

Forward to the Storm of Vengeance

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My name is Harolde Bartholemew de Raconter. A fisherman - I was supposed to be. This is my tale.

I was born the son of a fishing guide in the small village of St. Lacrois on the Brionne coast. Fishing would have been a good life - had I not been born without a voice.

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As soon as my parents discovered it - my father would have nothing to do with me. I was destined for a life of abuse and torment at the hands of my fellow villagers and my father. Village idiot to some - mother's angel to one - and punching bag to the rest. But they say - "what doesn't kill you... makes you stronger" - and they were right. I learned to deal with them all - but the death of my mother changed everything.

When they realized that they couldn't get to me - they went after my mother instead. People will do anything - even unspeakable things - to get what they want. One day, during a regular mugging in the street - my mother came to my rescue (as she commonly did). This time, however, they turned on her. Three of them held me down as the rest attacked her. She didn't last more than a moment.

Satisfied with themselves, they all gave me a kick for good measure and went on their way. I tried to help her - but she was gone. Barely able to walk myself, I carried her home. My drunken father was there. He looked at my mother and then tore into me again. I suppose he thought that I was to blame or figured that now she wasn't there to protect me. Nonetheless, I ran once I could get away from him. I ran and never went back.

I found refuge at the chapel. Although the caretaker said I could only stay a few days, I accepted gratefully.

I wrote a description of what had happened, named the villains and took it to the garrison. The chief constable read it - looked at me - laughed - and threw the note into the garbage. Dejected - I left.

"What kind of world is this? Where is there justice?" I asked myself.

That night I had a dream. A fabulous woman came to me - 'was it my mother?' She caressed my forehead - so lovingly - her face was purity and affection embodied. Then my father appeared - and the constable - and the thugs. The woman turned to them and her face transformed. Hideous teeth were bared - claws came out of her fingertips. She leaped at them - attacking - they screamed... and I awoke.

Drenched with sweat I sat up in the small cot. Someone else was there - I could sense it.

I stood and walked into the main chamber. A glorious looking knight in gold armour stood by the far door - the main entrance to the chapel.

"Get your things and come with me," he said.

I gathered what little I had and joined him at the door. His helm was closed but I could sense that this was not a man - at least not like any man that I had ever met before.

Outside were six more knights in black armour. They had long shields with the emblem of a sword upon it. There were two empty horses with them. The golden knight helped me onto one of the horses and then mounted his own.

I went with them as they left my home - although I couldn't say why I did.

As we left the edge of the village, the golden knight pointed to the south. I followed his finger and saw eleven tall stakes. Driven onto the stakes were the heads of the thugs, the constable and my father.

I looked back at the knight. He handed me a piece of paper - my note to the garrison.

"You write well," the knight said to me. "You are needed - to record the coming of the Ra'ede."

We rode on in silence - across Brionne and into Quenelles. I had never been more than a league away from St. Lacrois. I don't remember ever stopping during that journey. I don't remember the night changing to day. It all seems a blur. I don't remember now - how long ago that night occurred.

We rode into a fearful forest - the Loren. The sight of it was dreadful but my escorts rode right into it.

It was then that I came to know Kristian, his sister D'Orabelle and the rest of the renegade army. It was then that I learned of the prophecy that foretold the coming of Her Lady's Vengeance - the Ra'ede. It was then that I learned what my destiny was - to record His coming and the history of Her Lady's fury upon the land - the Storm of Vengeance.

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