

*Kingsford Castle*

*11 November 1111*

*Dear Charles,*

*I have spoken to Lord Marley on your behalf. He has agreed to you becoming a Page on his estate.*

*Before you decide on wherever this is the correct direction for your life to follow, I suggest you read this letter on my experiences of becoming a Knight.*

*When I was seven I was sent to live with Sir Alfred Hardy, a retired Knight who owned a vast manor in the north. Hardy Manor was large and seemed quite lonely compared with the home I had left. What at first was overwhelming, soon became a routine life. Despite the general routine, this life was still exciting and unpredictable.*

*As a Page, my duties started before sunrise. I rose early to dress myself before assisting Sir Alfred to bathe and dress. At this time I thought that all Knights bathed daily, it was only latter in life that I discovered otherwise. I expect that Lord Marley is normal and only bathes twice a year. After breakfast, the other Pages and I (known collectively as a Book) studied under the tutorage of the local Priest, Father Amman. Another of my duties was serving the Lady of the house morning and afternoon tea. Lady Hardy was very severe and had little patience or tolerance for slowy Pages such as I. She was often abroad during which time Sir Alfred had his mistress visit (Lady Evelyn), who by contrast was kind and considerate and a pleasure to serve (tea).*

*Sir Alfred was a falconer, and he would permit, the other Pages and I to train the falcons by using them to hunt in the woods. While we didn't appreciate the field mice that the falcons returned, the rabbits made a good stew. After hunting, I would practice in the armoury. After years of practice under the tutorage by Hagthorpe I became a skilled swordsman.*

Every night I played my flute and on occasion we had dances with the maids of the manor. By the beginning of the third watch I retired to my room exhausted and fell asleep to prepare for the dawn.

On my fourteenth birthday, Sir Alfred made me a Squire. As a squire training increased 3 fold. Before becoming a Squire, horse riding was natural for me. However, when armoured and fighting on horseback was a new experience that I found very challenging. As a Squire I no longer served the lady of the house and spent more time in the armoury, outdoors in the wood and in the field. I was assigned to a Knight, Sir Nigel. I was required to prepare his armour and assist in fitting him for battle. While Sir Nigel was a good Knight, he told me once that his secret to success was obeying the voices in his head. This probably explained some of his eccentric behaviour, but he was harmless enough unless he was your opponent.

At a particular tournament Sir Nigel had risen to the final bout of competition. During the rest period prior to the final, Sir Nigel had injured himself and could not compete (I am sworn to secrecy as to how he injured himself). The honour of the Manor was at stake. As I was now close to Sir Nigel's height, I put on his armour, closed the visor and went in to battle. I won, but only just. Just prior to receiving the trophy, Sir Nigel and I swapped places in his tent. When he staggered out to receive the trophy, all thought he was suffering from the battle, only I knew otherwise. The honour of the Manor was saved, Sir Nigel told the whole story (well most of it) to Sir Alfred and I was knighted for my quick thinking, courage, bravery, integrity, winning the tournament and saving the honour of Sir Nigel.

I encourage you in your endeavour to become a Knight. For me it was hard work but it was also fun. To quote Sir Nigel, "once a knight its once a night".

Your dearest brother

Sir James

