

## Reflections at Greenfield, Pt. 1

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Here starts the Tale of Marie de Quenelles, an ancestor of Gueron.

It was winter, Gilles-Tide, 1493, and Marie is remembering her family history while awaiting word of her father.

For those that are not fully familiar with the calendar of the Warhammer World, there are 12 months; After-Witching, Year-Turn, Plough-Tide, Ladys-Month, Summer-Tide, Fore-Mystery, After-Mystery, Harvest-Tide, Brew-Month, Chill-Month, Gilles-Tide, and Fore-Witching. Of these months ten have 33 days, and two have 32 days.

There are six days that are not included in months; Witching Night (New Year, before After-Witching), Lily-Day (Spring Equinox, between Year-Turn and Plough-Tide), Peace-Tide (Summer Solstice, between Summer-Tide and Fore-Mystery), Day of Mystery (Between Fore-Mystery and After Mystery, Commemerates the First Appearance of the Lady of the Lake), Grail Day (Autumn Equinox, between Harvest-Tide and Brew-Month), and Kings Sleep (Winter Solstice, between Gilles-Tide and Fore-Witching).

The Current year is 1544. The Storm of Chaos took place in 1543-1544.

### Gilles-Tide 1493

She looked south across the clear blue waters of the River Brienne, and its shimmering snow covered banks, and shivered with more than the winter's chill. She stood on the allure and absently pulled her ermine-trimmed wool robe closer about her as if to protect from a strong wind. However, there was no wind.

The robe had been a gift from her father, at the beginning of Brew-Month, in anticipation of a cold winter, one that he always seemed to be able to predict. It was a very nice robe, dyed in the deep blue of Quenelles, made especially for her in Carcassone, which meant it was fit to her somewhat tall frame. She loved her robe dearly, as she did all things that had been gifted her by her father, but unfortunately it did little to allay the chill that had caused her to wake earlier that morning.

"Lady Marie," asked Sir Bastien, "what ails thee?" She had not heard the old man approach, but that was not unusual, so she did not jump. Sir Bastien had been acting as her father's steward for the past two weeks. He was a too old to follow her father into battle this time, being nearly 75 years old. Still he remained unbowed by age, bearing his birth sword with the confidence and ease of years, the very definition of a loyal knight, and as such had been the logical choice to run her father's lands when he had ridden off to answer an ally's call.

Marie knew her family history well, and Sir Bastien was a large part of it. He had fought the orcs of Carcassone when they had raided nearly 50 years before, and when her father had left on his errantry quest, Sir Bastien had accompanied him, at the request of his grandfather, Gervaise of Carcassone. He taught the young knight many of the skills that he had come to rely on. Her father, Sir Gerard, even attributed Sir Bastien with saving his life more than once.

When Sir Gerard had been offered the lands in Quenelles, due to his many triumphs against the denizens of the Massif Orcal, Sir Bastien had left the service of Sir Gervaise of Carcassone, and taken service under Sir Gerard of Quenelles. That had been 1471, and her father had just turned 21. Sir Gerard had been in service of Lord Marcel, his father-in-law, since 1468 shortly after he had married Marise, Lord Marcel's youngest daughter.

Marie paused at that thought. She had not known her mother, who had died giving birth to her and her brother, Michel, in 1477. She wondered at the odd thought, why had she thought of her for no apparent reason, she certainly did not remember her. She did know that her father said she resembled her mother more than either of her sisters, well with the exception of her height. She realized that both her father and her grandfather doted on her for that reason, and she often wished she had known her mother.

She shook her head, trying to clear it, and realized Sir Bastien was waiting for her answer. "I'm not sure, Tonton," using the nickname she had always had for him, "I have had disturbing feelings, well I actually can't describe what is disturbing, but it is sort of an iciness that has reached my heart. It is as cold as the deep barrows of Châlons."

"How long have you had these feelings, Marie?" asked Sir Bastien, suddenly seeming far more serious than he ever had. It was almost as if he had grabbed and shaken though he had not moved, it was only his voice that startled her. He had never used that tone with her before, or even in her presence, but he focused her thoughts as she struggled to form her words.

"This morning I believe. This morning I woke to that," she paused, trying to choose the most appropriate word, "that inescapable chill. I believed at the time that it was the weather, but neither clothing nor the fire warmed me."

"Lady Marie, I would like you to go to the great room, I have to some things to attend to, and I feel that you need fellowship, and no other place is as attended as the great room." Marie considered this and turned to comply. Sir Bastien accompanied her down the stairs, to the ground below. As she turned into the entrance of the Keep, Sir Bastien turned toward the gatehouse.

Marie entered the keep, and made her way to the great hall. She was the last of her sisters unwed, and as such, the lady of the keep, a duty she preferred not to have, but nonetheless one she performed well. As she entered the great hall, there was a rustle as several men stood to allow her entrance. She noted the numbers, and wondered again at the vulnerability of the castle. She was only a lady, and was not supposed to understand tactics and strategy, but she was not a typical lady.

She had been the youngest of her siblings, born hours after her twin brother. Actually, due to the length and difficulty of her mother's labour, she had born on Lily Day, a day after her brother. The labour proved to be ultimately fatal, as Marise had died on the first day of Plough-Tide. Because of the death of their mother at birth, she and Michel had been inseparable, discussing all manner of things as they grew together.

She shook herself again, chasing off the dark iciness in her soul. The ten men who had stood were looking at her.

Regaining her composure, she crossed the stone floor to the fire, and sat down in a comfortable chair among the several ladies present. She listened absently as they continued their gossip, her mind working on several levels. The fire dredged up more memories.

Four years earlier, her brother Antoine, had embarked upon his errantry quest. The chill that had gripped her grew suddenly sharp as she remembered the grim situation that had nearly cost her father his second son.

Antoine had been 17, a few days shy of his 18th birthday, very confident and very proud. It was Grail Day, that time of year when the day and night are virtually the same length and there was a celebration featuring much drinking of wine. He and nineteen other young nobles had indulged quite liberally in the best Quenelle wines, and formed a pact to clean out that portion of the Forest of Châlons near the Barrows of Cuileux as their errantry quest. This in itself was not unusual. Knights Errant are invariably reckless while seeking to prove their worth, since they know they are superior to all lesser people. Regrettably they neglected to have a person familiar with that part of Châlons as they considered a guide beneath them. After all, what can stand against a score of Bretonnian knights?

They had left the next day, and Marie felt the sudden icy stab of fear, that had been the first day of Brew-Month, four years to the day before she had been gifted with the robe she now wore. She wondered if there was a correlation, she had to think. She focused on the glowing embers in the fire, trying to remember.

A score of Knights Errant, including her brother, had left Manor Greenfield that morning, just over four years ago, so confident that they were invulnerable that they had not bothered to take a guide, a miscalculation that cost them severely. Châlons was not a pleasant host, and according to her brother, as soon as they had entered, the forest itself had tried to lead them astray. A violent storm had struck and they missed the route that they had intended to follow. Antoine reported that the forest seemed to shift randomly, always drawing them more deeply into it. Their first misstep was when they stumbled into a village of Beastmen, rather Undead Beastmen. They fought but eventually were forced to retreat, as the Undead did not flee the overwhelming skill of the trained knights. Unfortunately, the Undead also seemed to not tire. There seemed to be a definite border that the Undead would not cross. After several days of fighting and the loss of eight knights, they were finally able to find that border.

Unfortunately, they had been forced further into Châlons, and they found themselves near the Black Chasm. One of the remaining companions was native to Bastonne, and he determined that if they followed the Chasm east they would arrive at the border of the Forest of Châlons as it ran into the Massif Orcal. After a short discussion, they agreed to follow that plan. About three days later, they were turned back, as the Black Chasm's edge led them into an encounter with a mantichore. Again forced deeper into Châlons, this time with wounded, they determined to head south. Antoine had very little recollection of their further journeys, having survived the brunt of the mantichore's attack.

Eventually after months, they found their way out of Forest of Châlons into Aquitaine, of all places. Of the twenty Knights Errant that had entered the Forest of Châlons, only a eight remained, and only four were in any condition to fight. Of those eight none had connections with Aquitaine. Antoine had recovered almost completely by then, so his recollection of what occurred next was more vivid, though it had taken Marie quite a while to hear the whole story.

The eight knights rode out of the Forest of Châlons, exhausted and hungry. It was night, and Mannslieb dimly shone, but the green glow of Morrslieb dominated the paths. A manor waited a few leagues distant from the forest, and its lights welcomed the weary travelers. A knock on the door brought a lovely lady, to answer the door, and upon determining that the knights had traveled far, they were invited in, offered wine, food, and shelter by the Noble family. In addition to the dozen servants or so, the family also had half-a-dozen lovely daughters. As the night moved on, loud music began to be played, and a few knights were led off by the daughters, singly or in pairs.

Antoine denied several advances, revealing to Marie that he had felt uneasy in the manor, and he started trying to pay

attention to his senses, despite the raucous music. He heard a painful yell, and immediately jumped up, reached for his sword, and started to rush outside to see where the scream had come from. When he reached the door, the lady of the manor interposed herself between him and the outside, with an almost hungry look. She asked what was wrong, and he reported that he had heard a sound, and was going to check the outside.

She stated that there was no need to do so, and that they would have a servant check, calling on a servant to check the outside. Antoine started to walk away but glanced back, to see the servant disappear only yards from the house. He uttered an exclamation just in time to note that there the servant was again inside. His sword already drawn, he slashed the servant only to see his sword pass through the creature harmlessly. The lady turned, her eyes radiating a green glow.

Antoine yelled to his companions, and those that were around responded. Robert of Parravon drew his sword and struck at one of the daughters, as her eyes had begun to glow. His weapon passed through the creature as well. Antoine thought quickly, he remembered a tale from his grandfather, and swore quickly, "Orcborn! We can't harm them, but they disappear just outside the house." He felt a cut on his leg as one of the creatures cut him, and started to head down the hallway and stumbled over something, his dagger went flying through the floor. He blinked, and reached forward and noted that his hand had gone through the floor, as he pulled it back, he felt his arm go brush against the jagged ledge of a hole in the floor, and backed up.

He felt another wound as he was being attacked by the "lady" of the manor. He found the door and backed out, noting that Paul of Bastonne, and Denis of Quenelles, as well as Robert of Parravon, had also made it out. They saw the family start to merge together, in one body, and started to approach. They backed away, recovering all eight horses of the eight survivors of the Forest of Châlons, but four of the survivors had been left in the house. The four Errant knights rode slowly away, knowing that they had lost half their number, and much of their confidence, but not knowing to what.

They camped several leagues further south, setting watches, as they refused to trust any home. The next day they rode on, and continued for several days until they were able to reach the town of Aquitaine and there took lodging at the Golden Sea Inn.

They stayed at the Inn for several days, and learned that the creature that they had run into was called a Derelich, a spirit of some sort that may or may not be associated with the Ruinous Powers.

At the end of their stay, they rode back to Manor Greenfield. Marie understood that three of the Knights Errant had been offered immediate positions under their fathers, citing the experience gained in Châlons. Sir Gerard had not felt the same way, though. He refused to give anyone a position that he felt was incapable of handling. He would not give up on his son however.

He detailed Sir Bastien to help the young troubled man, and after a few months, Antoine no longer seemed traumatized. On Lily Day, 1490, a group of adventurers from the Empire, well-mannered and well-dressed, guested at her father's manor, and he strongly encouraged them to join his son on his errantry quest. They seemed to be more than happy to help Antoine, and on the first day of Plough-Tide, Antoine started his second errantry quest.

Lily Day, 1490, her 13th birthday, stood out in her mind though. That was the first day she had ever met a female adventurer.