

Dear Reader: I do not often do this kind of thing but I have a real life experience that I want to share. Let me say first that the early chapters of Arden were conceptualized and mostly written about 2 years ago. I know, I am slow. In May of 2009, when I am writing this little missal, I experienced boy power, first hand and even more potently than my fiction describes. Two weeks ago I began overseeing a volunteer construction project at my local community association. This project, a community garden, consists of 21 raised units and contains 122 cubic yards of soil. The lumber came by the pallet load. The labor is all volunteer. One female volunteer brought a couple of her teenage sons on the first day. Soon we had 8, grade 6 and 7 students helping the three adults that showed up. It is now two weeks later and the construction is completed and 90% of the soil moved. The boys took an active part in every activity: hammering, sawing, measuring, screwing, lifting, carrying, shoveling and so on. (I will not let them work without adult supervision or proper safety gear around power tools.) Sixty percent of the work has been done by these young boys, which now number 15. Without them this community would not have half the gardens it will in the next few days. That's boy power in action. It is something else too, it is boy spirit in action. (Not one female under the age of 30 has volunteered to do anything, except post our blog, go figure.) I would like to think it is reality following art. In my heart I know, what I am presumptuous enough to think of as art, is a poor reflection of reality. What has been most inspiring to me is these real boys, all volunteered to give up play, sports and even homework time to work, for what we adults call, the common good. I hope their spirit and action will inspire my fellow adults, they seem to need it. These boys have demonstrated that given the resources and guidance with a few skills, they can do just about anything. I assure you they will receive much more than a few cans of pop and candy bars as reward and I am not talking about sex either.

Ok, I just had to get that off my chest. Back to Arden and the 14th century.

16: Learning the Art of the Job
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I spoke to Abrith about Perum and Flavia. He told me Perum's father would not talk, claiming Perum does not have the means to support a wife. Perum had come to him privately claiming to have more than enough money saved, which has been kept a secret from his family. Perum claimed his older brother and his wife were trying to force his father to take what ever money he had away from him and give it to them, claiming it was not his but belonged to the family. Abrith did not quite know what to do. I asked if this was need or desire. He did not know of any need and in a small community like Koalhurst any real need would be known.

He liked the boy and had faith in him and desperately wanted to honor Flavia's wishes as well. He told me Perum would not say how much money he had, except for the gold pieces given to him by Karyakos. Even that was being requested by his sister in law. Abrith ruled that it was Perum's, having been given to him and him alone.

The sister in law was taking the matter to her family council. "Our traditions are clear, a man may give a boy a gift and that gift is his and can not be claimed by his family. She will not win, it is what we call common law," he told me.

I asked him, in his capacity as the king's representative, to accept what ever coin Perum presented to him, as a gift to the Crown Prince's Consort. Since the Crown Prince's Consort can not accept gifts of this sort, the money would need be returned to him; pending the Crown Prince's Consort's refusal, the money must be kept in trust. Once he makes that gift, he can in all honesty say he has none, his family can not cease what he does not have. When he is 18 he will be free to ask for Flavia's hand directly. You will know how much he has and can make a fair judgment. For my part I will not make that refusal until the time is right.

I wrote Perum a letter, asking him to do what I suggested to Abrith and that I still believed in the opportunities at Apollo's Temple and would try and figure out how he might take advantage of them. I told him I was unable to use my personal purse directly but perhaps a partner or investor could be found. I would ask one of my trusted friends, who is studying the accounting arts, to evaluate the idea. If he gains any additional personal wealth that too should be given over to Abrith immediately, for safe keeping.

I went on to say he should remind his father that I was present when my new Father gifted him of that coin saying "this is for you and you alone, I will go and settle up with your father while you and Arden talk." It would be a very poor business decision to mistreat a gift from one so powerful as the Kings Consort and an insult to the new Prince who is one of us. He should tell his daughter in law that too press this issue would bring great embarrassment to himself and her husband. He should tell his brother, that if he made the same kind of extra effort to make customers comfortable as himself, he too would gain tokens of appreciation.

Abrith read the letter and immediately showed it to King Iason and Karyakos. I was surprised that he would do that. All three praised my cleverness and wisdom. Iason could not understand why I could not accept a gift. Karyakos explained that. "if you or Arden accept a gift, it has the appearance of someone purchasing favor. Perception is more important than reality and you would be no better than the corrupt religious and political leaders of other states. We have different standards here. Remember we are talking about gifts of goodly monetary value, not small and often symbolic tokens."

Karyakos quizzed me about my idea for the Temple of Apollo. When I explained it, Abrith and Karyakos both had that

look of pride as if I had accomplished some great feat. Uncle Iason placed his arm around my shoulder. "Arden, your fathers and your mentor are very proud of you. Not because you are quick enough to recognize an opportunity but because you understand that its realization would be of benefit to your friend and future brother in law and therefore your sister. Moreover that it would be a benefit to the people that use the Temple. You have taken your time and energy to promote the idea with no thought of your own personal gain. We are proud of you for applying the lessons we are teaching, without any prompting from us. You show a mastery that none of us could match at 12. I would guess not until we were 15 or 16 years."

Karyakos asked me who my student friend was. I told him Drakon. He smiled and nodded in agreement, suggesting that after I get Darkon's agreement, I should seek Alexandros' permission.

At the council meeting Admiral Pantaleon reported that a larger number of Venetian ships than usual were expected to be passing in the next few weeks. (TN: the Venetian merchant fleet at this time would have been around 3500 ships.) With the Florentines neutralized for the time being, Venice was attempting to increase its influence with our neighbors. Several North African pirate ships had been seen in the area having moved north in recent weeks. These pirates have been growing bolder since Venice and Parga cleared them from the sea during Iason the 4th time. They are now very careful and run when ever our navy approaches. News of what happened to the Florentines has obviously spread.

King Iason told him, "if the pirates come into our historic zone of protection, capture them if you can, destroy them if you must. We will send messages to our neighbors telling them that since they are unable to keep pirates out of the local waters we will. Until they are able to do so we expect their cooperation and assistance if pursuit becomes necessary. The Byzantines seem occupied in other places and have very few vessels in these waters. Our neighbors, vassals of one power or another, seem to weak to act."

Nothing but nothing is better than sex after a hard day in the castle. I returned to my bed chamber before the others rose and write by the light of a small lamp. Sex with your mentor and his new trainee makes it even better. Now that they knew what to do, how to do it and that it is pleasurable, our mentors want to install that need in their rectums. They do this by repeatedly giving them pleasure just like they did us. Uncle Iason and Father have often told us that sex is a very powerful motivator of human action but it must be used with great care. When in a position of power over others the temptation is great to use sex as a tool of that power. Try not to do that but use it as a tool for building personal loyalty.

From the traditions of Dionysus, Apollo and Aphrodite the priests at Apollo's Temple had concocted for them a mixture of the finest olive oil and the nectar of certain hemp plant flowers. These plants provide potent elements. The effect of this combination, when ingested by licking from their prodigious penises or being placed into the boy's rectums is quite something to see. After experiencing it, quite something to feel too. Being small of stature it takes only a little to make them appear drunk as if having consumed too much wine. When a little more is taken they become more relaxed and compliant. I noticed that our mentors were both encouraging of the them and free with suggestions. These suggestions seem to be taken up completely and repeated as if coming from their own minds. Thirdly, they soon seemed to desire sex greatly and even began asking for it. They became highly affectionate to our mentors, each other and ourselves. These boys were not as advanced as ourselves and could not yet ejaculate, they could experience orgasm after orgasm. It was our combined task to provide them with unending pleasure which we all attempted to do.

True success would be measured by how quickly and willingly they reacted to the signal they were being trained to. The signal is the forward and backward movement of the middle finger along the area between the anus and the testicles, combined with a tongue probing kiss on the lips. If this signal is given by the mentors, ourselves or to each other they would immediately comply with this unspoken request in the days to come.

In the ancient times and in our culture to some degree, as I have observed, men who readily submit to being fucked in public are considered unmanly. Girl like men and boys such as Dysme, who are not fighters, are not ridiculed but can be and often are joked about. They are still respected for their skills and abilities. Male couples are respected as long as they appear equal in public. Who is dominant in privet is not important. Girl like boys, such as Ikaros, who show great athletic skills are treated by the men with much respect, since their skills on the field are assumed to be mirrored in the bed. In Ikaros' instance a correct assumption.

Alexandros the younger and Odo rose shortly after I lit my lamp, but neither paid any notice to me. I can not write I paid no notice to them. It is very hard not to notice when two so handsome and skilled lovers perform only three feet away. (TN: This would be about 0.9 m in today's terminology.)

I found their performance to be most exciting, making my crotch and anus desire Iason all the more. The partial light of pre sunrise, combined with my small lamp's yellow glow, cast shadows over the vision, making everything more interesting. Alexandros stood next to the bed and Odo sat on it. Alex is tall and lean almost skinny with wide shoulder. His penis protrudes straight outward from his body and his testicles hang large and low below them. I could see his foreskin was stretched back and he arrow shaped head stuck out as if notched in a bow. He is very long, much longer than Iason or myself and longer than even Uncle Iason but not Father. His shaft is straight and does not bulge in the middle like other men. I expected to see much pubic hair but it was gone, shaved. He has much hair on his legs but

when he turned and bent over none could be seen in his cleft. His head has long brown hair and his chest shows a small patch between his nipples. His muscles are well formed and impressive. Odo took his small hands and guided the arrow into his mouth. I could see his tongue flicking out like a lizard and then the entire length disappear in the cavity. Odo has some wonderful skills. I think he should teach them to all of the Palace Boys.

Alex had his hands gently placed on his buttocks and at Odo's signal slowly pushed his hips forward and back each time Odo taking the entire length into his throat. I can do that but it took me weeks to learn and much of Father's and Uncle Iason patients to teach it. Presently Odo sat more upright and placed his hands between Alex's legs and on the base of his buttocks. Odo then pulled and pushed Alex's hips into and out of his mouth but not the full and prodigious length.

Once Odo understood Alex to be ready, he ever so gently moved making Alex turn and eased himself back onto the bed. Kleitos and Ikaros were still sleeping. While Alex and Odo were not attempting to wake them, once Odo started bouncing up and down on Alex's long pole, they would find little sleep.

1312, the 12th month, 29th day:

Today the North, East and West houses departed for their estates. I could see a few sad faces and even a few tears from the 10 and 11 year olds that were forced to stay in the Castle. Drakon and I will visit Apollo's temple in a few days. I received a letter from Perum telling me all was well and he had done as I requested. His sister in law is refusing to speak to him, apparently the comment about making customers satisfied and comfortable was less than appreciated by her. A number of ships came into the harbor, one a Venetian merchant, three from our navy and two I did not recognize.

The South House Eparchos reported that 22 injured and six sick apprentice boys were treated by the physicians following the statue instillation ceremony. "That is 22 to many for my taste," Father stated. "Eparchos I want to commission the South House Argonauts to conduct a census of all that live and work within a half day's walk. Record every person, even small babies by: name, age, gender; occupation, trade or skill; general health; status or titles; memberships; who their parents are; level of education. Record all buildings: location, type, status of repair, ownership and manager if different, use, the number of people that use, live, work or what ever in it. When you encounter people at work make sure you know where they live so we are not counting anyone twice. If someone is away, such as in the military or on a ship, get as much of that information as you can. Use Arden's Boys and any Palace Boys that can be spared with your own, but not anyone under 12."

1313, the 1st month, 2nd day:

We all went to Apollo's Temple except Kleitos and Alexandros the younger, they were helping with the census. Drakon hung behind us a bit and talked to the operators of the two small inns that were near by. He also interviewed the priests. What he found was: the present operations did not wish to expand for a variety of reasons, mostly a fear their taxes would rise, the investment was too great and they would be forced to employ non family members at too great an expense. Most people arrived by walking and most were making day trips. They did not wish to attend the severely ill as it was too great a burden. The priests would gladly tend to the severely ill if the government would establish a hospital. They also told us the need or desire for multiple day stays was about 1 in 20 visitors. These visitors were often accompanied by one to three family members. Drakon thought that workers could easily be found if young women were employed; that would mean some type of child care would be needed such as a school near by. The school building program starts in the spring anyway, so all we need to do is make sure one of those schools is near by. Palace Boys and Girls could be used as teachers on a rotation basis as part of their apprenticeships. Iason thought the state should build the needed hospital buildings and lease them to the priests for a small fee. We build them anyway, why not one near by that utilized the therapeutic pools and herb guardians. An inn with 10 rooms plus stables and dining facilities for 50 people would be needed. The inn could offer some kind of transportation from the city perhaps.

Our scholars told us that in other places the Christian monasteries often perform these functions. In places like Apollo's, mostly places they have taken over from the Pagans and renamed, they often claim mercurial cures and divine interventions. I took their words to mean we should move forward, if we move forward, in secret.

The bishop was less than pleased that we had erected a memorial statue in the town square that was not dedicated to one of his saints. The Pagans were pleased enough since Ganymede is one of theirs, even if not a god. The others are against images of men so they just ignore it. The closest the bishop could come anyway was St. Matthew which would have been very hard for him to make the claim for. Father told him that to give this memorial the name of any demigod in the Church's pantheon would be inappropriate since the Ganymede of Parga was not to be worshiped and could not intercede with any god, but is a memorial to an ideal. "Read the ode of dedication friend and understand." Besides it is a boy and not a man and all those saints are adults as far as I could see.

1313, the 1st month, 3rd day:

Uncle Iason was absolutely livid as Dysme and one of the young boys was trying to get him dressed. When he gets angry he paces and refuses to hold still, which makes helping him into his boots or wrapping his kilt impossible chores. He waves his arms and talks in a loud voice incessantly. Iason and I wanted to laugh but we knew better than that. Father finally raised his voice. "Iason, in Zeus's name hold still and let poor Dysme do his appointed tasks."

"That ungrateful dog, his delusions of adequacy are grandiose to say the least. If I were not a generous person I would see him live in a pig pen along with the other swine that inhabit it. Fortunately we have no such animals in this place. Unfortunately for us, he will need reside here for a while yet and turn our dungeon into one."

"Certainly Iason, we have sufficient dignity within ourselves, to not let his ill chosen words offend us to rash action. Let me do the talking and discourse with him; remembering well that the greatest insult we can deliver to him is preserving his humiliation and preventing his martyrdom."

We scurried out to dress in our ceremonial costumes. Father would play the game again and we certainly will be a large part in it.

From our page's bench we could witness a play that rivals the best our thespians have to offer. Even better, we would at some point, have a part in it. We kept Odo close at hand for his knowledge of languages will be beneficial to us. He knew some of the North African dialects and had been studying hard since these men arrived.

I could see about 25 or perhaps 30 prisoners. They did not have their feet bound and they were dressed in dull looking kilts and tunics. Their heads were shaved as were their faces, their hands were linked by short chains and wrist cuffs. Another 20 or so stood by, they were dressed as prison guards. They too were shaved of face but their heads were not shaved, their hair was cut rather short. From looking at them I figured they were the galley slaves, that survived the battle. A number of the prisoners and some of the guards had bandages indicating they had been wounded. Their leader, the defiant one, had no tunic, just a plain kilt. He seemed rather old and fat. His body looked as though it had been completely shaved. He was bound by a short iron chain so that his hands were held to his chest and could not be used, being connected to an iron collar.

"Well Captain Mohammed Atlizkas I see we meet again, although you were just a very junior officer, serving your uncle and I a young prince. I recall my father, Iason the 6th, warning you then of the consequences that would result from plying your trade in our waters. That was many years ago, perhaps you are suffering from memory loss, a consequence of old age." While Uncle Iason spoke the scholars translated Italian and Arabic so all in attendance knew what was being said.

"If you intend to put me to death then why not spare everyone and just do so? You foolish infidels can not stop us in our holy cause. My death means little."

Karyakos took over, "That is not our intention, we are not uncivilized barbarians as you are. True, your death means nothing. We do not pretend to be faithful, on a god's mission, while doing little but lining our own pockets and bringing death to all those we don't happen to like. It is not our way to put people to death for any reason, if it can be avoided. We are mindful that one man's truth is another's blasphemy. We are not a violent people but peace loving and generous to a fault. No, we will not put you or your men to death. My beloved Iason had suggested it would be most appropriate to house you in pig sties, since those of your faith so venerates these animals, alias we have none in our land."

"Allah be praised."

"No you fool, Allah had nothing to do with it. Our Pagan ancestors made that decision a thousand years ago for very practical, not faith based irrational reasons. Certainly ones having no relationship to your rather recent false profit and his pretend god. A god, stolen from the Hebrews that was not even known to them. It is an obvious failure to not know and understand history that brings you here.

You have in the past been known to have called us nothing but a gaggle of geese and that you, the mighty pirate, had nothing to fear from such women. You Mohammed, have been boosting such for almost 10 years now and yet this is your first visit to us in that time. Today you are here being humiliated by us, begging us to make you a martyr. Not shabby work for a gaggle of girls. Did you not believe the stories of the Florentines being crushed or did you believe your god would protect you, being such a pillar of the faith.

Since it was a Venetian ship you had attacked and since one of your two vessels is a recently captured Venetian merchant, you will be turned over to the Venetian Ambassador when he arrives. What they do with you, when you have rowed to Venice, is their business."

"Please take notice," Uncle Iason interjected, "Slavery in Parga is forbidden and against our laws, you see we are a civilized culture. Those former slaves that served on your vessels are now free men. Free from your tyranny and free to choose whatever religious tyranny, if any, they wish to believe. I have employed them to be your jailers. Short of torture, another practice that is forbidden here, you see we are highly civilized, they have been given permission to treat you

exactly as they had been treated by you. I suggest you pay very close attention to what ever instructions they issue.

As you claim noble birth you will be treated to a level more elevated than the others, something more befitting your self exalted station. Your personal guardian will be Loup D' Este, the lad of 15 who you captured along with that vessel and who's parents you killed while he was made to witness. The very lad you intended to hold for ransom or sell into slavery, which ever brings the great gold. Kidnapping is also against our laws and customs. Since he is Venetian we will let them deal with those legalities. Loup, take heed of what has been said here today, I want this man kept alive and well enough to man an oar and stand punishment in Venice."

"Your wish is my command Sire, one I shall take great pleasure in fulfilling." I liked that boy and his spunk. The look on the pirate's face told all, he was terrified and I suspected rightly so.

"The cargo of that vessel, what remains of it, will be returned to Venice along with the ship. As to your vessel Mohammed, it is now the property of King Iason the 7th. The content of that vessel are..." A long inventory was read out by one of the Triangles, a very junior apprentice steward. This was done purposefully to further irritate Mohammed.

"Prince Arden and Prince Iason please come forward," Father asked. "Princes, the inventory just read is being gifted to you. How do you intend to use it?" That got Mohammed's attention and just like before gifting it to mere boys, princes or not, was another blow to his manliness. Now we were on stage and again with no foreknowledge of the situation. Another test of our skills no doubt. Odo came with us. Iason motioned for the Triangle to come close with his inventory. We studied it for a few minutes asking him a few questions. This delay was longer than needed again to irritate the pirate.

Iason spoke first, "As to the navigational aids, they are so primitive as to be only useful for our fishers who do not venture far from the land, they will be sold and the money used for the benefit of widows and orphans of fishermen. As for the cloth and other such goods they will be given to the Palace Girls. The fancy glass will be sold and the money put towards their dowries. As to the armaments, they will be placed in the palace armory and used to equip and train the newly hired guards. As to the wealth in metals and jewels, that will be used as compensation for the disabled, widows and orphans resulting to our forces during the capture. The food stuffs should be used to feed the prisoners. The holy books given to the mosque library. The personal effects of the officers given to Loup. The effects of the crew given to the former slaves."

Karyakos asked us. "You keep nothing for yourselves?" I answered, we want for nothing and the crown has rightly taken the ship. No. Odo translated all this. I could see that Loup wanted to add something but was hesitant. I could also see a smirk on Mohammed's face. I whispered to Odo, go to him after we are done and find out what his concern is.

"Very well. The business of this council is concluded for today."

Odo ran over to Loup and taking his hand lead him over to us. He told us a bit about himself and that he knew, in Mohammed's foot locker, there was a false bottom with much gold in it. His family was very rich and he did not want that gold, "it has blood on it". He figured that Mohammed would try and use it to bribe him and others, once in Venice. He also told us Mohammed's purse was full, so with that coin he was well positioned until he returned to Venice. I asked him how he knew this. He told us that while at sea he had lots of time and while organizing Mohammed's cabin he discovered it. It is very cleverly concealed.

Iason pointed out we can not take that money, it has been given with the trunk to him. I suggested he might invest it in some venture that had nothing to do with trade or glass making but should over time yield a handsome profit. We decided to remove the gold from its hiding place and deposit in the royal treasury for safe keeping. I will have 6 Palace Boys and two of our bodyguards fetch the trunk and we could meet again and talk further. Loup was incredulous that we would not want the gold. He told us in Venice and other places he ever heard of the nobles or religious officials would have made off with it mostly into their own pockets.