

# The last duel by eric jager essay



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

In the story *The Last Duel* by Eric Jager, fourteenth century in medieval France, a knight by the name of Jean de Carrouges challenges a squire, Jacques Le Gris, to a duel. The reason for this trial by combat, a court-ordered duel intended by fate of God to determine the truth, was to seek vengeance for the sake of his own honor. The wife of Jean Carrouges was the “young, beautiful, good, sensible, and modest” Marguerite. She was expected to maintain a ladylike mannerism and remain loyal to her husband.

When the couple traveled to Capomensil to visit Carrouges mother-in-law Marguerite stayed under her watch while Carrouges set out on a journey in desperate need of cash. While away on his journey Marguerite claims to have been raped by the knight's old friend and squire Jacques Le Gris, and given the information throughout the story I believe it was true. To demonstrate my theory why Le Gris did brutally rape Marguerite I will take evidence from the historical material and explain my perception on this true story of the “duel to end all duels”.

The beginning of the story introduces the characters, discussing their backgrounds and family history. The two men that participate in mortal combat were once friends, and now enemies due to jealousy, envy, and success. Jean de Carrouges was born into a family line of blood and violence, but from this blood “sprang a line of fierce warriors”. Jean's rank of nobility started as a squire, but after returning from a six month French military expedition to Scotland, the only real prize he had to show was his new rank as a knight.

Before he left on this expedition he set a quest to find a wife, and that's when he met and married an heiress named Marguerite. The young bride was well-bred, beautiful and loyal, but her only flaw was growing up “ a traitor's daughter”. Her father, Robert de Thibouville, was a Norman knight who was known for betraying the kings of France. This could have been threatening for Carrouges and his relationship with Count Pierre of Alencon, a rich and powerful baron in France.

Jean joined the barons court along with his old friend Jacques Le Gris, a squire and named one of Count Pierre's chamberlains and close with Pierre. Le Gris' relationship with the count gave him an advantage throughout the story starting with being given a gift of Aunou-le-Faucon, which is what sparked jealousy and envy from Carrouges. In late 1384 Carrouges received an invitation from an old friend Jean Crespin who was celebrating the birth of his newborn son.

Both Jean Carrouges and his wife Marguerite attended the celebration, and this is where Marguerite and Jacques Le Gris met for the first time, and only this one occasion. The jealousy that arose in Carrouges was well known amongst everyone in the crowd, aware of his resentful behavior towards Jacques they wondered what would happen between the two quarreling friends. Carrouges was known as a man who could hold a serious grudge, but the two set aside their differences and put the past behind them.

At this moment, after greeting and embracing, Jean told his wife to kiss Le Gris as a sign of renewed peace and friendship. This gesture Jean would later regret in the future because the greeting between Marguerite and Jacques,

and the kiss, could be what initially sparked the squire's interest in the knight's beautiful wife. I took this part of the story as a foreshadowing of Marguerite's rape, and who had attacked her on that lonely night in Capomesnil. When Jean Carrouges departed on his expedition to Scotland, where he earned his rank as a knight, he left his wife under strict watch.

He also left Marguerite under strict watch with his mother, Nicole de Carrouges, while he embarked on a journey to Paris. It was clear Jean didn't want to risk leaving his wife alone in fear of her going behind his back. If she was under such strict watch, how is it possible that Jacques could have raped Marguerite? This is where the Le Gris' obsession for Marguerite comes into play, he had this attack well planned before he decided to act. It wasn't possible for him to succeed in this crime alone, so he had to have had help from someone.

His companion in this attack was a squire by the name of Adam Louvel, who Jacques secretly summoned after he learned of Carrouges' plan to visit Paris. Louvel served under Carrouges in the Cotentin campaign and actually knew him well. Ironically Louvel had a house in Capomesnil, where Marguerite was staying with her mother-in-law. It is very possible that since Le Gris knew Carrouges was leaving on a journey he could have traveled to Capomesnil and stayed with Louvel until his opportunity arose when Nicole de Carrouges left the house for a short amount of time to handle business in Saint-Pierre.

This is where my suspicions of Le Gris having everything planned grew because he must have known Nicole was called away to a town six miles away, and accordingly planned and timed when he would enter the home,

how long it would take to complete the brutal attack, and enough time to leave and form an alibi. Jacques Le Gris was established as a man who was known for seducing women. It was rumored his approach to Marguerite was an offer of money for sex, but she did not care for his money and wouldn't "submit herself to his will".

This is when the encounter became physical because Le Gris was going to get what he wanted whether she liked it or not. For a woman, Marguerite fought long and strong, but with the muscle between a man and his accomplice it wasn't easy for her. She even cried for help, but supposedly nobody was around or nobody wanted to respond to her urgent cries. After the violation Le Gris threatened the weeping Marguerite to keep quiet, and tossed a bag of coins beside her. She let him know she didn't want his money, she wanted justice.

And she wouldn't keep quiet for too long. Le Gris counted on Marguerite's old family disgrace as a guarantee that she would remain silent about this fresh shame". She only kept silent until the return of her husband. Jean returned from Paris receiving bad news from his wife of Le Gris brutally attacking and raping her, and also that she was pregnant. After five years of being married they weren't able to conceive a child, and now after the rape Marguerite was pregnant. Who was the father of this child? Instantly I had known it was the child of Jacques Le Gris because this couldn't have been a coincidence.

In the book there was a mentioning of a theory of reproduction, based on teachings of Galen, that in order for a female seed to conceive with a male seed, the female has to orgasm, meaning " woman could not possibly

conceive is she did not participate”. This theory is complete stupidity and close minded thinking, and probably ruined many cases in rape where the woman became impregnated by her attacker. After learning of the attack Jean summoned Jacques to trial, and was stretched out for a long period of time. Basically throughout all that time Jean and Jacques awaited whether or not they would be able to settle this accusation through a trial by combat, a court-ordered duel intended by fate of God to determine who of the two men were telling the truth. If Carrouges wins the combat, by either killing the squire or forcing him to admit to his crime, it will prove their accusations to be true and Jacques would be exposed as the criminal that he was. But if Carrouges was to lose the battle, he would be declared as a liar and killed, and Marguerite would be sentenced to burn at the stake for falsely accusing an innocent man.

After many months of waiting a decision was made, and the mortal combat was scheduled to be fought at Saint-Martin-des-Champs, a monestary in Paris that had a special field for combat. It had plenty of space to hold thousands of spectators, and the day of the fight you can guarantee that space was completely filled, even over-flowing with spectators. People watching were not allowed to cheer, or make any noise while the two men were in combat, or they would suffer consequences.

There was a lot of violence and brutality during these times and this duel was full of it. Before the battle begins there are many rituals to be followed; identifying who they were, stating their charges, presenting their scrolls, getting their weapons examined, learning the rules of combat, and most

importantly solemnly swearing to three great oaths. The person sinfully swearing under these important oaths would hopefully be exposed to their lies under the fate of God in this combat, giving the victim justice they deserve.

Thankfully the outcome to this battle worked in the favor of the honest accusers Jean and Marguerite, and Jacques Le Gris was killed in combat by a knife through his throat, Carrouges first giving him the chance to admit to his crime. Im not sure if all battles worked in the honest accusers favor, but I'm happy that today we don't determine who is right and who is wrong by battle, and instead by evidence. Today some people don't get the justice they deserve which isn't fair, but life is not always fair.

In the case of Jean de Carrouges and his wife Marguerite, justice was served as I had hoped it would. The pain of a woman suffering from an attack so brutal isn't easy in itself, but seeing the disgusting criminal not get away with it like he had expected, would help me overcome that pain and suffering slowly but surely. After reading The Last Duel by Eric Jager I do believe that Jacques Le Gris got what he deserved for what he had done to Marguerite, and " the squires ultimate fall thus embodies a justice both poetic and real".