

Arden

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20 A Deadly Adventure

1317, 10th month, 2nd day:

Today held a most exciting adventure for us. Although at the time we would have said else. Iason and I were passing through the city taking the long way from the university to the castle. We had desired to pay a visit to the Ganymede of Parga. We often do this, perhaps several times a week. All who live and work along the streets we take know us and greet us warmly as we pass. Due to the construction along this street, new sewer lines are being laid, most of the people were not about today. This is the oldest part of the city and the streets are very narrow and twisting. Pyrros and Heron were with us. We were a few doors short of a sharp turn in the street when a door opened and an old man, known to us only as grandfather, signaled we keep silent and enter his home. He pointed to the corner and made a slashing motion with his finger across his neck.

We entered and he told us there were six armed men waiting around the corner for us. He knew because a neighbor had signaled him when he was on his roof top. The old man had been in the army and when he saw Iason and I were unarmed he reached under his bed and presented each of us with a saber. We accepted, the pride and smile on his face said it all. Now armed, we were 4 to 6, more acceptable. Iason asked if we could get behind them by going over the roof tops. He smiled again and nodded pointing to his stairway. After a very short conversation where they all tried to get us to run away, Iason and I scrambled up the stairs and Pyrros and Heron went outside and began calling to us to hurry up. Hoping this would signal to the six that we were coming down the street and that they would still hold the element of surprise. We were moving fast over the roofs and came down about three houses below the sharp bend in the street. In the house we came down through, a young boy was tending his little sisters. We surprised him and signaled to keep silent. He hurried to move his sisters into the upper room. Swords drawn, Iason and I crept into the street and pressed ourselves against the walls, just behind them. Pyrros and Heron took the corner quiet wide, jumping over the little trench being dug for the sewer. This would mean a direct attack by them, or a direct attack on them, difficult.

If they divided, the odds were better, if they turned to run, all we needed to do was slow them until the others caught up. When Pyrros and Heron became visible, but on the other side of the trench, the six were momentarily stunned and stood motionless. Iason nodded to me and we stepped into the street. "Looking for us," He said. They turned all at once and the two closest advanced, a distance of about 15 feet. Heron and Pyrros were now on the advance and shouting and yelling as they came the 15 or so feet to the closest of the six. (TN: Remember these are Arden's feet not exactly imperial or US units but still quite close.)

I have never killed a man before, nor Iason. It was a terrible experience, one we both hope we never need to repeat. The two closest were engaged by our swords and with a few blows I had delivered a thrust to the middle of mine and Iason had cut off the arm of his attacker. Heron and Pyrros were on them from that side, stabbing one in the back and dispatching the other who stood his ground. The two in the middle made a half hearted attempt to attack but were soon subdued by superior swordsmanship and our two guardians pressing blades against their backs, demanding they yield or die. My heart was pounding and I felt like I had been running a fast but short race.

By this time everyone in the neighborhood was on their roofs and a cheer went up. I looked up and summoned a boy, who was looking down on us. I wrote a short note and sent him off to the castle. I wanted to puke but managed to hold myself together, Iason did not. The sight of the severed arm spilling blood was too much for him. I applied a trounce to the severed arm. I hoped that one would live at least long enough to face a proper execution. The old man came around the corner and we gave him back his blood coated sabers. Which he held high above his head proclaiming to all it was his sabers that saved our Princes. It did not take long for six Royal Guardsmen, three of the sheriff's

men, Volos and Damao to show up.

I was glad to see so many soldiers come as they would be needed to protect the two that surrendered. The wrath of our citizens and friends could be a powerful force. These were not highly skilled swordsmen although they were competent. Iason figured they had been watching us and expected we would be unarmed and that our two guards, even if superior fighters, could be overwhelmed by surprise and numbers. They had expected us to take the sharp corner in single file staying on the near side of the ditch.

I was not interested in that at all, what I wanted to know was who was behind this and why. I wanted to rid myself of the terrible feeling of having killed another man. I wanted to rid myself of the fear that something might have happened to Iason or our guardians. The exhilaration of the fight was still cooing through my body. This was not the time. I looked up just in time to see the boy I had sent to the castle, slip into his home. I had to thank him. Volos went to fetch him for me.

I knelt on one knee. The lad could not be more than 8 or 9 years. What is your name, I asked?

"Dios, Sire."

Dios, you did very well and quickly too. I am proud of you and wish to thank you for your most valuable service. He blushed and looked at the ground. Tell me Dios why are you not in school with the other boys? He looked at the ground. "I ... I stayed home to help my mother," He whispered.

I brushed his hair with my hand. "I am glad you were home today and helping your mother is a noble thing to do."

"I needed to help my mother, she is ill and needed me so I could not go." I told him I understood. I rose and still holding his hand asked Volos to see about the mother and the family situation. Still holding his hand I introduced him to everyone, telling them how well he had done as my messenger runner. He blushed greatly as every man praised him and patted his head or shoulder.

Volos returned to say his mother was quite ill and he thought she should be taken to the hospital. There were two smaller girl children. Her husband is at sea with our navy.

The sheriff's men would take care of the dead. The wounded and the other two taken to the castle by our guardsmen. I asked two of them to see that the mother was taken to the hospital and we would take the smaller children to the castle until the mother recovers. They in turn recruited several neighbors to assist in that, while the six of us plus Dios and his little sisters riding on Volos' and Heron's shoulders continued to the Ganymede of Parga monument.

Dios had seen it many times but he did not realize I had been the model, until I stood next to it. "Prince Arden is that you," he asked, pointing at the bronze? I told him it was. Iason told him how much I had complained about standing still while the sculpture worked. Dios smiled and pulled on my hand so I bent over. "Prince Arden will my mother get well?"

I told him I wasn't sure but I knew that the physicians at the hospital would do all they could. He was worried about his sisters but when I told him they would be cared for by the nurses at the castle he seemed a bit more at ease. For one so young he sure took his role as acting man of the house seriously.

Iason gave me that look again and I knew. "Dios how would you like to stay with the pages until your mother gets well?" He was absolutely elated with the idea and wound up walking between Iason and I, each of us holding one of his hands. This allowed him to skip and swing from our arms. He may take his perceived responsibility seriously but he is still a little boy, no doubt about that.

When we got to the gates the guards all came to attention and saluted Dios, who turned red again.

The child is easily embarrassed. Captain Consus came up and swept the lad onto his shoulders. Much to everyone's surprise. "Prince, as this little one came running from the city to our gates I thought for a moment it was you, many years younger. He has a talent for it just like yourself."

I responded he has a talent for delivering messages too. Iason thought we should make him an honorary page. Just then Odo came flying out of the castle into the court yard and into Heron's arms. He was worried about his new father. By now everyone in the castle had heard the news. Everyone wanted to pay honor to Dios in some way: the Argoanuts and Palace Boys, pages of course, even Janus wanted to make him an honorary courier.

I know he was confused by all this. All he did was what any boy would have done, deliver a message for his princes to the best of his ability. The fact that he was able to run at full speed from that twisting street all the way to the castle and back; something few adults in the kingdom could have done, was of no importance. That he took on all the responsibilities in his family that were asked and was more concerned about others than himself, completely escaped him. It is not that what he did was so extraordinary at all. It was that the opportunity presented itself and he seized the moment with as much ease as playing tag. That is what everyone was celebrating. We all need symbols and icons. Here was an almost ten year old boy, who did what many of us wished we would have the opportunity to do.

Perhaps it is fate or perhaps chance but whatever it is, his life is now changed forever. Now that he is under the influence of Iason and myself, it will never be the same.

It was later, before bed that I overheard Odo telling him, "I will be your big brother while you are here and for as long after as you want. Now that Prince Arden has touched your life it has changed forever. Those two princes are like a cyclone and you get sucked into it and you never want to get out. Now you go with Prince Nikias and share his bed tonight. I will ask the King to kiss you both good night."

"The King, are you sure?"

"Yes little brother, he will be most honored that you desire it."

1317, 10th month, 2nd day:

Iason and I were a little slow in getting to the morning meal. Ikaros did wake us but we began fooling around in our bed; once my lips had sealed around his penis not even the need for food could brake it, until my beloved had been satisfied. Being late, everyone else was eating and Iason and I had to stand behind Princess Elpis and wait to pay our respects. Nikias was busy telling her all about Dios, who was sitting between them looking very much embarrassed. He was saying that Iason had appointed him an Honorary Page and that made him his new brother and that since he ran like the wind I would keep him at the castle. He would live with the pages just like Odo did. The princess was nodding and listening to her son go on about Dios' exploits and that Odo had adopted him as his little brother and even written a song about the attack, as Dios had witnessed it and his run to the Castle.

We were eventually acknowledged and kissed her on the cheek. She was very kind and gently but did admonish us to be just a little more careful and try not to get into dangerous situations. That is what mothers do to their sons.

When Iason addressed her as mother Dios began to cry, big tears rolled down his round red cheeks. The Princess saw and began trying to comfort him. It was of little avail. Nikias said, in that kind of smug 12 year old boy voice, "Mother, he is worried about his mother."

She summoned a page and asked him to go to the hospital and bring news of Dios' mother. "I will send my personal physician to see her, Dios. We mothers are a strong lot, you will see."

As we prepared for our morning classes I could see Ikaros fussing. He was intent on dressing Dios in some appropriate way. Today we were armed as we went to our classes. Once inside the campus we gave our swords and daggers to Volos and Damao, students are not allowed to be armed in this secular temple.

Iason went to the prison to see the attacker he had wounded. The man was in some pain and quite incredulous when Iason asked after him. He simply could not understand why we would give him medical assistance and not just let him die. Iason tried to explain that he could neither dispatch an unarmed man or leave him to die. What his father might do he was not sure. Like us, he is not a barbarian for whom the lives of others have no value. In Parga we have laws which even the King must follow.

It was obvious from his accent that he was not of Parga but the neighboring state to the south. That state was under Napioe and some Venetian influence of late as the Florentines withdrew not long after our little war.

Dios was sent to school with the other palace children while the pages were in their classes. After our mid day meal I took him down to the running track, stopping to see Zephyros and the princes' ponies. Dios was thrilled by this. I was thrilled to see him run. He could not keep up with me and his little legs would not carry him as fast but I could see he had both speed and great stamina. He had a good natural form and stretched out his stride into a smooth even gate. Most of all he loved to run just as I do.

By the time Iason and I got to the council chamber all the pages and most of the knights had already arrived. Dios was sitting on Admiral Pantaleon's lap and describing how Iason and I dispatched the assassins, completely forgetting our two bodyguards. I was quite surprised that all the Knights were allowing such a young boy to dominate their place of business. Volos came up to me and whispered he and Heron would look after Dios and Admiral Pantaleon would take the younger sisters to stay with his family, who are all girls. I took it one or both of Dios' parents were related to Pantaleon's wife, himself or both as Dios was addressing him as uncle. We truly are a small state and one big family. Karyakos gave Iason his eye signal and before I could say anything Iason bid Dios be placed under the tutelage of the "three terrors", our term of endearment for our three little prince brothers. Admiral Pantaleon admonished them to only teach Dios well and not mischief, as he judged him already well schooled in that, kissed his forehead and placed him on the floor. Dios turned bright red and ran like a streak to his new friends.

The topic of debate or discussion was of course dominated by this latest assassination attempt or what ever it was. Little was yet known and the surviving attackers were reluctant to talk. Since we had never encountered any of them before it was puzzling to Iason and I, what their motivation was. Several of the knights judged money and not politics. They suggested it was politics that motivated their employer. Several foreign based conspiracy theories were passed around but none seemed satisfying to us. After some discussions I ask the simple question, who stands to gain by harming the Crown Prince and myself? The only logical answer would be our younger brothers who lack the means, guile and desire. If the harm is aimed not at us directly but at our Fathers, who is to gain? How will they do so?

King Iason sent the pages and scholars, scribes and even the guards away. He posted our eight personal guardians at the doors and in the upper halls to insure absolute secrecy.

Karyakos spoke to us, "Princes you will remain but you will be bound to keep our deliberations to yourselves. That means no entries in your journals about this until it is resolved, Arden."

Since he did not give me the option of leaving with the others I can not enter much else, except our intentions to ring as much truth from the survivors as they may possess and diligently follow up on every scrap of evidence uncovered. Our fathers and the council did not give us any specific jobs or tasks except to take extra care. Admiral Pantaleon told us Dios' father would be away for at least 20

days.

Iason and I are still puzzled as to why anyone would want to harm us. Perhaps we are callow as some of the knights pointed out. We are not so sure about that, we are sure that who ever they are has some very mistaken ideas about how Parga works. We decided to send the Argoanuts into every part of the land to sing Odo's songs of our adventure. The people must know the truth and not the rumors that will certainly be circulating.

One of our professors told us that people, even scholars, often believe things that are inherently untrue. He is not talking just about lies or false information spread for malicious reasons. He extended this to religious mythology and general cultural wisdom. (TN: I wanted to use urban myths here. A term Arden could not have known as the word myth in his time was not as we modern English speakers understand it.) He told us that a message or idea will stick, if and only if it has these attributes: simple, unexpected or not predicted, solid i.e. well constructed, believable, emotional and storytelling or narrative. Odo's song is such.

Official proclamations are circulated through out the land. Our citizens can all read, we do not use the old Spartan tradition of the runner but our military courier service. If the Argoanuts sing the songs of our exploits before rumors had a chance to spread, it will be our version that is accepted. (TN: This brings to mind the modern idea of controlling the message. Something obviously not at all new or modern.)

Dios was less than happy when all the pages went to the baths for hygiene and sex. Since he is so young we made him stay with Volos and Heron. We were 18 in all with Kleitos, Alexandros and several others. On my last visit to Apollo's Temple, I stayed as usual with Perum and Flavia. While there I learned how to burn the leaves of the special hemp plant they grow. This causes one to become light headed and spurs the desire for sexual pleasure greatly. All of us indulged in the incense and the pleasures it stimulates. Most of us more than once. Iason and I had pleasure with both sets of twins and several others as well. Kastor and Polydeukus have grown into young men of exceptional beauty and lustfulness. Their bodies are well muscled as athletes and their male endowments are like Father's, substantial and as pleasing to look at as to engage. The most desirable boy by far is Nikias, I think it due to his enthusiasm for all things in general and sex specifically. He seemed most popular among those 14 and 15. He is most skilled at riding on one while taking another in his mouth at the same time. I am sure the three terrors will see that Dios is properly educated, knowing them.

1317, 10th month, 4th day:

I had my first encounter with a woman last night. Her name is Euthalia and she is 14 years. I found her to be quite shy and modest at first. Ikaros had given both Iason and I full instructions on how to deal with women. Her face is pleasant to look upon, with smooth skin and large brown eyes. She has large breasts and a very narrow waist. Her hips are wider than a boys and now that I have been cradled in them, know why. Unlike many of the ladies her bottom is not too large but more ample than mine. She is about a head shorter than me. I found her fragrance pleasant and once we moved from talking to kissing I understood why men enjoy making babies.

She was much slower to start them myself but I have more experience than she. Ikaros had told us where the female's erogenous places are and how to judge the effectiveness of our efforts. I found she was as curious about my body as I was about hers. Not that my naked body is not well known from the different statues and paintings the artists keep on producing. We shared a plate of food and a cup of wine. Drakon had arranged the chamber with a large bed that was surrounded by curtains. Next to the bed were large pillows on the floor by a low table. We were forced to sit next to each other and close as well. I could feel the heat of her body and she mine. Ikaros had admonished us to go slow and easy, that women take longer to become aroused than men.

Euthalia entered the chamber a few minutes after I had seated myself. We already knew each other, being aquatinted on a social level. I rose and bid her sit, offering sweets and sweet red wine. We talked awkwardly at first not quite knowing what each other were interested in. As we both played the lyre I suggested we play and sing together which she readily agreed to. Soon I was singing Odo's new baled changing the words from Dios' observations to my actions. When finished she asked me how it was to kill another person. I lost all control and tears well up in my eyes as I described my feelings of revolution and horror. What I did not realize until then was how important this display of male weakness was. Euthalia was instantly upon me, pressing my face to her breasts and offering comforting words. Once in her arms she was soon in mine. It was only a short time before we lay naked on our bed exploring each other's physical charms. Now that we have shared our physical love I think I am beginning to understand this male-female business. Our touches and fragrance drove us onward. I now understood the words used to describe this union. It not like the animals, a duty of nature, a demand of the gods. She is ready, you must perform. No, it is much subtler than that.

Her skin was as soft as any boy but her kisses just a passionate. It did not take long for both of us to feel the fire. Once my ship had docked in her port I knew the difference. She was soft and slippery, she was tight but not like a boy and while she could clamp down and hold me in not with anything like a boy's power. That first night we explored each other but only in two positions. I could see right off that there would be as many positions with her as with a boy. Probably more since she has two holes to fill. I think her anus will just need hold for some later date as she will need much more preparation. Drakon told me this was her most fertile time so we must spend every other night together for at least the next two weeks. I look forward to it.

1317, 10th month, 7th day:

Captain Euthymios reported to the council today. He brought intelligence from our people in the land east of the mountain pass and news of the weather in the high mountains. Not only are the snows early again this year but much of the snow from the past three winters is still visible on the higher elevations. The pass itself is clear as has been since the beginning of the 7th month. Several small snow slides temporarily blocked the road between our border and our first defensive position. In the earliest part of the 8th month.

Traffic into Parga during the 9th month has been three times the usual amount. "I have a list of all that came and went over this period. We found the normal traders who have come and gone for years all doing business as they claimed. We found the other 2/3's not known to us, had set up in places close to road junctions or near the courier service stations, between the castle and the border. I have asked the Argoanuts from the Eastern and Northwestern Royal estates to divide themselves, sending work parties to each courier post and have been moving my men in small groups between different camps, so the traffic along these routs is almost continuous. They are under continuous surveillance.

On the 3rd day of this month about 50 Genoese cross bowmen, lead by Epirusian officers, came across the mountains over the snow fields. They killed two shepherds and confiscated their flock. Twenty two Koalhurst long bows and 20 mountain foot solders were dispatched. To date 37 of the invaders have been killed or captured with 2 dead and six wounded on our side. I expect the invaders to be wiped out by now. General Zokitos has dispatched a small party of mountain fighters to find out how they crossed and block that rout if at all possible." That is all I can write about this.

1317 10th month, 10th day:

Iason and I were abruptly wakened this morning by Dios. His naked body come flying into our bed and he burrowed under the blanket in between us. Close on his trail was a angry looking Heron. Iason asked Dios what he was afraid of. He was terrified that Uncle Heron would paddle his butt. I expressed my disbelief that Heron would harm him. Heron why is Dios hiding in our bed? Dios started to giggle. "Because I threatened to paddle his ass." Just why did you make that threat? "He

was in the Pages' chamber having sex with Prince Nikias. More appropriately, Prince Nikias was teaching him how to suck cock."

Iason reached down and pulled Dios up so his head was visible. "Is that true Dios?"

"Yes Iason, it is true but I asked him to teach me."

"Dios, did I not tell you that sex between pages and boys your age was not to happen and did I not say that also to the princes?"

"Yes, Uncle Heron."

"Do you think that your disobedience should go undisciplined?"

"No, sir."

"Then come out of hiding and take it like the man you are trying to become."

"Yes, sir." Dios said in a small sheepish voice. He slowly got out of bed and stood naked next of it. Heron swept him up in his arms and whacked his bottom several times but not very hard. Dios hung on his and kissed his cheek, "sorry."

Iason and I were up quickly and after pulling on some clothing stormed into the Pages' chamber to find Prince Nikias. We found him hiding under his father's bed. He, however, received more than a few light slaps on the buttocks from Iason and a stern talking to from me. I tried to explain that Dios was here under our protection as well as theirs and that we should not be teaching him things that could get him in trouble once he goes back to his home.

The Dioskourol are now 16 and should soon choose what professional training they desire to take. I will not be happy losing such valuable and skilled pages but it is time for them. Iason and I believe they should take up studies at the university with us. Twins in our society have a special place. Identical twins are even more special. These two are identical in every respect and it took us several months to learn how to distinguish one from the other consistently.

I also know Karyakos favors them above all other Palace Boys. He makes a very good job of not showing it. I would they become knights and serve as Iason's and my personal advisors. I know this would please Karyakos as they would always be close to him and Uncle Iason. Of all the older pages in our service, Iason and I have become the closest to them, they are frequent visitors to our bedchamber. Perhaps it is our proximity in age. Perhaps it is their close resemblance to Karyakos. Not in looks, which is strong, in temperament and intelligence. I suspect it is in their deep and abiding love for each other, which is as strong as Iason and myself. As with our four guardians we share a bond between members and between couples.

I have not been able to identify any specific special talent or interest in either of them. They are skilled at almost everything but masters of none. Both display good leadership qualities and others follow them as willing as for Iason and I. I will speak to my mentor about this.

Father and Uncle do not have any advisors as close but I am told by the old Stewards that our grandfathers did. Drakon also told me that the twins, our guardians, Ikaros and several others are all closely related through their mothers. All except for Ikaros prefer men to women. When I see how Ikaros enjoys receiving male sexual attention I am not sure of that either.

1317, 10th month, 11th day:

I spoke to Uncle Iason about the twins and their future. He was most attentive and kind, listening to

my concerns but offered no real advice except to inquire if Iason and I had spoken of this to them. Neither of us had as yet, not wishing to place the twins in an awkward or uncomfortable position. He told me they are bright boys and know full well their time as pages must soon end. "Take them to your bed Arden and after dispelling your passions, laying naked and together all four, brooch the subject without the trappings of office but as the deeply felt friends you have all become."

He went on to admonish us to take the young princes to our bed as often as we could muster. The personal loyalty of those boys will be critical in the years to come, the older twins should probably mentor the younger and I should mentor Nikias.

I broached the subject to Iason and our four body guards as we walked to the university. Iason was in complete agreement. We learned from our guardians they had been anticipating such an action on our part and were more than supportive. Offering to teach the military skills needed for them to qualify as knights as they had taught us. Volos suggested that Iason take Dios as his boy lover and mentor him as we had Odo and our little brothers if he is to remain with us.

I often thought we were just a bit young to mentor other boys. In the gymnasiums of old the boy was mentored by an adult. This is not Athens or Sparta of old and boys brought into our immediate circle of influence are assisted by many to manhood. Volos and Heron will do most of the mentoring but when it comes to boy love and sex it is best left of other boys. This 12 business is all well and good but for some boys like Odo it just makes no real sense. I guess Dios is in that class, according to Volos anyway.

After the Council meeting we asked Kastor and Polydeukus to join us for some afternoon refreshments. Ikaros always quick to grasp what is happening, brought us a large pot of tea and some sweets and retreated to the outer room, to guard the door.

I came right to the point and asked them if they would consider signing on to our personal service as advisors and confidants. The job pays well, comes with many benefits, power, sex, knighthood, education, sex, travel, responsibilities, more sex, adventure, titles and more sex. Iason added they could have families and even apartments of their own.

The smiles on their faces told me all I needed to know. Kastor looked at Polydeukus and they hesitated for a moment and in perfect unison said, "Yes". Then alternating phrases: as our, first official, bit of advice, we recommend, sealing this venture, with a good romp, on the bed." We did just that.

Polydeukus took my hand and Iason Kastor's, we moved to the bed and began helping each other out of our tunics and kilts. Poly kissed me deeply and pushing me on the bed said, "like our first time Arden, as young boys". He rolled on his back and raised his legs to my shoulders. Ikaros keeps little pots of oil placed around. I dipped my fingers into it and after teasing his anus for a few seconds slipped my stiff penis into his sheath. I leaned forward until my body lay mostly on him and we could kiss before I began thrusting. For one so experienced he is almost as tight and firm in the ass as he was four years ago. Before we were spent we had maneuvered into every position either of us could think of: side by side, him on his knees, my on my back, him on his back, standing, bent over a table, bed and chair.... I am not sure yet which is more appealing a boy or a girl on hands and knees presenting a naked ass to my stiff penis. One thing is for sure my hole misses very much being filled and females are just not able to do that.

Odo is the only boy I know that can suck his own penis. He is quite small in stature and his penis is quite long in length. That makes it possible. Most of the rest of us are much taller in the body as well as the legs and despite having a penis of equal or longer length we can not bend quite that far.