

## Chapter Two: Sir Andrew D'Arcy

Godwin dreamed that he was dead, and that beneath him floated the world, a glowing ball, while he was borne to and fro through the blackness, stretched upon a couch of ebony. There were bright watchers by his couch also, watchers twain, and he knew them for his guardian angels, given him at birth. Moreover, now and again presences would come and question the watchers who sat at his head and foot. One asked:

"Has this soul sinned?" And the angel at his head answered:

"It has sinned."

Again the voice asked: "Did it die shriven of its sins?"

The angel answered: "It died unshriven, red sword aloft, fighting a good fight."

"Fighting for the Cross of Christ?"

"Nay; fighting for a woman."

"Alas! poor soul, sinful and unshriven, who died fighting for a woman's love. How shall such a one find mercy?" wailed the questioning voice, growing ever fainter, till it was lost far,

far away.

Now came another visitor. It was his father--the warrior sire whom he had never seen, who fell in Syria. Godwin knew him well, for the face was the face carven on the tomb in Stangate church, and he wore the blood-red cross upon his mail, and the D'Arcy Death's-head was on his shield, and in his hand shone a naked sword.

"Is this the soul of my son?" he asked of the whiterobed watchers. "If so, how died he?"

Then the angel at his foot answered: "He died, red sword aloft, fighting a good fight."

"Fighting for the Cross of Christ?"

"Nay; fighting for a woman."

"Fighting for a woman's love who should have fallen in the Holy War? Alas! poor son; alas! poor son! Alas! that we must part again forever!" and his voice, too, passed away.

Lo! a Glory advanced through the blackness, and the angels at head and foot stood up and saluted with their flaming spears.

"How died this child of God?" asked a voice, speaking out of the Glory, a low and awful voice.

"He died by the sword," answered the angel.

"By the sword of the children of the enemy, fighting in the war of Heaven?"

Then the angels were silent.

"What has Heaven to do with him, if he fought not for Heaven?" asked the voice again.

"Let him be spared," pleaded the guardians, "who was young and brave, and knew not. Send him back to earth, there to retrieve his sins and be our charge once more."

"So be it," said the voice. "Knight, live on, but live as a knight of Heaven if thou wouldst win Heaven."

"Must he then put the woman from him?" asked the angels.

"It was not said," answered the voice speaking from the Glory. And all that wild vision vanished.

Then a space of oblivion, and Godwin awoke to hear other voices

around him, voices human, well-beloved, remembered; and to see a face bending over him--a face most human, most well-beloved, most remembered--that of his cousin Rosamund. He babbled some questions, but they brought him food, and told him to sleep, so he slept. Thus it went on, waking and sleep, sleep and waking, till at length one morning he woke up truly in the little room that opened out of the solar or sitting place of the Hall of Steeple, where he and Wulf had slept since their uncle took them to his home as infants. More, on the trestle bed opposite to him, his leg and arm bandaged, and a crutch by his side, sat Wulf himself, somewhat paler and thinner than of yore, but the same jovial, careless, yet at times fierce-faced Wulf.

"Do I still dream, my brother, or is it you indeed?"

A happy smile spread upon the face of Wulf, for now he knew that Godwin was himself again.

"Me sure enough," he answered. "Dream-folk don't have lame legs; they are the gifts of swords and men."

"And Rosamund? What of Rosamund? Did the grey horse swim the creek, and how came we here? Tell me quick--I faint for news!"

"She shall tell you herself." And hobbling to the curtained door, he called, "Rosamund, my--nay, our--cousin Rosamund, Godwin is

himself again. Hear you, Godwin is himself again, and would speak with you!"

There was a swift rustle of robes and a sound of quick feet among the rushes that strewed the floor, and then--Rosamund herself, lovely as ever, but all her stateliness forgot in joy. She saw him, the gaunt Godwin sitting up upon the pallet, his grey eyes shining in the white and sunken face. For Godwin's eyes were grey, while Wulf's were blue, the only difference between them which a stranger would note, although in truth Wulf's lips were fuller than Godwin's, and his chin more marked; also he was a larger man. She saw him, and with a little cry of delight ran and cast her arms about him, and kissed him on the brow.

"Be careful," said Wulf roughly, turning his head aside, "or, Rosamund, you will loose the bandages, and bring his trouble back again; he has had enough of blood-letting."

"Then I will kiss him on the hand--the hand that saved me," she said, and did so. More, she pressed that poor, pale hand against her heart.

"Mine had something to do with that business also but I don't remember that you kissed it, Rosamund. Well, I will kiss him too, and oh! God be praised, and the holy Virgin, and the holy Peter, and the holy Chad, and all the other holy dead folk whose names I

can't recall, who between them, with the help of Rosamund here, and the prayers of the Prior John and brethren at Stangate, and of Matthew, the village priest, have given you back to us, my brother, my most beloved brother." And he hopped to the bedside, and throwing his long, sinewy arms about Godwin embraced him again and again.

"Be careful," said Rosamund drily, "or, Wulf, you will disturb the bandages, and he has had enough of blood-letting."

Then before he could answer, which he seemed minded to do, there came the sound of a slow step, and swinging the curtain aside, a tall and noble-looking knight entered the little place. The man was old, but looked older than he was, for sorrow and sickness had wasted him. His snow-white hair hung upon his shoulders, his face was pale, and his features were pinched but finely-chiselled, and notwithstanding the difference of their years, wonderfully like to those of the daughter Rosamund. For this was her father, the famous lord, Sir Andrew D'Arcy.

Rosamund turned and bent the knee to him with a strange and Eastern grace, while Wulf bowed his head, and Godwin, since his neck was too stiff to stir, held up his hand in greeting. The old man looked at him, and there was pride in his eye.

"So you will live after all, my nephew," he said, "and for that I

thank the giver of life and death, since by God, you are a gallant man--a worthy child of the bloods of the Norman D'Arcy and of Uluin the Saxon. Yes, one of the best of them."

"Speak not so, my uncle," said Godwin; "or at least, here is a worthier,"--and he patted the hand of Wulf with his lean fingers. "It was Wulf who bore me through. Oh, I remember as much as that--how he lifted me onto the black horse and bade me to cling fast to mane and pommel. Ay, and I remember the charge, and his cry of 'Contre D'Arcy, contre Mort!' and the flashing of swords about us, and after that--nothing."

"Would that I had been there to help in that fight," said Sir Andrew D'Arcy, tossing his white hair. "Oh, my children, it is hard to be sick and old. A log am I--naught but a rotting log. Still, had I only known--"

"Father, father," said Rosamund, casting her white arm about his neck. "You should not speak thus. You have done your share."

"Yes, my share; but I should like to do more. Oh, St. Andrew, ask it for me that I may die with sword aloft and my grandsire's cry upon my lips. Yes, yes; thus, not like a worn-out war-horse in his stall. There, pardon me; but in truth, my children, I am jealous of you. Why, when I found you lying in each other's arms I could have wept for rage to think that such a fray had been

within a league of my own doors and I not in it."

"I know nothing of all that story," said Godwin.

"No, in truth, how can you, who have been senseless this month or more? But Rosamund knows, and she shall tell it you. Speak on, Rosamund. Lay you back, Godwin, and listen."

"The tale is yours, my cousins, and not mine," said Rosamund.

"You bade me take the water, and into it I spurred the grey horse, and we sank deep, so that the waves closed above my head. Then up we came, I floating from the saddle, but I regained it, and the horse answered to my voice and bridle, and swam out for the further shore. On it swam, somewhat slantwise with the tide, so that by turning my head I could see all that passed upon the mole. I saw them come at you, and men fall before your swords; I saw you charge them, and run back again. Lastly, after what seemed a very long while, when I was far away, I saw Wulf lift Godwin into the saddle--I knew it must be Godwin, because he set him on the black horse--and the pair of you galloped down the quay and vanished.

"By then I was near the home shore, and the grey grew very weary and sank deep in the water. But I cheered it on with my voice, and although twice its head went beneath the waves, in the end it found a footing, though a soft one. After resting awhile, it



plunged forward with short rushes through the mud, and so at length came safe to land, where it stood shaking with fear and weariness. So soon as the horse got its breath again, I pressed on, for I saw them loosing the boat, and came home here as the dark closed in, to meet your uncle watching for me at the gate. Now, father, do you take up the tale."

"There is little more to tell," said Sir Andrew. "You will remember, nephews, that I was against this ride of Rosamund's to seek flowers, or I know not what, at St. Peter's shrine, nine miles away, but as the maid had set her heart on it, and there are but few pleasures here, why, I let her go with the pair of you for escort. You will mind also that you were starting without your mail, and how foolish you thought me when I called you back and made you gird it on. Well, my patron saint--or yours--put it into my head to do so, for had it not been for those same shirts of mail, you were both of you dead men to-day. But that morning I had been thinking of Sir Hugh Lozelle--if such a false, pirate rogue can be called a knight, not but that he is stout and brave enough--and his threats after he recovered from the wound you gave him, Godwin; how that he would come back and take your cousin for all we could do to stay him. True, we heard that he had sailed for the East to war against Saladin--or with him, for he was ever a traitor--but even if this were so, men return from the East. Therefore I bade you arm, having some foresight of what was to come, for doubtless this onslaught must

have been planned by him."

"I think so," said Wulf, "for, as Rosamund here knows, the tall knave who interpreted for the foreigner whom he called his master, gave us the name of the knight Lozelle as the man who sought to carry her off."

"Was this master a Saracen?" asked Sir Andrew, anxiously.

"Nay, uncle, how can I tell, seeing that his face was masked like the rest and he spoke through an interpreter? But I pray you go on with the story, which Godwin has not heard."

"It is short. When Rosamund told her tale of which I could make little, for the girl was crazed with grief and cold and fear, save that you had been attacked upon the old quay, and she had escaped by swimming Death Creek--which seemed a thing incredible--I got together what men I could. Then bidding her stay behind, with some of them to guard her, and nurse herself, which she was loth to do, I set out to find you or your bodies. It was dark, but we rode hard, having lanterns with us, as we went rousing men at every stead, until we came to where the roads join at Moats. There we found a black horse--your horse, Godwin--so badly wounded that he could travel no further, and I groaned, thinking that you were dead. Still we went on, till we heard another horse whinny, and presently found the roan also

riderless, standing by the path-side with his head down.

"A man on the ground holds him!" cried one, and I sprang from the saddle to see who it might be, to find that it was you, the pair of you, locked in each other's arms and senseless, if not dead, as well you might be from your wounds. I bade the country-folk cover you up and carry you home, and others to run to Stangate and pray the Prior and the monk Stephen, who is a doctor, come at once to tend you, while we pressed onwards to take vengeance if we could. We reached the quay upon the creek, but there we found nothing save some bloodstains and--this is strange--your sword, Godwin, the hilt set between two stones, and on the point a writing."

"What was the writing?" asked Godwin.

"Here it is," answered his uncle, drawing a piece of parchment from his robe. "Read it, one of you, since all of you are scholars and my eyes are bad."

Rosamund took it and read what was written, hurriedly but in a clerkly hand, and in the French tongue. It ran thus: "The sword of a brave man. Bury it with him if he be dead, and give it back to him if he lives, as I hope. My master would wish me to do this honour to a gallant foe whom in that case he still may meet.

(Signed) Hugh Lozelle, or Another."

"Another, then; not Hugh Lozelle," said Godwin, "since he cannot write, and if he could, would never pen words so knightly."

"The words may be knightly, but the writer's deeds were base enough," replied Sir Andrew; "nor, in truth do I understand this scroll."

"The interpreter spoke of the short man as his master," suggested Wulf.

"Ay, nephew; but him you met. This writing speaks of a master whom Godwin may meet, and who would wish the writer to pay him a certain honour."

"Perhaps he wrote thus to blind us."

"Perchance, perchance. The matter puzzles me. Moreover, of whom these men were I have been able to learn nothing. A boat was seen passing towards Bradwell--indeed, it seems that you saw it, and that night a boat was seen sailing southwards down St. Peter's sands towards a ship that had anchored off Foulness Point. But what that ship was, whence she came, and whither she went, none know, though the tidings of this fray have made some stir."

"Well," said Wulf, "at the least we have seen the last of her

crew of women-thieves. Had they meant more mischief, they would have shown themselves again ere now."

Sir Andrew looked grave as he answered.

"So I trust, but all the tale is very strange. How came they to know that you and Rosamund were riding that day to St. Peter's-on-the-Wall, and so were able to waylay you? Surely some spy must have warned them, since that they were no common pirates is evident, for they spoke of Lozelle, and bade you two begone unharmed, as it was Rosamund whom they needed. Also, there is the matter of the sword that fell from the hand of Godwin when he was hurt, which was returned in so strange a fashion. I have known many such deeds of chivalry done in the East by Paynim men--"

"Well, Rosamund is half an Eastern," broke in Wulf carelessly; "and perhaps that had something to do with it all."

Sir Andrew started, and the colour rose to his pale face. Then in a tone in which he showed he wished to speak no more of this matter, he said:

"Enough, enough. Godwin is very weak, and grows weary, and before I leave him I have a word to say that it may please you both to hear. Young men, you are of my blood, the nearest to it except Rosamund--the sons of that noble knight, my brother. I have ever

loved you well, and been proud of you, but if this was so in the past, how much more is it thus to-day, when you have done such high service to my house? Moreover, that deed was brave and great; nothing more knightly has been told of in Essex this many a year, and those who wrought it should no longer be simple gentlemen, but very knights. This boon it is in my power to grant to you according to the ancient custom. Still, that none may question it, while you lay sick, but after it was believed that Godwin would live, which at first we scarcely dared to hope, I journeyed to London and sought audience of our lord the king. Having told him this tale, I prayed him that he would be pleased to grant me his command in writing that I should name you knights.

"My nephews, he was so pleased, and here I have the brief sealed with the royal signet, commanding that in his name and my own I should give you the accolade publicly in the church of the Priory at Stangate at such season as may be convenient. Therefore, Godwin, the squire, haste you to get well that you may become Sir Godwin the knight; for you, Wulf, save for the hurt to your leg, are well enough already."

Now Godwin's white face went red with pride, and Wulf dropped his bold eyes and looked modest as a girl.

"Speak you," he said to his brother, "for my tongue is blunt and

awkward."

"Sir," said Godwin in a weak voice, "we do not know how to thank you for so great an honour, that we never thought to win till we had done more famous deeds than the beating off of a band of robbers. Sir, we have no more to say, save that while we live we will strive to be worthy of our name and of you."

"Well spoken," said his uncle, adding as though to himself, "this man is courtly as he is brave."

Wulf looked up, a flash of merriment upon his open face.

"I, my uncle, whose speech is, I fear me, not courtly, thank you also. I will add that I think our lady cousin here should be knighted too, if such a thing were possible for a woman, seeing that to swim a horse across Death Creek was a greater deed than to fight some rascals on its quay."

"Rosamund?" answered the old man in the same dreamy voice. "Her rank is high enough--too high, far too high for safety." And turning, he left the little chamber.

"Well, cousin," said Wulf, "if you cannot be a knight, at least you can lessen all this dangerous rank of yours by becoming a knight's wife." Whereat Rosamund looked at him with indignation

which struggled with a smile in her dark eyes, and murmuring that she must see to the making of Godwin's broth, followed her father from the place.

"It would have been kinder had she told us that she was glad," said Wulf when she was gone.

"Perhaps she would," answered his brother, "had it not been for your rough jests, Wulf, which might have a meaning in them."

"Nay, I had no meaning. Why should she not become a knight's wife?"

"Ay, but what knight's? Would it please either of us, brother, if, as may well chance, he should be some stranger?"

Now Wulf swore a great oath, then flushed to the roots of his fair hair, and was silent.

"Ah!" said Godwin; "you do not think before you speak, which it is always well to do."

"She swore upon the quay yonder"--broke in Wulf.

"Forget what she swore. Words uttered in such an hour should not be remembered against a maid."



"God's truth, brother, you are right, as ever! My tongue runs away with me, but still I can't put those words out of my mind, though which of us--"

"Wulf!"

"I mean to say that we are in Fortune's path to-day, Godwin. Oh, that was a lucky ride! Such fighting as I have never seen or dreamed of. We won it too! And now both of us are alive, and a knighthood for each!"

"Yes, both of us alive, thanks to you, Wulf--nay, it is so, though you would never have done less. But as for Fortune's path, it is one that has many rough turns, and perhaps before all is done she may lead us round some of them."

"You talk like a priest, not like a squire who is to be knighted at the cost of a scar on his head. For my part I will kiss Fortune while I may, and if she jilts me afterwards--"

"Wulf," called Rosamund from without the curtain, "cease talking of kissing at the top of your voice, I pray you, and leave Godwin to sleep, for he needs it." And she entered the little chamber, bearing a bowl of broth in her hand.

Thereon, saying that ladies should not listen to what did not concern them, Wulf seized his crutch and hobbled from the place.