

A Coercive's Life

By Patricia (Pat) Mathews

Inspired by Steve Stirling's "In the Court of the Crimson Kings" and Gilbert & Sullivan's "A Policeman's Lot" from "Pirates of Penzance"

When Coercives aren't engaged in their employment (their employment)
Or executing someone else's plan (else's plan)
Their capacity for atanj and enjoyment (and enjoyment)
Is just the same as any peaceful man's (peaceful man's)

We are careful what we do to one another
And we don't do private feuding on the sly
What I do to you, you may do to my brother –
But – you killed my boyfriend, so PREPARE TO DIE!
(Prepare to die)
Oh, when our Martian politicking's to be done (to be done)
A Coercive's life is not a happy one (a happy one).

Oh, the person of the Crimson King is sacred
And I wouldn't be a Martian if I dared
Point a gun at any member of his family
But His Highness never told us that he cared (oh, that he cared)
And a bastard daughter's not the same at all (not at all)
A Coercive's life is one of rise and fall (of rise and fall)

Your Supremacy has won our death-duel fairly (won it fairly)
You have learned some tricks our order never knew (never knew)
There's a game of atanj playing in the palace (in the palace)
With a place upon the chessboard just for you (just for you)
If you beat the bureaucrats and Papa's cousin
You can bet your Terran's life that you have won
But with Pretenders here a quarter-weight a dozen –
Oh, an Empress' life is not a lengthy one. (A lengthy one.)