

Arden
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26: Bring On The Girls

1317, 12th month, 12th day

This female page business is causing more problems for the council, than I think anyone ever imagined. No one would talk directly to us princes about it but several of the Triangles came to us with reports. The unofficial word, among most the knights, was just as Uncle Iason suggested it would be. The women in their lives, from their mothers to their youngest daughters, all said one thing; yes and about time too. Many mothers were not about to send their daughters but that did not mean they were not in support of the idea. Some said, their female relatives and constituents were opposed, they seemed in a minority.

Many people question why we should offer this training and opportunity to women at all, since they will never have any real political power anyway. One knight was quite open about the pressure he had. His wife told him, if he wanted any more children he had better support the girls he already had. When I asked what the palace boys thought about it, they all thought it a good idea. As to this real political power business, I think they already have quite a bit. Judging from the comments above.

Since Palace Girls are officially the King's children and any marriage arrangements were made through his office, that part was easy. For the others he and the scribes drafted up a contract that said, as long as the female was serving as a Page, Royal Guard or in the Eagles, her father could not arrange a marriage to take place, until that service was completed. Just like the boys, while the families could betroth them at birth, they could not marry without the King's permission, while in his service. The council debated this, in the end voted for it. One knight suggesting they all desired more children and a willing bed partner.

Our history professors all agreed, no one knows when the society sifted from a matriarchal to a paratactical system but that it had. Our earliest ancestors were matriarchal. That knowledge is preserved in our oral traditions. The Dorians and many of the northern tribes, that invaded before them, were paratactical. It was probably a gradual thing that came with the shift from farming and herding to city states. Once women were never allowed to leave their homes unescorted and not taught to read in later years and so on, they would know no better. If they were in effect property of their fathers and husbands, given enough time, they would think it normal.

This must have been highly complex, societies are complex. These sorts of things were not always recorded and in our little state at least, records from those periods are scant. We must understand that writing, only gained popularity after the time of Homer. It was mostly the men doing that writing. Much of ordinary life was not thought important enough to record. Much of the oral traditions were ignored by early recorders. Given the importance of female figures in pagan religious affairs, one can get a glimpse of the obvious.

Slavery is another factor in Greek history that made things different here. With slaves to do much of the manual and domestic work, the citizens had the time and means to divide up things and spend time in both political and military areas. Here no one had the time for that. Since we were isolated and poor, the need to field a professional army was limited. By the time of Alexander, Parga was about the same population as it is today. We were ignored then and mostly still are. It was recognized by our neighbors, it was to their advantage to have us independent. We are too small to offer a threat. Too isolated to be of strategic advantage. Too costly to subdue and enough like themselves, to be culturally compatible. This makes Nik's recent action all the more puzzling. I think it results from his general ignorance of those he would lead.

It is only since the rise of the so called monotheistic religions, that we have become a target. Women, by necessity have played a large part in our society. It is a numbers game. Since all major property is held in common and we are all one clan, most of the reasons for social divisions are just not here. Given the need to limit our population, to sustainable numbers, it is important that many females contribute to the society in ways other than producing children.

I have not presented my plan for taking females into Arden's Girls. I think I need to review it with Princesses Elpis, Olympia and Eudoxia first. This must be done correctly and gradually, to not upset others. Perhaps I am learning the political craft in spite of myself. Attitudes in Parga are different about what is virtuous and modest. While females over 14 tend to have longer skirts and tunics than men, we are not shocked, offended or overly titillated by a bare breast suckling a child or the exposure of a woman's legs or arms.

Olympia and Eudoxia started as pages today. They are dressed almost like the boys, except their kilts are a little longer. The little hats look nicer on them than most of the boys. Why I am at a loss to say, both have hair of similar style and length. Since no one is permitted to take any liberties with the boy pages, while in service, the girls will receive the same respect. It is a respect of office, which all are pledged to. That and the fact that unlike other places, females here are not property but members of families and the society in general.

Their tunics are exactly the same as the boys. When the younger girls come in, I am sure from any distance, they will just look like boy pages. Olympia and Eudoxia are developing nicely shaped breasts and have wider hips than the boys, girl features that are not easily hidden. Some of the palace girls I see, in their age group, are still as slim as boys. Everyone is unique.

Alexandros has reported to Princess Elpis and is now part of her guards. I think this will give her a chance to evaluate him as a son in law. I also see that Helladios is becoming greater and greater friends with Dios and they are often playing together. It is good for Dios, sitting with the pages can be very hard on young boys, when not given anything much to do. Uncle Iason has given Helladios a pony so they are often with their animals in the afternoons. I assume providing protection for Helladios, when out on his own, will be part of Alexandros' job now.

1317, 12th month, 15th day:

Lugo and Dario arrived today from Venice. Due to all the construction, they are staying at one of the local inns. It was so good to see our old friends again. When they left us they were only boys but now they are men and very handsome men at that.

Father and Uncle received copies of the rewritten play. I think it must be very funny, the playwright, Hesiodos, Dysme and the two of them were laughing so hard we could hear it in our apartments. I am sure it will be a success. Later at dinner, Uncle Iason was saying he thought this a worthy piece of literature for the printing press. I assume he plans to send many copies to Epirus and specifically Kephalaria, for their enlightenment. I wonder if the poor playwright dare to go home again. From what I know of Thomas, he will enjoy the humor but I suspect Count Nikholas will be less than amused. It would seem that most of his efforts, at least those directed toward us, turn against him. He is young, not that much older than us and just this year replaced his father.

The politics of all this are highly convoluted. Nikholas' father was a vassal of Naples but he is known to favor Constantinople. In fact, he inherited his position on the death of his father. I guess Nik feels he has a birthright. How he has influence in the area around Parga, which is under Thomas rule, is a long sorted story, better left to the scholars to try and explain. It is obvious Thomas has little influence over his nephew. The young man appears to be obsessed with his mother's homeland and with power for himself.

1317, 12th month, 18th day:

Tonight was the Ballizien of the Princes. I must say, we hosted the best dance ever at the castle. That is what everyone said, although most of us had not attended that many, but those with more experience in these things, like Father, all said so. While we princes had input to the planning and certainly to the singing, dancing and playing, it was mostly Drakon and his staff that made it such a success. We all dressed in our finest. Iason, Kastor and Polydeukus and I got to wear our gold laurel wreaths. The three terrors dressed as princes not pages, Dios as a page, as did the other Pages, including Olympia and Eudoxia. Polykarpos brought his young lady from her village, my sisters and their husbands, my brother and his wife along with many others, all came.

Lugo and Dario were among the most popular and did have a chance to meet Olympia. Kalkrates and Solon along with Agapios assisted us in playing our instruments. Before that, all 9 of us senior princes formed a reception line to greet all who came. Immediately after we played, Karyakos and Tertius departed. I noticed Odo and Alexandros spending much time with Princess Eudoxia. I also noticed Odo spending time with many of the boys, obviously they were using his sweet words to assist them with the girls, including Adonis. Of late, Odo has been turning out many love poems that are much favored by the females.

Euthalia and Zoe, Iason's female lover, spent much time with us as well. While our romances were kept quiet, both being with child and by us, it is now anything but. My sisters were happy to meet Euthalia and they seemed to get along well. We all had a very good time. Our fellow university students, many from other places, seemed to appreciate our customs and greatly enjoyed the company of the local girls. A number of young ladies from the city also joined. These students were much impressed, not only by the beauty of these women, but their knowledge. Most of the playing and singing was provided by the palace musical department.

I did notice several of the nurses chasing Melitta, Helladios and several others, who were supposed to be in bed, until Kastor and Polydeukus assisted Alexandros and Eudoxia in rounding them up. While this was anything but fun for the nurses, it seemed an enjoyable game for both the younger children and the older. Dario, the Dioskouros, and several of the older Argonauts were among the most popular boys, at least with the unspoken for girls; we already know how popular they are with the boys.

Over all, the Ballizien was a great success. Iason and I decided to make this an annual event. We both resolved to drink much less wine next year, even if it is child's wine. I do not like the feeling of being drunk. When I am not in full control I am uncomfortable, besides I have been known to make a fool of myself. I think it important that we princes set a good example and making a fool of oneself is not. Sometimes the price we pay for our offices seems high. It is not when one considers just what perks this office brings. It is a little different for Iason, he has known little else, for Kastor, Polydeukus and myself, we know.

Nikias and the twins were spending much more time with the girls than I appreciated. So were Iason and I. On reflection I don't know why I was jealous of him. He was only having fun with other children his own age. I asked Kastor about his feelings. He shrugged his shoulders and just said, "it is normal you know, when we were younger I didn't want Poly to be with anyone. Now I realize that was foolish. He and I can have friends and even other boys in our lives, without diminishing our love. Remember brother, no girl can give him the love you do, they just don't have the right equipment." He kissed me and held me to his person. I knew he was right and I felt bad for having been jealous.

I will finish this now, Kastor and I want to fuck our lovers.

1317, 12th month, 20th day:

Yesterday we all attended the premier of the new play, called "The Flowers of Parga". We were all sitting in the section directly in front of the stage, occupying the first several rows. We have a very nice open air amphitheater, just behind the town, in a kind of bowl shaped area, between two hills. I noticed many of the students and faculty from the university and the other schools.

The play was very modern in presentation. It had a chorus and not many props. Conversations between actors, sometimes several and no masks. Sometimes actors would step to one side or forward and speak to the audience, as if the others were not

on the stage. The chorus was made up of local people, many I recognized. I also recognized several of the actors playing smaller parts.

It was very funny and everyone laughed and laughed. I found the boys playing Iason and myself, very good. I am sure it will be highly offensive to those who can not laugh at themselves or believe themselves superior to mere mortals. It seemed that everyone in the play was being funny except one, the boy poet, an obvious reference to Odovakar. That character would stride upon the stage at the most interesting times and address the actors and audience, with absolutely ordinary observations, delivered with no hint of emotion. The actors would just shrug and ignore him, this always got a good laugh from the audience and Odo especially so. The rewrite also cast Nicholas in exactly the same light as all the others. I wonder if he can laugh at himself.

Our theatrical traditions are Greek of course, but we have also borrowed from the Romans, who borrowed from the Greeks in the first place. We do have our own unique way of doing things.

[TN: The reader may wish to skip this scholarship section. The earliest days of our theater remain obscure, the oldest surviving plays come from ancient Greece. Most of our scholars agree that Greek theater evolved from staged religious choral performances, probably in the generation or perhaps generations preceding Thespis. (According to Aristotle, writing two hundred years later, Thespis was a singer of dithyrambs (songs about stories from mythology with choric refrains). Thespis supposedly introduced a new style, in which one singer or actor performed the words of individual characters in the stories, distinguishing between the characters with the aid of different masks.)

There are those that suggest the existence of theater-like performances much earlier, such as the Minoan Palace at Knossos. Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides, Aristophanes made some of the most renowned Greek plays. Their dramas were always part of a series of four performances (a "tetralogy"): the first, second and third plays were a dramatic trilogy of related events staged in temporal order, and the culminating fourth performance was a satyr play, a play on a lighter note, with enhanced celebratory and dance elements. Obviously, performances lasted several hours and were held during daytime. We still perform them today.

The dramas rarely had more than three actors (all male), who played the different roles using masks. There was a chorus on the stage all the time which sang songs and sometimes spoke in unison. The actors wore large masks, which were very colorful. These masks depicted two things: the age of the character, and their mood. Actors also wore thick, padded clothing, and shoes with thick soles. This made them seem larger, so the audience could see them better when seated in the uppermost rows of the amphitheater. When we do the ancient plays they are done this way but not our modern plays.

The theater of ancient Rome was heavily influenced by the Greek tradition, and as with many other literary genres Roman dramatists tended to adapt and translate from the Greek. When comparing and contrasting ancient Roman theater to that of Greek theater it can easily be said that Roman theater was less influenced by religion. Also,

Roman theater was more for aesthetic appeal. In Roman theater war was a more common thing to appear on stage as opposed to the Greek theater where wars were more commonly spoken about in Greek plays. This was no doubt a reflection of Roman culture and habits. As much in Roman culture was and still is more show than substance.

In Rome the audience was often loud and rude, rarely applauding the actors, but always shouting insults and booing. Because the audience was so loud, much of the plays were mimed and repetitive. The actors developed a kind of code that would tell the audience about the characters just by looking at them.

- A black wig meant the character was a young man.
- A gray wig meant the character was an old man.
- A red wig meant the character was a slave.
- A white robe meant the character was an old man.
- A purple robe meant the character was a young man.
- A yellow robe meant the character was a woman. (Needed in early Roman theater, as originally female characters were played by men, however as the Roman theater progressed, women slaves took the roles of women in plays.)
- A yellow tassel meant the character was a god.

Plays lasted for two hours, and were usually comedies. Most comedies involved mistaken identity (such as gods disguised as humans). (Note: I suspect he is talking about Farce, a term from 16th cent. French. These originally were comic, often silly bits, stuffed between serious material. A form of comic relief as it were. As a form this was not yet invented. Satire is more biting and pointed and not pointless.)

Our scholars, told me unlike us, the old Romans, like many moderns, were not as well educated and only the elite received a good education. For the last few hundred years, the Italians, Eastern Empire and others, theater has been mostly morality plays and the like, based on the old Greek and Roman models. In some respects the ancient Greek plays were a kind of morality play as well, at least the tragic parts. Not here, here we have continued to develop and grow our performing arts. Many of the ancient theaters, in both the east and west, fell into disuse after the rise of the Christians. Modern morality plays are overly simplistic and because of their monotheistic focus, boring. The old Greek tragedies, while religious in their moralistic focus, were anything but boring. They were often highly complex and mostly looked at large moral questions from several points of view.]

Here in Parga we no longer use masks for modern plays and we often have as many as 6 or 7 actors on the stage at once. We will dress in costumes. Our choruses, when used, are made up of men and women and female actors are also used but not girls. Girls are usually played by young boys, whose voices have not yet changed. This play lasted two hours and was built in 4 sections, each about 1/2 hour with a short break between. This was just satire; satire or other comedy are common today, drama and tragic drama are also performed in Parga.

I am sure that in the future we princes will stage this play again but this time all of us will play our own parts. I think it will be great fun, so do my brothers.

1317, 12th month, 21st day:

Today was the big art exhibition in the Grand Hall of the castle. All of the painters/drawers and sculptors had works on display, most pieces for the first time. At the summer solstices they show weaving, jewelry, pottery/glass and other kinds of craft oriented art. One of the student sculptors made a miniature bronze copy of the Ganymede of Parga. It is about one foot tall (TN: one of Arden's feet is about 309 mm or 12.1 inches, that would make it about 1/5 scale as Arden was about 5 feet tall when it was made and as you will recall he said it was life size.) and fitted on a small stone base. It is very accurate and very well done. He has cast many, but made a gift of the first to me. I did not want to accept it but Polydeukus whispered in my ear I must, as to not embarrass the young sculpture. I could always look him up later and pay him. A gift like this would not be mine but belong to the state, however I could have use of it as long as I lived. Further along I was asked to unveil one of the large wooden carvings. I had no idea why until I pulled off the covering. It was a newly carved Figurehead for the Prince Arden. I was most impressed. Hermogenes came up to inquire how I liked it. I liked it very much. The likeness was striking and I was painted as a knight. I know it will look good fixed to the prow of the Prince Arden. Figure heads on Greek ships go way back, often they signified the city they were from, like Athena on ships from Athens.

Over in the painting section there was this huge portrait of all the princes, including Uncle Iason and Lysandros. The King and Father were seated holding Lysandros, Helladios stood at King Iason's side and next to him Nikias. On the other side Joulous and Justus stood next to Father and us four older boys and Tertius stood behind them; Iason behind his father and me behind mine, with Kastor on the right and Polydeukus on the left and Tertius on the far left. I was amazed that the twins in fact looked exactly alike but had slightly different posture and expressions. On the back of the painting was a paper that recorded who was who, our ages and the date the painting was finished, artists name and the names of the apprentices that assisted him.

I saw one portrait of just me, painted by one of the students of the master. I purchased it for my parents. The Dioskouroi purchased the ones of themselves for their mother and Princess Elpis purchased all the others. I was most impressed by the way these paintings are being done. We all looked so natural and real in them. Lugo and Dario told me that the masters in Venice and Florence are not yet producing such as these. They are still stuck producing things with a strongly religious tone and much symbolism, although elements of realism are beginning to be added. Our painters are already there. The sculptures are mostly in the Classical Greek style, some even larger than life. Unlike the old style, however; some measure of emotion is allowed in expression. Mostly it is a smile or half smile.

We have many large paintings and sculptures in the castle, decorating the larger rooms and hallways. This large painting will hang in the Argonaut common room. Uncle Iason commissioned a number of copies of a smaller version of "The Princes", that will be sent to our embassies and estates. I saw many of the little bronzes being purchased by the Argonaut Eparchos. He told me several will be placed at each of the four

Argonaut residences.

1317, 12th month, 26th day:

[TN: This section presented several translation problems for me so I inserted more notes than usual.]

Over the intervening celebration days, the students at the university all met together. Iason had invited them to use the Argonauts hall for this purposes. We are about 135. About a third of them would be getting their first degrees in the next year. Many would continue for a Masters. The way our university is organized, is quite different from any others we know about. The university is made up of 5 schools. The Academy of Parga, grants a general Laurel Degree (I think he means a Baccalaureate Degree but that word is French and had not been invented yet.) Each student needed to complete 10 courses from each of the four academic colleges: Medicine, Philosophy, Law and Mathematics & Science. (I take it Philosophy here is used to include Divinity not distinct from it, as in other places.)

We are completely state supported. Pargian students are provided with a living allowance. Students from other places or outside the city, are given a place to live and eat. In the dormitory, small privet rooms are available, for those working on advanced degrees, in the same building. They must provide their own personal expenses.

We have 15 Academic Professors, 1 librarian with a small staff. One President or Chancellor (he calls him "leader") with a small staff, and a number of people who work for the school, to keep it running. The Chancellor's office attempts to organize things like sports for us and some social events but it is less than adequate for those who's home is not the city. (No mention is made, of what today we would call, a Dean.)

I think the other students were afraid to invite us princes. Polydeukus learned of the idea and invited them. We sent our six guardians to guard all the entrances and insure privacy. One of the older students was the meeting chairperson and several students recorded the events. In other places student organizations are forbidden or are under the control of some authority or another.

This is a Free University, which means the selection of professors, the materials taught and most other things in the university are independent from the state or any religious group. The professors from the five colleges all vote to elect the Chancellor. The money to run the place is provided by a committee of regents, appointed by the King, from a list of candidates provided by the Council. The Chancellor is also a member of this committee. In some places the students pay the professors and they control course content, in others the state or church pay and controls things. Here the regents act on recommendations from the colleges and the state, its' control is non academic. In some places like France, the students are considered above the civil law and answer only to church law. Here students are the same as everyone else and subject to the civil laws and codes of conduct.

The authorities (army and sheriff) are not permitted to enter the campus, without permission or an invitation. The students were of the opinion they should have some

official voice, to give advice and make requests of the Regents. They were afraid the state would object to such an organization. In a way it will be like a guild, which would have more restricted powers. I suggested they form a union of students and use the existing structures of guilds, as a model. If they wrote down and approved the rules and structures, we four would take it to the King and Council and try and gain a proper charter, like all the other guilds have. Which they started doing by electing a committee to prepare the text and present it back for approval and amendment.

One of the students, a former Argonaut, suggested they form clubs or groups like the Argonaut houses, where students could ban together for social, intellectual and sporting fraternity. Another suggest we call them fraternities. Not everyone wanted to be a part of that, most though it a good idea for those who did. Iason suggested that if it was informal and completely in the hands of the students, no official recognition need be made. Another student suggested we make three or four groups to give a choice to the prospective members. Someone else suggested the four princes each be the head of a group. The idea of having sports and debating teams, to compete against, was appealing to most everyone. Someone suggested, that once formed the groups could meet regularly for small social functions. Another though these groups should be called Fraternities and since they were being founded by the four princes, we simple be know as Phi Alpha, Phi Kappa, Phi Iota and Phi Delta.

I pointed out that none of us should hold office in these Fraternities but each could be a member of the one with his name. Kastor reminded everyone that we were forbidden to allow our names to be linked with any specific religious group, the one thing none of these Fraternities could openly expose. was any specific religious view. Just like the state and the University itself, these groups must be secular. Polydeukus pointed out that any group of students could form a group, of the like minded and seek recognition, official status, from the administration. The administration would create rules to govern these groups if asked. If membership was voluntary and restricted to enrolled students, they could even be religious in nature.

It worked well, since each of us has different friends and they have other friends, the little groups formed easily. Each group was about 20, as not everyone wanted to belong.

Later that evening we were talking before bed. Iason was musing on the possibility of lots of sex going on in the new Fraternities. We all agreed with him, it would probably be that way, at least among the Pargian students. At the mention of students, our boys all became overtly jealous demanding to know who we were talking about. Once explained all settled down into some very intense love making. I don't know what it is about young boys but they smell so delightful, especially my Nikias. I could keep my nose in his crotch or butt forever. He is especially fond of the boy superior position. I know he will make an excellent rider of horses as he posts over my penis in a most delightful way. I see he is sprouting a few pubic hairs of late and expect he will be ejaculating any time.