

Purstenpodler (excerpt)

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A few Housing Committee Members and Apprentices have been transferred. Species Relations and Security need more people.

Purstenpodler has been getting more important tasks, lately. She's been doing some of the things that Committee Members usually do.

Actually, it's not just her. There are four others who seem to be increasingly asked to do more and take on more responsibility. Purstenpodler and the others have also noticed who else is in the click.

As everybody takes their seats in the meeting auditorium, the 'in the click' Apprentices discreetly acknowledge each other. They sit in their usual seats and give no outward indication that they're aware of 'something' going on.

Committee Member 1 opens the meeting and introduces the first topic. The Committee Clerk begins recapping the previous discussion of the topic: the Serpilgeneret attacks on the Tubellstacene.

Purstenpodler notices that several of the Committee Members appear to be distracted. They seem to be uncomfortable about something and are trying to hide their discomfort.

An aide enters the auditorium and approaches the Members table. The aide hands a note to Committee Member 3 and they whisper a brief discussion. The aide walks away.

This is very unusual. Everybody in the auditorium adjusts forward in their chairs.

Committee Member 3: "My aide has brought me some information. This is an early report and will need to be verified."

Committee Member 3—standing from his chair: "The Serpils have taken Island 5."

First, there is silence. Then a murmur grows in the auditorium.

Many of the people attending the meeting are outwardly agitated. Most of the Apprentices are unsure about how to react, other than displaying anxiety.

Purstenpodler casually glances at a few of the others in the 'click'. They remain calm and exchange Inside eye-blinks.

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Purstenpodler is one of two from the ‘click’ to be advanced early to Housing Committee Member. She’s a little unsure about contributing to the Committee as a Member.

She wasn’t an Apprentice for long. Purstenpodler is apprehensive about being directly involved in the decision-making.

One of the first thought Purstenpodler has while sitting at the Members table for the first time is that, ‘Things look different from this side of the Members table’.

One of the first things Purstenpodler wants to do is get her own Burrow. She is a Committee Member now, and she’s still living with her parents.

Purstenpodler has been interested in a particular place. The Burrow land is part of a new batch of housing that the Committee is discussing.

New Housing has mostly been developed in large sections of valley land.

Typical Drel housing is a two-story Burrow with the living area mostly underground. The above-ground level of the structure is utilitarian — used as a garage, office space, storage, etc. The Drels use gently sloped ramps to get between levels.

Every Burrow has land around it to grow food. The usual development of a new Burrow includes a surrounding crop system.

The new batch of housing includes areas around the Capitol that have not been previously developed. There are many places that are higher up on the mountains.

Some places near the top are only large enough for one Burrow. Purstenpodler would like one of these homes.

Purstenpodler should be able to get the exact homesite that she wants. One of the Inside perks of being a Member of the Housing Committee is having first choice of Housing.

Committee Member 1, who was Committee Member 3 before the recent re-alignment, opens the meeting and introduces the first topic.

The Committee Clerk recaps the previous discussion of the topic.

Committee Member 1 still does his play of having an aide bring important news to him during a meeting. This play has become so familiar that many people in the auditorium respond like it’s part of the usual proceedings—except that it’s a more interesting part.

Committee Member 1: “My aide has brought me some information. This is an early report and will need to be verified.”

Committee Member 1 stands up from his chair to deliver the news. He takes a big breath, probably for dramatic purposes. The crowd responds accordingly.

Committee Member 1: “The Serpils have attacked the Tubells again. This time it’s at Island 1.”

First, there is silence. Then a murmur grows in the auditorium.

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Purstenpodler now sits in the middle of the Housing Committee table. They have been losing their Member 1 and advancing someone new about every tenth of a year.

Purstenpodler hasn’t been a Committee Member for very long. At this rate, she may be Committee Member 1 soon.

She’s good with that. Most of the Housing tasks are routine, anyway.

Three of the others from the old Apprentices click were advanced to other Committees.

Two were sent to be Apprentices for the Species Relations Committee, and both are now Members. One went straight to Member of the Infrastructure Committee.

They all maintain their Apprentices click—discreetly. They know that they might be able to help each other, or get help, at some point in the future.

Committee Member 1 opens the meeting and prepares to introduce the first topic. It’s not on the schedule.

Committee Member 1 — between happy and relieved: “Multiple confirmed reports state that the Tubells have repelled the Serpil shuttle attack at Island 1.”

Committee Member 4: “My sources say that the Tubells invented a type of mobile shield that reflects NRG weapon discharges. It deflects the blasts back in the direction from which they were fired. Apparently, it was effective against the Serpils.”

Purstenpodler contributes a thought. “For the Tubells, that almost sounds like a weapon.”

Committee Member 8: “It’s still defensive. If they don’t get shot at, their shield won’t send anything back.”

The Tubells are known to be pacifists. The Tubells are not timid, though. They have been the first Species to make numerous advancements.

The Drels are *not* pacifists. The Drelstenprupo prefer not to fight, but if backed into a corner, Drels will get as scrappy as necessary.

Purstenpodler thinks Serpils may perceive the peaceful nature of Tubells as a weakness and the Serpils are drawn to attack the Tubellstacene by some primal instinct.

It could just be that Serpils consider the Tubells to be “good eatin’.”

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Today is a Support Occupation day. Purstenpodler is contributing in Food Supply.

Purstenpodler has done shifts in the Food Exchange Building, but she usually helps with harvesting, including at her own Burrow.

It seemed strange the first few times that she was on a harvest crew at her own home.

Purstenpodler’s crew truck pulls into the Processing Building with their second harvest of the day. She’s expecting to take a good break and get a great lunch. One of the Inside perks of Food Supply is first choice of the incoming foods.

Purstenpodler gets out of the truck, returns her Beel Net to the tool shed, and heads for the lunchroom.

Someone runs up to her with a message.

The messenger hands her a note as he tells her what’s on it. “The Serpils have attacked the Tubell Mainland, Continent 5. As Housing Committee Member 1, your presence is required at the auditorium for a Special Joint Committee meeting.”

The messenger is certainly from the Security Committee. He escorts her to a waiting car. They drive off fast and are soon at the auditorium.

Three representatives from each of the higher Committees are supposed to be in attendance at Special Joint Committee meetings. Not everybody can be collected in time, so you never know who or how many will make it.

The auditorium is already packed with people. This building is about four times larger than the Housing Committee auditorium, which is always mostly empty.

So far, Purstenpodler is the only one from the Housing Committee, Member or otherwise. She feels outnumbered.

While the assembled people are taking seats and getting organized, she scans the auditorium for anybody from Housing. She would like to see another Member, but even an Apprentice or an aide would be nice.

Purstenpodler recognizes some of the Committee Members in the auditorium. She knows the former Housing Members who are now in, or leading, other Committees. It's an important circle of friends.

Executive Committee Member 1: "The Serpilgeneret has attacked the Tubells at 3 of 5. Obviously, this level of attack is unprecedented."

Species Relations Committee Member 1: "This will have potentially serious ramifications for long-term World Stability."

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She's been advanced again.

Purstenpodler is now a Member in the Executive Committee.

She doesn't know of anyone else who went directly from Housing to Executive. Three other Members from her former Housing circles are already in the Executive, but they were in other Committees first.

Purstenpodler is confident. She has been playing this game her whole life.

She's got her Inside sources across Drel society and all over the planet — except for the Tubells. Nobody has sources within the Tubellstacene.

Most importantly, Purstenpodler has her many circles of friends throughout the Committees. The whole Committee system is circles within circles.

Executive Committee Member 1 opens the meeting and introduces the first topic. It's not on the schedule.

Executive Committee Member 1: "The Serpilgeneret has been repelled from 3 of 5. Their shuttle is returning to Continent 13."

As a newer Member, Purstenpodler is observing and learning the scope of the Committee. The meeting touches on a large number of various topics. This is where the important issues get decided.

Naturally, it requires a lot of time to *make* a decision.

After the meeting, everybody files out of the auditorium and into the back corridors. It was a good meeting. Much was discussed, and a decision was actually reached.

Purstenpodler navigates her way through the corridors packed with people. There are about ten times more Members in the Executive than there were in Housing. Every Member has their inner circle orbiting around them, too.

One of the things she learned in Executive is that the Geminy have been steadily Claiming land in Continent 6. Other than that, the Geminy have been quiet.

Some say too quiet.

Quiet sounds good to Purstenpodler. Now that the Serpil – Tubell conflict is over, it would be good if things were quiet for a while!
