

Compromising Positions

Game Master's Comments: I hate dropping things in the middle. As a result, even though Garoth's player dropped out, I finished the scene myself. It allowed me to introduce one of the realm's movers and shakers - Dame Sophia - and to reveal the grief I had planned. It also allowed me to begin to establish Garoth as a non-player character. At this point I don't know if I will be able to capitalize on it.

Reinhardt's Commentary: This is a good example of meta knowledge. Reinhardt still has no idea of this possible political nightmare as of turn sixteen. This is a card up David's sleeve that he can pull at any time, probably in the middle of some other crisis.

1 Helane 719, Caer Gardiren, The Lady's Maids' Chamber

Garoth lay entangled with his young paramour in the dim moonlight, their bodies damp and cool in the evening air, a deep sense of desire still alive within him. She had been a demanding lover, had striven against him time and time again, and though he was weak from his exertions, something about her still roused him to passion. She giggled with greedy anticipation as he raised himself up on his palms above her, her eyes mischievous in their invitation. He was gazing ravenously upon her luminescent alabaster skin, taking in her nonchalant nakedness, a smug masculine smile upon his face, when the room's broad oak door creaked suddenly open, framing the pair in flickering torchlight from the hall beyond.

Garoth, momentarily stunned, heard Lady Urda's indignant gasp from the doorway, and then found his erstwhile companion struggling valiantly beneath him, scratching and striking him like a wildcat, screeching for help and cursing him with gutterspeak so foul even he, a man accustomed to such talk, was surprised as he leapt to his feet from atop her. There was a momentary struggle for the coverlet as a figure next to Lady Urda drew one of the torches from its sconce and advanced into the room, Lady Urda one step behind, and then Garoth found his hands empty as his companion yanked the coverlet to her breast with a savage hiss.

The young woman ran to Lady Urda's side, dropping to her knees and burying her face in the matron's skirt, bursting into sobs, suddenly the sundered virgin. Not a virgin in this life, Garoth thought, and caught a simpering look from the corner of her eye between crocodile tears, as Lady Urda bent down to comfort her, before the torchbearer filled his vision completely. He found himself standing fully nude, his arousal unmistakable in the light, before Dame Sophia, Countess Curo's paternal aunt, an ordained priestess of the Order of the Shattered Spear and Knight Commander of the Order of St. Claudia, Our Lady of Paladins. Garoth, finding his clothes momentarily unattainable, made an exaggerated courtly bow with a dramatic flourish of his hand and murmured, "milady."

Dame Sophia was perhaps forty, sturdily built, and might have been considered pretty were it not for a habitually severe countenance and salt and pepper hair that was cut brutally short. She wore a snow white robe under the mantle of her station, a deep purple garment richly embroidered with gold thread, which was held in place by a broad sash of the same material. She inclined her head curtly in response to Garoth's bow, an eyebrow arched, as her eyes ran briefly over Garoth and then flicked to the young woman's dress lying in a pool at their feet, to the bed, and then, half turning, to the girl sobbing in Lady Urda's protective grasp. "You have refined tastes, Garoth," she said making eye contact with the Armsman, her grim mouth half-quirked into a wry smile. "If not a sinful impetuosity."

"Rapine Rapsallion!" Lady Urda shouted, disengaging from the weeping Lady's Maid, advancing on

Garoth with a menacing shake of her fist. "Have you no shame you common born whelp?! Have you no sense of your station?! You should be hazing scullery maids, not gentle-born girls! How dare you..."

Garoth had stood his ground, hands on his hips, nowhere to go, completely unashamed of his natural state, and as Lady Urda's eyes fell upon his still impassioned manhood her voice trailed off and she stopped dead in her tracks, her face changing from indignant fury to bloodless shock. Her hand moved to her mouth and her mouth formed words, but no sound came forth. Then she crumpled into Garoth, who laid her gently down onto the carpet.

"That peasant sundered me..." the young woman barked with a surprising display of ferocity, her finger pointed in damning accusation at Garoth who had stepped over Lady Urda to scoop up his pants.

"I think thou doth protest too much, Mistress Pierstel," Dame Sophia said brusquely as she swept the torch from the door to dress to bed. "Twas quiet as can be 'fore yonder door opened, thy bodice is not ripped, and thou has left no maiden's blood on sheet or self. And," she added with a hard smile as the girl grew perfectly still and her expression changed to cool acceptance that the game was up. "Thy tears have stopped of a sudden."

Garoth, now in his trousers, felt a sudden gravity overtake the absurd levity he had felt a moment. He looked from Dame Sophia to the girl. "Pierstel?"

"Velna Pierstel," she said with a ram-you-damn-you air that would have been comical were it not for the implications of her answer.

"And your father?" Garoth asked to buy a moment to think, already knowing the answer. He pulled his shirt on, feeling as though he were swimming in molasses.

"Uthris Pierstel," she said rising to her feet, the coverlet clasped with one hand around her shoulders, a small imperiousness reasserting itself. "Baron Tonot."

Garoth looked at Dame Sophia who had knelt down beside Lady Urda in an attempt to rouse the old woman. Baron Tonot's fortress was to the north of Gardiren, controlling the fur road from Orbaal. The Baron was known for his short temper and prickly sense of class-consciousness. Nor the Baron one of Countess Curo's vassals. In fact, Uthris Pierstel served Earl Troda Dariune, who was, as Garoth understood it, a relative and occasional rival of Countess Curo at court. Dame Sophia shook her head, as though saying she did not know what to say, and said: "Good night Garoth." Then, looking pointedly at Velna beyond him, she added: "Mayhaps the matter will remain with us here."

"Good night, Dame Sophia," Garoth said, turning to find Velna holding his boots out to him. Her expression was apologetic. "You'd better go before the old bird wakes."

"Aye, Lady," Garoth said, smiling easily as he accepted his boots. "Twill be a night I shall not soon forget."

"And a night we should all try to forget," she said, looking down, a demure smile crossing her own lips.

Garoth drew her close, pressing her supple curves against him, and kissed her full on the lips before bowing and turning and walking out. Baron Tonot, Garoth thought as he reached the top of the tower stairs. That's not a good omen, his daughters pleasant company aside. He paused, thinking he sensed

someone in the hall behind him, but finding it empty, shrugged and descended the stair.

— *David Queenann* 2006/02/16 02:09

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