

5 The Plot Thickens

Iason gave me a small poke. "Thank you Uncle, I am sure your other nephews will keep me humble enough."

"Not only better looking Karyakos but even more cleaver than you were at 12." Of all the knights I have met so far I think this one is the most likable.

"How would you know brother, as I remember you were only eight when I was 12, that does not make it any less so."

A page burst into the room and handed a message to Uncle Iason. He studied it briefly and his face broke in a wide smile. He handed the message to Karyakos, who handed it to Tertius, who looked puzzled. "Are you not intending to share," Iason asked? Father frowned at him, "not now Iason." A few minutes later another Triangle came and whispered the priest and two monks are captured. Iason and I smiled. This Triangle was Adonis, he is a very tall and handsome lad with golden hair and blue eyes. His face and mouth are almost exactly the same as Father's. I guessed him 15 as he is just now gaining some facial hair. I noticed Uncle Tertius seemed more than mildly interested in him. His expression showed mild displeasure when another knight's hand, from the next table, found it way under his kilt as he leaned over to deliver his message.

Iason whispered to me, "He thinks our uncle wants Adonis to himself. Uncle Iason turned and said, "Is likely since he favors those between 14 and 18 years and his present Squire is now 19. You are to say nothing to Adonis of this, it is Prince Tertius' preview." I just keep on learning and so does Iason. I must learn more of these Palace Boys. I assume their are also Palace Girls, perhaps Drakon can enlighten me.

Just before we entered a smaller meeting room we were given instructions by our mentors to sit and observe and under no circumstances to say anything unless invited by one of them. We went in the room followed by Tertius and several other men I did not recognize. I took it that Iason knew most of them but we were good and said nothing.

"This is a fowl business the gods have brought upon us," Sir Hector exclaimed.

"Nay sir it is a fowl business brought upon us by jealous men of absolute greed, that seek only power for its own sake," Karyakos retorted. "This fowl business, as you put it, is the work of a coward, it shows neither honor or courage. We have no time at the moment to debate the right, wrong, wherefore or whereby of it now. The season of harvest approaches. We have only 30 days to resolve and prepare."

"A Royal decree is needed, Scribe write this down. Threats to the safety and security of every citizen have been throated. This is not to mean vigilance can be set aside. The borders and ports of this Kingdom shall be closed from the 15th day of this month and remain so for 90 days to insure a peaceful and productive harvest." I will sign this in the morning and shall be dispatched to every part of our land."

"We have much to do. Tertius, send your trusted companion Priamos and both your squires to your estate and fetch Lady Lucia and your children, for a family visit with us. Take as many of the King's Horse Guards as you may need. Captain we will interrogate the prisoners yet this afternoon. I think one at a time, in this room. Assemble the evidence against each, to be presented at his interrogation. Remind the guards that these prisoners are guests, all be it unwilling ones. Having been captured, they will be expecting harsh treatment. Be firm, fair and as hospitable as is practical. Insure no harm comes to them while in our care." Father lowered his voice, "Thanatos quickly open the door and invite the First Steward into our meeting."

Thanatos smiled as did others and flung open the door catching the old man in his arms. Apparently he had been pressing his ear to the door. How Father knew this I do not know.

“Steward I want you to send your best Seconds along with all of the Apprentice Stewards and three scholars to the Bishop’s Palace and Church, as well as a squad of guards. Make sure the scholars are aware they are to look for coded messages as well as political agendas and plans.

Scribe prepare a warrant of search, authorizing these men to cease any and all evidence that has or may have a bearing on this apprehended assassination business, invasion and or fermentation of revolution, plots and the like.

Steward, take great care not to be overly destructive in your searching, try not to harm anyone but if the solders are required to use force they are free to do so. Work quickly but be as diligent in this as you are in running this estate. Take head of secret hiding places. Be meticulous to inventory, but in no way disturb any coin or treasure you may encounter.

Scribe, write a letter to the Bishop saying we believe he and his office have unwittingly been aiding in this business and invite him and his assistants to attend the inquisition on the first day of the next week; not to answer charges or acquisitions, to assist us in putting an end to this business. This letter I shall sign.

Captain, place several discrete watchers, choose older Palace females, at this place. They are to report the number of assistants and scholars that are working for the Bishop and how many and who they are. If any are to leave between now and then.”

Iason and I just sat, wide eyed with our mouths hanging open. I had never witnessed my new family in action before. I could see that Father and Uncle Iason were able to act together and were not shy to it. I assume this is part of our education and preparation for power and leadership.

When the meeting ended we were sent to the stables to tend our horses. On our way to bath, before our evening meal, we encountered Adonis just about to enter Tertius’ apartments. He had a broad smile and told us he was being assigned to Tertius household as an apprentice Steward and personal servant. I think the job has more to do with serving in his bed but kept my opinion to myself. I think Iason wants to test his metal in our bed before he leaves for the estate. That I look forward to.

Was this also a part of our preparation. Iason seemed to understand, what I was just beginning to understand. Our preparation for the future has many sides. One of these sides is building a personal loyalty base. Perhaps that metal testing must be made to happen.

During the evening meal Adonis, Iason and I did the Ganymede performance for our men. A number of other knights had other Palace Boys in their service as well. I learned from Adonis that he has been my Uncle Tertius’ favorite for years now. Many of the Knights court Palace Boys just like our ancestors did in the gymnasiums. Iason and I also learned that the Palace Boys are taken into Royal Service at 10 and sent to a spacial school, all are educated in letters and numbers. At 12 they begin training in different parts of the Castle, continue to be educated and stop living with their mothers and move into the dormitories. At 14 those less scholarly boys or those with a great desire, are taken into the military. By 18 over half of them will have been taken to live with one of the Knights.

Each Knight keeps a close eye on the young people on his estate and local area for any orphans with no family or extended family to care for them. Orphans and boys of promise with some special talent are requited to the estate or sent to the Castle. Some orphans are placed with families that have no sons or where the only son has been requited. At the Castle, those boys who are not Palace Boys, ones not born here, are called Country Boys. No distinction is made between them except among themselves. I also learned girls have a similar system but few Country Girls exist. Adonis’ mother was a Palace Girl, she is now one of the nurses for the Princess’ children. Many Knights have a close friend, a consort also a knight. It is the duty of that consort and their squires to manage the estate

boys.

Iason and I learned all of this during that evening. We found Adonis' metal in bed was as great as ours and we are proud to call him brother. The three of us were joined by Pyrrhos and Damao for the night. That is when I learned that all three of them and most of the other young men in the service, as they put it, were educated in sex by our fathers. Adonis also told us that he felt himself very privileged since every Palace and Country Boy greatly anticipated sexual liaisons with us even more than the times they would spend with their mentor and our fathers....

(TN: The remainder of this section has been so badly damaged to translate. What I can report is a detailed description of some sexual encounter between Iason, Arden and others is indicated by words and phrases all having to do with fucking, sucking, touching, kissing, being fucked, being sucked, being kissed and experiencing numerous orgasms and states of sexual ecstasy. It is impossible to understand who was doing what to who but the reader can use his imagination. Since we know of five boys in the same room, three very horny boy loving men in the next apartment and several guardians close by and at the ready...)

1312 the 8th month, 23rd day

Uncle Iason, on visiting our apartment, saw this tome on my writing table. He was not at all disturbed by it and after seeing the personal nature of it, suggested I take great care, that I should keep it well hidden. I resolved to have a strong box with a secure lock built for that purpose. I ordered such a box from the steward of the Royal Apartments. Uncle Iason reminded me that almost all palace staff and most of the population in general could read and write in Greek and most in Latin as well. He is very proud of this, claiming that few other kingdoms could say anything like that. This is partly because all of the people in our kingdom are citizens, free men; and partly because all citizens are encouraged to become educated.

Today was to be the inquisition of the accused assassins and the "most fowl business". (TN: The term inquisition as translated here is to mean: from the Latin: inquisitio, is the act of inquiring. It was broadly used in law, before the Medieval Inquisition, to refer a common law procedure of inquiring into a matter, investigating, usually through interrogation, and by use of force. Through time, it was gradually associated with judging 'heresy against Christianity'.)

Iason and I are in our apartment. He has lit several candles and has promised to assist my memory of the day's events, although I find his dancing about the room naked is much distracting. His attempting to play my Pan's syrinx only makes me want to play his pipe, something I shall do before we sleep.

For the first time I noticed a number of ladies in the council chamber, the Princess and wives of Knights. Uncle Iason sat on his throne and was dressed in fine clothing. He had several symbols of office, including a scepter, standard, crown and huge ring. Father was also dressed in fine clothing with a large medallion around his neck and a huge ring. He did not sit in his usual place, at the right hand of the King, but paced the floor. Around the room were many Knights and state officials. Scribes were seated at desks. The pages and others stood or sat behind the King. Along one side of the room sat 12 Knights, again dressed in fine clothing. The ladies were seated behind this 12. The Bishop and his minions were also seated, opposite the King. The center of the room was open and held several tables with items placed on them. A small area surrounded by a little rail with a bench in it, was set aside for the accused. The prisoners were brought into the room by guards and seated in the dock. They were well groomed but dressed only in a plain kilt and tunic. Two senior scholars sat to the King's left and several others were off the side with the other Knights. Iason and I were behind the King with a number of other boys and young men, among them Janus. We were mostly to observe.

When everyone had arrived and taken their places the King rose and stood with his hands in the air. Everyone quieted down. He welcomed everyone and stated the purpose of this inquisition. He

announced his position in this affair was not as head of state but as primary adjudicator. Twelve Knights had been elected by their peers and would form a jury which would make recommendations. Prince Karyakos would be the grand inquisitor. The inquisitor has the power to ask questions of the accused or anyone else that may have information or knowledge. The accused will be given a full hearing to explain themselves, ask questions of other witnesses and call on others to speak on their behalf. He admonished, anyone presenting evidence or answering questions that their personal honor was to the test and anyone found to be less than truthful would be held to account.

Karyakos began by telling the tale of events that lead up to the death of the assassin. He showed the message sent by Uncle Iason to us and had Janus give his account of delivery; how he planted the false information in Koalhurst at Prince Karyakos' instructions and what that was. He showed the document and let all those that wished to inspect it, noting the date and the king's seal. One of the scholars declared it was the king's own hand. When asked how he knew that he replied he was the teacher that taught him how to write. "As to the content I know not. It could be fact or it could be supposition."

Karyakos looked at the King. Uncle Iason rose and changed places with Tertius. "As can be seen I have changed places with Prince Tertius and he is temporary adjudicator."

Tertius spoke, "This is highly unusual but not without precedent." The scholars all nodded in agreement. "Being the head of state the King is not required to speak to such matters and being the adjudicator he can not, but by changing places with me signals a willingness."

"I can not tell you how I came by this information. It is far more than speculation and I have and had no reason to doubt its truthfulness. In addition to the information in my dispatch to Prince Karyakos, I also knew that the six who came here, claiming to be religious scholars, did not attend the Bishop, their supposed host, did not attend the libraries at the Bishop's church, the libraries in this palace or the libraries at the monastery, a short half day's walk from here. This also I knew. You will also take notice that I held off sending the dispatch for three days. More than enough time for the scholars to appear at any one of the places they were invited." He stopped and a silence fell in the room. Karyakos then asked if anyone else wished to ask a question of King Iason. No one did so he changed places again with Prince Tertius.

The Eastern Hunting Lodge Captain of the Guard came and reported on what preparations he had made, showing the dispatch, his instructions and how the one assassin had been killed. He then showed the clothing, poison, money, instruments, weapons and so on captured with these men. This included a copy of the invitation letter placed in a secret compartment in one of their cloaks.

"Captain I have no doubt in your word but others who do not know you as I do, might question. Can you tell us how you know that the evidence presented here is the very same as seized from these men?"

"Yes, of course, if you look closely, every piece has been marked by red dye, made from the cherry. The marks are the letters of my name Minason and station. M, K, R, G. and a number which corresponds to the inventory that accompanied these goods." Then he asked if he knew which items belonged to which man in the dock. "Yes Inquisitor, these belong to the short one on the end, these to the dark haired one in the middle and these to the unfortunate man who chose death to surrender."

"This letter gives the names of six scholars all from the Bishop of Florence's domain. I have it on good authority that all six of these men are alive and well and hard at work in the Bishop's palace there. I take it that you men are not who you say you are but impostors. Please tell us what your names in fact are."

This went on for some time until each admitted his role and part. The evidence shown was as the Captain said. Exactly what the plot was and finally how they were to collect their fees and from whom. That person was obviously not the one in charge however.

Karyakos turned then to the local Bishop. He did not bring him or any of his people to the dock. He did present evidence that someone in the Bishops employee was behind much of this. That letters of invitation were real and wittingly or unwittingly the Bishop was involved. He then produced a number of coded messages from the Bishop of Florence to someone in the local Bishop's offices. The local Bishop had five Fathers under him. Karyakos built a strong case against three of them. I think we were all sure these three had a wider network in the countryside but that was for another day.

In the end the 12 knights decided that the inquisition had uncovered who, what, when and why sufficiently to pass a recommendation. They suggested the five be sent into permanent exile from our land, back to Florence. The three priests be sent permanently away but their personal wealth be forfeited to the king. Further that the local church be taxed of half its' wealth to pay for the war with Florence which seemed to be unavoidable.

Uncle Iason huddled with his advisors and passed his judgment. Since no one was harmed save one assassin, he thought exile and persona non grata status was fair. "When you return to Florence make it known to all that King Iason the 7th is fair and honorable. That the principals of Justice, respect of life, love of thin neighbor and treating others as we would be treated, are practiced here as a matter of course, by every citizen, not because some priests tells us what to think or believe. That is the way we have always lived and thought since our beginnings. Those beginnings go back to a time when Florence was little more then a collection of mud huts occupied by barbarians. As to the Bishop. You will forfeit half of your churches wealth to build and operate schools for educating of children in letters, reading and mathematics. You are forbidden in these schools from teaching dogma or theology. The diligent practice of your faith as you live your lives should be sufficient.

If we are attacked by any Bishop of the Roman Church or his noble lap dogs, you will forfeit your annual tithe to Avignon for 10 years to assist in the defense of this land. Foreign priests or priests not trained in this kingdom are not welcome until further notice. Note it well priests, you took a vow of poverty when you joined and I intend to see that you live up to it, at least until you are on your ship and out of our waters. All exiles will sail on the morning tide."

We returned from the busy day. Father and Iason went into our apartment, Tertius and Adonis into theirs and Uncle Iason and I into his. He immediately began removing my tunic and kilt. "Aye that was a good day's work was it not?"

I answered it was for him and Father but Iason and I had little to do. He suggested it was more difficult to sit still paying attention to others than to take up action. Before I could agree or disagree his lips were on mine and I was being transported into ecstasy. Uncle Iason stepped back and looked at me, smiling. "Your are the most beautiful boy in this or any other kingdom, come share some of it with me." I stepped into his embrace and after more kisses assisted him to nakedness.

My mentor has a powerful member, much like this entire body. Large and strong with rippling muscles. He is not greatly covered with hair as some men and his skin is smooth and soft but not as soft as mine. I took up some oil and after coating his erection with it pushed him back on to the bed. For a man of such physical, political and economic power he is remarkably compliant for his boy lover. Squatting over his penis, I lowered myself onto it filling my body with his long, hard, royal cock.

"Oh Arden you are so understanding, so smooth and so tight," He said to me as I raised and lowered myself over him; feeling waves of pleasure, desire, love and belonging with every movement. He took my hands to steady me as I posted on his stallion, like I do on Zephyros. As I rose and fell my head was wobbling from side to side and up and down. I was in absolute ecstasy and ejaculated several mighty sprits, landing on his chest. I am not sure what happened next for the last thing I remember is his mighty emissions filling my gut. The next is laying next to my mentor-lover-king and realizing we were not alone. Another boy was standing by our bed. His fingers scooping up my emissions and Uncle Iason licking them clean. Pangs of jealousy shot through me. Why was their another boy in my lover's bedroom?

Uncle Iason grasped his hand and directed his fingers to the last glob of my semen on his chest and then to my lips. His hands were soft like mine and he was gentle and loving in touching my lips as my tongue swept the cream from them. Uncle Iason then directed the lad's hand to his mouth again kissing it and back to mine. I also kissed it several times.

"Arden this is Dysme he has been assigned to this room as Chamber Boy. Dysme will be with us for the next six months, it is part of his apprenticeship rotation."

Dysme assisted us both in getting ready for the evening's events, another large feast in the great dining hall. I was surprised to learn that in the wardrobe were not only Uncle Iason's and Father's clothing but mine and Iason's as well. When Uncle Iason stepped into the outer room Dysme explained what his duties were. Saying with some pride that the most pleasurable was serving me and the king as a "bed boy". Taking my hand in his and directing it under his short kilt for a fingers on explanation of his readiness.

I do not want or need any help in dressing or undressing. I do not need a servant serving me. If this was part of his apprenticeship then I had best make some effort to cooperate, lest he fail in his lessons through no fault of his own. I would be most displeased with myself if I contributed to that in any way. Dysme is very much like my sisters. He is much like a girl with a penis and no breasts.

Uncle Iason returned along with one of the castle's barbers. From him I learned that the barber's trade is an extremely ancient one. Razors and their use for cutting hair and removing it from the face goes back to the founding of our kingdom.

Shaving, either of the head or face, was not always a voluntary act. Cleanliness and vanity were therefore not the sole reasons for a 'clean shave', the origins lie deeper. Before the Macedonian conquest of Greece brought the custom of clean shaving, the agora would trim and style his patrons' beards, hair, and fingernails, as gossip and debate flowed freely.

In this place clean or trimmed shaved has almost always been up to the citizen. The fashion in the Boule (TN: the council) comes and goes, now it is trimmed closely and partly shaved. During the Roman influence they tried to get all free men to be clean-shaven, while slaves would be forced to wear beards, as in Roman dominated places. Since slavery has never been allowed in this place before, during or after the Romans, it was only partly successful. The only slaves were the ones they brought with them. Since our forefathers were not inclined to change their ways, it failed.

Since I don't have any facial hair yet the barber just trimmed my locks. Instructing Dysme in this art as well. I knew from my reading that our ancestors left Greece to colonize here long before the time of Alexander but no one was quite sure when that was. I also knew the ancient Greeks had slaves, as does the Western Empire. I will ask the scholars about this when my lessons begin.