

The Historic Guest: a Comedy by Students for Students about the Fools we must Endure to Serve our Patron.

(Enter the Old Master)

THE OLD MASTER: Heed! Heed! Pay attention! Stop your mutterings and listen to the voice of wisdom and knowledge for once! Good. In today's lesson we shall continue our lectures on the Interregnum Period by delving into the political and economic causes of Ranser's War. As you all know the official accounts cite the marriage of High King Emeric with Princess Maraya of Sentinel, instead of Princess Rayelle of Shornhelm, as the main cause of the war. A handful of accounts, displaying a more critical reasoning, argue that Emeric's change of heart had more to do with the opening of trading routes with Hammerfell than love. These explanations are too simplistic and truth, as always, goes further than that.

It is necessary to analyze the political and economic situation of Rivenspire to truly understand the causes of the war. Rivenspire was "the backwater of High Rock", a territory whose soil is unsuitable for farming, causing semi-periodical famines and draughts, and far away from most commercial routes. The noble houses of Rivenspire have traditionally sustained themselves and their fiefdoms through the trading of manufactures and smithed goods with Wayrest. This dependency on trade created a dependency on peace and stability, which helped Ranser's claim to the throne of Shornhelm. Do not let the Montclair sources fool you with their faux modesty, if they didn't push the claim of Prince Phylgeon through war, it was not because of selfless love of peace, but because a civil war could ruin them.

Ranser was in a precarious situation. He needed to strengthen his position on the throne to avoid a take-over by his younger half-brother and prove to the noble houses that he could maintain or even expand the scale of trade with Wayrest. Marrying his daughter to Emeric could kill these two birds with one stone. But Emeric would not only frustrate Ranser's plans to solidify his power, but also threaten the economic viability of the whole region. The announcement of his wedding with Maraya, and the subsequent establishment of trade routes with Hammerfell, was a terrible omen for the whole of Rivenspire. With a new influx of manufactures coming from the land of the Redguards, the vital trade routes between Rivenspire and Wayrest were put in jeopardy. If Sentinel was able to sell manufactures at a cheaper price than Shornhelm, the whole region would plunge into a catastrophic situation.

It was not Ranser's ireful temper and vengefulness which caused the war but the danger of total ruin for his kingdom. If Emeric was willing to ruin his kingdom by opening up trade routes with the Redguards he needed to be deposed by any means necessary. The noble houses of Rivenspire, Montclairs included, supported the wars not because they trusted Ranser or were loyal to him, but because ruin was the only alternative to a war with Wayrest. It was not ire, nor vengeance, nor ambition what caused the war, but necessity and trade.

Now we shall look into the religious motives of the war. It is well known that *(stops, looks afar)*. Wait a minute. What is that? What is this blinding light? What is this thunder? What is this warrior emerging from such commotion?

(Enter the Historic Guest)

THE HISTORIC GUEST: Disciples! Everything this man has taught you is false!

MASTER: Who are you? Explain yourself!

GUEST: I am but a soldier of His Highness Emeric of Wayrest, by the grace of Akatosh the High King of the High Rock.

MASTER: Remarkable! Utterly remarkable! Surely your experiences can complement my teachings.

GUEST: I shall not complement, but refute! How do you dare to say that my king, my companions and I fought only because of trade and wealth? This war only had one reason and it was the foolishness of trice-damned Ranser!

MASTER: Do you expect me to believe that trade had nothing to do with it?

GUEST: I have not heard any of my enemies woe about how dire their prospects were. Neither Ranser addressed them before battle saying things like “fight for your prosperity” or “fight for the profits of our merchants”. No! All they talked about was the false affront of King Emeric, of how he didn’t marry their high-born toad of a princess. The word “trade” never appeared in the endless rants of our prisoners of war. They did not fight for trade, and neither did Emeric marry for it. My king did not choose a bride because of a matter fit for merchants. He changed his mind about whom to marry because he fell in love. Answer me this, would they have been so bold as to spend a year conjuring up a war against Wayrest had our king not been enthralled by the grace and wit of our Queen? Trade was only a secondary matter in all of this, almost negligible.

MASTER: This is preposterous! Absolutely preposterous! Love and vengefulness do not cause wars, money and power do! No matter what anyone said, the prospect of an empty stomach is far more powerful than the passions of love.

GUEST: This I can assure you, the temper of Ranser could start a war among corpses. Without his clouded judgement this war would have never started. A more tempered king would have never done such a thing. Bards sing about his foolishness and rashness, but none do about trade.

MASTER: What the bards say is of no matter. And neither does anyone’s manipulative words, passing matters of commerce as matter of love and revenge.

GUEST: You silence the people of our time very quickly and talk very mightily for someone who wasn’t there. How do you dare to pontificate on this war of ours?

MASTER: When can a moth read a parchment, while sitting on the ink or when it takes flight to see it from a distance? The same happens with history. You are too entrenched into your era to see the truth, while I’m free from the biases of your time.

GUEST: You throw at me your own defects. Who can better tell the allegiance of a ship, the mountain’s shepherd or the port’s docker? You see what you want to see and leave out what you want to leave out, while I saw everything!

MASTER: You are but an insolent buffoon, unworthy of the ears of my pupils!

GUEST: They should know better than to come to listen to a senile liar!

MASTER: How dare you call me senile? You are older than me! And far less wise!

GUEST: If you call soldiers buffoons, I will be more than glad to tell you a few "jokes".

(As they shout at each other, enter three characters as if they were unable to be seen.)

THE TRIANGULAR MAN: Here you have it. In their quarrel lies the validation of my patronage.

THE MARRIED ELF: I thought the master would assert himself as correct, as he could use the dutifulness of the scribes to pierce into a deeper truth.

THE APOCRYPHAL OUTSIDER: I thought the guest would prove himself right as he had access to hidden knowledge, and knew that which cannot be recorded.

THE ELF: How sad I am that history could not be solved by deepening the light of knowledge.

THE OUTSIDER: What a disappointment that history is not solved by showing lost memories.

THE MAN: You claimed to be patrons of history, when you were only patrons of registers and hidden truths. May this little meddling of ours prove that I, who protects those who are one thing and its opposite, am the true patron of history.