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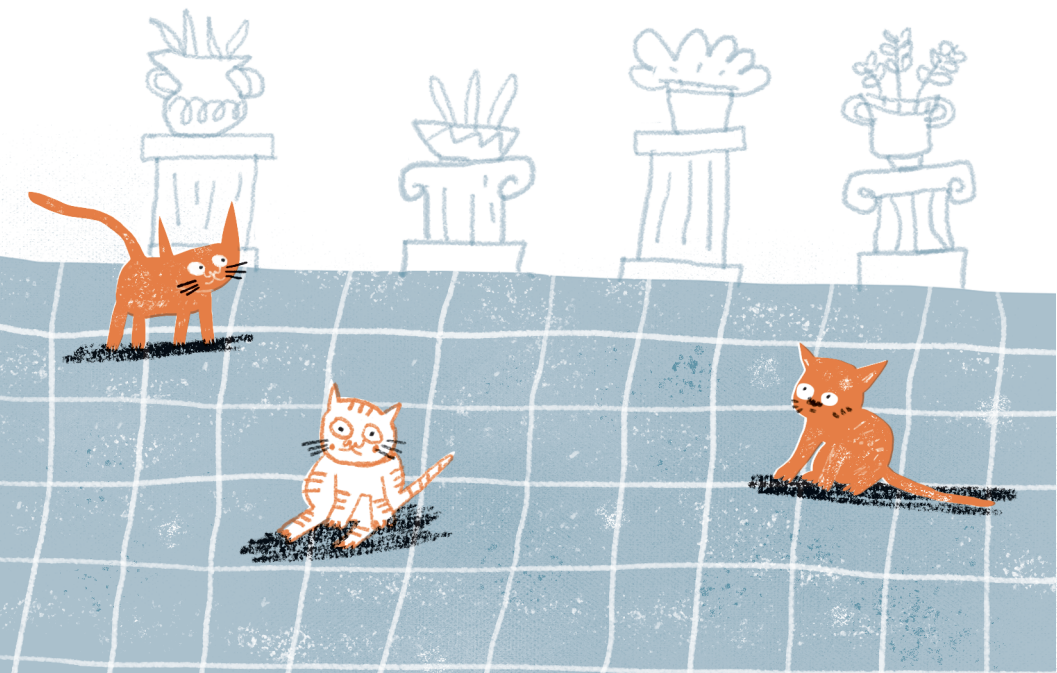


## All Roads Lead to Athens

My friends! This city is not an easy place to live in. It's not all hot dates, partying until after sunrise, and lounging by the pool. No. Life in Athens has become insufferable as of late. It doesn't matter if you're an 'it' girl, if you're *the* 'it' girl, if you're Pericles's favorite, or if everyone sees you as a hometown heroine. To be fair, it wasn't always like this. A lot changed when *she* came around and saddled up near and dear to Pericles's heart, saying things like "Ummm... no! Put that down!" and "Whoa whoa whoa!... Don't pick that up!" That's why I decided to

write this memoir, to let everyone know what's really been going on, to correct some historical inaccuracies, and to let the truth finally have its moment.

I was still just an itty-bitty beautiful baby, blue-eyed and sweet-tongued, when Pericles's mother, Agariste, singled me out among my five brothers and sisters as the cleverest, the friendliest, and the most rambunctious kitten in the litter. My reddish-gold color reminded her of a lion she'd come across long ago in a dream — only a few nights, in fact, before





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she gave birth to her baby boy. That's why she presented me as a gift to her beloved son Pericles, the brilliant Athenian general. So I bid a tearful, hissy farewell to my mother, my brothers, and my sisters and went to start a new life in an opulent palace where I would receive a first-rate education, learn to carry myself like a lady, and mingle with poets, sculptors, architects, philosophers, and the like. Agariste named me Aspasia, even though everyone—myself included—felt that she should have chosen the name Olympia on account of my aristocratically mild manners and my striking beauty, reminiscent of the twelve gods of Olympus.



