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A girl like any other.

What does she see?

Where better to start than at the beginning?

After all, it's the most important part of any story.

Even the world began at the beginning, and every day it starts over again. And often enough, it's our first words that really count.

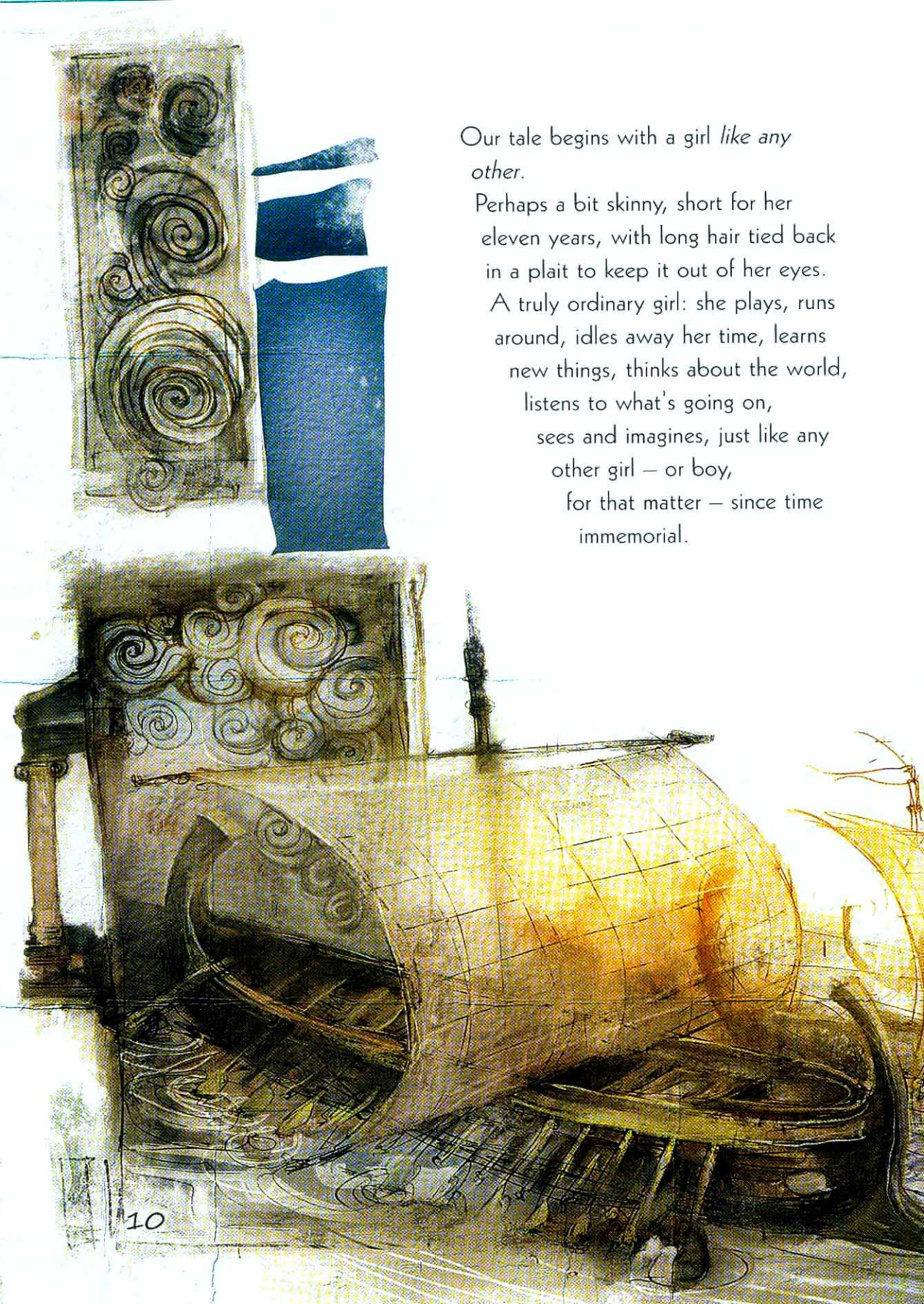
Sometimes, it's our first look. Or, if we're parched with thirst, our first sip. Or, if we're weak with hunger, our first bite.

Like when we sit down to hear the storyteller tell his tale – it's the first words that have to grab our attention.

Even Homer, the first and greatest of all storytellers, calls on the Muses to help him say the right things as he embarks on his tale of Troy. Indeed, the Muses help him to find the right words and enchant those who gather round to hear him.

And even old Hesiod, who sang of the birth of the gods, gives thought to the proper order and arrangement of his story: beginning at the beginning – this, after all, is where it all comes from.





Our tale begins with a girl *like any other*.

Perhaps a bit skinny, short for her eleven years, with long hair tied back in a plait to keep it out of her eyes. A truly ordinary girl: she plays, runs around, idles away her time, learns new things, thinks about the world, listens to what's going on, sees and imagines, just like any other girl — or boy, for that matter — since time immemorial.



So what's so special about her story that we should stop and listen to it?

Well, the things that this young girl sees are no ordinary things.

The things she hears are extraordinary.

And, as for what she imagines, well, what can I say?

It's almost beyond belief!

This girl's name is Myrtis.

It's a name that appeals to her: it's unusual and sounds good as the other kids call for her in their games and chases.

And let's face it, she's a bit of a tomboy, and enjoys the games that involve running around and getting in a mess.

She's not interested in dolls and knickknacks.

Though that means she won't have much to dedicate to the goddess when the time comes for her

to marry and she has to make an offering at the temple.

But what is it that Myrtis's eyes can see?

What does she hear?

What does she imagine?

Let's take a look at the world around her.





Myrtis is witness to a world that is in a state of eruption — but not an eruption of molten stone and lava and clouds of ash and horror and destruction.

The eruption that Athens is living through during this time is an eruption of words, of wealth, of ideas.

It is an eruption of military victories against all odds, of shipbuilding and the construction of amazing fortifications and monuments, roads, temples, statues.

An explosion of color and light and polished marble that are changing the face of the city and the life of its inhabitants.

Indeed, in Athens at this time everything is beginning to change, everything is transformed with unprecedented speed:

and the Athenians seize the opportunity to forge ahead and enrich their land, to build and to contemplate, to observe and to converse — all at breathtaking speed.

