

Beaming inwardly, I was proud of this personal distinction. Confidently, I drew in my pipe, savoring the smoke, and released it authoritatively into the air. I leaned forward in my chair, eager to proffer such expertise yet wanting to appear appropriately humble in my opinion.

But I was compelled to abbreviate my musings upon the almost imperceptible movement of Durchlauscht's fingertips towards his hat. I had offended him with my silent contemplations or, at the very least, caused him to suffer a certain amount of boredom while I had been applauding my superior sensitivities.

The lingering smoke now burned acrid in my throat. "Ihro Majestat, please forgive my silence I-" But he halted my apology with one elegantly raised hand.

"I regret that I must return to certain pressing business."

Durchlauscht rose effortlessly from the chair. His robe fell obediently around him. Instinctively, I stood up. I glanced towards the window, wondering whether his departure would rival the spectacular dramatics of his arrival.

"But of course we are not finished with our conversation, do you agree? Perhaps you shall join me." I felt my head nod affirmatively.

It was true, I had not yet taken down even a single word. I was pleased that Durchlauscht wished to continue the interview. I felt reprieved of my earlier offense by his offer to accompany him. Admittedly, I was bit curious as to where, exactly, Satan resides while in Vienna. I turned to collect my coat, anticipating the frigid Austrian night air in the still desolate Platz. Thunder rumbled impatiently in the distance.

With captivating charm, Durchlauscht again lifted his hand to stop me. "I think you shall find the sheer number of ovens will keep you sufficiently warm, even if they are American made."