

## **Intro:**

This my take on the historical story of a Greek noble by the name of Alcibiades. Alcibiades lived in the 5th century BCE and was one of the leading figures in the bloody Peloponessian war, being known especially for frequently switching sides throughout the war. He started out as one of Socrates's lovers, and quickly rose through the ranks of Athenian society before becoming a government official. From there, he contributed to starting the Peloponessian war, after which he switched sides first to Sparta, then Persia, then back to Athens, before finally settling in Persia where he was later assassinated. It was a troubling time and many records of what exactly happened were lost, leaving much open to interpretation. There is also a small element of Greek mythology thrown into the mix as a way to prove that with so few records, there is really no way of knowing exactly what did or didn't happen.

-Simon

## **Story:**

Many years ago, when man was still new to this world and the power of gods walked among us, using the planet to exact their wrath upon each other, there were a number of fledgling nations in the region now known as Greece. The three most powerful of these were Athens, Sparta, and Persia, each controlled by one of the 3 most powerful gods in the area. Athens and Sparta were in constant conflict as the brothers Zeus and Poseidon struggled to gain power over each other. While Persia, controlled by their outcast brother Hades, struggled to maintain the fragile balance of power and thus prevent his hated brothers from turning on him. For both Athens and Sparta had a coalition of loyal gods backing them and were they ever to stop fighting each other and instead turn their attention towards Persia, they would surely crush Hades with their combined strength.

Many years had passed since the last major conflict, and both Athens and Sparta were prospering during the peace. Tensions had eased, and old betrayals had been long forgotten. There was even talk of a treaty between the two nations, an alliance that would bind them together forever. This was unacceptable to Hades, so he devised a plan. In Athens, there was a young man by the name of Alcibiades who was favored by many of the gods. Lover and student of the great Socrates, he was well respected both for his looks and quick mind by the people of Athens. And so, when he was eventually elected to the leading military council of Athens, the nation rejoiced, for surely he would usher in a new era of prosperity for the realm. But this was not the case, for Hades had corrupted the mind of the young man and used him as a pawn to undermine his brothers. Under the influence of Hades, Alcibiades proposed a series of plans to

undermine Sparta that started with an expedition to capture a nearby colony. Apollo, an avid supporter of war with the Spartans, backed this proposal and forced the council to approve the expedition, placing Alcibiades at its head. But the Spartan emissary Dionysus heard of the expedition, and the night before it was set to leave he invited Alcibiades to one of his famed parties in his private villa, where he bewitched Alcibiades and sent him on a rampage through the streets of Athens, destroying statues of the Athenian gods and causing havoc throughout the city. This angered the Athenian gods, but they were slow to react. And by the time they had figured out what happened, Alcibiades had already left on the expedition.

Alcibiades sailed with his army towards the island of Sicily, where the Spartan colony lay waiting. However, halfway there a messenger by the name of Hermes caught up to them and demanded that Alcibiades return with him to Athens where he would await his execution, for in his rampage he had managed to defile one of Apollo's holy relics. Alcibiades reluctantly agreed, but as he turned his ship around to sail home, he prayed to the Spartan god Poseidon to save him from his fate, promising anything in return for his safety. Poseidon heard his prayers, and the seas turned hostile towards the messenger, giving Alcibiades and his ship time to escape to the safety of Spartan waters.

Upon reaching Sparta, Alcibiades was greeted by the Spartan king Ares and his queen Aphrodite. He thanked them for their kindness, and as a show of trust told them of the Athenian expedition. The Spartan king, charmed by Alcibiades, appointed him chancellor before leaving to crush the expedition. He ended up being gone for many years fighting the Athenians, and in his absence Alcibiades, with the help of Hades, grew more and more powerful. But the king returned unexpectedly, where he found Aphrodite with a child. For while he was away, Hephaestus, the queen's former lover, had tricked her into unknowingly conceiving a child with Alcibiades. With a warning from Hades, Alcibiades was able to avoid the king's wrath and flee to Persia and the palace of his master.

Hades welcomed Alcibiades into his court, where he once again became a trusted advisor. But back in Greece, the war between Athens and Sparta had started to tip in Sparta's favor. Fearing that Sparta would conquer Athens and upset the balance of power, Hades once again sent Alcibiades on a series of missions to assist Athens. Alcibiades devised a series of battle plans to use against the Spartans, which he would give to the Athenians on the sole condition that he would be welcomed back into their society. The Athenians reluctantly accepted, and under the lead of Alcibiades managed to win a string of battles with the Spartans. Zeus, impressed with his courage and quick mind, appointed Alcibiades to be the first ever grand general of Athens, giving him control of all military operations and armies in the nation. Alcibiades, confident that his newfound power was enough to protect him, broke away from the control of Hades and devised his own plans. Plans that would win the war for Athens, allowing them to seize power in the region and overwhelm Persia.

With the war nearing an end, Alcibiades geared up for one final battle against the Spartans. A battle that would ultimately decide the course of history for many years to come. In command of

the Athenians fleet, Alcibiades set sail for the Spartan capital, where the Spartan fleet lay waiting. The two fleets crashed into each other, and for a short while it seemed that the Athenians would win the day. But Hades, angered by Alcibiades's betrayal, vowed destroy him. Hades cursed Alcibiades, rendering him insane for the duration of the battle and causing him to send orders that plunged the Athenian armies into chaos. The Spartans, sensing a chance to turn the tide, charged the disorganized Athenians and decimated the fleet, crippling the Athenian army forever.

Alcibiades, realizing what had happened, returned to Athens to plead his case. But his pleas fell on deaf ears, as too many Athenians had lost their lives due to his actions. With the people calling for his execution, Alcibiades fled Athens once again, hoping to hide in the vast Persian countryside. But with the war nearing its end, each of the gods sent assassins after Alcibiades, hoping to kill him before he could sow any more chaos. They eventually caught up to him in his villa in the Persian countryside, where they killed him as he slept. Not long afterwards, the Spartans captured the city of Athens and forced them into submission, upsetting the balance of power and plunging the region into decades of war and strife. The power of the gods waned, and humanity grew more and more independent. Borders changed and temples were forgotten. New people rose to power and fell just as quickly, and the war was all but forgotten. But there were some who remembered, who passed the legend down throughout the generations, who told the story of a young man by the name of Alcibiades.

### **Bibliography:**

I didn't use any specific sources for this story. I've been studying history quite a lot this past year or two, and the topic of Alcibiades has always interested me. The basic narrative and many of the details came from Mr. Wilson's freshman history class and conversations with my friend Joel when we were designing an agora class on the topic. But I also had a few conversations with my mother about the topic, who has taught classes at the U of I about Socrates, and thus knew some of the other parts of Alcibiades's story. Those two sources combined made up most of what I needed to know for this narrative, but I also supplemented it with some basic greek mythology that I had learned as a child. I can't think of any other sources that influenced this story, but I'll be sure to add them if I remember.