

# **Alcibiades**

Virtue and Passion

A Novel of the Peloponnesian War

René Jean-Paul Dewil

# Book I

## Aphrodite's Girdle

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To Monique, Maxence and Julian.

*Prologue*

In those times, the world was a sphere suspended in perfect balance in the ether. The world was splendid and shone its purest hues. The colours were bright: white like snow, the most brilliant crimson, the deepest azure blue, glorious orange, imperial purple and dazzling golden. On the surface of this world grew plants, flowers and trees and their multitudes patched the world with more hues. Silvery mountains rose from the ground and on the soil lay precious stones: translucent diamonds, red rubies, jaspers and emeralds. The stones shone their rays of light back into the ether so that light pervaded the world. The mountains were studded with veins of metals, of gold and silver, of brown iron, red copper and grey tin.

On the world lived animals and human beings. They breathed the ether and they lived in peace with each other. The climate was soft and regular, agreeable to humans and animals alike, so that life lasted long. The people worshipped the gods. They built temples and the gods lived in these temples and spoke readily to the humans in omens and signs. The men saw the sun and the moon and they were happy. They did not become ill for diseases did not exist. The people lived at leisure. They saw the purest forms and ideas and they dwelled among them.

Within the world there were caves, hollows underground, of all sizes and depths. The caves were inter-connected by channels and basins and in these flowed great quantities of water. Subterranean streams of water, of mud and of fire dug hollows and beds, and the streams were kept in movement by oscillations inside the world.

One of these caves was larger than all the other, piercing through the sphere from the lowest side to the highest side. This was the hollow called Tartarus. All the streams flowed together in it, and out again. The air also rushed in and out along with the streams, creating winds that whirled around the world. The streams circled the world in spirals, the one inside the other. The streams and the air filled the caves in a movement of ebb and flood, caressing the surfaces of the hollows and creating in them rivers and lakes and heavens. These rivers also let their waters flow each back to Tartarus. Four streams thus entered Tartarus but they did not all flow in the same direction.

The streams were mighty and the greatest of them all was called Oceanus. Oceanus basked in the light of the sun and the moon. It spiralled, and led its broad waters circling around the world, embracing the sphere. In the opposite direction swept Acheron, the stream that flowed through dark and desolate regions before it plunged underground and entered the Acherusian Lake. Acheron was situated inside the circles of Oceanus, Oceanus being the outermost stream.

Between Acheron and Oceanus flowed a stream called the Pyriphlegethon. This was a stream of fire, a tediously advancing mass of hot, incandescent rock. It emerged from a large lake of mud and water that boiled in the intense heat. Pyriphlegethon also circled around the world, past the Acherusian Lake and it also finally thundered its mud of fire into Tartarus. The stream sent out jets of lava through the volcanoes of the caves, at various parts of the world, on the surface as well as underground.

Opposite to the Pyriphlegethon a fourth stream broke out from a sullen grey land, called the Strygian country, and then it flowed into a lake called the Styx. The waters of the Styx disappeared underground in a spiral movement contrary to the flow of Pyriphlegethon and met that stream opposite the Acherusian Lake. The fourth stream did not mingle its liquid with the other streams, but ultimately it too fell into Tartarus. The name of this stream was the Cocytus.

In one of the caves of that world there was a large sea. Around this sea lived humans also, but who were not like the people that lived at the surface of the world. The people of this cave saw their sea, a heaven, the sun and the moon; they lived at a surface too, but they could not perceive the world of purity, as they were contained within their hollow, which they called Earth. They called the sea their own Sea or also the Middle Sea, for it lay in the middle of Earth.

The people of this cave sensed the other world but they could not see it and a mute longing for the unknown world craved in their minds. They called this longing Eros, but Eros always remained unfulfilled, incomplete, and the humans were never pure. Because of the longing they coupled and had children. They were ambitious and fought among themselves, so that they grouped in packs, in tribes, to better defend and attack. They were envious and never satisfied, ignorant and yet filled with vanity. Among them however also were the virtuous who recognised the nature of their longing, suppressed their violence and transformed the longing into a search for goodness and beauty.

Everything the people of that cave had and all they were was ephemeral, but they lived as if eternity belonged to them. These humans were happy only at rare moments, and many died young from diseases, from wars among their tribes, from wars with their neighbours, or from the tremors with which Tartarus and the world shook their Earth.

On Earth, on the borders of the Sea, there lived many peoples, but there lived one remarkable people in a land called Hellas, which was surrounded on all sides by the Sea. The mountains of this land ended far into the Sea at many places, advancing like the fingers of a hand in the water so that the Sea was close from everywhere. This people were constituted of many tribes. The tribes were very similar for they had the same origins. They spoke the same language, sacrificed to the same gods, and they tilled the ground in the same way. They had no particular kinship to the other peoples of the Sea however. They were proud of their names and reputation among the other peoples, for they were ferociously independent and courageous to hold their own.

The Hellenes were aware of the world but they had no idea what it was like. They imagined that at the beginning there was Darkness and that from Darkness had come Chaos. Then Mother Earth sprang from Chaos. The Hellenes thought she was a goddess, the goddess Gaia. Later, Eros and Tartarus the Underworld came to be. Earth gave birth to Uranus, heaven, and she slept with Uranus to bear him twelve sons, the mighty Titans, as well as Ocean and also the one-eyed Cyclops, and the monsters with one-hundred hands Cottus, Briareos and Gyges.

Uranus hated his children. He threw the rebellious Cyclops into Tartarus. Mother Earth sought revenge. She produced a sharp sickle of flint, which the youngest of the Titans, Kronos, used to castrate his father. The blood from the severed genitals fell to

Earth and gave rise to the Giants and the Furies. The genitals, thrown into the Sea, also produced beautiful Aphrodite.

The Hellenes told furthermore that Kronos slept with his sister Rhea. Many children were born from this union: Hestia, Demeter, Hades, Poseidon and Hera. Kronos guarded jealously his position as King of the gods. His dying father Uranus had predicted that one of his own children would dethrone him. So, every year he swallowed the children that Rhea bore him. Rhea was angry. She sought help from her mother, Gaia, to preserve the sixth child, Zeus. Gaia and Rhea hid the young Zeus on Crete and gave Kronos a stone wrapped in swaddling clothes to swallow. When Zeus was a youth, he overcame his father Kronos and delivered his brothers and sisters. Zeus then made war against the Titans, brandishing his thunderbolts. Zeus and his siblings overthrew the Titans and imprisoned them in Tartarus.

The gods drew lots and Zeus was established as King. Hades won the underworld and Poseidon the sea. Zeus and his siblings lived on Mount Olympus then. Zeus was challenged by Typhon, the youngest son of Earth. Typhon too was overcome and consigned to Tartarus.

Zeus's official consort was his sister Hera, but he slept with many other goddesses: with Metis, Themis, Eurynome, Demeter, Mnemosyne and Leto. Themis was the mother of the Seasons. Eurynome was the sea-nymph and mother of the Charites, the Graces. Demeter was the sister of Zeus; she bore him Dionysos son of Zeus. Mnemosyne was the mother of the Muses.

Zeus also had children by Hera. These were Ares, the god of war, Hebe, the goddess of youth and Eileithya, the goddess of childbirth. Hera conceived of Hephaestos alone, however, without being impregnated by Zeus. Thus, all the gods were born.

Zeus also slept with mortal women. He begat Hermes on Maia, the daughter of the Titan Atlas. Leto, the daughter of the Titans Coeus and Phoebe, bore him Apollo and Artemis.

Zeus slept with Metis, but when she became pregnant he learnt that Metis was destined to bear a child greater than himself. Zeus swallowed Metis then. Some time afterwards, Zeus caught a terrible headache. His skull seemed about to burst. Hermes knew what the cause was of Zeus's pains. He persuaded Hephaestos to hit Zeus's head when Metis had come to term. Hephaestos breached Zeus's skull and from Zeus's head sprang eye-flashing, grey-eyed Athena. She wore full armour when she burst out of Zeus's head. She shouted a yell of war, brandished a spear and threatened Zeus. Hephaestos later tried to rape Athena, but she refused his embraces. Hephaestos' sperm fell on Athena's thigh. She wiped the sperm off, so that it fell on Earth. Earth thereby produced a child, Erechtheus, which Athena reared.

The Hellenes thus worshipped many gods. Their poets sang epic stories about their gods, stories of hate and love and revenge, stories of despair and triumph. The gods felt the same emotions as the Hellenes, only with more strength.

The Hellenes were a devout people. They feared the wrath of the gods. They offered sacrifices to their gods and implored their pardon and their help. They wrote long poems on the deeds of their gods and sang these alone or in choirs.

When the people of the cave named Earth died, they were accompanied by a spirit to be judged by three judges called Rhadamanthus, Aeacus and Minos. The people were separated by the judges in those who had lived well, those who had not lived well and those who had not lived entirely well nor entirely badly. These last were led to the River Acheron. They had to pass Acheron and pay a coin to the ferryman. They were taken in large ships on the Acherusian Lake and they remained there, awaiting purification and absolution of sins, as well as rewards for their good deeds.

The people that had committed sins, crimes and murders, were thrown immediately into Tartarus and disappeared.

The people that had sinned, but not too gravely, were thrown into Tartarus too, but they emerged after a year, and then the murderers were guided down the Cocytus and the offenders against their parents down the Pyriphlegethon. All passed the Acherusian Lake, where they cried out loud, asking forgiveness from their victims and begging to be accepted on the lake. If they received pardon, there would be an end to their horrors. If not, they continued to plunge once more into Tartarus, and the cycle of their punishment was renewed.

The men and women that had lived without sin received the good and the beauty they strove for during their life in the hollow called Earth. They moved to the real world, pure spirits now, souls without body, to revel in the ultimate purity of the ideas and of the world. The souls of the heroic and the virtuous dwelled in the Elysian Fields. This was a place on the western border of the world, close to the spiralling Oceanus, and there they enjoyed immortality and eternal bliss.

Among the tribes of the Hellenes, two were called the Ionians and the Dorians. These two tribes were neighbours; a good runner could cover the distance between their dwellings in three days. They lived not far from each other, yet their lands, Attica and Laconia, were separated by mountains. They assembled first in poor villages of reed hovels to protect them from the harsh climate of Earth. Later they built wooden and stone houses. Their numbers grew so that soon they each formed a city, large agglomerations of dwellings and temples. The cities were shaped in the crucible of wars with defensive citadels, formidable walls and fortified hills. The main city of Attica was called Athens and the main city of Laconia was Sparta.

The Ionians and the Dorians did not all live in the two cities, Athens and Sparta, though. Many of them worked in the country, tended olive trees and vines, and they herded sheep and goats. They built boats, at first simple rafts with small sails, then imposing vessels, which were lean and swift, and manned with many oarsmen. These ships could advance on the Sea, rapidly and powerfully. They also built bulky, round, slow, clumsy boats that could transport vast quantities of the items they did not have themselves, like cereals or hard wood, and they traded. First they traded what they had themselves. Then they traded with the goods of the other peoples, with everybody else who lived around the Sea, and they grew wealthy from this trade. They had the time to think, to reflect about their fate, and they learned to weep at their tragedies and to laugh and mock their vagaries. They were a proud people but they were clear-sighted enough to meditate on their pettiness.

The goddess Athena reared Erechtheus until he became the King of Athens. Thus, Athena was the mother of the Athenians and yet she remained a virgin, the Athena Parthenos, Athena the maiden. The Athenians worshipped Athena. The Spartans also worshipped Athena, like all the Hellenes, but their main god was Apollo, the son of



Zeus by Leto, he who shoots far his arrows, the god that drives his chariot carrying the sun through the heavens.

The two cities, Athens and Sparta dominated vast plains. They were both protected by mountains and hills. When the numbers of the people grew, they founded other cities, which were located on the borders of the Sea. They built cities in the west, in the east, in the north, but few in the south because another great people lived there that had already many cities on their shores. The sown cities vowed allegiance to their founding fathers, so the two cities controlled a vast network of alliances and vast funds streamed to the centres. They developed mighty armies.

If the cities resembled much, there were also however major differences between the living in the two cities.

Athens was a true naval power, being situated very close to the coast and having fine harbours. Its slender and swift war ships, manned with experienced crews, controlled the Sea. Athens relied on massive, high and double walls around its polis and on walls that led to its harbour for protection in times of war. When war came, it could draw all the population of its countryside within its defensive fortifications and it could then withstand a long siege by being supplied from overseas.

Sparta lay inland. It commanded no harbour close by, and was hence more powerful with its land forces. Sparta had no walls but relied on its exquisitely trained warriors to be the defences to protect its territory. This was so vital to this city that all of its citizens had to become experienced warriors, and all its organisation in peace and war was directed to the aims of sustaining the best army of the Earth. This tribe thus dedicated most of its human resources purely to its defence and it exercised its population heavily, so that its army had never been beaten. The citizens of Sparta were its walls.

Athens developed a political system to manage its affairs whereby the whole population assembled to participate in important decisions. Judges, generals and civil servants were chosen from the lots, elected to hold function for a very limited time – usually one year only. No particular skills were demanded from the chosen ones beyond those of being a citizen. This city's allied towns had introduced the same political system, which they called democracy, in which all citizens had the same rights, so that the alliance was forged and kept together not just by having the same tribal roots, but also by similar ideas and ways of living and managing the polis.

Sparta centred power only in a small part of its population, in the old families that had led the first men of their tribe, which had become rich and shared power. These old families formed an aristocracy that directed the affairs of the city. That aristocracy retained power and governed from out of an oligarchy of few. Its allied towns followed its example, and the wealthy leaders there were bold enough to retain power jealously in their own midst for a long time. Sparta was led by two hereditary Kings, whereas in Athens power came to the most charismatic leader, to the best speaker, the best counsellor, the one citizen whose arguments were the wisest and whose advices the most successful.

Both cities were formidable economic, political and military powers, because they bundled energies as were seen nowhere on Earth. They did not strive for the same honours though. They respected and admired each other and would stand together against common enemies. But they were two powers, and in the end there could only be one power on Earth among the Hellenes. When they clashed, for reasons they could not even understand well themselves, they at first avoided outright confrontation and made a series of limited actions to check how eager the other polis was for war or for peace. When they finally fought openly, their wars were waged in and outside their own territories, all around the Sea and often in foreign land where only few of their citizens had ever travelled. They clashed with a fierce energy and shook the earth with their war cries.

When their wars ended, they were each near exhaustion, the victor so weak that it soon became the real loser because the resources on which it had based its victory could not be renewed. The city that lost and had to recognise the supremacy of the other was however only momentarily depleted of its war resources. It could recover after many years and become powerful again. The victor ultimately lost to history, whereas the losing city was victorious a long time after the wars.

In these cities lived a few special men and women who were very much conscious of the world that was beyond their Earth, even if only by diffuse, vague and intuitive feelings. The men reflected and speculated about the other world, claiming ignorance more than knowledge. They were thoughtful men, most of them not war-like, but if necessary they would defend their ways of life ferociously.

There lived also on the Earth men who sought only glory for their own person, having no faith but in the moment. These desired to shine in glory and be regarded as the first, the cleverest, and the finest among their tribe. They sought flattery and recognition.

This is the story of two such men from one of the cities, Athens, one seeking goodness and knowledge of the world, and the other relishing only in satiated vanity. One of these men was a warrior who acted according to his passions; the other man reflected about his life and was virtuous. The two men were friends. They were virtue and passion.

The gods decided to have a laugh with the passionate warrior and inflicted violence, disaster, confusion and conflict on him. The goddess Aphrodite however, took pity of him. She sent her daughter, Harmonia, to soothe him with love and tenderness. Aphrodite gave her daughter a girdle, which had the power to link any human to her, and in particular the passionate man.

This is the story of those two men and of Aphrodite's girdle.

## ***Chapter 1 – Cape Sounion, Autumn 434 BC***

### **Sounion**

The sun stood high, though not as high as in mid-summer. It sent its blinding, white and hard light on the Sea and on the cliffs of the cape. The land of the cape rose abruptly out of the water here. It hung high and rough over the small beach of a creek. A giant knife had cut off the land here, as if it had been kneaded and then hacked off by a nervous and impatient god. Its rocks were sharp and angular. The waves gently broke against the little sandy beach today. A soft, warm breeze blew in from the Sea, over the rising rocks. This wind would grow soon, and with the coming afternoon gain in force and strike the land in strong gusts. Cliffs advanced into the Sea on both sides of the creek. The rocks were lower than the steep, massive promontory that formed the creek, but they were strewn here and there as if a giant, sleeping dragon showed its teeth from under the water.

A young man stood way above, at the border of the cape, looking down from very high onto the peaceful beach. He was dressed only in a short white tunic that reached not further than his knees. He rested his left hand on his belt, thumb inside. The leather belt split his tunic in two parts. One part clung to his chest, showing the muscles and the strength of the young body. The lower part hung in folds around his hips. He wore leather sandals. The young man looked straight into the water and he saw a broad silvery line dashing away from him on the waves and in the direction of the sun. He could scarcely hold his gaze into this bright strip of light, which shimmered as the water moved, changing and shifting with every tiny movement of the perpetually restless water. The water had the heaviness of oil now, not the energy of a storm when the waves were sent in bursts over the rocks. Once in a while a white cloud would shift past the sun and then the young man could see more clearly the colours of the water, ever green and blue and white, but always transforming from one hue into another.

The land was always the same; it did not change its aspect ceaselessly like the Sea. The rocks below and close to the abyss showed grey and light ochre; but where one colour was, that colour stayed. Close to the young man and at places along the cliffs there was a little green from shrubs, grasses and small trees. The foliage also shifted with the wind, but the colours did not move as much as in the water.

The young man's gaze was always drawn back to the water. He recognised the grandeur of the cape, and he revelled in the spectacular view of the dazzling light on the Sea. It was the Sea that attracted him! He watched in particular a green patch closest to the sand, where the white lines of the waves broke on the beach. The youth was sensitive to the colours of nature. Further along and away, the water was blue and to the far, towards the horizon, he remarked in wonder a deep purple band, which marked the border between sea and sky. Beyond, the sky rose in hazy light grey, and then white, as the humidity seemed to rise there from the water. The sky deepened its hue higher above, and when the young man looked straight up he could see darker grey clouds padded with very bright parts where the clouds seemed to open, hanging above him.

There was only motion in the Sea however, and the young man stood there, silently, the prisoner of the never boring, always shifting impact of impressions of waves, colours and living sea. He might not have looked at the land and admired its landscape for more than a few moments, but the Sea always attracted him, fascinated him and penetrated his soul as if he were part of the perpetual change in the tranquillity of its vast mass. The movement sucked him in, enchanted his mind, drew him to it and urged him to become a part of it, part of the natural splendour. His mystic union with the peace of nature enthralled the young man. He sighed when a large cloud again blocked the sunrays and temporarily darkened the scene menacingly. He saw straight rays then, shining through openings in the clouds, throwing white columns of light over him, which shone obliquely away from a point high above but in front of his eyes, as if a god had heard his prayer of admiration for the creation and had acknowledged his veneration with pride and gratefulness. It was as if the sun itself answered to a plea of the young man, affirmed a pact with him and ensured him of its grandeur and protection. The young man thought to see the figure of a very white woman up there, in the sky.

The young man was the beloved of the sun. He was tall and slender, yet strongly muscled. The muscles on his calves and arms stood well out. They were sharply delineated and hard, yet fine and their lines were in harmony with the curves of his body. For all the force displayed, there was a delicate smoothness in the man, even though the hard angles on his body and face proved a life of physical exercise and a determined character. He had a nice face, almost with a girl's traits. Long and gentle black locks crowned his head luxuriously. He had no beard but the black contours of his shaven facial hairs, shaven clean and very close, sculpted his chin and cheeks. He had a smooth chin, rather full lips, rounded cheeks and a small, straight nose. His face was very agreeable to behold. Its gentleness and simplicity of lines was attractive and inspired confidence. It was a face that invited being watched, as enchanting and tender and alluring as the Sea, making one feel comfortable with it. Men and women found themselves oddly at ease with the face. They lingered on it with their eyes, and would only withdraw their gaze from its appeasing presence when distracted by a noise or a touch. Their eyes would then pass over his bare chest. Men would appreciate its strength. Women would be tempted to gently draw their long fingers along the perfect torso.

In the face of the young man stood two very bright eyes, the light grey irises of which were speckled with blue and green like the Sea. Maybe it was these uncommon eyes that attracted people so that they were caught in a temptation that was difficult to break away from. The eyes were limpid as the water and they seemed to shift in colours like the morning waves. Yet, when one looked close, directly into the irises of those eyes, one remarked that the colours were compact, too dense to be truly sympathetic. One's gaze had to stop there and could not penetrate into the young man's soul. The eyes were cold, un-committing, and they would hardly ever respond to a human stare. The look of the young man could suddenly flash with a spark of menace and violence, then revert as quickly of tenderness, into a sudden stare of interest or alerted by a sense of danger. The young man would hardly ever show fear, but generally prove his immediate presence and involvement in the moment, in his interlocutor and in the aspects of the environment. The eyes scanned and took in all, eagerly. The young man was still learning and he learned from every moment.

Above the eyes stood dark, heavy brows, well-arched however, with fine hairs that drew a perfect line. The young man had a rectangular forehead, which would have been the largest and most prominent feature of his head had its forms not been softened and partially covered by the many curls of his hair, which broke its harder lines by curves and patches of darker hues. The face was sunburnt now, but the young skin seemed impervious to the dryness of the air and the scorn of the sun. The young man's face had retained the soft, rounded features of happiness and health, of the gentleness of a simpler character that was as yet untroubled by illusions shattered, by the vagaries of fate and the fallacies of the world.

The young man opened his arms now. He let the warmth of the sun fill his being. He closed his eyes and felt the breeze play in his clothes, caress his body and flow around his face, tear at his hair and sizzle in his ears. He felt at ease on land, but he was one with the Sea and one with the wind. Soon, he opened his eyes again, for although he was a man who could cherish a moment in himself, he was a person of action and energy and he was eager for novel sensations. He could not leave matters at peace.

A ship suddenly arrived from the right side, from behind the rocks. As it approached further out in the Sea, but always along the coast, the young man could distinguish it better. It was a small ship, with one row of oars on both sides, but it lay high in the water. Its oars rose and beat the Sea regularly in perfect cadence, slow but majestically, and a single large sail gave it added speed. With rising excitement the young man saw that the reinforced prow of the ship glimmered with gold and that it was adorned with garlands of multi-coloured flowers, hanging now fetid along the side. As the ship advanced silently and with dignity in the Sea, the young man reflected that only one boat could be thus decorated and dressed-up ceremoniously.

The young man recognised with amazement that this must be the ship that the city of Athens sent once a year to the island of Delos on a solemn mission to Apollo's Temple on that island. The Athenians thought that a very long time ago this was the very ship in which the hero Theseus had sailed to Crete with seven youths and seven maidens to be sacrificed to the Minotaur. Theseus had killed the Minotaur in the labyrinth however, found his way out again by Ariadne's thread, and saved the lives of Athens' young people for ever after. The Athenians had made a vow to honour the god Apollo every year at Delos by an official mission, by way of gratitude and respect. They would keep their city clean and pure as long as Apollo's ship would stay on its journey and had not returned safe. The priest of Apollo had garlanded the ship in Athens and sent it on its way. The young man was excited at seeing Athens' pride thus moving solemnly beyond the cape, in pride because Athens was master of the Sea, but also in humility since the city recognised with this ship a higher splendour and power, the splendour and power of the majesty of the gods. He wondered at the marvellous coincidence of having spotted that ship, at the very moment that he had arrived on the heights of Cape Sounion.

The young man exclaimed his surprise and marvel then. He broke away now from the spell of the sea-nymphs, the naiads, which he always thought charmed him to the water. He nudged at another man who had now come near him and who also looked down to the ship. But that man did not stir.

The older man next to the youth stood firm on a large rock, right leg bent. He was likewise dressed in a short white tunic, but his tunic was coarse, much used, less spotless, and almost ragged at the seams. The man was built like the rock under his feet. He had broad shoulders. He was not as tall and slender as the young man he accompanied, but he seemed to be part of Earth. He was more heavily muscled, but weight and fat of a life less dedicated to physical exercise had started to hide the angles of his strength. The tunic could not disguise the beginning of a pouch belly and his arms were fuller and less agile than those of the young man, his legs stocky. Still, the man gave the impression as if he could beat the young man in power wrestling at any time by sheer weight of body and limbs. His tunic opened on his chest and showed the adult, mature man's hair, dark tufts that were already greying. The man had a squarer, less long face than the youth. He had broad, recalcitrant, very dark eyebrows, dark but piercing eyes and a ruddy face with angular features, showing the lines and wrinkles of a seasoned male. This man was used to walk for hours in the sun, to exercise with warriors, to fight in the streets. He might have seen battles of armies. He too had a large forehead, but one that was less wide and his hair was cut shorter at the front, held longer in the neck. He had a heavy beard, which curled more than his hair. The beard was kept short but left unkempt, and it had started to grow white around the chin. The nose was chubby. The man had a snub nose. His cheeks were sunken and drawn like old leather over the bones. He had sad, protruding, dark eyes. The man inspired power although he was not tall. One suspected him capable of bursts of energy, of robust strength that could suddenly explode like a storm, yet that was usually utterly controlled by the natural gentleness of a being that had come to terms with himself. The eyes of this man could be nice. They looked so most of the time, but they could also be vicious when they needed to be. If the young man was as lenient and accommodating as the Sea, the elder man was of the material that bare mountains were made off.

The man did not move when the youth touched him. Even when the younger one nudged him repeatedly, with more insistence and increasing impatience, the man did not move. He stared and gazed at the ship, like his companion, but his eyes never left the boat, not until it passed to the left behind the rocks that reached far into the Sea there. The wind was fiercer now. It tore over the rocks of the cape and sea-waves of more power slew against the rocks down beneath. The older man seemed not aware of the passing time. When the young man finally tucked at his sleeve, not anymore wanting to honour the consideration he had for the older one, the man stirred. And then still, he murmured into himself, 'it cannot be.' He waited a moment, unmoving, and then repeated, 'it cannot be. It must be a herald ship bound for Corcyra'.

The older man then turned around, without giving attention to the youth, and ran along the path that led away from the Sea, onto the temple.

### **Socrates**

The older man made a rapid pace so that the young one had to run after him. The young man jumped beside him and said, 'Hey, Socrates, you run as if you had death on your heels. Whereto?'

The man called Socrates reacted as if he had been stung by all the bees of an Attican hive. He stopped straight, much surprised at the perspicacity of a youth who was otherwise never really in empathy with his private thoughts.

He retorted, ‘and what if death was indeed with us?’

‘Oh, come along, Socrates,’ the young man answered impatiently, ‘this is no place to think of evil death! Look at the Sea, the sky, and the temple there. All is light and joyful here. Look at the green of the Sea, the brown of the trees, the grey rocks, the birds and the sheep over there. Dark death is something to think off at night or in the heat of battle when it falls on you anyhow and cannot be avoided. Let’s not think of death here.’

Socrates insisted on the subject, stepping forward much slower now and holding his hands behind his back. ‘So you think death is evil, not always with us, and not to be desired, Alcibiades?’

‘Assuredly, Socrates.’

‘Well, you know, Alcibiades, people say I am a philosopher and it is true that I seek knowledge. But my body intrudes on my pursuit of knowledge. If we ever hope to reach pure knowledge of anything, it seems to me we must get rid of our body. I believe that attaining pure knowledge is not possible in the company of a body. As long as I live I may seek knowledge of things, but I will not reach that knowledge of the purest ideas I seek. Gaining knowledge of the uncontaminated truth cannot be done with a soul enchained by a body. I do not wish death, but often its prospect does not scare me. After all, how could one be scared of what one doesn’t know? I have no clue about what life after death could be.’

Socrates paused and then said, ‘I am but one of the swans of Apollo, his servant, and I will sing my swan-song before death. It will be a song of joy to learn what the other world will be like! Apollo gave me meagre prophetic powers, but nevertheless they are not non-existent either. That ship will once announce my death. But do not tell this further, lest I be named a soothsayer!’

The young man granted less attention to these words than to the grass, but he had listened nevertheless to the words of his teacher. Alcibiades rather believed that the soul would be destroyed the day a man died, be dispersed or dissipated, fly away in clouds of thin invisible smoke and vanish. But once in the past already Socrates had argued that the soul would continue to exist after death, with its own force and its own kind of intelligence.

Alcibiades answered therefore, ‘I wonder whether there is life after death at all, Socrates, so let’s enjoy ourselves here and now. Moreover, how can the body distract us from knowledge, when it is with our body that we learn, perceive, hear, see, and feel? Does not all knowledge come from our senses?’

Socrates thought about that. He opened his eyes wide, a favoured trick of his when he wanted to force an argument upon somebody and drive it down onto an interlocutor. It was difficult to withstand those eyes!

Then he said, ‘partly that is so, Alcibiades. But our knowledge comes from our soul and its own perception of its nature, which is one with the pure ideas. Our soul allows us to reason and through reason we can hope to understand something of the One. How does the body distract us from reasoning? Well, that question is easy to answer. Our soul is contaminated by the imperfections of the body, by our desires and fears, the passions and the longings, the cravings and the anger, the emotions that drive us. All these block our reason. Wars and battles and our urges for wealth and sex make us

slaves of the visible world and tear us away from the ideas. The true philosopher should be able to leave this world without grief or bitterness.'

Alcibiades stopped in his track and Socrates continued alone. Alcibiades thought of how they had come from Athens in a small group, walking on foot like pilgrims to Cape Sounion for four days, and sleeping in inns along the road. Socrates had insisted to go on foot, slowly, stopping only every once in a while to rest and then interrogating the young men, his students, which accompanied him. Socrates asked them what religion was, what virtue was, whether they knew what the soul was, and what the difference between sky and land. The young men surmised they knew well these things, but in just a few questions and answers, Socrates had left them confounded and doubting everything. Socrates at first seemed to confirm their ideas, drew many good and easy answers from them, praised them for their intelligence, and then by more answers made them acknowledge exactly the contrary they had said at the beginning. When finally they challenged Socrates to provide them the truth, the idea, the man would only stay silent, say he did not know the truth either, get up and continue the journey. They never got definite answers from Socrates, at least not up until this time, and they had to be content with doubts. So, when Socrates strode on with that awkward rapid swinging of arms of his and with that rolling movement of body on his stocky legs, they first stayed perplex, would look rather dumbly at one another, gather their things and hurry silently after him, while still repeating and pondering over his words in their heads, and still silently arguing against him. But they could never win an outright argument against Socrates. And however much they ruminated over his subjects, they seemed only to be more uncertain about everything, more lost, thoughts whirling around in their minds but never focusing on that ultimate truth to which Socrates alluded so often.

When it came to love and desire and battles, now these were subjects that Alcibiades indeed knew. The group had arrived at the temple inn of Cape Sounion the evening before. Early in the morning, Socrates and Alcibiades had strolled to the Sea, stripped and bathed in the little creek he had been admiring just moments ago. They had swum much, far and deep in the Sea, fought against the waves, which had been more violent than what they had just seen. They were both excellent swimmers, as many Athenians. Tired however, they had run out of the water and they lay down to dry their naked bodies in the sun. The sand of the beach had been cool against their backs. After a while, Alcibiades had caressed and stroked his penis unashamedly, until it had become strong and hard. Alcibiades had been all too eager to feel the other man's hand over his back and thighs. When Alcibiades had expected Socrates to enter him deep and powerfully, the man hadn't moved.

Socrates had looked at the young and splendid body with eager eyes, but merely said, 'Alcibiades, I am not so much attracted towards people endowed with physical beauty as towards those endowed with mental virtue. I will not do what you offer and expect. You are very handsome indeed. I am not insensitive to your beauty. I avoid sexual relations with beautiful people because I would have it difficult to preserve my self-control. I admit submitting to forms of lechery, but not with students of mine.'

Alcibiades had felt rebuffed and hurt and suddenly red shame had filled his face. He had kept laying still then, unified with all the elements of nature that were so overwhelming and quiet in the morning. The men had continued to rest for a long time still, looking at the rising sun and they had seen the clouds slowly passing by. It



was Socrates who had first showed impatience then, stood up and drawn Alcibiades with him to the inn, to eat with the others.

Oh, Alcibiades knew about love and desire all right. He suddenly wanted in some or other way to hurt Socrates, though he knew the futility of such efforts.

So he caught up with him and asked, ‘when you said love and desire diverts you from your investigations into eternity, were you thinking of Myrto, Socrates?’

Myrto was Socrates’s wife. She was a small woman, a head smaller still than Socrates. But she was a woman with broad hips, heavy breasts, round buttocks and a slender waist. For Alcibiades and his friends she was the perfect object of desire. They suspected she might have welcomed any lustful male to her body, besides Socrates. Yet, they had never dared making advances to her.

Socrates, however, had a very practical view when it came to women and he closed the subject. ‘Women are for washing clothes and for cleaning the house, for bearing children and for cooking, for making life agreeable for man and woman both, for raising children too, for learning as much as their husbands and preferably more, for loving, for cherishing and for to be loved. But to be desired is something else.’

And as he strode on, Socrates said in a last phrase, ‘Myrto inspires me the respect that leads to my self-control. You do not.’

Alcibiades was stunned once more, for the second time that day. Socrates would indeed acknowledge certain truths after all.

‘So, you love me then, Socrates?’ Alcibiades asked.

Socrates now really ran, but he did reply to this question too with an answer instead of with an argument and with new questions, ‘I might, Endymion! But what is love?

What is the nature of love?’

Which left Alcibiades strangely skewed again, for Endymion was loved by the Moon, and always asleep.

Socrates then shouted, already far away, ‘I seek to not love and to not desire, Alcibiades, as any philosopher should, and as you should have understood a long time ago. But beware when I do love!’

Yes, Alcibiades had understood by now that Socrates was a bag full of contradictions, made like any other man of body and soul, though. Socrates might have made peace with his contradictions. Alcibiades was still fighting with his own inconsistencies, with the lack of firmer bases for life, and hoping to discover truths as yet. Alcibiades suspected his fellow-student Charmides to be a lover of Socrates. Alcibiades himself lusted for the generous Myrto. He would have liked all too much to be covered by the softness of her ample flesh and her large breasts, yet being able to grab her tiny waist, more than be crushed by the hard muscles of Socrates. He also preferred to take, rather than to be taken, but he was not yet strong and determined enough. He was too unsure of his feelings and of his own desires to always do what he truly liked. He was still probing for all experiences before being able to make up his own mind.

The two men thus advanced towards the Sounion Hiron, the sanctuary of Poseidon, where two other young men of their company had been waiting for them.

The temple of Poseidon at Cape Sounion stood proudly affirming its cold symmetry on the land. The temple had been built only about ten years ago and the finest local marble still sparkled white and unblemished. Its Doric columns were elegant, sculpted with less flutes than usual to expose less surface area to the coarse elements of the

cape and thus to reduce erosion. The Ionic frieze at the east was sculpted in the finest Parian marble. It depicted the battle between the Centaurs and the Lapiths, the gigantomachia, as well as the adventures of Theseus, who some believed to have been the son of Poseidon. The east pediment represented the battle between Poseidon and Athena for the domination of Attica, and Socrates reminded the young men that Athens' acropolis had been dedicated to both gods, even if Athena was the main protectress of the polis. Next to the temple, porticoes had been built along the north and the east for the accommodation of the pilgrims, and here Socrates and his group had passed the night. A little further was the temple of Athena Sounias, but Socrates had come to visit the temple of Poseidon only, which stood so prominently against the sky of the cape. The Doric columns of the building surrounded the hall on all sides. The hall held the statue of the god, but the men did not enter the sanctuary. They had paid their honour to the priest the day before. The four men went to the side of the temple that lay in the shadows, the side also that protected them from the western winds and where the finest frieze could be seen.

The wind, now stronger, tore at their tunics until they were well around the corner. They did not want to be distracted by the roaring of the wind in their ears, for Socrates was going to speak to them, provide them his last lesson of the day.

Alcibiades lingered on before joining the group entirely. He admired the front columns of the temple and the flat triangle of marble that topped them. The frieze and its wonderful sculptures were painted in lively colours. These hues contrasted entirely with the whiteness of the marble columns. They gave a festive touch to the building and also definitely asserted that the construction was man-made and positioned there to be a sign that nature had to give way for the ingenuity and power of Athens. The architect had affirmed the strength and robustness of the temple in the face of the elements, which were powerful at Cape Sounion. Yet, because the temple with the angular lines of its vertical, slender columns and flat triangle was so artificial, showing no form that resembled anything Alcibiades had as yet seen as form of nature, because of its opposition to everything that was of nature and proving its mind-made structure, it was also oddly in harmony with nature, like man was with nature. It did not imitate nature and would thus have proved the imperfection of the human mind, but it was something completely different. It proved its own forms, thus becoming truly a part of the landscape too, a part that was pleasing and not abusing of its difference.

Alcibiades was filled with pride, for his forefathers and his polis had chosen this site for all the ships that passed the cape to admire this temple and be awed with it. It was a grandiose sign of the ingenuity, art, intelligence and taste for proportion of Athens itself. The ships that sailed along the coast would see the temple sparkle in the sun and welcome or stand humbly in awe at this splendid view of Attica's wealth and power, wisely displayed in pure elegance. The seamen would see the whiteness of the temple shine in the morning sun or watch it catching the last rays in the evening. They then would know they would soon be in Piraeus, and feel protected there at last.

Alcibiades reluctantly joined his companions. His resentment against Socrates, his teacher, had not subsided. He had accepted that morning the inevitable rebuke, which had not been the first time, but he resented being not the subject of the sole, exclusive attention of the teacher. He also had it difficult to feel attracted to a man who was

physically so common, lacking elegance and refinement in his manners. He saw in Socrates a man devoid of the softness and delicate strength he had remarked in his comrades, who were all of the finest families of Athens and who all trained with him daily in the gymnasium to give their body the smooth perfection of Athenian athletes. The man drank too much, he was too bulky and too short. He had not the force of a lenient, broad-shouldered swimmer, yet could by sheer brute energy win from all of them. Alcibiades could never win from Socrates at wrestling, and not even in running, for the man jumped and rolled with his chest, driving his torso and legs along with the speed of a bull. Alcibiades wondered how long Socrates could develop and sustain such speed, but he had never challenged him on the longer distances. He suspected that Socrates could then apply another style of running, better adapted to long distance running than anything he, Alcibiades, had discovered so far. He only took solace in the knowledge that he was an excellent horse-rider, whereas Socrates could not afford a horse. Socrates was a hoplite, a warrior on foot for Athens, whereas Alcibiades would ride with the cavalry. But he remembered that no cavalry had ever won a battle for the Hellenes.

Alcibiades could of course also not beat Socrates's elenchus, Socrates's never relenting imagination and cunning in always finding the series of arguments that charmed one into boldly delivering a first nice and cosy statement, which Socrates would applaud, encourage for more and recommend to the audience, as if he acknowledged the intelligence of his interlocutor. Then, by a series of questions which could but have self-evident answers, Socrates led the unsuspecting opponent into declaring finally exactly the opposite of what he had ascertained to start with, leaving the other utterly ridiculous, completely taken by surprise and wondering how by all gods he had arrived at that point, astonished to remain the perfect image of the fool.

It was hard enough to suffer such humiliation in private. In a group, the effect was devastating. Alcibiades had far more often been the spectator than the victim of Socrates's special gifts. He had cheered with his friends when Socrates went through the streets of Athens or strolled in the agora, stopping an innocent acquaintance, soliciting a statement and then bringing his implacable logic on the man to push him inexorably in a corner of reasoning by cause and effect, from which the person could ultimately find no escape. The man would always admit the contrary of what he had ascertained. Alcibiades and his friends would then further ridicule the man, and mock him for his stupidity. They appreciated that particularly when Socrates's opponent was someone they knew from Athens' richer families, standing there like an angry heap of misery. There was no better man to destroy any authority than Socrates, and Alcibiades's respect for the elders of his city had much diminished from being with his teacher.

When Socrates had however started to challenge Alcibiades with the same procedure, first in private and later in public, and although Alcibiades had learnt much to keep the elenchus going on longer and longer, making it more and more difficult for Socrates to lead him to contradictions, Socrates would always be the victor of the debate. Alcibiades had therefore lingered now, so that Socrates could not elicit a first statement from him. Socrates had chosen Paralus son of Pericles to begin with the lesson. Alcibiades smiled meekly at the knowledge that the lesson would be on Paralus and not be on Alcibiades, and he was satisfied.

Socrates seemed to be in a gentle mood. Alcibiades went to the middle of his friends Paralus and Charmides. He sat down on the rocks at the end of the area that was evened off, at the end of the marble platform in front of the temple. He was quite at leisure now, and sat with slightly crossed legs. Paralus lay on the ground, on his back, supported by his elbows, chewing on a short helm of grass. Charmides stood leaning against another rock. Socrates paused squarely before them, enough in the wind so that his chiton of coarse wool constantly shifted around his body, occasionally baring his chest. Socrates was talking about two and three, about tall and short.

Socrates asked to Paralus whether he was taller than Alcibiades and Paralus had answered yes.

‘All right,’ Socrates had said. ‘Paralus is taller than Alcibiades. Surely that must be because Paralus possesses more the attribute of tallness in comparison with the height of Alcibiades.’

Alcibiades did not like a bit this turn of events and once more the lesson had started badly, but he remained silent and looked quasi-respectfully at Socrates.

‘Now,’ Socrates continued, ‘we can all see that Paralus however is not taller than Charmides here.’

Socrates pointed to Charmides, who was one of the tallest young men Alcibiades had ever met.

‘So,’ Socrates said, ‘how can you, Paralus, be both tall and short, being the intermediate between Charmides and Alcibiades? One cannot be short and tall at the same time, can one not?’

Paralus agreed but said not more.

‘It seems to me,’ Socrates said, ‘that the feature of being the tallest, is something entirely different from being short or tall, and short and tall are opposites. There is nothing like being the tallest. When we talk about one person being shorter than another, either the notion of tallest has receded, or it does not exist anymore. The feature of being the tallest does not stay what it is when we think of shortness. Tallness does not transform itself into shortness, doesn’t it? Tall and short are opposite notions that do not reconcile by one changing, moving, transforming into the other. Don’t you agree?’

Paralus once more agreed wholeheartedly on that.

Socrates continued. ‘So, Charmides, your being the tallest, that quality does not accept being short. Can you then not agree with me, that being the tallest – or any other quality, by the way – while remaining what it was, cannot take on the opposite quality? Does it not either withdraw or cease to exist, Alcibiades?’

‘I must agree with you entirely,’ Alcibiades acquiesced, feeling the danger in his toes, but answering nonchalantly and not showing too much interest. He was wondering where this would lead them to. Such obvious, simple assertions as Socrates gave them here led to nowhere. Where was Socrates heading?

‘Right,’ Socrates said. ‘Now, take the number three. That is an odd number. The number three must always be called by its name of three, but it is also an odd number; it possesses the quality of being odd. Yet, odd and three are not the same thing. Three is an odd number but it is not the same as oddness. And two is not identical with even. Do you listen to me, Alcibiades?’

Alcibiades was forced to pay attention now. ‘Well, of course,’ he replied.

‘Fine. Well then. Now pay very careful attention to what I am going to say. We agreed that opposites such as being tall and being short, tallness and shortness, do not

admit one another. The one quality will never transit into the other. With two and three we have another notion yet. Two and three are not opposites like tall and short. Yet, they possess opposite quality for two is even and three is odd. If the quality of oddness would enter two, then two would not be two anymore. Two would not exist anymore. Similarly, if the quality of evenness would move into three then three would not exist anymore; it would disappear. Two and three are not opposites, but two shall prefer to disappear rather than agree to take on the quality of oddness. Two and three do not take on the opposite idea to that which is in them, but on the approach of that opposite quality cease to exist or disappear before it. Thus, again, three will prefer to cease to exist rather than vow to become even while it remains three. And yet, two and three are not opposites.'

Socrates drew his dress right, then continued. 'The notion of even will never enter into three. Three is incompatible with the notion of evenness. Three is uneven. Three will never admit the notion of even.'

All agreed to that. They were all attentive now, eager to know where this speech would bring them.

'Fine,' Socrates said then. 'Now, tell me, Alcibiades, what should be in a body to bring it to life?'

Alcibiades did not have to think long about that, so he answered the evident, 'the soul! The soul takes possession of a body and brings life.'

'Right again,' Socrates agreed, and Alcibiades relaxed. 'What then is the opposite of being alive?'

Alcibiades answered, 'being dead.'

'And according to what we just agreed, soul will never admit the opposite of the notion, the feature, and the quality that comes with it. Isn't that so?'

'Of course,' Alcibiades said, feeling the trap.

'Then,' Socrates continued, 'do you agree with me that soul cannot transform into death, and take on the quality of death?'

'I do,' Alcibiades acknowledged.

'Well', Socrates concluded triumphantly, 'So the soul does not die since it cannot transform and take on the quality of being dead. It simply does not die.'

'No, of course not,' Paralus exclaimed.

'But the notion of oddness, of which we talked before, is imperishable. You will agree with me that three is also eternal, does not ever disappear.'

Socrates held a small silence, and looked at the sky. Then he continued to talk. 'Let's take another example. The notion of coldness is equally eternal. When you apply warmth, its opposite, cold, disappears. Think of something that is cold, like snow. Snow would not withdraw into becoming its opposite, and not change to water, without warmth. When snow warms up it cannot remain what it was and still be called snow! Yet, snow, as we know it, would still exist. So, if what is alive, such as the soul is, is also imperishable. It is impossible that when the notion of death approaches the soul, the soul should cease to be, because the soul is life itself. So the soul can also not take on the quality of death and stay what it was, just as snow cannot become warm and remain snow. Odd cannot become even at the approach of even. And odd does not cease to exist. When even comes, odd and three depart but do not cease to exist. So if in the case of being alive we agree that this is also eternal, the soul will be eternal as well as being life itself. Something that is alive, having the quality of life, cannot be changed into having the quality of death. When a man dies, the part that is

alive of him retires and departs at the approach of death, and must escape unharmed and remain indestructible’.

‘So,’ Socrates concluded, ‘we have proven that the soul cannot take on the notion of death. The soul is eternal.’

‘Most truly so,’ an enchanted Charmides agreed.

Alcibiades remained a while standing with red cheeks, for the lesson had after all indeed be given on him!

Alcibiades was thinking, ‘well have you ever! Who would have thought that? The man proved the soul is eternal. My soul will not die.’

He stood open-mouthed now by the surprise. He had never thought before about his soul and about what would happen when he died.

After a while he said, breaking the spell, ‘and I am hungry and my body will pass away if I do not get something to eat rapidly. Let’s return to the inn.’

When Socrates, Charmides, Paralus and Alcibiades arrived at the inn inside the porticoes at Cape Sounion, beneath Mount Laurion, evening had set in. The sun was disappearing over the horizon. They sat in the open square in the middle of the house, stretched out their legs, rubbed the tiredness from their feet and continued to talk while waiting for darkness to fall and the stars to shine. But for a few other guests in a corner, pilgrims for Poseidon, they were alone to wait for dinner. The master of the inn brought oil lamps and he ordered his slaves to bring little dishes with various kinds of food, one after the other. The guests got bread and some opsôn with the bread. The slaves brought different sorts of cheese, bits of roasted fish, fresh water from the mountains, green and brown olives and fruit. Socrates and the youth could choose from pieces of meat threaded on a spit. The meat was sprinkled with salt, roasted on an open fire and on its red-hot embers. The inn-keeper also brought them dishes of the smaller fish, but they were surprised to have fish at all: sprats and anchovies, pieces of eel and of octopus, and bits of salted mackerel. They received bread in the form of maza, cakes of barley-flour. The men ate with their fingers. They ate eagerly, taking their dishes from the small tables that were arranged in their midst. They took the olives, the nuts and a few acorns. They were lying down on wooden benches covered with thick mats of cloth.

Socrates could not really stay silent. He asked appropriately, ‘what is the aim of cooking?’

Alcibiades answered, ‘to give us food so that we would not starve.’

‘No, that is eating. By cookery I mean preparing delicious dishes.’

‘Then the aim of cookery is to give us pleasure.’

‘If it is pleasure, Alcibiades, rather than aimed at our well-being, is it not contemptible?’

‘Well, Socrates, is pleasure bad?’

Socrates had talked enough for the evening. His students could think about that short conversation.

When they had finished, the inn keeper brought them sweet honey. Socrates asked for wine later on, and while he sipped cup after cup, all remained silent, already half asleep, the young men still drinking only water, and watching the sky.

When the master of the inn had cleaned all the dishes from the tables, they decided to sleep right there, under the open sky and the flickering stars, for the air was fresh but

warm enough to stay outside and none of them had the courage or felt like taking up his bench and move it inside the house, into the sleeping rooms. Socrates was almost drunk now and Alcibiades saw the man's dark eyes glimmering with lust in the last light of an oil-lamp, like twin stars. He fell asleep soon, and snored loudly.

## Laurion

The following morning, the men rose early. They ate breakfast rapidly and set off for their journey back to Athens. They walked along a rocky path in the hot sun. Alcibiades asked Socrates and his friends to visit the silver mines of Mount Laurion. Socrates suspected quite rightly that the young man wanted to see by himself the origin of his wealth. Very few people knew what Alcibiades's mother and his warden had confided to him two years before.

Alcibiades's father, the Athenian general Cleinias, had died gloriously in the Battle of Chaeronea when Alcibiades was seven years old. His mother took him to the leader of her family, to Pericles the Great, the most powerful man of Athens. Pericles had been Alcibiades's warden since that day, summoned him regularly to see how he did and how he progressed in knowledge and strength. Pericles sent Alcibiades to school to learn music and writing. Alcibiades learnt the art of speaking in public, and Pericles had ordered a friend to initiate Alcibiades in athletics. Alcibiades learnt to run hard, to jump far, to ride horses and light chariots, to throw the disk and the javelin. It was Pericles who had taken him in his own ship to his first Olympic Games in the region of Elis in the Peloponnese. And it was actually there, that Pericles and his mother had told him how wealthy he actually was, and where the largest part of his fortune came from.

The silver mines of Laurion were many. Alcibiades's father had provided with friends of his the money to exploit several of the smaller sites of the silver mines, sites that were aside and behind the larger places where the precious ores were dug out. Cleinias's name was not even mentioned as one who was associated with this industry and who leased part of the mining concessions, but the innings flowed in regularly and amply. Alcibiades was among the five richest men of Athens, but only few men of the polis knew what the source was of the wealth for Alcibiades's family was involved in many enterprises. Pericles respected the wealth not a little and looked after Alcibiades with the interest of a public politician, eager to assure for himself the support of the richest families of the city, even though the base of his power were his capacities as a demagogue in addressing the Assembly of Athens. Alcibiades also noted the particular interest Pericles gave his mother Deinomache, each time they met. He noted the silent complicity between the two in a touch or a glance, and he had started wondering what the true relations were between his mother and the man. Alcibiades knew where his money came from, but he wondered sometimes where he himself had come from.

Because of the leases on parts of the production of the silver mines, Alcibiades belonged to the pentakosiomedimnoi, the five-hundred-bushel men, the richest class of citizens of Athens. He was also formally a hippeis, a knight, and known by most only as a member of the hippeis. He would serve in the cavalry of Athens. The middle class of the polis, the zeugitai, served as hoplites and the poor, the thetes, would be sailors and oarsmen in the fleet.

Alcibiades knew where his money came from. But he had never actually seen a silver mine. When Socrates proposed – actually commanded – to go on a journey to Cape Sounion, he had begged Socrates to pass by the silver mines of Mount Laurion. The men were on a road now that climbed into the mountain. The road was lined with trees so that they could advance in the shadows. They saw another road in the far, where cartloads advanced laden with the silver ore, on their way to the place where the silver would be washed away from the dirt, smelted and poured into forms of pure silver to be brought to the Mint of Athens. The silver ore was pounded up in mortars, milled, and washed before being smelted down in furnaces.

Alcibiades was not so much interested in how the silver was actually separated from the ores. He had seen smelting ovens before in Athens, in the Mint near the agora. He was interested in the very source of his wealth, the mines. When the men came to the actual site, they saw more and more armed men, guardians and warriors of the mining site.

At the names of Alcibiades and Paralus, the guards opened the fences and let the group pass. An commander, one of the head guards of the mine had been warned of their arrival by one of the warriors, and this man came now running towards them, only too willing to show them around the site. Not that there was much to see after all. The dust was everywhere. There was a huge dent in the rocks of the mountain, but Socrates and the young men saw only a set of large, dark holes in the mass of the mountain and in the ground, from which men emerged wearing heavy baskets. The holes in the ground were square. They were mostly shafts, and ladders stood in the holes, leading deep into the earth. An endless row of other men entered. They were naked but for a loincloth. Among the men were many young boys. These transported the ore out of the mines. There were many such holes dug deep into the mountain, following the lodes. The holes were not all at the same level. Before the entries, dark earth had gathered, was tread upon, and in the dry hotness of the burning sun clouds of dust enveloped the men and the boys that came and went, like ants, from and into the mountain.

There were armed guards everywhere at Laurion; men armed with javelin and swords, and with sticks. They would now and then hit a man who arrived out of the caves, blinded by the light of the sun. The workers were for the most part young men. There were also a few more mature men, all heavily muscled, slaves of course, with a numbness in their eyes that staggered Alcibiades, hair caked together with dust and sweat, unwashed, stinking, and stepping slowly on, without energy. A little further there were also women at work, and old men, sifting the ore-bearing rock. Some of the women were pregnant.

The men and women and children worked unconsciously with sunken heads. Alcibiades noticed the tears, the new wounds, the dark lines of beatings on the backs and chests of the slaves. Slaves could not be killed in Athens and house slaves were well treated in general. Nothing forbade severe punishment, however, and Socrates and his company saw here what these laws meant at Laurion. Athenian society was tolerant. Nobody wore arms inside the walls of the polis, but this was another Athens. The mine guards had no particular interest in killing the men who worked in the mines, but not much value was granted to the human beings that



worked here either. Alcibiades and Socrates were thinking the same: who earned most of the money, the men that owned the mines or the men that sold slaves to the mine owners?

Alcibiades had seen enough. He did not need to see the interior of the mines, and the commanders of the guards had already twice warned them of the dangers inside, implored them not to enter. Socrates, Paralus, and Charmides were not inclined to going any deeper anyhow inside the mines. They drew their noses shut and all looked to Alcibiades with eyes that entreated him to leave this place. Alcibiades had gone over to one of the entries however, followed by the anxious commander. He had looked inside, inside the shafts, only to see nothing but darkness way down, lighted by a scarce oil lamp. He heard the noises of men shuffling in and out with their baskets and he heard the distant noises of picks on rock. He had drawn back soon from the heath inside, and not gone further.

The men talked for a while with the guards, and saw how the wagons were loaded. Then they left the scene, not without having noticed two bodies of naked dead men thrown aside in a shadowy place, waiting there to be summarily buried. They left the mine in silence. They followed the wagon road, then diverted to the north, towards Athens.

Later, Socrates talked again. He said that although the soul must be immortal, it had also the qualities of the body it inhabited. He therefore pointed out the duty of the young men to exercise their soul in virtue. He told them the way to virtue was through acquiring knowledge.

‘Knowledge is virtue,’ he said, stating quite firmly that knowledge could be gained through learning. A learned man was a virtuous man and a man without virtue had lacked acquiring knowledge. A man with knowledge was a wise man. Wisdom was virtue. A man could only do harm to others through lack of virtue, which was through lack of knowledge.

Alcibiades was ill at ease. He knew the men who had grown rich from selling slaves to the silver mines, and these were among the most learned and intelligent men of the town. He looked at his deceased father as upon an idol. How could these intelligent, learned and wise men be virtuous and yet know about the fate of the slaves at Laurion? Alcibiades started to wonder what other truths reigned the world than Socrates’s truths.

Socrates believed in the transmigration of the soul. Since the soul was eternal, he said, souls entered new bodies and gave life to them. Alcibiades could not well understand how a man’s soul could enter the body of an animal, but that was also what Socrates seemed to affirm. Alcibiades quite well understood the lesson however, and also why Socrates had accepted to go to the mines. Alcibiades had seen the slaves. According to Socrates, only the un-exercised soul of the wicked men of previous lives had returned in the slaves. But he wasn’t too sure of that anymore. He could hardly imagine Nicias son of Niceratus, the purveyor of slaves, to return a slave himself. The slaves were the poorest and the lowest of men. On the other end of the scale, the gods reigned. Men resembled the gods, but the gods were of another nature. Alcibiades knew well enough how earth had been created and how the gods had come

to be. He had wondered what was peculiar to men but he had never yet thought of what would happen with him after his death. Life was very strong on him.

Alcibiades had been asking himself whether he was body or soul, and although proud of his body, and convinced of the use of having a well proportioned, well exercised and fine complexion, he concluded finally that he, Alcibiades, was his soul in the first place. Socrates was right in that. He was rather convinced that his soul must, already in a previous life, have dwelled in the body of a hero. His soul could not have been the soul of his father, for his father had lived for several years after his birth. Maybe his soul was the soul of one of the legendary heroes of the songs of Homer.

Alcibiades knew beyond a doubt that he had to grow his aretê, his status, pride and honour, beyond that of men to become wealthier even, strong and fine for his next life. While he walked on the long journey back to Athens, his determination grew to become such a leader as the polis of Athens had never experienced before. He was convinced that he could and was destined to become that.

Pericles and Socrates had let him understand that he had everything of quality that they could muster: beauty of complexion and intelligence, wealth and upbringing and descent. Was he not a member of the noble clan of the Salaminoi through his father? He was an Alcmaeonid like Pericles through his mother. He was a great-great grandchild of an ally of Cleisthenes himself, who had chased the last sons of Athens' tyrants and who had installed the isonomia, the democracy, in Athens. He was a descendant of Megacles who, long ago, had defeated would-be tyrants on Athens' citadel, the Acropolis, and executed the men. He was an Eupatrid, an aristocrat of Athens. On his father's side he descended from Eurysaces, son of Ajax. He belonged to the phratry, the brotherhood, of the Scambonid. He was a great grandchild of a man who had fought as a trierarch in the Persian wars on his own paid ship, and the grandchild of a man who had been ostracised.

Alcibiades was descended from the greatest men of Athens indeed. So was his brother Cleinias, but Cleinias was not as extraordinarily handsome as he was, not so intelligent, not so generally admired. Alcibiades lisped, but everybody he had met had even admired this speech defect as one quality more that demarked him from his fellow citizens. He thought with proud expectation of the moment he would say all this to the citizens that sat at the dokimasia, the interrogation he had to pass to be officially registered as an Athenian citizen. He would soon be of the age to pass the dokimasia. He would cite his glorious forefathers. The interrogation should be a mere formality.

Alcibiades was impatient to prove his valour and the ambitions that Socrates had awakened in him. He straightened his neck, looked more decidedly forward now and murmured, 'my soul must be a shining, ethereal, golden and silver soul. My soul must have been the soul of a succession of the most valiant men on earth that lived before me. I should not shame my soul. I shall be Alcibiades, the man chosen by my soul. I shall be Alcibiades, the most brilliant man of Athens. I have to be. It is my destiny and I owe that to the soul that has chosen me. Athens, Athens, master of the cities of the Delian League, centre of the world: I shall rule you, and you shall acclaim me'.

## ***Chapter 2 – Athens, the first Month of 433 BC***

### **Socrates**

Socrates walked through the streets of Athens in the late afternoon. He went with light sandals on his feet although the air was very fresh, and he wore the same clothes in which he had travelled on his journey to Mount Laurion and Cape Sounion with his students last autumn. It took him a long time to reach the vicinity of the house of Pericles and Aspasia, where he had been invited to a dinner party. That was because Socrates liked to look around, to chat and to wander about while under way, like a young child given the treat of a walk.

A slave boy of eleven or so had suddenly appeared in the aulé of his house and given him an invitation in words, not in writing. Socrates gave some honey to the boy, but no coins, and he remarked with satisfaction that the boy appreciated; then he sent him back with the promise he, Socrates, would arrive quite before the setting of the sun the same day.

In the afternoon, Socrates began his stroll at leisure, seeking out the features that had changed on his road since the last time he had passed here. He interrogated people who happened to be in the streets on why and how this or that house had been modified. He remarked with satisfaction which new Hermae had been placed, noting which people had moved out or in.

The streets of Athens buzzed with life. Socrates saw potters work in the open court of their houses, woodcutters demonstrating their art, legume and fruit sellers offering him their merchandise in small stalls. Women were spinning wool threads, and in one aulé he saw through the open door two women work at a warp-weighted vertical loom. Women were still coming back from the communal fountain, from the Eneakrounos, the fountain with the nine mouths in the agora, wearing large water-jars, hydriai. They stopped to chat and Socrates could exchange a few words and jokes with them.

There were many stalls at the street corners, and Socrates admired at one of these the fine alabastrons filled with delicate perfumes. He had no money however to buy the more expensive ones. It was a cool and dry day, calm in the near evening. Most artisans and merchants continued their business as the day was far from over yet. Many of the men knew him, for he had talked to them several times before, and he politely greeted men he hadn't seen before, stopping here and there to chat. The Athenians were eager to talk with him, especially, as Socrates knew well, when he asked them about their own life and affairs, their woes and happy moments, their businesses and how their sons and daughters were doing. Socrates patted children on the head and found therefore immediate favour in the mothers. He commented on the fineness of a pottery or the quality of a fruit, the delicacy of a new chiton, and the gentle flattery made the men be more candid with him.

Socrates modified his normal route and strolled along the agora. Life was busy here, and he went by the stalls that were still open in the marketplace. The marketplace was crammed with selling tables and workshops. Socrates admired the last displays of the fishmongers. He passed at the bookstalls where tens of scrolls lay on tables. He lingered near the cooks, carpenters, oil-merchants, nut-sellers, bonnet-sellers, hatters,

bakers, fullers, statuette-makers and many other artisans selling their goods in the marketplace. The goods came from all over the Hellenic world. There were shoes from Argos and Sicyon. Fine, richly worked linen tunics from the island of Amorgos were being sold. He took one of the tunics in his hand and admired the patterns on the cloth and the fineness of the material. These were not for him. He sighed and passed on. Water dripped from his mouth at the stalls filled with dead thrushes and hares. He passed the sausage-sellers holding his head high, admiring the clouds in the sky. He ignored the smells of the meat stews, of grilled pork and mutton and goats' meat. He loved the smells of the various cheeses, especially the delicious goat cheese that was being grated at a stall. He examined the pots of aromatic herbs at another stall and inhaled eagerly the smells of mint, cinnamon and thyme. The fish-sellers haggled loudly with potential buyers over the price of Rhodian dog-fish, ribbon-fish, eels from Lake Copais, sea-breems, cuttlefish and conger-eels, and many a buyer left, not with the expensive Ambracian boar-fish he had wished in his hands, but with only sprats, anchovies and other smaller fishes. Fish was very expensive these days, and prices were up! The mongers also sold tuna, shell-fish, molluscs, squid, and all sorts of dried and salted fish. A baker sold his artos, loaves of round bread made from wheat-flour. On the baker's stalls also lay very fine cakes of barley-flour.

Socrates then walked by the wine-sellers, who commended him their sweet Chian and other Ionian wines. This was the east side of the agora. He walked on, under the plane trees of the place. He did not enter the taverns, the kapêlêions of Athens, though he knew many of the kapêloi, as well as the barmaids that served. He would have wine enough, soon, at Pericles's symposium.

Socrates was proud of his Athens. He admired the buildings of his polis. At the north end of the agora stood the Portico of the Kings, also called the Portico of Zeus. He saw there the temple of Apollo Patrôus and the Metrôun, which was the sanctuary of Cybele, the mother of the gods. In this building were kept the public archives. A little further stood the Bouleutêrion, where the Council met, and the Tholos, the building of the Prytaneis, where the members of the Council took their meals.

Socrates strolled on, and laughed a while at a pair of jugglers and tumblers, which made daring somersaults while pretending to be clumsy.

On the other side of the agora he walked past the altar of the twelve Olympian gods, past the Temple of Ares and the monument of the Eponymous Heroes, who gave their names to the ten tribes of Athens. The altar of the twelve gods was known as the centre of Attica. Distances of the country were calculated from this altar. Athens really was the centre of the world, Socrates surmised. He stepped inside the Stoa Poikilé, the painted Stoa, and admired the paintings of Polygnotus, Panaenus and Micon in the gallery. The paintings represented the Battle of Marathon, the Trojan War, the battles of Theseus with the Amazons and other scenes of victories of Athenians. Here also hung famous shields captured by Athens on its enemies.

Socrates went along the Sanctuary of Theseus. Then he strolled in the sumptuous colonnades of the west side. He saw the Prytaneum, the town hall, in which many banquets were offered. He lingered, as he did often, at the Laws of Solon, which were the sacred laws of the polis of Athens. The laws were written on long wooden blocks or kurbeis, which revolved on axles, the axionis, set in a frame. Any citizen of Athens could come to the City Hall and read Solon's laws, turning the kurbeis and reading the regulations. The law code of Solon was what made Athens the pride of Attica.

Socrates left the agora and walked on.

When Socrates approached Pericles's house, he heard his name being called out from behind him. He turned around, waited, and saw Aristodemus, a Kydathenean, come forward hurriedly. Aristodemus was dressed up elaborately, and he greeted Socrates with profusion. He told he suspected Socrates was invited too at Pericles's dinner party. When Socrates acquiesced that yes, he was indeed going to the house of Pericles, Aristodemus proposed to join him. Aristodemus always knew the latest gossip of the city's politics, so Socrates asked him what kept Athens busy these days. Aristodemus was a heavy man and he panted, so Socrates slowed down his pace even more, let Aristodemus catch his breath, and listened. Aristodemus liked to make large gestures to illustrate his stories, and Socrates cherished the enthusiasm that accompanied a good story. Aristodemus told a story that Socrates had heard before, at least the early pieces of it, but Aristodemus started from the very beginning.

Aristodemus spoke of a city called Epidamnus, a city way up in the northern regions of Hellas, situated on the western coast. This town had been founded by Phalius son of Eratocleides, a Corinthian of the family of the Heraclids. Phalius had arrived from the island and city of Corcyra, so it was a colony of Corcyra, that city equally founded by Corinthians. A few years before, the democratic party of Epidamnus had driven out the aristocratic party. These last joined the Taulantians, the Illyrian race that inhabited the country of Epidamnus and they harassed the city together. The democrats sent an embassy to Corcyra, begging their mother country for help. But the Corcyraeans, jealous of Epidamnus' wealth, refused to receive the ambassadors. The people of Epidamnus appealed to the Oracle at Delphi for advice on what they should do. The Oracle replied that they should hand over their city to the Corinthians, who had founded Epidamnus, and get help from that side. Epidamnus sent a delegation to Corinth to beg for help and assistance. The Corinthians were glad to comply, for the Corcyraeans had become powerful and refused to pay their respects to Corinth. Corinth grasped a nice occasion to spite the Corcyraeans.

Corinth sent an army and new settlers over land to Epidamnus, for Corcyra had a strong fleet of a hundred and twenty triremes, whereas Corinth was much weaker in naval power at that time. When the Corcyraeans heard of this, they sent twenty five ships to Epidamnus and demanded that the exiled oligarchs be re-installed. The Epidamnians refused of course, and with forty triremes the Corcyraeans besieged the town. The Corinthians then assembled with their allies a fleet of seventy five triremes, declared war to Corcyra, and set off. But eighty ships of Corcyra intercepted the Corinthian fleet at Leucimme and defeated the Corinthians. The Corinthians did not accept this insult. They brooded for revenge. But what could they do? Corcyra was too powerful for them at the moment.

While Aristodemus talked, another of their friends, Glaucon, had approached. Glaucon had missed the early part of Aristodemus' story, so he asked particulars. Socrates used the opportunity to enter Pericles's house.

### **Aspasia**

Pericles and his wife Aspasia stood in the aulé of their house when Socrates pushed open the door, and Socrates found with slight embarrassment that he had fell in on what was nothing less than a minor domestic dispute. The subject of the dispute was Alcibiades. Alcibiades, some time before, had left Pericles's house surreptitiously and

eloped to one of their lesser acquaintances, a certain Democratus. Socrates did not know this Democratus, but Aspasia was obviously irritated and she called Socrates to witness.

Aspasia said with a rising voice, ‘Socrates, I do not agree with what Alcibiades did. He should not have left this house to follow his inclination. I know that. But he is still very young and Eros is the oldest god among all and also the greatest, for there is no greater good than to be beloved. I understand and find some excuse for Alcibiades. He was not ashamed to show his love and I believe he might have been willing to die for the sake of his lover, like Alcestis died for her husband. Alcibiades is protected by the gods too, for they hold in esteem the zeal of the lover, much more than the virtue of the beloved, for the lover has the gods within him.’

Pericles answered with growing impatience, ‘well, if we are to talk of the gods, for the gods’ sake, don’t forget that there are two Eroses, just like there are two Aphrodites. There is the noble Uranian Aphrodite and there is the Pandemian Aphrodite, the common and the vulgar.’

‘True,’ Aspasia retorted, ‘but I heard it often said that the Uranian Aphrodite leads males more to males and the Pandemian Aphrodite males to females. I heard moreover men say that their noble and most vigorous love was addressed to other males since it was not stained by the passions as happen between male and female.’ Pericles grew angry at those words, ‘where would you lead your husband to, Aspasia? Pederasty is a disgrace. There is a law in Athens protecting boys. The law says it is shameful to draw boys into one’s nets and to abuse of them. Alcibiades has not sought the great and proud thoughts of the Uranian Aphrodite, and neither did Democratus. I too agree that it is nobler to love in the open than in secret, as you should know, Aspasia, and I do see grace in the lover, even between males. But an act nobly done is noble and an act basely done is base. I can find no good in what Democratus did. In truth, he seduced Alcibiades to shame our family and he did it just to put me and my brother to the test. Our law does not gratify that kind of affection. Alcibiades too let himself be caught too easily, which is shameful. I find no virtue in that act, or prudence, or reserve, or good, or wisdom. Democratus deceived Alcibiades and so Alcibiades was disgraced. And that is that.’

Ariphron, Pericles’s brother, had joined them from within the house and he continued with violence on the last words of Pericles, ‘there are sickly and there are healthy things of the body. We should not gratify the sick acts. Alcibiades and Democratus broke our harmony, our peace. We should have needed temperance and decency, and not a public scandal, not this corruption of the senses. Democratus used his power over Alcibiades for a reproachful act. That had to be stopped and that was why I would have extricated the relation and called Democratus to court to be judged, so that he would have had to give accounts for his ignominious acts. But Pericles stopped me from calling Democratus to face charges.’

Aspasia visibly cooled off. Pericles continued, ‘yes, I stopped Ariphron. Love can be in the open, but Ariphron convinced me that this was not a noble love. Still, I did not want Alcibiades to be pursued for the rest of his life by this shame and the shame would have been public knowledge to all Athens if we had gone to court. I quenched the affair and squashed Democratus like a fly to the wall, but I fear the rumours will not be stopped. Shameful, I say!’

Alcibiades's nurse, Amycla, joined in. She had nursed Alcibiades ever since his birth and though he did not really need her anymore even as a servant, for she was old now, he had insisted to keep her around. She could not hear a bad word said against her darling. She was a Spartan, but Alcibiades was her most beloved child. When Pericles had finished, she also started to speak and nobody stopped her, for she was wise and respected. Pericles listened with amusement.

'Eros is also the youngest of the gods, the god of youth, the god of beauty and of virtue,' she pleaded. 'He is not a violent god. He is the god of harmony. He does no injustice and knows no shame, for he is virtuous. My Alcibiades could not resist Eros, like even Ares could not resist Eros. He was possessed by Eros and meant no harm.' Aspasia too listened, now laughing and glancing and with the seductive eyes of conspiracy at Pericles.

The old nurse continued, 'Alcibiades was ready to give love, gentleness, wanting to give to Democratus everything he had, up to his soul.'

Pericles made a gesture of impatience and said on this, 'Democratus did not just want Alcibiades's soul, but indeed a particular piece of his body, and most surely too all his money. Luckily, I could bring him back to us before any paper was signed.'

Socrates then spoke out, wishing to end a discussion he had heard before and during which he had become more and more uneasy, reddening sometimes with embarrassment.

He said, 'you all talk of Eros as if he were a god. But Eros is the longing for the good and the beautiful, which means it is in need of that. How can he who is in need of beauty and good – because he has no share of it or at least not enough of a share – be a god? Eros must be something between a god and a mortal: a daemon, who interprets divine things to humans and transfers things from gods to humans and around. Gods do not mingle with humans, and Eros does. Besides, that daemon must be quite tough indeed and powerful, as we all know and have experienced. Eros is a hunter seeking his prey, a weaver of intrigues, very much alive and full of resources, not very wise, but not without understanding either.'

Aspasia broke in on these words, 'Eros is Alcibiades then, and Eros possessed Alcibiades.'

Socrates continued, 'Eros is in the lover, not in the beloved, and Alcibiades saw in his beloved all that is beautiful and good, all I have tried to teach him. Eros is the desire for good and beautiful things. We mortals seek immortality. Have you not noticed how love changes an old man into a young one? The man becomes happy again, in body and soul. Alcibiades seeks immortality, and that is expressed in his love these days, as in all young people. His body is more powerful than his soul, of course, because of his youth. The soul seeks prudence and virtue, moderation and justice, but these qualities are less obvious to Alcibiades currently. He seeks beauty and good but doesn't seem to know yet what is beauty and good.'

The friends of Socrates stayed silent after such a speech.

'Well,' Aspasia said, emerging finally out of her thoughts, 'so he can be excused and we have to bring Alcibiades to recognise where the true good is and the beautiful.'

'Yes,' Socrates agreed to that. 'Alcibiades glimpsed beauty and he leapt for it, but he has to move on beyond the practice of pederasty and advance to perfection. He must be led – since he is young – to always more beauty for the sake of beauty, from beautiful bodies to beautiful ideas, from lesson to lesson to beauty and the good. He

shall ultimately find pure beauty and virtue. Eros is a very relative thing, only a longing for. It is unlike beauty and good, which are absolute things. Alcibiades felt attracted to the beautiful Democratus and Democratus was beautiful to Alcibiades because Democratus flattered him. That was Alcibiades's Eros. Poor Alcibiades: the longing must have given him considerable pain and a great, nagging urge in his breast for fulfilment of the longing. We should not blame Alcibiades too hard. He is young and hence not happy. Alcibiades looks for immortality, and at the moment therefore he seeks sex, to reproduce. He has only access to men, however, to also seek the pure and beautiful. This is not the good, but he must learn. His bodily desires, his appetites are directed by his soul's longing for knowledge.'

Ariphron did not want to insult Socrates, but he shrugged as if he found all of this merely theories of reality-estranged men.

Pericles answered now, 'Socrates, Alcibiades's longing and desire for immortality should lift him indeed to other heights, to purity indeed, not to the sexual infatuation he indulges with Democratus. When will his longing, his eros, be better directed? You want to teach? I suspect you are also sexually attracted to your students because of that.'

'True,' Socrates said, 'I am a pimp, really.'

This was too much for Aspasia, who always kept herself firmly on her feet when her men were rising from the floor and at the verge of floating in the air, losing touch with reality.

She said, 'Alcibiades needs to learn. Socrates can teach him the beauty and the good. Alcibiades can have no contact with women and if Socrates taught him to seek the beautiful, he could only seek it in men. We have to teach him what women are. Aphrodite will teach him his right sex. We have to bring him to Aphrodite. He has to go to Cyprus.'

'Oh no,' Pericles exclaimed.

'Not me,' Ariphron cried and made a refusing gesture with his hands.

'I am not leaving Athens,' Socrates cried, appalled.

'I'll ask Protagoras, then,' Aspasia said.

'Not that old quack,' Pericles protested.

'Oh yes,' Aspasia insisted, 'and don't you try to resist me. Protagoras does everything he is paid for. It is a long journey to Cyprus. Protagoras can teach Alcibiades how to speak well on the boat, and I know he has already been to Cyprus; he knows what to do and what not. The more I think of it, the more I believe that Protagoras is the ideal man: mature, all-knowing, wise, virtuous and willing to help the house of Pericles.'

Pericles and Ariphron gave up, 'well, Aspasia, you do as you want. We will not be able to say no to you. You organise it!'

Thereby the dispute ended, and poor Alcibiades would have to prepare for a long travel to Cyprus. Aristodemus and Glaucon entered the house at that point, so the conversation stopped. Pericles asked Aspasia to go back to her rooms, and the men proceeded to the hall in which they would hold a symposium.



## Symposium

The guests of Pericles gathered one by one in the andron and sat down on the couches. Pericles welcomed everybody to the party. He stood alone in the middle of the hall and sprinkled a few drops of wine on the floor, as well as in the sacrificial stand, offering a libation to Agathos Daimon, the good spirit of symposiums. He pleaded for a peaceful, agreeable dinner party. Then, he clapped in his hands, and two servants came in to arrange the low tables in front of the couches. On these tables small basins were brought in, filled with water. Pericles invited his guests to wash their hands. When all had done so, the servants took away the basins. Three young servant-girls came in then, and hung wreaths of flowers around the necks of the men. A few giggles were heard, as one of the men had pinched a girl at the bottom. Pericles then again poured a few drops of wine, offering the libation to Zeus Olympios, the principal among the gods of Mount Olympus. He took a cup of oil and did the same, saying he offered this to the Heroes and a third time he offered more oil to Zeus Sôter, the saviour of the Hellenic cities. Then all together, the men sang a paean, a hymn of honour to Apollo. The grave voices fell rapidly in with Pericles's soft song – Pericles was not such a good singer. The low, forceful chant sounded through the house from out of the andron. The rituals of the symposium terminated thus; the guests relaxed and sank deeper into the cushions of the couches.

The first fish was presented in bowls. Pericles offered preserved fish, tarichos. Chunks of tuna were brought in, salted mackerel, pieces of eels from Lake Copais, crayfish, sea-perch and mullets. Lastly, the most expensive boar-fish was presented, and the men applauded, for Pericles served them only gourmet food now. The boar-fish was irresistible. It was served naked as it had come out of the Sea and straight from the oven, without cheese sauce or oil dressing. All complimented Pericles and Aspasia for their good taste in cooking. The men ate with their fingers, using their right hand only to bring the morsels to their mouths. They took bread with their left hand however. The bread was artos, pieces of large, round loaves of baked wheat-flour. It was excellent, because made by the best baker of the agora. While they ate, they cleaned their fingers with pieces of bread and threw the rests on the ground. After the dinner, the andron was swept clean by servants, clean from shells and fishbones. The floor was swept and most of the tables removed. Then, water was passed among the guests to wash their hands. More libations were held, made out of a cup called a metaniptron and this cup was passed among Pericles's guests. Pericles was also appointed to be the symposiarch. He presided over the mixing of water and wine. Wine and water were mixed in a krater, a special mixing-bowl. For once Pericles made a stiff mix, after some discussion, of far more wine than water.

Pericles mixed the water with the wine in a degree to which the guests agreed together, and boy servants served cups of the wine. Then, they brought in small dishes with food, cheese, olives, bread and figs. They brought thus many dishes, one after the other, but the Athenians were no great eaters and they preferred their wine. Aspasia had invited flute players to entertain the men. The music was vivid, and the party cheered up, loud discussions going on in one corner and roaring laughter rising from the other. The men sometimes shouted from one end of the room to the other. The wine kept coming and the wine cups, which were almost dishes, from which the men drank, emptied regularly and were as soon filled by the servants. No dancing

girls or acrobats were needed to enliven the atmosphere, yet, Pericles staged a dancing girl, also an acrobat, who had just arrived in Athens to please the men.

A beautiful young woman entered the room, dressed in thin shawls, which flew around her body at every movement. She brought hoops with her of many colours, and she threw the hoops in the air to catch them diligently with her slender fingers. She used up to ten hoops in this way, throwing them high, almost to the ceiling, and the men marvelled at her dexterity. While she threw the hoops she began to dance on the tunes of the flute-girl.

After this act, a servant brought in a potter's wheel and the woman continued to throw and catch her hoops while she turned ever more rapidly on the wheel. When the girl stopped and stepped from the wheel, she stood firm instead of being dizzy from turning around. Then a round frame was brought in. A servant stuck two swords in the frame, sharp blades upward. The young woman tore a shawl in two on one of the blades, showing how sharp the sides were. She danced in between the blades. The servant pushed more swords in the frame. The woman continued to dance. Then, she made somersaults into the frame, jumping into the frame and out of it, over the blades. She avoided cutting herself, dancing and jumping ever faster as the tune of the double flute became wilder and more exciting. The musician stopped to play the flute suddenly, and also the acrobat halted brusquely, in enthusiastic applause. The guests clapped their hands. The young woman resumed to dance then, on a slow rhythm of the flute. She danced around the andron, flirting with the guests. She tickled Socrates under the chin. Pericles ended this game however. His guests knew he tolerated no debauchery in his house and at his symposiums. His drinking-parties were nice and cosy, never wild, vulgar or outrageous. Pericles clapped in his hands and the flute-girl and the acrobat left the room.

Once in a while, one of the guests, who considered himself to be a decent singer, would start a song and the whole assembly joined in. One song was overtly sexual of tone, another spoke of belligerent heroes; a third was a song of challenge to enemies. This part also was a fine success.

While the men drank and talked, Socrates saw that Pericles remained thoughtful, even a little morose. He drew near to Pericles, believing that his friend was still fretting over Alcibiades and over the altercation with his wife, Aspasia. He recalled that Alcibiades had been training to become an Athenian warrior, and that Alcibiades's character would be favourably influenced by his training. But Pericles did not listen at first to Socrates. After a while, Pericles abandoned his private thoughts and addressed Socrates anyhow.

'Socrates,' Pericles asked, 'what is Athens?'

Socrates answered that Athens was a polis, a society of people who had agreed to live together by a set of laws and customs, most of them laid down by Solon.

'Right,' Pericles said, 'but isn't Athens a lot more than that, a country, Attica, and an empire by its alliance with the cities of the islands all around the Sea and on the Asian mainland?'

'That is Athens too,' Socrates agreed, but he dwelled on the grandeur of the city itself, the agora with its magnificent buildings, the Acropolis with monuments so fine as existed nowhere else in the Hellenic world.

Pericles cut him short, 'I am preparing to stop building on the Acropolis.'

Socrates was appalled. 'Why?'

‘We should be thinking of a new war. War threatens. Corinth has been defeated by Corcyra and feels humiliated. Corinth has not given up, however. Our information is that she is rapidly re-constructing a large navy. Corinth will attack Corcyra soon. Now, two things can happen when Corinth attacks once more. She can win or she can lose.

If she loses, she will be humiliated even more, and she cannot afford to let that happen. She may draw all her allies, and worse, Sparta’s allies, in with her. Which would mean a global war and we too will probably be drawn into that war.

If Corinth wins, Corcyra’s fleet will join Corinth’s fleet and that will mean the Peloponnesian League, the Spartan League, will have a considerable fleet that might overshadow our own. Sparta would not only dominate on land, as she has always done, but she would also dominate the Sea.’

‘We cannot allow that,’ Socrates said, horrified.

‘Indeed we cannot. I have received informal messages from Corcyra. They propose to send ambassadors to Athens in the summer or somewhat later to ask for a formal alliance with Athens. If we accept that alliance, we will have to send our ships in support of Corcyra.’

‘And risk a war with Corinth.’

‘Of course, and with Sparta. But if we do not interfere we will be worse off if Corcyra loses. I believe she cannot win against the fleet Corinth is building: it is an impressive war effort the Corinthians are assembling; they are pouring all their last funds in that fleet. It will be formidable. And her commanders will be desperate to win. We shall have to take sides.’

‘So there will be war,’ Socrates concluded.

‘Yes. I hope we will be able to contain that war. Sparta doesn’t like war either. I have dispatches from King Archidamus, personally sent to me only, encrypted. He does not want war and he will stall. But he wrote he might not be able to halt the war factions of Sparta and Corinth at bay. Then war, a complete, full war between Sparta and Athens, between our cities and all our alliances might have to be waged. What should I do?’

It was now for Socrates to remain silent a long time, and to reflect.

Finally he said, ‘then we will fight as well as we can and hope to win.’

‘Yes,’ Pericles answered, ‘but we may also lose, and many will die, warriors and non-warriors. Our countryside will be devastated and our wealth destroyed. It shall be a disaster anyhow. My friend, take a nice time off and go to Cyprus with Alcibiades. It may be your last for a long time.’

Socrates did not know what to answer further. He now too sat and thought. Finally he answered, ‘no, if there is to be a war I had better start exercising. I am a hoplite. As all Athenians, I will fight. I have to prepare.’

The two men did not speak further that evening.

At the end of the dinner, Pericles served the best Attican sweetened cakes. The symposium lasted on wine only. Later still, the guests left one after the other, thanking Pericles, and wishing him peace and happiness.

## **Chapter 3 – Cyprus and Abydos, April 433 BC to End 433 BC**

### **Protagoras**

In the middle of spring, Alcibiades was on his way to Cyprus, despite his protests. He argued he had to conclude his training in the gymnasium and also his training as a hoplite. He cried out he wanted a place in the cavalry and that in late spring the cavalry exercised around Athens. He shouted and wept, but Aspasia would not hear reason. She said he had a warped mind that needed straightening out. Alcibiades knew very well what she meant, but no pleading or outright refusal to oblige would deter her from her design. He sought out Pericles and Ariphton, only to meet with a blank wall of incomprehension and stubborn silence. Alcibiades ran around the house then, crying in anger that this was the mansion of the two most influential politicians of Athens ruled by a woman. His vociferations only insulted Pericles and Ariphton the more, so that they avoided him altogether. Socrates seemed to have disappeared from the earth. Protagoras the Sophist had entered. Protagoras accepted to take Alcibiades to Cyprus. It took some persuasion by Aspasia and Pericles, and that, Alcibiades knew, must have meant that quite a lot of his own money had went Protagoras' way. Knowledge of that only enraged him more, but places in a merchant vessel bound for Cyprus were secured, so that now Alcibiades and Protagoras, accompanied by merely three servant slaves, were sailing in foul weather and a violent Sea.

The merchant ship took its time. It belonged to a captain and merchantman who would buy anything he could sell in the next port and who would transport anything that was confided to him for farther destinations. The boat was plump, slow and ungraceful, and usually heavily loaded, but it sailed finely to several islands in the Sea. It harboured a couple of days in each port, on the islands of Ceos, Melos and Thera before arriving in Crete. It made three ports of Crete before sailing to Rhodes. From Rhodes the captain followed the coasts of Caria and entered one port after the other. The crew appreciated that Alcibiades and Protagoras were on the ship, for the men heard that they were important Athenians on a pilgrimage to Aphrodites' Temple and Aphrodite Epipontia was also venerated by sailors. After many days, the weather stayed calm, so actually the voyage was quite agreeable from then on. Neither Alcibiades nor Protagoras suffered from seasickness.

Alcibiades stood on the prow of the ship, pacing up and down as the boat separated the waves. A warm wind blew, the ship advanced rapidly, so that the gusts came over him in bursts. Alcibiades welcomed the wind on his face. Protagoras sat behind him, sheltered from the gusts. Alcibiades was shouting in the wind. He was delivering a speech as if he stood before the Assembly of Athens, but he was trying to convince only the dolphins that joyously accompanied the boat. Protagoras taught Alcibiades rhetoric, the art of delivering speeches. Alcibiades lisped and sometimes when he talked about important things he got stuck in the middle of phrases. He supposed he was useless as a speaker and had refrained from saying too much, even to Socrates. Now, Protagoras taught him how to structure a speech. The Sophist made him first think of a subject from all points of view, to know all its positive and negative

aspects, to foresee all questions that might be asked by other people. He taught Alcibiades to address in speeches the more difficult items, which might lead to nasty remarks from his opponents. Alcibiades spoke and Protagoras simulated the stings, the insults, the sarcasm and the nasty remarks of the sceptical audience. Protagoras taught Alcibiades to always leave some elements of the subject untreated in his own speech so that he might expect questions on these aspects, which would then be the aspects Alcibiades in fact knew best and might answer most diligently, with the most power of wit and force to crush his opponents rapidly and efficiently. Protagoras taught Alcibiades painstakingly to proceed from a slow beginning to a long or short argumentation in the middle, and to a spectacular conclusion. He urged Alcibiades every morning and every afternoon to deliver a speech to the seamen. Not all the crew came to listen to Alcibiades, but a few always showed up, eager to hear a good development and one or the other always would ask a question and challenge him. Today however, all the men were on their jobs, and Alcibiades talked to the waves and to the fishes.

Protagoras did not relent in his teaching. Protagoras would have to confront Pericles and Aspasia on his return and he would have to prove that Alcibiades had learned something from him, something substantial – and that could not just be what awaited them at Cyprus! Alcibiades's lisp was an issue. He had to take breaths often, but Protagoras taught him how to control his lisp and to pause not at unexpected moments but at times that coincided with arguments of importance or when the audience might believe Alcibiades to be seeking the right word, the right intonation to illustrate his idea. Gradually, Alcibiades learned to overcome his fears in public. He could not help his lisp, but soon enough it sounded like the small natural lisp that proved his performance original and charming.

Protagoras taught Alcibiades to think before to speak. He taught him how to order his thoughts. Alcibiades had it easy to find arguments, but it was difficult to retain his ideas all in his mind and then to recall them. He could write them down on wax tablets, but who had ever seen a great orator reading his speech from tablets? Besides, one would need too many of the tablets. Protagoras then taught Alcibiades the ancient technique of mnemonics.

'Think of the harbour of Piraeus,' Protagoras proposed, 'with its various ports, streets and buildings. Close your eyes. Walk through the harbour, eyes closed. Can you see it all? Walk along the moorings, the ship-sheds, the quays, the arsenal, and the buildings. Assign an image to each idea and to each argument you have for your speech. Then, take a particular route and put your images along that route. Find an aspect of each building on the route that reminds you of the idea; thus associate ideas with the buildings or the features of the route. Recall the earlier images you had so that you forget none. When you have done that for all your ideas and arguments, in your actual speech, walk through Piraeus again in your assigned order and recall the images. When you look at your audience, walk through Piraeus until you arrive at the gates of Athens. Then your speech will be over, and you will not have forgotten any argument. Does somebody interrupt you and you need to go unexpectedly to another argument? Well, simply jump a few streets, a few ideas, as appropriate, and start from there. You can always come back and handle all ideas. Let's exercise this!'

In the beginning, Alcibiades had to close his eyes once in a while, while speaking. His lisping was a good occasion for that. Then he walked through Piraeus and found his next idea. After a while, he could continue the order of his arguments without having to close his eyes. But he still needed the pauses once in a while. He trained and rehearsed his arguments, and he became more brilliant and gradually more at ease in bringing them forward. He also learned where to whisper, when to shout, when to look as if he were weighing his words – although all his ideas were outlined before him, images in the streets of Piraeus.

Alcibiades gained confidence when Protagoras had him speak publicly even in the streets of the ports they accosted on political subjects, on the greatness of the Ionian cities, on the wonders of travel, on the prices of goods and on the splendour of the harbours. His first public were fishermen, artisans in the harbour who had some time, women who sold goods, and young boys out for a new sensation. That public was eager for fine phrases, something Alcibiades had to learn too, but they were also extremely demanding, for they wanted simple arguments and powerful arguments. They had to be coaxed into listening, even when they had no interest in the subject at first, and wanted to return to their daily tasks.

At the first port, Alcibiades was just a crazy young man from Athens, but in subsequent ports, and as he learned insistently from Protagoras who pointed out his mistakes and applauded his finest arguments, he saw that people stayed when he talked. They listened with interest to what he proclaimed, and even started asking him questions, engaging him in dialogue. Here also he learned how to answer directly, without bullshit and straight, for nothing else they would accept. When Alcibiades could talk well enough, develop any idea with a speech of praise, he increasingly showed his intelligence and his charm. His lisping became a means to seek perfection and to emphasise the natural flowing of his words, the spontaneity of his advance, and a means to differentiate him from other orators.

Protagoras taught Alcibiades to add to his lines a few modest gestures, which became imposing stands when epic was needed, sudden outstretching of hands when overwhelming was necessary to support his words, or an embrace of the audience when compassion was the subject. Alcibiades became not only an orator but an actor, who could show outrage, indignation, surprise, tenderness, gentleness and warmth at will in words and gestures of his whole body. He entranced his audience, and learned to act and speak so that the audience would be thrilled, never bored, and always captured by Alcibiades alone. He loved it. While his audience listened in admiration, he walked the harbour of Piraeus in his mind. The many speeches made Alcibiades also reflect on many important subjects of the life of the Hellenes. He not only spoke, but made up his mind about Hellas, about its politics, its way of life. He would thereafter never fall short on opinions.

Alcibiades had always regarded Protagoras as something of a money-seeking quack, only apt at extorting gold from rich people. Yet, he had to contend that none among his former teachers had brought him so insistently and so successfully to hold speeches, to master the art of rhetoric. Still, Protagoras never ordered Alcibiades to prove points that were obviously morally bad or wrong, and to turn these into views that were in a warped way anyhow acceptable to a crowd. Protagoras told him that what it meant to be a good man was not wealth or noble birth, not physical strength, not political power. He claimed a good man was competent in useful work, avoided bad conduct and developed a keen sense of justice. Strangely, but after all not

surprisingly, Protagoras' Sophism proved to be not that much different from Socrates's philosophy. Protagoras, however, tried to persuade Alcibiades with arguments, presented one after the other, which he delivered in long monologues. He did not ask questions to Alcibiades and did not lure him into dialectics, but he talked to Alcibiades and he continued to talk even when Alcibiades did not listen attentively. Protagoras brought up the patience of an old man who preferred as well to talk alone, to himself. He heaped argument upon argument to prove a thesis until Alcibiades could not but agree.

Protagoras wanted Alcibiades very much to become a good citizen of Athens and he kept on commending to Alcibiades the greatness of Athens, its history, and the place of Alcibiades's family and forefathers in the glory of the polis.

Protagoras, nevertheless, was not an Athenian. He was born in Abdera, a town in Thrace. He explained the ferocious beauty of his country, the strange rites and habits of the Thracians among which the Hellenic coastal towns had been founded, and the pride of the Thracian Kings. But always he lauded the wealth, power and splendour of Athens. Protagoras told Alcibiades that virtue for a man would be to respect and abide by justice, temperance and piety. Alcibiades had heard such talk from Socrates before. He did not tell Protagoras that Socrates had told him once of the Sophist that the man was nothing else but a member of the money-making class of the disputatious, argumentative, controversial, pugnacious, aggressive and acquisitive class of artisans that worked at merchandising the soul, traded in virtue and was hunting after rich and promising youths.

Protagoras the quack taught Alcibiades some of the most interesting ideas he had heard so far, until he came on this boat voyage to Cyprus. Socrates was always after the truth, trying to define the truth about concepts by reasoning. Often, Alcibiades found that there were other directions of reasoning that could be followed, other answers to be given to Socrates than merely the ones Socrates suggested and then enforced. Not always could he follow Socrates's reasoning. Protagoras made it easier. He said that there was not one sole truth. There was no absolute truth on nothing. He said that reasoning did lead somewhere, but not necessarily to the objective truth. If Socrates offered an olive, Protagoras showed the insect in the fruit. He said that every man had his truth. What was true for one man was not necessarily true for another. There was no complete solution to the intellectual issues raised by the philosophers. Philosophy and reason did not lead to absolute truths. Since all too often Socrates's reasoning ended by him proving exactly the contrary of the argument he had started with, and since Socrates always underlined his own ignorance, Alcibiades - who was like any young man in search of definite answers and sound truths - received from Protagoras the stable pillar to hold on to. Not so from Socrates. Protagoras told that each man has his truth and that this truth was to be respected. Truth was very subjective. There were so many things that hindered true knowledge, all truth remained obscure. Nobody could proclaim to know absolute truth. Protagoras had travelled wide. He had seen many peoples, which all had different gods and different habits. He told Alcibiades about Herodotus' Histories and urged him to read the book. Herodotus too had travelled around the Sea, and had written about the peoples he had visited or heard off.

Protagoras told that what was important for a man who wanted to help his polis, was rhetoric. Truth was in every argument, as was un-truth, so a skilful speaker could

reveal the truth in any argument. Of course, Protagoras pleaded caution and he talked then again of the qualities of a good man, of the sense of justice and the sense of citizenship in his words and acts. But Alcibiades, who had been at a loss with Socrates, always demanding of himself and of the philosopher what the true and best approach was for his life, seeking a clear road for himself, heard Protagoras now state that the road he chose to live by, his way, as long as it satisfied a few criteria, was as good as any other. At least that was how he understood Protagoras' teachings. Here was a simple and useful lesson. The criterion for Alcibiades to live by was Alcibiades. Whatever he thought to be right and good was as truthful as any other idea. Alcibiades liked the concept.

Protagoras did not know about the gods either. He said that he had never seen a god and that a man only learned from what he perceived, from what he could hear or see or smell, and learn from his senses. He confided to Alcibiades that one could not really learn about the gods because that subject was so obscure and complex that a lifetime was not enough to comprehend all the aspects of the godly. When Alcibiades then asked whether Protagoras did not believe in the existence of the gods, the Sophist answered simply, 'oh, yes, of course. But do not ask me whether I believe more in Aphrodite than in Astarte. Each people has its gods. So we might as well believe in the gods of one's own polis. We should not drop the religion of our forefathers. But another people might believe in other gods. I just do not know which gods are the right ones, and I believe I will never know until the gods reveal themselves to me.' Alcibiades could well live with that uncertainty. He did not really care so much for the gods as for the living humans. He did not mention to Protagoras that the gods had revealed themselves to Socrates, and spoke to him.

Alcibiades gained confidence, learned from Protagoras to have faith in his own ideas and opinions, and he learned to defend his ideas relentlessly from the speeches Protagoras made him recite. His fears and doubts gradually evaporated and as he was already aware of his noble birth, of his growing talents and of his beauty of face and body, he eagerly made his the lessons of Protagoras.

## Cyprus

After two full moons of sailing and sojourning in the ports of the Sea, the merchant-ship arrived at the island of Cyprus. Alcibiades first saw the low-lying and sun-scorched land that rose gently out of the Sea in the morning. The island had long, marvellous sandy beaches, and then the boat passed white cliffs which entered into the Sea in a wilder landscape. The captain led the boat to a small harbour near the town of Paphos. The harbour was almost completely filled with all kinds of ships, some of them even Phoenician with high prows, painted with many colours.

Protagoras and Alcibiades dressed in the whitest linen of their best clothes, and stood firmly near the prow of their ship. They were a remarkable pair. Protagoras was old, but tall and lean. He had a white beard, white hair and he was the wisest of men, leaning on a richly decorated staff studded with silver patterns. Alcibiades was the smaller but magnificent youth with the flowing, luxurious long black hair, with the broad shoulders of an excellent swimmer and the muscles of a trained athlete. Both the men were now burnt by the sea-sun to a fine, equal brown tan.



When the boat moored, a proud Cypriote commander approached, wearing light armour and a sword and dagger at his sides. He asked what their business was in Cyprus. Alcibiades would have sneered back, but Protagoras spoke calmly with the man and he told the warrior who they were: Protagoras the Sophist from Abdera and Athens, and teacher of Alcibiades son of Cleinias, of the family of the Alcmaeonids, in the guard of Pericles son of Xanthippus, archon of Athens. He told they were on a pilgrimage to the illustrious Festival of Aphrodite. The commander was suddenly all politeness and begged the visitors to follow him. He would provide them with lodgings near the harbour. Everywhere in the port warriors and Cypriot officials thus welcomed the pilgrims and saw to it that order was kept.

The warrior led Alcibiades and Protagoras, followed by their slave-servants laden with the trunks, to a house somewhat aside of the port but overlooking the bay of Paphos. The house belonged to a rich Athenian merchant who traded with Cyprus and who stayed alternatively several months in Paphos, and several months in Athens. The warrior told the newcomers that the man had offered the port authorities to lodge for free any important Athenian who might visit Cyprus for the festival. Alcibiades and Protagoras let themselves be led gratefully to the large, square house just behind the cliffs of Paphos. The house was surrounded by green grass and olive trees grew a little further in a large grove. The view was more than charming.

When they arrived, the Athenian Hippocrates welcomed them, and when he heard how illustrious the visitors were, he thanked the gods, stuffed the hands of the commander with many coins, and showed the guests into his mansion. He asked whether they were hungry, and when Alcibiades and Protagoras answered with an eager 'yes', he shouted to his slaves to prepare a dinner. Hippocrates introduced his wife, a little and plump but very joyful Melian, and his two daughters, who were graceful young ladies several years younger than Alcibiades. The girls eyed Alcibiades with much surprise and excitement, but their mother ushered them quickly back to their rooms. Hippocrates presented food to the visitors, and while they ate he told them hundred about Cyprus, the harbour towns, his trade in copper with Athens, and the coming festival. Protagoras politely asked a few questions and Hippocrates was cheerful to oblige, so he talked and talked. Finally, when food dish after food dish had come, been presented and accepted, Hippocrates proposed the men to rest and he asked whether he could hold a symposium in their honour in the evening. Protagoras accepted with a graceful word and Hippocrates, delighted, sent out slaves to invite his friends from Paphos.

## **Aphrodite**

In the evening, the guests arrived in the andron of Hippocrates, in a finely decorated square room. A fine painter had been at work, for all the walls were painted with sea-scenes, so that Alcibiades and Protagoras had the impression their journey on the waves was not over yet. They were the centre of all attention. Hippocrates employed a flute player among his slaves, and he had also brought two Cypriote girls to dance for them. The evening was therefore filled with delicate grace, and Alcibiades certainly had not expected such refinement on an island so far from Athens. He said so, and Hippocrates and his Cypriote guests gleamed with pleasure. Besides Alcibiades and Protagoras there were seven men at the symposium, the dinner-party of the evening.

After they had all sung a song of grace to the gods, Hippocrates told them more about Aphrodite and Cyprus. Protagoras knew much about the goddess, but Alcibiades knew only the minimum. His first teacher, Zopyrus, had not explained him much about the goddess, rightly believing that such a subject was not of much interest to younger boys. Hippocrates told the complete story.

‘The goddess Aphrodite was born from the semen of Uranus, which was protected by the waters. Uranus, heaven, one of our very first gods, was married to Gaia, Earth, but he refused her children to emerge into the light. Uranus’s son Kronos, Time, castrated therefore Uranus when he wanted to lay with Gaia. Kronos cut off the penis and testicles of Uranus with a sickle with jagged teeth, and he threw the genitals into the Sea. The Sea received the parts and the semen and enveloped it with its foam. The Sea swept the semen away until it arrived, driven by the breath of Zephyr, at a rock of Cyprus. There the white foam that spread around the semen condensed, and a woman sprang forth, a lovely goddess, whom the gods and later the people of Cyprus gave the name of Aphrodite. This was Aphrodite Urania, the goddess of spiritual love. She was born from heaven and in the Sea, like Cyprus. Since that time the Cypriots call that rock the ‘Petra Tôu Romiou’, the Rock of the Hellenes, or the rock of Aphrodite. You cannot see it from our house, but part of the festival is at that rock, so you will be near it later. It is a rock inside the Sea.

When Aphrodite came on land, the Graces waited upon her. They bathed her in fragrant oil. They clothed her in shimmering garments, and decorated her with precious jewels, flowers and ornaments. They put a crown on her head, flowers of copper in her pierced ears and necklaces of gold around her neck and her white breasts. Then they escorted her to Olympos where she received a place among the other gods. Aphrodite was a joyful goddess with sparkling eyes, a beauty as the gods had never seen, and she laughed either sweetly or mockingly to all whom she desired. We also call her Kupris, since she was born at our island. Each year she comes back to Cyprus, to swim near the rock where she was born, and each time she is a virgin again, re-born by the sea-foam whence she came from. That foam around the rock is sacred. The Aphrodite who rejuvenates each year we call the Aphrodite Anadyomene, the ‘one rising from the Sea’. Eternal youth and grace is promised to those who swim around that rock three times in Aphrodite’s foam.’

A friend of Hippocrates continued on these words, ‘there are many Aphrodites, with different names, each name meaning a quality of the goddess. Homer mentioned in his Iliad that Aphrodite was born from the union of Zeus and the goddess Dione. Dione was a Titan, also one of the very first gods of earth. This Aphrodite is called the Aphrodite Pandemos, or the ‘Common Aphrodite’. At the festival we celebrate both Aphrodites. Aphrodite Pandemos is not the Aphrodite of pure love, but the goddess of the most powerful passions, the goddess of fertility and of the sexual act between men and women. This is the goddess of promiscuity, the goddess of free sexuality! She is venerated mostly in Corinth, and there are many religious prostitutes there at the temple of Aphrodite. We celebrate the Pandemian Aphrodite too, but with measure.’

Alcibiades asked whether Aphrodite was indeed married to Hephaestos, and the men, who had drunk quite much of the excellent wine by now, roared with laughter. Hippocrates said, ‘Aphrodite at first rejected all suitors! She refused to marry any of them, either god or human. Zeus became very angry then, so he ordered her to

become the wife of Hephaestos, the lame god of smiths. But Aphrodite refused to go to bed with Hephaestos, and she was unfaithful. She had many lovers and Hephaestos even once laid a trap for her, and caught her making love to Ares, the god of war. She had many children, but none with Hephaestos. She had Eros by Zeus, Anteros and Harmonia by Ares, Hermaphroditus by Hermes, Hymen and Priapus by Dionysus, and Aeneas and Lyrus by the Trojan Anchises. From one of our ancestor Kings, Adonis son of Cinyas, she had a daughter called Paphos. Our town has the same name, was called after that daughter. One of her lovers was the splendid youth Adonis, who must have looked like you, Alcibiades, but she lost Adonis when he was killed by a boar. Ever since that event our women lament over the death of Adonis at the Festival of Adonia, which is also held in Athens. Do not speak too much of that Aphrodite to our women and daughters; they do not like to hear so much about that side of our goddess! It is also not enough for our women to swim in the foam to become virgins again.'

This last remark again brought loud laughter around.

Another Cypriote then said, holding his wine cup high, 'to Aphrodite, may we all laud her and fear her.'

All drank to that.

The man who had proposed the toast continued, 'many other stories are told of Aphrodite, which show how whimsical she is. So beware! When the Sirens wished to remain virgins, she caused them to grow wings. She caused Aegus to remain childless until he introduced her worship in Athens. When the women of Astypalaea claimed they were more beautiful than she, Aphrodite made them grow cow horns! She is a jealous goddess, always ready to defend her supremacy in beauty! Nothing and nobody can resist her beauty. Do you know how she is so powerful?'

Alcibiades said no, and the man explained, 'haha! Hephaestos, the fool, made her a golden girdle. He wove the golden fibres with magic, so that Aphrodite was made irresistible by that girdle. It did not bring him gratitude from Aphrodite, for she used that girdle on almost all the gods. This magic cestus, the embroidered girdle of Aphrodite, arouses passion in all who wear it. So, Alcibiades, take care: when a girl of Cyprus throws a girdle around your neck, watch well out whether it is of gold. When it is of gold, the girl is Aphrodite herself and you will be caught with passion forever for her.'

There followed more hilarious laughter and drinking and toasts after these phrases, and even the polite Protagoras could yield a broad smile.

He said, 'now I know why the girls of Cyprus do not want to remain virgins: they fear getting wings!'

The roars of laughter continued.

They had a wonderful time at that first symposium of Paphos, in the house of Hippocrates the copper merchant of Athens. Hippocrates told that the festival of Aphrodite would start seven days from the present. Alcibiades looked forward to it.

### **The Paphos Festival**

The next days, Alcibiades and Protagoras rested, though the lessons continued for Alcibiades with orations and physical exercises. They took long walks along the sandy beaches. They strolled in the harbour, which buzzed with activity. They borrowed a horse and chariot from Hippocrates and rode inland to the town of Paphos

and to the sanctuary of Aphrodite. They did not enter the Temple though, for they would be there during the festival, and priests hurried by to decorate the statue of Aphrodite inside the holiest.

They walked back to the quiet town, which was built with low, white-washed square houses around narrow streets. The town was picturesque in its hillside setting. Here also many people hurried by and arranged matters for the feasts. Garlands of flowers already hung along certain walls. They noticed the vineyards, the olive trees and also vast grain fields beyond the town. This was a lush island, in which life was easy. Cyprus had all to sustain its population: enough cereals, vines and olives. And further inland lay its famous copper mines, which had given the name to the land. Its population was a mix of many origins: Phoenician, Greek, Semitic faces appeared at every street corner, and men in oriental clothes could also be seen discussing and trading in the town's agora. The town had a theatre, not large but well designed, and well situated, not so far from the agora. Paphos' countryside was a land of hills and ridges, and of deep rivers. It was protected to the north and the east by high mountains. On one peak still lay white snow.

When Alcibiades was in or around the house of Hippocrates, taking leisure, the daughters of the house fluttered around him like butterflies. Especially the elder one, Phoebe, dashed gentle but longing looks at him from under her long eyelashes with round and dark eyes, which seemed to want to draw him in, and she had always a mocking smile on her lips. She too would participate in the festival. Alcibiades and Phoebe were never alone, however. By some unspoken, unorganised design, there was always either her sister or her mother or even Protagoras in the same room, unobtrusively present. Conversations between Alcibiades and the two girls remained short and casual.

The first day of the festival would be dedicated to athletic games, and Alcibiades asked whether he could participate in the running contest. He was not a particularly fast runner in Athens, but he thought he could give it a good try here. Hippocrates arranged for his admission to the games of Aphrodite. So he did a lot of running too on the hillsides next to the house, running in the grass to which he was not used, and more than once saw the girls shouting admiration and encouragement from out of one of the windows.

A few days before the festival, the family, with Alcibiades and Protagoras, moved to a larger house inland, which lay closer to the town of Paphos itself. Hippocrates indeed owned had two houses on Cyprus: one near the harbour, where they had stayed until now, and one almost inside the town of Paphos. Hippocrates preferred the house by the Sea, but for the festival it was easier to be near the town. Paphos lies about sixty-five stades from its harbour, so they took some of the household in carts drawn by oxen, led by slaves, and travelled in light chariots.

The festivities started actually two days before Alcibiades had expected, but these were the Adonai, commemorations of Adonis. Hippocrates urged Alcibiades and Protagoras not to go too far away from the house, for this was a women's day. All mature women of Paphos ran through the streets, wailing and crying, weeping for the death of Aphrodite's adored lover Adonis. They wept and scratched their faces to blood. They held images of Adonis in their hands and threw these in the Sea. The town of Paphos resounded from their cries. They wore red flowers, roses and

anemones, which reminded of the wounds of Adonis. Thus the women mourned Adonis.

The next day was also a women's day, even though some men attended the ceremonies too. Alcibiades and Protagoras went to the Temple of Aphrodite and saw how a religious ceremony was held there. The High Priest and a young woman stood near the altar and embraced at the end of the ritual, reminding of the love of Adonis for Aphrodite. Alcibiades heard that the resurrection of Adonis was feasted in this way. Protagoras reminded to Alcibiades that this was probably an ancient fertility rite. Adonis was the god of vegetation and in spring, new plants sowed from the earth. Adonis resurrected, the real festival could start.

In the early morning of the Festival of Aphrodite, just after dawn, Protagoras and Alcibiades and the whole family of Hippocrates dressed up. They put on their finest and whitest clothes and adorned themselves with garlands of flowers, the very first roses, and myrrh. They went in procession to the temple of Aphrodite at Paphos, accompanied by many other people. From everywhere the Cypriots and many Hellenes from the Aegean Islands gathered at the sanctuary. The priests and priestesses awaited them on the broad stairs of the temple.

When most of the people had arrived, the priests walked to a massive two-man high rounded pyramid, a conical stone, which was Aphrodite's stone and her symbol on Cyprus. The priests wore long white robes and they burned myrrh and perfumed resins in bronze stands, so that the air was filled with delicate white smoke, which filled the atmosphere with heavy fragrances. The priests chanted their first incantations to the goddess. Two or three thousand people must then have been waiting in front of Aphrodites' Temple.

Protagoras stood among the crowd, but Alcibiades had joined the athletes who stood in a row to the right of the altar. Behind them were the youth, about fifty of them, who had come to be initiated by Aphrodite at the festival. In front of the young men stood about an equal number of young women and among them, Alcibiades remarked Phoebe. When the priests had stopped singing, non-bloody sacrifices were offered to Aphrodite and burned on the altar: grains, olives, vines, and flowers. Oil was poured onto the flames and more fragrant resins added. Then, the priests declared the sacred Festival of Kupris open and the athletic games could start.

There were not many games at this festival, for the contests lasted just one day. The athletes should jump, wrestle, box and run only. In the rest of the morning, the games of jumping took place, followed later by wrestling and boxing. Running was the last contest but the most prestigious one, and running could only take place in the late afternoon.

There was no stone-delimited stadium such as in Athens at Paphos. The games were held on a grass field not so far from Aphrodite's Temple. Unlike in the Olympian Games, women were allowed to watch, but all athletes wore at least loincloths here. The crowd gathered around the place indicated for the games, whereas the judges took place on a wooden structure set at the side but in the middle of the field. They dominated the area. Hippocrates was among them.

The jumpers sprang for the farthest until six jumpers – who had so far jumped best – remained. The men took stone weights in each hand, their halteres, stones that were three hands long but smaller in the middle so that the men could have a good grip on them. They stood still at their line, concentrated, asking silence from the crowd. Then they moved their arms and the weights to and from in a synchronised movement of

both arms, and jumped as far as they could. The judges stood close by and measured the length of the jumps. A lean youth of Cyprus won the contest, and a wreath of roses was his only prize. But the local girls cheered their hero. He would join the youth of Aphrodite, and be asked to take part in the initiation of the girls on the third day.

Alcibiades stayed to watch the games, but early in the afternoon Protagoras declared he was tired and he returned to Hippocrates's house. He would not see Alcibiades run. After the jumps, the wrestlers entered the field. They were all short, stocky men, many of them middle-aged. Oil gleamed all over their bodies. They had powerful chests and muscles. The judges called them two by two, and then they would for a time stoop and dance around each other with arms and hands along their bodies, ready to lash out and grip the other man. The wrestling game was fought fiercely. It was at first difficult to make out who would win, and the bets on the men were at heavy odds. Finally, a strong Carian won. He too received a crown of roses, but he would be rewarded with gifts from the Cypriots later on. There was a pause between the wrestling and the boxing games.

The boxing fights were bloody affairs. The boxers had throngs imbibed with water and oil around their fists and but for a loincloth no protection anywhere on their body. They hit each other without pity. They danced round their opponents like angry and sly peacocks, then delivered forceful blows to every part of the bodies of their adversaries, whenever they saw an occasion. Hits on the heads were infrequent but devastating. Each straight hit at the face of an opponent was hard, bruised and opened skin and often tore blood profusely. The crowd was beyond control in the heat of the fights. The judges of Paphos, however, let the game not degrade into too harsh executions. When they decided a fighter could not see anymore from the blood in his eyes, or when they saw a man swaying on his feet, half unconscious, they stopped the game. They wanted no deaths, no lasting serious injuries on their grounds, no enraging at a weaker and defeated challenger. Alcibiades had seen fiercer fighting among travelling professional boxers during the festivals of Athens, but he appreciated the more civilised judgements here at Paphos. After all, these games were dedicated to the goddess of love, not to war gods like Ares or Athena. When the boxing was over and the winner, an athlete of the town of Ephesos, crowned with wreaths of roses, the running contest could start.

The sun was getting low now, but the air had warmed up quite well. The running contest was the prime game of Aphrodite's festival and a welcome relief after the boxing fights. Alcibiades threw his clothes off to a servant, but for a loincloth. He had his thighs oiled for the last time and massaged, and he entered the field. Many a woman admired and cheered at his fine body, his harmonious proportions of head, chest and legs, at his strong but smooth muscles which shone with the new oil, and at his noble face. He was not the tallest among the youth who stood at the line, and he showed not the wily profile of the runner, but he looked certainly the best-built athlete of the day.

The trumpets sounded and the judges cried out to prepare for the final game of the festival. The runners stood tense behind the line, ready to jump forward as fast as they could. They kept their eyes on the judges, among whom one held a red cloth high. The man let that cloth fall suddenly, and the men dashed forward. They had to run

only about two hundred long steps, the same length as in the stadium of Olympia in the Peloponnesos.

Alcibiades had run that distance many times before in Athens. He ran now as fast as he could, exploded in the first strides, controlled his breadth, swung his arms to give more thrust to his body, and turned part of his chest at each length of his legs. He saw that he passed most of the runners. But he ran in the last few lengths at the same distance of the arrival line as two of the other youth. In a last powerful jump he threw his chest forward, over and beyond the line, among the cheers of the crowd, females crying harder than the men, but he saw from a corner of his eyes that he was only second. He would not be crowned. A tall, lean Cypriote boy, who had obviously been the champion of Cyprus, had run with the long strides of a professional runner and beaten the other athletes. A tall Lydian from Miletus came in third.

Alcibiades panted and he had to fold in two for a while, to find his breath again. Then, he went up to the young Cypriot who had won the race and congratulated him. That called more cheers from the crowd, for the Cypriots could not have wished a better ending of the race: their own champion coming in first and the noblest youth of Athens – they knew who he was now – second; they felt honoured. The judges crowned the Cypriot, but the youth took Alcibiades by the shoulders and they ran both slowly around the field, accepting cheers once more, and the glory. Alcibiades saw Phoebe jumping up and down from joy, and he waved back so that the girl was remarked by the people around her. She blushed then and hid. The people of Paphos knew that he was not a professional athlete and many a well-dressed Cypriot man came forward to congratulate him, patted him on the shoulders and appreciatively touched his back or even his thighs.

After each game the auletai, the flute players, entered the field. It was with their music and a final song that the games of Aphrodite concluded that day. Alcibiades returned to the house of Hippocrates, accompanied by a boisterous group of admirers. On his way back he was accompanied by Hippocrates and by Phoebe, both excessively proud to accompany one of the finest athletes of the festival.

The next day, Alcibiades could sleep a little longer, but when the sun shone high, he went again with a procession, now along the coast and towards the east. The youth were again splendidly dressed and adorned with garlands of flowers. They walked about fifty stades to the Rock of Aphrodite, guided by priests. The column was joyous on that nice day. Flutists and women playing on cymbals accompanied them everywhere. The procession of Aphrodite was very colourful. Alcibiades noticed many pretty girls looking at him with interesting eyes. He was flattered and satisfied. Some girls playfully threw flowers at him when they ran aside him. They danced in front of him. He did not really give them much attention though they amused him. Protagoras had remained in the house, but Hippocrates once more accompanied him with his family, wife and daughters. In that way they arrived at Aphrodite's Rock.

The priests set up an altar, offered sweet sacrifices to the gods once more, while the crowd sat down on the ground before the Sea. Then, a priest entered the water at the beach near the Rock, inviting the young people to join him. Only very good swimmers swam against the currents towards the Rock. Alcibiades was among these. He threw off all his clothes, like the others, and jumped into the Sea, close to the site where the priest stood. The priest salved the bathers with myrrh fumes. The finest

swimmers swam three times around the Rock, and Alcibiades was among a team of three youth who made a contest of the swimming party. The three stayed together however, and reached the beach together. The priests sprang to them, dried them and anointed them with fresh oil. The youth were panting, stood gloriously naked in the sun of the early afternoon, and laughed out loud. The beach resounded of singing, dancing and shouting, the flutes and cymbals played. Phoebe danced around Alcibiades, and he could feel more than once her pressing body against his own. Wine was brought in and baskets of food opened. The crowd stayed on the beach until the sun set, which was straight opposite the beach, until the light changed to deep red, and then slowly everybody left the beach one by one to return home. Hippocrates took Alcibiades with him and announced he had organised a new symposium in the evening to honour Protagoras and Alcibiades.

### **Harmonia**

The next day was a day of fasting. That was a very wise habit after two heavy days of eating, drinking and expending energy. No games were held, no main celebration would take place. Alcibiades and Protagoras went once more to the Temple of Aphrodite, where many people gathered again. After a while, the priests and priestesses came down from the temple entrance.

Before the altar, the high priest of Aphrodite salved the conical stone with oil. The priest was a stately, tall man, beardless, dressed in a long, wide robe. He was accompanied by other priests and by several priestesses. Slaves followed them. The High Priest took the oil from a large vessel that was brought beside him. He poured cup after cup of oil on the cone and chanted age-old incantations to the goddess. He held his hands above his head, face turned towards the Sea and he prayed for fertility and peace in the land of Cyprus. Many oil stands around the altar were used again to burn oils and resins and soon, the environments of the altar were saturated with the white smoke of the dense perfumes. The priest appeared to be in a kind of trance when around noon the ceremony closed to an end. He then invited the youth of the first day, the men and women who had stood along the stairs of the Temple, to come forward.

Over a hundred young people stood near the High Priest, Alcibiades and Phoebe among them. The priest gave a sign and more young men of Cyprus came forward from the crowd. Together with the priests, but for the High Priest, each took a girl at the hand and led her away. Phoebe was drawn aside by a rough youth and she looked with last and imploring eyes at Alcibiades, but she followed her partner drowsily. Alcibiades saw them pass towards the vineyards beyond the temple; other couples went into the rooms of the sanctuary.

The High Priest gave a new sign. While the crowd dissipated, the priestesses came for the young men and took them similarly by the hand to lead them away. Other women joined them, each taking a young man. Nobody however came for Alcibiades. He remained surprised at this turn of events, standing lonely and somewhat stupidly on the stairs of Aphrodite's Temple, not knowing what to do, whether to go away or to stay. He was looking with incredulous eyes at Protagoras. Protagoras remained of stone however, a tall and lean white statue of a man in the blazing sun. He leaned on



his staff and did not move. Finally, the high Priest came to stand next to Alcibiades. The man had come silently from behind him.

The priest laid a hand with long fingers on Alcibiades's shoulders and said, 'come, your time has arrived too.'

Alcibiades was too stunned to resist. The fragrances hung still heavy in the air, and some of the sadness of the ending of a joyful feast haunted already his mind. The High Priest started to walk and Alcibiades followed him.

The priest of Aphrodite went up the marble stairs through the wide open doors of the temple, into the holiest. The priest stepped inside and halted before the statue of the goddess. Alcibiades had been in many temples before. Compared to the Parthenon with its huge monument of Athena, compared to the splendour of that statue, and even compared to the temple at Cape Sounion, this temple of Paphos was modest. It was however splendidly decorated with wall paintings of scenes of Aphrodite's myths and friezes with intricate abstract patterns of intertwining lines, which continued on the wooden ceiling. The statue of Aphrodite was of marble and not very large, but it was exquisitely made. Aphrodite was depicted nude with a coloured peplos hanging down before her legs. The white marble of the body of the goddess glimmered in the sunlight rays, which shone through a high opening, right on to the sculpture. The High Priest knelt and prayed a long time, reciting prayers in a singing voice and in a language that Alcibiades could not understand. Alcibiades remained at ease beside the priest, but still awkwardly, not really knowing whether any reaction was expected of him. The priest then stopped his prayers and begged Alcibiades again to follow him. They went past the statue of Aphrodite to the opposite side of the temple. The priest opened a side door there. It had been sombre inside the temple. The blinding sun hit the men with all its force as they stepped outside. Right next to the temple, at this end, stood a larger building of the sanctuary. The priest went to the building, opened a small door and ushered Alcibiades in. He closed the door behind Alcibiades.

Alcibiades stood once more in a rather dark corridor, but there was a light coming from wooden stairs to the right, so he climbed up the stairs and arrived at the first floor. He entered a very large room in which he saw fine furniture of coaches and cupboards, cases, chairs and low tables. The room was decorated with multi-coloured paintings, showing very erotic scenes of Aphrodite and her lovers in explicit love-making in various poses. The whole room, all its walls were painted in this way. The higher borders and the ceiling were decorated with the same patterns as he had seen in Aphrodite's Temple. In the corner stood a large bed covered with fine, white linens. The room was well lit. Light came profusely in from several large windows, through which one had a view of the vast inner aulé of the sanctuary. And then Alcibiades's breath stopped for a time with surprise, and he had to inhale deeply, a sound coming even from his nose as the air entered in his lungs again.

In a corner of the room, to his left, at first hidden as he entered, but now coming forward into the light, he saw a most marvellous young woman stepping towards him. She was dressed only in a white tunic, which was so delicate as to mould her figure almost transparently. She had been surprised too, for she had been looking at a fine cushion. She might have expected Alcibiades or someone, but not at that moment. He was either late or early. She moved and put the cushion down on a small table. A smile appeared now on her lips.

She was not tall, slightly shorter than Alcibiades. She was slim and had slender legs and arms. Her torso was long, but so were her legs and she had a broad, flat belly and full, generous hips. These were accentuated by the tiniest waist he had ever seen. She wore a broad golden girdle, which sat tight around her middle. Her chest broadened upwards to her shoulders, but stayed as broad as her hips. She had ample breasts, which were not thick however, but heavy and long. Her nipples pushed against her tunic and showed clearly from under the fabric while she moved. He noticed her face, and he held his own head aside for he had never laid eyes on such a pale complexion and such exquisiteness. She had a small face. Her hair was pale brown and very close cropped. Alcibiades wondered what in her features was so different from any other face he had admired on the most beautiful women of Athens, but he had to declare defeat, for although this girl or woman had a nose, lips, eyes, ears, which differed not much from all he had seen before in the beauties he could remember, everything in her face was flawlessly forged to such perfection of form and lines and colours that all the elements of his mind dedicated to the recognition of art and beauty were excited, touched, impressed, activated, titillated and moulded to sincere admiration. He was deeply moved. The features expressed not only beauty, but also a strong yet mild character. She had a very white skin, only slightly tanned at the cheeks. Her chin was short and small, and her lips were full for the whiteness and delicacy of her face. She had a rather large forehead. She looked at Alcibiades with the lightest, pure grey eyes that could have existed. All the Hellenes had dark eyes. This girl was a rare exception. The girl's eyes were limpid and large, as if one might have seen through them, into her mind.

The girl spoke and said, 'welcome. My name is Harmonia.'

She stared at him, still surprised also, now, at his silent admiration. She was amused by that, and a mocking twist of her mouth showed nicely even, white, small teeth. Her eyes flashed away from him after the first scrutiny. She seemed to be embarrassed, and she was shy. As she moved, all her traits were graceful. This girl's face represented beauty itself for Alcibiades. She was not only perfectly beautiful, but also showed character in her face, in a design of features that made her special, outstanding, striking, unlike any other female face he had ever seen. Alcibiades had remarked very pretty girls from the far in Athens, never such a unique face. Her body too was divine. Alcibiades thought she was the impersonification of the statue of Aphrodite. The face of the girl definitely resembled the sculpture he had seen at Paphos.

She came forward and spoke with a warm voice, not high-pitched as of so many girls, but with a lower, husky tone, 'I was assigned to make you comfortable.'

She touched him with her hands and kissed him slightly on the mouth. She turned around him, touching him with her hands. She touched him everywhere, all over his face and body, for a long time, and kissed him several times, again and again. She drew curtains before the windows, letting however enough light into the room to see. She undid her girdle and hung it around Alcibiades's shoulders. She turned around him, touching him with her hands once more. She caressed him everywhere, for so long a time he thought time had stopped its course. Then her hands felt lower, between his legs and when her breasts caressed his chest, he felt his erection grow. She took his member in her hands then, but still kept her hands above his clothes. Then she started to undress him and while she drew his chiton off, she too dropped her clothes.

Alcibiades and Harmonia stood naked before each other in the middle of the room. Alcibiades's member stood up, straight and hard, and the girl giggled a little. She continued to caress him, as if to explore the volumes of his chest and legs in her hands, so that they would remember them.

Alcibiades also put one arm around her waist and drew her closer; he let his hand sink down to her buttocks. Without a word she beckoned him to the bed, lay down on it and invited Alcibiades beside her. She had almost no pubic hair and she stretched out on the bed in lascivious curves. She locked his eyes to hers. She caressed him on, with larger and rougher strokes, so that Alcibiades's desire hurt him more. When he wanted to turn her over and move upon her, she resisted and told him to lie on his back. She strode over him, sat on his thighs, took his manhood inside her and made love to him with slow, long and strong movements. Her face was above his and her eyes still remained open and insisting. He heard her breathe and he felt her breath on him. Her swollen lips opened. He touched her breasts and gently squeezed her large and long nipples, then dug his hands more roughly around her whole breasts. They cried out in climax together.

Alcibiades and Harmonia lay utterly spent together until the sun had moved lower quite a larger part of the sky. They talked. They made love three times that afternoon, and the last time was pure rough sensuality, hard and passionate, wild sex with every erotic excitement taken and tried. Between their love-making in, they talked. They at first talked in short phrases, haltingly. Then Harmonia felt more at ease and she talked more. She explained who she was and where she came from. She was not the daughter but the niece of the High Priest of Paphos. When he asked her whether she had made love before, she merely put two of her fingers on his lips and kissed him. He caressed her all the time, that afternoon, never stopped, revelling in her fine, lusty contours. He loved her calves, which were smooth and elegant, but she had the hard muscles of a runner underneath. When he asked her about that, she said she had not been born in Paphos but came from the Island of Melos, where her father had married a woman of the island. The sculptor of the statue of Aphrodite had taken her mother as a model. Her parents had travelled abroad and she had lived for several years in Sparta, where she had been allowed to exercise with the Spartiate girls. She could train with them, but was never accepted as one of them. Later, her father had returned to Paphos, to where his brother lived. Her parents had returned to Sparta later, and died in an earthquake there. Her uncle took care of her now.

Then, Alcibiades talked. He felt intimate with the girl, like he had never felt with any person before. He had never come so close to somebody, not even with his friends or his lovers. For the first time in his life, he savoured the intimacy of the mind and of the heart, which one can experience with only very few people in one's lifetime, and which is the most marvellous prize offered to humans by their creators. This girl was entirely like him and with him, in every aspect. She understood immediately everything he said and he unashamedly poured out his heart to her, all of it, his doubts and fears, his uncertainties. She did the same. In those moments, in the darkening afternoon and in the evening, they became one. They experienced something new, that oneness of spirit and blending of souls that was their surprise of instant love. Alcibiades explained who he was and the girl's astonishment grew, but she saddened somewhat when he told her about the splendours of Athens.

They talked and talked until it was evening. When darkness came, Alcibiades was still caressing her spine in long tender strokes with his fingers, while she lay on her belly. He walked his fingers over her shoulders, and down, over her silken skin, until the point where her flesh rose again. Harmonia was dozing a little now.

Suddenly, Harmonia sat straight, and told him he would have to go. Alcibiades too knew it was time to leave and return. He strode through the room and made Harmonia promise him not to disappear. She agreed to see him the next days. Harmonia sat up on the bed with her knees between her arms and her face tugged above her knees, looking still with her lovely eyes at him, dreamingly and longingly. She openly admired Alcibiades's chest now, his shoulders and his power. She looked at the shoulders against which she had lain with so much desire, and she smiled. Alcibiades dressed and left her with a last kiss on her lips.

Alcibiades returned on foot to the house of Hippocrates. Everybody slept, and the house was quiet. There was a light on the first floor and when Alcibiades went there, he saw Protagoras sitting in a chair reading from a scroll at the light of two oil lamps. Protagoras did not speak, but he smiled knowingly. He gave Alcibiades one of the oil lamps and bade him goodnight. Protagoras too stood up then, and went to sleep.

The next day, Alcibiades was up early. The house remained quiet even though Hippocrates, his wife and the servants hurried by. Phoebe was not to be seen anywhere in the house, and Alcibiades understood that he had better not ask how she was. Her experience seemed not to have been joyous. But for a few words of thanks and casual talk, nobody spoke longer than was necessary.

The festival was not over however. People had to assemble once more at the Temple of Aphrodite on this fourth day of the Festival, for the conclusion. Much fewer people returned to the temple. Only a few hundred men and women had gathered, and the King of Paphos was not present. The priests came out of the temple in procession, accompanied by the priestesses and the temple servants. Alcibiades looked out for Harmonia and he remarked her among the row of servants. The servant girls wore baskets filled with bread and cakes. The priests held a brief ritual, accompanied by chants and incantations. They salved all the pilgrims in the name of the great goddess of love, Aphrodite Urania. They ordered the servants to come forward, and they gave all the pilgrims a clump of salt and a piece of bread or cake. The cakes were in the form of a phallus, the symbol of the union between men and women and the sign of the Aphrodite Pandemos.

Alcibiades walked over to Harmonia. She handed him a cake and a piece of salt. She looked straight at him, whereas she had lowered her eyes to others. The icy, light eyes caught into his, and she smiled. Alcibiades lingered.

The High Priest then remarked them. He suddenly threw them a stern, reproaching look. It seemed to Alcibiades that the priest did not like the signs of affection that he gave his niece. The priest did not approve of the affection that was born in the youth beyond the sexual act of the Aphrodite Pandemos. But Alcibiades did not really care. His heart beat the name of Harmonia at every surge of blood through his veins. He was not just in love. This would be his only love, the only woman he truly would want to possess. He took the holy gifts of bread and salt of Paphos and returned to Protagoras, who was waiting below and scrutinising him also, obviously as surprised as the High Priest and equally highly perturbed by what he had sensed.

The same afternoon, Protagoras talked to Alcibiades about returning to Athens. The captain of the merchant ship had been waiting for two weeks in the harbour of Paphos. The man and his crew needed to get on their way again. The boat was fully loaded. Alcibiades understood that they could not stay forever in Paphos, and he longed for Athens too.

Alcibiades agreed to return, but he asked for two days more.

The next day, he returned to the sanctuary. He wanted to see Harmonia again and beg her to come with him. He could buy her off her uncle. He was refused access to the rooms and to the temple, however. The more he insisted, the more he met with a blank wall of incomprehension. He asked to see the priests but was rebuffed blandly by the temple guards. He remained crying and shouting his desperation before the doors of the sanctuary. He banged on the doors. He imagined Harmonia inside, keeping her hands to her ears from the sound and weeping to be with him. Finally, the door opened again, and the High Priest himself came out. He too refused to let Alcibiades inside to meet Harmonia. He told Alcibiades no woman of the sanctuary who had delivered the holy service could leave the temple precinct with a lover. He urged Alcibiades to go away. Alcibiades lost all tenure and patience then. He cried out that he would come back with warriors and with the King of Paphos if necessary. He shouted the Cypriots could not but yield to an Athenian of noble birth. The High Priest closed the door to his face.

Alcibiades returned to the house of Hippocrates. He spoke with Hippocrates and with Protagoras on what had happened. For a long time, the men tried to reason him. But Alcibiades was beyond reason. He was utterly frustrated and cried out his pain. Around noon, however, an commander knocked at the door and asked to speak to Protagoras. That took a while, and left Alcibiades wringing his hands and walking to and fro in a room. When the commander had left, Protagoras came to Alcibiades and told him the authorities of Paphos, among whom the King, demanded them to leave Cyprus. The High priest apparently had been first to speak to the King, and a decision had been taken. The priest and Harmonia had left Paphos hurriedly in a boat bound for the islands, and maybe for Corinth. Harmonia was not any longer in Cyprus. She was on her way to an harbour. Nobody could catch her while she was on the Sea, on board of a ship. Alcibiades could not see her again.

Alcibiades went to another room, and there he did something he had never done before in his whole life. He wept. He was satisfied to weep, for he had thought he was a man unable to weep. He discovered in that moment that he had feelings too, profound and precious. But he had lost his love.

In that room on Cyprus, Alcibiades swore two hard oaths. First, he would have to wait and grow stronger, so strong that nobody, nowhere on the world, would dare again to look at him with disdain. Second, nobody would then still be allowed to treat him like a spoilt child. He would become a man so powerful he could make the world pay for ever having humiliated him.

Alcibiades was calm the following day, and he asked Protagoras to hurry and leave. They bade farewell to Hippocrates and his family, still without Phoebe. Alcibiades promised to see Hippocrates back in Athens. He told the man that his house would always be at his disposition when he traded in Athens. Then, Protagoras took their servants and guarded the carts laden with their goods to the harbour. When they

arrived at the ship, the captain called his crew together so that it was near evening before they could sail.

When Alcibiades arrived at the harbour, a young boy stood close to the boat. The boy had been looking out for him. When he saw Protagoras's group arrive, the boy jumped to Alcibiades. He trusted a package in Alcibiades's hand. He fled without waiting. Alcibiades opened the linen and found a scroll, a letter from Harmonia. It had been written in a hurry.

*My love,*

*We cannot stay and live together. My uncle takes me away and I cannot resist. Do not seek for me. You will not find me.*

*At the marriage of Peleus and Thetis, Eris, the goddess of discord, threw a golden apple among the guests. On the apple was written, 'this apple is for the fairest'. Hera, Athena and Aphrodite quarrelled over the apple, each claiming it hers. Eventually, they agreed to let Paris, a Prince of Troja, to be the arbiter of their dispute. Of course, the three goddesses bribed Paris. Aphrodite promised to give to Paris the most beautiful woman on earth. Paris awarded the apple to Aphrodite, and she held her promise. She gave indeed the most beautiful woman on Earth to Paris, but that woman was Helen, the wife of Menelaus, King of Sparta. She helped Paris to abduct Helen, but we all know what tragedy and destruction came from that promise!*

*I have seen that you found me to be the most beautiful for you, like Aphrodite was to Paris. That suffices me for the rest of my life. I cannot be with you. I give you this present, which is my golden apple. Let my present not lead to destruction, anger and pain. Let no Eris run discord for what we had. Hold on to it and seek another fine woman to love. Seek your Helen.*

*Harmonia*

In the package was Harmonia's golden girdle. Alcibiades remembered then the myth of Paphos, Aphrodite's myth. He who would be caught by a golden girdle of Aphrodite, would love the girl he had met to his death. Harmonia had given him the girdle. He feared the girdle would keep him a prisoner for the rest of his life. He stood on the quay of the harbour, threw his arms in the air, always holding the girdle, and he cried out in despair, shouting Harmonia's name.

At that point, Alcibiades hesitated to go aboard. Harmonia had left Paphos, but he could still go back and interrogate people, try to force Harmonia's true destination from them. He hesitated, and Protagoras looked at him interrogatingly. Then, a dozen Cypriote troops marched along the quays and arrived at their ship. The hoplites were in armour and they had spears. They held their spears not horizontally, but it was clear what they wanted. An commander stepped out of the rank, went over to Protagoras and said a few words to the Sophist. He entreated the Athenians to leave Cyprus at once. Alcibiades went on board the ship without a word, with the scroll and the girdle in his hands. The whole crew of the ship stared at him, but he ignored everybody, strode along the length of the ship, and sat down at the prow. Harmonia's

letter had just withheld him from a third oath, the oath to ever come back to Cyprus with an army of triremes and destroy the entire island.

## Islands

The merchant-ship sailed back to Athens and moved from port to port as it had done on their outward journey. Alcibiades refused to talk to somebody for two days. He mostly stood or sat in the prow and let the wind sizzle in his ears and make his hair flow around his face. The sailors saw him standing there, and they left him alone, bringing him food and a little water once in a while. Protagoras also remained silent, but kept watch over Alcibiades, even at night. The old man was very tired, but he held on. He was worried, feared that Alcibiades might jump overboard, but knew time would heal the wounds.

Something had broken permanently in Alcibiades's soul. He had grown up, and with one stroke matured from a young man to an adult. He had grief to overcome, but a new determination was born in him. The gods had not been kind to him. For all his fortune and fine birth, he had lost his father without having known him really, and by that fact he had always been a youth who had had only himself to measure to. He had looked for other ideal images to cling to, but found none. Socrates had been the new father, and in a way remained so; Pericles never was because he had been too absent and too occupied. Socrates, though still revered, lived often in his own private world and Socrates shared that world with no one, also not with Alcibiades though Alcibiades had desperately sought Socrates to draw him in his soul.

When someone finally had really opened to him in body and emotions, a humble girl, that one too had been taken from him. So be it. If the gods wanted it this way, then that was the way he would give them. He would honour the gods in public, but the gods would not touch him anymore, because they had already condemned and punished him. He could only lose his life, and he did not care much for his life anymore. For the rest of his years, he would be Alcibiades the splendid, the ravisher of hearts and minds of people. He would become a conqueror, a politician and an intriguer. No intrigue, no venture would be dangerous enough, for he cared no more. He would never care anymore for anything but for his image among the Hellenes, and the gods would have to kill him to stop him. He defied the gods. This earth would see the most unscrupulous monster of its times. But he would smile at Earth, charm it, coerce it, and drive it with flatteries and persuasion. He would learn to make war and use warfare when he needed it. Protagoras had been good: Protagoras had taught him the arts to manipulate. He mastered these arts now. He would use them.

The third day, Alcibiades asked Protagoras to continue with his teaching and the old, wise man did just that, without ever referring to what had happened in Cyprus.

It was as if the gods had heard Alcibiades and acknowledged his determination – or were they merely curious to know what their experiment would lead to? The boat moored in many ports of the Sea. The people in the Hellenic towns might have heard of the stately, tall, learned Sophist and of his noble student connected to the leaders of Athens and who would surely be the next ruler of Athens. They might have heard how these two spoke in the streets of their ports two months ago. The authorities had heard the stories too. A legend, a notoriety, a fame now accompanied Protagoras and

Alcibiades. When they stepped onto the quays of a harbour and walked into a town, the people and the authorities came forward to the two Athenians to ask who they were. They flocked to Alcibiades, calling out his name. The authorities honoured him officially as if he were an ambassador. They invited him for a few moments or for a few days in their houses and organised banquets, symposiums, for him to meet the most important traders and the most powerful men of the town. Alcibiades spoke with them as if he were one of them. He was polite and civilised. He spoke with repose, dignity, authority, ease and determination. He affirmed his opinions and defended them vehemently, but he knew also when to stop and to accept views of interlocutors delivered and sustained with obsession. He spoke not anymore in the streets or the agorae. He was invited to speak in the theatre or in the places of assembly, and the people crowded to see him and to hear him speak. He spoke in long monologues, long speeches, on subjects that could interest them such as the place of their towns in the Delian Alliance. He became more brilliant and more prepossessing with each speech. He remained calm and respectful, as if he was at everybody's service, helping and answering with charm and wit.

Protagoras recognised the stone inside Alcibiades's heart, but knew it was too late to extract or mould it. He had placed the stone there himself, after all, he and Pericles and Aspasia and Socrates. The stone had been there from when Alcibiades was very young. But the stone had become larger instead of disappearing. Protagoras was remorseful, and he knew his teaching would not be used in the way he had wanted it to be, but he was helpless. The cocoon was now hard and impenetrable around Alcibiades. Protagoras could only feed more weapons into the cocoon. The more Alcibiades hid the stone within him, the more glory was added to his name, from port to port. He relished it, took it in eagerly and prepared for the time he could use it.

### **Thrasylus**

Alcibiades and Protagoras arrived in Athens in the summer. They returned to Athens in the slow merchant boat. When the ship moored in the harbour of Piraeus, Alcibiades said goodbye to the older man. Here their roads separated. Alcibiades had come to like the old man, who had taught him much in a short time. Yet, he understood that what Protagoras had taught him were techniques and concepts to use in daily, practical life. Socrates had taught him on a higher level. Socrates had gone to the roots of all questions, to the roots of his very existence. Alcibiades still craved to know why he was who he was on the earth, how he should live, and what he should live for. He longed to see Socrates back. He had so many questions to ask him, but he knew Socrates would give him no answer. Socrates would say to him he knew less than he, Alcibiades. Then, Socrates would ask even more questions to Alcibiades. Alcibiades had found already too many unanswered questions by himself. He was not in need of questions; he was in need of answers, and neither Socrates nor Protagoras had quenched his thirst for the ultimate knowledge.

Alcibiades was bitter: the only person in Athens capable enough of providing answers just asked more questions. Was life a question too, a quest for answers that were never found? Was Socrates suggesting that he, Alcibiades, had all answers in his mind, that his mind could find by itself all the answers? Did also not Protagoras claim the same? Well, he was sure he could not.



‘No,’ he thought, ‘I do not have the answers in me. I know too little and I experienced not enough. I have to live to learn. I have to learn by myself. Socrates and Protagoras can teach me something, but not what I seek. I shall live and see many wonders, like Herodotus. I shall live and travel more than I did with Protagoras. I have to live to the full. I shall learn and speak in the Assembly and have the experience of working in the meetings. I shall be a hoplite and a cavalryman. I shall be a general and fight Athens’ enemies. Then maybe, after battles and politics, I shall know the answers.’ He returned to the house of his mother and to the house of Pericles, decided to hear and listen more than before.

Pericles, Aspasia and the people of the household heard in the next days what had happened at Cyprus. At least, that was what Alcibiades assumed. He became a silent, quiet, introvert young man. Pericles and Aspasia did not see him much in the next days. He exercised in the gymnasium, wrestled in the palaestra, and he took his training in the army very seriously. Alcibiades ran in the stadium, and he ran like the best. He participated in the jumping contests and he was a good jumper, although he was not tall enough to be a champion. He threw the javelin and the disc. He exercised his muscles, swam a lot, also in the Sea, and his shoulders broadened. He had no fat on his abdomen and breast. He ran in full armour. He exercised at mock skirmishes of war with the military.

Alcibiades fought with the sword, his preferred weapon. He exercised at this with Thrasyllus, a young hoplite who was a few years older than he. Thrasyllus could deliver blows with the sword that made Alcibiades’s sword and shield sing, but Alcibiades wore him out, and then Thrasyllus had to parry the vicious thrusts of the point of Alcibiades’s sword. The commanders of the army were veteran hoplites. Alcibiades learned from them how to fight in a hoplite phalanx, first as a hoplite of the ranks, then as an commander.

When Alcibiades wrestled with Thrasyllus, he could not win. However energetic and rapid and snake-like supple Alcibiades was, and however he tried, Thrasyllus was equally fast in movements, and far stronger in muscles than Alcibiades. After many such fights, for Alcibiades never abandoned and wanted ever more exercises with Thrasyllus, and from sheer frustration when he was lying in the dust of the wrestling ground, with Thrasyllus’ hand over his mouth wriggling at his head and neck, Alcibiades bit deep in Thrasyllus hand, drawing blood. Biting was forbidden at wrestling.

‘Hey, Alcibiades,’ Thrasyllus shouted, ending the fight from surprise, holding his hurt hand, ‘you bite like a woman.’

‘No, like a lion,’ Alcibiades laughed, feeling at his neck, wondering whether it was still between his shoulders and his head.

Alcibiades was a good friend of Thrasyllus. He was obliged to buy a bowl of wine after that fight. Thrasyllus and Alcibiades went to taverns together and drank at times bowl after bowl of wine, for which Alcibiades always paid, until they were almost fully drunk and left. They were quiet friends, and hardly spoke in the taverns. Thrasyllus fought rarely in drinking house brawls, for his opponents usually dragged off when he stood up from his chair, but it happened. Then, the tavern fighters would taste of the power of Thrasyllus’s arms and of Alcibiades’s vicious fists. Alcibiades’s nose was never broken. He also did not box in the exercise grounds and he also never fought the pankration. He cared for his looks.

Once, Thrasyllus proposed to Alcibiades to accompany him to the Kerameikos district.

‘To do what?’ Alcibiades asked suspiciously, and suspecting what the answer was. ‘You know what,’ Thrasyllus said, ‘to go see the girls near the gates.’

Alcibiades refused to go to the brothels of Athens in the Kerameikos, and Thrasyllus, bitterly disappointed, had to go see the girls alone. And pay for them with his own coins.

Pericles discreetly spoke to the commanders of the army, and he heard from them how Alcibiades was doing. Alcibiades had become a very nice, serious young man, they told. He fought like a tiger. He was one of the best swordsmen. He had friends, and he was seen in particular often in the company of another young man, somewhat older than he, a giant called Thrasyllus, who was very dedicated also to his military career. Alcibiades was seen however mostly in the company of the toughest brutes of his squadron. He did not seek the company of the commanders, nor of the wealthier boys. He preferred the company of the hoplites of the lower classes. With these he laughed and drank, sometimes heavily. No, the commanders had not seen him go to brothels and no, there were no girls around him, and he went with nobody else but comrades in arms. Yes, there were brawls in which he was involved in, but nothing bad, and yes, Alcibiades could be very vicious when he fought with the sword and the lance.

Pericles was satisfied; the trip to Cyprus had ameliorated Alcibiades’s character notably.

‘The boy is sick,’ Aspasia worried.

She was sitting with her husband Pericles and with her child, young Pericles, on a couch in one of their smaller rooms. Pericles was reading notes about the situation of the finances of Athens, but the light was becoming inadequate.

He rolled up his scrolls, placed them in his chests, and asked, ‘why should he be sick? All is fine with him! He trains well and hard. His commanders are satisfied with him. He has friends and he goes out in their company. He makes no scandals anymore. Cyprus did him a lot of good. You were right.’

‘Nothing more?’ Aspasia asked, ‘nothing more?’

‘No,’ Pericles said, quite surprised. ‘What should there be more? He is just a serious, dedicated young man. Cyprus has been good for him, I assure you!’

‘He looks like he is bored to death. There is no life in him. He hardly speaks. The boy has lost all spirit. What have we done to him? Have we killed his emotions, his drive? Will he become one more of those dull, unimaginative, colourless, wealthy citizens that rule Athens?’

‘By Zeus,’ Pericles cried, a little worried too, but he certainly did not want to confess that to Aspasia. ‘I tell you he is all right and devoted to what he has to do, like all the other young men of his age.’

‘Alcibiades is not like the other boys of his age! Don’t you realise that? He is special. You know that.’

‘Aspasia, don’t start that all over again! You thought he was too deviated sexually and not like the most of us in that aspect, to say the least. You wanted him changed! You wanted him to go to Cyprus. So, I sent him to Cyprus. And paid outrageously for it! He changed, all right. He is a serious, fine boy now. Congratulations! Now what?’

‘He should not be a serious boy,’ Aspasia objected. ‘He should be Alcibiades. There are serious boys enough in Athens. The only one who doesn’t bore me here is called

Pericles. Alcibiades didn't bore me either, before. Now he does. I want him to be lively again, boisterous, arrogant and charming, a little lying and cheating, so that I can make it a sport to find him out.'

'For the sake of all the gods of Olympos, woman,' Pericles shouted, losing patience, standing up from the couch, pumping his arms up and down. 'You want one thing and when you get your ways you're not satisfied. I repeat: what's next?'

Aspasia looked miserable and she did not dare to fix her eyes on Pericles now. 'I don't know,' she said.

Pericles was worried. When Aspasia didn't know what to do, she might be sick herself. She had attached herself too much to Alcibiades.

'I think you love that boy,' Pericles said at last.

'Of course,' she answered. 'Of course I love him. I don't like to see young, promising, brilliant people become boring warriors or stupid, limited politicians.'

Pericles sighed.

At that moment entered Axiochus. Axiochus was Alcibiades's uncle on his mother's side, but he was only five years older than Alcibiades.

He said, 'greetings, Pericles and Aspasia. What were you talking about so excitedly?'

Pericles didn't like Axiochus at all and he wanted to scream that what he had been talking about was no business of an impudent young man. Aspasia was more quickly to answer Axiochus than Pericles however.

She said, 'of your nephew, Alcibiades.'

Axiochus sat down. 'What about Alcibiades? What has he done now?'

'He has become too serious,' Aspasia replied with a sad face.

'Isn't that what you wanted him always to be?'

'Yes,' Pericles answered.

'No, not at all,' Aspasia said.

'What?' Axiochus asked.

'We sent him to Cyprus, to Aphrodite's festival. He met a girl there. We had to take her away. Now he broods over her. He is still in love and he turned inside himself. He is too serious.'

Axiochus guffawed. 'Well,' he said, 'if it is a girl he needs ....'

'No girls,' Pericles shouted. 'Enough with girls around him!'

'Yes,' Aspasia said. 'No serious girls, anyhow.'

'He is serious, in love, and there should be no new girls around. How is he going to cheer up?' Axiochus grinned. 'How about travelling, changing air?'

'What?' Pericles and Aspasia asked in unison.

Axiochus looked at them both.

'Yes,' he said. 'I must go to Thrace and to the Hellespont. I have been there a few times already on my father's business. My father left me trading posts there. I have to see by myself what my trading partners are up to, how they work, how honest the foreigners are that manage the posts, and how much they steal from me.'

'But you are so young yourself!' Pericles exclaimed, surprised.

'Yes,' Axiochus said. 'The friends of my father taught me a lot. I know, I should not trade myself. But I like it. I won a lot of money in Athens and in those lands beyond Euboea. I did it myself, all on my own. I have a natural hang for business, for being a merchant. I am not and will never be a good hoplite, and certainly not a good politician either! Trading is what I like to do. I like to buy and sell things. It is easy, in fact! You buy in goods at low prices and you sell somewhere else at high prices. That is what I want to do!'

Pericles was amazed. ‘Another young genius of Athens,’ he thought. He did not like Axiochus however, for the man was already notorious for his debauchery with women. Pericles had heard rumours, and he had wondered a couple of times whether he should intervene for the sake of public morals.

‘So,’ Axiochus continued. ‘If Alcibiades is too dull and gloomy, I can take him for a couple of months to Thrace and to the Hellespont. I would love to have a companion with me and not travel alone. The change of air might do him good.’

‘He has just been back from travelling,’ Pericles objected, doubting the value of the influence of Axiochus on Alcibiades. ‘He needs still to learn how to be a good hoplite.’

‘I think it is a splendid idea,’ Aspasia retorted. ‘The boy knows only philosophy and the army, and I believe Socrates had made his head spin. He learned oratorship with Protagoras, and he knows what love is. He knows all about warring. It might be good for him to know what trading is. But Axiochus, do not draw him into your wild brawls! Don’t you dare!’

‘Hey’, Axiochus protested, ‘I am doing a favour!’

Once more, Pericles shook his head and gave up. He wanted peace in his household and peace with his wife who was also his only mistress. He put up his arms, and then clapped them to his sides.

‘All right, all right!’ he agreed. ‘If Alcibiades wants to accompany you, Axiochus, he can go with you.’

## **Abydos**

Five days later, a heavily loaded merchant ship left Piraeus. The ship had pots, bowls, vases, kraters and amphorae of the nicest kind in its loads, ceramics made in the Kerameikos district of Athens. Hidden in a corner was a chest of silver coins stamped with the owl of Athens. It was a broad ship, heavy in the water and it had a sturdy mast with large, old, brown sails. On board the ship were Axiochus and Alcibiades. The ship sailed south first, to Cape Sounion, then it took resolutely a northern course. It sailed along the coasts of the vast island of Euboea and along the territories of Magnesia in Thessaly. From Thessaly it sailed east to Chalcidice, and Alcibiades and Axiochus stayed a while in the port of Scione. Then they sailed to the island of Thasos and from there to Abdera. The ship followed the coast again until it arrived at the Hellespont, the narrow strait that led into the Propontis. Further to the east was the Bosphorus, the entry to the Black Sea. In the Bosphorus lay the cities of Byzantium, Chalcedon and Chrysopolis, and here the traders of the peoples that lived around and beyond the Black Sea came to sell their goods and to take on goods from the west. Axiochus was one of the traders who bought their produce and sold to them luxury items like the finely illustrated amphorae of Athens. Axiochus’s ship passed the Chersonese. It moored first at Elaeus on the northern shore of the Hellespont, then at Sigeum on the other side. The ship followed the southern coast of the Hellespont from that point on, sailing past Rhoeteum and Dardanus to reach Abydos.

Alcibiades enjoyed the travels. He liked to learn about the towns and their peoples, the coast sides and the contours of the lands they passed. He loved the rolling and working of the boat under his feet, the fresh air of the Sea and the views of the

beaches and rocky coasts from aboard the boat. He talked little by his own initiative, but he was a fine companion for Axiochus. He asked questions and with one question of Alcibiades, Axiochus could do what he loved best: talk and explain, proud of his knowledge and of his experience.

The boat stopped at all the ports, its only reason now the voyage and inspection tours of Axiochus. Axiochus's family owned trading posts in these towns and he ordered the ships to moor at all these places. Alcibiades accompanied his uncle, who was of course a youth scarcely older than he, but at that age every year counts several times, so that it seemed to Alcibiades that Axiochus was ages older than he.

The trading posts of Axiochus's family were mostly simple affairs. At Sigeum, there was a large warehouse near the port, and two ships lay close to the warehouse at the quays. Five people worked there and goods were brought in and out of the warehouse. At Dardanus, Axiochus's contacts were merely with a Mysian trader, who also worked for other families of Athens. Axiochus not only talked to the people who worked for him. He also had partners to meet. He had addresses of men he had never seen, but who his father had indicated to him. The addresses were rudimentary, like 'Aristarchus the Abydene who lives sometimes beyond the temple of Artemis and who deals in corn', to quite detailed ones like 'Autocles lives two houses to the right of the temple of Apollo in the harbour'. Alcibiades accompanied Axiochus when his uncle sought these men out.

Alcibiades learned everything there was to know about trading in those parts of the Sea. He learned all that Axiochus knew. He never participated in the meetings between his uncle and his partners, however.

Axiochus told him, 'if you want to trade yourself with these men, you pass by me. Let me have a share of the benefits.'

Alcibiades had seen enough by then, heard enough of the profits. He had sufficient confidence in Axiochus. He promised to talk to Pericles to secure funds for Axiochus from his personal fortune.

Alcibiades learned the price of corn, of all sorts of cereals, the price of timber of different widths and lengths and sorts, of spices, of precious stones and of fleeces in the prices of the different cities. Axiochus explained him how the price differences could be exploited and when, for the prices also depended upon the seasons.

Alcibiades admired the cunning in the movements of the goods made by Axiochus, and the ways in which Axiochus bartered, for only seldom did Axiochus bring his silver owls up. He obtained lower prices everywhere for the goods he bought and sent to Athens. Goods from Athens such as amphorae, tunics, and armour, also travelled the other way. Alcibiades learned rapidly how Axiochus's caskets got filled with golden coins, some of the Athenian gold staters, worth six tetradrachmas, and also the golden Darics, the Persian coins stamped with the head of the King of Persia.

When the two men reached Abydos, Axiochus brought Alcibiades to a house in the town, not far from the harbour. They arrived in the morning. The house was very large and near the agora, on the road leading to the port. It was unoccupied. The house belonged to Axiochus's family, but Axiochus had not been there for several years. The last time he had been there, Axiochus's father had brought him to Abydos. Since the death of his father, the house had been left alone. Axiochus threw open the door. The place was dirty. Dust covered every item of furniture as well as the floors. Sand had blown in. Still, the house would shelter them for the night. They would stay

several months here, use Abydos as a base and travel to and fro in the Hellespont, the Propontis and the Bosphorus cities from here.

Alcibiades waited and chose him a room. He fetched his gear from the boat and settled in. Axiochus went back into the town and later also to the harbour, to their ship to make arrangements. It was extremely hot and dry. In the afternoon, five slaves were already cleaning the place and a cook was preparing food. Wine amphorae were brought in. The next day, Axiochus took the slaves with him and later on, one piece of new furniture after the other was brought into the house. Axiochus knew his way around in Abydos, and he arranged to bring the house in good order of living. Then he showed Alcibiades around the town. Alcibiades was rather bored with this all. He had nothing to do, but he let himself be led by Axiochus.

It took Axiochus ten days in the house to declare he was bored, and he said he would look for other and better company. Alcibiades wondered what Axiochus meant. He shrugged his shoulders and continued to walk along the harbour alone, even further away into the rocky hills and in the forests beyond the town, in the creeks beyond Abydos. Alcibiades also strolled for long times in the harbour, and he did not hesitate to talk to the boat captains, to the sailors he met, and to the people who sold goods at the stalls. He walked and ran along the beaches, and roamed in the hills.

Abydos was a Milesian colony, an independent town that paid no subservience to the satrapies of Mysia and Phrygia. It had splendid high walls and strong gates, for the Abydenes knew the price of freedom. Abydos took pride in fine temples of Athena and Artemis and Apollo, pleasant streets and a little agora. Its harbour was ample and well filled with merchant ships that liked to stop here before sailing on through the Hellespont. Its twin town was Sestos, a smaller city situated just on the other side of the Hellespont. By and by, Alcibiades learned to know every corner of the environments of Abydos and Sestos.

Alcibiades looked at the Sea. The waves that disappeared in white, thundering rolls responded to his soul's confusion. He looked for long times at the Sea, revisiting in his mind all the images of Harmonia and their love. The Hellespont was very narrow here, only about eight stades wide. All the boats had to pass close. Alcibiades saw a few of these sailing to the harbour, or in between the two shores, slowly gliding past him with open sails. On the other side of the straits, he could clearly distinguish the harbour of the town of Sestos. He had read Herodotus' book and he knew that here, Xerxes, the King of Persia, had built two bridges to march over his troops to invade Hellas. That happened a long time ago, and nothing of the bridges was left. Still, a sailor of Abydos showed Alcibiades where tradition confirmed that the bridges were situated. A longer time ago, Leander swam here. The sailor also told Alcibiades the story of Hero and Leander.

Hero was a priestess of Aphrodite in the temple of Sestos on the opposite coast of the Hellespont. It was forbidden for her to meet men, but Leander had remarked her in the temple. Leander lived in Abydos, and he secretly met and loved Hero. Hero would lit a torch at night on the tower of the Temple of Aphrodite, and Leander would swim over the Hellespont, guided by the light, to his loved one. One night, a storm raged in the straits, as could happen here sometimes in the cold season. The wind blew out the torch while Leander swam to the other shore. He lost sense of direction, swam and swam, and drowned in the darkness. The next morning, the storm threw the lifeless

body of Leander on the rocks near Sestos. When Hero saw the shattered body of her lover, she flung herself from the cliffs into the Sea, to be united with Leander forever.

Alcibiades would have loved to swim to Sestos to meet Harmonia, and he wondered what twist of fate had brought him to this place that reminded him so much of a priestess of Aphrodite and of a sad, unfulfilled love. But where was Harmonia? Alcibiades turned entirely inwards, for he had been separated from his beloved one, and he feared he would never see her again. Would he find her ever? Should he fling himself from the cliffs into the Sea, here?

Axiochus returned with a woman and her daughter, and with a girl dressed like a Persian. He introduced the women to Alcibiades. The more mature woman was called Medontias. She was an Abydene and a courtesan of the town. The woman was about thirty-five years old, or even a little older. She was stout, had a large body, very heavy breasts, still a thin waist, a much curved back, luxurious dark brown hair, and a large face. She must have been a mixture of Hellenic and Persian blood, for her features were slightly coloured. She was beautiful in a very sensual way. When she walked, the men could not keep their eyes from her ample bosom. Her daughter, a slender, smaller but pretty and very lively girl, was of Alcibiades's age. She had large, dark, flirting eyes. The Persian girl was a Phrygian slave Axiochus had bought the same day in the agora, at a large slave auction that happened once a month at Abydos. She was a couple of years younger than Alcibiades and a frail little girl with a nice, round face. She would help in the house.

Alcibiades left the women to Axiochus. He refused to see them. Medontias offered several times to sleep with him, but he declined. The women stayed to live in the house. Alcibiades and Axiochus came and went. They lived for periods of several days at Abydos, then went aboard a merchant ship and travelled to towns further in the Propontis. Alcibiades learned to love this wonderful, sun-blanced country, its changing landscape of hills, cliffs, beaches and forests. He visited Hellenic cities on both sides of the water, all strongly walled and defended and jealous of their independence. He was most impressed by the massive fortifications of Byzantium, a Dorian colony, and by the grace of the temples and buildings of Chalcedon. He discovered succulent new food in these parts, opsôn cooked in various ways, and many of which were prepared with sweet honey. He discovered new flowers and trees. He met people from the orient who brought goods such as silk in heavy bales. At Chrysopolis he was even invited to attend a lion hunt.

After one of these travels, Alcibiades and Axiochus arrived very late in the evening at their house in Abydos. Alcibiades had then still helped to unload the most precious contents. He was exhausted. When he arrived in the house, he drank several bowls of wine with Axiochus, and then went to his bedroom. He fell asleep immediately. He woke in the middle of the night, for a naked body lay beside him and wriggled. While turning and tossing in his sleep, he had touched nude hips and legs. He stretched out a hand and his fingers came on a huge but firm woman's breast. He moved his hand. The nipples hardened and the breast heaved. The woman stirred. Alcibiades continued to caress with his hand over the breasts and he felt how they stiffened more under his touch. Long fingers glided down over his abdomen to his penis and caressed his lid unashamedly, so that he was rapidly aroused. The woman moved and sat on his legs. She crossed over his body and sat upright before him in the

darkness, with her knees on the bed. He felt with his hands the position of her flesh. He drew her buttocks closer. She took his lid into her vagina, but first she moved his lid with her hand around her opening so that she was all moist when he slid in her. The woman did all the work. She moved over his penis and held her breasts high above him, curving her spine and thrusting him deep in her. Alcibiades grabbed her breasts, clawed at them, pressed them until she gasped and then released them to hang over his face, gently caressing and pressing. The woman was an expert in love making, and she brought him slowly but very powerfully to a climax, continuing to suck in his ejaculation with the movements of her sex. Then she also cried out and collapsed above him. He held her a while, immobile, then let her stride over him and go naked out of the room.

In the following nights, this scene repeated until Alcibiades and Axiochus left again Abydos by ship for another destination in the straits. Axiochus knew that Medontias slept with Alcibiades, but he didn't seem to mind at all.

Axiochus only commented suddenly when they were both standing on the deck of a boat looking at the shores, 'Medontias sure knows her business, doesn't she?'

'Yes,' Alcibiades grinned. 'She is an expert indeed. She made love to me in the same way the first days, but now she wants to do it to me in all kinds of different ways!'

'Some of that is my doing, I'm afraid,' Axiochus replied. 'I told her you needed some ass. I told her you had not much experience. In fact, I even told her you were a virgin when you arrived here.'

Alcibiades made a fist and prepared to knock Axiochus over.

'Wait,' Axiochus cried, laughing. 'She did not believe me anyhow!'

Alcibiades lowered his fist.

He grinned, 'she taught me three positions more, ways I would have thought it impossible to bring a penis inside a woman. Each way offers other pleasures.'

'Sure,' Axiochus said. 'Each man should know all the ways to pleasure a woman, too. Next time we stay at Abydos, she will not come to you every night, though. I too have a use of that woman and of her knowledge of positions!'

They both laughed then, and continued their journey.

During the next stay at Abydos, Alcibiades expected Medontias, and he did not sleep. His member hardened in the dark only at the image of her in his mind. Footsteps sounded indeed muffled at the door. The steps were lighter than what he was used of Medontias. Smaller fingers were pressed against his lips so that he knew he should not speak. Medontias' daughter made him caress her tiny breasts and her hips. She took his hand between her legs and opened them until he pressed and pressed, and drew a moist hand back. Then she sat on the bed, on her knees, but with her back to him, and she made Alcibiades enter her from behind. She pushed her small buttocks to his loins and he worked with her, holding her at the waist, until they reached a wild climax. The girl had given Alcibiades the impression that he had savagely taken her and possessed her. Yet, she had been willing. He had been rough, and she had been wild. He had moved strongly in her and out of her, with powerful thrusts of his muscles.

He lay down exhausted beside the girl and she continued to caress his member. He was laying in the bed on his back, the girl next to him. They were both drenched in the sweat of their love-making. Then, Alcibiades felt another hand, a cool hand, sliding from his breast and calmly move all over him, over his hair, face, shoulders, breast, abdomen, hips and legs. It was his nipples that this hand pressed, and



Alcibiades felt a sharp but sweet pain go through his chest. The small hands slid delicately but ever more rapidly and more pressing over his body, and then two hands worked once more on his penis until he shuddered. A very light, lean body sat on him again, and his member entered tighter flesh.

One after the other, the two girls made love to him through part of the night. In the morning, he woke up in the bed with a female leg over his chest, his own leg over the belly of another girl, his hand on a tiny breast, a girls' head in his arms, and another hand lay over his groin. He saw Axiochus standing naked and laughing in the door. A nude Medontias stood behind him, peering over Axiochus's shoulder.

The days and nights that Alcibiades and Axiochus were in Abydos, they passed with such unrestrained, torrid sensuality as Alcibiades would not experience thereafter. The sensuality pervaded the house. While they were eating in the evening for instance, they might be served by a naked girl. When they read scrolls on a couch they could play inattentively with one hand inside the tunic of a woman. When they were sitting in a room, engaged in thoughts, alone, Medontias could enter surreptitiously and open her chiton to show her very heavy breasts and large, dark nipples in front of their eyes, very close to their faces, then turn around and bend and present her naked buttocks, open legs and wet opening.

Axiochus and Alcibiades lived in complete debauchery those days, as can happen with young men of unformed character, wealthy so that they could afford anything, and devoid of any voice to remind them of restraint, respect, and the virtues of the mind. They walked around naked or half naked and sat thus in the aulé of their house or in the rooms.

After one of their travels to the confines of the entry to the Black Sea, to Byzantium, when their boat moored along a quay of Abydos, a magistrate of the town came to meet them. He was accompanied by a heavily armoured guard, but he bade the man to stay at a distance, behind him. He addressed Axiochus first.

He asked, 'are you Axiochus and Alcibiades the Athenians?'

The magistrate surely knew who they were, but Axiochus and Alcibiades understood that the man was on some kind of official mission.

The man said, 'I am a magistrate of Abydos sent to you by the Council of the town. You are foreigners to our city and welcome to trade. We know you deal in goods and we appreciate merchants at our harbour. Yet, the Council has heard rumours that you live in debauchery with a woman and her daughter. Slaves have told in the city that you sleep with both of them and it is told also that the daughter is a girl of the woman by one of you. We do not disapprove of courtesans when they are discreet, but incest is a crime in our town. We know the allegations are lies, but we cannot ignore them. We have to remain cautious with the public morals of our town, although we take a very lenient view to such matters, as you must surely know. We want to be discrete and polite with the message we give you. We ask you also to be discrete and not to flaunt such habits in the faces of our citizens. The doors of your aulé are open, often. Your slaves see what you do and tell about it in the agora. We therefore ask you to stop your ways, which are becoming an open scandal in our city, or to depart in peace. We regret having to deliver this message to you, but such is our decision.'

Axiochus did not laugh anymore, for his business in Abydos was important. He wanted to continue to use the town as one of his main bases of trade in the

Hellespont. He could, however, establish his counter also at Sestos on the other side, and cross the Hellespont to trade at Abydos.

He replied, 'please tell the Council Members that we will abide by their wishes. We meant no harm and no scandal. We will be more discrete. We will not be staying for much longer in Abydos anyhow, but we would like to return here to trade peacefully. We were not aware we were stirring up scandals, and we apologise if we have offended Members of the Council or other citizens and given them bad feelings.'

The magistrate smiled then, pleased that his mission could be concluded pleasantly. He spoke a few polite words, and Axiochus assured the man several times he had not been aware they had offended citizens of Abydos. The magistrate left, dignified, austere, but with a knowing thin smile on his lips.

Axiochus looked at the man's back and said, 'pompous bastard! We'll have to take more precautions with our servants. I bet the two men I sold off last time because they cheated on us, and wanted a piece of the ass of our women, are the cause of this. Anyhow, I have to return to Thrace and to Athens soon. Suppose we returned a little earlier?'

'Yes,' Alcibiades replied. 'I would like to return to Athens, too. There is rumour of war. I heard it in the agora, here. And it is true we should change a little our ways of living!'

The two men continued to stay for a few days with the women, sharing them and experiencing sexuality to the extremes. But they also prepared to leave Abydos. The magistrates saw the preparations and they took patience, for they knew the two young men were of the best families of Athens and related to Pericles. Axiochus paid off the women. Medontias cried much and wept and screamed, but Axiochus sold the house and provided the women with funds to live at ease for many months.

A few days later, Axiochus and Alcibiades embarked on a merchant boat bound for Thrace. Axiochus stayed at a port of that land, but Alcibiades continued home, to Athens. He arrived there at the end of the cold season.

## ***Chapter 4 – Potidaea, Spring 432 BC to Winter 430 BC***

### **Therme**

In Athens, Alcibiades continued to take lessons every while with Protagoras, but he felt he could not learn more nor needed to learn more from the old man. He contacted Socrates and entered once again the discussion group of the philosopher. More than ever he too tried to understand why things were, rather than how they were.

He asked permission and advice from Pericles to build a house of his own. He hired an architect and started the construction of a large detached mansion within the walls of Athens, in a quiet neighbourhood of the Scambonid district. He also stayed often at his country house in Attica and took an interest in agriculture. He bred horses, though not many, and people could see him galloping extremely hard in the toughest winds around his territory, oblivious of danger and of the speed he made on his finest animals. He kept in touch with the politics of Athens and continued to train as a hoplite. His training was ending, so he was ready and fit for any campaign as a commander of Athens. At the end of that year war seemed improbable, however, despite consistent rumours as to the contrary, and Athens' splendour augmented, as considerable sums were still spent to embellish the town. The dark clouds in the sky were only the new developments in far Corcyra.

The Corinthians took a year and a half to prepare a new fleet to attack Corcyra. The Corcyraeans were allied to no other city of Hellas, they had always refused any treaty of mutual assistance, but now they appealed to Athens for a formal alliance and protection. Corcyraeans and Corinthians both sent ambassadors to Athens. Socrates told with much passion and relish of the fine speeches the envoys made to the Assembly of the people of Athens. The Corcyraeans pleaded for an alliance, the Corinthians against it. Several speakers from Athens came forward, Pericles along them. The Athenians feared that if they refused the Corcyraean plea, the Corcyraeans might be conquered by Corinth and since Corinth was allied to Sparta, Sparta would suddenly be able to put to sea the important combined fleet of Corinth and Corcyra, threatening the hegemony of Athens over the Sea. The Corinthians begged the Athenians to not listen to the Corcyraean claims. They asserted that war was not necessary, that the Peloponnesian cities desired to live in peace. They confirmed their friendship with Athens while presenting themselves as allies of Sparta.

The Athenian people, however, voted in favour of the alliance with Corcyra, and they sent ten well-trained Athenian war triremes in support of the island. In the meantime, Corinth had advanced on Corcyra with a hundred and fifty triremes, a very considerable naval force.

The Corinthian and Corcyraean fleets gave battle, once more near Cape Leucimne, in front of the Sybota islands. The Corinthians attacked the hundred and ten Corcyraean ships and the Corcyraeans were defeated while the ten warships of Athens, commanded by Lacedaemonius son of Cimon, had not intervened. Athens did not want war with Corinth and even less with Sparta. In the heat of the sea-battle, however, twenty additional Athenian triremes arrived at the scene. The Corinthians assumed that these ships were the front line of many other Athenian triremes, so they broke off the engagement and turned around. The next day the Corcyraeans offered to

fight the Corinthians again, but the Corinthian commanders refused battle. They did not want to confront the Athenian warships and thereby risk war with Athens. The Peloponnesian fleet sailed back to Corinth. Complete, all-out war between Athens and the Peloponnesos had been avoided.

Alcibiades heard from Pericles in the late summer that a punitive expedition was going to be launched in Macedonia. Athens would send about thirty triremes there with a thousand hoplites under the command of Archestratus, son of Lycomedes. Athens had forged an alliance with Philip, son of Alexander King of Macedonia and with Derdas, to join forces against Philip's brother King Perdiccas of Macedonia. Athens had been allied to Perdiccas, but lost confidence in him. No cavalry would join this expedition, because Archestratus could rely on the horsemen of Philip. Alcibiades nevertheless eagerly applied to join the expedition. When Socrates heard of this, he decided also to engage in the expedition. He still felt responsible for Alcibiades and some feeling of guilt nagged at his conscience, so that he felt obliged to keep near his former pupil, now young friend. Alcibiades offered to Socrates to share his tent, which Socrates gratefully accepted for he was poor although he possessed the full panoply of armour of the hoplite. The day of departure he arrived proudly with his bell-shaped breastplate and helmet, shield and other protections at Pericles's house, and both men said goodbye to Pericles, Aspasia and their friends. Then they went on board the trireme that would take them to Macedonia, and they found them sucked with incredible speed and harshness into an entirely different world.

Alcibiades and Socrates sailed on board a trireme paid for by Alcibiades. The trireme was a fast ship, built for war, one of the finest and fastest among the fleet. Its name was Harmonia. Most war ships of Athens had names of women and Alcibiades, when asked for a name, had remained thoughtful for a long while, and then conceded the name that was still so dear to him. He was proud of the ship, and she became one of the sensations of the fleet, for no other ship was so splendidly built and decorated. It had a crew of about two hundred of the best sailors, paid directly by Alcibiades. It took now also twenty hoplites on board.

The Athenian trireme was built for two purposes only: to be swift and to ram hard its reinforced prow into another ship. It was nothing more than an empty hull filled on each side with three superposed rows of rowers. Slightly above the highest row, the ship was covered with a deck, which went over the width of the ship and covered it completely. The hoplites stayed on this deck. They would occasionally go down under the deck to sit in the shadow, or to walk among the rowers and make jokes. The rowers sat on their benches. Each rower used a piece of leather, which he put under him so that he could move on the bench, forward and back, without hurting his flesh where he sat, or burn their buttocks. The rowers might row steadily the entire day. Most of the time however, the captain ordered the mast and sails to be risen. The boat would sail then, and the rowers sat at leisure in the hold of the ship. The ship would sail sluggishly, but it would advance in the Sea, fast enough for a fleet that merely transported an army to Macedonia. Sometimes, the hoplites would take over for half a day of rowing, and that was a joyous affair. There was a lot of cursing in the air too, for the citizen-warriors were not used to keep the rhythm, and oars blocked. Alcibiades learnt to row in a warship on that voyage of the Harmonia. He spoke a lot with the captain of the ship, and with the helmsman, to learn how to handle the

manoeuvres of the vessel. Like the other hoplites, he had a low tent on the deck of the trireme. At night, the seamen drew the ships against the shore. Sometimes, the crew stayed in a port, but mostly they simply moored in a bay or in creeks and then they all slept then on land but for the men who remained on board to guard the boats.

The fleet sailed peacefully for after a few days, and passed Euboea. There, the messenger ship of Athens, the Salaminia caught up with the fleet. Commanders of the Salaminia went on board Archestratus's trireme. They brought changes in orders from Athens. The Athenian Assembly had decided even before their departure to use this force to other aims, for more urgent affairs had come up.

Athens could not afford any city that paid tribute in the Delian league to defect from its alliance. Pericles feared that if one town would leave the alliance, others would follow. Athens found out in particular one town might be at the point of revolting against Athens: Potidaea in Chalcidice. Potidaea was a Hellenic town. It was nicely situated at the mouth of the Isthmus of Pallene. It controlled access to the isthmus, controlling the smallest part of the land between the mainland and the isthmus. Potidaea paid tribute to Athens, but it was a colony of Corinth. Corinth sent each year magistrates to govern the city. After Sybota and the conflict with Corinth, Athens feared that Potidaea would revolt against Athens, by Corinthian intrigue, to spite Athens that had prevented Corinth from winning the war with Corcyra. The Athenian Assembly therefore sent an ultimatum: Potidaea had to pull down its fortifications that were looking towards the isthmus of Pallene and it should stop receiving Corinthian magistrates. Pericles feared that not only Potidaea might revolt if he did not follow a hard line, but also that together with Perdiccas, with the Chalcidicians of Thrace and the Bottiaeanes, also the lesser towns around Potidaea would rebel. The ultimatum was not really that harsh, for Potidaea was most likely to be attacked from the north by enemies, and its walls on that side were allowed continuing to protect the city. The Potidaeans sent representatives to Athens to persuade them to leave their town's government as it had been before, but they also sent representatives to Sparta and Corinth for support. The Spartans promised secretly to invade Attica if Potidaea were to be attacked by Athens. Pericles's spies in Sparta heard of the agreement. Potidaea was considered a treacherous ally. Lessons had to be taught. The fleet of Archestratus changed direction from a northern course to a more southern one, advancing on the city of Potidaea.

Archestratus and his commanders were not too hurried to arrive at Potidaea, wanting to give the townsmen enough time to think over the menace of an Athenian army yelling war cries in front of their walls. During that time however, King Perdiccas succeeded in persuading the Chalcidicians to abandon and destroy their smaller cities on the coast and to re-enforce Olynthus, a town not far to the north of Potidaea. Olynthus thus became a large town. To other Chalcidicians the King offered refuge and land around Lake Bolbe in Mygdonia. The Chalcidicians destroyed their cities and moved inland.

When the fleet of Archestratus arrived near Potidaea, the strategos sent scouts to the town to report on what had happened there. The scouts came back rapidly. They had met troops of Potidaea, superior in numbers, which had routed them. They had also seen that the Potidaeans were heavily armed, warriors as well as citizens, ready to fend off attacks, and a huge number of armed warriors guarded the gates and walls of the city. Other reports confirmed that Potidaea had revolted.

Archestratus found it impossible to fight two wars at once: a war with Potidaea and one with Perdiccas of Macedonia. He decided therefore to set up camp on the coast near Potidaea, but to make war only against Perdiccas and against the revolted cities of Macedonia, as had been the original objective of the expedition.

The Athenians dallied. King Philip of Macedonia himself arrived at the camp of the Athenians for a war council, and together with the brothers of Derdas it was decided to jointly attack the revolted Chalcidician cities. Archestratus therefore advanced to the city of Therme and laid siege to the town. Alcibiades and Socrates were hoplites in the contingent of men that besieged Therme that spring.

The Athenian fleet blockaded the harbour of Therme, so that no ships could enter or sail out of the port. The Athenian hoplites looked in awe at the town walls of Therme. For many this was the first time they stood really with the prospect of having to storm a city, and for everybody it was the first time they actually participated in a siege. Therme was not a large town. Not more than five thousand people lived inside its walls. It was also a very ancient town, and its defences were old. The walls had once been built with large, regularly cut blocks of limestone. In several places, probably due to earthquakes, the stones had tumbled down. Parts for he walls showed repairs with mud bricks. These parts were not too strong, and not as high. Some places of the walls were even filled in with rubble of oddly shaped stones. The walls were not very high, not very well looked after, not very stable everywhere, built much more to keep out pirate gangs than armies, but certainly sufficient to deter any larger armed party that had not brought sophisticated siege engines. The Athenians had none. They constructed a ram to pound at the walls, an ox cart with a large tree trunk fixed on it. Their intent was to pull that ram to the walls, and destroy a lesser gate of Therme with it. The gate chosen by the Athenians was not particularly well protected. It was situated in one of the walls, but not inside a corridor protected from all angles by the defenders. Simultaneously, the Athenians would run with as many ladders as they could hastily assemble, throw these against the walls, and climb up. Archers would protect the warriors. The attack should start at night, close to dawn. It was a simple plan, but many wondered whether it would work, and how many Athenians would be dead before the first man would arrive on top of the walls? What would wait for the Athenians beyond the walls?

Alcibiades and Socrates ran silently in the dark of the night. They ran to Therme, accompanying two other hoplites who carried a scaling ladder. They were second and third to climb. Despite the surprise attack, the Thermian archers killed many Athenians. They threw down torches to light the attack and to better assess the oncoming enemy. Ladders on left and right were overturned, pushed away by the defenders. The screams of agony of the falling men mixed with the war cries of the hoplites who climbed.

The ladder of Alcibiades and Socrates held against the wall. They stepped up the rungs. The Athenians climbed up with their shields on their back, but with drawn swords. Few archers shot their way; the archers were more concerned with Athenians down beneath, which were unmoving targets. The first Athenian on the ladder was stabbed to death by a spear when he arrived on top of the stone parapet. That allowed Alcibiades to slip from behind the man's falling body and to find better footing. He saw a citizen of Therme stab with the same spear that had killed the first Athenian. He could avert the stab with his sword at the last moment, for the man was neither very skilful nor very strong, and then Alcibiades suddenly jumped forward with an energy

his opponent had not expected, pinned the man against the inner wall and gave him a nasty cut with his sword. The man was only wounded, but he had had enough already, and dropped his weapon. Socrates was now on the parapet also, fighting off another Thermian at Alcibiades's back. Socrates hacked and stabbed with large, powerful blows, and thus fended off warriors of Therme so that more Athenians could pour over the walls from the ladder. In a short time there were enough attackers on the wall to hold a small section of the parapet, from where other hoplites could come in. The Athenians had also gained strong footholds on other, farther parts of the wall, here and there in front of Alcibiades.

There was now heavy fighting on the walls. Alcibiades drew his round shield from his back, over his shoulders, because he had seen from a corner of his eye that beneath in the streets, a large number of archers had assembled, and these were preparing to pick their targets from among the Athenians on the top of the walls. Socrates was beside him, protecting his body from the inner side of the town by his large, ungainly, very old-fashioned but now extremely useful shield. With all their strength, both men pushed their shields to a few defenders who still resisted them on the top of the wall. Their adversaries were not professional hoplites, at least not on this part of the defences. They had been surprised in the dark by the swiftness of the attack, straight after the arrival of the Athenians before their town. They did offer resistance, but not wholeheartedly. It was as if they knew already their town would be captured anyhow, soon. Resistance faltered in front of Alcibiades and Socrates, and by the violence of the attacks and blows of the heavily armoured Athenian hoplites, many defenders fled from the wall down the stairs of a fortified tower. Alcibiades and Socrates pushed on, helped now by many of their comrades. They slammed, slashed, stabbed with their swords from between the openings of their shields, and wounded several men on the walls.

A huge Thermian sprang suddenly on Alcibiades, tearing the shields away, and Alcibiades felt a bite of a sword in his lower arm, where he had worn only light leather armour. Socrates had seen the move and slew with his sword at the man's neck. Blood poured over Alcibiades from the half-severed head. Alcibiades did not stop to look, however. He advanced rapidly and hit other defenders nearby. He went berserk at his own first blood and became a violent fury, slashing a way to the tower. The few warriors left unwounded on this part of the wall ran to safety down the stairs of the fortification. Alcibiades and Socrates followed. At street level, Alcibiades looked through the door cautiously, to see a whole contingent of archers waiting for onrushing Athenians. Socrates ran forward towards the door, but Alcibiades threw him aside. A volley of arrows flew past Socrates as he jumped to safety behind the thick walls of the tower, next to the door. The arrows killed the third Athenian who had rushed down the stairs impetuously, without looking at what waited for him ahead. The Athenians were down the walls, but stuck in the tower. They would have to advance against the arrows.

Alcibiades knew that they needed many more shields to storm the archers. They had too few men for the moment to pour out from the narrow door of the tower in force. But then, the massive wooden town gates to their right shattered, and more Athenians jumped through the opening. The Thermian archers had a problem now. They had to contend with the Athenians in the tower and they were attacked from the other side by powerful bronze-clad hoplites, while they were not heavily armed.

In that moment of hesitation, Alcibiades gave a shout of anger and violence, and joined by Socrates and other Athenian hoplites, he sprang forward. The men held their shields before them and together with their companions they rushed to the archers. A few arrows got stuck in Athenian shields. A few men had arrows in their legs and fell, but the hoplites were rapidly on the archers, who had let pass their moment of superiority. A fierce fight now took place between the Thermian lightly-armed archers and the fully armoured Athenian hoplites. Alcibiades let his energy explode and drove into the men, oblivious of pain and danger. The battle was uneven. The Thermian archers soon ran for their lives, trying to reach the streets of their town, but they were hacked down.

Half of the Athenian army was now inside Therme. The gate stood wide open, and Athenians steadily ran into the town. The hoplites strode at the backs of the fleeing armed citizens of Therme. Advancing more slowly now because they were seeking their second breaths, and feeling the fatigue of their running and slaying and of feeling unwieldy in their heavy armour and wearing arms and shield, Alcibiades and Socrates reached the agora of Therme, the centre point of the town. A last resistance had assembled there, but the Athenians surrounded the defenders. In the middle of the group stood an commander of Therme, probably a general or a high magistrate, for he wore a richly decorated breastplate lined with gold, the blazons of Therme hammered in silver on his breast. The man cried out orders in the heavy fighting. An Athenian arrow took him down, and immediately the Thermians stopped to fight and laid down their arms. The Athenians were angered by this stubborn resistance of Therme. Their energy of war was not spent. They slew pitilessly more than half of the men of the group, before Socrates succeeded in shouting and drawing at the men to make them stop the massacre. The Athenians looked angrily at Socrates, but held off from killing more men in the agora.

The Athenians everywhere entered the houses of Therme, forcing the wooden doors open with spears and axes. They searched for gold and silver, for coins and for women. They slew any Thermian who dared even a semblance of resistance. They raped in gangs of three or four all the women who were not too ugly or too old. Oil lamps were overturned inside a few rooms, and fires flared up here and there in the wooden buildings. Socrates ran around, trying to keep the Athenians from raping and thieving, but the men shed him off, and one hoplite kicked him viciously in the knee.

Alcibiades stood near the prisoners in the centre of the town, looking at a sky that reddened and he threw his arms high, still holding his sword, and shouted a cry of victory. He shouted he loved war. Laughing Athenians stopped and waited then around him, sharing his victory cries. Alcibiades loved the excitement and the delirium of victory. Only in war could he feel himself living. If only war could last! All the anger over his loss of Harmonia could only be spent in fighting. He felt satisfied, revenged, his energy spent for the first time since Cyprus. Socrates limped to outside Therme. He saw the town burning down. Wounded and killed men lay still around, unattended to, in front of the walls of Therme. He turned away from the city, planted his sword firmly upright in the ground before him. He fell on his knees, laid his hands on his sword and hid his face between his arms. He had sworn he would never weep in his life, but now he wept.



The destruction of Therme risked to be complete, its inhabitants killed or maimed, wounded and raped, until Archestratus himself entered the city and called off further plundering. His commanders withdrew the men. The Athenians collected the weapons, as well as any gold or silver that was still in the town. They plundered also the temple treasures. Then they assembled all the citizens outside the town gates until no one was left inside the walls. They slew a few tens of important citizens to show the power of Athens and led another part of a hundred or so young men into slavery, as well as the better looking women and girls. The rest of the Thermians were allowed back into the city by the evening of the day. Therme had been attacked just before dawn, after the night, and it been captured and subdued in just one day. The Athenian army was exhausted, but it was victorious. Its campaign had started gloriously. The men returned to camp and slept.

The Athenian commanders set up a triumph the next day at Therme. The triumph was a huge heap of as many panoplies of armour and arms as the Athenians could find or take off the defeated. They rolled up the last remnants of resistance in the countryside. They stayed for ten days at Therme, and then moved to the next Macedonian town, to Pydna.

Around that time, the Corinthians decided to send reinforcements to Potidaea. They sent Aristeus, son of Adeimantus, with a force of sixteen hundred hoplites and four hundred light troops to the town. Aristeus was a very popular leader, well known in Potidaea. This force reached Potidaea forty days after the revolt of the city, when the Athenians had not yet blocked the town. In Athens, the strategoi generals however heard of these reinforcements of Corinth. They sent out in their turn a further fleet of forty ships with two thousand hoplites to help their army in Macedonia. The new army was led by Callias, son of Calliades, and other commanders. These joined the forces of Archestratus at Pydna.

Pydna was a large town with better defended walls than Therme. The gates were set at the end of corridors that entered the city, so that the space before the immense gates proved to be a real killing ground. The Athenian commanders decided first to lay a siege to Pydna. They set up camp close to the town. But then the army of Callias arrived. The new men were welcomed with cheers as they joined in on the siege of Pydna. The real aim of the Athenians had always been Potidaea, however, and their army was now high enough in numbers to move against that city. The generals were not eager to lose hoplites at Pydna in storming the defences of a city that was now of lesser value to them. Callias and Archestratus therefore sent messengers to Perdiccas, and they negotiated an alliance of non-aggression. Perdiccas realised that his town, Pydna, would fall, so he accepted the truce. The Athenians then left Macedonia and advanced over Beroea to Strepna. They made a short, unsuccessful attempt to take the town but left it rapidly for Potidaea. In three days of short marches they reached Gigonus and set up camp there.

## **Potidaea**

The Athenians arrived at Potidaea from the north, from the direction of Olynthus. The Potidaeans expected them from this side, so Aristeus had set up his own camp on the isthmus facing Olynthus. The Athenian army consisted now of three thousand hoplites

and also of a large force of allied Thracian warriors and six hundred Macedonian cavalry from Philip and Pausanias. On the Potidaean side, Aristeus was commander-in-chief of the infantry, and Perdiccas (who had broken his treaty as soon as the Athenians had left Pydna) should have led the cavalry, but he sent Iolaus as second-in-command to lead at Potidaea. Aristeus left part of his troops in Olynthus. This remained a constant threat in the rear of the Athenians, so Callias positioned his Macedonian cavalry and a small force of his allied warriors in front of Olynthus, to prevent attacks in the back of his army. Then he advanced straight to Potidaea.

When the Athenian army arrived at the isthmus, they were surprised to find that the Potidaeans had already formed their battle order. The Athenians readied their phalanxes quickly, and they engaged immediately in the battle. The two armies stood in front of each other in the plains of Potidaea, not far from the Sea. The water ran close to the right side of the Athenians. At the right wing of Aristeus's army stood his own Corinthians, whereas his left wing was made up of Potidaean troops. Callias of Athens also had chosen to lead his right wing, whereas Archestratus led the left Athenian phalanx. Both armies had thus the best men on their right wings, a very traditional line-up. The Athenians had not really had the time to assess the strengths before them, so in both armies a strong wing stood before a weaker wing.

Callias stepped along his front phalanx with upheaved sword, addressing his men. He encouraged them, shouting with loud voice that this was the one decisive battle his Athenians would surely win by their honour and bravery. Alcibiades and Socrates stood in the third row in Callias's wing.

The troops of Potidaea sprang forward first, shouting an ugly war cry that penetrated with its vibrations the marrow of the Athenians. The Potidaeans ran, but kept their phalanxes in good order. Although a few arrows were shot, the battle was going to be a traditional head-on clash between two hoplite armies, with no sophisticated movements of wings, so the Athenians stood and braced for the shock. At the very last moment however, Callias also ordered his phalanx forward, to their surprise, but more so to the surprise of the Potidaeans who had rather expected the Athenians to be impressed by their energy and will-power to attack, by their war-cries and dashing mass. The confidence of the Potidaeans was shattered, and two armies of madly running hoplites slammed into each other.

There was space for fight of man to man in the onrushing armies. The Athenians at first ran by, slashing on all sides, until they had to stop to find opponents more thickly. Each Athenian picked an adversary and engaged in personal, face to face confrontation. Socrates had a young, lean Potidaean before him. He pushed the youth aside with a powerful thrust of his shield. The boss of his shield entered in the man's stomach, just under the bell-shaped corselet of his armour. Socrates cut a long gash in the man's legs with his spear. Socrates remarked that this hoplite wore no greaves to protect his shins. He exploited the weakness in the armour of his opponent. The youth fell, groped for his leg to stop the blood, and was out of action for the rest of the battle. Socrates left him alone and stabbed on to his next adversary, fending off others with long thrusts of his spear.

Alcibiades had more trouble. He fought with his spear at first, but that was not his preferred weapon. He dropped the spear and drew his sword from the silver scabbard that hung on a baldric on his back. He preferred to give battle with the sword, but that

meant additional danger to him, for he had to fight at closer combat. Two men from Potidaea, two strong citizen warriors jumped on him, attracted by his fine armour, recognising him as an commander. He fought both men at the time, parried blows from the first with his shield and halted the other's hews with his sword. He attacked fiercely the first man, pushed his sword unexpectedly from above his shield into the face of the hoplite and cut nastily into the beard and chin of his opponent. This man was only lightly wounded, but that seemed to enrage him more, so he ran squarely into Alcibiades with his shield and knocked the Athenian enemy down. Alcibiades jumped low to the right, in a movement that the second man had not expected, threw his shield on the man's left arm, rolled out behind him and pushed his sword in the man's side, just under his breastplate. The warrior had his due. He still turned to Alcibiades, but dropped his weapon and held his hands to his side and back. Alcibiades pushed his sword forward again, through the groin of the man. Then the first man came at him again from beyond his fallen adversary. Alcibiades had barely the time to draw his sword out of the heavily wounded Potidaean before he had to engage one more enemy. The man was tall and heavy, too heavy for swift movements. He had an ugly face with much black facial hair. He might have been a sailor or a ship-captain of Potidaea, a man of force. But the man had lived well and trained not enough. Blood ran from his chin. He had to fight in some pain, but he was still a forceful adversary for Alcibiades.

The two men hacked at each other with their swords, shield aside, but after a few blows, fatigue set in. Alcibiades fought with more agility and skill; the Potidaean hit with more brute force. Alcibiades threw his shield into the man's face and he heard a muffled cry of pain. He could hack in that moment's hesitation of his opponent at the warrior's arm and bit steel through the leather armour. Blood rushed out of the man for the second time. He yet forced Alcibiades by sheer energy and mass a second time to kneel. The man set a step forward in victory, but at that moment Alcibiades held his sword right before him and the Potidaean impaled himself in the lower belly with all his weight on Alcibiades's sword. The man might have killed Alcibiades then, but a glimpse of surprise appeared on the Chalcidician's face. He looked at the sword in his belly, and the understanding of the end dawned in his eyes. Alcibiades withdrew his sword, and the warrior of Potidaea dropped to his feet, mortally wounded, and dying a very painful death.

Alcibiades panted still with one knee on the ground, exhausted from the effort. He supported his body on one arm to stand up. Then he felt a shield in his back. He looked around to see Socrates push his shield between him and a spear that would certainly have pierced his back and his whole body. Socrates hacked at the arm that held a sword, and cut it clean off. The Potidaean who had attacked Alcibiades in his back fell to his knees. Alcibiades cried, 'kill him!' but Socrates took no time to do so, helped Alcibiades to his feet and both men fought on with new adversaries, side by side, Alcibiades being very conscious and happy and proud that Socrates had saved his life. Few men of Athens would have recognised him, as he fought on, spattered with blood and filth.

Callias's phalanxes were winning by the brute force and determination of his best men. The battle went on savagely. The Potidaeans withdrew. Callias too was smeared with blood, and he too was wounded, but he fought among his hoplites, his fellow-citizens, and he fought like them, in their midst. He looked over to the other wing of his army and saw with surprise that these parts had yielded. It was better to attack the Corinthians now, fall in their backs and isolate them. He had to run to succour his left

wing, rather than pursue the Potidaeans before him. He cried the orders to turn and in the enthusiasm of the running Athenians around him, still slaying enemies who retreated, he had to slap a few with strong blows and draw others to the ground before he was heard. He shouted angrily again to run back and help Archestratus's troops and pointed with his sword the way back. The men in his neighbourhood then stopped, looked behind too, formed rows while they ran to the left, away from Potidaea, drawing others with them, and a new phalanx attacked the Corinthians ferociously in the rear.

Callias led the attack and beside him ran Alcibiades and Socrates. Other commanders ran and fought farther off. Callias fell in the back of the Corinthians, attacking Aristeus's own men, killing the closest enemies and bursting into them like a peg in a wooden beam. His enraged troops reached far before they stopped and fought also sideways. Aristeus organised the reaction, and Callias saw him shouting orders and turning to face the new danger. The onslaught of the Athenians was in full force, however. Alcibiades and Socrates engaged with other companions in very close combat, man to man. They hacked around them on shield and sword and body. They pierced from under their shield. Alcibiades hewed in large blows on breastplates and arms. The three men entered far in the pack of Corinthians, oblivious of danger, and forcing their own men inside the enemy phalanx.

The battle raged fiercely there. Alcibiades suddenly saw that a Corinthian commander slew off Callias's helmet, and a second Corinthian pierced Callias's throat with a powerful stab. Other Athenians killed the man in his turn, but the Athenian army had lost its commander, and many an Athenian dropped his sword. Callias was slain before Potidaea.

Alcibiades had no time to reflect on the consequences. The Athenians saw another splendid armour before them, and an commander fighting on, with Socrates at his side. The troops that had seen Callias slain rallied to the new leader, to Alcibiades, and the fighting continued with the same momentum. They were certain to win now, and their force was adamant.

In this first battle before Potidaea, the Athenians were defeated at the wing where the Corinthian commander Aristeus stood before them with his picked phalanxes of Corinthians and his best allied troops. Aristeus routed the Athenians and broke through their lines. He pursued the hoplites in front of them, and his troops slew many fleeing Athenians. But he had to turn back, for Callias had defeated his other wing and broken the resistance of the lesser trained Potidaean and Peloponnesian rows, who fled to the town and its fortifications where they would find protection. Aristeus risked to be isolated and to be surrounded. He massed his groups of infantry together and attacked the on-running Athenians, who had let the Potidaeans return to better crush the Corinthians. Aristeus withstood the on-running Athenians barely. But by sheer pressure and concentration of battle-hardened men, Aristeus managed to push through the heart of the Athenian army, and he succeeded in returning safely to Potidaea. He had to use the seaside for that, so that he was only attacked from one side, and he ran with his men through the low water to reach the town. In doing that however, he was exposed entirely to the Athenians who shot arrows at them and hurled javelins on the fleeing men, so that many proud Corinthians got wounded and remained lying on the beach, or were killed. Alcibiades and Socrates fired their men on to attack and to pursue the Corinthians. Still, Aristeus and most of his troops got through, and reached the fortifications of Potidaea unharmed.

While the battle raged, the Chalcidians and other forces allied to Potidaea tried to intervene and attack the Athenians in the rear. The Macedonian cavalry of Philip, allied to Athens, prevented these however to advance far beyond Olynthus, so this force had to retreat to that town without intervening. Moreover, the Macedonian infantry could hurry to Potidaea to help the Athenians. Callias's plan and foresight had worked well. The Athenians had won their second victory in the expedition. They set up a triumph with the weapons and shields of their enemies and then concluded a short armistice of one day, so that both sides might recover their dead and care for the funerals honourably.

### **Courage and fear**

The Athenians returned in the late evening of that day of fighting and feasting to their camp near Potidaea. Alcibiades and Socrates washed and bathed in the Sea, then changed their clothes in the tent their servants had set up for them. It was Alcibiades's tent and it was spacious. The men drank a cup of wine. They joined somewhat later a group of hoplites that had assembled outside their tent, in front of a campfire. Alcibiades saw some of the men who had followed him and Socrates after Callias had fallen, had joined near them. The hoplites had gathered spontaneously to the men they recognised as natural leaders. They had been suspicious of Alcibiades at first, and looked at him as a young no-good who would fight half-heartedly, even cowardly. At Therme, however, they had been astonished to see Alcibiades fight in the front rows. And this day, they had seen him lead and confront Aristeus. They had seen Aristeus flee ignominiously. The excitement of their attack at sword's point was still in their mind, and they beamed.

The men were also curious about Alcibiades. They asked him now who he was. They desired to know from what quarter of Athens he came, which people he knew. Everybody in Athens knew everybody. Either you were far family, or you had common friends or acquaintances. When they heard the name of Pericles mentioned, their eyes opened wide. They wanted to touch Alcibiades. Alcibiades let wine be poured, he opened all the amphoras he had. The conversation was cordial and vivid. Alcibiades held a symposium in the open sky. The men were truly surprised to hear that Socrates was a philosopher and they were even more surprised when they learned Alcibiades's age and that he was a student of this Socrates. They wondered how a rough, tremendous warrior like Socrates, who they had assumed to be a butcher or a professional hoplite, could be a teacher. They also wondered what Socrates could still teach to a fine, young man of the best families of Athens, who had shown his valour in combat and in leadership.

'So you all wonder what the use could be of philosophy?' Socrates asked.

The men around the campfire grumbled, 'well yes, we do not really know what it is useful for. It will not make fear go away or bring us courage, so what is the use of philosophy? We are ignorant, but who cares? All we have to do is to live from our art in Athens and bang heads here. Who cares about knowledge here?' they asked.

'That is so true,' Socrates sighed. 'You speak of fear. What you call fear, would that be expecting bad things to happen to you?'

'Sure,' they replied.

'You fear what is bad. Would you seek out the things that are bad?'

‘Oh no, Socrates,’ they replied and shook their heads vigorously, ‘certainly not, not unless we cannot help it, such as here before Potidaea!’

‘Now then,’ Socrates continued, ‘let’s talk about courage. Is it courageous to go to things that one fears, such as going to battle, and do cowards not go to things only for which they have confidence that nothing bad will happen?’

They all said that was right.

‘So, the courageous go readily to battle, with the knowledge that bad things are ahead, and that is why they are courageous,’ Socrates said. ‘Is giving battle to one’s enemies honourable or is it disgraceful?’

All cried, ‘honourable!’

‘And you will agree with me that honourable actions are good. And you will agree that doing good things is also pleasant to you and to the gods?’

‘Of course,’ they replied.

‘Then,’ Socrates said, ‘the cowards, in full knowledge, will refuse to go to what is honourable, good and pleasant?’

The men grunted even more after these words, for cowards were particularly disliked in this company.

‘And the courageous advance towards the honourable, the good and the pleasant, isn’t it? So, when the courageous have fear before a battle, that fear is not disgraceful. Is it honourable?’

‘Oh yes, it is honourable,’ they said.

‘And good? Whereas the fear of the coward is disgraceful?’

They shouted they agreed.

‘Can this disgrace come from any other reason but ignorance and stupidity? Because the coward would have avoided situations in which he would have fear, so that when he has fear it is too late and he is in a place where bad things suddenly fall on him, unexpectedly. Cowards do not expect bad things when they fear.’

‘No, they can’t,’ they cried, ‘Cowards are ignorant and stupid!’

‘So, cowards are cowards by their ignorance of what is feared?’

‘Absolutely,’ they agreed.

‘So they are cowards because of ignorance,’ Socrates said, ‘cowardice is ignorance of what is to be feared and what is not to be feared. And courage is the opposite of cowardice.’

‘Yes,’ they said.

‘So, wisdom is the opposite of cowardice. And wisdom then, wisdom about what is to be feared and about what is not to be feared, is the opposite of ignorance.’

They nodded.

‘But then,’ Socrates said, ‘how can ignorant be very courageous?’

‘That is impossible,’ they said.

‘The courageous people are not ignorant then. Ignorant people can be taught to be ignorant no more,’ Socrates concluded. ‘Philosophers teach wisdom and knowledge, or they help you discover wisdom and knowledge. Therefore you can make men more courageous. Isn’t that so then? You are not ignorant because you are courageous, and by gaining more knowledge you will become more courageous. Isn’t that so?’

They all agreed to that now and thought over Socrates’s words with astonishment. For they knew that all who had fought well and had been courageous should not have been ashamed of their fear, and fear they had suffered all each time they had advanced against the Potidaeans. The ones who had feared and hesitated to attack, the ones who had slackened in the phalanx with heavy legs and the ones that had fallen down with

only superficial wounds, knew that their fear was not disgraceful but they understood they had been ignorant and now had received knowledge. They would be more courageous next time, and they would try to learn about what awaited for them, and they would calculate their fear. So they stood up, some in silence, others – the more courageous – still discussing with loud voices, but satisfied. They went to their tents.

Socrates lingered by the fire and he sighed, for they were all ignorant and truly without knowledge, and hence did not really know what courage was. Oh yes, they jumped into any battle, with fear or fearless, but few could have proven true courage, as Socrates knew that courage was, for few had knowledge of what was ahead. But after all, he, Socrates, was satisfied too. A few hoplites kept looking at him from behind their backs with suspicious eyes. They sensed there was a catch somewhere, and Socrates became aware that he indeed had taught these men something, given them a sparkle of knowledge. He stamped out the fire since he was the last to go, carefully making sure that only a few tiny red lights remained on the wood, which would not jump onto the tents and set the canvases afire. When he turned, he saw Alcibiades standing next to the tent behind him, leaning against the tent-pole. Alcibiades grinned with a smile of awareness. Here was one who had understood all right, Socrates knew. Alcibiades nodded goodnight and went his way. Then Socrates went to his own tent, to sleep.

## Siege

Alcibiades and Socrates stood looking at the fortifications of Potidaea. The city gates were closed. The walls rose very high, not old, solid, and they were manned with a multitude of armed defenders.

Alcibiades said after a while, ‘those walls are formidable. They are not like at Therme. There are no weak points in them at all. The walls are in good order. They are built of stones that were hacked out to perfection. The surfaces are even and smooth. Attackers will have it very difficult to get a grip at these walls. The ladders we have are too short. We will have to build very long ladders. I would hate to have to climb such a height in full armour, and then arrive out of breath at the parapet. There are also far more men here, on top of the walls, than at Therme.’

Socrates continued the reflection, ‘climbing those walls would take a long time. It would give ample occasion for those Potidaeans to shoot volleys of arrows at us. Why, they could even use elderly people and youngsters to throw stones at us and kill us. If we storm those walls, we would have indeed to use very long ladders, set one aside the other along many places of the walls. We would not just have to storm those walls; we would have to storm them massively and suddenly. Forget about the gates; those simply cannot be stormed, we would be massacred inside their corridor in front. Such an attack would take every one of our men, leaving us and our camp vulnerable to counter attacks. Suppose the Potidaeans opened their gates while we were climbing, and spewed out a thousand of those Corinthian veterans we fought, led by Aristeus? Now, that would be a fine mess!’

‘I rather expect Aristeus to have learnt a lesson from our last battle,’ Alcibiades said. ‘I would expect his forces to jump in at the hottest spots of our attacks on the walls. This looks to me not to be a better prospect, either. It is one thing to have a fat, respectable citizen waiting for you on top of those walls, like at Therme, than having

to fight up there from a ladder with a skilled hoplite with long lances, and some of the best hoplites at that, in front of you, waiting for you! Why don't we just sit and starve them out? We could surround the city.'

'I wondered already about that,' Socrates fell in. 'Archestratus has not surrounded the town. He must have held a council with his commanders by now and discussed how to best make Potidaea yield. However, he cannot surround the city. Suppose we surround it. We would have to split our army in two, keep one half here on the north side facing Olynthus, and put the other half on the other side, facing Pallene. Communication between the two sides would only be possible by boat. We don't have nearly enough men for that. Aristeus would laugh his non-existing beard off if we did that. He could attack each part of our army separately, concentrating his own forces with overwhelming numbers of warriors and defeat our both halves easily and decisively. Couldn't he?'

'Yes,' Alcibiades answered. 'Starving is out of the question as long as we don't block off the Isthmus of Pallene from Potidaea. There are enough small creeks there, impossible for our ships to control them all. Potidaea can bring in supplies from that side, and – why not? – even new hoplites from the Peloponnesos. We can stay here, together, at the Olynthus side. We can attack once in a while and lose men at that until either we or they bore ourselves to death. That can take ages! So what?'

'The only wise and reasonable thing to do, Alcibiades, is what you say. We wait. I would do something on the Pallene side however: have scouting parties raid their supply teams constantly. We should just harass them, make it difficult for them with some cavalry operating close to a few ships. We should track their best creeks, burn their smaller vessels too and not just their triremes and merchant-ships. We could make our combination of fleet and cavalry volatile, not set up a permanent camp in Pallene, but move and appear at other points every day and night. It will not stop their supplies, but it will make supplying arduous, irregular and expensive. They may run out of money. It will rack their nerves, put their motivation to the test, depress them and keep them ever worried. They will spend fortunes. In the end they shall give in. But yes, it will take a very long time, maybe even a year. We had better make ourselves comfortable. It is going to be a long expedition, this one!'

'A long expedition is going to cost lots of coins to Athens too,' Alcibiades predicted. He grinned. 'I can see the face of Pericles the Great when the war treasure of the polis disappears and is poured from Athens into the army of Potidaea! Potidaea has a problem, Socrates, but so have Pericles and Athens! All the money of him building on the Acropolis the finest temples of humanity, shall be wasted away by dirty men sitting on their asses playing dice before Potidaea, whoring the treasury away to the girls of Chalcidice. What a joke! I wonder what our dear commanders will do now. Archestratus? There's a man with an issue!'

Archestratus was no fool. He did two things. He ordered to build a wall at the Olynthus side where the Athenians sat now, to protect his army from surprise attacks by the Corinthians of Aristeus. He hoped he might man that wall with less hoplites and eventually, indeed, split his army to build another wall on the Pallene side. He doubted however, contrary to some of his co-commanders, that his current forces could hold both. So the second thing he did was to send his messenger ship, the Salaminia, to Athens, to Pericles, with a letter.



*To Pericles*

*We, commanders of the Athenian forces of Macedonia and Potidaea, greet you.*

*Since the time our army left Athens we took by storm the city of Therme. We lost few citizens in this battle. We laid siege to Pydna, but seeing that this would take a long time, moved against the primary target you set for us: Potidaea. The army led by Callias son of Calliades joined us then. We delivered a major battle against numerous forces of Corinthian hoplites, Potidaeans and their allies outside the city. The enemy army was led by Aristeus the Corinthian. We have slain our enemies in this battle in great numbers and won a triumph. Thereafter, we recovered our dead and buried them according to the respect we owe our courageous citizens.*

*We send you hereby the list of our dead, Corinth and Potidaea having suffered twice more casualties than we. Please inform the Athenian Assembly that all men fought like heroes and should rightly be honoured by our polis. May they dwell forever in the Elysian Fields!*

*We are laying siege to Potidaea. We have only enough men to block with a counter wall the north side of the city. We cannot block the side to Pallene. We expect therefore the siege to last a very long time, for we cannot storm the walls of Potidaea, these being too high, too vast, and too well defended by forces considerably larger than ours.*

*We hope you can decide on further actions according to your insight and wisdom.*

*The commanders before Potidaea and  
Archestratus*

Pericles read the letter. He spoke a long time with the trierarch of the Salaminia, who had more information from the commanders. He brought the letter to the Assembly. In a debate on the Pnyx, the Assembly decided to take Pericles's advice, as they almost always did. The Athenians sent out a new force to Potidaea. Athens sent sixteen hundred hoplites more, under the command of one of their greatest generals, Phormio son of Asopius. This army was to beleaguer the city of Potidaea on the side of the Isthmus of Pallene.

**Phormio**

Phormio moored at Aphytis, south of Potidaea. He advanced from there on the city, ravaging the countryside on his way. The Potidaeans did not dare to confront him in outright battle. Phormio's army had arrived in the winter of the first year of the siege of Potidaea. The Athenians were then still building a wall in front of the city on the Olynthus side. This counter-wall was practically finished. It had to be, for it was difficult to work in the harsh winter of Potidaea. Phormio devastated Pallene until all resistance stopped on the isthmus. Then, in the spring of the second year, he also started to build a wall, on the Pallene side, until Potidaea was completely surrounded. The Athenian fleet was large enough to prevent any ships from reaching Potidaea harbour. The city would starve, slowly but surely.

Aristeus understood that, barring a miracle, nothing could save the town now. He advised the Potidaeans to leave and sail away, leaving behind about five hundred hoplites. He volunteered to stay with these, to defend the town. Among so few men, the food would last longer. The Potidaeans refused to leave their town, however. They were stubborn and also frightened by the Athenian fleet. They doubted they could escape with so large a population.

Phormio's hoplites brought sad and disquieting news from Athens. Formal war with Sparta had been declared. Thebes had immediately attacked Plataea, the oldest and most loyal ally of Athens. The Thebans had been driven off by the valour of the entire population, but the city was in great danger. In late spring, King Archidamus of Sparta had invaded Attica and devastated the countryside. There were hoplites among the army before Potidaea who had property in the country, and so had Alcibiades. He wondered what could have happened to his horses, but he surmised with a grin they were now grazing in Laconia. When the hoplites who did not live inside Athens thought of their destroyed homes, olive trees and vineyards, they clenched their fists and listened in silence. They looked up, their eyes filled with hatred and hope of revenge when they heard that an Athenian fleet had made landings along the Peloponnesian coast and they cheered at the first successes of their army there, against Sparta and its allies. But the prospects were gloomy. Their only consolation was the thought that if it was so difficult to storm the walls of Potidaea, it would be impossible for the Spartans to get behind the walls of Athens. Besides, they laughed their heads off at imagining a Spartiate climbing a ladder! Pericles had been right all the time to insist on high walls to be built for Athens and walls to Piraeus! Yet, Pericles had promised to win the war with the fleet, but he had had to sacrifice Attica. Its population had left the countryside when the Spartan army attacked, and lived now inside Athens. Athens was isolated, but it could be provisioned with any supplies from Piraeus. Athens was still rich, its trade could continue, the people could be fed from the harbour.

Yes, the Athenians could piss on the Spartans from behind their walls. Walls had been built all around Athens, walls higher than those at Potidaea, walls well defended. Double walls formed a corridor to the port of Piraeus. Sparta was unable to blockade Athens, supplies continued to stream in. Most of the grain and of the wood came from the Hellespont and the countries beyond Byzantium, and the Athenians ruled the Sea. Sparta could not subdue Athens. Could Athens hold out?

In that same spring Phormio found it necessary to boost the morale of his troops. He wanted to hold a parade in full show of Potidaea. Potidaea would understand that the Athenians were there to stay, and the Potidaeans would see that the Athenian army was in fine condition. A few days before the parade, Phormio summoned Socrates to his tent. He wanted to reward the particularly brave men who had proven their courage in battle and who had supported the dedication of his men. Phormio proposed to reward Socrates for having led the Athenians at the moment of Callias's death. Socrates stood before the commanders in the tent of the war council. Also Macedonian commanders were present, standing in full battle dress. Socrates heard Phormio out, and he understood rapidly that the general want needed only a political act. He therefore told it was not he whom the hoplites had followed in the heat of the battle, but Alcibiades. He said Alcibiades had worn the brightest armour and had shown the most dash, and he assured it was Alcibiades the men had regarded as their

leader. Phormio knew Alcibiades and he recalled the young man's connections to Pericles, but he doubted veterans would have followed such a young man, however valiant. Nevertheless, he was willing to grant Socrates what the man proposed.

Phormio made Socrates wait for a while and sent a hoplite for Alcibiades. Alcibiades entered Phormio's tent in plain bronze armour. Phormio weighed the ephebe's good looks, his sharper traits of the adult hoplite, his arrogant but somewhat sad eyes, and the glances of affection to Socrates. He remarked that the youth he had known in Athens was now a warrior, and even a veteran of two heavy battles. Phormio explained he wanted to reward Alcibiades. Alcibiades protested. He said he and Socrates had merely continued to keep running ahead and Callias's men had done so too, around them. He told that Socrates should be rewarded for having saved his life. Phormio instantly recognised the potential of a leader in Alcibiades. He needed to reward a warrior and a leader of men, an commander better than a simple hoplite and a philosopher at that. So after a slight hesitation, weighing Alcibiades's words, he replied before his staff that what Socrates had done was commendable. But he praised Alcibiades's humility in not embellishing his acts. He applauded Alcibiades's courage and bravery during the siege of Therme, before Pydna and in taking over command from Callias in the crunch of action. Alcibiades would be their star commander to be rewarded publicly.

Two days later, Phormio and his commanders stood in the plains before Potidaea on the Pallene side. They were all splendidly dressed in parade armour. Most of the commanders of both armies stood beside them. Part of the phalanxes marched in the field, all in complete and polished hoplite uniform, garlanded as victors. The men marched to honour the city of Athens and then joined, one group after the other, to stand together as one grand army. They thus paraded, daring to assemble and leave their counter-walls thinly defended, showing their contempt for the Potidaeans, defying their enemy to sally. A herald then called the meritorious commanders and hoplites out of the ranks, and Phormio solemnly awarded them. So also happened to Alcibiades. Alcibiades came forward under the cheers of his phalanx and all the hoplites joined in, for he had become extremely popular. He was bright, courageous, a natural leader, a good comrade among the hoplites, and he was generous. Many knew him from his symposiums and many were his friends. Alcibiades stood before Phormio. When Phormio held a crown of olive branches to Alcibiades's head, an enormous shout rose from hundreds of voices from the troops, three times, which went as far as the tops of the walls of Potidaea, 'Alcibiades, Alcibiades, Alcibiades.'

When the wall on the Pallene side was completed, at the end of spring, the Athenians did not fear anymore any attempt to break out by the Potidaeans. So, Phormio rowed off with his sixteen hundred hoplites. He passed through Chalcidice and Bottiaea, ravaging the country and taking by siege other towns in that region. Potidaea understood it could not count on any help from allies. It became very clear for the Athenians too that they were here to stay until Potidaea starved or surrendered. If the great Phormio had not stormed the walls with the combined army, the army that stayed behind was in no obligation and in no power to attack the town.

## Socrates

The Athenians began to construct large siege engines. Alcibiades wondered whether these would ever be used, but it sure kept the men occupied. The work went slow, for large trees were necessary for the main beams, and these were not easy to find around Potidaea. A few Chalcidician troops continued to harass them. Transport by sea proved to be the fastest and safest. The Athenians settled in their camp and tried to get as most comfort as they could realise in the circumstances. The tents became larger and better organised. Alcibiades and Socrates still shared a tent, but Alcibiades had a second tent in which he organised reunions and drinking parties in the evening, symposiums. The environments of his tent were always lively and the men liked to gather there. Socrates sat there often too, and talked. He never stopped exercising his elenchus method.

When the men settled in the dreary routine of guarding the siege, they looked for women. The Chalcidician whore-masters slipped into the Athenian camp like rats in a cheese store. The Chalcidician merchants were eager to win from the enemy hoplites the two daily drachmas that Athens gave to the hoplites and to the ship rowers. Whore-tents and gaming tents were erected some way from the camp. The generals did not much object to these, as long as the military camp stayed without crime, and as long as the activities there, whatever they might be, did not interfere with the military service. Some of the generals were kept quiet by special favours. Others understood that they could not hold up discipline without some satisfying of the natural needs of the men. Alcibiades soon had a third tent close to this camp. The whore-masters presented girls to him. He had chosen two young women, which he kept only for himself. Socrates refused such services, although Alcibiades proposed the girls to him. Socrates felt rather morose these days. When he was free from duty he went on long walks along the beach. He sat sullenly at the campfire. He sat alone in corners, oblivious of the world. Socrates missed Athens. He thought of the reasons of wars, and of the sense of all he had seen and experienced.

In the summer of that second year of the siege, Aristeus, the Corinthian commander in Potidaea, did not dare anymore to hope for a miracle, for a rapid Athenian defeat against the land forces of Sparta. Corinthian spies had slipped into the city with news. Attica had been devastated twice now, but Athens had held on. Aristeus could not really help Potidaea anymore, so he slipped out of the town and broke through the Athenian blockade at night. He stayed with the Chalcidicians, however, and he laid traps and skirmishes to the Athenians from out of the north. He could do not much more than harass. When that also proved ineffective, he returned to Corinth.

The Athenians before Potidaea also heard from their messenger ships that the Spartans had once more devastated Attica, the whole country around Athens. The Spartans had left however. The Attican farmers had brought their families to safety inside Athens, fled when the Spartans came, but they had returned to the country fifty days later to repair the damage. They wondered how to plant anew, what to leave, and what was the use of it all, for Archidamus would surely come back next spring. Still, they tilled the ground and planted. The Spartans did not raid the country during autumn and winter.

Summer and autumn passed in boredom and gloom before Potidaea. Then came the second winter for the Athenian army on foreign ground. The first winter had been readily accepted and the men had had much to do to fortify their positions. The winter had been harsh, but it had passed quickly. Phormio had arrived during that winter with new hopes and there was the excitement of recognising friends, neighbours and even family. Now, the army sat, doing nothing but hold guard duties, and spent its time trying to keep warm. The army was bored. Whore-tents and gaming-tents proliferated. Discipline faltered. Training was stopped. More men had free time. Snow had fallen early that year, then partly melted some time later. The ground was a mess of mud, in which walking was tedious. Dirt crept in everywhere, in clothes and in tents. Then blizzards came, and everything froze suddenly to solidity. The mud froze and roads got hard and slippery. It froze harder. The price of cloth skyrocketed. The men gave every obol and drachma they had for covers, sheepskins and cloaks. Standing for duty was an ordeal. The Athenians had not enough wood to nurture large campfires and the fires brought not much warmth in the perpetual frosty wind. The Athenian army shivered from the cold. Frost bites appeared on hands and feet, on faces and exposed legs.

Potidaea was not better off. It started lacking food that winter. No gates and no walls were built to Potidaea's harbour. With small boats and in the night, cloaks and cloth were smuggled out of the city and a little food was smuggled in. Then women were smuggled out and more food brought in. Then gold and silver came for food. There was a game of hide-and-seek between Athenian night guards, who organised raids around the port, and the thugs who maintained the smuggling. Potidaea held on.

It was a tough winter indeed that year. The wind gushed relentlessly over the plains and augmented the impression of coldness. The Athenians were not used to this climate. The tents could not hold out against the winds and the cold air rushed in through every tiny opening, however small, chasing the little warmth that might have accumulated around the men. Standing on guard at the counter-wall was a punishment. The armour added to the perception of cold, and when humidity increased by snow, but the wind remaining, the bronze plates bit into flesh. The army suffered.

Alcibiades and Socrates were regularly appointed to be commanders of the guard. One night, Alcibiades inspected the men who stood along the Athenian wall with spears in half-frozen hands. He allowed the men to walk, to draw near campfires, to shelter from the wind behind wooden panels. He attempted a joke. He greeted them, went from man to man with a talk and an encouragement.

When Alcibiades returned to his tent, he passed by the Sea. He saw a man standing on a small hill, from which one could have a view over the plain and over the Sea. He feared the man to be an enemy, so he drew his sword and approached cautiously.

Alcibiades recognised the silhouette. It was Socrates.

Socrates wore a chlamys, a cloak, but hardly one thick enough to protect him from the icy wind. Socrates stood there, looking into the far, and he did not move. He also did not stir when Alcibiades arrived close to him. Alcibiades had seen Socrates turned inwards several times already in Athens, and also on their travel to Cape Sounion, but he could not imagine somebody remain standing for so long, without moving a limb in that freezing cold. He came to stand next to Socrates, but he did not speak and he equally looked into the far. He looked at the ominous grey mass of the starving town.

He saw that Socrates wore only the thinnest of sandals under his feet, and he feared the man would suffer soon from frozen toes. The toes dug in the snow. Alcibiades waited for a long time beside Socrates.

Finally, unable to hold out any longer in the cold, and seeing the sun rising, Alcibiades addressed Socrates.

‘Socrates, dawn is on us. It is time to go back.’

Socrates at first didn’t react. Then he seemed to come out of a trance. He shook his head, stamped his feet, shivered now, drew his cloak tauter over his shoulders, and looked around.

He looked with surprise at Alcibiades, and said, ‘I do not understand why there is a war here, but for the naked stupidity of mankind. There is no virtue in war. Our race is still so far away from the knowledge necessary to avoid wars. I searched and tried to find a decent reason for war, and I find none.’

Alcibiades did not answer. He had not sought any reason for the war. The war simply was, and he floated on its waves. He looked inquisitively at Socrates, scrutinised his face, but found that the man was indeed entirely being the philosopher, now. Reason or not, the war was on them and they were in it. It had to be waged until the end. War could mean glory and if he, Alcibiades, wanted to lead Athens, he had to prove an excellent war record. That would help build his credibility. If a little cold had to be taken into the account, he could bear it. He sighed, took Socrates by the arm and drew him towards the camp.

Socrates resisted being drawn away from the Sea, back to the camp, to warmth. He said to Alcibiades, holding on to Alcibiades’s arm, ‘who are we? What are we to lay a siege here?’

Alcibiades answered, ‘we are here to defend Athens, the way we live, our democracy, our league, our dominance. If we do not stand here, we will have to change our ways sooner or later and we do not want to do that. We defend our freedom.’

Socrates continued to talk and he held on to Alcibiades. ‘Dominance? What is dominance? In what name really did we bring these young boys to this place, to death and misery? At Therme, the youngest hoplites, and also some of the mature ones, got over-excited. We stormed Therme, and we lost so few men in the beginning that everybody lived moments of triumph only. After the first men had fallen I saw a few men step back, behind the on-rushing men, and vomit. Did you notice these too?’

‘Yes,’ Alcibiades muttered after a while. He had not been one of those men but he had seen a couple of the young warriors, though dressed in fine armour, turn and bend over to the ground.

‘Most of the men continued with us,’ he added. He did not like to be reminded of that sight, though. It bothered him.

‘Have you noticed then also how things differed when Aristeus attacked us? We stood in a fine line, our phalanx order, shield to shield, and waited for the Corinthians and the Potidaeans to run into us. Have you seen how many young hoplites urinated in their loincloths while they stood?’

‘No,’ Alcibiades replied. He had indeed seen that. But he wanted even less to be reminded of that scene.

‘There is your image of war,’ Socrates continued. ‘If we had not stood there all together, shield to shield, friend to friend, if one of us had not felt responsible for the other, and ashamed to run away, more than half of the hoplites would have turned and ran back then and there, away from the tension of the coming battle. Battle fear grips

much more than I would have thought possible. You know, I killed a Corinthian man at the end of that battle. I was running on and saw a man only slightly wounded get up after he fell. I pushed the man back on the ground. He was but a thin man, and his armour was way too heavy for him. He could not get up from the ground rapidly enough. So I threw him down again, and I put my foot on his backplate. I used my butt spike, the other end of my spear, to stab him. I took not the time to turn my spear. I pushed the spike through his armour. I noticed then that the man stank. At the moment I pushed him down, he must have known I was going to kill him. He defecated. I saw the brown mass come out from under his leather plates that protected his groin and lower back. The plates slid aside. I killed him. How many men, how many of ours, how many of them, defecated while we fought and killed, Alcibiades? Is that what war is?’

‘Yes,’ Alcibiades said. ‘That is what war is. Urination and defecation happen to inexperienced hoplites. We are hardened now. It does not happen anymore to us. We have seen what war is like. We can fight like men now.’

The memory of a disembowelled man was difficult to be blotted away, though.

‘I feel leaders should think more about what war is really like,’ Socrates said. ‘Before they decide to go to war. Only men who know what war is, have seen war, should decide over war or peace. Our democracy, where everybody can decide and have an opinion on matters they know nothing about, is horrible!’

‘Come along, Socrates. Let’s talk about that in the tent. We’ll freeze to death here.’ Socrates let himself be led to Alcibiades’s tent, have his feet rubbed to warmth and Alcibiades lovingly tugged Socrates deep under several layers of sheepskin. Then, Socrates slept.

Alcibiades did not catch sleep so easily. He too wondered why he remained at Potidaea. First, it was his duty to remain here. He realised that if he left now and sailed back to Athens, his reputation might be stained forever. Few would blame him openly, but many would gossip behind his back, and the reproach of cowardice and of flight from duty might be thrown in his face tens of years later. He was stuck here, as much as the rest of the army. Such was fate, and one did not change fate, one did not twist fate, one submitted to it. He smiled. His ambitions were intact. Second, he was still too young to play a significant role in the Athenian Assembly, and Potidaea could provide him the aura of being a loyal servant of the State, whatever the circumstances. This was the spine he needed to speak out in the Assembly with authority and be listened to. Lastly, without Harmonia he cared for very few things except his ambition and prospect of revenge on the gods and the world. Harmonia would know he was at Potidaea. She would hear of Socrates at Potidaea, and know who was with Socrates. She would think of him. Would she? How could he ever find her?

## Plague

The siege of Potidaea lasted throughout the entire, long winter. The last skirmishes came to a halt. Spring announced itself with heavy rains that soaked the men, the tents and the ground. All paths were sheer mud.

The air eventually warmed up, however, and the winds of summer chased the rains and dried the soil. Alcibiades was still an commander in the siege of Potidaea. He had not asked to be relieved, finding no truly good reason to return to Athens. Nothing waited for him in Athens. His return might have been regarded as cowardice, and he

did not want to leave Socrates alone. Two moons ago, the generals proposed to take him in their staff meetings, but he refused. He wanted to be among the men that took Potidaea. He needed the glory. He came to doubt however whether he would reach honour now. New generals arrived and tried haughtily to inspire renewed energy in the men. Of course, they failed in the attempt. The now experienced hoplites spat at them and refused to move. A few citizens were punished for impertinence, a few even were executed.

In the meantime, the smuggling trade with Potidaea soared.

Alcibiades grumbled to Socrates, 'this is not a war! It is a barter business. The Hellenes are becoming more Hellenic by the day, thieves and thugs and whoremongers all! A man could get rich here.'

In the early summer, Athens decided to send yet a new army to Potidaea. Pericles himself had used that army for an expedition in the Peloponnesos just recently, and he wanted it out of Athens as soon as possible for fear of losing it to a sickness that killed many people in the beleaguered town.

Hagnon son of Nicias and Cleopompus son of Clinias arrived at Potidaea as strategoi and colleagues of Pericles. They brought four thousand hoplites and three hundred cavalry, a large number of transport ships and about a hundred more war triremes. This was a considerable army, the largest Alcibiades had seen. The arrival of that force brought a flurry of action. Alcibiades and his men had to organise for a vast, new camp site. The arrived men looked in disgust at the dirty, worn-out remnants of the previous Athenian troops that had survived the winter. Hardened veterans these were all now, and Alcibiades's men knew every inch of Potidaea and of the terrain, whereas the newcomers knew nothing of the environs, or of how the Potidaeans and the Corinthians fought here. Alcibiades participated in the discussions of the staff of commanders in Hagnon's tent. Hagnon wondered about siege engines.

The Athenians of Potidaea had constructed many before the winter, but they had abandoned them. They had made rolling towers that would come almost at wall height. They had built long ramps. Hagnon and Cleopompus inspected them, found there were not enough, and agreed to have many more built. They had brought carpenters and much wood in their transport ships. The army spent feverish days working in increasing heat. It rained again and the rain drenched the soil, then the sun's heat dried the ground hard and broke the ground open to crusts.

After a few weeks, something not altogether unexpected started to happen. Increasingly, and in the new camp only, men got sick and died.

The troops of Hagnon and Cleopompus brought very bad news from the war with Sparta. The last winter in Athens had not been easy. In the autumn of the previous year, Pericles amassed the largest army ever seen by Athens and he attacked the Megarid, the region around Megara. If the Spartans could devastate Attica, Athens could devastate the lands of Megara and prove that Sparta's allies could suffer too. Pericles's forces destroyed the countryside, but the raid had no lasting effect on Sparta's allies.

In the winter, Pericles held a funeral speech to honour the dead of Plataea, of Attica, of the Megarid campaign and also for the dead of Potidaea. In late spring, not so long before the new army arrived at Potidaea, King Archidamus of Sparta again led his troops into Attica to destroy the crops. He had returned to Sparta rather rapidly



however, and then Pericles had once more devastated the coasts of the Peloponnesos with the hoplites of Hagnon, aiming at Epidaurus. Hagnon had gone no further than Prasiae, however, because surprising and alarming news had come from Athens. Something had happened that nobody, also not Pericles the Wise, had foreseen.

Pericles proposed at the beginning of the war to save the population of Attica by sheltering them inside the walls of Athens. Athens' population had thereby multiplied, quintupled suddenly. Every available space of the town had been occupied by new houses, hastily dressed. Shacks had been built all along the walls to Piraeus. Between the walls to the harbour, the whole length of the corridor, one could now see long rows of wooden houses, or what looked like houses, for the living there was really miserable. Hygiene was horrible. Hygiene was not neglected, but there were simply too many people to cope with inside Athens, too many to organise decent bathing and toilet facilities. The men, used to work hard in the open, sat in idleness, and they were bored. Prostitution soared. That year, a plague had come. People got sick and started to die in great numbers.

When the army of the Peloponnesos heard about what happened in Athens, they grumbled and talked increasingly of desertion. The men feared for their families. They wanted to know what was going on. They exaggerated the rumours. They told their commanders they had engaged in this army, believing their loved ones safe. Now, they heard that everybody was dying in Athens. Many feared the sickness, but most wanted to return to succour their families. The generals recognised the danger of desertion. They too were anxious to know what had really happened to their families. The new army that had been to the Peloponnesos had therefore briefly returned to Athens before departing in haste once more, now to Potidaea.

Athens became a victim to the plague. Thousands died. The generals, Pericles among them, assessed the situation in Athens, and sent the army out again as fast as possible; but men had de-mustered and others had mustered to fill the original numbers. These last had been in Athens from before the plague. They all had vowed to serve their country, but many had simply fled from fear of the sickness. Some of the citizen-hoplites and some of the sailors had contracted the disease, and taken it with them to Potidaea. The sick had the same symptoms as the dying of Athens. The conditions of living together, men crowded in tents in the heat of late summer, the rising humidity and the difficult conditions of hygiene in the camp, nourished the sickness. Some men were extremely sick and died after a few days. Others became very sick, so sick that they could not work or train and certainly not participate in any siege, and they stayed sick and recovered only very slowly. Men had to care for the sick. Most of the newcomers were a little sick, pulled through, but remained drowsy, and lacked the will and energy to fight with determination and force. There were few exchanges of men between the veterans of Potidaea and the new army, but exchanges were inevitable. Dead men among Alcibiades's guards had to be replaced. Still, Alcibiades and his men remained largely untouched, and so were the men on the Pallene side.

Despite the sickness, Hagnon and Cleopompus decided that they were ready to attack Potidaea before the rains of autumn and the coldness of winter. They estimated they had enough siege engines to storm the city.

By now, the Potidaeans had seen the large new army arrive. They had watched the effervescence in the Athenian camp, and knew what awaited them. They knew they

would have to cope with siege engines. They knew even the date of the attack from the smugglers. Most importantly, they had no option but to prepare and to prepare with all their intelligence, and to marshal every counter-measure they could think off.

The Athenian generals launched what should have been the one and final massive attack on Potidaea during a night, just before dawn. The Athenian troops assembled in the dark and waited a long time silently in phalanx order with the siege engines and with long ladders in their midst. The towers and the ramps were drawn by slaves. Alcibiades and Socrates had no confidence in the towers. These were only rickety affairs, mounted on large wheels, but not stable enough to hold against a high wall. A few of the towers never reached the wall. They fell apart as they advanced over rocks and bushes. None of the towers were high enough to reach the parapets. The hoplites who would climb into these contraptions would still have to use scaling ladders, planted on platforms that swayed in the wind and trembled from the mass of climbing men.

There were no speeches of encouragement, just the dead silence before the signal to advance was given, and the nerve-racking waiting ended. Right before dawn, when no light of the sun had come up yet, Hagnon and Cleopompus gave the signal on their respective wings, and all the phalanxes moved forward in silence, and slowly. The hoplites walked disciplined in ranks, dressed in full panoply of armour and weapons. They drew the siege engines, which crept forward shrieking and cracking in their wooden beams and ropes.

Alcibiades had to lead a group of hoplites who drew a ramp. This was an inclined, broad flooring on which wooden beams were pegged, beams that could be used like stairs to climb up the slope. The whole structure was fixed on large wheels of wood. The platform inclined steeply, but the idea was to run ahead and reach the top of the walls rapidly. Around and behind the ramp advanced many hoplites.

When the Athenians arrived close to the walls in front of Potidaea, no sound was heard out of their ranks or coming from the walls. They hoped despite everything to have surprised the Potidaeans. They pushed the siege engines against the walls and were sure that the Potidaeans would have reacted much earlier than this moment, would not have allowed them coming so far without resistance. They started to climb. Suddenly however, hundreds of torches were lit on the walls. The Potidaeans poured oil along their walls and to the ground. They put fire to the oil. The fires provided enough light for archers to pick targets, and it seemed then, in an instant, that every man capable of drawing a bow and throwing a javelin was on top of the walls. The Athenians had to advance under constant threat of arrows and javelins. A barrage of stones fell on the attacking warriors like hail from the sky. The silence was broken by war cries and shrieks of pain. The men of Alcibiades began to fall, wounded or killed, before they had made even a few steps on the ramp. The ramp was high enough, and Alcibiades's men succeeded in posting it against the highest stones of the wall, but many dangers waited for the men that hurried upwards.

Alcibiades followed the hoplites. Hell broke loose. The defenders did not just pour oil down their walls anymore. They poured it on the ramps, threw oil against the towers. They poured oil along the ladders, and they had added black pitch to the oil. Pitch was a dark, sticky stuff that burned ferociously on the rungs, and it stuck hard. It stuck to the wood and burned, and could not be quenched. If only the wood of the towers and

ramps had taken fire, a hoplite could still march on and over the fire and jump to the top. Due to the slippery oil, the men had it difficult to stay on their feet. They slid away, fell, they felt awfully frustrated, and that made their advance especially tedious on the ramps. They had to tread slowly over the beams, over large areas of intense fire and smoke. They did not see into what they advanced, their eyes sore from the sting of the smoke. They had it difficult to breathe. The arrows came thickly through the fire, straight at them. When they emerged, close to the top, and prepared to jump on the parapets of the walls, they fell wounded or slain by javelins. From further off, but close enough to be deadly, slingers hurled small stones devastatingly and with large force at the faces of the attackers.

The bodies of the attackers burned, as the pitch glued to them. The smell of burnt flesh was horrible and made the most courageous hesitate. Still, the Athenians advanced, pushed by the men behind them. Alcibiades was halfway the ramp and pushed the hoplites forward, but several ranks of men before him had fallen. The only way to go forward was to form a dense mass so that one could simply not glide down, and climb step by step. Shields could not be held but were kept on the backs of the men, for the warriors needed their arms and hands as much as their feet to climb, to grasp the side ropes and to push. Very many hoplites fell, victims to the arrows and javelins. When Alcibiades was almost at the top, all men before him wounded or dead, protected by the falling and fallen bodies of Athenians, he heaved his shield from his back and jumped forward towards the parapet.

Alcibiades stood there, one foot still on the ramp and one already on the parapet, one of the first Athenians on the walls of Potidaea, standing with sword and shield, in his bronze and silver armour, helmeted, and helmet topped with the thick scarlet feathers of the crest, silhouetted against the rising sun and surrounded by fire, the perfect image of the revenge of the Athenian power. Flames smouldered on him. The sun rose above the city. The sun's rays suddenly lighted his polished armour, and the defenders saw a golden helmeted figure against the sky. Later, children and old men of Potidaea would tell stories of how the gods had sent knights of fire to daunt their city. The Potidaean archers, paralysed by fear, desperate from seeing their walls overcome, terrified by the bronze warrior, did not aim well anymore, and arrows flew in all directions, stayed stuck in shields or were reflected. Victory was close for the attackers. On other parts of the walls also, Athenians stepped inside the city.

But Alcibiades and his fellow-Athenians felt the ramp on which they stood slide away. The Potidaeans had taken small anchors and grappling hooks from their useless ships, thrown these against the towers and ramps, and they pulled with many men sideways. Alcibiades's ramp shifted and beams creaked. The contraption shifted more and more, and Alcibiades's men fell off. He could choose to put his other leg on the wall, but he would then be the only Athenian on the parapet, and he would surely be killed. Socrates had already fallen from behind him. Socrates had slipped and fell heavily in his armour to the ground. The men close to Alcibiades slid off the ramp. The ramp did not hold. Alcibiades cursed, caught a grappling hook, but he could not force it off an away, because its teeth had bitten too far into the wood by the pulling force of the Potidaeans. He made his decision then, and blind with rage he stepped back on the ramp, falling immediately. He grabbed a side of a beam as the ramp crushed.

Athenians still fell, and Alcibiades saw a hoplite being crushed by the structure. He held on as long as he could, and then at the last moment, he jumped away from the smashing beams. He fell into other hoplites. The siege engine was destroyed. Only burning rubble remained on the ground. Alcibiades was momentarily stunned from the shock. He had bad burns on his hands and legs, and a part of his underclothing was burning. He hit on the last patches of pitch and oil that continued to burn on him, on his breastplate and leg armour. He was bruised in several places from falling in his bronze armour on other armoured men. Yet, he stood up and looked at the battle, with wild eyes, seeking for another ramp or tower to climb.

All along the walls the Athenians were being driven back. Towers, ramps and ladders burned or toppled. No new ladders had been placed to the walls. Hoplites were still being wounded and killed by archers. Light grappling hooks on long ropes were thrown on the ladders of the men who still dared to climb, and the ladders were pulled aside. Only a few ramps had held and where Athenians were on top of the walls, heavy fighting resulted. There were so few accesses to the walls that the Potidaeans could concentrate their forces there. They had so many defenders, that by sheer power of heaving bodies they were pushing the attackers back onto the ramps. The Athenians who had reached the parapets were being massacred, their dead bodies thrown down the walls. The attackers could not advance. Alcibiades ran to one of these ramps, pushing himself up, but to no avail. More oil and pitch was thrown over the men above him, and the proud warriors of Athens burned before his eyes. Hooks came down still, and the last few towers failed. The battle was over.

The Athenian siege engines had failed to provide any Athenian advantage at Potidaea. The last Athenian ladders were pushed back, and men shrieked while they fell to their death. The army stood at the feet of the walls, enraged by frustration. The defenders then threw down heavy stones. Skulls got cracked, backs received bricks, and also Alcibiades fell to his knees when a large, sharp stone hit him on his shoulder-plate, denting the bronze of his armour. The Potidaean archers continued to shoot their arrows down. Alcibiades stood with one knee on the ground and his shield held upwards. That was the new image of the Athenian troops. The Athenians started to run, away from Potidaea's walls, away from the horror, and into defeat.

The town had been much better organised than the Athenian generals Hagnon and Cleopompus had realised. There were more men on the walls than expected. Women and young boys had been up there, heaving stones over the parapets and throwing down oil pails. The Potidaeans had amassed oil, pitch and hooks in large quantities on their parapets, but hidden from sight from below. They had prepared at night, like the Athenians.

Now the Potidaeans stopped firing arrows and throwing stones downwards. The defenders cried out of joy. They stood up behind the walls, danced on the parapets, some lowering their trousers and showing their naked buttocks to the Athenians who drooped off. The walls crowded with Potidaeans. The Athenians had had to confront not just warriors, but the whole population of the city. The walls resounded with laughter and cheers.

Alcibiades withdrew to where he was safe from arrows, and then looked back. He had found Socrates close by and both men stood, dirty, quenched flames on their battle dresses, looking at the formidable city of Potidaea.

Socrates threw down his shield, stuck his sword before him in the ground and took off his breastplates and leg protections. He was too tired to continue to wear them and they bit in his flesh.

He said, 'as long as those guys have got oil and pitch and hooks we won't get in'.

'Yeah,' Alcibiades answered, 'and did you see how slowly those famed new heroes went up those towers and ramps? With so little energy it will never work. Our own men lost their breath pushing at the asses of those green-ears. Do you have a bright idea to get in anyhow?'

'None,' Socrates recognised. 'It was a bad day for me, today. I accomplished nothing. I must be getting old'.

'Nonsense,' Alcibiades grinned, 'nobody of us accomplished anything today.'

The two then supported each other to return to camp, put their shields on their backs, and dragged their armour at the straps behind them.

The attack was called off and all the hoplites returned in chaos. They left their dead and wounded behind. It took a lot of menaces and blows of the commanders to make a few troops return and seek a truce with Potidaea to recuperate the injured and the fallen. The burning towers and ramps were abandoned.

Alcibiades and Socrates were too tired to run. When they arrived at the tent, they fell heavily on their beds. They remained lost in thoughts, and rested.

After a while Alcibiades spoke again, on a subject that bothered him more than a failed attack, 'we have the plague in the camp. Our men were too tired to attack. What should we do?'

'No dirt; much bathing in the Sea; drink very little water; get water and food from where nobody else gets them from; drink a little wine when you are thirsty but not too much; don't dress up but let the wind play on your body; no women; no heavy perfumes but oil with fresh herbs; no gambling; burn old clothes; lots of exercise in the open air.'

Alcibiades laughed, 'that means saying goodbye to all the good things in life. Are you a doctor now?'

'No,' Socrates replied, 'but that is what will work. I have lived like that my whole life and I have never been sick.'

Alcibiades grinned then, but he thought on. He supposed he would have to close his whore-tent, to swim several times a day in the Sea, stay in his own camp, avoid water unless he knew where it came from, be prudent with his wine and continue his body-training. He slept then.

The next days, he did as he had decided. He oiled himself in light oil mixed with a little vinegar, and he perfumed slightly with fresh herbs. He exercised with a few friends daily but otherwise avoided company.

That end of summer Hagnon and Cleopompus realised that more attacks on Potidaea were impossible. They had no towers anymore, no other siege engines. The siege engines had proved to be unreliable and useless. The pounding rams were not strong enough to shake the walls. There were always as many Potidaeans on the walls, armed to the teeth, their long lances showed above the parapets. Two more attacks had been attempted by the Athenians, only with scaling ladders, and those too ended in defeat.

Even a night attack directed against the gates had been disastrous. The morale of the new army was as low as it could get and the veterans of the old guard grinned but could not force a way in either.

Their grins merely showed, 'we told you so, wise guys!'  
Potidaea could not be stormed and had to be starved out.

It was not necessary to hold so many men any longer in Chalcidice, merely to guard the town, and pay for the effort. Hagnon and Cleopompus had lost over a thousand men, more than a quarter of their forces. They had lost the larger part to the plague, in fear of which they had left Athens. They decided to sail off, back to Athens. The men packed, embarked slowly on the triremes and on the transport ships in two days' time. The troops that had been now more than two years in front of Potidaea stood watching at the seaside as the last ships disappeared towards the west beyond the horizon. Athens had abandoned them once more to their guard duties, to the blockade and to policing the smuggling trade with Potidaea. All dreaded the coming winter.

Around that time Alcibiades heard that an embassy with men from Corinth, Sparta, Tegea and even Argos had travelled to the Persian Satrap Pharnabazus of Phrygia with the aim to persuade the King of Persia to provide money and to help the Spartan alliance in its war with Athens. Sparta had no tribute paying allies, so no money to build a fleet. Persia had money. Persia had been defeated in the past mostly by Athens; Sparta might forge an alliance with Persia. The embassy had also tried to persuade Sitalces, King of nearby Thrace, to send an army to relieve Potidaea. Sitalces's son, Sadocus, however, delivered the Spartan envoys to the Athenians. The ambassadors were sent in chains, as prisoners, to Athens. In revenge, the Athenian Assembly decided immediately to kill the Spartan emissaries and to throw their bodies into a pit. The act might have been considered shameful, but they only did the same as the Spartans had done with any Athenian trader or sailor caught in merchantships around the Peloponnesos. Among the executed ambassadors was one of their worst enemies: the Corinthian general Aristeus, the first defender of Potidaea.

When winter announced itself with the first cold winds, Alcibiades went to see the generals of the Athenian army. He was not on duty, but could no longer hold back. He went to their tent. He found the generals together, discussing war plans. When they saw him arriving, recognising his stature in Athens, despite his youth, they called him in. Xenophon son of Euripides, Hestiodorus son of Aristocleides and Phanomachus son of Callimachus stood around a low, three-legged table. They were obviously discussing new possibilities for attacks on the city, for Alcibiades saw that the plan was an outlay of the defences of the town.

Xenophon spoke first, 'come in, young hero. We are eager to hear how a young commander might assess the situation. What do you think? Should we attack Potidaea once more? Where?'

Alcibiades watched the generals with increased attention. What did the men wanted to hear? He saw the fatigue in the eyes of Hestiodorus and of Phanomachus. Only Xenophon had glistening eyes and seemed to have enough energy left to dare new attacks. Alcibiades had heard about Xenophon, about his never-ending wish to advance, to fight and conquer. Alcibiades weighed his answer. He was inclined to support an aggressive policy to win over the interest of this general, who might help him later in Athens. Xenophon was a powerful figure in the Assembly, a seasoned

politician and as wealthy as Croesus once was. Hestiodorus and Phanomachus however were men of importance too. He knew instinctively that new attacks were suicidal. He knew, for he had been on top of those walls of Potidaea, and he had been thrown back. When he kept guard now, he had remarked no slackening in the defences of the town.

Alcibiades had talked with smugglers of Potidaea one night. One of the whore-masters had taken him to the smugglers, for he had given funds to the man and he had organised a mutually very interesting business, which had brought them both enormous benefits. Alcibiades had given the man money, and then also to others, brought to him by his associate. The men not only provided women – from where, Alcibiades did not want to know -, but of whom as many must have come from inside the town the Athenians were besieging as from the countryside. They also delivered any item the army desired. They provided extra food, and wood for the fires that burnt in the camps. The smugglers provided blankets in winter, medicines and even weapons. Alcibiades lent money, and the smugglers paid him back with huge interest because they won even more in the trade. He had followed the business of the whore-master, wanting to know how much the man made and from what, and then he forced the man to show him his middlemen.

The smugglers told Alcibiades their business had become increasingly difficult. The Athenian generals had tightened their controls on the harbour and become more efficient in the blockade. This had started from the arrival of Hagnon and Cleopompus on, when there were more Athenians around the city. On the Pallene side, nothing passed the counter-wall. The smugglers told him that the leaders of Potidaea were more determined than ever to hold out. They were creatures of Corinth, after all, and they feared the revenge of Athens. The populace also wanted to hold out because rumours and whispers were spread that the Athenian hoplites would kill them all from the frustration of so long a siege. The walls were indeed still very well guarded and the warriors there received more food than the rest of the population. The people of Potidaea suffered much, however, and there was talk of rebellion against the magistrates of Potidaea, though still in subdued terms. Still, the smugglers did not believe that any revolt inside the town would succeed.

Alcibiades sighed, sank his head in his shoulders and said, ‘Honourable Generals, I have been on the walls of Potidaea and I would love to stand there again. Very many men would die in a new attack. Many good citizens of Athens would lose their lives in storming the walls of Potidaea once more. I have information that the city is weakened. The leaders still have a powerful grip on the people, but that grip lasts only because the rulers tell that Athens would exterminate the giants of Potidaea if the city surrendered. We blockade Potidaea efficiently now, since many months, and while it was already wanting, in need of food, we made major attacks, which weakened their resolution even if we did not succeed to break through their defences. That seems to have fuelled the resolution of the rulers of Potidaea. The people, however, seem to realise that there can be not several more attacks like that before the walls are breached. The determination of the population is faltering. They lack the wood to keep warm in winter, and the oil to light their houses. Their oil sits in pots on the walls. They fear winter as much as we do. We could strengthen our grip on Potidaea, drastically control all smuggling, and start negotiations for the peaceful surrender of the town. If we can convince them that we will not execute the leaders, leave the people most of their property, withhold our forces from taking all their gold, leave

their temple treasures alone, and vow to not touch their wives and daughters, then further attacks might not be necessary. Potidaea will fall in our hands like a rotten olive from a tree.'

'Well said,' Phanomachus shouted, without asking where Alcibiades had his information from. The generals must have known already his connections with the whore-masters and the main smugglers. They might even have let him organise these links hoping to use his information, and they might have been glad he had offered it without invitation to do so. Hestiodorus nodded to the other men, Alcibiades included, and he looked interrogatingly at Xenophon. Would Xenophon, the warrior, order a new attack to quench the determination of the Potidaean leaders some more? Xenophon waited, scrutinised the eyes of his co-generals, and then looked at Alcibiades. Xenophon lowered his eyes. He suppressed his desire for a quick and total victory in that moment. He wondered how he alone, without the will of his colleagues, without the desire to attack in his best commanders, without the energy of his most aggressive and adventurous youths like Alcibiades, he wondered how he could bring his men to a new attempt at storming the city.

'Very well,' he said, 'so we reinforce our controls relentlessly for twenty or thirty days at the most. And we start preparations for a new attack on the city.'

Alcibiades caught his breath and he saw surprise in Hestiodorus and Phanomachus. A new attack in the middle of winter? Incredible!

But Xenophon continued, 'we must remain the only ones to know that we will not attack! Just when we are ready, and when the Potidaeans have seen our preparations, we start negotiations under threat of a massive storming the city walls once more. If they break, we continue the negotiations. If the Potidaeans hold out we will have to attack. But we can stage a minor attack to not lose face.'

The two generals and Alcibiades gave a sigh of relief and relaxed smiles appeared on the faces of the generals in the tent. Alcibiades did not doubt the negotiations would be positive.

The Athenians did not even have to prepare for new attacks on Potidaea. Ten days after the conversation of the Athenian generals, the Potidaean leaders desperately proposed to talk about a conditional surrender. They were no longer able to hold out against the siege. The city had no food anymore, no wood, and no medicinal herbs. The city had eaten the last of its provisions. None were left. Men, women and children had started to die from starvation. In the poorest quarters, human flesh was being eaten. Rebellion grumbled. The Athenian generals suspected all this, but they had assumed the Potidaean leaders still firmly controlled the town.

The Potidaean and Athenian generals agreed on the terms of surrender. The Potidaeans, their wives and their children, would be allowed to leave the city in peace. Potidaeans who wanted to stay in the town under Athenian rule could do so, if they swore allegiance once more to Athens. Those who chose to leave were allowed to take one garment per man, two garments per woman, and a certain amount of coins. The Athenians promised to kill no man, woman or child who left in peace.

At the agreed date, just in the first cold days of winter, the Athenian army gathered in full panoply of armour near the town gates. The Athenian generals wanted to take no risk. The hoplites stood in disciplined ranks and in battle order. At the indicated time, near noon, the gates opened, and the Potidaeans walked out.



A long stream of miserable rests of people, men, women and children advanced before the eyes of the astonished Athenian hoplites. Were these the glorious defenders of Potidaea? The people walked silently, wearing very few items on their backs in meagre sacks, fearful, shy and humble, looking frightened, walking towards the beach.

Alcibiades and Socrates stood in the first ranks of the Athenians. Suddenly, Socrates drew his sword. A murmur of fear passed through the crowd. Women and children feared to be massacred. The men had no weapons, but nevertheless they drew women and children behind them. The crowd stopped and accepted their fate. But Socrates merely hit his sword on his shield. And he hit again. When he had done this a few times, all the Athenians, including Alcibiades, drew their swords and hit their shields, even Xenophon. The Potidaean men then did not smile, for they could not any longer, but their heads came up proudly, while they marched before the saluting Athenians. It was common for defeated townspeople to be massacred all. It was rare to leave a besieged town unharmed, its people not being led into slavery, its women and children not abused. It was extraordinary to receive a public salute by victorious enemy warriors.

The Potidaeans had to walk by the seaside, in full view of the Athenian army. They remained at the mercy of the Athenians. But the sound of so many shields being hit in unison rolled over the Sea. The sound grew; the unison was lost as the rhythm accelerated, until one overwhelming noise deafening and rough flowed over the Potidaeans. Then, Xenophon gave a signal and the noise stopped abruptly. The Potidaeans left their town, all of them, and troops of Athenians entered the gates. The Athenians did not harm the people, as they had agreed, and let the Potidaeans travel unscathed to other Chalcidician towns. Athens had proved its determination. The message was clear: no Ionian and even less no Dorian ally of Athens could leave Athens' league.

Before the end of the winter, most of the Athenian hoplites returned to Athens and a few new troops relieved them. With that prospect, winter was easy to support. Athens also sent colonists to resettle the town. Alcibiades and Socrates did not leave with the first hoplites. They sailed back in one of the last triremes in the spring, in Alcibiades's own ship, the Harmonia.

By then they had been angered and pained to hear that the generals Xenophon, Hestiodorus and Phanomachus had been accused of treason in the Athenian Assembly. Athens was of the opinion that the surrender of Potidaea had been too favourable for the Potidaeans. The Assembly complained that with just a little time and better negotiations it would have been possible to obtain Potidaea's unconditional surrender. Alcibiades and Socrates had sent many letters regularly to Pericles however, and Pericles had talked to friends. There was a heated debate in the Assembly on the Pnyx but the generals went free of blame and could walk out of the Assembly heads high.

## **Chapter 5 – Athens, Spring 429BC**

### **Zea**

Alcibiades and Socrates spent the winter inside Potidaea. Their servants found a large abandoned house in the middle of the town, a detached house, not far from the agora. They settled comfortably. Socrates was mostly relieved from duties, but he was called upon for special missions of guarding the town. He had a large room in the right wing of the house, and he would sit there often with several men, Athenians as well as a few Chalcidicians, talking to them and teaching on his philosophic subjects.

Alcibiades would sometimes join the group, but he was one of the main commanders of the guard that had remained in the city, so he was often on duty even though he decided usually on his own schedule. Socrates began to talk with people of Potidaea in the agora.

Winter passed agreeably. The Chalcidician armies did not launch attacks on Potidaea from other Chalcidician armies, even though towns in its vicinity, such as Olynthus, were not in Athenian hands. Athens had proved enough with the surrender of Potidaea. A gruesome example had been given. Despite regular incursions of the Spartan army in Attica, no Athenian ally had defected. It was not necessary to lay siege to Olynthus and to risk another expensive campaign of several years over that city. Olynthus was spared. Gradually, Athenian colonists arrived and occupied houses assigned to them by the magistrates of Potidaea, now all men in favour of Athens. The harbour buzzed again with activity.

Alcibiades furnished the house lavishly and even a few new paintings adorned his walls. He courted one of the finest hetaerae in town, a Chalcidician woman who had returned one day to Potidaea. She had fled from the city three years ago, at the first news of the Athenians being signalled in Macedonia. She had heard then already that the army's target was Potidaea. When the Athenians were well settled after the siege, she revisited the city. She had actually without shame and blush simply entered through the open door of the richest man in Potidaea, into Alcibiades's aulé, and addressed him intelligently. She knew the house. Alcibiades invited her in, amused by the woman's nonchalance and lack of fear. She had returned to her own house, also a house assigned to her, and she wanted to stay. She was a tall woman, with heavy breasts and wide hips, a stout waist and long, black hair.

Socrates's comment was a whistle and a grumble, 'Much woman!'

Alcibiades soon provided for her, and she set up in his house. Their love-making was satisfactory and she did not resemble in the least Harmonia. Alcibiades started with her a routine that was almost the life of a married couple, even though he stayed rarely more than half a day at home. They slept in separate rooms. She sensed an unfathomable distance between the Athenian and herself, which she had attributed at first to his youth. Later however, she understood he had a secret that he wished not to share, and she understood she would never be more than a piece of furniture to this fascinating man. She was enough of a woman however to charm him often, and he actually smiled once in a while at her sudden sharp remarks of wit.

When the winter was over, no threat materialised for Potidaea. There was no reason anymore for Alcibiades and Socrates to stay in Chalcidice. Alcibiades allowed his female companion to remain in his house, refusing to take her with him to Athens,

and he gave her enough money to live comfortably for years. He brought together the few items he loved, very few Chalcidician art pieces. He sent them on a freight-ship to Athens, and embarked with Socrates on the *Harmonia*. Several more ships accompanied them to Athens.

The triremes set slowly sail for home. Alcibiades longed for Athens after three years of absence. The *Harmonia* made an uneventful voyage, passed Cape Sounion and entered majestically the harbour of Piraeus.

Piraeus had actually three harbours, protected by piers that were built in an open circular form so that the two ends could be connected by chains and the entries closed, impregnable for enemy ships. The harbours were *Kantharos*, the largest of the three and the merchant port, *Zea*, which was the main military harbour, and *Munichia*, the smaller military port.

The *Harmonia* entered *Zea*'s piers cautiously, using its oars. The trierarch brought the ship to moor close to an empty ship-shed, because the trireme had been in the water for a long time and needed a revision of its hull. The ship-sheds were colonnaded buildings with roofs of tiles. The ground of the sheds was of stone, very smooth and inclining upwards, so that an entire ship could be drawn out of the water, into the shed. A trireme could thus be drawn on the dry, where carpenters examined and repaired the hull. The roof protected the working men from the wind and rain. There were a hundred ninety-six of such sheds in *Zea* and about a third was occupied with boats. Each shed was about a hundred and fifty feet long, so that a whole trireme could enter. About ten new ships were being built inside the docks. There was much activity in the harbour. Several triremes were coming in, moving silently and graciously in the calm water, and a few moored. In the sheds, many sailors were working at the boats. Alcibiades saw one ship being drawn up the slipway by winches, out of the water. The ships of their small fleet first moored at a quay, however, to let Alcibiades, Socrates and other returning hoplites go on land more easily.

The men that had been on the *Harmonia* and her accompanying boats were all veterans of *Potidaea*, friends of Alcibiades, who had fought at his side. About fifty men effectively formed his body-guard. The men were eager to return to their families, so they split at *Zea*.

Alcibiades and Socrates received no cheering welcome from an arrival committee. Except for the working sailors, nobody gave them much attention. In this harbour there was nothing more usual than a trireme arriving, and another one leaving. The sailors and carpenters and blacksmiths kept at their work. They were not anxious or even interested in a new ship. Alcibiades and Socrates left it to their servants to unload their possessions from the boat, and they set off from *Zea* to Athens. They decided to go the thirty stades on foot.

Alcibiades was astonished. He had heard by now so many horror stories of the plague in Athens that he had expected to find dead and sick people in every street. Nothing of the kind could be seen in *Zea*, so he thought the messages had been grossly exaggerated. He had seen more horrors in the hoplite camp of *Potidaea*, the sick and dying men of *Hagnon*, than here.

Alcibiades and Socrates left *Zea* passing by the arsenal of *Philon*. This was an enormous building, a naval storehouse and the largest building Alcibiades had ever seen. It had the length of three triremes, more than four hundred feet, and it was

somewhat less than fifty feet wide. It contained the storerooms for the equipments of the triremes. Alcibiades went into the storehouse for a moment, curious to see what was in it. He saw a large number of wooden planks neatly stacked, heaps of ship cables and ropes, anchors, many oars, and vast chests in which sails were preserved. All the equipment was in perfect order and clean, and Alcibiades remarked with satisfaction to Socrates that Athens was well provided for a long war at Sea.

The two men then left Piraeus and walked towards the corridor of walls that led to Athens. Here began Pericles's famous long walls, about thirty stades long, between Piraeus and the Pnyx hill. Pericles had ordered the right-side wall to be built because the harbour of Phalerum had largely fallen into disuse, its functions usurped by the greater Piraeus. The south wall of Athens to Phalerum fell into disuse then.

The walls of Pericles were thirty-five feet high and eight feet wide at the base. The stone base rose about higher than three feet above ground level, and then met an upper part of plastered mud bricks that went much higher, to about thirty feet. This wall also was very thick, about three to five feet. Hoplites could patrol on wooden gangways behind the parapets. The corridor was more than five hundred feet wide. At equal distances along the walls stood large towers, dressed to fortify the defences. Wagons and chariots rode on and off in both directions, from Piraeus to Athens and back, carrying the goods to port and city. Many men, merchants, hoplites, guards, women and children walked the distance too.

The aspect of the road had changed considerably, however, since Alcibiades and Socrates had last been here.

## Athens

All along the walls leaned miserable wooden shacks. The poorest people who had arrived from the countryside at the beginning of the war lived in these. Against the fortification towers stood larger shacks, which were therefore somewhat better protected against the natural elements. These shacks had been built by the first people who had arrived in the corridor. Women and children sat in the houses now, very few men. The doors stood mostly open, and children ran in and out of the shacks. Many sat idly or walked in front of the shacks. Women enticed Alcibiades and Socrates to come in. Prostitution had soared in Athens. Alcibiades and Socrates saw poverty in its rawest form here. The people and the houses were dirty, neglected and miserable. Many of the men might still be in the country, working in the farms until a signal was given that a new Spartan raid on Attica was expected. It was still early in spring and King Archidamus would invade later, as he had already done twice in the past years.

While Alcibiades and Socrates advanced, they saw the first results of the plague. A dead body covered with pustules and ulcers was lying at a side of the road, leaning against a shack. The body stank, but nobody around seemed to care. There was nobody to draw the body away and bury it. The smell was unbearable, but everybody passed the body in a circle and did not seem to mind. The people of Piraeus had gotten used to such scenes.

Socrates was angry; he shouted it was an outrage to let dead on the street. Women then told him that the body was of a man who lived alone; everybody had feared the plague and refused to touch the body. Touching a dead body reviled people, and more so the bodies of men that had died of the sickness. A cart would come along any time

now to pick up the bodies in the street and carry them away to the funeral pyres in the city. They told Socrates to leave the man and also not to touch him. Socrates's eyes rolled, he looked in all directions and seemed to want to do something, but he too did not know what. Alcibiades drew him back with both arms and succeeded in walking on with him.

Several times later, Socrates looked back. A little further, a woman hurried out of a shack and vomited on the road. She looked pale and wasted. She staggered on her feet. Two children stood by her. Socrates went up to the woman, but she shouted not to touch her. She shouted to the children to go in the shack, while she continued to convulse but was unable to get more bile out of her body. She took up a water bucket and entered in her refuge.

Socrates advanced, and now Alcibiades became aware of what was really different from before. It was the silence. People did not meet to talk. They avoided each other. Few strolled along the corridor like Alcibiades and Socrates. Everybody hurried without looking sideways, without talking. Hoplites almost ran, cart drivers never cursed but drove steadily on. Everybody obviously wanted to pass this part of the town as quickly as possible. Still, the cart drivers pushed on cautiously, stopping for people from far before encounters. They carefully rode around people they suspected were sick.

Alcibiades also remarked there was much traffic of carts and people between the walls to Piraeus. Before the war, the main road from Athens to its harbour had run outside the walls. That road was still being used, though probably not when Archidamus invaded the country. Many more cart drivers passed inside the walls now. Alcibiades saw more of the sick people. He saw people standing stunned in the middle of the road, unaware of the world. He saw men walking half-naked, begging for money. He saw beautiful women tearing at their hair as if a pain were destroying their brains. He saw children coughing and falling, to be picked up silently by a parent. He saw a cart of the *astynomoi*, the board of Athens responsible for keeping the highways of the city open and clear. The duties of the *astynomoi* included disposing of the corpses of those who died in the streets, and the carts now rode regularly through the city to collect the dead.

Alcibiades and Socrates stopped speaking to each other. They too kept the silence that was in Athens. They walked more rapidly, eager to see the city proper and they wondered how life was in that centre, whether it was the same as in the corridor to Piraeus, or better or worse. They arrived soon at the gates in the wall that separated the corridor from the centre of the city.

They had seen the Areopagus, the Pnyx and the Acropolis from far. The Acropolis still stood splendidly white, domineering and like the true spiritual sign of Athens' wealth, but also as the sign of her humble recognition of the greatness of the gods. The Acropolis had been the fortified citadel of Athens. It could still be used as such, but Athens had turned it into the most famous religious compound of the Hellenes. The gates to the city were wide open. They were large and massive, and also well guarded. About twenty hoplites stood at the gates in light armour, asking everybody what their business was in the town. Alcibiades and Socrates had to tell who they were before they were allowed into the city. Carts passed the gates incessantly. Alcibiades and Socrates stayed for a while there, stunned, for a cart drove by with a low carriage. The cart was laden to the brim with corpses, corpses piled one on top of

the other, some naked, some still dressed. Two rough men drove the cart. Everybody avoided it, the ominous death and the smells of the spent bodies. Bodies bled, bile covered the cart, bodies were half-rotten and had probably been found only after a long time; many of the dead showed faces contorted with pain.

Alcibiades and Socrates marched towards the Areopagus and the Pnyx through the streets of Athens. They followed the long road that would lead them westwards of the Pnyx, towards the agora. They noted several funeral pyres in the open space just behind the walls. There were not just pyres near the cemetery anymore, but in many other places of Athens. Alcibiades remembered a short, nice stretch of open space along the walls, with a little green bush but without trees. Several pyres were installed here and people were burning their dead. There was only one dead body on each pyre, enveloped but for the face in white ritual cloth. Mourning processions marched along, but the processions were very modest affairs now, and few people attended to the funerals. Alcibiades saw one pyre burning and the relatives turn away before the body was completely burnt. Then, hurriedly, another man came forward and threw the naked body of a woman on the same pyre. Such sacrilege of the dead would have been unheard of in the times from before the war. But the poorer people had no money to buy the wood for pyres. Those who still wanted a decent burial for their family, apparently re-used others' pyres.

In the streets of Athens, Alcibiades and Socrates saw the same scenes as in the corridor, though less so. They saw three dead bodies lying against the walls of houses, sick people vomiting outside, men dying and scratching open their ulcers, women tearing at their clothes and staggering half-naked in the road. Children ran around, many probably without parents.

When they arrived at a fountain, Alcibiades wanted to drink, but Socrates held him back. A man ran to it in front of them, tore off his clothes and jumped into the water, apparently needing to quench a fire that consumed him from inside his bowels. Alcibiades and Socrates looked in disgust at the man, but they could not but pity him. They had seen too much misery and desolation now to want to intervene. The streets of Athens were not lined with dying people, and life continued as before, but the plague had transformed the town's inhabitants beyond recognition.

Alcibiades and Socrates split and said goodbye. Socrates walked to his own home in the quarter of Collytus, to the southwest of the centre of Athens. Socrates wondered what he would find. He was eager to find out whether his wife was still alive. He told he wanted to visit his friend Simon of the leather workshop near the agora. Alcibiades continued his way towards the agora. He could go to two places, to the house of Pericles or towards his own house, which had been finished while he fought at Potidaea. He decided to go to his own house first, then changed his mind and took the direction of the Acropolis.

All along this road he saw shacks of wood made for the people from the countryside. The open space between his house and the Acropolis was almost completely filled with wooden shacks and he also saw a few tents, and even people simply sitting or lying in the open, without any sheltering. He noticed a temple on his way, but the temple was occupied by people. They were not praying in the temple, but used it as a living space. Wooden walls were constructed in the midst of the building to allow

several families to find shelter and miserable homes. At least they had roofs above their heads, shelter from rain or wind.

### Acropolis

Alcibiades climbed up the formidable marble stairs that led up the hill of the Acropolis. As he got higher, he observed more of the city. Many funeral pyres sent black, heavy smoke in the sky. Alcibiades reached the end of the stairs. He stood almost at the top of the citadel, looking down. People walked silently by, also wanting to visit the temples, or they descended the stairs back to Athens, as grave as the ones who went up. Alcibiades entered the monumental gateway of the Propylaea. The Propylaea were not completely finished yet. Pericles had stopped the expensive works there, three years ago, before the war with Sparta began. Earlier commanded work continued, however. A few stonemasons were flattening marble walls in a corner. Alcibiades looked briefly at the shrines dedicated to Aphrodite and to Demeter. He looked at the temple of Athena Nike, and at the temple of Artemis Agrotera. He sauntered into the Pinakothek, the picture gallery of the Acropolis and he admired the paintings of the Hellenist heroes. He murmured a prayer to their memories and to the memories of companions fallen at the siege of Potidaea. He noticed that a banquet was being prepared there, so he left and went through the Propylaea again, to stand in front of the statue of Athena Promachos. A large group of people stood praying before the monument, arms held high to the skies in their common attitude of expectancy and plea for intercession of the heavens and the goddess to Zeus. Many were desperately holding their arms towards the impassible face of Athena. The statue was enormous. It was five or six times Alcibiades's height, made in bronze by Pheidias, and Alcibiades had seen it already when he climbed the stairs of the Acropolis. There was also a statue of Athena Lemnia, offered by the Athenian colonists of Lemnos, and a group monument of Athena and Marsyas. Many altars stood before the temples. Priests offered many sacrifices there. Alcibiades continued his walk, to the right side, towards the Parthenon, the Temple of Athena Parthenos.

The main temple of Athens was magnificent. Athenian guards were posted before the entrance and ensured that no strongly sick people could enter and hinder the others. Alcibiades looked at the front eight Dorian columns of white Pentelic marble. More than forty columns ran all around the building. The columns were left splendidly white, unpainted. They too were made of white Pentelic marble, unblemished and smoothed. All the sculptures and reliefs were painted in bright colours, however. He saw above the columns the blue coloured triglyphs and the red metopes, the acroteria at the corners where the roof started, the fine cornices with delicate patterns painted in various hues. Alcibiades said hello to the columns, and for a moment he was very moved to see again this place he liked best in Athens, after so long an absence. Yes, Athens was his most beloved city!

The vastness of the place astonished him and made him feel small in the world. He knew no vaster scene of worship. The spaces between the triglyphs were filled with sculptures. He walked slowly around the building, looking intently at the details, and taking in all the nice features he remembered. Each side of the Parthenon showed different themes. In the front side were placed scenes with the battles between the gods and the primeval giants. The north side held scenes from the Trojan War, and on

the south side were battles between men and centaurs. The architrave inside the colonnade, round the outside of the cella, was decorated with a frieze showing the annual procession in honour of Athena, the Panathenaic procession. At the east pediment stood sculptures of the birth of Athens, and on the west pediment he recognised the contest between Poseidon and Athena for the possession of Attica.

Alcibiades had seen this temple being built when he was young. It had been finished only about five years before he left Athens for Potidaea. He was deeply impressed by the majesty of the building, which invited to spirituality and prayer. His hearth filled with pride for the accomplishments of his polis, and he almost thought that Potidaea and the misery it had brought was worth its while to preserve such grandness. He stepped up the few stairs to go inside the temple.

The priests had opened the temple and the statue of Athena was visible to the public. Many people were also here, inside. Many had come to pray to Athena Parthenos, and Alcibiades imagined the hopes of these people and why they had come to pray. The air was heavy from perfumed incenses that burned in stands at the doors, sending thick smoke to the skies. No incense was burned inside the temple. The statue of Athena reached to the top of the ceiling. It stood at the west end of the central aisle. It was immense. Made of wood, it was covered with gold and ivory and glistened with every shifting of the sun's rays. Athena's face and arms were of ivory, her gown of gold. A shallow pool of water in front of the figure to reflect the sunlight onto the statue.

Athena was dressed as a warrior. Her left hand rested on a huge shield of gold, decorated with the Medusa head that would turn her enemies into stone. A large cobra snake, equally of gold and ivory, protected the shield from the inside, threatened the onlookers, and was a repetition of the snakes in the hair of the Medusa. The goddess was helmeted, and her helmet was topped with figures. Her hair was bound to golden locks. Her face, eyes and mouth were coloured. In her right hand she held another statue, a Nike, a victory. The entire statue was the work of Pheidias, the most famous sculptor of Athens.

Alcibiades did not stay long. He found the air inside the temple difficult to breathe, despite the vastness of the interior. He went out again, into the full sunlight, and walked further on to a large open space in the citadel, new to the Parthenon. A very old temple, dedicated to Athena Polias, had been erected there a very long time ago. In that temple, dear to Alcibiades, stood a very old statue in wood of Athena Polias. Alcibiades had preferred to pray and honour Athena here, and he had made many a sacrifice on her altar here when he was young. This temple would be demolished, he knew, to make place for a greater building, or for a complex of several temples, to be called the Erechteion. The new building was to be dedicated to many gods. The structure would have to be built around the tomb of Cecrops and the sacred olive tree of the Acropolis. Pericles had also stopped the works for this temple compound, in lack of funds. Alcibiades walked over there and he saw only the foundations of the temples.

Alcibiades walked on to the extremity on the west side and looked from the Acropolis hill towards Athens. The city unfolded before his eyes. He looked at the agora, where he imagined that Socrates was now, then to the Areopagus, the Hill of the Nymphs, the Pnyx, and then further on he saw the walls and corridor to Piraeus. He could even



see a glimpse of the island of Salamis in the Sea. Those walls to Piraeus! They looked so slender from here, yet formidable when one was on inside their corridor. Without those walls Athens was nothing. For all its power, even walled all around, the city could be circumvallated and starved out in a few months but for Pericles's corridor. Its army could never win from the Spartiates. But with the double walls to Piraeus, what did you have? An invincible power! And who had had the idea to build that second wall? Pericles the Great of course!

Alcibiades thought, 'who am I? What is Athens, and what is Athens to me?' He was twenty-two years old, would soon be twenty-three, and he had been part of events and scenes most people of this city would even never experience in their entire life. He had loved. He had travelled. He had seen the horrors and the thrills of war. He had killed and been rescued. He had met sailors, artisans, politicians, traders, wealthy landowners of Attica, hoplites, philosophers, generals, friends and enemy. He had conversed with mathematicians and sophists, with smugglers and whore-masters. He had made love to men, to girls and to hetaerae. What was the sense of his life? Wherein lay his fate? Waited his fate here in this city, where the black smoke of death pyres smelled of dirt and of burnt human flesh? Should he travel to a nice island, become a philosopher and enjoy life, or should he become an Athenian leader and general? Did he really want to realise his ambitions, sworn after having lost a love? Was Athens his lucky fate or his doom? Should he flee from the pestilence that was Athens now, or stay, and take the risk to rot away and be burnt on one of those pyres? A myriad of thoughts and questions thus passed in his mind while he looked at the sun-bleached Athens. He did not know what to decide, what to do next.

'Well, well, our young hero of Potidaea, back and looking at our Athens,' a voice exclaimed behind him.

Alcibiades recognised the voice and flung around as if stung by a bee, or rather like a dog caught at something it shouldn't do. There stood Pericles, his warden. But ward no more.

'Pericles! What a surprise to see you here!' Alcibiades answered. The two men did not embrace; not much love was lost between them.

'A greater surprise for me, Alcibiades! I knew you would be arriving one of these days, but not really when. I am organising a banquet to the honour of Dionysos in the Pinakothek and I came to inspect the arrangements. I saw you from there.'

'I have been to the Pinakothek a short while ago, but probably you arrived somewhat later. How have you been, Pericles?' Alcibiades asked, and bit his tongue for he knew many of the answers from his correspondence with the great man. He should not have asked that particular question.

Pericles had grown old. He was over sixty-five years. The irresistible energy had gone out of his eyes, but the determination was still in his long, now emaciated, sharp face and in the crude, limpid eyes.

Pericles blinked, and then answered, 'you know. Xanthippus and Paralus, my two sons by my first wife, have died. Pericles the Younger lives, my son by Aspasia, but I have no heir. Athens dies, the war lingers, many things lack, money not in the least. Whatever could go well?'

Alcibiades was not astonished to hear of no particular mourning and regrets over Pericles's sons. The great man had not been on good terms with Xanthippus, who had

married a wife who liked luxury, whereas Pericles was parsimonious to the extreme and had only given the smallest of allowances to his son.

‘Pericles the Younger is a fine man,’ Alcibiades said, liking him. ‘I would love to meet Aspasia again. Socrates said so too. He was with me but he went to his own house first’.

‘Yes, Socrates! His wife Myrto died just a few days ago. I guess he didn’t know that yet when he arrived. He will mourn, like the rest of Athens. What will you do now?’ ‘I don’t know yet. Continue to fight for Athens, I suppose. Wait for the wisest of all counsellors, time.’

That brought a laugh on Pericles’s face, ‘quoting me, eh? Yes, it suits you well. The fighting, I mean. Phormio told me about you. And Hagnon, Xenophon, Cleopompus, the whole rigmarole of our strategists. They all know of you and praise you for your daring.’

Alcibiades looked again at the smoke plumes that rose to the sky of Athens and he stayed silent a while. So did Pericles.

Alcibiades asked in a low voice, very serious now, ‘how many die every day, Pericles?’

Pericles went closer to the parapet of the wall of the Acropolis before he answered. He said, ‘around fifty people a day, currently. It has been a lot worse, over a hundred certain days. The plague is subsiding. It will stop slowly. It is entirely my fault, of course!’

Pericles looked much older in that instant, worn out, thin and beaten. He looked like a judge of eighty, the noble gentleman waiting for his death, the lean spider administrator. His eyes went into every direction, but they were sad, whereas before they had glittered with nervousness and force. Pericles had been accused of bad management of the city’s affairs last year. He had narrowly avoided banishment, but he had been fined. Now he had returned to office. He was still the most powerful man in Athens. But his sons had died.

‘Coming to the Acropolis to pray for Athens, have you?’ Pericles said, turning back towards the Parthenon and towards the crowd. ‘I believe Athena Parthenos has punished us. You know, was Athena really our patroness? All the old gods in Attica and the Peloponnesos seem to have been women, images of Mother Earth. Our myths tell about warriors coming from the north, conquering this territory, and Poseidon was a warrior. Our myths recall the battle between Athena and Poseidon. Who knows? Maybe that was the battle between the goddess of the original inhabitants of Attica and the god of our warrior forefathers. Poseidon lost, but the warriors won. Maybe Athena punishes us now for having subdued this land and its people.’

Alcibiades was surprised at these gloomy thoughts, which would have been quite a sensation in the Assembly.

‘Has the great Pericles lost faith in Athens? Is that why he is offering a banquet to honour Dionysos? Trying to win the favours of a new patron, Pericles?’

Pericles had recovered already. ‘Nonsense,’ he said, afraid that such a rumour might spread in Athens. ‘This is the month of the Dionysian festival. It is my duty to honour Dionysos.’

The men stayed silent again.

Then Pericles spoke. ‘Come to dinner. Visit Aspasia. Bring Socrates. It will do Aspasia much good. And there is a lot to talk about.’

He continued immediately, 'my two sons are dead, Alcibiades. I am without heir. I will ask the Assembly to legitimise my remaining son by Aspasia, Pericles the Younger. I know this is not in line with a law I proposed myself, but these are not the usual times. I will need help in the Assembly. Will you support me?'

'Of course I will,' Alcibiades said, but he had never been to the Assembly before. 'I will talk to my friends.'

Pericles hit the dust from his chlamys and he stepped away from Alcibiades to leave. He hesitated and said, 'I have been seeing a truth-sayer. A good one. Not that I believe much in that kind of thing. Anyway. He told me Athens would be ruled by a half Alcmaeonid ...'

Alcibiades exclaimed then, interrupting Pericles, 'so that is why you want to legitimise Pericles the Younger? Don't worry. We will speak for him. There are far worse choices than him to rule Athens.'

'No,' Pericles said, hurrying away, 'you don't understand. The truth-sayer said the other half would be Salaminoi.'

Alcibiades cursed out loud. Pericles had read his mind and his doubts far better than he had done himself. There was only one half Alcmaeonid, half Salaminoi in Athens. He, Alcibiades.

He sighed and continued to look at Athens. He would go back to his house soon.

Athens needed him. Pericles needed him.

Then, he said to himself, 'what do I care about Pericles? The man has never seen a truth-sayer. He is only manipulating people again, as he has done all his life. He wants to protect Pericles the Younger and he knows we like each other.'

Alcibiades laughed out loudly, very loudly, over the city that lay beneath him. He had blotted from his mind the pain, the misery, the dirt, the blood and entrails of Potidaea. He could do that here too. He had no Harmonia to retain him into virtue and decency. He would give Athens something to talk about, to gossip, and to laugh. Athens needed a few scandals to draw it from its gloom. Athens had to live again. He had not been touched at Potidaea by the plague; it would not touch him here. Yes, he would awaken this town and it would take courage from him. He continued to laugh out loud at some of the tricks he had up his sleeve. Who would be the first virgin-daughter of a rich landowner he could deflower? What general could be ridiculed? Which politician would be crushed first by his arguments in the Assembly? He was a man, now. He had all the arms he needed and he had learned to be tough.

## **Chapter 6 – Athens, Summer 429 BC to Summer 428 BC**

### **Sensation**

Alcibiades lived in his house in the centre of Athens, in the quarter of the Scambonidae, halfway between the Phyle and the Acharnian Gates. He acted with wild energy, as if a hot, wild storm wind blew through the streets of Athens, stunning the Athenians out of their torpor. He grew rapidly into the sensation of the town. The society of Athens gossiped about his sexual prowess, his drinking bouts, his outrageous living, the chorus he funded, the women he seduced, and the men he cuckolded.

Another wind ended the plague. Towards the end of that year, the sickness vanished completely from Athens.

Alcibiades had his house lavishly decorated on all inside walls by a painter called Agatharcus, a prisoner slave, until the man had finished transforming the house into a splendid, refined palace. Pleased with the result, Alcibiades released the man and gratified him with a generous reward. Agatharcus was now one of the most sought-after painters of the town, and wealthy house-owners actually also began to enliven their houses in Alcibiades's fashion with colours and images.

Alcibiades walked around town in outrageous dresses. He wore long, scarlet robes that trailed behind him. He even had a slave follow him to hold up his long robes, so that the vivid colours not be dirtied too much in rainy weather. He walked like that in the agora, and he drank ostentatiously from its fountain, ignoring the plague. In fact, Alcibiades only pledged his lips to the water, and the people did not see him afterwards rush back to his house and vigorously rinse his mouth with vinegar.

He organised symposiums in his house, which were richly provided with musicians, dancing girls, and acrobats. He staged even small theatre performances, many overtly sexual in tone. He produced girl slaves from various Hellenic cities, available at his symposiums to all who wanted them, brought over in his ships as if no war at all was going on. Athens heard in rumours about his extravagant drinking parties and the sexual debauchery that accompanied them. Much of that was exaggerated, but Alcibiades knew how to play on rumours, and he knew how rumours were released, whispered on, spread and amplified. He diligently sought friends, actually men of influence, who walked in his circles, and who were constantly out for his favours and his money. These were his willing instruments to manipulate the perceptions of the Athenians. His symposiums became the centre of political gossip in Athens, and if at first the good citizens of Athens were shocked, soon the best and wealthiest men alluded to him that they had not yet received invitations, eager to experience with their own senses the new thrill in town. Alcibiades granted them favours, magnanimously, with an excuse for not having done so already to a good friend, and with a knowing smile. His fortune dwindled rapidly, but he didn't care.

Alcibiades spent much time in the harbour of Piraeus in that period. He learned about ship-making. He spoke to the carpenters and to the trierarchs. He invested in the

business of the construction of ships. He learned in the port of Kantharos from what country or city which goods came. He knew the pilots, discussed the fate of lost ships, and heard where and when storms might be expected in which part of the Sea. Once, while he walked absent-mindedly along the quays, he noticed a large merchant boat being unloaded. It was a true sea-farer, plump but well-tended, apparently back from a long voyage. Its sail was folded to its mast, and many sailors were at work on its bulge. While he was looking at the unloading of the bales, two young women, well dressed, stepped out of the ship. They had beautiful faces and well-formed bodies. They were dressed in light, whimsy cloth, which emphasised their sensuality. They were a little surprised when Alcibiades addressed them, but immediately ready for a flirt. The women recognised him as a young, wealthy gentleman. They told him they had arrived from Corinth. They had been courtesans there, but been involved with faction leaders who lost influence and who had been banished from the town. The women had to flee Corinth, but they told they also did not really plan to stay in Athens, because of the plague. They had changed boats twice already because of the war, and they were now on their way to Lesbos or Ephesos. The one girl's name was Ismene and she was a native of Corinth. The other girl was called Perietione and she had been born in Argos, but from Athenian parents. As they talked, Alcibiades was amused by their wit and erudition. He promised to take care for the women if only they would stay in Athens. He persuaded them that the plague had subsided. He took them to his house immediately, and they lived with him and served him. His home filled with laughter.

In the summer, was a military parade was staged in Athens in honour of warriors killed in action, and Pericles asked Alcibiades to participate. When Pericles saw Alcibiades arrive in the agora and walk towards the building of the strategoi, he almost choked. Alcibiades was dressed in the bronze armour of a hoplite. His bell-shaped armour was polished so much, however, that it reflected the sun's rays. His helmet and his breast plates were inlaid with gold and silver patterns. Long, red, flamboyant plumes descended from his helmet down to halfway his back. He wore a hoplon, a huge round shield of gold and ivory, emblazoned with a Love wielding a thunderbolt. Alcibiades shone like a lighthouse among the other hoplites and commanders, who were dressed only in their usual battle armours. Alcibiades wore a purple cloak over his shoulders of the most expensive cloth and colour. The cloak dragged behind him and reached to the ground. Alcibiades became immediately the sweetheart of the populace in the agora, and he flaunted his wealth in everybody's face. He marched in the ranks, but Athens only had eyes for him, for Alcibiades the Splendid.

Alcibiades had a large and very fine dog, which had cost him a fortune. The dog had a wonderful tail and it was one of the sweetest animals in town. He called the dog Archidamus. Once, when attention around him diminished, Alcibiades cut off the dog's tail. All Athens laughed with the joke, for Alcibiades had cut off Archidamus's tail. But all Athens also was sorry for the dog. The, Alcibiades walked the dog ostentatiously through the streets of Athens. The animal was very affectionate. It and followed Alcibiades everywhere, docilely, not on a leash. When his friends asked him why he had cut off the dog's tail, Alcibiades only laughed and replied, 'I wished the Athenians talked more about me. The Spartans talk a lot about me. They wonder when, after cutting the tail, I shall cut off other pieces of Archidamus!'

Alcibiades not only organised famous symposiums. He also attended many drinking parties and banquets in the houses of his friends. He became an audacious, outrageous and controversial figure now, the talk of the town, so that many people invited him to present a sensation to their guests. He was the lonely youth who did crazy things at parties. On some evenings, he received several invitations at the same time. He wandered from party to party then, getting more drunk and joyous as he walked from house to house.

After months of this kind of life, Alcibiades became haughty, for he was allowed doing anything he wanted. The people who invited him forgave him any outrage. He wallowed in debauchery. His arrogance and cynicism towards his audience became an issue in the end. He became an issue for himself. He became exceedingly acerbic in his comments, sarcastic in his remarks, offending in his speech, disrespectful of all. He realised then he should have to end the spiral of drunkenness and sexual excesses of his parties. He could also be witty, brilliant in jokes and in conversations, though, and his opinions on the political situations were appreciated by the more serious men in the more solemn symposiums, but he attended less and less to such meetings. When in the late mornings he returned to his house, walking through the streets of Athens, alone, he could not but notice the poverty and misery of a large part of the Athenian population. Remnants of the ravages of the plague lingered in the town.

Alcibiades met Thrasyllus on one of his walks, the man with whom he had worked much in the gymnasium in his younger years. The two were genuinely happy to meet again. Alcibiades drew Thrasyllus into a kappeleion, a bar, in the agora, though he had had more than enough drinks during the night, and the men talked. Thrasyllus had been a hoplite. Then he had done all sorts of odd jobs. He contemplated returning to the army. When the men had finished drinking more than a few bowls of wine, for which Alcibiades paid, Thrasyllus wanted to go home. His house was on the road to the Scambonid district, so Alcibiades accompanied him. Thrasyllus was ashamed for the way he lived. He did not invite Alcibiades in. Thrasyllus said goodbye at his door and entered the house, or rather a part of a house in which several other people lived. Alcibiades noticed how small the house was. Thrasyllus lived in a dirty street of a dirty quarter, in just two dirty rooms, in sombre rooms that barely prided in furniture. Alcibiades did not see much of the interior, so dark was the inside, but he remarked enough of how poor Thrasyllus actually lived. A gloom descended like a veil over his mind then, and he was in a dark and foul mood the rest of the day.

That evening Alcibiades drank a lot once more, then went to a symposium organised by Anytus. Anytus was something of a fad, a diffident and very wealthy young man. Alcibiades arrived drunken at the party. Anytus embraced Alcibiades and he showed him in, into his andron. This evening, he produced the prodigy of Athens, he announced. About ten other men were present, that evening, most of whom Alcibiades already knew from other parties. Alcibiades was disgusted with the whole affair, insulted for being presented as something of a magician or a jester, but not yet ready to stop his tribulations in the circles of these people. He sat down on a couch of the andron to participate in the symposium. The party had started quite some time ago; he was late. The conversations went wild, parted in all directions. More nonsense than serious talk was professed. Alcibiades did not say much, but he drank bowl after bowl of slightly watered wine. The men drank stiff. At a certain moment, the conversation went on who owned what in Athens. Anytus claimed one had friends to share. He shared everything. He said that was what friends were for.

‘So’, Alcibiades exclaimed, ‘everything that belongs to you belongs to me then, isn’t it?’

‘Of course’, Anytus answered. ‘Yes, everything that belongs to me belongs to my friends.’

‘Fine’, Alcibiades said.

A weird idea suddenly occurred to him in his drunken mood. He grabbed a blanket from a couch. He spread that on the floor over the rests of the fishbones, discarded vegetables and pieces of bread. He went round the andron and collected all the golden and silver bowls, plates, kraters and vessels he could find and threw them on a heap in the blanket. The guests of the symposium looked at his doing in astonishment. Silence fell in first, then laughter, then hilarious laughter. Alcibiades closed the blanket, wound a knot with the corners of the cloth and slung the sack on his shoulder. The guests bent in two with laughter, then. Alcibiades was more than completely drunk, but he was also determined to push his idea to its conclusion. He walked towards the door of the andron, losing his balance and supporting himself against the walls. The laughter silenced, for Alcibiades walked out. A couple of the men in the andron cried out their indignation then, for Alcibiades walked off with a small fortune on his shoulders.

Anytus had watched Alcibiades with growing surprise and apprehension. When Anytus’s friends proposed to intervene, Anytus stopped them however with open arms, and he blocked them from going over to Alcibiades. He told that Alcibiades indeed had the right to take what he wanted. Alcibiades swayed through the house, then through the courtyard and the gates with the makeshift sack on his shoulders. Alcibiades stumbled through the streets. He passed one street corner after the other, leaning at times against walls to gain his breath. He walked until he arrived at Thrasyllus’s house.

He knocked on the door, crying, ‘Thrasyllus, Thrasyllus, open up! It’s me, Alcibiades! I have a present for you!’

He shouted so loudly that he woke up the entire neighbourhood. Thrasyllus opened the door. Thrasyllus had been carousing also parts of the night, so he had it difficult to keep his eyes wide open. Alcibiades saw a very drowsy Thrasyllus and a naked shoulder of a woman behind him. Thrasyllus did not have the time to ask what Alcibiades wanted.

Alcibiades threw the sack inside and shouted, ‘I brought you something. Please consider this a gift from your friends. You will find it useful. Do not think one moment of giving it back. It is yours!’

Then, Alcibiades turned away, and he drew the door shut.

In the next days, Thrasyllus heard what had happened. He heard who had been the owner of the gold and silver that Alcibiades had thrown into his house. He went over to Anytus and proposed to give it all back. Anytus refused however, saying that this belonged all to Alcibiades, and it was Alcibiades’s right to give it to whoever pleased him. Nobody ever knew who had received Alcibiades’s gift, for neither Anytus nor Alcibiades ever mentioned that night later on, but the story was told in every house of Athens.

At the end of the summer, Alcibiades made his first noted appearance in the Assembly. He had promised Pericles to support him in his plea to legitimise Pericles the Younger, so he walked that day to the Agora. By the time he arrived there, he had already forgotten why he had come. He passed the many fish-stalls in the Agora, and the fishmongers cried out to him. They were used to provide him lavishly with the

best fish. They knew him well and saluted him. He looked at sellers of jewels and of cloaks. He bought a gold signet ring. He shopped for a few rare items absent-mindedly, until the magistrates of the Assembly arrived with their aids, held long cords between them and drove the men to the hill of the Pnyx. The Scythian archers, the guards of Athens, surrounded the agora. They pushed as many people as possible to the Pnyx. They used a red rope for that, with a red powder sprinkled on the rope. Everybody who had red powder on one's chiton or himation or tunic would be punished. Alcibiades let himself being driven forward, towards the hill of the Assembly, the Pnyx.

Alcibiades was not much interested in what happened at the bema and he was in the last ranks of the thousands of citizens that heard the orators. The bema was the flattened surface at the top of the Pnyx that had been carved out of the solid rock of the hill, the place where the orators delivered their speeches. The bema also held an altar to Zeus Agoraeus. A priest was offering a non-bloody sacrifice there, now, before the beginning of the debates. A banner was being raised, the semeion, to indicate to Athens that an Assembly was in progress. Three major stairs led to the bema, and Alcibiades stood halfway beneath the speakers' place. When the priest had finished the sacrifice, the epistatês, the President of the Council, ordered the town heralds to shout the last reports of the Council and also to tell the people what the points were that had to be tackled this day. Then, the Assembly started its discussions.

While he was standing on the hill, Alcibiades heard a shout. Inquiring about what was the matter, he was told that in previous sessions the Assembly had appealed to the wealthy to provide additional funds for the war and also for the organisation of the Eleusian Mysteries, which due to the Spartan invasions could not take place in procession by land but had to proceed in boats along the coast of Attica. Alcibiades saw his occasion there and then. He jumped forward and impetuously proposed an extraordinary amount of money on his behalf. The people thereupon applauded him. All shouted and pushed him forward, to right before the bema, on which stood the eternal Pericles and the magistrates.

Alcibiades was so taken in by this opportunity to make a remarkable entry in the Assembly that he forgot he had bought a quail in the agora. The bird was frightened by the noise. So frightened, that it escaped from under his robe and flew happily to freedom above the heads of the assembled people of Athens. The result was wonderful hilarity in the men, laughter and more exclamations. Many of the men tried to pursue the bird and catch it. Pericles threw his hands in the air in desperation, while the magistrates laughed their heads off. Finally, a man caught the bird, went up to Alcibiades and presented it to him. The man told he was a trireme pilot, called Antiochus, who had seen Alcibiades on the voyage to Potidaea. Alcibiades embraced him publicly there and then, and the man became his friend.

When the tumult over the funds was over, Pericles asked to bring to the vote the legitimisation of Pericles the Younger. Alcibiades sprang to the bema uninvited, and delivered a short but warm speech in favour of Pericles the Younger, which he called his finest young friend. He brought a few excellent arguments to the bema, and since the crowd was still much in his favour, no further speeches or arguments of Pericles himself were necessary. The proposal was immediately brought to the vote and accepted almost unanimously by massive show of hands.



Pericles looked angrily at Alcibiades, then. He had thought to make a dignified speech, to appeal upon how his fate, the fate of his family, had been linked from his forefathers on to Athens' fate. He rather surmised a buffoon had stolen his dignity. Pericles had also feared at first that Alcibiades would have made a catastrophe of the vote. But soon he shook his head in unbelief at what had happened and laughed with the rest of the men, for the first time since long. Yes, he thought, Alcibiades behaved like a jester. But his words were calculated and warm. A whirlwind had indeed blown over Athens! If only the Spartans could have heard the laughter in Athens that day!

## Funeral

Having obtained the legitimisation of his son by Aspasia, would be the last happy event in Pericles's life. In early autumn of that same year, he succumbed in his turn to the plague. He died in a few days, overtaken by the sickness and by the worries for the State. He had not been so popular anymore in Athens after the plague, so his last words were, 'at least nobody in Athens will mourn over me.'

In that he was mistaken, however.

Pericles the Younger sent word of the death of his father to Alcibiades, and Alcibiades hurried to the funeral house immediately. Ariphron, Pericles the Younger and Alcibiades took the organisation of the funeral in hands, for Aspasia was inconsolable.

The professional buriers laid the body on a table, anointed it with oil, and they dressed Pericles in his best clothes. The buriers did all the actual work and they did their job their hands enveloped in oiled and perfumed cloths for fear of the plague. They bound the body entirely in waxed cloths, but its face was left uncovered. Pericles the Younger placed a coin in the mouth of his father, as was the tradition, to pay Charos, the ferryman who would lead the body of the deceased across the river Styx and into Hades.

When all that was finished, it was early afternoon. They placed a four-legged bier in the entrance of Pericles's house, in the open door to the aulé, and left it there to be greeted by the people of Athens. An interminable queue of people soon developed at the entrance. The people of Athens had come to see Pericles a last time and to pay homage to the one man who had been like a father to them. Many brought flowers or a little oil, and they spent libations to the leader of Athens. Alcibiades and Pericles the Younger watched open-mouthed at the crowd. They could not fathom the grief of Athens for the great man.

The following day, before sunrise, Ariphron placed Pericles's body on another bier and on a funeral chariot drawn by two horses. Alcibiades had provided the horses. The bier made its way in this fashion to the Kerameikos, a place of the district of that name outside the walls of Athens, along the sacred way to Eleusis. The Spartan or Megarian raiders did not attack funeral processions. They had not fallen to such ignominies yet, but one never knew. So, Alcibiades also provided for protection by hoplites.

The bier chariot advanced through the streets of Athens. The bier was followed first by a woman. She held a large libation jar in her hands, and all the way she spent oil in libation to the gods on the road. Then followed a large group of professional female mourners, who shouted and cried out loudly how great and good a man Pericles had

been. The women shed tears and tore at their clothes. After the wailing women walked Aripbron, Pericles the Younger, Alcibiades and his brother, in procession, all dressed modestly in simple, black tunics. They were followed by the rest of the family's male members, and also by Socrates. After these stepped more female mourners, led by Aspasia. She too was completely dressed in black clothes, and her face was veiled and hidden. A number of aulos players, fine flutists, followed the procession.

Pericles had been for so many years a strategos, general, and he had died a general. Though unusual to have the funeral procession followed by armed men, a considerable force of hoplites, friends of Alcibiades and of Socrates, carrying swords and lances but no shields, followed. Alcibiades too was armed. The family had not wanted to take the risk of being attacked outside the walls by roaming enemies, after all.

The long procession passed through the agora and from there engaged in the Sacred Way. Everywhere stood people, spending libations, throwing flowers before the horses and the bier. The Cemetery Road of Athens ran long. Terraces flanked its sides. The terraces were divided by low walls into a series of little plots. Each plot belonged to a family. Along the road stood funerary monuments, usually slabs of marble decorated with half-sculpted scenes of heroes and gods. In the Kerameikos, at the piece of land where the funeral stones of the Alcmaeonids had been erected, a pyre had been built. Pericles's funeral bier was taken from the chariot by Aripbron, Pericles the younger, Alcibiades and his brother, and placed on the pyre. Pericles the younger then held a torch to the wood. The flames remained small and hesitating at first, but then the first wind of the day took the fire high and smoke filled the air. The wood had been heavily perfumed with herbs and incense.

Pericles's corpse was thus cremated. His family stood in silence. The professional female mourners now wailed in sad, high-pitched voices. When the fire had consumed all and when the heap of ashes could be touched, which took a long time, the ashes and the remaining bones were collected, cooled on the ground, sprinkled with oil and water in a last libation, and put in a cloth. The cloth was put in an urn. At this same spot where the procession stood now, along the street of Tombs in the Kerameikos, would be erected Pericles's funeral monument.

The procession returned then to the house of Pericles. There, they were compelled to go through a long series of purification ceremonies. The corpse of Pericles, as any corpse of a dead man or woman, had defiled the house and all who had come in contact with it, so everything and everybody had to be ritually cleansed. The following day, the whole house would be purified with sea-water and hyssop, but now the funeral feast could begin. The men and women ate and drank. Relatives and friends entered the house one by one. Pericles the Great was no more, but he had had a funeral that had honoured his dignity.

During the funeral feast, Alcibiades ate nothing, but he drank heavily. He became very drunk, drunk as he had rarely been before. Socrates tried to keep him away from the wine but the more he tried, the more Alcibiades drank, and his wine was unwatered. Alcibiades sank into a dark mood. He sought even solace with Socrates and hid his head in Socrates's breast. Socrates cuddled him like a boy. Socrates didn't doubt anymore that Alcibiades, for all his insolence, genuinely grieved for Pericles's death. Neither Aripbron nor Pericles the Younger was thus affected, however. These

stayed sober, and they went round all the rooms of the house to talk to the mourners, receive in gratitude the remembered anecdotes of Pericles, and hear the words once more that honoured their brother and father. Aspasia ran around tearing at her hair and clothes. She wrung her hands constantly and still wailed, crying out loud her grief with her female friends.

Alcibiades ended up with Socrates and a group of drunken men in Pericles's symposium hall. They lay there on the cushioned benches, and Alcibiades drank without interruption bowl after bowl of wine. He started then to speak about Pericles. He recalled Pericles's great deeds and addressed the man directly as if he was still alive. He told how much he had loved and respected his warden. He drank to the great general and leader of Athens. He recalled how much the Athenians had loved Pericles, and how much his protector and ward had cared for the people.

Opposite Alcibiades, on the other side of the room, sat a man called Hipponicus. This was an old, rich, but always rather insolent man. He had divorced his first wife and Pericles had promptly taken that woman as his own first and legitimate wife. That had been a mistake for Pericles, for although the woman was wealthy and though she had influential parents, the marriage was as awful as Hipponicus's had been. After a few years, Pericles took to going out with hetaerae and particularly with the most beautiful woman of Athens then, Aspasia. Pericles took to Aspasia, so he divorced his wife. Still, he had two sons by her. Hipponicus was no politician. He remained uninterested in the common good. So the two men seldom met in the Assembly, though Hipponicus was the wealthiest man of Athens.

Hipponicus also had drunk a lot now, and he was disgusted by all the ostentatious signs of honour to Pericles, and even more so by Alcibiades's overt show of feelings. Hipponicus suddenly exclaimed, 'oh, Alcibiades, don't be such a quail! You didn't like Pericles as much as that either! You despised him even at times. Pericles was all won for the people, but you and others would have wanted him to become the new tyrant of Athens.'

He continued with a common rumour in Athens, 'when Pericles was at his accounts for the people and you wanted to speak to him, I heard that you said that Pericles had better consider how to avoid having to give accounts at all to the Athenians!'

Alcibiades listened to Hipponicus without a blink. At the last words, however, he suddenly sprang up from his cushions and before Socrates could withhold him, he hit Hipponicus with his fist on the ear. Hipponicus slammed with his head violently against the wall, so that he remained quite stunned for a moment. Two men groped for Alcibiades's arms so that he could not hit Hipponicus again, and Socrates dragged him out of the house. Alcibiades let Socrates lead him to his own district. It was very late and dark then. Socrates brought Alcibiades to his bedroom. Two women lived also in the house apparently, no slave girls but mature women, and these appeared now to Socrates's astonishment, and took gently care of Alcibiades. They undressed him, laid him on his bed and beckoned Socrates to leave.

## Marriage

Alcibiades slept all through the rest of the night and to all of the next morning and part of the afternoon. He awakened with a headache, bathed and prepared to eat a little food served by his two women, when Diomedes entered his house in all states. He cried, ‘Alcibiades, what have you done? You bumped Hipponicus yesterday. I am sure there must have been a good reason for that, but Callias, Hipponicus’s son, and others, have launched a nasty rumour in Athens. The rumour goes that we, your friends, made a bet with you. While we were drunk a couple of days ago, we supposedly dared you to box Hipponicus on the ear, and you, in a frolic, took up the challenge. Everybody who has a name in Athens is offended now by your insolence. Our friends refuse to salute us. Even the fisherwoman in my street looked at me with scorning, angry eyes. You have not given a bump to Hipponicus but to Athens, and we, your closest friends, are in this too. What should we do? What can we do? Hipponicus and Callias are so influential everywhere! What should we do?’

Alcibiades drew his long fingers through his dark hair. All the wine had not yet left his system. He tried to think.

Then he answered, ‘all right, all right, Diomedes. I bumped Hipponicus because he drew my feelings for Pericles in doubt. Maybe he deserved a box on the ear, but I should not have hit him. I had arguments enough to close his mouth. I suppose I just felt like I needed to hit somebody. Besides, the box did not amount to much, I was too drunk. The hurt came really only when he hit his head against the wall!’

He thought for a while, then continued, ‘I’ll see Hipponicus and apologise. You are right, he is too influential, and so is Callias, to have them as enemies. I was wrong in boxing Hipponicus.’

Diomedes was satisfied with that.

Alcibiades waited until the late afternoon. He ate very sparingly then, dressed up in his finest but simple tunic and chlamys, and made his way to Hipponicus’s house. There he asked a servant to be received by the master of the house. Hipponicus appeared in the room accompanied by two forceful slaves armed with clubs. Alcibiades saw the man’s red ear, blue eye and purple forehead and though he had an urge to start laughing, he also truly felt sorry for the old man. Hipponicus looked meaner than ever however, so Alcibiades had a quick idea to leave the house and tell Hipponicus that the man had received what he deserved. He suppressed that thought however. He also kept an eye on the menacing slave-servants.

Hipponicus spoke first, ‘so, Alcibiades, have you come to my house for a new boxing fight? I can give you a real one this time!’

Alcibiades sighed but kept his promise to Diomedes, and said, ‘Hipponicus, you see me sorry. I should not have boxed you. I don’t know what came into me. I lost my mind truly in grievance for Pericles. I really did. I have come as fast as I could to present you my apologies. Please forgive me.’

Hipponicus was still mad, but surprised also.

He said, ‘you insolent puppy! Nothing allowed you to hit me unexpectedly with such force before I could defend myself! I am your elder, a man you should respect! You resented my being at the funeral. Nothing can excuse your behaviour, and I will not accept apologies! If we had fought regularly last night, you would not have come off unscathed!’

Alcibiades had to laugh inside at that, for he could down Hipponicus with one blow any time. Hipponicus, however, crossed his arms and stood defensively, legs firmly and solidly on the ground. Alcibiades also saw two pretty faces of women peering from behind the door styles of the second room but not daring to advance. He was absolutely at a loss of what to do next.

Finally, Alcibiades took off his clothes one by one, even his loincloth, until he stood stark naked before Hipponicus. Hipponicus's mouth dropped open and his eyes widened. He had not expected such a development, but had prepared his servants for a new brawl. Now he saw the boy stand naked before him.

'Hipponicus,' Alcibiades said, arms open, 'look, I stand naked before you. Hit me, scourge me, chastise me by any means that please you. I assure you that you see me truly begging your forgiveness. I am your obedient servant!'

Hipponicus was so astonished that he looked silently, and looked again.

Hipponicus was no sourpuss. He liked a good joke. He was a tough businessman, but he also liked a young boy once in a while and he found the situation in his house exceedingly hilarious, now. Alcibiades saw him lean backwards, put his hands on his hips and start to laugh as hard as he could, un-stoppingly. He laughed and laughed, folded almost in two.

With tears in his eyes, Hipponicus said, 'Alcibiades, my boy, get dressed! You are forgiven and I'll think of a way by which you can redeem to me. Come on, get dressed! Let's have some wine and something to eat.'

Hipponicus became conscious of the giggling behind his back, turned to the girls and cried, 'what are you doing there? This is no scene for you! Don't mingle in the affairs of your father! Get off. Now! Bring us food and wine! Quickly.'

And Hipponicus clapped in his hands.

Alcibiades dressed, and Hipponicus took him at the shoulders to sit near him, at the low tables in the next room. The two girls, who happened to be Hipponicus's daughter and a servant girl, brought them little pieces of food. Hipponicus and Alcibiades laughed through the meal and through the evening. Alcibiades got very drunk for the second time.

The following morning, Alcibiades was up early. He sat in his aulé in a chair, head in his hands, coping with an all too familiar headache, warming in the morning sunshine. Suddenly, Callias, son of Hipponicus, stormed into his house.

When Callias stood before him, uninvited, Alcibiades looked up and said, 'will you please come in, honourable visitor? Come in, Callias, don't stay at the door! What is it these days that every morning somebody comes in storming like that with an angry face?'

Callias planted his feet squarely in front of Alcibiades and cried, 'what have you done to my father, Alcibiades?'

Alcibiades thought Callias was referring to the box on Hipponicus's ear and he opened his mouth in reply, but Callias didn't allow him to say a word.

'You made my father drunk for the first time in ten years. An old man like that! My father doesn't know the difference anymore between wine and water; so much water does he pour in his wine! My old man is babbling nonsense now. He wants you to marry my sister, Hipparete! He says that'll teach you to bump people on the heads. He wants no other son-in-law but you, and Hipparete seems as smitten as a crazy chicken that's seen a real cock for the first time in her life! What have you done?'

Alcibiades could only reply, ‘oh, oh! My head! What have we done?’

‘We? No, you, Alcibiades, you! My father said to tell you he will accept no excuses but for a marriage.’

Alcibiades stood up from his chair, but he had to keep one hand on its arm. He embraced Callias, his friend, without a further word, the Callias who was as wealthy as Croesus and only just not as wealthy as his father. He drew Callias towards the house, saying, ‘we need to talk! Let’s eat a bite.’

And Callias and Alcibiades, both bursting with laughter, entered the rooms.

Alcibiades asked, in all due form, for Hipponicus’s permission to marry Hipparete. He thus kept his promise to Hipponicus. He asked in wedlock a girl who was not only pretty (he had watched her secretly while she served him the other evening), but of the best family in Athens, daughter of the wealthiest man of Attica and sister to a man that would be more wealthy still. More importantly, Athens would be amused once more! He had at first refused to Callias to marry the girl. Just a little. Callias had threatened to let the nasty rumours continue. Then, Callias had offered ten talents to come with the bride. Alcibiades had suddenly asked for ten talents more if the girl had any children. This made Callias almost choke with spite, and he called names to Alcibiades, but Alcibiades stayed mute. The deal was concluded. Afterwards, when Callias feared to die without children, he declared in the Assembly that in such a case the state of Athens should inherit all his goods, not Alcibiades. Callias had never really well digested the tough negotiation Alcibiades had forced upon him.

Callias dragged Alcibiades immediately to the house of his father. Hipponicus had been waiting for them. Callias pushed Alcibiades through the door. As soon as Hipponicus saw Alcibiades, he smiled and called his daughter in. She had been waiting in the adjoining room, and she was dressed in a splendid orange tunic. She wore a white many-folded himation with small multi-coloured patterns on her shoulders. Hipponicus took his daughter’s hand and without more ado he said, ‘Alcibiades, my boy, I give you my girl. I hope and wish that she might give us children in the sacred bonds of marriage.’

Alcibiades muttered barely audibly, ‘I accept your daughter, Hipponicus.’

‘We will give her a dowry of ten talents,’ Hipponicus whispered with his face close to Alcibiades and with heightened eyebrows.

‘That is what has been agreed with Callias, and I accept all gladly!’

Hipponicus then energetically shook Alcibiades’s hands and so did Callias, who also slammed his strong right hand into Alcibiades’s shoulder. That was the betrothal ceremony. Hipparete stood with lowered but shining eyes next to her father.

Alcibiades took her hand now, and he saw she was not a young girl anymore but a young woman, ready for love-making and child-bearing, for marriage life and taking in hand a household. He understood then that his freedom was gone. Hipparete had good looks. She was even very pretty, compared to what the faces of Hipponicus and Callias might have promised, and he saw she had a mind of her own. She was the daughter of the richest man of Athens and the daughter of the first wife of Pericles, which made her half-sister to Pericles’s former sons Paralus and Xanthippus. His thought then was, ‘why not?’

Alcibiades and Hipparete waited until the best month of the year to marry: Gamelion. That was in full winter, so promised not much fine weather. The month of Gamelion,

however, was the month totally indicated for marriages, because it was the sacred month of Hera, the patroness of marriage.

The day before the wedding, Hipparete gathered her belongings in the house of her father. With her servants she put all her dresses and linen in large chests, and chest after chest was loaded upon a cart that stood in the open space of the house. Hipparete offered some of her childhood memories to the marriage goddesses: a doll, old toys. In the evening, her female relatives went in procession to the Fountain of Callirhoe to bring back water for her ritual bath.

The next morning, Hipparete and Alcibiades in their respective houses, cleansed ritually for the marriage. They put on new wedding dresses, which were for Alcibiades a vividly coloured himation and chlamys and for Hipparete a simple white, many-folded tunic and a himation of the finest cloth.

In the early afternoon, Alcibiades went with his family and his best man, Socrates, to the bride's house. Socrates looked ridiculous, and he knew it. He had come in his common clothes, but Alcibiades had pushed upon him a new coloured chiton, himation and chlamys with garlands of flowers around his neck, and he smelled of so many perfumes that he grumbled he resembled a priest of Dionysos. He said it was not he who was marrying the girl, but Alcibiades continued to sprinkle the perfumes on him and conjured him to do as was tradition. Alcibiades was likewise attired, wearing flower garlands above his tunic and flowers in his hair. He was anointed with aromatic myrrh. His house had been decorated entirely with olive branches and laurels.

Alcibiades and a large suite of friends went in procession to Hipponicus's house. Alcibiades and Socrates led the loud-mouthed group. Alcibiades's friends shouted jokes to left and right, and made one more outrageous appearance in Athens, the more so since the two houses were not close. The people of Athens were astonished at the wonderful group that danced as much as walked the streets. They clapped in their hands and laughed at the rogue jokes of Alcibiades's companions.

Hipponicus and Callias waited for them at the entrance of their house and received the merry company with uplifted eyebrows and a sigh. They offered flowers and fruit to the gods in sacrifice at the altar before Hipponicus' house. They spent libations of oil and water and bade the men in for a banquet.

Women and men sat at separate sides of the rooms, and now Alcibiades saw his bride again, for the first time since many days. She was magnificent in her fine clothes, her shoulders bare, and wearing a wreath of olive branches in her hair. She was entirely veiled however, with the bridal veil that he would have the pleasure only later in the day to see taken away. The banquet rooms were decorated with flowers, garlands, and laurel branches, and on high tripod stands stood already a few of the traditional Athenian wedding bowls, the lebetes gamikoi. These were the first wedding presents, and they were brought close to the bride.

Then, food was presented: many small plates and bowls filled with fruit, fish and meat. This was served on the low tables placed in front of the invitees. Bread was also offered.

Callias himself went around with a basket of pieces of bread, offering the ritual portions while saying loudly the sacred formula of marriages, 'I have avoided the worse; I have chosen the better'.

When Callias presented a piece of bread to Alcibiades, the two men grinned openly to each other. Today at least there was peace between them. At that moment, Alcibiades's friends bade in their servants, and these brought more wedding presents. Each servant wore a present and showed it to the attendance, first to Hipparete, then to Hipponicus. Many marvellous pieces of wedding boxes, more lebetes gamikoi, statuettes, finely decorated pieces of furniture, and jewels of precious stones were thus brought in, and Hipponicus remarked with glee and satisfaction the richness of the gifts. He had never participated in a marriage ceremony at which so many, such varied and rich presents were put to the show.

When all had eaten well, had finished the merry banquet, and drank some wine, Hipponicus apparently being used indeed to water his wine much, evening fell. Hipponicus gave a sign to his daughter in the first darkness and Hipparete dropped her veil. Alcibiades could now see her face, and many of his friends took a deep breath. This was not just a rich bride. Hipparete was a beauty too! Oil lamps were brought into the room, and in the mysterious atmosphere of the evening, with changing and moving soft light, entranced by more myrrh fumes, the men sang paeans in honour of the gods and of the bride. Hipponicus offered the last sesame cakes then, the symbols of fertility in Athenian marriages.

At the beginning of the night it was time for bride and bridegroom to leave the house of the bride's father. Hipponicus stood up from his bench, went formally to his daughter, took her hand, made her stand up, and laid her hand in Alcibiades's. The men and women that had been present at the wedding went outside. Alcibiades and Hipparete stepped in an open carriage driven by Pericles the Younger. The chariot had been arranged by Alcibiades, and his two best horses nervously tore at the reins. Hipparete held a sieve and a gridiron, symbols of her future domestic duties. The family of Hipparete, her friends, as well as Alcibiades's family and friends, followed the carriage, carrying torches. Servants carried all the presents, but also a few wagons had been necessary to hold the larger pieces. Asopius son of Phormio led the procession. He was the official proegetes, who preceded everybody. He too wore an olive branch wreath and a ceremonial staff. He was a dignified master of the ceremonial procession. He walked stately and slowly, followed by the carriage with the bride and groom.

Alcibiades had no parents anymore to receive his bride at his house. So he had sent Socrates in advance. Socrates stood at the entrance. He carried a torch, and libation vases stood next to him. Alcibiades helped a radiantly smiling Hipparete descend from the carriage. Then they stood before Socrates. Socrates welcomed the couple, sprinkled in libation some oil and water in front of them.

He tapped Alcibiades on the shoulder, saying, 'I wish God will bless your marriage, boy.'

Socrates then embraced the bride. He offered Hipparete a piece of wedding cake made with sesame and honey, as well as a few dates. These too were the habitual symbols of fertility for the Atticans. The crowd exclaimed in happy congratulations then, for this was the last part of the wedding ceremony. A shower of nuts and figs was thrown over the couple, and Alcibiades and Hipparete had to hurry into the house.

Alcibiades took his newlywed bride straight to the bridal chamber. Once inside, he closed the door. A friend of the groom had to guard that door. Alcibiades had convinced Callias with a hundred arguments that he had no better friend to do this,



and Callias also wanted to make sure that Alcibiades was indeed fully wedded to his sister, so Callias had grudgingly accepted. Callias stood guard and it was a good thing he was there, for Alcibiades's friends pushed together before the thalamos, the bedroom, singing very noisily the nuptial hymns, and they would surely have broken the door had Callias not thrown them back with curses and kicks. After all, the friends had to make as much noise as they could now, to ward off the evil spirits from the bridal chamber.

Socrates covered his ears at the scurrilous jokes and songs, at the evocative sounds, and he left the house before the hymns finished.

Meanwhile, Alcibiades stood in his bridal chamber. He took off one garment after the other from the body of his giggling wife until she was completely naked. Lastly, he took away the strophion that held her breasts. Then he also stripped rapidly and threw her on the bed. With the noise of Athens' best men, future leaders, generals and men of influence in her ears, Hipparete's first child was conceived then and there.

Alcibiades had sent the two hetaerae women who had lived with him before his marriage away from his house. He bought them a small house and continued providing for their living. He, however, settled in the cosy life of a married couple. Hipparete was young, virtuous, and an arduous lover. Alcibiades needed not much more, for the moment, to satisfy his appetites. She was modest, did not interpose between him and his friends, and she helped him during his symposiums. Alcibiades civilised his drinking parties so that there were no controversies in the marriage. He quite liked to have somebody waiting for him, and Hipparete was pregnant immediately. Alcibiades knew he had a son in Potidaea somewhere, but he had never heard anything more of mother or child. Hipparete would bear his first child and if it was a son, this son would be his legitimate heir.

## Politics

After a few months of this life however, boredom crept insidiously in on Alcibiades. He passed time by finding interest in the Panathenaean and Olympic Games. He contacted discus throwers, wrestlers and runners for sponsoring contracts. He prepared for the Olympics that year, which was not easy at all because of the war. His real interest was in horses, but with Attica devastated almost every early summer, this spring once more, he could not really breed the horses that might win prizes at the Olympics.

Alcibiades participated regularly in the Assembly meetings. Two factions rivalled for the attention of the Assembly and for the favours of the Athenian citizens after the death of Pericles.

One faction was led by Cleon son of Cleanetes. Cleon had been the long-time political opponent of Pericles the Great. Cleon's father had owned a tannery and had become rich in that industry. Cleon was not born in the old aristocracy names of Athens.

Alcibiades did not like Cleon and it was out of the question to join a former enemy of his family. He considered Cleon greedy and vulgar.

The other faction was led by Nicias son of Niceratus. Nicias was the pious gentleman, the reserved magistrate. He also was not descended from noble lineage. He had made his fortune by renting out slaves to work in the silver mines of Laurion.

Alcibiades did not like Nicias better than Cleon. He begrudged Nicias' quiet charm and his charisma with the people. He thought Nicias was indolent and presumptuous. Alcibiades delivered a few remarked speeches in the Assembly on unimportant subjects, in support of one or the other faction, but with many friends he stayed aloof of the two main leaders. He would be more opposed in time to Nicias than to Cleon, however. He appreciated more the aggressiveness of Cleon than the dignity of Nicias.

Gradually, Alcibiades built up his own circle of supporters in the Assembly. When Alcibiades spoke out against Nicias, Nicias's popularity never suffered. Alcibiades also directed his attention against Phaeax, the son of Erasistratus, but the man proved to be a very bad orator, so Alcibiades was fighting against the clouds with Phaeax. Phaeax was of noble descent, but not a worthy adversary for Alcibiades in the Assembly. His talent was persuasion in private conversation, not in rhetoric. Phaeax was dangerous because he drew on invisible cords. He could count on puppets in the Assembly, and one had it difficult to know who the puppets were and how many there were, but in votes strange results submerged. At those times there were no great causes to plead, anyhow.

The war drudged on. There were no more major war campaigns for Alcibiades, no more battles. The King of Sparta attacked Attica, but he stayed only the shortest time necessary in the land. No important threats had developed for Athens in the many months since Pericles's death. Athens and Sparta enjoyed small successes and suffered small deceptions.

Alcibiades ran out of tricks to make Athens laugh. His marriage was satisfactory enough, but his blood boiled inside him whereas Hipparete seemed a dutiful housewife, always ready to lie on her back. She had no great spark of passion inside her. She didn't scream or fight him, was always content. She did not introduce one grain of sensation in his marriage and was so reserved that he lacked the tenderness and passion he had enjoyed with his hetaerae. He had placed his two women in a house far from his home, in another quarter of the town. Now, he went to see them again, reserved them for himself once more. As the belly of Hipparete grew, he found more reasons and excuses to leave her alone.

## Demosthenes

In the summer of that year of Alcibiades's marriage, Alcibiades sat in his vast symposium hall with invited companions. Socrates had refused to come, telling he still mourned Myrto's death, but Alcibiades felt well that Socrates since long did not agree with the kind of debauchery he, Alcibiades, was organising these days. On the benches around the room sat his invitees: Alcibiades's uncle Axiochus, his friend Adeimantus, Demonstratus, the pilot Antiochus, Diomedes, Callias, Demosthenes, Cleon and Asopius son of Phormio. Alcibiades had surprised them all by welcoming them dressed in long, purple tunics like a woman. The men at this symposium were among the most notorious in Athens. They also would surely speak widely about the evening, and they had come, because they were curious, having heard about Alcibiades's outrageous last symposiums from friends' friends. Alcibiades organised now one drinking party after the other, one more splendid than the other.

That evening, the men had sung the usual paeans, performed the rituals of the symposium and they were engaged now in drinking from the large, flat bowls. They sat or lay against the walls, sitting on the benches and the lavish cushions, discussing the affairs of the city. Alcibiades had prepared a surprise for them.

He served them wine first. They made libations to the gods and sung paeans. He served fish to his guests: anchovies and sprats, little red mullets and tarichos, preserved salted fish. When his guests thought he had changed into a frugal chap and made the first polite remarks to chide him with his frugality, he clapped in his hands and made his servants enter with the most delicious dishes they had seen in ages. He served then tuna, conger-eels, grey mullets, boar-fish from Ambracia, dog-dish from Rhodes, crayfish, sea-perch, picarel, and crow-fish. Soon, the rests of the fish were sprawled on the floor, and the men lay very contented on their couches, all with very large bellies. Alcibiades had the floor swept. He brought in nice pieces of meat to finish the meal, including the fine sow's womb.

Two aulos players then entertained the men, and later three acrobats performed their tricks. All were of the best one could hire these days in Athens. The guests played at kottabos for a while, flicking wine-dregs from their bowls into a larger bowl placed in the middle of the room. Asopius won at the game, so he sat now, very drunk, crowned with olive-wreaths, next to Alcibiades. Several servants came and went to serve the men, to bring in wines and small delicacies to eat, and to clean the room.

Discussions were heated and might have ended in a genuine brawl had not Alcibiades clapped in his hands to let two aulos-girls in. The flute-girls were two young women, completely naked, pubis hair shaven, tall and in full forms of wide hips and heavy breasts. They wore only flimsy ribbons around their shoulders that hid nothing of their lascivious bodies, and they danced by the men while they played on their double flutes. They piped a rapid, enchanting tune in which shrill sounds regularly broke the rhythm. They engaged one tune after the other.

While the women passed by the men, after a short time of restraint, they sat on laps, pushed their breasts before astonished faces, and wriggled their buttocks alluringly. They stopped the flute play and turned to cymbals. Then they opened the legs of the men and pushed their backs onto the men's parts. By that time, several invitees tried to hide an obvious erection and one of the girls was actually engaged vigorously in fondling Diomedes's penis with her free hand. The other hung with her breasts above Axiochus and turning her naked foot between his legs. The men's excitement became rougher.

Alcibiades remarked, however, that not all of these men reacted favourably to the enticements of his courtesans, so unlike at previous evenings, he gave a secret signal and the women relaxed their dancing, switched to the flutes again and slowed down the rhythms. They whirled out of the room after having reverted the mood to less overt sensuality.

The men looked at each other awkwardly, drew their robes together, and sat a little straighter than before.

Axiochus cried, 'Alcibiades, hey, why are you always so high-spirited? Your symposiums are always such joyous affairs. Why is that?'

Alcibiades answered, slightly drunk already, 'why am I so high-spirited? I had a Spartan nurse, you know! She washed me in wine instead of in water when I was

small, as is the habit in Sparta. Unmixed wine that was! The Spartans do that because the effect of the unmixed wine on ailing children is that they lose their senses. In healthy ones the wine toughens the constitution. I believe it has other effects too!’ Demosthenes laughed, ‘Alcibiades, we all knew you had balls toughened in wine!’ There was a general roar of coarse laughter after these words.

Alcibiades then took up the subject of Plataea and of Chalcidice, the two main topics of the war with Sparta.

Demosthenes cried out, ‘you have left Potidaea too soon, Alcibiades! You should have stayed. We would not have suffered such defeat there!’

Demosthenes was an angry young man, very sure of his abilities, very aggressively opposed to the enemies of Athens, very ambitious and eager for glory in battles. He had fought only in skirmishes so far, but was considered as one of the future, talented war leaders on which Athens was to count for leadership in major engagements.

Demosthenes had a new theory for battles and this opinion interested Alcibiades. That was the reason Alcibiades had organised this symposium, and he had invited Demosthenes as his star invitee. The other men, however, did not know what interest Alcibiades had in Demosthenes.

Demosthenes was a proponent of every means available to win, whether conventional or unconventional, honourable or not. He wanted to win and winning justified the means. There were few traditions he would have honoured, but of course some of these were sacred to all Hellenes, such as recuperating one’s wounded and one’s killed on a battlefield, and he would not have transgressed these. Demosthenes thought in other terms than traditional trireme head-on naval battles or than hoplite phalanx to hoplite phalanx warfare. He spoke about using large numbers of foreign, light-armed troops that could move swiftly on land, engage in limited but damaging skirmishes to harass the enemy and disappear as rapidly as they had come. He wanted to use archers, Rhodian slingers, and even much cavalry. His maturer army generals had listened to him politely, but they did as they were used to and as their mentors, who had helped putting them in these positions of honour, had fought. Demosthenes was referring now to the two major defeats suffered by the Athenians between the spring of the previous year, the year in which Pericles died, and the summer of this year.

In spring of last year, the Spartans had attacked Plataea. The Spartan attack was a brutal breaking of oaths and pledges taken formally after the Persian war, when the Plataeans had stood with the Spartans and the Athenians as sole allies to defeat the Persians at the battle of this same Plataea. The Spartans had invented an excuse, of course, but Demosthenes could find no words hard enough to describe the scandalous behaviour of Sparta. The Plataeans were the most loyal allies of Athens. Thebes coveted Plataea since always, and King Archidamus had laid siege to the city. The Plataean population had fled in time to Athens so that only four hundred Plataean hoplites, eighty Athenians and a few cooking women remained inside the walls. The Plataeans asked the Athenians for permission to surrender, but that had been refused. Alcibiades and Demosthenes grinned, for the Spartans had not been able since then to storm the walls. The walls were high, and in good order. Plataea was but a small town, so small that a few hoplites could hold it and resist. The defenders had ample food. Alcibiades could not imagine the fine Spartiates in full armour and wearing their

splendid, red cloaks on their shoulders, ignominiously climbing rickety ladders to take the walls by storm. Such behaviour was unworthy of a Spartiate!

Plataea had remained under siege. The Spartans had built a siege wall all around the town. Athens laughed at the Spartans' frustrated attempts to take the town, but the Spartans had only disdain for Athens' inaction.

Demosthenes wanted to attack the Spartans, harass them constantly. Yet, Athens' army did not dare to sally out of its own walls and confront King Archidamus's troops. Athens simply did nothing in Attica and Boeotia since the death of Pericles. The new generals also refused Demosthenes's new tactics. They talked and talked and time passed without any intervention. The city of Plataea was left to its fate. The Plataeans knew of course that their city was therefore doomed, for the town's defenders would have to surrender before they starved and died from lack of food.

In Chalcidice, though Potidaea was still occupied by Athens, rebellions grumbled. Xenophon and two other Athenian generals had been sent with a force of two thousand hoplites and two hundred cavalry to subdue the revolts. The army had attacked the town of Spartolus. Olynthus had then sent additional forces in assistance to Spartolus: many light-armed troops and superior cavalry. The Athenians had been defeated in the ensuing battles. Their three generals had been killed and four hundred thirty of the best citizen-hoplites of Athens were lost, killed in the field. The Athenian army of Chalcidice was reduced to a defensive force in enemy territory. Demosthenes saw this as a proof that his ideas of unconventional warfare were solid.

Demosthenes became very excited now at the symposium, while he talked of the war, shouting that the time of the armoured hoplite had come and was gone. Alcibiades hung at Demosthenes's lips. Such warfare was what he had also more or less proposed at Potidaea, several times, and it was the kind of fighting he liked: limited skirmishes in the open, many wild, maverick attacks, in which cunning prevailed plus the personal intelligence and valour of each man. The other companions of the symposium, however, were not even listening anymore to Demosthenes.

Alcibiades led the debate back to a common interest. Asopius, son of Phormio, told in detail how his father had defeated the Spartan fleet led by the navarch Cnemus, twice already, with inferior forces, once in the open Sea between the coasts of Achaea and Acarnania, and once more before Naupactus. The mood became more optimistic again, and Callias dared to tell the audience that Athens' glory depended upon the navy.

Demosthenes cried out vehemently again, 'in Zeus's name, Callias, think! The Spartans win on land, we win on the Sea. Fine. That can go on for ages. If somebody ever will stop this war, there are only two possibilities. Either we win battles on land, or Sparta wins naval battles. If the latter is unthinkable, there is only one thing for us to do to win this war: we have to beat the Spartans on land. We cannot do that in a phalanx-to-phalanx battle. So we have to find other means of defeating them on land, before they learn to defeat us on the Sea! How long are we going to wait? You know well that the side that has the largest and best fleet wins on the Sea!. I concede that Spartans are the worst sailors in the world. And they have no money. But who owns money? Athens has some, but not much anymore. Where can one still find money in this world, where do vast treasures remain? You know there is only money, vast richness, in one place: in Persia! Who is allied to Persia? Athens? Oh no, not Athens! We are the ones that defeated the Persians, remember? Sparta is allied to Persia!

When Persia starts pouring money into a Spartan fleet, then you will see all the puppets start dancing. They will tempt our best rowers away from us with gold, as well as the best captains from the Ionian Islands. Every veteran navy man who has ever sailed the Sea and fought on a trireme will be on a Spartan ship. Where will we be then?’

That implacable logic caused sudden and complete silence in the room. The men did not end the symposium, but the atmosphere was broken, and everybody reflected sullenly on Demosthenes’s words.

## **Chapter 7 – Mytilene, Late Summer 428 BC to Summer 427 BC**

### **Lesbos**

Hipparete wore her pregnancy with dignity, but she had a difficult time. In the heat of the summer she became hard to be gentle and affectionate to. Her character changed. She burst out in anger when she did not get instantly what she desired. She ate large quantities of cheese, and took on weight. She grew plump.

Alcibiades looked more and more for an escape from his house. He perceived that Hipparete already knew where and with whom he spent his nights. Hipparete complained and reproached him for his absences, for his lack of tenderness and care. He did not know how to escape the continuous house quarrels.

Alcibiades was bored. So was Athens. But there was still the plague, a great lack of citizen-hoplites and foremost a dangerous lack of money in the state treasury. Athens could never win the war this way.

And then, Alcibiades saw an opportunity to make Athens hear of him as a saviour, and at the same occasion to leave his town and his pregnant, sour wife.

At the very end of the summer of that year, Alcibiades heard in the Assembly of the necessity to subdue a revolt in the city of Mytilene on the Island of Lesbos.

The case of Mytilene was not unlike that of Potidaea. Mytilene was ruled by an oligarchy, but still a member of the Delian League led by Athens. Mytilene formed an exception in the alliance of Athens. It was also one of the few allies to contribute not with tribute but with a proper fleet, and ten triremes served out of Piraeus under Athenian command. Mytilene had entered the Athenian alliance because Sparta had not been very interested at the time to accept the city in its own alliance. But Mytilene remained an oligarchy, suspicious and in envy of Athens. Its oligarchs found the wealth of their city growing, but not their power. They dreamt of subduing the whole island of Lesbos to them. Other cities of Lesbos, such as Methymnia, were democratic, however, and also allied to Athens. Athens still could not accept one of its allies to defect, fearing that all Ionian cities might then do the same, whereas Sparta desired nothing else. The Mytileneans therefore proposed to Sparta to revolt, and of course to be helped by the Spartan League in that effort. Their real aim was to take control of the whole island of Lesbos. The Mytileneans fortified their harbour, built sidewalls in the Sea to narrow the entrances to their two harbours, increased their fleet, and sent their merchant ships out to buy more grain, preparing to withstand a long siege. They also sent one of their generals to hire a large force of mercenary archers from Scythia and Crete. The democrats in Mytilene and especially the democrats of Methymnia warned Athens of what was happening on Lesbos.

In full summer, Athens therefore sent forty war triremes under the command of their general Cleippides son of Deinias, to Mytilene. The Mytileneans had been surprised by Athens' swift reaction. Its additional grain and mercenary troops had not yet arrived when the Athenian ships faced their harbours. Mytilene then played at delaying actions. They sent a mission of ambassadors to Athens, promising to remain loyal in the alliance if only Athens withdrew its fleet. Athens could not abandon the democratic cities of Lesbos, however, certainly not on meagre promises, and its

generals saw easily through the trap. Moreover, they heard that during the Olympic Games representatives of all Sparta's allies had convened and heard Mytilene's ambassadors. The Lesbians had pleaded for a resurgence of war.

Athenian spies noticed that the Spartans prepared to assemble an important new fleet of triremes to sail to the assistance of Mytilene. Athens thought this new Spartan fleet was a clear sign that Mytilene had this time been accepted in the Spartan Alliance. Athens quickly assembled a fleet of a hundred triremes and raided the Peloponnesian coast, to show that it still prevailed upon the Sea and did there as it pleased. The Spartan allied fleet stopped in its track. Once more, the Spartan navarchs trembled with fear for Athens' naval superiority, based not only on the sheer number of ships, but also on the skills of the Athenian trierarchs, helmsmen and rowers. The Spartans would not come to the assistance of the Mytileneans.

The Athenian army at Mytilene meanwhile blocked the city's harbours. It set up a camp at Malea, north of Mytilene, and delivered battles on land and at Sea. The army had been joined by its remaining allies on Lesbos, by Methymnian forces, by the Imbrians, Lemnians and others. But many other smaller cities joined the Mytileneans in the revolt.

After the first battles, a stand-off developed. The Athenians moved their fleet to a harbour south of Mytilene and they built two fortified camps on each side of the city, blockading the harbours, but unable to surround the city. They used Malea as a port for their ships and as a marketplace, but they controlled in fact only a small land area around their bases, so that Mytilene could launch actions over land against the rest of Lesbos. Cleipides then appealed to Athens for reinforcements.

The Athenian generals were unable to answer the plea, however. The Athenian treasury was empty, the bottom showed through the chests of silver coins. The situation was therefore brought to the Assembly.

Cleon and Nicias proposed to split their army of the Peloponnesos in two parts and send a part to Mytilene. The fleet of the Peloponnesos held not many hoplites however, and the splitting was dangerous for the remainder of the fleet.

Alcibiades then asked to speak. He saw Cleon and Nicias grinning at him when he started. He began to talk with a soft voice of the glory that was Athens, of its power and of its hegemony. Never before had Athens maintained such a large fleet in the Sea: over two hundred fifty triremes were in action. He then indeed, strengthening his voice, recognised that there was not enough money left to fight yet another war. But he described in menacing words what would happen if Mytilene defected and if the other Ionian allies became aware of the weakness of Athens. He described the horrors of general defection and he warned that the Spartans, allied to the Ionian cities, would soon possess the fleet they had always wanted to defeat the Athenians. After that description he paused.

Cleon intervened, 'we know all that, Alcibiades! Either propose a solution or give way!'

'All right,' Alcibiades said, 'what can we do, citizens of Athens? The solution is simple really, so simple a child could see it. If there is no money, then we have to get the money and if we have neither additional fleet nor additional hoplites, we have to get them. Money we can find. I will donate hereby a sum of a hundred talents to the state.'



Everybody listened now, and the Athenians began to whisper. Loud rumour filled the Assembly hill.

‘Yes,’ he continued, ‘I will pay so much and I am sure other Athenians will pay more. We have to levy new taxes. And we can send a few ships to the Ionian cities that are reluctant to pay and get in more money from them. Now, as to the warriors. We still have enough courageous, war veteran citizens here, just like myself, to go out to war once more. We will not let ourselves be discouraged now! We have the hoplites at our disposal, I tell you. We cannot pay for many new ships and we cannot pay now for the rowers. So what? I am a veteran of Athens’ army of Potidaea! Look at my arms!’

Alcibiades held his arm high so that the Assembly people could see his muscles.

‘I have strong arms like all of you. I can row. We can row. We would only need five triremes to bring a thousand hoplites to Mytilene! Who will row with me?’

By then the hill of the Pnyx roared with shouts, ‘we can get more money! We shall fight! We shall row!’

Cleon and Nicias stood astonished like innocent babies, open-mouthed, chastised, outwitted. A young man, not yet thirty years old had grabbed away the Assembly from them. But it was a dreamt occasion for them indeed to levy new taxes, which they had not dared themselves to propose, and indeed to send ships to the recalcitrant cities. The proposal to have the hoplites row the triremes was an idea they had not come up with, however.

The proposal was put to the vote and accepted by a great majority of hands. When Alcibiades descended from the bema, many men grabbed his hands, tapped him on the shoulders, and the toughest men encouraged him. Alcibiades had of course engaged now in a major war with Mytilene.

The Assembly voted to send reinforcements to Mytilene, in the terms proposed by Alcibiades, and under the leadership of general Paches son of Epicurus.

At that time, Alcibiades heard that his friend Asopius, son of Phormio, had died in Leucas, at Nericus, in an action of a fleet of thirty ships sent to the assistance of the Acarnanians. The Acarnanians had such respect for Phormio that they had specifically demanded for someone of Phormio’s family to lead.

It was Asopius’s first engagement as a general of Athens. He had laid waste the coast of the Peloponnesos, and then he had sent most of his ships back to Athens. He raised an army of Acarnanians and he had marched with them against Oeniadae. These refused to give in, so Asopius, unable to defeat them, had dismissed the army and sailed to Leucas. On his way back he gave battle to the people of the region. He was surprised by their numbers, defeated and killed. Alcibiades lost a fine friend, the friend who had led his marriage procession in the evening and the friend with whom he had drank at several symposiums.

Alcibiades asked Socrates to accompany him to Mytilene, but Socrates refused. Alcibiades understood that Socrates used this as a reprimand to reproach him of his licentious life in the previous many months in Athens, and even during his marriage life. It would be the first time Alcibiades would depart without Socrates then, without his teacher and mentor. He was twenty-five years old now, however, and sufficiently confident in his abilities to lead. He also very eagerly sought to leave his house and Hipparete. The Harmonia was back in the port of Zea. He could use his ship once more. Alcibiades was regarded to be an expert of sieges, so Paches was glad to have him on the expedition.

In the beginning of autumn of that year, Alcibiades stood again at the prow of his trireme, felt the sea-wind tear at his very long, curled hair, and he was happy. He stood not in armour but in the light clothes of a rower and other hoplites sat around, likewise dressed, relaxing from a long journey at the rows and letting the sail drive them slowly forward. There were only six triremes in this small fleet and only a few merchant ships followed, in which Alcibiades had his tents, panoply of armour, many heavy chlamyses to pass the winter, and goods and furniture he wanted to use during the siege. More importantly, he had four servants with him, and among these a man from the island of Cos who was expert in medicines and in healing army wounds. Most of the men on this ship were of his own deme. The pilot of the Harmonia was Antiochus.

The small fleet rowed gloriously round Cape Sounion, sailed between the most southern point of the island of Euboea and Andros, and then proceeded northwards along the coast of Euboea before rowing and sailing into the open Sea between Euboea and the Island of Lesbos, their destination. They enjoyed a calm Sea on their entire journey.

The siege of Mytilene was Potidaea all over again, but with fewer men and fewer means. Alcibiades was astonished that there were only a thousand or so Athenian hoplites present when they disembarked. A thousand more, lighter allied troops from Lesbos itself and from the surrounding islands had joined the Athenians, but that still was a remarkably low number for such a siege. At Potidaea, there had been from the beginning about three thousand hoplites and sixteen hundred additional men of Phormio. These had arrived later and left again, but then the Athenian army had been augmented by general Hagnon's considerable force.

When the small fleet of Paches entered the port of Malea, it was received with sneers from the warriors on land. Was that all Athens could send them? A few ships, a few tens of hoplites aboard at most? It took them some time to realise that every rower was a hoplite. Paches waited in the port until the merchant ships arrived with the panoplies of armour. Then the rowers put on their cuirasses and helmets, wore their lances, hoplons and swords, and marched in discipline into the camp. The Athenians before Mytilene now saw that a thousand heavily armed veterans had arrived and yes, now they cheered! A substantial reinforcement had come after all to Mytilene.

The army of Athens had no other army commander but Paches, the strategos. Alcibiades was a company commander. Paches ordered Alcibiades to build a wall around Mytilene. The new hoplites set to work immediately. They started to build a wall, a wooden and stone construction, all around the city. Alcibiades told them where to build, how to make use of the terrain. He positioned fortifications, towers and forts along the wall, to ensure that guarding the wall would be easy and not demand too many hoplites during winter. The climate of the island of Lesbos was very mild, however. Was this not the sweet island of Sappho, the poetess of love? Winter here would not be as hard as on Potidaea. It hardly ever froze on this island.

The Athenians forced every living soul in the countryside of Mytilene to work at the wall, so in a few tens of days the fortifications were almost finished. Alcibiades performed miracles. He led a working crew at the last end of the Athenian counter-wall. He worked with a shovel when necessary, like his companions, and helped bring

to the gap large logs of wood. They used wood sparingly and brought stones and mud to stabilise the wall. Large stones were heaped one upon the other; earth was poured between the stones. More sand was mixed with earth and with sea-water to have a kind of mud, and the mixture was plastered against the stones so that the wall was smooth on the attackers' side, on Mytilene's side.

When the walls were high enough, which was here a mere twelve feet, more planks and wooden beams were used to build a solid gangway against the wall, on the inside, so that Athenians hoplites could patrol. Only the heads and shoulders of the guards would pass above the parapet so that the Athenians would have maximum protection from Mytilenean arrows. Until this wall was built, the Mytileneans had been able to come out of their city in force and raid other Lesbian towns without hinder. That had stopped for a long time. They had not been capable to sally anymore. They began to believe Athens was a more formidable adversary than imagined.

Nobody in the Athenian army spoke of storming the city. Paches and his commanders had decided immediately that attacking the formidable walls of Mytilene was impossible. The walls were heavily guarded. Very many warriors patrolled behind the parapets every day. Alcibiades had told horrors enough of the attempts at taking the walls of Potidaea. His stories had avoided efficiently any temptation that Paches might have had to storm the fortifications of Mytilene. Paches blocked the harbours of the town and he had not too many but just enough hoplites to sit out a long siege.

On one of these days, Alcibiades worked at the wall, forming more muscles on his shoulders. It was a fine day, not too cold, not too warm, and the men had not met any resistance for a long time. Alcibiades wore no armour. He only had a sword at his hips. The armour of his men and his own were thrown together on the ground, a short distance away. A few men kept guard while the Athenians worked. They continued to direct the Lesbian slaves and servants what to do and how.

A guard on Alcibiades's right sounded the first alert. Alcibiades and his men ran up the wall to see what happened. The gates of Mytilene opened and a few hundred men, heavily armed hoplites with shields and lances, sallied in full speed towards the Athenian end of the counter-wall. The wall was still not closed there. A gap of about six hundred feet remained open. Few Athenians really guarded that part. The Mytileneans had effectively lulled the Athenians into carelessness. They had not attacked once since several days. Now they attempted a major attack. And they came straight at Alcibiades's section. Alcibiades wondered where the rest of the Mytileneans were, for even with these few hundreds of men, only a major skirmish could develop. The men that ran towards him could simply not be all the forces of Mytilene.

Alcibiades and his men ran to their armour. They nervously put on helmets, breast plates, and greaves to protect their shins. They took their spears and swords. They would have just enough time to prepare before the Mytileneans would clash into them. Alcibiades called in neighbouring Athenian hoplites and he also sent for reinforcements from the main camp, though he was sure that by now the alert would have been delivered to Paches. He marshalled his hoplites in a phalanx and posted his light-armed warriors to the sides.

Alcibiades positioned his men aside of the wall, aside of the opening where the wall was unfinished. He had not enough men to fill the gap and withstand the onslaught of the Mytileneans. Everything would depend on how long his group could resist here,

and how long it would take Paches to intervene with more men from the main camp. He also positioned a few men on the counter-wall, for he had seen Mytileneans running with ladders. The Mytileneans would surely try also to break through the walls to force the Athenians to surrender at the wall. With about one hundred men, mostly Scambonidæ like himself, many his personal friends, Alcibiades confronted a small army of several hundred Mytileneans. He stood in the opening of the walls and waited for the clash.

The Athenians had the low sun in their eyes. They had it difficult to distinguish clearly the magnificent Mytileneans as these fell on the Athenians. The Mytileneans wore full bronze armour, but they also wore multi-coloured cloaks of yellow, green and red hues. They looked like proud elite fighters, young men with good experience of war. When they reached the Athenians they ran out of breath, but they did not slow down.

Alcibiades stood with his hoplites and he braced for the shock. He remembered the conversation with Socrates on the hill near the beach of Potidaea, after his first phalanx battle.

He shouted to his men. ‘Hold on, men. Do not fear! We shall show these Mytilenean knights how Athenians of the Scambonid fight! We shall teach them to dare to attack us. You are far superior. You should not fear. We are the lions of Athens. We have seen much worse than this. Our other troops will arrive soon. Now, keep your distance! Don’t come too near the man before you. Think of the butt spikes! Prepare your javelins first. We shall welcome those idiots with our javelins! Throw your javelins to their faces at my command!’

The Athenian hoplites formed a buttress against the surging enemy. The men stood in lines only two shields deep instead of the usual eight, but Alcibiades had not more warriors. He feared wounds from the rear spikes of the spears. Wounds inflicted by the rear ends of the spears of the men of the front lines to those that stood behind were not uncommon. The men had the tendency to step forward and close the rows too much, which would hinder the first rank men and also risk the second row to be wounded from the spikes of the spears.

The Mytileneans ran, shouting their war cry of ‘Eleleu, Eleleu!’  
Alcibiades gave the command to throw the javelins.

The Athenians hurled their javelins in the faces of the running Mytileneans, and many a fine warrior in the adversary ranks sank to his knees. Alcibiades had merely the time to grab his lance after having thrown a javelin, for the enemy was upon him. A large force pushed closely together through the wall opening. The Athenians had silently formed a phalanx, then and there. They stood, shield to shield, spears out. Although they stood tight, with one leg in front of the other to hold better ground, they were pushed a couple of steps back at the impact of the on-storming troops. Alcibiades saw with satisfaction that when his first line was pushed back, the second line went a little back too. His warning had been remembered. His line stepped back, but did not break. The Mytileneans fought with the energy of despair.

From behind his shield Alcibiades pushed his spear at a throat, pierced the neck of a young Mytilenean, withdrew his lance and stabbed again. It was a spear fight that was going on and both troops stabbed and sliced with these weapons from behind their shields. The two masses of men hung together thus, with the spears between them and

each mass tried to push the other back. The Athenians had many stocky veterans in place, however, men that were stronger than agile and they held their own. Alcibiades dared to look above his shield and he saw a group of enemy attacking his men from the side, and in the back of his men. Just then he received a nasty cut in the leg from a Mytilenean spear and he could almost feel the breathing of a Mytilenean hoplite before him. The man pushed against his shield and he wielded his weapon dangerously to right and left. Alcibiades cried to his men to drop their lances and fight with swords. He pushed aside adversary lances with his shield now, and he stabbed at the throats of Mytileneans or tried to push his sword under breastplates. He hacked at legs with his sword and fended off lance thrusts. The Mytileneans also dropped their spears now, so that man-to-man duels with shield and sword ensued.

There was no phalanx anymore, just a chaos of wild men slamming into each other and hacking with weapons and shields. Alcibiades and his men were surrounded, and each of his men had several Mytileneans to cope with. But the Mytileneans fought here alone. They did not run along the wall to the next fortifications. The noise of clashing bronze and iron and screaming men was ear-splitting. Sight and hearing was curtailed by the helmet Alcibiades wore, yet he heard enough of the screams and the war shouts.

Once every while Alcibiades moved his head away from his opponents to see what situation had developed in the struggle. This was not a pitched battle. It was sheer bedlam.

As long as Alcibiades and his men could hold out thus, the wall was not lost. Farther away, the Mytileneans had also thrown a few ladders against the stone wall and they poured over the parapet, fighting against the hoplites that were on guard at the wall. There was fighting everywhere at that point. Other Mytileneans ran through the open space behind the Athenians, to fight men farther on. The Lesbian workers had not all fled away. A few showed sympathy for the democratic cause of Lesbos, for they had taken up swords of the slain, and they confronted the attackers together with the Athenians, even though they wore no armour. The Mytileneans could have swamped the Athenian defences then, rolled up all the guards along a vast section of the counter-wall and conquered a large part of the Athenian fortifications. But they met still fierce resistance from Alcibiades's companions. One after the other of Alcibiades's men fell wounded or killed so that only twenty or so Athenians held their ground. They stood on corpses of friends and on corpses of enemy, but they continued to fight. Alcibiades saw no fear in his men. He saw only rage and determination. His men sought revenge for their dead or wounded comrades. More Mytileneans were coming.

Alcibiades had fought for a long time now. He grew tired. His sword arm felt heavier at each stroke. He was out of breath, but continued to parry sword slashes from a huge, young Mytilenean knight before him. The man was strong and served a blow that already had forced Alcibiades to lower his shield and to stand less protected. He could barely resist the heavy hacks of the man against his own sword, and he had to step back until he could no more, for he stood back-to-back against another Scambonid hoplite. Alcibiades regretted now his easy life in Athens, his debauchery and drinking parties. He lacked exercise and stood panting there. But he had not forgotten his skill in sword-fighting and his viciousness in duels. When the man before him heaved his sword to deliver a powerful downwards blow once more, Alcibiades sank to his knees, dropped his shield rapidly altogether and with his last

might pushed his sword with his two hands through the armoured plates that hung protecting the underbelly of the Mytilenean. He had the time to see the fine metalwork of the armour, and then withdrew his sword. The man stopped a short time in mid-movement. He screamed in pain, but his blow downwards continued. Alcibiades threw his body aside, into the legs of another fighting Mytilenean, to see the heavy and long sword of his opponent plunge into the ground. The Mytilenean fell to his knees. Alcibiades was already up, pushed the second Mytilenean aside and slashed at his attacker's neck. Blood gushed out over him as it sprouted from the man's half severed head. Alcibiades then received a deep wound in his arm when a new Mytilenean sword slid along his shoulder armour, biting through his flesh. He engaged another Mytilenean.

Alcibiades was exhausted and twice wounded. He found the will to resist slowly leaving his mind. He parried the blows automatically now, but he was only defending himself. Few Athenians were left standing around him and these fought desperately among the dead. Many of his friends were gone, the remaining ones rallied around his red-plumed helmet. Alcibiades expected to die.

A wave rippled suddenly through the Mytileneans. All the men, also Alcibiades and his hoplites, were thrown aside. Heaps of new men pushed the belligerents back to the other side of the walls. The Athenian reserves had arrived at rapid sally from the main camp, and in large numbers. Hundreds of Athenian hoplites forced the Mytileneans inexorably back. Alcibiades and his men let themselves be overwhelmed, over-run and be pushed back by the new, friendly troops. They had held the gap long enough for the reinforcements from the Athenian camp to reach them.

Alcibiades dropped to the ground, too tired to continue to fight. He pushed his sword in the ground and hung at the hilt with his hands. His remaining men threw down their shields, but some still stood and looked at the new battle. The Mytileneans were also exhausted by now. Their resistance faltered and they fled back to their town. Trumpets of retreat sounded from the walls of Mytilene. The Athenians pursued for a short time but they were driven back by directed arrows shot by archers from the fortification towers of the city. The Athenians let the Mytileneans escape through their gates and they returned, to man their own walls.

Hardly a man in Alcibiades's group was unscathed. The men gathered their armour: a javelin thrown, a spear dropped, their shield recuperated. They supported each other and helped everybody to stand up. Alcibiades grabbed a friendly hand for he was still on his knees, unable to stand now from the pain in his leg. He looked at his arm and saw that the flesh had been opened in a long gash. The armour of all his men was splashed with blood and dirt. Alcibiades noticed with a grin how dirty his men were, but probably not less dirty than he. He stood in a broad circle of dead and wounded men. The sun set over a circle of men lying on the ground. Long sighs and grunts of pain could still be heard, and here and there an arm or a leg moved in the pile. Tens of dead and wounded men laid around Alcibiades. He stood in the middle of a slaughter ground.

A young Athenian commander, whom Alcibiades knew as one called Hipparchos, came forward then and said, 'all right, Alcibiades. It is finished! You had better take your men back to camp and recuperate there. We will guard here now. My reserves

will protect this part of the walls all through the night. I don't think the Mytileneans will come back, though. They lost too many of their best men here. They shall ask soon to recover their dead and wounded anyway. An armistice will develop. We shall relieve you, so you can go back to the camp, and we shall send you your wounded friends. And, oh, yes: thanks for having held out against this attack. We thought you would have been swamped and killed all by the time we could arrive, but you held out fine!

Then, he turned and left. Alcibiades grinned at so much cool assessment.

Alcibiades gratefully took the shoulder of one of his companions and with the few survivors of his group he limped back to the main camp and to his tent. There, everybody alive sank to the ground near Alcibiades's tent, tore at his armour and dropped it next to him. Then they all lay utterly exhausted, flat on their backs, once more in the dirt of the ground, Alcibiades amidst them. They were all covered with blood.

Alcibiades's doctor was present, and the man went from hoplite to hoplite. He washed wounds clean, knit or squeezed pieces of flesh together between small and smooth, soft pieces of wood. He applied herbs to the wounds and bound the harmed limbs in fresh, white cloth. Alcibiades had only a group of invalids for the moment, but the wounds would heal.

The doctor nodded 'no' to Alcibiades at a couple of men with nasty belly wounds. He could do nothing for these. He knew the men would soon develop gangrene, rot inside and die. Alcibiades's head then sunk on his breast. The Athenians and Mytileneans had only fought a skirmish that day. Soon, nobody would remember the battle. It had been a bloody battle, however, for those involved, fought with rage and utter energy. It had been expensive in men. Tens of citizens had been killed on both sides. Many more were wounded and of these some would die later.

Hipparchos collected Alcibiades's wounded friends and gradually, the space around Alcibiades's tent filled with groaning men lying on the ground. Everybody in the army knew that Alcibiades had a special doctor, so nobody asked questions, but brought the wounded to him. The doctor could treat superficial wounds. He set broken legs and arms. He could amputate legs. He closed gaping wounds, cleaned the wounds with water and wound bandages around the wounds so that they should stay closed. He could let blood to the men that had been shocked into stupors and get the bad bile out of their systems. He could not save the wounded hoplites and men of the lighter troops that were wounded in the lower belly. When bellies were sliced open or when they were transpierced, men suffered in agony. Blood spattered from open arteries and flowed to the ground. The doctor stopped the bleeding when he could. Alcibiades walked between the men. His face and tunic were coloured red of blood, and so was the ground where the wounded lay. The most heavily wounded had been placed together at one place.

Alcibiades talked to the men, but he could rarely console them. Some men died silently, their hands around the bowels that protruded from their open abdomen. Others screamed all the time. The doctor merely wound a clean cloth around the bodies of these men. Then he turned away, and let the men die.

When the doctor saw that a man suffered abominably, he called a particularly tough-character hoplite. The doctor had spotted a few of such men, who might have been butchers of Athens. He did not ask questions about the background of these men. He

simply called them in, now. He held the dying man's head compassionately and made the poor man sit a little, so that the hoplite could sit behind the man with a doctor's dagger and a hammer in his hand. At a sign of the doctor the hoplite put the dagger quickly with the long side to the neck of the man and hit on the blade to break the spine of the wounded. That was a quick and clean way to enter death, and according to the doctor, the less painfully. Alcibiades and the doctor decided to despatch in this way the men who could not survive and who would have to die in the severest pain. Alcibiades grew never used to the pain and the suffering. It was a moment he always dreaded after a battle, but a moment he could not avoid. He clenched his teeth until he hurt, and fought to keep the aversion from his face. He did not wash until he had finished. Later, he would stay a very long time alone in his tent and in his hip-bath to clean off his own blood, the blood of the men he had killed, and the blood of his companions.

The Mytilenean attempt to take the last opening in the Athenian counter-wall, in which Alcibiades fought in the centre, was the last spasm of the Mytilenean army. Alcibiades and his men stayed many days in their tents and recovered. Alcibiades's doctor tended to them all.

## **Paches**

Winter passed in tranquillity, without new, major skirmishes. At the end of the winter the Athenians heard that a Spartan commander had reached Mytilene. The man had come by the Sea and he had moored at Pyrrha. From there he had marched in on foot to Mytilene, following the bed of a water-course and gotten somehow through the Athenian lines. He entered Mytilene unobserved. His name was Salaethus. Alcibiades could not but remark that this was Potidaea all over again, and he did not underestimate the power and cunning of a professional Spartan commander.

Alcibiades had the time to visit Lesbos. It was a wonderfully beautiful island with low-sloping hills and lush green woods. He found many small creeks where one could bathe when the sun shone brightly. Lesbos had one of the best olive oils of the Ionian Islands. Its oil had a fine, nutty flavour. The island was covered by a carpet of innumerable olive tree groves. There were many varieties of birds. He found hot springs on the island, and he went with his men sometimes to bathe in the gloriously warm water. Life was easy on Lesbos, and it was no wonder why this island was so wealthy. Why and how had war could come to such a marvellous place?

In early spring, Alcibiades was called to Paches's tent. A delegation from Mytilene had arrived, and Paches wanted his main commanders around him to show the Athenians' strength. Paches stood majestically in a splendid gold-and silver studded armour with a white cloak on his back. He was a dry, lean, tall man with a sharp face and looked stern and menacing. Alcibiades knew that Paches was actually a good-hearted man, though a fine warrior, and Paches liked to laugh. Paches showed no smile on his lips now, however. He stood with a low table in front of his tent. Five Mytileneans appeared and had to walk through a long, double row of hoplites with straight lances. Paches was no man to take chances either. The Mytileneans were fully armoured, but they wore no lances. One of them held a helmet crested with red plumes, a red shield and a red cloak. He looked like a formidable athlete, and his



shield was emblazoned with a huge letter Lambda for Laconia. This was the Spartiate Salaethus.

Paches received the delegation. Behind him stood ten commanders of the Athenians, Alcibiades and Hipparchos amongst them. Alcibiades had taken off his white bandages. His wounds were almost completely healed. Paches would not want to show wounded commanders to the Mytileneans.

Paches began to speak first, 'welcome to our camp, Mytileneans.'

He ignored totally the Spartan commander and addressed solely the Mytileneans.

'Have you come to seek the surrender of your city from the Assembly of Athens?'

It was Salaethus who answered. 'Greetings, great Paches! We see you are well. You have fine forces gathered here, but few. No, we have not come to surrender.'

Paches and his commanders were surprised.

'Salaethus, what else is there to discuss? We are not going away from here until Mytilene falls. We have a mission to fulfil here and an honour to keep to the Assembly of Athens!'

'Oh, we know you have a mission, Paches,' Salaethus said. 'Consider the situation! You have surrounded us and blocked our ports, but food and grain we have in abundance to withstand a siege for years. We have a multitude of forces inside Mytilene and we will have more soon. Our allies will attack you from out of the countryside of Lesbos. Our Spartan navarch Alcidas arrives with over fifty ships laden with Spartan hoplites to finish the job. Cleomenes, brother of our King Pleistoanax has invaded Attica again to overrun your territory. You dare ask us to surrender? No, we will not surrender! On the contrary, we came to ask for your surrender! Surrender before it is too late, Paches!'

Paches laughed hard and loud at these words. 'No Spartan navy will ever reach anything, Salaethus and certainly not Lesbos! Oh, the Spartans have fine ships all right, and the best rowers of the world! They seem to be able to outrun each time the Athenian rowers when our ships are at their backs and they flee home!'

Paches thus insulted Salaethus, and jeers sounded from the Athenian row of commanders. They were having a grand time. No Athenian navy, such as they had here, would be afraid of even fifty Spartan ships.

'It will be a long time before another Spartan will reach Mytilene, Salaethus, except one or two that might come, sneaking in, dressed in shepherd's or women's clothes. Your allies have abandoned you. We control them. They see and feel the power of Athens now. You have few real warriors in Mytilene, Salaethus. I see few hoplites and our Alcibiades and Hipparchos here made sure quite a few of them got slaughtered in their last attempt to accomplish something. I see many warriors on your walls, but only lightly armed ones! You will not get far with those against our own hoplites. Where are your citizen-hoplites? You fight with knights and mercenaries, all men too concerned about their fortune and salaries. You will not prevail, I tell you!'

Salaethus and the Mytilenean commanders were angry at these words. But there was not much more to say. They saluted formally but stiffly and left, to return where they had come from, proudly and with pomp, but empty-handed, and they must have been more worried than when they had arrived in the Athenian camp.

'What was that good for?' Hipparchos asked.

'No idea' Alcibiades muttered. 'They must have had sweet dreams thinking we would leave on a hurry hearing about Alcidas. Well, even with forty triremes, for Salaethus

certainly exaggerated there, Alcidas will run at the sight of the first Athenian prow. They know that. What, by Zeus, is happening?'

The Athenians did not have to wait long before they learned what had really been happening inside Mytilene. And what had happened was worthy of the finest Attican comedy written by the craziest comic author. About ten days passed the encounter with Salaethus. Then the gates of Mytilene opened anew. A delegation of ten magistrates stepped out of the city towards the Athenian army. Salaethus was not part of this group. Paches again summoned his commanders rapidly, and when the Mytileneans asked to talk to him, Alcibiades and Hipparchos waited again behind their general.

The Mytileneans saluted them. An old, grey and rather well filled-out Mytilenean spoke, 'greetings, Paches and greetings to you, valiant Athenian commanders of the army.' He waited a while, and then continued, 'we have come to you from a Mytilene that is strong, powerful and serene in its knowledge of the situation of the war. We would like to negotiate the terms for the surrender of our city!'

Paches had to put one hand on the table from sheer astonishment. All the Athenians present, guards included, would have burst out with cheers then, and cried calls of victory. The Athenians were too disciplined, however, to show at this moment the least demonstration of relief. They remained standing impassably around Paches. Alcibiades and Hipparchos exchanged eye glances of joy and triumph.

Paches replied, 'Honourable Magistrates of Mytilene. We accept your surrender.'

Paches went too quickly here, for the Mytileneans had not yet accepted anything. They had only come to negotiate, but they did not correct Paches.

Paches continued, 'we shall not negotiate anything, however. We want your surrender now and without conditions. We will do as we please with Mytilene. We shall take prisoner whom we like and enter your city, and do as we like there too!'

The magistrates looked at each other and the speaker continued, 'great general of the Athenians, please consider! You have fought well and so have we and we can fight still. We will surrender but only if you do not kill or enslave any Mytilenean. We will open the city gates to your army and you will be allowed to enter our city. You can set up any government then, as you please. We ask for the right to send representatives to Athens to defend our case and lay our fate in the results of the discussions at your Assembly. But until that time we ask you not to harm one man, woman or child in Mytilene.'

Paches looked at his commanders and saw that they agreed.

He turned again to face the Mytileneans and answered, 'I agree, Mytileneans. You place your fate in the hands of your ambassadors to Athens and in the Athenian Assembly. Ten of you will be allowed therefore to travel to Athens in an Athenian trireme under our command. I want at least one prisoner however: Salaethus. We shall enter the city with our army today. You shall disarm before we enter. I do not want to see one armed man in the streets of Mytilene when we take possession of the city. We will harm no Mytilenean until we have news from the Assembly. In the meantime, of course, we will govern the town.'

The Mytileneans agreed and left. Once they were out of hearing distance, Paches broke out in a tremendous laughter and he threw his helmet high in the air.

‘By Zeus,’ he exclaimed, ‘who could have thought this? We might have been blocked here before their noses for many months still! Whatever made them change their minds so soon?’

The commanders of Paches congratulated each other, laughing out loud, and the cheers continued in the Athenian camp and all along the counter-wall that surrounded Mytilene. Athens had defeated once more a rebellious ally. The message would run through the Ionian Islands: no city defects from the alliance with Athens unchallenged and unpunished. Paches had succeeded in his mission.

The same day, the first contingent of Athenian hoplites led by Alcibiades and Hipparchos entered Mytilene. The gates remained open. The city was silent, but normal activity in the streets of the artisans, bakers, potters and tanners continued. No armed man was to be seen when the Athenians marched in. After a while, the Athenians realised that the most ardent supporters of the Spartan and oligarchic cause had taken refuge in the temples.

Alcibiades and Hipparchos prepared to assault the temples, but Paches arrived and spoke to the frightened men, saying, ‘men of Mytilene, I promised to do you no harm. I will keep my promise. You surrendered under the same terms as the rest. Come out of the temples. You have done wrong to Athens, but we will merely imprison you. Your lives will be spared.’

The men surrendered then. They were about a thousand men, and Paches took them prisoner and he sent them in his ships to the island of Tenedos to the north of Lesbos, to keep them in custody there until he learned what the Assembly had decided to do with them.

The Athenians learned later what had happened in the besieged city. After the first encounter with the Athenian commanders, the Mytileneans had given up hope of being relieved by the Spartan fleet. Salaethus needed more troops. So he had issued heavy armour to the people of Mytilene, who had only been armed lightly, reacting to the remark of the Athenians, and hoping to break out with a considerable army. But as soon as the people were properly armoured, they refused to obey orders from the oligarchs. They demanded a fair distribution of the food among all. They did not obey government any longer, without conditions. The authorities of Mytilene had not enough food anymore. They could simply not yield to this demand, but also wanted not to confess the true situation. They feared a mutiny in their town and they were quite incapable to control the population. They feared they would be more in danger if the population negotiated surrender, so they rapidly went to see Paches and sought favourable terms.

Nobody at that time heard anything of Alcidas and of the Spartan fleet. In fact, this fleet had wasted a lot of time, sailing to Delos, Icarus and Myconus, to hear there that Mytilene had been taken by the Athenians. The Spartan forces might still have attacked Mytilene then, but Alcidas hesitated, sailed to Ephesos and fled back. He killed most of his prisoners until a delegation of Ephesians told him that unless he stopped killing Ionians he would have no friend left in those parts of the Sea. Alcidas then released his last prisoners, men from Chios, and he fled. He fled even quicker when he sighted the two messenger ships of the Athenian navy, the Salaminia and the Paralus, on their way to Mytilene. He knew he had been spotted and would have Paches’s navy on him soon.

When the Salaminia and the Paralus arrived at full speed at Mytilene, Paches took all the triremes he had and rowed quickly in pursuit of Alcidas. But he could not catch the Spartan navarch in the open Sea. Paches sailed as far as the Island of Patmos, and then returned with his fleet. He could not leave Mytilene exposed for too long. While fleeing, Alcidas put in, among other places, at Notium, the harbour of Colophon.

## Notium

Two political factions strove for power at Notium. One party had long before taken the city and banned the other one. The party that was in power was sympathetic to Sparta and they had called in Arcadian and other foreign mercenaries from Pissuthnes, the Persian satrap.

The exiled democrats, when they saw the Spartan navy at Notium, appealed to Paches. But the Spartan ships under Alcidas rapidly left the harbour. When Paches arrived with the Athenian fleet, Alcidas had fled once more. Since Paches was at Notium now with a considerable army, he wanted to liberate Notium from the pro-Spartan and pro-Persian faction.

The Athenian fleet moored at the beach and a small tent-camp was set up. Paches wanted to negotiate first. He sent Hipparchos to invite the general of the Arcadian mercenaries to talk with him, promising that if an agreement was concluded, the general would remain unharmed and be allowed to return to Notium. Hipparchos came back with the man, one Hippias.

The talks with Paches and his commanders did not go well. Hippias was a rough warrior, not a fine ambassador. He did little more than insult Paches and the Athenian army, calling them cowards, traitors and liars. Paches was usually a gentle and polite enough man. Now, he lost his self-control. He heard out Hippias, letting the man speak until he had finished, fooling him into thinking he was impressed. Alcibiades and Hipparchos saw Paches wringing his hands behind his back however.

Finally, when Hippias had stopped his rage of vociferations against Athens, Paches cried, 'throw that man into prison! Grab him! Nobody, whatever agreements made, has the right to insult Athens in my face!'

The guards of Paches took Hippias, who had started groping for his sword, and they pinned him to his knees. A new flow of abuse rolled from Hippias's lips, but the hoplites dragged him away. Paches stayed but a couple of moments raging inside. Then he said, 'we should attack Notium now, immediately! They will expect their leader back, but they will be in doubt what to do without him. All the gates of the city are open. There are no high walls that we cannot pass quickly, here and now. Do not sound the alert, but everybody in full armour to the city and run for it!'

Alcibiades and Hipparchos shot in action, and so did the other commanders. A little time later, they ran as hard as they could towards Notium, side by side, and amidst the fastest of their men. It took them some time to get to the city, but less time than the Arcadians needed to understand what was happening. The Athenians dispersed on the run, but the Arcadian occupiers of the town had had no time for any council. No arrows or javelins were thrown at the running Athenians. The fortifications of Notium were under-manned. Alcibiades and Hipparchos pushed through the gates, which

were being closed at last, but with the help of their hoplites they killed the guardians. The Arcadians fought not all in armour, and they were no match for the attacking, raging Athenians. Soon Paches's men conquered the main gate and two minor gates, and the whole Athenian army poured in the city. Among them was Paches, also in complete armour.

Paches did not run. He strode at ease, with dignity, and he directed his troops forward, indicating targets to conquer. Alcibiades and Hipparchos grinned at so much calmness of mind. They pushed on, leapt up the stairs to the acropolis of Notium and in a fight that was over quickly, they killed any Arcadian who resisted. They advanced then through all the streets of Notium, quenching any resistance from Arcadian or foreign warriors. Alcibiades and Hipparchos fought together, and they cleaned the city of opposers of Athens without mercy.

Half a day later, when evening fell, Alcibiades and Hipparchos stood near the Temple of Zeus of Notium with blooded spears and blooded shields, tired but smiling. Victory was theirs. Therme, Potidaea, Mytilene and now Notium were cities that Alcibiades had helped to subdue for Athens.

Paches arrived at the acropolis of Notium and he had Hippias with him. In the middle of the town's citadel he addressed Hippias as follows, 'Hippias, I promised to bring you back unharmed to Notium. I have not put you in chains, as I also promised. My promises are fulfilled!'

Then he gave an order to two archers who accompanied him. Terror showed in Hippias's eyes when the archers stepped forward.

The archers shot Hippias down with their arrows. While he lay on the ground, dying, Paches looked at him and said, close to his face, 'a sword would have been too good for you, Hippias. Die like a dog!'

Paches turned his back to Hippias and ordered all the foreign troops to be killed.

### **Pyrrha and Eresus**

The next day, Paches turned Notium over to the pro-Athenian political party. Then he returned to Mytilene on Lesbos to consolidate Athens' power there. Two smaller towns were still pro-Spartan, pro-oligarchic on the island. Paches stayed with parts of his forces in Mytilene. He sent Alcibiades to attack and take Pyrrha with one half of the remaining forces, and he sent Hipparchos to subdue Eresus. So great was Paches's confidence in his commanders, that he let them lead their own small army at will.

Alcibiades marched with about five hundred hoplites and as many lighter-armed Lesbian troops to Pyrrha. Pyrrha lay only at a distance of a hundred and fifty stades or so from Mytilene. In a day's walk he stood before the town and its harbour. Hipparchos's warriors were brought to Eresus, which was on the other side of the island, in war triremes.

Alcibiades and his men were tired from the long travel by land. Still, Alcibiades could not afford to spend the night here and let the town prepare itself for his attack. Pyrrha was surrounded by walls, but the walls were not high and the town did not expect an attack at this moment, and certainly not by land. The Athenians had kept prisoner any

soul they had encountered the last half day, so that the city would not be warned of their arrival.

The Athenians put on their bronze armour, took their lances and ran towards the houses. The hoplites of Pyrrha had been warned nevertheless of their arrival, though they did not expect an attack so soon. Surprise was not total, and arrows and javelins welcomed the Athenians when they arrived at the outskirts of the town. Men fell then, but the others ran on and used the first huts and houses as shelter. They swarmed through the open gates and along the harbour quays. Led by Alcibiades, the hoplites overwhelmed the enemy. The sword-blows of the Pyrrhan warriors fell only on bronze armour, and then the defenders were transpierced by lance or sword. A thousand angry pro-Athenian warriors ran through the streets of Pyrrha and killed anybody who offered them any semblance of resistance. There was no great blood-bath here due to the speed of Alcibiades's operation. The Pyrrhan citizens surrendered without truly having been able to organise themselves.

Paches had ordered to reduce Pyrrha and Eresus to ashes. Alcibiades and his men set fire to the city and burnt what could be burnt. They burned down the harbour. They destroyed the main buildings. They made columns tumble into the harbour. Then, once more on Lesbos, they cried out their shattering victory. They secured also that day the environments of the town and only in the middle of the night did they lay down to enjoy a little sleep, rolled up inside their tunics, sleeping on the bare ground under the olive trees.

Alcibiades visited an ancient shrine near Pyrrha, dedicated to a trinity of gods: to Zeus, Hera and Dionysos. He prayed for success in his future campaigns. Two days later they returned to Mytilene. Eresus too had been captured by Hipparchos by then.

Meanwhile, in Mytilene, Paches had found Salaethus hidden in a butcher's shop. He fastened the Spartiate in chains and sent him to Tenedos with the other, pro-Spartan enemies. Paches put these prisoners on merchant-ships and he sent them to Athens. He awaited orders from the Athenian Assembly about the fate of Mytilene. Should he leave the citizens unharmed? Should he execute a part of the men? Were the Mytileneans to be deported and banned from the city? He waited for Athens' messenger ships with further orders.

In the beginning of summer of that year, Paches sat in his house in Mytilene with Alcibiades, Hipparchos and two other commanders of the Athenian army of Lesbos. They were in a good mood, for the climate was wonderfully smooth and agreeable on this island. Paches had requisitioned a large house in the centre of Mytilene and he worked here with his men.

Mytilene was secure. Almost no anti-Athenian faction remained in the town. The population was friendly and mostly relieved to have got ridden of aristocratic rule. After all, they had revolted also in the last stage of the siege and forced the oligarchs to surrender. Paches sat contented. He drank a cup of wine, discussing the last orders he had given to his commanders.

At that moment, an Athenian trierarch entered the house and asked for Paches. The general bade the man in. Without saying a word, the messenger handed Paches a scroll. Paches opened the scroll and while he read the papyrus, the man told Alcibiades and Hipparchos that he had brought a message from the Athenian

Assembly concerning the fate of the Mytileneans. A few days ago he had left Piraeus by trireme and he had come as fast as he could.

While Paches read the paper, all the blood left his face. He seemed suddenly to have turned into a very old man. He sank deeper in his chair and it took a while before he could speak.

With his hand to his front, incapable to look his men in the eyes, he said, ‘the orders of Athens are that we have to put to death the entire male population of Mytilene and to make slaves of the women and children. Those are the orders. Make your preparations, but keep this order quiet even to your own hoplites. Two days from now we will assemble all the men outside the city and execute them.’

Alcibiades and Hipparchos were too appalled to utter a word of opposition. Paches also would not have tolerated any questioning of Athens’ orders.

Still, after more moments, Paches spoke, ‘do the good citizens of Athens think we are butchers? We are hoplites! By Zeus’s will we became warriors, no butchers! We have to do a butcher’s job for a tanner!’

Paches thus referred to Cleon, who had co-signed the order with other authorities of Athens, in the name of the Assembly. Paches knew that only Cleon could have worked on the soul of the Athenians for such a decision. Paches discussed with his commanders on how to execute the doomsday order for the Mytileneans. The preparations had to happen in secret.

While they were thus talking, another Athenian commander entered. This man had red eyes of fatigue. He had come by a second trireme sent from Athens one day after the first. He had run all the way from the harbour to Paches’s headquarters. The man staggered, but he handed another scroll to Paches with a broad smile on his face.

Paches read the new scroll, and laughed out loud.

The second message was a counter-order. In Athens, the Assembly had indeed first decided to have all the Mytileneans killed. But then a day had passed and the Athenians had regretted their first order. A citizen, a good orator called Diodotus, had argued in a remarkable speech against Cleon and against the earlier decision, and he had won.

The second decision was to kill all Mytilenean prisoners now in Athens, a thousand men, but to leave the Mytileneans in their town save. A second messenger trireme had been sent out hurriedly. The trierarch told that his men had rowed without interruption all the way, without sleeping, and eating on their benches. They had arrived just in time to deliver the message of relief, just a little time after the first ship.

The Athenians would kill the men that Paches had sent to them and which he had found guilty of rebellion against the alliance, but the Mytileneans here were saved! Paches and his commanders walked out of the house then, drank and spilled wine with the two newly arrived Athenian commanders and they embraced each other before the eyes of the surprised and embarrassed innocent citizens of Mytilene, who found these Athenians to be very strange men indeed. They had no idea – at least for the moment, for later they would of course hear what had happened – how close they had been to annihilation.

The Athenians thus proved that they were still a moderately civilised people, though on the brink of losing their nerves.

The Spartans were less scrupulous. That same summer in Boeotia, Plataea surrendered to the Spartans and to the Thebans. The Spartans killed the two hundred surviving heroic Plataean warriors and also the twenty-five Athenians who had helped

the Plataeans during the siege. They sold the women into slavery. The Thebans razed Plataea to the ground and distributed the land. Plataea existed no more.



## **Chapter 8 – Sicily, Autumn 427 BC to Summer 424 BC**

### **Lipara**

The situation on Lesbos stabilised conveniently for the Athenians during the summer. All the cities had been subdued and remained under Athenian government or under democratic rule sympathetic to Athens. Athens sent magistrates to Mytilene to take over power from general Paches, and Attican colonists mingled with the autochthonous population. The people of Mytilene seemed to be content with democratic government. The toughest oligarchs had been killed in Athens. Paches, Alcibiades and Hipparchos returned to Athens on the *Harmonia*.

Alcibiades sailed back home. He found Hipparete in her quarters of the house, working with a slave-girl at a vertical loom, weaving a long stretch of woollen cloth. There was yarn on a spindle and wool baskets stood beside them. She was well and happy nursing her son, which she had called Cleinias after his father. The father had exchanged polite letters with her while on Lesbos. Their relations now in Athens were simple, casual, organised, formal, tender but not passionate. Alcibiades slept with his wife and as before the sexual part of his married life was satisfactory. There was no love however between the couple. Love also had not brought them together.

Hipparete's mother had died. Hipparete's mother succumbed to the plague, but Hipponicus and Hipparete's brother Callias survived. Alcibiades went to see Callias. Callias now lived in the zone of the harbour of Piraeus. He had built a house there that more resembled a hotel than a private house. Callias was not a war-like man. He preferred to help Athens by supporting Sophists and Philosophers. Callias told Alcibiades that Prodicus came to visit him regularly together with other Sophists, and also Socrates. He told that Socrates was as sharp as ever in his dialogues. Socrates kept his own meetings at the house of his friend near the agora. He had not changed his ways. Callias also told Alcibiades that Socrates was courting a woman, indicated to him by Aspasia, one Xanthippe. Xanthippe was a woman with hardly any tenderness and joy in her. Callias didn't know whether Socrates would re-marry after all. Alcibiades had also received letters from Socrates, but the philosopher had mentioned no new wife.

Alcibiades met other friends and he also went to see Socrates. Socrates did then not mention Xanthippe either, but he was genuinely happy to meet his younger friend again. He made Alcibiades talk for a long time about the war on Lesbos, and he himself told about the Assembly meetings on the Pnyx, and about the speeches made by Cleon and Diodotus. Alcibiades heard that Socrates had urged Diodotus to speak in favour of the Mytilenean population and that he had backed up Diodotus, discussed with the man all the arguments that might come up. With his deme, Socrates had voted in favour of Diodotus's motion to save the Mytileneans. Socrates did not want anymore to participate in campaigns far away from Attica, unless Athens explicitly demanded so. He told he would gladly take up arms again in a force that would defend the country-side inside the territory of Attica or even of Boeotia, but he would refuse to sail.

Alcibiades went to see Socrates several times during his stay in the capital but he did not want to remain inactive in Athens for long. He had grown restless and too used to action. He loved no one. Harmonia was still fresh on his mind and a constant aching for her hung in his soul. She turned into his head like an obsession at times. He would dream of her at night, here in Athens, and awaken in the middle of the night calling her name. Hipparete thought he had nightmares because of the war and that he was worried about his ship. Alcibiades had never told her what had happened on Cyprus. Harmonia's girdle had never left him. It was a cherished piece that nobody but himself had seen, hidden in his very personal kit.

He missed Harmonia. He often told himself, as he grew older, that he was chasing ghosts and that it was impossible to long this way for a girl he had seen only one afternoon and one night. At times he wondered whether she had existed at all. Their moments together had been so short, merely one afternoon in all these years. Their encounter had happened so long ago, that the memory of the extreme intimacy they had known was blurred. Her face did not fade, however, nor the memory of their love-making. He could still clearly see in his mind her eyes, her lips, and her hair. When he went to sleep, often, wanting to be happy for a few moments, he imagined her making love to him and caressing him. Was he cherishing a dream, nothing more?

Harmonia remained the impersonification of love to him. Her image stayed in his mind, but the image nagged at him. He tried to forget that someone like Harmonia might ever have existed, yet sometimes her image drove him mad. There was a saying in Athens that whom the gods wanted to destroy they first turned mad. Often, when he was alone, he tore at his hair in madness. So he sought never to be alone, not even at night. His mistresses served their purpose.

What was Harmonia compared to the hetaerae he had slept with? Surely the memories of their luxurious bodies could have chased the far remembrance of Harmonia, the skinny, vulnerable grey-eyed girl. They had not! He mocked himself. How could the great Alcibiades give any importance to a little whore of Cyprus? What could he care even for a love?

But the bright grey eyes continued to haunt him. He was angry at himself then for even having thought of the word whore in conjunction with the name of Harmonia. Harmonia's figure tore at his heart and mind. He could only forget her for a while by throwing himself without restraint in hard sex with hetaerae, in extravagant deeds in Athens, or in war. In war he was reckless, because he didn't care for what might happen to him.

After a few tens of days in Athens, Alcibiades longed for oblivion in action and he longed for the delirious emotions of victory in battles, for the emotions that could be shared by comrades at arms.

One day, Hipparchos stormed inside his house.

'Alcibiades, there is going to be an expedition to Sicily. I am going. They may need cavalry there. It is something else, an island in parts of the Sea I haven't seen yet. Coming?'

Hipparchos was a man of few words. Alcibiades bade him in for a bowl of wine and more news. Hipparchos told Alcibiades then what he had already heard partly in the Assembly, but given little attention to.

Athens intended to send a limited number of troops to Sicily, to make it more difficult for the Peloponnesos to import grain from Sicily. Cleon wanted an expedition to test

how easy it was – or how difficult – to control that land, and to block an important source of food for the Spartans.

The occasion Athens had waited for was that the people of Leontini, a very old allied partner of Athens, had complained officially that the Syracusans had attacked them. Syracuse, a Dorian settlement, wanted to dominate the island and also conquer the Ionian cities of Italy. Leontini was a city in the vicinity of Syracuse, so it was no wonder that the Syracusans, out for expansion, had looked with envy at Leontini. The Dorian settlements – except Camarina – and the Peloponnesian colonies on Sicily were on the side of the Syracusans, while the Ionian cities opposed them. On the Italian side, the Epizephyrian Locrians sided with Syracuse, but the people of Rhegium supported their kinsmen of Leontini.

Syracuse was a very large town with a large fleet, and Athens feared a tighter alliance between Sicily and Sparta. Cleon was not out to subjugate Sicily, not out to add the island to the Athenian hegemony, but he wanted the Syracusans to think twice about dominating the entire island and to think twice to support openly Sparta in its war with Athens and to harass Athens' allies. Athens would therefore send out twenty triremes in early autumn under the command of Laches son of Melanopus, and under Charoeades son of Euphiletus as strategoi.

Alcibiades thought Hipparchos's proposal over. There was nothing to hold him back in Athens. He agreed to accompany Hipparchos.

Hipparchos grinned then. 'Good. No need to tell Laches or Charoeades. They have already agreed. They know you will come. I told them. They are very pleased to have you as one of their commanders. Can we go by the Harmonia?'

Alcibiades could not be angry with Hipparchos for having decided for him. He might have preferred to serve with Demosthenes or even Eurymedon, but these two men were so large characters that he would not be able to shine by himself. He knew the Hellenic cities of the east by now, at least some of them. He was eager to travel to the other side. He knew nothing of Sicily. He had only heard that it was larger than Lesbos, but he didn't know how much larger.

He exclaimed, 'on to Sicily then!' and he drank on that with his friend.

In early autumn the twenty Athenian triremes of the generals Laches and Charoeades sailed from Piraeus all around the Peloponnesos, south of Cythera by the islands of Zacynthus and Cephallenia, sailing along the coast but staying at a distance from any land, except at nights. The ships advanced northward to Corcyra and from there they sailed into the open Sea until they reached the east coast of Italy. They sailed southward again, to Sicily.

Leontini was an inland town, however, quite a distance from the Sea and thus unfit to serve as a naval base for the Athenians. Any bay or harbour close to Leontini would be in the immediate vicinity of Syracuse, so open to constant attacks of the Syracusans who would see the Athenian fleet a direct threat to their town. Laches and Charoeades decided to stay in Italy, in the harbour of Rhegium, where the people were friendly to the Athenians. Rhegium was situated just opposite Messina on Sicily, and the Athenians could from out of Rhegium control the grain route to the Peloponnesos. They might even take Messina.

Alcibiades knew perfectly well by then how to organise for his greater comfort while on a campaign of war. He mustered a merchant ship to leave a few days later than the

fleet, to join him at Rhegium. The ship held his belongings, furniture, spacious tents, clothes and the finest food. He bought a house at Rhegium. The house overlooked the harbour and in a few moments he could be at the ships. He settled there with Hipparchos.

Hipparchos was a knight of Athens, quite wealthy on his own, and together the two men turned the house into a small but luxurious palace. They even kept horses, sturdy Italian horses, and Alcibiades could exercise with Hipparchos on long trips around Rhegium on horseback. The hetaerae of Rhegium contacted them, and soon not only Alcibiades and Hipparchos lived in the house but also two women who were expert in making them relax.

Laches and Charoeades laughed about their two wealthy commanders who lived in honey and who were so apt at seeking luxury and ease in wartime. But they knew the two men were also seasoned veterans though not yet thirty.

At the beginning of the winter Alcibiades received disquieting letters from Socrates and Hipparete. The plague had broken out once more in Athens. Its virulence was worse than before. Large numbers of people had started to die. Athens could organise somewhat better now for the sickness, but not to much avail. Fountains and sources were guarded so that nobody could pollute the drinking water. Reunions of many people were avoided, the meetings of the Assembly diminished in number. The doctors had no remedy as yet for this sickness. Alcibiades had departed in time to avoid that new danger. He was worried about his friends, but had not much time to think about them, for the fleet prepared for an expedition in which certainly battles would be waged.

Laches and Charoeades split their forces. Laches wanted to attack the northern parts of Sicily. First on his list were the Aeolian Islands. These islands lay on the northern grain route. Attacks on these islands were impossible in summer because there was not enough, if any, drinking water on these islands then. The inhabitants lived only on one island, Lipara. From there, however, they sailed out to cultivate on the other islands, Didyma and Strongyle, and even Hiera. The Liparaeans were excellent sailors. The islands lay in the territory of Messina and they were allies of Syracuse. Laches wanted to cut off Messina from its near allies. He was out to prove that even with a small fleet he could pain Syracuse's allies. His expedition to Lipara was a limited action of warning. Syracuse was not alone anymore on Sicily, to do as she pleased. So in the winter, part of the Athenian fleet, including the Harmonia with Alcibiades and Hipparchos, rowed past Hiera into the Aeolian Islands towards Lipara.

The Aeolian Islands bore their name well. These were the islands where lived the god Aeolus, who kept the winds imprisoned in his cave. He had unleashed the winds now, for fierce gusts tore at the hoplites on deck. The Athenians had experienced the winds ever since they came into these waters. It was winter and although the atmosphere was not cold, the winds chilled the men. In the open Sea they had been unable to stand upright on the decks. The men had gone down below, to sit among the rowers. The rowers grinned to see the hoplites taking refuge with them, in the sweat of their labour. The rowers had their part of the winds. They had to row the ship against the gusts. They had toiled hard, and some of the hoplites offered to row with them. Triremes were not suited to sail in storms. There was so much wind that the Sea was always wild here, and the Athenian sailors constantly feared a storm would break their

boats. The ships rolled and tossed dangerously. Laches had brought his finest helmsmen, though, and he listened to their advice. The helmsmen decided to row on.

Alcibiades saw once more the grandeur of nature as he had not experienced before. Hieria was a dark grey island that was almost entirely covered with ashes. During the day, the island was enveloped in black clouds of smoke. The fleet passed by the island in the evening and, as the trireme sailed at a comfortable distance, Alcibiades saw great flames rise to the sky in the darkness. Fire was expelled from Hieria. Was this where the stream Pyriphlegethon submerged? A sailor told that the Sicilians thought Hieria was the smithy of Hephaestus. The spectacle was frightening enough. The island and its cone formed a tremendous lighthouse in the night. The sailors feared Hephaestus's hiccups, and his anger. They feared equally Aeolus's whims, the earthquakes and the fire explosions and the heavy winds. They cursed Laches for bringing them in these parts.

The Athenian fleet reached Lipara the next day. Nobody was very happy once on Lipara. The winds, the tremendous force of the fires of nature and the cold had condensed the mood of the men to silence. The islands looked sadly grey. They were merely islands of ash and fire, and the seamen were not too keen to remain for long among these veins of desolation. They wanted to finish the job here as quickly as possible and leave again.

The ships moored and the army prepared to disembark on the island. The beaches were wonderful enough on Lipara, with very fine, almost white sand, and the Sea looked very blue, here. Lipara itself was a beautiful green island. The Hellenes had planted vineyards and olive trees.

Alcibiades, Hipparchos and their men went up a small hill, away from the beach. The Athenians had about a hundred hoplites with them and about a thousand sailors, who wore no armour and were only lightly armed with spears, short swords, and a shield, but who could fight fiercely nevertheless. They advanced with five hundred men. They marched deeper in the interior of the island and they followed the coast over steep hills. Then they stood above the last hill and saw the town of Lipara that was their destination, spread out beneath them.

Lipara lay peacefully in a small bay near the Sea, surrounded by high hills. It was more a fisherman's village than a town, but it was not small either. Its houses lay very much dispersed. A few fine temples could be discerned from the hill. There were almost no boats in the little harbour. The Liparaeans must have fled at the arrival of the Athenians. The Athenian fleet had seen indeed several small boats on their voyage to Lipara. One of these might easily have given the alert.

'Goodbye, surprise', thought Alcibiades.

The Athenian hoplites descended the mountain at the run and soon they stood in the streets of the abandoned town. But for a few old men, old women and a few children who must have been orphans supported only by the old folk, the place was deserted.

'Where is everybody?' cried Laches.

Hipparchos didn't answer but he pointed way up to the other mountain. There, built against the steep side of the mountain, hung the acropolis of Lipara. The acropolis was the ancient citadel of the town. It was old and not very large. A long, narrow path of stairs led upwards and ended at its vertical walls. The walls were old, built by giants from large stone blocks. They were damaged in places but well repaired with

bricks. All along the walls stood armed men. They were not heavily armed and surely all citizens of the town, but one man could hold out against a hundred at those walls. Attacking that citadel would mean that the Athenians would lose very many men. Moreover, they had no ladders with them and would have to construct some, which meant loss of time. And on what were they to place the ladders? There was not much space below the walls of the acropolis and if a ladder slipped, then down the mountain it would go with all its men. This acropolis was almost impregnable, and the Liparaeans also counted on the fact that it was not worth losing many precious hoplites over.

Alcibiades said what all the commanders thought. 'We have come for nothing.'  
Laches cursed with frustration.

The Athenians found a priest standing before the temple of Apollo. The man said he had been appointed to be the spokesman for the Liparaeans. He told Laches that the Liparaeans would not yield to the Athenians. The Liparaeans greeted the Athenians and wished them well, but they were poor and possessed not much else besides their lives. They wished to live in peace on their island, which held nothing of interest for the Athenians.

Laches knew that that was not entirely true, for Lipara was a welcome harbour for many of the merchant ships that came from the northwest parts of Sicily, along the northern route, and which sailed then past the Straits of Messina. Lipara controlled that route. But there was not much the Athenians could do for the moment. Seething with anger, Laches ordered to devastate the town. That job was left to the sailors, while the hoplites guarded the road back. Soon, Lipara was a blazing inferno. The harbour installations were destroyed, and the Liparaeans also saw how their vines and olive trees were being uprooted or hacked down around the town. If Laches had wrung his hands in frustration, the men inside the acropolis were now certainly crying out from anger. Laches hoped that the citizens would have attacked the Athenians then, but the gates of the acropolis remained shut.

The Athenians stayed the whole day in the town. In the evening, they returned to the fleet. They marched in the darkness, but they destroyed more cultivated fields on their way back. A few arrows came out of the darkness, a javelin was thrown, but the Athenian warriors reached their ships unharmed. They slept on the beach and for a couple of days more devastated the island. They also destroyed and sank a few boats. Then, the Athenian fleet returned, chastised and humbled, back to Rhegium.

## **Mylae**

While Laches had rowed to the Aeolian Islands, Charoeades had sailed with a smaller part of the fleet along a south-eastern route to raid the coast near Syracuse.

Charoeades had met a Syracusan fleet with a far superior number of ships and in the ensuing battle he had been killed. Laches was now in sole command of the Athenians. He had but few men, but his presence anyhow supported the Ionian cause. The Ionian towns did not accept anymore the dominance of Syracuse and they were strengthened in their resolve by Laches' presence in their waters. Laches gradually amassed several thousand allied troops so that he could undertake major military expeditions at last. His first aim was still Messina.

Around that time, at the end of the winter of his arrival in Sicily, Alcibiades received a letter from his cousin Euryptolemus son of Peisianax. Euryptolemus was in charge of Alcibiades's affairs in Athens.

*Alcibiades,*

*When you left for Sicily you asked me not only to look after your affairs in the city but also to listen to the news in Athens and to report if there was anything worthwhile to tell you. Here follows a first letter. I will be brief, but relate to you the most important events that rocked Athens, at least in my humble opinion.*

*Soon after you left, the plague broke out with new virulence in Athens. Once more, hundreds died in all the quarters of our town. The earth has never seen such horrors as I had to witness. People contorted of pain in full view in the streets, tore off their clothes and ran naked, covered with pustules, in the rain or towards the fountains. No water however could quench the pain of the miserable men, women and children who caught the sickness. The sanctuaries of Asclepius and Amphiaraus have been taken by storm, but there are not enough baths and not enough priests to interpret the dreams of the invalids and the sick, in search of possible cures. We know of no cure for this disease.*

*I went to see Hipparete often and she lets you know that she is fine. She drinks water only from her own well, which you were so wise to dig in your house. I reckon this well must be to a waterway from the sacred source of the acropolis and have Dionysios's blessing, for we stay untouched. She allowed my family to get water at her house, so we survive. Otherwise we get water from the fountain in the agora, which is guarded by hoplites, and that water comes fresh from the mountains. Your son Cleinias is fine too, growing into a nervous but intelligent and sweet boy. I assured Hipparete that she could count on me if she needed anything. There have been earthquakes in Athens too, though not so violent as the quakes we heard of and which happened in other parts of Hellas, such as in Euboea and Boeotia.*

*Socrates also lets you know he is well. He wishes to remarry, to one Xanthippe. We do not know yet however when he will marry. Pericles the Younger and Hippocrates son of Ariphron send you their greetings.*

*Concerning the leadership in our town, there are not many items worth telling you about for the moment. The plague seems to hold all attention of the Assembly at the moment, and there are as few reunions on the Pnyx as possible, by fear of contamination.*

*Wishing you well,  
Euryptolemus son of Peisianax*

The Athenians in Sicily had seen violent eruptions of Pyriphlegethon in the Aeolian Islands at the end of winter. They stayed in Rhegium all through spring and part of the

summer. Socrates wrote to Alcibiades that many earthquakes had happened in Attica and Hellas.

King Agis of Sparta, son of Archidamus, had wanted in mid spring to invade Attica. He had not gone further than the Isthmus of Corinth however, because of violent earthquakes. The Spartans were very religious and very superstitious people. They always regarded earthquakes as very bad omens, so they returned. Socrates told that at Orobiae in Euboea the Sea had first subsided from the shore and then swept back in with a huge wave, flooding and destroying the city. This also happened at Atalanta, an island off the coast of the Opuntian Locris. Other earthquakes had happened in various parts of Hellas.

Alcibiades received these letters in late summer. In the middle of the summer he once more participated in military engagements.

One day of that summer, in the year his army had arrived in Sicily, Laches set out with his entire fleet and with his entire army for Mylae, a town that belonged to Messina. Mylae lay opposite the Liparaean Islands, on the north-east coast of Sicily and it was one more of the strongholds that controlled the sea route around Sicily. If Laches captured Mylae, he occupied two strongholds against Messina: Mylae to the west and Rhegium to the east. He could then control almost any traffic of ships in front of Messina, sailing between Sicily and Italia.

It was a fine, sunny day when the Athenian triremes carrying the hoplites and their lighter, allied troops moored east of Mylae into a peaceful bay. The Athenians landed their ships at a small, idyllic, open beach that they had spotted from the Sea. The water there was as blue as the eyes of a woman and the long, sandy beach was ideal for the warriors to get off the boats in the shallow water and to wade to the land. Paths led from the beach to steep hills inland. The bay was abandoned and silent. Too silent. Alcibiades and Hipparchos had already remarked from the shore that no birds were singing when the boats approached the land.

Hipparchos felt a trembling along his spine, and his intuition told him something was not right about this place. No people, no small boats were around. Alcibiades sniffed the air. It was too damn calm here. He sensed danger too. But what danger?

Alcibiades and Hipparchos and tens of hoplites waded through the water and stood on the beach. Other hoplites disembarked and waded through the water. Soon, the whole army would stand on the beach. Alcibiades and Hipparchos waited on the rightmost part of the sand and beckoned the others in.

Completely unexpectedly, a shower of arrows descended on the Athenians. Stones and small iron balls were flung at the men, tiny stones and iron that pierced light armour or killed the men in their faces. A few javelins reached soft targets. The Athenians ran for shelter below the hills, against the rocks. Many of them pinned themselves to the slight wall that the water of the Sea had holed out from the hills. There was little shelter however. On the left side the hills were sharper. They were of rocks, steeper in slope there, and a cornice had developed under which many Athenians had found safety. They could not move from there, though.

The Athenians were stuck on the beach. Several warriors, especially the ones that had not worn full armour, lay dead or wounded on the beach. While they lay there, more arrows and stones thudded into their bodies. The archers and slingers concentrated on the men who waded through the water, and many fell among them too. Many



Athenians ran back for shelter to the ships and they disappeared below decks. From there, they shot a few arrows up the hills, but their arrows did not go far, and lost power rapidly for their targets were too far away for upward shots. Then, tens of heavily armoured men showed their silhouettes at the ridges of the hills. Laches's army had fallen in an ambush. The Athenians who were pinned down below at the hills could not return to the ships without heavy losses. Any group that attempted to run up to the hills would be killed by the archers and slingers. The triremes could not just abandon the men on the beach, moor at another place and disembark the rest of the troops, for the men here would be massacred. Laches was still in one of the triremes, cursing like the nastiest fisherman in a storm, but he was helpless and at a loss of what to do. A few men on the beach lost their nerve, ran towards the ships, and these were pitilessly shot down before they could even touch the boats.

Alcibiades and Hipparchos rested on their knees with their backs against a sandy ridge, next to each other, and on the beach. They were stuck. They sought desperately how to get off the beach, but they saw no easy solution or escape. Alcibiades stood on the rightmost side of the beach. Two men, veteran hoplites who had been with him at Mytilene lay even further to the right. Alcibiades advanced more to that side and he slipped cautiously past the men to see what happened on the hills that closed the bay. He saw an open space, a space that was unprotected sand, where warriors would be exposed to arrows and javelins. There were rocks at the end, which meant some protection, and to the extreme end of these, a small path winded into the rocks up the hill. The path was very small and might have been unnoticed by the enemy. He saw no silhouettes of warriors on the far right top of the hills.

Alcibiades looked several times, but he found no enemy hoplites on top of that stretch, and the path led in fact away from the beach, away also from the hilltops at the centre. If a group of hoplites could get past the arrows here without being noticed too soon, and if it could get up that track, and if the track was no dead end, and if that track had been forgotten, and if it was not heavily guarded, then the Athenians might just have a slight chance to get from there behind the enemy's back and attack them in the side or the back. There were many ifs. And if the enemy up there saw their movement on this right side, they might concentrate their attention here. More ifs.

There was no other alternative. The Athenians could as well die while running, than while laying here. Alcibiades told the hoplites, who were now on his left, that he would make a run for it to the other side and he told them to pass on the word for others to come but not all at once, if he wasn't hurt. He prepared to leap forward. At the last instance, one of the hoplites pushed him powerfully aside, against the sand, and the man jumped into the open space. He ran a few steps to seek cover behind the rocks. An arrow flew by him, but the man succeeded. Alcibiades waited a moment in astonishment. That man had actually wanted to protect him. He had run to see whether he would be a pincushion transpierced with arrows instead of his commander, or could indeed pass! Now the man made a sign to Alcibiades to come over. Alcibiades grabbed his lance and ran for his life. A couple of arrows grazed by him, but he too arrived unscathed at the other side. Hipparchos had seen the movement and he too jumped now, together with another hoplite. Hipparchos got through and so did the hoplite, but the man received an arrow through his leg. He was not badly hurt, but he could not move on for higher ground. Alcibiades and the first hoplite were already climbing up the path. The path was indeed very narrow, barely

enough to let through one man with a shield on his back. It wended through rocks further to the right, and it led indeed away from the enemy, but also higher up towards the ridges. Hipparchos cried for other hoplites to come over, and then he followed.

Alcibiades continued to step cautiously upwards. He arrived a little later at the top of the hill, overlooking the bay. Two archers guarded the path, so it had not been forgotten altogether. An arrow stuck powerfully in Alcibiades's bronze shield, and a second one shattered to pieces on it. The archers had to reload. That provided Alcibiades with the time he needed. The men stood very close. He leapt forward, fell upon the men in no time and stuck his spear in the belly of the first archer and threw his shield in the throat of the other, in one of those explosions of energy for which he was famous. Then the other Athenian hoplites were next to him, and another Athenian spear pierced through the throat of the Mylaean archer who had stumbled, numbed from Alcibiades's shield blow.

A small Athenian force gathered then and more men came up, while beneath men ran one after the other to their side since no more arrows halted them. The enemy was too occupied on the centre and the other side of the beach. Alcibiades ran towards the left and a dozen or so enemy hoplites faced him, men who had been throwing huge stones down the hill. They were surprised to see the Athenians. They sprang upon Alcibiades, but a small phalanx of Athenians had formed around Alcibiades and, shield to shield, his men faced the enemy. The Athenians held spears, like the Mylaeans, so that a regular hoplite battle developed. More Athenians came up. They threw the Mylaeans back with energetic slashes of their spears. Alcibiades got wounded again on the arm, but only with a flesh wound. The Athenians were furious to have been ambushed so treacherously, and there was no stopping to their rage. The Mylaeans had thought they had been smart, but they could not answer so much force. Alcibiades received a second slight wound, in the throat, from a lance thrust he could barely avoid, again only a flesh wound. Then, he threw down his spear. He liked to brandish a spear when it was necessary and handy, but he was a swordsman. He was more deadly with a sword and more vicious. With mighty blows he forced the Mylaeans back to the left side of the hills.

Because of this combat on the hill, the Athenians had made the enemy give way beyond a large, sandy path that rose from the beach up to the hill. More Mylaeans joined the fight at the hilltop. The Athenians would soon be unable to hold out. Alcibiades cried to Hipparchos that the main Athenian forces, still pinned down at the beach because of the archers and slingers, should mount the hill here, using the sand path. How to warn the Athenians down below?

Hipparchos solved the problem. He slung an enemy hoplite aside and shoved the man along, so that he rolled down the hill, then fell a few feet farther on the beach. The man was killed there by an Athenian spear and his fall drew the attention of the hoplites below. A few heads came cautiously from behind the rocks and they saw Hipparchos beckoning. The men ran up, taking courage from seeing Athenians also above them and they ran up, four or five together. Arrows and javelins still hindered them. A few hoplites fell, but most of them got through, so that a battle of many men developed on the hills. The Athenians were still outnumbered, but Hipparchos and Alcibiades and their best men fought so wildly, so aggressively, that the Mylaeans yielded. More Athenian hoplites descended from the ships now also, a few archers

among them, and soon the entire Athenian army were engaged above the beach. The Mylaeans were outnumbered in their turn now. The Athenian hoplites passed by Alcibiades and Hipparchos in large numbers, and the Mylaean warriors fled.

Alcibiades, Hipparchos and the few hoplites who had come with them by the rocky path, dropped to the ground from sheer exhaustion. They lay on their backs, panting, as if they had ran the Olympic track twice.

A voice said, next to them, 'well, well, the gentlemen are sleeping in the grass while a battle is on!'

Laches stood grinning between Alcibiades and Hipparchos, who were still lying on the ground but who heaved up their head a little now to see who addressed them.

They had the sun in their eyes and could not well distinguish who stood above them.

'Well done, anyway,' Laches continued. 'You gave us victory today.'

Then Laches strode behind his warriors, sword in hand. The general had well noticed what had happened, and who had saved his troops from an ignominious defeat.

Alcibiades and Hipparchos drew on each other's hands to get back on their feet and they followed Laches. The Athenians had been ambushed and lost many men, but they had entirely routed the enemy and they pursued the last adversary warriors. While they advanced inland, driving the Mylaeans out before them, they reached the fortifications of Mylae.

The Athenians did not stop then. They immediately attacked the walls of the town and the gates. They entered the city rapidly, for the Mylaeans too were exhausted, and Laches's hoplites overran the defenders.

There were few armed people inside Mylae. The Athenians gradually understood that they had not really fought a force of Mylaeans, but two battalions of Messinians.

These had been sent to defend the fortifications of Mylae and must have seen the Athenians arrive by sea. They had arranged for the ambush at the little bay.

Like on Lipara, the real Mylaeans had found refuge in their Acropolis. Most of the Messinian troops had been wounded, killed or captured now. Laches brought them in front of the acropolis to show the Mylaeans that resistance was of no use. He shouted to the acropolis that he wanted the town and the complete town. He said he would leave all the Mylaeans unharmed if only they opened the citadel and came out unarmed. Else he would attack the place, kill everybody and destroy the houses of the little town completely. It took only a short time before the gates opened, and the Mylaeans passed through the gates. They threw down their arms ostensibly and surrendered to the Athenians. Laches saved their lives, spared the town, and he even obtained a few days later that the best hoplites of Mylae followed him as allies on an expedition against Messina. The Mylaeans did not bear the Messinians in their hearths so well after all.

When Mylae had been brought under his control, Laches wasted no time. His ships moored in the harbour of the town, charged provisions, and together with his Sicilian forces he sailed a short way east, to Messina. He landed straight into the port of the town. He expected a severe battle, but at the quays the Messinian authorities waited for him and welcomed his commanders.

The magistrates of Messina begged Laches not to disembark with his army. They had heard of the defeat of their battalions at Mylae. They had obviously been impressed by the tenacity and fighting determination of the Athenians. They also feared

Laches's revenge for the ambush, which had cost the Athenians many a fine citizen-hoplite. They assured Laches that they abandoned their town to him. They offered hostages and allowed Athenian forces to occupy Messina. Laches accepted the conditions. The small Athenian fleet had reached in this way its prime target.

Laches held Mylae, Messina and Rhegium, and he had shown he could sail at any time to reduce Lipara. He owned the northern Sea route of Sicily. Moreover, Laches had coalesced all Ionian resistance to Syracuse, so that Syracuse could not claim easy dominance anymore over the other towns of Sicily and force its regulations on them. Syracuse had now a constant threat of allied cities on its territory to deal with. It left Leontini in peace, at least for the moment. The attacks of the small Athenian fleet and of its general Laches were serious darts in its flesh. Yet, Laches was not satisfied. He had an army at his disposal and he had received a mission from Athens. He aimed for more targets.

### **Locri**

In the late summer of that year, Laches planned an expedition against the Epizephyrian Locrians, the Locrians of southern Italy. He sailed with a substantially grown army to the town of Locri, situated on the east side of Italy, to the north-east of Rhegium. Laches desired to ensure that this territory in the south of Italy was completely safe for Athens.

The Athenian general landed south of Locri and made sure this time to send out scouts before disembarking. No ambush was set at this beach, so the army disembarked from the ships, waded in a long queue through the shallow water of the shore and assembled inland. The Athenians set up camp and occupied the hills. The next day, the army, led by Laches in person, marched to Locri.

Just before arriving at the town, a substantial force of Locrians stood in the plains leading to the city. The Locrians faced the Athenians for a regular battle. Laches ordered his hoplites in phalanx formation and he placed his lighter troops, led by Hipparchos, to the right of these. In the late morning, the two armies clashed.

The Locrians attacked first with archers and javelin throwers. After the first shots, Laches ordered his hoplites forward. The archers fled and the Athenian hoplite phalanx bit, advancing slowly but threateningly, running into the Locrian lines. The Locrians fought bravely, but even their best hoplites were no match for the Athenian veterans led by Laches and Alcibiades.

Alcibiades fought with his spear and shield. He killed a man by thrusting his spear under the warrior's plates. He stabbed ferociously at other men, who yielded before him. He wrought havoc among the Locrians until he received a wound on his arm. The Athenians around him protected him, and he them, so that the wounds remained superficial.

Alcibiades fought bravely, and so did his companions. Laches's own left wing, his heavily armoured troops, routed the Locrians. His right wing, with his lighter armed troops, held out against the enemy, but severe fighting was going on there. Laches ordered Alcibiades to stop pursuing the fleeing Locrians and to fall on to the Locrians' left wing to relieve Hipparchos. Alcibiades and his men turned and ran to their right, to fall in the side of the Locrians there. By sheer weight of armour and

pressure of shields the Athenians flung the Locrians to the ground and killed many men mercilessly. Alcibiades had dropped his lance after the first assault and he fought with his sword now, delivering sharp, rapid blows to enemy swords and shields. The fighting was dogged, for the Locrian commanders realised that victory or defeat depended on their tenacity to resist here, at this spot of the battle.

Alcibiades had two Locrians to worry about. One Locrian had a spear and another, probably a commander, fought him with a sword. He evaded the spear and delivered strong blows with his sword to the other Locrian, who proved, however, to be a very skilled hoplite. Alcibiades ignored for a while the warrior with the spear, to defeat the swordsman in a short duel and he stuck the man in the throat after a faint with his shield. The Locrian commander seemed stunned for a moment, and Alcibiades opened the man's throat with a large, powerful slice of the sharp of his sword. Blood splattered all over him. Then, he felt a sharp pain in his back. The Locrian spearman had stepped to his side and pushed his lance point under Alcibiades's arm in his side and back. Alcibiades was severely wounded. He could step away however. He drew the spear out of his body by turning his chest painfully but rapidly sideways and then, still turning, with one arm he pushed the spear away. The Locrian was unprotected for one moment. One moment was enough for Alcibiades. He pushed his sword under the man's leather breast armour. The Locrian fell.

Alcibiades dropped to his knees and remained there, unable to move on. He grasped his back and tried to stop the bleeding in his side with his hands. He tore his breast plate off, over his head, almost suffocating, and heavily in pain. He felt he was fainting and kept one hand to his side, one hand on the ground. He remained totally unprotected then, but the Athenian hoplites advanced beyond him now. He fought the urge to lie down and sleep to oblivion. He had lost much blood, continued to bleed, and the shock slowly numbed his head. Luckily, all the Locrians were being routed, and the fighting had advanced further on, forwards, to several steps in front of him. An Athenian hoplite of his company looked back, missing Alcibiades, and looked out for him. He saw his commander wounded and staggering. He ran up to him. Two other hoplites turned also and were worried. A group of several of his friends stood now around him. They supported Alcibiades, took him under their arms, dragged him on his feet, and led him back to the rear. They bound crude linen into Alcibiades's wounds to stop the bleeding, then they placed against a rock, but left him sitting upright, and they talked to him so that he would not pass out.

In the evening, the Athenians moved their camp close to the battlefield. Alcibiades lay in his campaign tent. His doctor stood by him. He had fainted for a time, while the doctor cut at his wounds, cauterised them, cleaned the wounds and wound new bandages imbibed with herbs around his chest and back. The doctor assured him he would survive.

Laches had defeated the Locrians decisively. He could enter the town without having to face further resistance. Laches also captured a Locrian fort on the River Halex somewhat later, and he fortified thus his position.

By that time, however, Alcibiades was recovering from his many wounds in the arms of his Italian mistress in his harbour house at Rhegium. It took a long time for his wounds to heal. Hipparchos lived with him and brought him more news from the campaign. Hipparchos had suffered wounds too, but only small flesh wounds.

Alcibiades wondered whether his proverbial luck had run out on him. It dated from Potidaea since he had been seriously wounded.

Laches came to visit him several times, and a couple of times even he honoured symposiums in Alcibiades's and Hipparchos's house in the evening. Alcibiades organised these drinking parties to celebrate Laches's victories. In these expeditions, the Athenians had met with success.

Alcibiades and Hipparchos liked Laches. They liked the ways of the man, his wisdom in battle, his caution and his drive. Laches had balls. He had the qualities of a fighter and of a thinker. He led the Athenian constantly to battles. He was a true leader of men and he judged situations well, for which the hoplites respected him.

Laches, Alcibiades and Hipparchos became friends.

At the very end of his first full summer in Sicily Alcibiades received another letter from his cousin Euryptolemus.

*Alcibiades,*

*Here follows more news from Athens. The plague has subsided somewhat and life returns slowly to normality in Athens. Hipparete and your son Cleinias are in good health. Socrates sends you his best wishes.*

*This summer, King Agis son of Archidamus, wanted to invade Attica with a Spartan army. He got no further than the Isthmus of Corinth, for a number of earthquakes happened and stopped him. He considered this, like all Spartans do, as a bad omen, so he turned back. You know how superstitious the Spartan are. Earthquakes and large sea waves have done a lot of harm to many towns on the coasts of Euboea and also in Locris. It is as if the gods send us many natural disasters to chastise the Hellenes for our wars and evil deeds.*

*The Assembly has sent out thirty ships to the Peloponnesos under the command of Demosthenes son of Alcisthenes and under Procles son of Theodorus. I believe Demosthenes is a friend of yours and he is not so many years older than you. He is young but leads bravely and proudly. In a few years' times you shall be a general like Demosthenes and leading us!*

*The Assembly also sent out sixty ships and two thousand hoplites to Melos under Nicias, son of Niceratus. Nicias did not accomplish much on Melos. He could not take the island. He sailed back to Attica, to Oropus, and marched with his army to Tanagra on the border with Boeotia. He met with other Athenian troops there, led by Hipponicus son of Callias and Eurymedon son of Thucles. Together, they won a battle against the Boeotians, and returned. Nobody understands what this was good for, and many Athenians died in the battle, but nonetheless Nicias set up a trophy and he was lauded in Athens.*

*While we were fighting thus in Boeotia, the Spartans founded a new colony in Trachis, which they called Heraclea. Leon, Alcidas and Damagon did this and they set up their city close to Thermopylae. It seems to be a rather miserable affair of a settlement, but it caused quite a stir in Athens, for the Assembly thought the colony*

*was directed against Euboea. The Thessalians seem to like Heraclea even less than we, so the town is under constant attack from small groups of Thessalian warriors and the Spartans do not dare to come out. We do not suffer from this settlement, and Sparta has its hands full just preserving it! We wonder how long it will hold.*

*Later, Demosthenes attacked Leucas and he won good results in the war there. He devastated the country of Leucas, but he never could take the entire city. The Messenians then proposed to Demosthenes to attack Aetolia. The Aetolians have been a constant threat to Naupactus. Demosthenes made his base at Oeneon in Locris and he took a few cities in Locris. The Aetolians then fell on his army with huge numbers, however, and it was a major battle of archers and javelin throwers and slingers that developed, a battle of lightly-armed troops. Many men in Demosthenes's army were killed.*

*Demosthenes escaped the ordeal, but Procles was killed. Demosthenes put the rest of the Athenians on his ships and sent them back to Athens. Demosthenes stayed at Naupactus, however. Many in the Assembly guess that he feared being banished and being fined by the Assembly after the defeat, and indeed the Assembly was angry. Had he appeared on the Pnyx he might well now be herding sheep on some distant Macedonian mountain.*

*That was not all! The Aetolians asked for Spartan forces to help them and Sparta sent Eurylochus with about three thousand hoplites from Delphi through the country of the Locrians to Naupactus. Together with the Aetolians, this army devastated the country of Naupactus.*

*Demosthenes was trapped inside Naupactus, and since he could not appeal to Athens he persuaded the Acarnanians to send him a thousand men. With these he reinforced Naupactus. When they saw this, the Spartans and the Aetolians withdrew. Eurylochus stayed with his army in Aetolia however, a permanent threat to Naupactus. So, Demosthenes did some good things too and kept us Naupactus.*

*Euryptolemus son of Peisianax*

## **Etna**

In the early autumn, Laches suspected something was amiss in Sicily. He had regular meetings with representatives from the Sicilian and Italian towns that supported the Athenian cause. Important magistrates came to see him less and less, however. He perceived lassitude in the behaviour of his allies and a desire to avoid being involved constantly in military actions. He could hardly blame the men. Laches had come to Sicily to enforce the politics of Athens, not the Sicilian ones. He had to keep Sicily, and especially the Syracusan warriors and the Syracusan fleet, away from the Peloponnesos, away from the Spartan war in and around Attica. He had to make it increasingly difficult for the Syracusans to transport grain to the Peloponnesos. He had well succeeded in these aims. He controlled the complete northern grain route, parts of the eastern route, and he could intervene in the Straits of Messina whenever he wanted. He occupied Rhegium, Messina, Mylae and other strong forts along the coasts. But in order to reach these aims he had had to ask the help of friendly cities in

Sicily, among which Leontini. These cities fought now almost all the time against the Syracusan troops. The battles were only skirmishes from an Athenian viewpoint, but they were exhausting enough for the allies. Laches understood that, but he urged his allies on.

The Syracusans found themselves much in the same position as Laches. The Syracusans avoided large-scale campaigns and large-scale battles in fear of more intervention by the Athenians.

Laches did not participate in most of these battles, not because he would not have desired to, but because he could not. He walked a tight rope in a strenuous stand-off with the Syracusans. This exasperated his Sicilian allies, for they bore the losses of many lives in continuous engagements. He avoided a major confrontation with the Syracusans, for he needed ten times more warriors than Athens could provide him with for a major battle. Laches was content with limited engagements that kept a delicate balance at which he needed to work continuously, but equilibrium anyhow, which kept Syracuse busy.

Laches sensed, however, that the balance could not be preserved forever. So many events could disturb the balance! His allies in Sicily could drop arms and embrace Syracuse. He doubted that scenario would realise, but when his allies started to avoid him, he began to wonder. The allied cities might complain to Athens behind his back and have him replaced. Syracuse might be constructing a formidable war fleet. Syracuse might be amassing troops and plan a major campaign against Messina, Mylae and maybe even against Rhegium. The towns that had remained friendly to Athens previously might sign a convention with Syracuse. Who knows, all these scenarios might be developing together! Laches needed information and he needed it fast.

Laches went to see Alcibiades privately. They developed a plan together. Alcibiades was still recovering from his wounds. He was unable as yet to participate in military exercises, but he could travel. He could travel and gather information about the situation in the Sicilian towns. He could find out what was cooking at Catana, Leontini, even Syracuse, and maybe at other places. He could travel, accompanied by his Italian mistress, his nurse now, and pretend to be a merchant from Thurii, travelling in the country of Sicily to look for new trading opportunities. Alcibiades grinned at the prospect. He might actually make some money indeed out of new ventures with the Sicilian merchants. Everything he would send to Thurii, his agents could ship further to Athens or to the Ionian Islands in the east! He had already set up anonymously a trading house at Thurii. He could travel easily by ship or by land. He preferred by land, because he had not seen much yet of more southern and inland Sicily. He suspected also the harbours would be better guarded than the villages inland. He could take a limited party of servants with him, recruited among the Sicilians of Messina or out of one of the southern ports, and from there go by boat to somewhere north of Catana. Then he could travel by land to Leontini and even Syracuse.

Laches had hoped that Alcibiades would have agreed to go to Leontini as his spokesman, but he drew up his eyebrows when Alcibiades mentioned Syracuse. This was real spying!



‘Entering Syracuse will be very, very risky,’ Laches said. ‘I don’t ask you to do that. You could be spotted there, recognised as an Athenian spy and killed. Even in Syracuse, they have heard of Pericles, Socrates and Alcibiades!’

But Alcibiades had already made his decision. Such dangerous, covert operations thrilled him. He would take his time, go in about ten days to Leontini, stay there a few days, travel to Syracuse a day or two later, stay there about five days, travel in two days to a small port east of Syracuse and sail straight back to Messina in a minimum of time. If all went well, he could be back in a month or so in Rhegium with the first-hand information Laches needed.

Laches regarded Alcibiades as one of his best hoplites, as his most promising young commander, and as a man who was destined to be one of the new leaders of Athens the day he had reached the age of thirty and could be a candidate strategos. He did not want to expose a man like that, for Athens would not forgive him if something happened to Alcibiades. But Alcibiades was the only man intelligent and cunning enough to sneak through the enemy lines. Still, he had not wanted Alcibiades to take such risks. He sighed, for he saw the flaw of rashness in Alcibiades. He noticed Alcibiades’s reckless, spontaneous but impulsive decision making. He ascribed that to Alcibiades’s youth. With this man too, Laches had walked the tight rope, though he had always been glad to make use of his energy at the toughest moments of battles. Finally, Laches sighed, defeated, unable now to hold Alcibiades on a tight leash. He said, after a flood of good arguments had flowed from Alcibiades’s enthusiastic mind, ‘all right, all right, my son. You go, but be careful. If you don’t come back I will not be helped either.’

Alcibiades cherished the ‘my son’ and grinned. When people told him that word, he was ready to pass the Styx in his own boat and defy Charon.

It took Alcibiades three days to make the arrangements, one day to convince his Italian hetaera to pretend she was his wife, and one day more to find a boat in Messina to take him south. He recruited five servants in Messina, who knew nothing of him. He told nobody in the Athenian army where he was heading for, and even Hipparchos only knew that he was sent on an inspection tour to Mylae and the Liparaean Islands. The merchant ship took Alcibiades and his ‘Thuriian wife’ to the harbour of Naxos. From there he wanted to travel on foot to Catana, then to Leontini and to Syracuse. He ordered another merchant ship to wait for him twenty-five days later at the harbour of Thapsus, just north of Syracuse. He set off in his best mood from the town of Naxos, when he encountered one of the worse frights of his life.

Alcibiades left Naxos with two wagons. In the first wagon rode his wife and her maidservant. This wagon could be covered with sailcloth over a reed structure, impermeable to rain. In sunny and warm days the cloth could be removed. In the second wagon he held his travel belongings, items bought in Messina: earthen pots, tents, vases with drinking water and some wine, arms but no armour, a small shield, bow and arrows, and clothes. Each cart was drawn by a horse and Alcibiades led a spare horse, which he used sometimes to ride in front of the little caravan. Two men drove the carts, two other servants walked along. Only Alcibiades was armed, but he wore only a short sword, his xiphos, about two feet long, in a scabbard on a baldric at his back.

From Naxos, Alcibiades travelled south at a slow pace, along the coast. Between Naxos and Catana the coast was hilly and rocky at first. The road was easy, however, and wide enough to let them pass comfortably. All along the coast, inland, he saw high mountains. Small villages hung against the mountains on his right. Some of these had small citadels, few were enwalled.

Alcibiades noted the marvellous beaches on his left. It was autumn, one of the best times to travel in Sicily. It was not as hot as in summer anymore, and the rains had not yet started to pour down. Each day he bathed with his mistress naked in a forgotten creek, and he had a grand time. He looked with interest at the landscape, trying to understand what the Sicilians lived from. He saw plantations of olive trees, of hazel nut trees, and vineyards. He also noticed fig trees, chestnut trees and pomegranate trees. Large forests lined the coast, mainly of oak trees, but he saw large pinewoods and Sicilian fir trees, and a few beech trees too. He also noticed many other kinds of trees: wild olive trees, wonderful tamarisks, and palm trees. He found an occasional agave, cedar or eucalyptus. Along the road grew aromatic herbs, lavender and rosemary, broom, and lentils. Although the time went to the year's end, many kinds of wild flowers grew around. When they came close to a village, he saw small garden patches with legumes. The mountain slopes held large herds of sheep, and on the other side an occasional fisherman brought in various kinds of fish, tuna and swordfish among them. The coastline was magnificent here, sweeter than in Attica. Alcibiades loved the large, sandy beaches, as well as the cliff-lined creeks, the tiny hidden beaches and the wide bays. His mistress was in a good mood and she joked with the men. Her maidservant flirted with one of the youths.

While his group advanced joyfully, the landscape gradually changed. Alcibiades had seen Mount Etna from the far and he had already heard about the fierce reputation this mountain. It was the most formidable fire mountain he had ever seen, and not one of the nicest. Its perfect dark grey cone was covered with snow. It absolutely dominated the land. It was the only major feature now, and everybody's attention was drawn inexorably to the menacing, lifeless sight of Etna's huge slopes. The landscape was desolation. The ashes spewed out from the angry mountain had suffocated most of the plants. The black ash had not yet turned into fertile soil, and it must have been too acid in most places to let any plant grow. A few low bushes nevertheless grew down the slopes and along the coast. Nature was as lush as before. Yet, the beaches also contained much of the grey ash.

Mount Etna was quiet, however, at this moment, and Alcibiades had not heard of fire eruptions of this mountain as long as he had been in Sicily. As he advanced southward, the road left the coast and went further inland, so that he saw the Sea only occasionally, when they rode to the top of a hill.

Alcibiades's group of travellers passed through a landscape of chaos. He had seen two rock streams. It was as if streams of rocks had flown there, maybe streams of fire of earth that had since long been solidified. It was as if giants had ploughed furrows over the rocky hills. The road passed over the rocks, but to left and right lay sharp, black rocks that would have been impossible to pass. People had hacked the road through, and over the giants' ploughings.

Alcibiades and his party could sleep outside, for they had tents with them. When they found an inn or a hostel decent enough to stay in, they sought shelter there. That happened usually around temple sites.

One night, when Alcibiades surmised he was at a distance of less than two days of walking from Catana, he spotted such a hostel near an ancient temple of Artemis. The temple might have been erected there to ward off the anger of the gods of fire of Etna. The temple stood on the slopes of one of the hills of the grey mountain. It was a fine, Dorian temple with about twenty columns, and it braced proudly against nature and Mount Etna in the far. The temple had a small hostel near it.

The rooms were not clean. The kitchen did not appeal to Alcibiades, and the food was very mediocre. Still, Alcibiades decided to stay the night here. There was food for the horses and he left his wagons just outside the square building. About ten other guests stayed at the inn with five or so servants of the innkeeper, who must have all been members of the man's family.

That evening, Alcibiades ate with his mistress and servants at the inn. Then they went to sleep. Alcibiades and his wife slept inside the hostel, and so did the maidservant and one male servant. The other servants slept in the wagons, outside, under the sail cloth. The atmosphere was warm and peaceful. They expected to spend an uneventful night on their journey.

At the end of the night, but before the sun had risen, Alcibiades's mistress grabbed him passionately, so that he awoke believing she dreamed a nightmare. He woke, but a nauseating feeling immediately filled his head. His bed and the whole house were moving under him. The movements were slow. They came in long waves. Alcibiades immediately recognised an earthquake. Poseidon was shaking the ground.

Alcibiades drew his woman to the floor, off the bed. She screamed. He hurt his side again, and felt new trickles of blood seep through his bandages. Earthen pans fell down from the roof inside the room then, and beams shifted dangerously. Alcibiades tried to get up and go out, but he could not stand. He drew the woman with him under the bed, in the dirt of the floor. He protected her head and she hid in his arms. She was not in panic anymore. She too understood. To his left, an inner wall collapsed, fell inside the room and sent bricks and dust up to the place where Alcibiades lay hidden. He heard more bricks fall, men scream, horses stalk, women shriek, and a low, distant grumbling grew louder and seemed to come closer with each moment. The grumbling turned into a loud roar. The trembling of the floor intensified with sharper movements. Then it dropped off abruptly.

Alcibiades and his mistress looked first at each other, to see whether they were unharmed, astonished maybe to be still alive. Then they dared to glance at the debris in the room. They saw tiles everywhere on the floor, and mud bricks had fallen from the walls. Beams stuck out where there had been no beams before. The plaster had cracked and fallen in large lumps to the floor. Alcibiades spat several times to clear the dust from his throat. His mistress crawled to a corner of the room. She vomited. She wiped off her lips with her hand, but she did not stand up. She grabbed an amphora of water that stood shattered in a corner but still contained water, and cleansed her mouth. Then she reached back for Alcibiades.

Alcibiades pushed the bed away, away from the fallen wall, so that he could get up. A second tremor then shook the house, threw him back on the ground, on the hard bricks. He grasped again for his mistress while he was on his knees and arms. The second shock lasted only a very short time, but additional cracks appeared in all the walls.

Alcibiades stood up, soothed his crying wife and gathered his clothes and his sword. He threw his belonging in the wooden chest that his servants had brought in at the beginning of the evening. He drew the chest behind him. He kicked the door to pieces and went into the corridor above the aulé.

In the hostel, in all the rooms and in the corridors, debris of walls and roofs covered the floors. Furniture was overturned and sprayed all over the place. Broken amphoras and earthen pots lay everywhere. He found the inn-keeper lying dead under a pile of debris, crushed by a fallen wall. A wailing, dirty woman sat next to him. Other people fled from the house, covered with dust and wild with panic. Some of them were wounded. Blood stained their tunics. There was nothing to do but to flee, so Alcibiades drew his chest and his woman behind him and leaped outside the hostel. In the first dim light of the morning he saw that the inn was almost completely destroyed.

The walls of the inn had cracked or fallen down. Openings of a man's hand wide ran like a lizard's walk along the surfaces. Two walls on the left had fallen and the roof there had caved in. People might have been killed at that place. Others might still be alive, but remained hurt under the ruins.

Alcibiades looked towards the rising sun, and he saw that also the old temple of Artemis had been partly destroyed. The temple had no roof anymore, and he saw on his side three columns had crumpled, their drums now laying in disarray on the ground. Alcibiades turned around and looked at his wagons. Alcibiades's attention was drawn towards a red, dim light in the far, behind the inn. Something was burning there. He took a few steps to his right, to peer beyond the inn, and to face a daunting, terrible spectacle that made his neck hair stand.

Not only had there been a devastating earthquake, but Etna had erupted. Of the eruption Alcibiades only saw at first only a red glimmer, the red of flames spewing out high of Etna's cone. A second mountain developed, an inverse form of Etna, broadening in the sky, to tantalising heights. This was a massive, menacing cloud of black smoke that drew westward above Alcibiades's head. Terrible though this sight was, a greater danger threatened them. Alcibiades's heart dropped a few beats and for a couple of long moments he was petrified, could not move from fear.

Pyriphlegethon had risen from the earth and appeared on the flanks of Mount Etna! Two vast rivers of red and yellow fire descended from the mountain, one to the east and one to the west. The rivers flowed viscous fire, which ran over rocks and ash. Though the heavy stream was not as liquid as water, it came fast. Large lumps of incandescent rocks were torn into the flow. The rivers of fire destroyed everything on their passage. When the fire reached a bush or tree, the plants would immediately hiss, then go up in flames and disappear.

The slopes of the hills of Etna were steep on this side. The eastern flood would reach in moments the walls of the inn. Nothing could withstand that stream. If Alcibiades's company did not get out of here, they risked being trapped between the two rivers of flames and be killed when the fire joined. They would die a very painful, horrible death. They would burn. The only escape might then be to the Sea, but Alcibiades had seen no boats close to the shore here.

Alcibiades shot into action. He ran to his wagons and kicked the servants out of their stupor. He pushed his mistress on her cart. Two servants had hidden under the other

wagon. He had to draw his sword and tell the men he would kill them there and then if they didn't start the wagons moving. The men ran to the horses and prepared the horses with the reins.

Alcibiades ran into the ruins of the inn, calling everybody out. Some of the men and women ran maddened in every direction, but most of the guests rallied to him and followed his instructions. Alcibiades showed them the danger. All threw their meager belongings in the wagons. He pushed four children and a wounded man and woman onto his mistress, and helped to draw the recalcitrant horses forward. The company left the dead under the fallen walls and roof.

The little group of about fifteen people advanced in the sunrise. Alcibiades noticed that if they followed the road they would not have enough time to avoid the westward river of fire. He signalled to one of the men, a sturdy, intelligent-looking, armed and well-dressed fellow, to lead the wagon further down to the Sea. The man nodded and told he knew a smaller road that way. The man made it clear that he was of these parts of the country and knew the tracks. The group followed this guide, advancing slowly. They went into almost a collision course with the viscous flows of fire, because of which the air became hotter and denser. It started to rain then, a rain of water and mud. The dirty stuff stuck to their faces and clothes. Alcibiades pushed on and the earth on fire was above them now, but the group and the carts were almost past the fearful flow before it could reach them.

The horses became wild then. They pranced and were almost uncontrollable from the heath and the noise and the mud, but the Catanian man knew horses like no other. Alcibiades saw the man controlling the horses calmly, and drawing them on. While the Catanian forced the horses on the right track, a steep and small but solid little path through the bushes, Alcibiades helped men, women and children over rocks and debris.

Finally, the fire passed behind their backs. Had they waited longer, they would have been trapped between two streams of incandescent earth on which complete rocks flowed as if they were light as a feather. It took a long time before the group slowed down and before hearts beat normally again. Several red glowing streams still erupted from Etna, also more streams flowing westward, but none could seriously threaten them now.

The men went back to the coast and they walked almost till noon, until they could see Catana in the far. Then they realised that they were exhausted. Alcibiades made the wagons halt. He sat down on the ground, beside the man that had been his guide. They were both dirty as if they had been in Hades, dirty from the mud that had fallen from the sky and from the dust sprayed over them in the earthquake. They were bruised from the destruction of the inn, and their arms were covered with scratches from the bushes through which they had hurried. Alcibiades's wounds had opened. Blood coagulated under his tunic. But they were safe. At least for the moment. The company fell to the ground, exhausted, laying on the rocks and on the grass. After a while, Alcibiades stood up and distributed whatever food and water he could find in the wagons: some bread, cheese and fruit, a few dried fish rests. He saw the head of his mistress appear from under a sail cloth, then the heads of two small children. She was still fine, delicate and shinningly beautiful, and he smiled at her. She came out of the wagon, for she had spotted the blood on his side. She drew off the linen that was caked with blood and changed the bandage with part of one of her tunics.

The Catanian man grinned and he said in Ionian so that Alcibiades would understand, 'A fine woman!'

'Yes,' Alcibiades grinned, 'thank you, Catanian! Thanks for having us shown the way out'

'Not Catanian, Alcibiades,' the man replied, 'Syracusan! My name is Hermocrates. And my thanks go to you for having forced us to act. I was stunned from fear. I have never been so frightened in my life. And I never would have imagined an Athenian to save my life.'

Alcibiades's heart stopped beating for the third time that day. Who had called him by his real name before, here? He said nothing, and the man continued to grin, and handed him a flask of wine.

Alcibiades saw the clouds darkening above, and he saw them grow thicker. The clouds rose with sickening speed from Etna's cone. The sunlight tainted in all colours the clouds way up, which spread enormously and threateningly over the country. Panic gripped Alcibiades once more, then. He stood up and urged the group forward. He drew everybody to their feet and the group moved to Catana. Alcibiades refused to enter the city, but most of the people left him there, profusely thanking him for having saved their lives. They took a road directly into Catana. Alcibiades was not interested very much in the town. To the few people that were still with him, he told he was still frightened by Etna and would walk farther into the plains. The other people continued on to Syracuse, accompanied and led by Hermocrates.

Hermocrates said goodbye and made Alcibiades promise that if he ever came to Syracuse he would visit him. Hermocrates said everybody in Syracuse knew him. He had been a magistrate and he told he was a leader in his town. That made Alcibiades blink. His cover was blown to Syracuse. Yet he grinned: this Hermocrates would be grateful, and he would not talk in his city of what had happened, and not tell who was travelling in their country. At least, that was what Alcibiades hoped for. He did not interrogate Hermocrates further. He ignored being called by his true name. The man told him that they could find a place to stay in towards the evening, and find food and shelter on the road to Leontini in a fine, small inn.

Alcibiades and his servants then marched alone all through the evening. At an inn to the northwest of Catana they bought food and got water. Alcibiades still pushed on, for he did not dare to lose time by sleeping at the hostel. The inn-keeper assured him that there was no danger here from Etna, but Alcibiades was too scared to be surprised again in his sleep. He also wanted to put a good distance between him and Hermocrates. He continued to march until he could see no more. Then he ordered his wagons to stop. The company set up four small tents in torch light and went to sleep. Alcibiades stayed outside the tent. He slept with his back against an olive tree and his face toward Etna. Many, many times he awoke that night, and he looked whether new rivers of fire came their way. He saw the flanks of Etna glow at multiple points, but the fire stayed far away. At the end of the night he fell sound asleep. The next day Alcibiades's party washed in a river and it took them half a day to clean, before they engaged the road to Leontini.

Alcibiades led his group along the road from Catana to Leontini. Travelling was easy and agreeable. The road was wide, well maintained, and flat. He passed through a vast plain that stretched from Catana to Leontini and to Syracuse. This could well be the

richest part of Sicily. The plain had a very fertile soil and almost every patch of it was used for agriculture. The company passed through vast corn fields, through plantations of vineyards and of legumes. When they stopped at inns to eat, food was excellent. The wine, called Etna wine, notwithstanding a horrible name, was one of the best Alcibiades had ever tasted. It had the colour indeed of the fire that Etna spewed out, tasted of berry fruit and nuts, and it burned to comfortable warmth in the body.

The group reached Leontini rapidly. Alcibiades settled in a hostel in the middle of the town.

Leontini was a strongly walled town. Its walls were well maintained and heavily armed guards controlled its gates. Many hoplites patrolled in the town. The Leontinians were apparently constantly prepared for war and for the defence of their town.

Alcibiades asked at the inn where the building of the headquarters of the Leontinian generals was situated. He changed clothes, and transformed from a travelling merchant to an elegant Attican ambassador. He went to the agora. The generals' headquarter was at a square house to the north of the marketplace. Alcibiades entered the building unhindered.

Hoplites and commanders went in, discussed, and went out, but gave him no attention. When he wanted to go into a room, he was stopped by the lance of a guard. He announced himself as a delegate of Athens sent by Laches, general of the Athenian forces in Sicily. The announcement caused a small panic. Alcibiades's coming was not announced. Nobody had expected him. And he walked around, unhindered, inside the Leontinian headquarters, right before the door of the Council room! Leontinian delegates went to see Laches at the Athenian headquarters in Rhegium, not the other way round!

Alcibiades had to wait in the room of the guards for quite a long time. He found that acceptable, and he was amused. The generals were in the town, on duty, or at home, and no conference had been organised. He had more or less expected only to be able to having a meeting with them two days or so later. The generals saw him the same day, showing ability to modify their schedules rapidly. They had called in a few magistrates too.

Alcibiades entered the Council room. He was allowed to keep his sword. The men sat on benches against the wall and a bench was arranged for him in the middle of the hall. Alcibiades did not sit immediately, though. He went up to the general who presided in the centre, and handed to him several scrolls from Laches.

One of those scrolls told the generals that Laches had ordered Alcibiades to speak in his name to the Leontinians. Other scrolls contained reports of the war situation. All papyrus scrolls were written in Laches's own hand. Laches had added letters of polite greetings to some of the men he had met before and appreciated. Alcibiades knew exactly what was written in each of the scrolls. Laches had read the contents to him before his voyage.

When the Leontinians had read the scrolls, he perceived that the atmosphere became friendlier. The men presented themselves to him. Alcibiades sat down, and the men asked him what his mission was. Alcibiades told them he had come in peace and that his presence proved Laches's respectful interest in the best interests of their town and

country. He told he had come to assess and to discuss with them the situation of Athens' allies. Laches wanted to know how the war was going in the interior of Sicily, and what the wishes were of the Leontinian generals and townsmen. Alcibiades explained that Laches had sent him to hear from their own mouths, not from couriers, what their issues were. He assured them Laches had not only sent him in this concern for communication. He was allowed to discuss further plans of military actions, directly with the Leontinian generals. The scrolls gave Alcibiades this power.

The generals relaxed a little. They provided Alcibiades with a rather gloomy account of the skirmishes in Sicily. The men said that half of the towns had turned to the side of Syracuse, in fear of reprisals, and Syracuse was winning the favour of more and more cities. The towns that held to their independence were diminishing. Syracuse grew richer every day, its trading boomed. Towns like Leontini, rich though from agriculture, but without a port, were being pressured by Syracuse. The war had been continuous. Minor battles, especially of cavalry, were fought regularly. The war depleted Leontini's finances and it destroyed the economy of the town, the fields in the land around their city, and their fertile plains of Sicily. Alcibiades asked questions about the strength of each ally, the number of hoplites and cavalry, their determination, the state of their funds.

Inevitably, the subject came to Athens' involvement in Sicily. The generals and magistrates, who were only of the pro-Athenian party, so they assured Alcibiades, told him that they were well aware that Athens' main aim was only to avoid Sicilian involvement in the war against Sparta. They knew that Laches wanted the control of the grain route. They acknowledged that without Laches's military actions Syracuse would have conquered already all the towns of Sicily and become the master of the island. They thought Laches wise and cautious. But the Athenian actions were too little, and too few.

That was not enough information for Alcibiades. It taught him nothing new. He sensed that the men withheld something from him. He took a more direct twist in his conversation, starting to provoke the men but in a polite way. He told that soon, Laches would attack and take Syracuse. The assertion was pretentious, outrageous and absurd and Alcibiades knew it. He wanted to know how the Leontinians would react.

The men looked at each other with amused eyes and they started to laugh. It was a warm laugh, the indulgent laugh of the wise for the young. They knew better than the inexperienced young commander, even though Alcibiades was an Alcmaeonid. They told that an attack on Syracuse with so little forces as Laches had, even reinforced by the allied troops, was preposterous. Syracuse was very powerful, and the town had a large fleet. The Athenian fleet was far too small to be a match for the Syracusan war navy. They chided Laches then, for Laches had only set foot on Sicily in the northeast of the Trinacria, the island's triangle, far from Syracuse. Laches could not even hold a naval base on Sicilian territory, for he stayed comfortably at Rhegium in Italy, on the other side of the Sea. Did Laches have magical powers to create hoplites out of dust?

Then the men gave true information to Alcibiades. They said that they had held a meeting at Leontini with all the Ionian allies of Sicily. They had sent delegates to Athens to tell the Assembly that the war was exhausting them and could not go on for



long. They had asked Athens to bring a more important army. The real news here was that the allies had done this without consulting Laches. In Athens, the embassy might be considered an overt blame for Laches, a blame for being unable to lead the war to completion in Sicily.

The Assembly had no idea of the challenges that Sicily presented. Few if any people in the Assembly knew even how large Sicily was. Most of the Athenian citizens might well believe that Sicily was an island not larger than Delos or Lesbos. There was much truth and good sense however in the message of the Sicilian allies. Laches's army was indeed too small to accomplish anything but the limited success and control the general and his commanders had been able to secure.

Alcibiades listened in silence and stayed lost in thoughts afterwards. Then, he praised the wisdom of the leaders of Leontini. The conversation came to an end. Further talks were necessary, however, to prepare the new campaigns that Laches had planned and for which allies were needed. Meetings were arranged the next days with the generals and their commanders.

Alcibiades returned to the hostel, but a messenger arrived there somewhat later to invite Alcibiades and his servants to occupy a house that Leontini had put at their disposal. Alcibiades moved with his group into a fine house close to the agora. He discussed for two more days with the Leontinian generals on how to coordinate their actions and where. They talked about the weaknesses of the Syracusan army and the flaws in its allies.

Alcibiades also told the Leontinians about his adventure on Mount Etna. The Leontinians assured him they had heard about the eruptions. Etna had erupted for the first time in fifty years and, since the Hellenes had colonised Sicily, they had knowledge of only three such eruptions.

The meetings finished. Alcibiades was invited to a symposium with the generals. He told the more pro-Athenian generals at the drinking party that he would return to Messina over Catana and bade them to keep his journey secret. He made sure only to get moderately drunk at the symposium.

Alcibiades feared that by now the news of his arrival in Leontini had spread throughout the town and he also feared that pro-Syracusan magistrates and spies might have learned of his presence. He left rapidly therefore, immediately after his negotiations. He loaded once more his wagons, and left by the road to Catana. He split off that road soon, and took the direction of Syracuse. No pursuit party would suspect him of being so bold as to enter the lion's head.

He reached Syracuse from the north, staying in the plains of Catana and admiring still the richness of agriculture of this territory. He arrived at the River Arapus, followed its bed a short time and saw the peninsula that extended into the Sea and on which Syracuse was situated. All along the river he also saw stretches of papyrus plant fields, cultivated by the Syracusans. He travelled past the gates and the formidable walls. Syracuse had the strongest and highest walls he had ever seen. The walls were more imposing than Athens' walls! He proceeded from there to a quarter called Achradine.

Achradine was the quarter of the businessmen of Syracuse. It was the richest part of the town where most business was conducted. It had its own small port, the Trogilos, and it was crowded with all sorts of men: Hellenes, Sicilians, Phoenicians, and even

Persians and Egyptians. Here, Alcibiades could blend with the traders. The district was fortified separately, the port was heavily guarded.

Alcibiades settled his party in an inn and took his mistress for a walk in the city. He knew that in Syracuse women were forbidden to wear golden ornaments and coloured robes, so he took her with him in a decent white tunic and himation and veiled her in equally humble shawls. She had protested at being so modest, but she truly liked being with him and enjoyed the scenery as much as he. They passed on their walk by the Temple of Zeus, the Prytaneion of Syracuse, a large theatre, the Agora and its stoa buildings. Alcibiades and his wife walked from there into another quarter.

Alcibiades had become quite intimate with his mistress on this voyage. He had conquered dangers with her and they had travelled under stress. Alcibiades admired her posture now. After the first frights of the streams of Pyriphlegethon on Etna, she had done well. She had not panicked for long, and she had been efficient with the children and the women. She had truly helped him. They had exchanged several knowing glances on that way. He had never really talked to her at Rhegium. He had not been interested in her life-story. He had just used her and they had had fun together. Now, he began to talk to her and to take a real interest in the woman.

Her name was Theodote. He was surprised, for she was actually Athenian born, and told him she had heard of him a long time ago already. She knew of his connections to Pericles the Great. She had accompanied a wealthy trader to Italy. The merchant had died, leaving her in a dire situation. She had been lucky finding Alcibiades, for all her money had dwindled. She was several years older than Alcibiades, more mature than he was in many matters, and she cared for life whereas he cared for nothing. She knew how to handle men with delicacy and politeness and had made him no remarks. Now she asked where his rage to seek danger and put his life at stake so often came from. In what originated his audacity, his brashness, his carelessness and his arrogance?

Alcibiades bowed his head, but he did not answer that question. He told her he enjoyed her company, and to leave it at that. Along the days and nights, he also invited her to give her opinions on politics of Athens and of Italy. He was each time astonished at the acute and correct answers he received, also on military topics. They got along very well.

Alcibiades saw Tyche, the most populous quarter of the city, its lighthouse and defence towers. He walked into Neapolis with its temples and theatre, onto the island of Ortygia. Ortygia contained the most ancient part of the city, and also the acropolis. Ortygia was an island, but it was being joined to the mainland. He saw Epipolai, the quarter on the heights of the city with its formidable fortifications around the fort Euryalos. Everywhere he went, he remarked high, strong, thick walls around the city. Syracuse had no flaws in its defences. The island of Ortygia half enclosed the bay that was the harbour of Syracuse, its Great Harbour. That harbour was marvellous for ships and extremely well defended.

When Alcibiades arrived in the harbour, he had to stand still in surprise and admiration. His mouth fell open. His mistress looked at him knowingly. Tens of ships, merchant boats and triremes stood at the quays in the shimmering, calm water. The

Syracusans could take pride in a harbour that was larger than the three harbours of Piraeus together. Syracuse also could close the harbour to foreign ships.

Alcibiades found the arsenal of Syracuse and he walked closer to it, despite the occasional guards. It was smaller than the arsenal of Athens, but much naval gear lay outside on the ground near the arsenal building. Many ship-sheds were situated close to the arsenal. Triremes were being built here. The sheds were filled with sailors and carpenters, feverishly working at new ships. Syracuse was building a new military navy!

Alcibiades saw how about thirty new triremes, large triremes, were being built at the same time. Laches had at the most twenty triremes of his own. With this new fleet and with their existing ships, Syracusan forces would outnumber several times the Athenian presence in Sicily.

Alcibiades now understood even better why the Leontinians had laughed at him. Not only could the Syracusans with this fleet defeat Laches at any time they desired, but Syracuse was impregnable to sieges held by even very considerable forces. Syracuse was not Potidaea and not Mytilene. It was a grand city the size of Athens, with Athens' knowledge of the Sea and with army forces comparable to those of Athens. Syracuse could not be conquered by a hoplite army. Syracuse could of course be surrounded. Access by land and Sea could be blocked, and the city might be starved. Alcibiades doubted that the harbour could be entirely blocked, though, and that was indispensable for the surrender of the town. Small boats could get through almost any sea blockade, and this town could hold considerable food reserves. Syracuse could muster a fleet of as much as a hundred triremes, maybe more, and it could count on more ships still from its Sicilian allies. The Sicilian allies of Syracuse might attack in the rear any circumvallating army. War with Syracuse would have to be a war of attrition first to subdue Syracuse's allied towns.

Alcibiades's wife drew at his arm, for he had remained too long in thoughts and she needed attention. He turned and kissed her on the mouth, then showing her the signs of tenderness that made bystanders more comfortable. She was not a little surprised at that, for he had never showed her any signs of tenderness. He had never kissed her. He had taken her, but never caressed her or touched her tenderly. She looked at him inquisitively. Was this a beginning of love? Where was this strange man leading her to?

Alcibiades walked on, around the quays of the harbour. Everywhere he saw the fine organisation, the clean tools, good artisan work, and almost military order. Alcibiades looked and looked, but he discovered no way, no means by which this city could be taken by storm. The fortifications were simply too formidable. Storming the harbour would be impossible: any enemy ship would be spotted from far.

The town occupied its heights of Epipolae and it manned formidable forts up there. It could rely as its last resort on its island of Ortygia with its acropolis and forts if the first line walls were captured. No army could take Ortygia and its acropolis.

Alcibiades whistled involuntarily. He had never expected this.

Syracuse was as formidable a town as Athens, and it brandished the power of a Sparta. It was a town of professional sailors, of sturdy, stocky citizens who had remained independent and free for so long that they would never accept any domination without a major war. The town controlled land vaster than Attica!

But what a prize would this city be for Athens! Syracuse and Sicily formed a prize as grand as Athens dominated in the east, in the Ionian Islands and its cities. With Syracuse, Athens would be invincible. Without Syracuse, it faced a constant threat of a growing sea-power allied to Sparta in its back. Just how much was Syracuse allied to Sparta? Alcibiades returned with his wife to the inn. The next days he thought of how to find traders here, and to start discussing commerce.

Two days later Alcibiades entered an inn near the harbour to drink a cup of wine. He asked for Etna wine. The inn-keeper made no remarks on his Ionian dialect. Around Alcibiades several languages were spoken anyhow, Dorian, Ionian, Phoenician alike, and in various dialects. A group of Sicilian merchants were discussing trade with Ionian merchants in a tongue that Alcibiades understood. Alcibiades followed the conversation a while, but he learned nothing important. He drank his wine and wanted to leave, when another group of merchants came in and sat at a table close to his. These men spoke of the war. Alcibiades only understood pieces of the phrases, but he was surprised at the subject of the conversation.

The men were discussing the relations between Syracuse and Carthago. It seemed there were growing tensions between the Phoenician city of Africa and the traders of Sicily. Syracuse was a prize for Athens, but a greater still for Carthago. Carthago was looking with hungry eyes at the wealth of Sicily. Syracuse in particular was a trading rival in the western parts of the Sea. The men expected sooner or later an invasion in Sicily of a Carthaginian fleet. They discussed how Syracuse could defend itself against Carthago. The men mentioned not once a threat from Athens. Their hereditary enemy was Carthago and not Athens, even though Syracuse was a Corinthian colony. That was new for Alcibiades, whose centre of the world was Athens. Here, people were talking as if Athens was a non-entity, no issue compared to the threat of yet another city he had not even thought of before, Carthago.

The conversation went on and on in this way and Alcibiades could not longer keep quiet.

He spoke out to the men and interjected, ‘you speak of Carthago. But an Athenian fleet is in Sicily now! Isn’t Athens a greater threat to Syracuse than Carthago?’ The men laughed and chuckled, ‘Athens? We sell and buy many things from Athens and Athens is far away! Sure, Athens is a threat because she thinks Syracuse can be conquered easily. But Sicily is large and cannot be gobbled up so readily. Athens will understand that, given time. Athens doesn’t comprehend the power of Syracuse and of Carthago. Carthago has a fleet that is much more important than the Athenian fleet. So far, the Phoenicians have not meddled with the war between Athens and Sparta because the war weakens those two hegemonies, and Carthago will grow richer by the day and stronger. There may be a war between Sicily and Athens, but for us that war will not be decisive! Decisive will be the war with Carthago.’

Another man said, ‘Athens! There is an Athenian fleet at Rhegium, which stings us like a flea stings a goat but not much more! Athens has not even one campaigning base in Sicily! They have not dared set up camp in Sicily. They stay on the mainland. We shifted our grain route of ships to the east over the southern route, and everybody is pleased. No, Athens is no real threat. They are too much occupied by Sparta and they have their hands full trying to keep the eastern towns and islands of their empire from rebelling. Our true, most dangerous enemy that is lurking and waiting with the eyes of a glutton, is Carthago!’

Alcibiades bought the men a cup of wine and he joined them at their table. He explained that he was a merchant from Thurii, from Locrian descent. He said he was a trader, and that peaked their interest. Soon, two men were discussing trading arrangements with him. He was interested in wool, in Etna wine, in papyrus, and a little later he was buying a corn transport that would bring him huge revenue. He was doing business in the inn, and he learnt more about the war. He received other names and addresses of Syracusan traders.

It was clear to Alcibiades that the Syracusans did not fear the capture of their city by the Athenians. The Syracusans lived in the comfort of their walls, protected by their fleet, and their army. They had confidence in their skills as warriors and as sailors. They feared much more Carthago in the long run, only Carthago. Carthago possessed a fleet larger than any force that could be assembled by the Hellenes. The Carthaginian fleet was several times larger than the Syracusan fleet. Almost every merchant ship of Carthago was a war ship. Carthago was immensely wealthy and could pay formidable mercenary troops.

Syracuse was a Corinthian colony, but it was a democracy now, so Syracuse showed some sympathy for Athens. Alcibiades wondered whether an alliance with Athens would be among the possibilities here, if only to secure and support Syracuse against Carthago. Surely the joined fleets of Syracuse and Athens would be a match for Phoenician threats! The Syracusans might see the advantage of a joint Athenian-Syracusan alliance to defend Sicily against Carthago. Such an alliance might be an effective deterrent for the Carthaginian ambitions over Sicily.

Alcibiades visited several other traders. He received more names of merchants, friends of friends, and he talked with the men about commercial agreements to bring goods to Thurii. He continued to talk with them about Carthago. After those few days however, he feared for being remarked. He feared he would receive too much attention in Syracuse harbour, from its traders to its military leaders. He saw the first signs of questions concerning his presence, the first suspicions, and the first discrete investigations among other Thuriian merchants about his background. He also feared his servants and mistress might have become more familiar with the Syracusans and have aroused suspicions through innocent remarks. Unexpectedly, he ordered his servants to pack and he left some time later with his wagons and horses.

Alcibiades and Theodote left Syracuse. He travelled north, ostensibly towards Catana, but he lingered in the harbour of a small port town between the two cities and waited for his ship to arrive. The boat had been delayed, but it moored in the port the next day. Alcibiades was relieved to board the merchant ship. It took a day to unload the ship's cargo, but the same evening the boat left the harbour, with Alcibiades and his group. They had an uneventful return to Messina.

At Messina, Alcibiades dismissed his servants. He loaded his mistress with jewels of silver and Locrian gold to thank her for having joined him on the dangerous trip, and he embarked with her on another ship bound for Rhegium. He was glad to be back home, to be back among familiar faces, among Athenian hoplites and sailors. He went to see Laches to give his report. Laches was astonished at seeing Alcibiades back and he remained open-mouthed at everything Alcibiades told him. Laches had half expected Alcibiades to be caught and be killed by the Sicilians.

Laches remained very thoughtful at all the news and information that Alcibiades brought with him. His eyes widened when Alcibiades told him that the Sicilian Ionians had sent ambassadors to Athens, behind his back. He doubted he would be appointed general again in spring after such an embassy of complaints. The information on Syracuse and on the situation in Sicily interested him only moderately, since he surmised he would be called back to Athens. Athens could hardly not respond in some way to the Sicilian plea. They would have to send reinforcements to Sicily, if only token forces, Athens would have to send another general. His days were counted in Rhegium. Laches was certain that without a very substantial new fleet and new troops, nothing more could be accomplished than what he had done so far. But Athens would win precious time once more. Laches understood that he could do nothing against the logic of politics. He wondered when his time in Rhegium would be up. He still had to secure what he had won however, and he sensed that the pressure of the Epizephyrian Locrians on Rhegium was mounting. His campaigning was not over yet.

Laches shrugged off Alcibiades's proposals to seek an alliance between Syracuse and Athens. For Laches, Syracuse was Corinthian and Dorian, and an alliance between such a crucial Dorian city and Athens was unthinkable, not so much from an Athenian as from a Syracusan and Spartan standpoint. Laches was convinced that Corinth and Sparta could easily persuade Syracuse to stay on their side. Alcibiades was of the opinion that a good orator could find the right arguments to interest the Syracusans and make them consider an alliance. Laches, however, did not change his mind. Such an alliance would have to be decided in Athens, in the Assembly, and the proposal was contrary to all traditional lines of thought of Athens and of Spartan allies.

Alcibiades transformed from ambassador to warrior. He saw Hipparchos back a little later, because Hipparchos had been patrolling around Locri. The two men embraced. Hipparchos was worn out, however. He had fallen in ambush and skirmish after skirmish. The Locrians became more audacious by the day, attacking Athenian garrisons by day and night. Alcibiades and Hipparchos had quiet days while Hipparchos remained in Rhegium, though. They organised feasts and symposiums and lived a pleasant life with their mistresses. They called in other women of Rhegium and Messina to entertain them. Rhegium marvelled at the reputation of the two knight warriors in their house on the hill of Rhegium harbour. They were brave and brilliant, and no fine daughter of Rhegium or Messina was safe from them.

## **Laches**

Laches stayed at Rhegium until the winter of his second year in Sicily. He decided now to show that he could pain the Syracusans closer to their home territory. He decided to penetrate deeper into Sicily with military actions. He gathered an important number of men and sailed with his war galleys to a beach south of Catana. There, his army assembled with another contingent of Sicilian troops that had revolted against Syracuse. He marched against the inland town of Inessa.

The acropolis of Inessa was occupied by Syracusan troops. Inessa was but an outpost of Syracuse in rather inhospitable land. Laches reckoned that he could cause the Syracusan more worries by diminishing gradually their zones of influence and capture

or harass smaller town after smaller town. He had not enough men and especially not enough triremes to attack Syracuse directly.

Alcibiades and Hipparchos led battalions for Laches once more. Alcibiades, now entirely recovered from his wounds, preferred to ride on horseback here, and scout the environs of the advancing army. The army marched, and as they arrived at Inessa from the south, the Athenians saw the monstrous landscape that Alcibiades had fled before. The enormous fire mountain of Etna rose before their eyes. The cone was completely covered by ash and it had built up so high that the top was covered with snow. Even Laches was impressed. Many an Athenian hoplite felt his neck-hairs rise whenever he looked up at the might of Mount Etna.

When the Athenians arrived at Inessa, they saw a very well defended town. The acropolis formed a part of the fortifications of the town. Inessa would have to be stormed. Laches set up camp in the face of the defenders and he prepared for an assault. Long ladders were made in haste.

Early next morning, at the rise of the sun, Laches gave the signal. First, the Sicilian archers and slingers advanced, sending tens of arrows against the parapets. Then, the Athenians and their Sicilian allies ran forward with their ladders. Alcibiades ran with them but he was not in the first ranks. While the men ran, the defenders shot arrows and small stones at them. Many hoplites fell.

The Athenians, however, continued to advance, so that soon most of them stood right under the walls of Inessa. They could not be reached there by the arrows from the walls, because the Inessaean and Syracusan archers had to come in positions in which they were less protected from the Athenian archers, and many a bold Syracusan archer was shot before he could do harm. The walls of Inessa were fortified by towers, however. From holes in these towers the Syracusans shot arrows still onto the attackers and these archers stayed in well protected positions. The defenders caused much harm to the Athenian allies, and many warriors were killed right at the walls. When Alcibiades reached the contours of the town, many ladders were erected one next to the other against the walls and the Athenian hoplites were climbing up like ants. The Athenian hoplites were perched on the rungs, in the air. They climbed up to the parapets. The defenders then threw everything they had in their hands at the heads of the attackers: large, sharp stones, oil, bricks, balls of fire, wooden beams. They used long poles with hooks to tear at the ladders and, as the Athenians below did not dare so much to shoot arrows lest they would hurt their own, the Inessaean archers got bolder and hung over the walls, picked more targets.

This was the heath of the battle of battles. It was the confrontation in which all energy had to be spent on both sides in all intensity, in a short, crucial few moments of time. Alcibiades waited below a ladder to mount in his turn, but he saw all ladders being overturned, downed or burnt, and the men on the sports being pitilessly targeted by the defenders. No ladder stayed right. The men fell with angry cries and with shouts of anguish, and they fell into the rubble of stones and burning beams below, where they broke their backs. If the Athenians continued like this, they would only continue to be slaughtered. The walls were too high, too well defended and defended by too many men for such a small circumference. The Syracusans had brought too many battalions to Inessa.

Alcibiades looked to the side of the Acropolis, and he saw everywhere the same image. The Athenians and their Sicilian allies were being massacred. They got no

higher. There was no Athenian on a parapet. Laches also had seen the futility of this attack. He stood, like Alcibiades, at the base of the walls. He gave the signal of the retreat and the warriors ran away from the walls, bearing the less wounded. They left their dead and a chaos of debris at the base of Inessa's impregnable defences.

The Athenian army withdrew to its camp. Alcibiades and Hipparchos wondered then whether Laches would lay a siege to the town. Laches called his commanders together. He told them he could not hold a siege to the city. He feared Syracusan reinforcements and a major battle in which he would have to face far superior numbers of Sicilian hoplites. The Athenians might build a double counter-wall around Inessa, but he was not sure there was enough time for that before they would be attacked in their turn by superior troops. He was far from his own home base, whereas Inessa was very close to Syracuse. If he stayed here too long, he could organise no further campaigns. He ran the risk of losing the initiative on the grain route. He ordered the withdrawal from Inessa.

The Athenians were disappointed, but they understood Laches's wise logic. They withdrew to the Sea, to their ships. The allied troops would support them in the rear. Their allies would then march to their respective towns over land. While this manoeuvre was set into operation, the Syracusans from the Acropolis of Inessa ran out and attacked the rear guard of the Athenian army, constituted mainly of Athenian allies, and they defeated and killed many of them. Alcibiades and Hipparchos were with the main force of the Athenians and they were already on board of the triremes when this happened. Like at Lipara, this expedition was not very successful. Laches had to confront true Syracusan forces for the first time, and he had not been able to defeat the obstinate, courageous Sicilians. The Athenians sailed back to Rhegium.

At the end of the winter and close to spring of the next year, Laches ordered once every while limited campaigns against the Italian Locrians, who continued to be a nuisance and a menace to the territory of Rhegium.

In one of those expeditions, Laches and Alcibiades sailed out with two hundred hoplites. They landed near Locri. They marched upwards along the River Caïcinus. Laches had heard from his Italian allies that a large, well organised force of Locrians had gathered there, led by Proxenus son of Capeton. The Athenians marched two days upstream in marvellous landscapes through idyllic but arid country. They arrived at a small valley that led into a plain. The plain was bordered with low but rocky hills at its end, and the hills were covered with low bushes. The whole battalion of Athenians marched into the plain.

It was hot, around noon, and the Athenians wanted to rest and to drink at ease at the top of the hills beyond the plain. Before they arrived at the foot of the rocks however, the hills covered with warriors. The Locrians held the hills and gave every sign of wanting to deliver a battle here. They had the advantage of the terrain. The Athenians were tired from the march. They were thirsty and if they desired to develop the initiative here, they would have to run uphill, slowly, strenuously, and be the targets of arrows and javelins all the way up. Once more the Athenians had been surprised by lack of scouting cavalry. Alcibiades cursed, for in this vast country advancing without cavalry was a constant risk. Yet, the Athenians still had not grasped the advantage of cavalry. If they were surprised, well then they were surprised. They had no idea how to avoid surprises.



Laches counted impassibly on the impatience of the Locrians. He ordered his men in phalanx formation and waited. The men had still enough to drink for the day. Laches told them to drink at ease. The men made signs of defiance to the Locrians, daring them to come down the hills and fight in the plain. The patience of the Locrians did not last for long. Shouting terrible war cries, they flowed down the hills, running as fast as they could, and they attacked the Athenians from all sides on a broad front. It was a wild, simple frontal attack.

The Athenian phalanx moved, broadened out so that it could not be surrounded, and Laches reinforced the centre phalanx, where Alcibiades stood. This centre would have to bear the grunt of the attack.

The Athenians waited quietly, confident in their superior armour, discipline and skills of combat. In battles like this, they could be defeated only by far superior numbers of warriors or by Spartiate phalanxes. The Locrians were no Spartans. They ran like a mad bull against a solid wall.

The Athenians did not give way one step when the Locrians slammed into them. Many a Locrian ran his belly into a diligent Athenian spear. The Athenians held well in those first moments. They closed their shields together, and any Locrian that passed the line of shields was instantly stabbed to death by the second row. The Athenians used their butt spikes to kill fallen Locrians.

Alcibiades gave an order, and to the amazement of the Locrians the Athenians did not step backwards but started to advance, pushing forward with all their might. While they marched, they continued to stab with their spears each time they saw a Locrian unprotected. Most Locrians wore only light armour, smaller round shields, leather breastplates, no shoulder protection and little protection of arms and legs. The Athenian solid first line in which Alcibiades stood let some Locrians through, just enough of them to be immediately slaughtered by the row of hoplites behind. They thus released pressure before them and stepped slowly forward. The first rank only played a defensive role while advancing, but it advanced and had a daunting effect on the enemy. All along the line this same scenario was developed by the Athenians. The Locrians were being killed, without mercy, in large numbers.

The Locrians stepped backwards, which handicapped them in their fighting, and they were gradually so much being pushed back and so much in the disadvantage, that finally, mad with frustration, they broke off the engagement and fled. The Athenians threw their spears and javelins at their backs. Then they dropped their shield and lance and ran after the routed enemy, killing or maiming the fleeing Locrians.

The Locrian army of Proxenus was annihilated and Proxenus lay killed on the battlefield. The Athenians even reached the camp of the Locrians, where the Locrians had stayed a considerable time. They found many weapons there, which they recuperated. Then they withdrew, set up a trophy with the weapons and armour of the enemy and returned to their ships. A day later they sailed back to Rhegium.

That same winter Laches also attacked the territory of Himera, a town in the north-west of Sicily but much further to the west still than he had gone so far. Again, he wanted to make his influence to be felt on the northern coast of the island. His Sicilian friends attacked Himera from the interior of the land. Laches did not risk anew losing his face standing before a walled town and an acropolis. Having too few men to take well-defended walls by storm, he merely destroyed the countryside to show that he could do whatever he wished on the northern coast of Sicily, and then he sailed home.

The Himeraeans could piss down their walls on the Athenians, but the Syracusans had not thwarted Laches from destroying their properties. Syracuse lost much face with its allies. Confidence in Syracuse was put into doubt.

On his way back to Rhegium, Laches led his triremes again past the Liparaean Islands. He rowed straight into the harbour of Lipara and destroyed the town a second time. When he arrived back in Rhegium, a surprise waited for him.

### **Pythodorus**

Laches discovered in Rhegium that a new Athenian general had arrived and had been waiting for him. The man was called Pythodorus son of Isolochus. The Leontinians had succeeded, as Laches had expected, in persuading the Athenian Assembly to send reinforcements to Sicily. The Assembly had decided to send forty triremes to Athens, thinking that the war in Sicily could be over by the actions of this fleet. Pythodorus had come with a few triremes to take over command instantly from Laches. The main force would come later, led by two other generals, by Sophocles son of Sostratidas and Eurymedon son of Thucles. Pythodorus had scrolls with him from the Assembly, ordering Laches to hand over command to Pythodorus. Laches packed immediately, said goodbye to his troops and to the fleet, and returned with the first merchant boat bound for Athens.

Thus the second winter of Alcibiades in Sicily ended and a new year set in with a new general leading the Athenian fleet at Rhegium. At the very end of the winter, just after he had arrived, Pythodorus sailed out with his troops against the Locrian fort that Laches had captured before. He left without Alcibiades and without Hipparchos, Laches's preferred commanders and veterans.

Twenty days later, Alcibiades and Hipparchos stood at the corridor of their house overlooking the harbour, dressed in long tunics, a cup of wine in their hand and one arm around their mistresses. They saw Pythodorus return with the wounded remains of his troops. It was a sorry sight.

Pythodorus had been defeated by the Locrians. It was the first Athenian defeat since Charoeades had been killed in battle. Alcibiades and Hipparchos remained confined to guard duties at Rhegium however. Nobody asked for their advice.

Alcibiades received a new letter from his cousin.

*Alcibiades,*

*The Oracle told Athens that we would have to purify Delos to have better luck in the war. So, this winter, Athens ordered to dig up all the tombs of those that had died in Delos. It was furthermore officially forbidden to have births and deaths on the island. Athens burst out in laughter at that, and jokes swept around, saying that when one wanted to live eternally one had to go to live on Delos. When an innocent man took up the joke, the teller would add, however, that he would have to forsake nature's greatest pleasure too, since births were also not allowed on Delos. Our good fathers of the Assembly had not suddenly power over life and death, however. The Delians*

*had to be born and to die on another island nearby, on Rhenea. After the purification, we celebrated the Delian Games.*

*This winter, the Ambraciots marched with a large army against the Amphilochian Argos. The Acarnanians leapt to the relief of Argos. They asked for Demosthenes to lead them and they also asked help from twenty Athenian ships coursing off the Peloponnesos.*

*The Peloponnesians under Eurylochus marched then to the support of the Ambraciots at Olpae. For five days both armies looked at each other and on the sixth day, they prepared for battle. Demosthenes set up an ambush with some of his troops and when the battle was given, he retreated when he was seemingly outflanked, to lead the enemy into the trap. Eurylochus was killed and the Peloponnesians, the Ambraciots and other allies utterly defeated with great loss of men. Eurylochus's command was taken over by Menedaius, who asked for a truce. Demosthenes made a secret agreement with Menedaius to let the most important people among the Peloponnesians, and also the Mantineans, leave without harm.*

*In the meantime, Demosthenes heard that a large additional army of Ambraciots marched against him. This new army did not know, however, of the defeat of its friends. The Peloponnesians and Mantineans now ran away, but the Ambraciots followed them so that the Acarnanians, thinking that the terms of the truce had been violated, attacked them and killed many of them.*

*Demosthenes attacked the new Ambraciot army in the mountains of Amphilochia. He routed that army too and killed many of them. This proved to be a great disaster for the Ambraciots, and a major victory for Demosthenes.*

*Demosthenes could have seized Ambracia then, so large were the numbers of Ambraciot warriors killed, but the Acarnanians and the Amphilochians believed that if the Athenians overtook the territory, they would have an even more powerful neighbour than the Ambraciots. So they persuaded Demosthenes to not march into the territory. The Amphilochians and Acarnanians signed a peace and mutual defence treaty for a hundred years with the remaining Ambraciots.*

*Those were the main events of this winter. Athens has a new hero now: Demosthenes. The Athenians who would have banished Demosthenes right away after his defeat against the Aetolians, now even proposed to erect a statue in his honour on the acropolis. Demosthenes is young, handsome, brave and very lucky. He showed that he could rally the peoples that are our allies to procure him troops, and with these lightly armed men he could defeat more heavily armed hoplite troops. He has not yet proven his skills against the hoplites of Sparta or Corinth, however. He has not always won battles, but he won most of the time and with little expense to Athens. He begins to be something of a half god in Athens. He is the only general to bring us victories at no cost. This is quite a change for our city, which has only received from its generals little victories and as many defeats at huge cost.*

*Wishing you well,  
Your Euryptolemus son of Peisianax*

The next summer, while Pythodorus sat tight at Rhegium, ten Syracusan and ten Locrian war ships recaptured Messina without resistance, invited to do so by the inhabitants. The Syracusans had instigated this return of their ally, for they feared finally that Athens might use Messina to attack them with larger forces from out of that town. Their spies had heard by now of the arrival of Athenian reinforcements. Syracusan spies in Athens had learned about Leontini's demand for new Athenian troops, and the Syracusans had acted rapidly.

The Locrians continued to make war on the Athenians of Rhegium, not only on land but also by sea. Alcibiades and Hipparchos led cavalry battalions now, and did what they could in perpetual skirmishes to fend off the Locrians. They learned the hard way how to lead cavalry forces, how to disperse and concentrate and combine their actions. They needed all their intelligence, and the Locrians came to fear them.

In late summer, the Athenian reinforcements had still not arrived in Sicily. The Syracusans had built the fleet that Alcibiades had seen under construction in the ship-sheds of Syracuse's harbour. The Syracusans sailed with this fleet to Messina, to continue from there the war with Pythodorus's army. The Syracusans urged the Athenians to a battle. They had now thirty triremes, whereas Pythodorus only had sixteen Athenian triremes and eight Rhegium ships. The Athenian sailors were still the best in the world, however.

The Syracusans lost one ship in the first naval battle, but that was enough, and they retreated rapidly to the safety of Messina. Their ships were scattered by the battle but all came together at Cape Pelorus near Messina. The Athenians attacked again, but now it was their turn to lose a trireme. The Syracusans learned rapidly how to fight Athenians at sea. The Syracusans moved and fled, and the Athenians attacked again. But the Syracusans turned and sank another Athenian ship.

The Syracusans gathered back in Messina and set up base there. The Athenian fleet sailed to Camarina because its commanders heard that this allied town was going to be betrayed to the Syracusans. They prevented that Camarina would fall to Syracuse, but the Athenians understood now clearly that Syracuse was getting anxious to step up the war in Sicily.

The Syracusan leaders lost no occasion to harass the Athenians. While the Athenian fleet was away, the Messinians attacked Naxos. At first, the Messinians met good success with their campaign. They drove the Naxians to within their walls and devastated their country. But the Sicilians who were allied to Naxos came to the town's help from out of the mountains. The Naxians sallied from behind their walls then, attacked the Messinians with superior forces and routed and killed a large number of them. The Messinians fled back to their town.

The Sicilian allies, led by the Leontinians and aided also by the Athenian fleet, attacked Messina some time later. The Messinian and a few Locrian troops that had been sent to the town attacked unexpectedly from out of Messina, confronted the Leontinians and defeated them. The Leontinians were routed in their turn and great numbers of them were killed. The Athenians landed their troops and supported the Leontinians. Pythodorus attacked the Messinians while they were still in pursuit of the Leontinians. The Messinians formed a disorganised group, whereas the Athenians attacked them in good discipline and drove them back within their walls. The Athenians then returned to Rhegium.

After these engagements, which were limited but costly to the Athenians, Pythodorus took no further action to wage war in Sicily. The Hellenes of Sicily warred upon each other but the Athenian army did not intervene anymore. Alcibiades and Hipparchos remained in their house of Rhegium, under the far and vague orders of Pythodorus, but they only served as commanders of the guards. They considered returning to Athens. They lived a pleasant life of little military duty and much leisure, during which they seduced the women and daughters of the magistrates and merchants of Rhegium. They organised every few days famous drinking parties and they passed the rest of the time in the gymnasium of Rhegium, exercising their fine bodies with athletes and in wrestling contests. They grew new muscles. They bred horses outside Rhegium and they became better riders than ever. They formed a fine cavalry battalion, specialised in isolated scouting, and they fought the Locrians in limited but bloody skirmishes on horseback.

In that summer Alcibiades received another letter from his cousin Euryptolemus.

*Alcibiades,*

*During the spring of this year, King Agis son of Archidamus, has invaded Attica, as his father did the previous years. He laid waste to the land with his savage troops and we did nothing to stop him.*

*I guess you may have expected some reinforcements to your Sicilian army. Those reinforcements have been gathered but will not come soon! Here is why.*

*Eurymedon and Sophocles indeed sailed out to Sicily with forty ships. But sixty Peloponnesian ships arrived at Corcyra and that was a serious issue, for Athens had also ordered our fleet to land at Corcyra to settle the situation there. Eurymedon and Sophocles wanted to sail anyhow to Corcyra, but the wild Demosthenes had other plans. He wanted to land at Pylos!*

*Pylos is situated at about three hundred stades to the south-west of Sparta, in the land of the Messenians. The Messenians are allies and friends of Demosthenes since ever. Imagine Athenian hoplites so close to Sparta! Eurymedon and Sophocles objected and refused to land at Pylos, but Demosthenes's proverbial luck held. A sea storm drove the Athenians to Pylos. Demosthenes held the men there, and he fortified the place. This happened while the main Spartan army was still killing and burning in Attica. Demosthenes was left behind at Pylos with five ships. Eurymedon and Sophocles hurried to Corcyra. The Spartan army rapidly returned from Attica, and Sparta also sent its sixty ships from Corcyra to Pylos. Demosthenes however had also warned Eurymedon in time, so Eurymedon sailed from Corcyra back to Pylos, and not to Sicily. You shall have to wait some more, Alcibiades! The Athenian and Spartan fleets sailed, but they did not meet each other at Sea.*

*Demosthenes, meanwhile, tugged his small force behind his fortifications, and the Spartans arranged their troops and ships around the Island of Sphacteria. The Spartans attacked Pylos with forty-three ships under their navarch Thrasytelidas son of Cratesicles. Demosthenes had to defend himself from the side of the land and from the Sea. In the fight that ensued, Brasidas, the greatest hero of Sparta, was severely wounded as he landed. His shield fell into the water and it was later picked up by the*

*Athenians, who used it in their trophy. Demosthenes and his men stood firm, and the Spartans had to give up capturing Pylos after two days of hard fighting.*

*The Athenian fleet from Zacynthus arrived now with fifty ships, and the next days this fleet attacked the Spartans. The Athenians defeated also the Spartan fleet, and they destroyed so many ships that there was much confusion in the Spartan army. The situation evolved then in such a way, that a large force of Spartan hoplites got trapped on the island of Sphacteria. These were the rests of the original army, and the Spartan fleet was unable to rescue them off the island!*

*There were however still many forces on land, in front of Pylos. The Spartans sent generals to negotiate an armistice with Demosthenes and they sent ambassadors to Athens to start peace talks. An armistice was arranged at Pylos. The Spartans promised not to attack Pylos further, and the Athenians allowed the Spartans to bring provisions and rations to their men and commanders who remained trapped on Sphacteria. The Spartans left their ships in the hands of the Athenians as a guarantee of the armistice. The truce would last until the end of the peace negotiations in Athens.*

*It was the Assembly that decided on the fate of the Spartans, Alcibiades. It was Cleon's heyday! I have never seen somebody so vehement about war and violence and hatred in the Assembly. He argued to demand the surrender of the Spartans of Sphacteria. Sparta would also have to give back to Athens such cities as Nisaea, Pegae, Troezen and Achaea. Of course, that brought an end to the peace talks, and the Spartans left as quickly as they had come. That also meant an end to the armistice at Pylos. The Athenians there refused to give back the Spartan ships.*

*There was a standoff in Pylos. The Athenians had it very hard at that site. There was little water within the fortifications, there was not much space, and the hoplites were crammed together, it was difficult to moor the ships. The Spartans on Sphacteria suffered even harder, but huge rewards were offered to whoever could smuggle food and water to the island. You told me about the smuggling at Potidaea. Something like that happened here too. The Spartan helots came in small boats and in the night, and they smuggled in food for their freedom. The Spartans on the island survived, and they held their own.*

*The Athenian Assembly then took a wise decision, worthy of a theatrical comedy. They argued that since Cleon had convinced them to end the peace talks, it was now to him to clean up the mess. Cleon cried he was not afraid of the Spartans and could take Sphacteria even only with the troops present at Pylos, or lending only some Lemnians and Imbrians and peltasts from Aenus and four hundred archers. He said no Athenian hoplites were necessary. Cleon claimed he could bring the Spartans of Sphacteria back alive in twenty days, or have them all killed. This caused a great laughter in the Assembly, for Cleon is a good and passionate orator but nobody believed he was worth anything at fighting. His claim was preposterous, and I believe he only boasted on what should be possible, but the other members of the audience forced Cleon to be taken on his word. It seemed to me that Cleon's claim was directed against Demosthenes. Cleon was jealous of Demosthenes's success and therefore had said that he could take Sphacteria. Now, Cleon did a real clever thing, though. He hadn't mentioned Demosthenes in his speech, nor overly blamed him. He chose Demosthenes as his co-commander!*

*I pass over the details. Off went our Cleon with meagre, light troops and his four hundred archers, to Pylos. When Cleon arrived, Demosthenes attacked Sphacteria. The Spartans on the island were led by Epiadas. Demosthenes used his archers and his javelin throwers, all his light troops, to harass the Spartan hoplites. He never brought forward his own hoplites! The Spartans despised Demosthenes for that, but Demosthenes continued to use his light troops to attack the Spartans, who lost many men in fights from the far. The Spartans were killed by arrows and javelins, unable to retaliate in close combat. The Spartans seemed to have asked their generals on land whether they should continue to fight or surrender, and the generals answered that they could do whatever they liked as long as they preserved their honour. The Spartans continued to fight. The commander of the Messenians offered to attack the Spartans in the rear. This caused more panic among the Spartans.*

*Cleon and Demosthenes stopped the attacks and they sent a herald to propose to the Spartans that they should surrender. There was a meeting between Cleon and Demosthenes for Athens and Styphon son of Pharaoh, for the Spartan troops. Epiadas had been killed. At the end of their discussions, the Spartans of Sphacteria surrendered and they gave up their arms. About two hundred ninety Spartan hoplites were sent as prisoners to Athens. Of these a hundred and twenty were of the Spartan commander class, Spartiates. There was not a magistrate, ephor past and present, not one man of substance in Sparta who had not a close relative now in the hands of Athens! Imagine what a victory this was, Alcibiades! Cleon and Demosthenes – well, in fact Demosthenes, but Cleon ran away with all the honours – had defeated with peltasts and other light troops a vast contingent of four hundred and fifty of the best and most famous and invincible hoplites of Sparta!*

*Athens sent heralds to Sparta telling them that if the Spartan army invaded Attica again, we would kill the prisoners. When you come back, you can start breeding horses in the countryside!*

*We also kept Pylos, of course. And what a thorn that is in the side of Sparta! Any helot that is in trouble in Sparta comes running through the gates of Pylos asking on his knees for Athens' freedom. Athens accepts them with open arms and puts armour on their shoulders. Our army grows by the day! Sparta is in disarray.*

*I wish you well,*

*Euryptolemus son of Peisianax*

The troops sent in reinforcements to Sicily, led by the generals Eurymedon and Sophocles, arrived only in the winter of the year. The new squadrons settled with the rest of the army at Rhegium.

In the summer of the next year, an armistice was negotiated between the towns of Camarina and Gela. Representatives of the belligerent towns of Sicily assembled at Gela to discuss the possibility of peace in Sicily.

The delegate for Syracuse was Hermocrates son of Hermon. He spoke in favour of peace. He told that Sicily had a common enemy currently, by which all the states were

threatened, and that enemy was Athens. He said that the Athenians were watching their internal strifes, waiting to weaken them and then to use the opportunity of a weakened Sicily to impose their hegemony on the island. He proposed to live in peace on Sicily for a period as long as possible, to grow stronger by that peace, and thus to be able to guarantee the freedom of Sicily against Athens and Carthago. Syracuse was ready to make concessions, although it was a large city more inclined to dominate than to defend itself. Hermocrates asked to stop the civil war, and to be saved from the Athenian threat.

Alcibiades received a last letter from his cousin.

*Alcibiades,*

*Here is a short note to tell you what happened to the Athenian fleet that was supposed to help you in Sicily. But first: some news about Nicias.*

*During the summer of last year our forces made an expedition against the territory of Corinth. Nicias was in command of a large force. The battles were tough. One time the Corinthians had the advantage, then the Athenians. Finally, our troops defeated the Corinthians. The Athenians however left in their ships when they observed what could be reinforcements of Corinth approaching. They laid anchor at Crommyon, and devastated the country there. They built a wall across the isthmus at Methana. The Athenian garrison at those walls then carried out raids in the country. The main fleet returned to Athens.*

*Eurymedon and Sophocles could still not have arrived in Sicily, because they had to help the Corcyraeans first. The Corcyraean democrats attacked the oligarchs of their city and they took their strongholds. They made many prisoners and killed them all. They made the men walk between two lines of hoplites, and let the men be clubbed and stabbed to death. This must have been a fearful sight. The Athenian generals did not intervene! Then your generals sailed for Sicily.*

*Many events have passed in our war with Sparta to be told in a letter! The entire earth seems to be on fire!*

*We captured Persian ambassadors who were on their way to Sparta. We forced the Chians to destroy their fortifications. The exiled Mytilenes took Rhaetum but gave it back for a ransom. They also captured Antandros. Later, Nicias, Nicostratus and Autocles attacked the island of Cythera with a fleet. Scandea and Ghea surrendered to Athens. The generals laid waste to Arsine, Helius and other coastal towns. The Spartans were disheartened after their catastrophe at Sphacteria, so they offered no real resistance. The Athenian army also took Thyrea and Epidaurus Limera. Thyrea was burnt and looted, the country of Epidaurus Limera devastated. The Athenians then took with them a contingent of Aeginetans who were present in the fight at Thyrea, and our troops put to death these prisoners. The Spartan commander, Tantalus son of Patrocles, was however brought to Athens and put to join the prisoners of Sphacteria. It seems we go from victory to victory and cannot lose a battle anymore!*



*Oh yes, do you know the latest scandal in Athens?*

*Some time ago Callias son of Hipponicus, your brother-in-law married a daughter of Isomachus. He married her only for her money of course, and the girl was all but handsome. Now, scarcely ten months ago, he took her mother in his house. The woman, called Chrysilla, has a finer figure than her daughter. She is a stout lady with a daring bosom, and Callias's desire was directed at her from being so often close to her when she visited her daughter. Callias now cohabits with mother and daughter. The poor girl, the daughter, tried to kill herself, and she ran away from Callias's house. Callias will probably marry the mother, Chrysilla, now. Callias still is the richest man in Athens, but he has suffered much from the invasion of the Spartans in Attica. Callias has been severed on and off from his concessions in the silver-mines of Laurion, and severed from his estates in the country. He wastes his money on women and dinner-parties. He pays extravagant prices for the best eels and the best cunts in Athens.*

*Before his marriage, Callias lost a fortune to Phocus. Phocus caught Callias with his pants down, in bed with his, Phocus's wife. Callias hadn't expected Phocus back so soon.*

*The first thing Callias asked when he saw Phocus was, 'how much?'*  
*Phocus asked for three talents, so Callias escaped being tortured and killed. I surmise Phocus and his wife arranged it all, simply to extort money from Callias. Whatever the truth, it cost your brother-in-law a fortune, and many say that was the reason why he sought to marry in the first place!*

*Wishing you well,*

*Euryptolemus son of Peisianax*

Alcibiades laughed heartily at Callias's miseries. If there was one person in Athens who could compete with him in extravagance, it was Callias. He longed to see his brother-in-law back. He had always quarrelled with his brother-in-law, but he recognised in Callias somebody very similar to him. Still, Callias was no warrior. He had always dogged having to go on campaigns. He lived like a true Sybarite.

The Sicilian cities allied to Athens agreed to the peace proposal of Syracuse. They called on the Athenian commanders, and told them they were going to make peace and that this peace would also apply to the Athenians. They thus forced the hands of Pythodorus, Sophocles and Eurymedon. The Athenian generals could only approve the peace. The Athenian generals summoned their troops, and embarked on their ships. The expedition of Athens to Sicily was over.

## **Chapter 9 – Delium, Summer 424 BC to Spring 423 BC**

### **Hipparete**

In late summer, the Athenian fleet left the Trinacria of Sicily at peace and rowed back to Athens. Alcibiades and Hipparchos sailed home in the *Harmonia*. They were eager to return after the years of bloodbaths and constant fighting. Hipparchos owned a house in Athens, but he had been absent from it for a long time. The house was in dire need of repair. Alcibiades dreaded to return to Hipparete. The two men did not speak much in their first days in Athens, as both sought to live differently from how they had done in their last months at Rhegium. They too longed for peace and quiet for a while.

Hipparchos had become attached to his hetaera, though not sufficiently to marry her. Alcibiades was fully and more occupied with the transport of the troops out of Italy. He let Hipparchos do as he thought best with their mistresses. Without warning Alcibiades, Hipparchos shuffled the two women on a merchant ship bound for Athens. Alcibiades, therefore, stood eye to eye with splendid Theodote, his Sicilian mistress, a few days after his arrival in Athens, and he found not the heart to send her back to where she had come from. He settled with her in his house, and had to do the same for some time for Hipparchos's mistress. He was looking for a new house close to the agora to bring Theodote there.

Once in Athens, Alcibiades and Hipparchos cried out their outrage at the turn of events in Sicily. They told everybody who wanted to listen how many opportunities had been wasted. The Athenian Assembly gathered on the Pnyx. Alcibiades expressed publicly his disappointment at what had been accomplished in Sicily, and so did many others. As a result, the Assembly banished Pythodorus and Sophocles, and it fined Eurymedon. The Assembly argued that the generals must have been bribed to sail away from the island, when it was in their power with considerable forces to seize control of the land. The Assembly acted on the words of Alcibiades and Hipparchos, who had spoken in private also to influential friends about what had happened since Laches had returned to Athens.

At first, Hipparete received Alcibiades warmly. She had been warned of his homecoming, and she had therefore decorated the house with garlands and flowers in the days before and of his arrival. Incense burners in the main rooms and in the courtyard sent delicate perfumes in the air. She did not quite know which day he would arrive, so she had wandered through the house for five days bejewelled, dressed in her best, most colourful clothes, before he actually appeared at the door. Luckily that first day he had left Theodote in an inn. Hipparete immediately embraced him and then called for the little boy, his son. Alcibiades's son was a shy child, shy to advance towards the man his mother said was his father, without really understanding what a father was. The boy put a finger in his mouth, hugged his father and then hid behind the long-folded tunic of his mother. Alcibiades looked formidable when he returned to Athens. He still had part of his armour on. He wore his helmet at his side and he kept a hand on his leather belt. His face was sunburnt and wrinkled from the dryness, but his body burst with energy and power. The boy apparently did not understand how his mother could embrace so passionately the brute of a man who had never been in the house before.

Alcibiades met the servants. They were all people he had not known before, but Hipparete and Callias had chosen well. He threw away his helmet, breastplates and sword then, and led Hipparete to the main room upstairs. Neither of them said a word. Hipparete was not anymore the shy, naïve girl he had married surreptitiously. She had turned into a beautiful woman, full of breasts and hips. She had taken on weight but she was not plump. Her waist was tiny. The lines of her face had softened, embellishing her traits. Her lips had swollen, her eyes had sharpened and her cheek bones remained fine, long and prominent. The more he looked, the more he saw she was truly a beauty, and a woman of mature sensuality. She knew what was coming, in the bedroom, and she smiled mysteriously. Alcibiades had little patience. Soft games of hide and seek, of flirting, and waiting for seduction to take hold, were of the past.

Alcibiades went up close to Hipparete and tore her flimsy tunic, the strophion cloth that held her breasts, and then her loincloth off her body. When she stood naked before him, with her hands on her breasts and pubis, he scrutinised her silently as if he were assessing an enemy's batallion. He drew her hands to her back and stroked her breasts until her nipples hardened and stood out. She sighed and trembled, but Alcibiades caressed her over her whole body until his hands knew her forms once more. He opened her legs. He had to use force there, but she yielded, and his hand explored further, until he could feel the wetness between her legs and the quivering of her desire. Then he threw off his own clothes, drew her on the bed and entered her hard and rapidly. She cried out almost instantly, and sooner than he.

The next days, Alcibiades was very busy. He had to look after his ship. He checked on the provisions for the trireme. He saw to it that his rowers were well settled. Some of the men did not have a house or a family anymore. He had his people to care for. He saw to it that all had a decent home. He split his own house effectively in two. In one part he settled Hipparete, in the other lived Theodote and Hipparchos's mistress, Myrrhina. This should only be a temporary arrangement until Hipparchos was able to occupy his own house. Alcibiades explained to Hipparete that both women were Hipparchos's mistresses, but Hipparete was suspicious and mad at the two women. Alcibiades did not remark how humiliated and hurt she felt.

Alcibiades did not stay often at home. He went regularly to the headquarters of the generals of Athens. He heard about the latest news of the war, there. He discussed with other commanders about strategies of battles, of how attacks could be planned to hurt Sparta most, and which allied towns were to be watched because they were grumbling under the new taxes and might revolt. Hipparchos came to see him, and together they decided to start breeding horses. The countryside of Attica was at peace, for Athens had the Spartan prisoners now to use as a guarantee that Attica would not be invaded. Hipparchos wanted to breed not just a few horses. He wanted very many of the animals. He pleaded with Alcibiades to inject funds. Hipparchos believed in cavalry. He told how powerful a large army of cavalry could be, directed against hoplites. He had learned so much in Sicily. Alcibiades agreed.

Alcibiades shared Hipparchos's dreams, but he was more cautious than his friend. They reached an agreement. Alcibiades invested and would look after the racing horses, the horses he might use in the Panathenaean Festival and in the Olympic Games. Hipparchos would breed quantity, and trade in horses. They would use Alcibiades's farm and his vast estate in Attica. Hipparchos left Athens with his

mistress for the countryside, with enough Scambonid money to rebuild Alcibiades's large farm and estate in Attica, which had probably been destroyed and looted during the Spartan incursions. Alcibiades would join him later.

Hipparete still looked at Alcibiades with tender and eager eyes. But there was a deep anger and reproach in those eyes too. She stayed in the gynaikeion, her woman's quarters, and only came out of her rooms when Alcibiades arrived at the house in the evenings. She drew him to her bed whenever he was home, opened his legs and pushed his long, hard penis into her with unexpected longing. He had been astonished by the change in passion in her. She used him more than he her, now, and he had the amused impression more than once of being raped by a woman. He saw her lying on the bed afterwards, covered with the sweat that seemed to have come out of all the pores of her body. She lay oiled in her own liquids, panting and exhausted from the arduous love-making. He laughed then. He laughed at the faces of the good men of Athens who saw Hipparete as a virtuous, prude, asexual and subdued creature.

Hipparete changed even more, when Hipparchos's mistress left. She knew one woman had stayed. One day she embraced Alcibiades passionately, the next day she categorically refused herself to him. She was cold and angry, she pouted and sulked. From that time on, he couldn't do anything right anymore. She threw cups of wine on the table as if she were an angry tavern-owner. His food was served sour. After a few days of this regime he grew irritated by her behaviour.

When she served him a bowl of water with aversion and anger all over her face, he cried out, 'what is happening, Hipparete? Why are you so angry, callous and irritated? Are you pregnant again or something?'

Her answer was a shouting, equally as loud as his, 'go ask that slut next door. Do you think I am an idiot forever? You keep a whore in this house! I hope you creep in her bed all heated up, and I hope you get from her a lot better than what you could have gotten here, for there will be nothing you will be getting from me anymore.'

That was it, then. Hipparete knew who Theodote was. There was hardly anything he could add. He was not the man to profuse in lies and excuses. He answered nothing, stood up and left the house. He passed that night with Theodote, as if to defy Hipparete. He stayed away from Hipparete for three days. Then only, did he return to his quarters. The servants looked at him awkwardly when he entered. They handed him a scroll.

Hipparete could write, and the paper was hers. She had written only the minimum of lines. She said she would divorce him and would stay in the meantime with her brother Callias. The servants told him how two carts from Callias's house had driven into the courtyard while Alcibiades was away, and the servants had loaded all Hipparete's possessions in the carts. She had stepped on the first wagon, and ordered the drivers to leave.

Alcibiades crumbled the scroll to a ball and threw it in a corner of the room. He thought Hipparete had behaved like a young, besotted girl, and not like a mature wife. He did not really care that she had left. But Hipparete was his, his possession. He would lose face by her leaving. Nobody took something away from him, not anything that had been given to him, and certainly not Callias. He would not grant Callias a victory. He wrung his hands and tore at his hair. He threw bowls and vases over the

floor and raged in the room until he acknowledged the futility of his anger. The servants fled.

Alcibiades lived alone in his house now. He had found a small house near the agora for Theodote. He had thought for a while about sending the woman back to Rhegium, and to seek a compromise with Hipparete. But Theodote knew too many sexual tricks to which he was addicted. He had come to like her too much. He sometimes thought of her as his real wife. He lacked Hipparete's ardour some, too. He continued for a few days to live exactly as before, speaking to nobody about the flight of his wife. He continued to go to the headquarters of the Athenian generals. Nevertheless, he knew he would have to address the insult sooner or later. He only pondered on the how.

One day, as he entered the strategion, Miltiades, the eponymous archon of Athens, the archon who gave his name to the year, stepped out of the entrance hall. The old man looked with interest at Alcibiades and a sneer appeared on his face.

He addressed Alcibiades. 'Well, well, Alcibiades the Great! How are you? No, no, don't answer. I can see you're in fine health.'

Alcibiades wondered why the man spoke to him. They had nothing in common, barely saw each other, and the archon was not a military man.

The archon continued. 'I have a divorce case on my hands. Rather rare these days. Hipparete wants to divorce from you. She shall bring her plea to me tomorrow noon. You know that our law demands that she brings her offences in person before me. From what I have heard already from Callias, I think I will not be able to refuse the divorce!'

Alcibiades nodded, seething with anger. At that moment, Laches was a few feet away and called out for him. So he let the archon stand there in surprise, without a further word, wondering how Alcibiades had felt about the message. Alcibiades entered the generals' Council room with Laches, and he left the archon looking puzzled and perplexed, without any obvious reaction.

The next day, Hipparete and Callias walked from the agora, where they had left their chariot, to the archon's hall. They entered the building, and Hipparete was led alone into the archon's office while Callias waited outside, before the open door. She clutched a scroll in her hand and demanded officially, according to the laws of Athens, the divorce from her husband. She laid the scroll on the Archon's table. Miltiades stood up and closed the door behind Hipparete. He sat in the middle of other magistrates, and listened to what she had to say. Before Hipparete could begin to, however, a loud noise was heard outside the room. They heard Callias scream, and the breaking of wood as one of the benches in the waiting hall crushed loudly. Then the door was flung open, a servant was pushed aside so that the man fell against the wall, and Alcibiades strode in.

Alcibiades was dressed only in chiton and himation, but he wore a sword. He had not drawn the sword, though, it hung still in its scabbard on his back. Alcibiades stepped forward in the hall with large steps and the look in his eyes told he was not to be held back from what he came to do, here. The Archon and the magistrates stood up. Chairs fell behind them.

The archon had the time to cry, 'Alcibiades, you cannot do this! You cannot violate my office!'

But Alcibiades could not be stopped. His anger was black. He went straight to Hipparete, who almost fainted when she saw her madman of a husband approach her. She thought he would either plead with her, or kill her.

Alcibiades however stooped, took her at the waist and threw her over his shoulders as if she weighed as little as a feather. The magistrates were screaming and there was pandemonium outside the Archon hall too, but Alcibiades walked straight through the door with long steps, out of the hall, with his wife on his back. Hipparete hit him on his body with her fists and her feet kicked up and down. Alcibiades held on. The magistrates and on-running guards followed, but Alcibiades was quick and determined. The archon waved to the guards not to interfere. They saw Callias sitting on the floor with his head in his hands, a little blood seeping in his hair. A broken bench lay beside him.

Alcibiades stepped outside. He threw his wife in his own chariot, right in front of the building, and he whipped his horse on. The chariot disappeared in a cloud of dust. Behind him, Callias, the magistrates and the Archon Miltiades ran out of the building too and shouted after him. A few of Alcibiades's friends, however, stood between Callias and the chariot. Alcibiades had not come alone. Callias did not get through the throng of men. Alcibiades drove the chariot on with a grim face. Hipparete sat in anger, but proudly, next to him.

By that time, Callias had cleared his head. He saw Alcibiades's chariot disappear around the corner of the street.

He turned to the archon, who sat down on the stairs of his building.

'You,' he shouted, 'call the guards of Athens! One cannot abduct a respectable woman like that! The law forbids that!'

The archon replied, suddenly in disgust of Callias, 'Callias, don't tell me what the law states! The law requires that a woman who wants a divorce should present herself in person to the Archon. The law forces she who desires to divorce to appear in public. It seems to me the law wanted to give husband and wife a last opportunity to deal with each other, and the husband a chance to endeavour to retain her. I guess husband and wife were just reconciled.'

Miltiades heaved up his arms and started to laugh, a hearty, roaring laughter that lasted and lasted in Callias' ears. Callias raged on his helplessness and threw a piece of the wooden bench that had been crushed on his head and that he had picked up as a weapon, to the ground in impotent rage.

Hipparete stayed quiet in the chariot until she and Alcibiades reached their house. Once inside, she grabbed Alcibiades like a stray cat that hadn't eaten for many days. She hit him with her fists and scratched at his face and eyes. She kicked him with her feet. He caught her hands, then, forced them behind her back and kissed her on the lips. She bit his tongue to blood and continued to wriggle to get free. Then he told her she would stay his dutiful wife as long as they lived. He would honour her, but mistresses there might be. He ordered her, soothed her, pleaded, and commanded, until she hung powerless in his arms. He brought her to her rooms then. Hipparete never asked for a divorce again.

The scandal of Alcibiades's aborted divorce became one hilarious joke more for the Athenians. Half of the city claimed having seen Alcibiades run out of the archon's building with Hipparete on his shoulders and seen him throw her in the chariot.

Alcibiades was lucky. The archon was an old and wise man, with a great sense of humour. He had a dull life in his courts, and he loved a nice diversion. He wouldn't hear of any accusation for contempt to the archon court, like Callias pleaded. The case was closed, and the archon laughed with the rest of Athens.

## Socrates

Alcibiades met Socrates in Athens a few days later, for the first time in several years. He had expected Socrates to visit him after his return to Athens, but Socrates did not come. So he decided to go himself to his teacher's house.

He pushed open the door of Socrates's house one morning, and he stood surprised at a tall, stout woman who was not a little offended to see someone come in without calling or knocking.

'You must be Alcibiades,' she said, 'no one else would come into the house of Socrates uncalled for and uninvited.'

Alcibiades had two urges then, one to hit the woman with his fist, the other to close the door and leave immediately.

But Socrates showed up from behind a door and he called out, 'come in, come in, my young friend and brave hero of Athens! Have some water. Come with me.'

Alcibiades thanked for the water, but he stepped further inside and went to a backroom towards which Socrates had beckoned. The woman set up a pair of very angry eyes and she planted her fists to her hips. She left the room silently and let Alcibiades step through.

Socrates continued, 'my wife has a tough life being wed to a poor forgotten philosopher like me. But she cares well for me. And she is pregnant. Her name is Xanthippe. How are you?'

'She looks like a real nice lady. She makes me forget Myrto. She sure is an imposing woman and quite somebody to hold your arms around!'

They both laughed heartily, then.

'You know,' Socrates said, 'there are many major advantages to Xanthippe. Nobody in Athens is jealous of me, and I have to fear nobody to be jealous of. Once you have known Xanthippe, and loved her, you can love your worst enemy. She is a hard woman, but she protects me like a chicken her last egg. She works miracles with almost no money. She makes love only to bear children. She is the ideal companion for me, and our children will be fine citizens of Athens. What more does a man need?'

Alcibiades sat down and he talked about his Sicilian adventures. He was really glad to meet Socrates again, and Socrates did have a little wine after all, so that the two men drank together. Socrates still lived from the meagre revenues he earned from a few fields left to him by his father. He refused to receive stipends and salaries from his students. He entertained an audience of about ten young men who came to talk to him regularly, but he sat with them at the house of a friend, for Xanthippe did not much appreciate his occupations. He walked and spoke in the streets, addressing one or other man or woman he took a sudden interest in. He knew everybody in Athens, poor and rich, and he spoke to them in the same language. He had nursed many during the plague and he had survived nonetheless. He had broadened somewhat more in the shoulders. His chest had widened. He exercised in the Prytaneium daily. He had grown older, but he was still a boar of a man, stronger and in better health than when

Alcibiades had left Athens, even though he had developed a huge belly. Alcibiades surmised Xanthippe must have fed him better, after all, than when he lived alone. But Socrates was as ugly as ever. His nose was as large as before, and his eyes stuck out of his face, the more so when he argued with people. Socrates's face reddened from the wine. Socrates was not used to wine anymore, Alcibiades noted.

When evening came, the two men held a private symposium, drinking only the two of them. Xanthippe entered and gave them small pieces of fish, meat and vegetables to eat. Alcibiades saw actually some sympathy in her eyes then. He guessed Socrates had few friends to see him like this, in his own house, and none of the status of Alcibiades. Socrates sat close to Alcibiades, and he slapped his hand on Alcibiades's knee.

Socrates said, 'I am thinking about going to war again. Hippocrates, a former student of mine too, is going to leave Athens with an army of citizen hoplites. So many good men died in Athens that he needs everybody he can get. He asked me to come. He wants to make a commander of me. I think I'm going to accompany him to Boeotia.' 'Leaving your wife already?' Alcibiades asked, but he bit his tongue immediately after having spit that out.

'Oh,' Socrates waved, 'she doesn't need me. She can get along very well on her own. She will have a little more money for her and the children. She will be glad I'm off for a while, and I aspire to some peace.'

'To find peace you go to war?' Alcibiades chuckled.

Socrates grinned, 'in this case, yes! War is ten measures of pleasant waiting, talking to one's friends, being cared for by the polis, and only one measure of fighting. I'll take my reading scrolls with me, and this campaign will not last long. Hippocrates and Demosthenes intend to take Boeotia quickly.'

'Well,' Alcibiades replied, 'the new young hero of Athens who does all with nothing, Demosthenes, is really invincible now, isn't he?'

'Yes, he is the idol of all Athens. Every boy of five and more dreams of being Demosthenes. And in this campaign Hippocrates comes along. Imagine! Ariphron's son, the nephew of Pericles the Great, a leader of men already! If Hippocrates has only half the wits and courage and intelligence of his uncle, Athens cannot lose a war anymore. You must have heard we have won all our battles lately. We have gained only victories since Demosthenes became a general, and since he led our men.'

'Socrates, Demosthenes has won all his victories with light troops, never with hoplites. He doesn't know yet what a real hoplite engagement is. I heard he never used his hoplites in the front line at Sphacteria. This time, with the Boeotians, it will be different. I know something of Boeotians though not much. The Boeotians are as tough if not tougher than the Spartans. They are more vicious than the Spartans. They have tricks all up their sleeves, hoplites or not. They do not care about honour. They care about winning and they don't care about how they do it. But well, I guess so does Demosthenes. I remember you when we fought together, Socrates. You were a marvellous hoplite. But you hated every moment of the fighting. The loathing of war, of killing, of seeing killed, will come back in all its force in Boeotia. Are you sure you want that again? What has changed you, Socrates?'

Socrates kept his silence for a long time.



Then he answered, 'I am getting old. Soon I will not be able to help Athens anymore. I have only a few years of force left in me. I have to give Athens what I can to be a good citizen. I will be happy to give my life. Will you care for Xanthippe if I die? Oh, I don't mean to care for her, for she doesn't need anybody really, but see to it that she does not become a woman in need of money and food and shelter. Though I believe there will be always just enough money for that, from my estates. This shall be only a small thing for you, who are so rich. Will you be the warden of my children? I need to give the last time what I have. And it will relieve Xanthippe a bit; give her some money more than today.'

Alcibiades was impressed, and a feeling of warmth went through his body. Here was a friend asking the ultimate, the things you can ask only to your very best and most beloved friend. He was past the age of being emotional, however. With Harmonia disappeared, probably gone from his life forever, a carapace had grown around him. Alcibiades answered, 'I will care for Xanthippe and her children. But I may die before you. I think I will come with you on this campaign. It may indeed be our last campaign together. My Xanthippe, Hipparete, wears me out, too. If something happens to me, will you be the warden of my children too? Shall we share the same tent again, as in Potidaea?'

The two men burst out laughing then and slapped their hands together firmly, and pushed to the pact.

Later, Socrates told Alcibiades, 'there is something else I have to tell you about. It is about the Spartan prisoners of Pylos. They are kept in prison here. Their life is miserable. They are constantly humiliated. The prison wardens steal their food. Nobody cares. They are just cattle, kept in waiting of slaughter. I have been talking to some of them. Their situation is degrading. Some of them are sick.'

Alcibiades replied, 'they are enemies. They have fought us and would have killed you and me if only they had got half a chance. What do you want me to do?'

'The men of your family were proxenos to Sparta for several generations. Someone should care about them. Nobody is proxenos for Sparta now. Just claim in the Assembly for something like your proxenos status again. The men of my deme will support you. Then you can force better treatment for the Spartans.'

Alcibiades did as Socrates asked. He claimed his proxenos status for Sparta, though Sparta would have to agree to that status, and he could not communicate with the town for the moment. When the Assembly agreed that he could care for the Spartan prisoners, he went straight to the prison and claimed better treatment for the Spartans. When the commander refused to comply, he struck the man to the ground. He made the generals of Athens agree to appoint another prison commander, one of Alcibiades's own men. Then he provided more and better food from out of his own funds. He went often to the prison with Socrates, and the men thanked him. He obtained that they could leave the prison and live in a set of small houses nearby, as long as they swore to Zeus and Apollo not to escape. He became particular friendly to a group of five men who were relatives of ephors and magistrates of Sparta, and he invited them even to his symposiums.

Once, Socrates asked them why they had surrendered.

The men answered, 'Sparta told us we should do nothing at Sphacteria that would dishonour us. Demosthenes and Cleon attacked us with arrows and javelins, women's

weapons. We never could fight an honourable battle of hoplite to hoplite. We thought it was not a dishonour to surrender against arrows and javelins. No real hoplite fight could have defeated us!’

Alcibiades thought, however, that Demosthenes had been right at his symposium of years ago. There were no rules in war if one wanted to win. All weapons could be used to win: arrows, javelins, ruse, deceit, embassies, cavalry and peltasts. Who cared, as long as one won? The Spartans were real knights, but inflexible in their regard to rules. If this view continued, Athens could actually win the war, and win and win on and on, and Sparta would lose and lose. Peace could not be far off. He did not share these thoughts with the Spartiates, though. Alcibiades conversed agreeably with the prisoners. He learned a lot from them about Sparta, and he won the confidence of the men.

### **Oropus**

That year, the two main Athenian generals, Demosthenes son of Alcisthenes and Hippocrates son of Aripfron had indeed been intriguing with people from certain cities in Boeotia to overthrow the oligarchic government of these towns, and to introduce democracy for government. They had plotted mostly with Ptoeodorus, an exiled Theban. The plan was to betray in this way to Athens the towns of Siphæ and Chaeronea. The Athenians would at the same time seize Delium and its temple of Apollo, in the territory of Tanagra. The operations had to be synchronised, so that once Delium taken, the Boeotians would not massively attack the Athenians, but be occupied by various uprisings in their land.

Demosthenes and Hippocrates surmised that they could fortify Delium and use it as an advanced military post to raid Boeotia and be a refuge for the Boeotians who opposed oligarchic government. There might not be an immediate revolution in all the Boeotian cities, but in the end, oligarchic control might crack and falter in Boeotia. Hippocrates would march with an army into Boeotia at the assigned date. Demosthenes would sail out first with forty ships to Naupactus, to assemble an army of allied Acarnanians there, and then move against Siphæ.

Alcibiades did not have to ask for his admission in the army of Hippocrates. After his conversation with Socrates, he walked the next morning into the Strategion building, wondering who he would have to talk to for a place in the expedition. When he entered, somebody tapped him on the shoulder. Alcibiades turned and faced Hippocrates himself.

Hippocrates spoke ou immediately. He was in a hurry.

‘Alcibiades, greetings! I am going to Boeotia with an army. The Assembly voted to send a cavalry with me. I see some use of a small force that can intervene quickly, but I do not really know what to do with it on a campaign that should end in hoplite battles and sieges of cities. Will you lead my cavalry? I heard you had some experience with cavalry in Sicily, as Laches told me. Also, I have found a hundred horses, but I need two hundred more. You breed horses! Can you provide for them? Athens will pay, of course!’

Alcibiades’s smile widened. ‘Sure, Hippocrates, I will lead your cavalry. And I shall procure the horses. When do you need them?’

‘In one moon from now we march from Athens. Be prepared. Thank you, Alcibiades!’

Hippocrates hurried on already, without more words.

Alcibiades did not go to the strategion rooms, then. He ran straight to Hipparchos's house and shook his friend out of his bed. He had a nice view of a naked buttock of the Sicilian mistress while she ran nude to her own quarters.

Hipparchos had had too much wine the day before. He kept his head in his hands, rubbed his eyes and shouted, 'woo, woo, Alcibiades! Stop that! Close the curtains!' 'Get up,' Alcibiades shouted, 'get up! I'm going to war again. You're coming with me. And I need two hundred horses in twenty days from now.'

'Woo, wow,' Hipparchos complained, 'I am not going to war now! Where do you think I could get horses from? I have not even been once to your farm, which we both know to have been destroyed, with no horses left!'

'Hipparchos, I don't care where the horses come from even if you have to ride through Boeotia to get them from the Thessalians. We said we were going to breed horses, so Athens took that as if we had hordes of the animals ready, grazing in the country. So, now we have to provide horses! Get them from the Megarans or from the Argives or from the Acarnanians, but get them!'

Hipparchos sobered up slowly. He went to the kitchen and ordered some bread to be brought in. He offered a new cup of Chian wine to Alcibiades, who swallowed it uncut.

Hipparchos only drank several cups of water, one after the other, in silence.

'All right,' he said at last. 'Suppose I have some ideas where to get horses. How do I withhold the merchants from being suspicious? They will infer that an expedition is going on.'

Alcibiades thought about that. Hipparchos must have contacts with the other side.

'Not necessarily. Not if you convince them that you are entering into an association with a few wealthy citizens of Athens like Alcibiades and Callias. Those are names that sound big business!'

He grinned. 'I will talk to Callias. He never stays angry for a long time, and he needs money. We'll make a fortune on the prices we can ask for the horses to Hippocrates. Say you are setting up a new horse-farm in the countryside for the pleasure of the wealthy. Where do you intend to get the horses from?'

'I know a Megaran merchant, a greedy one. This is going to cost. He has connections with horse merchants of Argos and Corinth in the Peloponnesos. We can buy horses, pack after pack, and drive them not to Athens but some way off, in the country. Will that be fine?'

'Yes it will do,' Alcibiades agreed.

'I shall not come to war this time, however. If we are going to be serious about setting up a horse farm, we need to do it now and it will take time. You go to war. I'll breed horses for a while, for from ten to twenty months. Then we'll see.'

'Splendid,' Alcibiades answered. 'Take Myrrhina and Theodote with you, away from Athens for a while. That will ease Hipparchos's anger, as well as Callias's wrath.'

'Fine,' Hipparchos grinned, and the two men shook hands.

Twenty days later, eight thousand Athenian citizen hoplites gathered outside the Dipylon Gate of Athens. Hippocrates marched out with his army, and as it advanced to the north, ten thousand allied troops and Athenian men of the foreign class, the metics, joined them. This was a formidable army. When the warriors had marched for a day, Alcibiades also joined them with his three hundred cavalry. Many of the horses

were only half tamed, and some of the riders had it difficult to stay on the animals' backs, so that Alcibiades's group was the laughing stock of the marching hoplites. But Hippocrates had his cavalry.

Alcibiades found Socrates among the hoplites, in the middle of the marching troops, in a contingent led by Laches. Socrates had thought that Alcibiades had forgotten all about his promise. He was not a little surprised to see Alcibiades riding up to him in a small group of companions on horse-back, long hair waving in the wind. Alcibiades remarked that Socrates was astonished, glad and proud to have this dashing young man come riding up to him, paying his respects and offering his tent. Alcibiades rode aside to the marching hoplites where Socrates went. The men marched and rode in arms, but for the moment their heavy armour was brought in the ox-wagons drawn behind the troops. Once they would reach the border of Boeotia, they would march in full battle armour, with bronze helmet, breastplates, greaves and arm protections, and with their long shields, the hoplons.

Alcibiades and his group of horse-riders saluted Socrates, and they left. Alcibiades taught his team to scout for the army on left and right and ahead, as he had learned in Sicily when he fought the Locrians.

Demosthenes sailed out in the summer to Naupactus. He succeeded in forming a new army of Acarnanians, Agraeans and Oenidaeans. He prepared to march to Siphae, which would happen at the agreed time in the winter of that year. A mistake was made, however, between the two Athenian generals.

Demosthenes sailed out against Siphae, but the plot of the democrats in the Boeotian towns had been betrayed. Relief forces arrived from all over Boeotia to Siphae, and Demosthenes could not accomplish anything. Also, Hippocrates had not arrived for the diversion. Siphae and Chaeronea were too strongly defended before Demosthenes arrived. He stood at the foot of the formidable walls of the cities, one after the other, took a second look, then he decided to retreat. Hippocrates arrived too late at Delium.

The army of Hippocrates reached Delium after three days of marching. The town was small, a village really. Its centre was formed by the temple precinct of Apollo and its connected buildings. The village lived off the temple, and from the people who came to pilgrimage to the site. There were no walls around Delium.

The Athenian army set up camp around the temple. Hippocrates ordered the place to be fortified by some means. The Athenians dug. The hoplites dug out a ditch in a wide circle around the temple and its precinct. The earth that came out of the ditch they threw together, and piled it up to form a rampart. They fixed wooden stakes in the rampart, cut vine branches from the temple yards and wove the vines in the stakes. The houses nearby were demolished. The Athenians threw the stones and the debris of the houses against the stakes. They used wherever they could also the ancient columns of the temple, and they fortified the places where the columns had fallen. Then they built wooden towers with the beams of the destroyed houses.

Hippocrates thus fortified Delium for about five days. On the sixth day, he made an inspection tour and found what had been done satisfactory. He saw that a smaller garrison of hoplites could now hold the place, since most of the work was finished, so he moved the largest part of his army out of the town. Delium could be used as an example for other Boeotian towns. Revolts could be encouraged from out of this place. Hippocrates brought most of the army out of the town, but he set up camp close

to it. Most of the lighter troops of resident Athenian allies and foreigners living in Athens returned immediately, back to Athens, but the hoplites had to rest.

Alcibiades and his cavalry scouted the environment wide. On an afternoon, Alcibiades's riders saw a long line of Boeotian hoplites advance towards Delium. This was an army of hoplites led by Pagondas son of Aeolidas, one of the two Theban commanders.

Pagondas held supreme command, and he was eager for a decisive battle. He drove his army rapidly forward. Alcibiades saw the Boeotians advance. He was gripped by fear for an instant when he saw the mass of the forces gathered by the Boeotians. The Athenian army was not any longer combined at that moment, and scattered in several large groups, many of which were already on the far march to Athens.

Alcibiades had a sense of imminent danger. His bowels knotted. This oncoming army was set for battle, unafraid, determined to fight, and Athens' hoplites were all but prepared for battle, expecting a simple and easy return home. The Athenians could confront this army, but their lighter troops had mostly marched off already, and only minor troops were still inside Delium with Hippocrates. Alcibiades sent his riders to warn the hoplites, to warn Hippocrates, and even to warn the returning Athenian light army, hoping it might turn a rush back to Delium.

When Hippocrates heard the news of the arriving Boeotians, he left most of his cavalry of three hundred riders in and around the town to guard the place if it was attacked. Alcibiades had galloped back to Delium, and Hippocrates ordered Alcibiades lead at Delium and to intervene in the battle against the Boeotians when and how it looked opportune for him to do so. A little later it seemed indeed that Delium was going to be attacked. A first force of Boeotians appeared on the crest of the hills around the fortifications. Alcibiades prepared to defend the place.

Hippocrates jumped on a horse to join his hoplites and urge them to action. He wanted to confront the Boeotians in the open, outside Delium.

The main army of the Boeotians assembled behind a hill, out of sight of the Athenian army. The Boeotians seemed to count about seven thousand hoplites and five hundred peltasts. The peltasts were lightly-armed troops, so called after their small shield, a light affair made of trussed wood bands called the pelte.

Pagondas posted his Theban hoplites on the right to the incredible depth of twenty-five shields. He would try to break the Athenian phalanx here. The Athenians could not see that danger immediately, for Pagondas kept a large part of his troops cleverly hidden behind the hills. On the left side, he positioned allied hoplites and his lighter troops, the Thespians, Tanagrans and Orchomenans. In the centre he placed the Haliartians, the Coronaeans and the Capaeans with other hoplites. His cavalry and lightest troops stood at the end of the wings.

The place was called Oropus.

Hippocrates placed his hoplites eight shields deep along the whole line, with some of his remaining cavalry at the end of the wings. His lighter troops had by then all returned to Athens. They were on their way home, out of reach, and Hippocrates had failed to get them back in time. Hippocrates failed to recall them from their march and to bring them in line. He ordered the usual sacrifices to be made to honour the gods of war, and the libations of wine and oil to be made to Zeus. Hippocrates marched along his phalanxes before the battle. He spoke to his men. He spoke of courage and duty

but he could only go halfway along the lines for the Boeotians appeared already on the hills. They sang their terrible war paeans and at the sound of flutes ran in a solid mass down the slopes.

Alcibiades stood with his horse on a hill, two hills away from the Athenian hoplites, when he saw the Boeotians running against the Athenians. Of the distant battle he saw at first only a huge dust cloud rise in the air. Then he heard a sound of flutes, which stopped, however, when the troops neared. He saw cavalry now, riding in front of the army, and although he stood with his horse rather high, he could not see very far over the grassy hill. The riders came straight at him. The Boeotian cavalry expected no resistance however. They knew the Athenians never had any cavalry of importance or value. The men galloped to the left. They had not spotted Alcibiades and his companions.

In the battlefield of Oropus, the hoplites moved now in a regular march, fully dressed for battle, in the unmistakable rattle of shields shaken against javelins, of breastplates and greaves that shook. In the slightly diminished light of the sun ran a group of men dressed in white cloaks. These were the Boeotian generals and commanders. They led their men proudly!

The enemy warriors marched rapidly, and the ranks formed tightly. The Boeotian light troops arrived on the run from behind, in view of the Athenians too. The ranks widened and Hippocrates saw how the long queues of on-storming troops transformed in little time to a set of parallel phalanxes. Hippocrates admired the discipline with which the Boeotians changed from line to battle formation, and the advance never stopped during the transformation. His face turned white when he noticed how many Boeotians arrived and how they were massed together much more than eight shields deep.

One of Alcibiades's men shouted a warning. The Boeotian cavalry had seen his group, and the riders galloped up to Alcibiades. Alcibiades could choose to fight, but he withdrew his gaze from the green hills and from the distant battle thunder, and he turned his horse. It was better now to warn the Athenians at Delium. He galloped back to Delium with his men. Their horses were not tired. The Boeotian riders must have been on horse-back the whole day. They were no match for Alcibiades, so that the distance between himself and the Boeotian cavalry widened. He reached Delium unharmed.

Socrates and Laches fought in the centre of the Athenian lines in the battle of Oropus. Here, Laches had placed his veterans, expecting the Theban hoplites to be fighting in the centre also. Laches could not see anymore where the Thebans were massed, but the Boeotian generals also could not have seen from the time before their formation whether the Athenians had prepared surprises. Even if they had spotted where the Athenians stood, and had they wanted to address the core of their enemy, they would not have been able to modify their phalanxes, now. Pagondas had expected the Athenians to be conservative and traditional. He wanted to roll up one wing of the Athenians and create a panic, then destroy the rest.

Hippocrates saw too late that the mass of the most heavily armoured Thebans, the elite troops of Pagondas, stood on his left. He knew now his only chance was to crunch the left wing of the Boeotians, on his right and in the centre. His only chance was to win on his right and in the centre, and then to destroy the Thebans. He was

well aware that the Thebans intended to do the same on the other side: crunch his own left wing, and later fall massively on his centre.

The armies clashed with each other on the run. The Boeotian army ran hard, but they succeeded in keeping close order, and the energy they had acquired from running down the hill was devastating. The Athenians stopped abruptly in their run and were pushed back. Men were overthrown and fell from the shock. A traditional hoplite battle ensued, a shield to shield battle. There was practically no fight going on at the end of the wings of both armies, for they had rivers in their way. The lighter troops did not participate in the battle, and that was a very good thing for Hippocrates, for he had almost none of such troops, and his wings would have been destroyed immediately by arrows and javelins.

The heart of the battle was the hoplite clash, where profusely sweating men in the late afternoon pushed against each other with all their might, stabbing with their spears through the wall of shields, hoping to wound as many enemies as they could. Socrates stood in the centre in the third row beside Laches, and so far he had only been able to push against the backs of the men before him, avoiding the occasional spear points that stroke past his shield on left or right and avoiding the rear sharp end of the spears of the friends before him. The men in front fell one after the other. The first two lines of Athenian hoplites disappeared after but a short while, and Socrates stood rapidly shield to shield with Boeotian hoplites. The Boeotians seemed to have eaten up two ranks of Athenians in no time at all. His heart beat tremendously and he fought with all his strength of the mature man. He fought for his life. He sensed the horror around him, but he dared not look to left or right. He was fighting upon a heap of bodies of the men that had fallen before him. He was already drenched in blood, and he stepped over blood. The Athenians in the centre and on his right were driving the Boeotians back, nevertheless, despite the tremendous pressure of bodies.

Socrates advanced over dead and wounded men. The wounded groaned and cursed him when he stepped on chests and arms and legs, but if Athens wanted to win the lines had to advance. Athens had two rows out of eight killed in this centre, about one fourth of its elite, most experienced citizen hoplites. The third row, the one third of the army was now fighting and dying. Socrates was disgusted by the slaughter, and he was tired. He fought not in Attica. He was aware he was invading other people's land. He understood these people, though allied to Athens' enemy, were fighting for their own territory, their towns, their ideals, their wives, their property and they did it doggedly, stubbornly.

Socrates stepped over the corpses, and as he advanced, stocky and mean, stabbing and slicing, another veteran to his left and Laches to his right, he advanced shield to shield. He saw an unprotected hand and stabbed it through with his spear. The Boeotian, a sturdy, long-bearded fellow dropped his spear in surprise and Socrates saw an unprotected neck. He struck with the side of his lance there, and blood sprouted wide while the man fell. Socrates took a large step forward. The hoplite on his left received a spear through the front opening of his helmet and he fell. Socrates pushed that spear away and struck his own weapon in an awkward sideward movement, leftwards below the breastplate of a Boeotian, in the man's weak underbelly. An Athenian from the fourth row advanced to fill the gap next to him, to take the place of his killed comrade. The struggle raged on, fierce and wild.

Suddenly the enemy gave way. The Boeotian left and the Boeotian centre wings were being defeated. The Thespians had been fighting in a narrow space and they were surrounded now. They were all cut down. The Boeotians fled before Socrates and Laches.

On the right wing of the Boeotian wings, where the Thebans fought with the power of twenty-five rows, the Athenian rows were totally depleted at places, to the last man fighting from the last row. The killing had been awesome here. The dead piled high. The Thebans pushed the Athenians back elsewhere too at that wing. Hippocrates saw what happened. His hope was to scatter the left and centre wings of the Boeotians, then to attack the Thebans and their white-cloaked generals. He had to accomplish that before the Thebans crushed his left wing.

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In the meantime, Alcibiades was waiting at Delium. He stood on the battlements of the place, looking at five hundred light-armed Boeotian troops. He was wondering what to do. He heard the noise of the main battle grow in the far, but he couldn't see who was winning. He might attack these enemy troops sent to contain the Athenian garrison of Delium, but that enemy had archers and slingers. Alcibiades's hoplite disgust for archers showed then. He didn't like to expose his expensive horses to arrows either. But if he didn't do anything, he could not help the Athenians in the battle beyond the hills, and if the Athenians lost, he had to clear the road to Delium for the fleeing hoplites.

With a sigh, Alcibiades called in his commanders and told two of them to ride full speed through the main opening of the fortifications towards the right flank of the Boeotians. He would sally somewhat later from out of a side opening that was hidden to the Boeotian eyes, and ride with the rest of his cavalry against the left flank. Then the hoplites should run out for a general attack in the centre. He knew that he ought simply to keep the town with these men, but the Boeotians would not expect such a sudden outbreak from the Athenians, so untypical for sieges of towns. The surprise might just do the trick and defeat the Boeotians. He hoped that the Boeotians would be merely facing the first attack, not change the configuration of their phalanxes, so that his own forces could cut them in the back and destroy the left wing of the enemy.

A few moments later Alcibiades launched the first attack, and a hundred wild horses dashed forward, galloping rapidly against the Boeotian right wing. Alcibiades had ordered to ride wide, to leave much space between the horse-riders, and to ride fast. When the Boeotians' attention was entirely captured by the attacking Athenian cavalry, he passed through the side opening of the temple precinct and rode also as fast as his horses would allow against the enemy. He rode in armour, and while he rode he brandished his sword. The coloured cloaks of his men waved in the wind and it was a glorious sight to see his young knights riding with stretched arm and swords forward, towards the Boeotians. These riders were mostly nobles of Athens, well-trained men and the finest horsemen of Athens. They were the richest and the best clad. They all wore their hair long.

The Boeotians were impressed and surprised when they felt the on-coming elite cavalry attack them. They doubted they could resist these men. Alcibiades fell in their backs. The Boeotians turned to bring their spears in position against the horses. There



was not distance enough, however, for arrows and javelins, for Alcibiades was already upon them and his wall of horses knocked down the lines of the Boeotians. His cavalry went deep into the Boeotian rows before he stopped, and then a fierce fight of sword to sword followed. Alcibiades hacked down like a revenging god. He hacked to right and to left. His long hair swung in wide arches behind him, from under his helmet. The Boeotians were trampled under the hooves of his horse. His horse pranced and struck down Boeotians.

Alcibiades was torn down from his horse. He fell to the ground, but he was not stunned. He jumped to his feet and while doing so stuck his sword in the leather breast armour of the man who wanted to kill him. He hit with so much force in this movement, that his sword entered fully the breast of the man, striking through the leather. The man was killed and fell to his knees. Alcibiades withdrew his sword, but he had to put his foot on the chest of the Boeotian peltast before the corpse yielded his sword back to him. Then, Alcibiades turned, and stabbed a Boeotian who attacked him from the back. He fought with his sword, wearing no shield for a while.

The Athenian cavalry attack had broken the resistance of the Boeotians and the Athenian hoplites who reached the battle now, plied up the remaining resistance. The Boeotians fled. Alcibiades shouted to make the enemy flee to the right, away from the road to the main battle of Oropus. He caught a horse without a rider and swung himself on horseback again. Then he continued to slaughter fleeing men.

Almost all the Boeotians that had come to keep the Athenians inside Delium, maybe even to take the place, were killed. Many received a sword in the back and Alcibiades's men gave no quarter. They cut the men down mercilessly with swords and javelins until a few only remained, who ran into the hills, throwing down their armour and weapons to flee more rapidly. The Athenians left these alone. Alcibiades ordered the first hundred riders back to the town, the hoplites equally, and with the rest of his cavalry he rode on the road towards Oropus, towards the main battlefield, hoping to participate there.

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In the hoplite battle of Oropus, an awkward situation had developed. The Athenians had defeated the Boeotian left and centre wings and massacred large numbers of enemy troops. The Thebans had crushed by sheer mass of warriors the Athenian left wing. Hippocrates had fallen in the battle when he had taken a few additional men to help on that side. He lay under a heap of bodies of his men and friends.

Pagondas then made one of those small decisions that can change the course of battles without having been really intended to change fate. His decision had an effect that even he could not have predicted.

When Pagondas saw that the Boeotians were losing completely at this left wing, he sent in two squadrons of horse-riders against the Athenians there. These were but meagre support for his Boeotians, and he expected no great change of outcome.

When that cavalry suddenly appeared from beyond a hill, not so numerous after all, the Athenians imagined that a new Boeotian army attacked them from the side. The men around Socrates and Laches just had enough of the hard fighting. They were too tired to face more troops. At this crucial moment, when it would have taken them

little more energy to completely and decisively route the Boeotians, luck seemed to change sides, and the Athenians stood and hesitated. They stopped suddenly driving forward. Socrates and Laches shouted to continue the battle and they sprang forward, but they were alone to enter the Boeotian lines now. Socrates was wounded almost instantly, once in his arm and once in his leg, and Laches bled from several wounds too. Nobody followed them.

The Athenians stood petrified. When the few Boeotian riders pushed on them, the Athenian hoplites turned and fled. Socrates let out a cry of anger and impotence, but he and Laches could not continue to fight on their own. The two commanders kept their position with only ten hoplites of their deme, but they would soon have to run backwards, to Oropus or Delium.

The Thebans had defeated the Athenians' left. These Athenians fled from the battlefield in great numbers. The whole Athenian army receded, and then all ran away.

Socrates had to give the sign to retreat to his men too. He ran backwards, away from the Boeotians, who let their arms sink lower, too tired to advance. Socrates protected the backs of his men.

The Athenians fled to where they could. Most tried to flee to the south, to Oropus, to Athenian territory. The Attican border was not far from there. Some fled to Mount Parnes, others fled east, back to Delium. Socrates directed his men to a road and he ran south. Unknown to him, the Boeotian cavalry rode by then between the Athenian hoplites and the easy escape. That enemy cavalry hacked down pitilessly fleeing Athenians.

Disparate groups of from five to ten Athenian hoplites ran for their lives along the road to Delium. Not many had chosen this road however. Most had fled directly to the south. The Theban and the Boeotian hoplites were exhausted, and after a while they abandoned pursuit.

The Boeotian cavalry, however, mostly Locrians, homed in with ten to twenty horse-riders on the small groups of Athenians and massacred the helpless hoplites without mercy. The Athenian hoplites seemed dazed by the defeat. They did not regroup to form phalanxes and confront the cavalry. The Athenian warriors walked, ran, cragged and crept on. The men threw off shields, breastplates and spears. They kept a sword but no other weapons. The cavalry crushed them under horses' hooves and killed them in rapid attacks in several repeated charges that left no man alive in the scattered groups.

When they ran for their lives, Socrates and Laches defended each other. A little further than the battlefield men fled in all directions. Laches, Socrates and their group followed a small, earthen road. The road suddenly split in three. The men wondered which road to take.

'One road, this one to the right, must lead to Tanagra,' Laches said. 'The one to the left must return to the north, to Delium and the one in front of us should return to Athens, to the south. Let's take the middle road, the one to the south. It will lead us back to Attica.'

The men walked forward but they looked in amazement to Socrates, for Socrates had stopped and moved no foot.

'No,' Socrates said. 'That road leads to death. The enemy cavalry and parts of their other troops are waiting in ambush on that road.'

‘How do you know that?’ Laches exclaimed impatiently.

‘I know,’ Socrates said. ‘My inner voices tell me not to take that road. We should not go that way. Death awaits us on that road.’

Socrates didn’t wait for further arguments. He resolutely stepped onto the road to Delium. The others hesitated. They looked at Laches, their commander. Laches was angry, for his authority was being challenged here, so he looked to the right and to the left. He saw how all his men were eager to follow Socrates. He slammed the point of his spear in the ground, and with a loud, ‘for heavens’ sake’, he too followed Socrates. His men had already run after Socrates, anyway.

Socrates and Laches walked with their men, leading them back to Delium. Socrates had forced the men to keep their armour, and twice already they had formed a tight square, a small phalanx, with spears out to fend off the cavalry. The Boeotian horse-riders had sought easier prey.

When Socrates and Laches walked two hills away from Delium, however, a large group of Locrian riders saw the men and advanced to attack them. Once more, Laches ordered to form a square of shields. Socrates knew death would come now, for they could not withstand for long so many riders. He saw the Locrian cavalry gallop all at once towards his group, determined to break it open. The riders were magnificent, and they attacked with heaven swords.

Before the horses could smash into the small group of hoplites however, a whirlwind of white-cloaked, blood-bespattered new cavalry drove into the right side of the Locrian riders. Athenian cavalry had seen the attack of the enemy and they intervened. A wild cavalry battle ensued in front of the startled eyes of the Athenian hoplites. The Athenian horsemen were wild, out for revenge, and filled with hatred. They had helped fend off several attacks like this one, come too late a few times, and they knew what to do now and here. The leading commander was a semi-god sent to earth to punish the Boeotians. He slew a Locrian rider with every hack of his sword. His horse trampled upon fallen men, and he led his horse’s power against Locrian horses with such strength that they gave way. The Locrians hesitated and withdrew.

The Athenian cavalry commander fought at the very point of the attack, and a triangle of mad swordsmen on horseback followed him. More Athenian horsemen streamed down the hill at the gallop, and the Locrian cavalry that had hoped to make an easy kill, was massacred although they had been in superior numbers at the beginning. Socrates saw little more than a wild mêlée of horses, many without riders, but the group expanded, leaving more space between the riders and the hoplites. The Athenian riders were more vicious killers and more energetic fighters, and better-skilled swordsmen. They were all also former hoplites who had received a hard training in sword fighting, and who had passed on to the cavalry later. The Locrians, though fine horsemen, were no match in this battle with the Athenian knights. They lost one rider after the other, until the Boeotian leader called the retreat. The Locrian horses turned and the enemy cavalry fled.

The white-cloaked Athenian commander advanced slowly and majestically to Socrates’s group. His horse pranced and he held his blooded sword to the sky in salute. Socrates and Laches recognised the breastplates with the golden patterns of

Athens. This knight was the only rider to wear some kind of cuirass. He wore no helmet but a leather cap, and therefore Socrates had not recognised him immediately. The horseman shouted, 'hi, Socrates! Need some help from your friends?' Laches signalled the hoplites to lower their spears and Socrates shouted back, 'hail, Alcibiades! Yes, we could need cavalry protection to get back to Delium. It seems cavalry is of some use after all.'

The other hoplites now recognised Alcibiades too, and they grinned and looked with relief at each other.

Alcibiades saluted Laches equally. He called his cavalry back from the pursuit of the Locrian horsemen. He sent half his men behind Socrates's group, a few riders to left and right, and he accompanied the hoplites until Delium was in sight. The Athenians of Laches and Socrates walked, spear on their shoulder and shield at their back until they reached fortified Delium. They picked up other disorganised groups on the way, and Alcibiades's horse-riders brought other groups in their direction. Some distance from the town Alcibiades and his riders turned back to search for other groups of Athenian hoplites and to give them protection on horseback from the harassments by the Boeotian cavalry. They saved many men and brought them back to Delium, where a garrison grew.

## **Delium**

Alcibiades could not stay for a long time, roaming in the country around Delium. The Boeotians gathered their troops. Javelin-throwers and slingers from the Malian Gulf arrived before Delium first. Then the Theban hoplites came in ordered lines, and they set up camp in front of the Athenian fortifications. Two thousand Corinthian hoplites, who had arrived too late for the preceding Battle of Oropus, but who were fresh and eager to fight, joined them. Peloponnesian troops and a contingent of Megarans arrived a little later.

All the Boeotian forces hostile to Athens thus assembled for a last engagement that would finish the horrendous slaughter of Oropus, and throw the last Athenian back to Attica. A major battle had been won, a triumph in a long series of defeats, and now the Boeotian allied armies desired revenge to the very end. They wanted to annihilate the Athenian troops that had occupied one of their main temples, a sacred ground of Boeotia, the Temple of Apollo at Delium.

The Boeotian army waited for two days, gaining in strength and in confidence, and it prepared for the final assault.

Alcibiades had placed his horses behind the temple buildings, where they were protected from arrows and fire. He had practically nothing anymore to feed the animals. He knew that if a siege were to develop here, all the animals would be slaughtered before they saw any action. He expected a rapid and massive, all-out attack on the fort, so for the moment he kept on to his horses. Many other commanders and men had fled to the site, so the fortifications were held by a few thousand Athenians.

The men took position behind the ramparts, and the Boeotians would have to pass the ditch, push their ladders against the wooden stakes to throw hooks with ropes on the

wooden beams and try to jump over the rough, sharp-edged palisades. Siege towers would not work because of the ditch. Fire chariots would get stuck in the ditch, too. It would not be easy for the Boeotians to capture this haphazard fort, for the defenders were seasoned citizen-hoplites. They were hardened and determined men, who knew that they would be fighting with no way to escape.

Alcibiades and his cavalrymen stood with the hoplites behind the fortifications. Normally, each cavalryman was accompanied by a groom who rode a cheap horse. The groom carried supplies and equipment. Many a cavalryman here did not have a groom anymore. The knights served as peltasts. The Athenians had but little food. Food had only been foreseen for a small garrison. Delium was surrounded, and would starve soon, but the fort would be taken by storm long before that happened. Waiting for the inevitable, the Athenians stood.

The third day, the Boeotian trumpets sounded the assault. The enemy sang a powerful paean, a rough song of death and valour, and then they advanced against Delium. They launched a massive attack with thousands of men, hoplites and other troops at once. A shower of arrows descended on the Athenians who stooped and crept as close as they could to the wooden stakes of the ramparts. Little harm was done, for the Athenians also kept their large shields above their heads and bodies, or they used bushels of vine twigs and ranks to stop the arrows. When the Athenians looked over the stakes they were the targets of the slingers and these were more deadly.

The Boeotian hoplites placed their ladders in the ditches and they ran up the steps. Lighter troops threw ropes with hooks over the stakes and climbed on to the fort. The Athenians had a few grappling hooks themselves to draw away the ladders, and they used their lances to fend off the attackers. They had few javelins left. The Boeotians had trouble putting their ladders against the fortifications. The fortifications were made merely of wooden stakes and intertwined branches and twigs. The ladders fell between the stakes, against the twigs. The ladders then did not reach the top of the ramparts. The Athenians had it easy to push the ladders away, inside the twigs. The Boeotian hoplites, heavily armoured as they were, came too low then to jump to the other side of the ramparts, and when they jumped it was one after the other, cautiously. They lost time, hung on the wrong side, the outside of the stakes. They just could not get in, not in sufficient numbers. When one Boeotian by chance arrived inside, he fell immediately impaled on Athenian spears.

Socrates and Alcibiades fought side by side; Laches held the other half of the precinct. They had it relatively easy. It was not hard to let one after the other Boeotian hoplite come to the top of the ladders, then push the ladders somewhat to the side so that the men lost balance, then stab at them with a lance. The men would fall off the ladder and the Athenian could wait for the next enemy.

What happened at Delium was carnage, but the carnage was on the Boeotians. Socrates had to overcome each time his natural aversion to harm a defenceless man, but he fought with as much determination as the other Athenians. The Athenians were not fighting to win a battle here. They fought for survival. The Boeotian slingers were no danger anymore, because they were afraid to touch their own men up there. The battle was uneven, and soon the Boeotian commanders called off the attack.

The first attack of the Boeotians had not lasted until noon. At no point had the Boeotians succeeded in breaking the defences. Alcibiades and Socrates went round to

inspect the troops and to inspire courage in the Athenians. They spoke to them, took interest in a wound, re-arranged weapons and told the men to stay vigilant. They gathered their wounded and put the doctor to work on these. The slightly wounded stayed on the battlements, however, and refused to be treated by the doctor. They knew how important it was that they stayed and defend their own.

The Boeotians attacked twice more that day, once right after noon and once almost at evening. Part of the last battle was fought in the light of torches. The Boeotians tried to burn the palisades, but the Athenians quenched the fires and threw even some of the burning debris into the ditch before them, making it even more difficult for the Boeotians to position their ladders. Delium held.

In the middle of the night a fine rain fell. The rain soaked the defenders, most of whom had stayed on their posts, sleeping with their backs against the walls. The rain drenched the ditches. The Athenian hoplites stood miserably behind their defences. They were grumpy and bad-tempered.

‘Why did we have to come to this land?’ they asked. ‘This is damned cow-land anyway, covered with cow-shit and cow-piss. Did we really have to fight for this?’ They found some solace in that the Boeotians must feel exactly like them in this weather, or even worse.

The next morning, the Boeotians could advance well on the grass until they were close to the fortifications. At the ditch, and in the ditch, the ground had been upturned. The mud there stuck to the boots of the attacking warriors. Ladders glided away from beneath, and the men slipped from the rungs. The morning attack was rapidly called off. Delium could not be taken this way.

The rain stopped, however, and a day later further attacks were launched. The Boeotians rolled forward inclined ramps made of flattened beams roped together. They also brought rickety towers now, which protected them somewhat more. The Athenians fought off the hoplites that ran up the planks, and they burned down the towers, which were but shaky structures anyway, so that they could be drawn to the ground by hooks and set to fire with a sole bucket of oil and a torch.

The following night Alcibiades had a short sleep, the first in three days. He awoke in the middle of the night and went to the ramparts. He looked over the wooden stakes, standing on the stones that formed the base of the walls, and he looked out at the Boeotian camp. The Boeotians had lit campfires between their tents. It was still winter and the air was fresher. Alcibiades saw tens of little fires in the far, glimmering like so many land-stars.

Alcibiades stood there, slowly dozing, when he was suddenly startled by a noise behind him. He heard a man approaching him from the right. Socrates came up to him and looked over the fences too. He leaned on his spear and looked in silence. The two men stayed thus a long time without speaking.

Then Alcibiades said, ‘what do your voices tell, Socrates, when will we die?’

‘Tomorrow or the day after, or will the Thebans starve us slowly out?’

‘My voices only tell me not to do certain things. They do not tell me what to do. I do not know the future, and my voices have not made a soothsayer out of me. It seems to me that the Thebans hate us more than anybody else in the world, even more than the

Spartans or the Corinthians. They are eager to kill us. I think they will continue to attack us. They are not going to starve us out. They have a serious issue, however. Their traditional frontal attacks do not work. We have a good stand.'

'Will reinforcements arrive from Athens to help us?'

'The only one who could bring reinforcements would be Demosthenes. But he will not move. He would either have to lead his own army across Boeotia, which would even enrage the Boeotians more, and that is the contrary of this strategy, or he would have first to return to Attica by ships and then come for us. That would take ages. Demosthenes wants victories. He does not want to march into traps while he is expected. He shall not risk defeat against a complete hoplite army of Boeotians, and not for defeated men such as we are. We are stuck here, alone, and here we shall die by force, or starve.'

'Suppose we broke out and run for the Sea. Or even now, when all is so peaceful, attack that camp by surprise? That should give them a fine awakening!'

'Attack now would not be a surprise. I have seen them positioning guards all along their lines and camps. As for our retreat to the Sea, there are not enough boats for us all at the seaside. We would be slaughtered on the beach by their archers and cavalry.'

'The rest could make a dash south and defend itself on the way. I still have my horses.'

'We could do that, Alcibiades, and we may have to, because I am not going to starve, and I am not going to surrender myself and be cut down helpless. Very few of us shall survive however. Better to wait a while and see what the Boeotians do. Who knows? They might even get bored with us, decide taking the fort is impossible, and leave.'

Alcibiades paused. 'No Socrates. With such a large army amassed here, and us occupying a temple to which they seem to be attached, they will go on attacking and attacking. They will not suffer losing face. But I really wonder how they will get in. They sure are not going to de-lodge us from here unless they keep attacking day after day and kill us by their slingers one after the other. That shall cost them extremely dear. I think that in a few days they shall see sense and start starving us out.'

There was a prolonged silence then, broken again by Alcibiades. 'What will you die for, Socrates?'

'That's an astonishing question, Alcibiades! I'll die for Athens of course!'

'For a democracy you do not really believe in? Will you die for the shabby, dirty streets filled with misery and fleas, for a woman who only scorns you or for children who mock you?'

'Yes, for all that. And I'll die for the freedom to wander about in the city and buy scrolls in the agora, as well as for the freedom to discuss with people things nobody understands, me included. And I shall die for my friends who stand here with me. For what will you die, Alcibiades?'

'What does it matter for what I die, Socrates? I have been much a dead man for so many years already. Yes, you laugh, but I have been dead all that time. I walk and eat and make war, all right, but for no reason. I am just here on this earth that I stamp upon, but I might as well not be here. I don't care. I like the excitement at times, the thrill of a fight of man to man, a wild gallop, the elation of a victory, the curves of a woman's hip, the sun shining on green hills. I like the thrill of battle and the thrill of an intrigue, but I don't really care whether I have that or not.'

'Did you care for Harmonia?'

Alcibiades was stung by that last word worse than by a spear.

He retorted, 'what do you know about Harmonia?'

'Nothing,' Socrates said. 'I lived with you in the same tent, many times, remember? I didn't even know there was a Harmonia until now. I saw you looking sometimes at a woman's girdle, however, and you named your ship the Harmonia. This is not a name the Alcibiades I know would give to a ship! I merely brought two and two together. So there actually has been a Harmonia?'

'Yes,' Alcibiades acknowledged after a while, 'there has been. She was my love for half a day, and a phantom love for eternity. She is lost to me.'

He paused for while before he continued. 'Anyhow, she would not have changed me. I realise that now. I would have remained Alcibiades and have mistresses. I would have remained Alcibiades, a man who cares not about life and not about death and who therefore is free for whatever might happen. Free also from Athens. I want Athens, but I don't really fight for her. I guess I fight for the kicks. I like to fight on a horse, in a trireme or with friends in a hoplite battle. I am so good at it because I risk my life just a little more than anybody else, and that makes the difference. Some call it courage, you know. But I definitely do not like to fight crammed in this stinking rat hole, even if it is a temple precinct. Our men defecate and urinate where they stand. How long will that take?'

'So you are not happy, Alcibiades. But then, which man can be called happy until he is dead? Who knows what the gods have in store for us? Do we not all sing joyously for the dead mostly because their sufferings have ended? One of these days, either we will sing over many dead, or others will sing for us. And maybe somebody will call us happy.'

Socrates said, 'don't you fear the gods, Alcibiades?'

'That's a strange question,' Alcibiades answered in the same tone as Socrates had done a few moments earlier. 'I don't care whether I live or whether I am dead. How can the gods harm and punish someone like that?'

Socrates laughed, 'they could let you live and suffer! If they took away Theodote and Hipparete from you and your Thasian wine and your purple robes, how would you suffer, Alcibiades!'

Those words made also Alcibiades laugh out loud.

'Yes, they could do that,' he said, 'and a lot more annoying things. But I do not think I fear even all that. I would run into that by my own wish also, but I do not really care.'

They looked out over the ramparts into the void.

'By the way,' Alcibiades said, 'how do you know about Theodote?'

'All Athens knows about Theodote,' Socrates replied.

He astonished Alcibiades. 'I knew Theodote when she was still a young lady. I visited her and conversed with her. You see, you did not know all the most beautiful hetaerae in town when you were young! She is a smart and nice person. I liked her a lot and I respected her.'

'Well, what I ever,' Alcibiades shouted. 'You know Theodote! Who is there in Athens you don't know?'

Socrates did not answer.

Socrates thought on for a while.

He said, 'in a sense, we are very similar. I am not attached to the things of this earth either. I live with little. But I love life all the same, and wouldn't leave it light-



heartedly. I like to be astonished at a new leaf on a plant in spring, at the shouting of the fishmongers in the agora, at the scent of a rose, at the song of a bird and at a juicy olive or a sweet fig. But I am not afraid to die either. I do not desire to die. But I am not afraid to die either. Maybe we will die tomorrow, maybe not.'

'And you, Socrates, do you fear the gods?'

'No, I do not fear the gods, but I respect them.'

'Truly? If I follow your reasoning, however, as you once told us when we were still your students, you used to say that the gods were ruled by their passions. Now, if the gods are ruled by their passions, there must be something stronger than them, no? Where does passion come from? Who is the god who brandishes the passions?'

Socrates remained silent once more for a time. He knew that what he was going to say now might bring him prosecution and death, maybe a worse death than what he could suffer here at Delium.

Yet, he answered. 'Yes. The gods are too many. If the gods must have all power and be ruled by nothing, there can be only one such god. The gods we know must be expressions of that one god. Maybe we, humans, have invented the gods, a god for every passion and none for virtue. There can only be but one God, one being that pervades and rules the universe. That being must be order, or must bring order in the world, the order of reasoning. It must be a God that has enough with his own being, yet created us. I wonder why he created us to suffer and to die, to live in passion and not in virtue. Did he do it because he was bored or out of love? I don't know.'

Alcibiades watched Socrates in astonishment.

He thought, 'one God! Good heavens! If he tells that in Athens, just once, even in disguised phrases, he will not live long. Yet, he must be right. He is always right. There is but one Zeus and it is not the Zeus we know. It must be a Zeus without passion, a Zeus ruled only by himself, setting rules we do not and cannot understand ever, but of an implacable order. And that must be the God that talks to Socrates.'

He remained silent.

'Do you know what all these Athenian citizens are fighting for then, Alcibiades?'

'Yes. Democracy! Democracy means freedom. Democratic polises involve the entire citizenry in their making of decisions. That is our way of living together, in freedom, being able to say what we want, and we participate in the management of the polis. It is our way of equal chances for all citizens.'

'You speak of freedom. Are we free?'

'I guess so, Socrates, more than any other citizen in any other city of the Hellenes.'

'Can we speak out freely what we think without risking being fined, imprisoned, at no risk?'

'I guess not.'

'And you would say that democracy means equal chances for all?'

'I guess so!'

'Do you know all the generals elected this year and last year?'

'Yes.' Alcibiades cited the names.

'How many of those are of the disinherited class, how many of the highest rank class?'

Alcibiades thought about that, then he answered, 'all are or were of the highest ranks and of the most important families of Athens. But all citizens voted for them in the Assembly.'

‘True. So we are all equal but we chose only candidates from the highest ranks.

Actually, do you recall whether there were candidates from the other ranks?’

Alcibiades thought again, ‘no, I don’t think so.’

‘Is that then our famous Athenian isonomia, Alcibiades, our fair and equal chance in the polis? Are not the Athenian people so very gullible? Wouldn’t you say that in our democracy we all have the equal chance to elect only people coming from a certain class, from some of the wealthiest or most powerful families of Athens?’

‘In practice, that is what it comes to, yes. I guess so. Only those men have the means to be candidates for generalships or be magistrates. But anybody who would have the means to do so could be a candidate.’

‘Yes. Now, something that is not what it says it is, how would you call that?’

‘A lie or hypocrisy’.

‘Fine. As to what we were talking about just now, isn’t it so that democracy is not what the word says it is?’

‘What do you mean, Socrates?’

‘Well, democracy means that all people can aspire to take part in the management of the state. But actually all the people can do is chose magistrates, generals, and leaders, from among a rather restricted number of citizens, always from the same families.

That is not what the word democracy means, what the word covers for most people, I would say.’

‘You are right.’

‘So,’ Socrates continued, ‘democracy is a lie or hypocrisy.’

‘On that point and in that sense you are right,’ Alcibiades said. ‘But the city is ruled for many other subjects by the Ecclesia, the Assembly. The laws are voted by the Ecclesia and prepared by the Council. The prytaneis are chosen among the Council. And choice is by lot, for which everybody, rich or poor is equal.’

‘I agree,’ Socrates said. ‘Who has actually proposed new laws these last years?’

‘Why, Pericles, Cleon, others did ... I see. The men of the same families did. But it shouldn’t always be like that.’

‘Of course. But hasn’t it always been like that these last years?’

Alcibiades grinned. ‘It has. The prytaneis however have some power in the city. They are the judges.’

‘Who decides on new taxes, on peace or war? Aren’t those the most important subjects of the ruling of our polis?’

‘Yes, they are. And the Assembly votes on these.’

‘Isn’t it so that the Assembly is led by the generals, the notables, the leaders, the demagogues?’

‘That is so,’ Alcibiades acknowledged.

‘So all the decisions on subjects that really matter have been proposed by a few men, of always the same class, and then they have been brought to the Council and to the vote through the Council?’

‘Yes. And if the people don’t like a proposal they can refuse it.’

‘Isn’t it so that then a counter-proposition made by a number of men of the same class is put to the vote?’

‘Yes.’

‘So wouldn’t you say that the people, all the people, have in Athens only a very limited say in all matters of the state?’

‘I guess so, if you say so.’

‘Oh no, Alcibiades, you said so. What we call democracy does not really cover then what most people would affirm that the word stood for?’

‘No.’

‘Then the word democracy is a lie or hypocrisy. We fight for democracy, but we have as less democracy as Sparta has!’

‘Socrates, I guess you are right up to a point. Since that is so, Athens has as much of an oligarchy as Sparta, only in a more disguised form?’

‘I haven’t said that, Alcibiades. I just said that democracy as it is in practice today in our polis is not what the word covers.’

‘Then we should think more about the word and what it means,’ Alcibiades said.

‘Yes,’ Socrates answered. ‘If we truly believe in democracy, we should reflect on what to do in our lives and in our polis to bring practice nearer to what the word means. We should give everybody the true and full means also to vie for important positions, not just to vote for them.’

Socrates spoke no more. He stayed silent too, sighed deeply and after a while he returned to sit against the wall and he caught some sleep. Alcibiades stood guard and kept looking out before him, to the enemy camp, until the sun rose in blood over the horizon.

The Boeotians attacked once or twice a day for fifteen more days. The defence of the precinct became a routine and an ordeal. Not one Boeotian got his feet inside the fort of the Athenians. The Athenians lost men every day and so did the Boeotians, but the Boeotians lost tens of men each time.

Not all attacks were massive. Sometimes the enemy just attacked at one point, as if probing the defences. Sometimes only archers advanced and shot at every head above the ramparts. Then slingers came and would do the same. The Boeotians constantly harassed the Athenians, refusing them sleep by limited attacks at night and by mock attacks. The Athenians ran out of everything: out of sleep, out of food, and out of patience. A few horses were slaughtered and the meat roasted. The Athenians would go up to the battlements and eat the most delicious pieces ostentatiously with succulent gestures, in full view of the enemy.

That night a fine layer of snow covered the wide landscape around Delium. It had frozen, so that the terrain before the fortifications was excellent for new all-out attacks of the Boeotian hoplites. At dawn, indeed, almost the complete army of the Thebans advanced until a short distance from the fortified town. The Boeotians had prepared a last surprise for the Athenians. The Athenians sensed this was a decisive assault. It was then the seventeenth day after the Battle of Oropus in which Hippocrates was killed.

The Boeotians brought forward a strange contraption. The Athenians saw two wagons advance, drawn by mules. On the cart stood a long tube. The tube was a hollow wooden beam, fitted in the inside with iron lining. An iron tube came out behind from the beam, and curved out from the hollow beam into a cauldron. The defenders wondered what the Boeotians were up to with the tube. The Boeotians brought the wagons with the tube as close as they could to a portion of the wall, to the right of Alcibiades. Alcibiades ordered archers to shoot on the men of the wagons, but they could not do much harm, and the men below were rapidly replaced. Alcibiades and Socrates looked at each other, wondering what would come next. They almost broke out in laughter at the awkward wooden and iron structure that seemed to be of no apparent use for the assault. They saw that the Boeotians inserted in the rear section of

the beam large bellows and the bellows blew through the tube. The blast passed the cauldron, and a great flame was blown from the beam, which scarred the wooden defences.

The Boeotians had poured sulphur and pitch in the cauldron and Zeus only knew what else, and set fire to it with ignited coals. The mixture was blown through the beam and the resulting flame that came out of the tube was so hot that it consumed instantly the defenders at the fortification. The men behind the palisades were horribly burnt. The stink of burnt human flesh horrified the Athenians.

Alcibiades ran up to the section of the palisades that had been charred by the fire engine. The wood had been consumed to stumps of black coal. Several men were lying on the ground, completely burnt in face and body, and dead. Men ran around like living torches. Their comrades dared not to approach them. The heat was tremendous. On the burnt men, skin hung in burning lumps around their bodies. The men slammed with their arms at their skin, and burning pieces of flesh fell on the ground but kept smouldering there. Then, the men started to scream horribly. When the flames on a person were quenched, the stuff that the men had been sprayed with remained incandescent and hot, and burnt through to the bone. Screams of agony were ear-splitting. The screams brought everybody's nerves to the breaking point and paralysed the men. Alcibiades was on the brink of panicking and running away from this horror. If there was anything he was afraid of after Etna, it was this fire. The Thebans had tamed Hades and thrown its flames on the Athenians!

The Athenians who were not burned immediately to the bone had to abandon their posts and they fled away to the interior. Many men were injured with burns. The Boeotians used their Hades-like engine to roast a broad section of the wooden wall, so that nothing remained of the fortifications but charred, black stumps. The cries of anger and fear on the Athenian side were terrible then. The Boeotians moved the beam a little and burned down in a nick of time section after section of the wall. They blew away by fire all the defenders before them, and when the Athenians fled in horror, they shifted the beam to char further sections.

The Boeotians ordered their warriors to pass massively with their ladders over the smoking and burning remains of the wall. In no time, hundreds of Boeotian hoplites ran over the fortifications and into the temple precinct. Socrates and Alcibiades ordered their men to that stretch of the defences, but once a row of Theban hoplites stood before them, the defences were overwhelmed, and the rest of the Boeotian army streamed in, in large numbers. Resistance was useless. Delium had been taken by fire. The Athenians fled.

Socrates and Alcibiades ran also, but they kept their armour. Socrates saw how the Athenian leader Cleonymus tossed away his shield to save his life. Socrates disapproved of such behaviour. Many were killed when they ran away, but the Boeotians were too happy with their victory, with having driven the last Athenians away from their territory. They did not push hard on. They were too glad and too occupied with the recapture of Delium to give the Athenians a deadly pursuit by their hoplites. They took prisoner whatever Athenian was trapped and had surrendered. Thus, Pyrilampes, father of Plato, whom Socrates knew, ran away at the first sign of defeat. He was captured later, and ransomed by the Boeotians. The Thebans killed

many men instantly, however. Then they sent their Locrian cavalry in pursuit of the remaining Athenians.

Socrates ran with a few men to the Sea, over the plains between Delium and the ships. Alcibiades had grabbed a horse at the manes, and he jumped on its back. Around Socrates a group of about fifty men formed. They half ran, half walked to the beaches. Alcibiades gathered fifteen riders, and with these he protected the Athenian hoplites from attacks by Locrian horsemen. In the far, in front of them and behind them, tens of Athenians were massacred by the Boeotian cavalry.

The Athenians reached the small port of Delium, and they saw five Athenian triremes waiting. Alcibiades jumped off his horse, took off its gear, slapped it on the back and sent it galloping towards the hills. All his horse-riders did the same. Athens had just lost its last and only cavalry. The men embarked on the ships. A few more Athenian groups ran towards the boats, but then Alcibiades saw only Locrian riders arrive. The Athenian triremes set off and rowed into the Sea.

When the ships were already some way in the Sea, a last group of Athenian hoplites did arrive at the beach, fighting its way to the Sea, pursued by Locrian cavalry. Alcibiades ordered the boat back to the shore. There were archers aboard, and arrows. He commanded as many men as he had to use arches to send volleys of arrows on the cavalry. The Athenian hoplites fought against the horse-men with desperation and the ship reached the beach before all the Athenians were killed. The men ran through the water, to the protection of the trireme. Alcibiades, Socrates and the others drew the men aboard. The last grinning face was that of Laches. The former general was very wet when he embraced Alcibiades and Socrates. Then he fell exhausted on the deck of the ship, amidst his men.

Oropus and Delium were the first great disasters for the Athenians after a long series of victories. Hippocrates had been killed, and Demosthenes had failed in his strategy for Boeotia. He failed due to treason and underestimation of the Boeotian hatred and jealousy for Athens. He had underestimated the Boeotian allied forces.

Later, Demosthenes regrouped all the men of his army and tried to take the town of Sicyon. Before all his ships had moored in the harbour however, the people of Sicyon, who had heard of the Athenians' great defeat, came out in force and drove the men that had come ashore back to their ships. Demosthenes could not even get his men off his ships at the town. The people of Sicyon set up a trophy and under an armistice they gave back the Athenians their dead.

The expedition to Delium and Boeotia ended thus. It ended in total disaster for Athens.

## **Chapter 10 – Athens and Amphipolis, Spring 423 BC to Autumn 422 BC**

### **Aristophanes**

Socrates and Alcibiades returned to Athens in the triremes that had been brought to the coast of Delium in Boeotia. They found the people of Athens angry and outraged at the defeat of the Battle of Oropus. The siege and surrender of Delium was considered but a small episode in the war against the Boeotians, a small setback such as for instance Demosthenes, the great general, had also suffered in between his major victories. Nobody suspected the tragedy that the defenders and survivors of the temple precinct had witnessed. The dead of Delium seemed to be quickly forgotten in the aftermath of the Battle of Oropus.

The two most important men in Athens were still the demagogue Cleon and the general Nicias son of Niceratus. Nicias was the one general who had never suffered defeat. He had never won much by himself, though. Demosthenes was Athens' most brilliant leader, but his successes were not consistent, and his daring and extravagance in campaigns were now looked at with suspicion and with fear of outcome. With Demosthenes, one never knew whether he would win or lose, even though he had won more often than lost, and more brilliantly. The two powers Athens could depend upon were truly only Cleon the demagogue and Nicias the general. Alcibiades wanted to become a general, but he was still too young for the office. He would have to wait four years more at least before he was of legible age, and no one in the Council seemed to be ready to lower the age for his sake.

Alcibiades lived a while with Hipparete in Athens, in his house. She was subdued now, accepting her fate. She was a faithful housewife. She rarely left the house and had enough on her hands with her children and her household. Alcibiades remained with her only a few days. He took a horse and rode to his estate in the country. Hipparchos lived there. Hipparchos had restored the house. He raised many horses. He dealt in horses but he kept a few thorough-breds for races. His mistress, Myrrhina, ruled the house, and she lived with Hipparchos as if she were his concubine or even his wife. Alcibiades longed for Theodote.

Alcibiades found Theodote with Hipparchos and Myrrhina. He was in a very morose, agitated state when he arrived in the country, for he had suffered his first defeat in the siege of Delium. He had run for his life for the first time, an ignominious, desperate, panicky run, and that had shocked him considerably. He had rather thought he would have fought until death, but Socrates had shouted the senselessness of death to him, and drawn him away from the battle, into retreat.

Alcibiades was very tense when he arrived in Athens, later, after Delium, and Hipparete didn't help. She wanted sex badly, hard and arduous sex. She assaulted him aggressively, without tenderness and without love. Alcibiades wondered how she did when he was away from Athens. She was wild. She used and abused him, and he had to use violence to subdue her more than she subdued him in bed. At long, he was not so much astonished as annoyed.

Theodote mothered him. She made him sleep as long as he wanted. She didn't make love to him and demanded nothing. She told him to lie down on a couch on the balcony of the aulé, on his back, and she caressed his muscles and thighs and legs with long lascivious strokes. She anointed him with scented oils, which were fresh at the touch, and she burnt delicate perfumes around him. She let him rest through dinner and supper, but brought him small pieces of the finest fish, a few morsels of fowl and many roasted legumes. She took him on strolls in the countryside, walking beside him but remaining silent and just keeping his hand in hers. She offered him her tenderness. It took a long time before he grabbed her at the waist calmly but with passion. Theodote got him to be relaxed, but it took her many days. Time passed by slowly and agreeably, and Alcibiades let himself live and be soothed by Theodote.

One of those days, Theodote was rubbing in Alcibiades's shoulders with light, fresh perfumed oil, once more on the balcony of their aulé. It was still early in the morning. Alcibiades was lying on a couch that Theodote had drawn outside. He lay belly down and Theodote caressed his shoulders and his neck with expert fingers. Sometimes she dug her nails in the flesh of his back, just to elicit a reaction and make sure that he still paid attention to her. She had placed flowers all around.

'Alcibiades, dear,' she said, 'you know what we should do?'

Alcibiades only grunted in response.

'We should go to the theatre!' she continued. 'It is near the Great Dyonisia! We can go to the plays, hear a fine tragedy, a dithyramb or two, a comedy. Athens will be in feast. There will be much laughter and dancing in the agora. I know I shouldn't go to the theatre with you, but I have these new veils you bought for me. Why, people could even take me for your wife!'

'No tragedy for me, this year!' Alcibiades exclaimed. 'I have seen enough tragedy. And those dithyrambs, I have just had enough of them. They are boring. I stay here. Keep at it, Theodote.'

'Alcibiades, dear,' Theodote continued after a while, thinking he was sleeping.

'What now?'

'We could go to a comedy! I heard that your brother-in-law, Callias, is paying for the chorus this year. The poor man is almost broke, but he is still paying for the best singers and dancers in town. He is also sponsoring your friend Aristophanes with his play this year. You know, Aristophanes won the price for comedy last year. His new play will be so hilarious! I am sure it will be chosen by the jury again among all plays, to be one of the three best plays to be performed during the Dyonisia. Won't you support your friends? The play of Aristophanes is called "The clouds", and Hipparchos told me it would be a play on Socrates.'

'What?' Alcibiades shouted, jumping from the couch, sitting up, suddenly alert.

'Aristophanes wrote a comedy on Socrates? Staged by Callias? Oh no! I have to see that. I have to defend Socrates. I cannot let Socrates be ridiculed. Aristophanes and Callias cannot do that. Have my horse readied. I have to return to Athens!'

'Hush, hush, my dear Alci sweet,' Theodote soothed. 'There is lots of time to ride to Athens. Socrates is the talk of Athens now. He was considered a great hero when he returned from Delium. Everybody knows him! Everybody listens to his teaching and to his talks. The richest young men flock once more around him. He prepares the next generation of Athenian generals and magistrates. You will not stop writers from staging him. Aristophanes is not the only writer of comic to have prepared a play in which Socrates is featured. Ameipsias likewise will present a comedy in which one of

the characters is Socrates. Cleon will sponsor that one! Don't you dare to mingle in the organisation of the Great Dionysia festival! If you don't want to hear tragedies and dithyrambs, we might anyhow go to see Aristophanes's play and afterwards you can say a word or two to your friends in defence of Socrates. I am sure, however, that Socrates will laugh harder at Aristophanes than Aristophanes at Socrates.'

Alcibiades remained sitting and mused over her words. Theodote was happy. She had finally found something to pique his interest, even though she surmised that Socrates was a rival to her. Alcibiades's combative spirit was on the winning side, as she had always known it would with time. She rubbed the scented oil on his legs and slowly moved her hands higher.

Five days later, Alcibiades and Theodote were back in Athens. They stayed in Theodote's house. Alcibiades had not returned to Hipparete. He was vivid, sparkling with energy again. He walked into the agora dressed in a new coloured chiton and red chlamys. The air was warm. He wore jewels around his wrists, rings on his fingers and gold in his ears, an outrageously wide hat, and Argive shoes with high heels. Theodote walked with him. She was dressed in a blue, light, long tunic, a peplos, with so many shawls and light blue veils that nobody could recognise her. She had Argive shoes on her feet, too, with outrageously high heels. She wore more jewels on wrists, neck and ankles than were on sale in the agora. A heavy bracelet of helical golden patterns ran along her left arm. She stepped into the theatre, and took care to draw up her many-folded tunic to show the silver rings on her ankles. She wore a parasol painted with orange flowery motives. They formed a stunning couple that walked to the theatre of Dionysos.

Theodote and Alcibiades entered the theatre from the side when many Athenians already occupied the marble seats. People stooped under Alcibiades when he passed with his large hat. After a while he took it off. The hat annoyed the people around him, yet so far he had kept the hat on while he walked in the theatre.

Young boys sold honey-sticks and sweetmeat. They ran between the chairs of the magistrates and notables of the town in the lower rows, forcing their sweets on the men. Alcibiades bought honey-sticks for himself and for Theodote. Theodote still held her parasol, but she also waved a fan, a heart-shaped flat instrument with which she sought fresh air. When Alcibiades wanted to sit down, boys jumped on them, ready to push a cushion under him but he waved them away. Theodote had brought their own cushions, cushions without bugs. How she could manage parasol, fan, and cushions and still show off with her tunic, always remained a mystery for Alcibiades, but she mastered it all.

Alcibiades saw Callias two rows down, and he signalled Theodote to follow him. Callias was not surprised at all to see Alcibiades, and not at all to see him accompanied by Theodote. He winked at Alcibiades and started to talk to him, saying how glad he was to have his brother-in-law next to him. Other dignitaries of Athens avoided Callias and his wife, who were as extravagantly dressed as Alcibiades and Theodote. As a group, they were very conspicuous among the Athenians in the theatre. Callias was as much in favour of being remarked as Alcibiades. Callias explained at what he had spent his money today.

The stage was set in a street of Athens, showing the fronts of two houses. The round orchestra below was garlanded with many flowers. On this floor in front of the stage,



the chorus would dance and sing. Callias confirmed he had hired the best singers and dancers of Athens.

Alcibiades suddenly saw Socrates enter on the right side, and his mouth fell open. Socrates also wore a wide hat, but it was his everyday hat he had on, the same hat he wore in winter as well as in summer. Threads ravelled out of the hat, and it was torn in places. Socrates was dressed in his every day's clothes. He had no other. Alcibiades stood up and cried out loud so that all the theatre could hear it, 'Socrates, come over here!'

Socrates walked over at his leisure, saluting people to left and right, greeting the better half of Athens, shaking hands. It took a long time before he sat down between Alcibiades and Callias. Socrates had brought his own cushion too. No bugs for Socrates either! Still, he gave a coin to the two boys that had run to him with their cushions, after he had seen their disappointed faces when he showed them his own seat from behind his back.

When Socrates sat, Alcibiades asked in a low voice near Socrates's ear, 'Socrates, what on earth are you doing here? Don't you know that the Clouds is a comic play on you? Aristophanes told me yesterday it would be hilarious, but the jokes are on you. Are you sure you want to stay?'

'Of course I want to stay. What did I come here for otherwise?' Socrates replied with his hand before his mouth so that only Alcibiades could hear him.

'I have already been here for Ameipsias's play and I found it disastrous although the crowds cheered. Ameipsias used me as a character in his play too, you know. The people were delighted to see me and make fun of me. I like it to make them happy. I met Aristophanes five days ago. He showed me some of his work. It's going to be fabulous. He has written a farce as outrageously as only he could do. After these plays I'll be famous! Everybody will want to talk to me. I wouldn't miss it for all the money in the world. And you, are you sure you want to be seen with me?'

'Of course,' Alcibiades answered. 'You are my friend. What do I care what people think?' Alcibiades was glad too, for all eyes in the buzz of the theatre were directed at the colourful group of the wealthy and exorbitantly brilliant, rich Callias and the striking Alcibiades surrounded by their gaudy mistresses, who only barely hid their faces now and chatted over the two men, sitting around the shabby and ugly philosopher. All knew that the subject of Aristophanes's play would be Socrates.

Aristophanes entered the theatre a few moments before the play began. He looked around, and then he went immediately to the places where Socrates, Alcibiades and Callias sat. Alcibiades asked Theodote to move over and let Aristophanes sit next to him.

With his play of last year, directed in critic at Cleon, Aristophanes had touched a weak spot in the demagogue. Cleon had not appreciated the mockery. He had attempted to deprive Aristophanes of his citizenship, on the ground of illegitimacy of the poet's Athenian parentage. The charge was disproved. All of Aristophanes's friends had pledged in court that the writer's parents were good Athenian citizens since several generations.

This year, Aristophanes had chosen to mock someone who could laugh at being made a fool of: Socrates. Aristophanes, however, sent a few grim glances to Cleon, who sat at the lowest row and also Cleon looked around to seek Aristophanes. Cleon was

visibly not pleased at all to see where the poet sat. Aristophanes expected nothing good from Cleon.

In his new play, Aristophanes would be witty at the expense of his friend. Socrates had proved Aristophanes a fool often in his elenchus dialogues. Aristophanes could not be angry at his friend, but he would be taking a fine revenge on Socrates with his own weapons: satiric humour and burlesque.

A herald announced the start of the play and blew on the trumpet. Two aulos-girls darted out from behind the scenery. They played a merry tune and they fluttered around in the orchestra. The people in the theatre went to their places and stopped talking. Conversations ended. The play was to begin.

The first scene started in a bedroom. Two men were sleeping: Strepsiades and his son Pheidippides. Strepsiades woke up, stung by the bugs in his mattress, and he told how much misery he had to suffer from his son who spent all his money on horses and chariots. He woke his son, and stated he had found a solution to the problem. His son was to learn how to win lawsuits in the thinking-shop of Socrates. He said they had two courses on reasoning there, the true and the false. If his son learned the false course well, he would not have to pay his debts. Pheidippides of course refused to learn anything, so Strepsiades went to Socrates's house himself.

The wooden scenery moved and instead of the bedroom, the wide wooden prisms behind the stage showed the thinking-shop now. A disciple of Socrates received Strepsiades. The disciple told how recently a flea had sprung from Chaerephon's brow on Socrates's bald head, and Socrates had asked how many flea-feet lengths that flea had jumped. The disciples solved the problem by dipping the flea's feet in wax, modelled Persian slippers on the imprints and then measured the distance.

The whole theatre roared with laughter, Socrates included, and everybody threw a glance at him. The play continued.

The actor Socrates entered the scene. The real Socrates was now utterly stunned and speechless at the surprise. The stage machine swung in a basket of reeds over the scene, and in that basket sat Socrates. He sat in the basket to suspend his brain in the air, to contemplate the sun from closer by, and to have lighter thoughts. Socrates the actor told that he would have discovered nothing from the ground, considering from below the ideas that were above.

When Strepsiades called out to him from beneath, he answered from in the airs, 'mortal, what do you want of me?'

Alcibiades and Callias were plied in two after the initial surprise. Theodote choked on her honey-sticks, and later the sticks stayed before her open mouth. Socrates's eyes bulged out of their orbits. He didn't move a muscle of his body. Then, he too convulsed and laughed with the heartiest sounds his face could produce. He slapped his hands on his knees and almost rolled on the ground for laughter. Alcibiades had to draw him right. Socrates had tears in his eyes and the actors stopped talking, the actor Socrates still swinging in his basket from left to right, suspended in the air. The actor Socrates pointed at the real Socrates, whom he had spotted in the audience. The real Socrates then stood up, turned to the public with his hands above his head like the victor of a wrestling match and he saluted the people of Athens. The audience applauded him, all still laughing. Alcibiades and Callias didn't know what to do:

disappear behind their chairs or wave too. They both drew Socrates down, who was cherishing the attention of the crowds, and the applause.

The actor Socrates descended from his basket. Socrates introduced the Clouds to Strepsiades, the Clouds to whom he acknowledged superior powers of thunder and lightning. The chorus of Callias's dancing women entered into the orchestra, dancing around on the music of invisible cythars. The song was a song of rain and of fertility. Callias really had spared no means, for the chorus was of the best quality, the dancers were graceful and most splendidly dressed, and the singing harmonious. The costumes of the graces were wonderful. The actors lowered their masks while the chorus danced, and it was a very colourful, gentle whirling of delicate cloths that the audience admired. The chorus women wore long, flimsy shawls and while they danced these shawls made slow, long movements, as the soft material floated around them in the air.

Of course, while the Clouds sang of thunder, Strepsiades told he really adored the Clouds, but since the Clouds had frightened him he also would let off his own thunder, whereupon he let go a tremendous fart. This brought new hilarious laughter in the theatre.

The comedy had a serious tone also, and one that Alcibiades would have considered to be very dangerous outside a farce. The actor Socrates started an elenchus on the stage, asking Strepsiades who was the most powerful in the universe. When Strepsiades proposed Zeus, Socrates asserted that Zeus did not exist. He argued that Zeus could not make it rain in a clear sky without the Clouds, so the Clouds were more powerful than Zeus, also with their thunder. And Socrates told that the Clouds moved. What made the Clouds move? The aerial whirlwind did that, so the whirlwind was more powerful than Zeus.

The real Socrates sat still and frowned. Calling into question the power of the gods was not something he dared to do in public. He regretted having opened his mind some to his friend Aristophanes. But the public was still smiling. Much could be allowed and was forgiven in a farce.

The comedy continued in the same hilarious and light-hearted manner, with many jokes and allusions. It was filled by reminiscences to Socrates's teaching by dialogue. There were also allusions to Cleon the demagogue, and even to people with long hair that bred horses.

The actor Socrates drew Strepsiades on the couch, but the man refused to sit for fear of bugs in Socrates's furniture. When he sat down finally, the man scratched ostentatiously, exclaiming that the Corinthians advanced on him from all the corners of the couch!

There was also a long scene in which Aristophanes brought 'Just Discourse' of reasoning against 'Unjust Discourse'. Aristophanes let 'Just Discourse' say that 'Unjust Discourse' invented ever new maxims which were received favourably by the fools, at which moment the actor pointed to the audience in the theatre. Here, another impious argument was delivered. Unjust Discourse stated that justice did not exist. If justice existed, how then could Zeus not have been condemned for having enchained his father?

The stage's Socrates did teach things to Pheidippides in the end. For when Strepsiades told his son that his debts were due on the day of the new and the old, Pheidippides told that this day didn't exist, for unless a woman could be old and young at the same time, no day could be old and new at the same time. So the meaning of the law, stipulating that day, was misunderstood. It meant that debts had never to be paid! Strepsiades simply denied he had debts to Pasiyas and to Amynias and these two had nothing to prove the contrary.

At the end, Pheidippides beat his father up. He proved by reasoning that he had the right to do so, and also to beat his mother. When Strepsiades complained to the Clouds, the chorus answered that they always acted thus. When the Clouds saw a man with a passion that was evil, they stuck him with some evil too, so that the man might learn to fear the gods. Strepsiades exclaimed then that he must have lost his reason when he denied the gods because of Socrates's charming words. Strepsiades ended by burning down and by demolishing with an axe the thinking-shop of Socrates. Socrates burnt inside his house, and the play was over.

During the comedy many jokes and absurd situations were proposed. Each time the audience applauded and laughed and shouted approval. The chorus, representing the Clouds, sang, danced and recited, and the crowd clapped their hands. The wooden scenery was wonderful, finely painted and set together.

The play was a great success, and at the end even Socrates wiped the tears of laughter from his eyes. The long dialogue between Just and Unjust Discourse pleased him too. Here, Aristophanes had shown the Athenians how the morals of the town had deteriorated. Pheidippides proved somewhat later that it was morally justified to beat up his father and his mother according to the teachings he learned of Socrates. The play was a true comic farce, burlesque, absurd and it mocked well-known Athenians like Socrates and Hyperbolus, as well as the gods. It was a political satire. Its arguments only allowed such a grotesque mockery. The audience stayed seated after the play, for this was the last presentation of the Dionysia.

The ten judges, who sat in the front during the play, now voted. Each judge put the tablet with his vote in an urn. In another urn they put five little black cubes and five white ones. The Archon-King then drew out simultaneously a voting tablet and a cube. He only counted the votes on the tablets that matched a white cube. So, of the ten votes only five were counted. At the end, Ameipsias's play came in second and Aristophanes's comedy third.

The writer, the chorégos and the leading actor of the first prize received the ivy wreath of the year. The judges came forward to crown the sponsor and the author of the best comic play. Callias could step forward for he had sponsored as chorégos the three comic pieces.

Aristophanes's play was only awarded the last, third prize. The judges had not much savoured Aristophanes's mockery of the gods. The audience was angry then, for they had seen Aristophanes' play win this year's contest like last year. The Athenians whistled and banged their fists on the marble stairs. They stamped with their feet. The choice of the judges was definite, however. Alcibiades, Socrates, Callias and Aristophanes stood up, still clapping to the performance, and they left the theatre discussing passionately their friend's play and the bad choice of the judges.

In Athens, the plays and comedies chased the memories of the horrors of the war.

## Cleon and Torone

The tribulations of war continued. Sparta's most acclaimed general and hero, Brasidas, who had been in Thrace, had marched in the winter against the city of Amphipolis. Amphipolis was an Athenian colony. It was a settlement on an old Thracian village called Ennea Oldoi, which was Thracian for 'nine roads'. The colony had been founded only fifteen years or so ago, by Athens' general Hagnon, who had chosen the site for its strategic importance on the route to the Hellespont and on the River Strymon, at a point where travellers crossed the river. A wooden bridge over the River Strymon tempted travellers to pass by the Amphipolis road. The town had prospered. Its walls were new and high. Not far from Amphipolis lay the Pangaion gold mines, and there were also silver mines in the neighbourhood, which belonged to Athenian families. One of the Athenian generals, Thucydides, had invested in Amphipolis and its mines.

Brasidas first captured the country around the town. Then he proposed a peaceful taking over of the town for Sparta, and promised to harm no one, to leave all political rights to everybody, also for the pro-Athenian citizens of the town. Brasidas was received with open arms in the city, winning the town without a battle and without loss of men.

Thucydides, the Athenian general, had been at Thasos with his ships, but he arrived too late to prevent Brasidas. He occupied a close-by town, Eion, and garrisoned it with Athenian hoplites, organising the defences. Brasidas had snatched Amphipolis from under the nose of Thucydides but Thucydides got Eion before Brasidas could arrive there.

Amphipolis was important to Athens. It provided wooden beams for shipbuilding. The Strymon River, on which Amphipolis lay, was an important border. The silver mines nearby provided a nice, steady income to Athens. The Athenians feared once more that other allied cities would revolt against them. Somewhat later, Brasidas also conquered several other cities in the area of Amphipolis, among which Torone and Lecythus. He asked Sparta for help, but the Spartan ephors and the Kings remembered in time they had still relatives as prisoners in Athens. Moreover, they were jealous of Brasidas' successes in Thrace. Brasidas was left on his own to wage war. His clout, however, proved to be large enough to attract allies to his army, and with these he set the region on fire. Brasidas revived the spirit of war and fighting in Sparta, in a city still mortified by the debacle at Sphacteria.

In that spring, the Spartans and the Athenians concluded an armistice for one year. Hostilities stopped, but while the negotiations were being discussed, Scione revolted from Athens and joined Brasidas. A little later Mende on Pallene revolted and also became an ally of Brasidas. Chalcidice and Thrace revolted thus from Athens. The Athenians spoke more and more of an expedition against Brasidas in Chalcidice, despite the armistice.

Athens sent Nicias, son of Niceratus and Nicostratus son of Diitrephes to the region with an army of hoplites. These troops took back Mende while Brasidas was helping King Perdiccas of Macedonia in a campaign against Arrhabaeus of Lynceus. Alcibiades and Socrates refused to take part in this expedition. Alcibiades told he needed a rest after Delium.

Nicias had taken no cavalry, and Alcibiades didn't like Nicias, because the general was in everything unlike him. Alcibiades refused to add to Nicias's quiet triumph. Socrates said he had fought enough. He too had been shocked by the Athenians' defeat at Delium. Socrates had aged. He had nightmares of flames of fire enveloping him. He had been too near death by burning at Delium. Nicias sailed off without Socrates and without Alcibiades.

Nicias's army took Mende and laid siege to Scione. Nicias ordered to blockade this city in the summer but since an armistice had been signed between Athens and Sparta, he merely placed a garrison at the counter walls of Scione, and returned with most of his men to Athens.

At the end of the winter, Brasidas tried to capture Potidaea in Chalcidice by a stealth night attack. The guards of Potidaea gave alarm efficiently, however, and Brasidas had to lead his troops away the same night.

The next summer, after the Pythian Games of Delphi, the armistice signed between Athens and Sparta ended.

Cleon argued time after time in the Assembly meetings in favour of war against Brasidas in Thrace. Cleon pointed out meeting after meeting what dangers Athens would suffer from being cut off from the sea-route to the Hellespont, deprived from its timber and grain supplies. The merchant ships followed the coasts, and halfway from Athens lay the ports that Brasidas had almost all conquered. Scione and Mende had defected from Athens. Brasidas had actually not captured that many harbours, and the Athenians held Eion strongly, but Cleon warned that Brasidas would continue and continue to organise acts of piracy against the Athenian trade routes.

The Assembly finally gave in to the arguments, and Cleon got his way, but the Assembly, like they had done with the crisis of Pylos, told him to go to Chalcidice himself and to lead the army.

The issue was that Athens was depleted of men. The war, the battles and the plague had taken a heavy toll in men. Clinias understood that well, for he had acted in Chalcidice the preceding year with limited forces in a restricted campaign. He had avoided costly battles against Brasidas. Cleon needed a considerable army to move against Brasidas in direct confrontation, and he had better win because there could be no second army.

Cleon therefore appealed to the veterans of previous campaigns. He scraped together the last rests of the citizens who were still able to fight, who had served in battles as commanders and subaltern leaders, and he added the youngest, the new generation. Socrates was in his late forties, and might have asked to serve in the home guards of Attica, but the generals of Athens entreated him to fight once more overseas. Socrates accepted to go with Cleon's army, and also Alcibiades and Hipparchos then enrolled for the expedition.

Cleon thus assembled twelve hundred hoplites from Athens and three hundred cavalry, in which Alcibiades rode. The horse riders were led by the general of the cavalry, the Hipparchos. Cleon also gathered a somewhat larger force of allied hoplites, and thirty triremes.

Cleon sailed with this army first to Scione. He depleted the Athenian garrison there even more, by taking as many hoplites as he could with him, and then he sailed to Torone.

The city of Torone had been captured by Brasidas, but the Spartan commander there now was one Pasitelidas son of Hegesander. Brasidas had fortified the town way beyond the old walls of the city. Part of the old walls had even been destroyed to build a new wall, which reached out in the country to develop the new suburbs of the town. Pasitelidas guarded these outer walls, and he was well decided to stop the Athenians there. He saw the Athenian army march towards him, but he was not afraid: with his men he could prevent any enemy to storm Torone's defences.

The Athenians advanced and halted closely below the walls. Pasitelidas expected the Athenians to attack any time. But then he got the news that Athenian triremes had been observed not far from the harbour. Pasitelidas recognised a fatal flaw in his defence: he had only thought of a Spartan-like attack by land. He feared he might be attacked in his back by a second Athenian army and be surrounded between two walled lines. So, he abandoned the wider fortifications of Torone and he ordered his men to fall back to the fortifications of the old city, even though the old walls were nearly demolished in several places. Pasitelidas retreated with his army to the old, inner city of Torone.

Meanwhile, twenty Athenian triremes advanced into the harbour of the town. The oarsmen of the ships rowed full speed at the accelerated rhythm of their flutists. The ships rowed very fast around the coast and around the first buildings and quays of the harbour. Alcibiades stood at the prow of his *Harmonia*. He wore his bronze hoplite armour, a white-plumed helmet, and his heavy round shield. He brandished his sword to the city. He wore the red stripes of the Athenian commander on his tunic. He had it difficult to hear the shouting around him, for he had put on his heaviest helmet, a helmet of the Corinthian type, which let him only see through small openings and which protected completely his nose and ears. He pointed with his sword to where he wanted his ship to shore. He directed the boat to the quays in the very middle of the harbour, to a place where Toronean hoplites stood waiting for him. He had not wanted to come ashore far away from the danger. The general who was with the ships had given orders to stop the ships outside the harbour, but Alcibiades thought he could make more of the surprise attack, so he dashed boldly with his ship to where the most resistance showed, thus surprising the Toronean forces in the port thoroughly, shattering their confidence.

The Toroneans were afraid. Such determination in the Athenians meant that the attackers were convinced that Toronean resistance would falter rapidly. The Toroneans stood with few men on the quays, and these showed too obviously the fear in their eyes. When the Athenian lean warships came straight at them, they flung their javelins, but most of those fell in the water, stuck in the wood of the prows of the ships, or were deflected by shields. At the last moment, when the prows would smash into the stone quays of the port of Torone and be destroyed, the left oars of the boats were drawn in deftly, and the Athenian rowers and helmsmen made a swift manoeuvre in the water for which they were famous, bringing the *Harmonia* with the hull immediately alongside the quay. The boat sheared against the massive stones, banged against the quay and Alcibiades almost fell in the water. Yet, he jumped before the ship stood still on the large flat stones of the long port quays, and he rushed forward, the first Athenian man and alone in Torone. Soon, thirty Athenian hoplites of his deme and of his ship followed him.

The Toroneans that defended the port were all elderly men. They were the guards of the city that Pasitelidas had put in charge of securing the town while he held the

fortifications. They were armed like hoplites, and they were veterans, but they were few. They could not build a strong enough phalanx on the broad quays. They held large shields and spears, but Alcibiades could evade the spears and run to a shield, cut a spear away, hack onto a man's armour and push him aside to force the man to open his defences, make him naked to Alcibiades's sword. Alcibiades killed his first man in Torone by slicing through a man's throat. His shield was immediately blooded, as he ran to the next man.

Athenians and Toronaeans fought a bitter battle in the port. The Toronaeans were easily crushed and forced back by the mass of Athenians. A Toronaeon commander soon cried to abandon the quays. More ships accosted then, and tens of Athenian hoplites ran with Alcibiades to the streets of the town.

The streets of Torone, in the old part of the city around the port, were narrow. The Toronaeon hoplites could stand with four or five and build an efficient defence in the streets with a wall of shields and spears. Other Toronaeon hoplites pushed against the backs of the first rows, added spear points, and held their stand. However forceful the Athenians advanced, the new wall of armoured bodies and shields held well in the alleys.

The old Toronaeon home guards could develop quite a mass of power.

While a fight of spears ensued, the Toronaeon citizens threw heavy stones, house furniture and even urine pots from the balconies and from the flat roofs of the houses, onto the throbbing lot of Athenian hoplites. The Athenians had brought no archers with them to dislodge the people from the roofs. More javelins were hurled from the roofs on the attackers.

Alcibiades saw Socrates in the back, shouting and gesticulating, pointing to side streets. The Athenians swamped over all the streets of the port, then. They were faster than the Toronaeans and in higher numbers. Soon, Alcibiades saw Athenians running at the other end of the street, falling fiercely in the backs of the Toronaeans he fought. The skirmishes in the streets were then decided for, for the Toronaeans got crushed between two anvils. They were massacred in the alleys and killed mercilessly. The same scene repeated in all the streets where resistance was offered. The valiant home-guards of Torone were defeated, and they surrendered or they were killed.

Pasitelas arrived with his troops at the outskirts of the old harbour. He even got past the old defences of Torone and into the city. But right beyond the walls a surprise waited for him. He faced a wall of spears and shields, but the spears were Athenian. His enemies stood with their backs against the walls of the houses, closing off the streets of Torone.

A new battle started, in which the Athenians did not yield. Many Peloponnesians were killed instantly, for they advanced too rashly. Athenian hoplites soon also fell. Their numbers were constantly replenished however, as more Athenian ships unloaded their cargo of warriors. Lightly armed troops of Athens, brought newly in from the last merchant ships of the attacking fleet, joined the battle for Torone, and these sent volley after volley of arrows on the arriving, running Peloponnesians.

Alcibiades fought like a lion. He had picked up a spear and he fought as any other man in the phalanx. He struck with his spear, avoided points of iron and threw his shield bronze against bronze. His way of fighting was to draw his adversary's shield aside and then to push his spear forward onto any weak spot he could see, be it arm, leg, neck or face. He had already killed three men today in a very short time. He



received only a light wound at his right leg, and a cut at his neck. Athenians around him fell, but his energy was too great, his movements too quick for any Spartan or Toronean to be able to harm him and wound him decisively.

The battle took a new turn when the Athenians heard the roars and trumpets of a new attack. Cleon's hoplites had passed the outer fortifications and now they fell in the backs of their enemy. The troops of Pasitelidas were caught between two walls of bronze and iron. Further resistance was useless for the Peloponnesians. The Spartans here were not the men with the determination of Thermopylae. Many threw down their weapons and surrendered. Pasitelidas was disarmed and taken a prisoner. The battle stopped suddenly. The Athenians were victorious at Torone.

Cleon entered the town when the battle was over, and the town entirely in the hands of the Athenians. He was a tall and massive man. He walked slowly and majestically but he panted, because he wore heavy armour and he was not used to the weight. He wore no shield or spear, but a sword hung on his back. He entered Torone when the other generals had taken prisoner all the Toroneans and all the Peloponnesians that were under the command of Pasitelidas. He walked proudly, chin high, with disdain and arrogance in his eyes. He strode wide like a tyrant, confident in the power he represented, and which he thought was his alone. He was sure of his genius and invincibility. He strode slowly, giving orders to right and left, scolding and lauding, commanding everybody. The Athenian hoplites had to know well and enough that the orders on this expedition came from him alone. He was the leader here, the supreme general of Athens.

Cleon looked at the prisoners. He ordered them to be gathered at a place outside the old city. He would send the men of Torone and the Peloponnesians back to Athens. He also ordered to bring all the women and children of the Toroneans together. These would be sold as slaves.

The Athenians collected the enemy weapons and they threw them in two piles together. They set up two trophies. One trophy was erected at the fortifications, and one at the harbour. The Athenians had been lucky this day.

Brasidas heard of the siege of Torone and he came to the relief of Pasitelidas. But he arrived too late. He was about thirty stades from the town when he heard the city had fallen in the hands of the Athenians. He turned back with his army.

Cleon, meanwhile, dispatched the men of Torone by sending them as prisoners to Athens. He pressed the men together in merchant ships and he had these escorted by a few of his triremes, ordering the boats to sail to Athens by the shortest route. He sent archers on his triremes to guard the prisoners. Still, these ships would have to follow the coasts, for autumn had set in and storms were to be feared in this part of the Sea. The women and children were sent in many smaller ships, in smaller groups, to Thrace, to the Ionian cities, and but a small group was destined for Athens. They would be sold as slaves on several markets, and Cleon would grow wealthier at the expense of Athens. Cleon took his time with these measures. He stayed for a long time in Torone. Then, he moved with his army against Amphipolis.

## Amphipolis

Cleon embarked the troops on ships and he sailed with them to Eion, leaving only a small garrison at Torone. The Athenian generals believed that when Brasidas would see the Athenian army threaten Amphipolis he would assemble his army there too, and not try to re-capture Torone first. Cleon forced Brasidas to consider a major battle at Amphipolis. He reckoned Brasidas would confront the large Athenian army in the open. Brasidas was the hero of Sparta; he would not hide inside Amphipolis and merely laugh at the Athenians from high on the city's walls. Brasidas would move his army to defend Amphipolis in the country.

Brasidas did indeed as Cleon had expected. But he did more.

The Spartiate general assembled all the troops he could. He engaged Thracian mercenaries. He amassed an Edonian army of cavalry and peltasts, Myrcinian and Chalcidician peltasts, and all the light troops of Amphipolis. He had two thousand Peloponnesian hoplites and three hundred cavalry. Soon he had an army of as many men as Cleon, but his men were assembled in a hurry while Cleon had loitered in Torone.

Brasidas's squadrons were mostly lighter troops, while Cleon had taken the best of the veteran hoplites of Athens, men that were all well prepared with the finest weapons and wearing shining armour. Brasidas did not want to show to Cleon and to the other Athenian generals how haphazard and weak in power his troops were. So, he placed most of his army inside Amphipolis, under the command of the Spartiate commander Clearidas. Then, he took fifteen hundred of his best hoplites, and positioned them on a hill of firm ground across the River Strymon not far from Amphipolis, from where he could see unhindered in all directions, to spot the movements of Cleon's army.

Cleon wasted more time at Eion, resting his army. He first detached a group of hoplites to the Andrian colony of Stagirus, failing to take the town because of insufficient forces. Then he delivered a massive attack to Galepsus, a colony of Thasos. The site was ill defended and had weak, half-broken walls, so it was rapidly captured. Cleon secured in this way the country around Eion and he made sure that these towns could not send more contingents of troops to the army of Brasidas. He then delegated some of his commanders to Perdicas, King of Macedonia, and also to Polles, King of the Odomantians in Thrace, to ask them for more troops. Meanwhile he remained content and at ease in Eion.

Some of Cleon's generals and most of the Athenian commanders, including Alcibiades, however, overtly showed impatience. They had come, leading a large, fine army to Thrace and they wanted it to fight, not to rot away. Many of the commanders had served with Demosthenes. They remembered Demosthenes's daring. The more they saw of Cleon on campaign, the more they despised his incompetence, his weakness of command and his confusion in organising logistics, his lacking of experience in battles and in tactics. Cleon wanted to command everything and everybody. He worked hard, but he commanded the squadrons whereas he should have commanded the army. The commanders had to counter-act on Cleon's stupidest orders, and yet take care to not openly disobey.

Cleon felt the critic in his bones. He caught whispered, sarcastic words between answers, and he noted the mocking glances. He was still convinced of his extraordinary cunning and he was confident of overcoming Brasidas, but he had to do something to address the growing dissent. He could not remain inactive when the

whole army was urging him to move. He knew that action would direct attention away from his person. Deep inside, however, he feared. He had no general of the stature of Demosthenes with him to pass command on, no general who had experience of battles, no general of the shrewdness of Brasidas. He distrusted commanders who might also be politicians, such as Alcibiades. His confidence shrivelled away.

Finally, Cleon ordered to break up the Athenian camp and to advance from Eion to Amphipolis. He had no intention to deliver a battle before he had superior forces, however. He told his commanders he merely wanted to reconnoitre the terrain with his army while waiting for the Macedonian and Odomantian reinforcements. He marched with all his men out of Eion.

Socrates was commander of the hoplites of his deme, and Alcibiades and Hipparchos joined the cavalry. Alcibiades and Hipparchos rode together, wearing only a very light linen armour, a head-cap of leather and two spears, and a sword slung on their backs. The army marched until it arrived at the hills in front of Amphipolis. Cleon made his men halt there and he set off at leisure to examine the land, to see by himself how well the town was defended, where the marshes of the River Strymon were, and in what conditions the grounds around the town lay.

Alcibiades and Hipparchos scouted wide around the Athenian army and found Brasidas on the hill of Cerdylum, waiting at his ease for the Athenians to approach. Cleon took a horse and accompanied by Alcibiades and a small number of cavalymen he rode closer to the environs of Amphipolis.

Brasidas did not stay with his hoplites at Cerdylum. He had noticed the arrival of Cleon's army, and he knew what to do. He retreated within the walls of Amphipolis, but he ordered his men to hide behind the walls of the city so that the Athenians could not see the rather dire state of his troops.

Cleon spotted not one hoplite or archer on the ramparts of Amphipolis, but the huge gates were closed. He thought Brasidas might have left the town to leave it to be defended by its citizens alone. Alcibiades cautioned him: Brasidas was inside and the fact that so few men showed above the walls was for him only a part of a ruse. Cleon had confidence in his forces, however, and he told his commanders he regretted not having brought with him a series of siege engines, such as ram's horns to break the gates, and ladders. He said he might have taken the city immediately. Cleon continued to ride around Amphipolis while his hoplites and allied troops waited close to the town.

Alcibiades and his men rode to a hill nearby from which they could look into parts of the town. They saw a large mass of warriors inside the town, in the streets and in the open places. They could even see that some kind of religious ceremony was going on near the temple of Athena. Was Brasidas sacrificing to the goddess of Athens? There was an unusual commotion going on in the town, a re-ordering of squadrons.

Alcibiades was worried. While he drove his horse down the hill on the gallop, he saw many feet of men and of horses under the gate in front of him. He stepped down from his horse to peek better under the gates there, from which the wooden beams did not reach entirely to the ground. Many troops were assembled there, just behind the gate, probably ready to dash out from the town. Brasidas had hid but he was ready to sally and attack. Amphipolis resembled a fire mountain ready to erupt.

Alcibiades and his horse-riders caught up with Cleon on the other side of the town and they told Cleon what they had seen. Cleon hurried back with his small group of cavalry, back to the army. He did not want any battle now, before his reinforcements had arrived. He thought he had time enough to retreat to Eion. His army stood in two phalanxes, in a left wing and in a right wing, with the road to Eion in their backs. Cleon ordered the left wing to march back to Eion, behind the right wing, and to move on the road in a long queue. The hoplites turned, and started the manoeuvre to march away in a formation entirely contrary to the way they had stood waiting. The left part of the left wing walked off first, then the middle, then the men on the right, the men that were closest to the town. This manoeuvre was executed in some confusion.

Alcibiades and his men galloped to the right wing, to the other phalanx, to guard the retreat. These men would walk off last, and the cavalry would protect the rear against enemy riders. When the left phalanx turned, forming a long line of thin rows, the Athenian hoplites showed their backs to Amphipolis. Then also the right wing prepared to turn. That was the manoeuvre, the error, which Brasidas had been waiting for. He thanked the gods for such an opportunity.

The nearest gates of Amphipolis opened suddenly, and Brasidas sallied from the town at the head of the best part of his army. He slammed with his men ferociously into the Athenian's left.

Brasidas attacked when the Athenians least expected it. The Athenian phalanxes were in full movement of retreat, their phalanxes unformed and the men walking away in a long line, not anymore in a mood to fight. There was no wall of shields and spears to hold the Peloponnesians.

Brasidas's men fell on the Athenians while they ran, attacking on all sides. Groups of Athenian hoplites tried to form islands of resistance but they could not form an organised, solid line.

The fighting that developed was of man to man in a large open space, but Brasidas could concentrate more men at every point. As his troops slay group after group, they packed like wolves on other isolated hoplites. Brasidas threw in also many light troops, which accompanied his hoplites from behind. These darted among the Athenians, throwing javelins and firing arrows at close distance. They slew many Athenians. Brasidas attacked the Athenian centre in the middle of the marching army, and he killed many men there. The battle was fierce, nervous, wild, merciless, and very rapid. The Athenian centre soon collapsed. The hoplites there ran back to Eion, joining the first men of the left wing who were already some distance on the road to Eion.

Nothing was really lost for the Athenians, and this fight was only a large skirmish. But then, Clearchus charged out of the Thracian gates of Amphipolis with the rest of Brasidas's army. The men and cavalry ran around part of the town and in a wide arch they too fell on the Athenians' left wing, which was now in total disarray. Interpreting literally Cleon's earlier orders to retreat, the left wing broke entirely up and fled to Eion in disarray. Thereby, they left Cleon's right wing, which had just been marching off to pursue the battle, alone. Cleon's army was split in two, and each half could be attacked by the Peloponnesians separately, which was every general's joy or nightmare depending on which side one fought. Brasidas sent some of his cavalry to harass the Athenians' fleeing half of the army, to avoid it coming back, and then he turned with his entire army against the remaining, battered half of his enemy.

The Athenian right wing stood also not in a correct formation for a major battle. It knew it was isolated, practically surrounded, and badly led. A fierce fight ensued, mostly of man to man, for the Athenians found no possibility of getting into tactical defence lines. The Chalcidician peltasts threw their javelins at the loose Athenian formation and Brasidas's cavalry hacked Athenians down one by one.

Alcibiades had at first returned to the fleeing left wing to try to protect them from the Chalcidician cavalry that had been sent to kill the escaping hoplites. Alcibiades and Hipparchos fended off the enemy until these saw that pursuing made little sense. Alcibiades saw the enemy horse-riders return to Amphipolis. He knew that half of the Athenian army was cut off there and must be fighting the entire Peloponnesian and Chalcidician army on the hills of the town. He hesitated. His orders were to shield and protect retreating Athenian troops. He could obey these orders entirely and accompany the Athenians who walked before him, safely back to Eion. Or he could turn now and ride back with his cavalry, back to the battlefield of Amphipolis. He resisted the desire for safety, ignored the pleading looks in the eyes of his men to ride to bliss. He shouted to Hipparchos to continue to ride straight on, but he turned his horse, dropped his spears, drew his sword, and galloped back to Amphipolis. Few men followed him. He had not asked his men to ride with him, but the knights of his deme rode behind.

Alcibiades galloped back to Amphipolis, to the shouts and cries of pain and war. When he arrived at the hill where the Athenian troops stood, he saw only scenes of horror. The Athenian hoplites were fighting in the open, in no line. One Athenian hoplite had to engage two or three enemy hoplites and peltasts. While an Athenian fought an enemy hoplite, the peltasts surrounded him and threw javelins in his back. The fight was cruelly uneven. The Athenians were being massacred, and the enemy gave no mercy. Any Athenian who threw down his weapons and shield in sign of surrender, was killed on the spot. Chalcidician cavalry dashed among the chaos and killed Athenian hoplites with spears in the sides and backs. Alcibiades saw Cleon lying with his face to the ground and a javelin deep in his spine. The man had many other wounds. He must have fought desperately against many adversaries, for he was covered with blood. The Athenians' general was killed. Alcibiades and his men galloped into the enemy throng of warriors, overthrowing part of the men by the power and speed of their horses, slaying enemies to left and right. They forced an opening into the Peloponnesian lines and entered like a triangle peg into the enemy mass of hoplites. Then, Alcibiades saw a development that was entirely contrary to the turmoil around him.

By some extraordinary magic the Athenian hoplites of Cleon's right wing were regrouping on the hills of Amphipolis. The men fled no more, but flocked together to form a tightly ordered phalanx. They stood again shield to shield, spear to spear and confronted the enemy in one block. At first, Alcibiades saw only a few hoplites. Then, with each further moment, the core group was added to, and Athenian hoplites concentrated. They ran together to form a disciplined square. The square elongated to a phalanx of four rows deep.

It took some time before Alcibiades remarked in the middle of the new phalanx a highly polished but over-aged, dented cuirass and an old helmet, which he knew belonged to Socrates. Socrates had not run, but continued to stand where he was, with

the rugged determination that was his. The men of his deme had joined him, then the men of his tribe, and then the others. Only part of the Athenian army stood in the traditional battle formation of the hoplites there, but that group seemed invincible.

A large contingent of Peloponnesian and Chalcidician archers and javelin throwers advanced to confront the new Athenian phalanx that had assembled spontaneously. Alcibiades's horse received two arrows in its hind. An arrow made a whistling sound before him, as it tugged into his horse's throat. The animal slowly fell, so Alcibiades slid away to the ground. He could barely roll away from the mass of the horse as it fell heavily on the rocks. He stood up and gesticulated to order his cavalry away. He had no weapons anymore. His sword lay some steps away from him, and enemy cavalry galloped towards him. He ran towards the hoplite phalanx. He reached it before the Chalcidician cavalry. He wriggled inside the ranks. A hoplite pushed a fallen shield in his hands. He only wore a light cuirass, no helmet, no shield, no spear. Another hoplite gave him a spear. He picked up a helmet. Then he stood next to his friend of old, next to Socrates. He had come back for this.

Socrates gave him only a quick look that meant, 'oh so, there you are. What took you so long?'

Then he stared grimly, straight before him, as he had done just moments ago. Alcibiades looked around. All the faces around him were old, weathered faces. He stood, a young veteran of twenty-odd years, amongst all veterans of over forty. Still, the men quivered. They knew him and they were glad to have a hero of many battles here. Alcibiades they trusted. They faced the enemy with Socrates's resolution.

The Spartan commander called off his peltasts and the Peloponnesian hoplites charged into the Athenian group. The first row of Athenian hoplites had to step backwards under the shock, but the last row stayed put. The Athenian rows were pushed together, but the phalanx did not falter and did not give way. A fierce spear-fight followed, in which each man tried to stab his enemy from out of his position, and each man held his place. The Athenian veterans were masters in such duels, yet they stood against men dressed with the red cloaks of the Spartiate hoplites. They were attacked by Brasidas's best men, his heroes, men destined from youth to be the best warriors in the world. The Athenians, however, were the men that had fought at Potidaea, Mytilene, Delium and so many other battles.

The Spartans and the Chalcidician hoplites suffered casualties. Many men were wounded, though not severely, and they did not succeed in breaking the Athenian phalanx. Clearidas led this first attack but he called it off soon, regrouping his men in a full hoplite phalanx too, while the Athenians slowly moved backwards towards the road to Eion, but up the hill, where they could take a better stand still. Clearidas then ordered a second attack.

Again the rows of hoplites clashed shields. Spears became entangled. Again the Peloponnesians suffered many casualties. The Athenian veterans fell one after the other, too. Alcibiades's heart wept with every man who fell, for all were friends he knew. This man was a fishmonger in the agora; that man had plastered the walls of his house; that one had fought with him and ran with him at Potidaea; the other one had been a friend of Socrates and he had drunk water with him in Socrates's house. Alcibiades was fighting a hoplite's battle next to Socrates, hurting the enemy. He was

cut in the flesh several times, for his arms and legs wore no protective armour and in his ardour he dared to create openings from which he struck to wound severely, but in which he got hurt in the sides too.

The battle lasted. The men grew tired; they sweat profusely. The blood on arms and legs and faces mixed with the sweat. Blows with spears were less frequent, but filled with more hatred and they were more vicious.

Alcibiades and Socrates fought. Hardly an unwounded man stood in the three first rows of the Athenian phalanx. When a man fell or when a man had to go back to the last rows because he was too severely wounded to continue in the front, his place was taken by another hoplite.

Clearidas called off the second attack. There was a moment of silence. The shouts of angry men, the Spartan flutes and the Chalcidician trumpets silenced, and the Athenians rested, wiping off the blood from their faces but each man held its place. Alcibiades started wondering whether this phalanx might march forwards now, inexorably, and attack the enemy hoplites. But the enemy was so numerous. How would the battle end?

The Athenians on the hills before Amphipolis could not expect help from the rest of their army, which was scattered now on the roads to Eion. Their general was dead. Alcibiades saw the Spartan leaders. He saw a tall Spartiate amidst the commanders. He thought that this man was Brasidas, but it was Clearidas.

Clearidas watched the Athenians with awe and admiration. He had rarely seen such a brave fight. His Spartan hoplites had not been able to break his enemy's determination to stand. He did something, then, which he knew was necessary, but which horrified even him.

Clearidas ordered more peltasts in. He surrounded with these troops the Athenian phalanx by about five men to one. Archers, javelin throwers and slingers advanced together with cavalry. Volleys of arrows descended on the Athenians. When the arrows stopped to come, javelins slew into the Athenians. The hoplites hid under their shields but many were wounded. Tens of javelins darkened the skies and fell on the Athenians from all sides. Slingers aimed then and pierced light armour. When a pause seemed to set in, more arrows, javelins and stones flew through the air and tried to slay the Athenians that stood at the flanks. One Athenian after the other fell wounded or killed.

The situation was untenable. Alcibiades wondered how a Spartiate could have called for such a dishonourable slaughter when hoplites were available. A new warfare had emerged, the warfare of Demosthenes and of Brasidas with only one rule: win, win, win. Win, whatever the means; if possible with traditional hoplite battles and if not then with arrows, javelins and slingshots.

Alcibiades nudged Socrates and Socrates watched at him in surprise, as if coming out of a trance. He looked around. Alcibiades made him a sign with the head turning backwards, notifying with his head to retreat.

Socrates slowly moved his head upwards, in his neck, to say, 'yes'.

The two men stepped slowly backwards to the direction of the roads to Eion. The Athenian hoplites did the same. A few men threw off shield and armour, but Socrates first, then Alcibiades, forced the men to keep their ranks and to stay in protective cuirass and with their shield. They still feared new attacks from the Spartan hoplites. The Athenian first ranks kept their shields for protection, and then the Athenian group

marched backwards as a whole, backwards to Eion. They broke through the Chalcidician peltasts in the rear, killing some of them but simply pushing through the mass, and they advanced in one block to safety. Arrows and javelins still accompanied them. The men ran now, so that they were a more difficult target.

Alcibiades looked around. He saw the tall Spartiate standing on the highest point of the hill in Spartan armour, with the long vermilion phoinikes cloak of the Spartiate commander and long black hair waving in the wind. The man wore the large round shield with the emblem of Sparta, the red letter lambda for Laconia engraved on it, and he wore a helmet with red plumes. The Spartiate opened his arms, heaving his heavy shield and spear high to the sky, opening his hand and his fingers. He called off the pursuit. The Spartan and Chalcidician army lowered its weapons. It was the closest thing to recognition of valour in battle given to Athenians that Alcibiades had experienced in a battle, for little mercy was given to an enemy after a pitiless fight.

The sun was setting. Alcibiades and the veteran Athenians stopped running and, heavily panting, they marched away. They still feared attacks from Chalcidician cavalry, but they arrived unharmed, in the middle of the night, at Eion. They had to walk over mountain tracks to reach the Athenian fortifications.

The Athenians heard at Eion that not only Cleon had been killed, transpierced by a Myrcinian lance, but also Brasidas, Sparta's hero. Brasidas had been wounded while he attacked the left wing of the Athenians. He had been lifted from the battle, and taken to Amphipolis. He died a few moments after having heard of the Chalcidician victory. It had been Clearidas who had led the last battle. The people of Amphipolis gave Brasidas a large funeral, and the joined Peloponnesian and Chalcidician troops paraded in the agora of the town. Sacrifices were made at his tomb. The people of Amphipolis called Brasidas the real founder of their town, and they demolished all the monuments that reminded them of their true founder, Hagnon the Athenian.

The Athenians claimed back their dead. They set up a funeral pyre and collected the bones, which they would take back to Athens.

The Spartans built a trophy with the Athenian gear, armour, weapons and standards they found on the battlefield. The Athenians left a small but sufficient garrison to hold Eion. Then, they sailed back home. This happened at the end of the summer of that year, just before the winter.

Socrates and Alcibiades sailed home in the trireme Harmonia. They remained silent most of the time, and the mood of all the men of the warship was dark. Athens had lost two major battles, two major campaigns, one straight after the other. They had lost at Delium and at Amphipolis. Alcibiades's confidence was severely shattered. Twice now he had had to run for a life of which he had told he did not care for. He wanted to die in glory or to live in glory, but he had experienced neither. Alcibiades, like Athens, had fled ignominiously, humiliated and chastised.

Of the Athenian army only the veterans had held for a while, and these had been killed by the hundreds. Athens could not expect to call up such an army again, for more battles. Soon these men would be really too old to stand on a battle field. For Socrates, this had been the last battle. Socrates and Alcibiades, and truly all the Athenians, sulked during the entire trip back to Athens.



Alcibiades sat at the prow and looked into the green water of the Sea. The Sea was a mirror that reflected a face he loved and hated at the same time. He spotted a shoal of tuna fish swimming together far out, before the trireme.

Socrates had rejected all his advances during the days of waiting in Eion, even only to have a serious talk, and on the ship, Socrates didn't say a word. Socrates sat now on the other side of the ship, staring sideways onto the horizon, looking into the sun, ignoring everybody and remaining for long times in his trance-like state. Alcibiades surmised that Socrates was thinking about the reasons of the defeat of the Athenians at Delium and at Amphipolis.

Alcibiades was wrong. Socrates blamed himself. Socrates was ashamed, and he did not dare to talk to other people. It was by his dogged determination to not yield on the battlefield, by his pride and stubbornness that so many citizen-hoplites had died on the hills of Amphipolis. He had obliged nobody, but he knew why the men had stayed on nevertheless, and formed the phalanx. He saw now how vain his effort had been and how vain he had been. He blamed himself for his vanity, for his pride, for his will to die in honour and to serve his polis, which had lasted until Alcibiades had nudged him and proposed him to flee. Then only had he come to his senses, remarked with surprise what was really happening, and taken his friend's advice.

Socrates dared not speak to Alcibiades on the ship. Time would have to pass to heal the wounds in his soul. Socrates forgot that half of the Athenian army had been able to flee unharmed to Eion due to his action, and that even of his own phalanx, of the right wing, many men had been saved because the last five hundred hoplites had stayed to confront the entire army of Clearchus. He did not say these words to himself, and he could not talk to Alcibiades, who would certainly have remarked that feat. The last phalanx of Athens had saved the Athenian army from a more catastrophic defeat, from a worse massacre. But Socrates beat his heart and soul with remorse and self-blame.

The men slept apart and they ate separately each evening when they went ashore. They kept silence and in silence, slowly and stealthily, the Harmonia slid on a quiet evening into the harbour of Munichia.

## **Chapter 11 – Athens, Winter End 422 BC to Summer 420 BC**

### **Politics and Proxenia**

Alcibiades, Socrates and Hipparchos returned to their houses in Athens. Hipparchos stayed a few days at Theodote's, but he soon left and travelled to the estate in Attica. Alcibiades remained a time with Hipparete, then with Theodote, and with Theodote he joined Hipparchos in the countryside. Hipparchos bought new horses, and Alcibiades found the racing horses he had left when he departed for the expedition against Amphipolis. He invested much money, too much, straining his reserves, but he hoped to recoup his fortune in future sales.

At the very end of the winter Alcibiades returned for a while to Athens, whereas Theodote remained in their house in Attica. He had received notice from Athens that his stepfather, Hipponicus, had died. He returned to Athens and, like a good husband, attended to the funeral of Hipponicus. He assisted Callias, who wept all through the three-day ceremony, though Callias had by his inheritance become once more the richest man in Athens by far. After the funeral, he returned to his business in the town. He lent money to merchants at high interest, discussed the sale of some of his horses, and learned about the affairs of the polis.

When Alcibiades arrived in Athens he heard that peace negotiations were going on with Spartan delegates. Delium had proven a catastrophic defeat, and Athens had lost its last army at Amphipolis. The Spartans still mourned Sphacteria, the loss of Brasidas, and they wanted the Spartiates back who were imprisoned in Athens. Both cities had good reasons to sue for peace, for the war had exhausted their resources and strengths of mind.

The main negotiators for Athens seemed to be Nicias and Laches, but neither Nicias nor Laches had asked Alcibiades to be part of the talks, not even as counsellor or secretary. Nevertheless, one of Alcibiades's first visits in Athens had been to the Spartan prisoners. The Spartans were better kept than before. Servants came and went in the quarter where Alcibiades had lodged the men. Fair quantities of food were brought in, fish and cheese and olives, and also new furniture and clothes. Several Spartan notables stood among the prisoners. They were talking to the young men and organising supplies. Alcibiades went up to one of the older men, asking who was in command of what was happening here. The man asked who he was, and what his business and responsibilities were in Athens. Alcibiades gave his name, whereupon the man changed tone immediately. He became suddenly more polite and cooperative. He accompanied Alcibiades to a well-dressed Spartiate. Alcibiades was surprised and also a little perplexed, for the Spartans of Sphacteria were still prisoners of Athens, whereas Spartans seemed to be in command, here.

This Spartiate accompanied Alcibiades to the houses, and Alcibiades saw the young man he had cared particularly for and taken to the plays of the Dionysia and to his symposiums. The youth stood now proudly in front of the prison, talking to a large, imposing Spartiate. The Spartiate was a mature man, quite elder than Alcibiades. The men greeted him, and the Spartiate presented himself as Endius.

Endius had come from Sparta with one of the ephors, and he had been given the charge for Sparta of the prisoners. Alcibiades suppressed the urge to flaunt in the man's face that he, Alcibiades, was in charge for the prisoners of Athens.

Endius was a man on the lower side of fifty. He wore a white tunic and a red himation. He was obviously a Spartiate, but he was no warrior. He wore no sword and no armour, here in Athens. He was not tall, but well built, and he showed an intelligent, active face. He continued to order the Spartan commanders around them while Alcibiades approached. He commanded easily, efficiently, politely, with dignity, and even with smooth elegance. Endius also participated as counsellor of the Spartan ephors in the peace negotiations. Alcibiades sensed authority, wisdom and also a lot of wit in the man, for his eyes sparkled with energy, maliciousness with smiles of knowledge. Endius thanked Alcibiades for having taken care of his nephew, who had been his special pupil in Sparta. Endius told politely but firmly that from now on, the Spartan delegates would see to it that their countrymen had everything they needed to pass decently their last days in Athens.

Endius said, 'I am happy to meet you, noble Alcibiades. We have never met before, but we should have. Our families were close, once. My family was proxenos of Sparta to Athens and my family communicated much with your family. My second name is Alcibiades, like yours. Yes, you have a Spartan name because of our connections. You also fight like a Spartan, I heard our commanders tell. Your reputation is well known in Sparta. You must be an Athenian with a Spartan soul. What can I do for you?'

'I have provided the brave Spartans with the best food, clothes and lodgings that I could possibly bring, in the scope of the laws of Athens. The men were prisoners of Athens. I thought it was my duty to care for them since my family had been proxenos to Sparta,' Alcibiades replied courteously, although he knew he was being dismissed. He refused, however, to abandon his cause.

'Yes, I know,' Endius answered. 'Sparta and I in particular, are grateful. You did us a good service to care for our relatives.'

'Are you, yourself, well lodged?'

'We are. The Athenian Council allotted us houses for the ephors, and we sought a few more ourselves for the rest of the delegation. Athens has been helpful'

'Why don't you leave it up to me to provide you with what you need?' Alcibiades proposed. 'I know many brokers in Athens. They have always a few houses to sell or to let, and I have wealthy friends who will be happy to receive you and entertain you. My own house is open for you! I will send you my stewards.'

Endius was embarrassed.

He said, 'thank you, Alcibiades. We will do well, I assure you. We are being well taken care off already.'

'I should take care of you,' Alcibiades assured.

'Your gentleness is appreciated, Alcibiades, but we are all right.'

'Fine then. My grandfather ended being proxenos for Sparta when Athens and Sparta were desperately at war. I would like to be proxenos in my turn, to continue the tradition of my family, which we have upheld for many generations. I had no occasion before to renew the relationships because I was young and our communications with Sparta had been broken in the last years. What do I have to do to be accepted again by Sparta as proxenos?'

'I believe we would be delighted to have a proxenos again in Athens, especially in times of peace. But peace is not here yet, and the negotiations may still break off.'

‘Nonsense,’ Alcibiades said, surprised that Endius evaded his offer. He insisted. ‘Peace will come. I am sure our two great cities will come to an agreement. Let me help defend your interests here.’

‘You are also very young for a future proxenos and counsellor to Sparta,’ Endius demurred, obviously thinking that Alcibiades also wanted to participate in the peace negotiations for Sparta, and asked so of Endius. ‘Sparta might want a more mature, experienced man, and maybe a man who is not anymore of fighting age.’

‘I have earned honour and respect from the Spartan hoplite commanders. I fought Spartans in many battles, so I have much in common with your best warriors. Will the Spartiates not honour a man who has shared their pains, though from the other side?’

Endius paused. The men entered the house. Alcibiades knew he should leave, but he still insisted, now wondering more than before why he was being avoided and rebuked on a simple matter.

Endius sat down on one of the chairs in the room and he looked at his nephew, not at Alcibiades.

‘It is not the right moment, Alcibiades,’ Endius sighed. ‘We might talk about this after the peace negotiations.’

Alcibiades still insisted, on the brink of being impolite. How far would he have to go before obtaining a reason for Endius’s reluctance?

‘I have all the qualities you would need in a proxenos. I will be general soon and an important man in Athens. I have many friends and they support me in the Athenian Assembly.’

‘Yes, we know,’ Endius answered. ‘Other men in Athens however prefer not to give you a position of influence in the negotiations. Sparta will follow the advice of your notables and negotiators.’

Endius kept silence then, leaving Alcibiades quite perplexed. He had almost asked to be friends to Sparta on his knees, and he was definitely being rebuffed. What had happened?

‘I don’t understand!’ he exclaimed after a while. ‘Is Sparta offended at something I did, or vindictive of her dead?’

‘No,’ Endius rapidly replied, looking Alcibiades straight in the eyes. ‘We are neither offended by you nor do we regret deaths in honourable battle. The name of Alcibiades son of Clinias and grandson of Alcibiades is well remembered in our polis. Your issue, which I understand well enough, did not originate in Sparta. Your issue lies here, in Athens, and Sparta shall not, not now, not over you, introduce an element of conflict into the peace negotiations. You should turn to your own relations. From here, in Athens, we received notice that it was preferable you were not given too much attention and credit for the moment. We complied with the wishes of Athens.’

Alcibiades became very angry then. He felt betrayed by both sides. His family had always been proxenos to Sparta. Though his grandfather had ended the tradition, Alcibiades still felt that no other but him could claim to organise the relations with Sparta. He had taken care of the Spartan prisoners in Athens and the Spartan ambassadors must have learned the fine services he had provided to their relatives. Yet, the Spartans had not contacted him. He had been ignored and diligently forgotten.

He had been a very good friend of Laches, fought with him in skirmishes and battles, sailed with him in several expeditions, and been his closest secretary. Yet, Laches had not added him to the Athenian delegation of prominent people. Laches had not sent

for him to propose him to accompany him at the meeting tables, although he had served as Laches's assistant and confidant for months on. Sparta and Athens had avoided him like the plague, as if he did not exist. There was a conspiracy against him, here in Athens and the Spartans had agreed.

Alcibiades thanked Endius courteously. He spoke with the man a few words on friendly terms. Then, he took his leave. He told he would leave the care of the Spartan prisoners henceforth to the good services of the ephors of Sparta. He had been rebuffed by Sparta. He felt insulted.

Alcibiades immediately ran to the Strategeion to meet Laches. He found the great man busy. The guards did not allow him inside the large Council Hall. He left a message for Laches. He strolled around the building of the generals, went to the agora, mingled absent-mindedly with the crowds for a time, and then he returned to the Strategeion. He waited for a while in the hall of the guards.

Laches received him, this time. The general came out from a room and took Alcibiades by the shoulders, drawing him out. Laches engaged the road to the Academy Park. It was a sunny day, and Laches told he needed a walk. He avoided looking straight at Alcibiades.

After some time, unable to contain any longer his anger and impatience, Alcibiades began to talk.

He said, 'well, Laches, 'what is up? I hear that negotiations of peace are being held here, right under my nose, and nobody tells me about it! Do I have the plague or something? My family has been proxenos to Sparta for generations. Why was I kept out?'

'True,' Laches replied, looking at the sky and the passers-by. 'We started discussions with a few Spartan ambassadors.'

'A few ambassadors? The whole lot is here! The only one I haven't seen so far is King Agis. When I walk from the Strategeion to the agora, I see nothing but Spartans. I never spotted so many men with "Lacedaemon" written on their face in all my life. I bet all the ephors are here too, servants and all.'

Laches smiled. 'The delegation is considerable, yes, but the meetings are held with the most important people only.'

'And who then are the important people of Athens? You must be of course, and Nicias, and Hagnon, and Thrasicles and Demosthenes and Leon. Must I go on? All Athens is part of the negotiations. Why am I not at the meeting table?'

'Well, you were not available. You were in the country. You were resting from your wounds.'

'Wounds? Everybody who came back from Delium and Amphipolis had wounds! Didn't you? Why was I not called for?'

'Oh, Nicias proposed it was better not to include you for the moment. You are so young.'

Laches continued to walk rapidly, nervously, under the cypresses. He stepped with his arms crossed on his back, his breast inclined, and he stared in front of him, obviously embarrassed. He did not look at Alcibiades.

'I was not to be included? I am too young? What nonsense is that? I will be thirty very soon now, and candidate general. I shall be general, you know that. I am a war veteran and I know battles and cavalry as well as you. What name in Athens is more honourable than mine? Nobody will stop me from becoming general. The Assembly loves me. Was it not opportune to consult me?'

‘Yes, the Assembly loves you. A little too much to the taste of many. Alcibiades, you do not have just friends. You also have people in Athens who do not like you. Nicias finds you too impulsive and too ambitious to rule in Athens. He believes you make rash decisions that are too inconsiderate of our traditions, and foolhardy. Demosthenes doesn’t want a second Demosthenes at his side. Iolcius would have loved your fine Theodote to open her legs for him while you were away, but she refused him and mocked him. Euthydemus is jealous of the love the hoplites vow to you. Theagenes would like to wear purple robes like you, but he cannot afford them. All these men say you made a fortune at the expense of the state, selling horses for the war. And so on. Do I need to continue? The old men have kind of gotten used to their lot. You are the outsider, the challenger. You scare them out of their wits. You are too brilliant in all you do, too ostentatious. You must wait and gain their confidence. If you propose yourself as general now, you may well be defeated. I wanted to help you, but if I had spoken one word in favour of you, I would have been ostracised on the spot.’

Alcibiades stayed silent then. He was seething with anger at Laches’s words, but his friend was telling the truth, and he knew Laches liked him and meant the best for him, would not betray him. He had no intention to change his lifestyle. He had also no intention of licking the heels of people he despised and despised more so after what Laches had told him. Laches was one of the few men in the pack of wolves that, apparently, had not decided to conspire against him. So be it. He would do alone what was needed to have Athens at his knees. He was more than ever decided now to rattle the bunch that ruled Athens today. Socrates had been right when he doubted the democracy of Athens.

Laches and Alcibiades continued to walk. The day was fine, the air fresh and delicious, the sky dry, and walking here among the grey shadows of the trees of the park was a delight. A slight cold breeze blew around, so Alcibiades tugged his himation together. They reached the park of Academos, the large, sacred grove of Athens, the park that had been walled around by Hippias, the park that was dedicated to Athena. The men strolled now under the twelve sacred olive trees of Athena, the moriai, said to have been grown from parts of the olive tree in the Erechtheum. Oil of these trees was given as prize to the victors of the Panathenaic games. Several altars had been erected here, altars of Hermes and of Eros. Further on was a gymnasium where Alcibiades sometimes exercised, the gymnasium erected by Cimon.

‘Well,’ Alcibiades concluded embittered, ‘I can have no part in the peace talks because neither the important men of Athens nor the leaders of Sparta want me. So be it. There will be peace, I guess. Both camps are exhausted. It will be a peace of small, envious, old, dull men. It will be half a peace, badly negotiated and wrongly formulated, wrought with confusion and distrust. It will be a treaty of the mind, not of the hearth. It will be a peace that will never last for long. There is too much tension, hatred and envy among the Hellenes, too much antagonism to be quenched by unimaginative magistrates who have only their material interest at stake. Nicias wants the silver mines of Laurion running again, isn’t he? While this treaty goes, new alliances will be made, forged out of demolished alliances and a new world will be created, a world so new that everything old shall be trampled upon. I will make sure that the world changes. I will shake the families and good people of Athens more times than they can digest. Tell them for me, Laches, that their peace will never be

more than a farce. I was good enough to be a hoplite until now and far from Athens, fighting for these men. From now on I shall not be fighting for the old men anymore. I will be fighting for me, for Alcibiades. Tell them I will not leave this affair as that. When they hurt me with a bee's sting, I will use an axe.'

Laches quivered. He stopped abruptly and turned back, but he waited until Alcibiades had done the same. The two men walked slowly back to the agora. They spoke only of domestic subjects and they touched no more the subjects of politics or of war and peace. Near the agora, Laches whispered goodbye.

Laches then looked Alcibiades in the eyes and said, 'I recognise you from our Sicilian days, Alcibiades, and I love you for what you did in the war. I will help you whenever I can, as much as I can. Take care. You spoke of bees. This is a hornet's nest, and games of experienced, sophisticated men. War and battles are different. First learn, and then impose your figure on the Assembly. You can count on me, but in this game I am a warrior, not a politician.'

Laches entered the Strategeion. Alcibiades lingered a while in front of the building. He sank in thoughts, then he turned and vanished into the crowds.

### **Politics of peace**

At the beginning of spring, Athens and Sparta concluded a peace treaty, so that a period without skirmishes and battles and invasions was to start after the Archidamian War, as the war between the Atticans and the Peloponnesians was called in Sparta. The peace was called the Peace of Nicias, and every time Alcibiades heard the words he chuckled and snorted.

For the Athenians, the treaty was signed by men that Alcibiades and Socrates knew well: Nicias, Laches, Leon, Demosthenes, Lampon, Isthmonicus, Euthydemus, Aiocles, Pythodorus, Hagnon, Theagenes, Myrtilus, Aristocrates, Iolicus, Timocrates and Lamachus.

The peace was concluded for fifty years. Athens had lost two major battles, which had exhausted it: Delium and Amphipolis. Sparta had recognised that it could not defeat Athens because of Athens' dominance of the Sea. It was left unable to retaliate in Attica because of the Spartan prisoners in Athens. Sparta was eager to have those prisoners brought back to their homeland. The treaty bound also the cities allied to Sparta and Athens.

It was originally only a treaty of non-aggression.

When the treaty was published, however, most of Sparta's allies rejected it. Boeotia rejected it for it had defeated Athens at Delium, and powerful Thebes wanted Athens on its knees. The Boeotians refused everything else but a temporary truce to be renewed every ten days. The Thracians refused to give back captured cities to Athens. Corinth was upset.

The Spartans, fearing to remain even more isolated than during the war, then asked for new talks with Athens, and the non-aggression pact was modified into a pact of mutual support.

The Athenians would come to the aid of Sparta if Sparta were invaded by enemies. The new clauses ensured Sparta of assistance by Athens in case she should be attacked by her old enemies in the Peloponnesos, such as Argos. The Spartans would also have to come to the aid of Athens in case of an invasion. Sparta and Athens

promised thus to punish together enemies of each other's polis. The Athenians would even support Sparta in the case that the helots would revolt against their masters, the Spartiates. The alliance stated that the oaths of this pact would be renewed each year by the Spartans that would take part in the Dionysia Festival and by the Athenians who would go to Sparta for the Hyacinthia Festival.

For the Spartans, the Kings Pleistoanax and Agis signed the alliance and also Pleistolas, Damagetus, Chionis, Metagenes, Acanthus, Doithus, Ischagoras, Philocharidas, Zeuxidas, Antiphus, Alcinares, Tellis, Empedius, Menas and Laphilus. In this way, not only a peace treaty was concluded, but also an alliance of mutual assistance between Sparta and Athens.

To everybody who wanted to hear it in Athens, Alcibiades told his signature was not under the peace treaty, and certainly not under the chart of the alliance.

The months after the conclusion of the peace treaty and of the alliance proved to be hard months for Alcibiades, and months of feverous activity for the allied states of Athens and Sparta.

Alcibiades returned to his farm house in the country, where he bred horses with Hipparchos. He ignored Athens, did not try to be elected general in the spring of that year. He sulked in his house north of Eleusis, not far from the border with Boeotia. From the balcony on the west side of his room, he could overlook the cliffs of the beaches and watch the Sea. He usually woke early, sometimes from nightmares of battles in which he had defended his life with his sword, and always with impressions of dreamt scenes in which he seemed helpless and overcome by a multitude of enemies. He would draw on a chiton then, for he often slept in the nude, go out of his bedroom, and look at the Sea in the first rays of light.

The Sea of spring beckoned calm and oily, perpetually moving and glistening with a myriad of tiny colours, mostly hues of green. Alcibiades was always attracted to the Sea, as any other Hellene, although he was trained as a hoplite and a cavalryman. The Sea represented so many things for him during that period. It represented first and foremost Harmonia, and the ultimate peace of mind he sought now. He thought about leaving all this: leaving his country house, his mistress, his wife, Athens, to sail out to the islands and seek Harmonia. But such a quest seemed vain. He did not know where to start. He had asked his uncle Axiochus to make enquiries in the islands for a woman named Harmonia who had lived in Cyprus. He promised much money to who would find her. The captains of Axiochus's ships and the captains of his associates asked around. They enquired on Rhodos, Crete, Lesbos, Thasos, and in particular at Melos, for Alcibiades remembered Harmonia's family originated from that island. His search was in vain. Nobody had ever heard of a Harmonia. She might be dead, or living deep in the interiors of the vast lands of Thrace or Persia. In the Hellenic cities of the coast and even in Italy and Sicily, nobody knew of a Harmonia who had fled from Cyprus.

The water of the Sea was not at all like the uneasy peace of humans in truce with each other. It resembled the true and complete peace of absence of any conflict. Alcibiades could look at the shifting water for long times without being bored. He would stand there, immobile, watching the cliffs and the birds that graciously glided white and impassable past his eyes. Theodote would come drowsily from out of the open door of the bedroom, half naked with only a flimsy piece of transparent cloth thrown over her



shoulders, and she would press her heavy breasts and her belly against his back. She would embrace him with her arms, rest her head on his shoulders and throw her long, black hair over his chest. They would not speak for quite a while, just stood looking at the splendour of nature revealing itself to their eyes. A few sheep might roam around the house into their sight, searching for more grass on this side, oblivious of the humans on the balcony. Theodote would kiss him in the neck and wet the upper part of his shoulders with her tongue. Her hair would flow in his face. Then, she would press her fingers between his legs until he was aroused. He was always easily aroused in the morning. He would turn around, embrace his mistress too, kiss her hard and bite her a little and gently until she giggled, and then he would draw her back into the room, to the bed, to make love to her. Somewhat later, both in a better mood, they would dress in cosy, light chitons, and have a short meal. Such was their life in Attica.

Hipparchos and Myrrhina were long sleepers. Alcibiades worked horses in the stables before Hipparchos was up, and even before most of the slaves. He checked on the animals every morning. He looked at those that remained still in their sheltered boxes, his most expensive ones, and on those that grazed in the fields. He loved to take one of the racing horses and ride the animal on long, lonely tours in the countryside. He would follow the beach to start, then ride inland and pass other farms and country estates.

Most of these had been burned by the Spartans or the Boeotians, and not rebuilt since then. Many were totally abandoned. Alcibiades rode past destroyed vineyards, past olive trees fields of which nothing but stumps in the earth remained, and past heaps of ashes of burnt tree branches and trunks. These parts were desolate, but gradually the Athenians of Attica were returning, and every day more men arrived and planted new vines, new olive trees, and new fig trees. Life was winning, again, in the countryside of Attica. Most of the neighbouring farmers knew Alcibiades. He stopped frequently to talk to them, to hear about their families, to listen to their woes and their scarce luck. He congratulated at births, and the men invited him to wedding ceremonies. Among these men he was the radiant, beautiful, strong, wealthy and most handsome youth. He was a welcome guest, and many Atticans took pride in his presence in their house. He was greeted as a friend and as a benefactor. Often, he only returned to his house after the sun was at its highest point. Then, he discussed with Hipparchos all the affairs of the farmhouse. They decided to re-plant more olive trees and even some cypresses around the fields. They talked about their horse-breeding.

Alcibiades worked on his farm to pass the time, and he tried to banish Athens from his mind. Theodote mocked Alcibiades then, telling him he was becoming a peasant. But she was secretly proud that he could do also such things. She saw him working in the fields, tilling the earth, wearing a filthy tunic, a pair of stitched leather gaiters wrapped around his shins to protect them from scratches, and sometimes gloves to save his hands from the brambles. He wore a goatskin hat on his head to protect it from the sun or from the rain. He looked to his figs and olives. He made furrows in the fields, driving his oxen as straight as any Attican farmer. With his slaves he had started to grow a few vines. He planted an orchard of fruit trees, which provided apples, pomegranates and pears. He walked among the trees, pensive and restless.

Alcibiades and Hipparchos worked mostly in the afternoon, do the work of farmers, the same work as the slaves, working together with them, and they tended to the

horses and dig in the fields. Later, they trained their bodies for war. They had flattened a stretch of open ground before the house, which they used as a gymnasium space. Here, they only put on a loin cloth. They oiled themselves and let soft sand drip through their fingers over their bodies. Then with Theodote, Hipparchos's mistress and sometimes with the male slaves as sole spectators, they ran, threw disks and javelins, jumped with the stones, and even wrestled as if they trained in an Athenian gymnasium. Neighbours saw them train by accident, and came in after that. Soon, they were with five and even more men to train their bodies and spirits in contests, after which they would all wash in the Sea and have a symposium, either in the andron of the house or outside, on the balcony, admiring the setting of the sun, and letting the quiet beauty of peaceful Attica forge their spirits to calmness of mind.

### **Agora politics**

After a few months of this leisurely life, Alcibiades longed once more for the action and excitement of Athens. It was in spring, but nobody had talked about the Great Dionysia and the plays in Athens. Yet, he longed to be once more in a theatre and be the focal point of attention. He wanted to organise symposiums in Athens. He even yearned for Hipparete. He needed more money, for the breeding of horses ate up his funds more rapidly than he had imagined, and with no military cavalry of name to provide large amounts of animals to, his revenue dwindled. He needed to seek contacts to merchants of everything. He also wanted to see Socrates, hear how his friend felt, talk to him. He wondered whether Socrates was more inclined to talk now than on the ship in which they had sailed back to Athens. More than anything, he wanted to go back to Athens to the Assembly and seek revenge. Men of Athens had spewed him out, something he would not have thought possible. He though people admired him, wanted his aid. Was he really of no worth, a maverick in everything, a fool who would never become a man of importance in the town? Had his hopes, his ambitions been smashed before he had even started?

It was time for Athens to know who Alcibiades really was. He wanted to learn of the latest developments in Attica and in the Peloponnesos. He had to prepare his campaign for the election as general. He talked of all this to Theodote, but she refused categorically to go back to Athens. She told him that she was pregnant. This would be her first child. She had desired that child from Alcibiades. She would not endanger her baby by living in stinking, unhealthy Athens, especially not in the summer. Alcibiades was more relieved than angry. He had been surprised when Theodote told him she was pregnant. He was proud that she had wanted a child by him, even if he did not approve of having children with his mistresses. He was relieved that in Athens he would only have to cope with Hipparete and not with two jealous women simultaneously.

A few days later, he awoke early, ate and jumped on his horse. He said goodbye to Theodote, wished her well, promised to send her the best midwife of Athens, and then he rode off hurriedly in the morning, to the thrill of the city.

Alcibiades arrived at his house in Athens in the late afternoon of the next day. Hipparete still kept good order, and he was not much interested in the affairs of his house. Hipparete had changed slaves again, so he found mostly new faces in the rooms. The nights with his wife were wild, and often he would wake in the morning

covered with scratches from her nails on his back and thighs. Hipparete wanted him to take her in the strangest positions.

During the day, he was seldom at home. He spent much time in the harbour, in Piraeus, talking to the merchants there, and to the ship-captains. He arranged much to bring his fortune in balance again. He lent money so that more money would come to him in the mid-long term, investing directly in merchant ventures. He spoke to Callias and entered with him in schemes that would bring in much money. He bought and sold slaves, something he had never done before. Then also, Hipparete told him she was pregnant again.

A long time passed before he had the courage to see Socrates. He entered Socrates's house uninvited and cautiously. He knocked this time, before he went in. Xanthippe was nowhere to be seen. Socrates was the first to come through the opposite door to welcome a visitor. When he saw Alcibiades, he froze in surprise.

Socrates had aged much. His hair was almost completely white. He was dressed in the same drab clothes as always. He overcame his surprise, and then, friendly, with joy, he invited Alcibiades in, uttering a few friendly words, and he finally seemed delighted of seeing his friend. Socrates took Alcibiades at the shoulders and kept looking at him. He scrutinised him and brought his friend's face in his memory once more. When Socrates liked somebody, he would touch the person, caress him, and feel him about. Liking somebody was a very physical thing for the philosopher. Socrates kept holding on to Alcibiades while he drew him to the small andron and offered him bowls with a few small morsels to eat. The men exchanged short, polite phrases of welcome.

Socrates was fond of Theodote and of Hipparete, so he asked how they were. Eager to learn how Socrates had fared since their return from Amphipolis, and eager to understand Socrates's strange behaviour during the boat trip, he asked, 'how have you been since we arrived back in Athens, Socrates? Why did you not want to speak to me on the ship? Did I offend you? Were you angry that we had lost at Delium and Amphipolis? Did you blame me for that?'

Socrates was surprised. He suddenly looked Alcibiades straight in the eyes.

'No,' he said, 'what made you think I should have been angry with you? You saved my life several times. I was angry with myself. If I hadn't stayed so stubbornly on that hill of Amphipolis, many more of my friends would be walking the streets of Athens now. I killed many men. I should be convicted and put to trial.'

'Maybe less of your friends would walk the streets, yes. But certainly much and much less other Athenian citizens would be walking around. While we stood together on that hill, the rest of our army could flee unhindered, well, almost. Clearidas kept most of his cavalry also against us, there. That was a fight! Do you remember? Two times, Clearidas and his Spartans attacked us with their entire army and tried to dislodge us, and twice we threw them back. I wonder what the fine Spartiates thought when they had to use their mass of helot peltasts with their women's weapons to subjugate us. We kept their whole damn Peloponnesian army busy while thousands of Athenians ran back to Eion. And we still broke through their lines and got back to Eion too! I tell you, every dead man on that hill was a hero and gave his life, not only for Socrates, but for the polis. Oh yes, you showed the way. But it was only the citizen's duty you remembered them off. Every one of those men might have fled. They stayed, of course, some out of love and consideration for you, but they knew they were in a situation in which a duty's fate had chosen them. They had a choice, Socrates, and

they stayed because they were there and not somewhere else, not someone else, by the chance of fate, and they stayed because they had to. If they hadn't stayed, most of them would have been killed on the run, and far many more among the men that had already run would have been killed. Don't blame yourself.'

Socrates's eyes looked first sadly, then with sudden joy and relief and hope. These were the words he had been waiting for from someone, but nobody but Alcibiades had pronounced them. Yet, his conscience still nagged at him. Then he had an idea.

He stood up.

'Let's walk,' he said. 'Xanthippe is with the children upstairs. I have to buy her some birds in the agora. Let's go.'

They left the house and went through the streets, heading towards the marketplace. Socrates greeted everybody with a smile. He walked very slowly and Alcibiades had to curb his impatience.

Socrates said, 'I am still unhappy because so many of our friends, all good men, were killed at Amphipolis, and because we killed so many others too.'

'When you decide to kill someone else for a just cause, for instance, because that someone is a criminal or an enemy, are you then unhappy?'

'No, no. You are right. I believe such a person, however, should not be envied. It is true, I believe that only a person who kills somebody unjustly should be unhappy.'

'What do you mean, Socrates?'

'I mean that there is nothing worse than wrong-doing.'

Socrates said, 'what brought you back to Athens? I heard you were in the country, breeding horses and having a grand time there. I did not expect you back.'

He added, 'oh yes, you have a wife in Athens. I haven't seen her for a very long time. Is she still as beautiful?'

'She is,' Alcibiades answered. 'She is at ease and gets fat but yet more handsome at that. I came back because I was bored. The country suits me, but I want the agitation of Athens. And I came back to see my friends.'

He nodded to Socrates.

'I see. Why did you leave Athens at all? Needed a rest?'

'I didn't need a rest. I did have to absorb the disasters of Delium and Amphipolis. I was angry at many people of Athens. I was mad at the incompetence of the generals, of the ridicule of their dangerous and stupid schemes, in which they did not realise what it takes to wage a war and battles. Then many other men of Athens did me wrong.'

'What happened?'

'Our famous magistrates all sat together to discuss peace with the Spartans to conclude an alliance with our enemies. Even our friend Laches was part of the delegation. I was explicitly excluded, ostracised virtually by the good men, behind my back. I was considered to be rash, foolish, a maverick, maybe a dangerous, war-loving man, a demagogue. I was dumped. Nicias saw to that. Nicias did me wrong. He will regret it.'

'I repeat, Alcibiades, there is nothing worse than wrong-doing.'

'Ah, is it not worse to suffer wrong than to do wrong?'

'No, Alcibiades. I would prefer to suffer wrong than to do wrong. In the first case I would be a good man, morally good. In the second case I would be morally bad. What is moral is good, what is immoral is bad.'

'Does it really take that?'

‘Yes. A man who is really good is happy, a wicked person is unhappy. If one is bad, one is miserable.’

‘Well, Socrates, is it then impossible to believe that a man, such as a criminal, or a tyrant, can be happy?’

‘So you believe that a criminal can remain happy, as long as he isn’t punished?’

‘Of course, Socrates. Would you prefer to have wrong done to you and suffer from it, than to do something wrong? Now, of course, I know, doing wrong is contemptible, but who likes to suffer?’

Socrates sighed. ‘Isn’t it so that doing wrong is more unpleasant than suffering wrong? Are not people that do wrong more distressed than people who suffer wrong?’

‘In a way, yes; in a way, no.’

‘Would you then say, Alcibiades, that doing wrong is more harmful than suffering wrong?’

‘That is sure.’

‘If doing wrong is more harmful than suffering wrong, it must be worse than suffering wrong.’

‘Yes, I suppose so.’

‘So, doing wrong is contemptible and it is worse than suffering wrong?’

‘Obviously.’

‘Now, if you had to make a choice between two deeds and one is more contemptible and worse than the other, which one would you choose?’

‘The one that is not contemptible and not worse than the other!’

‘Then you would choose rather to suffer wrong than to do wrong, is it not?’

‘I suppose I would.’

‘All right. I believe you implied earlier that people disliked punishment, didn’t you?’

‘Yes, I did.’

‘Now, if somebody punishes in due justice, isn’t that a good and admirable act?’

‘I think so, Socrates.’

‘Anybody who is having a good deed done to him, an admirable deed, benefits from it, isn’t it?’

‘Yes, he does.’

‘The criminal who receives punishment receives actually something good. Wouldn’t that be his peace of mind?’

‘Probably!’

‘Then a criminal who is being punished goes from a bad state of mind to a good one?’

‘I suppose so.’

‘So, like a medical treatment, a bad-tasting portion which heals us, justice and punishment buy healing of the mind, which is good?’

‘Yes.’

‘And a worst state is not being cured of this bad state?’

‘Yes’

‘So, punishment by justice is very beneficial. Punishment serves the criminals from the worst state?’

‘Yes.’

‘A man who escapes being punished by justice cannot be happy, isn’t it?’

Alcibiades laughed. ‘Socrates, you would convince a rat it was a lion.’

Socrates laughed. ‘Yes, I believe I could. Aristophanes would love that line! But I do not seek to convince. I seek to have people discover by themselves the good things; I

hold no Unjust Discourse. Suppose, now, we have a criminal or an enemy. Would you want to do something good to him or something bad?’

‘Something bad, of course!’

‘Then according to our reasoning, we should certainly not seek to punish our enemy by justice? For doing justice would be good to our criminal or enemy. If we want to do something bad to our enemy we should certainly leave him in his bad state of mind and do everything we can to make sure he doesn’t come before a court of justice!

Would you believe this was the best thing to do?’

‘Certainly not!’

‘So we should wish to do good to criminals and to our enemies?’

‘Yes. Deliver them to the just punishment so that their mind is in peace!’

Socrates stopped, walked on. Alcibiades remained silent for a while, then he asked,

‘why do you love philosophy more than me, Socrates?’

‘You say different things at different moments, Alcibiades. Philosophy always says the same things.’

Socrates walked on.

He said, ‘a self-disciplined person is a brave, a courageous person. He will have a good, moral, appropriate behaviour towards other men. He will turn away from people and pleasures and from desires that are not good. He will act justly towards men and gods. He will be a religious man. And a good man is bound to do the things he does well, and successfully. Are you happy, Alcibiades? The opposite of all I have said before, the opposite of self-discipline is self-indulgence. All I have said that is good, is all about self-discipline. Unhappiness is the lot of the self-indulgent.

Anybody who wants to look for happiness must look for self-discipline. You should work towards justice and self-discipline to guarantee your happiness. Order, discipline, love, justice is what the universe is made off and what we must seek.’

Alcibiades continued on that, ‘yes, Socrates, but do you not teach that no one really wants to do wrong, that wrong acts are done without us willing it, out of ignorance?’

Socrates replied, ‘yes, I grant you that. So we must constantly learn to avoid doing wrong. Doing well is more than preserving your life and your property. Alcibiades, you are going to be a statesman. So you will pledge to improve the citizens of Athens, won’t you? Isn’t that what a statesman should be doing? This is the service that a man who is good will have to render to his polis.’

Alcibiades answered, ‘I want to be a good statesman, Socrates. I want to do good and grow my soul. I want the best for Athens. But I also want my dignity and my honour preserved. I do not want to be ostracised by lesser men behind my back. I want Athens to recognise what I can do. The people like me. I know that. I fought for ten years now, side by side with the citizens of this polis. Nobody has such a record. Not Nicias, not Demosthenes. I did not fight as a general, not like Cleon who was killed by a javelin in the back, but in the middle of the battles, and often at the hardest points. Nicias and his friends know that. I am a member of the very best families of Athens, with connections going back in the past to many of the men that have brought this town to hegemony, to the very Eupatrids. And yet they deny me any right to discuss the fate and the organisation of the town. I will not leave this deed unchallenged. I cannot and I will not. I will have revenge. These men must learn what it means to scheme on intrigues behind my back to withhold me from getting my due. I quite well understood what you taught me just now. Unjust things were done to me, but the wrong-doing has been done by Nicias, not by me, so Nicias should feel sorry and not me. I do not think, however, he is suffering much, Socrates. I think he relishes

having humiliated me and pushing me in the dirt. One thing you said is right: he needs a punishment. I am going to give him that, sooner or later, so that he might feel better. I will not repent for it, for he deserves a punishment. Why, I would be doing him a favour, wouldn't I?

Socrates sighed.

The men arrived at the stalls of the agora. When the Athenians saw the two men walking in the square at leisure, under the plane trees, the old man with the speckled, unkempt, mostly white beard, dressed in old but clean clothes, and the elegant, very handsome and powerful man in the finest linen that one could find in Hellas, himation thrown elegantly over the shoulders, they opened the crowd to let them pass respectfully.

A few cried, 'hail, Socrates', and a lot more, 'hail, Alcibiades!'

Socrates was proud to be honoured by the accompaniment of the youngest, strongest hero of Athens and indeed the finest new statesman of the polis. Alcibiades took pride in being seen with the wisest and most respectable man of Athens. He knew Socrates loved him. Hadn't the oracle of Delphi, asked by Socrates's student and secretary, declared that there was no wiser man in Hellas than Socrates? Nicias and the other men who had signed the alliance treaty might have challenged his position. The rest of Athens honoured him with Socrates. And was not the power of Athens ultimately with the people, when the Ecclesia voted?

Alcibiades's heart filled then with confidence. His mind grew lighter, his mood improved. He saluted to left and right. He embraced a fishmonger who had stood with Socrates and him on the hill of Amphipolis, and he lauded the courage of the man. The crowds cheered. When the fishmonger had grown a head taller of pride by being recognised and saluted by Alcibiades and by Socrates, all the people in the agora flocked around the stall, and suddenly Alcibiades and Socrates had to shake everybody's hand and they were patted on the shoulders, touched everywhere. Even a few women came forward with children in their arms to greet the two men.

Nicias might have won the Council, Alcibiades had won the agora, and who owned the agora owned Athens. Alcibiades was very much aware then that Socrates had led him to the market with a purpose. Suddenly, the weight of the defeats of Delium and Amphipolis and of his being rebuked by Nicias and Endius fell off his shoulders.

### **Politics around Nicias**

Alcibiades remained in Athens, living with Hipparete. His wife was very pregnant now. He stayed with her and had no new mistresses in Athens. Theodote and the farm cost him enough money.

He went back once in a while to the house north of Eleusis, though, to check on how his racing horses advanced. He regretted he could not participate in the next Olympic Games. He was not ready. The horses were not ready. Hipparchos was not ready. They had fine animals, the best in Attica, all right, but the horses were not trained enough with chariots, and Alcibiades found that for the Olympic Games a better kind of horse was needed. His present animals lacked little, but that little would make all the difference in races. He had to wait for further occasions to find the best horses, the very best, the very expensive ones, the rarest animals of the most excellent talents. He also had to look for better charioteers.

The peace and alliance with Sparta were formulated and signed by then, the people of Athens were glad that the war was over. They seemed satisfied with the terms of the peace treaty.

It came to Alcibiades's ears that the Athenians began to say, 'Pericles started the war and Nicias finished it.'

Alcibiades loathed such words.

He had never been a particularly good friend of Pericles. The man had been his guardian too much. He considered the saying, however, an intolerable stain on his family's honour. It was just the last drop that made his bowl flow over. He resented the peace treaty and he resented the man under whose direction it had been concluded. Nicias more than ever became the subject of his anger and frustration.

Alcibiades gained in popularity in Athens during that time. He made sure he stayed more discreet with the crowds but he invited the more prominent men in Athens to his evening symposiums. He started with lesser-known men, with men who had large and wide connections in the circles of the funds-controlling groups. He gained the confidence of these men of business, of trade, of certain crucial industries such as potteries and leather-making. He invited Hippocrates of Cyprus, who controlled the copper business of Athens. He invited metics. He invested with these men, and when he was their friend and confidant, he invited the men who were active in the Councils of Athens, the men who wielded influence in the Ecclesia, in the Assembly.

Alcibiades engaged himself more firmly in his brotherhood, his phratry. He was hereditary member of a brotherhood of the Scambonid district. He went to the meetings of his phratry, and discussed seriously the upkeep of the shrines of his brotherhood. He looked after the possessions of the phratry in the country, where they owned disparate, small pieces of land.

Alcibiades organised public banquets for the members of his deme. He extended these to provide for free meals in the Prytaneum, for people he wanted to honour.

He also provided for a chorus. He became a chorégos. The duty of a chorégos was to pay for the training and the performance of a chorus. The chorégos was also the supervisor of the choir, so that the performance of the choir depended much on how well the chorégos could choose the members, the trainer of the choir, and keep order in the rehearsals. The chorus also danced, so choreographers had to be recruited and to be paid for. Alcibiades's chorus specialised in hymns to Dionysos, the dithyrambs. Alcibiades was not particularly a lover of these poems and songs, but he cared for the chorus.

He tried in every respect to prove a dedicated benefactor of the people of Athens. He spent large amounts of money to be liked by Athens. He did not realise that while he tried to become more popular, he also raised suspicions. Elder politicians might have told him that, but none spoke to him about this, and he had to learn the adversity by himself. The Athenians distrusted aristocrats who sought popularity, who flaunted their wealth to the people, and who shared their wealth with many. Alcibiades had not in mind to seek tyranny through popularity. He only wanted Athens to be grateful and to admire him. But part of Athens saw in him a danger to her old ways of living. Some people reproached him behind his back for his opulence and his good looks, accusing him of turning into a mindless demagogue. Alcibiades was too much the Eupatrid, too much the aristocrat, too much part of the good and the beautiful.



The poorer citizens loved his generosity. His better friends loved to have him at their symposiums and lauded his seriousness. The poor swore by him, the rich envied him. Luckily, for the moment, there were far more of the former than of the latter in Athens.

After many months, Nicias heard Alcibiades's name spelled in detail, with much respect, everywhere around him. Nicias's opinion of Alcibiades had to change if he wanted to keep many friends in the Ecclesia, so Nicias grew worried. Nicias still despised Alcibiades, however. Nicias's family originated from the lowest of classes. His father had grown rich and had moved only then in the most powerful circles of Athens, but the father had inoculated in the son the distrust and envy of the old aristocratic families of Athens. Alcibiades could not charm a Nicias. But Nicias's supremacy was not absolute anymore. Alcibiades waited for events that could bring him in controversy with Nicias, and in which he could play a first role. The occasion came from an unexpected corner: from Argos in the Peloponnesos.

### **Politics at Argos**

Corinth was dissatisfied with the alliance between Sparta and Athens. Corinth had been one of the instigators of the Archidamian War because it had been envious of the power of Athens. Now, with the Peace of Nicias, the power of Athens was confirmed, and Sparta even would have to defend it if it was challenged openly. The Corinthians were embittered. Their ambassadors had been summoned to Sparta to hear that they, the Corinthians, being allies of Sparta, were bound by the same treaty as Sparta was, without having once been involved in the negotiations. They not only despised Athens now, but also Sparta for having engaged them into the treaty. The Corinthian ambassadors returned from Sparta, but instead of going home they went straight to Argos.

Argos had been the old, strong enemy of Sparta in the Peloponnesos for ages, but the polis had kept neutrality in the Archidamian wars between Sparta and Athens, bound by oaths of non-aggression to Sparta. Argos was a democracy, however. The Corinthian ambassadors pleaded with Argos for a new Peloponnesian alliance, one that was independent from Sparta and whose aim would be to preserve the Peloponnesos. The Argives listened with much interest, for their treaty with Sparta was to end soon, and they feared being attacked by Sparta once more. The Argives were inclined to forge a new alliance with Corinth to confront Sparta if necessary.

Not only Corinth sought new partners. Mantinea, a town between Sparta and Argos, also found Sparta's enhanced hegemony in the Peloponnesos a growing danger, once Sparta would have her hands free from the war with Athens. And Mantinea was a democracy like Argos. The Mantineans did not hesitate. They signed an alliance with Argos.

The Corinthians and the Argives decided to start negotiations, but each polis chose twelve men only to discuss, for fear of Sparta, and to keep the negotiations a secret. Secrets were hard to keep in the Peloponnesos, however, so the Spartan ephors learned of the negotiations. The Spartans sent ambassadors to Corinth and tried to prevent the Corinthians from allying with the Argives.

The Corinthians said to the Spartans that they had great issues with the Peace of Nicias treaty, because they had made promises to their own allies and friends in Thrace, promises that were in contradiction to the alliance with Athens. Corinth also said it would think about the Spartans' demand not to enter into an alliance with Argos, but they promised nothing. In fact, at the same moment, ambassadors from Argos were already discussing a treaty in Corinth. Talks between these two cities continued unhindered, as before.

Then, an embassy from Elis arrived in Corinth. The Eleans asked and obtained in record time an alliance with Corinth. The Eleans rode on immediately to Argos to conclude also an alliance with the Argives. The Eleans had had an issue with the Lepreans. They had appealed for help from Sparta, but the Spartans had not only helped Elis disgruntlingly but also sent a delegation of hoplites to Lepreum to offer their protection to that town. The Eleans were upset about this, so they joined the Argives. When the talks between Corinth and Argos were finished, Corinth entered also into the Argive alliance, and with Corinth came the Chalcidians of Thrace.

Sparta had now to face a powerful alliance of Argives, Corinthians, Eleans, Mantineans and Chalcidians of Thrace. Most of these allies lived in their own territory of the Peloponnesos, the land Sparta considered hers, her backyard. The new alliance even tried to win the Tegeans to their side, and Tegea lay really in the closest vicinity of Sparta. Tegea refused however, and remained an ally of Sparta. How would Sparta react? Would she charm the allies?

Sparta did all but that. The Spartans invaded the land of the Parrhasians, who were subjects of Mantinea. The Spartans first laid waste to the land, and then declared the land independent from the Mantineans. Mantinea felt insulted and abused by Sparta. Then, Sparta received in its polis the helots who had travelled to Thrace in Brasidas's army. The helots received their freedom, and Sparta settled them with their families in Lepreum. Now, Elis felt insulted and abused by the Spartan ephors.

Alcibiades smelled the tension that was building up in the Peloponnesos. He could not sense for the moment how to use this to his means, but he followed the evolution in the Peloponnesos with much interest.

The treaty between Sparta and Athens stated that all belligerent polises should give back the captured towns. The lot fell on Sparta to start with this procedure. Sparta had not given back Amphipolis, though Athens had returned the prisoners of Pylos to Sparta.

Alcibiades saw his chance to sow distrust for the Spartans in Athens. He asked to address the Ecclesia, and he pleaded for Athens to summon the Spartan ambassadors to come to Athens to explain why Amphipolis was not handed over yet to Athens, despite the treaty and the oaths.

The Spartan ambassadors indeed arrived in Athens to plead their cause. They told publicly in the Assembly that Sparta had done her utmost best. The Chalcidians, however, refused to return Amphipolis, and the Chalcidians were now allies of Corinth, bound by their oaths, which were in conflict with Sparta's demands. Nicias and his group remained silent, inclined as they were to give credit to Sparta for this excuse.

Alcibiades was inclined to believe Sparta, too. Yet, he spoke in polite words but in an infuriated tone. He reproached the Spartans for having promised things which they could not hold. He not only scolded on this point the Spartans. He also undermined the treaty itself, and the process of signing the treaty by the Athenians, reproaching Nicias and the Athenian negotiators of happy innocence, of having been deluded. He reproached indirectly Nicias of rashness and neglect. He accused nobody overtly in public. He used sarcasm, and the people of Athens, who had been so far so happy and relieved with the peace treaty, began to distrust the Spartans and they felt insulted by Sparta. Alcibiades stuck the worm in the apple!

The situation in Chalcidice remained dangerous in the mind of the Athenians.

At the end of the autumn of the year after Alcibiades's return, Hipparete gave birth to a child. Alcibiades had stayed with her the last months of the pregnancy. She gave birth to a second son, which they called Alcibiades. The boy was in good health even though he was born a little early. It was a strong baby, but Hipparete suffered horribly. The birth had been very difficult and caused her pains and exhaustion. With the baby came out large, dark masses of bloody tissue, and when the midwives pushed on her belly, more bloody rests of flesh came out.

Hipparete recovered, but her health became more fragile from that moment on. She had little appetite and she grew weaker. She coughed, and the blood inside her kept flowing out at times in gushes from her body. Later, she had very painful menstruations. Although she still desired Alcibiades, he was reluctant to go to her bed. He had a disgust to see his and her legs blooded after their relations. He avoided her. Callias saw his sister becoming paler by the day. He asked Alcibiades with a scornful eye what was going on. Alcibiades merely asked to Callias where the ten talents were that Hipponicus had promised him for the birth of his first son. Callias became suddenly very deaf.

That autumn also, the Spartans persuaded the Athenians to withdraw from Pylos the Messenians, the helots and the deserters from Laconia, even though Amphipolis had not been given back to Athens. The Spartans wanted to have Pylos back, for that stronghold was still a danger for them and a temptation for all helots who wanted to flee from Sparta.

Alcibiades raged in the Assembly, crying out his indignation. The friends of Nicias proved still too powerful, however, and their views prevailed. Alcibiades's words had not much effect. Nevertheless, Pylos remained in Athenian hands.

In the winter, Sparta chose new ephors, and among these new magistrates, Cleobulus and Xenares opposed the peace. They schemed to get the Argives together with the Boeotians in the Spartan alliance, but they faltered in their attempts.

In that winter too, the Olynthians of Chalcidice attacked Mecyberna and they took the place by storm. Mecyberna was a town garrisoned by Athens.

At the same time, the Spartans ordered the Boeotians to hand over the fort of Panactum to Athens. The Spartans wanted to recover Pylos this way. The Boeotians, unknown to the Spartans, dismantled the fortifications of Panactum so that the fort would be useless henceforth to the Athenians. Athens would receive nothing with Panactum.

In the summer of the next year, the Argives noticed with bitterness that they were once more isolated in the Peloponnesos. Boeotia had remained the ally of Sparta. The

Argives sent representatives to Sparta to negotiate a treaty. Sparta was arrogant and refused to yield on any point that was to the advantage of Argos. In the end, the Spartans agreed to a peace treaty for fifty years but they did not sign the treaty immediately. They sent the Argive ambassadors home again to submit the proposals to the people, asking them to return to Sparta for the Hyacinthia Festival to take the oaths.

During these negotiations with Argos, the Spartans sent their own ambassadors Andromedes, Phaedimus and Antimenides to receive Panactum from the Boeotians. The ambassadors saw that the fort had been destroyed, but they travelled nonetheless to Athens to hand over the place officially. They also brought back Athenians who had been prisoners of Boeotia. They handed over the prisoners in Athens but also announced, visibly distressed, that Panactum had been dismantled. Still, they gave Panactum back to Athens.

### **Assembly politics**

Nicias and his friends were stunned when they received the reports on the state of Panactum. The matter came to be discussed in the Assembly. Alcibiades was outraged. He spoke in the Assembly and proved the bad faith of the Spartans, who, despite the alliance with the Athenians, had allowed the Boeotians to demolish an Athenian fort. Moreover, he had learned that Sparta had renewed its alliance with Boeotia without compelling its ally to accept and honour the treaty with Athens. Boeotia still refused the treaty of the Peace of Nicias.

Alcibiades remembered the Athenians at long that the alliance with Sparta forced both city-states to compel their allies to respect and realise the treaty. He shouted out before an awkward silence of thousands on the hill of the Pnyx, in a particularly well attended Assembly meeting, that Athens had been cheated. He told the treaty and alliance had only the value of the paper it was written upon.

Nicias spoke after Alcibiades, but the Assembly shouted its rage. Nicias could only say a few rough, impolite words to the Spartans and send them out of Attica. Alcibiades took the stand again while the Spartans left. He said the Spartans could not be trusted. The Boeotians were the arch-enemies of Athens, envious of the hegemony of the polis of Athens and mischievous in their designs. He said that the new treaty between the Spartans and the Boeotians was directed at destroying Sparta's enemies in the Peloponnesos. He predicted the Spartans and the Boeotians would increasingly harass the Argives, Mantineans and Eleans, until these democracies were exhausted and could be conquered. When that happened, Athens would face as enemies Sparta, Boeotia and indeed all the Hellenic states, turned into oligarchies directed by Athens' worst enemies: Sparta and Thebes. He cried that Athens should not be isolated thus. He promised to send a personal message to Argos, Mantinea and Elis, to invite them to send representatives to Athens to discuss an alliance. The Assembly applauded.

Alcibiades travelled to Argos in person, but the Assembly gave him two members of the Council to accompany him. The Assembly had adopted his plan enthusiastically. He travelled on horseback and with his two companions arrived in Argos in record time.

When he rode through the gates of Argos, covered with dust and sweat, but with a purple cloak on his back and a shield with the emblems of Athens at his side, Alcibiades made a remarkable entry in the city.

He liked what he saw. The town had excellent, very high and thick walls, which were heavily guarded. He remarked that the discipline in the guards was well enforced. He had been stopped roughly at the gates and his name had been asked. A commander came forward, asking what he intended to do in Argos. When the man learned who the Athenian was, and that Alcibiades led an urgent embassy of Athens, he saluted happily led the men straight to the Strategeion of Argos.

Alcibiades had only to explain in a few courteous phrases what he had come for. The Argives looked at each other. Then they smiled in relief, for they had thought all the time that Athens would have supported Sparta in its envy of Argos. The Argives said they welcomed the representatives from a sister democracy and from a great naval power. They embraced Alcibiades, patted him and his companions on the shoulders, and took them to their homes to bathe. In the evening they organised a symposium. There, the Argive magistrates said they would send representatives to Athens the next day already, to negotiate an alliance with Athens. Alcibiades should rest one night only and return to Athens with the ambassadors of Argos.

The Argives made no secret of what had happened in their town with the Athenian delegation. When the Argive ambassadors rode out, Alcibiades among them, the crowds cheered, and Alcibiades had to shake hands while flowers were thrown at him. The Argive commanders saluted when he rode past them. His heart went out to the Argives, then. Here was a polis with people who honoured him and received him as a liberator and a benefactor. He would cause a sensation in Athens, and one in Sparta too!

A few days later in Athens, Alcibiades sat as a member, with Nicias, of the group of negotiators that talked to write down the text of the alliance between Athens, Argos, Mantinea and Elis.

Sparta had thereby been effectively surrounded by allies of Athens in the proper land she considered so much her own. The Assembly admired Alcibiades for having brought new powerful allies into the power sphere of Athens.

When the Spartans heard of the ongoing negotiations between Athens and Argos, they too hurried a delegation to Athens. Philocharidas, Leon and Endius arrived in Athens because the Spartans were afraid of the alliance between Argos and Athens. The Spartans met the Athenian Council, and Alcibiades was present too. He grinned at the surprise in the face of Endius. The delegates explained they had full powers to negotiate an agreement with Athens on all matters that aggrieved the Athenian people. The Council met the Spartan openness with satisfaction.

Alcibiades feared that the calm determination, the politeness and assurance of the dignified Spartans to accommodate the Athenians might deter the Assembly to arrive at a quick agreement with the Argives. The alliance with Argos might be delayed, even refused, and the Argives would feel insulted, abandoned and frustrated. His promises would be felt as treason.

In a state of real panic and fear that his schemes might not work out as he had planned, Alcibiades called the Spartan delegates to his house. The Spartans had learned that Alcibiades would become a general this year, so they complied.

Alcibiades held a light symposium with the men. He told the Spartans he had always opposed to give Pylos back to the Spartans. He assured the Spartans now that he would speak in the Assembly in favour of handing Pylos over to them. The Spartans were relieved and they visibly relaxed while they sat before him in his andron. He assured the Spartans that he would also work to solve the other issues between Sparta and Athens. But he asked the Spartans not to mention their full, plenipotentiary powers in the Assembly. He argued that such mentions would only enervate the people by yet another formal negotiation round, whereas the day was given to informal talks and solutions by discussions in front of all the people. The Spartans did not well understand how a democracy worked, and what the feelings of the men in the Assembly were. They were anxious to do things right this time, and they were eager to speak and do as the Athenians asked and liked. Alcibiades lied to them and told that this way, as he proposed, was the best to advance matters. The Spartans would have agreed to much to have Pylos returned to them. When they left Alcibiades's house, preceded by torch-bearers, they promised to do as Alcibiades had suggested.

The next day, the Spartans attended the Assembly. When Nicias and his friends presented the Spartans and asked them for what purposes they had come to Athens, they stated that they would talk with the Assembly, hear proposals in public for renewed peace with Athens. They said they had not come as ambassadors with the full powers of Sparta to engage their city by their words.

The Athenians of the Council did not believe their ears. Here were delegates from Sparta who said one day this and one day that, just the opposite of what they had assured earlier. The Athenians did not listen anymore to the Spartans, and they made movements with their arms and bodies to show they had no faith anymore in anything a Spartan could say.

The Spartans were surprised. They did not understand why there was a sudden change of mood in the Assembly. Endius began to understand, however. He realised with a shock that Alcibiades had tricked them. It was too late however. He could not re-state that he had the confidence and powers of Sparta to negotiate now, for the Athenians would reproach the Spartan delegates even more their inconsistency. Endius smiled. Had he not rebuked Alcibiades before the peace negotiations, for his youth and inexperience? Alcibiades had taken his revenge. A Spartan recognised power and raw opportunism brought with intelligence when he saw it. Endius had more admiration for the cunning of Alcibiades than anger at losing face in front of the Athenian Assembly.

Alcibiades stood close by Endius. He watched the man intently. He remarked the naïve incredulity at the turn of events in the faces of Philocharidas and Leon and the knowing, sarcastic smile in the eyes and the quivering of the lips of Endius. Endius had looked almost immediately at Alcibiades, and he had sensed a feeling of admiration for the sly politician that he had become – or had always been. Alcibiades then knew with absolute certainty he could thrust the dagger as deep in as he was able to.

Alcibiades asked to speak to the Assembly and when the herald begged him to come forward, he attacked in bitter words the perfidy of the Spartans in keeping Amphipolis and Panactum from their righteous owners. Alcibiades spoke a long time. He delivered an eloquent oration on the good will of the Athenians and on the bad

consequences of the treaty in which Athens had been naïve and innocent to believe in the good faith of her adversaries, who now baffled and insulted her. He was about to ask for a vote to withdraw the confidence in the Spartans and to force a negotiation with friendly new allies. Then, something surprising happened.

While the full Assembly of the people of Athens listened to Alcibiades in silence, a low rumble began to be heard. Pebbles started to roll. Alcibiades held his speech for a while, for he knew what would come next. The ground shook. At first, the earth moved slowly from left to right. Rocks from the Pnyx Hill rolled sideways between the people. Then, the earth moved more rapidly, and the grumbling of the deep grew louder. Athens shook with an earthquake. Everybody on the Pnyx sank to his knees, and some men even threw themselves down where there was place to do so, for the people stood one against the other.

Endius and his Spartiates stood at the highest point of the Pnyx, next to Alcibiades and the other Athenian orators. Alcibiades saw a piece of rock slide away from under Endius's feet and the Spartan started to fall, towards a steep slope on the other side of the hill. Alcibiades grabbed Endius's himation, then his arm, and while he was on his knees, one hand to the shaking rocks, he held Endius on the Pnyx until the man had dug his heels in the earth and his hand around a rock that remained fixed. The trembling and roaring lasted for a short while, but long enough to make the men have strange feelings in their bellies. Then, the movements stopped as suddenly as they had started.

It took a while before the men stood up again. They hit the dust from their clothes. At that moment, Endius smiled again and in a low voice, so that nobody else could hear what he said, he hissed to Alcibiades, 'Alcibiades, it seems the gods disapprove of your methods. If Sparta or Athens will not punish you, the gods will!'

'Oh,' Alcibiades whispered, 'the gods only disapprove of Spartans in Athens.'

Especially when they are not what they seem to be and when they do not live by their oaths. Poseidon is angry with you, I believe.'

He sprang to his feet and shouted, 'you see, people of Athens, how the gods heard our grievances and disapprove of the ways we are treated!'

Too many people were still stunned however, and too much in shock, to react. They were all eager to go down the Pnyx and see what damage had been done to their houses. Nicias signalled to the herald and the herald called off the meeting. In no time the Pnyx was empty and also the orators left.

A new meeting of the Assembly was organised the next morning. The Spartan delegates were not present. They left the same day, convinced of the futility of further talks.

Nicias, however, had spoken to them the evening before and soothed them with new promises. Now, he held a long speech to the Assembly and he told that the Spartans, he Nicias, as well as the Athenian people, had been tricked by unscrupulous young, inexperienced aristocrats. He looked with disdain at Alcibiades without accusing him directly. Alcibiades grinned, waiting for the rest of the speech.

Nicias insisted on continuing to be friends with Sparta. He said the alliance and the peace were still new. Confidence had to be gained slowly on both sides. He proposed that the negotiations with Argos be postponed for a while until the differences of opinions between Sparta and Athens had been properly solved. Such discussions, he assured, held by mature and experienced politicians would smooth out the folds in the treaty. It would avert new wars in Attica and in the Peloponnesos.

Nicias made the Assembly remember the horrors of the war, the plague, the deaths of many men in foreign countries, the devastations of the fields in the country. It would be a wise policy, he pleaded, to preserve the peace. Peace was worth a few more talks. He persuaded the Assembly to send another deputation to Sparta, to hold there the talks that the Spartans had been willing to hold in Athens but had been unable to do so because of the earthquake. Nicias told, smiling, that all knew how superstitious the Spartans were with earthquakes.

A man cried, 'they sure pissed their chitons full, Nicias!' and all laughed.

Nicias knew then that he had won. He had the audience captured with his words. They were listening to him and he laughed also.

'True,' he said, 'so they left in a hurry but we should not hold that against them. Let's show that we, Athenians, are neither vindictive nor envious. I will go in person with a deputation of Athenians of the Council to persuade the Spartans to give back Amphipolis, to restore Panactum as it was before, and to renounce their alliance with Boeotia. The peace treaty, which bears my name, states that neither side has the right to conclude separate agreements. The Spartans must be pointed to the meaning of their oaths, whereas Athens might already have signed a treaty with Argos but refrained from doing so. Our friends, the Argives, will also be best served by peace between Athens and Sparta and we will persuade the Spartans to negotiate about any issues between among the Peloponnesians.'

Nicias's motion was accepted.

Alcibiades had stood silently. He was still puzzled by the earthquake of the day before. He had defied the gods often, but the gods had never acted in any visible way. He knew very well he had done something that Socrates would have called wrong. The gods might have reacted and given him a sign, here.

The Spartans certainly believed in earthquakes as signs of the gods. So much so they would even stop entire armies and turn around when the earth shook. But were they? Deeply buried inside his soul Alcibiades still had the respectful, healthy fear of the gods, instilled in him by his education. He had to acknowledge the brute fear that indeed the gods might have spoken to him like they did to Socrates. Or was the earthquake of yesterday merely a coincidence? How many earthquakes had happened during Assembly meetings in the past years? He had never heard of a trembling of the earth during Pnyx meetings. If it was a sign of the gods, what was its meaning? Was it a bad omen or an encouragement? Nicias would certainly regard it as a warning.

Alcibiades rather more expected he had been scorned by the gods, yet saved, because he had not been hurt. On the contrary, he had saved Endius from being hurt badly. Endius would be grateful. Would Endius be an ally of his in Sparta? Nicias did not really know why the Spartans had stated two conflicting messages in Athens, but Endius did. Had Endius spoken to Nicias and told how he had been tricked? No. Endius might hold a grudge against him, Alcibiades, but Endius would not openly accuse him for having been tricked, for he would lose face, and Endius had ambitions in Sparta. Endius was now an accomplice in an intrigue that had been played upon him and of which he was also the prisoner. The intrigue had been at the expense of Sparta and of Nicias, but it would only be at the expense of Endius if it became public. Endius would not let it become public, not now. Alcibiades would not have to expect a dagger in his breast from Endius. He might receive a thrust of a dagger in his back, but every Spartan would be ready to do that, and more than half of his Athenian friends too, anyway. Endius would support him in Sparta. Would Nicias win the opinion in Sparta? No way! The peace ephor Pleistolas was no more. Cleobulus and



Xenares were ephors now, and these were more intent on war, especially with their arch-enemies in the Peloponnesos, Argos, Elis and Mantinea, inclining to Athens. The Spartan Kings were also intent on war. Agis maybe not so much, but certainly Pleistoanax. Pleistoanax had to prove something in Sparta. No, there was but little chance that Nicias might succeed. And then, for the next period, he, Alcibiades, would be general and Nicias not. He would see to that. The alliance of Athens with Argos would be signed. He alone would be the true master of Athens, and he could become the new Pericles.

What then was the meaning, if there was a meaning, of the earthquake? If the earthquake was a signal, what would the gods have at stake for him?

When Nicias proposed the motion to travel to Sparta to negotiate, Alcibiades had been absent-minded. So many thoughts, combinations of logic whirled through his mind that he had forgotten to listen. When he learned of the extent of Nicias's engagement, he voted in favour enthusiastically. Let Nicias dig his own grave. Alcibiades grinned. Afterwards, everybody would say that he had manoeuvred until Nicias could only take this course, had stood with his back to the wall, and proposed this move in desperation. Chance only had brought Nicias to lead new negotiations in Sparta, not really Alcibiades. Was that the meaning of the earthquake? Were the gods his allies? Did even the gods admire him and support him? Alcibiades would not go to Sparta. Let Endius forget a little the trick played on him. Alcibiades would not lead negotiations in Sparta. But yes, Nicias would go under in Sparta, and hence in Athens too. Alcibiades just had to wait. What had possessed Nicias into believing he might succeed in Sparta?

When the Assembly meeting finished, Alcibiades went immediately over to the Argive representatives and bade them to have faith in him and be patient, whatever other people told them. He begged them for time.

Nicias travelled to Sparta. He was received as coldly as possible in the Peloponnesian town. The Spartans did not have confidence in him. He was lodged politely, but nobody came to speak to him in the house. He had to wait until the ephors conceded to invite him. The answers Nicias obtained when he spoke of continued peace and mutual confidence were distant, evading, sarcastic and non-committing. Xenares, the ephor, supported by his friends and by Endius, refused to give up the alliance with Boeotia. Nicias got not one step further with the matters of Panactum and Amphipolis. He therefore kept on to Pylos for Athens. He could accomplish nothing. He asked the Spartans to formally renew their oaths to the peace treaty. The Spartans complied disdainfully. Nicias returned an empty-handed, old and entirely disillusioned man to Athens. His earlier victory in the Assembly had led him to a catastrophe for his image.

In the Assembly, the day after Nicias's return, Alcibiades did not have to say one word. He let Nicias bring his report. Not one Athenian citizen was duped. Nothing had been gained in Sparta. Athens had lost more face. Nicias's speech ended in silence.

Alcibiades then bode the representatives of Argos to come forward. He made no long speech in favour of an alliance with Argos. He simply proposed a motion to swear a treaty and alliance with the Peloponnesian town. The motion was voted for instantly

and almost unanimously accepted. Alcibiades signalled the herald, and the Assembly went home.

Alcibiades waited until all had left. He looked around and saw Nicias standing alone, a lonely man abandoned by all, standing on the highest point of the Pnyx, looking out beyond the horizon, to the Sea.

### **Strategos and political parties**

In the next days, after easy negotiations, the Argives, the Eleans and the Mantineans signed an alliance for a hundred years, with the city of Athens, valid by land and by sea. The alliance was for mutual support against enemies. Each polis promised to help the other in case of war and invasions. The magistrates of the cities would have to swear sacred oaths to uphold the treaty.

For Athens, the oath would have to be taken by the Prytanies; for Argos by the Eighty, for Mantinea by the Theori and the Polemarchos and at Elis by the Demiurgi and the Thesmopylaces.

The oaths would have to be delivered by the Athenians thirty days before the Olympic Games and by the Argives, Mantineans and Eleans ten days before the great Panathenaic festival in Athens.

Corinth refused to sign the alliance. It did not denounce its defensive alliance with Argos, but stated that this latter treaty was sufficient for them. The alliance between Athens and Argos displeased the Corinthians and brought them yet again closer to Sparta.

In the spring of the second year of Alcibiades's return to Athens, elections were held for generals, for strategoi of Athens. In such elections, men came forward to present themselves as candidates during an Assembly meeting.

That year, Alcibiades had not only the right age (he was just beyond thirty years old) but he also enjoyed the support of many friends. The affairs of the alliance with Argos and his justified anger with Sparta had made of him a candidate who had the highest chances of being accepted. Athens needed ten generals, and fifteen men came forward. Nicias was not amongst them. Alcibiades was the best-known Athenian. He was elected immediately. He would be one of the youngest generals ever to receive the office in Athens' history.

Socrates came to see him, and congratulated him. Alcibiades took him to the andron and when they were at the door of the hall, Hipparete came out of the kitchen to greet Socrates. Alcibiades was surprised that Socrates knew Hipparete so well. Socrates told he had met Hipparete several times in the marketplace, when she went out with her slave and maid to shop.

Socrates said, 'she is ill and weak. All the colour has left her face. What has happened?'

'She suffered a difficult child birth,' Alcibiades answered. 'But she will get better. We feed her well and the doctors give her potions.'

'Ah, the childbirth was difficult,' Socrates said. 'You should have called me. I am a good midwife. My mother, Phaenarete, taught me. She was a midwife, you know.'

'You're not serious, Socrates,' Alcibiades laughed. 'You said that before. I supposed it was a pun.'

‘Oh, but I am a midwife, I assure you. When there is some urgency in the neighbourhood, a real difficult case, the women call me in. I brought more Athenians to life than I killed enemies, you know!’

‘I bet you would. And you will never stop surprising me. You are the only man in Athens I can truly admire. What can I do for you?’

‘Nothing really. I came to say hello. Now that you are a general, I can take my leave from the army. I applied for a place among the home-guards. If Athens gets attacked, you will see me defending the long walls. My wounds of Delium and Amphipolis are healed. How have you been doing lately?’

‘I am fine. I am helping Athens to make tough decisions and to live through an awkward peace without being weakened too much.’

‘You are a general learning the politics of peace?’

‘Wars are won during peace. We have to use diplomacy and politics to grow stronger. Battles are but a last resort, to be applied when for instance one’s enemy does not understand reason and loyalty.’

‘That enemy being Sparta?’

‘And her allies, such as Corinth.’

‘Are we not at peace with Sparta? I too believe our polises are looking at each other like two dogs ready to jump at each other’s throat, yet knowing that neither can win. If they fight they know they will both suffer dearly. Isn’t it wisdom then for them to do nothing and win both?’

‘Sparta uses the Peace of Nicias to grow stronger herself. Sooner or later, she will raise funds and build ships, although that is forbidden by the treaty. We will be too weak to stop her. And then only the gods know who will win. There is still no love between Athens and Sparta, not even mutual respect. War will come again.’

‘I fear so too.’

Socrates and Alcibiades stopped talking. They ate and drank. Socrates ate of the delicious fish, pieces he hadn’t tasted for ages. Alcibiades had his own cook and the man was a magician with morsels of fowl and fish, with sausages and cakes.

After a while, Socrates asked, ‘how are you doing in the Assembly? I hear your speeches, which are truly masterpieces of eloquence, but do the people listen when you speak? Just how far does your influence work?’

‘They do listen,’ Alcibiades replied. ‘But whether then they act upon what the orators say is another matter. The Assembly is not any longer an assembly of individuals moved by reason, logic and personal emotions. There are groups now, and the making of alliances between these groups decides largely on the issues.’

‘What groups are you talking about, Alcibiades?’

‘Well, I’m talking about the hetairae, the political clubs of Athens.’

‘I remarked they have some influence. How important are they?’

‘The hetairae control votes. Whoever gathers the most votes wins the decision, of course.’

‘Which are the hetairae? They seem to be invisible to outsiders like me.’

Alcibiades thought, ‘are you really an outsider, Socrates? You know all about the hetairae. Why do you ask me these questions?’

Alcibiades said in a neutral voice, ‘there are several. First, the largest group is the democratic club. They may have a few rich men of the best families of Athens, but they are constituted by a diverse kind of men. There are at least three different hetairae among the democrats alone. There are men like Cleophon, Demophantus,

Peisandros and Charicles and their friends. These are discreet men really, robust supporters of democracy in the finest sense. They are integer men. Then there is the party of Nicias, the democrats that are always hesitating, afraid of war even when Athens is insulted and humiliated. Nicias is Pericles's heir really, but Pericles had more balls once in a while. Nicias has lost his balls years ago.'

Socrates laughed. 'There is the hetaira of Alcibiades!'

'Sure,' Alcibiades replied. 'My friends are Charmides son of Aristoteles, Archeliades, Panaitius who fought with us at Delium, Adeimantus, Meletus, the metic Pulytion, my brother-in-law Callias, and my uncle Axiochus to name but a few.'

'There are the extreme democrats, people like Hyperbolus and Androcles.'

'Yes. Those would like to see me tied to the stakes. They think I will one day lead the aristocrats and bring either tyranny or oligarchy to Athens. They say I am supporting democracy only to destroy it. They are crazy. They are dangerous, envious, lowly scheming men.'

'And you do not lead the aristocrats? I am surprised!'

Alcibiades laughed. 'How could I be an oligarchist with a teaching like you gave me, Socrates? No, the aristocrats fear me too. They seem to be supporters of Nicias. But they stay quite discreet. They do not want to give the impression that they would want to do harm to the democracy. Thessalos is one of their leaders. There are aristocrats among the aristocrats too, a separate hetaira. Phaiax son of Erasistratos leads these. The aristocrats of the greatest families of Athens, with a few exceptions, are in this group.'

Socrates kept quiet for a time as if he expected Alcibiades to continue.

Then he asked, 'where does Euphiletus belong?'

'Ah, I forgot,' Alcibiades corrected. 'That is an interesting group. I am surprised you know about them. They are very secret and devious. Euphiletus has a group of men who are half aristocratic, half not. Some of their men are also of the great families of Attica. The half that is not aristocratic is very wealthy. They are mostly younger men. I would say that they have all vested interests in the country. They are not city-dwellers but they own houses here, in Athens. They love peace because they love money, and that is the money of the land, not the money of the Sea! I call them the "agrarians".'

Socrates shifted his legs, obviously relaxed. Alcibiades wondered what that was about. He could only assume that Socrates wanted to know whether Alcibiades knew about the hetairae and in particular about Euphiletus' clique. Why was that?

'And all these people oppose you?' asked Socrates. It sounded more like a statement than like a question.

'That depends,' Alcibiades answered. 'The agrarians oppose me because any danger of war is a danger to their land and money. They oppose Nicias too, by the way, because he let the Spartan prisoners go and thus exposed Attica again to Spartan invasions. They would have rather approved of continuing the war, but keeping the prisoners so that Agis would not destroy their vines and olive-trees again. The extreme democrats are against me because I am an aristocrat. The aristocrats oppose me because I am a democrat. They look at me as something of a traitor. I usually support democracy. But the democrats of Nicias oppose me because I denounce a peace that is a farce. The agrarians sometimes support me to spite Nicias. The aristocrats help me discreetly when I oppose new taxes and they believe that after all I belong to them, because I am indeed a member of the greatest family of Athens and

might one day remember that and take their side. The extreme aristocrats try to charm me because I would be their star name in an oligarchy. Nicias looks at me with suspicion because I am the only man besides him who might be serious competition for him. Yet we are both in favour of decent democracy, and we support each other on those points. And then there is Socrates.'

'Socrates? What are you talking about? I have no hetaira!'

'No,' Alcibiades laughed. 'You have no hetaira. You don't need one. Socrates controls his deme, though, and most of the veteran citizen-hoplites who have seen him at work and stood beside him in the battles, too. Socrates's deme votes as Socrates votes.'

'I never tell my friends for what they should vote!'

'True, you don't. You don't have too. They come to ask you. They watch you even from the other end of the Pnyx and look whether you bring your arm up or not. Come on, Socrates, don't be a hypocrite. You know that!'

Socrates grumbled in his beard and looked at the ceiling.

'Socrates does not tell his deme what to vote for, but he tells his deme what not to vote for.'

'The Assembly is not controlled by the hetairae.'

'You are right again. I think the hetairae control directly or indirectly about a third of the citizens. The other two-thirds they reach by arguments, by influencing, by talking in the streets, maybe by bribing, outside the Assembly. They arrange for the orators to come forward. They arrange what the orators should stress, which message to pump into the ears of the simple people. A good orator, who knows how to play into the moment and how to manipulate the feelings of the citizens in the very Assembly meeting, can get votes that are not controlled or only weakly influenced by the hetairae. The hetairae discuss strategies of orators and they control their words. There are no orators outside the hetairae.'

'Do demagogues then rule Athens?'

'Maybe. Maybe you should not use that word and call them simply astute politicians. Meet reality, Socrates!'

'The orators were all taught by Protagoras.'

Alcibiades laughed again.

'There will be interesting Assembly meetings in the next months,' Socrates continued.

'A happy polis it is, where citizens talk, discuss, fight with words in an assembly of free men, instead of killing Hellenes in battles.'

'I know you do not approve of war. By talking and talking, and by forgetting to defend one's polis' interests with the sword at the right time, one gets weak and soft and then one loses one's honour and dignity. Finally, our polis' strength rots away, and we risk being destroyed in one, final battle.'

'Oh, but we keep exercising in the Gymnasia, you know. We remain clean, healthy and strong. We are ready to defend our walls. The home guards are veterans who know how to fight. A new generation of youngsters has come of age, too. They are the ones who have survived the plagues. They are arrogant and they tend to support you, Alcibiades, but they have a sad maturity over them that is very different from the innocence you and your friends had when you were boys. They are clever. They have open eyes and they are not duped by the intrigues in the Assembly. They will go their own way. They admire you very much. They tell me you are the new man.'

'Yes, I know,' Alcibiades affirmed, proudly, his ego flattered.

The two men finished their food and drank a few bowls of very watered wine. They continued to talk about the little scandals of the city. Then, Socrates stood. He saw Hipparete pass from one room to the other with her child in her arms. He went up to her, and pinched the boy in the cheeks, but he remained pensive. Then he said goodbye to Alcibiades and went out of the front door.

The baby Alcibiades, the youngest child of Alcibiades and Hipparete did not profit from his mother's milk but he lived on. Alcibiades bought a slave nursemaid for the boy. She was a young girl whose own child had recently died, and she had plenty of milk in her breasts. Young Alcibiades suckled eagerly and thrived. But there was still a death in the family. Young Cleinias, the first born boy, eight years of age, died quietly in his sleep at the beginning of the summer of the second year after Hipparete had given birth to her second son. The boy had never been seriously ill and nobody understood why he had died now. Had he waited for his brother to be born to start on the long trip to the Acherusian Lake? Alcibiades buried his son in the Kerameikos, with only a few close friends present, among which Socrates. Hipparete wept and wailed for many days. Life in the house of Alcibiades was sad and tiring for his nerves.

Alcibiades returned to his country house once every while. There was always laughter in the country. Theodote had given birth to a daughter. This birth had been easy. Theodote claimed the girl just popped out of her one morning, and there she was. The girl grew fat and rosy. And so did the mother. Theodote complained she would have to lose weight, but Alcibiades liked her looks and her luxurious body. Mother and child were happy.

Hipparchos did a great job at the farm. He held fewer horses now, but they bred well, and a little profit started to come in, enough to keep the farm going, to buy new horses and breed stronger kinds. Hipparchos was a real expert at horses. He was looking for a few of the very best racing-horses to prepare the Olympic Games.

Hipparete remained weak but healthy, and Alcibiades cared more for her. He made much time for her. Soon, she announced him with a laugh he should be more tender with her, for she was pregnant again. She took on better colours and she seemed to have accepted the loss of her first baby. She ate raveningly and put on weight.

## **Olympia**

In the summer of the year after Hipparete's child-giving, the Olympic Games were held at Olympia in the Peloponnesos, in the territory of Elis. Alcibiades travelled to the Games by ship, in his trireme. He sailed leisurely. He had planks cut from the deck, and his bed hung from chains under his tent so that he could travel in some comfort. At the games he kept a low profile. He was only a spectator. He watched the Games and noted items to handle for his participation in the next Olympics, in which he planned to be a great victor for Athens.

The Games were heavily guarded. Elis had an issue with Sparta. Spartan hoplites had attacked their Fort Phyrkus, and Sparta had also sent helot hoplites of theirs to Lepreum, to settle there, although Lepreum was an Elean town. The Eleans therefore

refused the Spartans access to the Temple of Zeus at Olympia, and they even refused the Spartans the privilege to sacrifice and to compete in the Games. The Elean army, supported by added Argive and Mantinean hoplite troops and also a few Athenian cavalry were therefore posted in the vicinity of Olympia, in fear of Spartan attacks. The tension in the Peloponnesos rose during the Games when a Boeotian chariot won the race and a man, the owner, crowned the charioteer. The owner was a Spartan however, one Lichas son of Arcesilaus. The Eleans beat up the Spartan. The people present at the Games half expected a sudden invasion by the Spartans. The Spartans did not move however, and the Games passed without further incidents.

After the games, Alcibiades returned to Athens, visiting several smaller towns on his way back.

## **Chapter 12 – Argos, Winter End 420 BC to Summer 416 BC**

### **Argos**

In the winter, the Thessalians won a battle against the Spartans who had settled in Heraclea. The Spartans had colonised the site at the border of Boeotia to spite the Athenians, only a few years before. Later, the Boeotians took over the city, expelling the incompetent Spartan governor Agesipidas. The Spartans were offended, but unable to do anything. They would have to pass through Attica to attack Boeotia, even if in a limited way, and they wanted to keep the Boeotians as their allies.

Alcibiades sensed the weakness in the Spartans. The Spartans had been left isolated in the Peloponnesos, and apparently the Boeotians were not their strongest friends anymore. Who then, besides Corinth and Megara, was still unconditionally allied to Sparta?

He took a small contingent of Athenian hoplites and he sailed with them past the territory of Corinth and Megara. When he landed his triremes, other hoplites and archers from the Athenian allies in the Peloponnesos joined him. With this army, he marched through the land, the first general who dared to make a long military march so near the countries of Corinth and Lacedaemon. Of course, there was peace between Athens and Corinth and Sparta. It was also the first time Alcibiades commanded an army. He walked in front of his hoplites, dressed as a hoplite, with the standard of his command next to him, preceded by the trumpeters of Athens.

When he camped, he received delegates from Elis, Mantinea and Argos, and he discussed with them arrangements of their alliance with Athens. These men considered him as if he was the master of Athens, and he was satisfied.

Alcibiades had only brought a small army, a few hundreds of men, but his presence was a token, a demonstration, maybe even a provocation to Sparta. He showed suddenly to Sparta that Athens had extensive interests in the Peloponnesos. He discussed with generals of the allied democracies, and entertained the men in his large tent. He spoke their language and they had all learned by now in which battles he had fought, in which campaigns he had participated.

Alcibiades arrived at Patrae, setting up camp a few hills away from the city. He entered the town alone, on horseback, and armed with only a sword. He asked respectfully to talk to the magistrates. He explained them he had come in peace. He would not enter the town with his troops. He merely wanted to talk. The men of Patrae felt ill at ease with an Athenian general in their town, but they invited him in nevertheless, and they organised a meeting in a hurry with their own generals. Alcibiades explained to the men why Athens had signed an alliance with Argos. He spoke long and gently. The generals listened politely, but they knew already quite well what had happened with their neighbours. Alcibiades told the generals casually that the town could be surrounded and would then be cut off from supplies over the Sea. He proposed them to build long walls to the port, walls like Athens had towards Piraeus, so that Patrae would be invincible.



Alcibiades's aim was to make Sparta's enemies stronger. The generals agreed. Alcibiades promised to send masons from Athens to help at the work. The Patraeans did not refuse. They thus committed themselves to the project. Alcibiades left in a relaxed atmosphere. He had made new friends and Sparta had lost friends.

From Patrae, Alcibiades moved his men to Rhium in Achaia. He wanted to build an Athenian outpost there. He started to build a fort. His scouts warned him that an important force of hoplites from Corinth and Sicyon was marching against him. He did not want to provoke war, so he moved with his army to Argos. There, he conferred with the Argives how to contain the Corinthians.

The Argives had a dispute with Epidaurus. The Epidaurians had not sent offerings for their grazing land to Apollo Pythaeus, and the Argives were responsible for that temple.

The Argive generals proposed to attack the land of Epidaurus and to gain control if they could of the city. That would keep Corinth busy, and it would also allow Athenian reinforcements to arrive more rapidly from Aegina, following a shorter route than around Scylaeum.

The Argives proposed to attack Epidaurus by themselves on the excuse of taking the payment for the offerings by force. The next day however, the Argives learnt that King Agis of Sparta had marched with his complete army to Leuctra, on the border opposite Mount Lycaeum. Argos was in effervescence, and prepared for a Spartan invasion. But Agis offered sacrifices to Apollo, and as the omens were not favourable, the King returned home to wait for better signs. The Argives were relieved and together with Alcibiades they advanced into the land of Epidaurus, intending to invade and lay waste the country. Alcibiades knew he was stressing the patience of Sparta.

Alcibiades left his army with the Argives and hurried to Mantinea. He asked there to meet representatives from all the Peloponnesian cities not allied directly to Sparta. The Mantinean magistrates organised the meetings splendidly. The discussions took place in a building near the stoa and near the marketplace.

Alcibiades spoke first. He said he had come to bring peace in the Peloponnesos. The alliance of Athens with Argos, Mantinea and Elis was directed at securing this peace. The Corinthian Euphamidos interrupted him, however, stating that Alcibiades's discourse was quite surprising. There was a difference between Alcibiades's words and his deeds. They were all sitting here, he said, talking about peace, and yet Argos was attacking Epidaurus, supported in that by Athenian hoplites. Euphamidos proposed that first the two armies should be separated to keep the peace, and then the talks could continue.

Alcibiades had to agree to the suggestion, and so did the Argives. Ambassadors from Argos and Epidaurus were sent to retire the armies. Then the talks continued.

The disputes between the Corinthians and the Argives were too many and went too deep to be able to be bridged. An agreement could not be reached. Alcibiades sat in the middle of the bickering men, but he could not force them or persuade them to leave some of their interests aside to arrive at a fair deal for both. In secret, Alcibiades called for additional troops from Athens, a thousand hoplites, to sail to the support of Argos if needed.

One morning during the negotiations, Alcibiades stood on the walls of the citadel of Mantinea with Argive generals at his side. The Argives pointed to a man who went outside the gates of the city and then started to run towards the south.

‘Every second morning a Corinthian runner leaves thus southwards, to Sparta,’ an Argive general told. ‘Another one enters the city every other day. Sparta knows day by day what is said in our meetings. Shall we intercept the men and kill them?’ ‘No,’ Alcibiades answered. ‘Let them think we know of nothing. Sparta is allowed to know what we discuss.’

The talks with Corinth and with other Peloponnesian cities turned to nothing. These states were oligarchies. They had a natural aversion to the systems of ruling of Athens and Argos. The towns had a tradition as long-time allies of Sparta. Sparta had never invaded their country and some of their main cult temples were in Lacedaemon. They were all Dorians to the core. The talks with Corinth came to a dead end. The representatives of the cities left Mantinea.

The Argives invaded Epidaurus once more. They began to destroy the countryside systematically. King Agis of Sparta again marched out with his army. The Argives concentrated into one army and the Athenian hoplites joined them. Alcibiades and the Argive generals waited for Agis to advance over the frontier with Argos to call in all the armies of their allies. The Argives waited and waited. Agis did not advance far from Sparta. Scouts arrived with the astonishing message that the Spartans had once more stopped at the borders of Argos and turned back. When that message was delivered, all the Argive generals laughed, roaring, and they let the wine flow. They called Agis a coward. Alcibiades wondered now who and what Agis was. Agis had turned back twice with his entire army, probably because of unfavourable sacrifices. Sacrifices could be made favourable any moment, Alcibiades knew, as well as unfavourable. Agis did not want to fight. Was Agis indeed a coward or was Sparta not ready and divided in opinions?

The Argives feasted for a day. Then they continued to lay waste the land of the Epidaurians. When they had devastated the land, they returned home. The Athenian hoplites were not necessary anymore, and Alcibiades did not want to create the impression to his allies that Athens occupied the land. Alcibiades stayed a few months more in Argos so that he knew by name and face every magistrate, general and commander in the town. In the beginning of autumn, he too returned to Athens.

All during that autumn and winter the skirmishes, ambushes, raids and incursions of the Argives into Epidaurian country continued. Epidaurus and also Sparta were in a latent state of war with Argos, but the Spartans did not move.

Then, suddenly, three hundred Spartan hoplites arrived by ship in Epidaurus. They were led by Agesipidas. The Athenian fleet on that side of the Peloponnesos had been blockading all Spartan traffic by sea, but the Spartan ships were merchant ships, and they slipped past the Athenian triremes at night.

Alcibiades received his Argive friends a few days later in Athens. They complained that Athens had let the Spartans bring reinforcements to Epidaurus. They claimed the treaty stated that both parties would not allow an enemy to pass through its territory, and the Athenians had controlled the Sea.

Alcibiades asked what they wanted. The Argives told they wanted more pressure to be put on Sparta. Alcibiades thought about that, and asked whether the Argives would be satisfied if Athens brought the Messenians back to Pylos, as well as Spartan helots.

The Argives expressed their satisfaction. The Spartans would be occupied by holding their helots from running away and from revolting. The Argives could attack Epidaurus while the Spartans had their hands full with their helots and Pylos.

Alcibiades spoke in the Assembly. He proposed to inscribe on the Laconian stele a phrase that continued the inscription of the treaty with Sparta. The phrase was, 'Sparta has not kept its oaths.'

Nicias could not turn the tide in favour of Sparta. The inscription was chiselled into the pillar beneath the treaty, an insult eternalised in stone to Sparta and to Nicias. Then, Athens gave the order to bring the Messenian warriors back to Pylos, and the helots of Craniai raided the country around Pylos and brought in more helots.

The Spartans fought limited skirmishes in the southern region of the Peloponnesos like a boar fights with wasps. King Agis stayed inside his town. The Argives grew bolder with the day, and they attacked Epidaurus straight on. They tried to storm the town and put their scaling-ladders against the walls. But Agesipidas, who had but few men, fought off the attack and held the town. Epidaurus was too well defended and organised with Spartiate discipline. The Argives had to call off the attack. They returned chastised men, back home with their army.

Until the next summer, the hostilities between Argos and Epidaurus continued on a smaller scale. Alcibiades stayed mostly in Athens, consolidating his support in the Assembly. He sailed regularly in the *Harmonia* to Argos to confer with the generals.

In the middle of the summer, the patience of the Spartans ran out. Epidaurus had been assaulted, other Peloponnesian cities were in open revolt, the Spartan helots became increasingly restless, and the Athenians had re-instated Pylos with Messenians who were hostile to Sparta. The Kings and the ephors saw that they were insulted and stung from every side. It was time for the boar to shed off the wasps with one mighty blow of its claws. There would be no skirmishes anymore.

Agis called the Spartan army together and also all his allied troops. He marched out of the Spartan plain with his hoplites, who all wore proudly the scarlet cloak and the shield with the sign of Lacedaemon. Pipers went in front, and the men advanced on the shrill tunes of war.

With Agis came the Tegean hoplites, trained by Spartans, and the squadrons from Arcadia. Agis even took helot troops with him. The allies from further away had been warned too, and these assembled at Phlius. The Boeotians brought five thousand hoplites, five thousand light troops, five hundred cavalry and five hundred lightly-armed troops that had learned to move with the cavalry. Corinth sent two thousand hoplites. Also the Phliasians, the Pellenians, the Sicyonians and the Megarians dispatched as many men as they could miss.

The Peloponnesos had never seen such a mighty army march through its lands. A major reckoning was on the move. The Spartan army was on its way to Phlius to join its allies. The Argives surmised they had not much chance to defeat these combined forces. They therefore gathered quickly the Mantinean hoplites and three thousand hoplites from Elis. With these, they marched out of their town to confront the Spartans. They found Agis at Methydrium in Arcadia.

Alcibiades and the Athenian Assembly heard soon of the campaign of the Spartan army. Alcibiades immediately sailed to Argos. He had to sail as ambassador, not as

general, because Athens needed time to gather its army, and discussions were still held in the Strategeion on how large this army could be without violating the treaty with Sparta. Alcibiades chuckled. He argued that any army sent to Argos, however small, was a breach of the treaty, but he said the treaty had no value anymore in view of the developments in the Peloponnesos. The generals continued to reflect, but Alcibiades sailed off.

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While he was in Argos, Alcibiades received a letter from Euryptolemus.

*Alcibiades,*

*I send you hereby my greetings and news from Athens as well as from your house. I have sad news.*

*Hipparete had a very difficult childbirth. She gave birth to a daughter. But she was very weak afterwards. When the time came we called a midwife, a doctor and also Socrates, as you had instructed us. Hipparete gave birth in the evening. The midwife delivered the child, but she had a hard work at it. At the end, Socrates helped too, and the midwife told us later that she would have abandoned the child and the job had Socrates not been there. Together they delivered the child, a strong and tall child, but it was all covered up by the blood of its mother. Her womb must have broken. When Socrates came in the room where we all sat waiting, expecting good news, he said he feared for the mother.*

*The child was fine and well in limbs and chest, but she was not in good health. Hipparete also remained weak. She lost blood continuously. A few days later, the child died, and that saddened Hipparete extremely. After ten days, she sank in a deep sleep and she succumbed two days later. Neither Socrates nor the doctors could do more for Hipparete than what we all had done. Socrates would not be consoled for the loss of mother and child. We are very sorry for the sad news that I have to announce to you. We are sure the gods will accompany Hipparete to the underworld so that she might dwell in Elysium and care for the young Cleinias. Maybe the child called her to him.*

*We have provided for a fine funeral and invited all of our acquaintances to accompany her to her resting place on earth.*

*Your obedient servant and cousin,  
Euryptolemus son of Peisianax*

Alcibiades read the letter without emotions for his wife. He had not loved Hipparete. She had been a means to augment his fortune and his standing. She had been a faithful wife and he had been grateful for that. She had kept the house in Athens in good order and he had been on good terms with her in the end. He had experienced with her some of his wilder sex, and she had liked what would in other circumstances have been

called raping. He had possessed her physically, but he would not miss the mistress. He was sorry for the child. He would have liked to be father of one more daughter. He was father of an heir by Hipparete, father of Young Alcibiades, of a legitimate child born from an Athenian woman. He had enough. He would not have to re-marry. And Theodote sufficed for the moment for the tenderness and loving care. Theodote was Athenian too. Who knows, he might marry Theodote one day like Pericles had married Aspasia.

### **King Agis**

The Argive army settled on a hill in front of Agis's army and they brought their phalanxes in battle order. The Argive generals feared not to confront the best army in the world. They thought they could fight better, and they had the courage of lions. During the night, Agis broke camp. He brought his army away, in the direction of Phlius. When in the morning the Argives noticed that the Spartans had disappeared, they cheered. Agis had been afraid of the Argive army! They marched rapidly to the road to Nemea, from which they expected the Spartan and maybe also the allied armies to descend from the mountains into the plain of the land of Argolis. But Agis took another road over narrow paths in the mountains, and he marched with his own hoplites right into the plain on the very road to Argos. He had a large army, for also the Epidaurians had joined him. The Phliasians, Corinthians and Pellenians marched by another mountain road. The Boeotians, Megarians and Sicyonians entered the plain indeed by the road of Nemea.

The Argives were not aware of all these movements. They were unaware that they were surrounded on all sides by mighty armies that marched towards them. Whatever army the Argives might attack, another enemy army would fall in their backs, and they would be crushed, escape impossible. Agis had outwitted them.

Agis advanced slowly in the Argive plain and he devastated Saminthus and other settlements. The Argive generals were frustrated and angry about this, so they decided to attack Agis head-on. While they marched, they encountered the first troops of the Corinthians and the Phliasians and they delivered a minor battle, which they neither won nor lost but in which more of their men were killed and wounded than of their adversaries. The Corinthians withdrew, not wanting to bear the grunt of a major battle alone. The Argives continued away from the mountains and found the Spartans on the road to Argos.

The two armies formed their phalanxes in three wings each, ready to give battle. The Megarians, Sicyonians and Boeotians marched down the Nemean road until they saw in the far the Spartan and Argive armies confronting each other. The three armies of Agis had concentrated, two of them in the backs of the Argives. The Argives had no cavalry, for the Athenians had promised those but the Athenians had not yet arrived. They had no rapid scouting parties.

In front of them, blocking the road to their town, stood the Spartan army. On the hills above them, refusing escape to the mountains, ran the Corinthians, Phliasians and Pellenians. From the direction of Nemea arrived the Boeotians, Sicyonians and Megarians.

The Argives were still unaware of the danger. They thought they had caught the Spartans between their town and their army. They had trapped the Spartans, they surmised.

Two Argives started to think, then. They reflected on the results of a Spartan defeat. They did not want Sparta defeated. They thought about the consequences of an Argive defeat. They did not want Argos to be destroyed. These men were the general Thrasyllus and the proxenos of Sparta in Argos, Alciphron, who was also with the Argive army. Thrasyllus had the command of the army. He stopped the men and went forward with Alciphron to hold a conference with Agis.

Agis saw the two magistrates march towards his army. He suspected they wanted to negotiate, probably to surrender graciously. The men were brought to him behind the Spartan lines. King Agis stood in full armour, long hair waving in the wind of the hill. He held his shield and spear in his hands. He stood, legs slightly opened, fixed as if to show the Argives that the Spartans had come to take possession of the lands of Argos. He was a magnificent man, tall and lean, strongly muscled and with a beautiful, very masculine face, a fine athlete. The two Argives were impressed by his royal posture. Spartan, Epidaurian and Arcadian commanders stood around him, fully armed and looking arrogantly at the Argives.

The Argives spoke out with unquivering voices, however. They proposed the Spartan King not to deliver battle. They said Argos was prepared to accept fair arbitration for any complaint the Spartans had against Argos. They proposed to hold a truce to work this out and to conclude a peace treaty. Agis thought for a few moments, and then he told his commanders to step back. With only one commander of Sparta beside him, he spoke for a long time with the Argive representatives. The Argives pleaded that many men would die needlessly that day, for they were prepared to accept the Spartans' conditions of peace. Agis reproached the Argives for their incursions in Epidaurian land, and he said the Argives could not longer provoke and insult Sparta this way. Alciphron answered Argos would comply with arbitrations on the issues that Sparta would bring forward. He assured Agis that they could come to an agreement. Agis believed the Argives. He saw the fear in the men's eyes, the fear he also had known before battles, and he thought that Argos might truly have been impressed by the might that the Spartans had brought to the field. He could win all for what he had marched for without a battle.

King Agis decided to act like a wise man. He agreed on a truce of four months. He said the Argives had these four months to come to an agreement with Sparta. If in this period no peace treaty had been accepted by the Argives, he assured the men he would be back, with even more hoplites and cavalry than they saw now and he promised he would then offer no pity.

The Argives accepted, and they returned in high spirits to their army. Thrasyllus ordered the return to Argos.

Agis thereafter commanded his armies to break their phalanxes and to walk off. He declined to answer to the protests of his allied generals. He took no one in confidence of his reasons, and it took quite some more time to his commanders to force their men to comply with Agis's orders. The armies left the plain of Argos. The Argives marched unharmed to their town.

Alcibiades was in Argos. He stood on the walls of the city, and he saw the hoplites come back in close ranks. He saw the columns of dust rising in the sky. He was astonished to see them arrive so rapidly. He thought that the Argives had won the

battle at a hurry, but deep inside his mind he knew that was impossible. What had happened? He was amazed. When the first troops arrived closer to the walls, he saw no signs of battle on the men. He saw no wounds, no fatigue of fighting. He understood that no battle had taken place. Had the Argive army escaped and entered the city now for a long siege? The Spartans did not like laying siege to a city. He was afraid of the consequences of the Argives leaving the battle field.

The Argive army did not enter the city, for that was contrary to the laws of the town. It halted some distance from the walls, at a temple precinct called the Charadrus. That was the place where the results of an expedition had to be discussed before any Argive army was allowed to enter the city again.

Alcibiades hurried out of the gates of the town with the representatives of the Council. He noticed the silence in the hoplites, the grim, sometimes relieved but mostly angry faces. What had happened? He ran to the site where the generals had assembled. The five generals started to report to the Council. Two generals spoke out alternatively before the people. A large crowd had amassed in front of the place, of hoplites and citizens. Every word that was said was repeated to the masses, whispered from mouth to ear, from man to man.

The generals reported that Thrasyllus and Alciphron had negotiated on their own initiative with King Agis and called off the battle. Thrasyllus was called forward. He explained how he had taken the initiative to ask for a truce so that the sons of Argos would be spared a costly defeat. He told that the Spartans would listen to Argos' complaints and that together they could secure peace in the Peloponnesos.

The Argive Council and the people were offended and scandalised. They cried it was better to die for freedom and honour than to be the slaves of Sparta. Thrasyllus had no authority to negotiate in the name of the people of Argos. The men dragged Thrasyllus out of the Charadrus. The people began to throw stones at him. The general ran away under a shower of stones. The stones hit him on the head, and he bled from many wounds. He stumbled into the temple of Apollo. He escaped from being killed by the mob by hiding inside the temple, taking refuge behind the altar. The people in their anger pursued him even further than the gates of the building, but stopped once inside. There and then, the other generals and the magistrates of Argos sentenced Thrasyllus with banishment and with confiscation of his properties in Argos.

The truce with Sparta had been concluded by two leading men of Argos. The arrangement could not be so easily undone. Alcibiades agreed with the other Argive generals that the treaty had not been concluded in consent of the Argive people, not formally accepted by Argos. No oaths had been taken except by Thrasyllus and Alciphron. The treaty had not been signed according to the laws of Argos. Argos was therefore not legally bound by the treaty.

Alcibiades reflected on what he really wanted to accomplish in the Peloponnesos. Did he want war with Sparta or peace among the cities here? He was in a quandary.

An end to the hostilities would mean that an alliance with Sparta would be negotiated by Argos, effectively annihilating the effect of the treaty Argos had with Athens. The new alliance would engage also Argos' allies, the Mantineans and the Eleans, for these could not separately refuse. The result would be disastrous for him. The treaty signed with Athens would be without value.

The alliance with Sparta would bring peace in the Peloponnesos, or at least rest of hostilities. Sparta could thrive by trade with the lands around Lacedaemon and direct

her interests again to Athens and Attica. It could count on Argos' hoplites and on Argos' ships. The Argives had a more than excellent army of Dorian hoplites. The men were of better quality, more disciplined and tougher from the constant strife with their neighbours than currently the Athenian citizen-hoplites. A joined Corinthian-Argive fleet was not a threat to Athens' triremes, but it was a beginning. Sparta would have a formidable army of allies, and it could bring that army any time in the field against Athens. Even if it did not, the Athenian Assembly would believe so. Alcibiades's politics in the Peloponnesos were ruined. Nicias would put him to the stake in the Assembly.

What would happen if the Argives refused to honour the truce? Alcibiades was fairly certain that the provocations of Argos, Mantinea and Elis to Sparta would continue. The war would ultimately lead to a battle. Three times now, Agis had marched and returned without giving battle. Alcibiades thought that Agis was unsure of his abilities to lead in battle. He was unwilling to risk precious Spartiate lives until he was sure he could win at little expense. Agis feared the Argives more than he feared the Athenians. Argos had defeated Sparta before. Moreover, Alcibiades knew that Sparta was dying, slowly but surely. Endius had let him understand that. Every year there were less Spartans of the highest class, and their ranks were not renewed, or not renewed fast enough. They had not enough children. Every young Spartan hoplite killed meant a family line ended.

Yes, Agis wanted to spare Sparta. But he would have to react sooner or later to the provocations. Sparta could not forever tolerate being stung from all sides in its own territories. It would have to attack again, massively, with all the combined might of its allies. There would be a very great battle. The battle could be won or lost.

What if the battle was won? Then Sparta would be finished. It would be only a shadow of itself. Probably hundreds of Spartans would be killed on the battle field when they tried to escape. The Spartiates would not try to escape! They would stand to the last man and withdraw only on orders given, in full remaining phalanxes that would be harassed all the way back to Sparta. Argos had to have cavalry for that. Corinth would be defeated too. The Spartan alliance would be no more. The Dorian colonies in the Aegean would fall in the hands of Athens.

Athens would lose nothing in having the Peloponnesian armies clash. Athens would have to engage some men, at the most a few thousand hoplites, as a token of its support of the treaty with Argos. It should not send a large contingent of hoplites, so that it could not be accused by Sparta of having broken its oaths of Nicias's alliance. Anyhow, Nicias would make sure in Athens that not a large number of troops would be sent to Argos, and Alcibiades would not be able to curb the opinion of the Assembly to an open war with Sparta. Alcibiades would not win much political advantage for himself, however. He was merely the ambassador of Athens; he could not lead the Athenian army. Still, he would receive a due in the victory, and be present at the triumph.

What would happen if the Argives lost? Not much more would happen than if there was no battle at all! A treaty would be sworn between Argos and its allies, and Sparta. That alliance would have been forced at the point of a javelin and the Argive Council, the Mantineans and the Eleans would hate the Spartans for it. A state of hostility would continue with Sparta, which Alcibiades could entice and feed with suspicions and intrigues. Alcibiades was the ambassador, not the general of Athens here. It was not he who would lose. Sparta would be weakened by a major battle. So many young



Spartiates would be killed, that it would have to lick its wounds for at least ten years. Alcibiades admired the Argive and Mantinean army. He was certain that the Argives would do much damage to the allied Spartan armies even if they lost. So, what was the conclusion? Peace or war or something in between? No, something in between was impossible: ignoring the truce would lead to war anyway.

Alcibiades chose war. He chose war and the battle, because if the battle was won the rewards were huge and if the battle was lost the situation would not be much worse off than it was now. Damned Thrasyllus and Alciphron! For now, under the truce, Argos was forced by honour anyhow to conclude a peace treaty with Sparta. This was no gamble. It was implacable logic. He had to choose war. No alternative was left.

### **Mantineia**

A few days later, while Alcibiades was still thinking about the situation he was in, the Athenian army arrived in the harbour of Argos. The Athenians were led by Laches and Nicostratus. These had been appointed to be the generals to lead the expedition. They were co-generals of Alcibiades, but Nicias had made sure that Alcibiades could not lead this campaign. Laches and Nicostratus were in command, Alcibiades was ambassador only. He could not lead the troops.

Laches arrived with a thousand hoplites and three hundred cavalry. This was a considerable contingent, but not nearly large enough to be of decisive influence in the battle to come. Alcibiades knew that fifteen times or twenty times more men at least would be in the field on each side. Athens had underestimated the numbers that Sparta's allies could bring to battle. He said nothing of that to the Athenian generals, however. He welcomed them as liberators of the country.

When the Athenian reinforcements set up camp outside Argos, the Argives bade the Athenians to go away, to return home. They were still reluctant to break the peace with Sparta. Alcibiades remarked with a grim that although the Argives had tried to stone Thrasyllus, they seemed now relieved to evade battles. The Argives did not allow Alcibiades to speak out before the people of Argos, in fear of being called cowards in public.

Alcibiades spoke to the members of the Argive Council in private. He spoke to the Eighty and to the members of the Artynae. He spoke to the Demiurgi of Mantineia and to the Polemarchs of Elis that were in Argos. The Mantineans and Eleans were scandalised. These men had towns in their territories occupied by Spartans. They wanted to continue the war. They felt stronger with the Athenian hoplites among their armies, and they did not want to show fear to the Athenians. Alcibiades hinted to some men that more troops might arrive from Athens.

The Mantineans and Eleans told the Argives they could win any war together. They forced the Argive Council to accept to let Alcibiades speak to the people. They compelled the Eighty of Argos to agree to hear Alcibiades, the Athenian ambassador. At the firm entreaty of their allies, the Argives allowed Alcibiades to address the people.

Alcibiades spoke to the assembled people of Argos in a place below the Larisa citadel of the town. He began by reminding the citizens of the Argolid that the Argives were the brave descendants of brave men. He spoke of their founder Inachus, the river-god, the son of the Titans Oceanus and Thetys, and of his son Phoroneus, after whom the

town was called for a while. Were not all the Argives Inachids, descended from the Titans, who had ruled on earth even before the gods? The Argives were a proud and strong people. Then he spoke of Thrasyllus and Alciphron. He said these traitors to the Argive people had concluded in their personal name only an unlawful truce with Sparta, making promises that insulted the Argive people. He showed the Athenian generals, and pleaded that these veterans should not be sent back now that they had arrived with such a considerable force, which proved Athens' commitment to its allies. He lauded the qualities of the Argive army, the courage of the Mantineans and of the Elean hoplites. He told that these men were invincible and would fight like lions in battle. They could easily defeat the Corinthians and Epidaurians and the lesser city-states of the Peloponnesos. Then they could concentrate on the Spartans. Were the Spartans not cowards who had run away three times already? Did the Argives fear Agis who had turned round three times, and who did not dare to fight the Argives? Where was the honour of Argos?

The Mantinean and Elean generals were present during Alcibiades's speech. They too spoke out and agreed immediately for the continuance of the war and for breaking the truce. The Argives accepted reluctantly.

After the meeting, the Mantineans, Eleans and Athenians organised their armies for a campaign, and they marched against Orchomenus in Arcadia. The Argives lingered and delayed, but after a few days they too joined their allies.

Alcibiades stood once more on the highest point of the Larisa to see the armies march off in long rows, on towards Orchomenus. He would have liked to lead these armies to victory! He thought he knew how to handle the Spartan hoplite ranks. He could crush with his hoplites the allied troops of the Spartan league, while continuing to contain the Spartans with cavalry and peltasts. The light troops could harass constantly the Spartan hoplites with arrows, slings and javelins, in the same way Demosthenes had done at Sphacteria and in the manner that Clearidas had downed the last Athenian resistance at Amphipolis.

He told Laches that battles were not won against the Spartans the Spartan way. Laches, however, did not want to discuss his tactics with Alcibiades. He still considered Alcibiades his junior, the commander who had served under him for years. Alcibiades was a commander with nice ideas, but Laches knew what to do. Laches was of the opinion that Alcibiades did not know how to make quick decisions in the battle field, in the heat of the moment, and that was when battles were won, he said. No, argued Alcibiades, battles were won before the battles started. But Laches shrugged off Alcibiades, and he argued, grinning, that an ambassador should have confidence in his generals.

Laches refused to listen further. He made his preparations, and the armies marched away.

Alcibiades waited on the Larisa, wringing his hands in despair.

Orchomenus was assaulted and captured by storm. The allies discussed where to attack next. The Mantineans wanted to advance on Tegea, the Eleans however to Lepreum. The Argives and Athenians were in favour of Tegea, for a party of democrats there schemed to help the allies and hand over the town to them. The votes went for Tegea, but the Eleans were angry that the allies had not voted to liberate Lepreum. They left the armies and returned home.

After the four months of truce, and after the taking of Orchomenus, the Spartans heard of the dangers that loomed over Tegea. The oligarchs there warned the Spartans that Tegea might go over to the Argive alliance if the Spartans did not react quickly.

The Spartans, led once again by King Agis, but with ten Spartiates of the commander class as advisors, left Sparta with all the Spartiates, perioecic hoplites and helots he could muster. He appealed to all the Spartan allies too. The Arcadian allies marched immediately with him and also the Boeotians, Corinthians, Phocians and Locrians were asked to send their troops to Mantinea.

The Spartans advanced to a Temple of Heracles in Mantinea, and there they formed their battle order.

The Argives and Mantineans arrived in front of the Spartan ranks, and the two armies stood threateningly against each other.

Agis wanted to hold a battle there and then, but later it became known that one of the older men of the Spartan army had shouted to Agis that the Argives occupied a very strong position, and he reproached Agis of wanting to cure one evil with another. The man meant that Agis should not have to make up for his previous errors and hesitations by now, at Mantinea, endeavouring to attack at the wrong moment and at the wrong place. Agis had looked at the man in astonishment, then with gratitude, and he had led his army away.

The Argives were angry to see the Spartans move off. The generals led the army down their strong position on the hill they had held, and they camped between the mountains and the Temple of Heracles.

The Spartans returned the next day, believing that the Argives had also turned back. They were surprised to find the Argives still in their way. The two armies quickly formed their battle phalanxes and stood ready for an engagement.

The left wing of the Spartans was formed by the Sciritae, the mountain warriors that always accompanied Spartan armies. To their right stood the hoplites who had been with Brasidas in Thrace, as well as other freed helots. In the middle stood the Spartiate regiments. The right wing of Agis's army was formed by the Arcadians from Heraea, the Maenalians and further to the right stood the Tegeans. At every end waited a few Spartiate hoplites, as well as the Spartan cavalry.

On the side of the Argives, the right wing was held by the Mantineans, who thus faced the Sciritae. In the middle fought the allies from Arcadia and the Argive hoplites. To the left of these stood first the Cleomaeans and the Orneans, and at the extreme left stood the Athenians with their cavalry, facing the Tegeans.

The two armies almost matched in numbers. The phalanxes were generally eight men deep.

A very major battle was to be fought at Mantinea among the Peloponnesian peoples.

Alcibiades grabbed a horse, and he galloped to Mantinea to watch closer to the battlefield. He stood on top of the walls of the city's gate and he looked in the direction of the battlefield, hearing its thunder.

Late in the afternoon, he saw the first allied troops reach the town. They were not the fine ranks he had seen when the warriors returned from the aborted battle before Argos. The men came in little groups, then in larger teams. They had run and were exhausted. They were covered with dust, sweat and wounds. Some of the men supported others who had it difficult to walk.

Alcibiades knew then that the Argives had lost the battle.

Soon, he could distinguish a sizable group of Athenians. He took his horse and rode out of the city to hear what had happened. The Athenians stopped outside the city, close to its walls, near the river, and they were lying down there, resting in the sand and on the rocks. Alcibiades dismounted near them and talked to an commander. The man told him, panting, how the battle had fared.

The Mantineans had defeated the Sciritae and part of the Spartans first, but the picked Spartiate troops in the middle had forced through the centre of the Argives and also broken the Argive left wing. The Argive centre and left wing had not withstood even the first shock, which had been so terrible that no army on earth except another Spartiate army could have resisted.

The Athenians were surrounded on all sides by the enemy, but their cavalry had helped them escape.

Then, Agis had seen that his left wing was being threatened and he had ordered the rest of his army to fall on the Mantineans. That offered time for the Argives and Athenians to escape.

Many Mantineans were killed that day, but the main troops of the Argives and Athenians could get away. The allies of Athens had more than a thousand men killed, among whom the two Athenian generals. Laches had been stabbed in the back as he fled from the battle-field. The Spartans had almost three hundred hoplites killed, and their allies together about the same number.

The Argives and their allies were lucky, for the following days the Spartans had to feast their utmost important Carnean Festival, so the Spartan army returned to Sparta instead of marching on and attacking Argos.

The news was devastating for Alcibiades. All the blood left his face when he heard of the defeat, and he began to tremble. He grabbed his hair with both hands and tore. He cursed by all the gods of Olympus. He turned his back to the commander without thanking the man, and he started to walk, but he had it difficult to see clearly.

The defeat had been total for the allies of Argos. Argos would have to make a deal with Sparta now, for nothing would stop the Spartans from coming back after their festival to lay waste the plains of Argos and Mantinea. The Argives and Mantineans were still able to confront the Spartans, but they would abjectly crawl on their knees and beg for an alliance with Sparta. They would accept almost any Spartan demand. Alcibiades's role in the Peloponnesos was practically at an end.

On the day before the battle of Mantinea, the Epidaurians took the occasion to take revenge for the Argive incursions into their land. In their turn they attacked the Argolis that had been left undefended. But three thousand hoplites from Elis arrived at Mantinea, as well as a thousand more Athenians who had been sent as reinforcements but who had arrived too late for the battle of Mantinea.

Alcibiades cried out in despair, for had these forces arrived only a few days earlier, they might have pushed the balance of strength in favour of the Argives and their allies. Alcibiades ordered these new troops to face the Epidaurians while the Spartans were celebrating their Carnean festival. The troops pushed back the Epidaurian army. Then, the Athenians built a strong wall around the town of Epidaurus. When the wall was built, the Eleans returned home, but the Athenian hoplites garrisoned the fortifications so that Epidaurus was confined. The Argive people were grateful for that to Alcibiades.

A little later, after the Carnean Festival, the Spartan army marched out of its town again. This was at the beginning of the winter, in the late autumn season. The army halted at Tegea and sent representatives to Argos to demand negotiations over the disputes. The Spartans ephors sent Lichas son of Arcesilaus, their proxenos for Argos, to discuss terms of surrender and alliance.

Alcibiades was in Argos at that time, and he took part in the meetings. He could delay for some time any decision. The pro-Spartan party had of course grown stronger in Argos, and dared to challenge openly now the treaty with Athens. The Argives had lost enough men and enough courage, enough faith in their own strength, and enough confidence in their allies, to doubt that they could withstand the Spartans in another battle. They were uncertain about Athens. Athens was far away. Troops of Athens had arrived too late to protect Argos. The Argives feared Sparta more than ever. The Argive spirit of resistance was broken and Sparta seemed to offer peace.

Alcibiades could not persuade the Argives to continue war. In a final Assembly, the Argive people voted to accept the peace overtures of Sparta. The ephor Lichas negotiated a peace treaty with Argos. The treaty stated also that if the Athenians refused to leave the fortifications they had built at Epidaurus, they should be called enemies of Argos and of Sparta together. And that would mean the end to the peace of Nicias. Alcibiades could not risk that at this moment. He agreed to withdraw the Athenian forces from Epidaurus.

Later, as representatives of Sparta and Argos continued to hold talks, the Argives and the Spartans agreed on a peace alliance for fifty years. It was a pact of mutual non-aggression. The states agreed to settle their disputes in peace, and in a fair way.

Alcibiades had agreed to draw back the Athenian hoplites from Epidaurus, but he had committed to no date. The Argives ignored him, sending a delegation to Athens to demand the withdrawal of the Athenian troops. The Argive ambassadors persuaded the Athenian Assembly.

The Assembly sent Demosthenes, the general, to lead the return of the Athenian army from Epidaurus. Demosthenes succeeded in bringing the Athenians back unharmed. Athens then even renewed the old treaty of peace they had with Epidaurus. These events were insults to Alcibiades – at least so he felt about them. All that time he remained sulking in Argos.

A joint army of Sparta and Argos then threatened Sicyon and installed an oligarchic government in that town. In Argos too, an oligarchy would rule the city and its democratic party was suppressed. Alcibiades was not welcome anymore in Argos. He returned to Athens.

His position in Athens was weakened by the events in the Peloponnesos, but his reputation remained intact. He went to the Assembly meetings, but played a more humble role for a while, the attentive spectator more than the mover of people and activities.

### **Ostracism**

In the beginning of that year, after the Battle of Mantinea, Alcibiades attended as many Assembly meetings as he could. He was physically present at the meetings, but not always was he truly listening to the long discourses of the orators. He found most subjects just boring day-to-day management topics of the city.

At one of those assemblies he stood particularly drowsy, for he had attended a very boisterous symposium the night before in the house of one his friends, the metic Pulytion. Pulytion was incredibly rich and incredibly cunning. Pulytion was a guy who could make silver coins out of every undertaking. Alcibiades used Pulytion for his connections in the Ionian cities of Asia and beyond the Hellespont. Pulytion's symposiums were strange, and sometimes wild affairs, in which Hellenic traditions were mixed with oriental religious ceremonies. Adoring foreign gods was not a crime in Athens, and ceremonies to other gods were quite well tolerated but an Athenian admiring foreign gods would have raised more than one eyebrow in the polis. The danger and the daring of Pulytion's symposiums appealed to Alcibiades, though. He had not slept much the last night.

His attention in the Assembly was raised when he heard his name mentioned. He stood behind a group of men and he advanced in front to hear what was happening. When he had clearly heard a few phrases of the orator, a man named Hyperbolus, his mouth widened from astonishment. The guy was actually calling a procedure of ostracism against him!

Alcibiades could not recall when ostracism had been applied for the last time in Athens, but it must have been more than twenty years ago. Still, Hyperbolus was holding a long discourse on the dangers of wealthy, extravagant, brilliant manipulators of public opinion, naming Alcibiades, and asking for an ostracism vote at one of the next meetings on the Pnyx. In ostracism, the people would be invited to inscribe the name of a popular man on a potsherd. With enough votes on the potsherds, the man named would be banished from the town. Ostracism was an old habit, installed to prevent someone from becoming too popular or too damaging for the polis and to prevent new tyranny.

Hyperbolus was a toad really, a person of gaudy character, with no future of his own, boring and without imagination, a fool who had not succeeded the last years to gain any function of importance in the polis. He regularly proposed his candidature, but few citizens had voted their confidence in him. Hyperbolus had not succeeded in much in Athens, but he could exercise quite some influence. He was one of the best orators of Athens, and a well-known democrat. He was not just a democrat. He was an extreme democrat, always nagging at people with the virtues of popular vote. He had ambition, but he had been thwarted in his ambitions. To Alcibiades, this man was an arrogant, incompetent fool, and most of the Athenians saw Hyperbolus like that, but the man was envious and he proposed a sentence of ten years of banishment on Alcibiades. Hyperbolus was one of the loudest men in the political club of the extreme democrats. He could count on the support of his hetaira. Once proposed, the calumny reached home, and for an Athens avid of sensation the opportunity to calumniate a person of authority was always a welcome diversion. Alcibiades risked ten years of banishment from Athens.

Alcibiades reacted before the proposal could be fully accepted. He said there were other people popular in Athens on who might befall ostracism. He named Nicias and Phaeax, and added the name of the fine Hyperbolus for good measure.

The first two names fell in terrible silence in the Assembly, for Nicias was more than a war hero. He was the saviour of Athens. Phaeax was one of the leaders of the aristocratic, yet democratic party. Alcibiades had named two fine democrats, though one, Phaeax, among the most arrogant aristocratic new men. Phaeax son of

Erasistratos had been named in earlier trials. He had been an ambassador in Sicily. He was not a good orator but he worked often in the background, preferring to talk directly, in private, to people.

Somebody then jumped in three quick paces to stand next to Alcibiades, pitched him in the arm and drew him around. Alcibiades had seen who it was, feigned to twist his feet, but let him be drawn through the crowd. The people laughed while they let the men pass. The herald on the bema announced an ostracism session to be held, soon, on the named persons. A very surprised Nicias looked over his shoulder, still clutching Alcibiades.

They went down the Pnyx and when they were almost alone, Nicias hissed, 'Alcibiades, you fool! What have you done? Don't you know that I control the most important hetaira of the Assembly? We will vote against you, put your name on every one of our potsherds! This time you are done for. You're going to be banished!' 'Oh, oh, what have I done, what have I done,' Alcibiades wailed. 'Was that your idea to use ostracism to get me out of the way, Nicias? Oh yes, I can see it well now! Your powerful party will put my name on the potsherds. And Phaeax's party will do that too!'

Nicias looked at Alcibiades as if he had suddenly seen a bigger fool yet than he had ever thought Alcibiades to be.

'Yet,' Alcibiades continued, 'The Athenians love you, don't they Nicias? How many nice, innocent souls will put your name on the potsherds so that you might know they love you indeed? Oh, of course, the nice ones you control won't do that. We all know they will scratch the name of Alcibiades! Still, they being so nice, they might also just want to spite that outrageously aristocratic Phaeax, who despises them and not the name of Alcibiades. How many will be confused? I can hear them already! Should we put on our potsherd the name of Nicias or of Phaeax, popular or un-popular? My, my, isn't that an interesting situation that developed here? How many names of Nicias and Phaeax will be written? Why, Alcibiades's name may well be forgotten on those potsherds! I must tell the people quickly how nice you are, Nicias! Let me be going. I'll start right away'.

Nicias was extremely wealthy. Few people only knew where his wealth came from and envied him. He was a pious man, but sometimes he was too pious. He had reproached many of his fellowmen for a life that was not very respectful of religion. People didn't like to be scorned in public. Nicias was not so sure people would vote on somebody else because they liked him. He saw now that many would vote for him because he was popular, and many others because they envied him. Too many would engrave his name on the ceramics, to see him out of their way in Athens.

Alcibiades was also not without hesitation. His two grandfathers, his grandfather on his father's side and his grandfather on his mother's side, Alcibiades and Megacles, had been ostracised. Many people in Athens still remembered that. He feared that some people in Athens resented and envied his boldness and exuberance. The people who disliked his extravagant way of living and those who were jealous of him might reproach him for that and, engrave his name on the potsherds. Six thousand votes would be needed for someone to be ostracised. The simple strategy of Alcibiades was to dilute the votes.

Nicias moved a step closer to Alcibiades, and Alcibiades feared the man was going to knock him down. Nicias came very close to Alcibiades's face and said in as low a

voice as could possibly come out of his throat, ‘so what are we going to do about this mess?’

‘Aha,’ Alcibiades exclaimed. ‘We could ask of course both our parties to vote for Phaeax and eliminate him from Athens for a few years. But that would not be nice, wouldn’t it? After all, you need the good support of Phaeax, for he holds democracy high among the old aristocracy, where you have no footing. What could we really do indeed?’

‘You know damn well what we should do,’ Nicias whispered.

‘Yes,’ Alcibiades whispered back in Nicias’s left ear. ‘And you know it too, don’t you? All our parties, including the one of Phaeax vote for Hyperbolus! We arrange it to call to all who want to hear it that Hyperbolus is really the most popular man of Athens! Even the nice citizens who love you will find that the finest joke of the year played on any Athenian citizen, won’t they?’

Nicias smiled. He said, ‘done! Will you keep your side of the agreement?’

‘I always keep my promises, Nicias,’ Alcibiades assured him. ‘But how will I be sure that you keep your word?’

Nicias seethed, but he had an answer ready. ‘We tell what is going to happen to your friend Socrates and we allow him therefore to call any of the two of us a liar if he doesn’t keep his word. That is a contract.’

‘Done,’ Alcibiades agreed.

He cried loudly, ‘Socrates, will you come over here?’

The ostracism session was scheduled for the next day. Contrary to usual Assembly meetings, ostracism proceedings were held in the agora. Wooden barriers delimited the marketplace, but were ten gates had been left open in the barriers, one gate for each tribe of Athens. The men poured inside the marketplace. The Scythian archers did not have to push the men inside. Six thousand potsherds were necessary for an ostracism vote, but many more men wanted to participate in the voting, relishing the excitement of a scandal.

The magistrates, archons, generals, judges, every important man of Athens stood around the orator’s place. The herald called out that an ostracism vote was going to be held. Potsherds were handed over, but it seemed that most of the people already had such a piece of pottery pre-engraved at hand.

Hyperbolus stood beaming in the midst of the magistrates. He had called this meeting, so he stood at the place of honour. This was his great day of triumph. Alcibiades would be banished today and he, Hyperbolus, would have saved Athens from a tyrant-to-be! His name would be famous for ages in the city!

The herald allowed time for everybody to make his choice. Then he ordered the potsherds to be brought forward. The Scythian guards and judges watched to make sure that no one cheated by coming twice, or throwing more than one potsherd. In the end, a large pile of potsherds accumulated a larger one still and a third about as large, plus a huge, fourth pile.

As the piles grew, the herald pronounced the names that corresponded to the piles. There was a large pile of votes for Phaeax, a larger one for Alcibiades and one about as large for Nicias. But the huge pile, many times higher than all the piles combined, surprisingly, was on the name of Hyperbolus!

Everybody looked at Hyperbolus. The man never expected to see his own name come up. The stewards of the Assembly counted the potsherds in the largest pile, and more



than six thousand votes had been cast on the name of Hyperbolus. The Scythian guards grabbed Hyperbolus at the shoulders and the Assembly roared with laughter, at the biggest joke of the last twenty years, as a totally flabbergasted Hyperbolus was taken away from the agora to be banned from Athens for the next ten years.

That spring, both Alcibiades and Nicias were elected generals. The people however, after having finished laughing at Hyperbolus, who had travelled to the island of Samos in exile, remained not too well pleased. The venerated procedure of ostracism had been diverted by the tricks of the parties, and made a joke of. The Athenian citizens venerated their traditions and the law system of their polis. The vote had been delivered, however.

Socrates muttered that democracy had left with Hyperbolus.

There would be no more ostracism procedure in Athens after Hyperbolus' departure. The system of ostracism had had its time.

That same evening, Alcibiades, Pulytion and Axiochus sat together at a symposium, a bowl of wine in their hands.

'You solved that issue neatly,' Pulytion started.

'What issue?' Alcibiades asked innocently. 'I did nothing special!'

'Of course not,' Axiochus smiled. 'Watch out, however! Attacks like this one are just the first. They are signs that your position is not as strong as we think. Watch out for those extreme democrats and agrarians! Something is brewing. Those men never participate in the war, they are never generals, they are no merchants, and so they are bored and foment intrigues. You draw their attention like a glow-worm in the night. You think they resemble slow, heavy, stupid bears, but if ever your position gets weakened, they will transform into a pack of wolves, bite at you from all sides and devour you.'

Alcibiades nodded, 'well, I shall just have to remain strong then, shan't I?'

He turned away from Axiochus, but he remained uneasy afterwards.

## **Democratic Argos**

Alcibiades was again elected general for that year, but he had had to control everybody he could reach to be chosen. He had to plead, beg, exert power, and bribe. Then he returned to Argos. He had a job to finish there, he thought.

In his absence, the democrats of Argos had re-formed a party, and these men met Alcibiades in secret. He told them to have patience, but they schemed together to gain control of the city. They waited until the Spartans feasted their Gymnopaedic Festival, a moment at which no Spartan army could be assembled to march out, and at which all Spartans gathered in their home town. The democrats met during the night at the house of the former democratic generals. About a hundred men entered the large house, where they stood in silence in the rooms and in the courtyard, Alcibiades among them. He had asked also to keep his participation secret, but all the men knew he was with them.

Early in the morning, when it was still dark, the insurgents ran from the house and made for the building of the generals of Argos and also for the other official halls of

the town, to grab control of the city. A large group tried to enter the Larissa, Argos' main citadel. There was little fighting, for the guards resented the oligarchic government but a few men, only the most prominent oligarchs, were killed. The democrats captured the city by noon. The Larissa also had been taken; the guards there had joined the democrats. The Argives expelled the oligarchs from their town.

Everybody in Argos feared the arrival of Spartan troops then, but the Spartans continued to celebrate their Gymnopaedic festival. Although the Argives heard that attempts had been made in Sparta to start on a campaign against Argos, no Spartan army arrived in the plain of Argos.

Alcibiades urged the Argives to strengthen their defences. He proposed to build long walls to the harbour, such as Athens had to Piraeus, so that the city could be provisioned from the Sea in case of a siege. The people accepted the idea eagerly. Alcibiades called masons from Athens to help with the construction. When he inspected the works, he saw to his amazement that the entire population of Argos was working at the walls, men, women and children, and even the slaves of the town. The people greeted Alcibiades politely when he passed, and soon a brick was pushed into his hands. He helped build the walls of Argos for several days, until the defences were finished. The walls ran from town to port. The Argives had lost a major battle, but Alcibiades could at least tell the Athenian Assembly that due to his ambassadorial actions Argos had returned to democracy and, like before, resented Sparta. Argos would act, despite all treaties, as if the Spartans were enemies. Argos sought new contact with Athens. The city was once more an example of resistance to Sparta in the Peloponnesos.

At the end of the summer of that year, Alcibiades returned to Athens.

During the winter, the Spartans sent at long last a new army to Argos. King Agis did not attack Argos itself, nor did he lay siege to the city. His army took the long walls however, and they demolished large parts of them. They took by storm the smaller city of Hysia and killed all the men of the town. Then they returned home.

Somewhat later, the Argives attacked Phlius. The oligarchs of Argos had fled to Phlissia, where allies had sheltered them so that the oligarchs could organise raids from out of Phlius. The Argive army devastated the land of Phlissia, and then also returned. The raids against their town from out of Phlius stopped.

In the spring of the next year, Argos signed a new treaty of mutual defence with Athens. Alcibiades insisted that the number of hoplites that each city would send to the other would be mentioned in the treaty. The number was stated in terms of sums of money to be invested, so that Argos was assured of the help it could expect of Athens. With this treaty, Alcibiades had restored the situation of alliance with Argos to the status of before the Battle of Mantinea, and the Athenians were grateful.

An Argive oligarchic fraction favourable to Sparta remained, however, active inside the city of Argos. These formed a constant threat to the democracy of the polis. In the same spring, a delegation from Argos came to speak to Alcibiades to ask for support of Athens against the oligarchs. Alcibiades spoke in the Assembly in favour of the Argives. He had just been elected general again, and his power in Athens had not waned. He received a fleet of twenty triremes and a few hundred Athenian hoplites. With these he sailed to the harbour of Argos.

Together with a large number of Argive democrats, Alcibiades entered the city he knew so well by now. They ran to pre-determined houses, for which they had a list on

paper scrolls. They seized three hundred Argive citizens who were suspected of being supporters of the previous oligarchic regime and who were thought to be in favour of Sparta. Alcibiades took them prisoners, put them on Athenian ships and brought them to the islands near the port of Argos. He did not execute the men and by exiling them he prevented also the Argive democrats from killing them. A small contingent of Athenians held the Argives prisoners, but they also protected them from being slaughtered by the democratic Argives.

Alcibiades's political actions in Argos ended moderately positive for him. He had experienced ups and downs in the Argolid. The city had been at risk of being destroyed. Its army had suffered one of its worst defeats of history. Yet it also had preserved its independence and the menace of Sparta had waned. It had stayed democratic and hated Sparta more than before.

Alcibiades's grand schemes of alliances between the Peloponnesian cities, aimed at isolating Sparta, had not well succeeded, however. Alcibiades had had to face ostracism in Athens, at the lowest points of his activities. His popularity in Argos was dented, though still strong. His work in the Argolid had been laborious. He was not nearly as admired as he would have wished in Athens.

Alcibiades needed a special feat to boost his popularity in Athens, so that he could again enjoy the love of his compatriots. Since Athens was at peace, he could think of no better occasion to shine once more as a victor in the city than winning at the Olympic Games, which would take place that year. He had to prepare intensively for the Games, then. The only contest in which he might win was in the horseraces, but these were the most spectacular and grandest of the Games. They were also the most expensive by far.

Alcibiades still doubted it was the right time to participate. He was not entirely ready with his horses and charioteers. It was high time to prepare for the Games. He would have to participate this same year, not much time was left.

After his work in Argos, Alcibiades immediately returned to Athens. He was elected general again in that spring, but he dedicated all his time to the Olympic Games.

## ***Chapter 13 – Olympia, Spring to Summer 416 BC***

### **Journey**

In the beginning of the summer the Elean organisers of the Olympic Festival sent their heralds throughout Hellas to announce the Games. The central day of the festival was to be at the third full moon after the summer solstice. One of the heralds arrived with his assistants in Athens. He had travelled by boat from Elis. When he got off the ship in Piraeus, a delegation from the Athenian Council waited for him and accompanied him in solemn procession to the agora, where the man would announce the truce of the Games.

The herald was dressed in a white tunic. He wore olive wreaths on his head and he walked with a staff, the symbol of Zeus, which lent him his authority as an envoy of Olympia. The people of Athens flocked around him, and laughter and applause accompanied him, as he strode slowly and proudly, nodding left and right, between the long walls to the gates of Athens, and through the narrow streets to the market place. He was an old man, and twice already had he been chosen as Athens' herald. He knew the way and he knew he would be well received. The Athenians liked him. In the agora, the archons waited for him, very formally dressed. The herald stopped in front of the magistrates of Athens. He spoke in a loud voice so that the people could hear him to the other end of the place. He announced the date of the Olympic Games, and he also called for the Truce of the Games. Since he pronounced the rules inscribed on the bronze discus kept in the Temple of Hera in the Altis of Olympia, he was the truce-bearer or the spondophor. The truce ensured that the athletes and their trainers travelling from all Hellenic countries to and from Olympia would have a safe journey. It forbade the polises that participated in the Games to carry out death penalties, to war on each other by arms, and to pursue disputes.

When the herald had pronounced his message, the Council invited him to dinner, where they would learn more about the proceedings of the Games.

Alcibiades was not in Athens when the spondophoroi arrived. He was in his country-house, discussing with Hipparchos the last of his preparations for the Games. Alcibiades had not waited for the coming of the Olympic heralds to start his preparations. He had been preparing for more than a year. He wanted to enter ten chariots in the racing contests of Olympia. Each racing-chariot was drawn by four horses. A few horses might get sick during the boat-trip; some might die on the way. He would need forty-five animals. Bringing forty-five horses to Olympia was not a small task. It was a major logistic expedition, worthy of a small military campaign. Alcibiades had to provide for the food of the horses during the transport, as well as for the stay from the beginning until the end of the Games, in a country where there was no large town for hundreds of stades around. The horses and chariots had to be brought many days in advance to Olympia. Alcibiades distributed the work to organise the transport and the stay to three of his best stewards. The stewards assembled about fifty slaves to support the racing-team. Alcibiades had trained and worked with fifteen charioteers. These had trained the best horses all during the preceding autumn and winter, the very best horses chosen by Hipparchos.

Alcibiades sought the best horses that he could get in Attica, the Peloponnesos, Thessaly and Boeotia. Hipparchos spurred his Megaran contacts to seek the swiftest animals. In their Attican horse-farm he had bred excellent chariot-horses, and finer ones still entered the fields around his house. Alcibiades did not bother with scruples in his purchasing. An Athenian friend of his, Diomedes, told him he desired to win at the Games. Alcibiades was alarmed, but he only said that he too was preparing for the Games. Diomedes came to see him one day, for he had heard that the city of Argos had a very good team of chariot horses and wanted to sell it. Since Diomedes knew that Alcibiades had good connections with Argos, he appealed to him to buy the animals. Alcibiades on his next visit to Argos indeed contrived to buy that chariot and horses. But he kept them for himself. Diomedes learned of it later, and he raged, and he insulted Alcibiades, crying he would accuse Alcibiades in court. The lawsuit was never started however. Diomedes knew well that Alcibiades would never be condemned by the Athenian judges over such a trivial matter. Alcibiades had been clever, and Diomedes merely the fool.

Tents were bought and assembled for the horses and the men. Very large, beautifully coloured tents were prepared for Alcibiades and Hipparchos, for Hipparchos's mistress and for Theodote. A very large tent would be set up to host banquets for tens of people during the games and in this tent, hopefully, Alcibiades would offer his triumph dinner. Although all kinds of merchants would flock to Olympia to sell their goods, contracts had to be foreseen to bring all the necessary supplies to Alcibiades's camp at Olympia. The expense of all this was staggering, and the fortune of Alcibiades, as well as many of the funds of Hipparchos, dwindled. But Alcibiades also won more money than ever before from his associations in the Peloponnesos and in Athens, so he disposed of all the means necessary to grasp the equestrian victory for Athens. The Games were to be held in the middle of the heat of the summer, at the end of the harvest period, so good water supplies had to be arranged for. Tent furniture, chests, chairs, beds, were prepared or bought. Drinking vessels, kraters and wine amphorae were stored to be transported later on board of ships. Alcibiades had to prepare for a major logistic operation.

One month before the start of the Games, Alcibiades led a flotilla of no less than five merchant ships out of the harbour of Piraeus to Olympia. Alcibiades himself sailed in another small but fast merchant ship with Theodote. Hipparchos and his mistress were at the end of the column of ships. It was summer and hot, but the voyage was peaceful and no storms interrupted the travel. They arrived after a pleasant sea-trip at the port of the delta of the Alpheus River. Most of the merchant ships stopped there. Part of the goods was transferred on smaller boats, which would sail up the river Alpheus to Olympia. Other items were charged on wagons drawn by mules, and carried to Olympia over land. The horses were driven off the boats and taken by land to the site of the Games. Alcibiades accompanied the herd, glad to be riding a horse again. Theodote followed in a covered wagon. The boats with the tents had arrived earlier than the horses. The Elean officials had already assigned a wide stretch of land, not so far from the Altis, to Alcibiades's camp.

The sacred grove of Zeus was known as the Altis. Zeus had claimed this place to be his most important sacred precinct. It lay in the valley between the Hill Kronos and the northern bends of the River Alpheus, east of River Kladeos. With time, many

temples and altars were built here, and the main temples and other buildings stood inside the walls. The Altis was therefore a walled precinct of temples and altars. The large Temple of Zeus stood inside the Altis, as well as the Temple of Hera, the Temple of Rhea, and their altars. The burial mound of the hero Pelops, in whose honour the horse-races were held, was also situated in the Altis, and so was the Pillar of Oinomaos. Two buildings of colonnades closed the Altis to the east. At the far end stood the Prytaneion, the administrative building of the Games, where the organisers and the judges met. The athletics stadium and the hippodrome were situated outside the walls, on the east side. There was a gymnasium and a palaestra to the west side, where the athletes could train, also outside the Altis.

Alcibiades reserved for his tent camp a large space in the valley to the east of the hippodrome. While arriving, Alcibiades's party noticed the pine-covered hill. The landscape around Olympia was pleasant. The site lay at the confluence of the Alpheus and the Kladeos rivers, in a fertile valley so that grass was plenty, but also all kinds of bushes, olive trees, palm trees and high poplars grew along the water.

The Elean officials assured Alcibiades that the distinguished visitor from Athens had received one of the patches of land closest to the Altis and also that it was well situated, shaded by large trees, and with its own source of fresh water from the hills. Alcibiades thanked the Eleans and their aids, and he told them he would be honoured to have them as their main guests at his banquets. The men beamed and went to all pains to settle the Athenians peacefully and efficiently. Alcibiades had also invited the Athenian magistrates, the official delegates of the polis of Athens, to travel in his boats. These men carried with them the golden and silver ceremonial vessels of their city. Alcibiades's party set up their tents and housed the horses. They helped to set up the tents for themselves and for the Athenian delegation in the same place. The tents of these officials were well within Alcibiades's camp, so that it seemed as if he, Alcibiades, were Athens herself. Alcibiades was also the only general of his polis present and participating in the Games.

In the late evening of the arrival day, the tents stood all raised and ready. Tapestries from the Orient were laid down in the general's tent, and the furniture brought inside. Meals were being prepared then and wine served from the kraters, the large mixing-bowls. Alcibiades invited all the men to hold his first symposium in the open, outside his tent. Stewards and slaves drank with Alcibiades and with Hipparchos. The two women were veiled, but they too stayed for a while, and then discreetly disappeared inside the tents. Hipparchos presented the charioteers and these men were cheered heartily, for from them would depend the success of the mission. Three of the charioteers were brothers from the same family. They were slender youths, well-muscled young men, not tall but with a passion for horses that blinked in their eyes. Horse-racing was their profession and their obsession. Their father had been an excellent rider, and he too was among the men that had come to Olympia, now one of the main trainers of the charioteers. Several libations were spilled that night to the gods of speed and dexterity.

The most important officials of the Olympic Games were of course the judges, the Hellanodikai. There were ten judges, and one of them was chosen as the supervisor. The other nine were divided into three groups of three judges each. One group looked over the equestrian events; the second group of judges was assigned to judge the

pentathlon, and the third group oversaw the rest of the Games. The judges were known for their impartiality and each judge wore a splendid tunic of coloured purple. The three judges of the equestrian Games arrived one day in Alcibiades's camp to look at the horses and chariots and check whether these could participate. Alcibiades had not been able in the last moments to bring as many horses as he had wanted. He had only enough horses for eight chariots. The judges controlled the age of the horses. They found two horses too young to run in the chariot-race. Alcibiades decided not to protest and he hushed his trainers, who had started to dispute the judges' decisions, to silence. He would be able to enter seven chariots in the races, still an astonishing number, the highest ever put in line at Olympia from one and the same owner.

About ten days before the Games began, the horses, chariots, charioteers, trainers, Alcibiades and Hipparchos, all moved to Elis, about three hundred stades to the north-west of Olympia. They waited there for the departure of the sacred procession of Zeus.

The procession would take two days. It was a spiritual journey, a journey of initiation into the adoration of the upper god of Olympus, through the lands of Elis, Pisa and Olympia, to reach the Altis, the sacred land of Zeus. Along the road thousands of people would gather to see the athletes, trainers and owners of horses. The procession was the main festive event of the Peloponnesos, and since the truce was effective, it remained a peaceful event. The procession would hold sacrifices at the Fountain of Piera, pass through Pyrgos, and the men would pass the night under the stars at Letrini. Alcibiades and his men settled at inns in Elis and they prepared for the holy procession.

Two days before the opening of the Games, the procession set itself in motion. The judges, the Hellanodikai, led. Behind them walked the officials of Elis, followed by a group of armed Elean hoplites. Behind these followed the athletes, the runners, jumpers, wrestlers, boxers, discus throwers, javelin throwers, the men that would contest in the pentathlon, and after the athletes came the horses and the charioteers. The trainers and owners mixed with the athletes. All were splendidly adorned with flower garlands and dressed in fine, coloured tunics and himations. Alcibiades and Hipparchos walked among their chariots and here and there they drove the chariots, relieving their men.

Along the road stood the spectators, and among these one might distinguish the ambassadors and delegations of the Hellenic states. Most of the embassies had set up tents along the way. They offered refreshments to their contesters. The sacred vessels of the polises were shown ostentatiously.

The priests sang hymns. Spartan pipers followed, as well as Athenian trumpeters. Choruses from Elis, Corinth and Argos went in the procession too, so that the long column was also accompanied by music and chants.

The period of the Games was at the end of the summer. The heat was tremendous in Elis, and the sun burnt down on men and animals. The roads were dusty, so that the dust caked in the sweat of the men's faces, backs and breasts. This was the first ordeal, the first test for the men. The procession would tire the men, strengthen their determination to win, and prove their endurance in effort. The men advanced slowly but they tried to expend as little effort as possible for the contests to come.

Alcibiades had sent a few tents to Letrini, just the smaller ones, and the men slept there together at the end of the first day. The next morning, the procession continued

to Olympia and entered with large pomp into the Altis. There, the group broke up and everybody went to his own camp. Large numbers of people, thousands of Hellenes, had by now assembled at Olympia. Stalls, tents and huts had been set up by the merchants near the Altis, outside the walled temple precinct of Zeus, and every imaginable good could be bought, from foods to balms, tunics, cosmetics, jewels, tapestry, arms and furniture. Olympia had become a gigantic marketplace, and the spectators strolled among the temples and tents, sacrificing to the gods and doing business.

The Alpheus River was covered on both banks with boats, which brought all these goods from over the Sea, and in the grass and bushes along the roads stood the wagons of the merchants. There were more oxen and mules at Olympia than people, remarked Hipparchos. Elean officials and armoured hoplites held the peace. Anybody who disturbed the serenity of the Games was flogged.

The first day of the Olympics started with the ceremony of the swearing-in of the judges and the participants, which happened at the Bouleutêrion, an old building outside the Altis, which held the statue of Zeus Horkios, the Zeus of the oaths. The judges and officials, followed by the athletes and the horse- and chariot-owners entered the temple. The judges pledged the oath to be impartial and to manage well the games. The athletes swore to fairness in the contests and to follow the rules of their discipline, as installed by the Elean officials.

Once this short ceremony finished, all advanced outside the temple to the entrance of the stadium in the Altis. Large crowds had assembled there for one of the most festive parts of the Games, the contests for the heralds and trumpeters.

There was a building in the Altis, a long hall that was old and in need of repair and change, but that stoa still carried far a man's voice along its columns. The heralds there contested for the best voice, and the finest messages, hoping for the most enthusiastic appreciation by the public. The trumpeters contested like in a music festival, and the air was filled by their shrill tunes, which were reflected by the temple walls of the Altis and which, gliding over the waters of the Alpheus and the Kladeos, also rolled through the hills and mountains, announcing the real beginning of the Games. Every living person gathered around Olympic knew by these sounds that the Olympic Games had commenced.

When the music and herald contest had finished, there were only running, wrestling and boxing contests for young boys that first day. Most spectators were not much interested in these games, but large numbers of parents were present, and the spectacle took place, hot in excitement and also in laughter at some of the clumsier, beginning epebes' actions. At the same time, at every altar of the Altis, sacrifices were being held to the gods, so that the place became pervaded by the perfumes of myrrh and aromatic herbs burnt to please the gods. In the afternoon also, philosophers and poets came into the Altis to instruct their theories and to recite poems to divert the public. The programme was light that first day.

Alcibiades and Hipparchos controlled their nerves by walking around, seemingly at ease, relaxed, watching the turmoil of people and sacrifices, and keeping their thoughts off their horses. They had to leave the care and preparations of their mounts and chariots now to the trainers, while they mixed in the crowd and showed themselves off. They walked through the markets, fraying a way among the crowd, saluting Athenians and foreigners. Alcibiades met friends from Argos, from



Mantineia, Elis, Ephesos and Sparta. Endius, the Spartiate, was also at Olympia. Alcibiades invited all these men to a large feast he would give in the evening, expecting to invite them once more, later, at his victory symposium.

Alcibiades had never actually seen the statue of Zeus inside the Temple of the Altis, having not given enough moments to a visit the last time he had been at Olympia. He entered now the temple, accompanied by Hipparchos. The temple of the Olympian Zeus was larger than the Parthenon of Athens' acropolis. The two men stood tiny before the enormous statue of the upper god. Zeus was seated on a throne. His sculpture was made of gold and ivory. The god wore the olive wreaths by which also the Olympic victors would be crowned, and he held in his left hand a sceptre, wrought of several metals and surmounted by an eagle. The tunic of Zeus was of pure gold, and so were his sandals. The tunic was decorated with animal motifs and lilies. Several materials had been used also for the throne: gold, woods with ivory colours, ebony woods, wood inlaid with precious stones of various colours. Figures were also carved in the wood everywhere. In his right hand, Zeus held a figure of Victory, likewise made of gold and ivory, and the figure stood upright on Zeus's hand. The head of Zeus was of a powerful but wise, mature man with a thick beard of painted ivory. He sat on the throne, and the statue was so vivid that Hipparchos gasped. If Zeus were to stand, he would lift the top ceiling off the temple! Zeus's complete image was reflected in a large pool of oil that lay glimmering in front of the statue. Alcibiades and Hipparchos stayed a long time in admiration for the grandeur of the god. Hipparchos then drew at Alcibiades's arm, and they followed another man, who went up a spiral staircase to the upper floor in the aisle, from where the spectacle was more impressive still. The men walked there to the height of Zeus's breast and looked down upon the pool. Alcibiades was filled with pride. This monumental statue of Zeus had been made by Pheidias, who had also sculpted the statue of Athena in the Parthenon of Athens' acropolis. Zeus's face and breast were made of so much ivory, that it was as if elephants had been created especially and only for this sculpture. The men descended the staircase again and they remained standing a while at Zeus's feet, before the rectangular pool of oil, to pray for the help of the Zeus of Victories in the morning chariot races.

Alcibiades and Hipparchos went out of the temple of Zeus, into the full heat of the sun. There they saw Endius stand before another high monument in front of the temple, a statue that stood on a very high column. It was a Nike, a victory, standing high in the air on the back of an eagle in flight. Endius was looking to the top of the statue, and he saw not Alcibiades and Hipparchos approach him. The eagle was the symbol of Zeus, too. The Nike was a winged female figure, painted in harsh, contrasting colours, dressed in a red short tunic with rich folds, black hair bound by gold ribbons, pale face and red cheeks, white arms. This statue had been erected recently, made by Paionos of Mende, and it had been set up in memory of the victory of Sphacteria, where the Messenians and Athenians had decisively defeated a large Spartiate hoplite army. That was the reason why Endius took such an interest in the statue.

Alcibiades placed his hand on Endius' back and said, 'Endius do not grieve. Other victories await Sparta.'

Endius turned and laughed when he saw who had addressed him. 'Yes, Alcibiades,' he said, 'Sparta's power is undamaged and her luck will rise again. Still, Sphacteria

was our largest defeat for tens of years. Who knows, one day another statue may rise next to this, for Sparta's victories.'  
Then he walked on.

Alcibiades and Hipparchos continued to advance in the Altis precinct. They looked at the Temple of Hera, at the Temple of Rhea, at the three altars of Zeus, Hera and Rhea. They saw the tomb of the hero Pelops, which was a large burial mound. Many columns with smaller statues of heroes and visitors of the Games stood everywhere in the Altis.

Finally, Alcibiades wanted to have a closer look at the sacred tree of Heracles. This olive tree had been planted by Heracles, the founding father of the Olympic Games. It was a special tree, for its branches bore leaves that grew more thickly together than on other trees, and the leaves grew all in the same direction. Tomorrow morning, the priests of Olympia would bring children clad in white cloaks to this tree, and with golden faucicles they would cut off the branches that would serve to braid a wreath to crown him victor of the chariot races – or so he hoped.

The Altis was walled all around. Beyond the walls, beneath the hill of Kronos, stood smaller buildings, trapped between the rear walls of the precinct and the hill. These were the treasury temples, in which the treasures of several Hellenic city-states remained deposited and jealously preserved. Some of the treasuries here were even of Sicilian polises, such as those of Selinus and Syracuse. Others were of the Ionian and Dorian cities of the orient such as of Byzantium, or of Kyrene in northern Africa. The treasuries enjoyed the protection of Zeus by all Hellenic states, and they remained inviolate, even in times of war.

Alcibiades returned to his camp. He held a large, sumptuous symposium that evening, at which over a hundred invitees participated. The couches had been prepared in the tents, and even outside these, on the open air. The invited men arrived in groups at the tents, where they were welcomed by Alcibiades and Hipparchos. The wine flowed abundantly and hymns were sung to Alcibiades's impending victory. The symposium lasted till far in the night.

Thus ended the first day of the Olympics.

### **Chariot-race**

The next morning, the Olympic Games ceremonies started with a solemn procession led by the priests of Zeus, a procession constituted before the Temple of Zeus and then led to the stadium where the horse-races would take place. All the competing horses and riders, charioteers and trainers participated in this procession, and so did Alcibiades and Hipparchos.

The horse-races of Olympia were held in the hippodrome, a large grassy field to the east of the Altis and south of the stadium. The hippodrome was merely a stretch of open land, but earth had been piled up somewhat, all around the course. The spectators stood on this bank, whereas the judges looked out sitting on a wooden structure, situated also at the western side of the tracks, near the arrival line. Wooden barriers had been erected around the hippodrome. These were really only fences, and

behind them stood now thousands of men to watch the spectacular horse-races. The hippodrome was very wide, since forty chariots could race side by side in it. It was about two thousand feet long and six hundred feet wide on each track. There were two tracks, and the horses had to turn to run from one track to the next, and to return yet. The start of the races was given at one of the turning posts, the one closest to the Altis. The turning point was a stone base on which stood bronze statues representing Hippodameia crowning the hero Pelops.

The first races of the day were the races of colts, younger horses. These races were for chariots first, and the very first race was a race for chariots of just two horses, the synoris races. Then came a race of the tethrippon, of four-horse chariots, also with colts. After these began the synoris race for horses of all ages. The races grew in importance, and the crowds also gradually augmented and became fully involved in the excitement of the contests.

Finally, when the crowds were fully excited by the heat of the past contests, the open tethrippon was solemnly announced, the four-horse chariot race for horses of all ages.

This was the longest and most spectacular race. The drivers had to make three turns before the end of the race. Thirty-four chariots prepared to enter the aphasis, the starting apparatus in the hippodrome. The aphasis had actually forty traps for the chariots, but not all the traps were occupied. Before the carts entered the boxes however, each charioteer showed his horses and cart to the audience and he let the colours, decorations and fineness of his tethrippon be admired, and the nervousness and energy of his horses be appreciated. It took quite a while to get all the chariots in the starting boxes.

The charioteers stood in their small cart behind the horses. The two middle horses of each tethrippon were harnessed to a yoke, which was fastened to the pole that drew the chariot. The yoke was secured by a strap to the rim of the chariot. The charioteers used the outer horses to guide the chariot. The charioteer carried a whip, and he controlled these outer horses by reins and bits.

The chariots were very light contraptions, made of wood and wicker work. Several of Alcibiades's chariots were decorated with silver lining, and light sheets of bronze were fixed over the wicker works. His chariots had bronze wheels with eight spokes, the naves of which were of silver, and his horses wore head-pieces of gold. The chariots were so small that there was just enough space for the charioteer to stand, holding the reins in his hands. The charioteers wore long, white tunics.

The chariots stood between wooden fences, not next to each other, but in the form of an arrowhead. Two chariots stood at the tip of the arrowhead. The other chariots were positioned behind these two front chariots in oblique lines that opened to left and right. It seemed that the front chariots had an advantage, since they were the furthest forward on the tracks, but that advantage was eliminated by an ingenious engine. At the very tip of the arrow stood a bronze dolphin on a rod. A rope was tied as a barrier in front of each chariot. In the middle of the arrow, behind the chariots, was an altar of unburnt bricks, plastered all over in white. On this altar stood a bronze eagle with spread wings. The heart of the starting engine was installed on this altar. When the engine was activated for the start, the eagle would go up and the dolphin in the front would fall to the ground, so that all charioteers could see that the race had commenced. Then the first ropes to be let go before the chariots would be those at the farthest end behind of the arrow, at the back end, and not at the tip of the arrowhead.

These chariots would dash forward and when they came neck to neck with the chariots to their left or right sides, the ropes of the barriers before these chariots were released too. All the chariots rode thus at the same height at the tip of the arrowhead, but actually the chariots that were far behind had some advantage because they ran already at full speed when they arrived at the tip, while then these first chariots only just dashed out of their boxes. The places in the boxes had been determined by lot. Alcibiades's chariots stood in the last positions on both sides mostly, but one of his chariots stood just behind the dolphin.

The departure of the chariots was a most spectacular event. It allowed seeing each chariot dart forward separately, so that the staggered start gave much pleasure to the spectators, although it had been devised to eliminate the advantage of the front chariots. Each chariot burst successively out of the boxes, and gradually the noise of the chariots grew until with a thundering unison sound all the charioteers were driving at highest speed at the same height, in an almost straight line to begin the race in the hippodrome.

The spectators could not but show their excitement at the spectacular start. They all shouted and jumped and threw their arms in the air, encouraging the chariots of their cities. Alcibiades did not dare to look, but when the aphasis began to move and the dolphin fell, he too stood shouting and gesticulating to encourage his charioteers. One barrier after the other fell, and the horses bolted forward.

Alcibiades and Hipparchos stood on the earthen bank in the middle of the racing track. The chariots passed at utmost speed. Alcibiades's seven chariots were among the first ten competitors in the first round. The crowd cheered, excited at the view of the speeding horses. The show of power of the sweat-streaming animals, the thundering hooves, the cries and whipping of the charioteers was overwhelming. The first chariots arrived in a nick of time at the first turn, and five of Alcibiades's chariots were among the first to turn. The turn at the far, southern end of the stadium was the most dangerous moment of the race, however. The horses were over-excited, still at their highest speed possible, eager to out-run all the other chariots, not yet fatigued, and they all of course wanted to turn closest to the inner track. Chariots crashed together. Not all charioteers could control their chariots to a safer, middle course. Chariots touched each other, animals running side by side at full speed. Wheels clashed into each other, wickerwork screeched, whips flashed.

The horses and drivers had the sun in their eyes, and just before the turn stood a large altar, which was white-washed. The sudden appearance of this white obstacle in the tracks of the horses, even if it was in the middle and not straight in their path, panicked more than one animal. Four of Alcibiades's chariots almost passed the turn, unscathed, though one chariot had wickerwork destroyed from hitting the chariot that ran next to it, a Corinthian competitor. The two front chariots were driven by the two elder sons of Alcibiades's old trainer. The third son drove cautiously somewhat behind, in the second line of chariots that turned. Then disaster struck. Chariots entangled, crashed, horses touched, raced neck to neck, and then they collided. Wood splintered.

A panic-stricken set of horses of two chariots in the middle of the first line ran straight into each other. Horses had bolted while they were running at full speed because they hit together. The chariots of these horses were drawn aside, into the flanks of the

chariots at the other side. Wood cracked into wood, pieces of wickerwork flew around, wheels clashed, and several chariots raced on without being able to disengage. The poles were torn obliquely, and the horses fell. The poles opened. The chariots were overturned. Charioteers flew out of their stands. They were hauled over in a nick of time and at great speed, and they fell into the throng of stumbling animals. Four chariots that followed them ran straight into the chaos, unable to avoid the accident that had happened right before them. One among these was the youngest son of Alcibiades's trainer. The youth had driven wisely and cautiously. He had stayed well in the middle of the width of the racing track, avoiding the inner path, but this was a fate he could not avoid. There was a horrible mess, as the horses, chariots and drivers crashed wildly across the course. The very vulnerable men disappeared among the horses, which continued to hit everything around them with their sharp hooves. Alcibiades feared for the youth's life.

The crash was terrible, and the frightened horses continued to trash around while they were on the ground, entangled in the reins, poles and yokes. More than twelve chariots had fallen. One more chariot struck the turning point and lost a wheel so that the horses of that chariot too fell right in the turn. Two more chariots were downed by this accident. Only about twenty chariots continued to race on, but of these at least fifteen were utterly defeated already, for they had had to rein in at the turn, even stopped altogether, to race around the chaos of fallen horses and chariots, so that they were now so far behind the leading chariots that they would not be able anymore to stand among the winners. Five chariots remained of Alcibiades's team.

At the turn, a large group of Eleans, organised by the officials of the races, mixed among the fallen horses. They ran with large knives in their hands to cut the reins and the bits of the fallen animals. As soon as the reins were torn or cut away from the unhurt horses, the animals ran free, alone, without chariot, and many ran behind the other racing animals. Three-fourths of the horses were wounded however, and several had to be drawn aside, unable to stand. The horses that had broken bones were killed immediately, on the spot, and then rapidly drawn away from the course by the Elean horse teams.

Alcibiades saw the youth of his group stand up, and touch his neck, but the youth walked off the course unhurt. Then he turned, and helped ease the remaining fallen racing horses from the track.

Alcibiades's trainer sighed, disappointed, but Alcibiades told him, 'don't fret! Your boy did well and he ran prudently. Only fate has stricken him, he has no fault. We knew that some of our chariots would not make the first turn. Look, the boy is unhurt and he could not possibly avoid that Megaran chariot falling right in front of him. Our horses seem mostly to be unhurt too. The boy did well! I will tell him so. He will participate this evening at our side!'

The rest of the chariots continued to race. The chariots fled on the tracks now, at the highest speed their hooves could produce. The charioteers restrained no horse. Among the leading five of these, raced three chariots of the Athenian team. Two more chariots of Alcibiades followed in the next group of five. The two sons of Alcibiades's trainer were in front. They only thought of dashing to the second turn now, oblivious of any danger, and unless an accident happened to them because of their own fault or unless some of the chariots behind them ran so fast that they would overtake the leaders, Alcibiades was ensured of victory.

At the second southern turn the two chariots of Alcibiades and Hipparchos rode in the outermost tracks on the right. They had no trouble making a wide, nice turn. The third leading chariot of Alcibiades ran straight in the inner track, but its charioteer made the horses sprint just in front of the middle chariots at the turn, so that his chariot also continued unscathed. The three front chariots were now of Alcibiades!

At the turn, a charioteer, who raced in the middle, lost his nerve. He drew too much on the inner reins and his horses reacted horrendously quickly by racing into the chariot that ran on their left. Two chariots crashed once more into each other and got hopelessly entangled as they swayed to and fro, the disappeared in a chaos of dust, debris, fallen horses and trampling hooves. Horses and chariots fell and the two chariots that came behind them ran straight into the chaos. These two chariots were driven by Alcibiades's animals. Four more racing chariots drove into each other at that moment. One chariot continued to run a while without a charioteer, but one of its horses was bleeding from open wounds in its side, and as it fell somewhat further on the track it drew that chariot down too. More animals crashed into it. Again the Elean officials drew away chariots, animals and men as rapidly as they could. A man stayed on the track. He did not move anymore, so the Eleans took him by arms and legs and carried him off.

Alcibiades had three chariots still going among the mere fifteen chariots that remained competing, but his were the leading ones! The chariots raced now in one long column, and most of the charioteers behind the four or five leaders knew they were defeated. Two chariots led side by side. Then came Alcibiades's third chariot, and behind them rode the surviving chariots of the second group, a Spartan and two Corinthian racing chariots. The three chariots of Alcibiades raced for triumph.

The animals ran with white foam on their mouths, now. They ran in unison, side by side, with marvellous synchronisms of hooves and muscles, as they were used to when they exercised together in Attica. They remembered the joy of the open fields of the country. They raced near each other, but did not touch. The charioteers allowed for a respectable distance sideways between the chariots, and with the applause of the crowd they raced splendidly to the third and last southern turn. The two first chariots to turn there would win. No other team of horses could outwin from these magnificent horses of Hipparchos's breeding farm. Alcibiades's third chariot followed, and it still competed with the Spartan and Corinthian teams, but its advance grew, and it outran the other chariots to turn first.

Alcibiades saw his two front charioteers giving sign to each other, and the younger of the two brothers, who ran in the outermost circle, let his brother turn first and speed on. The other chariots fell behind the three racing victors. Alcibiades's three remaining chariots would win first, second and third place unhindered. The charioteers took the third turn easily and unharmed. They unleashed all the power in their horses to show a marvellous last race to arrival. The judges who sat opposite Alcibiades in their judges' stand, sat no more. They had lost much of their dignity by now, for they too stood gesticulating and shouting, dancing with excitement at the view of the finest chariots in the Hellenic world bursting to the arrival line.

The Athenian chariots of Alcibiades won first, second and third place, and the two first winning chariots were driven by two brothers. Alcibiades and Hipparchos ran to

the arrival line, through the hippodrome. At the northern end stood the panting horses. The charioteers had been able to stop the animals and they rested now, utterly spent, in the heat and dust of the mid-day run. The crowds and the judges surrounded the teams. Alcibiades's triumph was complete.

Alcibiades ran to the charioteers, embraced them, promised them fortune, and congratulated them. The judges arrived also, and they bound ribbons to the lead charioteer's arms and legs so that the man would be recognised by all as the victor of the Olympic Games of the tethrippon contest. The youth's father, Alcibiades's trainer, glorified in the triumph of his sons.

During the rest of the day, the Olympic Games continued. There were more horse-races before the afternoon, and then also this was the day of the pentathlon. Athletes competed in five contests of discus and javelin throwing, jumping, running and wrestling.

Alcibiades, however, returned with his charioteers to the camp. He was over-joyed. He had lost ten horses, which had been maimed and then killed in the stadium. One of his charioteers had been killed instantaneously from a broken neck. In all, three men had died on the tracks that morning. Two other men suffered from broken arms and legs. They would heal.

Alcibiades had won the race, however, and decisively, with three chariots, as had never occurred in Olympia before.

## **Banquet**

That afternoon, delegates from other nations brought in presents to Alcibiades's camp, one after the other. The Ephesians brought him a tent, which was magnificently adorned with coloured patterns and the poles of which were carved by the finest Ionian artisans. Alcibiades honoured the Ephesians by having it erected immediately in front of his Athenian tent so that it be used to receive the ambassadors of the other cities. The Ephesians erected the tent themselves, but Alcibiades helped. He transferred his best tapestries, rugs and furniture into it and lived there for the rest of the festival. The tent was very wide, longer even than the official tent of the Olympic Games. It was a Persian marquee, twice the size of the city's official tent.

The Lesbians came to render him honour and presented him with a flower-garlanded wagon filled to the brink with amphorae of their best wine.

The Chians provided him with fodder for his horses, enough for the rest of the stay in Olympia and the return to Athens. The Chians also gave him animals, oxen, to be sacrificed to Zeus. The Lesbians gave him money to alleviate some of his other expenses.

The Athenian delegation was so proud that they proposed to Alcibiades to place the official vessels of Athens on his tables during the victory feast that he would organise in the evening. His triumph in Olympia was complete.

In the evening, the judges, the Hellanodikai, called all the victors of that day together before the altar of Zeus. They crowned the victors. Alcibiades received the wreaths of olive-leaves around his head, and together with the victors of the day he paraded round the Altis. It was the habit at the Olympic Games that for the chariot races not the charioteers were crowned, but the chariot owners.

The Altis was filled with people from all the Hellenic polises, and all these lauded the great victory he had won. During the parade choruses sang triumphal hymns. The pipes and trumpets sounded for the first victors of the Games.

In the evening of that second day, the priests of Olympia staged first a funeral rite ceremony in honour of Pelops, around the burial mound of the hero.

Pelops was considered as the founding hero of the equestrian events at Olympia. His story was one of the finest myths of Olympia. Pelops raced faster than King Oinomaos at Olympia.

A very long time ago, Oinomaos was the King of Pisa, a town not so far from Olympia. Oinomaos had a daughter called Hippodameia. Oinomaos let suitors take his daughter in their chariot and race away. Oinomaos would follow the suitors in his own chariot, and if he caught up with them he would throw his spear through the men. Twelve suitors had already died when Pelops arrived from Phrygia. Pelops did not race Oinomaos immediately. He observed, and found out that Oinomaos's charioteer, a man called Myrtilos, was secretly in love with Hippodameia. The man did not dare to challenge Oinomaos, but he resented the violence of the King. During a drinking party one night, Pelops boasted that he could catch Hippodameia, and he promised to let Myrtilos spend one night with her if only Myrtilos would help him. Then, Pelops challenged Oinomaos.

During the ensuing race, the wheels flew off from Oinomaos's chariot, for Myrtilos had replaced the bronze axle-pins of Oinomaos's chariot with pins of wax. Pelops won Hippodameia. The King, Oinomaos, pitched over the chariot under the hooves of his horses and was killed.

Pelops did not keep his promise to Myrtilos, though. He had the man grabbed and thrown from a cliff, into the Sea. The King's palace was struck by lightning in the evening and it burnt down, except for one wooden column, which was still revered in the Altis of Olympia, on the site where now stood the Temple of Zeus. In earlier times, the races turned at this wooden column. That column stood also in the Altis now, somewhat to the side, known as the Pillar of Oinomaos. Pelops had remained the hero of the Altis, and the chariot-races were organised in his memory.

The men Alcibiades had invited came afterwards in his camp to celebrate the feast that he had prepared. There were delegates and friends from Athens, Argos, Mantinea, Ephesos, Chios, Sparta, Lesbos, Samos and many other cities.

The feast of Alcibiades and Hipparchos was the largest of the Games, and Lesbian wine flowed abundantly. Libations were poured to the victors and paeans were sung to the honour of the gods. Alcibiades sat in a large chair in the middle of the camp. Next to him sat Hipparchos, likewise dressed extravagantly. Alcibiades sat in the victor's throne, dressed in red robes. When he walked, he drew his robes behind him through the dust. To his right sat the three sons of his master-trainer, one of which still wore the ribbons of the Olympic victor, while their father throned proudly to the other side of Alcibiades and Hipparchos. For this man, the day had been the finest of his life, for his sons had been honoured by the gods. One of his sons was victor at the Olympics. His two other sons had driven honourably, and all three had come out of the dangerous race unharmed.

At the banquet of victory sat Endius and other Spartan delegates. Endius drank to Alcibiades's health and he laughed with him. Alcibiades talked to Endius at a certain moment, sitting next to him and aside from the core of the feasting.



Alcibiades said, 'I saw you admiring Paionos's victory statue, Endius. The victory of Sphacteria was hard for Sparta, wasn't it? But that victory of Athens is long past already.'

Endius replied, 'yes. It was a long time ago. It was a terrible defeat for us, which destroyed the confidence of our youth. But wasn't it a victory of the Messenians? The Messenians erected the monument, didn't they? Now, our King Agis has regained confidence, however. The victory he won at Mantinea did that. He fought well and wisely. Sparta proved once more that it remains undefeated in major engagements of armies, even though it might lose a skirmish. Sphacteria was won with women's arms, with arrows and javelins thrown from the far. Such a skirmish can be won because relatively few hoplites are involved. In real battles of hoplites to hoplites, as all major battles are, we won and shall win again.'

'Sphacteria was hardly a skirmish, but I grant you the greatness of Mantinea.'

'We destroyed by arms your policies in the Peloponnesos, didn't we?'

'Oh, Endius,' Alcibiades replied, 'we win some and we lose some. We are where we began. But my aims are still largely fulfilled. Argos is now friend to Athens, whereas before it was rather neutral, and so are Mantinea and Elis. Sparta won a battle but not the hearts. After the Battle of Mantinea, peace continues between our cities. Will that last?'

'I think so, Alcibiades. Sparta desires no war, though many young Spartiates from new families are stepping forward with new ideas. Wars are not won by only traditional means anymore. Sparta remains invincible on land. As long as we have no navy, no triremes, Athens is safe.'

'Does that mean your new young men are looking to the Sea, Endius?'

'Not yet, Alcibiades. Not as long as there is peace. You know that we weaken on land. Our numbers do not grow; in fact our numbers decline. We know that. You know that. But we have a new generation of warriors, and with new times come new means. Our new generation can think. Soon there will be another game, another situation, in which intelligence will prevail over the spear. Then, these new men will do whatever is necessary to win. Whatever. We wait for a new Brasidas. Who knows, maybe several new Brasidas will come.'

'To win the world you will need a naval Brasidas, Endius. But your navarchs can only serve for one year, and then not anymore in their entire life. That is an enormous waste of experience! You will need a Brasidas each year at that rate! And one year is a very short time for a new Brasidas to win over Athens!'

'Who knows, who knows, Alcibiades? Enough of those thoughts! Hail to your victory!'

And Endius downed his entire bowl of wine at once. The words of Alcibiades had suddenly saddened him, for he knew them to be so very true. Some institutions of Sparta were outdated, but jealously guarded by the ephors.

'Thank you, Endius,' Alcibiades replied, and he emptied his bowl likewise. 'Maybe one day we will see each other in Sparta, not just in Athens or Olympia.'

He left Endius perplexed. Then, Endius laughed heartedly and very loudly.

For Alcibiades, this day he had won his highest victory and triumph yet. Still, he too was sad. He missed Socrates and he missed Harmonia. Very late in the night, when his guests had almost all returned to their tents, Alcibiades sat alone, hunched on a bench in his new Ephesian tent, a last bowl of wine in his hands, reflecting on the vagaries of life.

## Sacrifice

On the third day of the Olympic Games, the morning started with a procession to the honour of Zeus by the judges of the Games. In this procession went all the ambassadors of the Hellenic cities, and these delegates wore the sacred vessels of their nation while they walked. The competitors went in this procession too, but Alcibiades walked among the official representatives of Athens. Behind the judges walked the ambassadors, then followed the competitors, and behind these followed the priests. The priests and their servants also drove one hundred oxen, given by the people of Elis, to the altar of Zeus. At the end of the procession, all these men stood in a circle around the altar of Zeus. Beyond the circle, the Altis was filled with all the people that had come to participate in the games.

The priests lit a fire on top of Zeus's altar. According to the stories of the gods, the holy myths of the Hellenes, this altar had been erected at the spot where Zeus had hauled a thunderbolt to from his dwelling place on Mount Olympus, thereby claiming the Altis as his sacred grove. The altar was a flat stone base, and on that stone base a conical pile of ashes had developed. The ashes were the remains of past sacrifices made to Zeus. The ashes were mixed with water from the Alpheus and then plastered on to the altar. The altar cone thus grew each year. The ashes from the tens of other, minor altars in and around the Altis were also mixed in to grow the altar of Zeus.

The head priest gave a sign that the offering could start. The oxen were taken to the altar, and the priests slew one after the other all the oxen. The legs of the oxen were cut off and brought to the top of the altar, where they were burnt. Soon, a thick column of black smoke climbed to the sky, while the priests chanted incantations to Zeus, pleading the god to take pleasure from the fumes. The rest of the flesh of the oxen was brought to the temples, to cooler places. It would be kept there not for long, for it was rapidly being prepared by butchers for consumption.

The butchers put the meat of the oxen on enormous iron grids. They started already to roast the meat. There would be a public banquet that evening in the Prytaneion. The Prytaneion was the building from out of which the organisers of the Olympic Games saw to it that the Games proceeded well. The judges came there regularly to record the names of the victors. Here also burnt the sacred fire of Hestia, the goddess of the hearth. From this fire all the other altars in the Altis were lit. The men that won in the Olympic Games could always, their entire life, get a free meal at the Prytaneion of Olympia.

The banquet that evening would not only be at this building, which stood at the extreme left of the Altis, against the Kronos Hill and behind the temple of Hera. The Banquet of the Hundred Oxen would be feasted all through the Altis.

In the afternoon, the foot-races were held in the stadium.

## Pankration

On the fourth day of the Games, the hardest contests were being held: wrestling in the morning, boxing and the pankration in the afternoon. In the late afternoon the foot-race would be held, in which the men had to run in armour.

There were two games of wrestling for the Hellenes: upright wrestling and ground wrestling. In upright wrestling, one had to throw one's opponent three times on the ground to win. The Spartans excelled at these contests. In ground wrestling, both wrestlers fought on the ground and the game ended when one of the two opponents acknowledged defeat. He did that by raising his right hand and index finger pointed upwards.

The wrestling game at the Olympics was only upright wrestling, but in the pankration all kinds of wrestling were allowed: upright wrestling, ground wrestling, as well as almost anything else but biting and pushing one's fingers into noses, eyes, mouth or ears. One could throw one's opponent down, kick him, strangle him, break his back, as long as the opponent didn't die, and surrendered.

In boxing, the men put leather thongs around their knuckles to protect them during the hits, and then they hit at each other's body and heads with their fists. The leather thongs went up along the arms of the men, and oil was poured on the leather to soften it on the knuckles.

Theodote and Myrrhina had so far stayed inside the Athenian tent-camp. They had not objected to being confined to their quarters, and they had briefly appeared during the feasts around the tents. They had watched the excitement, however, with growing eagerness and impatience. They longed to see some of the Games too. And they loved wrestling. When Alcibiades and Hipparchos had organised gymnasium and palaestra contests around their country house, the women had always been present. The women asked insistently now that the wrestling and boxing games began, to be taken to the stadium.

Women were not much appreciated at Olympia. Women were allowed in the tent-camps, but not tolerated in the Altis during the games, and certainly not in the stadium and in the hippodrome. The regulation was not fully in power anymore, though.

Women were not anymore thrown off the cliffs of Mount Typaeum when they were discovered watching the Games. Virgins were in principle allowed at the games, but the ban remained in use for married women. Women were not allowed to participate in the Olympic Games, but they could be owners of horses and chariots and thus they could even win and be crowned.

Still, all men applied the rule as far as possible for the contests. Few women were present around the stadium while the athletes worked, yet they were also not entirely absent. Most men found that the spectacle of the naked men in the stadium, in full effort of running or wrestling, was not suited for women's eyes. Many a husband succumbed, however, to the pleadings of his wife to take her to some of the games. So, a few women were always around, though they wore heavy veils to hide their faces.

Theodote and Myrrhina had worked on their men many times already to be allowed to see the pankration contest. Alcibiades had always refused. Theodote had gotten so angry however at the end of the third day, after Alcibiades had entered her tent as drunk as Dionysos, that she had thrown drinking bowls and water vessels at him, and refused her bed to him.

When he awoke, alone and in his own tent, and went to see Hipparchos, he found his friend in a bad state. Hipparchos was holding his head and said it thumped as if a hundred trumpeters were holding a private music contest in his mind. Alcibiades was not in a much better state. Hipparchos confessed he had been weak and promised his mistress to take her to the pankration. Alcibiades heaved his arms, and then let them

fall again in a gesture of abandoning. He confessed it was perhaps better that he also took Theodote. He returned to her tent, entered cautiously for fear of projectiles, and promised to take her around midday to the all-out wrestling games. The two women ran to their baths, to their chests of tunics, and then to their cosmetic vessels. They put red on their cheeks, exchanged jewels and veils, blackened their eyelashes, and dressed up.

At noon both women stood before Alcibiades and Hipparchos, blushing from eagerness, turning around in whirls, fishing for compliments for their dresses and jewels.

Alcibiades and Hipparchos looked at each other and said but one word: 'veils!' Whereupon the two women drew their left hands from behind their backs and put on the gaudiest, thinnest of orange veils Alcibiades had seen until that moment. Hipparchos sighed and abandoned, so Alcibiades said, 'all right, all right, off we go. Want to see some long penises, he?'

The two women were angry, then. They cried they wanted to see no penises. They wanted to witness decent fights and have some part in the excitement of a good pankration combat. Alcibiades laughed and he gave his arm to Theodote. The two couples walked from their tent-camp to the stadium. A few eyebrows drew upwards when they arrived, but when the people, and the judges, saw that the women were indeed veiled and since this was Alcibiades and Hipparchos who accompanied the ladies, they choked down the nastier comments and protests. The four advanced to the edge of the stadium, where the pankration contests had just started.

The opponents were chosen by lot, and each time there was a victor, the man who lost left the field. New opponents were determined by lot from out of the group of wrestlers until only two remaining men would face each other.

The men who fought the pankration were rough and powerful. They were mostly men beyond their first youth, men who had had fingers and arms broken before, men with heavy chests and strong muscles on breasts, arms and legs. Some of these men were real giants. They showed damaged faces, broken noses, and broken teeth.

The women giggled more than once for these men also had the largest crotches, the heaviest seed balls and some of the longest penises they had ever encountered.

'Of course they are long,' Hipparchos joked, 'So many other pankrationists drew on them in previous fights!'

But Theodote and Hipparchos's mistress dismissed him with his jokes. The women cheered as excitedly as the men that afternoon. The wrestlers oiled their skins with olive oil. They poured light, fine-grained sand on their bodies, so that their opponents were allowed some grip. They fought completely naked, but they wore a tight-fitting leather cap on their short hair so that their opponents could not get a grab on their head.

Four men stayed in the field to oppose one another. The judges announced the fights of Diagoras of Samos against Glaukos of Chios and of Astratos of Sicyon against Leonidas of Elis.

Diagoras, Glaukos and Astratos were mature, broad-chested men but Leonidas was still a young man. Alcibiades and Hipparchos placed no bets on Leonidas, but Theodote and Myrrhina had only eyes for the Elean. The man was lean, well-muscled. His muscles were hard and wiry, yet harmonious.

He rolled and flexed his muscles to loosen them, and Theodote exclaimed, 'ho, oh, hoops! Look at that!'

Alcibiades and Hipparchos silenced their women.

Then, Leonidas heaved his breast to show the public his powerful pectorals. He wanted to impress his opponent with his strength and beauty, and also the two noble women he had seen along the side. Theodote and Hipparchos's mistress stayed silent now, but their eyes and mouths said it all, and they rolled their eyes to each other in admiration.

Hipparchos shook his head, 'how is it possible?'

Leonidas faced Astratos. The two men ran into each other at a sign of the judge and grabbed each others' fingers. Leonidas let himself go down immediately, very fast. He totally surprised Astratos. He drew the Sicyonite over, placed his legs in the man's stomach and threw him over his own body into the grass. The Sicyonite made a full arch in the air and fell heavily on his back. Leonidas sprang up, meanwhile, and jumped on the man's belly. Astratos cried out in pain and rolled away. He wanted to get up, but while he rolled, Leonidas grabbed him again and exactly at the right moment, when Astratos had his back up to him. He closed the man in a ladder-grip. Leonidas pushed on Astratos until the man had his nose in the grass.

Astratos was a very strong man. He forced and curved his back several times, trying to get out of the ladder-grip. He tried with one hand behind his back to get hold of Leonidas's hands and fingers. He kicked with his feet to get some grasp there, and he wanted to bend his knees. But the ladder-grip held by an expert was most effective, and Leonidas had need of less strength to hold Astratos thus down than Astratos needed to get out of the grip. The fight on the ground lasted on, but there was not much fun in it for Alcibiades, because Leonidas gradually strangled more and more Astratos, so that after a while Astratos pointed his index finger of the right hand upwards, signalling his surrender. The judge allowed this victory to Leonidas. The youth from Elis had won unexpectedly, very quickly and decisively. Elis had a new hero! Leonidas stood with open arms of victory, and grinned openly to the two women who stood some distance further. Leonidas had heard female shouts among the cheering and he acknowledged well his supporters. The crowd, which consisted mostly of Eleans, forgave the women to cheer their hero.

In the second fight, Diagoras of Samos had won. The last game would be Leonidas against Diagoras. There were more Eleans among the crowd than of any other Hellenic tribe and polis. When the judges named Leonidas, the loudest roar of cheers went up from the crowd, and above those clang two shrill tones of Athenian women. The Eleans appreciated that Athens supported their local champion, but Alcibiades and Hipparchos hid behind the backs of the men in front of them. Would Leonidas win?

It lasted a while before the men began their last combat. They oiled themselves well, and let the judges see how the fine sand was poured over all places of their bodies.

Then they stood face to face. The judge gave the sign to start.

The crowd shouted loud appreciations for both the wrestlers. The bodies of the wrestlers gleamed in the sun as they clashed into each other. They hit with their fists first, then took hold of each others' arms and fingers. Diagoras tried to break the fingers of Leonidas, and the crowd saw the youth's mouth and face contorting with pain. The excitement rose and the spectators gesticulated wildly. Leonidas knelt under

the pressure and Diagoras towered above him. Leonidas fell to the ground, but he slid between the legs of Diagoras, escaping the pressure of Diagoras' hands. While he slid away, his hands got free, but Diagoras went for Leonidas's neck, ready to go for a stranglehold. Leonidas's hands were suddenly free. He grasped his opponent by the foot, heaved the foot up, and Diagoras lost balance and fell sideways. The crowd became wild for joy. While Diagoras fell, Leonidas twisted the foot severely and it was Diagoras now who cried out in pain. Leonidas might have twisted Diagoras's foot out of its sockets. Diagoras nevertheless kicked with that foot at the head of Leonidas, but the young man could take a bad punishment, and while Diagoras grimaced of pain, Leonidas jumped on Diagoras's back. Diagoras immediately rolled over and while both fighters rolled in the grass, Diagoras got hold of Leonidas's neck. He succeeded to catch Leonidas' head and twisted it aside. The two wrestlers stayed a long time on the ground probing, positioning arms and legs, and Diagoras had much the better of it.

Leonidas was almost immobilised. Then the Elean youth, under thundering ovations from his public, gathered all his energy and strength, and he curved his back until his spine was at the point of breaking. He succeeded to turn Diagoras and now Leonidas was on top of his opponent. Diagoras gazed on his back in the grass, and Leonidas had his back on Diagoras's belly. Leonidas could do nothing with his hands in that position, and Diagoras had his powerful arms around him. Diagoras was ready to roll over once more, trying to gain the upper hand. Leonidas managed to turn instantly while Diagoras rolled. Leonidas did not allow Diagoras to roll entirely over and get on his back again. Diagoras now had his face in the grass and Leonidas was on top of Diagoras. He had his strong arms around Diagoras's neck. Leonidas twisted until he got one arm entirely around Diagoras's neck. Diagoras was almost done for, unless he could also turn completely.

The Eleans around the stadium became hysterical, and Theodote jumped up and down of excitement. Diagoras could not escape. The two men lay twisting in the grass a long time. The judge stood close by the two men, sitting on one knee and looking intently to Diagoras's hands. The end came only long after, after Diagoras had lain without movement for quite a long time, after twisting and kicking and curving his back until he was exhausted. Leonidas enforced his stranglehold.

Then, Diagoras relaxed his body, and the judge saw the man opening his right hand and point the index finger upward. The judge ordered Leonidas to stop. Leonidas was the victor of the Olympic pankration. The judge declared the fight over and ended.

The Eleans burst into the stadium. They surrounded their hero and heaved him on their shoulders, carried him on top of the crowd, over hundreds of arms towards the Altis, where he would receive his victor's ribbons.

Theodote embraced Alcibiades ardently but Alcibiades drew her harshly away, even though he kept laughing, 'not here! Not here, Theodote! Behave yourself! This is Olympia!'

Theodote released Alcibiades, but the two women continued to jump up and down. Alcibiades and Hipparchos looked at each other, surprised at the joy and passion of the women.

Hipparchos remarked, 'it is a good thing they do not allow all women in here. There would be a revolution! If Diagoras had won he would have been devoured by these lionesses.'

The two men grabbed their women and led them, laughing, back to the tent-camp. Having taken bets on the wrestlers, they had lost a fortune on Diagoras, but the two women each had won a double fortune betting on Leonidas.

## Wreaths

The ninety-first Olympiads had ended. All the contests had been finished with the armour race the previous day. At the fifth day, all the victors would be crowned.

At sunrise, the victors assembled near the entry of the Altis. From there they formed a procession, preceded by the judges, and walked to the Temple of Zeus. The gates of the temple were wide open.

The priests waited on the dais for the procession to arrive. The victors went up the stairs of the temple one by one to be crowned by the judges, who stood next to the priests.

In full view of the statue of Zeus, Alcibiades was called first. He had been the most important victor of the first day. The high priest of Zeus put the wreath of the olive branches of Zeus's tree on his head, and he chanted a hymn of praise. Alcibiades thanked, greeted the crowd, and went down the stairs again, cheered by the people that had amassed at the foot of the temple.

When all the victors had thus been crowned by the judges and the priests, hordes of children, all clad in white robes, ran suddenly out of the Temple of Zeus. They came to the victors and showered them with leaves and flower petals from the baskets they wore. The judges then took the victors to the altar of Zeus, and as the men advanced through the crowd, they got once more sprinkled over with flowers and green leaves. After this triumphal parade and with the crowds still cheering, the Olympic Games ended officially.

Outside the Altis, the feasting continued. The people had roasted more animals. Sheep and goats were placed on grids and charcoal was heated under the meat. Every stall of the temporary marketplace outside the Altis had some food to sell. There was dancing, music and recitals of poems along the banks of the Alpheus. Men passed through the crowd wearing kraters of wine, and everybody had a bowl from which he served himself, giving a coin to the wine-sellers.

Alcibiades and Hipparchos walked amidst the people. Their heavily veiled mistresses walked in their midst, but as the afternoon set in, the women opened their veils. Many women were to be seen in Olympia now, and they shared fully in the feast. They sang hymns with the men. Flute-girls mixed with the men and Olympia was just a feast until very late in the night.

Alcibiades could return in triumph to Athens. He and Theodote returned to the city right after the Olympic Games, leaving it to Hipparchos to organise the return trip of the horses, goods and men.

In Athens, Alcibiades had two paintings made of him. The first picture represented him being crowned by Zeus Olympus and by Pythian, the patrons of the Olympian and the Pythian Games. The other picture represented him being crowned by Nemea, the patron goddess of the Nemean Games. He also asked the poet Euripides to write a victory ode to his mastery in the Olympian Games.

Alcibiades had defended the honour and the greatness of his polis brilliantly. He had won by means unheard of in Hellas up to his time, entering so many chariots in the races at huge cost. Alcibiades cherished his arrival in Athens. He loved the banquets organised in his honour, as well as his triumphal procession in the agora. Athens was at its knees for him. His influence in the Assembly was great. Henceforth, Nicias would be the second player.

Alcibiades enjoyed his revenge, but the joy blinded him. He did not perceive the growing jealousy of his person. Athens was a town of which the people always grew jealous of her heroes, and she distrusted profoundly men who became too popular. The Hellenes of Attica did not like men to be taller than them.



## ***Chapter 14 – Athens, Autumn 416 BC to Spring 415 BC***

### **Melos**

When Alcibiades was back in Athens and right after his triumph in the city, he took command of an Athenian fleet. He had enough experience of land battles. He needed also to excel in leading fleets, he thought. Athens sent him, much on his own proposal, to the Peloponnesian town of Argos where a pro-Spartan faction had once more taken control of the city. He gave the city back in the hands of the democratic Argives, and then he returned to Athens.

While Alcibiades was in Argos, Athens also led an expedition to the Island of Melos. The generals Cleomedes son of Lycomedes and Tisias son of Isomachus took thirty-eight triremes and about two thousand hoplites and archers to subdue the island. The Melians had remained strictly neutral in the previous wars. They had not joined the Delian League, and that had always been a thorn in Athenian eyes. Melos was a colony of Sparta, but the Melians had not harmed the Athenians during the wars. When the large Athenian army stood howling at the feet of their walls, the Melians still refused to give up their independence. They refused to submit to the Athenians, so the army of Tisias and Cleomedes surrounded the city with a counter-wall and they blockaded it by land and by sea, after which most of the Athenian army returned home. A garrison held the siege. The Melians would starve.

In the autumn of the year Alcibiades returned to Athens, the Melians attacked several times the Athenian walls that surrounded their city. They took by storm parts of the counter-wall. Through the breaches that they controlled they brought in everything their city needed for a prolonged siege.

Athens was angered at this obvious denial and provocation of her power.

The matter was discussed in the Assembly on the Pnyx. Alcibiades listened only half-heartedly.

The name of Melos concerned him of course, for Harmonia might still be on that island. He had lost hope, however, to ever see her back. Her image had become blurred in his mind, reduced to a concept of ideal love, to only an idea instead of the image of a living, breathing woman. He listened to the orators how they discussed the subject, but neither he, Alcibiades, nor Nicias, nor somebody of their political groups, intervened. He heard the orators demand revenge for the Melians' disrespect of the Athenian people.

The Assembly voted to send a new, stronger expedition to Melos, to take the town and to kill all the men of military age and also to make slaves of the rest of the population. Alcibiades did not expect Melos to be taken so easily. He knew how towns with high walls could withstand assaults. The mood of the Assembly was for revenge. Alcibiades found the eventual punishment excessive, but neither he nor Nicias voted against the proposal. They also did not oppose the proposal with speeches of their own.

Philocrates son of Demeus led the second expedition to Melos. He laid siege to Melos, and with the help of traitors from inside the town he succeeded in entering the city with his armed forces. The Melians surrendered unconditionally. Philocrates

ordered all the Melian men of military age to be taken prisoner, then to be executed. He did not ask a new judgement from the Athenian Assembly. He executed orders strictly. He brought all the young men together, and also the elders and the women and children and sold them as slaves for Athens. That happened in the spring of the following year.

### **Thrasybulus**

In late spring, Alcibiades inspected the military harbour of Piraeus. He went on foot from his house in the Scambonid quarter to the port, passing the acropolis and the narrow streets of Athens with its small, local temples. He was dressed in light armour and he wore a sword on his back. It was not necessary for him to do so, to be dressed like a hoplite general, but he wanted to impress the sailors, the guards and the carpenters who worked at the triremes. He wanted to inspect the arsenal. He had to show that a general was around, and he supposed he would have to slash sternly around with a few critics and harsh words to shabby military endeavours in the harbour. Over his leather breastplate he wore a white cloak with the coloured patterns of Athena at the ends. He tucked the cloak around him because the air was fresh while he walked through the streets that early morning.

The people of Athens greeted him. Everybody knew him by now. He was stopped in his way several times by people who complained to him about the states that the streets were in. A man, obviously distressed, told him he had been robbed in the night. Thieves had made a hole in the wall of his house while he was out to attend to a symposium, and his wife, who slept on the first floor, had heard nothing. The man was still in shock, for almost all his savings, which he had carefully hidden under a loose tile of his floor, had disappeared. He suspected one of the slaves to have told the thieves where he kept his money. Alcibiades listened patiently to the man, but he could not do much beyond telling the man to bring the theft to the courts and to accuse the slave. The slave might confess in the court when the judges interrogated him.

Alcibiades walked on and passed through the gates of the town. The gates were still guarded, though with far fewer men than during the war. The guards saluted him. Alcibiades saw that the guards were quite observant, or at least that they were showing some zeal while he passed. With his armour and general's cloak, the guards had recognised him from the far. Still, Alcibiades knew the commander of the guards here. It was a veteran who had been with him at Potidaea, now a mature man. He had remarked while he approached that the commander was not in the guard house sleeping, drinking or gambling. The man had stood outside the gates all the time, watching his men and looking at the traffic that passed, opening a wagon once in a while to inspect the contents. Noticing such attention, Alcibiades might have forgiven a rusty sword, a blunt spear or a lack of weapons at the gate, because he liked men that were observant while on duty. The hoplites of the guards were well armed, so he saluted the men ostentatiously and he exchanged a few polite words with the commander, joking with him over a particularly clumsy driver of a heavily laden wagon of amphorae that entered the city. The commander was proud to have been remarked, and when Alcibiades backslapped the man, he saluted him too, solemnly, respectfully, showing his pleasure, before he walked on. The man had grown taller by

a few fingers then, and he had gained much face with his group of guards from being thus recognised by a general.

Alcibiades passed between the walls of the corridor to Piraeus. The shacks he had seen during the plague, when he had returned from Potidaea, had all disappeared. The people who had lived here had returned to the country. The Athenian magistrates had the wooden structures be demolished. A squadron of home guards returned from their night duty to the city. The men were tired but they saluted Alcibiades enthusiastically. Some of these men must have been in battles in which he had fought too, so he stopped, saluted, bringing his right hand up, and let them pass respectfully. There was much traffic of wagons and chariots so early in the morning, mostly traffic entering the city. Soon there would be so many people in the streets, that the heavy wagons would have it difficult to pass. The merchants preferred to enter the city early. Alcibiades took his time to reach Piraeus. He noticed to his own amazement that he was not bored. He was genuinely curious about the passing men. He saw the various goods that were brought into the city, mostly wheat and barley, but also fish and olives to be sold in the agora. He noticed wine amphorae. He had even seen an entire wagon filled with Chian wine. Loads of corn passed, as well as a cart with arms, and carts with barrels filled with olive oil. He saw a few guards leading a group of people who were newly arrived slaves, women and children.

When Alcibiades arrived in Piraeus, he smelled the Sea from far away, but also the stink of rotten fish, of burnt oil, of pitch with which the carpenters caulked the planks of the ships. Piraeus was feverishly at work. It was not just a harbour. It was a town in her own right, and a very industrious town at that.

The actual harbours were called Kantharos, which was the merchant port, and Zea and Munichia, the military harbours. Alcibiades walked on the road to the harbour. This road was cut out of the rock, for Piraeus was nothing but an enormous hill of rock that entered into the Sea. There were no water wells at Piraeus, for ground water could not be reached through the rock. Athens had therefore built cisterns to preserve water here.

Piraeus was a rather new town, for in earlier times Phalerum had been the harbour of Athens. Athens had asked Hippodamus son of Euryphron of Miletus, an architect and mathematician, to draw the patterns of the streets. That had happened less than fifty years ago. The streets of Piraeus were therefore relatively wide, and very straight to configure a system of rectangular house blocks. Hippodamus had left Athens and become one of the men sent by Athens to help found the city of Thurii in Italy, together with such other famous men like Protagoras of Abdera and Herodotus. Piraeus looked in all aspects like a typical harbour town. There were many taverns, many merchant houses, stores, and brothels. There were markets for all kinds of exotic goods, and also many temples.

In Piraeus lived and met people from the entire world. The Hellenes had built temples to Zeus Sôter, to Athena Soteria and to Artemis Munichia. There were shrines dedicated to the heroes of Piraeus, to Akropotes, Eetion, Munichia, Paralos and Serangos. Other temples were dedicated to Asclepius, to Dionysos and to Demeter. Hellenes from all countries and islands came to pray here, and offer sacrifices for safe voyages on the Sea and for profitable trade. There were also Egyptian temples of Isis, Amon and Sarapis at Piraeus, as well as Phoenician temples for Baal and Nergal.

Piraeus was a town of the world, not just of Attica. It was a metropolis. It had a cultural life and political views of its own. It was tolerant and open to influences. The people here respected trade, foreign religions, and all kinds of political conceptions. They had to. Any other attitude would have been detrimental to the circulation of men and goods, and to trade. Piraeus formed a very liberal community, and Athens guarded it to remain that way. It was an interesting place for walks and for shopping, and a very lively town. There was always something strange and unusual about the place. Many languages could be heard in its streets. Many different dresses and people of various colours could be seen in its quarters closest to the Sea. It was a very congenial place. Piraeus was part of Athens, but it was also different from Athens. It had its own *astynomoi*, its own administrators responsible for the upkeep of the public building and for the public works, and for its policing. There were five such *astynomoi* for Piraeus, as many as there were for Athens.

Alcibiades arrived at the arsenal first, and he stepped resolutely into the large building to see whether order had been kept and whether enough gear was still in stock for the trireme fleets. He walked along the sails, the endless rows of oars, the heaps of ropes, the planks of wood, the stacks of nails, the plates of iron, and he inspected the weapons.

At the moment he entered, a supervisor of the arsenal had run up to him and the man fetched the papers of the arsenal. They went through the inventory together. The man was glad to tell him what should be replenished. He reported on the state of certain items such as of the old sails. Alcibiades found that there were not enough sails as compared to the number of oars, and the sails that lay packed against the south wall were indeed not in good shape. He would see to it that their renewal was voted for in the Assembly. He made up a list of all that had to be done to bring the arsenal in ready shape.

While he walked around in the arsenal, he saw a man, a sailor, standing before a row of masts. He recognised the man, brought a hand on his shoulder, and stepped beside him.

He said, 'hi, Thrasybulus, all going well?'

Thrasybulus was a trierarch, and the captain of his own ship. He was the son of a moderately well-to-do family of Athens, which owned a trireme. He lived only for his ship and his journeys at Sea.

'Yes, hi, Alcibiades,' Thrasybulus replied. 'All is fine, but my mast is bent. It is too old. I need a new mast. I am here to pick out a fine one. I'll pay for it, of course. It is not easy to find the right one, though.'

'Good. Take what you want. Shall we do an exercise of manoeuvring in a while?'

'No, not today,' Thrasybulus answered. He was relieved that he could say no to Alcibiades. 'My ship is in the sheds, being repaired. That is why I am here. Maybe later.'

Alcibiades left it at that, and he was secretly relieved also, for Thrasybulus was a man of much cunning and deviousness, as he was himself, at Sea. They had exercised often, to test the preparedness of their ships and crews. But such exercises were always hard-fought contests and very tiring. Alcibiades had no taste for a tiring afternoon today.

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On one of his previous inspection tours, Alcibiades had seen a fine ship lying next to the Harmonia. The ship was called the Axionike, the 'worthy of victory'. The Harmonia and the Axionike were on guard duty in the harbour of Munichia. The sailors of the Axionike were around, and rowers prepared to enter the boat. Alcibiades saw a stout man, a few years older than he, giving orders from the stone quays. He approached the man.

He pointed to his ship and said, 'greetings! My name is Alcibiades. I am the trierarch of the Harmonia, there.'

'Oh, hi,' the man replied, surprised at being spoken to. 'I am Thrasybulus and I am also a trierarch. The Axionike is my ship, here. I am on guard.'

'She looks like a fine ship to me,' Alcibiades commented.

He was not sure whether the man knew who he was. Thrasybulus was a trierarch however, a man to be respected.

Every year, four hundred of the wealthiest citizens of Athens were liable to serve as trierarchs. Three out of four of these were chosen to take command of a ship at Piraeus. The polis provided the ship, but the trierarchs paid for repairs, for food and water for the crews. Thrasybulus or his father belonged without doubt to the tightly knit and small class of the richest citizens of Athens, and Alcibiades suspected the trireme itself was also owned by this man.

Thrasybulus showed no surprise whatever to be addressed by Alcibiades. 'She is a fine lady indeed, flows more rapidly than the wind.'

'Is she now? Do you think she can beat the Harmonia in rowing speed too?'

'Sure, she can,' Thrasybulus bluffed.

'How much would you bet on that?'

Alcibiades asked.

'No money,' Thrasybulus refused. 'But I bet anyhow my ship is faster than yours!'

'All right,' Alcibiades said. 'Bet taken. For no money. We are both on guard. We might as well exercise a bit.'

He saw his men coming out of the taverns. They had seen him come to inspect the ship.

Thrasybulus continued. 'First beyond the mole of Eetonia and in the open Sea. Then we exercise a while in war manoeuvring outside the harbour until dark at the latest.' It was in the early afternoon.

'Good,' Alcibiades replied. 'Wait until my men are ready.'

'You said war exercise,' Thrasybulus insisted. 'That means we start NOW!'

He shouted the word out loud, surprising Alcibiades entirely, and ran with two mighty strides towards the deck of his trireme.

The sailors had heard Thrasybulus shout the command to embark, and seen him jump aboard. They all ran to action very rapidly, to their places on the bunks, and to their oars. A few of Thrasybulus's men had been in the taverns with the men of the Harmonia. By some miracle they had seen what happened, so they ran out of the doors towards the ship. Alcibiades cursed, but he ran back to the Harmonia. He shouted commands frantically, and his men burst into action. Alcibiades took the helm himself since he did not see his steersman. The taverns around the harbour emptied, as all the rowers heard that their ships were bound to leave in rapid exercise mode.

The Harmonia and the Axionike had been on guard that day, their crews in waiting nearby. Many men had been in the boats, other strolled around, some gambled on the quay, and many had been drinking cheap wine in the taverns of the quays. They had

not expected to be called upon at this time however. The contest between Alcibiades and Thrasybulus was thus also an exercise in readiness.

The ships filled with cursing men, and Alcibiades had now his steersman and captain. Thrasybulus's trireme was already free from its mooring and the first oars splashed in the water while men still jumped aboard. The ship slowly moved into the harbour. Thrasybulus was several beats of oars away when the *Harmonia* only left the quay. Bystanders gathered in the harbour to watch the contest. Both ships raced towards the opening of the military harbour, towards the Sea, and Thrasybulus's ship was two full boat lengths in front of the *Harmonia*.

Alcibiades stood on the deck of the *Harmonia*. He heard the regular swishing of the oars in the water. The masts of the ship were lowered and all the gear of sails was tugged in the middle of the hull. The deck was clean. The ship was nothing but an empty hull in which sat the oarsmen, a helmsman and a captain. Alcibiades had a captain on board, a *kybernikês* who generally oversaw the rowers and gave orders to manoeuvre the boat, so that the *Harmonia* could sail without him. The man was almost useless now, but always a good advisor.

Alcibiades moved to the prow. His captain walked in the middle of the deck. The man relayed Alcibiades's commands to the helmsman, the pilot or *prorates* of the ship. Alcibiades had in the past taught these two men and also his rowing master, his *keluestês*, the man who yelled to the rowers the pace of the beats of the oars, a series of very short commands. They had also developed simple signs to work by. He would shout 'turn' and show the direction with his arm. As long as the arm held, the turning had to continue. When the arm was lowered, the turning should stop. He cried a few commands for speed also.

Next to Alcibiades stood his flute player, his *trieraulês*. This man beat the cadence at which Alcibiades wanted the boat to advance. He shouted at the *keluestês* to give more speed. The man gave a more rapid rhythm, about the maximum at which the oarsmen could move the slender oars in the Sea. The *trieraulês* continued the rhythm. The rowing rhythm was very high now, for this was a race. Many men were still filled with the wine of the inns, but they rowed with all their might, caught in the excitement of the race.

Alcibiades saw that Thrasybulus stood in the middle of the length of the deck. Thrasybulus had no additional captain. He was captain of the ship himself. He also had a flute player, and Alcibiades saw him shouting orders constantly. Thrasybulus's oars slew the waves in regular cadence. However hard Alcibiades tried to push the rhythm, Thrasybulus kept the pace. The distance between the two triremes did not diminish, but Alcibiades also did not lose more lengths. The two ships raced one boat straight behind the other, at maximum speed, a speed they never held in a harbour because too dangerous there. They only reached such speed in the open Sea or in the middle of a battle.

The two triremes thus left the military harbour of Piraeus, and the ships darted to the Sea. There were merchant ships sailing before them, and the crews of these were at first astonished at the high speed of the triremes; then they tried to get out of the way. When they realised that a war exercise was going on, and a contest at that, they stood at their railings and shouted enthusiastically to the oarsmen on the triremes.

Each trireme had on each side three superimposed rows of oarsmen. That was why the ship was called a trireme. One crew sat directly above the lowest planks, inside the

hull, the thalamus. These were the fifty-four thalamites, the poorest crewmen. They sat less than three feet above the water. Bilge water stagnated here, and seawater always splashed in, soaking through the hull planks. These men did not see anything, not even the water. They sat under the other rowers and received the stench, sweat and occasionally, in battle, the urine of the men from the upper rows.

Above them sat fifty-four zygiante oarsmen. These sat on the middle banks, perched on the crossbeams of the trireme, the zygae. These men also could not see the water. The top crew sat somewhat outwards, and just a little lower than the deck, on an outrigger. The top row occupied the most prestigious slots, and there were sixty-two of them, called the thanites. These were the elite rowers. They could enjoy the sea breezes and they had more room than the thalamites and the zygiante rowers. They saw their oars hit the water, but they were also most vulnerable to enemy slingshots, arrows and javelins. They set the pace of the oars.

Each oar was about fifteen feet long. One hundred and eight rowers of the one hundred and seventy could not see the water and how or where they rowed. Each ship had about two hundred men in its crew.

Alcibiades saw the men of the upper row draw on the oars, then push the oars up and forward. These men were heavily muscled at arms and shoulders. They were recruited from the poorer citizens and metics of Athens, but they were still Athenians and no mercenaries. They all sat on a piece of leather, because when they drew and heaved, they slid in the effort forward and backward on the bench. Each man held one oar and each man sat alone; no other man sat next to him. The trireme was not wide, only a few feet separated the rowers of both sides. The trireme was about a hundred and fifteen feet long from bow to stern and twenty feet wide amidships. It was lean, rapid and deadly, its only function to ram and so to destroy enemy ships. The *Harmonia* shot forward and cleaved the waves.

The sun stood right before Alcibiades and Thrasybulus in the sky. The waves were coming in directly at the prows, so that the ships went up against the waves, and then descended again behind a wave. Water was thrown up white and greyish against the prow where Alcibiades stood. The prow of the *Harmonia* gracefully curved in the air, powerfully and proudly. The ship's prow had huge, white eyes of inlaid marble, so that the trireme resembled a ferocious sea-monster. Alcibiades looked at its figurehead, a multi-coloured figure of Aphrodite's daughter, *Harmonia*, his private patron. There, at the front of the ship, just at the water line, all the beams of the length of the ship came together in a gracious knot to end in a powerful, strong wooden point that was hardened and sculpted. The sole weapon of the trireme was this point, with which it could ram an adversary in the vulnerable broadsides and smash the side planks of enemy boats. It had to crash in the weaker side part of an enemy boat or an enemy trireme, to crash a huge hole in the hull of the other ship and then it had to disengage, row backwards, and let the water flow terribly in the belly of the enemy. Rowers would be killed during the crash, and pieces of wood would pierce into flesh, but that was what trireme war was all about. If the ship had hoplites or light troops aboard, javelins, slingshots or arrows could be shot at the enemy boat. When crashing into the planks of an enemy would not succeed, triremes could float aside each other, and then a regular fight could ensue on the two decks. The rowers were armed with javelins and short swords. When this happened, the oars of one or of both the ships might have been destroyed in the manoeuvre.

Oars that wildly swung around and broke could kill, maim or wound rowers in great numbers. When a ship sank, and gradually filled with water, the rowers fell into the Sea. Most rowers could not swim.

There was more than one way to die at Sea. One might be killed by the prow of a trireme, killed by a javelin, an arrow or a stone, pierced by sharp pieces of wood torn from the wreckage that penetrated bodies. One could drown in the water or die in the sea of cold.

The rowers were glad this was only an exercise in nice weather, though the waves were strong here in front of the harbour. The oars swished in the water and drove the ship forward.

Suddenly, Thrasybulus, having decided he had won the race, turned very sharply to the right. For that, his oarsmen on the left side of his ship held their oars in the water, without rowing, whereas the oarsmen on the right side continued to row. The ship was blocked by the oars in the water but it turned because of the force on the other side. All the diligence and discipline and art of the Athenian oarsmen was in having all the men do the same thing at the same fraction of time after the command. Thrasybulus's oarsmen responded to the commands of their captain to perfection. The Axionike turned.

If Alcibiades did nothing, Thrasybulus would turn in half a circle in the shortest of moments and ram him amidships. He had expected something like this to happen. He could do the same quickly and try to ram the other boat. This was dangerous for an exercise however, and he did not know yet how fast Thrasybulus would react. So he made his ship turn left.

His helmsman and his rowing master executed his silent orders to perfection, and instantly. All men were very tense now, all attention on the hard contest in which they had to show their pride and expertise. All knew that now was the moment of pride or of disgrace and none wanted to be the shame of the ship and be scowled in all the inns of Piraeus. This exercise could be deadly too, at the slightest error of judgement or at any wrong reaction.

Thrasybulus might expect to come out behind him, maybe hope that Alcibiades would continue straight on. Instead of that, Alcibiades shouted 'turn', held out his left arm at the prow and kept it there so that his ship made a full circle in the opposite direction of Thrasybulus's circle. When his movement was complete, Alcibiades could expect to have Thrasybulus's ship in full length before him, nicely ready to be rammed. Alcibiades's top rowing men were already shouting, 'hyppapai! Hyppapai!' their war cry at ramming.

Before Alcibiades had completed his circle however, Thrasybulus had seen what Alcibiades was doing, so he had ordered a full circle too and the two ships were again one behind the other. The two trierarchs tried to perform this manoeuvre at least four times in a row, in variants. The art and experience in these manoeuvres was to keep all the oars in synchronisation, rowing at the same pace and stopping to row or advancing exactly at the same moments. One error, one loss of the pace by one rower meant that the ship would stall or become the prey to the winds in open Sea; it meant chaos, lost time and disgrace.

Alcibiades's crew matched Thrasybulus's men in this game. Alcibiades always came out behind Thrasybulus in the end, and from the winner of a race Thrasybulus had become the chased captain, Alcibiades the pursuer. This situation suited Thrasybulus



very badly, surmised Alcibiades, and Thrasybulus time after time tried to shake off Alcibiades by turning in full circles, half circles, parts of circles, and row forward at angles. In none of these movements could Thrasybulus shake off the Harmonia, but Thrasybulus also never made an error of steersmanship or of judgement, so that Alcibiades was never in a position where he might have rammed Thrasybulus amidships. The movements were performed at maximum speed and as the sun set, the crews, though piqued at the game, also got tired. They had been almost half a day at Sea, never resting a moment, always rowing as fast as they could, at maximum force. Even in a sea-battle, such expenditure of effort would have been tremendous.

Alcibiades was still rowing his ship behind Thrasybulus, and he wanted to signal him to call off the movements. Then, Thrasybulus did something that he had not done so far, a manoeuvre Alcibiades had not expected. Thrasybulus had enough of being pursued. He ordered his oars stiff in the water, then to row backwards. He would probably draw in his oars to one side or to the two sides, and Alcibiades risked having all his oars on the right side ripped off. If Alcibiades called his right oars in, his ship would turn to the right and be rammed, though not with the Axionike's prow. Alcibiades could turn to the left, and that was probably what Thrasybulus had expected. Had he done that, Thrasybulus would have continued backwards a bit, made a left circle too and come out behind Alcibiades, where he had always wanted to be. Alcibiades decided to stop too, but not to row backwards. He ordered his trireme somewhat more to the right, then to stop in exactly the same manner as Thrasybulus's boat. All this he had to order at twice the speed of Thrasybulus's commands because he had less time, and his orders had to be executed to perfection. The two triremes slid one along the other. Both captains had entered the oars on the touching side but they held the oars on the other side still in the water so that the triremes turned alongside. Then the two captains cried, 'hooks!'

Grappling hooks flew from each ship to the other.

The two ships were locked now. Alcibiades had called first to link the two ships, but Thrasybulus had had the same idea. Rowers jumped from one deck to the other and then stood dancing on the other boat's deck. The two trierarchs also stood laughing in the middle of the decks, for each had not expected the other to give the same order. After a while, Alcibiades shouted, 'shall we call the exercise off, Thrasybulus, calling it a draw? It is getting late!'

Thrasybulus looked around and saw the fatigue in his men.

He shouted back, 'I need a drink! Back to harbour!'

The men untied the grappling hooks and made for the harbour of Munichia, rowing at leisure.

Thrasybulus brought his trireme at the quays alongside Alcibiades's. The two trierarchs jumped off their ship, tired but laughing, slapped at each other's shoulders, all tension gone now, and went to a tavern where Thrasybulus knew the host and where he said was the best wine of Munichia.

Thrasybulus shook his head and said, 'you're actually a fine captain! Where have you learned the movements, general? I would never have thought generals knew how to command single combat ships that way!'

Alcibiades had exercised the Harmonia often, all alone at Sea, doing and repeating several manoeuvres with his captain. He had heard other captains in the harbours talk of the movements of ships at Sea. His rowers and captain and his helmsmen knew to react punctiliously, as he wanted, and rapidly at that. He had learned on his own with

his ship, and he had been ready. Alcibiades's own captain was a veteran at Sea, and this man also had transferred all his knowledge to Alcibiades. Alcibiades had had a good teacher, so unlike most of the other generals, he could direct his trireme alone. He replied, 'I exercised, Thrasybulus, I exercised!'

Thrasybulus looked awkwardly at Alcibiades. Then he drew him inside the tavern. Thrasybulus taught Alcibiades other tricks that evening. More men of the Harmonia and of the Axionike entered the inn, and music and loud shouts filled the evening. It cost Alcibiades a lot of money.

Two very drunken captains returned late in the night to Athens. From then on, the two men were friends and they saw each other once every while. They exercised their rowers together and also exercised with squadrons of triremes. That was the Thrasybulus Alcibiades had met in the arsenal.

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After a while, Alcibiades now walked out of the arsenal and he visited the ship-sheds. About ten galleys, ten triremes, were being built. Twenty ships had been drawn into the sheds and these were being cleaned and repaired. One trireme was in a particularly bad shape. Debris and shells had accumulated on its bottom planks. These were being scraped off. The trireme had been a long time at Sea. Carpenters worked all around the ship and long bent planks were being brought in, while rotten planks were being removed from the ship. On the quays, Alcibiades had seen carpenters bending the long planks in boiling water. This was a difficult job, and many men were needed to bend the wood in the exact shape of the hull of a trireme. Alcibiades had seen the shaping and the re-trying going on, and he admired the skills of the men. He knew a few of the carpenters also, though many of the artisans were slaves. The supervisors were citizens, however, and Alcibiades knew some of them from previous military campaigns. All seemed in fine order of functioning in the port.

The harbour was well guarded by two triremes, which could ram and sink instantly any ship that would have dared to enter the port without permission. The entrance of the harbour was narrow anyhow, for Athens had built stone piers that closed almost completely the small gulf, leaving only place for two ships to enter simultaneously. Other triremes, about ten more of them, were lying in the water with sails and oars ready. These ships were moored along the quays, but they could be rowed out of the harbour very rapidly. Squadrons of hoplites rested in the barracks along the quays to man these ships in a very short time.

Athens was ready at all times to withstand a naval attack on its harbour.

### **The Melian slaves**

Alcibiades inspected in this way the two military ports of Piraeus, Zea and Munichia. He would do so every few days, whereas the other generals almost never entered the harbour. Alcibiades liked to know about the sailors, the oarsmen, and the state of the ships. He knew by name the best triremes, the better trierarchs, and the best helmsmen. His own ship, the Harmonia, was currently being repaired in a ship-shed of Munichia, and next to her laid Callias's trireme. Callias never ventured into the harbour, but he had asked Alcibiades to care for the boat as if she were his own.

Alcibiades loved the ships, and he longed to be on a long boat-trip again, perhaps to visit the far Ionian Islands or the beautiful, attractive lands of the Hellespont.

It was a good time past noon, in the early afternoon, that he felt his inspection tour was finished. He strode on to the merchant harbour out of curiosity. Many boats were coming in, heavily laden with all the goods that Athens needed and traded in: fish, barley, ores, wooden beams, amphorae of wine and oils, olives, figs, and dates. He looked at the unloading of the ships, remarking which ones were handled with the most skill, in the shortest time, and which boats had it difficult to find a good place along the quays. He knew also some of the finest boat-owners and the best seamen.

Alcibiades suddenly saw Nicias stand on a quay with a few of his stewards and with the slaves that served him as clerks. Nicias was dressed as a common Athenian, but he was coughing and when Alcibiades approached, Nicias drew his himation further over his body, and he drew it closer. Nicias had a cold and though he greeted Alcibiades courteously, he was not in the best of moods. Could Nicias ever be in a good mood seeing Alcibiades?

Nicias kept a particularly blank face when he saw Alcibiades, and he was not happy at all to see him. Alcibiades's curiosity was all the more piqued. What was Nicias up to here, in the harbour, dressed like an ordinary citizen so that his presence would not be too much noticed? Alcibiades ignored Nicias's sour looks and he accompanied him a while. The two men strode along the quays at which the latest boats newly arrived. Nicias was a rich man and his stewards organised a tough trading house. Alcibiades and Nicias, though opponents in the Assembly, also now had many common interests in politics, as well as in trade.

Alcibiades started to talk about the latest topic of the Assembly: a military expedition to Sicily. Nobody knew who had really proposed it first to send an expedition to Sicily.

This spring, the Sicilian town of Egesta had sent delegates to Athens. The ambassadors had come to ask Athens' aid in a dispute they had with their neighbours of Selinunt. Selinunt had attacked the lands of Egesta, and the Selinuntians had received the support of Syracuse.

The Egestaeans brought sixty talents of un-coined silver with them, which was the equivalent of a month's pay for the sailors of sixty ships. They asked the Athenians to help them defend Egesta against the Syracusans. Sixty talents was a lot of money, and many eyes in the Athenian Assembly widened far open when the amount was mentioned. Any expedition of sixty ships would however remain a long time in Sicily, for many months. The sum was not nearly enough for a major campaign. And not only triremes would have to be paid for, but also hoplites, cavalry perhaps, and logistics. The Egestaeans offered more money, which they claimed they possessed in their temple. In a few days the Assembly would have to decide what to do.

Alcibiades was undecided. He still thought that an alliance could be made with Syracuse, maybe after paying her a little. He thought there might be an opportunity in securing the Syracusans from their arch-enemies, the Carthaginians and use that promise as a lure to get Syracuse in Athenian influence. But were sixty triremes enough to force Syracuse? If no rapid peace could be concluded in Sicily, a war might ensue with the town and its allies. Such a war might be long and costly. Could he succeed as a general, where Laches had merely contained the Sicilian and Italian

peoples? Of course, Sicily was Sparta's grain barn. Blocking Sicilian cereals supplies to Sparta would weaken the enemy. He wondered how Nicias felt about Egesta.

'The Egestaeans made a remarkable show two days ago,' Alcibiades began.

Nicias watched Alcibiades's face now, scrutinising it for some time, probing for any feeling or expression that would betray Alcibiades's opinion. Alcibiades's face remained blank, however.

'Yes,' Nicias answered, 'Sixty triremes is a large fleet. The Egestaeans brought a lot of silver, but not nearly enough for any campaign in Sicily. We are at peace. Why would we engage in a new war in a far land?'

Nicias had already told much more than Alcibiades expected. Alcibiades continued to probe.

He said, 'Athens is stronger than ever. We have many young hoplites again. One of the greatest states of the Peloponnesos is our ally. We are strong. Syracuse is not so strong. The Sicilians are good sailors, but they are traders in the first place, traders and farmers. They do not have a well organised military fleet. Their fleet is much smaller than ours. They have no large army, few veterans, no generals worth mentioning, and no recent experience at war. They are a sturdy race and in a long war they will learn quickly and gain strength instead of weaken. Yet, they are no match for our swift triremes and for our hoplites. Syracuse is a democracy. Chances are that they will make a treaty with us.'

Nicias was impatient.

'Alcibiades,' he said, and he stopped walking, 'we have just emerged from a plague period that has been devastating, and out of a terrible war. We have gained peace with Sparta and with Argos, but great allies of Sparta, such as Corinth and Thebes, resent us, and these grow stronger every day. We may be attacked yet again sometime in the future. What would we go to Sicily for? The land is far away, and vast, largely unknown territory to our hoplites. I heard you and others state we would need a large cavalry to win in Sicily. We don't have much of a cavalry, and transporting hundreds of horses would be a vastly costly operation. What is it? Do you want to get rich from selling your horses once more?'

Alcibiades ignored the insult. Yes, he could need the money from selling his horses to the Athenian army. Already he had sent messages to Hipparchos to buy a lot more animals. But he did not want this argument to be played against him in the Assembly. Many Athenians would grow rich from a new war, Nicias not in the least.

He said, 'we have to think about our polis, Nicias. What do we want to become? If we rest on our accomplishments, we shall become poorer. We have to advance, change, and use the opportunities. We must profit from new experiences, seize chances, and grow in power. We cannot stay idle and let Sparta and Corinth scheme at our expense. The moment they reach the Orient, make friends with the Great King of Persia, they too will build a large fleet, and the war will start again. Syracuse could become an ally and an ally that is forceful. We can help them set up a military fleet, a fleet that could be as large as our own and well-disciplined, maybe led by some of our captains. I have been in Syracuse. The people there are not really a military-minded lot, but they are strong, wily men. They only need to be organised, but once that done, they could be as powerful as Athens and be on our side. They will never be a rich merchant polis like Athens, because they are too outside the trading routes with the Orient and with Egypt, while we are at the centre of the Sea. I have seen Syracuse however. They

have a natural harbour larger than Piraeus. Their port is well defended. Their acropolis is in fact a complete island. The city can be taken only by a sea-power. With such an ally, and a faithful ally, I am sure, we would be invincible. We just have to help them fend off the Carthaginians. If we organise Syracuse well, no Persian gold and no Spartan hoplite army would ever be able to defeat us!

Nicias coughed terribly but he retorted. 'No Spartan army and no Persian money can defeat us today, Alcibiades. In Sicily we would not make friends but enemies. Syracuse is no enemy of ours today, and also not a friend. The Syracusans will resent it if we make allies of them at the points of our spears and with the power of our triremes. Suppose Thebes and Sparta attack us while our generals and ships are in Sicily? Why, Piraeus could be attacked and taken in one single day!'

'I thought you said we were at peace with Sparta,' Alcibiades laughed.

'We are,' Nicias smiled too, 'but Sparta will not hesitate, and Thebes even less, to attack us if we lose our army and our fleet in far lands. They will exploit any major misfortune of ours.'

'I agree,' Alcibiades said. 'So we have to make sure that no misfortunes befall on us! We have all the strength and the souls to make sure of that.'

Alcibiades looked out into the harbour and he stopped talking, for a large merchant ship came to moor to a stretch of the quay where he and Nicias were walking. The boat was already quite close to them, and Alcibiades understood suddenly better why Nicias was in the port at this time. The ship that was approaching with half sails was heavily loaded. It lay very low in the water. It was a slow, bulky, ugly kind of boat, not built for grace or swiftness but for bringing vast loads of goods safely from harbour to harbour along safe coastal routes. It had a large, dirty, patched up, heavy sail on its mast. Two other ships, which resembled the first one like twins, sailed a little behind, and two war triremes also entered the neck of the merchant port now, a rather unusual event in these parts of the harbour. The triremes had been escorting the transport ships. The three boats were not only laden with goods. On the wooden decks of the three ships stood women and children. There were a few young men in the boats and a few elder men, but Alcibiades saw mainly the women and children. In the first ship, which had by now moored, the people stoop upright, waiting to disembark. On the following ships, many people were still lying or seated on deck. The boats were slave ships, and Nicias had known that they would arrive in this afternoon. The ships must be his property or he had bought full slave loads.

Alcibiades did not have to wonder where the boats and the slaves came from. The men of Melos had been killed; their women and children were being sold as slaves. Nicias had bought or would be buying Melian slaves.

Alcibiades turned and said to his companion, 'I did not know you traded in slaves also, Nicias. Melos certainly was an opportunity. You will have more slaves for the silver mines of Laurion.'

Nicias was shocked. He only showed his teeth at first.

He answered and coughed, 'I do buy and sell slaves occasionally, Alcibiades. But these are not mine! Philocrates son of Demeus sent these cargoes to Athens. Those slaves belong to our polis. They will be sold in the next days. I need a dozen more slaves for my country house. I thought I would see for myself how the slaves from Melos were, maybe pick a few out.'

‘Yes,’ Alcibiades thought. ‘You came to choose the best ones first because Philocrates has sent you word. Then his stewards will single out your choices and oh, yes, you will pay a fair price, but you will have the first pick at the best ones.’ He did not say this loudly, however, for every magistrate of Athens would have acted this way. It was not really cheating on the polis, merely an opportunity to grasp. Still, Nicias was ill at ease, and Alcibiades smiled knowingly. The noble Nicias, the pious Nicias! Nicias took the occasion for granted, like every other man in Athens.

Nicias liked to be called the most eminent citizen of Athens. He liked to be popular. He liked it to be known that he cared for, loved Athens, and he had used his wealth to that effect. Nicias had already profited himself against Cleon after Pericles’s death. He organised theatre representations and paid fully for them, public shows, and athletic games. He entertained the Athenians with choruses. He was known to be an extremely pious man, and very superstitious. He sacrificed to the gods daily. Nicias had won the sympathy of Athens and notoriety when he had been ordered, received the request, to organise the voyage of the Athenian choruses to the Festival at Delos. Nicias had made the Athenian choruses disembark at Rhenea, close to Delos. He had brought with him a bridge adorned with garlands and painted in many colours, also gilded. In the night, Nicias laid his bridge over the channel between Rhenea and Delos and in the morning he led the Athenian choruses in a wonderful procession to the honour of the god over that bridge, into Delos. The choruses were magnificently ornamented and as they sang their hymns, they formed the finest spectacle the Delians had ever seen in their festival.

Yes, Nicias spent money lavishly for the glory of Athens. But Alcibiades knew that Nicias also owned very many slaves who worked to their deaths in the dark shafts and tunnels of hazardous silver mines and works at Laurion. Nicias was a man who loved humanity, or so it seemed, but his humanity was based on the misery of hundreds, if not thousands of slaves. And Nicias had come to augment his army of slaves. He would not be buying just one or two slaves. He would buy most of the entire load. Yet, Alcibiades envied Nicias for the man’s immense wealth.

Alcibiades gazed back at the Sea where the second boat was now also busy mooring, while the first was secured with ropes. Wooden planks were rolled from the quays to the railings of the ship and at first two sailors came down to the quay, then the slaves were pushed on land. Many of them still had sea-legs and wobbled unsure of their feet on land. Hoplite guards approached to guide and contain the mass of women and children.

### **Timandra**

Alcibiades looked again at the second ship. He was not much interested in the sight of dirty, tired women, youth and elder men. He had not come to buy slaves. His attention was attracted only by the buzz of the people who were now eagerly talking to each other, glad to be on land again.

They were pointing at the harbour buildings, the ship-sheds and to the acropolis. Alcibiades saw women of all ages. Most of the people wore heavy himations, which they might have used well to keep them warm in the sea-winds. They were exposed unsheltered to the natural elements, wind and rain, on the decks. They must have sat for several days on that deck, though Melos lay not so far from Athens, slept also on

the ground in the harbours and creeks, gotten soaked in the rain, being burnt by the sun, and dried out by the winds of the open Sea. Their clothes and also their faces, arms and legs were dirty. They had not been allowed to wash for days. Few people wore shoes. Some carried a little sack with meagre possessions, probably the few personal memories or necessities they had been permitted to take with them from Melos.

Alcibiades's eyes went to a woman who stood at the railing of the second ship. She held both her hands at the wooden side of the boat and she kept herself straight from that support. She stood and gazed at him. Their eyes locked. She seemed transfixed by his eyes. She clawed the border of the boat so hard that her fingers were white, and she trembled. Her face was smeared with brown streaks of earth; her hair glued to her head in thick braids. She wore a coarse himation, tugged around her. The himation had been white once. Now it was dirty too, with grey and brown patches. The woman must have slept in the mud, on humid soil and then the guards had refused her to bathe. Alcibiades froze. He did not give attention to Nicias anymore. He only looked at the woman. He did not move for long moments. His eyes widened. Nicias saw Alcibiades blanch, flinch, and then quiver.

Alcibiades started suddenly to run along the quay, to the place where the boat would moor. Only a few feet of water separated him from the boat. Nicias remained perplexed to see Alcibiades run away so fast from him towards the slave ship. He looked offended. What was the man doing?

Alcibiades arrived at the boat while it glided along the quay and bumped its woods against the stones. Sailors jumped off the ship and wound ropes to the iron chains of the port. Alcibiades had to wait a while. Planks were thrown to the railings and the slaves were pushed off the ship. Alcibiades could not run onto the deck of the boat, for the throng of people that came off it was too thick and too nervous. Nicias saw that Alcibiades pushed at the people and drew them aside, looking over and in the crowd, to the deck of the ship. The people were eager to get off the ship. The woman Alcibiades had remarked stood in the middle of the throng. She was being pushed along, among the other women who passed on to the quay. She trembled and could hardly walk while she stepped over the planks on land. She never took her eyes off Alcibiades.

When she had one foot on the stone quay, Alcibiades pushed the sailors away with a rough movement of his arms, and he grabbed her and took her in his arms. She was but a small woman, with a fine face and she was very pretty, with striking light grey eyes. She fell without force against Alcibiades. He drew her aside.

Two guards approached and shouted, 'this is Athenian property! Lay your hands off her!'

Alcibiades held the woman with one hand and he drew his sword from behind his back.

Alcibiades held his sword high and straight at the men. He said nothing, but his eyes were terribly threatening and determined. The men hesitated. They held to their lances and pointed them at Alcibiades.

A third guard came to the scene then and he said to the other two, 'that man is Alcibiades. Let go!'

He held a lance, and this lance came horizontal too but it was pointed at the two guards. The man stood next to Alcibiades. Alcibiades still did not say a word, but he stepped sideways with the woman, who hid her face to his breast.

Nicias and his stewards had likewise approached now, and they looked in amazement at the scene. Nicias kept calm. He was mesmerized, but somehow he sensed that something out of the ordinary was happening, something beyond considerations of politics and rational calculation. To these feelings he would respond.

Nicias called for his stewards to advance a chariot. Alcibiades still held the woman and he still threatened with his sword. The Melians continued to come off the boat. The slaves were assembled by the sailors on the other side of the quay, and guarded by hoplites there. Alcibiades still remained with the woman in his arms. She sobbed now, but quietly, with little sounds. She clung to Alcibiades. The guard stepped in front of Alcibiades. Alcibiades had recognised the man as one of the hoplites of Socrates's deme with whom he had stood in the last square of Athenian resistance before Amphipolis. Alcibiades moved slowly to the rear and the hoplite who protected him moved with him. The two guards still held their spears at them.

Nicias's cart arrived.

Nicias shouted, 'get in, Alcibiades, quickly! It is all right. I'll see to it that Athens gets paid for the woman.'

He pushed Alcibiades and the woman in the cart, told the driver to make for Athens and he shouted at the guards, 'I am Nicias and this is Alcibiades. We are generals of Athens. Back with you!'

Alcibiades carried the woman to the chariot and he stepped in. The driver shook the reins of the horse and the chariot sped forward, to Athens. Alcibiades called a thank you to the hoplite who had helped him and he gave a grateful, surprised look at Nicias. Then the chariot disappeared in the streets of Piraeus.

The woman was sitting down in the small chariot. Alcibiades said and repeated, 'it's all right now, Harmonia, it's all right. You're with me now.'

Alcibiades held her in his arms all the way from Piraeus to Athens, to the Scambonid quarter, to his house. When he arrived near his home he ordered the chariot to stop, jumped off, and he helped Harmonia out. He carried her in and he wore her through the gate of the house into the aulé. He brought her all the way to the first floor, to a bedroom, and placed her on the bed. He called his servants in, ordered a bath, told them to clean the woman and to prepare a dinner. He ran and urged everybody to hurry. The servants were slow to react, so he kicked them impatiently on their way. He ordered one of his servants to buy the best fish he could find in the agora. He left Harmonia to the other servants, and then he went downstairs to his andron, and threw off his armour and sword. He poured himself a bowl of uncut wine from a krater and sat on the couch with his back against the wall. He began to tremble, and the wine spilled over the bowl. His hearth thumped and he tried to steady his hands.

He had found Harmonia, and she was his.

Alcibiades stayed a long time in the andron without moving. He laid himself down on the couch and closed his eyes. He steadied his mind and a short time later opened his eyes again. He felt hungry. He hadn't eaten since the morning. He called his cook to



bring him food. He ate one morsel after the other. He ate slowly, thoughtfully, relishing each piece, chewing and tasting delicately before swallowing the food. When he had enough he drank more wine. He came to his senses slowly. It was growing dark outside. He drank more wine. The slaves brought in oil lamps. He rested in the andron.

Harmonia entered in his room when it was completely dark outside. She was dressed only in a chiton. She threw herself again in his arms and they both held each other. They did not move for a while, just held each other. Then, Alcibiades pushed her back a little and looked at her face. She still had the most limpid, grey irises he remembered. She had had a hard life. He saw the little wrinkles around her eyes and at her mouth.

He touched with his fingers every corner of her face, every surface, every curve. He moved his hand through her light hair, behind her head, into the nape of her neck. She looked at him also now, and her eyes sunk in his. He caressed her shoulders and moved the chiton away from her skin. He touched the flesh of her body and with one finger he glided over her smooth shoulders, then went back in front to the hollows of her neck and down into the space between her breasts. He heard her sigh and he moved up with his hand to her full lips. He touched the upper lip, moved over the lower lip, until she opened her mouth. He leaned with one arm behind her and caressed her back with the other. Her spine was strongly curved. She was lean, and he felt hard muscles, but she was still as thin at the waist as he had known her when she was a girl. She had wide hips and large buttocks for a woman her size. He went again with his right hand at the opening between her breasts and he saw her stiffening. Her body straightened, but her breasts heaved and he continued to caress her without touching the nipples. Suddenly, she leaned towards him and pressed her lips on his. He was all passion then, and she curved her body to his once more, moved onto his knee and pushed her loins against his leg. Alcibiades took her up from the couch. Without a word he carried her off and went out of the andron, up the stairs, towards the bedroom.

Alcibiades made Harmonia stand next to the bed. She took off her chiton and stood before him naked. She was of the exquisite figure still he had known on Cyprus, and Alcibiades looked at her as if she were the most beautiful person he had ever seen. He took off his clothes and stood naked before her. Then he touched her again. He knelt and caressed her legs, one after the other, in front and behind. He felt her back, his hands moved to her hips. He felt the soft brown hair on her pubis and she opened her legs, pushing her small belly forward. But his hands moved upwards to her chest and to her two generous breasts with the long, hard nipples over which his thumbs played. She held her head backwards. Her long hair hung along her spine. Alcibiades combed his fingers through her hair all the way down her back, from her head to the hollow of her back where her back ended. They went two steps backward in unison, and slid on the bed. Alcibiades first stayed next to the bed, wondering whether this was the right moment to make love, but his member was long and stiff, and he longed for her. She took his member in her hand and he cried out for the pain of the waiting. He laid his body on hers and for a long, long time they moved together with ever growing passion until they broke out in sweat, clasped each other as tight as they could and then, gently, gently, he felt the same climax as she.

Afterwards, they lay side by side on the bed, still with eyes locked. Alcibiades never stopped caressing her. He wanted to know her like a sculptor knows his sculpture. Even with eyes closed, he would always remember every curve of her body. She was leaner, more angular and more muscled than when he had known her, so many years ago. But she was splendid, finer and more beautiful than when she was young. She was the prettiest woman he had seen in the whole world, and her body radiated kindness. She turned and lay on her belly, leaving Alcibiades's hand again to play over her back. He was wild with desire again of seeing her naked back and legs, but he did not enter her from the back and he suppressed his impatience to be in her. He would have liked to stay in her the whole night.

Instead, he asked, 'hungry?'

Her eyes were grateful when she nodded and sat up in the bed. She did not cover herself, though.

Alcibiades smiled. He stood up and threw a tunic over his shoulders. He went down, into the kitchen. He took bowls from the tables and the cook understood what he wanted. The man took out little pieces of cold but boiled fish, bread and cakes, fowl breasts and various sorts of olives, a bowl of wine, cups of sausages and vegetables. Alcibiades placed it all on a huge wooden board. He refused the help of the cook, but smiled, and as the cook nodded knowingly, he went up the stairs. Harmonia waited eagerly for him. She grabbed the food with her fingers as if she hadn't eaten for ages. She swallowed the fish without chewing. She had a voracious appetite, and Alcibiades laughed.

'Not so fast,' Alcibiades said, and he held her back for a moment. 'Don't eat so quickly. You'll get sick. You have the time. You're with me now.'

She smiled then and gave him a quick flirtatious glance. Then she looked at the food again.

Alcibiades said, 'I sent my servant to get the best fish of Athens for you. This is Rhodian dog-fish. That piece there is conger-eel. Here is some Ambracian boar-fish. You have even a piece of ribbon-fish in a cheese sauce here. I will have a bit of that too, myself. It is delicious!'

'I know about fish,' she answered, smiling. Later, she ate slower, looking at him.

While Harmonia ate, he said, 'I looked for you. Also on Melos. I sent ships over the Sea to look out for you on every Ionian island. Nobody found you. You vanished from our world. Where were you?'

She laughed. While she continued to chew, she answered, 'I know. It was so sad to hear all those men ask for me. Year after year, sailors came in asking for Harmonia. The reward was great, they said. A rich Athenian sought Harmonia. But I was not Harmonia anymore. I was Timandra! And Timandra had not come from Cyprus! Nobody on Melos knew a Harmonia who had lived on Cyprus. I was Timandra! My uncle brought me back to Melos, to our family. He left me in custody there. Then he returned to Cyprus. I never saw him again. He had sworn an oath that bound the family.

The oath was pledged to Protogoras, but the oath was for Pericles the Great. An oath to Pericles of Athens was sacred in the islands, even after the great man's death. I was Timandra, and Harmonia had never existed. Now I am Harmonia for you alone and Timandra for the rest of the world.'

'Where have you been all these years?'

'I stayed on Melos with my cousins. I was guarded. They were kind, considered me as one of the family, but escape made impossible. I never had any money, I would not have gotten out of the island. Gold coins were sent to Cyprus regularly from Athens, quite until recently, and my uncle sent coins from Cyprus for my upkeep. I worked in the country, in the vineyards and in the olive fields.'

She darkened then, and lowered her head. 'I knew a man for a while. He was one of my family. We lived together for a few years and slept together, but I refused to marry him. We had no children.'

Her head sank deeper. 'The Athenian hoplites did things to me. They caught me on Melos and forced me several times. I may be with child, but I don't think so. I washed and I rejected.'

Alcibiades continued to caress along the spine of her back.

'We'll see,' he said. 'If you have children, they will be my children. At least: do you want to stay with me now? Or do want to flee from me once more?'

'No,' she laughed, and dared to look him in the eyes again, sinking her translucent grey eyes in his, but only for a short time. 'I do not want to flee anymore. I never wanted to flee. The oath of my family had to be kept, but you annulled the oath. Do you want to keep me?'

'Of course,' Alcibiades said. 'I love you. I never stopped loving you. I would not want to let you go. Not for all the gold in the world.'

She said, 'I love you too. But I know very little of you.'

'What do you know of me?'

'You are Alcibiades, the greatest general of Athens. You led many battles, and I know your scars by now. You have a friend called Socrates, who was your teacher, and some say he was your lover.'

He smiled. 'No,' he said, 'Socrates is not my lover. Not in the sense that you think. He is my friend. But I had a wife. She is dead now. I have a boy. There is another woman in the country, and I like her very much. She is like a mother and a sister to me, but yes, she has been my mistress and still is. I have a girl by her.'

'Do you want to be with me now?' she asked.

'Yes, oh yes,' he answered. 'I would want to marry you. That is, if we get along well in life together. But it will probably not be possible. I cannot marry at this moment a woman who is not an Athenian, a Melian, and an enemy. Only Pericles could do that. But you can live here, with me, and I will care for you. I will take you with me on my travels and we will go to the theatre. You will meet my friends. And maybe we will have children. Would that satisfy you?'

She embraced him and said, 'yes, that would definitely satisfy me.'

She continued to eat. At the end, she drank some wine from the bowl.

'Your Athenians did an ugly thing,' she said. 'They murdered half of Melos. They killed all the men. I was there! I witnessed the slaughter! The Athenians slew off heads, cut throats, pushed swords in the stomachs of our men, and they turned their weapons until the men's entrails fell out from their bellies. Why did you do such atrocities? All the girls were raped, many several times by different men, for weeks. In the country, our houses were burnt to the ground. We only wanted to live in peace, to work, to eat, to sleep, to fish and to trade. Our girls were the prettiest and the liveliest on earth. You should have seen my cousins dance at the Festival! Sculptors and painters came from all over the Sea to look at us, and they used us as their models. Why did you destroy our lives?'

Alcibiades lowered his head.

‘It was voted in the Assembly,’ he muttered. ‘It was not the moment for me to go against the vote. It was also not the time for Nicias. Melos resisted us when it shouldn’t have. That angered Athens. When the second army was sent, Athens was exasperated that such a kind people refused us. Melos was a Dorian colony. Then it was voted that if Melos were taken, all the men should be killed. I think nobody really thought that possible, nobody realised the atrocity of the proposal, but it was voted. The generals executed orders without asking a second time whether Athens really wanted the massacre to happen. It was an error, a double error, but it happened.’ She threw herself on him then with the last of her frail energy. She hit him with her fists and she clawed at him with her nails. His back and breast got bloodied, but he let her hurt him until the pain was too hard to bear. He took her fists in his hands then, and she continued to wriggle her body, to kick with her feet, until she saw that it was to no avail. Then she sagged onto the bed and cried. She sobbed miserably. Alcibiades moved his fingers along her back with tender, very long, slow caresses.

‘I am sorry,’ he said finally. ‘It was an error and a fault. We will have to live with it. I will try to make such horrors not happen anymore in the future.’

‘Athens wallows in the blood of Melos,’ she wept. ‘We curse you and your power.’

‘You cannot deny that Melos was a colony of Sparta and defied us.’

‘We never did Athens any harm. We have not warred on the side of Sparta. Your generals told that it was for the good of the Athenian hegemony that we were attacked. What good did the destruction of Melos do to us and to Athens? My people are dead now, or slaves, like me. You did not want us to be friends instead of enemies. Athens regarded friendliness as a sign of weakness. When we hated Athens, later, you relished in the hatred, because the hate was a sign of your power. What kind of people are you to prefer hate? I am your slave now. Are you satisfied?’

‘I would like to enslave you, but you are not my slave. You are a free woman. Please stay with me.’

They let silence creep in between them. Alcibiades saddened at the thought of Melos. Harmonia still had the horrors in her mind.

They slept a little, woke and made love again. Alcibiades could not know enough of her body, of her face and of her hair. He caressed her long eyelashes, her fine brown eyebrows. He took her ears in his hands, followed every curve of her neck. He made the soft tissues around her nipples wrinkle until it supported the protruding hardness, and he sucked her nipples till she turned in pleasure. She counted the scars he had on legs, neck and back. She stroke over his muscles till they quivered. He let himself relax, every muscle un-sprung and loose. Happiness was here.

Something bothered Alcibiades with his finding of Harmonia. He had been in the harbour when the slave ship of Melos arrived, but he did not go everyday to Piraeus. When he went to the harbour, he remained in Zea and in Munichia, only rarely did he venture into Kantharos. He had met Nicias by chance, and he had lingered in the merchant port. So many coincidences had happened! So, why then, was he at Kantharos at exactly the moment the Melian ship had moored? If coincidence upon coincidence added up to odds too high to be considered possible, why then had he been present at the exact moment Harmonia left the ship?

There was only one rational explanation to the improbabilities, and that explanation so irrational the conclusion staggered him. Only the gods could have arranged to give Harmonia back to him. Why had they done that, and why now, after so many years? Still, he revelled in the woman. She was not anymore the girl he had known, but she was still the most beautiful creature on earth to him. Were the gods deluding him? Maybe Harmonia only looked plain to other people. No, she was perfect of body and limbs, strikingly different in face and voice from any other woman he had ever met. She personified the female grace of the finest of Hellenic women, and he loved her. He had loved her when she stood naked before him, and when he had silently put her girdle back around her waist, the girdle he had kept and cherished all those years. Was the spell broken, now? No, he did not wish the spell to be broken!

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Alcibiades was the best known general of Athens, the best orator, a rich man, a revered politician, and a man who had made and secured the major alliance with important Peloponnesian polises. He had the woman he loved with him. He could not marry her now, but one day he would, like Pericles had married Aspasia. Theodote did not seem to exist anymore at that moment. He stayed in Athens. With Harmonia, he possessed the glory and the beauty he had sought for ten years.

Alcibiades was strong and handsome. He was the master of Athens. At Mount Olympus however, the gods were merely laughing at him.

Alcibiades and Harmonia-Timandra lived in Alcibiades's house. Harmonia asked to be called Timandra for the world, and Alcibiades complied. Alcibiades settled her in the role of master of the house, not like a beloved slave or as a mistress could be, but like a wife was. The servants had to obey her. She was not just his mistress. He set her free from slavery. He paid the amount to Nicias.

Nicias was astonished that Alcibiades lived with a woman from Melos. Many Athenians claimed now they had not voted for the destruction of Melos. Others recognised they had not really wanted to have all the Melian men murdered. All reproached Alcibiades and Nicias for having accepted the votes in favour of the destruction of the island city, and many were disgusted by Alcibiades for his provocative coldness of heart to have taken in his house a Melian slave and sleeping with her, humiliating here even more. Socrates avoided him. Maybe Socrates was still angry with himself for not having been able to save Hipparete. Maybe he too resented Alcibiades's living so soon after the decease of his wife with a new mistress. Socrates spoke not anymore with Alcibiades, and he avoided Alcibiades's looks in the Assembly. Alcibiades sometimes felt eyes on his back in the Assembly, and when he turned, Socrates often stood in his line of sight somewhere in the crowd, but Socrates rapidly looked somewhere else.

## Sicily

A few days after Alcibiades had found Harmonia, the Sicilian matter came to be discussed in the Assembly. Alcibiades had left his house for the first time. He went to the agora and from there to the Pnyx. Nicias was speaking already. He was not in

favour of sending a fleet to Cyprus. He also spoke out against Alcibiades without restraint.

Nicias brought forward all the arguments against the expedition to Sicily that Alcibiades had heard from him during their recent talk in Piraeus. The land was vast. Athens' enemies would attack Attica while the army was in Sicily. Few Sicilian cities desired to support Athens. Sparta might enter a war in Sicily. There was no guarantee of more money from Egesta or Leontini. Sicily was no danger to Athens. The risks were too great. Nicias also looked at Alcibiades when he said that someone in the Assembly, a young man who relished being in command, supported the expedition because he wanted to make money from selling horses to Athens. Nicias warned that with such people bad management of public affairs went hand in hand with extravagance of life. He said this man controlled the younger in the Assembly, and he therefore urged the elder, wiser men not to be impressed by the passion and energy of the young.

Alcibiades did not answer immediately, for he was shocked. Nicias had actually accused him in public of wanting to wage a war for the sake of profit. Other orators came forward and they were all in favour of the expedition.

Alcibiades, meanwhile, was organising his speech with images of Piraeus the way Protagoras had taught him.

Finally, Alcibiades stepped to the centre of the high point of the Pnyx, and he spoke. He said Nicias had made a deliberate attack against him. He said he would explain why he bred horses. The Assembly gasped then, for nobody had expected that Alcibiades would so openly dare to confront Nicias. Alcibiades said it was natural that he sought honour. He sought honour and glory only for Athens, such as he had done when he won the equestrian contest in the Olympic Games. He said that was the reason why he had bred horses. Providing for choruses, for the Games and Festivals, travelling, showing off the wealth of Athens as he had done benefited the city, and the city had been proud of the radiance and the glory. Brilliance and prosperity were his virtues, and these virtues befell through Alcibiades on Athens. He reminded the Assembly how the Peloponnesian people had followed him and trusted his advice. The Sicilians, and particularly the Syracusans, were a mixed people without patriotic feelings such as the Athenians had. That was the weakness of the Sicilians. Syracuse had not many hoplites, not many ships and not many experienced military sailors. He had confidence in that many polises of Sicily would join the Athenians as allies. He reminded the Athenians of the oaths sworn to the Ionian cities in Sicily. He said these cities were not made allies to Athens so that they would send help to Athens, but because these cities were enemies of Syracuse and expected aid from Athens. Coming to the assistance of allied cities in need was a sacred oath of Athens, and the reason of the hegemony of the city. He pleaded not to wait until Athens' enemies grew stronger, but to take action in a pro-active way. The expedition would strengthen Athens' position. He drew to the Assembly a picture of an Athens strong enough with Sicily to rule all Hellas, or in any case to do great harm to the Spartan League, and thus gain advantage against the city's enemies.

Alcibiades also addressed Nicias's warning to the elder men for the young. Alcibiades said young and old had to work together without antagonism in one group, in which all kinds of men united their forces and skills to the benefit of the polis. The greatest strength came from using the differences, the various talents in one combination. He

asked passionately to the Assembly why a city that had always been so active, filled with energy and might, should now sit idly, which was against its very nature. When Alcibiades had finished his speech, a loud rumour of consent went through the Assembly. He stepped away from the bema of the Pnyx and many men touched him, took his hands while he passed through the people, and he stood then no more with the orators and magistrates but among the members of his deme, as if to mean, 'I am the people!'

Further orators came and went, and also the ambassadors from Egesta and Leontini spoke once more. The mood of the Assembly was entirely in favour of the expedition. Nicias had been able to think the matter over during that time, and he had talked to his friends. He came forward again. Alcibiades wondered how Nicias would try to turn the tide, but Nicias did not even propose that. Nicias tried to scare the Athenians now. He said a very large army would be needed to attack Sicily, for there were at least seven large cities on the island that would oppose Athens. He asked for a very large force of hoplites, added infantry, many ships, many troops of archers and slingers to fend off the Sicilian cavalry. The generals would need merchant ships carrying corn and barley, for in Sicily supplies from the land would be threatened. He asked for bakers from the mills of Attica.

Nicias surmised the Athenians would be thinking of their pockets for such a large expedition, but the men present in the Assembly understood from Nicias's words only that even he, Nicias, estimated that Sicily could be conquered if only the invasion force was large enough.

Alcibiades smiled too, wryly, for Nicias had asked no cavalry, probably to spite him. Alcibiades would have his campaign, but no profit. Yet, he knew that an army without a large cavalry in Sicily would be at peril.

One of the Athenians asked Nicias to state how many men were actually needed, so that the Assembly could vote. This was Demostratus, an aristocrat and a vivid supporter of the war. He insisted Nicias should declare now how many men were really needed to invade Sicily. Nicias asked for a hundred triremes, five thousand Athenian and allied hoplites, several thousand archers and slingers. Again he asked for no cavalry.

The Athenian Assembly immediately voted on these figures, and the vote was to give the generals complete power to muster the numbers of men and to lead the campaign. The generals for the expedition would be Nicias, Lamachus and Alcibiades.

Alcibiades stood perplexed. He had really only wanted an expedition with not half the numbers quoted by Nicias for the fleet, and for not one quarter of the number of hoplites and infantry. He knew Sicily well, the land, its cities, its people, and the character of its men. He had never wanted to conquer the island. He thought Syracuse impossible to take by storm if she wanted to protect herself. Indeed, only a very large fleet, probably even a fleet larger than Nicias had asked for, could blockade the city's access to the Sea, while a land army surrounded it. His own plan was merely to make a show of power and then to negotiate with the Syracusans on the best of terms an alliance with Athens against Carthago. He would have tried to lure Syracuse into an alliance to defend them against the Phoenicians. Athens would win a potentially large naval force, which she could train and refurbish, and then maybe block supplies of grains to Sparta. Athens would secure Sicily from ever becoming an enemy. If Sicily did not want to be saved from the Carthaginians, then so be it. He would have aided

Egesta and Leontini in limited battles, and thus have realised the main objective of the campaign. Then, Alcibiades would have returned to Athens with his army, nothing gained but nothing lost either. He wanted to use diplomacy much more than violence, but diplomacy supported by a show of hoplite power.

Instead of what was essentially an ambassadorial campaign, supported with some fighting if need be over Egesta, Nicias had boosted the Athenians into an expedition of overt and massive aggression, which would be considered by the Sicilians as an all-out devastating invasion. They would expect the same fate as Melos. The Sicilians would be offended and their pride wounded. Their sense of freedom and independence would be challenged. Syracuse would have a reaction of increased resistance. The city would be prepared to fight to the end. Negotiations would be almost impossible under such a threat. The Sicilians would resist mightily, and it would be a nasty, long war there. The Sicilians would constantly harass the Athenian hoplites with horse-rider attacks. The attacks would be limited, but regularly. It would prove impossible to buy horses in Sicily itself, for the horses would be hidden in the country, at places unknown to the Athenians. Nicias would have no cavalry from Athens, but also none from Sicily, and he would have to mount famous defences to protect his large army from the enemy cavalry, all the time. Then, one city after the other would have to be taken, to weaken Syracuse. Attacking directly Syracuse before the other cities fell, would mean not only to surround the town with all its warriors intact, but also blockade the harbour entirely, always a tricky, expensive and never fully efficient affair since small boats always passed at night. Nicias would also have to defend his forces from the rear. The other Sicilian cities, allied to Syracuse, would attack the Athenians in the back. The Athenians would have to build a double ring around Syracuse: a wall to defend the Athenians from the army of Syracuse and another one to defend the Athenians from being attacked from behind. How long would they hold out that game and which side would be able to hold out longest? What had Nicias gotten him into? For an all-out invasive war in Sicily, the Athenians would have needed twice as large an army still as Nicias had asked, and very much cavalry. Alcibiades knew immediately the expedition was doomed. He knew Sicily and Syracuse too well! Why did nobody else in the Assembly see that?

Alcibiades would have liked to lead a limited expedition alone. He might have wanted to do the same thing as in the Peloponnesos: be the general-ambassador with some forces under him and another general or two generals, which he could control, to fight the inevitable battles. He could control Lamachus, but not Nicias. Nicias would do almost every time the contrary of what he, Alcibiades, would propose. Lamachus would do as Nicias commanded. Alcibiades would be constantly outnumbered two to one. He would only be a puppet, reduced to doing what Nicias decided. If Nicias lost, Nicias would lose his image of the invincible general. But Alcibiades would lose too, for he had most supported the Sicilian expedition. If Nicias won, Nicias would gain all the credit for having proposed the right numbers of men. Alcibiades would lose face and stature compared to Nicias. Nicias loses and Alcibiades loses; Nicias wins and Alcibiades loses. How could he escape from out of that mess?

Alcibiades began to loathe the Sicilian expedition. How could he manoeuvre to come in a winning situation? He raked his mind for solutions, but he could not find one right now. He would have to advance with the others and grab opportunities when they presented themselves. He should count on his luck, and more so on his intuition



at the right moment, then act decisively and rapidly. Could he win Nicias over? The man, incredibly, had helped him in the harbour of Piraeus to get Harmonia. Was that an indication, an overture to becoming accomplices rather than opponents, the beginning of a truce? No. Nicias had attacked him bluntly, virulently and openly in the Assembly today. At most, Piraeus had been the temporary indulgence of an emotional man. Understanding, maybe friendship, was impossible between Alcibiades and Nicias.

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Alcibiades would not just lose when Nicias lost or won. He began to lose immediately. It once more came from a corner he least expected, from his friend Socrates.

The deme of Alopece had almost to a man voted against the expedition. Alcibiades knew well what that meant. Socrates had voted against the motion. In full Assembly, Socrates confronted Alcibiades. Socrates protested in public against the Sicilian adventure. Socrates spoke out, which he did very rarely, and it became very quiet in the Assembly. He spoke out loudly. He refused the bema and spoke from among the people, but he did not come forward from out of his friends of Alopece. He predicted a disaster, and said his inner voices had made it clear to him not to participate in this undertaking because it would cost Athens vast numbers of dead citizens.

At that point, Meton the astrologer feigned madness. He had a son he loved dearly, and he believed Socrates's predictions, therefore fearing for the death of his son. He caught up one of the last burning torches at the perimeter of the Pnyx and ran around wielding it, and crying out that he would burn his house at such calamity. He ran away, down the Pnyx. A few fellowmen of his deme caught up with him past the agora, and Meton calmed only after the men assured him that they would not allow his son to take up service in the campaign to Sicily.

When Socrates had finished with his gloomy prediction and Meton had run off, the Assembly only smiled at these weird men, and they gave no further notice to Socrates's warnings. The incident with Meton seemed to have discredited Socrates's words, and that too saddened Alcibiades.

The Assembly continued to discuss the expedition, and particularly the young men were eagerly talking and thinking about the wondrous far lands they might visit and the richness they might gain for themselves and for their polis in Sicily. Soon, Sicily was only one step, and they talked about conquering Carthago, and then Libya and Egypt. Nothing could stop their enthusiasm.

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The campaign to war with Syracuse had been decided. The generals prepared for the expedition to Sicily. The logistics for the campaign had to be meticulously organised. The three generals held council every day at the strategion.

Nicias, of course, distributed the tasks, and he was good at the administration. Nicias organised the hoplites and the infantry from Athens and from the allied cities in coherent troops. Lamachus arranged for the merchant ships with the barley and other food, as well as for the war equipment. Alcibiades had to inspect the fleet and bring it

to readiness. Nicias had smiled with a long mouth, and all his teeth bare, when he also ordered Alcibiades to pick horse-riders, but no horses. Nicias said he would find horses for the knights in Sicily.

There was an Assembly meeting every day, so that the generals received every day permission of the people for what they needed. Large amounts of money were voted for, and papers to ask for volunteers were agreed upon. Representatives of Athens were sent to the Ionian Islands for additional men. Sails and oars were assembled and bought when not enough were in the arsenal or on the ships. The triremes were feverishly being readied, and Alcibiades whipped the sailors of the military harbours into action. He had much to work on and to occupy his mind by, but the nagging sense of disaster, of how wrong all this was, never left him.

Alcibiades lived during that period in his house with Harmonia. The two lovers were together almost only during the evening and night. Harmonia was happy. She was patient. She slept in Alcibiades's arms, nude, and they said to each other the little words that people in love say. Alcibiades called her his morning star.

Alcibiades lived. He became afraid of many things, suddenly. He cared now for the world, for the world moved around Harmonia. He cared for life. He was sure he would shun death now. He was worried at that, for in a battle one could not afford hesitating. He had found a reason to live. He felt in symbiosis with all the lovers of earth. He showed gentleness and comprehension, where before he would have been intransigent. The first to remark the change in him were the hoplites and sailors who worked with him. He was more lenient and understanding than before. His character softened.

Alcibiades regretted that Socrates avoided him. He might have explained to the philosopher who Timandra really was, paraphrasing Socrates that all evil came from ignorance. His pride withheld him to approach Socrates and explain, and Socrates did not seek to talk to him.

Alcibiades, moreover, had Harmonia, and he needed nothing else but her in that period. She filled his thoughts.

Alcibiades and Harmonia talked and talked. They explained what had happened in their lives since Alcibiades had been in Cyprus.

For Alcibiades, no Athenian beauty could compare to the fineness of the features of Harmonia. She was a stunning beauty with the loveliness of a young girl. She was the kind of woman every man would have fought for instantly. She had a marvellous figure and face, full breasts, tiny hips, generous buttocks, a strongly curved back and a belly that showed only muscles. She had a sensuous mouth with thick but finely drawn lips that were always moist, and long eyes in which centred those bright irises in which a man would surely drown. She had retained innocence of heart and vulnerability, which appealed strongly to the better sentiments in men.

Alcibiades was smitten now as much as he had been in Cyprus. Her magic was irresistible on him. There was no artificiality in her looks or in her body. She was a rare Melian jewel, born on an island on which lived since generations the women with the finest complexions of the Hellenes.

Alcibiades cherished the jewel. The rarest among the Melian beauties lived in his house. He hid her jealously.

Alcibiades heard the rumours hum around him, of course. Athens continued to have a bad conscience about the murdering of the men of Melos and the enslaving of the

women and children. Men reproached him for having drawn the odious so far as to have first signed the death sentence for the men of Melos, and then having taken a Melian woman as his mistress, as his sexual slave. Athens knew only the name of Timandra. Socrates, also, only heard of Timandra.

Harmonia did not leave the house much. She did not know Athens, did not know any Athenians, and Alcibiades had no time free to take her around. He had not yet presented her to Hipparchos, to Theodote or any other friend. He kept Harmonia to himself. Only his uncle, Axiochus had met her one evening. When Timandra came in the andron and served them wine, Axiochus for once had no eyes for his bowl. He spilled his wine and his mouth stayed open in silence as long as she moved in the hall. Axiochus had never met such dignity and grace in a woman.

Only when she left, did he give an appreciating look at Alcibiades and remarked, 'gee, Alcibiades, where did you find that one? I heard you had a new Melian slave. I thought she might be something of a sexy prodigy. I did not imagine what a delicate beauty you had caught. Are you sure this is what you want?'

Alcibiades replied, 'hands off, Axiochus. This one is not for sharing. And yes, this is what I want.'

Axiochus grumbled something, and then he continued to talk about the preparations for the Sicilian expedition. Axiochus dealt in grains from the lands beyond the Hellespont, through stewards. He would make a lot of money from supplying the campaign and from dealing with Lamachus. Alcibiades made the necessary suggestions to Lamachus, and Lamachus smiled and complied. He was not against a few opportunities to share with friends. Alcibiades would not gain money from horses; he would gain money with Axiochus, from cereals supplies and from equipment.

## **Hermes**

At the very end of spring, during a hot night that announced the beginning of the Athenian summer, and only a few days before the fleet would sail to Sicily, a very bad thing happened in Athens.

The god of the interior of the houses, the goddess of hearth and home was Hestia. Statuettes of Hestia were worshipped inside the houses. The god of the exterior, the god of streets and travels, of crossroads, was Hermes. Many, most Athenian houses that had a statue of Hestia inside, had also placed a Hermes stele at their door or wall. Hermae stood against the walls at every cross-point of Athens. The Hermae were stele dedicated to the god Hermes, rectangular stones that stood upright, on which were cut out of the stone the face of Hermes, and usually also of a phallus. Athens was full of Hermae.

When the Athenians woke up that morning and went out of their houses, they saw that nearly all the stone Hermae in the city had been disfigured.

Vandals had cut out the faces of Hermes or destroyed the phalluses. There was hardly one single figure of Hermes left that remained untouched, and there were hundreds of Hermae in Athens. The Hermae stood in the porches of houses, and at street corners. Every square of Athens had at least one Hermes. There were Hermae all around the

agora and the Acropolis, and at the gates of the city. Hermes was the god of travellers, so the defacement of the stylized sculptures on the Hermae stele was immediately regarded to be a bad omen for the expedition to Sicily.

The magistrates of Athens, in the first place the astynomoi, ran around in consternation. They talked and discussed loudly, exclaimed and wailed, and the noise spread in the city and grew, so that it became a grumbling and then a roar. The citizens excited each other. There was talk of a plot against Athens. Some said Corinthians had swarmed into the town to hold back the Athenian army from moving against Syracuse. Others said the disfigurement of the Hermae was part of a plot to overthrow the democracy.

Alcibiades's name was mentioned by the extreme democrats in the meeting of the Assembly, the same morning. People saw evidence in his extravagant behaviour and in his rancour for not being appointed as supreme commander to lead the expedition, accusing him of seeking to install an oligarchy.

Alcibiades denied vehemently in the Assembly having anything whatsoever to do with the destruction of the statues. He said he had been preparing the expedition with the same zeal as the other generals and poured his own money in providing for ships and supplies. Why would he now then want to halt the departure? He did not say his mind was full of Harmonia. What would he have cared about stone statues?

The Assembly accepted his protests in silence. Nicias proposed to let the Council, the Boule, to have full powers to investigate the matter. That motion was accepted by vote. The Assembly then continued to vote on the items of the preparation for the expedition to Sicily, and adjourned.

The same day the Council of Athens decided to form a commission of investigation. The Council also promised an amount of a hundred minae to anybody who would denounce the vandals. The next day, at the Assembly on the Pnyx, the Council proposed to offer impunity to all denunciations of sacrilegious acts. Cleonymas put another proposal to the vote, whereby Athens would offer a thousand drachmas for such a denunciation. This amount was offered on top of the hundred minae already promised for anybody who would give information on the desecration of the Hermae. These proposals were accepted.

The generals Nicias, Lamachus and Alcibiades were present every day in the Assembly meetings. In one of the next meetings, a certain Pythonicus came forward. With a loud voice, he accused Alcibiades and his hetaira to have mocked the Mysteries of Eleusis in an Athenian house.

Pythonicus cried, 'my Athenian countrymen, you are sending forth this mighty army upon a very perilous campaign. Yet one of your strategoi, Alcibiades, has been holding parodies of the Mysteries in a house of Athens, and he invited other men to celebrate with him; I shall prove it. If you grant impunity to a man I will indicate, a slave belonging to a citizen here among you, that slave will describe the blaspheming of the Mysteries to you. You can punish me as you will, if I do not bring the truth.' This denunciation had nothing to do with the destruction of the Hermae, but it was on a sacrilegious act anyhow, and denunciations for all such acts were now sought after by the Council.

Alcibiades immediately denied the charges brought against him at great length. Pythonicus promised to produce a slave as witness, who had been present at the scenes, if only that person would get impunity.

One of the extreme democrats, the orator Androcles, jumped forward then and interrupting Pythonicus, he accused Alcibiades in public for not only to have mocked the Eleusian Mysteries but also of having defaced the Hermae. He spoke about Alcibiades's extravagant, provocative behaviour in Athens. He accused Alcibiades of lack of respect for the gods.

Alcibiades could not let such accusations go by unanswered. He also stepped forward in the Assembly. He claimed his innocence and he asked for a serious investigation. He told he would gladly stand to trial to disprove the words of Androcles, which formed only a miserable calumny, a sad farce on the people of Athens.

The Assembly ordered the Prytanies to bring in the slave who would be named by Pythonicus. It was also voted to install a procedure called 'eis appelleia' by which the destruction of the Hermae and any sacrilege connected to it was declared a crime against the security of the polis of Athens. The procedure was confided to the Tribunal of the Heliaia. The Prytanies were asked to bring in the slave, in the same Assembly.

While the voting on the last preparations for the Sicilian campaign continued, the slave Andromachus, a slave of Archebiades son of Polemarchos, was brought to the Pnyx.

When the slave spoke to the herald of the Pnyx he was barely audible beyond the men who stood immediately around him: the generals, the orators and a few members of the Council. The herald repeated in a loud voice what the man had uttered. The man told he was a slave in the house of a metic, called Pulytion. The metic was a rich friend of Alcibiades. The slave Andromachus had assisted at parodies of the mysteries of Eleusis in Pulytion's house.

The herald asked who was present at the scenes, upon which Andromachus named several people, of whom many were of the hetaira of Alcibiades. He named Niciades and Meletus, Archebiades, Archippus, Diogenes, Polystratus, Aristomenes, Oeonias, Panaetius and also Alcibiades. Other slaves had been present at the celebrations, as well as the fluteplayer Hicesius.

Alcibiades seethed with anger and cried out his innocence over and over again.

'Yes,' he said, 'there were ceremonies in Pulytion's house, just as there were ceremonies in every house of Athens. Pulytion performs oriental religious ceremonies and it is not forbidden in Athens to pray to foreign gods. I was not present!'

The Assembly voted to arrest all the people named by Andromachus to hear them out, except Alcibiades.

'Hypocrites!' cried out Alcibiades in the Assembly, with a voice that thundered all the way down the Pnyx to the agora. 'Arrest me too! I want to be judged! Accuse me at the Heliaia! There is a plot against me and my friends here, in the Assembly. None of us touched a Hermes statue, and none of us ever participated in any ceremony that might have mocked the gods of Athens. There is no proof of sacrilege. Charge me so that I can defend myself and my honour.'

The herald had to call the Pnyx to order then, and the Scythian guards opened their bows behind him, for the Pnyx was in a state of revolt. A few blows fell between men that supported Alcibiades and men who saw in him a danger for the democracy. When some silence was forced, one of the orators came forward. He started on a long discourse praising Alcibiades. Alcibiades was stunned, for the man was not particularly one of his friends. But the orator continued to laud him, until Alcibiades understood what was going on. He was regarded to be too powerful for the moment in Athens. He had too many friends. His hetaira was too large to be reduced to weakness. He was too popular in Athens and his record as a hoplite, knight, general and ambassador, as well as victor for Athens at the Olympics, was too impressive to be attacked openly. The democrats, among whom foremost Peisander, a notorious coward, and Charicles, wanted him out of Athens so that they could scheme behind his back, his hetaira headless, without drive and direction.

The orator told that Alcibiades should lead the expedition to Sicily together with the other generals, as planned.

A second democratic orator took over from the first. This man said that the preparations for war could not be turned back. He pointed to the harbour of Piraeus and said that the ship of Lamachus was already prepared and waiting in full Sea for the fleet to sail out. If a general with the notoriety of Alcibiades claimed his innocence, the men at the Pnyx should believe him. He doubted more evidence would be brought forward to accuse Alcibiades. He proposed to let Alcibiades lead with the other generals.

Shouts then came out from the crowd, 'let Alcibiades lead!'

Others cried, 'Alcibiades to Sicily!'

The Pnyx roared again with shouts, and arms and fists were heaved. The steward of the Assembly had to call to order once more.

He brought to the vote the confidence in Alcibiades and an overwhelming majority voted for Alcibiades to continue to be general and to lead with Nicias and Lamachus in Sicily. Alcibiades could not refuse. The Assembly adjourned.

Alcibiades was left with the feeling he had stood in great glory on the highest mountain of Attica, dominating and contemplating his land and Athens, only to have risen so high to be thrown down into the depths, like Icarus, and to be projected a few moments later back to the same heights. His head spun. Was that the price to pay for Harmonia?

Among the men named by the slave Andromachus only one was present at the Pnyx: Polystratus, a friend of Alcibiades. Alcibiades could not prevent Polystratus to be taken prisoner by the Scythian guards before he could leave the hill.

Polystratus was brought before the Council and summarily interrogated. He denied all the accusations, but he was executed nevertheless the same afternoon.

The men mentioned by the slave Andromachus who were not on the Pnyx, received notice. They all fled into the country and they escaped out of Attica immediately.

None was found.

The populace of Athens was thereby all the more convinced of the guilt of the men mentioned by the slave. All were of the opinion that the destruction of the Hermae and the profanities against the Mysteries were part of a dark plot to provoke the Athenian people, to create unrest, to destroy Athens' determination to war against its enemies, and probably to install an oligarchic government. Corinth, Sparta and traitors within Athens were named as proponents of this plot.

When Alcibiades walked that afternoon in the streets, many people avoided him, even men who had been his friends. They would still support him, but they doubted and they feared to be named too. Fear, uncertainty and doubt reigned in Athens.

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When Alcibiades entered his house, he called for Harmonia. They spoke in the room adjacent to the andron. He prayed her to seat. He remained standing, but his head sank to his breast. He saw her grace, her loveliness and her earnest face. He understood how the vindictive and jealous gods had brought fate to separate them again. He said, 'Harmonia, I have been accused of treachery against the polis. No, don't be startled. All went fine. The accusation did not reach home and the Assembly voted its confidence in me, so that I am to lead for Sicily. But in my absence, people will charge me with more calumniations. Too many men in Athens envy our happiness, wealth and power. I will lead on the expedition to Sicily, but it may become a long and arduous campaign. I am not sure whether I can have you brought over to a pacified town of Italia, where we could meet more often. I am not sure either whether I can guarantee your peace in Athens. I have decided to bring you to safety until we can meet again. You are free. A few days ago the Eponymous Archon signed the papers by which you are a free woman again. You could live like a free metic in a house in Athens. I will give you the papers. Nevertheless, I am not sure you would be in safety in Athens, and not sure that the house you would live in would really be considered by law to be yours. We need to make other arrangements. My steward will bring you tomorrow to my country-house. My friend Hipparchos will take care of you there. The woman he lives with, Myrrhina, is gentle and kind. She will like you. Theodote lives with her child in that house too. I would not want stopping to care about her. I hope you will get along well. If not, please appeal to me or to my uncle Axiochus. While I am away, at Sea, Axiochus will stay in Athens. I will ask him also to go to the country-house once every while. If there would be a danger in Attica, Hipparchos or Axiochus will take you away from our lands, and you should move with Theodote to places that are out of danger. I shall discuss this with Axiochus, make arrangements, and I believe Thrace would be the best place to go to. Axiochus knows the Hellespont well, and there are very nice sites there to live. If Axiochus cannot help you, my cousin Euryptolemus will. And if these two fail I will come back to fetch you, if necessary from Hades itself. Somebody else who will always help you is Socrates. But Socrates has grown old and he has little means.'

Harmonia had heard Alcibiades's terrible, calculated words. She was not going to give up easily her newly found happiness.

She answered, 'I do not care about safety. Let me come with you to Sicily. There are always women who follow their husband or lover, even on difficult campaigns.'

'I love you,' Alcibiades said, 'and I care about your safety. I need to know you are safe. Somewhere, wherever, but alive and safe. I don't care what happens to me, and I will follow my destiny, my fate, and what I have to do to remain Alcibiades. It would be unbearable for me to know that you are in danger. Nobody should know that you are my principal weakness. Otherwise, my enemies would reach you and do you harm. So you cannot come with me. It often happens in war that camps are conquered, and cities stormed and destroyed. I cannot guarantee all dangers of life to avoid you, but I sure can do my best. I will need all my spirits and focus to deal well with the war

in Sicily. I cannot do that, and at the same time worry about you. I only hope that this campaign will not last long, and giving time, the true criminals who defaced the Hermae and parodied the Mysteries will be found, but at this moment it is enough for a name to be mentioned to be guilty. I can only be strong and free if I know you are in safety. Before we found each other again, I did not live. I did not care about life. The gods could kill me any time without me caring. You brought me to life. I was reborn through you. Now, I want to live, but I can only live if I know you alive and in safety. Therefore, we have to separate, until we can be together once more. It may be months, it may be years, but if you live I will find you.'

Harmonia fled in Alcibiades's arms. They stayed a long time holding each other, went upstairs to the bedroom, and held each other there too, all through the night. They did not sleep.

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In the morning, wagons stood prepared in the aulé. Harmonia dressed to travel even before dawn. Alcibiades helped the servants to load the wagons with chests of clothes for Harmonia, some furniture, her jewels and coins. Alcibiades gave her the papers that set her free. He gave her letters for Hipparchos and also for Theodote. He sent a substantial amount of silver coins to Hipparchos, but he also put much money in Harmonia's own possessions, in a hidden compartment of a casket placed in a chest, telling her to speak to no one about the additional funds she had of her own, not even to Theodote. Alcibiades also gave her all the jewels of Hipparete. He embraced his love a last time, and then gave sign to the steward to move. Five veteran hoplites of his friends, discreetly armed, rode on horses next to the wagons. The wagons passed through the gate of the house. Alcibiades stared after it. He wanted to stop the wagon, but he never did. He looked for a long time after the wagon as it disappeared in the streets.

### **The Sicilian Campaign**

The fleet for Sicily was readying to sail. One by one the ships, the triremes and the sailing ships, left the harbour. Alcibiades and Nicias would be among the last to sail. Lamachus led the first forces of the army. Before leaving, Alcibiades offered an ox to be sacrificed to Athena on the acropolis. There was a ceremony before the altar of the Parthenon.

Alcibiades stepped up the road to the Acropolis accompanied by many of this trierarchs. Alcibiades himself led the garlanded animal to the priest. The priest of Athena slaughtered the animal. Then, the man examined the entrails of the ox. He looked for a long time. He deduced the divine will from the liver. He examined the state of the lobes, of the gall-bladder, of the portal vein. He looked at the vessels around the gall-bladder. Alcibiades had chosen a young, strong, healthy specimen. Still, he dreaded the prophecies of the priest. He waited impatiently for the verdict of the gods. The priest found all the elements of the organs in good order, and he revealed the best of omens for the expedition to Alcibiades.

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While the ships started to leave Athens, an Athenian mason, a metic called Teucros, sent a letter to the investigation committee of the Council. The letter said that if he received impunity and protection, he would come back from Megara, where he had fled, to speak about the Hermae and about the parodies of the Mysteries.

The Council promised the man impunity and he came back to Athens. He gave a declaration before the Council. He said he had participated in the parodies of the Mysteries and he named eleven people. These names were not the ones given by the slave Andromachus, and there was a big surprise in the declaration.

Teucros named Diognetus for having participated in the sacrilege. Diognetus was the brother of Nicias, and a member of the investigation committee! Teucros also named Axiochus, Adeimantus, Cephisodorus and Euphiletus. Axiochus was family of Alcibiades, and Adeimantus was a friend. Teucros declared that he had nothing to do with the defacing of the Hermae, but he gave eighteen names of people of which he had heard that they had anything to do with that sacrilege. He would not give any details on the Hermaecopid crime, however. He furthermore denounced a whole series of men, Euctemon, Glaucippus, Timanthes, Eurymachus, Gniphonides, Polyuctus, Isonomus, Charippus, Theodorus, Hephaestodorus, Plato, Antidorus, Smindyrides, Philocrates, Antiphon, Alcisthenes, Menestratus, Eryximachus, Eurydamas, Pherecles, Meletus, Archidamus, Telenicus, Teisarchus, and Pantacles. He also named Phaidros. Phaidros was a friend of Socrates. The Council ordered all these people to be arrested immediately. All those who could not escape were executed.

Alcibiades was relieved. His name had not been mentioned by Teucros. Nicias had been involved through his brother Diognetus. A strange mood set in at Athens and the thesis of a conspiracy gained ground. The populace was afraid. But the expedition to Sicily was on its way.

Nicias and Alcibiades went aboard their ships and led the fleet out of Piraeus. The day before, in a secret Assembly, the generals received their final orders. Sicily was to be conquered; Syracuse was to become a servant city to Athens; democracy and the conditions of the Athenian League were to be imposed on the other cities of Sicily. Syracuse would fare the same fate as Melos. Absurdities, thought Alcibiades.

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Half of the population of Athens walked to the harbour to see the fleet row and sail out. All the ships were wonderfully adorned with flower garlands. The trierarchs had gone to extraordinary expense to equip the prows of the boats with fine, new figure-heads. The rear high volutes of the triremes, the aphaestons, had been renewed and painted in shrill colours. Alcibiades's Harmonia had the statue of a young Aphrodite on its bow. The sails were painted with the patterns of Athens. The oars were newly painted also, whereby the oars of any one ship had the same distinguishable patterns, different from any other ship. The thousands of hoplites went aboard the triremes and aboard the transport ships with their panoply of armour. In all, over a hundred ships were thus prepared.

When all the ships were loaded and only women, children, youth and old men remained on the quays, the trumpets sounded. Silence came over the harbour. The priests and the men said prayers to Athena and to the gods of the Sea. A herald pronounced prayers in a loud voice, and the men in the ships repeated the sacred phrases with him. The last sacrifices were thus made in the harbour. The men received

wine and held their bowls. Then, all spent a libation to the gods, the commanders from golden or silver bowls and the citizen-hoplites from whatever bowl they had taken with them.

While cheers and goodbyes were shouted from the people ashore, the ships slowly left the quays, and they rowed out of the military harbours of Athens. At first they sailed in a disciplined column, but once at Sea, they raced against each other as far as Aegina. Then they made for Corcyra, where the fleet would re-assemble before reaching Italy and Sicily. At Corcyra too, the ships of the Athenian allies would be waiting.

The fleet at Corcyra consisted of a hundred thirty-four triremes and two pentecosters, fifty-oared ships from Rhodes. The fleet held over five thousand hoplites, five hundred archers, seven hundred slingers, over a hundred light troops constituted of Megaran exiles. There was even one horse transport ship with thirty horses. This was the war fleet.

The triremes were accompanied by over a hundred merchant ships, large and smaller boats, which held the corn, barley, vegetables, water, food, but also men such as bakers, carpenters, masons and iron-smiths with their equipment. About thirty large merchant ships and about a hundred smaller ones accompanied the fleet.

This fleet of Sicily was the largest fleet ever sent out by Athens in one sole effort over the Sea, and this whole fleet sailed for Corcyra over the Ionian Gulf. The force sailed in three parts, each commanded by a general. It was the largest campaign that Alcibiades had commanded at Sea. His ship, the Harmonia, proudly led his long column of war ships. Nicias was to his right, and further on sailed Lamachus.

The Athenian fleet sailed to the promontory of Iapygia and Tarentum, and then advanced slowly down Italia to Rhegium.

None of the cities of the coast however, not even Rhegium, accepted to open their gates to the Athenians. They provided them with water, but not with food, and barely allowed them to anchor their ships in their waters. The Italian cities of Tarentum, Locri and Rhegium stated they preferred to remain neutral in the wars between Athens and Syracuse. The Athenian boats anchored therefore at some distance from Rhegium.

Nicias ordered three triremes to sail to Egesta to fetch the promised funds from the Temple of Aphrodite at Eryx. The fleet waited until the ships returned, but when they did, they brought disappointing news. There was no gold at all in the temple. The Athenian representatives who had been to Egesta before, had been deceived. The Egestaeans had shown large quantities of golden and silver bowls, vases, goblets, and amulets but all that, though it had looked imposing, had but little value. The Egestaeans had entertained the Athenians in their private houses. They had brought to these houses great richness in golden utensils and in fine furniture from their whole city and also even from other cities, so that the Athenian delegates were blinded from the rays on all the gold, silver and precious stones. The Athenians thought that the Egestaeans were all wealthy.

This show of wealth had been nothing but a deception. Nicias was not astonished to hear that the gold and silver did not turn up. Alcibiades and Lamachus were truly disappointed. The news spread like fire through the army. The Athenian hoplites blamed their compatriots of the previous missions for having been deceived thus blatantly. The mood in the troops sank a few notches. The expedition had not arrived

well, and it had not started well. There were hardships and sweat to be had, maybe death or maiming, but no gold.

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Nicias called Lamachus and Alcibiades for a conference on his ship. The two generals arrived almost simultaneously at Nicias's trireme, and the three men, all dressed in armour, sat on chairs in front of each other in the middle of the ship. Almost all of the crew had gone ashore to sleep, since evening was falling, and only a few guards stood at a respectable distance on the deck.

Nicias greeted his co-generals.

Then he said, 'I have called you to discuss what we should do. We have found only thirty talents of gold and silver at Egesta, far less than the sixty they promised for a fleet. I propose therefore that we sail with our whole fleet to Selinus. If the Egestaeans come up with the whole sum to pay for the whole army, we can as yet move to protect Egesta. If the Egestaeans do not come up with enough money for the army, we can at least force them to provide us with enough supplies for the sixty ships and threaten Selinus and force them to reach an agreement, a treaty, with Egesta. Afterwards, I propose to sail along the Sicilian coast, past the other Sicilian cities, show the Athenian power and thereby demonstrate to these cities that Athens is always ready to come to the rescue of friendly towns. We might win to our cause some of the cities. We might help Leontini some, if the occasion presents itself. Later on, I propose to sail home with our allies. We should not endanger Athens by risking the army. The army can better serve at home. I believe that this is the wisest course.'

Alcibiades could not agree with this course. He remembered the decree that the Assembly had voted during the last secret meeting.

He said, 'Nicias, we cannot do that! The Assembly ordered us to conquer Sicily! We should at the least do a serious effort at that. Athens will never forgive us if we, having sailed with the largest fleet ever formed, only gave a demonstration of our power and nothing more. We came to take Syracuse, remember? We must weaken Syracuse before. We therefore must contact all the Sicilian cities with delegates from our army, and encourage democratic revolt, treachery, and propose to them to revolt from Syracuse. Our heralds should try to win the friendships of the towns that had issues with Syracuse before. We need supplies; so if they provide that to us, we will come with silver. We might get supplies from these towns for free. I believe we could start with Messina, for that is the gate of Sicily. I know that town well. It is directly on our way to the rest of Sicily and it controls the northern grain route. It has a large harbour, and we could use it as a base for activities all around the island. After having talked to the cities, we will know which polis is willing to support us and which not. We can hope that several, maybe many, cities will help us. We shall have cavalry then, and we should be able to attack Selinus and finally, Syracuse. Of course, in the occasion that Selinus made peace with Egesta and Syracuse came to a settlement with Leontini, then we might leave Sicily, for our initial objectives would have been reached.'

Lamachus had less imagination. He had sighed many times while Nicias and Alcibiades spoke and made fists with his hands.

He said, ‘oh, come on, you two! What is our aim? To conquer Sicily! So we should strike at the head, and the sooner the better, while that head is still unprepared. Our army is formidable and must inspire dread in the Syracusans. The Syracusans will not yet have a plan to resist us, not enough ships, not enough men, not enough commanders, no organisation, and not enough supplies. Why, if we attack Syracuse now, immediately, directly, head-on, by sailing into their harbour while they expect us not yet, we might take the city rapidly and by surprise. The sight of our fleet will scare them to death. If we have to surround the city to lay a siege, now is a good time too. Indeed, the Syracusans from the country will not yet have sought security, inside the city walls of Syracuse. Their wealth, their treasures, will have remained in their country houses. So, if we set up camp outside the city, there will be something to pick for our men. When we take or siege Syracuse rapidly, the other Sicilians will not come so readily to the assistance of Syracuse. I propose to use Sicilian Megara as our base for the fleet. There is an inhabited, natural harbour there, and it is a close enough place to Syracuse!’

Nicias understood that the two other generals did not want to go back to Athens without at the least a serious attempt to win Syracuse, or a few other Sicilian towns. He disliked Lamachus’s proposal, because it was wrought with large risks. He did not know Sicily and also not the defences of the town. How efficiently could the Syracusans close their harbour? He had little information. The general who was the most foolhardy should have been Alcibiades, and Alcibiades knew Syracuse. Alcibiades had not proposed head-on attacks, so Nicias surmised that Alcibiades did not believe such an attack feasible at all, at this point.

Lamachus noticed that the two other generals were not inclined to fight right away, and he was really surprised at their attitude. In the affair of the Hermaecopid crimes Alcibiades had been named, and Nicias was involved through his brother. Both men needed an early victory, so that the populace of Athens would be favourable towards them and would not want nor dare to touch generals that brought home great victories. Why then, did they not attack and take their chances?

At that moment, Alcibiades addressed Lamachus. Alcibiades had seen in Nicias’s eyes that the elder general expected him to do so, and for the sake of the man’s kindness towards him in Piraeus he obliged. ‘Lamachus,’ he said, ‘I also believe that you are right when you think we can take Syracuse now. A direct attack or a siege might be more difficult later. But if we attack now, we will lose half of our men and as many ships. That will cripple our army indeed. I also know that Athens wants blood, and blood rapidly. If we win Syracuse now, not only will large numbers of our finest citizens be killed and the rest wounded, but we may have to murder all the men of Syracuse. It will be a new Melos, and we will be obliged to do so by order of Athens. Should we not be wiser? Let us at least try with diplomatic means to weaken Syracuse, to show our force, but be lenient towards the cities here and prove us as the great nation that we are. We should at least try a more peaceful way; it is worth it. If later on, our missions of peace do not work out well, then we will have to attack, surround and storm Syracuse. I know that town. I have been inside it. I assure you, with or without being very well prepared, the Syracusans will give us a very hard time, and our attacks will need much reconnaissance, cunning, knowledge of the weak points of its fortifications, and knowledge of its waters and its harbour. Let’s try the peaceful way first!’

‘I see your Melian mistress has mollified you, Alcibiades,’ Lamachus sneered. That answer startled Alcibiades. He had not expected that kind of low response and reasoning of Lamachus.

The general continued. ‘Yet, there is sense in what you say. I too do not desire unnecessary bloodshed. I appreciate your view, because I would expect you to seek a rapid victory. So, I am willing too to try it your way. But let us not linger for a very long time here. I know hoplites and sailors. If we let them sit here in the Sea idle for a long time, they will start grumbling and plotting and then we will be forced anyhow to take action.’

‘And that is right, too, Lamachus,’ Nicias said, standing up. ‘I see you agree. I will join your opinion.’

‘The man can still not give me any credit,’ Alcibiades thought, ‘the course to be taken will not be my proposal but the proposal of Lamachus.’

Nicias continued, however. ‘Alcibiades, you should go as ambassador-general to Messina first and try to win that town for our views. If you succeed, all the better, and we will camp in Messina. If you fail, we will take the core of our fleet to Naxos, Catana and Camarina. We will try to win these towns to our side. That might give us the southern coast of Sicily except Syracuse. With Leontini and Egesta we may be able to impress Syracuse, negotiate from a position of force. If she does not yield, we shall lay siege to her with our combined forces.’

Nicias turned his back on Lamachus and Alcibiades, who knew they were being dismissed.

Nicias looked into the night.

‘Those towns will not all take our side,’ he thought. ‘We will have to storm at least one. Much blood will be spilled before we reach Syracuse. But there is no turning back. Why did I have to become a general? I thought I could and should help to divert us from more wars, more killings. Now look at me! Or was it my vanity that drove me to this? Was I and am I still jealous of that young, handsome, intelligent Alcibiades, who received everything in his lap without effort, everything for which I had to scrape and work so arduously and for so long? I did not want war, nowhere, and now I am leading the largest, most aggressive army on earth, and I am forced to send many men to their deaths. I am disgusted by it all. But I have to lead and if I doubt and lack in determination, it will be much worse.’

He stared at the stars and implored the gods to give him signs on how to act best.

Alcibiades and Lamachus left the trireme. They returned to their own boats.

Alcibiades gave the orders to sail to Messina in the early morning.

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Alcibiades slept well in his quarters and when he awoke, it was because the trireme was moving forward under him and his trumpeter signalled the departure. Alcibiades ordered to sail first instead of to row, to take time with the passage to Messina. Only when the trireme came in view of the harbour of Messina did he command his men to row. While he stood in his armour, splendidly studded with silver patterns, his *Harmonia* slid into Messina harbour. His ship was admired and feared, but he insolently rowed into the port. His trireme was allowed to moor alongside the quays, and a delegation of Messinians had already sent a small boat to his ship to learn of his intentions.

The port authorities had seen him sailing slowly at first and they had had the time to warn the magistrates of the town, an effect Alcibiades had desired. A delegation waited for him in the harbour. He was taken to the town's meeting hall.

The Messinians were polite but firm. They wanted no part in the war with Syracuse. They were not against Athens, but they wanted to stay neutral. They refused to give Athens hoplites and ships to move against Syracuse, but they would also not provide Syracuse with men, horses and boats. They would not receive the Athenian army inside their city walls, but they could trade provisions with the Athenians and set up a market outside the walls.

Alcibiades pleaded and he threatened with the force that was anchored at Rhegium. The Messinians obviously knew the answers given by the Ionian cities of Italy and they doggedly kept to the same attitude, we stay neutral but we want no war with you.

Alcibiades was not successful, but he was also not angry. At least Messina vowed not to join Syracusan forces. Syracuse indeed was weakened by this position. In the depths of his mind, however, the doubts nagged. These Sicilian cities, Messina, and the Italian towns, would rapidly side with the most powerful army, rally the winning army. If the Athenians did not win Syracuse, Athens would have all the Sicilian polises against her, rapidly and decisively. That could tip the relations of power very dangerously in favour of Syracuse. The hairs in the back of his neck stood up for a few moments of intense fear and anger. But he showed nothing but a benevolent smile to the Messinian leaders, and bade them a good day. He sailed back to Rhegium, to report to Nicias.

Nicias ordered immediately his core force, sixty ships, to sail along the south-eastern coast of Sicily, to Naxos. The ships had enough provisions with them for a long, autonomous expedition. Nicias let Lamachus in command at Rhegium and he led with Alcibiades, using Alcibiades as an ambassador.

They met success at Naxos. Alcibiades spoke to the Naxians and the Naxians supported the Athenians. They opened their city gates to them.

Nicias then sailed on to Catana. This town seemed in favour of Syracuse, and refused at first to help the Athenians. Nicias wasted no time, however. He was anxious to see Syracuse, if only from the Sea. Alcibiades wondered what was going on in the head of Nicias, but Nicias stubbornly made his fleet sail to Syracuse.

The triremes rowed one after the other in a long row. Nicias sent ten triremes under the command of Alcibiades straight into Syracuse harbour. Alcibiades itched all over his body when twenty or so triremes of Syracuse rowed out to block them from mooring. Still, he wondered now whether Lamachus's daring scheme of sudden attack might have worked after all. There were not nearly enough Syracusan triremes in the harbour to check the entire Athenian fleet.

Heralds on board the *Harmonia* cried out with their loudest voices that the Athenians had come to help the Leontinians regain their land, in accordance with the rules of the Athenian alliance. The heralds shouted a message to the Leontinians in the city: they were to leave Syracuse and join the Athenians. While this proclamation was being made, another Athenian trireme entered the harbour. This was not Nicias's own ship, but Alcibiades saw Nicias on board. The ship moved in the harbour as if it wanted to reconnoitre every corner of the quays and of the land. Nicias definitely wished to know as much of Syracuse as Alcibiades.

Alcibiades understood what Nicias was doing and he smiled. Nicias was not all in command. Nicias doubted. Nicias knew less than Alcibiades here. Alcibiades could use that knowledge. Nicias's boat lingered a while, then left for the open Sea. The Syracusan ships gained confidence, meanwhile, and they began to approach the small Athenian fleet menacingly. Alcibiades gave the order to get out of Syracuse harbour. He joined the rest of the fleet, outside the harbour, and Nicias led the entire army back to Catana.

The Catanians looked in awe at the Athenian forces, but they still did not allow the army inside their town. They merely invited the Athenian generals to expose their mind and their intentions. Alcibiades held once more the role of negotiator. Nicias sent a force of hoplites closer to the walls and gates of the city. These troops stayed most hidden behind a hill.

Alcibiades entered the city, accompanied by a strong group of Athenian hoplites. He turned his back when he had passed the gates, and he remarked that the gates were not being closed behind him. He whispered a message into the ear of one of his commanders and the man retreated and returned to outside the gates, back to the Athenian camp.

The citizens of Catana assembled to see the splendid hero of Athens coming to talk to them. Alcibiades spoke not just to the Council of Catana, but to all the people. While he was speaking, and he held a long speech, particularly fine in wording, he saw Athenian hoplites strolling into the agora. The Athenians had come in by the open gates, and they had also broken down a badly built smaller gate so that large numbers of Athenian hoplites poured into the city. The men who were in favour of Syracuse rapidly slipped out from the Assembly, and out of town.

The people of Catana voted in favour of Athens. They invited the Athenians to bring their forces of Rhegium to their town.

Alcibiades had won over one more city. He stayed at Catana to discuss matters of provisioning, while Nicias sailed back to Rhegium, and the generals brought their entire force to camp outside Catana.

A promising city on the south-western coast of Sicily was Camarina. From Camarina came news that the city would join the Athenians if these came to the town with their fleet, and also that Syracuse was preparing to send out many war-ships to attack the Athenians.

The Athenian generals first sailed out with their entire fleet along the coast to Syracuse, but they saw no sign of an enemy fleet. They continued to sail past Syracuse to Camarina, where they landed at the beaches. When they sent heralds to the city however, Camarina refused to receive them. The Camarinaeans told them that they were bound to their promise only if the Athenians came in with one sole ship, and unless the Camarinaeans themselves asked for a fleet to come.

Since they had no success there, the Athenians sailed back. They fought a skirmish against a small force of the Syracusans, with little consequence, and they returned to Catana.

Alcibiades had remained very quiet all the time on this last expedition.

## Plot

While the Athenian army had still been at Catana, before sailing for Camarina, Alcibiades had received a disquieting letter from his cousin by one of his rapid sailing boats. He owned two such small but speedy vessels, and the crews of these ships were used to sail as long as there was just a little light at Sea. They could out-speed any other boat of Athens. The letter of Euryptolemus told him what had happened at Athens since he had left for Sicily.

*Alcibiades,*

*I greet you, cousin.*

*I write to you and send you letters by our sailing-ship because events in Athens have quickened and I believe it is necessary for you to decide on a course of action in the case of the defacing of the Hermae and the profaning of the Mysteries of Eleusis, for your enemies in Athens have named you again and their attacks have become blatant and insisting lately.*

*As you remember, just before you left, Teucros the metic denounced eleven men to have profaned the Mysteries, and he knew also eighteen men who destroyed the Hermae. Among these men he named the brother of Nicias, but not you. Most of these men escaped before they could be arrested, but the few that were too late to flee were executed.*

*After your departure the investigation continued, however. Two of the commission members are Peisandres and Charicles, zealous and jealous democrats. Peisandres could bring the award for denunciations to ten thousand drachmas. All the members of the commission were feared in Athens, then. People went out of their way lest they be accused and executed.*

*About fifteen days after your departure, a certain Diocleides denounced a lot of men. He told that in the night of the crime he had seen at least three hundred men assembling next to the Temple of Dionysos and from there separating in many groups. Diocleides told he had had to fetch the earnings of a slave of his at the silver mines of Laurion. He therefore woke early in the morning, but mistook the time and he set off in the night. He walked by the light of a full moon. As he was passing the gateway of the theatre of Dionysos, he noticed a large number of men coming down into the orchestra from the Odeum. He was afraid, and he withdrew into the shadow to hide between a column and the pedestal of the bronze statue of the general. He then saw some three hundred men standing about in groups of five, ten and, even twenty men. He recognized the faces of most of these men, as he could see them in the moonlight. He said he had recognised forty-two people, which he instantly named. He named two members of the Council: Mantitheus and Apsephion. He also named Leogoras and Leogoras's son Andocides, as well as other members of their family and of Leogoras's hetaira, all very aristocratic and very favourable of oligarchy. Named also was Eucrates, another brother of Nicias. And also Critias was named, equally an aristocrat and a man who opposed democracy openly. Callias son of Telocles was named too. Other names were Taureas, Nisaeus, and Phrynichus.*



*The two members of the Council, Mantitheus and Apsephion, fled immediately, which made the Athenians all the more believe that all this was true. The men who had not fled were imprisoned.*

*The Council did not assemble anymore in the Bouleutêrion near the agora, but on the acropolis, for fear of conspiracy. We heard also rumours that a Boeotian army was marching for Athens and that a Spartan army was nearing the Isthmus. Athens was in a state of uproar. Armed citizens ran through the city brandishing swords and crying support for democracy.*

*The next day, the young Andocides son of Leogoras was convinced by one of his co-prisoners, his cousin Charmides, to denounce himself and thus be saved. Andocides denounced himself as having participated in the defacing of the Hermae, but he told that his father Leogoras had not participated. He also made innocent the men given by Diocleides. He gave the names of a hetaira to which he belonged. Andocides in fact named the same men as Teucros had designated (among which Euphiletus and Meletus) plus four other persons.*

*These depositions were contradictory to those of Diocleides. Diocleides happened to be having dinner peacefully at the expense of the state in the Prytaneion. So Diocleides was called in immediately. He claimed vehemently that he had clearly seen in the light of the moon all the men he had named previously. That was one detail too much, for the people suddenly remembered there was no moon that night! Diocleides fell through before the commission, and he had to admit that he had been pushed to his declaration by Amiontas of Aegina and by your cousin Alcibiades of Phegus. Diocleides was judged and executed immediately. The persons that Diocleides had accused were released from prison. I guess Alcibiades of Phegus was eager to help you, too eager, so he must have driven Diocleides to the false declaration. All this backlashes on you, now.*

*It seemed clear then, however, that the band of friends of Euphiletus, his hetaira, had wanted to retain our army in Athens. They probably feared incursions in Attica from the Spartans once our army was gone. They feared a new war, which would be very detrimental to their funds and activities in the country-side. They must have thought they could stop the army from leaving by destroying the Hermae, the gods of travel. They may have thought that Athens would believe in a conspiracy and retain the army. They are young men, and foolish.*

*So the truth about the Hermae was finally out and public.*

*However, the affair of the Mysteries was not solved yet. There was the list of Pythonicus, and that list still contained your name. By that time and before, cousin, when the heralds lowered the flag on the Pnyx to signal that a meeting of the Assembly was to take place, as many people as could fled the agora in terror of being arrested!*

*You will not believe this, but your name was then given a second time! Agariste, wife of Alcmaeonides told the Council she knew of another parody of the mysteries, in which you, Alcibiades, Axiochus and his friend Adeimantus had participated in, in the*

*house of Charmides next to the Olympieum. Few men believed her, however, for all knew she had tried to catch you in her nets, and all knew how you had mocked her.*

*Yet another denouncement was delivered to the Council! A slave called Lydus declared that his master Phericles of Themacus, one of the men denounced in the destruction of the Hermae by Teucros and by Andocides, had parodied the Mysteries also, in his house at Themacus. He named Leogoras, the father of Andocides, for having participated. Leogoras, however, could prove his innocence. Also Autocrator and Acumenus were named. Of course, every Athenian named in these affairs fled as soon as possible. Lydus did not name you!*

*At that moment, the Council heard that some of your friends in Argos, the people at whose houses you stayed lastly while in Argos, were conspiring against the democracy in that city. The Council then decided to deliver the three hundred Argive aristocrats you had made prisoners on the islands before Argos, but left alive and guarded by Athenians, to the Argive democrats. Who killed them promptly!*

*There was no real evidence against you, except for the denouncement of Pythonicus, and the Council knew he had named you before you left for Sicily, but they let you go, forced you to go, although you demanded to sit for trial. I surmise all the democrats had been hearing so long now of oligarchic plots, that your enemies found the time appropriate to accuse you publicly and formally. Zeus sent Strife to the Assembly, the cruel goddess of dissent and misery.*

*Then Thessalos son of Cimon, the grandson of Miltiades deposed a new denunciation, this time to the Council and not like Pythonicus's declaration, at the Assembly, so that it would be a double deposition. He accused you of having held parodies of the Mysteries of Eleusis in your own house. Thessalos had been the hierophant, Pulytion the torch-bearer, Theodorus the herald, and the other members of your party had been spectators. Thessalos of course enjoyed impunity.*

*The Council has just, at the time I write this letter, decided to send the Salaminia to Sicily to bring you back to stand for trial. I write therefore this letter in haste, and send it with our fastest ship so that it would reach you before the Salaminia.*

*The denunciation of Thessalos is a serious one, cousin. He bears one of the greatest names of Athens, and he could cite details. Thessalos has described the scenes in quite precise words: how he wore your purple robes to be the hierophant to show the sacred symbols of Eleusis, how you all followed him in a row.*

*It will not be easy for you to defend yourself against his accusations, if they allow you to stand accused. In the state that the Athenians are in currently, they might as well incarcerate you and execute you right after your arrival in Athens. Needless to say the extreme democrats here, led by Androcles, will do everything they can to further beat up the people against you.*

*Androcles continues to talk in the Assembly of a plot, a conspiracy against the polis. He tries very hard to convince the people of Athens that all the persons named in the parodies of the Mysteries of Eleusis are conspiring against the state, and he seems to succeed well in this effort. I do not know whether you might be saved.*

*Euryptolemus son of Peisianax*

Alcibiades had received this letter in the Harmonia and he had thrown down the papyrus scroll in disgust. That damn Thessalos, he thought. Thessalos had the first name of Athens, except his own, and the dumbest mind by far. What Thessalos had confessed was the stupidest thing on earth. Yes, once, when all the men who Thessalos had denounced were in Alcibiades's house, quite a long time ago already, Thessalos had scooped up Alcibiades's red robe in a totally drunken impulse. Yes, Thessalos had pretended to be the hierophant and the others had followed, equally drunk. It had happened during a symposium in his andron, and at least two had fallen down in the middle of the andron, too drunk to stand. The others had snored, and fallen asleep a while before leaving. They had not only mocked the Mysteries of Eleusis that night. They had damned well mocked every ceremony of Hellas, religious or not. No parody had been deliberately organised. It had just been a drunken men's flur of the moment, a joke, a laugh, as one laughed at so many things when one was dumb-drunk. It had only lasted a few moments. Nothing had been organised beforehand.

Thessalos' mind must have snapped at the constant accusations given in Athens. He must have feared that one of the other men came out with this story first. Thessalos might even have had problems with his conscience about that night, and his simple though aristocratic mind might have yielded. Thessalos must have had second thoughts about his drunken sacrilege. Yet, he had had enough of a mind to confess, or had that been the mind of his wife?

Thessalos was out of reach now, promised impunity by the Council. Had Androcles and the old buddies of Hyperbolus worked on Thessalos? These men knew that Thessalos was a frequent invitee at Alcibiades's symposiums. They might have accused Thessalos, told him all what might happen to him, talked to him of a curse of the gods, and incited him to speak about what happened during the symposiums. Alcibiades blamed himself. He should have taken Thessalos with him to Sicily, out of reach of Androcles. The man would have been killed at the first engagement. Alcibiades thought Thessalos too dumb to hold a sword, let alone a spear or a javelin.

Now what, he thought. Even if he, Alcibiades, worked on Thessalos's mind in Athens, the man would never accept to say he had lied. Thessalos would be executed for perjury, whereas he enjoyed impunity, now. Alcibiades might well say in the Council it had all been an innocent joke. Who would believe him and his friends in the over-excited climate of Athens? Even if he was believed, his reputation was damaged. He would not be general again and discredited forever. So what? Claim that Thessalos had lied, that it had all been a conspiracy to bring Alcibiades down? Nobody would believe that in Athens, these days, and his friends would stand before the jury with guilty faces and blushing cheeks and sunken eyes. If they had not escaped yet! He was alone. He stood before so many eager democrats, eager to drink his blood. So, what to do? Say that there had never been a parody of the Mysteries, which was the very truth? Say that Thessalos had dreamt, dozed and numbed with wine?

What to do in Athens? He could squash Androcles in the Assembly. Androcles was nothing but a rat scurrying through the offal of Athens. He could smash Androcles in the Assembly with words like daggers, words of fury and anger, and he could cajole and charm past any accusation. But Androcles would not let it come to that! Alcibiades would be a prize, brought in chains from the Salaminia to a Council or a

committee of but a few bloodthirsty so-called democrats, to be judged and executed, screaming in innocence, in a few moments' time. He could not return to Athens.

And so what? Disappear from Athens until the atmosphere had cooled down? Yes, he could do that. And where to wait? Athens controlled the whole earth. He could offer his services to the Sicilians. But then, he would be openly confronting Athens, waging a war on Athens. He would never be able to return to Athens. Disappear to Carthago? Or to Persia? Those were places too far away for the moment. Little was to be gained there. There was only one other place on earth where he had a few friends. Not exactly friends, but people that he might still appeal to. People who owed him. A place that was not at war with Athens, at least not openly, and he could bring that place to make war on the perfidious democrats who had opposed him and brought his demise. A place where Athens could not reach him, and where he actually knew people. A place that despised democrats. He could go to the Peloponnesos, to Elis, to Argos, to Mantinea, to Sparta. Elis and Argos could be reached by Athens. In Mantinea he would not be that popular anymore. He could only flee to Sparta.

All the way to Camarina and back, Alcibiades fretted over the issue. He was morose. He refused to leave the Harmonia. He wondered whether the Salaminia would arrive, when and where. Maybe the ship had been recalled. Maybe the sentence had never been made official. Maybe matters had turned yet again in Athens. Maybe, maybe, maybe.

When the Athenian fleet sailed into the port of Catana, Alcibiades stood at the prow of his trireme.

In front of him, at a side of the harbour, softly balancing in the cosy waters, the Salaminia showed proudly her swift profile in bright red, green and blue colours.

## ***The Actors***

- Adeimantus: Athenian general sent with Alcibiades to the Hellespont in 408 BC. Before, he was convicted like Alcibiades in the affair of the parody of the Eleusian mysteries, and considered as belonging to his party, but he escaped from Athens. He went into exile in Ionia and was captured by Persian warriors there. Imprisoned in Sardis, he escaped from that town with Alcibiades. He was later re-elected general in Athens.
- Aenesias: Spartan ephor at the outbreak of the Peloponnesian war in 431 BC.
- Agatharchus: Syracusan commander sent in 413 BC with a fleet to the Peloponnesos to urge for more vigorous war efforts against Athens. He burned ship-building timber sites of the Athenians in Italia, making logistics harder for the Athenian fleet.
- Agatharidas: with Isocrates and Machaon Corinthian commander of a Spartan fleet sent from Corinth to help Cnemus at the battle of Stratus in 429 BC, but defeated by Phormio at a battle before Patrae and Dyme in Achaea.
- Agesander: with Melesippus and Ramphias a Spartan ambassador who brought in 432 BC the Spartan ultimatum to Athens, which started the Peloponnesian war.
- Agesandridas son of Agesander: Spartan commander. He commanded a Spartan fleet in 411 BC, anchored off Laconia. He overran Aegina on his way to Euboea and threatened Piraeus. He then sailed along Megara to the coast of Salamis, but his ships sailed past Sounion and later to Oropus without attacking Piraeus. At Euboea he defeated an Athenian fleet under Thymochares.
- Agesippidas: Spartan governor of Heraclea. He was expelled by the Boeotians for incompetence in 420 BC.
- Agis son of Archidamus: King of Sparta. He followed up on his father Archidamus as King of Sparta in 427 BC. He set out with a Spartan army to invade and ravage Attica in 426 BC but returned after an earthquake in the Isthmus of Corinth so that no invasion of Attica took place that year. He invaded and destroyed Attica in 425 BC, but he stayed then only fifteen days in Attica because the Athenians occupied Pylos in the Peloponnesos. He marched into Leuctra in 419 BC, but returned home rapidly. In 418 BC he invaded Argos with a Spartan army but equally turned back, yet laying waste Saminthus. In 418 BC he concluded a truce of four months with Argive generals to avoid a battle with Argos. He was blamed for this truce in Sparta, blamed for not having given battle near Nemea. As a result, he had to accept with him ten Spartan commanders to act as advisors. That same year he marched against the Argives once more, because the Argives wanted to take Tegea. He won the Battle of Mantinea against the Argives in 418 BC. In 418 BC – 417 BC he marched once more against Argos, which had been building defensive walls. He destroyed the walls of Argos. He also took Hysia in that expedition, killing all the free men of the town. He invaded Attica in 414 BC, laying waste the country and fortifying Decelea (on advice of Alcibiades). This Spartan occuaulén threatened and controlled the richest plains of Attica for Sparta. In the winter of 413 BC he sent a force to Decelea once more and raised money

from Spartan allies to build a new fleet for Sparta. In the summer of 410 BC he attacked directly the city of Athens but the Athenians repelled the attacks and led him to retreat to Decelea. Until the defeat of the Athenian fleet at Aegospotami, he stayed in Decelea.

Alcaeus:

archon of Athens in 421 BC at the signing of the Peace of Nicias with Sparta.

Alcibiades son of Clinias:

Athenian statesman and general. Born ca 451 BC or 452 BC. He was a student and friend of Socrates. Pericles the Great was his warden. In around 430 BC he tried to gain the status of 'proxenos' or public representation of Sparta that had been held by his grandfather, but the Spartan rebuffed him, so he took a vigorous anti-Spartan standpoint. He participated with Socrates in the siege of Potidaea and in the Battle for Delium. In 420 BC, the first year he became a general, he sought an alliance with Argos and he also tried to end the Peace of Nicias. He was in the Peloponnesos in 419 BC, serving as a general. In 418 BC he was ambassador for Athens in Argos. He sailed with a fleet to Argos in 417 BC and he seized three hundred pro-Spartan citizens of Argos to be held prisoner for Athens. He urged in the Athenian Assembly in 415 BC to attack Sicily and was subsequently sent with Nicias and Lamachus to Sicily with an important Athenian fleet and army. When he had just arrived in Sicily, Athens' herald ship the Salaminia, brought the message that he had to stand trial in Athens for the destruction of Hermae sculptures. He subsequently fled to Sparta. There, during 415 BC – 414 BC, he invited the Spartans to more involvement in Sicily and also to fortify Decelea in Attica. He proposed the Spartans to send reinforcements with Gylippus to Syracuse. In 412 BC he sailed with a small fleet and with Chalcideus, for the Spartans, to Tissaphernes, the Persian satrap of Lydia and Caria. He persuaded and succeeded to make Chios and other cities revolt from Athens. In 411 BC however, he made overtures to the Athenian commanders at Samos to return to Athens. For that, he tried to persuade Tissaphernes to become an ally of Athens instead of an ally of Sparta. He was brought to the Athenian army at Samos by Thrasybulus and immediately appointed general there. In 410 BC he returned to Tissaphernes' court but was arrested by the satrap and brought to Sardis. He escaped from Sardis a month later. With Theramenes and Thrasybulus he defeated the Spartan fleet under Mindarus at Cyzicus in 410 BC. After Cyzicus he built a fort at Chrysopolis, opposite Byzantium. With Theramenes he attacked Chalcedon in 408 BC against Pharnabazus and Hippocrates but failed to take the city. With Thrasyllus he attacked Byzantium in 408 BC and they captured the city by treachery from within. In 408 BC he could officially return to Athens. Later that year he was sent with a large army and with as fellow-generals Aristocrates, Adeimantus and Conon once again to the Hellespont. In 407 BC he tried to take Andros and then sailed to Cos, Rhodes, Samos and Notium. In 406 BC he left his fleet there to join Thrasybulus in the siege of Phocaea, putting Antiochus in charge of his fleet. Antiochus lost the Battle of Notium to Lysander in the absence of Alcibiades, but Alcibiades was severely blamed by the Athenian assembly for that. He was removed from command in 406 BC and went into exile near the Hellespont in Thrace, living in a fort he built there. Before the Battle of Aegospotami in 405 BC he came to warn the Athenian generals to move their base to Sestos and to promise support with land forces from the Thracian King; but he was not listened to. In 404 BC he withdrew to the court of

	Pharnabazus but he was assassinated on his way to Susa, to the court of the King of Persia, that same year.
Alciphron:	a Spartan, who represented Spartan interests in Argos in 418 BC. With five Argive generals he negotiated near Nemea with King Agis of Sparta to avoid a battle between Sparta and the Argive forces in 418 BC. He succeeded in securing a truce of four months.
Alcidas:	Spartan navarch, who led a fleet of Sparta, sent to help the island of Lesbos in its revolt against Athens in 428 BC and 427 BC. With Brasidas he was sent by Sparta in 427 BC in aid of the Corcyraean oligarchs, but he retreated when Athenian forces arrived.
Alcmenes son of Sthenalaïdas:	Spartan commander sent in 412 BC by King Agis to Euboea, which wanted to revolt from Athens after Athens' defeat in Sicily. But also the island of Lesbos wanted to revolt and Agis preferred to help Lesbos first. So Alcmenes was sent out in 412 BC with a fleet to Lesbos but later ordered to sail to Chios. He was killed on his way to Chios in a naval battle which he lost against an Athenian fleet.
Alexarchus:	Corinthian commander sent in 413 BC by the Spartan alliance to Sicily in support of Syracuse with a force of hoplites.
Alexicles:	one of the Athenian generals of the Four Hundred and one of the organisers of the oligarchic political clubs. He was arrested by democratic hoplites in Piraeus in 411 BC, and later released. With Peisander he got away to Decelea when the Four Hundred were overthrown by the democrats.
Ameiniades son of Philemon:	Athenian at the court of Sitalces, King of Thrace. Learchus and Ameiniades persuaded in 430 BC Ladoce son of Sitalces to arrest the Spartan ambassadors that were on their way to Persia.
Ameinias:	one of three Spartan commanders that supported Brasidas in 423 BC in Thrace with a Spartan army.
Ammias son of Coroleus:	one of the first Plataeans to climb the city's walls in the attempt to break out of the Spartan siege of Plataea. In 428 BC.
Amorges son of Pissuthenes:	bastard son of Pissuthenes, who revolted against the King of Persia. Like Pissuthnes, Amorges was a rebellion enemy of King Darius and of Tissaphernes. He was captured in 411 BC and turned over to Tissaphernes.
Amphias son of Eupaïdas:	Epidaurian statesman who accepted with Spartan statesmen the one-year armistice for Sparta and its allies with Athens in 423 BC.
Andocides:	one of the people who parodied the Mysteries of Eleusis in Alcibiades's times. He was exiled from Athens but returned at the general amnesty of 403 BC. He was put on trial again in 399 BC and executed.
Andocides son of Leagoras:	Athenian fleet commander sent with Glaucon in support of Corcyra in its war with Corinth in 433BC. He participated that year in the Battle of Sybota.
Androcles:	a leader of the Democratic Party in Athens; he was murdered in 411 BC.

Andromedes:	Spartan ambassador, who with Phaedimus and Antimenidas discussed an alliance with Argos in 420 BC.
Androstheneis:	famous wrestler and boxer of Arcadia. He won wrestling and boxing at the Olympian Games of 420 BC, in which the Spartans were not allowed to participate.
Antalcidas:	Spartan commander, born around 435 BC. He may have been with Lysander in the Hellespont as his lieutenant. He was a diplomat, who was also close to King Agesilaus of Sparta.
Antimenidas:	Spartan ambassador, who with Phaedimus and Andromedes discussed an alliance with Argos in 420 BC.
Antiochus:	pilot of ships for Alcibiades. Antiochus was an old friend of Alcibiades and Antiochus led Alcibiades's trireme. He was put in charge by Alcibiades of the fleet at Notium in 406 BC. He gave battle to Lysander then and part of the Athenian fleet was destroyed by the Spartans.
Antiphon:	oligarch in Athens during the period of the Four Hundred. He was one of the masterminds behind the oligarchic revolution in Athens of 413 BC. With Phrynichus he went to Sparta to negotiate a peace but Phrynichus was murdered on his return at Athens.
Antisthenes:	Spartan commander sent to support Pharnabazus in the Hellespont.
Aracus:	navarch (admiral) of Sparta appointed in 405 BC, with Lysander as co-navarch (in fact as 'epistoleus' or secretary), to head the Spartan fleet in the Aegean.
Archestratus son of Lycomedes:	Athenian fleet commander sent first to fight Perdiccas, King of Macedonia, and then to besiege Potidaea in 432 BC.
Archestratus:	Athenian statesman who proposed in the Athenian assembly to accept the Spartan surrendering conditions for Athens in 405 BC.
Archetimus son of Eurytimes:	with Isarchidas one of two commanders of the Corinthian land forces in the war with Corcyra of 433 BC.
Archidamus son of Zeuxidamus:	King of Sparta during the first declaration of war with Athens in 432 BC. Archidamus was married to Lampito, daughter of King Leotychidas, and married a second time to Eupolia. Agis was his son by Lampito and Agesilaus and Cynisca his children by Eupolia. He was a 'xenos', a friend of Pericles the Great because Archidamus' grandfather Leotychidas II and Xanthippus father of Pericles were joint commanders of the Hellenic fleet against Persia in 479 BC. His co-King Pleistoanax was in exile, convicted of treason since 455 BC. He reigned from 469 BC until 427 BC. He led the first raid of the Spartans into Attica. He attacked Plataea in 429 BC and laid siege to the city.
Archidemos:	one of the prosecutors of the Athenian generals accused of negligence after the Battle of Arginusae. Archidemos was the leader of the Democratic Party in that period, but nevertheless he rather favoured Alcibiades.
Ariantides son of Lysimachus:	commander, with Pagondas, of the Theban armies that attacked the Athenians of Hippocrates in 424 BC. The Thebans won the Battle of Delium and captured the town.



Ariphron son of Xanthippus:	the brother of Pericles the Great.
Aristarchus:	oligarch in Athens during the period of the Four Hundred.
Aristeus son of Adeimantus:	Corinthian commander sent by Sparta and its allies to relieve the siege of Potidaea in 432BC. He participated in the Battle of Potidaea but left the city when it was surrounded by the Athenians. He fought the Athenians from the inland country for a time. In 430 BC he was sent by Corinth on a mission to Persia but was captured with other ambassadors by the Athenians. He was brought to Athens and killed there.
Aristeus son of Pellichas:	one of three commanders (with Callicrates and Timanor) of a Corinthian fleet sent to make war with Corcyra in 433 BC. He participated in the naval battle of Leucimne.
Aristeus of Sparta:	one of three Spartan commanders that supported Brasidas in 423 BC in Thrace with a Spartan army.
Aristides son of Archippus:	commander of Athenian ships sent in 425 BC to collect tribute from Athenian allies. He captured the Persian ambassador Artaphernes with dispatches for Sparta. Artaphernes was later sent back to Persia unharmed. He was sent with Lamachus and Demodocus to collect tribute once more from the Ionian cities in 424 BC. They took Antandros then.
Aristocles:	Spartan commander who refused in 418 BC at the Battle of Mantinea to execute King Agis' commands. He was found guilty in Sparta and banished from the city.
Aristocrates:	oligarch in Athens during the period of the Four Hundred. Later, in 408 BC, appointed co-general with Alcibiades and sent with a large fleet to the Hellespont.
Aristotle son of Timocrates:	Athenian commander sent, together with Hierophon, with a fleet to the Peloponnesos in 426 BC. They appointed Demosthenes general-in-chief against the Spartan army of Eurylochus.
Asopius son of Phormio:	Athenian commander. He attacked with an Athenian fleet the coasts of the Peloponnesos in 428 BC to help the Acarnanians. He was killed that year at a battle for Nericus.
Aspasia:	wife of Pericles. Pericles divorced his first wife to marry Aspasia and lived fifteen years with her, until his death.
Astymachus son of Asopolaus:	with Lacon a spokesman for the Plataean citizens at the surrender of Plataea to the Spartans in 427 BC.
Astyochus:	Spartan admiral given supreme command at Sea in the battles in the Aegean in 411 BC. He sacked the Meropid Cos in 411 BC and tried to take Cnidus but fled for an Athenian fleet led by Charmines. Later his fleet brought Rhodes to revolt from Athens. He positioned his fleet at Mycale, in front of Samos, but never attacked the Athenians. He was relieved from his command by Mindarus in August 411 BC.
Athenagoras:	a Democrat of Syracuse, who in 415 BC at the invasion of Sicily by an Athenian army, pleaded against resistance to Athens. He was overruled however and Syracuse started preparations for the war,

- especially by organising a large cavalry force, which the Athenians did not have.
- Athenaus son of Pericleidas: Spartan statesman who accepted with Taurus and Philocharidas the one-year armistice with Athens in 423 BC.
- Autocharidas: Spartan commander. In 422 BC he was sent by Sparta with Ramphias and Epicydidas to Thrace, to bring Spartan reinforcements there, after the Battle of Amphipolis.
- Autocles son of Tolmaeus: Athenian commander. He led with Nicias and Nicostratus as co-commanders the expedition of Athens against Cythera in 424 BC and took the city. They laid waste the Spartan coasts that year, capturing and burning down Thyrea.
- Boriades: an Eurytanean, who was one of the Aetolian representatives who went to Sparta in 426 BC to ask Sparta for help against Athens when their land was attacked by Demosthenes.
- Brasidas son of Tellis: Spartan commander who saved in 431 BC the city of Methone from an Athenian attack. He was an ephor that year. Sent by Sparta in 429 BC to advise the navarch Cnemus. He and Cnemus made an aborted attempt to attack Piraeus in 429 BC. With Alcidas he was sent by Sparta in 427 BC in aid of the Corcyraean oligarchs, but he retreated when Athenian forces arrived. He participated in an attempt to relieve the Spartan forces at Sphacteria in 425 BC, but he was wounded and fell into the Sea there. With an army of Corinthians, Phliasians, Sicyonians, Boeotians and Spartans he went to the support of Megara when Demosthenes and Hippocrates attacked the city in 424 BC. Therefore the Athenians could not take the city. He made a Thracian expedition in 424 BC. He was accompanied in Thessaly by Dorus, Hippolachidas, Torylaus, Strophaeus the Chalcidician and Nicomidas from Larissa. He joined Perdiccas of Macedonia then, but made a deal with Arrhabeus son of Bromerus, King of the Lyncestian Macedonians against Perdiccas' wish. He took the city of Acanthus peacefully in 424 BC. He captured Argilus, Myrcinus and Amphipolis in 424 BC. After the capture of Amphipolis he marched against Acte. He received many towns in surrender in 424 BC – 423 BC and took Torone and Lecythus by force. He was a Spartan politician also, always in favour of war to the end and like Cleon in Athens he tried to undermine the truce of 423 BC. In 423 BC he accepted Scione, a city of Pallene, which had revolted from the Athenian alliance. That same year he re-took Mende, previously captured by the Athenian general Nicias and Nicostratus. Late 423 BC he made an expedition with Perdiccas, King of Macedonia, against Arrhabeus. Although abandoned by the Macedonian army at a crucial moment, Brasidas defeated the Lyncestians. That same year he also tried to capture Potidaea but did not succeed. He won the battle of Amphipolis against Cleon in 422 BC but was wounded and died. He was subsequently considered as one of the founding-fathers of Amphipolis.
- Battus: a Corinthian commander who counter-attacked together with Lycophon an Athenian invasion of Corinthian territories in 425 BC.
- Callias son of Calliades: Athenian fleet commander sent in reinforcement of the Athenian army at the siege of Potidaea in 432 BC. He was killed in action during a major battle before Potidaea.

- Callias son of Hipponicus: Callias lived from c. 455 BC to c. 370 BC. Callias inherited a vast fortune from his father, as well as important civic duties. He was educated as a Sophist and hosted many Sophist philosophers (Protagoras, Gorgias, and Prodicus) in his house in Piraeus. Alcibiades married Hipparete, Callias' sister. Socrates also knew Callias well.
- Callicrates son of Callias: one of three commanders (with Aristeus and Timanor) of a Corinthian fleet sent to make war with Corcyra in 433 BC. He participated in the naval battle of Leucimne.
- Callicratidas: Spartan commander who replaced Lysander at the head of the Peloponnesian fleet in 406 BC. He moved the Spartan base back from Ephesus to Miletus. He trapped Conon's fleet in Mytilene at first, but he lost the Battle of Arginusae in that same year against Conon, the main naval battle in the Hellespont of the second part of the Peloponnesian War.
- Callixeinus: Athenian demagogue who spoke out in the assembly against the eight Athenian generals, which were at the Battle of Arginusae, and which had not rescued Athenian sailors that were left in the Sea there during a storm and that drowned. Six of the generals were executed in Athens, among whom Pericles the Younger.
- Carcinus son of Xenotimus: with Proteas and Socrates as commanders sent out by Athens with a fleet to attack the Peloponnesian coasts in 431 BC.
- Chaereas son of Arcestratus: Athenian sent out with the 'Paralus' messenger trireme from Samos to give news of the democratic tendencies of the Athenian fleet of Samos. He was arrested by the Four Hundred in Athens but slipped away and returned to Samos.
- Chalcideus: Spartan naval commander sent to the island of Chios, active with a fleet in 413BC – 412 BC in support of the Spartan fleets in the Aegean. He was killed in 411 BC in a battle against Athenian forces at Panormus near Miletus.
- Charicles son of Apollodorus: Athenian general sent with a fleet round the Peloponnesos in 413 BC to ask Argos to help Athens in the war with Syracuse. He attacked the coasts of Laconia then. He was with Critias a legislator among the Thirty Oligarchs in the period of 404 BC to 403 BC.
- Charmides son of Glaucon: uncle of Plato on his mother's side and uncle of Glaucon the Younger (elder brother of Plato). When he was young he was renowned for his beauty. He was one of the Thirty Tyrants in 404 BC – 403 BC and a leader in that oligarchic revolution. He was also a student of Socrates. He died in the counter-revolution fighting of 403 BC.
- Charmines: Athenian commander who was sent to Samos in 411 BC with Strombichides and Euctemon in reinforcement of the Athenian forces there. He attacked a fleet with Astyochus before Cnidus that year but had to retreat when too many Spartan allied ships arrived. He was a democrat among the Athenian generals at their base of Samos.
- Charoeades son of Euphiletus: Athenian commander who participated in the first Athenian expedition to Sicily in 427 BC. He settled in Rhegium and made

- war on the Sicilians from there. He was killed in a battle with Syracusans in 426 BC.
- Chrysis: priestess at Argos at the outbreak of the Peloponnesian war in 431 BC. In 423 BC she burned down by accident the Temple of Hera at Argos and subsequently fled to Phlius. Phaeinis was appointed as her successor.
- Clearchus son of Ramphias: Spartan commander, given the high command of the joint Spartan forces in the Hellespont in 412 BC. In 411 BC he was sent to Pharnabazus to take control of cities along the Hellespont. He brought about the revolt at Byzantium against Athens. In 408 BC he defended Byzantium against Alcibiades and Thrasyllus. He was such an arrogant ruler at Byzantium that the Byzantines conspired with Alcibiades to hand over their city to the Athenians. He was killed in the Battle for Byzantium that same year.
- Clearidas son of Cleonymus: Spartan commander put in charge as governor of Amphipolis by Brasidas in 423 BC.
- Cleinias son of Cleinias: younger brother of Alcibiades. At first, Ariphron brother of Pericles was his guardian, but Ariphron could not handle him so after 6 months he brought the boy back to Pericles, who became his guardian too.
- Cleippides son of Deinias: Athenian commander, sent with a force to subdue the revolt of the island of Lesbos and its main city Mytilene in 428 BC.
- Cleobulus: ephor in Sparta in 421 BC – 420 BC. With Xenares he advised the Boeotians to enter into an alliance with Argos, with the aim of bringing this alliance later into the larger alliance of Sparta.
- Cleomedes son of Lycomedes: Athenian general. He was sent in an expedition to the island of Melos, a Spartan colony that had refused to enter the alliance with Athens in 417 BC. With Tisias he blockaded Melos.
- Cleomenes: brother of Pleistoanax, King of Sparta. He acted for King Pausanias, the under-age son of Pleistoanax, to invade and ravage Attica in 427 BC.
- Cleon son of Cleanetus: Athenian statesman and general, in favour of war with Sparta at all cost. He proposed in 427 BC in the Athenian Assembly to put all Mytilenians to death after the revolt and surrender of that city. He argued against a peace with Sparta after a large number of Spartiates were trapped at Sphacteria in 425 BC. As a result, he was sent with an Athenian fleet to capture Sphacteria near Pylos in 425 BC. He chose Demosthenes as co-commander then and Demosthenes captured the Spartan forces there. In 422 BC, after a year of armistice with Athens, he sailed with an Athenian fleet to Thrace. He captured Torone and returned to Eione with his army. He lost then the Battle of Amphipolis against Brasidas and was killed there in 422 BC.
- Cleophon: Athenian demagogue. When, after the battles of Cynossema, Abydos and Cyzicus of 411 BC – 410 BC the Spartans sought peace with Athens, he spoke out in the assembly against the offers so that Athens rejected peace. He rejected in the Assembly of Athens other peace offers of Athens, made after the Battle of Arginusae in 406 BC. He also opposed the motion of surrender to Sparta in 405 BC.

Cleopompus son of Clinias:	with Hagnon a colleague of Pericles in the high Athenian command at the beginning of the Peloponnesian war. He was an Athenian commander of a fleet sent by Athens to keep watch on Euboea and capture Thronium in 431 BC. He was defeated by the Locrians at Alope in 431 BC. He participated for a few months in the siege of Potidaea, having been sent there with Hagnon and an Athenian army.
Clinias son of Axiochus:	a cousin of Alcibiades gifted equally with good looks.
Cnemus:	Spartan navarch, who attacked Zacynthus with a Spartan fleet in 430 BC. He attacked with a Spartan allied army Acarnania in 429 BC, attacked Stratus and defeated the Stratians in a battle at that city. He and Brasidas made an aborted attempt to attack Piraeus in 429 BC.
Conon:	Athenian general and navarch. He was sent with Alcibiades and a large fleet to the Hellespont in 408 BC. He became admiral of the Athenian fleet in the Aegean in 406 BC. He was blockaded by a Spartan fleet under Eteonicus on Lesbos when the largest naval battle of the Peloponnesian War at Arginusae was won against Callicratidas. He was one of the generals who subsequently lost the decisive Battle of Aegospotami, but he could escape with a few vessels then.
Cratesippidas:	Spartan general who brought Chios again in Spartan control in 410 BC after a pro-Athenian group had taken power in the city.
Critias son of Callaeschrus:	He lived from about 460 BC to 403 BC. Athenian statesman, poet, philosopher, and writer, student of Socrates. He was a cousin of Plato's mother. He was one of the leading oligarchs during the reign of the Thirty Tyrants (404 BC- 403 BC) but afterwards he was banished to Thessaly. He had a grudge against Socrates and called him in to warn him around 402 BC to respect the laws. He had many Athenians killed when he was a member of the Thirty, including Theramenes.
Cynisca:	sister of the Spartan King Agesilaus, daughter of King Archidamus II and his wife Eupolia. She was born around 440 BC. She won her first Olympic victory in the chariot races in 396 BC. She also won later at the Olympic Games of 392 BC.
Damotimus son of Naucrates:	Corinthian statesman who accepted with Onesimus and Spartan statesmen the one-year armistice for Sparta and its allies with Athens in 423 BC.
Darius:	King of the Persians. He died in 405 BC and his son, the Achaemenid prince Artaxerces, succeeded upon him then.
Demarates:	Athenian general who, in 414 BC, with Pythodorus and Laespodias, attacked the Peloponnesian coasts in breach of the Peace of Nicias in support of Argos, which had previously been attacked by Spartan forces.
Demodocus:	Athenian commander sent with Lamachus and Aristides to collect tribute from the Ionian cities in 424 BC. They took Antandros then.
Demosthenes son of Alcisthenes:	Athenian fleet commander, sent with Procles to ravage the Peloponnesian coasts and Leucas in 426 BC. He set out with a fleet

and an allied army from Leucas to a campaign against Aetolia in 426 BC. He set up his base that year at Oenion in Locris, took Potidania, Crocylium and Tichium but was defeated by the Aetolians. Demosthenes returned then to Naupactus, not to Athens, in fear of critics. In 426 BC he won the Battle of Olpae against the Spartans and defeated an army of Ambraciots near Amphipolis. In 425 BC he led the forces brought by Sophocles and Eurymedon to Pylos and set up a base there close to Sparta. He was with Hippocrates before Megara in 424 BC. Democratic Party members of Megara talked to Hippocrates and Demosthenes with a view of surrendering the city to them. The Athenians subsequently captured the walls but not the rest of the city and had to leave the city. He arrived mid 424 BC with an Athenian fleet at Naupactus. He was defeated near Sicyon, where he had landed in 424 BC. In 418 BC, during the Peace of Nicias, he was in charge of the withdrawal of the Athenian forces from Epidaurus. In 414 BC he was appointed with Eurymedon to share command in Sicily with Nicias. After his arrival in Sicily in 413 BC he attacked the heights of Epipolae at night but was repelled by Boeotian forces. He urged then to return with the army to Athens but Nicias refused to do that. He attacked with his colleagues Menander and Euthydemus the Syracusan fleet in the harbour of the town in a fierce battle, but was defeated. After this battle the Athenians retreated by land, away from the siege of Syracuse. He surrendered a little later with six thousand men to Syracuse and was executed by the Syracusans in 413 BC.

- Dercyllidas: Spartan commander sent with a small force to bring about in 411 BC a revolt at Abydos in the Hellespont. He brought about the revolts of Abydos and Lampsacus.
- Diemporus son of Onetorides: with Pythangelus one of two Boeotarchs that led a Theban force to attack Plataea soon after the outbreak of the Peloponnesian war in 431 BC.
- Diitrephes: Athenian commander of a force of Thracians that came to help the Athenian forces in Sicily in 413 BC. That army had to be returned from Athens to Thrace because of lack of funds. On their way back they plundered Tanagra, and took and burned Mycalessus. They were defeated and destroyed by a Theban army. Diitrephes was sent in 411 BC to take up command in the Thracian Sea. He ended the democracy at Thasos, during the time of the oligarchy of the Four Hundred in Athens, but the Thrasians somewhat later fortified their town against the oligarchs.
- Diniadas: a Spartan, but not of the regular commander class. He was commander of a Spartan fleet that led Methymna to revolt against Athens in 411 BC.
- Diodotus son of Eucrates: Athenian. He opposed in 427 BC in the Athenian assembly Cleon's proposal to put all Mytilenians to death after the revolt and surrender of that city. He thus saved the inhabitants of Mytilene.
- Diomedon: Athenian commander sent with a small fleet in 411 BC to the Aegean. He defeated a force of Chians that year. He used as basis islands off Chios and with Leon defeated the Chians later again. He was appointed commander of the combined Athenian fleet (with Leon). In the winter of 411 BC he made an attack on Rhodes. He defeated with Leon a force of Pedaritus, in which Pedaritus was killed. He was of democratic opinions in Samos. He was one of the

	generals also at the battle of Arginusae and convicted to death later in Athens.
Dionysius I:	Tyrant of Syracuse from 405 BC to 367 BC.
Diphylus:	Athenian commander of a fleet based at Naupactus. He led an engagement against Corinthian ships led by Polyantes off Erimeus in Achaia in 413 BC, but both sides claimed victory.
Dorieus son of Diagoras:	Thurian commander who sailed to Cnidus in 411 BC, accompanied by the Spartan commander Hippocrates, in support of a revolt against Athens there.
Dorieus of Sparta:	Spartan commander who arrived in 410 BC after the battle of Cynossema in the Hellespont, pursued by Alcibiades. With Mindarus these ships escaped to Abydos.
Eccritus:	Spartan commander sent in 413 BC to Sicily in support of Syracuse with a force of hoplites.
Endius:	Spartan statesman. One of the Spartan ambassadors (with Philocharidas and Leon) sent to Athens to secure the Peace of Nicias in 420 BC. Nicias intervened in their favour to preserve the peace with Sparta. Endius was a family friend of Alcibiades in Sparta. After the battle of Cyzicus, Endius tried once more to make peace with Athens. He also was an ephor of Sparta while Alcibiades was there. Due to Endius Alcibiades could leave Sparta with a small fleet bound for Chios.
Epicydidas:	Spartan commander. In 422 BC he was sent by Sparta with Ramphias and Autocharidas to Thrace, to bring Spartan reinforcements there, after the Battle of Amphipolis.
Epitadas son of Molobrus:	Spartan commander of Spartiate troops trapped at Sphacteria, and killed there in 425 BC.
Erasinides of Corinth:	Corinthian naval commander who arrived in Sicily in 414 BC with a Corinthian, Ambraciot and Leucadian fleet to help the Syracusans in their war with Athens.
Erasinides of Athens:	one of the Athenian generals who were prosecuted in 406 BC for negligence in rescuing the crews of sunken ships after the Battle of Arginusae. He was subsequently executed together with five other generals.
Erianthus:	a Theban statesman who proposed in 404 BC to have Athens completely destroyed after the Spartans had won at the Battle of Aegospotami.
Eteonicus:	Spartan naval commander of Mytilene in 406 BC. He led land forces for Lysander at the Battle of Aegospotami in 405 BC.
Eualas:	Spartan commander, commander of land forces that advanced in 411 BC along the coast towards Clazomenae and Cumae.
Eucles:	Athenian general who defended Amphipolis against Brasidas of Sparta in 424 BC. He was defeated by Brasidas.
Euctemon:	Athenian commander who was sent to Samos in 411 BC with Strombichides and Charmines in reinforcement of the Athenian

	forces there. With Strombichides and Onomacles he attacked Chios that year.
Euetion:	Athenian general who tried in 414 BC to capture Potidaea again for Athens. He worked in co-operation with Perdikkas but failed to capture the city, yet put a blockade to it with his triremes.
Euphamidas:	a Corinthian statesman. He spoke out at a meeting in Mantinea between Athenians and Argives for peace between Argos and Epidaurus.
Eupompides son of Daimachus:	a Plataean who, with Theanetus, planned a breakout from the siege of their city by the Spartans in 428 BC.
Eurylochus:	Spartan commander who was sent with a fleet and co-commanders Macarius and Menedaios to the help of the Aetolians when they were attacked by the Athenian commander Demosthenes in 426 BC.
Eurymachus son of Leontidus:	aristocrat of Plataea, who invited the Thebans to attack his polis at the outbreak of the Peloponnesian war in 431 BC.
Eurymedon son of Thucles:	Athenian commander sent to support Nicostratus at Corcyra in 427 BC. He let the Corcyraean democrats kill all members of the oligarchic party, and then returned to Athens. With Hipponicus he laid waste Tanagra in 426 BC. He was sent with Sophocles, another Athenian commander, and with Athenian reinforcements to Sicily in early 425 BC, after the defeat of Pythodorus. He participated in the Battle of Sphacteria under Demosthenes and later sailed with Sophocles and their fleet to Corcyra to help the popular party there. In 414 BC he was appointed with Demosthenes to share the command in Sicily with Nicias. In 413 BC he participated in a naval battle at Syracuse but was defeated and killed. This naval defeat much disheartened the Athenian forces in Sicily.
Euryptolemus:	cousin and associate of Alcibiades. In 406 BC he spoke out in the assembly against the demagogue Callixeinus, defending the Athenian generals, which had, after the Battle of Arginusae, not rescued Athenian sailors that were left in the Sea there during a storm and that drowned. The generals were however executed in Athens.
Euthydemus:	Athenian commander in Sicily in 414 BC. He was appointed by Athens to be co-commander of Nicias who was ill. In 413 BC he attacked with his colleagues Menander and Demosthenes the Syracusan fleet in the harbour of the town in a fierce battle, but was defeated. After this battle the Athenians retreated by land, away from the siege of Syracuse.
Evarchus:	dictator of Astacus at the outbreak of the Peloponnesian war.
Glaucus son of Leagrus:	Athenian fleet commander sent with Andocides in support of Corcyra in its war with Corinth in 433BC. He participated in the Battle of Sybota.
Gylippus son of Cleandridas:	appointed by Sparta in 414 BC to be commander of the Syracusans in their war with Athens. He sailed to Syracuse with a Corinthian fleet. He took a fort called Ietone first, and then arrived at Syracuse in 414 BC. In the battles around Syracuse in 413 BC he took



	Plemmyrium, a depot used by the Athenians for their fleet but he lost a naval battle. He was the main commander to win the battles of Syracuse against the Athenians.
Hagnon son of Nicias:	with Cleopompus a colleague of Pericles in the high Athenian command at the beginning of the Peloponnesian war. He also participated in the campaign in Thrace against Potidaea in 430 BC, without much success.
Hegesander:	Thespian commander sent in 413 BC by the Spartan alliance to Sicily in support of Syracuse with a force of hoplites.
Heraclides son of Lysimachus:	Syracusan commander. He was appointed in 415 BC as one of only three generals (with Hermocrates and Sicanus), after Syracuse lost a first battle against Nicias due to a confused command of ten Syracusan generals.
Hermocrates son of Hermon:	Syracusan statesman. He spoke out in 424 BC in a Syracusan assembly to end the war between Sicilian cities. In 415 BC he urged the Syracusans to prepare for the Athenian invasion led by Clinias, Alcibiades and Lamachus. He was appointed in 415 BC as one of only three generals after Syracuse lost a first battle against Nicias due to a confused command of ten Syracusan generals. He won several battles against the Athenian forces and after a final naval battle in the harbour of Syracuse in 413 BC, when the Athenian forces withdrew over land, he pleaded to continue to attack the Athenian armies of Nicias and Demosthenes. This led that same year to the destruction of the Athenian forces that invaded Sicily. In 411 BC he was with Syracusan forces in the allied army of Sparta in Miletus. He was on bad terms with Tissaphernes on the account of the pay for the Spartan forces. Astyochus complained against him to Sparta so that Hermocrates was declared an exile from Syracuse. New commanders were sent to lead the Syracusan fleet.
Hermogenes son of Hipponicus:	a companion of Socrates. He was present at Socrates's trial and death.
Hestiodorus son of Aristocleides:	with Xenophon and Phanomachus one of the Athenian commanders that made peace at Potidaea and received the surrender of the city in 429 BC.
Hierophon son of Antimnestes:	Athenian commander sent, together with Aristotle, with a fleet to the Peloponnesos in 426 BC. They appointed Demosthenes general-in-chief against the Spartan army of Eurylochus.
Hippagretas:	second in command, under Epitadas, of the Spartan forces trapped at Sphacteria in 425 BC. He was wounded in the battle there, so that he relented command to Styphon.
Hipparete:	daughter of Hipponicus and sister to Callias. She married Alcibiades and lived with him until her death. She had a son with Alcibiades, Alcibiades the Younger.
Hippocles son of Menippus:	Athenian commander of a fleet that tried to intercept the Spartan allied fleet that came back from Sicily in 412 BC. He led a minor battle, but the Spartan-Sicilian fleet could escape.
Hippocrates son of Aripbron:	Athenian general before Megara, 424 BC. Democratic Party members of Megara talked to Hippocrates and Demosthenes with a

view of surrendering the city to them. The Athenians thereafter captured the walls but not the rest of the city and had to leave the city. He marched into Boeotia with an army in 424 BC. He mistook with Demosthenes the dates at which their armies should join. Later he arrived at Delium. He lost the Battle of Delium against the Thebans Arianthides and Pagondas in 424 BC. He died in that battle.

- Hippocrates of Sparta: Spartan commander who sailed to Cnidus in 411 BC in support of a revolt against Athens there, with Thurian ships commanded by Dorieus son of Diagoras. He was the Spartan defender of Chalcedon (after Clearchus) against Alcibiades. He gave battle there, before the town, but was defeated and killed. Nevertheless the Athenians failed to take the city then.
- Hipponicus: Wealthy Athenian and father of Callias. Alcibiades married Hipponicus' daughter Hipparete and thus became brother-in-law to Callias.
- Hipponicus son of Callias: Athenian commander who, with Eurymedon, laid waste Tanagra in 426 BC.
- Hipponoidas: Spartan commander who refused in 418 BC at the Battle of Mantinea to execute King Agis' commands. He was found guilty in Sparta and banished from the city.
- Isarchidas son of Isarchus: with Archetimus one of two commanders of the Corinthian land forces in the war with Corcyra of 433 BC.
- Ishagoras: one of three Spartan commanders that supported Brasidas in 423 BC in Thrace with a Spartan army. He was sent in 421 BC, after the Peace of Nicias, by Sparta (with Menas and Philocharidas) to governor Clearidas to hand over Amphipolis back to the Athenians.
- Isocrates: with Machaon and Agatharidas Corinthian commander of a Spartan fleet sent from Corinth to help Cnemus at the battle of Stratus in 429 BC, but defeated by Phormio at a battle before Patrae and Dyme in Achaea.
- Lacedaimonius son of Cimon: with Proteas, Athenian fleet commander sent in support of Corcyra in its war with Corinth in 433 BC.
- Laches son of Melanopus: Athenian commander who fought at Potidaea. He was a friend of Socrates. He was sent with a fleet to Sicily in 427 BC. He took Messina in 426 BC. He attacked but was unable to take Inessa in 426 BC. In 423 BC he proposed a truce of one year with Sparta, which was accepted. In 418 BC he came with a small force and Nicostratus as co-commander to help the Argives. He died that year.
- Lacon son of Aieimnestus: with Astymachus a spokesman for the Plataean citizens at the surrender of Plataea to the Spartans in 427 BC.
- Laespodias: Athenian general who, in 414 BC, with Pythodorus and Demarates, attacked the Peloponnesian coasts in breach of the Peace of Nicias and in support of Argos, which had previously been attacked by Spartan forces.
- Lamachus son of Xenophanes: Athenian commander sent with Aristides and Demodocus to collect tribute from the Ionian cities in 424 BC. They took Antandros then.

- In the summer of 424 BC Lamachus however lost his fleet due to a flood in the waters of the River Calyx near Heraclea. He was sent in 415 BC with Alcibiades and Nicias on an important Athenian expedition to conquer Sicily.
- Learchus son of Callimachus: Athenian at the court of Sitalces, King of Thrace. Learchus and Ameiniades persuaded in 430 BC Ladoce son of Sitalces to arrest the Spartan ambassadors that were on their way to Persia.
- Leon of Sparta (1): Spartan statesman. One of the Spartan ambassadors (with Philocharidas and Endius) sent to Athens to secure the Peace of Nicias in 420 BC. Nicias intervened in their favour to preserve the peace with Sparta.
- Leon of Sparta (2): Spartan commander. In 411 BC he became the leader of the Chians after Pedaritus' death, after he had come with Antisthenes from Sparta. He fought a battle against the Athenians at Chios, which was left undecided.
- Leon of Athens: Athenian general sent in 411 BC with a small fleet to reinforce Diomedon in the Aegean. He sailed with Diomedon to Polichna and captured it so that Clazomenae became Athenian again. He defeated with Diomedon Chian armies that year. He was appointed commander of the combined Athenian fleet (with Diomedon). In the winter of 411 BC he made an attack on Rhodes. He defeated with Diomedon a force of Pedaritus, in which Pedaritus was killed. With Diomedon and Charmines he was of democratic opinions in Samos.
- Leotychidas son of Agis: Leotychidas should have become King of Sparta after Agis but there was doubt he was truly Agis' son. He might have been Alcibiades's son by Timaea, the Queen of Sparta. Agis only acknowledged Leotychidas at his death (399BC). Agis was succeeded by his younger brother Agesilaus, even though he was lame, because Agesilaus had the support of Lysander.
- Lichas son of Arcesilaus: Spartan chariot-owner. He received a beating at the Olympic games of 420 BC because, although the Spartans were not allowed to participate in these Games, he had crowned his charioteer who ran for Boeotia thus showing Spartan involvement. He was sent in 411 BC to admiral Astyochus, in whom Sparta had lost confidence, with ten other Spartan advisors.
- Lycophon: Spartan commander sent as advisor with Brasidas and Timocrates to the navarch Cnemus in 429 BC.
- Lycophon of Corinth: a Corinthian commander who, with Battus, counter-attacked an Athenian invasion of Corinthian territories in 425 BC. He was killed in battle there.
- Lysander: Spartan navarch in 407 BC. He was born around 455 BC. He was a mothax of Sparta, not a Spartiate (the son of a Spartiate father and a helot mother or the son of an impoverished Spartiate who had lost his status). He was the lover of Agesilaus, the half-brother of King Agis. He became a friend of Cyrus, son of Darius King of Persia. In 407 BC at Ephesus he promised the Ionian cities to cede control to its aristocrats if he won the war. He refused a battle with the Athenians that year at Ephesus. He was appointed satrap by Cyrus over Cyrus' provinces of the Persian Empire in 405 BC. He thus secured sufficient funds to continue the war for Sparta. In 405 BC

he also attacked Lampsacus and took the town. That same year he won the Battle of Aegospotami which finished the Athenian fleet. He let about four thousand Athenian prisoners be executed then. As a result of that battle most of the Ionian cities abandoned the alliance with Athens, except Samos, to which Lysander put up a blockade and later captured. End 405 BC Lysander arrived in Attica with the armies of the two Kings of Sparta, Pausanias and Agis, to demand the surrender of Athens. The Heraea Festival of Sparta was renamed in his honour the Lysandrea.

- Lysicles:** Athenian commander sent by Athens to collect tributes in various cities in 428 BC. He was defeated and killed that year in the Hills of Sandius by the Carians.
- Macarius:** Spartan commander who was sent with Eurylochus and a Spartan fleet to the help of the Aetolians when they were attacked by the Athenian commander Demosthenes in 426 BC.
- Machaon:** with Isocrates and Agatharidas Corinthian commander of a Spartan fleet sent from Corinth to help Cnemus at the battle of Stratus in 429 BC, but defeated by Phormio at a battle before Patrae and Dyme in Achaea.
- Medoc:** one of the Thracian Odrysian Kings. He succeeded on Sitalces.
- Melesander:** Athenian commander sent to collect tribute in Caria and Lycia for Athens in 430 BC. Defeated there and killed.
- Melesippus son of Diacritus:** with Ramphias and Agesander a Spartan ambassador who brought in 432 BC the Spartan ultimatum to Athens, which started the Peloponnesian war. Later that year sent by King Archidamus of Sparta to negotiate a peace with Athens, but refused entrance by the Athenians.
- Menander:** Athenian commander in Sicily in 414 BC. He was appointed by Athens to co-commander of Nicias who was ill. In 413 BC he attacked, with his colleagues Demosthenes and Euthydemus, the Syracusan fleet in the harbour of the town in a fierce battle, but was defeated. After this battle the Athenians retreated by land, away from the siege of Syracuse.
- Menas:** Spartan statesman. He was sent in 421 BC, after the Peace of Nicias, by Sparta (with Ishagoras and Philocharidas) to governor Clearidas to hand over Amphipolis back to the Athenians.
- Menecrates son of Amphidorus:** Megarian statesman who accepted with Nicasus and Spartan statesmen the one-year armistice for Sparta and its allies with Athens in 423 BC.
- Menedaius:** Spartan commander who was sent with Eurylochus and a Spartan fleet to the help of the Aetolians when they were attacked by the Athenian commander Demosthenes in 426 BC. Later that year he took over command of a Spartan army, after Eurylochus and Macarius had been defeated and killed at Olpae by Demosthenes. He made a truce with Demosthenes and left with the rests of the army (426 BC).
- Mindarus:** Spartan navarch who arrived in August 411 BC to the Spartan fleet in the Aegean to take over command from Astyochus. In late 411 BC he transferred his fleet from Miletus to Chios. He lost the

Battle of Abydos against Thrasybulus and Alcibiades in 410 BC. Later, with Pharnabazus, he took Cyzicus by storm. He lost the decisive naval Battle of Cyzicus to the Athenian fleet led by Thrasybulus, Theramenes and Alcibiades in 410BC and he was killed in that battle.

- Naucleides:** aristocrat of Plataea, who invited the Thebans to attack his polis at the outbreak of the Peloponnesian war in 431 BC.
- Nicasus son of Cecolus:** Megarian statesman who accepted with Menecrates and Spartan statesmen the one-year armistice for Sparta and its allies with Athens in 423 BC.
- Nicias son of Niceratus:** Athenian commander and statesman. He led in 427 BC an expedition against the island of Minoa, in front of Megara. He took the island and blockaded Megara by building a fort there, then withdrew. In 426 BC he was sent to subdue Melos. He laid waste Nocris that same year. Late 425 BC he led an expedition against the territories of Corinth; he landed there between Cheronese and Pheitus and defeated the Corinthian army. He led with Autocles and Nicostratus as co-commanders the expedition of Athens against Cythera in 424 BC and took the city. They laid waste the Spartan coasts that year, captured and burned down Thyrea. In 423 BC, together with Nicostratus, he took Mende and made peace with Perdiccas, King of Macedonia, against Brasidas. Brasidas re-took Mende some time later. He made peace with Sparta (with King Pleistoanax) in 422 BC – 421 BC. This peace was called the Peace of Nicias and was supposed to last fifty years. After unrest in Argos in 420 BC he intervened in the Athenian Assembly against Alcibiades and in favour of Spartan ambassadors, to secure the peace. He pleaded in the Athenian Assembly in 415 BC against the attack of Sicily, in opposition to Alcibiades, and asked so many troops that the hoped the Athenians would be set off by the numbers. But the Assembly voted for the expedition in excessive enthusiasm. He was thereafter sent with Alcibiades and Lamachus to Sicily with the important Athenian fleet and army he had demanded. He first defeated the Syracusans in front of their town in 415 BC but he was unable then to capture the city. In 414 BC he was ill, so he wrote a letter to Athens to be relieved from his command in Sicily but the Athenian Assembly refused and appointed Menander and Euthydemus to him to act as co-commanders on a temporary basis. Athens later sent Demosthenes and Eurymedon to share his command. In 413 BC he defeated a Syracusan army through allied Sicilian forces. That same year he lost a naval battle against the Syracusans because the Sicilians had reinforced the prows of their ships and attacked the Athenian triremes head-on. After a battle in the Great Harbour of Syracuse lost by the Athenians, he and Demosthenes retreated over land, continually harassed by Syracusan troops. When Demosthenes surrendered to the Syracusans, Nicias did so finally too. He was executed by the Syracusans in 413 BC.
- Nicon:** Boeotian commander sent in 413 BC by the Spartan alliance to Sicily in support of Syracuse with a force of hoplites.
- Nicostratus son of Diitrephes:** Athenian commander at Naupactus in 427 BC. He led with Nicias and Autocles as co-commanders the expedition of Athens against Cythera in 424 BC and took the city. They laid waste the Spartan coasts that year, captured and burned down Thyrea. In 423 BC, together with Nicias, he took Mende and made peace with

	Perdiccas, King of Macedonia, against Brasidas. Brasidas captured Mende back a little later. In 418 BC he came with a small force and Laches as co-commander, to help the Argives.
Nymphodorus son of Pythes:	a representative of Athens in Thrace sent to secure the alliance with Sitalces, King of Thrace in 431 BC.
Onesimus son of Myacles:	Corinthian statesman who accepted with Spartan statesmen and Damotimus the one-year armistice for Sparta and its allies with Athens in 423 BC.
Onomacles:	Athenian general sent in 411 BC with a large force (with Phrynichus and Scironides as co-commanders) to reinforce Leon and Diomedon. They won a battle near Miletus. He then attacked Chios with Strombichides and Euctemon.
Paches son of Epicurus:	Athenian commander. He led reinforcements of Athens sent to Lesbos in 428 BC, when Lesbos had revolted against Athens, and led the blockade of Mytilene. He took Mytilene by surrender in 427 BC. He was ordered by the Athenian Assembly to kill all Mytilenians, but was withheld from doing so by a last-minute counter-order. He took Notium in 428 BC and handed the city later to the Colophians. He destroyed Pyrrha and Eresus in 427 BC.
Pagondas son of Aeolidas:	commander, with Arianthides, of the Theban armies that attacked the Athenians of Hippocrates in 424 BC. The Thebans won the Battle of Delium and captured the town. The Athenians thereby failed in their scheme to invade and take Boeotia.
Pasitelidas son of Hegesander:	Spartan commander put in charge as governor of Torone by Brasidas in 423 BC. He was made a prisoner by Cleon's army there and sent as a prisoner to Athens.
Pausanias son of Pleistoanax:	Co-King of Sparta to Agis. He was put to trial in 403 BC in Sparta on charges of treason, but he was acquitted.
Pedaritus son of Leon:	Spartan commander sent to take command of Chios but later sent over land to Erythrae. He was commander in 411 BC of a Chian fleet, working with Astyochus. That year he killed the pro-Athenian Chians in the town. He sent for help from Astyochus to defend the town and keep it for Sparta. He was killed in a battle against the Athenian generals Leon and Diomedon in 411 BC.
Peithias:	a Corcyraean, member of the Council of Corcyra. He was murdered by the oligarchs when he proposed an alliance with Athens in 427 BC.
Perdiccas son of Alexander:	King of Macedonia at the outbreak of the Peloponnesian war. He was declared an enemy of Athens in 417 BC.
Pericles son of Xanthippus:	great Athenian statesman and general. He lived from about 495 BC to 429 BC. He proposed the original Athenian strategy in the Peloponnesian war to withstand the Spartan invasions from within Athens' walls and he proposed to rely on Athens' naval power to counter-attack Sparta. He was the warden of Alcibiades and of Alcibiades's brother Cleinias.
Pericles the Younger:	son of Pericles the Great. He was elected general in 406 BC. He was one of the generals executed after the Battle of Arginusae, when the leading generals of that battle were prosecuted for

- negligence at leaving the crews of sunken ships to their fate in the stormy Sea.
- Phaeax son of Erasistratus: Athenian statesman. He sailed with two colleagues to Italy and Sicily in 422 BC to secure friendly relations of certain cities with Athens.
- Phaedimus: Spartan ambassador, who with Andromedes and Antimenidas discussed an alliance with Argos in 420 BC.
- Phaeinis: priestess of the Temple of Hera in Argos. She succeeded on Chrysis who had burnt the temple by accident.
- Phalius son of Eratocleides: a Corinthian, founder of the city of Epidamnus.
- Phanomachus son of Callimachus: with Hestiodorus and Xenophon one of the Athenian commanders that made peace at Potidaea and received the surrender of the city in 429 BC.
- Pharnabazus: satrap of Phrygia, the Persian Province in Asia Minor at the Hellespont. His headquarter was at Dascylium, near the Hellespont. He was an ally of the Spartans on land in the Peloponnesian Wars. He helped the Spartan admiral Mindarus in the war with Athens in the Hellespont, such as at Cyzicus. He signed a treaty with Athens over the town of Chalcedon. He ordered Alcibiades to be executed in 404 BC.
- Philippos: Spartan commander at Miletus in 411 BC. When Tissaphernes promised a Phoenician fleet to the support of Sparta that year, but brought it no further than Aspendus and did not hand over the fleet to the Spartans, Philip was sent to negotiate with him – in vain. Philip complained to the Spartan admiral Mindarus that no ships would be coming from Tissaphernes and that the satrap was treating them disgracefully.
- Philocharidas son of Eryxidaïdas: Spartan statesman who accepted with Taurus and Athenaüs the one-year armistice for Sparta with Athens in 423 BC. He was sent in 421 BC, after the Peace of Nicias, by Sparta (with Menas and Ishagoras) to governor Clearidas to hand over Amphipolis back to the Athenians. He was one of the Spartan ambassadors (with Leon and Endius) sent to Athens to secure the Peace of Nicias in 420 BC but deceived before the Athenian Assembly by Alcibiades. Nicias however intervened with him to preserve the peace with Sparta.
- Philocles: one of the six generals of the Athenian fleet in the Aegean in 405 BC and supreme commander at the day of the Battle of Aegospotami lost by the Athenians against Lysander.
- Philocrates son of Demeas: Athenian general who arrived in the winter of 417 BC – 416 BC with Athenian reinforcements at the island of Melos. Melos surrendered unconditionally to Athens then. All men of Melos were killed, women and children sold as slaves.
- Phormio son of Asopius: one of the greatest Athenian navarchs. Sent by Athens in reinforcement of the army at the siege of Potidaea in 432 BC. He participated in the battle of Potidaea. He ravaged with a fleet the Peloponnesian coasts in 430 BC. Phormio based his fleet at Naupactus in 430 BC to block naval access to Corinth. He defeated in 429 BC before Patrae and Dyme a Spartan fleet commanded by Machaon, Isocrates and Agatharidas, which were sent to help

Cnemus in the battle of Stratus. He first lost a part of the naval Battle of Panormus, but won the second part and finally defeated there the Spartan commander Timocrates in 429 BC. He liberated in 429 BC/428 BC the cities of Stratus and Coronta in Acarnania from the Spartan occupation.

- Phrynichus: Athenian general sent in 411 BC with a large force (with Onomacles and Scironides as co-commanders) to reinforce Leon and Diomedon. They won a battle near Miletus. He opposed Alcibiades in his efforts to return to Athens, depicting Alcibiades as a mere opportunist in his desire to be accepted again by Athens. Due to accusations by Alcibiades he was relieved with Scironides from his command by Athens; Diomedon and Leon took their places in 411 BC. He was one of the oligarchs in Athens during the period of the Four Hundred. With Antiphon he went to Sparta to negotiate a peace but he was murdered on his return at Athens.
- Phynis: a perioeci from Sparta sent to check whether the Chians wanted to revolt from Athens in 413 BC, after which Sparta could forge an alliance with Chios and Erythraea.
- Peisander: Athenian commander sent in 411 BC by Athens to Samos to discuss Alcibiades's return to Athens. With Alcibiades, he proposed to bring an oligarchy in power at Athens and he returned for that from Samos to Athens. He was an oligarch in Athens during the period of the Four Hundred. With Alexicles he got away to Decelea when the Four Hundred were overthrown by the democrats. Peisander was notorious for his cowardice.
- Pittacus: Edonian King. He was killed by his wife Braura and the sons of Goaxis in 424 BC.
- Plato son of Ariston: Plato lived from 429 BC to 347 BC. He was an Athenian philosopher and student of Socrates. His brother was called Glaucon. His uncle was Charmides, one of the Thirty Tyrants of Athens. He wrote several brilliant dialogues in which he brought his ideas forward through the figure of Socrates.
- Pleistoanax son of Pausanias: Spartan King who made peace with Athens (with Nicias) in 422 BC – 421 BC. He had been convicted for treason in Sparta and exiled from 445 BC to Arcadia. He remained in exile for 18 years but was recalled to Sparta around 427 BC to 426 BC. He marched into Arcadia in 421 BC, laying waste the land of the Parrhanians. He took then the Cypsela fortress.
- Pleistolas: ephor of Sparta at the signing of the Peace of Nicias in 421 BC.
- Polyanthes: Corinthian commander of a fleet who led a naval battle against Athenian ships led by Diphilus off Erimeus in Achaea in 413 BC. Both sides claimed victory.
- Polydamidas: defender of Mende in 423 BC against the Athenian generals Nicias and Nicostratus. He was defeated and Mende became Athenian for a while.
- Procles son of Theodorus: Athenian fleet commander, sent with Demosthenes in 426 BC to ravage the Peloponnesian coasts and Leucas. He was killed in the Aetolian expedition of Demosthenes in 426 BC.



Protagoras of Abdera:	a Sophist philosopher. He lived from around 485 BC to 415 BC. Abdera was a town in Thrace. Protagoras was one of the best known Sophists. When the Athenians founded Thurii in 444 BC, Pericles the Great asked Protagoras to draw up a constitution for the town. In Athens, Protagoras stayed at the house of Callias.
Proteas son of Epicles:	together with Lacedaimonius, Athenian fleet commander sent in support of Corcyra in its war with Corinth in 433 BC. With Carcinus and Socrates as commanders later sent out by Athens with a fleet to attack the Peloponnesian coasts in 431 BC.
Pythangelus son of Phylides:	with Diemporus one of two Boeotarchs that led a Theban force to attack Plataea soon after the outbreak of the Peloponnesian war in 431 BC.
Pythodorus son of Isolochus:	Athenian archon at the outbreak of the Peloponnesian war in 431 BC. Sent by Athens to Sicily in 425 BC, as general of the Athenian forces, to relieve Laches. He was defeated that year by the Locrians. He was in Sicily in 424 BC with Athenian forces there and was subsequently banished by Athens for having accepted peace in Sicily, whereas Eurymedon was merely fined. This was on the grounds that they had been bribed to leave Sicily, when they should actually have taken control of the island. He was a host to Zenon and Parmenides when they visited Athens. He attacked in 414 BC with Laespodias and Demarates the Peloponnesian coasts in breach of the Peace of Nicias to support Argos, which had been attacked previously by Spartan forces.
Ramphias:	with Melesippus and Agesander Spartan ambassador who brought in 432 BC the Spartan ultimatum to Athens, which started the Peloponnesian war. In 422 BC he was sent by Sparta with Autocharidas and Epicydidas to Thrace, to bring Spartan reinforcements there, after the Battle of Amphipolis. He advanced a Spartan army to Pieirium in Thessaly that same year.
Salaethus:	Spartiate sent to Mytilene during the Athenian siege there in 427 BC to promise the Mytilenians Spartan support. He surrendered with Mytilene and was put to death in Athens that year.
Sargeus:	Sicyonian commander sent in 413 BC by the Spartan alliance to Sicily in support of Syracuse with a force of hoplites.
Scironides:	Athenian general sent in 411 BC with a large force (with Onomacles and Phrynichus as co-commanders) to reinforce Leon and Diomedon. They won a battle near Miletus. Due to accusations by Alcibiades he and Phrynichus were relieved from their command by Athens; Diomedon and Leon took their places in 411 BC.
Seuthes son of Spardocus:	nephew of Sitalces, King of Thrace. He persuaded Sitalces to return after the invasion of Macedonia in 429 BC and received Stratonice, daughter of Perdicas, King of Macedonia, in marriage for this treacherous advice. He succeeded Sitalces as King of Thrace in 424 BC.
Seuthes:	Thracian commander who fought to consolidate the Odrysian Kingdom of Medoc. He was allowed around 405 BC to call himself King of the southern territories of Thrace.

Sicanus son of Execestes:	Syracusan commander. He was appointed in 415 BC as one of only three generals (with Hermocrates and Heraclides) after Syracuse lost a first battle against Nicias due to a confused command of ten Syracusan generals. He was sent in 413 BC with a fleet to Acrages, a town that had revolted from Syracuse but failed to capture it.
Simonides:	Athenian general who captured Eion in Thrace in 425 BC. He was forced out of the town later by the Chalcidians and Bottiaean.
Sitalces son of Teres:	Odryian King of Thrace at the outbreak of the Peloponnesian war. He marched in 429 BC against Perdiccas, King of Macedonia. He was defeated in battle by the Triballi in 424 BC and killed.
Socrates son of Antigaus:	with Proteas and Carcinus as commanders sent out by Athens with a fleet to attack the Peloponnesian coasts in 431 BC.
Socrates:	Around 469 BC to 399 BC. Socrates was an Athenian philosopher. He devoted his life to thinking about ethical questions and discussing these subjects with his fellow-men. He fought as a hoplite for Athens at Potidaea, Delium and Amphipolis. He was the teacher of Alcibiades and among his students and followers were also the philosopher Plato and the historian Xenophon. Socrates never wrote down any of his conversations and theories, but Plato used Socrates as his major character in his 'Dialogues'. Socrates was put to death in 399 BC on charges of corrupting the young and of introducing new gods to Athens.
Sophocles son of Sostratidas:	Athenian commander sent with Eurymedon and Athenian reinforcements to Sicily in early 425 BC, after the defeat of Pythodorus. He participated in the Battle of Sphacteria under Demosthenes and later sailed with Sophocles and their fleet to Corcyra to help the popular party there. He was in Sicily in 424 BC with Athenian forces there and was subsequently fined by Athens for having accepted peace in Sicily, whereas Eurymedon was banished. This was on the grounds that they had been bribed to leave Sicily, when they should actually have taken control of the island.
Sthenelaidas:	one of the Spartan ephors during the declaration of war with Athens in 432 BC. He took the war with Athens to the vote of the Spartan council.
Strombichides son of Diotimus:	Athenian commander sent with a small fleet to stop the revolt of the Ionian cities in 411 BC. He was driven to Samos by Chalcideus and Alcibiades, who were acting for Sparta. He attacked Chios with Onomacles and Euctemon that year. He attacked Lampsacus later that year, which had revolted from Athens, and recaptured the town.
Styphon son of Pharax:	Spartan commander of the besieged Spartans forces at Sphacteria in 425 BC, after the death of Eпитadas and the wounding of Hippagretas.
Taurus son of Echetimides:	Spartan statesman who agreed to the armistice of Laches of Athens in 423 BC.
Tellis:	father of Brasidas. Spartan statesman. He was one of the men sent by Sparta to negotiate the terms of peace in Athens in 421 BC.

- Theanetus son of Tolmidus: a Plataean who, with Eupompides, planned a breakout from the siege of their city by the Spartans in 428 BC.
- Theramenes: oligarch in Athens, though a moderate one, during the period of the Four Hundred. He appeared in the Piraeus to stop the democrat uprising there in 411 BC. He was sent to Euboea by Athens to secure the island against a Spartan fleet. Afterwards he sailed to Macedonia to help its new King Archelaos in his siege of Pydna. Then he joined Thrasybulus in the Hellespont. With Thrasybulus and Alcibiades he defeated the Spartan fleet under Mindarus at Cyzicus in 410 BC. He attacked Chalcedon in 408 BC with Alcibiades but failed to capture the town. He was not re-elected general in 406 BC due to Alcibiades's downfall. With Thrasybulus he accused the Athenian generals that were at the Battle of Arginusae for not having rescued Athenian sailors that were left in the Sea there during a storm and that drowned. The generals were subsequently executed in Athens. In 405 BC, after the Athenian defeat at Aegospotami, he proposed to negotiate with Lysander at Samos and persuaded the Athenians that he had made progress. The Spartans agreed to a favourable settlement with Athens. He was appointed as one of the Thirty Tyrants in Athens in 404 BC. He was executed later after an accusation made against him by Critias.
- Therimenes: Spartan commander who came in 411 BC with Syracusan and Peloponnesian ships and money to support admiral Astyochochus. Therimenes handed over the fleet, signed a treaty with the Persians, sailed away and was lost at Sea.
- Thrasybulus son of Lycus: at first acting as a captain of an Athenian trireme for Athens in the fleet at Samos in 411 BC. He became with Thrasyllus the most important supporter of the democracy for Athens in the Athenian fleet of Samos. They made the army swear an oath to the democratic constitution of Athens. With Thrasyllus he was appointed in command of the army at Samos in 411 BC. He was in support of the return of Alcibiades, so he sailed to Tissaphernes and Alcibiades to bring Alcibiades back to Samos. With Thrasyllus he campaigned against Eresus to capture this town, and then they sailed to the Hellespont to meet Mindarus' Spartan fleet there. They won the Battle of Cynossema before Sestos and Abydos against Mindarus. With Theramenes and Alcibiades he defeated again the Spartan fleet under Mindarus at Cyzicus in 410 BC. With Theramenes he accused the Athenian generals that were at the Battle of Arginusae for not having rescued Athenian sailors that were left in the Sea there during a storm and that drowned. The generals were executed in Athens. After the Athenian surrender and the government of the Thirty Tyrants installed by Sparta, he fled to Thebes (which had become more hostile to Sparta then), assembled an army and overthrew the Thirty Tyrants in 403 BC to restore full democracy in Athens.
- Thrasybulus son of Thrason: an Athenian who returned from the army at Samos to Athens, to accuse Alcibiades from treason after Antiochus was defeated by Lysander in Alcibiades's absence.
- Thrasyllus of Argos: Argive general. He was of five Argive generals to negotiate near Nemea with King Agis of Sparta to avoid a battle between Sparta and the Argive forces in 418 BC. He succeeded in securing a truce of four months. Afterwards he was blamed for this in Argos and almost stoned to death.

- Thrasyllus of Athens: at first acting as a hoplite for Athens in the fleet at Samos in 411 BC. He became with Thrasybulus the most important supporter of the democracy for Athens in the Athenian fleet of Samos. They made the army swear an oath to the democratic constitution of Athens. With Thrasybulus he was appointed in command of the army at Samos in 411 BC. With Thrasybulus also he sailed against Eresus to capture this town, and then they sailed to the Hellespont to meet Mindarus' Spartan fleet there. They won the Battle of Cynossema before Sestos and Abydos against Mindarus. He remained in Athens from end 411 BC to mid 409 BC. Then, he brought a new force to Ionia via Samos to recover lost cities there. At Ephesus however he gave up this Ionian campaign and regained the Hellespont end 409 BC. With Alcibiades he attacked Byzantium in 408 BC but when they tried to capture the city by treachery from within, they failed. He was not re-elected general in 406 BC due to Alcibiades's downfall. He participated in the Battle of Arginusae, in 406 BC, but he was one of the commanders accused of negligence at that battle for not having rescued sailors of sunken warships. He was then executed, together with Pericles the Younger.
- Thrasymilidas son of Cratesicles: Spartan navarch who attacked in vain the Athenians under Demosthenes at Sphacteria in 425 BC, hoping to relieve a Spartan force there.
- Thucydides son of Olorus: Athenian general, born around 460 BC. He probably took part in several engagements of the Peloponnesian War. Between 430 BC and 427 BC. He fell ill of the plague in Athens but recovered. In 424 BC he was with a fleet in the Aegean Sea when Brasidas took Amphipolis. He was warned but came too late from Thasos to prevent the capture. In 423 BC he was banished from Athens due to this. He was a wealthy man, who owned gold mines in Chalcidice. He became the main historian of the Peloponnesian Wars, writing a book that detailed the actions from 436 BC (the Corcyraean war with Corinth) until about 411 BC. He returned to Athens after twenty years of exile, to die there around 400 BC.
- Thymochares: Athenian general sent with a fleet to defend Euboea against Agesandridas. He was defeated by the Spartans, as a result of which the Euboeans revolted against Athens.
- Timocrates: Spartan advisor to the navarch Cnemus in 429 BC. He killed himself that year after losing the Battle of Panormus to Phormio.
- Timanor son of Timanthes: one of three commanders (with Aristeus and Callicrates) of a Corinthian fleet sent to make war with Corcyra in 433 BC. He participated in the naval battle of Leucimme.
- Tisander: an Apodotian, who was one of the Aetolian representatives who went to Sparta in 426 BC to ask Spartan for help against Athens when their land was attacked by Demosthenes.
- Tissaphernes: a courtier of Darius, King of the Persians, and satrap for Persia of the provinces of Lydia and Caria. He was based at his capital of Sardis. He supported the Spartans against the Athenians. In 411 BC he negotiated an alliance with Athens with Peisander, but preferred Sparta. He promised to bring a Phoenician fleet to the support of Sparta that year, but sailed it no further than Aspendus and he did

	not hand over the fleet to the Spartans. In 408 BC he was replaced by Darius' younger son Cyrus.
Tisias son of Tisimachus:	Athenian general. He was sent in an expedition to the island of Melos, a Spartan colony that had refused to enter the alliance with Athens in 417 BC. With Cleomedes he blockaded Melos.
Tolophus:	an Ophionian, who was one of the Aetolian representatives who went to Sparta in 426 BC to ask Spartan for help against Athens when their land was attacked by Demosthenes.
Xenares:	ephor in Sparta in 421 BC – 420 BC. With Cleobulus he advised the Boeotians to enter into an alliance with Argos, with the aim of bringing this alliance later into the larger alliance of Sparta.
Xenocles son of Euthycles:	commander of the Corinthian garrison sent to Ambracia in 425 BC.
Xenon:	Boeotian commander sent in 413 BC by the Spartan alliance to Sicily in support of Syracuse with a force of hoplites.
Xenophon son of Euripides:	with Hestiodorus and Phanomachus one of the Athenian commanders that made peace at Potidaea and received the surrender of the city in 429 BC. He then fought against the Chalcidicians in Thrace and against the Bottinaeans. He was killed in the Battle of Spartolus in Bottiaea that same year.
Xenophon son of Gryllus	Xenophon lived from ca. 428 BC to ca. 354 BC. He was an Athenian historian and general of troops. He left Athens in 401 BC and was formally exiled in 399 BC, possibly for connexions with the Thirty Tyrants. His exile was repealed however in 368 BC. He admired Sparta. He wrote several books on the teachings of Socrates, of whom he had been a student. In 400 BC he joined the expedition of Cyrus the Younger against Cyrus' brother Artaxerces to gain the Persian throne. The attempt failed and Xenophon led the Greek mercenary troops back to Greece. From 399 BC to 394 BC he fought for Sparta. He may have fought even against Athens in the Battle of Chaeronea in 394 BC. He lived in exile from Athens until 365 BC, when he returned. Then he lived in Athens until his death. He wrote a text, the 'Hellenica', which continued Thucydides' account of the Peloponnesian War.

## ***History of the Peloponnesian War***

- 436 BC: A civil war rages in Epidamnus. The Aristocratic party is driven out of the city and joined by the non-Greek Illyrians (Taulantians). They attack the city. Epidamnus sends for help to the Corcyraeans, their founders; but these refuse to help. The Epidamnus democrats then turn to Corinth, founder-fathers of Corcyra and Epidamnus. Corinth sends colonists and troops to reinforce the town. Corcyra makes an ultimatum to Epidamnus with the force of its 120 war ships: the democrats of Epidamnus must dismiss the garrison as well as the Corinthian colonists and take back the exiled aristocrats. Corcyra sends 40 triremes to Epidamnus. Ambassadors from Corcyra arrive at Corinth but Corinth refuses an agreement. Corinth sends 75 ships with 1000 hoplites to Epidamnus. Corcyra intercepts these with 80 ships. At the Battle of Leucimme Corinth is defeated. Later, Epidamnus surrenders to Corcyra.
- 435-434 BC: Corinth prepares for war with Corcyra and builds a fleet.
- September 433 BC: Corcyraean and Corinthian ambassadors arrive in Athens. They speak at an assembly of the Athenians on the Pnyx. Athens forms a defensive alliance with Corcyra because Corcyra has a powerful fleet of ships. The Battle of Sybota is waged between the Corcyraeans and the Corinthians. Ten Ships of Athens participate and later in the battle 20 more ships arrive. The Corinthians are defeated because they retreat, but their ships are mostly unharmed.
- Winter 433 to 432 BC: Athens sends an ultimatum to Potidaea. The Megaran Decree is issued by Athens: the Megarians are blocked from the harbours of the Athenian empire and from the Athenian Agora (where all business is done).
- Spring 432 BC: The Athenians order a fleet they had previously sent to Macedonia to attack Potidaea. Potidaea rebels against Athens. Start of the siege of the town.
- Late Spring 432 BC: The Athenian army of Macedonia and Potidaea takes the town of Therme. It besieges Pydna.
- Early Summer 432 BC: Arrival of Aristeus with a Corinthian force in Potidaea. Callias arrives from Athens with a new force. Battle of Potidaea between Athenian and Corinthian plus Potidaean forces; Callias wins a victory but he is killed.
- July 432 BC: The Spartan ephors call a meeting of the Spartan Assembly. Athenians speak out at that Assembly. Sparta sends various envoys to Athens, beseeching peace.
- Winter 432 BC to 431 BC: Phormio arrives with a new Athenian army at Potidaea. The Athenians build from the summer to the winter two counter-walls to the town, encircling and blockading it.
- March 431: Thebes attacks Plataea.
- End May 431: King Archidamus of Sparta attacks Athens; He takes Onoe. He devastates Attica. The Athenians retaliate by making landings on the Peloponnesian coast. Methone is saved by Brasidas.
- Summer 431 BC: King Perdiccas of Macedonia receives back the town of Therme from the Athenians and he joins Phormio's army before Potidaea.

Late summer 431 BC:	Phormio leaves Potidaea. The Corinthian general Aristeus likewise departs from Potidaea.
Winter 431 BC:	The Athenians hold a siege to Potidaea.
Spring 430 BC:	The plague starts in Athens.
Summer 430 BC:	The Athenian generals Hagnon and Cleopompus arrive with a new army in Chalcidice and Potidaea. They try to capture the city, but fail. The siege of Potidaea continues, also after the departure of this new army.
End Summer 430 BC:	Aristeus is captured and executed in Athens.
Late Autumn 430 BC:	Hagnon and Cleopompus return with their army from Potidaea to Athens.
Winter 430 to 429 BC:	Capture of Potidaea by the Athenians after a siege of two and a half years. Many men were away from home since the winter of 433/432 BC. Generals of Athens were Xenophon, Hestiodorus, and Phanomachus. Potidaea received good terms of surrender so the Athenian generals are put to trial in Athens, but they are acquitted. General Phormio sent to Naupactus for Athens.
Begin 429 BC:	The Athenian armies return from Potidaea. There is still the plague in Athens.
Spring 429 BC:	Pericles again elected general of Athens.
May 429 BC:	Sparta attacks Plataea under King Archidamus. Siege of Plataea. Revolt in Chalcidice. Athens sends its general Xenophon and two other generals with 2000 hoplites, 200 cavalry to crush the revolt. Attack on Spartolus. The Olynthians come to help, so Athens loses the battle with 430 dead warriors, as well as its generals killed.
July 429 BC:	Pericles back in office. He will only live a few months more before being killed by the plague in his turn.
September 429 BC:	Siege wall built by the Spartans around Plataea. The Ambraciots urge Sparta to attack Acarnania. Cnemus of Sparta attacks Stratus, a city of Acarnania; but Cnemus is defeated there. Reinforcements for Cnemus were sent by Sparta in 47 triremes but Phormio attacks them with 20 ships of Athens at Rhium. In the Antvirhium Battle Sparta is defeated. Sparta then sends 3 advisers (xymbouloi) to Cnemus, among which Brasidas.
October 429 BC:	Phormio flees with his navy to Naupactus. He defeats the Spartan fleet there and receives a statue on the Acropolis. He is buried in the state cemetery on the road to the Academy, near the tomb of Pericles.
November 429 BC:	A Peloponnesian plan to attack Piraeus is designed in Sparta. The plan is formulated by Cnemus and Brasidas. The Spartans ravage Salamis but retreat. The Spartans fail in battles at Naupactus and Procis due to lack of experience at Sea.
End 429 BC:	Pericles lost his sister, his legitimate sons Xanthippus and Paralus to the plague. He asks citizenship for the young Pericles, his son by Aspasia the Milesian. Soon after, Pericles dies from the plague.

- Winter 429 to 428 BC: Sitalces, King of the Thracians attacks Perdiccas, King of Macedonia and the Chalcidician cities nearby. The Athenians send no help, no navy to Sitalces, so the King of Thrace returns to his lands.
- January 428 BC: On the island of Lesbos, the city of Mytilene with an oligarchy, though ally of Athens, seeks to unify all the cities of Lesbos under Mytilenean leadership.
- June 428 BC: Athens had prepared to send a fleet around the Peloponnesos, 40 ships, but these are sent to Lesbos instead to protect the Democratic city of Methymna on Lesbos.
- August 428 BC: Olympic Games. The Peloponnesian alliance meets after the conclusion of the Olympic Games and they meet in the precinct of Zeus. The Spartans decide to assist Mytilene. Athens sends 100 triremes to raid the Peloponnesian coasts, so the Spartan fleet sent to Lesbos returns and does not help the Mytileneans. General Paches of Athens sails with 1000 hoplites to build a wall around Mytilene.
- Winter 428 to 427 BC: The siege of Mytilene by the Athenians. Due to a financial crisis in Athens, the city asks an increase in tribute from its allies. Athens sends a fleet of 12 ships to gather the new tribute. Lysicles is killed in this effort. Athens levies a direct tax, the 'eisphora'. The Spartans send Salaethus to Mytilene to tell the city of the coming Spartan attacks.
- Early 427 BC: Corinth sends its Corcyraean prisoners back home. These vowed to Corinthian loyalty however, and this faction tries to take power. The democratic Peithias is charged with treason but acquitted, then killed. The Oligarchs with Nicostratus gain power and the Democrats are defeated. A Spartan fleet of 53 ships under Alcidas with Brasidas among the xymbouloi sail to Corcyra and these give battle with 60 Corcyraean and 12 Athenian ships. The Corcyraeans are defeated but the Spartan fleet is driven back by the news of an approaching Athenian fleet of 60 ships under Eurymedon son of Thucles. Eurymedon gets control of Corcyra and does not move for 7 days while the Democrats kill all supposed Oligarchs.
- Late Spring 427 BC: The Spartans invade again Attica. King Archidamus is dying however and his son Agis too young, so Cleomenes, the brother of the exiled King Pleistoanax leads the armies. The Spartan navarch Alcidas sails to Lesbos with 42 triremes. Such as in 430 BC, Attica is ravaged again.
- May 427 BC: Mytilene surrenders to Athens. The Mytilenean oligarchs and Salaethus are taken prisoner and sent to Athens.
- Summer 427 BC: Athens sends out a ship ordering Paches to kill all Mytileneans. But in a second assembly of Athens, Diodotus wins from Cleon and a second ship is sent immediately after the first with the order not to kill the population. Still, Cleon passes a second motion ordering to kill the imprisoned 1000 men from Mytilene, which were in captivity in Athens. The Athenian Assembly chooses two new generals: Eurymedon and Demosthenes, who promise bolder policies in Athens. Nicias seizes the island of Minoa off the coast of Megara.



- Plataea surrenders to Sparta. Plataea is destroyed by the Thebans.
- September 427 BC: The Athenians send 20 war ships under Laches and Charoeades to Sicily, instigated by Cleon, to prevent delivery of grain to the Peloponnesos.
- October 427 BC: Second outbreak of the plague in Athens.  
The Sicilian expeditionary army stays first at Rhegium in Italy. Laches attacks the Liparian islands. Ten Athenians help Leontini against its rival Syracuse. Laches captures Messina and asks for reinforcements. Athens then sends 40 war ships under Pythodorus. Pythodorus sailed immediately from Athens; Sophocles and Eurymedon sail somewhat later with the rest of the forces.
- May 426 BC: Sparta sends King Agis to devastate Attica. There are earthquakes however on the way, so the Spartan army returns back home.
- Summer 426 BC: Sparta establishes a new colony at Heraclea in Trachis, central Greece, close to Thermopylae. Brasidas was the instigator of this so that he could attack Euboea. The Thessalians however attack Heraclea incessantly, so the colony does not grow.  
Athens sends Nicias with 60 ships and 200 hoplites against the island of Melos. He fails there and attacks the Tanagrans, then sails back home. The army of Hipponicus and Eurymedon is also back in Athens.  
Athens sends 30 ships around the Peloponnesos under Demosthenes and Procles, with 10 added marines in each ship. They destroy Leucas. The Messenians from Naupactus ask Demosthenes to attack the Aetolians. In Demosthenes' army the Corcyraeans, Locrians and Acarnanians abandon. At Aegitium Demosthenes takes the town but he is ambushed and of his 300 marines 120 are killed. Demosthenes retreats to Naupactus. Sparta sends 3000 men into central Greece against the Locrians. The Acarnanians help the Athenians then under Demosthenes and the Spartans abandon; they cannot take Naupactus.
- Autumn 426 BC: An army of 10.000 Ambracians invade Amphilochia. They take the city of Olpae.  
The Acarnanians intercept a Spartan army under Eurylochus. They ask Demosthenes to lead their forces. Eurylochus joins the Ambracians at Olpae. Demosthenes waits for 5 days and then ambushes the Spartan army. The Spartans are defeated and the two generals of Sparta, Eurylochus and Macarius, are killed. This is a great victory for Athens, for Demosthenes had only a small army. The Spartans and Ambracians are besieged at Olpae but they slip away, although many are killed. The second Ambracian army is also defeated by Demosthenes.
- Winter 426 BC: Demosthenes returns to Athens. A fleet of 20 Athenian ships returns to Naupactus. Ambracia receives reinforcements from Corinth.
- Spring 425 BC: Athens sends 40 ships under Sophocles and Eurymedon to Sicily to help Pythodorus, but they first sail around the Peloponnesos. In Sicily, Messina is recaptured by Syracuse.  
There is a new revolt on Corcyra. The navarch of Sparta, Thrasymelidas, returns from Corcyra with his fleet.  
King Agis' army returns from having devastated Attica.  
Demosthenes is allowed to use his ships around the Peloponnesos, so he embarks at Coryphosium (Pylos). The Athenian fleet moves

- from Zacynthus to Pylos. Demosthenes surrounds an important Spartan army on the island of Sphacteria. Demosthenes gains a naval victory as well as a land army victory. As a result of this, Sparta proposes an offer of peace: for the exchange of the surrounded Spartans of Sphacteria they propose a defensive and offensive alliance with Athens. But the Athenian demagogue Cleon makes the negotiations break off. Athens sends 20 more ships to Pylos under Cleon. Cleon takes several allied troops with him.
- Midsummer 425 BC: The Spartans surrender at Sphacteria. 292 Spartans of the homoioi are imprisoned. The Athenians threaten to kill these if Sparta invades Attica again. This is a triumph period for Cleon.
- Summer 425 BC: Nicias with two other generals and an army of 80 ships, 2000 hoplites and 200 cavalry invades Corinthian territory. He defeats the Corinthians and attacks Troezen and Halieis. Sophocles and Eurymedon take the fleet to Corcyra, where the Oligarchs surrender.
- Winter 425 to 424 BC: At Naupactus, the Athenians capture the Corinthian Anactorium. Athens captures Spartan envoys sent to Persia to ask help from Persia.
- Spring 424 BC: The Athenian Assembly elects Cleon, Demosthenes and Lamachus as generals. And they elect also Nicias, Nicostratus and Autocles as well as the historian Thucydides son of Olorus, who are opposers of Cleon.
- Early May 424 BC: Nicias, Nicostratus and Autocles with 60 triremes, 200 hoplites, cavalry and allied troops sail to capture Cythera, the harbour of Sparta to Egypt. They place strongholds around the Peloponnesos and take Cythera. Thyrea is burned and destroyed. In Sicily, Hermocrates of Syracuse proposes at the conference of Gela a united Sicily. In Athens, Sophocles and Pythodorus are exiled and Eurymedon is fined, for having accepted a peace with Syracuse.
- Summer 424 BC: Athens delivers various offensives.
- July 424 BC: Athens launches attacks on Megara. Hippocrates and Demosthenes try to take the walls connecting Megara with Nisaea, but Brasidas arrives with a Spartan army. The Athenians take part of the walls of Megara but they are driven off and return to Nisaea. Megara becomes even more the ally of Sparta.
- Begin August 424 BC: Athens in action against Boeotia, under the generals Demosthenes and Hippocrates, and with the help from the democrats. They want to take Siphiae, Thespis and Chaeronea. Part of the Athenian army masses at Delium.
- Mid August 424 BC: Brasidas of Sparta is sent by Sparta with 700 helot hoplites and 1000 mercenary hoplites from the Peloponnesos to Thrace. He moves to Amphipolis, important to Athens as a key location for strategic materials such as timber, gold and silver. Athens declares Perdiccas of Macedonia an enemy.
- Late August 424 BC: Brasidas is with a Spartan army in Acanthus, a Chalcidician peninsula.

- Early November 424 BC: Demosthenes attacks Siphae with 40 ships, hoping to join Hippocrates's forces; but the Boeotians learn of the plan so its armies occupy Chaeronea and Siphae. Demosthenes and Hippocrates are not ready and they stay at Delium. Hippocrates completes a fort at Delium. He has 7000 hoplites and 20000 metics as well as foreign, allied troops. He sends his army partly back to Athens.
- November 424 BC: Pagodas son of Aeolidas, commanding the Boeotian armies, gives battle to the Athenians at Delium. He uses a novelty: a very deep wing of 25 rows in the phalanx instead of the usual 8 and crushes the Athenian wing. Athens is defeated at Delium and it fails to take Boeotia.
- December 424 BC: Brasidas attacks Amphipolis. Eucles, the Athenian commander there, asks Thucydides for help but Thucydides come too late and Brasidas takes Amphipolis. Thucydides is charged for treason by Cleon in Athens and he is exiled. Rebellions arise against the Athenians in the rest of Thrace.
- Spring 423 BC: The Athenians are prepared to talk for peace with Sparta and its allies. It proposes a one-year truce.
- Late March 423 BC: Sparta accepts the one-year truce. Mende and Scione revolt and Brasidas goes to Scione. The Spartans break their alliance with Perdiccas. Nicias and Pisistratus make for Mende and Scione, setting up a base at Potidaea. Ischagoras of Sparta is sent to Thrace.
- August 422 BC: End of the one-year truce between Athens and Sparta. Athens sends 30 ships, 1200 hoplites, 300 cavalry and allied light troops to recover Amphipolis. Cleon leads this army. Cleon takes Torone and Galepsus. Brasidas leads the Spartan army against Cleon. In a battle, lost by the Athenians, both Cleon and Brasidas are killed. The new Spartan commander is Ramphias.
- Winter 422 to 421 BC: Peace talks between Athens and Sparta.
- March 421 BC: Peace declared for fifty years between Athens and Sparta. The peace is ratified by Athens on 12 March of 421 BC. The peace is called the Peace of Nicias.
- 421 BC to 414 BC: The Peace of Nicias lasted for 8 years, not 50. The central figure during this period of peace in Athens was Nicias. The peace was formally ended in 414 BC.
- 421 BC: During the peace between Sparta and Athens, Corinthian and Argive magistrates propose to setup a new coalition, the Argive Coalition in which the Eleans and Mantineans would join. Athens takes Scione, which was under siege before the conclusion of the peace; but Amphipolis remains in hostile hands to them. The Spartan King Pleistoanax leads his army into Parasia, west of Mantinea, to relief these from the Mantineans. The Spartans stay in the region between Elis and Mantinea.
- Autumn 421 BC: There are new ephors elected at Sparta. In Athens, Xenares and Cleobulus want to break off the peace treaty.
- March 420 BC: Sparta forges a new treaty with Boeotia to prevent Athenian attacks.

- Spring 420 BC: Alcibiades elected for the first time as a general, about 32 years old.  
A war faction builds further up in Athens, consisting of Hyperbolus and Cleobulus. Alcibiades opposes Nicias over the destruction of Panactium and over Sparta's alliance with Boeotia. He invites Argos to come to Athens to make an alliance with his city.  
Sparta sends Leon, Philocharidas and Endius to Athens to prevent an alliance between Athens and Argos. Alcibiades deceives the Spartan ambassadors. An earthquake finally prevents the alliance and the Spartan ambassadors return. Nicias is then sent to Sparta to secure the alliance but he does not succeed well.  
Athens forms a non-aggression and defensive alliance for 100 years with Argos, Elis and Mantinea, which are Peloponnesian democracies. This is a triumph for Alcibiades.
- End June 420 BC: The war faction in Athens is angry at the destroyed fort of Panactum, which Athens had hoped to recuperate intact.  
Hyperbolus son of Antiphanes agitates as member of the council and as a general.
- Summer 420 BC: Olympic Games. The Olympic Court of the Eleans makes dubious charges against the Spartans and bans them from the Games. The Eleans protect Olympia with troops, aided by Athenian cavalry and 1000 hoplites from Argos, with 2000 men from Mantinea.  
The Spartan Lichas son of Archelaus, who was two times victor at the Olympic Games before, proposes his chariot to the Thebans and his horses race in their name; they win. The Eleans are furious over this feat.
- Winter 420 BC to 419 BC: The colonists of Heraclea are defeated by the Thessalians and the Spartan governor is killed. The Thebans take control of the city.  
Sparta is therefore angry with Thebes.
- Summer 419 BC: Alcibiades is re-elected general.  
He leads a small force of Athenian hoplites and archers into the Peloponnesos. King Agis of Sparta moves with his army to Mantinea and Elis. Corinth prevents Alcibiades from building a fort at Rhium opposite Naupactus. Sparta puts pressure on Corinth, for a fort at Patrae and Rhium could have closed off the mouth of the Corinthian Gulf.  
The Argives attack Epidaurian land at Alcibiades's instigation.  
The Spartan King Agis marches his army into Arcadia and Elis.  
Athens calls a conference at Mantinea to discuss peace. Alcibiades chooses military presence and diplomacy rather than a hoplite battle. The Spartans threaten to attack Epidaurus, but Agis retreats.
- Winter 419 to 418 BC: The Spartans send 300 men to reinforce Epidaurus.
- Spring 418 BC: The political intrigues of Alcibiades to win immediate and decisive advantage fail. So, Nicias and his friends are elected as generals for 418 BC and not Alcibiades. The Athenian assembly votes for caution against adventures but remains committed to help Argos.
- Summer 418 BC: King Agis of Sparta leads 8000 hoplites, the full Spartan army, Tegean troopers and loyal Arcadians against Argos. In all, this army consists of 12000 hoplites, 5000 light armed troops and 1000 cavalry. The Argives have 7000 hoplites plus 3000 Eleans and 2000 Mantineans. Athens promises 1000 hoplites and 300 cavalry to Argos. Agis however retreats with its army to Phlius. The

- Argive army splits in two. The two Argive generals Thrasyllus and Alciphron speak to King Agis and they conclude a 4-month truce; there is no battle. In Argos, passions run high because of this truce; Thrasyllus is stoned to death. Also Sparta is angry and a great blame is put on King Agis.
- End Summer 418 BC: Alcibiades arrives too late in Argos. He pleads that the Argives had no right to make a truce without consulting its allies. Elis and Mantinea are persuaded to attack Orchomenus in Arcadia; the Argives join them and Orchomenus is taken. King Agis promises revenge. But ten xymbouloi must advise him on his campaigns. The Argive Oligarchs had promised to bring Argos into the Spartan alliance and that has not materialised.
- Late August 418 BC: The Tegeans plan to join Argos. King Agis is on the march with his army. The Eleans defect from their allies. Agis sends a part of his army to defend Sparta. Agis fights the Battle of Mantinea and wins a major victory. The Athenians and the elite 1000 men of Argos escape destruction but their two Athenian generals, among which Laches, are killed.
- November 418 BC: Sparta sends Lichas, the Argives' proxenos at Sparta to Argos with a peace offer. Lichas finds Alcibiades at Argos but the Argives accept the Spartan treaty. The treaty restores all hostages and Argos gives up Orchomenus and evacuates Epidaurus. This is a fatal blow to the democratic league with Athens. An army of 1000 Argives and 1000 men of Sparta take Sicyon and place an oligarchy in charge there. The Argive democracy is ended and an oligarchy installed in its place. Alcibiades's schemes falter.
- Spring 417 BC: Nicias and Alcibiades are elected generals again. Alcibiades's policy is to support his friends in Argos. Nicias' policy however is to turn away from the Peloponnesos and to recover Chalcedon and the Thracian territories.
- March 417 BC: The Democratic League of the Peloponnesos ends. Alcibiades continues to build intrigues in Argos.
- May 417 BC: There is an Athenian plan to campaign against the Chalcidians and Amphipolis under the command of Nicias. King Perdiccas of Macedonia refuses to take part. Athens blockades the Macedonian coast but arrives at nothing, so the plan fails.
- August 417 BC: The democrats of Argos rebel and expel the oligarchs. Sparta, celebrating its Gymnopaedia, does not react.
- End Summer 417 BC: Argos builds walls around its city. King Agis of Sparta sends an army to destroy the walls. Agis captures and kills the men of the town of Hysiae of Argos. The Argives attack Phlius.
- Spring 416 BC: Alcibiades is again elected general of Athens. He brings a fleet to Argos to remove 300 suspected Spartan sympathisers from the town. Athens directs a campaign against the island of Melos. Melos was an ally of Athens but also a Dorian colony of Sparta. Melos already fought off an attack by the Athenians in 427 BC. Athens attacks with 38 ships, 1200 hoplites, 300 archers, and 1500 allied hoplites. Alcibiades supported or even proposed the siege and Nicias does not oppose it. The Melians surrender and all the men are killed, women and children are sold as slaves.

March 416 BC:	Hyperbolus is ostracised.
Autumn 416 BC:	Alcibiades enters seven chariot teams in the Olympic Games horse races. Nicias also exposes his wealth.
Winter 416 BC:	Segestra and Leontini of Sicily ask for help from Athens against Selinus and Syracuse.
March 215 BC:	The Athenian Assembly discusses Segestra's request. It decides to send 60 ships under Alcibiades, Nicias and Lamachus to Sicily. Alcibiades is eager for the expedition but Nicias pleads against and asks for 1000 ships and 5000 hoplites. The assembly gives Nicias what he asks but urges him to lead the campaign against Sicily.
Early June 415 BC:	The statues of Hermes are disfigured in Athens, a religious violation and since Hermes is the god of travellers, a bad omen. It might have been an effort to prevent the planned expedition to Sicily from sailing. There is an investigation of the Assembly and Pythonicus accuses Alcibiades. Alcibiades offers to stand trial but the Assembly votes to let him depart to Sicily with the fleet.
Late June 415 BC:	The expedition to Sicily sails from Athens and makes a first stop at Corcyra. The Sicilian expedition consists of 134 triremes, 5100 hoplites, 700 thetes that serve on the ships, 1300 light armed troops, 30 cavalry and 30 cargo ships laden with supplies. Teucrus returns to Athens and he names eleven other parodists and eighteen men who had attacked the statues of Hermes; he names Alcibiades too. A man is executed. Diocleides also testifies and names forty-two men. Andocides confirms the list of Teucrus. The Council questions Diocleides and executes him. Agariste, wife of Alcmeonides, accuses Alcibiades, Axiochus and Adeimantus of profanation. The state trireme Salaminia is sent to Sicily to retrieve Alcibiades to stand trial in Athens.
Summer 415 BC:	The Athenians camp near Leontini, and then they move to Catana. The trireme Salaminia waits for Alcibiades at Catana. Alcibiades first follows the Salaminia in his own trireme; then he flees inland at Thurii and goes to Sparta. Alcibiades is convicted in absence in Athens. He is condemned to death and all his property is confiscated; his name is carved in disgrace on a stele. A reward of one talent is put in his head. The Eleusian priests pronounce an official curse on him. The Athenians attack Hyccara in Sicily and take the town. They win a first battle at Catana. They win the Battle of Anopus, a victory over Syracuse, but gain no strategic results due much to lack of cavalry.
Winter 415 to 414 BC:	The Athenians sail back to Messina. In Sparta Alcibiades supports the Syracusans and the Corinthians. Sparta decides however to send only Gylippus, a Spartan general, with a token force to Syracuse.
Spring 414 BC:	The Athenians start a siege of Syracuse. Gylippus and the Corinthian general Gongylas come to help. Gylippus wins a series of smaller victories.
Summer 414 BC:	Athens attacks the coasts of Laconia in violation of the treaty with Sparta.
End Summer 414 BC:	Nicias starts to believe that the Athenian army in Sicily is in danger. He is ill.

- Autumn 414 BC: Nicias sends a letter to Athens, to the Assembly. He asks either to recall the army or to re-enforce it. The Assembly votes to send reinforcements to Sicily. Menander and Euthydemus are sent as co-generals to Nicias, whereas Demosthenes and Eurymedon lead the reinforcements.
- March 413 BC: King Agis of Sparta attacks and ravages Attica. He builds a fort at Decelea (an idea of Alcibiades), only a hundred stades from Athens and thus controls the plains of Attica and the northern route from Athens. The route to Euboea is blocked by Oropus. Athens' livestock of cattle was on Euboea. A new war starts between Athens and Sparta. In Attica, 20.000 slaves desert from the silver mines at Laurion. Thracian mercenaries attack the town of Mycalessus in Boeotia and they kill everybody there. Syracuse captures Plemmyrum. The Corinthian commander Polyanthes refits his ships with stronger bows and by this contraption he checks the Athenian fleet. The Syracusans win a victory at Sea. But Demosthenes and Eurymedon arrive with 70 new Athenian ships, 5000 hoplites and supplies. Demosthenes attacks at Epipolae but the Athenian army is defeated. Demosthenes now too proposes to return to Athens with the forces; Nicias refuses however.
- Autumn 413 BC: The Athenian fleet suffers a major defeat in the harbour of Syracuse. Athens' army of 40.000 men retreats away from Syracuse over land. They move to Catana, pass the Cacyparis River and the Ermeus River. Demosthenes surrenders his army and attempts to kill himself. Nicias is defeated in his turn by Gylippus. The Athenian army is imprisoned. The Syracusans vote to kill Demosthenes and Nicias. Syracuse holds 7000 prisoners, the remains of the Athenian army, and lets the men die in its quarries or sells them into slavery.
- September 413 BC: Athens learns of the Sicilian disaster. The Sicilian campaign cost Athens itself 3000 hoplites, 9000 thetes, thousands of metics. Athens has now still 9000 hoplites and 11000 thetes and 3000 metics. Its fleet lost 216 triremes of which 160 of Athens; Athens has still only 100 triremes. Merely 500 talents remain in its treasury. Demosthenes, Nicias, Eurymedon and Lamachus, its most experienced generals, are dead.
- Late Autumn 413 BC: King Agis marches with a Spartan army to Boeotia to recover Heraclea. He returns to Decelea to help the Euboean rebellion against Athens. Lesbos rebels against Athens, brings 10 triremes and 300 neodamodeis to Sparta. A delegation of Chios and Erythrae comes to Sparta asking for supporting their rebellion against Athens. The Spartans prefer to help Chios and Tissaphernes, satrap of Persia in Lydia. They decide to move first to Lesbos, with a significant fleet of 40 triremes and their admiral Melanchidas. Chios has 60 ships. An earthquake in Sparta delays the Spartan fleet however. After a meeting at Corinth of the Peloponnesian League, generals are sent to the Ionian cities: Chalcideus to Chios, Alcmenes to Lesbos and Clearchus to the Hellespont. The Athenians participate in the Isthmian Games and discover the plot.
- Winter 413 to 412 BC: Four new, inexperienced generals are elected in Athens. A board of advisors is assigned, among which Hagnon and Sophocles. Athens

builds a fort at Cape Sounion to protect the cereals-carrying vessels. Athens abandons its fort in Laconia.  
Sparta and its allies build a fleet of 100 triremes.

- July 412 BC: The Spartan general Alcmenes and his fleet are intercepted by the Athenian fleet. He tries to avoid a battle, but he is defeated at Spiraëum and killed.
- August 412 BC: Alcibiades persuades Sparta to send Chalcideus to Ionia, with himself. He sought to flee Agis' anger because of an affair with Agis' wife. Chios revolts against Athens, a first crucial defection from the Athenian alliance. Later also Erythae, Clazomenae, Haerae, Lebedus, Teos, Ephesus, Anaea and Miletus revolt. Tissaphernes forges an alliance between Sparta and Persia. Athens sends 50 ships to Chios. Samos is used as the naval base of Athens. There are further revolts in Methymna, Mytilene, Phocaea and Cyme against Athens. Astiochus is appointed navarch of the Peloponnesian fleet. The Athenian generals are Leon and Diomedon.
- October 412 BC: Athens takes back Chios. The Athenian generals Phrynichus, Onomacles and Scironides sail from Samos with 48 ships and 3500 hoplites to attack Miletus. Alcibiades is at Iasus and Teichiussa. The Spartan navarch Therimenes arrives with 55 ships among which 22 ships from Syracuse led by Hermocrates. Alcibiades urges him to sail to Miletus, but the Athenian general Phrynichus does not want to fight a battle; Athens withdraws from Miletus. The Spartans capture Amorges and Tissaphernes sacks Iasus. Phrynichus is formally charged for treason in Athens.
- November 412 BC: The Persian Satrap Tissaphernes comes to Miletus to pay the Spartan sailors.
- End 412 BC: Alcibiades joins Tissaphernes. He leaves the Spartans because he lost the support of Chalcideus (killed in a raid) and of Endius (the ephor's term is ended). He has become an enemy of King Agis and his plans for Sparta have failed since Chios is not anymore the centre of the revolts but drains Spartan funds. Moreover, Athens defeated Sparta at Miletus in a battle and Therimenes' army seems to have only been used to give Amorges and Iasus to Tissaphernes, not to defeat Athens in the Aegean. Sparta orders Alcibiades's death. He advises the Persians to leave the Spartans and to make overtures to Athens. There is a revolt in Euboea against Athens.
- Winter 412 to 411 BC: The Athenian fleet with 104 ships is at Samos. The Peloponnesian fleet stays at Miletus. Astyochochus, the Spartan navarch, moves from Chios to Miletus. Sparta sends 11 xymbouloi to Astyochochus under Lichas. A Spartan fleet under Clearchus son of Ramphias is sent to the Hellespont. A naval battle between Charmines and Astyochochus remains undecided. Alcibiades asks to return to Athens in conversations by envoys of trierarchs. The aristocrats in Athens want an end to democracy. Thrasybulus, the Athenian democratic general in the Aegean favours Alcibiades's return and so do the warriors at Samos but Phrynichus and Peisander, the oligarchs of Athens, turn against Alcibiades. Peisander is sent on embassy to Athens, sent by the Samos oligarchs. They plead for Alcibiades's promised help from the Persians. Once in Athens, Peisander speaks to overthrow the democracy. Alcibiades cannot move the Persians and Thrasybulus therefore loses faith in Alcibiades. In Athens the young aristocrats with Peisander kill Androcles, and they take



power. At the Athenian assembly the aristocrats propose to appoint a commission of 30 men (syngrapheis) plus the 10 probouloi with full power to draft a new constitution. A Council of 400 men (the Four Hundred) is to rule, chosen from only 5000 men (the Five Thousand) in a complex voting process, which excludes the lower classes from the political life. The leaders of the movement against democracy were Peisander, Phrynichus, Antiphon, and also the moderate Theramenes among others. The army at Samos revolts against the oligarchy in Athens and it declares Alcibiades as general of the army to lead the democracy. Athens sends peace ambassadors to Sparta. King Agis tries to exploit Athens' weakness and attacks the city, but he is driven away.

- January 411 BC: Oligarchs from Rhodes propose a revolt and Sparta agrees, so it sends 94 ships to Camirus and takes the island. The Athenians depose Phrynichus and Scironides. They are replaced by Leon and Diomedon and Athens attacks Rhodes. The Spartan Pedaritus at Rhodes appeals for help from Chios but he is killed.
- Early 411 BC: The army at Samos remains democratic. The Paralus, the state trireme, is sent to Athens but its crew is imprisoned in Athens. The Samos army elects Thrasybulus and Thrasyllus to oppose the ruling of the Four Hundred.
- February 411 BC: Sparta signs a new treaty with Tissaphernes for Persian financial support. No Persian fleet however ever played a role in the Aegean.
- February to May 411 BC: Sparta sends a fleet to the Hellespont under Dercylidas, which arrives there in May. Lampsacus is taken for Athens by Strombichides and a fortress is installed at Sestos. Sparta sends Leon to replace Pedaritus as governor of Chios with 36 ships from Miletus and Chios. Astyochus joins these with 100 ships and attacks Samos. The Athenian fleet, torn apart by the civil strife, does not at first react.
- June 411 BC: The Spartan army of Miletus attacks Samos with 112 ships against Athens' 82 ships. The Samos army asks Strombichides to hurry back from the Hellespont so that Athens has 108 ships. Astyochus flees back to Miletus and refuses battle.
- Late July 411 BC: The Spartan navarch Clearchus sails with 40 ships more to the Persian satrap Pharnabazus in the Hellespont. Caught in sea storms, he arrives at Miletus. Ten Spartan ships under the Megarian general Helixus bring about revolts in Byzantium, Chalcedon, Cyzicus and Selymbria, threatening thus the grain supply to Athens. Thrasybulus gets support for a decree recalling Alcibiades to Athens with a grant of immunity from prosecution. Alcibiades comes to Samos and he promises support from Tissaphernes for the Athenian fleet.
- August 411 BC: Astyochus is relieved by the Spartan navarch Mindarus. Athenian ambassadors arrive at Samos. Alcibiades retains the loyalty of the hoplites and sailors and he asks to depose the Four Hundred and to restore the Council of the Five Thousand. The Council of Four Hundred runs into trouble in Athens.
- September 411 BC: The Four Hundred seek peace with Sparta. Antiphon and Phrynichus are sent to Sparta to negotiate the peace but they return without an agreement. Phrynichus is assassinated in the Athenian Agora. There is a rebellion in Athens, and extremist generals are

imprisoned. A threat of a Spartan fleet to Athens is thwarted, an Athenian fleet is sent to Euboea. There, in a naval battle, the Athenian general Thymochares with 36 ships loses against the Spartan navarch Agesaneridas with 42 ships; he loses 22 ships and their crews. Athens fears attacks at Piraeus. Athens brings about the fall of the Four Hundred, gives power first to the Five Thousand and then gradually evolves back to full democracy.

- Late Autumn 411 BC: Alcibiades is elected general at Samos, by the army. The oligarchs of Athens are formally charged with treason (Archeptolemus, Onomacles, Antiphon, Polystratus and others). The Spartan navarch Mindarus arrives with 73 ships in the Hellespont, where revolts against Athens soar. He remains with his fleet at Abydos. Thrasybulus lets Mindarus escape from Miletus, so the grain route through the Hellespont is again at risk for Athens.
- Early October 411 BC: At the Battle of Cynossema Thrasybulus and Thrasyllus defeat Mindarus. Alcibiades comes back to Samos with funds from the cities of Caria. The Spartan Dorieus comes from Miletus with a Spartan fleet to join the Spartan fleet of Abydos. Thrasybulus prepares for battle against Sparta's 84 ships and the army of Pharnabazus on land.
- October 411 BC: Athens wins the Battle of Abydos. Mindarus flees back to Abydos but loses 30 ships. He sends for reinforcements from Sparta and from Pharnabazus. Athens recovers 15 ships previously lost. The Athenian treasury is exhausted however. Theramenes sails with 30 ships to Euboea and then to Macedonia, to help King Archelaus in the siege of Pydna.
- End 411 BC: Alcibiades is at Sestos. He sails to Lydia to negotiate with Tissaphernes. But the Satrap wishes no peace with Athens and he arrests Alcibiades and sends him to Sardis, his capital. Alcibiades escapes after a month. Alcibiades loses the support of his Persian connections.
- Spring 410 BC: The Spartan navarch Mindarus has again 80 ships. The Athenian fleet is at Cardia, a city of the Chersonese, with 86 ships. Athens wins the Battle of Cyzicus with its generals Theramenes, Thrasybulus and Alcibiades. The victory is a triumph at land and at Sea and Athens gains a large booty. Alcibiades collects more money at Cyzicus and at other cities of the Hellespont. He builds a new fort opposite Byzantium, Chrysopolis. The Athenians hold the Hellespont again; Sparta's strategy has failed there. The Peloponnesians lost 135 to 155 ships in a few months and the Athenians control the Sea once more.
- Late Spring 410 BC: Sparta sues for peace but the Athenians under Cleophon the Demagogue reject peace. Endius leads the negotiations for Sparta. Tissaphernes infuriates Sparta and loses their trust.
- June 410 BC: The democratic leaders of Athens take full power again and restore democracy. Cleophon introduces a new public subvention for the poor (two obols a day). Work is continued at the acropolis of Athens: the parapet for Athena Nike and the temple of Athena Polias (the Erechteion) are finished.
- July 410 BC: King Agis attacks Athens again but he is forced to retreat to Decelea.

- Winter 410 to 409 BC: The Spartan colony of Heraclea is defeated by the Thessalians and 700 Spartans are killed. There is a new civil war in Corcyra and Athens loses the island. Corcyra turns neutral. The Spartans capture the fort at Pylos. Athens loses Nisaea to the Megarians. In the Hellespont, the towns of Abydos, Byzantium and Chalcedon remain to Sparta.
- December 411 to 409 BC: Thrasyllus remains in Athens but he collects no reinforcements.
- June 409 BC: Carthago attacks Syracuse. The Syracusans withdraw their fleet from the Hellespont and from the Aegean. Thrasyllus has money to form reinforcements at last. He sails to Samos aiming to recover lost Ionian cities from Tissaphernes.
- Winter 409 to 408 BC: The Athenian generals in the Hellespont took no major action for lack of funds in the past months. Thrasyllus arrives in the Hellespont. This new army is not welcomed at first, but the Athenians take Lampsacus and Alcibiades routs Pharnabazus' armies. He collects much booty in raids.
- Spring 408 BC: Athens moves against Chalcedon. Athens receives 20 talents from Pharnabazus to keep the city free.
- June 408 BC: Alcibiades attacks Selymbria with Thracian and Chersonesian troops and he takes the city. He exposes himself to great danger and personal risk at Selymbria. Athenian armies attack Byzantium but the assaults remain unsuccessful until Alcibiades uses a ruse and takes the city, which becomes again an ally of Athens.
- End 408 BC: Spartan ambassadors meet the Persian King Darius II and his son Cyrus. They make a new alliance with Persia. The Athenians arrive too late in Persia.
- Spring 407 BC: Alcibiades collects large funds in Caria for Athens. Alcibiades returns to Athens and enters the town triumphantly. He restores the procession to the Eleusian mysteries under protection of his bodyguards, although the Spartans still hold Decelea.
- October 408 BC: Athens brings its fleet of 100 triremes, 1500 hoplites and 150 cavalry under command of Alcibiades. He chooses as co-generals Aristocrates, Adeimantus and Conon. They sail to the Ionian Islands against Sparta's 70 triremes. King Darius of Persia revokes Tissaphernes and replaces him by his own son Cyrus. Cyrus wants to fight Athens and continues his alliance with Sparta.
- Early 407 BC: The new Spartan navarch is Lysander, a mothax, and the lover of the young Agesilaus (half-brother to King Agis). Agis and Lysander have the same views in politics.
- Spring 407 BC: Lysander is with 70 triremes in Ionia. He makes his base at Ephesus, close to Sardis. He is on good terms with Cyrus and receives Persian funds. Alcibiades takes cities back for Athens: Andros, Cos, Rhodes. He stays with his fleet at Notium to launch attacks on Ephesus.
- February 406 BC: Alcibiades leaves his fleet at Notium and sails to Thrasybulus to help him in the siege of Phocraea. Antiochus, who he has left in charge at Notium with orders not to attack, transgresses his orders

and fights a battle with Lysander. Antiochus is killed and Athens loses 20 ships. Alcibiades is blamed for the defeat by Athens.

- Spring 406 BC: King Agis ravages Attica once more. Alcibiades is convicted in Athens and sent into exile again. Also Alcibiades's friends Thrasybulus and Theramenes are brought down together with Alcibiades and they are not re-elected as generals. Conon becomes the new commander of the Athenian fleet. Lysander can only be one year in command for Sparta, so that Callicratidas becomes the new navarch of Sparta.
- April 406 BC: Callicratidas is in Ephesus. Lysander returns to Sparta and even gives back money to Cyrus. Callicratidas moves the Spartan base again to Miletus. He has now 140 and later even 170 ships. He attacks the Athenian strongholds at Delphinium and at Teos, also Methymna on Lesbos. Conon sneaks off from the Hekatonessi islands to Mytilene and asks help of reinforcements to Athens.
- June 406 BC: Conon's messenger's ship arrives in Athens. Athens melted down the golden statue of Nike on the Acropolis as well as other treasures of the city. It has now enough money to build 150 triremes. Callicratidas keeps 50 ships to block Conon at Mytilene he and tries with 120 ships to cut off the Athenian reinforcements.
- July 406 BC: The Athenians win the Battle of Arginusae. Conon does not participate in that battle. The battle is led by eight Athenian generals among which Pericles the Younger. The Spartans lose 77 ships, the Athenians 25. Callicratidas is killed. The Athenian fleet let part of the Spartan fleet escape under Eteonicus. More than 1000 Athenian men drown in the Sea amidst the storm from the sunken ships at Arginusae and the Athenian generals do not recuperate their corpses. Six generals, among which the Young Pericles, son of Pericles the Great, are convicted by Athens for this neglect. Alcibiades's cousin Eurypotemus speaks in favour of the generals against Callixeinus in the assembly and Socrates, the presiding commander of the Assembly refuses to put the question to the vote but the generals, among whom Pericles and Thrasyllus, are executed nevertheless. Sparta still has 90 triremes but no money to pay the crews so that the men even have to work as labourers on Chios. Chios agrees to support these troops. The Spartans ask for peace to Athens and even offer to evacuate Decelea. But Athens, under the demagogue Cleophon, rejects the peace offer.
- Winter 406 to 405 BC: Sparta's allies meet at Ephesus and demand the return of Lysander even though a Spartan can only once in his life be appointed navarch. Aracus is appointed navarch and Lysander his secretary; Lysander leads the Spartan fleet in effect. Cyrus appoints Lysander as satrap in his place. Lysander has thus new funds from Persia. Lysander takes Ionian cities in Caria and Rhodes, killing the men and enslaving women and children. He raids Salamis and Aegina and lands in Attica, drawing an Athenian fleet to there. Then he sails rapidly back to the Hellespont, once more preventing the merchant ships to reach Athens.
- Autumn 405 BC: Lysander with his fleet, and a Spartan land army led by his commander Thorax takes Lampsacus by storm. Lysander is at Lampsacus with his fleet and confronts at Aegospotami the Athenian fleet commanded by six Athenian generals. Alcibiades comes from his fort of the Propontis to warn the Athenian generals.

- He promises to bring land forces from the Thracian Kings, but the generals refuse his aid. The Athenian general Philocles sails with 30 ships to Lampsacus. Lysander attacks him in the Battle of Aegospotami and all but ten Athenian ships under Conon are captured or sunk. Lysander makes about four thousand Athenians prisoners and executes them all according to a command from Sparta.  
Athens is defeated. It has no money to build another fleet.
- Autumn 405 BC: All Athenian cities of Ionia surrender to Lysander. He installs oligarchies in the cities, councils of ten men loyal to him. Lysander leaves 40 ships to siege Samos and he takes 150 ships to Attica.
- October 405 BC: Lysander arrives in Attica. King Agis comes from Decelea with his army and King Pausanias arrives with another army from the Peloponnesos. In the Spartan assembly called together by Lysander, Thebes and Corinth propose the complete destruction of Athens.
- Winter 405 BC: Athens sends ambassadors to Sparta. Theramenes speaks with Lysander at Samos for 3 months and he obtains that Athens should not be destroyed.
- March 404 BC: Lysander accepts a peace with Athens. The Peloponnesian war is over. Parts of the long walls of Athens are to be destroyed; all the Ionian colonies have to be given up and all the oligarchic exiles must be allowed to return, but Athens can keep Attica. A puppet government of 'Thirty Tyrants' favourable to Sparta is installed to hold power in Athens. Later, Thrasybulus, who has escaped to Thebes, restores Athenian democracy.
- June 404 BC: Alcibiades the Younger arrives at the fort of his father on the Propontis, Neon-Teichos.
- July 404 BC: Alcibiades travels to Bithynia and to Pharnabazus. Theramenes and Critias secretly ask Lysander to eliminate Alcibiades. On the island of Samos the last pro-Athenian troops capitulate to the Spartan troops.
- September 404 BC: Alcibiades is on his way to Susa. Lysander asks Pharnabazus to execute Alcibiades. Alcibiades is killed in Phrygia.
- October 404 BC: Theramenes is killed by Critias in Athens.
- March 403 BC: Thrasybulus attacks Athens and takes Piraeus.
- September 403 BC: Restoration by Thrasybulus of the Democracy in Athens. Somewhat later: end of the civil war in Athens of oligarchs against democrats. Athens returns fully to its former democratic constitution.

## Notes

This book is a novel, and therefore a work of fiction. Its two major characters are placed in their historical period, but the book is a novel first. Most of the characters are historical nevertheless and as much as possible the narrative follows true events as recorded by ancient writers.

Alcibiades is often depicted as an unscrupulous, intrepid, ego-centric adventurer. This is a rather a shallow and one-sided view of a figure the ancient writers described with more circumspection. I tried to give depth to a character that must have been more complex. Alcibiades must have known as much love, hate, doubt, fear and uncertainty as any man.

Almost two thousand five hundred years separate us from Alcibiades's life and although excellent authors such as Thucydides, Xenophon and Plutarch left us with descriptions of events of his life, many periods – mainly of his youth – remain hidden in the darkness of history. I made assumptions for these early years. I also added the romances with his mistresses Theodote and Timandra. The ancient authors mention these two names, however. For the main part, the events and dates of this book match the historic accounts that were left to us of the Peloponnesian War. Most of the people mentioned in this book have lived in the fifth century in Athens, Sparta or Hellas overall and thus they are historical figures. Only Hipparchos, Alcibiades's erstwhile friend, is an invention.

The sources for the historical part are Thucydides' account of the Peloponnesian War and Plutarch's notes on the life of Alcibiades, as well as other, diverse sources. These sources served as the basis for the lives of Socrates and Alcibiades and for other figures of the novel, such as Nicias and Lysander. These accounts leave huge gaps however in the biographies of the two main figures, which had to be filled in for the sake of the novel.

No ancient writer mentions Alcibiades at Cyprus, at the Festival of Aphrodite, when he was young, but they do mention his stay at Abydos with Axiochus. I started to write this book on the beautiful beaches of Cyprus and heard there of the ancient rites of Aphrodite. This was the inspiration for that romantic episode.

There is no evidence that Alcibiades was in Mytilene, and also not that he served with Laches in Sicily. He had been in Potidaea as a hoplite, so it seems natural to assume that he continued to be a warrior during the war also after Potidaea and until the defeat of Delium at least. Most historians assume he served in the cavalry around Athens after the siege of Potidaea, but there is no written evidence of that. I assumed that since the name of Alcibiades was not mentioned with Demosthenes's campaign in the Peloponnesos and in the taking of Sphacteria, he did not participate in that campaign either. I had Alcibiades accompany Laches in his campaign in Sicily as a junior commander, which introduced him to knowledge of Sicily and of Syracuse. There is no evidence that Pythodorus had no confidence in Alcibiades - if Alcibiades was in Sicily at all.

If he had been in Sicily, Alcibiades might have returned to Athens earlier than the summer of 424 BC, for his name is mentioned in 425 BC as a member of a

commission of taxtai, the ten men that were in charge of determining the tributes of the Delian League to Athens. On the instigation of Cleon, the Athenians decided in 425 BC, a few months after the Spartan defeat at Sphacteria, to double the tribute. This was a proposal in the Assembly of an orator called Thoudippos. Alcibiades might have been one of the ten taxtai responsible to decide on the list of the cities from which the tribute was due.

Mount Etna did not erupt in the autumn of 425 BC. It did erupt in that period, but Thucydides mentions a somewhat later date, in the spring of 424 BC.

There is no mention in any of the ancient books that Alcibiades met Hermocrates of Syracuse. Hermocrates is a historical figure, however.

Harmonia is an invention, but Timandra existed. She was with Alcibiades at his death. Alcibiades lived indeed in Athens with a Melian slave woman, and he cared for her children.

He had indeed a mistress in Athens called Theodote, and Theodote seems also to have erected a monument for him after his death, at Melissa. Xenophon recalls conversations between Socrates and Theodote.

Alcibiades did have a child by Timaea, Queen of Sparta. The child was called Leotychidas and was supposed to inherit the Kingship of Sparta. Lysander argued to make Agesilaus, Agis's brother, King of Sparta instead of Leotychidas.

Cynisca did win the Olympian Games and Alcibiades must have met her in Sparta, but no historical account exists of any connection between Alcibiades and Cynisca. It seems very improbable that Cynisca, who wanted to win in the chariot races of the Olympic Games, did not meet Alcibiades who won the same games some time before.

There is a historical account on how Alcibiades escaped from Sardis, but Cyne is an invention for the sake of the story. Alcibiades indeed escaped with Mantitheus.

It is exceedingly difficult to describe situations and battles without using words that were invented only so much later after the fifth century BC. I preferred to use words that are more familiar to the reader, rather than often to describe a word that exists now but not then. Still, I tried to use as little as possible of these words.

I found it too cumbersome for the reader to use the names of the Athenian archons or the Spartan ephorates as dates of periods. These would have demanded of the reader each time effort of transformation that I found detrimental to the story.

## Glossary

Aegis:	the shield of Zeus.
Agoge:	the special system of upbringing and training young Spartiates installed by the Spartan law-giver Lycurgus.
Agora:	the marketplace of a Hellenic city.
Alabastron:	a little perfume jar.
Archon:	the archonship was an Athenian institution that evolved out of the Kingship. The nine archons of Athens were chosen by ballot from the Assembly ('Ecclesia'). The archon had administrative responsibilities but no real political power. The archon King or basileios was the religious leader of the polis. The eponymous archon gave his name to the year; he was responsible for family lawsuits. The war archon was called the Polemarchos.
Aristeia:	the excellence displayed on the battlefield.
Astynomoi:	magistrates of Athens who were responsible for the upkeep of the city. The astynomoi looked after the public order in the streets, and the cleanliness of the town. There were five astynomoi for Athens and five for Piraeus.
Aulé:	inner courtyard or patio of a Hellenic house.
Bisanthes:	town in Thrace, west of Selymbria and Byzantium, in the Propontis. Currently called Tekirdag in Turkey.
Boulê:	the name of the Council of Athens, a council of five hundred members chosen by lot from the ten tribes (fifty persons per tribe). The Council prepared the agenda for the assemblies of the citizens. The Boule or Council assembled in a building on the Agora of Athens called the bouleutêrion.
Bronze House:	the shrine of Athena Poliachus (Athena holder of the city) in Sparta. It was situated at Sparta's acropolis; its walls were covered with bronze plates showing mythical scenes.
Chersonese:	a peninsula that forms with the near-east coast of Asia the Hellespont. The Chersonese is currently called Gallipoli.
Corcyra:	a large island to the west of Thessaly. Corcyra is currently called Corfu.
Damos:	the Spartan assembly of the people. Only Spartiates were allowed in the Damos.
Deme:	the villages of Attica. Athens had ten tribes and thirty villages or demes.
Dicastery:	a legal court of law of Athens. The citizens of Athens chosen for court duty sat as dicasts or judges, to hear cases or dikai.
Dokimasia:	the formal scrutiny that young men of Athens had to pass to be officially accepted as Athenian citizens. The dokimasia usually happened at the age of eighteen to nineteen years of age.
Drachma:	a silver coin of Athens. One drachma was approximately the daily salary of a workman in Athens. It comprised about 4.36 grammes of silver. Coins existed of two drachmas: the didrachmon, of four drachmas: the tetradrachmon, and of ten



drachmas: the dekadrachmon. A mina was a hundred drachmae. A talent was sixty minae or six hundred drachmae. One drachma was six obols. Athens' golden stater was worth six tetradrachmas (twenty-four drachmas in total).

- Ecclesia: the Athenian Assembly. Every Athenian male citizen of over eighteen years old could attend the assemblies of the people of Athens. The assemblies usually took place on a hill called the Pnyx.
- Eiren: a Spartiate twenty-year old boy who had passed at least two years beyond the class of boys in the agoge. Spartiates were called eiren until they were about thirty years old.
- Elenchus: the Socratic method of gradually refuting a claim of knowledge of a person by questions and answers, proving it to be inconsistent with the other beliefs of that person.
- Ephors: the ephors were five overseers of Sparta, chosen by ballot every year. They were magistrates who monitored the behaviour of the other officials of Sparta, including the conduct of the Kings. The word 'ephor' means 'overseer'.
- Epistatês: the epistatês was the president of the Prytany. He kept the state seal and the keys to the temples where the public treasure was stored. He presided over the Council and the Assembly. There was each day a new epistatês.
- Foot: unit of length in ancient Hellas. The Ionian foot may have been 29,6 cm and the Doric foot 32,6 cm. Divide the number of feet approximately by three to obtain the number of metres.
- Gerontes: the twenty-eight Elders of over sixty years of age, chosen for life, which formed a kind of senate for Sparta.
- Gerousia: the assembly of the Elders (Gerontes) that ruled Sparta. We would call this a senate now. The Gerousia consisted of twenty-eight Elders.
- Harmost: a Spartan appointed to be governor of a foreign city or state.
- Heliaia: the law court in Athens. The Heliiaia was a jury court. The jury was large, part of the Assembly and randomly selected. The jury voted by casting a ballot (small metal tokens). There were no judges but a formal president of the court. In all, six thousand citizens were drawn by lot from the Assembly by the archons, six hundred from each Attican tribe. Each court normally had then five hundred and one, a thousand and one, fifteen hundred and one or even two thousand and one jurors.
- Hellespont: the narrows that open the Propontis (the Sea of Marmara currently) into the Mediterranean. The Hellespont is currently called the Dardanelles.
- Helots: Spartan slaves, mostly the defeated and subjugated Messenians, owned by the state. The helots were obliged to work for the Spartiates. On taking up office after their election, the ephors officially declared war on the helots so that they were under martial law. Spartiates who killed helots were thus absolved.
- Hetaera: a female courtesan of Hellas. Hetaerae sold their services to the wealthy of Athens.
- Hetaira: political group or party in Athens. The hetairae could be grouped around a political system such as democracy and oligarchy, or around a charismatic person.
- Hipparchus: the general of the Athenian cavalry. The Hipparchus had ten squadron commanders, called phylarchoi, one from each tribe of Athens. A squadron counted about one hundred cavalymen.
- Hippotrophia: horse-raising.

Homoioi:	the Spartan term for 'peers' or 'equals'. The Spartiates that had gone through the agoge system called themselves by that name.
Hoplite:	a Hellenic infantry warrior, dressed in bronze armour. The hoplite received his name from the 'hoplon', his shield. He fought with a spear and a sword.
Hoplon:	the concave-shaped shield of the Hellenic warrior. The hoplon covered half the body. It had a hand-grip and an arm-grip. It was usually made of wood and covered with bronze plate. Symbols were painted on the hoplon, such as the letter Lambda for Lacedaemon on the Spartan shields.
Kapêlêion:	a tavern in Athens held by a tavern-keeper called kapêlos.
Krater:	wine was served from out of a mixing bowl called a krater. The word came from the verb 'krasis' which meant 'to mix'. A number of kraters were used at Athenian symposia.
Krypteia:	a Spartan institution whereby Spartiate eirens (youths) were sent by night and armed only with daggers to search and kill in the countryside helots that stood out for their strength and outspokenness. It was an organised killing of helots by young Spartiates.
Metics:	a class of persons living in Athens. Metics were foreigners that had received the right to live in Athens. They had civil rights according to the law of Athens but they were no citizens and they were obliged to rent their houses in Athens. They participated in Athens' wars together with the citizens. They could become Athenian citizens by special vote of the Assembly.
Mora:	a regiment of Spartan warriors. The Spartan army consisted of six morae, each led by a polemarch. One mora was led by the King of Sparta.
Mothax:	either an impoverished Spartiate who could not pay for his part in the communal messes, or a son of a Spartiate father and a perioecic or helot mother. Mothax men could pass the agoge and become Spartiates.
Nauarchos:	admiral of the Spartan fleet. The nauarchos or navarch was chosen for one year and could not be re-elected afterwards a second time to that post.
Neodamodeis:	Spartan helots that were liberated because of services in the war effort. The word means 'new citizens'. The Spartans needed warriors but they distrusted the newly liberated helots and preferred to keep them in troops outside the Peloponnesos.
Obol:	small coin of Athens. An obol had a value of one sixth drachma. There existed coins of a value of two obol coins: the dioblon, three oblons: the trioblon, three-fourth of an obol: the tritemorion, one-fourth of an obol: the tetartemorion and one-eight of an obol: the hemitetartemorion.
Opsôn:	all kinds of food added to bread. It could be pieces of meat as well as fish, vegetables and fruit.
Paides:	Spartiate boys in the agoge upbringing, less than twenty years old.
Paidonomus:	a Spartiate appointed as head trainer of a class of boys (paides) in the agoge. Paidonomus means 'boy shepherd'.
Pactye:	town in Thrace, on the north-eastern coast of the Chersonese, opposite Cardia but in the Propontis.
Pankration:	one of the athletic disciplines of the Hellenes. The pankration was a wrestling combat in which also punching was allowed.

- Panoply:** a complete suit of armour consisting of breastplate, backplate, shoulder protections and greaves to protect the shins.
- Perinthos:** town in Thrace, west of Selymbria and between Bisanthes and that town. Perinthos is currently called Marmara Ereğlisi in Turkey.
- Phalanx:** ordered Hellenic line of battle, consisting of infantry bodies in close order. A phalanx was usually eight shields (men) deep but in later years could be as much as fifty shields deep (Theban and Macedonian phalanxes).
- Phiditia:** the Spartan military messes, consisting of about fifteen to twenty Spartiates and more in later times. Each member of the mess had to contribute every month a medimnus of barley-meal, eight choes of wine, five minas of cheese, five half-minas of figs and money for a little fish and meat.
- Polemarch:** a senior army commander and leader of a mora in the Spartan army. There were six polemarchs under the King. Each polemarch commanded four lochagi, eight pentecosters and sixteen enomotarchs. The enomotarchs acted as heralds to further commands to their forces. The cavalry was marshalled in groups of fifty cavalymen in a square formation. Each such group was called an oulamus.
- Propontis:** currently called the Sea of Marmara, the stretch of the Sea between the Hellespont (the Dardanelles) and the Bosphorus.
- Prytany:** the inner and executive part of the Boulê or Council of Athens. The Prytany consisted of fifty men chosen from the Council. The Prytany ruled over Athens about one tenth of the year (one month). It formed the permanent office for the affairs of the city. A civil year lasted ten prytaneis of thirty-six to thirty-seven days. One man was chosen among the prytaneis to preside the meeting of the Assembly; he was the official head of the polis for one day. The members of the Prytany ate in the Tholos.
- Pydna:** a town now in Greece in the north-eastern prefecture of Pieria, in ancient Macedonia. The town is north of Larissa, west-south-west of Thessaloniki (ancient Therme).
- Rhegium:** town in southern Italy, currently Reggio. It was called after the narrow strait there.
- Rhetra:** a Spartan oral, un-written law. The Great Rhetra was the law given by Lycurgus.
- Rhyton:** a horn-shaped drinking vessel.
- Saurotêr:** a bronze butt spike on the spears of hoplites. The saurotêr was on the reverse end of the spear. When an enemy fell, the hoplites pushed this spike in the backplate of the man. Many spears broke in hoplite battles, in which case the hoplites fought on with the lisarder.
- Spartiates:** also called Spartiatiai and Homoioi. The Spartiates were Spartan citizens who obtained this status because of their birth and having gone successfully through the agoge training system. They dined together in a mess and they had to provide this mess with a certain amount of produce. They were warriors only and were forbidden to be artisans.
- Spondophoroi:** the heralds that announced the Olympian Games. The spondophoroi were citizens of Elis. They also called the Olympian truce period, which forbade the Hellenes that participated in the Games to be hostile for the fixed duration and which guaranteed free access to Olympia despite wars.
- Stade:** unit of length in ancient Hellas. One stade was about 200 meter, with local differences. Divide the number of stades by five to obtain the distance in kilometre, by eight to obtain the number of miles.

- Stratêgos:** the ten strategoi were the generals and admirals of the Athenian army. They were chosen annually, but re-election was allowed and even normal. The strategos Autokrator was one of the strategoi who exceptionally was given total command over the army. There was not every year an Autokrator.
- Strophion:** brassiere.
- Tethrippon:** chariot drawn by four horses in chariot-races.
- Therme:** town in Macedonia, currently called Thessalonica in Greece.
- Trireme:** Hellenic war ship. The trireme was a hollow wooden shell, driven by a hundred and seventy oars in three superposed rows of fifty-four, fifty-four and sixty-two rowers. It was about a hundred fifteen feet long from bow to stern and twenty feet wide amidships. The oars were about fifteen feet long and the rowers could row at up to fifty strokes a minute. In the hold or 'thalamos' rowed fifty-four thalamites. Above the thalamites sat fifty-four zygiante oarsmen on the middle banks, perched on the crossbeams of the ships (zyga). The top row was formed by sixty-two thanites, elite rowers who sat on outriggers of the deck and thus they were the only rowers that could see the water and who gave the pace of the oars.

***The End***