

At Last the Jousts Begin! from *Castle Diary* by Richard Platt and Chris Riddell

April 23rd, Monday

This being the feast day of Saint George, the whole castle was astir well before sunrise in preparation for the jousts.

All the clashes were keenly fought, but I shall give account of my uncle's combat first. His opponent was Lord Sudbury. Everyone from the castle (and the village folk besides) gathered eagerly to watch their charge.

After some ceremony, of which I shall tell after, the two knights trotted to opposite ends of the Lists (which is what they call the strip of field where the combat takes place). When they were some 300 paces apart they turned to face each other.

The sunlight danced on their shiny helmets, and on the bright colours of the families' arms blazoned on their shields and armour.

On the command 'LAISSEZ ALLER' from a herald, both knights urged their horses forward. Pricked with sharp spurs, the snorting horses galloped faster and faster, until they ran as swift as a March gale. Each knight aimed his lance at the shield of the other, and the watchers cried 'HUZZAH!' when my uncle stayed on his horse and knocked Sudbury to the ground. Three times my uncle toppled Sudbury. At their third meeting, though, the force of Sudbury's blow lifted my uncle, too, clean from his saddle.

Those who watched gasped 'ALAS!' in fear for my uncle's life, but he quickly rose to his feet and raised his iron glove to still the hubbub.

Then, though, he found that he could not raise the visor on his helm, so twisted was it from the fall. And when later the heralds announced that my uncle was the victor, he was nowhere to be found.

At length, a search of the castle discovered my uncle in the armoury – with his head laid on an anvil and the smith at work upon his helm. 'Tis surely a wonder the smith could remove my uncle's helm without harming a hair on his head.

