

GASPARD LEBLANC

A slightly shabby but otherwise nondescript fellow in his 20s – evidently one of the lower social orders, despite the rapier he sometimes wears. His accent and style also mark him down clearly as a native of Araterre.

Equipment

Weapons: 2 Daggers; Heavy Cloak; Large Knife; Rapier.

Armour: Leather Jacket; Cloth Gloves; Boots.

Carried: Pouch; Personal Basics; \$210 cash.

History

You were born in a town a little way down the coast from Sauvons – not in the gutter, despite what some people think, but in a slum there’s no denying. But from the age when you learned how the world works, you decided that you could do better for yourself. You could have more fun, learn to be as good as anyone in any way that mattered, and maybe eventually make your fortune.

It was the fire in your cheap lodging-house that made you act on your dreams – the fire that nearly killed you. You still get the shakes remembering how long it took to get through that small window; the drop down to the ground hurt, but with those flames at your back, well, you weren’t waiting around. You hate fire . . . but you took that one as a hint from fate. You moved up to the big city and went looking for work.

It turned out that there was quite a bit going for a lad with determination – provided he didn’t have too much *ambition*. All those fancy noble houses always need some poor sod to carry slop buckets and clean out the stables. You spent a couple of years in those sorts of jobs, learning to dislike some of your employers very much indeed, but also learning how to make yourself useful, before you found a boss worth working for. You picked up quite a bit, actually – in one house, you even heard some stuff about politics that’d make some people’s hair stand on end. (Why do people think that the navy didn’t do very much in that last war against the Muslims? It’s obvious when you know; the Cardiens were pulling the strings . . .)

Anyway, that last job . . . Monsieur Mathieu was getting on, and frankly down on his luck, so he couldn’t pay much cash; he wasn’t getting enough students in his fencing classes. But he was good at his trade, despite not being fashionable, and he agreed to pay you partly in *lessons*, especially once you showed him how quick and agile you were. It turned out that he enjoyed having a half-decent student for once, and you enjoyed learning.

Then, well – he died. Poor sod was getting old, and not living as well as he needed. Couldn’t afford a fancy healer. You nursed him until the end, and he left you his most valued possession; his sword. Which gets you some damn fool questions from the law sometimes, but to hell with them.

Mathieu turned you into a pretty fair swordsman, if you do say so yourself, and now you’re going to show the world. You’ve gone out to sell that skill. Of course, people don’t always recognize it straight away, so you’ve signed up as one of a band. You’re still getting used to this *professional* fighting stuff, but it’s not that complicated a business.

The Others

The band you’ve joined has a leader, naturally. Varlak’s crazy, that’s clear, a big mad barbarian from far up north where his brain got frozen solid. But he’s also shrewd in a fight, he can move that crowbar of a sword around, and he looks the part, which helps. Being a crazy Northman, he’s got a kind of hate-feud going with some wizard who killed his woman or something, but whatever. And in addition to more swords, he’s had the sense to hire a healer; Magda’s a sea-witch, good with a bunch of different spells. Annoying sometimes, and ugly as sin, but healing is healing.

When Varlak takes point, you mostly fight alongside Jared, a lad from Cardiel – a bumpkin, frankly, except that his daddy was evidently an elf. He’s touchy on that subject – strange kid all round, actually – but he can handle that bow very nicely. The last of Varlak’s little army is less use in a fight, though – a scholar type who says that he used to be at the University at Sauvons. A lot of students are real asses, frankly, but this Pierre fellow doesn’t seem too bad. He’s a big talker, of course, but he does help when you’re settling terms for a job and he knows a little bit of magic. He actually knows a little bit of smallsword technique, good for a skinny little runt, and he’s pleasant company. Knows his food, too. He does turn that charm on the womenfolk more often than’s always safe, though.