

SEEKING SOCRATES

CHORUS 2: WAR WITH SPARTA



Some say it was pride that made war inevitable. Others lay the blame on Pericles who, knowing that Athens would need his leadership in time of battle, persuaded the Assembly to turn against its powerful neighbor just 150 miles to the south. Sparta.

Life in Sparta was tough. And made that way by design. The city, ruled by an oligarchy of wealthy families, placed the needs of the group above those of the individual. Young boys, taken from their families at age 7, began military training and lived in barracks far from home. They went barefoot and ate only what was needed to stay fit. Young girls were expected to train as well, to produce strong offspring who could protect and defend the city in the future. Courage in battle—valor—was prized beyond art, freedom or love. Cowards were ridiculed in public, made to shave their beards, and shunned... Spartan warriors were fierce.

No wonder, then, that Sparta bridled when Athens gained control of the Delian League—an alliance of city-states first formed to protect the Greeks against further attacks by the Persians. Sparta would not join. They would not pay taxes--or tribute--to a league that was only an Athenian empire in disguise. True, the magnificent fleet of Athens was unmatched at sea. But on land, the armies of Sparta were king.