

A Sport of Kings

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by

Autumn M. Birt

Characters

Elfs

Lady Mythlorin (Myth)

Lady Elana

Lord Thy Kathon

Courtiers

Humans

Byran

King of Salimere

Jester

Courtiers

Act One

Scene One

Lady Mythlorin and her elfin companions return to the human kingdom of Salimere after an absence of two years. They are waiting to be announced to the court of the King. The hall is richly decorated and filled with courtiers. In the background the court can be seen. Someone, who cannot be heard, is presenting a problem to the King, whose reply is also unheard. In the foreground, the elves wait and watch. They notice many changes since their last visit.

Lady Mythlorin: *(having just arrived and only stopping long enough to change into court clothing for the benefit of the King. She notices the change in the castle and is looking for her companions)* Jester, Jester! How is it with you? There certainly have been many changes since I last visited.

Jester. Ah, my lady, my world is complete again now that you have returned. I nearly died without your presence! I will not let the elfin court keep you away so long again.

Myth. *(laughing)* Jester, you are impossible. Now tell me about the changes at court before I am announced. We heard that there had been a battle between Salimere and your neighbor Tiros. Is it true? How did you fare?

Jester. Battle! Do not honor it so. The Tiros ran more than they fought. It was not a battle; it was a cross country chase and they were slow as well. I think we won their kingdom by default.

Myth. It looks as if the kingdom prospered. I take it all is peaceful here? It will be a pleasant stay.

Jester. *(suddenly serious)* I bid you lady, do not remain here long.

Myth. *(alarmed)* Why? Jester, what is this?

Jester. There is deceit at court. They have tasted glory and power and now they long for more. You must leave.

Myth. *(impatient)* Will you make sense? What do you mean?

Jester. The King wants more power. He wants the elfin lands . . . *(Myth looks disbelieving)*. It is true, my lady. The longer you stay the more you will see, and the more danger you will be in. Their taste of power has bred a lust for more. They will use you or you will fight them. Either way, you will play the game and who will leave with their soul intact? *(puts head in hand and looks confused)*.

Myth. *(confused by Jester's change in attitude)* I . . . I don't understand. Do you mean

Count Announcer. *(court can now be seen and heard)* Your Majesty, the Lady Mythlorin and her companions from the elfin land of Kith Quailon.

Jester. I will speak with you later, my lady *(flashes smile)*. Fare thee well.

Lady Elana. *(hurries to Myth and motion towards the court)* Myth, quickly! The King is waiting. What are you doing?

Myth. Yes, I'm coming. *(to herself)* That fool! He'll pay if it was nothing but an elaborate joke. I believed him, the way he acted . . . *(walks quickly to her companions and then to stand before the King and bows)*.

King. Lady Mythlorin, we welcome you to our great kingdom of Salimere. We hope you left your beloved lands in peace and prosperity.

Myth. Your Majesty, thank you for your hospitality. The King of Kith Quailon sends you his greetings and his wish to continue the plans for a trade route between our kingdoms.

King. Yes, child. *(Thy Kathon looks up sharply at the King)* We shall discuss that at a later time, after you have rested from your journey. We are sure that the elfin kingdom would profit tremendously from such a trade route. You have been isolated so long.

Myth. *(puts a hand on Thy Kathon's arm, who has taken a step forward)* Thank you, your Majesty. We greatly appreciate this chance to rest.

King. Of course. Then please come, elves, to the banquet. Business can be discussed tomorrow. *(stands and exits hall followed by courtiers except Byran).*

Lord Thy Kathon. How dare he? To call you a child, my lady! And to think we need to trade with humans. We chose to remain isolated, so that we are not infected with such petty desires.

Myth. Control yourself, Thy! He is our friend, our ally.

Lady Elana. He is a pompous, old

Myth. Enough! We are his guests.

Lord Thy Kathon. And so subject to his whims. My lady, he has changed from two years ago. I will do as you ask, but I cannot wait until this stay is over. Shall we go to the banquet?

Myth. Yes, go. I'll be along in a few minutes. *(looks towards Byran)* See if you can find anything out, and be careful. *(looks at Thy Kathon, who nods. Elves exit except for Myth)*

Byran. *(lights dim. The hall takes on a dismal look. Byran leaves a dark corner and walks toward Myth, who stands at the edge of the light)* Thy Kathon hasn't changed, I see. He is his usual impulsive self.

Myth. It is nice to know that something has remained the same. I see you wear the robes of a mage. You have passed your tests of magic?

Byran. Yes, I took the tests last year. So, you are angry over the way the King treated you? You brought it on yourself.

Myth. What? I have been here less than an hour. What have I done to displease him all ready?

Byran. Have you forgotten your court etiquette, my lady? You kept him waiting after you were announced. Then with Kathon nearly leaping on to his throne, it didn't improve his mood, I'm certain.

Myth. I hadn't heard the announcement. I had just been told some disturbing news.

Byran. So soon? I thought that you hadn't been here an hour yet?

Myth. The Jester

Byran. (*sharply*) You were listening to that over-dramatic fool? He said something upsetting? I don't suppose it made any sense?

Myth. Not really. He looked serious, though. He said something about the King wanting the elfin lands and of playing a game. I suppose that it was just a jest.

Byran. That is no jest. The fool is smarter than I thought. The King does want the elfin lands. He gained much with his victory over the Tيروس. He is finding such power to his liking.

Myth. To his liking? He cannot be so blind as to attack the elfin lands and even think he might win!

Byran. A little euphoria goes a long way. It is a dangerous game that you walked into the middle of, Myth. Now you must play it to the end.

Myth. That is what the Jester must have meant. Only, he wondered who's soul would be left. (*Byran looks amused*) Byran, what is going to happen?

Byran. The King will try to use you. He wants the elfin lands, but he needs a reason to justify attacking the elves for the people. However, now you know, Myth, what he wants.

Myth. Yes, I know what he wants, so I'll be certain to watch my step.

Byran. Is that it? Myth, don't you see? If we are going to speak of this as a game, then you are one point above him. You can't just step out of it now! You can use him.

Myth. To what end, Byran? What do I want with him?

Byran. Dear Myth, you miss the point. The King will make a mistake when he threatens your lands. That error will cost him dearly. It will be worth his throne. Someone who is powerful enough will be able to replace him.

Myth. (*contemptuously*) And you want to be there to take his place when he falls from his throne?

Byran. (*smiling*) No, that is leaving too much to chance. I'm going to push him off.

Myth. (*worried*) Byran, this game you play is dangerous. What right do we have to take such power, to plot a King's downfall?

Byran. What right? Anyone who can dream has the right. The power is there for the taking. Why not us? We are strong enough. (*Myth looks at him angrily*) Do not pretend that you are not a part of this now. Willingly or unwillingly, you walked into the middle of it and now you must play or be a pawn.

Myth. (*rebellious*) I can leave.

Byran. And it will follow you home. Only then, it will be carrying swords.

Myth. What makes you so much better than the present King? What makes your dream the better one?

Byran. I can see the King's fallacies. He ruled well for a time, but times have changed. The common people are unhappy. The Tirois are slaves, and their only crime was being wealthy and peaceful. My rule will be different. There will be no more of this foolish fighting between kingdoms. The Tirois will be free. The races will be equal. (*Myth moves as if to speak*) Listen to me, Myth. Do you think there is no prejudice among the elves? Do you think it is just among humans? Then tell me, why do you close your border to humans? Can't you see that my way will be better?

Myth. (*doubtful*) You make it sound almost justified, almost reasonable. (*he takes a step closer*) No! No, it is not right. (*she steps away from him*) Nothing started from the blood of innocents will find peace. You too hunger for power. Your dream may be noble, but the burning for power in your soul will destroy it.

Byran. So attacking the elfin lands is the best way. You agree with the King? *(steps closer again.)*

Myth. No! *(draws sword, but more from frustration than to harm)* But there is more than two options. I must play your game. But I will play by my own rules. I see your fallacies, Byran. *(Turns and exits hall)*

Byran. *(room is dark except for a spot of light he is standing in. He looks after Myth and grins.)* Now, my lady, you are playing the game. You are not my pawn or the King's, but we will see on whose side you are on in the end. *(bows in the direction she left and then exits in the opposite direction).*