

## SECTION 3

# OTHER "AMAZONS"

The Amazons were not the only women of the Bronze Age to hunt and fight like men. Legends from Classical Greece, describing characters who lived centuries ago, mention a number of strong, capable women.

### THE LEMNIAN WOMAN

At the same time that the Amazons of Themiscyra were at their peak, another nation of women rose and fell on the island of Lemnos. Unlike the Amazons, these women did not lose their men through war; instead, the men died at the women's hands.

Their story is told by Apollonius of Rhodes, and by Valerius Flaccus, as part of the saga of Jason and the Argonauts. (On their way from Greece to Colchis, the Argonauts stopped briefly at Lemnos.) Interestingly enough, the women lived in Myrine – a city named after the African Amazon who campaigned along the coast of the Aegean Sea in Asia Minor.

Previous to the arrival of the Argonauts, the men of Lemnos had been at war with the Thracians, who lived on the mainland to the north. They returned home with booty that included Thracian women with "stained hands and branded faces" who became their new wives.

(The "stains" referred to are tattoos. A vase painting from the Classical period shows an aged Thracian woman with tattoos on her wrists and neck. On both the inside and outside of each wrist are three wavy black lines that reach about midway to her elbow. Her throat is also marked with three wavy lines.)

The Lemnian women were outraged to see their homes usurped by strangers. Apollonius tells the story.

"In the previous year [before the arrival of the Argonauts] the women had run riot and slaughtered every male inhabitant. The married men, seized with loathing for their lawful wives, had cast them off, conceiving an unruly passion for the captured girls they brought across the sea from raids in Thrace. The Lemnian wives had for long neglected the homage due to [the love goddess] Aphrodite, and this was the angry Cyprian's punishment.

"Unhappy women! Their soul-destroying and insensate jealousy drove them to kill not only their husbands and the girls who had usurped their beds, but every male as well in order that they might not have to pay the price one day for this atrocious massacre.

"The only woman to forbear was Hypsipyle. She spared her aged father Thoas, who was king of Lemnos, and sent him drifting over the sea inside a chest, in the hope that he might yet escape. And so he did. Some fishermen dragged him ashore at the island then called Oenoe, but later renamed Sicinus

...

"The Lemnian women found it an easier thing to look after cattle, don a suit of bronze, and plough the earth for corn than to devote themselves, as they had done before, to the tasks of which Athene is the patroness. Nevertheless they lived in dire dread of the Thracians; and they cast many a glance across the intervening sea in case they might be coming.

"So when they saw the Argo rowing up to the island, they at once equipped themselves for war and poured out in a wild haste from the gates of Myrine, like ravaging Thyiads [maenads], thinking that the Thracians had come. Hypsipyle joined them, dressed in her father Thoas' armor. It was a panic-stricken rabble, speechless and impotent with fear, that streamed down to the beach ...

"[The Argonaut Aethalides persuaded] Hypsipyle, as the day was spent, to let the travellers stay there for the night. But even when morning came, bringing a breeze from the north, they did not cast their hawsers off.

"The Lemnian women made their way through the town to take their seats in the meeting place. Hypsipyle herself had summoned them, and when the great assembly was complete, she rose to give them her advice.

"My friends,' she said, 'we must conciliate these people by our generosity. Let us supply them with food, good wine, and all that they may want to have with them on board, so as to make sure that they shall never come inside our walls, or get to know us well, as they would do if they were driven by their needs to mingle with us freely. The evil news of what we did would travel everywhere. It was a great crime that we committed, and one by no means likely to endear us to these men, if they came to know it, or indeed to others. Well, you have heard what I propose. If any

woman among you has a better plan, let her stand up. It was for that purpose that I brought you here.'

"After Hypsipyle had finished and sat down on her father's marble throne, the next to rise was her dear nurse Polyxo, an aged woman tottering on withered feet and leaning on a staff, but non the less determined to be heard. Four young girls were sitting by her, their virginal appearance contrasting with Polyxo's crown of white hair. She made her way to the center of the meeting place, raised her bowed head with a painful effort, and began:

"Hypsipyle is right. We must accommodate these strangers; it is better to give than to be robbed. But that alone will not ensure your future happiness. What if the Thracians attack us, or some other enemy appears? Such things happen. And they happen unannounced – you saw how these men came. But even if Heaven spares us that calamity, there are many troubles worse than war that you will have to meet as time goes on. When the older ones among us have died off, how are you younger women, without children, going to face the miseries of age? Will the oxen yoke themselves? Will they go out into the fields and drag the ploughshare through the stubborn fallow? Will they watch the changing seasons and reap at the right time?

"As for myself, though Death still shudders at the sight of me, I have the feeling that the coming year will see me in the grave, duly and solemnly buried before the bad times come. But I do advise you younger ones to think. Salvation lies before you at your very feet, if only you will entrust your homes, your livestock, and your splendid city to these visitors.'

"Polyxo's speech was greeted with applause from every side. They liked her plan; and Hypsipyle immediately stood up again and said, 'Since you are all agreed, I will send a messenger to the ship at once.' And turning to Iphinoe, who was at her side, 'Go, Iphinoe, and ask the captain of this expedition, whoever he may be, to come to my house and hear what the people have decided – it will please him. And tell his men that they may land, if they wish to do so, without fear and come into our town as friends.' With that, she dismissed the meeting and set out for home."

Jason enters the city, and meets with Hypsipyle in the palace. She lies to him about the fate of the Lemnian men.

"When my father Thoas was king our men-folk used to sail across from here to the mainland opposite and raid the Thracian farmsteads from their ships. They brought home plenty of booty, and they brought women too. But that malignant goddess Aphrodite had for some time had her eye on them. And now she struck, depriving them of all sense of right and wrong. As a result they conceived a loathing for their wedded wives; they turned them out of doors; and then the brutes indulged their passion by sleeping with the captives of their spears.

"For a long time we put up with this. We hoped there might be a change of heart before it was too late. But the evil grew; and it had a double consequence. In every household, the lawful children were neglected, while a bastard generation was growing up. Meanwhile unmarried girls, besides the mothers who had lost their homes, were left to wander in the streets. No father took the slightest notice of his daughter; for all he cared, a cruel step-mother could kill her in his sight. No son was ready now to protect his mother from outrage. No brother loved his sisters as he should. Whether at home or dining out, dancing or talking politics, the men could think of nothing but the captured girls.

"But at last some god inspired us with a desperate resolve. We had the courage, when the men returned one day from Thrace, to shut the city gates against them, in the hope that they might come to their senses, or take themselves elsewhere, trollops and all. In the end they begged us for all the male children left in the town, and so went back to Thrace. And there they are now, making a living from its snowy fields.

"So I invite you all to stay here and settle with us. If you yourself accept and the prospect pleases you, my royal father's scepter shall certainly be yours."

Jason declines the offer, but he and his men spend several days on the island in the company of the Lemnian women. Only Heracles and a few of his companions remain on the ship, disdaining to enter the town.

Apollodorus also tells the story of the Lemnian

women, but cites disease as the reason the women were rejected by their husbands.

“At that time [that the Argonauts stopped at Lemnos] it chanced that Lemnos was bereft of men and ruled over by a queen, Hypsipyle, daughter of Thoas, the reason of which was as follows. The Lemnian women did not honor Aphrodite, and she visited them with a noisome smell; therefore their spouses took captive women from the neighboring country of Thrace and bedded with them.

“Thus dishonored, the Lemnian women murdered their fathers and husbands, but Hypsipyle alone saved her father Thoas by hiding him.

“So having put in to Lemnos, at that time ruled by women, the Argonauts had intercourse with the women, and Hypsipyle bedded with Jason and bore sons, Euneus and Nebrophonus...

“The Lemnian women, afterwards learning that Thoas had been saved alive, put him to death and sold Hypsipyle into slavery: wherefore she served in the house of Lycurgus [king of Nemea] as a purchased bondswoman.”

Other accounts list a different name for the second son of Hypsipyle and Jason: Deipylus.

Euneus, who became the next king of Lemnos, ruled during the time of the Trojan War; he supplied the Greek ships with wine.

After being purchased by King Lycurgus (or Lycus) Hypsipyle became a nurse for his son Opheltes. The boy was later killed by a snake while Hypsipyle was giving directions to a spring to a force of warriors on their way to attack Thebes.

Valerius Flaccus also tells the story of the Lemnian women. In his account, the goddess Rumor, at the direction of Aphrodite, stirs up jealousy in the women when they see their husbands returning from Thrace with captured flocks and women.

“[Rumor] departed and went down rejoicing into the midst of the city; she first accosts Eurynome at the house of Codrus near by, as she sat worn by anxious fears, still preserving undefiled her marriage bed; faithful to her husband she wearies her maids with wool spinning ...

“To her the goddess comes weeping, in the well known dress of Neaera<sup>1</sup> and with smitten cheeks, and says: ‘Ah, sister, would

that I were not the bearer of these tidings ... since at this moment the husband thou hast served so well ... is crazed, the servant of a bondslave’s shameful love. Yes, soon they will be here, and to thy bridal chamber there comes a Thracian woman, no match for thee in beauty, in skill with the distaff or in fair fame for chastity ... but a foreign woman with stained hands and a branded face.

“For all that, it may be thou wilt find some other bride bed to comfort thee for this loss and wilt choose some happier home; but I, I am maddened to think of thy children, their mother lost, condemned to a rival wife; and I see her [the Thracian] eyeing them askance, poor wretches! I see the deadly meats and the drugged cup ... a thirst for blood is in the Dahae. Soon, hard-reared amid frosts on wild beast’s milk, will she be here.

“‘Nay, rumor says that I too have been cast out by my husband, and some tattooed bride snatched from her wagon home shall lie in my bed.’

“With these words she broke off her tale of sorrow, leaving the other to doubt and weep and tremble. She passed on to Iphinoe, and spread the same fire in the homes of Amythaon and Olenius; next through the whole city she cries aloud, that the men are plotting to drive them one and all from Lemnos, that they and their Thracian women may rule the city.

“The tides of jealous rage and anger begin to rise. And all as they met one another passed on and heard again the same story, nor was any disbelieved. Then they call upon the gods with shrill lament, and now on their beds, now on the very door posts they shower kisses, and then again they tarry to weep and to look back. Forth they rush and seek no more their husbands’ roof and the bridal chamber; together they throng, and close-packed beneath the naked stars wail ever louder, calling down curses on these weddings and the fires of hell on these monstrous unions.

“Midst of them all, in the form of the sorrowing Dryope, [the goddess] Venus [Aphrodite] stands and weeps. Her fierce and passionate complainings never cease, and first she spoke: ‘O would that it had been my lot to find a home among the Sarmatians, to dwell amid the grim frosts and to follow a waggon, or even to have looked upon the flames devouring my father’s house, and the ruin of

our temples; for all the other misfortunes of war, are they not ours? What, does he, does that madman think to put the strange yoke of slavery on me? Or am I to flee the city and leave my little ones? No! Before they come, let us arm ourselves with swords and burning brands, and as they rest in slumber each by his new-found bride, love shall inspire some mighty deed!' She cast her flashing eyes around and dashed her children headlong from her breast.

"At once the women's minds were roused, their tender hearts overcome and swept along by the accursed cries of Venus; one and all gaze out across the sea, and then make show of dancing and of decking the temples with festal garlands, and with smiling faces go down to meet their returning husbands.

"Soon they depart to their homes to feast; they lie down in the high colonnades, by each man's side his wife, raging and eager to be doing ...

"Venus herself, whirling a pine torch in spires of flame, piles gloom on gloom, and, girt for the fray, sweeps down to quivering Lemnos; storm, lightning and peals are her escort from heaven ... Then through the terror-stricken air again and again she makes a strange cry ring ...

"And now Venus set her hands to yet another and more awful crime; she caused a sound of groans and cries of men struck down; she rushed into houses clutching a head still throbbing, with fresh blood staining her bosom and her hair streaming in terror.

"Look!' she cries, "I am the first to return; I have avenged the guilty bed! See, day is at hand!' She drives them before her lash into the chambers, and forces swords into their faltering hands ...

"They seize the doorways and fall upon the bodies of their once loved ones: some, upon the men that lay drowsed with feasting and drinking, others, armed even to fight and with huge torches, upon a few that slumbered not but saw all; but flee or take up arms they cannot for fear, so huge did the angry goddess make the women seem, and their voice rings louder than the wife they knew. They did but cover their eyes and their hands as though they saw the ranks of the Eumenides [fearsome goddesses]...

"Such the savagery of sister, of wife, aye, of closer kin, of daughter and of mother.

Caught in their beds woman drags forth and butchers the men ... Blood flows in the chambers, while in every breast there is a bubbling, smoking wound, and struggling pitifully the bodies roll from their beds.

"Some of the women hurl torches of destruction upon the roofs and add their homes to the ruin; some few men make haste to escape from the smoking fires, but their way is barred at the threshold by an unyielding wife, and at the sight of the sword they rush back into the flames.

"Others rend and tear the Thracian slaves, their men's undoing and the cause of these frenzied deeds; mingled groans, barbaric cries of supplication and unintelligible voices fill the air ...

"Daughters and the wives of sons, all beneath one impulse, had joined the throng, and now the whole island was ablaze with widespread deeds of horror. But good Hypsipyle, sword in hand, cries, 'Straightway flee the city, father, and me too; it is not enemy, no exulting Thracian holds the walls. This is our doing; ask not who bade us do it. Up and flee! Up and be swift to profit by my doubting spirit and do thou – O have pity – not I, grasp the sword!'

"Then she supported his limbs, and covering his head brought him swiftly in silence to Bacchus' shrine, partner of their secret, where upon the threshold she stretched forth her hands and said, 'Father Bacchus, save me from this sin, and have compassion once more upon thy votaries.'

"Then in the still shrine she placed him trembling, below the feet and the right hand of the god; gathered beneath the folds of the sacred robe no eye might see him ...

"When the Lemnian princess saw dawn mounting in her rosy chariot, and how at length silence had come upon every home ... she arrays her father in garlands, with the tresses of a youth and the robes of Lyaeus [an epithet of Bacchus], and causes him to stand in a chariot, while around him she places the cymbals and drums, and the caskets, full of mysterious awe. She herself twined the Bacchanal ivy about her bosom and her limbs, and brandished a vine-leaved wand that smote the air; looking back to see that her father in his robes should grasp the leaf-decked reins, that the horns should stand out from the snow-white coif, and that a sacred goblet should

bring Bacchus before men's eyes.

"Next with a harsh grating she thrust back the strong doors and moved onward through the city as she cried aloud: 'I pray thee, Bacchus, quit thy bloodstained dwelling place; let the sea cleanse thee of the pollution of death, and let me bring thy snakes again to the temple when they are purified.'

"Thus she went safe through the terrors about her path, for the god himself made her to be feared ... So now she hid the old man far from the cruel city in the silent forest; yet by day and by night fear troubles her, and the secret of her bold deed, and Erinys [female goddesses who punish blood guilt], cheated of her victim. No more she dares to join the dances of her companions – once only can the mock rites deceive – nor to visit in secret the glen that hides her father, while she must seek escape for him, poor wretch, by other means

"She beheld a ship outworn with the toils of the savage sea, long since offered up to Thetis and to Glaucus [deities of the sea], which passing time had scorched with its suns and the moon with her hoar-frosts had worn. Hither with all speed through the darkness and silence of midnight she haled her father from the woods ... he in fear escapes in the oarless ship afar, and reaches the dwelling of the Tauri and Diana's [Artemis'] sacred shrine ...<sup>2</sup>

"His daughter betook her to the citadel, whither an unkempt throng of women had gathered together. With harsh clamor they sat them down where fathers and sons had sat before, and amid the buildings of the empty city they made new laws. On Hypsipyle they bestow the throne and scepter of her father as by right, and a daughter's love has its fit reward.

"Lo! Afar off they descry warriors making towards Lemnos with sturdy strokes of the oar [the Argonauts]; the queen starts in sudden alarm, and calls councilors about her. No reckless rage lacked they to bring arms or fling brands [torches] upon the foe, had not [the fire god] Vulcan quelled the savage passions of Venus' stirring.

"Then too Polyxo, the priestess beloved of Phoebus [the god Apollo] ... [says] 'Oh trust me, it is destiny brings this ship, and the god that favors Lemnos has guided the Minyae [Greeks] hither across the sea. Freely doth Venus herself grant us to mate with them, while our wombs have strength and our years

are not past child bearing.'

"Her words find favor, and Iphinoe bears the entreaty shoreward to the Greeks; and they shrink not at the guilty people nor at the traces of yesterday's crime, for Cythera's queen [Venus] banishes all fear of the island."

In a later passage of the *Argonautica*, Valerius Flaccus uses the name Dryope for one of the "huntress nymphs" who kill Heracles' young lover Hylas. (According to Apollonius, the boy was drowned in a spring called Pegae, located in Mysia.) The way the women are described makes them sound like Amazons, particularly because they carry bows:

"... a comely troop of huntress nymphs, the pride of woods and waves. Light bows and green armlets have they all, and a shaft of myrtle-wood with tight-drawn strap. Knee-high are their skirts, and the straying tresses float and fall gently rippling to the band that confines the hidden breasts."

Apollonius describes them as women who go out into the woods at night, under a full moon, to hold dances and sing songs in honor of Artemis. While one of their members enters a sacred pool, the others are "posted some way off to patrol the woods."

These women are also described by the 3rd century B.C. writer Theocritus of Syracuse.

"Now in the midst of the water there was a dance of the nymphs afoot, of those nymphs who, like the water, take no rest, those nymphs who are the dread goddesses of the country folk, Eunice to wit and Malis and Nycheia with the springtime eyes."

Tim Severin, who re-enacted the voyage of the Argonauts, places the stream Pegae somewhere along the coast of the Sea of Marmara.

## ATALANTA

Atalanta (also spelled Atalante), whose name means "impassable one," was a woman of the Bronze Age who was a contemporary of both Bellerophon and Jason. (Her grandfather Athamas was the brother of Bellerophon's grandfather Sisyphus, and of Jason's grandfather Cretheus.) Raised to be a hunter, she took part in one of the most famous hunts of Greek legend – the Calydonian boar hunt.

Atalanta was the daughter of Schoenus (the son of Athamas), a Boeotian king. Other accounts list her as

the daughter of Iasus, king of either Tegea or Maenalus, and Clymene. (There may have been two women hunters named Atalanta, whose legends were later combined.)

As an infant, Atalanta was exposed by her father in a forest. (Abandonment in the wilderness was a common method of getting rid of unwanted children in the Bronze Age; the father of the child had the final say over whether it lived or died.)

According to legend, Atalanta was suckled by a bear and later found by hunters, who reared her. Skilled with the bow, Atalanta once faced down two Centaurs who tried to capture her, killing them with arrows.

Apollodorus tells the story.

“And Iasus had a daughter Atalanta by Clymene, daughter of Minyas. This Atalanta was exposed by her father, because he desired male children; and a she-bear came often and gave her suck, till hunters found her and brought her up among themselves.

“Grown to womanhood, Atalanta kept herself a virgin, and hunting in the wilderness she remained always under arms. The centaurs Rhoecus and Hylaeus tried to force her, but were shot down and killed by her.

“She went moreover with the chiefs to hunt the Calydonian boar, and at the games held in honor of Pelias she wrestled with Peleus and won.

“Afterwards she discovered her parents, but when her father would have persuaded her to wed, she went away to a place that might serve as a race course, and, having planted a stake three cubits (about 1.5 meters) high in the middle of it, she caused her wooers to race before her from there, and ran herself in arms. And if the wooer was caught up, his due was death on the spot, and if he was not caught up, his due was marriage.

“When many had already perished, Melanion came to run for love of her, bringing golden apples from Aphrodite, and being pursued he threw them down, and she, picking up the dropped fruit, was beaten in the race. So Melanion married her.

“And once on a time it is said that out hunting they entered into the precinct of Zeus, and there taking their fill of love were changed into lions. But Hesiod and some others have said that Atalanta was not a daughter of Iasus, but of Schoeneus. Euripides says that she was a daughter of Maenalus, and that her husband was not Melanion but Hippomenes.

“And by Melanion, or Ares, Atalanta had a son Parthenopaeus, who went to the war against Thebes.”

(In his play *Phoenissae*, Euripides says that Parthenopaeus' shield bore an image of “Atalanta subduing the Aetolian boar with her arrows shot from afar.”)

Hyginus says that Atalanta exposed Parthenopaeus so that she would appear to still be a virgin.

“Atalanta, daughter of Iasius, exposed a son by Meleager ... Shepherds found these boys [Atalanta's son and the son of Heracles and Auge, daughter of Aleus] and took them away and reared them, giving the name Telephus to the son of Heracles because a doe had suckled him, and to Atalanta's child the name Parthenopaeus, because she had exposed him on Mount Parthenius, pretending to be a virgin.”

Publius Papinius Statius, a Roman writer who was born around A.D. 40, mentions Atalanta's son Parthenopaeus as fighting in the battle of the Seven Against Thebes in his *Thebaid*. Statius gives the boy's father as Talaus.

“Thou too, Parthenopaeus, unknown to thy mother – unschooled, alas, in arms, such lure hath young ambition – speedest onward thy Parrhasian [Arcadian] cohorts. Thy warlike parent, so it chanced – not otherwise could the boy have left her – was bringing peace with her bow to distant glades, and the farther slopes of cool Lycaeus.

“No fairer face was there [than Parthenopaeus] of any marching to the grim hazard of war, none wins such favor for pre-eminent beauty ...

“Diana [Artemis] herself, when she saw the boy beneath the shade of Menalus stepping youthful over the grass, forgave her comrade [Atalanta, forgiven for not remaining a virgin] ... and with her own hand fitted to his shoulders the Dictean [Cretan] shafts [arrows] and Amyclean quiver.

“Smitten by dauntless love of war he dashes to the front ... his innocent shield adorned with his mother's Calydonian battles...

“And now the tidings had filled the ears of Atalanta, that her son was going a captain to the war, and rousing all Arcadia. Her steps

faltered and the darts fell by her side. Swifter than the winged wind she fled from the woodland, over rocks and brimming rivers that would stay her, just as she was, with snatched-up raiment and fair hair streaming behind her on the breeze ...

“When she halted and pressed her bosom on the reins that met her – he pale, with eyes downcast – [she said]: ‘Whence comes this mad desire, my son, whence this reckless valor in they young breast? Canst thou drill men to war, canst thou bear the burdens of [the war god] Mars and go among the sword-bearing companies?’

“‘Yet would that thou wert able! Lately I paled to see thee plying thy hunting lance in close conflict with a struggling boar, forced back upon bent knee and almost fallen, and had I not drawn my bow and sped an arrow, where now would be thy wars?’

“‘Nought will my shafts avail thee, nor my shapely bows, nor this black-spotted steed in whom thou trustest. Mighty are the endeavors to which thou hastenest and thou a boy scarce ripe for the embraces of the dryads or the passions of Erymanthian nymphs.

“‘Omens tell true: I wondered why Diana’s temple seemed to me of late to tremble, and the goddess herself to frown upon me, and why the votive spoils fell from her roof; this it was that made my archery slack and my hands to falter and never to strike sure. Nay, wait till thy prowess be greater, thy years more firm, till the shadow come upon thy rosy cheeks and my likeness fade from off thy face. Then I myself will give thee the battles and the sword for which thou dost burn, and no mother’s tears shall call thee back. Now take thy weapons home!’”

Atalanta, however, is unable to persuade her son to return home. He was killed at Thebes. Atalanta foresees his death in her dreams.

“Meanwhile the stern-eyed mother of the Tegean archer lad [Parthehnopaeus], troubled in her sleep by gloomy dreams, with flying hair and feet duly unsandaled was going before daybreak to Laodon’s chilly stream, that she might cleanse her from her tainted slumbers in its living waters. For throughout many a distracted, care-worn night she would often see spoils that she herself had dedicated fallen from the shrines, and herself, a fugitive from

the woodlands and chased away by dryad folk, wandering by unknown tombs, and often new-won triumphs of her son brought home from the war, his armor, his well known steed, his comrades, but himself never. Or again she would see her quiver fallen from her shoulders, and her own images and familiar likenesses aflame.

“But that night seemed to the unhappy woman to portend surpassing terrors, and disturbed all her mother’s heart. Well known throughout the forests of Arcadia was an oak of fertile growth, which she herself had chosen from a multitude of groves and made sacred to Diana [Artemis], and by her worship endued with power divine. Here she would lay by her bow and weary shafts, and fasten the curved weapons of boars [tusks] and the flayed skins of lions, and antlers huge as woodland boughs. Scarce have the branches room, so closely set is it with spoils of the countryside, and the sheen of steel mingles with the green shade.

“This oak tree, when once she was returning from the uplands tired with the long chase, and carrying in proud triumph the head late-severed of an Erymanthian bear, she beheld all hacked and torn with many a wound, its foliage fallen and its branches dripping blood and dying on the ground. In answer to her question a nymph told of the violence of cruel maenads and her foe Lyaeus.

“While she moaned and beat her breast with imaginary blows, her eyes cast off their darkness; from her sorrowing couch she leaps, and searches over her cheeks for the phantom tears.

“So when by dipping thrice her hair in the river she had atoned the sacrilege, and added words that comfort a mother’s troubled heart, she hastened to armed Diana’s shrine while the morning dew was falling, and rejoiced to see the familiar woodland and the oak tree all unharmed.

“Then, standing at the threshold of the goddess she prays thus, to no avail: ‘Maiden queen of the forests, whose ungentle standards and ruthless warfare I follow, scorning my sex, in no Grecian manner – nor are the barbarous fashioned Colchians or troops of Amazons more truly thy votaries – if I have never joined reveling bands or the wanton nightly sport, if, although stained by a hated union, I have nevertheless handled not the smooth wands nor the soft skeins, but even after wedlock

remained in the rough wilds, a huntress still and in my heart a virgin. If I took no thought to hide my fault in some secret cave, but showed my child and confessed and laid him trembling at thy feet – no puny weakling was he, but straightway crawled to my bow, and as a babe he cried for arrows in his first tearful accents. For him I pray.

“Ah! What means these nights of terror, these threatening dreams? For him, who now in confident hope, trusting overmuch, alas, in thee is gone to battle; grant me to see him victorious in the war, or if I ask too much, grant me but to see him. Here let him labor and bear thy arms. Make the dire signs of ill to cease ...

“But if sleep sends true presagings to my unhappy mind, I beseech thee, merciful Dictynna, by thy mother’s travail and thy brother’s splendor, pierce with all thine arrows this unblest womb! Let him first hear of his wretched mother’s death!

“She spoke, and beheld even cold Diana’s marble moist with falling tears.”

Hyginus describes the foot race slightly differently, giving the name of the winning contestant as Hippomenes.

“Schoeneus is said to have had a most beautiful daughter, Atalanta, who by her swiftness used to surpass men in the race. She asked her father that she might remain a virgin. And so, since she was sought by many in marriage, her father set up a contest, that her suitors should contend with her first in a foot race. Then, a limit being set, that the man, unarmed should flee, and she should pursue him with a weapon. The one she overtook within the limits of the course, she should kill, and fix his head up in the stadium.

“When she had overtaken and killed many, she was finally defeated by Hippomenes, son of Megareus and Merope. For he had received from Venus [Aphrodite] three apples of exceptional beauty, and had been instructed how to use them. By throwing them down in the contest, he had slowed up the speed of the girl, for as she picked them up and admired the gold, she lost time, and gave victory to the youth.

“Schoeneus willingly gave him his daughter because of his ingenuity, but as he was taking her home, forgetting that he had

won by the favor of Venus, he did not give thanks to her. While he was sacrificing to Jove Victor on Mount Parnassus, inflamed with passion through the anger of Venus, he lay with Atalanta in the shrine, and Jupiter because of this changed them into lion and lioness, animals to whom the gods deny the intercourse of love.”

Ovid agrees that the winning suitor was Hippomenes. He adds that, after the race, the pair made love in “a temple, hidden away in the depths of the woods, which the famous Echion once erected to the mother of the gods [Cybele] ... near the temple was a dim recess, like a cave, roofed over with natural rock, which had long been regarded as a holy place. In it, the priest had gathered together a large number of wooden statues of ancient gods.” Due to this sacrilegious act, the pair were turned into lions.

Hesiod also tells Atalanta’s story in his Catalogues of Women and Eoiae – but the surviving manuscript is fragmentary.

“... of the glorious lord ... fair Atalanta, swift of foot, the daughter of Schoeneus, who had the beaming eyes of the Graces, though she was ripe for wedlock rejected the company of her equals and sought to avoid marriage with men who eat bread ...

“Then straightway there rose up against him the trim-ankled maiden [Atalanta], peerless in beauty. A great throng stood round about her as she gazed fiercely, and wonder held all men as they looked upon her. As she moved, the breath of the west wind stirred the shining garment about her tender bosom. But Hippomenes stood where he was, and much people was gathered together. All these kept silence, but Schoeneus cried and said:

“Hear me all, both young and old, while I speak as my spirit within my breast bids me. Hippomenes seeks my coy-eyed daughter to wife; but let him now hear my wholesome speech. He shall not win her without contest; yet, if he be victorious and escape death, and if the deathless gods who dwell on Olympus grant him to win renown, verily he shall return to his dear native land, and I will give him my dear child and strong, swift-footed horses besides which he shall lead home to be cherished possessions. And may he rejoice in heart possessing these, and ever remember with gladness the painful contest. May the father of men and of gods ...’

“on the right ... and he, rushing upon her ... drawing back slightly towards the left. And on them was laid an unenviable struggle: for she, even fair, swift-footed Atalanta, ran scorning the gifts of golden Aphrodite. But with him the race was his life, either to find his doom, or to escape it. Therefore with thoughts of guile he said to her:

“‘O daughter of Schoeneus, pitiless in heart, receive these glorious gifts of the goddess, golden Aphrodite ...’

“But he, following lightly on his feet, cast the first apple: and, swiftly as a Harpy, she turned back and snatched it. Then he cast the second to the ground with his hand. And now fair, swift-footed Atalanta had two apples and was near her goal. But Hippomenes cast the third apple to the ground, and therewith escaped death and black fate. And he stood panting and...”

Atalanta also participated – much to the dismay of the male hunters in the legendary Calydonian boar hunt. According to Apollodorus, the boar was “of extraordinary size and strength” and was sent as a punishment by the goddess Artemis after King Oeneus of Calydon neglected to honor her. It “prevented the land from being sown and destroyed the cattle and the people that fell in with it.”

The king called together “all the noblest men of Greece” to hunt down the boar. Apollodorus lists more than a dozen nobles, including Oeneus’ son Meleager (an Argonaut), Theseus and Peirithous (who carried away the Amazon Antiope from Themiscyra), Jason, Iphicles (Heracles’ twin brother), Telamon (who fought with Heracles at Themiscyra), Dryas, Idas and Lynceus, Castor and Pollux, Admetus, Ancaeus and Cepheus, Peleus (the father of Achilles), Eurytion, Amphiaraus, and the sons of Thestius. Atalanta, daughter of Schoeneus, is also included in the list.<sup>3</sup>

“[Oeneus] promised that to him who should kill the beast he would give the skin as a prize ...

“And when they were assembled, Oeneus entertained them for nine days; but on the tenth, when Cepheus and Ancaeus and some others disdained to go hunting with a woman, Meleager compelled them to follow the chase with her, for he desired to have a child also by Atalanta, though he had a wife Cleopatra, daughter of Idas and Marpessa.

“When they had surrounded the boar, Hyleus and Ancaeus were killed by the brute,

and Peleus struck down Eurytion undesignedly with a javelin. But Atalanta was the first to shoot the boar in the back with an arrow, and Amphiaraus was the next to shoot it in the eye.

“But Meleager killed it by a stab in the flank, and on receiving the skin gave it to Atalanta. Nevertheless the sons of Thestius [Meleager’s uncles], thinking scorn that a woman should get the prize in the face of men, took the skin from her, alleging that it belonged to them by right of birth if Meleager did not choose to take it. But Meleager in a rage slew the sons of Thestius and gave the skin to Atalanta.

“However, from grief at the slaughter of her brothers Althaea [Meleager’s mother] kindled the brand, and Meleager immediately expired.<sup>4</sup>

“But some say that Meleager did not die in that way, but that when the sons of Thestius claimed the skin on the ground that Iphiclus had been the first to hit the boar, war broke out between the Curetes [spirits who guarded Zeus] and the Calydonians; and when Meleager had sallied out and slain some of the sons of Thestius, Althaea cursed him ... and having killed the rest of the sons of Thestius, he himself fell fighting.

“After the death of Meleager, Althaea and Cleopatra hanged themselves, and the women who mourned the dead man were turned into birds [guinea-fowls]”<sup>5</sup>

Ovid describes the boar hunt in his *Metamorphoses*. He starts with a description of Atalanta.

“The girl warrior from Tegea, the pride of the Lycaean grove, came too. A polished buckle fastened the neck of her garment, and her hair was simply done, gathered into a single knot. An ivory quiver, containing her arrows, hung from her left shoulder, and rattled as she moved, while she carried a bow as well, in her left hand. Such was her attire. She had features which in a boy would have been called girlish, but in a girl they were like a boy’s.”

Armed with spears and aided by dogs, the nobles pursue the boar through a dense forest. Echion misses with a spear, and Jason’s cast overshoots the mark and hits a tree instead. A spear thrown by Mopsus hits the boar, but because the metal spear point has fallen off

does little damage.

The boar charges and Eupalamus and Pelagon are thrown to the ground, to be pulled away just in time by friends. Enaësimus is gored behind the knees by the boar's tusks, and falls. Nestor, meanwhile, uses his spear to vault up into a tree, out of the boar's path. The boar stops to sharpen its tusks against a tree, then slices open the leg of Hippasus.

The twins Castor and Pollux come riding in on horseback, but both of their javelins miss as the boar plunges into a thicket. Telamon runs in after the boar, but trips and falls.

Then it is Atalanta's turn. "While Peleus was helping [Telamon] to his feet, the girl from Tegea fitted an arrow to her bowstring. Then, bending the bow, she sent the shaft speeding through the air. It grazed the top of the boar's back, and stuck just below its ear, staining the bristles with a thin trickle of blood."

Meleager points the blood out to his friends. The male hunters, "flushed with shame," press the attack. Ancaeus, using a two-headed axe, attacks the boar, saying that a man's weapons are superior to those of a woman. But the boar gores him "in that most vital spot" and he dies.

Peirithous rushes in with a spear, but Theseus stops him. Theseus' own spear winds up in a tree. Jason also throws wide, killing a dog by mistake.

Meleager then throws two spears. One misses, but the other hits the boar's back and fells it. He finishes the job with another spear at close range.

Meleager gives Atalanta the boar's hide and tusked head. The sons of Thestius protest, and refuse Meleager the right of presenting the spoils to her. Meleager uses his sword to kill both Plexippus and Toxeus, his uncles. Their sister, Meleager's mother Althaea, throws the brand into the fire, killing Meleager, then hangs herself.

Diodorus of Sicily also tells the story, adding the detail of an ambush in which the boar's skin trophy is stolen from Atalanta.

"Once when Oeneus had an excellent crop of grain, he offered sacrifices to the other gods, but neglected Artemis alone. Angered at him for this, the goddess sent forth against him the famous Calydonian boar, a creature of enormous size. The animal harried the neighboring land and damaged the farms, whereupon Meleager, the son of Oeneus, being then in the bloom of youth and excelling in strength and in courage, took along with himself many of the bravest men and set out to hunt the beast.

"Meleager was the first to plunge his javelin into it and by general agreement was

accorded the reward of valor, which consisted of the skin of the animal. But Atalanta, the daughter of Schoeneus, participated in the hunt, and since Meleager was enamored of her, he relinquished in her favor the skin and the praise for the greatest bravery.

"The sons of Thestius, however, who had also joined in the hunt, were angered at what he had done, since he had honored a stranger woman above them and set kinship aside. Consequently, setting at naught the award which Meleager had made, they lay in wait for Atalanta, and falling upon her as she returned to Arcadia took from her the skin.

"Meleager, however, was deeply incensed both because of the love which he bore Atalanta and because of the dishonor shown her, and espoused the cause of Atalanta. And first of all he urged the robbers to return to the woman the medal of valor which he had given her. And when they paid no heed to him he slew them, though they were brothers of Althaea.

"Consequently Althaea, overcome with anguish at the slaying of the men of her own blood, uttered a curse in which she demanded the death of Meleager, and the immortals, so the account runs, gave heed to her and made an end of his life."

Hyginus also tells the story of the Calydonian boar hunt.

"... the wrath of Diana [Artemis] sent a boar of huge size to lay waste the district of Calydon, because Oeneus had not made yearly offerings to her. Meleager, with the help of chosen youths of Greece, killed it, and gave the hide to the virgin Atalanta because of her valor.

"Plexippus, Lynceus ... brothers of Althaea, wished to take it from her. When she asked the help of Meleager, he intervened, and putting love before family relationship, killed his uncles.

"When Althaea, the mother, heard that her son had dared to commit such a crime, remembering the warning of the Parcae [Fates], she brought out the brand from the chest and threw it in the fire. Thus, in desiring to avenge the death of her brothers, she killed her son.

"But his sisters, all except Gorge and Deianira, because of their weeping, were by

the will of the gods changed into birds. These are called meleagrids [guinea hens]. And Alcyone, wife of Meleager, died from grief in mourning for him.”

Pausanias also mentions the hunt briefly: “Ankaios, son of Lykourgos stood up to the Calydonian boar although he was wounded, and Atalanta shot it and hit it first, and so Atalanta was awarded the boar’s head and hide as trophies.” He goes on to describe the Sanctuary of Alean Athena at Tegea, which featured a pediment carved with characters who took part in the boar hunt.

“The figures in the front pediment represent the hunting of the Calydonian boar, with the boar in the middle and on one side Atalanta and Meleager and Theseus, Telamon, Peleus, Polydeukes, Iolaos who shared most of Heracles’ labors, Thestio’s sons and Althaea’s brothers Prothous and Kometes. On the other side of the boar Ankaios already wounded and dropping his axe and held up by Epochos, Kastor beside him, Amphiaros son of Oikles, Hippothous son of Kerkyon son of Agamedes son of Stymphelos, and last of all Peirithous.”

Pausanias reports that in his day (the 2nd century A.D.) the hide of the boar still hung in the temple at Tegea, although it was “shriveled and left without a single bristle.” The temple had once also held the tusks of the boar, but these had been taken by the Roman emperor Augustus.

Both Diodorus of Sicily and Apollodorus list Atalanta, daughter of Schoenus, as one of the crew members of the Argo. Diodorus also mentions her in a passage in which the Argonauts are forced to fight off forces led by King Aeetes of Colchis, who pursued the Argonauts after they stole his golden fleece. Aeetes kills Iphitus, but ultimately the Greeks win after Meleager kills the Colchian king.

“The moment [King Aeetes] fell, the Greeks took courage, and the Colchi turned in flight and the larger part of them were slain in pursuit. There were wounded among the chieftains Jason, Laertes, Atalanta, and the sons of Thespius, as they are called. However they were all healed in a few days, they say, by Medea by means of roots and certain herbs ...”

But according to Apollonius of Rhodes, Atalanta was not permitted to join the expedition, despite bribing Jason. (When Jason visited the isle of Lemnos he was

carrying “a light spear that Atalanta had given him, when she welcomed him in Maenalus, in token of her friendship and strong desire to join him in the quest.”) Despite the gift, “[Jason] had dissuaded her, fearing the bitter quarrels that a lovely girl would cause.”

Callimachus also tells the story of Atalanta..

“[Artemis] didst greatly commend swift-footed Atalanta, the slayer of boars, daughter of Arcadian Iasius, and taught her hunting with dogs and good archery.

“They that were called to hunt the boar of Calydon find no fault with her, for the tokens of victory came into Arcadia which still holds the tusks of the beast.

“Nor do I deem that Hylaeus and foolish Rhoecus, for all their hate, in Hades slight her archery.”

Pausanias, in his Guide to Greece, mentioned a spring that was said to have been connected with Atalanta. It lay near Kyphanta and the Cave of Asklepios. “There is a stream of cold water running out of the rock: they say Atalanta came hunting here and when she was drooping with thirst she hit the rock with her javelin and the water ran out.”

Pausanias also describes a geographical feature called “Atalanta’s tracks,” which he guesses must have been located near Schoinous, the city named after Schoineus.

Atalanta was just one of the figures carved on a cedar-wood chest at Olympia that was described by Pausanias. She is shown beside Melanion (her husband), holding a fawn.

Images of Atalanta appear on painted vases from the Classical period. The Athenian painter Kleitias, about 560 or 575 B.C., created what is known as the Francois Vase, which shows the Calydonian boar hunt.

Atalanta, whose name is spelled Atalate, carries a hunting spear and marches behind Meleager and Peleus, and beside Melanion. She wears a thigh-length chiton and male armor, consisting of a corselet.

Atalanta also appears on a drinking cup by the painter Oltos, who worked between about 525 and 510 B.C. The subject is a wrestling match, presumably that of Atalanta and Peleus.

It was traditional for males to wrestle in the nude. Atalanta, however, wears tight-fitting shorts embroidered with a lioness (symbolic of her later transformation) and a skullcap that covers most of her hair.

Another drinking cup, dating to about 460 B.C., shows Atalanta standing in her wrestling garb (which includes a cap with an ear cover and chin strap, shorts embroidered with a palmette, and a bra-like top

embroidered with stars). She stands beside a winning post in the stadium with her oil flask and strigil (scraping stick) hanging above her. In her left hand is the slender stick carried by umpires and trainers of athletes.

Atalanta also appears on a fragment from an Athenian red figure mixing bowl. Here, she raises her hands above her head and wears the familiar skullcap. She also wears a bra-like top with cut-outs that reveal her breasts. (The fragment shows only her upper torso and face; details of the rest of her costume are lost.)

## AMYNONE

Amynone was the daughter of King Danaus of Argos, who led his family into arid Argos after fleeing Egypt. She seems to have been a hunter. Her story is told by Apollodorus.

“Amynone, in her search for water, threw a dart at a deer and hit a sleeping satyr, and he, staring up, desired to force her. But Poseidon appearing on the scene, the satyr fled, and Amynone lay with Poseidon, and he revealed to her the springs at Lerna.

Poseidon was said to have created the triple stream by striking a rock with his trident; the resulting river was named after Amynone.

Amynone was the mother, by Poseidon, of Nauplius, a famous sailor.

## ANTICLEIA

Anticleia was the daughter of a famous bandit. She was the mother, by either Sisyphus or Laertes (whom she married after becoming pregnant), of Odysseus. She died of grief while her son was away fighting at Troy.

Callimachus lists Anticleia as one of the hunters favored by the goddess Artemis: “... and fair Anticleia, they say, thou didst love even as thine own eyes.”

Together with Britomartis, Upis, Cyrene, and Procris, Anticleia was described by Callimachus as “the first who wore gallant bow and arrow-holding quivers on their shoulders; their right shoulders bore the quiver strap, and always the right breast showed bare.”

(The baring of the right breast by women who followed Artemis in the hunt bears an interesting parallel to the myths of Amazons mutilating their right breasts in order to make drawing a bow easier.)

Women especially favored of Artemis were said to be tall, a mark of beauty.

## BRITOMARIS

Britomaris, a famous hunter who came to be worshipped as a goddess on Crete (and was identified as Artemis by the Greeks) was the daughter of Carme and Zeus. She was contemporary with King Minos of Crete.

Callimarchus, in his Hymn to Artemis, mentions Britomartis as a favorite of the goddess.

“And beyond others thou lovest the nymph of Gortyn, Britomartis, slayer of stags, the goodly archer; for love of whom was Minos of old distraught and roamed the hills of Crete.

“And the nymph would hide herself now under the shaggy oaks and anon in the low meadows. And for nine months he roamed over crag and cliff and made not an end of pursuing, until, all but caught, she leapt into the sea from the top of a cliff and fell into the nets of fishermen which saved her.

“Whence in after days the Cydonians call the nymph the Lady of the Nets [Dictyna] and the hill whence the nymph leaped they call the Hill of Nets [Dictaeon], and there they set up altars and do sacrifice.

“And the garland on that day is pine or mastich, but the hands touch not the myrtle. For when she was in flight, a myrtle branch became entangled in the maiden’s robes; wherefore she was greatly angered against the myrtle.

Pausanias also tells her story, in describing a temple of Aphaia (another name for Britomartis) on the island of Aegina.

“Carme bore a child to Zeus whose name was Britomartis. Her pleasure was running and hunting and she was a particular friend of Artemis. Running away from Minos, who fell in love with her, she flung herself into a net let down for fishing. Artemis made her a goddess, and not only the Cretans worship her, but also the Aeginetans, who say Britomartis appears to them on their island. Her title in Aegina is Aphaia and in Crete Dictynna.”

Pausanias also briefly mentions a wooden statue of Britomartis, located on Crete and carved by Daidalos. He was of the opinion that this goddess was originally a mortal woman: “... in those days certain human beings were turned into gods and are still honored, like

Aristaios and Britomartis of Crete ...”

One sanctuary, at Sparta, was called a sanctuary of Issorian Artemis (also known as the lake goddess), but Pausanias adds: “she is not really Artemis, but Cretan Britomartis ...”

Peter Levi, who translated Pausanias, adds that there was a sanctuary to Britomartis at Chania on Crete that contained a 2nd century A.D. inscription, and at Chersonesos east of Heraklion (which included a late Classical inscription to her). She was also worshipped at Olous, Laton, and Lyttos.

## CALLISTO

Callisto (whose name is alternatively given as Megisto or spelled Kallisto) was the daughter of the Arcadian king Lycaon (or King Nycteus of Thebes, or Ceteus). Apollodorus tells her story.

“She was a companion of Artemis in the chase, wore the same garb, and swore to her to remain a maid.

“Now Zeus loved her and, having assumed the likeness, as some say, of Artemis, or, as others say, of Apollo, he shared her bed against her will, and wishing to escape the notice of Hera, he turned her into a bear. But Hera persuaded Artemis to shoot her down as a wild beast.

“Some say, however, that Artemis shot her down because she did not keep her maidenhood.

“When Callisto perished, Zeus snatched the babe, named it Arcas,<sup>6</sup> and gave it to Maia (one of the Pleiades, who lived in a cave on Mount Cyllene in Arcadia) to bring up in Arcadia; and Callisto he turned into a star and called it the bear.”

Pausanias tells the same story.

“Kycaon had a daughter Callisto with whom, according to the Greek legend, which I am simply repeating, Zeus fell in love. Hera caught him as he lay with her and turned Callisto into a bear, and then Artemis shot her dead to please Hera. But Zeus sent Hermes with orders to save his son, who was in Callisto’s belly. He turned Callisto into the constellation of stars called the Great Bear ...

“And apart from these stars are perhaps named in honor of Callisto, whose grave the Arcadians can show you.”

He later gives the location of Callisto’s grave:

“To the right from Trikolonoi [a city that was abandoned in Pausanias’ day] there is a road precipitous at first to a spring called the wells. In something under [six kilometers] down from the wells you reach Callisto’s grave, a high mound with a lot of trees on it, barren and cultivated trees alike. On the top of the mound is a sanctuary of Artemis Calliste.”

According to Pausanias, a statue of Callisto, done by Deinomenes (a sculptor mentioned as early as the 4th century) stood inside the acropolis at Athens. Pausanias briefly mentions that Callisto was turned into a bear.

He also mentions another statue of Callisto, this one dedicated by the Tegeans and located at Delphi. It was carved by Pausanias the Apollonian.

Callisto also appears on a painting depicting the fall of Troy; the painting decorated the Clubhouse at Delphi. She appears above Penthesileia, near women who carry water in broken pots, beside Nomia, and Pero, daughter of King Neleus of Pylus. “Callisto has a bear skin instead of a rug, and her feet are lying in Nomia’s lap. I have explained before that the Arcadians believe Nomia is a local nymph of theirs.”

## CAMILLA

Camilla, the daughter of Metabus and Casmilla, was a queen of the Volscians (a people in Italy). She led her people in a battle against Aeneas and those who had fled with him from Troy as a result of that city’s collapse in Trojan War. The battle takes place at Latium (Rome), then ruled by King Latinus.

Virgil tells Camilla’s story in the Aeneid. She is first mentioned in a passage in which Queen Amata of Latium prays that Camilla will defeat the Trojans who have besieged her city.

“Amata, the queen, with a great throng of matrons, rode to Pallas’ temple on the heights. Beside her the girl Lavinia, cause of all that evil [Amata had refused to betroth her daughter to Aeneas, thus causing the war], went with head bowed and downcast eyes.

“The women climbed on, and made the temple steam with incense, and from the threshold chanted sorrowful prayers: ‘O mighty power in war, Tritonian virgin, break off his spear, lay low the Trojan robber. Stretch him in death before our lofty portals.’”

Camilla sets out to battle beside Turnus, king of the Rutulians, an ally of Latium. She wants to battle Aeneas alone, but he suggests an ambush.

“To meet [Turnus] came Camilla and her Volscians. And she reigned in at the gate, dismounting quickly. And all her band, at her example, followed, listening as she spoke:

“Turnus, if courage has any right to confidence, I promise, I dare, to meet the horsemen of Aeneas. I dare, alone, to meet the Etruscan riders. Let me try, first, the dangers of the battle; you stay on guard as captain of the walls.’

“And Turnus, gazing at the warrior maiden, replied: ‘O glory of Italy, no words of mine can give you worthy thanks; your spirit surpasses all the rest of them. Share with me the work we have to do ...

“And meantime, high in the halls of heaven, Latona’s [Leto’s] daughter [Artemis] was talking to a nymph of hers, a maiden of her devoted company, named Opis. Diana’s [Artemis’s] words were sorrowful: ‘Camilla is going forth to cruel war, O maiden, our soldier, all in vain, and dearer to me than all the other girls; she has loved me long. It is no impulsive whim that moves her spirit.

“Perhaps you know the story – how her father, Metabus, ruler of an ancient city, became a tyrant and his people drove him in hatred from Privernum. And he fled through war and battles, taking as companion to share his exile the little infant daughter, Camilla, she was called, after her mother whose name was not so different: Casmilla.

“So he was going on, toward ridge and woodland, long roads to loneliness, holding his daughter before him on his breast, and weapons flying from every side against them, and the Volscians spreading the net of soldiers wide to catch him.

“But Metabus went on, and came to a river. Out of its banks, the swollen Amasenus foaming in flood from cloudburst. Could he swim it? He thought so, but he checked himself; he feared for the dear load he carried.

“He did some thinking, and suddenly, or not quite all of a sudden, he saw the only way. There was the spear his stout hand bore: it was strong and heavy, knotted of seasoned oak, and he bound his daughter to it, gently, with bark of cork wood all around her. And carefully, to keep the missile’s balance, and let

his right hand weight its left a little, and then made prayer: “O gracious woodland dweller, Diana, virgin daughter of Latona, I consecrate my daughter to your service. These are your darts she holds, the very first ones she ever carried; she comes to you, a suppliant who flees her foe through pathways of the air. Accept her, O dear goddess, I implore you. Make her your own. Her father, I commit her, now, to the dubious winds.”

“The arm drew back, the whirring spear shot forward, and the waters roared loud below. And over the rush of the river Camilla, on the whistling spear, went flying. And Metabus, as the great host came closer, dove into the flood, and safe across, a victor and happy, pulled the spear and girl together out of the grassy turf, his votive offering made to Latona’s daughter.

“No city ever received him to its walls or homes; he would not, in his wild mood, give in to any city. He lived with shepherds on the lonely mountains, and there, where wild beasts lurked, in thorn and thicket, he raised his child. His hands would squeeze the udders of wild mares for their milk.

“When she could stand and toddle a little, he armed her with a javelin, a tiny pointed lance, and over her shoulder hung quiver and bow. There were no golden brooches to bind her hair, no trailing gowns: her dress was black and orange tiger skin.

“Her hand grew used to tossing childish darts, or whirling the limber sling around her head; she learned to hit her targets, crane or snowy swan. And as she grew, many a Tuscan mother wanted her for this son, or that, but vainly. Diana was her goddess, and she cherished, intact, an everlasting love – her weapons, her maidenhood, were all she knew and cared for.

“I wish she had never been so possessed, so ardent for soldiery like this, attacking Trojans instead of meeker game; she would have been the one most dear of all my dear companions.

“But now a bitter doom weighs down upon her. Therefore, O nymph, glide down from heaven to Latium, where, under evil omens, men join battle. Take these, my bow, my arrows, from my quiver. Draw the avenging shaft. His life is forfeit, Trojan, Italian, whoever he is, whose wound profanes the sacred body of Camilla.

“And when she has fallen, I will bring her home by hollow cloud, both warrior and armor unspoiled, untaken, to her native country – home to her tomb, poor girl ...’

“In the thick of the fight Camilla rages, wearing her quiver like an Amazon, one breast exposed. She showers javelins, she plies the battle axe, she never tires. Her shoulder clangs with the golden bow, Diana’s weapon. If ever, turning back, she yields, the arrows are loosed from over her shoulder; even in flight she makes attack.

“Around her, chosen comrades, Larina, Tulla, and Tarpeia brandish axes of bronze. She chose them as her handmaids, good both in peace and war, Italian daughters, Italy’s pride, like Thracian Amazons warring in colorful armor in the country where Thermodon River runs, and women warriors hail fighting queens with battle cries or clash the crescent shields together.

“First and last, Camilla struck men down: who knows how many she brought to earth in death? Clytius’ son, Euneus, faced her first, and her long spear pierced his unguarded breast. Rivers of blood poured from his mouth; he chewed red dust, and dying writhed on his wound.

“She stabbed the horse of Liris, and the rider fell, and reached for the reins. Pagasus stretched out a hand to help him, to break his fall, and Camilla slew the pair of them together.

“Amastrus next, Hippotas’ son: far off her spear caught up with four, Tereus, Chromis, Harpalycus, Demophoon. For each dart sent flying from her hand, a Trojan fell.

“Far off she saw the huntsman Ornytus, riding a native pony, in strange armor. He wore a steer’s hide over his wide shoulders, and wolf’s head for a helmet, with the jaws, wide open, grinning above his head. He carried a rustic kind of pike, and he was taller, by a full head, than all the others, easy target for any dart.

“She cried above him: ‘What did you think, O Tuscan? You were chasing beasts in the woods? The day has come when boasting like yours is answered by a woman’s weapons. But after all, you take to the shades of your fathers not little cause for pride: Camilla killed you!’

“And then she slew Orsilochus and Butes, two of the mightiest Trojans, stabbing Butes

with spear point in the back, between the helmet and breastplate, where the flesh shone white, and shield hung down from the left arm.

“Orsilochus she fled from first, and, driven in a circle, became in turn, pursuer; and, rising higher, brought down the battle axe, again, again, through armor and through bone. His pleas for mercy availed him nothing; the wound he suffered spattered his face with his warm brains.

“Next in her way and stunned to halt by abject terror came a son of Aunus, an expert at lying like all Ligurians. He could not escape her, and knew he could not, but he might outwit her, or so he hoped. ‘What’s so courageous, woman always on horseback? Forget the hope of fleeing, dismount, meet me on equal terms. Try fighting on foot for once. You will learn, I tell you, something – the disillusion of that windy glory.’

“She took the challenge, burned with angry temper, turned her horse over to another, savage in equal arms, confronting him undaunted with naked sword. He leaped into the saddle, much pleased with his sly stratagem, drove the rowels deep in the flanks, took off.

“‘O vain Ligurian, swollen with pride of heart, that slippery cunning will never get you home to father Aunus!’ So cried Camilla, and flashed like fire across the horse’s path, grabbed at the bridle, hauled him to earth and shed his blood ...

“Then Arruns, as the fates would have it, started stalking the fleet Camilla with the javelin, ahead of her in cunning. He took no chances, seeking the easiest way.

“When that wild maiden dashed fiercely into the battle, there he followed stealthily in her footsteps, or turned the reins when she came back victorious. This way, that way, wary in each approach, he circled after, the sure spear quivering as he poised and held it.

“It happened Chloereus, Cybele’s priest, was shining far off in Phrygian armor, spurring a horse covered with leather, scales of brass and gold and the rider was a fire of foreign color, launching his Cretan darts. The bow was golden, the helmet golden, and the cloak of saffron, so stiff it had a metal sound, was fastened with knots of yellow gold; some foreign needle had worked embroidery into hose and tunic.

“Camilla picked him out from all the

battle, either to take that spoil home to the temple, or flaunt the gold herself; she was a huntress in blind pursuit, dazzled by spoil, a woman reckless for finery.

“Arruns caught up his spear and prayed ... Apollo granted the downfall of Camilla; the returning safe home was not to be ... So the spear, whirring, spun from his hand; the sound turned all the Volscians with anxious eyes and minds to watch their ruler.

“She heard no stir in the air, no sound, no weapon along the sky, till the spear went to its lodging in the bare breast and drank the maiden blood.

“Her frightened comrades hurry, catch her falling, and Arruns, frightened more than any other, half joy, half fear, makes off ...

“Dying, she pulls at the dart, but the point is fast, deep in the wound between the ribs. Her eyes roll, cold in death; her color pales; her breath comes hard.

“She calls to Acca, her companion, most loved, most loyal: ‘I have managed, Acca, this far, but now – the bitter wound – I am done for. There are shadows all around. Hurry to Turnus. Take him this last direction: to relieve me here in the fight, defend the town, keep off – farewell!’

“The reins went slack, the earth received her, yielding her body to its cold, resigning the sagging head to death. And she let fall, for the last time, her weapons, and the spirit went with a moan indignant to the shadows.

“And then indeed the golden stars were smitten by a wild outcry; with Camilla fallen, the fight takes on new fierceness: all the Trojans rush in ...

“High in the mountains Opis, Diana’s sentinel, unfrightened, had watched the battle and seen, through all that fury, Camilla slain in pitiful death. She sighed and spoke with deep emotion: ‘Cruel, cruel, the punishment you pay, poor warrior maiden, for that attempt to battle down the Trojans! It comes to nothing, all the lonely service in woodland thicket, the worship of Diana, the wearing of our arrows on the shoulder.

“‘And even so, in the last hour of dying, your queen [goddess] has not forsaken you, nor left you unhonored altogether. Through the nations this will be known, your death, and with it, surely the satisfaction of your vengeance. He whose wound profaned your body will die as he deserves to ...’

“Camilla’s squadron was first to flee, their leader lost ... No one can halt the Trojans now...

“Along the walls [of Latinum] the mothers try to be fighters – love of country taught them. And as they saw Camilla do, fling weapons with trembling hands, or grasp at stakes or oar poles to do the work that steel should do ...

“Meanwhile, to Turnus in his forest ambush the terrible news is borne. Acca reports it, the Volscian ranks destroyed, Camilla fallen ...”

## CYRENE

Cyrene (also spelled Kyrene) was the daughter of Hypseus, king of the Lapiths (or of the river god Peneius). Known as a hunter, she was another favorite of the goddess Artemis. Callimachus writes: “Yea and Cyrene thou madest thy comrade, to whom on a time thyself didst give two hunting dogs, with whom the maiden daughter of Hypseus (Cyrene) beside the Iolcian tomb (the tomb of Pelias) won the prize.

Pindar tells the story of Cyrene in his 9th Pythian Ode.

“Cyrene, once, from Pelion’s wind-echoing dells, Leto’s son [Apollo], the flowing-haired, caught up and in a golden car. [He] bore away the huntress-maiden to the place where he made her queen of a land rich in flocks, yea richest of all lands in the fruits of the field, that her home might be the third part of the mainland of earth [the continent of Africa], a stock that should bear lovely bloom.

“And silver-foot Aphrodite awaited the Delian stranger issuing from his car divine, and lightly laid on him her hand. Then over their sweet bridal bed she cast the loveliness of maiden shame, and in a common wedlock joined the god and the daughter of wide-ruling Hypseus, who then was king of the haughty Lapithai ...

“Now the child [Hypseus] reared was Cyrene of the lovely arms. She was not one who loved the pacings to and fro before the loom, neither the delights of feasting with her fellows within the house, but with bronze javelins and a sword she fought against and slew wild beasts of prey. Yea and much peace and sure she gave thereby to her father’s herds...

“Once as she struggled alone, without

spear, with a terrible lion, he of the wide quiver, far-darting Apollo, found her. And straightway he called [the Centaur] Cheiron from his hall and spake to him aloud:

“‘Son of Philyra, come froth from thy holy cave, and behold and wonder at the spirit of this woman, and her great might, what strife she wagem here with soul undaunted, a girl with heart too high for toil to quell; for her mind shaketh not in the storm of fear.

“‘What man beget her? From what tribe was she torn to dwell in the secret places of the shadowing hills? She hath assayed a struggle unachievable. Is it lawful openly to put forth my hand to her, or rather on a bridal bed pluck the sweet flower? ...’

“[Cheiron answered]: ‘To wed this damsel camest thou unto this glen, and thou art destined to bear her beyond the [Mediterranean] sea to a chosen garden of Zeus, where thou shalt make her a city’s queens, when thou hast gathered together an island people to a hill in the plain’s midst. And now shall queenly Libya of broad meadow lands well please receive for thee within a golden house thy glorious bride, and there make gift to her of a portion in the land, to be an inhabiter thereof with herself.

“Neither shall it be lacking in tribute of plants bearing fruit after all kinds, neither a stranger to the beasts of chase. There shall she bring forth a son, whom glorious Hermes taking up from his mother’s arms shall bear to the fair-throned Hours and to Earth ... and they shall make him as an immortal ...’

“That same day [Apollo] made accomplishment of the matter, and in a golden chamber of Libya they lay together; where now she haunteth a city excellent in beauty and glorious in the games.”

Cyrene was the mother, by Apollo, of Aristaeus and the seer Idmon.

A city named Cyrene lay on the northern coast of Africa, just east of the Libyan Sea. According to Greek legends, it was founded by descendants of the Trojan Antenor, who later welcomed settlers led by Battus of the Isle of Thera.

## DAPHNE

Daphne (whose name translates as “Laurel”) was born either in Arcadia or was the daughter of the Thessalian river god Peneius. She enjoyed hunting,

with female companions, along the banks of the Ladon River.

Pausanias tells her story in describing the Springs of the Ladon.

“Oinomaos the lord of Pisa had a son called Leukippos who fell in love with Daphne, and knew he could never have her by straight wooing because she ran away from all men whatsoever, so he thought of a trick. Leukippos grew his hair long for the river Alpheios so he plaited his long hair like a young virgin and put on women’s clothes and went to Daphne and said he was Oinomaos’ daughter [Oeno] and wanted to go hunting with her. She believed he was a virgin girl of a much grander family and a much more brilliant huntress than the other girls, and besides he was extremely attentive to her, so that he and Daphne became close friends.

“Those who celebrate Apollo as her lover add to all this that Apollo was jealous of Leukippos’ success in love. So Daphne and the other young virgins suddenly wanted to swim in the Ladon, and stripped Leukippos against his will. When they saw he was not a young girl, they stabbed him to death with their hunting knives and spears.”

In another version, Daphne’s unwanted suitor is the god Apollo. When he chased her through the woods, she prayed to the goddess Ge, and was turned into a laurel tree. The frustrated god broke off one of her branches, and thereafter wore it on his head; the laurel was thus sacred to Apollo.

## PROCRIS

Procris was another favorite of the goddess Artemis. Callimachus writes: “And the fair-haired wife of Cephalus [Procris] ... thou madest thy fellow in the chase.”

The story of this hunter is told by Apollodorus.

“Procris [was married] to Cephalus, son of Deion [king of Phocis]. Bribed by a golden crown, Procris admitted Pteleon to her bed, and being detected by Cephalus she fled to Minos.

“Now if any woman had intercourse with Minos, it was impossible for her to escape with life, for because Minos cohabited with many women, [his wife] Pasiphae bewitched him, and whenever he took another woman to

his bed, he discharged wild beasts at her joints, and so the women perished.

“But Minos had a swift dog and a dart that flew straight; and in return for these gifts Procris shared his bed, having first given him the Circaean root to drink that he might not harm her.

“But afterwards, fearing the wife of Minos, she came to Athens and being reconciled to Cephalus she went forth with him to the chase; for she was fond of hunting. As she was in pursuit of game in the thicket, Cephalus, not knowing she was there, threw a dart, hit and killed Procris, and being tried in the Areopagus, was condemned to perpetual banishment.”

## **SPHINX**

A woman known only as “the Sphinx” led a tribe of bandit raiders in Boeotia. Pausanias describes her lair, which lay in the region of Thebes. (The mountain was three kilometers from Onchestos.)

“Further on is the mountain where they say the Sphinx had her lair. From here she sprang, chanting her deadly riddle; though some say she was a pirate with a wandering fleet, who put in at Anthedon, occupied this mountain, and used it as a base for raiding until Oedipus captured her with an overwhelming army he brought from Corinth.

“Another legend says she was a bastard daughter of Laius [king of Thebes], and Laius, who loved her, told her the message given to Cadmus by Delphi: no one else but the kings knew about this oracle. (It had instructed Cadmus to follow a cow and found his city on the spot where it lay down.)

“The oracle was handed on only to Epicaste and Epicaste’s children, not to the sons of Laius by his mistresses; so if ever one of these brothers came to claim the throne from the Sphinx, she used a trick on them, saying that being Laius’ children they must know the prophecy made to Cadmus. When they had nothing to answer, she condemned them to death for fraudulently laying claim to royal blood and to the throne. But when Oedipus arrived he knew the prophecy from a dream.”

Apollodorus turns this woman – bandit leader or claimant to the throne – into a monster (just as the

bandit Chimarrhus was), and gives her a different riddle.

“For Hera sent the Sphinx, whose mother was [the snake-woman] Echidna and her father Typhon; and she had the face of a woman, the breast and feet and tail of a lion, and the wings of a bird. And having learned a riddle from the Muses, she sat on Mount Phicium [north of Thebes], and propounded it to the Thebans.

“And the riddle was this: ‘What is that which has one voice and yet becomes four-footed and two-footed and three-footed?’

“Now the Thebans were in possession of an oracle which declared that they should be rid of the Sphinx whenever they had read her riddle; so they often met and discussed the answer, and when they could not find it the Sphinx used to snatch away one of them and gobble him up.

“When many had perished, and last of all Creon’s son Haemon, Creon [king of Thebes] made proclamation that to him who should read the riddle he would give both the kingdom and the wife of Laius.

“On hearing that, Oedipus found the solution, declaring that the riddle of the Sphinx referred to man; for as a babe he is four-footed, and as an old man he gets besides a third support in a staff.

“So the Sphinx threw herself from the citadel, and Oedipus both succeeded to the kingdom and unwittingly married his mother...”

## **SYRINX**

Syrinx was a native of Nonacris, in Arcadia, who chose to remain a virgin. This hunter was pursued by Pan, and ran to the Ladon River. Unable to cross it, she prayed to the water nymphs, who transformed her into a clump of reeds. Pan used the reeds to make pipes.

## **UPIS**

Upis (also spelled Opis) was another favorite of the goddess Artemis, according to Calimachus, who writes: “Upis, O [Artemis], thee too the Cretans name after that nymph.”

She is also mentioned by Apollodorus, who writes: “Orion was killed, as some say, for challenging Artemis to a match at quoits, but some say he was shot by Artemis for offering violence to Opis, one of her maidens who had come from the Hyperboreans.”

Pausanias, in his description of Megara, mentions her also: "Girls before their marriage traditionally bring pitchers to Iphinoe's memorial and cut a lock of hair on it, just as young girls in Delos used to cut theirs to Hekaerge and Opis."

The two are also mentioned by Herodotus.

"There is also a story that before the time of Hyperoche and Laodice, two other Hyperborean girls, Arge and Opis, came to Delos by the same route. [Through Scythia to the Adriatic, south to the Dodonaean and on to the Malian gulf. Across to Euboea, and from town to town to Carystus. From Tenos they went to Delos.] Hyperoche and Laodice came to bring to Ilithyia, who presides over childbirth, the thank offering which they had promised for easy labor, but Arge and Opis came to the island at the same time as Apollo and Artemis, and are therefore honored in a different way; for the women of Delos make collections for them, and name them in the hymn which Olen of Lycia wrote in their honor a ceremony which the other islanders, and the Ionians too, have learned from the women of Delos. And the ashes from the thigh bones burnt upon the altar are all scattered upon the tomb of Opis and Arge, where it stands behind the temple of Artemis, facing east, close to the banquet hall of the Ceians."

The first two Hyperborean maidens carried sacred offerings wrapped in wheat-straw to Artemis' shrine on Delos. They died there, and were honored by young men and women who mourned them by cutting off a lock of their hair. Herodotus adds: "The girls, before they marry, cutting off a lock, which they twist round a spindle and lay upon the tomb; the boys twisting a strand of hair round a new shoot from some plant which, like the girls, they too lay on the tomb."

The first two Hyperborean maidens were guarded by five men, known as the Perpherees.

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<sup>1</sup> In Greek mythology, it was common for a goddess to take over the body of a mortal – or at the very least, put words into her mouth. Rumor is using Neaera in this fashion.

Neaera is also the name given to the mother, by the sun god Helios, of Lampetie and Phaethusa. These daughters served as herders of the god's cattle and sheep on the island of Thrinacia (possibly Sicily).

Another woman, also named Neaera, was the daughter of Pereus. She married her father's brother,

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king Aleus of Arcadia, and by him had a daughter, Auge (who was seduced by Heracles), and three sons: Lycurgus, Amphidamas, and Cepheus.

Yet another Neaera was married to Strymon (possibly a Thracian river god) and had a daughter named Evandre.

<sup>2</sup> The Taurians, to whom Iphigenia was taken by Artemis, were ruled by a king named Thoas. Both Valerius Flaccus and Hyginus believed him to be the former king of Lemnos.

<sup>3</sup> Hyginus gives the list of hunters as follows: Castor and Pollux, Eurytus (and possibly his twin brother Cteatus, since part of the text is missing here), Parth--, ... Echion, Aesculapius, Jason, Alcon, Euphemus, Iolaus, Lynceus and Idas, Peleus, Telamon, Admetus, Laertes, Deucalion, Theseus, Plexippus, ... Ideus and Lynceus (sons of Thestius), Hippothous, Caeneus, Mopsus, Meleager, Hippasus, Ancaeus, Phoenix, Dryas, Enaesimus, Alcon and Leucippus, and Atalanta.

Ovid notes that Caeneus "had once been a woman." He adds other names to the list: Acastus, Phyleus, Lelex, Panopeus, Hyleus, Nestor, a son of the seer Ampycus, and a contingent sent by Hippocoon from Amyclae.

<sup>4</sup> When Meleager was just an infant, the Fates prophesied that he would die when a brand (piece of wood) in the fireplace had been completely burned. Althaea snatched it out of the fire and placed it securely in a chest.

<sup>5</sup> Artemis was said to have turned the women into birds by touching them with a rod. The birds were transported to the isle of Leros, where they were kept in a sanctuary and tended by priests. Worshippers of Artemis refrained from eating the guinea-fowl.

<sup>6</sup> The name Arcas means "bear."