Michael Swanwick's Periodic Table of Science Fiction

33

As

Arsenic

74.9216

Lucrezia Borgia

Lucrezia was a good girl overall, though she did have her faults. Her family, for one. It's no easy thing having the Borgias for in-laws.

"Soup?" she asked her new hubby.

"No thanks." Antonio's father had had a long talk with him just before the wedding. He'd gone into Lucrezia's romantic history in some detail. It had made a lasting impression on Antonio. "I'm not hungry right now."

Lucrezia blushed. "Then, maybe a glass of wine before we ? you know?"

"I'm not thirsty either."

"I understand." She began to unbutton her blouse, and in a sultry-shy voice said, "Fetch me that little bottle of strawberry oil. You can pour it all over me, and then lick it off."

"No!"

Lucrezia's fingers froze. "Are you gay?"

"Of course I'm not!" Antonio flushed, and stuttered, and coughed, and then the whole story simply poured out of him: how greatly he feared poisoning. How little he desired to end up as dead as Lucrezia's six earlier husbands.

"But, darling," she protested. "That wasn't me?it was my family. You know how insanely political they all are. But you have nothing to fear on that account. You have neither position nor money, and even if you did, the pre-nups your father had me sign specify I can inherit nothing from you. I married you solely because I am deeply, passionately drawn to you. You're a very sexy man, you know. What possible reason could I have to

Michael Swanwick's Periodic Table of Science Fiction 33

As

Arsenic

74.9216

Lucrezia Borgia

Lucrezia was a good girl overall, though she did have her faults. Her family, for one. It's no easy thing having the Borgias for in-laws.

"Soup?" she asked her new hubby.

"No thanks." Antonio's father had had a long talk with him just before the wedding. He'd gone into Lucrezia's romantic history in some detail. It had made a lasting impression on Antonio. "I'm not hungry right now." Lucrezia blushed. "Then, maybe a glass of wine

before we ? you know?"

"I'm not thirsty either."

"I understand." She began to unbutton her blouse, and in a sultry-shy voice said, "Fetch me that little bottle of strawberry oil. You can pour it all over me, and then lick it off."

"No!"

Lucrezia's fingers froze. "Are you gay?"

"Of course I'm not!" Antonio flushed, and stuttered, and coughed, and then the whole story simply poured out of him: how greatly he feared poisoning. How little he desired to end up as dead as Lucrezia's six earlier husbands.

"But, darling," she protested. "That wasn't me?it was my family. You know

how insanely political they all are. But you have nothing to fear on that account. You have neither position nor money, and even if you did, the pre-nups your father had me sign specify I can inherit nothing from you. I married you solely because I am deeply, passionately drawn to you. You're a very sexy man, you know. What possible reason could I have to want you dead?"

"None," Antonio admitted, abashed.

"Then show me you trust me." She popped a grape into his mouth. "Eat." Antonio hesitated, then nodded bravely. He chewed, swallowed, and died. Lucrezia wiped a little tear away from the corner of her eye. She had really liked this one. He had been so kind and

sweet and attentive ? She began unlacing his doublet.

Sometimes it was hell being a necrophile.

© 2002 by Michael Swanwick and SCIFI.COM.