





## THE TRAVELS OF MENDES PINTO CHARACTER SHEET

### NOTES

Rodrigo Vasques is the son of soldier that served D. Eduardo da Silva until death took him when his son was 7 years old. Rodrigo's mother was a maid of the Silva's house. She died too when Rodrigo was 10. Both of them were trusted servants of D. Rodrigo that had a lot of affection for them. That affection was extended to their only son. D. Eduardo enjoyed teaching the boy soldiering skills that remind him of the days of his youth. For the last 7 years, after the death of his father, Rodrigo learned from his master all the crafts and arts of war.

D. Eduardo da Silva was a good-natured provincial nobleman from Cartaxo (a locality to the north of Lisbon), the offspring of a long lineage. He had five children: The elder, D. Afonso da Silva; a second son that died in North Africa while on the service of the king; D. Ana de Figueiredo, a daughter married into the Figueiredo family; Antão de S. Maria, a priest that now lives in Italy; and Aida, his youngest daughter from his second wife. He saw his two wives die from sickness. When his son D. Afonso got married, D. Eduardo decided to retire to his estates in Cartaxo where he lived since then a more or less reclusive life with his youngest daughter.

D. Afonso is a haughty and cold man in his forties. He lives in Lisbon where he has fulfilled several appointments to the king. He is cold, hot-tempered, and very protective of his good name and honour.

Aida a bright and spirited young lady now in her twenties, would have been sent to a nunnery if her mother was alive but his father kept her with him for the company. Deprived of young company in a house inhabited by her father's aging servants, the young lady became close Rodrigo since his childhood. It was she that taught him how to read and write Portuguese.

D. Eduardo relied on his old priest for his scribe needs. When arthritis made this task too painful to Fr. Luis, the aged priest started to use the 11 years old Rodrigo to do the writing under his instructions. That continued for the next 2 years. In the mean time he taught Rodrigo some Latin (enough to say simple sentences and aphorisms and to read basic texts). When the priest died a year ago D. Eduardo entrusted his scribe needs to Rodrigo.

At 14 Rodrigo seemed to be 16. That summer, years of a childish close relationship with Aida turned into something new, something that none of them had tasted before. It was a brief and guiltless explosion of juvenile lust and desire. The carelessness of youth brought it into the attention of indiscrete eyes and years and the whole affair was reported to D. Eduardo. The aging nobleman was devastated. Two of his most trusted and loved ones had betrayed his confidence beyond repair. Prostrated with grief, unknowing what to do, he called on his son, D. Afonso. Aida, knowing all too well the moods of her brother, ordered Rodrigo to flee at once.

The reclusive ways of the Silvas allowed the coverage of the whole affair and protected Rodrigo in his flight. He sailed in a boat down the Tejo (leaving Cartaxo for the first time in his life) claiming he had to go to Lisbon because of some business commanded by his master. Nobody discussed it.

When D. Afonso reached Cartaxo his rage was unbounded. He wanted his sister sent to a nunnery right away. He wanted Rodrigo hunted and killed. His father and his wife were barely able to contain his anger. After many arguments they were able to convince him that killing Rodrigo would only bring more suspicion and could put him under the reach of the king's justice. On what concerns Aida, it was too early to send her to a nunnery.

The latter was a wise decision. Soon the signs of a pregnancy became all too evident. Aida was officially declared ill. She lived the life of a recluse under the watching eye of D. Afonso's wife's most trusted maid. Five months later a child was born. Only the maid, D. Afonso, his wife and his most trusted servant knew about this. D. Eduardo, prostrated by the events and not willing to see his daughter for the rest of his days, was never informed about it. The child was taken by the servant and put into the wheel of an undisclosed convent, his or her destiny the service of the Lord.

Two months later Aida was declared cured. According to the story told by her brother and step-sister, this was a God's miracle that she wanted to thank for the rest of her days by living in a nunnery. That winter D. Eduardo died of a cold.

When Rodrigo reached Lisbon he got lost, not knowing how to go about in such a big city. It was not hard for D. Afonso's men to hunt him. D. Afonso anticipated the moment he would be able to get his revenge. Yes, he would spare the life of the youth. But he planned to leave him maimed and disfigured, wreaked for the rest of his days. Rodrigo was lucky. Unknowing of what was happening, the king summoned D. Afonso to an urgent meeting. Reluctantly

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hospital for the poor where he claimed he had been assaulted and robbed. In three weeks he was on his feet heading south.

Months later Rodrigo was in Sines, a town in the south-west coast of Portugal, penniless. He heard by chance that a local nobleman wanted to hire soldiers for his caravelas. He got onboard after lying about his age (he was 15 and said he was 18). For the next four years he lived a mix of sailing, privateering, and misery due to the unscrupulous mores of his new master. His read and write skills made him into the scribe of the nobleman.

When he was 18 his master sent him as the under commander of a caravela in a mostly piracy mission to the straight of Gibraltar. That time luck run out and the caravela was captured by the Spanish and taken to Cadiz. Rodrigo had to face two options: either go to jail or enrol in the Spanish army that was going to Italy. He opted for Italy. In the months before embarking he became friend with a Spanish captain from Granada. That spared him the troubles of the wars in Italy.

The life of a soldier in the south of Spain on foraged rations and little pay was not the most prosperous opportunity one can think of. Two years later, when his days in Cartaxo seemed to be more dream than real, he receives a letter from the servant of D. Afonso. The man was dying and decided to confess to the son of his former comrade in arms that he had a child. He gave no details, but that was enough to put Rodrigo on the move. He decided to return to Portugal and sail to India, the only place where he can improve his lot enough to be able to one day to return to Portugal and search for his son. It is the year 1537.