

The Story of Landenel

In 1564 6AE, a man by the name of Landenel Peumasquier turned 22 years of age.

Landenel was the son of two Gridanians of ill repute.

Landenel's father was a Duskwight criminal and petty thief, a man that often found himself yet again behind the bars of a Wood Wailer gaol-cell, and seemed to recidivate almost immediately upon his every release.

Landenel's mother was a Wildwood Wood Wailer who had gradually become charmed by that Duskwight criminal's handsome appearance and carefree, lackadaisical demeanor, as he passed her through stationed gaol again and again, and she slowly became quite familiar with his appearance and presence.

Over time, the two began to frequently spend nights long in conversation: he possessed a likeable and smoothly-charming personality, and she oft grew bored during her long shifts, stationed alone, patrolling the long halls of cells at her assigned facility.

Their conversations began with self-conscious irony — a woman of utmost order and law, chatting with an unrepentant and perpetual criminal — but eventually, gradually, turned to genuine friendship... and then attraction. Each slowly became thrilled by the mis-matched ridiculousness of their growing attraction to each other, which only served to fuel the infatuation further.

At last, neither could resist their feelings any longer. The Wood Wailer took advantage of the fact that she was well-respected and well-trusted within the Gridanian law enforcement organization, and thus she was oft stationed completely-alone during her shift-hours. So she could easily unlock the Duskwight man's cell and slip into his presence without anyone around to notice, and so the two could finally begin indulging in the tension and passions that had been building between them for months.

These trysts continued for some time, becoming more and more emboldened and reckless with each passing month, even as the Duskwight was periodically released from his gaol terms... before being arrested again, mere days or weeks later.

Often, if she could manage to manoeuvre her assignments correctly, the Wood Wailer would try to be the one on-scene to arrest him... because the two of them found even that to be subtly and especially erotic, as she dragged him back to "her" cells again...

And so this continued, their mischievous, blissful secret, for nigh-on a year, with none amongst the Wood Wailers, or Gridanians in general, any the wiser.

...Until the day that the Wood Wailer could deny reality no longer, and was forced to admit to herself that her body was clearly growing with child.

Suddenly, the consequences of her thrilling and shamefully-exciting game came crashing home: a Wildwood, having a child with a Duskwight... that was already unthinkable-scandalous. But her, a Wood Wailer, having a child with a well-known petty criminal, besides...

To the Wood Wailer's shock, however, the Duskwight man was not angered by the news — he was pleased, excited even, and promised her that he would do his utmost to support both her and the child.

In truth, she wasn't sure how to react to that — a part of her had honestly been hoping that he would take the opportunity to simply vanish, that she might never have to deal with him again. In her silent evaluation, his proudly wanting to remain, and be a father, only complicated matters for her, severely...

Then, matters were soon taken out of her hands — another criminal imprisoned at the same gaol, who had been observing their trysts for many months, eavesdropped and overheard their conversation about her pregnancy in the deep of night. That same other criminal then used the knowledge that he had gained as an opportunity to get his own sentence reduced, after slyly promising another Wood Wailer that he had knowledge about corruption with their ranks.

One event very quickly led to another, and in the end, the female Wood Wailer's name was blackened, and she was discharged with dishonor from the Wood Wailers, her career in ruins and her pension revoked.

Then, within mere days, it seemed as if all of Gridania already knew every last sordid detail, and the hushed whisperings amongst the commonfolk never seemed to cease.

As the months passed, and her belly grew more and more obvious, the shunning by her fellow Wildwood only intensified more and more. Her social networks withered and abandoned her, her former professional contacts avoided her, and her life spiraled into both destitution and despair.

By the end, the former Wood Wailer was forced to move into the run-down shack on Gridania's fringes that her Duskwight lover had long lived in, and then endure making ends meet in their decrepit household through the ill-gotten profits of his criminal activities and thefts. She tried constantly to instead find some honest way to support them — but none in Gridania would offer her, or her lover, any sort of employment... nor even eye contact.

Eventually, the former Wood Wailer gave birth to a healthy young boy, whose appearance undeniably reflected that of both his mother and father — his parentage was strikingly-obvious to any in the city at a mere glance, even as an infant.

Shortly afterwards, once her body had sufficiently recovered from the birth, the former Wood Wailer vanished in the night — fleeing Gridania, and going to parts unknown, never to be seen again by Landenel or his father... or any other known Gridanian, for that matter.

The Duskwight criminal, however, felt fiercely-protective of his boy, and proudly raised Landenel as best as he could... but for the troubled man, this essentially meant teaching Landenel all that the Duskwight father knew of crime and theft.

As such, Landenel grew up with a black mark upon his reputation in Gridania even before he could walk or speak, and it only worsened as the boy aged into being a capable thief himself, under his father's diligent guidance and training.

However, years later, when Landenel was entering his early adolescence, his father finally crossed the wrong Gridanian authority one time too many, and was hauled deep into the cells of a Wood Wailer prison — at last handed a sentence that would essentially consume the remainder of the man's lifetime, ensuring that Landenel's father was unlikely to ever again see the light of day.

Thus, Landenel was left alone, and despite being a mere boy, most Gridanians still shunned him just as much as they had his father. Indeed, many who knew of the boy simply assumed that he would end up along the same path as his father, and thus wanted no association with him. However, the young Landenel — during his daily skulking around the city — one day happened to cross paths with another boy that Landenel was attempting to steal from, named Ywain Deepwell.

Despite being only an adolescent himself, Ywain — trained well by his own Wood Wailer father in the arts of combat — quickly floored Landenel, and prevented the theft.

An irate Landenel, feeling his pride bruised — and possessing the fiery temper of his Wood Wailer mother, in addition to his father's cool and charming demeanor — quickly challenged Ywain to a duel "for honor", refusing to admit that he had been caught stealing.

A bewildered but incensed Ywain, already training in the way of the spear under his father, agreed with a combination of both annoyance and the impulse of youth. Ywain hurried away and fetched for Landenel a blunt training-spear, which Landenel had no idea what to do with, and their "duel" began.

To Ywain's surprise, Landenel actually had a natural talent with lancework, and held his own admirably-well by quickly observing and imitating Ywain's motions and actions. Whilst the duel ended predictably with Ywain's victory, it was very nearly a draw.

The young Ywain's anger quickly faded, and he instead felt impressed — and thus began excitedly offering Landenel tips on how to better-wield a lance... which Landenel actually listened to, finding himself fascinated by learning about an art other than petty crime.

The two quickly struck up a genuine friendship, and Ywain — oblivious to Landenel's reputation — took the boy home to meet his family. Ywain's Wood Wailer father was, unsurprisingly, quite shocked to see a youth of such ill-repute set foot within the Deepwell family home, but upon hearing Ywain's story, his father came to have some cautious respect for young Landenel.

Thus, believing that Landenel might have potential for redemption beyond his origins, Ywain's father instructed Ywain to continue training the boy, to which Ywain happily agreed.

So Ywain and Landenel became regular sparring partners, and both became quite good with a lance — good enough that, in their late teens, both were easily-accepted into the service of the Wood Wailers.

Image

Landenel, unsurprisingly, met a great deal of prejudice and scepticism from his fellow Wood Wailers — and Gridanians in general — due to his well-known past. However, he demonstrated remarkably-disciplined and impressive service, and his past was soon forgiven and forgotten by most who knew him.

Ultimately, though, some of Landenel's worst habits — taught to him by his father — remained with him, even into his attempt at an upright life: a penchant for drinking, gambling, and the temptation of easy and fine things. Additionally, his mother's intense temper continued to haunt him, and led to many problematic situations for Landenel, both with those citizens under his authority, and with his peers amongst the Wood Wailers.

Eventually, these issues would lead Landenel — at the age of 21 years, in 1563 6AE — to have a severe lapse of judgment, as he agreed to "look the other way" about an illegal gambling ring that he had discovered was operating out of a Gridanian hamlet, and to make an effort to keep other Wood Wailers from discovering it... in exchange for two things: a generous personal cut of the nightly profits, and the freedom to partake of the games — and booze — whenever the whim struck him.

Landenel enjoyed this nightly "relaxation" and "extra income" for quite a few months... until — in 1564 6AE, when Landenel was now 22 years of age — news of the gambling ring's existence finally leaked to other authorities, and it became known that a bribed Wood Wailer was enabling the activities to continue.

The ring hastily shut itself down and dispersed as soon as news of the Wood Wailer investigation was relayed to the criminals operating it, making it impossible for the frustrated Wood Wailers to investigate further.

However, the topic remained a sore and charged point of chatter and investigation amongst the Wood Wailer hierarchy, and suspicion and rumours quickly fell upon the new recruit Landenel — for Gridanians always assume the worst from Duskwights, and anyone with Duskwight blood.

Landenel realised that, due to prejudice against his origins, his punishment would very likely be far more extreme than others in a similar position, as the Wood Wailers would want to make an example in order to appease what would likely be an infuriated Gridanian public.

Landenel thus panicked, and protested the accusations intensely, attempting to claim innocence — after all, technically, no one yet had any scrap of direct evidence about his involvement... only assumptions.

That is when a troubled Ywain made a decision with his heart.

Ywain had realised the same thing that Landenel had: this incident would only lead to further Duskwight prejudice amongst Gridanians and Wood Wailers, and that Landenel would almost certainly be punished disproportionately in order to make a demonstrative example and try to

deflect away any blame that might fall against the Wood Wailer recruiters for allowing a troubled citizen like Landenel into their ranks.

Thus, as his humble and noble nature made him not wish to see either of those outcomes occur, Ywain abruptly stepped forward... and announced his own guilt, taking the blame in Landenel's place, and claiming that he had been the one accepting the bribes. A shocked Landenel — to his own shame and humiliation — remained silent, and quietly allowed his closest friend to take this fall in his stead.

Landenel was quickly offered deep apologies by all involved, and the Wood Wailers felt ashamed for assuming the worst of Landenel just because he was a Duskwight, guiltily vowing to do better to overcome their own prejudices.

Landenel quickly recovered, jumping back into his cool, practiced demeanor, and waved away their concerns, insisting that it was just a misunderstanding, everything was fine, and they needn't feel so bad about an honest mistake... Ywain, meanwhile, was dishonorably-discharged from the Wood Wailers by Captain Swethyna Brookstone herself, with a vicious and infuriated verbal dressing-down in front of Ywain's entire contingent.

Captain Swethyna expressed her extreme disappointment and shock that such a promising and upstanding member of her troops could end up having such a ridiculous lapse of greed and judgment, and railed that Ywain had tarnished the reputation of the entire organization with his greed and selfishness.

Ywain burned with humiliation and embarrassment, and became overwhelmed with regret about the effects that the incident would have upon his family's good name — especially his father, who remained a Wood Wailer himself.

However, Ywain ultimately bit his tongue, refusing to betray Landenel, and cause what Ywain feared would be even worse consequences for his friend, and the Duskwights of Gridania. Indeed, Ywain returned home to silence — his family was incredibly-ashamed, unable to even look him in the eyes. But Ywain feared that if he told any of his family the truth, then they would be unable to stop themselves from revealing it to the Wood Wailers, in an attempt to clear Ywain's name...

Thus, unable to deal with the situation emotionally, Ywain overnight made ready to depart from Gridania and the Twelveswood, hastily deciding — in 1564 6AE, at the age of 23 years — to leave behind his home, his family, and his proud profession as a Wood Wailer, and to seek his fortune abroad, as an adventurer... and in regions where his name was not so blackened. Before departing, Ywain privately met with Landenel one last time.

There, Ywain expressed to the contrite Landenel his sincere hope that Landenel would make good of this opportunity— to begin resisting his temptations once and for all, and to not

squander this final chance that he had been granted to lead an upstanding and well-respected life.

Landenel was left speechless, unable to decide exactly what to say or how to express himself, and thus Ywain at last departed in pained silence.

Ywain then shouldered his small traveling satchel and lance, and walked away from both his meeting with Landenel, and the Black Shroud itself.

1565 6AE

Most of the Wood Wailers, across the various regiments, were as stoic and reserved in emotions as any Gridanian — if not moreso — and as such, they did not continue to apologise, or otherwise express contrition, to Landenel in the days or months after the incident.

However, in their own ways, it was quite obvious that they felt ashamed and guilty about having assumed the worst of Landenel — they treated him kindly in subtle ways, and went notably out of their way to include the half-Duskwright in their various activities, trainings, and camaraderies. Landenel, at first, felt immense relief, and committed himself to being a model and upstanding officer... but he gradually became quite used to it, and in time, had become a relaxed and popular member of the Wood Wailers, the past incident sometimes being laughed off over drinks as "water under a bridge".

...However, in truth, beneath that casual and carefree public demeanor, Landenel was wracked with a guilt that festered ever-more with each passing day that he enjoyed comfort and companionship, whilst Ywain was out somewhere far away and unknown, disgraced and forgotten...

Eventually, it became too much for Landenel to endure, and so — from the perspective of the other Wood Wailers — he abruptly and seemingly-inexplicably resigned from his successful career as a Wood Wailer at age 23 years, in 1565 6AE... about a year after Ywain's disgrace and discharge.

Landenel then vanished from the Twelveswood, and — filled with shame and self-loathing — became a gambling drunkard, wandering aimlessly across Eorzea, his temper growing ever-more volatile and severe as his vices took ever-greater hold over him.

It was in these travels that Landenel eventually ended up in a situation where his volatile temper resulted in a dire confrontation after a high-stakes card-game, wherein the mood went sour after a drunken Landenel accused the others of cheating him after losing all of his coin yet again.

Rising in a rage and drawing his spear, Landenel very nearly murdered several innocent men.

However, another traveler intervened and subdued Landenel before blood could be shed. That traveler was Lorens, the former first-mate of Merlwyb Bloefhiswyn, who had years earlier walked away from Merlwyb and the League of Lost Bastards after witnessing Merlwyb execute her own father — and Lorens's adoptive father — Bloefhis.

Lorens had been quietly working on founding a mercenary group, whose ultimate purpose would be to protect and defend those unable to do so themselves. He had been searching the land for ideal candidates for this new group, but he refused to consider nearly everyone that he met — his instincts for men were sharply-honed, and he found precious few that met his personal criteria for the sort of individuals that he wanted in his new "crew".

But in Landenel, Lorens saw the sort of man that he was looking for. Aye, Lorens also recognised Landenel's severe vices, troubled personality, and dangerous temper... but Lorens still saw something within Landenel that few others in Landenel's life ever had: Lorens believed Landenel to be a good man deep inside.

Thus, after subduing Landenel, Lorens dragged him away, drunken and protesting, and then tied him up, and forced him to sleep off his drunken rage.

In the morning, Lorens then offered Landenel a place amongst the new mercenary brigade that Lorens was slowly building — the Company of Heroes.

At first, Landenel was inclined to burst out laughing... but as Lorens began to explain his purpose and his vision for the Company of Heroes, Landenel found himself instead remaining silent.

Indeed, Lorens's quiet, stern, sincere, selfless hopes, dreams, and ideas slowly began to remind Landenel painfully of his lost friend Ywain. As did Lorens's expert skill with a spear, which was far more nuanced and disciplined than Landenel's wild, impulsive style.

And so Landenel surprised himself, by accepting Lorens's offer.

The two men quickly became close companions — with Lorens quietly and patiently guiding Landenel onto a better path in life, and patiently steering Landenel back onto it every time that Landenel strayed again.

Landenel, in turn, developed a deep and abiding respect and admiration for Lorens, and came to feel more passionate loyalty toward Lorens than to anyone that Landenel had ever met in his life — indeed, Lorens became the responsible, upright father-figure that Landenel had never had... and in many measures, also the mother figure that Landenel had never had.

And so Landenel came to travel and battle alongside the Company of Heroes, and have many grand and daring adventures in the name of fortune, glory, and the protection of people across Eorzea.

In the last days of the Sixth Era, Captain Lorens — the reclusive master of the Company of Heroes — had abruptly announced the disbanding of the entire vast mercenary organization that he had built from humble origins into a fearsome force over the past two decades.

Image

A shocked and indignant Landenel Peaumasquier had railed and raged angrily against this sudden decision — but ultimately to no avail, for Captain Lorens seemed absolutely-convicted about the matter, and would not be swayed.

Thus was Landenel once-again left to wander the realm, lost in spirit, his sense of purpose removed...

...but now, unlike a decade prior, being a man far less viced, and far stronger of character.

So his mentor's parting words continually echoed within his mind as he wandered:

"Wheresoever life should lead you men next, I ask only that you live evermore with, in your hearts, the words of this brigade's solemn creed: 'The strong are for the weak.' "

And with that, Landenel's beloved mentor had solemnly saluted the assembled Brigade one final time... and then said only one last thing:

"Dismissed."

Eventually, after mulling over those parting words for nigh-on two aimless years — and witnessing much suffering and devastation as he wandered first the dire days of the Sixth Era's end, and then the ravaged realm of the Seventh Umbral Era — Landenel eventually concluded that he had, indeed, been far happier serving a greater — and admittedly, also very profitable — cause, in the service of the Company of Heroes.

And thus, to his frustration, he was finding it difficult to enjoy "retirement" — he could no longer find the same joy that he once had in a simple life of wandering, drinking, whoring, and gambling.

So Landenel at last gathered his resolve, and returned to the Twelveswood — where he requested, some 12 years after his previous resignation, to be reinstated within the service of the Wood Wailers.

The return of this prodigal son of Gridania spread a storm of whispers and rumours within the walls of the Wailing Barracks... and it was only shortly thereafter that Landenel was called to meet with a captain behind closed doors.

Image

Ah, but it was not just any captain of the Wailers — it was Swethyna Brookstone herself, Supreme Captain of the entire Wailer force.

Swethyna had taken as a personal wound the exposed corruption of that gambling ring some 14 years prior — having been shocked, in her younger days as Captain, that anyone under her watch and command could so sully the name and trust of the Wailers amongst both their own, and the people of the wood.

And she had also taken it even more deeply-personally that a man she had trusted so much, and had such hopes for — Ywain Deepwell — could betray his sworn oaths for such a trivial reason.

And so, she had taken it especially personally when, 8 years after that incident, it was at last made clear to her that Ywain Deepwell had not, in fact, been the perpetrator of those crimes...

...because, following that revelation, she had immediately begun to suspect which of her soldiers had been responsible.

Who else would the noble Ywain have been willing to sacrifice his very honor and character to protect... but his Duskwight friend? That rare Duskwight recruit to the Wailers... and a man who had already faced untold prejudice from his fellow soldiers, both for the color of his skin, and the origins of his family?

Yet from that context, Swethyna also struggled to bear truly ill will against Landenel.

Firstly, she had to admit to herself that she still held no true proof of her suspicions.

And furthermore, whilst his betrayal of his oaths for petty pleasures in his youth was inexcusable, she could grudgingly understand how his past had driven the man to have such weaknesses of character — and why he would fear confessing them in the social climate of those days.

And to be sure, the tales she had heard told about Landenel's deeds across Eorzea in the intervening years suggested to her someone who had admirably mended his ways... and become a respectable man in his own right, as well as a capable soldier.

However — he had still violated the honor of the Wailers, even if it was 14 years prior.

And even now, as he stood before her, humbly requesting reinstatement, she noted that not a word of confession or contrition slipped his lips — leading her to wonder whether he even remembered, or if he did, at all cared about, his petty crimes from days long gone... or the extreme grief and hardship that it had caused for his once-fellow Wailer, Ywain.

Thus did Swethyna — in silent contemplation, behind her unblinking mask — at last come to a decision.

Landenel Peumasquier would be granted his request, and reinstated to the service of the Wood Wailers — should he swear oath to forest, Gridania, and Elementals once more.

And, in acknowledgement of his extensive experience as a member of the Grand Sea Brigade, he would be made Captain of the Sixth Spears — as the previous captain of that unit had been lost in the catastrophic flooding of the original Camp Tranquil, and the Sixth Spears at that time suffering a severe staffing shortage.

Yet both Swethyna and Landenel instantly understood what her seemingly-generous appointment really meant:

Landenel would be stationed, in perpetuity, at... Camp Tranquil.

Neither said a further word about that, but both knew exactly what was being said: "You may return. But some penance will be paid."

Landenel, however, did not even flinch — instead he smiled gamely, and agreed to the assignment with an honored bow.

And, indeed, at first, Landenel deeply-resented the assignment — and being trapped in the unpleasant — and deadly, and precarious, and smelly, and mud-caked, and... (etc) — conditions of the rebuilt Camp Tranquil, and the awesome devastation that surrounded it.

But the discipline and purpose that had been instilled in him by Captain Lorens had left Landenel a changed man, and so whilst he chafed against his new duty... he did not abandon it.

Yet, in time, Landenel eventually came to take great pride in his assignment — and accordingly, responsibly shaped the Sixth Spears into an impressive force at Gridania's southern border, especially considering their relatively small number.

Image

Captain Landenel would come to recognise the importance of the Sixth Spears's struggle against the beasts and criminals that infested the marsh.

And he also would come to see the importance of protecting both travelers and traders alike as they brought a vital lifeline between Ishgard and Ul'dah via the roads of the Twelveswood.

And he would come to see the importance and necessity of keeping an ever-wary and vigilant eye upon Gridania's weak and porous southern borders.

But most of all, in his time stationed within the resurrected Camp Tranquil, he would come to feel a sense of connection to the past — to the men and women that had died to uphold this very same duty during the ominous final days of the Sixth Era.

He would come to feel that, by enduring this less-than-ideal post, he would honor many good men and women's memories — just as he hoped, through his service, to honor the memory of his former comrades in the Grand Sea Brigade.

In fact, so effective would become Captain Landenel's leadership, and the training of his Sixth Spears, that Camp Tranquil would survive and flourish against all odds in the remote southern region — so much so that the Seedseer Council eventually felt that the exorbitant cost of installing a coveted aetheryte was justified, to facilitate more efficient travel, trade, and defense of the increasingly-important outpost.

And through this all, Landenel would remind himself that he was most definitely upholding those final words of Captain Lorens: being strong for the weak.