

[Attolian Archives](#)

***The Queen of Attolia*, Chapter 8: International Relations Go Boom**
by **Noelle** and **Caitlin**

Opening quote:

Noelle: “Spring came earlier on the coast than it did in the mountains, and Sounis’s summer was already near when the king’s magus woke one morning in the last hour before dawn with his ears ringing to find his room awash in moonlight. There was a sound like thunder still lingering in the air, and he left his bed to look out the window.

‘There isn’t much to see from here,’ said a voice behind him. ‘You need a view of the harbor.’

The magus turned to look for the Thief of Eddis and saw a shadow standing in a corner out of the moonlight.

‘Eugenides,’ he said. He had recognized the voice.

‘Yes.’

‘What have you done?’

[Intro music]

Caitlin: You’re listening to the Attolian Archives, a Queen’s Thief reread podcast that aims to answer that very question: just what has Eugenides done?

Noelle: A heck of a lot in our chapter for today, which is Chapter 8 of *The Queen of Attolia*. After 5 solid chapters of smoldering in the emotional wreckage of Chapter 3, Gen is back in action with a bang, and what action it is! In 19 pages, Gen destroys the Sounisian navy, kidnaps the magus,

upends the military landscape, and inadvertently starts a rumor that he's boning his cousin.

Caitlin: It's March 10th, 2019.

Noelle: Let's get to it. So in our last episode we talked a lot about the destruction of the navy even though it doesn't happen until this chapter, because we were just so excited about it [Caitlin laughs]. And it really is sooo satisfying.

Caitlin: Mm-hm.

Noelle: Cause if you're reading this for the first time, it's uncertain whether Gen is gonna be up to his old tricks again. And in this chapter you finally get assurance that he is back in action.

Caitlin: Yeah. And in the best possible way.

Noelle: Yeah. A detail that I think is interesting about the way that he does this is that he destroys the navy when all the sailors are on shore, having this festival that celebrates their navy superiority. And so he accomplishes two goals with that: one is ethics—Gen doesn't want to destroy the navy when there are people on the ships.

Caitlin: Mm-hm.

Noelle: And also—irony! It's funny! And it's an example of something that Chip has brought up a couple of times, which is that Gen always finds a way to succeed on all fronts.

Caitlin: Mm-hm. And that's one of the things that makes this return to power so satisfying because it's also—not only is it a political victory, but it's also personal, in his relationship with the magus.

Noelle: Mm-hm.

Caitlin: So—something that this made me think about, when you think about Gen’s relationship with other people in the series, you kind of think that the relationship with the most ups and downs is his and Attolia’s [Noelle: Mm-hm] but his relationship with the magus has just as many ups and downs and, like, revenge moments as Attolia’s! [both laugh]

Noelle: And there’s that thing about how there are these personal relationships and then there’s the politics, [Caitlin: Mm-hm] and the politics are always muddying the personal relationships and vice versa! Gen ruins the magus’s life in this chapter! And the magus is angry, he says he’s too old to be ... something ... by somebody I thought was a friend.

Caitlin: Yeah.

Noelle: And Gen reminds him, hey, five seconds ago you were trying to get your king to take over *my* country!

Caitlin: Mm-hm.

Noelle: So it’s very personal and very impersonal.

Caitlin: Right. And Gen points out it was the magus himself who spurred Gen to this course, to this point of action, saying “you could still do something”.

Noelle: Mm-hm [both laugh]. “That’s not what I meant, Gen!” Every character has a moral weakness, or a point where their moral world becomes different in relation to nationalism, and patriotism.

Caitlin: Mm-hm.

Noelle: It's a whole other arena where they do things that they would never otherwise do to each other.

Caitlin: Mm-hm.

Noelle: Nationalism creates divisions between people.

Caitlin: Right. Who are brought together in other ways, not by their nationality but by their interests or by personal feelings, instead of being divided by nationalism.

Noelle: Mm-hm.

Caitlin: So Gen's turning point in this chapter from his previous passivity to coming back into the political arena is even highlighted in the descriptions of this scene. When the magus wakes up with the boom of the cannons, Gen is in his room, Gen is in shadow.

Noelle: Mm-hm.

Caitlin: And then "I can steal anything,' Eugenides corrected him. 'Even with one hand.' He took a step forward into the moonlight" (106 2006). So even the smallest details are revealing in this way, are echoing what's happening in him as a person.

Noelle: Mm-hm. And it reminds me looking forward of one of my favorite lines from *The King of Attolia*, "Eugenides was like a god revealed."

Caitlin: Mm-hm.

Noelle: He steps into the moonlight and the truth of him that the magus hadn't realized becomes transparent, which is that he is still extremely dangerous and unpredictable.

Caitlin: Right. It's a side of him that he didn't—well, okay. I was going to say it's a side of him that he didn't realize was still there but I would even go further than that, actually, and say that it's a side of Gen that the magus has actually never seen before.

Noelle: Mm-hm.

Caitlin: Because they talk in this chapter about political naïveté—when they're talking about politics, it's clear to the magus that Gen is now much more ruthless than he was before. That he has a completely different perspective on politics now, he's now—he's grown up, as Chip was saying in the last episode.

Noelle: Yeah he's changed a lot.

Caitlin: Yeah.

Noelle: He says "I would have much preferred to slit Sounis's throat while he slept." (112 2006).

Caitlin: Mm-hm.

Noelle: And there's an ambiguity, I think you can make the argument that he's bluffing.

Caitlin: True.

Noelle: He said, "I would have much preferred to slit Sounis's throat while he slept, but his heir is hardly ready to inherit the kingdom, and we can't

have a civil war in Sounis for the Mede to step in and resolve, can we?” (112 2006) And so Gen has found an excuse both not to kill the king of Sounis and not to put Sophos in the position of having to rule a kingdom before he’s ready, which would be extremely dangerous for him. And so Eugenides—he’s found a way to make his personal goals politically expedient for everyone.

Caitlin: Mm-hm. And just thinking about the point you brought up a little while ago, how nationalism changes the personal relationships between all of these characters—Eugenides says something in relation to that that’s kind of equalizing. He says—when the magus is telling him “you know, it would have been better if you had convinced Eddis to surrender” it says “‘One thing I see,’ Eugenides said, ‘is that everybody is always willing to throw someone else’s country to the dogs’” (112 2006).

Noelle: Mm-hm. Yeah, I don’t think that’s something he would have said in *The Thief*, even if he was being honest.

Caitlin: Right.

Noelle: I think Gen has a much more romantic view of the relationships between countries and the position of Eddis in *The Thief* than he does in this book.

Caitlin: Yeah. Totally.

Noelle: Which is interesting, because in terms of relationships this is probably the most romantic book.

Caitlin: Mm-hm [both laugh].

Noelle: It's centered around a love relationship, and also ... an optimism about how relationships can resolve. But the politics are much more pessimistic.

Caitlin: Mm-hm.

[Music plays for ad break]

Noelle: Do you have a series of young adult novels that you have a lot of opinions about? Thinking of making your own podcast and wondering where we host ours? Well, let me take a second to tell you about Anchor, the easiest way to make a podcast. Seriously, it's so easy. It's totally intuitive, it takes out a lot of the leg work, and it's completely free, which is awesome. There are creation tools that allow you to record and edit a podcast directly into Anchor from your phone or computer - you also don't have to, you could upload a podcast you've created with your own tools, like we do. And Anchor will distribute your podcast for you, so that people can actually hear it, on Apple Podcasts, Spotify, and all the major platforms. Another bonus is you can make money from your podcast with no minimum listenership. It's everything you need to make a podcast in one place. Download the free Anchor app or go to anchor.fm to get started.

[Music ends]

Noelle: Gen is still passive aggressive about that damn cart [Caitlin laughs]. It's been how long?

Caitlin: It's been like a year and a half?

Noelle: [Laughing] Yup. And he goes "You see how well-planned this adventure is, I arranged not only a cart but a chariot as well, asshole!" [both laugh]. He doesn't say asshole. Ugh! We weren't gonna swear. [Laughs] That might be a lost cause.

Caitlin: That's another aspect of this series that I really enjoy, that even when they're doing all of this and wrecking each others' lives there still is that levity that reminds you that there are deeper connections between them.

Noelle: Yeah.

Caitlin: And that even though they go through these ups and downs they still care about each other at the end of the day. And that their relationships are strong enough to withstand this pressure that the political situations put on them.

Noelle: Yeah. The interactions between Gen and the magus in this chapter are really complicated.

Caitlin: Mm-hm.

Noelle: Because they're *deeply* angry at each other.

Caitlin: Yeah.

Noelle: And this is a profoundly difficult situation, and the stakes are high. But it never feels ... The magus makes a joke about how he'd be happy to see Gen fall and die, and Gen smiles cause he's like [laughing] oh, you know, "the first real joke of this evening."

Caitlin: And the punchline of the joke is the magus doesn't actually want that, that's what's supposed to make it funny.

Noelle: Yeah!

Caitlin: Is that he's just kidding.

Noelle: [Overlapping] But it's sort of like what he's supposed to say in this context, like they're playing parts, almost.

Caitlin: Right.

Noelle: And, ooh, brings us back to my pet theme of this book which is performance!

Caitlin: [Overlapping] Aaah!

Noelle: It's a, ah, it's almost a game.

Caitlin: Yeah. And I think that's a huge part of why after all this they can eventually make it back to emotional equilibrium with each other.

Noelle: Mm-hm.

Caitlin: Because part of it is performative, and there's a difference between their political roles where they're taking these actions against each other, and the personal, where they do actually, like, like each other [Noelle laughs].

Noelle: And speaking of performance, there's a lot in this chapter about taking advantage of other people's perceptions, of rumors. At first Gen wants people to believe he's still in his room and he's still incapacitated.

Caitlin: Mm-hm.

Noelle: And once that cat get out of the bag, a rumor is semi-accidentally started that he and Helen are romantically involved, and they take advantage of that, because if people are paying attention to that they won't see what's really going on. It's like a magician's misdirection.

Caitlin: Mm-hm.

Noelle: And at the same time, Attolia is continuing to make it seem to everyone around her, including those closest to her, that she is totally on board with the Mede. We know from having read this book that she is not, but everything about the narration, everything about what she does suggests that she is in bed with them hook line and sinker.

Caitlin: Yeah. Figuratively [both laugh]. Yeah it says ...

Noelle: [Overlapping] And that's a performance she's putting on!

Caitlin: Right! It says in Relius's, semi-Relius's narration, it says Attolia had been showering favors on the Mede.

Noelle: Yeah. And nobody—it's almost like, ah, like she's overdoing it.

Caitlin: Yeah.

Noelle: But nobody questions it. Because they underestimate her, I think.

Caitlin: Right. And it's—another aspect of that is, or well no, I guess this is probably—you tell me if you think this is her main goal here. Eddis, and probably everyone else, assumes from Attolia quote unquote showering favors on the Mede that she's also politically involved with them.

Noelle: Mm-hm.

Caitlin: But she's not.

Noelle: Mm-hm.

Caitlin: So do you think Attolia is being so warm to Nahuseresh in order to create that misconception, or is she leading him on to lead him on?

Noelle: I think—

Caitlin: [overlapping] And like the perception is a byproduct of that.

Noelle: Hmm.

Caitlin: I don't know if I'm being clear enough, but do you get what I'm saying?

Noelle: I think Attolia's first and foremost goal is keeping the Mede happy.

Caitlin: Mm-hm.

Noelle: So they don't see what cards she actually has up her sleeve.

Caitlin: Right.

Noelle: If they think she's docile then they'll get docile. But, hmm, there's a question of whether Eddis and Sounis thinking she's treating with the Mede is to her advantage right now.

Caitlin: Right.

Noelle: Which I don't know that it is.

Caitlin: Mm, even if she thinks it is, that's the reason they're trying to depose her.

Noelle: Yeah.

Caitlin: So it's not, but maybe she doesn't see that.

Noelle: Mm-hm. Or maybe she sees it as a necessary byproduct of how she has to deal with the Mede right now, because I don't see her having a lot of other options?

Caitlin: Yeah.

Noelle: She can't just kick them out, because that would start a conflict.

Caitlin: Right, and she can't actually give them anything what they want.

Noelle: Yeah.

Caitlin: But this is a way to promise them what they want and not have to give it to them.

Noelle: Yeah. So she's kind of walking a tightrope here.

Caitlin: Right. So after the navy is blown up, that starts an incredible domino effect for the war. After that, pirates who were probably Attolians, joined forces and burned two Sounisian cities, Sounis attacks Attolian islands in revenge, Eddis and Sounis become allies, Sounis gives her grain and she promises to give cannon. Which, side note, cannon is the plural in this book, which we just had to Google [both laugh].

Noelle: Like "is that, is that really correct?" Yeah apparently you can do both, cannons or cannon.

Caitlin: Yeah. And cannon is apparently more common in Australia and the UK, but we're in the US so that's why we're so confused.

Noelle: Yeah, Megan Whalen Turner's American [Caitlin laughs] but this is fantasy Europe, ish.

Caitlin: Yeah.

Noelle: It's like how movies set in Europe, no matter where they are in Europe, if people are speaking English they have English accents [both laugh].

Caitlin: Yeah. So continuing, ok. So Sounis gives her grain and she promises cannon, Sounis takes two islands, Chios and Sera, Attolia takes the island Capris and almost takes Anti-Capris, cool names, ok.

Noelle: There's a lot of trading islands back and forth.

Caitlin: Yeah. She takes the eastern end of Cymorene, but then she's also moving her army up Eddis's pass. Two more grain shipments reach Eddis and Sounis really really really wants the cannon. Eddis almost had the cannon in the pass to fire on Attolia's army, but Attolia's army retreated before she could fire. And that's what you missed [laughs].

Noelle: I feel like they're playing Settlers of Catan. Eddis is like alright I've got a whole hand of sheep, please somebody take my sheep [both laugh]. I'm gonna look up the etymology of the word cannon real quick, just out of curiosity [sound of typing]. "The word cannon, circa 1400, it comes from the Anglo-French word canon, which comes from the Italian cannone "large tube or barrel," which comes from the Latin canna, a reed or a tube.

Caitlin: Hm!

Noelle: And that's what you learned on the Attolian Archives today! That comes from the Online Etymological Dictionary, my favorite resource. One more moment I wanted to bring up is when Gen assures the magus that he

will be an honored guest in Eddis and he won't be treated poorly. And the magus, he said, "Whether I spend the rest of my life in comfort in Eddis or in jail won't be historically significant." And then Gen says, "If all you cared about was historical significance, you could have stayed in bed until the king's guard came for you" (111, 2006). And that is another attitude that's wrapped up in this idea of the personal and the political and playing roles. The magus is concerned about his life, but his primary goal after "don't die" [Caitlin laughs] is how will I be remembered when I do die, and what am I accomplishing?

Caitlin: Mm-hm.

Noelle: And it's all about *greatness*, and changing the world, making your mark.

Caitlin: Yeah. The magus has always been very big picture.

Noelle: Yeah, yeah.

Caitlin: Definitely more than anyone else you see in *The Thief*.

Noelle: Yeah. And I think the magus, he's gotten used to being a big fish in terms of big-picture thinking, and I think Gen sort of comes out of left field and smacks him in the side of the head [both laugh]. "Oh ho ho, you think *you're* thinking long term ... what if I become a god while you were out?" [Caitlin laughs]

Caitlin: That's chapter 8! Next week, it's story time again!

Noelle: If you have any thoughts about Chapter 9 that you'd like us to discuss in the upcoming episode, lingering questions about Chapter 8, art, songs, anti-equine hate mail, drop us a line at attolianarchives.tumblr.com

Both: Be blessed in your endeavors

[Outro music]

Noelle: [Overlapping] Thank you for listening, this is an Amateur Embroidery Production. Has anybody seen my peace? Or my time? I think somebody might have taken it. See you next time.