

*Let's Go For A Walk  
Book Two*

# ΠΥΘΑΓΩΡΑΣ ΩΓ ΣΑΜΩΣ

*Pythagoras of Samos*



*A life adventure of  
Ascended Master Kuthumi Lal Singh  
as told to Marisa Calvi*

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Marisa Calvi  
20 Pinus Avenue  
Glenorie NSW 2157  
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# Introduction

Welcome to the next chapter of my writing adventures with Kuthumi, as we continue sharing some of his life adventures.

My time with Pythagoras began just after I had completed the story of Pharaoh Thutmose but before it was published. Knowing that I was reluctant to leave Thutmose and his family, Kuthumi offered me a glimpse and a taste of his next story to help me let go. It worked, helping ease me from Ancient Egypt to Ancient Greece.

It was not just the people of Thutmose's story that enamoured me, making it hard to let go. My time with Thutmose was like sitting by a warm fire with a friend, swapping stories as we sipped on a brandy. If I had time to sit and write, then this aspect of Kuthumi had time to talk. He even loved to chat between our writing sessions. I could get lost in writing for hours at a time, as though I was there in the very scene I was writing. I needed complete silence for my writing and in the beginning I would even need to shower when I finished to pull me back to the present. It was intense but wonderful.

Writing with Pythagoras was completely different. I received downloads in short bursts and could not write for more than an hour at each sitting. Unlike Thutmose he did want me to research his history and led me to Iamblichus' biography of him, telling me that should be my guide for major events of his life.

Some days I would sit before my computer and Pythagoras just would not show up to write with me. This was especially so as we got into the details of his time at the mystery schools. Frustrated one day at the lack of progress I was making, I openly asked Pythagoras what was happening. Pythagoras confessed he felt he should not share the particulars of the mystery schools. These were sacred places that he had been privy to and even now he still felt compelled to honour their codes of secrecy.

In ancient times you proved yourself worthy to attend these schools and some schools were so hidden that just finding them showed your merit. So I argued that in the same way, if someone found their way to his book then they too were worthy to know of his experiences at the schools. Thankfully this made sense to his pragmatic nature and we moved on.

I still missed the warmth of writing with Thutmose though. I even joked that Thutmose was emotional while Pythagoras was informational. Every now and then I like to check in with Kuthumi to see how we are

doing. After all these are his stories and it's nice to know that he is happy in how they are being told. We were having one of these meetings when I made my confession.

"I don't like Pythagoras," I said.

"It's okay. He doesn't like you either," was Kuthumi's reply.

As bizarre as it sounds this somehow cleared the last block between us and from then our work together moved much faster.

There were still days when I felt I should not write and I let go of the time line I had decided to tie myself to for this book's release. I knew our readers would rather wait another month or two for something genuine than something forced. This release opened my writing even more. I could now write with noise in the house. Even getting up from my desk to get a glass of water did not break the flow. It seemed Pythagoras' practicalities were rubbing off onto me and I did not complain.

I generally don't review my writing as I go, saving this process for when the book is complete. Kuthumi recommended this when I started writing with Thutmose and it was the best advice he gave me. When the story is done then I take off my writer hat and put on my editor hat.

When it came time to do this with Pythagoras I did so with some trepidation. The writing had happened in fits and starts over eighteen months and I really did not have a sense of the book as a whole. I was honestly scared I was going to read a mess. Instead I delighted in reading Pythagoras' story as a whole. I read parts that I had completely forgotten I had written with him and found much more humour than I had given him credit for.

Once again I thanked myself for letting go of my expectations and for having dived into the experience of writing with Kuthumi.

Balthazar, of the three magi who travelled to see Yeshua, is our next story. Even though we have not started that book yet, he is already floating around nearby. His energy and personality is something new yet again, and I know writing with him will be a new, unique experience even though it will be my fourth book with Kuthumi.

I cannot wait to start again!



# Kuthumi's Introduction

Welcome back my dear friends!

Welcome back to the odyssey that is the retelling of my experiences. I have to be honest and say that it has been some time since even I have revisited these stories and stepping into the remembrance is not always so easy. There are just some parts of lives that you wish you could forget. This cannot happen though when you choose to be an ascended master!

In revisiting my stories I am once again living these lives and in doing so it sometimes does become easy to forget who I am now. So I step back, and I observe the aspect of me that tells the story. I feel the depth in which that part of me is connected to the experience of that lifetime and I honour all they did in being part of my collective experience.

During my last days as a human, I pondered writing these stories myself before I left the physical realm but I knew that could not happen. I knew I needed to stand back to tell them with the compassion that would do them justice. I knew that would only happen once I surrendered into my pure essence.

Therein lies the catch; once you are complete and have called all parts of you back to the one, how then do you revisit just one part of you and not let it once again consume you.

This was the question I asked myself as I sat at my writing desk in India. The answer found me immediately. I felt it call to me in the breeze and I knew it was not a voice from within me. It was a voice I knew well though and it repeated a promise made to me before time existed and before the human realm came to be.

“We will tell your stories and we will read them ....”

It was a whisper with the strength of a tornado. It was my spirit family reminding me of the promise made before I separated from all that is, to become a sovereign being.

I knew these stories would once again be told when the time was right. But then is time ever wrong? These stories would find their way when the readers were ready.

How wonderful you have found them. How wonderful of you to join me and fulfil an ageless promise made with love.

So my dear, dear friend, when you are ready, let's go for a walk...



# Chapter One

The time of this life was just over five hundred years before the birth of Christ. Ancient Egypt still existed as it did when I ruled as Thutmose III but without the majesty and strength that it had known. Greece was a burgeoning power and pushing into the west, however it was kept in check by the growth of Persia. There was change happening slowly but steadily beneath the surface of humanity. This era saw the birth of the great age of Greek philosophy and science. To the east in Nepal and Northern India, Buddhism emerged while in China the hundred schools of thought sprung up independently, resulting in the birth of Taoism and Confucianism, amongst many others

Even if one was not aware of the political processes in play or the new religions and philosophies being born there was still the palpable sense that change was on its way.

My physical time as Pythagoras was begun upon the island of Samos, which despite being just off the coast of modern day Turkey was, and still is considered one of the Greek Isles. At this time Samos was complete and self-sufficient with a full working economy, cultural pursuits, and a steady pulsing population. Samos was a crossroad for trade from the Orient to Europe and as such was a kaleidoscope of locals and travellers carrying their wares.

My mother's family had been upon Samos for four generations. They had originated from mainland Greece to resettle here when my great-grandfather, Anatolius arrived to build boats. He brought with him his new wife, who spent the boat ride vomiting with the nausea of her first pregnancy.

When they got off the boat Anatolius stood on the shore looking over his new home and grinned as he pictured the prosperous life he would now start here. Meanwhile his pregnant wife sat on the ground, fighting one last retch of her stomach before bursting into tears.

"This island may sound and smell the same as home, but I may as well be another world away," she thought to herself.

Anatolius' ship building skills were well revered and matched by his ambitions. He worked endlessly and passionately knowing that one day he would step out of the shadow of his employer and he did. He had been upon Samos for ten years when a trader from Babylon knowing of his skills, approached him with the offer of a contract.

"Build me a fleet to carry me across the Mediterranean Sea. If they prove worthy then I shall make you my ships' master," the trader offered.

It was simple. All Anatolius had to do was build five ships to the

trader's expectations and not only would he be paid for the construction but then he would continue on, overseeing their maintenance. The trader would gain a loyal tradesman on this foreign island while Anatolius would gain self employment with guaranteed continued income. It was just what Anatolius had been working for.

Anatolius sent for his younger brothers from the mainland as they too now could benefit from his business. Besides he could hardly afford to pay full wages to the amount of men that he needed to complete the contract. His brothers crammed into his small home along with his wife and three children.

When his wife would cry to Anatolius that they could not afford meat or that she was sick of the piles of laundry they all left her he would just laugh and say, "My darling, enjoy the mess and poverty while you can. Soon you will have maids and cooks. Then you will miss all this!" He would finish by laughing.

His wife would not laugh though. "Stupid man! I will show you how much I will enjoy spending your money then we will see if you miss being poor," she spat back at him one day.

Anatolius never did miss being poor though.

A year later the boats for the trader were complete and they were magnificent. Anatolius inspected every nail and join in the wood and he would smile when he saw that each man had worked as diligently as he would have himself. When the trader walked their decks and then examined their hulls from a smaller boat Anatolius watched the trader's every gesture and expression. The trader stepped back upon the dock, clapped his hands and yelled something out to his assistants in his native tongue.

They ran to the cart they had travelled upon and re-appeared with a small trunk, placing it at the trader's feet. He clapped again and they opened the trunk to reveal the gold pieces within that glistened as the sun hit them.

Anatolius could have fainted as he looked at the gold. Here was his reward for all the exhaustion, the stress and the promises to his wife, brothers and the men who had worked for next to nothing. It was sitting there before him, only a step away.

"Well done!" beamed the trader, "They are even more magnificent than I hoped. You have outdone your reputation."

Anatolius just nodded still mesmerised by the gold but he looked up at the trader, "It was an honour. I hope they serve you well."



“I am sure they will. All will know my grandeur before I even dock at their shores,” the trader said laughing. “Here, take your payment and know it is well earned,” he continued and pointed to the chest. “I will see you in four weeks when they have completed their first voyages.”

The trader left upon his cart to begin to make plans for the boats and the goods that would travel upon them while Anatolius knelt on the dock before the trunk of gold. His brothers appeared by his side and they too were hypnotised by what they saw.

“That looks like more than he promised, Brother,” one murmured and Anatolius nodded.

“Call the men,” Anatolius said without looking up. “It is time they were paid.”

Right there upon the dock before he took one piece for himself, Anatolius paid each and every one of his workers all that he owed them. When he was finished the gold looked as though it was hardly diminished and he realised that the trader had indeed been generous with his payment. His three brothers waited until the end, recording for him each salary paid and then Anatolius turned to them.

“I thank you for your loyalty and trust,” he began, finally lifting himself to his feet before them. He then reached down and gathered more gold. In each of his brother’s hands he placed all that he owed them then three times more.

“Now, go buy your own homes and find your own wives!” he said and they all laughed.

They made their way back home carrying the chest between them, still laughing as they walked. As they passed by each of the suppliers that were owed money they stopped to clear their debts, throwing in an extra gold piece as a thank you.

When they were finally home Anatolius looked once more into the chest and when he saw that it was still half full he smiled and called out to his wife. She came to him with her arms crossed and expecting his usual request for wine when he entered the home but her curiosity piqued as she saw the chest before him.

“Ah, my patient and wonderful wife, come close and see that all I have promised you has finally arrived,” he beamed.

His wife walked to the chest, looked in and then sighed, “And what shall be left, if any, once you have paid your debts?” she sulked.

“My debts are paid! This is ours,” Anatolius said still grinning.

Then for the first time since they had arrived upon Samos he saw his wife smile.

The trader returned to Samos even faster than he should have and Anatolius' heart sank as he saw two of the boats approach, picturing them in need of serious maintenance due to some fault in his work. Anatolius braced himself and scanned the boats for damage as the trader stepped down the gangway. He could see none and then he saw the smile upon the trader's face.

“Ah my loyal boat builder!” the trader cried out as he walked to Anatolius, grabbed his shoulders and kissed each of his cheeks in turn. “This was the fastest voyage ever and all thanks to you. I have sailed in similar conditions but never as efficient as this. The other boats already make their way upon their second journey as we speak. I will make thrice my money this year at this speed and next year I wish to make thrice that again!”

With that he commissioned another five boats and presented Anatolius with another chest of gold. “This time I will pay you in advance and perhaps this might help you work even faster!”

Which of course it did. Anatolius hired even more men and the boats were finished in six months by which time the first boats were so well-known that another twenty boats had been commissioned by other business men.

The staff soon grew to two hundred and they became the largest ship building company of the region. His wife finally had her grand home filled with maids and cooks, and not once did she miss her chores.

The wealth that Anatolius created never diminished and his two sons took over the trade, keeping steady its prosperity and reputation for skilled work. Each generation carried on this tradition so that when my mother was born not only was it still a successful business but the family had amassed property and possessions that could have fed another four generations if no other boats were ever built or repaired.

So my mother, Pythia, was born into comfort and this was all that she knew. Her life was carefree and her days full of simple pleasures. As she turned fifteen her parents began to speak of marriage and she looked forward to this but she did not look forward to what Samos had to offer by way of men.

Pythia did not want any of the men who worked at the ship yards. She had grown up listening to talk of different lumbers, the new curves of a hull or the latest price for the canvas of the sails. The last thing she wanted was to have a married life full of this talk as it bored her rigid. Neither did she

fancy any of the sons of the other Samos wealthy. As far as she could tell they were all just spoiled boys with no ambitions or interests beyond their families or the Samos shores.

The men who did excite her were the foreign traders that travelled to Samos and who often met with her father. Not a week went past that one didn't sit at their dinner table sharing stories of their travels and the things they had seen.

Pythia would sit listening, completely intrigued with their stories and picturing in her mind what they described. It was not that my mother wanted to travel; she just wished for a man who could speak about more than the limited little place that she believed Samos to be. Of course most of these men were far too old for my mother and even those that were within a reasonable age range were already married, however many did bring with them their sons. Unfortunately none so far had shown interest in my mother despite her beauty.

My father, Mnesarchus, was different in all accounts from the droves of traders that arrived on Samos. Though he had found his trade through his family and was well-established he certainly was not like the big game traders who arrived with an entourage and a fleet of boats. My father arrived upon Samos alone, carrying his satchels of gems over his shoulders.

Mnesarchus was born in Tyre which like Samos was a city state consisting of a small island as well as some area of the adjacent mainland. It lay within the region known as Phoenicia that lies now within the land you call Lebanon.

His father, Ruben, was certainly not rich and lived as a simple farmer, raising goats for their wool, their milk for cheeses and, when the herd was plentiful, their meat. Ruben's father and brothers all earned their living in this way, working together on a huge farm in the open plains on the mainland of Phoenicia. While far from the wealth of my mother's family they never needed for anything. There was one of Ruben's brothers though who broke from the tradition.

This brother found favour with a man of the village, Alexander, who worked buying and selling gems throughout the Middle East. This trade had made Alexander quite wealthy but he was now aging and he knew it would soon become difficult to travel. Alexander had no son to pass on his business to and while he could have simply ended his work, his heart ached to hand down his knowledge and expertise. He began to look at the men around

him, sizing them up and evaluating their suitability in readiness to approach someone with his offer to mentor them in his trade.

Alexander knew of my grandfather and uncles as they were well regarded within business by anyone who had traded with them. So one day Alexander travelled out to their farm and with the bleating of goats to greet him he asked my great-grandfather, Mikael, if he could sit with him to discuss business.

“Alexander, I thought you dealt with things much smaller and quieter than goats?” my great-grandfather joked.

“Yes, and with less stench about them too,” Alexander answered as he waved his hand full of rings before his face.

My great-grandfather was curious as to why the gem trader sought him and Alexander alleviated this immediately. A man of business knew not to waste the time of another.

“Mikael, my end years are fast approaching and it makes my heart ache that I have no son to pass my trade on to. You are so blessed to have six sons,” Alexander said simply. Mikael raised his eyebrow but when he saw tears form in the old man’s eyes he lowered it as Alexander continued, “I have come to you today to see whether you would consider allowing one of your sons to work with me. I will give him ample wage and then when I am gone he will continue on his own.”

Mikael knew this offer was a true gift and he sighed as he thought of the blessings this man now offered to one of his sons and wondered just which son he would pass this offer on to.

Alexander took his hesitancy the wrong way though, “Please Mikael, I do not wish to steal any of them away or to infer that you do not offer them as much as I could. I just know that your family are hard workers and intelligent. I can think of no others who are worthy or who will make of this as much as is possible,” he begged.

Mikael raised his hand to slow the old man, “I know. I know, Alexander. I am truly flattered and I now wonder who is the most worthy of my sons.”

Mikael did hesitate but it was quite clear which of his sons should go with Alexander. His three eldest sons were now married and starting families. While this didn’t rule them out he knew they were comfortable and happy as they were. My grandfather, Ruben, the youngest, was far from ready for such travel and the fifth son only a year older than him did not have the business mind that he knew was needed. His fourth son though was another matter altogether.

Antonius was now eighteen years old and while he should have been settled into manhood, his father knew he was far from knowing the stability that his older three brothers had chosen. Of all his sons, Antonius was the

only one that Mikael would hesitate to send to the markets to trade as the few times that he did his son could not resist the urge to squander some of the money at a taverna on the way home. Antonius was always the quickest to spend his wage with no interest in saving.

While Antonius showed no interest in choosing a wife, Mikael knew that his son was familiar with many women of the village and he feared for the day some cuckold or dishonoured father would appear at the farm with a knife in his hand, ready for vengeance. Mikael lectured his son about his behaviour, he even begged him to change his ways. Antonius would curb himself for some time but then he would return to his old habits.

Mikael had prayed that something would happen that would help Antonius change and suddenly he realised that Alexander and his offer was what he had asked for. Mikael smiled at Alexander. Perhaps the old man could succeed where he had failed in helping Antonius to find some discipline and direction. Also, quite frankly, he would be relieved to have him away from the farm and his impressionable younger sons. So what at first had seemed like a big decision in fact turned out to be quite simple.

“Alexander, I would be happy to for you to mentor my son Antonius,” Mikael said as he smiled.

Coincidentally this was just the son that Alexander had in mind. The eldest of the remaining single boys and known for his lively personality, Alexander knew Antonius’ charisma made him ideal for bargaining and selling. Thankfully he did not know of the more extreme aspects of his character.

For Antonius, bored with farm life and the predictability of Tyre and Phoenicia, Alexander’s invitation along with his father’s blessing was the ticket he had been looking for. He could stop smelling like a goat, would have more money and hopefully more women. He accepted so whole heartedly that Alexander knew he had made the right decision. You can then imagine the old man’s disappointment when, only days into their first trip, his young protégé started getting drunk regularly and returned to their inn room later each night smelling of wine and whores.

The final insult came on the last day of their initial trip. As they approached Tyre, Alexander saw that Antonius’ purse lay flat against the young man’s side where it hung from his belt. Alexander grabbed at the small leather pouch and immediately felt that it was empty.

“Where is your wage?” he cried out to the young man.

“It is gone in celebration of my new vocation!” Antonius finished with

a smile, his eyes hazy from the previous night's rough drinking.

Alexander pulled the reins of the donkeys that dragged their cart along so that they stopped in the middle of the road. "How am I supposed to send you back to your father with an empty purse after what I promised him?" Alexander implored.

Antonius just shrugged for indeed he didn't care and this made Alexander's blood boil. The old man suddenly forgot his age and grabbed at Antonius' shirt pulling him close and yelled into his face.

"You ungrateful brute! I could have chosen anyone but I chose you and this is the respect you return to me and your family!" He pushed Antonius back in his seat and shook his head. "What am I to do?" he said aloud to no one.

Alexander flicked the reins and the donkeys once again started walking. They had only an hour to reach Tyre and they were quiet the rest of the way except for Alexander who occasionally turned to give Antonius a dirty look as he grunted. When they arrived at the small road which led to the goat farm Alexander stopped the cart again.

"You can make the rest of the way on foot. Hopefully the walk will clear your hangover some more before you greet your parents," he said through gritted teeth, "I wish you luck telling them that our agreement is no more. Here," he handed Antonius a few coins. "So that you may have some scrap of dignity to return home with." With that Alexander left Antonius on the dusty road to make his way home.

It was a long walk at the best of times but today for Antonius it was not only long but incredibly hard. The sun bore down on his sore head, his back ached from hours bouncing in the donkey cart and the coins in his purse seemed to weigh much more than they should have. Antonius had much time to think of what he would say to his father and he smirked once more because he truly did not care what his father would say in response.

As he walked closer to his home the smell of the goats suddenly wafted towards him and his heart sank. It had only been a few weeks away but they smelt worse than ever and within hours this is how he would smell again also. Antonius suddenly remembered just why he had accepted Alexander's offer and then he recalled the excitement of travelling. Now when he thought of telling his father that he had failed he felt the sting of tears in his eyes.

Antonius did not tell his father of his failure that day when he returned, nor did he tell him the next day. He acted as though all had been successful and entertained the whole family with stories from the journey. He even spoke of when he would next leave with Alexander.

Then on the third day Mikael was due in town with some bales of wool

for a market. Antonius stepped up, offering to make the delivery, insisting that he save his father the time by doing so. Mikael believing his son to be reformed and wishing to encourage him more, allowed him.

Antonius, true to his word for the first time in his life, made his way to market to sell the wool and amazed himself that he pulled the highest price that he ever had. Ironically this was due to some of the bargaining that he had watched Alexander do on their journey. He finished up at market and stashed the money in his purse, tucking it within his clothes to keep it safe. Then he should have made his way home but he didn't. Instead he made his way to Alexander's home.

Antonius was the last person Alexander expected that day and yet he still wasn't so surprised to see him. Alexander assumed that Mikael had sent him to apologise so when Antonius threw himself at the old man's feet and begged forgiveness he grunted and nodded. What he did not expect was when Antonius continued on pleading for another chance, promising anything to the old man so that he could continue to work with him.

"You will stop the drunkenness?" Alexander asked and Antonius nodded fervently. "The womanising?" he also asked and Antonius nodded again. "Mmph!" grunted Alexander, "I will take you on again young man, but let it be known that one night of ill behaviour and I will leave you upon whatever road it is that we are travelling at that time."

"Thank you Alexander. I won't disappoint you," Antonius said, relieved beyond words.

Antonius was true to his word and even though he had to fight every last instinct within himself he conformed to the behaviour he knew Alexander asked of him no matter how much he hated to do it. Every time he saw a goat he was reminded why he changed his ways.

There was still the odd night that Antonius would slip away to a taverna but he would stop after two drinks and be back to their lodgings in a reasonable time so that Alexander had nothing to truly lecture him on. Antonius soon understood for himself the importance of heading to a business meeting with a clear head and calm stomach. The lines under his eyes disappeared and his skin glowed. He walked beside Alexander as a dynamic young man ready to take on the world.

As the years passed he took part more and more during business transactions so that when Alexander grew too frail to travel, their clients and traders were more than happy to interact with Antonius on his own. When Alexander passed away ten years after Antonius' training began, Antonius was more than ready and able to carry on the gem trade. By this time he had also settled into a marriage with a local girl of Tyre and Antonius had indeed become the model of a man that his father had hoped he would.

Ironically though Antonius had also followed in Alexander's footsteps in more ways than he planned and he too had no son to pass on his trade to.

His wife had given birth to six healthy daughters, who now needed dowries. While he was more than able to provide these, in turn attracting a son-in-law to become his business heir, he turned to his family instead.

My grandfather, Ruben, had continued on at the goat farm. The farm had grown with the family but while it could support the families of six sons my grandfather knew that it would struggle to support the four or five sons that each contributed to the next generation of men and the families they would one day have. He was not the only one who thought this and some of this next generation had already moved on to other work, creating their own farms or beginning a trade.

Ruben had four sons, of which my father was the eldest. They were living modestly but my grandfather felt a sting of jealousy when he watched his brother Antonius arrive home from a journey. Ruben knew it had been merely his age that had stopped himself from being chosen by their father but he also knew of Antonius's behaviour before he left the farm and couldn't help but be angry that such disrespect and selfishness had somehow been rewarded. He hated the way his brother now dressed and the way Antonius always seemed to sneer when he now visited the farm as though the very scent of his family offended him.

So on the day that Antonius rode onto the farm and asked that he might speak in private with my grandfather, Ruben merely sighed with annoyance. The annoyance was soon replaced though as his brother sat and repeated the very conversation that Alexander had with their own father just over twenty years before.

Antonius was far from aging but he did not see why he should wait until he was in order to have this matter organised. Antonius also saw his nephews were becoming men and establishing their lives so his options to choose amongst them were diminishing. It was only my father and his brothers who were still young enough to consider for this role.

My father, Mnesarchus, had just turned thirteen. He was on the edge of manhood, a hard worker and fast learner. Even if he had not been the eldest my grandfather would have chosen him anyway due to these qualities.

"My eldest is the most worthy," Ruben said plainly and without hesitation when Antonius finished his proposition and they both nodded in agreement. Indeed it had been my father that Antonius had in mind all along.

Mnesarchus did not leave with Antonius until he turned fifteen. Ruben and Antonius both agreed this was a more suitable age for a son to leave his home for such things. In the meantime though, when Antonius was in Tyre, he would have my father travel to his home. This was close to the



town centre and far from the smell of goats. My father would be greeted by Antonius's wife who, although receiving him warmly, would then look him from head to toe with pitiful eyes. My father hated this but he soon learned to ignore it.

Mnesarchus would then sit with Antonius who would begin to tell him about the basics of trade. Antonius unfurled maps and taught Mnesarchus the geography of the Middle East, Mediterranean and Northern Africa. Antonius would empty a bag of gems upon the table and then pick them up one by one, reciting what they were, and the different styles in which they were cut. In those two years my father learnt all this, as well as what gems came from which area and where they sold the best. Most importantly he soon knew what each gem was worth. Antonius quizzed him over and over until he could name a region, its gems and their value in his sleep.

My father though grew bored with this. Mnesarchus just wanted to start travelling and put all this into action. It seemed his fifteenth birthday was taking forever to arrive. As excited as he was though there was something within him that might never have cared if he didn't ever leave Tyre with this man. There was a feeling about Antonius that never felt right to my father. He could not put his finger on it but it was as though he was watching a performance whenever his uncle spoke and this seemed even more so if his wife was present.

It was only hours into their first journey when all that my father suspected was confirmed. They were bouncing along on their cart and had just left the very outskirts of Tyre when Antonius looked up to the sky and shrieked like a jackal before bursting into laughter.

He turned to my father. "Ah that wretched city is finally behind us," he said as he laughed. Then he slapped his hand down hard upon my father's thigh making Mnesarchus wince with pain. "Now my young nephew, your true tutelage will begin," Antonius said with a grin.

Antonius certainly did put on a performance as soon as he rode into the city limits. Within Tyre he was a devoted husband and father, an upstanding member of the community, wise and sober, always beyond reproach. However once he left, most of those attributes fell away. He spoke as coarse as any farmer did and my father blushed continuously as he insisted upon speaking of sex at every opportunity.

Alexander had done much to curb Antonius' uncouth behaviour, however as soon as the old man was gone then my uncle was free to be himself once again. Although this time Antonius had some maturity and wealth to balance things. Antonius still knew that he needed to be clean and sober to do business. He also knew that he needed to arrive home with the money to support a luxurious lifestyle that he was now addicted to.

The callings of his desires though pulled at him with the strength that they always did and he had denied them for over ten years while the old man was around. So without his chaperone and tutor Antonius would still enact business with the dignity that he always did, but when all transactions and work were complete for the journey then he let those urges loose. It was then that he would book into a comfortable inn and spend a day or two drinking the local tavernas dry and sampling the local prostitutes.

Mnesarchus discovered this last vice with quite an effect when he walked into their lodgings one evening after dinner to find Antonius grunting and heaving on top of a woman. My father may have been inexperienced but he had seen the goats mate enough times to know what was happening. Mnesarchus also knew that a man should only do this with his wife. Now when he walked into Antonius' home he could well match and return the pitiful stares of Antonius' wife.

It only took that one incidence for my father to never enter their inn rooms without first pressing his ear against the door to listen for the animalistic sounds his uncle made when with a woman. Even just having to hear him was as stomach turning as that one time he had seen Antonius in action. Mnesarchus would sit in the hallway, just far enough away so that he didn't have to hear the grunting but where he could see the woman leave, signalling that he could make his way to bed to sleep.

Mnesarchus would enter the room without so much as looking at Antonius' who most times would be lying naked and spreadeagled upon his bed, drifting fast into sleep.

One day, after such a night, they began their ride home. They travelled in silence for almost an hour when Antonius suddenly burst out laughing.

"Am I to be treated to these scowls and silence at the end of every journey?"

Mnesarchus looked up and shook his head, but they had indeed fallen into a very regular pattern during their time together. It always began well; Mnesarchus could even deal with bawdy talk now as they left Tyre. They would attend all the markets and meet with other traders and this part of the journey always was fine too. Then Antonius would say the words my father dreaded.

"Our work is done!"

Antonius would always say this as he clapped his hands and grinned, but my father would groan inside and drop his head, for now the drinking and whoring would begin.

Mnesarchus would now be subject to two days of Antonius' drunken rudeness and then bragging about his conquests, even though the women had been paid for like a jug of wine. My father would have to find ways to

amuse himself while their room was occupied and he did so quite profitably, often crossing paths with men they had dealt with upon their journeys who would invite him to their homes for meals or sit with him in a taverna and share some knowledge. However no matter how pleasant an evening he had with someone he would still have to return to his uncle and whatever state he was in by that hour.

My father had been travelling with Antonius for a year and their routine was well-established. It was once again that horrible two days before they journeyed home. Mnesarchus and Antonius had just eaten dinner and were making way to their room at the inn. Mnesarchus was so relieved that his uncle somehow seemed intent on actually retiring for the night that he did not even notice the smirk upon Antonius' face as they walked up the stairs to their room. Mnesarchus opened the door to find a woman lying naked upon his bed. He rolled his eyes and turned to his uncle.

"I'll come back later," Mnesarchus said bluntly.

Antonius grabbed Mnesarchus' arm as he tried to walk past him and turned my father to face the woman.

"This is my sixteenth birthday present for you," he said while grinning and not taking his eyes off the woman for a second while my father in turn kept his eyes to the floor. "Perhaps if you taste the delights of a woman then you will understand why I enjoy them so much. Maybe then I will not have to suffer your scowls after treating myself to one."

Before my father could refuse Antonius was gone, slamming the door behind him and my father heard him chuckling as he walked away down the corridor. Mnesarchus stood in place with his eyes down wondering what to do.

"We won't achieve much with you standing over there," the woman called out softly.

Mnesarchus looked up and saw that the woman had raised herself up on one elbow and was holding her other hand out to him. He drew in a sharp breath as he had never seen a woman naked before and her details intrigued him. Then he found his voice, albeit trembling.

"I—I cannot madam," he stammered.

"Really?" she said and the hand that was out held now pointed to his groin. "Because your loins tell me otherwise," she said and giggled.

My father pulled his hardness against himself, covering it with his hands, blushing madly. "Madam, this is wrong," he reasoned, "This should only be for a man and his wife."

"Urgh!" gasped the whore and threw herself back upon the mattress. "He didn't tell me you were a priest!" she cried to the ceiling.

"I am not a priest!" exclaimed my father, "I just do not wish to do—"

this—with you.”

There was redness in Mnesarchus’ face still but it was no longer from embarrassment but frustration. He would not be drawn into this, no matter how commonplace the whore and his uncle made it seem. It was revolting to think that a woman would do this for money and that men felt they needed it so much that they would pay her for it.

The woman sat up once more. “If you send me away then Antonius will not pay me and my father will beat me if I return home without money,” she pleaded.

“Your father?” cried Mnesarchus, now repulsed to his core. This whole situation just kept getting worse for him and he sat down upon the bed opposite her, putting his head in his hands. He looked back up after a moment and sighed. “Fine, stay for how long it would have taken but please put your clothes back on,” he offered. “I will lie for you, if you will lie for me,” he finished and cringed. My father hated lying but given the situation it was a quite honourable option.

The woman redressed and sat upon the bed. “You know I could just use my mouth or hand if you find that less sinful,” she reasoned.

“Oh please stop speaking!” begged my father.

They then sat awkwardly and silently for a while until the woman sighed and declared that a sufficient amount of time had been mimicked.

“In fact given it was to be your first time it probably would have been even quicker,” she said and laughed. “I have probably helped you appear more skilled than you are,” she added as a final sting before walking out.

With the woman finally gone Mnesarchus undressed and climbed into his bed. He lay upon his stomach and turned his head so that he would be looking away from the door when Antonius entered the room. When Antonius did return he heard his uncle sniff as he walked towards his bed.

“All I smell is perfume! You must have been quite quick and unsatisfying,” Antonius teased as he too undressed and the mattress creaked as he climbed onto his bed. “Well Mnesarchus do I not get a thank you?”

My father’s blood was now boiling. He fought every instinct to jump from his bed and grab his uncle by the throat, shaking the man as he screamed the names “Brute” and “Pig” at him. Instead he swallowed hard and feigned a snore, hoping his uncle would believe him to be asleep which of course the old fool did.

“Ah, sleeping deeply after your first woman, that is thanks enough,” Antonius chortled.

My father continued on working with Antonius and while nothing changed, Mnesarchus was at least relieved that things did not get worse. Antonius was many things and a creature of habit was one of these so that

it became quite easy for my father to fall into his own routine to deal with his uncle's vile behaviour. My father kept up his façade as well, convinced that no-one back in Tyre would believe him anyway. Mnesarchus never imagined that when his father asked as to his relationship with Antonius that Ruben was actually digging to see if any of the old traits of his brother still existed.

I would have imagined that as the years passed Antonius' character would have grown less jarring to my father as he became accustomed to his style but this was far from the truth. Each journey with his uncle only made Mnesarchus' hatred swell and just when he thought Antonius could not reach a new depth of depravity he indeed did and my father would once again wish someone else had been chosen for this "honour".

One day my father actually told me about Antonius, not so much to make me sorry for how he established himself but more as a cautionary tale. When he finished I asked him, "Why did you continue? Why did you not just return to the farm and your family?"

My father sighed, "Because I did not wish to upset my father and make him believe that he had chosen wrong for his son." Then he smirked. "Mind you if it had carried on much longer I do believe I would have returned to my goats...or ended it somehow."

That consideration went through my father's mind many times more than he would ever have admitted. It had been eight years of working with his uncle when he was finally sickened so much that his disdain could no longer be contained.

Mnesarchus had once more busied himself at a local taverna knowing his uncle was being entertained in their room. His eyes grew more tired by the moment and he finally made his way back to the inn, hoping he could climb into bed and sleep. He pushed his ear against the door and heard murmurs which although they meant that Antonius was busy it also let my father know that the act was well and truly completed as there was not a grunt or creak of the bed to be heard.

Mnesarchus heard footsteps approach the door and he jumped back a few steps. When it opened the young woman walked out and made her way to the stairs to leave. She held herself and my father saw that she trembled as she walked away. He also saw that her frame was slight with hardly a curve upon it, in fact if it hadn't been for her long hair and knowing his uncle better, my father might have thought she was a boy. It was then that Mnesarchus realised how young this girl was and he burst into the room to confront his uncle.

"You pig! You vile disgusting pig!" he screamed as eight years of anger and repulsion finally exploded.

Antonius was standing naked by a table, pouring himself some more wine. He swayed as he stood, clearly as drunk as ever. Antonius looked upon his nephew and just snorted.

“She was still a child!” my father continued screaming. “Your own daughters are older than her!”

Antonius sat hard upon a chair, took a swig of his wine and then smirked. “Well not all of us can be satisfied with making love to our hand,” he said.

“You have a wife!” Mnesarchus screamed once more and Antonius now erupted into laughter.

“Oh my nephew, perhaps one day when you are married you will understand,” Antonius said through his guffaws.

My father never would understand though and he most certainly could not as he stood there shaking with anger as his uncle just laughed. Mnesarchus went to his bed and threw himself upon it fully dressed knowing that it would now be some time before he would drift off to sleep after his outburst. He lay there and his heart finally began to slow. Then the silence in the room was broken by his uncle belching and Mnesarchus felt his heart begin to pound again.

As Mnesarchus lay there he prayed for the day when Antonius would die and he would no longer have to spend time with him. He thought of how much longer this could possibly be. When he realised that Antonius at forty-three had many more years to go he felt like punching the bed. That night he decided that he would just have to return to the farm and end this once and for all.

He didn't tell Antonius the next morning or the entire journey home. Each time that he thought that he might, something stopped him and Mnesarchus took this as a sign that perhaps he should speak with his father first. A part of him also knew that his father may indeed talk him out of it so that when he returned home and saw his father his tongue once again failed him. He went to bed that night still as Antonius' assistant.

Mnesarchus thought over and over as to how he would tell his father and he sighed knowing that he would have to lie. He could tell his father about the drinking and he might believe him but to speak to anyone about Antonius' whoring was another matter entirely.

Mnesarchus was embarrassed that he had even been witness to such things. To tell his simple farmer of a father, here in his valley raising goats and seemingly oblivious to such things, made Mnesarchus feel sick. Besides, even though he never did quite like Antonius' wife he hated to spread her shame any further than needed. So he remained quiet and as each day passed that was another closer to his next trip with Antonius.

It was two days before they were supposed to leave and Mnesarchus' heart sank as he resigned himself to yet another journey with the old pig.

"Just one more," he thought to himself. "Then I will tell Father."

Besides it was just a short journey down to Petra and back within a week. It had been barely an hour that my father had decided this when Antonius' donkey cart arrived at the farm with one of his servants upon it bearing a letter for Mnesarchus.

Antonius was ill. In fact far too ill to travel, the first time in his entire career. Still he did not cancel the trip. Instead he was asking Mnesarchus to journey and do business on his own. A smile spread across my father's face as he read the note. His own father approached him.

"I see there is some good news from Antonius?" Ruben asked.

"Wonderful news!" answered Mnesarchus and he laughed. "Antonius is ill."

Ruben frowned thinking he had heard wrong but Mnesarchus handed him the note and Ruben realised he had indeed heard his son correctly. He looked up and Mnesarchus was still smiling. "I know I can do this on my own, Father, and I know I will do it even better than Uncle does," Mnesarchus said

"So be it," said Ruben plainly as he handed the note back. "I suggest though you remember some respect and not gloat to your uncle, or any others, until you have returned and proven this to be so. I might also suggest you visit your uncle to see as to his condition."

My father returned to Antonius' home with the servant just as his father suggested. His aunt greeted him at the door, clutching a handkerchief and dabbing at her eyes. As she led Mnesarchus to Antonius' bedroom she spoke and her voice was broken as she fought tears.

"I have never seen him like this before," she whimpered.

When my father stood over Antonius as he lay within his bed all he could think was, "I have seen him this way far too many times." For Antonius looked exactly as he always did when he had been drinking for an entire day; his face was red and swollen, his eyes glazed over and his skin was covered in a fine sweat. In fact for a moment Mnesarchus thought that Antonius was simply drunk and would have loved to turn to his aunt to tell her this. Then Antonius spoke and his voice was clear and steady, if somewhat slow, and my father realised he was not drunk at all.

"Ah Nephew, you have come to visit me," Antonius said as he tried to smile, "What a blessing that I have made you ready for such a time."

"Yes the timing is indeed a blessing," said Mnesarchus as he laughed to himself, grateful that he could say this with no-one knowing the irony.

As Mnesarchus rode off to Petra two days later he could barely keep the smile off his face. When he reached the city limits of Tyre he stood up in the cart and screamed to the heavens then sat down to relish the silence of travelling alone.

Mnesarchus did indeed do even better than Antonius would have. His business style was more efficient as he kept small talk to a minimum and didn't enter into the bragging that his uncle performed with other traders.

Not one of Antonius' clients or suppliers questioned that my father was alone and he even suspected that a few were quite relieved that this was the case. Just as my father knew he would, he returned to Tyre quicker and with a much fuller purse than ever before from trading in Petra. Not surprisingly so as he did not have to use extra time and money to drink and have sex.

Mnesarchus arrived at Antonius' home ready to gloat and was greeted as always by his aunt who now had dark circles under her eyes.

"He is no better," she said plainly. "He has been sleeping most of the day and still does so now."

Mnesarchus was relieved as he had no real desire to see the man no matter how much he would have loved to see the look on his face when he told him the money he had bought home and the deals he had enacted. Instead he handed the purse over to Antonius' wife.

"I have taken my usual wage," Mnesarchus said as she took the purse from him and he saw that immediately her face changed as she felt the weight of it.

"You should take a bit more for the extra work," she replied, never taking her eyes off the purse as it sat in her hands.

"Not this time," Mnesarchus smiled, for he wanted to make sure that Antonius and his wife knew just how much money he had made.

When my father left, Antonius' wife walked to a table and spilled the contents of the purse upon it. Then she slowly counted each and every coin, organising them into piles to make it easy to recount which she did several times. She walked to the bedroom to check upon Antonius who had just woken and was shifting himself upon the pillows to sit up.

"Oh good, there you are. Fetch me some water," he said as he saw her in the doorway.

His wife walked towards the end of the bed and stood with her arms crossed. "Mnesarchus returned this afternoon from Petra," she said.

"What? That is two days early! The stupid boy must have done very badly indeed," he spat as he screwed his face up. It was bad enough he had



missed out on his extra-curricular activities now his assistant was probably ruining his business as well.

“He bought back twice the money you usually do from Petra, and in less time,” she said curtly and raised her chin.

“Well he must not have taken his wages,” Antonius offered, quickly thinking up some excuse.

“He told me he had taken that,” she answered sharply and began to tap her foot on the floor.

“Well... he must have just been lucky...oh...and he would have used a smaller room at the inn. That would have saved money too,” Antonius’ mind raced to think of things to satisfy his wife but she merely huffed and stormed from the room.

Antonius fumed with anger. “That stupid boy, too foolish to even steal some of the money,” he thought to himself.

Mnesarchus had just ruined Antonius’ travels for evermore. Not that this mattered for Antonius would never travel again. What seemed to be a fever that would not leave was in fact the symptom of a venereal disease that he had picked up from one of his whores.

It had begun to fester a month or two before Mnesarchus’ trip to Petra. At first there was just a burning sensation whenever Antonius urinated but when they had arrived back to Tyre from the last trip, sores appeared upon his genitals that would not heal. The fever arrived soon after the sores and that was when he took to his bed. Antonius hid the sores from his wife knowing full well what had caused them and only his physician and the servant sent to bathe him knew the truth of his illness.

The fever levelled off with some tonics prescribed to Antonius but the sores would not abate. Antonius dragged himself from bed as the next trip planned was for Babylon, where his most favourite whores were. Every step made his groin ache but despite this he was determined that he would travel. Antonius climbed aboard his cart one day to venture to the town centre sure that if he made himself active that would help the disease retreat.

However each jolt of the carriage felt like a stab to his genitals so that he returned home in more pain than ever and that night the fever returned with a vengeance. The next morning he awoke and his pain was matched by his anger.

He called out to his wife, “Send word to Mnesarchus that he must travel alone tomorrow.”

As Mnesarchus rode away once more with another huge grin on his face, Antonius watched him with a scowl. It had now been six weeks since he had touched a woman, the longest in all his time since Alexander had died. Here he was stuck in Tyre with a wife who did not excite him and who had moved to another bed lest she contract his fever. Even if she did show some interest in the sex that he wanted Antonius knew he could not touch her in his state. So one night he arranged with a trusted servant to sneak a local whore into his bedroom by the window.

The whore climbed through the window late one night when the servant knew all the family would be deep asleep. As she stood there in the lamplight Antonius grinned for the first time in weeks but then the smile was gone for his usual instant arousal was not making itself known. He drew back the sheets as the girl walked closer hoping it was just the sheet upon him that interfered but still nothing happened, not even when the girl slipped her dress from her shoulders and stood before him naked.

The whore sat on the edge of the bed and began to stroke his chest. Antonius looked down at himself and when he saw himself still limp he began to panic. The girl saw the look on his face and looked down also, recoiling as she saw the sores.

“I cannot service you Sir,” she said bluntly and began to lift herself off the bed. She knew what those sores meant. She had heard enough talk amongst the other whores to know they could cost her weeks of illness if not worse.

Antonius grabbed at her wrist and pulled her arm roughly, “I have paid for your service and you shall supply it!”

“Sir, release my hand or I shall scream and wake your household,” she said calmly knowing that she was under no threat from this sick man lying before her.

Antonius released his grip, throwing her hand back towards her, “Then perhaps you could just use this to pleasure me.”

The whore cringed but it would at least mean that she would leave with some payment. So as Antonius lay back upon his pillows and closed his eyes, she reached down to his still flaccid member and wrapped her hand around it. Antonius sighed with relief but this was soon replaced with pain as the girl’s hand dragged along his raw skin. Not surprisingly he still did not respond and after several minutes of suffering he realised that the physical rush he craved would not visit him. Antonius reached down and pulled the girl’s hand away.

“You can go,” he said flatly and closed his eyes, not even interested in watching the girl dress, and only opening them when he heard her slip back out the window. He looked once more down upon his body, pulled the sheet

to cover it and then cried himself to sleep.

This time when my father returned from business Antonius was awake. His wife though told Mnesarchus otherwise so that she received the purse into her hands.

“I trust you have taken your wage?” she asked.

“Yes, I have Aunt as well as the commission Antonius and I agreed upon,” he answered her smiling. “I also bought some new gems that were too much of a bargain to resist. I am sure we can triple their cost in Egypt.” His aunt smiled and nodded. “Now you must be tired. Go home and rest. Your family will be most pleased to see you,” she said, anxious to have him gone so that she could count the money.

Once again she poured the coins upon her table and started to pull them into their piles. Once again Mnesarchus had returned home with more money than her husband ever had and this was after his increased wage and buying more stock. She walked into Antonius’ room with her arms crossed and her blood boiling.

“Mnesarchus has returned,” she said sharply as Antonius looked at her knowing her tone was far from pleased. She then added, “It seems he was once again lucky and found an even cheaper room.”

Antonius festered within his home, growing weaker and bitterer as each week passed. Every time my father left for another trip this seemed to escalate as Antonius contemplated the freedom he had lost and also just how much his nephew continued to show him up.

His wife now wise to his past deceptions, but thankfully not the details, treated him with contempt. Each time my father handed her the purse which grew heavier and heavier with each journey this hate for her husband grew even more. It was not that she was not comfortable for indeed she and her daughters had all the luxuries they could dream of. It was in knowing there could have been more and that she had lived with a man who had lied to her for their entire marriage.

Antonius became like a stranger amongst his own family; treated with disdain by his wife and avoided by his daughters who could not bear the smell of his rotting body. It was a relief to everyone, including Antonius, when he finally took to his bed permanently and the physician told his wife to prepare for a funeral.

Antonius died just two months before my father turned twenty-five,

almost ten years to the day that Mnesarchus began travelling with him.

When news of Antonius' death reached the goat farm and then to my father he simply sighed and walked away from the rest of his family so that they could not see the smile upon his face. Eighteen months ago he had prayed for an end to his situation with Antonius and it had been delivered even more fortuitously than he had ever imagined.

Mnesarchus was not without remorse or gratitude towards Antonius though. While he had prayed that night in the inn that Antonius would die he had also hoped that a far less tragic solution would present itself. Further to this he also knew that regardless of his uncle's less admirable traits he had indeed taught him all that had made him the excellent trader that he was today. So on the day of the funeral as he joined the cortege to walk the body to the temple for its final prayers, Mnesarchus decided to mourn the teacher and not think of the scoundrel that he hated so much.

My father continued on with the business that was now his. Despite being entitled to all that he made he still visited Antonius' wife to give her a share. Each time she would cry as she took the small purse, "You are better to us than he ever was but you do not need to do this, Mnesarchus."

This was true as in the eighteen months that my father had run the business he had doubled her family's income and his aunt had been wise in saving, knowing in her heart that the business would soon be gone.

"You still have three daughters remaining who need dowries," he would answer and hand her the money.

"Perhaps you would consider one of your cousins for marriage?" she suggested one day. "You are more than of age to be married and start a family Mnesarchus. This could be your home then."

My father simply shook his head in response. No matter how customary it was to marry one's cousin, this was simply something he could never accept. He loved his cousins dearly but to take one as a wife would be like lying with his own sister.

At twenty-five though this was a conversation that Mnesarchus was having often; both with his father and his uncles, who also offered their daughters to the man who now would become the wealthiest in the family. He did think of marriage from time to time also but it never pulled at him the way that he saw it do to other men his age. Mnesarchus had the liberty of not needing sons to work a farm and while it would be nice to have an assistant for company and to teach his trade, he could just as well offer this to a nephew the same way that Antonius had done for him. In fact the longer Mnesarchus remained single and childless the more his brothers hoped this was exactly what he would do.

Another three years passed and not only did my father's business

prosper but it also grew. Unhindered with the sea sickness that had limited Antonius and Alexander, my father now ventured west by boat to mainland Greece and Southern Italy. In fact this opened the whole of the Mediterranean to him for business and Egypt now was only a day's travel instead of the five it used to be by cart.

It was this new expanse of his trade that saw him land upon Samos. As a major trade hub of the region he would have been a fool not to have looked for prospects there. My father never realised just what opportunity waited for him there.

Mnesarchus was sitting at a café that faced out on to the town square of my mother's hometown. He sat and sipped upon his coffee, relishing every mouthful as he soaked up the sunshine and enjoyed the breeze that carried from the shores nearby. Then he saw her.

My mother walked across the square, her soft curls of hair framing her face upon which she wore the sweetest smile. Pythia looked across at my father and when he saw her eyes, deep and dark, yet bright he thought his heart would explode. Her smile widened and he saw her cheeks dimpled, then she turned her head away as she passed him by.

My father had seen many women in his life. From the whores who visited Antonius to the royal princesses of Babylon. He had seen women with skin like ebony and those with skin like cream, ones whose hair fell over their shoulders, red with henna and those who twisted it into ropes to pile on their head. They had been offered to him as wives and concubines and although some had intrigued him none had remained within his thoughts past the moment they had met.

Today though as my mother passed him and walked away he threw his coin upon the table to pay for his coffee, flung his satchel over his shoulder and followed her.

Mnesarchus laughed when he told me this story, "I still don't know what possessed me to follow her or what I thought would happen. All I knew was I wanted to watch her for as long as I could."

And watch her he did. As Mnesarchus walked behind her, at a respectable distance of course, he noticed every detail. He smiled as he watched her curls bounce around her hair combs with every step, the way her back sloped into her waist and then he sighed as he saw her hips sway under her gown. Even her tiny feet in their sandals enchanted him.

Mnesarchus continued on following Pythia as she made her way

through the streets until finally she entered the door of her house. Then he stopped and sighed. This was the grandest home he had seen on Samos so far. He knew this home belonged to someone with wealth that not even Antonius without his philandering and drinking would have accumulated by his death. Here Mnesarchus stood, far from poor but a long way from the wealth he saw before him and he knew that what was inside would never be his.

Mnesarchus shoulders slumped. “Oh well, it was a pleasant walk at least,” he thought and then he made his way back to the town square.



*The preview continues on in Chapter Six. At this part of the story Pythagoras is now in his early twenties and has begun his travels to study at the mystery schools and temples. He has spent several years through Persia, Babylonia and Phoenicia and is about to make way to Egypt.*



## Chapter Six

After my time at the Moschus school I once again contemplated my passage to Egypt. However I knew that the time for me to be there was not quite yet upon me. I started to head back north and as I did so I continually debated with myself as to why I was not only avoiding Egypt but also taking myself even further away from it.

I was once again north of Tyre and had experienced even more of the schools of Phoenicia. It was also at these schools that I finally understood why I had not been to Egypt yet. As I became more known in the region and proved that I was genuinely here to gain knowledge I found that many of the teachers became more open with me. This willingness to share kept me here longer.

It was at the final school that one night over dinner with the help of some wine one of my teachers gave me the answer I had been looking for.

“You do know that all we teach started in Egypt? We are nothing but the remnants of what the Amun priests brought here under Pharaoh Thutmose,” he slurred and the other teachers nearby gasped. “Oh hush! I am not telling him anything he will not find out when he finally gets there,” he continued. “There was nothing here but superstition and fear until the Egyptians claimed this land. It has all expanded since then and, even though they decimated some of our traditions, I am grateful that they did.”

At this one of the other teachers threw a chunk of bread at his head as he called the teacher a traitor. The teacher who spoke picked it up and threw it back.

“Make your way to Egypt and when you do ask all the questions you can to show them that your hunger for knowledge and wisdom is without respite. This is what they want in a student and this is what they will look for before they share with you the depth of the mysteries that they hold. The mysteries come from a place before even Egypt and yet no-one can tell you about that place. It is like it disappeared.” He paused and tapped upon his head. “Yet somehow we all connect back to it through here. That is the final mystery that we need to understand.”

“You’re a fool!” yelled another teacher and threw a fig at him.

This time he picked up the fig and bit it.

“I love figs!” he declared and his eyes began to droop as the wine truly

took a hold of him. “Pythagoras, ask the questions and keep the chain going. You owe it to all before you and all that will follow.”

With that he slumped upon the floor beside the low table and began snoring.

“I wish you would take him to Egypt with you!” groaned another teacher.

Then we all left the snoring teacher upon the floor and made way to our beds.

After that night I now felt clear about making my way to Egypt. I was grateful I had spent the time I had in Phoenicia and even if I was just going to relearn all of this when I made my way to the southern land I knew I would be prepared. I would arrive as a willing and able student ready to expand. I puffed my chest at this thought. I would become a teacher in no time at all.

It was after this last school that I decided to make my way to the coast and find a boat on its way to Rhakotis. Every boat along the coast heading south went to this port and it would be easy to find one. I was just to the south of the Mount Carmel ridge so I knew to just follow this to the west and I would be at the sea in less than a day.

As I wandered along I stopped and realised that I had walked for some time without one cart passing me and this made me curious. The roads along here were always busy with carts moving goods or travellers and yet today there was not one. I stopped and listened to see if perhaps I could hear the noise of anything; a cart approaching, a river, or even a nearby town. But there was nothing.

I looked up at the mountains nearby. They looked amazing at the best of times but today they were majestic. I thought of all the legends that these mountains lay claim to; from the stories of the Egyptian army’s passage through them on the way to Megiddo and the stories of Elijah. It was as though they invited you to play amongst the cracks and crevices. It was as though they ached to be filled with stories.

I smiled as I imagined how many schools may be hidden within its depths along with rogues and hermits all trying to escape society. It was as I was doing this that I saw a flash come from halfway up the side of one peak. I laughed out loud, telling myself that my imagination was simply playing with me to satisfy my ponderings but then the flash appeared again—and again. I paused and for a moment I was tempted to make the journey to see just what I was being invited to.



I knew it would be a sanctuary for at least one night and then perhaps tomorrow the road would have more carts upon it to make up for the time I had lost in stopping. I also had enough food in my satchel and water in my canteen for a few days so even if they were non-eaters I could sustain myself. I might even learn their ways and make my food last longer or even redundant.

I took a deep breath and looked along the road and then back to the mountain. For a moment I heard her call me.

“Come to me,” she seemed to whisper and I knew that it was not my imagination.

The flash pulsed again but I did not walk towards it. I walked towards another peak of the ridge and spent the next three hours finding my own cave.

I found a lovely small cave not too far up from ground level. It had barely any sun and the stone floor was cool to sit upon. My satchel and canteen were beside me on the floor as I settled into a cross-legged position and looked out upon the plains below. Once I was comfortable I looked to the stone walls around me.

“Now what?” I asked the mountain out loud.

“Be quiet and still,” was the answer I heard but it was not the female voice of the mountain I heard outside. This time it was decidedly male and felt like my own.

So I sat and was quiet and still. When I finally moved it was two weeks later.



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