

Chapter II-Death in your Sleep

Tuesday, 15 August 2006

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Well, this is my second part and... that pretty much says it all!

thanks for those who read my first part, i never wrote so many pages in the same story before for the reason that nobody would read them!

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I would like to thank some people for reading my story and pushing me forward. First of all, Jean Marcel, for reading my story, giving me ideas and honest opinions while pushing me forward, also Arakasi (from the late Chateau Montreford), who i can always trust to support me and help me in difficult times, Tylarion (from asur) who is always besides me and is a great and trust worth companion, and Ferretsnarf, who gives me the strength, the will, and the morale to stay up until 5 a.m. while writing and listening to his jokes.

Â Of course that there is many others also, but im not going to write an essay about other people here so, im just gonna jump to my story.

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Chronicles of the Asturien

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Chapter II:

Death in your sleep

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Â Â Â Hugo was astonished by the size of the enemy's force, he, and all the men in his command he was, sure, thought the enemy to be at least a hundred times smaller, and the size of their warriors was also subject of great concern amongst their men, he was sure that if it wasn't the two hundred knights behind his force, they would have run for the hills as soon as the main unit of knights had took off for the flank attack.

Â Â Â Â His thoughts drifted away to back in time, as far off as when he was a children in L'Anguille, Â his father told him that since he had first been born, he had noticed how stronger and tougher he was when compared to the other peasant children. He grew up with his father constantly carving wooden sword for me to train with him so as to have a bigger chance of entering the force of men-at-arms of our Lord Marcel.Â

Â Â Â Â In the recruitment day, he was the first to be chosen amongst the persons there, his father told him it was a sign, he was only sixteen then, yet he was already tall like a grown man. From that day forward, he began catching the eye of many people; he was mostly famous for being one of the youngest yeoman wardens around. He had gained enemies amongst the other men-at-arms due to his quick trip to the top of his garrison. Yet he had always somehow managed to keep himself out of trouble, one of the reasons was because he simply had not asked for his promotion, he was more surprised with it than any of the other men, and his personality always made people smile and forget their anger even when they were about to punch him right in the face.

Â Â Â Â He knew that one day, he would be sent to an impossible battle, where he would perish alongside his companions, it was, to his understanding, inevitable, he just didn't think it would be so soon.

Â Â Â Â He was brought back to the present happenings when the horns in the units of men alongside him were blown, their sounds announcing the fight to come.

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He looked back to the unit he was in charge of, one of the units in the centre of their battle line. "Twenty men will not be enough to hold these barbarians for more than some minutes..." he thought to himself, he knew that twenty men deep in his line was not near enough to hold back the main force of the enemy, he also knew that it was part of the plan, that his unit of men-at-arms was not expected to survive, and instead, would sacrifice half their numbers to hold their flank. Due to this tactic, their line was divided into three main sections, the first, being the left flank had roughly five thousand men and a thousand and two hundred and fifty men, the middle, was made up of almost three thousand men, seven hundred and fifty bowmen, and the two hundred knights ready to charge into the enemy through the first opening in the line, now in the far right flank, where they expected to undertake the majority of the enemy, they had more than six thousand men there, with a thousand and five hundred bowmen of support, and several knights to ensure that the formation would not falter. They expected to have at least fifty thousand men of the enemy hitting their right flank, with forty thousand hitting the left and the other forty thousand hitting the middle, yet now, that the never ending horde before them marched towards their front line, he had realised, as had the others, that the enemy had in a very clever action changed their formations, they had taken then thousand men from the right flank and five thousand men from the left flank and had moved them to the middle of the army, meaning that now fifty five thousand men marched against the middle composed of less than four thousand men, and still, the two formations in the flanks were too outnumbered to borrow some of their men to the middle, it seemed that their plan was to be their doom.

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Hugo looked forward, towards the living moving mass before them, moving tirelessly, in a manner that seemed to indicate that it would swallow the whole ground.

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The two opposing lines continued moving until no more than a hundred metres of grass and ground separated them, in that infinitely long, and yet, so small amount of time, the eyes of the two different armies met, they all held their ground like statues. their gazes that once showed hope, dreams, and emotions displayed in intimate and cheerful moments, now showed only rage, despair and the understanding that this would be their last moments of their lives in this earth, it was a moment where no movement was displayed or word was spoken and the sound of the background was filled by the sound of the howls in the wind, and also the screams and sounds of the struggle and death of their friends in other parts of the battlefield.

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Hugo and some other Yeoman wardens wishing to end the never ending gaze between the two forces stepped forward, drew their swords and held them high in the air while they shouted like one

-FOR THE LADY AND FOR HONOR,
CHARGE!!!!!!!!!!!!

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The voices of the yeoman wardens vibrating and booming in the space between the two forces for a few seconds until the moment where it seemed that the statues were awoken, and all the men from both lines started running towards the opposing force.

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Screams and shouts for the lady and for the gods of chaos were heard in those few seconds before the first contact, Hugo ran as fast as he could, shouting "FOR THE LADY!" to give his men a boost in morale while he ran to meet his foe, the other force did no less, for they also charged forward, their axes and weapons in the air while they shouted names of various chaos gods, the most common shout being "BLOOD FOR THE BLOOD GOD!".

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The last few metres were disappearing under his feet while Hugo ran as fast as he could, with his sword in his hand and the shield ready to receive an impact.

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He could see the face of the men he was about to crash into, a complete stranger to him, yet a threat to him and to those he loved, the two lines crashed and during a small moment the world seemed to explode while axes met shields, swords ripped through guts, maces crushed the men's faces and man after man was brought down under the sheer weight and strength of their comrades pushing them onwards. Men were trampled by their fellow companions and the lines of tight formations that once were so clearly defined existed no more, now, men fought for their survival.

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Hugo deflected a blow from an axe with his shield and slashed the man making a clean cut across his chest, he fell backwards only to have his place taken by another one bigger and faster, he delivered a blow with his hammer, directed to Hugo's head, Hugo dodged to his right and lunged forward with his sword, stabbing the man in the abdomen. The man fell, and Hugo didn't have enough time to withdraw his sword from the man's gut, so, he took his wood cutting axe from his belt and buried it deep into the face of one of the enemy's men stabbing one of Hugo's men. Hugo took the opportunity to seize the man's short blade just in time to deflect a blow from another man who was quickly dispatched by a halberd from one of the men-at-arms.

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Hugo looked around, the battle was grim, his men were being cut down to pieces and the line had been broken everywhere, yet none of the holes in the line was big enough for the knights to charge into it. Another problem Hugo could see was the enemy's elite warriors, big and tall men standing well over Hugo and wearing full armour, these were the ones causing most of the holes in the line, they simply charged in and killed everything that moved, he could see one of them charging a group of his men and in mere seconds he broke one of the men's neck, ripped another open and crushed a third one's skull, fortunately, nearby men charged him by all sides, some were taking down in this warrior's frenzy, but a lot of them were able to stab the warrior between the junctions of his armour until he finally succumbed to his many wounds.

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Hugo knew that in his unit had to eliminate these warriors very quickly or they would be eliminated themselves faster than it was planned, Hugo was able to approach one of the warriors by the back, right in the same time that the horn of the attack of the main unit of knights was heard, Hugo lunged and tried to stab the warrior through his cape, but in a cruel blow of fate his sword hit only plate armour, the warrior turned around and in a strike so quick that seemed impossible for someone of his size, the warrior brought down his huge mace, smashing Hugo's shield, stunned by the pain of having his hand broken, Hugo fell to one of his knees thought to himself how lucky he was that at least the wooden shield had taken some of the shock, when he finally looked up, recovered by the shock, he realised that he had dropped his sword from his right hand and it was on the ground, no more than two feet away from him, the warrior brought the mace up and then down into a descendent blow, Hugo lunged for the sword and grabbing it, he brought it up in hopes of deflecting the blow from the mace, yet he knew that he had run out of time, and in that moment it seemed to Hugo that the world had slowed down, while he watched the inevitable descent of the mace in the direction of his skull, and just as he was about to close his eyes to receive the blow he saw a hoof exploding through the warrior's helmet, sending pieces of his skull and blood everywhere.

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Hugo looked around and saw the knights charging past him towards the enemy, Hugo joined them in the charge and holding his sword high he shouted

-ONCE MORE MEN!! INTO THE FRAY!!!

Â Â Â Â And he ran, towards the thousands of men before him...

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Arthas looked at Claudius, his hunting companion, they had been friends since they were first enlisted in knighthood as knight errants, when they were seventeen, but that was eight years ago, now they had just hunted down an impressive elk.

-Well, that was fun, but I have to travel to Quenelles for a couple of days, my father asked me to take care of the new shipment to Carcassone.

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While saying those words Arthas mind went back to thinking about his father, he had left four days ago with many of the men in their land to fight against another army trying to invade Bretonnia from the south, yet the absence of a messenger with the news of his father's victory made him doubt that this fight would be like all the others, yet Claudius had reassured him that they were simply busy celebrating yet another victory.

Claudius looked back at him from atop his horse, they were in the border of a small forest in the south of Quenelles, one to two days ride from his father's keep, grabbing the carcass of the elk and properly arranging it in the back of his horse he said:

-Don't worry Arthas, ill take this hunt prize back to your father's keep and ill keep it there till you come back. In the meantime, what should I tell Elvina?

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The mention of his love's name brought her image to his mind together with fond memories, her sweet brown hair and her smooth red lips were suddenly in his mind, he was lucky, he knew, to have such a beautiful young and loving lady as his wife.

-Tell her I'll be home in three days at most, this business in Quenelles shouldn't take long.

Arthas said, and then he jumped atop his horse, eager to go to Quenelles so as to come back to his home in the Asturiens, his father, Lord Uther Di Asturien's keep, it wasn't really his keep, Arthas had been told, it had been built ages ago when the Asturiens had returned from the Border princes and had built this keep. He remembered the whole story of the Asturiens, which began with the ending of Glanborielle, in that time, the Asturiens were known as the Hastur, and were the second most powerful lineage in Glanborielle, and had many marriages with the Glanborielle family. When the land fell, and the lineage of the Glanborielle ended, the remaining Hastur fled south through the mountains, and through perilous dangers, of the total of fifty knights of the Hastur, only survived one knight, Amadis Di Hastur, his wife, Rosaline, his sister, Lorraine, and two young boys, one, son of Amadis and Rosaline, the other, son of Lorraine, and so, the two boys grew in the border princes, in a fertile and peaceful land where Amadis grew in strength, for while the years passed, he gained more farmers into his land and allegiance, and thus, more land was added, soon, the small parcel of land was big enough to own a garrison of troops to defend the land, and so, the two boys grew, lived, fought, were successful, and married to beautiful ladies, and thus, their lineage went on, until the day when Tilea was invaded by the lands far to the south, and chaos erupted in many of the lands nearby, while farmers abandoned their homes and fled, only to later join in raiding parties, for they had no place to produce crops and live as they had before, because of that, the lands of the Border princes were plunged into the fires of war, raids and shacks devastated the country land, and the land where the remaining Hastur had settled, was invaded by huge armies of raiding farmers and mercenaries, he was said that if it had not been the second crusading army from Bretonnia, led by Baron Tybalt, passing through, then their land and their lineage would be no more.

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After the raiding parties were crushed, the Hastur decided to return to their former land, and so they returned to Bretonnia and established themselves where Glanborielle once was, between Carcassonne and Loren, and there, they renamed themselves, from Hastur, to Asturien.

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Now days, there were only four, living and pure descendants from the Hastur lived, he, Arthas Di Asturien, a paladin, his father, Uther Di Asturien, lord of their land of the Asturien, his uncle, Marcus Di Asturien, a lord of a land near to the Asturien land, he was brother to Uther, and finally, the last descendant, Marcus son, Leonnardus Di Asturien, who was Arthas cousin and was a Battle Standard Bearer, elevated to his post by the king himself.

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Arthas woke up to reality with Claudius poking his arm with his finger, and Claudius said:

-You started dreaming awake again!

-Uuups, sorry, I really can't help myself, anyway, got to get going now.

Arthas answered, they said their farewells to each other and started their way, Claudius to the south west, and Arthas to the north.

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Arthas still had to go through a small part of the woods, but he didn't mind, he kind of liked it, largely due to the fact that while a child he had an old yeoman as a bodyguard, this yeoman, called Arturo, was once a wood guide, and taught Arthas everything he knew about surviving in the forest, following tracks, walking around without being seen or making a noise, all the essential things for a wood guide, Arthas father did not like this, at all, because for the Bretonnian code of chivalry, fighting in stealthy ways were dishonourable, yet Uther respected Arturo as a veteran soldier, and so, he allowed it, also because he believed that learning how to live in the woods might help Arthas someday, and so, Arturo continued teaching Arthas many things about the forests, and those lessons almost always became the high point of his day, until he was twelve, when he was declared too old already to have a "nanny" and so, the time he spent before with Arturo in the woods was replaced by lessons of swordsmanship and tactics.

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Arthas trotted along the road in the woods, hearing the wonderful sounds of nature and chanting to himself the small tune Arturo has also taught him:

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"When you are alone, in the road,

and it goes on, and on and on,

then go ahead and sing along,

a cheerful little song;

a cheerful little song like this,

it can be yours or even his,

if the song remains at least,

partially as it is!!!"

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Arthas laughed to himself, surprised to remember the small tune and also happy at the memories of it being called the worst song ever heard in the black brew inn back at the village in Asturien, it was a bad song, Arthas knew, but somehow, he would never forget it, and was always a good tune to keep the morale up.

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Arthas fastened the pace, eager to get to Quenelles as fast as he could, so to return home quickly, to hold his beloved Elvina in his arms.

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The world was not clear to him, he tried to sit up but his chest hurt him too much so he stayed down in what seemed to be a litter, apparently fashioned to carry injured soldiers and such, Uther turned his head to his right and looked around, he was in the middle of dozens of other litters, and by what he could see, all the men lying there were in worse shape than he was. When Uther tried to turn his head to his left a sudden shock of pain went from his jaw, in his right side, to his brow, he suddenly remembered that the last image he recalled was that of a mace coming in his direction, "The helmet must have resisted to the blow" Uther thought to himself.

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He suddenly was aware of someone moving towards him, but he couldn't look up to see who it was until he was but three feet away.

-Well, well, finally, back from the world of the dead?

Uther looked up, at the face of Jean Marcel.

-If you want to keep your head between your shoulders Marcel, then help me up would you?!

Uther said, angry at Jean's relaxed pose.

-Good day to you too.

Jean said in a sarcastic tone, while leaning down to help Uther up.

When Uther got up he looked around him, trying to recognise some of the faces he saw on the litters, he wasn't able to recognise any of them, and any hope of him being able to was lost mostly do to the fact that many of them had disfigurations caused by wounds in their faces. They started walking towards a tent thirty feet away from them, it was night with some torches burning, yet Uther could already see beams of light from the east, announcing the arrival of the sun and the dawn of a new day, curious about all that had happened since he was left unconscious Uther turned to Jean and asked:

-What happened? I remember that one of the last things I saw was the battle being lost, our lines being broken, and many of the knights, like you, on foot fighting impossible odds.

Jean didn't stop to ask, there was no need

to, instead, he continued walking while formulating and answer:

-Well, it was all just a group of miracles
you see, from what I heard the knights in

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main unit that survived the travel through the enemy's army reached the central
unit where their general and commanders were, after a tough fight they managed
to kill the General and a handful of his commanders, with this, almost fifty
thousand of their men in the central part of the battlefield panicked and fled,
the remaining were cut down with the charge of the two hundred knights we left
there, soon enough, the middle forces were split and each went to reinforce the
two sides of the battlefield, yet, we were still losing and heavily
outnumbered...

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Jean interrupted^ his narration
when they entered the tent in which were the knight lords, Uther noticed that
from the thirteen knights, only eight, including Jean and Uther were there, those
missing were Robert Giselles, Guillaume le Courageux, and Marcidius D'Brionne.
Etien noticed his worries and said:

-Worry not for Robert and Guillaume, they
are in bed, with bruises and tired, but they will be all right, as for Marcidius,
we were waiting for the three of you to wake up for the burial of his body, or
what is left of him.

His face had a grim look, which seemed to
be due to the loss of a great knight amongst them. Uther looked around again,
and this time, he noticed two other knights standing in a corner, one wearing a
robe with red and blue, gilded with yellow and with adornations of small yellow
swords in each side of the robe, and the other still wearing his armour, with
blue and yellow colours where his robes were visible and with a small trident
standing off in his chest robe, Uther recognised these colours as being from
Carcassone and from Bordeleaux.

-These two are Aiden from Carcassone and
Baron Sigibald from Bordeleaux.

Uther greeted them and was greeted back
with a slight nod from both the knights, Jean turned to Uther again and said:

-After the enemy had lost fifty thousand men and we had reinforced both our flanks, we were still losing the battle, until these two appeared up with twenty five thousand troops. They flank charged the two occurring battles and we simply crushed them! It was a beautiful sight Uther, you should have seen it.

-Well then, it seems that our job here is done, and what a great victory it was! Those filthy chaos scums won't come back so soon.

Uther finished the sentence with a laugh, awkwardly, nobody laughed with him, Gaulord and Gisoreux grinned, but the grins soon faded as they saw Montgallion turning to him:

-What Jean here is not telling you Uther, is that not all news here are good news.

Uther reflected upon these words and said:

-Then let me hear this bad news, better sooner than later, Alain started again:

-Well, it just happened that not all the fifty thousand men who fled went to the west; one day ago we discovered a group of five thousand heading north Uther, towards your home.

-Well then! Lets just gather a small force and go stop them before they reach my lands! It wont take much, they are certainly tired and all.

Uther started walking towards the exit of the tent when Montgallion started again:

-You have been asleep for nearly four days Uther, I am sorry to tell you that they must have already reached you keep, we sent some forces there, but they will take another day, according some reports, we have heard that the only defenders in the village of the keep on duty were

roughly two hundred men. I'm sorry Uther, it is just too late.Â Â

In that horrible and agonising short moment, Uther felt his world crumble around him.

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