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## The Battle for the Med., year 871 a.d.

In year 871 a.d., we find an old king tending to his rose garden one day, when suddenly his peace is shattered, by a young messenger "Sire, I must speak with you immediately". In his haste to reach the king with this important news, he has inadvertently, damaged some of his king's prize roses. "How dare you!" shouts the king. "Now you just wait, over there" pointing to a place out of the way "until I get done, or I'll have you drawn and quartered!" the king continued to mumble something about "the young are just too impatient, nowadays". Realizing that his liege lord was in no mood to hear what he had to say, and also realizing that such an event, would permanently end his career as a government official, he meekly walked over to the space the king pointed to. After all, "I've got time", he thinks.

Shortly thereafter another young man, entered the garden. Unlike the first this one was well versed in the king's moods, and knew to tread lightly and carefully. "Sire, warships from the south are approaching", he reported. The flag they fly is Islamic, possibly from Aleppo. "Prepare the fleet and sail and soon as you are ready, Laelilus" the king told his young, but able fleet commander. "But Sire", wailed the young man on the other side of the garden. "Not another word, or you'll be sleeping with the fishes tonight!" said the king. Laelilus laughed inwardly, for as a young messenger, in the service of the king, he had learned then, that the old man's bark was far worse than his bite.

The old man continued to work on his garden, for several hours in fact, when finally, word was sent that his fleet was successful in repelling the Islamic fleet. Deciding that it was time to turn in, he only then remembered the young messenger. He went over to where he was, finding him fast asleep on a patch of grass. Oh well, I really couldn't expect him to remain awake all this time, he thought. Shaking him gently, the young man awoke with a start. "Well youngster, what was so important, that you had to trample my garden to tell me?" "Sire" the young man started, "We just received word, that the Holy Roman Empire, has just asked the Alepponese, to send a fleet, to patrol off the coast of France, in case that power decides to march to war."

There's a very old saying: Sometimes you get the bear, and sometimes the bear gets you. That would be a very apt way to describe how our old king is feeling right about now.