

## Sands of War --Changes

Contributed by The Marquis d'Ascoyne  
 Sunday, 06 January 2008  
 Last Updated Sunday, 06 January 2008

Now the Marquis d'Ascoyne arrived in Araby weighing 22 stone, dotted a bit when not wearing the Armor of Angilulf and, alas, was as white as the snows of winter. Years in Armor of in his disguise as that 'Cheese Merchant from the Carcassonne' with his broad brimmed hat and robes of Yellow and Ivory or in his general dress, he had been spared prolonged exposure to the sun and was denied the look of a man of a sunny clime. He preferred it that way.

Please understand the impact when the Commanders of the Araby Reclamation Pact packed up their forces and began returning to Araby during the first month of Victory. Ascoyne Hercule Achille du Bois Guilbert pleaded with them to stay a while, maybe six months or a year at best so that Tariq could gather his forces, train them and bring order and control to the Land of Sand. He sent Parcifal to audience with the young Sheikh as he recovered from his wounds. Parcifal came back with good news, Tariq granted the request assigned him to train warriors at Martek and act as Justice for the Martek district, specified a time frame of no more than one year and expressed his thanks to the white haired warrior for staying.

The villa at Martek was extremely well appointed and was filled with officers and soldiers. The Villains, Cavaliers, Gallant, Wardens, Yeoman Wardens were studied by the Grail Knights and questioned. Those who qualified were ordered to remain in Araby to train a new Army for Tariq. With his Grail Knights acting as judges, the return to normalcy at the city was quick, gaining the respect of Tariq. For from the beginning, the Marquis did no proselytizing for the Lady of the Lake nor enforce the Laws of Bretonnia onto a foreign soil. The Grail Knights got the respect of the people and the merchants for their knowledge and exercising of Arabic Law, tempered with Bretonnian Chivalry and a flair for dispensing justice equally. This caused many peoples of Araby to believe that this man who had played a part in the liberation of Araby and the establishment of Tariq as Sheikh must have some the blood of Araby in his veins. What he did was allow the laws of Araby to enter in to his magistration. What he did not change was his compassion for people driven to criminal acts through hard times. His compassion also reached the ears of the young King who began to ask about this old white haired man on a weekly basis. His shipwrights he had brought with him had trained many at the port and ships were being repaired and built quickly and soundly at Maharek. His trade agreements with the merchants of Al Hadok, Mezdah, Lashiek and Cophers began to get results. Tariq stopped in Martek during the fourth month and embraced the Marquis as a Man of Honor from the Land of Honorable Men. What impressed the Sheikh was the Marquis regimen of training for the infantry. 'The Marquis explained, 'Many of the Regiments can march 30 miles a day with full pack across any terrain. They are now skilled in close combat and Siege warfare.. The Sheikh smiled his approval.

They passed the Archery compound where a bright ball of wood, painted orange was affixed atop a forty foot pole. 100 paces away stood ranks of archers at the ready. Six large wheels, eight feet in diameter with round solid centers painted Yellow and Red and Blue were on top of long sloping ramps across the archers line of fire, As he escorted the sheik to a small grandstand he said 'We'll be safer here, the walls are ten inches thick.' Tariq laughed without any sign of nervousness. When everything was ready, the Marquis gave the signal and the air was filled with flights of arrows to the orange ball. Then the wheels were loosed and more flights of arrows filled the sky.

A signal from the Marquis and the bows were lowered. As he and Tariq waited for the findings, Tariq asked for the orange ball with the arrows intact and the Marquis agreed. Richlieu arrived with the tally after an hour. 'The archers consisted of 15 archer masters or villeins, each commanding 19 bowmen. Of the Orange Ball 300 of 300, of the Yellow wheel, 280 of 300, the Blue Ball 270 of 300 and the Red Ball 290 of 300.' He offered the tally to young Tariq As they left the stands, the new Sheikh asked for the orange ball replete with all the arrows and it was done. When Tariq left Martek, he was provided copies of every case brought to the courts and all the programs initiated by the

Marquis d'Ascoyne. Now during the Sands of War and his subsequent stay in Araby, subtle changes were made to the Marquis without his knowledge. He had a new found respect for the tenacity of the Greenskins, the ferocity of the Beastmen and the evil that is the Tomb Kings. He had been victorious defeating an ogre army combined with Goblins and Beastmen. Beginning at the Battle of Maharek, where he fought the Tomb Kings to a draw he realized that he was overweight and out of shape. Although not wounded he felt as if five Lances of knights had used him as their parade ground. It was at Maharek he began to adapt the diet of Araby to his own, developing quite a taste for vegetables and fruits. After the three battles at Mazdeh and the Oasis nearby, he was sorely wounded and part of his recovery was to be put into an open, roofless tent, wearing but a loincloth and basking under the Arabian Sun as his wounds were treated with medicated oils. He was again wounded at Eunuch Mountain, the loincloth was exchanged for a large towel to provide modesty in the presence of the healers. It seemed he had a penchant for wounds at Haseem's Palace, the Oasis of the Western Winds, Al Hadok and so supported his daughters victories at Cophers while recovering from his wounds. Although he was not aware of changes within him, neither were his officers as he was now wearing The Lion Skull Helm; a Black Surcoat with a splendid Grail radiating light, the Armor of Angilulf and the Lady's Champion sword and his horse barding was black as well. He affected Arabian fashion and he, and all his officers, had become quite brown on the face, hands and arms.

As he bathed privately his physical change went unnoticed After Lashiek he was treated for his wounds and spent even more time in the open tent with the Arabian healers. When a female of his entourage entered he covered up completely. Lady Gandolfyn noted that the Arabian females seemed eager to attend the old campaigner in the open tent. She didn't fear any mischief, but it was curious. He made the return to Martek slowly, but made it nonetheless. He set up a small walled residence on the edge of the city, near the north side acting as a Magistrate for the Mahrtek District. He was enjoying his new vim and vigor and the quick step he had acquired. He had a bathing pool [ a large interior fountain] fashioned at his residence and was enjoying the process when he was approached by Sir Richelieu and Sir Parcifal who stopped and stupidly stared at their leader. Emerging from the pool, he wrapped a large red towel about himself at the waist, Sir Richelieu studied the old warrior, for what he saw he did not believe. A bronzed man of the desert, with strong musculature. Gone was the extra seven stone of weight, gone was the effects of over 62 summers of life. His hair was snow white, bleached by the sun. Sir Parcifal laughed out loud. "Pardon me good sir, hath thee seen the Marquis?" He gestured and mimicked the Marquis of old, "He is about your height, but is half again heavier and when he walks he rather shuffles with a palsied quake to himself." And the Grail Knight grinned like a mischievous schoolboy. The Marquis turned with a look of disbelief and said nothing. "Mirror, let us get a mirror here. A Big Mirror here, please" shouted Sir Richelieu and it was made so in moments. The Marquis could not believe his eyes for what looked back at him was his younger self, more muscular and tanned like an Arab, his white hair framing his face. A second and third mirror were brought in and he was able to get a fuller view of himself.

He asked his comrades to leave him alone and they did so. He dropped the towel. He posed before the mirrors, very pleased with what he saw.. A feminine voice broke the moment. "Hercule we are packing up our baggage to leave this palace and --By the Lady, Sir!!!!!" Lady Gandolfyn had entered talking, was stunned into silence and left abruptly. The Marquis did not stop laughing for ten minutes, he recalled seeing Lady Gandolfyn bathing in the Pool at Peg Fowler's Cave so many, many years ago, naked as the day she was born "Now we are even," he said and continued laughing. Home at last. Over the full eight months, progress was steady and unrelenting and the Sheikh suggested that the Marquis leave the remaining duty to a competent officer and the Marquis, stubborn as ever, politely refused. Old Parcifal had requested a formal audience with the Marquis to request his being emplaced as Magistrate for Martek, allowing the Marquis to return home. His qualifications were impeccable and the Marquis knew the old Grail Knight could fulfill the obligations probably better than the Marquis himself. He didn't want to leave the good knight behind, nor did he want to leave. Sir Parcifal was adamant however, explaining he had found documents from the original Crusades and he wanted to study them as they were at the Antiquities Hall in the old city.

Eventually the Marquis relented and held a formal ceremony at Maharek. Tariq was not present, but his officer was and presented the departing Marquis with a fine, Surcoat and cape in the ASrabian Cotton. Barding of cuirboilli leather for his destrier and all in the blackest of black, edged in gold. And the honorarium "To your titles of Defender of the Faith, Lord Protecteur of the Gavenie District, Order of the Silver Wolf, add this ; the Lion of Araby." The Marquis was so moved he had to sit down. Then he presented a gift to the New Sheik, allowing the officer to sail it back to the western coast. It was a wonderful compact ship of 24 guns, combining the sails of Araby with the skills of the Bretonnian builders. She was well appointed and painted in Tariq's own colors. "She'll maintain 14 knots in a wind, she is double hulled and made from ironwood, oak and the hull is metal lined. After the ceremony the Marquis went to the docks and there, happened to bump into Lady Gandolfyn.who was, as ever, the very picture of composure. She and the

Dasmels and the Sisters were returning to Bretonnia, having shipped all but the bare essentials- and here she winced. "Bare essentials. Eh?" crowed the Marquis, bushy eyebrows wiggling and a smile emerging across his face. "I can understand your need for the Bare Necessities" and he nudged her in the ribs. The Prophetess drew herself up regally, "M'squ;Lord ever since a young child you have this strain of provincial rudeness which many find annoying." She admonished him, "Do remember your station" The Marquis stopped teasing her, became as sober as old Huebald and bowed. "Good speed to Bretonnia and home. Tell my wife I shall see her by the end of the week for I plan to ride a Pegasus to the Sentinel." He bowed a second time. "But before I leave this place, I am allowing myself three days to familiarize myself with the customs of this ancient land and conclude trade agreements." And he walked away. Lady Gandolfyn watched him as he departed and she shook her head.

Three Damsels watched as well. Damsel Romain spoke first "How devoted he is to establishing trade" and the other three worthies turned their heads to stare at the young innocent., which they quickly clarified. "First, he will visit his barber after a trip to the baths. He will then dress in his finest new clothes, said Damsel Lilly Christine. The second Damsel continued the explanation. "He will then review his various trade agreements, something he has done almost every other day since establishing them. I figure maybe two hours. "More like two minutes" continued Lady Gandolfyn, watching him disappear into the crowds, "Then he will eat light meals and spend the next few days-" and here all three worthies spoke at one. "At any Inn, Taverna, Bar, Tent, Alleyway, small closet, crack in the wall that has Raq Sharqi dancers&hellip;" and they made for the boat. "No he won't!" said the Damsel Romaine, adamantly.. "He will not!! He will go to the Great Purple Tent of Abu where the best raq sharqi dancers dance. There are 56 of them. I told him about it a month ago." That information did not slow down the prophetess who commented that the Marquis restraint was improving at last and she thanked the Lady for that..