

EXCALIBUR

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Adapted from "Le Morte D'Arthur"

by

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Draft

Final

FADE IN:

EXT. FOREST - NIGHT

metal
flying
each
their
their

Darkness. The sound of battle cries and the clang of
upon metal. The forest lights up with huge sparks
from sword and ax as armored knights hack and swing at
other. Mounted knights collide head-on at full gallop,
armor made incandescent in the clash. Sparks eddy in
wakes and float to the ground. The forest catches fire.

battle

MAIN TITLES on the flames. Out of the sounds of ancient
grows music, heroic and barbaric, shot through with
melancholy.

man
male;
knowledge.
hair

Two crazed eyes reflect the fire. The eyes belong to a
without age, at once ancient and boyish, female and
his eyes are pained from the burden of too much
So close is he to the flames that a lock of his wild

annoying
It is
forest,

sizzles alight. He slaps at the fire as if it were an insect. He wears a cloak of black trimmed with silver. Merlin. The wizard weaves a path through the burning dodging the combatants, searching.

MERLIN

Lord Uther! Lord Uther!

follow
flames

The forest around him weeps softly with the sounds that slaughter. Patches of undergrowth are smoldering. Small lick bark and branches.

bodies of

Smoke floats through the trees and hovers over the the dying and the dead.

horse.

A huge knight reins up beside Merlin on a lathered

He

His armor is blood spattered. He is weary from battle.

of

looks down at Merlin, his countenance fierce. The blade of his sword glows with an unnatural aura.

MERLIN

It's done. A truce. We meet at the river.

UTHER

(disgusted)

Talk. Lovers murmuring to each other...

EXT. RIVER, FOREST - DAY

the
flanked by
them.

Waiting on one bank of a small river that flows through forest is a warlord, the Duke of Cornwall. He is his armored warriors. Lot of Lowthean prominent among They are battle-weary and bloodied, but they look ready to fight. Behind them is an army of lesser knights.

to

smaller

To the opposite bank come Uther and Merlin, a much

surrounding force of knights, including Uryens, Lord of Gore,
them.

DUKE OF CORNWALL

I spit on your truce, Uther. If you
want peace, throw down your swords.

silence Uther and the Duke of Cornwall glare at each other in
anger; across the river. Uther strains forward, burning with
but Merlin restrains him.

UTHER

I should butcher all and every one
of them. Merlin, what is this wagging
of tongues?

MERLIN

Just show the sword.

the Uther unsheathes his mighty sword, and brandishes it in
and air high over his head. The blade hums disquietingly
marvel leaves a lingering electric hue upon the air. The
instills dread in all present.

MERLIN

(waxing eloquent)

Behold the sword of power, Excalibur.
Before Uther, it belonged to Lud,
before Lud, to Beowulf, before Beowulf
to Baldur the Good, before Baldur to
Thor himself and that was when the
world was young and there were more
than seven colors in the rainbow.

(and in an aside to
Uther)

Speak the words.

UTHER

(bellowing)

One land, one king! That is my peace!

his The Duke of Cornwall looks around nervously as some of
knights fall to their knees in awe.

DUKE OF CORNWALL

Lord Uther, if I yield to the sword
of power, what will you yield?

UTHER

Me, yield!?

Merlin urges Uther hard.

MERLIN

(a whisper)

He has given. Now you must.

with

The two knights glare at each other, rage contending
anger.

UTHER

The land from here to the sea is
yours if you will enforce the King's
will.

The enemies lock eyes and Merlin watches anxiously.

DUKE OF CORNWALL

Done!

All men from both sides break out in wild cheers.

DUKE OF CORNWALL

My Lord King Uther, let us feast
together. To my castle. Lord Merlin,
you must join -

But Merlin is nowhere in sight.

INT. TINTAGEL CASTLE - HALL - NIGHT

lusty

She is

Cornwall

knights.

and

Drums and wailing flutes fill the banquet hall with a
rhythm. Armored warriors watch a lone woman dancing.
very beautiful, both sensuous and innocent.

Uther sits at the long table beside the Duke of
with the barons and dukes of the land, and the lesser
The table is stained with wine and littered with bones
half-eaten fruit.

Uther's eyes burn with lust as he watches the dancer.

DUKE OF CORNWALL

I would wish you such a wife, Lord
Uther, as my Igrayne. So innocent,
but in bed, a furnace...

center
him.
The Duke rises and goes to his wife, be-striding the
of the hall and Igrayne weaves circles of dance around
He gloats with pride.

The words escape his lips:

UTHER

I must have her.

Lot spins to face him.

LOT

What? You're mad! What about the
alliance?

UTHER

(oblivious)
I must have her.

LOT

And risk all you've won? This castle
commands the sea gate to the kingdom.

past
him. Uther is not one for politics, and Lot's words sail
him. The King lusts for Igrayne.

hall
dawn
Muffled
heard
Those
drunk,
A bell is struck not far away. The music ceases and the
falls silent. The great door creaks open, revealing the
light, and a monk steps into the hall and waits by it.
by corridors of stone, a choir of monks can now be
singing the high, ecstatic harmonies of the Te Deum.
who have fallen asleep at the table are roused, those
helped up.

INT. PASSAGEWAY, TINTAGEL CASTLE - DAWN

castle.
in
dark.
bent,
breathing
of
body. So
mouth is
an

The monk leads the party down the hallway of the
Thin shafts of dawnlight filter through archers' slits
the thick walls onto stone floors. Otherwise, it is
Each person, lady and knight, proceeds alone, head
some crossing themselves.
Uther is among them. He stops in a dark alcove,
heavily, waiting.
As the lovely Igrayne drifts past him, he pulls her out
sight of the others.
In a shaft of pale light Uther clasps Igrayne to his
breastplate, his iron arm wrapped around her frail
violent is his embrace that she cannot breathe, her
wide with fear, and her feet do not touch the ground;
impaled butterfly.

UTHER

You will be mine. Wife and queen,
bed and crown.

devour
she

His face is close to hers, looking as though he would
her tender whiteness with his kiss. She doesn't answer;
can't. Even Uther understands this and lets her go.

IGRAYNE

(a fierce whisper)
I want no other crown and no other
bed than those I have.

armor,

Her gown and her fragile skin torn on the spikes of his
Igrayne backs away and joins the procession.
Uther trembles with unreleased passion.

INT. PASSAGEWAY OUTSIDE CHAPEL, TINTAGEL CASTLE - DAWN

the

Igrayne enters the candlelit chapel from which issues

chant, calling the castle to worship. She rushes to her husband's side, kneeling next to him and whispering.

The
eyes.

Duke of Cornwall looks back at Uther, hatred in his

EXT. WAR CAMP - BEFORE TINTAGEL CASTLE - DAY

among
rolling
out
of

Uther is in a towering rage. Sword drawn, he stalks the biers of fallen knights. Squires and clerics keep a healthy distance. The sky is lowering, pregnant with thunder. Beyond his encampment, high on a cliff rising of the sea stands the impregnable Tintagel Castle, seat the Duke of Cornwall, now under siege.

UTHER

(bellowing in all directions)

Merlin! Where are you!?

Ulfius, a

Just then a knight rides up and dismounts. It is lieutenant.

UTHER

Have you found him?

ULFIUS

No--

But he cannot finish. He is taken aback by the sudden appearance of a hideous hag who approaches, rattling a beggar's pan.

HAG

What a hurry you were in this morning, good sir. You forgot to give this old woman a coin.

ULFIUS

I saw you half a day's gallop from here. I asked you if you had seen Merlin. I returned here straight away. How did -

HAG

--I heard. I have come. I am also Merlin.

flowing
The figure straightens, the filthy rags become a
cape, and the hair is swept back by the wind, and it is
Merlin, laughing.

MERLIN

I have walked my way since the
beginning of time. Sometimes I give,
sometimes I take. It is mine to know
which, and when.

UTHER

(exploding)
Dumb riddles, Merlin. I am your King.

Ulfius edges away.

MERLIN

I know the storm inside you, and
what it has wrought. The alliance I
forged is wrecked.

Selfish
The Duke of Cornwall under siege. All this for lust.
lust.

Uther grabs Merlin.

UTHER

For Igrayne. One night with her. Do
it. Use the magic.

distances
Merlin frowns pensively, his gaze searching strange
and wandering; then focusing, blazing straight at
Uther.

MERLIN

You will swear by your true kingship
to grant me what I wish. Then you
shall have it.

blade,
Uther kneels and draws his sword and holds it up by the
a cross.

UTHER

I swear it. By Excalibur and the
holy--

MERLIN

--What issues from your lust will be mine. Swear it again.

UTHER

I swear it.

Merlin looks down sorrowfully at the kneeling King.

EXT. BATTLEMENTS, TINTAGEL CASTLE - EVENING

riding
passes
The Duke of Cornwall watches a force of armored knights
forth from Uther's war camp, with banners flying. It
beneath the castle and on toward a distant cliff.

DUKE OF CORNWALL

(to a lieutenant)

It's Uther and all his best knights.
He leaves behind little more than
fledglings to guard his camp.

His eyes are as cold and as pale as ice.

EXT. CLIFF ABOVE THE SEA - TWILIGHT

the
sea, is
and
moans
Uther and his knights, and Merlin on a mule, ride to
high promontory and dismount. Here, overlooking the
a circle of ancient stones, carved with strange runes
hieroglyphics, and as the wind moves through them it
and sighs.

horse,
The knights watch as Merlin and Uther, leading his
walk toward the stones. Merlin strides into the circle,
turning to look at Uther, who hesitates.

MERLIN

Come.

halts
the
Uther starts to make the sign of the cross, but Merlin
him with a gesture. Uther's hand drops, and he enters
circle with his horse.

Castle
Merlin and Uther look out across the sea, to Tintagel

high upon the cliff.

Merlin solemnly raises his arms toward that distant
castle,
he
wind
Until
wind
and chants in an ancient language, the sounds of which
marries to the roaring and whining of the wind. The
becomes stronger, and Merlin's incantations become more
intense, and the wind in turn becomes wilder still.
Merlin is charged with a fierce, nonhuman power, as the
buffets his slight frame.

And then, for all to understand:

MERLIN

I hold the balance of all things in
my summoning. Arise mists. Come fog.

EXT. VISTA FROM THE CLIFF - TINTAGLE CASTLE - TWILIGHT

From the horizon a front of fog advances toward the
castle
circle
to envelop it, and continues across the gulf to the
of stones.

EXT. GATE, TINTAGLE CASTLE - TWILIGHT

The portal opens and a small force of armored men, led
by
around
the Duke of Cornwall, exits. A fog is thickening all
them.

EXT. CLIFF ABOVE THE SEA - TWILIGHT

The advancing front envelops Merlin and Uther, eddying
around
the stones. All else is obliterated.

MERLIN

Mount your horse.

The King does.

MERLIN

Ride straight to the castle, across
the sea of fog.

reins

Uther spurs straight for the edge of the cliff, then
in his horse abruptly.

UTHER

But the cliff, the sea...

Merlin rages, crazed.

MERLIN

Ride across! Across the bridges of
desire. Your lust will hold you up.
For I have just woven it into the
fabric of the world. This is magic -
making solid what is in the mind,
and unsolid, that which is already
solid.

He gives the horse a stinging blow with his staff.

stepping

hoofbeats

they

The horse and Uther charge forward into a gallop and
off where the hidden edge of the cliff would be,
ceasing and the horse dropping for the blink of an eye,
gallop across the fog.

EXT. MERLIN'S FOG

advance

animal

Galloping on no visible terrain, Uther and his horse
through the restless fog, and as they recede rider and
become a wavering, changeable form within the cloud.

EXT. GATE, TINTAGEL CASTLE - NIGHT

Horse and rider pull up at the gate.

RIDER

(calling)

Wake up in there. It is I.

eyes

resemblance to

If it was not for the electric blue hue burning in the
of the man entering the castle, the same magic hue that
Excalibur left upon the air when wielded, the
the Duke of Cornwall would be perfect.

After a moment the portal opens.

INT. INNER GATE, INTAGEL CASTLE - NIGHT

behind.
Duke

He passes into an inner court, the portal closing
Armed men emerge cautiously. Thinking that it is their
they help him dismount.

'DUKE' OF CORNWALL

Have the horse ready. I ride out
before sunrise.

An inner gate opens and the 'Duke' goes through it.

EXT. UATHER'S WAR CAMP - NIGHT

camp,
trapped
squawking
unhorsed
staggers

The real Duke and his men ride through the fogbound
cutting the ropes of the tents, stabbing the men
beneath the canvas. When a frightened crow flies
into the face of the Duke's horse, which rears. He is
and falls, and impales himself on a tent stake.
Dying, the true Lord of Tintagel Castle rises and
forward, blood pumping from him.

INT. CHAMBER, TINTAGEL CASTLE - NIGHT

lone

A little girl of four awakens from a nightmare, a small
figure in her canopied bed. Her eyes are ice, like her
father's.

MORGANA

Papa... Papa...

bed,

Igrayne is soon at her side, lifting the child from the
holding her tight.

MORGANA

My father is dead...

INT. IGRAYNE'S BEDCHAMBER - NIGHT

The 'Duke' enters. The room is empty, but the door to
Morgana's room is open.

INT. MORGANA'S CHAMBER - NIGHT

The 'Duke' stands in the doorway. Igrayne herself is surprised.

IGRAYNE

Look, here is your father. It was just a dream, little one.

'DUKE' OF CORNWALL

Come Igrayne.

own
to
Igrayne kisses Morgana, tucks her in and returns to her room, closing the door. The child doesn't know whether to believe the truth of the dream or the waking truth.

INT. IGRAYNE'S BEDCHAMBER - NIGHT

Igrayne on
eyes
passion,
armor.
In full armor, the 'Duke' bears down on the naked her marriage bed. She stares at him, wondering. But his are closed, and finally he carries her in his wild her white limbs tangling around the lustre of his armor.

EXT. CLIFF ABOVE THE SEA - NIGHT

coming
And Merlin is jolted awake from deep within himself, out of a trance.

MERLIN

It is done. The future has found root in the present.

midst of
mighty
together
He lifts himself up on his staff. He stands in the the ancient stones, bristling with excitement. Uther's knights are asleep, a deep unnatural sleep, huddled and surrounded by their horses. And then Merlin swoons, collapsing to the ground.

INT. HALL, TINTAGEL CASTLE - DAWN

bloodless
and
and
the
gown.

His lieutenants deposit the Duke of Cornwall's
body upon the long table. His eyes are wide open, icy
cunning even in death. The ladies of the castle support
comfort the grief-stricken Igrayne as she approaches
body of her husband. Morgana hangs onto her mother's

IGRAYNE

When did it happen? Where?

LIEUTENANT

In the camp of Uther, my lady, just
after nightfall.

IGRAYNE

It can't be. He came to me, to his
bed, last night.

LADY

It was his spirit, yearning for you
in his hour of death, that visited
you.

IGRAYNE

His spirit?

Pale with grief, Igrayne stares at her dead husband in
silence.

again,

Then her hand drifts to her stomach. When she talks
undone and resolved, it is to all and herself:

IGRAYNE

Tintagel Castle falls to Uther. But
what shall become of me, and the
child I bear?

across
that
cunning

Morgana shows no distress. She runs her baby hands
her father's face and closes his eyes. The intensity
was frozen in them is now added to her own pale and
eyes.

EXT. CLIFF ABOVE THE SEA - DAY

He is
awake.

Merlin has been propped up against one of the stones.
in a deep trance and Uther is attempting to shake him

UTHER

I want her, Merlin. I cannot be
without her. Tintagel is mine. Can I
take her now? Tell me!

puzzling

Merlin's eyes open but he sees nothing, and only a
squeal issues from him.

INT. IGRAYNE'S BEDCHAMBER, TINTAGEL CASTLE- EVENING

Morgana watches from a corner. The ladies of the castle
surround Igrayne who is giving birth.

notices.

Noisy crows alight on the windowsill. Only Morgana

INT. PASSAGEWAY, TINTAGEL CASTLE - NIGHT

knights
spattered.

Uther strides to Igrayne's bedchamber, his warrior
following. He is dirty and his iron dress is blood-

UTHER

(bellowing)

Three horses died under me, so hard
did I spur them here. Is it born? Is
it alive?

INT. IGRAYNE'S BEDCHAMBER, TINTAGEL CASTLE - NIGHT

and
on the
arms,

At his approach and entrance the ladies shrink back,
Morgana edges closer to her mother, and seats herself
bed beside her. Ingrain holds her newborn baby in her
the blood of birth still wet upon it.

UTHER

Out!

The ladies slip past him to the door, and he goes up to
Igrayne.

UTHER

What is it, lady?

Terrified of him, Igrayne faces him the best she can.

IGRAYNE

A boy, sir. Rest yourself.

Uther waves away her words but does sit down on the
bed,

exhausted. He notices Morgana, who stares at him.

UTHER

Send the girl away.

IGRAYNE

She is just a child -

UTHER

Out!

Igrayne draws the child to her and kisses her cheek.

IGRAYNE

(whispering)

Go now. Come back later.

The child leaves silently, hatred in her eyes.

UTHER

She watches me with her father's
eyes.

He grasps the newborn baby with his iron hand, and
pulls it
to himself. He looks upon it with wonder, with a
gentleness
that is unexpected.

UTHER

Igrayne, is he mine, or -

He can't bring himself to say his name. She hesitates
on the
edge of tears, worried for the infant lying in its iron
cradle.

IGRAYNE

The night he died, a man loved me
with great fierceness. He looked
like my husband, spoke like, smelled
like, felt like my own husband. But
it was not he, for he was already

dead. It wasn't his spirit, for this child, who was conceived that night, is flesh and blood. I know nothing more.

Uther draws a dagger. He lifts it.

IGRAYNE

No--

leather
casts
beaming,

But he uses it before Igrayne can move. He severs the thongs that bind the iron breastplate to his chest. He it to the floor. His chest is smooth and milk-white in striking contrast to his creased, weathered face. And he holds the baby to it.

UTHER

Through him, I will learn to love them, for I am tired of battle. I will stay by his side and
(looking shyly at
Igrayne)
his mother's...

becoming

Igrayne's hatred for the man is at the very edge of love. The baby starts to cry.

UTHER

Here. It's hungry.

swollen
bubbles
suckles.

And his free hand opens her shift, and he holds a breast in his gloved hand, squeezing gently. Milk from it and he thrusts the baby's mouth onto it. Igrayne weeps and Uther watches proudly as the baby

iridescent
perched

Merlin advances from the window, his cape the same green-black as the feathers of the crows that were perched by the window.

UTHER

Merlin! Out of the sick sleep at last.

MERLIN

Doing what I did for you, it wasn't easy, you know. It takes it's toll. It took nine moons to get back my strength.

Uther avoids looking at him.

MERLIN

Now you must pay me.

UTHER

I?

MERLIN

The child is mine, Uther. I have come for him.

Uther is shaken to his roots. Igrayne watches, trying to understand.

UTHER

The oath. You didn't say--

MERLIN

You didn't ask!

IGRAYNE

Uther, is it true? Don't let him take the child.

UTHER

I swore an oath, Igrayne. I made a pact with Merlin.

Igrayne suddenly understands. She glares at Uther.

IGRAYNE

It was you? You came to me that night. You are the father.

Uther is caught, and turns to Merlin who is harsh and unswaying.

MERLIN

It's not for you, Uther, hearth and home, wife and child.

UTHER

To kill and be king, is that all?

MERLIN

Maybe not even that, Uther. I thought once that you were the one to unite the land under one sword. But it'll take another, a greater king...

UTHER

You strike me with words as hard as steel.

MERLIN

They are not weapons, my friend, but truths. You betrayed the Duke, stole his wife and took his castle, now no one trusts you. Lot, Uryens, your allies will turn against you. Give me the child, Uther, I will protect him. Go back to your war tent.

hands Uther wrenches the baby from it's mother's breast and
him to Merlin.

UTHER

(in torment)

By the oath, take the devil child.
Take him!

Igrayne With the bawling baby under his cape, Merlin exits.
under pulls herself out of the bed, weak, her legs giving
her. She starts after Merlin.

IGRAYNE

WHY?... Why must he have the baby?

his Uther stops her with his bulk and she claws savagely at
around chest to get past him. He weeps as he folds his arms
her.

INT. PASSAGEWAY, TINTAGEL CASTLE - NIGHT

his As Merlin walks through the castle, the baby crying in
intervene arms, the knights and ladies step back, afraid to
in royal matters.

INT. HALL, TINTAGEL CASTLE - NIGHT.

Merlin comes across the empty banquet hall, cooing to the baby, strangely pacifying him. Morgana steps out of the shadows in his path, and Merlin stops at the sight of the little girl, her pale eyes glaring at him. She speaks haltingly and clearly while far-off Igrayne cries out her distress.

MORGANA

Merlin, are you now the father, and the mother, of the baby?

Staring at her, Merlin shudders and without answering he continues away, faster now, and into an unlit passageway, disappearing from sight a bit sooner than an ordinary mortal would have.

EXT. FOREST - DAY

The forest is dark and shiny with rain. An unseen battle rages.

The first combatant in sight is Uther, who swings the mighty Excalibur, cutting an attacker in half at the waist.

Uther and a small force of knights, Ulfius among them, are retreating through the slippery wet forest, completely outnumbered.

Lord Lot of Lowthean and Lord Uryens of Gore are the leaders of the attack.

URYENS

(to his men)

The King's sword. I must have it.

Ulfius and his men stand their ground so the King may escape the onslaught. They are hacked down.

tree

Uther flees alone, severing the limbs of any man and
that stands in his way.

EXT. STONE IN THE FOREST - DAY

clearing
forest
blood. He
a

Uther has gained on his pursuers. He comes to a small
where the spine of a buried boulder rises through the
floor. He stops upon it, breathing hard, dripping
rages aloud, but his throat is raw and cracked and only
whisper comes out.

UTHER

Merlin, where are you? To weave a
mist, to hide us...

He hears his pursuers closing in.

UTHER

No one shall have the sword. No one
shall wield Excalibur but me.

pointing
up his
rage
widens
pink
his

He holds it by the hilt with both hands, the blade
to the ground of stone. He flexes his knees. He lifts
hands above his head. And with all the strength that
and pain can muster, and more, he drives the blade of
Excalibur into the stone, nearly to the hilt. His mouth
in an awful silent scream, and then the foam of saliva
with blood issues from deep within him, so violent was
effort.

As the sword cuts into the rock, the earth shudders.

EXT. FOREST - DAY

in

The forest quakes. The knights searching for Uther halt
fear.

EXT. FIELDS, WOODS - DAY

a
birds. The
from
his

And far away, a caped figure is crossing a field toward
wood, when the earth shakes, stirring animals and
man turns. He is Merlin, the two day-old baby peeking
his cape. Merlin is amazed at the phenomenon, he puts
ear to a rock protruding from the earth.

MERLIN

Into the spine of the dragon!
(and then he is
saddened)
Uther... I loved you, mighty child.

whisks

And tears welling, and giggling at the same time, he
away into the woods.

EXT. STONE IN THE FOREST - DAY

is
mouth

Uther staggers away, colliding with trees, staggering,
crashing to the ground. Until the only life left in him
the coursing of his blood, flowing from his gaping
onto the leaves on the forest floor.

at
and
Uryens
and

The enemy knights advance through the trees. They prod
the fallen leviathan, they roll him over to get at his
scabbard. Only then do they see the sword in the stone,
they stop, amazed and afraid. Their captains appear.
sees what they are staring at, and races to the sword
attempts to pull it out.

He strains with all his might, but it is immovable.

LOT

Let me.

either,

He shoves Uryens aside, but he can't loosen the sword
and he rages with frustration.

FADE

OUT:

LEGEND APPEARS:

"Fifteen years passed and the land was without a king."

FADE IN:

EXT. FIELDS - DAY

fleeing a
in the
past the
their
leaves in

Peasants spill over the crest of a hill. They are
force of armored knights, their plumed helmets forged
semblance of predatory animals. The knights thunder
peasants, trampling the ripening crops. Sir Uryens is
leader, his hard face indifferent to the havoc he
his wake.

The peasants watch in mute anger.

EXT. FARMYARD - EVENING

pigs
lives
water and
who
as

Sir Lot leading another group of mounted knights comes
galloping into a small hamlet, panicked chickens and
scattering at their approach. The farmers run for their
as the steel men dismount, leading their horses to
hay, and searching for vittles. A knight spots a woman
stands frozen with fear, and he drags her into the barn
her crying child watches.

EXT. COUNTRYSIDE - NIGHT - MOONLIGHT

figures
knight
new
jousting
he

A farmhouse is burning nearby, and three mounted
make their way along a trail at a walking pace - an old
in leather and mail, a young knight proud in gleaming
armor; and on a farm horse, a squire with baggage and
lance. The old knight, Sir Ector, is troubled by what
sees.

SIR ECTOR

It is a dark hour... everywhere
lawlessness and destruction, and no
one to lead us out of it.

darkness,
They
slices

Just then, ten crazed peasants emerge from the
hurling stones and armed with clubs and pronged sticks.
surround the three riders. Sir Ector wheels around and
the air with his sword to ward off the ambushers.

SIR ECTOR

Listen all. I am Sir Ector of Morven
and these are my sons. You would
wrong me, for I have never stolen
from others, or destroyed the fruit
of the land.

the
the

The peasants edge closer, working up the nerve to rush
horsemen. The sound of thundering hooves cuts through
clamor.

tears.

A cavalcade of riders, armor gleaming in the moonlight,
advances across the fields at a gallop. Immediately the
peasants scatter. The old knight is on the verge of

SIR ECTOR

The people's anger is just. It is
sad that for our own safety, we will
have to ride to the tournament with
these robber knights.

EXT. SITE OF THE SWORD IN THE STONE - SUNRISE

stone
each
burly

Red with the first light of day, Excalibur rests in the
as King Uther left it. The field is itched with tents,
flying its heraldic banner. Knights and squires are
everywhere, preparing horses and armor for the joust. A
man in religious robes harangues the crowd, vying for
attention.

BISHOP

This is Easter day, when Christ rose
again. Who will find strength in
victory of arms? Who will draw the

sword?

throng,
and
over

The Bishop goes among the tents, through the teeming solemnly casting holy water upon man and horse, armor banner. The knights kneel at the Bishop's transit, but ceremony does not lift the air of grimness that lies the event.

EXT. JOUSTING GROUND, SWORD IN THE STONE - DAY

thunder
jousting
deflected
crowd,
around
again
time
unhorsed.

Their armor ablaze with sunlight, two mounted knights toward each other at full gallop, lowering their long lances. As they meet, the lance of each knight is by the shield of the other. A gasp goes through the and the two knights charge past each other. They wheel at the end of the jousting ground and go at each other from the other direction. Again lances strike, and this one of the men is hit in the chest and violently The crowd cheers.

EXT. THE SWORD IN THE STONE - DAY

dismounts.
comes
although

The victor, Leondegrance, rides up to the stone and Each great knight with his coterie of lesser knights to watch. A charge of expectation is in the air, most knights are glowering with envy.

it by
Excalibur is
staggers
others

Leondegrance of Camelyarde ascends to the sword, grabs the hilt, and begins to tug with all his might. immovable. The moment of tension passes. Leondegrance toward his waiting squires, who lead him away. All the return to the battle sport.

EXT. JOUSTING GROUND - DAY

Kay
buckling
small
empty. He

At the edge of the jousting ground Sir Ector's son Sir
is getting ready for a bout. His brother Arthur is
the new armor while his father fusses about him, making
adjustments when he notices that Kay's scabbard is
turns to Arthur and grab's him by the ear.

SIR ECTOR

Arthur, where is Kay's sword? A good
squire doesn't forget his knight's
sword.

The fifteen year-old boy blushes.

ARTHUR

I left it in the tent, sir.

SIR ECTOR

Well hurry then, and get it.

without

The boy dashes off as Sir Ector shakes his head, not
affection beneath the sternness.

EXT. TENTS - DAY

Arthur runs in search of their tent. He finds it.

INT. TENT - DAY

floor,
verge

He enters. The saddle trunk has been emptied on the
equipment is scattered all over. Arthur is shocked,
nonetheless he rummages madly. Finally he stops, on the
of tears.

ARTHUR

It's been stolen....

EXT. TENTS - DAY

by two
left

He comes out, utterly defeated, and frantic. He stops
knights who are arguing angrily; and one of them has
his sword in the grass.

can't. Arthur looks at it. He is tempted to steal it, but he
Head down, he wanders off.

EXT. JOUSTING GROUND - DAY

Sir Ector and Sir Kay are waiting.

SIR KAY

Father, I'll go and see what's keeping
him.

EXT. THE SWORD IN THE STONE - DAY

dejected, Arthur stops at the edge of the dark forest, totally
his when he sees the sword in the stone. He walks up to it,
as face lighting up, brimming with innocence. He is alone,
everyone has returned to the jousting ground.

ARTHUR

If only Kay could have it...

in a He smiles, forgetting his troubles, a boy again living
comes fairy tale. He grasps the sword by the hilt and it
away easily from its stone lock.

arm Not expecting it to, he nearly falls. He stares at it,
terribly excited and surprised: he tucks it under his
and rushes back.

EXT. TENTS - DAY

He bumps into Kay.

ARTHUR

(breathless)

Your sword was stolen, Kay, but here
is Excalibur. Is it too late? I
hurried--

his Kay takes it. He cannot believe what he's holding in
only hands. He starts to talk but he is so agitated he can
stutter.

EXT. JOUSTING GROUND - DAY

him
Kay, with Arthur in tow, rushes to Sir Ector and shows
the sword; he trembles with excitement.

SIR KAY

Look, Father. Excalibur. Does that
mean that I am to be king?

Sir Ector is dumbstruck.

SIR ECTOR

Did you free the sword, boy?

SIR KAY

I... did, Father.

not
Ector looks at his son amazed, wanting to believe but
able to.

SIR ECTOR

We must go to the stone at once.

stone,
excitement
happening.
With Excalibur in hand Ector of Morven heads for the
Kay following, and Arthur too, the boy flushed with
but a little worried, not understanding what is

overheard.
spreads
like wildfire.
The exchange between Sir Ector and Sir Kay has been
Some have seen the sword in Sir Ector's hand. Rumor

EXT. THE SWORD IN THE STONE - DAY

jousting
and
peasants too, press around.
As Sir Ector ascends the stone, from all parts of the
ground knights and squires, the Bishop and the clerics,

Excaltibur
sinks to its original position.
Ector lowers the blade into the tight cleft and

SIR ECTOR

Draw it, son!

and the Sir Kay grabs the hilt and pulls without conviction,
sword doesn't give. Eyes downcast, he lets go.

SIR KAY

Sir, I didn't draw the sword. Arthur gave it to me.

SIR ECTOR

Arthur ?!
(spinning around to
face him)
How did you get the sword, child?

ARTHUR

(frightened)
Sir... Kay needed a sword. His was stolen. I saw Excalibur, and... I took it.

SIR ECTOR

You freed it, son?

ARTHUR

I did, Father. I beg your forgiveness.

He starts to kneel but Ector pulls him up.

SIR ECTOR

Try the sword, Arthur.

and Arthur is about to grasp the hilt when Uryens and Lot,
Caradoc other nobles, Leondegrance of Camelyarde, and Sir
and Sir Turquine among the younger, stride up.

URYENS

Stand back, Sir Ector, and take your children.

LOT

We will try again.

turn Uryens, Lot, Leondegrance, Caradoc, Turquine - each in
with grapples with the sword, only to be defeated by its
immobility. The crowd around the stone is thickening
common folk.

SIR ECTOR

Let the boy try the sword.

BISHOP

Let the boy try...

knights
pushes

The demand is echoed by peasants and serfs. The great
remain silent and bitter in their defeat. Sir Ector
Arthur to the sword.

SIR ECTOR

Go ahead, boy. Don't be afraid.

Excalibur
following
afraid,

The boy hesitates shyly, and then takes the hilt of
and pulls out the sword with a great sweep.

The throng is stunned. Silence falls. Some kneel,
the example of Sir Ector and Sir Kay, of the Bishop and
Leondegrance. The other nobles stay back, confused,
angered.

shining
confidence
head.

Arthur stands there, little more than a boy, his cheeks
flushed, his soft hair ruffled by the wind, his eyes
with exultation, awe, and fear. Then, as if gaining
from the sword itself, he turns it in arcs above his

BISHOP

We have our King, thanks be to God.

roaring
and

The commoners and some of the knights react with
enthusiasm. The others draw closer to Uryens and Lot
their supporters, closing ranks around them.

ARTHUR

Please, Father, rise up. I was your
son before I became your King... if
I am King.

Sir Ector rises, tears streaming down his cheeks.

SIR ECTOR

My Lord, you are King, all the more

because you are not my son, and I am
not your father.

This is quite a shock to the boy king, and to the
onlookers.

ARTHUR

Who is, then?

SIR ECTOR

I don't know. Merlin brought you to
me when you were newly born and
charged me to raise you as my own.
At first, I did so because I feared
Merlin, later because I loved you.

Merlin's name is on the lips of all those close by.

ARTHUR

Who is Merlin?

MERLIN

Speak of the devil!...

From out of the forest strides Merlin, dramatic, cape
flowing,
eyes crazed as ever, laughing at his own entrance. A
crow is
perched on his shoulder, and it squawks loudly. Annoyed
with
it, Merlin swooshes it away.

MERLIN

I am Merlin. Counselor to kings.
Wizard and beggar. Prophet and...

(he drops it)

I have feasted on thunderbolts, I
savored my death before I got myself
born. I--

Merlin interrupts himself when his eyes fall on the
boy, who
is taking in his performance raptly, half awestruck,
half
amused.

ARTHUR

Whose son am I?

MERLIN

You are the son of King Uther, and
the fair Igrayne... you are King

Arthur.

The suspicion and confusion and envy of the lords erupts.

LOT

Merlin, we haven't forgotten you.
This is more of your trickery.

URYENS

You're trying to foist a boy of
dubious birth upon us. You want to
shame us?

LOT

Lord Leondegrance, join us against
the boy. Surely you can see he is
only Merlin's tool.

LEONDEGRANCE

No. I, Leondegrance, Lord of
Camelyarde, saw the drawing of Uther's
sword, and witnessed no trickery. If
a boy has been chosen, a boy shall
be king.

The crowd of serfs and peasants cheer wildly, and their
long suppressed anger against the nobles comes to the fore.
They dare to press up against them, fists hammering on their
and shields as the chant Arthur King over and over. Dark
Leondegrance scowling, full of rebellion, all the lords except
begin to withdraw their iron men surrounding them.

EXT. CHAPEL, JOUSTING GROUND - DAY

Bells toll the good news. People stream by to see the
new king and join the celebration.

EXT. SITE OF THE SWORD IN THE STONE - DAY

Uryens and Lot, and Caradoc, Turquine, and the other
lords have mounted, and are moving out, when from the rear
guard a bowman in Lot's service draws upon the unarmored figure
of

arrow
Arthur across the cheering crowd. The bowman lets the
fly.

It flies over the heads of the crowd, unseen.
Except by Merlin at Arthur's side. He extends his arms
halfway
on the
flaps
up, his fists clenched tightly as if drawing urgently
power within himself. The sound of wings is heard as he
his arms.

The arrow flies toward Arthur.
Arthur sees the arrow coming right at him, when a
swooping
crow plucks it out of the air.

Arthur watches the crow flapping its wings, climbing
swiftly,
the arrow in its beak, disappearing over the forest.
Only he
has noticed.

When he turns Merlin is no longer at his side; to the
puzzlement of all. And Arthur is all of a sudden
terribly
his
alone and afraid, as people from all sides clamor for
attention and guidance.

EXT. FOREST - DAY

Arthur charges through the shadowy forest. He is in
armor,
sheathed
calls
but it is only a light tunic of mail. Excalibur is
in a leather scabbard by his side. He is frantic and he
urgently.

ARTHUR

...Merlin... Merlin...

His face shines with sweat, the horse is lathered. He
dismounts and continues on foot into denser, more
tangled
undergrowth.

ARTHUR

Merlin!

to
head.
A huge eye opens in the foreground of what had appeared
be shadow, bark and tufts of weeds is really Merlin's

MERLIN

You called, sir?

exhausted
roots
his
His voice is thin as he is awakening from a deep,
sleep. Arthur finds him lying within the large gnarled
of a great tree. The boy kneels before Merlin and lifts
hands and kisses them.

ARTHUR

You saved me from the arrow...

MERLIN

(a flicker of mischief)
But not from your destiny.

ARTHUR

I want to thank you.

MERLIN

That's not why you came.

Arthur blurts it out:

ARTHUR

Merlin, help me. I need your help. I
don't know how--

MERLIN

(irritated)
'Help me, Help me.' Help me get up.

unsteadily.
Arthur helps Merlin up and the wizard stands

MERLIN

I'm tired. Doing magic takes its
toll, you know. My arms ache
terribly...
(he makes flying
movements with his
arms and grimaces)
Once--or is it yet to happen--I stood

exposed to the Dragon's breath so that a man could lie one night with a woman. It took me ten moons to recover. I'm sure that story would interest you, since... Well, we'll have to talk about it another time. You're too busy now.

shrill

The forest groans and creaks, alive with murmurs and calls.

MERLIN

It is whispered in the forest that...
(he cups his ear with
exaggeration)
...Leondegrance's castle is under
siege by Lot and Uryens.

ARTHUR

(pressing)
Yes, yes, I know that. Everybody
does. Lord Leondegrance is my only
ally among the barons and the great
knights. I can't lose him.

MERLIN

Well there. You don't need me half
as much as you think you do. You
already know what must not happen.

ARTHUR

(exasperated)
I must find the means to save him,
then. I was hoping I could ask you
for a little magic help, but if it
makes you so tired...

MERLIN

Thank you.

Silence. Arthur tries again.

ARTHUR

It's just that I have no experience,
and no men to speak of. How can I--

MERLIN

(suddenly fierce)
Because you must! You and only you.
Have you forgotten that it was you
who freed Excalibur?

Just as suddenly, he is his amused, ironic self again.

MERLIN

Besides, it will be a good lesson.
(giggling)
The best, if it's not the last.

Merlin

Arthur bows his head, confused and almost defeated.
steals a look at him, and puts his arm around the boy.

MERLIN

Maybe you'd like to meet the power
that gave you the sword?

He enjoys being cryptic.

ARTHUR

How? Where?

MERLIN

In the great book.

ARTHUR

What book is that?

MERLIN

(melodramatic)
The book without pages. Open before
you, all around us. You can see it
in bits and pieces, for if mortal
men were to see it whole and all
complete in a single glance, why, it
would burn him to cinders.

ARTHUR

What?!

EXT. FOREST AND ELSEWHERE - DAY AND NIGHT

MERLIN

The dragon! There...

lava
cloud,

A deep cleft at the edge of the forest, where far below
boils with a phosphorescence that lights up a great
billowing upward.

MERLIN

Coiled in the unfathomed depths, it

emerges...

Merlin points to the sky where roiling clouds appear to
be unfurling of immeasurable wings.

MERLIN

...It unfolds itself in the storm
clouds...

A terrific wave batters a coastline, spray shooting up,
and as the wave recedes it exposes dark rocks and deep
crevices.

MERLIN

...it washes its mane sparkling white
in the blackness of seething
whirlpools...

Merlin spins Arthur around, and they are transported
into a storm swept forest. Lightning strikes.

MERLIN

...its claws are the forks of
lightning... its scales glisten in
the bark of trees...

The trees shine with wetness, as a great wind tosses
their crowns, the branches groaning against each other.

MERLIN

...its voice is heard in the
hurricane...

Arthur is awestruck.

EXT. FOREST - DAY

Arthur and Merlin are back in the same spot, having in
fact never moved at all, but traveled on the spell of
Merlin's words alone.

MERLIN

...it is so much more than a scaly
monster. It is Everything!

Arthur's eyes shine with the brilliance of the vision.

ARTHUR

And if I am to be King of everything,
lord and commoner, beast, leaf and
rock, I must use its voice, its claws,
its power.

EXT. BATTLEMENTS, CASTLE OF CAMELYARDE - NIGHT

sees
girl of
surviving
walls
Leondegrance, Lord of Camelyarde, is shocked by what he
in the distance. His daughter Guenevere, a beautiful
sixteen, draws close to him, terrified. With his
knights, Leondegrance is making his last stand. The
have been breached, parts of the castle are burning.

EXT. OUTSIDE THE CASTLE - NIGHT

gleam
A bellowing dragon advances. Its eyes burn, its scales
from light shining from within. It snorts fire from its
nostrils.

in
away
unprepared war
in
Uryens and Lot, Caradoc and Turquine, the great knights
command of the siege of Leondegrance's castle, back
speechless as the monster descends upon their
camp. All around them, squires and lesser knights flee
panic and confusion.

backs
waiting
Only a dozen or so remain with their leaders. The group
up against the swampy moat that surrounds the castle,
with swords drawn.

that it
Their
scales,
its
The dragon moves closer, and now it becomes apparent
is nothing more than a force of knights and footmen.
shields glinting in the moonlight are the dragon's
torches its burning eyes. And the snorting flames from
nostrils are only Merlin doing a fire-eater's trick.

the
and Kay

The dragon form dissolves, and a banner rises bearing emblem of the Dragon, and under it, Arthur and Ector lead a charge of twenty knights.

upon

In Arthur's hands, Excalibur leaves an electric glow the air.

EXT. BATTLEMENTS, CAMELYARDE CASTLE - NIGHT

GUENEVERE

Father, it's the boy King.

LEONDEGRANCE

It is. I will fight my way to his side.

EXT. OUTSIDE THE CASTLE - NIGHT

and
water
armor,
Arthur's
Bleeding
back

Arthur and his men charge into the enemy ranks. Lot's Uryens' people are pushed into the moat. Although the is only waist-deep, the fallen, weighed down by their armor, drown. The horses of the attackers are brought down, among them. He pulls out from under it, limping. form wounds, cutting, slashing, thrusting, he falls from the havoc of the charge.

respite.
their

A small distance exists now between the foes, a brief Uryens and Lot, exhausted, bleeding, and fierce in rage:

URYENS

War-wise fighters, grown gray in battle, checkmated by a boy.

LOT

It's Merlin's trickery, nothing more. I won't swear faith to that wizard's brat.

his

Arthur and his men have been joined by Leondegrance and

knights, few in number.

ARTHUR

Let's finish this with a show of force. We have no more tricks and no more advantages.

his
die.
He rushes alone at the enemy, shouting at the top of lungs, Excalibur flashing over his head, prepared to

EXT. BATTLEMENTS, CAMELYARDE CASTLE - NIGHT

Guenevere watches...

GUENEVERE

No...

EXT. OUTSIDE THE CASTLE - NIGHT

SIR ECTOR

No... Arthur--

defend
from
The old knight rushes after the boy, sword drawn, to his flank, and the others follow, a battle cry issuing from them that is terrifying in its fierceness.

EXT. BATTLEMENTS AND BATTLEFIELD BELOW - NIGHT

face
...and when she can't watch any longer, she buries her face in her hands.

EXT. OUTSIDE THE CASTLE - NIGHT

savage
fall
Arthur fights like a wounded lion at the center of the melee of sword and shield, and once again the two sides fall apart.

bodies of
wounded,
Arthur
Uryens and Lot are standing in the moat among the bodies of their men, are reduced to eleven knights, all wounded. Arthur is flanked by twenty men at arms, most of them wounded, and trembling now beyond exhaustion with blood lust.

steps forward alone, and addresses his opponents.

ARTHUR

You are in my hands, to slay or spare.
I need battle lords such as you.
Swear faith to me and you shall have
mercy.

URYENS

Noble knights swear faith to a mere
squire?

watching
implacable,
going

Arthur turns, searching for Merlin. He spots him
from a distance. They stare at each other, Merlin
Arthur's eyes pleading. It's obvious that Merlin isn't
to help.

ARTHUR

You are right. I'm not yet a knight.
(gaining strength)
You, Uryens, will knight me.

before

He unsheathes Excalibur and goes forward, kneeling
Uryens and offering him the sword.

ARTHUR

Then as knight to knight I can offer
you mercy.

MERLIN

(to himself)
What's this, what's this?!

him,
mad

Arthur, kneeling, bows his head and Uryens steps up to
his features set. He accepts the sword. Lot watches, a
hope dancing in his eyes.

EXT. BATTLEMENTS, CAMELYARDE CASTLE - NIGHT

Guenevere watches, frightened for Arthur, not daring to
breathe.

EXT. OUTSIDE THE CASTLE - NIGHT

enigmatically.

Uryens stands towering above the boy. He smiles

He lifts Excalibur.

Merlin is attempting to push through the crowded ranks
to get to Arthur.

He's frantic and worried for once.

MERLIN

I never saw this...

Uryens swiftly lowers the sword on Arthur's neck; with
the flat of the blade he gives Arthur the three strokes.

URYENS

In the name of God, of Saint Michael
and Saint George, I give you the
right to bear arms, the power to
mete justice.

Arthur looks up.

ARTHUR

That duty I will solemnly obey as
knight and King.

Uryens is deeply moved.

URYENS

Rise, my King. I am your humble
knight, and I swear allegiance to
the courage in your veins, for so
strong it is, it's source must be
Uther. I doubt you no more.

Sir Arthur rises and Uryens kneels and kisses his hands.

Ector turns away to hide brimming tears. Merlin pushes
through finally, out of breath. Uryens embraces Leondegrance
while

Lot and the other enemy knights kneel in turn and kiss
Arthur's hands.

EXT. WOOD BY CAMELYARDE CASTLE - DAY

The castle can be glimpsed through the trees. A clear
spring bubbles from the ground, and the sun splashes leaf,
bird,

Guenevere

squirrel, and bee with golden light, and Arthur and too. Guenevere is serious and intent on her work.

ARTHUR

Owww...

on
arms,
sewing.
cloth.

With water from the spring, she is bathing a large cut his chest that has been stitched closed. Wounds on his and one on a calf also show evidence of her neat She's just finishing, and she dabs his chest with a dry

GUENEVERE

It didn't hurt too much, did it?

ARTHUR

Ye...

GUENEVERE

--I'm pretty good at stitchery. I've sewn my father's wounds more than once.

He starts to get up.

GUENEVERE

Careful! You'll have to stay still for a few days or you'll tear them open.

Arthur shivers at the thought.

ARTHUR

But I have to leave tomorrow. The forests are thick with rebels, invaders plunder our shores...

GUENEVERE

--And damsels in besieged castles are waiting to be rescued?

ARTHUR

I didn't know Leondegrance had a daughter.

GUENEVERE

Well, then, I shall tell you which knights have maiden daughters, so

you can avoid their castles.

irritates
Arthur smiles at her, enjoying her jealousy, and it
her a little.

GUENEVERE

No, I think it's better if you just
stay here to heal. At least a week.

ARTHUR

I'm going.

GUENEVERE

Quiet, or I'll sew up your mouth
too.

shut.
She touches his lips with hers, her eyelids fluttering
He stares at her young beauty, and draws her into a
long,
slow kiss.

away.
A shrill almost human squeal pierces the air not far
giggles.
Arthur pulls away startled, half-rising. Guenevere

GUENEVERE

Would you rescue me from a fiery
dragon, sir?

She puts her arms around him, drawing him close again,
speaking in a half-whisper.

GUENEVERE

It's just a furry little rabbit that
took the bait and sprung the trap.

closer:
They smile at each other, about to kiss. As they come

GUENEVERE

You'll find him served up to you
tonight, cooked in a most excellent
sauce...

INT. BANQUET HALL, CAMELYARDE CASTLE - EVENING

The soft beat of psaltery and the liquid flow of lute.

position is
table
it
and it
gliding,
right.
into
another
his

serving platter bearing roast rabbit in rampant
carried across the hall. It is laid on the long raised
before Arthur, who presides in the middle. He looks at
suspiciously and blushes, remembering the afternoon;
looks back at him accusingly with its cherry eye.
Guenevere is dancing around her father, lovely,
sensual. She sees Arthur and the rabbit and laughs out-
He twists off a leg of the rabbit and sinks his teeth
it to hide his embarrassment. Guenevere passes to
partner, smiling at him, radiant. Arthur watches her,
heart breaking. He is in love.
Merlin leans close.

MERLIN

A king must marry, after all.

ARTHUR

...of course...

Only then does he realize that Merlin has understood
everything. He is annoyed at being so transparent.

ARTHUR

I love her. If she would be my queen,
my dreams would be answered.

MERLIN

(mischievous)

There are maidens as fair, and fairer
than Guenevere. If I put my mind to
it, I could see them now, many of
them, weeping for love of you,
watching the hills for you coming
from the high towers of their castles.
Offering you their every favor. Rich,
clever--but if it is to be Guenevere,
so be it.

A shadow of doubt crosses Arthur's brow.

ARTHUR

Who will it be? Put your mind to it,
then.

MERLIN

Guenevere. And a beloved friend who
will betray you.

ARTHUR

(smiling)
Guenevere...

MERLIN

You're not listening. Your heart is
not. Love is deaf as well as blind.

her
before
Guenevere approaches, smiling and coquettish. She slaps
hands, and a servant sets down a tray of pastries
Arthur.

GUENEVERE

They are only for you, for in them I
mixed things that heal, but not too
quickly; and things that make limbs
sleepy, preventing escape, but keep
one's mind sharp.

She smiles at Arthur's embarrassment and confusion.

ARTHUR

What's in them?

She takes a cake and bites into it.

GUENEVERE

It is an ancient mixture, containing
only soft, unborn grains, and flavored
with roses. The rest is secret.

looking at
it.
Guenevere offers one to Arthur, and he hesitates,

MERLIN

Looking at the cake is like looking
at the future. Until you have savored
its bitterness and its sweetness,
its texture and its perfume, what do
you really know? And then, of course,
it will be too late.

into Arthur bites into the cake, and Guenevere looks deep
his eyes.

MERLIN

Too late...

FADE

OUT:

A LEGEND APPEARS:

"...but for years war kept Arthur from thoughts of
marriage."

FADE IN:

EXT. OAK FOREST - DAY

Near War tents have been pitched beneath the majestic trees.
in the banner of the Dragon a doe grazes. Arthur is older,
watched battle-scarred plate armor, pacing and angry. He is
the by his wounded and bruised knights--Kay, Uryens, Lot,
Leondegrance, Caradoc, and some new young faces among
ranks. No one talks.

arrival The harsh clank of its battle trappings announces the
knight of a horse. All eyes watch it walk into the camp. A
is slouched in the saddle.

some Arthur runs to meet the horse, followed by squires and
of the knights.

It is He eases the rider to the ground, unlaces his helmet.
in Sir Ector, and his hauberk is badly dented. Tears burn
Arthur's eyes.

SIR ECTOR

He is the mightiest and fairest of
knights.

ARTHUR

We fought and won battles, and now

one man defeats all my knights? I
will go.

steps He pushes past the knights and goes to his horse. Kay
in front of him.

SIR KAY

A king must not engage in single
contest. I'll go again.

from Arthur rises into the saddle and takes a jousting spear
the rack.

ARTHUR

Where is Merlin?

The squires are silent.

from. His Arthur gallops off in the direction Sir Ector came
knights are afraid for him.

EXT. COUNTRYSIDE - DAY

bordering His countenance grim, Arthur gallops along a trail
to a plowed field when in it a scarecrow moves. It starts
Arthur run as stick-wielding farmers pursue it. It is Merlin.
armored turns off into the field, and at the sight of an
Merlin knight on a war horse, the farmers turn and flee.
stops to catch his breath.

ARTHUR

(angry)

I should have left you to fend for
yourself.

MERLIN

I had to weave a little enchantment
on the bees so I could get some honey,
and I didn't feel up to using any
more magic just yet. Anyway, I was
in less danger than you'll be in
today.

Arthur's hand is clenched tight around Excalibur's
hilt.

ARTHUR

So you were stealing their honey.
They should have killed you.

MERLIN

Come now. So much anger for such a
little crime? Are you sure there is
nothing else troubling you?

ARTHUR

You know full well there is, and I
go to meet it now. Come witness my
revenge.

He offers his arm and Merlin hoists himself up behind
the
King.

EXT. GORGE THROUGH THE HILLS - DAY

A waterfall cascades into a pool. The spray casts a
rainbow.
Beneath it is a colorful confusion of flowers and
budding
trees, a place dreamlike in its beauty.

Arthur, with Merlin behind, gallops along the edge of
the
pool. The trail widens into a field of grass. Arthur
reins
beside a pile of broken lances and twisted shields.
Across
the field, pitched upon the trail is a war tent made of
Merlin
diaphanous white silk, a sky blue banner above it.
slides off and Arthur continues.

From the tent, a knight with jousting lance rides
forward to
meet him. His armor is so shiny it is a mirror. His
eyes,
seen through the open visor, seem to laugh. His speech
is
foreign, from across the sea. He is Lancelot of the
Lake.

LANCELOT

Good day to you, sir.

ARTHUR

Move aside. This is the King's road,
and the knights you joined arms
against were his very own.

LANCELOT

I await the King himself. His knights
are in need of training.

ARTHUR

I am King, and this is Excalibur,
sword of kings from the dawn of time.
Who are you, and why do you block
the way?

LANCELOT

I am Sir Lancelot of the Lake, from
across the sea. I am the best knight
in the whole of Christiandom, and I
look for the king who is worthy of
my sword's service.

ARTHUR

--That is a wild boast. You lack a
knight's humility.

LANCELOT

Not a boast, sir, but a curse.
 (a cloud passes over
 his innocent face)
Never have I met my match in joust
or duel.

ARTHUR

Move aside!

LANCELOT

I will not. You must retreat or prove
your kingship in the test of arms,
under the eyes of God.

He crosses himself.

ARTHUR

Then may He give me the strength to
unhorse you and send you with one
blow back across the sea.

Arthur wheels away, trembling with anger, and gallops
to his edge of the field. He sees that Lancelot has already
positioned himself and is waiting, lance down.

other.
Arthur
is
Merlin watches, a spectator, as the two charge at each
They collide with great force, their spears shattering.
is jolted but stays in the saddle. Lancelot's jousting
is impeccable. Arthur draws Excalibur.

LANCELOT

Hold! I offer you another lance.

Lancelot.
Pages come forward with new lances for Arthur and

LANCELOT

You joust well, sir. Battle learnt,
but tournament fancy. You should
ride more forward in the saddle,
though.

circles
Lancelot
He
Excalibur.
Arthur grabs the spear from the page's hands, and
back to work the horse up into an all-out gallop.
spurs forward to meet him. Arthur is neatly unhorsed.
picks himself up from the ground in a rage, drawing
Lancelot on his horse weaves circles around him.

LANCELOT

Yield. I have the advantage.

ARTHUR

I will not.

slashes
Arthur charges Lancelot, a raging bull, but cuts and
only at the air as Lancelot stays clear of him.

ARTHUR

Fight me from your horse or on foot,
but fight me. Your avoidance mocks
me.

LANCELOT

I sought only not to harm you, sir.

Shield and
He dismounts and draws his sword, and they clash.
sword and armor against shield and sword and armor. The

hacking,
Arthur
lifts his

swordplay is furious, Arthur attacking, slashing,
Lancelot parrying effortlessly, elegantly defensive.
breaks the onslaught to catch his breath. Lancelot
visor. His eyes are calm, laughing.

LANCELOT

Sir, your rage has unbalanced you.
It seems you would fight to the death
against a knight who is not your
enemy, for a length of road you can
ride around.

ARTHUR

So be it, to the death.

LANCELOT

It is you, sir, who knows not the
virtue of humility, as a true king
must.

shield
own
both
his
cutting
snaps
sword.
stunned
Arthur

Arthur goes forward attacking with terrible blows upon
Lancelot's shield, and Lancelot holds his ground,
high. And in its mirror-like metal Arthur can see his
reflection, a face distorted by uncontrolled passion.
Arthur discards his own shield, grabs Excalibur with
hands, and with a frightening shout that speaks of all
rage, he swings a terrific blow upon the shield,
through his own reflection and the metal. And Excalibur
in two.
A blinding blue-green light explodes from the broken
Lancelot, knocked back by the force of the blow, is
by the blast and falls to the ground unconscious.
backs away, horrified, half of Excalibur in his hand.

ARTHUR

What horror is this?
(calling)
Merlin!

Merlin approaches, pale, gripped by dread.

MERLIN

The sword is broken. Hope is broken...

Arthur picks up the broken blade, utterly undone.

ARTHUR

My pride broke it, my rage broke it... Humiliation and defeat lie in ambush even for a king.

(looking at Lancelot)

This excellent knight who fought with fairness and grace was meant to win. With Excalibur, I tried to change that verdict.

Merlin stands there, drawn, defeated, his hopes dead.

ARTHUR

I have lost for all time the ancient sword of my fathers whose power was meant to unite all men, to serve the vanity of a single man.

the
Despairing, he flings the two parts of Excalibur into
pool. He kneels at the waters edge, and he cries.

ARTHUR

I am nothing.

the
dancing
Then Arthur sees something that startles him. Beneath
surface, suspended in the blue-green water amid the
weeds, he sees Excalibur, intact.

water,
It is held by a maiden in flowing gown the color of
her long hair rippling across her face, obscuring it.

ARTHUR

Excalibur! Is it true?

MERLIN

The Lady of the Lake. Take it. Take it, quickly!

hilt and
Arthur dips his hand under the water and grasps the

fades.
before

the moment he does the vision in the blue-green water
He rises with Excalibur in hand, and Merlin speaks
Arthur can ask the question.

MERLIN

There are infinite worlds within the
infinite coils of the Dragon. In one
of them, which I have not traveled,
the sword was forged. I only know
that the King is returned to us
through the instrument of his power.
The game continues!

And he laughs.

curls.
once

Just then Lancelot stirs. Arthur rushes to his side. He
loosens his helmet and removes it, uncovering damp
The young knight's eyes open, and his laughing charm
more animates his face.

ARTHUR

Thanks to God, you are alive.

LANCELOT

(sitting up)
I, the best knight in the world,
bested! This is a great day, for my
search is over. I love you, my King.

He embraces Arthur, who is overwhelmed by his childlike
directness. The King helps him to his feet.

ARTHUR

You are still the best knight in
Christiandom. You gained a hundred
advantages over me. It is I who must
love you, for through your courage
and patience you taught me a bitter
lesson.

LANCELOT

Then make me your champion and I
will always fight in your place.

ARTHUR

But your life and lands are far from
here.

LANCELOT

I gave up my castles and my lands!

He thumps his breastplate.

LANCELOT

My domain is here, inside this metal skin. And I would pledge to you all that I still own: muscle, bone, blood and the heart that pumps it.

ARTHUR

And a great heart it is. Sir Lancelot, you will be my champion.

Lancelot draws his sword, holding it by the blade, a crucifix.

LANCELOT

In the name of Jesus Christ and His holy blood, I swear eternal faith to Arthur, King.

They embrace, and Merlin watches.

EXT. ARTHUR'S WAR CAMP - NIGHT

Converging from different directions parties of mounted knights enter the war camp. Lancelot among them. They dismount, battle-weary and burning with the excitement of victory. They quench their huge thirst from buckets carried by squires. They rip off hunks of meat from carcasses sizzling on spits over a roaring fire. And they join the throng of knights, where stories of deeds of arms of the day are enthusiastically exchanged.

A great number of knights are packed tightly around King Arthur, each man anxious to tell of his victories. One of them has the King's attention.

KNIGHT

...We killed every one of them. Burnt their ship...

Arthur sees Lancelot in the throng and moves toward him.

in
the

Merlin follows Arthur and is pushed and knocked around
the crush of spikes and iron. The only unarmored man in
crowd, he glares at the excited knights irritably.

ARTHUR

Lancelot, how did you fare in the
North?

LANCELOT

We spared the lives of a few, so
they could sail home and tell their
fellows what fate they met at the
hands of King Arthur's knights...

Arthur turns toward Uryens.

ARTHUR

And you, Uryens?

URYENS

Victory!

ARTHUR

Lot, and you?

LOT

We drove the invaders into the sea.

ARTHUR

You, Gawain, the East?

GAWAIN

The East is ours again.

Cheers greet each declaration.

ARTHUR

The war is over. One land, one King.
Peace.

pushing
with

Amidst the celebration, a fracas is heard. A knight
forward to talk to Arthur has entered a shoving match
those in front of him.

KNIGHT

Let me through. I fought the King's
battle too. He must know my story.

Merlin is brutally jostled. He draws a fistful of powder from his cape and he tosses it into the air above him. He raises his staff into the cloud, cracking it like a whip. The tip of the staff catches fire, and the fire spreads through the powder in the air, stunning all into silence. Merlin shouts and snarls.

MERLIN

Chaos... confusion... brutes... savages... troglodytes... Stand back... make space.

Merlin swings his burning staff into a wide arc. The knights back away, amused at first, then a bit afraid.

MERLIN

The moon... the sun... the stars... they spin... they turn... they circle... around us... us...

The knights have fallen back. Merlin stalks past each man, and Arthur too, holding the flaming tip of his staff before each pair of eyes, and staring into them with his gimlet gaze.

MERLIN

You, and you, and you, take up your place. Be wedded to the world. Respect its perfection. All of you, together, be one.

The knights have formed a circle. They realize this. Awestruck, they whisper in astonishment, looking up at the sky burning with stars. Merlin brims with pride as he waits for Arthur to recognize his handiwork.

ARTHUR

Your ancient wisdom and infinite sight have forged this circle, Merlin. Hereafter we shall come together in a circle, to tell and hear of deeds good and brave. I will build a table

where this fellowship shall meet.
And a hall around the table. And a
castle about the hall.

A cheer rises. Arthur strides into the ring of knights.

ARTHUR

And I will marry.

Another bout of cheers goes up, and Arthur stops before
Leondegrance, resting his hand on the old knight's
shoulder.

ARTHUR

And the land will have an heir to
wield Excalibur.

Leondegrance's eyes fill with tears of joy. A roar of
cheers.
Arthur draws the sword of power.

ARTHUR

Knights of the Round Table, good
friends, brothers in arms. I send
you on a quest harder by far than
the battles we have fought together,
a quest to uphold always, and
everywhere, justice, honor, and truth.
Each day shall bring forth a cause,
and may each cause bring forth a
knight.

Lancelot is drawn in by the King's enthusiasm. He
unsheathes
his sword and swoops it low in salute.

LANCELOT

I swear never to rest twice on the
same pillow till all men live at
peace.

In quick succession all knights draw their swords,
following
Lancelot's example.

Merlin struggles to put out the flame on his staff. He
finally
does it by smothering it with earth. When he looks up
again,
he sees the knights galloping off in all directions.

INT. FARMHOUSE - DAY

or
are
they
A

Terrified women, a screaming child, cowering men, old
made old by the hard labor of the fields. Armored men
ransacking a farm, looking for grain, and gold which
find among the votive objects of a little house altar.
A woman is dragged away to be raped.

emerging
sudden
crying

Through a window, a knight in shining armor is seen
from the adjoining woods. The plunderers are all of a
apprehensive, and fall silent. One of them grabs the
child and covers her mouth with his iron hand.

EXT. FARMYARD - DAY

rides
farm.
loaded
farmers are

The knight is Lancelot, in his mirror-like armor. He
into the cluster of houses and barns that make up the
There are other armored men there, around a cart half-
with loot. They smile nervously at Lancelot. The
blank with fear.

among the

Lancelot stops in the middle of the yard. A knight
armored men comes forward.

KNIGHT

Good day, sir.

LANCELOT

Good day to you.

patriarch

And he also acknowledges with a nod the ashen-faced
of the community.

relief.

Lancelot spurs his horse on, and the knight sighs with

knight

But then he reins his horse to a stop. He has sensed
something. He turns his head, his hooded eyes on the
and his men, and they squirm inwardly.

INT. FARMHOUSE - DAY

The child, her mouth covered by the armored hand.

EXT. FARMYARD - DAY

Lancelot, listening, watching.

INT. BARN - DAY

The woman, a blade flashing next to her eye.

EXT. FARMYARD - DAY

shiny
slowly

Lancelot, immobile. Behind him, the knight, his face with sweat. His minions inch forward, hands moving toward sword hilts.

Lancelot wheels his horse around.

LANCELOT

I hear the stifled cry for help, I
smell the reek of fear...

and
rear and
with
of

With a shout the knight and his men draw their swords rush Lancelot. He reins in his horse, causing it to break their attack. He slides off, falling on his feet sword drawn, already fighting. In an extraordinary show of sword play he cuts down six men.

INT. FARMHOUSE - DAY

hands
Lancelot
down
mid-
The

Hearing Lancelot storm in, the man holding the child her to a woman and kneels before the altar, just as bursts into the room, sword high and already swooping on the man's neck. Lancelot brings the sword to a halt air, his fury held in check. The repent man is spared. The woman kneels to kiss Lancelot's hand.

EXT. SITE OF THE SWORD IN THE STONE - DAY

decked for
Guenevere, a
around
the
among
altar.

The field is pitched with war tents and pavilions
holiday. Nobles and knights flank the King and
beautiful vision in white samite, a wreath of flowers
her head. Lancelot leads a long file of prisoners to
King. They fall to their knees, begging forgiveness;
them is the man whom Lancelot had spared before the

LANCELOT

These men repented before God for
their evil deeds. Those who would
not, met their fate at the end of my
sword.

(he kneels)

Accept the fruit of my first quest
as my wedding gift.

ARTHUR

I do. Rise, Lancelot, come with me.

central
inside.

He rises and follows Arthur and Guenevere into the
pavilion. Pages draw its curtains closed as they pass

INT. PAVILION - DAY

who
knight

Guenevere is surrounded by a group of ladies and maids
fuss over her dress and her hair. They eye the great
and whisper about him, Guenevere laughing with them.
Arthur sits, excited and happy.

ARTHUR

Sit beside me, Lancelot.

Lancelot sits, stiff and upright.

ARTHUR

Your deeds set an example for all
other knights. For your gift, ask a
gift of me.

LANCELOT

Only give me leave to ride out again,

to do what I am most able to do, and
happiest doing.

to Guenevere overhears. She approaches and Lancelot jumps
his feet.

GUENEVERE

(to Arthur)

He must stay for the feasting days
of our wedding, and tell his deeds
himself.

ARTHUR

(to Lancelot, smiling)

I grant you your wish if you grant
Lady Guenevere hers.

LANCELOT

I will stay Madame.

Merlin leans close to Arthur.

MERLIN

The knights of Galys approach the
camp. It would be politic...

ARTHUR

...to ride out and meet them.

straightens. He rises. Lancelot, who was about to sit again,

ARTHUR

I will ride with Sir Kay. Lancelot,
rest here.

GUENEVERE

Don't start a war on my wedding day!

ARTHUR

Without Lancelot?!

She Arthur and Merlin exit, leaving Guenevere and Lancelot.
smiling. looks at him, lively and amused, and he can't help

GUENEVERE

Look Lancelot. The maids and ladies
whisper about you. They all dream of
winning you, young and old, fair and

ugly.

Lancelot blushes.

GUENEVERE

But surely that's no secret to you, dear Lancelot. You're the bravest and strongest knight they've ever seen, and beauty has kissed your brow.

He can't look at her.

GUENEVERE

The well-kept secret is whether any of them has won your heart.

LANCELOT

No.

GUENEVERE

Why?

LANCELOT

I am a fighting man and I am married to the quest. That is enough.

GUENEVERE

And there is no maiden in the whole world who inspires you?

LANCELOT

There is one.

GUENEVERE

Who?!

LANCELOT

You.

GUENEVERE

Me?

LANCELOT

Yes. I would swear my love to you.

GUENEVERE

To me? But why?

LANCELOT

I cannot love as a woman the lady who will be wife to my King and my

friend. And, in pledging my love to
you, I cannot love any other woman.

Guenevere smiles, moved by his blunt innocence.

LANCELOT

I will see you in all women, and I
will defend them as I would defend
you.

He kneels, kisses her thigh, rises and leaves.

INT. CHAPEL - DAY

altar
with
glows
satisfied.

A chorus of children sings. The Bishop waits at the
with his friars and altar boys. Cornucopias overflowing
vegetables and wildflowers adorn the church, which
with the light of a thousand candles. Sir Kay is
He comes back up the petal-strewn aisle.

EXT. CHAPEL, SITE OF THE SWORD IN THE STONE - DAY

flanked
follow,
the

Arthur and Guenevere are ushered in by Kay. They are
by Leondegrance and Sir Ector. Lancelot and Merlin
leading the cortege of knights and ladies.
Merlin is incapable of entering the chapel, as if at
threshold there is an unseen force that repels him.

LANCELOT

Lord Merlin, are you ill?

MERLIN

No, no, I need air.

Uryens
and
off

Strangling a laugh he wrenches himself away. Just then
and a small party of knights rides up through the tents
dismounts in front of the church. Uryens helps a lady
her horse and joins the cortege on foot.

URYENS

Merlin, don't you join the

celebration?

Merlin, who was slinking away through the throng of
bystanders, looks up. What he sees sends a chill
through his
body.

At Uryens' side stands a young woman of sinister
beauty,
with bewitching eyes of ice. Merlin just stares at her,
and
she smiles back at him faintly.

URYENS

My wife, Merlin. Lady Morgana of
Cornwall.

MORGANA

I remember you, Merlin. I was a child.
You took my brother away.

Merlin laughs. Uryens shrugs and continues into the
chapel
with Morgana. As she enters she glances back, and just
then
Merlin steals a look, their eyes meet.

INT. CHAPEL - DAY

Uryens and Morgana take their places near the altar.
Arthur
and Guenevere kneel before the Bishop, and Arthur takes
her
hand. The clatter of armor mingles with the
enthusiastic,
happy singing of the children, and seems to strengthen
their
song.

EXT. SITE OF THE SWORD IN THE STONE - EVENING

The chorus carries across the field to the dark wall of
trees
from which issues another chorus, of hoots and squawks
and
howls. Merlin advances along the edge of the forest. He
stops
by the stone that once held the sword, his eyes wild.
He
forgets his inner torment when he sees a plant at the
base

admires

of the stone. He kneels beside it and plucks it. He
its strange flowers; he smells them.

face

Two feet appear at his side. He rises to be face to
with Morgana. They look deep into each other. Then
Merlin
breaks the silence.

MERLIN

You left your husband's side? You
left your brother's wedding?

MORGANA

Is that Mandrake, Lord Merlin?

MERLIN

It is.

MORGANA

Can it truly be used for magic?

piercing,

Merlin smiles at last, and Morgana does, her eyes
cruel and lovely.

MERLIN

Yes... sometimes...

His gaze drifts toward the chapel.

MERLIN

...There are many powers in this
world.

INT. CHAPEL - EVENING

behind

armor; and

Bishop

him,

Arthur and Guenevere are radiant with joy, and Lancelot
them mirrors the ceremony of their joining in his
the sweet voices of the children fill the chapel as the
pours the wine into the chalice, and lifts it up before
blessing it.

He turns to the royal couple.

BISHOP

Drink this the blood of Jesus Christ

our Lord.

the
The chalice seems to burn with a mystical light; and as
chorus soars:

FADE

OUT:

A LEGEND APPEARS:

the
"And Arthur built his castle, Camelot. And one day, in
far reaches of the Kingdom..."

FADE IN:

EXT. FOREST, STREAM - DAY

animals
forward,
-
with
It is shadowy and dark; ancient trees creak, unseen
cry out. A rabbit hops into view and a boy leaps
grabbing the animal by the ears before it can move. He-
Perceval--is a wild boy of seventeen, dressed in skins
an endearing and childlike smile.

PERCEVAL

(to the rabbit)

Sorry. Hungry.

glances
upon
armor
A din is heard to the forest, and it grows. Perceval
around, panicked. The sound is the rubbing of leather
leather, of metal on metal, for now a mounted figure in
hovers over the terrified boy.

PERCEVAL

(stuttering)

Have I taken too much?

dismounts.
stream and
He lets the rabbit go free. The threatening figure
And Perceval, cartwheels backward, landing in the
scooping a fish out.

PERCEVAL

(desperately trying
to ingratiate)
I had rabbit yesterday. Today I'll
eat fish... No?

a
armor.
He returns the fish to the water. The figure steps into
pool of sunlight and a glorious halo streaks from the
It is Lancelot.

LANCELOT

Don't be afraid.

Perceval is overcome with astonishment, and he kneels.

PERCEVAL

You're an angel! Not a devil...

Lancelot laughs and pulls the boy to his feet.

LANCELOT

Just a man. A knight in the King's
service.

PERCEVAL

You're a man?!
(he reaches out to
touch Lancelot)
...with metal skin!

Perceval is beside himself with enthusiasm.

PERCEVAL

Can I grow metal skin?

Lancelot rolls his eyes, amused.

LANCELOT

You've got a lot to learn.

EXT. SPARSE FOREST - DAY

alongside,
Lancelot is cantering and Perceval is running
shouting in gasps.

PERCEVAL

I'll learn... take me... to the
King... What's a... King?

gallop.
reins

Lancelot shakes his head and spurs the horse into a
Perceval lengthens his stride, and keeps up! Lancelot
to a halt.

LANCELOT

Very well. Climb up.

PERCEVAL

I will run.

LANCELOT

Listen, boy, it's more than twenty
days from here.

PERCEVAL

Twenty days!? The world is that big?

EXT. OUTSIDE CAMELOT, FOREST - DAY

talk
never
he

Perceval cannot believe his eyes. As Lancelot and Kay
about him out of earshot, he sees things that he's
seen before; and he gapes like the country bumpkin that
is.

a
lance
Camelot
walls,

Dragon-like kites sweep low, maneuvered by children. In
meadow among the trees, knights hone their skills with
and sword, and ladies watch and their "bright eyes rain
influence and judge the prize." And then, there is
itself; the great gate and the drawbridge; the massive
and the soaring towers and spires above.

Perceval rushes up to Lancelot and Kay.

PERCEVAL

Who will give me my sword?

by
the

Kay is not at all pleased; nonetheless he takes the boy
the ear and leads him across the drawbridge and into
castle.

KAY

Kitchen knives and greasy spits will
be your weapons, boy.

before the

Lancelot smiles to himself, hesitation, lingering
great gate of Camelot.

also
of
sees

There is a walkway suspended in the trees above, that
leads to the castle, and promenading on it is a group
women, Guenevere and her ladies-in-waiting. The Queen
Lancelot and hastens toward him.

into
and

Lancelot sees her, and mounts his horse and heads back
the forest. She stops, somewhat ahead of the ladies,
watches wistfully.

down

Lancelot turns back and seeing her one last time, draws
his visor and spurs his horse into a canter.

one
dispute.
children

He passes two commoners who are heading for the castle,
fat and the other thin, and they are locked in hot
Their wives keep them from coming to blows and their
spur them on, enjoying the excitement.

Lancelot is swallowed by the forest.

INT. HALL OF THE ROUND TABLE, CAMELOT - DAY

Merlin at

Guenevere, bearing a bowl of perfect, deep red apples,
approaches the Round Table, where Arthur sits and

Quite a
each
pages.

his side, attending to the affairs of the kingdom.

and

few of the knights occupy their seats, talking with
other, drinking and laughing, attended by ladies and
Guenevere places the apples at Lancelot's empty place
takes her seat next to Arthur.

wait,

In the archways that lead into the hall, petitioners

no
man
is the

eating, drinking, talking among themselves. In the din,
one pays attention to the vehement arguing of the fat
and the thin man, which continues even here. The hall
burgeoning, happy center of the kingdom.

like
over
Gahalt,,
notices

But Merlin is oblivious to the lively clamor. He gazes
a lovesick puppy across the table at Morgana, who bends
whispering to a knight at the table, the young Sir
while his older brother Sir Gawain listens. Morgana
Merlin's stare and smiles at him, and then resumes her
flirtation with Sir Gahalt, much to Merlin's annoyance.

open
with the
and

Sir Kay ushers the thin man and the fat man into the
space at the center of the table for their audience
king. They quarrel even as Kay tries to present them,
the attention of the hall gradually focuses on them.
The two men talk at once, interrupting, overlapping.

FAT MAN

I brew ale, sir--from
old shoes--I am an
honest tradesman sir.
I must sell what I
produce. He won't buy
ale and he won't pay.
Pay up! He leans over
the barrel and sucks
in the vapors. The
vapors are mine.

sir,

in
for

THIN MAN

How would you know I,

have the misfortune to
live next to this
criminal... What loss

that? Not to me! Pay

what? Why?! They are
floating on the wind.

Arthur is both amused and exasperated.

ARTHUR

Enough!... What is a fair price for the smell of your ale?

FAT MAN

That's why we have come to you, sir. There's no one else who can tell us.

ARTHUR

What does it cost to get drunk on your ale?

FAT MAN

At least three shillings, sir.

Arthur addresses the Thin Man.

ARTHUR

Give me three shillings.

face.
to
fall on
is

The Thin Man is crestfallen, the smile gone from his face. He reluctantly hands the coins to Kay, who gives them to Arthur. Arthur tosses them in the air and lets them fall on a metal plate. He hands them back to the Thin Man, who is totally confused now, as is everybody else.

ARTHUR

For the smell of your ale, the jingle of his coins.

Thin
out a
from

The knights roar with laughter and the Fat Man and the Thin Man look at each other in astonishment. Perceval lets out a raucous laugh that wins him a glance of disapproval from Kay.

INT. HALL OF THE ROUND TABLE - NIGHT

the
except

The din of the petitioners is replaced by music. It is the hour of the evening feast, and all knights are present, except

fireplace, and
fro
Lancelot. Whole tree trunks burn in the great
lambs roast on spits in the flames. Pages run to and
with trays of food and wine, Perceval among them.
Morgana stops beside Merlin.

MORGANA

What did I see today in the wizard's
eyes? Censure, because I enjoy a few
words with a young handsome knight?

Merlin is in agony, a bug stuck on a pin.

MERLIN

No, no, of course not. You are
young...

MERLIN

I'm not jealous!

MORGANA

It's clear you are, and it irks me.

MERLIN

No. Yes, I am. I am jealous. I want
to write poems about you with
moonbeams, make the sea sing your
name...

MORGANA

A lovestruck page!

MERLIN

Shh... yes, yes. Sit with me,
please... Morgana.

holds
She does, laughing and in complete control. His hand
immediately slides onto her thigh. She removes it, but
it in her hand, toying with his fingers.

MORGANA

A steamy, panting, lovestruck page.
But what good are songs and poems to
me? They are the barter of ordinary
love. A gift that reflected your
greatness is the only one worthy of
your love.

Merlin looks at her, knowing already, sad yet eager.

MERLIN

I showed you all my conjuring
tricks...

MORGANA

The deepest secrets, the forbidden
formulas...

MERLIN

Maybe... maybe...

realizes

Merlin's thoughts have carried him far away, when he
that Arthur is addressing him.

ARTHUR

Merlin, are you counselor to the
King, or to my sister?

Some knights laugh.

MERLIN

At your service, sir.

ARTHUR

Then answer me this. For years peace
has reigned in the land. Crops grow
in abundance, there is no want. Every
one of my subjects enjoys his portion
of happiness and justice, even those
whose tiresome misunderstandings we
must resolve here each day. Tell me,
Merlin: have we defeated evil, as it
seems?

MERLIN

Good and evil; there is never one
without the other.

Arthur is taken aback.

ARTHUR

Where hides evil, then, in my kingdom?

MERLIN

Never where you expect it, that's
all I know.

speaks

He chuckles softly and Arthur is puzzled. A knight

His

out, the young knight with whom Morgana was flirting.
manner is sarcastic.

SIR GAHALT

If we have peace and justice, why is Lancelot never with us? Why is he always riding out on his quests? He must know where this evil is.

SIR GAWAIN

Could there be evil within Lancelot himself? To live above human folly, as is his aim, is to be overly proud.

SIR GAHALT

He pays no heed even to the Queens longing for his company.

The hall falls silent, all eyes upon the Queen.

GUENEVERE

(lashing out)

What is it you would have your words mean, Sir Gahalt?

to

Frightened, Gahalt doesn't answer. Morgana has slipped
Guenevere's side.

MORGANA

Don't listen to him. You are the Queen.

has

Arthur, ashen-faced, turns to Merlin for help, but he
escaped into sleep...

ARTHUR

Sir Gahalt, answer the Queen.

GUENEVERE

No. I meant not to be angry with you, Sir Gahalt. In the idleness that comes with peace gossip has bred its own evil. You merely repeat it. Please, sir, have one of those apples that Lancelot loves, and in that gesture partake of its goodness.

any

Morgana picks the bowl up and as she does so, unseen by

fingernails
Guenevere,
sits,
feet.

and with a magician's dexterity, she thrusts her
deep into the top apple. She gives the bowl to
who takes it and sweeps around to where Sir Gahalt
followed by Morgana. The young knight jumps to his

GUENEVERE

Take one, Sir Gahalt.

SIR GAHALT

I am most honored, my lady.

apple on
looks
eating

He is too shy to take the shiniest, most beautiful
top, and goes for another one. Morgana giggles, and he
at her. She looks at the apple on top and then smiles
encouragingly at him. Sir Gahalt takes it and starts
as the Queen returns to her seat.

goes

With the third bite his is unable to breathe. His face
red and he rises to his feet, attempting to call out.

and
far

He falls, dying immediately. All leap to their feet,
Arthur rushes to the young knight. Merlin is asleep and
from human affairs.

knight.
Guenevere,

Arthur and Sir Gawain rise from the body of the young
Sir Gawain backs away from Arthur and points at
trembling with cold rage.

SIR GAWAIN

Hear me, Lord Arthur, and knights
and chieftains: I charge Guenevere
with the murder of my brother.

Arthur.

Guenevere, white and with a broken voice, turns to

GUENEVERE

I didn't... I am innocent.

feet.
before
She begins to swoon and Morgana keeps her steady on her
Arthur slumps into his seat and Sir Gawain kneels
him.

SIR GAWAIN

I champion this truth: That Queen
Guenevere murdered Sir Gahalt with
the aid of sorcery.

he
Enraged, Arthur reaches for Excalibur. But with effort
checks his impulse.

ARTHUR

The Queen will be in my charge till
a champion steps forward to fight on
her behalf.

GUENEVERE

Not you, my husband?

Arthur cannot look at her.

SIR GAWAIN

She must be burnt at the stake. That
is the sentence for murder done with
magic.

ARTHUR

It is. Lords and knights of the Round
Table, as her husband I say that
this deed was not done by Guenevere.
Who among you will champion this
truth?

No one responds. Guenevere falls into her seat. Arthur
searches the eyes of his knights and they evade him.

ARTHUR

Sir Caradoc! You!

The knight looks up.

CARADOC

I am torn.

speaks
voice
Sir Ector, old and feeble, weeps for Arthur. Someone
up. It is Perceval, who kneels before the Queen. His

tears;
is unnaturally loud, and his eyes shine with held-back
he stutters.

PERCEVAL

I will champion you, my lady.

All
He is overwhelmed by his own boldness. He looks around.
eyes are upon him. Guenevere smiles at him, sadly.

GUENEVERE

I thank you, but you are not yet a
knight.

PERCEVAL

I will find Lancelot! He will come!

ashamed,
his
Perceval hurries from the hall. Arthur looks away,
and his eyes fall on Merlin, twitching and mumbling in
sleep.

MERLIN

Boys!... boys will be boys...

EXT. HOVEL - COUNTRYSIDE - DAY

a
mother
very
lathered
In full armor but for his helmet, Lancelot is seated at
small table in the shadow of a tree, eating an apple.
A young girl is turning a chicken on a spit, and her
is removing freshly-baked bread from an oven. It is
peaceful and silent until, galloping all out, Perceval
arrives. Frantic, out of breath, he leaps from his
horse.

PERCEVAL

I have found you. The Queen. An apple.
Tomorrow. Sir Gawain...

LANCELOT

--It must wait, child. These good
ladies, for whom I intervened once,
will honor me with a meal. I am
beholden to them now as I was when
they begged my protection.

great
The two women set the chicken and the bread before the knight, and stand back to watch him eat, flushed with excitement. Perceval falls silent, in awe of Lancelot.

INT. BEDCHAMBER, CAMELOT - NIGHT

the
Arthur stands hunched over the fireplace, staring into flames. Guenevere paces back and forth to a window.

GUENEVERE

Why can't you be my champion?

ARTHUR

If I am your judge, I cannot be your champion. When I act as your King, I cannot be your husband.

GUENEVERE

And you cannot love me...

ARTHUR

The laws, my laws, must bind everyone, high and low, or they are not laws at all. Lancelot will come...

GUENEVERE

And if he cannot be found, no other knight will champion me, though you beseeched each and every one of them. Why be king if there is no one you can call loyal subject but an eager boy?

to a
there
still
He hides his anguish from her. Numb with hurt, she goes tall curtained window, and draws it open, and stands looking out upon the surrounding forest, silent and beneath the moon.

EXT. WINDOW - NIGHT

great
She cries softly, and she whispers the name of the knight.

EXT. EDGE OF THE FOREST, WALLS OF CAMELOT - NIGHT.

forest,
His
Guenevere.
draws

A mounted knight stands motionless at the edge of the
his armor gleaming with dark lustre. It is Lancelot.
eyes are raised to the high window, where he sees
He watches her in silence. In the high window Guenevere
the curtain and Lancelot reins back into the forest.

EXT. FOREST - NIGHT

small
removes
cross. He
and

Lancelot has unsaddled and tethered his horse in a
clearing. He sits, resting back against a tree. He
his helmet; he plants his sword before him, like a
loosens the ties of his breastplate. He waits for day,
yawning, tired. But his eyes burn, and he closes them
nods off to sleep.

looks
above
sword,
draws
knight's
attempts
image, is
and
joint in
out. On
paralyzed by
to
the

A knight appears silently hovering over him. Lancelot
up, and his eyes go wide with fear. The knight towering
him wears armor identical to his, and he raises his
and the blade is descending upon Lancelot. Lancelot
his sword from the ground and rolls away, but the
sword slices through his shoulder joint. Lancelot
to rise but already the knight, Lancelot's mirror
upon him. From the ground, Lancelot parries the blow
slashes at the opponent's knee, cutting through the
the armor and severing the leg.

The knight doesn't fall, doesn't bleed, doesn't cry
one leg he comes forward, a horror. Lancelot is
fear. As the knight leaps upon Lancelot, Lancelot rises
meet him, impaling himself on the knight's sword below

down
The
awakening
stomach,
other

hauberk. He throws the knight to the ground, and comes upon him. He rips off the helmet and the breastplate. armor is empty and Lancelot rolls over on his back, from the nightmare with his own sword deep in his stomach, and in his hand his own helmet and breastplate, while parts of his armor lie strewn around him.

and
and
clutching a

Only then does he become conscious of the terrible pain the shock of the truth. He grabs the hilt of his sword draws it from his stomach. He curls up in agony, fistful of leaves to the wound.

LANCELOT

Guenevere, I fight against myself...

He loses consciousness.

EXT. JOUSTING GROUND OUTSIDE CAMELOT - DAWN

from a
knights
stealing
to
and
mangy

The Bishop blesses the field. Guenevere, numb and disbelieving, is being led to the stake, which rises bed of straw and wood. Arthur watches, in shock. Other and ladies keep their distance, watching darkly, glances at Arthur, mumbling disapproval of his refusing defend Guenevere. In battle dress, Sir Gawain rides up down the jousting run on a snorting and powerful horse, practicing. Perceval, in a mail doublet, waits beside a roan, his face burning with anxiety.

Guenevere is tied to the stake. All eyes watch for the approach of her champion. Arthur goes to Perceval.

ARTHUR

Is he coming?

PERCEVAL

He heard Lady Guenevere's request and he said nothing. That is all.

Arthur hides his pain behind a rigid mask.

EXT. JOUSTING GROUND - DAY

eyes; the
King

The sun has risen shining cruelly into Guenevere's queen is alone at the stake. Sir Gawain rides up to Arthur, who waits alone, separated from the others.

SIR GAWAIN

My Lord, the sun is upon the field.
The Queen has no champion. I demand
justice, as is my right.

ARTHUR

So it is.

Perceval leaps onto his horse.

PERCEVAL

Let me champion the Queen!

Sir Gawain looks at the squire with contempt.

SIR GAWAIN

(to Arthur)

Since no knight comes forward, I
demand justice--

sign
his own
through

Arthur is in anguish. He searches the tree line for a of Lancelot. He looks from Guenevere at the stake to knights watching him. He draws Excalibur. A gasp goes the crowd of onlookers.

ARTHUR

Boy, kneel.

the
shoulder,

Perceval leaps from his horse and bends his knee before King. Arthur brings the sword down on the boy's giving him the three strokes.

ARTHUR

In the name of God, of St. Michael,
and St. George, I make you a knight.
Rise, Sir...

PERCEVAL

...Perceval!

back
field.
senses
rides up
friend,
Guenevere and

Gawain shakes his head disdainfully as Perceval mounts into the saddle, his eyes burning with fervor. Sir Gawain and Perceval ride to opposite ends of the field. The spectators fall silent, all staring blankly, their senses dulled by the tragedy, at the uneven combatants. A cry goes up. Lancelot rides out of the forest. He rides up to the King and salutes him. Arthur smiles at his old friend, tears of joy in his eyes. Lancelot bows toward Guenevere and rides on to where Perceval waits. Lancelot reaches out to touch Perceval's cheek.

LANCELOT

It's my task to prove the Queen's innocence.

that
lance
spear
violent
getting
inflicted
falling
stomach

Perceval cannot reply, his eyes affixed on the blood trickles from Lancelot's hauberk. Lancelot raises his lance in salute to Gawain across the field. Gawain salutes in answer. The two huge knights charge at each other, each man's spear tip making contact with the other's armor, and in the violent collision both are unhorsed. Lancelot is slower at getting to his feet and drawing his sword. He is bleeding below the hauberk from his self-inflicted wound. In the first onslaught Lancelot fights defensively, falling back. He has to toss aside his shield and hold his stomach with his shield hand.

sword on
is

Morgana watches with Merlin. Every terrible blow of sword reverberates through her body pleasurable. Merlin captivated by her cruel sensuality.

EXT. JOUSTING GROUND - LATE DAY

bone-
Lancelot's
with a
sword
shield,

They swing and thrust at each other with slower but crushing force, both unsteady now. Blood seeps from feet, leaving awful footprints on the earth. Finally, daring thrust, Lancelot lifts Gawain's visor and the tip is before his eyes. Gawain drops his sword and kneels and speaks in a voice hoarse with weariness.

SIR GAWAIN

The Queen is innocent. I yield to your mercy, Sir Lancelot.

Lancelot collapses in a dead faint.

INT. CELL, CAMELOT - EVENING

cloth
and
working the
the
Lancelot,

Eyes closed, Lancelot lies on a bed, naked but for a across his loins. His minor wounds have been dressed, Merlin is kneading the huge gash in his stomach, severed flesh together. Guenevere stands on one side of bed, Arthur on the other, both looking down upon relieved and not daring to look at each other.

MERLIN

Flesh on flesh. You must press on the wound, Guenevere, hold it, and it will begin to bind.

flicker

Guenevere kneels, and at her touch Lancelot's eyes open. Merlin exits, and draws Arthur away with him. Arthur is deeply tormented.

ARTHUR

Merlin, tell me. Now that Guenevere
is returned to me...

MERLIN

What is it my child?

Merlin appears moved by the predicaments that Arthur
has to face.

ARTHUR

Will I have a son?

Merlin stares off into the evening sky, where a lark
sings high up.

MERLIN

Yes.

ARTHUR

Just yes? No mad laughter, no riddles,
nothing but a simple yes? That
frightens me.

MERLIN

A king should be afraid, always. The
enemy is everywhere. Waiting in ambush
in the dark corridors of his castle,
on the deer paths of his forest, or
in the gray and winding paths of a
more tangled forest, in here.

He taps his skull and smiles.

INT. CELL - EVENING

Lancelot is staring into Guenevere's eyes. She opens
her shift, baring a breast with the innocence of a mother
preparing to suckle a child. She presses her breast to
his wound, her face to his chest, her arms enfolding him.
She whispers.

GUENEVERE

Flesh on flesh. I will heal you.

His body trembles and his eyes brim with tears. He is
lost.

INT. HALL OF THE ROUND TABLE, CAMELOT - NIGHT

music
the
the
they

The court is assembled, for the evening feast. There is and heavy drinking. Some knights are slouched across table. Lancelot, still weak, takes his seat, looking at drunken and frivolous knights. Arthur catches it, and smile at each other.

ARTHUR

They miss the battlefield. I think we do too.

LANCELOT

But one can still keep a sword sharp riding out in the name of the King's law.

her
speaks
directness.

Guenevere cannot tear her eyes from Lancelot. He avoids look. Arthur looks from Guenevere to Lancelot, and softly to him, across her, and with stabbing

ARTHUR

It is not easy for the young ones to learn knightly virtues without the hard teaching of war and quest. It is only your example, Lancelot, that binds them now.

Then, addressing the hall:

ARTHUR

Which is the greatest quality of knighthood? Courage? Compassion? Loyalty? Humility? What do you say, Merlin?

hall

He is bent close to Morgana, whispering. Only when the rings with laughter does he look up.

MERLIN

What?
(then seeing he has an audience)

The greatest? They blend together like the metals we mix to make a good sword.

ARTHUR

I didn't ask for poetry. Which is it?

Merlin looks from Arthur to Guenevere to Lancelot to Arthur.

MERLIN

All right. Truth. It must be truth, above all. When a man lies he murders some part of the world.

An uneasy silence falls upon the feast. Guenevere and Lancelot cannot look at each other, and Arthur feels it. Lancelot jumps to his feet.

LANCELOT

Conversation and court life don't suit me. I must take my rest in the forest.

Guenevere stifles her dismay.

ARTHUR

Hasn't Merlin mended your wound?

LANCELOT

It is deep...

Arthur is about to rise to embrace him, but checks himself.

ARTHUR

You will be sorely missed. Heal yourself and come back.

The exchange has become closely intimate, even though they stand apart and speak before everyone in the large hall. Lancelot leaves. Only Guenevere cannot watch.

EXT. FOREST GLADE -DAY

Water gurgles from a rock that is captive in the roots of an

trunk,
life

ancient oak. Lancelot, in armor, reclines against its
the roots cradling him. He is perfectly still, drawing
from the vibrant, all-enfolding forest.

rabbit,
the

Flower petals drift on the breeze. Trees sigh. Fox and
sparrow and hawk, at peace with each other, watch over
knight.

EXT. FOREST -DAY

It is
toward

A horse and rider tear through the thick undergrowth.
Guenevere. The forest races past her as she gallops
the glade, brambles tearing at her flesh and clothes.

EXT. FOREST GLADE - DAY

and
race.
beside

Lancelot gets to his feet, tense. Guenevere dismounts
approaches. She is flushed and breathless from the wild
Her horse, left free, wanders over to his and grazes
it.

LANCELOT

Why? You will destroy Arthur, and
us...

keep
soft

She moves closer and he thrusts out his mailed fist to
her away. She clutches it and presses the metal to her
tear-streaked cheek.

LANCELOT

The law forbids it.

GUENEVERE

Love demands it.

armor,

Hungry with passion, she embraces the cold unmoving
kissing it.

LANCELOT

There are things about love--

GUENEVERE

--Nothing!

blade He steps back, drawing his sword. He holds it up by the
between them.

LANCELOT

By my knight's sword, I swore faith--

aside. And before he can finish she grabs the blade to push it
cannot He holds it fast. Blood streams from her bare hands. He
sword, prevail without cutting them deeply. He lets go of the
and she lets it fall to the ground.

the She embraces his still and defeated hulk. She kisses
metal, and sensation shoots through him, dizzying him.

LANCELOT

Guenevere...

as He folds her in his arm, and their bodies lock together
devouring though a trap had sprung. Their mouths meet, each
the other...

EXT. BATTLEMENTS, CAMELOT - DUSK

overwhelmed Arthur and Merlin, the King desperate, the Wizard
by compassion:

ARTHUR

I am alone and betrayed. By my wife,
by my beloved friend, by my knights.
And by you. Perhaps most of all by
you. For you made me, you forged
this wretched life. And like a child
tired of a toy, you toss me aside, a
babbling lecher trotting after my
sister...

MERLIN

That is my destiny. I have a destiny,
too...

ARTHUR

With all your powers, you are content to be ridiculed, laughed at...

MERLIN

My powers fade, Arthur. I resort to cheap tricks...

(with sudden enthusiasm)

Yes! I enjoy every moment of my foolishness, I join in the making of it, so no one can betray me. But you! You betray yourself.

ARTHUR

Me? I have lived by the oath of king and knight.

MERLIN

You betray the boy who drew the sword, the boy who saw the Dragon... the Dragon who moves close by, coiling and uncoiling, restless, looking down, waiting for the King to be a king...

Arthur looks up and in the rolling clouds maybe, just maybe, the form of a dragon is taking shape. Arthur draws Excalibur, intensity animating his dead features.

ARTHUR

I must do it myself. I must kill them both. Lancelot and Guenevere. Will you ride with me, Merlin?

MERLIN

I cannot. I must not. Here I must stay.

They embrace. Merlin is on the verge of tears, his face immediately sad and finally ancient. Arthur exits.

Morgana, who has been watching from the shadows, watching from the shadows, slinks up to Merlin's side.

MORGANA

Crazy old fool. You think yourself a kingmaker. Ha! A meddler, more likely. Look what a mess you've made of things.

Merlin smiles knowingly at her.

MERLIN

I? Perhaps, perhaps. I'm losing interest, Morgana... I have helped men--or meddled in their affairs, if you would have it that way--since the dawn of time. Now let them live by their own laws. Let them stand on their own feet. The gods of once are gone forever, it is time for men... Morgana, make a man out of me. Kiss me.

hers
knuckles

He reaches to touch her lips. She cradles his hand in and doesn't allow Merlin to kiss her. She kisses his and stares into his eyes, stoking his desire.

MORGANA

You know what I want. I want the secret of true magic, how to thicken the stuff of dreams and wishes with the flesh of the world.

MERLIN

That I cannot.

She breaks away, provocative, alluring.

MORGANA

Then I will not.

EXT. FOREST - NIGHT

It
horses

Arthur and Sir Kay gallop through the forest, silently. is not a dream. Their armor and the hooves of their are muffled with pieces of cloth.

EXT. FOREST GLADE - NIGHT

the
it in
and

Only Nature will ever see their love; the creatures of air, tree and ground witness the final reality of their passion and sense its unfathomable depths, singing of a hundred languages. Lancelot and Guenevere are naked

the eye interlocked, one being, suspended in the darkness in
of the forest.

EXT. FOREST - NIGHT

the Arthur walks soundlessly through the trees, approaching
glade. The forest falls suddenly silent.

EXT. FOREST GLADE - NIGHT

Lancelot and All passion spent, locked in each other's arms,
Guenevere drift off into sleep.

head. Arthur comes upon them. He stands over them. He draws
Excalibur. Checking all emotion, he holds it above his

The ancient steel glows darkly.

He The lovers faces are serene and innocently beautiful.

letting hesitates, tormented. His mask of anguish gives way to
determination and calm. He strikes the sword home,
go of it.

He backs away, turns and disappears into the forest.

EXT. FOREST GLADE - DAWN

awakens The sky is red; so is the steel of Excalibur. Lancelot
They and starts at what he sees. His cry stirs Guenevere.
between are horrified to see Excalibur impaled in the ground
without their entwined bodies. It has pierced their union
to grazing their flesh. They leap up and back away, unable
speak at first.

LANCELOT

Why didn't he kill us?

GUENEVERE

He has given up.

breast. She kneels before the sword, embracing the hilt to her

LANCELOT

The King without his sword, the land
without a king...

GUENEVERE

We are to blame.

He
roots
symbol

Lancelot stumbles into the forest, berserk with guilt.
rages against a small tree, crying out, and he rips its
from the ground, the terrible tearing and renting the
of his own inner torment.

armor

Guenevere sinks to the ground next to Lancelot's empty
and his abandoned sword.

INT. DUNGEONS OF CAMELOT

rock.

Merlin and Morgana descend winding steps cut out of
The only light comes from the glow of Merlin's staff.

MERLIN

When Arthur built the castle, I carved
out a place for myself, where I could
laugh or sleep, and no one would
bother me.

MORGANA

People make you laugh?

He laughs.

MERLIN

They do.

MORGANA

Why?

He leans close to her ear, whispering into it.

MERLIN

They don't know how close they live
to the edge of delight or disas...

He is about to kiss her when he slips. He laughs.

MERLIN

Happiness or horror.

INT. CAVE BENEATH CAMELOT

Merlin
up
crystals.
quartz,
suddenly

They pass through jaws of stalactites and stalagmites.
cracks his staff whip-like and a ball of fire billows
from the tip and illuminates a cave wildly veined and
filigreed with minerals and crusted with growths of
The light goes out but the malachite and the gold, the
diamond and beryllium burn dully. He turns to her,
tall and unstooped, younger, sleek and evil.

MERLIN

In the folds of the earth where the
forces that hold the world together
are more alive, my power is strongest.
Here I will possess you, as a man
possesses a woman. And the god, the
eunuch, the mule that I was, will be
no more.

He sweeps her up into his arms.

MORGANA

You are truly magnificent!

MERLIN

Flattery! Do you think I am ignorant
of your stupid little games? Preying
on you weakness of others. That's
your power, a petty evil. Mine is
great. Great plans. Impossible dreams.
Laughable endings...

him

He deposits her on bare rock. He kisses her. She pushes
away.

MORGANA

Merlin, the powers of Summoning, the
true Name of the charms of Doing and
Undoing. Show me!

MERLIN

I won't. You would misuse such power.
I have paid enough for you, and I
will have you.

She leans forward and kisses his ear and whispers.

MORGANA

Make magic, my foolish wizard. For our love. Weave a marvelous room around us, a room worthy of our coupling.

She draws closer, kissing him deeply. He breathes heavily.

MERLIN

What do you want? You must desire it for me to weave it.

MORGANA

Walls of shining crystals, burning with red fire, furnishings of metals and jewels never seen by man...

Morgana falls silent as Merlin raises a hand, majestically intoning a harsh repetitive charm. The mineral veins of the cave begin to glow and fog seeps out from them enveloping the couple.

MERLIN

Desire it and it will be as you desire.

Morgana burns with intensity. Merlin utters a formula and the fog coalesces around them into the shimmering presence of crystal walls, fountains raining jewels, flowers made of scented air, a bed of glass shot with light and covered with skins of animals dead before the time of man, goblets of ruby, tapestries woven of golden hair. She reaches out to touch the wall and her hand plunges through the unmaterialized illusion.

MORGANA

It's only a semblance. You disappoint me.

She begins lacing up her loosened gown.

MERLIN

Don't touch the walls. Come close to me.

She does, a mad hope in her eyes. She kisses his chest.

MORGANA

Do it, Merlin, the deepest secret. Fix it with the charm of Making, for our endless pleasure.

He utters the ancient charm, Morgana listening closely, memorizing it. The illusion is all of a sudden solid.

MERLIN

For you...

eyes
She runs her hand across the hard crystal surface, her gleaming.

embrace.
to
light.
From outside the wondrous room they can be seen to He carries her to the magical bed where he makes love her, as they disappear from view in its effulgent

evil
She comes out through the crystal door, burning with intent. She turns to watch him asleep in the bed.

and
Merlin
She utters the charm of Summoning learnt from Merlin, the room melts into an eddying carmine fog. Within it, struggles to awaken from the torpor of love, alarmed.

gaseous
Outside, Morgana utters the charm of Making and the mass begins to crystallize.

fog,
opening in
Inside, Merlin is rising to his feet, breathing the red his movements slowing to a standstill, his mouth a scream of horror.

of
she
gaping
She

The cloud has metamorphosed into a magnificent cluster
red crystals. Morgana peers into its facets and there
sees, in fragments, Merlin's terror... an eye, the
mouth, a clawing hand--as he is entombed in the stone.
laughs in triumph.

EXT. FOREST - CAMELOT - DAY

Camelot
to

Surrounded by forest, the spires and battlements of
rise under black storm clouds. Arthur and Kay ride back
the castle.

INT. HALL OF THE ROUND TABLE - DAY

attendance at

The great hall is in gloom. Few knights are in
the table.

haggard,

Some sleep off last night's wine. Arthur approaches,
searching.

ARTHUR

Has no one seen Merlin?

shake

Knights look up; those who meet Arthur's reddened eyes
their heads.

Arthur leaves. A knight whispers to another.

KNIGHT

Did you see? The King was without
Excalibur...

INT. PASSAGEWAYS, CAMELOT - DAY

follow
upon
door,

Echoing in the vaulted corridors outside the hall, the
knight's whisper stabs Arthur.

The words now seem borne on the whistling wind and
the King wherever he goes in search of Merlin. He comes
a knight seducing a lady in a dark corner by the chapel

his hand under her gown. Arthur notes the sacrilege in silence, and continues on his way.

INT. BEDCHAMBER - DAY

his
man.
looks

The wind keens. Thunder rolls overhead. Arthur enters bedchamber. He sits by the empty fireplace, a broken Feminine hands light on his shoulders. He starts. He up. It is Morgana. He smiles and grasps her hand.

MORGANA

I'll weep for you, brother, for a King must not weep.

he

She comes around and she kneels in front of him. Before can talk she silences him with a tender caress.

MORGANA

Do you know what Guenevere's maids have whispered?

He shakes his head.

MORGANA

That when the King returned from battle...

shin

She begins untying the laces of his metal thigh and guards.

MORGANA

...Guenevere would unlace his armor and massage the burns where metal rubbed on flesh...

flesh

She is stripping his legs naked, gently touching the with her fingertips. He stares off, remembering.

MORGANA

...She would prepare a bath for you, mixing special ointment in the water...

his

Arthur's eyes brim with tears. Morgana weeps, embracing

with
incants a

knees. He rests his hand gently upon her head, choked
remembrance, soothing her. But as she weeps, she
charm.

at
made
her

Arthur looks down upon her, and the woman who looks up
him is Guenevere, a Guenevere with cold ice eyes. He is
weak by desire and weakened further by magic. He holds
face adoringly.

ARTHUR

Guenevere! You are--

"GUENEVERE"

--Don't speak. A thousand words, a
hundred thousand words, would only
be prologue to the truth that must
be. That you, King, and I, your Queen,
beget a son to bond our love and to
strengthen our weak kingdom with a
successor. Come, my lord...

him
pathetic

She draws him to the floor and upon her body, holding
tightly to himself. Arthur trembles with excitement,
in his desperate passion.

charm,
may not

As he takes her, she shudders, losing control of the
and her features change till once again "Guenevere" is
Morgana. She holds him in a tight embrace so that he
see her. She whispers in his ear.

MORGANA

The moon flows in my blood to meet
your seed. And already I bear him
who will be King.

arms

Arthur wrenches himself away so he can see her, her
still around his neck. He looks down upon her, aghast,
incredulous.

MORGANA

I could easily kill you, brother.
But I want you to live to see our

son be King. In me, the blood of
Cornwall will have its revenge; in
me, the blood of Uther will show its
dark side.

She presses her thumbs into his neck and he faints.

EXT. FOREST - CAMELOT - DAY

Morgana, with a small party, rides away from the castle
through the lashing storm, till they are taken from
sight in
the folds of the forest...

INT. CHAPEL, TINTAGEL CASTLE - NIGHT

Lightening forks across the sky, illuminating the
interior.
The chapel has been transformed into a place of satanic
worship. Held up and surrounded by hooded figures,
Morgana
lies on the altar, her pregnant belly huge; and her
features
are fierce with passionate intensity. She writhes in
the
pangs of childbirth.

MORGANA

Stand back, all of you. Through my
own body I have nurtured him with my
potions. I made him. I alone can
give him life.

INT. CHAPEL, CAMELOT - NIGHT

Arthur enters, pale and haunted. Mass is being
celebrated,
and some knights are present. Those not asleep whisper
to
each other about the King. The sound of an approaching
storm
is heard.

As the priest raises the chalice to consecrate the
wine.
Arthur comes down the aisle and steps onto the altar.
He
reaches out to grasp the chalice from the priest's
hands.

INT. CHAPEL, TINTAGEL CASTLE - NIGHT

body

Morgana holds aloft her beautiful newborn baby, his glistening in a flash of lightening. She is triumphant.

INT. CHAPEL, CAMELOT - NIGHT.

chapel,

A bolt of lightening strikes the chalice, rocking the and Arthur is knocked back violently.

terrified

Rain lashes in through the shattered window upon the knights. They and the priest back away. Arthur is left

alone.

He rises and goes to the chalice, which is bent and

cracked.

He kneels before it. Steam hisses up as rain falls on

it.

INT. HALL OF THE ROUND TABLE - DAY

in

Sun streams in. Many of the knights are in attendance, full armor.

addresses

Ladies and pages watch from dark corners. Arthur the fellowship.

with a

He holds the cracked chalice in his hands. He burns new-found fervor.

ARTHUR

Who will ride the labyrinths of the forest, to the very root of his soul, to the very ends of the earth, to find the secret that will redeem us from the evil that has fallen upon us, and make this chalice, and ourselves, whole again?

Gawain rises and draws his sword in salute.

SIR GAWAIN

I will ride forth in the name of that quest, and commit my strength and my soul to it.

touch

Perceval, Kay and a few others draw their swords and

their lips to the blades in oath. Sunbeams splash off
their armor.

PERCEVAL

I will go.

The rest of the fellowship draw their swords in
imitation, but the resolution within them is not strong. Arthur
comes forward to Gawain.

ARTHUR

Gawain, a dreadful fear is upon me,
that we may never meet again, that
the fellowship will be no more...

He embraces Gawain, tears in his eyes. He turns to
Perceval, and Perceval kneels.

PERCEVAL

We will find the secret or die.

Arthur kisses the young knight's brow. Then he turns to
Kay.

ARTHUR

Kay, I know your heart yearns to go,
but I am prisoner to my duties, and
you must be to yours, at my side.

Arthur and Kay watch the knights file out till the hall
is empty, the harsh song of their armor growing distant.

FADE

OUT:

A LEGEND APPEARS:

"For nine years they searched. Morgana's power grew in
the land."

FADE IN:

EXT. SNOWSCAPE - DAY

Under a leaden sky, Gawain drives his horse through
swirling

his
frozen
way.

snow. He comes upon a mounted knight who is frozen in tracks. He brushes the snow from the man's face. The features belong to Caradoc. He slowly continues on his way.

EXT. DEAD FOREST - DAY

dead
rotting
out

Dangling from the branches of a dead tree are a dozen knights of the Round Table, crows pecking at the flesh in the chinks of armor. Perceval rides up, cries in horror, and spurs his horse away.

EXT. MOORS - DAY

distant

The rotting carcasses of sheep. The crops blackened and withered on the stalk. Hungry peasants head for a hill.

EXT, HILLSIDE, MOORS - DAY

its

A giant head has been carved out of an outcrop of rock, stone mouth gaping toward the sky.

farmers,
throbbing

People are congregated around the mouth. Peasants and they are wild with excitement, responding to drums and bagpipes wailing.

dark
cold
in
her

They watch Morgana, who is surrounded by knights in armor. At her side is an angelic boy of eight, his eyes as his mother's. Morgana is more beautiful than ever, flowing druidic robes, the gossamer silk clinging to sweat-drenched body.

giant's
acting as
Before

She is standing by the deep hole which forms the open mouth. It is covered by a tooth-like grating a drain for the blood of human sacrifices made there.

strong
into
the

her is Gawain, chained and struggling against five men who hold him. Morgana lifts a dagger and plunges it into Gawain's chest. The fountain of blood that gushes from the great knight's body drives the crowd into a frenzy.

MORGANA

(intoning)

The blood of this knight will feed the god in the earth, he is weak with hunger, and he will be made strong by this blood. Then he will plant his seed, and the land will be fertile once again.

mouth,

Gawain, his blood flowing from him and into the giant's mouth, looks up in anguish. His bellowing voice is echoed and amplified by the hollow beneath the drain.

GAWAIN

Arthur, forgive me. I die without the secret. I have failed.

EXT. MOORS - DAY

draws

Gawain's death cry and the din of the ritual carries to Perceval's ears as he wanders through the wasteland. He draws down his visor and spurs his horse forward.

EXT. HILLSIDE, MOORS - DAY

and

He gallops toward the giant's head. He checks his sword and lowers his lance.

awesome
strangely

The knight charging forward on his war horse is an awesome sight, but the crowd around the giant's mouth is strangely unfrightened. Morgana is excited; she turns to the boy.

MORGANA

Look, Mordred, a true prize for the giant. The lamb rides into our jaws.

way

Perceval is galloping toward them when the ground gives way

pit.
beneath the horse, and he and the animal plunge into a

The cheering crowd rushes to the edge of the trap.

MORGANA

(to Mordred)

You must kill him, for this knight
is dear to your father. You must do
it and learn to enjoy your father's
pain.

Her knights drag Perceval, unarmed, into Morgana's
presence.

MORGANA

Have you found what you search for?
Have you found what Arthur seeks?

Perceval doesn't answer, defiant and hiding his fear.

MORGANA

You haven't, or you would be smiling
now in the face of death. Your quest
is an impossible one.

PERCEVAL

That it might be impossible makes it
all the more necessary.

MORGANA

Fool!

(to the men holding
Perceval)

Uncover him. I'll show you the mystery
of life. It's death...

(to Mordred)

Do it, Mordred!

him
exposing
boy
Perceval's
handle.
Holding Perceval by his limbs and hair, the men force
down on the bloody grating, drawing back his head,
his throat. Morgana kneels by his head, and draws the
beside her. She holds the tip of the dagger to
neck and takes Mordred's hand and wraps it around the
Perceval is choked with fear, his heart pounding in his
throat.

MORGANA

Feel the life through the dagger,
child. It belongs to you.

neck
The boy looks up at his mother. The vein in Perceval's
pushes against the dagger's point.

MORDRED

I feel it, Mother. I will give his
blood to the giant.

Perceval
the
just
dagger,
The boy raises the dagger, and hesitates just a bit.
resigns himself bravely. He looks the child calmly in
eye. Mordred brings down the blade without strength,
piercing the skin with the tip. He lets go of the
afraid now of his mistake.

the
against
men
The dagger clatters to the grating and slips away down
drain, before Morgana can retrieve it. She rages
Mordred. In the confusion, Perceval tears loose, the
holding him slipping on the blood-wet stone.

lowered,
catching
it.
Perceval runs through the crowd. Immediately, lance
a knight is upon him. Perceval leaps toward him,
the lance in his hand, and pulling down the rider with
He jumps the rider and draws the knight's sword.

Whirling
back
his
off
rearing.
hidden
foot
horse
the lance and cutting the air with the sword, he keeps
the other knights for a moment, giving him time to see
chance. He leaps onto the riderless horse and charges
through the crowd. He reins in abruptly, the horse
He is wary of the ground before him; there could be a
pit. But there is no time to think. Knights and men on
are rushing him. He spurs forward into a gallop, the

the
horse

striding mightily And its hind leg sinks into a pit,
animal losing its gait. But the momentum carries the
forward, and it recovers from the stumble.

Perceval gallops away.

Morgana is enraged. She shakes Mordred by the hair.

MORGANA

You didn't kill him! You didn't kill
him!

But suddenly she begins kissing him tenderly.

MORGANA

My dear, sweet boy...

her

He just stands there emotionless, the dead center of
turbulent passions.

EXT. DEAD FOREST - DAY

knights of

Perceval gallops down a trail. The black-armored
Morgana chase him.

to

the

Perceval reins into deep cover alongside the trail. The
pursuers thunder past and the sound of hooves recedes.
Perceval checks his newly found sword, slashes the air
feel the weapon's balance. He re-sheathes it. He pats
horse.

PERCEVAL

We'll become good friends.

trees.

small

crashes to

has

He starts off again, into the patchless forest of dead
He is suddenly set upon by a wildman who, swinging a
uprooted tree, knocks him off his horse. Perceval
the ground and before he can use his sword the wildman
knocked it out of his hand.

blows
Perceval
addresses

It is Lancelot, demented, who furiously rains battering
on Perceval's armor, bellowing with rage. All that
can do is attempt to avoid the blows. Lancelot
Perceval as if the young knight were Lancelot himself.

LANCELOT

Where are you going, Lancelot, in
your iron tomb? Still trying to save
the world?

(He hammers blows
into Perceval's armor)

The best... the bravest... the
greatest... fool that ever lived.
Now the world rots. Death is king of
the earth. And it is you who make it
so, Lancelot.

into
with the

Before Perceval can speak, Lancelot disappears again
the forest, his eyes blank, as though his encounter
young knight had never happened.

rise
on

A knot of pain, Perceval pulls himself up. He tries to
into the saddle. He is too hurt to do it. He starts off
foot, slowly, leading the horse.

EXT. DEAD FOREST AND STREAM - NIGHT

and
heels,

It is very dark and Perceval has to feel his way.
He comes to the edge of a stream. He kneels to drink,
the horse drinks beside him. Then he rests back on his
brooding, too tired to rise.

defeated,

He lowers his eyes, staring into the dark water,
empty.

appears. He
away.
hand

Before him in the water a long thin bar of light
looks at it amazed. Voices are heard singing very far
He reaches out to touch the long strip of light but his

grows just disturbs the water. It is a reflection. The strip
wider and the ethereal music is closer.
Perceval looks up. The strip of light is before him,
suspended, thirty feet above. It continues to grow
wider. A
light drawbridge is being slowly lowered, allowing a powerful
to escape from within.
Perceval is terrified. In pain, he slowly rises into
the saddle, ready to gallop off; but fascinated, hypnotized
by the sight, he cannot, and he stays and watches.
The dim outline of a castle becomes visible as the
drawbridge is lowered across the water to the ground at his feet.
At the center of the blast of light coming from the
castle, Perceval can make out a burning chalice. The music
swells to a terrifying pitch, searing the forest.

EXT. ENTRANCE TO CASTLE - NIGHT

Bathed At the sight of the chalice, Perceval masters his fear.
in light and music, he spurs the horse forward onto the
drawbridge.
Once he is on it, the bridge begins to rise. Unsure of
its footing and blinded by the light, the horse becomes
skittish, and Perceval has to struggle to control it. He
dismounts to lead it, but the horse is terrified, rears up and jumps
off the bridge, which continues to rise, drawn up by unseen
hands.
Perceval hesitates, then advances down the sloping
drawbridge into the castle courtyard. All details are bleached out
by the blinding light. The chalice appears suspended in
space,

behind

and now the figure of a man can be glimpsed standing
it.

closing,

Enchanting music from unseen singers grows and weaves.
Perceval looks back to see the drawbridge slowly
trapping him inside.

cupping

He approaches the figure, his courage ebbing. Hands
the chalice, it speaks to him.

FIGURE

What is the secret of the chalice?
Who does it serve?

up

closes.

heaves

to

wriggles

Perceval doesn't understand. He glances back again. The
drawbridge is nearly closed. Terror seizes him.

Panicked, puzzled, baffled, he backs away. He scrambles

the drawbridge desperate to reach the top before it

He claws his way up till his hand grasps the top. He

himself through the narrow closing slit which is about

crush him. He screams, and with a final effort he

free and topples over crashing into the water below.

EXT. DEAD FOREST AND STREAM - NIGHT

thin

only

He looks up. The drawbridge thunders shut, the last
strip of light disappearing; and now he is surrounded
by the silence of the forest.

Perceval

all

Where there was a castle, now there is darkness.
wades through the water. He has crossed the stream and
he can see and feel are tree trunks. The castle has
disappeared. He is utterly defeated.

PERCEVAL

The chalice. The secret was in my
grasp. I let it slip, afraid for
myself. A question was asked. I didn't
understand. I didn't try. I failed...

FADE

OUT:

A LEGEND APPEARS:

"Nine years passed."

FADE IN:

INT. CAVE BENEATH CAMELOT.

Dripping water is steadily encrusting the crystal with limestone.

INT. HALL OF THE ROUND TABLE, CAMELOT - DAY

power
table.
and

Dead knights lay on biers. The once glorious seat of
is falling into decay. Few are in attendance around the
Agitated, Kay enters and goes to Arthur, who is worn
haggard, and aged.

KAY

Your son Mordred is at the gate.

Arthur comes alive.

ARTHUR

At last...

KAY

Don't recognize him. You were trapped
by Morgana's sorcery.

ARTHUR

(staring off)

...Gawain and Perceval, Bors and
Bohort, Caradoc and Ector, and all
the others--lost to me. Only the
echo of their voices remains in this
empty hall. All I have left is the
memory of their fellowship. Echoes
and memories. I am a ghost of the
King that once was...

(he turns to Kay and
with sudden harshness)

...Mordred is real, alive, my own
flesh and blood. I will see him, I
must.

EXT. GATE, INSIDE AND OUTSIDE CAMELOT - DAY

from Kay

The drawbridge lowers slowly, and Arthur moves away and the other knights, and advances across it.

surrounds
forest.

Rooks wheel over the dead trees of the forest that Camelot. A group of armed men waits at the edge of the

metal

One steps forward, a huge knight in black armor, the defining and exaggerating the powerful musculature of

his

body. He is Mordred, a young man of eighteen, and of extraordinary beauty. A page follows ten steps behind

him

bearing an enormous spear, its points hooded. Arthur

stops

at the edge of the drawbridge, the huge knight a few

steps

from him. Kay, ready for anything, moves halfway across

the

drawbridge.

Mordred kneels on one knee.

MORDRED

Father...

ARTHUR

Rise, Mordred.

MORDRED

I have come to claim what is mine,
Father.

ARTHUR

I recognize you only as my son, no
more.

MORDRED

(his tone is scathing)

And you are the great King? The lords
have rebelled. Invaders attack the
coasts. Crops don't grow. There is
nothing but plague and hunger in the
land. Only I am feared. I will be
king. You may have lost Excalibur,
but I have found my own weapon of
power. There.

and the
its
He points to the huge lance. The page pulls a string
hood drops, revealing a diabolically sharp spear tip,
metal glinting menacingly.

MORDRED

The very spear that pierced the side
of Christ as he died on the cross.

ARTHUR

Your mother told you that?

Arthur
Mordred is thrown off by the doubt Arthur has cast.
looks upon his son, desperately trying to read him.

ARTHUR

I cannot offer you the land, only my
love...

MORDRED

And I offer only this, Father. To
commit with passion and pleasure all
the evils that you failed to commit,
as man and king.

attempt.
Arthur goes forward to embrace his son, a desperate
Mordred recoils.

MORDRED

We will embrace only in battle.
Father, and I will touch you only
with the blade of my spear.

Arthur is on the verge of tears.

MORDRED

I will muster a great force of
knights, and I will return to fight
for what is mine.

ARTHUR

So be it.

pulled up
He turns and re-enters the castle, the drawbridge
immediately behind him. He is hunched over, broken.

EXT. BARREN LAND - EVENING

Asleep in the saddle, Perceval rides across burnt and smoldering fields. The horse walks aimlessly; it is the same animal, mangy and old. A hoard of children in filthy rags closes in on him, begging, pulling at the horse's trappings. He bolts awake and reins away. His eyes are red and feverish.

Wild hope grips him when he sees a glinting light by a farmhouse. He spurs the horse forward into a gallop.

EXT. FARM - EVENING

He leaps from the saddle and a terrified woman backs away. Perceval plunges his hand into the source of light. It is nothing but the reflection of the dying sun in a bucketful of water. Perceval covers his face.

PERCEVAL

Illusions. I will never find it again... I am sorry, woman, that I frightened you.

Peasants have emerged, surrounding him, and they hold axes and pitchforks.

PERCEVAL

Good woman, do you have any food? Some water?...

PEASANT

The little we had, we gave to Mordred's knights. He has taken this land. Tell the King that now we must look to Mordred.

SECOND PEASANT

But we will give you some water...

At least ten peasants encircle Perceval and he is too exhausted to put up a fight. They grab him and carry him away. Other peasants pull his horse to the ground, and one raises an ax to kill it.

EXT. STREAM, BARREN LAND - EVENING

into the
out

They throw Perceval down an escarpment and he rolls
fast-moving water. He is swept downstream and thrown
ferociously against the rocks in the stream bed, crying
in pain.

EXT. RIVER AND UNDERWATER - EVENING

the
it,

The water is deeper and Perceval is dragged under by
weight of his armor. He struggles desperately to shed
half drowning.

beside a
dies.

Exhausted, he pulls himself up onto the muddy shore
rotting sheep carcass, and around him, the daylight

EXT. RIVER - NIGHT

Ragged and bruised, lifeless, he stares into space.

PERCEVAL

I have lost my horse, my armor, my
sword. I have lost my way. I have
lost my strength. I have lost
everything... I will not lose hope.

Perceval

A light bursting through the trees shines on the mud,
wordless, harmonies sound somewhere in the forest.

flinch.
lowers.

sets off toward the source.

The burning light blasts into his face but he doesn't

The chorus builds in power. Before him, a drawbridge

details

EXT. CASTLE GATE - NIGHT

He steps onto the bridge and walks in. He crosses the
courtyard as the drawbridge closes behind him. All

of the castle are bleached out by the searing light.

EXT. CASTLE GATE - NIGHT

details

He steps onto the bridge and walks in. He crosses the courtyard as the drawbridge closes behind him. All of the castle are bleached out by the searing light.

INT. CASTLE, VARIOUS

seem to
stands
swirls

Heading for the source of the light he ascends what be a staircase. He enters a hall where the chalice suspended, burning with light, and the mysterious music and grows.

Figure

Perceval approaches the diaphanous and featureless who stands over the chalice.

FIGURE

Who does it serve?

PERCEVAL

You, my lord.

FIGURE

I have waited long for you. Once you almost saw, but fear blinded you. Why am I served from the chalice?

PERCEVAL

Because you and the land are one.

FIGURE

I am wasting away and I cannot die. And I cannot live.

PERCEVAL

You and the land are one. Drink from the chalice. You will be reborn and the land with you.

But
hands,
hold

Perceval cups his hands around the chalice to lift it. they close on nothing, and he draws back. The Figure's although insubstantial, grasp Perceval's and appear to his hands around the cup.

FIGURE

But who am I?

Perceval begins to kneel.

PERCEVAL

You are my lord and King. You are
Arthur.

The blinding light vanishes, the music drifts away.

INT. HALL OF THE ROUND TABLE - NIGHT

Perceval falls to his knees before Arthur and he holds
the
blood
drinks.
grow
in strength.

ARTHUR

I didn't know how empty was my soul
until it was filled.

Sir Kay stands by the vast fireplace where a small fire
burns,
and only now looks up and is aware of Perceval.

KAY

Perceval, you have returned!

ARTHUR

Ready my knights for battle; they
will ride with their King once more.
I have lived through others far too
long! Lancelot carried my honor and
Guenevere my guilt. My knights have
fought my causes. Mordred carries my
sins. Now, at last, I will rule.

EXT. WOODS AND FIELDS - NIGHT

Arthur at the head of a small force of knights, their
armor
Where
and
blossom,
the power of Nature exploding into life.

INT. CONVENT - DAWN

An old nun approaches the doors, upon which someone is pounding loudly. She opens the peephole. It is Arthur.

NUN

Go away. No man is allowed beyond these doors.

ARTHUR

I am Arthur.

The old nun is amazed and starts pushing open the many bolts, mumbling and agitated.

INT. CONVENT COURTYARD - DAWN

She leads the King, his footsteps ringing in the silent cloister, past the doors to the cells. His armor is wet with dew and it shines with a dull and deep luster. Nuns whisper at his transit. She opens the door to a cell and Arthur steps inside.

INT. CELL - DAWN

Candles flicker on a small altar before which a nun is praying. She turns to see who has entered. It is Guenevere, older, thin with self-denial, all the more beautiful. She looks up at the majestic figure who stands before her. She nearly swoons. He helps her to her feet, and words rush from deep within him.

ARTHUR

Guenevere, accept my forgiveness, and put your heart to rest. We have suffered too long. I have always loved you, and I still love you.

She weeps.

GUENEVERE

I loved you much, as King, and sometimes as husband, but one cannot

gaze too long at the sun in the sky.

ARTHUR

Forgive me, my wife, if you can. I was not born to live a man's life, but to be the stuff of future memory. The fellowship was a brief beginning, a fair time that cannot be forgotten; and because it will not be forgotten, that fair time may come again. Now once more I must ride with my knights to defend what was, and the dream of what could be.

GUENEVERE

I have kept it.

barely
She draws back the covers of her pallet, and there is Excalibur. Arthur is overwhelmed by emotion; he can speak

ARTHUR

I never dared to hope all these years that it was in your keeping.

off,
off
does.
He kneels before her and kisses her thigh. She gazes remembering the life of long ago. He rises and looks into her eyes, unable to find the words; he finally

ARTHUR

I have often thought that in the hereafter of our lives, when I owe no more to the future and can be just a man, that we may meet, and you will come to me and claim me as yours, and know that I am your husband. It is a dream I have...

He takes Excalibur by the hilt and exits.

INT. CONVENT COURTYARD - DAWN

strides
balance,
The nuns scatter before him in awe and terror. He strides forward, Excalibur in hand. He stops and tests its balance, and he draws force from it.

ARTHUR

Guenevere...

EXT. WOODS - DAY

at
of the
helmets,
in the
trees

Excalibur gleams in the sunlight. Arthur holds it high, the head of a small force of knights under the banner Dragons. Kay and Perceval ride at his side. Plumed shields blazing with armorial colors, pennants flying clean wind from their lances; it is a brave sight. The are in blossom and dandelion fluff billows up at their passage.

EXT. PIT, MOORS - DAY

squires
the
older

Arthur's group comes to a halt. Two knights and a few galloping from the opposite direction rein in before King. The knights draw their swords in homage, and the one addresses Arthur.

KNIGHT

It is only me and my son. All other knights of the dukedom have rallied to Mordred.

pit, a

Arthur smiles hiding the hurt. He points to an open huge devastation.

ARTHUR

What horror is that?

KNIGHT

Mordred, sir. He digs for precious metals, with which he buys the loyalty of men at arms, binding them to his side.

EXT. THE MOORS - ARTHUR'S WAR CAMP - LATE EVENING

crescent
from

It is a clear night and the sky blazes with stars. A moon casts its silvery light upon Arthur, who wanders

his camp alone.

EXT. STONEHENGE, THE MOORS - LATE EVENING

He stops in the ancient circle of Druidic stones.

ARTHUR

I am outnumbered ten to one by Mordred's forces. Merlin, I need you at my side as you were once, my friend, to give me courage. There are no war tricks that will fool Mordred. He was weaned on blood.

He falls on his knees in front of the stone, tired, between thinking and dreaming, and he bangs his mailed fist against it.

ARTHUR

More than I ever did, I need you now. Where are you, Merlin? Is it true that Morgana has trapped you?

INT. CAVE BELOW CAMELOT

The veins of crystal glow darkly, and the hammering of Arthur's fist upon the stone is dimly echoed here. In the red crystal, fragments of Merlin can be glimpsed, trapped, frozen.

EXT. STONEHENGE - LATE EVENING

Arthur slips off into sleep. The stones around him distort. He speaks softly, but then though the words continue, his lips are closed.

ARTHUR

...If only you could be at my side, Merlin, to see me wield Excalibur once more...

INT. CAVE BELOW CAMELOT

The crystal is cracking, shards falling to the cave floor.

EXT. STONEHENGE - NIGHT

up.
the
Arthur is still on his knees, and he sits back, looking
But the atmosphere is different, within a dream, and
stones of the henge loom larger over him now.

ARTHUR

What is this place? It is rumored
Merlin, that you drew your power
from these circles...

to
him
were.
rises.
A hand ruffles the King's hair. He turns, and his face
face with Merlin, standing over him. Arthur looks at
without surprise, as though the intervening years never
Merlin begins to laugh his hideous giggle. Arthur

ARTHUR

Quiet. You'll wake the men, and they
must fight tomorrow for their very
lives.

MERLIN

I know. I have heard noises and echoes
through the stones...

ARTHUR

What is this place, Merlin?

MERLIN

It is like a tree. The roots of the
stones spread out across the land
and they draw on the thoughts and
actions of men. Like sap those human
matters course through the stones
feeding the stars that are the leaves
of the tree. And the stars whisper
back to men the future course of
events.

(becoming passionate)

But the earth is being torn apart,
its metals stolen, and the balance
is broken and the lines of power no
longer converge. In fact, I nearly
didn't make it in one piece.

pain. He limps affectedly and stretches with exaggerated

MERLIN

But, I'm here.

ARTHUR

Where have you been these many years?
Is it true that Morgana--

MERLIN

--Stories... You brought me back.
Your love brought me back. Back to
where you are now, in the land of
dreams...

ARTHUR

Is this a dream? Tell me, Merlin!

Merlin smiles, turns and leaves, heading for Arthur's
camp,
giggling. Arthur starts off after him and awakens from
the
dream when he walks into one of the stones. It takes
him a
moment to realize that Merlin has vanished.

ARTHUR

Merlin?!

He hurries away toward the camp.

INT. KAY'S TENT, ARTHUR'S WAR CAMP - NIGHT

Arthur shakes Kay awake, and as the faithful knight
comes
out of a deep sleep, he clutches Arthur's arm.

KAY

Merlin, will I live...?
(he shakes away the
dream)
...I was dreaming...

ARTHUR

Of Merlin?

KAY

Yes. He spoke to me. He said I would
fight bravely tomorrow. I have never
dreamed of Merlin before.

ARTHUR

I dreamed of him too... Merlin lives!
He lives in our dreams now, in that
dark and shadowy place that is as
strong and real as this more solid
one. He speaks to us from there.

EXT. MORDRED'S WAR CAMP - NIGHT

tents, and
a
canvas,
Cape flowing, Merlin sweeps between Mordred's war
in the logic of dreams, unseen by the guards. He passes
tent where the huge shadow of Mordred is thrown on the
as he sharpens the blade of a fearsome spear.
He enters a tent.

INT. MORGANA'S TENT - NIGHT

over
waits
She is stunningly beautiful in her sleep. Merlin leans
her lovely body, kisses her softly on the lips, and
for her to awaken.

MERLIN

I have returned, enchantress. You
are beautiful, magnificent. Have you
used up all the magic you stole from
me to keep yourself young? Have you
any magic left to do battle with
Merlin?

INT. TENT - MORGANA'S DREAM

She rises from her sleeping body.

MORGANA

You provoke me, Merlin.

MERLIN

What's behind that beauty? A wizened,
cold-hearted snake.

Merlin steps back, grandiose and melodramatic.

MERLIN

You are a snake about to strike!

He raises his staff.

MERLIN

And I am the staff that drives the
snake back.

slinks

He lowers the staff with dreamlike slowness and she
right up to him.

MORGANA

Burning with the fire of desire, I
am the flames that consume the staff
to ashes.

the

licking

She winds her fluttering hands around the staff, and
shadows they cast upon the tent give the illusion of
flames.

MERLIN

I am the cloudburst that quenches
the flames.

MORGANA

I am the desert, where water
disappears--

MERLIN

--I am the sea, which covers the
desert forever under its weight.

MORGANA

--I am the fog and mists that rise
up from the sea, escaping...

She laughs at her cleverness.

MERLIN

Fog and mist! You couldn't be that.
You don't have enough magic.

INT. MORGANA'S TENT - NIGHT

Morgana tosses and mutters in her tormented dream.

MORGANA

...I have the desire and I have the
magic...

INT. TENT - MORGANA'S DREAM

Merlin, huge, magnetic, enfolds Morgana in his cape.

MERLIN

You are mine at last. I am the sea
and you will never escape me. Fog
and Mist...!?

chanting

And he laughs at her, suffocating her. Morgana begins
the charm of Making, desperate--

INT. MORGANA'S TENT - NIGHT

spring

--and she finishes uttering it in her sleep. Her eyes
open, and vapors issue from her gaping mouth. She
and the fog gushes out filling the tent.

screams

EXT. MORGANA'S TENT, MORDRED'S WAR CAMP - NIGHT

camp.

Fog billows out of the tent, spreading through the

INT. MORGANA'S TENT - NIGHT

LIEUTENANT

A fog is rising, sir.

MORDRED

That cannot be.

He rises and goes out with the lieutenant.

EXT. MORDRED'S WAR CAMP - NIGHT

It is fogbound, the campfires yellow smudges within it.

MORDRED

(to the lieutenant)

My mother has a sense for such things.
She said there would be no fog.

Mordred enters his mother's tent.

INT. MORGANA'S TENT - NIGHT

Mordred enters.

MORDRED

...Mother?

smoke Morgana, withered, old, lies dead in the bed, wisps of
rising from within her ruptured body.

EXT. MOORS BY THE SEA - FOG - DAWN

white Arthur, with Kay and Perceval, canters through the
armor. fog. They are flanked by a phalanx of knights in silver

ARTHUR

Kay, you will lead the attack.
Perceval, you will stay with me.

Kay draws his sword in salute, elated.

ARTHUR

Be cautious, my brother.

watching him He spurs forward, while Arthur reins to a halt,
surround disappear. Perceval and a few knights stay behind and
the King.

ARTHUR

In this battle there is one thing I
must do, that no one else can. Find
Mordred and kill him.

Ahead, the horrible din of joined battle.

arms. In the swirling fog, clash of arms follows clash of
he There is confusion, for each knight is unable to see if
other. is fighting friend or foe until they are upon each

in The battle becomes a series of vicious duels, a knight
just silver armor against a knight in black-burnished armor,
sword on glimpsed in the fog that is alive with the clang of
shield, the pounding of hooves, the cries of the dying.
faces Squires drag away their wounded knights, their young
pale at the sight of the carnage.

riderless

Kay is unhorsed but picks himself up and mounts a horse, rejoining the combat although he is bleeding.

EXT. MOORS BY THE SEA - FOG - DAY

glare.

It is full day, and the fog blinds with its painful

King.

Arthur with Perceval at his side rides through the fog, searching. Perceval takes up a challenge against the

He

He unhorses this opponent, piercing him with his lance.

returns to the King's side.

PERCEVAL

There are too many on Mordred's side.
We cannot hold out much longer.

his

Kay is glimpsed fighting on foot, hurt, barely holding own, but then the sight is hidden in the fog.

breath. He

Kay overcomes his opponent and stops to catch his

scarred

is amazed by what he sees. A knight, in old, battle-

in

armor whose pieces don't match, cuts down the knights

fight

black in foray after foray, wheeling and turning in a brilliant and ruthless spectacle of martial arts. He

his

without a shield, a lance in his left hand and sword in right.

Kay moves away in search of Arthur.

death

Arthur and Perceval watch the lone knight meting out

fog.

with such terrible beauty, weaving in and out of the

KAY

He can be no other.

ARTHUR

Lancelot?... It is Lancelot!

quick

He spurs his horse forward to join him, but Perceval is to stop him.

PERCEVAL

No, my lord. We seek Mordred.

KAY

I will join him.

Kay rises onto a fresh horse and gallops away.

EXT. MOORS BY THE SEA - FOG - LATE DAY

knights
around
Arthur
and
Arthur and Perceval ride alone, the accompanying
gone, the dying and the dead and the crazed horses all
them.

Squires are carrying Kay upon his shield. He is dead.
leaps to the ground and reaches out to touch his face,
closes his eyes. He stifles his tears.

ARTHUR

Has anyone seen Lancelot?

SQUIRE

He lies over there, sir.

abdomen,
side.
Arthur rushes off, Perceval following on horseback.
Lancelot is mortally wounded, blood flowing from his
his eyes open but his gaze dead. Arthur falls to his

ARTHUR

Squire! Here!

and
drawn.
Lancelot's
But there is no one now except the dead and wounded,
Perceval, who dismounts to watch over the King, sword
Desperate, Arthur stops the wound with his hand.
eyes are sightless, but tears spill from them.

LANCELOT

Arthur.

ARTHUR

Lancelot, I will save you... Don't

die.

wound
He tears off a piece of his tunic and staunches the
with it.

LANCELOT

My salvation is to die a Knight of
the Round Table.

ARTHUR

You are that and much more. You are
its greatest knight, you are what is
best in men. Now we will be together--

LANCELOT

--It is the old wound, that has been
opened. I have always known it would
be the gateway to my death, for it
has never healed. Let my heart do
its job, my King, and pump me empty...

against
Arthur takes Lancelot in his arms and rests his lips
the knight's brow.

LANCELOT

(a death whisper)

Guenevere, has she come to you, is
she Queen again?

He lies, closing his eyes, unable to look at Lancelot.

ARTHUR

She is, Lancelot.

face,
shut
A boyish smile settles over the features of Lancelot's
and he dies. Arthur holds him to his breast, his eyes
tight.

A strong wind rises. Perceval kneels beside Arthur.

PERCEVAL

The fog is lifting. Only we remain
alive.

EXT. MOORS BY THE SEA - EVENING

across
Arthur and Perceval rise, and as far as they can see

aftermath
steaming
dying

the green hills that roll down to the sea lies the
of the massacre. Hacked bodies, abandoned armor,
horse carcasses, everything still. The murmur of the
is carried on the wind to the soft roar of the sea. The
squires have fled the scene of horror.

ARTHUR

But for Mordred. Where is Mordred?

dead,
bodies

Elsewhere on the battlefield, Mordred searches the
accompanied only by his lieutenant, who turns over the
of Arthur's knights.

MORDRED

Where is Arthur?

Mordred
lance is

One of Arthur's knights reaches out blindly for help.
crushes his skull underfoot. The shaft of his huge
caked with blood, as are his hands.

the

Arthur and Perceval see Mordred and his lieutenant, and
King restrains Perceval from going forward.

ARTHUR

No, Perceval. Now it is time for me
to raise my sword.

(he bellows out)

Mordred, prepare to meet your death.

starts

Shield on his left arm, and Excalibur in his right, he
toward Mordred.

MORDRED

I wait for you, Father.

and

Mordred advances forward, the huge spear in both hands
parallel to the ground.

the

Arthur goes straight for him, shield ready to receive
blow. Mordred keeps walking, his arms now tensed back

and

ready to strike.

Mordred
Arthur's
King's
pierces

Once they are within weapon's reach of each other,
dashes forward and thrusts the spear. It glances off
shield, slides under his hauberk and penetrates the
body, and so powerful was the blow that the blade
him right through.

horrible
strength
presses
Arthur
the
metal,

Mortally wounded, Arthur's scream of pain becomes a
war cry, and he drives himself forward with all the
he has along the spear shaft almost to Mordred's hands.
Mordred is knocked back and to the ground and Arthur
down on him, the butt of the spear pinning Mordred.
lifts Excalibur. Mordred attempts to free himself, as
blade of Excalibur descends upon him and cuts through
flesh and bone.

side,
Arthur

Mordred's head falls to the ground, rolling away.
Mordred's lieutenant flees. Perceval races to Arthur's
and supports the King who has fallen on his knees.
speaks through the pain:

ARTHUR

Draw the spear from me. Do it.

while
Arthur's
remove
slowly,

Perceval holds the King tight to himself with one arm,
with the other he draws the shaft through and out of
body. Arthur sags but doesn't fall. Perceval begins to
his armor to get at the gaping wounds. The King speaks
softly, from outside his own pain-wracked body.

ARTHUR

There is one thing left to do...
Excalibur... And you must do it,
Perceval. Leave my wounds, I command

you.

PERCEVAL

I cannot--

ARTHUR

--Take Excalibur. Find a pool of calm water and throw the sword into it.

Perceval, stunned by the command, doesn't move.

ARTHUR

Obey me, Perceval. You must act for me. It is my last order as your King. Do it, and be back!

Perceval picks up the sword, mounts his horse and rides inland. Arthur watches him go, struggling with the pain, still kneeling, and then his head falls to his chest.

EXT. POOL, MOORS - EVENING

Perceval steps through tall reeds to the edge of a pool. He cannot bring himself to throw Excalibur into the water. He examines the blade, and it is haloed with a faint iridescence.

PERCEVAL

It is too precious a thing. I can't...

He backs away from the water and hides the sword in the reeds, and starts back.

EXT. MOORS BY THE SEA - EVENING

Perceval dismounts, rushing to kneel at the King's side. Arthur looks up, calm and intense.

ARTHUR

When you threw it in, what did you see?

PERCEVAL

...I saw nothing.

blurts

The King looks at him with piercing power. Perceval
it out.

PERCEVAL

My King, I couldn't do it. Excalibur
cannot be lost. Other men--

ARTHUR

--By itself it is only a piece of
steel. Its power comes from he who
wields it. For now there is no one.
Do as I have ordered!

sun

clouds.

Perceval leaves once more. The daylight is failing, the
is near the horizon over the sea, bursting through

EXT. POOL - EVENING

middle

holds the

marvel.

He picks up the sword and looks at it for a long time.
Finally, with great misgiving, he hurls it into the

of the pool. As Excalibur is about to touch the water a
woman's hand reaches and grasps it by the hilt. It

sword aloft for a moment and then draws it under.

Perceval backs away from the pool stunned by the

EXT. MOORS BY THE SEA - SUNSET

shouting

Perceval returns to the King, terribly excited,
from his horse:

PERCEVAL

Arthur!

doesn't

horse and

But Arthur isn't there. Perceval looks around him, he
understand. He sees a trail of blood. He spurs his
follows the trail down to the sea.

EXT. BEACH - SUNSET THEN NIGHT

by a

There is a trail of blood and prints upon the sand left
man crawling.

Perceval follows them toward the sea. He looks around, searching, terribly distraught.

footprints
out
Where the blood and prints cease, there are many coming from and returning into the sea. Perceval looks across the waves.

deck he
surrounded
The sun
further,
He sees a sailing vessel rising on the swell. On its can make out the distant figure of Arthur, lying by women, their gossamer robes rippling in the wind. hovers on the horizon and the ship is heading for it. He gallops into the waves until his horse will go no calling out with all his strength, a futile attempt:

PERCEVAL

Arthur! Will you return?

the
wades
back.
The sun slips below the horizon. Night is falling, and wind whips the wavecrests. He turns from the sea and

PERCEVAL

All the knights of the Round Table are dead. Excalibur is returned. Arthur is gone. Maybe he lives, maybe he will return...

light
pouch
He stops at the edge of the water. In the uncertain sky and sea become one. He draws the chalice out of a on his saddle, and he holds it up before him.

PERCEVAL

Only I remain, and this...

of
taken
The wind swirls and whistles mysteriously in the hollow the cup. Music grand and melancholic grows from it. The chalice, etched in starlight, is the last thing that is from sight in the enfolding darkness.

OUT :

FADE

THE END