

## LOTT 02 - The Joust

Thursday, 04 May 2006

Last Updated Friday, 05 May 2006

The second story of LOTT has him as a secondary character to a primary character called Asathen. Here also the first encounter with the lovely Asa was made. Later Asa married Ricold, but I have not written that story, and doubt I will. Asa however is married to Ricold by the time he rescues her in the next story.

Asathen woke up. In this fact alone there was no major event, except that it happened. And that it happened would not had been noticeable except that no one present expected it to happen. And that is why it was so significant. But we are digressing. When Asathen woke up, he immediately regretted it. He had a stinging headache, and no lack of pain anywhere else, except his left arm, where there was no feeling at all. He lay there silently for a moment, in the dark, before realising he still had his helmet on. Consequently he decided to take it off. There is a knack to taking helmets off at the best of times, but trying it when you only have feeling in one hand is near impossible. As soon as his right hand moved it was caught, and laid back down gently but firmly. The hand that had touched his was so smooth, and so soft that Asathen had no intention of letting it go to take another try at his helmet.

He woke up. A voice said quietly. Asathen could not see the source of the voice because he could not turn his head and he could only see the pale yellow material of the tent, subtly backlit by a rising or setting sun. He could hear footsteps approaching now, and then he saw the face of and heard the voice of his best friend, Ricold, looking as though he had just come in a joust, asking if he was all right. "Do I look alright?" Was what Asathen tried to say. But he choked on something in his mouth, and only coughing was heard. "Hey, still and quiet!" Came the quiet soothing voice of Ricold. Asathen must communicate, small movements only. Asathen wondered how this might be achieved. His head was held solid, it would not move at all. He could not feel his left arm, and he was still holding the soft hand in his other, and he did not think communication with two very painful legs would work, especially under bedding, so he lay still and listened.

Presuming you want a run through of the last few days, you shall have it. Started Ricold "You don't really get me but I want to take some of this equipment off first." Asathen could see Ricold had a shield, a practice sword, and his staff on him. It all started three days ago, when that large guy, what was his name? Hmmm! Vannick! Yes. It was when Vannick challenged you to a joust. He was not exactly slim or agile, and you thought you could beat him easily. So you accepted the fight, and it was scheduled for that after noon. We decided to sit and watch you, especially knowing how proud you are of your jousts, and we had prime seats for the show. \*We\* are Asa, Montgomery, and myself. And so, the joust began. You scored a massive blow with your first pass, but somehow Vannick stayed on his horse. On the second pass something went wrong. Your shield arm dropped as you approached him. He hit you heavily and squarely on your left shoulder, and you were thrown to the ground. You got up, staggered, and he approached you with his sword drawn. You drew your axe in reply, but from the audience you looked like you did it in a tone that suggested an easy win. You lined up swords with one another, and started to circle. He swung out, and you blocked it easily. You returned the blow, and he just deflected it. You both circled, almost all the way around. Then you hit him, and he retaliated, his sword solidly hitting your hip, and then again that hit your gauntlet, and again hitting your head, and again, and again. You stood up well against him, but after about six or seven shots you just collapsed. We immediately jumped the barrier, and came to your side. You had passed out by this point, and, even as we removed the quick, easy pieces of armour, blood started to seep from the bottom of your helmet. Asa went off to find a mage, and you were brought back here. You have severe bruising all over, a badly damaged left arm, and a split skull. The mage did all she could, and Asa, Montgomery and I sat here and waited.

Talk about worrying us, that was two days ago! But we were warned it might take you a while to wake up. Your skull is still very tender, and you are bruised all over. Asathen could feel the last one plainly, but he wanted to know something still. "Who's Asa?" he whispered. It was a quiet whisper, but he opened his mouth a second before, so Ricold knew coming. "Maybe I should let her introduce herself?" replied Ricold. And then Asathen heard another voice, and it was not one he recognised. It was soft, and sweet, but it was more than that. It was the kind of voice that lullabies are made of, and the sort that are made of silk. It was a female voice, and it was quiet. But Asathen got the idea that it was probably always like that, and it was such a nice voice that it made no difference to him. "I am Asa" was all it initially said. Surprised him, the hand let go of his, followed by a quick shuffling of legs, then a face appeared in his vision. In Asathen's opinion, any descriptions of this face would be inadequate. For it was a small, elven face, and was made of pure beauty. "I am Asa," said the golden voice again, and suddenly Asathen realised it was she, the face, the hand, this Asa, that was speaking. Asathen did not hear the rest of what Asa said. For he was listening to the voice, and looking up into her face, and nothing else mattered. It was as though the words did not exist, as though his pain did not exist, it was just the voice and the face of Asa. And then it faded. Not fast, very slowly, but it faded. And of that day Asathen remembered no more.

When Asathen re-awakened, all he could see was the tent roof. Looking at the light levels, Asathen reckoned it must be nearly mid-day. He groaned because he could not stand being so dependant like this. He expected some sort of a response from his groan, either from Asa, Ricold, or Montgomery. But nothing happened. All was silent. He groaned again, he did not think he was up for speech. There was still no response. Asathen thought about trying to get up, but he

suspected that the helmet was tied down, and he did not wish to increase his headache by fighting against what was obviously not going to move. So he tried to make his right arm move. Slowly and painfully he managed to lift his lower right arm, then the whole arm, and get it into his vision. His wrist was bandaged, but his hand seemed not to be in too bad a condition. He felt around his helmet, and realised it was not \*his\* helmet at all. It was one of the helmets that are designed for the beginners, and had a quick release catch on it somewhere, if Asathen remembered correctly. So, he slowly felt his way across the outside of the helmet to where he thought the catch would be. He was right, and he started to try and release the catch. "Stop that! You do yourself serious harm like that!" Asa suddenly said. Asathen wondered why she had not spoken before, but when he heard several pairs of feet approaching, he suspected they had been out the tent, and just returned. "You should be lucky you did not get that open, in your condition." She then slowly and gently returned Asathen's arm to his side.

"You hungry old chap?" came the low boom of Montgomery's voice. "You haven't eaten in a few days, and you know that fight you promised me." This was going back several years, but Asathen could tell Montgomery was just trying to be friendly. "Don't try to speak, groan for yes, grunt for no." Asathen thought about this for a minute. Yes he was hungry, he wasn't sure he could keep any food down, and he definitely didn't want to throw up in front of Asa. So he grunted. Montgomery suggested a drink. He groaned. He'd only just realised how dry he felt inside, and he was relatively confident he could keep a bit of liquid down. "Close the back of your mouth so you don't choke." The low rumble of Montgomery and he was ready to swallow. Asathen then felt the splash of some liquid being pored out, and when it was dropped in his mouth he recognised the taste of his own home whiskey. As this happened, he could also see the unmistakable face of a wizard, giving him his drink. He allowed the whiskey to moisten his mouth for a second, then swallowed. He opened his mouth for some more. "No, no, we don't want you either drunk or throwing up." This voice was Asa's. "If you want it will have to be water." Asathen shut his mouth. Water was fine normally, but the water at these events tended to be stored, and had an old stale taste to it. Most of the knights went to the nearest spring instead. The whiskey had strengthened Asathen from the inside, and so he tried to speak. "Talk to me Asa, how am I?" it was only a whisper, but it was clear enough in the complete silence.

"That blow to your skull was not a normal blow," Asa started. "Vannick had an illegal, magical blade. It was cursed, and the officials think it was cursed just before the match. We do not think Vannick knew his sword was cursed. He holds too much honour, and too high a status to risk bringing a magical weapon to a small-scale match. We, well the officials anyway, are still not sure who cursed the blade, but they suspect it was either to harm you, or to harm Vannick. Anyway, when Vannick hit you over the head, one of the mages saw the sword drawing magical energy, and discharging it as it hit you. The combined force of Vannick's strength, and the magic in the sword caused your head to split, even through your helm. Due to the magical energy of the blow, none of the mages here can heal it. The best they could do was to put a helmet on you, and seal it so nothing can get into the hole." Asathen knew immediately what this meant. He was going to die, and was dying because of an illegal blade in the joust. Asa must have seen this realisation on Asathen's face, because she stopped. "Talk to me until I die," said Asathen. "I want yours to be the last voice I hear." And so Asa talked, but not after Ricold, and Montgomery, paid their respects to Asathen, both as a man, and as a knight. They then both together gave him a prayer so he might find the happiness in death. Asathen listened, and watched. Asa talked about many things, her younger life, and her travels. After a while, Asathen shut his eyes, quite content to just listen. Asa must have taken this as him slipping away, as she next said "You know, that you are one of the bravest men I know. I love you." Asathen summoned the energy to make three last words "I never knew" the last thing he felt was before all feeling left him. "And so it was that Asathen died. Asathen had had a very nice career though, Montgomery had set his errantry, and he had gone on his errantry quest with Ricold. They were the only two of the five to survive, and Ricold had forfeited the right to the land in order to go adventuring. And so Asathen had gained a nice patch of land, a town called Setta, on the edge of Loren. It had a population of 5000 in the actual town, of which about 500 were elven. It had a lot of land, but a lot of it was forested, and much was unpopulated. Asathen had not been completely unprepared for his death though. He, like all Knights of the land, had prepared what was to be done in the case of his death, either accidental, murder, or in competition or war. Asathen had been good friends with Ricold since their errantry quest together, and Ricold had kept the town on the map, as well as providing Asathen and the town with some very nice equipment and money. Due to this, Asathen had declared that upon his death all his belongings and rights went to Ricold, including the title "Lord of Setta". On the possibility of Ricold not being alive long enough to write his own will of the land. It was declared that all the rights and belongings of both men would go to the knight of the major grail shrine outside Setta. Ricold knew about, and stood by the agreement, and when Asathen had died, Ricold knew his title was now "Ricold, Lord of the Tournament, Lord of Setta, Friend of Athel Loren", Boy was that a big title. And so it was decreed that after the tournament that killed Asathen, Ricold would return to Setta. Montgomery would, on the other hand, investigate who killed Asathen and why. Asa could go and do as she pleased. As it was, Asa pleased to help Montgomery for the moment, but would go with Ricold when he left. "What do you mean, I'm not allowed!" Bellowed Montgomery "I have been blessed by the Lady, and have drunk from the grail, and you are telling me I'm not allowed! This is ludicrous!" "I also must agree here, I see is no reason why we should not be allowed to investigate the death of our good friend." This was the calm collected voice of Asa. "You may do as you please around tournament grounds providing you leave official business to officials, and contests to the fighters. Now if you excuse me, I have work to do." The official speaking then sat down, behind her desk and started working. Asa and Montgomery left her tent, picking up their weapons from the guards on the way out. "I never worked this out," Asa commented to Montgomery, "is higher in the pecking order, a grail knight, or a sorceress?" "The grail knight usually, but this is a tournament, and all competitors must obey the rules of the owner of the tournament, even Grail knights. As she was enforcing the wishes of

the owner, even I must follow her rules. I donâ€™t have to like them, and I can argue, but I must live with the conclusion.â€” I presume that only stands for knights and entrants?â€” No, it stands for those visiting as well. Actually I believe it stands for everyone on the designated land.â€” As they were talking, Asa and Montgomery had been walking down towards the visitorâ€™s tents. The approached Ricoldâ€™s tent, and knocked on the post Ricold had by the door exactly for that purpose. There was no answer. Asa stuck her head round the flap, and came back out with a scrap of paper.â€” Ricold says heâ€™s in a fight now,â€” Asa read out, â€œcould we meet him outside the secondary arena when it is over. He will wait only 10 minutes after it finishes.â€” I suspect we just missed him then, so far as I know the last one finished as we entered the officials tenting areaâ€” reasoned Montgomery â€œif we are quick, we might see the whole fight.â€” And so Asa and Montgomery started walk towards the arenas. They were not very far off from the competitor tents, and they reached then quite quickly. The approached, and entered the stalls. It was a Black Knight â€œfriendlyâ€”. The Black Knight had challenged Ricold, because of Ricoldâ€™s notoriety. Both Montgomery and Ricold knew this Black Knight out of the arena, and, without letting on that he knew this, Ricold was quite happy to fight him for his enjoyment, and for the enjoyment of those watching.â€” The fight was going well for Ricold; he had driven the Black Knight off his horse, and was taking a final pass before dismounting. Ricold set his horse quite fast, and caught the Black Knight squarely with his practice sword. Asa wandered over to the mount stand.â€” Well, I see you got the message thenâ€” said the hollow voice of Ricold through his helm â€œPass me my drink will you, thanksâ€” As Asa obliged â€œI need to talk to you two after this, Iâ€™ve found something out about the late Lord Vannick was lost for words, and Ricold strode off before any came to her mind. She returned to Montgomery, and relayed what Ricold had said.â€” The \*late\* Lord Vannick?â€” Queried Montgomery, â€œI thought he had been in a fight this morning.â€” finished watching the fight, with Ricold scoring a well earned win. He helped the Black Knight up, and they both gained cheers from the audience. Ricold returned to his stand, and both Asa and Montgomery helped Ricold remove his armour, and carry it back to his tent. Once inside, Ricold told them what he had found.â€” Vannick, as you may or may not know, was in a fight this morning. It was his semi final fight, and he, apparently, was looking forward to it. Anyway, he entered the arena, and was booed by the crowd. His opponent simply walked up to him, as he was mounting, and knifed him in the groin. Several times. He then stabbed himself in the chest. Neither survived. The final has now been postponed for 3 days as officials investigate.â€” Thatâ€™s usefulâ€” Montgomery was being sarcastic â€œThree knights dead, over all, and going to do is \*investigate\*?!?â€” Thereâ€™s moreâ€” Ricold claimed solemnly â€œThere was an attempt on my life also Montgomery, â€œHeads will roll for this!â€” â€œNot so hastyâ€” As always Asa was the one to calm Montgomery down â€œAs I said,â€” repeated Ricold â€œThere was an attempt on my life during that last match. The servant by my stand been bribed, and tried to poison my liquor. I smelt a rat, but I didnâ€™t see the culpritâ€”â€” That it?â€” Montgomery asked, Ricold nodded he continued, â€œWhy the hell did you \*not\* raise the alarm. There have been two deaths already, yours could have been a third!â€” Suddenly Asa asked, â€œWhatâ€™s the connection between you three?â€” â€œSorry?â€” Ricold thought, â€œOh, yes, the connection. Well Asathen and I are both from Setta, we did the same errantry quest (together) to hunt goblins and get back a magic flail, currently residing in The grail chapel in Setta. We were both in Montgomeryâ€™s local force before we became knights.â€” As for Vannick, I know nearly nothing about his past, recently heâ€™s been touring tournaments, rumour has it this was because he was thrown out by his local town for disgracing them, or something. Youâ€™d have to do more research on him.â€” Montgomery, pull your weight around here and see if you can accumulate some notes on Vannick. Someone around here must know him, try his servants; you have enough gold to get some good informationâ€”â€” Orâ€” Started Asa â€œWhat about the actual fights themselves?â€” â€œCould be anything down to style of belt,â€” exclaimed Ricold, sitting down hard on his fold up chair, which obligingly gave way, depositing him on the floor. â€œWeapons!â€”â€” What do you mean, weapons?â€” Asked Asa as she helped Ricold back to his feet.â€” How many you seen in the Joust? Four, five? Iâ€™ve not seen any more then that. But look, Asathen was wielding an axe when he died, I had an axe at my last fight, and I wouldnâ€™t be surprised if Vannick had an axe in the battle he died in.â€” So they are targeting people with axesâ€”?â€” Lord Brend!â€” Ricold grabbed his sword off the table, and ran out the tent. Asa caught quite quickly.â€” Where are you going?â€” she asked, â€œWho is Lord Brend? Do you know him?â€” Lord Brend is an old acquaintance of mine, we are going firstly to his tent to see if heâ€™s there, then an official tent, if heâ€™s not, to see if heâ€™s in a fight. I just hope weâ€™re not too lateâ€”â€” They approached the tent bearing Lord Brend's Coat of Arms. There was no one in. But there was a note stuck to the door, â€œgone for a friendly fight, can be found in arena 9â€”â€” Nice of him to tell usâ€” Ricold as they started towards arena 9. It was a small arena, used mainly for practice sword fights. Inside was the body of Lord Brend, fallen next his stand, his armour still on the stand waiting for him, his axe propped up against the side of the stand, with three arrows bristling out of him. Ricold threw up.â€” Attention all: the joust has been cancelled. No one is to leave the grounds without official permission. Everyone is requested to keep to his or her tent(s), and to keep a guard and lookout up while we investigate the recent deaths. No one is to wander about without good reason, and a note must be left telling someone where you have gone, if you really must go anywhere. These conditions are in effect from after the dinner in the great hall this evening. Thank you.â€” All fine and good if you have a retinue, but I on my own,â€” Bellowed Montgomery, â€œyou have one servant,â€” at Asa, â€œand only you has more people.â€” This time Ricold.â€” It does say keep to his/her \*tents\*,â€” Ricold stated flatly, â€œimplying if we let it be known, you two could pitch in a patch, Iâ€™m sure security would agree.â€” Canâ€™t hurt to ask,â€” said Asa, â€œI certainly would be much happier with your men around, Ricoldâ€”â€” First I suggest we go to dinnerâ€” Ricold said â€œFor we should be told more, and Iâ€™m h Ricold, Asa and Montgomery headed off to the great hall of Earl Gresham, who was organising the event. A great hall indeed it was, for it had no problems seating (not to mention feeding) all the knights from the tournament. Everyone was basically told that if they had no men, they should group up with someone who did have men, if anyone wanted the castle had some rooms, and would provide guards if needed, and that the investigation would hold everyone here for one week, in which time they were not to leave their plot without good reason, and certainly not the grounds.â€” And so it ended up later that night with Ricold, Asa, and Montgomery all in Ricoldâ€™s patch of land. They had a wait of a week; with very little they could do in the mean time. Several times someone came to them to ask them questions, which they all

answered truthfully. And they waited! And they waited! And they waited! After four days, an announcement was made that if they had found the culprit, he would be detained for a week, and if his innocence was not proved by then he would be hung. His name was Tesyn of Parravon. The joust will not be finished, and everyone was now free to come and go as they pleased. ----- So, Teslyn, I can't say I even know the name. But I suppose we should all be happy they caught him. Commented Ricold, after our three heroes had gathered following the announcement. Either of you know anything? Not a name I know either, said Montgomery, as Asa shook her head. But we are now free to go, and that is much more important. Ricold, As the senior knight of Setta I must return there, and await your arrival, when do you intend to return? With all haste, now we are not bound to this place. But we should be asking the most important person; Asa, what do you intend to do now? I, replied Asa, intend to follow you back to Setta. If what I have gathered is true, on the outskirts of Althel Loren, and has an Elven community anyway; I can see me fitting in very well there. But remember, I am neither a knight, nor a follower of chivalry. I can come and go as I please, and am not duty bound to anywhere. I cared greatly about Asathen, and I intend to find out what happened to him before I head to Setta. And so it was that Ricold and his tournament retinue left the Brionne valley, and along with Montgomery returned to the town of Setta