

Chapter 3: Insolence

Sunday, 05 April 2009

Last Updated Monday, 06 April 2009

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“Ezquirre!” Duarte shouted as he came riding down to the old squire's quarters. João had bought a fine stallion, that had to be said. Not too fast, but very strong, quite unlike Ezquirre. He had had enough of him. He'd send him back today. Back to his father. Old Hernandez, a good knight. Proud, brave, strong of resolve, not unlike himself. Ah, the battles they had fought together, few but as sweet as the scent of rosemary in the early morning. Sweet was the air when the ground was drenched with the blood of foes. Sweet was the water when mingled with the blood of the slain. Sweet was the sound of the beheading of cowardly captives. War, oh glorious war, where would we be without you? He was getting old, too old. One more battle, one more charge, before the end? It would be a good end, to die on the sword of a worthy foe. But alas, it was peace.

He approached the door to Ezquirre's quarters. There was no doubt that the lazy squire was there, Ezquirre never went anywhere without being ordered to do so and as far as he knew, he hadn't ordered him to go anywhere.

“Ezquerre!” He said again, as he opened the door. The squire's quarters, far too good for the third son of a brave man, yet to prove his honour. Ha! Ezquirre never had honour to begin with, no honour, no courage. At times he wondered if he truly was the son of his father, he possessed none of the knightly courage. Alas, he would never know if the young man could become a real man on the field of battle, he wouldn't get the chance.

“Ezquirre!” He said for the third time. No answer. Sounds came from the other chamber. Someone was trying to get away. Intruders! Duarte grasped his sword and burst into the room. He swung his sword. At Ezquirre. The sword missed the fortunate squire by inches. His cheeks turned ruby, he wasn't alone. On the floor a woman laid, half-dressed. She turned her head away, but Duarte had already recognised her, it was one of the peasants. His face too turned a slightly darker shade of ruby. How dare he, with a peasant? Was he not of noble blood? How could he smear his father's name with the shame of peasantry blood?! Insolence! Brutality!

“Ezquirre! Out! Now, now!” He barked at the trembling squire. Duarte's sword was only a finger's length from his face. He stood up and scurried away, leaving only Duarte and the peasant woman in the room.

“You!” He said coldly, restraining his boiling rage. “Away. Now.” He pointed his sword at the door. She picked up her clothes and ran out. He was alone. Sheathing his sword, he sat down on one of the wooden chairs in the small room. He'd have to send word to Hernandez, his family had the right to know what shame their son had cast upon them. Ezquirre, son of Hernandez, a brave knight of Myrmidia. And yet, yet the insolent son had dared to mingle his soul with the dark, rotten one of a peasant woman. Poor old Hernandez, that one of his sons should do this to him. Ezquirre, and Catarina. Why? Why Catarina, why had he chosen to betray his heritage? He couldn't grasp it. And what would happen to Catarina, she had tempted a nobleman. Severe punishment, that she deserved. Execute her, perhaps. He had to calm down first. The anger still flowed through his blood. One made rash decisions when charged with anger, he could not have that. He would be just in his ordeal. His ordeal, he hated to admit it, but João still decided.

“So you're on your way to Belmoz?” Joãoquin asked the stranger. So far the man hadn't said anything. They were nearing Belmoz, One more hill and they'd be there. A new shipped had docked at the harbour. Supposedly Arabyan trade vessel, it was a lot larger than the Tilean ones. He hadn't seen a lot of them lately. From what he'd heard, it was Arabyan corsairs these days, few traders. Not that it bothered Joãoquin much. Arabyan, Tilean or even Marienburgers, as long as they paid.

Â Â Â "Yes." The stranger answered, absently staring at the Belmoz harbor. That wouldn't do as an answer.

Â Â Â "For what purpose, if I may ask?" He said. The man didn't even move. The insolence of the stranger, he was allowed to lift on his cart, yet he refused to say anything. Luckily, they were almost in Belmoz. He'd walk down the market with JaÃ±ina, see if there was some nice Arabyan pottery they could afford. Maybe Jeruel was in town too, the bastard still owed him money. He grinned. Old Jeruel, no one quite knew what he did for a living. He could be a beggar, could be a thief. He himself claimed he was a feared mercenary warrior. No one doubted the correctness of his claims, everybody knew they were false. Dirty old rat, but a nice fellow to drink with. At least he was always at that inn. Ah, Ravished Rosanne's, what man hadn't been there, hadn't heard the tales? Many stories he had heard over there, tales of heroic knights of Estalia and Bretonnia, fanciful tales of Deamons and Goat-men in the darker forest, and other stories that are only good after a couple of tankards of home-brewed beer. Ah, the beer of Ravished Rosanne's, it was almost as good as the grapes in the back of his cart. Almost as good.

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