



Volume 18

Issue 1 *Do I Dare Disturb the Universe?* (2009-2010
Issue)

Article 8

5-1-2010

The Archer in Your Arches

Kaitlyn Montague

Concordia University - Portland

Follow this and additional works at: <http://commons.cu-portland.edu/promethean>



Part of the [Creative Writing Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Montague, Kaitlyn (2010) "The Archer in Your Arches," *The Promethean*: Vol. 18 : Iss. 1 , Article 8.
Available at: <http://commons.cu-portland.edu/promethean/vol18/iss1/8>

This Story is brought to you for free and open access by CU Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in The Promethean by an authorized administrator of CU Commons. For more information, please contact libraryadmin@cu-portland.edu.



The Archer in Your Arches

Kaitlyn Montague

Mother always said that it was a tumultuous day when I was born, rain clouds rolling over the peaks of the sun-kissed mountains so dark and heavy that it could be nothing less than the Gods acknowledging my presence. Doubtful. More likely was the rest of her story, but not by much: servants bustling frantically, shaken by Mother's cries, and she says even Father looked stricken.

The great Telamon shaken by the cries of a mere woman? His composure shattered by a concubine? The idea was unthinkable, and I've always thought she exaggerated, but perhaps, once upon a time, there had been a point when Father had not been so rough, his voice perhaps softer, his blows not as hard. It seems difficult to imagine, and my older brother had never been one to help my musings when it came to our father.

By the gods, no. When talking to Ajax, Telamon was not simply a companion of Heracles, the great son of Zeus, or Jason, leader of the legendary Argonauts. He was their equal in every way. In fact if it hadn't been outright heresy to do so, Ajax would have claimed his father surpassed them both. An Argonaut and distant relative of Zeus, Father tried to measure out his accountability in reputation alone, rather than his deeds—as if his name and his associations made him an important man, never mind whatever it was he accomplished with that name. He had always been a companion on a quest, an associate. He helped Jason to acquire the Golden Fleece, but it had never been his quest. He resented that the quests had never been his alone, and yet used these associations to act as if he had done far more. It was not something to be mentioned—my Father was incapable of realizing his hubris. And I learned long ago that in the comparison of Telamon with his brother Peleus lay a similar sort of blasphemy.

After all, it wasn't every brother who married a daughter of the gods, much less a goddess herself. Father resented the fact, and thus Ajax did too.

Peleus had cheated, betrayed a sort of unspoken brotherly oath to never surpass his elder, and even worse, he had broken this shaky promise with the assistance of an immortal. Peleus had achieved the entitlement from On High that Father had always wanted, and what he never saw was that it was my uncle's deeds that made him a man.

Never mind that Father won his second wife, his precious caged Trojan songbird and my mother, Hesione, by the hands of Heracles himself. They started that war on Trojan soil that we always thought would be the last, and would be left forever regretting the assumption. Doubtful that he or his eldest son would ever admit to this, at least without excuses. Heracles had been a mortal at the time, an Argonaut, and a fellow companion of Jason, and if nothing else, Hesione had asked for her plight. In defending her brother and her country, she became a concubine in a country far away from home, never to see her city again before its final fate. Instead, she was kept a sort of prisoner at home, with only one connection to the outside world. Me.

Of course, Father had known Heracles, sailed with him personally, and that should have been more than enough to persuade the fates to simply give him everything he had wanted: fame, glory, women, treasure, and a country to rule. In that argument, perhaps, he had gotten lucky. At the time. But later, when held next to his brother who had bed a goddess, it paled in comparison.

However, for the sake of truth, I had never been as easily persuaded in my parents' matters as Ajax. While my brother would be quick to notice Father's anger and validate it whenever he had the opportunity to agree, the world did not work on Telamon's terms. These stories of exploits were tales of heroes that were not my father. No matter however much he wanted them to be. He had been brave, and perhaps a lesser hero in his own right, but what he never realized is that his name would only live on in the fact that he was an entitled companion, a warning against jealousy without

real ambition. His terms meant little.

I, for one, adored my uncle Peleus and his goddess-wife, and their kindness to their brother's bastard son has never been forgotten. And the kindness itself, prone to wane as families have their own children to look after, only seemed to strengthen by the time Achilles was born. Knowing how Father's first wife, Ajax's mother, had reacted to the son of her "competition," despite the fact that she had produced the heir to the kingdom, and that I was only the son of a concubine and no real competition at all, I had expected no better than a pat on the head, a stilted sort of smile, and a desperate attempt to shove the responsibility of me back onto my mother.

As chance would have it, Thetis was no ordinary woman, nor one with a concubine to ridicule and grow paranoid of. She was a goddess, though what of exactly I still wasn't quite sure, though she did seem to know everyone, and every inch of her acted like one. She regarded her son's welfare with such seriousness it may have been thought she had the capacity to care for nothing else. However, Achilles' companions—which included myself, Ajax, and our distant cousin Patroclus—were far more like the other sons Thetis and my uncle never produced (unless Ajax really was correct about the accidents with her first several children—though there is little proof that Thetis could be so desperately callous, nor that Peleus ever would have allowed such a thing to happen). We were never simply "cousins" in Peleus' kingdom of Phthia, and I still have never had the chance to thank either of them.

Though Thetis is a goddess. Perhaps she knows regardless.

Thetis' husband, Peleus, acted as the softer of Aeacus' sons, perhaps not as ruined by fighting for his namesake. Father often called it laziness, in that bitter tone of voice, gruff around the edges, that he always spat when he felt particularly resentful. Though I would never tell him, I feel it safe to assume now that it was not by any trickery that Peleus won the favor of the Thunderous One.

He was simply the better man. He had taken Patroclus in when my cousin was at his darkest hour, and yet my Father threatened to throw out his bastard son for the slightest

My cousin had committed an act of murder, and yet my uncle only saw him for the person he could become. I would have been murdered in kind, publicly, made into a sort of grisly example of how our wrong choices are the only things that define us. After all, that was the only thing my father seemed to understand—everyone else's wrong choices. Nothing was ever his fault. It's a wonder he hadn't killed off all his countrymen as simple scapegoats.

In the end, what did Father need with a third wife, anyway? He had what he said he wanted. If he were as productive and industrious as he claimed, it would not be a necessary addition to the Kingdom of Salamis. It was a country of hard-working men, the same who needed no reassuring or entitlement from On High. My father, however, was just a man, and as all men, fell victim to fallacy. And considering how vehemently he opposed the Gods' favor and yet was so clearly jealous of his younger brother, hypocrisy always stood out, unspoken, as his most obvious fault.

This resentment, however, he would not keep to himself. If anything else, it was the legacy of his words, not his blood, that would outlive his cold burial underneath the wet earth. Ajax believed every word, up until his death. If it was not the very thing that killed him. Odysseus later said that he carried these truths with him, even into the afterlife.

Of course, he would not be my brother otherwise. And who am I, the silent party in the story of Aegina's sons? I am the one man they had always hoped wouldn't speak: the son of a king and his Trojan whore. The bastard archer, betrayer of his "true home," and the only son of Greece named after a founder of Troy. *Tenecer.*