

Luncheon In The Green Lake Room

Lunch was served at the guest's tables. Abbot Gaudentius had asked everyone to eat before they took their afternoon walk around Carlsbad Abbey. Many wanted to see their horses and coaches; others needed to send messages to their respective groups. The Flagellentes had left as a group, claiming that their role was to make prayers to the shrine of Dona Rina, and then to tend to their andas.

Looking around his own table, and the glum faces picking at their excellent choices of beef burritos, cheese quesadillas, and chicken tamales, along with baskets of fresh fruit of all descriptions, Don Antonio was the first to say what he supposed everyone else was thinking.

"That First Sister of Clan Demetra was lying through her teeth. She threw that poor Berylia to the dogs."

"Whatever she did wrong, the treatment of the First Sisters was terrible," Dona Carmencita agreed. She had surprised Don Antonio by declining the opportunity to pray group devotions to the Blessed Dona Rina.

"I foresee a peasant revolt developing," Don Baca observed. "Clan Demetra has ten times as many as the other two combined, and yet they are kept in line by the Healers--the natural administrators--and I daresay we will discover that later on the Builders will become a military caste."

"But...and I have to say this...Rintiala and Dianire are girls I would be proud to have as daughters. They were ready to give their lives for each other, without hesitation." Dona Baca said.

"I have to agree with you there, even though I'm probably not going to put another coin in the Flagellante coffers after this meeting. Rintiala was brilliant and brave, a natural leader. I've said all along that if you start from an early age, you can build a leader by age twelve." Don Antonio continued. "But there is no doubt about it. That Alatheia and Tianara were too sure of themselves. They couldn't see Clan Demetras' plan, when it was right in front of their face."

"Why I wonder is the story written from Dianire's perspective?" Dona Carmencita wondered aloud. "Surely since Rintiala was there, she could have said 'I saw this' or 'I did that', simply reporting the facts."

"Dona Carmencita, I think I know why," Dona Baca chimed in. "Rintiala wanted us to see Dianire as she saw her then, not as she became later."

"Dona Rina the Compassionate, ever the true friend," Don Baca said, reciting the nighttime prayer well-known to the children of New Spain. "But why are we here at all? Something much more serious must be forthcoming, for the Queen to have called this solemn assembly."