

# THE UNSEEN FORCE



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## SAMPLE

REDGE AWOKED TO the room lit by the glow of sunlight against the drapes, during that short period of the year when the sun rose before he did. He sat on the edge of the bed and rubbed his face, the stone floor cool against his feet. His wide room was silent, the thick walls of the tower muffling all sound.

Redge rose from the bed, gently so as not to disturb his wife. He scratched at his close-trimmed beard and ran a hand through his medium length dirty blond hair, seeing silver from the corner of his eye. Slipping on his boots, he strolled to the window and pulled back the drapes.

A private training yard lay four stories below, secluded from the rest of the castle. Half a dozen men sparred or ran through their exercises in the shadows of the walls surrounding the yard. Most of them wore battered training armour or coats of mail. Only one, standing apart from the others as he followed the trainer's drills, wore his full suit of armour. Like the rest of the men, he wore no helmet. Redge didn't need to see the glint of red in the man's hair to know it was Sir Magni.

In a far corner, a handful of women tended their small garden while children ran about playing nearby or watching the knights at their drills. Seemingly happy, despite that this was the only glimpse of the outside world they ever saw. Redge's face fell and he let out a sigh.

He turned from the window to take in the stand in the corner holding his own suit of armour. Meticulously polished, intricately detailed, stylized like all Agaesi armour into modern blacksmiths' imitation of dragon scales, his standard suit of plate was finer than most knights' parade armour. And long unused, from the layer of dust on the neck and base of the stand.

Redge crossed the room, but left the plate where it hung, donning only a long mail tunic and strapping an arming sword over it.

Opening the door to the common room of his suite, he found his own children up and playing as well. Most of them, anyway. He bid good morning to the boys and younger girl, but his eyes remained on the closed door to his eldest daughter's room.

Redge continued out of his suite. The corridor outside, like all the floors in this secluded tower, was narrow and unadorned, barely wider than his spread arms. Unlike the other floors, the door to Redge's suite was the only one along this hall before it turned a corner. Turning away from the bend in the hall, he moved to the spiral stairs along the inner wall and climbed down.

He stepped off the stairs on the second floor and crossed the mostly empty dining hall. Only a handful of women, children, and elders ate at the long tables. Redge greeted them as he passed and continued toward the far side of the tower, exiting onto the stairs leading down to the training yard.

Until the sun rose over the wall surrounding the yard, Redge supervised the training and ran through his own drills. His aging body protested the exercise at first, but his movements swiftly eased and grew faster as the power of Agasis coursed through his body. The ancient dragon's strength filled Redge's muscles and seemed to lift his own weight away. He wasn't quite as fast, nor could he last quite as long, as in his prime, but his abilities were still greater than an ordinary knight half his age.

The mail pressed heavily against him and he was drenched in sweat by the time he finished. His assistant Brannik waited near the stairs, holding a handful of folded cloth.

Redge smiled at the young, thin, pale boy as he dried himself off. Redge tried to ignore the guilt that rose as his thoughts turned again to his daughter.

*I can give Brannik something better for his life, Redge thought, but even as the captain of the Agaesi, I can do nothing for my own*

*daughters*. He moved behind a screen to change into clean clothes.

“Anything new this morning, Brannik?” Redge asked, fully expecting the answer to be the same as every day. Correspondence about requisitions, maintenance of weapons and armour, updates on the whereabouts of the few Agaesi knights on assignments, general news and gossip in the province and the kingdom.

“Actually, Sir,” Brannik said, the wheeze in his breath a little softer in summer, “there was a note from the duke this morning requesting your presence.”

Redge paused as he pulled his trousers up. “What?”

“It’s for later this morning, Sir. That’s all it says.”

Frowning, Redge hurried to finish dressing and handed off the sweaty garments and mail to Brannik. Redge ate swiftly and retreated to his office on the ground floor to address what correspondence he could, but his thoughts were on the summons from the duke.

When the time came and he crossed the castle to a drawing room, however, he found several others waiting inside the room as well. Other nobles and high-ranking knights, field marshals for Hesperia’s large standing army, had also been summoned, though the curious and concerned looks on their faces told Redge that they knew no more than he did about this meeting.

The Duke of Hesperia turned to acknowledge Redge’s entrance. Osmarus Valikov was broad of shoulder, chest, and girth, a bear of a man who commanded, rather than demanded, attention. His curly, dark hair was pulled back from a widow’s peak and tied at the nape of his neck, and his thick, full beard, without a moustache, tumbled over his chest.

“My Lord Duke,” Redge said as he bowed.

“Sir Warwick,” the duke’s booming voice replied. “Please come in. We are waiting on just a few others.”

Redge nodded as he crossed the room to stand among the others gathered. Two more people soon arrived and the duke stepped forward to address them, everyone falling silent.

“Thank you all for coming on such short notice. I know how quickly stories travel, so I wanted to brief each of you personally on this newest development as soon as possible.

“I assume you have all heard the rumours about an army gathering in Edan.”

Murmurs of assent rippled among those gathered. Redge nodded along with a few others. He was uncertain how to feel about a meeting regarding the so-called Army of Light in the kingdom to the west.

The duke reached into his coat and pulled out a folded letter. “I

gathered you all here to tell you that those rumours have been confirmed.”

A flurry of murmurs, surprised looks, and shuffling rose.

“I received this message last night from a trusted source.”

“Spies?” asked one of the others.

“Allies,” the duke answered. “Friends of Faneria who wrote to inform us that the King of Edan has announced his joining forces with the malakh Niabi.”

Greater murmuring rippled as some turned to speak to others. Redge frowned. He perhaps knew more than many in the room about Niabi, the malakh, servant of the Gods of Light, who was responsible for no small amount of damage done during the Battle of Albrith several weeks ago. His personal beliefs aside, Redge didn't like the idea of her gathering an army in Edan, or of their king joining her.

“What does this mean for us?” another knight asked.

“For now, nothing,” the duke replied. “But we must all be watchful of what transpires from this alliance.”

“Is it true, then,” said someone else, “that their goal is to convert unbelievers and snuff out all trace of the old gods?”

“The king has not officially claimed her supposed cause as Edan's,” the duke said.

“Then why join with her?”

“He had to,” answered another of the nobles. “The stories say one in every five men within fifty leagues of Brighton has joined the Army of Light. Their king's position is still tenuous. If he did not officially join with her, he would quickly lose power.”

“But why?” pressed another. “Why assemble an army so large if not for a specific campaign? What is that malakh planning to do?”

“I've heard that she's already moved south to recruit more men,” said one. “Mark my words, we'll be their next target.”

“That,” the duke said before anyone else could respond, “remains unconfirmed. Speculate outside this room, gentlemen.” He held up the letter. “We are here to discuss facts.” With that, he tossed the letter onto a table before him. Redge moved forward to read the letter as the others continued discussing the news. The note said little more than the duke did, and only mentioned Niabi as she related to the King of Edan.

“What do you require of us?” Redge asked.

“Keep your eyes and ears open for any news on this front,” the duke answered. “Nothing else has been confirmed at this point, but I think that some of you are right that this could prove troublesome for us. I have a strong feeling this will not be the last we hear of the Army of Light.”

The ballroom was a sea of brocade and lace that reflected upon the polished marble floor. Sunlight gleamed through the high windows and glinted off gold, silver, and gemstones adorning the soft-spoken crowd that filled the room. Elaborate gilded chandeliers hung high overhead, set with perfectly even candles that remained unlit, daylight filling the room on the long summer day. The tender notes of a harp issued from the gallery as the aromas of fruit and flaky pastries rose from the tables along one wall.

Garrick took it all in at a glance as he stepped through the door. Half a year ago, this sight had been a beacon of hope to him, but now, all he wanted to do was turn around and leave.

*Funny, he couldn't help thinking with a sardonic grin, after going out in the dirt and hard labour of the real world, these silks and jewels have lost their lustre.*

He had, however, cultivated his reputation here too much before he had left Misengrad to abandon it entirely. There were already enough whispers circling about his extended absence from court. His excuses ran dry, and if he hadn't come, he would have to address those rumours. These lords and ladies wouldn't appreciate him admitting he'd rather spend his time with brewers and cobblers.

Arriving fashionably late, he and the resplendent middle-aged woman on his arm managed to avoid overt attention as they entered the hall. Garrick's brown hair, slightly curled and with a hint of red in the light, was tied back in a tail that fell between his shoulder blades. His embroidered coat was perfectly tailored to hint at the chiseled muscles beneath, while outwardly displaying only grace and poise. As usual, he was one of few knights of high enough standing to attend this ball. As always, he was the only Agaesi.

Catching movement from the corner of his eye, he turned to the woman whose arm was linked in his. Lady Estrina Valikov smiled at him. Dressed in scarlet, the fainter details of her fine gown seemed only to make her stand out more. Rather than hiding the lines in her face and grey in her immaculate dark hair, it complemented them, giving her a radiant, mature beauty.

The smile she gave him seemed perfectly benign, but he knew her well enough to see the hints of something else in her eyes. Equal parts confidence and caution.

He smiled his assurance and approached a knot of nobles congregating near the dance floor. They were deep in conversation.

A woman with elaborately coiffed white hair, but standing with back straight and eyes sharp, spoke with an air of disdain. "Those Albrithites so love their stories, it sounds the more outrageous with

each telling. I still refuse to believe that a malakh was seen after so many years and centuries, let alone a god.” With a sigh, her features smoothed. “Though the scars from the attack were clear. Much of the rubble had been cleared away, but the damage... well, let me say that I have given thanks each night since that those villains did not decide to unleash their wrath closer to home.”

A gentleman of large stature but little hair sneered. “Vile mages.” He spoke the word as though a bitter taste filled his mouth.

A young lady shuddered, dark ringlets bouncing over her pale shoulders. “It gives me chills to think of one of the old gods leading an army of mages through Albrith.”

Garrick spoke up then. “Would it ease your mind, then, to learn that it was the other way around?”

All eyes turned to him. The young lady and her timid-looking escort straightened and caught their breath, though the white-haired lady and the large gentleman merely inclined their heads in greeting. However, Garrick didn’t miss the flicker of interest in the old woman’s eyes.

“Lady Estrina Valikov.”

“Lady Petrochenko,” Lady Estrina replied with a smile and nod, greeting each of the others by name. They smiled, bowed, and greeted her in return.

Lowering a hand, Lady Petrochenko placed it on her hip as she turned to Garrick. “And Sir Magni.”

Garrick smiled radiantly, large green eyes glinting. “My Lady, it’s a pleasure and an honour to see you again.”

Lady Petrochenko stared at him, looking unimpressed, but with curiosity clear in her eyes. “Well, now that you have finally made an appearance at court, perhaps you would care to elaborate.”

The gentleman carefully watched Garrick. “Yes, we have all heard that you were pivotal in turning the tide of the Battle of Albrith.”

“And you with a Sword of Annas!” the dark-haired young lady said excitedly.

Garrick kept himself from fingering the medallion around his neck. Although the heavy gold chain sat wide around his shoulders and the palm-sized emblem with its embossed swords hung in the middle of his chest, the medal for bravery felt more like a noose, and like the only thing he wore.

“It has certainly taken you long enough to show your face at court again, after disappearing for over a season without telling a soul,” Lady Petrochenko added.

Immediately, Garrick wondered if they savoured the suspense, but for once, he hesitated to speak the thought. Instead, he simply

said, "I do apologize if I have caused any inconvenience. I was unaware that—"

"Please, Sir Magni," Lady Petrochenko cut across him. Garrick watched her carefully, but the look of annoyance on her face was genuine. "False modesty suits you ill."

*That wasn't who I was here, he realized too late. These people loved the proud and dashing knight, the one whose armour and blade had never been dirtied by battle.*

From the corner of his eye, Garrick saw Lady Estrina turn to him. The look was casual, but the action was full of meaning. A warning. He reflected on her lessons on handling court politics.

*Never show any sign of weakness.*

"We have been dying to hear your story," the young lady added, cheeks colouring. "You have kept us waiting far too long."

Garrick sent the nobles a sly smile. "Do forgive me, my ladies and gentlemen, but I am sure you must understand that a hero's work is never done."

The young lady giggled and her escort's awe and envy were unmistakable, though the gentleman and Lady Petrochenko each gave Garrick dubious looks. The latter, however, couldn't entirely hide the amusement she obviously tried not to show.

"And what 'hero's duty' has kept you so occupied that it took you weeks to finally appear in the duke's court?" Lady Petrochenko asked.

"Why, the most taxing work of all," Garrick answered with a grin. "Reports. I had to relay the entire story to my captain, the captain of Hesperia's forces, advisors, enquirers, and His Grace himself. A threat of this magnitude demands that all my reports must be made firsthand." He glanced askance at Lady Estrina, her arm still linked in his as she silently listened to the conversation. He smiled at her as he recalled another of her lessons.

*Nothing draws more interest than a mystery.*

Garrick slid a suggestion that he was hiding something into his voice and lowered his chin faintly as he faced the nobles again. "Scheduling such time alone has been a nightmare."

Lady Petrochenko scoffed as she picked up on the cues, though her smile began to break through. "Fine, keep your secrets. I see that fame and recognition have done nothing to change you into a respectable gentleman."

The young lady giggled. "Oh, but how boring would he be if he were?"

Her escort joined in chuckling along with the ladies. More eyes turned toward them from nearby as other nobles stepped forward.

"Enough about our peculiar dragon knight," said another lord.

“You were about to tell us of the battle.”

*Everyone has their own agenda.*

Smiling over his feelings, Garrick told the gathering crowd the tale of the Battle of Albrith. His retellings to his various superiors had all been the same, but he knew the nobles didn't want a dry or even factual account of events. Knowing that he would have to repeat this story several times before the night was over, he forced himself to tell it once again, engaging his audience with appropriate pauses and emphasis and manipulating the events to make him sound more the hero they thought he was.

What he didn't have to embellish was the scale of the damage or the power of the attackers. “I saw it with my own eyes,” he said again as a new listener expressed her doubts. “The Goddess of Chaos looked exactly like what depictions remain in the temples, and few others could wield such power as she. And I promise you that she battled a malakh in the streets of Albrith. She was seven feet tall if she was an inch, with the head of a fox, and shining brilliantly from the power bestowed upon her by the Gods of Light.”

“Thank the gods for that!” the young lady exclaimed.

Garrick didn't need to ask which gods she was referring to. Even as she believed every word he spoke about the Goddess of Chaos being reborn, to her only the Gods of Light existed. Strength, Justice, Wisdom, Love, and Life. There was no place among these nobles for the old Gods of Time, or any others.

“I fear to imagine what would have happened had that malakh not been there,” spoke another new listener.

It took all Garrick's self-control to keep his smile from faltering. Yes, these nobles were not interested in the truth. They didn't want to know that the servant of their deities levelled as many buildings and took as many lives as Nephrita, or that the Goddess of Chaos showed more compassion toward humans than the malakh had, or that the Gods of Light had been the ones to open a chasm that swallowed up a village.

Much as Garrick had believed in the virtues of the Gods of Light, the thought of any devotion to the figures themselves left a bitter taste in his mouth. Fortunately, that was easy to remedy.

The nobles who had so raptly listened to his tale now spoke excitedly to each other, so none objected when he bowed to the crowd and said, “If you will excuse me, My Lords and Ladies, I have been deprived of the fine work of the duke's kitchen staff for far too long.” As several in the crowd waved their approval, he nodded and smiled at Lady Estrina, who had stepped to the edges of the circle as he spoke. “My Lady.”

She returned a knowing smile. “Sir Magni.”

With that, Garrick slipped away from the crowd and strolled to the velvet-draped tables, laden with overflowing silver dishes, behind the marble pillars ringing the dance floor. Other nobles nodded as he passed, but he made his way uninterrupted. Most of those on this side of the ballroom had heard at least some of his tale.

Garrick had just slipped the last bite of a delicate cinnamon pastry into his mouth when someone spoke beside him, “That was quite the compelling story.”

Garrick took in a breath as he recognized the low, powerful voice, but averted any other reaction. Turning, he bowed low. “My Lord Duke.”

Osmarus Valikov nodded in greeting. “Sir Magni.” He approached the table and picked up a miniature meat pie. “I dare say that tale was far more interesting than the one you told me.”

Garrick grinned. “I shall remember that you prefer the dramatic rendition the next time I have to tell you that I saved the kingdom, Your Grace.”

The wryness in the duke’s smile made it clear that he heard the sarcasm Garrick kept out of his voice. “Indeed. Though I do hope you will not gloss over the contribution of the other heroes of the day, as you did just now. What was the name of that fellow you mentioned who slayed the rebel mage leader?”

“Sir Lyle Hitchcliffe, Your Grace.”

The duke nodded thoughtfully. “Yes, that was it. The man who formerly commanded the city guard here. I still have not had the opportunity to meet him.”

“A grievous oversight, Your Grace.” *Or an intentional evasion*, Garrick added silently. It had been clear from their briefing with the king and his advisors that Sir Hitchcliffe held many secrets and knew far more about what had happened with the rebel mages than he let on. However, despite being trapped on the same ship on the return journey to Misengrad, Garrick had been unable to learn anything from the reticent Lyle. Blunt as the man was, Lyle was very good at avoiding topics he was determined not to discuss.

“One that will be corrected before long.” The duke turned toward the outer edges of the ballroom, moving just deliberately enough to make it clear that he wished for Garrick to follow. The duke may not have cared to play the courtly games that his sister excelled at, but he had been raised with the same training to understand them. The subtle concern in his eyes, peppered with distaste, made Garrick realize that was precisely what was on the duke’s mind.

Politics at the fore of the duke’s thoughts. The rarity of such a discussion alone was enough to make Garrick uncomfortable. For a

brief moment, Garrick considered acting as though he had missed the cue and instead wander off into the crowd. Of course, Lady Estrina would have some choice words to say about that idea.

*Never alienate the most powerful person in the room.*

Without missing a beat, Garrick fell into step beside the duke.

“In truth,” the duke continued, “I am more interested in hearing more of what you have to say about Albrith. Factual reports are the more necessary, but I need not speculate that those who deal in rumours must be falling over themselves with glee to discover that the rebel mages marched out of Hesperia.”

The duke stopped as he reached the wall, methodically turning his goblet around in his hand as he planted a firm look upon the knight.

“So tell me honestly, Garrick. What is our standing at the king’s court?”

*This is the only thing I’m good for.* The thought crossed Garrick’s mind before he became aware of it. He quickly shook that off as he reflected upon the whispers he had picked up on during his brief stay in the king’s castle. Whether this was his destiny or not, the duke was looking to him.

“The king is true to you, Your Grace.” That much had been clear from the regard the king and queen had shown Garrick, though despite his embellishments, he had contributed little enough to the victory. Garrick lowered his voice, carefully eyeing the crowd nearby for eavesdroppers. “I did not have an opportunity to attend court while I was in Albrith. I only heard some secondhand rumours. I will not pretend that no one wishes to use this against you, Your Grace. However, the impression I received was as fodder to move against the king, rather than against Hesperia.” Garrick thought back to the mood in the castle the day and even the hours after the final reports of the battle had been given.

“The wolves are circling,” he added, watching the nobles mingling and dancing across the room. “There is instability in the king’s court. I think there are some who would go to great lengths to undermine his authority.” Garrick returned his gaze to the duke. “His Majesty will need all the allies he can get, Your Grace.”

The duke looked sombre. “I see.” He let out a breath. “Dark days are coming. I think we shall all be in need of allies. Speaking of which...” The duke turned to look into the ballroom. “How is your mother?”

Garrick followed the duke’s eyes. On the dance floor, Lady Estrina swayed gracefully with an older man. A seemingly carefree and uncomplicated smile lit her face. Had Garrick not been raised by her and lived his entire life with her, he would never have

suspected any cunning thoughts hid behind that look. He couldn't help smiling as he watched her, completely at home amongst the nobility.

"She is well, Your Grace," Garrick answered.

The duke nodded slowly, his eyes fixed on her. "She always is when she is here." A smile creased his face. "She took to the court like a bird to the sky. Even when we were children, she always knew exactly how to handle people."

Garrick's smile faded slightly as he and his uncle watched Lady Estrina dance.

*She could have been queen, Garrick thought, and instead, she spends her days locked in the Agaesi tower.*

His throat tightened. He couldn't help feeling like a shackle around her leg. The only thing still holding her to her lonely life among the Agaesi.

Garrick was about to excuse himself from the duke's company when he noticed someone walking toward him from the corner of his eye. As he looked at the new figure, some of the tightness in his chest eased and his smile grew warmer.

The Markiese of Gredsk was a square-jawed youth with a shock of flowing ebony hair. Though thinner about the shoulders than the duke, Cedryck Valikov seemed to have filled out in the chest and arms since Garrick last saw him half a year ago. He had also begun growing a beard, dark but still thin.

As he approached, Cedryck spread his arms, covered in a ruby coat that reached his knees. His face split in a broad smile. "Garrick. I was beginning to fear you would never return to court."

"Fighting to save the kingdom takes a lot out of a man, Lord Gredsk," Garrick replied with a wry grin, not bothering to completely hide the sarcasm this time. It was already getting exhausting to maintain the appearance he had so easily worn at court before.

Cedryck rolled his eyes. "Come on, Garrick, we aren't going to start with the titles now, are we?"

Garrick grinned and gestured at the ballroom around them. "We are all under the obligations of social structure, My Lord."

Cedryck matched the look. "Then let us go somewhere they can rot in darkness. It's been too long since I've seen you." Planting a hand on Garrick's shoulder, he strode swiftly along the edge of the ballroom.

Garrick looked over his shoulder as they passed the duke. He bowed his head. "Your Grace, it was an honour, as always."

The duke smiled wryly, watching as Cedryck and Garrick retreated. "Sir Magni. Do not wait so long before returning next

time.”

Garrick could only smile and nod as Cedryck pulled him out of earshot of the duke. A few heads turned as they passed, but soon, they slipped behind a tapestry and escaped into a narrow, dark corridor hidden behind it. Slinking through the back passages of the castle after Cedryck, the years slipped away and a genuine smile lit Garrick’s face. As they emerged into a public hall, he grinned and winked at a servant who started and bowed at their appearance. They continued jogging down the hall toward the entrance to a secluded tower.

As they turned a corner, Cedryck and Garrick both drew up short. A fair-haired woman in a gown of ivory and gold leaned back in surprise.

“Oh, Lord Gredsk...” She curtsied, then her eyes shone as she saw Garrick. “Sir Magni! I did not realize you would be here tonight. It has been entirely too long.”

A couple of the ladies-in-waiting accompanying her whispered and giggled.

Garrick kept his smile and posture even, though inside he wilted. He knew what Lady Sarkova wanted, and talking usually didn’t happen until after. Cedryck had paused as they faced the lady, but behind his back, Garrick nudged Cedryck toward the entrance to the tower.

“My deepest apologies, Lady Sarkova,” Garrick said, “but Lord Gredsk has requested my attention personally. You understand, I do hope?”

Lady Sarkova nodded. “Of course. But don’t leave me waiting.”

Turning, Garrick caught a glimpse of the surprised look on Cedryck’s face before the markiese led the way to the door and inside the tower.

The heavy wooden door shut behind Garrick, locking him and Cedryck into the silence of the spiraling staircase. Only the crackling of the torches mounted along the walls broke the stillness.

Cedryck glanced over his shoulder as he began climbing the stairs, a curious look still marking his face. “I’m surprised, Garrick. I’ve never known you to dismiss Lady Sarkova’s attention.”

Garrick sniffed. “I don’t really need that kind of attention right now.”

Cedryck stopped in his tracks, his eyes wide as he stared down at the knight. “Garrick, what happened to you?”

Garrick paused as he saw the shock on Cedryck’s face. Had he said something he shouldn’t have? Garrick didn’t think he had, but something clearly didn’t portray right to Cedryck. The instincts ingrained into Garrick from his mother screamed his next course of

action. He had to deflect attention to another topic.

But this wasn't a rival or some court schemer. This was Cedryck. If there was anyone Garrick could speak honestly with, it was him. His cousin, and the closest friend Garrick had.

...and the future duke.

*I've made enough bad judgment calls lately.*

Garrick let out a sigh, putting all his effort into making his words sound earnest. "I'm sorry. It was the battle. It was exactly what I trained for, but..." Raising his head, he met Cedryck's eyes. "I couldn't do a thing against them. I might as well have not been there at all." It wasn't a lie. That had bothered Garrick, and saying so brought back the helplessness he felt when the malakh and the Goddess of Chaos battled in the streets of Albrith. At least it worked to deflect Cedryck's attention.

The stunned look on Cedryck's face faded to one of understanding. He shook his head. "I can't even imagine what it must have been like." He fixed his gaze on Garrick. "I want to hear about it. The real story."

Garrick nodded as the markiese turned to continue climbing the winding staircase. Cedryck didn't want to hear the embellished version told to the nobles, nor the bland, factual version he had heard when Garrick reported to the duke. Cedryck was the one person who wanted to know the truth about the gods and the other players in the battle.

At least Garrick could give him that.