

The Origin of Chivalry: to Please Men's Ego not to Benefit Women

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“Oh, this one’s on me.”

“Here, let me get that for you.”

“Ladies first.”

Phrases such as these are uttered daily by countless men as they graciously expedite simple life tasks to benefit women. But when did it become common practice for men to do so? This chivalry stems further back than the time of the Renaissance, to the times of ancient Greece!

Aphrodite, the goddess of love, was a popular crush for many of her male counterparts. Soon, she captured the hearts of both Ares and Dionysus who fell madly in love with her yet were unaware of the involvement of the other. Aphrodite, being the beautifully cunning immortal she was, allowed the men to live in this ignorance for quite some time. She divided herself equally between the two of them and her separate love affairs continued on for many years. However, Cupid was not pleased with this. He was used to fostering an environment for a man to fall in love with a woman, not for a complicated love triangle. After many attempts, he successfully revealed to Ares that Aphrodite had another suitor.

This sparked the competitive side of Ares who was then determined to win the heart of Aphrodite. Once Dionysus was also aware of the love triangle, he too refused to relinquish his feelings for the goddess. Thus the competition between who could be the better boyfriend began.

Soon, every god and goddess was aware of this dispute and they began to pick sides as to who they thought deserved the hand of Aphrodite. Delighting in the attention, Aphrodite eagerly accepted the dual love and even began suggesting possible gift ideas to her lovers. For quite some time, she was given a constant supply of presents from both Ares and Dionysus, but this game ended when Zeus found out.

He stormed to Aphrodite and chastised her for being so selfish and deceiving. He hypocritically admonished her for juggling multiple relationships and decided there must be an end to the whole affair. Since he knew Aphrodite needed to make a choice, he enlisted the help of Janus who came up with the idea for a final test: whichever god created the kindest gesture would win Aphrodite’s heart.

As the men scrambled to plot the best, most loving action, Janus came up with a plan of his own. Once the day of the competition arrived, Ares was chosen to go first. He approached Aphrodite and read a declaration pledging that he would give of himself to destroy any of her enemies in battle. She

could not help but laugh at his cocky demeanor and beckoned for Dionysus to begin. The second god approached with a cup of what he called "œa drink made with love" yet when Aphrodite took a sip, she nearly gagged at the pungent bitterness.

By then a crowd had gathered and a sigh passed through them all as they realized Aphrodite's choice would now be even harder to make. Aphrodite ran to Janus and said she would need a day to decide. The god offered to walk with her back to her home. Along the way, Aphrodite collected an array of flowers to decorate her living quarters but when they arrived, her hands were too full for her to open the door. Seizing the moment he had been waiting for, Janus sprinted to the door and held it open for Aphrodite. She was beside herself with how kind this gesture was and immediately thanked Janus who had already fallen in love with her.

Ares and Dionysus, who had followed the pair, were jealous of how happy such a simple task made their love that they felt silly for what they had done earlier. It was in this moment that both gods realized their foolishness and made a mutual agreement to pursue other goddesses with the hope of wooing them with the same chivalry of Janus.

As Ares and Dionysus went their separate paths, they began to hold doors open for their crushes or to carry large loads for them and soon the entire divine world was doing the same. The relationships between gods with humans allowed chivalry to spread throughout the entire world as it changed into the modern convention it is now.