

Alcibiades

Virtue and Passion

A Novel of the Peloponnesian War

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Book II. The Spartan

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To Monique, Maxence and Julian

Chapter 15 – Sparta, Winter End 415 BC to the Summer of 412 BC

Sparta

The commanders of the Salaminia waited for Alcibiades on the quays of Catana in Sicily. When the Harmonia moored, they went aboard Alcibiades's ship and handed over to him official scrolls ordering him immediately to sail back to Athens and stand for trial. Also some of Alcibiades's friends that had accompanied him to Sicily were to justify themselves in Athens. The trierarch had received explicit instructions not to arrest Alcibiades, but to command him to return to Athens. Alcibiades regarded this immediately as an overt invitation to flee in exile. The Salaminia was to accompany Alcibiades's trireme on its journey back to Athens, however.

The suspicious democrats of Athens wanted Alcibiades's fine neck on a rope, or his body racked on the stake, but not in front of the troops of Sicily. Alcibiades might appeal to the hoplites and to the sailors, and grasp control of the fleet. Then he might have been acclaimed as the Tyrant of Athens! He also might appeal to the Mantinean and Argive hoplites in the army of Sicily! Alcibiades had given that possibility some thought, indeed. But the army had been grumbling lately. The expeditionary forces had done nothing but sail from one direction to the other. There had been no major battle and no booty to be had. Sicily had not been the paradise of gold they had dreamt of! Alcibiades should have taken Lamachus's advice and forced the army to attack Syracuse right away!

'No,' Alcibiades thought, 'I would not have been able to do that. I did the right thing in the right circumstances. I will go back to Athens, sooner or later. I will make them call me back, and they shall ask for me on their knees. I will not disappear from the theatre in which it was my destiny to play in. Why else did the gods and fate decide me to be Alcibiades? The damn democrats that have plotted against me will learn who Alcibiades really is! I shall teach them!'

Alcibiades sailed off in the Harmonia, accompanied by all the accused persons. The commanders of the Salaminia were surprised that he sailed docilely with them. He did not say goodbye to Nicias and Lamachus; he only sent them a short message that Athens ordered him back.

The two ships moored for a while in the port of Thurii in Italy. Alcibiades walked into the town with a few of his people. He still had many friends and commercial relations in Thurii.

Alcibiades and the other accused men never returned on board of the Harmonia.

The crew of the Salaminia looked for Alcibiades for several days. Nobody in Thurii had seen the least Athenian the last month. Had there been an Athenian ship in the harbour? Where? Nobody had seen anything! The Salaminia sailed away, to report to Athens.

Alcibiades had offered his companions to go wherever they wanted to go after Thurii. He himself boarded a merchant ship to cross the Sea to the Peloponnesos. Many of his exiled companions remained with him.

The merchant ship first sailed to Cyllene in Elis. In Elis, Alcibiades still had many friends. He stayed a few days in that city. The Athenian Council, however, demanded from the Eleians that Alcibiades should be sent to Athens under guard. Alcibiades disappeared again, warned in time.

Alcibiades travelled over land to Argos. Many of his best friends in Argos were either massacred or imprisoned, the victims of plots - like himself - of the democrats of Athens.

He expected decrees of Athens to seize him waiting for him in Argos, but he could hide in the city for a while with his companions. From Argos, Alcibiades sent word to Endius in Sparta. He told in the letter where he was, and for what reason, in but a few lines. He wrote he could be useful in Sparta. He had advice to give and secrets to reveal. He asked guarantees for his safety in the event he would arrive at Sparta. Alcibiades wondered whether he might be welcomed in Sparta. Would he enjoy safety in Sparta? He had personally killed more Spartans, probably, than any other commander but Demosthenes in the Athenian army. Nevertheless, he counted on the honour and respect of the Spartans, and on the avidity of Sparta's ephors to learn about the weaknesses in the defences of their arch-enemy of ever.

Alcibiades waited with little hope in a miserable hovel of a small village near Argos. He did not really expect an answer from Sparta. He waited a long time. Endius sent no letters back, but a messenger.

Alcibiades arrived in Sparta in the heart of winter. The coldest time of the season had not yet passed; cold rains and fogs accompanied him on his journey through the hills. The gloomy season crept in his clothes and worked on the moods of his friends, all exiles now. They were renegades and people that would surely be condemned to death for religious offences. Yet they were bound for a city that was more notoriously pious than Mount Olympus itself.

Alcibiades arrived in Sparta with only three friends. The others had preferred to stay in the country of Elis and Argos. Some had disappeared in the night, others openly asked to take their leave. His companions were of no importance to Athens, they had played no major role in the administration of the town. They were also not men who had spoken out regularly in the Athenian Assembly. They were members of the hetaira that followed Alcibiades blindly and who did as he told. They resented now having been banned from Athens for crimes they had nothing to do with, but they stood accused in Athens, and would certainly be instantly condemned and executed the moment they set foot in Piraeus. They contributed not one idea that might improve their situation, followed Alcibiades and complained almost constantly. The dark weather of the plains formed by the Spartan rivers and the far view of the high mountains around the drab villages they passed, depressed them totally.

Then, they arrived at Sparta. Sparta looked to them just somewhat larger than the Attican country villages, a despicable, miserable Assembly of low houses in a wide, open valley.

Alcibiades settled in a house Endius had prepared for him. The messenger of Endius that had arrived at Argos had promised a separate house for Alcibiades and another one for his companions. Alcibiades was invited to Sparta but Endius would not be his

host; Alcibiades would not live in the house of Endius's family. Endius arranged for Alcibiades's travel, but he kept his distance in Sparta.

The group arrived on horseback from the north with only two wagons drawn by mules, loaded with a little furniture, papers, and goods for the travel. They followed Endius's servant. They had found a muleteer in Argos willing to guide them. Nevertheless, Alcibiades had enough money to live at ease at Sparta – though not in wealth. His companions had practically no funds, but Alcibiades had left money in places from Thurii to the Hellespont that he could draw upon, so he would not be without means. He laughed, for the Athenian magistrates would confiscate his house in Athens, but otherwise they would find little money. Alcibiades also expected support from the Kings and from the ephors of Sparta, and he also expected to trade in Sparta, maybe with his remaining connections in Thurii, and, who knows, with Athens.

The men entered the town from the road of Tegea. When they stood with their horses on the first hill of Sparta, the very unfamiliar sight of the town astonished them. Sparta had no walls and its houses were distributed over a wide area. Alcibiades knew that Sparta had no walls, of course, but he was still amazed to see the first or second most powerful town of Hellas totally without defences, and spreading in the valley as a loose collection of houses dispersed among the trees and the rocks. He even wondered at first whether he had really arrived at a town!

There was no acropolis worthy of that name in view, no high citadel like the Argive Larissa. Yes, there was a low hill, a bump in the landscape, merely, with a temple that looked larger than the other buildings. This would be the Temple of Zeus, but nothing resembled the mighty, straight cliffs that formed Athens' acropolis with its resplendent Parthenon radiating its white brilliance over the cityscape. The guide pointed out the five villages that were called Sparta: Cynosura, Mesoa, Limnae, Pitana and Amyclae. The houses here were built low, and almost all looked rather small in surface, though ample space was available in the valley. Sparta had space for its streets too. The buildings did not touch. The streets were wide, much wider than in Athens, which lacked terrain between its walls.

Sparta inspired feelings of the country-side, of life in uneventful agricultural villages, of farming and of slow, meagre ambitions. The town filled the broad valley, but otherwise it looked totally unimpressive. No building of importance signalled power or wealth. Sparta looked like a poor men's town, though it was vast.

Alcibiades knew that the Spartiates refused to build walls around the core of their town because they claimed their warriors to be their walls. The villages, however, which constituted the town, covered a vast territory. To surround all the terrain of the town would take very long walls.

Alcibiades suddenly felt the heavy spiritual power of the place, a dark, menacing power, and the threatening silence weighed down on him. He arrived in the darkness of the evening, black darkness fell deeper here than in Athens. He encountered few people when he rode through the streets.

The servants of Endius brought them to a house in the Mesoa district of Sparta. Alcibiades entered the house, where two slaves waited for him, inviting him in with much bowing and many polite welcomes. Endius's servant rode on with Alcibiades's companions. Alcibiades went immediately upstairs without eating or drinking, and he did not undress but dropped on the bed like a dead weight, and slept.

Alcibiades awoke the next day and explored the house. It was built quite like other houses in Hellas, but the beams that held roofs and ceiling were left rough and round like they had grown, looming lower than in Athenian houses, and the rooms were less spacious. The house allotted to him was rather modest, but neat and very clean. He could rest and walk in a tiny aulé courtyard. His horse stood in a stable. The slaves were polite and gentle, and they brought him all food he might have wished for: fine bread, olives, figs, and a little fish. He arranged his papers and goods, and stayed in the house for the rest of the day.

Eupheas

Alcibiades lived in his house in Sparta. For many, many long days, nobody came to see him. Endius did not come to greet him, no King, no ephor, no Spartan magistrate, and no Spartiate hoplite announced to meet him. Alcibiades did not ask the servants where Endius's house was. The Spartans had not come to him, not come to acknowledge his presence in any way. Patience obviously was the first virtue of Sparta. He felt depressed.

He knew Sparta as an authoritarian, secretive and very conservative town. Athens would condemn him to death and might have by now already confiscated all his properties. The country-house belonged not to him anymore, but to Hipparchos, yet he wondered whether Hipparchos would be left in peace in Attica. Axiochus, Hipparchos and Harmonia might be on their way to Thrace. When would he see Harmonia again? Never? Was this the way the gods punished him for his vanity and contempt? He had had so few days with her!

Alcibiades remained sulking inside the house. He rarely left the building. He only went to the marketplace briefly to buy a few scrolls, and he read the writings of the old philosophers. He re-read Homer. It rained almost constantly in Sparta in that period. He felt gloomy. He slept and drank much wine. His Athenian friends knocked on the doors, but he refused the two servants to answer. He found the Spartan drinking cup, the kothon, quite handy. It was a deep, black cup with a broad rim and ribs all around. It was a military cup, not a bowl, with only one handle, but it was deep, much deeper than the Athenian wine bowls, and it was very convenient to get drunk with as quickly as possible. Alcibiades had heard about the austerity of the Spartiates. He had almost believed the Spartans only drank foul water. Nothing was less true. There was as much wine to be bought in the Spartan agora as in the Athenian marketplace.

One day he awoke around noon and saw that the rain had stopped, the fog cleared off. He had enough of the sulking days. He ate and decided to walk into the streets of Sparta and to explore the town. He put on non-conspicuous clothes, a chiton and a coarse himation, but he left his hair long on his shoulders. He called his servants in the living-room. The men entered with apprehension, wondering what was happening. He looked at his three servants and remarked for the first time how young they were. One of the young men was particularly lively. Alcibiades had seen him smile all the time, and now also the youth stood with the bright eyes filled of curiosity, looking at the Athenian.

‘You,’ Alcibiades asked, ‘what is your name?’

‘I am called Eupheas,’ the youth answered.

‘All right, Eupheas,’ Alcibiades smiled. ‘Are you Messenian or Spartan?’

‘My grandfather’s father originated from Messenia, but ever since my family has served in Sparta,’ the boy answered.

‘Do you know Sparta, its streets and monuments?’

‘Yes, I do, master,’ he replied.

Alcibiades dismissed the servants, except Eupheas.

‘Fine,’ Alcibiades decided. ‘I want to have a look at Sparta, but I don’t know the roads. Come with me; show me the way to the acropolis and the agora and to the most interesting streets of Sparta. Tell me where we are. Tell me which temples we see and which buildings.’

He told Eupheas to get a himation, and both men stepped outside, into the streets of Sparta.

Alcibiades walked at first without really knowing what he wanted to see and how. He just stepped forward and Eupheas followed him. Once every while, Alcibiades turned to the helot slave, asking names of streets and places. He had soon enough of turning around to the slave youth who remained behind him, following in his steps, so he asked Eupheas to step beside him.

Alcibiades was surprised to see the streets filled with people. His house was near a small agora, and many men and, strangely, also a lot more women than he was used to see in Athens, sped a good deal of warmth hung already in the air now, announcing early spring. The sun cheered him up. He had taken some money with him. He decided to go to the agora first and buy little things, feeling the pulse of the city.

Many men he passed wore leather tunics and dogskin caps. These would be the helots, the slaves of the city, like Eupheas. The Spartiates, a Dorian warrior tribe, had arrived in these parts of the Peloponnesos hundreds of years ago. The Dorians had then defeated not only the Laconians, the original inhabitants of this country, but also the Messenians. Laconia and Messenia now formed the land of Sparta, Lacedaemon. The Spartiates wore the letter lambda, the first letter of Lacedaemon, proudly on their shields. The original populations formed the basis of Sparta’s helot or slave class.

Most of the men in the streets were dressed like Alcibiades. These could be the perioeci, the free men and women who were the artisans and traders of Sparta. The perioeci were also the stewards of the Spartiates. They wore their hair short. Eupheas explained about a hundred perioecic communities lived in Lacedaemon, of which many occupied the less fertile lands in the hills or in the swamps and the sandy, rather infertile grounds of the coastal areas. The perioeci were free men and they served also as hoplites in the Spartan regiments. They could not join in the Spartan Assembly, however. The Assembly was reserved to the Spartiates only, and mainly because of that, Sparta was an oligarchy. The largest mass of the population of this country had no say whatsoever in the management and in the decisions for the future of the city.

Alcibiades saw a man being dragged through the streets, wearing a very heavy wooden halter on his shoulder. This must be a perioecic criminal, who would be thus punished and probably also killed, his body broken to bits. The sort reserved to helots was simpler: the men were killed on the spot, immediately and mercilessly.

Alcibiades saw Spartiates pass him by once every while, arrogant men who walked in light armour, or walked only dressed in chiton and himation, always wearing a sword or spear. Most of these men wore their hair long, often bound in a knot at the backs of their heads. These were the members of the Spartiate class, the leading class in Sparta. Some of these men wore their scarlet cloak, the phoinikes, which they all wore in their phalanx when they participated in a battle. The red cloak was expensive because of its vermilion dye. The Spartiates said the cloak had to be red so that in battle the colour of their spilled blood would blend with the red hue of the cloak, so that no enemy would notice how much the hoplites were wounded. Spartiates were not allowed to be artisans or traders. They could only be warriors. They spent their youth to learn how to fight in war.

Until seven years old, a Spartiate boy would remain in the house of his parents. Then he would be taken to the barracks where his education in the art of warfare began. At twelve, he would receive a young but adult warrior as his tutor. That man would be his inspirer and his lover. Alcibiades wondered how far the relationships went between the boys and their tutors. He suspected the relationships also to be quite sexual. The education of the boys was called the agoge, the way of learning, and every Spartiate – except the sons of the King, destined to be Kings themselves – was supposed to go through the agoge. If the boy or young man failed in the agoge, he could not become a Spartiate, and then he had better kill himself or leave the country. The boys were half starved but they were encouraged to steal food. Eupheas told Alcibiades that if the boys were caught stealing however, they were severely chastised. They were whipped until they almost died, and some did, at the altar of the Temple of Artemis Orthia in the middle of the town.

The Spartiates did not dine in their houses. They dined together, men only, in a communal mess. The messes were halls in which the Spartiates ate in the evening. Each member of a mess had to contribute for his meals: one medimnus of barley-meal per month, eight choes of wine, five minas of cheese, and five half minas of figs a month, small amounts of fish and fruit, occasionally some meat from their hunting. The land allotted to the Spartiates by the polis allowed contributing this much, and some more. But a Spartiate could have bad stewards and his land might not provide him enough in the end to give enough to the communal mess. A Spartiate who was not able to contribute to his mess, was excluded from the Spartiate class. A man, who had passed through the agoge but was unable to pay his due to the mess, or also someone born of a Spartiate man and a helot or perioecic woman, was called a mothax. The men voted for who was allowed to join a mess, and the main meal was a black broth. The meals were taken in the evening, but often the Spartiates refused to have torches brought in when darkness fell. The men ate in the darkness then, believing thus to train their eyes for night attacks at war. Spartiates were indeed also famous for such manoeuvring and fighting in the night.

Alcibiades knew the upbringing of the Spartiates. His nurse, Amicla, as well as the young Spartiate prisoners from Sphacteria with whom he had conversed so much in Athens, had explained to him how Sparta worked.

Alcibiades had heard in Athens that the Spartiates were particularly callous on the helots, their slaves. Paradoxically, the Spartiates were afraid of the helots, and especially of the Messenian helots. For instance, every ephor, when entering service, had to swear to wage a war on the helots. The helots were the dominated and enslaved

people of Laconia and of Messenia. They were treated so badly by the Spartiates that they regularly revolted.

A particularly notorious revolt had taken place a few tens of years ago, when Sparta had been devastated by a major earthquake. The Messenian helots had started an uprising then, which the Spartiates could entirely subdue only after hard battles and with the help of Athens. Athens had removed on her own initiative part of the Messenian helots to Naupactus, to save them from the wrath of the Spartiates. Sparta still loathed Athens for that act, though in the backs of their minds they remembered the help of Athens. The Messenians had helped Demosthenes defeat a Spartiate contingent of hoplites at Sphacteria and Pylos, a betrayal Sparta particularly resented. Many more helots than Spartiates lived in Laconia. The numbers of helots were a constant threat to the Spartiates, yet the Spartiates could only subsist in their mode of living due to the work of the helots.

Alcibiades walked on. He wondered what the Spartiates had in store for him. Would he be confined to the house allotted to him and rot in this valley between the Spartan mountains, or would they call upon him in public? Would he take part in the Spartiate mess system?

He passed by the acropolis of Sparta, a place that could hardly be called a citadel. It was a hill lower than the Pnyx, on which stood many temples, but no fort. He asked his servant Eupheas to which gods the temples were dedicated. A temple on the Spartan acropolis was dedicated to Athena Poliachos, the Athena that was the holder and protector of the city. This Athena was also called Athena Chalkioikos or the Lady of the Bronze house. Athena, strangely enough, was also a patroness of Sparta. The temple was entirely built in limestone. The servant told him that this temple was appropriately called the Brazen House.

Alcibiades entered the building. Its interior was dark. He saw a bronze sculpture of Athena in a corner. The walls were entirely covered with bronze plates, depicting mythical scenes. Alcibiades recognized the deeds of Heracles, as well as the achievements of the sons of Tyndareus. The Spartans called their people the descendants of Heracles. He also remarked low sculptures on the bronze plates of the births of Athena, Amphitrite, Poseidon, and of nymphs with Perseus. Alcibiades had to admire the marvellous craftsmanship of the sculpting. He found more Spartiates here than in the streets. The men brought votive offerings to this temple: little figures in clay, bronze, lead and ivory.

Another temple on the acropolis was of Athena Ergenes, Athena the Worker. There was a Temple of Zeus, of Zeus Kosmetas, the Orderer. To the left of the Temple of Athena's Bronze House stood a sanctuary dedicated to the Muses.

Alcibiades strolled further, down the acropolis to a place called Limnaion, or marshy land. He saw here another major temple, the Temple of Artemis Orthia. Artemis, the sister of Apollo, was one of the patronesses of Sparta. He stepped towards that building to look at it from closer by. He did not enter it, but he saw figures and patterns sculpted on the walls. This too seemed to be a dark temple, its walls quite unlike the brilliantly painted insides of Athens' temples. Eupheas told him this was the place where the young Spartiates got to be whipped when they were caught at stealing. He said the young Spartiates were also whipped when they had not stolen anything. Whipping was apparently part of their upbringing.

Below the acropolis, Alcibiades arrived back at the marketplace where he had been before, and which was much smaller than the agora of Athens. The square was so small that he wondered whether this really was the main agora of the town. Eupheas told him that yes, this was Sparta's agora.

There were several major buildings on this marketplace. A large square building was the bouletêrion. Here, Sparta's main government body met, the Gerousia.

He saw a building which held the offices of the Ephors, called the Archeia – told Eupheas. The servant told him that yet another building in the agora was the House of the Bidaiarioi, the magistrates of Sparta, the guardians of the laws.

On the other side of the offices of the Bidaiarioi stood the sanctuary of the goddess Athena, the temple of Athena Keluetha.

He saw the Persian stoa, a colonnaded building in which the Spartans kept the spoils from the Persian wars. This was a fine building, not as long and large as the stoas of Athens, but its pillars were finely chiselled and ornamented with marble figures of Persians.

Close by stood the temples dedicated to the goddess Earth, Ge. This sanctuary of Ge was called the Gasepton. At the agora were also various temples dedicated to Zeus Agoraios, Athena Agoraia, Poseidon Asphalios, Apollo and Hera. The Temple of Hera was the Temple of Hera Aigophagon, Hera the Goat Eater. Alcibiades actually saw goats being sacrificed to the goddess at its altar. Many fine but crude statues lined the agora. He looked at the statues of Apollo, Pythaeus, Artemis, Leto, and at a colossal statue dedicated to the Damos, the Assembly of Sparta.

He found a little further the sanctuary of Lycurgus, the wise man who had given Sparta its peculiar laws, which were not written down but passed by mouth, generation after generation, called the Great Rhetra.

Alcibiades now recognised the Spartiates easily by their long hair, sometimes knotted in long tresses. They were proud, haughty-looking men, some of which only gave him a short, condescending look. He walked on.

Nature descended from the hills into the city. There were much more open, green places in Sparta than in Athens. The houses had been built inside nature, and he found many plantations of bushes, trees and flower plants between the streets and the houses. The streets were clean and spacious.

Sparta lived in silence. Athens was a boisterous heap of stones that gave no place to nature. Athens was colourful, artificial, a city of variety, but also a city of people. The people shouted, sang, discussed, insulted, strolled and talked constantly and everywhere in Athens. Here, the Spartans sped along and few chatted. Colours were absent: grey and green dominated. Athens had been built for people to live together and to dominate nature. In Athens, one forgot about nature, about its green wealth of grasses, bushes and trees. Sparta was hidden in nature. It was vast and wide. Here people lived more isolated, individually, as if trust in neighbours and fellow-citizens lacked completely. Athens shone with its high acropolis and its imposing temple complex around the Parthenon. Not one human construction outshone nature in Sparta.

Alcibiades continued to feel the gloom of the dark interior of the Temple of Artemis Orthia and of the environment of this city. Sparta had no walls: its Spartiates were its walls, but every Spartiate was essentially an island – until they stood together in a phalanx, and then they became ants that answered as one block to a command. Maybe that was a good comparison: Sparta was a city of ants, but each ant had a territory of

its own. And there were many, many worker ants. No enemy army had ever come close to Sparta without being defeated. Brutality and power hung in the air, as well as a tension and a menace. That was the rude force of the country. Sparta lacked diversity, openness of mind, which otherwise were the characteristic of cities that had close access to the Sea. A harbour and the sight of the vastness of the Sea opened spirits, minds and ideas. From out of Athens one could see the Sea and island in the Sea. Alcibiades knew that Sparta's harbour, Gytheum, lay a few hundreds of stades south of the town, which was too far to easily walk to. Sparta did not know the oily vastness and also not the swift changing of the mood of the Sea.

Alcibiades walked in a street past the agora, westwards. Eupheas indicated to him the cenotaph of Brasidas son of Tellis. Alcibiades lingered a while here, for he wanted to pay his respects to the last hero of Sparta. Eupheas spoke freer now. He told Alcibiades old myths of Sparta. He showed him nice corners of green in the town. Alcibiades was surprised. The young slave was quite an intelligent boy. Eupheas knew a lot about Sparta and its history, also about its battles. He knew the names of the streets, and why they were called that way. He pointed out where the roads led. Alcibiades caught himself discussing with interest on the organisation of the town. It was the first time since his arrival that he had actually engaged in a nice, entertaining conversation.

Close to the sanctuary lay the theatre of Sparta. And opposite the theatre stood the tombs of Pausanias, the general that had won from the Persians at Plataea, and of Leonidas. Alcibiades ignored the tomb of Pausanias, but he looked with intense interest and emotion at the tomb of Leonidas. The Tomb of Leonidas was a large quadrangular building and sanctuary dedicated to the hero of Thermopylae. He walked on and came to the bridge over the Eurotas River, a sturdy, old and fine work of architecture. He went upon the bridge and enjoyed the scenery of the river and its green banks, where poplar trees grew. The waters of the Eurotas ran swiftly. He saw houses almost entirely hidden between the green bushes. Here and there emerged whitewashed walls and roofs.

He returned. Eupheas took him on a road called the Aphetaid Road, and led him to the royal tombs of the Spartan Kings, the Eurypontids, at the end of that road, close to a sanctuary of Dictymna.

Alcibiades took another street without asking where he was going. He simply wandered around, more or less following the Eurotas River. He reached the outer villages south of the town, and he remarked along the river a long series of houses, which were in fact halls, and merely vast barracks. He asked his helot servant what these were, and the youth told him that these buildings were the mess halls of the Spartiates, where the Spartiates took their evening meals together. Eupheas explained him that they walked on a road called the Hyacinthian way and that the road led many stades further to the town of Amyclae. Amyclae was the site of a cult of Apollo and of Hyacinthus. Hyacinthus was a beautiful, adolescent boy loved by Apollo. Apollo had killed Hyacinthus accidentally by a throw of his discus. Eupheas explained that there was a very nice throne for the god Apollo in that temple, built of white stone and other precious materials. Alcibiades grinned inwardly. How appropriate for the Spartans, who nurtured male love relationships among mature men and young boys to dedicate a cult to

Hyacinthus, the beloved of Apollo! Alcibiades dismissed his servant at this point, and decided to walk on, on his own.

It was late in the afternoon when Alcibiades returned to Sparta's centre around its acropolis. He had seen no other marketplace but the agora he had walked through while leaving. He continued to return along the river, and suddenly he heard voices sing in the distance. He stopped. He was startled at hearing wonderful female voices sing a harmonious song of love in long, languid rhythms and tones. The song sounded incongruous in this city, because it was a sweet, melodious chant of longing and awe. The chorus regularly stopped singing, and then one high voice would repeat the same few words of love over and over. The singing came from behind the trees to Alcibiades's left, so he advanced some more until the voices were clearer, and then he passed through a dense row of poplar trees and high bushes. He had to fray himself a passage through the plants with difficulty. He arrived at a small stone theatre. It was a half round theatre he saw, and he stood at its top. It was built like all the Hellenic theatres with sloping stone levels of seats that descended onto the lowest part, where the actual scene was, a flat half circle. The theatre was old. The scene was built in front of a row of palm trees. Nature only formed the background of the theatre. A large chorus of young women stood down beneath.

Alcibiades walked down the levels until he arrived almost in the middle of the theatre. Then, he sat down to hear the chorus sing.

A few men were present too, all Spartiates, but really only very few, and they sat in the front rows. The chorus was exceptionally large. There were over fifty women and girls on the scene. They were all dressed in long, white, unblemished tunics. They sang one hymn after the other with the same sweet tunes of old, in long melodies. He had heard his nurse Amycla sing some of these songs when he was a boy, with the same kind of languorous melodies. The songs were the melancholic poems and music of Alcman, of Terpander and of Spondon. Alcibiades heard virgin songs, songs of and for maidens, partheneions. He could murmur some of the lines, remembering the words his nurse had taught him when he was a child.

'So,' he thought, 'in this city of tension and isolation, of power and oppression, of death and darkness, grace, loveliness and softness are yet to be discovered. I would have truly been surprised if there hadn't been, somewhere, and I seem to have found some of it already, by chance.'

The girls stopped their singing for a while, and in the meantime four flute girls stepped forward to the orchestra. These played merry tunes on Spartan pipes. The flute girls were no professional musicians. Alcibiades could see that. They were Spartan daughters that had learned to play the pipes.

'Is this then the secret of Sparta?' wondered Alcibiades. 'Is Sparta's secret of living its music? Does that ease the tension here? Or are there other secrets to discover, so that these Spartans do resemble ordinary people anyhow? Is it the music that makes this town endurable? There are hardly any monuments worth mentioning here, no Parthenon-like splendid temples, no massive gates, and no port like Piraeus. This town is austere, parochial, very like its country. Is Sparta a hymn to the gods? The music will be heard, but only by so many people, and it will not last. This people will not leave anything to be remembered by but the music. It will leave no writings, no sculpture, no paintings, no imposing architecture, and no engineering. Will it leave

only its harsh laws, its battles and its music? But the music and the poems that are sung here, will die with them.'

Several of the women noticed the lonely, strange man who had come uninvited to sit in the middle of their theatre. Alcibiades sat nonchalantly, as he would have in an Athenian theatre. He was still a fine youth, with delicate and striking features. He could wear the coarsest himation with aristocratic elegance.

While the piper-girls blew their tones and darted over the scene, some of the chorus girls giggled, and they whispered words in each other's ears. Some of the Spartiate men remarked this. They turned around to look at the source of the interest, and they saw Alcibiades. Especially one tall, dark skinned, very handsome mature man with hard looks and sharp features studied Alcibiades insistently.

Alcibiades sighed, and he stood up. His thoughts had been interrupted. He did not want to disturb the atmosphere of the place. He turned his back to the choir and to the Spartiates, and slowly walked upwards again. His mood had changed, however.

Alcibiades was suddenly cheered up. He had learnt to know a bit more of Sparta. He remembered women were much freer in Sparta than in Athens. If the men refused to notice and acknowledge him, the women would. He could appeal to the women to break into the circle of the Spartiates. Oh yes, the Spartiates would notice him! They would notice him when their women called him to their beds. He laughed out loud, and threw his head in his neck. Harmonia would not like what he was about to do to the Spartiate girls, and then to the Spartiate ladies. But if necessary, he would seduce them. He returned to his house.

Damos

For many, many, very long days, nobody in Sparta seemed to care about Alcibiades. He was left alone. Endius still did not show up, nor any other magistrate of the town. Alcibiades wondered what was happening. Would he be allowed to live here but not heard, tolerated but not listened to? Were intrigues around his person raging and were the Spartans still discussing over what to do with him? Were factions fighting over allowing him to speak out or not, giving him a role in Spartan politics or not? Were they discussing his death or preparing to expedite him in chains to Athens?

He decided to wait, not to force anything for now, and to give the Spartans time for a first move. He certainly would not run after the ephors and Kings to beg. He had much to offer. They had to call him in, because they needed him, and would have good use of him. Then, he could speak, and he could start to use the Spartans to his own designs. For now, he remained utterly bored. He had nothing to do but to take walks and talk with Eupheas. He played at dice with the young man. Eupheas became his confidant. He wanted the youth to stay with him. He dispensed him from other works in the house.

A few days later still, early in the morning, at sunrise, Endius entered the house of Alcibiades in a hurry and prayed him to accompany him to a meeting of the Spartan Assembly. Alcibiades showed no surprise. He acted as if he took Spartan patience for

granted, threw a coarse himation over his shoulders and laced a sword on his back. Endius looked disapprovingly at the sword, but he did not openly object. The two men walked crisply through the streets. Endius walked rapidly as if he was in a hurry.

Alcibiades asked, 'what is happening?'

Endius answered, without stopping, 'the ephors allow you in the Spartan Assembly from now on. You might wish to speak about your coming, today.'

He added, 'there is also a delegation from Syracuse and Corinth here. They have come to ask our support in their war with Athens. Your advice in this matter might be valuable.'

'So,' Alcibiades thought, 'they have an issue and they would like to hear my opinion. They don't know much about Sicily. They don't know what Athens might be doing there. They don't know Athens' motives to attack Sicily. They have spies of course, but they do not trust their spies. They want to know how Athens will react in the event that they sided with Syracuse and Corinth. They are not going to murder me after all, or ship me back to Athens. Not yet. They need my opinion. They are desperate and confused. I am going to give them my opinion. I am going to shake them awake. And Athens will know I am alive.'

Alcibiades and Endius arrived at the Assembly of the Spartiates. Far less people were present in this meeting than Alcibiades was used to see in any Athenian Assembly.

Only a few hundred men stood together. The meeting took not place on a hill, but in a building near the agora, a building that resembled a theatre, a circular building.

Endius told it was called the Skias, for the 'Canopy'. The Skias had been designed and built by the architect Theodorus of Samos. Endius told Alcibiades, laughing, that in the Skias hung the harp of Timotheus of Miletus, because the Spartans disapproved of Timotheus having added four strings to the old seven ones.

'A nice example of conservatism in Sparta,' Endius told wryly.

Alcibiades added no comments. There were no seats in this theatre, though, and all stood, like in Athens. Endius entered and walked to the lower levels, with Alcibiades in his wake. It was easy to hear what was being said. The two Kings and the ephors, as well as other magistrates of Sparta stood on the scene. Endius took Alcibiades down with him, until he reached the first row. He signalled Alcibiades to stay there. Endius went forward and took a stand among the magistrates. Alcibiades was now certain that it had been decided at this meeting, only shortly before this moment, to go and fetch him. He listened and abided his time.

The Syracusan representatives were talking about the war with Athens. There had been severe fighting around Syracuse, and from what Alcibiades could understand from the courteous, pompous, polished phrases of diplomatic language, the Syracusans were having a hard time.

Nicias had decided to attack the city after all, Alcibiades deduced. Syracuse had sent ambassadors to Italy and to Corinth, pleading for help. They had been to Corinth before Sparta, because Syracuse had been founded by Corinthians. The Syracusans had apparently very easily convinced the Corinthians to assist them, so that the representatives of both nations stood now before the Spartan Assembly. They pleaded together for Sparta to enter the war and to send troops and ships to Syracuse. Corinth promised to construct more ships if only Sparta would add hoplites and Spartiate commanders.

The Spartiates listened in silence in the Damos. The Kings did not intervene at this point. The ephors and magistrates asked questions to the Syracusans about the progress of the war, the number of hoplites, of light armed troops, archers and slingers, and about the cavalry in the field. They wanted to know how many ships Athens had brought along the Sicilian coast. They asked which city of Sicily was allied to which side. This took a long time, and it was all very technical, but the Syracusans answered patiently. Finally, the Spartan magistrates discussed the issue and they tried to formulate an opinion.

It seemed they were all rather reluctant to send military forces of Sparta to Sicily. They argued that they were at peace with Athens and that opposing Athens openly now, in foreign country and not on Peloponnesian ground, would be regarded as an act of aggression and hence as a breaking of their holy oaths. They also still feared Athens' power at Sea, whereas Sparta had practically no fleet, and also had neither the funds nor the skills to build an important enough fleet in a short time.

The Spartiates of the Assembly then started to talk amongst each other, and the sound of their voices filled the theatre. The ephors halted for a moment with their speeches, probably waiting a while before putting the issue to a vote. In the Spartan Assembly a vote was cast by having the Spartiates commit to 'yes' or 'no'.

Alcibiades used that moment to step forward, uninvited. Endius had a gesture of surprise, maybe even a flare of panic in his eyes, and Alcibiades saw that Endius had not wanted him to speak out now, but Alcibiades was too far advanced already in the scene, towards the magistrates, to step back. As he came closer, he recognised the handsome Spartiate that he had remarked in the open air theatre a few days before. The man was standing amidst the ephors, but the ephors looked at that proud, long-haired Spartiate with more respect than at their peers. This was probably Agis, the King of Sparta, who led the Spartiate armies outside the town. Agis had a grin of disdain in his face when he saw the Athenian come to the scene.

Alcibiades continued to step boldly forward. He turned to the Assembly and began to speak. He held his two arms high above his shoulders to pray for silence and the Assembly gradually muted to hear him speak.

'I give you my greetings, venerable Assembly of Sparta,' he started. 'My name is Alcibiades and I was until recently general for Athens in the expedition to Sicily. I have been several times general of Athens.'

Alcibiades had total silence now, and none of the Kings, ephors or magistrates in his back withheld him from speaking. He spoke with the Dorian accent he had learned from his nurse.

He continued, 'you might thus be suspicious of me and of my words here. Yet, my name is Alcibiades, and Alcibiades is a Spartan name. I have family connections here. My ancestors were proxenoi of Sparta in Athens. There was a misunderstanding in the past, so my grandfather gave up this position, but I proposed my services again to Sparta, in particular to help the Spartiates that remained captive in Athens after the battles at Pylos. I sheltered them and provided for them while they were in my town. Some of you know how I cared for your people, for your relatives. Again, when you negotiated the peace with Athens, I proposed my services. But you preferred to deal with my enemies in Athens and refused my help. Therefore, do not blame me for the hardships you suffered when I acted as a general and ambassador of Athens.'

'I am an honourable man. You might distrust me because I arrived from a democracy. My family has always opposed tyrants, and democracy is only a name given to a

system that opposes total power in the hands of one man. I believe your laws have the same aim. My family and I have been leaders of our people, and we lived in Athens. Is it not honourable to abide by the laws of one's polis and government? We had to conform to the laws of the city we lived in. Yet, we were always enemies of men that tried to manipulate the people in ways that were evil and wrong. In the last months, I have had to fight very hard with words and deeds against such people, who laid conspiracy after conspiracy against me and accused me of acting not for but against the government of which I was a member. I could not have acted against a government that was handed over to us generation after generation. The evil men succeeded in their wicked goals while I was in Sicily with the army, not in Athens, where I might have defended myself.'

Alcibiades paused a while, then he resumed. 'We could also not change the form of government while we were at war with you, for danger of losing the polis. Yet, many people in Athens believe that the form of democracy that the city has evolved to is evil and outdated. I will not now make my speech longer by recalling to you all the absurdities of such a system.

But, enough of myself! I stand here before you to talk of Sicily. I know Sicily! I fought in Sicily, accompanying Laches a long time ago, and I learned to love and admire that country. I have secrets to tell you about the intentions of the Athenians with Sicily. When I sailed with the Athenian fleet, I wanted to make peace with Syracuse and propose our help against their eldest enemies, the Carthaginians. But our orders given to the generals by the Athenian Assembly in the last meeting before the fleet embarked, was to conquer Sicily!'

At this point the theatre filled with surprised voices, and the Spartiates looked at each other in awe. Alcibiades heard also exclams of surprise and outrage in his back from the Syracusan and Corinthian ambassadors. He brought once more his hands up, and as he dominated his audience now with curiosity and astonishment, the voices died down more rapidly. He continued to speak.

'If we would have conquered the Sicilians, the joint army and fleet would have moved against the Hellenes in Italy and conquered their cities also. Then, the Athenians would have attacked the Carthaginian hegemony and taken Carthago. All the lands in the west of the Sea were intended to be dominated by Athens and added to her power!'

The Spartan Assembly growled now, and shouts came from the crowd, shouts of anger. Fists were being made.

Alcibiades silenced the Assembly, this time by speaking in his loudest voice. 'Finally, if these plans were realised, Athens was going to assault the Peloponnesos with all the allied Hellenic armies of the west and it would have invaded Lacedaemon with great numbers of troops also, gathered from the best and wildest warriors of those countries.'

Alcibiades halted once again a few moments to let the message drill down. The Spartans were stunned by the breadth of vision of Athens.

'Sparta will have to fight many Mantinean battles then, inside Laconia, and Athens would be able to replenish her armies, supported by the funds paid from the contributions of its hegemony in the east and in the west.'

Alcibiades paused and continued. 'So, what could Sparta do to thwart Athens' ambitions? Sparta could work at land and at Sea. On land, the Athenian generals that

are in Sicily, Nicias foremost, will continue to carry out the plans decided by the Assembly on the Pnyx. Unless you help Sicily, Sicily will be lost. The Sicilians lack the experience of war that Athens has. Syracuse lacks the organisation and the knowledge of warfare that Sparta has. I heard today that already, Syracuse has been defeated in battle with her entire forces. I heard that the harbour of Syracuse is blocked by the Athenian fleet. If this goes on, Syracuse will not hold out against Athens and when Syracuse falls, Sicily falls. No other city on the island is strong enough to hold out against Nicias's army and once Syracuse falls, the Sicilian cities will be forced to rally Athens. Then, Italy will fall. Then, Carthago will fall. The Peloponnesos will be invaded next. There is really no alternative for you but to send troops to Syracuse! The Syracusans need experienced hoplites. They need rowers and ships. More importantly, they need organisation for war. They are good fighters, but they lack discipline and training in their troops. They need men that can devise strategies of war and of defence, and that have vision to lead in their resistance. They need leadership. Yes, they need commanders trained to teach them to organise coherent actions! They need a commander who can provide them with the skills and the energy for war. When this is done, there shall be a new spirit of resistance in Syracuse. Actions will be directed and the sign of Sparta's involvement will make the other Sicilian cities hesitate to follow Athens. But that is not enough! Athens does not fear Sparta currently. She can direct all her attention, all her funds, all her people, all her means and the resources of her allies to one target: Sicily. Athens can concentrate all her energy to one point, to one aim. You must thwart that. You must add difficulties to her, so that she has to divert her attention and means to other points. You must break her unwavering confidence in her power. You must make it hard for Athens to send reinforcements to Sicily. Therefore you must invade Attica again!

Alcibiades heard the Assembly discussing this point in muted voices. He felt that the proposal was not popular, and he saw many a sceptical look. He knew why. 'I know,' he said, 'you doubt the efficiency of an invasion in Attica. It will mean an end to peace! It will be late spring by the time you arrive there. Earthquakes may shake your confidence when you leave with your army to such a campaign. Your previous expeditions have not lasted for long, one or two months, so they turned out to be merely shallow stings from arrow-points for Athens. The past campaigns have had little effect on Athens' determination. It is not easy; it is cumbersome work to burn olive groves and vineyards. But I can tell you, I who have come from Athens, that the incursions in Attica have done real harm – much harm – to Athens. Remember the sickness that Apollo inflicted on Athens when the entire population of Attica was amassed within her walls. Remember the fortunes lost by the richest families of the town from the blockade, from the even temporary blockade of the silver mines of Laurium. The countryside resurrected rapidly when Sparta passed, but the rich owners of the farms wept at the loss of gold from their agriculture. Imagine the hardships that you could inflict on Athens if you could remain not one or two months in Attica, but the whole year round! You will ask me – how would this be possible? Well, the possibility exists! There is a small fort in Attica, very close to Athens, near the mountains. It is so close that it can be seen from the acropolis of Athens on a clear day. It is a village called Decelea. Decelea is on a hill. It can be fortified and held constantly by Spartan forces. Raids can be sent out the entire year from Decelea to ravage the country and to stop the Attican farmers from coming out of the city as soon as your armies have returned to

Sparta in the summer. A force in Decelea does not have to ravage the entire countryside! Such a force can spy on the country, and when a farm is re-established, it can destroy that farm. All the other farmers will run for their life, back inside the walls of Athens. The countryside will remain empty for fear of the raids from Decelea. Not only will you keep the Attican farmers from returning to their fields. You will also stop the Athenians from running their operations in the silver mines. Decelea in Spartan hands, permanently, would paralyse much of Athens' commercial life on land. Athens fears this. How can you best harm your enemy if not by doing to him what that enemy fears most? If you take Decelea, and fortify it, then occupy it with a small force of seasoned hoplites and strong cavalry, and raid from it permanently. You will capture the land around Athens, deprive Athens from the revenues of Laurium, deprive the town from all the income she receives from the land, and shake the confidence of her allies. Allies will leave Athens' League, and then the tributes will diminish, and Athens' funds will dwindle to a trickle, so that she will not be able to pay for reinforcements to Sicily and the Peloponnesos. The effect will not be seen immediately, but month after month, Athens will find life harder and harder.'

Alcibiades paused once more for a while.

He continued. 'Venerable Spartiates, could this be done, this occupation of Decelea? Yes it can. It can be done easily. I am a trained general, a strategist, and I have a long war record. I know it can be done easily.'

Alcibiades still held the scene. He walked to and fro now, looking also, for the first time, at the Kings, ephors and magistrates. They stood passively behind him, but none expected to interrupt his discourse. Some stood with their arms crossed. He saw doubt and scepticism in some eyes as they caught his looks, surprised at his turning around and confronting them openly.

When he looked at the assembled Spartiates again, he remarked doubt here too. So he would have to re-assert that the Spartans could trust him, and that he spoke the truth and a strategy that made sense.

He continued to speak. 'I love my polis, my town, my Athens. So you might ask why I should now join its bitterest enemy against her. I am not speaking and acting against my polis, however. My town is currently in the hands of villains who misuse the word of democracy, and baffle democracy's rules in the city to harm my town and to exert evil power over her. I am an exile because of these men. They harm my Athens and break the peace. They turn the city's friends against her. They seek merely power, pure power, not the interest of the Athenian people! I am not attacking a city in which I enjoyed the rights of a citizen, but a city in which its rulers abuse of democracy's ancient laws. These men abuse of the laws and divert Athens' laws to evil intents! The Athens I left is not my Athens anymore, and not the Athens I want to regenerate. I will do everything that is in my power to bring back the Athens I love. I am a general and I have fought bravely, as many among you know. I am a hoplite and a cavalryman who has fought in many battles. I am not a politician who has always stood aside! I am a hoplite! How many hoplites do you know who have been in many battles and wear the scars of face to face combat, and who are not pure of soul? Hoplites pay with their body, with wounds and risk of death for the love of their polis. Hoplites honour their adversaries, of which they share the hardships. I am a hoplite! You are Spartiates. You are hoplites! You must recognise a hoplite's pledge of sincerity!'

Alcibiades shouted these words loudly over the heads of the hoplites, and he hit his breast and his sword with his clinched fist. He let his words enter the minds of the Spartiates. None of them moved.

‘I offer my services to Sparta so that the Athens I love might be re-instated. I can be of much service to you. I have been a general of Athens. I have led in battles and know how to lead men. I know how a war strategy is devised. I know how the Athenian Assembly reacts and how the men that rule her mood today will react. I can advise you. My advice today is to consider the dangers that you risk when you do not intervene in Sicily. You will have great results in Syracuse from sending only a token force, and your finest help to the Syracusans shall be your finest commanders and cavalymen. Once they are well led, the Syracusans will fight like lions. By attacking and investing Decelea, you shall receive great rewards and destroy the confidence of Athens, as well as the confidence of her allies in her. You will live in safety and be joined by many cities. You will be praised for your wisdom.’

Alcibiades stopped speaking and he went slowly back to stand among the Spartiates. Many men brought their head in their neck, nodding in consent and appreciation. He had won his audience over and the scepticism had left. Alcibiades felt another mood in the men around him, they now admired the general with vision, the warrior, and the advice of somebody who knew the situation better than they.

The ephors and magistrates discussed the issues all over again in public, and several orators came forward. They were in favour of Alcibiades’s proposals to send help to the Sicilians and also to fortify Decelea. King Agis was the only one in but a short address to plead for prudence. He expressed his lack of confidence in the young Athenian who was an exile.

The ephors forced a decision in the Damos. The decision voted on was to occupy with military forces Decelea. The decision was taken. They asked King Agis to lead the army against Attica. The Peace of Nicias lay shattered at Alcibiades’s feet! The Assembly then voted on support to Sicily. This vote too was taken. The ephors appointed Gylippus son of Cleandridas to be sent to Syracuse. Gylippus would be the commander for the Syracusans. The ephors instructed Gylippus to discuss with the Syracusans and the Corinthians on how to bring reinforcements to Sicily.

Gylippus stepped forward. He was a handsome Spartiate of mature age. He was a strong man, hardened from gymnastics and battles. Alcibiades saw long scars on his arms and legs, so the man was a veteran, though not of old age. He showed an intelligent face, but some softness lay on his features also, so that he might indeed be a patient man to drive the Syracusans to concerted action. Alcibiades judged only by the looks of the man Gylippus was probably a good choice. Gylippus asked the beaming Corinthians to send him at once two ships to Asine and to equip the fleet that they intended to sail to Sicily. He told he would lead the expedition, and that he was ready and eager for the campaign.

The Spartan Damos Assembly was called to an end by an ephor and the men left the theatre. The Corinthian and Syracusan representatives hurried to Alcibiades to thank him.

To one of the Syracusan ambassadors, Alcibiades said, ‘give my regards to Hermocrates.’

The man replied, very surprised, ‘do you know Hermocrates?’

‘Yes, I do,’ Alcibiades replied, smiling. ‘Tell him I helped a friend.’

The Syracusan was perplexed. He wanted to know more, obviously, but the other ambassadors drew him away before the conversation could go on.

Alcibiades hesitated. He wondered whether he should stay to continue to talk to the Kings and ephors and to Gylippus, but the men were discussing very excitedly together, among their group only, and Gylippus was the centre of their attention. Alcibiades walked slowly away. Endius came out from the group and he signalled Alcibiades to wait. Endius said no word of praise for Alcibiades's speech. He said merely, 'Alcibiades, I invite you to be a candidate for the mess of which I am a member. I will send you a servant in the evening, he will bring you to our hall.' And Endius walked rapidly to the other magistrates without waiting for an answer.

Alcibiades looked a few moments at Endius's back.

He thought, 'how strange are these Spartiates. They are so much like children. Give them a sweet, and they run off to play. They are hoplites indeed. They are mighty hoplites, but they lack the subtlety of mind needed for politics.'

He turned, and he smiled. He did not dare to laugh out loud. He would be a Spartan, after all. Things could move indeed in Sparta. The Spartiates moved slowly and only at hard facts, after long deliberations. Sparta was a place for intrigues, like Athens of course, but intrigues were simple here, held for longer terms, until they broke forward in all intensity. Results of intrigues would be more drastic in Sparta and more spectacular, more sudden and more dramatic, whereas in Athens it was a way of life. Sparta was slow. Decisions were taken after long reflection. Athens was swift and decisions came easily there. This was knowledge he could exploit, but his work would be long and arduous, and he would have to take care, for the Damos of Sparta would at long, finally, always explode into something spectacular.

Phiditia

Alcibiades waited that evening for a servant of Endius to come to him. The servant did not come that same day, which taught Alcibiades patience once more. The Spartiates moved at their own time!

The servant came the day after. The man was a helot, and he was on foot. He took Alcibiades along the river to the mess halls. It was not a rainy evening, but fogs rose from the river, and a light grey veil began to hang above the water and entered the woods on the other side. Many Spartiates walked in the same streets and tracks towards the messes. Alcibiades avoided speaking to them. In Athens he would have started a conversation with anybody going the same direction, whether aristocrat, citizen, metic or slave. The Spartiates walked in silence, even if they came together in groups. The men greeted each other with raised right hand, drew their himations loser, walked together, but remained silent. Alcibiades would have to remain silent too, and let the Spartiates choose their moment to address him. Endius's servant took Alcibiades to one of the halls in the middle of the row of wooden buildings. When Alcibiades entered the hall, the servant disappeared.

Somewhat more than twenty Spartiates sat at the tables. The tables were higher than in Athens, and the men sat on wooden benches made of unpolished, rough planks. There was little light in the hall, so Alcibiades's eyes had to get used to the darkness. He recognised Gylippus near Endius. He did not know the others, and he did not

remember having seen any of them in the Assembly. Endius came up to him. He bade Alcibiades to sit next to him. He quieted him when Alcibiades wanted to begin to speak, and Endius bade him to sit between him and Gylippus. Endius said in a low voice, 'do not say anything yet. You are not a member of this hall yet. We shall have to vote for you to be a member.'

Endius stood up and he said in a loud, clear voice, addressing the mess members, 'this is Alcibiades. He was a general. He desired to stay and live in Sparta. His advice will be appreciated. I propose to make him a member of our mess.'

A single voice came from the last table, asking, 'will he be able to contribute to the mess?'

Endius looked at Alcibiades, and Alcibiades signalled that, yes, he could pay.

Endius answered for him, 'yes, he will contribute his normal due.'

Endius took an empty bowl and went round the table of Spartiates. The Spartiates continued to eat. They did not discuss; they did not ask Alcibiades to justify himself. Each Spartiate took a piece of bread, closed his hand and threw the bread in the bowl. When Endius came back to his place, he emptied the bowl. All the pieces of bread were squeezed hard together.

Endius announced, 'Alcibiades is accepted unanimously to our mess.'

Endius sat down again. Alcibiades sat open-mouthed. He did not understand what had happened.

Endius explained. 'When we vote, we squeeze a piece of bread together for a yes or throw it un-squeezed, untouched in the bowl. All the pieces got squeezed. They all voted yes. You are now a member of the mess.'

The Spartiates talked, now. They discussed the situation of the helots openly. They talked about where uprisings of slaves might be expected, which seemed to be their first concern. Others were talking about how to hunt stags in the mountains. A few men discussed the breeding of horses.

Food was brought in for Alcibiades, and the first bowl he would have to absorb was of the famous Spartan black broth. It was a disgusting-looking liquid with a nasty dark colour, and the broth raked foully. Alcibiades took the bowl with the most relaxed face, brought it to his lips and started to drink and to eat. He drank much at once, unhesitatingly, and then put the bowl down. He lifted his eyes because he heard no voices anymore. All the Spartiates were looking at him. Alcibiades smiled at them amiably. He made no grimaces, and he took up the bowl again to drain the rest. Then, he smacked audibly with his lips and wiped his mouth clean with his hand. The conversations continued. Alcibiades had passed one test more.

Alcibiades was on the point of vomiting. His stomach asked to be emptied, but he forced his face not to change colours and to remain without a wrinkle. Once, a very long time ago, when he was a boy, his nurse had mentioned the black broth to him. He had asked Amycla to prepare some for him. He had tasted it and refused to gulp more beyond a few mouthfuls, but Amycla had forced the entire bowl into him. He knew the taste and the contents: blood mainly, spiced with salt and vinegar, onions maybe, and pieces of pork meat. The pork was very tasty. Salt and vinegar he could dump in his stomach. The taste of blood was what he detested. He had to learn to eat this stuff without disgust, even with relish, for otherwise he would not be accepted in this mess, and this mess was his entry to the politics of Sparta. It was true what the men of Sparta said of the black broth: only men that could swim naked in the swift Eurotas

could swallow this food. He had been prepared to the taste however. He had asked Eupheas to prepare some for him the previous day, and he had moderately got used to the sour taste, enough not to spit the stiff out in front of the Spartiates. Was he a considered to be a Spartan, now?

Alcibiades hoped it would also open doors to trade or to other new income. With the money he had with him, he could pay for this mess for a period of about six months, not for more. He could get money from Thurii and from the Hellespont, from Axiochus, but that money would not arrive quickly. He had a few ideas. They involved Pulytion, his metic friend in Athens, but where was Pulytion? Maybe Euryptolemus knew.

Gylippus addressed him. 'I shall be sailing to Sicily soon, Alcibiades. How is Syracuse really? I heard you mention you have been there.'

Alcibiades answered, 'yes, I have been in Syracuse, venerable Gylippus. Syracuse is a large town. It is a port town and it has a very great harbour, around which are its streets. It is a sailors' and traders' and fishermen's town. Its core, its old town, is on an island, and the island is now connected to the mainland by a bridge. The town has high walls on the side of the land and with its island, which is also its acropolis, it is really impregnable. Syracuse cannot be taken by land even if it is only half well defended. The Athenians might build a wall of their own to block the city from reinforcements coming by land from the inside of Sicily, and they might blockade the harbour. I surmise however that many small boats can easily supply the town by night to hold out a long time. Syracuse cannot be stormed, though the Athenians might try, for none of them has ever been inside Syracuse. If the Syracusans make no gross error, such as coming out with their entire army to give battle to the Athenians, they will easily defend their town and exasperate the Athenians. The only danger for the Syracusans is the incompetence of their generals and their lack of energy.'

'I am worried most about the Athenian fleet and their power to blockade Syracuse.'

'Yes,' Alcibiades replied. The Athenian fleet dominates the Sea. You know, Gylippus, Athens' power is not so much in the number of ships as in the courage, self-confidence, training in manoeuvring and discipline of her sailors. Athenian trierarchs know as no other sea-captains how to manipulate their ships and to turn, stop, and row in all directions and backwards swiftly to surprise the enemy. Moreover, Athenian fleets repeat complicated manoeuvres together so that the trierarchs also learn how to react inside a large number of ships. The generals that teach such manoeuvres are experienced navarchs, and they repeat the same configurations of attack or of defence over and over again, with the individual ships and their trierarchs in different places, so that the trierarchs at the end almost execute any configuration by intuition and automatically. No Syracusan and no Corinthian fleet, however large, can dominate and win from an Athenian fleet. Athenians manoeuvre at Sea with the speed you Spartiates manoeuvre parts of your hoplite phalanxes.'

Alcibiades drank, popped a piece of bread in his mouth to soften the acid taste, and then said, 'especially what you should not do is to let matters converge into a battle in the open Sea without a large number of ships in excess of the Athenian fleet or part thereof. Even with far less boats, the Athenian trierarchs will out-manoevrue you. A battle in waters where the Athenians would not be able to manoeuvre well would be your only hope of victory. Such a battle could happen inside Syracuse harbour itself. Syracuse harbour is large, but there is not much space for two enemy fleets. It seems to me that this would be your only chance. And even then the Athenians may give you surprises. They are also masters at turning and breaking loose in close waters. You

would have to face three challenges: one, to get the Athenians inside the harbour, two, to lend the Syracusans enough confidence to lure the Athenians inside their harbour, and they will be very afraid of allowing the Athenians inside, and three, to bring the Syracusans to a large enough number of ships and to sufficient discipline at Sea so that they would fight with enough ardour and energy to withstand the Athenians.'

Alcibiades laughed, 'you will have to teach the Syracusans not to turn around and row in panic to the shores when they see the first Athenian trireme move in!'

Gylippus laughed too. 'Can that be done, Alcibiades?'

'Oh, sure,' Alcibiades replied. 'The Syracusans are a sturdy and a stubborn lot, but they are born seamen. They just need confidence and discipline. Any even minor, success would demonstrate that the Athenian fleet is not invincible. That should inspire the Syracusans with enough confidence in their own skills. Then they will fight like lions. They will suddenly all be brave men. You, who have been in battles, know that the determination to win is the first and most important condition that is really needed to win a battle, whether on land or on the Sea. Yet, that is what the Syracusans lack today.'

Gylippus said, 'I could load the triremes with extra hoplites and archers to have more force in close combat in the harbour.'

'Yes, you could. But usually, that has been proven to be counter-productive. The ships will be very difficult to handle. The ships may even turn over when too many men amass on one side. They will be buffeted by the winds. The oars will not reach the water evenly. The helmsmen will not be able to control the movements of the ships. Certainly do not do that when the boats row to the open Sea! No, just amass your ships, and attack the Athenian triremes from various sides, then hit them hard, and run, and watch out for other enemy ships.'

'How would you handle the Athenian land-forces?'

'There will be a large number of hoplites amassed in Sicily. Nicias will ask for reinforcements, and he will gather some troops at least from Leontini and Egesta and maybe from a few other cities of the island. His hoplites are not better than the Corinthian hoplites, from which you will probably have a fair number. They are not as good as the Spartan hoplites, but you will have very few of those. Syracusan hoplites are badly armed. They are not worth much in regular battle and train them well will take a long time. You will have to fight limited skirmishes with the best men you can gather and with veterans from Sicily. With these you can win a few skirmishes, and build up confidence.

The Athenian army in Sicily has two weaknesses. Its first weakness is its generals. Nicias and Lamachus are unimaginative leaders. They will fight the traditional way. They will give you no surprises, and they may be surprised by non-conventional attacks at places and at times they do not expect. They will rather suppose they can take the initiative all the time. Take the initiative away from them and they will be confused. That will show in what they do. They will react well, but you will have the initiative, and they will be moody and want to return home.

The second weakness is their lack of cavalry. Athens has no cavalry. That is her Achilles's heel. If you can get cavalry from the other Sicilian towns, much cavalry, you can harass the Athenians constantly from out of the countryside and break her fighting spirit. That also will take time. Athens' army is a hard nut to crack. You will not be able to crack it in one squeeze. Steady pressure will do the job!'

Gylippus took a nut from a basket on the table, placed it in front of Alcibiades and hit it powerfully with his closed fist. The nut broke instantly with a dry sound, smashed between the table and Gylippus's fist. The pieces of the nut flew around in all directions, so that the other Spartiates stopped a moment from eating and looked at what had happened in Endius's company, but they knew Gylippus's trick already, and continued eating with their eyes in their bowl.

Alcibiades laughed, 'so that is the Spartan way, is it not, Gylippus? Well, it is not the Syracusan way. You will have no Spartan fist at your disposal in Sicily.'

'I know, Alcibiades,' Gylippus smiled back. He was inwardly quite happy that the nut had broken; sometimes the nut was harder than his fist.

'With steady pressure then, shall I crack the Athenian army! I shall prepare more surprises for them than they can digest!'

Gylippus paused, and then he said, looking earnestly and worried, 'I will hold a few meetings with the Syracusan representatives. I need to know much about the terrain and about the Athenian forces. I would like you to join us. Can you come tomorrow before noon to our military headquarters near the agora?'

'Of course,' Alcibiades answered calmly, but his head spun. He would learn all about the strategy of the Spartiates!

Endius drew on Alcibiades's arm, so Alcibiades turned towards him, leaving Gylippus at his broth.

Endius asked, 'will you also come to our choruses, our gymnastics and our wrestling exercises, Alcibiades? We do not just talk about war in Sparta, you know!'

'Of course,' Alcibiades repeated.

He knew only too well from what he had seen in Athens that the gymnasium was the place where old men sought distraction and maybe a fine young body. The gymnasiums and tracks were the places where the Gerontes would talk and meet and forge their intrigues. Oh yes, he would go there.

'I will send my servant!'

'Fine. I will wait for him. Can you tell me who the other Spartiates are in the hall?'

'Sure. Our mess is the most important one after Agis's mess. You know Gylippus.

Next to him sits Alcamenes, who may be a navarch for our fleet some time soon.

Opposite him sits Chalcideus, a great Spartiate and also a man who is a commander of troops, at times one of the six polemarchs who are the main commanders of King Agis. He is also one of our most intelligent men. He has shown much cunning in diplomatic missions. A little further sits Astyochus, who will also be navarch soon.

There is Hippocrates, Pedaritus and Antisthenes, all commanders of the highest class of Sparta. To the left sits Dercyllidas and next to him eats Clearchus. Those two are friends. Behind you sits Mindarus. The other men at his table are commanders too.

The man beyond, is an ephor. You will learn to know each of these men better with time.'

'What are the relations between the Kings and the ephors?' Alcibiades asked.

Endius was a little surprised, and Alcibiades saw some distrust flaring in Endius's eyes.

'Those relations are always moderately strained,' Endius answered. 'The institution of the ephors was installed a long time ago to closely control the Kings. When a King enters a meeting, all have to rise, except the ephors. Ephors and Kings share power. They are committed and inextricably linked. Each month, ephors and Kings exchange oaths. The ephors act for the city and they guard Lycurgus' Rhetra laws, given to us to

govern our polis. The Kings lead us in war. Lycurgus, our law giver, did not want our Kings to become tyrants. When a King is on a military campaign outside Laconia, two ephors always accompany him. Ephors report on the King's behaviour to the Gerousia. The Gerousia consists of twenty-eight elders of at least sixty years of age. The two Kings are however part of the Gerousia too, so that it has actually thirty members. The Gerousia really represents the power of Sparta, not the Kings, and even not the ephors. The Gerousia controls the Damos, the Assembly of the Spartiates. All proposals brought forward to the Assembly have first to be debated by the Gerontes, the elders of the Gerousia. It was the Gerousia that stood in the scene together with the Kings in the Assembly when you were there. It was the Gerousia that asked to send for you because they doubted their own opinions. '

'Aha,' Alcibiades thought, 'so the elder men were wise and remembered they had a master trick somewhere up their sleeves. The men of the Gerousia are not against me. They saved me because they and they alone believe I can be of use. They did not show me earlier, because I was kept in reserve for the right moment. Agis does not trust me, nor do some of the ephors. I felt that in the Damos. I must know who those elder men are, the leaders of the Gerontes, and befriend them. These men are the key to Sparta!'

Endius continued, 'the Gerousia can bring the Kings to trial and they can judge him, too. The Gerousia can also change any decision of the Damos. The ephors report to the Gerousia. Every ephor oversees a part of Sparta's administration.'

'Well then,' Alcibiades said, 'the people here have the authority to decide on all matters, just like in Athens, but the people are the Spartiates, and the Gerousia can dismiss any decision, unlike in Athens, where a people's decision cannot be overturned. The power of the Kings is controlled by the ephors so that the Kings cannot become tyrants. That looks a very efficient system to me! The Kings of Sparta, much in fact like in Athens, have not so much power. In Athens, they are only the head priests, actually.'

'Our Kings have more power than in Athens, Alcibiades! They have some of the same prerogatives as the archon Kings of Athens, though. They perform all our main public sacrifices, too. The Kings ask advice to the Oracle at Delphi before going to war; nobody else is allowed to do that. But yes, their main function is to lead the army. It is the major King, the Agiad King, who does that. The Eurypontid King protects the polis while the warrior-King is away. The Eurypontid King is the guardian King. The Agiads are the senior royal house, and from this house the warrior-King is normally chosen. Agis is an Agiad, of course. The Eurypontids are the junior royal house. I do not know why we have two Kings, one from the Agiad family and one from the Eurypontids. But it comes out neat in time of war. I suspect the Dorian forefathers of ours to have come to Laconia in two tribes that joined in Sparta to subdue the land, and each tribe may have had its leader. Or maybe it was already an old institution to guard one King by the other. Two Kings are convenient, for while one is abroad on expeditions, the other can also with full authority war on the helots in Laconia. Our Kings receive a little more land than the other Spartiates, but Kings are not enormously wealthy in Sparta. They receive parts of the sacrificed animals and double portions in the mess. But the double portion is only so that the Kings can offer it to people that are their guests at the mess. The King can demand a piglet from every sow's litter to sacrifice to Zeus Skullianos, here in Sparta.'

Alcibiades paused, then remarked, ‘you are not an ephor and not yet sixty. Yet you stood in the scene too, with the Gerontes.’

‘The Gerousia members sometimes invite somebody to consult with them,’ Endius answered finely and modestly, but with a twist to his lips. ‘I will be ephor one of the next years, anyhow. An ephor can be chosen only once in his life, and then only for one year. My year has not yet come. I am not of the right age. In one of the next years I will be ephor. Some men of the Gerousia want me to be ephor. I do not want just any year, however. I want to be ephor in a year that is crucial for our city.’

‘There were not many people present in the Damos when I spoke.’

‘Of course,’ Endius replied patiently and with a wry smile. ‘Only adult Spartiates are members of the Damos. They must be of legitimate Spartan birth, have gone through the agoge, our education system, and succeeded in this upbringing. They then must have been selected to join a military mess such as ours, and be able to pay for it. They must of course obey the Rhetra, our laws and not have been guilty of any crime, misdemeanour or of cowardice. And then there are always Spartiates who are on duty abroad, hunting, breeding horses or breeding children.’

Alcibiades laughed. ‘Who is that man there, behind?’

‘That is Dorieus and next to him sits Eurysthenes. In front of them sit Astrabacus and Leonidas. At the same table you can see Archidamus at the end, and Agesistratus. Telantos and Clearos sit with Aristoclitus. Aristoclitus is the father of Lysander and Libys. Libys is also normally in our mess, but he may be out hunting. Lysander eats in Agis’s mess.’

‘Am I now free to go everywhere I desire in Sparta?’

‘Oh yes! You are assimilated to something similar to the status of a foreign ambassador, but you live permanently in our city. You can attend the gymnasium, attend performances of our choruses, take part in our festivals, and so on. I may come and fetch you actually to some of these. I’ll introduce you.’

‘So,’ Alcibiades thought, ‘I am fashionable again after my speech. You did not want to be seen with me, dear Endius, mighty warrior though no doubt you are, until I had truly be welcomed by the old men in this city. The Gerousia men changed your mind for you. You scored well with the old men, for you got them out of a quandary, and I was your instrument. Your reward will be to become an ephor, and then an elder in your own right. I’ll give you gladly what you need, for that is in my interest.’

Gylippus

In the following months, Alcibiades lived peacefully in Sparta. He was a free man. He could go anywhere in the town. He took a slow stroll each evening to the phiditia, the military messes, and he drank the black broth.

In the first days, he drank cautiously. He was each time at the point of vomiting. The knowledge that he would have to drink the blood was a dread that felt harder for him every day. But he persevered, and after a while he became used to the taste, even though the taste stuck to his mouth the entire night and day, and the smell remained in his nostrils. He learned to swallow the pork with the liquid without being sick. Then, the taste pervaded his body and later, absorbing the stuff grew into a habit. He now would gulp the broth without an afterthought, and talk at the same time. He avoided wine. He actually lived very frugally.

Alcibiades talked a lot with his servant boy Eupheas. The boy explained much to him about the life in Sparta. Alcibiades regarded the young man highly. He talked freely with him, and explained to him also what Athens was like. The boy was very curious, listening in silence with eager eyes when Alcibiades held long monologues about the beauty and greatness of Athens. Alcibiades described the temples, the statues of the gods and he taught Eupheas to love art. Alcibiades realised he talked more to himself than to the boy, and it was the longing for his home town that spoke. He was grateful for Eupheas, for the boy kept asking about Athens, and Alcibiades felt a lot better each time he could talk about his home, about the theatre plays and choruses, about the great games and festivals of Athens. He talked about Socrates, and it happened that he played Socrates and Eupheas the student. Alcibiades discussed in elenchus terms then, catching the boy at inconsistencies of discourse, like Socrates had done with him previously. Eupheas liked to laugh, and it happened that the servants came into the aulé, wondering why the two men were slapping their knees and laughing so hard. Eupheas was but a slave, but he was becoming Alcibiades's only true friend in Sparta.

The mess of Endius was quite interesting and filled with Spartiates of the highest ranks. All the men had been and would be important politicians, ambassadors, informal representatives of Sparta, polemarchs or senior army commanders that ate in the mess of the King while he was on campaign, or navarchs. Alcibiades learned much about the Spartan army in the phiditia.

The Spartan army consisted by tradition of six regiments, six moras of cavalry and hoplites. Each mora was led by a polemarch, who dined in the Kings' messes. There were thus six polemarchs, the senior army commanders who constituted the Council of the Kings. Each polemarch commanded four lochagi, eight pentecosters and sixteen enomotarchs. The enomotarchs were the actual commanders of the Spartiate warriors. They passed the orders to the men, shouting commands like heralds. Alcibiades attended exercises of the Spartiates, and he saw them rehearse movements of entire phalanxes in unison, whereby the commands were efficiently despatched and obeyed instantly. The cavalry moved in squares of fifty cavalrymen, called oulami. The cavalry was among the finest Alcibiades had known so far. However, the power in Sparta was not in his mess, not with the commanders he met there. The real power belonged to the current polemarchs and the Kings, and above that power towered the power of the Council of Elders.

Alcibiades attended the gymnasium where the commanders of Sparta trained, and he also worked his body actively in the palaestra. He went to the tracks where the Spartiates ran, and asked to participate. They made place for him. He accepted contests of discus throwing, javelin throwing, jumping and even wrestling. He taught the Spartiates some of the Athenian tricks at wrestling. All the men were nude in these contests, like in the Games at Olympia. He won and lost fights, but he definitely gained in companionship, and in belonging to the Spartiate groups the trained with. After many long days he could enter the tracks at any time and compete with any Spartiate without being frowned upon. He won the confidence of the men, one by one. He was the only foreigner to be regarded as a normal partner among the Spartiates.

Gylippus had helped much in that. For several days after the Damos meeting in which it had been decided to send Gylippus to Sicily, Alcibiades had participated in Council meetings with Gylippus and with the Syracusan and Corinthian representatives.

Gylippus wanted to know everything about Syracuse, the town walls, the terrain outside, the harbour, the military forces, the state of the Syracusan fleet and the defences of the town. He asked question after question, for days on. He had a map made of Syracuse on papyrus and one of Sicily, on which he noted the rivers and the cities. He had a secret agreement with Alcibiades that Alcibiades would not react immediately on the Sicilians' words, but check by his knowledge the plausibility of the answers, and give a secret signal to Gylippus when an answer was dodged or not quite in line with what he, Alcibiades, knew to be true. The Spartiates knew of these meetings, and Gylippus also talked about the meetings to other Spartiate commanders, praising the help of Alcibiades, so that Sparta relaxed about his presence. Some of the men who were regularly on military duty even called on him to ask his advice in private. Alcibiades complied eagerly. After all, he did not only know Syracuse. He knew almost every city of the Peloponnesos, some of which were enemies of Sparta, as well as of Sicily, of Chalcidice, Thrace and of many islands in the Aegean such as Lesbos, Chios and many more, as well as the Ionian cities of Lydia and Caria. He had been to the Hellespont. Few Spartiates had travelled so extensively. Two men even asked to talk to them about Socrates and Socrates's teaching.

Gylippus and Alcibiades also met, just the two of them, in Gylippus's house. They compared what they knew about warfare. Gylippus taught him briefly about the agoge and the Rhetra, the laws of Lycurgus. But he also talked to Alcibiades about the tactics of the Spartan phalanxes. Alcibiades taught Gylippus the movements of Athenian troops. They exchanged ideas about the war in Sicily, prepared plans and counter-plans according to how the Athenian armies might react to attacks and army manoeuvres. Alcibiades told Gylippus over and over again that no Corinthian, let alone Spartan fleet, manned as well with local as with mercenary rowers, would ever be a match for Athenian trierarchs. Gylippus said he understood, but sooner or later he would have to confront the Athenian fleet if he wanted ever to liberate Syracuse from the invasion, for as long as the Athenian fleet was intact and in Sicily, danger would loom. So they devised new tactics together.

Alcibiades came up first with the idea for re-fitting Syracusan ships so that they could better ram the Athenian galleys in the close harbour of Syracuse. Alcibiades proposed to use huge grappling hooks to immobilise the Athenian ships, and to man then anyhow the Syracusan boats with many javelin throwers and slingers. He proposed to use very many small vessels and swarm the Athenian ships with these. Gylippus thought about putting bronze shielding to the sides of the Syracusan ships to withstand ramming by enemy boats, and also to make the prows of the Syracusan prows so strong that they could ram the Athenian triremes head-on and smash through them without much manoeuvring, at which the Syracusan ships were not so well used. They also discussed the land blockade of Syracuse. The Athenians would build walls around Syracuse. Gylippus proposed to build a counter-wall that would be thrown perpendicularly to the Syracusan and Athenian walls. He thought this would cut the Athenian garrisons of the wall in two, so that he would be able to attack each part separately with his own entire forces. Alcibiades looked at the proposal and found it a good idea, though a costly and elaborate one. He had seen that actually applied already by an Athenian army, with success. He explained to Gylippus how such a wall could be built despite constant attacks from opponent troops.

Alcibiades did not mix merely with the commanders. He ran with the young men that still exercised in the agoge education system of Sparta. Although he was nearing forty, and he had had quite a lifestyle of debauchery in Athens before he met Harmonia again, he was still a fine runner. He liked to measure his speed with the young men.

The Spartans gave the name of Dromos to the place where the young men used to run. Alcibiades met the Elders of the Gerousia there.

The Elders were all over sixty years of age. During the winter, the men preferred to stay inside the building to look at the exercises, even though they were Spartiates. As the sun of spring warmed the air, they walked along the tracks. Alcibiades spoke to the men only when they addressed him first. Usually, a lengthy conversation ensued. The men liked to talk and to hear what Alcibiades had to say. They let him speak, but only seldom judged or commented. He saw, however, that many approved of what he said. The Elders were excessively curious, like Gylippus. They wanted to know everything about himself, about Athens and about Sicily, Chalcidice, the island and the cities. They had not travelled much themselves outside the Peloponnesos, Alcibiades could tell. He met men who had been Spartan ambassadors to Athens during Nicias's Peace, and men that had co-signed Nicias's Peace treaty.

The Gerontes came to know him, and soon they took his presence for granted. One talked to him about his father; another talked to him about getting grain in from the Hellespont, and Alcibiades told he could get the best grain to Gytheum from the lands beyond Byzantium. A few days later, helot stewards knocked at his door and a few moments later he was discussing very profitable trade between the Spartan Gerontes and Pulytion, as well as with Axiochus's trading houses in the Hellespont. He would be able to pay lavishly for his military mess after all.

From the Dromos, winding to the east, lay a path on the right that led to a small sanctuary of Athena Axiopoinos. Axiopoinos was an old name for vengeance, from the word poinoi. Heracles himself allegedly founded this sanctuary to commemorate his avenging on Hippocoön and his sons. Here, Alcibiades sacrificed on the altar and prayed for vengeance on his enemies in Athens. The men of the Gerousia understood, and approved.

Therapne

Sparta prided in many, many temples, and the Spartiates seemed to Alcibiades to be a very religious people. Eupheas told Alcibiades that Sparta's most famous temple precinct was situated however about twenty-five stades to the south-east. That was only a short walk from the city, mused Alcibiades. It was time for him to explore the country around Sparta! The temples were situated at the city's very ancient centre, called Therapne. Alcibiades had heard Eupheas talking in superlatives about the site, and he had seen its highest points very far in the distance, on the hills south-east of the town, but he had never visited it. One day, he decided to walk the distance. He knew the direction by now, and decided to walk without Eupheas.

Therapne lay on a hill of the mountain Parnon, above the eastern bank of the Eurotas River. The road turned and twisted and climbed constantly upwards. Alcibiades started rather late, so it was already past noon when he saw the first dark walls of the

precinct not so far off. He had had to climb almost constantly, and the road wended much around the hill, so he took more time than he had thought. It was warm and he transpired a lot. He had walked along the river awhile, and then passed straight up the hills towards the temples. A few people followed the same road, but not many, a group of women, too, walked behind him. He enjoyed the stroll upwards, and while he advanced he looked regularly back, for the view of the city that unfolded below him was marvellous. One had a very fine view of the plains of the Eurotas River from here and of Mount Taygetus in the distance. The mountains were still extensively covered with snow, but the snows would rapidly recede now that spring had arrived fully. Sparta lay sprawled around in the Eurotas Valley, partly hidden peacefully in the veil of a slight fog caused by the warmth of the early spring sun on the humidity that remained from the winter in the trees, fields, and that also ascended from the Eurotas River.

Alcibiades walked slowly upwards. He saw two women approaching from the other side, coming towards him. When he could see them more clearly, he noted that they were Spartiate women, well dressed in fine, long, white chitons with many folds. They wore himations on their arms and a few smaller vessels, probably of oil for libations. One of the women was rather small. She had a sharp face and thick, dark, brown hair that hung loose and heavy in curved locks on her shoulders. She had a lean body and she looked like a ball of nerves, for she spoke and gesticulated passionately to her companion and sometimes changed sides with her. The young woman was not veiled. She had a nice complexion and she reminded him a little of Harmonia and her boyish demeanour, although Harmonia radiated more femininity than this thin girl. She had a broad forehead, and intelligent and piercing, very dark eyes, with which she seemed to scrutinise Alcibiades while she neared, every once and a while. Her eyes darted to and fro, never stayed long at one place, she took in every detail of the landscape and of the people on the road, and showed only now and then that she was interested in the man who walked upwards to the temples.

The other woman was of another quality, entirely. She was tall, taller than Alcibiades. She walked elegantly with the proud, slow steps of a woman used to be admired. This woman let herself indeed be remarked, valued and then worshipped, and she walked accordingly. She was a strong woman, much woman. She had well-muscled but not thick, long arms, and fine but stout legs. Generous and well-filled curves softened the angular lines of her muscles. She had a small waist and broad hips, and Alcibiades suspected under her many-folded peplos the largest, luxurious breasts he had ever seen. A leather girdle accentuated the difference between her waist and her hips and chest. Alcibiades had known hetaerae in Athens who had almost looked like this woman, but none had induced in him the sensuality this woman displayed so openly, naturally and so easily. She was fully aware of the effect she had on men. Her chiton was very light and a slight wind blew from behind Alcibiades's back, from down the valley. The wind tucked at the woman's chiton, which descended until her ankles, but which also sculpted her body in white folds, as it pushed the cloth firmly against her limbs. At each step Alcibiades could not but admire the shape of her legs, calves, her strong thighs. He saw how flat her belly was although she was a heavy woman and a little overweight, he remarked the soft features of her face. With every step her breasts heaved up and down, and he distinguished clearly the firmness of each shape and the large, dark nipples that stood out from the white cloth. She was a woman of his age,

but her breasts were planted somewhat sideways. They hung not like an elder woman's, the nipples pointing upwards.

Alcibiades was aroused only from watching the woman approach. She was veiled, but he could see she had raven black hair. Her veil was almost transparent, merely a sign of convention. She opened her veil on the road so that her face was quite visible. Her hair was cropped short, so she was surely a married woman. Yet she made up her hair in a high knot at the back and the top of her head, so that she looked even taller.

Alcibiades looked with overt interest at her face. She had soft traits there, full chin and cheeks and very red, thick lips. She kept her mouth slightly opened and she said little to her companion, who apparently did all the talking. This woman was solemn and majestic in her attitude, fully aware of her appeal on men, and she smiled with an amused look at Alcibiades's surprise and insistent staring at her. He saw a twist at her lips and an eager look in her eyes, which held his for quite a while. He could see the colour of her eyes when she was close, and he remarked the irises were grey and green, but a lot darker and more passionate and dangerous than Harmonia's. The woman still did not avoid his looks then, and held his eyes until he abandoned from embarrassment, he, Alcibiades, and changed the directions of his eyes. The woman had actually impressed him and subdued him instantly, but Alcibiades also thought about the consequences of holding the eyes of such a woman. In Sparta, she must be married. She was past the marrying age, only slightly younger than he. Married women of Sparta cropped their hair short. Yes, she was certainly married. So she was a very dangerous temptation. He brought his hands to his back, slung his fingers together, and tried to think of the harbour of Piraeus, not to surrender completely to the sexual spell of this woman.

When Alcibiades passed the two women on the track, he greeted them. 'Good afternoon, ladies,' he said. Nothing more.

The two women answered simultaneously with one voice, 'good afternoon, Alcibiades.'

Alcibiades stopped abruptly, too astonished to continue. The women knew him. They knew his name! The tall one had answered with a deep, husky, warm voice. The younger one had spoken in a higher pitch, but still with a melodious tone and equal sympathy. Alcibiades stood and he watched the women walk by. He had to continue to look at them. He wondered who these women were. They giggled now, and laughed heartily, and whispered to each other. Then the younger one, the one with the heavy, luxurious locks of dark-brown hair, looked back.

As if she knew quite well in what state of astonishment they had left Alcibiades, she turned her body and called out to him, 'Cynisca!'

She laughed a hearty, warm laugh and while she looked at Alcibiades she walked backwards to remain close to the side of her companion. The tall woman then also turned her head. She saw how Alcibiades was still taking in every line of her. She continued to advance slowly on the road, and she shouted her name too, 'Timaea!' Then, the two walked on.

Alcibiades drew himself from his dream and shook his head. He watched the women's back figures for a long time, until they disappeared in a turn of the road. Then he stepped on to Therapne.

Timaea! A name so much like Timandra! Was the fate of the jealous gods once more playing with him? Harmonia and Theodote or no Harmonia and Theodote, when this Timaea would only wink once with a gesture of her hand, he knew he would have to

follow. She was a woman that could catch any man in her spell. He would have to find out who the women were.

In that troubled state of mind, Alcibiades arrived at the walls of the temple precinct of Therapne. Therapne was a hill site with temples built on terraces, very unlike Olympia, which was situated in a valley. At Therapne stood the tombs of King Menelaos and Queen Helena, the heroes from Homer's poem the Iliad. Sanctuaries were dedicated to Menelaos and Helen here. Helen was more than Menelaus's wife for Sparta. She was also the goddess of fertility and of vegetation, of trees and bushes. Her father was Tyndareus, but she was also the daughter of Leda, whom Zeus had visited in the form of a swan.

Therapne was a sanctuary not only of Helen and Menelaus, but also of Helen's brothers, the Dioscuri Castor and Polydeuces. The Dioscuri had their small temple and altars, here. A little further stood a Temple of Apollo, the Dorian god of the Spartans. But Therapne was foremost a site of pilgrimage to Helen's tomb, the mythical wife of Menelaos and the most beautiful woman on earth, abducted from Sparta by Paris of Troja and then brought back after the destruction of Troja and the massacre of its people by the army of the Hellenes. Menelaos was one of the first Kings of the site of Sparta, which was situated in those times closer to the hills of Therapne than to its current site of low in the valley of the Eurotas River.

Alcibiades walked among the temples and altars. He had to climb constantly. It was a site that lay isolated in nature, dominating the hill. The view of Sparta from so high was wide, imposing, daunting, and unique. Therapne was a very spiritual site, where one felt close to the clouds and to Apollo's chariot. The men here sacrificed to Menelaos and to Apollo, the women to Helen. The women came to pray for beauty of skin and body, the men for courage in war. The site was isolated, but not abandoned. It was well maintained and cleaned, and quite many people walked around. The altars were all being used for sacrifices, although it was already way in the afternoon. The sacrifices were non-bloody. The women offered perfumes and balms. Alcibiades walked around and watched the scenes.

Eupheas had told him that Therapne was called after Therapne, a daughter of Lelex and Penidia. Lelex was one of the original inhabitants of Laconia, which was then called Lelegia after the King. Therapne was thus a very ancient site, dating from before the time when the Dorians arrived in Sparta. Alcibiades saw ancient, massive ruins behind the hill-site of Therapne. These were the remains of the mansions of the first people that had lived in Laconia, long before the Spartans arrived.

'It makes sense,' Alcibiades surmised. 'These ancient tribes would have lived higher up to be able to defend their houses better, and this hill might have been their citadel. Maybe the temple precinct was built above the ancient acropolis.'

Alcibiades enjoyed once more the marvellous, majestic view on Mount Taygetus. White snow capped still much of the heights of the mountain and the peaks looked dangerously sharp against the blue sky. Winds blew snow from the angular skyline. It was an imposing, but wonderful view. Such majestic, grandiose views of mountains did not exist so close to Athens.

The shrines of Menelaos and Helen were built on a set of terraces on the hill. The sanctuary was led to by a monumental ramp, and surrounded by holy grounds, so that the view of the temples was magical, as also these monuments stood white against the

blue sky and the grey clouds. Cool winds blew here, and Alcibiades remained standing, confronting the winds, and praying to Menelaos to give him the strength to continue to live in the King's town of Sparta.

Then he left and returned to the town in the valley, to his house near the agora. He almost ran when he stepped down from the hill to the valley of the Eurotas River, back to Sparta, his head still filled with the images of Timaea and Cynisca.

Cynisca

In spring, Gylippus left for Sicily. He entered Alcibiades's house uninvited, clad in armour. He had come to say goodbye to Alcibiades.

'We may never see each other again, Alcibiades,' Gylippus said, 'but I wish you luck. I do not really know what that word means to you, though. There is a side of you that you do not show in Sparta, and probably also not in Athens. In all your blatancy, you are a very private person. What could luck mean to you? To stand before me with an Athenian phalanx, decided to defeat my own, my Spartiate phalanx? If that day comes, I will fight honourably against a friend. What a fight that would be!'

Alcibiades smiled. 'May such a day on which we would stand in front of each other with spear or sword in our hands never come, Gylippus! By the way, I am sure I will never stand before you with a spear or sword in my hand. I will never, never handle again a Spartiate phalanx that way! I do not yet really know how I should fight you, but not that way! You Spartiates are invincible as hoplites. I will have to fight you with other means to defeat you!'

Gylippus could also laugh with these words. 'All right, all right, Alcibiades. Fare you well!'

The men grabbed each other at the shoulders and hugged goodbye.

Alcibiades actually felt sad. He had liked Gylippus. Gylippus was an honest man, as far as he had been able to weigh him, an intelligent man, a good commander and he had been a fine friend.

'You are a great hoplite leader, Gylippus,' Alcibiades continued. 'You are a great general. You will beat Nicias and other generals of Athens in Sicily. I am sure of that. You have more wits and more knowledge. You are well prepared. Have faith in yourself! I forgot to tell you, but my two Athenian co-generals despised me so much that they never asked me questions about Sicily. You did. You have the intelligence to win. Good luck to you too! May the gods grant we see each other again.'

'May we see again,' Gylippus replied, and then he left.

Months passed and summer came to Sparta like a sudden birth, with heat and glaring fire of the sun. The air condensed incredibly warm, hot and humid in the town.

Alcibiades stayed much in his house.

One of those days he was lying on a couch in his aulé, reading papyrus scrolls, and books he had bought in the agora. It was still in the morning, but not early. Alcibiades stretched comfortably. He put down his papyrus one moment, and he wondered whether he would go out to exercise in the Dromos today. He had more or less decided to do that anyway despite the heat, to show the Spartiates that also a middle-

aged Athenian hoplite could stand a little of the sun, when he heard a voice calling his name. He looked up but the sun shone straight in his eyes, and he could not well distinguish who stood before him.

It was a female voice he heard saying, 'get up, you lazy Athenian! I need you. I have a sick horse. You know about horses. You might know a trick or two that might be new to us in Sparta. Get up and come with me!'

The word 'Athenian' was spat out like an insult and a curse. While she talked, she put her figure between Alcibiades and the sun and he was amazed to see Cynisca, the woman he had met on the road to Therapne, standing before him with her two fists stuck in her sides, her legs open to stand firmly in his aulé. Alcibiades was so astonished that he didn't know what to say or do.

Alcibiades had not seen any of the two women since he had encountered them on the road to Therapne. He had not sought them out, not asked where they lived or who they were, because he was certain that he would have the unquenchable urge to pursue more intimate relations with one of them. He had been rather happy not to meet them again.

He had said to himself, 'Alcibiades, with those two and at least with one of them, you are going to turn Sparta into a Hades for you. Leave them alone! They are married and frolicking with married women means danger. Messing up with those women will lead you to chaos and perdition. Stay away from them! Dissolve your earlier wishes to cuckold Spartiates.'

But if he had not gone to them, Cynisca had come to him. Cynisca waited impatiently before him, tapping one of her feet on the ground.

'Well, by all Athena's wisdom and lack thereof. Whatever!' Alcibiades whispered to himself. He was really far too bored with his life in Sparta to say no. He stood up.

'What did you say?' Cynisca asked suspiciously.

'Never mind,' Alcibiades retorted. 'Lead the way!'

Nothing could surprise him anymore in Sparta! A woman, maybe a married woman, had come into his courtyard uninvited and alone, not even accompanied by a slave. Such a thing would have been unheard of in Athens. The woman would have been compromised immediately for having been seen with a man in public. Adultery would have been assumed, and the man risked his life. His aulé door stood wide open, and people walked to and fro outside, in the street, spotting anything that happened in his space. None had reacted so far with curiosity or disapproval.

'Are you married?' he asked incredulously.

'Are you truly crazy, Athenian?' she replied, stopping in her pace and shouting the 'Athenian' again with the emphasis of a curse.

'Do I look like somebody who is married? Are you probing already to mess up with me? Well, forget about it right now! Just follow me and shut up!'

Alcibiades followed her in silence. The young woman led and he stepped after her. He followed in her steps. He never had the occasion to walk beside her, for there were many people coming from the other direction in the road, and she strode so rapidly that at times he had to run to catch up with her.

They passed the Eurotas Bridge and hurried along a road east of Sparta. Cynisca took suddenly a side road to the left, without warning, and without looking around. She disappeared behind a row of large, dark grey rocks. Alcibiades followed without protesting. They arrived at grassy fields protected by slopes of low hills. Cynisca

continued to march, never once turning around to check whether he followed, until Alcibiades discovered a series of wooden barracks, horse boxes, neatly arranged in a row directed with its hinged doors to the east. The boxes consisted merely of crude planks nailed together on poles, but Alcibiades saw that the roofs were sturdy and tight so that rain would not fall on the horses. On the side of the winds the planks were neatly placed one over the other, so that the wind and rain could also not chase through. Horses' heads emerged from the doors and several horses neighed happily when they saw Cynisca approaching. There was a nice stone house a little further, a country-house, maybe Cynisca's place. Alcibiades also saw vast running tracks for chariots and horses. Chariots were stowed in another barrack opposite the horse-boxes. There was much terrain here for the running tracks and for the house, and Alcibiades wondered who the owner was of all this. He saw no servants and slaves around.

Cynisca changed from her brusque, masculine gait to a slower walk. Alcibiades levelled up with her and he saw that also her face had softened when she approached the horses, caressed one or other at the nape of the neck or handed them a little fodder. When she did that to one horse, the other horses around that stable hit the wooden walls of the boxes with their hooves. They too wanted a sweet. The kicking was horses' music.

Cynisca went over to a box at the end, opened it and got an animal out. The horse followed her docilely. She secured the animal to a stone stele by a halter. It was a magnificent, tall, black animal. It held its head high. Its black manes streamed well-combed along its shoulders. It neighed, and it shook its manes impatiently. It had long, fine legs and small but strong hooves. Alcibiades also saw that it was a nice horse, an animal fit for endurance rides, not a jumping horse or a chariot race horse. The horse dragged a leg, it seemed to be lame. It also avoided standing on that front leg.

Alcibiades knelt, took the leg in his hands and the horse automatically, docilely, bent its leg gently for the man to probe. Alcibiades felt along the muscles. His hands slid along the leg from hooves to calves. The muscles were all fine and there were no broken bones. Some of the muscles were hard, though, and swollen. This horse had simply ridden too long. It had been forced too much. There was nothing here that could not be cured by a little rest and a bit of oiling and salving on the lower legs. Any horse rider and certainly any horse-breeder of Attica – and those were not among the best – would have told that to Cynisca. Surely there must be men in Sparta who could have told her what had happened to the horse. Cynisca must have known that, too. Why then had she made him come to this place? Not to cure this horse!

Alcibiades turned by instinct his head towards the road by which they had arrived, still kneeling beside the horse. He had once more the sun in his eyes, but he saw a figure entirely clad in a long, white tunic arrive, a tall figure with a high black dot way above the head.

Alcibiades stood up and he said, 'my greetings to you, gracious Timaea.'

Timaea took her time in the last short distance to join Alcibiades and Cynisca. Alcibiades devoured her body lines with his eyes before she stood beside to him. At first she didn't speak.

Then, she asked to Cynisca, 'how is Evening Wind?'

‘She is fine,’ Cynisca answered, throwing a furtive glance at Alcibiades. ‘She just needs a little rest and a bit of moisture around her legs for a while. Our horse expert here will propose that too, won’t you, Alcibiades?’

‘Of course,’ Alcibiades replied. ‘There are some herbs you might mix in the oil. But no doubt you know about these remedies too, don’t you?’

‘Well, maybe,’ Cynisca conceded. ‘I’d like to hear the recipe. But I had you come for something else, really,’ she continued.

‘Really?’ Alcibiades wondered, his eyes still on Timaea and caressing the horse’s manes.

‘Truly,’ Cynisca continued. ‘I want to win the Olympic Games, the Olympic chariot races. I want you to teach me how, Athenian!’

Alcibiades was utterly astonished. He was so amazed he took his eyes off Timaea and looked again at Cynisca. This young woman was crazy.

‘The Olympic chariot races? You want to win in the Olympic Games? Cynisca, no woman was ever allowed to compete in the Olympic Games!’

‘Well, that is about to change, Athenian. I am Cynisca and I am going to win the Olympic chariot races! I don’t have to drive a chariot to win. My male chariot drivers can do that for me. I have read the rules, as they are engraved on the stele at Olympia. I asked the judges. The Eleans scratched their heads, but they all agreed. Not one rule prohibits a woman chariot owner from entering seven chariots in the races, like a certain Athenian called Alcibiades and to win first, second and third places! I tell you I will be crowned like you were at Olympia! By the way, the next time, Athenian, put your olive wreaths at least at level on your head! I suppose it was your vanity that drew the wreaths to the wrong side. How damn proud and serious you were!’

‘I pass from amazement to amazement,’ Alcibiades thought.

He asked, ‘you were there?’

‘Of course,’ she answered. ‘I was too heavily veiled, much more than that Theodote of yours, to see all very clearly. But I was there. It was quite a race!’

Then she remained silent, for she had pronounced a name Timaea might not have appreciated, and Timaea advanced right close to Alcibiades.

Timaea had dressed up. Her peplos showed the finest, crisp folds. She wore no jewels and no make-up, but the brooches that closed her tunic at the shoulders were of gold. In fact, Alcibiades had seen no cosmetics on any woman in Sparta. Timaea had the same thick lips as Harmonia, only larger ones, and the same grey and green eyes but in Timaea’s eyes shone tiny, very light and brilliant green speckles, within a darker rim. Alcibiades felt inexorably drawn into those eyes. Drawn to and drowned into those eyes he was already, he feared.

Timaea took his arm and said, ‘let’s eat something. Cynisca, I am hungry. Do you invite us in your house and kitchen?’

‘Sure,’ was the answer. ‘You go ahead and start. I’ll be coming’.

Cynisca took the horse back into the box. She walked to another box and lingered there. She began to ease fodder into one box after the other.

Alcibiades looked at Timaea, who said, ‘Cynisca’s house is there. Come with me.’

Alcibiades followed. After a while he asked, ‘to whom do these stables belong?’

‘To Cynisca.’

‘To her husband or her father, to her brother?’

‘No,’ Timaea insisted, a little surprised.

‘Oh, I see,’ she continued. ‘In Athens women cannot inherit and they have no possessions. In Sparta they can. Cynisca inherited the horses, stables and this house from her father and, actually, even more from her mother. Her mother, Eupolia, came from a family that was famous in Sparta for breeding horses. Cynisca has her own patrimony. Her father gave her the horses of her mother’s stables. She has continued breeding horses ever since. She loves horses. She is not married; she is still a parthenos, a maiden, even though many of the Spartiates covet her.’

Timaea and Alcibiades entered the house of Cynisca. They entered the aulé and Alcibiades wanted to look for a servant. There was no one around. Before he could ask what to do next, Timaea took his arm again and she drew him around to face her. She held on to the arm firmly and stepped very close to him.

She said in a low, husky voice, ‘Alcibiades. You know what I want.’

She pressed even closer to him, so close that he could feel the tips of her breasts against his chest and he was enveloped in her heavy perfumes. He brought one arm around her waist and drew her firmly against his body. Then he placed his other hand in the nape of her neck, caressed her thick hair there and he kissed her.

Timaea kept the kiss. She remained cautious at first, but then she moved with every curve of her abdomen, legs, and breasts against Alcibiades and lay entirely in his arms. She too brought one hand behind his head and caressed there while she kissed. She moved with her body and pushed her underbelly against his private parts, feeling there with her thighs and between-thighs. Alcibiades was aroused immediately and when she felt his hardness she rolled her hips more passionately against him. Their mouths and heads also moved now, tongues played in their mouths and they were passionately caressing and exciting each other’s wants.

Footsteps sounded on the little stones in the aulé. The steps came from the entrance of the courtyard. Alcibiades and Timaea broke away. They reluctantly released one another, to stand at some distance, separate from each other, but still holding hands. Cynisca entered.

‘I heard you say you were hungry. You said so. I didn’t know what kind of hunger! You sure are that hungry!’

Cynisca advanced towards a door.

Then, she said, ‘there are no servants in the house. Olives and pieces of boiled meat are all that remains in the kitchen. I’ll fetch some.’

She disappeared through the door and Timaea followed her. He heard the women talk, but not in angry voices. Alcibiades sat down on a couch in the aulé. The women returned to him with low tables, two other couches, and later they brought platters with olives, pieces of meat and cakes. Cynisca also offered watered wine. Alcibiades ate olives.

He said, ‘Cynisca, you have fine horses. And fine stables, fine tracks. You have much terrain to train, and that conveniently close to Sparta. Your father must have been a loving and wealthy man to leave all this to you!’

‘Yes,’ Cynisca answered. ‘My father cared for me. He was a nice man with me. He knew I loved horses. We bred horses together, and only I was allowed to touch his animals. He left me all my mother’s horses and also this house, and the terrain. You have known him, Athenian.’

‘How is that?’ said Alcibiades astonished.

‘My father was King of Sparta. He chased you and your hoplites several times back behind your high walls. When my father was in Attica, there was not one Athenian left to stand to face him. My father’s name was Archidamus.’

Alcibiades had an olive at the opening of his mouth, but the olive stayed there. Cynisca was the daughter of King Archidamus, the invader of Attica? Then she was the sister of King Agis! What had he gotten himself in to? The olive disappeared in his mouth, but he choked on it. Cynisca and Timaea exchanged very amused and also so slightly embarrassed looks.

‘What is going on here?’ he thought. There was a silence.

Then Alcibiades asked the question that had to come sooner or later and that all three dreaded: ‘Timaea, who are you?’

She answered, and the words came out in a soft, husky but proud voice.

She spoke with her eyes locked straight into his. ‘Why, Alcibiades, I am Timaea, wife to Agis. I am Queen in Sparta.’

Alcibiades moved his head several times for incredulity. The silence lasted.

‘Oh no,’ he said to himself. ‘Oh no! I’ve done it again. Why does this have to happen to me? My fate was to be born Alcibiades from the Alcmaeonidae family. The curse on our family works still and it works also far from Athens. Why do I always have to move in the highest circles? Why do these people cling to me? Do I cling to them? No, I don’t. This was dark fate at work. Or the gods. The gods will not leave me alone. They must be laughing their heads off!’

They ate in silence, and the silence lasted for a long time. The spell of friendship, of relaxed lightness and even of sensuality between Alcibiades and the two women had receded. Alcibiades, Cynisca and Timaea ate and they did not exchange one word more.

It was Cynisca who broke the silence. ‘Well, we sure are in Laconia, aren’t we, Athenian? Laconia, the country where people talk with the fewest of words: none! And yet the silence says all. The names of Archidamus and Agis seem to freeze all Athenians to blocks of marble. Have you lost a piece of your body to the ground? You sure look as white as marble. Are you such a coward that you lost your tongue all of a sudden?’

Cynisca said that with a funny face and with her hands open at the height of her shoulders. Then, Alcibiades started to laugh. He laughed a little at first. He threw his head high and laughed hard and heartily. He laughed to tears. And then Cynisca laughed too, and Timaea joined in. They laughed hilariously. They laughed at fate, at the gods, at the countries of Athens and Sparta, at having each other.

‘If this is to be my fate, so ordained by the gods of Olympus, then so be it,’ Alcibiades decided. ‘I will cuckold Agis, because that is what his wife wants. I will not release this Timaea now, because we both want the same thing and she will not release me. So be it. Timaea, my love, how are we going to meet in Sparta and do what we have to do without being seen, because if we are seen I shall be executed, and maybe you too.’

Cynisca explained that her father had been Archidamus, the Agiad King of Sparta. She was only the half-sister of Agis. Archidamus had married first Lampito, daughter of Leotychidas. Their child had been Agis, the current King of Sparta, married to

Timaea. When Lampito died, Archidamus married Eupolia. The name meant ‘well-horsed’, in reference to the ownership of horses in her family. Eupolia had given birth to Agesilaus and to Cynisca. There was much love between Archidamus and Eupolia, and Archidamus also had loved Cynisca much, his only daughter. He had named her his ‘puppy’. Cynisca was half-sister to Agis and sister-in-law to Timaea.

They stayed thus, linked by absurd, cruel fate, in Cynisca’s house. They talked of little things of no consequence. They chatted about the Elders of Sparta, about the weather, and about the concerts of choruses. They continued to eat at their ease, until the platters were empty. Alcibiades and Cynisca emptied a bowl of only slightly watered wine. Alcibiades remarked once more that Sparta’s bowls were quite larger than Athenian bowls.

He asked, ‘why are these bowls so large in Sparta? You sure drink more wine than we.’

Timaea answered. ‘Our bowls, our kothons, are also the bowls that the Spartiates take with them in war. The kothons are black inside and they have this broad rim around them. They are black inside so that the Spartiates would not see the foul particles in the water when they are on expedition, and the rim keeps the dirty particles inside the bowl.’

Alcibiades drank.

Alcibiades had to leave before evening fell to go to the Spartiate mess, and also Timaea had to leave. They left together Cynisca’s house, but on different roads. Cynisca had disappeared a while ago.

Alcibiades and Timaea had stayed alone in the aulé, sitting and lying on a couch. Alcibiades had kept her in his arms and caressed her hair. They had talked little. They left the house now and went separately, by different roads.

Alcibiades asked, ‘shall we meet again? Where?’

‘Of course we should,’ Timaea answered with a smile. ‘Why do you think I asked Cynisca to bring you here?’ Are you sure you want to meet me?’

‘Sure,’ Alcibiades said. ‘How, where?’

‘You will teach Cynisca to train her chariots to win the Olympics. I think she is crazy, but that is how we can meet. We can meet here and she will lend us her house. There will be other people around, most of the time, but not all the time. And I know of a few forgotten places around here. We will be alone once in a while. Often!’

‘I believe Agis will leave this spring to invade Attica. We will be alone then. He may stay the entire year in Attica!’

‘No,’ she replied. ‘Agis will not leave. He wants no open war with Athens now.’

‘The Damos has decided to send Gylippus to Sicily and to fortify Decelea in Attica. Gylippus went. Agis must comply with the Damos and with the Gerousia’s commands!’

‘I tell you Agis will not leave! Matters are not that simple. The Gerousia is divided. Most of them are in favour of war with Athens now, but many aren’t. The men and Agis want to wait and see what happens in Sicily. If the war in Sicily lingers on without a clear winner or loser, no war will be made by Sparta on Athens. If Athens seems to be winning, Sparta may enter the war yet to keep the Athenians from conquering Sicily. But Agis will not move now. It is too soon. He will say the preparations started too late and that more preparations are necessary. The Gerousia will not press him. Maybe next year.’

Alcibiades left it at these words, for they had to separate. He returned to his house.

Cynisca came to fetch him two days later. She knocked on his door this time, and she stayed there until he came out. It was summer. Alcibiades only wore a chiton, no sword. They went in silence together, to her house outside Sparta. Timaea was not at the stables. Alcibiades saw the fields where the horses had been taken to graze and he approached a fence. Cynisca told him she had not put the horses in the stables. The fields had a part of grass shaded by a rocky hill. The horses could stay there, protected from the heat of the sun. Alcibiades put his arms on the wooden beams of the fence and he watched. The horses were tall, sturdy animals. They were healthy and had much force and energy in them. They had brilliantly shining, fine eyes and long manes. They were well fed, clean, and well taken care off. More than two thirds would be unsuitable as chariot horses however, and Cynisca would have to breed, sell and buy a lot more and better to build a stable of sufficient chariot-racing animals. She had work for years. Many horses here were too heavy to his taste. He said so to Cynisca.

Cynisca answered, 'You are the first to tell me that. Are you sure of what you told me now? These horses are fine racing horses. They can run fast for a long time and they have great force. We use these horses for all kinds of races. These animals, trained for a tethrippon, can push anything aside.'

'I am sure they could,' Alcibiades agreed. 'But you need a lot more than force. A chariot race is not won by power, though it helps in certain circumstances. Chariot races are won by dexterity, by the quality of rapid changes in speed and track. Two-thirds, if not more, of the chariots are destroyed in the race of Olympia. You need a mix of light, swift horses on some chariots and heavy horses, like these, on other chariots. A very swift chariot that can run very fast during the very first run can therefore turn first. It may then win because behind it, and beside it, there will be many crashes and accidents. Of course, a chariot that survives the first round, with powerful horses that can be whipped to speed afterwards may still win also. But the first chariots at the first turn have more chances to win. My horses at Olympia were the swiftest at the first run, not the most powerful. I say you could bet on both strategies, but I would propose swift, light horses mostly. How many chariots will you bring in the races?'

'I don't have as many horses as you did. I thought maybe five chariots.'

'You should bring then at least two or three more chariots to Elis. Eight chariots. That means about thirty horses. Will you bring them by boat or over land?'

'I thought by land.'

'Then you should move early, bring the horses a couple of months in advance to Olympia. That will add to your costs.'

He looked at Mount Taygetus. 'I suppose there are passes in those mountains that you could use. Or yes, you could go south and then follow the coast to Olympia. That is not a short travel for so many horses! You will need protection. Agis can provide you with Spartiate cavalry. How about charioteers?'

'What about charioteers?'

'You will need charioteers with experience of chariot races. Not just any charioteer you have here!'

'We have fine charioteers,' Cynisca protested. 'We have cavalry races and chariot races at some of our festivals here.'

‘You will need men with outstanding talents.’

‘Are you trying to dissuade me, Alcibiades? You will not succeed. I know of all that. I was at Olympia, remember, and saw how prepared you were and what an expedition it was to bring the horses from Attica. I am not going to participate next time but the Games after the next ones. I have time. There is much we have to talk about. By when could I be ready?’

‘Ready for the Olympic Games? From what I see from your horses here, among which very many will have to be sold, you will need at least five years. You will have to wait until you have exactly the right number of the finest horses for the Olympics. It will take you two, maybe three Games further before you will have a serious chance to win. That is a long commitment, Cynisca! Much can happen in the meantime. War may happen, and marriage and children and disasters.’

‘You had that patience,’ she retorted tartly. ‘And you are not exactly a patient man.’

‘In Attica I had a friend who had enough of war. He had horses ready for driving chariots. He had a woman and a peaceful life to breed the right kind of animals. We started early. I found the money and kept us going. You will be all alone. It is a formidable challenge you face!’

‘I know. But I am not alone. You are here and you’re the best. I thought I could be ready sooner, but I shall have to bring up the necessary patience. I tell you I will win one day at Olympia. In the meantime of course, I can run in contests here at Sparta and at other places in the Peloponnesos. I can get famous and train my horses and riders and ameliorate them for the greater aim. Horses will be presented to me that are better than these. I can breed my horses, too, and sell some of them to the Spartiates. They know I have a good way with horses and they appreciate my knowledge of breeding already. They acknowledge what I can do with horses. I can live. I have money. I can wait. You teach me everything you know. Will you?’

‘Yes. All right then. We start. But are you really sure you want me to help?’

‘Yes, I do. Besides, what would you do here anyway, Athenian? You look pretty bored to me. You do exercise a lot with the young men and talk with the Elders of the Gerousia, but you do not do much useful beyond that. Some intense horse-riding would do you good.’

‘Thank you, nurse,’ Alcibiades grinned. ‘I will come. Yes, I would like to feel a chariot under me again. And a horse. At speed. Will you allow me to ride?’

‘Sure,’ Cynisca said. ‘You can start right now. Timaea is waiting for it in the house.’ Alcibiades chose to ignore the tension of the ugly remark. Cynisca disapproved of him seeing Timaea. He would have to sort that out later. Now he longed too much for the woman with the raven-black short hair. He wanted to answer something soothing to Cynisca, but she stepped into the fields, towards the horses.

Alcibiades turned on his heels and went to the house.

Timaea

Timaea waited for him impatiently in the courtyard. She sat with her hands crossed in her nap, but the hands wrung constantly. She was nervous; he could tell. When he entered she did not see him at first, for she was watching the birds in the sky. When she sensed him she ran to him. They embraced. They could not wait. They ran for the bedroom.

Timaea drew him up the stairs, opened a door to a small but finely decorated bedroom. The room was lit by a window that showed the green fields, and far away, Cynisca working with the horses. Timaea drew a tapestry before the opening. She undressed and stood entirely naked before Alcibiades. Alcibiades gasped. Timaea had a perfect, filled, voluptuous body. She was the impersonification of everything that was femininity, of the ideal female. She was a goddess of bodily beauty and should be the object of any man's most sexual dreams. Alcibiades tore off his chiton and his other clothes, and he took Timaea immediately to the bed. She urged him on her and in her and very soon, too soon, they reached the explosion of their senses, which had been quenched for so very, very long in both of them.

Afterwards, Alcibiades was lying next to Timaea. She was on the bed, on the blankets, lying on her back. She was drenched in sweat, but she stayed there. It was hot and humid in the room. Her orgasm had pushed her bodily liquids out of every pore to the surface of her skin. Alcibiades slid with his hand over her body, her legs, her belly, and her breasts. His fingers felt the sweat and the oils of Timaea. His finger pressed and drew pictures of moisture over her belly.

Timaea kept her eyes closed, relishing in the past climax and the sensation now of his caresses, which she would have liked to continue and continue. She loved enjoying the sensuality of these caresses all through the night, purring like a satisfied lioness on the furs of Cynisca's largest bed.

After a while, Alcibiades turned Timaea over, so that she lay on her right side. He brought his body against her back. He caught her left, upper leg and drew it over his own left leg so that his member was between her thighs. He entered her again then and she opened to him, invited him in, and moved at the same rhythm as he. He entered deep and strongly in her and she curved her back to better envelop him. He clutched her, pressed her breasts and drew on the nipples until they both cried out at the last effort of the renewed orgasm. Alcibiades waited inside Timaea until his member retracted and until her fluids acidified so much that she hurt him. Then he drew out and lay on his back again. She also turned, to lie on her belly, satisfied and consumed. They lay in silence.

Timaea said, 'we have to go downstairs. Cynisca will be coming in. I can stay a while, but not long.'

'We will have to, indeed,' Alcibiades agreed reluctantly. He stood up, gave her a hand and whispered, 'let's dress and talk downstairs.'

They hurriedly washed in the bathroom downstairs, giggling and laughing while they sprinkled water from the basin on their bodies.

When Cynisca entered the aulé, Alcibiades and Timaea were sitting on a couch as if they had been sitting there since the beginning of time. Cynisca knew, of course.

Alcibiades was still more worried than his face would allow.

He addressed Cynisca first. 'Cynisca, how will the Spartiates react when they know I work with you on your horses and often come to your house?'

'You mean to ask how much we risk, Athenian? You and me, we don't risk anything! I can do what I want. I have told already to everybody who wanted to hear it that you, Alcibiades, were going to help me win the Olympic races. They were so astonished about the words Olympic Races that they didn't mind the word Alcibiades. The Spartiates know you will come here.'

'And they don't mind?'

‘What do I care whether they mind or not, Athenian. I am sure they do not approve much. But you are the only man in Sparta that has ever won the chariot races of Olympia. That is a reason they cannot overlook. They do not care with whom I sleep, except maybe the few men that coveted me and which I rejected. Those will be jealous and mad for being made a fool of by an Athenian. But they would have been made a fool of, anyway. I told some of the Elders quite some time ago, before you came to Sparta, that I did not want any of those men, because I considered them vile and unworthy of my father. Some of those guys are real nasty bastards. So you may be in some danger from them. Guard your back, Athenian! Nevertheless, I am sorry for your vanity, Athenian, but few Spartiates will truly think I am sleeping with you. It is hard for them to believe I might prefer an Athenian over a Spartiate! In short, you’re pretty safe with me.’

‘And I suppose you would be safe too?’

‘Very much so, yes,’ Cynisca said. ‘I am safe too. If ever I marry it will be with an elder man and then to somebody I respect. Such a man I haven’t encountered yet, and the Elders, as well as all the Spartiates, know that. They don’t try to get near to me anymore! Well, except one – and that one doesn’t count.’

Timaea intervened, laughing, ‘the last one who tried to come into her house she whipped out of her courtyard. You see, she still had her riding stick in her hands. Then she ran over him with her horse on the road back! You have a real privilege of being liked by Cynisca, Alcibiades.’

‘So true,’ Cynisca also laughed. ‘They don’t come back anymore. They leave me alone.’

‘Fine then,’ Alcibiades concluded.

Cynisca did not gleam as openly, sensually beautiful as Timaea, but she showed a fine figure and a striking, boyish face, which he liked because it reminded him of Harmonia. She had a confounding manner of speaking to him, crude, arrogant and defying, but he also appreciated the directness of her words, which made him oddly smile often and feel very intimate with her.

Servants returned to the house meanwhile, but these only saw the three of them laughing and talking in the courtyard. The servants prepared things to eat and they spend the rest of the time agreeably at Cynisca’s home.

Alcibiades came once in every while to Cynisca’s house. He sent her his servant Eupheas in advance to ask when he was welcome.

Eupheas would return with an answer like ‘Cynisca says that the Athenian is welcome today in the afternoon’, or ‘Cynisca asks Alcibiades to come two days after today in the morning’, or also ‘Cynisca proposes to meet with friends tomorrow at noon.’

With such last messages, Alcibiades learnt that Timaea would be at Cynisca’s house, for Cynisca had only one other friend. He met with Timaea often in the following months, but only every five days or less. He spent most of the time with Cynisca alone, and they became friends.

They chose the best horses for tethrippons and put those before chariots. At first they drove chariots with two horses only in the racing tracks of Cynisca. Alcibiades, however, pleaded that if Cynisca wanted to win with tethrippons, she would have to get used immediately to run with four horses side to side. So they abandoned the two-horse chariots and exclusively trained with four. They ran on the tracks and rehearsed techniques of turning sharply. They drove cautiously around poles at first, rehearsing at slow speeds. The horses had to get well used to the yokes and reins, to the feeling of reins coming from different directions. Alcibiades learned Cynisca to try out horses

in different positions in the tethrippon and then to combine the horses in their best running places. He knew these horses would never run at Olympia, but he taught Cynisca, not the horses.

Cynisca showed him a few drivers. Alcibiades looked at the men, but he showed his disinterest to her. He told Cynisca she did not need to show him men that would be far past the age of racing in five to ten years from now. He wanted to try and see young boys. He sought early talent in these boys, love for horses and passion for the tethrippon. Cynisca went searching for perioecic boys of less than fifteen years old and they started training the youngest with the most potential. Alcibiades also brought Eupheas once in a while. The boy protested, but Alcibiades put him on a horse. Then, he taught him to ride. Eupheas was too old already for future chariot-racing, but he was a natural horse rider. Alcibiades and Eupheas raced against each other on horses' backs. Cynisca joined them too. It was fun working with the boys. Laughter sounded high in Cynisca's fields.

All those months, Alcibiades revelled in Timaea. He still regarded her as a true goddess of love. She was the most perfectly built female. She was kind and understanding. No sexual prowess was beneath her. Yet, there was also a dark side to her, as there was a dark side to Cynisca and to himself. Timaea could be coarse and vulgar when she talked of her husband and of Spartiates. In all three, in Cynisca and Timaea, as well as in Alcibiades, illusions had been killed, and they had a realistic but also cynical view of the world of Hellas. Their opinions were wrought with sarcasm and bitterness. Timaea did not talk much. Cynisca was more open and always ready to flash a sharp answer. Timaea had a hard mind, sometimes a dirty mind, and always a mind of her own. She had had to survive in a tough town and save her own. Timaea was also kind. He had seen her recently in the agora. He had seen her stroll among the stalls, but he had avoided her in public. He had not come near her. He saw her defending a helot who was being beaten up by a Spartiate. The entire marketplace could hear her shouts of abuse at the Spartiate. The man, an ugly brute of a hoplite, had backed off, angry as a bitten dog. She was Queen of Sparta, and she showed it. The helot was on the ground. The man was old and he had been kicked severely. She helped the fallen helot to his feet. She put the man back on the road, publicly supporting him for a few steps until he could walk alone.

Timaea was a very sensual woman, but also very loving, tender and thoughtful in love. She did not just have sex. She yearned for tenderness and she gave tenderness gladly. She was so very much like him, he thought. He felt often very close to her, intimate in soul, in symbiosis with her, in feelings of true togetherness. If he would have met her in Athens, and without Harmonia existing, he would have asked her to marry him.

'Yes, Harmonia, where are you?' he asked himself. If Timaea was the image of love, what then was Harmonia? Sweet, tender, dear Harmonia. Harmonia was Aphrodite's child. Harmonia was of another class than Timaea, something entirely different. Harmonia was him. Harmonia had grown in him since his youth. Harmonia was not somebody else. Harmonia was Alcibiades. She was an inseparable part of him. There was more to Harmonia than love. Timaea was in the world. Harmonia was not in the world. She was inside him. Where was Harmonia now? Alcibiades did not know. He

received no letters telling where she was. He was sure she was safe, though. He had letters from Axiochus, but Axiochus also did not mention her, meaning she was safe, and Alcibiades did not want somebody in Athens or Sparta who might intercept his letters know where she was. The secret sign for 'all is well' stood drawn in a corner. When would he be able to leave Sparta?

Alcibiades and Timaea talked much between love-making. They talked easily to one another. Timaea was slow in replying to Alcibiades's questions. Yet, she clung to him in bed, caressed his body, slept with his member in her hand and could be as gentle, protective and motherly with him as Theodote. Still, she calculated her odds like a polemarch.

Alcibiades one day asked her, 'Timaea, what we do here is called adultery. Adultery is when a married wife sleeps with a man that is not her husband. In Athens, when adultery gets known and proven, the husband can go to court. In a trial, a very short trial, the woman can be repudiated and covered with shame and her lover can be killed unless he can buy off the plaintiff. I don't think I could buy off Agis. What are the risks in Sparta? We see each other in secret, but the secret will be out sooner or later. So, what happens then?'

When he asked that question, Timaea was lying naked on the bed on her belly, with her head on crossed arms looking at him. She had oiled her body after their love making with fresh oils and aromatic herbs. The room was scented with her perfumes. She loved to smell with fruity but heavy scents. She turned, lay on her back and put her hands first behind her back. She curved her body so that her breasts flattened, and her spine rounded. Then she stroked over the nipples so that they stood out even more and swelled to arouse him. She caressed between her opened legs, opened her lower lips with her long fingers and asked, 'is this worth it or not, Alcibiades?'

Alcibiades laughed hoarsely and replied, 'of course it is. I would not be here otherwise. But what of it?'

Timaea yawned. She said, 'to start with, Alcibiades, there is nothing like adultery in Sparta. There are no laws to punish adultery in Sparta!'

Alcibiades had heard something like that before, but if he had interrogated a Spartiate about these laws he would have created unnecessary suspicions. He was still surprised.

'There are not,' Timaea demurred. 'If you do not believe me, then ask Cynisca. Or ask Endius.'

She paused. 'So if I sleep with you, that is my affair only. Of course, we should not publicly offend the King, for that would be considered a crime. It is the habit in Sparta that when a Spartiate desires a married woman, and the woman shows that she would be willing to receive that man, that the lover approaches the husband and asks to share the woman for a time. Often, the husband agrees, for such a plea usually means that the marriage is not very happy. The husband may be better off with a house that is more at ease. If the husband feels for his wife, or is totally unfeeling about the whole matter, agreement is given readily and encounters discreetly arranged.

It happens that the husband is possessive and does not want to share the wife. The Elders do not like this too well. The wife is supposed to have certain rights too in Sparta, among which are fulfilment of natural desires and harmony of mind. So the wife decides whatever pleases her in this case too. She can refuse the lover, or sleep with him. That is entirely an internal domestic affair, not to be meddled with by other people, and the Elders tend not to interfere.

Now, let's take our case. Agis does not like me to mix with other men. He is possessive and jealous. He is vain. What Agis owns he does not want to share.' She pronounced the words distinctly and with bitterness. 'Only, Agis doesn't own me, whatever he thinks, and the Elders disapprove of his attitude. The ephors will oppose Agis if he publicly chastises me. One does not chastise a Queen; one respects her. I am a daughter of an ephor-that-has-been and the daughter of an elder of the Gerousia.'

Alcibiades was again surprised. He didn't know who Timaea's father had been. He made a note to ask her the name of her father.

Timaea continued. 'If Agis repudiates me, he will lose me, whereas he leers for me. And he will once more be publicly disgraced. He will therefore not repudiate me, and if he would anyhow, the ephors would talk him discreetly but decidedly out of it. He would change his mind conveniently. I shall therefore not be repudiated for sleeping with you. But we should make no public scandal. It is all right for us to meet here.' She drew her arms high above her and stretched like a cat, more like a lioness, thought Alcibiades now.

'Let me tell you a secret. The ephors know all about us. My father knows all about us and the complete gathered Gerousia knows about it.'

Alcibiades sat up in the bed. He was really alarmed.

Timaea looked at him amused. 'Oh, don't mind, Alcibiades. Would you really have thought that we could hide in Sparta?'

Alcibiades chuckled.

'All the servants in your house, Alcibiades, have been picked out very carefully by Endius. They report to Endius on every movement of you, on every moment of your time, on everything you do. Endius is a docile servant of the Gerousia men. Endius will be an ephor soon and later a Gerousia member. He will be one of the most distinguished members. He has to earn that! There are spies on you all the time. Oh, the Gerousia trusts you, all right. Really, they do! I heard them talk and they trust you. Better: they like you. You amuse them. You bring spice in their lives. They like your youth, your experience and intelligence. Yes, don't smile now! They like your looks, your body, your daring, your freedom of speech, your courage, your dash. You are a hoplite, a true one, one that fights. They know about your battles. They saw your scars. You know, few Spartiates have scars like that. Agis has none on his entire body.'

'Come to think of it,' Alcibiades remarked, 'that is true.'

In the gymnasium he had seen few men with long, nasty scars like his.

Timaea continued. 'But though the Elders trust you, they need to keep an eye on you anyway. So you are followed. You are not followed to here. They know what we do here, and once they had that certainty, there was no danger anymore for them and no additional information. The uncertainty dissolved. There was nothing exciting here for them. They like a good laugh too, especially if it is on Agis.'

'Then Agis knows too.'

'No, Agis doesn't know. Or he knows, but his vanity refuses to acknowledge it. I married what I thought was a fine, courteous, decent young Spartiate. I am going to tell you a secret. Agis is a coward. He is the biggest coward of Sparta. He is not a physical coward, for when an enemy stands before him he will not run away. Agis is an intellectual coward of the worst kind. He doubts and hesitates, seeks absolute certainty in everything. He will only act when all the omens give good signs and when

he is convinced he is doing the only thing there is to do. In war, he must not be convinced that he can win. He must be convinced that he shall win and that nothing else but a victory can happen.'

'He did attack at Mantinea'

'Yes, he did. First when he was sure he would win, and then he made the wrong decision, but at the first word of a mere hoplite, he backed off. The second time, at the real battle, all the ephors and polemarchs had to push him to it. He is a coward at war and, I tell, he is a coward with me. I detest cowards. He knows that too.'

'One day Agis will realise. He will know and acknowledge. It will dawn to him we are lovers. What then?'

'Then I hope I will find it out soon enough to warn you. I read him easily, you know! He despises you. The first time you spoke in the Damos he told me your words needed to be added to by troops and money. He said Sparta had the troops but not the money. He also said you brought neither, so you had no right to speak out in the Damos. He may want to kill you. He is not subtle enough to do it by politics, but he will have accomplices. There is always a polemarch, an ephor, members of his guard, people of the Gerousia who flock to him, and he can scheme with those. I will tell you when that happens, but it will not happen soon. If ever he should try to kill you, he will do it in a devious way and not by himself. He knows you can fight. He is not sure to win from you in face to face combat. He will send his commanders and troops to do it. He will not kill you in Sparta. I think it will never happen unless we are compromised so much in public that he cannot ignore it anymore, and has to admit publicly too that you slept with me in a dishonourable way.'

'What do you mean by dishonourable?'

'The way we do now. I told you. In an honourable way you should have asked his permission to take me to bed. Of course, that would have been refused. There is no Spartan, honourable way for us to be together. But as long as we remain hidden, though everybody knows, it will be tolerated. We do not need more. I said, admit publicly. Nothing is public about our relation. The Gerousia is not public.'

Alcibiades hesitated but he said it anyway, 'am I the only man, except Agis, that you slept with?'

She slapped him gently with her hand in the face at that question. 'My, my, would Alcibiades be jealous too? You are, my darling! I do not intend to have other lovers beyond the man I love. I fell in love with you instantly. You are just too charming. I yearned for you ever since we met on the road from Therapne.'

'How does Agis cope? Do you still sleep together?'

'You do ask the questions of a jealous lover! You ask questions you shouldn't ask. Agis comes to my bed very seldom, and at night only, so that I do not have to see him. I comply. It happens less and less.'

She stopped talking. Alcibiades turned to her and he saw she was biting her lips. She said, 'he has a helot woman, though, in our house. She complies, too. He takes her like an animal. If she would not accept him, he would have her killed. Moreover, you don't know Spartiates. Spartiates keep wives for children. For sex, they do not need women, really. They have enough of other Spartiates. Sex between men is standard here. You know that.'

'Yes,' thought Alcibiades. 'It is also standard in Athens, though less so. I sensed it was rampant here in Sparta. I saw it not just among the Elders of the Gerousia and the younger boys that run in the Dromos or exercise in the gymnasium. I felt it among the

young Spartiates and the mature commanders. Does Timaea detest so much of Sparta because of that?’

He had not finished with questions about Sparta and about Timaea.

‘Men must desire you, whether they sleep with men or not. Do they also desire Cynisca?’

‘Many men have leered at me. Some have shown openly they desired me. Endius has. If you hadn’t come, I might have yielded to Endius. He is one of the more decent men around in Sparta and just powerful enough to scare Agis off. But he is a schemer and a devious man too. I am Queen of Sparta. Few men dare to approach me.’

She paused. ‘Cynisca is another story. She is not married and past the marrying age, actually.’ Timaea laughed. ‘Some believe she does it with horses! Many men would like to have her as wife. She is rich and an Agiad King’s daughter. Not so bad men and some very bad men have desired her and wanted her. However, she does not want to have what happened to me. We are good friends and she knows what remains of my marriage. My marriage is Hades to me. She does not want the same fate. She will not marry.’

She looked straight in the eyes of Alcibiades. ‘Stay away from her! She is dangerous!’ Alcibiades was startled at the sudden violence that was in her eyes. He wondered who was more dangerous, Agis or Timaea.

He said, ‘I do not intend more with Cynisca than to be her friend.’

Timaea replied, ‘you misunderstood me. Not she herself is dangerous, but some men around her. Some of them are among the very worst of Sparta. If these remark you leering at Cynisca, they may kill you.’

Alcibiades continued, ‘I like horse-riding. Cynisca and I will breed horses and I will advise her. She wants to win the Olympic Games for chariot racing. Did you know she is very serious about that?’

‘Yes, I know that,’ Timaea replied. ‘She is crazy. But it occupies her and it fills her life. She loves it. It is her way to prove she is better than the Spartiates. I am sure she shall win, in the end. She told me she had now the most excellent teacher. This is her chance. She had to do everything by herself until now. Nobody would teach her.’ She slapped him again; harder this time. ‘You only teach her horses, you hear!’

Alcibiades laughed then, and he drew Timaea to him. ‘I heard. You fill my mind and senses enough. I don’t need somebody else.’

‘My, my,’ she said, teasing him. ‘You don’t need anybody else! How about Theodote and Timandra? Did you not need a helot slave from Melos in Athens, like Agis needs a helot woman here?’

Alcibiades sat rapidly up in the bed, utterly stunned. ‘How do you know about Theodote and Timandra?’

She laughed. ‘Don’t be so surprised, my love. Do you really think Sparta has no spies, no information? Sparta is a hoplites’ town, but it has a government and institutions of men like the Gerousia. These institutions are permanent. Sparta has spies, like Athens has. The information flows to the Gerousia, which is at the centre of all reports. Agis gets the reports too, and the letters, some also from the Gerousia of which he is a member, some of his own spies. Agis knows all about you. His letters are in his room. When I am bored, which happens often, in fact all the time before I met you, I read whatever I could lay my hands on. I read his reports. Yes, I can read! So I too know about you. I suppose you know that Theodote and Timandra are in Thrace, brought

there by your uncle Axiochus. We know as much too, though we don't know exactly where in Thrace he has taken them. My consolation is that they will wait for you for a long time. I rather find it strange to know you meddled with a Melian slave. Such bad taste you have!

Alcibiades felt her teasing and probing with these words, but he did not react immediately. Timaea kept silence and waited. She looked at him sideways, waiting for a reaction. He could see from a corner of his eyes that she was irritated. He didn't want that.

Then she said sharply, 'and there was Harmonia. Who was that Harmonia anyway?' Alcibiades looked at her, angry now, but Timaea did not know who Harmonia was – she could not possibly know. Only three people on earth knew who Harmonia was: Socrates, Theodote and Hipparchos. Not even Axiochus knew who she was.

He said, 'what do you know about Harmonia?'

'Nobody seems to know anything about Harmonia,' Timaea replied. 'I only saw her name mentioned once in a report. There must really have been a Harmonia however, seeing how angry you look now! She must have been quite something for you to have called your ship by that name. Alcibiades, please! I love you. I will not hurt you, even when you will have enough of me and repudiate me. I will not hurt you now or ever, even not in my wildest anger. I have received too much happiness from you. I will not hurt you. But I would like to know about Theodote, Harmonia and Timandra.'

Alcibiades believed her and she was too dear to him and too sincere. He could not withhold the truth from her.

He explained, 'Theodote is like a mother to me. I met her in Italy when I fought with Laches in a campaign in Sicily, though she is a born Athenian. She became my mistress there. She is sweet, stands at my side and she supported me in difficult times with love and care. We had fun and we like each other. Harmonia is the love of my youth. My very first love. We first met in Cyprus, a long time ago, when we were both very young. We got separated. I looked for her, sent out ships all through the Sea to find her. I couldn't locate her for many, many years. Her family hid her on Melos under another name, the name of Timandra. I could not find her. The family had received an order to hide her from me, because the order was from Pericles, my warden. Her family told she originated from the island of Samos, so also the link with Cyprus was erased. I only saw her back recently, when she arrived in the harbour of Athens as a Melian slave. I took her into my house, and later sent her to the country. I asked friends to save her in the event that I would be condemned in Athens while I was fighting in the new expedition to Sicily. So you see: I needed no Melian slave woman to sleep with. Timandra is Harmonia, and I knew her from before. I told this to nobody. I want to protect her. I am not as heartless as the people induced, saying that I agreed with the killing of the Melians and then slept with their women.'

Timaea was all softened up when he stopped talking. She came very close to him, hugged him, cuddled him, enveloped his body in arms and legs, soothed his tense muscles with her hands and breasts and promised, 'I will never hurt Theodote and Timandra. I will not ever tell these secrets of yours to somebody else. I love you and I respect you. We shall be separated, sooner or later. Separation is inevitable for us; it is our destiny. I hope it will be in a far future only that we will separate. When that happens, go back to Timandra, the love of your youth, and go back to your mother

Theodote. Tell them who I was. Tell them not to be jealous of a miserable woman in Sparta.'

She cried and sobbed. Alcibiades had never seen Timaea even close to crying. He thought she was incapable of cries. It was his turn to hug her.

Alcibiades was also glad for the news he had heard. He did not avow to Timaea that he had had no letters from Theodote and Timandra. He had sent letters to Axiochus. Axiochus returned the letters of trade. Contacts with Axiochus and Pulytion were ongoing and frequent. The Elders he worked with saw to it that he could send letters and receive them. He knew they opened the letters, and Axiochus knew that too. Axiochus had not written one word about Theodote and Timandra. No Spartan spy would read where they were. But it was hard to have no news. Timaea had just confirmed that they were indeed in Thrace and safe. He felt a lot better.

Timaea's cries turned into a miserable sobbing. Her body and face still shook. She hid her face in the blankets of the bed. Finally, she emerged from the covers and her cries became embarrassed laughs.

She said, 'I have not cried since I was a girl. I thought I could not cry anymore. I thought I, Timaea, had no heart anymore. I suppose I should thank you for leading me into emotions. I really thought I had no emotions anymore.'

They hugged and their hugs ended in them making love once more. They were close in souls again.

Eupheas

Alcibiades went more often to Cynisca's house. They started patiently to change the kind of horses Cynisca had. They sold and bought horses, and the Spartiates wondered what was going on at Cynisca's stables.

Alcibiades never missed going to his mess in the evening. Sometimes he also went after his evening dinner to Cynisca's house. Timaea was at Cynisca's sometimes in the evening and she would then stay over for the night at Cynisca's house. Alcibiades made sure always to go home before the night really fell, however.

On one of such days at the end of summer, Alcibiades had once more walked to Cynisca's house after his evening mess dinner. Timaea was not present, but his slave, Eupheas, had stayed the whole day at Cynisca's, exercising with her and riding horses. Night fell, and Alcibiades wanted to talk alone to Cynisca. He sent Eupheas home. Cynisca was nervous that evening but she did not want to tell Alcibiades why. She said she was not nervous, everything was all right. Alcibiades did not insist. They talked and arranged how to proceed with the horses and with the chariot riders. It became late. Alcibiades said he was going home.

'Wait,' Cynisca protested, 'I am going with you. I'm going to sleep at Timaea's house. But I'm going on horseback. Agis's steward bought one of my horses. I can as well take the horse with me.'

Alcibiades waited until Cynisca fetched a himation. He asked for a sword.

'What do you need a sword for?' asked Cynisca.

'I don't know,' Alcibiades replied. 'I'm going out in the middle of the night with a woman. You are nervous about something. I feel better with a sword. I'll accompany you to Timaea's house.'

Cynisca gave him a short, Spartan sword, which he swung on his back.

'That was one of the swords of my father,' Cynisca remarked.

Alcibiades did not answer. He followed Cynisca while she went to the stables and brought out a fine, tall black horse. She jumped on its back and Alcibiades started to walk beside her. Cynisca told him to come on the horse too, but he refused and walked. It was a clear night. The moon was full and the road was quite visible. They had advanced a good part of the road and saw the outskirts of Sparta, when Cynisca's horse refused to go on. The horse neighed and neighed and stamped its hooves. Cynisca saw something lying in the bushes beside the road. She called out to Alcibiades.

Alcibiades drew his sword and went into the green growth. The body of a man was lying on the ground in the grass, a short distance from the stones. Cynisca slid down from the horse and followed Alcibiades. She held his arm as if she wanted to retain him from going on, but Alcibiades looked at the body and turned it over. The corpse was completely naked. The man had been stabbed several times with swords or daggers, and he had been severely beaten before or after being stabbed. The face was horribly disfigured, all swollen up, almost unrecognisable and bruised everywhere from kicks of fists and feet. The skull was cracked, for the man had also been beaten with clubs. His chest was bruised around the stabs. Blood had poured all over his body.

He was quite dead. The corpse had been thrown along the road and left there to rot and be eaten by animals. Alcibiades placed the face in a ray of moonlight, and he recognised his young servant, Eupheas.

Cynisca had come near and she also now recognised the youth. She hid her face in her hands, but kept silence. Alcibiades was horrified. He stayed without moving for a long time with the boy's bloodied head in his arms.

Then, he cried out loud in the night.

'Agis! This is Agis's work. He doesn't dare to touch me, so he killed my boy. He threw him on the side of the road like an animal. I'm going to kill Agis.'

He turned, and went to the horse.

Cynisca ran after him, however, and kept her arms around him.

She cried, trying with all her might to stop Alcibiades, 'no, this wasn't Agis! Agis would not kill like this. Agis does not take revenge like this. He is a King! This was the Krypteia! The boy was killed by daggers, not swords. I tell you it was the Krypteia!'

Alcibiades still advanced, dragging her along, but she wouldn't let him and as she fell to the ground, she clung to his knees and legs. 'I tell you this was the Krypteia. In this time of the season they raid once every while!'

Alcibiades was beyond reason. He was filled with hatred for the murder and the beatings the boy had received. But he finally looked at Cynisca and stopped. He listened now to her.

'This is the work of a Krypteia gang,' Cynisca cried. 'Please, please believe me. Agis has nothing to do with this. I have been feeling nervous this day. I knew something was going to happen, but I didn't know exactly what. I have such sensation of the

future sometimes. It happens to me. Timaea does not wait for me. I had to come with you. I thought you were in danger. I hadn't thought about the Krypteia!' Alcibiades asked, 'what are you talking about?'

Cynisca explained. 'At eighteen, Spartan boys are ready to be hoplites in the army of the Kings. They are called eiren then, what you would call ephebes in Athens. Some of them, specially chosen, form a secret organisation called the Krypteia. The Krypteia are gangs of the most brutal and unscrupulous Spartiate young warriors. They believe it is an honour to belong to the gangs. They sweep through the country at night to kill with knives the helots that have dared to speak out against the Spartiates. And if there are not really helots that have spoken out, the Krypteia just seeks out the most intelligent helots and kill them. In the secret raids, any helot that has shown some critic, resistance, or who simply looks intelligent enough to become a possible contender of the laws of Sparta, will be murdered. The young Spartiates are chosen for these operations by especially appointed commanders, called the paidonomoi, men appointed by the ephors. The Krypteia are killer gangs, and they wander in this time of the season. They must have either known of Eupheas or simply have encountered him on the road and killed him. I was stupid. I should have told you and sent Eupheas back on his way long before dark.'

Alcibiades sat down. 'What are these Spartiates,' he cried with his head in his hands. 'They kill and murder innocent people just for fun, then. Will nobody judge them?' 'No,' Cynisca said. 'Nobody will judge them, for they are doing Sparta's job. They keep the helots obedient and fearing. No helot will dare to speak of revolt, because the Krypteia shall kill him. They may have heard the boy was intelligent, that he learned from you, and rode horses. So they killed him. They must have thought he could be dangerous one day.'

'They are cowards, who kill in the night!' Alcibiades shouted. 'Where is the Spartiates' honour? Can't they kill in daylight? If this was just and honourable, they should dare to kill in clear light!'

Cynisca was embarrassed. 'This is our city, our law, our ways, Alcibiades. This is our way of surviving. Not everybody likes the Krypteia, but most of the magistrates of Sparta have been members of the gangs when they were young. It teaches the young hoplites to draw blood, to war and kill in the dark.'

They stayed sitting near the road. Alcibiades didn't move.

'Let's take the boy and put the body on the horse,' Cynisca proposed. 'We'll take the body to my house and bury it there.'

'Let's take it to the cemetery of Sparta and bury him there.'

'No,' Cynisca demurred rapidly. 'A helot cannot be buried there. We'll bury him on my estate. Help me, please.'

She stood up and went on the road to draw the horse nearer to the body. Alcibiades moved and took the lifeless body in his arms. He put the boy on the horse. He did not look anymore at the signs of torture. Cynisca turned the horse and she stepped back the way they had come. Alcibiades followed her.

When they arrived at Cynisca's stables, she stopped the horse and said, 'I'll take a shovel. We are going to bury him.'

'Now?' Alcibiades asked, surprised. 'We can envelop him in linen and bury him tomorrow.'

'No,' Cynisca refused. 'Not in this heat. Wait, I'll come back'.

Cynisca disappeared but came back a few moments later with two shovels. She took the horse at the reins once more and led the animal into the dark. She went across her fields to the woods, entered between the trees and stopped only quite far. There was a fine clearing in the woods.

She said, 'I know this place well. It is one of my favourite spots in the woods and it belongs to me. We will bury him here and I will order a stele to be put above his tomb. Would you like that?'

Alcibiades said yes. They took the body off the horse and they dug a grave. It would not be profound, but enough to roll the body in. Cynisca told him to continue. She said she would go back to the house and get white linen. She did not sit on the horse, because the animal was covered with blood. She drew it with her. Alcibiades stayed alone with the boy who had been his friend and who was dead, probably because of him and of their conversations about Athens and Sparta. He sank to his knees and stayed that way in the night. Would death, torture and misery happen to all the people he touched?

Cynisca soon returned. They put the boy in the white linen, and then they rolled the body in the earth, covering the linen. Cynisca and Alcibiades shovelled sand and rocks over the body.

When it was all over, Cynisca took Alcibiades by the hand and said, 'I would like you to stay with me tonight. I don't like to be alone, knowing that Krypteia gangs are around here. Will you stay with me?'

Alcibiades was still too shocked to resist. He answered automatically, 'yes, of course.' Cynisca took him to her house and led him into the bedroom he shared with Timaea. Cynisca went to another room at the end of the balustrade above the courtyard. Cynisca brought oil lamps to Alcibiades's room, and she lit one when she stepped out. Alcibiades wanted to fall on the bed, but he realised he was covered with Eupheas's blood. He drew off his clothes, went to a basin that stood always on a low table and washed off the blood on his hands. Then he lay down.

That night the Spartiates and the Athenians alike came for Alcibiades. He ran on the road, the road from Sparta to Cynisca's house. The Spartiates hurled javelins at him, but he ducked. He drew his sword and killed a Spartiate. He recognised Athenian democrats, now in full hoplite armour, who pursued him. He fended them off with his sword, and five Athenians were around him, against which he fought. He stabbed and brandished his sword around his head. His sword entered flesh and it was all bloodied. He kicked with his feet and the men hesitated to attack; but more hoplites arrived and they renewed the assault. Spears were thrust forward to him and entered his flesh. Then he saw archers arrive, and arrows flew to him and entered his breast. Red blood sprouted from his wounds into his eyes. He cried out in pain.

Cynisca stood beside him in the room, cuddling him and holding his head in her hands.

'Alcibiades dear, dear Alcibiades! It is just a nightmare. Nothing but a nightmare! It is nothing, my darling.'

Alcibiades realised suddenly where he was and what had happened. He stayed a while in Cynisca's arms.

Then he said, 'I know, Cynisca, I know. I'm sorry. Yes, I had a nightmare. I'm fine now.'

She kept her arms around him.

‘No,’ she said, ‘no, you’re not fine. You have still blood all about you and you’re all humid, drenched in sweat. You have a fever. Wait, I’ll wash you a little.’

She lit more oil lamps, which threw eerie waves of dim light on the walls. She went out and came back instantly with more water. She had a piece of white cloth and washed him. He felt very feverish. When she was finished, she told him so. She asked him to calm down. But he would not let her go and drew her to him.

At first, Cynisca resisted feebly, then she tore off most of her chiton with one hand and bared her breasts. He caressed her there and felt the nipples grow. He abandoned her hand, and she took off the chiton entirely, then with a cry she curved her body around his. They first touched and felt each other’s body, sensed the delight of flesh on flesh. Then, Alcibiades brought her under him and as she opened her legs he entered her very gently. She withdrew a little from him in the beginning but then took his member in eagerly. They moved together at a gentle rhythm, then they moved harder and harder, Cynisca trusted her loins onto his member so that he came deep, deep, until he wanted to pierce her body. Cynisca caressed him all the time, but at the end dug her nails in his back until she cried out in the sweet pain of love and giving. Alcibiades stayed in her a long time, before he rolled aside. All his hate and fear was spent in Cynisca. He kept his right hand on her breasts, kept her so, and did not want her to leave. In this way they slept through the night. Cynisca did not leave the room.

In the morning, Cynisca stood up from the bed. Alcibiades did not leave her with his eyes. His fever had passed during the night. He understood what had happened and how shocked he had been.

He had lived in tension ever since he had come to Sparta. All the stress had found its culmination in this night, in the killing of his young friend. He understood the murder now, and while sleeping next to Cynisca, the tensions had receded. He revelled in Cynisca’s young, lean body. She had thin breasts, but her body also showed nice, alluring curves. She was a beautiful woman too, though so different from Timaea. Alcibiades realised Timaea would know what had happened. She would know from the spies that he had spent the night at Cynisca’s, and of course, she would know just by seeing them look at her with guilty eyes. He was not good at deceiving women. He sighed, but he clung to Cynisca and continued to caress her all over her body. Cynisca yielded, but after a while she said, ‘I have to go. We have to talk. Come downstairs.’

Somewhat later, Cynisca and Alcibiades sat eating in the inner courtyard. They had washed again, taken a bath and put on new clothes. Cynisca had given him a chiton and himation. He did not know where she had these from, but he was grateful. He would have to burn his clothes of yesterday, for they were stained with Eupheas’ blood. They ate breakfast in silence. Cynisca talked.

‘Timaea will know what happened this night. So I will have to explain it to her. No, don’t hush me now. You will continue to love Timaea. This night belonged to us, but you have to stay with Timaea. You are my friend, but we don’t love each other. You love Timaea. I have to tell you, I loved Timaea too. Yes, Timaea was my lover. I am not a woman for men. I will never marry. I will not sleep with men. Men are too hard for me. I only like the soft bodies of women. Oh, don’t look at me like that! I had a few men before. I hated it when they took me. Still, I loved this night. You were so sweet. I did not hate what we did this night. But I still prefer to sleep with women. It was good, however, that you came, for Timaea and I were too close. Timaea is a

woman for men. What she did with me was not good. We took sex only. It was fun and I was fulfilled, but Timaea needed something else. I showed you to her and I felt she was in love with you, soon. That is good. She is a nice woman. Oh, you may not always perceive her as being nice. She had a tough life. So have I. But she is worth loving, and it must be a man to love her. So love her and be my friend.'

Alcibiades remained silent for a long time. He ate the bread cakes and drunk of the water. He continued to think. He felt Cynisca's eyes on him.

Finally he said, 'yes, Cynisca, that is what we'll do. We have to explain to Timaea what happened and yes, it would be better if you do that.'

He laughed, 'I am sometimes a complete idiot at these things'.

He paused, and then continued. 'I once loved men. It was at the beginning of my youth. I did not know women then. I understand how you feel. I respect you. I love you. I love you in another way than I love Timaea. But I love you and I thank you for this night. I will not forget this night. Thank you for your tenderness. I will not always be around, but I would like to stand at your side with a sword in my hand and defend you. That will not always be possible, but that is how I shall feel about you. We will be friends, but we will not touch anymore.'

Cynisca was crying now, but she said only, 'yes, thank you.'

Then she disappeared in the kitchen.

Alcibiades stayed in the courtyard, sitting on the couch. He sat and thought. How wonderful life was. Life was filled with surprises, with marvellous surprises, sad ones, terrible ones and nice ones. Harmonia, Theodote, Timaea and Cynisca were all the good things that had come to him. Except for Socrates, who had given him so many fine thoughts too, all the good things that had happened to him, practically all the best friends he had, had been women. Oh, he thought, he had male friends too, Hipparchos, young Pericles, Axiochus and Euryptolemus and Laches had all been friends, as well as the hoplites that had so many times stood by him in battles. They were all fine companions. Eupheas had been a friend. Friends were killed and friends would die one day. Life was short. His destiny was to live among the men and women who wielded power in Hellas. He attracted such men and women and always, always arrived in their midst. Look at what had happened here in Sparta. Wherever he went, he thought, he would end up in centres of power. And in the centres of power there were intrigues, whirlwinds of change and death.

Alcibiades watched Cynisca coming back into the courtyard. He stood up and closed his eyes. He let the morning wind envelop him. He held his arms up, open wide, at the height of his breast and he snapped his fingers. Then he put one foot before the other, slowly and in full conscience of every length he moved. He curved his toes. He put down the foot behind him. He brought up his other foot. He set the foot down again. He moved his arms and turned. He pushed his right foot over the ground, and then drew the other close. Alcibiades's eyes were closed, but Alcibiades danced. He saw before his closed eyes, with the eyes of his mind, the dance of the Athenian hoplites at Potidaea, and he moved with the same slow rhythm and passes. He made passes in the sand with his feet, turned his feet sideways, and stooped through his knees, then up again. Once in a while he opened his eyes to see where he was, but he continued to dance.

He heard a flute. Cynisca had hurried into the house and she had brought a single flute. She stood next to him and moved behind him, then turned in front of him. She

sat down on her knees before him and let him dance. Alcibiades danced. He danced to life itself, to its sadness and its happy moments. Alcibiades danced more rapidly and Cynisca accelerated the rhythm, enthralled by Alcibiades's movements of legs, body and arms. He held his head backwards, in his neck entirely, and he whirled now around Cynisca.

The flute stopped brusquely, and a voice was heard, saying, 'good morning. Is this the time of the Dionysian Festival?'

Alcibiades opened his eyes and he stared at the man that had entered the courtyard. It was an extraordinary man, a Spartiate. He was very tall and wiry. He was thin, but he had very strong, sinewy muscles on his legs and arms. He wore only a chiton, but a small shield and a sword were slung on his back, a short Spartiate sword. A long dagger hung on a leather belt. He had another, larger belt over his chest. On this belt hung the man's sword, on his back. Alcibiades had never seen such long hands as this man had. The Spartiate had a hooky face, sharp at every feature and dark brown eyes glittered deep in their sockets. The man was shaven clean and everything about him was cleanliness. His white chiton was spotless, and so were his leather boots. He had very long, black hair. He looked in everything the predator to Alcibiades, a very dangerous man. Alcibiades had never seen him before. The man stepped forward with arrogance and self-assurance. He drew away his mocking eyes from Alcibiades and looked coldly at Cynisca.

He said, 'so, Cynisca, good morning to you. I hope you are enjoying yourself. I was in the neighbourhood this morning. I decided to drop by.'

'What do you want, Lysander?' she asked.

The man looked back to Alcibiades, who was very much aware that he had no sword in his hands. This man was dangerous, he thought, though he did not know why. He had seen Cynisca's eyes draw together and heard her crisp, unfriendly words.

The man continued defiantly, 'yes, Alcibiades, my name is Lysander son of Aristoclitus. I am a Spartiate. In fact I came by to apologise. Your harmony was disturbed. I am also one of the paidonomoi and my group of young men has been on a helot hunt last evening and night. They told me they encountered your slave, Alcibiades, not so far from here. The man was arrogant, which is not allowed for a slave. So my young men killed him. That was a good thing, for helots are dangerous when they believe they can resist us. But my men did not know it was your slave. They should not have killed him without your consent, but as I said, they did not know whose slave the man was, and he defied my men. I apologise for them, and I will ask of course Endius whether he wants the helot replaced by another one.'

'Lysander,' Cynisca cried, 'get out of my house! Now!'

Lysander looked with disdain at Cynisca, then at Alcibiades, implying involvement between them.

He said, 'yes, of course, Cynisca. I will leave. You haven't changed. You are always as beautiful as ever. Still, a good morning to you. Nice to have met you personally, Alcibiades. Goodbye. We shall meet again!'

Lysander turned around and left the house, stepping slowly through the gate with long strides.

When Lysander was out of the house and well on the road, Alcibiades asked, 'who was that?'

'That was Lysander,' Cynisca told.

She was still trembling, but she had kept the flute in her hands, though she crisped it as if she wanted to break it.

‘Lysander,’ she continued, ‘wants me as his wife. Not because he loves me but because I am a King’s daughter. Being married to me might augment to his status. He tried to force me once. He almost raped me had not Timaea intervened. Yet, he likes boys. He is the lover of Agesilaus, the half-brother of Agis. He hopes that Agesilaus will be the next King and if that happens, Lysander will hold Agesilaus under his influence so that the real King of Sparta will be Lysander. Agis has no children with Timaea. Lysander is the cruellest man of Sparta. He has no scruples whatever, and he builds intrigue after intrigue around Agis, Agesilaus and the ephors. He has no regards for justice, except when justice is to his advantage. He seeks honour only when it suits him. He is a fearless fighter. He killed young men in the palaestra at wrestling, and he whipped others to death at the Temple of Artemis Orthia. He is ruthless, dirty, nasty, disgusting, deceitful, licentious, and utterly unscrupulous in his ambitions, and I would rather marry a poisonous snake than Lysander. Spartiate my ass! He is a mothax. His father gave birth to Lysander by a helot woman. Maybe that is exactly why he kills any helot he can put his hands on. He hates helots. Yet, his family was of a fine name. He is of the stock of the Heracleidae, but of the very poorest Heracleidae. He is dangerous. He knew we were here. He knew we passed the night together. I would not be surprised he knew we buried Eupheas in the woods. He controls his Krypteia gang not just against the helots. He did not come here to apologise. He came here to show me he knew what was happening, and to intimidate us. He killed Eupheas on purpose. He lied all the way. I hate him!’

She still shook. Alcibiades went to her and took her in his arms, kissed her. She whispered then, though cuddling him now also in her arms, ‘you should not touch me any more like this. Remember what we agreed. Your love is Timaea. Timaea needs you. Lysander is but one of the Spartiates among which she has to live. I can cope; she has it hard to survive.’

Alcibiades released her.

‘Yes,’ he agreed. ‘I have to go. Please talk to Timaea and explain. She needs to hear it first from you; then I will also talk to her. I do love her. Very much so. Nevertheless, if we are to be friends, I will show you tenderness too, whenever I want. Tell that to Timaea too!’

Then he laughed, ‘thank you, dear flute girl, for the music and the dance. And for the entertainment during the night!’

‘Oh, get away with you,’ Cynisca laughed, but with embarrassed smiles. ‘This is not a whore house where you can come and fuck everybody at your whim for a smile and a kiss. Go home, Athenian, before I change my mind on you too!’

Alcibiades mockingly ran off.

Eupheas had died, but Alcibiades’s heart sang lightly.

Gerontes

Alcibiades talked with many Gerousia members, but more with two members than with the others. He was linked in trade with Damagetus, and he liked Menas. Menas was a man who loved to talk and in Sparta that was rather an oddity. Menas liked to hear himself speak. He did not have much chance to find an audience among the Spartiates, so he had turned naturally to Alcibiades. Alcibiades learned a lot from

Menas. Moreover, Menas liked the contests of the Olympic and other Games, and he had seen Alcibiades in Olympia. Alcibiades did not recall meeting Menas at Olympia, but Menas liked to parade with an Olympic victor. When Alcibiades exercised in the gymnasium, Menas was often around. When he ran in the tracks of the Dromos, he saw Menas. Menas was also interested in the young Spartiates who threw the discus and the javelin and who ran in the stadium. Like everywhere in Hellas, the men exercised naked, and so did Alcibiades. After and between the exercises, Alcibiades walked and talked.

Alcibiades discussed with Damagetus on how to bring Sicilian cereals from Thurii and heavy wood from the lands beyond the Hellespont. The region of the Hellespont was becoming increasingly important for Sparta, as it was to Athens, for grains were harder to get from Sicily. Damagetus was doubly concerned. He was concerned as a statesman because he was one of the magistrates that had to organise constant supplies for Sparta. He was also concerned as a private, for he traded in all foods and materials. Damagetus of course could not trade openly since he was a Spartiate, but his perioecic partners did that for him, with his money. The Spartans had also started very modestly to build a few war ships at Gytheum. Alcibiades advised on where experienced trireme carpenters could be hired. He advised to hire men from the Island of Chios, which had a large fleet in the Sea.

With Menas, Alcibiades talked gymnastics and Menas was also the leader of a Spartan boy chorus. Alcibiades knew a few things about chorus singing too, as he had been a chorégos in Athens. With Menas, he sought the finest athletes among the Spartiates and they asked the men to train for the Olympics. Menas advised the ephors on athletes for the Isthmian and Olympic Games, and Alcibiades and Menas lauded their favourite athletes and compared their qualities. Alcibiades praised more the fineness of body and elegance of moving, as well as the intelligence of an athlete than brute force, and Menas eagerly agreed. Between athletes, beauty of bodies and chorus singing in, a little news fell about the war in Sicily and about Spartan politics. Menas confided in Alcibiades, and Alcibiades gracefully confided in Menas. He had also found in Menas a channel for divulging his opinions.

One day, Menas began, ‘Well, Alcibiades, if you like elegance so much in athletes, then you should come with me to see the gymnastics of our young women. You will like that!’

‘What is that?’ replied Alcibiades.

He had heard that women, at least mostly unmarried women, also exercised their bodies in Sparta, but he assumed it was rather an exceptional event that happened only occasionally in spring or in summer time. He also thought that men were not allowed to watch.

‘Our girls exercise all the year,’ Menas affirmed. ‘We have several gymnasiums in our town. You always exercise in the same one, but there are other gymnasiums, where both men and women train. Most men and boys, however, prefer to train among friends. If you are interested, I will take you to a place where the women exercise.’

‘Are men allowed there?’

‘Sure,’ Menas replied. ‘Not too many men come there, but members of the Gerousia are always welcome. The girls perform better when they know that distinguished

Elders are present, or valorous foreigners like you. I will take you there, three days from today. They are staging major contests that day.'

Three days later Alcibiades was running on the sand of the stadium, together with ten young Spartiates, training in raw speed at short sprinting. Menas appeared suddenly, signalling Alcibiades to leave the tracks. Alcibiades quickly bathed, washed, perfumed and dressed only in a chiton. He still wore a sword on his back. He accompanied Menas, who urged him to walk more rapidly, for he said the games had already started in the women's gymnasium. They walked through the streets and Menas also, like the helot slave Eupheas, mentioned to Alcibiades the names of all the temples they passed. They walked for quite a long time and came to the outskirts of Sparta. Menas took a small side road there so that they arrived at a small round building, the women's gymnasium. Behind the building lay open fields, and Alcibiades saw the banks of a rough stadium. He also saw that horses were grazing in the neighbouring fields. Horse breeding was a passion among the Spartiates. The Spartan army had some cavalry forces, but not great numbers. Alcibiades had been surprised at the extent of horse breeding in and around Sparta, and he did not understand well why the Spartiates' armies relied so little on cavalry. He assumed the Spartiates were too conservative to change tactics and lend more importance to cavalry. He, Alcibiades, would have used a lot more cavalry. He wondered now whether the women also rode horses in Sparta, like Cynisca, and whether other women too raced with chariots or on horseback. They probably would, he thought. He was curious.

Menas led and he brought Alcibiades directly outside, into the stadium. Alcibiades was very surprised at the numbers of women he saw inside the gymnasium. A game of javelin throwing was going on, and about twenty girls stood waiting, a javelin in their hands, at the beginning of the ground where they would throw. They were nervous, turning and jumping in place, winding and unwinding their throngs around the javelins.

Alcibiades ran from astonishment to astonishment in Sparta. The women wore only a very light chiton, a single piece of almost transparent cloth. Most wore chitons that were knotted above one shoulder, but in such a way that the cloth bared one breast. Not that the other breast was therefore hidden, for the girls wore no breast-belts of leather or other material. The chitons were open at the sides, not sewn together to any form resembling a tunic. At every movement of their legs and bodies the chitons opened. Some of the women wore loincloths, but not all. The girls trained almost naked, here. Many of the women were still very young, girls in their early teens. Others were in their late teens. These were lean, tall, long-legged, slim girls, with small and firm breasts. They were all well-muscled, Alcibiades could see, and he looked with popping eyes. He was amazed at the blatant magnificence of the young female bodies. They threw the javelin like professional athletes, energetically and with great dedication. Other women were of an elder age, in their twenties, and Alcibiades remarked even a few women that were obviously past that age. These had more ample curves, more generous buttocks and heavier breasts; almost all prided in hard, flat bellies. The women trained much to stay in this shape. These women had full, still uplifted breasts and often their nipples hardened in the fresh air. Alcibiades watched with open mouth the women come forward, solemnly, and throw their javelin with force and precision, as if they were assaulting the walls of an enemy town. They

would run a distance first, which opened their chiton and showed bare legs, thighs, sexes and breasts.

Alcibiades suppressed surges of desire at the sight of so much naked female flesh. He had to stop; he could not walk further. He looked at Menas, who continued slowly to step, but the man simply walked at the same slow gait he had used before, and he looked straight forward, somewhat distractedly.

‘How can that man stay unmoved,’ Alcibiades wondered. ‘How can any man stay here and watch this and stay calm?’

Alcibiades walked on. When he passed the girls, many heads turned. A few of the more daring girls giggled and whispered to friends, for Alcibiades could not break away his eyes from them, from their forms and eyes and smiles, and he stumbled against a rock in the stadium. He gazed.

He thought, ‘gee, I am going to like it even more in Sparta! This is after all a town of pleasures, too! Only, one has to discover the hidden pleasures of Sparta. Though they are not hidden at all once you know the right places!’

He followed Menas. Menas strolled around, looking now to right and left, saluting men he knew. There were many men watching on the banks of the stadium, commenting on the games. All the men seemed to take the contests of the naked girls for granted.

‘They are used to this,’ Alcibiades concluded. ‘If you see naked women every day and so much of them, I suppose you will lose at long the interest of the first moments. It is only a shock to newcomers, to foreigners in Sparta like me. I must not show surprise and effect. Relax and enjoy!’

In this town, the games in which women participated were commonplace.

Alcibiades could not disagree with the concept: women too might develop their bodies in a healthy, natural way, with the aim of course of raising robust children. Yet, these women, so trained, might be amazons at war. Alcibiades could not object to discus throwing, to jumping with halters, to running and not even to horse-riding. These were elegant games. Throwing the javelin was a contest that had its origins surely in military exercises, but he found even these contests passable for women. He was astonished at the utmost, however, when wrestling games were announced, pankration games at that.

Wrestling was done entirely in the nude, for any such chiton as these girls wore would anyhow not have lasted longer than a few moments in the wrestling competitions. The women oiled luxuriously, so that their magnificent, young, graceful bodies gleamed in the sun’s rays. Then they let a flow of thin sand escape from between their hands and cover their shoulders, breasts, arms and legs. The women would then stretch their bodies entirely and curve it to show their beauty. Alcibiades had to apply all his presence of mind to control his body reactions at so much overt show of sensuality.

Several groups of two women then sprung to each other and they engaged in the wrestling matches. Each fight was a hard contest. The women fought more obstinately and longer than men. It was hard for a girl to admit defeat. The sensuality of the fights defeated Alcibiades in the end.

He said, ‘quite a fight these women perform. How do the men stay calm?’

Menas grinned. ‘No true man can stay calm at these fights. So we truly do not encourage the men to come here. But it is also not really forbidden to come and

watch. One gets used to it. At least, at my age! It is always an amazement and sometimes an ordeal for foreigners to watch our finest, young women fight naked.’ ‘Homer called Sparta the city of beautiful women. I understand why he said that. Now at least I know why Spartan girls are called thigh-flashers in Athens,’ Alcibiades concluded. ‘I would not call them just thigh-flashers though! They flash everything they have!’

Menas burst out laughing then, so that he split his sides. He couldn’t stop laughing and almost choked in the act. Alcibiades had to hit him on the back several times to bring him back. When Menas stood beside him, still smiling, the man wiped the tears of laughter from his eyes and he slapped Alcibiades equally on the back.

Menas and Alcibiades stayed through the entire pankration games. Later, Menas took Alcibiades by the arm and he led him back to the men’s training grounds. Alcibiades sighed. He was relieved. He thought he would have lost soon his harmony of mind and body, and definitely his composure, at the sight of the combating girls. Still, he could not but admire the wonderful shapes of the female Spartan breasts, buttocks, flat and slim waists and backs. Many of the girls had fine, long legs and graceful, elegant bodies, of which he would surely dream for many nights to come. The female training was one of the wonders of Sparta.

Menas preferred the contests of boys and young men, and Alcibiades decided not to return alone to the games for females, and even not to return at all to the women’s gymnasium. The place was too dangerous for his ease of mind and for the ease of certain parts of his body. He explained so to Menas. Menas laughed and continued to laugh when he remarked Alcibiades’s loss of composure after the wrestling scenes. He found he had played a good joke on the Athenian.

Decelea

In the summer of that year, the news from the war in Sicily was not all well for Sparta. The Syracusans had been defeated in a battle that took place on the heights of Syracuse, at Epipolae. Epipolae was a high ground above Syracuse. Its name meant ‘The Heights’ and the Syracusans wanted to keep it because they thought correctly that it would be difficult for the Athenians to build their wall entirely around Syracuse if they could hold these heights. The battle was not really decisive, but also not exactly a victory for the Sicilians. The Syracusans were defeated in their attempt to hold Epipolae. The Athenians could therefore build fortifications around Syracuse, and they destroyed the drinking water pipes to the town. The Athenian generals gained other, though small, victories around Syracuse. A double Athenian wall grew all around the city, and the Sicilians could not, despite fierce attacks, avoid the wall to advance towards the Sea.

The Athenian general Lamachus was killed in one of the skirmishes won by Sicilian cavalry. Nicias was now in sole command of the Athenian forces.

The Athenians built a fort at a place called Syca, a fort they called ‘The Circle’, in front of Syracuse. From there they continued to build a wall from the harbour of Syracuse to the Sea at the other side.

The Syracusans, led by Hermocrates, started to build a counter-wall from their city below the Athenian fort ‘The Circle’, at right angles to the Athenian wall. This Syracusan counter-wall was destroyed in a raid by the Athenians. The Syracusans

then tried to build another counter-wall, more a stockade and ditch, for they lacked wood and building material. This wall too was destroyed by Nicias's army. In these skirmishes, the Athenians emerged victorious, though they were hard pressed.

Gylippus had still not arrived in Syracuse at the end of the summer: he remained at Leucas and Tarentum and also at Locri, negotiating, rallying Italian and Sicilian cities to procure him men to attack the Athenians.

He was successful in this enterprise. Gylippus arrived at Syracuse with a thousand hoplites and light troops, seven hundred of his sailors armed, about a thousand Sicilians and some cavalry. Corinthian ships also arrived at Syracuse. Gylippus brought thus a considerable army, and while he approached Syracuse by land, he attacked the Athenians. He did not enter the city at first, however. He positioned his troops in front of the Athenian wall, took a fort at Labdanum by storm and he wanted once more to build yet another counter-wall to prevent the Athenians from blockading entirely Syracuse by land. He also attacked at Epipolae, and he met some success at last. Gylippus then entered Syracuse and he started building a counter-wall up Epipolae. He attacked the double Athenian wall, and was defeated a first time. He learnt much from that defeat and he attacked a second time, to rout the Athenians with his cavalry. He lengthened his counter-wall, and the Athenians were unable to stop him. The Syracusan wall crossed the Athenian lines. The Athenians would definitely not reach the Sea with their double wall, and Syracuse was not to be fully blockaded by land. No decisive battles took place however.

The Spartans showed their teeth against the Argives during that summer. The Argives had plundered Spartan properties at the frontier with their country. So, during the summer, the Spartans entered the Argolid and laid waste border territories of Argos. In breach of their treaty with Sparta, and in retaliation to these Spartan incursions, Athens sent thirty triremes to Argos under the command of the generals Pythodorus, Laespodius and Demaratus. The army landed at various places in the Peloponnesos, at Epidaurus and at Limera, but in the end, the Athenian expedition sailed home again without seeking a direct confrontation with the Spartans, who then also withdrew their army.

At the end of the summer the Athenians also took some initiative in Thrace. The Athenian general Euction, helped by King Perdiccas, marched against Amphipolis. He failed to capture the town, but he blockaded it and brought his fleet to Himeraeum, close by.

During this period, Alcibiades kept going to the Damos meetings. He spoke often about the necessity for Sparta to occupy Decelea. The invasion of the Athenians in the Peloponnesos with a considerable fleet came as a surprise to the Spartans. They had never thought that with so many ships and hoplites in Sicily, Athens could still be able to send a fleet to Argos. The expedition however confirmed what Alcibiades had told: Attica had to be occupied for Athens to be constantly harassed and kept from attacking the neighbourhoods of Laconia.

In the autumn, in Sicily, the Athenians gave Nicias two co-commanders, generals who were already with him in Sicily: Menander and Euthydemus. The Assembly also decided to send reinforcements to the island, led by the prestigious generals Demosthenes son of Alcisthenes and Eurymedon son of Thucles. Eurymedon left immediately for Sicily; Demosthenes would leave only in spring of the next year.

In that autumn and winter, Alcibiades began to remark in Sparta intensified preparations for the invasions of Attica. He went regularly to Gytheum, Sparta's harbour town, some two hundred twenty-five stades south of Sparta, to organise his trade with Menas's stewards, and he saw large quantities of iron plates there, and wooden beams being delivered from Sparta's allies, all materials for building fortifications. The training of the Spartiates intensified also. He saw more frequent hoplite combat training, simulated movements of phalanxes, and staged battles in full panoply of armour. Sparta was preparing for war, though it was formally still at peace with Athens. Agis was now convinced that the Athenians were weakened by the war in Sicily, weak enough to offer little resistance in Attica. The Spartan Damos considered also by now that Athens had broken the peace treaty, and that therefore Sparta was not bound by her oaths anymore.

In the early spring of the following year, King Agis son of Archidamus marched out of Sparta with a considerable army. He marched over land to Attica, to fortify Decelea. The war with Athens had thus formally started again. The Peace of Nicias was terminated.

Alcibiades, the ephors and the Elders of the Gerousia saw Agis march at the head of the Spartiates. He marched out at the sound of the Spartan pipes, with all the Spartan polemarchs, advisors and Spartiate hoplites dressed in full panoply of armour and flowing vermilion cloaks, flower garlands around their necks, all wearing a large hoplon shield with the sign of Lacedaemon.

A little later, Sparta also sent reinforcements of hoplites to Syracuse. Sparta sent Eccritus with six hundred hoplites and with three hundred more Boeotian men led by Xenon, Nicon and Hegesander, fine experienced commanders that could help Gylippus. Three hundred men from Sicyon under Sargeus joined them. Gylippus also received a large force from the Sicilian cities.

Gylippus attacked then the Athenians positions incessantly, and he captured three Athenian forts at Plemmyrium, south of Syracuse.

But Syracuse lost a naval battle before its harbour. The capture of the forts of Plemmyrium was a great loss for the Athenians, for there they had stored a large arsenal of masts and other trireme equipment of over forty ships there, all gear and materials they needed in the war. Plemmyrium also controlled a large part of the shores of the harbour of Syracuse, and that part of the land was now closed once more for the Athenians. Because of the loss of Plemmyrium and of the equipment, the Athenian forces, despite their limited naval victory, were in trouble. They did not entirely control the Sea anymore around Syracuse. Convoys of Athenian supplies were no longer safe and Syracusan ships could even sail as far as Italy with impunity to destroy Athenian convoys of merchant supply ships there.

In the meantime, King Agis of Sparta had finished fortifying Decelea. He began to raid the Attican countryside relentlessly, until right under the walls of Athens, all the months round. To the surprise of the Athenians, Agis did not return to the Peloponnesos after one or two months. The King stayed permanently in Attica, under the noses of the Athenians. They could see his fort on a clear day from the acropolis. Yet, Athens could still fight back.

A fleet of thirty-five ships manned with Argive hoplites, under the direction of the generals Demosthenes and Charicles, laid waste again the lands of Epidaurus and

Limera, at the borders of Laconia. They also attacked the land opposite Cythera and they fortified an isthmus there. Charicles was left at the fortifications with a contingent of hoplites to invite the Spartan helots to revolt and escape. Demosthenes repeated with this occupation the former experiment of Pylos, which had been so successful for Athens. Demosthenes, however, had to depart from the Peloponnesos this time, for he had been sent in reinforcement to Nicias in Sicily. If Sparta could occupy Decelea, Athens could occupy a southern point of Laconia. Still, the Athenians were suffering hard from the occupation of Decelea. Athenian slaves deserted by the thousands, many of these skilled workmen. Athens had to bring in supplies of food from Euboea over the Sea, around Cape Sounion. Decelea blocked the land route. That was expensive. The Athenians had to be constantly on their guards too, for Agis might attack Athens' city gates and walls any time he desired.

In the spring and summer of that year, Alcibiades lived marvellously well in Sparta. He lived a life of leisure and love. Agis was gone and far away in Attica, so he was less worried about the husband of Timaea and his possible revenge. He did not have to be on his guard so much. He could even pass the night with Timaea in her own house. He would go to Timaea's house when the night fell, and he would leave just before dawn. He did not go often thus to Timaea's house, but she begged him to caress her nights through. These salacious nights were hot, passionate, sweet, obsessive in love, and sometimes wild. The nights exhausted Alcibiades, as well as Timaea, but left them always satisfied, their desires consumed. After such nights they would leave long days between new encounters, as if they were ashamed of their unrestrained passion.

Alcibiades continued to see much of Cynisca too, and they bred horses, trained chariot drivers, ameliorated on the chariots. Sometimes they dared to ride at full gallop along the wider roads of Sparta, on horseback or in chariots. The excitement of these rides was wonderful. Never did Cynisca and Alcibiades sleep together again. They had promised so to Timaea, and they kept their promise. Alcibiades exercised in the gymnasium and in the stadium. He accompanied Menas several times still to the women's trainings. When Timaea heard about that, she was not too pleased. But Alcibiades soothed her with promises and assertions that he was fulfilled from Timaea alone. He also got used to the sight of the female games.

Alcibiades participated in most of the Damos meetings, so he stayed abreast of the developments in Sicily. Timaea was no longer a source of information, for Agis and his letters were in Decelea. Alcibiades obtained sufficient information on Sicily from the Damos, from Menas, as well as from the evenings in the military mess of Endius.

Alcibiades had the surprise of an unexpected guest in the mess. One evening, when he entered the hall, he saw that Lysander sat next to Endius. Lysander had seemingly come to dine with his father, Aristoclitus, in Endius's mess. Lysander's father was a respected, very old man but he still attended the gymnasium games and his mess. Alcibiades knew him well.

Lysander was older than Alcibiades. He was something over forty years old, whereas Alcibiades was only going on to forty. For most of the evening, Lysander talked to the Spartiates, to his father, to Endius, for such an invitee from the royal mess was honoured with questions. Alcibiades ate in silence, without talking. He had learnt the Spartiate way of being in a mess and kept to it also this evening.

He heard Lysander address him separately towards the end of the supper. ‘We see much of you these days, Alcibiades, riding horses at full speed through Sparta and with Cynisca racing behind you. How is she?’

Alcibiades did not react on the remark. He answered merely, while dabbing in his broth, ‘Cynisca is fine. Her stable gets better and better.’

‘Yes,’ Lysander mused. ‘Cynisca blooms. Your influence befits her, Alcibiades. I think she loves horses more than men, though.’

Alcibiades did not find it necessary to answer.

Lysander continued. ‘What is your opinion? Do you think the Syracusans will win the war in Sicily?’

‘They will,’ Alcibiades replied. ‘Gylippus will win.’

‘Ah, Gylippus!’ Lysander exclaimed. ‘So far, Gylippus has not advanced much. He has succeeded in taking a few forts from the Athenians, but he has made no decisive progress. What would you do in Gylippus’s stead?’

‘Continue to do what Gylippus does. Make the blockade as tough as possible for the Athenians, prepare my fleet and strengthen it, training it, and maybe at long last lure the Athenians in my harbour to smash their ships in one good crush.’

‘Funny you talk mostly about the fleet. I vowed also for a decision at Sea,’ Lysander said. ‘But that takes a good navarch, a man who can lead manoeuvres at Sea and sink Athenian triremes at their own game.’

‘The Athenian fleet will not be easily deceived and at open Sea they are invincible!’ Alcibiades remarked.

‘Oh, there is nothing in the Athenian fleet that a fine Syracusan and Corinthian fleet doesn’t have,’ Lysander boasted. ‘It just takes the right men and enough boats to defeat the Athenians.’

‘By Zeus,’ Alcibiades thought. ‘The man is actually jealous of Gylippus! He wants Gylippus’s command, at least at Sea. He realises of course, that Athens will not be beaten as long as she masters the Sea. So he is after Athens’ power at Sea and he desires to be navarch of the fleet in Sicily, which is considerable enough with Syracusan, Corinthian and the few other allied ships – practically none of them Spartan, though. How good is Lysander, inexperienced as he is at Sea, and is this a good time for him to be navarch?’

He said, ‘a general of a fleet is substantial in a sea-battle. He decides on the strategy, the appropriate moment of attack, the concentration of forces and the location of the attack. These are all important elements. A general can determine the movements of the fleet, decide on how the ships should pierce through enemy lines. But once in the battle, the roles of the generals are limited. Communications are much harder than in phalanx battles. Every trireme captain fights individually in a sea-battle, every sailor, every steersman, and every rower team. If these men are not well trained and do not have enough skills at Sea, and not enough determination to fight, then even a well-organised battle formation may break and the marine battle be lost.’

‘So you imply that the Syracusans are not ready to destroy the Athenian fleet?’

‘I do not know how much Gylippus has been able to do. I do believe he has not had much time to turn the sluggishness of the Syracusan fleet into swiftness and decisive power.’

‘The forces at Syracuse have now stood for more than six months in front of each other. Large numbers of men and ships are massed together before and in Syracuse. The tension there must be like in the bending of a javelin. The javelin will break

sooner or later. Hasn't the time come that one or other side will break by the tension of war in Sicily?'

'Maybe,' Alcibiades answered. 'Something is probably bound to happen. The question is only when, and I feel it will be when Gylippus is ready. There have been only skirmishes really so far, but all serious engagements have made the two parties suffer greatly. Either one of two things might happen. Either both parties will go on like this until both tire and finally retire. Syracuse will not retire of course: it is a town rallied by so many allies, that it will not surrender. But the Athenians may yet go back without victory, yet also without defeat. Or: in a major battle, or in a series of major battles, one of the two sides may lose.'

'You speak in oracles, Alcibiades, not like a general. Which outcome is most probable?'

'The least damaging for the Syracusans would be to let the Athenians come in by wave after wave, and resist. This is not a typical long-term blockade: massive armies are amassed at Syracuse. To defend and wait and to hurt the Athenians at every battle, to harass the Athenian army constantly at land and at Sea, might be a good strategy. That is what Gylippus is doing.'

'I see,' Lysander said. 'Then the war in Sicily can go on and on without decisive battles.'

'It could but I don't think so. It might also be otherwise. The Athenians may make mistakes or tire and retire. Something will break with time. It cannot go on like this forever!'

'What kind of mistakes?'

'You know that, Lysander! When does a general make a mistake?'

Lysander didn't answer.

'When does a general, a strategos, make a mistake?' insisted Alcibiades.

He wanted to know just how much cunning and intelligence and knowledge the Spartiate had. Lysander might, however, know the right answer but prefer not to tell it. Alcibiades suspected the last. Would this Spartiate be open?

Lysander looked at Alcibiades for quite a while without answering.

Then he said, 'a general makes a mistake when he allows his enemy to choose the time and location and forces of the battle.'

'That was the right answer,' Alcibiades thought. 'Lysander had known that all along, from the beginning. He hesitated to let me know he knew. Gylippus had known that answer too; all good generals had. Would Nicias know that answer?'

'Yes,' Alcibiades thought. 'Nicias knows so too. But when one is desperate, as Nicias must now be, for he never wanted to stay so long in Sicily, he might transgress the primary rule and that is the worse error a general can make: say bust to the rule and break it out of desperation. Then it takes sheer genius to win, and Nicias doesn't have that. Demosthenes has the genius, however, once in every while. Gylippus does not have the genius, but he will never forget the rule, not even when in desperation, for he is a Spartiate and he is Gylippus. So, Gylippus cannot lose in Sicily. He might not win either, but he will not lose. He is so much a Spartiate. How much of a Spartiate is this Lysander? How much genius does he have to always choose his own time and place, whatever happens? He does not look like a genius. He looks like a more brute Gylippus'.

'So true,' Alcibiades answered, finally. 'That is the rule. And when one is desperate for a victory, should one not break the rule?'

Lysander now answered immediately, ‘of course, Alcibiades. One should then break the rule. At least, an Athenian would. Not a Spartiate. Unless ...’

‘Unless what?’ Alcibiades interrupted.

‘Unless one has a fair chance of winning, superior forces or superior skills as a general. One has to know one’s enemy well then.’

Lysander laughed coarsely, ‘yes, fox-skin has to be stitched on lion-skin when lion-skin does not stretch!’

Alcibiades thought, ‘this one does maybe not have the genius, but he has the cool calculation of a genius. How many geniuses are called geniuses, but have known before the battle whether they had a serious chance to win? All of them! The geniuses just saw more elements than their commanders. This one may not be a genius, but he will be called a genius. He will not be as popular as Brasidas, because he will win by logic and not by the heart, not by the intuition and the dash. He will only engage when he is convinced he shall win – shall win, not can win. He will use all his cunning when he is cornered, but he will almost never gamble. No, he will not gamble over a victory. He is not a hero. He is truly a strategos.’

Alcibiades said, ‘Nicias and Demosthenes are the best Athenian generals. They may be desperate for victory, but they will not do rash things. They may make a decisive error, but, like you, they will then also believe they have a very good chance to win. They will not be lured into desperate actions.’

‘Then one should make them believe they can win and hide enough of time, location and forces to deceive them!’

‘The so very right answer again,’ Alcibiades thought. ‘That was his fox-skin.’

Alcibiades agreed, ‘and for that, one needs to be in sole command.’

‘That is the point, the hiccup, the trouble, the rub’ Lysander thought. ‘You are clever, Athenian, very clever. It is nice talking to one’s equal, but you are very dangerous indeed. You hit the nail where it hurts. I will never get sole command in Sicily for the moment. I am not a navarch, and I don’t want to be at this particular moment. I will not be alone to break the spear with a decisive snap. So I will not force the ephors to send me to Sicily now. Gylippus will win, according to you, Athenian. Gylippus will win, but he will do nothing with his victory. I will divulge insidiously the information that the Syracusans and the Corinthian navarchs won, not Gylippus alone. It is better to wait.’

He paused, then said, ‘one day, Alcibiades, we may stand, leading armies, in front of each other. What a day that will be!’

‘Oh no,’ Alcibiades replied innocently, giving to Lysander the same message he had given to Gylippus, but now with another purpose. ‘I would never dare to attack a Spartiate hoplite army! We will not stand in front of each other on land. Besides, I like it here in Sparta.’

Lysander laughed out loud. ‘Truly, Alcibiades, I know you like it here in Sparta. Sparta offers many delicious pleasures to foreigners and in particular to you. Maybe we will not stand in front of each other on land, but at the prows of ships, at Sea!’

Lysander stood up from the table without waiting for an answer. He bade everybody loudly goodbye, greeted his father and left the mess.

‘There was your first mistake, Lysander,’ Alcibiades thought. ‘You had not in mind at all to stand before me at the head of a phalanx. That privilege is reserved to the Kings of Sparta, and you will not be able to usurp that place for a long time to come, in fact

for eternity. Not with Agis on the throne. But you can indeed lead a fleet and be a navarch, win definite victories over Athens and use that as a lever to reach – and, who knows – to grasp supreme power in Sparta. You need a fleet for that, my friend, and you will have only one year. At least in principle. Sparta has no fleet and no money for a fleet. You sounded too determined in that last short phrase, though. You must already know where to get money and where to get a fleet. Now, how could you put your hands on a fleet? All the Ionian cities and all the islands, practically all, are allied to Athens. If Athens would fail in Sicily, with the Athenian army destroyed there, these cities might come over to Sparta's wide open arms. They would abandon Athens because they hate the contribution they have to pay in their alliance. So you will not be able to ask money from them. You may have a considerable number of ships mustered from the Ionian cities and islands, though. With the Chian fleet for instance, the Corinthian fleet and some Syracusan ships, and some more from here and there, you might measure up to Athens. But you would still have no money to pay for a campaign. Where would you get the money?'

Alcibiades wondered and wondered over his bread, eating lower to the table, keeping his silence. He saw Lysander watching him at the door, and grin.

'There is only one source of money in the world for you, Lysander,' Alcibiades thought. 'There is money only in Persia! You will make the Ionian Islands and the Ionian cities of the orient, Ephesus and Miletus and the others, first your allies, and then sell them to the satraps of Lydia and Phrygia! From there, you will get your money. If that is your plan, and it is the only one feasible, the new action theatre will be in the Aegean and around Lydia. We live in quite interesting times and from Sicily in the west, activities will move to the east.'

'Fine,' Alcibiades combined on, 'I like those cities. I haven't seen them since a long time ago. I can travel there, too.'

Alcibiades bade all Spartiates a nice evening and he left the mess. He walked to town alone but it was dark already, so he did not stop in his street but went straight to Timaea's house, where she was waiting for him.

Alcibiades and Timaea made love immediately and passionately. Then they lay exhausted, naked and still in the sweat of their effort, on the large royal bed of Timaea.

'I had an interesting conversation this evening,' Alcibiades started. 'I talked with a man called Lysander. I heard he nurtured high ambitions in Sparta.'

'You talked with that snake?' Timaea asked. 'Stay away from him. He is dangerous. He wants Cynisca, too. But he wants Cynisca because it can add to his power. He only wants power in Sparta.'

This was not the first warning Alcibiades received about Lysander.

'I know he is ambitious. Cynisca told me he was the lover of Agesilaus, Agis's younger brother. Agis has no children by you, so Cynisca said Lysander wants to bring Agesilaus on the throne at Agis's death and reign with Agesilaus as a mere puppet of him. He will be the real master of Sparta, then.'

'We know that, all of us.' She paused. 'Who says Agis will have no children?'

'You have been married for quite a while,' Alcibiades remarked. 'Yet you have given no heir to Agis. One of you may be infertile.'

‘I am going to give Agis an heir, my darling. That is settled. But not yet now.’

Alcibiades did not react, but he looked at her with strange, weary eyes. He found her words pretty hard and heartless after their love-making.

‘I am going to give Agis a child, a son, an heir, Alcibiades. And I will call my son Leotychidas, like the name of so many other fine Agiad Kings. Sparta will rejoice at the birth of a new King and the child will be strong in limbs and very handsome in body and face. This son will be King of Sparta after Agis.’

She stopped for a few moments, and then continued, ‘I might as well call my son too by the fine Spartan name of Alcibiades, for my son will be conceived by you. It will be your son who will be King of Sparta one day!’

Alcibiades was struck by sudden, complete torpor. He could not speak. Timaea had talked in a soft, determined voice without emotions, and as if all had been arranged since long. Timaea could scheme like an Athenian and like a Spartan general. This scheme of hers topped any scheme of Lysander! She wouldn’t dare!

‘Of course she would dare,’ he thought. ‘She would have a child, which she desires so very much. She despises Agis and she loves me. She wants only a child by a man she loves. She will protect my son by saying he is Agis’s child. She hates being subdued by Agis but she will sleep with him at the moment that is necessary, when she knows she is pregnant, but very early on. She is marvellous, but what a scheme! My child might sit on the throne of Sparta and he might go to war against my Alcibiades in Athens. It is inconceivable! But Timaea could probably conceive, all right.’

‘Dumbfounded, are you? Flabbergasted, astonished to dumbness?’ Timaea asked, turning her body sideways to study his reactions better. When she saw him paralysed, she brought all her weight on him so that a maximum of her warm, moist skin touched his body. She crossed her arms and placed her elbows on his neck so as to choke him. She said, ‘don’t dare to threaten my design, my darling. I am a Spartan woman and we breed, we make these brutes you meet in the Damos and in the messes. We are tougher than them. You will go away one day, back to your beloved Athens, and leave me alone among a pack of wolves. That is our destiny. I will have no aim in life anymore, and my love will be dead, for you will return to your Harmonia. She will have children and love, I will have nothing. So you will leave me with something, with someone to love. I know I can have children, not so Agis. He fucked too many helot girls in my house and elsewhere, without any children born, for me to doubt his infertility. He doesn’t know. Well, he shall have a child and he will either never know the child is not his, or come to recognise it as his own, because he has no other choice. He does not particularly hate Lysander, and he loves his brother, but he will not leave power to Lysander. You see, he remarked also quite well the danger that is Lysander for his brother, for his sister and for me. I made sure of that. He will have no choice but to choose for a child that is at least of his wife. I have Agiad blood in me too, my darling. And I will love and protect our son!’

She kissed Alcibiades, and kissed and kissed, until with a powerful, desperate thrust he turned her over and was on top of her. Then he entered her again, to become one with her.

Syracuse

Lysander and Alcibiades had been right. Something did break in Sicily in the summer of the same year. Reinforcements were dispatched to Syracuse from all of the Sicilian cities except Agrigentum, which remained neutral in the conflict. The Athenians too received reinforcements from troops that Demosthenes and Eurymedon brought with them from Corcyra and from the Iapygian Islands. The armies that confronted each other at Syracuse were formidable, now, in numbers and in power.

Something happened, however, in a place far from Sicily, at Naupactus, that would be decisive for the war in Sicily. It was an innovation in fleet battle tactics. The Spartiates were confident in their phalanx tactics and warfare on land and they didn't change these, even not in view of the successes of cavalry and light troops. The Athenian fleet commanders also held on to traditional warfare at Sea, but that was going to change.

At Naupactus, twenty-five Peloponnesian ships, mostly Corinthian, were stationed in front of the harbour, blocking the Athenian Conon in this important Athenian naval base on the west side of Attica. Conon had obtained only twenty ships, but he had received ten more from Demosthenes and Eurymedon, so he envisaged a battle. Polyarches commanded the Corinthians. Conon sent out his fleet, when he had assembled enough ships, under the trusted command of Diphilus to give battle to the Corinthians. There was a sea-battle indeed, and for the first time it had rather an undecided outcome, both fleets losing some ships. The remarkable and unexpected turn of events was that the Athenians suffered more damaged ships than the Corinthians. The Corinthians had devised new tactics at Sea to thwart Athens' superiority in manoeuvring. They had reinforced the prows of their triremes. Instead of competing in manoeuvres and counter-manoevres with the Athenian swift naval movements in order to smash in the unprotected sides of the enemy triremes, a game in which they could not win from the Athenian captains and steersmen, they rammed the enemy ships head on, crashing into the strong but not strong enough prows of the Athenian triremes.

The Athenian captains were caught by surprise. Seven of the Athenian triremes had their fore-ships staved in by the Corinthian triremes. The Athenian ships were not sunk, but so much damaged that they were not of much use afterwards. This technical modification and its success, was brought to Syracuse. It inspired the Syracusans to other changes. Gylippus was excited about the possibilities.

The Syracusans cut a length of their prows, of the prows with which normally they would have tried to ram the soft sides of the Athenian ships. They made their prows shorter, but much more robust. From the catheads they stuck out wooden beams, which protruded out of the boats for about three meters. Their ships would not be very sea-worthy after these modifications, but ideally suited for a battle in the great harbour of Syracuse where manoeuvring was difficult and head-on ramming the most easy. The Syracusans were going to charge prow to prow to the Athenian ships. No sophisticated skills, no very experienced captains and steersmen were needed anymore, at least not in the great harbour. Most of the shore of the great harbour was in Syracusan hands after the capture of Plemmyrium so there would be almost no escape possible for the Athenians from Syracuse harbour, which was moreover very narrow at its entry. The Athenians would have it also difficult to sail back into the open water in case of imminent defeat.

For this new tactic to work, the Athenian ships had to be lured into Syracuse harbour. Gylippus and Hermocrates set a trap.

It seemed the Athenians indeed enthusiastically charged on to the Syracusan fleet, certain of victory. About eighty triremes clashed on either side, sixteen thousand men on either side. The Syracusans charged prow to prow, and they attacked the Athenian ship crews with many javelin throwers from their own ships. The Athenian fleet was first surprised, and then defeated. The Athenian superiority at Sea had been challenged for the first time.

At that time, Demosthenes arrived with yet another, new fleet of about eighty triremes and five thousand hoplites. He came too late to assist in the Battle of Syracuse Harbour. He landed his troops on the shores of the harbour, however. The Syracusans, who had been very much encouraged by their last victory, wondered once more about how many resources Athens really could muster time after time, and their courage failed once more.

To exploit the surprise of the Syracusans, Demosthenes wasted no time. He attacked the Syracusan counter-walls at Epipolae. It was an evening and night attack, like Demosthenes liked. The Athenians were routed by Gylippus's counter-attacks, however, and especially by his Boeotian troops. In the night, the confusion of the fleeing Athenians was all the greater. The advantage of the darkness of the night turned against them. They fled in panic to everywhere. The dispersed Athenians were an easy prey for the Sicilian cavalry the next morning. The Syracusans had won major battles at Sea and on land in a short period of time.

'The javelin was broken at that moment of the war,' Alcibiades later thought. He would never really understand why the Athenians had stayed on after these defeats.

Actually, Demosthenes wanted to return to Athens with the army, but not so Nicias, and Nicias was still commander-in-chief.

Gylippus appealed again to the Sicilian cities for additional forces and after the latest successes, he also received the reinforcements he asked for. The Athenian fleet remained still in the greater harbour of Syracuse. The Athenian generals saw ever more forces opposing them. They decided to withdraw. The Syracusans heard of that, so they rowed out to attack the Athenians before these could depart. They attacked with seventy-six ships against the Athenians' eighty-six, so confident were they in their tactics and courage. The Syracusans once more defeated the Athenians in the harbour before Syracuse. Athens' superiority in the waters had definitely been broken, and that fact would be an important signal to all the cities that paid tribute to Athens. The general Eurymedon was killed in the battle. The Athenian ships ran ashore. Gylippus tried to capture the ships by attacking on land the Athenian camp, but the Athenians drove him back and prevented the final loss of their fleet.

The Syracusans blocked completely the harbour opening with their ships. They wanted definitely now to defeat totally the Athenian fleet in their harbour. When the Athenians saw that, they manned every ship they still had and they assembled about a hundred and ten triremes. Like the Syracusans, they put as many javelin throwers, slingers and hoplites on the ships as they could. With these ships, the commanders of the fleet, Demosthenes, Menander and Euthydemus rowed straight to the barriers of

the Syracusans at the harbour entry. The Syracusan ships bore on the Athenian ships from all sides. Because of the narrowness of space – the entry of the harbour was less than ten stades wide – the Athenian ships could not manoeuvre. The fighting and killing was atrocious, and the massacre was carried on from boat to boat. The outcome of the battle hung in the balance for a long time, but in the end the determination of the Syracusans won. The Sicilians grappled many Athenian ships. The Syracusan sailors and hoplites and light troops on the ships defeated the Athenians for a third time.

Most of the Athenian ships were destroyed or captured in the last great battle of the harbour of Syracuse, except for a few that had run ashore at the short side of the harbour, at the part of the coast that the Athenian land troops still held. The Athenians decided to abandon their ships and to escape by land. Nicias and Demosthenes took each half of the remaining troops, all their rowers, and they moved away from Syracuse two days after the last sea-battle. They marched off with forty thousand men. They would have to march entirely through hostile country, for the whole of Sicily sought mercilessly revenge now against the invaders that were defeated and weakened.

The Syracusans and the other Sicilians constantly harassed the Athenian lines. Demosthenes's and Nicias's armies got separated. Athenian logistics were henceforth non-existent. Food and water was scarce. A few days after the ignominious departure, after he had lost hundreds of men each day, Demosthenes surrendered his army. Nicias refused to surrender, but at the River Asinarus his remaining forces were severely cut down. His men had run to the river to drink and while they drank the Sicilian hoplites killed them with javelins and slingers or cut them down by cavalry. Nicias surrendered there to Gylippus.

Little time later, Nicias and Demosthenes were executed. The remains of the once so proud army of Athens and her allies was imprisoned in stone quarries. For ten weeks the men were imprisoned and treated badly. The surviving ones, not more than seven thousand, were sold as slaves. The war in Sicily was over in that ending of the summer. The magnificent, largest and best armed Athenian military force that had ever rowed out of Piraeus, was no more. It had disintegrated and disappeared. Not one man returned right after the surrender. A few would ultimately reach Athens, either when they emerged out of slavery many years later, or because they had individually escaped to Sicilian cities that were not entirely in enmity with Athens. But they would arrive in Athens many months and years later. No messenger ship announced to the Athenian Assembly the total destruction of their army.

The news of the total defeat of the Athenian army and the story of the great and final battle in the harbour of Syracuse, as well as the news of the surrender of Demosthenes and Nicias, arrived in Sparta when all was finished. The news arrived in the middle of a meeting of the Damos. Gylippus had sent a messenger ship to Gytheum, and a Spartiate brought the account in letters of Gylippus to Sparta. An ephor read the scrolls first, and then he gave the letters to the herald of the Damos. The herald read the text of the scrolls slowly and with a loud voice. The story was told by Gylippus in

his clear, administrative language, and the cold and cruel phrases fell in the utter silence of the listening Damos members.

When Gylippus told how in the crossing of the Asinarus River his Syracusan troops had slaughtered hundreds of Athenian citizen-hoplites while they were greedily drinking of the first sweet water they had had in several days, Alcibiades's heart bled. Gylippus wrote how, afterwards, when the killing was over, bodies of dead and wounded Athenians were heaped one upon another in the bed of the stream, and how Nicias then had surrendered.

The Damos listened in silence, then cheered. The herald had to stop reading the rest of the text, and let the Spartiates cry out their joy. Now, Sparta was the upper force in the Hellenic world again, and Athens' power lay destroyed in far-off Sicily.

Alcibiades too cheered and congratulated the Spartiates, and he slapped them on the shoulder. But his heart bled.

The herald continued to read the rest of the letters at long last. Gylippus wrote that he would have liked to bring back to Sparta Nicias and Demosthenes, but the Syracusans and their Sicilian allies wanted the heads of the Athenian generals of the dreaded Sicilian expedition. Gylippus ended his letter by stating that the rest of the Athenian army was imprisoned in the stone quarries of Sicily. Alcibiades imagined what those men would have to suffer, how many would die from the heat in the quarries, and what would be their fate when ultimately the few survivors would be sold as slaves. Alcibiades grinded his teeth, but the muscles in his face remained even and never a smile left his mouth. Lysander watched him.

When the Damos was finished, the Spartiates left the building in boisterous laughter and shouting cries of victory, so that all Sparta would hear the marvellous news. The Spartiates shouted victory, for the power of Athens lay in shambles. They were sure to be joined now in their war against their rival by renewed Corinthian and Syracusan fleets.

Gylippus had written how many times the Athenian fleets had been defeated! Tens of triremes could be recuperated in Syracuse harbour and repaired. New allies would flock to Sparta, and money could be raised from these. Sparta could demonstrate its leadership in Hellas once more.

Alcibiades walked home like a ghost. He set automatically one foot in front of the other, but he was not really conscious of his walking. He arrived at his house, but his body continued to walk, and he went upon the road that he had taken often, to Cynisca's house – not to Timaea's house in the town. Cynisca was in her fields, steadying a horse. Alcibiades came up to her and he hung his arms around her neck. Then, for the second time during his stay in Sparta, he wept.

During the winter, the news of the disaster of Sicily also seeped through to Athens. No messenger ships and no herald brought the story of the ending of the great army. The news started as a rumour. Then ship captains who had travelled to Italy confirmed the destruction of Athens' pride. There was mourning and wailing of widows in Athens and silence by the men of the demes when they went in the streets. In the Assembly meetings, the citizens blamed the people that had induced them to organise the expedition.

Yet, some men also spoke out for courage. One of these was Socrates. From out of the people of his deme in the Assembly, he said that this was no time to let arms be hung down. There was work to do. Athens should not give in. Euboea had to be secured, for in Euboea grazed the livestock of Athens now, since Attica had been occupied. Triremes had to be built, with whatever timber that could be had. Measures of economy in all the administrations had to be taken. Piraeus had to be strengthened, and the military harbours defended with all means available. The Athenians feared that the Corinthians and the Syracusans would attack Athens' harbour with a fleet. The Assembly decided on a group of ten elders to form a committee that was to advise on every point of the situation.

Athens had moved imperceptibly from a total democracy to some form of government that was quite similar to the form of government of Sparta, though justice was still given by appointed members of the Assembly.

King Agis of Sparta remained snugly entrenched in Decelea. He acted as if he were the sole governor of Sparta. He started levying money from the Spartan allies to build a fleet. He ordered the Thessalians, much against their will, to procure him funds. Agis too understood the need for Sparta to become a sea-power. He requisitioned money from the Boeotians to build twenty-five war triremes, fifteen from the Phocians and Locrians, fifteen from the Corinthians, ten from the Arcadians, Pellenians and Sicyonians together, ten from the Megarians, Troezenians, Epidaurians and Hermionians together. He ordered Sparta to pay for twenty-five ships. He wanted a fleet of an additional hundred triremes and he wanted the rest of the Corinthian and Syracusan fleet to join the new Spartan allied fleet.

Lysander applauded in Sparta, but he was worried about the growing power of Agis and he discussed with the ephors how to keep that power in Sparta. He talked not overtly in the Damos but in private conversations in the messes and in the gymnasiums. Alcibiades joined in on the whispered opinions. Agis continued to lead, however, in initiatives and Lysander could only talk and react on Agis's activities. Lysander seethed, for Agis had the initiative, not Lysander.

Agis received the Euboeans who wanted to revolt from Athens. He summoned from Sparta his friends Alcamenes son of Sthenalaïdas and Melanthus to take command in Euboea. A delegation of Lesbians knelt before Agis to ask his help for the pro-Spartan uprisings they proposed to organise. Agis re-directed Alcamenes to Lesbos, and he promised to send ten Spartan and ten Boeotian triremes in support. Agis decided and he chose where to intervene. Agis was on expedition beyond the frontiers of Sparta, and he liked that, for as long as he was with an army out of Sparta, he had the right by law of Lycurgus to do as he liked.

In Sparta however, eyebrows lifted, and Lysander schemed. Alcibiades just smiled and watched with interest these internecine strives for power in a city that had otherwise been so peaceful and slow to react. The beehive of Sparta hummed in effervescence.

Poseidon

Alcibiades participated in the Damos meetings. He was not a Spartiate, but Endius had assured him that he was an honoured guest. In one of the Damos meetings, several delegations arrived to ask support for revolts against Athens. First, a delegation from Chios and from the Erythraeans came to the Damos to speak there. With them had come a representative from Tissaphernes, the new Persian satrap of Lydia and Caria. The Chians wanted to revolt from Athens, and Tissaphernes promised to maintain a Spartan and allied army for a Spartan intervention in Chios. Tissaphernes wanted the tributes of the Ionian Islands for the King of Persia. He not only wanted them, but desperately needed them, for the Great King had ordered him to gain these.

Later, two representatives from the Persian satrap of Phrygia, Pharnabazus, spoke. These were Hellenes. They were Calligeitus son of Laoplon, a Megarian, and Timagoras of Athenagoras, a Cyticene. Pharnabazus wanted the same thing as Tissaphernes, but at another location: a Spartan fleet to act in The Hellespont, so that he could collect the tribute from the cities that revolted from Athens. These two Persian parties also sought an alliance with Sparta.

The Spartiates enjoyed much the speeches. The atmosphere had been rather morose in the Damos and in Sparta while the Athenians were in Sicily and had fought early successes. Now that the Athenians had suffered a disaster of a massive magnitude, the Spartans only had to open their arms to receive gracefully in their bosoms the former allies of Athens and the promises and coins of the Persian satraps. Sparta relished being begged to, as if they were the new rulers of the world, and the marvel was that they did not have much to do to win that status, for the Syracusans and their allies had offered them the honours on a golden platter!

Lysander was very active in the Damos. He had sought the money from the Persians all the time, and now he didn't even have to ask. The Persians offered the funds themselves. Lysander secretly opposed all Agis's initiatives. Here was his chance to give orders to Agis from out of the Damos and Gerousia of Sparta and to raise funds, equally from out of Sparta, to equip a fleet. The money would arrive exactly from the sources he had wanted to contact anyhow, from Persia.

Lysander pleaded in the Damos that it was preferable to lend assistance to Chios and Tissaphernes, rather than to Lesbos. He argued the cities in the Hellespont were not yet prepared to receive the Spartans. The real reason for his opinion was that Chios had a considerable fleet, and Lysander needed ships for Sparta, and that Tissaphernes was quite wealthier than Pharnabazus. Money would more easily flow from Lydia and Caria than from Phrygia. Endius supported Lysander. Endius wanted to become ephor. He sought a strong ally in Lysander. He also, by intuition and natural reaction, remained suspicious of the power of the Kings of Sparta.

Alcibiades also stepped forward. He said he knew Chios well and also the Lydian and Carian towns. He said openly what Lysander had not spoken of, the fleet of Chios and the wealth of Tissaphernes. These would help Sparta most in her ambitions. He delivered a speech that subtly appealed to the greed for ships and money of the Spartiates.

Lysander and Endius were grateful for Alcibiades's speech, which no Spartiate would have dared to propose so openly, and they thanked him with their eyes. The three of them mastered the mood of the Damos.

Alcibiades had something in mind, however, and he needed the support of Lysander and Endius for that.

It was early spring of the following year. The Spartan Damos voted for support of Chios, as proposed by Endius, Lysander and Alcibiades. Nevertheless, the Spartiates remained Spartiates. They acted with utmost care and thoroughness. They sent a perioecic merchant, Phrynis, to find out whether indeed Chios had as many ships as everybody claimed and was as strongly determined to revolt from Athens as the Chian delegates told in Sparta.

Phrynis came back a few weeks later, and he confirmed all what had been told in Sparta. Chios had as many ships as the Chian delegates and Alcibiades claimed, and the island was as strongly determined to revolt from Athens as the Chian oligarchs had claimed in Sparta.

When Phrynis returned with positive news, the Damos voted for an alliance with the Chians and the Erythraeans. They voted to send forty triremes to Chios, assuming there would be sixty ships in Chios itself. The ephors and the Gerousia decided to send these ships, ten of which would be Spartan triremes, under the command of their navarch Melanchridas.

Alcibiades proposed in the Damos to accompany Melanchridas. He sensed that the centre of initiatives would be among the Ionian Islands and the Hellespont, and he wanted to be part of the activities there as soon as possible. He had wasted enough time doing nothing in Sparta.

Alcibiades met with Timaea two days later in her house. He expected to pass the night with her agreeably. Timaea received him as angry as Kerberos, the guardian of Hades. 'What do you want to leave me for?' she cried, having obviously heard of his demand to accompany Melanchridas. 'The Gerousia will never allow an Athenian general to accompany the Spartan navarch anyhow! The Elders are not that stupid to let an Athenian spy accompany our navarch to watch our operations. Why do you want to leave me?'

She paced up and down in the bedroom while Alcibiades stood embarrassed at the window.

Timaea flayed with her arms and spoke to herself, 'why do you want to leave me now? It is not the right time! You can only go when Agis comes back for good. Oh, yes, he comes and goes, stays for a day or two, but he does not really come home. You cannot go now. It is dangerous in those areas. The Persians are nothing but devious perverts. Melanchridas may well kill you somewhere at Sea, and nobody will care! Cynisca needs you for her horses and chariots. You cannot leave her!'

She shouted at Alcibiades whatever argument came to her mind. She stood close to him to embrace him, then jumped to the other side of the room and pointed at him menacingly. She was in panic. She was hysterical.

‘I am not gone yet, not by far,’ Alcibiades proposed to soothe her. ‘This is not the first time I proposed to go on campaign with a Spartiate general! I even proposed to accompany Agis to Decelea. You know that. I am a general. I cannot sit here to do nothing but be your plaything! The Gerousia never proposed something like this to me. Sooner or later I have to do something. I am a general, remember? I am not your humble sexual servant! I am a man and bound to take responsibilities in the city I live in. I may go to Chios, but I will return. Melanchridas cannot stay for long in Chios. I will only be on a diplomatic mission, and once that finished, I will be back and flee into your arms!’

Timaea wept and cried out her despair at the same time. She sprang before him, showed her opened hand and shouted, ‘oh no! You will not come back! You had your pleasure with me, now you will return to your Theodote and Timandra.’ She cried, ‘you had your pleasure with me. Now you throw me away, like the bones of a gobbled fish! What am I to become without you? You long again for your Theodote and your Timandra. You want your whores back, to play with! From Chios you will sail to Thrace to live with them and you will never, never return to Sparta. I will not see you again!’

‘Timaea,’ Alcibiades replied calmly, ‘I assure you that I am not going to Thrace now. I am merely going to Chios, which is entirely out of the way of Thrace! I am going on a war and an embassy mission, and that only if the Gerousia lets me. I will only assist Melanchridas temporarily! When Melanchridas is finished, we will both sail back to Sparta.’

Alcibiades grabbed his weeping mistress at the shoulders, took her in his arms, and he kept her there so that she could not spiral once more in despair. Timaea indeed calmed down, but a mischievous look and a determined brilliance came in her eyes. She drew him flirtingly to the bed, undressed completely and slowly moved before him with lascivious, long gestures. She helped him out of his chiton while her hands lingered too much at certain places of his body. She blew out the oil lamps, and in the feeble rays of the moon that threw a silvery but dim light on the floor, she made love to him with long and slow movements of her body so that their accumulated sensuality was only gradually and softly released.

Timaea did not give peace to Alcibiades that night. When they had finished a first time making love, she rested a little but soon forced him to enter her again. They were both exhausted thereafter, but Timaea would not allow him to sleep and also did she not take satisfaction from caresses alone. Timaea did all the caressing that night. She touched him hard with her palms however, scratched on his back long red lines with her nails, turned Alcibiades over, slid over his back and legs with her breasts, massaged him with her hands, and turned him over again. Then she sat astride over him, aroused him and took his member eagerly once more in her while she towered over him. After the third time they had made love, she let him sleep.

Alcibiades was walking on the walls of Potidaea, above the precipice that formed these high fortifications. He was afraid of falling off from the height. He struck at his enemies on the top of the parapets with wild movements of spear and sword, but his enemies threatened to make him fall deep, deep.

Then, he was galloping on a horse over long, green slopes, pursuing Sicilian horse riders. It was a storm gallop he was in, and storms of wind blew in his ears with a deep grumbling. He heaved his curved cavalryman’s sword and cut at a man’s neck,

but he had to fend off more enemy horse riders than he could handle. He would be overtaken soon.

He was standing at the prow of a war trireme, now, fleeing from so many enemy ships, shouting cries of encouragement to his rowers. The Harmonia broke the waves and the ship rolled and moved terribly upwards and downwards in wild water.

Then, there was fire above him. A burst of red and yellow flames suddenly glowed above his face and scorched his hair. The Thebans blew fire at him, above the fortifications of the temple of Delium, and he knew he had to flee. He ran down the ramps of the stockade where the beams were scorched with the fire from Hades. He sped down stairs and the stairs shook and moved under him. To and fro the stairs moved under his feet. He had to hold on the side planks of the stairs. He leaned against the brick wall and he stumbled. He fell from the stairs on the ground, and he hurt himself, but he jumped up to flee the thundering of the fire of incandescent rock that flowed from Pyriphlegethon along the mountains of Sparta. Debris of rocks and stones and mud bricks fell alongside him and he ran until he arrived at large gates. He pushed the gates open with super-natural strength.

He stood in the open then, the earth still shaking more and more, so that he became nauseated, and he reeked and spat on the ground. He crawled on knees and arms in the sand. Parts of walls crushed in front of him and flames of torches dropped everywhere around. He saw now distinctly people running in all directions, but the shaking of the earth had stopped, and more flames surged to the sky.

He stood up and saw that people, Spartiates in light chitons, for they had been sleeping too, cautiously walked among debris. Dawn rose. The Spartiates and helots gaped at him, and he realised he was naked. He stood in the nude in the middle of Timaea's street, in front of the house and with the gates wide open. Stones and bricks continued to fall here and there. Fires had broken out from fallen oil lamps, and men hurried back into their houses, to look at what damages had been done.

Alcibiades ran quickly back into the house. He went back up the stairs to the bedroom in which he had left Timaea. Where was she? What had happened to her?

Timaea lay still sprawled on the bed, arms spread and legs wide open. She had made, where she lay, as large a surface as she could. She did not move, for she was terrified, and she held on to the bed as if it was a raft that floated on the waves of the Sea. She looked at Alcibiades with frightened eyes, with panicky eyes, but she did not move. Alcibiades went up to her and said in a calm voice, 'it is all right, Timaea. There was an earthquake. It is finished now. The house is fine.'

A new deafening grumble arose from the ground then, however, and the house shook again. Timaea groaned and held on to the blankets. Her fists clenched in the bed.

Alcibiades stumbled to her and took her face in his hands. The shaking of the earth was less violent now than the first time, a few moments ago. The movements of the walls were longer and slower, with longer oscillations of trembling. All the beams of the house and the wood of doors and cupboards creaked once more, and Timaea cried out a shout of agony. But the movement stopped as abruptly as it had come.

Alcibiades and Timaea's hearts calmed.

They stayed a long time, holding each other on the bed. Then at long last Alcibiades asked, 'are you fine, Timaea? The quakes are really finished now. We are not hurt. The house stands. We can get up. Dawn has come. I have to go! I am too late already.'

Timaea clung to him and didn't want to let loose of him. The panic in her eyes had not yet receded. She had the green eyes of a wild cat before a wolf, thought Alcibiades, and she slung her arms tighter around him.

Alcibiades pleaded to her, repeating over and over again, 'I have to go now, Timaea, I have to go! The Spartiates saw me naked before your house. Maybe they have not recognised me. I have to go! It is all light outside, of dawn. I have to go!'

Finally, Timaea nodded. She stirred her hands and feet, looked around her with wandering eyes, seeking for damage to the walls and the window.

She jumped up, sat on the bed and said, combing with her hands through her thick hair, 'I am fine now. Yes, it was only an earthquake and we are unhurt, thank the gods. Helen preserved us this time. The gods wanted to punish me, but Helen helped me. Yes, you have to return to your own house!'

She added, 'will you also go to Cynisca's and check whether she is all right?'

He answered, 'yes, I will go to Cynisca's house. I will let you know whether she is hurt. I have to hurry now. The house held, but there is some damage to walls. You have to go down and see how your helots are doing.'

He dressed, kissed her and fled once more down the stairs into the courtyard.

It was clear day. The streets lay brightly in the light of the sun. He saw the old wall of the house in front of Timaea's that had fallen down, almost on him. The beginning fires, here and there, were being quenched. People ran in the streets, but the panic was over. Some of the men and women looked at him in astonishment, but not in anger. He stood in the gate of King Agis's house and they recognised him. He did not linger there. He drew his himation far over his head to be recognised no further. He fled off through the devastated streets. He ran off, in the direction of his own house.

While Alcibiades sped on, he saw the damage that the earthquakes had caused to Sparta. A few walls had caved in, a few roofs had sunk sideways, but there were no large fires and not many wounded lay in the streets.

When he arrived at his house, he saw that the building was overall undamaged, but for a few cracks in the walls, which could be easily repaired. His helots were re-arranging pots and amphorae in the kitchen. One helot was burnt from a fallen oil lamp.

Alcibiades got ointments from his room, from his own personal military kit he always had with him. He made the man sit and he cared for his wounds. The slave looked at Alcibiades in amazement: no Spartiate would ever have cared for a helot that way.

Alcibiades told his people to look after the house and to make repairs if necessary.

Then he ran off again, and he took the road to Cynisca's house.

He ran all the way. He had no breath anymore when he arrived at her fields. The horses grazed peacefully, as if nothing had happened. They must have eased after the quakes. Cynisca's house seemed undamaged, like his own. The gates were open and when he entered, he saw a half-naked Cynisca sitting on a couch in her aulé. When she saw him enter, she ran into his arms and they held strongly for a while.

She said, 'I am all right. You are the first to come to see me. Thank you for caring. My walls and roofs held, but a pane fell on my shoulder. I should not have run out immediately, but I was afraid to receive the roof on my head. It creaked awfully. The horses are all right now. My house is fine; a few walls have split, but I am fine.'

Alcibiades looked at her shoulder and he made her move her arm. No bones were broken. She had only bad bruises, and her upper arm began to swell much and was all blue. But for the bruises, she was unhurt.

He sat down beside her on the couch, and they smiled. He told her Timaea was fine, too. Cynisca went into the kitchen and she came back with food on a platter. They ate bread and drank goat's milk.

Suddenly, when he wanted to explain in detail what had happened during the earthquake at Timaea's house, all the implications became clear to him.

He said, 'I stood naked in the street in front of Timaea's house! All Sparta will know we are lovers.'

At first, Cynisca laughed her head off.

'Oh yes, Athenian,' she said while she wiped the tears of her laughter from her eyes, 'you can be sure of that! You will be the laughing stock of Sparta today. It will be quite a scandal, our Queen sleeping with an Athenian outlaw! I bet there will be a few horse riders sent out this afternoon to warn Agis. Lysander will send off a rider, I am sure. He is always dedicated to assist Agis in such things. How could you be so stupid?'

'I wonder what will happen next,' Alcibiades wondered. 'Anyhow, I asked the ephors to leave for Chios with Melanchridas.'

'I heard of that,' Cynisca answered. Her eyebrows went up and she looked at him, her mouth full of bread, 'how did Timaea react?'

'Oh, she was mad, really mad, and very excited! I did not realise how much she holds on to me. She reproached me for wanting to go back to my mistresses in Thrace, to Theodote and Timandra. But I only wanted to go to Chios!'

'Hmm,' Cynisca ate and finished her mouth, cherishing her honey on a cake. 'I saw Theodote in Olympia, even once without her veil. She is beautiful and she looked like a nice woman. Her heels were outrageously high. She danced quite well too when she witnessed the wrestling games. Timandra, I don't know. But Timaea is all wrong about your mistresses, Athenian. You don't want to go back to your other mistresses. Why would you? You have everything here you need.'

Alcibiades interrupted, 'that is exactly what I said!'

'You want to go to another whore,' Cynisca continued. 'Your real whore is Athens. That is your real mistress. You just want to be where the future action will be on your whore Athens, and for the moment, that will be in Chios! You want to see whether there is not in Chios and in other places of the Ionian Islands and cities any new possibility of double-crossing both Sparta and Athens, with the sole aim of returning to your whore! You do not deceive me, Athenian! Athenian you are born and Athenian you stay. You will scheme and scheme until the whore Athens will ask you on her knees to come back. And you will gracefully accept, and run towards her bosom as quickly as you can run, and you will run a lot faster than you ran towards my house just a while ago!'

Alcibiades ate in silence.

'Oh, don't look so dumb, Athenian,' Cynisca said, almost whispering, and almost talking to herself. 'Would I love you if you were just an ordinary outlaw? I have known your real designs all the time!'

Those last words cheered him up, and he grinned. But he continued to eat in silence afterwards, thinking Cynisca knew him better than he knew himself.

Later, he said goodbye to Cynisca, told her to keep it calm with her shoulder, thanked her for the meal, and he returned home. He sent word to Timaea that Cynisca was not hurt, and that she was well in limbs and in mind.

Agis came back from Decelea with a few commanders about ten days later. He only stayed a few days in Sparta, then left again for Decelea. Alcibiades had avoided seeing Timaea since the earthquake, and he also avoided attending Damos meetings. He had waited also a few days before going to the gymnasium. He saw enough signs there to conclude that all Sparta knew by now that he was Timaea's lover. When Spartiates greeted him in those days, they had a knowing grin on their faces. For most of the Spartiates the grin was a nice smile, however. Practically no Spartiate seemed to mind that he was the Queen's lover. Alcibiades was well accepted and appreciated now in Sparta, whereas Agis was a not too popular King. Probably most of the Spartiates found the joke on Agis only savoury. The story of Alcibiades storming out naked and in panic into the street during the earthquake had done the tour of the town. Yet, the scandal was on Agis alone. Nobody really cared beyond that.

Chios

After Agis had returned to Decelea, Alcibiades saw Endius exercising in the gymnasium. Alcibiades exercised with him and the men ran together on the tracks, outside. He asked Endius when the expedition to Chios would leave.

Endius answered, 'there has been a lot of talk going on in Sparta these days.'

'Oh, oh! I can imagine,' Alcibiades thought.

'Of course, they discussed my position in Sparta!' he said.

Endius continued however with a smile. 'An earthquake sure changes a man's opinions. When Poseidon, the earth-shaker, moves the world, we, Spartans, regard that as a very bad omen. You have to be present at the next Damos meeting. We will decide not to send an expedition with Melanchridas to Chios. Poseidon opposed that idea. We will send Chalcideus instead on an expedition to Chios. Instead of the Spartan ships we will only send five Laconian triremes. And, oh yes, I will be ephor this year!'

'That is great news, Endius. Congratulations! So you finally believe change is coming and an important year ahead?'

'I do, Alcibiades. Athens is very weakened by her Sicilian disaster. We have a fleet now. I know what you will say: there are few Spartan ships among them. But we lead our allies once more. The occupation of Decelea and Attica is a huge success. Euboea wants to revolt. Even Agis seems to like it! By the way, take care with Agis. Your relation with Timaea is now a public scandal. We knew of it all since many months of course, but Agis didn't. Now he knows.'

Endius started to laugh. 'What got into you to run naked in the streets in front of her house? I assumed you were a courageous guy. It seemed you were gripped by panic! Now, that is something we rather appreciate than despise in Sparta. We fear earthquakes too, and not a little! People say you have become a true Spartan!' And Endius laughed a little more.

'I had a nightmare,' Alcibiades groaned. 'I panicked from the nightmare, not from the earthquake.'

He waited a while, for Endius only poofed more.

Then, he said, 'Endius, you have to make me get out of Sparta for a while. Agis will hate me and Lysander doesn't like me either, because I am friends with Cynisca.'

'Friends with Cynisca? We thought more was going on with her too!'

'What, with Cynisca? No! She is like a sister to me!'

Endius smiled knowingly. ‘Yes, she is a sister to you like she was a sister to Timaea! Anyhow, I understand. The fire takes in the grass under your feet. But why would we send you to Chios, of all men? Alcibiades, use your head once in a while! We send Alcibiades to Chios to discuss a revolt against Athens. What will the Chians think when they see an Athenian former general arrive at the head of our ships? They will think we sent them an Athenian spy! We cannot take the chance they might think that!’

‘It is not only about Chios, Endius. We are talking about all the islands and all the cities in the Aegean. I can easily persuade the Chians to revolt from Athens. I am condemned to death in Athens, so why would the Chians think I was a spy for Athens? Better than no other, I, a former Athenian general, can explain to them how weak Athens is currently. And after Chios, I can persuade all the more and better, easily, the other cities. I still have friends in Miletus and in Ephesus and also on Lesbos. I always reached much more by persuasion than by war. I can make those cities turn sides! Now you think, Endius, think! This year is your ephorate! If those cities would become allies to Sparta, then who would harvest all the benefits? I’ll tell you: the ephor that supported Alcibiades to speak to the Ionian cities! Nobody else. And then, Endius, there is to be found the prize of prizes in those lands, the price that Agis and Lysander and every general and ephor longs for: those magnificent Darics, the golden coins of Persia with the dignified head of Darius on them. You will see sacks full of those coins. With the coins, Sparta can build ships and pay for crews on triremes. If you and the other ephors do not delegate me to those lands, to advise your navarch and polemarchs, and especially to negotiate with somebody like Tissaphernes, then Agis and Lysander will reap the benefits. I have your navarch and polemarchs in high esteem, Endius, on a battlefield. In the fields that Tissaphernes fights in, however, your Spartan friends are worthless! They will be double-crossed and cheated like children by Tissaphernes and Pharnabazus. How many times do I have to be condemned to death in Athens before your ephors and elders of the Gerousia could trust me to initiatives that are worthy of my arête, of my honour?’

‘You may be right,’ Endius conceded.

Endius still looked sceptical, and he still hesitated.

He said, ‘you may be right, after all. True, Chalcideus is a hoplite polemarch and a brute, a fine leader of men in battle, but no diplomat, and no astute politician. Yet, he was the best man we had. You might be useful in the Ionian Islands as his adviser. I will see what I can do with the men of the Gerousia.’

Endius continued, ‘Timaea and Cynisca will scratch out my eyes if I let you go.

Timaea warned me she would do that. You will have that on your conscience.’

Alcibiades smiled and replied, ‘Timaea will be mad, yes, but not Cynisca. We are friends, remember?’

‘Well, I am not too sure about that. Cynisca was a dead woman before you arrived.

She was Timaea’s lover for a while, you know. She has come to life again since your arrival. I actually heard and saw her laugh in the agora! What do you think,

Alcibiades? I am still a handsome man. I might have a go at her, myself.’

‘Yes, you might, Endius,’ Alcibiades remarked dryly with a sudden pang of jealousy.

‘Now don’t be conceited, Alcibiades!’

‘I am not, Endius. Cynisca is not for men, Endius. You will be disappointed. Cynisca is only for women. Totally and only!’

And that left even Endius standing in amazement.

It was spring again, and this spring came soft and gentle. Endius was ephor in Sparta. The Chians insisted for a Peloponnesian army to be sent to their island to help them in their revolt from Athens. The Spartans discussed the topic in the Damos. They decided to order their whole fleet, about forty ships, to sail to Chios. Agis would not have ships for Lesbos.

King Agis had come back again for a short time to Sparta. He noticed he had no support for his own plans with the ephors and the Gerousia. So he joined the opinion of the majority, and the Damos added to the original plan. The Spartans would sail first to Chios under Chalcideus, then to Lesbos under Alcamenes and finally to the Hellespont, where command was to be given to Clearchus son of Ramphias.

‘By all the gods,’ Alcibiades thought, ‘why so much fuss for forty ships? Forty? Is that all they can muster, even after Sicily? With both victorious Corinth and Syracuse as their allies?’

The Gerousia ordered half the ships to be brought from Corinth across the Isthmus. The other half would sail later.

‘They will never send more than twenty ships to the islands,’ Alcibiades knew. Sparta was still not up to Athens’ power at Sea!

The Athenians learned of the Spartan campaign during the Isthmic Games. They prepared rapidly also about forty ships, and promptly drove the twenty Corinthian triremes into Spiraem, a natural harbour on the border of the land of Epidaurus. Alcamenes was killed in skirmishes in the harbour and the Peloponnesian sailors panicked to the point that they even thought of burning all their ships. The Athenians blockaded Spiraem, and the Corinthian ships did not dare to engage them.

Alcibiades raged in the Damos.

‘How is it possible,’ he thought, ‘a much weakened Athens can draw forty war triremes out of its sleeve like that, and the Spartans not even ten, only five. Moreover, the few Athenian ships block efficiently half of the Peloponnesian fleet.’

He said to the ephors, ‘this is no way to wage a war in the Sea! If Sparta wants half a chance to win, it has to learn to react much more quickly! Sparta has to act in secret and not take the time to let the whole world know what it is planning. What will you do now? You promised a fleet to Chios, but the few ships you have are blocked completely by an Athens that has never been weaker! You have to act quickly now, much more quickly than before. Send out your tiny fleet of five ships with Chalcideus and me today, before the Chians hear of your shame, of the disaster of Spiraem! I will talk to the Chians and prove to them the weakness of Athens. I will bluff them into revolt with empty promises and then realise the promises with their own ships. But be quick!’

He shouted the last words as if the ephors were deaf. Endius and the ephors were convinced that Alcibiades spoke the truth, and they did not doubt anymore that he was the only man who could call the bluff they needed to soften the catastrophe of Spiraem. He became their only hope. So they let Chalcideus sail out urgently with the five Laconian ships, and accompanied by Alcibiades. Alcibiades received no command. He would merely be an advisor and an unofficial representative of Sparta.

The departure and decision for action was indeed a good thing for Sparta, for Athens would teach the Spartiates once more how one fought at Sea. Just a little time later than the Damos meeting, sixteen Peloponnesian ships that returned from Sicily were given a beating by twenty-seven Athenian ships led by Hippocles son of Menippus. After losing a mere one sole trireme, the Peloponnesians fled to Corinth and did not dare to come out of that harbour anymore. The worried Spartan ephors could not keep count anymore of how many Athenian ships were actually in the Sea. They wondered where the weakened Athens could still get its triremes from. But the Athenian triremes were there all right, everywhere where there was a Peloponnesian ship to be found.

After the Damos meeting, the same morning, Alcibiades said goodbye to Cynisca. He planned to meet Timaea in the afternoon. Cynisca embraced him. She knew that he would not return and she said so.

‘I will return,’ Alcibiades said weakly.

‘No,’ Cynisca answered. ‘I have that intuition. I know it and I feel it. I feel also that you will return to Athens. That should make you happy.’

She did not tell him that she also thought he would not live to become an old man.

She shuddered, and then continued. ‘It is all right. We all have to follow the destiny the gods prepared for us. Thank you for everything. I know what to do with the horses and chariots. I will be the first woman ever to win the Olympic Games, for sure!’

Then she cracked, and she began to cry, to cry as if her heart flew out of her mouth, cries of rage and despair. She was Cynisca, however, so she stopped as abruptly as her cries had started. She flew in his arms and hugged him.

‘Oh, Athenian, you were such a joy for me! You made me laugh again. You made me suffer again. I found out I had emotions after all. I thought I had lost all feelings. I was so alone here, in Sparta, and I had to keep myself so much alert. You gave me a fine present. I love you and I respect you. I would not be able to love you if I didn’t respect you, though you were enemy and will be one day enemy again. There can be no love without respect. I respected you and you respected me.’

‘Somebody, well, it was Socrates, once said to me I did not respect people. Thank you for saying the contrary!’

‘Socrates was right and wrong. He was wrong, because you do respect individuals when you are placed before them. That was nice, for nobody ever respected me like that, not even Timaea. You respect a helot the same way you respect a Spartiate and a King. I believe Socrates learned you that! And Socrates was right, because you do not respect peoples, polises, when they stand in the way of your ambitions and your destiny. Then you are able to sacrifice them. That is what you were born for. Oh, why could the gods not grant us lasting peace? Life would be so nice!’

She hugged him again, then pushed him away from her, ‘now, you leave quickly, Athenian, and take care!’

Alcibiades turned and ran out of the gate of her house.

Timaea was spinning wool and a servant sat next to her, weaving the yarn. She sent her servant away to talk to Alcibiades. She received him joyfully, so joyfully that Alcibiades was definitely surprised. Has she been scheming and were there no ships sailing for Chios after all? He had expected cries and tears. Timaea was actually happy and she smiled! She kissed and hugged him. She said it was a good thing he went away for a while, far from Agis’s grips. She said that she would make Agis forget about the relation they had.

‘And how will you do that, for Zeus’ sake?’ Alcibiades asked, slightly irritated. ‘Oh,’ Timaea answered off-handedly, striking over the folds of her tunic, ‘I am going to give him a child. He’ll like that.’

‘What?’ Alcibiades said, ‘again?’

‘Again?’ Timaea replied, all innocence. ‘It will be our first child, Alcibiades!’

She paused. ‘Don’t look so perplexed, darling. Don’t you notice something about me?’

She stood back and patted her belly. She had very rosy cheeks, heavy breasts, and she stuck her belly out to him.

Alcibiades was dumb-stricken. ‘No,’ he shouted. ‘No! You’re not pregnant!’

‘Oh yes I am, darling sweet, I am!’ she cried triumphantly. ‘I am going to have a Poseidon child! It can only be a boy! Remember? We made him just before the earthquake! Poseidon gave him to me. That was what the earthquake was about: a sign of Poseidon that a new King was being made to Sparta. I have a little Alcibiades writhing in me! Isn’t it wonderful, a little Alcibiades? Oh, I will have to call him Leotychidas of course, but for me he will always be the little Alcibiades! And you will come back to see your son!’

‘This simply isn’t possible,’ Alcibiades panicked. ‘She hasn’t done that!’

But he remembered how many times they had made love that night and how passionate she had been. Yes, it was perfectly possible. Would he come back to Sparta?

‘I am very happy then, Timaea,’ Alcibiades said out loudly and sweetly. ‘I do love you and I do want to come back. You are lovely and radiant. Your pregnancy already suits you. I will be back when you give birth. And yes, you should call him Leotychidas. But how did Agis react?’

‘Agis doesn’t know yet that I am pregnant, sweet, and he won’t for quite some time,’ she said coolly. ‘We haven’t slept together when he came back, thank the gods for that. He feared the earthquake and pledged not to sleep with me for a while. But about our being lovers, he was mad! I told him your charm had been irresistible. I told him I was lost, bored, not satisfied with Cynisca, and I said I was attracted to you. I accused him of neglecting me. He said at first he would kill you, but then I made him believe it was really all his own fault what had happened. I told him I seduced you and I asked him who in Sparta would be able to resist me when I wanted something. He didn’t laugh, but he changed his mind then. In the following days he kind of got used to the idea that I had lovers. Many Spartan women have lovers. How else could we live with all our men at war? In a way too, he prefers that I sleep with a foreigner rather than with a Spartiate. It makes his politics in Sparta easier. At least, that is how I pleaded! He told he would send you away from Sparta, though. I cried and wept, then wished him to get killed in Attica and go to Hades for all the suffering he brought on me. He refused to sleep with me. He fears earthquakes even more than you. He will not repudiate me or kill me. I still belong to him; I am his. He once said I was the most desirable woman in Sparta, and I think he still sees me that way. He is even flattered I slept with nobody else but the first man of Athens, a child of the great Pericles. Then he left.’

She sighed.

Alcibiades embraced her a last time. He locked his eyes with hers and he saw only happiness and expectation. Timaea longed for him, but she had something new to long for. Something else occupied her mind already, her child. She would defend her

son like a lioness. He caressed her manes, the short yet luxurious, thick black hair that crowned her face. He realised how much he would miss her, this greatest among the beauties of Sparta.

He said, 'you will be in my mind and in my heart. Take care of our boy.'

He patted her under her breasts. Then he tore away, turned, and left the room.

Alcibiades thought, 'why am I leaving? Why do I not stay in Sparta? Why did I have to sail to Chios? I had Timaea here, in Sparta. I had here the only true friend I had in years, Cynisca.'

But then he said to himself, 'Cynisca is a friend, but she loves women. Timaea loves her child and herself. You are not needed here. You had to go. You have Harmonia. If you want to see Harmonia again, you have to leave. Cynisca was right: Athens is beckoning. Deep inside yourself you know Athens is beckoning. Home is beckoning. Yes, you do want Athens to ask you back. You don't know how or why, but you long for Athens. You long for the stinking alleys of that hopeless city. It is the one thing you want in front of you, Athens at her knees. You don't want to be tyrant of Athens. Oh no. You want Athens to love you, to admire you, to say you are the only saviour of the polis. She sure needs you now!'

The next day, he rode on a horse of Endius through the plains of the Eurotas River. While he galloped he said goodbye to Sparta and to Laconia. He rode in the morning, towards the south, towards the sun.

'I only continue my journey,' he thought. 'I came from the north, into the sun, but the sun was hidden in clouds then and now I leave again with the sun shining brightly in my eyes. I came with little money, alone, an outlaw, condemned to death in my town, and uncertain of how welcome I was in this grey city. Now I travel as an ambassador of this town. Pleasures and grieve are mixed inextricably together here, but that is not different from how it is in the other places of the world. Why did we make war on Sparta? The Spartans only want to live in peace and be let alone and be tranquil. They move so slowly! I had two loves in Athens; I have two loves in Sparta. I had a son in Athens; I will have one in Sparta. Will I ever be able to make war again on Sparta? I have to think about that! But I have to stay away from Agis now. No Athens and no Sparta for me anymore. Where to then? To Ionia and to Lydia and Caria! How beautiful is nature there!'

Thus he rode, and he made good way southwards, longing for the Sea. He would soon feel a ship under his feet again and the prospect of that delight made his heart feel lighter.

Alcibiades arrived in the late afternoon in Gytheum, Sparta's harbour town. It was situated to the right of the River, downstream, on the side on which he followed the Eurotas. He handed over his horse at a house Endius had indicated him. He went on foot to the military harbour, a tiny affair compared to Piraeus and to Syracuse's quays. Five triremes were being readied to depart. He walked by, and saw Chalcideus on one of them. He stepped aboard that ship. Chalcideus was a Spartiate of his mess, so he knew the man vaguely. Chalcideus had been a silent man in the evenings, but Alcibiades had not had the impression he was a bad man. He knew the man was a friend of Gylippus.

Chalcideus greeted him with lifted hand. The commander immediately proposed him to travel on the same ship, so that they could discuss the issues at Sea and how to

handle the Chians. Alcibiades had already sent his belongings to the fleet, the day before. They were on Chalcideus's ship. Alcibiades stayed on board.

The next day, the only five triremes that Sparta possessed, sailed out of Gytheum. They would sail to Cythera, from there to Melos and then from island to island, maybe over Delos, but Alcibiades preferred to pass by the smaller islands, and from there to Chios. They would have to sail in the open Sea for quite a stretch, but Alcibiades insisted on secrecy. Athens should absolutely not know that they were on their way to her most powerful ally and to the largest polis in the Athenian League.

When the small fleet rowed out of Gytheum and when the sails were brought up and took the wind, Alcibiades stood at the prow of the first boat. He said goodbye to Laconia. He was once more the lonely Hellene in search of a new place to live in. He said goodbye to Timaea and to Cynisca. Might they fare well! He thought he would be back one day.

Chapter 16 – Chios and Miletus, Summer 412 BC to the Summer of 411 BC

Chios

Chalcideus and Alcibiades moored their triremes to pass the night and to eat at as few islands as they could. They arrested everybody who saw their ships on the voyage. They did not sail straight for Chios, but went first on land at Corycus on the mainland of Asia. They set their prisoners free there, for the men would only be able to return and warn Athens a long time after the Spartan actions would be finished.

Chalcideus arranged a meeting with the Chians who plotted to overthrow democracy on the island. The Chians proposed the Spartans to row directly into Chios harbour to create a surprise in the town. Chalcideus was cautious, but Alcibiades was in favour of the idea of simply dashing in with their ships and force immediately the Chian Council to cope with the presence of the Spartans. He said that if they took the initiative in that way, the Chian democrats would be caught by surprise and unable to take the initiative. The oligarchic Chians promised to arrange for a Council meeting to take place right at the moment that the Spartan ships would arrive, so that Alcibiades and Chalcideus could walk straight from the harbour to the Council. And so they did.

Alcibiades stood with Chalcideus in the middle of the deck of their ship, both clad in complete bronze armour. They had shields engraved with the sign of Lacedaemon hanging on their back. The ships sailed early, and they sailed until they arrived close to Chios. The island became clearly visible at the horizon.

Chios was an island of soft, sun-baked slopes, and to the south lay a vast plain. Alcibiades imagined the vineyards of the best wine in the world in that plain, and he and Chalcideus laughed with the expectation of that wine. Chios was also known for its delicate fragrances. It was the island and city where allegedly Homer, the blind poet who had written the Iliad on the Trojan war, had lived. Behind the town towered mountains, but none were sufficiently high to have their tops crowned by snow in this season. It was a beautiful island, which lay now peacefully in the brilliant light of the sun and the Sea.

When they sailed close to the harbour, Chalcideus ordered the sails and masts to be taken down and while that happened, the sailors started to row. They rowed fast. The triremes sped through the waves and as they advanced proudly and rapidly on the Sea, they fell in a regular line, rowing one after the other, as if they were breaking through enemy defences. Alcibiades had made them train on this manoeuvre in the Sea. The Spartan fleet entered thus in battle formation in Chios harbour. They took the Chians utterly by surprise.

The city of Chios had a fine, wide harbour, not as large as Syracuse harbour, but larger than the merchant port of Piraeus. The Chians had built a grand pier to close the natural harbour, but for an opening of about five stades. This harbour was the jewel of the region and so was the island that lay all dressed in green in the Sea. The harbour was a splendid refuge in times of storm. The Spartan ships did not wait for any permission to enter the harbour. They rowed at full speed to the quays, arrogantly, and aiming for a place in the middle of the port, closest to the centre of the city. Chalcideus and Alcibiades did not really dare to look at the many war triremes that

were moored at the far quays. They chose to ignore the threat of that fleet. Chalcideus made a sign with his head in that direction to Alcibiades, and moved with his eyebrows, but Alcibiades whispered to him to look straight ahead, and certainly not to show any fear to their men and to the Chians. It was hard for a Spartiate to stay unmoved at the sight of so much sea-power. The two men commanded their ships unperturbedly forward, though. Of course, the Chian ships could have destroyed them in a nick of time. But nobody expected Spartan ships to enter so cocksure into the harbour, and the Chians did not expect any attack.

The Spartan ships moored one after the other. As soon as their ship was at the quay, Chalcideus and Alcibiades jumped off their ship. A few Chian oligarchs waited on the quays for them and, together with these men, Chalcideus and Alcibiades walked to the Council building.

The Council had been warned just little time before of the arrival of Spartan war triremes. Yet, the surprise of seeing two Spartan polemarchs enter the Council Hall was total. Alcibiades and Chalcideus stepped proudly and self-assuredly to the speakers' place. They were still in full armour and they wore shield and sword on their back. They held their bronze helmet in their left arm, at their side.

Chalcideus was the first to speak.

He said, 'Honourable Members of the Council of Chios. I am Chalcideus, polemarch of Sparta. I have come in peace. I have arrived in advance of the Spartan fleet to help you gain your independence from Athens. Athens exerts ever higher tributes from you to fund her outrageous wars against the peaceful Peloponnesian lands and against other peaceful polises like Syracuse of Sicily. You know what happened not so long ago to Melos. I have come to offer you freedom from that yoke. Allies of Sparta do not pay tribute, and we live in peace with our allies, as well as with all other peoples. I propose that you throw off the yoke that oppresses you. You will gain the friendship and the protection of Sparta, not only on land, but also in the Sea!'

Chalcideus let the Council consider the proposal. The men discussed feverishly, whispering to each other. Alcibiades saw that they were confused. The oligarchs ended by shouting approval, but the democrats were alarmed and wondered how to react to this sudden development. They also did not know how many more armed Spartiates patrolled in the streets and before the building. Chalcideus looked at Alcibiades, and Alcibiades came forward and spoke.

'Valiant men of Chios, greetings,' he started. 'Some of you know me. I am Alcibiades, general of Athens.'

The room became very quiet.

'I have lived for two years now in Sparta, which gracefully offered me hospitality when the current wicked Athenian leaders banished me from my town. I fight now with Sparta against the men who wanted to conquer the world of the Hellenes from Sicily to the Hellespont and who usurped power in my beloved polis. Athens attacked Sicily to win Syracuse. With Syracuse it would have attacked Carthago and with Carthago it would have subdued all the Hellenic cities and islands of the western Sea and of Italy. Then, Athens would have attacked the Peloponnesos, tried to subjugate Sparta with masses of hoplites, as many as Sparta would not have been able to resist. If Athens had been successful, the same ambitious and heartless men would have conquered Ionia and made slaves of you. Luckily, I explained this wicked plot to the Spartan Kings and ephors, for I am a peace-loving man. Yes, I too would have sailed

for Sicily, for I obeyed the laws of Athens. Yet my sole aim was to offer Syracuse protection from Carthaginian invasions. Sparta thwarted the Athenian ambitions in Sicily and Sparta's army permanently occupies Attica. Athens is nothing but a citadel that lives and dwells, isolated from its lands, and dominates the Sea like a parasite by virtue of your tributes exclusively. How long are you going to suffer hardships for these men in Athens? They have been completely defeated in Sicily. Athens' fleet of more than hundred ships has been totally destroyed. Athens' army of once fifty-thousand men has been reduced to nothing. Not one of those men returned to Athens. Athens has but few ships left and the Peloponnesian and Syracusan fleets roam the Sea unhindered. So, I repeat; how long are you going to suffer hardships for Athens? He paused a few moments to let these thoughts sink in their minds. Then, voices rose, 'away with Athens! For Sparta!'

Alcibiades continued. 'You may wonder why an Athenian general speaks for Sparta in your Council. I explained most of it. But there is more. Sparta gave me shelter when Athens banished me. Sparta could have killed me or refused entrance, for once I fought the Spartans. Yet, I lived in peace in Sparta, and I learnt to appreciate the peacefulness of the place. Sparta has not attacked lands and polises that did not belong to their allied peoples. The men that lead Athens, however, have appropriated the money you sent them for the Delian League, to use that money for their own designs of hegemony. The money that had to protect you from invasions has been squandered to invade peaceful territories, and it will be used against any polis that seeks its independence and that has enough ships to defend itself or ally with other polises of its own choice. I repeat my question: are you going to let that happen? Athens has spent your money for its own adventures. Now that the largest part of its army is destroyed, it is time for you to say to Athens, "enough! Give us back our money. Give us back our freedom. We will ally with a polis that does not usurp our strengths and money!"'

Alcibiades had started his speech calmly, with a voice that almost whispered, so that the Chians had to remain very silent to hear him speak. Like Protagoras had taught him, he shouted his last phrases over the heads of the members of the Council with opened arms to excite the emotions of the audience. Even Chalcideus was impressed, and he caused an uproar in the hall, for the weakest of oligarchs convinced the toughest democrats that the words of Alcibiades were nothing but the truth. Chios, the largest of the allied polises of Athens, could go its own way with Sparta. There was a vote in the Council, and with a large majority of votes the Chians decided to revolt from Athens. The Members of the Council then left the hall. The men drew Alcibiades and Chalcideus with them, and together they visited the war fleet of Chios in the harbour. Many of the people of Chios joined the group, so that they went in a large procession to the harbour.

Chios had fought its freedom from Athens. The Council was proud to show the important fleet of well-prepared war triremes that were moored in the harbour. Ten ships were ready to sail out at a word of the Council. Their crews were resting in the arsenal close by. The Council showed about fifty triremes, and they told that ten more ships were patrolling in the open Sea. The ships were all in perfect sailing and rowing condition. Alcibiades wondered how the few Spartan ships had been able to get along and pass the vigilance of the patrolling Chian triremes. Maybe he and Chalcideus had only enjoyed dumb luck, but it told him much about the awareness of the Chians navy, though he made no remarks to the Chian generals.

The Peloponnesian fleet of forty ships was still ignominiously blocked at Spiraenum at that time but Alcibiades had just offered a fleet of sixty war triremes to the Spartans without drawing one sword. Chalcideus beamed.

Chalcideus got along well with Alcibiades. He recognised the daring, the self-assured dash and the genius of the man. He did not shy away from recognising that Alcibiades worked at another level than he. He listened to him, as his friend Gylippus had told him to do, and the two men worked together in good understanding. The Chians saw the Spartiate hoplite and the Athenian diplomat as one man, and they had confidence. That evening there was feasting in Chios, and Alcibiades and Chalcideus tasted the best wine of Ionia and indeed of Hellas, as they had expected.

A few days after the Chians, the Erythraeans rose in revolt against Athens. The Erythraeans had heard what had happened at Chios, and they sent on their own initiative a delegation to Chalcideus to inform him of their decision.

While Chalcideus stayed in Chios to lead the fleet, Alcibiades sailed to Clazomenae with three ships. He pleaded with the people there, and he brought also Clazomenae to refuse to remain a member of the Delian League. The Chians, Erythraeans and Clazomenaeans fortified their cities, harbours and forts, and they prepared for the war with Athens. The Clazomenaeans even sailed to the mainland of Lydia to fortify the site of Polychna, so that if necessary they could retreat from their island to this fortified place. Such facts proved to Alcibiades that these people were indeed very determined to leave the alliance with Athens.

In Chios, Chalcideus heard from the merchant boats that roamed the waters of Ionia that the Athenian general Strombichides had arrived at the island of Samos, close to Chios, to check the Spartan actions in Ionia. Strombichides arrived with one ship at Teos, but Chalcideus, ever driven to speedy action by Alcibiades, had taken twenty-three Chian ships and he had sailed to Teos too. Chalcideus arrived first at Teos. Alcibiades sped with a land army of Clazomenaeans and Erythraeans, in support. The Teans were not well inclined to receive Chalcideus, but when they saw the Athenian ship flee from the Chian ships led by a Spartiate, they allowed the armies of Chalcideus and Alcibiades to enter their town. With the help of the people of Teos, Alcibiades destroyed the fort that the Athenians had built on the island, facing the mainland.

While they were occupied at destroying the Athenian forts, Alcibiades saw a small troop of Lydian hoplites approach the city. The men marched under the orders of Stages, a commander of Tissaphernes. Alcibiades and Chalcideus continued with their work and let the amazed commander come very close. Before Chalcideus could say a word, Alcibiades greeted the commander and he asked him to join in the effort of destroying the forts built to menace Lydia. Stages looked arrogantly at the works on the other side of the water. Then, he smiled, and sent over his men. Alcibiades looked at Chalcideus and he asked to Stages, 'where can we find the satrap Tissaphernes? Can you take a message to him from the Spartan command?'

Miletus

Alcibiades conferred with Chalcideus. In very few days they had forced Chios, the largest polis and most powerful ally of Athens, to serve the interests of Sparta. Erythrae, Clazomenae and Teos were now allies of Sparta and enemies of Athens. Alcibiades sent triumphant letters to Endius, and Chalcideus informed the Gerousia with official scrolls. Chalcideus was satisfied, but for Alcibiades these successes were only the first.

Alcibiades proposed to sail to Miletus next. He had friends there among the leading people. He thought he could persuade also Miletus to revolt from Athens. He needed a Spartan hoplite army to that end, however. Chalcideus proposed to take the crews of the Spartan ships, who were perioeci, and to arm these as hoplites. Sparta had not really any rowers; these men had been hoplites in previous lives. Alcibiades thought that a grand idea. So now he had an army of about a thousand Spartan hoplites. He manned the five Spartan ships with Chian rowers, to take the place of the Spartan sailors. Alcibiades told Chalcideus to hurry. He wanted to bring Miletus to revolt before the arrival of a new Peloponnesian fleet. Thus, the credit of having gained Miletus would go to Alcibiades, Chalcideus and Endius, in that order.

Alcibiades and Chalcideus sailed with the five Spartan ships, twenty Chian war triremes and their thousand hoplites to Miletus. While they sailed they remarked that they were followed on their heels by an Athenian fleet. That fleet was constituted of the ships of Strombichides and of ships brought lately to Ionia by another Athenian general, Charicles.

Alcibiades and Chalcideus arrived first at Miletus. They positioned their fleet in battle order, in a half moon form, in front of the harbour of the city. Alcibiades and Chalcideus spoke to the people of Miletus in the same way as they had done at Chios. Alcibiades also spoke in private to some of the leading people of the town. The Milesians hesitated for a day. Then they voted for a revolt from Athens.

Strombichides and Charicles found the harbour closed to them. Milesian ships joined the Chian ships, and the sight of the Spartan triremes made them understand immediately what had happened. The Athenians took position at Lade, the island off Miletus. The fleet of twenty-five Chian and Spartan ships were by then safe in the harbour of Miletus, and the Spartan hoplites set up camp near the city.

Miletus was a large, beautiful and wealthy city of Ionia, situated in the Persian satrapy of Caria. It had high and powerful walls and enormous, strong gates. It lay entirely on an isthmus and its richness came from its four harbours. The main harbour, the Lions harbour, lay to the north, facing the Sea to the west. Two other natural harbours were south to this one, equally facing the Sea, and also on the east side ships could moor. The Milesians had founded prestigious colonies, from Naucratis in Egypt, the main port by which Athens and the Hellenic world traded with North Africa, to Synope on the Black Sea. The houses of Miletus were built on a grid rectangular plan with wide roads, among which the finest was the road that led from the Lions harbour to the city centre. Miletus prided in several agora marketplaces. South of the Lions harbour lay a first agora, close to which stood the sanctuary of Apollo. A little further lay a very large marketplace, and here were the main buildings of the town: the Bouleutêrion or the city's Council hall, various temples, shrines, altars for sacrifices, the Nymphaeum, and others. These buildings were very elegant and finely sculptured, for some of the best Hellenic architects and sculptors had worked at Miletus to give it the splendid

appearance and grace of a metropolis that possessed much wealth and gold to spend on beauty. At the fourth harbour, southwards, stood the Temple of Athena. It was here that Alcibiades later came for his prayers and where he sacrificed to the goddess. It was not a spectacular temple, but it was a nice building with six Ionian columns on each shortest side and ten columns on the longest side.

While Alcibiades and Chalcideus discussed the alliance with Sparta in Miletus, they found there Stages and other commanders of Tissaphernes. Alcibiades was eager to conclude a treaty between the Spartans and the satrap of Lydia and Caria. He sat therefore together with Chalcideus and the Persian commanders, and together they made up a first draft of a treaty that could be signed by both parties.

The text was short, Laconian, and to the point. The paper stated that Sparta recognised all the territories that were currently or in the past part of Caria to belong to Persia. Sparta and Persia promised to co-operate to prevent Athens from ever again demanding tribute from their cities. The war with Athens would be carried out jointly and could not be ended unless both parties agreed to do so. People that revolted from either party would be regarded as enemies of the other. The commanders of Tissaphernes promised to take this text to the satrap and to the King of Persia.

Not long afterwards, ten Chian ships sailed to Anaia to have news from their ships at Miletus, and also to organise revolt in the cities there. The people of Miletus heard however that Amorges, the enemy of Tissaphernes, was arriving with an army by land in those territories. Chalcideus and Alcibiades decided to send the Chian ships back. The Chians obeyed, but they unfortunately sailed straight into another Athenian fleet of sixteen ships led by Diomedon, a fleet that had been sent out later still than Charicles's ships. The Athenians defeated the Chians and captured four empty Chian ships, the crews of which had fled ashore. The Athenians had now over forty ships in their army of Samos, of which twelve ships were at Lade, in front of Miletus. This was a considerable power in Ionia, and Alcibiades was worried. Nevertheless, there were new successes in the Spartan expedition, for the Chians brought their ships to Lebedus and then to Erae and stirred up revolt in these cities too. Chios, Erythrae, Clazomenae, Teos, Miletus, Lebedus and Erae were all allies of Sparta now, having become sworn enemies of Athens. The islands flared in uproar.

Though ally to Athens, Samos was governed by an oligarchy that controlled the town. The Athenian generals and the democrats of Samos forced an uprising of the democrats of the island. The Athenians supported the democrats with three of their ships, and soon a democratic government was installed on the island. Most of the oligarchs were banished. The Athenian army would be safe at Samos, which also possessed an excellent harbour.

Alcibiades and Chalcideus stayed at Miletus. They waited there for Tissaphernes. The twenty Peloponnesian ships that were blocked in Spiraeeum in the meantime, finally broke out of their containment and defeated even the weak Athenian forces that opposed them. They captured four Athenian ships and sailed to Cenchriae, where they prepared to sail to Chios. The Spartan ephors sent them Astyochus as navarch, to take over supreme command in Ionia. Chalcideus and Alcibiades would henceforth be subordinated to Astyochus.

The Spartans also suffered setbacks in Ionia, for Alcibiades and Chalcideus heard that the Athenian general Diomedon had arrived with ten ships at Teos, forcing the Teans to receive his army in the town. Diomedon sailed afterwards to Erae and he took that city by assault. Teos and Erae were thus lost for Sparta.

But a new success for their side was that the Chians had set out with thirteen ships to the island of Lesbos. Chalcideus and Alcibiades had ordered them first to go to Lesbos, and then to the Hellespont. The Chians sent Eualos, a Spartiate commander who had accompanied Chalcideus, with the troops they had, along the coast towards Clazomenae and Cumae. The Chian fleet was under the command of another Spartan hoplite commander, called Diniadas. The Chian fleet brought Methymna and Mytilene on Lesbos to revolt from Athens.

Astyochus took only four Corinthian ships from Cenchriae to Chios. When he arrived at Chios, the Chians were comforted in their belief that more Peloponnesian ships would soon join in the revolts.

After so many early and spectacular successes in the Aegean, Sparta could by right rejoice. So far, Athens had refrained from halting the progress of the anti-Athenian coalitions in the islands, so much so that everybody in the region took for granted that Athens' role in these parts of the world was finished. If Athens lay in agony, she slashed out in her death pangs in a series of events that astonished friend and enemy. A gigantic game of chess started then in the Ionian Islands, which brought the theatre of the operations of war between Athens and Sparta completely to these parts. The cause of events was astonishing, confusing and surprised all observers of the war.

The Athenian generals did not remain idle at Samos. They engaged in a flurry of actions. Twenty-five triremes under Diomedon and Leon sailed to Lesbos. Leon had brought ten additional ships from Athens. These troops took Mytilene. The Chian ships fled from Methymna too, and Astyochus, who had taken a Chian ship to see what was happening at Lesbos, recuperated these four ships in the open Sea. With these he organised a revolt at Eresus. The people of Lesbos were Athenian once more, so Astyochus had to return to Chios. Six additional Peloponnesian ships arrived at that time in Chios. But the Athenian army sailed to Polychna, captured the fort and led the people back to Clazomenae, which became Athenian again. The Spartans had lost in a few days Lesbos with Methymna and Mytilene, Teos and Erae, Clazomenae and Polychna. They had gained Eresus and they still held Chios and Miletus. It was not anymore Alcibiades's diplomacy and fine words that decided in Ionia, but the might of the sword and of the war trireme.

The Athenians who were at Lade blockaded Miletus on the sea-side with twenty ships. Their men landed near Miletus, at Panormus. Alcibiades wanted to hide safely inside the walls of Miletus, for he did not see how a few Athenians could harm the town at this moment. But Chalcideus wanted to chase the Athenians from Milesian territory. He ran out of Miletus at the head of a few tens of hoplites. He ran into a deadly trap, for the Athenians had brought more men than could be seen from the walls of Miletus. Chalcideus became involved in a regular skirmish, and he had too few men. He was overcome and killed.

Three days later, the Athenians set up a trophy in front of Miletus with the armour of the defeated Spartan and Milesian hoplites. Alcibiades was angry. He convinced the Milesians to sally out of their gates and to pull the trophy down, for the Athenians had not conquered this territory.

As a next initiative, the Athenians attacked Chios. They invested the islands off Chios called the Oenussae, the fortresses of Sidussa and Pteleum, and of course they had recovered the island of Lesbos. They landed at Cardamyle and at Bolessius and they defeated the Chians several times in the land battles that ensued there, as well as at Phanae and Leuconium. The Chians were much distressed, but they still kept their faith in their alliance with Sparta, and they discussed further actions with Astyochus.

Athens strengthened its forces in Ionia even further. Forty-eight additional ships arrived at Samos with a thousand Athenian citizen hoplites, a thousand allied troops and fifteen hundred Argive hoplites. These were commanded by Phrynichus, Onomacles and Scironides. Alcibiades heard about these arrivals at Miletus, and he was worried. With Chios beleaguered, these new troops might attack Miletus. There were now about a hundred Athenian triremes in Ionia against seventy Chian and Peloponnesian ships. He secretly admired the energy of his home town, and he wondered also at the reserves in money and men that were still in Athens, but his actions for Sparta would run into disaster if not more ships and troops would arrive from Sparta. He sent small messenger ships to Chios, to Astyochus, and to the Peloponnesos, to Endius. He was much excited, however, for the events in the Ionian Islands quickened his heart and appealed to his intelligence much more than anything that had happened to him in Sparta.

At the very end of the autumn of that year, while Alcibiades was wondering at Miletus what to do next, the satrap of Lydia and Caria, Tissaphernes, arrived with a few troops in front of the town. He had finally received the proposals for alliance from Alcibiades and the late Chalcideus and he had decided to travel himself to the Spartans to negotiate a treaty. Alcibiades stood at the walls of Miletus when a large group of Lydian cavalry arrived, among which Tissaphernes. Also mercenary hoplite and light troops followed the cavalry. Tissaphernes asked for entry into Miletus. Miletus was an Ionian city, and a rather independent Hellenic polis, but Ionia was still considered by the King of Persia to be part of Caria. The Milesians had to pay officially allegiance to Tissaphernes by fear of Persian reprisals. Beleaguered as they were by the Athenians, any addition to their forces was welcome. They immediately opened their gates to the Lydian and Carian armies. Alcibiades and the magistrates of Miletus went to the Council Hall of the town to greet the satrap.

Tissaphernes entered the hall. It was the first time Alcibiades met a Persian satrap, a representative of the Great King, a governor of vast Persian lands. Tissaphernes was a tall, lean, imposing man who stepped with dignity and arrogance to the speaker's stone. He was a Persian aristocrat of the highest rank, a courtier of the King of Persia and his haughty looks made everyone understand he was to be obeyed. He was also a warrior, not the corrupt lackey of the King, but a man used to take initiatives and with a mind of his own. He governed over vast lands to which the King of Persia would never come, so he governed there as the absolute master. He was a man of energy and of force. He entered the hall dressed in light armour, wearing a sword, and a bow and

a quiver filled with arrows on his back. He wore no shield. He was bare-headed, but a Persian commander walking behind him wore his helmet.

Tissaphernes could be mistaken for a Hellenic general in war campaign. He wore an expensive, wonderful, golden-coloured cloak that floated on his back. Alcibiades studied the man's long, aquiline nose and hooky face. Tissaphernes looked slowly around to take in the scene of the hall with his deep black eyes, and his looks lingered on the handsome Alcibiades, who stood in mere chiton and unarmed among the magistrates of Miletus. For Alcibiades, this man was not a lion but a deadly, subtle and determined tiger. Seven Persian commanders followed Tissaphernes, all likewise armed with bow and arrows and swords, splendidly dressed in silver-engraved armour.

Tissaphernes spoke in perfect Ionian, 'greetings, honoured men of Miletus. I heard the Athenians led siege to your city. I brought troops to assist you in your strive. More men will come if necessary. What have you started without consulting me? I would like to talk to the Spartan delegates!'

The Milesians welcomed Tissaphernes with a hundred bows and polite formulas. They bade him and his men welcome. They assured Tissaphernes that the city was open to him. They said they had allied with Sparta to defend themselves from Athenian dominance. Only Alcibiades represented Sparta.

'The Athenians have come in great power of fleet and hoplites to our countries. We must resist them here,' Tissaphernes said.

Turning to Alcibiades, he continued, 'I wonder why there is this sudden interest of Athens for our lands and cities. I expect to find out what the Athenians want from our territories. The Spartans obviously have accepted our offer to help the Ionian cities to become totally independent from Athens.'

Many a Milesian Council Member thought, 'so that we would be dependent on Sparta or on Tissaphernes. What is the difference? We have fought the Persians for generations, and sometimes Athens helped us in those wars. Have we fought the Persians to depend from Persians once more? Should we not rather join Athens?'

The Members of the Council remained in silence, however. This was not the time to be rude with Tissaphernes. They explained the situation to the satrap and they decided on a distribution of the Persian troops among the guards of Miletus. The Milesians offered a house to Tissaphernes, but he declined and replied coolly he preferred a Persian tent to sleep in. He did ask for a shadowed, large open space in the town to set up his camp. Then, the Council adjourned.

In the evening, Alcibiades walked to Tissaphernes's camp and he asked for an audience with the satrap. Tissaphernes's tent was closed, but a commander went inside and the man came back almost immediately, telling Alcibiades that Tissaphernes would indeed receive him.

The satrap's tent was actually a cluster of tents. When Alcibiades entered, Tissaphernes was lying on a couch reading from a scroll and he was talking to two of his commanders. He gave a signal to the commanders to leave. The men were reluctant at first to let Alcibiades be alone with the satrap. Tissaphernes pointed however at a huge guard who stood at the far side of the tent, who obviously was his bodyguard and who would remain inside the tent. The commanders left, looking suspiciously at Alcibiades, and Alcibiades stayed in the tent alone with Tissaphernes, but for the bodyguard.

The tent and place where Tissaphernes received Alcibiades was huge. This tent was used by the satrap only to receive people. His personal tent was behind this one, and connected to it. Alcibiades saw the opening to the personal tent, closed by a light silk curtain. But for two couches and a table, little furniture stood in this part of the tent. Heavy tapestries lay on the ground, however, and tapestries also adorned the side curtains. Tissaphernes bade Alcibiades to sit on the couch in front of him. He merely signalled with his hand and did not speak. He offered wine to Alcibiades without words, Alcibiades agreed with a sign of his head, and Tissaphernes poured the wine himself in a bowl, which he placed before Alcibiades. Alcibiades took the bowl. He was very much aware that Tissaphernes scrutinised every part of him, every gesture, how he moved and how he looked. Alcibiades drank at ease, obliging Tissaphernes. He would also scrutinise Tissaphernes, of course, and he also would have time later to observe the satrap. He drank in silence and did not bring his eyes on Tissaphernes in these first moments. He was thirsty, but he drank calmly and slowly, taking in each time only little wine in his mouth but tasting the succulent Persian product. The wine was sweeter and lighter than the wines of Athens and Sparta, but still very good.

Tissaphernes saw Alcibiades drink with relish.

He thought, 'that is good. He loves wine. He loves pleasures of the body. He is well clothed, in fine clothes of good cloth, but modestly dressed. He wants to make a good impression on me and gain my confidence. He puts me at ease and he honours me. Yes, this is Alcibiades indeed, Athenian general and Athenian renegade, victor at the Olympic Games, Sparta's unofficial ambassador and lover of Agis's Queen. Would I be the lover of Parysatis, the Queen and wife of Darius? I would rather cut off my arms! She is a leopard and a lion in the same person, that one. She would definitely dominate me, then play with me like a cat with a mouse and destroy me at whim. She is dangerous, her mood changes in the cry of the moment. This Alcibiades, what is he? He is a sensual man for he likes the pleasures of the flesh, like me. He likes beautiful women, for Agis's Queen is reputed to be one of the prettiest women of Sparta. He is handsome. So very handsome. I wish he would have been younger, but he is of my age.'

Tissaphernes also drank of the wine, now. He kept his silence for a while still.

'He has come to Ionia to stir up revolts and he has been quite successful at that, so far, as long as Athens did not show her claws and teeth. He is feeling the bite, now. He made an error. He underestimated Athens, and he overestimated Sparta. Or maybe he knew all that, but anyhow thought this was the only way for him to act, away from Sparta and Agis's Queen, travelling to places where he could take more revenge on Athens. Or has he led Sparta into a trap for Athens to destroy whatever meagre forces Sparta can send here? No. He has come to stir up revolts with a simpler aim. He is angry with Athens and angry at certain people in Sparta. Yet he wants now to strengthen Sparta's influence. He is playing with Athens and Sparta alike, so that he would survive and shine once more. Will he try to play with me too? I heard many Spartiates disliked him. He has come here because it is safer for him, despite the war and the battles, safer than in Sparta, and of course in Athens. He has come to my tent much more quickly than I expected. He needs me. He needs my money for Sparta, for Sparta has to build a fleet. He preferred to support me in the Spartan Damos, rather than Pharnabazus. Yet, I only promised, whereas Pharnabazus's delegates showed the money to the Spartans. He prefers an alliance with me. Why is that? I am richer. He has not supported Pharnabazus with a particular Sparta has not understood. I do understand the aim! I am more important to him in the long term. With Pharnabazus

he could have hungered out Athens, for she can get no grain anymore from Sicily, and with the Hellespont closed Athens would be condemned. His proposal was in favour of Athens! He still loves Athens. That is his secret. He does not want her on her knees yet. Athens is still an open option for him. He wants to play with her, and with Sparta. I need Sparta to kick the Athenians out of Ionia and then to levy new taxes on the Ionian cities to send to my coins-hungry King. This Alcibiades, can he help me? Why would he really need me?’

Tissaphernes broke the silence. ‘You are Alcibiades, Athenian general and Spartan ambassador. What do you want of me?’

Alcibiades was surprised at Tissaphernes’s directness of speech. This was a test.

Tissaphernes wanted to know how he would react.

He said, ‘Honourable Satrap Tissaphernes, I have received news that a large force of Athenians will arrive soon at Miletus. There will be over sixty Athenian ships here tomorrow, and close to four thousand hoplites and light troops. They will set up camp near Miletus and lay siege to the town.’

Tissaphernes sipped at his wine without reaction.

Alcibiades continued, ‘we also have news from the Peloponnesos. The Spartan polemarch Therimenes will arrive equally soon at Miletus with fifty-five war triremes. They believe that Astyochus and Chalcideus are here, so they will arrive in a day or two. They may give battle to the Athenian ships, but I believe the Athenians will withdraw. The Athenian generals here will have too many ships against them, and the rest of their fleet is blocked at Chios.’

Tissaphernes looked directly at Alcibiades now. Alcibiades had not answered his question.

Alcibiades thought, ‘he knew of all this. His spies are good. He showed no surprise, no reaction. He knew about the Athenian forces. When he said in the Council he had come to learn what was happening here, he hid his knowledge. He knew all about the situation here.’

Tissaphernes thought, ‘so, as my spies told me, a Peloponnesian fleet is indeed near. Fifty-five ships are much more than I would have thought possible. Twenty triremes I had expected, maybe thirty. Did I under-estimate Sparta yet? Where do these damned Hellenes get so many ships from? I could assemble such a fleet, but only at enormous cost. And what would I do with it? There are now over a hundred ships on either side of the warring Hellenic parties in Ionia, gathered in but few days. Great powers of destruction have gathered here. To defeat such armies I would need double as many ships as they have together, for these uncivilised, wild men will join their armies against mine, like they have ever done in their past to thwart Persia. I would need three hundred to four hundred ships, all well armed and the sailors well trained to defeat them. That means ten thousand sailors and a thousand commanders. So many warriors do not exist in Lydia, Caria and Phoenicia together. And less-skilled captains and men would be able to do nothing against these warriors of warriors at Sea. They would still be defeated. What does this Alcibiades have in mind for the Athenians? What would he do?’

Since Tissaphernes still did not speak, but seemed engaged in thinking, Alcibiades continued.

‘We might give the Athenians a hard time here and keep them busy on land, so that they cannot build fortifications in front of Miletus for their men and their ships. I propose we sally tomorrow with a few hundreds of men to attack the Athenians. We

need to win some time, time enough to let the Peloponnesian fleet sail near. We might fake a major attack. We might attack their camp immediately, while not all of their men are on land yet. They will disembark this late evening, maybe even through the night, but not all their army will be on land by tomorrow morning. They will not expect us so soon. A battle will delay them.'

Tissaphernes answered. 'I never fought against Athenians. How do Athenians fight?' 'The generals in front of us are rather traditional hoplites. They have some experience but not much. They will follow the advice of their commanders, of the men who do have experience,' Alcibiades replied. 'They will form regular phalanxes in line, four men deep, and await our attack. We have traditional hoplites here too. Moreover, the Athenians have two kinds of hoplites. Half their men come from Argos, half from Athens. We do not intend to win, although if we could win that would be wonderful of course. We want to delay and to lose as few men as possible. I can lead the Milesians, you could lead your own men and the additional Spartan hoplite forces we have in Miletus. We give battle, but when we see we cannot win we withdraw in good order to suffer few losses.'

'We can do that,' Tissaphernes replied. 'I never fought Athenians. I do not know how they fight. I never tested my light troops against their phalanxes. I would like to know what it is to fight Athenians. You take the Milesians against the Argives. I will lead against the Athenians. With the troops I have, I do not expect to defeat the Athenians. I have not enough cavalry either. We will withdraw behind the walls at the right moment. Will you withdraw when I give the sign?'

Alcibiades thought, 'that makes him supreme commander in the battle. But it is a fair offer since he has not refused my command of the Milesians, though I have no title to that. He is satrap and I am a renegade. It is nice to hear that he asks me for it; he did not tell me what to do.'

'Sure,' Alcibiades replied. 'We set out tomorrow at dawn, then.'

'Yes,' Tissaphernes agreed. 'Is there anything more I should know about the Athenians?'

'You might use the Spartan hoplites, few though they be, in the centre and engage the Athenians with them. The Athenians are very vulnerable to cavalry, but not when they are standing in close phalanx. I believe indeed there is not enough cavalry on our side to hurt a phalanx. I will try to close up the Argive rows. One can do that by starting the battle with archers and harass their flanks. If you do that too, we might obtain an opening between the Argive and the Athenian phalanxes. The cavalry can pass through the gap and attack the Athenians from behind. For that, we need to concentrate our first attacks in the centre of each phalanx and use volleys of arrows on the flanks in the beginning.'

'That is what we will do,' Tissaphernes concluded.

Alcibiades thought, 'I have not answered his first question and got away with it. He has let the matter wait, probably for later. But what answer am I to give him? I have no definite answer for the moment!'

Alcibiades emptied his cup and he stood up, ready to leave. He saw that Tissaphernes was surprised.

Before he left, Tissaphernes said, 'I will need to see Astyochnus. We have to negotiate a treaty. Send him word. Now. I have no ships for such a message.'

Alcibiades smiled, 'I already sent a ship to Astyochus, telling him to get here. With the hostilities going on everywhere, however, I do not know when he will be able to arrive.'

'Good,' Tissaphernes said.

Tissaphernes thought then, 'this Athenian knows what to do. He takes decisions and he takes the right ones. I might use him as a counsellor. How much does he depend from Sparta or from Athens? Which city, which persons control him? Or does he control them? He also dodged my question all the time. Maybe he has no answer yet.' He spoke again, 'fine! Leave me now.'

Alcibiades smiled inwardly, but he did not change one feature of his face.

Tissaphernes had disliked him to leave on his own initiative, to depart when he, Alcibiades, wanted to. Tissaphernes had re-engaged the conversation and then dismissed Alcibiades.

'He is a vain man,' Alcibiades concluded, 'that was to be expected. He is satrap.'

He left the tent and made all the preparations for the morning attack with the Milesian commanders.

The next morning, at dawn, Alcibiades stood with eight hundred Milesian hoplites behind the gates of Miletus. Sacrifices were being made to Artemis at the other end of the streets. At the second gate, a little farther, Tissaphernes waited with his mercenary troops, with the Spartan hoplites of Chalcideus, and with his own cavalry.

Tissaphernes shot a red arrow high into the air. The arrow was the sign for both armies to open the gates suddenly and sally out together from the town. A steady flow of men then ran into the plain before Miletus, towards the Athenian camp. Most of the Athenian army had disembarked, but not yet the entire army. The Milesian hoplites ran slowly because they were in complete armour, with shield and lances.

Tissaphernes's lighter troops and his cavalry had to check their speed so that both parts of the Milesian defenders arrived together. Alcibiades expected the Argives to hold the left flank, so he had posted his men at the right flank of his and Tissaphernes's army, at the right of the Milesian and Persian forces.

Alcibiades dreaded standing face to face with one or other Argive general he had known at the Larissa. He hated to fight phalanx to phalanx against men who had once been his friends. The Argives had been valiant, brave men, well trained and disciplined in battle and they had come here in great numbers to support their ally according to a treaty that he, Alcibiades, had forged.

Trumpets sounded the alarm in the Athenian camp. Hoplite phalanxes formed to protect the Athenian camp. The Athenians and Argives would be ready to receive the enemy. The Argives ran to their places in front of Alcibiades's arriving men.

Alcibiades looked aside, and he saw Tissaphernes's troops move in good order to his left. The two enemy armies waited a while to form orderly phalanxes. When the Milesian lines were ready, Alcibiades continued to watch Tissaphernes. The satrap rode a horse behind the lines. He wore fine armour, but not parade armour. He was protected by a light, leather cuirass and he would participate in the charges of the cavalry. Tissaphernes let the Hellenes sing their paeans in Ionian and Doric.

Alcibiades would have attacked more quickly. Tissaphernes honoured the gods of war. Priests hurriedly sacrificed a last time to the gods behind the lines. There were as well Dorians as Ionians on both sides of the armies. Without further waiting, Then, Tissaphernes ordered the Milesian trumpeters sound the attack. The battle for Miletus had begun.

Alcibiades ordered volley after volley of arrows on the sides of the Argive lines of hoplites. The hoplites rose their shields and the men hugged together to better protect each other. They hid behind touching shields. Tissaphernes likewise sent volleys of arrows at the Athenian phalanx. The two flanks of hoplites crept together, so that a gap developed between the Argive and Athenian phalanxes. The opening remained, did not close soon. Tissaphernes's cavalry might rush through this opening soon. The strategy of Tissaphernes and Alcibiades had worked. But would the cavalry be powerful enough to exploit the advantage?

The two lines of men walked forwards, towards enemy lines, and in few moments the phalanxes drove into each other. Alcibiades wore the arms of a hoplite of Miletus, the armour with the signs of Miletus. The bronze helmet completely hid his face but for the eyes. He stood in the first row of the Milesians, with his shield and lance positioned to receive the Argives. All around him, in front and behind, men stabbed forward with their lances. Shields clashed to a sudden, deafening din. The stabbing and thrusting of lances was vicious, for the Argives too were excellent hoplites. They had made a crucial error, however. The Argives had expected to find less well trained native troops before them, so they had advanced quickly and therefore in some disorder. They had seen that the feared Spartan hoplites, which they thought were Spartiates, stood in the other phalanx. They had run impetuously against the Milesian lines. Alcibiades, however, had shouted several times to the Milesians, even before the attack, to always, whatever happened, to hold close rows, to advance slowly but together. The Argives ran individually or in small groups onto a wall of bronze and iron. The Milesians were mostly young men, no veterans, and maybe therefore they had listened well to what Alcibiades had repeated before and during the battle: whatever happens, hold your ranks! In the very first moments of the battle, many an Argive hoplite faced suddenly several Milesians on his own and alone, and these Argives were overcome and killed rapidly, merciless, efficiently. It took some time for the Argive phalanxes to close together and until that happened, they lost more men. The impetus of their attack was broken. Small gaps had been left in their rows, and the Milesians could use these to stab better and from several directions at the same time, isolating Argive groups even more.

While he fought, Alcibiades still shouted to hold the phalanx order. The Milesians saw by themselves clearly now the advantages of keeping their lines straight and close. The battle was fierce. The Argives had lost tens of men in a few moments of time. Alcibiades had already killed three men, but he was wounded in his right arm and right leg, at the places of his body where he had to open his shield and to expose himself to look and stab at the enemy. His wounds hurt. They had opened old scars, but he knew the wounds to be superficial. Blood streamed along his legs, but he continued to fight. Everywhere men dropped their spears and many fought with swords, man to man, in very close combat. Alcibiades hacked up and down, from right to left, and he pushed the Argives backwards.

The Milesian wall of hoplites proved too strong for the Argives. This astonished the Argives, and ate at their determination. The Milesians advanced steadily. Not all the Athenian troops were on land yet, so the forces were about equal in this battle. Alcibiades parried a blow and then he pushed his sword right next, forward, past a shield. He heard a cry and once more his sword came blooded out of raw flesh. A man fell before him, and Alcibiades jumped over the wounded, fallen man, hacking

sideways at Argive hoplites who did not expect an attack from that undefended side. The Milesian hoplites followed Alcibiades immediately. They flocked around him to close the ranks again. They hacked and pushed with swords and spears at the Argives. The Argive hoplites were definitely at a disadvantage. They yielded terrain, yielded to the pressure of the energy of the enemy. The Milesians continued to drive the Argives back. The Argive hoplites hesitated. They had not expected this development of the battle, and they lost confidence in the outcome. They stepped backward, hindered each other, they could not well heave and swing their swords and spears, and lost the precious advantage that Alcibiades sought to exploit. Defeat threatened the Argives.

Alcibiades looked to Tissaphernes's phalanx. The force of the Athenians there had been thickened with added hoplites. The Athenians had not made the mistake of the Argives. They had held their phalanx and a regular hoplite battle had ensued. They clashed fiercely into the Spartans without fear, and the Athenians overwhelmed the Spartans. When the few Spartan troops retreated, the Milesian hoplites and Tissaphernes's mercenaries had not held either. Tissaphernes's line was in retreat. His troops did not flee in disorder, though. They stepped back in regular, undefeated rows, always fighting while stepping back. They kept their line.

The Persian cavalry rode behind the Athenian lines and they achieved some success there, but the Athenian allies had brought archers with them so that the cavalry was in danger of being destroyed. The cavalry preferred to attack the fleeing Argives, and here they too slew many men, so that the Argives were completely routed in front of Alcibiades. Tissaphernes's cavalry had more helped Alcibiades's side than Tissaphernes's lines. This had not been so by design, but by the development of the battle. The Argive troops fled in disorder, which made them even easier prey to the Persian cavalry. The Argives fled to the Athenian camp. They were routed and utterly defeated, leaving hundreds of dead in the field.

Alcibiades saw the young Milesians run behind the Argives. He shouted orders to stop them from pursuing the enemy. Alcibiades wanted to drive his forces now sideways into the Athenian phalanx. For the moment, however, he was halted in these efforts by the volleys of arrows shot by a large contingent of Athenian allied troops. Then, he realised the Athenians had defeated the Peloponnesian hoplites and had dangerously driven back the Lydian forces too.

Tissaphernes slowly receded, back to Miletus, but so slowly that his men kept pace with him. Tissaphernes shouted order after order to keep his men to retreat in discipline, and he kept fighting all the time. The retreat happened without too many men being killed. Alcibiades reckoned that if he entered the battle on that side now, he would have to face the Athenians alone. He might also make Tissaphernes lose face. Better to fake fear and caution, and also to retreat back to Miletus with his troops, rather than try to force a victory which was elusive at best. He ordered the retreat for his own forces.

The Argives did not hinder the movement of Alcibiades's troops. They continued to return to their camp. Alcibiades and his men ran to Miletus, to the gate from which they had emerged in the morning. Alcibiades saw Tissaphernes's men enter by the other gate at the same time, and that gate shut close. The Athenians advanced until right under the walls of Miletus, but they did not bother with Alcibiades's phalanx. Alcibiades could thus also reach the gate to the side of Miletus, and his men poured in.

Alcibiades was the last man to enter the town. The gates closed right behind him. When he walked inside the city, sword now on his back, he went among the Milesian hoplites, and he praised them for their discipline and valour in battle. He touched wounds with affection and shook hands, slapped on shoulders, thanking his men.

The Athenians put up a trophy that same afternoon, although their victory was at best a shaky one. Later, the defenders of Miletus saw that the Athenians also started to build a blockading wall around the city. Miletus was situated on an isthmus, so not a long wall had to be built to block Miletus from the land, and the Athenians thought they also could block the town by the Sea.

Alcibiades joined Tissaphernes in the satrap's tent to confer on further actions. Tissaphernes looked surprised at Alcibiades's wounds, for blood still reddened the windings Alcibiades's servants had put in haste around his arms and legs. Alcibiades had blood all over him, not just his own blood. He had only splashed some water on his face to get the blood out of his eyes and hair. Tissaphernes was not used to see commanders of his enter his tent in that way. He had more admiration for the hoplite, however, than shock at the disrespect of the Athenian.

It was in the tent that Milesian commanders brought them the news that the Athenians had started to build the counter-wall around the town. Tissaphernes looked worried. He did not like it at all to be blocked at Miletus. A satrap of Persia could not be imprisoned in a town under siege. He wanted to go back to Sardis and raise more men for his army. A few moments later news came from Tissaphernes's horseback scouts that a new Spartan fleet had arrived in the Gulf of Iasus.

Alcibiades immediately proposed to ride out himself that very afternoon to speak to the Spartan commander of the fleet, and to bring the army to Miletus. Tissaphernes agreed eagerly, and Alcibiades rode out of a small gate of Miletus at full gallop. He avoided the part of the isthmus where the Athenians were preparing to build a wall. He had to duck for a few arrows, but he could flee in the directions of the Gulf of Iasus. He rode for a long time, and in the last rays of the sun he saw a large number of ships reaching land. This was the territory of Teichiussa, still Milesian country. Alcibiades rode on until he saw the first triremes disembark armed men and equipment. A camp and spaces for storing naval equipment were being set up. He then clearly saw that these were indeed Peloponnesian ships. He jumped off his horse at the nearest ship and ordered the ship to row him to the trireme of the leader of the fleet.

The Spartan commander of the Peloponnesian fleet was Therimenes, and he was not far out at Sea. Alcibiades went on board Therimenes's ship. Men came and went to this boat to hear the orders for the operation. Therimenes stood on the deck of the ship, surrounded by many commanders. Alcibiades wrung himself to the polemarch. He explained to Therimenes what important forces were gathered at Miletus and what was at stake there. He explained that Tissaphernes, the satrap of Lydia and Caria, was in danger of being imprisoned in the town. He told of the battle and their strategy. He advised Therimenes to row to Miletus as quickly as possible with his entire fleet, to prevent the town from being walled in and lost to Sparta. Alcibiades told that if Miletus was lost, there would not merely be an issue with Tissaphernes and the pay of the fleet, but also Chios would be lost, for the Athenians would then be able to concentrate all their forces there.

Therimenes was a true Spartiate, and a man of very few words. He knew Alcibiades from his days in Sparta. He let Alcibiades talk and talk with an amused air, because he knew already much of what Alcibiades told him. He didn't know about Tissaphernes being in Miletus, though. Then, he gave only very few orders, without further bothering about Alcibiades. He ordered the ships to be readied to row out at dawn, and to be readied for a battle at Sea. His fleet had to sail to the relief of Miletus. Alcibiades remained open-mouthed at the burst of efficiency and rapid action, which he had not expected of a Spartiate. Therimenes smiled at Alcibiades's astonishment, and he proposed to Alcibiades to accompany him on his own trireme.

The Peloponnesian fleet prepared in the night for a battle at Sea and at land. They set off from Teichiussa at the first light of the sun and rowed to Miletus in battle formation. There was no Athenian ship to be found a little further, however, much to the disappointment of Therimenes. The Athenians had heard about the arrival of the enemy ships and Phrynichus had withdrawn the Athenian fleet. The Athenian general probably had not wanted to risk the precious last fleet of Athens in this battle for Miletus.

Alcibiades and Therimenes entered triumphantly in a feasting Miletus. Therimenes did not want to stay long in the town, however. The Peloponnesians took with them the few Chian ships that Chalcideus had left at Miletus, and they rowed back to Teichiussa to pick up the equipment they had left there. Miletus was free.

Tissaphernes

The satrap Tissaphernes had been much relieved to see Alcibiades return with a fleet and to see the Athenians flee. He prepared his army to return to Sardis, taking Alcibiades with him, and he first passed at Teichiussa. Tissaphernes asked Therimenes there to sail to Iasus, which had been occupied in the meantime by the satrap's enemy Amorges.

Amorges was the son of the former satrap of Lydia, Pissuthnes. Pissuthnes had revolted against the King of Persia, Darius Nothus. Tissaphernes had been able to incite a rebellion among the Hellenic troops of Pissuthnes, and he had defeated and arrested the satrap. Darius had been grateful and appointed Tissaphernes as satrap of Lydia, in Pissuthnes's place. This had happened just two to three years ago and Pissuthnes's son, Amorges, still had an army in Lydia and harassed Tissaphernes's territory. All resistance to Tissaphernes had not ended.

Alcibiades had talked with Therimenes about the importance of an alliance with Tissaphernes, so Therimenes complied to assist Tissaphernes. He ordered the fleet to Iasus, made a sudden attack on the town and took it by storm. The Spartans captured Amorges and handed him over to Tissaphernes. The Peloponnesians sacked the town and brought all the gold and treasures they found on board of their ships. Then they handed over the town with all its people to Tissaphernes, for a price. Tissaphernes paid well. Amorges's Hellenic mercenaries, of which many were Peloponnesians, were incorporated in Therimenes's army.

Sparta had ordered Spartiates of the commander class to accompany Therimenes's expedition, for them to take command as governors in the Ionian cities. Peditus son of Leon was appointed governor of Chios and Philip governor of Miletus.

Alcibiades knew Pedaritus. He did not like the man. He knew him as a devious and not too intelligent brute, but Pedaritus's main quality was to be loyal to King Agis.

In the winter of that year, after Tissaphernes had organised Iasus with his own government, Alcibiades and Tissaphernes returned to Miletus to discuss with the Spartans and the Peloponnesians of the fleet.

Tissaphernes had appreciated Alcibiades's advice for the battle of Miletus, and he had liked how Alcibiades had fought loyally with him on the battlefield. He called in Alcibiades for several evenings to discuss the matters of the war in Ionia with him. Because of the battle in which they had fought together, Tissaphernes and Alcibiades gained confidence in each other. Tissaphernes saw not anymore merely the cunning ambassador in Alcibiades. He also saw a brave man, a hoplite, on which he could rely in battle. The spirit of companionship of hoplites, which transcended frontiers and characters, had developed strongly between the two men. Tissaphernes confided in Alcibiades. Alcibiades had expected a corrupt courtier abandoned to sexual excesses. Instead of that he began to appreciate Tissaphernes as a frugal, honest, subtle and brave man.

Tissaphernes had been a Persian courtier until a few years ago. He had been involved in many battles for his King and he had not stayed behind the lines, but participated fully in the attacks. There were not many commanders of his own calibre and rank around him. He could talk strategy and tactics with Alcibiades, and he was grateful for the conversations.

Tissaphernes had travelled in the Ionian cities of Lydia and Caria before gaining his satrapy. He controlled many spies, yet he did not have first-hand information from leading people on the situation in Athens, Sparta, Sicily, Argos, Corinth or the other Hellenic polises. These cities had become increasingly important to him. His Persian episode was practically over, he thought. The King of Persia had ordered him to turn his attention to the Ionian cities and to the Hellenic Sea. If Tissaphernes were to spend lavishly money in Ionia to advance his own power there, and bring in more money to Susa, then he had to know very well how the power relations had developed between the Hellenic polises. He did not trust Alcibiades completely, but Alcibiades was the best available source of knowledge to him. He was very much interested in everything Alcibiades could tell him about the Hellenic forces, their schemes and politics, their culture and ways of thinking. He was eager to know as much as possible to form his own picture of the Hellenic world. He heard Alcibiades out. He compared what the former Athenian general told him with the reports of his spies. When a detail did not fit, he asked for verifications from his spies and he confounded his spies, also with the extra knowledge he had acquired from Alcibiades, to check on the veracity of what they told him. Alcibiades became an almost indispensable source of information to him, though he continued to check and counter-check. In the end, Tissaphernes recognised that Alcibiades told him the truth. Trust ensued. And trust, Alcibiades could exploit.

One evening, Tissaphernes handed over a scroll to Alcibiades without telling him what the contents were. The scroll was a letter, a letter from Sparta, sent by the environment of Agis to Astyochus. It had been sent to Miletus, for Sparta believed that this was the place where Astyochus resided. The letter stated that after the death of Chalcideus and after the defeat of the battle of Miletus, Alcibiades was to be

considered an unreliable asset, a liability. Alcibiades was a personal enemy of King Agis. The letter ordered Alcibiades to be put to death.

Alcibiades's blood left his face.

Before he could speak, Tissaphernes said, 'this is a copy. Sooner or later Astyochus will receive the original of this letter. What are you going to do?'

Alcibiades thought, 'good question. You showed me this copy, Tissaphernes, so you do not want me dead. Otherwise you would have destroyed the copy and said nothing. Or, you might have executed me, and told the Spartans. The Spartans are fed up with me. Their plans here are turning into an expensive disaster. They do not advance one step further against the Athenians, and their fleet is engaged in interminable skirmishes without spectacular gains. Chios is besieged. The army of Tissaphernes has not been able to defeat the Athenians. Their plans are turning to worthless dust and blood. I am superfluous. The ephorate of Endius is ending, so I lose support. But Tissaphernes does not know all of this.'

He said with a dry mouth, 'this must be a letter ordered by King Agis. Agis hates me because his wife and his sister loved me. Two ephors signed the letter, but not all the ephors. Astyochus knows that several ephors and the Elders of the Gerousia support me, among them my family's friend Endius, a very powerful man in Sparta.

Astyochus will think and hesitate. He will want to know what the opinions of the other ephors are. He will send a fast ship to Sparta and that ship has to come back.

That may take ten days or so, probably more. When did this letter arrive?'

'This morning,' Tissaphernes replied. 'It is not yet in Astyochus's hands, but it will be in a few days. What will you do when Astyochus receives confirmation from Sparta?'

'The question is not so much what I will do as what Astyochus will do and what he can do,' Alcibiades said.

He paused now. This was the moment to gamble.

He smiled wryly and continued, 'am I still a Spartan ambassador or am I a Carian advisor?'

Tissaphernes fixed his eyes inquiringly onto Alcibiades. He had come to like this man. Alcibiades was brave in battle and in politics. His advice was sound and rapid and had proved to be correct. Tissaphernes waited a while to answer. He sipped slowly from his wine, thoughtfully, as if he were weighing an answer, to hold Alcibiades in tense expectation.

Then Tissaphernes yielded.

He said, smiling, 'Alcibiades is from now on special advisor to the satrap of Lydia and Caria and not anymore in the service of Sparta. Welcome in our tents. I will have you prepared a tent close to mine. Let the Spartans then try to harm my advisor.'

Tissaphernes saw very tiny relaxing signs in the muscles of Alcibiades's face.

'Yes', he thought. 'He gambled here, and won. He will be dedicated to me now. At least for a while. Where else can he go? He is an outlaw in Athens and an outlaw in Sparta, which blocks access to all the allied Hellenic cities for him, and hardly one Ionian or Dorian city is not allied to either of Athens or Sparta. I will use Alcibiades to play with the Spartans and to confound the Athenians. It is my good luck to have met this man. The gods of Persia are still powerful.'

A little later, Tissaphernes said, 'the Spartans are going to ask me for money for the upkeep of their ships. They will ask for a lot of money, one drachma per rower, and my funds are low. What can I do?'

Alcibiades answered, 'offer three obols a day per man instead of one drachma. The Athenians only pay three obols a day to their rowers, and the Athenian rowers have much more experience than the Peloponnesian ones. The Athenians also do this so that their sailors would not spend money lavishly and become lazy.'

'Those are but weak arguments,' Tissaphernes surmised.

'Yes,' Alcibiades replied. 'But they are useful and truthful none the less. We might also bribe the captains of the Peloponnesian triremes, as well as the delegates from the other polises, to accept this offer. They will not protest, therefore. There is but one thing you must not do. I heard Hermocrates is here as one of the commanders of the fleet. He is a Sicilian. He was the leader who brought his people to resist successfully against Athens. I know him and have met him. Do not offer to bribe Hermocrates. Hermocrates will refuse to be bribed and he will give the entire scheme away to Sparta and to Syracuse.'

'We shall do that. Bribes are a better argument. I know all about bribes,' Tissaphernes smiled. 'I will negotiate with the Spartans and use these arguments. I name you my counsellor for matters of finance. You will receive the representatives of the Ionian polises and try as much as possible to keep them away from my money.'

For the first time since they met, Alcibiades and Tissaphernes laughed together and they finished more bowls of wine than usual, in each other's company.

Tissaphernes waited as long as he could before discussing the treaty with the Spartans. Finally, he invited the men in his tent. The negotiations about the contribution to the Peloponnesian fleet were to be led by Therimenes and Hermocrates. Therimenes was not a navarch, however. He had come merely to Ionia to hand over the Peloponnesian fleet to Astyochus.

Among the Peloponnesian ships were many Syracusan ships, led by Hermocrates. Before going to Tissaphernes, Hermocrates had protested, stating that Astyochus had to be called in, instead of Therimenes. But Therimenes had ignored Hermocrates's objections. Hermocrates especially did not want to hand over Ionia to Tissaphernes. He distrusted the Persian satraps, with reason, more so than the Spartan commanders did. When Therimenes and Hermocrates entered the satrap's tent, they were surprised to find Alcibiades in the company of Tissaphernes. Alcibiades had confidence in Therimenes's integrity, but not in the qualities of the other commanders of Sparta that were now in Ionia, and certainly not in Astyochus. He knew that Astyochus was also a man moderately dedicated to Agis.

Therimenes and Hermocrates were surprised to find Alcibiades in the confidence of Tissaphernes, especially when Alcibiades did not leave, but was asked to stay at Tissaphernes's side. Alcibiades had not met Hermocrates since Sicily, and Therimenes was even more surprised at seeing Alcibiades and Hermocrates greet each other like old, dear friends. Although friendly links connected Alcibiades and Hermocrates, Hermocrates was scandalised when he heard Tissaphernes's offer. Tissaphernes's delegates had promised to pay one Attic drachma a day for each man in the Peloponnesian army of Ionia. Tissaphernes gave one drachma the man for one month, but he wanted only to pay three obols per day and per man after that period. These amounts were the ones that Alcibiades had advised Tissaphernes to pay. It was Alcibiades's revenge on the Spartans. He had now taken Tissaphernes's side since he was also declared outlaw in Sparta, and he feared the Spartan commanders. Hermocrates reacted with great anger. He argued in front of Tissaphernes that Astyochus should lead the meeting about the payment. A discussion ensued, in which

Alcibiades wisely took no part, but Tissaphernes acted as Alcibiades had advised him. Tissaphernes yet conceded to pay for five ships more, in addition only however to the three obols a day per man. He would have to pay about thirty talents a month, but Alcibiades had saved him manifold by his advice.

Alcibiades discussed many times the situation in Ionia with Tissaphernes, and gained completely the confidence of the Persian on these matters. Alcibiades advised Tissaphernes to let Athens and Sparta weaken each other by confrontations in Ionia, and to let them exhaust their armies to the benefit of the satrap. Making funds rare for Sparta was one way of keeping down the number of Spartan ships in the Ionian Islands. Finally, he said, Tissaphernes could wipe out the Peloponnesians in the Ionian Sea and force the Athenians to accept his conditions for peace. Tissaphernes, however, remained sceptical about an alliance with Athens. His agreements with Sparta were favourable ones, and he thought negotiations with the Spartans might bring him more than an alliance with Athens might benefit him. Tissaphernes still saw Athens as the first obstacle to Persian dominance in the Hellenic world. Yet, he was cautious with presenting these views openly to Alcibiades. He distrusted Alcibiades only on this one point: his new counsellor was an Athenian and he suspected Alcibiades to have remained a patriot of his town. Tissaphernes remarked the passion and admiration and silent greed in Alcibiades's eyes each time he spoke of Athens.

Astyochus

During the winter, the war in Ionia continued with initiatives and counter-initiatives of the engaged armies. Thirty-five more ships arrived from Athens under the leadership of their general Charmines. The Athenians drew all their triremes together, to divide them again later.

They blockaded Miletus by Sea and attacked the town by Sea and land.

Strombichides, Onomacles and Eucteon advanced upon Chios with thirty ships and one thousand hoplites.

Seventy-four ships remained close to Samos for yet another attack against Miletus.

At the moment that Chios was not blocked anymore, Astyochus took twenty Chian and Peloponnesian triremes, sailing with those to Clazomenae. His attacks on Clazomenae and also on Pteleum were not successful.

Astyochus arrived later at Phocaea and Cumae, where a delegation of Lesbians arrived to talk to the Spartan navarch. The Lesbians tried to lure Astyochus into a new expedition to Lesbos. Astyochus was avid for some success, but his allies refused to sail to Lesbos. They referred to the lack of success they had experienced in the past at that vast island. Astyochus returned empty-handed to Chios.

On this voyage, Astyochus ran several times into storms at Sea and lost much time. Lesbian delegates reached Chios then, and pleaded there for help. Astyochus was again inclined to lead an expedition to Lesbos and its rich cities, but this time the governor of Chios, Pedaritus, refused to give Chian ships to Astyochus. The navarch was extremely angry, then. He felt insulted. He sailed with the ships he had out of Chios.

Later still, Astyochus sailed to Miletus with his own Spartan ships and with five Corinthian triremes, one Megaran and one Hermionian ship. He told in arrogant

phrases to Pedaritus and to the Chian Council that he would not sail anymore ever to the aid of the city, whatever their demands.

Astyochus moored at Corycus. There, he received a note from Pedaritus, telling him that some Erythraeans, who had been made prisoners by the Athenians at Samos but had been able to escape, planned a revolt from Athens at Erythrae. Pedaritus sailed to Erythrae with Chian ships, and so did Astyochus, but they found out there that the story was merely an odious sham. Astyochus yelled once more in anger at Pedaritus. Pedaritus sailed back to Chios, Astyochus returned to Miletus.

Alcibiades acted as advisor to Tissaphernes at Miletus. He received the representatives of the Ionian polises.

The most fun he had was when the Chian representatives came to ask Tissaphernes for money.

The Persian commanders of the Court of Tissaphernes directed the Chians to Alcibiades. Alcibiades knew they were coming, and for what. He dressed in Persian clothes, which Tissaphernes had given him, and he rested in the Persian way on a couch of cushions. His tent was small, but richly decorated. All the splendid tapestries had been gifts from Tissaphernes.

Alcibiades chided the Chians, for they were in fact the richest people in Hellas, who had caches of golden and silver coins in every house of the island. He explained them with proofs how rich they were from the trade in their excellent wine and scents. He told that so many non-Chians were protecting their lives, among them the valiant troops of Tissaphernes, that they should be grateful and offer money instead of begging for more. He dismissed the delegates, scorning them for their effrontery. The Chians left chastised. Alcibiades used these same arguments on other Hellenic cities that came to ask help from Tissaphernes.

In the middle of the winter, yet another small Peloponnesian fleet of twelve ships arrived in Ionia. This fleet was led by the Spartan commander Hippocrates. The ten Thurian ships he brought were led by Dorieus son of Diagoras. Hippocrates arrived at Cnidus, where a revolt had already been organised by Tissaphernes. Astyochus instructed Hippocrates to leave six ships at Cnidus to guard the town, and to sail with six other ships to Tropium, to capture the Athenian merchant ships that sailed past Tropium on their way to Egypt.

The Athenians attacked these last six ships, however, and destroyed them. When they also attacked Cnidus, they were unable to take this city by storm. In this manner, skirmishes which cost many men to all sides, to the Peloponnesians, Athenians and to the Ionians of the islands, raged all over the Ionian Sea. Alcibiades had put Ionia to fire. He reflected, however, that also without him, war would have been brought to the peaceful islands. He was merely an actor in the tragedy, not the one that caused the tragedy.

At Miletus, Alcibiades served now officially as the main advisor of Tissaphernes. He walked around in the city dressed in Persian robes.

Astyochus had again arrived in Miletus. Alcibiades was certain by now that Astyochus had received the letters from Sparta ordering his execution, but Astyochus could not touch the trusted advisor of Tissaphernes!

Therimenes stayed in Miletus, too. He had still command for Sparta of the army he had brought there.

After many days, the navarch Astyochus asked to speak to Tissaphernes and Alcibiades. They negotiated a new treaty, which was very much like the first draft. An interesting new line was inserted in this text for Sparta, stating that all the troops that were in Ionia at the request of the King of Persia would be paid for by the King. The treaty did however not state how much, and that was Alcibiades's work. Again, the territories of Ionia were considered territory of the King of Persia.

This was of course the clause Hermocrates had secretly opposed, but Hermocrates had taken no part in the recent talks.

After these negotiations, Therimenes sailed away in a small boat, back to the Peloponnesos. It was the middle of the winter, a season of storms, and a dangerous time to sail in small boats in the Sea. Therimenes was never seen again. He disappeared at Sea. Astyochus remained in Miletus in sole command of the Peloponnesian army and ships, and he drank wine with Tissaphernes and Alcibiades. Darics flowed in his coffers.

Tension increased in the city of Chios. Pedaritus was governor there, and he had installed an oligarchy in the town. The oligarchs governed with a heavy hand. Many people thought that the mercenaries of Pedaritus would not be able to hold the town against the Athenians. They sent letters to Astyochus, begging him to help Chios. The navarch, who remembered with bitterness that Chios had refused to send ships to Lesbos, refused his assistance. Pedaritus then started to send messages to Sparta to complain about Astyochus's counter-productive actions in Ionia.

The war forces in Ionia continued to concentrate. Twenty-seven more ships sailed from the Peloponnesos to Ionia at the very end of the year. In command of this fleet was Antisthenes, a Spartiate. With him came eleven other Spartiate commanders, among which Lichas son of Arcesilaus, to act as advisors on the progress of the war in Ionia. These eleven commanders had the power to depose Astyochus and to put in command as navarch Antisthenes, if they agreed together on such a course. The fleet fought skirmishes with Athenian ships and finally moored at Caunus in Asia.

In the meantime, the Chians became more and more distressed by the Athenian blockade. They had always held a tough regime on their slaves – of which they had many – and these now fled in large numbers to the Athenian fortifications. The Chians once more appealed to Astyochus, but the Spartan navarch continued ostentatiously to refuse them assistance.

Yet, Astyochus secretly changed his mind, and he prepared to intervene at Chios. Before he could sail to Chios, however, he heard of the arrival of the advisors from Sparta and the new fleet at Caunus. He therefore sailed to Caunus. On the way he sacked Cos, fought a battle with a lesser Athenian fleet of which he destroyed more ships than he lost himself, and joined Antisthenes not at Caunus but at Cnidus. Two Peloponnesian fleets were now gathered at Cnidus: the one of Astyochus and the one of Antisthenes.

The eleven delegates from the Spartan Gerousia sent word to Tissaphernes that they wanted to re-discuss the treaty drawn up between Sparta and Persia. Tissaphernes and Alcibiades thus heard of the concentration of the Spartans at Cnidus, as well as of the arrival of the Spartan advisors. Tissaphernes travelled therefore to Cnidus too, and he and Alcibiades re-discussed the treaty between Sparta and Persia.

Alcibiades knew Lichas, one of the main Spartan advisors. Lichas was a friend of Endius and he was an honest man, who, like Hermocrates, could not be corrupted by money. Lichas also was a Hellene: he had ideas that were Spartan of course, but he also looked beyond the mere interests of Sparta. Alcibiades feared that Lichas would object to certain clauses of the treaty. Indeed, when the discussion started on the text, the Spartans did not agree anymore on the most important clauses that were in favour of Tissaphernes. Especially Lichas argued that it was preposterous to recognise the satrap as the master of the Ionian cities. Lichas saw clearly that the Spartan forces would not only be offering freedom from Athens to Ionia with their war, but also enslavement under Persian rule. For Lichas, that was not why Sparta continued the war in Ionia.

Lichas vehemently rejected the previous texts of the treaty. Alcibiades had feared this development. Tissaphernes was of course very furious. He left Cnidus in anger.

The large Peloponnesian fleet at Cnidus then received delegates from the oligarchic party of the island of Rhodos, who wanted to revolt from Athens. Rhodos was a very wealthy island, so the Spartans sailed with ninety-four ships to Rhodos. They convinced the inhabitants to choose the side of Sparta. The city of Rhodos was unfortified, its citizens peaceful merchants. The Spartans easily persuaded the people to revolt from Athens. The Peloponnesian fleet stayed for many months at Rhodos, spending there the rest of the winter and part of spring. They were constantly harassed however by Athenian ships, of which many had taken base at Chalce and Cos, nearby.

During a conversation of Tissaphernes and Alcibiades, the satrap talked about his campaign against Pissuthnes and Amorges. Tissaphernes told how he had used ruses to bring to rebellion part of Pissuthnes's army, and how he had subsequently defeated Pissuthnes in several battles. These battles had been with limited troops, not of the numbers that Athens and Sparta and their allies could bring in the field, but regular battles nevertheless. The Spartans had eliminated the last rests of resistance by handing him over Amorges, after which Amorges had been promptly executed. Tissaphernes could now concentrate on his affairs in the coastal cities, which had gained their independence in wars against Persia tens of years ago, but which were situated on his land. Tissaphernes said he did not want to start new wars, but the King of Persia demanded of him to levy income from these rich Hellenic towns and islands, which, though independent, were on his lands, and of which he surmised he was therefore the rightful owner. Tissaphernes could obtain tribute by applying pressure. He had thought to increase his influence by using land forces, but he recognised that the wealthy trading and maritime cities had very fine hoplite armies, for which his Persian and mercenary troops, used to wage war over vast territories and hence relying on light infantry and much cavalry, would be no match. He confided in Alcibiades that therefore he, Tissaphernes, had begun to build a very large fleet.

Alcibiades's eyes opened wide at that news. A large Persian fleet was always what Athens had hated, and she had not tolerated one Persian war ship in her Sea. Persian fleets had been no match for Athens' war triremes. But a large Persian fleet would now be a third force in the Aegean Sea. It could completely change the politics of the area and truly also of Hellas. Alcibiades believed the Persian fleet would be a miserable lot, however. He asked Tissaphernes for how many ships the satrap was paying. Tissaphernes hesitated, but at last he told Alcibiades he was buying about one hundred Phoenician ships.

Alcibiades was even more astonished and interested. Phoenician ships were not Persian ships. The Phoenicians were among the best sailors of the Sea and they were great warriors. A Phoenician fleet, maybe even manned with professional sailors from Carthago, would be a formidable force and a match for the Athenian and Spartan fleets here in Ionia.

Alcibiades's mind calculated in all aspects the implications of this news. After a long while, he advised Tissaphernes not to bring this fleet in too soon. If Tissaphernes supported either Athens or Sparta, he argued, that power combined would dominate the Aegean. That power would then win from the other side. The victorious polis would then have enough funds from its hegemony to throw much more than a hundred ships in the battle arena, and such numbers would tip the balance once more in favour of the Hellenic polis that won, not in favour of Tissaphernes.

Alcibiades proposed for Tissaphernes to use his fleet as a diplomatic tool to shift the balance at his will and at his time.

'What you propose is to let my fleet rot in Phoenicia and never bring it to Ionia,' Tissaphernes shouted. 'I might as well not actually build a fleet but simply say I am building one. The fleet is almost ready. I can bring it into the Sea, and I will. I also favour Sparta. Sparta has not a large fleet, relies on its allies, and does not strive so much for hegemony as Athens. Moreover, the Spartans, notwithstanding the objections of Hermocrates and Lichas, have accepted each time the idea of my righteous dominance over Ionia. With my fleet, I intend to dominate Ionia, and Sparta will not prevail over me. I think I had better continue to support Sparta, though there is some wisdom in watching how things evolve and not intervene too rapidly. Sparta is still my best ally.'

Alcibiades agreed that Sparta's hegemony was a land hegemony, whereas Athens wielded a naval power. Athens was not out to occupy territories, however, the city was merely out to secure a steady income from contributions to its league. Athens left no governors behind like Sparta had done in Chios and Miletus. Alcibiades told Tissaphernes to remember what Lichas and Hermocrates wanted: to free the Ionian cities of Lydia and Caria, not only from Athenian dominance but also from other foreign, but Spartan, dominance. Alcibiades advised Tissaphernes to weaken the power of Athens on land and at Sea, but to strive to make the Peloponnesians leave the Lydian and Carian towns.

'What are you saying now, Alcibiades,' Tissaphernes objected. 'You were the one who came to Ionia to subdue it to Sparta.'

Alcibiades replied calmly, 'I came here to make the Ionian polises revolt from Athens. That would weaken Athens. Athens would lack money and ships. Her allies would not anymore contribute triremes to her army. The pressure on Athens would have been amplified. True, Sparta would have new allies. But what I wanted was something else than these cities being under the yoke of a Spartan governor. The towns that have a Spartan governor, a harmost, are slaves to Sparta. I propose that you

pretend a large fleet of Phoenician ships are in the making, but to stall with the actual arrival of that fleet. That way no major, decisive battle will be fought among the fleets of Ionia, including the King of Persia's ships, for long. And I believe Athens in the end would be a better ally to you than Sparta. Athens must be desperate by now. They have a large fleet, but if this fleet is destroyed or weakened considerably by constant loss of ships, then Athens will not be able to build yet another fleet. The Athenians will be more inclined to sign an alliance with you on favourable conditions for the King than Sparta.'

Tissaphernes hesitated. He was still more in favour of Sparta, but he wanted to keep both options open. He recognised he had better wait and see how the situation evolved between Athens and Sparta, rather than to engage his fleet to the benefit of the one or the other party.

'All right,' he agreed. 'Your advice may be the best for the moment. That leaves me time to enhance my fleet with better sailors and better troops, to train them better and to be more ready still.'

Tissaphernes followed Alcibiades's advice. When Spartan commanders came to ask him for help, he told them a fleet would arrive from Phoenicia to take the side of Sparta.

The fleet never materialised.

A plea to the Athenians

Alcibiades might stay for a few years in Lydia, near Tissaphernes, but he surmised his position as a counsellor of the satrap was not a very stable one. Tissaphernes had a mind of his own and his cunning equalled Alcibiades's. A time would come when Tissaphernes would know as much about Athens, Sparta and Hellas as he, and then Tissaphernes would throw him aside like a used glove. Alcibiades longed for Athens. He was condemned to death in Athens; yet he sought ways to get back to his city. His return to Athens was only a matter of politics. Even his condemnation to death was politics there, and politics could be reverted to his advantage, whereas in Sparta death was personal and a final matter once decided. King Agis wanted his death in Sparta, and the ephors thought he was unreliable after his strategy in Ionia had been checked by Athens. Endius was ephor no more. Alcibiades would also never be able to play any role according to his rank and birth in Sparta, for he was a foreigner there. He was no Spartiate. Hence all positions of importance were barred for him. Oh yes, individuals in Sparta might like him. But he had lived for more than two years in Sparta, and never had he been allowed to accompany any King or polemarch on a campaign, but the one to Ionia, and that was due to Endius's favours. There was no future for him in Sparta, though Sparta had been good as refuge against Athens. He had no future with Tissaphernes either, though the satrap had been generous as refuge against Sparta. His future could only be in Athens, however difficult to win. His standing with Tissaphernes was temporary. If he wanted to live like he deserved, he would have to find a way to return to Athens. He had to break through the interdictions in Athens.

Alcibiades thought that the information concerning the Phoenician fleet of Tissaphernes was given to him by the gods. It was the opening, the opportunity, the

chance he had been waiting for. This fleet was his leverage to break through Athens' edicts.

In utmost secrecy, taking all necessary care to avoid the spies of Tissaphernes, Alcibiades sent letters to the Athenian generals at Samos. Nevertheless, he knew the fact that he was communicating with the Athenians would not remain hidden for long to Tissaphernes. So he told the satrap that he was making contact with the Athenians in Samos in order to reach the men that held power there. He said that would allow Tissaphernes to play with both the Spartans and the Athenians. Alcibiades immediately noted the suspicions in Tissaphernes's face, but the satrap could not really object. Yes, contacts with both parties could be useful.

Tissaphernes warned, 'fine, Alcibiades. Remember however: do not engage me to anything. My strategy is still to wear out both sides some more, quite some more, by letting them fight each other. In this effort, in the long run, I still favour Sparta more than Athens.'

Tissaphernes had other items on his mind.

He continued, 'I will be leaving Miletus for a while. I have to go back to Lydia. I will probably not travel to my capital, Sardis. It will be high summer soon, and Sardis is not very healthy then. I will be at Magnesia most of the time, though I may go to Sardis also for a while. There will be couriers every day between Miletus and me, between you and me.'

A few days later, Tissaphernes left Miletus for Lydia.

The first letter Alcibiades addressed to the Athenian generals at Samos read as follows.

To the generals and leaders of the Athenian fleet at Samos,

I greet the great Athenian army of the Ionian Sea. The army has had success in blocking the Spartan intentions of domination in these waters. Chios is blockaded and you succeeded in regaining several cities that proposed to revolt from the Athenian hegemony. For this development, I congratulate you.

The army has also reached a stalemate with the Peloponnesians in Ionia, however, and not all of the Athenian initiatives have been successful. Miletus is in Spartan and Persian hands and so are Rhodos and Chios. Your forces are about equal to the Peloponnesian forces, and on the mainland you must fear at any moment to stand before a Persian army, for the satrap Tissaphernes is a powerful and wealthy ruler who considers the coasts of the Sea in these territories to belong to Lydia and Caria, where he rules. The balance of forces is a new development in the war. Neither you nor Sparta seems to be able to win here. So, you are bound in a very expensive expedition, far from Athens. I see fleets sail from island to island, gaining some influence and losing some. Both armies refuse or run away from direct confrontation and decisive sea-battles. Athens does obviously not dare to risk its mighty fleet unless it is absolutely sure of winning and so does Sparta. This war can go on and on and exhaust the treasury of Athens.

There are two very great dangers looming for the Athenian army, dangers which if they materialise may smash the Athenian fleet and Athens' power in these regions.

The first danger is one of funding. The last thousand talents of Athens' hidden war chests have been spent. Athens has no money anymore and with every Ionian city that seeks its independence, twofold damage is caused to the city. Damage is done because that polis pays no contribution anymore, and also because Athens has to send a fleet to bring that polis back into the Delian League. That is twice expensive. Sparta however, though she lacks in funds, receives all the money she needs from the satrap of Lydia and Caria and hence from the Great King of Persia. Persia can pay the Spartan fleet in Ionia for many years without feeling in its sacks of silver and gold any substantial diminishing of quantities. The gold mines of Sardis bring to the surface as much gold every day as could be spent in several wars for Ionia. The Peloponnesian allies can therefore bring and replace in their expedition as many ships as they can build, and they can wear down in the end any Athenian campaign.

The second danger is more imminent. There are about one hundred ships on the Athenian side and about one hundred ships also on Spartan side. These fleets are currently about the maximum that the two polises and their allies can muster. Yet, you must have noticed that the Peloponnesian fleet strengthens every odd month. That is due to Tissaphernes's gold. There is more. Tissaphernes is paying for a large fleet of over a hundred and fifty ships to be built and manned. Of course, no Persian ship has ever matched an Athenian ship. But this fleet will not be Persian: it will be Phoenician. It will be manned by the best sailors in the world and led by experienced captains, some of which might be Carthaginians. This fleet may join one day the Peloponnesian fleet. They will confront your own fleet together, and then, in some harbour into which you will have fled, they will attack and destroy you. Among the Peloponnesian ships are Sicilian triremes. Their captains know how to defeat an Athenian fleet, like they did in the Great Harbour of Syracuse.

I write to you because I have the honour to be also counsellor to the satrap Tissaphernes. I can help you.

I enjoy the confidence of satrap Tissaphernes. I advise him on how to wage the war in Ionia, and how to regain his possessions. I advise him on whom to ally with, on how to engage his army and on when to enter this war. We stood together to defend Miletus. Tissaphernes trusts my advice.

I can bring Tissaphernes to support Athens!

The Phoenician fleet can be brought to support you instead of Sparta. The Persian funds to Sparta can be stopped or be diminished. I can advise Tissaphernes to support you more than the Spartans. For that, however, several conditions must be met.

Firstly, the wicked democrats that keep our polis in a stranglehold of stupidity, wrongdoing, and in devious intentions, must be deposed. The satrap Tissaphernes is righteously suspicious of a government that is unlike his own. He will be willing much better to negotiate with strong leaders who can speak for the government than with representatives who represent nothing. Athens is in need of a stronger leadership. Maybe only for a certain time, a new institution of wise, able men must rule Athens. How such a change in government can happen, we can discuss. I remind you that this idea is not new. After the disaster of Sicily, Athens installed already in part such a new government. But the leading advisors in that new form of rule have been too few, too weak, too much involved with democracy and still in the influence of the current corrupt, so-called democratic leaders.

What is democracy more than justice provided by all to all? That can be left unchanged. The ways the polis is led however, must depend on the circumstances. What is called democracy currently is nothing but the leadership of a few money-hungry, power-hungry and corrupt men who use their ambitions and vile demagogy to drive Athens towards destruction instead of using their wisdom to serve the welfare of the citizens. Therefore I urge you to bring back to Athens wisdom and virtue in leadership, leadership by the wise and honest men of your choice. This change will be favoured by Tissaphernes and also by the Ionian polises. Why indeed have these revolted so easily to join Sparta, an oligarchy, if not because they have learned to hate corrupt democratic regimes?

Secondly, I must return to Athens. The judgements spoken out against my person must be annulled. I am innocent of the crimes that the wicked, unscrupulous current leaders of Athens have charged me with. I had no part in the defacing of the Hermae, nor did I parody the Eleusian Mysteries. I swear so by Athena. Why then did I leave the Sicilian army to seek refuge in Sparta? Because I would have been executed unjustly and promptly after a mock trial in Athens. When I can return to Athens as a free man and when Athens has chosen a government that suits the situation, with other men in power than those that convicted me, I can work in Athens and also near Tissaphernes to bring the satrap and Athens to appreciate one another and join forces. Of course, some of Tissaphernes's demands will have to be accepted by Athens. Tissaphernes wants the mainland cities and some of the islands to accept his supremacy. How that can be arranged and in which conditions, can be negotiated.

I am Alcibiades. I continue the heritage of Pericles the Great. I fought in more battles for Athens than Pericles. I got wounded many times for Athens and in my undertakings for the polis, be it in battle or in representation, I had success. In how many battles have my hoplites, horse riders, and ships, been defeated? In none! Have I not brought into the Athenian influence Argos and Mantinea and many other peoples? These are neighbours to Sparta, in the Peloponnesos, and yet in our alliance now. Think about my influence in the Ionian Islands and about what I could accomplish for you here!

I am ready to receive your envoys and to discuss these matters with you. The bearer of this scroll will inform you on how to proceed. As little as possible should be written down. Most of the messages must be delivered in person. The Spartans and the Ionians have many spies among you, and also in and around Miletus. If you have to write on scrolls, use ciphers, in the way my man will indicate to you. I hope you understand that confidence and secrecy are mandatory for our efforts to succeed.

Alcibiades.

Alcibiades waited for a few days. He was impatient and he walked up and down in his tent and on the grounds of the Persians. He received an order from Tissaphernes to join him in Magnesia, but he stalled.

Then, on an afternoon, two men asked to be received by him on an urgent and private matter. The men were unarmed but for long daggers and they wore nondescript, even drab himations over their tunics. The men waited before his tent. Alcibiades first looked at them through an opening in the cloth. He recognised a hoplite when he saw

one. He guessed they were Athenian citizens from Samos, hoplites indeed, or sea-captains, so he ordered his scribes and advisors to let the men in and to leave him alone with the visitors in the tent.

When they were all with Alcibiades, the men said they were trierarchs of the fleet of Samos. Alcibiades begged them to come closer and to lower their voices. They whispered that the generals and leaders of Samos had discussed in detail the contents of his letters. The generals were divided, but willing to consider the offer.

Alcibiades had expected this answer, but he was nevertheless much relieved and formidably excited at the opportunities that opened for him. The tension he had been in for several days left his mind.

The men said that not all of the leaders were willing to do all the things Alcibiades asked. If Alcibiades agreed, more men would come and talk. Alcibiades agreed instantly, stating that he was not after words, but expecting action. The two trierarchs then asked whether Alcibiades confirmed all he had written. Alcibiades said yes to that. The men needed not much more this time. Alcibiades explained in detail the arguments he had put in his letter, and he took a long time for that. He emphasised his influence on Tissaphernes. The men needed not much more for the time. They said others, more important than they, would come to discuss. Alcibiades told them to send the next messengers to Magnesia, for Tissaphernes needed him at the court of Magnesia. The men were much impressed to hear that Alcibiades was so private to Tissaphernes. Alcibiades explained he would be living in Tissaphernes's acropolis and palace at Magnesia, and that he would leave the day after. The men left his tent and they hurried back to Samos.

Alcibiades travelled the next day to Magnesia, where he met Tissaphernes. Alcibiades was surprised. He marvelled about the breadth of the Hellenes' influence so far from the Ionian and Doric centres, for Magnesia was not an oriental city but truly an Ionian one. Its pattern was square like Miletus, so Alcibiades guessed that the town had not been founded so long ago, or that it had been destroyed and re-built recently. He found fine temples at Magnesia, dedicated to Hellenic gods, and the influences on the town's architecture seemed as well Doric as Ionian. He visited a Temple of Artemis, not such a fine one as at Miletus or Ephesos, but the traditional Attican temple. A fine road led to the agora, which was immense. The Magnesians had also built a large theatre just outside the walls of the town, and close by there was also a Temple of Athena. After seeing towns like Miletus and Magnesia, Alcibiades experienced feelings of pride, but also of humility. Fine, Hellenic towns existed in these countries and survived the wars. Why were they now Persian, Lydian, ruled by oriental satraps? Would these towns ever be again allied to polises of Attica or of the Peloponnesos?

While in Magnesia, every few days, Athenian messengers – often other men – came to speak with Alcibiades. They were trierarchs and sea-captains, as well as hoplite commanders. Alcibiades was secretly satisfied that such men came and not the generals. He talked for many hours to these men, and tried to convince them of his innocence in the crimes for which he had been condemned. He convinced them of his intimacy with Tissaphernes and of his love for Athens.

Alcibiades received the men in the luxuriously decorated rooms of the palace of Magnesia. The richest oriental tapestries hung in his rooms, and he showed the men the lovely gardens to which he had access. The men saw how wealthy and powerful he was. He was dressed in oriental robes. He wore the Median trousers and tunics of

silk. Many slaves served him, and beautiful slave-girls whirled around him. The slaves entered, served wine and fruit and they brought in perfume burners in the evening.

Alcibiades made the men feel at ease. They told him several times the same thing. Most of the leaders of Samos were in favour of Alcibiades's return, a few were not. It seemed that Peisander, a very good orator and a former democrat, but a man now fervently in favour of change, would be sent to Athens to propose the return of Alcibiades. Peisander would have to propose a change in the governance of Athens, and so to make Tissaphernes run to the support of Athens.

Alcibiades asked which men were most opposed to his views. The men said the general Phrynichus was not in favour of him. Phrynichus argued that Alcibiades only wanted to come back to Athens, whatever the price and whatever the government of the polis, as long as the men that opposed him were put out of his way. Phrynichus shouted that when the democracy had committed crimes, it had only been so at the instigation of men of the upper classes, such as Alcibiades. With the upper classes in control of society, there would be no justice anymore, for any man could then be convicted and put to death without a trial. Phrynichus wanted the upper classes not to have power over the polis. He voted for a continuance of traditional democracy. He also doubted Alcibiades could win over Tissaphernes to the side of Athens. He said that the King of Persia distrusted Athens, her hegemony, her dominance over the Sea. The King and Tissaphernes would see to it that the most important cities of the country, Chios, Miletus, Rhodos, would fall and then stay in the hands of the Peloponnesians. If Tissaphernes wanted power over those cities, he would more easily receive it from the Spartans. Phrynichus also objected that the Ionian cities would not welcome oligarchs in their polises, such as the new Athens would have as leaders. He said these cities did not really care under what government they lived, be it oligarchy or democracy, as long as they were free.

When Alcibiades heard this, he raged inwardly. He promised to take revenge on Phrynichus for this opposition. He stayed outwardly calm however, in front of the visiting Athenians, and only told the envoys that he had expected some form of opposition to his proposals. He claimed Phrynichus's arguments were devious and wrong, and he started to prove that in a long discourse to the men. Each time envoys came he argued against the terms of Phrynichus and proved them wrong in many ways. Still, he wondered what the final decision would be of the generals at Samos. His return to Athens still hung in the balance.

Astyochus and Phrynichus

On one of those evenings, Tissaphernes called Alcibiades in for a council meeting. Tissaphernes was in the largest hall of the palace. He sat on an ornate throne and several of his better counsellors and commanders stood around him. The men stopped talking when Alcibiades entered. Alcibiades noted immediately that Tissaphernes was very angry. The man did not hide his displeasure.

Alcibiades went up to the satrap and waited, while bowing, for the satrap to address him. Tissaphernes took two scrolls from a table next to him and threw them surreptitiously at Alcibiades.

Tissaphernes shouted, ‘what is the meaning of this? What have you to say for yourself?’

Alcibiades opened the scrolls. The first scroll was a copy of his own letter sent to the Athenian generals of Samos. The second scroll was a letter from Phrynichus, the Athenian general, delivered to Astyochus, the Spartan navarch. Phrynichus told in his letter that Alcibiades was betraying the confidence of Sparta by making Tissaphernes favour Athens. Phrynichus must have thought that Alcibiades was still primarily working as a representative for Sparta. The letter explained all the negotiations that had gone on between the Athenian generals and Alcibiades. Phrynichus ended by stating that he hoped Astyochus would understand his plotting against a man he considered his enemy, Alcibiades.

Astyochus had of course nothing to do anymore with Alcibiades. It was not in his power anymore to reach in any way Alcibiades, and kill him. Astyochus had merely forwarded the letters to Tissaphernes. Moreover, Alcibiades suspected, as he had proposed earlier, that Astyochus was being bribed by Tissaphernes. Astyochus had apparently been very happy to oblige the satrap and send him the letters, hoping to get rid of a counsellor close to the satrap and, as was proven by the letters, still a schemer for Athens.

Alcibiades blanched while he quickly read the letter of Phrynichus. His mind raged and raced. He looked calmly straight in the eyes of Tissaphernes. Alcibiades had written the letter in words that could be interpreted in several ways. He had feared his letter might be intercepted. He could explain it all, and turn each phrase into the service of Tissaphernes.

He started by stating the letter to the Athenians had been in support of Tissaphernes’s policies. He reminded the satrap that he had told him in Miletus he would contact the Athenian generals. Tissaphernes needed two parties in the balance of influence, so that Tissaphernes could tip the balance at will. Tissaphernes needed two oligarchic governments to negotiate with him at pair. No democratic government could negotiate with authority during meetings with the representatives of the King of Persia.

Therefore he, Alcibiades, had urged to change the government in Athens. He said nothing in his letter was directed against Tissaphernes, on the contrary, the arguments were only at the service of the satrap. He asked how else but with the arguments of the letter could he have attracted the attention and interest of the Athenians? Should he have written that the satrap was using both sides one against the other, merely in his own interests? Should he have written that the Phoenician fleet would come to destroy the Athenian ships?

‘Think, Lord Tissaphernes,’ Alcibiades pleaded, ‘think! What could I have written else to spur the interest of the Athenians and bring them to seek an alliance with you? I could only have written what I wrote! What is there in this letter that is directed against you? Have I committed to something in your name? Read the letter well! There is nothing in that scroll that engages you to anything whatsoever. I engaged myself, of course, yes, but I did not engage you, engaged to nothing in your name.’

‘The letter’s intent is to bargain your return to Athens,’ Tissaphernes shouted. ‘That is all that counts for you!’

‘I was born in Athens, Lord,’ Alcibiades answered meekly. ‘Where would I best serve your interests? You are hesitant about allying yourself with Athens. You have no

confidence in the ways of government in Athens. You want that changed. I want that changed. Who do you have to serve your best interests in a renewed Athens? Think of how I could help Lydia and the King of Persia from out of an oligarchic government of the upper classes in Athens! What an alliance that would be!

Alcibiades saw how Tissaphernes thought about Alcibiades's defence and its implications. Tissaphernes hesitated with a judgement and he let some time pass in a deadly silence that fell awkward in a hall filled with people.

Tissaphernes thought, 'this man tries without a doubt to double-cross me. His real aim is now clear: he wants to return to Athens, become a general again and fight the Spartans, and probably the Persians as well. He wants his position back as a leading man in Athens and in Athens' hegemony. His ambitions will not stop at Athens. He will also want the Ionian cities, as all the Hellenes want. Yet, there is some truth in what he says. He could hardly have used other arguments indeed to interest the Athenians in negotiations. But it is a fact that he wants to serve Athens in the first place. That is why he tells me so often these days that Athens would be a better ally than Sparta. It might be true. Athens is not the strongest party here; Sparta has a larger fleet and a larger army. Yet, Athens might therefore be more willing to side with me.'

Tissaphernes still did not talk. Alcibiades was used now to such moments of silence. Tissaphernes sipped from a bowl of wine.

He thought further. 'So, Alcibiades, you are an Athenian and you took a side. That side is not my side, for I do not know yet which side I will choose to be on. I finally cannot trust you either, Alcibiades. Strange! For a while I thought I could. There is nobody I can trust but myself. If I cannot trust you, I can either kill you now, or use you. I do need contacts with Athens, and you can provide me with that, schemes or no schemes. I will intercept your letters, torture secretly one or other of the Athenian envoys to really hear what is going on. And until I make up my mind to throw my armies in a war on the side of Athens or Sparta, I can use you.'

He turned his eyes on Alcibiades and said, 'I see. Yes. You wrote only what you could have written. Continue to talk with the Athenians. But never commit me, you hear! I make my own decisions, and only I commit myself and the King of Persia. Until I get really angry with you, you remain my counsellor for all matters concerning the hostilities between the Hellenes in Ionia.'

'That will not happen,' Alcibiades answered, 'I mean you will never grow angry with me and be deceived by me!'

'Oh no?' sneered Tissaphernes. 'Yet you look to me to be quite capable a making me angry.'

'No, no, no,' Alcibiades replied. 'You hide your women too well, Lord.'

Tissaphernes looked first surprised at that unexpected answer, and then he was angry at the boldness of the man. Alcibiades was an adventurer indeed. Should he have him killed now for his insolence? Then, Tissaphernes laughed and laughed and laughed. He waved Alcibiades out with a sign of his hand.

'What a man,' Tissaphernes thought, shaking his head in amazement. 'Any other man, any Persian, I would have thrown in the dungeons of my acropolis. No man has been as insolent with me, especially not a man with his neck under the curved sword. Yet, This Alcibiades does succeed in amusing me. For the moment. I must find ways still to use him!'

Alcibiades returned to his quarters, shaking like a reed in the wind. He had pulled it off with Tissaphernes, but for how long could he keep these double and triple agendas going on? Tissaphernes had lost his confidence in him. He knew that clearly. How could he still convince Tissaphernes to support the Athenians in this war? Would he work for that cause? Only if he could return to Athens. Phrynichus had almost succeeded in having him killed. That was exactly what the general had wanted, thought Alcibiades: his death. Phrynichus was a deadly, devious enemy now. Alcibiades took a scroll of papyrus, and he wrote a new letter addressed to the leaders at Samos. He told in this letter all what Phrynichus had done to scheme with Astyochus. Alcibiades wrote that Phrynichus was committing treason by thus contacting the Spartans. Phrynichus had committed treason against the cause of Athens, and should therefore be put to death.

A few days later, a new letter written by Phrynichus was handed over to Alcibiades by the Spartan navarch Astyochus.

In that letter, Phrynichus complained to the Spartan navarch that somehow the contents of his letter had become known to Tissaphernes and Alcibiades. He therefore feared for his life. He now explained how the Peloponnesians could destroy Samos and the Athenian army. He said that Samos was unfortified and could not easily be defended by land. He also described all the ways of where and how the Peloponnesians could attack the island and take the town by storm. He wrote that his life was in danger, so no one could blame him for thus escaping from his fiercest enemy. Alcibiades discredited the contents of the letter to Astyochus. He told Astyochus to take care, for the letter could be a trap, so that the Spartan troops would fall in an ambush at Samos.

Phrynichus learnt in time that Astyochus was betraying him to Alcibiades and Tissaphernes. In order to rescind his last letter, he told the Athenians that he expected an attack on Samos, since the city was unfortified and the fleet not in the harbour. He was still in command of the fleet, though, with Scironides as his co-general, so he ordered Samos to be fortified and he had triremes patrol around the island, while he recalled to Samos a large part of the fleet, back in the vicinity of the city's harbour.

Alcibiades then sent yet another letter to the Athenian leaders, not to Phrynichus and Scironides, informing them that Phrynichus was betraying the army to the enemy and plotting an attack on Samos together with the Peloponnesians.

The Athenian trierarchs and commanders showed the letter to Phrynichus. They laughed, for they were fortifying the place in direct orders from the same Phrynichus accused for treason by Alcibiades. It was Phrynichus who had told them all the time to be vigilant about a Spartan attack on Samos! They did not believe anymore what Alcibiades wrote. They now thought that Alcibiades was talking nonsense, seeing spirits, and that Alcibiades used any argument, however stupid, to accuse the Athenian general of plotting with the Spartans. Alcibiades wanted Phrynichus, a person that opposed him, simply out of the way. Alcibiades's letter therefore did not harm Phrynichus at all, and for the Athenian leaders the letter merely confirmed that Phrynichus was right when he stated how unreliable Alcibiades really was. Henceforth, the Athenian commanders did not take into account other messages of Alcibiades. They ignored him.

During these months of the summer and autumn, Alcibiades continued to talk to Tissaphernes in the palace of Magnesia. He was winning Tissaphernes over to his cause very slowly. The satrap still feared the Peloponnesians because they were currently the strongest force in Ionia. Tissaphernes, however, loathed the arrogant remarks made by Lichas concerning the agreement drafted with Therimenes. Lichas wanted the Ionian cities of the mainland of Asia to be liberated from Athens, but also from Persia. It was clear, said Alcibiades, that this was the new official policy of Sparta, now that Endius was ephor no more. He said Tissaphernes would advance into nothing with the Spartans. He argued that Tissaphernes might therefore turn with benefit to the Athenians and promise these, currently the weakest force in Ionia, support of Persia in exchange for a better treaty.

Tissaphernes listened to Alcibiades. Everything he heard was logical. He was eager for a treaty that provided him supremacy over the Ionian cities. That was something to show to Darius. He wanted non-intervention from the Hellenic armies in the event that he increased pressure on the Ionian cities. He needed these wealthy cities to pay contributions to Darius. It would be nice to have the Athenians – or the Spartans, but after Lichas' interventions that seemed out of the question – to help him with their army and fleet to dominate these territories, but their neutrality would suffice him. This had to be guaranteed in a treaty. Yes, he had done good to keep the Athenian. Let Alcibiades scheme to return to Athens! As long as he, Tissaphernes, had his treaty, he could expedite Alcibiades himself to Athens – or to Hades! To please and lull his counsellor out of suspicions, he sent Alcibiades one of his finest slave-girls, a very beautiful girl with tiny, firm breasts and a nice face. The girl was Phoenician, but she had a fine, pale complexion.

With the girl came a message, which she herself presented. 'The Lord Tissaphernes sends you one of his women so that you would not long anymore for his wives.' Alcibiades smiled, and he drew the girl to him. Her name was Cyne.

At the very end of that year, an Athenian delegation reached Magnesia. The delegation was led by Peisander who had come back from Athens. Ten other officials of Athens accompanied him. Peisander immediately asked to see Alcibiades. The eleven Athenians were led into Alcibiades's reception room, and Alcibiades let the Athenians talk. Peisander told he had been to Athens. He said he had pleaded in the Assembly for a change in government that might please Tissaphernes, and he had also proposed Alcibiades's return. There had been much and violent opposition to the proposal, he said, but in the end the people had recognised there was no other hope of survival than to seek the aid of the King of Persia.

The people had voted in the Assembly to send Peisander and ten other men to make arrangements with Tissaphernes and with Alcibiades. Peisander also said that Alcibiades would not have to fear Phrynichus and Scironides anymore, for these generals had been relieved of their functions at Samos. Leon and Diomedon were now generals at Samos.

Peisander did not tell to Alcibiades how very hard he had had to argue in Athens, for the people hated the idea of installing an oligarchy in Athens. The people had only voted for Peisander's proposals when he had asked them bluntly what alternatives they had. Peisander also did not tell Alcibiades that he actually had discredited

Phrynichus and Scironides himself, by claiming that they had offered Iasus and Amorges to the Spartans.

Peisander eagerly and secretly wanted an oligarchy in power at Athens, and he wanted Tissaphernes 'support even more. He wanted that because he, Peisander, would be able to play a role of substance in Athens, as the man who had brought the necessary change in action. He did not care about Alcibiades. He said of Alcibiades the man was much smaller than his ego thought. If Alcibiades had to return to Athens to realise Peisander's objectives, then that was just fine for Peisander.

Alcibiades was satisfied. He told the men he would arrange for negotiations with Tissaphernes.

Alcibiades should have been triumphant and very glad of his intrigues at this news. Yet, he was seething. He should have found these developments very positive, but he had an issue. It was either too early or too late for the Athenian delegacy. The war in the Sea changed the situation of power so rapidly, that he had to act on a day by day basis. The situation had once more transformed matters in a few days. The Athenians had become too successful for his aims.

Alcibiades had known already that Leon and Diomedon had taken over the power at Samos. He had heard of the effect. The Chians appealed once more to the Peloponnesian fleet at Rhodos, claiming that the fortifications of the Athenians were now completed and declaring that if the Peloponnesian fleet would not come to their rescue, the city would be lost. The Peloponnesians decided to sail to Chios. Pedaritus, the governor of Chios, had meanwhile been impatient. He had attacked the Athenian forts with all his mercenaries and with the complete Chian army. He had some success at first, captured even a few shored ships. When the Athenians counter-attacked, however, they routed first the Chians and somewhat later the complete army of Pedaritus, killing the Spartan leader in the act. Chios was entirely blockaded by the Athenians, which meant famine for the city.

When it was almost in spring, the Boeotians captured the town of Oropus. Oropus was situated in front of Eretria, a town of Euboea. The Eretrians sailed to Rhodos and asked the Peloponnesians to intervene to bring Eretria to revolt from Athens. Euboea was crucial for Athens. Astyochus expected the Athenian fleet to sail to Euboea as rapidly as possible. So he thought there would be now only minor forces of the Athenians present before Chios. He ordered his fleet to leave Rhodos and he sailed to Chios. In front of Chalce, the entire Athenian fleet was waiting for Astyochus to give battle to him. That was not what the Spartan navarch expected, so he refused to attack and sailed into Miletus. The Athenians returned to Samos and stayed there. The Peloponnesian fleet had sailed to Chios, but at the first sight of the Athenian fleet they had crept surreptitiously back to Miletus, fleeing from battle.

The Spartans, after this debacle, came to weep at Tissaphernes's court. They agreed to make amends with the satrap, to yield to his demands. Tissaphernes still applied the original advice of Alcibiades, which was to support the weakest party to gain as much as he could from them. The Spartans had been defeated before Chios and the Peloponnesian fleet feared the Athenian ships, who clearly dominated the Sea. The Spartans were ripe for a treaty. As ever, Tissaphernes was more inclined to sign an alliance with Sparta, which he found politically a lot more stable state than Athens.

Alcibiades thought that Tissaphernes would never sign an agreement with Athens at this moment. Who were these delegates anyway, what did they represent?

Alcibiades had to find a solution to the dilemma. Here were the Athenians, ready to negotiate with Tissaphernes, believing Alcibiades could bring Tissaphernes to support them, and Tissaphernes was unwilling to sign with the Athenians. Yet, tomorrow, Tissaphernes might change his mind.

Alcibiades designed an absurd scheme, one that might just barely work out. He had to bring the Athenians to believe that he, Alcibiades, still the grand counsellor of Tissaphernes, was unwilling to agree on a treaty for the moment. So he had to propose absurdly tough conditions on the Athenians, conditions they could never accept. It was the only path of action open to him. He was not proud of how he handled this situation, but much later he thanked the gods, for he realised that refusing Peisander was the single most brilliant thing he had done.

The next day, Peisander and the other Athenians were allowed to appear before Tissaphernes. The satrap sat on his throne and all his Persian counsellors stood around him. It was Alcibiades who spoke for the satrap, and Tissaphernes stayed silent and looked bored. He had agreed to receive the Athenians, but his mind was already on a treaty with the Spartans. Alcibiades had arranged the scene with the satrap.

Tissaphernes had agreed to keep silence for a few moments, as long as Alcibiades said things the satrap could accept. Alcibiades told the Athenians that Tissaphernes wanted dominance over the country of Ionia. There was a short exchange of opinions on that point. Then, the Athenians withdrew to discuss this issue among them.

A new meeting was held the next day. The Athenians agreed on the claims of the King of Persia over Ionia. Alcibiades told the astonished Athenians that Tissaphernes also wanted dominance over the islands off his coasts and various other minor concessions. Again the Athenians left without breaking the negotiations.

The third day, they agreed on all of Tissaphernes's demands. Alcibiades then stated that the King of Persia should also be allowed to build a large fleet and to sail along his coasts and islands with as many ships as pleased him. This last condition was outrageous to the Athenians, for ever since the Persian King had been defeated in Attica and in the Sea, Athens had dominated the waters. Peisander could not possibly concede this supremacy over the Sea, not to the Peloponnesians, and certainly not to Persia.

Peisander and the Athenians were very bitter then. They said Alcibiades had deceived them by demanding unacceptable conditions by all means. The Athenian delegation left Magnesia the same day and returned to Samos.

Alcibiades also remained in a bitter mood. The Athenians had left with the impression that Alcibiades had indeed fully the confidence of the satrap, but also believing that he had wanted to squeeze the Athenians to the utmost, in the service of the satrap. The Athenians still thought he had the confidence of Tissaphernes, however, and that was the most important asset now for Alcibiades, for without this belief Alcibiades had no leverage at all on the Athenians. But the Athenians thought he had deceived them, and that he had demanded too heavy conditions for the satrap. They thought Alcibiades was more in the service of Tissaphernes than in expectation of return to Athens. He had won time, but won some and lost a lot.

Tissaphernes and Alcibiades sailed together along the coast to Caunus, where the Peloponnesian fleet had moored. Tissaphernes wanted the Peloponnesians now back at Miletus, where he could control that fleet better, and he wanted the fleet to protect the largest Ionian city – his wealthiest city – from the Athenians. He was also willing to pay the Peloponnesian fleet, for he reckoned that if the trierarchs did not receive their pay they would either in desperation seek a major battle with the Athenians, in which battle they would be destroyed, or start pillaging the countryside of Ionia and Caria in order to have enough supplies and not starve.

Tissaphernes continued to apply Alcibiades's original policy to seek ever equilibrium between the two forces and weaken them. The satrap negotiated a deal at Caunus, a final treaty with the Spartans. The Spartans were now very inclined to deal with Tissaphernes.

In the treaty, the Spartans and their allies recognised the King of Persia's country in Asia to be truly his. The alliance was one of non-belligerence between Persia and Sparta, and even an alliance of mutual support in case either of the parties was attacked by others. Tissaphernes promised to pay the Peloponnesian fleet at least until the arrival of his own Phoenician fleet. That assured the Spartans that Tissaphernes would indeed bring in his fleet soon now to Ionia. After the arrival of the Persian fleet, the Peloponnesians could pay for their men or they could ask Tissaphernes to pay for them but then they would have to pay back Tissaphernes at the end of the war by the amount spent. That clause was inspired by Alcibiades.

The treaty also stated that at the arrival of the Phoenician fleet, the two fleets would act together as suited best Tissaphernes, the Spartans and their allies. Finally, if one party wanted to make peace with the Athenians, the other party would have its say also in the realisation of this peace.

In this text, Tissaphernes obtained from Sparta the recognition of his dominance over the mainland of Asia, including the Hellenic cities on the coasts of Lydia and Caria, over cities like Miletus and Ephesus, but not over the islands. This was the point that Lichas had objected to previously, so Tissaphernes had dropped claims on the islands and the Spartans had agreed to the coastal cities for him. Tissaphernes promised to add the Persian, Phoenician fleet to the Peloponnesian fleet, and this point made the Spartan delegates – also Lichas – lean in favour towards the treaty. Sparta ignominiously abandoned the Hellenic-Ionian cities of Asia to their fate under Persian rule. The treaty was concluded in the beginning of the year after Alcibiades's arrival at Chios, just before spring set in.

Tissaphernes made preparations to call his fleet to him. He stalled and stalled, however, for he had gold enough to pay the Peloponnesian fleet, and Alcibiades had convinced him that this policy of balance between the forces was still the best way of acting in Ionia.

Athenian oligarchs

At the end of the spring a Spartiate called Dercyllidas marched with a small army from Miletus to the Hellespont. He reached Abydos, which was a colony of Miletus, and brought the city to revolt from Athens. By then, the satrap of Phrygia, Pharnabazus, joined Dercyllidas with a few Persian troops.

Soon a second city, Lampsacus, revolted also.

Meanwhile, the Athenians were fully occupied at Chios, for Leon, a Spartiate who had been sent to Chios after Pedaritus's death, took twelve ships of the Peloponnesian fleet of Miletus, and together with thirty-six Chian triremes, he attacked the Athenians that blockaded Chios at Sea. He also attacked by land, and he gave a hard time to the Athenians.

At the news from the Spartan activities in the Hellespont, and as soon as the Spartan Leon retreated back into Chios, Strombichides rowed out from the Athenian fleet at Chios with twenty-four Athenian ships and also with transport ships loaded with hoplites, bound for the Hellespont.

Lampsacus was an unfortified town. The hoplites of Lampsacus waited for Strombichides in the open fields in front of their town. Strombichides defeated them in a pitched battle, and he took the town by storm.

He marched to Abydos after that victory. He tried to capture also that town, but the defences proved too strong for his small army, and he failed in the effort.

Strombichides subsequently sailed to the other side of the Hellespont, to the town of Sestos in the Chersonese territory and he set up his base there for the defence of the Hellespont.

The war thus came to spread from Ionia to the Hellespont, an area that was of the utmost importance for Athens, for much of its supplies and trade passed through these narrows.

After the successes of the Chians and of the Spartiate Leon, and after the departure of a large portion of the Athenian fleet for the Hellespont, the navarch Astyochus found more courage and some daring. He set out with his fleet to attack Samos. There, the Athenians refused an engagement. Astyochus sailed back to Miletus.

The Athenians refused a battle this time, not because they thought they were not up to the Peloponnesians, but because they were hopelessly divided by internal political strifes.

A strong faction of Athenians favourable to oligarchic rule had developed at Samos. That intrigued Peisander, who had arrived on the island after disappointing negotiations with Tissaphernes and Alcibiades. The Athenian oligarchs at Samos decided to try to ply Athens and other allied cities to their mode of government. They also decided to leave Alcibiades altogether out of their plot. They considered Alcibiades had refused to support them with Tissaphernes. So they told they would act in favour of oligarchy without appealing to Alcibiades.

Alcibiades managed during that time to keep his contacts with the Athenian fleet at Samos open. He still received Athenian messengers regularly, and he heard from these that the oligarchs around Peisander had dropped him like a stone in the water. There might indeed arrive a change of government in Athens, and Alcibiades had proposed that idea first, but now the oligarchic movement was advancing without Alcibiades. If the movement would succeed, Alcibiades was certain not to return to Athens ever!

That realisation made Alcibiades change opinions instantaneously. If the oligarchs thought they did not need him, he did not need the oligarchs. His speeches to the envoys of the Athenian fleet became the speeches of a moderate democrat. He said he

had not wanted Tissaphernes to grant his favour to extreme oligarchs like Peisander. That kind of oligarchy was not what he had asked. Through the Athenian messengers, Alcibiades also learnt what happened at Samos. Time passed. The oligarchs that had assembled at Samos departed from the island. Alcibiades wondered what they were up to. For quite a time he had no news at all.

Alcibiades knew what happened in Athens, for his cousin sent him letters regularly. The last letter of Euryptolemus informed him the oligarchs of Peisander had reached Athens. Particularly interesting events had happened thereafter in Athens.

Alcibiades,

I greet you, cousin. I hereby give you account of important developments that have taken place in Athens, which have thoroughly shaken the polis.

It all started with a murder. Androcles, one of the extreme democrats and a man who was largely responsible for your banishment from Athens, was murdered in the agora by a group of young oligarchs. These men act now without being hindered by the authorities of Athens. The young men certainly killed Androcles to please you and thus they hope for your support at the court of Tissaphernes, but also because the man was a dangerous demagogue who stood in their way openly and opposed their party.

The young oligarchs started to speak of a number of five thousand men only that should have a share in Athens' government. These should be people qualified by their proper talents or because they could support the polis financially. Nevertheless, Assembly meetings were still held, as before, though the people dared not to decide anything that had not been considered beforehand by the oligarchic party. The oligarchic youth groups continued to do away secretly with men that opposed them, so that no one in the Assembly dared to speak openly against them. No criminal investigations were set in place to find the men that committed the crimes.

Such was the situation when Peisander arrived from Samos. Peisander had departed from that island with several companions and they spread ideas in favour of oligarchic governments among cities of the Aegean Sea. Thasos became oligarchic and also other towns. We heard, however, that once these cities passed oligarchic, they also feared Athens no more and so claimed their total independence.

Peisander and his companions gathered hoplites from the cities they had reformed, and thus they arrived with a small army in Athens. Peisander called together a general Assembly in Athens and he proposed that a committee of ten men should be chosen to draw up proposals for a new sort of best government. This was accepted by the Assembly. This Assembly was not held on the Pnyx, but in the narrow ground at Colonus, which you know to lay eight stades of the city, in the field sacred to Poseidon there.

When the Committee of Ten brought forward its proposals, there was only one, actually. The first and only proposal of the Committee of Ten was that any Athenian should be allowed to make any suggestion he liked without being punished. Heavy fines would be imposed on anyone who brought a case of justice against such a speaker for violating the laws, or to damage him in any other way. When this proposal was accepted, the oligarchs brought forward their most daring suggestions.

It was first proposed that nobody should still receive a payment for any office of the polis. That excluded the poorer citizens from seeking a function of magistrate. Then it was proposed that five special men should be elected. These should choose a hundred men and each of these hundred men should choose three more men. This body of Four Hundred should then seat in the Council with full powers to govern as they thought best. The old Council would be abolished. They should convene five thousand others at their own time.

These proposals were uttered by Peisander, but the men who planned all this with him were in the first place Antiphon, and then also Phrynichus and Theramenes son of Hagnon.

The Assembly accepted these proposals. Needless to write, the five men chosen first were all oligarchs. So the Hundred were oligarchs, and then the Four Hundred too. Athens ended up in the power of the oligarchs!

The next day, the Four Hundred entered the Council Hall, Athens' bouleutêrion. They dismissed perfunctorily the former, democratically chosen Council. They told the old Council to take their pay and go. They paid out immediately, there and then, to each of the Council members what was due to him for the rest of his term, and shuffled them out.

The Four Hundred then started to work. They gave all functions of magistrates to themselves, though choosing by lot for these posts among them. They rule the city now, also its justice administration, and no one dares to object.

The Four Hundred also made overtures to Agis, the Spartan King who occupies Decelea. But Agis only believed that Athens was weakened by internal strives, so he did not grant much confidence to the oligarchs. He assembled a large army and arrived up to the walls of Athens. However, all the Athenians mobilised to defend the town. Troops stormed out of the gates with much cavalry and light troops, and also with detachments of hoplites, which did much harm to the Spartans. Agis understood then that Athens was strongly led and still well organised. The Kings drooped off with his army, back to Decelea. He dismissed the reinforcements by sending them back to Sparta.

The Four Hundred continue now to talk to Spartan representatives to seek a settlement for the war. I heard that representatives of Athens also left to that end for Sparta.

A last thing I should tell you. Although power over Athens is now in the hands of five thousand men and in the hands of the Four Hundred, the Five Thousand have so far not once been called together to discuss the matters of the polis. So it is really only Peisander's Four Hundred that rule Athens.

*Yours,
Euryptolemus son of Peisianax.*

Democracy at Samos

Alcibiades also heard of uprisings and turmoil in Samos. About three hundred Samian oligarchs had grouped together and formed a conspiracy to install oligarchic government on the island. The Samian democrats, however, heard of the conspiracy. They went to the Athenian army at Chios, to talk to the Athenian generals Leon and Diomedon, who were moderate democrats, and to people of the army they knew as advocates of democracy, such as the trierarch Thrasybulus and the hoplite Thrasyllus. They also spoke to the crew of the Athenian messenger-ship, the Paralus, who were Athenian citizens known for their strong democratic sympathies.

Leon and Diomedon made a few ships sail to Samos and also the Paralus was posted on the island. When the oligarchs brought their rebellion to execution, they were rapidly contained by the Samian democrats and the Athenian sailors and hoplites. They were defeated. Some of the oligarchs were later killed by the Samians, but reprisals were moderate. Samos remained democratic.

Alcibiades wondered how the situation would evolve. Athens was oligarchic, but the army at Samos was democratic. Something was bound to happen with that state of affairs. He rather expected the army to bring about the downfall of the oligarchs. Would there be civil war for Athens? Alcibiades received little news from Samos in that period. The messengers from the army of Athens arrived no more. He learnt little from Tissaphernes's spies. He waited, patiently, for new signs which would make interventions possible. What had the gods at stake for Athens? And for Alcibiades?

At the same time of these events, in the summer, trouble and dissension also brewed in Miletus among the Peloponnesians. The captains of the fleet and the allied leaders reproached the Spartiate navarch Astyochus for his inaction and fear to give battle. Astyochus had so far always refused large battles with his main fleet. This had been a long-time policy, and the Spartan advisors sent to judge him on his actions had actually agreed with his arguments and reasons for this policy. They left him in the full exercise of his function of navarch. Astyochus told he waited for the Persian fleet. The promised Phoenician fleet of Tissaphernes never arrived, however. Tissaphernes paid irregularly, contrary also to his promises. Especially Hermocrates and the Syracusan captains were angry for that.

Astyochus was forced to action. When therefore Astyochus heard about the uprisings at Samos, he gathered his fleet and sailed out with a hundred and twelve ships to Mycale. He also ordered the Milesians to march over land towards this place.

The Athenian fleet at that moment was moored at Glauce in Mycale. When they spotted the Peloponnesian fleet, the eighty-two triremes of Leon and Diomedon rowed to the protection of the harbour of Samos. The Athenians had not enough ships to confront Astyochus, for they had sent an important contingent of ships with Strombichides to the Hellespont. The generals had some intelligence on the movements of the Spartan fleet, however. Alcibiades had sent them a trusted servant to warn them secretly of the imminent departure of the Peloponnesian fleet.

The Athenian generals then dispatched messengers to Strombichides, ordering him to return for a while to Samos. Strombichides arrived in time, so that the Athenians had a hundred and eight triremes at their disposal, with which they were more than willing to offer battle to Astyochus. The Peloponnesian ships promptly returned to Miletus.

The Athenian fleet sailed equally to Miletus, but once more Astyochus refused to give them battle.

Time passed. Alcibiades still resided at the court of Tissaphernes at Magnesia. He spoke many times with Tissaphernes and Tissaphernes confided in him. Tissaphernes regarded him once more as a friend. Alcibiades appreciated the refinement of the satrap.

Tissaphernes was a very educated man, who was very much interested in everything Hellenic, also in what had happened in the states around the Sea. Tissaphernes not only knew the Ionian language, but he had also read many books written by the Hellenic philosophers. Tissaphernes had read Homer and Herodotus, and he asked Alcibiades several evenings to tell him about his teacher Socrates. The satrap surprised him one day by telling him that he had called a small but exquisite garden after Alcibiades. Alcibiades wondered how it was possible that a man as cruel as Tissaphernes, a Persian courtier, so unscrupulous and devious, could also be so cultivated and excited about the delicate beauty of gardens and flowers.

Tissaphernes was a true oriental product of a courtier, thought Alcibiades, not a logical but an irrational man, calculating intrigues yet always very emotional and unpredictable in his reactions. The man loved to live amidst beautiful things, which he obsessively collected: trinkets of gold, jewels, and tapestries. Tissaphernes dwelled in luxury and he sought rich decorations around him. He was also a sensual man. He had many women in his palace and his tents, which he hid to everyone but his most dedicated guards. He was a generous man, however, who would send girls to his most loyal servants. Tissaphernes loved wealth. He craved for gold, but he could spend much if he expected more in return. He was not the slave of gold. He was also a fine hoplite. Alcibiades saw him regularly exercise with his men, fighting in single combat with a curved sword, or training with them at javelin throwing. His tactics in war were a mixture of Persian cunning and Hellenic power. Many times, he saw the satrap working with his men until he was drenched in sweat, and then the satrap would enter his rooms to take a bath and change in clothes. Tissaphernes liked heavy perfumes. Almost always incense burners stood in his reception rooms and the rooms were kept fresh and clean. Alcibiades admired many aspects of Tissaphernes and he started to dress and to live like the satrap. When he proposed to exercise with him at arms however, the offer was politely declined.

One afternoon, Alcibiades's servants told him a large delegation of Athenians asked to see him. Alcibiades was very astonished. For a long time, he had received no news from the Athenians, not one single messenger had been sent to keep contacts open with him. He let the men enter his reception rooms.

Alcibiades was even more astonished to see which men advanced towards him. They were many, about ten men, and all were dressed not as ambassadors, but as warriors. They wore light armour, swords, and they held their bronze helmet at their sides. They had refused to depose their arms, but Alcibiades nevertheless agreed to let them in. Alcibiades saw that the men were all sailors and hoplites, men of action and veterans. They were not young men, but men of mature age, sunburnt and with heavy chests. They were fighting men with brilliant, energetic eyes, and hard faces. Red scars showed on their arms and legs. The men looked powerful, intelligent and determined. Alcibiades knew instantly that these men were no ambassadors, no

messengers and no politicians, but commanders from the army at Samos. This was a military delegation.

One man led, and the others followed behind him. The delegation was led by the trierarch Thrasybulus.

Alcibiades smiled, and stood up from his couch when he recognised his long-time friend. The two men embraced and slapped their arms around each other. Alcibiades had known that Thrasybulus had been with his ship in the fleet of Samos. He had heard Thrasybulus had become a man of influence in the army, but he did not know what had happened recently. He wondered why such an important Athenian delegation came to see him, but his heart thumped at the excitement of the news they would bring him. Was the army revolting against Athens? He kept his face calm and stood in his heavy Persian robes, brocaded with marvellous oriental patterns in front of the men of the army.

He spoke first.

He said, ‘greetings, citizens of Athens and men of the army of Samos. Do you bring me news from your generals?’

Thrasybulus answered in a grave, deep voice, ‘yes, we do, Alcibiades. And it is a general that has come to bring you news. I am one of the two generals now, leading our army. The other general you know too, I believe. His name is Thrasyllus.’

Alcibiades was not astonished anymore. He was dumbfounded. Many questions turned around in his mind. His two friends, Thrasybulus the trierarch and Thrasyllus the hoplite were generals of the army, the generals! Whatever had happened to Leon and Diomedon?

He said after a while, recollecting his spirits before a smiling Thrasybulus, ‘well, then, Thrasybulus. I congratulate you. Why do I then have the honour to receive an Athenian general at Magnesia?’

‘A lot has happened in very few days,’ Thrasybulus started to explain. ‘You know of course that a government of a limited number of people has been installed in Athens and these claim and exercise all the power over our polis. Peisander was one of the most important protagonists of that plot. Yet, the army in Ionia, of which I am now a general, as well as the Samian citizens, reject such a government. Not so long ago we sent the Paralus to Athens to inform the city of what had happened with the army. When the Paralus left Samos, we did not know of the events in Athens. The leaders of the Four Hundred treated our comrades, the Athenian citizens of the Paralus, without respect. A couple of our men were arrested and thrown into prison. The rest of the crew was placed on a merchant ship ordered to patrol around Euboea. One of our people however, Chaereas son of Archestratus, escaped. He looked around to notice how the state was in Athens. Later, he returned in a ship bound for the islands and arrived at Samos. He told us what had happened in Athens.’

Thrasybulus paused and shifted his feet.

He continued, ‘Alcibiades, nobody among the citizens of Athens dares to speak against the current government. People are either flogged in public or killed secretly when they show any opposition. The current leaders of Athens heard from the sailors of the Paralus what had happened in Samos, the taking over by our democratic forces of the army and the island. They disliked that very much. Outrages are being committed to the wives, children and relatives of our men. The Four Hundred plan to

imprison and torture the relatives of the leaders of Samos. Chaereas even told us that some of the oligarchs threatened to kill our families unless we submitted to their government.’

The companions of Thrasybulus groaned with anger at this account. Thrasybulus said, ‘we held an Assembly of the army at Samos, to decide on what we could do. Me and Thrasyllus, we argued that democracy should remain our way of living and of organising our lives, and the citizens agreed with us. We made everybody, all fighting men of Athens, all oligarchs too, and all the people of Samos swear solemnly to continue the war against the Spartans, to avoid revolt at Samos and in the army, to hold on to democracy, and to be the enemies of the government of the Four Hundred. Leon and Diomedon were then dismissed as generals by the vote of the army, and so were all the trierarchs and commanders of the hoplites who were openly in favour of the oligarchy of Peisander and Antiphon. Then, the people elected Thrasyllus and me as generals. We spoke to the men, and also other citizens spoke with us.’

Alcibiades stood up from his couch and approached Thrasybulus.

Thrasybulus said, ‘we all found that there was no cause for despair. We are the fleet and army of Athens. There is no other army, and there will be no other Athenian army but ours. There is no money anymore in Athens to build another fleet and to gather another army of hoplites. We considered the people that had taken power in Athens to be only a minority that used terror, aggression and violence to impose their will. We need money also, of course, but we are certain we can find some in the democratic cities that still are in the Athenian League and that would wish to support us in our cause. We dominate the Sea with our navy. We dominate the Peloponnesians here as well. The Spartans hid in Miletus with their shit constantly hanging in their arseholes, and they do not dare to come out against us. We hold the sea-routes to Athens. We can strangle all supplies to Athens, whereas Athens can do nothing against us. The polis of Athens, at least the men that now control the polis, cannot harm us. If they threaten our families, we have more force to threaten them! They can also do nothing for us, because they send us no money anymore to buy supplies. We therefore live on our own and provide for us ourselves. We cannot learn abide anymore by the current leaders of Athens. These men do not live by the old laws and by the old institutions we believe in and want to live, fight and die for. We have a few good people to advise us, here in Ionia. Yet, we need people with broader views and people with a better vision of the future, people who know the Athenian army, the Spartans, the situation of the countries. And that is why we are here, Alcibiades!

We need the best advisers, truly good advisers to help us win the war from the Peloponnesians and to win back Athens. We need more than fighting men for that. We need advice. We need funds, and we would welcome support from the King of Persia. So we voted, and we decided we would like to have you back in our midst. You are a fighting man yourself. You have been general and representative for Athens in better times. Our hope is also that you could win over Tissaphernes to us.’

Alcibiades stayed silent a long time. He was speechless at first by the sudden, unexpected opportunity. The offer overwhelmed him. He looked over all the men. Then he smiled and said, ‘I thank you, Athenians, friends, for the confidence you give me. I am the counsellor of Tissaphernes and of the King of Persia for Hellas and for the war between Athens and Sparta, which is a war - as you have felt in your flesh and

mind – between oligarchic ideas and ideas of democracy. I will go with you immediately of course, for Athens and its citizens are still much in my heart. I will advise you. Yes, we will gather the funds necessary for the army of Samos, to continue the war here, as well as in the north, and in Athens. We shall receive the support of Tissaphernes and we shall prevail! Of course, we shall prevail!

Alcibiades placed a hand on the shoulders of Thrasybulus, and the Athenian commanders stepped forward from behind Thrasybulus to touch Alcibiades and be touched by him. All smiled and some of the commanders were moved to tears. Alcibiades shook hands, and patted shoulders. The men embraced. Alcibiades was back!

Alcibiades wanted to cry out for joy. He would have been unable to lead any army in the world to capture Athens, but he could enter the city at the head of an Athenian army, gates wide open!

Chapter 17 – Samos, Summer 411 BC to the Autumn of 411 BC

Assembly

Alcibiades did not warn Tissaphernes of his departure to the Athenian army at Samos. He grabbed a horse of the palace and rode with the Athenian commanders that same day from Magnesia to the coast, where a trireme waited for them. They rode a long stretch in the darkness. The next morning the ship, Thrasybulus's own trireme, rowed to Samos. They arrived at Samos after noon.

The rowers saw Alcibiades, dressed again as an Athenian hoplite, come aboard the ship. Alcibiades greeted each one of the rowers. Grinning broadly, he pushed one of the men from the bench and took his oar. He rowed for a time together with the men. He was so happy to feel an Athenian trireme once more under his feet. The familiar rolling of the ship as it moved along the coast filled him with pride and happiness. The rowers sped as fast as they could in the waves. Thrasybulus looked with astonishment at Alcibiades, as the man rowed and rowed.

The trireme of the Athenian commanders arrived in the harbour of Samos. It moored at the quay and Alcibiades was first to jump off from the ship on the stones. Thrasybulus followed him. Thrasybulus ordered his men to announce an Assembly of the army and the citizens of Samos in a field outside the town. He led Alcibiades to this place. They went slowly and talked.

As the two walked on, the sailors and hoplites ran from everywhere to accompany them at their side.

Hoplites came along, ran to Alcibiades, patted him on the shoulder and said, 'remember me, general Alcibiades? I was at Potidaea!' And, 'I was at Delium with you!' 'I stood with you in the square at Amphipolis!'

Carpenters, metalworkers, ropeturners and sailmakers stopped working and they followed Thrasybulus and Alcibiades. From one of the gates of Samos flowed another mass of men, and Alcibiades saw from the far the giant that was Thrasyllus among these men. When the two groups met, Thrasyllus crushed Alcibiades to his powerful chest. Thrasyllus could utter no word, for he was too moved with emotions. He shook his head and the two groups continued to walk together to the Assembly grounds.

Thrasyllus said, 'Alcibiades, who bites like a lion is with us!'

Alcibiades looked at Thrasyllus surprised, 'do you still remember the times when we were young, Thrasyllus? So many things have happened since then. Yet, yes, we are still fiends!'

In front of the people marched Thrasybulus, Alcibiades and Thrasyllus. Alcibiades the aristocrat, Thrasybulus the trireme owner and Thrasyllus the citizen-hoplite walked with power and confidence. Thrasybulus and Thrasyllus needed the assurance of Alcibiades, his cunning and knowledge in diplomacy and war, his greatness and the notoriety of his family name. Alcibiades needed friends. Together, they would conquer the world!

When they arrived in the Assembly fields, a large number of men had already gathered there and many others came running on. The generals waited some a time, allowing everybody from the army and from the people of Samos to assemble. Then Thrasybulus introduced Alcibiades. They stood on a hill, on a splendid and clear day. They stood as if they were assembling on the Pnyx. There was no speakers' stone, but as the people stood on the slopes of the hill and Alcibiades at the top, he could be heard well and far. He spoke slowly, with a clear, steady and loud voice.

'Greetings, citizens of Athens and of the army and fleet of our polis. Greetings, people of Samos! I am Alcibiades!'

A loud roar came up from the crowd. A lot of cheering and whistling was heard, and Alcibiades smiled, because he had heard even a few trumpets in the audience. He held up his arms to quieten the crowd. Then he continued.

'You have had it hard in the war with the Peloponnesians, and you had a rough time resisting to men who wanted you to live like you do not want to live. So did I! I have been banished from Athens and even condemned to death for crimes I did not commit. The men who desired me to be exiled schemed behind my back, as others schemed behind your backs while you were away from your town. I was condemned while I was in Sicily, and certain to be executed as soon as I set a foot on Athenian soil. You were betrayed while you were as far from Athens as I was, but on the other side of the Sea! I suffered hard from being exiled, first in Sparta and then at Tissaphernes's court. I longed all this time for you, my comrades, to be with you again and to stand next to you in battle, but the wicked people in Athens had seen to it that my return was forbidden. My fate is your fate now. We are all banished together out of the town we love, and there is nothing as hard in this life than to be betrayed and deprived of the love of one's polis!'

An angry grumbling rose from the people when Alcibiades shouted these words. He paused, took a step or two sideways, seemingly lost in thoughts, then he continued.

'Athens is in the hands of a group of men who use the power they have gained over the city to serve exclusively their own designs. These people do not want you back unless you ply to their authority. That was exactly what happened to me, a few years ago. I also refused to ply to the will of the perfidious men that diverted the people to their own aims and interests. The few people who usurped power, our power, in Athens, now, also do not wish to have me ever returning to Athens, for they know I will never accept their authority. So, I say: let us go back together and teach them what true citizens filled with love for Attica can do for their town!'

The cheers grew loudly now, and the Assembly shouted its agreement.

Fists also went into the air above the heads, and shouts came, 'up to Athens!' 'Death to Antiphon!' 'Death to Peisander!' 'Death to Phrynichus!'

Alcibiades spoke again.

'Yes, we will go back to Athens! We shall be peaceful citizens again, for our force and determination will wear these people out. The citizens of Athens will find new hope in what we shall do here, in Ionia. Not all is won yet, however. If we return to Athens, it can only be as victors of the war here. We cannot let the Spartans win the islands and cities in these parts of the Sea. We have to defeat the Spartans and the Syracusans and the Corinthians and all the other allies of Sparta that have given us so many hardships here! We shall prevail over the Peloponnesians that are our enemies!'

Alcibiades shouted these last words very loudly over the heads of the hoplites and he looked at the men with wild, revengeful eyes.

He paused and continued.

‘We are the strongest and the most valiant here, and we will get help from Persia. The satrap of Lydia and Caria, Tissaphernes, will support us and bring the Phoenician fleet, which is now waiting at Aspendus, to join our fleet. He will also provide us with the funds necessary to continue fighting here until victory is ours. Tissaphernes will stop supporting the Peloponnesian fleet that hides already in fear at Miletus.

Tissaphernes, however, seeks to give his confidence of oaths and vows to people on the Athenian side he trusts. He distrusts the developments in Athens and the men, like Peisander, that have come to see him a while ago. He distrusted them with reason, for these people will not long hold power in Athens. What do they represent but themselves? Tissaphernes trusts me and I have been his counsellor and confidant for a long time now. I preferred his protection rather than Spartan security! Tissaphernes wants me in Athens, and with you, so that he can negotiate and deal with somebody he trusts! Together, with the armies and funds, we will defeat the Peloponnesian fleet of Astyochus, and Athens will then be ours again.’

Alcibiades paused a while, for the shouts overwhelmed his last words.

‘Yes,’ he shouted, ‘Athens will again be the city of the laws of our fathers! We must have our true ways of living, the ways our forefathers lived, our democracy, to uphold the virtues of our forefathers. The political situation in Athens must change. We must have no political parties anymore, no parties that intrigue against each other and that scheme only in their proper interest. We must again organise true Assemblies of citizens to decide on the government and justice of our polis.’

He shouted very loudly, ‘we are the army and free citizens of Athens! Nobody can take that away from us! We will bring the old ways back and chase the corrupt men who strangle our beloved land. Yes, there is a future for us and for the people we love in Hellas! We shall make the future as we like it to be. We shall curb fate to our views. We shall not be thrown to and fro by fate and by the future. We shall drive the future! We can do that together!’

Alcibiades had said enough. He had fighting men before him. These men needed no long discourses. They needed to have faith in the future, and be assured that what they were doing was right, and that their cause was just. They needed to be told that they could conquer the world and would be helped. He stopped, and at first a long silence fell. Maybe he had not said enough and the people had expected more.

Then the people ran forward, to Alcibiades and to the generals. They pressed forward and Alcibiades was held amidst the men and pushed towards the centre of the mass. He went around, shook hands and arms, embraced weeping men and held others he knew from previous campaigns.

The shouting was muffled in the beginning but unanimous, ‘Alcibiades for general!’ ‘Alcibiades for strategos!’

The shouting became a roar in unison and the men repeated the same words over and over, and the words lasted and lasted, ‘Alcibiades our general!’

Finally, Alcibiades held up his arms to silence the crowd. He took a long time.

Thrasybulus shouted above all the other noise, ‘Alcibiades is hereby elected general of our army. He will lead with us and serve you!’

There was more roaring noise after that, and Alcibiades proudly went back to the top of the hill.

A hoplite shouted, ‘Alcibiades, when do we sail to Piraeus to take Athens back?’

Many men cried, ‘yes, yes! Up to Athens!’

The crowd was uncontrollable, Alcibiades being the only one able to calm them down.

He said, ‘not so fast! We are not going to leave Ionia in the hands of the Spartans!

Now that I have been elected your general, I have to go back to Tissaphernes and seek support there. We have funds to gather, for you have to eat and be paid, and we need all kinds of supplies. We have to lead this war and win it. As to the men in Athens who threaten your families, we will send them word that if they touch one hair of their heads their own heads will roll off their shoulders soon.’

Thrasybulus broke up the Assembly after these phrases. The three generals discussed about the strategy of the war and of the most pressing affairs of bringing sufficient supplies to Samos. They walked to the harbour again, but they were surrounded continuously by many people. They walked to the temple of Hera at Samos, which was magnificent, and they prayed there to the city’s goddess.

Later, Alcibiades went straight for Thrasybulus’s trireme that had brought him to Samos. The rowers went aboard, and Thrasybulus ordered the ship to the coast of the mainland of Asia, close to Magnesia. Alcibiades waved goodbye and immediately the ship set out for Lydia, for Alcibiades had to return to Tissaphernes’s court as quickly as possible.

Alcibiades returned to Magnesia. He asked for an audience with Tissaphernes.

Tissaphernes allowed seeing him the next day. Alcibiades prepared for the meeting.

He dressed like an Athenian, in a white, simple chiton, not like a Persian, but he wore no weapon. Alcibiades was led to one of the satrap’s private rooms, not to his official reception hall. He entered in Tissaphernes’s work room, preceded by a guard and the guard stayed in the room.

The satrap sat on a couch. Two Persian counsellors were at his side. Scrolls and maps lay tossed upon several small tables.

Tissaphernes spoke out immediately, dismissing formalities, ‘I know, I know. You come to see me because you are an Athenian general again. I heard of your election at Samos by the army. News spreads rapidly. How do we proceed now?’

‘News spreads not so rapidly,’ Alcibiades thought. ‘You have spies in the Athenian army or among the people of Samos. I was lucky to have returned immediately, though somebody rowed or sailed even quicker!’

He said, ‘yes, lord. I was indeed elected general for Athens once more. That is good news for both of us. I will be able to better serve your interests from within the Athenian army.’

Tissaphernes interrupted Alcibiades sharply, laughing sarcastically, ‘you have been made general by the army, not by Athens. What if Athens disagrees? And what if the interests of the Athenian army are not my interests? No servant can serve two masters. You pretend to serve Athens, Samos, Sparta and Persia. I rather believe you only serve yourself!’

He continued to grab among his maps and did not look at Alcibiades.

‘I hope there shall be no conflict,’ Alcibiades replied. ‘I believe since long that your interests are best served by an alliance with Athens and especially with its army at Samos. I told you that before.’

‘I do not know who rules in Athens, Alcibiades, and I do not know how long the current leaders at Samos will keep their heads on their shoulders. How can I negotiate with people that change so quickly? I shall not make an alliance with people and institutions that are in such a volatile state as is the case with Athens, its leaders and its army in Ionia. You yourself advised me to watch the two parties and support the weakest. The Athenian fleet controls the Sea, obviously. The time of observing and of weighing options is not over yet, Alcibiades!’

‘I understand, lord. Yet, the army here in Samos is all the army Athens has, its sole power and it is the power of Athens. The army and its generals will force back to power the institutions they prefer. Athens cannot withstand her army. The people of Athens think like the army.’

Tissaphernes grinned again, ‘and the generals of Athens are led by one among them, called Alcibiades. Isn’t it? You are telling me you are the master of Athens now!’

Alcibiades did not answer that question, which was really a conjecture of Tissaphernes.

Alcibiades said, ‘Lord, you have a treaty with Sparta concerning the Ionian cities of Asia. Can Sparta really make that treaty happen? What if Athens and Athens’ fleet cries out its indignation? The cities and islands of Ionia will revolt once more, and since Athens rules the Sea, the treaty you have with Sparta will have no value whatsoever. By supporting the army of Athens at Samos, the same treaty can be signed by the generals of Athens and voted in an Assembly of citizens. Only a treaty with the Athenian army, and the treaty with Sparta still valid, can offer you the cities you want.’

He said, ‘I have to return to Samos, to the army. I will keep in contact if you permit. I will probably ask to come to see you and discuss with you about the future of the relations between Athens and Persia. Will you allow that?’

Tissaphernes sounded more positive after these words.

He looked Alcibiades in the eyes and replied, ‘yes. I will allow that. I will also think about your proposals. I have not decided yet which side I should support. I am not sure I will support one of the sides anyhow. The Athenians exasperate me with their dominance in the Sea and their lack of solid government. The Peloponnesians have angered me. I shall not bring them my fleet, at least not until matters have been cleared up with the Peloponnesians. I may still link with the Athenians.’

Tissaphernes had been thinking out loud and he stopped abruptly, as if he suddenly remembered that the man that stood before him was not anymore Alcibiades, his counsellor, but an Athenian general.

Alcibiades wondered whether this was indeed an indiscretion of Tissaphernes and information that the satrap had given too soon, or a deliberate hint and encouragement. There was not much more to be said. Alcibiades had heard that he could continue to contact Tissaphernes, that there was still some hope for Athens to become a privileged ally of Tissaphernes, and most importantly, that Tissaphernes was not throwing his fleet in the war theatre of the Ionian waters. Tissaphernes did not openly and angrily blame him for having changed sides again, though he noted he had displeased the man. Alcibiades took his leave and also Tissaphernes spoke a few last, polite words. Then, Alcibiades left.

Alcibiades learnt from his own Persian spies what had angered Tissaphernes. The Peloponnesians in the fleet of Miletus had grown totally out of patience with not being paid in full and not regularly. They seemed to believe this was partly Alcibiades's doing. The leaders, as well as the men from the allied troops, went to see the Spartan navarch Astyochus to complain. Astyochus received the leaders arrogantly and he even threatened Dorieus the Thurian with his swagger stick. The Syracusans and the Thurians were free men, however. When the men of the ship crews saw how Astyochus sneered at their leaders, they prepared to stone Astyochus. The navarch had to run away and flee to an altar to find security. Tissaphernes feared revolt among the Peloponnesian troops. Meanwhile, the Milesians captured the fort built by Tissaphernes inside their town. Most of the Peloponnesians had agreed with the capture, and done nothing to prevent it. The only Spartan to object was Lichas, who said that the Spartans still needed the confidence and support of the satrap and that they should preserve his favours. Lichas, however, caught an illness and he died soon thereafter. The Milesians refused even to have him buried near Miletus. The Milesians also sent representatives from their town to Sparta to plead for their independence from Tissaphernes. Moreover, Astyochus's time as a navarch was up.

Shortly after the events in Miletus, a new navarch arrived, a Spartiate called Mindarus. Lichas was dead, Astyochus returned to Sparta, and Hermocrates equally left the Peloponnesian army. It was Hermocrates who had protested the most against Tissaphernes and against Alcibiades, but he had been condemned to exile from Syracuse on orders of Sparta. Syracuse sent other commanders to lead the Syracusan fleet. Hermocrates was banned on allegations of corruption. It was Tissaphernes who had accused Hermocrates of corruption. The satrap told everywhere that Hermocrates had wanted large sums of money from him to guarantee his support and he said Hermocrates had been his enemy ever since he, Tissaphernes, had refused to pay the Syracusan. Hermocrates fell in disgrace with Sparta and Syracuse. With Lichas, Astyochus and Hermocrates away from Ionia, a whole new situation developed for Tissaphernes, also with the Peloponnesian army.

Alcibiades moved from Tissaphernes's court with all his belongings to the Athenian army at Samos. He was almost where he had always wanted to be, ever since he stepped off his trireme, the *Harmonia*, three years ago in Italy during the Sicilian campaign.

Four Hundred

The oligarchic party of Athens sent ten men to Samos to secure the support of the army for the new government. During the discussions and uprisings in the army, these men had waited at Delos. Now that they thought that the situation with the army had stabilised, they arrived at Samos, almost at the same time but a little later than Alcibiades.

Thrasybulus organised an Assembly outside Samos, and he let the Athenian delegation speak first. The speaker for the Athenian oligarchs could only utter a few phrases.

The man started with, ‘greetings, citizens and warriors of the army of Athens. I came to speak to you as a representative of the body of the Four Hundred, which legitimately governs Athens.’

This first phrase was enough. It angered the hoplites to the utmost. They refused to listen to the man, and they shouted that all who opposed democracy should be put to death. Because of the noise of the hoplites the Athenian delegates could not continue speaking. The hoplites had become a mob out of control, and they threatened the speakers.

Thrasybulus and Alcibiades intervened. They silenced the crowd gently but firmly. Thrasybulus had a mighty voice that thundered above the men. He urged to let the delegates say what they had come for. It took a time for the men to calm down, but finally the noise diminished, and the Assembly could continue.

The Athenian delegate explained the concept of the Four Hundred and the function of the Five Thousand. He said that the change had been brought about to strengthen the polis, not to weaken it, and to be able to respond better and more rapidly to the changing environment of the war in the Sea. He reminded the men that a system of ten counsellors, ten probouloi, had been installed before already, to the same effect. The Four Hundred would be chosen among the Five Thousand, in turns. This way the Five Thousand would have all and each a share in the government. Afterwards, the man spoke of the allegations of Chaereas, the sailor of the Paralus. He assured the hoplites that no outrages had been committed against the relatives of the men in the army. The families of the hoplites had retained their property; they were not pursued in any way; they were not thrown into prison and they were treated exactly the same way as all other citizens.

The hoplites, however, did not believe one word from the envoys from Athens. Again, they shouted the ten delegates down, so that the speakers dared not continue to speak. The army cried, ‘up to Athens!’ and, ‘we sail to Piraeus!’ ‘Death to the Four Hundred!’ ‘Back to our laws!’ ‘Let’s hold a vote to sail to Athens and re-install our democracy!’

Thrasybulus had to intervene once more. He quietened the crowd and Alcibiades sprang forward to address the men. When he began to speak, silence set in immediately.

Alcibiades shouted, ‘men, citizens of Athens in the army at Samos, hear me! Hear me! I told you already in the previous Assembly that we should not leave these waters! If we leave now for Piraeus, then the Peloponnesians will grab power in Ionia and all its marvellous and wealthy cities will be lost forever to us. The cities will be forced to become allies of Sparta, or their people will be murdered and their polises destroyed.

Let us think what we should do! If Athens wants to govern better by using the best talent and financials, then we can accept now Five Thousand men to rule the city, while the situation of the war necessitates it. But the Five Thousand have never been once called together by the Four Hundred! So the Four Hundred have to go! We don’t want of them! They have to go!’

The hoplites shouted their agreement.

Alcibiades continued, ‘the original, elected Council of Five Hundred, our Boule, such as we had in the times of our democracy, should be re-installed. It is good that people who know how to handle money, such as from the Five Thousand, can take care for

the state of the treasury, and seek economies where they can be found. For that should result in better conditions and better pay for the army too. We all want very best talents in government, now that all means have become so scarce in Athens. The army must hold out in the Sea and win from our enemies. We must hold out against the Spartans now, grow stronger by getting funds and support from our allies, and defeat the Spartans. I am certain that for Athens and for the army a settlement can be agreed upon, a settlement that satisfies the needs and aspirations of the citizens in Athens as well as of the citizens that are here, fighting in the army at Samos. Athens must also hold out and not now give up to Sparta and seek a dishonourable peace! If we lose the war, however, because of our internal strifes, then Sparta will impose its views on us and it will force on Athens and on us an oligarchy of the toughest kind.

We, your generals, will discuss on these terms with the delegates from Athens and urge them not to negotiate with Sparta for a surrender that would be dishonourable to us.

I propose a vote! We continue to fight the Peloponnesians here, to show we are strong together, Athens and army, and try to come to an agreement with the various parties in Athens. In the meantime, we should let some delegates return immediately to tell the Four Hundred that they should dissolve and tell the oligarchs of Athens what we think.'

The hoplites cried that they accepted the vote, and the proposals of Alcibiades were accepted. The men were disciplined again, and further motions were proposed and taken to arrange the war.

The war in Ionia came to a pause in hostilities. Chios continued to hold out despite the famine in the city caused by the Athenian blockade. The Peloponnesian fleet did not move with the new navarch Mindarus. Tissaphernes became less and less popular with the Spartan leaders, who blamed him for his support of Alcibiades among many other grievances. The Spartans suspected Tissaphernes of collaboration with the Athenian army. Tissaphernes actually was still and ever not making up his mind on which side to support totally. He wanted however to clear the suspicions that Sparta had against him, so he said he would sail to Aspendus himself to bring the Phoenician fleet to Miletus. He left his commander Tamos in Miletus to provide pay for the Spartan ship crews.

The Athenian generals at Samos heard that Tissaphernes was going to Aspendus to fetch the Phoenician fleet. Everybody looked at Alcibiades, so he told he would go after Tissaphernes and bring Tissaphernes with his fleet to Samos to support the Athenians, or at the very least prevent the fleet from siding with the Peloponnesians.

Alcibiades took thirteen triremes under his command, and he sailed to Phaselis and Caunus in the east, in pursuit of Tissaphernes. He went aboard the ships in the harbour of Samos. He knew very well that what he was doing was nothing but a show set up for the Athenian hoplites and his co-generals. He was very much certain that Tissaphernes would not decide for the Athenians or for the Spartans at this moment. Tissaphernes would fear to lose his precious fleet in a sea-battle. The fleet would not leave Aspendus, thought Alcibiades, and not move north, up to Ionia. Tissaphernes was only gaining time with the Spartans, as he had always done. Alcibiades had, however, also promised to bring money to the Athenian army. He wanted to use a

fleet to collect funds in the islands of Ionia, and he had a few ideas for that. He took his time to reach Caunus and Phaselis.

At Phaselis, Alcibiades met Tissaphernes, and he spoke to him in several meetings, which lasted many days. Alcibiades understood that Tissaphernes would indeed do as he, Alcibiades, had expected. Tissaphernes wanted to wear out the armies of Sparta and Athens, still balancing the strength of the two armies, and still keep the war undecided as long as possible. Then, he could strengthen his position in Lydia and Caria, and with the Ionian cities. Alcibiades strengthened the satrap in his views. He was also certain he could not persuade Tissaphernes to support Athens at this moment.

Alcibiades sailed back after more than a month, returning first to Samos. The Spartan navarch Mindarus never saw the Phoenician fleet of Aspendus, and Alcibiades could report that Tissaphernes would not throw his weight of arms on the side of Sparta. He then took with him nine additional ships, and sailed with his bigger fleet of a little over twenty triremes to Halicarnassus and to Cos.

Halicarnassus was a very wealthy city, so he thought he could collect enough money there to keep the army well paid for, for the months to come. He also wanted to have Cos strong in alliance with Athens, and the city there fortified. He had to do all that before the bad weather of the winter set in, and autumn advanced rapidly. When Alcibiades stayed a few days at Samos, he also heard what had happened in Athens during his meetings with Tissaphernes.

It seemed that Alcibiades's message to the Four Hundred had been well accepted by the representatives of Athens' oligarchic government that had assisted at the Assembly of the army. The delegates told the oligarchs of the proposals from the army of Samos. Many of the moderates of that party, also involved in setting up the Four Hundred, became afraid of the developments in the city. Among these men were Theramenes son of Hagnon and Aristocrates son of Scellias. These men were also afraid of the army at Samos and of Alcibiades. They proposed to appeal indeed more to the Five Thousand, and they believed that the oligarchy would not hold out in the longer term. The strongest supporters of pure oligarchy continued to be in command, however, and among these men were not only Peisander, Antiphon and Aristarchus, but also Phrynichus, the former general who had opposed Alcibiades in Ionia, and who would have little to expect from Alcibiades. These men sent a delegation of ten men to Sparta to negotiate a peace treaty. The delegation was led by Phrynichus.

The oligarchs also began to build a strong wall at Eetonia, a mole in the harbour of Piraeus, as well as a large warehouse there, in which they amassed grains and other food. The wall controlled the narrow entry to the harbour of Piraeus. The Athenian democrats surmised that this wall was being built not so much to keep the Spartans out of Piraeus, as to let the enemy sail into the harbour. The walls could be controlled and defended by a limited number of people. The Athenians heard that a fleet of forty-two Peloponnesian ships, among which Italian and Sicilian triremes, were being prepared in Laconia to attack Euboea. This fleet was to sail under the command of a Spartiate called Agesandridas son of Agesander.

The moderate oligarchs like Theramenes feared that Agesandridas's Spartan fleet would attack Piraeus, and that the Spartans would be helped in that action by the extreme oligarchs of Athens who occupied the walls and the warehouse at Eetonia. At that time, Phrynichus, who had just returned from leading the embassy to Sparta, was struck down and killed in the agora. The assassin escaped. His accomplice was an Argive. The man was arrested and tortured by the Four Hundred, but the man betrayed nobody. No connections were made with Alcibiades.

The Spartan fleet sailed out, took Aegina and anchored at Epidaurus. Theramenes and Aristocrates thought it was time to bring about a change in government in Athens, for they had lost confidence in the other oligarchs. They thought that the current oligarchy led Athens into extremes of violence against the will of the majority of the people.

Their revolt started at Eetonia. Aristocrates was a commander of the hoplites that guarded the construction of the walls. The oligarchs had not expected him to rebel from them. His men arrested at the mole Alexicles, a general of the oligarchy, and one of the men responsible within the hard core of the oligarchy for the building of the walls. Hermon, the commander of the citizen guards of the military harbour of Munichia, supported Aristocrates. The original oligarchs ran armed through the streets of Athens in a state of panic, ready to any action of violence. They threatened Theramenes, Aristarchus and others, so that these also fled to Piraeus to join the revolt. The rebels started to tear down the walls at Eetonia and they received the help from the citizens that lived in Piraeus. Civil war threatened within the confined space of the city walls.

The oligarchs would have attacked Theramenes, but a man called Thucydides of Pharsalus, a Pharsalian who represented Athens' interests at Pharsalus, stood resolutely in their way and conjured them not to commence a battle inside Athens, while the Peloponnesians stood at their gates. The next day, Theramenes obtained that the rebelling hoplites released Alexicles. The wall at Eetonia was torn down. The insurgents marched to the theatre of Dionysos near Munichia. They held an Assembly there, during which they decided to march on Athens. They went as far as the Anaceum.

There they were met by a group of oligarchs who promised them that the Five Thousand would meet regularly and that the Four Hundred would be henceforth chosen in turns from the Five Thousand. The oligarchs thus moderated their views on the government of the city under the threat of civil war. Both parties calmed down then, and they decided together to hold an Assembly outside Athens, in the theatre of Dionysos, to settle their differences peacefully.

At the day of that Assembly however, it was heard that the Spartiate Agesandridas had sailed around Megara with his fleet and that he was passing Salamis. The danger that he would sail into Piraeus seemed real. Instead of holding the Assembly, the Athenians ran to the ships and to the fortifications of the harbours to defend Piraeus. The Spartan fleet sailed past Cape Sounion, however, past the occasion to damage Athens hard and directly. They sailed away from Athens, to Oropus.

The Athenians then sent Tymocharus with a small number of ships to Eretria on Euboea. An Athenian fleet of thirty-six triremes had moored at Eretria, facing Oropus, and a fleet of forty-two Peloponnesian triremes led by Agesandridas remained nearby,

at Oropus. The newly arrived Athenian ships had crews that had rapidly been gathered together, and which had no experience or training in manoeuvring as a whole. The Athenian fleet was at a disadvantage.

A sea-battle took place close to Eretria, in which the Athenians were defeated, losing twenty-two of their ships. They lost also many men, for the Eretrians took the side of the Spartans, and they killed the Athenians that fled ashore.

The entire island of Euboea revolted from Athens then, and that was the single worst major disaster that could arrive to the polis. Athens had brought its livestock to Euboea, out of Attica, for Attica had been laid waste and terrorised for a long time now by the garrison of Spartiates at Decelea. Athens had lost its livestock in Euboea. This was not just an immediate financial loss to individuals. The city had to import everything from this moment on from very far, even its most immediate supplies, by boat from the Hellespont.

That made of the Hellespont the only one and last vital point for the economic survival of Athens.

The Four Hundred assessed the situation. Their assessment proved to be dismal. They had lost the livestock of Athens with Euboea. The army had revolted at Samos. There were no more triremes in Athens. They hung at the brink of a rebellion inside their city. Attica remained occupied by King Agis of Sparta, and Agis could stand any moment again below the long walls. Alcibiades wanted them out of government. With no ships in Athens, the Spartans could have sailed into Piraeus harbour any moment and have attacked Athens from close by. That would force the Athenian fleet at Samos to sail back to Athens, so that Ionia and the Hellespont would fall into the hands of the Peloponnesians. Even if the attack on Athens would be repelled, with Euboea and Attica occupied, if the Hellespont was closed, Athens was strangled and its hegemony obliterated.

Did the Athenians lose all hope? Never! When the dangers got tougher they assembled, set aside their differences, and found solutions for their problems. They managed to their own surprise to find and prepare twenty more triremes. They organised meetings of the Assembly and they held these, as they had done before, on the Pnyx.

They decided to peacefully depose the Four Hundred and to hand over power to the Five Thousand. The Five Thousand were to include any citizen that could afford a hoplite's panoply of armour. They stopped remunerating official functions as a measure of economy. They voted to recall Alcibiades, as well as his companions, and they asked everybody to continue actively the war with Sparta.

With these decisions, the brief period of oligarchy was brought at an end. Athens was almost fully democratic again. The leaders of the oligarchy fled. Peisander and Alexicles ran to the Spartans that were closest by, at Decelea. Aristarchus, the general, fled to Oenoe and obtained by treachery that this city surrendered to the Boeotians. Athens was practically democratic anew, and in line with her army at Samos.

Mindarus

When Alcibiades arrived at Samos, the Spartan fleet of Ionia also lay in turmoil. The Peloponnesian crews had received no pay from Tissaphernes for months, and the two Spartiates who had accompanied the satrap to Aspendus, reported that no ships would be coming to their aid.

The Spartan navarch Mindarus tore at his long hair, cursing Astyochus for having left him an impossible heap of problems to deal with. He felt like sitting on a fire mountain that could erupt any moment.

The solution for Mindarus arrived from Pharnabazus, the satrap of Phrygia. Pharnabazus had the same objectives with the Hellenic cities on his coast as Tissaphernes had with the cities of Ionia, but he had shown his money. He invited the Peloponnesians to the Hellespont.

Mindarus considered the situation in Ionia to be rotten to the core and entirely blocked. He wanted to do something useful for Sparta with the fleet, and not to remain inactive at Miletus. He also started to wonder why the Spartans had come to Ionia in the first place, instead of capturing the Hellespont, which would have hurt Athens much more than a revolt in a few islands in Ionia. He suspected Alcibiades to have tricked the Spartans to rust in Ionia, because by Alcibiades happened to know the people in Ionia better than the ones in the Hellespont. Or, he thought, had Alcibiades done all this by purpose to protect Athens? Mindarus made up his mind quickly, for he was a man of action, not of waiting, and he sailed for the Hellespont with his seventy-three triremes. He ran into a storm however, for it was late in the year, and he had to go ashore at Icarus. A few days later he arrived at Chios.

Thrasyllus and Thrasybulus sailed out separately from Samos, but when they heard that Mindarus was at Chios, they assembled at the island of Lesbos and they meant to capture the town of Eresus there, which had revolted from Athens when it was attacked by a force of exiles from Methymna. The generals kept eager lookouts for the Spartan fleet, but Mindarus managed to slip past them by advancing along the mainland coast, passing by Carteria in the Phocaeid, along the Cumaeian coasts, Hanaxitus and Rhoeteum. The Spartan fleet arrived unscathed in the Hellespont.

The Spartans had already sixteen ships at Abydos. They gathered their eighty-six ships in the strategic port of Abydos, at the narrowest point of the Hellespont, and they began to block the merchant ships bound for Athens.

The Athenians abandoned the siege of Eresus as soon as they heard that the Peloponnesian fleet had arrived in the Hellespont, which was merely a day's sailing from Lesbos. They were joined by fourteen ships that were sent to the Hellespont to defend Chersonese. They moored at Elaeus, close to Sestos, on the opposite side of Abydos.

When Alcibiades was on his way to Halicarnassus, a sea-battle took place between the Athenian and the Peloponnesian fleets in the Hellespont. Thrasybulus and Thrasyllus, with seventy-six ships, gave battle to Mindarus, who had eighty-six ships. The battle took place near Cynossema.

The Athenians seemed defeated at first, but the Peloponnesian ships did not have the discipline to stay grouped in a battle. Thrasybulus profited from their confusion and extension of lines, and attacked them in force, concentrated, turning back from what seemed a fleeing from the battle. He defeated the central fleet of the Spartans. The Syracusan ships were also defeated by Thrasyllus. The Peloponnesian fleet was defeated and fled in disarray. They succeeded in reaching their safe harbour of Abydos, losing but a few ships. The Athenians nevertheless caught twenty-one Spartan ships for fifteen Athenian triremes lost.

Alcibiades had been to Halicarnassus. The city of Halicarnassus was independent from the satrapy of Caria. It had fought its independence from a series of Carian tyrants, the last of which had been Lygdamis. Lygdamis had been the reason why Herodotus, the writer of the 'Histories', had travelled to Athens from his birthplace, though he had come back later to help depose the tyrant. That had happened more than thirty years ago, and since long the city had been a loyal member of the Athenian League. Alcibiades had never met Herodotus, for when he was still young, the man had left Athens to help found Thurii in Italy for Pericles. Nevertheless, Alcibiades had read his books.

Halicarnassus was a wealthy city, a Dorian town but with a democratic form of government ever since the Carian tyrants had been driven away. Carians and Dorians lived in peace in the city. Alcibiades had only to sail with his boats in a long line before Halicarnassus, to reach the effect he wanted. Halicarnassus preferred to pay rather than to fight.

The city had been in early times a member of the Dorian Hexapolis of Ionia, a federation of six Dorian cities: Cos, Cnidus, Camirus, Lindus and Ialysus. These had erected their sanctuary of Apollo near Cnidus, a precinct called the Triopion. Here, games were held in the honour of Apollo. It was said to have been founded by Triopos, the son of Poseidon. The Triopian Games were held every four years. It was said also that once, a Halicarnassian had taken home the tripod that was his prize for winning the Games, back to his city. That happened in breach of the tradition of leaving all trophies in the temple of the Triopion. The man was called Agesicles, and because of this Agesicles the other cities had excluded Halicarnassus from their Hexapolis alliance.

Alcibiades forced the people of Halicarnassus to pay large sums of money. He sailed rapidly to Cnidus and sacrificed graciously at the temple of Apollo. Then, he left and fortified Cos.

In the Hellespont, a few Antandrians took hoplites from Abydos and brought them to their city of Antandros, where Tissaphernes had appointed one of his men as governor. The man had been cruel, so the Antandrians revolted against Persia and captures their city, installing Hellenic rule. Tissaphernes was very angry then with the Peloponnesians, and he was also angered because the Spartans thought they could be better helped by Pharnabazus than by him. He therefore decided to march to the Hellespont.

Tissaphernes had more than one issue. He had supported the Spartans, but the Spartans had left him. He had confided in Alcibiades, and Alcibiades had left him. The Ionian cities of Cnidus and Miletus had revolted against him, and so had Antandros. The Peloponnesian fleet had escaped into the strong arms of wealthy Pharnabazus. With success in those waters, the Spartans could assist Pharnabazus, and

Pharnabazus would gain the favours of King Darius. Tissaphernes began to wonder about who had counselled him and led him in this impasse, for this mess could, surely, not have been of his own doing. He could find no other name but Alcibiades.

When Alcibiades heard of the sea-battle at Cynossema, three thoughts immediately worried him.

He was disappointed not to have been there, but his work in getting funds for the army was important; without money the army might revolt. He was delighted with the result – the victory was very good news and confirmed Athens' superiority, even with lesser forces. He was however also trembling of fear and apprehension, for if this battle had been lost, Athens would have been finished, since there was no other fleet and currently no money to build yet another fleet. Alcibiades cursed Mindarus and Thrasybulus for having been so belligerent as to want to fight and seek battle.

Astyochus was a navarch Alcibiades preferred. But he saluted Thrasybulus's skills at Sea, for Thrasyllus had merely been a hoplite, appointed general of a fleet, having no experience leading ships. Nevertheless, the two generals had done well.

It was late autumn. Thrasybulus and Thrasyllus kept their fleet in the Hellespont, watching closely the movements of Mindarus and thwarting his attempts to block the narrows. They had installed their base near Sestos, whereas Mindarus was at Abydos. Alcibiades returned from Halicarnassus and Cos to Samos. There was still a small fleet of about fourteen Peloponnesian triremes in Ionia, a fleet that had remained at Rhodos, led by Dorieus son of Diagoras the Thurian, so Alcibiades had stayed at Samos to guard that force.

Late in the year, Dorieus slipped also to the Hellespont, hoping to reach Abydos under cover of darkness, but he was spotted by the Athenians at the Hellespont. Thrasybulus rowed out to meet him with more ships than Dorieus had, so Dorieus fled to the shore near Rhoeteum. He grounded his ships there, and though the Athenians attacked him, they achieved very little. The Athenians returned to their main camp at Madytus.

Dorieus waited awhile, and then slipped out again. He was pursued by the Athenians, who drove him again ashore, this time at Dardanus.

When Mindarus heard of what Dorieus was doing, he sailed with his entire fleet from Abydos to Dardanus, and he also warned Pharnabazus to come to his help on land. Pharnabazus controlled with his troops the southern and south-eastern shore of the Hellespont, the coast of mainland Asia, the territories of Phrygia, so that if the Athenians would be driven ashore there, they would have to face a land battle.

Harmonia

At that time, Alcibiades received a man at Samos who asked to meet him. The man was a sailor, the captain of a merchant ship that sailed between Rhodos and the Hellespont. Alcibiades received the squat, sun-burnt man in his house of Samos. The captain told him he had already looked for him on his way to Rhodos, but had not been able to catch up with him.

He said, 'you travel like a whirlwind, once in this place and then in that one.'

He told he was much engaged in business with Axiochus, Alcibiades's uncle.

Alcibiades interest was immediately piqued. He asked how Axiochus was.

‘Oh, he is fine,’ the man said. ‘He is still the one who likes to live at both ends. He wins much business in the Hellespont, trading in everything. I work with him a lot. We are fellow-traders.’

The man opened a bundle of leather cloths he wore under his arm, and he handed over three scrolls to Alcibiades.

‘Axiochus gave these to me and asked me to bring them to you, wherever I could find you. He said he was sorry for being so late, but he had his reasons. He said you would read about it.’

Seals closed the scrolls, and Alcibiades found a different name on each of the scrolls. Alcibiades read, ‘Axiochus’, ‘Theodote’ and ‘Timandra’.

Alcibiades suppressed his impatience but his hands trembled when he eagerly took the scrolls. He talked for a while with the captain and wanted to reward the man for his effort with golden Darics, but the man waved the coins away.

‘I am not here for rewards, general. I have come to help friends of friends. I cherish the friendship of Axiochus and I work with him. That is my reward.’

Alcibiades thanked the captain. He asked him where Axiochus was. The man answered that Axiochus was somewhere in one or other port of the Hellespont and the Propontis, always on the move. If Alcibiades wanted to answer the scrolls, he would be happy to take them with him, but he did not know really at what time of the year Axiochus would get the letters. Alcibiades made an appointment with the man for the next day. Then, the man left.

Alcibiades opened the scroll written by Axiochus first. He read.

Alcibiades,

I salute you, nephew.

I imagine that you are anxious to have news about Timandra and Theodote. They are well and safe. I dared not to send you news in Sparta because I feared all kinds of pressure might have been exerted on you by the knowledge of the place where the two women and children were. I feared Sparta’s spies and her hired killers. I feared for the safety of the women that were dear to you and yes, also a little for my own safety at that. I waited to send you news at Miletus equally, for I thought that town had to be a true spies’ nest of Ionian, Persian and Spartan intrigues. I hope I have done for the best. I heard recently, however, that you returned to the Athenian fleet at Samos, and had been elected general there. So I sent these scrolls by a sea-captain who is a loyal friend. I can trust this man, for he owes me a lot, and you also can trust him. You can send me letters by him. He will guard them with his life and keep them a secret.

I suppose you will hardly find the time to sail north soon, one of these months. I told you we would go to Thrace when we had to leave from Athens, and that is where we are. I am an Athenian merchant of the Hellespont, but Athenian only in name. When we had to leave from Athens, I sailed to the Hellespont. I received your word to flee Athens, while you were still in Sicily. I immediately set off for your country house. I urged the women to come with me. Hipparchos refused to depart, for he had still many horses to care for. He told me he would sell the horses and the house, and leave

as soon as he could, but he could not do that at that moment. All his money was invested in that house and stables.

I wanted to leave rapidly and I had a ship waiting in Piraeus, so the next day after my arrival I took the three women (also Hipparchos's mistress) back to Athens, boarded them on the small boat and headed for the harbour. We left as soon as I got on my ship. Nobody saw us sail off. It was a merchant ship and not well suited for a long voyage with ladies, but the trip to the Hellespont did not take so long after all. We followed the coasts of Euboea, then sailed east, and I sailed close to the beaches, so that we were out of danger of storms and heavy seas. I showed the women Scione and Torone in Chalcidice. We sailed by Stagira and Eion over Abdera, and landed a day at the Island of Samothrace to take in food. We arrived at Cardia on the Chersonese. With the money you had left with me I bought first a house at Cardia, within the walls of the city, so that the women would be safe there. Then I left alone, for I had business to attend to in the Hellespont and in the Propontis, but I told the women I would look for a decent place for them in one of the towns of the Propontis. The women were quite happy at that. Nobody in Cardia knew who they were, and I asked partners of mine to keep an eye on them.

I sailed from Cardia, which is quite a pleasant town in a nice land, and I sailed on. I looked at various places in the Propontis, travelling as far as Byzantium and Chalcedon to look for a suitable, nice and safe place for your women to live in. I revisited all the places to which we travelled together when we were young. I looked at Elaeus, Sestos, Abydos (where we are not welcome anymore), Madytus, Lampsacus, Harpaginum, Perinthos, Selymbria and Byzantium. I found one place too large, the other too strategic a position in war, the other in Spartan or Peloponnesian hands, and so on. I was even for a while at Dascylium, the capital of Pharnabazus satrap of Phrygia. I carefully considered all these towns, and I judged finally that the entire southern coast of the Hellespont and of the Propontis would not be safe enough for your family. The territories of the Troad and of Phrygia belong to the King of Persia and to the satrap of Phrygia, with which you and Athens might one day be at war. Pharnabazus seems to take the side of Sparta.

So after many headaches, I decided for the northern coast. I also looked for a town allied more or less to Athens, but at peace with its neighbours, an independent town that paid tribute to our Athens. I did not want one of the larger cities, for in case of war in the Hellespont these might be the prey of attacks and sieges. I looked for a town that was small and peaceful, was situated in an agreeable landscape, with a pleasant climate. I was looking for a town that was small and insignificant, a town that had walls but that would be taken easily by a larger army, so that the population would not suffer from a long siege and the atrocities that could ensue.

I decided for the town of Bisanthes! Bisanthes has all the qualities I explained above, plus it is also one of my trading places. I like discreet, quiet places. You would be amazed to hear how much more trade there is to be done in such places, more than in many larger towns. The wealthier merchants considered the same way as I, it seems. We are not so far from Byzantium and Selymbria here, not far from Galata, and close on the other side of the Propontis to Abydos and Lampsacus. We are close to the Chersonese. The Kings of Thrace are far away, and even if the tribes in the interior live in the wild, they are friendly and trade with us. You know how the climate is in the Propontis. There can be hard storms here in winter, but otherwise the weather is

pleasant. It can be hot in mid-summer but beyond the shores lay vast forests, and the morning and evening breezes of the Sea always delight us.

So we are at Bisanthes. I bought two houses here. I bought a house in the countryside, close to the town but hidden from its view, separated from the walls by a few hills. In very little time we can get into Bisanthes. A cart and horses are always ready. In case of danger, the women can ride to Bisanthes, where I furnished another house. When the women want to shop, they come to the town house. I left five Thracian men, veterans of battles in their country, in charge of the house, so that you need not fear for the safety of Timandra and Theodote. Your two daughters play around me here, as I write this letter, and they are two dolls of rare beauty. They are truly fine children and especially Laiis is very pretty. Oh yes, Timandra gave birth to a girl, your daughter, which we called Laiis.

Hipparchos also arrived in the Hellespont. I told him to travel on to Cardia. He arrived there before I had re-sold the house, so when I arrived there afterwards I found him at Cardia, bored but satisfied. He could leave Athens just before Agis moved on Decelea and fortified the place to devastate Attica. Hipparchos had by then been able to sell the house and stables in Attica. He will raise horses now, probably at Cardia or nearby, and help me with my trade.

I am afraid you have nothing left in Athens. Your son Alcibiades the younger has remained in Athens and he lives with the family of Aspasia. He is well cared for, as I could notice when I travelled to Athens. I can still trade with Athens and I go there sometimes, though I am not a desired person in the city. I try to be discreet and I never stay in Athens for more than a few days. I have a house in Piraeus, you know, not far from Callias's home. Your cousin, Euryptolemus, also keeps an eye on Alcibiades the Younger, who is a fine boy eager to learn.

You should not worry about Timandra and Theodote; they are safe and well protected. They have enough money to live easily by.

Our trade with Sparta thrives well, even after your departure from the town. Your contacts allow still golden opportunities for the people in Sparta, for our partners, and for us.

Waiting to meet you again,

Axiochus

Axiochus had done wisely. Alcibiades then took the letter written by Theodote.

Alcibiades,

We hope so much these letters will come to you by Axiochus's courier. We are all in good health, too good I think often, for I fear you will not recognise your Theodote anymore! It is awful, my dear Alcibiades, but I have grown fat. You will not want me

anymore when you come back. Timandra says I am still beautiful, but I have aged to become a well-set, respectable, dignified lady mother. Anyhow, I have children enough here, in Bisanthes. My own dear girl, and Timandra and Laïs consider me their mother and ask me for advice on what to do and how.

Axiochus has really cared well for us. The naughty lecher did make some overtures at me, but I guess he was only flattering me, actually. He buys us jewels, the best clothes, and he found us a marvellous home in the country. You should see the scenery we enjoy around the house! The territory of Bisanthes shows some of the finest beaches of the world, and the weather here is nicer than in Athens. The children run on the beach all the day. They bask in the sun, eat for four, and they thrive! We start giving them some education too, but they resent that.

Thrace is a wonderful land and we live in abundance and peace. The only annoying thing is that Axiochus insisted we would always be accompanied by at least two guards. These Thracians have nasty faces, and they are real brutes. Sometimes they fight among them, but they love the children, and the children do everything they want with the Thracians. Have you ever seen a four-year old grabbing a Thracian veteran dressed in skins by the hand, and pulling him into the Sea to fetch a wooden ball? Laïs even jumped between two Thracians, five times her height, to separate them from wrestling. The Thracians complied and laughed.

We are all very thankful to Axiochus for caring so well for us. Hipparchos has just been around to fetch Myrrhina. He lived at first at Cardia, but now he lives at Pactye, it seems. He has gone into trading with Axiochus and they also entered into some horse business.

The jewels these Thracians make! Real marvels! The Thracian goldsmiths are real magicians, and Axiochus allows us to buy as much as we want. He says it is all your money, but I don't believe him. For a lecher, he is truly a nice man. Each time he comes to see us, he seems to be with another woman, to show off, but he cherishes us. We hope to see you soon!

Theodote.

Alcibiades hesitated for the third letter. He sighed and weighed the last scroll in his hand before opening it. He dreaded reading this scroll. He unrolled the paper like a religious secret. This was the first letter Harmonia had ever sent him. He unrolled the scroll entirely, determined to read now. He read every sentence twice, and the emotions of his love filled his mind.

My love,

We left Athens in a hurry under the protection of your kind uncle Axiochus. We travelled in a merchant ship to Cardia. About two months later we arrived at Bisanthes. We have a house in the country here, not far from the beach, and we also

own a nice house in the centre of the city. Theodote does all the shopping, for I prefer to stay with the children in our country house. How beautiful it is here! Imagine long, long, sandy beaches and calm water of the loveliest of colours, low-sloping hills, grey and white rocks, and lush fields and forests all around! The brilliance of the sun's rays is even better here than on Cyprus and on Melos. No woman or man on earth could wish to live in a more beautiful place than on the hills and beaches of Bisanthes! And Axiochus told us we owe all this to you! I wish that one day soon we could meet again and stroll with the children in this marvellous landscape.

Theodote is a real mother for me. We get along real well, and I understand why you loved her so much. She consoles me and brightens me up with the children when my courage falters and my mood worsens.

Why, my love, is it our destiny to be apart? What have we done to the gods? We are two lovers who are obviously not allowed to be together. The gods and fate separated us to punish us, but why do they punish us? Do they punish all lovers, because they are jealous? Sometimes they bring us together, only to make us suffer more and to separate us yet again. I love you so! I have known no other man, no love but Alcibiades. I do not live without you; I just wait and breathe, but I have no life but with Alcibiades! I sleep and dream until we are together, to start then living and be conscious of what I do once more. The days and months pass, but there is not a day that I do not walk along the water with my hand in your hand. Oh, I only walk with an image, a spirit, a memory, but you are always at my side.

Theodote wakes me up when she sees me walking, thinking only of you, imagining you holding me in your arms and running around me. I see your face in the water, in the rocks, in the yellow sand, in every leaf of the trees and in the green foliage of the bushes, and in the clouds in the sky. I know you are alive and that is my sun, my light and my warmth.

When I write this letter, yes, I know how to write myself, Laïs plays before me. People say she is the prettiest child on earth. She looks so much like you. She is a delicate child, but she is never ill. Of course, that would be difficult in this mild weather and Axiochus stuffs us with the best fish, freshest vegetables and nicest fruit he can find. Laïs is but a little child. Yet, she turns everybody around her little finger. You will not believe me, but the Thracian brutes that Axiochus hired to protect us simply adore her! I have never seen such wild sword-fighters and heavy drinkers as these Thracian guards. When Laïs, however, tells them to stop fighting or to stop drinking, they actually do as she says! When they are wrestling, she wrestles with them and they let her win. Oh, she is the true sweetest doll! When she grows up, I am sure she will charm any man out of his wits. And she is so clever too. It is so nice for her to have Artemisia as a sister and a companion in her games.

So, my love, now close your eyes. See, we are walking together. We walk on green, grassy pastures in the white sun of the morning. We walk, and when you turn around me in the soft breeze of the salty air, we embrace. I imagine you like this every morning and every evening, and I dance with you in the sand. Keep my hand in yours, my love, so that when you think of me I also think of you.

Your Harmonia

When Alcibiades had finished reading this last letter, he closed his eyes and put his head in his hands. The scroll dropped to the ground. He remained sitting thus a long time, imagining Harmonia walk with him on the beach. Then, his body shook with long convulsions. He trembled and groaned. He wept.

The next day, the servants found him laying in a corner of the room with his head still in his arms and his knees and legs all drawn up against his chest, drawn together so that all his limbs were as close to his body as possible, sleeping like a foetus in a woman's womb. The servants woke him, for they thought he was ill. He was only very, very drunk. The servants had to help him get up on his feet, for his legs and joints were so stiff from the cold of the floor and from his cramps that they feared he might not walk again. He had dark, swollen eyelids. His head was caked with blood and when he stood, he trembled all over. The servants prepared a hot bath for him. They feared for his sanity of mind.

Chapter 18 – The Hellespont and Sardis, Autumn 411 BC to the Summer of 410 BC

Abydos

The theatre of operations of the Athenian and Spartan fleets was brought to the Hellespont. The Hellespont was immensely more important as a scene of war for Athens than Ionia, even though in the Hellespont lay no such wealthy cities and islands with large fleets as in Ionia. For Athens' hegemony, Ionia certainly was important; for Athens' survival, the Hellespont was vital.

Alcibiades had done Athens a very great service to have proposed to the Spartans to organise first their military operations in Ionia, and to ally with the satrap of Lydia and Caria, Tissaphernes, rather than with Pharnabazus, the satrap of Phrygia. Alcibiades had counselled Tissaphernes to weaken both the Hellenic armies, and that advice resulted in that for over a year Sparta had not advanced in any decisive way in the war.

In that year, Astyochus had been the unimaginative navarch of Sparta. He had lost no ships, though, and kept the Peloponnesian fleet intact.

With the arrival of Mindarus, the new Spartan navarch, the strategy of Alcibiades in Ionia came to an end. Mindarus wanted to perform deeds to be remembered by in Sparta. He was not a man who parried blows, but who attacked. He was only for one year navarch of Sparta, but he was not afraid to risk his ships. When he sailed towards Dorieus with his entire fleet, he knew he was risking a sea-battle with the Athenians, for these could not let him sail freely around in the Hellespont. He was a true Spartiate. Despite Athens' much proven superiority in naval manoeuvres, he refused to be cautious. A major sea-battle was in the making.

Thrasybulus felt in his bones that another sea-battle would be waged soon. He sent word to Alcibiades to sail quickly to the Hellespont with all his triremes. Alcibiades received the scroll the evening before the battle. Thrasybulus wrote that if there was going to be a battle the next day, Alcibiades should speed to the Hellespont and arrive in the late afternoon in the middle of the battle. His arrival might discourage the Spartans at the crucial moments, when the decision lay in the balance. He wrote to Alcibiades not to show the flags of Athens, but to bring up a red flag only when he had approached the battle quite closely, for a maximum effect on the enemy.

Alcibiades grinned at the stratagem. He recognised the cunning of his friend, here. He hurried his men aboard the triremes, taking on a few extra hoplites on each ship. He sailed off the same evening. This time again, he pondered over the change in the situation. Astyochus and the previous Athenian generals had refused battles for over a year in Ionia. Now, with Thrasybulus and Mindarus, two major battles were fought in a short period of time. Thrasybulus and Mindarus were two fighting dogs. They were after each other's throat, and there had been nobody to stop them and call them to caution.

The next day, the two fleets of Athens and Sparta rowed to positions opposite each other. Thrasybulus commanded the right wing of the Athenian fleet, Thrasyllus the

left wing. Opposite Thrasyllus rowed the right wing of the Spartans commanded by Mindarus. The left wing of the Spartan fleet was formed mostly by Syracusan triremes, and Thrasybulus would have to fight these. The fleets rowed majestically towards each other in calm water. Trumpets and pipers sounded over the water, the harsh tones rolling far towards the enemy. Paeans were sung and sacrifices made, even on board the leading ships. The triremes sped at utmost speed towards each other, rowing past each other or trying to break off the oars of the enemy ships. The ships manoeuvred in expert ways, attacking and counter-attacking in the open Sea. They chased in one direction, darted into another, turned at the appropriate moment and destroyed enemy ships by ramming into them from unexpected angles. The Athenian captains were masters in manoeuvring and in such fast changes of movement. The Spartan and Syracusan ships had many hoplites and light troops aboard, which threw on the Athenian boats volleys of arrows, of sling stones and of javelins, each time an Athenian ship came near, and even still while Athenian ships rammed them. The fighting was fierce and equally hard for both sides. At the end of a day of intense manoeuvring, there was no decision on who would win or lose. Both fleets and their crews suffered the whole day the horror of a battle on lean but vulnerable triremes surrounded by water.

Towards the evening, when exhaustion set in for both fleets, eighteen more ships arrived at the horizon. The triremes rowed as fast as was hardly believable, towards the battle. Each side was in happy expectation of reinforcements.

The commander of the new, small but crucial fleet, was Alcibiades. He stood in heavy armour and bronze helmet at the prow of his ship. He stood at the lookout with one hand on the wood of the prow, javelin in hand, his shield with the Love and Lightning at his feet. He encouraged his rowers to row at a higher cadence still, he smiled to see his aulos players high red in the cheeks from the effort of sounding the rhythm. Alcibiades remarked much wreckage of lost and damaged boats as he approached. He ignored the drowning men through which his ships slid silently. He saw the chaos of the battle, of ships destroyed and lying steerless in the water, having been rammed by other boats.

When his triremes rowed not so far anymore from the enemy, and when the enemy could recognise his ships but not just yet, he ordered a red flag to be flown at the top of his mast. This was the sign agreed with Thrasybulus that the reinforcements were Athenian. All the crews of the Athenian ships knew that signal. The Peloponnesian crews panicked when they heard the triumphant shouts of the Athenians. The Athenians triremes attacked with renewed energy and rage.

When Alcibiades reached the Athenian fleet, the Peloponnesian ships were already fleeing towards Abydos, back to their base and harbour. The Peloponnesian ships remained scattered, however, over large distances. The triremes that were the farthest from the centre could not reach Abydos before being cut off from escape by Alcibiades's ships on the west side, and by Thrasyllus's wing on the other. The Peloponnesian ships rowed to the shores, to defend their triremes that were beached. Alcibiades made his rowers advance as close as possible to the shore. He wanted to jump in the shallow water of the beach with his hoplites to disperse the Syracusans and recuperate their ships.

Over the hills of the coast, however, large numbers of troops ran towards him, enemy troops, Persian hoplites. Alcibiades saw also much cavalry, riding through passes in

the rocky hills. These troops advanced aggressively onto the beach. Alcibiades remarked a tall Persian, who was splendidly dressed, ride with his horse far into the Sea and thus drawing his forces behind him, to attack in the Sea any Athenian that might venture in the water. Too many of these enemy hoplites and riders had gathered at the beach for Alcibiades. He held his few hoplites aboard his triremes. A skirmish ensued, fought at a distance, with javelins thrown and arrows shot from both sides.

The battle at Sea had finished. Alcibiades succeeded in capturing a few empty Syracusan ships with grappling hooks, and his men drew the hulks behind them, to the open Sea. He had to leave the shores, row back to the open sea, for darkness set in. He applied the Hellenic code of honour now, to draw aboard his vessels as many men as possible who swam or hung in the water or who held on to wreckage. His crews inspected the wrecked ships that were lying in the water, searching for wounded sailors. They recuperated as many dead men as they could find, to bury them on land. He joined Thrasybulus before the night.

In the evening and during the next morning, the Athenians captured thirty Peloponnesian ships. They recovered the fifteen ships they had lost in the previous battle at Cynossema.

The day after the sea-battle of Abydos, at noon, and at their base of Sestos, the Athenian generals assessed the situation. They sat in a large house of the harbour. They had eaten, and sat now before their bowls of watered wine.

Thrasybulus said, 'we have won two victories at Sea in a very short period. We can beat the Peloponnesians whenever we want.'

Thrasyllus replied, 'you forget we also almost lost twice. At the battle of Cynossema we were even indeed losing, but only by a happy coincidence, while you retreated, the Spartans rowed in confusion out of formation. So we profited from that. At Abydos, we fought the whole day and it would have been difficult to predict, even in the afternoon, which side could have won. If Alcibiades had not arrived at that precise moment, we might not have set up a trophy yesterday.'

'Rubbish,' Thrasybulus growled. 'I told you already that at Cynossema I knew what I was doing when I feigned retreat. Did I call general retreat? No! When I saw the Spartan ships rowed in disarray, I turned and attacked them straight on. That was a surprise for them! Here, in front of Abydos, we warned Alcibiades to come. True, he could not have arrived at a better suited moment, but that was no coincidence either! We have more tricks in our minds than the Spartans can ever think of. We outmanoeuvre and outsmart them each time. Those Spartiates simply do not have any imagination in sea-battles!'

'I am glad,' Thrasyllus replied. 'I admire you, Thrasybulus, how you handled the enemy in front of you by outmanoeuvring the Syracusan ships. Their captains and crews fight well. Their ships can manoeuvre almost as well as ours. The Syracusans must have been veterans, and when one rows close, even when one rams them, they came at us with their entire crew armed with everything that can be thrown by the air: javelins, arrows, slingshots, and grappling hooks, everything. They must carry loads of javelins. They are more dangerous than Kerberos. They lost a lot of equipment in the battle! Those monsters attacked my ships head-on and busted straight through our prows! It was quite an art to avoid their prows and to dash into their sides! It is a good thing those Syracusans lost so many boats. That makes it a lot easier for us, here. We caught some and Alcibiades caught some more. From the thirty ships we recuperated yesterday, about half are Syracusans.'

‘We lost fifteen ships so far,’ Alcibiades remarked. ‘We gained thirty ships plus our lost ships of the previous battle, which we can all man with crews. The Spartans lost about sixty-six ships in two battles. They will keep quiet for a while. They need reinforcements now, for they have a lot less ships than we, now. Pharnabazus will pay for the new ships, given time. He also very well supported the Peloponnesians. I think I actually saw him! He rode in front of his cavalry and splashed right into the Sea, fearless, to scare us off from coming ashore and defeat the Peloponnesian crews on land. Without Pharnabazus, we would have done a lot more damage. Pharnabazus is a nuisance. He guards the entire right bank of the Hellespont. He will be there at any future battle. We must avoid going ashore on that side, because our men shall be massacred by the Persian’s light troops and by his cavalry, as soon as they set foot on the shore. It is Sicily on the other side!’

‘Yes,’ Thrasybulus agreed. ‘We are up against men to my heart! Mindarus fears no battle. That man can fight! I like enemies that have no fear and just come at you, open, straight at your centre, hard, fearless, to push you back. Mindarus fights like a real Spartiate hoplite at Sea. But he has been licked. And you tell me Pharnabazus is a hoplite guy too! We are going to have much pleasure here. My boys are eager for battle now. They believe they cannot lose anymore! We had better prepare for a new battle within a couple of months. The date depends on how fast the Spartans can get reinforcements in ships to here, to the Hellespont.’

Alcibiades calculated, ‘Mindarus had about a hundred ships at the last battle. He lost forty-five, which brought his fleet at fifty-five. Ten or so of his ships were heavily damaged, and will not be so good anymore to lead a next battle. He may soon get twenty or so new triremes from Sparta and Pharnabazus, not more. That will bring his fleet to about sixty ships. We reduced his fleet nicely! He will not come out of his harbour so soon.

We had seventy-four, really, before Abydos, here in the Hellespont. I came with eighteen more. We lost fifteen and we had twenty or so damaged but ready to go. We won forty-five ships. We have more than a hundred thirty-five first-rate triremes now. That should be enough to win any battle the next year. It is even too much to hold here merely to guard Mindarus. Ninety triremes will do for that. We can send out a rather large fleet to do other things.

We also have issues, generals! Even that many triremes are not enough to blockade the Peloponnesians entirely at Abydos. Mindarus can be supplied by land. We cannot blockade Abydos, for we have no hoplites to fight Pharnabazus. We have no light troops, no cavalry. It will be a new naval battle we will have here, if there is going to be a battle. Maybe Mindarus has learnt a lesson. Still, as long as he is here we have an issue, though I grant you Mindarus has a bigger issue. We cannot block Abydos on the land side, but his fleet is trapped inside that harbour and it remains useless there, for he cannot harm one Athenian ship that sails through the straits.’

‘Mindarus will come out and fight anew, so much is certain! He will fight at Sea if necessary,’ Thrasyllus said. ‘I can smell that guy. He is like Thrasybulus and me. He is afraid of nothing, not on land and not on water. He will try drawing us to his side of the shores, too.’

‘We need more hoplites and some ships,’ Alcibiades asserted. ‘And what is more, we have only money for a few months more for the entire fleet. Without money, we cannot provide crews all the ships we have here. Athens has no money. We have to find coins and gold somehow to survive through the next summer.’

‘I am going to ask for reinforcements in ships and hoplites anyhow,’ Thrasybulus said. ‘If needed, our men can fight for a few months without pay.’

‘I am going back to Tissaphernes,’ Alcibiades decided.

‘What?’ cried Thrasybulus and Thrasyllus in unison.

‘Yes,’ Alcibiades said calmly. ‘It is the right time. The Spartans have left him. Pharnabazus is paying the Spartans to win the war. Tissaphernes will not like it if Pharnabazus is successful. Still, we have done so well, he may be suspicious of our plea. Maybe there is some money to get from Tissaphernes, though I believe the man has spent his fortune to build his Phoenician fleet. The upkeep of the fleet, to accomplish nothing, must be costing him a fortune, too. It is worth a good try, so I must do it, and use the last influence I may have on him. Tissaphernes also might bring his ships on our side now, though I very much doubt it. He will not dare to attack the Spartans and Pharnabazus, not even with us on his side, for Pharnabazus may complain to Darius. He will also not want us to recuperate all the Spartan triremes of Mindarus in a next battle. We would be too powerful. But we might offer him an advantageous treaty, for instance, to remain in the Hellespont and leave him alone in Ionia. We might offer him peace and support in Ionia and allow him to exert his power, even if only gradually, over the cities and islands of Ionia. He could come in handy to protect the southern shores of the Hellespont, so that if we run ashore there our crews would not be killed by Pharnabazus. He only has to position his hoplites somewhat more north for that.’

Thrasybulus then asked, ‘what should we do? We cannot just stay here, watching Mindarus and do nothing!’

‘You could sail to Thrace and get us some money too,’ Alcibiades suggested. ‘Thrace is close by, so if something develops here, you should be able to return quickly.’

‘And what should I do?’ Thrasyllus asked.

‘You should watch here. Somebody should guard Mindarus. Afterwards, you could return to Athens. You are a hero now, and very acceptable in Athens. You have very many good friends there among the people. They will worship you. We still have an issue, haven’t we? We are all generals of the army at Samos, not self-appointed, yet not appointed by the Assembly of Athens. You could gain us credibility and legitimacy in Athens, have us appointed generals by the Assembly.’

‘Would you be trying to forge a politician out of me, Alcibiades? I am a hoplite!’

‘Yes,’ Alcibiades replied, ‘you are a hoplite indeed. And you are a general of hoplites and a very successful general at Sea, too. Believe me, Thrasyllus, you can do it all. I have seen how you handled the sailors of the fleet! You have the qualities needed in Athens and for us. Please!’

‘All right,’ Thrasyllus said meekly. ‘To Athens for me!’

The men emptied their bowls of wine.

Sardis

At that time, Theramenes, a general of Athens, led a fleet of thirty triremes to attack the cities that had revolted in Euboea. Theramenes did not succeed at doing much in Euboea, but for laying waste the lands that were unprotected. The Euboean rebels had received strong support from the Boeotians, so that the larger cities were now too well defended. These defied the Athenians.

Theramenes sailed therefore to islands in the Aegean Sea to submit those cities that had passed to oligarchy at the instigation of Peisander and his friends from the Four Hundred. He also collected much money from these towns.

After that, he proceeded to sail to Macedonia to help the new King, Archelaus, in his war against rebels. He helped Archelaus lay a siege to the town of Pydna, and thus he gained the support of Macedonia for Athens. Macedonia was still an important source of timber for Athens.

Theramenes afterwards joined Thrasybulus, who had been campaigning and plundering in Thrace to collect funds for the army of Sestos. Together, the general from Samos and the general from Athens remained at Thasos. From there, they could watch potential uprisings in the area of Thrace, Chalcidice and even Macedonia, and yet also return instantly to the Hellespont in case of need.

Alcibiades took one trireme to sail to Tissaphernes. He loaded his ship with gifts, items of luxury that he had been able to 'collect' from the occupied cities: a few pieces of excellently carved furniture, golden utensils, jewels of gold studded with precious stones, tapestries, and cleverly forged weapons. He sailed down the Hellespont, lower than Sigeum, to where he thought he could find the camp of Tissaphernes. He found the satrap at the border of Lydia and Mysia, further south. He moored his trireme not far from the Persians' camp and set out on foot with a few servants. He was dressed in light armour, no helmet. He arrived with his presents at Tissaphernes's tent, which had been erected not far from the beaches, in the countryside, amidst green hills. The air was fresh here, and the winds strong. The fabrics of the tents flapped dangerously, but the Persians were used to this, and their tents held well. Alcibiades was ushered into Tissaphernes's tent alone. The servants that carried the gifts had to wait outside.

When Alcibiades stepped through the door of the tent, he found Tissaphernes sitting on a wooden throne, surrounded by several advisors, and accompanied by six commanders of his guard, which were in armour.

He saluted Tissaphernes the Athenian way, saying, 'greetings, Lord Satrap of Lydia and Caria. I have come to you to explain how we, the Athenians, have defeated the Spartan forces in the Hellespont. The Athenian army also now occupies most of the places in the straits. I come as your counsellor too, and have brought a few humble gifts as a sign of friendship, a friendship the Athenian generals and the city of Athens would like to expand upon with you.'

Tissaphernes interrupted Alcibiades bluntly in his speech, not waiting for Alcibiades to offer his complete message, and without giving him the occasion to show his gifts. 'Alcibiades, you are Athenian. You are not a Persian counsellor anymore. You abandoned the court of Caria to serve other masters. Your advices have been not to serve the Persian King but to serve Athenian interests only. You have diverted us from our alliance and treaties with Laconia, Sparta, and the Peloponnesian states. During the war with your enemies you have attacked Persian hoplites, the troops that were led by the satrap of Phrygia and Mysia. Therefore you are an enemy of the King of Persia, an enemy of Darius, my master!'

'Lord,' Alcibiades protested, suddenly shocked, 'we regret having had to confront a few Phrygian forces, which were misled by the Peloponnesian generals. These forces only guarded the beaches and hills of the coast, and we stood before them when the Spartan ships ran ashore, while we tried to capture the enemy triremes. We did not go

on land. We tried as much as we could to avoid fighting on the shores of Phrygia. We have not attacked, but spared cities on that side of the Hellespont. We seek the support of the King of Persia in our war with Sparta, to the benefit of the Hellenes and of Persia.'

'I repeat what I said. The few troops you fought, Athenian, were led by the satrap of those territories, a satrap of Persia. The King of Persia cannot tolerate that. We hold you personally responsible for the hostilities and for the devious counsel, which you proffered to us, only to the advantage of an aggressive hegemony that has always been the enemy of Persia. By your doings, the cities of Ionia have revolted. Will Athens once more support these revolts and attack Sardis?'

Tissaphernes spoke these words in anger.

He cried then, 'arrest this man! He has offended the King of Persia!'

The commanders of the satrap stepped forward from the places where they had been standing at the side of Tissaphernes, and they surrounded Alcibiades.

Alcibiades was not a little surprised. The commanders took him by the arms and drew him out of the tent. Alcibiades was completely amazed. He tried to think. The mere idea of being imprisoned, led away under guard and maybe face execution, paralysed him. He saw how his servants were being chased out of the camp. The commanders dragged Alcibiades to a nearby tent, which had obviously been prepared for him, and they shoved him inside. They closed the tent.

Alcibiades remained to stand in the middle of the space. He looked around. He saw some furniture here, a bed, a table. He was shaking all over his body. He wondered what had happened. He was a general of Athens. Did Tissaphernes realise what he was doing?

He sat down and thought on what he could do. A little later, the tent opened, and food was brought in, and wine. Alcibiades then smiled a little. If the Persians wanted him dead soon, they would not feed him.

The food was excellent: delicious fish, fresh vegetables, fruit, grapes and wine, which he recognised as coming from Tissaphernes's personal amphorae.

This meal meant, 'I regret, but I had to do what I did. You shall not be harmed.'

Yet, he was a prisoner. He wondered what would be happening next. He ate slowly. He found no knife, but he had to cut no food because the morsels in the dishes had been cut for him. When he had eaten, he ventured to open the tent. When he drew the curtains aside at the front of the tent, a lance was stuck under his nose. He rapidly stepped back. He discovered two heavily armed Persian guards at the opening of the tent, and the two men were looking at the tent, not standing with their backs to the opening. They were not Hellenic mercenaries, but Persians, warriors of Tissaphernes's personal guard of Susa, veterans, and well-trained men. He could not escape.

Alcibiades stayed inside the tent. He pondered. How would Tissaphernes have assessed the situation to blame him, Alcibiades? Tissaphernes must have understood the many failures in his strategy. The Spartans had left and betrayed the satrap. Pharnabazus now manipulated the Spartans, or so he thought. Tissaphernes's counsellor had betrayed him and fought another Persian satrap, who might complain about that at the court of Susa. The Ionians had revolted against him, and with Athenian support of a huge, victorious fleet they were stronger than ever. The Athenians dominated the Sea again, foremost the Hellespont, but they had enough ships now to be masters of Ionia. Drawing up an alliance with Athens was out of the

question, for the Athenian hegemony would be strengthened, and such an alliance with the arch-enemy of the Persian King would not be regarded as very opportune. Tissaphernes had made that clear. Tissaphernes had used Persian money to prepare a Phoenician fleet, but that fleet had been paid for to do nothing, and now it was too late for it to do anything, for Athenian fleets would rip it to pieces.

Tissaphernes was cornered. His actions had fallen short of results, and he would want to blame somebody. That somebody was Alcibiades. Yes, Tissaphernes must have been thinking along these lines. Seen from that angle, there was indeed nothing positive for Alcibiades at the satrap's court, and personal friendships would not count. He should have been more careful, and tried to find out through messengers how welcome he was. He cursed to the heavens. He had been punished severely for his carelessness. Everybody in the Athenian army would know he had lost credit with Tissaphernes. The Persian connection was closed to Athens. Athens would also blame him. Return to Athens was probably excluded then, again.

There must be ways out of this negative reasoning, thought Alcibiades, surmounting his first panic. He thought of arguments that he could bring forward in a long speech to Tissaphernes, so that he could regain his freedom. He had misjudged badly the mood of the satrap, but he was sure that if only he could speak to Tissaphernes again, he could offer solutions, or at least ways to work at solutions. He tried to step out again. The same lance came at his nose.

He said, 'I want to speak to Tissaphernes'.

The lance was brought to the tip of his nose and pushed there. A second lance came from sideways to his breast. Alcibiades understood the message. He retreated into the tent.

The rest of the day and night, he remained there, in his prison of cloth. He slept. During the night he awoke. With a piece of sharp wood from one of the tables, he laboriously cut a long hole in the side of the tent. When the hole was large enough to push his head through, he looked outside. He felt the point of a lance at his nose. 'Those buggers are obsessed with noses,' Alcibiades grumbled.

He withdrew his head rapidly. He peered through the hole nevertheless, to see an additional guard on that side of the tent. The Persians had taken no chances with him. They were guarding each side. Escape was unthinkable. He would simply have to have patience until Tissaphernes wanted to see him again.

Early the next morning, six Persian warriors in light armour suddenly entered the tent. Without saying a word, they drove Alcibiades out at the point of their lances. The guards brought Alcibiades a little farther. A chariot stood before the tent, a small wooden contraption drawn by two horses. The chariot was covered by a tent. The men ordered Alcibiades into the tent, and the chariot moved immediately. Alcibiades could peer outside, for the openings of the tent were not covered. Ten Persian guards of the cavalry escorted the chariot. The chariot moved more rapidly than hoplites could have marched. The horses advanced quickly, but they never galloped.

That morning and during the day, Alcibiades received no food. In the evening however, the chariot and its escort halted. He did receive something to eat then, warriors' rations. He was allowed to relieve himself in the bushes, but a guard stayed in his vicinity, and afterwards he was rapidly pushed back in the tent. The guards refused to answer his questions.

In one of the following days, he pointed at a horse, signalling he wanted to ride instead of being kept in a cart. The guards refused this also. They had strict orders,

probably. The journey continued with a boring rhythm. During the entire day he had to sit inside the chariot, even when the warriors rested. In the evening, he could eat and stretch his legs.

The voyage took several days. Then, Alcibiades perceived a definite change in landscape. The chariot passed forests in a vast plain. The forests gave way for wide grain fields and for small orchards of fruit trees, to patches on which all kinds of vegetables were grown. Apparently the chariot moved into fertile country. Was that Ionia? No, the people were dressed too much the Persian way. Many people worked in the fields, and more and more peasants passed on the road of the chariot. The road was really a road here, not the hill tracks they had been passing so far. A few warriors, of which most rode on horseback, passed by the chariot. These were Persian light troops. Alcibiades passed large earth mounds, which were probably burial mounds, Persian or Lydian burial mounds. Where was he? The chariot and the warriors continued to advance.

Alcibiades was still wondering where they would end, when the first houses of a city appeared. These were low mud-brick houses, low and miserable. Then, the houses multiplied, and he saw the chariot advanced through a vast city. He saw many artisans sitting before the houses. They looked very much like the Hellenic artisans, potters and cobblers but fields lay in abundance among the houses, and he saw many sheep in the fields. They were definitely entering a large valley, for to both sides, in the distance, there were slopes of hills and even high cliffs of mountains. On the slopes of the hills grew vines. This was wine country.

That day, the chariot continued to roll all through the evening, and even in the darkness of the night. The road started to climb. The chariot advanced very slowly. It arrived at a large structure, a building of which Alcibiades could not see much, for the moon was covered. He heard many voices in a language he did not understand. He saw that the chariot passed gates. He assumed they had arrived inside a fortified town. The cart advanced somewhat faster but then it slowed down, for the road climbed again. The climb was very heavy and difficult. Most of the Persian warriors marched, holding their horses at the reins. They entered more gates. Alcibiades heard vast gate panels open and close. The chariot stopped.

Alcibiades was ushered out and dragged along on foot through endless corridors of rough stones, up many stairs, to reach finely decorated halls. The guards followed corridors of a brownish marble. Then, they pushed him into one of the rooms, and indicated that there would be guards at these doors waiting, too.

Alcibiades found himself in a beautiful, large, rectangular room. There were tables and couches here, and many tapestries, but no windows in the room. He pushed open a side door, and came into a bedroom with large windows. It was very dark outside, he could discern nothing of where he had been brought to. He had had no food that day, and rather little the days before. He was very hungry. He lay down on the bed and slept.

He awoke early the next morning. It was light. He stepped forward to the windows and looked out. He gave a gasp of amazement.

Far below him lay the vast structure of an acropolis, a fortified small town perched high on cliffs on the flanks of a mountain. Further below, he had a wonderful view on a vast plain made by a river that meandered peacefully in a deep valley. A vast town,

of which he saw parts of the walls and of the roofs, deployed to his view. Further on he saw green and brown fields in a patchwork of colours over which hung a slight haze, the haze of dawn. It was a splendid view that unfolded to him in magnificent green and brownish colours. He discovered a blue lake in the distance.

His part of the acropolis was a palace, built of finely carved marble. He thought he knew where he was, then. He had heard the Ionian commanders of Tissaphernes talk of their capital of Sardis before, its acropolis and palace in the acropolis. The valley below must be the Hermus valley, and the river there the Pactolus, flowing down mount Tmolus. The lake in the far might be the Gygean Lake, of which Tissaphernes had once told Alcibiades that it was the source in the summer of too many mosquitoes to the satrap's taste.

Alcibiades saw many large buildings below, and a vast Hellenic temple too. The inhabitants of this city had not much resembled Hellenic types, and they had mostly dressed the Persian way, but the city showed a rectangular pattern like some Hellenic towns.

If this was Sardis, the city had been burned down a few tens of years ago, when Alcibiades had been born. The Ionians that had rebelled against Persian rule had burned the city. The Athenians had assisted the Ionians, then. Tissaphernes might indeed still hold a grudge against Athens for that. The Persian satrap, Artaphernes, had held out in those times, however, in this very acropolis, and the Persian armies had returned.

This was the ancient capital of the Lydian Kings, of Gyges and Croesus, of which Alcibiades had read in Herodotus's scrolls. Now it was the capital of the satrapy of Lydia. Alcibiades was imprisoned in a golden cage of the acropolis palace of Sardis!

Tissaphernes had transferred Alcibiades from the Hellespont to his capital Sardis, to his palace in the acropolis.

Alcibiades looked down at the acropolis. It was vast, facing south, so that the red disc of the sun stood right before him. The palace was built along the northern ridge at the highest point of the cliffs. The acropolis was large, so that it could hold at least a few thousands of people in times of siege. Alcibiades saw also large cisterns filled with water to one side. A very thick, imposing mud-brick wall surrounded the citadel. He saw many repairs at the walls, signs of damage made by earthquakes. This was quake country, he remembered.

He looked into the far again, taking in the marvellous view. Then, he heard a noise in the adjoining room, so he went there. Servants had brought in various trays of food and a bowl of wine. One servant also showed him another door, which he opened to find a bath ready. There was a door at the other side, so the bath must have been brought him from that way. Persian clothes lay on low tables. He would be able to wash and to change.

The servants, all male, were still arranging the room, cleaning the bedroom, when he brought some morsels of the delicious fruit to his mouth. He went first towards the room with the bath, however. It was a nice, large room with brightly-lit windows and marble walls. He went to the windows to discover yet another wide view of the city of Sardis. He closed the door behind him, and started to undress. The door opened again, and two female servants entered, two beautiful young girls. Alcibiades was almost undressed, but they helped him out of his last chiton and boots, and bade him to step

into the bath. The bath was a Hellenic hip bath, positioned low into the floor. It was spacious and very clean. The water was warm. He was completely nude by now. The girls dropped most of their clothes, bared their breasts, and they giggled when they began to wash him. That took a long time, for Alcibiades truly stank from the long voyage.

Afterwards, they dried him with large towels, perfumed him, and one of the girls made a movement as if inviting him to have sex with her. Alcibiades waved that away, however. He felt in no mood for sex. He was glad to be clean. The Persian clothes were made of the best silk. He went into the adjoining room and continued to eat. The girls dressed and left.

Somewhat later, two commanders opened the door. One was dressed like a Persian light warrior; the other was a Hellenic hoplite commander.

The Hellenic man spoke in perfectly audible Ionian. 'You are imprisoned in the palace of the acropolis of Sardis, capital of the Lord Tissaphernes. You are to remain here on his orders. These are to be your quarters. You can walk in the corridors and in the common rooms of the palace, to a limited extent. At certain points, the guards will not allow you to go further. They have orders to kill you if you try to escape. Do not believe that if you get past one part of the guards you are safe. The palace is large, and after one set of guards there is another. You may pass one group of guards; you will not pass all. Beyond the palace guards are the acropolis guards. There is no chance to escape for you. You will have servants. If you need something, just tell them what you want, and they will bring it to you. You are our honoured guest until Tissaphernes decides what to do with you.'

Alcibiades grinned. 'I'll ask for armour, spear, shield and sword!'

The Ionian, according to his tongue a mercenary of Ephesus or Miletus, sneered, 'you can always ask for those, but those will not be given to you.'

'How long am I going to have to stay here?'

'As long as our master wishes. Tissaphernes might be absent for months, and if he does not return before the summer, he will not be back until after the summer, for he usually does not reside here during the hot season.'

After these words, the guards left and Alcibiades was left alone in the room. He was a prisoner.

Alcibiades passed his time doing absolutely nothing in the palace of Sardis. He walked around from corridor to corridor, encountering only male servants and guards. He soon knew the limits of his golden cage, for at the ends of some corridors, guards would point their lances. No commanders, no guards ever entered his rooms. The servants that came to him were not always the same, except for the two bathing girls. He used them at times for other matters but bathing, and they allowed him to do anything he desired. He was bored and gloomy.

He had found a large terrace with a fine garden that was open to him. He wondered whether this was the garden that Tissaphernes had called after him. He knew there was a garden in Sardis called the Paradeisos, but he surmised that garden was one private to the satraps. He only walked in the garden, but then he began to exercise there, too. He ran, jumped, and threw heavy stones. He exercised, to the astonishment of the slaves, but nobody stopped him.

Day after day passed. He asked for scrolls, but received none. He had nothing to do. The best food, best baths, best clothing were invariably prepared for him.

The two bathing girls understood Ionian, but they spoke haltingly only a few words of the language. He got nothing forward in way of information from them. He studied the structure of the palace from every window. He sought means to escape. He discovered several ways to leave his quarters unseen by the guards of the palace. The guards did not patrol in the night. Leaving his quarters he could, by tying all the sheets in the rooms together, to reach lower terraces. He did not know, however, which levels were beyond, and also not how many guards stood in position below. He tried to spot them. Still, he could give it a try one night. He remembered, however, what the Ionian commander had said: that when he tried to escape, he would be killed. He hesitated. His despair grew with every setting of the sun. He would have to be patient.

After about fifteen days of this regime, he was served by other bathing girls. He had not looked at the faces of the women at first, but when he stood naked in the bath he watched them more attentively, and he recognised one of the girls.

He saw Cyne, one of the maidens that Tissaphernes had given to him in the past, at Miletus. He looked at her with a smile, and he saw that she had recognised him also, for she smiled back knowingly, but she did not speak. This woman knew the Ionian language very well, whereas the other girl neither spoke nor understood the language. He could speak and joke freely with Cyne.

‘You,’ he pointed at her, ‘do you remember how you entertained me in the tents at Miletus?’

‘How could I forget, lord? Yes, I know you.’

‘What has become of you in the meantime?’

‘I am but a slave, lord, to be used and to serve whom my master pleases. I lived with you at Miletus and when you left I was brought back with other slaves to the palace of Sardis.’

The girl spoke perfect Ionian, and Alcibiades remembered that she was no Persian, no Lydian, but an Ephesian slave girl. She had pleased him well at Miletus, and he had passed many a gentle and passionate night with her and her sister in the tent camp. He let himself be washed and he stayed silent.

When all was finished, he ate, and when the girls prepared to leave, he took Cyne by the arm. She was astonished, but let herself be led by him through the corridors to the first guard.

He said, ‘tell them in their language what I will tell you.’

‘Yes,’ she replied.

‘Tell them I like you and I want you not just for bathing but also to pass the night with me.’

The girl spoke in Persian to the guards, and then she signalled Alcibiades to let her go. Which he did.

The next day, no bath was prepared for him but in the evening Cyne entered his room. She said, ‘I am to stay with you and serve you in any way my master wishes.’

‘Fine,’ Alcibiades said, suddenly aroused by her servitude and submission. He took her by the waist, drew up her chiton and undid her loin cloth. He entered her there, in the room, against a wall. Cyne was passive at first; then she moved together with him.

Alcibiades lived with Cyne in the palace at Sardis. Cyne did everything Alcibiades wanted of her, and he was gentle with her.

As the days passed, he became more and more bored. He fell into a state of depression. He remained lying in bed for entire days, drank wine until he fell on the ground, and he refused to talk to Cyne.

This period passed. With time, he stood up and walked through the corridors again, sometimes running like a lion in a cage, enticing the guards to kill him. Cyne would run behind him and draw him back when he pushed the guards' lances to his breast. He looked for long times through the windows, as if in trance, always checking the guards' movements.

Alcibiades spoke to very few people. He remained confined to his quarters, to his prison. He saw the slaves, the guards, and an occasional commander.

One day, he heard noise of men arguing in the corridors. He stepped out of his rooms to see what happened. The guards were trying to stop a man from coming to him. Alcibiades recognised with much amazement an Athenian, a former member of the Council of Athens, and a man who had been sympathetic to his hetaira then, Mantitheus. The man had fled when Diocleides had mentioned his name in connection with the parodies of the Mysteries of Eleusis.

Alcibiades was more than happy to see a compatriot. He knew Mantitheus was innocent of the Athenian crimes, like himself. How had Mantitheus gotten into Sardis? But Alcibiades was not sure he would be able to talk to the man. He cried at the guards too then, and ran towards them, gesticulating to let Mantitheus through. After much shouting and cursing, Mantitheus could reach Alcibiades. Alcibiades drew Mantitheus into his rooms.

The men slapped each other on the shoulders. The guards shrugged, and let Mantitheus talk to Alcibiades.

'Mantitheus! How did you get in here?' Alcibiades wondered.

Mantitheus sat down, gasping, and found his breath only slowly. He explained how he had fled from Athens, with just enough money to go to Megara, and from there to Corinth. He had disappeared in self-inflicted banishment to Samos, but he had fled Samos when the Athenian army arrived in force there, fearing to be caught and be killed. He had sailed to nearby Ephesus in a merchant ship. There, Tissaphernes' commanders had remarked him and transferred him to Sardis, to be judged by the satrap.

Alcibiades also explained how he had arrived at Sardis.

'Then we are both prisoners,' Mantitheus concluded, with sorrow in his voice. He had hoped Alcibiades had been a guest.

'Have you tried to get out of here?' Alcibiades asked.

'No,' Mantitheus replied. He shook his head. 'Well, yes, actually. I have looked and searched. I can get into a courtyard where they take me once every while, and I could get there also alone, at night, but what then? I do not know what is behind that place. We are kept prisoners in the palace of Sardis, a real citadel. I would have to get out of this palace, out of the citadel, then past the gates of the city. And then make my way to the coast. The only city that Tissaphernes does not control there is Clazomenae. But who awaits me there? The Athenians! Why should I seek a long way to death when there is a shorter, here? I thought I could always talk my way out of being killed. Maybe I can assist the satrap in some way.'

'How did you know I was here?'

‘I have been in this golden prison for several months. Many times I was at the point of losing my mind! I picked up a few words of Carian, also in Ephesus. I heard the guards mention the name of Alcibiades. I said to myself, that can’t be! But then I saw you in this corridor a few days ago. You walked on and didn’t see me. It took me these days to gather my courage. Finally I said to myself, who cares? I might as well get killed by trying to get to you. So, here I am!’

Alcibiades and Mantitheus talked on how they had been imprisoned, how life in the palace was, and how they could meet again. The doors opened, and Persian commanders stormed in. They fetched Mantitheus roughly by the arms, and drove him out at the points of lances.

Several times in the following days, Mantitheus succeeded in seeing Alcibiades again. He would come to the corridor, shout at the guards in Carian, and force his way in. Mantitheus was the only person Alcibiades could talk to. He talked about the politics of Athens, about the people they knew mutually in Athens. They laughed together when they recalled Callias, the theatre plays of Aristophanes and the chorus performances. Their mood remained low, however.

Mantitheus expected nothing good of Tissaphernes. At the best, imprisonment in worse dungeons awaited him, or he feared being handed over to the Athenian hoplites.

Alcibiades proposed to walk in the garden together. This was the place that seemed to be common to their quarters, though Mantitheus had to pass guards at his end. They regularly strolled together in the garden and talked.

One evening, Cyne stood at Alcibiades’s back. She was naked and caressed the muscles of his shoulders.

He said, ‘I can get to the garden and with sheets or ropes knotted together I can get one terrace lower. No one will see me at night. I cannot perceive well what lies beyond the garden, though. But there must be a road there.’

Cyne sighed.

She replied, ‘beyond lies the acropolis, at least three guard posts before you could reach Sardis. Then there are the gates of the town, which are closed at night.’

‘Then I have a choice,’ Alcibiades declared softly and with a bitter voice. ‘Either I get killed and probably tortured when Tissaphernes deigns to return to Sardis, or I jump down there and take my chances to be killed outside the palace. I prefer the second option. I am not going to stay here.’

‘You will be killed by the guards,’ Cyne warned.

‘I guess so,’ Alcibiades replied. ‘But I am a hoplite, and I can take my chances. Those guards don’t know me. I may surprise them and if I down one, I will have a sword.’

‘They know you, all right,’ Cyne asserted. ‘The guards change duties in the palace and in the acropolis. There will always be someone who has seen you here and knows your face.’

Alcibiades remained silent a long while.

Then he said, ‘I will try to escape one of these days. I will ask not to see you anymore, so you shall not be blamed.’

Cyne moved behind him, let her arms roam about his body and then she hugged him and put her head against his shoulders.

Finally, she said, ‘yes, send me away. There may be a way to escape, still a very dangerous way, but less dangerous than what you proposed to try.’

Alcibiades turned to look at her, ‘what way?’

Cyne locked her eyes into his and whispered, ‘I can bring you women’s clothes, heavy tunics and veils. You can escape in those. It is cold in the evenings at Sardis in this season, so women are concealed in heavy clothes. When you have these clothes, you send me away, but you have to ask for another woman, because otherwise the guards will be suspicious. You must hide the women’s clothes for several days. We shall have to agree on a certain number of days, or rather nights. Then, on an agreed evening, you climb down the terrace of the garden, just before evening and darkness. It is very important that you be below the terrace just then, for at that time many women leave the palace for Sardis and beyond. The women live about everywhere. I do not live in Sardis, however. I live in the palace, but I have friends among the women. I will be among the group of women that passes below the garden terrace. I can even appear at a site where you can see me, and that could be the sign for you to climb down. That will of course be a moment full of risks, for you will have to climb down while there is still light. I will be among the women when they pass in the street below, and be dressed just like you. You are not tall. Dressed like a woman you will have a chance, even of getting through the gates of Sardis. The gates do not close until well into the darkness.’

Alcibiades thought about the scheme. It might work, indeed. Was the girl leading him into a trap? Would guards be waiting for him beneath, with the order to kill him?

‘Why would you help me?’ he asked.

Cyne smiled a little, a little miserable smile, and she touched her belly.

‘Haven’t you noticed? No, you wouldn’t. I should have had my bleedings by now. I haven’t had them, and I have been feeling pretty sick for two days. I think I am pregnant. Should I tell my child I let his father die?’

Alcibiades looked at her with great eyes of amazement. He couldn’t speak. So soon? He had not cared for Cyne, and not thought about children. He had made love to the woman at least once a day, and some days more than once. He had been living in his egoism, having hard sex with Cyne as the only appeasement of his urges, but he had not thought about her.

He said, ‘will you help me leave the way you told?’

‘Yes,’ she said.

She paused a while. ‘There is a condition,’ she continued.

‘What condition?’ asked Alcibiades, though he knew what would come.

‘I am a slave,’ she replied. ‘I want to be free and raise my child in freedom. Take me with you.’

Alcibiades remained silent for only a short time.

‘I would,’ he replied softly, ‘but even if we reach Sardis and get out, we would not be out of danger yet. It is a long way to the Sea. Would you risk being killed?’

She thought that over. ‘I know a place, just outside town, where there are stables with horses. The stables are not guarded at night. We can get a horse, even two horses there. I cannot ride horses, not at high speed, but when the horses walk I could stay on them. I will take the risk. Have you thought about what might happen to a child of Alcibiades in Persian captivity?’

Alcibiades reddened again. No, he had not thought about that either.

‘We only have to ride to Clazomenae,’ he proposed. ‘That is due west and south. There are Athenians there. Do you know the road?’

‘Of course. I can tell you where the road is. But I have never been on my own far enough outside Sardis. You will have to find the way, once we are outside the town.’ Still caressing, they agreed on a date and on a signal.

‘I will not be alone,’ he remarked to her before she left. ‘A friend will be with me. His name is Mantitheus and he is imprisoned here, too. I will need women’s clothes for two!’

Later, Cyne brought him two sets of women’s clothes, which he hid in a corner of the corridor to the garden.

Alcibiades made Cyne tell the guards the next day that he did not want her anymore to sleep with him, and that he wanted another woman. For a moment, he thought the guards would refuse, but the orders from Tissaphernes were obviously to please him in all ways.

The woman that was brought to him was one of the bathing girls. He had agreed with Cyne to leave at the seventh night after the day Cyne did not sleep with him anymore. The bathing girl was a good sleeper, and Alcibiades made love to her every evening before the agreed night.

Alcibiades talked to Mantitheus. The Athenian seemed doubtful at first about the scheme, but Alcibiades asked him whether he had other choices.

‘No,’ Mantitheus answered. ‘I shall come with you. I may have to knock out a guard by surprise during that night, but I am sure I can do that. Yes, I shall come with you.’

The seventh evening, when the bathing girl started to doze, Alcibiades suddenly propped a piece of cloth in her mouth so that she would not scream. He saw her eyes widen, but he caught her and bound her arms and feet together with the sheets of the bed. Then, he placed her on the bed, with her eyes turned to the window.

He gathered all the ropes from the curtains in his room, tore the rest of the sheets to longer pieces, and went out. He was dressed in a light chiton. He recuperated the women’s clothes, and bound the ropes and the sheets together. He took other ropes he had found in the corridors before. He took great care to make no noise, and ran through the corridors to the garden. There were no guards in the corridors. He saw a guard in the distance, but the man was not looking around.

Soon, Mantitheus joined him.

‘I hit the guard with a small bronze tripod,’ he whispered, ‘and made my way to here. Now what?’

Alcibiades tied his ropes to a palm tree in the garden, close to the parapet, and he waited. After some time, little time, he saw a veiled woman come in the streets below and wave a red scarf. He stepped over the wall and lowered himself on the ropes down the cliff to the road below. He had seen this road from the garden before, but he had no idea where it led. Mantitheus slid down the ropes also.

Alcibiades went to the end of this road, as Cyne had told him, and there he changed into the women’s clothes. He kept his chiton under the female tunics and veils. He even put on the slippers that Cyne had given him. They were a lot too small for him, and his toes hurt terribly, but he didn’t care. He waited in the road with Mantitheus, leaning against the cliff. He heard steps and saw a group of women coming at him, chatting and laughing in the street. The women looked in amazement at the newcomers. Most of these women wore no veils! But one of the women was also

veiled. She advanced, and took his arm. Cyne was among the women, indeed. She drew him and Mantitheus to the end of the group.

Cyne chatted to Alcibiades in Persian, and when he assumed she was asking for his agreement he shook his head. He did not speak. The group of women was joined by other women, and soon Alcibiades and Mantitheus walked in the middle of a sizable group of chatting females.

The group arrived at a first troop of guards. The men looked at the women and let them pass. Then there was a second gate, and again Persian warriors guarded the entry. One of the guards looked with more attention, but again the group did not stop and just passed. They walked on and there was a third gate, a third group of guards. These men also let the women pass. They followed the road, but the acropolis loomed already far behind them, now.

Cyne continued to walk. The women dispersed, only a few remained. They arrived at the gates of the city. Only Alcibiades, Mantitheus and Cyne were veiled. Darkness had fallen and the gates were being closed, but the women stepped on unhindered, onto the road beyond. They were out of the walls and gates of Sardis! Cyne continued to walk with the women, and then drew them into a side road.

Cyne said, 'we are out of the centre town of Sardis, now. You will have to steal horses. Come on.'

They ran, but Alcibiades put on his boots and drew off his women's clothes. Mantitheus did so, too. Cyne brought them to nearby stables. She hid behind the trees. Men were still working there, despite the darkness. Alcibiades, Mantitheus and Cyne waited until everybody had left. Cyne disappeared for a moment. She came back with a heavy sack.

'What is that?' Alcibiades wondered.

'We have to eat,' she answered. 'I hid this yesterday evening. We will not go hungry.' He grinned, 'you are a lot cleverer than I thought!'

'Thank you so much,' she grinned back. 'Now it is up to you. If those horses make a noise, you will have to fight.'

Alcibiades and Mantitheus approached the stables, which were of a Lydian government camp, and Alcibiades drew out three horses. Large fields lay outside the stables. The horses made no noise on the soft ground. Alcibiades took two sets of reins, and put them on the animals. He went slowly out of the stables, drawing the horses gently behind him. He continued to walk away with Mantitheus and with the horses until he was past a field.

Cyne had followed them so far, in the protection of the trees. Alcibiades jumped on one horse, keeping the other at the reins. He signalled to Cyne, grabbed her up and drew her behind him, on the same horse. He made the horses walk more rapidly then, but not galloping, for it was very dark, and he needed indications of Cyne at first. They advanced by the light of the moon until they were past the outskirts of Sardis. Alcibiades did not expect military patrols in the night, so close to the city, so he continued on the road that Cyne had said would lead them to Clazomenae.

They rode on the horses for a long time in the night. Cyne slept against his back, holding him with both her arms. Mantitheus rode nearby.

In the middle of the night, he stopped the horses in a small wood, tied them to a tree and he slept until the first light of dawn awoke him. The sun had not risen yet, but there was light. He awoke Cyne and Mantitheus. They ate rapidly some of the bread

Cyne had brought in her sack. Then, Alcibiades mounted the horse again, and brought Cyne behind him. He left the road then, and advanced with his two horses among the woods and bushes, about five stades sideways of the road. He tried to follow the direction of the road, however, due west. He let the horses run at a rapid pace, but not at their highest speed. He avoided all obstacles that might be fatal to the animals. He kept an eye on the road. Once, when he looked around noon from behind a hill, he saw a large troop of cavalry speed along the road. He assumed the alarm had been given in Sardis. These troops might be looking for him. He had done well to advance cautiously.

In the afternoon, he asked Cyne to sit on the other horse, for his own animal was becoming tired. She did as he asked, and they moved more slowly now, for Cyne was not used to ride. He still held the rein of the other horse and led it. They were making good way. They stayed in hiding, always keeping the road to their right side. Mantitheus followed them.

Alcibiades, Mantitheus and Cyne rode for several days. They rode horses, but advanced slowly. They followed the main roads, but still avoided to ride on them. They rode in the hills and in the woods.

When there was open terrain, Alcibiades took Cyne behind him and pushed the horses on to gallop. In more difficult terrain of rocky hills or woods, he put Cyne back on the other horse and drew her slowly after him. When they found a river or torrent in their way, Alcibiades followed the course until he found a ford where they could pass the water with the horses, unseen. At these places he took particular care, because he expected other people to wade through the water, there. They slept at night, but they suffered from the cold, for they had little to cover themselves with.

In this way they arrived at beaches and at the Sea. Alcibiades became hilarious when he first saw the water. He advanced rapidly southwards. He supposed they had emerged somewhere between Smyrna and Clazomenae. He did not know Smyrna however, nor the northern cities, of which he had heard that they were more in favour of Persian rule than of Athenian or Spartan dominance. At Clazomenae he would find Athenians.

Mantitheus was less enthusiastic about Clazomenae, for he feared the Athenian army. Yet, Alcibiades had befriended Mantitheus. He promised Mantitheus protection in the army. Alcibiades and Mantitheus rode a day more, passing villages.

Alcibiades risked riding to one of those smaller villages, which were nothing more than a few scattered farms. He made Cyne ask in the Lydian language where they were. When she asked for Clazomenae, the men showed the way, along the beaches, in the southern and western direction. They did not reach Clazomenae that day, but the next day before noon they saw all the signs of a nearby town: more villages, ships in the Sea, well-tilled fields, and more roads, which they still avoided. They made speed. They reached Clazomenae in the early afternoon.

Alcibiades still did not follow the roads, here. He stayed along the fields and the woods. He avoided the roads lest the commanders of Sardis had posted guards close around the Ionian towns.

Then, down a hill and while turning from behind rocks, Alcibiades and Cyne saw the walled town of Clazomenae and its harbour beyond.

Clazomenae was a walled town, built on an island. There was no bridge to the island, but many small vessels brought people from the mainland to the town. Alcibiades spotted no Persian warriors on the roads, but he saw many guards, dressed as Hellenic hoplites, at the gates of the city. These guards would be Ionians. Cyne could laugh now and in a happy mood they galloped on the horses to the gates of freedom and salvation.

Alcibiades, Mantitheus and Cyne found a man who agreed to take them to the island town in his little boat for free, but on guarantee of the horses and promises of coins later.

Alcibiades told who he was at the gates of Clazomenae. The town had been recovered by the Athenian army not so long ago, so there was an Athenian garrison in the city. The Clazomenae hoplites brought him, Mantitheus and Cyne to the Athenian commanders. When these heard he was Alcibiades, the Athenian general, they put the garrison at his disposal. He merely secured a small merchant boat to take them to Samos.

‘Why Samos?’ Cyne asked when she heard him give the name of that island.

‘You wanted freedom to raise your child,’ Alcibiades replied. ‘Samos still contains a contingent of Athenian war ships and Samos is democratic and peaceful. The island is out of reach of Tissaphernes. I have friends there. I can find a trireme in Samos to go back to the Hellespont, to our fleet. Samos will remain our base in Ionia. Samos is where you will have to stay, for the Hellespont, where I must go, is at war. It would not be safe for you in the Hellespont.’

She agreed, but realised sadly he would not take her with him all the way. She truly had not expected as much. She wanted only protection for her and her child.

Alcibiades, Cyne and Mantitheus left Clazomenae together. Mantitheus belonged henceforth to Alcibiades’s group of closest friends.

Alcibiades brought Cyne to Samos. He borrowed money on the island and bought her a small house. He gave her some money, enough to live for a few months, and promised to send more.

He asked then, ‘how will you call the child?’

She was warmed by his interest and replied, ‘Duris.’

‘Duris is a male name. What if it is a girl?’

‘My child will be a son,’ she said proudly.

‘Good,’ he replied. ‘Duris the Samian it will be then!’

He paused, and then, triumphantly, showed her scrolls.

He said, ‘I brought you two scrolls. They have been written by the Athenian commanders at Samos. The first scroll states that you were once a slave but that you are now a free woman. The other scroll is signed by Council Members of the city of Samos. This scroll says you are a citizen of Samos with all the rights of a true citizen of this town. This scroll cost me a lot, for the Council assured me that no papers were necessary. They found it highly unusual for somebody to ask such papers. Some persuasion was needed. I thought, however, that when somebody would annoy you or draw your citizenship into doubt, because you are a foreigner here, you could show these scrolls.’

She beamed. ‘That is very fine. I am a free woman now!’

Cyne clutched the scrolls in her arms.

Alcibiades left her the money he had promised. He also would send her money until the end of his life, and he sent her enough so that she would never be in want. Cyne had saved him from death. He would have children in Attica - where were these now, thought Alcibiades, where was Axiochus? -, in Sparta and in Samos.

He left Cyne, standing at the quays of the harbour of Samos while he was waving and looking at her from the ship for as long as he could, until she was a mere dot in the line of the harbour.

From Samos he obtained a trireme that sailed and rowed to Lesbos.

He arrived in Lesbos just before the spring of the new year.

Cyzicus

That spring, Mindarus and Pharnabazus planned a joint sea and land attack on the city of Cyzicus.

Cyzicus was situated in the southern part of the Propontis, in territories controlled by Pharnabazus. Cyzicus had remained independent from the Phrygian satrap, however. The city controlled the country at the neck of a peninsula. A fine harbour provided shelter for many ships, and from there the Peloponnesians could hold the Propontis. Mindarus gathered eighty triremes from various cities. He had once more a large fleet. He was convinced that the Athenians had no idea of how many ships he had already.

Mindarus and Pharnabazus attacked Cyzicus by surprise, and they besieged the town. After a few days of combats they took Cyzicus by storm.

When the Athenians at Sestos heard of this, they sent out their fleet. Only forty Athenian triremes had remained at Sestos, and Mindarus knew that. But the Athenians also called on Thrasybulus and on Theramenes, who had been roaming in Macedonia and near the Island of Thasos respectively, as well as on Alcibiades, who was then still at Lesbos. The generals sped with their warships to the Hellespont. A third major confrontation between Athens and Sparta seemed imminent.

Alcibiades arrived first at the fleet of Parium. The Athenians had moved, in the night, to avoid being detected, to the island of Proconnesus. This island lay northwest of the peninsula of Cyzicus.

Alcibiades had actually sailed first to Sestos, where he put as many hoplites and light troops as he could get on board of small merchant ships, for he feared a battle on land was coming, and not just at Sea, and only then to Parium. He seized also all the small boats he met. He hid his triremes inside a flotilla of merchant ships, so that the Peloponnesians had no warning of his coming, and no idea of the number of triremes he had.

The army of Sestos had heard of his imprisonment in Sardis and they were astonished at his early escape. He was the only general in the fleet of forty ships, but the other generals were approaching.

The two Athenian squadrons of triremes led by Thrasybulus and by Theramenes also entered the Hellespont at night to escape the surveillance of the Peloponnesians at Abydos.

Alcibiades ordered an Assembly of the sailors and hoplites at Proconnesus. The men stood on a hill and Alcibiades spoke to them from the top of the hill, as she was used to in the Assemblies of Athens.

He said, ‘comrades, I am here back from Sardis. You may well wonder how it was possible for me to escape. Well, if it was not for Tissaphernes’s help, I would not have been able to be here. Tissaphernes had to take me, for Pharnabazus has complained to the Persian King Darius about our successes in the Hellespont. Tissaphernes had me transported to Sardis to keep me out of the hands of the Phrygian troops, and in safety from the Phrygian hired murderers. Tissaphernes slackened after a while the control of my quarters in the palace of Sardis, and he prepared an escape for me, so that I could reach Clazomenae.

Tissaphernes has tied hands, now. He cannot support us with money or ships anymore, for that would mean to help Athenians fighting against a satrap of Darius. I am here, but no help will be coming from Tissaphernes and since we fight Pharnabazus, also not from him. The only good news is that Tissaphernes shall also not help the Peloponnesians anymore. His fleet will not sail into the Ionian Sea!’ Alcibiades waited a while, and then he continued to speak.

‘Our enemy, the Spartan and Peloponnesian fleet, has plenty of funds. They have at their disposal the Darics and the means of the King of Persia, provided by Pharnabazus. We are, as we always have been, due to the vagaries of time and due to our fate, on our own. We have, as we always had to, to fight our way through the hardships and through the mass of our adversaries, as we always had to. We will fight at Sea with our victorious fleet, and fight at land with our citizen hoplites, our sailors and our faithful allies. There is no choice but to prevail in the coming battle.’

Alcibiades gave this speech in a bitter tone. When he spoke about the fleet, he spoke about himself. When he said ‘we’, he meant ‘I’. The speech reflected his mood. He was alone. He was general of the fleet, but not general of Athens. He would have to fight and prove himself, and he could rely only on himself. But then his mood changed a little. He looked over the heads of so many companions in war. He had friends in the fleet, many friends, and among hoplites he was among friends. He continued in a more optimistic tone.

‘We have to fight like our forefathers have fought. We are not less courageous, not less skilled, not less intelligent, and not less powerful than our forefathers. We have beaten the Peloponnesians and the Spartans in particular, so many times already in the Sea, that the mere sight of our ships makes them flee. True, there is a man in front of us who is courageous enough to give battle to us, a Spartiate named Mindarus. I know him well. I know how he thinks. I ate at his table. He is a brave man and he loves his polis. But every time he offered battle, here in the Hellespont, we have defeated him and his army, and chastised his Spartiate arrogance. We are going to do that again. We shall take Cyzicus. We shall defeat Mindarus’s fleet and then storm the town and chase the Phrygian troops. I am sure of that, for we cannot be defeated. We will fight at Sea, fight at land, like our forefathers, and then we will step on the walls of Cyzicus, and march beyond!’

An enormous roar of raw shouts of the army men answered Alcibiades’s speech. He stood in front of the hoplites with Thrasybulus to his right and Theramenes to his left now, for their reinforcements had just arrived. They unsheathed their swords from their backs and pointed it to the heavens.

‘By Zeus, we shall win!’ Alcibiades cried, and thousands of swords were unsheathed, held with stretched-out arms to the skies, and the Athenians shouted with the rough voices of hoplites and sailors, ‘by Zeus, we shall win!’

The generals went out of the Assembly and they stepped immediately on board of Thrasybulus's ship, on which he had erected a tent for a meeting. The ship was empty of hoplites, but for two guards at the quays.

The weather was becoming foul. It was very dark early at this morning. The sky was covered with heavy, dark clouds.

Thrasybulus spoke first.

'We have now eighty-six triremes here,' he said. 'That is more than Mindarus has, though not a lot more. Mindarus will refuse us a battle. He has fewer ships than we. He has been bitten twice, and he is sitting snugly inside the fortifications of Cyzicus. We will have to go ashore to fight. We have no cavalry and Pharnabazus can get all the cavalry he wants. Superior forces will face us.'

'Pharnabazus has troops and cavalry, but we should not over-estimate those,' Alcibiades replied. 'Pharnabazus has not that many troops. He has some Persians and some mercenaries, but his best troops are only his cavalry, and he has those not in great numbers. Oh, he has enough to scare off our sailors, which are only lightly armed and without protection of armour, but his troops will not hold out against an ordered phalanx. Mindarus and Pharnabazus will defend Cyzicus. There will be little cavalry there and it will be of little use. They have not more hoplites than we, only very few Spartans, and then only of the perioecic class. Our sailors will fight a lot better than their un-coordinated rubble of mercenaries and men from ten polises assembled by Mindarus.'

'We need a battle at Sea,' Theramenes said. 'We always defeated them at Sea. Mindarus is a Spartiate, but he is no genius at Sea. You defeated him twice already. Can we draw him out?'

'Yes,' Thrasybulus agreed. 'That should be our chance. We must draw him out with his fleet. We defeat him at Sea. As long as he has his fleet he can be dangerous, and do harm in the Hellespont and the Propontis. If we defeat his ships at Cyzicus, most of his army will run ashore, flee back to Cyzicus and in that confusion – if we are quick enough – we can defeat him also at land, Pharnabazus or no Pharnabazus. How can we draw him out?'

'Mindarus does not know we are all of us at Proconnesus,' Alcibiades ventured. 'He knows we had forty triremes at Sestos. Suppose I dash in to him with those forty ships. We have to take care to use the same ships as were at Sestos. Mindarus might think we are arrogant to attack him with so few forces. He does not know you have arrived with forty-six more triremes. So, you wait in hiding, and when he advances on me, you attack him in the back. You can hide on the other side of the peninsula!'

'He will spot our ships,' Theramenes asserted.

'Not necessarily,' Thrasybulus intervened. 'A lot of bad weather is coming. I feel it in my bones. Mindarus does not expect more ships. Why would he be at the lookout? He may not even have posted lookouts for more ships at the other side. He does not expect us to come. We hide to the northeast of the peninsula, then sail west and hide behind Halloni Island.'

'We can sail even closer,' Alcibiades proposed. 'I know Cyzicus and its harbour. I have been there. We can come in beyond Halloni, closer to Cyzicus, behind a small island that is right in front of Cyzicus' harbour. There is another peninsula there, small, but large enough to hide a fleet. It is called Artaki. In front of that peninsula lies a small island, also called Artaki Island, which is actually only a promontory, a high hill. I attack in front with forty ships and lure Mindarus out. When I flee to the

west, back into the gulf, you come from behind Artaki and we surround him. Then we crush him.'

'How far is Artaki peninsula from Cyzicus?' Thrasybulus wondered.

'Less than half a morning or so walking,' Alcibiades replied. 'Why do you ask?'

Thrasybulus said, 'I was thinking about a strategy of falling in the back of Mindarus at Sea. We could repeat that on land. Suppose we put Chaereas ashore with part of our hoplites. When Mindarus runs back in confusion to Cyzicus, he will run into our own hoplites. That should be a surprise! He might lose his wits!'

'Mindarus will not lose his wits. He is a Spartiate,' Theramenes protested.

He grinned, 'his hoplites sure will, though. But we are taking great risks here.'

'What risks?' Thrasybulus asked.

'Remember your first lesson as a strategist,' Theramenes replied. 'You shall not split your forces! You shall attack with your forces concentrated at one point to overwhelm the enemy at that place, and then ply up his other forces. Here, we split our troops. Suppose our ships do not arrive in time to assist our first forty attacking triremes. What can happen then is that those forty would be defeated, after which Mindarus may still have eighty triremes to attack our forty-six. Then he retreats with his entire army to Cyzicus and on his way back he disposes of Chaereas. That is a very plausible scheme too!'

'All right, all right. Never panic!' Alcibiades cried, remarking the suddenly worried faces of his co-generals. 'So we make that scheme impossible. We need somebody who can fight like a lion in the centre and who will hold out forever until the others arrive. That should be me. I can bear the grunt of the Peloponnesians at Sea and at land. I know the Peloponnesians and Mindarus, and I can raise the most energy in our troops. The men will follow me, whatever happens, at any cost. I know how to energise my men. My hoplites and sailors will follow me to the very end. That should give us time to bring you two in, as well as Chaereas on land. I shall be fighting hard and hold out, however many men and ships I face. I shall be fighting and doing nothing else. I shall not be seeing what happens around. We need a strategist to watch the enemy, to see what is happening in the battle, and to throw in forces and move forces wherever needed, at the right moment. That should be you, Thrasybulus. You have the most cunning of the three of us. Theramenes, you are a fine general and a man of action, like me. You shall have to save me. The way you move with your forces will be crucial. You shall have to deploy your men to harm the Peloponnesians the most and to confuse them most in the battle.'

'Agreed,' Theramenes acquiesced.

'Yes,' Thrasybulus confirmed.

The strength in the Athenian army lay in the way their best generals, all veterans and intelligent men, free citizens of Athens and each capable to lead an army, knew how to combine their qualities, and then realised their plans.

Alcibiades would be Alcibiades: flamboyant, energetic, invincible in single combat, the leader of men who ran in front of all.

Thrasybulus would be Thrasybulus: the strategist who used cunning to position and move his forces, the manager who stood behind his men, directing the armies.

Theramenes would be Theramenes: the aristocrat, the able general who combined

some of the cunning of Thrasybulus in the middle of a battle and some of the courage of Alcibiades.

None of these generals was jealous of the other's assignment. If they could win the battle, they truly would win as one man.

The generals discussed the details, then went out of the tent and walked in the rain to their own ships. Their confidence in each other could only have been possible because Thrasybulus and Theramenes acknowledged one leader to decide between them, even though they found themselves by no means his inferior, and that leader was Alcibiades. Alcibiades recognised the value of the two other in comparison with his own talents. Moreover, his temperament was best suited to attack with recklessness, straight into the centre of the Peloponnesians.

The Athenian fleet split and sailed from Proconnesus in the middle of a storm. It rained heavily, the waves ran high, the wind blew hard, and thunder roared, lightning flashed around the fleet and boiled the Sea. The Athenians saw this as a rather good omen, for the bad weather concealed the parts of their fleet to the enemy. The weather was hard on the men, however. The Sea was wine-dark, and the storm clouds lay low, descending in the water. Showers swept the deck and drenched the men. The waves rose massively over the singing Sea. The triremes swished in the water. The ships rolled dangerously, so that many rowers and hoplites were sea-sick. The battle that would come was crucial, a matter of survival for Athens, and a matter of survival of Alcibiades, for in defeat he would never be able to return to Athens. The stakes were high. The Athenian generals dared to take a huge gamble, without hesitation.

At the Artaki peninsula, Thrasybulus and Theramenes landed Chaereas with his hoplites. Chaereas immediately marched in the streaming rain in the direction of Cyzicus.

Theramenes then took twenty ships, and Thrasybulus twenty-six. They hid their fleets in a little harbour to the north of Artaki Island.

Alcibiades meanwhile slowly rowed his ships towards Cyzicus from the west side of the gulf. He moved very slowly. At first, all stayed peaceful. Then, he could distinguish sudden action in Cyzicus harbour.

The Peloponnesian sailors and hoplites ran to their ships, to their triremes. Soon, eighty triremes moved in the Sea towards Alcibiades's ships. It was still raining, but the Sea had calmed down a little. The water in the gulf was a lot less wild than around Proconnesus. Dark clouds still covered the sky. Had Mindarus indeed given the order to attack Alcibiades's fleet, thinking Alcibiades had only the forty ships of Sestos, or had the Peloponnesian allies chosen for him? Were the Peloponnesians zealous when they saw so few ships in front of them, and had Mindarus only agreed to the riposte when his allied ships were already in the water? It seemed so!

At any rate, the Peloponnesian fleet rowed in mass towards Alcibiades. When the Peloponnesian ships were quite close, Alcibiades seemed to hesitate. He halted his ships, and then made them turn and flee, as if he had suddenly realised he would be defeated. His ships rowed not in straight lines but in oblique directions, in jagged courses, in apparent confusion, at full speed, some even with sails open, to the southwest. The Peloponnesian fleet pursued Alcibiades's forty triremes.

When Alcibiades had drawn Mindarus's fleet sufficiently far into the open water of the gulf, far enough from Cyzicus, he made his fleet turn again to face the surprised

Peloponnesians. His ships gathered in a perfect line. The two fleets prepared for a nasty battle, in which Alcibiades's ships were badly outnumbered.

At that moment, perfectly in timing, before even the ships could engage, Thrasybulus's fleet rowed from behind the Artaki Promontory to cut off the Peloponnesians from going due west and north. Theramenes's ships rowed also from behind the promontory, towards Cyzicus.

What made Mindarus look sideways and behind him? In any case, he perceived the trap. Mindarus saw Alcibiades before him, slightly towards the southwest, Thrasybulus to his right, and Theramenes at his back. He saw three fleets coming at him. He could not really see how large those fleets were, though.

Alcibiades grinned, 'poor Mindarus. He must think three times forty triremes are surrounding him.'

Mindarus acted on the trap, fleeing before Thrasybulus and Theramenes could complete the encirclement that would be fatal. In the middle of the enemy fleets, his ships would be crushed and unable to manoeuvre.

Mindarus fled to the only route that was open to him, to his left, southwards, to the beaches of Cleri that lay southwest of Cyzicus. Mindarus would be in safety there, for Pharnabazus's army camped not far from the beach. Mindarus expected Pharnabazus to have followed the movements of the fleet, and to assemble his men at Cleri.

The Peloponnesians rowed to the shore, and they pulled their triremes onto the beaches. Alcibiades rowed hotly in their pursuit. He arrived but a little later at the beaches. He rowed his ships as close as he could to the Peloponnesian triremes, which were already empty. His men threw grappling hooks at the enemy boats. The hooks clamped tightly on the wood of the ships. Alcibiades's sailors waded through the shallow water of the beach to haul the empty Peloponnesian ships into the Sea.

Pharnabazus's troops arrived at that moment. Pharnabazus came with light troops, with many archers ready, on the hills of Cleri. Alcibiades saw some cavalry, but not much. He discovered only a few mercenary hoplites. Persian reinforcements would soon arrive.

The Peloponnesian sailors turned also towards the Athenians. A considerable number of men stepped from the beach hills onto the narrow line of sand and rocks to confront the Athenians. Alcibiades's men stood in the water. A battle, fought half in the water, half on land, began.

Alcibiades jumped off his ship, and he stood, wading in the water, amidst his hoplites. He fought. He stood in the water, shouting orders to form a closed line. He wore an Athenian shield and a spear. His forces were outnumbered more than three to one. Yet, he decided to fight, as he had promised, and he stayed on the beach instead of fleeing to the ships with his men.

Alcibiades had confidence in Thrasybulus. He hoped that Thrasybulus would perceive how much danger there was for the Athenian centre force, his force, and he applied what had been arranged. He fought and stood his ground – or rather, his water. He fought with his hoplites, and a growing number of sailors fended off the Peloponnesians and the Phrygian troops.

Spears stabbed, shields clashed, arrows bit flesh and javelins transpierced bodies. Alcibiades fought like a lion. He pushed back with the thrust of his spear the Persians before him. He advanced step by step, and drew his men after him, then in line with

him. The Athenians refused death. Their comrades fell. When a hoplite was wounded or killed, a sailor took that man's shield and that man's place. A mass of Persians fell on Alcibiades's troops, and an unequal fight of one man to five developed on the beach.

The Athenians threw their spears at a sign of Alcibiades, and they unsheathed their swords. They wriggled through and past thrusting javelins at the risk of death, to run into the shields of their enemies. They hacked with their swords from very close. The Persians' first row could not step back and was surprised at this sudden attack with unexpected weapons. They had been confident in a shield-and-spear fight. They lost many men before they knew what happened. Many Athenians had not been able to avoid the enemy spears, however. Other men were wounded. They fell into the water with shoulders, legs and arms pierced by the sharp Persian lances.

The entire first row of Persians was massacred in no time by the sword attack. The second row had the time to draw its swords also, and sword-fights now ensued in earnest. The battle was messy, but Alcibiades's men stood firm in a line, and more men jumped from the boats to join the ones that were on the beach.

The battle was chaotic. It was everything but a conventional battle. In front of the Athenians stood rows of men of different origins, of Peloponnesian hoplites standing next to Persian light troops, of Corinthians next to Spartans, of Syracusan sailors fighting together with Megarians. Athenian hoplites fought mercilessly Persian light troops. Peloponnesian hoplites had come down from the ships to fight Athenian sailors. Persian commanders fought together with Phrygian mercenary, Ionian and Hellenic hoplites.

The Athenian ships, forty of them, lay immobilised in the water close to the beaches. The sailors of these ships had come onto the decks to hurl javelins at the Peloponnesian sailors. The eighty ships of Mindarus were interspersed in the Sea with the Athenian ships, and on the beaches the Athenian sailors were still trying to haul the enemy ships back into the water while their comrades fought on land. Alcibiades had given the order that the Athenians must fight to the last man on land, but the Peloponnesian fleet had to be led away or be demolished. It seemed this primary objective would be reached already, for the Athenians had captured most of the Peloponnesian ships.

The beaches were stained red with blood. When an Athenian fell, he fell in the water, and his blood would spill out and continue to flow profusely, mixing with the sea-water.

More and more Peloponnesian sailors and hoplites joined the Persian mercenaries of Pharnabazus. The pressure on Alcibiades's men was tremendous. they held their lines by sheer energy, but slowly, slowly, they were pushed back into the water. Even without being wounded or killed, they could not withstand the pressure of the mass of men in front of them.

The Athenian hoplites looked desperately at their ships, but many of their triremes floated in the water, farther off, back into the Sea. Alcibiades and his men had to hold the beach or they would drown.

With terrible blows and with the courage of despair, they forced the Peloponnesian and Persian troops to stay where they were. So much expenditure of energy could not be sustained for much longer! Alcibiades was tiring rapidly, and so were his men.

Alcibiades parried a huge Corinthian warrior in a sword duel. The two men had barely the place to move forward. They could not dodge sideways, or they bumped into other fighting men. The Corinthian man was obviously convinced of his superiority in strength, but Alcibiades was more rapid with his sword, and he had already cut the man twice on the legs. The Corinthian seemed used to wounds, however, for he did not slacken his efforts, and he bore Alcibiades down under the weight of the terrible blows of his sword on Alcibiades's shield. With a strong blow from beneath, he hammered Alcibiades's sword out of his hands. Alcibiades grabbed his shield with both arms to protect himself from the blows that were to come. This adversary was so much stronger than he! He saw the man suddenly stagger, transpierced at the shoulder by a javelin. The Athenian hoplite next to Alcibiades had seen the danger, and he had thrown a Persian javelin at the right place. The Corinthian fell, and the water in front of Alcibiades turned red. Alcibiades grinned at his companion, recuperated a sword, and it was his turn now to help the Athenian hoplite who was being assailed by two Peloponnesians.

The Athenian fortune phalanx of Alcibiades was on the point of breaking. Suddenly, the pressure diminished, and in the last rows of the enemy lines, warriors ran off to the west side. Alcibiades also looked in that direction. He saw in the far Thrasybulus's ships at the beach. Thrasybulus had played his role well. He had seen the danger for Alcibiades, brought his troops of twenty-six ships to the west, to the right side of Alcibiades and he attacked the Peloponnesians from that side. Mindarus had sent a part of the forces that fought Alcibiades's men towards the west, so Alcibiades found some relief.

The men in front of him hesitated, looked to the west, and there was a general slackening of the fierce duels for Alcibiades's men. A new danger threatened, however, for Thrasybulus had but few men and very few hoplites. So many Persian mercenaries and Peloponnesians swarmed upon him that his troops almost instantly retreated and might have been destroyed there and then. The fight continued bitterly. Thrasybulus would falter soon!

From the east, Theramenes arrived then with a strong force and with Chaereas's hoplites. They did not wait to help Alcibiades's centre, for Alcibiades held his place. They ran behind the Peloponnesian lines to assist Thrasybulus. A terrible battle started therefore on the western side also.

Chaereas's men, the few Athenian elite hoplites, slaughtered Pharnabazus's troops. While fighting, Alcibiades saw how Pharnabazus's troops began to flee inwards, to Cyzicus. Mindarus dispatched more men to attack Theramenes and Thrasybulus, which gave even more space for Alcibiades. It provided new hope to the Athenians that were now fighting all along the beaches of Cleri.

Alcibiades saw Pharnabazus on horseback, a proud and brave commander, viciously killing Athenian lightly armed sailors in the water. He saw Mindarus, the Spartiate, twice wounded, blood all over his armour, running with the red cloak of the Spartiate, and blooded sword in hand behind his troops to assist where necessary. What an adversary was Mindarus in this battle!

Alcibiades remained among his hoplites, encouraging them to hold on. He slowly formed a tight wedge that entered the Peloponnesian enemy ranks, and which advanced towards the hills, out of the water. Every Athenian supported the man that stood next to him.

They applied the tactic of advancing shield to shield, occasionally letting an enemy push through, so that the man would be killed in the rows behind. This trap was used with much success, and many a Peloponnesian, happy to break through the Athenian line, understood too late he had been tricked to death.

After a while, there was more space to fight, and one man fought one man, but corpses floated all along the beach.

Alcibiades and his men still waded in the water. Alcibiades avoided a javelin thrust and he hacked at an arm. He jumped over the deadly wounded man, and a sailor behind him finished the enemy. Alcibiades pushed on, but he received a blow of a sword from sideways, on his shoulder. The wound was not deep, but blood gushed out of his arm. He managed to keep his shield before him with that arm, though, and he still advanced, parrying blows and always fighting, always moving and hacking, moving his sword up and down and forwards and backwards. He fought sword to sword many men, and he wounded and killed many.

Theramenes had saved Thrasybulus's men. The troops of Pharnabazus abandoned the battle on the western side. Theramenes and Thrasybulus ran now to help Alcibiades's warriors. They gradually pushed back the Peloponnesians. They stepped forward on land, towards the beaches, behind Mindarus.

Mindarus had to fight from two sides now. In front of him stood the army of Alcibiades. His troops were now fighting individually, man to man, among the stranded ships. Alcibiades's line stood like a wall. Mindarus's ships were being drawn into the Sea. The Spartan navarch was losing his fleet. His men were harassed by javelins and arrows sent to them from out of the Athenian ships. He was being attacked fiercely in his back by Theramenes. He despaired, but he did not give up.

Mindarus divided his forces once more, though he knew he would be outnumbered in his turn. His forces retreated on the beach, but he still actually succeeded in forming a new phalanx just before the hills, while the other half of his troops fought off the on-running Athenians of Theramenes.

Alcibiades's men succeeded finally in wading out of the water. They too formed a line, a very mixed line of hoplites and sailors and light troops together, interspersed, standing together where they had been able to come to when they ran on the beaches. Alcibiades's phalanx was several men thick now, and they started to sing a paean of courage and dedication to Zeus. While singing, they attacked with cries of victory the last Peloponnesian line of Mindarus.

Mindarus's troops were caught between two terrible anvils of bronze and iron. The Spartan troops fought bravely. Alcibiades did not directly engage Mindarus in a personal duel. They were fighting some distance from each other, at different wings, and Alcibiades did not want to leave his place lest his men thought he would be retreating. The two men looked at one another, however, once every while, and Alcibiades saw that Mindarus had recognised him and looked straight in his eyes. He saw a flash of contempt and hatred. Mindarus fought like the brave Spartiate he was. Alcibiades saw him fall, hit by a javelin at the neck and by a sword at the shoulder. Four Athenian hoplites surrounded the Spartiate. Mindarus disappeared amidst the Athenians, and he did not come up again.

When Mindarus fell, the enemy lost its command and its fighting spirit. Alcibiades continued to fight however, without bothering about the body of Mindarus. The battle was still fought bitterly.

The Athenians arrived at the foot of the hills. The Peloponnesians panicked, for they were being driven back decisively now, and they saw no leader anymore. Several commanders shouted contradictory commands on the enemy side, one to hold on and the other to retreat.

Alcibiades recognised this confusion. It was a familiar, common phase before a total defeat. He could step behind his lines now to have an overview of the battle, and to reorganise the men in spots where the Athenians had it hard. He drew men back into the line where there were gaps. He organised the rest of the capture of the Peloponnesian ships. He forced the sailors to secure the boats that were drifting away. He told where prisoners had to be assembled, and who should guard them. He pushed hoplites forward. He scorned men that retreated to the back, and let their sword rest on the earth. He grinned to the youngest sailors who fought as peltasts among the hoplites and encouraged them, praising them and fighting next to them. He jumped into places where the fighting was still hard, withdrawing men from where resistance was less and moving them to where the Peloponnesians resisted most. He encouraged his commanders to drive the enemy back everywhere.

The Peloponnesian resistance broke globally, along the entire stretch of the beach where Alcibiades's men fought. The Peloponnesians realised they could not win anymore. They risked to be killed all, caught between Theramenes's troops and the line of Alcibiades. Retreat to their ships was excluded, for they had the Athenians between them and their triremes. Their triremes, they saw, were being drawn back to the open Sea, one by one. They could see one Athenian ship dragging off four or five empty Peloponnesian ships.

The Peloponnesian army fled. They were routed.

Alcibiades looked to the battlefield. The battle had taken place along the beach, along a narrow lane between hills and water. Corpses, mainly of Athenians, floated in the Sea. In many places the water was red of blood. Bodies were also lying on the sand and on the rocks, the bodies of lonely, broken men. The wounded cried and sighed. Many of the bodies on the ground still moved or convulsed, as the men were severely wounded. Peloponnesian wounded warriors crawled desperately away. Most of these would be killed by the Athenians. Scavenger birds circled above the dead. Arrows and javelins stuck out of the ground. Shields, spears, swords, helmets and axes lay around everywhere. A few dead horses were also lying on the beach. A few men were still fighting, but the last Peloponnesians ran upwards, up the hills, away from the battlefield. They escaped to the east, towards Cyzicus.

Peloponnesian ships floated steerless on the waters, but Athenian sailors jumped on the decks or even swam towards the boats, to take control of them. Most of the Athenian triremes rowed with only a few oarsmen, a little farther into the Sea, where they formed a line to block all enemy ships to pass.

The clouds parted in the sky, then. The first sunshine rays of the day brightened the battlefield. Amidst the chaos of re-grouping, panting men, the Athenians re-formed phalanx wings at Sea and at land. A few Peloponnesian ships were burning and yellow flames rose from their timbers. Black smoke filled the sky.

Alcibiades saw a rainbow above the Sea now, for in the far, rain showers still darkened the horizon. He approached the fires, and saw that the burning boats were Syracusan triremes. He admired once more these valiant and courageous Sicilian men who had fought to the last along their stretch of beach and who had realised early

enough that the battle was lost for them, early enough to still be able to set their triremes afire so that the enemy would not be able to use them.

Alcibiades threw down his shield. He kept his sword in hand, and when his men looked at him from out of the well-formed new lines on the beach, as he stood again at the place where the water of the Sea died on land, he stretched out his arm and pointed with his sword upwards, to the hills, to Cyzicus.

The Athenians saw the lonely commander like a dark shadow against the bright, white rays of the sun, giving the order they had expected and hoped for, as in trance, for this order annihilated their frustrations of past humiliations. They ran after the fleeing Spartans. The Spartans would be once more defeated in a land battle by the Athenians. There were prisoners to be made. The job had to be finished, now.

At that moment, a strong force of Persian cavalry, led by Pharnabazus, stormed into the Athenian ranks. The lighter Athenian troops ran before the hoplites. Their progress was halted for a while. They ran back behind the hoplites, and Alcibiades formed a small but tight phalanx protected by shields and spears to fend off the cavalry attack. Pharnabazus might be capable of slaughtering light troops, but he was rather powerless against a true phalanx, even if Alcibiades had very few hoplites. Attacking a well-formed Athenian hoplite phalanx, in the centre of which stood a determined Athenian general, proved too much for Pharnabazus's courage. He realised the debacle around him. Further resistance here was senseless. He turned his horse, and his riders followed him. Pharnabazus delayed the Athenian advance enough to let the remaining men of the Peloponnesians retreat to his camp, and from there to Cyzicus. Alcibiades saw Pharnabazus look at him and curse him. He grinned and saluted with lifted sword. Pharnabazus turned his horse brusquely.

During that time, Alcibiades, Theramenes and Thrasybulus pursued the enemy. They wanted Cyzicus. They encircled the town's walls with their troops. The walls loomed very high, however, and the Athenians had not enough hoplites to dare to storm the city. They would have to stay beneath the walls, organise a siege, and make scaling ladders, of which they had none with them presently. They had to organise the recuperation of their dead and wounded men, and the recuperation of all the Peloponnesian triremes. There were spoils to be taken, and booty to collect in Pharnabazus's tents camp.

Yet, suddenly the east gates of the city opened, and Pharnabazus's army marched out, accompanied here and there by the miserable rests of the Peloponnesians. These sought protection in joining Pharnabazus's men. They marched to inland Phrygia. The Athenian generals decided to let them flee unharmed.

The battle for Cyzicus was over.

The entire fleet of Mindarus had fallen intact in the hands of Athenians, but for the burnt Syracusan ships. There had been not truly a sea-battle after all, for Mindarus had fled ashore immediately when he perceived the Athenian trap. The strategy of the Athenian generals had worked to perfection. The battle for Cyzicus had been only a land battle, and a very unconventional battle at that. Thrasybulus's strategy had also worked there. Each Athenian general had used his talent to the best.

Alcibiades left the walls of Cyzicus. He returned to the beach of the battlefield, where his troops were collecting the weapons of the enemy, piling them up for a trophy. Alcibiades then held his arms to the heavens, one hand still holding the blooded

sword, and he prayed to Zeus and Athena. The Athenian hoplites shouted their victory, and they sang a war paean to the gods.

Later in the day of the battle of Cyzicus, the Athenians picked up their dead. They gathered the Peloponnesian ships and rowed slowly back to the island of Proconnesus. The Athenians waited for a few days so that the last Peloponnesians and Phrygians had left Cyzicus. Alcibiades then took a small fleet of a few triremes and about a hundred hoplites. He sailed to Cyzicus. He remained there for a month, installing pro-Athenian rule and collecting large sums of money for the army, ransom money. Pharnabazus's camp had been captured earlier on by the Athenian army. The war spoils, provisions for the Peloponnesian fleet, weapons arsenal, and funds destined to the enemy armies were brought together. The huge booty of the battle was transferred to Sestos.

Alcibiades's men later intercepted a message destined for Sparta, written by Hippocrates, the secretary of Mindarus, which read in true Laconic expression, 'the fleet is destroyed. Mindarus is dead. We are starving. We know not what to do.'

Propontis

Alcibiades imagined the mood in the Spartan Damos after the Athenian victory at Cyzicus. The news would be brought to the ephors first, and then read with loud voice in the Damos. There would be a great silence in the Assembly of Sparta, and the defeat would not be commented upon. The Spartiates would return home to prepare their mourning. There would be soft wailing in the houses, but the sounds of the weeping would not reach the streets. The Spartiate families would do little weeping, for they had few deaths to mourn. The perioeci would suffer, and they would hate the Spartiates a little more. The Spartan dead would not come back to Laconia. Timaea would walk in sadness but pride, for the message would also have been that Alcibiades, her lover and the father of her child, had defeated Mindarus and Pharnabazus. Cynisca would be angry at him for having caused so many deaths and so much pain to her city. She would agree, however, that life was like that, made of successes and grief, and she would continue to work her horses, depressing her grief.

Alcibiades laughed, for he also thought about Lysander. The lean Spartiate would have to wait a few years before there was a new fleet of so many triremes for Sparta. He would not be navarch soon. There could be a respite in the war. Athens could breathe again. Its grain routes were secured. Yet, Alcibiades thought already about what became now the next main issue. The Athenian army needed more money. The army in the Hellespont needed reinforcements. Where would those come from, with which funds and when?

Alcibiades felt also bitter after the battle of Cyzicus. Since he had become a general, appointed by the army of Samos, that army had won three major battles at Cynossema, Abydos and Cyzicus, and the Spartan fleet had been annihilated. Athens had been saved, because Ionia and the Hellespont were largely secured. The Spartans held out in various cities, but the power of Sparta in those regions was finished. Yet, Alcibiades had not been invited back into the city of Athens! He was still a renegade, a general convicted to death if he returned. What else should he do to please

the Athenian people and the haughty men that had trembled for their lives and possessions when the Spartans had taken Decelea, Euboea and the Hellespont as well? Would he have to do it all, take Euboea back and take Decelea?

‘I could,’ he thought. ‘There is no limit to what I can do if they just give me enough hoplites and good generals.’

But first he had to have money. Athens had to have money. He had ideas for that, as brilliant and daring as had been his frontal attack on Mindarus.

Alcibiades sailed north, to the other side of the Propontis. He visited the cities there, and secured them for Athens. He collected funds along the way. Then he sailed east, to the Bosphorus. The two main cities there, Byzantium and Chalcedon, were Dorian, and always had been Dorian. Byzantium was a Spartan colony. Alcibiades sailed to Chrysopolis. This town was situated opposite of Byzantium, and it had a good harbour. He ordered masons, stone workers and carpenters to come from Sestos, and he built a fort at Chrysopolis. The fort would serve as a customs house.

Alcibiades began to intercept every ship that sailed from east to west through the Bosphorus. Every merchant ship had to pay a passage tribute of ten percent on the transported goods. Some captains paid in money, other in goods. The Athenians of Chrysopolis sold all the collected goods, to be transported to the west, and the money thus raised, the tax on the passage of the Bosphorus straits, was used to pay for the army. What remained was sent to Athens. Athens had a steady supply of coins now, and its treasury filled again.

Alcibiades had to be quick. He occupied Chrysopolis, but the Spartans still held Byzantium and Chalcedon. He controlled the traffic in the Bosphorus, but that might not last if these two cities opposed Athens vigorously. It might take the Spartans two to three years to build or constitute a new fleet. It would take Sparta months to overcome the shock of the defeat of Cyzicus. Athens had once more Laconian prisoners, but among these were no Spartiates. Alcibiades was almost sure the Spartans would ask for peace. That was the common reaction of the Spartans when they had suffered a major defeat. They would sue for peace, even though they still held Decelea, Euboea, Chios, Rhodes, Miletus and Ephesus!

The Spartans indeed, shortly afterwards, sued for peace with Athens. The main proponent of the peace movement in Sparta was Endius. Endius arrived in Athens as ambassador for Sparta, to negotiate the peace. His proposal was that each side should keep the cities it held currently, but to abandon the garrisons in the other's territory. Prisoners would be exchanged, one Laconian for one Athenian. The Athenian Assembly, its emotions swept up by inflammatory speeches delivered by the demagogue Cleophon, rejected the proposals. Endius returned to Sparta empty-handed.

In Athens, the Five Thousand abandoned their privileges to the restoration of democracy, as it had worked before the installation of the Four Hundred. Athens was completely democratic again. A new law was voted, which declared enemy of Athens any person that would take part in the abolition of democracy. The men who had killed Phrynichus were rewarded. Members of the Four Hundred were prosecuted, fined or exiled. They lost their civil rights. The funds from the tax on the Bosphorus

started to pour in and eased the finances of the town. Works resumed on the Acropolis, be it in humble way. The temple of Athena Nike received a new parapet that should laud the great victory of Cyzicus. The temple of Athena Polias was completed.

Athens knew not only successes in the war, however. It also suffered drawbacks. Pylos stayed in Athenian and Messenian hands, but the fort was captured by the Spartans. Corcyra, a powerful ally at Sea, turned neutral. In the summer of the following year, war resumed even in an intensified way. The Spartan general Cratesippidas took Chios again for Sparta, after pro-Athenian groups had taken control of the city. Nisaea returned to the Megarians.

Like Athens, Sparta also suffered setbacks. King Agis attacked Athens with an army from out of Decelea in the summer, but he had to retreat very rapidly, for the Athenians had amassed a considerable army of citizens to defend the polis. Agis even lost some precious squadrons of his troops that were last to retreat to Decelea. The Syracusans also left the rests of the Spartan fleet that summer, because Carthago had invaded Sicily. The Spartans suffered minor issues at other towns.

Athens still lacked enough funds, especially not enough to levy men and means for major expeditions or reinforcements to the army of the Hellespont.

It lasted until well into the summer also, before Thrasyllus could assemble an army to sail to the Aegean. He departed with fifty ships, a thousand hoplites, five thousand rowers that were armed as light troops, and a hundred cavalry.

Thrasyllus sailed first with this army to Samos. Theramenes, Thrasybulus and Alcibiades stayed in the Propontis, meanwhile. From the time of spring in that year at which Alcibiades had arrived in the Hellespont, to until late the following year, almost a year and a half, the Athenian army remained without significant actions in the Hellespont, the Propontis and the Bosphorus. They could pay to maintain their fleet, but they could do hardly more. By that summer also, Sparta raised a new fleet paid by the money of Pharnabazus. The war could resume.

There was not much to do for Alcibiades in the Hellespont. Thrasyllus returned to Athens. Thrasybulus rowed with a fleet along the coasts of Chalcidice. Theramenes and his co-general Eubulus were at Chrysopolis to collect customs at the Bosphorus. Alcibiades remained alone to guard the Hellespont and the Propontis. He thought about what he should do. He knew he had to call the entire fleet together and continue to win cities, by any means, even if by reduced means. He heard, however, that his co-generals found the effort in the Hellespont quite sufficient for the moment, and he agreed. They needed to be each on their own for a while. They also had to wait for reinforcements from Athens to organise campaigns in diverse places at the same time, and to attack the two major strong-points of the Bosphorus: Byzantium and Chalcedon. Yet, the grain route to Athens was open, and money poured in from the taxes of the Bosphorus, and these were by far the most important, vital achievements of their co-operation. With smaller fleets, the Athenian generals secured the rest of the grain route now, from the Bosphorus over the Hellespont to the entire coastal line from Chalcidice to Euboea and Athens.

Alcibiades decided it was calm enough in the Propontis to take four triremes with him and to patrol at his ease. He brought his small fleet of war triremes into several ports of the Propontis' northern coasts, and he demanded tribute in the name of the League

of Athens. He collected much money, and he kept some of that money for his own aims. He moved along the northern coast of the Hellespont and the Propontis, approaching slowly the eastern cities, and of course also the city of Bisanthes.

Chapter 19 – Thrace, Autumn 410 BC to the Spring of 409 BC

Bisanthes

Alcibiades arrived at Bisanthes one sunny day in the morning, and he rowed with his small fleet inside the harbour of the city. He asked to meet the Council of the town. He was brought rapidly to the Council Hall, and to the Bouleutêrion of Bisanthes. The Council Members were expecting him and they suspected what he wanted. He addressed the members of the Council who had gathered to meet him. He told the men he had come in peace, for they had been loyal allies of Athens. He said he would stay quite a while in Bisanthes with the triremes he had brought. His men would stay in the harbour, however, and set up camp there, outside the walls of the town. He told he had come to collect additional levies in contribution to the war of Athens and its allies, which was directed against the domination by the Peloponnesians and by the satrap of Phrygia. He assured the Council that the levy would be moderate, and could be discussed as to the final amount. Bisanthes would gain some money from the hoplites, for the fleet would buy goods at the agora of Bisanthes. He said he had money for his fleet, and everything his hoplites needed would be paid for. He also assured Bisanthes of Athenian protection, but he did not want to disturb the trade by bringing war to the city. He wanted the peace and prosperity of Bisanthes to be guaranteed. Finally, he told them that family of his lived in Bisanthes and he wanted these to be protected in secret during his absence, guarded by the people and by the Council of the city.

The Bisanthesians were much surprised at these words. They promised discretion and protection. They were glad that Alcibiades was moderate in words and deeds. They promised their support for everything he asked. They invited him to a large dinner, but he declined, yet promising to stage a feast himself within a month. Then, he left the Bouleutêrion, discussing agreeably with the Council Members. He asked where the house of Axiochus was, and one of the men took him to the agora and from there to a side street, showing him the house.

The gates of the house were closed, but when Alcibiades pushed at the large doors, they opened. He saw two servants working in the aulé, two men. They looked at him in surprise. He was dressed in light armour of leather breastplates, with arm and leg protections, and these were of a very fine quality, worked out with finely sculpted motives. He held a sword on his back. The men were not used to see hoplites enter their house, and even less an obviously wealthy Athenian commander. A tall, stout woman came through a side door wearing a basket of woven reeds. The woman looked surprised at the man who opened the doors. The basket fell to the ground, and the amazed servants saw the woman run up to the hoplite and throw her arms around him, sobbing and laughing at the same time.

‘Alcibiades, Alcibiades! You have come back!’ Theodote cried, and she embraced and hugged him until he could breathe no more. Finally, after much kissing and

pinching, he pushed her away and looked at her face and body. She had not grown fat, but she sure had taken on weight. Her hips had broadened, her calves had thickened, her breasts were imposing, her face rounder, and her hair more luxurious than ever. But her waist was still small, her belly flat, and she was as exciting, wonderful and beautiful woman as he remembered her. The woman walked around him, scrutinised him, hugged and touched him. Suddenly, she slapped him on the head so that his ears sizzled and he was quite angry with her.

She said, 'so, I had to get that out of the way and out of my system. That is for Timaea. You hurt poor Timandra when she found out you had a mistress in Sparta too. Now we can forget about that.'

Then she took Alcibiades by the arm, and drew him inside to a large room, which Alcibiades supposed could be used as an andron.

'Do you want to eat something? Some wine!'

Theodote clapped in her hands, 'servants, servants, you lazy scumbags, bring wine for your master!'

She turned to Alcibiades without waiting.

'Where have you been all this time? What have you been doing without us? How long will you stay? When do you want to see Timandra? And the children? How long will you stay? Will you now stay with us? Shall we go back to Athens?'

'Oh, oh, oh, Theodote,' Alcibiades interjected into the flow of questions. 'One question at a time, please! Yes, I would like to eat something and have a bowl of wine to drink. Have a bowl with me. Then, we talk!'

Theodote ordered a meal to be brought in, and she ate with Alcibiades and drank some wine with him. They talked. He let Theodote explain their voyage from Athens, tell him how they had at first lived at Cardia, and then arrived at Bisanthes. She was currently alone in the house of the town. Timandra and the children had remained at the country-house. She told how Axiochus had helped them, and how courteous he had been with them and still was. Axiochus passed by to see the women, but not regularly. Sometimes even several months could pass before he dropped in for a few days. He paid well a Thracian steward to look at the women and the houses, but they felt free, and the steward was at their service, not their goal-keeper. They were not bored at Bisanthes, for there were always things to do at the houses, and they made long walks. They worked and they went to theatre performances in the town. Once in every while, also Axiochus would take them to Selymbria to the festivals and the theatres there. The children had to be taken care of, and even only with these, they had their hands full. Timandra loved the country, told Theodote. The children grew up to nice beauties. Theodote thanked the gods for the years she could take care herself of the children and spend so much time with them.

When Theodote finished chatting, which took the whole meal and some time more, Theodote drew him upstairs and they made the most passionate but sweet love that Alcibiades had missed so much.

Theodote had the same feelings.

'Oh, I missed you so much,' Theodote sighed. 'Axiochus and before him Hipparchos were nice men, but we felt so abandoned at first, lost, and then hopeless, when we heard that you had been convicted in Athens. It took many months for us before Axiochus could tell us you were safe in Sparta. We did not dare to write to you there. Axiochus told us it was better not to send you letters, so that the Spartans would not

find out where we were and use us to pressure you. I thought he was right. Were we right?’

‘Axiochus did very well,’ Alcibiades confirmed. ‘Sparta and Miletus were spy nests. The ephors and Tissaphernes might indeed have used knowledge of your whereabouts to put me under pressure. You also preserved the Bisanthesians.’

Then, Alcibiades had to tell Theodote all he had done in Sparta. He also told her, though Theodote was lying naked beside him, of how he had come to be the lover of Timaea and how much he considered Cynisca to be like a sister to him.

‘And what am I to you then, after this absence? I have grown fat. You will not like me anymore,’ Theodote said this in a miserable, husky voice.

She was looking at the blankets of the bed, which she passed nervously through her fingers.

‘If you would have been with me, Theodote,’ Alcibiades said, ‘there would have been no Timaea for me. Cynisca was a friend. I was alone and depressed, just like you were. I liked Timaea, but I love you and Timandra. How did you learn about Timaea?’

‘Are you kidding?’ Theodote asked. ‘The young people of Bisanthes sing songs about you and the Queen of Sparta. Luckily, they do not know half of the story! What are we to you?’

‘I told you,’ Alcibiades repeated, ‘I love you. Timandra is me. You, I love. Timaea I liked, and she helped me through sad times. Sparta and Laconia are depressing places in winter. Cynisca is my sister. I will not let you go until you desire to leave. Do you want to leave?’

‘No,’ Theodote said in a small voice. ‘I love you too, and I never knew a sweeter man. You will be nice with Artemisia and Laïs, our children. You do not beat us, you do not cheat on us, you confessed about Timaea, and I understood what happened. Men simply cannot control their seed and they have other urges than women. Men are such weak creatures after all, so that they seek to use violence to win from us, poor women. You do not have to use violence with us. You always win. You were never like that, violent, that is. You were always sweet and caring, and we thought that since you brought us to safety you must surely feel for us. But we were so very afraid that something dreadful would happen to you, first in Sparta and then during the war in Ionia!’

Alcibiades told her everything he had done in Sparta, how he had become the counsellor of Tissaphernes, and then how he and his friends Thrasyllus and Thrasybulus had won the war in the Hellespont.

‘And now you have come to live with us?’ Theodote asked, hope in her eyes.

‘Yes,’ he said. ‘At least for quite some time. I will have to go back regularly to our fleet in the Hellespont, but I can arrange for a discreet courier service, so that as long as the Peloponnesians keep quiet here I can stay with you!’

They stood up from the bed, for Alcibiades wanted to go to the country house to see Harmonia before the evening fell. Theodote refused to accompany him to the house outside the town, for she estimated he had to be alone with Timandra. She showed him the way, though, and he followed her indications.

Alcibiades walked on foot, went out of the gates of the city and followed a road for a while, then a side track. He had marvellous views of the bay of Bisanthes. He passed two grassy hills and saw the Sea again, as well as a house, which had to be the one Axiochus had prepared for the women. It was a large house, built like the Attican country houses, but more solidly built. It was an ugly square, and there were only

small windows below, but larger windows higher up. Inside, he imagined a large aulé, a fine courtyard. The house had a flat roof, but there was a parapet on that roof, so that people could walk there and also defend the house from above. Alcibiades saw a small boat in a creek, too. The gates of the house were closed.

An armed man walked around the house. He was a tall Thracian, dressed in a chiton-like short and light tunic. The man wore a sword at his belt, not on his back like Alcibiades. When Alcibiades approached, the man saw him coming from the distance. Alcibiades heard him shout something to people inside the house, and the man brought his hand to the hilt of his sword. Alcibiades continued to walk up to the man. He stopped two paces from the guard and said, 'I am Alcibiades, general of Athens and family of Axiochus. I have come to visit Theodote and Timandra.'

The man eased his hand on the sword. He opened the gates, but he stayed close to Alcibiades. They went inside, where two more defiant guards stood, with lances horizontal, ready to intercept him. In the aulé, two girls, Alcibiades's children, were cleaning vegetables at a low table. A young woman sat there too, a slave, showing them what to do. The children hid behind the guards when they saw Alcibiades arrive, and Alcibiades refrained from explaining to the children now who he was. He asked for Timandra, ignoring the girls this time. The guards did not say a word, but they beckoned Alcibiades to come out of the house with them.

Alcibiades followed. One of the guards remained posted at the gate. The other one walked up a hill towards the Sea. The third guard stayed inside. At the top of the hill, the Thracian smiled with dirty teeth and he pointed at the beach. Alcibiades saw a small female figure dressed in a white chiton. She moved slowly, and she was stooped. She held a basket and gathered things at the beach.

The guard looked at him, but Alcibiades held up his hand and said, 'she is safe with me.'

The guard hesitated a moment. Then, he lowered his head and showed Timandra with his hand, inviting Alcibiades to approach. He continued to watch Alcibiades, however.

Alcibiades walked down the hill. The sun was setting behind his back, low behind the hill. A few light clouds hung in the air of the coming evening, thin and hazy lines of white and grey. The Sea was marvellously blue and green. The water broke in small waves on the sandy beach. The Sea was very calm on this day, but a slight evening wind blew inwards, to the land, and that breeze would no doubt later stir up the waves a little. Alcibiades reached the beach, and he saw Harmonia more clearly now. When he was about twenty paces away from her, she was startled as if sensing a presence, as if someone was watching her. She looked in his direction. She stopped picking up pebbles and shells, stood up now, and looked and looked, as if to make sure that indeed Alcibiades was approaching and not a ghost or a mirage of her mind. Then, she dropped the basket, and its contents rolled at her feet. Her long hair flowed in the sea-wind, so that she had to draw her locks out of her eyes. She still did not move but only stood there, one hand at her face. Alcibiades saw her trembling, and her other hand moved nervously over her belly. He ran the distance that was between them and she waited, as if frozen in place, until he held her in his arms.

When Harmonia lay in Alcibiades's arms, she moved and brought also an arm around his shoulders. She gave little screams, soft and low, and held him. She trembled then

and wept and wept, with cries of despair. All the longing, the fears, and the love suppressed for so long, poured out of her now, and she sobbed louder and louder. He knew then that this was the first time she cried since she had left Athens, and he understood the release of all tensions in her mind and heart. He held her while she cried, until the sobbing slowed down and until she relaxed. He wanted to withdraw, but she held on, passionately and obstinately, and brought her wet cheek against his. She caressed the back of his neck with her hand. She still trembled. He moved his hand on her back to soothe her.

Finally, she calmed down, and then she drew her arms and hands away and touched his face with her fingers, moving the fingers over every feature of his head. He let her explore him and kept both his hands on her waist. She hugged him again. She let him go, stepped back and rubbed her hands against her tunic.

Alcibiades looked at Harmonia in the evening sun. Like Theodote, she had aged. She had more wrinkles around her eyes and mouth than Theodote. She had taken on a little weight, too, but she had remained the delicate little woman he remembered so well. Her face was more angular and her cheekbones had become more prominent. She still had those well-delineated, full lips he loved so much, and those striking but non-committing very light grey eyes in which he could always perceive her mind and soul. The last red sun rays played in her eyes and the irises reflected in a myriad of different colours of grey, green, a little blue, a speckle of brown. She had marvellous hair that hung almost to her waist, but parts of which flowed around her face in the evening wind. She had to draw the locks constantly out of her eyes to look at him, and her eyes never left him. She had a fine figure indeed, which seemed more sensual than ever to him.

Harmonia lay back in his arms then, and they caressed both at the same time all over their bodies, eager for the touching of their flesh. Alcibiades felt her hips push, her waist turn against him, as well as her breasts on which her nipples hardened under his fingers. She pressed herself on him. She sank to her knees and she drew Alcibiades down to her. There, she continued to kiss his mouth and her fingers played on his eyes, in his hair, and on his neck.

When she wanted to lie down however, he separated from her and said hoarsely, 'no, not now. You wrote in your letter you wanted to walk with me. Let's walk.'

She was surprised, but he drew her up, took her hand, and then left her hand to pick up her basket, which he filled with the pebbles and shells she had been collecting. He took her basket in one hand and held her hand in the other. The sun was really setting and darkness would soon come, so he walked slowly with her, back to the house.

He looked at Harmonia before arriving at the gates and said, 'it is not that I do not desire you. I desire you very much. My love for you is far beyond sex.'

She just squeezed his hand. They went inside.

When he opened the doors, a little straw-haired being jumped to his knees and when he looked down he saw the most beautiful girl that had to be Harmonia's child, Laïs. The little girl had thought her mother had come in, and she had jumped to her without looking. Now, she was frightened.

He took her up and said, 'you are Laïs. I am Alcibiades. I am your father. I love you and your mother.'

The girl looked at him with wide eyes.

Harmonia said, 'give your father a kiss, Laïs.'

Laïs made a circle with her lips and pushed a wet kiss on Alcibiades's cheek. Then she struggled to get loose and Alcibiades set her down. The girl ran inside the aulé, to her half-sister Artemisia. She whispered something to the other girl. This one had the dark hair of Theodote and she was pretty too, though not so strikingly as Laïs.

Artemisia had large, bright eyes, which were her finest charm, and she was not as shy as Laïs.

She asked in a clear voice, 'are you my father too?'

'Yes,' Alcibiades said. 'And I love you and your mother also.'

The girl then brought her arms up and Alcibiades grabbed her up, smiling, and he kissed her.

He held Artemisia on his arm, took Harmonia's hand again and said, 'don't you people eat in this place? I am starving! I had something to eat at noon, I am hungry again.'

'I will prepare us a meal,' Harmonia said, and she went inside the house.

Alcibiades and the girls followed her into the kitchen. Harmonia prepared food with a slave woman, and she ordered also wine to be brought. She told to give the guards to eat, too, and to drink, for this was a feasting day since Alcibiades had come home.

Alcibiades and the two children ran into the adjoining room downstairs. Oil lamps and torches were brought in, and they ate inside.

When they had finished their supper, and when Alcibiades had told two long stories of his sea-battles to the girls, Harmonia led the children upstairs to sleep in the bedroom. She came back a few moments later, and leaned on the couch next to Alcibiades. They embraced and lay in silence a long time. Alcibiades talked about his life in Sparta and in Ionia, about his battles in the Hellespont, about his victories and about his losses, his successes and his depressions. He talked about Timaea and Cynisca and Cyne. He assured Harmonia ten times of his love and of his unique love, which she was. She let him talk until he was exhausted.

Then, deep in the night, they went to a bedroom. In the darkness of the room, only broken by a very soft, silvery moonlight, they undressed and touched each other's body and flesh. Alcibiades caressed all Harmonia's curves while she was still standing, eyes closed. He touched all the delicate arches of the most perfect, finest, white marble sculpture that was her body, but this sculpture felt soft and warm. Strong desire rose in him.

They went to the bed and made love there, gently and patiently, in silence.

Harmonia's body still felt eager and yielding. It took a long time of caressing and touching and exploring before Alcibiades entered her, and then they lingered still until he began to move powerfully inside her. They moved together in long waves, pushing and leaving, to join again. Harmonia's body curved to his chest and she took him in her, deep and caressing. Their climax was strong and full, and Harmonia felt the convulsions of his member in her, and her own convulsion around the seed.

Alcibiades stayed a long time in her, until his member withdrew on its own. Then they slept.

The next days passed like in a dream. In the morning, the two girls woke up. Artemisia pushed through the door of the bedroom, drawing Laïs behind her, and the girls wanted more stories from Alcibiades. Alcibiades complied, until Harmonia

called them downstairs for a light meal. They ate with the Thracian guards in the courtyard, and also Theodote entered then, so that the place was filled with laughter. Alcibiades also talked with the guards. Two of the guards spoke some Ionian, and when they had learnt to trust him, they talked about their country. Thrace was a vast country, they said, with very large, dark but wonderful forests. One of the guards had seen the widest and longest river on earth, the Danube, to the north. Thrace was a land of many tribes who lived more or less independently. One of these tribes was the Odrysian tribe, and the guards were all of this one tribe. The men were proud to tell that the Odrysian King had united all the tribes under his command. Medoc was the name of the new King. Alcibiades asked them whether they knew songs of their country. The guards were surprised at that question, but they gathered and sung together the rough war paeans of their tribe.

When they heard the singing, the girls ran out from the house to sit next to Alcibiades, and then the Thracians danced and the girls clapped in their hands. One of the guards swung Laïs on his shoulders, another followed with Artemisia, and the Thracians danced with the girls.

Alcibiades walked with Harmonia for entire days in the hills of Bisanthes and also along the sea-side. They played with the children, made sand-castles for them and they ran in mock competitions. In the evenings, Alcibiades took the children with him and then he always had to tell stories of his battles, of the great captain Thrasybulus and of the hoplite Thrasyllus. He had to paint them the life at the court of a Persian satrap. He talked to them about Pericles and Socrates in Athens, and he described the Athenian acropolis with its temples and altars as if it was the greatest wonder on earth. The girls watched him speak and their eyes widened. They ate in the courtyard and even on the beach, in the light of torches.

Alcibiades could not but love his life of happiness and leisure. He started wondering why he was making war, delivering battles, and trying to return to Athens. Why should he want to return to that dangerous, vast city that was always so jealous of success and brilliance, a city in which envy reigned? Should he not gather more money and stay here? His happiness was here, not in Athens.

Alcibiades had also some work to do, however, and his sense of duty prevailed. He went regularly to Bisanthes to inspect the fleet and his men. He kept the ships there, and the men did not mind. He stayed much more in the country-house than in the house of the town. He went to the market-place of Bisanthes with the two women, and he bought them jewels. It was true, he thought, that the Thracians were master goldsmiths. The jewels he saw here were not made in the Hellenic towns of the coasts, but deep in the interior of Thrace. The gold jewels were marvels, pressed and curved and cut in wonderful patterns. Especially the fine golden horns he found were elaborate wonders.

At the agora of Bisanthes their baskets filled with fish, fowl, vegetables and fruit. Alcibiades could also find good wine, and the women tried on the finest chitons, tunics and himations. When they shopped, he always kept a hand on Harmonia. The people of Bisanthes thought he walked with his wife and her mother, with his two little children. The Council Members saluted him respectfully in the streets. Life passed agreeably.

Seuthes

One day, Alcibiades was playing with his girls in the aulé when a servant of the town house entered. He was accompanied by a Thracian warrior. Alcibiades's guards accompanied the man, for they were ready to protect Alcibiades, but they obviously treated the visitor with very much respect. The man was dressed like a warrior, with leather armour and the hides of a commander around his breast. A sword hung at his belt, but the guards had not taken the weapon away from him. Alcibiades told the guards to remain at ease. He stood up from the couch on which he was reading a scroll with messages from Thrasybulus.

Alcibiades said, 'I greet you. You are welcome in my house. Why have you come to me?'

'I greet you too, venerable Athenian,' the man said in perfect Ionian, but with a strange accent. 'I bring a message from my King. Are you the Athenian general Alcibiades?'

'Yes, I am Alcibiades son of Clinias.'

'I am Seuthes. I am a commander of King Medoc of the Thracians.'

'Sit down next to me, on this couch,' Alcibiades proposed. 'Do you want some wine? You seem tired. You had a long journey. What is your business with me?'

'Yes, thank you,' Seuthes replied. 'I rode from Selymbria, and before that from my lord's camp. My lord is the King of Thrace. Several generals and leaders of tribes do not yet recognise him. Some of the tribes of Thrace have rebelled. They have not rebelled to form one united army, however. My lord fights the rebels one by one, but he could use help, for his battles take a long time. I rode to Selymbria, then to Perinthos and then to Bisanthes. I heard an Athenian general, called Alcibiades, was in Bisanthes. My master sent me to ask whether Athenian forces would be inclined to help him. We have valiant troops, but not enough men, and our men are not all well trained at war. He asks whether you could lend us commanders and men to assist us. Our situation is not desperate. We know we will prevail. But the skirmishes linger on, and multiply. The tribes destroy much property. They lay waste the lands of peaceful farmers and shepherds. They disturb the peace in Thrace, and devastate our country. Many people are killed before we can arrive, and when we fight in one place, other tribes on the other side of our land burn the villages of other tribes. My lord promised he would pay the Athenians well.'

Alcibiades thought only for a short time. He placed his bowl of wine on the low table and said, 'good. Yes, we will help the lawful King of Thrace. We must do that. How much hoplites do you need? What can I do for you?'

Seuthes was not a little surprised at this quick answer.

'I don't really know,' he said. 'Five hundred men would do the most perfect work. We need experienced commanders especially, and infantry too, for we lack those.'

'I can only bring about four hundred now,' Alcibiades replied. 'I can bring in more men, but not immediately. I can provide for the commanders, though. In the four hundred there will be about one hundred heavily armed hoplites. The rest will be light troops, but I have many archers. I have not much cavalry, though, only twenty horses. Can we count on your assistance with Thracian cavalry? Can we move jointly?'

The Thracian commander was happy beyond belief. He had been sceptic about finding troops nearby that wanted to help his King. He had thought he would have to ride on to Sestos and beyond. He had been sceptic about the Athenians or their allies

providing military aid to his King, because the battles happened far in the interior of Thrace, where the Athenians had no interest. Moreover, the Hellenic states along the Sea were rich, fat and lazy, and wanted nothing better than to exhaust the troops of Thrace.

Seuthes had expected hard bargaining, pleading and begging, and hard promises of much barter and gold. Yet, he had accepted the mission, for he loved his King, and nobody else had volunteered to what seemed an impossible mission. Nobody else had the skills of diplomacy, the intelligence and the stature to negotiate for the King. He had ridden to Selymbria, only to find that the Selymbrians did not want to be disturbed and involved in internecine strifes of Thrace. He had been asked politely but firmly to leave the city, and guards had even accompanied him to the gates. He had heard the same message at Perinthos, and even at Bisanthes. Then, a member of the Council of Bisanthes had mentioned to him that an Athenian general resided in his town, and so he had ridden to the house, where a Thracian servant had accompanied him to this house in the country. With this Athenian he had not had to beg. The man had not even once asked for gold.

This general had said, 'what can I do for you?'

Seuthes took in his breath, and his chest expanded with gratitude and pride, for this man not only offered help but also asked to be helped. This man proposed to move jointly.

He answered to Alcibiades, 'cavalry we have enough. In fact, we have almost only cavalry with the Odrysians, and that is our strength but also our weakness. We know not how to invest townships, and how to fight against large forces of infantry. If you want to help, by when do you think we can leave?'

'We will need the day of tomorrow to prepare the men,' Alcibiades told. 'The day after, we could be on our way.'

Seuthes was even more surprised now. Two days only! He would have thought twenty or more to be needed, and he had not thought it possible to be able to bring help to his King within a lapse of several months.

'Where is your King Medoc?' Alcibiades asked.

'He has a palace at his town of Uscudama, but he is often on campaign. His real palace is a tent.'

'Which tribes have rebelled?'

'There are very many tribes in the south of Thrace. The closest tribe here in rebellion is the tribe of the Cicones. They have been important in convincing other tribes to revolt. We should attack and subdue the Cicones first. They live not far from here, in the most southern part of Thrace, to the west of Bisanthes, between here and the Odrysians.

To the west of the Cicones live the Bistones, the Odomantes and the Edoni. These are smaller tribes. We can handle them later.

A larger tribe however, and a very dangerous one, is the tribe of the Dii. They live in the mountains and in the valleys of the far Rhodopes Mountains, to the west of the Cicones. The Dii are powerful tribes of wild and courageous men. They are very good warriors, and they have many fighting men. We have to defeat the Cicones, and then attack the land of the Dii. That will be the hardest part, and we can expect a major battle with them.

Further in the mountains live the Bessi, the Satai and the Medi. The Medi and the Bessi live west and north of the River Nestus. They are also large tribes, but they are more co-operative to the Odrysians.

If the Cicones and the Dii are subjected to our will, the rest of the tribes will follow and recognise Medoc, though skirmishes and smaller battles may still be necessary. Still further to the north, and also more in the west, live the Seidi. I suppose Medoc will handle those, though.'

'What tribes is Medoc actually fighting?'

'The northern tribes are the largest and the most powerful. They have the most men. They live south of the River Danube. Medoc fights the Triballi and the Getae, the Moesi too, but some of the Moesian tribes are his allies already.'

Alcibiades continued, but he sighed, 'I will lead the troops myself. We will need your cavalry soon. I do not want to be harassed constantly by horse riders while I march. Suppose you go back tomorrow already to arrange for the cavalry. I will march two days from now. We arrange a place where your cavalry should meet us. We must draw up a plan. Could you do that?'

Seuthes hesitated. Alcibiades was a little surprised to see the man think this over. Yet, he thought he knew the problem. If the commander returned to his King to fetch cavalry and Alcibiades did not come, then the man would lose his head.

Without waiting for an answer he said, 'you wonder whether you can trust me. I am not just an Athenian general. I am Alcibiades, and Pericles the Great was my warden. My forefathers fought and defeated the Persian Kings. On the honour of my family, when I say something, so it happens. I will send one of my commanders with you and a scroll with my word.'

The Thracian beamed.

He replied, 'thank you. I have my own forces, and I will not have to go to my King for cavalry. I trust you.'

Alcibiades then discussed with the Thracian how to proceed, and most importantly, where the Athenian troops would meet the Thracian royal cavalry. Seuthes promised to draw a map of the region. The men drank, and Alcibiades asked details about the uprisings, about the Thracian and Odrysian King, about life in Thrace, and about the court.

Harmonia brought them to drink. The Thracian's eyes widened when he saw the beauty of the woman. Alcibiades was proud, and Harmonia smiled.

'Timandra is my wife,' Alcibiades explained.

The Thracian closed his mouth.

He hesitated, and then said, 'allow me to compliment. Your wife's beauty is unequalled in Thrace and matches the character of her husband.'

Alcibiades was pleased, not offended. He held his bowl to the compliment and even Harmonia smiled lovingly.

Then, Alcibiades saw how tired the Thracian was.

He said therefore, 'it is getting late. You can sleep here, in the house. We have a room. We will look to your horse. Tomorrow morning we will go together to Bisanthes and you can depart from there to your forces with my commander.'

The man thanked Alcibiades, and a servant showed him the way to his room. When Seuthes passed to the door, the two girls ran up against him, for they wanted to embrace their parents before going to sleep. Seuthes caressed the two heads and Alcibiades smiled inwardly, for Seuthes was a thoughtful and generous man, who felt for children.

He wondered how courageous the Thracian would prove to be in battle.

Harmonia stayed with Alcibiades in the aulé. Alcibiades finished his wine and he remained in lost in thoughts. Theodote joined them. There was a long silence.

‘You are leaving,’ Harmonia stated.

‘Yes,’ he replied. ‘I shall stay away for some time. But I shall not stay away as long as before. Not ever. Not anymore.’

He paused. He expected cries and tears but none came from the two women, not even from Theodote. They looked at each other and just sighed.

He continued, ‘I have a job to do. I am a hoplite. I am a general. Moreover, there is not just Athens. There is something else. I do not know what the future will bring. Since I have become a general of the army of Samos, our fleet has had nothing but successes, in Ionia and here, in the Propontis. Yet, Athens has not recalled me. The army of Samos in effect does not exist anymore. It has been split in four parts. I do not know how much longer I will be general. I am still condemned to death in Athens. The extreme democratic parties must again be in the hands of demagogues and of people who detest me. Sparta is closed to me. So is the satrapy of Lydia, and I fought Pharnabazus of the satrapy of Phrygia. Bisanthes is an ally of Athens. Athens, Sparta, Lydia, Phrygia, and Bisanthes may pursue me, and at one time or other desire to have me killed. Where can I go? Where can we go? I have to make new friends.

The country here is fine. You like it, and so do I. The children need security. I do not know Thrace, but Herodotus wrote that if the Thracian tribes unite, they could be the most powerful nation on earth. This Thracian King, Medoc, seems to be doing just that! I shall make friends with the Thracian King in the right way, help him consolidate his throne and not ask him to ally with Athens or Sparta or whatever nation. He will owe me, not Athens. He will owe me, personally. I will train his armies, and lead his troops in war. When we prevail, I will ask him a territory somewhere here, be his vassal, build a fort or even two forts, and have a guard of Thracians. We need very much an ally, maybe a friend, and safety. We will have a place where we can make ourselves be forgotten, and we can live together while growing old. I am close to forty. I will not be able to be a commander and a general for many, many years to come. It is necessary to think of the future. What Thucydides does near his goldmines in Chalcidice, we can do here.’

The women wept. They wept with silent tears, because they also had thought about old age and wondered about the future, about the withering of their looks, and they had worried about their safety. Their tears rolled on their cheeks. Happiness could only last for a few days on this earth. They knew that well. Yes, they should think about the future, not only of today. Today prepared tomorrow. Safety was not to be received like a gift from heaven but had to be fought for, and that was the first duty of men.

Alcibiades embraced both of them, and then he prepared for his campaign.

Cicones

Two days later, Alcibiades marched at the head of four hundred Athenians into the forests of Thrace. He had sent one of his confidants, Antiochus, the helmsman of his trireme, with the Thracian commander. They had arranged to meet in six days with the Thracian cavalry. Alcibiades marched rapidly on, and he was a day early. He set up camp immediately, and fortified it. He was not sure what to expect. This might be trap, or other enemy tribes might attack his army. He set up his tents upon a hill

despite protests of the hoplites, for they had to get water down the hill. Yet, he forced his men to fill the water sacks and bring them to the camp. Alcibiades sought protection from cavalry, just for a few days. He made his men start digging for a well, and more protests came for that work.

In the evening of the next day, the alarmed Athenian hoplites heard a massive noise of thundering horse hooves approaching. The hoplites climbed up the hill, to their camp, and many a hoplite put on his panoply or armour. Alcibiades stood at ease at the top of the mountain, but his heart thumped. He did not yet call the alert and his commanders looked anxiously at his face. He moved no muscle. An awkward silence fell in the Athenian camp.

Soon, Alcibiades saw a large group of about three hundred horse riders arrive. The men rode proudly and swiftly. They were dressed in skins and leather armour. They were heavily armed for cavalry, with several spears at their side, bow and arrows, a light shield, and swords. All seemed perfect horse riders. They rode easily and with pride. One commander rode in front of the group, and Alcibiades saw with relief that the tall man was Seuthes. The cavalry army did not come up the hill, but stayed near the river in the valley, and the horses drank of the water. The men dismounted. Seuthes rode alone up to the Athenian camp, to Alcibiades.

Seuthes rode on his horse, a black mare, until he arrived at only a few steps from Alcibiades and then he jumped off the animal and held it by the reins.

He shouted, all smiles, ‘Alcibiades! You have arrived! And early, too. I have brought the cavalry!’

‘Fine,’ Alcibiades smiled. ‘They are proud men. They look brave and determined. I am relieved. I dreaded attacks from Thracian tribes unknown to me. Your men can set up camp here, with us, or stay in the valley, as you want.’

Seuthes looked around. ‘Our horses need to drink. It took me more time than I thought to gather my men. I did not go to Medoc after all, but brought the tribesmen that know me. Medoc is fighting in the north. We were late, so we hurried. The men and the animals are tired. I shall come up here with a few of my commanders. The others can stay in the valley. I have sent a few of my riders to scout. They will guard us.’

‘Good,’ Alcibiades replied. ‘If your men are tired, my horse riders can scout for you, but I would like it to have a few of your Thracian riders to accompany them. Your men know the terrain and the people better. Come to my tent tonight. We will eat together.’

That evening, the Athenian commanders and the Thracian commanders dined together. Some of the Thracians knew a little Ionian, others did not. They ate and drank, and sang paeans. The Thracians even danced a powerful, thrilling war dance. Seuthes told he had not seen the King Medoc, but he had spoken to the King’s commanders, and he brought the gratitude of the court. He had a load of fine golden gifts with him for the Athenian commanders. Medoc was attacking the northern tribes with his army. The Royal Court was afraid of being attacked from the south and east. Seuthes proposed to attack and to suppress the rebellions of the southern tribes. Three tribes had been active opposers of the Odrysian King’s dominance. One of these three tribes was only a small one, however. The tribes were not united.

Alcibiades suspected then that Medoc was only in name King of the Thracians. He was King of the Odrysian tribe, all right, but at the death of his father, who was also called Seuthes – like the commander that had come to fetch Alcibiades – almost all the other tribes had refused to recognise Medoc, reverting to the organisation in independent tribes they had had before the Odrysian Kings imposed themselves. So Medoc was in fact re-conquering Thrace, like his forefathers had done before him. Alcibiades was quite willing to assist, but the price would be higher. Discussions on retribution lay in the future, and Alcibiades counted on the honour of the Thracians. The evening passed agreeably. The men also discussed how the Thracian cavalry should work together with the Athenian infantry.

The next morning, Seuthes wanted to march to the camp of the largest tribe of the Cicones. Alcibiades refused to move so soon. They needed to train the two different squadrons together, he argued. They needed to agree on commands. The next five days were spent on rehearsals of manoeuvres of the combined hoplite and horse troops. Only when the two members of the army knew intuitively how to react, how to work together, how to hold the lines, and how to support each other mutually, did Alcibiades agree to march on. The day after, the new army set itself in movement.

They marched and rode for three days and then arrived in a valley covered by vast grassy fields. At the end of the forest flowed a river, and between river and forest stood a series of huts, low houses blended with the landscape. The village or small town did not have walls and continued in the forest.

‘That is the tribe of which we have to defeat the army,’ Seuthes mentioned. ‘That is their main town. They will have gathered many men from the villages beyond, though. Their scouts must have seen us arriving.’

‘How many men could they bring in the battle?’ Alcibiades asked.

‘About a thousand,’ Seuthes answered. ‘Many of the men will be peasants, however, men armed with a sickle or a rusty sword. Enough to be a hard nut to crack for our own forces, but not so hard for your veterans. Their warriors will be in the first lines. The lines behind will be soft. They have not much cavalry.’

‘We’ll find that out soon, then’, replied Alcibiades, but he was a little worried at the numbers mentioned. ‘I want to see their strength clearly. I don’t like that forest. We cannot see how many men hide in there. Tomorrow we go halfway down this hill, and wait there until they attack. If they don’t, you will have to entice them with your cavalry to come out and show their army.’

The next day at dawn, Alcibiades descended with his troops halfway down the hill. He positioned his hundred hoplites on the left wing. He ordered his men to leave a small opening in the middle, where he would fight, but in the first instances of the battle he would stand somewhat behind. He brought his lighter troops around the hoplites. His right wing was also constituted of light troops, but Alcibiades had found long lances and large shields for all, so that his army was heavier than one would think and resembled much traditional phalanxes, even though his lighter troops wore no bronze armour but leather protection. He did not suspect the Cicones to be dressed in bronze armour. The cavalry was positioned half on both sides of the phalanxes, and Seuthes led on the right wing. Alcibiades’s Athenian cavalry stayed behind, as reserve.

Alcibiades stopped halfway down the hill, and he obstinately remained positioned there, even though it was calm in front of him. The helmets of his hoplites glistened in the sun. He had agreed with Seuthes that they would let the Thracian tribe attack first. Seuthes' cavalry would have to wait. It would only enter the action of the battle when Alcibiades gave sign. Alcibiades placed behind him an Athenian horse rider with a red flag on his spear. He would shout commands to the horse rider, and the man would signal Seuthes. The red flag stiffly upwards meant to attack with all horses. The red flag only to one side meant cavalry attack to the indicated side alone. Moving the flag rapidly meant to hurry. There were a few more agreed signs. 'What if the horseman gets shot down by arrows?' Seuthes asked. Alcibiades grinned, 'then you do as you like!'

It was calm in the village below. There was not much life among the huts. A few old women passed once every while. Smoke rose from the huts. There were no men around.

'What now?' Alcibiades wondered. 'Have we fallen in a trap?'

Scouts on horse-back rode around their army, but none of these men had returned with news of an enemy army arriving from one direction or other. The enemy could only wait in that forest. Should he order a detachment of Thracian horsemen to advance into the woods to have a look? This was a game of patience. Whose patience would give in first?

Suddenly, an enormous roar of raw, wild voices came from the forest and hundreds of Cicones tribesmen ran out from the woods, crossed the river, and ran up to the Athenians. The Cicones launched some cavalry too, but not nearly as much as Seuthes had brought, and in that Seuthes had been right.

They were quite surprised, however. Almost four times more men than Alcibiades and Seuthes had expected ran towards them, roaring their war cries. If the men were peasants, they sure looked ferocious, for they had dark marks on their faces. Very few of them actually had sickles and knives. They wore shields and spears, battle-axes and swords. Far more than but a thousand men ran to meet Alcibiades and Seuthes, here. Maybe almost double that number opposed them. The tribesmen had brought no archers, though, and Alcibiades's men in the last lines had brought quite many bows. The Athenian lines stood four men deep. They might be swarmed around, for the Cicones ran in thin but very long lines.

'I am not going to thin my lines,' Alcibiades thought. 'I am going to pass through their mass with my hoplites. I shall let them attack like this, not advance. When they reach us, we will pass through them like a knife through pig's fat. If they continue running like that, in one loose mass, without forming a phalanx, they will run to their deaths.'

The Cicones were dressed like the peltasts that Alcibiades knew from some of the mercenary troops that Athens occasionally used. They wore a cap of leather or of fox skin on their head, to protect them from the rain and the sun, a short chiton that did not even reach to their knees, and high, leather boots. They had a coloured cloak with them, and often they had animal skins worn as a cape on their shoulders. The Thracians were armed with a shield shaped like a half moon or like an oval, sometimes also of a circular form. This shield was made of osier mostly, and it was covered with skins, sheepskins or goatskins. The shield was called the pelte in Hellenic and the Thracian mercenaries had their name of peltasts from this shield.

They wore light armour, usually only leather breastplates or skins on their breast. They were light troops, rapid, and because they had to wear no bronze, they could march rapidly and for long distances without the need of wagons.

The Thracian peltasts were no match for the heavily bronze-armoured Athenian hoplites in a traditional phalanx-to-mass battle, but not all battles had to be phalanx battles. They had advantages of their own, too. The Cicones and the Thracians in general, were master javelin throwers. They carried four or more javelins at the opening of a battle. Their javelins were short: three and a half feet to five feet long, only, but none the less deadly. The Thracians could throw the javelin with dexterity and precision. They could throw far, for they held the javelins with two fingers, while two other fingers were hooked around a noose attached to the javelin. The noose accelerated the javelin when the peltast threw it, and made it spin in flight, so that it held its direction. Javelins were a nuisance to Athenian and Hellenic armies in general, profoundly disliked by hoplites.

The Cicones did not swarm around the Athenians, after all. They saw the enemy line and they ran in mass against it. They were used to battles in which two hordes ran into each other. They were not used to slam into patiently waiting men who stood their ground. The Cicones ran towards the Athenian phalanx. When they were still quite a distance away from the Athenian lines, they slowed down and launched a first volley of javelins towards their enemy.

Alcibiades and other commanders cried ‘javelins!’, and they tried to hide as much as possible from the cloud of pointed spears that descended upon them.

The ranks drew together because of this, an effect that Alcibiades did not like at all, for it narrowed his lines and made them vulnerable to attacks at the sides. The hoplites were mostly unharmed, for they wore large shields and bronze armour, but their light troops suffered casualties. These men could protect their face and breast and shoulders, but javelins reached legs and feet. Wounded that way, the warriors would have it hard to sustain a battle for long. As the Cicones attacked, they threw their javelins twice. Then they were upon the Athenians.

In front of the Athenians, the Cicones hesitated, but the first rows of men were pushed in the back by the oncoming tribesmen. The shock with the Athenians was terrible and Alcibiades’s lines had to retreat a few steps to damp the clash. Alcibiades stood in the first row, in the midst of his hoplites. Axes slew on shields and Thracians received spears in their abdomen. The fight commenced in all its horrible heat, now. The Athenians pushed their spears forward and back, wounding the Cicones in necks and chests. The Thracians wore no armour of metal, their only protection were breastplates of thick leather and of skins. A powerful thrust of a spear could pierce these. The axes, however, could tear a shield apart or blow it out of the hands of the Athenians, and then the lighter troops were defenceless. The bronze hoplites held firmly.

Alcibiades fought with his spear and shield, and so did his men. He parried a Thracian lance and kicked a man with his foot in the belly. When the man lost his balance for a fraction of a moment, he thrust his own spear in the Thracian’s neck. Blood sprouted on his shield, but a second Thracian already slew his axe at him. Alcibiades succeeded in evading the sizzling blade only at the very last moment. Here and there, the Athenians let a Cicones warrior pass through the protection of their shields. These tribesmen were immediately killed by the second or third rows.

The Cicones in front of Alcibiades hesitated. They were at a standstill. They had not been able to run over the Athenian lines and to break the resistance on Alcibiades's side. They did not advance anymore and in the battle of man to man in the front line, they were no match for Alcibiades's well trained men. The Thracians had not many spears, so Alcibiades used his slight advantage and fought spear to axe and spear to sword. Few of his men fell, but on the Thracian side casualties were regular. The Thracians suffered.

Alcibiades parried an axe blow with his shield and he almost fell under the terrible impact, but the Thracian warrior had to take more time to bring his axe up again, and that was one moment too much. Alcibiades's spear disembowelled the man.

A line of bodies of dead or wounded Cicones grew in front of Alcibiades. The tribesmen fought on top of their dead. Alcibiades ordered the hoplites to advance. The hoplites pushed forward with their shields and spears. They took a step forward, thrust their spears in the flesh of arms, legs or bellies, waited a few moments to parry swords and axes, and took a step forward again. Faced with this force of Athenians, the Cicones had no answer. The men in front of Alcibiades were pushed together against the men that had followed them, and their movements were hindered. It was easy to kill or maim a man who was amassed against his companions, unable to swing a sword or an axe. The large shields of the Athenians then slammed against these men, and each time an Athenian spear came forward, it came back bloodied and a wounded or killed Thracian would fall. Large numbers of tribesmen lay on the ground, and when they moved they were either mercilessly killed by a spear in the chest from the rear rows of the Athenians, or they were trampled upon by the fighting men. The killing and wounding went on for a long time. Athenians fell and Cicones fell, but not nearly as many Athenians as Cicones.

Alcibiades had advanced with his line a good stretch towards the river of the valley. He signalled to his men to take his place, for he wanted to see what had happened to the other wing in the battle. He stepped to the last rows, then looked to his right. The situation there was much more confused. The Thracians had broken through the right wing's lines. Alcibiades's lighter troops on that side had been partly overthrown by the on-running tribesmen, and several wedges of Cicones had developed inside the lines of the Athenians. The lines had more or less dissolved on the right wing. Man was fighting against man. Space had been pried open, and the battle went much more even, there. He discerned no clean winner. Still, the Athenians held on.

Alcibiades could try to defeat the Cicones on his left wing with his hoplites, and he wanted to save his right wing later. But there would be many Athenians killed on the other side. It was not yet time to bring in the cavalry of Seuthes. The battle had to go on there, and men had to die. He returned to his first line and forced the Athenian hoplites forward with all his energy. He had to win here! The Athenian hoplites moved forward, driven by his power. Still, Alcibiades looked to the right every once in a while, to see how the battle developed there.

On his own wing, the Thracians were being massacred. They lost tens of men without really hurting the Athenian hoplites. He saw how many Athenians died, however, on the other side.

In front of the Athenian hoplites, the Cicones got tired of being killed. Their determination faltered. They saw they could not enter into the Athenian lines. Many men stepped back, towards the river. Alcibiades's hoplites had more space before

them, and less men. They used the advantage to kill more skilfully. A man who fought a hoplite got a spear in his side or even in his back from another hoplite who had advanced.

Alcibiades fought a small, wiry man who had a sword. He threw his spear away and sprang against the man, bouncing on him with his shield. Then, he drew his sword and he engaged the man. He parried vicious blows and delivered a number of thrusts with his sword. The tribesman was very skilled, however, at sword-fighting, and Alcibiades could only parry the man. He actually enjoyed this fight, which was almost an exercise in sword-fighting and he admired his opponent. Alcibiades sprang sideways after a while, and the Thracian stood surprised, for behind Alcibiades was a light trooper with a spear and the spear was flung into his belly. Alcibiades finished the man instantly, almost severing the Thracian's head. Alcibiades was covered with blood on his arms, breast armour and shield. He already took on the next Thracian.

The Athenian hoplites advanced quite a distance towards the river, so that the Cicones were wading in the shallow water. Alcibiades ordered his hoplites a few steps back. The Cicones were surprised at that movement. Alcibiades commanded his bowmen forward again, and a volley of arrows shot at the slowly wading Cicones. Many men did not have their shield in front of them, or had not seen the danger for they had their backs towards the Athenians. Arrows pierced necks and backs. Alcibiades told his hoplites to step forward again, and then he knew the Cicones were being routed on his wing. He signalled to his horse rider with the flag for a cavalry attack on the right wing, to relieve some of his men there.

At that moment, Seuthes attacked with his cavalry on the Athenians' right wing. He rode proudly at the gallop, all around the Athenian troops, and he attacked the Thracian tribesmen fiercely in the rear. Many Cicones were cut down immediately or wounded by the horses' hooves. Still, they defended their positions well, and they did not give way easily. Many of the Cicones were slaughtered, but so were many Athenians on that wing. The Athenians were nevertheless revitalised by Seuthes's attacks, they gained hope and pressed harder. Seuthes was an excellent swordsman, and he hacked on to the Cicones, cutting throats and biting his sword into shoulder plates and backs.

Alcibiades was still fighting with his men against large numbers of Thracian tribesmen. The Athenian line advanced almost to the river. They pushed back the tribesmen as far as there, but although any Hellenic army would have realised by now the uselessness of the attack and would have fled, the Cicones continued to fight doggedly. Alcibiades noticed that each Thracian fought as an individual, and had no behaviour in common. No signal to withdraw came from the leaders of the tribesmen.

Alcibiades's hoplites would have to wade through the water soon, to push back and to destroy the wild mass in front of them. A lot of Cicones had it hard to traverse the water, so Alcibiades once more ordered his archers to harass the men in the water, and the river coloured red.

Then, Alcibiades ordered a new hoplite attack, over the river. The Athenians stood for a moment on the bank of the river, and Alcibiades waited too, then he sang a victory paean. A hundred voices fell in with him and it was while singing an ode to Zeus that the Athenians stepped into the water.

If the Cicones had been able to regroup on the other side of the river and allowed themselves some time to form a line on the other bank, the Athenians would have been at a serious disadvantage to climb up the bank, out of the water. As it seemed, the Athenian song had broken the resolution of the Cicones, and they fled now towards the woods. Alcibiades's lines pursued the tribesmen, among which many continued to fight, however. When all his men were out of the water, Alcibiades's phalanx stepped forward again in a compact mass and broke the last resistance of the Cicones. The tribesmen ran away as fast as they could, to the protection of the forest.

Alcibiades paused and looked to his right wing. The battle was still being fought bitterly on the right side of the Athenian troops. Athenians, tribesmen and the horse riders of Seuthes were involved in a chaotic mixture of men and animals. There were no lines anymore on that side, and in this kind of fighting the Thracians excelled. Alcibiades formed with all his men a new phalanx, but he directed this along the river, towards his right wing. He led the phalanx obliquely over the river again, and attacked the Cicones sideways. It took the Athenian left wing some time to arrive on the right, but then a wall of bronze and iron hit the Thracians. They had a not so well organised part of the Athenians before them, but they had not counted on such a devastating, well co-ordinated attack.

The Athenian phalanx of Alcibiades could swarm around the remaining tribesmen, and the massacre began in earnest. Sideways, the tribesmen had two or three Athenians against each man, and their opponents were veterans. The Cicones were slaughtered pitilessly, and their thinner side was rolled up and destroyed efficiently. At the farthest end of the right wing, the Cicones still had not remarked that their fellow-men were being killed in very great numbers. When they finally realised the disaster, there was a total rout.

The Thracians fled in all directions to avoid the advancing wall of the hoplites that would soon cut off their direction to the woods. The tribesmen fled suddenly, and all together. Few, however, could save their lives in the forest, among the trees, because Seuthes's riders galloped amidst the fleeing men and they mercilessly cut the Cicones down. Then, Alcibiades told his trumpeter to call off the troops.

Alcibiades stood in the sudden silence among dead bodies sown across the battlefield, Athenian and Thracian alike, even though on this side now lay far more Cicones on the ground than friends. The Athenian hoplites were exhausted, and so was Alcibiades. He sat on a rock, holding his spear and supporting his body with both his hands, catching his breath at last. Seuthes, unsheathed and bloodied sword still in his hand, rode up to him.

'Hail Seuthes,' Alcibiades shouted. 'Victory is ours!'

'We did defeat them,' Seuthes cried, as he jumped off his horse. He sat next to Alcibiades, and the troops saw their two leaders together, like two brothers, overseeing the carnage. The troops sat down for a while in the grass and on rocks, and Seuthes's men also let their horses rest and sat among the Athenians.

'We should devastate the village,' Seuthes proposed.

'No,' Alcibiades thought aloud. 'I have over fifty of my men killed and about as many seriously wounded. If we are going to have other battles like this, then after one or two battles we will not be able to fight anything anymore. We have to make ourselves some allies.'

He paused.

‘We defeated this tribe. If we besiege their town here, or storm it, for there are no walls, we may have more dead. Let’s simply put up our camp aside the town and spare it. Do you think there is a chance they might recognise your King and join us together, in next battles?’

‘I really don’t know,’ Seuthes shrugged. ‘Brave they are, but not very intelligent. Chances are they may want to continue to fight us, as much as they might have learnt a lesson or two.’

‘Suppose we tried to talk to them.’

Seuthes looked around him. He saw the fatigue in his men, the wounded horses, the dead Athenians, the slaughtered Thracians, the corpses lying in their blood on the ground. Some bodies still moved an arm or a leg, some screamed from pain and others were weeping. The Athenians went among these men to recuperate the wounded and amass the dead for a funeral pyre. He saw the horror of the battlefield. His head dropped on his shoulders.

He said, ‘all right. Let’s talk to them.’

Alcibiades watched him with satisfaction. He had been observing Seuthes all through the battle. He had remarked his ferocity, but now also his humanity.

He said, ‘how come there were so many men here?’

‘We fought not one tribe but two.’

Alcibiades looked up. ‘I thought the tribes never united.’

‘I thought so too,’ Seuthes replied, and he stroke through his hair, a little embarrassed.

‘I never knew any tribes that united. But they did. There were distinctly two tribes here. One can tell by their standards and by the way they were dressed. Maybe there is a matter of marriage here, one tribe’s leader marrying out his daughter to the son of another leader, and then leading the unison of tribes. I don’t know what happened. But I recognised two colours, two tribes. For one reason or other, they joined. I had quite a surprise to see so many warriors here. Still, we defeated them.’

‘With two surprises like this we will be finished. Either we get help and men from these tribes, or I shall have to get additional hoplites. That will take much time. So, you negotiate and you had better bluff your way through. Tell them an Athenian army will come to lay waste their lands if they don’t rally you.’

Seuthes grinned, ‘I am very good in bluffing. I know what to do. I would like you to come with me, though, dressed in your finest armour and with a few commanders.’

‘I will do that,’ Alcibiades replied. ‘Let’s collect the dead and wounded. We have a trophy to set up.’

Alcibiades stood up from his rock. He called on his commanders to prepare a funeral pyre, also one for the dead Thracians. He told them to gather the weapons of the Cicones and set up the trophy. Seuthes’s horse riders had dismounted. The men gave their horses to drink, and they looked to the animals’ wounds. The hoplites hurried along. Later, they set up camp in front of the village, in the valley. Seuthes used his cavalry to organise a guard of scouts around the camp. He also sent out two of his commanders to make contact with the rebellion leaders.

The camp of tents was set up. Fires were lit among the tents. The men hunted and brought back deer, fowl and hares. Soon, delicious scents of roasted meat ascended from the camp. Two large tents were set up in the centre, one for Alcibiades and one for Seuthes. Alcibiades and Seuthes sat in front of the tents around a fire of forest wood. The men had raided the village and found many amphorae filled with wine. It

seemed the Cicones were lovers of wine. The Athenians had also looted golden artefacts, so they were in a particularly fine mood. The huts of the leaders stood hidden in the forest, however, and the Athenians had not dared to vantage far out. Alcibiades, Seuthes and the commanders warmed at the large fire. More timber was brought in. The hoplites, Athenians and Thracians alike, arrived and assembled. Bowls of wine were shared. The Thracians had found a priest in the village, and they forced these men to build a primitive altar. The priest sacrificed two pigs. Then, the Thracian warriors sang paeans to the honour of Dionysos. When the paeans were finished, the drinking began in earnest.

Alcibiades was not in the best of moods. He had left Harmonia and Theodote for an adventure of which he did not fathom the dangers. He liked the soft valleys of Thrace, but the journeys through dark, dense forests unnerved him. He knew he was a child of light, of large open space, of the Sea. Seuthes seemed to love this country, but Alcibiades's preferences were elsewhere. He drank. The drinking went heavy, the wine remained uncut. The cups of the hoplites were filled and emptied as soon. The Odrysians started to dance. The men danced around the fire. One of the dances was a wild sword-dance. Many of the Thracians had the brands of their tribes on their faces, and in the red light of the campfire that flickered over their bodies and faces, they looked like monsters from Hades. They danced until they were in trance and repeated their gestures automatically, without conscious thinking. The dance then became more enchanting and more rapid. The dancers threw off their chitons and they danced in loin-cloths, turning their swords and even occasionally drawing blood on their chests, in honour of the battle that had been and in honour of the lives taken and lost.

At the end of the valley two funeral pyres had been set up. These were lit now also. Black smoke rose from the valley. The Thracians danced around the fires, and as they danced, they drank until they fell on the ground. The Athenians had aulos players with them, and these had taken up the rhythm of the Thracian boots. The air filled with the sounds of the flutes, of a single trumpet, of drums taken from the village, and the thundering of the dancers' boots.

Alcibiades was one of the last men to have enough of the drinking. He said goodbye to Seuthes, who continued to dance and drink with just a few Thracians. He went into his tent to sleep.

The next day, it was about noon when Alcibiades got out of his tent. He felt a constant banging in his head from the drinking the previous night, but he could think relatively clearly. His first idea was to look for guards. He saw none around the camp, so he kicked his commanders into action. He cried around and drew tents to the ground to get some attention. He felt only reassured when he saw a few men take off to the village and beyond, to watch out for Thracian tribesmen. Then, slowly, the entire camp awoke, and the men started to get organised. In the early afternoon Seuthes joined him. Seuthes said he would leave with a few of his men to seek out the rebel leaders. They ate together. Seuthes jumped on his horse and disappeared with his men.

Alcibiades sent a messenger on horseback to Bisanthes to demand more troops. He wanted at least two hundred more Athenian hoplites, and he commanded to bring as many Bisanthesian hoplites. He remained for several days in the camp, six or seven days, before Seuthes came back. Seuthes went immediately to Alcibiades's tent to discuss what he had found.

‘All the tribes around us have rebelled. A few have united. We may face about three battles or more like we have had a few days ago, in the next months. The tribes that have united, and which we will likely face next, could bring five thousand warriors in line, including something like five hundred cavalry.’

Alcibiades whistled.

He said, ‘then we were lucky we came first upon not too large tribes. With five thousand men against us we would have been crushed.’

Seuthes looked embarrassed. ‘This information comes from the tribe leaders I met. If the information is correct, then we might have had the surprise of our lives. The information can also have been exaggerated, of course.’

‘Well, there is no need to fret about that. What is done is done. What else did the tribe leaders say?’

‘In fact, the two tribes we defeated united under one leader. They lost so many warriors that they do not want to repeat a battle. They will submit to the rule of the Odrysian King, but there are a couple of conditions.’

Seuthes looked rather gloomy now.

‘What conditions?’ Alcibiades asked suspiciously.

‘One condition is that they want some ceremony to accept mutual succour, mainly of course in case they are attacked by their neighbours. They want a treaty. And they want an Athenian general to witness. You will not have to sign the treaty. It will be an alliance between Medoc and Seuthes on one side, the tribe leaders on the other.’

‘That we can do,’ Alcibiades admitted.

‘Fine,’ Seuthes continued, but he still looked gloomy.

‘The second condition is that they want the leader’s daughter to marry me, as a symbol of the pact.’

‘So what?’ Alcibiades asked imperturbably.

‘I am already married. Twice,’ Seuthes protested.

‘So, where is the problem?’ Alcibiades asked. ‘If you are married twice already, you can marry a third time. You’ll get a nice dowry plus thousands of dedicated, allied troops.’

‘You have not seen the girl,’ Seuthes replied. ‘I have! She is ugly. Really ugly! She is twice as fat as the fattest woman I ever saw. That is nothing, but she has a bad temper at that!’

He looked at the ground and stuck repeatedly with a twig in the sand.

Alcibiades stood flabbergasted for a while. Then, he laughed and laughed and laughed, until the tears came in his eyes and he almost rolled on the ground. The laughs were contagious for finally, Seuthes could laugh too.

The Odrysian commanders who had accompanied Seuthes sat outside the tent.

They said to each other, ‘now he talks about the girl!’

And they laughed as much as the men in the tent.

A few days later, Alcibiades and Seuthes, accompanied by their commanders, splendidly dressed, rode proudly into the camp of the rebelled and defeated Cicones tribe. The leader, a small thin man dressed in bearskins, was waiting for them and he had his daughter at his side. The leader’s camp was a tent camp and a warriors’ camp was some way off. This leader possessed nothing that even resembled a Thracian

palace, and he had found his major village of not a dignified setting enough to receive an Athenian general and an aristocrat of the court of the Odrysian King.

The leader was an imposing figure none the less, and so was his daughter. Alcibiades had promised Seuthes not to laugh, but he could not avoid a scant smile when he saw that the leader's girl was even uglier than her father.

'How would Seuthes ride this one?' Alcibiades wondered.

Still, he kept his smile short, and when he jumped off his horse he walked proudly and haughtily towards the tribe's chief. Alcibiades walked with Seuthes, and the tribe warriors went aside respectfully, for the two men were thought to be invincible.

Seuthes saluted the leader, and an elaborate exchange of polite statements ensued.

Then, priests offered sacrifices of animals, and soon also the scent of myrrh rose from the sacrificial fires. Paeans were sung. Then, the men entered the leader's tent.

For many years afterwards, Alcibiades would recall the ceremony of the signing of the treaty. It happened in the leader's tent, and an exchange of blood – mostly Seuthes's blood –, as well as ink was involved. Lastly, Seuthes came out of the tent holding his future bride by the hand. He was followed by the bride's father and by Alcibiades.

The feast of the alliance and of the marriage was wild, boisterous, and a drinking party of such extent, that it was one of the most remarkable but worst of Alcibiades's life. He laughed all through the ceremony of marriage. The tribe-chief slapped Alcibiades constantly on the back, each time presenting him a filled bowl of wine, for he too was as happy as a thief in a room filled with gold. Before the night was finished, a night of singing and dancing, the leader had promised to lend Seuthes and Alcibiades more than a thousand warriors and two hundred horse riders. That brought Alcibiades's army to about two thousand warriors and six hundred cavalry.

'With that,' Alcibiades surmised, 'we can handle five thousand Thracian warriors. We will need to train these hordes a bit, though, so that they can fight with us.'

The wine was good. But for the bride, the girls swarmed at Alcibiades like flies to an oil-lamp. The girls were rather pretty, and as eager as the Athenian girls. The campfires of the evening were lit with huge logs. The music was wild and varied, and very suggestive. The dances were many, and finally, the Thracians joined in a massive rapid dance to the honour of Dionysos and to the honour of the Thracian Horseman, Heros, the main god of the tribes.

The feast lasted until dawn. In fact, not many could tell when the party ended, for by that time most of the men lay completely drunk on the same spot they had fallen, in the first dew of the morning. Had another tribe attacked the camp during the following day, Cicones, Odrysians and Athenians alike would have been massacred. As it happened, they slept through the day.

Alcibiades awoke late in the afternoon. He opened one eye laboriously to discover he had his nose on a huge naked female breast with rosy, large, flat nipples. He sat up with a shock on a bed of furs and skins in a tent. Next to him, on his left, slept another beautiful, naked girl. One of her legs was still sprawled over Alcibiades. On his other leg slept yet another girl, smaller and more slender, but one with alluring, curved back and buttocks. This girl lay on her belly and she snored. She had drawn a sheepskin over part of her back but Alcibiades, while sitting up, had drawn that skin aside. The girl must have it cold in her sleep, but she did not really wake. She drew with her left hand at an imagined sheet or skin that wasn't there. Alcibiades threw a bear's skin

entirely over her back, patted her on the buttocks, and he stood up. To his right lay a huge girl, naked also. She lay on her back and her breasts covered her ample chest. Alcibiades drew skins also on that one. He could stand straight, then. He stepped outside, naked, and saw all the men sleeping on the ground, on rocks, against and over each other, fully dressed. He ran to the river, jumped into the water and gasped at the cold shock. He splashed more water on him in guise of a bath, and then stepped towards the tent again, to dress. He was not the only one to have awakened. Guards kept watch already, and they grinned not a little when they saw the nude Athenian running to the tent. Around the evening, everybody was awake and working.

Alcibiades and Seuthes stayed a few days in the camp. Later, they left to join their army. They were accompanied by a first contingent of five hundred Cicones warriors. The other Thracian warriors, as promised, would be sent to them in the following days. They set up camp in another, larger valley, and Alcibiades waited for Seuthes's commanders to find out about the situation with the other tribes.

Dii

About a month later, Alcibiades and Seuthes learned that an army of Dii was preparing for battle at five days' march from their camp. Alcibiades and Seuthes had received their reinforcements from Bisanthes and from the Cicones by then as well as some more Odrysian troops. Alcibiades and his Athenian commanders trained the troops every day, so that the men got used to each other and learned the Athenian manoeuvres of attack and flight, and the sudden movements of the phalanxes. Alcibiades and Seuthes decided to wait for the Dii.

The Athenian and Thracian army had now two thousand infantry and a thousand cavalry. Alcibiades could count on a hundred and fifty hoplites in complete panoply of heavy armour. The rest of his infantry were men merely clad in leather breastplates, but wearing small shields and spear and sword. Many of these men also had bows and arrows. This army filled with its tents one end of the valley of low bushes and grassy fields. In the valley, to one side, flowed a small river, merely fifteen feet or so wide, a very shallow and calm and peaceful river. Seuthes sent out scouts and he rode regularly out of the camp with them, too.

One day, Seuthes arrived at full gallop accompanied by his men up to Alcibiades, announcing that the army of the Dii was arriving, out to attack them, at a distance of two days. Seuthes told that this army was vast. It consisted of about five thousand men on foot and also three hundred horse riders accompanied it, which was few for such a large army. Seuthes suspected more cavalry was behind.

Alcibiades fell from one surprise into another. He was here, in a vast country, fighting a massive war unknown to Athens, in which thousands of men were opposed. He had thought he would have to fight at the most a few hundreds of untrained warriors from wild tribes a time, but instead of that, he faced regular battles against fierce, proud warriors who might all be veterans, who had experience in minor battles between tribes, and who knew perfectly well how to fight. He faced vast numbers of cavalry, as many as even Pharnabazus or Tissaphernes would have trouble to gather in the field. He had to confront these forces, however, due to his promises to Seuthes, and simply also because he was here, in this place, and committed, and these Thracians were coming at him. He could not run away and leave Thrace in dishonour. He knew

nevertheless that chances were great that his troops would be defeated, overrun by the sheer numbers of tribesmen.

Alcibiades was growing tired of fighting battles for nothing. What had he come to Thrace for? To support Medoc? He had not even met that so-called King of the Thracians, who seemed to him more and more to be merely the ambitious chief of one of the main tribes of Thrace. Had he come to help Seuthes? Yes, Seuthes was his friend now, but he was nothing but an obscure aristocrat from Medoc's court. How much influence did Seuthes really have at that court? Seuthes might as well, for all Alcibiades knew, be a lone adventurer like himself, out on his own initiative to please Medoc. Seuthes might be rebuffed for his actions by Medoc. The more Alcibiades thought of all this, the more his happy mood sank in his boots. He fretted about the coming battle. It was too huge.

He asked himself, 'am I afraid?'

He found no answer to that question at first. Yes, he was very afraid, he admitted afterwards.

Alcibiades decided to ride out of his camp with Seuthes to have a look at the Dii. He disliked having to give battle, now. It was not his style to give one battle right after the other. He remembered Mantinea. He wanted to use diplomacy. But he could not even speak the language of the land to talk to the Thracian leaders, and one did not talk when armies were on the move. Alcibiades was angry and sad. He forced Seuthes back on his horse, grabbed the horse of a commander of Seuthes, and shouted to Seuthes to follow him.

Seuthes was very tired, but he complied. He rode for a long time with Alcibiades and they passed a short night in the forests, to arrive at a hill from which he thought the new army could be spotted as it marched through a valley. After a while that morning indeed, the marching Dii filled the valley.

The Dii must have had scouts of cavalry around their army, but Alcibiades saw none. The army marched with about two hundred cavalry in front, men on rather small horses, but well armed. Then followed thousands of men in loose formation. They merely advanced in one mass. The men were dressed in skins and rough cloth with high leather boots, caps and mantles. Some men wore some form of leather armour, but most were without protection. They held bronze or wooden shields covered with sheepskins, spears and swords and axes, a few bows. The army spread into the valley, and the noise of clanking weapons, of the boots of the men and of the hooves of the animals filled the air. Yet, the men marched in silence. Behind the footmen rolled wagons drawn by oxen and horses, and these were guarded by other horse riders.

'They do not have a thousand cavalry,' Alcibiades remarked.

'No. They have only two hundred or so here. But we do not see them all,' Seuthes cautioned. 'I saw more horses the other day. They may have split, of course, or a part of their forces, a large part, may be scouting. They had far more horse riders the other day. There may be more behind.'

'I don't understand,' Alcibiades said. 'Why are they attacking us? Why don't they just wait first, see what happens, and defend their villages if need be. If they wait, they might scare us off by these mere numbers of men and maybe we would not even disturb them!'

‘I guess they are sure we would come anyhow. So they march,’ Seuthes shrugged.

‘Yes,’ Alcibiades agreed, talking more to himself than to Seuthes now, thinking out loud. ‘I am a fool. What have I come here for, to learn what? I wanted to get a feeling of these people, but I should have known it all. They want freedom. They want to choose who governs them. They want no dominance. They are sure to win. They think it will be easy. They are not aggressing us. We are aggressing them, of course. We are disturbing their peace and threatening their freedom. They cannot let us do whatever we want on their territory. They have to uphold their pride in front of their women and fathers. That is how they see it. They will march on, until we flee or until they are defeated, but that is not an option they are thinking of. There is no point indeed in talking with them. It is us or them. So we have to destroy them. If we destroy their warriors totally, fiercely, then we will have a chance to talk to other tribes. First frighten them, then soothe them, and they will be grateful. These warriors here really have bad luck, and they do not expect that. We shall have to give them a beating. I am a fool. We should have stayed at the camp and prepared our troops and a few traps. Let’s go back.’

Alcibiades paused, however.

‘Will they have many scouts?’ he asked.

‘Yes,’ Seuthes replied.

‘All the way to our camp?’

‘Yes,’ Seuthes answered again. ‘But we have scouts too, very good ones, and defensive guards. I put out quite many of my horse riders to look for scouts of the enemy. We should have intercepted or scared off most of their scouts close to our camp’.

‘Then we may have a chance,’ Alcibiades shouted. ‘Let’s go back. Hurry!’

So they rode back to their camp, where they arrived at dawn of the next morning.

Alcibiades immediately made the alarm to be sounded by a trumpeter. The Dian army would only arrive late in the night, and they would probably attack only the next day or so. He called his commanders, Athenians and Thracians, together.

‘We need traps and deceits,’ Alcibiades told. ‘We cannot win this battle without traps, all the traps you can think of! To start with, two thirds of our cavalry will ride into the forest, now, and hide. And I mean hide! I want not one enemy scout even to smell our cavalry. No fires from now on in the forest, no sound, no cooking, no horse neighing. I want all our archers in the woods too. We are positioning only half our men here, in the valley. These will go on cooking, being merry, polish their weapons, fetch water and stay on guard as usual. The hoplites shall have to stay, as well as one half of our other Athenian troops, and one third of our Thracian light warriors.

When we are attacked, tomorrow morning, I will advance with our hoplites first. We shall organise two central wings on this side of the valley. We will dig a large hole in the river, way behind our lines, so that people will not be able to wade through that river over a large distance. Cut sharp twigs and branches and plant those in the bed of the river. Everybody staying in camp, except the hoplites, will work at that. When the Dii try to swarm us on our left side, where the river is, they will have a surprise in that river, and that will hopefully give us some time. I want a few archers on that side of the river, too, but not too many. Just one squadron of about fifty bowmen. The Dii should not pass the river and attack us in the rear.

Our cavalry shall be positioned at the extreme right wing. All of the horsemen that stayed with the Athenians will wait behind the lines. They will constitute a little

reserve. The rest of the cavalry goes all to the left side of the river, hidden by the woods.

Our Cicones and our archers will be hidden in the woods to the right. Now, how shall we do it? I will first advance to the Dii. We shall engage, and I will be pushed back. I will flee then, but slowly, at the pace of the hoplites. We rehearsed that movement a few times already. When we come at the end of the stretch of water that has been deepened, I shall turn and face them again. We will put a flag at that point. These movements will have to happen rapidly, so the Dii will not then scout for what might be in the forest. They will run towards us. That will mean they have our archers and our cavalry in their backs. We first allow our archers to attack. The Dii will lose men, wonder just how many men there are in the woods. We let come out many archers, but not all. When the Dii attack our archers, we get out all of our archers at once from the woods, and kill even more of their men.

That will not stop them, though. There will be a battle at our right wing. When our archers seem to be losing, we release our Cicones warriors on that side. They should destroy the troops that the enemy has there, and relieve somewhat our central wing. Our troops should swarm all around the Dii on that side. While the Dii are in trouble there, being surrounded, we charge with our cavalry on the left side, over the river, until we reach the archers and our Thracians. We shall have surprised them four times. They shall ask what comes next. It shall all have to be timed perfectly or it shall fail. When we hit as hard and as timely as we can, there will be no surprises for us and we will have the Dii surrounded. Then we kill them. Any suggestions?’

The commanders looked at each other. They stood pensive.

‘Suppose they have thought of a few surprises, too?’ Seuthes wondered.

‘Would they?’ Alcibiades asked.

Seuthes hesitated. ‘No,’ he said, finally. ‘We did not use tricks the last time. They also do not know we have many Cicones with us. These tribes are just used to run to their enemy and start hitting, destroy or be destroyed. But they are no fools. They will scout in the woods.’

‘Your cavalry shall have to intercept the scouts,’ Alcibiades replied. ‘But not all of them. Just not let them come too near. They can have a close look at our camp but not in the woods. After the first clash, when we are almost defeated, we will run backwards, and they will forget about scouting!’

‘They could sweep right from the beginning to the other side of the river and attack us in the back,’ a Thracian commander said.

‘Yes,’ Alcibiades replied. ‘What can we do about that?’

‘If you indicate us where you will turn,’ the man said, ‘we could amass at that side of the river dried grass and bushes, and set fire to it with a few men. Since the river is deep there, they will have it difficult to return and cross the river. Somewhat later, they will have our cavalry in the back. They should not be much of a nuisance.’

‘Good, good,’ Alcibiades praised.

He hesitated. The suggestion had come from a Thracian. The Thracians were not that stupid after all. They learnt quickly! Just how quick would the troops in front of him learn?

‘See to it that we have our fifty archers also there, so that the men who pass the fire are killed.’

‘My guess is they will use cavalry there,’ the man remarked.

Alcibiades thought about that. ‘They might, yes. Their horses will not be able to pass on the right side. What is your name?’

‘Ikkos,’ the man answered.

‘All right, Ikkos. You are responsible for the defence on the left side of the river. You use fire, archers, and you can have the Athenian cavalry. But if it gets hot on another side, I may have to take the cavalry away from you. Will you hold?’

The man beamed. He was a Thracian, but he had been made responsible of a wing and he would lead the Athenian cavalry! Alcibiades smiled; he had made one devoted friend more. The man was worth it.

‘What do we use as signalling?’

‘No need for signals,’ Seuthes proposed. ‘The events will be our signal. When you turn to fight again, only a few moments later, our archers on the right wing enter into action. When the Dii attack there, we throw in more archers, and later we launch our Cicones in a frontal, ferocious attack. When those fight for some time in the battle, I attack on the left wing with the cavalry and we close the gap.’

‘Fine,’ Alcibiades concluded, quite satisfied. He felt a little better, only a little.

‘Everybody knows what to do. If somebody doesn’t do it to perfection, he loses his head. I mean it. Seuthes, you lead the cavalry on the left wing and if I fall in battle you are commander-in-chief. Eudamas, you lead the archers on the right wing. You are also in charge of deepening the river. I will tell you where. Poleus, the Cicones on the right wing are for you. Ikkos, we need to talk, for I may need your cavalry. We need a signal for that. If it doesn’t work out as we have agreed here, then everybody is on his own and decides for the best. Everybody go!’

The commanders ran to organise the work. Eudamas built a dam in the river. Water swamped over the valley, but the army worked quickly to deepen the river bed behind the dam. Hundreds of men worked. They took care not to leave mud on the grass. A human chain passed baskets of earth into the woods. The rocks were also transported to the forest. In the evening, the dam was demolished and the water continued in its original bed. Dry grass and twigs were gathered for the large, wide fire on the left side of the river. The parts of the army that had to stay hidden slept in the forest. Normal fires were made in the camp, pigs roasted, and the men slept.

At dawn, Alcibiades stood in the valley on the right side of the river with half his hoplites, among which all his hoplites, and with a few hundred cavalry. The Thracian scouts of his had announced that the enemy had set up camp a little farther off in the valley during the late night. Battle was not expected before noon, maybe a little earlier.

Alcibiades formed his centre phalanx in a straight line. Some men sat down on their shields, and Alcibiades let them rest, but the grass was wet from the morning dew. The valley was filled to a man’s height with a dense, white fog that had diffused from the forests. In this unearthly atmosphere, the Athenians and the Cicones waited. Long before noon, they heard the noise of the oncoming army and their nerves were put to the test when the noise grew. They heard the voices of the men singing, flutes playing, they heard the neighing of horses, the noise of boots and hooves steadily arriving. The noise was unnerving, for the waiting men were sensitive to the noise. In the valley, sounds were heard from far, and when the noise grew, the men had the impression that the enemy troops were near, whereas actually they were still far off. The waiting lasted an eternity. They heard an occasional scream in the forest, probably made by enemy scouts that were being intercepted and killed. The men waited silently, tense, nerves strung like the cord of a bow.

Alcibiades stood among his hoplites, and he also waited. To divert attention, he ordered the Thracian priests to sacrifice pigs. The priests then burned the rests of the animals. They spilled wine on the ground in the honour of the gods, Zeus and Dionysos and the Horseman. The Athenians sang a short paean to Zeus.

Quite before noon, the two enemy armies stood some distance from each other in the valley. The enemy did not bother to form phalanxes. The Dii stood in a large crowd, filling the valley. Some men waded through the river, and Alcibiades saw that, as Ikkos had feared, also the Dian cavalry waded over the river to the left side. They had the obvious intention to ride against Alcibiades's left side and cross the river further down again. These men would want to attack the Athenians in the rear.

Alcibiades remarked clearly how happy the Thracian tribesmen before them were, to see only so few men stand in their way.

Horns blew, and the Dian army slowly set in motion. The men at first walked slowly, and then their faces became more serious and grim. The Dii ran now, but they stopped to throw their javelins. A first cloud of pointed wooden spears rose above the Athenian phalanx and fell down on the men. The hoplites laughed with the light and short javelins, but the troops made up of Athens' sailors laughed less. Few men were killed by the javelins, but a fair number of the peltasts got wounded.

The Dii had prepared a surprise of their own. Before the Athenians lowered their shields, a second volley of javelins was hurled, almost immediately after the first attack. Those javelins caught many an Athenian with lowered shield, peering from aside his protection. Alcibiades cursed aloud, for his men were falling before they even had been able to touch a Thracian. The Dii repeated this manoeuvre of a double throw once more, before reaching the Athenians.

The Dii accelerated, and when they ran close to the Athenian lines, the Dii were running as fast as they could. Alcibiades ordered a volley of arrows. These killed or wounded a few men, but the effect was absolutely not enough to break the advance of the Dii. In a nick of time, the tribesmen were on the Athenians. They ran against the shields of the hoplites with just one short spear in their hands and a sword on their belts.

Like in the previous battle, the shock was terrible. The Athenian hoplites were immediately thrown back a few steps. The Dii had run into a barrage of long spears and heavy shields, however. Many of their men were instantly killed, impaled on the sharp points. The Dii had swords and large battle-axes, and these bit deeply in the Athenian ranks. Where the Dii pierced the Athenian ranks, Alcibiades shouted orders to step backwards and to re-form the phalanx. A hoplite battle ensued.

Alcibiades stood in the second line. He stood in armour of gleaming bronze. He wore a shining helmet with a long crest of coloured horsehair. He supported the men who fought in front of him. It was hard to move in the pressing men, those first moments. Spears were thrust forwards and drawn back. Men fell among the Dii. Alcibiades's archers continued to send volleys over their ranks into the mass of Dii. Blood sprouted on the grass from necks cut, arms wounded and legs hewn down by axes. Screams and curses, war cries and cries of pain filled the valley.

Alcibiades shouted very loudly to make sure his lines were not swarmed around at the left and right ends. For the moment, the tribesmen limited themselves to a fight straight on. Alcibiades's line was long and thin, only four men deep. The Dii fought ten or more deep, so that the pressure on Alcibiades's phalanx was tremendous. The

killing continued steadily on, and the Athenian hoplites, with their heavy armour, were almost invincible. Occasionally, a Thracian would get through the Athenian lines, only to be killed instantly by the second or third rows.

The Dii sent more men with large axes forward, and these delivered powerful blows on shields and lances. The Athenian hoplites held on, however, and Alcibiades remarked to his amazement that if this fight continued, he would not need to flee. The Dii had many warriors, but in the valley they could not entirely use their advantage in men. A battle of attrition was going on, with more Thracians than Athenians being killed. But also Alcibiades's lines were thinning. Alcibiades held on.

The Thracian enemy leaders realised also that the current pressure was not enough. They moved more warriors forward, and now the Athenians were definitely being pushed back, unable to resist the mass before them. They had to step back. They could not use their spears anymore. Hoplites were falling. The first rank was being replenished from the rear rows, but this fight could not go on for long.

Alcibiades's entire first line was sacrificed. The corpses of dead Athenians lay on the ground, behind Dian lines, for the Athenians were driven back. The wounded Athenians did not survive, for they were killed in the Thracian lines. A wounded Dian was recuperated by his companions. At places, the Dii succeeded in entering openings in the Athenian ranks. Soon, the lines would be broken, and then Alcibiades's troops would be swarmed over from all sides, and be defeated a little later. Alcibiades called the retreat.

Alcibiades shouted to retreat. His troops ran suddenly backwards, towards the other end of the valley, away from the battle, close to their camp. Crucial in this retreat was that all lines ran at the same speed, with the row opposite the Dii still fending off those enemy groups that were rash enough to follow them.

The Dii were caught by surprise by the sudden retreat. Alcibiades had rehearsed this movement the day before, several times, to make sure the ranks stayed in dense lines. That was difficult. The rows undulated, became jagged, but they were not penetrated by the Dii, and when Alcibiades and his men reached the purple flag beside the river, which indicated the point at which the Athenian hoplites turned to face the Thracians anew, he had the satisfaction to see he had still ranks at all, and in relatively good order.

When the Athenians turned, the Dii leaders might have suspected that something was amiss. Had they wanted to stop their warriors, however, they would not have succeeded. The cries of victory were too loud, the enthusiasm of the Thracian tribesmen too formidable.

The Dii believed the Athenians stood to defend their camp. They smashed again into Alcibiades's ranks. The hoplites held the attack once more, and Alcibiades now stood in the first row, but again his men were pushed back a few paces. The killing and wounding started again.

The Athenians fought with bitter determination. The Dii fought in the knowledge that they were winning and could not lose. Athenian hoplites fell, one after the other, to the right side of Alcibiades, and to his left side. He had received a nasty cut on his shield arm, so that he barely held his shield up to defend himself. He had a wound at his skull, a wound of an axe that had been diverted by his shield but bounced to his head. He had been numbed for a few moments, but hoplites had protected him. He had slain three Dii so far. He had pierced a throat with his spear, stabbed a Thracian in the chest, through a thin leather breastplate, and downed a man with a spear in the

belly. Alcibiades fought with his last energy, but his men were slowly but surely losing their ground. Breaches were being made in the Athenian ranks. When would Eudamas attack with his archers? It was time!

Alcibiades saw how Thracian cavalry and Dii footmen arrived from the other side of the river, with the intent to attack his phalanx in the rear. If these men succeeded, Alcibiades would be finished rapidly.

‘Ikkos, now it is your turn,’ Alcibiades thought.

Allied Odrysians ran suddenly with torches in their hands to the river. The Dii tribesmen were stopped by a wall of fire. Horses stalked, but refused to pass through the high flames. About twenty archers came out from the forest. They aimed between the flames to kill with arrows. Man after man of the Thracians fell on that side. The cavalry would not pass!

Dii footmen waded through the river then, trying to walk around the fire, but that was not easy, for they stood soon up to their shoulders in the water, surprised at the depth of the river. There were shouts of pain as the Dii impaled feet and bodies on sharp points in the water. Men were packed in the riverbed. Ikkos ordered more archers out of the woods, and the Dii in the river were the easy aim for the archers. Ikkos would not even need the Athenian cavalry! He kept the cavalry hidden for a few moments more.

In the centre, Alcibiades fought, pushing with his body against his shield and stabbing with his spear. The din of battle was terrible around him. The groaning of the wounded men, the clash of shields, the clangs of armour, the fury of commands, the clattering of greaves, the sound of the hurled sling-stones and javelins, forced the men to fight with raging hearts. The ground ran with blood. Blood spurted out from severed hands, cut legs, transpierced groins and shoulders, and from damaged necks. Alcibiades was tired, and desperation seeped slowly into his mind, a feeling he refused to acknowledge. Would he die here, in this forsaken Thracian valley? What was Eudamas waiting for on the right side, in the forest?

‘Eudamas,’ he cursed, ‘Eudamas, attack!’

At that moment, the archers indeed stepped out of the forest. They sent volley after volley of arrows in the backs of the Dii. They killed many men, and they annihilated in a short time almost the entire Dian cavalry that had stayed behind the Dian ranks. Angry commands were shouted, and large groups of Dii turned from the main mass of the army to attack the archers of Eudamas. These continued to send arrows into the on-storming men. More archers came out of the forest then, and the first rows of the Dii were stopped. But the Dii warriors, though badly diminished, were almost on the archers then. The archers dropped their bows and unsheathed their swords, took their small shield from their backs and confronted the on-running Dii. The two masses of men clashed. Then, hundreds of allied Thracians, the Cicones, allied to Seuthes and to Alcibiades, ran out of the forest shouting fierce war-cries, and, led by Poleus, they attacked the Dii tribesmen that fought the archers. They swarmed around the enemy and killed almost all the men that had attacked the archers. The last of the Dii stepped back, back towards their main army.

There was consternation now among the Dii in the centre. Many heads turned. The allied Cicones and the archers attacked the rear flanks of the enemy on the right. The

Dii had to defend themselves from two sides. The pressure on Alcibiades's men diminished, and the Dii hesitated.

At that precise moment, the cavalry of Seuthes attacked. The horse riders galloped suddenly at full speed and with unstoppable force from out of the trees on the left side. They passed the river and slammed their horses into the backs of the Dii.

All the warriors of the two armies were now fully engaged. The Dian tribesmen were surrounded. They faced a terrible disadvantage. They stood and formed a rectangle with their men. On one side fought Alcibiades, and he held his ranks. On the left side, facing Alcibiades, glimmered the river, and wading through the water or passing the fire with many men was sheer impossible. That side was well defended by archers, too. Behind the Dii fought Seuthes's cavalry. To the rest of the rear and somewhat to the right side fought the Cicones. The archers had taken up their bows again and, protected by Poleus's Cicones, they sent volley after volley inside the rectangle. They also held the forest on this, right, side.

The Dii stood in a rectangle, and their troops in the middle were useless. Their advantage of men was reduced to nothing. The Athenians and their allies stood on a wider perimeter, so they had more place to use more hoplites for every Dian warrior.

The battle was on the verge of being decided. The Athenians and their allied troops had it easier to manoeuvre and kill the Dii. Archers continued to send volleys of arrows into their mass.

The Dii sought to escape, to the rear, through Seuthes's cavalry, but the trap had been closed, and Seuthes and his men fought like lions with their curved swords.

The fire on the left side of the river was almost finished. Slow flames only came from the grass. More and more Dian horsemen sprang over the rest of the fire and attacked the few archers of Ikkos. Ikkos looked to the centre. He saw that Alcibiades did not really need the Athenian cavalry. He ordered the Athenians to counter-attack. The Athenian cavalry did not hesitate. Alcibiades's word that Ikkos was in command had been efficient. The horse riders rode into the Dii and killed the men with overwhelming numbers.

The battlefield became a slaughterhouse for the Dii. The Dii fought on, but they were desperate then, losing all hope of victory. There was fear in their eyes and they looked to all sides.

Hope was on the side of the Athenians and their allies. The hoplites killed or wounded without mercy and irresistibly, they stepped forward and killed. When a Dii warrior was wounded, even only slightly, the Athenian hoplites stepped over the man without looking, leaving the man to be finished by the following ranks. The dead heaped up under their feet. The hoplites, including Alcibiades, were covered with blood on their bronze plates. They fought, got wounded, fought on, killed and advanced, and they pushed the Dii together.

This battle lasted a long time, and the sun set slowly behind the trees. The killings continued. The Dii in the rectangle stood shoulder to shoulder and still arrows hit them. More than a third of their forces lay slain in their blood, behind and under the Athenians and their companions. Seuthes's horse riders trampled upon Dii.

Suddenly, one by one, Dii warriors threw down their weapons. The ones in front were still being killed by the Athenians. Alcibiades did not remark immediately what

happened with the Dii. He continued to slay men like a madman, and so did his hoplites. He came to his senses when he stabbed with his spear, to find no resistance was given anymore. He stopped, surprised, then saw how the Dii had thrown down most of their weapons and stood before him only still wearing their shields.

Alcibiades called off the battle. The Athenians stepped back five steps and surrounded completely and tightly the Thracian tribesmen. All around the rectangle of the enemy developed a corridor of open space. Alcibiades's men stood with hanging shields and weapons.

'What next?' Alcibiades wondered, 'what do I do now?'

At least three thousand men stood in front of him, throwing down their weapons.

'What do I say now? What am I going to do with these men? Kill them?'

On the other side, a horseman rode between the two armies. He rode in the open space, slowly, haughtily, on his grey horse, and he rode with his bloodied sword still in his hand. He shouted things in the Thracian tongue to the defeated men.

The Dii began to sit down on their shields, and this movement rippled like a wave through the men.

The horseman rode slowly, shouting always the same message. He stopped in front of Alcibiades.

He stalked his horse, and Seuthes cried in Ionian, 'hail Alcibiades, slaughterer of Dii! Victory is ours. The Dii surrender. What do we do with them? Do we kill them all?'

Alcibiades paused a while. He dropped his head and leaned on his spear. He had enough of the killing. He had no hatred for these tribesmen who fought for freedom and for their villages. He had promised once to somebody not to perpetrate the Melian massacre, and now he remembered his words of long ago.

He answered to Seuthes in a loud voice so that the Athenian hoplites could hear him well, 'no, Seuthes, no massacre. No further killing. Tell them to go home. We want peace if only they submit to you.'

Seuthes was not a little surprised. He waited, wondering whether he would agree with this strange command or not. He had learned how strange the moods could be of this Athenian general, but he also liked the generosity of this man.

He said to Alcibiades, 'we should at least talk to the leaders. We might need them as allies.'

'Yes,' Alcibiades agreed. 'Ask the leaders to come out.'

Seuthes stayed on his horse, and he cried something at the crowd. A man stood up, looked at three others, spoke to them, and he stepped forward. It took some time for the four men to step through their warriors and reach Alcibiades.

'Can you translate?' Alcibiades asked to Seuthes.

'Yes, but I am not sure I am going to like what you intend to say.'

Alcibiades smiled, 'tell the men that they should recognise Medoc as their King and Seuthes as their ruler. If they do that and become faithful allies of the Odrysians, then we will let them all go in honour. If not, we shall kill them all.'

Seuthes spoke to the men, and a conversation followed. It took a while, and Seuthes's patience was put to the test.

At last, Seuthes addressed Alcibiades, 'they accept. I would not have believed it. They assured that on their honour, they accept Medoc as King and me as ruler.'

'Good,' Alcibiades said. 'They can go in peace.'

The leader of the Dii, a mature, bulky man dressed in ample, rich skins and leather armour, said something to Seuthes.

‘They say they would be ridiculous to go back to their villages without their arms. They want to take their arms with them.’

‘Ask him whether he can put two thousand warriors at your orders for our further campaigns, under your command.’

Seuthes was surprised once more. Why had Alcibiades asked these men for him, Seuthes? He spoke to the Thracian leader.

Then, Seuthes replied to Alcibiades, ‘they agree. The leader says he would even bring three thousand warriors and lead them himself if we asked for them.’

‘It may be necessary,’ Alcibiades said. ‘Tell that to him.’

Seuthes replied to the leader. Then, Alcibiades did something that Seuthes would have thought impossible if he had not seen it with his own eyes.

The army of Athenians and Cicones looked at what Alcibiades did next. Alcibiades undid the leather straps that held his sword on his back and he took off his sheathed sword. He handed the straps and the sword to the leader of the Dii.

He said to Seuthes, ‘tell him there is Dian blood on that sword. I do not wish to take with me the blood of Dian tribesmen. I offer him the sword as a gift, for he and his men have fought bravely. Tell him I honour him and give him the sword so that he would not return to his house without arms. It would be an honour for me if he accepted my sword.’

Alcibiades stayed with outstretched arm and hand before the Thracian leader, but the leader did not move until Seuthes had translated. The man then looked Alcibiades in the eyes, probed for Alcibiades’s intentions and for his feelings. He saw determination, respect and sympathy. He stepped forward, accepted the sword, and unsheathed it. A hundred arrows were pointed at this heart, but the man stayed calm. He held the sword to the skies and he shouted a series of incantations and war cries. Then he sheathed the sword again, slung it on his back, and he cried commands to his men. The Dii stood up, took their shields and weapons. Seuthes rode to the other end. He opened his cavalry to let the Sian warriors step through.

The Thracians marched off. Seuthes rode back to Alcibiades.

He said, ‘while passing, the leader told me they will camp not far from here to recuperate their dead and wounded. They will march away tomorrow.’

‘What was it he sang and said as last words here?’

‘He is not only the leader, but also the priest of the tribesmen. In Thrace, leaders are often also priests. He sang a paeon to the Great Horseman. He sang and told that the blood of his men had been spilled by somebody against the will of that man and that this man was you. He said there is nothing more honourable and sad on earth than a man who kills against his liking and yet defeats an army. He honours you, and will be proud to wear your sword in battle.’

‘Fine,’ Alcibiades said. ‘I trust the man, but I believe we had better guard well that mass, and see whether they stay peaceful. Can you be on the alert until they have really left?’

‘I think so,’ Seuthes answered, relieved, and dismounting from his horse. ‘I do not trust them entirely.’

‘Are you going to have one more bride, now?’ Alcibiades smiled.

‘For heavens’ sake,’ Seuthes replied, horrified, ‘I hope not! It is your turn now!’

Alcibiades laughed then, and the entire army laughed with him. The men relaxed and started to look for their dead and wounded.

While they walked from the battlefield, towards their tents, Seuthes said to Alcibiades, 'so you have up to three thousand men more.'

No,' Alcibiades corrected, while walking. 'You didn't listen well. I asked those warriors for you.'

'What do you mean?'

'The three thousand additional warriors are for you. Plus everything that is here. I have been watching you. You learn quickly. You know enough to continue this war. You will have more than six thousand men. That should be enough to submit all the tribes in this territory to your rule. I do not even need to see Medoc. Yet, I would like him to grant me something for the battles won. I will leave the Athenians with you, led by experienced commanders. I suggest that you try now to parlay, to negotiate peace with all the tribes, first, instead of giving battle. I am going back to Bisanthes. I have the rest of the Athenian army to think off, my fleet, and I want to see my women and children. You are on your own now. You are a good war leader, believe me. If there is to be a very great battle and you don't feel comfortable, then don't hesitate to call on me. I may also come back to see the army once in a while. I will know where you are. You can keep these Athenians and Bisanthesians for six months, but you will have to send the hoplites back after three months, though I will send you as many, other hoplites, to replace them for three months more. Use the Athenians to train your army. My commanders will show you. Does that suit you?'

Seuthes scratched in his long hair. 'I suppose so. I suppose the remaining tribes will think twice before attacking us, now. I think I can do. If not, I will call on you.'

'That is all right then,' Alcibiades said, and he returned to his tent.

The scouts of Seuthes assured him the next morning that the Dii had begun to return to their villages. Alcibiades came out of his tent, dressed for a travel on horseback. He spoke to Seuthes. 'I gave orders yesterday evening to the Athenians to obey you. They will do so. Eudamas and Poleus will lead the men. Send me a messenger once in a while to let me know how you are doing. I will be at Bisanthes, at the house where you found me. The Athenians will be paid as before by me. The commanders have enough money for that with them and I will send more.'

'Good,' Seuthes said. 'What was it you wanted to ask Medoc? I will see to it that the gets your message.'

'Here is a scroll.'

Alcibiades handed a paper over to Seuthes.

'The scroll says it all. I do not ask much. I would like to settle with my family in the region of Bisanthes, somewhere between Bisanthes and Pactye, on the Thracian coast of the Propontis. I would like to build two forts, some distance from each other, on the seaside. I would hold some uninhabited territory near the Sea, but hold it in Medoc's name, of course. I need no gold, no men, just the land to live on, under the protection of Medoc.'

'You like our country, so it seems. I will plead with Medoc. I will let you know his answer as soon as I can find him.'

'Thank you,' Alcibiades replied. 'Goodbye, my friend, fight well, till we see again!'

'Till we see again, Alcibiades.'

The two men embraced a last time. Then, Alcibiades mounted on his horse.

Two Athenian cavalrymen waited for Alcibiades at the other end of the camp. They rode south together, to Bisanthes. Alcibiades arrived in the autumn. He only had to travel for five days to arrive at the Sea. Then, he travelled east to Bisanthes. He sent his two companions to the contingent of Athenians in the town. He rode leisurely, alone, to the country house of Theodote and Harmonia. When he arrived, he dismounted, and gave his horse to the Thracian guards. He looked at the guards with other eyes now, and remarked by their colours that they were from the tribe of the Odrysiens. He wondered whether they had heard of the battle and of the alliance. He entered the gates of the aulé, to find Harmonia and the children there. She jumped up to him. They hugged and felt each other as if they had been apart for ages. Theodote was at Bisanthes. He passed the evening with Harmonia, eating and drinking, holding the children. Then, he took Harmonia to bed.

Teichos

Alcibiades lived in the country-house. He lived with Harmonia and Theodote and the children. Life was good all throughout that winter. The seasons were soft on the coasts of the Propontis. It rained some days, but Alcibiades walked along the beaches every day with Harmonia and also with Theodote. He lived peacefully, and for the first time of his life he also felt the peace inside his heart. He inspected the troops at Bisanthes. He took a trireme and looked at the rest of his small fleet, close to Sestos. He had enough money for that fleet, but not much more. He did not seek more money. He stayed at Bisanthes.

About a month after his arrival, a group of four Dian horsemen reached the house. The guards kept the horsemen outside but they allowed one man in. Alcibiades recognised him. It was one of the three men that had stood up after the battle with the Dii to parlay with Seuthes and Alcibiades. The man spoke no Ionian, but the guard could translate. The Dian handed over a long packet enveloped in sheepskins. Alcibiades opened the package. The skins were wrapped around a sword. Alcibiades unsheathed it, to find a finely crafted iron blade. The surprise was in the heft. The handle of the sword was forged in solid gold, studded with fine, coloured stones. The craftsmanship of the golden heft was the most beautiful that Alcibiades had ever seen. The Dian said, 'my father thanks you for the sword you gave him. This is a present from the Dii.'

The man also put a sack of course cloth on the table. Alcibiades opened it, and he was stunned to find about ten large, golden artefacts. He held out golden plates, golden sculptures, and golden drinking horns. Harmonia and Theodote gasped, for these were the most valuable golden objects of the house. The objects together constituted a small treasure.

'My father thanks you for your generosity at the battle,' the messenger said. 'Please accept these as a small token of our gratitude. Our brother-in-law also sends you his greetings. He is on campaign with my brothers against the Medi. We gave him three thousand warriors to revenge the lack of respect the Medi have paid us in previous battles. Our men have fought two skirmishes since, and won. He is well.'

'Your brother-in-law is Seuthes, I suppose?'

'Yes,' the man answered.

Alcibiades laughed then.

‘He did it again,’ Alcibiades whispered to Harmonia. ‘He had to marry once more. Seuthes sleeps himself to power! The tribe leaders prefer to marry out their daughters, even if that means they have to give a large dowry – they have to give a dowry anyway, and thus, Seuthes does not loot his father-in-law. Yet, he wins dowries and alliances that way, gains warriors, and that means more power.’

Alcibiades invited the other Dii in. He gave the men to eat, to drink, and sheltered them for the night. He had an evening of heavy drinking with the Dii and the Odrysians.

When he awoke the next day, the Dii messengers had left. Other Dii arrived thus, sometimes only one man, every ten days or so, bearing messages and news of Seuthes.

At the beginning of the following year, another rider arrived in the evening at Alcibiades’s house of Bisanthes. He was accompanied by three companions. Alcibiades was out, walking on the beaches with Harmonia, Laïs and Artemisia. When he returned, he saw the four horses outside and when he pushed open the doors, he found a very tired but satisfied Seuthes waiting for him in the aulé, drinking wine with three Athenian cavalymen and joking and flirting with Theodote. Alcibiades frowned, but he embraced Seuthes and he greeted the three guards, which he knew well from the campaign in Thrace.

The evening was boisterous. Seuthes told of all his battles and skirmishes. He was very satisfied with his accomplishments. It seemed he had fought to submit many lesser tribes and had led several smaller battles, which he had won also because he had superior forces now.

‘I have amassed around six thousand men and a thousand cavalry,’ he told Alcibiades. ‘Your Athenian commanders supplied armour for about a thousand hoplites and they trained my Thracians in hoplite warfare. My cavalry gets more experience too. I developed several new tactics with my men, based on what you taught me. I also try to be generous with the defeated, like you wanted and showed, and that indeed brought me many men.’

Alcibiades gasped internally. What a Pandora box had he created? Seuthes could crush all the Athenian forces in the Hellespont and the Propontis, now. Seuthes’s army had grown larger than any army the most powerful nation, Athens, could possibly muster. This force had been growing, totally unknown to Athens, and it could go on growing. It had experience of fierce battles. Thrace was an untapped power. If that power was unleashed, it could threaten Athens and Attica. He diverted the attention some, so that Seuthes would not remark his discomfiture.

‘How many wives do you have now?’ he asked.

Seuthes struck his knee with his hand.

‘I married three more since you left,’ he answered. ‘They are all very nice girls. Two of them are even very pretty. The dowries were even prettier! I keep those girls with me when we are on the move with the army. I control the entire south part of Thrace, you know!’

Seuthes was happy as a child with his success. He was unaware of his potential power in the Athenian world. But he knew whom to thank for his opulence and his victories in Thrace.

They ate and drank while Harmonia and Theodote stayed inside the rooms at the end of the evening.

Alcibiades finally asked his burning question, sideways, so that the other men would not hear him, ‘have you seen Medoc?’

Seuthes became serious then.

‘Yes, I have,’ he said. ‘I have scrolls for you. Medoc was so pleased that he gave me the entire southern part of the Odrysian Kingdom to rule over. He still has his hands full with the Triballi and the Getae. When I have finished here, I will join him in those campaigns.’

‘Congratulations,’ Alcibiades said. ‘You deserve that. So, I suppose I should ask you for lands here, not Medoc.’

‘No,’ Seuthes laughed. ‘Medoc gave you land, and I will respect his will with pleasure. That is what the scrolls say. I wrote them, so I know what is in there!’

Alcibiades did not open the scrolls yet. A man’s word was worth more to him than a paper.

He asked, ‘what then is in the scrolls?’

‘Exactly what you asked,’ Seuthes said. ‘You can choose any land on the coast of Thrace, as large as half the distance between two cities – any two cities. Your territory can go inland as deep as it is long. You have the right to build two forts on that land. You can defend your territory with up to five hundred men. The only condition is that if the Odrysian Kings or I, Seuthes, need you, you would lend us assistance with forces and advice. For the rest, we guarantee your independence. If you are attacked, we shall feel attacked!’

‘That is more than I expected,’ Alcibiades said. ‘I shall of course honour the scrolls.’

‘I thought so. My King was extremely pleased with what we brought him. Without your first help, we would not have been able to gather thousands of men. With these, I finished the revolts in the south of Thrace and I brought him a large army. The tribes of the south promised together more than fifteen thousand men, for Medoc to use in major battles. No northern tribe can resist him now. You should have seen his amazement when I announced him that good news. I remained at my knees to him, of course, claiming to have been his obedient servant.’

‘Fifteen thousand fighting men?’ Alcibiades exclaimed. ‘I don’t think I ever saw such a huge land army!’

‘Me neither,’ Seuthes grinned. ‘I have seven thousand in all now, but I guess I could squeeze the rest out of them. My father-in-laws will be happy to comply, too.’

Seuthes paused a while and let the figures sink in.

Then he continued, ‘moreover, I brought you something else, another gift from my King and from me.’

Seuthes stood up from the couch in the aulé and he went outside, to the horses. He came back with a, Athenian commander, who was wearing two heavy sacks on his shoulders. He gave Alcibiades a wooden box of about two hands long and two hands deep. He also handed over the two sacks to Alcibiades. Things clanked in the sacks when they were deposed. Seuthes dismissed his commander.

He said, ‘you had better make sure your guards and slaves do not see this.’

‘There is only one slave inside the house, in the kitchen,’ Alcibiades replied, ‘and the kitchen does not look out onto here. Timandra is with him. He cannot see what happens here. My guards are outside. Why the mystery?’

‘Open the box and the sacks.’

Alcibiades opened the box. It was filled to the rim with golden and silver coins. There were far more golden coins than silver ones. When Alcibiades ran his fingers through the treasure, he discovered all sorts of coins: Athenian owls, Persian Darics, Odrysian

gold, and many coins with designs he did not recognise immediately, probably minted in other Thracian and Propontisian cities. He gasped. There was a small fortune in the box!

‘Medoc sends this to you, augmented with your part of the loot I could secure from the tribes. Have a look at the rest.’

Alcibiades opened the two sacks, to find them filled with golden bowls, vases, plates, and drinking horns. He pulled out a rhyton, a drinking vessel in the form of a bull’s horn, entirely made in gold and worked all over with fine, small sculptures pressed into the metal, sculptures of grapevines and with the image of Dionysos on two sides. He took out another one, a cup made with effigies of Artemis. He found a large golden plate, made by genius goldsmiths, pressed open by hammering a slab of metal to a perfect circle and decorated with delicate patterns of flowers repeated all around the dish.

Seuthes saw Alcibiades’s amazement.

He said, ‘this is the main part of what I recuperated from the peoples we subjugated. None of it belongs to my fathers-in-law, though.’

Alcibiades laughed then, with a dry mouth, ‘so that is how they preserved their treasures? Marrying you to their daughters!’

Seuthes smiled too, ‘yes, but I got nice dowries. Here I put somewhat more than your share from the loot. There will be more, as long as you leave the Athenian hoplites with me. There should be enough here to pay for the construction of your forts, though.’

‘Yes, there is,’ Alcibiades replied gratefully.

He had it still hard to believe that one more worry had been taken away from him. This treasure was a gift from the gods. He had peace. He had his land. He had the money to build, to start trading here, and make more money. He did not need Athens, Sparta or Sardis anymore. What else could he desire more? He could stop being an Athenian general.

‘You want Athens,’ it gnawed in his mind.

Athens, always Athens, the centre of the universe. And oh, yes, also seeing Timaea and Cynisca again, and holding his Spartan boy in his arms, if only once. He sighed. He put everything back in the sacks, and he hid them in his bedroom.

When Alcibiades descended the stairs, Seuthes was still in the courtyard, talking vividly to Harmonia, describing his weddings, and drinking a little wine. Alcibiades and Seuthes talked for a long time. Seuthes recalled his battles, which he told were mere skirmishes after their great battle against the Dii. Alcibiades explained to Seuthes about strategies of land wars and about movements of troops.

Seuthes stayed for five days in the country-house. All the time he talked with Alcibiades, and he learned. Alcibiades drew manoeuvres of phalanxes and of light troops on papyrus. They devised schemes to improve the joint attacks of hoplites and peltasts. They combined the advantages of the troops into a blending of the specific characters of the various forces, including cavalry. They thought it might be possible to open the phalanx lines to let peltasts come to the front ranks, throw their javelins and retreat back to let the hoplites close ranks again, to absorb the shock of masses of attacking tribesmen. These were defensive tactics. They also designed strategies of attacks of Thracian armies, of surrounding and of storming towns. Many of the Thracian villages and towns had no walls, but fights inside streets could be vicious.

Harmonia and Theodote usually sat with them, spinning or weaving cloth. They ate together, sometimes also with the Thracian guards. Time passed agreeably.

One day, Seuthes said goodbye. Alcibiades watched Seuthes prepare for his voyage into the mountains of Thrace. He sighed when he saw Seuthes leave on horse-back with his men.

Much later, when Seuthes was gone, he spoke to Harmonia and Theodote, 'I will ride out the next days. I received land, for me to choose, somewhere along these coasts. I can build two forts on that land and hold it for the Odrysian Kings. Do you want to come with me to pick out a place?'

Theodote said, no, thank you. She would be pleased to stay at Bisanthes. She could not ride horses, and carts could probably not reach all the places Alcibiades would want to visit. Harmonia could ride horses however. She was eager to see the land further out of Bisanthes. So the children stayed with Theodote, and Alcibiades and Harmonia rode out along the Sea.

It was winter when Alcibiades and Harmonia rode, looking for their land. They rode at leisure, however. They were dressed in heavy himations, and they had sheepskins on their shoulders, caps of furs on their head. Harmonia could have been mistaken for a boy. They rode at first in silence, and then talked while the horses advanced along the beach.

The atmosphere was mild, but Alcibiades felt the cold and the humidity of winter none the less. They had fine weather. It seldom rained.

They scouted the coast between Bisanthes and Pactye in the Chersonese for many days. They avoided the towns. At night, they slept under a tree or between large rocks. Alcibiades would light a fire of twigs and logs to warm them. They slept, huddled together. Alcibiades caressed Harmonia before dozing in. He slept with his hand on her breast.

They rode their horses during the day or walked next to them. They discussed about everything that had happened to them, and watched serenely the beauty of the landscapes they passed. They checked the situation of stretches of land, discussed where they could build a house. When they arrived at Pactye, they turned back. They wanted to be alone on this trip. They did not visit Hipparchos and Myrrhina. They had found several pieces of land that interested them. Which would they choose?

At four days' riding from Bisanthes, still in Chersonese land, they saw the ruins of an old fort. They had seen this place on their way to Pactye, but they had given it not much attention, so relatively close to Bisanthes as it was. They decided now to have a look at the place, and they rode their horses to the remains of the vast walls.

Not much was left standing of the old building. The walls had not been made by Hellenic masons, but by a very ancient people. The fort was strong. The walls were wide and robust. The foundations of the fort were still intact, and these showed some of the vast dimensions of the building. Stones lay around everywhere.

Alcibiades and Harmonia dismounted. They walked over the fallen stones to investigate the ruins.

Alcibiades went to the far end, to the side where the fort looked over the land. He saw with amazement that soft, green hills deployed, way beneath his view. He could see

far. The fort stood on a promontory in the Sea, though beaches ran all around it. There was water on three sides of the ruins. Alcibiades could see far into the land, which was good, for no oncoming groups of men could surprise the people that lived in the fort. A new fort could also be made vast and impregnable. There was ample space to build a large complex of rooms, walls and towers, with several halls, kitchens, guard halls, and a fine inside courtyard. They could build a terrace that looked out to the Sea. He could re-use many of the large stones that lay here. He wanted to tell his ideas to Harmonia.

He did not see Harmonia anymore. He turned and called out her name. Where was she? What had happened? She never left him!

Harmonia answered back to him, but her voice sounded strange in the dying day. He walked towards the Sea and called her again.

He heard her answer, 'come down here!'

He advanced, but he didn't see her. He heard a noise, went a few steps on, and then saw old, massive stairs leading down to the Sea. The stairs ended at a small creek of blue water and in the water was a Naiad. Harmonia was swimming and taking a bath in the Sea, despite the cold. Her clothes, also her loincloth, lay on the sandy beach at the end of the stairs.

He cried, 'you'll get sick, come out!'

But she only winked at him to join her.

He was unable to resist. He undressed quickly and ran into the water too. They swam, splashed in the Sea together, drew each other's head playfully under the waves, then swam out and back until they were exhausted. Harmonia shivered when she got out, yet she dried herself in the sun, which was still a little warm here, despite the winter season. The warmth was caught and preserved by the rocks of the promontory, by its grey and white walls.

Harmonia stood before him and stretched her naked body. Alcibiades admired the perfect figure of desirable womanhood that she was. He saw the heavy and firm breasts with the aroused nipples and the large brown surface around, her small flat belly, the wide hips and the slender waist, her strong but graceful legs. She shook the water out of her hair, and he saw the drops that were being thrown away from her body sparkle in the light.

How beautiful she was! How vulnerable, yet how majestic was her body!

They rested a while there, dressing again, for with the evening and the setting sun the cold returned. They saw the large, red disk of the sun sink slowly below the horizon. The last purple light shimmered on the Sea, as if so many precious stones shone on the surface of the water. Then, Alcibiades drew Harmonia up the stairs to look for the horses. He let the animals loose a few moments to eat, then he bound them again in the ruins, in a sheltered place. Harmonia had found a shelter under a huge arch, where the roof had partially held. She lit a fire in front. They drank some wine, ate a piece of bread and took some olives, a few morsels of dried fish, which they had bought in the morning. Alcibiades brought a pack of sheepskins for them to sleep in. The night brought silence, but for the incessant sounds of the sea-waves breaking on the beaches of the fort. Alcibiades lay naked with Harmonia, enveloped in warm skins on a bed of dried grass. They caressed and made love gently and tenderly. They enjoyed the peace of the site. They made love, but they teased their desire for a long time, for they knew that the spending would come quickly. They entertained their sensuality without shame, indulging in the passion of their senses.

When Harmonia was already asleep, cuddled entirely in his lap, next to him, he murmured, 'here we will build our fort, our safe haven.'

The next day, they packed and rode on. They met peasants a little further, and Alcibiades asked the name of the place. The man and woman shrugged.

They just said, 'walls, Teichos'.

'All right,' Alcibiades said to Harmonia, 'then we will call the place the New Walls, Neon-Teichos.'

They explored the region until Alcibiades was satisfied. He had found his place. They returned to Bisanthes.

Alcibiades built his fort at Neon-Teichos. He hired an architect and masons at Bisanthes. He gave his indications, all the ideas he had caught on his campaigns for the defence of places. The fort was ugly in the first plans. It was a large structure of massive walls with round side towers and high parapets. There was a large inner court, a protected courtyard, a terrace that looked onto the Sea, vast cellars and rooms for cisterns of water. There were places for horses and for guards.

Alcibiades wanted a house for himself inside a tower with a fine view on the Sea and on the land also, and with separate rooms and courtyard, separate from the rest of the fort. He wanted to be able to go down the old stairs to the creek where he had dived with Harmonia.

He had enough coins to build the way he desired. He wanted first to build Neon-Teichos, then a fort for a large group of hoplites a few tens of stades further. That fort would also hold a farm and barns. He would hew a small harbour out of the promontory, large enough to moor four triremes and a merchant ship. He wanted to start trading and make of his fort also a place where a few merchants would be welcome at night, and find security.

He visited the works regularly. The architect suggested changes, so that the fort remained as impregnable as Alcibiades wanted it to be, but also so that it could be elegant and gracious. Alcibiades had bought a transport ship to bring the materials to Neon-Teichos, and Harmonia and Theodote travelled to the place to watch the towers and walls rise. They started bringing in furniture to Neon-Teichos, and they bought more at Bisanthes.

Theodote and Harmonia lived in the hope that their happiness would last. Yet, Athens was at war, and events caught up with them once more.

Chapter 20 – The Bosphorus, Spring 409 BC to the Spring of 407 BC

Lampsacus

In the spring of that year, Thrasyllus was formally elected general of Athens. Alcibiades was not. In the summer of that year, Thrasyllus finally disposed of enough funds to assemble a new Athenian army. He brought together fifty triremes, a thousand hoplites and a hundred cavalry. He also could equip five thousand rowers as light troops.

Thrasyllus sailed first to Samos. He arrived at Samos with his fleet in the middle of the year. He stayed three days at Samos. He attacked Ionian cities with the ultimate aim to recover all the Ionian towns that had revolted from Athens. He first tried his army at Pygela.

Troops from Miletus ran to the rescue of the Pygelans, and they routed for a while Thrasyllus's men, until he succeeded in bringing in reinforcements of peltasts. The peltasts turned the tide of the battle, and Thrasyllus could set up a trophy, but he did not accomplish much more with his small victory.

Afterwards, Thrasyllus captured Colophon, an important harbour on the Ionian mainland. He had some success with the smaller towns, but he failed at Ephesus. He besieged that city, the finest and wealthiest pearl of Ionia, but Ephesus was too rich, could pay too many mercenaries, had too good a harbour, and was too well protected on land by the Lydian troops of Tissaphernes, as well as by a detachment of Syracusans that had remained in Ionia.

Thrasyllus laid siege for many months to Ephesus. He stormed the walls with his men, but he was driven back several times. The Syracusans, led by Eucles son of Hippon and Heracleides son of Aristogenes, attacked the Athenians with their own Syracusan triremes and also with two Selinuntian ships. Ephesus had gained all the time it needed to prepare for a siege, and the Council of the town laughed at Thrasyllus from the top of their high walls and citadels. Thrasyllus had not been able to catch Ephesus by surprise. The Athenians were finally even put to the flight after a battle at Mount Coressus near the city. The Athenians lost a few hundred men killed in the battle. Thrasyllus cursed the Ephesians, the Lydians and the Syracusans, but he could do that only from below the walls of the town, on the killing ground in front of its gates. He had not enough power of men and of determination to take Ephesus.

The campaign of Thrasyllus in Ionia was much of a failure. Thrasyllus nevertheless kept his army intact. He sailed with his fleet to Notium, then to the Island of Lesbos and the Hellespont, to serve as reinforcements there. He sailed to Alcibiades's fleet near Sestos.

Thrasyllus arrived in the winter of the end of the year, and Alcibiades had to leave his love-nest to join Thrasyllus. He did so, though not in the best of moods.

The meeting between Alcibiades and Thrasyllus was rather formal and cold. Thrasyllus was still a friend, but for Alcibiades Thrasyllus had failed to secure his own return to Athens.

Alcibiades resented many things that winter. He disliked his peace being disturbed by the arrival of an army, which would soon mean new campaigns in the Propontis. He heard from Thrasyllus that Athens was once more a nest of conflicting parties that competed for the favour of the Assembly. His return to Athens was compromised again. He wondered why he should fight for that town, when friends could use him in Thrace. He had his fort, support from the Odrysian King, and he was far safer there than in Athens. Why was he to be disturbed? He was not even an official general of the town. He recognised that expeditions to the cities of the Propontis, Hellespont and Bosphorus that were not in Athens' influence was necessary for Athens' safety, but he had grown used to a life of pleasure and love with Harmonia and Theodote. He resented having to give up his current life and he resented being reminded of Athens. His first reaction was to wish Thrasyllus as fast as possible back to Athens. He resented Thrasyllus being a popular general appointed by Athens, whereas he was still an outlaw, even if Thrasyllus, Theramenes and Thrasybulus recognised him as their co-general.

As he was in a bad mood, he also resented Thrasyllus's failure to accomplish anything of importance in Ionia. He launched a few sharp words at Thrasyllus's head, and those words were caught on by his troops. Thrasyllus was looking at him, at Alcibiades, to bring victories to the Athenian army.

Alcibiades sighed and cursed, but he gathered his army. Thrasybulus sent him an additional contingent of ships and men, men which belonged to his original army of Samos. These warriors had won the major successes in the Hellespont. They were veterans, men who had seen Alcibiades attack the entire Spartan fleet with only forty ships. They looked with disdain at Thrasyllus's Athenian army of young, inexperienced hoplites that had accomplished nothing. They refused to set up a common camp. They refused to be mixed with the newcomers in a joint army. They honoured Alcibiades but they refused to follow Thrasyllus.

Alcibiades and Thrasyllus talked, and as the days passed by, Alcibiades could not but feel the old pride of the hoplite rise in his heart. He saw the magnificent Athenian triremes in the harbour, the bustle of the hoplites and peltasts preparing for a campaign. He saw the training and the exercising of movements of squadrons. He tried to stay aloof, but when he saw errors he ran to the commanders and showed them what a real battle was like. Alcibiades was sucked up by the army again. The pace of his heart quickened.

Alcibiades and Thrasyllus talked about new campaigns. They had to take the initiative now, for they had a decent army. The army could not be paid for doing nothing. Thrasyllus had met failure in Ionia, so he was obliged to lead new expeditions, and to fight new battles. He had to win successes to satisfy Athens.

Alcibiades saw only two objectives, but two terrible objectives: submit the Hellespont to Athens, and the Bosphorus. The Spartans and their allies had to be driven out of these two straits to secure the grain route from the Black Sea. So many goods were transported to Athens through the Hellespont and the Bosphorus ! They had to secure this route once and for all!

In the Hellespont, only one important Spartan base challenged the supremacy of Athens: Abydos. In the Bosphorus lay the cities of Chalcedon and Byzantium, but Chrysopolis guaranteed sufficiently the income from the Bosphorus. Abydos should therefore be the first target of the Athenian fleet. Alcibiades sailed out at the head of the triremes.

The town of Lampsacus was sympathetic to the Athenian cause. It was an ally of Athens. Alcibiades and Thrasyllus brought all their men there. Lampsacus was situated on the southern coast of the Propontis, on Pharnabazus's Phrygian side. The Athenian generals fortified Lampsacus with walls and stockades, so that they could use the town for raids against the troops of Pharnabazus. Lampsacus lay to the northeast of Abydos, close by that town. The Athenians fortified Lampsacus during the winter, at the end of that same year. In the spring of the next year, they attacked Abydos.

Alcibiades and Thrasyllus split their army. Thrasyllus sailed with thirty triremes to a territory to the east of Abydos. He took a few hoplites with him and part of the lighter troops. Alcibiades led the Athenian cavalry of a mere hundred horse riders and a hundred and twenty hoplites, led by his commander Menander, along the coast to the southwest, to Abydos, marching over land.

Thrasyllus brought his troops to the beach, armed his sailors and prepared to march inland, and from there to Abydos. While his hoplites left the small, natural harbour he had found, he was attacked by a large contingent of Persians led by Pharnabazus. Pharnabazus had light troops and cavalry. His archers shot arrows at will towards the oncoming Athenians. The Athenians returned arrows. The Persians advanced and javelins were thrown. For a time, a battle developed of light troops, which was fought at a distance, by arrows and javelins. When arrows and javelins had to be assembled from the ground, the volleys diminished, and Pharnabazus unleashed his cavalry. Thrasyllus's men were rather powerless against the swift and strong horses, which threw the men aside, made them stumble and fall. The horses trampled them and brought disorder in their ranks. The Persian cavalry fought with swords. Many Persian horse riders were wounded by javelins and spears, but the Athenians were driven back to their boats because Pharnabazus had many more warriors than Thrasyllus. The Persian cavalry swarmed around Thrasyllus's sailors with the aim of cutting them off from retreat. Pharnabazus was confident that here, at last, victory was his.

At that moment, Alcibiades arrived with his cavalry. He led his horse riders in person. He attacked the Persians immediately, so that Thrasyllus's men gained new hope, had some relief of time to re-group and to attack the Persians in close ranks.

Alcibiades fought on his horse. He engaged a Phrygian, a proud horse rider, and the men slashed out at each other with their swords. They danced around each other with their animals, trying to bring the other out of balance. They delivered blows with their swords when they were in reach. Alcibiades parried a blow and drew his sword away along the enemy's body, surprising the Persian, and opening a large part of the man's lower right leg. The Persian gasped. He lowered his sword, but turned his horse, so that Alcibiades could not profit from the advantage. Alcibiades drew his horse along the turning Persian, arriving at the man's back. He slashed a large open wound in the man's flesh. The Persian screamed out his pain. He faltered, and Alcibiades had the time to approach nearer and to hack again at the rider, now in the unprotected neck,

almost severing his head. The man lost gushes of blood and he sank down, falling heavily from his horse, on the rocks. Alcibiades sought out his next victim.

The cavalry battle was fought viciously. The Persians were brave, elite troops of Pharnabazus. The battle was going on in all energy and force. The fights were even. Persians fell and Athenians fell. Alcibiades knew that something else had to happen, for at the best they could hold their ground here, but not more. They were losing too many men.

Alcibiades's hundred and twenty hoplites led by Menander arrived on the scene at that moment. Alcibiades jumped off his horse and let the animal gallop away on its own. He ran to the hoplites and placed himself, wearing only his cavalry sword, no armour, no shield, in its centre. He turned the row of hoplites to a phalanx, and he attacked the lines of the Persian infantry in the flank.

With his phalanx, Alcibiades cut through Pharnabazus's light infantry like a knife through a long, fat fish. The Persians had no defence against Alcibiades's onslaught. The veteran hoplites, trained to work as a group, formed a very efficient killing rank that advanced and advanced and killed, wounded and maimed, to leave the wounded for the peltasts to finish off. Once in a while the hoplites halted, which surprised the Persians at first. Every second hoplite then stepped behind his neighbour and made place for an Athenian peltast. The peltasts threw two javelins, then stepped back and the hoplite phalanx closed again, to advance once more. This was the tactic that Alcibiades had worked out with Seuthes, and he had exercised his men, so that they could repeat the manoeuvre expertly.

It was no use for the Persians to try to resist such effective killing mass. It took them some time to understand, and then they ran for their lives. The cavalry, seeing that their infantry was on the retreat, followed the men, protecting their flight as good as they could, but they had the Athenian cavalry still fighting in their midst.

The Persian infantry was routed, and Pharnabazus cursed his gods once more, for each time he had withstood the Athenians, this scourge of Alcibiades had come to defeat him.

The battle was over at that moment, and the Athenian hoplites halted. Alcibiades called his cavalry together and he pursued the Persians until darkness fell, not only with his horsemen but also with Menander's infantry. The cavalry made many more victims, but they returned in the late evening. It was time for the Athenians to lick their own wounds. Thrasyllus had suffered many casualties. The dead had to be brought together and burnt on funeral pyres. Alcibiades's veterans gathered together with Thrasyllus's young men the weapons and shields on the field and they set up a trophy. The two armies had reconciled.

Alcibiades took up again the command of the cavalry, and the same day he captured the camp of Pharnabazus. He collected much booty there. He kept a part of the loot for himself, this time. He still thought of the fort he was building.

He returned to Abydos in the middle of the night, with wagons laden with the tents, tapestries, golden vessels, plats and bowls of Pharnabazus's camp. The surprise was in the form of a few very nice Persian slave girls. These, Alcibiades shared with Thrasyllus.

The following days, Alcibiades continued to raid Pharnabazus's territory, storming villages and a few of the smaller Phrygian towns, driving Pharnabazus further inland.

The Athenian army stayed thus in the euphoria of their victory close to Abydos. But the Spartans and their allies had used this time well to reinforce Abydos. They had gathered food and arms inside the town, as well as men. The walls of the town were hastily repaired. The townsmen were called to arms and they received a basic training from the Spartans.

When the Athenians arrived under the walls of the town, they saw hundreds of men standing, armed with shields and spears, wearing all bronze helmets, on the parapets. These men were no veteran hoplites. They would have been defeated easily in a regular land battle. Yet, they formed a large defensive force on the walls. The Athenian generals had enough experience to realise that Abydos had become impregnable. Alcibiades wryly remarked that Pharnabazus had saved Abydos. The Athenians could not realise their objective. They could siege the town, but that would take a long time. They returned to Lampsacus.

Chalcedon

The second objective of the Athenians was the Bosphorus. The Bosphorus was the crucial link between Hellas, Thrace, all the lands of the Sea including Phoenicia and Egypt, and the vast territories in the north-east of the world. Many goods came from the coasts of the huge Black Sea, goods asked for in large quantities in the west. The cities of the Bosphorus controlled the narrow seaways between the Black sea and the Propontis. The towns were rich, very rich, and they guarded their independency very jealously. They took pride in excellent and large harbours, which were of course vital for their trade and hence for their wealth. The towns were mostly colonies of Peloponnesian polises, of Megara and Sparta. They knew well they were situated in a very strategic position, and they knew many neighbours coveted their wealth. Only because of their independence could they hold the balance between the large powers of the Thracian tribes and the Kingdom of Persia. Had they chosen for one side, the region would have been on fire, not once but repeatedly. The traders needed peace for their commerce, which was based on barter, on the exchange of one good for another. The cities spent considerable parts of their wealth to their safety. They fortified their towns with high and thick walls. Their harbours had stone quays and piers that projected far into the Sea to protect the entry to their ports. In these cities lived traders of all nations and languages.

On the north side of the Bosphorus lay proud Byzantium, the pearl of the eastern cities. Opposite Byzantium stood Chalcedon, and a little further was Chrysopolis, which had become Athenian recently.

Chalcedon and Byzantium were now prime targets for the Athenian fleet, because Sparta controlled these two cities and could at each moment block the trade with Athens.

Alcibiades and Thrasyllus received additional warships from the other Athenian generals. They sent message to Theramenes, who was still sitting at Chrysopolis, to march to Chalcedon.

Chalcedon was heavily fortified. The Spartan harmosts, the governors, first Clearchus and then Hippocrates, had used the last years to improve the walls of the city and the towers and gates to very strong defences. Theramenes began his expedition by laying waste the lands around the city. He did not have to march far for that, because Chrysopolis was situated very near to Chalcedon. After a few days, Alcibiades and

Thrasylus arrived with their fleet before the city. Hippocrates, the Spartan harmost of the town, saw one of the largest war fleets that had ever passed the Bosphorus, almost two hundred triremes and transport ships, sail up to the harbour of his town. The Athenian army counted almost fifty thousand men, including the sailors. The spectacle was grand, and Hippocrates went to the highest tower of this citadel to count the ships. He was impressed, but not afraid. He had confidence in his walls.

Chalcedon lay on a stretch of land that advanced into the Bosphorus. The Athenian triremes blocked Chalcedon's harbour and Thrasylus moored the rest of the ships close to the town. Alcibiades, Thrasylus and Theramenes walked to a hill above the plains of Chalcedon and looked at the town. The walls and the gates of the city were formidable.

'We could storm the town,' Theramenes proposed.

'Not with those walls, we couldn't,' Alcibiades replied.

He was angry. Abydos, Chalcedon, probably also Byzantium, were all strongholds. The Athenians had enough men to siege Chalcedon, but that would take months and maybe even years. Alcibiades had learned lessons at Potidaea, in his youth, and he had not the patience of youth anymore. It was not that he thought sieges to be impossible. He knew quite well what to do, and he doubted not that Thrasylus and Theramenes also knew what to do. Time was an issue, and there was another, even greater issue for the Athenian army!

Alcibiades had seen the chests of money of Thrasylus, and those chests had been empty. There was no money anymore to pay for the rowers. The Athenians could simply not pay for a siege. Yet, a siege was the only thing to do here.

'We should siege the city,' Thrasylus began. 'We have to build a counter-wall to block the city by land, for Pharnabazus will bring his army back to here soon. We can hold the counter-wall with fewer men, block Chalcedon's harbour with not too many ships and starve them out. Meanwhile we look for more money elsewhere.'

'Nothing else to do,' Alcibiades muttered.

'Then we had better start today,' Theramenes replied.

Theramenes ran down the hill without waiting for the others. He too was angry with this turn of affairs; he too had expected earlier results.

The Athenians built a wall around Chalcedon on the side of the land, so that the city was enclosed on its triangle of rocks. The wooden wall went from the Bosphorus to the Propontis. It was only a wooden wall, a double palisade actually, but it would serve its purpose sufficiently. It could protect the Athenian guards from Persian and Chalcedonian attacks.

The Athenians prepared for a long siege. They also showed ostentatiously that they would withdraw a part of their forces.

Alcibiades walked all along the stockade to inspect the troops. He saw little motivation among the men. There was not much hope that Chalcedon would surrender rapidly. The men suspected that the town had its own wells of drinking water. Alcibiades wondered how long the campaign here would last. Two months or two years?

Theramenes returned with a part of the army to Chrysopolis, promising to return as soon as there was some kind of development at Chalcedon. Alcibiades was stuck at Chalcedon.

Around that time, the Athenians heard from spies that the Chalcedonians had sent much money and treasures to Bithynia. The Bithynians were in fact Thracians that had moved from the northern side of the Propontis to the southern shores. Alcibiades was strong in his knowledge of Thracian warfare, so he decided to fetch the gold of Chalcedon, and also to make sure that the Bithynians would not come to the aid of Chalcedon on the land side.

Alcibiades took a small detachment of Athenian hoplites and also ordered a few ships to follow him along the coast. He marched into Bithynia, and interrogating the local people, he arrived close to the camp of the Bithynian leaders. The Bithynians sent him a delegation of their commanders. Alcibiades talked impatiently with the men. He ordered them to hand over the property of the Chalcedonians, and he threatened to make war against the Bithynians if they did not comply with his demands.

The Bithynians had heard what had happened in Thrace. They had heard of the bloody battles and of the defeats of the Cicones and the Dii. They had heard of Seuthes and of Seuthes's alliance with this Athenian general. They did not want to risk a war with Athens over Chalcedon. They promised to hand over the treasures of Chalcedon to Alcibiades. Alcibiades wondered whether the Bithynians would do as he had asked, but he let the men return to their camp.

Two days later, when he was preparing to attack the Bithynians, a long line of several chariots drawn by oxen rode out towards his troops. The chariots arrived, and Alcibiades looked under the canvas cloths to find the golden utensils, vessels, bowls, chests filled with golden and silver coins, and the other items of the wealth of Chalcedon. The Bithynian leaders solemnly promised not to come to the aid of Chalcedon.

Alcibiades loaded the contents of the chariots into his triremes at the coast and he returned in triumph with the treasure to the Athenian army. He had solved at least one issue of the army! He too now entered the bore of the siege of fortified Chalcedon. He lived in tents near the fortifications of the counter-wall, at the farthest end.

The wall of the Athenians around Chalcedon was only just finished, when the Spartans sallied from the gates and attacked. Hippocrates, the Spartan harmost of Chalcedon, had seen that the Athenian army had been split. He thought he had a chance.

Hippocrates opened the gates of the city, positioning his troops in a double hoplite phalanx under the walls of the city. The Athenian trumpeters sounded the alarm. Thrasyllus gathered his men to block the enemy. Hippocrates's aim was to draw out the Athenian army and to engage it. He advanced his men immediately against the Athenians.

The Persians of Pharnabazus did not attack at the same moment. This was entirely a movement of Hippocrates alone. If the Persians had done so, they would anyhow have been stopped from intervening by the counter-walls and its defenders, but the Athenians would have been weaker still.

Thrasyllus arranged his troops also in two separate phalanxes. He hastily ordered blood sacrifices behind the lines. The Athenians and the Spartans sang their paeans to Zeus, and then the armies gave battle. The Spartan pipers blew their shrill tones, and the hoplites advanced. The battle of Chalcedon was a traditional hoplite to hoplite confrontation of phalanxes. Thrasyllus did not use any of Alcibiades's new tactics.

A truly Spartiate army would have defeated the Athenians. Hippocrates was the only Spartiate present, however. Most of his hoplites were perioecic Laconian hoplites, and Chalcedonians. The battle was equal in forces, power, energy, arms and movements. The battle went on very evenly, and both sides lost many precious men. The Athenian and Spartan ranks fought eye in eye, challenging each other. The Athenian hoplites pushed with their shields and stabbed with their spears. The Spartans did the same and they forced the Athenians back. The two armies fought for quite some time this way, and nobody would have been able to tell which side would win. There would be many casualties.

Alcibiades had been on an inspection tour on the other side of the counter-walls. To lead his troops to the battle, he had to run back in a hurry. It took him much time to reach the Athenian camp. He looked out and saw the chaos of inter-clashing phalanxes. He hastily gathered a few hoplites, men that had not been able to answer immediately the calls of Thrasyllus to fight the Spartans. He placed thus a small group of Athenian hoplites and his cavalry to confront the enemy. His horse riders were still preparing their horses and they had been waiting useless for a time. Alcibiades ordered them to be ready, but only to attack after a while. When he saw his commanders fighting the Chalcedonians, he ran out of the camp with his makeshift group of hoplites and he attacked the Chalcedonians in the side of the left Spartan phalanx, the phalanx closest to him.

The Spartan phalanx faltered in its courageous assault. The Spartans of the left phalanx had to fight on two sides now, which they did by turning part of their troops. But they were compressed by the attack, and fighting became more difficult. They combined their hoplites well with the Chalcedonian lighter troops, however. They harassed the Athenians with javelins and arrows. Hippocrates had learned alternative ways of using the specific strengths of each member of his army. When his hoplites were pushed back, he halted the Athenians with throws of javelins. When a part of his phalanx was broken through, he pushed his hoplites off and showed great numbers of archers in the opening to chase the Athenians. He maintained the pressure of his best hoplites in the centre, where he had posted the few neodamodeis Spartans, liberated Laconian helots, he had. He had not enough Spartans, though, and the Laconian hoplites chosen among the perioeci and the neodamodeis, men adventurous enough to accompany a Spartiate to far-off lands, were not the best of hoplites. The Spartans slew many Athenians, but the Athenians had the advantage in men.

The Athenian cavalry then arrived on the scene. Alcibiades left the hoplites to Thrasyllus. He ran to behind the Athenian lines, and he ordered a horse rider from his horse. He jumped on the animal, took the reins and commanded the cavalry to follow him.

The Spartans had thrown all their javelins, and archers were busy on the left flank of the Athenians. Alcibiades rode around the Spartan lines. He rode to the right phalanx of the Spartans, where his own hoplites had attacked. He fell on the Spartan phalanx in the rear. Many Chalcedonian peltasts fought there, wearing only small shields and swords. Alcibiades attacked these on the gallop and his horse bore into the men. He tumbled a few of the men to the ground with the impact of his horses. Then, his men engaged the light troops, using horses and swords.

It took not a long time before Alcibiades cleared a stretch behind the Spartan hoplites. His men courageously defended their advance behind the Spartan lines. They attacked the Spartan hoplites in the back, riding into them so that they fell, and then Athenian hoplites finished off the men. Alcibiades rode into the hoplites, throwing the mass of hoses in the backs of the Spartan hoplites.

The well-ordered right wing of the enemy had been transformed into a throng of fighting men. There was no ordered phalanx anymore, and in that chaos a Spartan hoplite could be engaged by several Athenian peltasts. These would dart around a Spartan hoplite and wound him or hold his arm, so that he could be killed by a spear. The right wing of the Spartans was destroyed, and with it Hippocrates, who had fought at the centre end of that phalanx. Hippocrates received three spears into his breast, piercing into his body from the sides of his armour. The Spartans were routed.

The Spartans ran away at an order that came from a commander replacing Hippocrates. The Spartans ran off together, suddenly, and rapidly. They ran before the Athenians had really decided what to do. The Spartans were already several steps away, running towards Chalcedon. Most of the Spartan army reached the gates of Chalcedon unharmed.

Alcibiades and Thrasylus let them escape. That might have been an error, for the Spartans could enter the city at the run and the gates closed after them, blocking out the Athenian cavalry that galloped now towards the last fleeing men.

When the gates closed, Chalcedon was again the impregnable fortress it had been before. The battle had once more not been decisive.

The Athenians gathered their dead and wounded. They gave the Spartan and Chalcedonian dead back to the townsmen. They set up a trophy of the recuperated enemy arms and burnt their dead on funeral pyres in front of the walls of Chalcedon. Later, they withdrew behind their wooden counter-wall. Their military surgeons tried to help the wounded in their camp get back on their feet. Every man was needed.

Athena

Alcibiades felt disgusted by the sterile sieges of towns in the Propontis and elsewhere, angry and impatient with the developments. He had stood twice now impotently before huge stone walls, looking up to the massive blocks and from there to the clouds in the sky. He did not imagine himself anymore climbing up scaling ladders to storm a city. He was too old, had lost the necessary patience, he felt frustrated. He had finished with that kind of fighting. It was expensive in men and failed most of the times. It was a nasty way of being killed, falling from those ladders. Besides, he thought bitterly, the walls of Chalcedon were far too high to be stormed. The gates were hidden inside corridors which entered the city. The spaces before the gates were true killing grounds. The Athenians would have to siege the city without approaching it. How long would that take? At Potidaea and other sieges, corruption had set in among the men, and then the besieged city would anyhow be provided with food, even if only in small quantities. The nights were dark and small boats could bring in supplies, right under the noses of the Athenian triremes. Alcibiades stood with Theramenes, who had hastily come back from Chrysopolis, and with Thrasylus, but he could not stay still. This was not his kind of warfare! The three men remained irritated with everything, with the siege, with the men, and with themselves.

‘I am going to do something else,’ Alcibiades decided after a while. ‘I am not going to stay here. I am going back to Bisanthes.’

‘Going back to warm your bones with your mistresses, are you, Alcibiades?’

Theramenes taunted cruelly.

Alcibiades wondered whether he should hit Theramenes for the insult, but he liked the man also and they had been friends for so long.

He retorted, ‘yes, I am. But I will also find ways to let you guys go on fighting. Maybe you don’t realise it, but Athens sends you no money. Within less than two months you will have to break up your army here, and leave, for the men will not be paid anymore. I am bored here. This is Abydos all over again. I am going back, and I’ll think of something to get us some money.’

‘We can’t give you hoplites,’ Thrasyllus said. ‘We need them here to fend off Pharnabazus.’

‘I don’t need hoplites,’ Alcibiades cried. ‘I fail to comprehend, though, what hoplites are going to do behind the walls against raids of Persian cavalry. You can have the hoplites. I need five hundred peltasts and twenty triremes. That should do the job!’

‘Those you can have,’ Thrasyllus agreed quickly before Theramenes could sneer back.

Theramenes calmed down a little. He too was angry with the developments at the Spartan-held cities.

‘Alcibiades is right,’ he thought.

‘Oh, give him fifty hoplites too, Thrasyllus,’ he said. ‘Alcibiades is right after all. Without Hippocrates the Spartans will not come out again of the city. Our hoplites are indeed useless against cavalry. We need archers for that. Let’s devise some sort of defence with archers, and with our own cavalry. All right, Alcibiades. I am sorry of having been nasty. We need money indeed. You go and fetch that. There should be some at Selymbria, for instance.’

‘Fine,’ Alcibiades grinned. ‘Selymbria is also what I had been thinking about. ‘Yes, I will gladly take a few hoplites. I shall be sailing tomorrow, then.’

The day after, Alcibiades took his small fleet from the environs of Chalcedon. He sailed first to Bisanthes. He moored his fleet before the town, but did not allow his troops inside the walls of the city. He still needed the protection of the Bisanthesians for Theodote and Harmonia. He stayed a while in the country-house, with Harmonia. He needed to think.

Harmonia’s heart rejoiced.

‘He has come back,’ she thought. ‘He has come back, and he comes back more often. He comes back after shorter absences. He likes me and the children. He must truly love me to come back. He loves Theodote too, but he almost never sleeps with her. He loves me. It is me he comes back to. How I love him! He is not a scoundrel, not a cruel, not a violent man. He is a loving man. He has a duty to Athens. He can scheme and make war, but he is a generous man. He has patience with me. What is it with me that is attractive to him? I am not luxurious and witty like Theodote. I am not a Queen like Timaea, I am not a courtesan. Why does he love me? What binds him to me?’

When Alcibiades entered the house, she was in his arms immediately, and she caressed him with her hands in his back and on his neck. He could not have enough of her, and he kissed every little surface of her face, before his hands found her nipples and pressed her breasts.

Alcibiades looked at Harmonia lying next to him in a bed of the house, upstairs, and he caressed her long, delicate neck, her full breasts, her slender but strong legs, and her soft skin, on which his hands lingered. How long could they be together this time? Not long, he feared. While she slept he tried to think about what to do next, but he had it hard to concentrate for the bitterness and the languor for peace darkened his mind. He lay with a marvellous woman in his lap, the most precious gift he had ever received, but to the east an entire army depended on his abilities to gain everything with nothing.

‘How many times have I done this?’ he asked himself, ‘having nothing in my hands and yet gained fame and victories? So numerous times! Far too many times! I am tired. I want peace. How can I succeed this time? What should I do?’

Alcibiades also rode to his fort of Neon-Teichos. He had to control the progress of the works there. He rode on horseback, and he rode without stopping. He rode for a day and a half and arrived in the middle of a storm. The fort was rising on the coast. Its towers were almost finished. A few men lingered around. They told him they had stopped the construction for a few days, because a religious festival was held at Bisanthes, and they were the last to leave with the transport ship. Alcibiades met with the architect, though, and the men discussed the last modifications that Alcibiades asked.

Overall, the fort was fine. Alcibiades saw the men go around the promontory and go aboard the ship, then sail away in the streaming rain. He could go inside and lit a fire, for some of the rooms and halls were finished. Instead, he walked to the terrace that overlooked the Sea. The storm blackened the waves and threw the water violently against the rocks, so that foaming walls of water mounted into the air with loud roars. Sometimes the water fell on the terrace, but Alcibiades remained in the waves and the rain and he looked at the anger of Poseidon. Flashes of lightning broke the darkness with brilliant white light, and thunder groaned in the skies. Lightning stroke a tower, and the noise was overwhelming and sudden, so that Alcibiades looked up. He was not afraid, however, amidst the elements of nature that were thus unleashed. He opened his arms and he cursed. He cursed Athena.

Alcibiades shouted, ‘Athena, you goddess of wisdom! The wisdom you bring to people is cursed! Your wisdom is the biggest joke on earth. You are nothing but a vindictive sorceress! You are but an empty, ugly skeleton of revenge and jealousy. You made of me a man without peace and luck. You torture me with the love of a city, with love of the territory that you conquered. You promised, yet you gave me nothing. You took everything away from me, time after time, so that I have so much to suffer to win back some hope of peace. How much have I to do for your city to obtain my due, before it likes me and calls me back? Your city refuses me. Why should I continue to fight for you and your city? Why do you force into me this desire for your territory? You made my Harmonia suffer, and who knows what will happen to my children? Why do you torture me thus? What have I done to you? Was I too handsome, too smart, too much loved, and too much admired? Now I am nothing anymore.

You be cursed, Athena! You can grant all, happiness, wisdom and love, yet you take more than you give. I curse you! I curse you, I tell you! I will live despite you, and despite the love for your city that you poured into my heart! You killed Pericles in the end. You killed thousands of poor people, who screamed of desperation and pain during the hardships of the sickness in your city. Pericles abandoned you too! You also tortured him too much. I abandon you too! The Alcmaeonidae curse you, Athena.'

The wind tore at his clothes. The water of the rain streamed on his face and along his body, but he remained standing there with open arms, defying nature and the gods. Poseidon, Athena's revengeful and jealous enemy enveloped him with his elements. The storm ended then, and the clouds broke. The sun showed through the black sky and beams of light struck the terrace in oblique lines. The clouds opened wide and Alcibiades saw a double rainbow with inverted colours, as the rains continued over the Sea, but departed from the fort. Was this a sign of the gods? Had they understood him or were they throwing one more challenge at him? Yet the gods remained silent, and only the howling of the winds sounded above the fort.

Alcibiades went into a room of the fort. He thought about his horse then, went out again and found the frightened animal inside the courtyard. He brought the animal into a stable. He returned to the room, and he lit made a fire of logs. He had not eaten for two days and he ate also not that evening. He slept, exhausted, thinking about how to find money for Athens.

Selymbria

Alcibiades rode to Seuthes. He found him in the land of the Odomantes, near the Chersonese. Seuthes was astonished to see a haggard Alcibiades come to him, with a black beard of several days and with wild looks in his eyes. Alcibiades asked Seuthes for Thracian troops, and he received two thousand men from Seuthes. He returned to Bisanthes and got hoplites there, a mere hundred men.

With two thousand Thracian peltasts and a hundred and fifty hoplites, he marched on the splendid city of Selymbria. He had already gathered some money from allied cities in the Chersonese. He expected to find more at Selymbria.

He marched slowly, and the Selymbrians spotted his army from far. He had Alcibiades's luck. Even before he arrived at the walls of the city, a group of Selymbrians who were favourable to Athens ran out to meet him. The men wanted to help him if he could help bringing them to power. They had heard of Alcibiades's generosity with conquered cities. They wanted to avoid disaster, famine and deaths in their town. They proposed to open the gates for him at an assigned date and time during the night.

At the appointed night, Alcibiades waited with a small number of hoplites at the main gate of Selymbria. The gates opened indeed that night. Pro-Athenian guards let the hoplites march in. Alcibiades's hoplites then held the gates open, and the entire Athenian army sped inside the city. At dawn, the town was invested by Alcibiades's men. Thracian warriors with branded faces stood on the walls and on the towers of the city. Athenian hoplites guarded the agora.

Alcibiades asked for the Council to assemble. He spoke to the Members of the Council. He promised to save the city. He demanded the city to be allied to Athens.

He demanded money, but in reasonable amounts. He promised not to harm the citizens. He proposed to hold a garrison of Athenians inside the city, but the Selymbrians could rule their city as they had done before. There would be no Athenian governor in Selymbria, but he desired a signed alliance.

The Selymbrians found the terms of the victor very reasonable. Democracy was restored. Whether allied to Sparta or to Athens, the Selymbrians only sought peace and protection. They might as well be protected by Athens as by Sparta. The Selymbrians accepted Alcibiades's conditions.

Alcibiades thus recuperated one more town in the Propontis for Athens. He was very satisfied when he left Selymbria a few days later. He was also glad to leave, for the Selymbrians had learned how to drink wine from the Thracians, and during the feasts celebrated to the honour of Dionysos, Alcibiades had too much of everything. He discovered that the Hellenes could excel in everything from their neighbours, whether in drinking wine or in making children from women. He had very bad headaches in the Selymbrian mornings. He left Selymbria in the best of terms.

When Selymbria was secured, Alcibiades sent most of his Thracian troops back to Seuthes. He heard at Selymbria that Theramenes and Thrasyllus had reached an agreement with Pharnabazus over Chalcedon. The Athenians gave up the siege and they yielded the town to Pharnabazus. Chalcedon would have to pay its tribute to Athens, as in the periods it had been an ally of Athens. The town would also have to pay for the arrears it had not paid during the time it had become separated from the Athenian League. Pharnabazus moreover promised to pay twenty talents of silver to the Athenians, and to assist Athenian ambassadors to travel to the King of Persia. Athens thus won the much needed money to continue to hold her troops in the Propontis. The Athenians had not to sustain a long and costly siege at Chalcedon, and they were assured of further income. There would be no Spartan harmost anymore in the town. But Pharnabazus held Chalcedon, which was an awkward standoff. The Athenians promised not to make further attacks on Pharnabazus's territories at least until the return of their embassy to Persia. The Athenian generals could unite again. With the money Alcibiades brought from Thrace and from Selymbria, and with his added troops, the Athenians could attack Byzantium, and if need be lay a siege to that city for many months.

At Selymbria, Alcibiades received messengers from Theramenes and Thrasyllus. The messengers told him about the arrangement concluded between the Athenian generals and Pharnabazus. Alcibiades did not understand well why the generals had sent messengers to him. News sailed rapidly in the Propontis, and what they told him he knew already. The commanders told him, however, that Pharnabazus agreed to the treaty, had sworn the oaths at the ceremony of Chalcedon, but at the last moment the satrap had refused to consider the treaty valid without the special oath of Alcibiades. Alcibiades laughed and answered that he would sail with his army first to Byzantium. He said he was unable to come in person to Chalcedon. The messengers then told him that they had arranged to take Alcibiades's oaths in the witness of Persian representatives. Alcibiades took five triremes and he sailed with those to Chrysopolis, to join Thrasyllus and Theramenes there.

Alcibiades found Theramenes and Thrasyllus seething with indignation. The Athenian generals were proud with the agreement made with Pharnabazus, and Alcibiades

smiled and congratulated them. Theramenes and Thrasylus resented, however, the extraordinary demand of Pharnabazus. They were not really jealous of Alcibiades's added prestige. They were too happy with the turn of events at Chalcedon, the added funds, as well as with Alcibiades's conquests in Thrace and at Selymbria. Yet, they cursed at Pharnabazus for his new requirements.

'All right, all right,' Alcibiades soothed. 'I will take the oath, too. But we add two things. I want Pharnabazus to take the oath again, and before I take the oath. And I want to hear from Pharnabazus also that he will support our mission to King Darius.' 'Fine,' the generals said. 'We will propose this to Pharnabazus.'

The satrap of Phrygia agreed. He wanted the exchange of oaths to take place through proxies. Alcibiades waited a few days at Chrysopolis, and then two Persian commanders arrived to hear Alcibiades's oath. The names of these men were Mitrobates and Arnapes. Alcibiades took the oaths before the Athenian ceremonial tent. In the same period, Pharnabazus took the oaths in the presence of the two delegates of Alcibiades, his two commanders Euryptolemus and Diotimus. Alcibiades and Pharnabazus also exchanged pledges of good faith towards each other. These pledges remained private and were written down in separate scrolls, which were only signed by Pharnabazus and Alcibiades. The texts promised mutual, personal respect. They guaranteed safeguarding in case one side attacked the other. They promised immediate release from captivity and safe passage through each other's territories. Pharnabazus expected only Alcibiades to be able ever to capture him alive.

The Athenians prepared their embassy mission to the Persian King. The generals proposed to send five Athenians: Philodices, Theogenes, Mantitheus, Dorotheus and Euryptolemus. On insistence of Alcibiades, they also sent two Argives, Pyrrholochus and Cleostratus. Alcibiades asked Mantitheus to accompany the Athenian delegation to Persia in his name.

After all agreements had been satisfactorily signed, Alcibiades insisted on hearing from Pharnabazus's own mouth the necessary assurances of the safety of the Athenian embassy. He desired to meet Pharnabazus in person and take the measure of the satrap. The proposal was brought to Pharnabazus, and the satrap agreed to the condition.

On the agreed date and time, the Athenian generals rode on horseback to Pharnabazus's camp. They arrived with five of their commanders. Persian guards led them to Pharnabazus's tent. The satrap was sitting on a wooden throne in the middle of his ceremonial tent. The tent was huge and decorated with ornate, large Persian tapestries. Several Phrygian warriors guarded Pharnabazus, and his commanders stood beside him. The air was scented with heavy perfumes. At the end of the tent, priests were offering non-bloody sacrifices.

Pharnabazus was a powerful man. He was not as lean as Tissaphernes, but not heavy-set either. His face seemed fuller, less aquiline and rather more sensual. He had a small black beard, but thin lips. His shoulders were broad, but Alcibiades remembered more his strong muscles and his energy from the battle at Cyzicus, when he had seen the man active in fight. Pharnabazus wore a multi-coloured tunic, brocaded with golden patterns, and also his cloak was splendid. He looked very un-Hellenic in his sumptuous robes. Pharnabazus welcomed the Athenians with a few polite words, speaking perfect Ionian. While he spoke, he kept his left hand on his sword. The sword

had a hilt of gold, studded with precious stones, but it was a long military sword none the less, not a short parade sword. Alcibiades supposed that Pharnabazus was left-handed then, and he remembered indeed that he had seen the satrap wielding the sword at Cyzicus in his left hand.

The Athenians came forward, and Theramenes stated their purpose. Pharnabazus had been watching mainly Alcibiades. Now, turning his eyes away from Alcibiades, he listened attentively to Theramenes.

When the Athenian general had finished, the satrap pointed to Alcibiades and asked, 'is this man Alcibiades?'

'Yes,' Theramenes confirmed. 'He is Alcibiades son of Clinias.'

'Is this the man who took the oaths on the affairs of Chalcedon, and who asked me to assure the Athenians of the safety of their ambassadors?'

'Yes. He asked to hear your pledge.'

'He is arrogant to think he can order a satrap of Phrygia. Yet, in order to secure our peace, I shall comply,' Pharnabazus said. 'I pledge to guarantee the safety of the Athenian embassy. I shall guide the men to Persia myself.'

The priests advanced. They perfumed the satrap, for he had made a personal and official pledge. The arrangement was thus sealed.

Pharnabazus then repeated for the Athenians the conditions of their agreements for Chalcedon.

He said, 'we will hold our side of the oath. Chalcedon will pay tribute to Athens. I will take your ambassadors to guide them under my guard to travel to King Darius' court.'

Pharnabazus paused. He stood up from his throne and all the men in the tent thought that he would leave for his private quarters. Pharnabazus stayed in the tent, however. He stepped closer to Alcibiades.

He said, 'no Athenian commands a satrap of Persia. Yet, I always wanted to meet you. You gave me and my men a hard time. You fought well. I will not forget you.'

'Was that a threat or a compliment?' Alcibiades thought. 'Yes, I suppose he actually threatened me.'

He said out loud, 'I wanted to meet you too, for a man must know one's enemy. I saw you once before, but it was from the far only. I remember having seen you too at Cyzicus, fighting with your men and with this same sword. You fought bravely too. I will not forget you either.'

'Fighting well is not enough,' Pharnabazus continued with a smooth and low voice, so that only Alcibiades could hear him.

The satrap held his face very close to Alcibiades. 'To win, one must be favoured by the gods. I wanted to see what makes you so special. My men say you are a god and Achilles returned.'

'I am not special,' Alcibiades remarked.

'Yes you are. I can see it in your eyes and in your demeanour. You are human though, no god and no Achilles. Humans can be defeated.'

'I am not looking forward to being defeated.'

Pharnabazus smiled, 'me neither, general. But I am not favoured by the gods, so it seems. I envy you. Make sure our personal agreement will hold.'

Then he turned abruptly and left, disappearing behind a curtain that led into another tent.

'What was all that about?' Thrasyllus asked.

‘I wouldn’t know,’ Alcibiades evaded. ‘This Pharnabazus hates to lose, however.’ Alcibiades had come to take the measure of Pharnabazus, but he knew he had been weighed also, and maybe Pharnabazus had gained one more element of information he needed to fight the Athenians. The satrap knew the character of his opponent now. That would help him in his future battles. Or so the satrap thought.

Byzantium

Ten days later, the three Athenian generals stood some distance away from the fortifications of Byzantium. Byzantium was a Hellenic city, founded by Megarians and Spartans a long time ago. It was a city where many people met. Byzantium was littered with trading houses of many nations, and the merchants and artisans of very different origins lived more or less peacefully together in that town. It was a formidable city. It had become very wealthy from trade, dominating the Bosphorus, so that it drew various taxes on the ships that navigated through the straits in front of it, taxes which were now levied by the Athenians at Chrysopolis. Many merchant ships entered the harbour of Byzantium, however, and trade flourished there.

The Athenian generals looked with very wide eyes at the power of Byzantium. Its walls were larger, thicker and higher than anything they had seen before, thicker than those of Chalcedon and Abydos. Byzantium showed an excellent harbour in a long stretch of water that entered the land. Its main city was built on a stretch of land that resembled a horn. Its harbour could be easily defended. Byzantium’s harbour was one of the very best that Alcibiades had seen, maybe smaller than the bay of Syracuse, but much easier to protect. Alcibiades whistled, after its massive walls had impressed Theramenes and Thrasylus to silence.

‘This is the worse I have ever seen,’ Alcibiades reflected. ‘Look at those large, wide towers. They look as if they are but extensions of the walls. Scaling ladders will be of no use here. Any idea?’

‘A siege is the only thing we can do,’ Theramenes replied. ‘Storming those walls with ladders, with those towers protecting every stretch of wall would be suicidal. Have you seen those gates? The doors are of bronze! It takes horses to draw them open! Men would be unable to storm those gates. Even if we got close to the gates, only Heracles could pry them open! And, of course, the doors are at the end of corridors deep into the walls of the city. We siege! This siege will last a very, very long time.’

The Athenians sighed.

‘Well, let’s face it,’ said Alcibiades, ‘their strength is in their trade and in their taxes on the transfer of goods from incoming ships to outgoing ships. If we can cut off their access to the Bosphorus, then we cut off their income. That will come hard on many people inside, which may lead to dissension and revolt. We siege!’

The Athenians built a counter-wall around the city on the land side, and their fleet blockaded at Sea. Byzantium was governed, like Chalcedon, by a Spartan harmost, a Spartiate called Clearchus. Clearchus did not make the mistake that Hippocrates had made at Chalcedon. He stayed snugly inside the city, and did not sally with his Spartans to give battle. He defended the walls not only with Spartan perioecic hoplites and neodamodeis, but also with men from Megara and Boeotia, as well as with mercenary troops. He did not rely much on the hoplites of Byzantium and on their civil guards.

When the counter-walls around Byzantium were finished, Theramenes and Thrasyllus wanted to storm the town.

Alcibiades refused flatly.

‘Why did you build a wall for?’ he asked. ‘If you wanted to storm the city, we should not have built a wall to hold a siege. Besides, have you taken a good look at the city walls? They are first oblique, then steep, and massive. Your scaling ladders have to be very, very long. That means also a very long way up there! The defensive walls of Byzantium cannot be taken! You’ll fail!’

But Theramenes and Thrasyllus wanted at least to test once the strength of the defences.

The entire Athenian army, but for a few squadrons that stayed with Alcibiades to protect the counter-walls, advanced at the sound of trumpets, running towards the town. They ran to the walls like ants, to a height ten times their length.

Alcibiades saw them go and he saw them come back.

There was a lot of enthusiasm and hubris when the men ran to the walls. Deeply hurt, frustrated and scarred men returned to the Athenian camp, and worse, one in ten men did not return at all!

Thrasyllus and Theramenes had suffered wounds, too. Theramenes had made a bad fall from one of the scaling ladders. The wounds were more to their pride than to their bodies, though. Byzantium had held easily, and the Peloponnesians had fended off the assault at their fingertips. No Athenian had even reached the top of the stone walls.

Alcibiades wisely refrained from saying, ‘I told you so!’

Alcibiades left Theramenes and Thrasyllus to their wounds. He inspected the counter-walls regularly and the stayed away for several days then, without speaking to his co-generals. He slept with the men in tents between the wooden counter-walls. When he arrived back in the camp, Theramenes and Thrasyllus would stay silent and not mention their attack. Not one word was exchanged on the matter.

The siege lasted and lasted. The Athenians knew that they would starve the Byzantines out, but the siege could take many months.

One of those nights, Alcibiades held the guard with his men, but he was not looking at Byzantium. He looked to the night sky and the shining stars above. He looked at the other side of the city, where the landscape was wide and open. He did not expect any attack from the Thracians, for all the tribes were on the side of Seuthes and Medoc now, but the view was finer to that side, and he was dreaming awake. It was a night of full moon and visibility was good. Alcibiades mused, lost in thoughts, under the majestic night, looking at the thousands of tiny spots of light that shone flickering in the firmament, and it seemed to him that they all moved in a circle through the night. While Alcibiades was thus holding guard with his men in front of one of the gates of the city, a hoplite nudged him. When the guard disturbed him, the man told him there was movement ahead at the gates of Byzantium. Alcibiades looked to where the man pointed. He saw a few men sneak out of the city walls through a small door next to the gates. The townsmen ran along the walls to a place where bushes grew. Then they ran towards the Athenian counter-wall. The Athenian guard proposed to sound the alarm, but Alcibiades held the man back. He ordered to make no sound. He let the Byzantines approach the wooden walls. When the men were trying to get over the palisades, Alcibiades approached, and he asked in a low voice what the men wanted.

There were only five men and they were startled, for they thought nobody had detected their presence. Alcibiades had, however, gathered twenty heavily armed hoplites of the guard in silence, and these men waited behind him.

The men called, not loudly, ‘we are Byzantines. We want to speak to Alcibiades, the general!’

‘Walk on west,’ Alcibiades indicated. ‘There is a door a bit further. I am Alcibiades. I will let you in.’

He walked to the door, opened it, and five silent men ran behind the counter-wall.

Then they rested, panting, standing with their backs against the wooden stakes.

Alcibiades repeated, ‘I am Alcibiades. What do you want?’

Twenty Athenian guards pointed their spears at the men. The men were frightened.

They feared for their lives and they huddled together.

One of the men was a little more courageous than the others.

He said, ‘I am Cydon. I am of an ancient Athenian family, but a Byzantine since several generations. I am a Member of the Council of Byzantium. I have come to discuss helping you inside the city. My friends here are Ariston, Lycurgus, Anaxilaus and Anaxicrates’

‘When do you have to return?’ Alcibiades asked.

‘Before dawn,’ the man answered.

‘All right. Then we have time to talk with the other generals. Come with me.’

Alcibiades led the men to the Athenian camp. He ordered Theramenes and Thrasyllus to be woken, and soon both men stood with drowsy eyes in Alcibiades’s tent, looking astonished at five Byzantines drinking wine with Alcibiades.

‘Talk!’ Alcibiades said to Cydon.

‘Clearchus, the Spartiate harmost, has left Byzantium,’ Cydon told. ‘He left the town to be defended by commanders of his, Helixus the Megarian and Coeratadas, the Boeotian. He has fled to Pharnabazus on the other side of the Bosphorus, for he needs money. His mercenaries do not get their pay anymore. Moreover, he knows that our town will have to surrender after a siege. He wants to ask for a Spartan fleet to attack some of your allied fleet triremes in the Bosphorus and in the Propontis, so that you have to give up the siege here.’

‘What does that help us,’ Theramenes interrupted impatiently.

Alcibiades hushed him and he prayed the men to continue.

‘There is a famine in the town. The people are hungry. The hoplites are not. We are suffering. We are free citizens. We do not want anymore a Spartan governor in our town. Clearchus is an arrogant man. He kills and punishes as he wants, without any court of justice. His behaviour towards us is harsh and callous. We do not feel our freedom anymore. We are here to discuss the terms by which we would allow you in the town at night, and let your army in.’

‘Fine,’ Alcibiades said. ‘You seem to know me. You may have heard which terms I gave to the other towns that confirmed their former alliance with Athens. If you let us in and help us to enter Byzantium and chase the Peloponnesians, I promise you the protection of Athens. There will be a small Athenian garrison in the town and a few Athenian triremes in your harbour. There will however be no governor of Athens to rule you. You shall rule yourselves, as you did before. We shall not harm trade, on the contrary, we will help stimulate it. We shall not interfere with the economy of the town. You can mint your own coins. We ask only tribute to the Athenian League and the arrears of that tribute to be paid. Our army shall enter the city, but after the defeat

of the Spartans it shall leave again within five days. Citizens who do not oppose us will not be hurt.'

The Byzantines smiled knowingly. 'We have heard of what you proposed at Selymbria. We discussed already among us, and we accept. We accept Alcibiades's word!'

'That is settled then,' Alcibiades concluded, without waiting for Thrasyllus's and Theramenes's consent. 'How do we proceed?'

'Five nights from now, somewhat later than complete darkness, we will attack the guards at the gates. The gates are guarded by Peloponnesian troops. The walls and towers are equally guarded. When we attack, alarms will be sounded. We will try to open the gates.'

'I do not know well how to handle that,' Alcibiades doubted. 'You might not succeed at the gates, Cydon.'

'Maybe we can offer a diversion,' Theramenes proposed. 'Suppose we abandon our camp the day before, at least largely, and hid our men behind the hills. We could spread the rumour that we are off for a new campaign to Ionia and that we have abandoned the siege here. There will be fewer guards to no guards at all on the battlements and at the gates.'

Thrasyllus said, 'the Spartans will not abandon the walls so easily. We have to give them a lure. Suppose that somewhat before Alcibiades gets into the city we attack the harbour with our fleet? That may draw even more of the Peloponnesians away from the rear walls!'

'Yes,' Theramenes acquiesced, 'good idea, Thrasyllus! We could do that.'

'That might work better,' Cydon agreed. 'Before, the Spartans let our civil guards watch over the walls. They will return to that. When you leave with your army, the walls will not be held anymore by the Spartans. Civil guards shall be posted on the parapets. We are the civil guards; they are with us. Let the Spartans guard the gates. We shall clear a whole stretch of the walls. You can put your scaling ladders up and bring some men of your army inside the city that way. We will join you. There will be no alarm for some time. Then we take the gates together.'

'That is a good plan,' Thrasyllus said. 'We can do it like that.'

'It will be dawn soon, Cydon,' Alcibiades remarked. 'You should return. We can discuss details on the way. Thrasyllus, will you lead the attack on the Peloponnesian ships and Theramenes, will you lead the army away?'

The two generals signalled their consent. Alcibiades accompanied the men back to the small door of Byzantium, near the side gates.

Four days later, the Athenian army broke camp. The Athenian generals spread the rumour that the army was leaving for a new campaign in Ionia because the siege of Byzantium would last too long and be too expensive. The hoplites, peltasts and cavalry marched off in the afternoon. Alcibiades remained at guard with a small force of hoplites behind the counter-walls. He showed all his men regularly to the guards of Byzantium, but not on the side at which he intended to attack.

Evening fell, and then the entire darkness of the night enveloped the plains in front of Byzantium. The far mountains lined darker even, above the town. Alcibiades and his men opened the doors in the palisades, and they ran silently with their scaling ladders towards the town. They ran to the stretch that would be free of resistance this night. Alcibiades had confidence in the Members of the Council who had come to see him.

It was extremely dark now, for clouds suddenly masked the moon. Theramenes and Thrasyllus would at that precise moment also be on their way to Byzantium with the main rest of the army. Alcibiades supposed that Thrasyllus attacked the Byzantine harbour with the fleet. The harbour was too far off, however, for him to hear the noise of the battle. He decided to move on. It would take a while, though, for Theramenes to arrive. Alcibiades should not wait.

Alcibiades ran with only about a hundred men, mostly hoplites. They wore breastplates of bronze, spears, and on their back dangled their shields and swords. Soft cloth around the metal dampened the sounds of metal clanging on metal. They wore no arm or leg armour, so that they would be able to climb up the ladders more swiftly. About twenty archers accompanied him. He had ten scaling ladders. Alcibiades ran with his men. They placed the ladders against the walls and without hesitating, started to climb upwards. Ten men climbed up the ladders at once, one on each ladder. They were all white in their faces with fear, and Alcibiades had forbidden them to speak. They expected sudden, swift death once they were on top of the ladders. Alcibiades climbed up when the first men were a few rungs higher on the ladders. When the first men arrived at the top of the walls, four men were climbing on each ladder. The men drew themselves on the parapets. No alarm was given; no Byzantines or Spartans guarded this stretch of the walls. In a very short time, forty Athenians stood on the walls, and the others continued climbing.

Alcibiades walked cautiously towards stairs that led down into the city. He whispered an order and ten archers, each with an arrow on his bow, ran towards him, and followed him. A Byzantine guard came running towards the Athenians, but the man did not shout. He did not sound the alarm.

When he came to Alcibiades, he whispered, 'we are the Pro-Athenian guards. We hold the next stretch of the walls for you. If you come with me, there are stairs in the tower we hold. We can go down there and we will be very close to the gates.'

'All right! Lead!' Alcibiades answered.

The man walked rapidly on the corridor of the walls, and the Athenians followed, still fearing a trap. A little further waited more Byzantine hoplites. They saluted the Athenians, and joined them. Alcibiades had now about a hundred and fifty heavily-armoured men. They arrived at the tower and went down the stairs. It was not dark inside, for torches had been lit along the way below. The flames threw an eerie light on the stone walls. Alcibiades looked out the doors of the tower, halting his men.

He saw a small market-place here, near the walls, and a contingent of about ten guards at the gates. More torches hung around the place; visibility was good.

'Are these ours?' he whispered to the Byzantine commander who had accompanied him.

'No,' the man replied. 'They are Byzantines and Peloponnesians, not in our conspiracy. They will react and fight us, sound the alarm. We have to kill them.'

'We shall immediately storm the gates and open them,' Alcibiades decided. He ordered his archers with him. He suddenly ran out of the doors. He let the guards be astonished, but he did not shout and assembled his archers in a line. The archers fired their arrows at the guards. They killed or wounded them all, but not before two men had been able to shout the alarm loudly. The alarm was answered by many shouting voices inside the town.

Alcibiades ordered all his men out of the tower, now. They pulled at the massive doors of the gates to open them for the Athenian army. It took a long time to open the gates, even though many hoplites, and even Alcibiades, drew with all their might on the panels. The archers still stood to protect them. The massive gates opened too slowly to Alcibiades's taste. Time passed as if it lasted ages. Finally, the gates opened wide.

This work and the first skirmish had made such loud noise that Byzantine guards arrived running from all sides to the little place before the gates. Alcibiades's archers shot the first men down, but soon there were too many enemies for the archers. Alcibiades formed a line with his hoplites, and a battle ensued, while others of his men still pulled the gates open. Alcibiades dropped his spear. He preferred to fight with his sword only. He engaged two Byzantines and alternately fended off a spear thrust and a sword's blow. He fought with rapid slashes. He darted and defended, attacked and parried. He wounded the hoplite that had attacked him with a spear almost immediately, so that the man stepped backwards holding his arm and crying out in pain. Alcibiades continued to fight the swordsman in a duel.

Meanwhile, tens of Byzantine guards came on running into the little market-place. Alcibiades's archers killed many, but there would soon be too many enemy warriors for Alcibiades's troops to hold. The Athenians risked being overwhelmed. Alcibiades killed the man that fought him, driving his sword fiercely into the man's underbelly and then cutting at the man's head. He saw his men falling around him. They were inexorably being pushed back towards the walls, to the outside of Byzantium. The gates risked being closed again. He ran backwards, leaving his place in the line and he called on his herald, a man with a strong voice that sounded far.

He told the man to shout, 'Byzantines listen to us! We have come with your fellow-men to save your city! We will not harm the citizens of Byzantium!'

The fight stopped for a moment, and everybody in the place listened. Alcibiades won time.

'We were invited to help Byzantium regain its freedom. We promised to hurt no Byzantine citizen that does not oppose us. We are here with your friends, look, other Byzantines! We fight together to avoid famine, death and oppression. We agreed to not appoint a governor, to leave only a small garrison of our hoplites inside the town and to respect your laws, your justice, your privileges and your trade. Help us defeat the usurpers of your freedom!'

The Byzantines did not fight anymore. They hesitated. They looked at the herald. Alcibiades turned, and through the open gates, he saw the Athenian army advancing at the run. The cavalry was almost at the gates. If only he could win a few precious moments here, the Athenian army would pour into the city.

A big, burly Byzantine hoplite shouted, 'who is it that makes such promises?'

Alcibiades answered himself now, 'I make such promises; my name is Alcibiades. When I make a promise, I keep the promise, and when I keep a promise, Athens keeps the promise!'

A murmur of astonishment ran through the ranks of the Byzantines.

The Byzantine guard cried, 'come forward so that we can see you. Are you truly the Alcibiades of Abydos, Cyzicus and Selymbria?'

Alcibiades walked through the Athenian hoplite ranks, to the man.

He asked, 'what is your name, hoplite?'

‘My name is Stroebus son of Epicles,’ the man replied proudly. ‘I lead the civil guards of Byzantium here.’

‘Well Stroebus, I shall do as I said. I am Alcibiades indeed. Alcibiades keeps his promises. Are you with us or against us?’

The man hesitated, but he recognised in Alcibiades the aristocrat and the leader of men.

He replied finally, ‘after all, Alcibiades, I have had my belly full of the Spartans, Megarians, Boeotians and the like. They took away our freedom and abused our women, spoiled our trade and killed our friends. What do you say, men? Are we with the Athenians?’

Shouts answered Stroebus’s call, ‘up with Alcibiades! Death to the Spartans! Kill the Boeotians!’

Stroebus said, ‘you heard, Alcibiades. I guess we are with you!’

‘Then we fight the Peloponnesians in your city together. Kill when you need to kill. Take as many prisoners alive as you can. Bring the prisoners to this place, near the gates. Disarm them. Archers, you stay here and guard the prisoners. Stroebus, lead us to the buildings where the Peloponnesian commanders are. How can we take the citadel?’

The Byzantines answered the question all together at the same time, but in the end they let Stroebus talk for them. Alcibiades split his men in three groups, of Byzantines and Athenians together. Theramenes came running in also, panting like a bear, astonished at the Assembly that was being held.

Alcibiades asked him to go with a few Byzantines and take the citadel. He sent another group to the end of the city, where an important contingent of Spartans had set up camp. The entire Athenian army streamed in through the gates. The army flooded into the streets. Alcibiades went with Stroebus to the agora, where the Council Hall was, as well as the buildings of the generals of Byzantium.

Whenever Alcibiades’s group encountered Byzantine guards, there followed a discussion with Stroebus, and the Byzantines would join the Athenians. Alcibiades arrived with a substantial group of hundreds of hoplites in the agora.

A Spartan commander stood there, with a large group of Spartan hoplites and allied peltasts. Alcibiades shouted in Dorian to these men, urging them to lay down arms, for they were very much outnumbered. The Spartan commander looked at the mass of men that arrived in the agora. He saw that the Byzantines had changed sides. He sang a strong war paean and his men fell in with him. Then he ran forward in a phalanx line.

Alcibiades admired the man’s courage, but the group was quickly overwhelmed and cut down. Alcibiades ordered to spare the life of the brave Spartan, but the man fought to the last, and even when the Athenian spears were held high, refusing to pierce him, he ran into them with his sword and hacked in on the Athenians. He was killed.

The other Spartans threw down their spears then, and abandoned. Alcibiades took the Peloponnesians prisoner.

A little later, the two generals that were in command of Byzantium, Helixus and Coeratadas, arrived with a force at the outskirts of the agora. They saw the place totally invested by overpowering numbers of Athenians and Byzantines. They did not offer the resistance the Spartan commander had given, just a while ago. They surrendered immediately, and with them the rest of the Peloponnesian troops

surrendered everywhere in the town. Alcibiades could occupy the Council Hall and the town's most important buildings around it.

By dawn, Byzantium was controlled entirely by the Athenians and the Byzantines. A heavy battle had been fought around the Spartan camp by the army of Theramenes, but finally, the Peloponnesians had been defeated and they had surrendered also when they heard the fate of their generals.

Alcibiades called together a meeting of the Members of the Council of Byzantium in the Council Hall. He stood with Thrasyllus and Theramenes in front of the noble citizens of Byzantium. He was still clad in hoplite armour, smeared with caked blood, and he had drawn eyes of fatigue. He reiterated the promises made to the Pro-Athenian party. He told he would withdraw the Athenian troops the same day out of the city, but for a small garrison led by a subaltern commander. He claimed all the Peloponnesian prisoners, but he promised they would not be killed, yet sent to Athens to be judged there. The Council Members voted full support to the Athenian army. Byzantium had become an ally of Athens.

Alcibiades, Theramenes and Thrasyllus returned to their fleet. They camped their army a distance away from Byzantium, on the other side of the Bosphorus, in sight of Chalcedon. They met to discuss what to do next. It was spring of the following year now, and soon there would be elections for general in Athens. Alcibiades had received notice in scrolls from his friends in Athens, assuring him that he might well be elected officially this year. The committee that would present the names were almost all friends of his, and among them was Thrasybulus. The scrolls said that he could return to Athens without fear.

Alcibiades, however, did still fear! The scrolls were not official invitations of the people, of the Assembly, for him to return. They represented only the beliefs of a few friends. He had many apprehensions about returning to Athens. His bitter cursing of the goddess Athena shaped his opinion on the matter. He still resented his home town..

Thrasyllus and Theramenes were of the opinion that their work in the Hellespont and in the Propontis was over. The Athenians had again won back the control over the straits, over the Bosphorus and the Hellespont. The cities in the region had become their allies, except Abydos. Abydos remained with a Spartan harmost. The Bosphorus, the Propontis and the Hellespont had been freed of any Spartan fleet, and only very few enemy ships remained at Abydos. No Spartan commander of importance was known to have remained in the neighbourhood.

The Athenian generals decided it was not worth the effort to lay a long siege to Abydos. The Athenians could easily leave a small fleet, maybe even of only ten triremes or so in the region, and return home to Athens. Their mission was accomplished, here. Thrasybulus had campaigned on the west coast of Thrace, west of the Chersonese, and he had secured that area of Hellenic cities for Athens too, including the island of Thasos and the city of Abdera. Thrasyllus and Theramenes considered that they had nothing to do anymore in the Propontis. They told Alcibiades they would sail to Athens.

Thrasyllus and Theramenes proposed to Alcibiades to accompany them to Athens. They assured him they would protect him in the event that somebody in Athens would oppose his return. They said nobody would dare to oppose a victor of the cities of the

Bosporus. They tried to persuade him to accompany them, and to sail into the harbour of Piraeus the same day with the entire, victorious fleet of the Hellespont. Alcibiades remained reluctant. He did not want to show his reticence. He was still condemned to death in Athens, and his name was carved on a stele of shame in the Acropolis. He had been cursed by the priests of Eleusis. He had the impression Athena wanted to take revenge on him. Nobody in Athens officially asked for his return. The political parties were strong again, and not all wanted to see him back. But the generals, his friends, insisted.

Finally, he promised to sail to Athens. He did not want to show his fears. He told the generals there were still funds to be gathered in Ionia, and he wanted to sail to these lands and cities first.

Thrasyllus and Theramenes had to stay for a time at Byzantium, to secure the situation, but they made an agreement with Alcibiades on a date and time to gather before the harbour of Piraeus with their entire fleet, including Alcibiades's ships, and then to row into the harbour together. Thrasyllus and Theramenes insisted, but they looked at each other with doubts in their eyes. Both remarked Alcibiades's reluctance.

They doubted Alcibiades would meet them at the appointed date and place with his trireme.

Chapter 21 – Athens, Spring to Autumn of 407 BC

Gytheum

Alcibiades left Byzantium a few days after the Athenian army invested the town. He said goodbye to his co-generals Thrasyllus and Theramenes the evening before he sailed, after which they organised an enormous drinking party to celebrate their victories in the Bosphorus. Alcibiades was bound for Ionia. When he walked to the fleet, alone, at dawn, to board his ship, he saw a crowd in the harbour. He approached, and saw an assembly of hoplites and sailors standing in his way to the triremes.

Among the people were his co-generals.

‘What is up?’ he asked, suspecting the worse.

‘We thought you might like a gift,’ Theramenes replied mysteriously. ‘If you return to Athens, you might as well do it in style.’

‘What do you mean?’

‘Have a look,’ Thrasyllus said, pointing to the quays.

The crowd opened before him, and the men formed a corridor for Alcibiades to walk through. The men saluted him. Alcibiades looked at the hoplites with amazement. He knew every one of these men, all men of the army of Samos, and some had been with him in several battles. Were they honouring him this way? He advanced towards the Sea. Then, he stopped.

Before him lay a trireme, rigged with purple sails, completely restored and newly painted, a trireme with finely coloured oars and a wonderful crew of all young rowers ready at the oars. Antiochus stood grinning next to the helmsman. The ship was the *Harmonia*! Alcibiades could not advance anymore, he stopped in his tracks, and the blood left his face.

The *Harmonia*! Emotions welled up in his heart. The *Harmonia*! He had left his ship at Thurii like a thief in the night to escape Athens’ messenger boats. His men now had found the *Harmonia*, and they wanted him to return in it to Athens! They had restored the ship and given it back to him. He was obliged to sail to Athens now. He would not refuse this homage! They wanted him to row to Athens the way he had sailed out!

Alcibiades turned to Thrasyllus, stammering, ‘how did you?’

‘We found her, forgotten and neglected, almost rotten, in a ship-shed of Munichia, Alcibiades. She was in a bad shape. I found her by accident when I was in Athens. I asked to have her restored and sent to the Propontis when she was ready. We hid her from you to present her at a grand occasion. I guess this is such an occasion. The *Harmonia* is yours again. Everything is on board to decorate her with, when you enter Piraeus. As we promised, we want to enter into the harbour of Piraeus with the entire fleet, the *Harmonia* leading.’

Alcibiades remained at loss of words. Had Athena repented after all, and relented?

He turned to Theramenes and addressed him in private. ‘Do you agree with that too, Theramenes?’

Theramenes was not an emotional man, not as much as Thrasyllus, anyway.

He grumbled something in his beard, and then said clearly audible, ‘Alcibiades, how many times do we have to repeat this? What is the matter with you? Of course,

Alcibiades, we want you to lead the fleet back into Athens' harbour. Me too, of course! You deserve it. We cleaned up the Hellespont, the Propontis, the Bosphorus, Thrace and Ionia. We annihilated the Spartan fleet. There is still work to do in the long end, but the desire to win and the knowledge that we were invincible is what you inspired us with, and then also the victories. With your kind of luck, Alcibiades, we would follow you to Hades, and bring back Kerberos himself.'

He patted Alcibiades on the shoulders, and pushed him towards the trireme.

Alcibiades sailed with a light heart and mind to Samos. He met rests of the Athenian army, there. He spoke in an Assembly to the men of Samos, explaining them the victories obtained in the Hellespont. He added a few ships to his small fleet, and then he sailed to the Hellenic cities in Caria. He took his time. He collected funds from the Carian cities, where the Councils of the towns had heard of his victories. They all feared Athens' power now and they lauded the Athenian leader who had restored the Attican Hegemony. The Councils were eager to implore the protection of Athens; they were glad to pay tribute. Alcibiades returned with a hundred talents of silver to Samos. He stayed there a while, took twenty triremes, and then he sailed for Athens.

Alcibiades sailed from island to island in the Aegean Sea, passing by Mykonos, Delos and Andros and staying at several cities in the islands, receiving triumphs everywhere he moored. After Andros, Antiochus directed the Harmonia and the fleet to Cape Sounion.

Alcibiades stood once more at the prow of the Harmonia while she sailed homewards. He stood in the strong wind, which tore at this chiton. Antiochus went up to him, for Alcibiades had stood there for almost an entire day without moving. He stopped behind Alcibiades. Alcibiades became aware of his presence.

Alcibiades did not turn but asked, 'what date are we at Athens?'

Antiochus told him.

Then, Antiochus said, 'won't you come ton the middle of the ship? It is cold in the full wind, here!'

Alcibiades at first didn't answer. He continued to stare at the waves of the Sea.

He said, turning to Antiochus, 'Antiochus, steer for Cythera over the island of Cythnes.'

Antiochus was astonished. 'Cythera? That is down Laconia! To the south of the Peloponnesos! I thought we were going to Athens! From Cythnes to Laconia is sailing a very long time in the open Sea. That is dangerous with our fleet! Think about the men. If we are caught in a storm, we will lose ships, for sure.'

'From Cythnes sail to Hermione or Troezen in the Peloponnesos, and follow then the coast of Lacedaemon southwards. That will avoid us sailing in the open Sea.'

'Yes. What are we going to do at Cythera? What shall I tell the men? What about Athens?'

'We are not going to Cythera. That was only the direction. We are going to Gytheum.'

'Gytheum? Have you gone mad? That is the harbour of Sparta! What are we going to Gytheum for? It is dangerous there! We shall be sailing to our deaths!'

Alcibiades replied patiently, 'no, it is not dangerous there. The Spartans have no fleet. It is too early to sail to Athens. We have to wait for Thrasyllus and Theramenes and the main fleet. I have things to do at Gytheum. I want to know whether the Spartans are building a new fleet and how many ships they have are preparing.'

Antiochus did not ask more questions. The answers he received made no sense, anyway. Alcibiades did not really have to wait for his co-generals. Not unless he was scared to death to enter Piraeus by himself, alone, and Antiochus had never heard of Alcibiades being scared of a challenge, if there was one at Athens. If Alcibiades wanted to spend some time, why at Gytheum? To look at Spartan triremes? Alcibiades could send one spy on foot a lot easier into the harbour over land from Athens and yet get better and more detailed information. None of these answers were the right ones, but obviously, Alcibiades did not want to share his real reasons. Alcibiades stepped past Antiochus without looking at him. He went to the middle of the trireme, cut himself a piece of bread and he ate slowly, meticulously, still thinking. Antiochus cursed in his beard, but he went to the helmsman and turned the direction of the ship. The other triremes followed.

A few days later, Alcibiades's triremes turned around the most southerly cape of Laconia, sailing proudly and defiantly towards Gytheum. The alarm must have been sounded in Sparta by now, for the coast guards must have warned the city of the arrival of an Athenian fleet along their land. The Athenian fleet arrived at Gytheum in the afternoon. Alcibiades made the ships drop anchors to the west of Gytheum, very near the coast of Laconia, almost at the beach. He still did not confide in Antiochus, and Antiochus refrained from asking further questions. Antiochus was absolutely wondering what Alcibiades was up to. He admired his leader once more, though, for which Athenian fleet had ever dared to taunt the Spartans thus?

Alcibiades did not go to sleep that evening. When night came, he ordered a small barge to be put into the water, and he stepped into it with two rowers. He was dressed in clothes which were not typical of any Hellenic city. He only wore a coarse chiton and a rough, wide himation, and a cape which he could hold over his head to protect himself from the rain.

Alcibiades shouted to Antiochus, 'if I am not back within ten days, leave! If you are attacked, defend the fleet. Try to stay here, or to come back to here, so that I can see you. Come here every day just before nightfall. You are in command of the fleet. Take no initiatives to attack anything Peloponnesian, however. Just stay here and do nothing. I will not be long.'

He took some food in baskets for the rowers of the barge, and he showed with his arm to where the rowers had to move: straight to the beach of Laconia.

Alcibiades went on land west of Gytheum. He told the rowers to hide under large rocks and to remain there. He walked towards the harbour of Sparta. He arrived in Gytheum at dawn. He looked around and noticed an unusual bustle in the town, and he saw indeed several triremes being built, maybe ten ships, not more. Several squadrons of Spartiates patrolled in the harbour. The alarm had been given, and the Spartans feared an incursion of the Athenians. Perioecic guards stood on duty everywhere.

Alcibiades drew his cape over his head as if to protect himself from the brilliance of the sun. He spotted several Spartiates he had known a few years before. It was indeed dangerous for him to be here, observant men might recognise him. Alcibiades wanted to reach Sparta itself!

He strolled along the quays, and found a merchant who was loading wagons with goods to bring to Sparta. He asked for transport. He paid for his place on the wagon

with a Daric coin. Darics, Persian coins with the effigy of Darius, were quite common at Gytheum. The Laconian might have thought he was a merchant travelling to Sparta. Alcibiades jumped on a wagon loaded with wine amphorae. The wagons were driven by oxen, they advanced slowly. When the wagons stopped, which happened often on the way, Alcibiades walked some distance and ate a piece of bread alone, so that he did not have to answer questions of curious men. He arrived at the outskirts of Sparta only the next day, when dawn spread over the city.

Alcibiades drove no further in the wagon than the outskirts of Sparta. He then jumped from the wagon without warning the drivers, and made his way rapidly on side tracks into Sparta.

His aim was Cynisca's house and stables. He had not long to walk. He kept on his hood, for in the far he saw the military mess halls of the Spartiates, and he wanted not to encounter a Spartiate who might know his way, and have afterthoughts about the hooded figure he was. He walked, but met nobody. He arrived at the side-street that led to Cynisca's house. He prayed for some luck now. If Cynisca was not in, he might have to wait for her return, and if she did not return at all within a day, how would he be able to contact Timaea? He would have to be a thief in the night to enter her house, without the advantage of being able to spy on who happened to be inside Timaea's house. What if Agis was in? How many guards would be at the house? Getting into the house would be utmost risky, then. He wasn't sure he wanted to take such a risk.

When he arrived at the horse training fields around Cynisca's house, he saw quite a few changes to the premises. Cynisca had added several stables in front of the old ones. More horses than before grazed in the fields, and even from far, Alcibiades could tell the horses were of much better quality than when he had first arrived in Sparta. A few animals were munching their barley and wheat in the stables. They were well looked after. Not much had changed to the house, though. Several people worked in the stables, and Alcibiades looked around, truly spying at first. How could he approach the house without being seen?

He turned around the house, and saw a chariot race at full speed, one chariot drawn by four running horses racing on a track near the forest. The chariot raced towards him, throwing a cloud of fine dust behind it in the dry air. It ran in a well-delineated stadium, especially built for horse-contests.

Cynisca had made her a new, fine ground for horse-racing. About four chariots could race side by side here, and the tracks were as long as Olympia's. Cynisca owned more land around her house that he had suspected. The chariot-driver arrived close now. Alcibiades recognised the chariot-driver. She still had a delicate, slender figure but she directed her swift horses with better skill. She had learned a lot, thought Alcibiades.

The driver was of course Cynisca. He approached the moat of the hippodrome along the tracks, and stepped on top of the mounds. When he arrived, Cynisca rode past him but she gave him only a quick look. She could not possibly have recognised him, for he was still hooded. Yet, Cynisca let her horses run loose for a few paces, then she turned her head in his direction, and she tugged furiously at the reins, with all her might, to stop the chariot. The horses halted only at the other side of the tracks. She made the chariot and the horses turn and drove the chariot up to Alcibiades. She tried to peer inside his hood, but he drew the cape deeper over his face.

He heard her shout though, 'for all the gods of Olympus, is that you, Athenian?'

‘Yes, it is I,’ he merely answered.

She recognised his voice distinctly.

She cried, ‘step on the chariot, you dumbest of fools! And keep your cape on!’

Alcibiades stepped down the moat. Several slaves and perioeci workers were looking at him now. It was not usual for Cynisca, their mistress, to take up a stranger on her cart. Cynisca rode her chariot slowly on. Alcibiades stood beside her. She rode close to the house. She stopped her horses and pushed Alcibiades against the wooden posts of the gates of her courtyard. She called a slave to take over the chariot. Then she shoved Alcibiades into the aulé, into a very small room contiguous to the gates; the room had no door.

She said, ‘wait here, Athenian! Hide against the wall. Do not take off your hood until I tell you!’

She ran into the aulé and started to shout orders. She called for everybody to leave the house, men and women alike, for she wanted to be alone. The slaves did not wait for a second command. They knew the changing moods of Cynisca and her fits of black anger. Two women and a man ran out of kitchen and rooms, out of the gates.

When the servants were gone, Cynisca closed the gates and blocked them. Then she remained standing firmly in the middle of the courtyard with her fists on her hips. She did not shout anymore.

She said, almost whispering, ‘you can come out now, you rat of an Athenian!’

Alcibiades stepped out of the room, feeling more than silly. He took off his cape and hood, and held them in his left hand. He looked at Cynisca. She was a little older, not much, a little more sunburnt and a little tougher, more man-like still, but she was the same Cynisca. She was of the kind of woman that aged well and all the exercises had improved her body. She had preserved her lean, gracious demeanour and the good, angular, angry looks that appealed to him. Alcibiades liked strong women with a mind of their own, and Cynisca was the best specimen he had met so far of that type. She had lost nothing of her muscles either, but her breasts were heavier and her hips more alluring, now.

He came near to her, ready to take her in his arms. When he opened his arms, she suddenly turned away from him and with all the power of her strong though small fists, she knocked him down.

Alcibiades had never been hit so badly by a hand. He had avoided boxing in the games. He knew how to wrestle, and he could box if need be, but he had rarely needed to do that in battles. He sank to his knees, numbed for a moment, and she kicked him over with a forceful thrust of her left leg and foot. He felt the tip of the leather boot in the middle of his lungs and he gasped from the impact. He fell as long as he was in the sand of the courtyard.

He expected more kicks, but he only heard her vociferate, ‘you double-crossing devious traitor, Spartan killer, mad cheating dog, whoremonger, bastard liar, dung-eating Athenian scum! I ought to kill you now, or hand you over to Lysander to have you cut up in a hundred little pieces of rotten flesh and corrupted bones! How dare you come here?’

Alcibiades still remained lying on the ground, but he ventured to sit upright when the kicks did not come anymore. He expected to be kicked again, so he held his arms in front of him. Then he felt his chin. Was it still at the end of his face?

He grinned.

‘You are as pretty as I remembered you, lovely Cynisca, renewed image of beautiful, gentle Helena. How have you been?’

‘Don’t you dare to grin at me, scum. What have you been doing, hey? Cheating and killing Spartans, you have!’

‘I have done what I had to do, Cynisca.’

He came up and stood before her. She was closer to weeping than to anger, and her fists were no more on her hips but they hung along her body, as if lifeless. He approached her and took her in his arms. She let him hug her. She cried in long, pathetic sobs. She put her arms around him too.

After a while, with her head still on his shoulders, she said, ‘I missed you so much, Alcibiades!’

She stopped crying, and they both moved frantically and hard their hands over their bodies. Alcibiades felt her muscles quiver under his fingers. He reached her breasts and they hardened to him. He drew her chiton open, to see the white flesh of the body of her breast. He drew further and tore her chiton away, until she was naked. He felt between her legs. She pushed her breasts onto him. They sank to the ground. He kept her under him. He pinned her in the sand. She tore also at his clothes to feel his skin. He opened her legs and he looked at her sex covered with the ample black hair he knew she had. Then he entered her, rapidly, hard and impatiently, and she gasped from the pain because she was not ready yet, but she let him. He pushed and turned inside her until he felt her soften and moisten. She moved around his member and sucked it deeper into her. She pushed against his loins. Then they convulsed together. He kept stroking her breast and hips a while, then lay on top of her, crushing her to the sand, exhausted and spent but happy. He drew out of her after a while, and lay next to her, drawing together the rests of his torn chiton. Orange-coloured sand clung to their bodies.

Cynisca’s eyes widened, as if she was only now conscious of his presence. She got up, walked naked into the house. She came back a few moments later with a new chiton on. She threw another chiton to him.

‘You disgusting liar and cheater,’ she said. ‘Why did I let you do that? Why did I let you take once more your pleasure from me? Sit down!’

She pushed him on a couch in the aulé. She sat next to him, drawing her hands through her hair. She looked at him as if she wanted to devour him. It took her quite some time before she was ready to talk.

‘What have you come here for?’ she asked. ‘You have a nerve! Anybody who recognises you or who might have the slightest suspicion that you might be in Sparta will have you thrown in prison and the same day you will be executed. What came into you?’

‘I was in the Propontis. I am on my way to Athens. This is the first time I could be in the neighbourhood. I am a general of the army now, and I will be general of Athens soon. I may not see you back soon. It was my only occasion to meet with you. I had to do this. I longed for you. You were always on my mind. I am not sorry to have made love to you. I love you. There is nothing more to say. I have other women I love, in the Chersonese, but I wanted to hold you, and Timaea, just once.’

‘You scared Sparta to death! You came with a fleet of Athenian war triremes right under our noses, to Gytheum. The Spartiates think you will attack Gytheum, your fleet only waiting for the right moment, near our harbour. The Spartiates do not know

who leads your fleet, though they suspect it is you. Who other would have the daring and the courage to taunt us thus?’

‘I did not come to attack Gytheum. I came to see you. Will you help me to meet Timaea and Leotychidas?’

‘Leotychidas, he! So that is why you came back! You want to see your son. You had better forget about that, you know. Agis is accepting him, slowly but surely, as his own son.’

‘I did not come here just to see Leotychidas. I came in the first place for you and Timaea. Will you go and fetch her? I do not have much time. My fleet may be attacked by Spartiate triremes, soon. I did not come here to fight!’

Cynisca laughed contemptuously. ‘Your ships will not be attacked, Athenian. By what would they be attacked? By skiffs? We have no fleet. Not yet! A few ships are being built at Gytheum, but most of our triremes will come from Pharnabazus’s shipyards, from Antandros for instance. You have time!’

‘No, I have no time,’ Alcibiades replied. ‘I also have to be back in Athens at a certain date.’

‘All right. I will get Timaea. I cannot promise you anything about Leotychidas, though.’

‘Wait,’ Alcibiades dais.

Cynisca had already risen from the couch. He drew her nearer to him and kissed her eyes, nose and lips. He felt again over all her body.

‘I need to remember you better. You are so lovely. You are so strong, so lean, and so hard, yet so fine! You nearly dislocated my chin. I saw your horses. You do well. You have been successful. How I love you! I desire your body, and I would like to enter your mind. I love you.’

He felt her hips again, her arms, her breasts. She was uncomfortable with the tenderness. When he became insistent once more on her breasts and too hard with his kisses, she withdrew and held him at a distance.

She said, ‘yes. My horses are better now. I breed horses for Sparta and I get paid well. My chariots run fast! I win prices in contests. I am really still preparing for the Olympic Games. In a couple of years I will be truly ready.’

She paused. ‘I love you too. I shouldn’t, but I do. I shall go to Timaea. I don’t know whether I can get Timaea to come to here. Tomorrow might be more difficult. My slaves may become suspicious of a male presence in my house. I have to go.’

Cynisca wriggled out of his embrace. She entered her house and came back out a little later with a himation on her shoulders.

She said while she stepped to the gate, ‘I will ride on horseback. I will lock the gates from the outside and allow nobody from my slaves and workers in, but one never knows. You had better go to my bedroom until I call you. There are stairs next to my room, to the far left. If somebody other than me enters the house, go down those stairs. There is a small door at the end. That will lead you into the woods. It is an escape. You will not be seen. I will come back as soon as I can.’

She left through the doors of the house. Alcibiades went to the bedroom, as Cynisca had told. He looked for the stairs she had indicated. He opened a small door at the end, and he saw he was indeed very close to the woods behind the house. Yes, he could escape through here if the house was attacked. He went to the bed and dozed in. In the evening, he heard voices in the aulé. His name was being called. He stood up, went to the corridor that opened onto the courtyard and saw Cynisca, Timaea and a

little boy. He ran down the stairs. He ran in Timaea's arms. Cynisca led the boy in the kitchen.

Alcibiades and Timaea embraced and embraced, kissed and hugged. Timaea dug her nails into his back. She laughed and wept. She drew Alcibiades after her, almost immediately, up the stairs, to another bedroom. She threw off her clothes and showed herself triumphantly naked to him. She was the image of the most generous, voluptuous courtesan, temptation and sensuality to the fullest. She had a full body now, filled in all the places with soft flesh and round curves. Her breasts were very large but they still pointed their red nipples upwards, and her belly was flat despite her past pregnancy and birth-giving. She crossed her legs on her sex, but the long curves made her all the more desirable. She stepped forward, drew off his chiton and loin cloth and held him, skin to skin. Then they made love, passionately, fervently and eagerly. She touched him with her hands and drew her long nails along his back when he lay above her and while he entered her.

'Every night I dream of you making love to me,' Timaea sighed with a husky voice. She drew him deeper in her and worked on his member with her loins. They reached climax together. Afterwards, they were drenched in sweat.

Alcibiades and Timaea remained lying on the bed. They talked. Timaea told him how she had given birth to a fine boy. Agis had reproached her for her lover, but after her pleading and her arguments to the contrary, he was not sure anymore who the boy's father was. There were no other children in his household. Agis had no children with his mistresses. He despaired ever having other children. She said Agis rather inclined towards recognising Leotychidas as his successor. Agis allowed Leotychidas to call him father.

Timaea expressed in Cynisca's house her lasting love for Alcibiades, and he explained to her how much he had longed to see her back, as well as Leotychidas. She was very proud then, and pleased. No man had risked his life thus, only to see her. She swung her arms around his neck, and their bodies intertwined once more.

Night fell.

Alcibiades asked Timaea, 'when do you have to go back?'

'Agis was not in when Cynisca arrived. Yes, he is in Sparta for a while. He will stay a few months here, and only then return to Decelea. I told my slaves I would be at Cynisca's house until tomorrow. If I am not back in the late afternoon, somebody may come here to look for me.'

'Show me my son,' Alcibiades implored.

They washed a little, quickly, and went downstairs. Cynisca was in the kitchen.

'I put Leotychidas to sleep,' she said.

Alcibiades went to the room with Timaea and he saw his son sleep. The boy looked more like his mother than like him.

'He has your eyes and hair,' Timaea showed. 'He is smart, alert. He learns quickly. He talks well. He is courageous. He knows no fear. He will be like you. But he will be a Spartiate.'

'Yes, he looks like his mother,' Alcibiades remarked. 'That is fine. I bless him. May Zeus and Apollo give him peace and luck in his life. I pray Zeus to protect him, Artemis to give him strength and swiftness, and Apollo to provide him with beauty and intelligence. If Athena grants me anything whatsoever, I ask her to give him

wisdom. She can condemn me and I ask nothing of her for me, but I ask her to protect Leotychidas.’

‘I pray Menelaos and Helena to give him a good life and to guard him,’ Timaea whispered. ‘I do not wish him to be a King. I wish him love however, and peace.’ Timaea drew Alcibiades out of the room, and they joined Cynisca.

‘The noise you two make,’ Cynisca grumbled. ‘My house trembled like during an earthquake.’

Timaea looked embarrassed. ‘You always joke, Cynisca!’

They sat together, the three of them. They drank wine and ate cakes. They talked through most of the night. They slept a short while before dawn, and woke but a little later. Leotychidas ran around, but Timaea and Alcibiades had gotten out of the bedroom, so that the boy did not see them lying together. They ate some bread in the courtyard. Alcibiades was presented to Leotychidas as a friend of Cynisca’s, one Tacidas. While Leotychidas was with them, they chatted about non-consequential matters. Alcibiades relished being with his son, more than he had ever liked being with his Athenian son. He observed the boy insistently.

Around noon, Cynisca asked, ‘when do you have to go back?’

‘Soon,’ he replied. ‘Can you lend me a horse? I would like to reach Gytheum in the evening or in the night.’

‘Sure,’ she answered. ‘I will tell you where you can leave the horse at Gytheum. That way there will be no suspicions.’

They stayed silent now. It would soon be time to say goodbye.

Alcibiades said, ‘I have to thank you. I did not really expect you to welcome me. I have become Athenian again, though not entirely yet. I do not know if I will ever see you again. I sincerely hope so. It will be possible if Athens and Sparta make peace, but that will only happen when much sorrow will be caused to one of our cities. I also do not know what my fate will be. Very few leaders and polises seem to like me; yet I have friends everywhere, too. My home seems to be in Thrace, though my heart will always be in Athens and in Sparta. I wish you well. Win the Games a little for me too, Cynisca, and take well care of our boy, Timaea. He is a fine boy. Love and happiness are but short in our lives. Suffering is the lot reserved to us by the gods. But our love is more intense than for most of the humans. Maybe the gods are jealous of us for that.’

They continued to talk for a while, and to hold each other. Alcibiades talked a little alone with his son, aching for not being allowed to say who he was. Finally, he offered three of the finest Thracian jewels in gold he had kept from Seuthes’s treasure.

Alcibiades asked Cynisca for the horse. He embraced Timaea for the last time and went with Cynisca to the stables, where she gave him one of her black stallions.

‘In front of the harbour is a wide street,’ Cynisca said. ‘Two streets on the right of that one is a temple of Artemis. Three houses further from that temple, ask for Cynisca. Leave the horse there.’

‘Good,’ Alcibiades replied.

He embraced Cynisca and continued, ‘you are strongest. Will you look after Leotychidas too? Timaea is not as strong as you.’

‘Of course,’ she replied. ‘That goes without asking.’

She added, ‘anyhow, there is one place where we can see each other, war or no war, if only every four years. Come to the Olympic Games! I will go to every Games from now. I just might bring Leotychidas with me, maybe even Timaea.’

‘Good. Yes, I will come too. If I can.’

Alcibiades jumped on the horse and he galloped as fast as he could back to Gytheum, for he had to suppress the emotions that welled up in him.

‘No,’ he thought. ‘I feel it in my bones. I had to come here because it is the last time. I will not see them back.’

He rode on.

Alcibiades rode along the river at the gallop, as fast as his horse could support. The horse only walked along certain stretches, and then he urged the animal rapidly on. He drank from a small spring of fresh water on the road. He did not rest until he arrived at Gytheum, in the evening.

Spartiate squadrons patrolled everywhere in the harbour. Very late in the evening, when he could not be recognised in the falling darkness, he walked to the house indicated to him by Cynisca. He knocked and asked a surprised, frightened slave whether this was the house of Cynisca. When the slave answered yes, Alcibiades handed the horse over to the man, asking him to take care of it. He walked then on to the outskirts of the harbour, along the coast, westwards, but avoiding the beaches and hiding as much as he could in the bushes and under the trees. Spartan troops also patrolled along the coast. He avoided those, each time hiding from them. When he really could not see anymore where he was stepping, he stopped and rested hidden behind a rock. He slept.

At the first light of dawn, he made his way again to his fleet. He saw the triremes still anchored along the shores. He found the barge and the two sailors. They rowed him back to the Harmonia.

Antiochus was waiting for him, pacing on the deck.

Before even the barge was at the ship, Alcibiades shouted, ‘get the anchors up, Antiochus. We sail for Athens!’

The twenty triremes of Alcibiades’s small fleet left Gytheum, unchallenged by any Spartan fleet. Antiochus prepared to attack the Spartan harbour, but Alcibiades refused. He had seen about thirty triremes under construction, but much worse than that, hundreds of Spartiates and many other troops guarded the environs of the harbour. With his few troops Alcibiades could not have won from these Spartan forces at Gytheum. He would have to set his sailors on land, only lightly armed, to destroy the Spartan ships in the yards, risking complete defeat from the Spartiates. Alcibiades ordered his fleet to sail north, along the coast of Laconia and the Argolid. Alcibiades sailed to Cape Sounion.

Zea

Alcibiades was still apprehensive of his return to Athens. He had heard at Samos that the elections for general had been postponed this year. The season was almost in summer, now. It seemed that the Athenian Council was waiting for the return of the fleet of the Propontis.

Even before Alcibiades had sailed past Laconia entirely, his fleet encountered an Athenian fast messenger trireme. The trierarch of the ship signalled that he had messages for Alcibiades. The man came on board the *Harmonia*. He told Alcibiades that he had been sent by Theramenes and Thrasylus. The generals would be five days from now outside the harbour of Piraeus, in the open Sea. They would be waiting five days more for Alcibiades. If Alcibiades did not arrive within that period, they would enter the harbour at dawn of the last day. The trierarch also told him that the Athenian Assembly still had not held the election for generals, but would proceed to that after the arrival of the fleet, to let also the citizens of the army take part in the election. Alcibiades had ample time to reach Athens, but he would have to go on land a man still condemned to death and laden with shame. The trierarch was a man of much experience and knowledge of the character of people. He sensed Alcibiades's hesitation.

The man smiled inwardly and added off-handedly, 'the Assembly has accepted a decree however, proposed by Critias son of Callaeschrus, to recall you from banishment.'

Alcibiades took a deep breath then. If the people had recalled him, it was not to have him murdered at his return! Alcibiades thanked the trierarch with a smile. He also would be able to enter the harbour of Athens at the date chosen.

He sailed with his fleet to some distance in front of the military port of Zea, and he was the first to arrive there, around noon. He dropped anchors and waited in the open Sea. In the afternoon, the first triremes of Theramenes and Thrasylus arrived. They towed behind them many merchant ships, captured in the Propontis. Before evening, the entire Athenian fleet had assembled.

Theramenes and Thrasylus came on board of the *Harmonia* to discuss their entry into Piraeus. They brought with them a merchant ship laden with spoils of the war. There was not much to discuss, for all agreed to be led by Alcibiades's *Harmonia*. The *Harmonia* would hoist the purple sail. After the *Harmonia* would row the ships of Theramenes and Thrasylus. The triremes would be adorned with the shields and the armours of the Peloponnesians and of the Persians they had defeated. The hoplites and light troops would stand in panoply of armour in neat ranks on the deck. The commanders would also put on their best armour. The fleet would row to Zea, but a number of triremes would have to sail for Munichia, for even Zea was not large enough to contain so many ships. The merchant ships would be sent partially to the commercial harbour of Piraeus, Kantharos. Alcibiades preferred to moor at Zea. They had an issue about the date. Theramenes and Thrasylus wanted to sail straight in at dawn of the next day. Alcibiades preferred to wait one day more. He insisted strongly on the waiting, but he refused to say why. He just stated that he needed the extra day to prepare his fleet. They would have some more time to organise their departure, decorate their ships, and to prepare their men. The generals did not really care about the time or day, and if Alcibiades wanted to wait a day they were quite willing to accommodate him. They also preferred to have a long triumph rather than a short one. Athens would know that the fleet had arrived. The people could see the fleet on anchor in the far, hundreds of ships floating peacefully on the wave, lying in wait. Expectancy would be high. More people would be present to welcome them with a day more.

Two days later, in the morning, the fleet prepared to sail into the harbours of Athens. Theramenes had sent a ship in advance to warn the authorities of the port.

Preparations would be made in the three harbours of Piraeus to receive the triremes and the transport ships. Theramenes gave word to his trierarchs that most of his own ships would moor in Munichia, whereas the gross of the fleet would row to Zea. Alcibiades gave the sign to row for the harbours.

Alcibiades was still in a dark mood. He had never dreaded battles so much as entering Piraeus now. Yet, when his rowers arrived at the mole of the quays of Zea, he commanded them to raise his purple sail. The Harmonia rowed very slowly into the calm water of Zea. Alcibiades stood at the prow of the ship, at his usual place, with bare head, but with a sword and a shield on his back, dressed with a bronze and gold breastplate with ivory inlays. He was very anxious. His ship was decorated with the shields of all the peoples of Thrace and the Hellespont, and behind him, to his left and right, rowed the ships of Theramenes and Thrasyllus, equally magnificently decorated.

Alcibiades looked at these ships, and he saw Theramenes on one side and Thrasyllus at the other side, standing like him at the prows of their ships, waving at him. It was certainly one of the most famous and magnificent returns of a large fleet ever in Athens, but still Alcibiades bit his lips. Would somebody be waiting for him? Would hoplites be waiting to take him prisoner? Was there an official delegation of the Council to take him in custody? His trireme arrived at the quays and his men rowed to a place closest to the end of the harbour, closest to the road leading to Athens.

The Athenian fleet saw people running on the quays, hundreds of people. The crowd followed the leading ships as they slid into the harbour of Zea. The people shouted, cheered and waved at the ships. Alcibiades stayed a few tens of feet from the quays, but he steered along the people and advanced to their height. He saw no hoplites among the crowd. There was much cheering on land. He saw no angry people. The crowd laughed, gesticulated and called out for the sailors. Not just men waited there, but also many women and children. The people were actually providing a triumph indeed for the fleet!

Then the crowd must have spotted him on board the first trireme, for they shouted his name time after time, 'Alcibiades, Alcibiades!'

Alcibiades waved to the crowd, and the crowd waved back and shouted harder.

Alcibiades laughed then, openly, and he became very excited. The people had come for him after all! They had come for him, and called his name. He looked in front of him, though, peering out to see who waited for him, there, and whether hoplites in armour had come. The crowd was thickest in front of his ship.

In the middle of a dense crowd of men stood his cousin Euryptolemus. Alcibiades recognised other friends, even Callias. Thrasybulus was there and also Archidemus, who was a leader of the democratic party of Athens now, but also a man who had been sympathetic with him in the past. Almost everybody he knew from his hetaira stood there, and many sympathisers of long ago. They waved and shouted at him. There were a few hoplites, guards of the harbour amidst them, but these men saluted, waved and cheered as much. The men were much too relaxed and enthusiastic to have come to arrest him. Alcibiades saw Members of the Council, magistrates and judges and even an archon of Athens, but none of the men wore arms. He saw no Scythian guards, no archers. Alcibiades relaxed.

He steered his trireme directly at the place where Euryptolemus stood. Before the ship was entirely alongside the quay, Alcibiades jumped from the Harmonia onto the stones of Zea.

Euryptolemus caught him and said, 'hi, uncle. Welcome in Athens!'

Alcibiades was back in Athens after more than seven years of absence, nearing on eight. He set foot in Piraeus.

Alcibiades was the first commander of the Athenian fleet to set foot on the quays of Piraeus.

The cheers grew in intensity and 'hail Alcibiades,' was cried everywhere.

'Alcibiades, saviour of Athens!' the crowd shouted.

Alcibiades's friends stood around him, patted his shoulders, congratulated him and protected him. He saw that several men wore swords on their backs after all, and daggers. His friends drew the crowd open, pushing him through the mass of people. Alcibiades saluted men he knew. Friends came out of the crowd to embrace him.

He advanced very slowly through the narrow streets of Piraeus. He suspected all the citizens of Athens had come to the harbour now, to greet the fleet. Everywhere in the streets he had to shake hands or let him be touched.

Theramenes and Thrasyllus had reached the quays likewise, and they now ran up to him. He waited for them. Their amazement was large. The crowd had no eyes for the generals, only for Alcibiades. They only shared in his triumph. When there was a little more open space among the people, Alcibiades stepped towards the long walls, succeeded by Theramenes, Thrasyllus and Thrasybulus. They all shook hands, laughed, saluted, waved.

Young girls and boys ran towards them at the beginning of the long walls, wearing flowers and garlands in their hands. Alcibiades undid his armour, his sword and shield, and gave them to Euryptolemus. The children covered him with flowers, put garlands around his neck. Alcibiades took a boy in his arms so that the boy could put a garland on him and he walked forward with the child in his arms. The children pushed flowers in his hands and in his belt. His co-generals also received these honours.

All the way through the long corridor leading to the Piraeic Gate of Athens, people waved and applauded. Athens saluted thus its liberator, its genius of war, the man who was more than a man and who could divert from the people all the evils of defeat. Alcibiades cherished his triumph between the walls of Piraeus leading to Athens.

Alcibiades's triumph seemed to last an eternity. The generals and Alcibiades's friends accompanied him to the end of the long walls, to the gate in the defensive walls of Athens. The crowd continued to grow in numbers. Where was he going?

He turned to Euryptolemus, and asked, 'where are we going to? Do I go to my former house?'

'No,' Euryptolemus replied. 'Your house has been sold by the polis. I propose you stay in my house. My wife waits for us. A room has been prepared for you. The Council wants to hear you this afternoon. An Assembly has been called together for tomorrow morning. You will have to attend to those.'

'Good,' Alcibiades agreed. 'Bring me to your house, then.'

They continued to walk through a throng of people. Alcibiades looked all the time at the Pnyx, at the acropolis. He could not get enough of the marvellous and so familiar view. The sun shone brightly on the white, splendid marble of the buildings and on the cliffs where Athens was born. He felt however also somewhat as a stranger.

‘What happens to me?’ Alcibiades thought. ‘I assumed I would feel like I was finally coming home, and yet I do not. This town is so familiar, and yet I do not feel at home. Now that I am here, I do not crave for this place anymore! I like the triumph, which is a kind of vengeance, and a victory over the men that banished me and vilified me, but would I want to stay and live here? I don’t think so! I lived in so many marvellous, wide, powerful landscapes in Thrace, among the islands in the Sea, in the forests of Ionia, the beaches of the Propontis and the hills of the Bosphorus. I feel at home there, in the wide. I can breathe there. I cannot breathe here, not in this crowded and corrupted mess of miserable little cubicles of bricks and wood, which are called houses. The acropolis, yes. There I might feel at home. But there reigns Athena. Though not today she reigns! This is my day. Today she stands naked and hidden.’ The crowd pushed him on. Alcibiades thus reached the end of the long walls in this state of mind. He was above Athens now, above the need to be at home here, for this seemed not really home anymore. He had been away from the town for too long. His place now was the hegemony. The town was too small for him. He could govern this hegemony out of Neon-Teichos. He did not need Athens anymore. He needed her power, of course, her admiration, her essence, not the mass of stones.

Alcibiades walked in triumph through the dirty, small streets of Athens. He reached the agora. He remembered the stalls and the people selling him, a long time ago, the goods of the world. The stalls were empty when he arrived. He noticed the fine buildings, the splendid stoa’s with their columns and paintings, the temples, and the statues of heroes and gods in the marketplace.

The merchants hurried now to open their businesses. The agora filled with people. A few Scythian guards stood aside and lingered impassively to the side, under the trees. Things were pushed into Alcibiades’s hands: a jewel, a chiton, even a pair of shoes, a quail, and a fish. He handed the things over to Euryptolemus and to his friends. He shook the hands of the merchants, men and women. He embraced the ones he knew from the years hence. He walked. He had seen almost all his friends and acquaintances at one moment or other, this day, but he had not seen Socrates welcoming him.

Euryptolemus brought him to a house in the better suburb of Athens. The wife of Alcibiades’s cousin was a small woman, well fed, plump, but overjoyed to have such an important guest in her house. She was a pretty, happy woman, and Alcibiades remarked the affection between her and his cousin. They talked for a while. They ate bread, cakes and a delicious baked fish. They had small pieces of fowl and boiled vegetables, olives of various sorts, and an apple at the end. Euryptolemus’s wife served, and she refused to let a slave come near the two men. Then they showed Alcibiades his room. A bath had been prepared too, for it would be impossible to go to the bath-houses today. When he looked out of the window of his room, he saw that a crowd was still waiting and chatting outside. The people saw him at the window and they cheered and waved.

‘We will go with you to the Council, Alcibiades!’ they shouted.

Alcibiades waved back, and then he quickly withdrew. He found water in the room, plenty of water. He washed a first time, and then he took a bath downstairs. He went back to his room. Somebody knocked on the door. When he opened, slaves entered wearing his chests of clothes and personal things, which had been on his trireme. He let the chests be placed against a wall. He changed chitons. He rested.

He woke at new knocks on the door. It was his cousin.

‘Alcibiades, it is time to go to the Council!’

‘I’m coming. Wait, Euryptolemus. What am I to expect from the Council?’

Euryptolemus hesitated. ‘I do not really know. You have seen the crowds. You are the hero of Athens. The Council will not go against the will of the people of our polis. They would be torn apart. Besides, have you not noticed? Most of the Members of the Council were at Piraeus, cheering with us. Not all members are friends of ours, but most are. I guess the Council will wait with decisions, and will first need to hear some words of you claiming your innocence in the affairs of the parodies of the Mysteries of Eleusis. You will have to speak well on that subject, yet soberly. They will ask no more than a claim of innocence. There will be no new judgement. Everybody is all too eager to hear you say you did not participate in any parody of religious feasts. You will be cleared. You have been proposed to the generalship, whatever the Council decides, and your friends are in the committee. The people will elect you for general tomorrow. That also will weigh on their opinions and decisions.’

‘All right. Thank you, cousin. Also, I have not been able to thank you yet for everything you did for me in Athens while I was banished. I will not forget that. Thank you for looking after my son, and thank you for the letters. I will say thank you to your wife too.’

‘There is no need to thank me, Alcibiades. We are family. It was a pleasure. Oh yes, I forgot! I have another guest in the house this evening. Axiochus is in Athens. We will have a bowl of wine together.’

‘If Axiochus is your guest, cousin, one bowl will not be enough!’ Alcibiades laughed. Axiochus was a man he also truly looked forward to meet again.

Council

Alcibiades stepped out of the gates of Euryptolemus’s house. The crowd was still there. When he walked on, cheers were heard again. The people knew he would go to the Bouleutêrion. They wanted to accompany him. He was astonished how many they were. These people actually protected him!

He recognised a man, who said, ‘I was with you at Delium. You helped me escape. Without you, we would have been dead.’

Another shouted, ‘if you had been with us in Sicily all the way, we would have won!’

Yet another cried, ‘I delivered you the best fish when you lived in Athens!’

‘Well done in the Hellespont,’ a man yelled.

The crowd followed him. Alcibiades was not embarrassed anymore. He liked being thus spontaneously accompanied by Athens’ citizens, and he greeted his audience at leisure. Being admired came natural to Alcibiades! He arrived with a very large group at the Bouleutêrion.

He said then, loud enough so that he could be heard also in the Council Hall, ‘friends, thank you all for having accompanied me to the Council Hall. Now please, return to your work and your houses. I cannot demand more from you. I will be fine, do not fear. Tomorrow there will be an Assembly meeting. You can help decide things tomorrow in the Ecclesia. I may have to stay quite a while, here, with the Members of the Council. Do not let me retain you! Please go home peacefully. I thank you all. I thank you!’

A few Members of the Council waited in the doors of the Hall. They had heard Alcibiades’s words clearly. They were astonished to see the crowd, then less

astonished when Alcibiades stepped out from the midst of the people. Alcibiades walked alone inside the building.

The Council Members stood relaxed. They had not come to judge and arrest Alcibiades, not to execute the judgements made so many years ago on a national hero. This meeting would be a formality.

Alcibiades entered the Hall, and he stood among the Members, shaking hands here too, and being congratulated with the successes in the Propontis and Ionia. The meeting of the Council started, announced by the herald of the House. After a few matters of no importance, Alcibiades was called to the centre of the Bouleutêrion to speak. He addressed the Members of the Council of Athens in his usual, cocksure way.

‘Honourable Members of the Council of Athens! I stand before you after many, many years of voluntary banishment, judged and even condemned for acts I did not commit. I had no part in the mutilations of the Hermae just before the disastrous expedition to Sicily. I was a leading general of that expedition. I prepared it with much zeal, for I expected so much of that campaign, as all citizens. Why would I have wanted the Hermae to be disfigured when my ships were ready to sail, to confront the dangers of the Sea and of the war? I proved in many battles that I was not afraid of dying for my country. I am a pious man. I sacrificed to the gods. Why would I have directed the anger of the gods of travel when I would sail a few days later into dangerous waters? But enough of this affair! The judges of Athens have concluded already long ago that I had nothing to do with these crimes. Slander only reached me, and condemned me! As to the parodies of the Mysteries of Eleusis, I plead innocence too. I confess nevertheless to have been a joyous young fellow in those times!’

He paused a while, for the Members of the Council looked at each other and smiled. ‘Who has not been joyous, boisterous, and happy to live in his youth, in those times of peace and opulence after the devastations of the plague? I was very young in those times! I confess I liked the gaiety and the conviviality of our symposiums. Men play games at symposiums, and actors present mimes and scenes. I think that people who do not understand our theatrical plays may easily mistake such representations for religious ceremonies. Many gods are adored, here in Athens. That is not a crime. Some of the ceremonies to the honour of oriental gods resemble our own ceremonies. I had friends among the foreigners residing in Athens, too. When the foreigners invited me to their house, they honoured their gods when they greeted us, as is their custom. There must have been such mistaking in the denunciations. I remind you of how many good men, all citizens who took to heart the defence of our polis and the ceremonies of our forefathers, were inflicted with suspicions of crimes they could not possibly have even wished to think about, let alone enact! In the frenzy of those days, of panic, fear and uncertainty about everything, it is understandable that the minds of many citizens became confused, so that doubts could be thrown on every act. The worse was thought of the most innocent scene. I was convicted before I could defend myself, though I told before I sailed that I wanted to show and prove my innocence.’ He paused again. He shifted his feet.

‘Fate has been hard on me and on my companions. The gods were jealous of us, Athenians, in those times, for we had peace then and well-being. We were powerful, and we would be gaining even more power from the most magnificent army we brought together at that moment. Could such an army, such brilliant generals, such good men, have been defeated and brought to disaster by anything else but the

jealousy of the gods? I do not doubt this! The Mysteries of Eleusis, however, remain for me and my companions the most cherished ceremony of our polis, and we have missed it dearly. Athens has been obliged to forego the ceremonies the last years. Oh yes, some procession was organised over the Sea, but our traditions have not been upheld. To show how much I honour the Mysteries, I will arrange to re-instate them! We shall walk to the Mysteries as we did in years of old, and I shall guard the procession!’

The Members of the Council whispered astonished to each other at these words. Alcibiades brought his arms above his head and asked for silence.

‘This year, Members of the Council, if the Assembly and this Council allow me, I shall guard with my men the procession to Eleusis over land. Yes, the procession will again take place over land and not by Sea, as we organised since always!’

There was again a frantic murmur among the Members of the Council. The re-enacting of the procession of the Mysteries of Eleusis right under the threat of the Spartan troops of Decelea, who would almost certainly be able to observe the procession, was a defying surprise for the Council. This man had won in the Hellespont. Could he defy the Spartiates thus also?

Alcibiades continued. ‘Yes, you heard well, venerated Members of the Boule! We will re-enact the Mysteries if the priests, the Eumolpidae and the Kerykes allow me. Athens must gain its former glory. Our army has been victorious in the Hellespont, in the Propontis and in the Bosporus, and equally in Thrace and in Ionia. Athens is now assured of its supplies. There is still much work to do, in Euboea and in Ionia. The gods willing and finally taking pity upon their servants, as we will honour them with the Mysteries, will grant us peace and protection so that we can assure the well-being of our allies and the wealth of our city. We shall continue to build and embellish our acropolis, our efforts to honour the gods. I want to be one of the proponents that can realise our greatness further, ever since my youth, and as I have ever been since I had to leave Athens.’

The Members of the Council acclaimed Alcibiades’s discourse. They shouted agreement. They shook his hands again, all. They voted on several resolutions to be brought to the Assembly, among which one to appoint Alcibiades general, one to revoke the judgement banishing him and condemning him and his companions to death. They proposed to destroy the stele of the Acropolis on which his name had been engraved in shame, and which denounced the ignominy of the parodies of the Mysteries. They voted to hand over to him an estate in compensation of his possessions in Athens, which had been confiscated by the state seven years earlier. In this mood the Council adjourned. Alcibiades and the Members talked still a long time informally about the situation of the war with Sparta and about the state of the army.

Alcibiades had to explain how the battles in the Hellespont had been won, how Selymbria and Byzantium had been taken for the Athenians. Later, the Council Members left the Bouleutêrion. The crowd that had accompanied Alcibiades had dispersed. Only a few friends still waited before the building, and to these Alcibiades told the outcome of the meeting. His companions were satisfied, and they returned home.

Virtue and Passion

Alcibiades remained standing alone in the marketplace. Many people still looked at him and saluted him, and he waved back. Then he also made his way home, and he told so to the last people around him. On his way to Euryptolemus's house, however, he changed direction and walked to the acropolis. It was late in the afternoon.

Alcibiades saw the gates of the acropolis above him. He started climb the massive stairs of Athens' citadel and religious centre. From below already, he had remarked the few additions to the temples. He stepped slowly, taking meticulously one stairs after the other, lost in memories of the Council meeting, and looking down so that he would not slip on the marble stairs of the ramp, on which one had to stride long.

When Alcibiades was almost at the top of the stairs, a familiar voice addressed him. 'Greetings, Alcibiades, the greatest of all living Athenians! I wish you well-doing!' Alcibiades looked up. He saw an old man dressed in what could only be called rags, but clean rags, leaning on a wooden staff. It was a man with protruding eyes and a snub nose and a dirty beard and wrinkles all over his sun-burnt, red face. A man with a huge belly.

'Greetings, Socrates, wisest of all men,' Alcibiades called. 'It is good to see you too!' Socrates was accompanied by two men who were in their early twenties. One was a very lean, beautiful young man, with a face of intelligence and sophistication. The other was a smaller but tougher man, with a red face that showed energy and exercise. Socrates introduced the young men to Alcibiades.

'This young man wanted to become a politician and maybe even a general, but he shall be a philosopher. His name is Plato son of Ariston. The one to my left seeks philosophy, but he shall be a general. His name is Xenophon son of Gryllus. You see virtue and passion with me, Alcibiades!'

'And which one is virtue, which one passion, Socrates?'

'That is for you to choose, Alcibiades. I am but a poor philosopher. I ask questions, I do not choose.'

'Are you sure you do not choose, Socrates?'

Alcibiades did not wait for an answer.

He said, 'you were sure I would come here today, weren't you?'

Socrates laughed finely. 'I was pretty sure, yes, Alcibiades. Let's say I rather expected it, after your meeting with the Boule. I rather thought you would climb the stairs of the acropolis, yes. I expected you earlier, however. I was leaving.'

'Why did you want to see me, Socrates? Am I not vice for you, lack of virtue? If you have virtue and passion with you, then what am I for you?'

Socrates came very near to Alcibiades and he whispered, so that his students could not hear what he said, 'you are not vice to me, Alcibiades. You are my virtue and my passion, both.'

Then Socrates stepped back again, returning to the citadel.

He went higher up and he pointed to the acropolis, saying loudly now, 'there is nothing for you there, Alcibiades! Athena is all naked and hidden! The girls, the Praxiergidae, on this twenty-first day of Thargelion, have taken off Athena's clothes. Athena is being washed and her clothes are being washed too, cleaned of the dust laid on her by the vices of the citizens of this city. Athena is hidden behind cloth, so that she sees not your triumph, and so that Athens doesn't see her nudity. This is the day

of Plynteria, the worse day of the year, when wisdom hides her face to our polis. Why have you come back this day? The Athenians say you forgot what day it was. You don't fool me, though, Alcibiades. You knew perfectly well what day it was! Why have you come back on such a day of ill omen? Did you think you could make the people forget Athena? Who is the man who dares to overshadow the gods?'

Alcibiades laughed. 'Socrates will not be fooled! Athens can be fooled but not Socrates!'

'Do not chide on me, Alcibiades. It does not suit you.'

Socrates walked up a few steps more.

He turned once more and said, 'who are you to defy the gods? Pericles also, in his last months, turned his face away from Athena and honoured other gods. Who are you, Alcmaeonides, to show such arrogance that you think you can defy the gods? Why do you, Eupatrids of Athens, defy Athena? Is she not as powerful as her father Zeus and gifted with more wisdom than the ruler of Olympus?'

'What are gods, Socrates? There is a god, Zeus, who must be one, for otherwise he would be no god. That is what you taught me, isn't it? What then is Athena? How much power has she truly? She sure has more power than humans, but just how much power has she? Should I pray to a jealous and vindictive woman? The gods are not necessary benevolent, Socrates, however much we pray and supplicate.'

'You are blaspheming, Alcibiades! I never taught you not to believe and not to honour the gods.'

'That is true, Socrates. You only ask questions and leave it up to us to choose between virtue and passion.'

'So true, Alcibiades. Look!'

Socrates pointed with his staff at Athens. The city unveiled beneath them in the red light of the setting sun.

'Look at Athens! She is yours, now. Tomorrow you will not only be elected general. You will be named Autokrator. You will have supreme authority over the army. You will be the man who can decide on any measure for the safety of this Athens, without having to refer to the Boule or to the Assembly. You alone will be charged with the conduct of the war and as Strategos Autokrator you can take any decision you deem necessary, never to be judged. Will you not be the master of Athens then? Has Athena not given you what you think you deserve? Athena brought no disasters upon you! Don't you think it were men, maybe jealous men, and yourself, who brought disaster over you? Did not Athena save you in the end?'

'Socrates, Socrates! You know what I know. Being Strategos Autokrator does not make me master of Athens. Besides, we do not even have an army worthy of that name, and you know that too, I am sure. The fleet that we, generals of the Hellespont and of Samos, brought back is a tried lot, and the ships are rotten. The fleet needs to be cleaned and restored, the men have to rest.'

'I see you have grown wise, Alcibiades.'

'Then you think I am virtuous, Socrates?'

Socrates walked down to Alcibiades, followed by his two students, until he stood very close to Alcibiades once more.

'Why does Athens make war, Alcibiades? Wars are started to acquire wealth or to defend oneself from others that want to acquire wealth. You, men of authority and men that people look up to because they think you are wiser than they and know more than they, you start wars. Then you call all the people to arms. The poor of Athens go to war so that they can earn a little more money and pay for their wives and children. The citizens go to war because they believe it is a duty to help their polis. They are

right, of course, but you, the men that know, you deceive them by words of honour and national pride. You lead them to death, deprivation and misery. You seek power and fame so that the next generations remember you, and so that you do not die entirely, by their memories. Is that not vanity? Is that virtuous? Wars are a desire and a thing of the body. I am not preoccupied with matters of the body, Alcibiades, and not with physical pleasures. The philosopher directs his attention to the soul.'

Socrates waited a while. Then he continued to speak.

'I heard you were compassionate with the people of Selymbria, of Byzantium, of Chalcedon, of Cyzicus, and of many other towns. Do you think you did well there? Were you virtuous there?'

Alcibiades's anger welled up in him. 'I did what I had to do to win the war.'

'Did you also think you had to go to Sparta, to win our war? Did you think you had to invite Agis into Decelea and have Gylippus sent to Sicily? Was it not you who started the war in Ionia for Sparta and took away so many islands and cities from us, there? The Boule has a very short memory, hasn't it?'

'I was not fighting Athens then, Socrates. I was fighting men that would have killed me instantly, without hesitation and especially without trial. I was fighting men that strangled Athens, then. Yet, Athena supported those men and let them strangle me, and in the end also strangle the city. Whenever the Assembly of citizens used not persuasion and good arguments but its absolute power to take measures, whether good or bad, against persons, would you not call that straight violence rather than law? That was what I opposed! That violence! You know that better than any other man, Socrates. And did not Athena let all that happen?'

'So that indeed was your reason to arrive on the day of Plynteria, wasn't it? Come with me, then, we will go to Athena together.'

'Athena isn't there today!'

'Oh yes, yes, she is. Come with me, Alcibiades! It is necessary!'

Socrates came further down the steps to Alcibiades. He took Alcibiades resolutely by the arm and drew him up, up the last steps to the acropolis, and through the gates. Plato and Xenophon followed them.

Socrates continued to talk.

'The soul has no clear, true view of reality, because it is constantly deceived by the senses. Observation by eyes and ears, touch and smell deceive the soul. The soul refrains from using these. It can trust only judgement by reasoning, which is its own means. You corrupt your soul by seeking pleasures, thus linking the soul to the body and making it less pure.

Yet, our soul is eternal, imperishable. We have to care for our soul because our soul learns constantly from us. Souls return to bodies after our death but souls that are impure are avoided. Your soul will wander in desolation. Your soul will share less in the divine and not dwell on the surface of the earth when it leaves you. We should control ourselves and not let us be ruled by our pleasures.'

'I do not let myself be ruled by pleasures, Socrates. What makes you think I cannot control myself?'

'You control yourself only in a devious way, as most men do! You cannot resist some pleasures, though by not resisting those, you succeed in resisting other pleasures. Is that not self-indulgence? Self-indulgent people endure the worst form of slavery, for they are blocked from wisdom. There is nothing worse for a man. Self-indulgence with pleasures withholds us from enduring hunger or thirst or restraint from sexual desire when it should. Self-indulgent men will not wait for the moment of maximum

enjoyment that restraint can offer. It actually keeps us from enjoying most pleasure that can be cherished! I also wonder how a man who cannot resist the physical pleasures could be capable of goodness. Such a man will always choose his pleasures instead of goodness and duty. Would he be better than an ignorant animal?’

‘What are those pleasures I cannot resist, Socrates?’

‘They are many, my young friend. Sexual desires, desire for power over other men, desire to be appreciated and applauded, arrogance, pride, vanity, the search for wealth, desire for the best food, to have the finest paintings in one’s rooms, high heels on one’s boots, gluttony, drunkenness, violence, love of prestige, love of authority for authority’s sake, and so on.’

‘What should I have sought, then?’

‘Goodness, temperance, justice, courage, truth. All the things that make a soul good! You should have sought *sophrosynê*, sobriety and self-control. Do not be ruled by your instincts, your appetites or your emotions. These distract from your duties. Un-virtuous actions are actions governed by ignorance of virtue, which precludes and restricts choice. You should be scrupulous always, and be a man who manages well his own affairs, a man who is reliable in his relations with others and who is prepared to do good services to his friends and benefactors. Such a man would have many friends that would be eager to link with him. Do you believe, Alcibiades, that Athens should choose for the functions of strategos a man who cannot resist his urges, such as his sexual desires? How could such a person save us and overcome the enemy? Self-discipline is the foundation of moral goodness, and such a man should exercise his character with it. Otherwise the man will not escape degradation of the mind. A man who is a slave to his inclinations cannot do his duty.’

‘So, Alcibiades,’ Socrates concluded, holding him back still a few moments. ‘It is passion that creates war and hostilities among men. Passionate people fight for the subject of their passions. They envy the possessions of others. They arouse hatred and they thrive on hatred. Moral goodness only overcomes passion. It means gentleness, sharing, settle arguments, helping each other out. This is important in the management of the state, for it breeds friends, which can be used to benefit the state. Which do you choose now, virtue or passion?’

‘I thought you were ignorant of what people had to do, Socrates. I thought you did not know what moral goodness was. You just showed me that you do have an opinion on the subject, too. That was quite a forceful speech you gave. You have chosen virtue, haven’t you, Socrates, definitely? Isn’t that so because you are a virtuous man by nature? Virtue comes easy for you. You are blessed by the gods and received virtue in your character. I am a passionate man by nature. I am but a man. I chose virtue whenever my nature allowed me too and when I could reason and think. But I cannot live against my nature and against my fate, forced upon me by the gods and by Athena foremost among the gods. I honour Athena after all, by being myself, and I give her what she gave me. This is the point, Socrates, where your education, your teaching, is too simple.’

‘What do you mean, Alcibiades?’

‘You proclaim that a man who is not always virtuous is an ignorant man. An ignorant man doesn’t know what is good for him, and only virtue is good for him. A man driven by passions cannot but be an ignorant man. That is fine statement, an ideal statement, your statement! I understand that at this stage of your teachings it is a fine concept to be taught. But it is too simple in that it takes no account of the human mind, of the human heart, of the human nature. A person living by high moral

principles in easy times can be drawn step by step into situations that he does not approve of, but from which he cannot escape. Virtue can be taught, but a man can accept it or reject it, and still not be ignorant. There is more to a man than his mind, Socrates. There is a dimension that you do not consider. A passionate man can act against what he knows to be virtuous, because of many other reasons but virtue, and to which his being accords priority. He might never repent to have set virtue back. Is he then unhappy or a criminal? You would answer with a definite yes, Socrates. I, however, am not so sure. I look at people like they are, with their passions and with their desire for virtue, which I find time after time in most men indeed, but not in all. A truly virtuous man, virtuous by nature, may act against virtue, and yet, most of the time, I find it impossible for me to blame him and to condemn him. I tend to try to understand him and forgive him. There is no place for forgiveness in what you teach, Socrates. If there is no absolute virtue, there is only punishment. That is what you teach. It is a sad lesson, Socrates. Moreover, Socrates, I heard some hard statements from you today. You, who always proclaimed you know nothing, you do have strong opinions of wrong and right. You tore down our illusions of knowledge at all times, pricking at our conceit. You proved us so often that we knew nothing, that in the end, Socrates, we believed in nothing anymore. Do you know who brought about the downfall of all beliefs of Athens? No other man but you, Socrates.'

Alcibiades walked on, but then he turned, 'luckily, Socrates, and that is why I loved you and still love you, you are a compassionate man and you do not live by the hard, implacable lessons you teach, because you too forgive and do not always punish.'

Socrates looked at him, astonished.

Alcibiades laughed, and he said rapidly, 'don't answer me on that one, Socrates. I know what you are going to say. You are going to say that you do not teach, that you merely interrogate and ask others what they think they know! Yet, beneath your elenchus there are very clear teachings indeed, as well as your opinions and intentions, to which you lead your students with your questions. Do not deny that, Socrates! You know where you lead your students to.'

Socrates laughed then sadly, and he sighed. It was the first and last time in his life that he did not refute somebody saying this to him.

Alcibiades continued with hanging head, 'you have it truly easy to be virtuous, Socrates. You are indeed naturally virtuous. You bear virtue in you. You are virtue. I admired you for that easiness, and I loved you for it, more than any other man I have met. I am the bright and brilliant Alcibiades. Yet, I never had it that easy, Socrates. I was never as bright as you, though you thought I was. Can you understand that I was not as bright as you? I had to learn! I had not your quickness of mind, your surety of heart, your steadfastness of character. I had to grope around! I had to try matters out to understand afterwards, always afterwards, where virtue was hidden in an event or a situation. I thought about how I had to act when something happened to me, and I did truly for the best, each time. But it was not always the best thing to do. If I had taken the right path, done the virtuous thing, I was happy. When I had done something that turned out less virtuous, I suffered in my mind and heart and I repented. Have you ever known the agonies of repent, Socrates? I don't think so.'

He paused, and continued. 'All I did was to survive. I floated on the waves of fate! I have not been unscrupulous. You spoke of the soul to me. I thought that if my soul had chosen my body and my birth, it had to be the soul that was in previous men who had been courageous, intelligent, valorous, and wealthy. It had to have been the soul of men that were fine warriors and excellent politicians. I did all I had to do to survive

and to remain the brilliant Alcibiades who always had to prove worthy of his soul. For instance, if I had returned to Athens after the departure of our large fleet for the expedition to Sicily, I would have been humiliated, and my body incarcerated, maybe even killed in ignominy. What would that have done to my soul? I had to stay alive and to fight back against what the democrats of the moment wanted to do with me. I could not let them shame my soul! I stayed the Alcibiades that Athens knew, and I have remained that Alcibiades, the Alcibiades that always moved only with the powerful. It is a heavy burden, and sometimes I flee from it. I have only Harmonia to flee to, the only one who understands me instantaneously. Yet, I never flee for long! Yes, courageous I am; I know I am that, in battles and in life. But the burden is heavy, believe me, Socrates. I stand before you the Strategos Autokrator. I have fulfilled my destiny. I accomplished all according to my destiny and for the honour of my soul, despite Athena. I never received any help from Athena. On the contrary, I believe she was a jealous goddess, who envied me my soul. And so did her city and her citizens. Yet, I only wanted to please Athena.'

They walked on, in silence now. They walked past the huge monument of Athena Promachos.

There, Alcibiades asked, 'have I been a bad general, Socrates?'

'No, oh no,' the philosopher answered, shaking his head forcefully. 'No! I think you are a great general. You are the best! You know how to prepare for war and how to provide supplies to your men. You are inventive and aggressive and brilliant in manoeuvres. You are attentive and friendly with your men, harsh when needed. You can be a subtle politician combined with your generalship. You are straightforward in your commands. You are generous and steady. You persevere. You protect well, yet you can steal as no other. Are you not a shepherd to your men and a stout warrior as well? In that, you tried to realise the aims of Athens.'

They walked on. They did not stop to pray to Athena Promachos that day.

'You see,' Socrates said. 'Athena is still here, in full glory!'

He pointed at the statue.

Alcibiades stopped and went no further.

He answered, 'now you chide me, Socrates. The clothes of the statue of Athena Polias are being washed. Not the Promachos! And I know what you mean, of course.'

Alcibiades asked him off-hand, to ease the tension, 'where do you teach now, Socrates?'

Socrates answered, 'I am often at the Lyceum, at the gymnasium in the precinct of Apollo Lyceus. Do come and visit me there.'

He suddenly took Alcibiades's hand, drew him to his breast, and said, 'I have to go back. I was on my way home when we met. I am late already. Alcibiades, if it does not matter anymore who you are, what you know, what skills and talents you have, what you have done; if it only matters who you know and how much you can impress others by words only, then our world goes awry. Then the management of our polis will be very bad. Please don't let that happen, Alcibiades! I wish you well-doing, Alcibiades! Till we meet in Elysium!'

'Till we meet in Elysium or in Hades, Socrates. Yes, you are a virtuous man by nature! You shall reach Elysium. I shall dwell in Hades, of course.'

They both turned quickly, for their emotions showed in their faces. They went their separate ways.

Strategos Autokrator

At dawn the following morning, the citizens of Athens walked to the middle of their town, to the hill of the Pnyx. Rarely had so many people mobilised. Men arrived also from Attica and from Piraeus. The Scythian guards, as was their duty, took the ropes to the Agora, blocked the roads back into the town, sprinkled the ropes with red colour and forced the people that were in the marketplace to the Pnyx Assembly site. Few men were still in the agora, however. Most stood already on the Pnyx, and the Pnyx was black with people, like on the best days of the great Assemblies when major decisions were in the making. Now, all wanted to see and to hear Alcibiades.

Alcibiades walked among his friends. He walked slowly, chatting and shaking hands, and his group pushed itself a way to the top of the hill. Alcibiades was dressed very soberly, but in impeccable white chiton and himation, which Eurypolemus's wife had lovingly prepared. Alcibiades had specifically thanked her for the work she did, and she had shown her pride.

Alcibiades waited on the hill until Athens' herald would call the meeting to open. A Scythian commander came forward to tell that all people had assembled. The herald thereupon opened the meeting with his powerful voice. He called immediately Alcibiades to come forward. Alcibiades stepped on to the bema, the large, flat stone from which so many public speeches determining the fate of the city had been given. He waited there until total silence invited him for his first words. He spoke in his usual slow way, emphasising his words and phrases and sometimes whispering, sometimes shouting over the crowd.

'Citizens of Athens, I wish you well!' he started. 'You see before you a man you know well, and who has suffered much. I have been away from my beloved city for so many years that I despaired seeing the white acropolis, here behind me, ever again. Is there something worse for an Athenian born from an ancient family to be bereft of the sight and love of his city? Fate has been hard on me! I lost all that was dear to me, my wife, my friends here, my house, my fortune, my fields, my properties in Attica, and I could not see my son grow up. I have been fatherless since I was a young child and with Athens my complete family was torn away from me. I had nothing to care for anymore in this world. The Athenian gods had forsaken me. I might as well have been dead. I lived in dark towns. I hid in harsh mountains of barren rocks. The people that knew me in this town forgot about me; or so I thought. But when death arrives to nature, like it happens in winter, hope breaks through, like in spring. Like nature, I tried not to be depressed. I sought continuously how to help the polis that had rejected me unjustly. I was alone, with my mind as only weapon, helpless yet determined, despite the hardships. I was unjustly punished! Yet, my friends, I was determined to continue to do for Athens whatever I could. My wanderings went far and wide. I travelled the world, sailed on all the seas of the orient, travelled in the darkest forests of Thrace. I was in Caria and Lydia, in the deserts, and I passed high mountains. I lived among friends and among the enemy. Everywhere, I continued to serve Athens. I dwelled among the leaders of the greatest powers of our world and I learned how to use or curb their powers with only one aim: to assist Athens. How did I arrive thus, alone and forgotten, banished and lost, yet blessed with the fervent love of my polis? Jealous men had decided to diminish me! Men had decided to slander me. Jealous

men accused me of deeds I never even thought of doing. Jealous men, men who sought destructive power instead of the well-being of your polis!’

Alcibiades paused, and let the last words, cried out with angry eyes, sink down in the minds of the Athenians.

‘Finally, I had the opportunity to join the army of Athens. Yes, Athenians, I am a hoplite! My second home was the army! Do you know what it is to be a hoplite? It means upholding the highest standards of discipline. It means daring to risk one’s life for one’s country! There are no politics in the army, no political parties, and no discussions on what to do when the enemy stands before you! There is only courage or cowardice then, and I never fled from a battle, never fled from a confrontation with an enemy. I am a hoplite! I have fought so many battles for Athens! The army asked me to lead it. I could not win all skirmishes, but when I led Athens’ troops Athens lost not one battle! I bring to you with my friends of the army Chalcedon, Byzantium, Chrysopolis, Selymbria, Sestos, victories at Abydos and Cyzicus. We annihilated the fleets of Sparta and her allies, opened the Hellespont, the Propontis, the Bosphorus, and we made the Thracian people our allies. The islands, except a few in Ionia, have joined our League once more. Our hegemony is almost as large now as it was in my youth. We have a strong army again, a strong fleet and able generals. Money is streaming to Athens from a multitude of sources, from cities and taxes. Soon, we shall be able to assemble a new army and gain back Euboea and the rest of the cities of Ionia. Yes, we dominate the Sea once more, and we shall force Sparta back into its borders!’

He waited, for the people started to applause spontaneously. He opened his arms, however, to silence the men.

‘To realise all that, we only have to be ourselves, use our minds and arms and the energy of our people. There is nothing we cannot do if only we put our minds and our courage to it! We can do that! We have to be one, and not disperse our actions in internecine strifes, fruitless discussions and jealousy of the leading men. The army of Samos has proven how many successes can be gained by acting as one unit, with one determined command.’

Alcibiades paused here a little. He kept his head to the ground and seemed to think, then continued.

‘The gods have punished me unjustly. I am sure that they regret this now. They will help us win our peace and our well-being. I am sure the gods admire now the courage we had when they tested us. Therefore we will thank them and pray to them. We shall hold our procession to the township and sacred grounds of Eleusis this year over land. Yes over land! We shall pray the gods to protect their good city of Athens. Then, with the benevolent assistance of the gods, we shall free Attica from our enemies!’

‘As for the crimes of which I have been accused, I will say little. You know, everybody knows, that it was absurd to accuse me of disfiguring the Hermae. No witness ever called my name for this crime. I also never parodied the Mysteries of Eleusis. Would I dare to re-enact the Mysteries when years before I had parodied them? The gods would petrify me for such sacrilege and send lightning on my head for such an ignominy! No, companions, also of this crime I have been accused unjustly, by men who wanted power over Athens to destroy Athens’ strength and to destroy a man who always stood in their way when they schemed their worse deeds against our polis.’

‘I stand here after almost eight years of absence, and I bring you the victories of the army I have led. If you allow me, I will lead that army to more successes. Oh, we will not win all, the road of war will be long and sinuous, but we will not lose and in the end win all! Never shall we lose! We shall advance and advance, from victory to victory, and grow thus Athens’ splendour! That I promise you, I Alcibiades!’

A single roar of applause shook the Pnyx.

People ran up to Alcibiades to thank him and to congratulate him. The Scythian guards brought order, pushing the people back. Two Members of the Council stepped forward. They had with them a crown of gold leaf. They placed the crown on Alcibiades’s head. The Assembly voted on a decree to restore his lands and house to him. These resolutions were immediately accepted. Then, a decree was voted whereby the priests of the Eumolpidae and the Kerykes, as well as the Holy Herald of the Mysteries of Eleusis had to absolve Alcibiades from the curses which they had pronounced against him. This also was accepted by the Assembly, and representatives of the priestly families absolved Alcibiades on the Pnyx, in public, there and then. The High Priest, Theodorus, however, declared that he did not need to revoke the curse. The curse was anyway void, he said, for if Alcibiades was innocent, he had never been cursed.

After these resolutions which addressed Alcibiades alone, the herald called on the elections for generals of Athens to take place. Alcibiades had been named as one of the candidates. He passed the votes rapidly. The other generals elected with him were Adeimantus, a man of the same deme as Alcibiades, and also Thrasybulus, Phanosthenes, Aristocrates and Conon. Neither Thrasyllus nor Theramenes were elected.

When the election of the strategoi was over, the crowd shouted in chorus, ‘Alcibiades for Autokrator!’

The crowd cried so loudly and so insistently, for so long, that the herald looked at the Members of the Council. The members brought their heads in their neck, conferred on what they had expected, and one of them came forward and presented indeed Alcibiades to this honour. The herald proposed to the Assembly for Alcibiades to be appointed Strategos Autokrator, in supreme command of the army for the next year. Alcibiades would be able to lead the army without having to refer to democratic control over the army. He would not have to ask permission for major expeditions, orders or measures from the Council or the Assembly.

The Assembly voted also positively on this proposal.

Alcibiades came thus to be in sole command of the fleet and army, and virtually to be the master of Athens. He could now wield the same powers as only Pericles, his former warden, had held before him. The prediction given to Pericles had come true. There was no greater triumph possible for Alcibiades at that moment. The Assembly had to be concluded early, for the chaos of the congratulations and cheers around Alcibiades were too great.

Alcibiades’s friends feasted him on the Pnyx, and his sympathisers accompanied him afterwards throughout the town. Alcibiades received again flower garlands, and a very boisterous party stopped in the evening at Euryptolemus’s house, filled the house, and

emptied that same evening the entire stock of wine amphorae, expensive and cheap ones, that Eurypotemus had spared.

In the months after his election, Alcibiades was a very busy man. He held meetings every day in the strategion with his co-generals. He assigned tasks to the generals, to prepare the fleet for an expedition to Ionia. The ships of the fleet of Samos had to be repaired as quickly as possible. A new army of hoplites and peltasts had to be hired. Alcibiades thought he would have enough with a fleet of about one hundred triremes. Sparta would not be able to bring more than eighty new triremes in the Sea. He needed hoplites and peltasts of elite quality, however. Logistics were also important. There was much to think of: new sails, new decks, oars, arms, and so on. Alcibiades inspected the works in the ship-sheds where the boats were being refitted in haste.

Alcibiades also had to prepare for the procession of the Mysteries. He prayed that the information he had received from Timaea, the so important knowledge that King Agis would stay in Sparta for several months, would be accurate. It would help if Agis was not at Decelea during the procession to Eleusis. Nobody in Athens but Alcibiades knew that Agis would not be at the fort in Attica, but that he would stay in Sparta, with his wife. With Agis absent, the Spartiates of the fort would dare no major attack on Athens.

Alcibiades sent guards a long time in advance to the top of the hills around Athens. He trained cavalry to scout the movements of the Spartan troops. He rode out with his men to watch the Spartans, and he only relaxed when he observed with his own eyes how few the troops in the fortress were, how they stayed inside the fort without raiding the country, and he saw no preparations for major incursions in Attica. He assembled his elite hoplites, hoplites and archers of his previous army and of the civil guards. He picked out the best men, men he could trust and that would not easily panic, to protect the procession.

A few days after the Assembly meeting that had appointed him general, Alcibiades assisted at a most satisfying ceremony. The stele, on which the name of Alcibiades had been engraved in relation with the crime of the parodies of the Mysteries, was formally carried to a cliff near Piraeus. It was broken, and the pieces were thrown into the Sea by the Eumolpidae priests of the temple precinct of Eleusis.

Alcibiades was particularly glad with this ceremony, for there was nothing left now but the memories in the minds of some men of the accusations delivered against him. The judgements had been annulled. He was once more a free citizen of Athens, cleared of all guilt towards the polis and towards the gods.

During that time, Alcibiades also saw his son, Young Alcibiades. He had not loved the boy's mother. He had appreciated her because of her faithfulness towards him, but he had not been able to bring himself to love the woman. He had not longed after this boy, though Young Alcibiades was his first child and his eldest son. He could not bring himself to give to this boy the love and interest he had proven for Leotychidas, for Laïs and Artemisia, his other children. Alcibiades the Younger was too much linked with dark periods of his life.

The boy felt the reticence, but he was used to the lack of love and would have been amazed at any other attitude from his father. Young Alcibiades lived in Aspasia's home, but there was also little affection also between Aspasia and the youth. Alcibiades watched the boy. He saw his thin lips, wide forehead, his very pale skin, broad and tight jaws and little, mischievous eyes. He knew then the boy would not be up to the reputation of Pericles or himself. The boy never laughed. He had lacked affection and loving care. He would therefore share little love with other people around him, and he would not give love to his polis later. Nevertheless, Alcibiades spoke to the boy, and took him out for walks in the city. Alcibiades talked about his life in Sparta and in the orient. Young Alcibiades said little. If he showed one emotion, it was one of admiration for the deeds of his father. He listened open-mouthed to Alcibiades's tales of battles and sea-voyages. Alcibiades never mentioned Timaea or Harmonia. He taught his boy to ride horses, and he had some satisfaction to see that the boy liked to ride with him in the tracks of Athens or along the long walls to Piraeus.

Rather more pleasant were the symposiums that Euryptolemus organised in his house. Alcibiades was preparing to occupy his own, new house in Athens, but he stayed still mostly with his cousin. Euryptolemus often invited Axiochus and other friends, such as Thrasybulus and also Young Pericles. Young Pericles was a joyous young man, who liked to joke and to drink a bowl of wine. He had the good looks and the intelligent eyes of his mother Aspasia, and the courage and aristocratic daring of his father. He had already served in a few military expeditions, and Alcibiades surmised he would make a fine general soon. Young Pericles had not yet chosen a particular political party, but Alcibiades thought he largely adhered to his own ideas. Euryptolemus did not much approve of very drunken affairs at his symposiums, but the evenings and nights were cheerful none the less, especially when Axiochus invited dancing girls. These symposiums, however, did not resemble by far the rambunctious affairs Alcibiades had organised ten years ago.

After a few months, Alcibiades and his co-generals had assembled a new fleet and army for a major campaign in Ionia.

Alcibiades had to keep his promise to organise the procession of the Mysteries of Eleusis, however, so he lingered on in Athens, and could only sail out until after the festival of the Mysteries.

Eleusis

Eleusis was a town on the Attican coast, to the west of Athens, at a distance of about a hundred stades. The Mysteries were dedicated to the goddess Demeter. The ceremonies had been founded because of a marvellous but sad story that had happened at the beginning of times.

Demeter was the goddess of fertility and of harvests. She was the daughter of the Titans Kronos and Rhea, which originally dwelled on earth. She was the sister of Zeus. It happened that Iasion, a mortal, seduced Demeter. Zeus was infuriated. He killed Iasion with a thunderbolt and he made love to Demeter himself. A child was born of this union, a girl called Persephone. Demeter loved her child dearly. When Persephone had grown into a beautiful young woman, Hades, the god of

the Underworld, coveted her. He asked Zeus for Persephone as his wife. Zeus agreed, but he knew well that Demeter would never agree with this union, for she would lose her daughter forever to the Underworld. Zeus assisted Hades in the abduction of Persephone. Zeus asked Gaia, the goddess of earth, to grow flowers near where Persephone lived so that the girl went out with her friends to pick the flowers. While the girls were picking the flowers, Hades rose from the Underworld and took Persephone with him in his chariot, down into the earth. Later, Demeter looked everywhere for her daughter, but she couldn't find her.

When Demeter realised the role that the gods of Mount Olympus had played in her misfortunes, she abandoned her divine form and roamed the world disguised as a mortal woman. Demeter travelled all over the world and taught to mankind the secret of the harvest of barley and wheat and other grains. Men came to be entirely dependent on harvests.

Demeter settled at Eleusis, near Athens. When she arrived there, she was thirsty and she sat at the Maiden Well. She wept with grief. Four lovely girls, the daughters of Celeus, a local King, became friends with her, and brought her to their mother Metaneira. Metaneira offered Demeter a cup of sweet wine, but the goddess refused, for it was not lawful for her to drink wine. She asked for a mixture of meal and water, scented with mint and Metaneira prepared that for her. Metaneira observed her, and she admired the proud and dignified composure of Demeter. Metaneira offered Demeter to be the nurse of her son, Demophon. The goddess accepted and she raised the boy.

Demeter secretly practised her powers on the boy. At night, she anointed his body with ambrosia, held him to her bosom and she breathed sweetly over him. Then, she held him a few moments in the fire of the hearth. The child would retain his youth and live eternally if the practices had continued, but Metaneira had suspicions. She spied on Demeter, and when she saw one night how the woman held the child in the flames, she cried out. Demeter revealed herself as a goddess then. She stopped with the secret practices on Metaneira's boy. She demanded, however, that a temple be built at Eleusis and she promised that she would teach the priests her secrets, the secrets of eternal youth. Then Demeter disappeared. Celeus ordered a temple to be built upon a hill above Callichorus. When the temple of Demeter at Eleusis was built, the goddess dwelled there, refusing to join the gods on Mount Olympus. Eleusis had become the home of Demeter, the goddess of harvests.

Later, Demeter forced a famine to come over mankind, for she refused to make the seeds sprout and grow from the earth. When the famine covered the earth, the gods also began to suffer, for no mortal had anything to sacrifice to the gods anymore. Zeus then sent Iris to intercede with Demeter, but Demeter would not give in. She threatened the world with famine unless she could get back her daughter. Zeus then sent Hermes to Hades, to propose the god of the Underworld to send Persephone back to her mother. Hades feared the gods of Olympus, so he relented. But he contrived to have Persephone eat some of his own food, a pomegranate seed, and because of that Persephone would always have to spend one third of the year with him, deep in the earth, in the Underworld, during the season men called winter.

The Mysteries of Eleusis represented several very important aspirations of the Hellenes. The people depended on the eternal rejuvenation of the earth and nature every spring, on the fertility of the seeds that were sowed and on the harvests. They realised all too well how much their lives depended from the food promised by the harvests and from the earth's and the rain's work on the seeds. Nature could provide

for a fine harvest or for a disastrous one, and this effect was attributed to the gods. Bad harvests brought famines.

Athens had of course evolved from a community of an agricultural economy to an hegemony with an economy of trade, but the old roots had been dug forceful in the minds of the Athenians, so that the ancient traditions were vividly honoured.

In the communal feasting of the Festival of the Mysteries, the coherence of the polis was re-forged. Demeter was the goddess of harvests, so the Atticans depended most on her for their most basic needs. It was Demeter also, at Eleusis, who had applied her secrets of eternal youth, and she had passed her secrets to the Eumolpidae priests.

Being initiated in the Rites of Eleusis signified hope on eternal life, if not in this world then in the aftermath, and ever-lasting youth. Such aspirations transcended the men that were wealthy or powerful enough, or had enough connections with the Eumolpidae and the Kerykes to be initiated. The rites inside the Telesterion, the sacred Temple of Demeter were secret. The initiated, called the *mystai*, had to swear on punishment of death to not reveal the proceedings of the ceremonies. This secrecy also appealed to the imagination of the people of Athens.

The Festival of the Mysteries lasted for about ten days in the autumn of the year, in the Athenian month of Boudromion. It was a festival organised by the priests of the Eumolpidae and the Kerykes families, but conducted by the Archon King, the Archon Basileus. The Archon Basileus was responsible for all religious matters and ceremonies of Athens. He organised the procession of the Mysteries in person.

The preparations of the festival started two days before the religious feast as such.

Two young men of Athens, two *ephebes*, travelled the first day to Eleusis to represent the town. The next day they would return with the Sacred Objects, the *Hiera*, the Holy Things.

The *Hiera* were never shown in public. They were kept in a chest bound with purple ribbons. The objects, which also represented Demeter, were brought by wagon to Athens and deposed in the Sanctuary of Demeter, the Eleusinion. Demeter's arrival had to be announced to Athena, so the *Phaidryntes*, the Priest of the Two Goddesses reported the arrival of the Holy Objects to the priestesses of Athena. The *ephebes* had not to travel alone to Eleusis. A large crowd already accompanied them on their journey to and from Eleusis. Alcibiades would have to protect this crowd with his *hoplites* and knights.

The first day of the festival, on the fifteenth day of Boudromion, the *mystai* who would be initiated at Eleusis gathered in the agora of Athens. The *Mystai* stood together. They were dressed in long, white tunics with long sleeves, and friends and family had adorned them with garlands of flowers. Their Assembly attracted a large crowd. A Kerykes herald spoke to them, imploring the men to be virtuous and pure. The herald told the *Mystai* that only those who had lived justly could survive the rituals. The *mystai* had to prove to the Kerykes then and there that they had already passed the Lesser Rites of Eleusis, which had taken place just before spring, every year.

On this first day of the festival, the Day of Gathering or *Agyrmos*, the Kerykes took the *mystai* with them for spiritual exercises and prayers for the rest of the day. They followed the Kerykes in procession to the Temples of Demeter and Athena for prayers.

The second day was a day of Purification. The priests accompanied the mystai to the Sea, near Piraeus. The procession of the Initiated was accompanied again from the Agora to the coast by many people, who sprinkled flower petals in front of their feet. Alcibiades waited halfway the long corridor to Piraeus, and he too honoured the passing men. He was dressed in light hoplite armour and he had his shield on his back, to show he cared already then for the safety of the processions. He had posted the civil guards all along the road. He had met Socrates among the guards. Socrates had put on his old hoplite armour, still dented from Delium, and Alcibiades had seen him standing proudly near the Piraeic gates among his companions.

At the seaside, the priests ordered the Mystai to walk into the water. Some of the candidates also wore suckling piglets, which they now offered to Demeter. When the Mystai were cleaned by the water of the Sea, the priests sacrificed the piglets and a few drops of blood were sprinkled on the men. The piglets were eaten the same evening in a communal feast around the Temple of Demeter in Athens. The mystai later walked back in procession from Piraeus to Athens.

The following day, several sacrifices were made on the altars of the temples of Athens, and religious ceremonies were celebrated in various temples. The celebrations were addressed to the gods, and they asked for protection of the polis of Athens and her institutions.

The fourth day, the Day of Epidauria, was a day of resting for the mystai. It was a day of fasting for them, and they had to participate in sacrifices that were being organised all over the town.

On the fifth day of the festival, the mystai would walk to Eleusis.

The procession assembled in the centre of Athens at the sanctuary where the shrine of Iacchus was. The Iakkhogogos, the priest of Iacchus, led the procession. He wore a sacred image of Iacchus before him. The Archon Basileus followed him, and with the Basileus walked the Hieoroknyx, the herald of the precinct of Eleusis. Then followed the mystai, and also the epoptai, the men that had already been initiated, and who accompanied the mystai as spiritual wardens on their journey. Also the priests of Eleusis walked in this group.

The High Priest of Eleusis, the Hierophant, accompanied the Sacred Objects, the Hiera. With the Hierophant walked the priestesses of Demeter, priestesses of the temple of Demeter at Eleusis. Then followed the Dadouchos, the Torch-Bearer, and next to him marched his female assistant, the Dadouchosa. The mystai were dressed in long, white tunics. They wore garlands of flowers and of myrtle and they also held myrtle branches in their arms. Musicians and choruses of singers came next in the procession.

The procession was noisy, for music was played loudly, especially as long as the men were still in Athens, and the choruses sang. The priests sang paeans also, and they recited holy texts all the way. They poured libations of wine and oil on the Sacred Road. The pilgrims talked and chatted. The sound of the flutes would be heard from far. It was impossible to pass unseen in the plains beyond Athens and in front of Decelea.

The procession advanced slowly from the Sanctuary of Iacchus to the agora, and it then proceeded on one the widest roads of Athens, the Sacred Road to Eleusis. This road passed the Sacred Gate in the Kerameikos district, and from there ran in the Attican plain to the west of Athens, to the hills of the Bay of Eleusis. The procession

would remain eastwards of the hills, and then walk in a wide arch along the coast of the Bay of Eleusis to the temple precinct.

Alcibiades waited outside the Sacred Gates with his army. He had already sent out his cavalry commanders to scout the environs of Decelea. Sentinels guarded the top of the hills along the Road to Eleusis. He had about two hundred horse riders with the procession, but these always stayed to the right of the *mystai*, between the procession and Decelea, and at the same height as the procession.

Behind the *mystai* and the priests marched a contingent of two hundred hoplites. After the Athenian citizens, at the far end of the procession, he had a few hundreds of peltasts.

Alcibiades escorted the *Hiera*, protecting the procession with his troops. He rode on a white horse. He was dressed entirely in white, with white *chiton* and *himation*. He wore a fox-cap from Thrace on his head; a sword hung on his back. He rode proudly forward and backwards and sideways, with a solemn and determined look on his face. He constantly checked on the hoplites and on his cavalry. The people that walked in the procession saw regularly scouts on horse-back arrive to the line of the walking men to hand him messages. He knew the exact situation of the Spartan troops moment after moment by his scouts, and the situation was calm and peaceful. His scouts mentioned no special animation in the fort of Decelea.

When the procession was in the open plains, Alcibiades ordered his peltasts forward, and the marching people saw two single rows of light troops walk at their sides, slowly passing them until the entire procession was enveloped with Alcibiades's warriors to left and right. The manoeuvre was a very theatrical performance, but it proved to the people how much Alcibiades cared for the procession, and how well he had organised protection. It seemed as if not the *Basileus* and not the *Hierophant* led the procession, but the white-clad rider on the white horse, who often rode a few steps in front of the procession.

The priests celebrated several ceremonies along the road. They offered sacrifices to the gods and made libations of wine and oil. At a place called the *Krokidai* they tied a yellow ribbon on the right hands of the *mystai*. They passed by a sacred spring and drank, while pausing for a while on the road. The army of Alcibiades enveloped the procession, and no Spartan was seen to ride or march out of the fort of Decelea.

Alcibiades thus restored the most ancient tradition of the procession of the Mysteries. He gained much glory and recognition, for the people of Athens told that *Agis* had not dared to attack the procession for fear of Alcibiades and of his army. The people looked upon him as the only one general who had dared since many years to hold the sacred procession, and the only one who was truly able to protect them. With Alcibiades, they said, things would change, and his daring was based on real power and intelligence.

The procession arrived in the dark, for evening fell early in this time of the seasons, and rather suddenly. The best part of the Procession marched by torchlight. This was also symbolic, for in the myth of *Demeter* the goddess sought her daughter by the light of a torch.

When the procession arrived at Eleusis, the priests of *Demeter* celebrated another short ceremony. Water and oil were offered a last time to the goddess. Part of the night was spent near *Demeter's* well. The celebrants danced by torch-light. The

priestesses ran around in the night, wailing loudly, imitating Demeter's search for Persephone.

Later, all went to sleep. The eoptai and mystai slept in the quarters of the temple precinct. Alcibiades had sent tents in advance for the other pilgrims. He slept but little. He had brought his men to their tents. He organised guards all around the temples and around Eleusis, and scouts still roamed the country.

The next day was the Day of the Initiation proper. The mystai prepared themselves throughout the day for the sacred rituals. They purified themselves, prayed, and offered sacrifices to Demeter. During the entire day, the altar in front of the large marble statue of Demeter and in front of her temple was open for offerings. Several priests, the Hierophant, his two female assistants, as well as many other female priests celebrated ceremonies. The mystai and the mystagogoi stayed now within the sacred precinct of Eleusis. Towards the evening, the initiation rites began.

Alcibiades knew more or less what would happen. He had not been initiated, never, but Callias, in his drunken fits, had told him in pieces and hints what happened at the ritual. Alcibiades laughed, for Callias had even enacted part of the Mysteries, yet without wanting to parody the events.

When darkness would fall soon, the mystai gathered before the large hall of the Telesterion of Eleusis. The Telesterion was an immense building, a rectangular temple with a roof supported by forty-two columns. The mystai obtained a bowl of Kykeon to drink. This was of the same mixture of barley meal, water and mint that Metaneira had given to Demeter. Callias had been convinced that also some ingredient that numbed the senses and brought the men in trance was mixed in the drink, but Alcibiades doubted that.

The mystai were given a password. Each mystes, accompanied by his religious warden, his mystagogos, stepped forward, one after the other, in a long row, to the door of the Telesterion. It was still light outside, then. The men had to give the password to be allowed to enter the hall. From that moment on, the Mysteries began, and what happened then was one of the best kept secrets of Athens.

The mystagogoi went as far as the entrance. When the doors opened, the postulant went inside, alone, and the door closed behind him. It opened a little later, for the next mystes. The men entered in a hall that was totally dark, black as night. Somebody, however, took the mystes by the hand. It was a small, slender female hand that took the postulant's hand and led him deeper into the hall, through a narrow corridor. The man came from the light outside, his eyes were not used to the darkness. He could see nothing in the dark hall, so he let himself be led by the woman, towards the interior of the Telesterion. Gradually, he began to discern contours of the hall he was in, and also other figures.

The Telesterion was very large and high. The men stood inside a large, round room. This was one of the largest halls the men would ever be in. In the middle was a round open space without any furniture. Other mystai stood already in a circle, and as the men came out of the dark corridor, its doors hidden by heavy black curtains, the circle was formed with more men.

At the end of the right wall was a large statue of Demeter. Opposite Demeter, on the other side, stood a statue of her son, Iacchus. A priestess stood in front of each

mystes, facing the man. In the middle of the circle waited the Hierophant, the two Hierophantides and the Dadouchos, the Torch-Bearer.

The Hierophant was dressed in fine, multi-coloured tunics, and he stood proudly and solemnly with a golden staff in his hands, which held above the symbols of the harvest, the symbol of Demeter. The Hierophantides wore each a long white peplos with many long folds. The Torch-Bearer was dressed in furs. He stood with crossed arms and looked around at the mystai, as if he would soon torture them. It was very dark inside the Telesterion, but as the eyes of the mystai accustomed to the darkness, they could better and better discern the figures.

When all the mystai were inside, the doors of the Telesterion were bolted. The Torch-Bearer lighted just three small torches. The flames threw a strange red light on the marble walls. The first part of the celebration started then.

The High Priest sang a paean to Demeter, and the two priestesses joined in the song after the first phrases. The paean lasted a long time, and the priestesses sang alternately with the High Priest. After that first paean, several more were song, in which all the priestesses participated. Each paean told a part of the story of Demeter and Persephone. Between each paean, the High Priest invited the mystai to repeat prayers with him. The dark hall thus filled with male voices, reciting the ancient poems of the sacred prayers of Eleusis, interspersed with the songs of the sweet female voices. This was the legomena part of the celebration, the part of the things said.

When the legomena part of the Mysteries was over, the Hierophant paused. He invited the mystai to think about their lives, about the good and the bad things that had happened to them. He invited them to repent for their offences against the gods. He paused to let the men reflect.

After a while, the Hierophant clapped in his hands. Very dense fumes were now blown into the hall from openings in the walls. The fumes scented heavily for myrrh, and these were probably made by incense-burners behind the walls of the round hall. Some more light was given to the hall by the Torch-Bearer, but the light was still diffuse and coloured. It was directed upwards, towards the high roof of the hall. The mystai could discern enormous paintings of scenes of the myth of Demeter and Persephone. All the walls were thus painted, too.

The Hierophant let the room be filled with the fumes, which were regulated by the Torch-Bearer. The atmosphere in the hall was eerie in the red and yellow light of the torches. The fumes slid like heavy clouds in the hall, and the clouds enveloped the mystai.

The Hierophant clapped in his hands once more. The priestesses, who had been standing without moving in an inner circle in front of the mystai, undid their tunics and they let them fall to the floor so that they stood naked before the mystai. The Hierophant opened his arms.

He said loudly, 'Demeter held Demophon to her bosom.'

Upon these words, the priestesses advanced until they touched a mystes. They took the head of the mystes in their hands and brought the man's face to between their breasts. They held the face there for a while, then went to another mystes, for there were less priestesses than mystai, and repeated their gesture. Meanwhile, the Hierophant and his assistants sang more prayers. This scene was repeated several

times. Then the hierophant paused. The priestesses stepped back, to their inner circle, and they dressed again so that they stood once more in their white peploi before the mystai.

The Hierophant said, 'Demeter blew life in Demophon.'

The two Hierophantides left the Hierophant. They were splendidly dressed in multicoloured tunics now, and they held sceptres in their hands with the emblems of Demeter. The Hierophantides priestesses went each to one side, at one position outside the circle of the mystai, and they passed by the backs of each mystes. They held a small incense burner in their hands, which the Torch-Bearer lit, and fixed them on a wooden staff. The priestesses held the staff with the incense burner above the heads of each mystes and they blew the fumes towards the inner circle. They went in opposite directions around the circle of mystai, stopping only when they had each walked half a circle. All the mystes had thus felt the breath of Demeter.

The Hierophantides joined the hierophant in the middle of the hall and they continued to let the fumes from their incense burners escape. More paeans were sung.

The Hierophant said, 'Demeter purified Demophon with fire.'

The Hierophantides priestesses started to walk in the inner circle. They brought their incense burners to a side of the wall. They came back and took two mystai by the hand, on opposite sides. They invited the mystai to walk likewise in a circle, in the counter-movement of the inner circle priestesses.

Large doors suddenly opened in one of the sides of the hall. The mystai saw a rectangular room. Part of the floor of that room was covered by a gridiron. A red glow shone through the iron bars. The Torch-Bearer took a mystes at the hand and led him towards the gridiron. The priestesses stopped and turned, took the other mystai and followed the Dadouchos. The Dadouchos forced the first mystes to walk over the gridiron. The iron had not heated yet, for the coals had been poured ignited not long ago. The gridiron was at floor level, whereas the red coals lay beneath the floor in a lowered basin of stones. The Torch-Bearer walked over the gridiron, showing that also the feet of the mystai could walk without danger over the heat of the fire. Then, he returned back to the hall.

The mystai walked over the gridiron in turns, but the priestesses walked aside, not over the gridiron. Many a man felt the heat and the last men also felt the heat on their legs. Tunics were scorched but the priestesses quenched the starting flames. No one was seriously hurt. The mystai were led back, after the ordeal of the fire, to a place in a circle around the Telesterion.

This walking over the fire finished the part of the ceremony of the things done, the dromena.

The Hierophant sang more paeans and more incense was burned so that the hall was now filled with a dense fog.

The Hierophant announced, 'Demeter showed the secrets to the priests of Eleusis.'

On these words doors opened on the side opposite the hall of fire. They revealed the Mysteries of Eleusis. This hall was small, but there was another door in the room. The Hierophant passed through this small door and he disappeared. A little later he came back with several objects in his arms.

The Hierophant had been inside the Anaktoron, the sacred and most secret chamber of the Telesterion. That chamber housed the Holy Relics of Demeter and Persephone.

The Hierophant placed the objects on the altar, in view of the mystai. He went again

into the Anaktoron and emerged with more objects. These were the holy objects, which, according to the tradition of Eleusis, belonged to Demeter. There were six objects in all: a phallus, a female pudendum, both in gold, two statue figurines of women with huge breasts and bellies, which were obviously very old, a golden sheaf of grain stalks and a golden serpent.

The Hierophant now invited each mystes to come forward and to touch the statues and objects. Again, the priestesses accompanied the mystai.

When the mystai had seen the objects and touched them, they moved once more in a circle inside the hall, and the doors of the room of the objects closed. The Hierophant brought the objects back into the Anaktoron and he joined the other priests in the Telesterion. He wore now a bowl of wine in his right hand and a cup of olive oil in his left. He spilled drops of the liquids, singing paeans to the mystai, to mystes after mystes, calling their names, and each made a libation to the gods. With these libations, the part called the deiknymena, or things shown, finished.

When the last mystes had made his libations, the Hierophant still offered four libations, each in one direction of the winds. More paeans were sung to the honour of Demeter.

The Hierophant paused, then. The priestesses and priests left the hall, so that the Hierophant stood alone with the mystai in deadly silence.

The hierophant let the silence linger.

Then, he said, 'Persephone was re-born in light.'

At that moment, the priestesses and priests re-appeared suddenly from a third side-room. The doors of that room opened completely, and blinding white light shot into the Telesterion. There was a large source of very white light in this room, which illuminated the hall. The light blinded momentarily the mystai, and from out of the light walked very rapidly, solemnly, one after the other, the Torch-Bearer and the priests and priestesses, each wearing a large torch. The hall thus filled with intense light. The priestesses holding the torches stood once more in a circle within the mystai. They moved their torches.

The Hierophant then said, 'may you be re-born every year and see the light like Persephone. You are now initiates of Demeter. You will know eternal youth and life, in this life and in the afterworld.'

A last paean and a last libation of wine concluded the rites.

The Hierophant said, 'you are now epoptai, those who have seen. You have sworn to keep the secrets of Demeter in your minds alone.'

The epoptai got used to the light. This symbolised Persephone returning to earth and to Demeter, from the Underworld.

The Hierophant brought more wine and water and the initiates drank some. The priestesses took the men by the hand and the initiated were led out one by one. The priestesses did not step out of the hall. The mystagogoi waited for the men, and together they went to another hall of the temple precinct, for a communal symposium.

The next day was the Day of Plemokhoai, the day of libations and sacrifices, in which the initiated participated fully. Each mystes wore two plemokhoai amphorae filled with water. They walked around Eleusis and at several places all along the way they sprinkled the water in the earth to make it fertile. Thus, the Attican plains were sacred and fertilised. This part of the ceremony was extremely important to the Athenian

people, because it promised the harvest by the fertility of the soil. The mystai were now again accompanied by large crowds of worshippers.

It was time to prepare for the return to Athens. The eighth day, the procession reformed at the temple precinct of Eleusis. The priests performed a religious ceremony around the Telesterion, and then the group set in motion.

Alcibiades once more guarded the procession with his troops. The march advanced along the coast of the bay of Eleusis at first. The bay, with its blue-green water, was magnificent. It lay peacefully in the morning light. When the procession arrived near the hills, the road curved around them, to the east, and then proceeded straight to Athens.

Like a few days earlier, the Spartans did not come out of Decelea and the procession of priests of Eleusis, epoptai and crowds of worshippers reached Athens unhindered in the evening.

The following day was the conclusion of the festival. Still more sacrifices and libations were performed in Athens.

Alcibiades gained extraordinary glory by the organisation of the procession to Eleusis. He, who had been accused of religious blasphemy against the Mysteries, had restored the ancient splendour of the procession and organised everything in good order without incidents. It was said that Agis had been afraid to confront Alcibiades. Alcibiades had led the venerable procession with much dignity, sobriety, and he had been worthy of the ancient traditions. His reputation was so great that the people considered him their greatest benefactor. When in his youth Alcibiades had astonished Athens by his extravagance, he now conquered he people by his efficiency, piety and dignity.

Alcibiades was at that moment not only the most powerful man of Athens. He was also the most popular politician. Such men were very much envied in Athens. Some feared he would abuse of his popularity to grasp absolute power and become a new tyrant. But Alcibiades took the good working of the town to heart. He could propose anything to the Assembly, and his proposals were accepted immediately. He changed the institutions for the better. He was thus very active before leaving on a new military campaign, to promote his polis for the welfare of its citizens. But the jealous democrats looked at him more and more as if he might become a terrible danger for the state, like other democrats had done eight years earlier.

Alcibiades assembled an army of one hundred triremes, fifteen hundred hoplites and a hundred and fifty cavalry. He could have taken power in Athens then and have been crowned the new tyrant of the city. Such was not in his character, however, and not in the character of his family. Alcibiades loved to be loved. He desired the gratitude and admiration of his fellow-men. He wanted to charm, to attract, not to force. He was a seducer, a man who sought admiration, and who dwelled in this admiration. He dominated by charm, not by power. Of course, his charm was his power. He was not interested in forcing people to submit to his will. He sought voluntary submission and that not of a part of Athens but of everybody in the town.

Alcibiades was very well aware of the fact that this kind of attraction would last only for a while, for a year maybe at the most, maybe a few years, and only as long as he offered successes. No human glory lasted, and certainly not in Athens. He was accustomed now to the changing moods of the Athenians, and he did not fight this fickleness anymore. He might have fought this, as long as he found Athens indispensable and vital to his life, but Athens was not indispensable for him anymore. In Athens he could not be free. He could live in Athens for many years, but he could not marry Harmonia. Harmonia was not an Athenian. He would not sacrifice Harmonia for Athens. He might have tried to live with Harmonia in Athens like Pericles with Aspasia, but his home was not Athens anymore, and Pericles's times were not his. Athens had been vital to Pericles, but Pericles had never lived for years in the immensity of the Sea or in the vastness of the forests of Thrace.

Alcibiades longed for home and for Harmonia, and his home was in Thrace now, near the Chersonese, near Bisanthes. He laughed when he realised he had to return to Athens to arrive at this amazing awareness and truth. That was how he felt. The Athenians feared his popularity. They did not see that Alcibiades did not really care anymore for Athens, and that he did not cherish the glory, for he knew it to be short and vain.

Chapter 22 – Ionia and Thrace, Autumn 407 BC to the Summer of 404 BC

Notium

Alcibiades left Athens proudly, at the height of his glory, after only four months of return. He left gladly, for conscious of the fact that he had again powerful enemies in the town, which would use any occasion to bring his downfall. Yet, he was a gambler. He was not a man who would sit and relish in popularity, control this atmosphere and let other men make war in his place. He wanted to be up to his reputation. More than that, he wanted to do the things he did well, to make war and conquer. He sought action, not intrigues.

He was very confident of his own abilities in war, and also something of a fatalist. He was convinced he could win the war in Ionia. And if he lost, he would find a heaven of peace and love at Neon-Teichos with Harmonia and Theodote. Often, when he stood in the strong, cold wind at the prow of his trireme, he was not even sure of which outcome he preferred.

It was in such a mood that Alcibiades left Athens in late autumn of that year, just before winter, with his fleet, bound for Ionia. He was eager to leave and the growing democratic party was eager to see him leave. He had chosen to take with him the weakest of his co-generals, Adeimantus and Aristocrates, so that Thrasybulus could continue to wage his campaign among the Hellenic cities in Thrace. Thrasybulus was collecting additional funds in western Thrace and bringing the last Hellenic states there to join Athens. Alcibiades also took Conon with him, the most experienced naval general, a general to whom he thought he could trust part of his fleet. Adeimantus and Aristocrates would manage his logistics for him.

In Ionia, Alcibiades's targets were primarily Chios, Tenos, Andros, Miletus and Ephesus. He sailed first to Andros. The city occupied a key position for the free movement of the Athenian merchant ships sailing from Ionia to Athens. From out of Andros, Peloponnesian triremes could attack and sink Athenian merchant ships that sailed home from Rhodos and Caria, after trading with the southern ports.

Alcibiades brought his ships to Andros. He set up camp in front of the town. He had no siege engines. He could at best encircle the town and lay a siege to her to starve its citizens out.

His tents were not all set up when the Spartan garrison of the town already attacked his camp. The Androsians had seen that his triremes had not all disembarked their men.

Alcibiades's transport ships had unloaded his hoplites out of the sight of Andros, however. Alcibiades could protect his camp with a force of hoplites. His men hastily put on their heavy armour. His force was larger than the Peloponnesian garrison, and that came as a surprise to the enemy. Alcibiades fought in the first lines of his army. After a short and bloody battle, he decisively defeated the Peloponnesians. They left a considerable number of hoplites dead before their town. The enemy lost many men

dead or wounded, and few returned unharmed to Andros. Nevertheless, the town closed its gates.

Alcibiades fortified Gaurion to guard Andros and to hinder the city, to cut it off from trade and force it in the longer term to some form of arrangement with him. He left twenty ships and some troops at Gaurion, under the command of Conon. Conon was the only general he could trust with such work, the only general able to decide for himself and manage a situation of war. Alcibiades then sailed to Samos with the rest of his fleet.

Samos was still an excellent base for his troops. In the region, Samos was not the only town or island that the Athenians held. There were Athenian garrisons at Iasus, Clazomenae, Colophon, Teos and Notium.

The Peloponnesian fleet of Ionia could put now to Sea about eighty triremes, as many ships as Alcibiades had. Alcibiades also learned that the Spartan navarch he would have to confront was the Spartiate Lysander, at last, and the satrap Tissaphernes was not anymore in command of the Persian armies of Lydia.

The Athenian delegates sent under the protection of Pharnabazus to plead the Athenian cause at the court of the King of Persia, had travelled no further than Gordium. There they met a triumphant Spartan embassy that returned from Susa. The Spartans had seen the King and sealed a treaty with Persia. The embassy returned accompanied by the King's son, called Cyrus. Cyrus, the Achaemenid prince of Persia, had been ordered to take up the command of the armies of the satrapies of Lydia, Caria and Phrygia. Cyrus supplanted thus both Tissaphernes and Pharnabazus. Persia was once again the strongest enemy of Athens and the confirmed ally of Sparta.

Pharnabazus retained the Athenian delegates in Phrygia. In doing this, the satrap broke his promises and signatures of Chalcedon.

Cyrus now reigned in Sardis! Alcibiades heard at Samos that Lysander had met Cyrus in person. Lysander had charmed Cyrus. He had obtained from Cyrus to raise the pay of the sailors of the Peloponnesian fleet to four obols per rower, and the men were paid a month in advance. Alcibiades could only pay three obols. Many of Athens' rowers were now mercenaries, hired in the islands. These men were no Athenian citizens. They took money from whatever master that could pay them, and they rather preferred to be paid more than less. They disappeared in groups from the Athenian army. They deserted, and they sought work in the army of the other side, the Spartan army of Lysander. Alcibiades needed more money. The motivation of his men sank away in the water of Ionia. The men grumbled.

At that time, while Alcibiades was at Samos, Thrasybulus returned with his army from Thrace. He sailed southwards to join Alcibiades in Ionia. First however, he attacked Phocaea.

Lysander moved his fleet base from Miletus to Ephesus, so that he was closer to the more open, northern route. He was freer in the movements of his fleet there, and could sail for the Hellespont without being observed, for Samos was situated to the south of Ephesus. Alcibiades therefore also decided to move north with his fleet. He sailed to Notium, north of Ephesus. Notium was the harbour of Colophon.

Alcibiades feared Lysander. He knew the man had much cunning. Lysander was very intelligent, very ambitious, powerful of character and vicious in his dealings. He was a hard man without any pity or any sense of mercy for defeated enemies, a calculator, a scheming man of intrigues, a flatterer and a deceiver. He would do anything to reach his goals.

Alcibiades knew that Lysander had only one year. Then, the Spartiate would be navarch no more. But could Alcibiades wait a year, playing at waiting with Lysander? Who had the most patience? Lysander was also a Spartiate, at least, he was educated as a Spartiate. The man was swifter than most Spartiates, able and ready to break every rule in the books. Yet, he was still a Spartiate, and he had only one fleet, the eighty triremes at Ephesus. Lysander would take no risk. Alcibiades was sure that Lysander would never offer battle unless he was sure to win. He did not gamble unless all the odds were on his side. Lysander would not sail out of Ephesus to seek battle with Alcibiades, as long as Alcibiades kept his fleet together. Lysander and Alcibiades were at equal forces.

Alcibiades heard from his spies that Lysander was fortifying Ephesus, building additional quays and a war arsenal. Lysander was not now planning to row to the Hellespont.

Alcibiades needed to talk to Thrasybulus, design a strategy for both of them, and warn Thrasybulus of Lysander. Thrasybulus fought hard at Phocaea. He seemed to have it hard to take the town there. With Thrasybulus, Alcibiades would not only have a friend at his side, but also a very able general to confer with on strategies. The duo of Alcibiades and Thrasybulus was invincible. Adeimantus and Aristocrates were no help to Alcibiades. They were occupied with the logistics of the fleet. They had no experience at war, not the brilliant, imaginative kind that Alcibiades needed. They knew nothing of fleet movements or hoplite battle tactics. Placing these generals in front of Lysander would be asking for disaster. Alcibiades decided to leave Notium with a few ships and to sail as fast as he could to Thrasybulus.

Alcibiades left his fleet of Notium under the command of the captain of his own trireme, Antiochus. He made Antiochus assure him three times not to engage the Peloponnesian fleet ever, in no circumstance whatsoever. He forbade Antiochus to sail out of the protection of the harbour of Notium. He told the man to do as he had done at Gytheum: sit still and remain put. He did not tell Antiochus how much he knew and feared Lysander. He left Antiochus in command of the fleet, but he ordered him to do nothing else, but to defend Notium in case of a direct attack. Alcibiades sailed to Phocaea, to Thrasybulus.

Alcibiades wondered how Thrasybulus would react to him. Alcibiades was now the Strategos Autokrator. But Thrasybulus had recalled him to the army of Samos at a moment when he, Alcibiades, was nothing but an outlaw, several years ago. He owed Thrasybulus. Thrasybulus had won many battles at Sea and at land, and he had been successful also these last months, whereas Alcibiades had not accomplished much in his campaign. But then, Thrasybulus had not been so successful either, in Phocaea. Alcibiades had won no sea-battle without Thrasybulus or without other generals with him. Alcibiades won by deception, and he needed other generals to lead wings of fleets or armies for that. Alcibiades could lay traps for Lysander, but he needed for that a man like Thrasybulus. Alcibiades was confident he was the equal to Thrasybulus as a general, but he needed him nevertheless. He had other abilities than

Thrasybulus. They could be complementary. Would Thrasybulus acknowledge his command? Could he persuade Thrasybulus to common actions? Would Thrasybulus discuss the situation with a cool head and accept good arguments, or would he seek always another proposal to spite Alcibiades and to confound him?

When Alcibiades stood in front of him in the commander's tent, Thrasybulus smiled. He was not jealous of the status of Alcibiades. Thrasybulus was a hoplite, a trierarch, a general and a leader of men. He was, however, only a leader in battle. He acknowledged Alcibiades's function, invested in him by the Assembly of Athens, and he was genuinely ready to do whatever was best. Alcibiades was glad to see Thrasybulus back and enchanted with his friends' attitude.

The two men embraced, and they discussed the situation. The campaign in Ionia had not been brilliant for either of them so far. Conon held Gaurion to block Andros, but he arrived at nothing better there. Thrasybulus sat in front of Phocaea, but the town did not yield.

The cities of Ionia had had to fight the Carians, the Persians, as well as all their Hellenic neighbours at various times, so these towns were all very well fortified. Around the towns stood powerful, thick, big stone walls and towers protected access. Their harbours were well closed, but for narrow entries, well protected against invasions by the seaside. The cities had many wells of drinking water inside their walls. The towns were rich, their storehouses were filled with grain and pigs. They could withstand long sieges.

Neither Alcibiades nor Thrasybulus had the time and patience for sieges. Sieges were costly in men and in money. Athens had not many men anymore, and funds were low again. The two generals talked and talked and wrought strategies of attacks. None satisfied Alcibiades.

They looked up at the walls of Phocaea, hoping that the city would be betrayed from within. But the Phocaeans laughed at them from the tops of their mighty, impregnable walls. Thrasybulus agreed to join their armies. He feared the effect on his men when he left Phocaea without successes however. He shared his apprehensions with Alcibiades.

Alcibiades knew that Lysander had lots of patience, but also a deadline. If Lysander had no success in Ionia before the end of the year, and waited and waited, then he would be dishonoured in Sparta for not having been up to his ambitions. Alcibiades felt that he had to wait longer than Lysander, and then let Lysander come to him and lay a trap for him. For that, he said, he needed Thrasybulus. He was not sure he could handle his army, the men, long enough without a spectacular success. Thrasybulus could also help him keep the men of the army patient.

Thrasybulus agreed to work together with Alcibiades. Alcibiades decided to sail south again and to return to his army at Notium.

Alcibiades would be sailing the next morning. In the evening, a rapid trireme of the army of Notium reached Phocaea. Its captain jumped off board even before the boat was properly moored. He ran straight to Alcibiades's tent. He brought a message of catastrophe to the Autokrator. Alcibiades sank on a couch in his tent and hid his head in his arms.

Antiochus, to whom Alcibiades had conferred command of the fleet at Notium, had thought to seek glory and victory in Alcibiades's absence. He had underestimated

Lysander. He had not stayed snugly and patiently inside the harbour of Notium at all! He had wanted to imitate Alcibiades, and do better.

Antiochus had taken ten fine triremes and rowed to the port of Ephesus to challenge Lysander. He had dared rowing into the harbour. His ships had touched the prows of the Peloponnesian ships.

Lysander knew of the departure of Alcibiades. He feared only Alcibiades. He reacted immediately when the Athenian ships rowed into the harbour of Ephesus. He did not panic. His entire fleet was ready in a minimum of time. His men were well trained from exercises of such manoeuvres. He had used his waiting time well, training his sailors and hoplites. He charged with his fleet to the pursuit of Antiochus, who fled back, hoping to draw the Peloponnesian fleet disordered into the mass of Athenian ships waiting outside Notium. Lysander moved so fast however, that the Spartiate surprised the Athenians, and caught the fleeing Athenian ships in the open Sea.

Lysander destroyed the ten Athenian triremes and he killed Antiochus in them. Then Lysander rowed quickly, in good order, against the Athenian fleet that waited for Antiochus in front of Notium.

These ships had rowed out of Notium, waiting to intercept the Spartan fleet. With Antiochus gone, this fleet was without a commander and what they saw was not what they had expected. The Athenian fleet was in disarray when they saw that not their commander but Spartan ships bore into them.

Lysander destroyed twelve more ships from the Athenians. The Athenians were unable to answer the change of the battle. The Athenian ships could barely in time seek protection inside Notium. They had saved the majority of their fleet, but lost twenty-two triremes. Most importantly: they had suffered defeat, whereas Sparta had won its first major victory in Ionia since many years.

Lysander stopped before Notium. He did not attack the harbour with his fleet, though he could have. He had no hoplites with him. He still considered it a great risk to attack the Athenians inside Notium. He turned back. He could celebrate a victory.

Alcibiades returned immediately from Phocaea to Notium. He assembled as many triremes as he could at Phocaea. He notified Thrasybulus of what had happened, and he sailed back. At Notium, he took his entire fleet and rowed to Ephesus, exposing his ships and challenging Lysander. He defied Lysander to come out and fight, hoping desperately to link the defeat at Notium with a victory at Ephesus.

Lysander refused to grant Alcibiades any success. He was far too smart for that. He made Alcibiades's defeat very apparent. Lysander had his victory over Alcibiades, and that was enough for the moment. He wanted that limited victory to be known wide and far. Alcibiades stood at the prow of his ship, cursing at Lysander, but no Peloponnesian trireme set out of Ephesus. Alcibiades shouted in the wind at the cowardice of Lysander, but his voice was lost over the waves. He returned to Samos with his diminished and demoralised fleet. He prepared his report for the Council of Athens.

Bisantes

Alcibiades still needed more money. The mercenaries among his sailors continued to defect. He could not leave the army to seek new funds, for it was in dire need of a leader and there was none but him. He could not sail out with his fleet to Caria and

leave the scene to Lysander. The Spartans would have claimed that the Athenians had suffered a defeat and turned coward. He decided to sail against the nearby town of Cyme with a small fleet.

Cyme was independent and wealthy, and would have the funds to pay some more for his hoplites. But Cyme was also a town that paid already a tribute to Athens. It was allied to the Athenian League. Alcibiades wanted to lay waste the country to seek booty. He made a few hundreds of prisoners from around Cyme. He kept a jealous watch on the town, but Cyme had closed her gates as soon as the Athenian fleet had arrived before its harbour.

When the Cymeans saw their kinsmen being kept prisoners by the Athenians, they ran out of the city with a large force of hoplites. The hoplites threw Alcibiades back. He had too few hoplites with him to hold against a well-organised and large army. Alcibiades withdrew his men to his triremes, and he made the triremes and transport ships sail to some distance into the Sea. He needed more men. He sent commanders of his army to the Island of Lesbos, to Mytilene, to demand reinforcements of hoplites. When these arrived a few days later, he disembarked again his men at Cyme. He set up camp in front of the town.

Cyme had had ample time to prepare for a long siege, however. Alcibiades was once more blocked before a town with massive walls and gates. He had now three parts of Athenian armies standing impotently raging before walls of stone at Andros, Phocaea and Cyme.

Alcibiades could have had patience then, like Lysander, but his term was over somewhat earlier than Lysander's. Alcibiades realised that not only Lysander had a deadline. Alcibiades had a deadline too. He had suffered a defeat and accomplished nothing that might justify the continuation of his appointment as Autokrator. He started to wonder whether he would be re-elected general in the spring, soon now. He wrung his hands with impatience and frustration, but there was nothing he could do but wait.

Lysander did not stay entirely inactive. He had his victory for the year. He was less ambitious with other ventures. He set out with his army and captured Delphinium and Teos, easier targets than Andros, Phocaea and Cyme. There was nothing to win at Delphinium and Teos but the names, but Lysander was satisfied with the names.

It was the beginning of spring of the year Alcibiades had left Athens. There would be elections for general in Athens. Alcibiades wondered in his tent at Cyme what would happen. He was a candidate, of course, and so were many other men, among them Thrasybulus and Thrasylus.

Alcibiades then received a letter from his cousin, Euryptolemus, brought in by one of his fastest ships from Athens.

Alcibiades,

I wish you well, uncle.

The elections for general of the armies of Athens have been held this morning. I send you this letter in a hurry, so that you might know what happened here and be able to take action accordingly. The Athenians chosen for general by the Assembly are Pericles the Younger, Leon, Diomedon, Aristocrates and Conon. Also elected were Erasinides, Thrasyllus, Archestratus, Aristogenes and Protomachus. Neither you nor Thrasybulus has been re-elected.

I suppose these generals will soon sail to Ionia to relieve you and Thrasybulus in command of the fleet and army. The Assembly voted for Conon to leave immediately the siege of Andros and to take over command of the squadrons at Samos. That does not mean that the siege of Andros is to be abandoned. Conon has to keep on with the siege, through other commanders.

What has happened? Once again, uncle, all your enemies have joined forces to accuse you. They accused you of all the woes that have fallen on Athens since your departure, whether you had anything to do with the setbacks or not. Our army and fleet have met little success in Ionia. Andros, Phocaea and Cyme are under siege, but few advances have been made there. The Athenians blame you for the defeat at Notium. They say it was your responsibility to ensure that the fleet stayed inside Notium. They say that if Thucydides was banned for having let Brasidas take Amphipolis, you should equally be blamed for Notium. They also say that the Peloponnesians captured cities in the meantime, whereas you have done nothing. In the Assembly, Cleophon accused you of negligence. When you return to Athens, you will have to answer to the commission of inquiries that interrogates all generals after their term. You will have to answer for the defeat at Notium. Several other accusations were brought to the attention of the Assembly.

The people of Cyme sent representatives to Athens to complain for the treatment given to them by their ally. They shouted their indignation in the Assembly at being attacked by an Athenian army, even though they loyally pay tribute every year to Athens.

The state of the army of Samos is very bad, so it seems. One Thrasybulus son of Thraso, of Kollytos, coming from Samos, presented himself to the Assembly. He told that you lived in debauchery with the courtesans of Ionia, and remained passive while the Spartan navarch dominates the Sea. He accused you of appointing favourites to positions of influence in the army. He told that most of these men were incapable of command. The army was badly led, he told, and powerless to accomplish anything, whereas the Spartan fleet was growing constantly in strength. I suppose this man was sent to Samos by the democrats to spy on you, and that he came back telling the story the democrats wanted to hear!

All the old grieves you can imagine or that you cannot even remember anymore, emerged then once more. Even the old trial brought against you on account of the chariot you bought from Argos for the Olympics, so many years ago, surfaced! We, your friends, tried to deny all these accusations and prove their absurdity. Whatever we said, however, was buried within a mood of disappointment, resentment and anger.

As a result of all this, after a very chaotic and wild Assembly, a vote was cast, and you were not elected general for this year. Moreover, you will have to justify yourself

to the court of inquisition. That is not extraordinary in itself, as you know, for each general has to pass that court at the end of his term, but in your case I do not know what to expect from the committee. The disenchantment in the Council and with the people is profound. Athens expected of course impossible, spectacular victories in the shortest timeframes. The people were absolutely convinced that you were invincible and that only immediate successes could happen. At the first difficult moments, the mood of the Athenians turned. They let all the old dogs run wild and passed from the grandest enthusiasm and the wildest expectations to total despair and blame.

Euryptolemus

Alcibiades dropped the scroll to the ground. He picked it up somewhat later, and burned the papyrus. He reflected on what he should do next. He could return to Athens. He could do that at leisure, calmly, take his time and let pass a month or so, maybe even longer, between departure from Samos and arrival at Athens. He might have to face the arrogance of Conon or of one of the other newly appointed generals during the relief of power. Then, he would arrive in Athens and have to justify his actions done during his time as general. He doubted that the Athenian generals would accomplish more than he and Thrasybulus had. There was not one genius hoplite among the names, except Conon maybe, and Conon was a fleet man, not a land battle man. Thrasyllus was a land battle man, but Thrasyllus and Conon would not be a good combination, for Conon would not understand how Thrasyllus thought and fought, and Thrasyllus would grasp nothing of Conon's sophisticated navy manoeuvres and of his obscure reasoning.

Alcibiades could win some time while travelling, let the Athenian generals wallow in setbacks and then prove that the Athenians had not given him enough time to finish his strategy in Ionia. Reasonable men would make reasonable decisions. Reasonable men would accept his explanations for the defeat at Notium and maybe elect him for general the year after. That meant staying for another year in Athens, far from the Hellespont, far from the Chersonese, and far from Harmonia and Theodote. Far from home!

Of course, he could continue to live in Athens, mix with the rest of the influential men of the city then and become a greying, ageing, and fine old aristocratic man of Athens. He might even succeed in bringing over Harmonia and Theodote to Athens without shocking the good people. He might travel with Harmonia and show her the islands. Life would be good and easy.

Alcibiades had two issues with that scheme.

Firstly, Alcibiades did not really like Athens anymore. He had tasted the orient and learned to like that country and its people. He had been caught in the charm of Thrace and that charm now held him. He could breathe in Thrace! He could trade from out of his fortress in the Chersonese, travel from out of Thrace, visit the Hellenic cities in the neighbourhood when he felt for it, and live in the marvellous wide space that were the lands and cities of the Propontis. Alcibiades had fallen definitely in love with the landscapes and the beaches of the Hellespont and of the Propontis. He had good friends in Thrace, Seuthes, and tribal chiefs. Those were simple men, who

cherished simple feelings like friendship and loyalty and who, once they had offered friendship and loyalty, stuck to such qualities. The men schemed, just like the Athenians, but when they deceived, one knew immediately about it. Theodote liked Athens, but Harmonia did not. Harmonia was a girl of the islands, used to views of the Sea and used to feel the sensation of the wind in her hair. She liked to roam along the beaches and in the low, green hills. She would be unhappy in Athens. Where would his daughters, Laïs and Artemisia, run in Athens? In their house's courtyard? In that limited space without air, when they were used to running for days long on beaches and in the hills? They would be so unhappy!

The most important issue that Alcibiades had was with the people of Athens. He was experiencing the period of the last months before his departure for Sicily all over again! Political parties dominated the Assemblies in Athens once more, and strong parties, which desired his downfall. His adversaries were fuelled by every small obstacle to his success. He might ask for time from the Council and from the people, but receive none! He had been torn down from his pedestal already, the pedestal on which the Athenians themselves had placed him. He could only expect to be trampled upon now.

Would he find the courage to defend himself? That task might prove to be arduous. Did he still want to defend himself before those narrow-minded, incapable men who were controlled by democratic demagogues, and who would have judged him even before he could open his mouth? Would he be able to turn around the interrogation committee from preconceived opinions to favourable ones? In his youth he might have wanted to fight and take his chances. Now, he was not so sure anymore. What would happen if the men judged him guilty of neglect? He could then well be banished. Thucydides had been banished thus, unjustly. He could be fined, but walk out free. He might be thrown in prison. He might be executed at the stakes and die in ignominy, without seeing back once his women. That last thought was unbearable. Athens was not worth taking the risk. He could not go back to Athens!

As an alternative, Alcibiades also thought he could simply leave from Samos, just before Conon arrived. He could leave a letter to Conon, stating that he would be travelling, since he was a free man and not a general anymore. Who would stop him from seeing the world? He would leave doubt on his return to Athens. He would not say he had no intention at all to return. On the contrary, he should write he was sailing back, all right, but without stating to where he was going back. He should not take the risk of being humiliated, tortured, killed in Athens, when he could have the blue sky above his head and the vast Sea under his ship for the rest of his life, and live in peace and pleasure. If Athens did not want him anymore, he did not want Athens anymore either.

Alcibiades was depressed then, and angry at the ingratitude of the Athenians. The people of Athens, and also their goddess Athena, did not know how to appreciate their ablest sons. As soon as a man grew above mediocrity, the mediocre would cut the legs from under his body. Well, he, Alcibiades, would not let the small men of Athens cut off his legs.

Alcibiades paused. He walked around. He thought.

'I have been taking into account only Athens and Alcibiades,' he remarked. 'There is another party though, which plays a role in my considerations: Sparta.'

‘No, not Sparta,’ he said loudly to himself. ‘Not Sparta! Sparta is incapable of playing any decisive role. But Lysander is. What will Lysander do, now that he has tasted power? He will eat the Athenian generals raw. Not one among the elected generals is up to Lysander. Lysander is trained for war, not only because he is a Spartiate, but because of his character and his genius. He is for cunning and deceit by character. He is more intelligent and especially a lot more sly than all the Athenian generals together. Take Pericles the Younger. Now, there is a nice, fine, intelligent young man. But Pericles entirely lacks experience at Sea, and he has no experience of major battles. He has fought only in a few very minor skirmishes, in which he had no command at all. He thinks he knows all about the army, but he knows nothing. There is no comparison possible between that nice, gentle young man and the wolf that is Lysander. Lysander can bring up thrice Young Pericles’s energy and swiftness in war, once he decides on action. Pericles will see Lysander coming at him from all sides at a time, and he will not know where to react first. The same is true for all the other generals, except maybe Conon. Only Conon could be up to Lysander, and then only in a sea-battle. Conon is not up to Lysander in diplomatic intrigues and dealings, and even less in land battles.’

He thought on. ‘So, what is bound to happen? Lysander will defeat the Athenians in Ionia, for sure, and then move to the Hellespont. Lysander has only few months left, though. Suppose Lysander does not succeed this year. In any case, whether he succeeds or not, he will not be navarch anymore. A Spartiate can only be one and only one time navarch of Sparta, for one year only. Sparta has a dearth of good commanders, however. The ephors know that very well, and the ephors will seek efficiency in the end. Lysander breeds on power. He will be bigger than Agis when he returns to Sparta after this year. He will find a way to return to power, which means he will come back here, for he knows Athens can only be defeated decisively at Sea. He will defeat the Athenian generals then, without a doubt. So, what will happen then?’

‘Athens’ populace or Athens’ army will once more recall me,’ Alcibiades thought. ‘I will continue to have my friends and men in Athens remind the Assembly of my existence. I will have my reputation of success and personal valour brought to the front of the discussions at the right moment. I will be given power again, to confront Lysander. Athens will understand that no other person is capable of stopping Lysander. Athens will come crawling low to me again. I shall write and let it be known in Athens how scandalised I am by the attitude of the current leading politicians. I shall proclaim everywhere that it was impossible to accomplish great acts in just a few months. I shall make Athens understand that, every month a little more. The Athenian people will know, I will make sure of that too, that I am still available.’

‘I should not be judged by any committee of inquiry in Athens however,’ he thought. ‘That would be deadly for my reputation. I have to ask my friends to have such an investigation postponed forever. So, I should not be in Athens.’

Alcibiades cheered up. He did not have to run away like a dog kicked out of the house. He could leave with his head high. He could show to his friends how scandalised he was by his not being re-elected general, after only a few months in combat. The new Athenian generals would not meet success either, not with Lysander

in the neighbourhood. He laughed. Was it not ironical that his worst enemy was his largest asset for the moment? Athens, one day would be begging him to return. Alcibiades laughed. He laughed harder. He laughed so loudly that the guards outside his tent thought he had lost his senses. But Alcibiades knew again what he should be doing. He saw the road open before him, now. He sent for the captain of his trireme and ordered the Harmonia to be prepared for sailing.

Alcibiades prepared his trireme, the Harmonia, to sail off. He stayed a few days longer at Samos, without however occupying himself in the least with the army. He expected Conon to arrive in one or two days. At dawn the last day, he ordered his most devoted men to go on board of his trireme. He took a few peltasts and also a few hoplites with him in the Harmonia. These were men with families in Athens or in the islands, but men who warred for money. He wrote scrolls for Conon on the situation of the war and of the fleet and the army. He wrote a scroll mentioning he would be travelling in the islands.

He set off in his trireme, quietly, in the morning, without waiting for Conon to relieve him of his command. He sailed at leisure in the Harmonia, bound for the Hellespont. He lingered in almost every island and Hellenic town on the way. He talked with the Council Members and with the leaders of the cities. He discussed the situation of the polises with them. He talked about the politics of Athens and of Sparta. Everybody was astonished, for he talked as if he was as active in politics as before. He convinced most of the leaders that although he was general no longer this year, he would return soon and still play an important role in the strife between Athens and Sparta.

Alcibiades arrived at Bisanthes in the early summer of the year. He dismissed many of his sailors there, but he kept enough men to bring his boat to his fortress at Neon-Teichos. Before taking his trireme to the fort he went to the country house to see Harmonia and Theodote.

Alcibiades found the women on the beaches near their house. He surprised them with his sudden arrival. They took him each at an arm and drew him into the house. They then talked both at the same time, turning around him and gesticulating.

He brought his arms above his head and said, laughing, 'peace! One at the time! No, let me talk! I am back indeed and for quite a while!'

Harmonia and Theodote made him sit down on a couch, in between them. They ordered for wine to be brought.

Alcibiades talked. He explained all that had happened in Athens, the main lines of which they knew already from his scrolls. He had sent every five days or so letters from Ionia and Athens to the women. He told about his defeat at Notium. That was not really his defeat, he said, but anyhow his responsibility. He told about how he had lost the elections for general.

He said he was back to enjoy his home, and very happy to be back. He wanted to stay in Thrace now, finish the construction of the fort, and move to Neon-Teichos as soon as he could. He would go back to Athens only if the Athenians asked him to come back on their knees. He told, grinning, that that would not be soon anyhow. He loved Thrace and talked about his aversion for the city of Athens.

Harmonia and Theodote exchanged relieved looks. Harmonia said she had never liked Athens, and Theodote surprised Alcibiades, for she told without regrets that she had come to like the land here too, and she told she dreaded to have to live again for a long time in a town as crowded as Athens. Theodote patted Artemisia on the head

while she said that, and Alcibiades understood she was talking in the interest of the girl too. When he asked about Neon-Teichos, they told him they had a surprise for him there, but they wanted to say nothing more.

Neon-Teichos

Alcibiades stayed with Harmonia and Theodote for a few days. He wanted to visit Neon-Teichos as soon as possible, to resume building the fort. He would travel in his trireme, to check on how well he could moor the trireme near the fort.

‘You go with him and show him,’ Theodote said conspiringly to Harmonia.

Harmonia answered, ‘thank you. Yes, I will.’

Alcibiades returned with Harmonia to Bisanthes. They sailed from there in his trireme to Neon-Teichos. The fort was visible from the far, for it was built on a rocky promontory. The fort was not very high, but sufficiently high with its towers and terraces, to deter any troop of bandits. It was vast, and steep walls had been built on all sides. Alcibiades scrutinised the building for works, for scaffolds and masons, but he saw none.

‘Where is everybody? The construction has well progressed in my absence. The walls are nearly finished, I see,’ Alcibiades remarked, amazed. ‘Who led the works in my absence?’

‘I did,’ Harmonia said, a little afraid of Alcibiades’s wrath. ‘I supervised the works. Axiochus came in every once in a while and he helped. The architect has been marvellous. I hope you like what we did. I tried to think how a hoplite would build a fort. The architect helped. I talked to veterans of sieges, to hoplites of ours in Bisanthes. If what I did does not please you, things can be changed, you know. Theodote looked after the money.’

She smiled, ‘the men that worked here curse her. She did not use up half of your money. Lots of it is still left in our purses and in our storehouse. Axiochus brought in money too, saying it was for Laïs and Artemisia. He also told he liked to have one place on earth where he was always welcome, and also could hide in when necessary. I think he likes Theodote more than he admits, though she did not sleep with him. She is like a sister to him, and she confides in him.’

It was not difficult for Alcibiades to moor his ship near the large stairs that led up from the creek to the old fort above. The stairs had been cleared of bushes and grass, cleaned and evened.

Harmonia led him up, holding his hand. She opened a door to the fort. Alcibiades experienced one surprise after the other. Their personal courtyard on the terrace facing the Sea was a marvel. Harmonia had taken him there, for him to see the finest view first. They descended later into the aulé inside the fort, the courtyard that was for all to use. It was vast. It was flat and paved with large stones.

‘No mud for us in winter,’ she said. ‘I had the aulé paved with stones.’

The quarters for the guards were clean and provided with furniture, ready to receive the men. The kitchen was enormous and well equipped. Thracian warriors already guarded the gates and the smaller doors.

‘Courtesy of Seuthes,’ Harmonia told. ‘Theodote seduced Seuthes, too. Seuthes still comes by every while and then he is never to be found far from Theodote. She is a lot older than I, quite a matron, but she attracts men a lot more efficiently than I do.’

‘Don’t you ever try,’ Alcibiades said. ‘There is written on your forehead a line that says, this one is for Alcibiades only!’
Harmonia laughed.

The gates of the fortress of Neon-Teichos were vast. The panels were very thick, and covered with iron plates on both sides. They walked to the walls, and Harmonia led him upstairs to walk all around the fort, on the top of the walls. The parapets were wide, so that guards could defend the fort well. They were wider than in most other places he had been, and that was all for the better, for troops could run easily past each other. Heaps of stones, and basins filled with oil stood at regular distances. ‘Axiochus said that burning oil and stones would keep any enemy from our walls,’ Harmonia explained. ‘So I organised these. I hope I arranged for enough of them.’ Alcibiades was amazed. This woman knew a lot about fort defences. She had learned well.

‘I made the parapets be built with higher protections,’ she continued, while they walked on the walls, ‘so that our men can hide between them, to shoot down arrows from out of these openings. The towers protect the walls and our guards can also shoot along the walls from the openings in the towers.’

They went down again. Harmonia showed him the horse stables, the storehouses, and the wells of drinking water.

‘These wells are very deep,’ she said. ‘This was actually the hardest work. We had to cut all through the rock and we were still not sure we would find drinking water. Seuthes brought us a magician, a water-finder. The man showed me a few spots. I had no idea where to start anyhow, so I thought any spot would do. We dug where the magician told us, and dug and dug. We found water each time! I even feared we had reached the Sea, so deep were we, and had gotten only to salty water. But no! This water is sweet and tasty. We have three sources of drinking water, now! We even have a well inside our tower. I reckon the old fort was built here because the people knew there was fresh water in abundance below!’

Harmonia brought Alcibiades to a square tower at the end of the fort, facing the Sea. She was eager to show him the interiors. She drew him forward, and he protested, but she drew on. The tower was quite higher than the walls of the fort. It was built on the promontory of rocks that protruded into the Propontis. The tower was also large. Harmonia showed the floors one by one to Alcibiades. She was as excited as a child. The lowest floor was practically empty of furniture. A part of it housed a kitchen however, a separate kitchen, separate from the large kitchen Alcibiades had seen in the guards’ barracks. The hall was paved with a fine Thracian mosaic with motives of Dionysos.

‘This may become your andron,’ Harmonia said. ‘I have not brought furniture in it, nor decorated it, because I thought you might do that to your own taste.’

Wooden stairs led upwards to the next floors. These were splendidly decorated with tapestries and curtains. There were little tables here and there, and on these Alcibiades saw some of the finest golden presents, horns and plates, brought in by Seuthes a long time ago. The furniture, the tables, couches, and chests were all sculpted with intricate Thracian and Hellenic patterns. The dark wood had been oiled and waxed. Some walls were covered with wooden panels too, finely worked on with motives of Aphrodite. The windows were small here, but there were enough windows to light the rooms and let the breeze and the fresh, salty odours of the Sea come in.

Stairs in finely carved marble led farther upwards, to the private rooms and to the bedrooms. There were enough bedrooms for Alcibiades, Theodote, Harmonia and the two girls. These rooms were the most splendidly decorated, and gold also gleamed here in the sunlight. The windows were larger, square but with wooden panels on the outside that could be closed, and heavy curtains hung inside.

A fourth floor still held more bedrooms, for guests or for more children. Finally, the last stairs led to the top of the tower.

The wind was strong on the top of the tower, but the parapets were high and protected. From here one could see far, over the Sea and over the land. One could observe the movements of approaching armies or gangs of bandits, as well as fleets on the Sea. Alcibiades walked around the terrace. There was a shed and a large pile of wood in one corner. The pile was made of neatly stacked logs of trees, with lighter pieces of branches beneath. The pile was protected from the rain by the shed. Alcibiades remarked, 'a strange way to provide for wood for the tower. It would be easier to bring the wood up from downstairs, than first pile it up here and then bring it down again!'

Harmonia laughed, 'this is not wood to use in our hearts. Come over here!'

She took Alcibiades by the hand and drew him towards the land side of the tower.

They had a view there of the large courtyard inside the fortress. They looked out over the soft sloping hills of Thrace. Harmonia pointed out a far hill. There were bushes and trees on that hill.

'Do you see that hill there? There is another tower there. Not as high as our tower, but squat and square like here, with walls as thick as the walls of our tower. You cannot see it, for it was built among the trees to hide it, but it is there, all right. If ever we are surrounded by gangs or by enemy troops, we light a fire on our pile of wood. I have stationed guards in the tower over there. They too will light a fire when they see our signal. Their fire will trigger a fire on a tower three hills further north, and there yet another fire will be lighted. That fire will be seen by a garrison of Seuthes's army in a small camp he keeps there permanently. He put a large outpost of men there, not especially for us, because it has been there for a long time now, and only about two hundred men. These men may come to our help. More importantly, they will send out horse riders and be able to reach Seuthes in two or three days at a maximum. When we light a fire on our tower, Seuthes can be here in five to ten days with thousands of Thracian warriors. He said he owed you all his fortune, and most of his wives. He promised to come to help.'

Alcibiades was astonished and he looked at Harmonia with other eyes.

'You actually installed a semaphore system. Did Seuthes think of this scheme?'

'No, he didn't. I did. Well, I asked Axiochus for a means to warn Seuthes, and he said many things, among which also that fire signals were sometimes used in battles. I asked Theodote to find out where Seuthes camped, how far from here, and where he kept his closest guards. We found out we needed only three signals to get to his outpost nearest to us. We explained my scheme to him, and Theodote caressed his beard a little. He laughed a lot and promised to be part of the scheme.'

'You will set fire to the towers if you light this pile,' Alcibiades remarked.

'Maybe, but I don't think so. We put plates of iron beneath the stacks of wood and an extra layer of clay bricks. I left openings beneath to let air circulate under the plates. I tried it once. Theodote lighted the fire, and I was in the tower over there. We tried it in foggy weather and the fire could be seen quite clearly! Seuthes's guards came soon

to our tower on horseback. They had seen the warning fire too! The only issue is, that we have to keep secret the two other towers, the other signalling posts.'

'Neat,' Alcibiades replied. 'You think like a general.'

'No, no,' Harmonia continued. 'We think like mothers wanting to protect their children.'

Alcibiades was embarrassed. 'I brought you and the children in dangerous situations. I am sorry. Please accept my apologies. I hope I can make up for that.'

'You are who you are and we love you for it,' Harmonia replied. 'I hope we will never have to light this pile. We should be safe in our tower and in our fort. The signals that we can give to the hills will not only be seen by the hidden towers. They will also be seen by our second castle over there, along the coast. They can send out horse riders to Seuthes too. We have two points from which our signals can be seen. If one is captured, the other must see what happens, for sure. Our second fort is almost finished also, ready to hold troops. Now, come down! Let's go to our terrace again.'

Harmonia went down two floors, to their bedroom. She opened a small door in the corridor and then she was once more on their private terrace that faced the Sea.

'From our rooms we can get to the terrace and have this view on the Sea and on the fort below. That was possible because of the promontory on which the tower stands. The terrace faces the Sea to the south, somewhat to the east. The sun shines at this place the entire day. It also heats the tower, but the rooms stay cool in summer and keep the warmth in winter. The sun gets up there in the morning and sets on the other side. The views we have from here! I cannot get enough of the air and the Sea, here. The views are so splendid. Sometimes, rarely, but sometimes, there are storms in the Sea. They are treacherous and come quickly with huge squalls that break against our rocks. The winds are violent here, then. The people that live somewhat further on the coast have told me that it can be astonishingly cold also, damp and freezing, but days like that are very rare. It happens only a few days a year. The rest of the year, it is very mild and sunny, here.'

Alcibiades looked around. There was time now to linger here. The terrace was covered with grass. It was possible to grow a small Persian garden with flowers and ornamental bushes. It was a natural flat space on the promontory. It dominated the Sea, which broke its force on the rocks below. It was a pleasant place, the ideal site to rest or to walk around and think. The architect had only built a parapet at the borders to about the height of a man's breast, so that one could lean over the nicely carved stones and look to the Sea, even in stormy weather. Children could play here, protected by the parapets from the winds and from falling down the cliffs.

The sun stood high in the sky. Its white light pervaded the place, yet the coolness of the breeze and the gentle humidity of the air preserved the grass. Alcibiades leaned on the stones. He looked at the Sea to feel the distance of the Propontis, the vastness of the water and of the world. He looked down. He could see his ships from here, the creek, the beaches, and his small port.

Sea-birds flew around in circles above his head and he followed them with his eyes. There were large birds among them. These defied the wind. They hovered in the same place, watching the water beneath. When they spotted a fish in the water, they dove down, suddenly, plunging like a stone in the water. Then they flew up again, towards the sun.

‘These are a rare kind of Kingfishers,’ Alcibiades remarked. ‘I rarely saw such large birds.’

‘They are halcyons,’ Harmonia replied beside him. ‘They have nests in the rocks just beneath the terrace and higher up, there, in the light grey rocks. We tried to disturb them as little as possible. They are precious birds. They bring us peace and luck. They have a calming influence on the Sea at the time of the winter solstice. From seven days before the solstice until seven days after it, storms will not occur at Sea when our Kingfishers are around. It is said that this is because they breed at the time of the winter solstice in a nest floating on the Sea, but I do not believe that. I saw them nest and sleep on the rocks. They are Alcyone. Alcyone threw herself into the Sea in grief over the death of her husband Ceyx, and then she was changed into a halcyon. Alcyone’s birds ease the winter storms when they fly out, so that we do not have the violent squalls that crush roofs and sheds, nor the high waves of the angry Sea. Maybe, one day, I will throw myself into the Sea from grief of your death and be changed in a bird.’

Alcibiades looked at her with sad eyes.

He said, ‘promise me not to do that. Live for me.’

‘No,’ she replied. ‘Now I know I shall choose my death and if we are together when something happens to you, we shall die together. I shall not wish to live. I shall do like Alcyone. I would prefer to die with you, though.’

‘No,’ Alcibiades shouted. ‘Even if something happens to me, I want you to live. As long as you live, I live.’

‘I will not live,’ she replied stubbornly. She looked at the eternal movement and glimmering of the waves in the Sea. ‘We shall die together, I think.’

Alcibiades let a small silence linger.

He laughed then, ‘I am not Ceyx. There is only one man on earth that could kill me, and then it would still be on a sword’s edge whether I would kill him, or he me. That man is not soon going to kill me! I live and breathe and can make love to you!’

Alcibiades took Harmonia at the shoulders. They embraced and hugged for a long time. Alcibiades was grateful. He had thought to come home to long and tedious work of building the fortress. It had all been done in his absence, and it was perfect.

A few days later, he moved his family and a contingent of men into the fort. More men were sent to the second fort. He kept the country-house as well as the city house of Bisanthes, but he lived henceforth in the fort of Neon-Teichos. It took only a few days more to turn the castle into a comfortable, warm love nest. They were rapidly used to the building, its stairs, its surprising corners with manifold views of the Sea and the green hills. The children ran from the creek and its beaches, where they could bathe, to the courtyard in the fort, to the terrace, to the top of the tower, and into the entire fort. They were the darlings of the Athenian and Thracian hoplites.

With time, houses of wood came to be built around the fort’s walls. The hoplites took wives among the Thracians, and they lived with their families in the houses around the castle. The fort promised protection in case of danger. Farmers came also to the fort, and the men asked permission to grow grains in the fields on the hills. A new town was in the making.

Seuthes came often to the fortress, to talk with Alcibiades and joke with Theodote. He was married many times now. He brought some of his children with him. The thick walls reverberated then with children's laughter and shouts. Laïs and Artemisia learned to speak Thracian without knowing. They just spoke the language from hearing, nobody really taught them. Life was easy and good in the fort.

Visitors from Athens started to arrive. They arrived steadily. Alcibiades owned a fast, small ship and with this boat he sent dispatches to Athens. Letters arrived back, and with the letters also the men of his hetaira. Euryptolemus and Adeimantus came, and even Thrasybulus. They travelled to Alcibiades. Alcibiades invited many other men to his fort. The men discussed the matters of the polis in the evening, in the light of torches that threw red, changing light on the tapestries of the walls of his andron, on the dark timbers of the ceiling and on his marble mosaic. Sometimes, the wind howled around the tower. Theodote and Harmonia served the men. The Athenians were amazed at the slender, dignified beauty of Harmonia and the grand luxury of tall Theodote. They drank sweet Thracian wine, and they conspired over the wide, golden bowls that Alcibiades offered them.

Alcibiades told them all the same message.

'We wait! If the current Athenian generals win battles, our hetaira may be finished, and I will have to stay here, but that is very unlikely to happen this year with Lysander in office. If the generals lose battles and have their fleet destroyed, Athens will be finished, definitely and entirely, for there is no money left in the treasury to build a new fleet. I fear most this last case.

The only Spartan general capable to defeat Athens decisively is Lysander. Lysander will be navarch only for a few months more, though. So, you have to tell the generals to be cautious and not run head-first in battles with Lysander. Let them fight skirmishes, try to capture cities, sail out with small numbers of ships. They will be defeated, of course, but nothing decisive will happen, and Athens will be disappointed but able to fight on. When this continues long enough, I shall come back, just like Pericles came back from banishment. I must not, however, be condemned to anything, not fined, not banished, not anything. You will have to work to delay investigations, courts, and committees of inquiries. Make them forget me for a few months. When the situation gets desperate, when Athens loses money but does not advance in war, I shall come back.'

Arginusae

Alcibiades's wishes, his predictions, turned out for a time as he had told his Athenian friends. There was indeed a standoff between the Athenian army and the Spartan army. The Athenian general who had replaced Alcibiades in Ionia, Conon, had but little money, so that he could only bring about seventy ships in the balance of the war in Ionia. Lysander meanwhile, succeeded in growing the Spartan fleet, and he paid his men well. But time caught up with him. His period of navarch was up. Like Alcibiades, he had not been able to accomplish much.

Lysander was replaced by Callicratidas, a young Spartan of just over thirty years, a mothax like Lysander, but a representative of the moderate conservatives among the ephors. Alcibiades's comment was one of worry.

He thought, 'Callicratidas is a young man. He is belligerent. He will want to fight. He will either lose or win, and both outcomes are bad for me. And bad for Athens, for if Athens wins a battle now, its vanity will blind it.'

Lysander sailed immediately back to Sparta. He gave back to Cyrus the money he had not used for the fleet. He did that to spite Callicratidas, for he should have handed the money over to the new navarch. Callicratidas had to humiliate himself before Cyrus to receive more money, and Cyrus refused. Callicratidas asked to see Cyrus the Younger at Sardis, but he only received the message that Cyrus was drinking. Cyrus refused even to see the navarch. This happened several times.

So, in the end, Callicratidas said, 'surely, I am eager to obtain money from Cyrus. Yet, that eagerness is not so great as my concern to do only things that are worthy of Sparta. I will not be forced to do anything unworthy of my polis.'

Callicratidas left Sardis for Ephesus, cursing the Persians.

Callicratidas needed a victory, now, for he would soon not be able to pay for his ships anymore. He moved his fleet back to Miletus. The Spartans had at that moment about double the number of ships of Conon. Callicratidas attacked the Athenian forts at Delphinium on Chios, and he attacked also at Teos. He captured the town of Methymna on Lesbos.

Conon could not let the Spartans continue to win victories unchallenged. He rowed his triremes to Lesbos. Callicratidas had been waiting for that. He sailed to Lesbos with his entire fleet, grown to a hundred and seventy triremes.

Conon escaped destruction, but he had to flee hastily to Mytilene. He lost thirty ships of the seventy he had. He could save forty ships at Mytilene, but he was blocked there by Callicratidas.

The Spartan navarch then received the money he had been asking for from Cyrus, for the King of Persia's son feared that the Spartans would win victories without his aid. The Athenian general Diomedon tried to sail to the relief of Conon with twelve triremes, but in the narrows before Mytilene he was attacked by Callicratidas and lost ten of his vessels.

Conon sent messengers to Athens to ask for urgent help. The Athenian Assembly had no funds left to build or buy triremes. The Athenians melted down their golden statues, among them the statues of Nike on the Acropolis. They minted coins with that last gold of their city. They managed in the summer of that year to ready a hundred and ten triremes. The Council pressed every able man in Athens to take on duty in the ships. They had to man many vessels with inexperienced rowers, even with slaves to which they promised freedom for their service in the fleet. The last Athenian fleet thus sailed to Samos, led by all their generals. It picked up forty-five more ships from the Athenian allies on the way. Over a hundred and fifty Athenian triremes approached Lesbos.

Callicratidas left fifty of his ships under the leadership of Eteonicus to guard Conon's forty triremes at Mytilene. Callicratidas sailed with the rest of his ships to the south of Lesbos, to meet the Athenian fleet before it could unite with Conon's army.

Between the south of Lesbos, its Cape Malea, and the mainland lay the Arginusae Islands.

The Spartan and the Athenian fleets clashed there, just north of Garipadasi Island.

Before the battle, a seer predicted a victory to Callicratidas, but also his death. Callicratidas merely remarked, 'the fate of Sparta does not depend on me. If I die my country will not be worse off but if I yield to its enemy, it will be.'

He designated his commander Cleander to succeed him, and he gave battle.

The Spartans attacked with a hundred and twenty ships; the Athenians had a hundred and fifty-five triremes. The Athenians divided their fleet in eight independent squadrons, each commanded by a general. The Athenian flanks extended and tried to encircle the Spartan line, in which fewer triremes rowed than the Athenians had.

Young Pericles led this movement on the left wing of the Athenians first.

The Athenians fought bravely. The battle was hard. Spartan and Athenian ships rammed each other and many ships were sunk on those wings, where the Athenian ships tried rowing beyond the Spartan line and attack their enemy from behind.

Callicratidas's trireme rammed into an Athenian trireme. The Athenian ship was destroyed, but Callicratidas was killed. The Spartan formation broke then, and now the Athenian main fleet, of which the ships had remained largely inactive until then, routed the Laconian ships that had held the Spartan centre.

Arginusae was a formidable victory for the Athenian fleet. The Spartans lost seventy-seven ships. The Athenian left wing could not close off entirely the escape of the remainder of the Spartan fleet, however.

When they heard of the defeat, the fifty Spartan triremes that had guarded Conon's army at Mytilene on Lesbos joined the Spartan fleet, and Eteonicus took command, ordering the rest of the Spartan ships to Chios. Eteonicus had ninety-three ships left, whereas Athens now had still a hundred and sixty triremes in the Ionian Sea. The Athenian losses amounted to twenty-five ships only at Arginusae. The Spartan fleet could escape also because a storm overtook the ships.

Right after the sea-battle, the wrecks of twelve Athenian rammed triremes were still lying in the Sea, with about a thousand sailors clinging to whatever piece of floating wood they could reach. The Athenian generals did not immediately rescue these men, for they feared a new attack by the regrouped Spartan ships under Eteonicus. They sailed off with their ships, to re-concentrate and to discuss further actions together. In the middle of the storm, the abandoned sailors drowned. The dead men were not recovered rapidly from out of the Sea. The Athenian generals did after a time dispatch forty-seven ships led by the two trierarchs Thrasybulus and Theramenes to rescue the sailors, whilst the rest of the fleet sailed on to attack the enemy's squadron that was still blockading Mytilene under Eteonicus. But it was too late. Thrasybulus and Theramenes could not save the men in an ever wilder Sea. The storm drove the ships back to the islands.

The Athenian fleet re-united afterwards at Samos. The Spartan fleet remained to lick its wounds at Chios, now led by Eteonicus.

In Athens, despite the great victory, the magistrates blamed the generals for the failure of the rescue of the shipwrecked sailors. It was a holy duty to save sailors from horrible death by drowning in the Sea. It was a sacred duty to pick up the dead from the Sea.

After a hot debate in the Assembly, the generals of Arginusae, except Conon, were deposed from their function. With Conon, two new generals were chosen: Adeimantus and Philocles.

The Assembly voted a decree to call the victorious Athenian generals of Arginusae back to the city, to face an inquiry. Two generals immediately fled. Six generals, Pericles the Younger, Diomedon, Lysias, Aristocrates, Thrasyllus and Erasinides, proudly confronted the Assembly. On their arrival, Archidemus, the leader of the democrats, immediately accused Erasinides. He accused Erasinides of having appropriated funds from the money provided by Athens and he also accused him of misconduct. The Dicastery Court sentenced Erasinides to imprisonment. Timocrates proposed in the Council that the other five generals be put in prison to be judged by the Assembly. The Council ordered the generals to be taken in custody.

A major Assembly came together on the Pnyx in Athens the next day. Theramenes and Thrasybulus, the two trierarchs that had been charged with recuperating the sailors from the Sea, were also recalled to Athens. They defended themselves, complaining that the generals had wasted precious time to re-unite and confer first, before thinking of the drowning sailors, so that the storm could advance upon the scene. Theramenes openly and formally accused the generals, and shouted that the generals had to justify themselves for why they had not picked up the crews of the destroyed vessels.

In the following debates in the Assembly, Callixeinus argued for a simple vote of guilt or innocence. Euryptolemus, Alcibiades's cousin, spoke in defence of the generals. He was in favour of individual trials in courts of justice, not for a popular vote in the Assembly. He argued that the proposal of Callixeinus was unconstitutional. But the majority in the Assembly cried that the people should have the opportunity to judge in the Assembly.

The mood in the Assembly was one of revenge. It was for a time even suggested that the brave Euryptolemus should be included in the trial of the generals.

The Athenians had lost about five thousand men at Arginusae, and among these had been fifteen hundred citizens. Arginusae had been a victory, but it had been paid for dearly, paid in blood.

The party of Theramenes then produced the relatives of the dead men, all dressed in black and close-shaven in sign of mourning. Too many citizens had died, thought the Assembly, and the families of the drowned, dead men, cried out loud in the meeting. The generals had passed willingly and knowingly by their holy duty to succour defenceless, helpless citizens at Sea.

Few representatives of the tribes supported the generals, so these men stood rapidly in danger of being accused of religious offence, like the generals. Lysicus proposed that all the persons that did not abandon their actions of dissent should be tried by the same vote as the generals. The representatives rapidly withdrew their objections to a common vote.

One man, however, refused to put the issue to the vote, and that was the President of the Council, a representative of the Prytaneis who was that day the leading man in the Council. That man happened to be Socrates, the philosopher.

Socrates was the only obstinate dissident who objected to a vote that was not constitutional. There should be a treatment case by case, he told; a common vote for all the generals together was unconstitutional.

Callixeinus and other orators threatened to indict Socrates and to arrest him, but Socrates would not yield. Euryptolemus helped him in a brilliant, long speech, and also the democrat Archidemus spoke in favour of the generals.

A vote was cast after the words of Euryptolemus, and a majority voted in favour of judging the generals separately, but Menecles uttered a formal exception to this vote, and at a second vote, there was a verdict in favour of the proposal of the Council.

Archidemus had tried in vain to direct the accusations on Erasinides alone. He failed in that attempt. Theramenes was especially opposed to Erasinides, and also to Diomedon. These two men had plotted against the Four Hundred, the government that Theramenes had helped realise. Theramenes also had no sympathy for Thrasyllus anymore by then, especially not after the generals had tried to push guilt on him and Thrasybulus. Thrasyllus had opposed Theramenes's constitution when he had been elected general after the victory of Cyzicus, ending effectively the oligarchic regime in Athens that Theramenes supported.

Several orators, controlled by Theramenes, men like Lyciscus and Menectus, now spoke against the generals in fierce and hard words. The Assembly proceeded with the vote.

The Assembly voted on the proposal of Callixeinus, and all eight generals were condemned to death. The six generals that were in Athens were promptly executed. Young Pericles, Aristocrates, Lysias, Diomedon, Erasinides and also Thrasyllus, Alcibiades's companion of so long years, were killed.

The command of the day of the battle of Arginusae seemed to have been held by Thrasyllus. Instead of being able to claim the victory his, Thrasyllus had been executed.

A few days later the Athenians repented. They brought charges against the people that had brought them to vote for the death of the generals. Five or so men were accused and ordered to be arrested but they all escaped before their trial. When Callixeinus later returned to Athens, four years later after an amnesty, he was hated by everyone and he died of starvation. The victory of Arginusae was thus tainted by the injustice of the mania of the populace of Athens.

At Neon-Teichos, Alcibiades wept. He learned of the news of the execution of Young Pericles from letters of Euryptolemus. His cousin remained humble when he wrote about his speeches, but Alcibiades read the bitterness and resignation in the lines. He was glad when he read how Socrates had stood up for the generals to the last and only man of the Council, all alone, against the Assembly, against the outbursts of revenge from the populace, and against the wicked orators. Yet, Young Pericles and the other generals were dead.

There was nothing he, Alcibiades, would have been able to do in Athens. Very probably, wrote Euryptolemus, in the great hysteria of the unbridled mass of people in the two days of the debates in the Assembly, Alcibiades would have been crushed, convicted and executed with the generals.

Alcibiades walked from his room to the terrace, still holding the scroll in his hand. He looked out into the Sea.

Democracy was a terrible form of governing a city like Athens, he thought. The Assembly was fickle in mood, could easily be manipulated to strong outbursts of emotions by unscrupulous men, and then the Assembly decided like a brainless mass, acting on feelings only, without any consideration. He hated the men who controlled

the masses of the Assembly to such excesses. Alcibiades recognised he also had manipulated the populace in this way, in his time. He did that differently, though, he thought. He had never guided the Assembly into acts of such horror. It was a duty to lead the Assembly to compassion, to the truth, to justice, and not to senseless revenge. Senseless the killing of the generals certainly was, for Alcibiades had to admit that the strategoi had been men with at least some knowledge of warfare, whereas now almost no men of such knowledge remained now in Athens. Young Pericles was dead and with him perished five able generals. Conon only, who had been at Mytilene at the moment of the storm, trapped there by Eteonicus, had escaped the verdict. Alcibiades remembered with tenderness the joyful young man with whom he had passed so many merry symposiums. He was racked by remorse, for he remembered well how Pericles the Great had asked him to support his son. Young Pericles was dead, and Alcibiades banged his fists on the parapet of his fort. Athens' ablest general, Thrasybulus, was also compromised in the affair, and would surely not be re-elected general. He supposed Theramenes would also stand for office again, but Alcibiades swore to give word to all men of his hetaira to not let this man succeed. Alcibiades resented the role Theramenes had played in the condemnation of the generals, despite the fact that he had once called this man his friend. He liked Theramenes as a warrior, he now despised him as a politician.

In the elections of the spring of the following year, among the elected generals were Conon, Philocles, Cephisodotus, Menander, Tydeus and also Adeimantus, who was re-elected. Thrasybulus was not re-elected. Theramenes had been re-elected by the Assembly, but rejected in the interrogation committee that had to agree after the election with the candidature.

Menander and Tydeus had fought in Sicily. They had experience of battles. So had Conon, whom Alcibiades knew as a fine leader of trireme fleets. Philocles and Cephisodotus Alcibiades knew less, but he had vaguely heard that these were conservative leaders and they certainly had not any feat to mention in their past career.

After the victory of Arginusae, the Spartan army was blocked without funds at Chios. The troops remained in a state of half mutiny. The sailors and hoplites had to work in the fields as farm labourers to not starve.

Sparta made offers for peace to Athens. The Athenians, however, swept up in the Assembly by the demagogue Cleophon, once more rejected the peace terms. Athens thought a total victory over Sparta was within its grasp.

The Athenian ships in Ionia fought the Spartan allies with renewed energy. All the cities allied to Sparta were harassed, their territories devastated, and their trade ships intercepted and sunk.

During the winter of that year, representatives of the Spartan allied nations assembled at Ephesus. They discussed the war, the disasters brought to their trade by the prolonged pressure of the Athenian triremes in Ionia. They also invited representatives of Cyrus to their debates.

Together, they wrote a text asking the Spartiates to re-instate Lysander as navarch of the Peloponnesian fleet. Cyrus's men still favoured Lysander, and made this point a condition of their further support to the Spartan fleet. Recalling Lysander seemed

impossible at first, for the Spartan law forbade a Spartiate to be appointed navarch twice in his life. Moreover, there was a faction of moderate conservatives in the Spartan Gerousia. The Elders feared the ambition and the power of Lysander. After a time of intense in-fighting among the Spartan leaders, however, it was decided to appoint a man called Aracus as navarch, but to send Lysander with his as epistoleus, secretary, in a disguised form of co-commander.

Alcibiades did not know what to think of these turns of events. He should have been satisfied, for Lysander would surely stop the successes of the Athenian navy in Ionia, and Lysander would once more harass the Athenian fleet in Ionia. That would play into his cards and his chances to return to Athens would grow.

On the other hand, he feared Lysander's successes. He would have welcomed any other able Spartiate general but Lysander. Alcibiades felt the ominous Lysander in his bones. He feared no man but Lysander. He wondered why and how he had felt such strong apprehensions for this man, though he had seen and talked to him only so few times. He thought instinctively that Lysander was after him, Alcibiades, in particular. He thought he knew why, of course. There was Cynisca. Lysander had coveted Cynisca, and he had not been able to touch her, whereas she had been friends to him and opened her heart to him. Lysander was jealous of everything Alcibiades was and that Lysander was not: handsome, generous, brilliant in speech, a man to whom everything came easily and who charmed naturally. Alcibiades was everything Lysander was not. There could be no friendship between them, only strive.

Alcibiades had also heard from Euryptolemus and Axiochus about the state of the treasury of Athens. There were no golden statues anymore for Athens to melt down. If Lysander destroyed the Athenian fleet, there would be no new Athenian fleet. Athens was broke!

Alcibiades cursed loudly when he thought of that situation, for Lysander had the final decision of a war of thirty years right at that moment in his hands. If Lysander crushed the Athenian generals, there would simply be no Athenian fleet anymore. Sparta would dominate the Sea. The Hellespont would be blocked so that no grains could be transported to Athens. Piraeus could be blocked. Athens, without supplies from over the Sea, would be doomed in less than a month. Sparta would rule over Sea and land, and that would be the end of Athens.

Alcibiades was unable to handle this situation. He was not welcome in Athens. He was not general of Athens. He did not lead a fleet. He did not lead land forces. Yet, he knew how crucial the next months could become. What turn of fate, he thought, that right at this moment Sparta had somebody like Lysander in command. It was as if the efforts of thirty years of war culminated in this event, Alcibiades was impotent to act and was Lysander back in command!

Alcibiades walked like a caged-in lion in his rooms, ever restless, looking out for long times to the Sea, hardly listening to what Harmonia or Theodote said to him, turned inside, always worrying and feeling angry and helpless. He racked his brain for solutions, but he found no way of entering the war in person. There was little chance that the current Athenian generals would win from Lysander, like the previous generals had won from Callicratidas. Alcibiades knew Lysander. Lysander now had much more than one year, for the Spartans could apply their trick over and over again. Lysander had no Alcibiades in front of him. Between Lysander and Athens stood only six experienced but unimaginative generals who bickered about a war they did not

know how to handle, how to lead, yet of which they all thought they could not lose it. The generals were convinced they directed the fleet expertly.

Alcibiades worried about that, pacing up and down in his tower, nervous like a caged-in animal. He had no peace of mind and the knowledge soured his life with his women and children.

Harmonia tried to calm him. She pointed out to him repeatedly how peaceful life was at Neon-Teichos, how happy they could be and how joyful the children darted around them. Theodote massaged and caressed his back for long times. But Alcibiades's thoughts were in Athens and in Ionia.

Seuthes arrived at Neon-Teichos. He asked once more for Alcibiades's support. Alcibiades was not sure whether Seuthes really needed help or whether Theodote had sent word to Seuthes to drag Alcibiades out of his sad mood. Alcibiades let Seuthes persuade him. He rode out with the Thracian a few days later, accompanied by two hundred of his men from his two forts. He had trained these men in the past months for hoplite warfare, as well as for peltast actions. He might as well use them in true battles, and give them the experience they needed. Seuthes needed hoplites to serve as shock squadrons in the centre of his lines during battles against the northern tribes. So, Alcibiades rode out at the head of his troops. Wagons loaded with the panoplies of armour followed the men.

Theodote and Harmonia saw them disappear slowly behind the hills. They sighed, but knew that Alcibiades would have destroyed himself in the fort, staying inactive. They did not hear from Alcibiades for four months. Travellers from Thrace arriving at Neon-Teichos told them stories of multiple, terrible skirmishes and battles deep into the mountains of Thrace. Alcibiades did not send them word, and no messengers.

Finally, Alcibiades returned. He arrived one day, un-announced, followed by his troops. He advanced slowly to the fort, riding the same horse on which he had left. He had a long beard, wild long hair, a dirty face, and he wore a dirty, much-dented cuirass. He came back with only half the hoplites that had left with him, but farther along rode three hundred more Thracian warriors. His troops guarded several ox-wagons, and Theodote and Harmonia knew these would be laden with booty, with the gold of Thrace. He was obviously tired.

When he arrived at the gates of the fort he jumped off his horse, as quickly as a young man, and he grinned when he remarked the two women at the top of the tower.

Theodote and Harmonia knew he was better then, the former Alcibiades again. The first thing he did when he came into his rooms was to wash, and cut off his beard. He shaved his face clean. Then, he slept for three days in a row. He was spent, and he remained uttering not more than one word for days more. He refused to talk at first about his second campaign in Thrace.

Time passing, he drew Harmonia again to him, and in the beginning he made love to her like a madman, roughly, so that she cried out in pain. Soon, he could show his tenderness again, however, and look at her lovingly and tenderly. The children, of course, transformed him most. They charmed him and demanded his attention, which he gave first reluctantly, but then eagerly.

The news from Athens dribbled in at Neon-Teichos, as visitors from Athens moored their ships at Alcibiades's small port. Alcibiades heard that Lysander was using his time well. The Spartan co-navarch had contacted Cyrus and received more money. Cyrus had, however, fallen in disgrace with his father. But then, Cyrus had been

recalled to the deathbed of his father Darius, who lay dying at Thamneria in Media, near the territory of the Cadusians against whom the King had campaigned to suppress a revolt. That had been only to the advantage of Lysander, for something really extraordinary had happened, something unthinkable in the Hellenic world.

Cyrus had such confidence in Lysander that he had appointed the Spartiate as satrap in his place for Lydia and Caria, with the right to levy tribute in these lands. Lysander could rule from out of Sardis if he wanted to do so. He had at his disposal all the money from the tributes of the Hellenic cities of Caria and Lydia, as well as the income of the Persian satrapy!

Lysander had not yet enough ships to attack the Athenians straight on, but he had now all the means and the funds he might ever need to build up his navy. Lysander added steadily triremes to his fleet. He recuperated and re-fitted all the old ships, and he had more ships built at Antandros. He trained his men intensely. Lysander crushed all democratic feelings in the region of his rule. He installed oligarchs in Miletus. When he sensed that the Athenian generals did not dare to attack him openly, he used his fleet to storm one after the other of the pro-Athenian settlements in Caria and on Rhodos. He captured Cedrae and sold its inhabitants into slavery. In every place he took he installed oligarchy, governments of no more than a few men that were totally dedicated to his personal cause. He was ruthless and unscrupulous. He gave all power to these men, so that they could become wealthy and in power in their region, and thus even more linked to his person.

Aegospotami

At the end of an uneasy summer, Lysander estimated that he had enough triremes to confront the Athenian fleet. It was harvest time by then, the time when merchant ships laden with grain from the Black Sea coasts passed through the Hellespont on their way to Athens.

Lysander decided to attack in the Hellespont and go for Athens' jugular. He sailed his main fleet to Abydos. The Athenian generals pursued him, but by the time they arrived Lysander had already captured Lampsacus and he installed a naval basis in that harbour. Lysander had used a combined sea and land strategy, attacking Lampsacus' harbour with his vessels and sending his commander Thorax with a contingent of men over land.

The Athenians, with a hundred and eighty triremes, commanded one of the largest fleets ever assembled. They moored at what was not a fine harbour, but a landing site nonetheless, in face of Lampsacus, on the north coast of the Hellespont, at a place called Aegospotami or 'Goat Rivers'. The Hellespont was not wider than fifteen stades at that point.

The Athenian generals challenged regularly Lysander to give battle to them, but Lysander remained in the protection of Lampsacus. It was not his time to fight the Athenians when they were at their strongest force. He waited until the Athenians became impatient and would make a wrong move, an error of judgement, or get demoralised from the waiting.

The Hellespont was in autumn one of the most crowded waters on earth. This was the densest sea-faring moment of the year with the traffic of trade from the Black Sea to Attica. Moreover, close to four hundred war triremes and military transport ships were now gathered in the Hellespont.

The two fleets, of Athens and of the Peloponnesos, patrolled with their most rapid ships to spy on each other's manoeuvres. The Athenian generals preferred to stay at Aegospotami rather than at Sestos, to react as soon as possible on any movement of Lysander's fleet towards the Propontis or towards the Bosporus.

Aegospotami was a bad place for an army of thirty-six thousand men, however. It did not have a harbour worthy of that name. It was merely a stretch of low-sloping beaches. Supplies had to be brought in from Sestos, further to the south.

The Athenians would not be able to hold out long at such a place. The hoplites and sailors of Athens got bored. Food was hard to get. The six Athenian generals changed command every day, as was usual. They challenged the Spartan fleet to row out of Lampsacus, and to give battle but Lysander refused to sail out of Lampsacus harbour and to expose his triremes. Each day, the Athenians rowed out with their triremes to Lampsacus, challenged the Spartans, then they sailed back to Aegospotami. Lysander limited his reactions to sending a few fast ships after the Athenians to see what they did after having challenged him.

Alcibiades heard from his Thracian allies of the build-up of the Athenian and Spartan fleets in the Hellespont, not far from his fortress. He had given word before that he should be warned whenever something special happened. A Thracian tribesman who lived near the region where the Hellespont opens into the Propontis, brought him the news of the arrival of the two large armies. The messenger arrived in the evening.

Alcibiades did not hesitate. He took two of the horses of his fort, and rode to the Hellespont. He rode as long as he could see in the falling darkness, along the coast, past the inhabited regions, changing horses once every while and always pushing on. He slept only a short time, near a beach, in the middle of the night. He wore light armour. He had a shield and a sword.

Before dawn, he set out again, and arrived in the morning in view of the Athenian camp. He rode up a hill, from where he could see the Athenian ships lying in long rows along the beaches of Aegospotami. Some of the triremes were still coming in from the Sea. He surmised that the fleet had just challenged the Spartans at Lampsacus, and had returned without giving battle. He also spotted two Spartan ships watching for a distance the Athenian fleet. Why were these triremes not pursued and chased away?

From that far already, he remarked that confusion reigned in the camp. He saw hoplites sitting in tents, at leisure, without armour. Sailors were eating quite near the ships, on the beaches. They ate immediately after having returned from the Sea. This could have hindered loading the ships in a case of emergency. Not everybody was eating at the same time. He did not see any organisation for the meals. There seemed to be no guards far out, for none had intercepted him. How could the Athenians have spotted a surprise land attack? He saw no cavalry. No manoeuvres were going on in the water. The men were not training, neither at Sea or on land. The sailors were sitting idly, or wandered around without anything to do.

The logistics of this army must be appallingly difficult, Alcibiades reflected. For an army of thirty-six thousand men to feed, huge amounts of food must have to be brought in every day. The Athenians must have at least eight merchant ships laden with food taking turns every day to bring supplies from Sestos.

‘I bet they have twenty transport ships in all, going with ten boats every two days,’ he counted. ‘Where are the latrines? They must have wells here, but their latrines must be far off lest they poison their wells. How many men are working at their logistics? How long can they stay here? Where do the men go when they return from their ships? How fast can they get onboard? Why do they stay here, why not farther off, to draw the Peloponnesians out?’

Alcibiades rode down the hill slowly, cautious for archers. He rode unharmed and unchecked almost until he was on the tents. There, guards appeared, guards on foot, and asked him who he was. He told he was Alcibiades of Athens. He said he wanted to speak to Adeimantus, the Athenian general. The guard pointed out Adeimantus’s tent, and Alcibiades continued to ride on, on horse-back and un-accompanied. When he rounded a hill, the camp of tents really unfolded before his eyes. He remarked the sloppiness of the men. The commanders let the men wander about, seemingly without demanding of them to stay near their squadrons. The commanders were eating and chatting, playing games, without taking much notice of their troops. He had to ask several times for Adeimantus, before he was brought to near the tent of the general.

Adeimantus was standing in front of his tent, sprinkling cold water on his face from out of a pail. He dried his head with a piece of white but dirty cloth. He looked up, and only then did he remark Alcibiades. Adeimantus reacted as if he had seen a ghost. Alcibiades was probably the last man Adeimantus had expected to see in this place. Alcibiades shouted, ‘you can close your mouth now, Adeimantus. Yes, it is I, Alcibiades!’

‘Alcibiades! How did you get here? What is happening?’

Alcibiades stepped down from his horse, and he had to shout a harsh command and an insult very loudly before a hoplite took the reins from his hands to care for his horses. He replied, ‘nothing special happened, Adeimantus. I live not far from here, to the east. I thought you might need some help and advice. You tell me what is happening here! Are you building a new Athenian colony here? Is this an army or a mob?’

‘It should be an army, Alcibiades, and it is. What help could you provide, Alcibiades? We already have the largest army on earth and all the generals Athens might need to command it!’

‘I can bring additional troops and a plan. I would like to propose that to your co-generals. Will you call them together?’

Adeimantus paused a while before he said, shaking his head, ‘sure! Why not? Let’s go to the tent of Philocles. Take care, Alcibiades! You do not have only friends among the generals.’

‘Who will oppose me most?’

‘Surely Philocles. He is an arrogant bastard, as hard as they can come. He believes Athens cannot lose, whatever battle happens. Menander too will oppose you. And Tydeus. You must know those two. They have been to Sicily with you, many years ago. They still resent you leaving the army in Sicily. Cephisodotus is neutral to everything. Conon, I do not know. Come along!’

Adeimantus walked with Alcibiades through a lane of tents. The hoplites looked up when they saw the two men pass, the general and the handsome, apparently

aristocratic man. They did not know Alcibiades. Alcibiades recognised not one sailor or hoplite. These were all new men. He was disappointed. He had hoped to be otherwise saluted, but this was an entirely new army of which he knew nobody. He thought once he saw a familiar face, belonging to somebody he had seen in the army of Samos, but the man turned his face and walked away, ignoring him.

‘Who are these men?’ Alcibiades asked. ‘They do not look familiar to me.’

‘They shouldn’t and couldn’t be familiar to you, indeed. Most of these are sailors. We have citizen hoplites, but those live in tents on the north side of the camp, not here. Most of them are very young, though. You might know some of the commanders there, though. You would be amazed how many ordinary hoplites of a few years ago, the men that fought with you at Cyzicus, for instance, have now become commanders. The sailors here are not Athenians. They are mercenaries coming from all over the world, and some of them are slaves to whom we promised freedom once their term in the fleet was finished. We did not get the best slaves, and not the best mercenaries. The best ones went to the Spartans, for they pay better. We got the rubble, the poorest, the less able, and the most inexperienced, the most in need of immediate jobs, whatever job. They resent what they do. They are not motivated to go to war, but they hate even more getting bored here. They resent not getting enough to eat. They complain the whole day. They will be ruthless and savage in their killing though, for they have no scruples whatsoever. Still, they are grateful for the pay. This army is in a sorry state! We have good trierarchs, however. Even among those, many of them are captains of merchant ships, Athenian citizens, but men without experience at manoeuvring triremes.’

‘I saw no exercises going on in the Sea. If some of the trierarchs are inexperienced, you should be training them. It would keep the rowers occupied, too. They look listless to me.’

Adeimantus was embarrassed.

‘You are right, Alcibiades, we should train. I tried to force exercises upon the men, but I have little experience myself. I asked the other generals. They were not interested to lend me their most experienced captains. It is every general for himself, here.’

‘How about Conon? Surely, Conon must know what to do?’

‘I told you, every general works for himself. Conon hides in contempt. Conon managed to get the best rowers, the best captains, the best crews. He knew the men. He went to speak to them, so that they chose to serve with him. His men have been fighting at Arginusae, and many were with him at Mytilene. Conon goes his own way, the way of Conon! He despises the other generals, and the other generals despise him. They say he got himself boxed in at Mytilene, losing thirty ships from Callicratidas, a milk boy, and he did not participate in the victory of Arginusae. But we all know and feel he is the only general with experience at Sea. He has proved in other battles, even as a young man, that he could defeat Peloponnesian ships. Yet, he doesn’t mingle with us.’

Alcibiades said with bitterness, ‘he lost more ships than Antiochus at Notium, and much more men. Yet, Conon has not been called to justify himself in Athens. He escaped neatly the interrogations after Arginusae, and he was not executed for the drowning of the sailors in the islands. Pericles was, yet Arginusae happened only because of Conon’s defeat! Conon is as much an astute politician, it seems, as a naval general.’

‘Yes. Conon is popular, and he is not a man who stands in the front. He does not throw any shadow. In Athens, you will always find Conon standing behind a tall man. He is the most circumspect, inconspicuous person I know. Yet, each time he receives full honours. He is the ultimate hoplite, I guess. We arrive at Philocles’s tent!’

Philocles was utterly surprised to see Alcibiades enter his commander’s tent. Alcibiades detected a twist of disgust on the general’s lips and face. Adeimantus spoke first, telling why Alcibiades had come to the camp. Philocles kept his silence for quite some time. At last he sighed, and ordered the two guards in his tent to call in the other generals. An awkward silence remained hanging in the tent. Nobody spoke a word. Philocles did not address Alcibiades. He did not even look at him. He went to his table and read one after the other scroll that laid there. He ignored Alcibiades. Alcibiades was tempted to kick the table over with a thrust of his leg, crying that this was no way to receive a past Autokrator, but he kept his temper, and he was patient.

The other generals entered a little later, practically together. Not all saluted Alcibiades. Conon did. Soon, all the generals stood in the tent: Philocles and Adeimantus, Conon and Cephisodotus, Menander and Tydeus.

Alcibiades decided it was time to speak.

‘Generals, I salute you,’ he said loudly. ‘You have a large army here, with fine ships.’ ‘Quit the applause, Alcibiades,’ Philocles interrupted Alcibiades impatiently. ‘We know what we have. What have you come for, here? You have no authority here. It might even be our duty to arrest you and send you back to Athens. Do not tempt me into that!’

‘Have you taken a good look at your fleet, lately, generals? This place is a very bad harbour place to keep so large an army in. The logistics of food and weapons must be awesome here. I propose that you withdraw to Sestos. Sestos has a fine harbour, and it is a city that can supply your army from its hinterland.’

‘We know all about that, Alcibiades. We decided to stay here. Why we are here is of no concern to you. I repeat: why have you come?’

‘I come with help and advice, Philocles,’ Alcibiades replied. ‘I have friends in Thrace. Thrace has many warriors. I can join thousands of Thracian peltasts to your army. You have the sailors you need, but few land troops. You have no cavalry. I can bring you those. My troops can guard this shore of the Hellespont, so that when the Spartans are driven to the north shores in the Hellespont or the Propontis, they would be attacked and destroyed. I never lose a battle, Philocles, you know that! If the Spartans come on land, they shall be defeated. You might even lure the Spartans to this coast, for my troops to surprise them. They do not know you might have an alliance with Thrace. The Spartans do not know I have an army that works with you. They also do not know Alcibiades is here.’

‘That is all nice but very hypothetic, Alcibiades,’ Philocles growled, brushing away Alcibiades’s arguments with an impatient movement of his hand. ‘We cannot even get the Spartans to come out of Lampsacus Harbour, such cowards they are! How would we get them as far as to moor on the north coast of the Hellespont? Your proposal is absurd.’

‘If the Spartans will not sail out of Lampsacus, I can tease them out. Lampsacus has walls, but its harbour has only ramparts. The defences on the land side of their harbour are very weak. I can be here in a few days with a considerable number of men, with so many troops as you do not dare to believe. Help me with your transport

ships to bring those troops to the south coast of the Hellespont, and give me your contingent of hoplites! I shall then attack Lampsacus Harbour with my army from a side the Spartans do not expect: from the land side! The Spartans will be forced to sail out with their ships, and you can pluck them out of the water a little later. If they go back on the south coast, somewhere near Lampsacus or even Abydos, we shall be waiting for them with my army. If they beach on the north side, they will have the surprise of falling into another trap. Adeimantus, here, is a good land-war general. He can lead my troops on the north side.'

'And what would there be in this scheme for you, Alcibiades? What do you expect from us in return for this preposterous help?' Menander sneered.

'I want to help Athens,' Alcibiades threw back. 'Doesn't that suffice you? You do not know Lysander, the navarch that leads the Spartans! I know him well! I have eaten at the same table as he. I know how he thinks. I met him, spoke to him, discussed strategies with him, I have seen him move. We even coveted the same woman. Believe me! I know Lysander as well as I would know a friend. He is the most dangerous person on earth for Athens and for you. Lysander will eat you raw before you have even remarked he has approached. You need me to advise you with his man!'

'We asked what you wanted in return, Alcibiades,' Philocles interjected.

'What I want in return is simple. I come with an army. I lead the land forces. So I should be general. You can elect me general. It has been done before, by the army at Samos, years ago. You must remember that. If you are smart, you can make me your leading general for the few days of the battle, maybe even just for one day, as is your habit. You can just accept me as general of the land forces, and hear me out on the strategy of attack and defence. That is not asking much for a victory! Think of what happens when you lose here!'

Philocles answered again more rapidly than the others. 'Alcibiades, we are perfectly capable of handling the Spartan troops at Lampsacus. Our fleet is superior. It has always been superior in the past, always, at least as long as the fleet was in the proper hands.'

Philocles referred to Antiochus's defeat at Notium, at which Alcibiades had passed leadership over the fleet to his helmsman. Philocles did not let Alcibiades retort on that nasty remark.

He continued immediately, 'we know all too well why you have come here. You have come to claim a victory. If we lose a battle here, we, the current generals, shall be blamed. We shall even be blamed for having given you command. We will be put to the trial in Athens, but you will disappear once more to your fortress in Thrace. If we win the battle, you will claim and receive all the credit. I say we do not need you. Your time in Athens is finally up, you see!'

'True,' Menander added. 'We don't need you, Alcibiades. I don't believe you can come with thousands of warriors. You are just promising what you have no right to promise. You have nothing with you to offer us, except wind and air. Oh yes, if we appoint you to general, which would be illegal in the current circumstances, you would ride to King Medoc in the guise of the function of Athenian general, promise him marvels and demand troops. You might come back with a few hundred peltasts or with nothing. But being general, you would take part in our victory, and steal our victory from us. We don't need you, Alcibiades, not your ideas and not your help. Go home and sleep with your mistresses.'

Tydeus added, 'I agree with Philocles and with Menander. I fought in Sicily with Nicias, all the way to the end. I could barely escape back to Athens. You left us like a

thief, before the battles started. We do not need men like you, Alcibiades. You are a danger to Athens and to the army.'

'I tell you that you don't know Lysander,' Alcibiades cried desperately. 'That man is not just a Spartan general. He is a Spartiate. He is ambitious, intelligent, calculating, a born deceiver, and he acts as quickly as a snake. He shall hold his prey in his mouth, you all, before you realise it. Then he will absorb you, and crush you with a single movement of his jaws. I alone can speculate on his intentions and counter-act on him. Better, I can take the initiative away from him. He fears me!'

'You are telling fables, Alcibiades,' Tydeus shouted. 'We can think too of what Lysander might do! You are nothing but a fraud, always have been. We don't need people like you. Your time with Athens has been up since Notium and Samos!'

The men turned their backs on him. Philocles opened his scrolls and showed one to the men, obviously a plan of attack. He whispered to the men, and they all bowed above the table, ignoring Alcibiades.

Alcibiades was desperate. He saw Conon standing in a corner. He addressed Conon now.

'What do you say, Conon? You have been general in many battles. What do you say of support by land troops? What do you say about attacking Lampsacus harbour with land troops? Is that not sound strategy?'

Conon answered, 'yes, I think that is a good plan and a good strategy. But my colleagues seem to think your promises will not work out. I am inclined to believe them. We cannot wait, Alcibiades! The logistics here are defeating us. If we do not move in very few days, this fleet will poison itself in this place. Sickness and desertion will be the fate of this army. We cannot wait for reinforcements that may not come. Go home, Alcibiades!'

Alcibiades wanted to shout more arguments at the generals, but they completely ignored him at the table.

Adeimantus took his arm and gently pulled.

'Come out, Alcibiades, come with me,' he said softly, almost with pity in his voice, 'your time is not with these men, now. They don't want you with them, whatever you might say. It is better to go now.'

Alcibiades turned on his heels. Finally, he stepped towards the opening of the tent.

His last words, before he went out, were, 'poor Athens, poor, poor Athens!'

Then, he left. Adeimantus offered to sail him back to Neon-Teichos in a small boat, but he refused. He jumped on the same horse he had used to ride to the camp of the Athenians.

He said goodbye to Adeimantus, thanking him for his help. He told Adeimantus to take care, and to stick to Conon. He said Adeimantus would need courage. He turned his horse and rode off, at the gallop, eager to be out of the Athenian camp. He was not angry anymore. Rather, a strange sadness filled his mind. He wanted as quickly as possible to ride out of a camp of dead men.

Lysander did a very simple thing that autumn, right after Alcibiades had left the Athenian camp.

His spy-ships had reported to him that each time when the Athenians returned to their camp at Aegospotami, the men wandered off to eat and drink at leisure. Four times already, his captains had reported him the same habits of the Athenian fleet.

The fifth day, when about thirty Athenian triremes led by Philocles challenged once more the Peloponnesian fleet, and when they returned to the beaches of Aegospotami, the Athenian sailors and hoplites disembarked and strayed off. The Spartan spy-ships as usual looked at what the Athenians did, and then they returned to Lampsacus, as usual also. Lysander had asked the captains of his spy-ships to hoist a shield when they were in the middle of the straits and, of course, when they had noticed that the Athenians were taking life easy on land.

Lysander saw the sign, the sunlight reflecting on the polished bronze shield at the mast of the boat from Lampsacus. He sailed out very rapidly with his entire fleet. In a short time he fell on the Athenian camp with all his ships. He had brought land forces on the other side of the channel, and these troops, under the command of Thorax, advanced along the coast to Aegospotami.

The Athenian crews were scattered on the beaches when they noticed, quite late, the Peloponnesian ships rowing at full speed towards them. They were gathering food, wood, talking to friends of other sections of the army than their own, or eating around camp fires with crews intermixed.

The Athenian generals saw the enemy suddenly attack at Sea, on a very broad front. They tried to man their triremes hastily. Some triremes set out to Sea with only one row of oars, others with two rows. Many triremes stayed ashore, because the trierarchs could not find enough men to row.

The Peloponnesians ran through this makeshift set of ships, and destroyed part of them. They hauled the empty boats from the beaches. The confusion among the Athenian fleet was so great, that the generals could put up no resistance at all. When the Athenians fled from the beaches inland, Thorax and his troops arrived on the from out of the hills along the coast, in good order of phalanx. The Athenians surrendered in great numbers on the shore. They abandoned all their ships to the enemy.

In the early confusion of a battle that could not receive that name, the only Athenian squadron that had all rows on their ships filled by men, and that was sufficiently quick to react and be ready, was Conon's squadron of nine triremes. Among these ships was Athens' messenger ship, the *Paralus*. Conon was unable with only nine fully equipped vessels to halt the hundred and eighty ships of Lysander. He rowed to Abarnis, the promontory of Lampsacus. He could take away at that place the great sails of Lysander's triremes from the Peloponnesian field arsenal, but that changed nothing to the humiliating defeat the Athenian generals suffered at Aegospotami.

Conon sailed away from the Hellespont. He sailed to Cyprus, to seek the protection of King Evagoras there. Conon knew very well that his little fleet would be the only Athenian triremes in any waters soon.

Lysander set up a trophy for his victory at Aegospotami. He had won a great victory with almost no losses in his own fleet. His army took prisoner about four thousand Athenians. Lysander asked Sparta and the Spartan allies what to do with these men. It was decided to kill them all, and Lysander executed the order promptly. The men were killed by the sword on the beaches of Aegospotami. Their corpses were assembled and burned on large pyres.

The Athenian generals, including Philocles, were not spared. The Spartans knew Philocles had persuaded the Athenian Assembly to chop off the right hand of all Peloponnesian prisoners taken at Sea, to prevent them from rowing again. Philocles was known to have ordered captured oarsmen to be thrown overboard into the open Sea and left to drown. Philocles was executed at Lysander's express orders. Lysander

spared only the general Adeimantus, for the Spartans told that Adeimantus had shown mercy previously to their own prisoners. Because of this, many Athenians later thought that Adeimantus had betrayed the Athenian fleet. The Athenian fleet had only been betrayed, however, by the incompetence of its generals, and by their lack of discipline and preparedness in front of Lysander.

Lysander brought his fleet a little later to Byzantium and Chalcedon.

The Spartan and Peloponnesian triremes sailed past Neon-Teichos. Alcibiades could count the ships while they sailed in the far. He knew already then, that all he had warned the Athenians for had come true.

Lysander had used speed and cunning like a predator, and bitten before his prey was ready to resist. He had used land forces combined with his fleet, to cut off escape of the Athenian fleet. If the Athenian generals had listened to Alcibiades and harboured at Sestos, then Lysander would have needed more time to attack, and his fleet would have been spotted from further off. Had the Athenians been more disciplined and trained for rapid reaction, like Alcibiades had proposed in the generals' tent, they would have been better prepared to react more quickly. If Alcibiades had been able to post land forces along the coast, Thorax would have been surprised, and not the Athenians. But it was too late for ifs. Philocles had paid with his life for his errors. Athens had no fleet anymore. Lysander had crushed it in one kick of his foot.

Byzantium and Chalcedon heard of the disaster in which practically the entire Athenian fleet had fallen into Lysander's grip. They opened their gates without resistance to the Peloponnesians. The citizens of these cities that were still allies of Athens, and that had helped to hand over their city to Alcibiades, fled to Athens.

Conon sent the Paralus with the bad tidings to Athens. When the ship arrived, the news of the total loss of the Athenian fleet spread like fire from Piraeus to the acropolis of the city. There was wailing for the dead then, lamentations and mourning. Worse was the fear for the lot that would befall on the Athenian citizens now, for the war was lost.

Athens prepared for a siege, but without provisions, and without any money to build a new fleet. The city was doomed to starvation, and maybe extermination. Athens waited in fear for the fate reserved to them by Sparta and her allies.

Lysander sailed from the Hellespont to Ionia. He had no trouble to convince all of the cities of Ionia to rally to the Spartan cause. Only Samos resisted him. Lysander laid siege on Samos with part of his troops. He sent Eteonicus with a squadron of only ten ships to Thrace. The cities of Thrace also abandoned their alliance with Athens. Thus, in a very short time, Sparta dominated the Hellenic polises of Thrace, the Hellespont, the Propontis, the Bosphorus and Ionia. The hegemony of Athens was past glory. It had simply dissolved in no time.

Lysander then sent word to King Agis at Decelea and to King Pausanias, the Spartan King that had remained in Laconia. He announced he would approach Athens with two hundred triremes. Pausanias levied an army of Peloponnesians, and brought these to Attica in support of Agis. He encamped with this army right under the walls of Athens, on the site of the Academy. Lysander sailed first to Aegina. He re-instated the inhabitants that had been chased from that city by the Athenians, and he pillaged the island of Salamis. Then he blockaded Piraeus with his ships. He arrived at the city of Athens at the end of the autumn of the year.

The Athenians negotiated with Lysander. The main negotiator for Athens was Theramenes. Theramenes and Lysander talked for five months. After so many months, Athens was starved. Lysander and Theramenes reached an agreement only then. Lysander proposed the result of his negotiations to the ephors of Sparta, proposing that Athens would not suffer death, as some of Sparta's allies had demanded, and not be reduced to slavery. The citizens could remain to live peacefully in the city, unharmed. The city would have to demolish a stretch of about ten stades of its long walls to its harbour, however, and the Athenian fleet should be reduced to twelve triremes in all. The exiles from Athens, the past oligarchs, had to be restored, and Athens had to acknowledge the leadership of Sparta in war and in peace, by land and at Sea. Athens had to follow Sparta's choices of friend and enemy.

The majority of the Athenian Assembly voted in favour of this proposal. The exiled oligarchs, past supporters of the Four Hundred, were allowed to enter the city, and the Athenians began to demolish the fortifications of the long walls of Pericles. They did that to the accompaniment of female flute-players to celebrate the beginning of a new period of peace, though that peace tasted very bitter.

In the beginning of the next year, when Pythodorus was Archon-King in Athens and Endius ephor in Sparta, the Athenians chose thirty men to act as their leaders. This organisation was entirely in line with the groups of ten leaders that Lysander had installed in the other Hellenic cities that were former allies of Athens.

The Thirty, as they became to be called, were Theramenes, Critias, Polychares, Melobius, Hippolachus, Euclides, Hiero, Mnesilochus, Chremo, Aresias, Diocles, Phaedrias, Chaereleos, Anaesius, Piso, Sophocles, Erastothenes, Charicles, Onomacles, Theognis, Aeschines, Theogones, Cleomedes, Erasistratus, Pheido, Dracontides, Eumathes, Aristoteles, Hippomachus and Mnesitheides.

The Thirty had been chosen to assemble a new code of laws for the future constitution of the polis of Athens, but these laws were never published. The Thirty appointed a Council and other magistrates, as suited them.

In order to rule with power, they asked Lysander to post a garrison of Spartans in their town. Lysander and the Spartan ephors granted their request, after which one Callibius entered Athens at the head of an army of Spartan hoplites to serve as harmost, or governor.

The Thirty soon fell to flattering Callibius, so that they had their hands free in the affairs of the city. They arrested whoever they wanted. They arrested the people known to resist the new order, the people that put the actions of the Thirty in doubt. When they detained the people, they made sure to be accompanied by Spartan hoplites.

The Thirty thirsted for the blood of the democracy, so that soon the Athenians called them the Thirty Tyrants.

Chapter 23 – Thrace and Phrygia, Summer to the Autumn of 404 BC

Critias

In the early summer of that year, in Athens, Theramenes and Critias, the most prominent members of the Thirty oligarchs that ruled over Athens, held a firm grip on the city, supported them in that by the Spartan ephors. The population feared the revenge of the dominator, and let them rule. The two men differed fundamentally, however, in their opinions as to how the polis should be governed.

Theramenes was constantly thinking about how the present state of affairs might last. He sought to install a solid, permanent system of ruling. He aspired to a government that was firm, intelligent, dedicated to the welfare of the city and of Attica, and to the preservation of Athens as one of the major Hellenic polises in economy, art and mindset. Democracy was not a good means to assure optimal rule, he thought, because the populace could be manipulated by unscrupulous men who controlled the system through their hetaira or political groups. The demagogues abused of the emotions of the people to ensure that their interests were served and their private aims realised. Theramenes despised magistrates chosen by the people, chosen irrespective of the abilities of the persons nominated for the function. He thought a government of wise men, elected because they were the most capable persons for office, was the best form of management of a polis. Theramenes was opposed to democracy for the sake of Athens, which he wanted strong and wealthy. Many of the leading people of Athens adhered to his ideas.

Critias on the other hand did not think of anything else but the exercise of power, power now, today, and totally. It became his obsession to seek out adversaries of the oligarchic system of rule, opposers of the dominance of the Thirty, and opposers of his position among the Thirty. He did not really care who was appointed as magistrate. A magistrate could be anybody, endowed with whatever talents and capabilities, as long as he supported Critias and did as Critias told the man to do. Critias expected total obeisance to the Thirty from any Athenian citizen. He was convinced that the Thirty had the absolute vocation of power and of course needed to wield absolute power to rule as they pleased. He guarded that power jealously. Critias had the character of a tyrant, even though he had to share some part of the power with his colleagues, and, like a tyrant, he was obsessed by absolute power. He was interested in the welfare of the people only to the measure that the welfare assured his power and withheld the people from contesting his rule. He jealously looked for ways to consolidate the dominance of the Thirty, his source of power, over Athens. Like all tyrants, he sought out anybody that might endanger his position, and he acted immediately to thwart any person who might contest and endanger his position. He did not care for being admired. He remained intimately convinced it was far better to be feared.

Critias drew up a secret list, known by him alone, a list of people that might endanger the Thirty, even only potentially. The list grew with names every day. When Critias walked in the streets of Athens or lingered in the agora, people saw him lost deep in

thoughts. He was thinking of his list, then. He thought about who to add, and how to condemn the men on his list of treachery or perfidy. He began to note after the names for what reasons the man might be imprisoned, banned or worse. He looked once every while at the people that passed by, wondering who this or that man was and whether that man should be a candidate for his list or not. People who greeted him cheerfully with an obedient, frank salute, would not come on his list. People that hurried by with a scared or angry look, people who avoided him or drew away their eyes and did not salute him respectfully, he regarded worthy of his suspicion. When he walked together with somebody in the streets, his eyes would dart to left and right, even while he listened, to spot such men. He would ask his companion who this or that person was, what the man did, and his list might be lengthened with a name. Lately, Critias had not only been thinking about the citizens that could be dangers to his regime within Athens, but also outside the polis. High on that list, the first name he entered on it, was of course Thrasybulus, the trierarch and former general who had fled to Thebes once the Thirty had been installed. The second name was that of Alcibiades.

Critias had seen Young Alcibiades train in the gymnasium. This Alcibiades was as handsome as his father and as untamed. But he was still a boy of seventeen years. Young Alcibiades might be a future candidate for the Thirty, yet Critias remembered well that his family had always opposed tyranny, even though Alcibiades the general had resented the developments of the democracy in the past ten years or so, as much, if not more, than Critias. Critias heard what the people were saying in the agora on the war and the peace with Sparta. The people looked back, seeking to come to grips with the errors that had been made and because of which they lost their fleets. When Young Alcibiades passed, heads turned. Critias saw people whisper, then. He heard the name of Alcibiades mentioned far too often to his taste..

The Athenians indeed began to regret having taken command of the army away from their former Strategos Autokrator. It had not really been Alcibiades's fault, they said, that a few ships were lost at Notium. Looking back, Alcibiades had won a lot more battles than the small one he had lost, and then still he had not lost that one in person, but only because one of his trusted commanders had transgressed on orders given. Was not Alcibiades since his very young age the best hoplite of Athens, and later the best negotiator of major alliances, such as the ones with Argos? That alliance was the closest Athens had ever concocted to threaten Sparta! Had not Alcibiades and his family a reputation and a tradition for opposing tyrants in Athens and abroad? Alcibiades had disliked the excesses of the demagogues among the democrats, quite righteously, and he had wanted a change for the better to bring competent people in the government of Athens, while maintaining democracy and the old laws. Was that not the equilibrium desired by a large part of the oligarchs too? Might not Alcibiades prove a good father for Athens?

Critias also heard people mention that Alcibiades would not live for long at ease in Thrace. The people were convinced that Alcibiades was plotting for his return to Athens. Speculations were made on how he would accomplish this, and many of the allusions allusions were directed towards Thrasybulus, the exile in Thebes who wanted to restore democracy and who was Alcibiades's best friend in arms.

Critias came to suspect, and Theramenes knew, that with Alcibiades the people thought to have found the ideal leader to lead the polis to the demise of the Thirty.

Because of the existence of Alcibiades, the people dared criticizing the oligarchy, even if in subdued terms. Moreover, the people told, Alcibiades would certainly have connections in Sparta and he would, with his natural captivating charm, arrive at a decent compromise with the Lacedaemonians.

Critias saw Young Alcibiades run in the streets of Athens, together with a gang of boys his age, all sons of the finest names of Athens. The boy was only seventeen years old, but as boisterous and arrogant as his father had been at that age. He was not as intelligent or as brilliant in speech as his father, but he was very visible, too visible, looked at with hope and expectations. Critias saw Athenians point at the boy or nod to him, and he heard the people talk to him about his father. Critias did not like at all being reminded of Alcibiades so often.

Critias discussed about Young Alcibiades with Theramenes.

He began, 'I have seen Young Alcibiades today in the Agora. A gang of young men accompanied him. They made a lot of noise in the marketplace. A shack of a cobbler got overturned as they ran. The boy disturbs the peace. That young man will end in debauchery, like his father. We have to do something about him.'

'Do you want him to be killed, Critias?' Theramenes asked wryly.

'That will not be necessary. But we should teach him a lesson. He must keep his manners and be more discreet.'

'I have not remarked that Young Alcibiades is more buoyant than many other aristocratic youngsters with money. Young Alcibiades belongs to the most well-known families of Athens, the families whose support we need and of which many members support us openly. We cannot and should not touch him. Touching him would be counter-productive to our aims'

'He is the son of his father and a constant threat to our government. The people criticize us and seem to look once more to Alcibiades, the general, as their hero!'

'So you have remarked that too, Critias. Yes, the people criticize us. That is not extraordinary. I would have been surprised had it been otherwise. After all, we imprison many people, and we kill a lot of the men for no other reason than because they oppose us in words. We give them too many reasons to hate us, too few to like us. And do not Athenians always criticize their government? It is in our nature, isn't it?'

Critias did not answer. Theramenes paused a while, and he kicked a stone on the road out of his way.

He continued, 'Alcibiades should not have been banished. He should have been retained in Athens, where he could have been controlled. He might have been one of the Thirty, you know. He was actually for a long while in favour of oligarchy, in the beginning, when he arrived at Samos. He asked, as the very first Athenian, to put a halt to the excesses of democracy. He embraced not democracy but the army, and the army was democratic. It was the only way for him to return to Athens. Because he is in exile, the people see in him a viable alternative to our government. He has still many friends in the city. These men talk in his support, and they spread rumours of his comeback.'

'Alcibiades is the new idol. He and Thrasybulus, that is. I would not be astonished at all if those two were plotting to overthrow us. Thrasybulus wants to restore democracy and the old ways of rule, of course. Alcibiades wants, as ever, to return to Athens triumphantly, be welcomed with open arms, lauded once more as the saviour of the city. Alcibiades wants so much to be admired! Quite a man, our Alcibiades is!'

Theramenes laughed.

Critias reacted with red anger.

He hissed, 'I do not laugh. Alcibiades is a danger for the state and young Alcibiades is the image of his father in Athens. The people should not be reminded of Alcibiades by the conspicuous presence of his son.'

Theramenes sighed, 'so what, Critias? I suppose you have concocted a solution, designed a plan to do something about the image of the Alcibiadeses, father and son?'

'Yes,' Critias replied definitely. 'I have given it thought. I want to send Young Alcibiades to his father in Thrace, where he belongs. He will make much less noise there! I want this to be done swiftly, without stirring up an uproar in Athens, in silence. I want him out of the public eye and out of the public ear.'

'That is a noble gesture, Critias,' Theramenes remarked, not without irony.

The irony was lost on Critias.

Critias continued, 'I am also going to talk to Lysander. Alcibiades is a danger to the oligarchy and that means he is also a danger to Sparta. We can cope with Thrasybulus. We cannot cope with distant heroes whose image gets embellished every day because he is not involved in the difficulties we face in the government of this polis. We have to take unpopular measures to redress the situation of the city. The Spartans should nurture a few grudges against Alcibiades. The Spartans will never be able to sleep well until the democracy in Athens is utterly destroyed. Alcibiades is a living threat to the oligarchy and to the dominance of Sparta. The Spartans should silence Alcibiades!'

'Oh,' Theramenes answered, 'silence Alcibiades hey? I find it difficult to hear him. His voice is so weak from out of Thrace!'

'Do not joke with me, Theramenes. You know what I mean.'

Theramenes became serious, then. 'Yes. I know what you mean, Critias. You want Alcibiades killed, and you want the Spartans to do the job for you.'

'Of course,' Critias replied. 'We have no troops. We certainly have no troops in Thrace. Alcibiades lives in a fortress, I heard. It takes troops to dislodge him from his fort.'

'Sure,' Theramenes whispered. 'I know Alcibiades. Yes, he will plot for his comeback. He may well, indeed, communicate with his buddy Thrasybulus. We can handle both if we remain smart and vigilant enough, without creating dead men that are venerated more while dead than alive. Alcibiades and Thrasybulus I know. I do not know who might come after their time and presence to confront us, wielding statues of Alcibiades and of Thrasybulus as images of semi-gods in front of them. Young Alcibiades we can despatch to Thrace, of course.'

'And I say we despatch Alcibiades, too, permanently, to the other world. I am going to talk to our colleagues, and then to Lysander. Will you support me?'

Theramenes did not answer that last question of Critias. He coughed, turned his heels, and left Critias standing perplexed, alone, in the middle of the Agora.

Critias obtained immediate and sufficient support among the Thirty to ban Young Alcibiades from Athens. Two days later, Spartan hoplites and Scythian archers entered the house in which Young Alcibiades lived. They told him in rough terms that he was banished from Athens and should be lucky to be still alive. The commander gave him a few moments to pack necessities for a very long travel. Then, they pushed a very pale young man into a closed cart and drove him under escort to Piraeus. Young Alcibiades was thrown aboard a merchant ship bound for Thasos. Two

mercenary hoplites accompanied him on orders of the Thirty. Young Alcibiades sulked and raged during the entire voyage but the hoplites kept a strict eye on him. When he arrived at Thasos, still seething with anger for having been exiled from a town where he had lived in luxury, in ease, and basking in the admiration of a gang of young aristocrats like him, as well as a group of pretty courtesans, he dropped his sack on the stones of the quays. He grumbled and raged. He had been dumped in a small provincial town of a Thracian island. He certainly did not intend to stay here. He had taken some money with him, but not nearly enough for a long stay anywhere. He had to go to his father, who lived in these parts. Young Alcibiades went in search in the harbour for a boat and a captain sailing to the Bosphorus. He might persuade such a captain to follow the north coast of the Propontis and make a stop at Neon-Teichos. He had to wait for three days in Thasos. Then he found a captain willing, for a hefty fee, to take him to his father's fortress.

At that period Lysander stayed in Athens for a few days. Critias talked to Lysander on the affairs of the town. At the end of their conversation, Critias spoke of Alcibiades. He told Lysander that Alcibiades was becoming more popular again, and that Alcibiades would soon prove to become a living menace to the oligarchy. Critias argued that as long as Alcibiades lived, democracy would live, and as long as democracy had a chance, oligarchy could be destroyed. Democracy had to be destroyed totally, and no hope given to the Athenians that it might ever return. He said that as long as Alcibiades lived, the opposers of oligarchy would have a leader and be ready to plot to shake off Spartan-led rule.

Lysander reacted as if he were surprised. He told Critias he thought the Thirty had a better grip on the city. He asked Critias how one lonely man might plot to destroy oligarchy. Lysander remained doubtful of what Critias wanted of him. In fact, he had not given much thought to Alcibiades, lately. The man did not bother him anymore. He lived like a recluse in his fortress, surrounded by Spartan garrisons in the towns nearby. Lysander had other things on his mind than bother with one man in far Thrace. He would have liked to despatch Alcibiades to the other world, but not treacherously. Lysander had wanted to defeat Alcibiades in person. He had defeated Alcibiades's troops at Notium, but Alcibiades had not led those troops in person, as he well knew at that time. He had only attacked Notium so brusquely because Alcibiades had not been there, and he had defeated Alcibiades in the effects of that battle, but Lysander still hoped to one day confront the Athenian general man to man and kill him in battle. Lysander hesitated to answer Critias. When Critias started to talk to him about the execution of Alcibiades by Spartan troops, he waved Critias away. 'Why should we bother about a man without troops, so far from Athens?' he objected. Lysander left Athens the following day. He sailed to Ionia, far from Athens, to be present at the last stage of the capture of the city of Samos, the last town in Ionia that openly defied Sparta.

Critias did not stop agitating against Alcibiades. He sent messenger after messenger to the ephors in Sparta, trying to convince the Spartan leaders of Alcibiades's perfidy and of the dangers Alcibiades represented to the new order.

Young Alcibiades

Meanwhile, in the summer of that year, Alcibiades and Harmonia stood in the afternoon on the terrace of their fort. It was hot. They were only dressed in light chitons. Alcibiades had his arms around Harmonia's shoulders. They looked out to the Sea. Alcibiades saw a merchant ship arrive and moor at the wooden quay of his small port. A guard had already sounded the alarm, for Alcibiades feared sleek attacks by Spartan troops on his fort. The merchant ship did not stay, however. It moored, a young man leapt on the quay, and then the boat sailed off again. Alcibiades watched in surprise, wondering who the young man could be. Then it dawned on him that his son had arrived from Athens.

Alcibiades prayed Harmonia to wait. He ran towards the tower and down the stairs that led to the beaches. Young Alcibiades walked up the stairs, slowly, a heavy sack on his shoulders. Harmonia looked at the boy and the man. The boy dropped the sack to the stairs and waited when he saw Alcibiades approach. Harmonia saw Alcibiades embrace the young man. The boy acted rather coldly. He did not embrace Alcibiades but for a rapid holding at the shoulders, barely touching the man who hugged him enthusiastically. The two men walked up the stairs and Alcibiades cried to a servant to pick up the sack of the visitor.

Alcibiades brought the boy immediately to Harmonia on the terrace and said with gleaming eyes and a broad smile, 'Timandra, you have seen my son, Young Alcibiades, before. He has grown up. He will stay with us now.'

The young man saluted Harmonia. She remarked a hint of silent admiration, for she had still a fine and now dignified figure, pale creamy skin with little blue veins like in the most priced white marble, and a delicate face, but the boy did not more than salute her politely. He never smiled, and his lips stayed tight. The boy was dirty, and he stank of sweat and fish.

He said, 'I would like a bath father, then we can talk.'

'Sure, sure,' Alcibiades said.

He called servants to prepare a bath for his son and to lodge him in the guest rooms of the tower.

Young Alcibiades had a bath. He ate and visited the fort with his father. He met Theodote, and though he knew her from when he was a child, he was still impressed by her stately elegance. He did not know Laïs and Artemisia. He did not grant them the slightest interest. Were they no bastards? When the family gathered on the terrace, the two girls defensively blotted themselves against Alcibiades and Harmonia. They did not sit next to Young Alcibiades. The Alcibiadeses, Harmonia and Theodote talked, chatted about everything and nothing until darkness fell. Young Alcibiades explained how surreptitiously he had been ousted out of his house, pushed violently in a closed cart and ushered summarily on a boat with destination Thasos.

Alcibiades was not entirely surprised. His hetaira in Athens had been preparing for his return by spreading the right rumours, calmly, discreetly, but steadily. He had given orders to seep his well-chosen messages through to the people, and in the form of questions, the way Socrates asked questions in his elenchus.

The questions went like, 'did Alcibiades kill Athenians when he was Autokrator? Did Alcibiades really lose at Notium? How many battles did Alcibiades win? How many battles had Theramenes won for Athens? Has Critias ever won a battle for Athens? Has Critias ever fought in a battle?'

And so on.

Alcibiades insidiously prepared the public opinion for the right moment to be called back. The moment was not yet ripe, however. The Thirty were not yet hated enough.

Alcibiades was therefore quite satisfied with the reactions of the Thirty concerning his son. It was a sign that his work of undermining the Thirty was being done well. The Thirty feared his name and had not forgotten about him. All Athens would now start to know how the Thirty feared even Young Alcibiades, his son, enough to have the boy exiled. The Thirty must be losing patience, he noted, and live in doubt and frustration to have arrived at fearing even his son that much. Athens would rapidly know that the mere name of Alcibiades was a menace to the oligarchy. Every opposer of the regime would consider Alcibiades and Thrasybulus the only viable alternative for rights of freedom in Athens.

Young Alcibiades talked and talked. When he told of the theatre plays, Theodote's eyes gleamed with memories. Young Alcibiades told how he had participated in the last Panathenaic Festival of Athens. Theodote clapped her hands of excitement when Young Alcibiades recalled who won and how. The boy explained how feasts, symposiums, theatre plays, contests in the gymnasium and the bustle in the harbour had regained their splendour after months of mourning. Young Alcibiades talked and proved to the girls what a dull life they really had, here in Thrace. He spread out all the glamour of the city of Athens to them, instilling in them a longing for the greater, grander life, and the image of such splendours would grow in their minds. Finally, Harmonia and Theodote stood up from the couch and they drew the two girls with them to the rooms inside the tower. Four torches now burnt around the Alcibiadeses on the terrace, for total darkness of the night had fallen. Though it was still warm, a colder breeze blew in from the Sea. Stars glimmered in the sky. It would be too cool soon to stay outside, the difference in warmth with the bright day terrible. Alcibiades was alone with his son. They drank a last cup of wine together. Alcibiades noticed how fast his son gulped the beverage. He had watered the wine much, but nevertheless he found the boy drank too much, too rapidly. An uneasy silence set in. Alcibiades broke the silence.

He asked, 'what had you in mind to do at Neon-Teichos, my son?'

'I cannot go back anymore to Athens. I do not have much money left. I could stay here for a while, or depart again, just as you wish. I shall not bother you. I could travel to a town, even under another name. I could live in Byzantium, maybe. Axiochus could teach me a few things there.'

'How well do you know Axiochus?'

'Not very well. I know him, though. He came to visit me often these last years. So did Euryptolemus and several other friends of yours. I know Axiochus travels and trades in these parts of the Sea. But I don't know where he lives. Socrates the philosopher, too, came to see me. Socrates told me he could take me on as his student, but I refused.'

'You could have learned a lot with Socrates.'

'Socrates has grown old. He does not tolerate one arguing against him. He has fewer students. There are more old men around him these days than young students. I do not need talk of philosophers. I prefer the contests in the gymnasiums and the exercises, there. I started to train in the cavalry, though not since a long time.'

'Do you like the cavalry?'

'I am a knight, so I should like the cavalry, shouldn't I? I would like to be an commander in the cavalry. I thought I might train to become the Hipparchos of Athens.'

‘One doesn’t become Hipparchos by training with horses. One becomes Hipparchos by training with men. Socrates would even tell you one gets born Hipparchos. One needs to have a special talent to be the general of the cavalry, the Hipparchos. Or general of the army, of the hoplites. He would also tell you to train much your body, however. What kinds of talents do you think you possess?’

Young Alcibiades answered distractedly. ‘Oh, I could do anything in Athens. I am a knight. I am a rather good rider, too. All my friends are knights, and most of them train like me in the cavalry.’

‘To become Hipparchos you must return to Athens. Yet you have been banished.’

‘Yes, I suppose I have been exiled. I do not believe that my exile will last. The situation will change in Athens. My friends say that once the harsh period of the transition to the Thirty is over, the Thirty will relax their rulings. Then I can go back.’

‘What would you do as Hipparchos? The Hipparchos leads the cavalry, but he is a warrior only. Would you not rather talk in the Assembly and be a leader of the polis?’

‘I will be one of the Thirty, sooner or later. Many of my friends will be. I would like to know Sparta better, maybe train for a while there like a Spartiate. I shall ask Leotychidas.’

Alcibiades spilled wine from his cup.

‘You will ask who? What?’ he exclaimed.

‘I shall ask Leotychidas. Don’t look so surprised, father! We all know in the family who Leotychidas of Sparta is. He will be the next King of Sparta, won’t he? It took me a few years to put the rumours together, but I understood all right.’

Alcibiades drank from his wine, for his throat suddenly felt very dry. ‘What rumours?’

‘The rumours that Leotychidas is your son and my half-brother. Leotychidas will be King of Sparta one day. Then I shall go to see him. I shall be a general or at least a commander of Athens by then. Together, Leotychidas and me can forge an alliance and conquer lands beyond Hellas.’

‘Oh, you have thought all that out well, my son. What tells you that Leotychidas will listen to you? He is Spartan bred, Agis’s official son, and Spartan raised. He will be a Spartiate. His mother will see to that. Leotychidas does not know he is my son. He is Agis’s son! He may well not listen to you.’

‘I am sure he will. Spartans and Athenians will evolve together, now. Together we will be very strong. The things we could do with our armies, Athens at Sea and Sparta on land! We shall be invincible. No army can win from us.’

Young Alcibiades’s voice sounded shrill, passionate and louder than before.

Alcibiades replied, ‘Sparta wants domination, lasting domination. As long as Athens is powerful, the Elders of Sparta will esteem that Athens is a danger. Whether they will react to a danger depends on how acute the danger is, but the Elders will never feel at ease with Athens, never. They do not hate Athens, but they fear her. They want a sort of peace in the Hellenic world, but that peace can only be their kind of peace. Suppose your hopes with Sparta do not realise. Suppose the people of Athens do not follow you. What would you do then?’

‘I am not alone. I have friends. I am a leader of a group. We will convince Sparta to join us. The leaders of Sparta are intelligent men. So will we be, in Athens. We shall do great things together, you shall see!’

‘I hope your dreams will come out true, son,’ Alcibiades sighed. ‘The great things you propose will mean war, and that will mean many men killed, their bellies slashed open and their jugulars cut through. Have you ever seen blood on a battlefield?’

‘No, not yet. Men before me have fought. There is always a first battle, and before a first battle, nobody has seen blood. You have won battles. I can do so, too.’

‘In the meantime,’ Alcibiades concluded, ‘you are to stay with me. You want to be a cavalryman. We have horses here, in our stables. You have seen those, and you are welcome to ride on them. Our main cavalry is not in this fort. I have another fortress, larger than this one, much larger, but built without high towers like we have here. My cavalry consists of Thracian horse riders, the best in the world!’

Young Alcibiades interjected, ‘there is no better cavalry in the world than the cavalry of Sparta and Athens!’

Alcibiades laughed, ‘oh yes, there is. You shall see. What the Thracian horse riders can do, you will have it hard to repeat. They fight in another system than ours, but they fight as bravely as Spartans or Athenians. It would suit you for a while to live with the Thracians and exercise with them, even go on a campaign with them. You can stay here for a few days, then go and train as a true cavalryman with the Thracian guards.’

Young Alcibiades felt dismissed. His father had just rejected him out of his house. He knew that, but he did not really care, for he had not had a father so far, and he had not expected anything in coming here but a temporary shelter and money. He answered he was tired, took his leave, and went into the tower to sleep.

Alcibiades stayed alone. He drank his wine. His head sank on his breast. He remained sitting, lost in thoughts. He heard a soft noise in front of him, which made him look up. He saw a figure sneak out of the house and walk towards his couch. Harmonia had come back.

She whispered, ‘I could not catch sleep.’

Alcibiades drew her near to him. She wore a heavy cloak around her shoulders, and she pushed the cloth around both of them. She laid her head on his chest and she settled in his arms. She remained silent, but Alcibiades expected questions.

She asked, ‘trouble or happiness?’

‘You mean with my son?’ Alcibiades asked.

He continued without waiting for an answer, ‘I guess he means more trouble than happiness. The boy inherited his mother’s unrestrained, passionate nature. He knows what he wants to do with his life, but he doesn’t know yet that people are like boats in the Sea. Boats sail on the waves and they go up and down with the waves. Only foolish captains try to break through the waves with their prows or hulls. When a boat breaks through the waves, it will not last and it shall be broken in its turn by the Sea, and be destroyed. I might change him by caring for him a lot, give him attention and show him love. I am not sure whether he knows what love is, though. He seems to care only for his own neat life. He does not care for others. It will take me so much work to change him, that I do not know whether I am willing to invest that much of my time and of my energy on Hipparete’s son. It has also become very late for that. His character is formed, and not by me.’

‘He is your son. He is your heir. He will inherit from you one day. He will inherit your wealth and your reputation. He bears your name. The people of Athens will see you when they hear his name.’

‘I am not sure having my name is a boon for him. It brought such a heavy burden on him that it could be too much to bear. His mother should not have called him after me. Also, I have not a large wealth, darling! Before I die I will make sure that the largest part of my money goes to you and to Theodote, for Laïs and Artemisia. Most of our money has gone into our forts and the rest is eaten up by our troops. I wonder whether

Young Alcibiades hates me for what he surely must feel is a father's neglect. I suppose Leotychidas does the same, though Timaea will talk to him with some warmth of his father, and that one will not be a boy deprived of love! I am sure Timaea will tell him one day who his father really is.

I rather believe Young Alcibiades ignores me. He is a boy without love, who does not know what love is. I haven't seen the craving for affection in his eyes. In fact, I saw only a void in his eyes, and passion when he talks of war and being a warrior. He has never received love. He does not seem to expect love and affection. He is a cold boy, though an obsessed one. He is obsessed, but doesn't know the vagaries of life. He reminds me somewhat of Lysander, for other things. Lysander is a cold person too. He is infinitely more intelligent and realistic, of course. Lysander alive will never hand over power, or share power with an Athenian. That is the scheme of Young Alcibiades, you know, and probably the scheme of his group of friends. I wonder how much there is of Young Alcibiades himself in his views, and how much of his friends. He seeks an alliance between Sparta and Athens that is an active one, and then he proposes to conquer the world together. That scheme will never work! One Hellenic town will always eat the other! That courage, that craving is our strength, but also our weakness. I once also had a similar grand scheme, even though I never really believed in it. That was the scheme over Sicily!

Alcibiades chuckled. 'I would have been the first surprised if Athens had conquered Sicily. I only wanted the Syracusans to be allies of us, and help them fight Carthago, like they might have helped us against Sparta. Look where the Sicilians are today! Only five years after the Athenians arrived on the island, the Carthaginians invaded Sicily. Four years later, Syracuse was governed by a tyrant, by Dionysius. The Syracusans have to defend their towns from an invasion by Carthaginian warriors, and from what I heard they are not doing so well a job at it! I bet the Spartans will send them one or other Spartiate to save the situation. One Spartiate! That helped in the past, but not anymore. The Syracusans can do without Spartiates; they have learned how to fight well enough and equally how to lead men; a Spartiate will not be of much help.'

'So, what will you do with your son?'

'I will certainly not let him disturb our peace. Definitely not! I do not tolerate coldness, bitterness and obsession near our girls. I sent him to our fort of Oinos. He wants to be a cavalryman. He speaks of war and of battles, but he has not yet seen one drop of blood. The Thracians can teach him all that. He needs to suffer a bit. I shall give orders to my men to not spare him. He needs to learn. He will become a better man by learning. He needs to know what it means to be a hoplite, like I did at Potidaea. His arrogance must be broken. I wonder what kind of character he will show us then.'

'It may destroy him. You should talk to him, show him your interest.'

Alcibiades let a small silence set in before he replied. 'I will pick him up then, all right. Yes, I should show interest. I will see him here or at Oinos every fifth day. I will call him in to some of my symposiums. Yes, I will show him love too, for your sake. That is what you want, isn't it? That was why you came here for, didn't you?' Harmonia looked at him, smiled, then settled again, satisfied, in his arms. They stayed a while like this, sitting in the night under the stars and in the cool night. Then Harmonia stirred, and they stood up and walked hand in hand to the tower. They could not see in the darkness that Young Alcibiades was looking at them, as they walked in the light of the torches on the terrace. The affection so displayed by

Alcibiades and Timandra did not touch him. Down there was only a man walking with his mistress.

Axiochus

During that month, Axiochus visited Neon-Teichos. He was still a formidable man, though he was greying, and he had put on weight. He wore a thick beard now but short-cropped hair. He turned around Theodote in obvious envy. He was a rich man, his trading ships sailed from the Black Sea to Athens and to Sparta, to Rhodos and Cyprus and back. His war was in making money and in defeating the competing captains on the trade routes in price and speed. He lived at Cardia, a peaceful town on the other side of the Chersonese. He remained seldom for long in the same place, however. Alcibiades would bet that Axiochus had a mistress in every town of the Propontis and of the Pontis too, but Axiochus swore he only admired Theodote, though he did not beguile her.

Axiochus arrived with news from Athens and from Thebes. The Thirty were exercising a government of naked terror in Athens. They arrested whoever they liked, or rather disliked, at the moment that suited them, and they executed the men. Wives were sold as slaves when they were not Athenian citizens. The possessions of the imprisoned and executed men were handed over to the Thirty, and these disposed of the properties, keeping much for themselves. The Thirty were rapidly growing rich. They did not just arrest citizens. Axiochus told that Lycon's son, Autolycus, a man who had won a victory at the pankration of the Great Panathenaea of 422 BC, an honoured and friendly man, had been executed by the Thirty only for having insulted a Spartan. There were more examples like Autolycus. The Thirty also imprisoned, exiled or executed metics.

Axiochus had gone to Athens only briefly, and he had arrived in the harbour on a new boat that was not known in Kantharos as belonging to him. He had lived in a small inn of Piraeus. He had not sought to visit old friends, except a few such as Euryptolemus, and he had approached these unobtrusively in the harbour or in the agora, not at their houses. He had heard the people talk in hostels and in the harbours. Spartan hoplites patrolled the town. Young men of oligarchic private guards walked with daggers in the streets. There were no Assembly meetings anymore.

The Athenians called the Thirty the 'Thirty Tyrants' now. Alcibiades's hetaira still existed and it remained active, even though it agitated in secret. The city hummed with rumours about Alcibiades. The people longed for the old government, but they were also glad to have peace. They resented having to submit to the Thirty. Axiochus told that the Thirty were led by Theramenes, and especially by Critias. It seemed these two were disputing leadership of Athens, and each had a group of the Thirty around them. Axiochus surmised that one day, maybe soon, these two factions would come to arms. The most unscrupulous and bloodthirsty man, however, was Critias, and not Theramenes.

It had been noticed in Athens that Young Alcibiades had disappeared. Hoplites had been seen at this house. It was known that Young Alcibiades had been pushed aboard a ship. This had not helped the reputation of the Thirty, and Alcibiades's prestige had risen. Alcibiades was now definitely considered a menace to the Thirty. Thrasybulus

remained a fugitive in Thebes, but not such a political challenger as Alcibiades, and the Thirty underestimated him in military value as well.

Axiochus had sailed around the Peloponnesos and travelled to the coast of Boeotia. He had travelled over land to Thebes, always under another name. He had met Thrasybulus.

Alcibiades became excited, restless, when he heard Axiochus had met Thrasybulus. He asked a hundred questions. Axiochus silenced him, asked for food and wine. He only talked of Thrasybulus to Alcibiades when the women had gone to sleep, late in the night.

Thrasybulus had escaped from Athens and found refuge in Thebes. The Thebans had wanted Athens destroyed, its citizens sold in slavery or exterminated. Lysander, the Spartan Kings and the ephors had refused such dramatic ending. Harsh words had fallen on other matters between Thebes and Sparta.

The Hellenes are a terrible people, said Axiochus. Once there were two cities who disputed power, Sparta and Athens. Now, one city had been defeated and its power annihilated: Athens. Sparta dominated Hellas. But that was not the end of war and the beginning of ever-lasting peace. Immediately another power had formed to challenge the strength of Sparta: Thebes.

Axiochus said this city was preparing for a war with Sparta. The Theban hoplites trained hard every day. A new military power was in the making in that city, a power as strange and extreme as the one of Sparta. Axiochus had seen more and better fighting men in this town than elsewhere.

Sparta was still strong, but dying, he said. He had been in Sparta before, and he found the energy that still existed in that region to be dwindling. Sparta was aging; Thebes burst of activity.

All Thebes needed now was a genius leader of military campaigns. Then it would be a perfect match for Sparta, and in a pitched battle Thebes might defeat the Spartiates. Thrasybulus had been accepted in Thebes. No Spartan could touch him there. Fifty other Athenians remained with him in the city, and they conspired to return to Athens. Many of the companions of Thrasybulus were democrats, but not all. All opposed the regime of the Thirty Tyrants however. They were plotting their armed return to Athens. Thrasybulus had told Axiochus in secret that he planned to capture a fort somewhere in Attica, just a token occupation, to show that a counter-force existed in Attica, and to see how much armed support he could muster spontaneously from out of the disgruntled men of Athens. Thrasybulus knew he would somehow have to confront the Spartans. He was not afraid of that. He thought he had found a solution to harass the Spartans. Thrasybulus would not have a regular hoplite land army. He could not attack the Spartans in a battle in the Attican plains. He was sure to lose such a battle, except maybe with Boeotian aid, but he would not receive such aid soon.

‘So, what did Thrasybulus then have in mind?’ Alcibiades asked.

Thrasybulus was to enter Athens at Piraeus and to fight his way to the agora in the streets. He would fight in the narrow streets and from the tops of the roofs. He would have lightly armed troops, many archers and slingers. He hoped the people of the town would help, if even only to throw stones down on the enemy. The Thirty would resist fiercely, so there would be a civil war in Athens.

Thrasybulus would not remain in Thebes forever, Axiochus was certain of that.

Thrasybulus would come out and fight. He might lose or he might win, but he would not sit idle. That was not in his nature. Thrasybulus thought he could hold out long

enough in Athens for the Spartans to seek a settlement when the cost of attacking and fighting in the midst of the city proved too costly. He hoped the Athenian people would support him massively.

‘Lysander will not seek a settlement,’ Alcibiades remarked. ‘He will always seek victory. He will throw in all the men needed to crush Thrasybulus, and defeat him. He will get peltasts, and slingers and archers, from his allies. He may well be vindictive and kill all the insurgents brutally, and punish Athens severely. Thrasybulus cannot win such a war.’

‘Lysander might do that, indeed,’ Axiochus replied. ‘Thrasybulus told me, however, that Lysander is not the only power anymore in Sparta. It seems Thrasybulus has received some good information from the Theban ambassadors, and they share it with him easily. The Kings of Sparta are envious of Lysander’s influence and afraid of his ambitions. They fear he might intrigue to become King himself. Agis gets old, and was always rather shy in politics. Pausanias, the second King, worked himself up to prominence lately. He is a new force in Sparta. The Damos listens to him.

Pausanias has been augmenting his notoriety among the ephors, linking more than half of the ephors to his house. Pausanias looks with apprehension at Thebes. He does not fear Athens anymore, he fears Thebes, and looks to Athens for a potential ally. He fears for Sparta and counts on the enmity between Athens and Thebes. He does not care for Ionia or for the Hellespont. He does not look far beyond the Peloponnesos and Attica. He might want a much diminished Athens as some form of an ally and he dislikes the killing and exploitation by the Thirty in that polis. Thrasybulus assured me that the situation of power in Sparta is more complex than we think. He believes he has a chance to fight it out in the streets of Athens and make those fights so expensive to the Spartans in men, in Spartiates even, that they will sue for a kind of peace with him and change alliances.’

‘Did Thrasybulus say anything about me?’ Alcibiades asked.

‘Yes. Of course. Thrasybulus cannot bring about renewed democracy without you. Thrasybulus is a hoplite, not a schemer, not truly an orator and not a legislator. He misses the support of the eldest and wealthiest families of Athens. He says he can bring men to fight but he needs somebody to speak in the Assembly for him, and to gain the support of the eldest families. He says he can win over the Assembly once, after a victory, but not hold it for a long time. After his victory, times will be hard for Athens, and a government may not be popular. Somebody needs to tell that to the Athenians in the right words. He says he thinks he cannot do that, certainly not alone. He wishes somebody at his side. So, he will attack Athens sooner or later. He will then send you notice, and he will ask you to join him. Together, he believes, you two could be invincible. He has good commanders, but none with your vision and energy and cunning. He heard also of your growing popularity in Athens, which has been the work of your friends. He was impressed. He needs another general, but he needs even more somebody he can trust to govern Athens afterwards, even if in the old ways. Athens also seems ripe to want you back!’

‘Then I should travel to Thebes,’ Alcibiades reflected.

Axiochus whispered now even more.

‘No,’ he said. ‘Thrasybulus asks you first to do something else.’

‘What then?’ Alcibiades wondered.

‘Athens needs money. Her strength at Sea must be built up again. It will take many years, but gradually Athens must regain her splendour. We do not want a war again. You must know that at Arginusae alone died more Hellenes than were killed in the

great battles against Persia seventy years ago. In the battles of the Hellespont and the Propontis more than fifty thousand Hellenes died! Have you thought about that? And the cost of the war! You were at Potidaea. I was told that Potidaea alone cost us two Parthenons and almost half of the polis' reserves of before the war. We have had enough of wars. But Athens must become a wealthy city again. We need a few ships to be built every year. We need friends. The Spartans could win the war because of the coins of Persia. The money for the war, the money for Sparta's triremes and for its mercenaries came from Persia. Sparta had Lysander, but there will be no more Lysander after a few years, for Lysander cannot be navarch in name anymore. You know how Sparta is. She will revert to her old laws and customs. The Spartan ephors and Kings will limit Lysander's influence on Spartan politics. Once peace settles, even with a democratic Athens, power in Sparta will return to the ephors and the Kings. Athens and Sparta will then be on equal footing again. Currently, Lysander's fleet blocks our trading ships in Ionia and they control whatever boats travel through the Bosphorus and the Hellespont. Spartan captains can transport goods unhindered, but our ships are pillaged. The Athenian traders are losing a fortune in Ionia. That has to stop, gradually, but surely. We need Persia as a friend! Persia must understand that the trade must go on unhindered, uncontrolled by Sparta, around the coasts of Asia. Somebody must explain to Tissaphernes, to Pharnabazus and to Cyrus that it is in their interest to let Athenian boats sail freely in their waters, and to do commerce without Spartan control with the Persian territories. On that commerce depends the wealth of many of their cities. Sparta and Lysander kill that commerce. The satraps will know that from the figures of their dwindling income.'

'Aha,' Alcibiades said, and he laughed, for Axiochus's scheme was so evident. 'You and your friends are suffering from the Spartans, are you not? Your profits are going down. You lose ships and transport. You worry how your merchant ships sail in Ionia! Spartan captains are capturing your contacts and transporting where you transported before, isn't it?'

Axiochus laughed too. He had been caught, but he had expected Alcibiades to understand quickly. He had to take Alcibiades into confidence.

'Not only Spartan captains are capturing our trade. I spit on Spartan captains. They are the most incompetent sailors and traders in the Sea. But every damn Peloponnesian port is capturing our trade, Megara, Epidaurus, Cythera, and foremost Corinth. Let's say that it was not entirely for the love of Athens that I was in Thebes. Us, traders and transporters, we talked before. How can we win a decent living if Athens is not wealthy? Could Athens become wealthy again without us and without our trade? The Thirty allow our trade, but they will never do anything in the islands and in the Sea. Moreover, they kill citizen traders and the trading metics as well. We have no peace. We trade without protection. Our friends are being killed, and trading agreements, as well as payments, disappear with the killed. That cannot last!

Thrasybulus gets arms from the Thebans. He needs money for the rest. So, we traders, we set up a secret fund. We are willing to help Thrasybulus with money when he attacks Athens, by paying for mercenaries, for his hoplites and for his cavalry. We are willing to help you with money, but you, Alcibiades, don't need money, you have enough. Few people in Athens know that. I have another question for you. Do you still have the ear of Tissaphernes?'

'Tissaphernes will hear us out,' Alcibiades speculated. 'He is jealous of Cyrus's power. He hates Cyrus. He has to lick Cyrus's boots to continue to rule in Caria. Tissaphernes will be occupied flattering Artaxerces, Darius's son who rules over Persia, now. Tissaphernes will hear me out. He is also in favour of trade. He will want

to gain more influence on the Ionian cities, regain the influence he lost to Sparta, especially at Miletus and Ephesus, his largest sources of income. Tissaphernes will hear me out, but he will move very slowly and very cautiously.’

‘That is all what we need,’ Axiochus said. ‘We can be patient. We, the traders, we are all for peace and quietness in these waters. Assure him that directed by you and Thrasybulus, in an Athens returned to her previous state of democracy, there is wealth to be won. What about Pharnabazus?’

‘Pharnabazus is quite another game! If Tissaphernes is a desert lion, Pharnabazus is a tiger. He is linked to me by the contract over Chalcedon. That treaty is worth nothing anymore, of course, since the Spartans hold the town. But there are some nice phrases in the text that we both signed, and on which we took oaths of mutual courtesy. They state that Alcibiades and Pharnabazus respect each other and should remain unharmed in confrontation. Pharnabazus hated me because I defeated his troops more than once. Still, he will feel obliged by the hospitality of the personal treaty that binds us, to receive me, and give me free travel in his territories. Of course, he may argue that all that is void now, and even though he swore an oath on the treaty, he may betray. He is a nasty bastard in war, but he has some honour. As long as he doesn’t know for sure why I want to see him, he will not kill me. I can talk to him, prove to him with few words, straight words, because he is first and foremost a warrior, and how he could benefit from a secret alliance with Athens. Then, I could ask him to pass through his country to travel to Susa. Yes, I have to pass by Pharnabazus personally. I don’t think I can get through his lands without being recognised. I could traverse the Propontis in a boat, but go to Bithynia first, so that he has all the time to be curious about my doings. I could travel slowly to Dascylium, and then go south to Metropolis. That part would be the most dangerous stretch. From Metropolis on I might travel on the Royal Road to Susa. I could join a caravan of trading travellers for more security, from Metropolis on. Then, in Susa, I could ask an audience with Artaxerces.’

‘What will you say to Artaxerces? I have no clue as to what you might tell him to bring him over to us, to the cause of Athens, and neither could Thrasybulus. Thrasybulus told me you would know what to do.’

‘Artaxerces is the son of Darius. So is Cyrus. In Persia, brothers, cousins and uncles fight each other until only one remains. Persian nobles of the court support Cyrus. That is a danger to the King. Sparta supports Cyrus. That also is a danger to Artaxerces. Have you never wondered why Cyrus and Lysander are such good friends? Why do you think did Cyrus name Lysander to govern over Lydia in his absence? I have no proof, but I am convinced that there are two reasons. The first reason is that Cyrus and Lysander have been lovers and are still lovers.’

Axiochus took a step backwards in surprise but Alcibiades continued, ‘do not be so surprised, Axiochus! You know how the Hellenes are, and how the Persians are. I am sure they are lovers. The second reason is that the Spartan army is invincible on land. Cyrus will attack Darius one day or the other, and mount an expedition against him, to win the throne of Persia. Where can Cyrus find the best hoplites in the world, the best commanders? Cyrus needs Lysander to help him assemble a very strong army. Oh, Cyrus may not yet have planned this, but sooner or later, believe me, that is what will happen. It is bound to happen.’

Alcibiades laughed. ‘And if it is not bound to happen, Artaxerces will listen to me when I tell him what might happen. Artaxerces will be a cool bastard too, and he has the largest army in the world, no doubt about that. But he may need a fleet and he may need hoplites to stand before hoplites. He will listen to a proposal for a secret treaty

with Athens if we promise him hoplites to check the mercenaries provided to Cyrus by Lysander.’

Axiochus mouth opened and stayed open. He had never been a schemer in politics, though sly in business. He acknowledged the master in Alcibiades.

Then he said, ‘how will you proceed to be received by Artaxerces? He may not even want to give you an audience. We have not yet any power in Athens; you represent nothing to Artaxerces.’

Alcibiades thought about that. ‘I have to bring him presents. The Persians are greedy. I have to bring him the gold of Thrace. I still have fine objects here, and enough. I thought to keep those for later, also to pay my troops in the forts. I guess they will be put to better use in getting Artaxerces’s attention. You shall have to return to Thebes, though. Thrasybulus must hear all I told you. Who knows, he may receive ambassadors of Tissaphernes, Pharnabazus and Artaxerces to check on what I told. He should back me up.’

‘Yes, I can return to Thebes. But ambassadors to Thrasybulus should be on secret missions. I am not too sure about how the Thebans would react. If you need money, I can provide funds too. Friends will help.’

‘Thanks, but I have enough for the moment. I need you to look after the women and children, though. Can you come back straight to here after Thebes, and remain here while I am gone?’

‘I am afraid I can’t. Not now. I have to assemble more money for Thrasybulus. They can come with me to my house at Cardia, though. They will be safe there.’

‘Good. We can do that. That is settled then. I have things to arrange. I will leave in something like ten days.’

The men shook hands after these words. They discussed Thrasybulus’s plans, and Alcibiades explained how Thrasybulus could take a fort, which fort, a fort that was impregnable, and how he could win more people to his cause. He told Axiochus to return to Athens, too, and to see Euryptolemus to prepare fighting men, veterans Alcibiades knew among the Athenians, to join Thrasybulus. A few days later, Axiochus left Neon-Teichos, promising to return soon.

Oinos

Before Alcibiades spoke to Axiochus, he had seen his son many times. The boy seemed to do well with the Thracians at Oinos. He trained with them in horse-riding. It seemed he was not a bad horse rider at all. He managed his horses well. The Thracians gave him respect, but no respite. Young Alcibiades bit on his teeth and he endured the tough exercises the warriors submitted him to, which was their regime too.

During that time, Alcibiades had promised Seuthes once more to send troops to teach a lesson to a tribe that lived not far from Oinos, but deep in the forests. Alcibiades would have to send three quarters of his troops, and trusted commanders. He also sent his son. Young Alcibiades thus accompanied the Thracian warriors that had been originally trained by his father on his first campaign. The warriors rode out of Oinos and Young Alcibiades rode between the commanders. Alcibiades had given orders to protect his son.

The cavalry returned one afternoon. Alcibiades had already heard from couriers that the battles had been bitter. He saw his men and his son arrive at the fort of Oinos after the expedition. He saw many wounded men among the horse riders. The warriors rode in silence, always a sign that they were tired and that the fights had been hard. Young Alcibiades had a bandage around his head, and another on his left arm. Blood hung dry on his leather cuirass. He was dirty, and Alcibiades noticed he barely kept straight on his horse. The boy looked sick. When the horse riders rode through the gates, several men fell from their horse. Young Alcibiades kept on his animal. He slid off once the men were in the fort, led his horse to the stables and then came out to greet his father.

Alcibiades started saying, 'you got your first wounds, I see. How did the battle go?' 'Battle?' Young Alcibiades asked. 'What battle? We fought our way through the forest almost constantly, all the time. There was no battle, unless you wish *tic alle* every day a battle! The tribes attacked us unrelentingly. We fought on the entire expedition, every day. We killed many men. I killed my first tribesman too. I survived. Many didn't. The Thracians sure know how to fight. I never saw anything like this. Your commanders protected me, I think, at first like a baby, but they had their hands full with the tribesmen, so I got wounded. It was terrible, terrible!' 'No, it was not terrible,' Alcibiades grinned. 'It was war, and it was Thrace. Are you convinced now that the Thracians know how to fight, and also that they know how to ride?'

'Oh, yes! They know how to ride. They ride through the forest at speeds you would not believe, yet they manage to avoid the trees. I fell twice from my horse, felled by a tree branch. I learned.'

'I suppose you need a bath?' Alcibiades chided.

Young Alcibiades glanced with angry eyes at his father. 'Yes I do. Sorry, father, I will go inside now.'

'Sure,' Alcibiades answered. 'Step inside. I am glad you are well.'

Young Alcibiades looked for a split moment at his father, surprised. It was the first sign of real concern Alcibiades had given his son. The boy did not move one muscle in his face, however, no smile appeared on his lips. He threw his head in his neck and went to the warriors' rooms.

Alcibiades walked over to the commanders, to hear what had really happened. The commanders told Alcibiades in the stables much the same as his son. It had been a hard campaign. The tribesmen had ambushed the troops many times in the forests. Alcibiades's troops had always been able to massacre their enemy. They had not seen Seuthes's troops at all. Seuthes was fighting more to the north. Yet, Seuthes's commanders had come and told them they had done a good job.

At first, they had kept Young Alcibiades behind. At the first dead, the boy had been sick for a few days. When the tribesmen pressed harder, every hand and sword had to fight, including Young Alcibiades. He learned. He fought bravely in the end. Another commander told Alcibiades that Young Alcibiades had broken at his first skirmish when he had seen the dead fall with bellies sliced open and the entrails spread on the ground, stepped on by the horses. He had vomited in full sight of the troops and the commander thought he had wept all through the night. But as the skirmishes continued, Young Alcibiades had fought better and better. He had to fight, for he would have lost his life if he didn't. In the last days of the expedition, Young Alcibiades had fought like any other young warrior. He needed some more training, more strength in his arms and breast, but he would be fine.

Alcibiades felt moderately pleased. His arrogant aristocrat of a son had hardened somewhat in this campaign, seen men be killed and he had killed a man himself. Young Alcibiades was still on his feet, he had returned, he had learned what a real battle was, what war could be, what a campaign meant in losses. Young Alcibiades might think otherwise now about war and about alliances with Sparta. Alcibiades made a note in his mind to force his son to train more as a hoplite, and to send him in a true hoplite battle afterwards.

Alcibiades was wrong nevertheless about Young Alcibiades changing his views of Sparta. After the campaign, the Thracian warriors gave Young Alcibiades more freedom. Young Alcibiades took a horse then and roamed around Oinos and around Neon-Teichos. The commanders of Oinos told Alcibiades that the boy rode out alone. Alcibiades ordered the men to let the boy do as he pleased, but also to scout on him and report on what he did. After a while, the commanders reported back that Young Alcibiades did not just roam anymore along the coast, around the forts and in the plains, but also that he had entered Bisanthes. The Thracians had stayed outside the town, for it had a Spartan garrison now. Young Alcibiades stayed inside quite a long time, and then he rode out again. This had been repeated many times. The boy had not been imprisoned at Bisanthes.

Alcibiades spoke to his son about his stay in Bisanthes. He reproached the boy for going there. Young Alcibiades escaped in stubborn muteness. He refused to say much. He only told he had made friends among the Spartans. He said that Athens and Sparta were at peace and could make war together on the Thracians if needed. The Spartans of Bisanthes had common goals, he said, and common interests in these regions. Alcibiades told him to make friends elsewhere, among the Thracian commanders, for instance. He promised to send his son for a while to the court of Seuthes, who was King of vast territories in the south of Thrace. He was sure Young Alcibiades would see different ways of living, very different from the ways of a young man in Athens, but very rewarding in sensations. Seuthes could provide for juicy Thracian ladies. These also would teach a few tricks to Young Alcibiades. Learning to know Thrace would open Young Alcibiades's mind. There were no common interests between Sparta and Athens for Thrace, he told. Thrace was so vast no Hellene had better make war on Thrace. He asked who had talked of common interests for Thrace, but the youth refused to yield more. Young Alcibiades only smiled haughtily at his father. He seemed to very sceptical about learning something from the wild tribes of Thrace, among which the Odrysians of Seuthes and Medoc were merely one of the largest and the most violent.

Not long after Axiochus had departed, Alcibiades sent a large contingent of his men of Oinos on a new expedition to Seuthes. He considered that Young Alcibiades had seen enough of action in real engagements for a time. He wanted Young Alcibiades to train more as a hoplite, and he ordered heavy armour to be put on him and to give him exercises of hoplite battle. Alcibiades sent scrolls for Seuthes with his most trusted commander that left on the expedition, in which Alcibiades asked Seuthes to receive his son at court, after this campaign, and to teach him the way of the Thracians. Only a few guards were left at the fortress of Oinos, together with young Alcibiades, enough to hold the place against superior forces in case of an attack.

Alcibiades's warriors had only rode out of Oinos since three days, when in the middle of the night the alarm was sounded at Neon-Teichos. A wounded Thracian guard of Oinos knocked violently at the gates of the fort. He awakened everybody by his cries. The man was brought before Alcibiades. Alcibiades hastily threw a chiton on his body, he put a leather cuirass on his chest, and he ran out of the tower with a sword in his hand.

The Thracian guard explained that he was a guard of Oinos. Oinos had been captured treacherously by a Spartan and Bisanthesian troop of hoplites, at the fall of the night. The leader of the Spartans was one Theodamos of Cnidus, who Alcibiades knew as a commander of Lysander.

Alcibiades raged. He asked by what treachery the garrison had been taken and what had happened to his son. Was his son a prisoner? Had the fort not been guarded? Had the guards been sleeping? The Thracian guard trembled in front of Alcibiades when he told his version.

Young Alcibiades had offered much wine in the evening at the fort and much good food to everybody. He had come with these gifts from Bisanthes. The warriors had had a good time. They thought all was fine in the fort. They stood guard, all right. There was one guard at the outlook above the gates and one stood inside the fort at the gates, below. Young Alcibiades had approached this guard with wine, and then killed the guard that stood at the gates. He had immediately opened the gates. A few Spartan hoplites, completely dressed in black, and who had come probably along the walls in hiding, from the other side of the fort, had run inside. The guard at the outlook at first did not see well what was happening, and since Young Alcibiades opened the gates, he thought troops from Neon-Teichos had entered. He had not sounded the alarm immediately. When the guard did sound the alarm, it was too late. The men had not expected betrayal by one of their own men, by the son of their general. The Spartans ran into the fort. They opened the gates wider and brandished torches. They protected the open gates with archers, killing several Thracians. When the Thracians formed a phalanx to attack the Spartans, Young Alcibiades standing among the Spartans now, Spartan cavalry had burst inside the fort from behind the hills, and given no quarter. There had been a hard-pressed fight inside the open space of the fort, during which at least ten Thracian guards had been killed. The man that knelt before Alcibiades had been able to escape with the other Thracians through a small side door at the back of the fort. The three companions of the man had been caught by cavalry from Bisanthes that roamed in the hills.

Alcibiades called the general alarm in the fortress. He ordered a few men on horse-back out of the fort to check on who owned Oinos. He posted guards on all sides of Neon-Teichos and brought everybody to armour and arms. He calmed Harmonia and Theodote, and then walked up to the parapets of the walls to look out beyond the plains. He might expect to be attacked by an army now.

In the morning, his horse riders returned. Neon-Teichos was not under attack. There were a few Spartan patrols of cavalry in the hills, but no army was around. Oinos, however, had been captured by the Spartans. The gates were closed, and Spartan guards now stood on the walls instead of Thracians. The men had seen Young Alcibiades on the parapets, unharmed and free, laughing with the Spartans.

Alcibiades threw his sword on the ground in rage. He had lost Oinos. It had all been so simple! Surely, his son had plotted with the Spartans to hand over to them the fortress and be henceforth protected by them. Young Alcibiades might have negotiated his return to Athens or to Sparta. There was quite some money and gold in

the treasury at Oinos, money used to pay Alcibiades's Thracians with. Young Alcibiades had that money now, at least if he had been smart, and apparently that had been the case. There was enough money at Oinos for a man to live at ease for several years, anywhere in the world. Young Alcibiades had betrayed his father, to his own intentions. The youth had learned too little in too short a time.

Alcibiades blamed himself bitterly. This was the second time somebody close to him had betrayed him. Alcibiades should have kept his son longer with him, at Neon-Teichos, and observed the boy more closely. He should have first tried to win Young Alcibiades over to him. He had misjudged his son, in character and in intentions. He should have been aware that there were no ties between him and his son.

'No,' he thought, 'that is not true. The boy called me father. Who might have worked on his mind at Bisanthes? Maybe the boy did this because he believed it was the best, also for his father!'

Alcibiades ordered Neon-Teichos to be defended with the entire garrison that day. He reflected for a few moments on lighting the fire signals at the top of the tower, but he changed his mind. If he called in troops of Seuthes now, Seuthes would have to fight the Spartans. Alcibiades knew how to take the fort of Oinos, even with Spartans inside. But would Seuthes help him? Could he ask that of Seuthes? Seuthes would provoke the Spartan army, and maybe start an all-out war between his territories and Sparta. Could Seuthes confront a regular Spartan army led by Lysander? Alcibiades did not want to risk that for Seuthes, who had quite enough on his hands with the Thracian tribes. What devastating war would be started? Some of the tribes would certainly side with the Spartans. Thrace would be on fire, once more.

Alcibiades ordered Neon-Teichos to be under constant guard. Around noon, he went inside the tower, walked on to the terrace on the promontory and stood at the parapets, looking out to the Sea. The oily waves of the water shone brilliantly from a myriad of rays that struck the surface from far above. Alcibiades banged his fists on the stones. He had lost his elder son and he had lost Oinos to the Spartans. He did not really believe there would be a siege on Neon-Teichos, however. His fortress was too formidable, too well defended. The Spartans would think twice also about provoking Seuthes. But each time Alcibiades would go out with his men now he would have to fear being attacked by Spartan cavalry patrols. He would have to fear receiving an arrow in his back. The Spartans had so far avoided scouting around Neon-Teichos. Now, they would concentrate their attention to the fort. Alcibiades could bring in everything he needed from over the Sea, but that would be costly. He would have to get his food from other towns on the coast than nearby Bisanthes. What would happen if Spartan triremes blocked his port? He laughed. He could hold out a long time at Neon-Teichos! The worse of it all was only that Thrasybulus would have to wait before he, Alcibiades, could travel to Susa.

Alcibiades looked at the sky. He saw the white light of the sun straight above him, very high in the sky. He looked down. His shadow was very small. He was sad. He had not thought it possible to be betrayed by his son. He regretted much now not to have done better and more what Harmonia had asked him. He had been deficient in giving love. Athena had once more exploited the weakness in his character, the most obvious of errors. Sadness pervaded him. He felt sad and disappointed. He was getting old, and so very tired of too many difficulties and worries and fears all the time. His worries sapped his energy. He was getting nowhere with his actions; he had

to start all over again, time after time. Athens had lost a war of thirty years. All the birds of death were after his body, picking at his organs. He dropped his head to his chest, and he saw the contours of his body on the ground, in his shadow. He opened his arms, and he saw the shadow open its arms, too. He moved his arms sideways and opened the fingers of his hand. The shadow moved. Then he placed a foot to the left and behind him. His body moved with arms and legs. He dropped to one knee and touched the sand with his fingers. He stood up again. He brought his right foot up, swung around and stood on his left leg. He turned his arms.

Alcibiades danced with his shadow. It was a lonely dance, a very slow dance, with each movement thought out and silently executed. It was a dance of sadness, a dance of defeat. Alcibiades hummed a war tune, a regular, powerful suite of repetitive harmony.

Alcibiades danced. He closed his eyes and brought his face to the warmth of the sun. He asked Athena, 'why do you do this to me?'

Then, he implored Aphrodite, 'please, help me.'

He murmured, 'Zeus, who rules from all heights and wears the aegis, Zeus, you who gather clouds and brandish lightning, greatest and most glorious among all the gods, I pray to you. Apollo of the Sun, who sees and hears all things, I pray to you. Poseidon, shaker of the earth, you who grants fair sailing, I pray to you. Fair and divine Aphrodite, white-bodied goddess, most handsome among the immortals, mother of Harmonia, golden goddess, ever-lasting beauty, and daughter of Zeus, I pray to you. Ares, clad in bronze, who captures cities, raging warrior and destroyer of armies, I pray to you. All the gods that punish the men that have sworn falsely, I pray to you.'

Alcibiades danced and he prayed. He moved more rapidly now, then ever more quickly. He opened his eyes again. His shadow danced with him.

Then, he heard a noise and he stopped abruptly.

Alcibiades saw Harmonia and Theodote standing, very frightened, at the entry to the tower. They did not dare to approach him. Alcibiades went to them, calmed them, and he bade them to take good care of the children. He stayed a long time on the terrace. He needed to think everything out.

The next day, Alcibiades had arrived at decisions. He called Theodote and Harmonia on the terrace and he told them about the situation and what they would do.

He stated, 'the fort of Oinos is in Spartan hands. Young Alcibiades has betrayed us. I guess he had the best of intentions. He may even have negotiated our safety here, at Neon-Teichos. But Oinos is lost. We can stay in this, our fort for a long time and sit this hardship out until the Spartans and Young Alcibiades leave from sheer boredom. The Spartans may harass us, however, when we ride out, so we are pretty much confined to the fort on the land side, but for armed patrols. I do not want to draw Seuthes and Medoc into an open confrontation with Spartan troops right now, which would only set all Thrace ablaze and draw more and more dangerous Spartan troops here. Here is what we will do.'

'I have to go to Phrygia, to the other side of the Propontis. You might stay here with the children, but I am not sure it will be safe enough. All kinds of things might happen. You might be betrayed. I agreed with Axiochus that you could travel to Cardia, to his house there. He will not be in the house in the beginning, but he will return and take care of you. He told me he would prepare his house for you. You will be safe there. Nobody will know who you are. You will just be friends of Axiochus, travelling to Boeotia after a visit to relatives of yours in Byzantium. We have two

boats. You can sail in the largest ship with the children. I will provide you with enough money to live by and if that is not enough, Axiochus will take care of you. I may be away for a few months, but I too will return and pick you up at Cardia, later. If anything happens to me, Axiochus will see to it that you can live in safety and at ease. There is enough money for that, deposited with Axiochus, and with what more I can send with you.'

Harmonia asked, 'why did you say anything could happen to you? Why do you have to go to Phrygia?'

'The roads in Phrygia are not all safe. I am going on a mission that needs some secrecy. I cannot travel under an ambassador's status protection. Much can happen, but normally I should not be harmed.'

'What kind of mission?'

'I had better not tell you what I am going to do. The least you know about why I am travelling to Phrygia, the better for you. I will be on a peaceful mission though. I am not going there to participate in battles or skirmishes. I am going alone, not with troops.'

'What will happen to the fort?' Theodote asked.

'The fort will remain ours. We have to leave it in the custody of the commanders. I will also send letters to Seuthes, to ask him to hold the fort for us as long as he possibly can. I believe the peace with Sparta will last this time. There will be a moment when we can come back. Now, I believe all that really matters is said. You should prepare today, so that we can sail tomorrow if the weather allows. The Sea should remain calm, like today, so that you can have a pleasant sea-travel!'

'No,' Harmonia objected softly, but suddenly very determined.

'What no?' Alcibiades asked, surprised, and a little angrily. He was not used to being contradicted, certainly not by a woman of his household.

Harmonia said, without looking into his eyes, with bowed head, 'Theodote can go to Cardia with the children. I go with you. I am not letting you go alone this time. I go with you. If you have to travel in Phrygia, maybe secretly, a man travelling with his wife will be less conspicuous. We can be a trader and his wife, returning home to wherever you want to travel.'

Alcibiades was nervous. Harmonia had struck a chord in his mind that sounded warmly. Harmonia knew Alcibiades's world had been crumbling for some months. Maybe he was aging, for he approached fifty years of age now. She had seen her father and uncles becoming increasingly unsettled by the setbacks of age, irritated by the least issue in their lives, as if the troubles and worries of a lifetime suddenly weighed with all their heaviness on their backs and were too much to wear. They became irritated at the slightest issue, devastated at the minor setbacks which they would have laughed away when they were younger. She had seen Alcibiades increasingly worried, in fear, doubt, anger, and similarly irritated with the events. She felt he needed somebody beside him. She was the only one available. He had no friend at his side.

Alcibiades looked at her insistently. His eyes darted from left to right. He was at a loss. He could refuse this offer, but for the first time in his life he dreaded travelling alone and bearing the burden of all concerns once more.

He refused nevertheless, 'no, Harmonia, no. I cannot take you with me! There might be danger.'

Theodote stepped closer, now.

She said, 'Timandra is right. I support her. You cannot go alone this time. I shall take care of the children. Take her with you.'

Theodote too had remarked that Alcibiades dreaded the loneliness of this voyage after his son's betrayal. She sensed he was on the brink of accepting Timandra to accompany him. She thought they had a better chance travelling together. She did not think Timandra would be hurt during the voyage and she, Theodote, could better organise the trip to Cardia and control Axiochus better alone.

Alcibiades looked undecidedly at both the women. He had already agreed in his mind, though, glad not to be alone. This was the strength he would need on this trip.

At last, he said, 'all right then. Yes, we could travel more easily as husband and wife. I will make the arrangements.'

These words tranquilised Theodote. If Alcibiades accepted Timandra, the travel could not be as dangerous as she had feared. She smiled, then. She also smiled at hearing Alcibiades and Timandra to be travelling as husband and wife. This had been coming since a long time, she thought. Theodote still loved Alcibiades, but she felt she could not endlessly live with him like that, as his second mistress. She knew Axiochus would accept her as his wife. Axiochus never stayed long in one place, he was a travelling bird, that one, but Axiochus too returned to her and he had arrived at an age when he needed someone to be waiting for him. Theodote would be his home port. When Alcibiades came back, she would propose him to let her free, and she would go to live with Axiochus. Axiochus would be the first surprised, but she would make him see the sense of the proposal.

Phrygia

The following morning, Theodote and the children stepped aboard the larger of their two ships. The children went on a sea trip with Theodote to uncle Axiochus, and they were excited by the voyage. Chest after chest loaded with the dresses of Theodote and Harmonia were brought aboard. Most of the chests were filled with gold, however. The boat left the port.

Alcibiades and Harmonia looked at the ship while it sailed away until they could not distinguish the children anymore. Then, they entered the tower and ordered their own chests aboard the second vessel. Alcibiades and Harmonia would travel lightly. More chests were loaded on the ship, heavy chests, also filled with gold, gold destined for Artaxerces.

While Alcibiades wrote the last scrolls to Seuthes, he spoke to his commanders. He said he would leave for several months, leaving the fortress in theirs and in Seuthes's custody. He appointed a commander to be the leader in the fort, and to this man he showed the rest of the treasury, in which there was enough money to pay for the men for years. The Thracians knew that if they stole these coins, Seuthes would track them down all over Thrace, and even in Hellas, to punish them. Alcibiades trusted the men however, especially the leader, who belonged to Seuthes's family.

Soon, Harmonia entered to tell him all was ready and he left with her, going down the stone stairs to the port. He wore no armour, but he had a very light leather breastplate. He wore a sword on his back, and he also took a quiver filled with arrows and a bow with him. He had been exercising with this weapon, lately. The Thracians had shown him. But for his weapons, he looked no different from the merchant captains that

occasionally had to find refuge at their fort. Harmonia was dressed in a white peplos, over which she wore a grey, coarse cloak. She wore no jewels. They went aboard the ship. Alcibiades's eyes looked wild, the eyes of a tracked animal, when he heard the ship's captain order to loosen the ropes and let the ship sail forth. He felt it weirdly very hard to leave Neon-Teichos.

Alcibiades had no home city anymore, for he had went voluntarily in exile from Athens for the second time after Notium. He now abandoned his last home, his fort, the home he had thought to be impregnable. He had abandoned his children and a woman he had loved for so long, Theodote. He embarked on a perilous voyage to meet men of power, men he had challenged before, even betrayed, and who might kill him and Harmonia at a whim. These men owned still everything, power and money, whereas he had nothing but his bluff. He who had nothing, he would offer them his last treasures. He represented nothing and nobody; he had no scroll with credentials from Thrasybulus. Such a scroll would have no value, anyway. He was nothing but a rebel, a member of a group of people without an army, without money and without a home. Alcibiades laughed bitterly, but then Harmonia took his hand, and she smiled with courage at him. New strength filled his mind, and brightened his mood. 'No,' he thought. 'I am a representative of the original, true owners of Athens, of the sovereign people of Athens, the most splendid city in the world. I have been the Strategos Autokrator of that town, and I can be that again. I have been the friend of the ephors of Sparta and of the Queen and of a princess of Sparta. I have been the counsellor of the satrap of Lydia and Caria, Tissaphernes, and I have spoken to Pharnabazus as an equal. I am Alcibiades. I am the fiercest man in battle and the smartest in diplomacy. I am the representative of the future government of Athens. Pharnabazus and Tissaphernes and their King Artaxerces will hear me out, especially when they hear that I am on a mission to deal with the King. Why did I nurture these dark thoughts the last days? I shall meet with Pharnabazus first and then travel to Susa. Later, I shall talk to Tissaphernes. Cyrus I do not need to see, but I may find him too at Susa.'

While Alcibiades sailed away from Neon-Teichos to the other side of the Propontis, Lysander was leading the Spartan army at Samos. Samos lay under siege, surrounded by the Spartan forces. Lysander held the siege, and he wanted that town very much, but he had no intention to storm the town. He received enough reports from his spies, stating that famine had settled in terribly in the city. He had efficiently cut off all supplies, even the smallest, to the city. Samos could not hold out much longer. Lysander had already sent envoys to parlay for the surrender of the Samians. There would be negotiations. He did not want Samos to be destroyed. He respected this little town, the last to stick to their democracy and their own rule. He needed the harbour, a fine and fully Spartan harbour in Ionia. He would demand the democratic Samian leaders to be delivered to him of course. Most of these he would execute, others he would sell into slavery, but he would spare the rest of the citizens of Samos and appoint a harmost, a Spartan governor for the town. He would let the city's everyday affairs be handled by an oligarchy of ten men devoted to him, ten men of course appointed by him only. Lysander lived in his campaign tent in front of Samos. It was in this tent that he read the scrolls that arrived once every while from Sparta. Most of the scrolls were of little

importance to him. They reported on the politics of Sparta, on the alliances and allegiances among the ephors, the Gerousia and the Spartiates. He received letters from his brother and from other members of his family. He read letters of accounts, of goods sold and bought for the army. He discovered the situation of Athens from the man called Critias, who was a despised slave among his harmosts. He read Critias's pleas for more troops. He would let Critias wait until the winter, and then only send him some additional Spartan lesser forces. That would do.

One of the scrolls drew Lysander's attention, for it bore the signs of the ephors of Sparta. He unrolled the papyrus. The scroll was encrypted. Lysander took the code and painstakingly deciphered the writing himself. He wondered what was so important to encode a letter from Sparta in these days.

He read the short phrases. The ephors ordered him to put Alcibiades to death, wherever Alcibiades was, and in whatever way he deemed necessary. The paper was an order of execution. The ephors argued at length that Alcibiades had caused many Spartan dead at Cyzicus. Alcibiades had betrayed Sparta and caused considerable damage to the polis, so he merited death. The ephors wrote that now was the time to arrest Alcibiades and kill him. The ephors even mentioned that Alcibiades might have been the lover of Agis's wife and thus had dishonoured a King of Sparta.

Lysander weighed the scroll in his hand and pondered over it. What should he do with this? He did not acknowledge any order from the ephors. He could ignore this paper, and find some excuse in Sparta when asked about it. He could say he didn't know where Alcibiades was, though he knew very well that Alcibiades was at a fort called Neon-Teichos close to Bisanthes. Was Alcibiades worth a campaign to capture a fortress that nobody needed and that had no fleet? He felt some satisfaction reflecting on how insignificant Alcibiades had become to all the events that happened in the world, now. Lysander threw the scroll in a chest, among many other discarded letters. He decided nevertheless to make inquiries on what Alcibiades was exactly doing at Neon-Teichos. He wrote a paper to Theodamos of Cnidus, who was at Bisanthes for a while.

Alcibiades and Harmonia travelled eastwards in the Propontis. Alcibiades ordered to sail to just south of Chalcedon. He arrived at a small town of Bithynia. He asked where Pharnabazus resided these days, and he heard that the satrap was at his capital of Dascylium. He stayed at first with Harmonia on board of the ship, and then he hired a few servants. He hired three wagons drawn by oxen, and he also bought two horses. He covered one wagon with hoops and sail cloth. He would travel with Harmonia in this cart.

He had the servants put all his chests in the other wagons. The servants were all strong men. He had hired them for a long travel through Bithynia. The men knew he travelled to Dascylium. He stayed at the town for several days, and then he sent his ship back to Neon-Teichos. He set off with the wagons in the direction of Dascylium. Alcibiades rode a horse. He let the animal walk slowly next to the wagons. Harmonia sat with a woman-servant in the first cart. The men that drove the oxen stepped next to the animals. The roads were bad here, not much more than sandy paths, but the season was dry, so they made good way.

On his way to Dascylium, Alcibiades and Harmonia slept along the road. They passed few towns on this road, few villages and few travellers' inns. They set up tents and

slept under the open sky. With their servants, they made campfires with the dry wood they could find, and they ate the little food they had: cheese, bread, olives, and a few dried fishes.

On those nights, Alcibiades huddled together with Harmonia. They slept in each other's arms. They whispered little words of tenderness when they were alone and together, the words that consoles lovers from the woes of the world. Harmonia was happy. She was with Alcibiades, whatever the circumstances, and she saw he needed her. The strength was with her now and she was glad to pass her silent force on him. She knew he lived through bad times. For some reason, and she could guess a thousand, Alcibiades had lost his customary energy. He said so in few words, but while she spoke to him his views of the situation bettered, and he gained new hope.

Only a few days after they had departed from the port on the Propontis, they slept at the border of a forest near a small river. Just after nightfall, about twenty horse riders attacked their small camp by surprise. The horse riders killed several of Alcibiades's servants instantly, including Harmonia's maid. They spared two men among the servants, but these immediately drove the ox-wagons into the forest on a track they seemed to know. Alcibiades could not withhold the assailants from taking the wagons. He jumped on his horse from out of the covered cart and defended Harmonia. He held his own cart, killed two horse riders, but the other men rode away at the gallop to surround in the far the wagons that were driven off and out of sight.

Alcibiades raged and wept for indignation. He had to stay, to keep Harmonia safe. He could not pursue the bandits, and Harmonia drew him back too, for the men were too many for him to stop them. He had still enough money in his covered cart, but the treasury gifts destined for Artaxerces were but for one chest all lost and stolen. Once more he had been betrayed, either at Neon-Teichos or by his ship-captain, or at the port of Bithynia where he had hired his new servants. He assumed that the servants had guessed what the contents were of the chests, for the chests were too heavy to contain clothes only. He had seen two of the servants set off too rapidly, right after the attack, to drive away the wagons guarded by the bandits. These two might have betrayed him! Was betrayal now to be his fate?

Alcibiades raged and cried out to the skies for his helplessness. He buried his head in his arms, drew his himation over his head, but there was nothing he could do.

Alcibiades saw the last of the bandits ride off. He sat inertly near the cart until Harmonia stirred him.

She said, 'we should not stay here. The bandits may return and try to kill us. Come on. I know how to push oxen forwards. I have done this often on Melos.'

Harmonia took the reins of the oxen and she drew them on. Alcibiades jumped sullenly on his horse and rode beside Harmonia. They rode the entire night, hoping to stay on the path, which they could see in the moonlight.

Around noon the next day, Alcibiades recovered his senses. He saw that Harmonia would soon collapse with fatigue, so he forced her back in the cart to rest and sleep, and he drew the oxen himself. Late that day, they arrived at a town. He hired new servants and they continued their journey to Dascylium.

Dascylium

Alcibiades and Harmonia arrived unharmed but chastised at Phrygia's capital Dascylium. Alcibiades immediately rented a house. He took two days to render the

house more comfortable for Harmonia and to let the authorities of Dascylium know that a Hellenic foreigner had arrived in their town. No magistrate called on him, ever. He went to the palace to ask for an audience with Pharnabazus. Alcibiades told the guards who he was. The commanders told him to wait at his house. Pharnabazus let Alcibiades wait several days before he deigned to grant him an audience. Then, a servant of the palace, not a commander, not one of the counsellors of Pharnabazus, arrived at the house and told him to come the following day at noon.

Alcibiades put on the best chiton he had. He dressed in a multi-coloured cloak, but he took no weapons. He went back to the palace and prepared his mind to talk to the satrap.

Pharnabazus received Alcibiades in his largest palace hall. The hall was splendidly adorned with tapestries and trophies of the wars that Phrygia had won against its neighbours. Pharnabazus welcomed and spoke to ambassadors, here. He obviously wanted to impress Alcibiades. Alcibiades noted with much pleasure that Pharnabazus gave him thus the honours due to representatives of nations. The satrap sat on his throne dressed in heavy robes. Several of his counsellors and commanders stood at this side.

Pharnabazus spoke first. ‘General Alcibiades! We have not met for quite a time! But then, our armies have not clashed for some time, either. Where is your army? Oh yes, I heard Athens has no army anymore. How many years is it now, four years, since I have not heard from you? Do you not find it impudent to come here? Whatever can your business be with Phrygia?’

‘My business is as always with Athens, lord Pharnabazus, and it is in Athens’ service that I have come to see you.’

‘Athens? Athens does not exist anymore. Is Athens not Sparta now? Is it not a mere puppet city without defences, governed by Spartans? How can your business be with Athens when both Sparta and Athens have exiled you?’

‘Athens is still governed by Athenians, though by Athenians who act as the ephors of Sparta tell. Yet, I am on a mission here in Phrygia for other Athenians, and would like to speak to you, to you alone, and in confidence.’

Pharnabazus paused for a while, weighing these words. Alcibiades wanted to speak to him alone. Why was that? What did this man still represent? Who had sent him on a mission? He was surprised. Yet, Alcibiades was not a mere citizen of a defeated town. He was one of their aristocrats, of their most important families, a past general. He was a man full of tricks, this Alcibiades. What ruse brought him here now? What made this man come to an ally of Sparta and risk his life at Phrygia’s court?

Pharnabazus leaned forward as if he wanted to put more weight behind his words, and he spoke slowly, menacingly, ‘why should I speak to you, Alcibiades? Why should I not kill you immediately? You brought your wife in grave danger, here.’

Alcibiades felt his throat go dry.

He answered calmly, as if re-assured of his dignity and importance, ‘I believed I was in safety at Dascylium, lord satrap, because of the confidential parts of the treaty over Chalcedon we signed. We promised mutual respect and safety in those scrolls. Will it be said that Pharnabazus does not hold to his oaths? I cannot believe that!’

Pharnabazus hissed angrily, ‘you do not need to remind me of my duties of hospitality, Alcibiades. I have a good memory. The treaty was over Chalcedon, though, and that treaty is void and non-existent, now, because Chalcedon is not

anymore in your hands. Yet, I will respect my signature on the personal clauses in those papers because it is my pleasure to do so. I will receive you in private. Go now!’ Alcibiades was dismissed. He left the palace. He would have to wait more time, wait for Pharnabazus’s whim. That could take a long time. Pharnabazus would let him wait. He would let a considerable time pass, and let Alcibiades wait and wait until Alcibiades despaired, before remembering him and calling him to his palace again. He might let Alcibiades come back to the palace several times and beg for the audience. Such were the ways of Persia!

Alcibiades lived with Harmonia in the house at Dascylium, and he waited patiently. He walked unhindered in the city. He offered sacrifices to the gods on the altars of the Hellenic temples and he and Harmonia stayed unharmed. Some commander always walked somewhere behind him, though, who kept watch on him in an unobtrusive way. Alcibiades bought a bronze breastplate and greaves in the shops and also new weapons. He bought a shield, javelins, spears, swords. If his house was attacked he would be ready. He sent the servants away each evening, and he closed the gates with heavy iron bars, not just with wood. He slept with Harmonia in another room than the room that the servants knew to be their bedroom.

It took Alcibiades more than a month of waiting at Dascylium. Then, one evening, a finely dressed Phrygian court guard bade Alcibiades to follow him for a new audience with Pharnabazus. Outside the gate waited ten hoplites. Alcibiades walked among the hoplites as if he had been arrested. He looked behind him, and saw that two more guards were left to guard the house. At least, Harmonia would be guarded from thieves and bandits.

The men walked through a maze of narrow streets towards the mass of the palace walls. The citadel of Dascylium was not as impressive as Croesus’s palace of Sardis, but it was more gracious, as strong, and it had thick walls. The Phrygian commander walked stiffly before Alcibiades, and he walked rapidly. The man did not look back to see whether his men and Alcibiades continued to follow him. The commander did also not enter the main gates of the palace. He continued to stride along the high walls of the palace compound, until he arrived at a lesser gate. A strong squadron of Phrygian peltasts stood at this gate and challenged the commander, but after curt words they let the men pass. The commander went through the door, beckoning Alcibiades on. The other guards remained outside. Alcibiades wondered whether this was the gate to the prison of Dascylium palace, or whether the doors led to Pharnabazus’s own quarters. The commander walked inside the building. Alcibiades followed him. They walked through a maze of corridors which were all decorated luxuriously.

‘Well, a prison this isn’t, it seems,’ Alcibiades said loudly, thereby startling the commander, who looked angrily around and said something to him, which Alcibiades did not understand, but which would surely have meant to be silent. Armed guards stood posted every few tens of feet in the corridors. Pharnabazus was well protected. The commander finally opened a door leading to a room. Two heavily armed guards stood at the front of the door. The commander gave Alcibiades a sign to enter, but the man himself stayed in the corridor. Alcibiades entered alone.

Alcibiades stepped into a room without windows, lit by torches. A heavy atmosphere of perfumes and of scents from myrrh burners hung in the room. Although there were very many torches, the light was rather subdued in the room, which was large, but

much smaller than the audience hall. It took Alcibiades a few moments before he could well distinguish the furniture. He remarked the walls on which hung heavy tapestries, and at the end of the room stood three couches. Pharnabazus was lying on one of the couches.

Pharnabazus wore a heavy Persian robe, but his bare chest showed in the opening of the robe. Around his legs laid a half-naked woman. She was a slender and tall girl, as voluptuous and generous of forms, with large bare breasts, as Alcibiades knew from the Persian mistresses he had seen at Tissaphernes's court. The girl looked defiantly and disdainfully at Alcibiades, as if angry from the intrusion, without hiding her nudity. Pharnabazus drew the woman gently on her feet and dismissed her. When she left, she put on a cloak, she passed through a side door, and a guard and a counsellor of Pharnabazus entered through that same door. Pharnabazus told in perfect Ionian to Alcibiades to sit down in front of him, on the couch. The counsellor sat on the third couch. A guard stayed standing at the door with crossed arms, and he held his eyes constantly on Alcibiades.

Pharnabazus spoke. 'We can talk freely here. This is my uncle, Susamithres. He can hear all that you have to tell me. He has my full confidence.'

A small krater of wine stood on a low table, and Pharnabazus offered a bowl to the two men. He even dropped a little wine on the floor, as if he made a libation to the gods in the Hellenic way. Susamithres and Alcibiades copied the satrap.

When he had drunk, Pharnabazus asked, 'what have you to say to me? You represent nothing anymore. Athens is subdued. She has no army and no fleet. Sparta rules on land and on the Sea. Athens has surrendered to the great Lysander, her walls destroyed. You are an exile, hiding in a fort of Thrace that can be captured by the Spartans any moment. One of your two forts has fallen already in the hands of Theodamos of Cnidus, Lysander's commander. What have you to offer, what is there to talk about?'

'Lord Pharnabazus,' Alcibiades began, 'I stand humbled like all Athenians before you. Athens' power has indeed dwindled by the battle of Aegospotami. However, Athens' splendour remains, and her wealth grows once more. Athens gathers new funds every day. Her commerce grows. Her current leaders obey the Spartan ephors because they are bound by an alliance treaty and oaths to Sparta, but that treaty has not been signed by the rightful Council of Athens. The treaty was signed by a group of men, the Thirty, who hold Athens in their grasp for the moment, but that group is being increasingly challenged by the people, because the Thirty do not represent the people of Athens lawfully.'

Pharnabazus laughed, 'anybody with power enough to hold a city holds it lawfully, Alcibiades! You know that! Those Thirty men ordain the laws in Athens currently.'

'Every people has its particular ways of living,' Alcibiades continued. 'You, Persians, need the strong hands of a King and of his satraps to rule the land. Since a long time, that kind of government has remained unchallenged, and Kings of Persia have ruled here since all times. Sparta has two Kings and it elects from out of a limited number of men its ephors and its elders, the Gerousia, which hold the power to rule. The people of Athens like to rule all together, all citizens equally. It is a slow, difficult and painstaking process to rule the Athenians, but the Athenians decide together in assemblies, and the Athenians together rule themselves. In your infinite wisdom, you must surely understand that each people has its proper and preferred ways of ruling that suit the character of the people. Change these ways of ruling, divert the traditions of a country, and one forces a ruling on people that is unnatural and contrary to the

character of the people. Currently, Athens is ruled by Thirty men. They rule in the name of Sparta. Such a government is contrary to the feelings and habits of the Athenian people. The rule of the Thirty is so despised that the Athenians have called the men the Thirty Tyrants! This rule will not last, because it is unnatural to the moods of the people of Athens.'

'I follow your reasoning, Alcibiades. So the rule of the Thirty, you say, will stop one day and there will be a new war with Sparta. Is that what you have come to tell me? I find this rather ridiculous. The Thirty men hold all power in Athens, and they are backed by Spartan hoplites. How can their rule stop?'

'That is indeed part of my story, lord Pharnabazus. Yes, there shall be an uprising in Athens. It is inevitable. Athenians will run from out of the hills and from out of the houses in the city, in arms, and they shall grab power. Remember, Athens has already had an oligarchy a few years ago, and that oligarchy has been rapidly abolished, and the polis returned to democracy. The old ways of government shall be restored now, as in the past. The Athenian people do not support oligarchic governments. The change will come soon. I cannot tell you the names of the leaders that will restore Athens' ancient rules, for that must remain a secret. Yet, a vast number of people, warriors, hoplites and knights, tradesmen and aristocrats of the old families such as me, shall rise together and build a new Athens.'

'What is your role in this,' Pharnabazus wondered. 'Are you not the leader, the sole leader wishing for the change?'

'I am one of the leaders. I was asked to come to talk to you about the imminent change.'

Pharnabazus interrupted Alcibiades. 'Lysander will crush the new Athens like the old one.'

'Lysander's power is waning. The new Athenians shall indeed gain power in the city! They do not seek a new war with Sparta, however, or with Persia. Lysander's position is endangered because he is too ambitious. The Spartan ephors and the Kings cut pieces off his power each day. The ephors are wise men. They prefer an alliance with the natural leaders of Athens, rather than with a number of men that are not supported by the people and that rely solely on Lysander. Guarding Athens like a prison will become too expensive in the long run for Sparta. Lysander does not acknowledge this, but the ephors and Kings do. Sparta will seek peace with the new leaders of Athens.'

'You speak about democracy but you also speak of leaders. The new leaders will be the new oligarchs.'

'No, no' Alcibiades insisted. 'Of course, there are always leaders of opinion in any society. By the new leaders of Athens I mean the war leaders, the people that are necessary to lead as generals to free Athens from the Thirty. These men will relent power immediately to the Assembly. The opinion leaders will propose, but the people will decide.'

'So,' Pharnabazus concluded, 'Athens may be given back to the lawful Athenians, back to the old ruling. How does that concern me?'

'Athens will be a rich trading town again. The people of Athens want freedom and free trade on the Sea. Athens will not seek hegemony as before. We shall not garrison the Ionian and Dorian cities along the coasts. We shall not install harmosts. We shall seek to have the cities revert to their natural government, to the ways they like to be ruled, be it by Kings, by a few leaders or by the general assemblies of the people. We agree that these cities should pay their dues and pay respect to the Kings in whose countries they are situated. We hope, however, that Athenian ships would be able to

trade freely with any town, her grains and her wood to reach her unhindered. We ask for your help in that!’

Pharnabazus took his bowl and drank. He seemed to reflect on the message of Alcibiades. His eyes narrowed.

He said, ‘how should I help?’

‘We do not expect you to believe us until power has passed in other hands in Athens. You will hear about the change in government as soon as it comes. If you allow, we will send you envoys immediately. Athens will rise then and by its trade, the industry of its cities, its renewed fleet and hoplite forces, it will grow once more to a power of peace. We would like to have the status of friendship with Phrygia immediately after the change has realised. We desire that status with all of the Persian satrapies. We should like you then to support our traders, offer them freedom of trade, free passage, and privileged dealings of commerce with your country, and, most importantly, of course, your protection. When the moment comes, when Athens has regained its wealth, we may ask additional funds from Persia to raise a new army. I repeat, however, that we do not seek to dominate the world. The frenzies of the wars are over. The war has had devastating effects on all of us. We do not seek a new war with Sparta. We seek to have a better government for our people, wherever they are, and to work in peace with other peoples. The war has taught us hard lessons. We do not want another catastrophe like has befallen on us at Aegospotami.’

‘Is that the message you and Thrasybulus have concocted? What tells you I will not run to the Spartans now, and tell them about your weird plans?’

Alcibiades did not move a muscle in his face when the name of Thrasybulus sounded in the room.

He replied, ‘I have faith in the lord Pharnabazus’s wisdom and in his honour. I also count on the special pledge of friendship and mutual respect we both swore in the treaty over Chalcedon. I have come in peace. I wear no sword and I have no troops with me. I held my oaths. Will you renounce your oaths?’

Pharnabazus remained silent for a long time. He drank from his cup but his eyes never left Alcibiades. He was thinking, considering the Athenian’s words. The silence lasted for so long that it was awkward. Alcibiades too drank from his bowl.

Finally, Pharnabazus said, ‘it is a good thing you have not come with troops. You would not have gone far. Most of what you ask is not mine to give. I am a satrap, a servant of the King of Persia. I cannot act against the designs of my King and my King is an ally of Sparta. Treaties link my King and Sparta. I have to honour those.’ Alcibiades jumped on the occasion offered to him.

He said, ‘I have come by your lands to discuss these matters with the lord Pharnabazus first. You, lord satrap, can do what we ask immediately and effectively after the government of Athens changes, on your own authority. We believe you can do most of these things without hurting, yes by serving best, Persia’s and your own interests. We ask you not to damage our merchant ships and to not openly confront us, but to stay neutral in the new conflict. We do not ask yet for an alliance or a treaty from you. We ask you for your benevolence, patience and indulgence. We ask your confidence, and we will prove worthy of that confidence. The treaties that exist with Sparta bound King Darius. They bind less Darius’s son Artaxerces. I am on my way to King Artaxerces at Susa to present him the same proposals. One of the reasons I am here also, is to ask your protection on the road to Susa. I hope that King Artaxerces too will consider the possibilities laid before you. I am travelling alone with my wife through difficult land on which I do not know the roads. I would appreciate to have an

escort of a few Phrygian hoplites, as well as a guide who knows well the roads to Susa. Bandits stole the golden presents I brought for you and for the King!’

‘Persia supports open trade among the peoples of the Sea. There is nothing new in what you bring us as information or on what you propose. Do you really believe our King will listen to you, to such a meagre message?’

‘I do not know whether Artaxerces will listen to me. I merely would like to tell him in person, like I did to you, that a new government is imminent in Athens, one that it might be worth to support since it wants peace and the independent views of the towns in the islands and on the coasts of Asia. We do not object these towns to ally with the powers that are closest to their interests. I will of course also ask the King humbly for support to our cause, not to attack it but to protect it, which I am sure he would be able to do in a number of ways, and that only after our victory, not earlier.’ Pharnabazus kept silence again for a while. He looked at his counsellor, but the courtier did not change the impassive look in his face.

‘This man does not approve,’ Alcibiades thought.

Then, coming to a decision, Pharnabazus said, ‘in honour of the oaths we took, Alcibiades, I will provide you with an escort to Susa and have your embassy accompanied by a guide. As to for what happens in Athens, we shall have to wait for the developments to decide on our relations with the governing men. We will allow further discussions when the changes that you predict have realised.’

Pharnabazus made a sign of the hand, which effectively dismissed Alcibiades. The guard moved towards him. Alcibiades stood up from the couch and the guard pointed to the door through which he had come. The commander who had brought him waited outside. He took Alcibiades back through the maze of corridors, to the exterior of the palace. He accompanied Alcibiades to his house.

Alcibiades threw himself on a couch, in front of Harmonia. He trembled all over his body from the tension of the audience. He explained to Harmonia now, at Dascylium, what he had come to do in Phrygia, and he told her they would continue to travel to Persia’s capital, Susa.

She asked for details but he answered, ‘it is better for you not to know what I will say to King Artaxerces. I can tell you, however, that never has a mission I supported had such a thin base. I have practically nothing to offer, nothing concrete, only thin promises, and all I can say is very prospective. I wonder why I am doing this!’

‘Shall I tell you why you are doing this?’ Harmonia asked. ‘You do this because Thrasybulus and Axiochus asked it. By going to Susa, you are again part of something, you see, if only of a hypothetical uprising that might or might not occur. Hope has conquered your mind once more, whereas before you hope eluded you. You do not do this just because Thrasybulus and Axiochus are your friends. It is a pretty depressing thought for you to have so few elements in hand to offer as negotiation, but it is something you must do. You are not made to be sitting like a prisoner inside a fort in Thrace. That is why you take risks, so much risk that you may lose your life.’ Alcibiades laughed and caressed her hair.

‘You know me well. You are right. My message to Pharnabazus was only an overture, of course. Pharnabazus promised nothing, but at least he heard me and he listened. He asked many questions. He actually used the word of embassy at the end of the audience, which was giving me huge credit. At the end of this voyage however, and if I get to see the King of Persia, I will have fine messages, impressions only, with which to return to Athens. When Athens is back in the hands of the people and when the old ways of ruling are re-activated by the revolt, I might – after the certain time

needed to consolidate the democracy – return to these parts. I would like that. We could live again at Neon-Teichos, and I could travel to represent Athens' interests in the Propontis and on the Asian mainland. The revolt in Athens is the only way for us to live peacefully somewhere.'

Harmonia had rarely seen Alcibiades so unsure and doubtful of himself. He was still very nervous most of the time, losing control of his temper, sometimes shouting and kicking at the servants. His doubts and the uncertainty of his position were taking their toll, she recognised. Yet, she spoke to him about the usefulness of his mission, and she encouraged him with her love. She poured now some of her own courage and natural strength of survival in Alcibiades, which kept him going and hoping instead of despairing. She went to him on the couch, laid her body next to his and caressed his face. She untied her peplos and brought his hand on her breast. They kissed and she held on to his kiss. He felt her breast heave and swell, and soon he was aroused. She turned on the couch and let him enter her. He felt stronger after their love-making, ready for the travel to Susa and filled with hope of having messages that could interest Artaxerces. This interest, however tiny, he could exploit further.

In Pharnabazus's room, Susamithres cleared his throat. Pharnabazus looked at him, allowing Susamithres to talk.

Susamithres said, 'he promised nothing of substance, offered nothing, brought nothing, not even the usual presents. Why do we not kill him? Sending his head to Lysander would please the Spartans.'

'I have information that he has been robbed in Bithynia. We captured the thieves, but most of his gold has disappeared. I will not return to him what we recuperated. Let's see how he does with Artaxerces. If he tells the King nothing more than what he told us, Artaxerces will refuse to hear him for more than a few moments, and then kill him. Maybe he knows things he hasn't told to us. If we stop him here, then that information may be lost, and Thrasylbulus may one day send message to the King we withheld important information. Still, one important piece of information is that the threat to the current government of Athens seems to be materialising as expected.'

'Did you believe that, lord? He may just have been bragging and lying, like he always did.'

'I believe him. Should we give that information to the Spartans?'

'Sparta is mighty in our regions. King Darius supports the Spartans. We should do as Sparta pleases, and keep friends with them. We supported Sparta to destroy the Athenian influence in these regions. Are we now going to diminish the Spartan influence? Do we advance one step with that? Is that in our interest? Do we win something with the new Athens, if ever it comes?'

Pharnabazus became suddenly very angry. He flared.

He shouted, 'have we not helped the Spartans so much already without receiving anything in return, except reinforced Hellenic cities, cities ever more arrogant in their dealings with us since they bask in the support of Lysander? Why have we entered this war in the first place, Susamithres? I will answer that question for you: to get rid of the arrogance of the Athenian League! We gave money, much money, to Sparta. What have we received, but new arrogance beyond belief. Also, Lysander controls Cyrus and Cyrus controls us.'

He calmed down when he saw Susamithres's discomfiture. Pharnabazus continued in a lower voice, 'Athens, this new Athens that Alcibiades seems to promise, proposes a new mode of living. This new Athens seems to have learned from the war. Sparta simply replaces Athens currently, doing exactly the same as Athens did earlier, but even more arrogantly. The Spartans are friendly with us and they let us profit from the spoils of the war, but nothing has truly changed. Hellenic supremacy is complete. I don't really care whether that supremacy is called Athenian or Spartan. It is the same arrogance. Alcibiades, and of course Thrasybulus, seem to promise what we sought at the beginning of our involvement in the war. Alcibiades's message was quite interesting, actually, and the message of a warrior. I like warriors. Warriors have honour. He promised what Sparta promised for Ionia and for the Propontis but never delivered. Worse, her ephors jealously guard the autonomy of the cities of the coasts and keep our influence at bay. Sparta has displaced Athens as the leader of the Hellenes at the end of their war, in a more raw way, more rationally, but we, Persians, we have gained nothing. Alcibiades brought us a very compelling story. The truth is, he doesn't seem to realise this himself. I had the impression he had nothing to offer, while in fact he delivered us a great message I have heard so far. He brought his speech and arguments as if he had nothing to offer whatsoever. I know him. I studied his eyes and though he did not waiver, I saw only sadness and doubt. The man is wrong. He has something to say, at least to me. He had something decent to offer to us! Moreover, it is the message of one of the bravest warriors I ever saw in a battle, so he means what he says!'

Pharnabazus laughed. 'We might help that new Athens a bit, after all. We have nothing to lose.'

Pharnabazus did not speak further, but he thought, 'Alcibiades hid something, but I don't know what. It might have to do with Cyrus. Tissaphernes has been Alcibiades's friend at one time. Alcibiades might seek to weaken Cyrus so that Sparta would be weakened. If he weakens Cyrus, he strengthens Tissaphernes. And myself. So he will be offering help to Artaxerces in the event that Cyrus would want the throne for himself. That must be it. Where does that leave me? I want Phrygia. I should ally with Tissaphernes one day, against Cyrus. Yes, I can support a little this Alcibiades now. Strange how life is! I once feared that man, now I feel sympathy for him.'

He said aloud to Susamithres, 'see to it that Alcibiades gets an escort. Have him come to the palace a few times to beg for the hoplites and for the guide. The third time, tell him all will be ready within five days. Do not let him travel from Dascylium alone. Give him horses, a horse driven wagon for his wife. Have him followed.'

Susamithres replied, 'we have a series of houses along the road, lord. If you allow him to use these houses our guide can bring him from town to town, from house to house, so that it is easy to track him. He will lodge in safety, too.'

'That is good. Let it be done this way,' Pharnabazus ordered.

He dismissed Susamithres, and asked his mistress back in.

Melissa

Alcibiades waited impatiently ten days more for his escort to arrive. No messenger came to his house. Then he went to the palace to ask when he could leave for Susa. He had to wait in the palace rooms, being led to three different magistrates of Pharnabazus. The escort would be arriving soon. After ten days more, no escort

having been prepared, Alcibiades returned to the palace. He received the message, after much waiting, that the hoplites were being prepared and the guide forthcoming. After ten days more, Alcibiades raged and told the magistrates he would be travelling alone, Pharnabazus's promise not realised. He saw three magistrates more, before being brought to Susamithres. Susamithres promised him that within five days more the warriors would come to his house. At the fifth day in the morning, indeed, at dawn, Phrygian commanders came to Alcibiades's house and told him they would be coming the next day at dawn with his escort. They told Alcibiades they also had a wagon for Timandra.

The next day, ten Phrygian guards and two commanders indeed stood at the gate of Alcibiades's house. One of the commanders presented the guide. He also announced that Pharnabazus had in his infinite goodness and wisdom invited Alcibiades, his wife and his escort, to use the residences of the satrapy along the road to Susa. He showed Alcibiades a splendid wagon, graciously was offered by Pharnabazus. It was a royal wagon, in which Pharnabazus moved his mistresses when he was on a war campaign, a comfortable wagon, decked with a wooden structure and finely decorated. It lifted Alcibiades's mood. He noticed he was considered as if he were on an official embassy. He thought he still was an important representative of Athens. Harmonia felt as if she were a Persian princess. She stepped in the wagon like a Queen and the Persians were amazed at her delicate, radiant beauty. Drawn by horses, the wagon made much faster way than the ox-cart they had before. Alcibiades covered larger distances with his escort in one day.

Lysander was still at Samos at that time. Samos was on the point of surrendering. Lysander estimated that only a few days would pass before the Samians would open the gates and give up their town to him.

Lysander was preparing for his army to enter the city, when messengers came to him with news of Alcibiades. Alcibiades had left Neon-Teichos quite some time ago. He had travelled to Dascylium, where Spartan spies had noticed his presence. Later, he had departed on the south road with an escort of Persian warriors.

Lysander gave some thought to Alcibiades's movements.

'Alcibiades is on the run again,' he thought, 'after his fortress at Oinos has been captured. What made him go to Pharnabazus, who was more his enemy than his ally? What is he travelling south for? He is not going to see Tissaphernes. He would have done that in a boat, overseas. Alcibiades is travelling to Susa! That is the only interesting place for him to go to.'

Lysander had no idea about what Alcibiades was going to do at Susa. Alcibiades represented nothing anymore but himself. For whatever reason the man would be talking to Artaxerces or be seeking refuge with the King of Persia, what harm could the man do? Lysander laughed and shook his head. Alcibiades was harmless to him. 'Never underestimate an adversary, Lysander,' he thought afterwards. 'Alcibiades is the one man to fear in the world. Apollo only knows what tricks the man hides in his head. Sparta will hear of Alcibiades being at Susa. Sparta may blame you, Lysander, for not having obeyed orders in due time to execute Alcibiades.'

Lysander still couldn't care less now about Alcibiades. He did care about his own position, and about the opinion of the ephors. This was not the moment to risk an open clash and the blame of the Elders of the Gerousia. Lysander did not hesitate, then. He ordered his secretary to write a letter to Pharnabazus, informing the satrap of

the awareness of Sparta's ephors of the whereabouts of Alcibiades. Alcibiades was in the custody of the satrap. Lysander asked Pharnabazus, ordered him, to have Alcibiades executed, on the wish of the ephors and the Gerousia of Sparta. He dispatched the scroll in one of his fastest ships to Dascylium and he sent a copy to Sparta. The ship left immediately from Samos.

An eclipse of the sun happened that day over the Ionian Islands, and also over Samos. The light from the sun diminished to a grey darkness in the full day. The omens were bad for the Hellenes. The Samians surrendered to Lysander that day. Lysander would soon sail home, back to Sparta.

Pharnabazus received the message of Lysander two days later. He raged when he read the contents. He had let Alcibiades go to Susa, and even given him protection by his own warriors. He remained bound by a treaty with Sparta, and by oaths. He could not ignore these orders. He called in immediately his counsellors to his room, his stepbrother Bagaïos, the head of his military forces, and his uncle Susamithres, his political counsellor and confidant.

The three men considered that the demand of Sparta had to be honoured. The Spartan order annulled the satrap's obligation towards a renegade. Pharnabazus sighed, but he felt he was obliged to comply.

Pharnabazus wanted to be sure that Alcibiades was properly executed, so he invested the two men together with the job. Luckily, Alcibiades was virtually already in his hands since the escort with which he travelled was exclusively Phrygian. The escort would obey orders given by the two closest counsellors of the satrap. And they knew very well where to find Alcibiades. Their spies had reported recently that the Athenian still followed the scheduled route along the royal houses, and would soon arrive at the small town of Melissa.

Bagaïos and Susamithres left the same day with a force of twenty cavalymen. These were picked men and fierce Phrygian warriors. They rode as fast as they could from out of Dascylium to meet with Alcibiades's group at the earliest.

Alcibiades and Harmonia arrived at Melissa on their way from Synnada to Metropolis. Their voyage had been easy. The Phrygian cavalry that accompanied them had been courteous and helpful. The commanders handled efficiently all issues of the travel, from logistics to making life comfortable in the houses of the satrap. The guide had little to do, because the warriors knew the roads well, and they knew where the houses of Pharnabazus were.

Melissa was a small, un-walled town, which was really only a collection of villages. Alcibiades compared it a little to Sparta. They arrived at the residence in the late afternoon and would stay here for a few days to rest before embarking on the next stretch to Metropolis. Alcibiades had calmed down somewhat, due to the care in which he had been enveloped by Pharnabazus's men.

Pharnabazus's house at Melissa stood isolated at the outskirts of the town. It looked like a small fortress from the distance. It was a house with walls on all sides. The walls were not high and they were mostly built of mud bricks and wood, not with stones. The manor had no second floor, and therefore it was wide. All the rooms were situated around an open, inner place. That space was rather pleasant, for a small garden with green plants had been preserved here, which meant that abundantly

watering the courtyard was necessary in the morning and the evening, which added pleasantly to the freshness of the place. The house had fine furniture, couches, tables and chests. It was nicely decorated with paintings and mosaics. The walls were made of bricks and wood. It was a pleasant site, though not of the luxury of a palace. It stood on top of a hill and the view from the courtyard, through the open gates, was marvellous. Alcibiades and Harmonia slept in a room next to the courtyard, opposite the gates. The guards slept outside in tents. Guards stood at the gates all throughout the night. The commanders slept with their men.

After the first night, near dawn, Alcibiades awoke with a scream. He had had a nightmare again. He had seen himself lying on a table, dead. He had been wounded and he had felt in his sleep the pain of several wounds in his body. More awful than being killed, though how that had been done he had not seen, was to have to watch his own dead body. He had never experienced this kind of doubling of his being before. He was dead, and his face was grey-white. He lay fully dressed in a white chiton, belt and sword lying at his side. The chiton was not his however; the clothes were of Harmonia. His eyes were closed, and two golden coins had been laid on hem. Harmonia was standing next to the table, applying her cosmetics on his face to give it the coloured, rosy appearance of a living man. She did not cry. He saw her work meticulously, painting his lips and his cheeks, blacken his eyebrows. There were red patches on his face. She lighted these first with a white powder, then gently used a brush to bring colour onto the skin. He saw her move around the corpse from left to right, moving in a brilliant light. He wondered why Harmonia did not cry. He saw well that she was close to a nervous breakdown. Yet, she worked with a steady hand and the strokes of her brushes looked like as many caresses, such as he was accustomed of her during the last months at Neon-Teichos. Where was this scene? Then, Harmonia's long hairs, undone while she was working, hung all over his body and caressed his face. He heard the scream, which was his own, and the image disappeared. His dream ended. He found himself entangled in Harmonia's hairs in the bed and her arms around his naked chest. He sat up on the bed. Harmonia looked at him when he sat up on the bed.

He said, 'I only had a nightmare. There is nothing to be afraid off.'

He stood up, cleaned himself with cloths and lay down to sleep again. Sleep would not come; it was also near morning. Harmonia was completely awake too, now. She asked him what the nightmare was about. He hesitated yet told her what he had seen. She grabbed for his hands then but remained lying next to him. They turned each on their back.

Harmonia said, 'I dreamt something similar a few days ago.'

She pondered a while, and then added, 'I guess it is the tension of our voyage, and the uncertain outcome, that makes us afraid and have such dreams. I never had a nice dream in my life and I heard from other people too that they only had nightmares. Maybe our head continues to think at night about all the bad events, past and future, we should avoid. I do not think we should assign much importance to this dream. It is only a dream, a possibility, not something bound to happen.'

Alcibiades stayed silent. He was terrified. He fretted.

'Who knows,' Harmonia laughed, 'maybe I was colouring you because you were of a very old age and I wanted to make you handsome again like when you were young.'

'No, no, no,' he shouted, piqued. 'I was like I am now and I am still handsome like I was young!'

He jumped on her so that he crushed her on the bed. They were both naked and they made love.

Alcibiades and Harmonia stayed at Melissa for several days. Then, he wanted to push on. The guards agreed. They would prepare to ride on to Metropolis the next day in the morning. In the evening, all the warriors and servants left the house, as they had done the previous days. Alcibiades closed the gates from within. Guards stayed at the gates. Alcibiades went to sleep with Harmonia.

Alcibiades had another nightmare that night. He was in Sicily again, near Mount Etna and red Pyriphlegethon spewed out its rivers of incandescent rocks and its fire around him. He heard coarse shouts, and Harmonia woke him at the same time. The sky was red to one side, and it was not the sky, but the ceiling of the bedroom that seemed ablaze. He smelled the burning wood. Black and white smoke rose from under the door of the bedroom and slowly ascended to the ceiling.

Harmonia cried, in total panic, 'the house is afire. It burns!'

She grabbed him. Alcibiades drew her hands away. He jumped up, threw a chiton over him and he went to the door, sword in hand, Harmonia following behind him. She also had drawn a coloured peplos over her.

He wanted to open the door but she cried, 'take care! The flames will dash in!'

He went back to the bed and pulled several clothes from the bed, mostly things of Harmonia. He wound these around his left arm. He opened the door. Flames enveloped him, drawn in by the air of the room. Fire licked all around the inner courtyard. The whole building was aflame. With his enveloped left arm, Alcibiades waved at the flames. He hit the flames at the door stiles with the cloths, so that there was a free opening of only smoke, not of fire. He drew Harmonia out, after him.

Alcibiades saw no men in the house anymore, but he had also heard no alarm. The house was entirely on fire, the gates were on fire, and the roofs also, as well as some of the wooden structures that formed part of the walls. Men pushed against the gates so that the wooden panels crushed down and threw sparkles everywhere around. Boots kicked at the flames and at the consumed beams. Lighter parts of the gates flew into the courtyard. Alcibiades told Harmonia to follow him. He kicked rests of burning wood aside, enough to allow him to pass through the gates. Red cinders flew to the skies everywhere. Why had the guards not sounded the alarm sooner and not opened the gates earlier? What had happened outside? He was grateful that the gates were open, and that he could escape from the burning house. Alcibiades looked behind him when he passed the gates, drawing Harmonia out and making sure she was safe. He had pain in his arms and legs. He knew he had been burnt by the fires. He saw Harmonia's eyes widen as she looked past him. He turned his eyes around, towards the road in front of the house. He held out his arm, giving sign to her to stay where she was. He turned his face.

Tens of Phrygian warriors stood waiting in front of him, armed with spears and swords, and obviously waiting for him to run out of the house. The spears were not to protect him. They were levelled at him. He recognised not only the commanders of the guards among the men, but also Susamithres. He understood.

Alcibiades brought the arm that was enveloped in Harmonia's clothes in front of him and he held his sword straight at the Persians. He stepped forward, ready to attack the men, alone. He was Alcibiades the warrior again now. He saw fear in the men's eyes and the whole group of Phrygians also stepped back.

Then, Susamithres gave a sign to men that stood behind him, and archers stepped forward. Without waiting, the archers let one arrow after the other fly towards Alcibiades. Alcibiades felt the stings of the wooden shafts enter his chest, arms and legs. He was surprised at so much cowardice. His war cries did not sound anymore in the first light of the sun. He could not keep standing on his legs. Darkness overcame his senses, numbness took over the control of his body. He toppled. He fell to the ground. His right cheek touched the sand. His eyes still saw, but he did not see his assailants anymore.

Sideways, a brilliant light suddenly pervaded the hill.

Above the low-sloping grey hills appeared a woman dressed in a long, golden peplos. She wore a shield at her side from which curved a snake. She wore a victory in her right hand and she had a multi-crested helmet on her head. Athena Parthenos smiled at him, but it was a smile of vengeance. She brandished her spear.

‘So,’ Alcibiades thought, ‘she has finally come to get me.’

Then a second woman appeared, dressed only in a pure, white peplos. Her peplos was not all closed; one breast was clear. She stepped before Athena and blocked her way. She looked much like Harmonia, but she was not Harmonia.

Aphrodite stalled Athena with her white arm. She waved the folds of her shining robe over Alcibiades. Then, there was only darkness also in his eyes.

Epilogue

Harmonia

Harmonia saw Alcibiades being targeted by the archers. Six arrows planted themselves in his body. He fell slowly to the ground, and he looked at the shafts as if he was astonished to find them in his body. He fell sideways, some arrows breaking off as he fell, others entering deeper in his chest and legs. He convulsed, and then lay with his face in the dust. Harmonia screamed and screamed and fainted. No arrow reached her.

Some time afterwards, the Phrygian warriors helped her on her feet. They brought her to the wagon in which she had arrived with Alcibiades. Alcibiades lay on a table next to the wagon. Harmonia still had some of her cosmetics, so she made up Alcibiades's face. She did not cry, but despair was in her heart.

The commanders of the Phrygians watched her working for a while, as she caressed the corpse with her hands and with her hair. Then, a commander called Bagaïos, came forward, and told her the hoplites would not hurt her. Bagaïos said he needed Alcibiades's head however, to bring it back to his master in proof of the killing. She understood that. It had to be done.

Harmonia went inside the wagon again, while Bagaïos cut off Alcibiades's head. Bagaïos enveloped Alcibiades's head in white cloth. The Phrygians also covered Alcibiades's body in white cloth. Only then did Harmonia come out. They asked her what they should do with the body. Harmonia answered to have the body burnt and the ashes assembled, as is the custom with the Hellenes.

Alcibiades's corpse was burnt on a pyre the same day. The Phrygians were respectful at the ceremony. They even called a priest of Melissa to lead the burning, and to chant songs to the gods. Then they asked Harmonia what to do with the ashes. She ordered the ashes to be buried close to the road near the place where Alcibiades had died, at Melissa. She told she had enough money to erect a mausoleum for the grave, and she offered the gold.

Bagaïos and Susamithres found a stone sculptor in Melissa, and Harmonia paid the man a vast sum of money for the grave and the tombstone monument. Susamithres revealed to the sculptor who he was and who the man was whose ashes would be buried under the grave. The man promised to make a large and fine mausoleum of white and coloured marble.

Bagaïos then asked Harmonia where she wanted to go to.

Harmonia answered, 'kill me here.'

The Phrygians refused to kill her, stating their master Pharnabazus had ordered them explicitly not to harm her. The satrap also had given orders to bring her to whatever place she desired, even if it was to the other side of the Sea.

Harmonia hesitated, but then she named the place where her child was, the town of Cardia. The Phrygians returned to Dascylium with Harmonia, and they put her on board of a ship bound for Cardia with strict orders to not harm her.

Bagaïos and Susamithres brought Alcibiades's head to Pharnabazus. The satrap wanted to see the head, if only briefly. He recognised Alcibiades. He was astonished

to find the head nicely made up with cosmetics. Bagaïos and Susamithres explained to the satrap who had done that work.

Pharnabazus remained thinking for a long time about the fate of the man he had known and also about the marvels of love. He doubted he had ever been loved like Alcibiades and once more, even in death, he was jealous.

He honoured the Athenian, however. He ordered the head to be burned and the ashes to be buried in the royal cemetery of Dascylium. He did not attend the ceremony, but from a window of his palace he saw the pyre and the white smoke ascend to the heavens.

Harmonia arrived by ship at Cardia. She found Axiochus's house, Theodote and the children. Theodote saw her arrive and she understood. She too fainted then, and mourned for several days.

Two years later, when peace had returned to Athens, Harmonia moved with Theodote from Cardia to Alcibiades's town. She met Socrates and told him how Alcibiades had died. Socrates mourned then also, deeply shocked by the story, and he aged further much that day, bent under the sadness of one more dear death.

Theodote lived henceforth with Axiochus.

Harmonia travelled to Sicily after a time. Too much reminded her in Athens of Alcibiades, and she constantly felt she was not appreciated in the town. Moreover, she had never liked large cities. Sicily seemed far away enough to her, to be forgotten by the Athenians. She did not suffer anymore being reminded either of Sparta or of Athens, the two towns that had killed Alcibiades.

Harmonia ended her days at Hyccara in Sicily, but she did not live for long. She left enough money for her child, still a young girl then, to live at ease.

Laïs, the daughter of Alcibiades and Timandra was one of the most beautiful girls of the island of Sicily. Her mother died when she was still young. Laïs fell in love with a man from Athens and accompanied him to Athens. She thus returned to her father's home. She took revenge on the Athenians. She became one of the best known courtesans of Hellas. Philosophers and generals vied for her favours, and she made the men pay dearly for her services. She played with them like a hawk with a dove. Hellenic authors wrote books about her beauty and about how she made fools of the best-known men of Athens, so that she amassed a fortune and lived at leisure in the city.

Later, much later, Theodote travelled with Axiochus to Melissa. She found the tomb of Alcibiades and she paid a sculptor to sculpt a statue of Alcibiades to ornate the tomb.

Much later still, the Roman Emperor Hadrian, in 124 AC, saw the tomb, and he erected a second statue in honour of the great Athenian general that Alcibiades had been.

Several other statues were built to honour Alcibiades in the ancient times.

A statue was erected at Pergamon, one by the Romans in the Roman forum, at the advice of the oracle of Delphi. That statue was made in bronze by the sculptor Physomachus, and it represented Alcibiades driving a cart drawn by four horses.

Athens

Life continued in Athens. The two main people that Alcibiades had known intimately during his last campaigns were Theramenes and Thrasybulus. Theramenes was not a friend of Alcibiades anymore; Thrasybulus had supported Alcibiades to the end.

In the middle of the year, while Alcibiades was on his way to Susa, the two leaders of the Thirty, Theramenes and Critias, strove both for power in Athens. Critias ordered one Athenian after the other to be arrested and executed. Theramenes resented the killing and he spoke out publicly against the arrests and the lack of lawfulness in Athens.

Critias and the rest of the Thirty Tyrants needed to consolidate their power. They proceeded to draw up a list of three thousand citizens that could support them in their cause. The Three Thousand were drawn up in the Agora and given arms, whereas the Spartan hoplites took away the arms of the other citizens.

Theramenes openly criticised these measures. The Thirty regarded him therefore as a menace. At a meeting of the Council, they armed the most audacious young men of the Three Thousand with daggers hidden in the hollow of their armpits. Critias addressed the Council in a long discourse against Theramenes. Theramenes defended himself in brilliant speeches. He mentioned among other wrong acts of the Thirty that he found the banishment from Athens of people like Alcibiades, Thrasybulus and Anytus to be impolitic. He said the Thirty could have done better than providing the people with such opposers to the oligarchy.

Theramenes received much applause for his speech, and it became clear to Critias that Theramenes might win the votes in the Council and escape his wrath. Critias therefore stated in his answer that he knew there was a clause in the new laws that forbade any of the Three Thousand to be executed without the vote of the Council. But, he said, the Thirty had power of life and death over all people outside that list. He proceeded to strike Theramenes from the list, with the agreement of his colleagues of the Thirty. Then, he condemned Theramenes to death in the name of the Thirty.

Theramenes jumped to the altar of Hestia, crying that the Thirty would certainly not spare the altar, for the Thirty were impious men towards the gods and nefarious towards men. The young men, led by one called Satyrus, dragged Theramenes from the altar to the Agora. They forced Theramenes to drink the hemlock, which poisoned him.

Once Theramenes killed, in that autumn of that year, the Thirty and Critias acted even more like true tyrants, killing who they liked and confiscating possessions to their own benefit, possession of people they considered to be opposers of the regime or whose properties they coveted.

Thrasybulus had fled to Thebes when the Thirty Tyrants had been installed in the late spring of the year in which Alcibiades was killed. He did not want to live under the rule of the Thirty. He fled to Thebes, which was more and more dissatisfied with Sparta and began to take its distance from the Lacedaemonians. With Athens' power destroyed, there were again two cities in Hellas striving for power: Sparta and Thebes. Thebes took over Athens' former role.

Many Athenian democrats fled to Thrasybulus and joined him, so that he gathered a small number of dedicated followers, ready to fight for democracy. In the spring of

the next year, Thrasybulus and seventy companions captured by surprise the Attican fort of Phyle.

Phyle was a very strong fortress. It controlled a narrow pass through mount Parnes, on the road from Thebes to Athens. The Thirty sent a garrison of Spartan troops and a strong contingent of their own cavalry to Phyle. Thrasybulus had gathered by then about seven hundred men at Phyle. He defeated the oligarchic forces. Then, marching on Athens, he arrived at Piraeus, to be counterattacked there by a very important force of the oligarchy. Thrasybulus retreated to the citadel of Munichia with his men.

Thrasybulus was outnumbered five to one, but he gave battle nevertheless. Athenians were now fighting Athenians in a civil war.

Thrasybulus defeated the Thirty. Critias and also Charmides were killed in this battle. Thrasybulus remained with his men in Piraeus, for the Thirty were still strong inside the city. The Thirty Tyrants first voted a resolution to depose the current government and to hand over power to ten men, called the Ten, one man chosen from each Attican tribe. The Thirty also sent for help to Sparta. Lysander still supported the Thirty. He arranged to be appointed supreme commander of the land army and his brother Libys to be navarch of the fleet. He then arrived with an important army of Peloponnesians at Piraeus, while his brother blockaded the harbour.

But the Spartan Kings did not appreciate Lysander's power anymore.

King Pausanias intervened. Pausanias and three ephors called out the ban on Lysander. Pausanias proclaimed that the expedition of Lysander was contrary to the oaths taken by Sparta. Notwithstanding that, the Spartan armies stood before Thrasybulus. Thrasybulus fought the two Lacedaemonian armies in the streets of Piraeus, and he could make the battle so hard and bitter that the Spartans withdrew. Upon these developments, Pausanias sent secretly a proposal of terms to Thrasybulus, terms which he thought the ephors could accept from Thrasybulus.

The Spartans sent an embassy to Thrasybulus to discuss a truce. Representatives from Thrasybulus, from the Ten and from the people in the city that did not accept the rule of the Thirty, spoke with the Spartan ephors. The representatives negotiated with the ephors that were present in Athens, with the members of the Damos, and also with fifteen men empowered by Sparta to reach an agreement. These men arrived at a general peace treaty, which granted immunity to all men of Athens, except the Thirty and the Ten, though these might find a guaranteed home in Eleusis and remain unharmed.

After this agreement, the Spartan troops returned home.

Thrasybulus called a meeting of the Athenian Assembly right after the departure of what was now again the army of King Pausanias. He asked for law and order in the Assembly, and he restored the old democratic constitution of Athens. The restoration of the democracy in Athens happened in the autumn of the year after the one in which Alcibiades was killed.

The Thirty Tyrants had ruled for only about a year. Oligarchy definitely did not thrive in Athens!

A little time later, the oligarchs, now living at Eleusis, plotted their return to power in Athens. They hired mercenary troops. The Athenians marched on Eleusis, they put to death the generals of the mercenaries that had come out of Eleusis to parlay with them, but they negotiated with the oligarchs of Eleusis. They came to an agreement, to an oath that bound both parties.

The oath said, 'we shall no more remember past offences'.

This oath of forgiveness marked an end to the open and armed hostilities in civil war between the Athenians. Athens could work at recovering its past glory. It did that, and in a few tens of years became once more the wealthiest town of the Hellenic world.

When Thrasybulus restored democracy in Athens, the polis remained at peace for more than fifty years. Its wealth increased. Within three decades, its fleet had grown again to more than three hundred triremes. A second Athenian League was in place.

The Athenian general Conon, the one who had been present at Aegospotami, but who had escaped that battle unscathed, utterly defeated a Spartan fleet at Cnidus in 394 BC, winning from Sparta's navarch Peisander. Conon led not only a few Athenian ships but also a large Persian fleet in co-leadership with the Persian satrap Pharnabazus who had sided with Athens.

Peisander was killed, and the Spartans lost fifty triremes, so that their supremacy in the Sea ended once more. Conon triumphantly returned to Athens' harbour that year. He restored the sections of the Long Walls that had been destroyed before. Thus, in a strange reversal of fate, Persia and Athens had become allies, like Alcibiades had proposed years before, and Conon's fleet was supported by Persian money. Pharnabazus had changed sides.

In the year before the death of Alcibiades, the Athenians passed a decree giving the citizens of the Island of Samos citizenship of Athens. This was re-confirmed in the year after Alcibiades' death, when the Athenians and the Samians overthrew the pro-Spartan oligarchic regime there.

Sparta

King Agis of Sparta recognised Leotychidas, Alcibiades's son by Timaea, Queen of Sparta, as his own son. Leotychidas should have succeeded on Agis. Lysander, however, favoured Agesilaus, his erstwhile lover, the younger brother of King Agis. He intrigued to bring Agesilaus to the throne, and he succeeded in that by throwing doubt on Leotychidas's legitimacy.

Agesilaus was a good King of Sparta, and he gradually threw off the yoke of Lysander's influence.

Within a decade after the end of the Peloponnesian War, Sparta was desperately fighting against its former allies: Corinth, Thebes of the Boeotian League, and also Argos.

The Spartans were also drawn into a war with Persia. First, they helped Cyrus the Younger in the uprising against his brother. Cyrus was defeated. Xenophon, the Athenian-born general and former student of Socrates, led the Hellenic mercenaries of Cyrus from inland Asia to the Sea and back home.

After Cyrus's death, the wiry satrap Tissaphernes launched attacks on the Ionian cities. The cities appealed to Sparta. Agesilaus, King of Sparta after Agis, organised a

campaign against the Persian satrap, leading the anti-Persian expedition in 396 BC. He had command of the army and reduced Lysander to a ceremonial role. Lysander returned to Sparta, and the Gerousia despatched him to Boeotia, together with their second King, Pausanias son of Pleistoanax. Lysander failed to link with Pausanias's forces and stormed alone the Boeotian town of Haliartus. He was killed in that battle.

After Lysander's death, Agesilaus inspected Lysander's archives. He soon wanted to accuse Lysander of having wanted to strive for the Kingship of Sparta. Agesilaus had found a scroll in Lysander's house that formed a new thesis about the constitution of Sparta, prepared for Lysander. The pamphlet stated that the Kingship of Sparta could cease to be inherited by the Eurypontids and the Agiads. A selection was to be made from among the best Spartiates to become King. The Kings would be chosen like Heracles for their merit. Agesilaus wanted to use the scroll to discredit the followers of Lysander, but Lacratidas, the ephor who presided over the Council of ephors at that time, dissuaded him from making the text public, arguing the scroll should be buried with Lysander, for it might become persuasive to the Spartiates.

Later, but still during the reign of Agesilaus, the Thebans led by their genius general Epaminondas, defeated the Spartan army led by Agesilaus's co-King Cleombrotus at the Battle of Leuctra. Only about a thousand real Spartiates were left by then, and Sparta's power came to an end. This happened in 371 BC.

The Thebans defeated the Spartans in other land battles. They invaded Laconia and destroyed forever the power of Sparta.

Later still, the Macedonian Kings Philip and Alexander conquered Boeotia, Attica and the Peloponnesos. They ended the hegemonies of Sparta, Thebes and Athens.

In the year that King Agesilaus of Sparta received command of the Spartan campaign against Persia, in 396 BC, his sister Cynisca won a victory in the chariot races of the Olympic Games. It was her great triumph, for which she had worked for many years. After her victory, she had a commemorative monument erected at Olympia, with an inscription that mentioned she was the only woman in Hellas to have won the wreath at Olympia. Her brother, Agesilaus, had encouraged her to participate, and he helped her, as she helped him to avoid the yoke of Lysander. She won again a victory at the Games, four years later, in 392 BC.

After her death, the Spartans venerated her as a hero of their city, and a shrine in her honour was set up in Sparta.

Socrates

A few years after Alcibiades's death, the philosopher Socrates was accused of corrupting the young men of Athens. He was also accused of impiety, and of failing to acknowledge the gods of the polis. Meletus, Anytus and Lycon were the men who accused him to the Council. Socrates was seventy years of age in 399 BC.

Socrates defended himself before a large court of justice called together to judge him. He rejected the charges brought against him. He proposed not to be punished. He argued he should receive free meals for as long as he lived in the prytaneis, but he was also willing to pay a fine.

Socrates had opposed the regime of the Thirty, even calling Critias a pig at one time. The Thirty tyrants and Critias in particular had forbidden Socrates to converse with the young. When the Thirty ordered him and others to arrest a citizen called Leon of Salamis for execution, Socrates had refused, and the Thirty had hated him for that public act. But the people of 399 BC were of the opinion that much of what had happened to them was the fault of men like Socrates who had destroyed the old beliefs. Many resented him for having been the tutor and friend of men like Alcibiades and Critias. The court judged him to be guilty by a very small margin of votes, and therefore condemned him to death. Socrates would be a victim of the extreme democrats, like his student Alcibiades had been before him.

On the day before Socrates's trial, the annual sea-mission to the island of Delos left Athens. The mission began immediately after the priest of Apollo had finished garlanding the vessel. The mission consisted of one single ship, an ancient pentecoster with a single row of oars, which sailed out of Piraeus decorated with garlands of flowers. Its sailors and the magistrates on board of the ship would celebrate at Delos the victory of Theseus, the founder of Athens, over the Minotaur of Crete. Until the ship returned to Athens, the city had to remain pure, so no execution could take place. Socrates had to remain in his cell in the prison, waiting to be executed, until the ship entered Piraeus. The ship took a long time to return.

Many friends came to visit Socrates in prison. The people who remained around him all the time were Apollodorus, Critobulus and his father Crito, Hermogenes, Epigenes, Aeschines, Antisthenes, Cresippus of Paeanis, Menexenus and Phaedo. Visitors from outside Athens were Simmias, Cebes and Phaedondas from Thebes, and Euclides, and Terpsion from Megara. Plato would have been with him too, but Plato was ill at the time. The men proposed to Socrates to bribe the prison-guards so that he could escape, but he refused.

On the day that the ship from Delos had signalled in the harbour, near sunset, the man who had to execute Socrates prepared a cup of poison of hemlock. Socrates took a bath, preferring to wash himself before his death, rather than giving the women the task to wash him after his death.

Socrates reflected on how many, many years ago he had stood with a young man he loved at Cape Sounion, seeing the garlanded ship on its way to Delos pass the cape majestically and silently. He had had a premonition at that time that this boat one day would signal his death.

When the moment of Socrates's execution was imminent, his friends stood around him. Socrates would not die alone. He saw briefly his three sons and his wife, and also the women of his household. Later, in the cell, the executioner administered the cup of hemlock to Socrates. The philosopher drank the fatal potion calmly.

Socrates lay down on his back after a while, when his legs grew heavy under him. The coldness from the poison gradually spread through his body, until it reached his heart and made it stop beating.

Such was the story of Alcibiades and of Socrates, the story of virtue and passion, though who was virtuous and who passionate seems hard to determine. The story was written so that you would reflect, for such stories tend to happen over and over again, until humans turn wise. And even then ...

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 hoplites 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 Italy, 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 then. 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 again in 414 BC, laying waste the country and fortifying Decelea (on advice of Alcibiades). This Spartan occupation 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. 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 Thrasylbulus and immediately appointed general there. In 410 BC he returned to Tissaphernes's court but was arrested by the satrap and brought to Sardis. He escaped from Sardis a month later. With Theramenes and Thrasylbulus 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 Thrasylbulus 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, Rhodos, Samos and Notium. In 406 BC he left his fleet there to join Thrasylbulus 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 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's 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 Rhodos 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 Chalcidian 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 later 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. 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 was a cousin of Plato. 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 soon after surrendered 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 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 Rhodos. 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 Achaea 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 Perdicas 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 Menedaius 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's 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 Rhodos. 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's 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 Hegemony 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.

- Nauclides:** 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 re-took Mende some time 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.
- Philip: 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 Athenaus 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 Erythrae.
- 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: Odrysian 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 Antigeus: 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 Epiadas 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 Chalcidians 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 hegemony 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 hoplites, 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:	Peloponnesian plan to attack Piraeus, 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 Chalcidian 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 return 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's 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 Siphae, 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 Chalcidian peninsula.
- Early November 424 BC: Demosthenes attacks Siphac with 40 ships, hoping to join Hippocrates' forces; but the Boeotians learn of the plan so its armies occupy Chaeronea and Siphac. Demosthenes and Hippocrates are not ready and they stay at Delium. Hippocrates completes a fort at Delium. He has 7000 hoplites and 20.000 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 threat 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 fails. 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's 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 Laurium. 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 fleet. 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 flies, but is defeated at Spiraeum and killed.
- August 412 BC: Alcibiades persuades Sparta to send Chalcideus to Ionia, with himself. He sought to flee Agis's anger because of an affair with Agis's 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's 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 Astyochus under Lichas. A Spartan fleet under Clearchus son of Ramphias is sent to the Hellespont. A naval battle between Charmines and Astyochus 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 hoplites 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 Samos hoplites revolt against the oligarchy in Athens and they declare Alcibiades their general 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 Rhodos 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 Rhodos. The Spartan Pedaritus at Rhodos 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 hoplites and 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's 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, Rhodos. 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 had 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 Euryptolemus 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 Thrasylus, 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 Rhodos, 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. Its two major characters are placed in a historical setting, 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 that 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 were 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 was with Laches in Sicily. He had been in Potidaea as a hoplite, so it seems natural to assume that he continued to be a hoplite 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' 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 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 taxes. 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 Olympic 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 aulé 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 Heliaia 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 cavalrymen.
- 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 hoplite, 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 hoplite. 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 hoplites. 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 the participation 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 hoplites 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 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 'The Rent' for 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.
- Saurôtêr:** a bronze butt spike on the spears of hoplites. The saurôtêr 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 hoplites 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