

The Great Table of Bretonnia

Contributed by The Marquis d'Ascoyne
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Curiosity killed the cat. Curiosity caused Pandora to be the instrument of releasing all manner of things evil into the world-Curiosity to the Marquis d'Ascoyne is like Honey to a Bear.

He entered the Great Hall and was silenced by the majesty of the place. The entry was broad and long leading to the Table room. The walls were 30 feet high.. The ceiling was bare. Balusters ran the length of the hallway 3 feet from the top and from the baluster was hung the Tapestry of Bretonnia. Here was the History of the Land of Chivalry, illustrated by some of the finest needlework ever seen. He slowed when he passed the section on the Storm of Chaos. The tapestry was big, human figures were nine feet in height so that all could see the testament of Bretonnian Bravery. Below each panel was displayed arms and armor, banners, relics. The entry hall ended at two wide and handsomely carved doors. Thirty feet tall and each door eight feet wide, they opened with the gentlest of pulls! When he walked into the Table Room, he drew in his breath sharply. The table room was 100 feet across and equally as wide! Centered in the middle of the Room, under the great dome overhead, was the table. It was a ring of wood with a second ring six feet out from the first! The outer Table was raised on a tier some 10"; Both tables being five feet across and fashioned from Bretonnian hardwoods.

Earl Cadfael put his hand on the old warrior's shoulder. "You are seated in the lower tier, old comrade." He watched as the Marquis d'Ascoyne walked round the table seaching for his chair. His white hair floated like whisps of mist as he moved, calling out the names of friends old and dear and new as well. He noted the hardwoods - Red Alder from Parravon, Blue Beech from Artois, Brionne Teak and Quenelles White Oak. Lyonnese Maple, Languille White Birch and Monfort Ironwood. Although it was evident that the servants had spent days cleaning the room, he stifled a sneeze from the fine dust. The Black Walnut from Gisoreaux. He saw the wonderful Black Cherrywod from the Carcassonne, the Ivory color of the Aquatainne Ash and the near metallic sheen of the Couronne Copperwood. Nothing From Mousillon was seen.

"Mousillion is not reperesented - is that wise? The land may be tainted but the Gold Oak is not". Earl Cadfael asked the Marquis to check the underpinnings. The Old Warrior went to his knees and all fours surveyed the legs and supports all fashioned from Gold Oak.

Earl Cadfael explained that 111 craftsmen labored hard and long crafting the both tables and an additional 100 for all of the chairs. "The king visited us on three occasions, twice without fanfare." He walked over to his chair on the lower level and sat down casually, as if at home. "The king was quite excited about the labours here and apologized profusely but stated that he could not stay away from the wonderful handiwork of Bretonnian Artisans. It was the King who ordered a lid of secrecy put over the project almost three years ago"; "Ummm. Disguised the structure as a Great Rabbit or Giant Chicken Egg"; The Marquis listened as Earl Cadfael gave credit to the new Great Hall's construction to de Rochefort and de Giselles and le Courageux. The Marquis was about to give a cheer to the designers of the structure, but his nostrils caught a bit of dust and he started to sneeze - almost controlled it and then sneezed explosively, loudly and the single echo startled him. He cocked his head to one side and arched an eyebrow. He pontificated in his most stentorian voice like one of those medicine peddlers in the traveling shows.

"I'm Here, I'm Here!! And I bring a new confection to dazzle the tongue, delight the senses and make sour souls sweet. Fashioned into the shape of Bretonnian Chicks, 'tis called choklaht by the traders from which I purchased it. One cartload distributed to all attendant!!";

He strode to his seat identified by a shield bearing his heraldry. He continued, "I Am Here!!! Let the trumpets sound, the cannons roar. The Tocsin sound and the doves let free!! Peal the bells and let the banners fly. Feast your eyes on me. For, like good wine, I have aged well! I know it's too good to be true, but I am here!.. Damsels swoon, Ladies flirt, Let it be known to all that d'Ascoyne is in the House!"; Pleased with the way sound was held in the room he nodded to Earl Cadfael who was busy shaking his head and laughing.

As he entered the Table Room with other members who also responded to the loud announcement, Tertius gave a pained expression and turning to the both the Estalian ambassador and his consort and asked weakly, "Have you met the Marquis d'Ascoyne?";