



Bravery And Valour Is Always Rewarded

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Historical

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If there ever had been an ideal kingdom with an ideal king then Artois and its Nobel king Jean Marie would rank among the top contenders for the distinction.

The kingdom of Artois spread from Eastern Bavaria to the river Siene in the south. This French Riviera with the most fertile soil would be any kings ultimate wish for his subjects. May be due to his ancestors good deeds or his own noble and just deeds Artois and its people have enjoyed abundance of natural wealth.

King Jean Marie was now old but like his father he had been a just ruler. Most of the people living in Arthois were self sufficient in terms of their basic needs. The king had made sure that his subjects were well looked after. He had divided his kingdom into four autonomous areas each managed by a governor. The largest of these, Picardy was governed by Earl Simeon, the son-in-law of King Jean Marie. Earl Simeon was married to the King's daughter, Annie.

King Jeam Marie and his wife Sofia lived in their castle situated near Calais. The armed forces also had a garrison there. The army was commanded by General Bartheumus and ably assisted by three young trained commanders Lois, Henry and Gustav, well trained in archery, swordsmanship and other battle techniques.

The kingdom of Artois had a sea brigade positioned at Calais port. The brigade had trained sailors, deep sea underwater swimmers capable of outsmarting sea pirates. Artois also had four large ships armed with cannons.

King Jean Marie's son-in-law Earl Simeon was equally noble and just. He and his wife, Annie were kind to the people, mostly farmers and peasants, living in Picardy. In Picardy and other provinces of Artois the farmer community mostly grew fruits and vegetables in their farms as the climate and the soil were most suited to growing fruits like grapes, oranges and strawberries. The kingdom of Artois would barter the fruits and vegetables for foodgrains like wheat and oats with the kingdoms of England, Spain, Portugal and Bavaria.

Earl Simeon and his wife Annie were blessed with two sons, Prince Jerome and Prince Joel. Jerome, the elder, had grown into a handsome, chivalrous and adventurous young prince. He had started to show interest in the affairs of governance and spent a lot of time with his father. On the other hand Joel was equally chivalrous and adventurous like his elder brother, he was more happy go lucky type and showed very little interest in the affairs of the state.

Prince Joel would spend most of his time with his mother or travel to Calais to be with his grandfather the King of Artois. Both King Jean Marie and Queen Sofia loved Joel and they liked his presence in the Royal castle. They knew the more time he spent in the castle the more he would learn about the affairs of administration.

The people of Artois were mostly Christian and you could find an old church in most of the villages there. The farmers and the peasant population were God fearing. These simple people gave very high respect to the king but more than that they revered and respected the Bishop of Calais.

The king, before taking any crucial decision would consult the Bishop. There was a very majestic church near the King's Royal castle. During the festival times you could see people from different parts of the kingdom visiting the church to participate in the church services. There would be fairs in the lawns adjacent to the church with games for children and adults, performers from far and near performing hair raising acts and lots of goodies to buy.

Whenever the Royal Council, with the King, the Governors, the commanders of the armed forces and the princes as its members, met, the Bishop of Calais would be always there to guide and bless the king.

To the south of Artois was Portugal, a small but very prosperous kingdom ruled by King Almeida III. King Almeida had a wise daughter, Rafael. Once Portugal was attacked by armed Arab invaders from the middle east, who were looters and plundered the kingdoms they managed to attack and defeat. They would loot and leave with the loot, the precious materials they managed to lay their hands on.

King Almeida was quick to ask for help from Artois. The noble King Jean Marie agreed to help and sent his grandson Jerome and commander Gustav with a small army of archers and well trained swordsmen. This was the first real test for the young prince.

The invaders were not expecting the elite brigade from Artois, and that too under the able leadership of Prince Jerome. The invaders could put up no fight and surrendered very easily. Thus the young Prince without much effort was able to overpower the armed Arab looters.

Prince Jerome reinstated King Almeida III on the throne of Portugal. King Almeida was delighted to have the reins of the kingdom in his hands and wanted to thank Prince Jerome so he requested to accept his wise daughter as his wife. Jerome replied that he was humbled by the gesture and added that he was just following orders of his King. When King Almeida insisted, Jerome said that he was willing to take Rafael with him. Being an obedient son he wanted to show princess Rafael to his parents and as his brother too was single, Rafael could be the wife of either of the two princes.

So Rafael was readied to accompany the young prince. When the time for leaving came she tearfully bid farewell to her home and loved ones. Prince Jerome had decided much in advance that on their way back they would pay a visit to Rome. As, while returning the princess would be with them, the idea seemed all the more apt.

Prince Jerome, Princess Rafael and the soldiers claimed the mountains to reach Rome. The Pope was there to welcome them and was very happy to see the young prince Jerome.

In times of difficulty the noble King Jean Marie had always taken advise from the Pope and in times of trouble

for Artois the Pope had always proved to be the light that would show up the right path.

The Pope blessed the prince and the princess and prophesized that the future would see the Prince as a great king of Artois and the princess as his great queen. They stayed with the Pope that day, praying and receiving his blessings. The next day early morning they left for the capital of Artois, Princess Rafael had learnt horseriding at a very young age and could keep pace with Prince Jerome and his brigade who were at their slowest while on this journey.

On reaching the capital Jerome received a hero's welcome. The old King Jean Marie and Queen Sofia were there with Prince Joel. Before anyone could say anything the old Queen started speaking that it was always his secret desire to see wise Rafael as the future Queen of Artois and started looking at Joel, the favourite of the royal grand parents.

Rafael was wise though not very beautiful. She proved to be not very attractive for Joel who turned down the offer. So eventually Jerome decided to marry Rafael. The two got married at a very grand and royal function attended by the young and old of the kingdom who came in large numbers to bless the young prince and princess.

It so happened that some years later as the Pope had foretold the young Prince was crowned King and Rafael the Queen of Artois. And so they lived happily for many years to come.

To be continued

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