



Pawn in Frankincense: Book Four in the Legendary Lymond Chronicles

By Dorothy Dunnett



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In this fourth book in the legendary *Lymond Chronicles*, Francis Crawford of Lymond desperately searches the Ottoman empire for his kidnapped child.

Somewhere within the bejeweled labyrinth of the Ottoman empire, a child is hidden. Now his father, Francis Crawford of Lymond, soldier of fortune and the exiled heir of Scottish nobility, is searching for him while ostensibly engaged on a mission to the Turkish Sultan. At stake is the political order of three continents, for Lymond's child is a pawn in a cutthroat game whose gambits include treason, enslavement, and murder. In that game's final move, which is played inside the harem of the Topkapi palace, Lymond will come face to face with his most implacable enemy and the dreadful ambiguities of his own nature.

With a Foreword by the author.



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Editorial Review

From the Inside Flap

For the first time Dunnett's "Lymond Chronicles are available in the United States in quality paperback editions.

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About the Author

Dorothy Dunnett was born in 1923 in Dunfermline, Fife, Scotland. Her time at Gillespie's High School for Girls overlapped with that of the novelist Muriel Spark. From 1940-1955, she worked for the Civil Service as a press officer. In 1946, she married Alastair Dunnett, later editor of **The Scotsman**.

Dunnett started writing in the late 1950s. Her first novel, **The Game of Kings**, was published in the United States in 1961, and in the United Kingdom the year after. She published 22 books in total, including the six-part Lymond Chronicles and the eight-part Niccolo Series, and co-authored another volume with her husband. Also an accomplished professional portrait painter, Dunnett exhibited at the Royal Scottish Academy on many occasions and had portraits commissioned by a number of prominent public figures in Scotland.

She also led a busy life in public service, as a member of the Board of Trustees of the National Library of Scotland, a Trustee of the Scottish National War Memorial, and Director of the Edinburgh Book Festival. She served on numerous cultural committees, and was a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts. In 1992 she was awarded the Office of the British Empire for services to literature. She died on November 9, 2001, at the age of 78.

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Baden

The bathers of Baden in summer were few and fat. Winter was the best season, when everyone came home from the fighting, and the baths public and private were filled with magnificent men, their bodies inscribed with the robust holograph of the sword.

The pretty girls came also in winter; the unmarried with their maids and their chaperones: the matrons bright-eyed and dutiful; eager to furnish their lords with an heir.

The rule was mixed bathing. The great officers of the Church went in winter, smoothing off in the sulphurous water the ills of a summer's rich feeding; and rested afterwards sweating in bed, the warm bladders under their armpits, dreaming of Calvin. Noblemen from the Italian States and the Holy Roman Empire; from the France of Henri II and the uneasy England of Edward VI came to Switzerland for the hot baths of Baden: noblemen, soldiers and merchants, lawyers and physicians and men of learning from the

universities; courtiers and diplomats; painters, poets and leisured connoisseurs of the human experience.

To trace one man in Baden at the turn of the year was a strenuous but not a disagreeable task. Neither was it impossible, even if the man were international in tongue and appearance, and had no knowledge of, or desire for, your presence. Jerott Blyth and his companion, having crossed half Europe pursuing their quarry, tried four Baden inns before locating the Engel, the largest and most high-priced of all, with the armorial bearings of all its most notable patrons studding the snow-covered front.

Among them, neat, fresh and obliging, was the familiar blazon of Lymond and Seigny. Their journey appeared to be over.

With Jerott Blyth, innkeepers never shirked the proper discharge of their duties. To the doggedness of his Scottish birth, his long residence in France and his profession of arms had lent a particular fluency. He was black-haired, and prepossessing and rude: a masterful combination. Coming out of the Engel in five minutes flat, he swung himself up on his horse beside the rest of his retinue and led them through the slush and over the square to the far side, where the snow had been swept from an imperial flight of white steps, at the top of which was a pair of carved double doors. Jerott Blyth looked down at his companion. 'He's in there,' he said. 'In the baths. In the public baths. In the public mixed baths. You're too young to go in.'

'I'm fifteen,' said Philippa bleakly. She would have lied about that, except that Fogge, the family maid, was on the pony beside her. She added, 'The stable-boys swim in the Tyne.'

'In waist-cloths?' said Jerott. 'Philippa, Baden isn't the same as the northern counties of England.'

'In nothing,' said Philippa. 'I know.'

She got in, as she had persuaded Jerott Blyth to bring her half across France, by force of logic, a kind of flat-chested innocence and the doggedness of a flower-pecker attacking a strangling fig. Then, followed by a pink, sweating Fogge, they climbed to the gallery which ran at first-floor level overlooking the pool.

The spectators walked there, eating and drinking in their clean velvet doublets and listening to the lute and viol music which ascended in waves through the steam. The discreet abundance of steam and the powerful stink of bad eggs were the first things which Philippa noticed. The next was the size of the pool beneath, and the fact that, unlike the private baths of the hostleries, it had no central partition segregating the sexes: merely an encircling bench divided modestly underwater into pews for each bather.

They were full: so full that in the centre of the pool twenty or thirty of the displaced frolicked or swam or floated, comatose in the warm and sanitative water, beneficial for worms, colic and melancholy; and a certain cure for barrenness in young wives. Beside Philippa, an elegant visitor in shell-pink satin leaned over the carved balustrade and cast a little garland of bay leaves and gilded nutmegs into the water. Two nuns, hesitating on the edge of the pool in their long peignoirs of lawn, flinched and stepped back, but a pretty black-haired woman sitting submerged just below them looked up with the flash of a smile, and the elderly man seated beside her, his paunch bared to the waist, followed her glance with a scowl. Beside Philippa, the gallant smiled back, muttering under his breath; and fishing inside his doublet for the second time, pulled out a preserved rosebud, rather tattered, and took aim again, with rather more care. Philippa followed his eyes.

Women; pure, handsome and pert; with hair curling about their ears and their fine gowns afloat in the water around them and filming the cheerful pink of their shoulders and breasts. Men, sick and stalwart, athletic and obese: the churchmen with tonsure and crucifix lodged on the broad, naked chest; the wealthy served by their

retinue, the small floating trays drifting among them bearing sweetmeats and wine, and a posy to offset the fumes. Of soldiers there were fewer than usual: the war between France and the Emperor Charles had dragged on, that winter, in the Low Countries and Italy and the beautiful men this time were otherwise engaged.

Then the steam shifted and Philippa saw there was one suavely muscled brown back, stroked here and there with the pale scars of healed thrusts and the raw marks of an encounter more recent. One gentleman of the sword, just beyond the lady of the pretty black hair and the smile; who was amusing himself with a stiff game of bouillotte, played on a light wooden board drifting between himself and a large and roseate person of no visible rank.

Of the identity of the gentleman-soldier Philippa had no doubts at all. The arching hands, dealing the cards; the barbered yellow hair, whorled and tangled with damp, could belong to only one person, as could the two deferential servants in blue and silver and red, waiting uneasily damp at his back.

'There he is,' said Philippa quickly, just as the limp rosebud thrown from beside her touched the bather's bare shoulder, and he flicked round, glancing upwards, and trapped it.

For a moment Philippa saw him full face: a printing of blue eyes and pale, artistic surprise. Then, rose in hand, the bather leaned further round. Behind him, the two nuns still stood, nervously hesitant, while beyond the bouillotte game two seats had become vacant. With dreadful grace, the yellow-haired man got to his feet and, reaching up, presented the rose to the elder of the pair of shy nuns, bowed, and handed both ladies down the wide shallow steps and into their seats. Then he sat down in a gentle lapping of water, and picked up his cards.

'He didn't see us,' said Philippa, disappointed. The gentleman in shell-pink, retrieving his upper torso from the reverse side of the balustrade, sighed and observed, 'How wasteful of Nature. You know him, madame?'

Jerott saved her from answering. 'We knew him in Scotland. He commanded a company of which I was a member.' He gave a sudden, malevolent grin and said, 'I think you'd have better luck with the lady.'

Shell-pink, ignoring that, Pursued his inquiry. 'His name? He is alone?'

'His name is Francis Crawford of Lymond. He has the title of Comte de Sevigny,' said Jerott. 'As for being alone: I don't even know who he's playing with.'

'Ah, that is simple,' said shell-pink. 'That is Onophrion Zitwitz, the duke's household controller: one of the best-known officials in Baden. Perhaps, when you greet your friend, you will introduce me also?'

Jerott's eyes and Philippa's met. 'When I meet my friend,' said Jerott Blyth carefully, 'there is likely to be a detonation which will take the snow off Mont Blanc. I advise you to seek other auspices. Philippa, I think we should go down below.'

'To swim ?' said that unprepossessing child guilelessly. 'I can stand on my head.'

'Oh, Christ,' said Jerott morosely. 'Why in hell did you come?'

The brown eyes within the damp, dun-coloured hair inspected him narrowly. 'Because you need a woman,' said Philippa finally. 'And I'm the nearest thing to it that you're likely to get. It was very short notice.' She

stopped short on the stairs and said, in the voice of discovery, 'You're afraid of him!'

Jerott's expression was affably menacing. 'And you think that because he's an old friend of your mother's he'll spare you. He won't.'

'Nonsense,' said Philippa. She wasn't actually listening. They arrived at ground level and took up their stance behind an arrangement of towels, from which they had an excellent view both of the pool and of the man known to most people, briefly, as Lymond.

Francis Crawford had seen them. What he thought about it was unlikely to be visible, through a long-practised sophistication of response. His voice, conversing softly with the controller, did not falter, nor did his hands, dealing the cards. The game drew to a close, in Master Zitwitz's favour, and a pile of gold gulden changed hands. The older of the two nuns, sitting beyond the controller, made a shy comment and the fair-haired man answered, his hands busy with a fresh game. The cards flipped. His nationality, which was Scottish, showed in neither his face nor his voice, which he had raised a little to carry over the noise of laughter and music and splashing: he detained the board and held it steady as two girls, pursued sluggishly by an elderly senator, curvetted past.

The farther nun, the plain one, leaned forward and said in Spanish-accented English, 'We were two years, sir, in Algiers before we escaped in October. Our sufferings may be imagined. Moors, corsairs, heretics cast out of Spain. . . . Turkish Spahis strut in the streets and because the Pasha is a puppet of that accursed of God, Sultan Suleiman, Christian prisoners are treated like hogs. Have you seen-'

A handful of gulden slipped, sparkling, into the water and there was a wallow as several hands urgently sought them. They were now playing passe-dix, and the black-haired lady's husband had joined them. The black-haired lady suddenly giggled. Righting the board: 'Banker's share, I believe,' said Crawford of Lymond courteously. 'I beg your pardon, Sister. You were saying?' Gold-a large amount of gold-changed hands.

The colour was high in the plainer nun's face. 'I was saying-have you ever been at a ganching? Seen a man's feet roasted black in his shoes? Needles driven into his fingers? Have you ever seen a friend flayed alive with such art he took three hours dying, and his skin then stuffed back to its life-shape with straw? Have you ever seen half a man cauterized on a red hot brass shield so that he lives a little time longer? Medicinal baths!' said the older nun bitterly. 'What can hot baths do for our scars?'

Her voice, at the sharp pitch of hysteria, carried even to where Jerott and Philippa stood. The decorative lady, paling, recoiled into the arms of her husband, and her husband, a stout soap-broker from Munich, expressed his displeasure. 'There are women present' he said.

'So there are,' said Francis Crawford gently, and throwing a ten, passed the dice into the capable hands of the household controller. 'Not a fashionable topic. Why not come back after dinner?'

Onophrion Zitwitz, arrested, the dice in his fingers, put in a question. 'You speak of horrible tortures. But women and children surely were not subject to these?'

The young nun answered. 'They have other uses for them,' she said bitterly. 'I was a slave in the corsair Dragut's own palace. I saw his women-Spanish, French, Italian, Irish. I was at the branding of all his poor children. To some women, degradation like that is the worst sort of torture.'

There was a small silence, in which Philippa's epiglottis popped like a cork. Beside her, Jerott's breathing

faltered in the same moment and resumed, shallowly, as he went on straining to hear. The steam drifted, lazily, and there was a little fuss as an old lady was carried out, overcome by the fumes. The viol, which had paused for its rest break, resumed softly, some distance away. Lymond, who had received some gold coins from both Zitwitz and the soapbroker, was counting them. The soap-broker's wife stretched her legs idly under the water.

After a long moment: 'She might have been Queen of Ireland, she told me, that black-haired Irishwoman,' said the young nun sulkily. 'And the golden child on her knee.'

There fell a weighty silence again, filled with the rattle of dice. A small crisis in the passe-dix arrived and departed. The soap-broker threw, followed by Zitwitz, followed by Lymond, who still appeared to be abstractedly considering his money. He threw less than ten, and confronted by the controller's outstretched hand, turned to the younger and prettier nun who had last spoken. 'I'm sorry, mi bella, but I need my loose change.'

The nun flinched. The older sister, leaning over her, exclaimed, 'Sister Anne has no money! What are you saying!' The soap-broker looked outraged.

Francis Crawford's voice was quite peaceful. 'That she has twenty gold pieces trapped under her foot.'

Master Zitwitz suddenly said, 'Ah!' Both nuns had gone patchily scarlet and white. The older one said hoarsely, 'You are baiting us! I shall appeal to the Cardinal!'

'No need,' said Lymond. And bending, he caught Sister Anne by both ankles and hurled them up over her head.

Whether she had purloined coins under her feet was not at that moment immediately evident. Her shout, and the tidal wave which went with it, brought each flaccid bather horrified to his feet. As Sister Anne floundered: 'Now, by God!' said the broker, and lunging, tripped over the large form of Master Zitwitz who, head dripping, had come up for air. 'You were right, sir!' said the household controller. 'She had stolen-' Then the broker's shin cracked on his neck, and the waters closed over Master Zitwitz gain.

The merchants wife suddenly giggled and Lymond also broke water, smoothly. The older nun, her fact pulled from beneath her by some unknown agency, disappeared likewise in a whirl of steam and a blizzard of water. Combers, running from side to medicinal side of the pool, overturned trays, wine, food and the more sportive bathers: the merchant, who had discovered why his wife giggled, advanced on Lymond through the water with dreamlike slowness, a pewter jug in his hand.

Lymond ducked. An attendant, running behind, seized his upflung arm, and Lymond, bending smartly, somersaulted him into the pool. He dodged another and watched, admiringly, as the controller, a majestic figure rising mother-naked from the depths, seized another by the liveried waist and delivered him into the arms of a Cardinal. Someone seized the soap-merchant's wife, who was now laughing incessantly, and there was the sound of cloth tearing as she passed down the length of the pool.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

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