

## Prelude: The Pledge - Part I

Contributed by Jerrold Nikolaisen  
Thursday, 03 January 2008  
Last Updated Friday, 22 February 2008

The pleasant scent of earthen spice filled the candle-lit room as gentle rain drifted in through the open window. Baron Stephen de Laurent rolled over, let out a deep sigh, and released his grip on the delicate pillow.

'Finally the infernal whimpering ends,' he mused glancing over at the petite woman lying beside him. Her young body still looked somewhat boyish and he was pleased that

Stephen's thoughts were disrupted as one of the court guards burst through the door.

'Master,' the guard yelled 'then paused a moment to look at the naked body lying on the bed.

Baron de Laurent hastily pulled a sheet over the woman and cursed at the man. 'How dare you' he began.

The guard cut him off, 'Master, we are

Three arrows pierced through the man's neck. As he fell to his knees, clutching his throat, he finished 'over' run!

With a quick glance back toward the window, the Baron leapt to the door, slammed it shut and threw the latch. He turned and 'keeping careful watch of the window' crawled back to the guard. Retrieving the man's sword he noticed something odd about the arrow heads protruding through the guard's neck

Glyphic steel' Elves!

The door shattered into thousands of pieces. The Baron crouched and spun. His outstretched leg tripped one intruder while the sword in his hand cut through the upper leg of another. He brought the hilt of the sword down into the face of the tripped beast?

In his hesitation, the beastman reached up and caught his arm. The Baron put his knee to the creature's ear, twirled his sword and severed its head. The collared neck and shackled wrists fell to the floor. 'What's this?' He was stunned. 'The beasts are bound?'

Finishing the form, Stephen ended the life of the other beastman and then vaulted over the bed 'preparing for an assault' but none came. There must have been thirty or more of the snarling demons in his chambers. 'Why don't they come?'

The beastmen lined the walls and formed a rough circle surrounding the Baron. He was poised 'ready to defend' but they just stood there 'crazed looking' some cross between hatred and fear. 'What holds them?'

The beasts parted at the door as a golden knight entered the room. Removing his helm &ndash; long, blonde hair fell out. &lsquo;Elf!&rsquo; realized the Baron.

&ldquo;You will not die here Stephen de Laurent,&rdquo; said the elf with a musical quality to his speech. &ldquo;Lay down your sword and come with me or these heathens will dine on Bretonnian noble this night.&rdquo;

&ldquo;Why should I trust you - Elf?&rdquo; the Baron demanded.

&ldquo;What choice have you?&rdquo; demanded the elf. &ldquo;Though you do have my word &ndash; and I have sworn fealty to your very own goddess, Baron &ndash; your very own Lady of the Lake.&rdquo;

Baron Stephen de Laurent followed the Elvin knight through the door where he discovered what was restraining the beastmen. Chains from their necks and wrists were held by men &ndash; Bretonnians &ndash; ghoulish men in a trance bearing three black lines across their faces.

&lsquo;Madness,&rsquo; Stephen thought. &lsquo;Complete madness&hellip;&rsquo;

Continued with:  
Prelude: The Pledge - Part II

See also:  
[Table of Contents and Discussions at the Critics' Arena](#)