

Hegemony: Philip of Macedon

The Story Begins

Chapter One: The Companions

The seeds of power are forged by the bonds of friendship.

The Reconnaissance

In the creeping dusk, the group of young warrior companions stood quietly, silhouetted against the forested slope. Their demeanor was relaxed, expressing the ease of fast friends, having grown up together as they did in the royal court of Macedon. Since coming of age, the companions had remained together, acting as the shield, the spear, the eyes, the ears and the analytical sounding board for their friend and leader, Philip of Macedon, younger brother of their king, Perdiccas III.

It had been Philip's initiative that had kept the group together. Philip had need of a squadron of cavalry to patrol the kingdom with and Perdiccas had been more than willing to let him hand pick the men that would join his core of childhood friends. Over time Philip had expanded the group to its current squadron size of 300 and had recently dubbed them his personal Companion Cavalry.

All eyes explored northward over the valley of the River Strymon. The vantage point was ideal, cloistered, but with an unobstructed view. Set back beneath the shelter of the trees, the horses could be heard twitching softly in the cooling air, dismounted moments before, enveloped by the shifting silence of Gaia's cloak.

Further to the north the great river cracked its way south though the mountain barrier before skirting the east side of the Thracian town of Heraklea Sintike. The Strymon then gradually quieted down to gently flow past this point, the ford at Bisaltia. Downstream to the east the river built up again before making a sharp turn south to sweep past the City-State of Amphipolis and into the Aegean Sea.

Having scoured the immediate area free of enemy scouts, Parmenion assumed his post at Philip's right hand. "This was their last crossing point."

Craterus, stalwart as usual, casually responded from Philip's left, "Good to know, but dare they cross here again so soon?"

Philip stirred, but kept his focus on the open fields that stretched up to the ford. Philip took special note of the added scruff of brush and foliage that sheltered the riverbank below before acknowledging them each with a nod. Parmenion and Craterus were both close, yet as different as left and right.

Parmenion, a true and steady friend, grasped Philip's strategic intentions better than anyone. There was more here than the rough and tumble camaraderie of youthful play, or the rigors of training and schooling together, or that first battle-kill that defined them as true men and no longer boys. There was that close, unspoken bond of understanding between Philip and Parmenion, a bond that transcended simple reasoning, a bond that forged Parmenion into Philip's indomitable right hand.

Craterus, on the other hand, seldom set aside his devotion to events within easy reach of his spear for long enough to take a broader view of strategic matters. It's not that he couldn't, it's just that he didn't have to worry about it, not with Philip and Parmenion around. Philip kept Craterus close by his side, not for the wisdom of his opinions, but for the juggernaut of his battle skills and bravery, and the knowledge of how the infectiousness of that bravery could help turn the tide of any close battle. Craterus had, by force of circumstance, become Philip's formidable left hand.

"It's definitely not the best spot," interjected a curious Aristotle in his typically reasoned tone. "The Thracian peltasts that have been ravaging Lower Macedonia from the east will know this crossing to be far too vulnerable. It's much safer for them to cross further north under the protection of Heraklea Sintike. From there they can muster supply and swing back down here to properly secure this crossing, or simply sortie westward from Heraklea Sintike, toward the Axios Valley and Pella."

Aristotle was the only one in the group who wasn't a formalized Companion of Philip's, yet Aristotle remained as close to Philip and as trusted as any of his official Companion Cavalry.

Philip and Aristotle enjoyed many shared experiences from their childhood. Thanks to the presence of Aristotle's father as Macedonian court physician, the boys had ample opportunity to lock horns and polish their rhetorical skills together. They would spar for hours, ablaze with grammar, dialect, logic and mathematics. With the passage of time, Aristotle embraced the path of the philosopher, while Philip remained grounded in pragmatic matters of state; weapons, battle, espionage and diplomacy.

If the current circumstances had been but youthful rhetoric, Philip would have retained the unfair advantage of having personally grilled a captured Thracian agent; one that Philip was convinced was not a plant. But, this was not the playful rhetoric of their youth; this was war!

With a quiet gesture of concession to Aristotle as his intellectual equal, Philip turned and in a low voice, explained his thinking to the group. "My dearest friends, of course they will be back. Firstly, this may not be the safest or smartest route, but it is the shortest path to plunder these rich farmlands of Bisaltia. Secondly, the Thracian King Cetriporis enjoys only success to this point. He sends out one extra raiding party to pave the way whilst he prepares his full invasion force to seize this land with its newly gathered harvest. Cetriporis is impatient and dismisses the potential dangers of a direct crossing as a small risk to take. He has become Aesop's Dog carrying his bone across the bridge, looking down at his reflection. Cetriporis has let his greed define his reach and dictate his move."

Philip paused to allow the strategic underpinnings and the analogy of the fable to sink in before he continued with the fundamentals of his summation, "Thirdly, Thracian success breeds Thracian contempt, both for us and for our ability to defend our lands. That is a vital mistake. While Cetriporis is blinded by his greed, to add further to our fortune, his men mark us easy and become complacent. It is his greed and their complacency that we shall turn to our advantage."

Although his life has not been that of the warrior, Aristotle appreciated the logic of Philip's explanation and nodded his agreement. But alas, night pressed upon them and Aristotle had plans to visit Plato in Athens. He thanked Philip for the escort and with a display of genuine respect, turned southward for his home in Stagiera; one of many ports soon to be frequented by Athenian bound grain ships. The seasonal increase in merchant trade would provide Aristotle with a travel window, a window that would close as soon as winter storms put their clamp on maritime trade.

Antigonus broke off to see Aristotle safely on his way, then settled back to the group.

From within the renewed silence, Antipater began shaking his head slowly from side to side with an ever-calculating precision, as if an aged and wizened man lingered within his gaunt, youthful body. "How is this to our advantage? We have but three hundred men and the pending incursion is reported as twenty five hundred." Antipater could be counted on to question the logic of all decisions. This degree of hesitancy would be annoying to Philip if it were not for Antipater's attention to detail, efficient logistics and quirky tendency to turn bear once engaged in battle. Antipater was Philip's back; always at the ready.

"You'll see," commanded Philip as he turned in the fading light to prepare for rest. "We break camp when the moon is high."

The order of watch was set and the men settled in.

Stretched out on his cloak for sleep, Philip gazed up into the canopy of branch and leaf. The complexity of shapes was a comfort to him, a focal point with which he could trace out strategic principles in the filtered shadows. With war the accepted norm between States, raiding remained the best probe of strength; a diplomatic overture if you may, but with the tip of a spear; more of a preamble to greater ambition than a mere overture. The problem was seldom the individual raid, but how easily an unchecked tip-of-the-balance could provoke a full-scale invasion; such as when the unfortunate events of ten years back had prompted Olynthus to mobilize ten thousand Chalcidian League hoplites and sack the Macedonian capital of Pella.

Philip recalled how the timely intervention of Thebes had restored the regional balance. One consequence of that Theban intervention was the two years that Philip had been forced to spend as a humble guest in Thebes. A prisoner in the time-honored tradition of stability through hostages. Although Philip had taken advantage of the opportunity and gleaned much knowledge from his time in Thebes, he had no intention of allowing such a situation to repeat itself.

The Dawn Surprise

As the moon passed its zenith, a solitary owl detected the slight stir of three hundred horsemen slipping from their hillside perch. Like a still breeze they began their silent ride down to the river. Concealed and insulated beneath versatile woolen cloaks, each companion bent forward to spread his weight evenly over the back of his horse. Each horse wore a simple saddlecloth, girth strap and reins. Each man wore a thin bronze breastplate, helmet and greaves and carried a ten-foot lance, small shield and short sword. Helmet plumes would be bared in battle to identify friend and frighten foe.

These were elite cavalry of the Kingdom of Macedon; Philip's personal Companion Cavalry.

The dark and misty spirit of the Strymon rose up coolly to greet the Companions as they approached the south bank of the river. The stillness had become palpable.

Suddenly, slicing through the muffle of dampness, a march of peltasts could be heard on the far bank. Louder and louder, they approached, confidently unaware of what awaited them.

Antigonus reined in close to Philip and whispered, "I make out three thousand peltasts divided into three companies of one thousand each."

Philip chuckled to himself, "Antigonus had ears like a bat and eyes like a hawk. His reconnaissance was flawless." Antigonus was Philip's eyes. He was Philip's front man; Philip's chief of reconnaissance.

Philip turned and whispered back, "A night crossing would frighten his men, so Cetriporis will have given orders to cross at dawn. Effective, but timid and predictable."

Concealed by low light and light foliage, the Companions reached the crossing ahead of the peltasts. Philip quietly summoned his captains to join him and led off with the central premise, "Although they outnumber us ten to one, I trust they'll make that fateful mistake of those with overconfidence and not scout ahead before crossing." Philip then proceeded to outline the tactics for the day's battle.

They were barely back in formation when a loud splashing of peltasts marked the first glow of dawn. In response, Philip eased his mount to a point near the edge of the ford and silently made a series of signals with his left hand. The signal passed through the ranks of men like the turn of a flight of birds and with a precision gained through repeated practice, the Companions quietly formed a wedge, Philip at the apex. No scouts were seen. The trap was set.

Moments later the first company of peltasts cleared the river, haphazardly shaking down the wet while laughing praises at good fortunes crossing. With impeccable timing, Philip raised his hand again and the wedge of Companions sprang to life in a silent charge aimed at the head of the second company of peltasts, just now reaching the bank.

The gap between cavalry and peltast had all but closed, when a voice cried out in fearful surprise.

The charge of the Companions had been spotted!

Philip immediately switched to signal shouts. With cloaks thrown back and plumes flying high, all stealth was now abandoned in favor of clanking metal, a crescendo of war cries and the dramatic shaking of lances.

The first company of peltasts had seen Fate's lance too late. Confronted with an attack of the Companion Cavalry, they paused but a moment before scattering to flee.

The next shout signaled the forthcoming impact. Each Companion crouched forward with free hand cradled around his horse's neck. Correct use of this pullback grip would strengthen the blow of the lance, otherwise weakened by the absence of any form of stabilizing stirrup.

The second company of peltasts struggled frantically for shore as the right face of the Companion wedge sliced obliquely across their front. Philip selected a target, feigned as if to pass by, then veered back, flicking the tip of his lance in a last second change in angle of attack as he struck. The peltast, caught flatfooted, was unable to shield-deflect the blow. Philip drove lance into chest, piercing leather and flesh with a dampening force that compelled him to pull up short. Fortunately, the smooth taper from shaft through lance-tip allowed him to yank back hard, extracting his lance in a gush of blood and air.

Philip was elated, but relieved. He'd rather not be forced to drop his lance and switch to his sword, at least not while so many movement options remained open to him.

A lesser warrior might have been caught up in the exhilaration of his first kill in the battle, lost focus and become vulnerable. Not Philip! He reacted quickly and fluidly, crouching and spinning his horse to gain momentum as he spotted the peltast commander emerging from the river. Bursting out of his spin in a tangential strike, Philip surged forward and ripped open the left side of the commander's neck with a powerful pass-through thrust of his lance.

Eucratides, the peltast commander, was taken completely by surprise. And now his life's blood gushed forth from the terrible neck wound that Philip had inflicted. His mind raced in panic. "What? Horseman! How...?" He reflexively dropped his spear and reached across to clutch his neck in an attempt to stem the flow. All in vain. The blood flowed freely around his fingers, cascading down his forearm in rivulets that streamed off his elbow. To add insult to his already sealed fate, severed nerves left his shield arm and side, limp and unable to resist the downward drag from the now dead weight of the shield strapped to his forearm.

Moments before, Eucratides had been wading the river, confidently plotting morning maneuvers, gloating with his unit commanders about how easy it was going to be to secure the neighboring farms and supplies for the invasion force to follow. Now, suddenly contorted and frozen, eyes wide empty with disbelief, Eucratides' mortality beckoned and with a silent gasp, his uncontrollable body twisted to the left and rolled backward into the dark, chill waters of the river. Gone!

His enemy leaderless, Philip made a glancing assessment and shouted a fresh command code. Any Companion hearing this shout, repeated it. In this way, the order was relayed as easily in battle as it could be on parade. With the second company of peltasts still emerging from the river in disarray, this new command released Parmenion and his tetrarch of sixty four Companions to aggressively pursue and lance the first company of peltasts before they could stop and regroup. The remaining Companions stayed with Philip and continued to press the attack against the riverbank bound peltasts.

The tactical timing had been perfect. The first company of peltasts fled and were pursued and slaughtered. The second company of peltasts was caught in the river trap. Those that reached the bank had been lanced, the remainder floundered and broken; the current threatening to loosen their footing and drown them. The third company of peltasts remained neutralized by their loss of leadership and their position on the far bank. Any javelins they threw would barely clear the river and would more likely kill friend than foe. The best they could do would be to fight any attempt by the Companions to cross. Victory was near complete!

Craterus yelled across from Philip's left. "Shall we cross and pursue?"

"No! We'll clean up here and make tracks for The Iron Gates." Philip shouted back through the din of battle. To cross the Strymon at this time would be a step too far. "We have accomplished our goal. The dog has lost his bone." "Cetriporis will cancel his invasion plans, until time has passed or circumstances have shifted back to his favor."

"We must move on! The Paeonians are the ones next in need of a bloodying."

The battle area remained somewhat chaotic and as Philip had other more pressing issues, he quickly regrouped his Companions and sent word for the local spear militia to mop up any peltast stragglers and loot the corpses. These spear militia were made up of the men too old or injured for active duty and the boys too young to carry their share of a march and battle. Philip recognized their value and knew that local militias were far more effective than they were generally given credit for. Seasoned older men taught battle skills, experience and efficiency; young boys charged around energetically yearning for their first kill. The combination was the ideal mix of wisdom and enthusiasm. When properly trained and briefed, these militias could be relied upon to respond to minor threats and to look out for the local inhabitants, freeing up Philip to move on with his mobile strike force of Companions.

Setting up effective local militias was only part of his greater strategic overview. Philip was well aware that in spite of his resounding victory, this skirmish had done little to alter the fact that the future of the Kingdom of Macedon remained in a tenuous state. King Perdiccas III had recently marched westward into Upper Macedonia to combat Bardylis and his Illyrian invasion force. In his effort to stop Bardylis, the king had levied troops from the entire Kingdom. His younger brother Philip with his squadron of Companion Cavalry, was all that Perdiccas was willing to leave behind to deal with any enemy incursions into Lower Macedonian.

As the Companions set out on the next stage of their patrol, Philip remembered his final encouraging words to Perdiccas, little more than a week before. "Stay on the defensive and pick your battleground with care, my brother. Bardylis is powerful and at his most dangerous these days. Make him come to you." Philip had always had the better eye for battlefield placement and remained concerned as Perdiccas had simply nodded, turned and ridden away.

To the Axios

Antigonos scanned northwestward to where fields and woodland climbed into mountain. He wasn't expecting to spot anything. It had been quiet and every expectation was that the passage from the valley of the Strymon to the Axios River valley would go well. This was to be a patrol after all and not a reconnaissance or reconnaissance-in-force.

In its most basic form, a patrol was a statement of presence, a declaration of sovereignty in friendly territory; where as a reconnaissance was the act of setting eyes on the ground in hostile territory. While many a commander would conduct a patrol with a leisurely stroll-in-the-park attitude, Philip organized his patrols with a care that befitted the endless vigilance and continuous enforcement that he felt was required to maintain security and express sovereignty in the Kingdom of Macedon. Every patrol, no matter how straight forward it seemed to be, was given the same level of import as a reconnaissance and conducted with the same due diligence.

To maximize their flexibility and for greatest efficiency, Philip divided his Companion Cavalry into four tetrarchs, each comprised of four lochoi of sixteen horsemen each. The lead horseman of each lochoi was known as the Lochagos. The commander of each tetrarch, assigned to it from Philip's personal bodyguard, was simply called the Tetrarch. Each Tetrarch was accompanied by five bodyguards, giving each tetrarch a total of seventy men. To bring the total up to three hundred Companion Cavalry, an additional twenty Companions remained with Philip as his personal bodyguard. They also functioned as Philip's command staff. The bodyguard along with any tetrarchs that weren't detached for other duties, plus any auxiliaries, formed the main body of the squadron.

To add to the preparedness and endurance of the Companions, at least fifty extra horses were always attached to the squadron's main body. The horses were attended to by a variable number of chosen pageboys. These horses carried supplies and were available as replacement mounts, while the pageboys got to experience some of the rough and tumble and learn from the seasoned wisdom of the Companions in action. The pageboys were encouraged to learn and advance, each at his own pace.

At any given time, one of the tetrarchs was on outrider scout duty. They would trade off with one of the other tetrarchs every half day or half night, giving each tetrarch one turn at scouting each full day. The practical application of this setup was to allow most of the Companions to remain relatively fresh; better able to respond to any alarm raised by the scouts, but also to stay sharp by taking regular turns as outrider scouts.

The commanding Tetrarch on outrider duty would ride with the lochoi assigned to vanguard duty and deploy his other lochoi to the rear and flanks of the main body. The various lochoi would then scout out and back in an expanding-contracting pattern to maximize the area to be scouted. To cover this much ground, the scouts would canter or gallop as needed, while the main body camped, walked or maintained a slow canter as called for by the day's events or the current strategic plan.

It was just past mid afternoon and Antigonus and his lochoi were scouting the right flank, the mountain flank of the patrol zone, as the main body of the Companions rode in a slow zigzag pattern with a generally westward heading.

Antigonus had just spotted the telltale signs of distant movement. Was it the subtle disruption of the normal randomness in the flight patterns of those distant birds, or the slight shimmer of light off the damp morning grass? "Perhaps the sum of many small parts reveals the whole."

"What was that you say?" Demetrius rode up just in time to catch Antigonus quietly muttering to himself. Although the mutterings were not specifically aimed at outside ears, Demetrius had known Antigonus too long and too well, not to want to pry his thoughts out into the open.

"Not many, fifty, sixty." Antigonus thoughtfully refocused his gaze on Demetrius and shifted to a more audible speech. "They look to be heading for the mountain, likely for their hideout."

At the limit of his vision, Demetrius could just make out nothing more than a few extra birds in flight. Demetrius knew better than to doubt Antigonus in matters such as these, for Antigonus would spot and describe distant activities before anyone else could even see them.

The lochoi ran its pattern of fanning out and pulling together, scouting on the move like an elastic cord in constant motion. Seleucus, Coenus and Antiochus, along with the other riders in the lochoi, were currently drawing back in and would be joining Antigonus shortly to exchange updates and get any new orders.

The sixteen man lochoi remained the building block of Philip's latest organizational refinements. The men of each lochoi stayed together and did everything together. They trained together. They ate together. They slept together. They fought together. They laughed and loved and plundered together as a group. The slightest gesture was all that was needed for one of them to understand and respond to another man's needs, and they thought nothing of putting their lives on the line for one another.

With his lochoi together as one, Antigonus gathered in their updates then gave his assessment and orders. "We'd best catch them before they make the trees; don't want to be hunting them through that forest at night."

"Is this the group we've been hearing about?" Added Coenus, "Half a hundred or more in strength?"

"Could be." Was the dry response. "Seleucus! Signal the main body and then catch back up." Then, with nothing more than a slight, but completely understood nod in the direction of movement, Antigonus led off at an easy gallop in pursuit of the target, while Seleucus wheeled his horse back toward the main body.

Seleucus rode until he could pull up on a slight rise of land, just close enough to the main body to be seen. He attached a signal flag to the tip of his lance and extended it overhead, carving a gentle oval in the sky. When he saw the answering signal from the watchers of the main body, he dipped his lance in the direction of the target, then turned and galloped off to rejoin the rest of his lochoi in their pursuit.

The signal was relayed out to the other lochoi and to their Tetrarch, Parmenion, who was riding with the vanguard. With everyone informed, the entire squadron of Companions shifted momentum in the direction of the target, like a sail swinging around for a change in tack. The former vanguard and rearguard lochoi were now the flanks of the advance. Antigonus had assumed the vanguard role. Until contact was made and the target ID confirmed, the approach was always the same whether it turned out to be a band of bandits, an invasion force or a stray sheep.

"Who knows?" Parmenion smiled, "When will a stray sheep simply be a stray sheep, rather than a lone sheep determined to escape the advances of an invasion force?"

"An invasion force?" Chuckled Alcetas. "Unlikely, given the logistical nightmare imposed by that mountain. There's no way to bring supplies over the mountain and we'd have spotted any significant activity trying to run a course along the base of this rough slope."

"And a stray sheep that's just a stray sheep?" "Antigonus will offer up one of his eyes, if that turns out to be the case."

"No! They be bandits, more than likely." Parmenion continued, turning to make an additional signal. "Heading for their mountain lair." His men picked up their pace and as if in perfect lockstep with Antigonus' thoughts, Parmenion concluded, "Antigonus will be eager to bring those bandits to ground before they reach the shelter of the mountain slope and forest."

Parmenion wanted his former vanguard and former rearguard lochoi to both be in ideal flanking positions when Antigonus engaged the target. Training, planning and execution were everything. And no criticism would be laid, well maybe just a few hearty laughs aimed at Antigonus, if the target turned out to be nothing. If no engagement resulted, this pursuit would be treated as if it were a training exercise with all of the appropriate lessons conveyed and learned.

The mountain approached...

Parmenion led his riders over a small rise where, with a start, they all but collided with a small contingent of bandits that had escaped being ridden down by Antigonus. Both groups were caught totally by surprise, but none more so than the bandits who hadn't expected any resistance in flight and now suddenly found themselves doomed, as Parmenion pressed the attack with deadly efficiency.

Antigonus had successfully run down the main group of bandits, overburdened as they were with loot and had taken them on in full fury. Those bandits that could, had dropped their loot and scattered. Those that couldn't, died a quick death to the lance.

Their positioning with respect to the path of the fleeing bandits was perfect. Parmenion took pleasure in the quick cleanup. No stragglers escaped. As an extra bonus, one of the pageboys that Parmenion had invited to tag along, got his first kill, successfully making the time honored transition from boyhood to manhood.

As it turned out, the boy leapt off his horse to confront a bandit spear to spear. Alright, the man had been distracted by the presence of cavalry, but he had still been given a fair chance. The boy had feigned to suggest another attacker. The man took the bait and glanced away. The boy lunged into his chest and it was over, all except for the dying, which took but a few minutes more.

"Now there goes one proud pageboy." Smiled Parmenion. "He'll be prancing around the camp tonight, telling that tale, strutting his stuff, displaying his technique for one and all to see."

"And rightly so." Added Antigonus, as he rode up to congratulate Parmenion on the impeccable timing of his intervention. "You couldn't have timed that better, if I had done it for you." They laughed together; the hearty laugh of friendship.

"All in the planning. All in the planning." Parmenion chuckled back. "Actually, I just didn't want to be late for the parade if it had turned out to be just a sheep after all."

"You'd have been first in line." Antigonus grinned widely as he swung back to check on his men.

Philip had the men pitch camp to facilitate the cleanup operations. Seleucus and Antiochus led a small contingent up to the bandit camp to destroy it and kill any they found there. Just as at the Strymon River ford, the local spear militia was mobilized to cleanup and gather back the loot that had been stolen from the people of the area.

The next morning revealed the remnants of smoky plumes spiraling from the mountainside. Morning probes confirmed late night reports of the bandit camp had been destroyed, as true.

Shortly thereafter, with the spear militia firmly in control of the area, the patrol of Companion Cavalry broke camp and moved on.

The rest of the patrol to the Axios was less eventful. Two more small groups of bandits were encountered below the south face of Mount Orbelus and dispatched with ease, to the relief of the local inhabitants.

Peacefulness had been restored to the area, at least for now. His men's spirits high, Philip felt a quiet edge of unease pervade his thoughts...

The Plain of Lyncus

He slumped to his knees, grasping for his genitals with his left hand, while fumbling for his spear with his right. A warm stream of blood pumped forth, mixing with the already muddied quagmire of the battlefield. “Steady the line!” had been his last rally cry to his shaken men. He had been trying to stop them from cracking under the charge of the disciplined Illyrian battleline.

It had all happened in a blur. Perdiccas remembered turning his head to shout the command just as an upward thrust of a probing spear deflected under his shield, catching him in the groin. Surprise had raced through his mind. “My shield must have lifted up, ever so slightly as I turned; just enough to allow that spear thrust to slide by.”

“Damn this!” A bolt of realization pulsed home, like the blood surging through his ears. “I could have drawn Bardylis further south and taken advantage of the narrows. I shouldn't have marched forth to confront him here on the plain of Lyncus. My boldness has failed us.”

Perdiccas' guard initially recoiled at the blow, then rallied, pushing back the attackers to make room for the King to get what aid he could.

The flow of blood was slowing now. Pale, silent lips, barely moved, vision darkened, hearing faded. “What doom has befallen us! This can't be so.”

“Philip, my brother, where are you?”

“Steady the line, steady ...line, ...stead...”

The Iron Gates

On the fifth day following their victory over the Thracians, Philip drew his men up to the east bank of the Axios. The cool clear waters of the river sparkled and beckoned in the sunlight. Beyond the opposite bank the distant trails of late afternoon smoke lazed skyward, marking the site of the Macedonian town of Edomene. Having made good time, the Companions were tired and eager to enter the town for a well-deserved feast.

Although Philip fully intended to cross the river before nightfall, he knew the horses to be winded and ordered the men to settle in for a meal. The ever-prudent Philip would rather arrive at the town late, refreshed and ready; than early, while hungry, exhausted and vulnerable.

Meal fires buzzed with anticipation as the Companions ate, laughed and bolstered their way through the latter part of the afternoon. Finally, freshly fed and rested, the Companion Cavalry waded the Axios and began their evening approach to the town.

Edomene was a quiet town, the first Macedonian town south of the long rocky gorge cut by the Axios River as it cascaded from Paeonia to Macedonia on its way to the Thermaic Gulf. The heavy flow of traffic, both friend and foe, that passed through this natural conduit gave Edomene a strategic import that a town of this size could not otherwise enjoy.

As they rode on toward the town, Philip went over the next stage of his plans again with Antipater. "We can only take time for a short celebration to bolster moral and restock supplies."

"Understood." Antipater was already deep in thought, busy calculating the various steps he would follow to procure the necessary supplies.

"I'll make a simple display of the royal flag and spend some time responding to any adversities brought to my attention by the local watch and scouts."

"That should give me all the time I need to arrange the resupply." Antipater cracked a satisfied smile.

"Good." Philip was pleased. "Then we can make good time for our reconnaissance in force upriver into lower Paeonia."

"They certainly won't be expecting us."

Halfway up the river gorge sat the prize that Philip was after; an area of protective narrows known as the Iron Gates of the Axios. If everything fell in place as intended, a brigade of infantry from Edomene would be levied to fortify and garrison the Iron Gates while the Companions reconnoitered and screened past the head of the gorge, into Paeonian territory.

But alas, the Fates had other plans for Philip.

"Somethings not right here! Where's the outlying town guard?" Antigonus burst ahead of the group and pulled up, clearly agitated by this unexpected development.

Antigonus' sense of order had been totally disrupted. What was wrong?

Philip shared Antigonus' concern and signaled the Companions to shift to a canter. He now wanted to reach the town quickly, but still rested enough for action. A canter was the best compromise.

Craterus mused aloud, "Have the Paeonians attacked?"

"Unlikely, given that the cooking fires burn as would be expected for this time of day." Antipater countered as he turned toward Philip. A slight agitation was building in Antipater's voice.

Philip slowly drew out a "Yes," then continued with a contemplative, "Assuming the guards have drawn back to town, it must be something serious enough and something that has just happened or is ongoing."

Philip wasted no time. With a hand gesture and a nod, he signaled Antigonus to race ahead. "We are in need of knowing!"

Antigonus wheeled with his lochoi of scouts and galloped off in the direction of Edomene, while the main body of the Companions remained at the canter. As Philip drew closer to the town, he could just make out a distant clamor. The clamor of doom!

Antigonus had reached the edge of town and was racing back to the Companions shouting, "The King is dead, the army defeated!"

A shocked halt followed, "Perdiccas and six thousand have been killed by the Illyrians. Bardylis remains in Upper Macedonia. There is nothing left to stop him from marching on Pella."

Philip paused with all eyes upon him. The shock intense. The ramifications immense. Philip, sparing no time for grief, began to shout out commands.

"Antipater! Take one tetrarch and see to the immediate needs of Edomene, then catch me up."

"Parmenion! Take the other three tetrarchs to Pella, quell any riots and prepare what defenses you can. I will meet you there in good time."

"Craterus! We ride for Aegeae to locate and secure Amyntas, my brother's infant son."

With that, Philip signaled his personal bodyguard to accompany him, then turned and rode south, hard. He knew that if he rode through the night and bypassed Pella he could reach Aegeae by the following evening.

There would be no feasting tonight or for many nights to come.

Chapter Two: Save the Kingdom

To lose the King is to destabilize. To lose the army is to terrify.

Aegeae

Philip rode through the clamor of the night. Turmoil was everywhere. Like a beast caught off guard by a sudden mortal blow, the Kingdom of Macedon recoiled in shock at the extent and gravity of this unexpected loss.

Philip could feel the power and with it, the burden of responsibility, shift towards him. The Kingdom was weak from within and open to attack from without. The Illyrians could ravage Upper Macedonia and advance into Lower Macedonia unchecked. The Paeonians had free movement down the Axios valley. The Thracians, still poised to invade into Bisaltia, would quickly forget the bloodying given them by the Companions at the Strymon ford and renew their attacks. The Chalcidian League would be mobilizing at Olynthus for their share of the spoils and Athens would be sending a fleet. Each of these adversaries would pounce on the added instability wrought by the prospect of an infant king and move to plant their respective puppets on the throne of Macedon.

It couldn't get much worse. The only stability standing between the Kingdom and oblivion was Philip and his tightly knit squadron of Companions.

Enveloped by this aura of death and doom, Philip rode on, passing to the northwest of Pella just as the distant glow of fire and chaos began to emanate from the capital. Shortly thereafter, as early twilight beckoned Apollo to light the skies, Philip pulled up for a moments rest and turned to Craterus, who was staring at the city with a posture revealing his urgency for action.

“Craterus! We must press forward. Parmenion and the Companions will stabilize the city. Pella can await my return.”

Given Craterus’ stern look of unwavering faith and trust, it occurred to Philip that he was reassuring himself as much or more than he was reassuring Craterus.

Ah, but Antipater, having just caught them up, shifted uneasily. With Antipater, what else could Philip expect? “The men would have you Regent in Pella, so why the urgent need to reach Aegeae?”

“Appearing in Aegeae will strengthen and legitimize my Regency with the entire populace. To save the Kingdom from destruction, I will need the unquestioned loyalty of all of the peoples of Macedon, not just my Companions.” And without further comment, Philip turned and rode onward, embracing the sullen with resolve.

All that day, Philip rode south through flat farmland and field, reaching the north bank of the Haliacmon River with evening's light. They had made good time and would be able to cross and make their approach to Aegeae before full dark.

The Haliacmon flowed northeast from Thessaly, taking a short northward twist to the point where they stood, before turning eastward to flow straight into the Thermaic Gulf. On the south bank, nestled in the angle of this constricted bend in the river, lay the old capital of Aegeae.

The horizon to the south of Aegeae was dominated by the cloud-shrouded Mount Olympus, home of the Olympian Gods. Past Aegeae to the east, the coastal road was blocked by the Athenian controlled City-States of Methone and Pydna. The proximity of these external threats, coupled with the constrictive location and marginal farmland around Aegeae, had prompted an earlier King's decision to move the capital to Pella. Yet, as if in restitution for the demotion, Aegeae remained the only fully walled city in the kingdom and the natural refuge of the Royal Court in difficult times. And these were rapidly becoming the most difficult of times.

Unlike at the Axios, there was no pause to freshen at this river crossing. Philip plunged ahead and approached the gates of Aegeae. A short exchange of identifying calls followed Philip as he entered the city to a reception of deepening gloom. The future course of the Kingdom would be defined by the next few hours.

As he rode silently and slowly into the town square, the ever watchful Philip gaged the condition and mood of the gathering crowd. Through the dust and fatigue, the murmur permeating the air was a mixture of anguish and fear, undercut by a sense of surprise and a sliver of hope. “Philip has arrived!”

In keeping with his character, Philip had earned the respect of the people through his initiative and courage. Philip constantly patrolled the kingdom, hunted with, fought for and learned about locations, the people and their concerns; all the while remaining prudently in the shadow of his brother the king. Philip's intelligence, genuine interest and natural charisma had endeared him to most of those who had come to know him. Respect would be Philip's catalyst to rebuild with.

Philip signaled his bodyguard to halt and dismount in front of the council chambers. In response to the unexpected arrival of armed horsemen, Apollophanes, an elder and confidant of the royal court, walked slowly down the steps and approached with a strained decorum. Suddenly in recognition, he collapsed to his knees and greeted Philip with a desperate hug. "What are we to do?" He whispered. "It will take the strength of Hercules to overcome these events that beset us."

Philip bend forward to whisper back into Apollophanes' ear. "Then it is fortunate that I, Philip of Macedon, am a direct descendant of Hercules through his son Temenus and that I make no plans that include failure."

Philip held Apollophanes tight a moment longer, to reassure, then stepped back and called out with a sweeping gesture. "As is my right, I call for an assembly of all those armed men of Macedon who are present here in Aegeae."

An assembly was the core tradition of the Kingdom of Macedon. All major decisions called for an assembly or gathering of Macedones, the armed men of Macedonia and all Macedones had an equal opportunity and right to speak at an assembly. Thus it was that even the King could be forced to convince an assembly that a position he took had merit and was the correct course of action. Following an open debate, all decisions or judgments were by acclamation and were final. In this way, although only a member of the extended royal family could be king, the king himself required a populist, democratic style of approval to be in power.

With an assembly quickly gathered, Philip outlined his hopes and plans and expectations, all the while boosting the moral of those gathered by extolling the virtues of the people. In due course, Philip called for the assembly to acclaim the infant Amyntas as King. He then led the men in the traditional rhythmic clash of spear on shield. The gathering had been coaxed from despair toward empowerment.

Throughout the assembly, the now infant King rested quietly in his mother's arms. Being too small to wear them, the Royal Robes were spread out before him in a fine slash of purple. The signet ring, the Royal Seal of Macedon, was placed on the bench to his right. A cadre of the assembled Macedons then took up positions around the King to protect him and yell out the time-honored oath, "We vow to fight to the death to defend the king against his enemies!"

In the lull that followed, Philip stepped forward and picking up the Royal Seal to hold it aloft, called out, "Do all the assembled agree that I, Philip of Macedon, act for the King as his Regent." In response to the positive reaction, Philip slipped the ring on his finger to sanctify his Regency. The first step in a long march had been taken.

As the newly acclaimed Regent, Philip faced what many perceived to be insurmountable obstacles. The Kingdom remained caught in a perilous situation and the majority of the populace was infected with an omnipotent gloom. This inertia of dread had to be overcome. But how?

With the crowd still palpable, Philip launched into an eloquent speech explaining the gravity of the situation while suggesting that the customary feast, normally be held in honor of the new king, be deferred. The people, spellbound by persuasive manner and detailed reasoning, enthusiastically agreed to follow Philip as he charted the future course of the kingdom.

In the fullness of night, the assembly finally adjourned. The city had been freshly infused with an optimistic murmur. Philip carried this enthusiasm with him as he set about the urgent task of shoring up the city's defenses. Walls were inspected by torchlight. Defensive plans were detailed and the garrison brigade reviewed and reorganized. With the loyalty of Aegeae confirmed by a newfound hope and energetic deeds, Philip took rest in preparation for a dawn departure.

Archelaus

Sunrise found the newly buoyant spirit of Aegeae interrupted by a voice of dissent from the past. Philip's half-brother Archelaus had arrived and had called an assembly of Macedons to make his claim to the throne. Philip joined in, but maintained his silence, preferring to let the will of the people take its full measure.

Archelaus had never shown himself to have any exceptional qualities and as a consequence, the assembly of Macedons heard no arguments for Archelaus and many against him. Within a short time the assembly grew weary and tense, yet oblivious to the threatening mood, Archelaus made one final plea, "As an older brother of Perdiccas, I claim the right to be King."

It was certainly true, Archelaus was the older brother, except that Philip's mother Eurydice had been the primary consort of Philip's father, Amyntas III while Archelaus' mother Gygea had been cast as a secondary consort, bearing Amyntas three additional sons, Archelaus, Arrhidaeus and Menelaus. The tradition was that the sons of the primary consort had first claim to the succession. If they were found wanting, the assembly would look to the offspring of any of the other queens, to find their new king.

Having the King keep multiple wives and many children was the prudent thing to do in this age of heroic warfare. The king's sons were expected to lead men into battle, increasing their risk of violent death at an early age. This natural order of events would tend to cull the weak and clarify the choices available to the assembly. Bad luck aside, the strong and talented would shine, the weak would die. Those without an aptitude for combat were generally overlooked, given that strength of character earned through arms was the most cherished attribute for a prospective king to have.

The succession ran into trouble at times such as this, when an infant was next in line. The assembly could either bypass the infant's untested promise for another already proven in battle, or hold the kingship in trust through a Regent. Either choice was divisive and destabilizing. As the most able heir, Philip had wisely simplified the matter by accepting the Regency. Archelaus, unaware of the pitfalls of his timing, just blundered along.

Given his history of avoiding battle, the prospect of Archelaus as king was much less inviting than the prospect of Philip as regent, and the assembly of Macedons responded, "We, the gathered Macedons, affirm our allegiance to the infant King Amyntas IV with Philip as Regent." As making a claim to be King was generally an all or nothing proposition, with this decree, the assembly of Macedons had simultaneously rejected Archelaus' claim and condemned him to death.

Archelaus stood, undaunted to the end, being genuinely surprised when the ring of guardsmen stepped forward in unison to spear him. Remaining somewhat perplexed by the response, Archelaus was left to slump in a growing pool of his own blood, too vain to even see the root of his folly at his end.

Philip thanked all those assembled with a short passionate statement and then in a quiet aside to Craterus admitted, "Archelaus was but the weakest of those who would claim the throne."

A Strength of Garrisons

The strength of any garrison was multiplied by the security afforded by its fortifications. In essence, secure walls magnified the power that could be projected by an otherwise small garrison. If a weak enemy came too close, the garrison could sortie out from behind the walls and attack them at will. If a larger army was in the vicinity, the garrison could bide its time until after the bulk of the enemy force had passed by and then attack the enemy supply chain, their camp followers, their wounded and stragglers; thereby threatening any weak link at will.

As a consequence, any garrison protected by fortifications or city walls would force any bypassing enemy to leave a sufficiently large containment force behind to counter any possible reactions by the garrison. Otherwise, the marching army would have to delay its campaign while it reduced the fortified position to destroy the garrison. Either way, an active garrison effectively tied up and diluted the reconnaissance and or main battleline forces of any enemy army operating in the vicinity, indirectly improving the odds for any friendly field army counterattacking in the area.

Philip had carefully studied how this magnifying power of solid fortifications bolstered the strength of and reliability of each garrison and envisioned an interlocking system of garrison defenses. To establish this new system of garrisons, Philip had been making plans to accompany a team of engineers to each city in the kingdom to initiate the building of fortifications and city walls and to commence effective training of their garrisons. All of the strategically important cities would thus be transformed into security hubs where the currently, mostly rural population, could be relocated to for protection and economic advantage. In addition to being reinforced to act as garrisons and provide a reactive defensive response, the local spear militias would be adapted to become the training cadres of Philip's newly envisioned Macedonian Phalanx.

Philip revisited these ambitious plans with Antipater, his trusted logistician. "It's somewhat fitting how nicely this current crisis will simplify the toughest part of this task, that of convincing the people to relocate. The fear of an impending Illyrian invasion will soften the resistance of the people to the idea of permanently migrating behind the protective walls of cities."

"Of course, but first, city walls must be put in place. Without walls, they're little safer in cities than in their village huts."

"It should be enough to have the plans set forth and the wall building underway."

"The incoming migrants can add to the work force and do the bulk of the construction."

"Our engineers can coordinate their efforts with the city elders."

The revisiting and modifying of previous discussion points continued. To which Antipater added. “Antigenes, Lysimachus, Orestes and Demetrius all show promise as engineers.”

“Yes they do. I brought them with us for that very reason. You and I can meet with the local leadership and outline where the walls are to be built. We’ll leave one of our engineers to take charge of each city site while we move on to the next. I’ll have a private word with the elders about the required uprootings and migrations. Craterus and Antigonus can reorganize the local spear militias into effective garrisons and training cadres.”

“I’ve noticed that both Coenus and Seleucus show promise as future brigade commanders.”

“They can be among those left in charge of training the new phalangite brigades.” In this way, Philip would have his close companions in charge of the Kingdom’s fortifications, garrisons and the his uniquely Macedonian Phalanx.

Interesting, thought Antipater, “To liberate Upper Macedonia we retreat behind new walls that we build in Lower Macedonia.”

“Exactly, and as long as Bardylis remains at a loss for a next move, we’ll have a chance to hold him in place until we’re ready to counterattack. But there is much to do to prepare for that mortal blow.”

The Gardens of Midas

With his Regency anchored, Philip could now safely head back across the Haliacmon and leave Aegeae as his southern buttress. The walled city and garrison would guard the river crossing on the defensive line drawn by the Haliacmon River while he reestablished sovereignty and initiated his plans in the lands to the north. Although Philip felt an urgency to return to Pella, he would first attend to the lowlands that wrapped round the head of the Thermaic Gulf from the Haliacmon to Pella. Then he would enter the new capital and rejoin the main squadron of his Companions.

Emathia occupied a central position in the area to the northwest of the crossing. Rather than taking the direct route to the city of Emathia, Philip made for the shrine just beyond the city. Philip intended to pay his respects and make offerings to the shrine’s dedication, the God Apollo. The lands in this area were so lush and rich with roses that bloomed unattended that it had become known as the Gardens of Midas.

“It’s prudent to give the tendrils of the Fates a chance to sow the seeds of my arrival.”

To which Antipater extended, as he was comfortable doing. “Any time lost at the shrine will pay you back in multiples.”

“Yes, respecting the shrine goes beyond strategic timing, it will bind me to the very core of these people.”

In a predictive response, word of Philip’s Regency and piety spread throughout the Gardens of Midas.

While taking a contemplative rest and relaxing at the shrine, Philip had time to revisit some of the earliest memories of his youth, hiding and seeking with his older brothers among the rose brush. Why had this area been named in honor of an ancient Phrygian King when the Phrygian strongholds had been in Asia Minor?

The facts remained shrouded within the mysteries of time. Did Midas in his wisdom, grant these lands near the periphery of his Kingdom to the fledgling peoples called Macedones or did the early Temenidae settling in from Argos, drive off the Phrygians? Did the Macedon peoples simply retain the garden name as tribute to the impressiveness of their victory or was there some sort of alliance with Midas. No doubt Midas had greater problems to contend with nearer his home base in the Troad and may have welcomed the advantages of having a reliable ally, such as the Temenidae, occupying the western fringes of his land? Or was there no direct connection to the mysterious king of Phrygia and the name a simple metaphor for how the golden roses reminded the people of the King with the golden touch?

Time held tight the answer, which was just as well as Philip would not have to ponder it for long. The elders of the city were so pleased with the respect shown for their shrine that without delay they dispatched an envoy to openly invite Philip to Emathia to accept their allegiance to the new king.

On the ride into town Philip instructed Antipater to let loose among the inhabitants his designs for walls and migrations, with the intended effect of further softening the ground for his actions in advance of their entry into the city. If the plan was in the air and the elders perceived a receptive buzz, they would more quickly agree to make the changes required of them.

Philip expected little resistance and got none. The people of Emathia were so relieved to find that there was someone firmly in charge that simply showing up was all that was needed.

The more solemn affair that had occurred at Aegeae was replaced by a much more optimistic response in Emathia. An assembly was called, not to question the basic principles of Philip's plan, but to facilitate the spreading of instructions and to open up a dialog of ideas to speed the implementation of the specifics of the plan.

Phalangites

Following Philip's introductory overview, the assembly was divided into action groups. The masons were walked through the details of wall and tower design and made allocations of manpower and quarry assets. The armorers were instructed in the fabrication of the new sarissa, a sixteen foot spear that Philip intended for his new approach to phalanx warfare, the soon to be formed Phalangite Brigades. The armorers would also fabricate shields to a new standard of two feet in diameter, as opposed to the traditional three foot diameter shield carried by hoplite heavy infantry.

Philip took aside a group of the seasoned older men from the local spear militia to teach them the tactics he wanted for the new phalanx. These vets would form the training cadre for the Phalangite brigade to be based in Emathia. They had experienced the hoplite style of battleline warfare and the peltast style of skirmish. They would do just fine.

A mob of the curious young boys refused to be left out and could not be shaken off.

“Just as well,” reflected Philip. “The learning for them would be fresh and less tainted by the traditional ways of doing things.”

With the group gathered together, Philip started with an explanatory analysis of the established hoplite battle formation of the Greek City-States and the light infantry peltasts of Thrace.

“A hoplite fights with his shield. At three feet in diameter, the hoplite shield provides superior protective covering and when overlapped in a shield wall, can be effectively used to block, push and shove until an advantage opens up for the jab and thrust of the eight foot spear that each hoplite carries in his right hand. If enough men are present to maintain the inertia of these scrum-like tactics, then the force with the better training should win the day because they will hold their battleline until the enemy battleline crumbles.”

“So why should we not be trained as hoplites then?” came the logical query from one of the boys.

Philip chuckled his pleasure at the enthusiasm of youth, “Firstly and most obviously, you can’t afford to buy your own armor and the Kingdom can’t afford to buy hoplite armor for everyone that we need. But I’ll get to that part in a bit.”

This brought out the smiles in the older vets, as they were most familiar with the hardships wrought when everyman was expected to purchase and maintain his own hoplite kit. As a consequence the local hoplite phalanx bore a smattering of breastplates, a variety of shields and a variable length of spears.

“Secondly, with this interlocking shield-wall approach the battleline has a tendency to skew obliquely towards the right whenever it advances. This happens as each man tries to maintain some added cover by gravitating towards the shield held by the man to his right. It’s a survival reaction, but with a tendency to limit mobility.”

Mobility was not the strength of the hoplite battleline. The strength of the hoplite battleline was in its cohesion, its fellowship, its group dynamic. Every hoplite relied on every other hoplite to hold up, with each having his small part to play in the total that was the hoplite phalanx. This great breakthrough arose and thrived in the Greek City-State where a middleclass, the hoplite class evolved to flourish and take a collective control of warfare and government.

“Thirdly, although maintaining a close order formation is the key to the success of the shield-wall, the heavy gear and cloistered helmets add to the dust and confusion of battle, making it easier to mistake friend for foe than would otherwise be the case. The heavier helmet and larger shield, limit visibility, increasing the chaos and risk if the initial cohesion is lost.”

On the other hand, peltasts armed with javelins a short spear and their small crescent shaped pelta shield had come to dominant light infantry tactics. Being mobile and fast, they’d fan out and fight in a loosely structured, irregular formation, throwing javelins to disrupt the enemy; then darting in and out to stab at any of the distracted or wounded. While hoplites exemplified battleline tactics, peltasts exemplified the effectiveness of skirmish tactics. Their goal, out skirmish the enemy skirmishers, disrupt the cohesion of the enemy battleline so that their friendly battleline could deliver the mortal blow, then chase down the broken enemy to ensure that the rout was complete.

With peltasts to support and protect the vulnerable flanks of the battleline, cavalry could be freed up to further harass the enemy in flank and threaten to envelope their rear. When properly trained, organized and coordinated, this force would develop into the penultimate combined arms force that Philip had envisioned.

With the analysis in place, Philip next outlined the creation of the new phalangite brigades to replace hoplite brigades and his intention to shift the focus of battleline troops from fighting with their shields to fighting with their spears. To this end Philip revealed the defining element of the phalangite, the sarissa, an elongated sixteen foot spear that Philip had recently developed. The key feature of the sarissa wasn't just its length, but that the spear tip was counterweighted by a butt that was pointed, yet squared off to prevent it from being planted too deeply in the ground.

What an ideal way to defend. Plant the butt of the sarissa in the ground. The flexible shaft allowed a smooth bend that brought the tip to the level. Thickened by the added reach of up to six ranks projecting past the foremost rank, the dense bristle of tips that could be brought to bear would deter all but the most seasoned of shield walled hoplites trying to advance against it.

When the advance was sounded, the phalangite phalanx, thanks to this defensive posture of planting the butts of their sarissa, would tend to be more rested than corresponding hoplites would be, giving them an endurance advantage as the melee progressed.

To be effectively used in battle, the sarissa had to be held with both hands. This was where the newly standardized two foot diameter shield size fit in. Being lighter than the hoplite shield, it could be supported by a neck strap and controlled by its attachment to the left forearm. The emphasis was no longer fighting with the shield, but fighting with the sarissa.

A mobility advantage would be enabled by the lighter shield and augmented by a further reduction in gear. By eliminating the breast plate, the phalangites would be lighter and could thus be faster and have more endurance than hoplites. The fact that Philip could not afford to add breastplates to the gear, made the choice all the more practical, faced with the task of raising as large an army as possible in a reasonably short time, as he was.

Philip used the hoplite example to outline the level of discipline and drill that would be expected of the new phalangite. To facilitate training, time would be set aside from everyday labors for all able bodied men to receive instruction and drill.

The light infantry peltast was next up for discussion.

With the farmlands of Emathia reclaimed, Philip inspected the potential fort site at Berrhoea, visited the ancestral home at Mieza and established an observation post at the mouth of the Haliacmon River, before turning his gaze toward Pella. Philip wanted to be thoroughly prepared and wanted the people to know that he was thoroughly prepared, when he returned to Pella as Regent.

Let the game begin!

Note: This prelude carries just past the death of Archelaus, which is the point where the game begins.