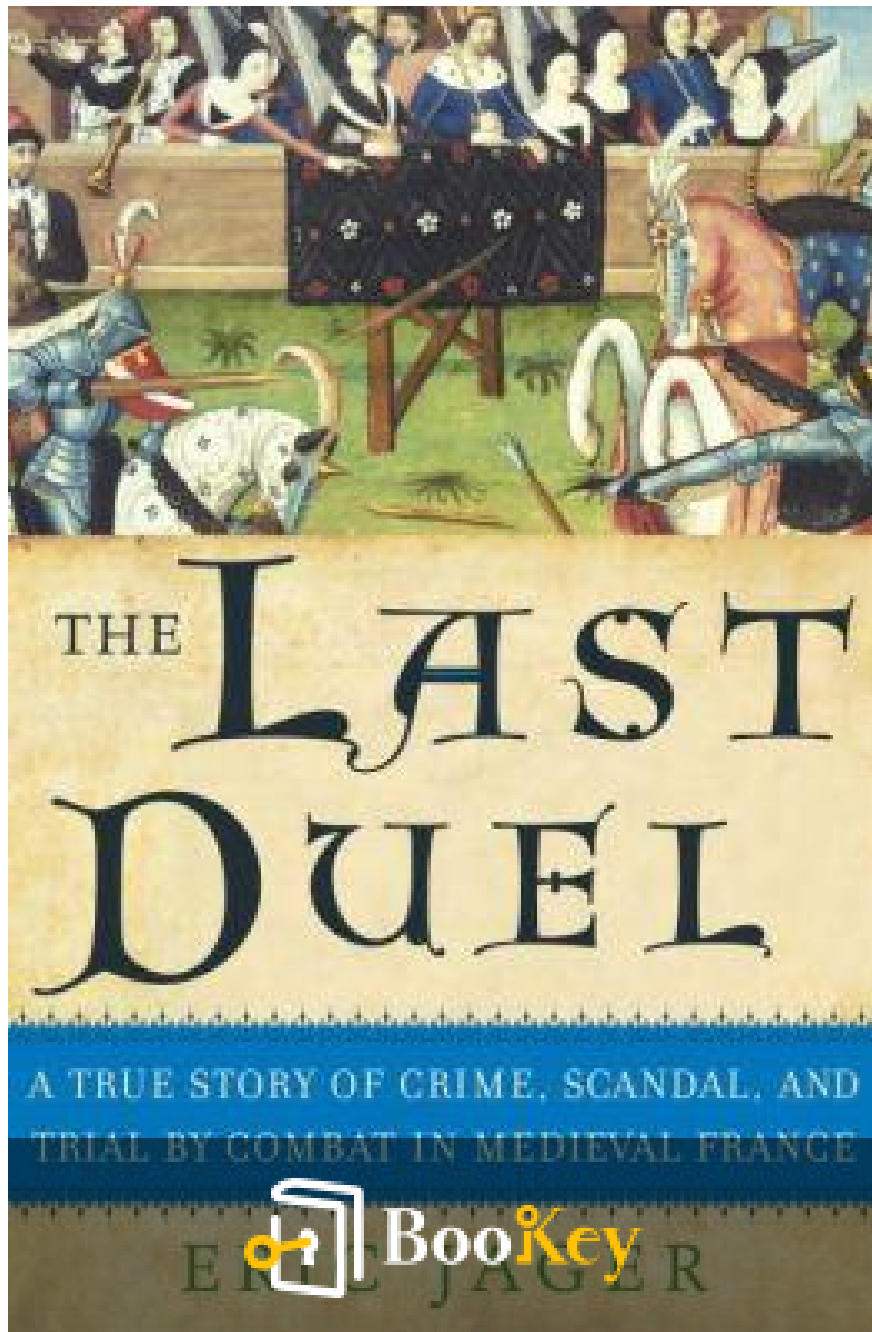


The Last Duel PDF (Limited Copy)

Eric Jager



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The Last Duel Summary

A Fatal Test of Honor Amidst War and Betrayal

Written by New York Central Park Page Turners Books Club

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About the book

Set against the backdrop of the chaotic Hundred Years' War, Eric Jager's "The Last Duel" explores the gripping true story of medieval knight Jean de Carrouges. This era, marked by ongoing conflicts, societal upheaval, and the impact of plague, serves as a vivid stage for the pressing issues of honor and justice that unfold throughout the narrative.

At the heart of the story lies Jean de Carrouges's struggle to defend his wife, Marguerite, after she accuses the squire Jacques Le Gris of assaulting her. In a patriarchal society where a woman's word carries little weight, Marguerite's allegation becomes a catalyst for conflict as it sparks a court-ordered trial by combat. This ancient judicial practice, designed to ascertain the truth through physical confrontation, puts Marguerite's fate—and potentially her life—on the line, should her husband fail in battle.

The conflict escalates as preparations for the duel unfold, drawing in various societal figures, including the youthful King Charles VI, who watches the event with bated breath. The duel itself is not merely a fight for survival but a public spectacle that encapsulates the era's values surrounding honor, masculinity, and retribution. Jager's meticulous research highlights not only the historical context but also the personal stakes involved for each character, capturing the moral complexities and societal pressures that drive them toward their fateful confrontation.

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As the two men face off in a deadly duel, themes of justice, honor, and revenge intertwine, resonating deeply with contemporary audiences and prompting reflections on the nature of truth and valor in a world rife with instability. The book ultimately serves as a poignant reminder of the lengths to which individuals go to uphold their integrity and protect their loved ones amidst rampant injustice.

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About the author

In "The Last Duel," Eric Jager explores a gripping true story from the 14th century, a period marked by social upheaval, feudal strife, and the often brutal application of justice. The narrative centers around a trial by combat—a judicial duel fought between two knights to settle a dispute where the outcome was believed to reflect divine judgment.

The chapters unfold with the introduction of pivotal characters: Jean de Carrouges, a proud and courageous knight, and Jacques Le Gris, a squire of noble birth who possesses both charm and cunning. Their tumultuous relationship begins with a shared bond but quickly devolves into animosity. Central to the tale is the accusation made by Carrouges' wife, Marguerite, who claims that Le Gris assaulted her. In the patriarchal society of medieval France, such accusations held grave significance, as a woman's testimony was often undervalued compared to a man's honor.

As tensions escalate, the chapters vividly depict the societal norms surrounding honor and reputation that overshadow personal truth. Jager interlaces historical context, explaining how trials by combat were seen as a means of divine intervention, where God himself would determine the rightful victor.

Throughout the narrative, Jager also explores the themes of loyalty and

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betrayal, the role of women in a male-dominated society, and the complex moral landscape navigated by each character. The story builds to the momentous duel, a dramatic conclusion where Carrouges and Le Gris confront not only each other but the very ideals of justice and honor that govern their world.

In synthesizing rigorous medieval scholarship with accessible storytelling, Jager brings the past to life, encouraging readers to reflect on how these age-old struggles resonate in contemporary discussions about truth, honor, and justice.

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Chapter 1 Summary: CARROUGES

Chapter 1 Summary: Carrouges

Historical Context of the Fourteenth Century

In the fourteenth century, Europe was at a crossroads, experiencing turmoil from both external threats and internal strife. The underdeveloped state of European travel meant that journeys to distant lands from major cities like Paris and Rome could take months. Europe was embroiled in a lengthy conflict against Muslim forces that had persisted for over six hundred years. Simultaneously, internal rivalries and territorial wars among European monarchs exacerbated chaos, leading to devastation and social upheaval.

The Decline of France

France, once a dominant kingdom, faced grave challenges following the onset of the Hundred Years' War in 1339. The English invasion compounded these struggles, with defeats at key battles like Crécy and Poitiers significantly weakening the French nobility. The nation experienced civil unrest, peasant revolts, and the catastrophic impact of the Great Plague, which decimated its population. With the young King Charles VI ascending the throne at just eleven years old, France fell into fragmentation, controlled

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by powerful uncles and foreign aggressors.

Feudal Society and the Carrouges Family

Feudalism dictated the social framework of France, where landholders, or vassals, owed service and loyalty to their lords. The Carrouges family, steeped in a history of conflict, exemplified this warrior lineage. Sir Jean de Carrouges III emerged as a notable military figure, fiercely loyal to the Count of Perche and actively participating in ongoing military campaigns against the English.

Jean de Carrouges' Life and Inheritance

Central to the narrative is Jean de Carrouges, a seasoned knight in his sixties whose life has been heavily influenced by warfare and familial expectations. As he grapples with the anticipated inheritance of lands and a prestigious military captaincy, the deaths of his wife and son loom large over him, intensifying his fears about the future of his lineage. With no heirs to carry the Carrouges name, he seeks a new marriage, striving to secure his family's legacy amidst the backdrop of war and unrest.

Interpersonal Relations and Rivalries

Within this complex social landscape, Carrouges experiences a tumultuous

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relationship with Jacques Le Gris, a fellow squire who has garnered favor from their shared lord, Count Pierre of Alençon. Le Gris's rapid ascent creates friction between the two, inciting jealousy in Carrouges, especially in light of his personal losses. The intricate dynamics of friendship, rivalry, and loyalty unfold against the broader themes of feudal loyalty and the quest for personal honor.

Conclusion

Chapter 1 establishes a foundation for a nuanced exploration of both personal and social conflicts intricately woven with the historical events of the era. The external power struggles mirror the inner turmoil faced by characters like Carrouges and Le Gris, illustrating how loyalties and rivalries play out within a feudal society on the brink of transformation.

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Chapter 2 Summary: THE FEUD

The Feud: Summary

In 1380, Jean de Carrouges, a squire with ambitions for land and title, married Marguerite, the beautiful heiress of the Thibouville family. Despite her youth and charm, Marguerite's lineage was shadowed by betrayal, as her father, Robert de Thibouville, had previously committed treason against the French crown. However, her substantial dowry made her an appealing bride, and their union promised to strengthen Jean's social standing.

The couple's wedding, celebrated in spring at Sainte-Marguerite-de-Carrouges, was an elaborate affair, marked by both a civil ceremony and a grand feast that formalized their marriage in the eyes of the church and society. Yet, joy was quickly overshadowed by discord over Marguerite's dowry. A piece of land, Aunou-le-Faucon, which Jean had hoped to inherit, had been sold by her father to Count Pierre, complicating Jean's prospects and inciting resentment towards both the Count and his former friend, Jacques Le Gris, who appeared to thrive at Jean's expense.

As tensions escalated, Jean's grievances evolved into a bitter feud characterized by lawsuits against Count Pierre over the lost land, highlighting a rivalry not just with the Count but also with Le Gris. This

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animosity deepened when Jean felt overlooked for his father's expected captaincy of Bellême, as his fortunes waned while Le Gris's rose, exacerbating their conflict.

By 1383, Jean found himself increasingly isolated, consumed by bitterness and accusations against the two men who were once his allies. However, a gathering in late 1384 provided an unexpected chance for reconciliation. During this event, Jean and Jacques engaged in a tentative truce, visibly mending the rift in front of their peers. In a moment of impulsive camaraderie, Jean asked Marguerite to kiss Le Gris, a gesture that, while surprising, symbolized a desire to move past their conflicts.

This reconciliation, however, set the stage for complicating relationships, as Le Gris's interest in Marguerite began to simmer beneath the surface, foreshadowing the intricate dynamics that would define their future interactions and the inevitable tensions that would arise from this rekindled connection.

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Chapter 3 Summary: BATTLE AND SIEGE

BATTLE AND SIEGE

Jean de Carrouges' Departure for Scotland

In the spring of 1385, Jean de Carrouges, a French knight frustrated by the failures he faced at Count Pierre's court, decided to join a military expedition to Scotland. The expedition aimed to unite with the Scots against England, spurred by Sir Jean de Vienne, a celebrated military leader. Seeking both wealth and the possibility of earning a knighthood, Carrouges left his wife Marguerite in the care of her family for safety during his absence.

Journey to Sluys and the Campaign Begins

Carrouges and his troop made their way to Sluys, a key port, where they were compensated for two months of service before setting sail for Scotland. The troops were filled with optimism for a victorious campaign. However, upon reaching Leith, they encountered skepticism from their Scottish allies, which called for bribes to King Robert of Scotland to secure cooperation and support for their mission.

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The Siege of Wark Castle

Tensions rose as Carrouges and the Scottish forces besieged Wark Castle, defended by Sir John Lussebourne. Lacking proper siege equipment, they relied on ladders to scale the castle walls, leading to fierce fighting. Their perseverance paid off when they captured the fortress, resulting in its destruction and the seizure of several prisoners, marking a notable success in their campaign.

Rampage Through English Territories

Following the siege, the combined French and Scottish forces advanced south, laying waste to English lands and creating terror among the populace. King Richard II of England regrouped his forces in response. Despite pressure from their Scottish allies to retreat, Admiral Vienne chose to forge ahead, leading to brutal clashes that culminated in Hotspur's unexpected attack, causing substantial losses during their withdraw.

Aftermath and Return to France

As autumn set in, the exhausted troops returned to Scotland, facing hunger and growing discontent over their failed campaign. Eventually, the French forces disbanded and returned home. Jean de Carrouges arrived back in France empty-handed and in poor health. Though he managed to attain a

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knighthood, the victory was bittersweet, overshadowed by the trials and losses he had endured. With winter approaching, he and Marguerite set off for Capomesnil, preparing to navigate the treacherous journey amidst inclement weather and the lingering threat of danger.

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Chapter 4: THE CRIME OF CRIMES

Chapter 4: The Crime of Crimes

Marguerite's Journey and Foreboding

In the depths of winter, Marguerite Carrouges, burdened by her family's troubled legacy, departs her father's castle for her mother-in-law Dame Nicole's modest home at Capomesnil. Married to Jean Carrouges for five years without bearing children, she fears judgment regarding Jean's deteriorating health and financial woes. The chilly journey heightens her anxiety, as she grapples with the societal pressures and expectations of motherhood, fearing she may be blamed for her husband's struggles.

Capomesnil and the Tension of Arrival

Upon arriving at Capomesnil, Marguerite finds the château lacking the comforts of her own home. With Jean's health declining, he soon leaves for Paris on urgent business, leaving her alone with Dame Nicole. Marguerite attempts to find solace in her solitude while acutely aware of Jean's financial

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difficulties, which cast a shadow over her stay.

The Encounter at Argentan

In Paris, Jean confronts financial troubles and seeks support from influential acquaintances. During a stop in Argentan, he unexpectedly encounters Jacques Le Gris, a man with whom he shares a complicated past marked by rivalry. Their brief interaction reignites old tensions, setting the stage for a sinister turn in their relationship.

Le Gris's Scheme

Motivated by revenge against Jean, Le Gris hatches a scheme to seduce Marguerite. He enlists Adam Louvel, a subordinate, to monitor her movements while Jean is away, laying the groundwork for a nefarious plot that threatens Marguerite's safety.

The Assault on Marguerite

On January 18, while Dame Nicole is absent, Jacques Le Gris and Adam Louvel invade Capomesnil. Louvel deceives Marguerite into letting him in,

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claiming he needs warmth—a ruse that leads to a harrowing assault.

Overpowered by Le Gris, Marguerite is violently raped, and in the aftermath, he threatens her into silence about the atrocity.

Aftermath and Marguerite's Isolation

Left traumatized and alone, Marguerite confronts the harsh reality of her situation in isolation, without support from her mother-in-law or servants, who are away during the assault. She grapples with profound despair and betrayal, feeling the weight of both physical and emotional trauma.

Marguerite's Decision for Justice

When Jean returns from Paris, he quickly senses Marguerite's distress, which compels her to reveal the horrific event. Jean's fury ignites at the revelation, prompting a fierce desire for vengeance against Le Gris. They navigate the daunting pressures of societal honor and shame, compelling them to seek justice amidst personal turmoil.

The Council of Families

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In light of Marguerite's assault, Jean convenes a council of family and trusted allies to discuss a course of action. Despite the risks of involving Count Pierre—who favors Le Gris—they collectively decide to pursue legal action, understanding that reclaiming Marguerite's honor is paramount.

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Chapter 5 Summary: THE CHALLENGE

Chapter 5: The Challenge

In January 1386, the noble Count Pierre of Alençon found himself embroiled in a scandalous dispute ignited by Sir Jean de Carrouges, who accused Jacques Le Gris of raping Lady Marguerite during her husband's absence. Count Pierre, incensed by these claims, assigned two reputable nobles, Sir Bernard de La Tour and Jean Crespin, to investigate. Upon their affirmation that Marguerite had indeed been assaulted by Le Gris, Count Pierre called for a court hearing to facilitate justice for the couple.

However, when Jean and Marguerite failed to appear, Count Pierre ruled in Le Gris's favor, declaring him innocent and suggesting that Marguerite may have merely "dreamt" the incident. This verdict left Jean and Marguerite feeling humiliated, defeated, and powerless, yet they were aware of their legal right to appeal the decision in the king's court in Paris.

Determined to vindicate his wife and restore their honor, Jean embarked on the arduous journey to Paris, with Marguerite—a pregnant woman—by his side. Understanding the complexities of the political landscape, Jean sought legal advice and decided to invoke a trial by combat, a practice rooted in historical precedent where divine judgment would be sought through

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physical contest, particularly for severe accusations like murder or rape. Though this ancient method of seeking justice was waning due to changing societal views, Jean felt it was their only viable option to reclaim the dignity of his wife and prove his honor.

Upon arriving in Paris, Jean formally issued a challenge to Le Gris in front of King Charles VI, initiating the judicial duel procedure within the Parlement of Paris. The stakes of the conflict escalated, drawing notable nobles into the fray as both parties secured pledges for their court appearances, further heightening the tension surrounding the case.

On July 9, 1386, the planned confrontation took place at the Palais de Justice in the presence of the king and esteemed lords. Jean de Carrouges boldly accused Le Gris of the heinous crime, offering to validate his claims through combat. Le Gris, in turn, vehemently denied the accusations, echoing the confidence of his innocence, and agreed to the duel, which effectively cemented the matter within the royal legal system.

With the challenge laid before the court, the Parlement ordered an inquiry requiring both parties to submit written testimonies, which would inform the next steps in this fraught legal battle. The public nature of the proceedings intensified the situation, capturing the attention of society and placing both men's lives at stake, positioning the case as a pivotal episode in the sociopolitical landscape of France.

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What started as a private conflict over honor and trust rapidly evolved into a significant legal and social discourse, raising pressing questions about justice and the moral expectations of the nobility. As both Jean and Le Gris prepared for the consequential confrontation ahead, they found themselves enmeshed in a web of public scrutiny and personal stakes that would ultimately shape their fates and, perhaps, the future narrative of their legacies.

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Chapter 6 Summary: THE INQUIRY

THE INQUIRY

Court Proceedings

The Parlement of Paris commenced an inquiry into the serious accusations made by Jean de Carrouges against Jacques Le Gris. The inquiry required both men to meticulously prepare their testimonies, which would be formally documented. A pivotal figure in the case was Marguerite, Carrouges's wife, who, although she could not initiate charges herself, became a crucial witness and faced intense scrutiny as she recounted her experiences and allegations against Le Gris.

Testimonies

Marguerite was summoned to present her testimony to the court, which was crucial in establishing the case. The documentation included Carrouges's detailed accusations, which were rooted in his wife's statements, alongside Le Gris's rebuttals. Carrouges described his long-standing friendship with Le Gris, emphasizing how this bond was shattered when Le Gris allegedly

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developed lustful intentions toward Marguerite.

Nature of Allegations

Carrouges leveled grave accusations at Le Gris, accusing him of rape and adultery, asserting that Marguerite had neither consented to the encounter nor the ensuing acts. The accusations underscored a profound betrayal of trust, portraying Le Gris as not just a false friend, but as a violator of both personal integrity and marital sanctity.

Le Gris's Defense

Contrasting sharply, Le Gris mounted a vigorous defense, portraying himself as a loyal nobleman committed to serving his lords with honor. He accused Carrouges of harboring jealousy and rivalry, arguing that the knight's allegations stemmed from personal grievances rather than truth. Le Gris attempted to establish his innocence by challenging the details of Carrouges's claims, providing an alibi to discredit the timeline of the alleged event.

Character Attacks

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Le Gris's defense also included attacks on Carrouges's character, suggesting he was prone to jealousy and violence. He portrayed the charges as vindictive fabrications, motivated by Carrouges's resentment and political strife. Such character assessments aimed to undermine Carrouges's credibility in the eyes of the court.

Marguerite's Pregnancy and Its Implications

A significant development arose when Marguerite's pregnancy came to light, raising contentious questions regarding the timeline of events and the nature of the alleged crime. At the time, societal perceptions of conception influenced the court's interpretation of her claims, complicating the narrative surrounding her allegations and further intertwining personal matters with judicial questions.

Judicial Capture and Potential Outcomes

Faced with increasing pressure from both parties' supporters, the Parlement sought to evaluate the legitimacy of the charges. Ultimately, the court authorized a trial by combat—a dramatic and rare decision, reflecting uncertainty about the clarity of the case. This choice suggested that the

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outcome would not only determine guilt or innocence but also reveal deeper truths about honor and vengeance.

Final Ruling

In September 1386, after extensive inquiry, the court set a date for the trial by combat on November 27, 1386. This ruling was a tactical victory for Carrouges; however, it carried dire consequences, as the duel could lead to fatal repercussions for both men. There loomed the grave possibility that if either man were found guilty of perjury, they would face harsh penalties, including execution, which added to the tension surrounding Marguerite's fate.

Conclusion

This inquiry represented an early judicial process marked by personal vendettas, societal norms, and shifting interpretations of justice. As the men braced for their impending duel, the stakes were high and the ramifications of the alleged transgression, alongside Marguerite's future, rested precariously in the balance, awaiting resolution through the brutality of combat.

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Chapter 7 Summary: THE JUDGMENT OF GOD

Chapter 7: The Judgment of God

The highly anticipated duel between Jean de Carrouges and Jacques Le Gris was set to take place at the historical Saint-Martin-des-Champs, a monastery in Paris distinguished for its combat arena. Founded in the eleventh century and dedicated to Saint Martin, the patron saint of military men, Saint-Martin's held not only religious significance but was also deeply intertwined with the cultural fabric of medieval society, becoming a pivotal site for spectacles of honor.

As the urban landscape of Paris expanded in the 1380s, the monastery, once isolated, became enveloped by the burgeoning city. This transformation reflected both the increasing security of the region and the prosperity of its inhabitants, making it a fitting backdrop for the monumental duel that would soon attract a wide audience.

Judicial combat, although a declining practice, found its place on the fields of Saint-Martin's, which was one of only two designated sites for such confrontations in the city. While primarily reserved for settling disputes, these duels also served as public entertainment, mirroring the popular jousts

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of the time. The preparations for the event were meticulous, with barriers erected and accommodations made for spectators, including nobles and dignitaries, emphasizing the formality and spectacle of the occasion.

As the duel approached, the anticipation built among a diverse crowd of commoners, nobles, and members of the royal family. King Charles himself took a keen interest in the outcome, signaling his desire to witness the event by ordering a postponement originally set for late November. This royal intervention not only underscored the duel's significance but also highlighted the intertwining of personal honor and royal favor, both critical in the fabric of societal norms.

For Carrouges and Le Gris, the stakes were nothing short of life-changing. The consequences of the duel extended beyond their personal vendetta; it threatened to orphan Marguerite, Carrouges' wife, and impact their newborn child's future. This personal conflict echoed the tragedy of the king's own son, who had recently passed away, adding a layer of shared grief and reflection on mortality to the upcoming battle.

This chapter intricately weaves together the personal dynamics, the societal implications, and the royal involvement surrounding the duel, painting a picture of an event where honor, justice, and power collide in a dramatic and historically rich setting. The anticipation of the duel becomes a symbol of the tumultuous interplay between individuals and the larger forces shaping

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their destinies.

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Chapter 8: OATHS AND LAST WORDS

Chapter 8: Oaths and Last Words

Preparation for Battle

On the morning of December 29, knight Jean de Carrouges and squire Jacques Le Gris made their final preparations for an imminent duel, a culmination of tensions that had escalated to this life-or-death contest. Both men had spent the night in fasting and prayer, seeking clarity and strength. Clad in heavy, sixty-pound suits of armor, each knight was protected from head to toe, equipped to withstand the brutal combat that lay ahead.

Warhorses and Equipment

The readiness of their warhorses was equally vital. These stallions were specifically trained for battle, adorned with custom saddles and protective gear, showcasing their importance in medieval combat. Armed with lances, swords, axes, and daggers, Jean also carried a shield emblazoned with his family crest, symbolizing his honor and lineage in this high-stakes affair.

Spectators and the Ritual

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The duel had attracted thousands of spectators, including nobles and the king himself, who would oversee the event as the presiding judge. The atmosphere was charged with anticipation as the enormity of the spectacle weighed heavily on all present. Rife with solemn rituals and carefully observed formalities, the occasion represented not just a physical confrontation but a quest for divine judgment on the truth and honor of each man's cause.

The Processional and Oaths

As the participants prepared, Jean de Carrouges was joined by his wife, Marguerite, who represented the wronged party and the essence of his fight. Their processional was steeped in tradition, culminating in the formal presentation of their charges. Both men swore three crucial oaths of honesty regarding their causes, each vow reinforced by clergy present to lend religious weight to the proceedings. These oaths established the duel as not merely a physical battle but a matter of moral and divine scrutiny.

Last Words

In a poignant moment just before the duel began, Jean and Marguerite exchanged final words. Marguerite expressed unwavering faith in her husband's righteousness, emphasizing the stakes: should he fail, she would face the horrific fate of being burned alive. This heart-wrenching exchange

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underscored the gravity of their situation, amplifying the emotional tension as both men braced themselves for the tumultuous conflict ahead. The chapter concludes with the atmosphere thick with impending danger, foreshadowing the brutal clash that would soon unfold.

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Chapter 9 Summary: MORTAL COMBAT

Chapter 9: Mortal Combat

The Preparations for Battle

As the tension escalated, Jean de Carrouges and Jacques Le Gris prepared for their duel, a dramatic culmination of their bitter conflict. Ceremonies were conducted, and attendants meticulously checked the knights' armor and weapons in the presence of a captivated audience, including the king and court. With their readiness confirmed, the two knights took their places, cloaked in the heavy iron of their armor, brimming with anticipation for the upcoming battle.

The Duel Begins

At the herald's command of "Faites vos devoirs!" (Do your duty!), Carrouges and Le Gris charged at one another, lances lowered, as a tremor of excitement coursed through the crowd. Their initial clash was spectacular, showcasing the physical prowess and fierce determination of both knights. Despite neither being dislodged from their horses, the duel embodied the brutal spirit of combat, undeterred by the constraints of chivalry.

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Changing Tactics

As their initial lances swung wide without securing a win, the knights transitioned into axe fighting while still mounted. This close-quarters skirmishing escalated rapidly, and both horses eventually succumbed to fatal injuries, forcing the combatants to abandon their mounts and fight on foot, further intensifying the confrontation.

Swordplay and Injury

Now on solid ground, Carrouges and Le Gris wielded swords in a desperate exchange. The clash culminated in Le Gris managing to land a severe blow to Carrouges' thigh, casting doubt on his chances in the fight. Yet, in an unexpected turn, Le Gris chose to withdraw momentarily, granting Carrouges a chance to regroup, a decision that would ultimately shape the outcome of their duel.

The Turning Point

Seizing the moment for redemption, Carrouges launched an assault on Le Gris, overpowering him and forcing him to the ground. In a moment of fierce urgency, Carrouges demanded that Le Gris confess to the alleged crimes that had ignited this deadly confrontation. When Le Gris maintained his innocence, Carrouges, fueled by rage and desperation, drove his dagger

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into Le Gris's throat, delivering a fatal blow.

Aftermath of the Duel

Victorious, albeit battered and weary, Carrouges acknowledged the crowd's cheers and the king's presence, performing the traditional gesture of triumph. He then accompanied his wife, Marguerite, to the Cathedral of Notre-Dame, where they offered thanks for their deliverance from the fears that haunted their lives.

The Fate of Jacques Le Gris

In a stark contrast to Carrouges' glory, the body of Le Gris faced a disgraceful fate. It was dragged to Montfaucon, a site of public humiliation for executed criminals, serving as a grim testament to his downfall. Renowned chronicler Jean Froissart noted the poetic justice in this spectacle, reflecting on the harsh reality of fate that dictated the fortunes of men.

Conclusion

This chapter captures the brutal essence of medieval combat, exploring themes of honor, justice, and the stark realities that accompany such intense rivalry. The feverish duel between Carrouges and Le Gris serves as a profound commentary on the complexities of human conflict, where valor



and ruthlessness are often inseparable.

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Chapter 10 Summary: CONVENT AND CRUSADE

Summary of Chapter 10: Convent and Crusade

In the aftermath of the intense duel between Jean de Carrouges and Jacques Le Gris, Carrouges emerged victorious but found himself grappling with a complex mix of rewards and lingering grievances. His triumph was acknowledged with a royal pension and a financial reward of 6,000 livres from the Parlement of Paris. Despite the accolades and newfound fame, Carrouges felt unfulfilled, particularly regarding the fief of Aunou-le-Faucon, which was unjustly claimed by Count Pierre of Alençon after Le Gris's death.

Determined to reclaim his rightful inheritance, linked to his marriage with Marguerite, Carrouges embarked on protracted legal battles. Unfortunately, by 1389, a court ruling deemed that Aunou-le-Faucon belonged permanently to Count Pierre, leaving Carrouges frustrated and feeling his quest for vengeance was incomplete.

Marguerite's perspective added another layer to the narrative. Having endured the trauma of her assault and the subsequent public spectacle of the duel, her focus shifted towards her own healing and the well-being of their

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son, Robert, who had been born shortly before the dueling saga unfolded. This shifting dynamic complicated her feelings as the struggle for land paled in comparison to her personal recovery.

Despite his loss at Aunou-le-Faucon, Carrouges experienced a rise in social stature. His victory proved advantageous as he gained recognition at the royal court, leading to appointments and a role in a military mission aimed at assessing the threat posed by advancing Ottoman forces in Eastern Europe.

The chapter then pivots to a broader political landscape, featuring King Charles, who was embroiled in a military campaign in 1392 against a noble involved in an assassination plot against the constable of France. During this operation, the king experienced the onset of madness, exacerbated by the stress of the moment. His violent outburst against his own men marked a troubling turn in his mental stability, which would complicate governance throughout the realm.

In 1396, Carrouges answered the call to join a Crusade against the Ottomans, culminating in the catastrophic Battle of Nicopolis. Initial successes in capturing surrounding towns gave way to chaos, fueled by a reckless early charge led by the Count of Eu, which resulted in severe losses for the crusaders. Much of Carrouges's fate remained uncertain after this brutal encounter, though historical accounts suggest he likely perished in battle.

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The consequences of both the duel and the disastrous Crusade would resonate deeply in Marguerite's life. Though she retained control over her estates, the death of her husband left her isolated and laden with the weight of their struggles. The chapter concludes by reflecting on the tragic legacies of Marguerite and Le Gris, whose stories overshadow the nuances of their lives and the societal forces at play.

Finally, the chapter addresses the decline of judicial duels as a practice within the legal system, highlighting the duel between Carrouges and Le Gris as the last officially sanctioned event by the Parlement of Paris. This shift signifies a transformation in societal values regarding honor and justice, marking the end of an era.

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