

## FAIRE GAME

*by*

*Jean Rabe and Andre Norton*

**L**ORDS AND LADIES flock to Renaissance Faires for many different reasons:

To watch knightly jousts and birds-of-prey exhibitions.

To see belly dancers sway in the summer heat.

To hear minstrels perform charming centuries-past pieces.

To chomp down on smoked turkey legs and throw back a pint of ale.

To dress in elaborate costumes and buy fanciful medieval-looking knickknacks . . .

To be swept away to a romanticized era.

Picture it! Parades of nobles and jesters work their way through the grounds. Swordsmen call out for an audience. Women braid flowers in revelers' hair, while artists paint butterflies on upturned faces. Archery competitions are waiting to be joined. Jewelry and cloaks and tall mugs of lemonade are waiting to be bought. There are kissing bandits, mud wrestlers, crafters, and courtly dancers—all vying for attention. And don't forget the flowery headdresses to try on, the outdoor taverns to sing at, and all the new exhibits to discover.

And everywhere there are imaginations daring to be stirred.

Historically, the faires in Elizabethan times were held to celebrate the beginning of spring. There were artisans, musicians, and acrobats. Farmers brought their first crops to hawk. Not so different from what can be found now, eh?

When was the first "modern" Renaissance Faire? No one is really certain, though in the United States many faire enthusiasts point to May of 1963 in Hollywood, California, when Phillis and Ron Paterson ran what was called the "Renaissance Pleasure Faire." It drew about 8,000 folks, and the following year it was said to grow to 12,000.

Now the faires are found across the globe: the Bristol Renaissance Faire in Wisconsin; the Grand Valley Renaissance Faire in Colorado; the Kansas City Renaissance Festival; King Richard's Faire in Massachusetts; the Minnesota Renaissance Festival; Oregon Days of Olde Renaissance Festival; Silver City Renaissance Faire in New Mexico; Tennessee Renaissance Festival; Brisbane Medieval Fayre in Australia; Festival Medieval in France; and on and on and on.

Often they are the haunts or the productions of members of the Society for Creative Anachronism—an international organization dedicated to re-creating and studying the Middle Ages. Always they are the passion of the visitors who return season after season. For example, one of us has made a few trips to the Bristol Renaissance Faire in Wisconsin. Always, there would be a stop by the gaudy wooden stage to watch Dirk and Guido duel with their swords and spar with their verbal barbs. And, always, there would be time set aside to wander by the musicians, the dealer selling those oh-so-delicious almonds, and the mudmen wrestling in the pit.

Many faire-goers have poofy-sleeved shirts in their closet. We do, too.

And some of us try to employ the language of the faire performers and visitors—one must get in the spirit, after all.

Nay: no

Aye: yes

Ne'r: never

Wherefore: why

Belike: maybe

Verily: truly

Prithee: please

My Lord, My Lady, Is it even so, Forsooth, and Alakaday.

So good morrow to you kind readers! Within these pages are exquisite tales by fantasy's finest, all involving Renaissance Faires—ones the authors have visited and ones they have created from whole cloth. Verily, thou shall find genies and gentlemen, thieves and faeries, and magic enow to entertain and delight thee from cover to cover. Prithee sit back in thine favorite armchair and immerse thyself in this literary feast.

Anon,

Jean Rabe and Andre Norton