

LOTT 01 - Errantry

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LOTT. A simple abbreviation. The name eventually used for "Lord of the Tournament" because it was such a hard name to type out in full. But even so, he has had a colourful history.

The life of LOTT started out when I one day decided to step into Earl Cadfael's Bretonnian Court, and needed a way to identify myself. I picked the name out of the air, and it stuck. From that point, LOTT existed, and was uniquely me. My first attempt at Fantasy story writing was so bad that I dare not even produce it now. But Sir Thomas de Bastonne (I think) very kindly translated the Beginning and errantry quest of Lott into a viable story. It is still known as LOTT's errantry quest.

The wild heath is mostly a quiet place, rocky uneven ground broken by small groves of stunted trees. The silence broken only occasionally by the distant call of birds of prey as they watch the bracken for their next meal. Few humans dwell here for fear of the elves in the forest beyond. The tall stones jutting up towards the sky remind them that this borderland is guarded by magic as much as by the watchers in the woods. Yet despite the desolation and danger there is a small town to be found here. Outcasts and brigands are the only residents, but infighting is rare. This is a place of refuge for them and for the travellers who stop here for the night. The town is called Setta, and it is ideally located on the road from Parravon to Quenelles. Tradition in Bretonnia calls for a knight of the realm to be constable over every village and town, Setta is no exception. The town is watched over by Sir Thasen de Quenelles. He inherited the lordship after Sir Montgomery met with death in the forest of Loren. It is said that he killed an elf by mistake, but there was no mistaking the dozen arrows that bristled from his body when his squires returned it for burial in the crypt of the local chapel.

Sir Thasen was one of five Knights Errant who placed honourably in a tournament, held to narrow the applicants, for Knighthood of Setta. The five Knights were sent on an errand to recover the holy flail of Setta, a relic from the local chapel. As they set out, each of the Knights Errant bragged of his martial prowess and they set wagers as to who could bag the most goblin heads while searching for the flail. The flail was thought to have been taken by a renegade dwarf who had passed through the town two years past. He had been travelling from the Massif Orcal to the vaults to search out an ancient dwarven hold, which he bragged would make him very rich. He had flaunted a map that he claimed to have taken from the body of a black Orc he had killed with his bare hands. His loud boasting and foul stench had made him memorable to the villagers when it was discovered that the flail had been stolen from the chapel.

The Errantry Knights travelled down the road to Quenelles and from there took a barge across the river Brienne and up the tributary that flowed from the Vaults. When the water became too shallow for the barge they continued on foot into the mountains. It was a long journey and a dangerous one. Goblins were encountered the first night that they camped in the rocky outcroppings of the Vaults. The greenskins came on them quietly just after the sun had set and their evening meal was finished. A former spearman from Quenelles, named Ricold, was the first to spot the goblins as they slunk into the camp. With a yell to his comrades he drew his sword and charged the nearest goblin. He had felled three of them by the time the other young men had roused themselves and taken sword and shield to dive into the fray. Thanks to the sharp eyes and quick blade of Ricold, there was no loss of life among the Knights Errant. The head count of goblins numbered sixteen and there were claims of twenty more mortal strikes against those that had run away.

Fighting goblins became a routine part of each day as the party travelled the narrow trails of the mountains. After two weeks they stopped counting heads, no one in Setta was going to believe them anyway, and there was no way they could carry the rotting skulls of 200 goblins back down the mountain. Eventually the greenskins must have tired of the futile raids, or perhaps it was a sign that they were close to the dwarven settlement that the goblins stopped showing up to be slaughtered. The supplies they had brought were gone and small game was becoming scarce when at last the ancient dwarven hold came into view. They stood at the top of a ridge and looked into a gorge lined with rocks, carved with runes and the effigies of dwarves. At the far end stood two mighty pillars and between them a gaping black hole led into the side of a cliff. Weary and sore they trudged the final distance and made camp at the entrance to the ancient hold.

At first light, they took torches and swords then entered the dwarven hold. They startled a family of bats who had been roosting in the first cavern. The stone floor was worn smooth but the dust that coated it appeared undisturbed. Doubt and depression were starting to set in when a distant echo reached their ears. It could have been a shout, a battle cry or a horn, but while the nature of the sound was unclear the direction it came from was plain. The five bold knights charged into a narrow passage at the back of the cavern and followed the sounds down into the depths. As they ran the noise grew in volume, war cries and the clashing of weapons. A battle was raging beneath them. They came upon it suddenly as they rounded a corner after the long descent. Many Orcs beset a small party of dwarves standing with their backs together. The knights stopped and watched for a moment admiring the way the dwarves dispatched one after another of the green monsters that towered over them. Thasen would recall later how he had never before or since seen axes whirling so quickly, deftly slicing limbs from torsos with the ease of a master butcher. But the dwarves were outnumbered so badly that they must soon be overcome by sheer body mass of the ferocious Orcs, who ignored their losses and kept on coming. With a cry for the Lady and the fair land of Bretonnia, the young knights dove into the fray. Soon heads fell from green shoulders onto the piles of lost limbs as the blades of the knights found fresh targets. Surprised by the newcomers the Orcs began to fall back. Soon the dwarves and the knights were aligned and in pursuit of the retreating greenskins. Still the Orcs had an advantage in numbers and toughness; they quickly regrouped and came back with a vengeance. The fight raged on for two hours or more and the tunnel floors were slick from the blood and the gore.

When at last the last Orc fell dead to the ground only two dwarves were standing and three of the knights. Ricold and Thesan had many cuts and scratches but for all of the blood their wounds were superficial. Kallen the third of the surviving three leaned on his sword and held closed his blood soaked tunic. He had been pierced through his gut by a wicked Orc blade and he was gasping for air. Without a word the two dwarves each took a side and began to carry Kallen up a tunnel towards the light. Ricold and Thesan followed them until they came out into the open at a small gate to the outside. The dwarves lay the wounded knight beside a small spring that bubbled with clean water. They spoke with deep voices in their native tongue then turned to Ricold who had knelt beside them. "Your companion is dying, there is naught to be done. You have come unexpected to our aid and in our own home we owe a great debt to you and your companions, sir knight." Thesan knelt beside Ricold and together they bowed their heads and prayed. Kallen's last words were spoken between rasps. "At least... I shall ... be ... with ... the Lady." The dwarves were brothers, Gunther and Gruedid, they had met the rascal with the map and the flail and had relieved him of both before sending him bound hand and foot in a barrel down river into the border princes. They gave Ricold and Thesan the holy flail as a token of their gratitude for coming to their aid. And they swore an oath that their axes would draw blood for a cause of the knights' choosing. Then they fed the knights a great meal within their ancestral hall replete with the finest dwarven ale. Afterwards Gunther showed the knights to a smaller cavern where a fine hearth was laid with wood and clean straw was gathered in corners under thick quilts.

The morning found Thesan and Ricold well rested after the nights good lodging. The two dwarves replenished their supplies before saluting them with ancient blessings and sending them back down the mountains to Quenelles. As they travelled homewards the two knights came to an agreement. Thesan would be made lord of Setta and Ricold would be custodian of the Holy Flail. Thesan vowed that Ricold would always be a welcome guest in his castle and Ricold declared that he would return again to Setta only when he had gained a worthy title.