

Prelude Three : Appointments and News

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It was a cool summer day as the sun neared its lowest point. The messenger found Baron Gisoreux de Ponthieu mounted on his warhorse on a small foothill outside his city of Roiglan, overlooking the training of what looked like lowborn. He quickly rode by and addressed the Baron: "Mylord, I humbly bring news and tidings from our good King!"

"Hold on a moment," Gisoreux replied as he suddenly strode forward towards two training men. The messenger followed bemused and bewildered: what on earth could be more important than news from the King? Gisoreux started talking to one of the man: "No, no, no! If you'll hesitate on the battlefield, you'll end up dead. Your enemies won't hesitate to rip your throat open! You need to hit him hard and fast like this."

And with a quick blow he hit the other one right on his nose with his fist. The man wavered of pain and took startled two steps back. Gisoreux quickly dismounted and took the man by his shoulder and said: "Dear man, I hope I didn't hurt you too much?"

The commoner mumbled a negative reply and Gisoreux quickly continued: "Good! I knew you could take a punch! I have watched you with interest earlier on! From now on you are the sergeant of this unit. Now ask the healer to look at that eye and get it fixed at my expense. Dismissed!"

Gisoreux vigorously remounted his horse and looked at the messenger as the newly appointed sergeant saluted and turned at his feet to go find the healer as his lord had bided. The messenger now stood almost stupefied for this personal training of commoners. While they rode back up the foothill he asked: "Why do you invest so much in training the lowborn, Milord?"

"Because they have to be battle-ready when the time comes and ruthless in battle. This unit will stay home and guard the castle in my absence. Now what is the news you bring me?" With a clear and steady voice the squire started to recite the Royal Decree which was spread far and wide throughout Bretonnia in a general call-to-arms by the King.

"Our Lord and good King of Bretonnia, Louen Leoncouer, by the grace of the Lady, notifies anyone who reads or hears this decree, ordered by him in his foreseeing wisdom, on the 25th day of Fore-Mystery the Year our Lady's 1544 that he has ordered a general call-to-arms to a Holy Crusade of anyone willing or able to destroy the threat that endangers the roots of Bretonnia and its glorious history. The recently rebuilt and ancient shrine of our Lady and discovered the tomb of his far and most noble forefather, the deceased Duke of Bastonne, Guiverch le Breton, is beset by an unholy alliance of all matters of Evil most foul and dishonourable. It is our duty as the ruler and inhabitants of this noble land and as followers of our most gracious Lady that we stop the infiltration of Evil in the far lands of Lumbria lest we forsake our blood and honour. Any lord who feels this is his righteous task, can join up with the various crusaders and small armies already setting out to protect Bretonnian patrimony. Any lowborn who feels the need of protecting the roots of our noble society can find various mustering agents throughout the land. The King rewards three cuppers to all lowborn who join this holy crusade and another five cuppers for those who survive this noble and necessary campaign to

free the taint of evil from this holy place.”;

“I had heard as much at the Round Table,” Gisoreux replied while he turned his horse and headed back to his fair city. The messenger however was not yet finished: “My lord, the King of Bretonnia has ordered me to deliver this personal message to you.”;

He held a white piece of parchment, sealed with the mark of the King. Puzzled Gisoreux took the message and nodded. The squire saluted and spurred his horse on to the next fief to alarm the resident Lord and household Knights. As he watched him disappear in the evening sun, he broke the seal and opened the parchment: in a formal and decorative writing there stood.

“To Lord Gisoreux de Ponthieu, Baron of the fief of Roiglan and Portus, noble Knight of the Bretonnia, by now you will have heard of the gathering storm, threatening one of our most holy sites and the burial site of my glorious ancestor. The first armies of crusader-Knights have left Bretonnia and are travelling by horse and ship towards the far shores of Lumbria to protect these sites of Bretonnian patrimony. To defend the shrine and tomb from the corrupting arm of Chaos and the like, may well be one of our most important task as a Bretonnian to this day since the Storm of last summer. I hereby declare and order you as your liege-Lord that you shall travel to Lumbria as my official Royal Chronicler of this campaign to write summaries of battles and report directly to me of the tide of the battle for Lumbria. I cannot leave the country for so long so short after the Storm. Search for Lord Guillaume de Courageux and Lord Alain de Montgallion at the Palace of the Sun, north of the shrine. They are my official representatives at the Council of Light, the new Alliance of Man, Dwarf and Elf. I wish you Lady’s luck and speed on your travel and may your sword ever strike through, King Louen Leoncoeur”;

Gisoreux sighed: it seems that the battle for the Olde World once again starts again.