

Proclamation by Adriana, Captain of the Guard

Kelly Digges

From set *Conspiracy: Take the Crown*

Free Citizens of Paliano:

When you fell asleep last night, you were loyal. You laid down your heads as steadfast servants of the one true king of Paliano, Brago the Eternal. Perhaps you did not love him. It is not the role of a ruler to be loved. But you obeyed him, and you respected him, as any citizen should.

You awoke as unwitting traitors beneath the bloodstained banner of a usurper queen: Marchesa, the Black Rose, a known assassin and plotter, a criminal of the highest order whose veiled threats and hidden thorns have allowed her for far too long to flaunt the law of Paliano. She has made you traitors by raising her flag above the palace and placing the crown upon her treacherous brow. She has forced you to choose between loyalty to the crown and loyalty to your city.

Somehow, this vile deceiver murdered King Brago, ending his immortal existence and dispersing the essence of his spirit. Somehow, she inserted herself into the sovereign's will and testament—a document forged, no doubt, from whole cloth, for why would the King Eternal have a will at all? And if he did, why would he name the murderous daughter of a fallen house to rule in his place? Somehow, she commands the loyalty of the Custodi priests who once made the king's word manifest in the world. Alongside them stand numerous servants of the throne who cannot or dare not question her right to rule, and in the shadows lurks her own existing network of thieves, spies, saboteurs, informants, and assassins.

Already, the false queen raises her own sigil, the emblem of the Black Rose, above Paliano. She would quietly ignore the symbol of our city, the symbol Brago carried with him on the pommel of his own sword, an image so enduring, so emblematic of our city and its lawful ruler, that the Custodi consider it a religious icon in its own right. Oh, the Custodi wave it even now, and it means as little from them as it ever did. But the banners of the City Troops have already changed. You will not see that symbol in the halls of Marchesa's palace or on the shields of her defenders. She claims to rule legitimately, to have the interests of the city at heart, but the flag that has flown above us all these years is absent at her own command.

And why? The reason is simple. Marchesa has no right to that sign of our city's history, and she knows it. She wears the crown and sits upon the throne, but she does not carry the sword of Brago—the blade that bears the symbol of our city. I know this because I now carry that sword, and with it the burden of upholding law and order in Paliano. I have been stripped of my title by the traitor queen, but I do not relinquish it. I hold this sword, this symbol, this duty to defend our city from all its enemies—even and especially an enemy who sits upon the throne. I have no wish to rule, only to unseat the usurper so that we may determine our rightful sovereign in the wake of King Brago's tragic end.

Marchesa would have you stand with her, in service to a true crown that rests upon a false head, and thereby she would make you a traitor. I offer you a different path: stand with me, and with Brago, and show your loyalty to your city through your disobedience to the pretender.

If her flag is not your flag, then do not bow to it. If her rule is illegitimate, then so too are her laws. If she is not truly queen, then the servants of the throne are no better than her spies and assassins, and should be treated accordingly.

What say you, citizens of Paliano? Do you stand with the city, or with its self-proclaimed queen? Are you loyal rebels, or obedient traitors? Every day, as long as Marchesa sits upon the throne, you are one or the other. Make your choice!



Adriana, Captain of the Guard | Art by Chris Rallis

—Adriana, captain of the guard