

# BIOGRAPHY



KALLIPATEIRA



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# THE GIRL WHO BROUGHT VICTORY

**CHARACTER:** KALLIPATEIRA

**DATES:** ?

**COUNTRY OF ORIGIN:** GREECE

**HISTORICAL PERIOD:** ?

**SUMMARY:** Kallipateira lived in 4th century B.C. Greece.

She was the daughter of the famous athlete Diagoras.

At that time, women were forbidden to participate in the Olympic Games either as athletes or spectators, especially if they were married. They might risk being sentenced to death for going against the rules.

Kallipateira had two sons; so, widowed, she replaced her husband as a coach and disguised as a man to accompany her youngest son to the Games.

**KEY WORDS:** OLYMPICS, WOMAN, FORBIDDEN

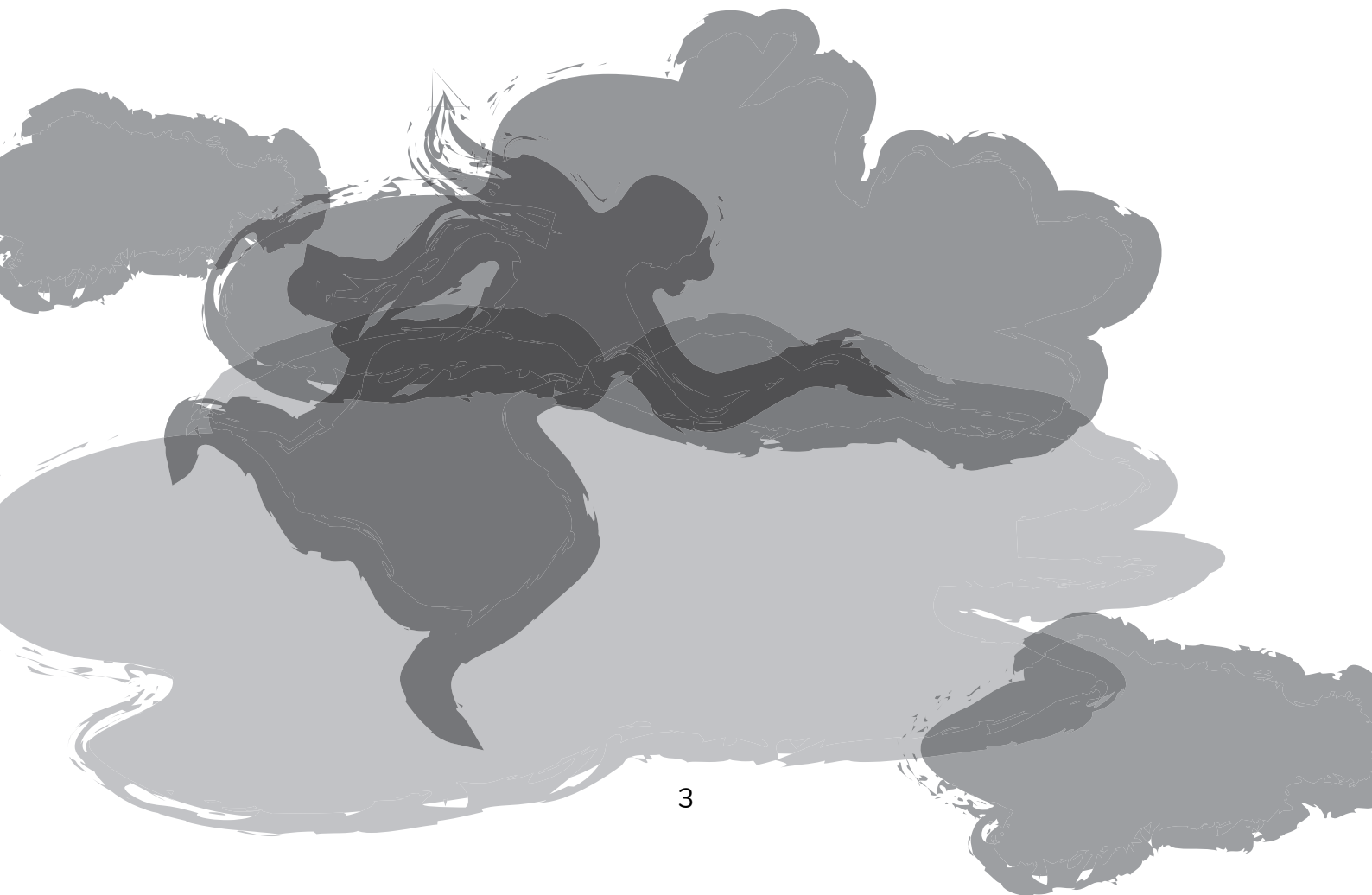
**GENRE:** BIOGRAPHY

**AGE:** 7 - 8 YEARS

**AUTHOR:** Barbara Lachi

# THE GIRL WHO BROUGHT VICTORY

Hidden among the sage and lavender bushes, Kallipateira was lying stretched out, breathing in deeply the intense scent released by the flowers, and moved by the gentle sea breeze. She kept her eyes open watching the clouds speeding across the sky. Sometimes she wished she could be a cloud to run free without anyone stopping her from doing so, but by now the wedding drew near. She would become a married woman and would not even be allowed to watch her own brothers run. If they caught her doing so, they would take her to the road leading to Olympia on Mount Typaeum, and from there, they would throw her into the deadly void.



Running was like breathing to her; Kallipateira loved to run. That was how she discovered her island, running through the narrow streets and paths of Rhodes, along the long sandy beaches, up into the milk-colored mountains surrounded by soft hills that followed one another like the waves in the sea. The scent of thyme and red lentils, myrtle and oregano accompanied her runs, and twined around her hair, leaving a trail behind her.



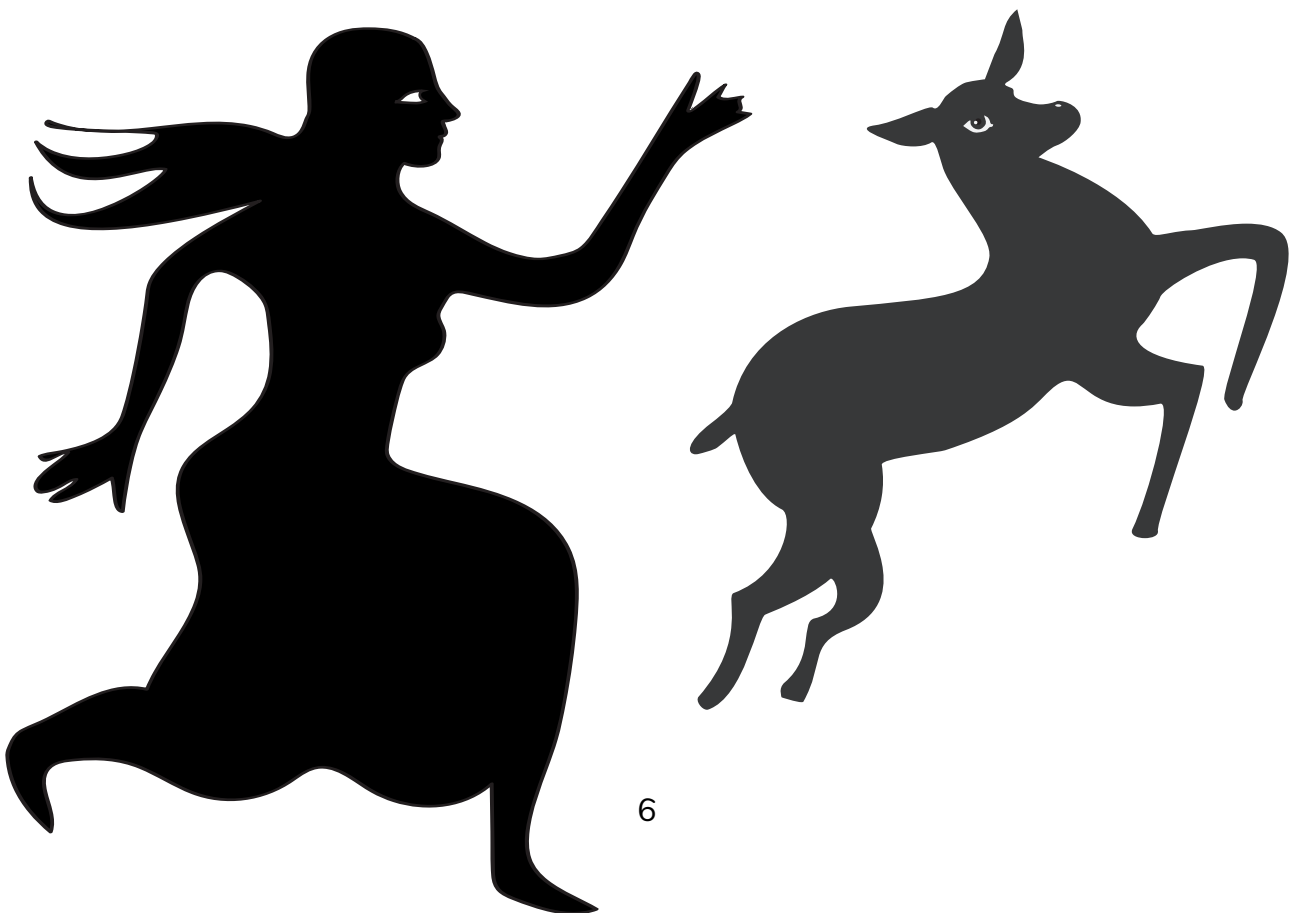


One day, during one of her runs, she spotted a young female deer watching her from behind a bush, its gaze seeming both frightened and uncertain.

“Come closer” said Kallipateira softly, who stood up slowly to avoid frightening the animal even more. Holding out here hand, she tiptoed towards it while the little doe stood motionless, curiously scrutinising the moves, ready to pounce.

Suddenly, as if it recognised in the little girl an equal of her own, the fawn jumped and then with a leap began to run around, turning back to her from time to time, slowing the run while its gaze seemed to invite the girl to play. Kallipateira began to run after the little doe, caught up with her and managed to pick up her pace. They ran together through the carob and juniper woods, circling the towering oak trees.

She would have liked to continue this way forever, feeling like a young Artemis, but a large female deer emerged from behind a bush to call the little one back from its games.



The animal stopped and looked at the little girl, then lowered its head in greeting as if it recognised in her the same brave and wild nature. Kallipateira responded to the greeting. She felt a thrill inside her akin to an omen of something to come further on. Still astonished by that meeting, she slowly returned home.

Alas, getting married would change everything; she would no longer run or see the sea. She would only attend a few religious festivals in honor of Athena or Demeter and Persephone.

She would not be able to accompany her father and brothers to the Olympic games because married women could not see the athletes. She felt sad but knew there was nothing she could do; in her heart she could still feel the gaze of the young doe.

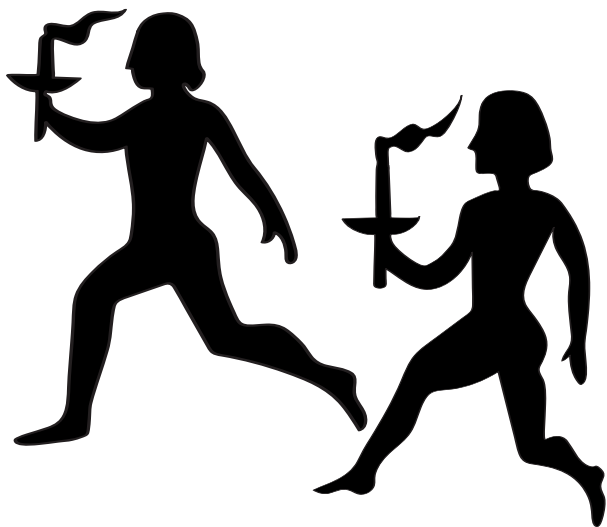
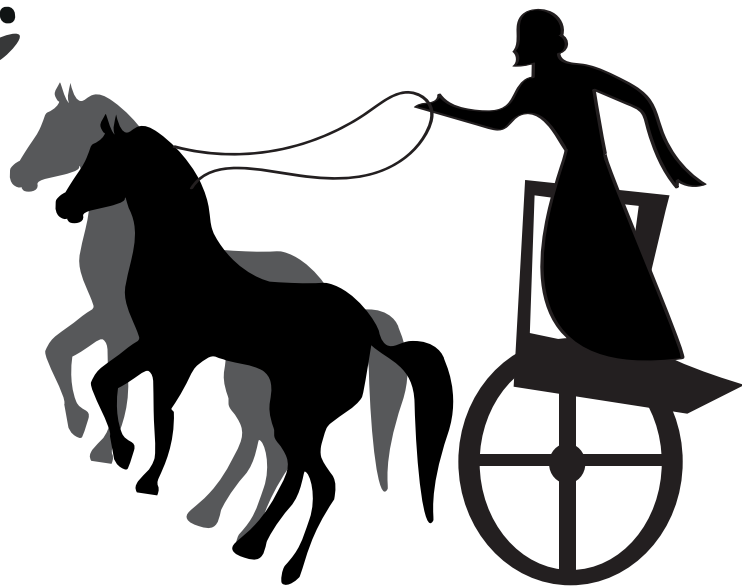
The wind swept the beach, raising sand sprinkles, while snow had already fallen on the top of the Attairo mountain. Winter had come and the wedding was celebrated in the usual three days.

Kallipateira thought of nothing, she just wanted to run far away, from now on her life was reduced to looking after the house and the children.

Seeking refuge in her memories, she often went back to that day in the woods, to the doe who ran with her and told her children about it as if it were a distant myth. Once in a while, she would hear about her father, the famous boxer Diagoras, and his older brothers, Damagetos and Akaousilaos, winners at the Olympic Games. She imagined them fighting and challenging their adversaries, she knew their movements from having seen them so many times as a child. Her brothers moved as if in a dance, agile, fast, elegant and invincible. That day they both won. They immediately ran to their father, embraced him, lifted him up to carry him in triumph, recognising that their victory, their moves, every movement, they owed to him. Diagoras, in the strong arms of his sons, felt that he could not have been happier. He closed his eyes, and with a smile, he died.







That day, Kallipateira dreamt of the young doe coming towards her. Feeling its deep gaze on her, Kallipateira approached, her hand outstretched to stroke its snout but the animal stopped a few steps from her: "Your father is dead, come run with me." Kallipateira woke up puzzled by the meaning of her dream. The day after, her brothers brought her the news. Years passed and her sons also became athletes, two talented boxers Eucle and Peiserodos. She was proud of them, although she never got to see them.

The Olympics were coming up and her husband was following the training of their youngest son, Peiserodos.

Kallipateira was at home, focused on her work at the loom. Suddenly she seemed to see in the half-light of the room the young doe, striding slowly towards her.

The woman reached out a hand to touch it, but the animal said, "Your husband is dead. Come run with me."

Kallipateira heard cries coming from outside, and her children returning to tell her the news, but when she turned around the doe had disappeared.



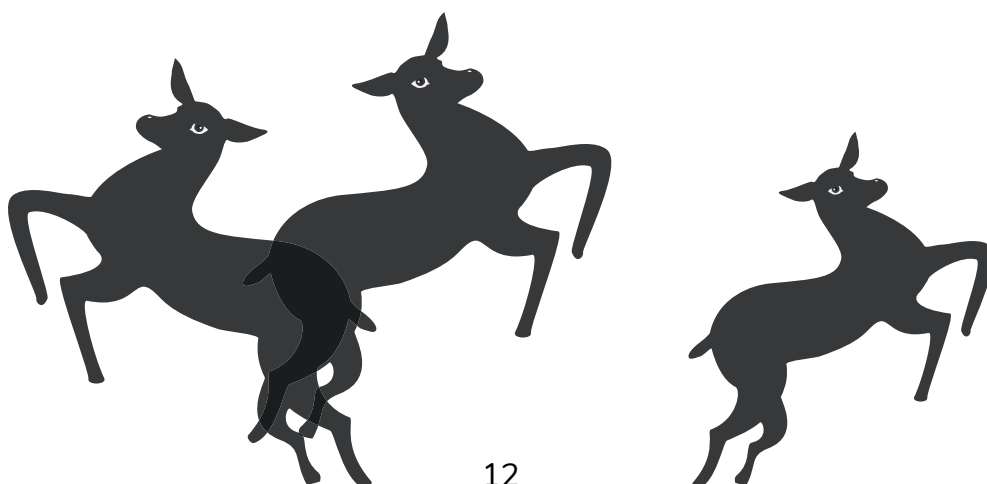
Perhaps it was due to her daydream, or perhaps the love for her children, but Kallipateira made the decision to continue training her son.

“Don’t worry,” she said confidently to her son, “I know the movements and moves from having seen it from the greatest of all athletes, my father Diagoras. I will teach you and we will win together.”

She committed to this without thinking of the consequences, happy to be able to do something she had chosen herself. While teaching her son, it seemed to her that the young doe was running around her, jumping close to her as if it was her heart that never felt free and alive until that moment. Joyful. Thus, the time for the competition arrived.

Kallipateira, dressed as a man, entered the Olympic stadium and found her place among the other coaches.

Her son began the fight: with each gesture from his opponent, the woman thought up a countermove that her son executed. It seemed that not only did her son do everything she had instructed, but, that she was guiding his moves, as if united by an invisible thread...



“Dodge, bend, jump to the side,” thought Kallipateira, and her son did, indeed, dodge, bend forward and jump to the side, until with one final move, he won over his opponent. Kallipaterira’s heart exploded with happiness such as when, as a child, she could run free in the woods and feel the sand beneath her feet and the scent of myrtle tangle in her hair. She felt a wave in her chest, an emotion so intense, mixed with joy and pride that she impetuously leapt over the low wall to run and hug her son. However, her robe became entangled and slipped away, revealing to everyone that a woman was hiding under that cloak. She was immediately surrounded and forcibly brought before the judges. .



“Woman, how dare you disregard the rules? Who do you think you are?”

“I am Kallipaterira, daughter of Diagoras, sister of Damagetos and Akaousilaos, mother of Eucle and Peiserodos. My husband died and I could not leave my son alone to fight.” She said bravely and without lowering her gaze, vindicating the choice she had made.

The judges’ gaze seemed to soften; the audience listened in silence waiting for their decision. Perhaps because she was the daughter of a famous athlete or perhaps because they believed her actions had been dictated by love for her family, the judges released Kallipateira. However, the ban on women was reaffirmed and in order to prevent others from following suit, they imposed a rule that athletes and coaches had to participate naked at the Games.

Although Kallipateira had proved her talent, she could no longer coach her children and was forced to return to her daily life.

One day, sitting at her loom, she saw the doe appear again from the depths of the room's shadows.

Without waiting for it to speak, Kallipateira approached and stroked the animal's snout, and as if abiding by a silent promise, she started to run, plunging into the depths of the forest with the animal.





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