

# Jester

I walked through the fire lit corridor; a whisper of wind swept through an open window fluttering the torches. Heading for my personal chamber I thought of the day I just had. First the jousting tournament, the knights of different cities, mounted on fearless steeds, charged at each other with lances. Those huge wooden poles '9-14 feet' (2.7-4.2 meters) long, tipped with deadly steel. Between each set, I was ordered to sing, dance and perform tricks and jokes to keep the crowd interested and occupied when knights were sometimes walked off the court or even dragged off, sometimes never to be seen again.

After the tournament I was stationed outside the stadium by a Reeve who bluntly told me, "Stay here until all the crowd has dispersed, then go yonder to the hall for the King has summoned you." With that he walked off towards the tavern. I stayed there for what seemed like hours, smiling at departing crowds who chuckled and pointed at me taking me for a joke. But I guess I could not expect anything else, I was called a joker, a fool, a man who does nothing but think of some new jokes to impress others, my job technically was to seek your attention to distract you and to sometimes humiliate myself for others' entertainment. Yet still I was a large part to the community, the people and the King. I was a man of many talents, a man to help others. And I was proud. Proud of who I was, for it is not an easy job to get. Plus, I was the only one to "mock" any noble I saw fit, even the King, though it must be in the manner of the jester. I can get away with poking fun to any of the noble's short comings. For how can you blame me, I'm a fool. Finally, the last of the last of the commoners left the stadium and the only people were servants and squires. And so I relieved myself of my duty and walked towards the castle.

At the Kings hall multiple dukes had gathered and were squabbling amongst themselves, arguing over all kinds of things a jester should not hear; land, knights, money and other "nobley" things. When the King saw me, his eyes brightened for it was an excuse to relieve himself from the politics and arguments. I truly could not imagine having to be in politics, always having disputes and it simply sounded so boring to me. I bowed respectfully as the dukes strode out of the door some of whom were still feuding. The king beckoned me forward, only him, his personal advocate and the guards were in the room. But I knew soon that other royalties and nobles would be joining us to have a feast for the triumphant win in the jousting tournament. I skipped up to the King's side with a large smile on my face. "What may I be able to do for you sire?"

"Well with your known talents and flair I request your presence at the feast. And could you perform for the knights who set forth this glorious triumph?" The King posed this as a question, but I knew it was not at all one. I had seen firsthand the dire consequences of repudiating the King's requests, even such a small thing could flare up the lordship's temper and cause a domino effect, sometimes ending with your head being relieved from your shoulders, or other forms of that certain repercussion. And so, I replied with the civil and healthy choice saying, "You flatter me sire and I humbly accept your generous offer. I will be there ready to do my foremost." The King then smiled,

that smile I had seen a billion times, the smile of getting what he wants, and if he doesn't carry-out that smile then you'd be in big trouble. The King waved his hand, signalling for me to leave, and so with that I bowed in respect and marched out the door towards my chamber.

When the firm knock on my door came, I jumped even though I knew it was going to happen at any time. I swung the door open to see a castle guard in full armour standing in my doorway. "The King is ready for you. There are lots of knights and nobles in there and they've had accouple of rounds of ale each, get ready."

"I am." I responded still psyching myself up. The guard turned and walked down the corridor not waiting to see if I was following. And so, I tailed the guard up to the enormous spruce doors that lead into the vast hall, now with chairs, tables and food no doubt, lots of food knowing the King and his unsurpassed excessive ways. Two more guards at both sides of the door went to the centre and heaved at the massive handles. A stream of light hit me as the door swung apart revealing a scene of laughter, talk, music being playing and, yes, lots and lots of food and beverages. People gnawed at different meats and cheeses, fruit and vegetables they drank ale and other drinks while messing around and frolicking.

The tables were set in a U shape so that if you walk directly into the hall you would be in a place where you could be seen by all. Directly ahead was the King's table where the King, his trusted advisories and the most important nobles sat together, gorging themselves on food and drink. When the King saw me belched then rose from his throne. Everyone around the room fell silent and the musicians stopped their composition seeing that the King was about to talk and straitened themselves up. "Friends, family, nobles and the fearless knights who fight our battles. The success in the tournament just hours ago was phenomenal as per usual. And now, to celebrate, I present the best jester in England, here to entertain us as we eat and drink. The floor is yours." The music started again, and some people continued their conversations others looked my way intrigued by the King's introduction of me.

And so, I started with some simple tricks of juggling sharp objects and swallowing swords. I made butterflies come out of my costume I pretended to breath fire. Told some jokes. Teased some people. And once I got into the mood it was easier to dance and sing and perform tricks and tell jokes. And soon the feast was over, people left the chamber and realized how tired I was. I wrapped up my final tricks with applause and hysterics then bowed as low as possible to the King and the others at the royal table. I walked out the huge doors hot and exhausted.

And that's where I am now, walking back to my chamber after a long day. I stop at an open widow and stare at the stars. The breeze is on my face and I'm thinking of King William. And I know that I am on a path to success.