

It was a typically hot, steamy August day in that summer of 2003, and the unseen blue alien continued her fascinated study of these odd people. The sweaty, 12th century Celtic fighter, in mismatched but serviceable armor, gallantly stepped aside to let an equally sweaty but gorgeously attired 15th century lady carrying a fretful infant pass by on her way to a court function. At least the child was dressed in a lightweight linen tunic, he noted.

Rulf of Jersey had field-tested some new loaner armor in a practice skirmish with some of his fighting brethren, noting where it chafed and needed to be adjusted or at least additional padding recommended. He was generally pleased with its range of motion and knew, by long years of practice, that it was safe and not unreasonably heavy, despite the practical requirements of metal joint protection. He was very familiar with the East Kingdom, Kingdom of Atlantia and Middle Kingdom armor requirements, having been an armorer as well as a heavy weapons sword and shield fighter for the last six years. He was also very competent in polearm and Florentine style fighting and felt comfortable in his role as fighting instructor. He was willing and able to use modern plastics when they were suitable replacements for their lightness and surprising durability despite how some “purists” felt, at least when it was loaner armor or what his client wanted.

The Society for Creative Anachronism, or SCA for short, had always been an interesting mix of people, customs and talents, the alien thought, even for the peculiar humans. People came from almost every walk of life and had so many varied views of life in “The Current Middle Ages” as most folk called the present time frame. There were folks who tried their best to use only materials and techniques that were available during their chosen time frame, or “period,” which generally spanned the Middle Ages and Renaissance period of European history or earlier.

Even with that large and loose definition there were dissenters who preferred to cover Asian or African history and culture and even, *gasp*, the New World. Usually the purists would give a newcomer some slack but even the newest attendee was strongly encouraged to make some attempt to dress in period, at least a simple tunic and black or brown pants. Newcomers quickly learned that blue jeans were “not period” and were generally frowned upon except for rank beginners.

Rulf wiped some sweat from his forehead with an already sweat-soaked corner of his tunic before it had a chance to get in his eyes. He walked up the dusty footpath toward his camp, along the way he nodded politely to the occasional duchess or other lesser royalty, and greeted fellow fighters and people he knew with his warm smile. When he got to camp, he addressed the gate guards with a familiar nod. He went to his tent and started shrugging out of the loaner armor, then got his ball peen hammer and used some practiced whacks to adjust the elbow cops to free up more room for padding. He liked the way even an inexperienced fighter could figure out how to don the chest, upper arm and elbow protection without too much trouble.

He was a big chested man with the shoulders and muscles of an amateur blacksmith, a hobby of his that had earned him a respectful following of clients even though he never advertised or even set up a shop at Merchants Row at Pennsic. He started by just making his own armor and chuckled every time he saw his first disastrous attempt at a simple pot helm, which he kept to keep him humble and remind himself that anyone who came to him for advice on how to start making their own armor needed patience and respect, not a know-it-all.