

Also The Dancing Ground Again

By Stone Riley © 2019

From his blog “Stone Riley's Shoebox”

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>>Explanatory Note

Here is a character-cementing chapter from a history romance novel called “Dark Of Light”.

We are among the Ancient Greeks, where we penetrate their mysterious religion by means of imagining human lives gathering, arriving at, and attending a religious festival, their sex and religious lives in other words, which look quite different from ours.

Given the world's situation I thought this would be good to show readers now.

But imagine something else for a moment... This is a tiny city somewhere on some rather isolated bit of land that yields fruit to early human agriculture, in the oldest layers of the Ancient Chinese Annals. Or indeed it may be somewhere else but similar

This farming settlement with their small sturdy housing clustered tight inside some sturdy simple wall, and a few trails leading away, and a few high windows where they keep watch, in a landscape, a rather isolated city with it own ways.

Imagine that. Perhaps among the Greeks, but only if it's in their Old Ancient Dark Age.

In other words, this is contrasting with the existing Greek novel of which the material below is a chapter. This little city we're imagining here is metaphorically CONTRASTING with the human life described below.

This little city we're imagining is to represent the Modern World.

Imagine that. And there is a story happening there in the Modern World's tiny city. They have gone berserk.

For long they've had organized militia obviously, organized in several squads, and they have one squad we're going to call the Western Modern World.

That squad recently cooked up an insane ideology of universal conquest. They laid waste to wells and fields and everything. The little city burns.

But that is all in contrast to the virtuous loving normal honest human life described below.

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>>Chapter from a history romance novel "Dark Of Light".

There was a moment when she knew her marriage bed and all of that would never be. Or rather when she knew that if all that were never done then still her priesthood would be worth the lack of it. Or rather when she first with conscious judgment chose her priesthood absolutely past all that, regardless what might be. It was so hard for boys to take a girl like her but by that time, that afternoon of choice, her dearest childhood chum already had a husband and a newborn.

A stitching bee. She was home for the holiday. Old Auntie Kettle plucked a random fussy little child from underfoot, examined it and knowingly declared "Oh, he wants to eat!" And with a glance about the little yard where they were sitting at the work she then of course thrust the hungry child into the bosom of the only healthy milking woman present. Of course, and yet . . .

Sixteen herself, her infant then days old, scarcely yet a week of life between she and the tiny one she loved above all else, and it her first, and never yet another child had she yet put to tit, and sleeping unsuspecting of this breach, this betrayal of a holy trust, this fracturing of sacred love, it sleeping unsuspecting nearby in a shady basket cradle wreathed with dainty flowers.

Old aunties know their work. There was a choice to make - community or selfishness - and now was time to get it made.

The young mother's face was blanched in horror and she stared.

And the priestess girl, the closest friend, the cousin tried and true, the intimate of bygone times, now come home for the holiday, was sitting just beside with mouth agape, astonished at the shock of such an ordinary thing. And her own tits were yearning to give suck. And yet she understood it all intensely without jealousy.

No spite and yet suddenly the tears burst out in panicked grief that such a life as this, of such surpassing beauty as this was, would not be hers. Where would her Goddess take her? Was she a stranger here already? The temple's early years - the years they gave the girls and boys who would apprentice back into the village rites - were almost done and no one thought that she would leave Elfesus. So could she ever again be home in this loved and dreaded village yard, this place of utmost courage? Was she a stranger here already?

Here was, in fact, the tragic fact that had and has informed great tragic song and poetry across that culture-world from Ur to Ireland. To live where they were living, with the means of living that were then in hand, humans must compromise continually between competing demands which were, despite the contraries of those demands, so doubtlessly innate to human nature or else so innate in the way that they perforce must live, as to be both, contrary though they were, doubtlessly sacred. These people danced a labyrinth with every step.

And then she understood that understanding this so well - that seeing this eternal tragic majesty of human life so well - was more than human heart could bear at such close reach. She was not made to be one of the aunties here where every instant of your life demanded so much acquiescence to the Fates. And this was just the very thing the village boys all feared of finding in her bed, this wish for knowledge over faith. This constant groping in the cavern of the well behind the eyes. This blaze of unaccounted thought. This laughter bursting from her weeping heart. Indeed, they understood her to be mad. And here and now - on this particular ground at this particular moment of this life - she was.

It can't be said the fit of laughing weeping took her unawares this second time. She felt it shadowed when she saw her well loved cousin start and stare. Then when the well loved cousin nodded, pulled the chiton down and held the hungry one to let the hands and lips seek out the teat, she felt it like a storm of knowing rushing up her spine. Then when an eager voluntary squirt dripped down the little cheek the fit came fully on.

She sat there slumped down on her stool just like the other time, the stitching things all fallen from her violently shaking hands and trod beneath her tapping feet, but this time knew exactly why she laughed and wept. The world was just so beautiful. And yet, what was the use of this? The dire frustration of these crippling fits - the inability to work, the liability it placed on her companions - all came exactly to this point: They who were so beautiful, how could she ever serve them as a lunatic?

But then her well loved cousin looked her in the eyes to gain attention, looked down at the child she had at breast, looked into her eyes again with dire anguish manifest in each contour of her face and silently clearly asked: "Dear priestess friend, is this a crime that I have done?"

Did they see she looked at things they did not see? Did they realize that this insanity was saturated all and all with holy revelation?

Apparently they did. For it was Auntie now who stood behind her quaking body, embraced to try to hold her shoulders still, and - even while her head was bobbing to and fro and even while the sobs and laughter barked out of her throat - the old matron bent to speak distinctly in her ear: "Is it a crime what I have done?"

The fit then passed immediately and never would return. She sagged into the old woman's arms. She gulped and gasped for breath. She cried out hoarsely as the spittle flew: "It is so beautiful! It is all so beautiful! There is such courage! What is good is done!"

And in that moment she had chosen priesthood far beyond all else.

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