

LOTT 03 - The End of an Era

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LOTT's next outing was his last, but not because of his death. When I eventually abandoned playing Bretonnia at Warhammer, I actually abandoned the name of LOTT. At this point I wrote the story where some conniving people stripped LOTT of his title. The story left quite a few un-answered questions, and as of yet I know the answers but have not yet written them down.

There was a loud cheer from the crowd as Ricold knocked down his opponent with his sword. "With that, I declare you have won the joust!" called the judge. Ricold bowed, to another cheer. "Is there any man here who would still challenge my position as Lord of the Tournament?" These words, by Ricold, were purely ceremonious under the laws of chivalry. "Nay!" Cried the crowd. "Then I declare you may maintain your title as Lord of the Tournament until chivalry decides you must fight for it again." The judge was struggling against the noise of the crowd. "And you are all invited to feast in the castle tonight!" Ricold added. Another cheer. "But first I should thank Baron Titimus for allowing me to host this event on his land." The crowd applauded Titimus as Ricold sat down.

The end of another joust Ricold thought. It had been a long day. Baron Titimus held land near the southern border of Bretonnia, and Ricold had paid a fair amount of gold to have this nice situation for his joust, complete with food and support. This was also quite a fair way out of Ricold's usual lands. Although Ricold did not officially own any land at the moment, he normally held his tournaments near to either his home town of Setta, on the border with Loren, where he was always welcomed with open arms, or up near Parravon where Ricold was a member of the very nice court of Earl Cadfael, where he seemed to be spending more and more time. And so the officials started herding the crowd away, for there were many hours until evening, and there were plenty of events that the crowd could participate in still. Ricold trudged back to his tent, still in full armour. Let all see him victorious.

Just as he finished changing out of his armour, in his tent, a messenger arrived with a note. Ricold took the message, and looked at the seal. It was not a seal he did not think he had ever seen anything even similar before, although it was not exactly wrong. It did not bear a coat of arms, so was not Bretonnian, or a high Imperial family. Instead it simply had a fox head shape imprinted in it. Ricold heated his belt knife carefully, and gently cut the seal off whole, so he could exactly identify it should he see it again. Then he opened the actual letter. The writer introduced himself as Morsac, and the letter showed he knew quite a lot about Ricold. Morsac claimed that he knew the location of some troublesome commoners that had been creating troubles down in the south of Bretonnia, they had even tried to disrupt Ricold's joust, and he would give that information to Ricold if Ricold would meet him within the hour after high noon on the west border of the Barons land, and Ricold was not to bring anyone else with him for Morsac would be alone, he was a wanted criminal, and would share this information only if he could be sure not to be arrested.

This intrigued Ricold, but he was not stupid. So he gathered up a dozen of his best archers, and at high noon started to trip towards the Baron's west border. Ricold sent his archers out as scouts; they were not to shoot anyone unless they were attacked first. Ricold decided to wear a solid suit of chain mail, his trusty morning star, and rode out on Psias, Ricold's Pegasus. As Ricold walked into the woods, he heard several bow shots. He stopped, dismounted, waiting to hear for a response. "I thought I'd said 'alone'?" Came a voice. "No matter, I was not to be trusted either." The hard voice, not very loud, but very penetrating. "Shall we see which side won the archery contest?" A man stepped out from behind a thicket, he was tall, quite slender, and he had stepped out before he finished speaking to ensure Ricold knew the voice was his. "Well?" Ricold simply nodded. "All men cease shooting!" He called. "Hold your fire!" to his own archers "Come out here!" "Emerge from hiding, men!" The man called. "I don't think we have ourselves yet? I am Morsac, and you are coming with me." Ricold suddenly noticed a dark clad crossbowman behind a bush; he looked around, and found he was surrounded. "You can come peacefully, or we can shoot you down." "Never!" Shouted Ricold as he turned and drew his morning star. He got no further though, because as he turned, Morsac clubbed him over the head. Ricold fell unconscious to the ground.

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When Ricold awoke, he was in a dark room. His head hurt slightly, but not as much as he had expected. He sat up, and a quick inspection revealed his armour and morning star were missing. But he still felt like he was wearing his own clothes. The room was dark and not very big. He had been lying on a bed of straw that seemed to be reasonably clean. There was a metal door in one wall, which had no handle on the inside. In one corner, there was a peg, with a water skin hung on it. Ricold inspected and tasted the liquid before deciding it was probably plain water, and drank a few mouthfuls. Once he finished the door opened. A man with a big heavy club stood in the doorway. "Boss wants to see ya. Now."

The man lead Ricold along the corridor, up several flights of steps, out of a cave entrance into fresh air, and along to a tent. He pushed Ricold in. "Ah, Ricold!" Morsac greeted him "I'm sorry about the impromptu 'capture' at the moment. I think you would try to fight, and I cannot afford to lose any men at the moment. I will start by reassuring you on a few

facts. Firstly, I am not a criminal. I have not committed any crime that gets more than being banged up in the watchtower overnight. Secondly, your armour, flail and Pegasus are safe. None of my men have actually handled a Pegasus before, but I have, and a quick kick from your friend sorted them out. Anyway, he has been fed and watered. Thirdly, all your equipment from the joust is here as well, you should not need for much of your own equipment. Lastly, you are not a prisoner. Once I have finished talking with you here you are free to do as you please according to standard laws.

"But why did you bring me here in the first place?" Ricold queried. "You are being hunted. There is a group of people claiming to be from Couronne currently seeking you out with false documents for your capture, apparently signed by the King. As I said, these are false documents, but they are very good forgeries, and we have received word that they have already used them to forcibly search towns and castles for you. We do know why they want you, which is why I have been told to protect you. "Why do they want me?" "I told you that, I would be putting your life, my life, and this entire protection scheme in danger. You will have to make a leap of faith, that I am telling you the truth." Morsac paused here for Ricold to take in this information. "Actually, I can help you make that leap of faith, here I have a letter from Lord Montgomery, your mentor. I do not know what the letter says, for it was for you only, if you did not trust me. You can check the seal, it is still whole and untouched, and it bears Montgomery's coat of arms. Here."

Morsac handed Ricold the letter. Ricold stood and scrutinised the coat for a good few minutes, then checked it had not been tampered with. Satisfied, he snapped the seal, and opened the letter. It was in the same distinctive style of handwriting that Montgomery always used, but it looked like a very worried man had written it. Satisfied on the contents of the letter, Ricold folded it up, and tucked it in a pocket. Returning his attention to Morsac, Ricold asked him simply "Where did you come from?" Morsac had clearly not been expecting to be asked this, for he stumbled before he answered, "Well, I was from!" That is to say I used to live in! Bretonnian. I come from Quenelles." Ricold was as shocked by the answer as Morsac had been by the question, "You're Bretonnian, does that mean?" "Yes, I too was once a knight, no longer, I had my knighthood stripped from me many years ago." "You're saying that implying that I am no longer a knight?" "If you are found out to be here, or having been here, you will lose your knighthood. If you disappear from your home lands too long, you will lose your knighthood too." "Then I must return to Setta, they will be expecting me to return." "Only if you take protection with you." "What sort of protection?" "Take the Dark Assassins, my crossbowmen, and Pegasus. If all goes too badly, you will need to get out of there fast. Either flee to Loren, and hope for sympathy from the Elves, or flee back here if you can. Your life is much more important than those of my crossbowmen if it comes down to that." "I still do not know where we are." Ricold had made a statement, but it was obvious it required a reply. "The Fennec Brienne has four tributaries between the sea and Quenelles, the easternmost one splits into two just before it reaches the mountains. We are currently a fair way north of that split, on the East side of the river. We are about 2 days from Quenelles, and about 4 days from Setta." "Then I ride tonight." "I'll send out orders for provisions for four days travel and 10 Dark Assassins. I recommend you pass by Quenelles to the east, and cross at Pano. From there you can either veer back, and go straight up the Quenelles to Parravon road, or you can head up the no mans land between Loren and Bretonnia. I expect you to restock at Setta, and let them know you are leaving for a good long while. You must gather enough food and supplies for the 5 days journey back down here. We may well have to move, and we will follow the river down its west tributary. In the mean time I'll show you to the tent where all your equipment is."

It was a long, hard journey, but they had no problems reaching Setta in four days. Sadly, it was in Setta that they started to encounter problems. They got into town late night, and found rooms in one of the inns without declaring who they were. They woke up next morning to find the town in shock. Early that morning, Ricold's retinue from the joust returned. They brought news, that Ricold had gone missing, and despite extensive searches, was not to be found. They had returned hoping Ricold was to be found here. Someone had put into this mix that the King wanted Ricold, and so the people had leapt to the conclusion that he had fled the lands in fear of the King. His artefacts were to be thrown out of the town, his capture was worth all his remaining gold, and he was stripped of rank and knighthood until proven innocent. This had all been made worse because Ricold had managed to slip Asa, his wife, out of their town house the previous night (along with quite a bit of stuff), and the townsfolk had thought she had left with Ricold. Ricold decided to leave as soon as possible. Ricold managed to gather quite a lot of the stuff that was of value, and had been thrown out, and started the return journey to Morsac. He suspected this was the last time he would ever see his town, and he knew he could never go as Lord of the Tournament again. He had to simply ride south, and hope they could accept him for what he was. Sadly, all he was, was misunderstood.