

A reader has pointed out that I have been less than diligent in making sure the proper homonym is being used. An apology is in order and I humbly make one. The purpose of a story like Arden is to tell, I hope, a good tale not tail. At times, probably more often than I readily admit, my fingers and my brain are less than synchronized. It is not my intention to make your reading experience other than pleasurable. Enough said on that. Just a reminder, if you are not of legal age you probably should not be reading this. For that situation I make no apology but I am supposed to remind you of it.

Arden

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15: Rise Up And Celebrate

1312, the 11th month, 21th day

Following our custom, an official announcement of Lysandros birth was proclaimed today. "Amphidromia" in smaller places takes place on 5th or 7th day after birth. Involves, if your a Pagan, a sacrifice and ceremony. A naked father carried his child around the household hearth; women purified themselves; friends and relatives send traditional gifts. In the old days they did not attend unless they had been present at the birth but now it is different.

Families decorate the doorway of the house announcing the birth: Boy with a wreath of olive, Girl with wool, because of their spinning. Girls and children of poorer families might be named at the same rite. We tend to name everyone separately now day but almost everyone religious belief aside decorates their doorways.

The Christians don't celebrate births, they want everyone to be named for a saint, so name days are very popular and baptisms are more celebrated by them.

It is now just 30 days to the winter solutes and a few less to the beginning of the celebrations. In our culture, the new year and the winter solutes are the same, like the Romans. In fact we have adopted the Roman calendar some time ago. [TN: Remember when Arden writes Romans he could mean old Rome or the Eastern Roman Empire, Byzantines to us. It depends on the context and time reference.] Before that I guess every Greek City state had it's own. Some versions of the ancient Greek calendar celebrated the new year on the summer solstice. The Athenians and the other Ionian peoples began their year with the first new moon after the summer solstice, the Dorians with the autumnal equinox, the Boeotians and other Aeolians with the winter solstice.

For us, we do it all in some fashion. Every month of the year has at least one, most several festivals. The Christians have expropriated most of them, but not here. They even moved the birth to the solutes. (TN: Using the Julian Calendar then the solutes is on the 25th not the 21st or 22nd. The Eastern Church still uses the old calendar and the phases of the moon so Christmas for them is about 12 days after the Western Church. It appears that in Pagan they adjust the calendar twice a year so for them the soloists was as it is for us. ) No one knows when the Jesus person was born for sure. Most babies are born in the spring or early summer. In an attempt to dampen the Saturnalia celebrations of the Pagan Romans, the early Christians fixed the date at that time.

Here only the winter solutes week is an official state declared time. Lenaea, a festival of Dionysus is now a part of this. All others are celebrated by the faithful of what ever, on the days they choose. Most festivals even the Christine ones are big parties for everyone. Dancing, music, theater, food and often sports. What people do at their temples is none of our concern. In the city, not small places, when someone wants to use public spaces they must seek a permit. We have a number of sports events each year and those are state organized. Festivals for Apollo, Dionysus and a few others are very popular. Since many Pagans have both male and female gods to celebrate, one finds those festivals for the male gods more attended by men and for women by women. For us younger men it is the best chance we have to meet and get to know the girls. (TN: Arden may call himself a young man but in his culture he was still a boy.)

My tutors told me: What made the winter solstice so special, is that it marked the midpoint of winter, and it is one of the four important points of the year, the others being the summer solstice, and the two equinoxes; and in many cultures, all of this had a special metaphysical significance. It was all part of a sensibility about the orderly periodicity of the universe, the oscillation of the yearly cycle, a process of continual birth, death and renewal. All of this mirrored itself in the lives of animals and human beings, too. There is good reason to suspect that funereal rituals and belief in some kind of afterlife resulted, in part, from the perception that nature renewed itself; that crops and plants grew again after the dormancy of winter. The two solstices and equinoxes being opposite each other, were often depicted as points on the great circle of life by the ancients, especially those with a mathematical outlook.

This is one time of the year when everyone has something going on. Chanukah and Kwanzaa, Yule and others, I like it. I think we should get the Argoanuts to celebrate the Gymnopia in the summer. It would also be great fun.

(Translators Note: Dies Natalis Invicti Solis and Deus Sol Invictus was the "birthday of the invincible sun", the celebration of the birth of Mithras, the invincible sun. Sol Invictus it is said came to Rome via Syria, as a variant of Baal known as El Gabalsun, the Sun God. It also has been put forth that Mithras was a minor Zoroastrian deity and worshiped in India as early as 1400 B.C.

Emperor Aurelian named Sol Invictus the supreme Roman Deity at some time in the late 3rd century and became known as Deus Sol Invictus.

Dies natalis solis invicti or Dies Natalis Invicti Solis was celebrated on December 25th, which in the Julian calendar was the Roman date for the Winter Solstice. Mithras offered salvation for His followers, He was virgin born to save humanity from evil, he died and was resurrected to become a messenger God between man and the God of Light, and his day of worshiped was Sunday, the day of the sun. Followers of Mithras were male, and typically soldiers, clerics, slaves and freeman. Mithras was once again, the sun that battled against the forces of chaos and disorder, the forces of darkness and despair, who brought the light, order and hope back every year at Winter Solstice. Arden would have been aware of all this and I am sure much more.)

1312, the 11th month, 27th day

I have been much to upset, followed by much to busy, to write anything for the past several days. Iason and I had a small fight. Our fathers knew it was only a matter of time before it happened, they told us so. I write small fight and in fact it was such but at the time, had I recorded it, I am sure I would have said it was a major thing.

I was just so embarrassed and he had the gall to laugh at me in front of the council. Then Uncle Iason grabbed him and pulled up his kilt and spanked him so hard he cried. Now all the knights were laughing at us. I just wanted to run and hide and never see him again. Karyakos and Uncle Iason began upbraiding both of us until Uncle Tertius stopped them. Volos came rushing to my side with a wet cloth to wipe the blood from my face and assist me in replacing my kilt.

"Iason, did you release the pin on Arden's kilt?" Iason looked at the floor, "Yes Uncle."

"Arden, were you embarrassed when your kilt fell off?"

"No Uncle, when I tripped on it and everyone laughed, especially Iason."

"It hurt when your beloved took pleasure in your embarrassment?"

"Yes, but I took pleasure when his father spanked him."

"Then you are equal. Your feelings have both been hurt and you are angry with each other. The last time something like this happened in this chamber your fathers were the two pages involved. They began a fist fight and did not talk to each other for several days. That was all about a Palace Girl's attention they both desired. Our father was rather harsh in his punishment but I am sure your father will be less so."

"Why should Arden be punished for what I did?"

"I can answer that," Karyakos said, "Because you both did what no lover should ever do, you laughed at each other. To laugh with is good, to laugh at is not."

"When Karyakos and I scrapped, just over there. My father was furious because we disrupted the dignity of the chamber and its proceedings. Prince Plato, was unable to dissuade him and he punished us by making us clean the stables, by ourselves, for three consecutive days. Needless to say by the end of those three days we were friends again. So I am going to take his example for having disrupted the decorum of this body and ask you two to clean the stables for the remainder of the day."

We went and we did not talk that much for a while either. I was crushed that he would pull a prank like that on me. I felt bad that he had been spanked and laughed at but not all that bad. Iason had no idea I would trip and cut my forehead. It took us a little while but soon we were making light of our work.

I later learned that the Palace Girl, our fathers squabbled over, had eyes for Sir. Pantaleon and he is today, so fond of his wife, that he spends as much time at sea as possible. Our mentors assured us we would have many more difficulties and squabbles over time. That we would

learn how to deal with each other as they had. After their stable cleaning experience they resolved never to go to bed angry, if it required talking through the night. It has at times required that, they told us. It was acceptable to play little tricks on each other, but like our deeply passionate love, that should be kept private. Since our room had so many staying there, we stayed in theirs and they went to ours. I am very sure all of our roommates appreciated that and I suspect none got much sleep. Iason and I got very little of that sleep, since we kept repeating our making up, over and over.

I may be the more beautiful of us but he is the better lover.

1312 the 12th month, 19th day

Today Kleitos was beside himself with joy, nine of our companions from Koalhurst arrived this afternoon. These were boys we had grown up with. Most older, none younger than me. Kleitos greeted them and saw to their needs, Iason and I were busy with page duties. Abrith had written us and made all the arrangements. Once we knew how many and who they were to be, Kleitos worked with the chief steward to make arrangements for them.

These boys and others would be known as Prince Arden's State Service Corps. The King and Consort had decided to reform the Kings' Representatives incorporating them and new blood into the State Service Corps. This would include the present 25 King's Representatives, some of the people in the castle and add another 50 more to their ranks. Eventually, probably under our reign, they told us, the postal service, now run by the army and the non military or civil ingegneres would be taken from the army and incorporated.

Prince Arden's State Service Corps would be made up of young men who had little or no interest in having families, at least until they were older. A new residence and school would be built in the city but as close to the castle as possible. It would be next to the new university. Graduates needed two years of education beyond their 10th year, one year of military service and one year of practical experience to receive the schools diploma. They would become the police, justices of the peace, recorders, tax collectors, ingegneres and managers of the state's properties. Iason and I would be expected to work out the details in the future.

For the present, until the school is completed, Arden's boys, as Father called them, would live and train with the Argonauts. The Argonaute House that was resident at the castle would help the army build the school. All available construction workers were now busy on existing projects. Most of the full time army was available, now that we were at peace, the part time soldiers had little work in their fields and could keep the peace in rural districts.

All expenses for these boys was being covered by the crown, they would only be paid one fourth of the lowest army rank while in school, full pay for the year of military service and one year practical experience. Full pay for the position after that.

In the spring we would make a tour of the kingdom to recruit another 25 or so students. Their symbol is my symbol, a gold laurel wreath with a hand above it and a lightning bolt added below. Kleitos and Alexandros the younger will have opportunity to be a part of this new group. I doubt they will desire it.

Iason and I wondered just how the Crown could afford this, since taxes had not been raised and we are not a rich place. No one would tell us. One knight did ask that very question at a council meeting. King Iason's answer was clear but gave no numbers. He told the council the treasury was sound. Production at the state's estates was higher than the normal and that increase was greater than the recent defense costs. The sale of the Florentine ships more than covered the cost of the repairs, our naval expenses and repairs, the cost of keeping and paying the captured army and so on. That surplus would be enough to cover the operation of both the Argoanuts and Arden's Boys for several years.

The reparations or donation to the university would see it through its first several years of operation which was still three years away. The cost of the university buildings was from his and Father's personal treasure. I didn't know he had one, neither did Iason. The civil works the army ingegneres were building, was already in the budget. The the Argoanuts should be self supporting in three or four years and Arden's Boys would generate increased efficiency in government operations and in production from the estates, which would finance that part of government in the future.

Another asked if all this construction was putting an undue burden on our manpower resources. Karyakos answered. Yes it has and will continue to do so for some years to come. That is why we must be innovative and creative in what we do. Archimedes and his ingegneres have developed new and more efficient machines to assist making each worker more productive. In addition, they are developing new methods and techniques that require fewer craftsmen. In the past several years they have improved the efficiency, therefore capacity, of our water power and wind mills half again.

Venice was so impressed with the performance of our war ships and the quality of our repairs on the Florentine vessels they have offered to purchase all of our existing vessels. We will build new ones and sell our old ones as quickly as possible. The new vessels will require only one quarter of sailors, be two or three times as fast and most twice the size of our current ships.

Mentor was correct, if we sit quietly and pay attention, we will learn much.

We met with our friends and new Arden's Boys at our evening meal, in the great dining room with the King, Prince Consort and many of the knights, scholars and senior administrators. Our evening meals tend to be light when we work in the castle and heavy when we work in the field. This was not an ordinary meal, it was the starting of the festival and not only rich with food and wine but filled with singing, music, entertainment by players and actors. The Castle would celebrate on the 19th and 20th so its residents could join the community on the semi official days that follow. (TN: I think Arden means they will "party" when he uses celebrate.)

Many of the palace ladies and girls also joined us. We had many chances to dance, something we as a people love to do, with ourselves and with the girls. Other festivities were taking place in the other halls, as well. Most of the festivities will be held in the town plaza, often with something in the castle as well. We also have large fires on the beaches and torch light parades. Before the Christians we had a four day celebration but since they want to celebrate Christ's birth on the 25, that has added a day.

I am told in other places only the 25th is celebrated now. The Eastern Church seems to save

their biggest event for Easter and Channica is 8 days long but much less public. The Eastern and Western Churchs celebrate Christmas, in the east about 12 days later then Parga, as the moon phase is taken into account. This is all very confusing for me. (TN: I think this has something to do with the difference in calanders. Parga's is adjusted annually as it is tied to the solastus. The pre Julian calendar was not accurate and by 1312 was already close to two weeks out.)

The older boys tell me the big festivals, especially this one, is the best time to meet and get together with the girls, without the constant interference of watchers. Iason and I are not all that interested in girls except for our sisters, we like them and like doing things with them. The little princes managed to escape their nurses and spend some time with us. They liked the Koalhurst boys immediately but after a while Uncle Iason made us take them back to Princess Elpis.

1312, the 12th month, 21th day

Yesterday was overwhelming and exciting. It was so powerful that I rose early the next morning to write this.

Immediately after our morning meal the Argoanuts assembled in the court yard and with all the princes in the lead, including Nikias, Joulous and Justus; we marched slowly out the gates, across the drawbridge toward the plaza. The bronze Ganymede was wrapped in a shroud and was being carried on a cart filled with straw and drawn by about 20 of the boys. Goro joined us. The South House was providing an honor guard that carried the standards of the Crown Prince, Prince Cosnout and the Argoanuts.

What we couldn't see from the front was about half the castle was following, including the King, Princess Elpis and the older sisters, the little princes were left inside. Other surprises waited at the plaza. Karyakos, Iason, Tertius and the boys marched with me. Right behind us were our guardians, they were flanked by some of the older South House boys. We were all behind the standard barriers. People were lining the street and filling the plaza already. I don't know who planed all this but it was obviously well done. A small group of Army Ingegneres were set up by the monument base for the final lift. When we got into the square the standard barriers moved to one side and we followed them. The front sections of each house peeled off and took up stations round the square, crowd control I figured.

I could see lots of children had gathered on our side of the plaza, it is the harbor side, a large open area. A group of young palace children moved in behind us mixing with the city children. I think every 10 and 11 year old from the palace was here and many of the palace girls in the 12 to 15 age group; they seemed to take control of the younger ones, boys and girls. The young princes were caught in a dilemma, they wanted to join their friends but they knew duty first. In truth I reminded them of it. I looked over toward the castle side of the plaza and saw King Iason and Princess Elpis greeting people I knew; they were Koalhurst people, Kleitos' parents among them. Then I saw my brother Abernath and his betrothed. She looked from here better than I had remembered her. I knew my parents must also be here and my sisters. I could also see Arden's Boys in their bright uniforms with them.

My attention was drawn to the statue which was being hoisted from the cart into position by the

device the ingegneres had erected; the work was being done by about 25 Argoanuts. That is when Prince Joulous tugged on my hand and announced he needed to pee. I turned to look and Damao extended his hand. Joulous, Justus and Nikias ran after him into the crowd of children. When I looked back at the King I could not see him but I could see my mother talking to Ikaros.

The statue was hoisted above the pedestal on a huge hemp rope and lowered onto its little pins. Goro was right in the middle of all this supervising. The boys came back and this time when I looked Princess Elpis was pointing at us and my mother was laughing along with Ikaros. About half of our navy was in port and many sailors were in the crowd along with most of the King's Guards, they seemed to spread out among the people as did the army. Just as the ingegneres were taking their hoisting trusses down a loud sound of Conch Shell horns came from the harbor area. It was Admiral Pantaleon's flag ship. Things slowed down, I assumed giving him and his crew some time to join us.

Eight Argonaute trumpeters appeared and standing in front of the monument's base sounded a Herald, followed by the first dozen notes of Odo's ode. Behind the statue all I could see was a sea of Argoanuts in their blue and red tunics with the gold laurel wreath and the Argo floating over it. The boys must have been told what to do for as soon as the trumpeters moved aside they took Iason's and my hands and started pulling us across the open ground to the statue. As we moved, so did the crowd.

Karyakos stood and raised his hands. Everyone quieted down. "The princes of Parga thank you for coming here today. We are the patrons of Crown Prince Iason's Argoanuts. The Argoanuts of Parga are not quite like the Argoanuts of legend. They are heroes, that is true and they hold allegiance to a young man named Iason, that is true also. It is their goal and purpose that is different. They seek adventure just as the originals but a different kind of adventure. They seek to serve the people of Parga and it is that service that marks their passage from boys to citizens. This memorial is the first of many gifts. It was invented, designed and created by boys, these boys. It is dedicated to the spirit of all boys. Even the music and poetry you will be treated to, in a few moments, was written by them, the fine art you will enjoy from now on created by them. I give you the Ganymede of Parga. The three little ones pulled on a small rope and the shroud fell away revealing the gleaming bronze. The figure positively glowed in the strong sunlight of the late morning, causing a loud gasp from the assembled throng.

Everyone cheered as we moved down to the ground level, to not block the view. Behind the figure the palace music master stood up and raised his arms. Suddenly the entire throng of Argoanuts began to sing the ode. It was thundering and magical. Not mystical as before, just thrilling. We joined in even the three little ones. As soon as the song was finished our guardians lead us over to the our family.

My sisters were much more interested in the three boys and Iason's young sisters than us. They did comment, as did everyone, how good I looked standing in bronze. The Argoanuts continued to sing our other songs which helped keep the crowd of well wishers under some kind of control, as many stood to listen. We were immediately mobbed by hundreds of boys, mostly apprentices and helpers in everything from glass blowing to cobbler. I saw several that were injured and few looked sick. Volos made sure the Argoanuts took them to the physicians. After a while Uncle Iason and Father asked us to take our mothers and the boys back to the

castle. That was good since I wanted to talk to my brother and sisters as well as my parents.

I knew my mother would get on well with Princess Elpis and they did seem to. On the way to the castle we were joined by the other Koalhurst people and my new cadets. Ikaros, Alexandros, Dysme, Adonis and Kleitos joined us in the castle garden to help with all the visitors. I could see right off, my younger sister, while having a crush on Iason was completely overpowered by Ikaros. She was in love, I could tell. When I whispered to her that under his kilt was even more than she imagined, she turned absolutely the brightest red one could. Only a brother or sister could make such a comment and not cause the other anger.

Kleitos' father seemed to have a much changed view of his youngest son. I noticed that and I also noticed how Abrith winked at me when he noticed, I noticed. My oldest sister Flavia, whispered that she needed me to intercede with father on her and Perum's behalf. Apparently several others had already approached him to arrange a marriage. I guessed Perum tested the waters before asking his father to make the arrangements. Why this has not happened I was not sure. Why she did not ask Abernath I have no idea either. In this culture, like many others, I am told, the oldest brother is almost as important as the father. If anything happens to the father the oldest son becomes the automatic head of the household.

I also noticed my future sister in law was just a bit cold toward me. I was not sure why until later that day. I realized she was jealous of me. Well not me so much as jealous that my brother did not enjoy all the perks of being a prince and that none of those perks would flow to her or her children. I asked Ikaros to explain the world to her, specifically that if Abernath was in my place she would not be betrothed to him since the Crown Prince Consort is betrothed to the Crown Prince and can not by law and custom have a family of his own. That does not mean he can not or does not have concubines, just that he can never marry them and his children, even if recognized, inherit nothing save any personal wealth he may leave them.

Later that night after having enjoyed much passion with my mentor I asked his advice. He was not overly forthcoming but did suggest that I must be careful to separate my office from my loyalty to my sister. "You must do what any brother who does not have royal power would, but no more and never less. Because you are a prince you have some influence and you can not turn that off and on, it is permissible to use that influence to correct a wrong or gain a fair solution. You should not use your authority or mine in any way that you would not for any other citizen seeking your assistance or advice."

1312, the 12th month, 25th day:

I had no idea the festivities in the city would last as long as they have or be as diverse. Iason and I are so tired and since he and Odo won't leave me alone I will put the pen down and continue this when time permits.

1312, the 12th month, 27th day:

Affairs of state, family matters, official duties and just being a brother/lover and friend have kept me from recording anything for several days now. Our lessons will begin again in the morning. Sometimes I just wish I was a normal boy. I wish I could just go and play, swim in the river and

just be me, Arden. Iason has never know any different, he doesn't seem to know what I am talking about. Oh, sure he is empathetic but he is always on stage anyway, so for him it is just normal. Our guardians understand, they remember being 12 and just playing and having fun.

Damao and Heron asked to adopt Odo but Father suggested they hold off on that until they are just a little older, perhaps 20 years. I think Odo was just a bit disappointed because he so desperately wanted a family. Father told him that he had a family and that all around him, loved him. When Damao and Heron were 20 years they could ask again and he would grant it.

Our touters told us in the old days boys lived in the gymnasiums and had an adult male lovers who mentored them. They were expected to have families when they were in their 20's and to mentor a boy then, as they were mentored. Parga is different.

On Krite all boys were expected to have a male lover and life partner and some would also have families but it was the women who chose them and inheritance was through the maternal line. This was largely due to the limited resources of the island. That was before the great devastation. After that it was a long time in recovery and became particule. The limitation on resources didn't change and once the population recovered only a select few could have families and boys were still encouraged to form male partnerships.

Today Parga faces that same problem it always did. We have about 75,000 people. The scholars believe we can grow enough food to feed a maximum of 85,000. This is using all the good farm and orchard land. The pastures can not support more animals then now and what forests we have are needed and must be replanted and kept as forests. At 75,000 we have enough food to feed everyone quite well and still have some to export, even in lean years. The exports are needed to exchange for things we do not have or do not create. If we did not need to feed beasts of burden or grow flax and hemp we could feed more people but we do. Two thirds of our people are needed for agriculture. That leaves one third for everything else. (TN: It appears Arden is including fishers in the two thirds)

They also told us that males represent over half of the population and that half of the females are able to bare children. As long as that group of women have four children each, that survive to sexual maturity, the population of the state will be stable. Since records show that the average is five children per female it is important to keep the number of women having children below about 18,000. To do that and because we have more males than females anyway, it is important to keep about 3000 men over 16 in situations where they will not be producing children or very few. (TN: this means that Parga must have a child and infant mortality rate considerably below the normal for other places at this time. A 50% mortality for children between one and 14 seams to be the norm in the literature. It is obviously less in Parga.)