

Arden

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24: Adventure is Good

1317, 11th month, 17th day

All of the older pages have been helping Dios catch up in sexual sophistication. He is just delighted to be receiving all this attention, since it is so pleasurable. None of the under 13 boys are as advanced as Iason and I were at that age. They can not yet ejaculate but that does not mean they are not up for sex.

Nikias has a penchant to undress and lay on my bed with his legs spread apart and his little stiff penis standing straight up. This is his invitation to me. I find all of his smooth body attractive but his butt is most so. I enjoy laying next to him with his head on my chest, letting my

hand drift over his smooth skin. He insists I to am naked and lay like him on my back with my legs spread. He just loves fondling my erection. Even more than this, he demands my penis fill his rectum until he climaxes and rests his head again on my chest to fall asleep. I can not get enough of his kisses, they are so sweet and gentle.

All of the older pages are mentored by Knights as well as our guardians. Since the knights are often away from the castle and the pages must stay here. Some of the older pages, boys over 16 that are receiving military training, still cary messages. They are standing by in the dining halls, offices and in the King's apartments when the younger ones are having classes. Some like Adonis go on to serve as squires or in their mentor's households. Some into the military, mostly the King's Guard or as junior

officers. Other move into the new Civil Service by becoming Arden's Boys.

The Page Core, as we now call it, has a long and strong reputation for exemplary service and for its deeply felt brotherhood. Some, mostly Palace Boys, serve only part of a year before returning to their professional track but all, no matter how short or long a time, find themselves dedicated to the service of the state. More appropriately to the representatives of the state, its princes.

The Pages dormitory is always open to them as a warm and comforting place of refuge and of course pleasure. I see from time to time many stopping for a few hours to a few days.

One knight visits about two times a month. He comes in unannounced and positions himself on one of the sex

benches taking all that would have him. The older boys are much delighted by this as his ass is prized above all, except the King's, by them.

The sex benches are a unique feature of the dorm. They are made of wood with soft leather padding. The structure is flat on top and wide enough for a man or boy to lay comfortable on, but not as wide as a man's body. They are high enough to allow a man or older boy to stand behind and engage the anus of his lover or in front and press his prize into his mouth. The layer can be on his stomach or on his back. The padded platform is long enough to accommodate a body from the neck to the hips. They have padded rests for the feet and hands. These benches can be used to receive massages as well as sex. I have seen as many as six giving pleasure to one. Sometimes the pages

play a game with one laying and several ministering to him. After he as been satisfied they change positions until all have had a turn. Ikaros claims these benched were responsible for his love of being fucked. He told us as a young page he would position himself and take on as many other pages as were around on frequent occasions. Something he still does when we older boys aren't paying enough attention to his needs.

I am not so sure if this experience is responsible for his longings or it it is something within himself. No doubt he receives much pleasure from it, we all do but he gives much pleasure as well. Giving pleasure to your friends and close associates has, in itself, rewards.

1317, 11th month, 18th day:

Nothing much of note happened today in the state but something of great importance to our wider family did take place. Kastor and I encountered Ikaros and Dysme on our balcony. Ikaros was beside himself crying and carrying on. Dysme seemed unable to console our friend. We were no more successful. Iason and Polydeukus joined us but Ikaros continued his incoherent raving, which is much unlike him. He often displays his feelings and at times can be quite emotional like the women are. Were he more servant and served then family, it would be unprofessional and not manly but we are family and trade greatly on our mutual love and respect. If one of us needs being emotional, angry, distort or what ever it is no different to us.

After some time it became apparent Ikaros' distress was self directed. We

still had no idea the cause and without that no idea of the cure. Dysme confided he feared for him doing harm to himself. Now if he had dishonored himself, disgraced his family, us in this instance, offended the gods of any faith, we would not stand in his way. We would not be happy about it but in our society that is his right of atonement. We knew Ikaros was not capable of doing any of these things. Kastor and Poly positioned themselves between Ikaros and the balcony railing. Finally Ouranos came out of our Fathers' apartment, onto the common balcony and demanded Ikaros take hold of himself and stop acting like an old woman.

Ikaros quieted down and Ouranos waved us away. "Come here Ikaros, sit on daddy's knee and tell me what is upsetting my little boy." Ikaros turned

bright red, no one, not even his father, had talked to him like that since he was a small child. I thought he would react badly but he didn't, he bowed his head and pressed his face against Ouranos' chest. Ouranos, the toughest of the tough, the hard as nails soldier, bodyguard, draped his arms around his son as gently as I have ever seen. He turned and with Ikaros walked along the balcony away from our ears and eyes. Dysme was quickly quizzed but we learned little, except Ikaros had approved his taking Kalkrates, Ikaros' oldest son as his lover. He told us Ikaros had been so happy for both of them as the lad desired to follow into the stewardship business. Dysme thought Kalkrates would be living with him in the next few days and Ikaros seemed so happy yesterday.

I noticed he had mentioned Solon

several times but could not understand the context. Dysme reminded us Solon was his other 12 year old son, from a different mother. He is a few months younger than Kalkrates. The two boys look quite a bit alike both more resemble Ouranos then Ikaros. Dysme added, “my children of that age are dead or girls.”

Poly asked about Solon’s whereabouts. Dysme answered he and Kalkrates were with the pages. Iason went into the pages’ dormitory. When he came back he had a sardonic smile on his face. We all began trying to get him to tell us what he either knew or suspected. To my beloved’s credit he would not. “We must consider Ikaros’ feeling and sensibilities. No matter what he is to say or what we may privately believe, our friend has done no wrong. We must make him believe that.”

Ouranos gently pushed Ikaros into the room and standing behind him, with his long arms around the diminutive man. Ikaros looked down at the floor, he was obviously embarrassed. “I am very sorry. I thought I had made a terrible mistake and sinned against the gods and my family.”

“Mistakes are always possible but sins against us? No mistake could be that bad,” Iason said.

“I did two things I thought would be unforgivable, one that stands in the face of what this family, my family, stands for. Ouranos, my father, insists I have done nothing wrong.”

“Ikaros believes he has unfairly favored one son over the other. I told him, what I have told all of you in the past, what

your fathers have all told to you. You must treat all your children fairly and evenly, you must give to them the support and guidance they need. Sometimes one will need greater than another. It does no good to give more than needed but harm to give less.” To this we all agreed.

“He believes he has sinned against us and the gods because he loves one son in more ways than another. Dysme has taken Kalkrates as his eromenos. Ikaros who loves this son as a father should have blessed this, as is our way. But for Solon he has declared his love of him to be both as his son and his eromenos.”

“That is incest and forbidden, I have sinned.”

“No Ikaros, you have not sinned. Incest

is forbidden between females and males of close blood relation. That has more to do with procreation and protection from abuse of power, than anything else. Sex between fathers and sons is frowned upon because it may not be freely given. That does not mean it is wrong for fathers to teach their sons and it can never be wrong for a father and son to fall in love. When Eros shoots his arrows we mortals must live with the results,” Iason said.

Poly added, “We take it you have consummated that love with Solon. That tells us he must truly be your eromenos since you have never consummated with any of us, though we share our bodies freely.”

“That is the kind of love Polydeukus and I share, Ikaros, it goes beyond and is in addition to. We both have mentor—

lovers and we both love and share with our brothers but between us is something special. You and Solon must have that something special. Honor it, revel in it, let us marvel at it and enjoy it with you,” Kastor said.

“But what of Kalkrates?”

“I am surprised at you friend, Kalkrates is a fine young man he loves you and his brother. I will meet his needs, he will not want for anything. You did your duty to him and he loves you for it. I can not say he will not lust for you or any of you; I promised him and I promise all of you, he will not want for my love and affection, as none of us ever wanted from our mentors.

Ikaros turned and kissed his father and whispered something that made the hard old soldier blush. He turned away

and disappeared onto the terrace. We all embraced our friend admonishing him not to take all this so seriously. Reminding him we were all together in this family we would never let him sin as he would never let us. Iason made some comment about “you know you have been struck by Eros’ arrow when just the thought of your lover’s smooth little butt caused your penis to attention and the just touching of his skin would make it erupt”. Ikaros was back with us as he kept saying just because he could not keep his member out of Solon’s ass didn’t mean he was ready to fuck any of us. The size of his smile told us all we needed to know.

I know Iason and I both find it necessary to sleep with our fathers every once in a while. Somehow it reinforces what we know to be true, that they do love us and respect us and desire us. That we

are glad they are our fathers and we are glad to be their sons.

This love business is still most puzzling to me. We seem to be able as men, to love our boys, our children, our partners, our siblings, our mentors, our brothers and our friends. We seem to have a capacity to just keep on loving and allowing ourselves to be loved. That does not mean sex is always involved. For some it is, for others not.

Not all love needs sex and in fact sex could diminish some. Sex is good, sex is great. Sex is pleasure, tool, machine. It is the objective and the object. Later as we spent quite time with our young lovers, I could see Ikaros and Solon locked in an embrace kissing and teasing each other. They were in love as are Nikias and I. It was good now that every one of us had a boy to love

and mentor. All of our boys had men to love and be mentored by.

1317, 11th month, 21st day:

Word came today that Lugo and Dario would be with us for the solutes celebrations. Dario included a number of sketches as a form of illustration in his narrative. He reported on the state of affairs in the glass industry, in the state and with Lugo. It would appear that Dario has been taking lessons from some of the masters in Venice as his sketching is markedly better with each letter. Archimedes has made several improvements in his printing press so now it is possible to produce what he calls engravings and text on the same page. Dario's letter would be a good test if this would be made public. Something that will not happen.

We received several other communications as well. Those from France, the German lands and Britain are all positive and worrisome at the same time. The winter is harsh but at least the crops were harvested and people are not starving. Political intrigues seem common in these courts as in Epirus. The Byzantines have softened their attitude toward us. It would seem they now choose to pretend we do not exist.

Of late, the Epirus navy has kept a good distance from ours. The Venetian ambassador to Epirus has also reminded them, Parga is a navel ally of Venice and Dubrovnik. It would be unwise to do anything that would weaken our contribution to stability on the water or to cause us to increase our strength.

Count Nikholas Orsini of Kephhalonia has finally responded to the message sent via his envoy. Karyakos found the letter not to his liking and made no hesitation to say so. Orsini made no apologies or take ownership of his actions, refused to pay reparations by any name or to make any arrangements to take away men, who he still refereed to as hostages. Karyakos' response was simple. He had the scribes copy the Count's letter and on the other side responded to it, calling the Count a coward and other unkind names. Since he would not accept responsibility for his people and arrange their transportation, Parga would, at his expense. The donation expected is simply doubled for our trouble. This would be printed by the new printing press on large sheets of paper. He would circulate it in Parga but also in Kephhalonia and along the

mainland coast. Our navy would cease the first Kephalonian vessel to pass and force them to carry the soldiers and spies home. It was so ordered and that would be that.

One of the knights wanted to know how the 2000 florins would be collected. Karyakos told him and all of us, he would tell them how it was done once the money was safely in our treasury. “In this you will just have to trust that I can and will collect.” I wanted to know the answer to that as well; since he would not tell his trusted council, in effect his source of authority, I guess he is not about to tell me either. He did say to us in private, that he did have a plan and that he needed to keep the details of it secret even from us. “You boys will need do the same in your time. There are a few secrets that are so important you must, in effect, take them to your

grave.” I do not know why he keeps calling us boys as we are now men? I guess it is force of habit, as has been so often said by our parents, we are always children even when old and gray.

The Prince Arden and three other ships will sail as soon as the printing is finished, he told us. I was quite surprised at his attitude, it was almost boyish in delight. The thought of using our new printing presses to completely embarrass the Count, not at his court but with his people, seemed to completely delight him. Later I thought about the assassins. No mention was made of them. I inquired of Thanatos about this. He told me the assassins would be tried, found guilty, pardoned, exiled and returned with the others. He told us they had come here under much duress, not for money as we first thought; their families were being held

hostage on Kephallonia. I felt somehow better about all this.

After speaking to Iason, Kastor and Poly we decided that the pardon should be granted at our request and if we were allowed, by us directly. Uncle Iason just smiled and nodded when I asked him. Then he kissed my forehead and held me to himself for a moment. “Arden, I am very pleased that the princes of this place have learned so much in so short a time. You four have grasped the concepts of statesmanship and leadership better than Karyakos and I ever did at 16. I think you have also learned a bit of the politics behind Parga, as well.

When you request a pardon you should state your reason. I will find it a request based on sound logic and delegate the privilege of doing so. That way your

pardon will have all the authority needed and stand beyond question; the pardon will carry the State Seal as well as your own. Another princely adventure for Odo to compose about.”

I asked when this would take place?
“When the Admiral delivers the transport. I would guess several days from now.”

Later this evening Alexandros and Adonis came to see us. They came into our apartment with a few jugs of wine and quickly sent the pages into their quarters.

After consuming most of the wine, Alexandros broached the point of their visit. Not the only point, since the fellowship we shared was certainly one of the more important. He thought that we should mount some kind of

embarrassing prank against Count NiKholas Orsini of Kephalaria. Something that will be costly to him but not endanger to many others. Adonis suggested it should be something done by stealth; he does not appear to have suffered from his mistakes or transgressions. What ever we do should demonstrate attacking Parga is costly as well as difficult. We all agreed and did much laughing and joking about it. Alexandros said he had an idea but we would need to get Admiral Pantaleon's cooperation. We all of course begged him to tell us but first made sure our guardians were in on this and our fathers were not listening out on the terrace.

The plan was simple, our newly trained frog men, using bladders made of sheep's stomachs, to breath under water, would plant devices on the

wooden docks of Argostoli and burn them down. If we use Greek Fire, a Byzantine invention and military secret, they think only they know, the blaze can not be put out. If we can do this with full stealth they will never even know who was behind it. Of course they will suspect and of course will accuse; but King Iason can rightly claim ignorance. (TN: In modern terminology, deniability.)

One of us suggested that when the Prince Arden sails to deliver the propaganda that it be turned into a training run for the marine division of the Royal Guards. Alexandros had already thought that too and added that the engineers have devised a device that can be placed under the wooden structure of the quay and activated by a high or low tide. It is a long tube with a pole with an iron striker on one end of a pole that slides in the tube. The top of

the tube is glass filled with the components of this incendiary device. If planted a low tide for example it can be set to activate at high tide some 12 hours later. Since our ingegneres have made devices to calculate tides, accurate in time and magnitude, at any port along the coast, it will be easy. Not only that but they will think that information could only be provided by locals and spend much time looking for spies that simply do not exist.

This is a dangerous game we play brothers, I told them. The dangers go beyond one or more of our people being killed or captured. These are risks a solder accepts in his business, that we know. But we are asking them to take the risk for a prank. All be it a prank with a message.

“Are we not exceeding our authority

here,” suggested Polydeukus? “Might there be repercussions from Nicholas,” Iason asked?

It was decided we were probably exceeding our authority but this was one of those times that seeking forgiveness was truly easier than seeking permission. Had not Nicholas provoked us in several ways? Besides, his self image needed be more severely damaged than just the public rebuke and a monetary fine. He needed to be taught that the cost of attacking Parga's princes was far higher than he ever dreamed. Our intelligence tells us this young man, who is a nephew of Thomas, is both power hungry and overly confident in himself. Did not reliable informants tell us he was vindictive and often acted as a spoiled child. In fact he is not much more than an child and is certainly spoiled. We

decided it was time to brake a few of his toys and spank his ass. It was agreed but when we four wanted to know when to be ready, we were told in no uncertain terms to stay home and make love to our boys. This was a job best left to professionals, ones who are masters at their craft. Adonis would not go but Alexandros would, as part of his training.

Alexandros summed up: “It is decided then, we will sail on the Prince Arden as soon as it returns from its present mission. In five days the tides and moon will be favorable for us. We will have a slack tide in the early evening just after dark and a full moon about two hours later, that gives us about 6 hours between setting the devices and the high tide.”

1317, 11th month, 25th day:

The Epirusian officer was brought before the council and given a release for himself and his men. The King made a big show of giving him back his sword and impressing on him and everyone else that he and his men were never hostages. That since his leader, the Count, was not interested in providing them with transportation as requested, we made other arrangements for them. He went on to say that Count Nicholas had made a very generous 2000 florin donation to the University, in place of reparations. He wished them well and asked them never to return to Parga in a military capacity. To the spies he was less generous telling them never to return under pain of immediate execution. To which Iason added, “that is not because of your purpose or methods but your utter incompetence.”

The three assassins were given a swift trial and found guilty and sentenced to death. I could see the look on their faces, it was one of abject hopelessness.

I asked the king if I might speak to this. He nodded. I made a short and I feel thoughtful speech about why I thought they had paid for their crime. I pointed out this was not a crime motivated by greed, averse, ill will or faith but one forced by a immoral political system. They were as much victim as we, perhaps more; they were three dead one disabled. It would be punishment enough to send them back to a place where the nobles found it acceptable to hold a man's children hostage, as a way to force them into doing what they would not for any other reason.

What is most egregious is, that nobleman is unwilling to take any responsibility for planning and executing this illegal and immoral act. That he displays the highest level of hypocrisy as defender of a faith which preaches love, humility and forgiveness; yet his actions say duplicity, obsession with power and delusions of self importance. Prince Iason and myself wish to grant a full pardon to these three survivors and a posthumous pardons to their three dead companions. We wish to remind Count Nikholas his atonement has not yet begun and any time he wishes to confess his sins we will gladly prescribe an appropriate penance. Atone he shall, be it willingly or unwillingly. King Iason replied that my reasoning was sound and compassionate. He agreed that the pardons should be granted. He delegated that act to Crown Prince Iason and his Consort, Prince Arden.

The three were visibly relieved.

After the public part ended Karyakos told the council about the 2000 florins. He told us they are now in our treasury. The gold came from a Byzantine repository. It was being shipped to Argostoli. Our people simply removed the 2000 florins and replaced them with a receipt and brief note thanking him for the generous donation to the University and naming him as a Patron of Knowledge. Since this gold was being sent secretly to him it will be interesting to watch how he deals with the situation.

Uncle Iason later told me he sent another private letter to Thomas informing him of what transpired today and included a copy of my short speech. I think he fears for Thomas' well-being as he again offered to give him refuge, should he need it. He also praised

Eutukos saying he thought him a worthy and honorable officer, one that could be trusted.

1317, 11th month, 27th day:

This afternoon all the princes were summoned to the family dining room for some kind of meeting. The entire family was present except for Princess Melitta, Princes Lysandros and Helladios. Princess Elpis had called the meeting and sat in Uncle Iason's chair with Princess Eudoxia next to her. Our aunts, uncles and cousins over 12 were mostly present as well. I had never seen such a non social gathering of the family before. Princess Elpis set the tone of the meeting, it was being run by the women and us men are expected to sit quietly and listen. She started out by noting the women in our society are

mostly kept out of politics by tradition and laws, that they understood. However, the women of Parga are getting a little tired of being thought of as nothing more than producers of babies and cloth. “Traditions aside we are not the property of males as no man can own another. The simple reality is their are almost as many females as males in the state and as a society Parga is not making full advantage of our human resources. A few rules need to be changed and we, the women of this family are telling our men: husbands, sons and brothers that we expect you to make those changes, sooner rather than later.” She looked right at the King, “It is time to recognize that your daughters have abilities as great as your sons. That they are just as deserving of education, responsibilities and opportunities as are the boys. As fathers and brothers we

know your love is as great for the girls as the boys. It is time you acted.

Iason will be 17 this spring. You and I will be selecting his bride and she will spend a part of that year being tutored by me. As the young lady will be no more than 15 or 16 her education will have thought to be finished. That is far from the truth. As you well know, being the Princess Wife of a Crown Prince means she will need to continue learning for years. Running a household the size of this castle is no small job or easy task. If that woman, like myself or our oldest daughter desires to make a wider contribution to the society such as medicine or art, it is impossible. I suggest we are the poorer for it.

Eudoxia has a talent for teaching. You husband and the boy's fathers are

grooming a young man to be her husband. You have plans for him that involve future service to the state, yet your daughter, who can also make a strong contribution to the society, is being treated as little more than a baby factory to provide us with grandchildren. There are several palace girls who are every bit as strong and skilled as some of the young men you have taken into the Royal Guard. Why not take them into it as well and they can provide service to the women of the castle and free those young men to other useful purposes. Several of our nieces are fine athletes and artists, yet no training is provided as it is for our sons and nephews.” She went on for some time giving examples.

I looked at Iason and he at me. We both knew where this was to lead and knowing our sister’s talents and those of

our cousins it was obvious what we should do. Since none of us men had yet been given leave to speak we kept our council.

Karyakos took the floor next. It was a wise move I think since Uncle Iason must be both King and husband and Karyakos is less emotionally involved, at least that is what I thought. After hearing him speak I am not convinced of that. On thinking about it he may not have a wife but he does have daughters and sisters. None of us men are completely isolated from the female sex. Were it not for our mothers none of us would be here, a father alone produces no children.

“Princess Elpis, you are absolutely correct. This society has been remiss in our treatment of women. What is obvious to me is that many of our

traditions are decidedly one sided. They were written down by men who in the ancient way thought political life somehow superior to the home. It was not that long ago that my brother told the guilds and academics that institutions and professions must be opened to women or he would take some action. Iason was much more polite than that. Eudoxia, your name was mentioned. What are your desires?”

“I want to be a teacher of children, a wife and mother.”

“Their are those who will say they being a mother is also being a teacher and that being a wife and mother is in itself a full time job. They are partly correct and partly in error. Mostly, we as a people, have forgotten how great a contribution to our society our mothers made for us.

I remember my grandmother telling me about working in the fields along side my grandfather and it was only when my father grew old enough to help that she could devote most of her time to the household and younger children. In reality the women of Parga have always done several jobs at once, just as the men have. We, as in Iason, myself and our senior princes, will see to it that a quality education to the level of doctorate is made available to women by the 10th month of the new year. We will assist you and opening up or creating guilds for those professions you identify as important for women, such as teaching and midwifery. The princes will, starting immediately, establish an all female unit of the Royal Guards.”

Uncle Iason added, “Princes: Iason, Arden, Kastor and Polydeukus will present a plan to Princess Elpis that

integrates females into the Royal Page Core. Elpis do you have any specific ideas for them to consider?”

She did but would meet separately with us on those details. She also thought something like the Argoanuts should be created for girls but with a less military emphasis.

“I will proclaim the creation of Princess Elpis’ Amazons, a core of the Royal Guards. As to the female Argoanuts I think Princess Eudoxia’s Eagles will do. Their symbol will be an eagle over an olive branch. Your Uncle Tertius will assist you in organization as he has experience in these matters. I think this should be proclaimed during the Soloists celebrations.”

The discussion continued for a while longer but no other decisions were

made. We four knew that we were expected to make this page business happen smoothly and quickly. I could already hear the four terrors complaining they were not about to be bossed by the older sisters. It was clear to us that Olympia and Eudoxia would be the first female pages. The experience would be critical for them.

I wondered if this would change Uncle Iason's plans for Alexandros and Eudoxia. It just might. She was very happy and made a big show of thanking daddy. Funny she acted just like Iason and I, not all that long ago. I guess we underestimate the women being separated from them for so long. I wonder what Euthalia will say when I tell her. For me I needed to run. Running always clears my mind. Things are much easier to understand after a long run. I got Dios and we went for a long

run along the lake shore.

Nikias was just a little coy as we settled in for sleep. “Arden, will the girls be naked too,” he inquired?

How should I know if they dress or not in their privet quarters?

“But the pages are almost always naked in our dorm.”

Naked girls are as nice to look at as naked boys, don't you think?

“I don't know, mother never let us go naked when I lived in her apartment. I like being naked, especially in bed with you.”

I kissed him. Thank you Nikias and I like being naked with you too, but I don't think the girls will like it and I don't think

our fathers would allow it, do you?

“Oh nooo, father will paddle my butt like lason did. You won’t let him will you?”

No little one, I won’t let him but he is father and the king so maybe you better not do anything to make him want to spank you.

“Yes, but how will it work, I mean from the time we are little the girls and boys have always been kind of separated and now I am 12 and we are kept very much apart.”

That is correct. I think it has to do with becoming men and women but you know that. I don’t know yet but I am sure we will find a way to be separate and together at the same time. It is not our sister and cousin I am concerned about, as they are both old enough to

keep themselves out of trouble. It is in the future, when we get younger girls, not related to us, who knows. My sisters were accustomed to seeing me naked when I was younger and living in Koalhurst. You have been naked with girls in the bath when younger, remember. Now that we are sexually active things change, for them too. What ever happens, Nikias we will always be able to be naked in bed together, that I promise you.

Nikias is correct we can not have the boys and girls sharing the same dormitory, as much as all might like it. Now that I have more experience with females, it is clear to me that they enjoy sex as much as we. I am told they share between themselves as we boys do. Something I just assumed was the situation. Some of our girls are like some of the boys, they prefer their own

sex to the opposite. This is not talked about much by the boys except to joke and poke fun. I am sure they joke about us.

Some of our women are more masculine than some of the men. I know women much larger, stronger and with deeper voices than Ikaros or Dysme. A few have expressed to me their disappointment at not being born boys, as we can easily do things they would like to such as fencing, archery, equestrian activities and wrestling. They must often work hard to be included and are often not taken seriously by the male instructors. I know a few boys that would be girls if they could arrange it as well. I thought at first meeting Ikaros to be that way but he is not. Dysme has expressed that thought a few times but except for keeping his body hair completely removed seems happy to

dress as a man. None I know are willing to go through the monthly cycle or bind their breasts. I guess the girls that would be men do have some inconveniences we boys do not.