

## The Crown of Sporta

For many years, the small coastal city state of Sporta had prospered. It was a strong and proud place and home to many fine thinkers. Under the rule of its two kings Sporta had made many friends and the few enemies it made had been easily overpowered by the strong and well-maintained navy. King Borisicles was known for his friendliness. Although he was occasionally difficult to understand, people often felt like he agreed with them and they were happy for him to be their leader - even though the things that were agreed about seemed to be different for different people. King Donatus however was less interested in making friends, people also found him occasionally difficult to understand. Many people of Sporta often felt like they should disagree with Donatus but were afraid to upset him. Most of the time, most of the people were happy because they lived easy lives.

It was fortunate that King Borisicles and King Donatus had some very clever advisors to help them to make decisions. Socrates was able to help them to think about how to make people happy. Hippocrates was able to help them to think about how to keep people healthy. Cleisthenes, meanwhile, made sure that all their decisions were fair and taught them how to be very persuasive. In addition, the city state was under the protection of the god Ares. He had many powerful family connections, being the son of Zeus, but he was also very scary for most people.

Over many years Ares and Donatus became trusted friends and they enjoyed working together during the short and violent wars with Athens and Corinth. Now sadly Sporta had found a new and difficult enemy in the form of the Island Nation of Freedomos.

The prince of Freedomos, Prince Paris was a fine and fair leader. His father had long ago made an alliance with Poseidon, the god of the Seas. King Midos now spent most of his own time sailing with the god of the sea, where they worked together to ensure the safety of mariners from all parts of the known world. It was important and difficult work to persuade everyone to agree on rules to keep each other safe in the waters. Prince

Paris had been trusted to rule Freedomos and as a reward for his hard work, Poseidon had agreed to allow his daughter, Helen, to marry Paris.

In the late Autumn, when the leaves were turning from green to flame, the happy couple were to celebrate their wedding. It was generally agreed that Helen was among the most beautiful of women in the world and that they would be wonderful rulers together. Their marriage would bring everlasting happiness to the people of Freedomos. Invited from every city were the most powerful and influential guests, who arrived safely under the watchful eye of Poseidon and King Midos. The Kings of Sporta had been invited too and along with them came Ares. There was a full week of celebrations on the island of Freedomos to prepare for the wedding ceremony. During the week King Donatus found it difficult to cope with the fact that he was not the centre of attention, he was used to people making a fuss over him. Now though, Paris and Helen were object of every gift and compliment, and Donatus grew steadily more furious.

Late one night, Donatus spoke to Ares about his problem. They decided that the people of Freedomos had been unpleasant and deliberately rude to the mighty state of Sporta, and that they should therefore be punished. The scheming pair hatched a plan to carry Helen away back to Sporta, where she would be forced to marry Donatus instead of Paris. This would bring happiness to Sporta and ensure that the rude people of Freedomos would suffer lifetimes filled with sadness.

On the night before the wedding of Paris and Helen, Donatus and Ares captured the bride to be and rushed her away to their ship. King Midos and Poseidon were busy entertaining guests, but Paris and his guards came to demand that Helen be released but Ares used his powers to throw them into the sea – where they sank to their deaths.

By the time Midos arrived, his son was gone. By the time Poseidon arrived, his daughter was gone. Poseidon grew angry and could not bear to watch the tears of his friend flow into the seas. He blew a mighty storm that whipped up the tears into clouds of fierce waves and sent them towards Sporta.

Back in Sparta, Donatus celebrated the success of his plan. Back in Sparta, Helen cursed the men who had stolen away her happiness and vowed never to marry Donatus. Knowing that Borisicles had a fine ability for persuasion, Ares asked him to help change Helen's mind. When he went to see Helen, Borisicles was struck into silence by her beauty and he fell almost instantly very deeply in love with her. In the hope of making her accept a new life in Sparta, Borisicles told Helen that Paris had perished at the bottom of the ocean. The sound of her sorrow echoed through the streets of Sparta and many of the citizens worried that they were a sign that the gods had been upset.

That same day clouds of waves crashed onto the coast of the city and as they crowned, they sent sprays of the tears of King Midos across the city. People who were unfortunate enough to breathe in the tears that floated through the air became filled with the same sadness that Midos had felt on losing his son.

Soon it seemed that every citizen had come down with the sadness brought by the crowning waves of tears. At their most desperate time of need the people turned to their kings for guidance, but Donatus and Borisicles had locked themselves away in the palace. They wanted to keep away from the tears and were occupied with thoughts of how they could each win the affection of beautiful Helen.

Only the advisors stood up and offered some assistance. Socrates told the people that they should stay at home with their families so they could share happy memories together. Hippocrates told the people that they should be careful to wash the tears away so that the sadness could not spread to other people. Cleisthenes told the people that they should search among themselves for champions who could sail away to plead with Poseidon to take away the tears. When Donatus heard that the people planned to go to Poseidon he was frightened that they would find out the real cause of the sadness had been his pride at not being the centre of attention.

To protect himself and stay safe from the sadness, Donatus climbed to the top of the palace and called to the citizens. He told them that Poseidon

would never agree to helping them because he was jealous of the power of Ares to protect Sporta. The citizens listened as Donatus said that instead they should build a high wall along the coast to keep the waves away from the city, but the advisors told them that no wall could prevent the waves forever. Remembering the help that the advisors had always been to the city, the people decided to follow their instructions instead of Donatus' plan.

When Poseidon heard that the people no longer wished to follow their selfish Kings, he agreed to halt the waves. However, he told them that King Midos could never allow Helen to stay in Sporta, and so she must return to Freedomos. Borisicles protested but as punishment he was placed onto a small rocky island close to Freedomos where he could see Helen, but he could never again talk to her. He called and shouted but his voice could only ever be heard by sailors who were warned to stay clear of the rocks. In this way Poseidon was helped to keep his seas safe.

Donatus was no longer permitted to be king and the city of Sporta made all future decisions by discussing them with the advisors. When he saw that his old friend was no longer powerful, Ares moved on and returned to Mount Olympus. He was not welcomed there because of the harm he had caused, and the other gods took away his powers and his strength and so he left again. By the time he arrived back at Sporta, Ares found that the people there had decided to build the wall that Donatus had been so keen for them to construct. The advisors had told them that they should never forget the way they had been treated by the kings. They took Donatus and placed him inside a high circular wall, and then they forced Ares, helpless without his powers, inside as well. From that time on Sporta remained a happier place to live and the sounds of Donatus and Ares arguing together, but never agreeing, about the best way to escape, reminded them that the difference between happiness and sadness is often the ability to listen to the ideas of others.