

## Chapter Three

Brod

Callarnia, Sorvine Empire

Day Six

*Beginning of new paragraph needs to be indented. "Get up." Modern convention is that dialogue that does not continue should concluded with a period.* Brod was awakened with a kick to his bed frame. He stirred from a dreamless (*Need to know it was dreamless? Words are real-estate you can't waste.*) sleep to find Pavian's gaunt, stubbled visage staring down at him. "We're going into the country. How's your Ketch?"

Brod sat up scowling, and gestured for Pavian to give him space with a backhanded wave—partially so he could get up from the bed, mostly to waft away the man's fetid body odor, "Passable. You?" *There is a neurological concept called 'Chunking'. Basically, it explains that to remember large quantities of information, our brains chunks it into smaller pieces, resulting in fewer 'units' to be recalled. When you outline a beat (character action) prior to dialogue, the longer the beat, the less likely the reader will have chunked what is necessary to recall to understand the dialogue's context. Read Steven Pinker's book The Sense of Style. He explains the brain-side of reading and writing.*

*What I would recommend is this:*

*"We're going into the country. How's your Ketch?"*

*"Passable. You?"*

*"I can ask a woman how much to fuck." Pavian said.*

*Brod sat up scowling...*

Pavian snorted. *Period, not comma.* "I can ask a woman how much to fuck." *If Pavian is an uncouth lordling, would he not have called the woman a whore instead?*

Brod slipped on his boots and stood up. He had an extra head in height and a full shoulder's breadth on the other man. *Period, not comma.* "For you? They must charge a princely fortune."

*A note on the previous paragraph: You've missed an opportunity to show, and instead told us something (much more dull).*

*Try this:*

*Brod slipped on his boots and stood up. He looked down at Pavian's unwashed face, eying the man's narrow shoulders and wondered at the purity of his parentage. "For you, they must charge a princely fortune."*

*"Fuck you, peasant."*

*It would help to add a scene break here. It varies from publisher to publisher, some use a solid line, other use three dots or asterisks. Read submission guidelines, or just do whatever you wish until editing for submission.*

For example:

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*Indent required.* Within the hour, Brod was dressed, shaved, fed, and saddling his horse. Pavian was still breaking his fast on a bench table outside with a hash of potatoes, leeks, and bacon and some small beer that smelled of pine resin. The scent of his meal mingled with the aroma of the warm morning sun baking the wood of the fort. Brod would've found it pleasant if not for Pavian's nauseating groans and smacking as he ate. *This again reads as a missed opportunity for showing. It is clear you're attempting to characterize Pavian as a crass, grotesque man, and therefore Brod as his antithesis. It's common in fantasy, particularly modern fantasy, for authors to provide culinary detail apropos of nothing—as you have above. Instead, you could try to illustrate how uncultured the lordling is by showing us through Brod's experience. Perhaps Pavian is eating a common Sorvian dish, but in a manner that disgusts Brod. You then get to world-build a little, show how Pavian's consumption is against the grain of Sorvian (or Brod's personal) culture, and you could achieve it all without telling.*

*Here's another piece of advice: when you're able, show through dialogue. Character voice trumps pretty scene-setting, evocative beats, and exposition. For example, maybe there is a particular seasoning Pavian is overusing, and Brod can point this out. Don't underestimate a reader's ability to parse what is being shown.*

*I'd suggest considering subtext too, but that may be too much to juggle at once. First step telling; second characterize and show through dialogue; third, refine dialogue by the use of subtext. Get the first two without the third, and for most people it won't matter. You want to rise above mediocrity? Master subtext.*

*"You got up earlier than me," said Brod as he fastened a sack of supplies to the saddle. "How are you not ready yet?" Again, there is a chunking struggle here. Brod is saddling the horse in the first sentence of the first paragraph of this scene. You then go on to explain what Pavian is doing, what he's eating, and what Brod thinks of it. Then, in your first bit of dialogue, you refer to the saddle. I just read this twice, and while adding notes I still halted and thought, "What saddle?"*

*What I suggest is that you consider my above suggestion. For example:*

***Within the hour, Brod was dressed, shaved, fed, and saddling his horse.***

***Pavian was still breaking his fast on a bench table outside.***

***"They don't teach the upper crust how to eat properly?" Brod said.***

***Pavian slurped and groaned into his bowl like a troughing pig, saying nothing. He had a common Sorvian hash of potatoes, leeks, and bacon...***

*Now, that is not written in your voice, it's written in mine. The idea is, you would say it in your voice, as per my suggestions (or fuck me if you don't want to), and it would read far easier. Note, too, what I had Brod say. The subtext there is Brod's resentment of one so unworthy being born into a higher station. It would then be emphasised later when Pavian rides Brod for his name.*