

Arden

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## 22: Foreign Adventures

1317, 10th month, 25th day:

Three days of nothing worth mentioning. I think this must be the first time that has happened. We have sent a number of our fishers both north and south, to look for signs of invasion preparations. It will be a few days before they return with reports.

1317, 10th month, 26th day:

Hermogenes came to see Dios and I, training on the running track, this afternoon. A couple of the Argoanuts and one of the new pages are capable

of giving me some real competition in the shorter distances. For the longer distances I still depend on Nikias riding his pony at a measured gate, since I have found no one who can run as long or as hard as I, over them. The older I get the better I can run. Dios is making good progress too. He is now running with boys two and three years older than himself. I think he will challenge me one day. His father was much impressed.

After our bath, which Hermogenes shared, I invited him to refreshments in our apartments. Dios went immediately to join the younger pages while we enjoyed some wine and dyed fruit. Volos, Heron and the others also joined us. The conversation revolved around Dios and what was to happen to him while Hermogenes was at sea. Hermogenes wanted to send him to his parents farm in the southwest, near our

estate. That would make it more difficult, as he could only travel there when his leave was of sufficient length. Volos suggested it was in Dios' and his best interest to let him stay with himself and Heron, until he is 12 and can become a full page. Iason pointed out that Dios was much favored by our younger brothers, that he had captured all of our hearts, specifically his mother and sisters. Polydeukus suggested the knowledge that Dios and his sisters were being well cared for would ease his soul when at sea. Iason almost in tears, something I had only rarely seen before, told Hermogenes he loved the boy greatly and desired to be his mentor and that he was prepared to court him for that affection, as was done in the gymnasiums of old.

Hermogenes seemed greatly moved by all this and agreed, suggesting no

courting would be necessary as his son, “already thinks you are all fabled heroes if not gods. You may be forced to hold him back on all but the running track.” For the next few weeks he would be in port readying his first command. He is being given our newest ship, designed to patrol local waters. This ship will carry my name, Prince Arden. I made him promise to take me on the maiden voyage.

Everything has been just a little too quiet for my taste. I find that whenever everything seems to be sailing along with no difficulties or problems, it is a sign the fates have something difficult hiding just behind the next cloud. That does not mean I don't enjoy these periods, I do more than I can express in words.

1317, 10th month, 29th day:

Thomas' reply arrived today. He did not say much except express his regrets and to assure us none of this was his doing. He asked what we thought would be a fair amount. As to the prisoners, since they were not his men, we could do what we wanted. Unofficial word from his court said that our suppositions about the Eastern Empire being behind this and helping some dissatisfied courtiers to cause difficulties, was correct. All agreed we had not seen the last of this business and we must keep our vigilance sharp. After making a close inspection along our neighbor's coast line the council decided to let the fishers back to their homes.

Snows are beginning to build up in the high mountains and even the border pass area.

1317, 11th month, 5th day:

The Prince Arden is getting ready to sail. Odo has composed a new song about it and King Iason is to launch it in the morning. Dios has been spending every afternoon with Hermogenes on the Prince Arden, helping. I am not sure how much help a 10 year old boy is. I suspect his father is just happy to be spending time with him.

I must say the design is different. It is quite long and I think narrow, with a very large center fin; the lower half of the fin can be raised so it can operate in very shallow waters for a ship this size. Like all ships built here, since the Florentine attempted invasion, it has no oars but relies strictly on sails. It has three masts, although one is short the other

two are very tall. They have large, triangular, main sails on the lower portion and large, square, sails on the top. It has four cannons, two at each end. They are mounted on posts and can be swung around and reloaded in relatively short time. It has four small boats that can be raised and lowered quickly. In addition the large triangular sails, it has smaller twins. They can be changed by several men pulling on ropes. The tiller has been replaced by one that is mostly below water and is moved by ropes, worked from a screw like machine, moved by a wheel, fixed to a post. Should it be needed, a tiller arm can also be connected. The helmsman (TN: Arden used the term wheel man, but helmsman is what he means) can see his compass and can keep the bow on a compass bearing by slight adjustments of the wheel.

1317, 11th month, 10th day:

On the 7th day I took a long run in the country, training for the up coming Winter Soloists games. Volos, Kleitos and Pyrros accompanied me on horse back. My purpose was to run 20 stadion in the count of 360. Archimedes had built a measuring device called an Odometer which counts the turns of a wheel of known diameter, therefore circumference. We had marked a number of 20 stadion intervals along the road south. Kleitos rode with us, bring Zephyros along for me to ride back, along with my tunic and riding britches. Just as I was finishing my 6th, 20 stadion segment, Pyrros noticed something and road ahead. The others rode up to it and I trotted along. When I arrived, I could see that he had found a fisher well inland. The young man was



in need of water and rest. He was insistent that he continue to the city, that he must speak to the king. I am Prince Arden, we will take you to the city but pray tell what the urgency is. I stood naked before him while Pyrros shared his water flask. He hesitated, probably not quite believing a prince would be standing on the road naked before him. I didn't think he was from Parga anyway.

“Prince Arden is that but also a fine athlete,” Kleitos added.

The people of Sarakiniko have all been taken hostage in Karavostasi. You must come and free them.

“How do you know this?”

“Prince, I was in Karavostasi when they arrived, the entire village. They all came to Karavostasi for the wedding of my

cousin. When they arrived the army commander arrested everyone, saying they would make fine hostages. I am very much concerned for them as these soldiers are not gentle people.”

I looked him over and could see the concern on his face was real but something more than just concern. “Are these your relatives, perhaps?”

“No not yet, not until the wedding, I must admit to a strong fondness for a certain young lady, who is the daughter of the village chief and I fear for her safety.”

“And having been involved in his and her recovery to Parga will not hurt your cause, I’ll bet.” He blushed a bit, in fact he must have blushed quite a bit to be noticeable over his already flushed appearance.

“I think you must be one of the bravest young men in Karavostasi. I am sure few others would take the chance of going for help and angering the local military.”

I asked Pyrros and Kleitos to ride on and investigate while we made our way to the castle. Volos and I placed Polykarpos on Zephyros and I ran along side back to the city. I learned that Polykarpos had run away, as soon as he realized what was happening. He took his small fishing boat south, hiding it along the shore and came up the cliffs at night. I wondered why he had not been seen by the lookouts or why he did not stop at their post and tell them. He was afraid they would not believe him and would delay sending for help. It was also obvious he did not know they could have signaled for help. I didn't tell him this.

Now that he had committed to trying to free the citizens of Sarakiniko he would not be able to return home for some time. I thought this adventure a good test of his metal, for it looks like we just acquired a new citizen. As we approached the docks Dios came flying up the path waving his arms. “He will want to run with me, Volos would you go and tell Hermogenes what we are about, he should come to the castle and dine with us.” Volos rode off as Dios came to a halt. “May I run with you Arden?”

“Of course. This is my new friend Polykarpos. This is Dios the best little runner in the Kingdom.” Polykarpos leaned over and took Dios’ up starched hand.

“Should you not dress Prince.” Polykarpos asked while Dios was pulling

his tunic and kilt off.

“No, everyone knows what I look like naked,” I said pointing to my bronze likeness. “Nothing they haven’t seen a thousand times.”

Polykarpos took Dios’ clothing, we ran ahead not stopping until we reached the gate.

Polykarpos was quite surprised that a prince would groom his own mount. In the stable, I made Dios put his clothing back on, allowing him to sit on Zephyros until I was almost finished. I sent him to Ikaros, requesting clean clothing for Polykarpos be brought to the Argoanut's bath.

While we relaxed in our rooms Polykarpos was subjected to a constant attention of all our companions. Iason

was most concerned that no harm should come to the hostages. He and I both realized the hostages would likely be exchanged for our prisoners. That gave me an idea. I sent Nikias to look for Prince Tertius. Once the pages the others had cleared the room I asked Kastor to summon our guardians. Pyrros and Kleitos had returned. All this was puzzling to Polykarpos but he was perhaps too shy to inquire. Once assembled I looked at Iason and he at me. "Brother you have that look again," Iason said. I smiled and so do we all where adventure is concerned. "Should we not inform the King," Heron asked?

Yes but after, not before. I looked around, it is much easier to obtain forgiveness than permission. All agreed by nodding, even Polykarpos. Since they are presently engaged in affairs of state or who knows what else and are

not here, I guess it the senior princes of this place who must take action. Just then I realized the junior princes were listening at our door. I pointed to it and nodded to Volos who moved with Damao to suddenly pull it open. In tumbled three princes, one junior page and one chamber steward.

Ikaros I think you should take those four and fetch Captain Hermogenes. Nikias, I thought you were fetching Prince Tertius?

“He said he would be along presently, my prince.” The little scamp bowed and made some arm waving gestures. They all ran out giggling with Ikaros trying to keep up. Damao commented mostly for Polykarpos’ benefit, “he is our equal on the fencing court but still runs like a girl.” He then asked the two young guards in our outer entry room to keep a couple of

pages at the ready but to admit no one except Prince Tertius and Captain Hermogenes.

Once everyone assembled Polykarpos retold his story and we all asked a thousand questions, like how many people there were, how many soldiers, where they were being kept and so on. Tertius said he could not use any of his soldiers to support our adventure and his brothers would forbid our participation, in what looked to him as an excellent plan. Iason suggested 25 senior Argoanauts plus ourselves. The fisher families could travel in their own boats, the same way they got their. Hermogenes pointed out the Prince Arden is not yet commissioned, it was still undergoing trials. He could ask some of his crew to volunteer for an unofficial night trial. It was set then, we would sail at sunset.



Polykarpos asked again should you not inform the King? “I answered no, it is better left to after, besides are not 5 princes equal to one King?” To this I heard a might laugh from our balcony. One I recognized as belonging to Uncle Iason and Father. I almost fainted as they came through the archway. “Are you not intending to introduce us to Polykarpos?” Iason did so. “I am sorry to interrupt your little adventure planning but could not let a mighty error stand. Five princes are not equal to this king. Any one of them is my equal, some my better, that you should never forget.” He bowed and Karyakos bowed and they departed the way they came.

Tertius hesitated until he was sure they were gone. “Some day I will tell you about a few of their adventures, some not even Uncle Plato and my father

knew about. You know boys, some of us may be hurt or even killed should the plan go off. An adventure with no risk is not a true adventure now is it; and a life with no adventure is not truly worth living.”

We were temporarily out of favor with the pages, our brothers most specifically, as they felt slighted by not being included. Dios was devastated but Hermogenes came through by outright forbidding Dios to leave the castle or Princess Elpis’ company.

Iason recruited 25 older Argoanuts by simply asking. We all assembled in battle dress and sailed out with the setting sun. Polykarpos who, had no training in military arts, was unarmed. Our plan was simple, we would come to shore in small boats and swim the last stadion. Overpower the guards and with

Polykarpos showing the way, take control of the garrison, load everyone in fishing boats and sail to Parga for a wedding in the place court yard. We would leave the soldiers tied up in their barracks. The local citizens would be asked, Polykarpos assured us they would cooperate, not to release them until morning.

The plan worked well. We came about 1 dolichos (1112 m) from shore and set the little boats in the water with 8 of us and 4 sailors to row in each. Iason, Volos, Pyrros, Heron, Damao, Kastor and Polydeukus, striped and with only a danger in our teeth and a small water tight sack around our necks, swam to shore and came up on the 4 guards. I placed a danger against the back of one saying, "cry out and you die." I took my hand away from his mouth and bid him kneel. While he did this Polydeukus

bound his hands and feet with wet leather strips. The others were subdued in a like fashion. Taking a strip a cloth from his tunic he placed a gag over his mouth.

In my little sack I had a special night signaling device. It is a spirit lamp. That can be lit with flint and iron. The light is completely enclosed until a little door is opened and can only be seen from that direction. I signaled the boats and they came to shore. The sailors would look after the four, bound and gagged guards. We dressed again and 32 of us crept into town. With swords drawn we burst into the barracks and set upon the sleeping solders. Sever managed to get weapons and stand to fight but the Argoanuts were better swordsmen and they were quickly overpowered without any loss of life. The only unaccounted for solder was their commander, a

lieutenant. Polykarpos woke up several people in the town and found his location. We found him sleeping with a recent widow. He did put up a bit of a fight. He and Volos traded thrusts and parries for several minutes before Volos drew blood and he yielded. A wise move since we were six more in the waiting. We bound his hands, treated his wound and took him with us.

The kidnapped or held wedding guests were quickly freed. After talking to them we determined they had not been too badly mistreated. I found the mayor's daughter to be as described and most beautiful. I understood Polykarpos' concern and his passion.

Once we had subdued the soldiers Iason signaled to the Prince Arden. By the time we got the wedding party to the dock and loaded on the Prince Arden

the little boats had been returned to their hangers and the wedding party guests took to their fishing boats. The party turned out to be nine families in total. Polykarpos came with us after bidding his parents and friends good by. His boat was in hiding and he was needed at the wedding anyway. A number of the ladies and children also came with us. As we sailed past the first lookout post. Hermogenes signaled a message for Ikaros to prepare housing for 9 families.

The sun was high in the sky when our little fleet sailed into the harbor. Ikaros was at dockside with a contingent of Argoanuts to assist in getting all the families settled in. He had planned the wedding in the Argoanuts dining hall on the next day. We put the unhappy lieutenant in the dungeon with the others.

Later that afternoon, Kastor, Volos and I visited the lieutenant. He was in a bit better mood now that he had been given some food and allowed to sleep a bit. His wound was not serious and the physicians had closed it with thread made of animal gut, that had been treated with spirits.

He confirmed that he had ceased the wedding party as hostages to be exchanged for his now fellow prisoners. Telling us he had received orders to do so from his commander in another town. I asked him to write to his commander, giving a full account of all that had happened. He did not know how we found out but obviously we did. Nor did he know how valiantly or not his men at resisted us. I let him save face by suggesting his men had been surprised and overpowered by a superior force in numbers, which was true. The fact that

most of us were 18 or less was omitted. He also stated several times we bound him and took him unwillingly to Parga for treatment of his wound.

Taking hostages as a means of foreign and sometimes internal relations is common in the world. Many powers do this if they can. The North Africans and other followers of Islam seem prone to it but the French and Italians have done so in the past. The Eastern Empire has often done so too. So why not us? It is not our way and Uncle Iason would be greatly distressed had we done so.

We sent the message out on the first merchant heading in that direction. Kastor thought we would hear from them before they got this message. King Iason and Father were not interested in hearing anything about our adventure, except that none were hurt



and that we had a new guest temporally staying in the dungeon.

The wedding and party was held and I am told a great success. From the smile on Polykarpos' face his heroic efforts were not to go unrewarded. I found out later that the young princes all managed to sneak into the wedding party and were more than well received. The Argoanuts and several sailors were invited as was Captain Hermogenes and Dios. We had been invited too, but declined having other official duties to attend.

Iason and I spent the evening with our ladies. Euthalia tells me she is with child and we are both very happy about it. Iason has not mentioned any success on his part yet. Kastor and Polydeukus would very much like female friends. I hope we can find a nice set of twins for

them, perhaps Tertius will help to locate them. Hermogenes was kind enough to open his home to the newlyweds for the duration of their stay here. He and Dios are staying with Volos and Pyrros. When I told her about our adventure she was quite upset that harm could have come to me. She did not think us princes should be placing ourselves in danger. I tried to explain that leadership means that, leading, not just directing.

Today, as Kastor had predicted, an Epirusian ship docked with an Envoy on board. This man seemed a bit smarter than the Florentine Envoy had been. At least he had some idea of what we are about.

I could see this was going to be another bit of theatrical pleasure for Iason and me too. Now I know why they did not want to know anything about our

adventure. After the usual introductions the Envoy presented his Count's demands. In essence the exchange of hostages. King Iason looked at Prince Karyakos. "Envoy, neither of us have any idea what you are talking about. We hold no hostages and to our knowledge none of our citizens are being held hostage in any other land. Perhaps you can enlighten us?"

"Sire is it not true that you are holding a Epirusian officer and 26 of his men along with several others?"

"It is true that we hold this officer, his men, a number of spies and three would be assassins. They are not hostages, they are prisoners of war, spies and criminals. We are not in the habit of exchanging criminals or prisoners of war for hostages, which would be Citizens of Parga, that have been kidnapped or

illegally detained by you or someone else. Should such people exist we simply demand you free them.”

“But sire Epirus and Despot Thomas 1st have not declared war on Parga. How can you hold prisoners of war?”

“So they are not prisoners of war, they are murders and thieves, having killed two shepherds, stolen their flock and killed several of my solders that attempted to apprehend them. The fact that they are Genoese mercenaries, crossbow men who claim to be employed by Epirus and lead by an Epirusian officer can be set aside then? They need not be treated as prisoners of war but can be hung as common criminals.”

“No they are not criminals, they were obviously sent to Parga on some military

mission. Since Parga is part of the Despot of Epirus, I suggest you have acted in a criminal way.”

“And since when has Parga been a part of any state except its own?”

“Why since the Emperor created the Despot?”

“Scholar, what say you to this, history or mythology, fact or fiction?” (TN: Arden used fiction story. I have used mythology.)

“Mythology Sire. Anyone can claim anything they wish but that does not make it so. Pargains have been a free people since the beginning of recorded time.”

“You have it Envoy, either these men were acting on behalf of Thomas 1st or

one of his vassals, perhaps someone else, or they are common criminals. How would you have it?”

“It is not I Sire. I am just a messenger, it is Thomas 1st.”

“I see, well now let me see documentation signed by Thomas 1 stating what you have just said.”

“I, I do not have such Sire. I have only the message given by his nephew.” He produced the document that demanded the exchange of hostages.

“I think this is more fiction and mythology than fact,” Karyakos said. “Who are these hostages anyway and how many of them are there?”

He produced a list of men, women, and children numbering 18 in all. One, the

mayor of Sarakiniko, our village.  
Karyakos read the list and scratched his chin. “Page would you read this list aloud, I believe some of these citizens are here in the gallery.”

The page read and from the gallery about 10 people called Aye. Karyakos called to the mayor. “Mayor, can you account for all the names on this list, as not all are present with you?”

“Yes Prince, all are here in the city, many are children and the newly weds are being newly weds.”

“Does that mean your village is empty?”

“Yes prince it does, the entire village was here in this castle, attending a wedding just yesterday. None have left the city.”

“Well Envoy it would appear you have no hostages to trade, no matter what we call the men in our dungeon.”

“But how can that be Sire? This list is signed by lieutenant Eutukos and I know him to be trustworthy.”

“I do not know Envoy but I know the Mayor of Sarakiniko and he is in this gallery, he too is trustworthy.”

“Perhaps our sons know something of this business that they have not shared with us?”

“Prince Iason, Prince Arden do you or your companions have any knowledge of this lieutenant or this hostage business?”

“Yes Sire, we do,” Iason said.



I added, the lieutenant is a guest in your dungeon, he has a cell next to his fellow officer, next to the cell with the three assassins. Iason and I visited him just yesterday and have seen to it that he has had an opportunity to write a letter to his commander; explaining his absence from Karavostasi and the liberation of his unwilling guests.

“Page,” he pointed to Justus go to the dungeon and tell the captain of the guard to have lieutenant Eutukos brought here as quickly as possible.”

“Do you have more to add Iason.”

“Yes Father, I do. We, the senior princes, not including Prince Karyakos, learned that the entire village of Sarakiniko had gone to Karavostasi for a wedding celebration and were being held hostage, as the Envoy claimed.

Kidnapping in Parga is a crime and one we take very seriously, something you have taught us. We princes acting completely on our own, set out to Karavostasi, freed the kidnapped and returned here with the entire wedding party, including 4 families resident in Karavostasi. The wedding was a fine event and the families will be returning to Karavostasi in the next few days. As to the lieutenant we brought him with us as he was wounded and we desired him to see our physicians.”

“Don’t you think that was a rather childish thing to do?” I answered, no more so than kidnapping wedding attendees to be held hostage in the hope of exchanging them for criminals and questionable prisoners of war, Uncle Iason.”

“And you did this on you own, without

the use of our military?”

“Yes Sire, no active duty officers or men, equipment or ships were used, except our personal bodyguards did accompany us, as that is their job. We were accompanied by 25 Argoanuts who volunteered and a few off duty sailors to operate the Prince Arden, not yet commissioned, on a nighttime trial run.”

“My brother’s role in this affair?”

“Advice and council, Sire.”

“What say you Envoy?”

“I have nothing to say Sire....” Just then lieutenant Eutukos came into the room accompanied by the captain of the guard.

Karyakos greeted him, introducing everyone including the Envoy who it appeared he already knew. He outlined all that had been said so far. “PLEASE lieutenant give us your account of these events.”

“I received orders from my commanding officer to take opportunity of the wedding in Karavostasi and hold the Pargian citizens hostage. Which I did when they arrived. I forwarded a message to the commander listing all those being held as was my order. I made my rounds of the town and went to bed, leaving the usual watch in place. The next thing I knew six or seven men entered my sleeping place, demanding I yield. I did not do so immediately and engaged the nearest one call Volos, who it turned out was a most accomplished fighter. I received this wound to my left arm and yielded.

Prince Arden immediately placed a bandage on my wound and I was taken to their ship and then to this place. These boys, better I think called young men, had overpowered my garrison, binding them and instructing the local people to release them in the morning. Non were harmed save me and my wound is not serious.

The physicians attended me soon after our arrival and I was given food. The food given prisoners and guests here Envoy is superior to that of my garrison. Yesterday, Prince Iason and several others visited me. I wrote a full account of these events to my commander which the Prince had delivered to a merchant ship departing for Epirus. I am free to go to Karavostasi and will travel with the families when they depart.

“You are not a hostage then,” the Envoy

asked?

“No, I know nothing of hostages. The door to my cell is not locked; the physicians asked me to rest easy and protect my wound for several days, to help healing.”

“What of the so called assassins and the Epirusian officer, said to be held?”

“They are all well but unhappy that they sit in a dungeon while no effort is being made to bring them home.”

“And these so called assassins are they Epirusians?”

“Yes and they are more than so called, having admitted to me that was their purpose. Three were killed and one lost a part of his arm to Prince Iason’s sword. They told me they had been

sent by Count Orsini as did the commander of the Genoese Cross Bows, another officer you also know personally, Envoy.”

“We have not touched on the attempted invasion or attempted interdiction of our navel vessel,” Karyakos interjected.

“Now Envoy this it a letter sent to Thomas 1 and this is his reply. As you can see both letters are signed and sealed, one by him and one by me. Thomas 1 disavows any knowledge of these events and suggests we do what we will with the prisoners.” The Envoy and lieutenant read the letters.

“Do you doubt the authenticity of the response or the voracity of the text, Envoy,” King Iason asked?

“No Sire, if the Despot has written this,

which he appears to have done, I am in not position to challenge it's content.”