

The Petain Treachery

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Not all enemies of Bretonnia have green skin, nor do they have scales and tails, nor repeating bolt thrower, nor undead.

Some of the greatest enemies of Bretonnia are human and many of these are Bretonnian.

When a warrior becomes a sell sword he loses rank, status and respect, save from his own kind.

In Bretonnia such activity is considered traitorous. At least by the d'Ascoyne family

What makes this tale unique is that it is based on a factual trial by combat which occurred in the 13th century. Ripples

Throw a pebble into a still pond and you get a small splash and lovely ripples. Throw a rock and you get a bigger splash and more ripples.

When the Marquis d'Ascoyne, well satisfied that the larks had completed their labors of soiling the official Empire version of the Storm of Chaos [see Breakfast at the Sentinel], sent the damaged parchment to the Empirical Court the impact was one of profound laughter by many.

After the laughter there was some reflection and in truth many Empirical nobles decided to honor the debt owed to the Bretonnians with trade agreements and even relinquishing Empirical claims in some of the lands in The Marches of Couronne.

Conrad von Himmler was not one of those so affected. Conrad von Himmler, Armament Chief of Himmler Forge found the letter not funny indeed. Conrad von Himmler decided to Scheme against the Marquis d'Ascoyne and so contacted Bretonnian nobles who were adversaries to both the Marquis and many members of the Cadfael Court.

It must be said that although these chronicles have told the stories of the men and women of the d'Ascoyne tract and some on the Cadfael Court, nothing has been written of their adversaries. Not the adversaries of Green Skin, nor those Undead abominations from the desert lands, nor the Lizard folk, Beastmen or Ratmen nor followers of Chaos.

I speak of human adversaries. Bretonnian adversaries. For although Bretonnia is a land of Chivalry, it does have its share of villains. Some are very outspoken, criticizing the members of the Cadfael court and walking to the very edge of the precipice whereby challenges could be made and met and settled once and for all. The cowards never crossed that line.

It must be further understood that some of these unworthies had all the intelligence the Good Lady gave to a head of cabbage.

Chief amongst these rascals was the Baron Bourville of the Couronne Marches. Many of his activities tweaked the noses of Abbot Rhoderic and Baron Loben, amongst others. Bourville considered his actions sport, an entertainment. A cruel man with sadistic tendencies, Bourville lived in splendor outside of L'Anguille.

In the Middle of Bretonnia was the Duke Gastone du Romaine. Greedy. Land Grabbing, his only thoughts were to expand his holdings and his treasury. He had the manners of a pig but lacked the creature's intelligence. He weighed 18 stone and stood but 5 feet 1". He once spoke rudely of the family of Earl Cadfael. Earl Cadfael rebuffed the little ogre with the comment that he [du Romaine] was in perfect shape. Round. As a ball of cheese. Of course, du Romaine took umbrage at the statement and silently declared a road of vengeance upon the Good Cadfael. Both du Romaine and Bourville were emboldened by their petty successes and confident in their own minds of their greatness.

South, in the Carcassonne, was the Baron Bendeict Villachaize. He had little holdings and was envious of the Marquis d'Ascoyne and to a lesser degree the holdings of Georgal of Entraglia. Recently Villachaize acquired an ally in one Baron Simon Petain, of Montfort. The worst of the covetous Bretonnian Lords, Petain had orchestrated the take over of the Maritime Banque and also the du Bois Guilbert Shipyard by seducing and marrying the widow of the Marquis's younger brother. The woman was near as greedy as he.

Over the years Baron Petain had spies send him all manner of gossip and scandals regarding the men and ladies of the Court. He spread rumors like soft cheese on bread all the while cloaked in his respectability and 'honor'. He had large

holdings in Lyonesse and Bordeleaux. He extorted favors, blackmailed the weak and revelled in his infamy. He was a gambler of high degree and a thrill seeker. Twenty eight years younger than the Marquis d'Ascoyne, he wanted the man crushed to oblivion. His trophy rooms were filled with the biggest and best trophies including those won by his Champion Agravain leMange, "la Bête de Gisorex". Le Mange had never been defeated in combat and left his adversaries crippled or dead.

{mospagebreak title=The Path to Ruin} The Path to Ruin

All villains, male and female may think themselves intelligent and that the law is weak, but the Law is unforgiving and pursues relentlessly those who break its bonds.

One afternoon Petain listened to a conversation about the Marquis d'Ascoyne. As he listened he formed a plan for disaster. A plan that would bring his dreams to reality. Present at his manor in Montfort were Baron Villachaize, Sir Hector LaMesieur, Baron Rothamund. Another villain named Francois du Breton, the famous herbalist physician, who was more sadistic than Bourvil and finally Baron von Kimmerling an ex Empirical General living near Montfort. Villainy is not the dominion of males as Lady du Bonaparte, a voluptuous red haired beauty who was no stranger to intrigue. At least three good nobles killed themselves for what she had uncovered. This left Stephanie du Bonaparte, youngest daughter of Lady Bonaparte, but still innocent, somewhat..

d'Ascoyne is lucky, he fails in two endeavors and yet triumphs in the Carcassonne.

Now stay your words, the man is generous to both Crown and Country. It is for nothing he is called the Carcassonne Innkeeper. True his conduct at Court

Is reprehensible! This was Baron Villachaize speaking. The Baron was too easily upset by the mere mention of the d'Ascoyne name. By the gods, he is a duddyhead, a provincial charmer, he hath not the breeding nor the carriage of Marquis of the Realm!

Petain suggested that the Marquis was, after all, an ancestral title and even with a few victories on his record, the Innkeeper had not earned the right to walk amongst the gentry.

Lady Bonaparte, whom up until this time had remained silent as a mouse suggested the man was simple minded, but she was ignored. She waited a bit, for she knew how to plant weeds in a garden. She suggested that perchance the old man was unfit as he had exhibited signs of melancholia and lunacy. This stopped all conversation at the table. Smiling she continued. Consider what was well known at Court:

He was said to dance with the Pixies and admitted to the act. He spoke bluntly to many and recently appeared to be insensitive to those ignorant, He was seen muttering to himself in public and actually walked his desmane in the guise of an old merchant. She went on and on and when she was done had sown enough poison to kill a forest.

Petain carved up most of her arguments with the truth, but left the main body of her argument hinging on the Marquis mental stability.

We need but one witnessed incident, something at a place where Liege Lords gather

Like the wedding of the son of Sir Aiden the Brave, suggested Villachaize and was given a warm embrace by Lady Bonaparte. She excused herself for she had little time to prepare an incident.

{mospagebreak title=Collapse} Collapse

We shall not depict the monstrous plot, but only its outcome. The Marquis d'Ascoyne was placed under house arrest by Sir Aiden the Brave for stripping a member of Lady Bonaparte's family and forcing his way upon her in a chamber near

the wedding reception. That she had run screaming from the room naked and he had been found raving like a madman bore mute witness to the unspeakable crime.

All the conspirators played their part well, including Petain. Baron Huebald, Duke of Carcassone, a grim and respected member of the Royal Court listened to the arguments after verifying that the Marquis was quite mad. The Marquis was brought in under restraint. Red faced, eyes wide, his green pupils the size of needle points and sweating profusely. He uttered incomplete sentences, rolled his eyes about and screamed cries of alarm.

A squire announced the arrival of Lady Ascoyne and her daughters interrupting the inquisition. She was not blocked for her sister Millicent, had the ear of the King and she knew courtly protocols. The sight of her husband behaving like a madman caused her to swoon and she ordered her daughters out of the room. She begged to speak with her husband and the boon was granted.

AndreaLyn and Cobina left the room weeping. From seeing their father obviously insane and knowing that there was no reason for the behavior. They both arrived at the same conclusion together.

Lady Gandolfyn and word was sent to the Carcassone to the elfin prophetess. Two days later a reply was received that Lady Donda Bromeliad Gandolfyn was on a trip far away and could not be reached. Both daughter did not accept the response as genuine so they sent a second hawk, but went far afield to release the bird.

This time the response was genuine. Three words "On My Way" and sealed with the seal of the Prophetess.

Yet in the three days lost to these events the Marquis had slipped deeper into the dementia. Now he bayed at the moon and acted bestially, much to the delight of the conspirators. He ate no food, drank water on occasion and by the morning of the fifth day had lost 45 pound and his lucidity.

By protection of the Lady's Chapel, the Marquis was allowed a specific time to recover, but he had made little progress and the period was soon running out.

Now dear reader this is not one of those bloody melodramas where everything hinges on one giant heroic effort which occurs at the last minute. Lady Donda Bromeliad Gandolfyn arrived on back of a Pegasus in the Courtyard. She was dressed in leggings and surcoat and in her colors of Blue and White. She bore a Royal scepter which provided safe passage for the bearer and within minutes of her arrival had spoken to the Duke. Naturally her arrival upset the conspirators.

"Kill the Prophetess and we succeed!" cried Villachaize, obviously terrified at being revealed.

Baron Rothamund said that, although an elf, even she could not discern what had brought on the Marquis "inspired Lunacy" and he laughed.

Petain was cold and aloof. He had put himself so far above suspicion, he would escape should the plan fail.

The plan failed miserably. Lady Donda Bromeliad Gandolfyn visited the prisoner and spoke to him all the while he raved and drooled and foamed at the mouth. She was calm and loving.

"Now dearest Hercule, I understand you are not quite yourself" and he tried to bite her hands. She slapped him on the face. He looked shocked before returning to the bestial behavior.

"No!", she said motherly, "No biting" and she wiped his sweaty brow with a cloth and smelled the residue. He responded by spitting.

“No!” she said serenely, “We do not spit at our friends.” Next she checked his ears with a swab and withdrew substance.

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He grabbed her by the thigh and she deftly incapacitated the offending hand by swinging the scepter.

“Now stop that, Hercule!” she commanded. He quieted down and she looked into his eyes.

“Deeply.” A few moments of quiet.

“I know you are still in your right mind, Hercule and are struggling to free yourself.” She unscrewed the scepter and called for the Guards. Ordering them to hold him down and force open his mouth she mixed powders and liquids and when he was prepared, she poured the viscous mass down his throat.

“This should not take long,” she said and it didn’t.

“He had three major convulsions and then became stiff as a menhir, falling back against the prophetess.” She lowered him to the floor “Oh Hercule,” she said sarcastically, “I had always wondered how you felt about me.” The guards but were silenced when Lady Gandolfyn mentioned frying them with magic for a week.

“Now the Marquis lay still and asleep. And snoring. And smiling.” Lady Gandolfyn instructed the guards that no one was to see the Marquis save herself and Lady d’Ascoyne. Not the King,, not even his daughters. She returned to the Baron.

“To Baron Huebold and Lady Dianne she explained in chambers that she had found what had caused the Marquis abrupt descent into madness. Mushrooms called Sparkling Dreams by the elves. Hallucinogenic to elves they led to insanity among other races.” She went on to explain that she found traces of Lycaetcheum and Hippocrallus in his sweat and earwax. These were slow acting poisons which killed over a ten day period.

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“We must discover the events leading to the assault on Lady Bonaparte’s niece.” Baron Huebald leaned back and spoke broadly. “By the Lady, the d’Ascoynes are a formidable family. His daughters were just here with the results of the investigations.” He handed the Prophetess three sheets of notes. She read them and as her eyes narrowed, she asked Baron Huebald where the niece was now.

“The Baron responded she had left that very morning with her aunt, Batrons Petain and Sir Hector LaMesieur and Baron von Kimmerling.” By the arch of her eyebrow, Baron Huebald knew something was up. He concluded by saying others had left two days ago, including Baron Villachaize and Baron Rothamund. The prophetess made a simple request.

“Arrest Petain, Villachaize, LeMesieur, Kimmerling and Lady Bonaparte and her niece. Especially the niece.” and without pause Baron Huebald made it so

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{mospagebreak title=Justice} Justice

And so 12 days after the event of the Marquis Madness an investigation was begun at the Court of Baron Huebald. All members of the d’Ascoyne family and Lady Gandolfyn wore Black and this put the minds of the conspirators at ease. After lengthy questioning and repeated denials of any plot, the conspirators were confident of an early release.

It was Baron Villachaize who sealed their doom. He stood up to address the tribunal and asked could he please leave as the prosecution did not have a case and that by the colors of the d'Ascoyne family, the monster Hercule Achille du Bois Guilbert had met his rewards as well.

Cobina looked at Villachaize. "He is mine," she whispered to her sister and AndreaLyn nodded.

Lady Bonaparte's niece was terrified. She seemed to be catatonic with her eyes staring blankly into space. Andrea noted that she was trembling, ever so slightly. A pang of pity struck AndreaLyn, for the girl was not quite 15 years of age. She vowed that were the girl coerced into her actions, she would plead leniency.

When Lady Bonaparte spoke tearfully of how the false accusations had adversely affected her niece who would need time at an abbey. She tended to overplay the Part., thought Cobina. Lady Dianne leaned forward and whispered "she is mine." Both daughters looked with awe and disbelief at their mother.

AndreaLyn shrugged her shoulders. "Well that leaves me Rothamund, LaMesseur and Kimmerling, which is fine." She really wanted to duel all three at once and show them what righteous anger could accomplish. Baron Petain requested that this hearing be closed that he could attend to other, more important matters.

A familiar voice filled the halls. "Lord Baron Huebald, I request the right of trial by combat to the death against one Baron Simon Petain for the crime of plotting to weaken the defense of the western Carcassone Borders." It was the latter charge that brought the Tribunal's heads up, for it was a charge of Treason. Ascoyne Hercule Achille du Bois Guilbert, Marquis d'Ascoyne and Lord Protector of the d'Ascoyne Tract and Upper Gavenie river strode into the room. His whole demeanor showed he had regained his wits, his strength and his desire for Justice. He wore the Armor of Angilulf and the Lady's Champion Sword. He pulled his gauntlet off and made the challenge to Petain. "Traitor I call you!"

Petain called for his Champion and a giant of a man stood up and looked at the Marquis with cold malevolent eyes. The Marquis made an aside to his family and friends in the chamber. "He's big and dumb and quick work, then I shall have Petain." Lady Bonaparte could not believe her eyes and fainted, Baron Viullachaize screamed "we are undone!" and prostrated himself onto the floor. Von Kimmerling asked why he an Empirical Warrior was being detained and fell silent when he was informed that for any part he played in the plot against d'Ascoyne he would not be punished, but escorted into the hands of the Empirical Border Patrol on the far side of Axe Bite Pass. Petain looked to the bailiffs who approached him, gave them warnings not to come near him and they escorted him from the chamber at a distance of two meters.

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Baron Huebald brought down his gavel once and the rising pandemonium vanished. "Baron Petain, your champion will meet the Marquis in the yard in one hour." Petain smiled and looked at his giant champion. Petain spoke, "Tis a sad thing this, when a man's innocence must be decided by combat." The gavel dropped a second time. "Such is Nobility, Petain, the audience is over." And the Baron left the Chamber.

We shall get to the trial by combat shortly. What happened to the other conspirators, you ask?

Baron von Kimmerling returned to the Empire and summarily executed there for treason.

Baron Benedict Villachaize made a full confession in writing, was visited by the youngest d'Ascoyne and that evening he hanged himself in his cell.

Sir Hector LaMesieur turned out from Bretonnia in disgrace. Dies in combat with unknown assailant

As Baron Rothamund, turned out from Bretonnia in disgrace. As LeMessier, dies in combat by unknown assailant.

Francois le Breton was found mad as a March hare, gibbering in his chambers, his hair white as snow. He had suffered a similar malady as the Marquis d'Ascoyne.

Lady Stephanie du Bonaparte, disappeared. Thought to have escaped to the lands of Araby with her retinue and small fortune but not before being scarred for life by an unknown assailant, experienced with knives.

Her niece is left behind and put into a brothel. She is searched for and found by Roland Richeleau who takes her to Parravon and the castle of Earl Cadfael. She is fully restored and absolved of any crime against the family du Bois Guilbert.

As for Baron Petain-

{mospagebreak title=Trail By Combat} Trail By Combat

The armoured judicial duel was typically held between nobles, fought in armour with the knightly weapons that include the spear, longsword and dagger, usually to the death. Essentially, the duel was a private affair and the role of the judge was only to ensure that the duel was conducted according to the formalities of the period. If a noble had to undergo a trial-by-combat to settle the issue of whose case was right or to provide evidence in support of the individual, the challenger had to wear the same clothing and armour as depicted. Not all trials were fought to the death. This was necessary only when a major offense like murder, treason, heresy etc. was put to court.

Additional requirements over and above the tournament arms & armour requirements will include:

beirs draped with sheets, one with a white background and red cross, the second with a red background and white cross, medieval encampment chairs ("X" chairs) or other medieval chair alternative which the combatants will sit in while the charges are announced to the spectators, no less than three judges present to administer the duel.

The beirs were assumed to be used as a stretcher used to carry the dead from the lists.

Duke Huebald, on hearing of this duel, declared he would be present at it. Earl Cadfael, and members of his court requested to provide additional time, for that he would be present. Upon his arrival by flying mount, the principal chiefs went to Quenelles, to witness the combat, lists were made for the champions behind the Temple; and the lords had erected on one side scaffolds, the better to see the sight. The crowd of people was wonderful. The two champions entered the lists armed at all points, and upon entering the field, du Bois Guilbert went to his lady, who was covered with black and seated on a chair, and said, "Lady, from your accusation, and in your quarrel, am I thus adventuring my life to combat Simon Petain: you knew whether my cause be loyal and true." "My lord," she replied "it is so; and you may fight securely, for your cause is good."

The lady remained seated, making fervent prayers to the Lady, entreating humbly, that through her grace and intercession, she might gain the victory according to her right. Her affliction was great, for her life depended on the event; and, should her husband lose the victory, she would have been burnt, and he would have been hanged.

The adversaries were seated in a chair opposite the other; the Count de St. Polidorus directed Sir Hercule du Bois Guilbert, and the retainers of the count Simon Petain. As to the Charges and the terms of combat.

The two champions were then advanced, and placed opposite to each other; when they mounted their horses, and made a handsome appearance, for they were both expert men at arms. They ran their first course without hurt to either. After the tilting, they dismounted, and made ready to continue the fight. They behaved with courage; but the Marquis d'Ascoyne was, at the first onset, wounded in the thigh, which alarmed all his friends: notwithstanding this, he fought so desperately that he struck down his adversary, and, thrusting his sword through the body, caused instant death; when he demanded of the spectators if he had done his duty: they replied that he had.

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The body of Agravain Le Maunge was delivered to the hangman, who dragged it to the scaffold, and there hanged it.

Â Â Â Marquis d'Ascoyne appealed to Duke Huebald and Tribunal to next combat Simon Petain himself, for great was his outrage at the villainous Baron.

The Duke denied the appeal. Â Â Â "Thee are wounded Sir knight," he said, "thou has thy victory;Â Baron Petain will be stripped of rank and holdings of which a percentage shall be given unto you.Â .Â Petain shall be branded and Â shall be turned out of the land and allowed to beg for his sustenance in the hope he learns humility and goodness."

For Petain it was a fate worse than dying.Â The Marquis accepted what the Duke had said..Â He approached and fell on his knees: the Duke Â made him rise, and ordered one thousand gold to be paid him that very day: Sir Hercule, after thanking the king and his lords, went to his lady and kissed her: they went together to make their offering in the church of N'Âtre Dame, and then returned to their home.

And of Petain and the Widow of the Marquis brother?Â She had sequestered a small fortune away in Estalia and they left Bretonnia to live out there days there.Â Never again did Petain attempt entry in the Land of Chivalry and the mere mention of the name d'Ascoyne sent him into fits that lasted days..

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