

## Just Before the Tournament - a chance encounter

Contributed by The Marquis d'Ascoyne  
 Sunday, 13 November 2005  
 Last Updated Monday, 14 November 2005

Now the Lady of the Lake knows your virtues and your weaknesses, however small they may be.

She does not always appear as an ethereal spirit, more beautiful than any human. She come in many forms as suits her purpose.

Just before his Last Tournament.

The Marquis chose not to wear any enchanted items, no armor, no sword or lance and no enchanted steed.

"Let us see what we can do without. There is nothing good of wearing magicked things in a simple tourney. It is a sacrilege to the Lady of the Lake and all that Bretonia stands for."

He wore well crafted mundane armor and he marveled that he could move as freely as he did. He walked out into the paddock and saw that AndreaLyn had provided him his Great Chair to rest until he was called. A small pastry box rested on one massive arm of his chair. He saw many of his old comrades there, but none paid him attention.

He waved to Earl Cadfael, but got no response. He beckoned to Sir Hillier, but that worthy turned abruptly into a tent without seeing the gesture. Sir le Courageaux did not recognize him as well.

"Hmphhhh", he said to himself, "Might as well be invisible" He put his feet up on a log and moved until he was as comfortable as an old cat before a fire.

He was aware of someone noticing him. He could see the observer easily out of the corner of his eye. It was female and dressed sweetly and about eight years of age. She approached tentatively and quietly. He heard her clear her throat and ask a question.

"Sirrah, art thee the famous Marquis d'Ascoyne who trains noble knights in the Southern hinterlands?"

What a smart child he thought to himself, so articulate. He turned to face her directly and sat up.

"You must be he, truly you must." She clasped her hands together under her chin in Joy. "Oh good knight I have spent all my life waiting to meet you for I have a concern"

All her life? A lifetime is predicated on time whether eight or 60 years of age. The Marquis d'Ascoyne stood up and offered his young guest his chair while he sat upon the log. The child managed a wonderful curtsy and sat, most ladylike, upon his Great Chair.

She explained she was sorely vexed that some of the knights were seeking prizes or treasures rather than the true meaning of the Tournament, which was fellowship. He offered her some tarts and she politely declined saying she was not quite hungry just yet.

"Ooooooh, it makes me irritated that some knights do not understand what it is to be Bretonnian" and she made a fierce, yet lovable face of righteous anger,

The Marquis felt his body chill listening to the wee one. He eyed her coldly for a moment but quickly regained his loving grandfatherly stare at the young guest. He leaned forward and said confidentially "I share thy concerns young mistress and will champion them in all rounds of Tournament" He leaned back and nodded with a loving smile.

It was at this point that three knights, Barons Robespierre, Latreque and LaMortt interrupted the conversation announcing that LaMortt looked forward to defeating the old warrior and inquired if he wished to wager anything of value on the contests. Before he could make reply, the little girl turned to face the three.

The Marquis noticed two things, first when she looked at the trio they stopped talking and muttering and stood as if carved from stone. Secondly their seemed to be a blue white glow emanating from her eyes.

&ldquo;Begone varlets and clean your stables!&rdquo; The voice was commanding and yet so young., The trio turned quickly and quick stepped towards the stables. She turned to address d&rsquo;Ascoyne, whose heart was thumping like a muffled tocsin.

&ldquo;My Lady&rdquo;- and she got off the chair and put her hand on his. His heart calmed immediately. She looked at him and smiled.

&ldquo;Do what you must to teach these loggerheads humility, good and faithful knight.&rdquo; She scampered off as any young girl of eight until she was gone from his sight.

He returned to his chair and thought about what had transpired when he noticed the tart tin was gone. He laughed to himself, &ldquo;Well, tis good she regained her appetite.&rdquo; He was asleep within moments.