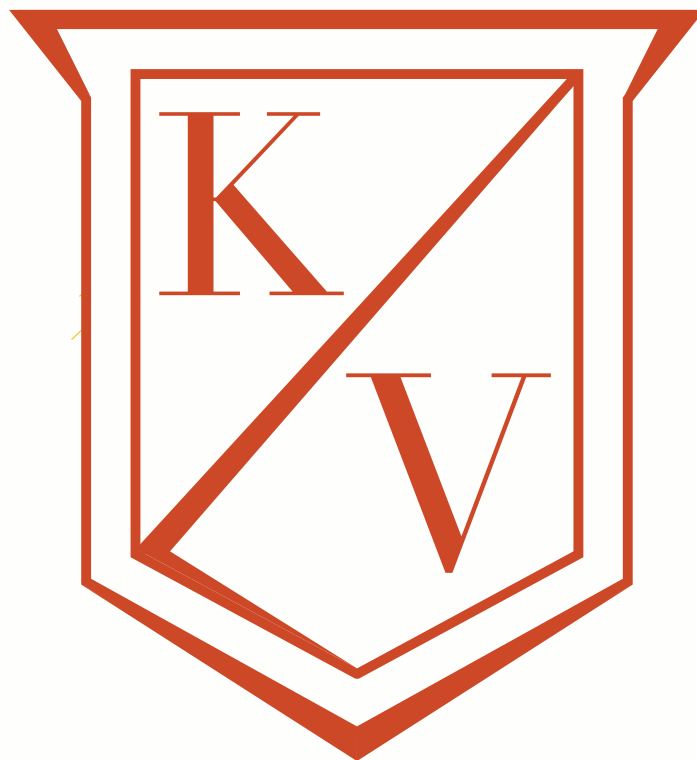


Heroes Who Inspire

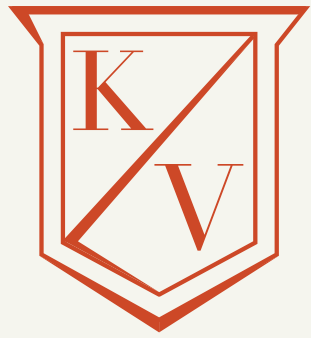
Knightly Virtues



Gareth & Lynette

Learning About the Virtues of
Self-Discipline and Courage

Heroes Who Inspire

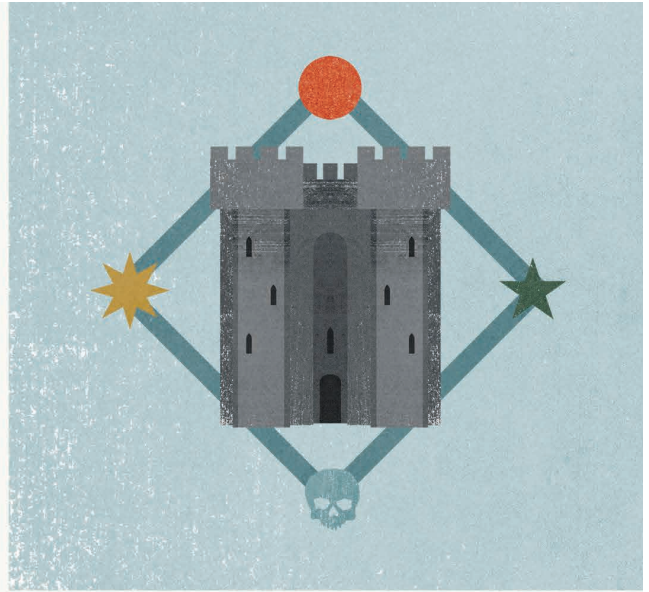


THE STORY

Gareth & Lynette

Story retold by the Jubilee Centre for
Character and Virtues

Gareth & Lynette — The Story



Queen Bellicent of Orkney had three tall sons; and the youngest, named Gareth, was the tallest of all. Gareth's brothers, Sir Gawain and Sir Gaheris were both Knights of the Round Table, and Gareth longed to join them at the court of King Arthur, and to do valiant deeds that would allow him to join the Fellowship of the Round Table, and make him worthy to sit in the company of Sir Lancelot, the most well-known and respected of any knight in the world.

So Gareth begged his mother, "Let me go; I am not a child anymore." But Queen Bellicent didn't want to lose her youngest son as easily as her eldest two had gone. She insisted that Gareth work for a year and a day, in secret, as a kitchen servant in Arthur's Court before he could become a knight. "Son, you shall go to Arthur's Court once you have worked among the pots and pans as a scullion; and you shall not tell your name to any one".

"So be it. I will work hard for a year and a day to gain my wish; for all I desire is to be among those noble knights, and to win myself a name like theirs." He kissed Queen Bellicent and departed.

At that time, King Arthur was hosting the feast of Whitsuntide, in a city called Kink-Kenadon, near Wales. The King had a custom that he would not sit down to dinner until he had seen something remarkable, or heard about some adventures. So far on this day, nothing of interest had happened. However, soon three men drew near to Kink-Kenadon castle and came into the King's dining hall. The men were very well dressed, and one of them was very tall and handsome.

The tall young man walked in and said, "King Arthur, God bless you, and all your noble Fellowship of the Round Table; I come to ask three gifts of you."

"The first," said he, "is, that you will let me serve among the kitchen-boys and be given meat and drink for a twelvemonth. If you grant me this, I will ask the other two gifts in a year, wherever you hold your high feast."

King Arthur accepted the request and allowed the tall man to work in his kitchen. "You shall have meat and drink, for I never refused that to friend or foe. But what is your name?" "I cannot tell you," said the tall man. "That is marvellous," said the King, "not to know your name; for you seem the finest young man that ever came into our presence."

King Arthur called Sir Kay, the steward, and told him give the young man the best food and drink, and treat him in all respects as though he were a lord's son.

Sir Kay wasn't pleased. He named the tall man 'Beaumains' ['Fairhands'], because his hands were large and white, and took him to the kitchen, making sure he only had thick pottage to eat. Sir Kay jeered and mocked Beaumains, and made him do the meanest and hardest tasks. However, Sir Lancelot treated him with great gentleness and courtesy; saying, "I will wager that this youth shall prove a very honourable young man." Lancelot invited Beaumains to dine with him in his private chamber; but Beaumains would not accept the offer. Instead, he sat down and ate sadly among the kitchen-boys. Every day he worked among the greasy pots and pans, and every night he slept in the kitchen: and he did this for a whole year, and never did anything to displease anyone, and was always meek and mild and obedient to Sir Kay, who

hated him and called him 'kitchen boy'.

Whenever the knights were jousting, Beaumains would go and watch. He loved to hear tales of good knights, and of the great deeds of Sir Lancelot, which the kitchen folk told round the fire. Lancelot was the strongest of all knights; no one could throw a heavy bar or stone as far as he could; and he was the fastest runner and greatest wrestler.

So the year passed and Whitsuntide came round again. The King held the feast this time at the city of Carleon. Again, King Arthur would not eat dinner until he had heard of some adventures. Presently, a maiden named Lynette rode up on a white palfrey. She bowed to the King, and asked him for help. "Sir," said she, "I serve a beautiful and well-known lady named Lyonors. A tyrant besieges her in her castle, so that she cannot leave. I beg you to send Sir Lancelot to my Lady's help."

The King asked, "Who is this tyrant?" Lynette said, "He is called the Red Knight of the Red Lawns; and he is determined to marry the Lady Lyonors, whether she wants to or not; though she hates him. Four knights hold the fords of the river surrounding her castle, so that no man may come past; and they are so strong that only a very strong knight might overcome them.

They call themselves Morning Star, Noon-day Sun, and Evening Star: and the fourth is called Night and Death, and is more terrible than all the others. So, I have come for Sir Lancelot; for there is no other knight that could undertake this adventure and succeed in it."

Then Beaumains, the kitchen-boy, came forward crying. "Sir King! Sir King!" and everyone turned to look at this tall young man. "I have been in your kitchen for the last year and have served you honestly for my meat and drink; and now I will ask my two gifts that were to be granted me today. First, that you will grant me the honour of this adventure of the rescue of Lady Lyonors, for it belongs to me by right." "Thou shalt have it," said the King. "Then, Sir," said Beaumains, "this is the other gift, that you will tell Sir Lancelot to knight me whenever I ask him to, for I will be made knight by him and by no other." "All this shall be done," said the King. "Fie!" said Lynette, "I asked for Sir Lancelot; and I am given a kitchen boy?" She was very angry indeed, and took her horse and left.

A man then came into the hall and told Beaumains that his horse and armour were waiting ready outside; and there waiting was all the richest armour that a knight could need, which had been sent by Queen Bellicent. The court wondered where all these things had come; for the horse's trappings were of cloth-of-gold, and so were Beaumains' mantle and tunic; and he looked more like a prince than a scullion. He bade farewell to the King, and rode after the maiden; and Sir Lancelot rode a little way with him.

Sir Kay was angry and jealous, and said aloud in the hall, "I will ride after my kitchen boy and bring him back to his work." So he took his horse and spear and followed; and he cried, "Ho there! Beaumains the scullion! Turn back! Do you not know me, your master?"

"Yes," said Beaumains, turning around, "I know you as the rudest knight of Arthur's court.

Now you must beware of me!" And they rode hard at each other with their spears pointed and Beaumains unhorsed Sir Kay, and left him lying on the ground. Lynette had watched this from a little way ahead.

Beaumains said to Lancelot, "Do you think that someday I may prove myself fit to be a knight?" "Yes," said Lancelot, "if you go on as you have begun; and indeed you should by rights be a knight already. But I cannot give you the order of knighthood till I know your name and family; I promise you that I will not tell it to any man.

"My name is Gareth; son of King Lot of Orkney, and brother to the good knight Sir Gawain."

"Ah, sir!" said Lancelot, "I always thought you came of a noble race." And Sir Lancelot made him knight there and then. Afterwards he went back to Sir Kay, and had him taken home on his shield, as his shoulder was put out of joint by his fall. And Sir Beaumains rode after the maid Lynette.

But when he overtook her, she said, "Away, kitchen lad your clothes are covered in tallow, and you smell of the kitchen. I accept that you have overthrown your master, Sir Kay; but you are no more than a turner of spits and a washer of spoons. How can you hope to finish my adventure?" "I shall do my best," said Beaumains. So Lynette rode on in front; for she would not ride beside him.

As they passed through a wood, a man came running and calling for help; "Robbers have seized my lord, bound him, and I fear they are about to kill him!" "Bring me to him," said Sir Beaumains. They came to a glade where there was a knight bound with ropes, and six robbers about to drown him in the river. With three strokes of his sword, Sir Beaumains slew three of the robbers, and the other three fled. The freed knight invited Sir Beaumains to his castle, so he could reward him with praise and honour. "Sir," said Beaumains, "today I was knighted by Sir Lancelot, and that is enough reward for me. And also I must follow this maiden." So they parted company.

But Lynette again made Beaumains ride behind her, saying, "You are strong in the arm; but still you smell of a kitchen, and soon you will meet with a stronger man than yourself, who shall put you to shame." "Maiden, I heed not what you say, so long as I may save the Lady Lyonors." The maiden continued to scoff at him, but Sir Beaumains did not answer a word.

They came to a ford in a great river, with a narrow bridge across; on the other side was the knight who called himself the Morning-Star. And he called across the river, "Maiden, is this your champion that you have brought? Is he a knight of King Arthur's court?" "Nay, good knight," said she, "this is no knight at all, only a scullion, who has been fed in King Arthur's kitchen; I am ashamed to be seen in his company."

"That may be," said the knight, "but he looks a very strong man. I shall soon overcome him and take his horse and armour."

But Beaumains said, "Sir Knight, whether you like it or not, I am going to force this crossing; and you will get neither horse nor armour of mine without winning them in hard fight."

"It is not proper for a kitchen-boy to ride with such a lady as your companion." Said the knight. "You lie," said Beaumains, "I come of higher lineage than you!"

The two knights fought a short sharp fight, and Beaumains unhorsed the Morning-Star, and brought him to his knees. Lynette cried out, "Do not kill him!", so Beaumains bid him go to Arthur's Court and ask for pardon; and he himself rode on after the maiden. She called back over her shoulder "keep away, do not come between me and the wind for you smell of the kitchen worse than ever! If you have over-thrown the Morning-Star, it was by chance and you are still no better than a scullion. There is a knight nearby, who shall pay you for your insolence."

Thus, shortly, they came to another ford in the river, and saw the knight called Noon-day Sun guarding it, pacing up and down all in blazing red armour. He taunted Beaumains, and defied him, as his brother had done; and Beaumains challenged him to combat. Noon-day Sun was bigger and stronger than the Morning-Star, and he fought very fiercely. But in the end he was unhorsed, and surrendered.

Lynette, however, was still as disdainful as ever, and said "Fie, for shame that a good knight should fall before a kitchen knave!"

Soon they came to the third crossing of the river, with the Knight of the Evening-Star waiting to challenge all-comers. Sir Beaumains encountered and overcame him and the three fords were won.

Finally, in the twilight of the evening, they came to the castle of Lady Lyonors. A black pavilion was in front of it, and a terrifying skeleton in black armour, on a black horse, was riding up and down. "Fool!" said Lynette. "You had better flee whilst there is still time; for this is Death himself, and you shall never overcome him; for who can overcome Death?" "Let him come on and do his worst," said Beaumains, "I shall not fail to fight while my life lasts." "Oh mercy!" said Lynette, "What a man you are! How patient, how dauntless! I am sure you must come of noble blood; for never did a woman treat a knight so shamefully as I have done you, and you have endured it all with gentleness and courtesy, never answering a word back again. I am sorry that I have treated you so; and still more sorry because I know you will shortly be killed. It is not possible to escape Death."

"Lady, whether I be a gentleman or not, I have done you gentleman's service; and perhaps I shall do better still before I depart from you. Now I will end this adventure as best I may." With that, he charged hotly upon the figure of Death, and split his helm in two. But from within the skull there appeared the bright face of a boy, crying, "Do not harm me, Sir Knight; for I should never have harmed you; I am but a boy. My brethren put me here, to scare off all from Lady Lyonors, while they kept the fordings of the river." "But where is the Red Knight of the Red Lawns?" asked Beaumains. "If you have passed the fords," said the boy, "you must certainly have met and overthrown him; for he was the knight all in blazing red armour,

calling himself the Noon-day Sun.”

Then Dame Lyonors came forth out of the castle, to welcome her champion; and she was dressed richly like a princess, and as beautiful as a midsummer morning. Sir Beaumains and Dame Lyonors fell in love; and they agreed to be married on their return to Carleon.

Meanwhile the three defeated knights, Morning-Star, Noon-day Sun, and Evening Star, had asked for mercy at Arthur’s Court; and when King Arthur heard of all the gallant doings of his kitchen lad, he was greatly astonished. “You need not wonder,” said Sir Lancelot, “for there are few men living that are as strong as he, and of such noble blood.” “It would seem that you know his name, and whence he comes, and of whose family.” “I suppose I do,” said Lancelot, “or else I should not have knighted him.”

As they spoke, Queen Bellicent of Orkney arrived seeking news of her dear son Gareth; and so all was soon made known. And at the marriage of Gareth and Lyonors, there was the heartiest rejoicing among the knights that ever had been known at Arthur’s Court.

Gareth & Lynette — Glossary

Characters

Sir Gareth	son of the King of Orkney
Sir Beaumains	Sir Gareth's alter ego
Lady Lyonors	marries Sir Gareth
Lynette	servant to Lady Lyonors
King Lot	King of Orkney; Gareth's father
Queen Bellicent	Queen of Orkney; Gareth's mother
Sir Gawain	Gareth's brother
Sir Gaheris	Gareth's brother
King Arthur	King of England
Sir Lancelot	the most well-known and respected of any knight in the world
Sir Kay	the steward
Red Knight of the Red Lawns	suitor of Lady Lyonors
Morning Star	one of the Red Knight's soldiers
Noon-day Sun	one of the Red Knight's soldiers
Evening Star	one of the Red Knight's soldiers
Night and Death	the most terrible of the Red Knight's soldiers

The Story

Dauntless	Without intimidation.
Fellowship of the Round Table	The collective brotherhood of knights who were usually of noble birth: kings, princes, dukes, earls, and barons, who formed the backbone of any army of the time. Merlin the Wizard created the legendary Round Table - in a shape symbolising the roundness of the universe. The Fellowship of Knights each made an oath to protect the distressed, maintain the right, and live a stainless existence.
Ford	Shallow place to cross a river.
Heed not what you say	To take no notice, or to choose to ignore.
Higher Lineage	higher social standing.

Gareth & Lynette — Glossary

Jousting	a game contested between two horsemen with lances, often as part of a tournament. The horsemen ride towards one another at speed and attempt to unseat their opponent, or break their lance on their opponent's shield or armour.
Palfrey	a highly valued horse.
Scullion	a male servant who performed menial kitchen jobs (washing, cleaning, etc.) in large households.
Slew	killed violently.
Tallow	beef/mutton fat.
Thick Pottage	a thick soup or stew.
Trappings of cloth-of-gold	expensive fabrics, usually covering a horse and/or its carriage.
Turner of spits and washer of spoons	a servant, carrying out basic tasks such as turning a spit (hog roast), or washing cutlery.
Valiant	brave able to face and deal with danger or fear without flinching.
Whitsuntide	holiday period in Medieval times for serfs.