

KING ARTHUR

by

David Franzoni

October 18, 2001
First Draft – Ninth Revision

EXT. UKRAINE, NEAR THE BLACK SEA, 400 AD - DAY

Vast plain flows from the foot of the snow packed Caucasus Mountains to the Black Sea where a nomadic settlement nestles on the shore. It's a band of Russian (Iazyges-Sarmatian) warriors. SIX YOUNG BOYS on WARHORSES ride away from the tents.

AS THE RIDERS APPROACH

We see all the boys are about ten years old, led by a ROMAN OFFICER and an Older RUSSIAN KNIGHT. Then, MEN and WOMEN ride bare-back at a distance before finally halting to watch the boys as they leave. These are the boys' parents and relatives.

Each of the boys looks back for a last glimpse of their homeland. All except YOUNG LANCELOT, who wears a CLOTH AND GEMSTONE TALISMAN around his neck: the image of a CRIMSON DRAGON. Only Lancelot refuses to look back and fights bitter tears...

LEGEND OVER:

Historians agree that the classical Medieval tale of King Arthur and his Knights rose from a real hero who lived and died in a much earlier period often called the Dark Ages. Recent archeological evidence in Britain and historical reassessments shed light on his true identity.

By 183 AD, when the Roman Empire extended from Arabia to Britain, her forces defeated a powerful army of cavalry from the plains of Russia. In exchanged for their lives, these Russian warriors were incorporated into the Roman Military and stationed to Hadrian's Wall in Britain. There they battled local freedom fighters called Woads, struggling to keep them north of the wall. Everything in the south became loyal to Rome.

Their commander was a Roman officer named Artorius.

For two hundred years each generation sent sons from their Russian homeland to Britain reporting to their own Roman commander who assumed the ancestral title of Artorius, or Arthur.

In the twilight of the Roman Empire, with the final military evacuation of Britain in the face of a massive Germanic invasion of Saxons, all that stood between the local population and extermination was this last band of Cavalry - Arthur and his Russian Knights.

GO TO BLACK:

EXT. FOREST, BRITAIN, TWENTY YEARS LATER - DAY

FROM FAR ABOVE: a world of unspoiled forests unlike anything on earth today. Wind moves through the trees like a wave that flows for a continent.

EXT. CLEARING - DAY

Below the canopy a ROUGH-CUT, HANDSOME YOUNG MAN picks the last wild flowers of summer. His name is ARTHUR CASTUS. Dressed in a worn tunic, he could be a recluse or a hermit. Arthur stops just as he picks a Cupid's Dart; senses something on the air.

TREES...

Massive trunks surround the clearing holding back the shadows... and whatever else is in there.

ARTHUR

snaps the flower off at the earth, returns to his long-stemmed bouquet on the forest floor, kneels and adds the Cupid's Dart.

FACES

melt right out of the trees. For a second they seem to float — then THREE WHOLE MEN emerge. Camouflaged with plant dye, each carries a short sword. They're WOADS: indigenous British guerilla fighters.

Arthur stands, lifts the bouquet as if offering it to them. The Woads hesitate. He SHAKES the bouquet, the flowers drop and his sword EXCALIBUR is hidden inside. In a flash Arthur KILLS THE FIRST TWO WOADS.

MORE WOADS

rush to help their comrades — one is SLAMMED BY AN ARROW and DROPS.

IN THE TREES —

Knight TRISTRAN camouflaged by his own DIRT VANISHES back into the branches, pulling his carbine-size COMPOUND BOW in after him.

HULKING KNIGHT BORS —

steps from the shadows...

LANCELOT —

drops from a tree...

GALAHAD —

tall as a Laker with Rasputin eyes, explodes from a BLIND of foliage — twigs cling to his matted hair...

DAGONET —

RISES UP from a heap of leaves, wave-blade dagger in his left hand, a BRONZE WEAPON that fits over his right hand like MASSIVE BRASS KNUCKLES with fang-points...

ARTHUR —

moves on his third Woad. This one looks like trouble. Big, scarred — been there, killed that. They square off.

GAWAIN —

splatters an escaping Woad using a two-headed mace...

LIKE A LEAD-OFF BATTER

Bors DRILLS a Woad with a bronze spiked CLUB that resembles a rolling pin laced with razor blades...

LANCELOT

stabs an escaping Woad with a double-tipped short spear. He spins and kills another. A magnificent chiseled Action Hero who loves his job, Lancelot smirks, looks for more Woads...

GALAHAD

CRUSHES Woad six with an ornate bronze battle-axe — then slams him AGAIN just to be sure...

DAGONET

With boxer-like strokes kills the last two Woads...

ARTHUR

Excalibur is like a titan missile compared with Big Woad's sword. He swings and Big Woad dodges, lunges forward but Arthur already has Excalibur leveled on the back swing and kills Big Woad before he even gets close...

ALL THE KNIGHTS

sink back into the forest...

ARTHUR

crouches in the clearing listening to the wind.

EXT. STREAM - DAY

SQUIRE JOLS guards seven horses and a mule watering at the stream. As one the Knights move out of the forest. Jols JUMPS, then smiles in relief when he sees the Knights. Arthur thrusts Excalibur into the stream and BLOOD billows away.

EXT. BRITISH VILLAGE - DAY

The STREAM rushes by a dusty country trail. Small round shields on their backs Arthur, Lancelot, Gawain, Galahad, Bors, Dagonet and Tristran enter the village followed by Squire Jols.

Broadswords sag low at their horses' flank like six guns. No armor, just leather, wool and dirt. They look less like classical knights than a special forces search-and-destroy unit.

Lancelot — mounted on a sleek dapple "Heavenly Horse" — trots off to glare down at the nervous Britons. Arthur reins in. An ELDER hobbles up on a cane.

ELDER

In the name of our savior Jesus
Christ you and your knights are
welcome in our village! Thanks be
for preserving us from the Woads!

Lancelot — always the itchy trigger — returns to trot around the Knights. Arthur studies the Britons with a mixture of pity and mistrust, then:

ARTHUR

Toss this shit-hole.

Lancelot is the first out of the saddle. The others right behind go hut to hut. Only Bors stays mounted by Arthur's side.

ARTHUR

(to Bors)

We've got four hours before dark
— water, food but only what they
can carry. Watch each other's
backs.

ELDER

Sir knight! Gods! Spare us! We honor you as our saviors! Don't treat us as the Woads do!

BORS

Shut up while Arthur speaks!

He does.

ARTHUR

We've been eating mushrooms and berries for a week so we could work our way through the forest from the south to ambush these Woads. You have your lives; I'm taking rations for my men; you can eat berries if need be.

ELDER

Sir Knight...! Surely you cannot believe we help the Woads! They are here because they prey on us!

BORS

Shut up!

ARTHUR

Listen to me!

BORS

Listen to Arthur Castus, commander of the Russian Knights!

Silence.

ARTHUR

We are here to keep the roads clear and protect you and all villages south of Hadrian's Wall from Woad raiders. It's our duty, delegated by Rome. But, if we find anyone has been purposefully supplying these Woads we will be back and we will punish you.

LEAVING THE VILLAGE

the Knights pass three simple MONKS working a tiny patch of land for vegetables. Arthur reins in, lowers his head for a moment of prayer. Lancelot swaps an annoyed look with the others. Arthur Lifts his face. Bors bumps his horse against Arthur's. Tristran close behind.

TRISTRAN

No sign the Woods were welcome in
this village. That elder's
telling the truth. They're loyal.
This was just an isolated raid.

LANCELOT

We didn't catch them. That's all.

BORS

Dragon formation? To be safe?

ARTHUR

You on 'eyes', Tristran, 'tail'.

EXT. FOREST TRAIL - DAY

DRIZZLING. Knights look MISERABLE.

BORS —

far ahead on 'EYES' of their "Dragon Formation".

TRISTRAN —

DRAGON'S TAIL — watching their ass; silent, stoic,
the deadly professional.

LANCELOT —

Like an angry wasp weaves his nervous horse in and
out of the Knights. Arthur rides on watching the
forest like he could see through the trees.

GAWAIN

These people are loyal only so
long as they fear us.

LANCELOT

With the Saxons coming soon
they'll have a new place... for
their loyalty. Personally I'm
glad we're pulling out of here.
These people are wearing us down!

ARTHUR

I don't feel worn down. In fact I
feel fairly good, today.

Jols laughs — then swallows it as Lancelot glares.
Lancelot aims this at Arthur but it's for them all.

LANCELOT

Rome is leaving this island
because Rome is falling apart.

Arthur makes eye contact with each Knight.

ARTHUR
Maybe we're the ones falling
apart.
(pause)
I'm going out on point — I'll
send Bors back.

Arthur rides ahead, alone.

EXT. FOREST TRAIL

A WOAD watches The Knights from a ledge. A bear of a man in his late forties who commands absolute respect — he's MERLIN. A WOAD GUERILLA crawls to his side.

WOAD GUERILLA
Merlin... That one there, that is
Arthur!

Merlin studies him as if trying to read his soul. He keeps watching Arthur as he rides out of sight alone in the rain. Arthur looks like the loneliest man on earth.

EXT. COAST (SCOTLAND) - DAWN

LEGEND: NORTH COAST OF BRITAIN.

TWO BRITISH BOYS tend sheep. Their DOG STARTS BARKING toward the sea and the boys turn to look.

DARK SHIPS MATERIALIZE FROM THE GLOOM until TWELVE of the hulking things approach the shore like a D-Day invasion fleet. The boys turn tail and RUN.

EXT. SHIP'S DECK - DAWN

CERDIC, Saxon commander who has the personality of a THUG, stands on the foredeck. CYNRIC, his burning-eyed son, joins him. Cynric looks about eighteen; can tell he thinks a lot of himself.

EXT. SHIP/AFT

GREY-CLAD SWORDSMEN prepare to hit the beach: some sharpen their blades with whetstones called SNAKESTONES. As another SHIP slips alongside the swordsmen ALL stop what they're doing to watch...

2ND SHIP

BLACK-CLAD "belly-shooters" (crossbowmen) form on deck with the fanatical precision of a Waffen SS division.

CERDIC

stands on the prow of his ship and shouts
COMMANDS IN SAXON.

BELLY-SHOOTERS

To a precision chorus of BARKED COMMANDS and gun-cocking CLATTER they arm their crossbows. Two TALL, MUSCULAR BELLY-SHOOTERS flank the main ranks holding huge MONOPOD MOUNTED CROSSBOWS. They have to use HAND CRANKS to cock them.

WHERE THEY'RE HEADED:

a British town... the two boys can just be seen, running as villagers cluster near the beach, then join the boys and RUN FOR THEIR LIVES.

A MUSCULAR BELLY-SHOOTER

... FIRES — the thing kicks like a 12 ga. Far up on the beach a running child DROPS. A CHEER roars up from the Belly-Shooters.

EXT. HADRIAN'S WALL - LATE AFTERNOON

LAUGHING CHILDREN race through the dirt street, dodging in and out of the path of the returning Knights. Arthur smiles at the exuberant kids as Gawain tries not to trample any.

Atop the wall 'ALAS' — standard issue Roman auxiliary FOOT SOLDIERS — stand at attention. Gigantic Hadrian's Wall looks like it could hold back Godzilla. From where the Knights ride it runs horizon to horizon.

Gawain and Galahad smile for a few familiar FEMALE FANS. One KID hands Arthur a flagon of beer. Arthur drinks as he passes a fresco on a building wall, the simple profile of a MONK. It's an image of the British Monk and spiritual leader, PELAGIUS.

ARTHUR

hands the grog back to Bors who drinks, passes it to Lancelot. Then Arthur reaches down to touch the hands of the children who stretch up to touch him and his horse.

LANCELOT

You haven't got a worry, no matter what happens, commander, sir. You're half a Briton anyway. I'm beginning to imagine you actually like it here.

Arthur manages generally to be amused by Lancelot's temper.

ARTHUR

Well, control your imagination. When the day comes I'll be taking both halves of me straight to Rome.

GAWAIN

Then where's the damned envoy with our orders to evacuate? It's years end; he should have arrived by now.

GALAHAD

We want to go home, Arthur.

Arthur looks at Galahad and the others.

ARTHUR

No more than I. No more than I.

Lancelot holds up the flagon, shares his mock toast with the Knights.

LANCELOT

Hear that, beloved citizenry!? Incompetent infantry!? Soon it's going to be good-bye to you all! You won't find me where I'm going...

(to Arthur)

It's where I go every night, Arthur. Did you know I desert every night to the plains of our homeland? In my dreams — all right with you?

(to all the Knights)

Endless sea of grass for our horses. You know what I mean and damn-it Arthur, don't pretend you don't!

Arthur smiles at Lancelot's Big Humor.

LANCELOT

In my dreams I never get off my horse. Like having a woman, forever.

INT. FORTRESS - NIGHT

and TIGHT ON A TAPESTRY that shows riders in silhouette. Each carries a long SHOCK LANCE.

LANCELOT (O.S.)
Room enough to fight, and to have
enemies worth killing.

BIG ANGLE

Lancelot, Gawain, Galahad, Bors, Dagonet, Tristran
in the armory which doubles as their rec room.
Blazing hearth beneath the tapestry. Bear and wolf
skins shroud the chairs and floor. The guys have
WOMEN in tonight. Lancelot charming to a REDHEAD,
Galahad all over A BUXOM BRUNETTE.

LANCELOT
... No trees, no Woods creeping
like snakes through the leaves.

REDHEAD
And your commander?

LANCELOT
Arthur?

REDHEAD
He's more than just your
commander, isn't he? Isn't he
your friend?

Moment for everyone to reflect. The Knights look
for Lancelot to take point on that one.

LANCELOT
Our commander has no friends...

INT. LOCAL BAR - NIGHT

Essentially a trench where they serve alcohol.
Crude tables, the center is an open hearth.
Arthur's at a corner table with bread, a jug of
mead and a single mug. TWO GIRLS are suddenly at
Arthur's table. One attractive, the other, close
enough. The attractive one is IA, the near-miss,
BRIGID.

IA
Are you one of the Knights?

BRIGID
He is the Knight, Ia.

IA
Commander Arthur? Good lord! May
we sit? I'm Ia, she, Brigid.

Arthur allows a smile — maybe he'll get lucky
tonight.

BRIGID
Your others? The Knights?

ARTHUR
Celebrating Saturnalia for the new
year.

BRIGID
Pagans, still?

IA
They're from far off. Isn't that
true? Their ancestors were taken
captive by the Romans and sent
here.

ARTHUR
Your friend's right. All the way
from Russia.

BRIGID
Where is that in heaven or hell?

ARTHUR
Very distant, near an ocean called
the Black Sea. So black, children
use the waters for their pens!

They get big eyes listening as Arthur turns on the
charm. Arthur gestures to a servant for more mead
as he warms to their company.

BRIGID
Their gods? If not Jesus?

ARTHUR
They honor a great God of Fires,
called Dragon.

IA
No!

Servant passes out the beer.

ARTHUR
Heaven, for them, is their
homeland. And, great warriors
have the honor of returning as war
horses.

BRIGID

The horses they ride are really people?!

ARTHUR

Absolutely! Sometimes at night, if you're very quiet and sneak into the stable you can catch them talking to each other...

IA

Sweet, Jesus; and their women?

ARTHUR

A Russian woman may not marry until she has killed an enemy in battle.

IA

NO!

ARTHUR

There is nothing a Russian Knight values more than a woman who can fight... and ride...

As Ia giggles, Brigid seems more thoughtful.

BRIGID

And what of you? Are you Roman or Briton? Many say, truly a Briton, because you were born here and more that you are a follower of Pelagius, our patron. We are of one blood and one Christian religion.

Something almost plaintive in the way she asked that. Arthur senses it and they lock eyes.

ARTHUR

My ancestor, Artorius was the first Roman commander to bring Russian Knights to this island. My own father was the first of my line to marry a Briton. He truly loved this country.

The news of Arthur's lineage surprises them.

BRIGID

Well, to save this country some see that with the coming of the Saxon armies the Woads must join with the Britons. To fight.

ARTHUR
The Woads are your enemy.

BRIGID
Some see you Romans have made them
such.

Arthur takes a harder look at Brigid. Ia gets the
subject back on track.

IA
If your father married a British
woman, he must have found us much
to his liking.

ARTHUR
My father also believed that taste
in all matters could best be got
through historic indulgence.

Giggling Ia is all over him.

IA
So, who are we with, then?
Arthur, or is it Artorius?

Arthur smiles, puts an arm around each girl and
they rise.

ARTHUR
Ladies, tonight I'm sure I can be
both.

Brigid and Ia GRAB his arms pull him back against a
beam — a MAN in the bar lunges for Arthur with
SHORT SWORD.

Arthur yanks Ia against his chest and she takes the
sword in her back. He heaves her aside crumples
the attacker with a power-punch.

Brigid clutches Excalibur in a death grip as TWO
OTHERS lunge for Arthur. He smashes the first into
a table — grabs one of the broken-off legs and
takes out the remaining opponent. It's over FAST.
Brigid pulls a knife. They stare at each other.

ARTHUR
Tell me Woad, is Merlin sending
little girls to do his work for
him now?

BRIGID
You've no love for this country!
Your British blood runs cold!

She strikes out with the knife and he DECKS her.
He turns and the bar has emptied out. Arthur looks
down at his arm — he's been cut.

INT. CHURCH - NIGHT

Arthur wings back the plank door so it BANGS
against the wall. A MONK looks up from a table
where he's hand-cutting candles.

MONK

My son, you're hurt...

ARTHUR

Get the hell out of here!

Monk scurries out. Over the rough alter hangs a
CROSS. Arthur sits, exhausted. He wraps his hand
with a piece of cloth. Catches his breath.

ARTHUR

Are you here tonight?

(yells)

God of my father! Or have you
deserted this miserable island,
just like the Empire has?

The wind moans outside. His eyes LOWER... to a
PAINTING OF the monk Pelagius. Arthur stabs
Excalibur into the floor and leans his forehead
against the hilt which forms a natural cross.

ARTHUR

My teacher, with God's help, soon
I will be with you in Rome...

EXT. DIRT ROAD - NIGHT

and TIGHT on an ostentatious SOLID GOLD CRUCIFIX.

BIG ANGLE

It's a short pulpy MAN in a BROAD BRIMMED HAT on a
fat mule. His name is HORTON, and he's a ROMAN
CARDINAL'S SECRETARY.

EXT. HADRIAN'S WALL - NIGHT

Gawain and Galahad stand on the edge of The Wall
facing the road.

GALAHAD

See that hat?

GAWAIN

Never...

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

The Cardinal's Secretary passes — as he does a
STREAM OF PISS rakes his fancy wide-brimmed hat.
Horrorified, Horton spurs his mule to race ahead.

BEHIND

slogging it's way up the dirt road is a LARGE
CARRIAGE flanked by mounted SOLDIERS. A hand pulls
back the window drapes and a PALLID FACE peers out.
He is CARDINAL GNAEUS SERTORIUS. The first thing
to catch his eye is the fresco of PELAGIUS. And he
hates the sight.

INT. CHURCH - DAWN

As the Monk hovers, Tristran and Bors enter.
Arthur's sprawled on the altar, embracing Excalibur
like a lover. Lancelot checks the monks aside.

LANCELOT

Our great leader in the presence
of his god.

INT. STABLE - MORNING

All the Knights seated or standing around Arthur
who sits on a hay bale. Lancelot paces.

DAGONET

Why would they send a Roman high
priest!?

TRISTRAN

He's called a 'Cardinal'.

LANCELOT

Why else? He's here to relieve
us. It's damned well about time.

ARTHUR

He may be here to relieve us, but
Cardinals are not messengers.
He's here for another reason.
What if this Cardinal asks you to
trade in your Gods for mine? They
know you're pagans.

LANCELOT

No, you're the pagans, we worship
the true Gods!

GAWAIN

I don't mind lying our way out of here especially if it means lying to a Christian. They're so gullible they believe anything you tell them anyway.

Realizing what he's saying he looks away...

ARTHUR

Where did you put him?

GALAHAD

In your quarters. Where else, Arthur? Not like there's an inn.

ARTHUR

Send me Jols. I'll wash out here.

BORS

Use my room, Arthur.

ARTHUR

I prefer the company of horses.

INT. ARTHUR'S ROOM - DAY

Cardinal Sertorius walks around Arthur's room touching things as if he could get a sense of Arthur's nature from the objects in his room. He runs his hands over the bindings of a collection of BOOKS. Then he comes to a small fresco of Pelagius. Sertorius steps back, worried.

INT. FORTRESS HALL - NIGHT

Lancelot, Gawain, Galahad, Bors, Dagonet and Tristran sit at a thick-plank circular table, waiting. Likely cleaner and better dressed than they've been in years. There are MANY EMPTY SEATS.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Stone and brick cooking hearths, Roman style. Horton enters, scans the area, then fixes on Jols.

HORTON

When my master meets with your knights he must be seated last and he must be seated at the head of the table.

JOLS

There is no head at our table, sir.

Horton peeks into the hall and sees for himself that the table is ROUND.

HORTON

What sort of evil is that?

Jols takes a platter and moves toward the hall, Horton in his wake.

JOLS

Arthur says for men to be men they must first be equal.

HORTON

Fool, Arthur is your leader.

JOLS

But we are all equal. So he says Jesus says. You can see that? You serve your master, but you are still a man? Are you not?

Probably the first time Horton's had to think about it.

INT. FORTRESS HALL - NIGHT

Jols lays out two platters on the table then stations himself beside Horton at the door. Gawain finally has to loosen his collar.

GALAHAD

You're going to behave tonight, aren't you?

GAWAIN

You're talking? You stinking sot.

GALAHAD

I may stink but when I drink at least I don't get it all over everyone, you puking moron...

Gawain nudges Galahad who sees that Horton is smirking.

GALAHAD

And I can kill that one from here!

Galahad reaches for his table knife and Bors grabs his hand. Jols moves AWAY from Horton. Arthur enters.

ARTHUR

Jols? Give the men some drink.

Jols picks up a large pitcher and fills each glass.
At that moment the CARDINAL makes his entrance.

HORTON
His Eminence, Cardinal Gnaeus
Sertorius.

CARDINAL SERTORIUS

Magnificent. Clean. Surreal. He wears a red robe
with fur trim. The Knights rise.

CARDINAL SERTORIUS
By the grace of our blessed Lord
who dwells higher than the stars I
have been safely delivered unto
thee.

Sertorius studies the round table. It bothers him.
There's no place exactly opposite Arthur...

ARTHUR
Welcome to our table and our home.

Jols pulls a chair out and finally, grandly,
Cardinal Sertorius lifts up his skirt and sits.

CARDINAL SERTORIUS
You deserve great praise,
commander. The roads were safe
the whole way from the coast.
Clearly it's a matter of principle
for you and your men! Everyone
knows of you in Rome; are you
surprised?
(pause)
The honor of the Empire maintained
by a handful of courageous Knights
on the last outpost of our glory.

A struggle for Lancelot to keep a straight face.

CARDINAL SERTORIUS
And, you are?

LANCELOT
Lancelot. Sir.

ARTHUR
(around the table)
Gawain, Galahad, Bors, Tristan,
Dagonet.

Cardinal looks around at the other empty chairs.

CARDINAL SERTORIUS
I was given to understand there
were considerably more of you.

ARTHUR
There were...

CARDINAL SERTORIUS
Alas, we are but players in a
changing world.

The Cardinal's BODYGUARD enter with a WINE CASK.
As the girls fill the Knights' glasses they eye
this rarity with enormous anticipation.

CARDINAL SERTORIUS
You Russian Knights have served
faithfully and kept the covenant
first struck with Rome by your
ancestors some two hundred years
ago. You are the last of that
noble line to serve in Briton; the
first to go home forever.
(raises his glass)
Noble Knights, Commander: to your
final days as servants of the Empire.

They drink. The wine is so good it hits Arthur and
the Knights like an emotion.

CARDINAL SERTORIUS
From the Pope's vineyard. He has
taken a personal interest in you.
He inquires after you each and is
curious to know if your Knights
have converted to the word of Our
Savior or...?

ARTHUR
They retain the religion of their
forefathers. I have never
questioned that.

CARDINAL SERTORIUS
Of course, of course. They're
pagans? As was Rome, once. And
some would say Rome was once
better for it.

Not these boys. They already smell an ambush.

CARDINAL SERTORIUS
Commander, as a Christian your
path to God is through Pelagius
the patron monk of Britain?
(MORE)

CARDINAL SERTORIUS
(CONT'D)

Also your personal teacher? I saw
his image on a wall, in your
room...

ARTHUR

And pleased we are that he is so
welcome and revered in Rome.

CARDINAL SERTORIUS

Ah, now there's that selfsame
changing world I spoke of. You
know how fancies come and go,
especially at the royal court.
The paganism of your Knights is
lately deemed innocence. Whereas
Pelagius' teachings of freewill
are, now, considered heresy.
Admit it commander, all around you
insidious examples abound.

GAWAIN

What's he talking about?

CARDINAL SERTORIUS

This absurd round table? Every man
equal no matter where he may sit?
And, you may imagine that in Rome
your battle motto — "Freedom or
Death" — is hugely provocative.

LANCELOT

It's Russian; if Roman, it would
be "Bad food, bad pay and then
death..."

ARTHUR

How is teaching people to be free
against the Church?

CARDINAL SERTORIUS

Come, Commander, Pelagius taught
your Britons they must be free to
think what they want, even act as
they choose? The truth is:
Predestination is God's rule. We,
The Church, have resolved belief
in freewill to be against God.
Since God has predestined who is
damned and who saved — for
instance — you cannot 'save
yourself' through good deeds.

GAWAIN

There's a load off my mind.

ARTHUR

The Christ said: "Neither principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor death, nor life, not even angels, shall be able to separate each of us from the love of God." Mankind must be free, in thought and action to reach God.

CARDINAL SERTORIUS

Do you realize how dangerous those ideas are? "Neither principalities nor powers..."

ARTHUR

It's in the Bible.

CARDINAL SERTORIUS

Not any longer. Anything bearing on freewill has been expunged. Commander, let's speak as men. We don't care what the Christ said, we have a world to run, a filthy, secular world. And if mankind believes he has freewill we have chaos.

ARTHUR

Well, we have freewill in Britain — it's in our nature!

LANCELOT

To hell with the Britons, we just want to get out of here and go home.

CARDINAL SERTORIUS

To hell with them, indeed.

(suddenly smiling)

Be assured, your private religious convictions are unimportant.

Cardinal lifts his hand and Horton scurries up like a lap dog with a set of papers. As he returns Jols gives him a deprecating glare.

CARDINAL SERTORIUS

Gentlemen, your discharge papers with safe conduct throughout Europe.

Knights eye it, relieved. But Arthur knows they aren't getting off that easy.

ARTHUR

Why is a Cardinal running errands
for the army?

Dead silence. Sertorius and Arthur square off.

CARDINAL SERTORIUS

One errand, and for the pope: Your
final orders before discharge are
to rescue a Roman family which has
become isolated on their estate in
the north. Because of the Saxon's
control over the seas, you will
bring them overland to the wall
whence we may all evacuate south
and to Rome. To Rome, Arthur,
where I dare say as a hero you
will live out your days in honor
and wealth.

LANCELOT

What estate?

BORS

Why wouldn't we have heard of it?

Horton scampers up with a leather map that he and a
bodyguard hold open. Sertorius rises and indicates
an SQUARE far above Hadrian's Wall near the coast.

CARDINAL SERTORIUS

A modern settlement, established
and supplied by sea directly from
the mainland.

BORS

And you expect us to ride up there
and bring them back?

ARTHUR

None but madmen venture above the
Wall. Merlin and his Woads
control everything in the north.

LANCELOT

And, as I'm sure you have heard
inn Rome, Merlin is a dangerous
magician of the dark arts.

Knights swap fast looks; everyone realizing this
is a joke: but anything to talk him out of this.

GALAHAD

An evil sorcerer. Evil.

LANCELOT

Some say that in those mountains
trees speak. Beasts converse with
men. Mountains become monsters by
night. And the dead walk.

CARDINAL SERTORIUS

Nonsense and superstition. Merlin
is nothing more than a rebel
leader. Your swords seem to work
well enough.

They look to Arthur to back them.

ARTHUR

That's because my sword has pagan
magic. Excalibur. I tore it from
a stone.

CARDINAL SERTORIUS

A stone?

LANCELOT

Stabbed into rock by the Gods of
Russia. The sword of his ancestor.
When he pulled it loose fire and
lightning was flung all around!

GAWAIN

Merlin shit himself! Lancelot
possesses a singing sword.

KNIGHTS

Yes!/True.

ARTHUR

The Woods fear us when they
venture south. But above the wall
they are too powerful and there no
man goes.

CARDINAL SERTORIUS

And your duty to Rome? Or is that
a matter for your freewill to
decide?

ARTHUR

My duty is to my men.

CARDINAL SERTORIUS

Then get them home!

Sertorius gets very calm, lethal.

CARDINAL SERTORIUS

Disobey this order and you will
become deserters, hunted
throughout the empire.

(now soft)

I beg you to consider, there are
women and children in that
settlement whose lives will be in
peril... I appeal to your
greatness, your reputation for
decency.

Knights swap looks. Sertorius sits in the empty
seat beside Arthur, solicitous.

CARDINAL SERTORIUS

Arthur, I've seen your library,
your collection of literature and
poetry. Rome, the center of all
learning, would be as a lover to
you. And — for such a loyal
commander — there is a political
appointment in the Roman Commune.
Your spirit would not be inactive.
And Knights, imagine, to go home!
Home at last...!

This final truth sinks in and they realize they
have no choice.

CARDINAL SERTORIUS

As a representative of the Holy
court, my trusted secretary will
accompany you on your quest.

Horton nearly GAGS...

EXT. STABLE - NIGHT

Jols emerges leading his donkey. Before he leaves
the shadows he checks that he's not seen.

EXT. HADRIAN'S WALL/GATE - NIGHT

Jols avoids a main gate and goes down an alley,
opens a small gate and rides off into the dark.

EXT. FOREST - NIGHT

The full moon lights Jols way as he leads his mule
into a clearing. He ties up his mule and faces a
huge oak that dominates the hill. In the center of
the clearing is a small Druid stone. Jols kneels,
forehead against the stone. When he speaks his
voice nearly whispers — from fear.

JOLS
Merlin, my master, I am here.

MERLIN (O.S.)
Come near...

Jols' hands shake, but he carefully rises and approaches the oak.

JOLS
Arthur and the Knights are coming
to your land. I plead, let them
pass... they mean you no harm.

Jols kneels in the clearing as the talking oak
looms over him like a jagged limbed demon.

MERLIN (O.S.)
Don't be afraid. Tell me...

EXT. FOREST TRAIL - LATER, NIGHT

Jols riding as fast as he can back toward the wall
and the lights of the tiny fortress town.

EXT. MAGIC CLEARING - NIGHT

The moonlight plays the shadows. Then MERLIN MOVES
and we see that he's been sitting a foot away in
the shadows, but his mastery of camouflage is so
perfect he's been invisible. There is no magic.

INT. ARMORY - NIGHT

The Knights pack and clean their weapons. Candles
around the room. Overriding sense of doom. Bors
tacks up the LEATHER MAP. Arthur studies it.

LANCELOT
Pulled Excalibur from a stone?
Where in hell did you get that?

ARTHUR
Well, I pulled it from my father's
burial mound.

LANCELOT
A Russian tradition. You may have
learned to love from The Christ,
but you learned to fight from us.
Which do you suppose will be most
useful on this quest?

A sprinkling of laughter as they revive their
spirits a bit.

Lancelot SLOWLY draws his sword from it's scabbard and the blade SINGS — actually an eerie high-pitched vibrational resonance like a TUNING FORK. It's hilt is a GOLD INLAID DRAGON.

GALAHAD

Singing Sword... why does it do that?

LANCELOT

A whimsical happening, the way the steel was hewn. Pull it quickly and — silence.

Arthur points to a BAY on the map and the Knights gather around.

ARTHUR

Rome's been busy up north.
There's a new fort on the coast.

Knights lean in to examine another symbol.

ARTHUR

The port would be protected so they could move supplies overland to the settlement and our good, Roman family.

DAGONET

Why build all this when Rome is pulling out?

BORS

Maybe they've been there for a year or more. We wouldn't know unless they told us about it.

LANCELOT

Still, an army unit to protect one family? Who are these people?

Jols enters with packs. Arthur motions him to sit. Gets back to the map.

ARTHUR

All right, listen everyone. This map is short on detail, but here's our plan: Once in the forest we move fast up this pass.

LANCELOT

Outdistance our Woad friends.

ARTHUR

Once above the forest straight to the settlement. Two days hard riding. Then, because we'll be coming out with civilians, we must locate the Saxon army... Tristran, that's your job. With good luck, we grab these people, keep out of the Saxon's way and ride straight back to the wall.

LANCELOT

And with our usual luck?

Arthur looks from one face to the next.

ARTHUR

Pray — to whomever you pray — we don't have the bad luck of getting into a fight with the Saxons.

INT. ARMORY, LATER - NIGHT

Knights packing last of their gear.

BORS

What about you, Arthur? When we get our discharge, will you come with us? Or is it really Rome?

Arthur lays Excalibur on its side and flips it to a BRONZE MEDALLION which has been hammer-welded to the hilt. It has a DOUBLE PROFILE of a man facing left and right.

ARTHUR

The god of my Roman ancestors, Janus. Passed down from my namesake, Artorius. A pagan. He would have gone back with his Knights.

Then he flips Excalibur over to a GOLD CHI-RHO CRUCIFIX medallion.

ARTHUR

The God who I came to love.

Lancelot crosses to the back of the armory, shoves aside a heap of crates. He whips back a canvas.

LANCELOT

This is a God I can love!

It's a bundle of seven foot long SHOCK LANCES. He lifts one, then strips off the sheath. The other Knights each pick up their lance.

But Bors has opened another case, this one containing huge SHIELDS. Bors takes one out that has the painting of distant mountains with a moon.

BORS
One last time.

ARTHUR
You know we can't take them.

Lancelot slaps his hand against the leather map.

LANCELOT
The forest. We know. It won't suffer our lances nor our body shields. This land won't suffer us, Arthur.

EXT. BRITISH VILLAGE - DAWN

and TIGHT ON A SAXON BATTLEFIELD MAP held down by four stones. Cerdic's massive hand touches down on the same bay as on Arthur's map.

CYNRIC'S HAND more tentatively touches a spot on the north coast.

CYNRIC (O.S.)
(Saxon w/subtitles)
Three to four days march from where we are.

CERDIC (O.S.)
(Saxon w/subtitles)
You will get there in two.

BIG ANGLE

Father and son stand looking at the map. Around them Saxon SOLDIERS and ENGINEERS swarm — supplies are landed with racks of CROSSBOWS. BODYGUARDS flank Cerdic as the gray-clad swordsmen march past.

CERDIC
(Saxon w/subtitles)
Burn every village you find. But get this family — they're worth enough ransom to pay for our invasion. Where's your tracking dog?

CYNRIC
(Saxon w/subtitles)
Come here, Briton!

Cynric gestures and a muscular, weathered BRITISH SCOUT comes to stand beside Cynric. Cynric points to a drawing of Hadrian's Wall on the map.

CERDIC
(Saxon w/subtitles)
The wall? What troops are
stationed there?

BRITISH SCOUT
(Saxon w/subtitles)
Inexperienced Roman infantry. And
possibly...

CYNRIC
(Saxon w/subtitles)
Speak up, beast!

BRITISH SCOUT
(Saxon w/subtitles)
Russian Knights.

This comment is lost in the commotion as a harried SAXON OFFICER scampers to Cerdic's side. Behind are a group of British CHILDREN, none older than ten. Cerdic looks them over.

CYNRIC
(Saxon w/subtitles)
Slaves for our colonists.

Cerdic looks over a pretty little girl. There's nothing 'arch' about him; he's a pragmatist.

CERDIC
(Saxon w/subtitles)
We don't mix with these people,
and that's what will happen. See
how pretty she is? Kill these..
Kill all of them as you go through
their villages. Rome has been far
too kind, that's why they're
losing. Do you understand?

CYNRIC
(Saxon w/subtitles)
Yes father!

Slaps the map again.

CERDIC
(Saxon w/subtitles)
I want that Roman family!

EXT. VILLAGE

Fast moving Saxon infantry double-time away from the village. In their midst is Cynric flanked by his own bodyguards and led by the British Scout. Cynric turns back for a second, raises a short sword in a salute.

CERDIC

holds up his short sword. He lowers it, turns to the Harried Officer as the children get herded into a pen with adults. The little girl looks up at Cerdic with big, innocent eyes.

CERDIC
(Saxon w/subtitles)
Cleanse this earth.

Commander shouts orders and the Crossbowmen raise their bows and fire waves of short bolts into the Britons who are MOWED DOWN...

CYNRIC

enters a forest trail with his elite foot soldiers. The British Scout points ahead and takes off like an Apache...

EXT. KNIGHTS' FORTRESS TOWN - MORNING

A FRAYED BATTLE PENNANT of a CRIMSON DRAGON belching flame snaps in the wind as The Knights ride through the streets of the Fort village beneath their battle pennant.

Lancelot wears a leather-armored tunic, his CHILDHOOD RED DRAGON TALISMAN stitched to his shoulder like a MILITARY UNIT INSIGNIA.

HUGE GATES

Auxiliary Troops paint the massive hinges and bolts with brushes dripping ANIMAL FAT. Then, one by one, the thick bolts are hammered back. Finally four TROOPERS put their shoulders to the doors and inch by inch shove them open.

EXT. HADRIAN'S WALL — MORNING

The Knights edge down a slope away from the wall across a PLAIN and toward the dense forest. LIGHTNING flashes far up in the mountains.

Jols pulls up the rear on his mule leading another with packs. Behind them is miserable Horton who looks back like he was leaving his mother.

EXT. FOREST - MORNING

Arthur leads The Knights on a narrow trail.

BORS

You want me out on eyes?

Arthur studies the forest like he could see through the trees.

ARTHUR

They already know we're here.

Arthur looks back at Jols, then indicates a large pack on the mule's back.

LANCELOT

I brought the dragon.

Arthur nods, then breaks into a canter and the rest follow, Jols and Horton struggle to keep up.

FOREST

The Knights flashing past — Arthur, Lancelot, Gawain, Galahad, Bors, Tristran, Dagonet.

EXT. FOREST - NIGHT

Knights asleep on their horses which sleep standing. The sound of frogs and crickets is intense. Arthur rides up to Lancelot who is also awake and watching a crescent moon.

ARTHUR

What are you thinking about?

LANCELOT

Death.

ARTHUR

What about it?

LANCELOT

Is it a place? Is it a god?

He points to the moon.

LANCELOT

What is that thing? And who hung it there and why?

ARTHUR

What does your religion tell you?

LANCELOT

Shit. Yours?

In silence they both watch the beautiful sky.

ARTHUR

See that long white part up there?
When I was a child my mother told
me that one night long ago, before
the Old Gods of Britain died, the
Giant, Albion went out into the
celestial stables to milk Orga...

Lancelot chuckles at this child's yarn.

LANCELOT

Orga?

ARTHUR

God's cow. Well, Albion started
in on a huge jug of wine and he
fell into a mood and kept milking
for centuries. Until he had
enough milk to feed the whole
earth. But he was drunk and when
he finished he knocked over the
milk and it splashed into the sky
and became the stars.

LANCELOT

What happened to the wine?

ARTHUR

Rain!

LANCELOT

They have answers for everything
don't they? And for nothing.

ARTHUR

You don't believe in much, do you?

LANCELOT

Horses, a good fight, a real
woman... and then it ends. You?
What do you see in this dung-heap
of contradictions?

ARTHUR

I agree with Pelagius: if you see
with God's eyes, you see the world
is perfect. Even you.

Lancelot can't repress one his smirks.

LANCELOT

I respect that you're a Christian
but don't bury me in our pathetic
little cemetery, burn me if I die
on this damned quest.

He turns his horse and disappears into the dark.
Arthur is about to follow when a SHOOTING STAR zips
across the horizon. He watches until it fades.

EXT. FOREST - MORNING

Knights, Horton and Jols moving through the forest
at a clip. The path suddenly NARROWS into a gorge
ahead. Arthur reins in and the Knights gather.

LANCELOT

We going in there?

ARTHUR

Single file — stay alert!

They ride into the gorge until about halfway in:
Ahead SERIOUS MOVEMENT in the trees.

BORS

Woads!

Galahad glances sideways at Arthur who looks cool
and collected. Lancelot smiles straight ahead.
He's STOKED.

LANCELOT

Well... there's a lot of them.

BORS

Let's not give them the satisfaction.

LANCELOT

Of knowing that Gawain is scared?

GAWAIN

Kiss my horse's teat.

LANCELOT

That's a better teat than you had
in your mouth two nights ago —
taking that ugly wench in the barn
was a smart idea. I'm sure she
felt right at home.

KNIGHT'S HANDS...

tightening on sword grips, revving for battle...

GAWAIN

When's the last time you had a
teat in your mouth?

LANCELOT

If quantity was the issue I'd find
myself a cow.

IN THE FOREST

Woads rush along both sides of the trail.

ARTHUR

Move your asses! We have to break
through now or be surrounded!

The Knights explode to full gallop — with his bow
Bors shoots between the trees and nails a Woad on
the left, twisting in his saddle as he reloads and
takes out the lead Woad to his right.

TWO WOAD SLINGERS

charge through the forest whirling slings overhead
like revving helicopter props — they FIRE.

BORS

ducks beneath a tree limb which is *SPLINTERED* by a
powerful shot. But Bors is *SLAMMED* in the shoulder
by the second shot and spins sideways clinging to
his saddle.

TWO WOAD ARCHERS

fire primitive bows. One arrow strikes Bors in the
chest the other slams into his horse's flank. Bors
and his horse go *DOWN*.

MERLIN

rushes forward with his Woads.

BORS

snaps the arrow shaft out of his chest and slams it
into the throat of the first Woad. As his horse
rises, Bors whips out his broadsword and splatters
the next Woad. Then he turns to face Merlin and
about six Woads. He cocks his sword back....

ARTHUR BURSTS OUT OF THE FOREST —

crashes into the charging Woads, bowls them over.
Merlin *SLAMMED* off the trail.

Arthur and his horse wade into the Woads, Excalibur chopping down into them — left — right — left — right.

TRISTRAN

yanks Bors back on his horse. Lancelot and the rest slash into the Woads, but can't reach Arthur.

LANCELOT

Arthur! Pull out!

A Woad leaps onto Arthur's horse. With his free hand Arthur reaches back and in one powerful stroke HURLS the other over his head and down into the attacking Woads and Merlin. But now Arthur's cut off from the Knights. Woads close in.

LANCELOT

drives his horse into the Woads trying to clear a path.

ARTHUR

SLAPS HIS HORSE'S SHOULDER and for fifteen spectacular seconds the animal goes nuts on the Woads. Spinning and kicking a swath as they fall back. Arthur turns his horse and it LEAPS OVER A LINE OF WOADS and gallops back with the Knights.

A WOAD fires a parting shot from a sling — Arthur instinctively DUCKS and the shot rips into a tree.

EXT. TRAIL - AFTERNOON

Exhilarated but shaken, Lancelot passes a leather bottle of grog to Arthur who drinks.

LANCELOT

That was about as close as it gets.

ARTHUR

They knew right where to find us.
We have to keep moving.

Arthur rides on ahead. Galahad looks over at Bors who digs at his wound beneath his shirt.

GALAHAD

You going to die on us?

Bors yanks his hand out and heaves the ARROW POINT at Galahad. Its sticks to Galahad's chest along with a glob of BLOOD that spatters in his face.

BORS
That's better...

EXT. RIVER - AFTERNOON

The Knights watering their horses as Jols goes horse to horse, grain in his hat. Arthur watches Jols, then closes his eyes for a quick sleep.

Tristran helps Bors clean the wound in his horse's shoulder.

Still shaken, Horton kneels in the mud, face in the water slurping like he was dying. When he pulls his face out Galahad points to a black writhing thing on the end of his nose.

GALAHAD
Mind the blood-suckers.

Horton screams and yanks the leech off his nose sending a spray of blood all over his face.

GALAHAD
The Cardinal's servant is wounded!

The Knights CHEER Horton on.

EXT. DEEP FOREST - DUSK

The Knights ride slowly up to a RUIN. Stone blocks of a once proud WALL litter the ground. They dismount, exhausted. Bors' horse staggers sideways and Bors puts his shoulder against it then helps it lie down. Arthur approaches.

BORS
He's tired. That's all.

GALAHAD
Look at the load of shit he's got to lug around!

Arthur gives Bors' horse a hard look.

ARTHUR
He's got to be on his feet in the morning.

BORS
He will be.

EXT. DEEP FOREST - NIGHT

Fading moon casts an eerie glow throughout the forest.

Tristran is hidden in the shadows with his bow watching the forest like a sniper. A HAND rest his shoulder and Tristran barely flinches. It's Arthur. They whisper.

TRISTRAN

Nothing moving. They have to be out there. Why don't they attack?

ARTHUR

We'll pull out an hour before dawn. Can you sleep on your horse?

Tristran nods, never takes his eyes off the forest.

EXT. FOREST - NIGHT

Arthur moves quietly through the forest. Something makes him stop. He hears what sounds like a breeze in the trees — it stops abruptly. Starts again; it's WHISPERING... Now he sees a FAINT LIGHT deep in the forest. As he gets closer it looks MAGICAL.

Finally Arthur gets to the source, kneels and touches the LIGHT.

EXT. FOREST - NIGHT

Arthur moves quietly through the forest. Something makes him stop. He hears what sounds like a breeze in the trees — it stops abruptly. Starts again; it's WHISPERING... Now he sees a FAINT LIGHT deep in the forest. As he gets closer it looks MAGICAL.

Finally Arthur gets to the source, kneels and touches the LIGHT.

A WEDGE OF FUNGUS

broken in half dripping BIOLUMINESCENCE SAP. Arthur's hand touches the liquid and his fingers GLOW. Fascinated, Arthur rises — he WHIPS OUT EXCALIBUR.

DEEPER IN THE FOREST

a LINE OF GLOWING FUNGUS leads into the woods. Someone has laid out an invitation. For a second he starts to turn back, but then cautiously follows the lights into a huge clearing lit by rocks all around that seem to have a WRITHING BLUISH LIGHT on their tops.

CLOSER

Arthur finds the hollow tops of the rocks filled with honey and bread crawling with feeding GLOWWORMS.

WOADS

Melt out of the forest and surround Arthur. He spins in all directions but none draws his sword.

SUDDENLY MERLIN IS RIGHT THERE — Arthur nearly trips over him. MERLIN sits on a rock flanked by poles with mesh tops filled with FIREFLIES. Arthur puts Excalibur right to Merlin's throat.

MERLIN

Peace between us this night,
Arthur Castus.

(pause)

You fight well.

Seeing he hasn't a chance, Arthur lowers Excalibur — then grabs Merlin and for a moment the two are locked together as if in a test of strength.

ARTHUR

Call off your dogs so I can rip
your head off!

Battle-hardened warriors move on Arthur — but Merlin stops them. Then he allows a smile as he pulls free and nods toward these veterans.

MERLIN

My best fighters were determined
that I challenge you when you
entered our woods.

Now other WOADS crowd in from the shadows and there's a clear dynamic at work: The OLDER, SEASONED WOADS keep their distance, while Arthur is surprised as YOUNG WOAD FIGHTERS press close as if passionate to get a glimpse of Arthur.

MERLIN

But my younger men... feel
differently. You can see the fire
in their eyes.

Arthur studies these tough, young faces.

ARTHUR

Sorry the new generation won't get
to practice their skills on us.

A Woad Veteran tosses a CROSSBOW on the ground at Arthur's feet.

MERLIN

They'll be busy elsewhere.
Cerdic, Saxon commander, and his
son have landed twelve keels of
infantry and belly-shooters in the
north.

Arthur picks up the crossbow. He's uncomfortable
with the mechanism. Merlin pulls it out of his
hands and cocks the string. He inserts a BOLT and
fires from the shoulder.

ZING!

the bolt nips the top of a rock snuffing a
bioluminescent light.

MERLIN

tosses the crossbow back into Arthur's arms.
Arthur looks this dangerous device over.

ARTHUR

Many?

MERLIN

One eighth of their whole army.

Not good news. He throws the device on the ground.

ARTHUR

The Britons in the north?

MERLIN

Crushed. Soon, Arthur, nothing
will stand betwixt us and the
Saxons.

ARTHUR

You, not us. We're not staying
for the farewell party.

Merlin gets serious as if he were afraid Arthur was
too glib.

MERLIN

You can become a leader in this
land. These people and your
people, will fight if you lead
them. My own young men hold you
in immense esteem. They believe
you can do anything. They've seen
you and your Knights in battle.

ARTHUR
Against you?

MERLIN
Yes, they trust you over even me.
And I am a Briton. And you?
(pause)
That sword, it's not Roman.

ARTHUR
Nor British. Russian. Like my
loyal Knights. Who want to leave.
Who trust me not to betray them.
And certainly not to their enemy.

MERLIN
Who is your enemy? That must be
confusing for a Roman. But here
you've been protecting the
Britons. What happens to them
when the Saxons arrive?

ARTHUR
You protect them.

MERLIN
Don't you have any feelings for
these people?

ARTHUR
When I was a child, my mother was
killed by Woads.... these people.

MERLIN
Your father was a courageous man
to have stayed on.

Arthur slowly raises his sword again.

ARTHUR
He had this in his hand when he
died. Perhaps he was hoping to
use it on you.

MERLIN
I've also lost family.
(perhaps a moment)
Yet, we've both been able to save
our men. To fight.

ARTHUR
Pathetic... aren't we?

Arthur slips Excalibur back into his shoulder
sheath.

MERLIN

Hear me, Arthur Castus, Christian
and commander of the finest
cavalry on earth: We've honed our
skills fighting one another; you
own the south, I the north, and in
this war that's raged between us
and our ancestors for two hundred
years, the Britons have owned
nothing. Look at these young men,
they see beyond the scraps we've
been fighting over, and to the
nation worth fighting for.

(pause)

There comes a time when fate sets
the design of your life, to spit
on that design is to spit in the
face of God.

A WOAD rushes past Arthur and the bioluminescent
lights SNUFF ONE BY ONE.

EXT. NORTH COAST (SCOTLAND) — PREDAWN SKY

Saxon Rhapsody of death. SPARKS of light — like
the bioluminescent lights in the forest — flash in
the dark. Cynric's infantry burns another British
village. As people run from their huts they're cut
down. On point is British Scout.

EXT. RAVINE - DAY

Arthur and the Knights race through a ravine, hoofs
CLACKING on the stones. Arthur raises his hand and
they grind to a stop.

Tristan nods, then turns his horse off into the
forest, away from their line of travel.

Arthur watches him until he's out of sight, then
looks back. Bors is missing. Lancelot turns and
canters back.

FAR AHEAD

on an expansive lowland is a MANSION and houses
surrounded by a wall.

RAVINE

Lancelot comes on Bors running alongside his horse.
Bors pants almost too exhausted to speak.

LANCELOT

You're too fat, anyway.

Bors snarls a smile, gets on his horse and rides.

EXT. FOREST - LATE AFTERNOON

SEEN FROM ABOVE Saxon elite infantry under Cynric's command arrive at a fork in the broad trail.

British Scout waits for them. Troops halt as Cynric and his bodyguard approach the intersection. The Scout talks quietly in Saxon. Then he STOPS TALKING. Looks up into the towering trees.

ABOVE

The canopy sways in the wind. Light filters down in a confusing array.

IN THE TREES

Tristran, hidden in the leaves, watching as Cynric's force DIVIDES. He parts a branch for a better look.

HIS POV

British Scout pauses beside the trail and touches a FRESHLY BROKEN TWIG still dangling from its branch. He TURNS to look back up into the trees.

TRISTRAN DUCKS

Guy's good. Maybe as good as Tristran.

EXT. FORTRESS - DAY

The Knights ride toward the open gate past MEN and WOMEN working the land. SOD HUTS dot the forest edge. As they pass the people run back to their huts.

Someone BEATS A DRUM and MERCENARIES rush to man the top of the walls — an iron GRATE SLAMS blocking the entrance. A CAPTAIN OF THE GUARD shouts down.

GUARD CAPTAIN

Who are you!?

ARTHUR

Roman Knights!

The Guard vanishes. Another man on the wall — thick as Henry VIII. He's the master of the estate: MARIUS.

MARIUS
Who are you!?

LANCELOT
At least they ask easy questions.

ARTHUR
Roman Knights from the fort at
Hadrian's Wall. My men are hungry
and need rest, open the gate!

Hesitation.

LANCELOT
We are the Russian Knights under
the command of Arthur Castus, sent
by Cardinal Sertorius from Rome!

Magic words: Marius lights up, signals and the
grate is cranked back up. The Knights ride in as
people crowd to gawk.

EXT. COURTYARD - DAY

The Knights stop. Bors pulls up beside Arthur.
Pats his horse on the neck.

ARTHUR
How is he?

BORS
Wanted to take the weight off him
for a while.

As the Knights file into the courtyard of the
estate they dismount. Galahad and Gawain hand
their reins to Jols who tries to hand a pair to
Horton who turns up his nose.

Arthur trots around checking the place out. Inside
the walls is a windowless STONE BUILDING. Outside
the building is a GALLOWS.

An ENTOURAGE surges around them. SERVANTS, and the
MAN and WOMAN of the estate. MARIUS and his wife
FULCINIA. Fulcinia, once beautiful, now has the
frightened look of a battered woman. Marius teen-
age son — ALECTO — pushes rudely to the front.

MARIUS
Arthur, the fame of you and your
Knights exalts us. Back in Rome
you are the subjects of epics!

GALAHAD
 (to Gawain)
 We're in poems now! I'll bet they
 even sing about us in Rome!

GAWAIN
 You must be famous for your stink.

Arthur dismounts. Now the crowd is joined by four
 MONKS dressed in BLACK ROBES.

ARTHUR
 My men need food and drink...

MARIUS
 Of course!

ARTHUR
 And our horses.

People mob them. A few reach out and touch the
 Knights as if trying to be sure they're real. An
 obnoxious monk keeps tugging at Lancelot's sleeve.

OBNOXIOUS MONK
 Are you from Rome?

LANCELOT
 No. Are you from hell?

OBNOXIOUS MONK
 I am a man of the Lord, Jesus!

LANCELOT
 You look like a rat... of the Lord
 Jesus.

Lancelot shares a smile with Arthur who 'gets' his
 rough humor.

MARIUS
 It's a wonder you've come. Did
 you have to fight the Woads?
 (off their look)
 Good Jesus! Arthur and his
 Knights! We must celebrate for
 the whole of Christ Mass!

LANCELOT
 Christ Mass?

MARIUS
 Was Saturnalia — but the Church
 has decreed all pagan rituals
 banned. Saturnalia is now
 Christ's Mass.

FULCINIA

You and your men must have the whole north wing of the house for your stay.

LANCELOT

Lady, we're not staying for your Christ's Mass...

ARTHUR

Our orders are to evacuate you immediately.

MARIUS

What? Madness! Everything we have is here, in this land given us by the Pope of Rome.

LANCELOT

Well, you're about to give it up to the Saxons.

ARTHUR

(to Lancelot)

See the men are ready to move at dawn.

MARIUS

We were sent to establish a colony of the true Church!

LANCELOT

We need food.

FULCINIA

I'll have the servants care for your men.

MARIUS

We assumed you to be our reinforcements! To fortify us against the Saxons!

(Galahad laughs)

We refuse to leave! I have enough men and this fortress can stand against anyone! Rome will send an army!

ARTHUR

They have, we're it, the seven of us. Let's make our relationship perfectly clear: if I fail to bring you back my men and I can never leave this land.

(MORE)

ARTHUR (CONT'D)

Now you're coming with me in the morning if I have to tie you behind my horse and drag you all the way back to Hadrian's Wall. My lord.

(to Fulcinia)

Lady, my Knights are hungry.

Fulcinia glances at her husband who clearly calls the shots. He nods curtly and storms from the room. As he exits an ELDERLY MONK with eyes like a mental patient, intercepts Arthur, kisses his hand.

MENTAL MONK

Sir Knight! You are from Rome!
Rome!

Arthur pulls his hand free, studies this psycho and exits.

EXT. ESTATE - DUSK

Arthur looks around the grounds, then up at the walls and Marius' mercenary army.

ATOP THE WALL

Arthur surveys the village. Below, at the main gate, PEOPLE who live outside bring in baskets.

ALECTO

I for one will be glad to see Rome again.

He turns to find Marius' son, Alecto, leaning on the wall beside him. He indicates the people in the huts.

ARTHUR

You shut these people outside the gates every night?

ALECTO

The Woads never bother them. Too filthy. Rape one of those bitches you get fleas...

ARTHUR

Under what laws do you treat people so?

ALECTO

They're serfs.

ARTHUR
I'm unfamiliar with the word.

ALECTO
People who, because of God's plan,
must work their master's land.
Until death.

ARTHUR
God's plan? You mean, predestination?

ALECTO
Yes. In their case, miserable
slaves. It's why my father came
to Briton, to help put an end to
this subversive Pelagian ideal of
freewill. I'm honored to believe
we have had some small effect.

Arthur fights his impulse to toss this little
bastard off the wall.

ARTHUR
And how does the world react to
this 'vision'?

ALECTO
This island keeps you in ignorance
of the truth, sir.
(indicates serfs)
As you see, is all Europe, now.

ARTHUR
Every man a slave? Well, Pelagius
is in Rome, teaching still that
all men are free. How is the
Empire reacting to that?

ALECTO
How? They killed him. Were you
not told? Commander, Rome's wars
are no longer fought at legion
strength. But one man at a time,
one idea at a time. You kill an
idea, you can kill a nation.
Cheaper than armies.
(pause)
Getting a chill? Well, I am. I'm
going inside. Join me?

Arthur doesn't answer. Alecto heads down. Arthur
leans against the wall — absolutely devastated by
this news.

EXT. VILLAGE OUTSIDE WALLS - DUSK

Arthur enters the village, but people avoid him. Then he turns to see Mental Monk as he crosses the courtyard to that windowless stone building and shuts the door. Tristran trots out of the forest and dismounts, breathless.

TRISTRAN

Saxon light infantry converging on us in a pincer movement. They'll be here by morning. They're aimed right at us. Arthur, they must want this family.

Bad news. Arthur turns to the villagers.

ARTHUR

Where is your elder?

The villagers hesitate. Tristran grabs a man by the collar.

TRISTRAN

Where is your village leader?

A slim YOUNG MAN steps up; his name is GANIS. Too scared to speak, Ganis motions Arthur to follow him.

EXT. VILLAGE CENTER - DUSK

Ganis leads Arthur and Tristran to a clearing in the middle of the village. A CRAGGY MAN in his fifties has his ARM STUCK THROUGH A HOLE DRILLED INTO THE TRUNK OF A DEAD TREE, his wrist chained on the opposite side. Been there a while.

TRISTRAN

Your elder? What is this punishment for?

Tristran tries the chain but it's steel.

ARTHUR

Why is your elder treated like this!? Answer me!

Ganis points up at Marius' mansion, Gathers his courage and finally speaks.

GANIS

He defied our master, Marius. Most food we grow is sent out by sea to be sold on the mainland.

(MORE)

GANIS (CONT'D)

We were going hungry and our elder demanded we keep more. You are from Rome... it is true that Marius is of The Church and a spokesman for God so it is a sin to defy him?

In answer, Arthur whips out Excalibur and SPLITS the trunk, freeing the elder. The Elder slowly pulls his freed hand up to his chest in a fist. Ganis in awe...

ARTHUR

We're evacuating this estate. You also must leave before the Saxons arrive. You!

GANIS

I'm Ganis....

ARTHUR

Your people must leave.

EXT. COURTYARD - DAWN

Amidst light SNOW FLURRIES the Knights frantically organize a column of civilians. Arthur on his horse, stares at the anonymous STONE BUILDING where two mercenaries BRICK UP THE SINGLE DOORWAY. Lancelot trots alongside, points to a wagon.

LANCELOT

What about all this baggage?

Gawain trots up. In the distance comes the sound of SAXON SIGNAL DRUMS.

GAWAIN

We're ready. Arthur...? We need to leave...

EXT. FOREST - DAWN

Saxon light infantry moves relentlessly through the forest like army ants. DRUMMERS strike crude wood drums stretched with painted animal skins.

EXT. FRONT OF STONE BUILDING - MORNING

Mercenaries cementing in the last bricks. Arthur leaps off his horse, pulls his sword.

ARTHUR

Move!

Mercenaries BACK OFF. Arthur drives Excalibur into the new laid blocks. Lancelot and Gawain dismount, confused, but they help Arthur.

Blocks gone, they're confronted by a wooden door. By now Marius and his entourage approach.

Arthur tries the door — locked. Lancelot puts his sword against a mercenary's throat.

LANCELOT

Key.

MERCENARY

It's locked!

LANCELOT

Key!

MERCENARY

Locked from the inside!

Say what? Arthur, Lancelot and Gawain heft the huge plank table and CRASH it through the door.

MERCENARIES

rush forward but the Knights swing on them, swords leveled.

INT. STONE BUILDING - MORNING

So dark in here it takes a moment to realize this is a PRISON and TORTURE CHAMBER.

CELLS line one side of the building and vanish into the dark. Arthur enters, and he's shaken. Lancelot hangs in the doorway with the others. Mental Monk rises from prayer at a tiny altar.

THE CELLS

Starved and dying men. One or two who can still reach out through the bars.

NEW ANGLE

A 2nd Monk grabs Lancelot by the arm.

2ND MONK

How dare you set foot in this holy place...

Furious Lancelot turns and impales him. SHOCK — other monks fall to their knees weep and pray.

MARIUS
There was a man of God!

LANCELOT
Not my God.

Lancelot plants his boot in the dead Monks face and scrapes him off the blade. Galahad enters, sees Mental Monk.

GALAHAD
This fool going to bury himself
alive with — who are these people?

ARTHUR
Get them out of here.

ALECTO
Father! Stop them!

MARIUS
These are prisoners of God! They
who would not accept the will of
our lord, Jesus Christ.

A few of the mercenaries move to join Marius.
Lancelot points his sword at them — eye level.

LANCELOT
Touch a Knight, you die.

They BELIEVE HIM.

EXT. HILL - DAWN

Tristan canters to the top of a rise and looks down on the forest. It's still snowing flurries. To his RIGHT Saxon Infantry, led by British Scout, approach.

EXT. FOREST

British Scout and Cynric see Tristan on the hill.

CYNRIC
(Saxon w/subtitles)
Who is that? A soldier?

British Scout and Tristan FIX ON EACH OTHER — two consummate PROS; then Tristan is GONE.

INT. PRISON - MORNING

Gawain with his mace, Galahad with his battle ax go from cell to cell breaking prison locks.

ARTHUR & LANCELOT

Carry a torch move deep into the prison.

LANCELOT

These are all dead. The work of
your God? Why?

ARTHUR

Watch my back-end.

Arthur takes the torch and descends a sloping stone
ramp into the bowels of the prison. Left and right
are cells with CORPSES. House of horrors.

ARTHUR

Is anyone down here?

Arthur lifts the torch...

EXT. COURTYARD - MORNING

Lancelot emerges and then Arthur who carries a
YOUNG WOMAN in his arms — we will know her as
GUINEVERE. She covers her eyes against the light.

Guinevere is filthy, brutalized. Dagonet spreads a
blanket and Arthur lays her carefully on it. Four
other prisoners are laid out in the sun. One is a
small BOY about ten years old. His name is LUCAN.
Lancelot kicks a Mercenary into action.

LANCELOT

Get water to these people!

Lancelot already handing Arthur a cup. As Arthur
puts it to Guinevere's lips she stares into his
eyes.

ARTHUR

I'm a Roman Knight. You're safe,
now.

Guinevere looks up at him. Beautiful eyes behind
the dirt.

ARTHUR

Can't you speak?

Bors and Gawain drag Marius up to Arthur and shove
him down on his knees.

ARTHUR

What is this madness, animal?

MARIUS

They're pagans and Pelagians!

Bors puts his sword to Marius' throat.

BORS

So are we.

Marius, confused.

MARIUS

These refuse to accept the place
God set for them at the table of
life and must die! As an example
to others! As an example!

ARTHUR

You mean, they refused to be your
serfs?

MARIUS

Yes, yes! You understand! Of
course as a Roman Knight you
would. As a Christian...

ARTHUR

As a Christian? As a Roman I
refuse to believe you can be the
true character of our most holy
city!

Arthur and the Knights look around at the faces of
these people. The Monks have crowded around their
dead pal.

Fulcinia rushes to Guinevere's side. Guinevere
seems to recognize her. Marius grabs Fulcinia.

MARIUS

You kept her alive! You fed her!

He slaps her. Arthur nails Marius with a power
punch that lifts him off his feet. Mercenaries and
Monks rush up to help right Marius.

Tristan gallops into the courtyard. DRUMMING gets
CLOSER...

TRISTRAN

Arthur! We have to go! Now!

EXT. COURTYARD - MORNING

The Knights loading two mules with supplies when
the Monks clustered together around Mental Monk,
approach.

MENTAL MONK

Defiler! I was willing to die
with them to lead them to their
rightful place.

Arthur stops what he's doing and looks at Mental
Monk.

ARTHUR

Wall them back up.

Arthur turns to the Knights. They look at him like
he was redefining the definition of 'hardass'.

ARTHUR

I said, wall them up!

Lancelot loves-it — a delicious idea!

The Knights herd the Monks back toward the prison
when led by their ELDER, the villager-serfs
intervene. They push the Monks into the prison and
immediately start piling up stones and mortar.

ARTHUR

You people must leave! Go into
the forests and walk south.

EXT. WALLS - MORNING

Main body of The Knights MOVES OUT led by Dagonet
and Tristran. Behind them the VILLAGERS stream
out. The cart now holds the WOUNDED. Guinevere
sits in the cart, blanket draped around her.

EXT. FOREST TRAIL - MORNING

Arthur rides to the head of the small caravan.

LANCELOT

We're moving too slow! Nobody
said we had to bring all these
people out. Just the family.

ARTHUR

We are honor bound to bring these
people out.

LANCELOT

Honor, a fancy idea. Especially
when it gets you killed.

Tristran and Bors gallop up..

BORS
We're going back to try and lead
them away —

They're gone before Arthur can object.

EXT. TRAIL FORK - MORNING

The SAXON INFANTRY EMERGES. Tristran and Bors appear at the edge of the forest on the main trail — they rapid-fire two shots each killing four Saxons, retreat south the trail away from Knights. The Saxons cheer and charge ahead after them

EXT. MAIN TRAIL - MORNING

The troops swarm down the trail. British Scout falls to his knees to study the ground, then rises and furiously hurls a handful of dirt on the ground. Cynric stops.

BRITISH SCOUT
(Saxon w/subtitles)
They didn't come this way! We
have to turn the army!

Cynric gestures to Lapdog Officer.

CYNRIC
(Saxon w/subtitles)
Order the men to halt.
(to Scout)
Who was that mounted soldier we
saw this morning?

SCOUT
(Saxon w/subtitles)
I tried to tell you: A Russian
Knight. Arthur and his Knights
are here...

Two SOLDIERS drag squealing/pleading Mental Monk toward Cynric. Scout intercepts them, talks to Monk as Cynric turns to an OFFICER

CYNRIC
(Saxon w/subtitles)
Turn the men and get them on that
forest trail.
(to Scout)
Where's the next village?

Scout leaves Soldiers with Mental Monk and scurries to Cynric's side.

SCOUT
(Saxon w/subtitles)
About half a day's march.

Cynric indicates Mental Monk.

SCOUT
(Saxon w/subtitles)
He says someone named Arthur...
cemented him up in a building.

Cynric's eyes glow with concern and... envy.

CYNRIC
(Saxon w/subtitles)
Find them!

SCOUT
(Saxon w/subtitles)
The Monk?

CYNRIC
(Saxon w/subtitles)
Put him back where you found him.

Mental Monk yells as he's dragged off.

BIG ANGLE

as the Saxon force MOVES OUT after the Knights
soldiers set fire to the deserted HUTS...

EXT. FOREST - LATER, DAY

Arthur and Lancelot pause on the trail overlooking
a bigger village. It seems deserted. Galahad and
Gawain canter up the slope, returning to the trail
from the village. Seriously snowing now.

GALAHAD
Empty. They've all flown.

GAWAIN
Didn't have to tell them what's
coming. We got water anyway.
There's another trails runs south
from here.

ARTHUR
Keep everyone moving.

GALAHAD
Why don't we turn here?

ARTHUR

We can't go south, they'll cut us off.

LANCELOT

We are cut off. What now?

ARTHUR

North for that military outpost on the highlands near the sea. It's our only chance.

LANCELOT

You heard the Cardinal, the Saxons control the coast. We'll be trapped against the sea!

ARTHUR

They'll have troops at the post. Let's go.

LANCELOT

I thought the plan was to avoid a fight with the Saxons!

Tristan rides up.

TRISTRAN

You need to have a look at some of those wounded.

Arthur turns his horse.

LANCELOT

So much for our good luck!

EXT. TRAIL - DAY

and TIGHT on Arthur's boot in his STIRRUP.

GUINEVERE

fascinated by the stirrup. Her eyes move to Excalibur's ORNATE, pagan HILT. Then up to Arthur as he LEAPS into the wagon — his horse dutifully trots alongside.

Arthur lifts a blanket and studies Lucan's arm which has been intentionally broken. Doesn't like what he sees. Dagonet rides up and Guinevere watches as he tosses Arthur a flask; Arthur helps the kid to drink. Then he turns to Guinevere.

ARTHUR & GUINEVERE

Arthur kneels at her side as the wagon rocks. He reaches out for one of her hands — she pulls back. Carefully, slowly, she lets him unwrap the filthy bandages. Doesn't like what he sees.

ARTHUR

They dislocated all your fingers.

Lancelot and Tristran ride up, flank the wagon.

LANCELOT

Look at her hands. She's not going to make it. You're wasting your time — you're wasting your time on all these people.

He peels off.

TRISTRAN

We're going hunting.

Arthur nods and Tristran also peels away. Guinevere keeps her eyes fixed on him, doesn't speak. Arthur readies himself for this.

ARTHUR

If your fingers stay like this they'll rot. And, you'll die.

CLOSER ON THESE TWO...

She keeps staring into Arthur's eyes. Arthur turns her hand so the back rests against his chest, he tightens his grip on her index finger, looks her in the eye and CRACK. She stares harder into his face. Maybe it's a challenge.

He takes the next finger — CRACK. The pain must be incredible. As he goes from one finger to the next the pain finally becomes too much. She puts her head against Arthur's chest, her free arm pulls him close fighting the pain. CRACK...

EXT. DEEP FOREST - NIGHT

Lancelot and Tristran watch as Saxons move through the deserted village. Nearby TWO SAXON SENTRIES talk over a small fire. Snow has finally covered the ground.

LANCELOT

Let's cut them down a little.

But Tristran stops Lancelot from pulling his sword.

TRISTRAN

We have to try to draw them south.
We go through the village then
come out on the south, leave
tracks... and a mess.

LANCELOT

What the hell are they doing?

SAXON SIGNAL DRUMS beat deep in the forest — then
a semi-circle of torches. Tristran slips into the
dark. Lancelot just shakes his head and follows.

EXT. FOREST - NIGHT

As torches glow in the distance and drums beat,
SCREAMS are heard inside the forest.

LANCELOT & TRISTRAN

dodge house to house. But as they're about to turn
back into the forest on the opposite side of the
village, they stop.

EXT. FOREST - NIGHT

Saxon swordsmen wait on the edge of the forest as
the drums, shouts and screams get closer. Suddenly
VILLAGERS — mostly women and children — are
driven from the forest and are cut down by laughing
swordsmen.

LANCELOT & TRISTRAN

shocked by the brutality.

SPEARMEN

jostle with their swordsmen buddies for a turn.
The firelight shines on the red earth.

LANCELOT & TRISTRAN

Tristran pulls his bow out of his back-quiver, then
a look from Lancelot stops him. He slides the bow
back. They slip into the forest.

EXT. SAXON GUARD POST - NIGHT

Two Saxons warm themselves at a fire.

TRISTRAN

nocks an arrow — kills them in succession. They turn and move into the shadows.

FOREST

They move back into the village, going house to house.

TRISTRAN

We have to go back through the village so we don't leave tracks.

EXT. VILLAGE - NIGHT

Lancelot and Tristran are suddenly face-to-face with FOUR BRITISH MEN — YOUTHS huddled inside a meeting house that's about five times hut size. Each has a dagger or knife. Tristran recognizes Ganis.

When they hear SAXONS approaching, the Knights move right, the Youths, left.

LANCELOT & TRISTRAN

leap behind a stone wall. Then SHOUTS from the hut.

INT. RUIN - NIGHT

Six Saxon light infantry surround the British Youths, disarm them, set torches in the crumbling walls.

INT. HUT

A BRUTAL-LOOKING Saxon officer yells at one of the youths and punches him against a wall.

O.S. Lancelot's SWORD SINGS... Saxons hear it, mystified. Lancelot and Tristran charge in, swords swinging. The Saxons are tough — seasoned fighters and this is no mere skirmish.

A Saxon grazes Lancelot in the shoulder with a dagger. Ganis wrestles the Saxon off Lancelot as he and Tristran desperately battle one-on-one opponents.

Ganis is WOUNDED by the last Saxon. Lancelot just manages to kill his first opponent in time to take out the Saxon bearing down on Ganis. Tristran takes out his man and they sit, exhausted. One torch still burns. For a moment the British Youths and the Knights study each other.

Then, Ganis slowly reaches up and touches the RED DRAGON INSIGNIA on Lancelot's shoulder.

GANIS
Lancelot...!?

Lancelot and Tristran swap amazed looks. The three youths seem to explode with energy.

GANIS
Oh, God! You're real! It was Arthur's Knights who freed our elder! We must come with you!

LANCELOT
No. Go south. Warn the other villages — that's how you can help us.

Saxon SHOUTS O.S. as soldiers move toward the sound of their fight. Ganis grasps Lancelot's arm.

GANIS
Then we'll meet you at the great Wall!

They're gone. Lancelot watches the dark for a moment, moved by this encounter.

TRISTRAN
Brave.

LANCELOT
All children are brave.

Just a bit too dismissive for Tristran.

TRISTRAN
That's true. I even remember when we used to be brave.

Lancelot gets a taunting smile from Tristran — they rush out into the dark.

EXT. VILLAGE STREET - NIGHT

Lancelot and Tristran cross the street and are spotted by Saxons — Tristran rapid-fires two arrows dropping a pair of Saxons. As the Saxons hesitate the Knights escape in the dark. But they have been SEEN.

EXT. RAVINE - DAWN

Guinevere jostling in the wagon, wrapped to her chin in a blanket: cold and in pain.

Her eyes open to see Arthur's stirrup as he rides alongside. With a THUMP his boots appear beside her, then he leans down into her line of vision with bread.

Guinevere straightens, but as she does PAIN shoots through her hands. Arthur touches her shoulder to help but she shakes loose and sits up on her own.

At the opposite end of the wagon, Dagonet sits with Lucan, helping him eat. Lucan does not look good.

ARTHUR & GUINEVERE

Arthur breaks off a piece of bread. Guinevere clearly doesn't trust him and struggles with her useless hands to feed herself, but she fails. Arthur breaks off another piece of bread, gives her the hard stare. She glares back. Then opens her mouth and lets him feed her.

DAGONET

Arthur?

Guinevere responds when she hears this name.

ARTHUR & LUCAN

Arthur moves to the back of the wagon, kneels down and puts his hand on Lucan's forehead. Can tell by his look to Dagonet that Lucan's condition is bad.

EXT. HIGHLANDS - MORNING

Arthur on horseback, leads the caravan to the edge of the forest and converges with Lancelot and Tristran on snow covered highlands. An estate fronts the forest.

As the caravan comes out of the woods, men drop what they're doing, gather in ranks along the road into the fort. Many are soldiers. Arthur reins-in. They swap salutes.

CAPTAIN OF THE GUARD

Sir, have you come in from the sea?

ARTHUR

No. From the wall. Where's your commander?

INT. TOP FLOOR BEDROOM, MANSION - MORNING

ROLO AGRICOLA comes to the window. Rolo's a massive man with a thick, grey beard. A WOMAN half-dressed and half his age joins him.

EXT. COURTYARD - MORNING

Rolo rushes out carrying a ceramic jug and a bronze goblet. Three servants fan out around him carrying jugs and mugs. Rolo goes straight to Arthur.

ROLO

Don't say a thing — drink!

Arthur knows he has to humor this guy. Takes the goblet and drinks as the servants pass cups to the other Knights. Arthur winces; it's strong.

ROLO

Brilliant, isn't it? From berries
and honey and secrets!

(to the other Knights)

Drink — come in, everyone!

(back to Arthur)

Everything we grow right here
ourselves! Imagine? And we
haven't had a connection from the
sea for months? The world needs
our wine but how the hell am I
supposed to get it to them? For
God's sake come inside; as sure as
Jesus can fly there's a storm
coming.

LANCELOT

A storm all right.

TRISTRAN

They're on our trail.

(off Arthur's look)

I was careless...

LANCELOT

No, it was my fault.

This is interrupted by a commotion with Marius and his mercenaries.

EXT. COURTYARD - MORNING

Marius has rounded up his Mercenaries and approaches his former prisoners and Fulcinia.

MARIUS

Fulcinia!

She ignores him and guides Guinevere toward the house. Arthur and the Knights enter the courtyard and move toward the group. The Mercenaries STOP.

MARIUS

I want my wife returned to my care! We can make our own way to the wall. With these legions I have more than enough soldiers to protect us.

Arthur sees Dagonet sitting with Lucan. He places his wave-dagger in Lucan's hand, indicates he should lift it using his bad arm. He does.

MARIUS

You are a fool, commander. Like all Britons. When we get to the Wall and your superior from the Church, you will suffer horribly for your heresy.

Arthur turns to Marius' Mercenaries.

ARTHUR

Divide our forces and which ever part the Saxons find will be slaughtered. Are you feeling lucky?

(to the Knights)

Get everyone inside. Rest. We move again at dawn.

INT. MANSION - DAY

The Knights at a long table with Rolo each with their wine.

ROLO

We haven't been able to get anything out, how are you going to evacuate?

ARTHUR

Along the coast to The Wall.

Rolo sees Bors nipping at his berry wine.

ROLO

You like the wine?

(pause)

You can't move fast enough with all those people. Your plans include leaving them here?

ARTHUR

Commander, everyone who stays here will die. Rome is done with this island.

LANCELOT

Rome is done...

ARTHUR

You need to come out with us.
Marius is, so you have no reason
to stay on.

ROLO

They told me I'd be stationed here
for the rest of my days.
Otherwise I wouldn't have gotten
into this damned wine business.
So, where are my orders?

ARTHUR

I have no orders for you.

Rolo gets it; the plan was to abandon him.

LANCELOT

They brought you in by sea,
perhaps that's how they planned to
bring you out.

Rolo laughs.

ROLO

You recommend I wait?

(pause)

You came far out of your way just
to save me. Or did you?

ARTHUR

I came because we may need to
fight and with you and your
soldiers we have a chance.

ROLO

You don't need me or any of the
older officers, but we'll send out
the young soldiers, women and
children.

ARTHUR

No, you don't understand: the
Saxons are too powerful, if you
stay here you will all be killed.

ROLO

If there's someone here they'll
have to stop and fight. Otherwise
they'll just catch you anyway.

Arthur and Lancelot try to object.

ROLO

Listen to me: there's a chance you
could get away without a fight.
Everyone I love will be with you,
so there's no argument.

(pause)

I have a few mules, but no horses.

Arthur gets that the argument has indeed ended.

ARTHUR

Someone can ride my horse.

LANCELOT

No one touches my horse.

But something has got Rolo's attention. They all
turn...

STAIRWAY

Guinevere come down the stairs with Fulcinia. She
has found a dress for Guinevere who is transformed.
In the bleak fort she shines like a sun. One by
one the Knights see. Her eyes fix on Arthur and he
rises as she crosses directly to him passing the
other Knights without so much as a glance.

ARTHUR

Are you better? You look better.

She slowly shows Arthur her hands as all the
Knights gather. Arthur doesn't get what she's
trying to do. Then her fingers barely move.
Beautiful and tough as steel, she keeps TRYING TO
SQUEEZE HER HAND.

ARTHUR

You shouldn't do that...!

Her fingers MOVE... it hurts so much she actually
SPEAKS, like a CRY. Then, as she finally CLENCHES
HER FIST and her scream of maximum pain cracks and
becomes a WILD LAUGH. She has a Celtic accent.

As she talks, like her hands, she has trouble,
stumbles over words, until by the end she finally
has a real woman's voice that's full of ANGER.

GUINEVERE

They tortured me. To make me tell
them things, things I never knew
to begin with. So, they put my
hand in a machine they called
'Holy Ghost' — pet-names they had
for their torture machines.

She stares right at Arthur, keeps bending her fingers. Marius listens getting LIVID.

GUINEVERE

Each finger I swallowed back my voice. If I don't have a voice, I can't talk. No matter what. So, then to my good right hand. This machine was a new pet called 'Augustine', different in case I was used to the pain of the 'Holy Ghost'. I saw other pets that crushed people or ripped them apart. So, I knew I was going to be killed. Then I heard your voice in the dark. Saw you, holding up a light.

(pause)

You brought me back. All the way from death. I am Guinevere.

She goes close to Arthur. She looks him over, like she might kiss him or bite.

GUINEVERE

You are Arthur, of The Knights from the Great Wall?

Arthur's never quite heard it put this way.

ARTHUR

I am... we are.

FULCINIA

The lady needs rest...

She reaches up with her still stiff fingers and gently brushes Arthur's cheek. Although the touch is soft, her look is TOUGH. She lowers her hand. As she walks away with Fulcinia the Knights can't take their eyes off her.

Jols enters, spots Arthur and crosses to him.

JOLS

Arthur, another has need of you...

EXT. FOREST - NIGHT

Arthur and Jols led by a villager approach a man who sits alone on a rock. He turns and Arthur sees it's Merlin. Unlike the time they first met, Merlin seems to carry a tremendous weight on his shoulders.

MERLIN

Arthur.

Arthur's natural impulse is that Merlin is the enemy. But, when he sees the state Merlin's in, Arthur feels for him.

ARTHUR

You met their main army?

MERLIN

My veterans... were wiped out.
I'm down to my young men, now.
You know, Arthur, the ones who
think you are a hero.

ARTHUR

We've got their light infantry on
our assess.

MERLIN

Wish I could help you. I need to
gather more forces and go back
north against their main army.
Try to stop them. You think it's
hopeless?

ARTHUR

I think you have to fight them the
way you've been fighting Rome.

MERLIN

No. For Rome this island was a
business. For the Saxons it's
conquest so their army has to be
stopped. But that would take a
great leader. You know what I
think a great leader is? A man
who hates leaders. A man who
would mistrust even himself in
that position. A man who leads
only because someone must.

ARTHUR

My trust is with my Knights.
Which is to get them home.

MERLIN

Yes, they still believe they have
a home. But exactly where in
heaven or hell is Arthur's home?

Arthur doesn't have an answer.

EXT. COURTYARD - MORNING

Cold enough to see your breath. The wounded get loaded on mules. Dagonet sets Lucan in front of him on his horse. Knights watch as Guinevere throws her leg over Arthur's horse and easily steadies him. Knights, impressed; she can ride.

GUINEVERE

I can walk just as well as the next.

ARTHUR

And walk you shall. When I see you've healed.

GUINEVERE

No man needs do anything for me. I'm a strong girl.

ARTHUR

We'll go faster if the wounded ride.

Arthur set a stirrup but she pulls her foot out.

GUINEVERE

That a Roman invention to drag you to death?

ARTHUR

Russian, actually.

She kicks the horse and trots off with a scornful laugh. Bors and Tristran approach Arthur leading their horses. Bors offers Arthur his reins.

BORS

The men should see you riding...

Arthur nods and accepts the reins. He swings easily into the saddle and trots out ahead.

BIG ANGLE

looking more like a United Nations rescue mission than a search and destroy unit, The Knights lead the refugees off into the forest path. Their ranks have swelled with women, children and a dozen tough-looking young SOLDIERS.

ROLO

paces the walls directing his legionnaires as they fortify the defenses. He stops, looks down to see Arthur watching from horseback.

ARTHUR

as the wind whips the snow around him in a whirlwind Arthur rears his horse and draws and holds Excalibur high overhead.

ROLO

Holds up a fist.

EXT. FOREST - DUSK

The Knights form around Arthur.

ARTHUR

All right: we're going directly east to the coast. Map shows an old military trail we can take almost all the way to the wall, but we have to get to it before the Saxons. So, if we run out of trail we walk. Their army must use the trails and if we can go direct we should beat them.

TRISTRAN

I'm going out for a look. But alone, Lancelot.

LANCELOT

I'm as good as you in the forest.

Laughs from the others.

TRISTRAN

You're noisy and I can smell you.

Tristan turns and heads back.

EXT. FOREST - DAY

Arthur rides between the trunks of immense pines. Guinevere easily keeps up.

ARTHUR

That young boy...

GUINEVERE

His name is Lucan.

ARTHUR

He's going to die. I'm sorry.

GUINEVERE

As a soldier you've seen a great many men die. Maybe you just take it as a certainty. When you found me, that day, you told Marius that you are a Pelagian.

ARTHUR

Pelagius was my teacher.

She laughs.

GUINEVERE

A rotten Roman taught by the greatest Briton of them all?! But I have heard of you.

ARTHUR

Heard what?

GUINEVERE

Fairy tales. The kind you hear about people who never existed. Brave, selfless... But I know you for what you truly are — another Roman. Tell me, Roman, how many Britons have you killed?

ARTHUR

Exactly as many as tried to kill me. It's a natural state of man, to want to live.

They study one another, a challenge.

GUINEVERE

Animals live. It's the natural state of man to live free. Just like your great teacher... tried to teach you.

ARTHUR

Is that why they tortured you, because you were free?

GUINEVERE

I was far, far too free for them. Prove to me that though Roman, you have a soul: we must save Lucan. They tortured him because the head monk demanded he kiss his feet so Lucan spit in his face. He needs to be saved to bring up children to spit on monks.

Arthur can't hide his smile: point taken. He reins in, reaches into his coat and takes out a tiny leather sack. Hands it to Guinevere.

ARTHUR

Garlic. Crush it and rub it into his wound every day and it may kill the poison. This is all I've got.

EXT. KNIGHTS' CAMP - NIGHT

Lucan beneath a make-shift lean-to from pine boughs. Guinevere massages the liquefied garlic into Lucan's arm. He looks up at her through glazed eyes. As she works she sings quietly.

BIG ANGLE

The Knights and others cluster around coal-fires which are further subdued by bough supported over the coals on cut saplings. The Knights listen to Guinevere's soft voice.

GUINEVERE (O.S.)

O Western wind, when wilt thou blow
That the small rain down can rain?
Gods, that my love were in my arms,
And I in my bed again!

Lucan LAUGHS. This gets the Knights smiling and laughing a bit between them. The wind HOWLS...

EXT. FORTRESS WALL - NIGHT

Rolo's LEGIONS in a last stand against the Saxons who try to mount the walls with siege ladders. Rolo and his men drink from open barrels, fight and heave barrels over the wall. All the soldiers who have stayed with Rolo are greying. One indicates four gnarly barrels heavily sealed with tar.

SOLDIER

Our first vintages!

Rolo grins, motions them forward to the wall.

EXT. SAXON LINES - NIGHT

Cynric watches as FOUR GNARLY BARRELS tumble down followed by TORCHES. The barrels splinter and the torches explode the wine like napalm.

CERDIC

(Saxon with subtitles)

No prisoners.

EXT. FOREST - NIGHT

Tristran watches from a distance. BEHIND him, TORCHES appear. Tristran draws his sword, moves back up through the trees toward his horse. Now, torches approach on the RIGHT. It looks like he may be CUT OFF.

EXT. KNIGHTS' CAMP - DAWN

The Knights have slept with their shields tight around themselves. The shields open up like the pedals of a flower and the Knights are immediately up. Jols and Horton creep out from a lean-to. Dagonet walks around kicking mercenaries awake.

ARTHUR

All of you get your gear. We're leaving. Now.

GAWAIN

Tristran's not back.

LANCELOT

We don't abandon our friends.

ARTHUR

You'll obey your orders, damn-it.

Gawain reaches slowly for the hilt of his sword — nervous about drawing on Arthur. At that moment Bors bumps his horse against Gawain as he rides on ahead.

BORS

Arthur came back for me.

GAWAIN

We all did.

BORS

Arthur was first. It must be because he gets paid more than us.

Bors rides ahead. Dagonet rides past Lucan with him on his horse.

MARIUS

Kill him! I will tell the Cardinal you were protecting yourselves and me from this demon!

Listening to this jerk snaps the others back to reality. Galahad pulls his sword and brings it right to Marius' throat.

GALAHAD

You are lucky we have to bring you back alive. But everyone's luck runs out sooner or later.

He lowers his sword and joins the others.

EXT. FOREST TRAIL - LATE AFTERNOON

Driving snow. All the Knights on foot now except Lancelot. Guinevere dismounts and gives her horse to one of the civilians. Lancelot sees.

LANCELOT

You're too sick to walk.

And she JOGS ahead, leaps fallen timber. She turns back and gives him a smile. Now it STARTS TO RAIN. Bors raises his fist and shakes it at the heavens.

BORS

Rain — what the hell is going on up there, Gods!?

Wind BLOWS STRONGER. Dagonet holds his shield over Lucan's head like an umbrella.

DAGONET'S FIST, LATER —

SLAMS down on his shield shattering a glass-like layer of ice. He holds up a large piece for Lucan who finds it fascinating.

EXT. DEEP FOREST - DAY

The caravan crawls through the trees and as they brush up against the branches they TINKLE LIKE A CATHEDRAL OF WIND CHIMES.

Lancelot appears leading his horse which now carries a civilian. He feels everyone's eyes on him but wins a smile from Guinevere.

EXT. FOREST - LATE AFTERNOON

Arthur holds up his hand for everyone to stop and shut up. He points into the forest downstream. He and Lancelot draw swords, swap hand signals and each takes a tree flanking a path into the woods.

Tristan walks out of the snowstorm leading his horse which is LADEN WITH SAXON WEAPONS including a bow. He simply holds up his hand indicating "killed five."

TRISTRAN

Rolo's dead. One Saxon army
closing. British Scout still
tracking us. We can't stop.

ARTHUR

We have to hit them and lead them
off. Dagonet you stay here...

DAGONET

Me, why?

ARTHUR

When you reach the coast head
south. We'll join you on the way.
If we can. Let's go.

GUINEVERE

Why are you doing this? To save
us and sacrifice yourselves?

ARTHUR

We'll survive.

LANCELOT

We sacrifice ourselves for no one!

They mount up. She grabs Arthur's bridle. Arthur
yanks his bridle free.

ARTHUR

I said we'll make it and we shall.

The Knights all turn their horses. They gallop
off.

EXT. CAMP - MORNING

Dagonet is JUMPED by five Mercenaries. They fight
him to the ground. Lucan runs to help and is
grabbed as well.

EXT. CAMP - MORNING

The Mercenaries pull Guinevere and Lucan out into
the center of the camp. The two other former
prisoners have already been dragged out. The
Mercenaries surround the group. Fulcinia is shoved
in. Marius supervises from horseback.

MARIUS

You are going to fulfill your
obligations to God.

MERCENARY

What about the Knights? They'll murder us!

MARIUS

When we get back to the wall the Cardinal will support us against anyone.

GUINEVERE

moves behind the prisoners, tearing the last of the bandages off her fingers.

MERCENARIES

slow to gather up their courage.

MARIUS

Kill them all!

Marius grabs a MACE from one of his Mercenaries, rides up to one of the prisoners and raises it to kill him.

An ARROW SLAMS into Marius' chest. He gags, looks at the thing sunk up to the feathers — then at...

GUINEVERE

She holds the Saxon bow rock steady.

MARIUS

drops the mace and tumbles backwards off the horse into the boughs and the camp fire.

All others FREEZE as Guinevere nocks another arrow and pulls the string to her cheek. No question in anyone's mind that she KNOWS HOW TO USE IT.

Slowly the Mercenaries spread out. Guinevere points the new arrow at a Mercenary and he stops — then another. It's a matter of time before they get her. One reaches down for a sword.

ARTHUR STEPS UP BESIDE GUINEVERE

Points Excalibur right at eye-level. For a moment it's JUST THESE TWO...

One by one the Knights emerge and line up with Arthur and Guinevere. As they do, each has a look at this young girl with a 75 lb bow at full draw and NOT SHAKING. Lancelot LAUGHS, slowly pulls his sword and IT SINGS.

That's it — Alecto and his Mercenaries DROP THEIR SWORDS. Guinevere tilts the bow back and FIRES —

THE ARROW

center-punches the white circle where a limb's been cleaved off a tree. Point made.

GUINEVERE

slings the bow over her shoulder, then puts her fingers in her mouth to suck off the blood. She turns to find all the Knights staring at her. Galahad and Gawain actually BUMP INTO EACH OTHER. Now, they are TOTALLY SMITTEN.

The boughs CATCH FIRE around Marius' corpse and it goes up in a huge plume of smoke.

EXT. FOREST - DAY

The British Scout spots the PLUME OF SMOKE rising up from the forest to the north...

EXT. FROZEN LAKE - DAWN

The Knights break out of the forest to the edge of the lake. Arthur alone rides down to the shore.

Guinevere kicks her horse and immediately the other Knights — not to be outdone — follow. Arthur rides out and the frozen lake GROANS as the ice threatens to BUCKLE. He turns in the saddle and motions them to come ahead, but SPREAD OUT.

As they advance the lake comes alive with warping sounds of creaking ice. Lancelot rides beside Guinevere — and she looks ahead and locks eyes with Arthur.

Jealous Lancelot digs for conversation.

LANCELOT

Where'd you learn to shoot?

GUINEVERE

My own father taught me.

LANCELOT

And to ride?

GUINEVERE

Taught myself.

LANCELOT

Didn't know the Britons understood horse.

GUINEVERE

Don't know much, do you?

She moves ahead and arrives at Arthur's side.

ARTHUR & GUINEVERE

The two alone in the middle of the ice lake. The ice makes an horrendous quaking sound. EVERYONE stops moving. Ice settles down. They continue riding slowly together.

ARTHUR

We're not across yet.

GUINEVERE

We shall be. And then? Are you going for the sea?

ARTHUR

And back to the wall.

GUINEVERE

You want to know what I would do? I'd go back, into the mountains.

ARTHUR

And what would you do there?

GUINEVERE

Wait like a bear till spring. Then I'd come out, get strong, gather forces, attack the Saxons. You could too.

ARTHUR

I'm not at my best ambush-fighting.

GUINEVERE

My father says you're the best.

ARTHUR

Your father? Well, thank him for me.

GUINEVERE

Damn you, Arthur, it's our country! Whether you understand or not you Romans have helped shape it!

(MORE)

GUINEVERE (CONT'D)

You saw what Marius' world is and
such is all Europe now — Church
instituted slavery! This land
must stay free!

The snowy mist clears revealing SAXON SOLDIERS on
the opposite shore. At their head is the British
Scout — knows he's finally outsmarted them.

ARTHUR & GUINEVERE

Hit the brakes — both horses sit on their haunches
and SKID. Guinevere's horse GOES DOWN. Guinevere
and her horse separate and slide toward the shore.

Arthur spins horse, reaches down and hauls
Guinevere into his saddle and they GO. Her horse
gallops behind.

THE KNIGHTS

As Arthur reins-in he circles his hand overhead.

ARTHUR

Form a square!

The Knights move together in the middle of the lake
and dismount.

ARTHUR

Move the horses to the rear. Non-
fighters in the center!

As they form the Roman Square the ice GROANS
beneath their feet. It CRACKS and water rushes
onto the ice.

DAGONET

The ice is giving beneath us!

ARTHUR

Keep it tight! Shoulder to
shoulder!

The Mercenaries and Young Soldiers station
themselves as the main body of the square.

Jols and Horton pull the horses to the center. The
Knights take down their shields and swords. Bors
and Tristran pull their compound bows from their
saddle holsters and sling the holsters over their
backs — they wear both their swords and bows on
their backs. They draw their bows.

BORS
Feed us, Jols!

JOLS

pulls a thick roll off a mule and flips it open —
it's a HUGE BAIL OF ARROWS. Guinevere sees,
unslings the Saxon bow and gets ready.

AHEAD

Cynric's soldiers appear. When they see the
Knights they halt. Several step in front of the
line shout holding stakes with skewered HEADS.

KNIGHTS

Take positions like they've done this a hundred
times before.

ARTHUR
Those are the heads of Rolo's
men...

Guinevere watches Bors strap a DEVICE to his arm:
the thing has a CHANNEL THAT RUNS THE LENGTH OF HIS
FOREARM. Bors takes a very short arrow and loads
it into the device. He nocks the short arrow in
the string of his composite bow and draws it.

GUINEVERE
They're way out of range...

Bors sneers and takes extremely careful aim. The
bowstring rockets the stubby arrow along the
channel... Jols sits with his back to Bors facing
the bale. He holds up another short arrow.

Guinevere watches as one of the SAXONS holding a
head-on-a-stick suddenly DROPS. Bors aims, fires,
reaches back for an arrow Jols already holds.

Another SAXON is hit — this one does a backward
somersault. The other Saxons get nervous.

Bors fires again. Still another Saxon FALLS — the
rest panic drop their severed heads and bolt.

THE KNIGHTS/POSSIBLY FROM ABOVE

Arthur moves down the front line of the square.
Bors and Gawain hold the front corners; Dagonet and
Galahad the rear. Lancelot, Tristan hold center
with Guinevere as Arthur shouts encouragement.

IN THE SQUARE

Lancelot slowly draws his sword as the SAXONS rank-up in a straight line. The Saxons SING a dirge-like battle song that echoes across the lake as they advance.

ARTHUR

We have to cut their numbers.

LANCELOT

Be a pleasure to silence that racket.

Arthur and the other Knights size Guinevere up as she wraps strips of cloth on her shooting fingers. She hefts the Saxon bow, tests the tension. She reaches back without looking, takes an arrow from Jols and nocks it.

GUINEVERE

Shall we call our shots?

Even stoic Tristran has to look sideways at that one. Bors laughs as he strips off his sniper gear and reaches back for a normal length arrow.

LANCELOT

I like a woman who's got guts.

GUINEVERE

Really? So, do I.

BORS

By guts, Lancelot means, mass.
Lard... chest!

Bors fires — Guinevere and Tristran send arrows right after his...

SAXON RANKS

A SINGING SAXON takes an arrow in the chest and in a flash TWO MORE take arrows square in the chest and they all DROP.

KNIGHTS

Guinevere, Tristran and Bors string arrows.

LANCELOT

All women of this island are
mostly lard — finding their bones
is an expedition.

GUINEVERE

The big-ass ones you know as they
live off the fat of the Roman
fort. Throat!

Almost as one they fire...

SAXON LINE

Three SOLDIERS in a line take arrows in the THROAT.
This spectacular precision is beginning to unnerve
the other SAXONS.

KNIGHTS

Arthur walks ahead of his square, studies the
approaching army.

LANCELOT

But only a woman of substance is
strong enough to accept my
pleasures.

GAWAIN

Pleasure is a word not likely
associate with those pachyderms
you roll around with.

ARTHUR

Steady now...

TRISTRAN

Knee!

A second for better aim and they all let fly.

SAXON LINE

Three take it in the knee cap and scream in agony
as they fall. Now the Saxons swap looks of REAL
fear. But they're getting closer. Cynric —
marching in the middle — sees their hesitation.

CYNRIC

(Saxon w/subtitles)

Advance! These are just another
herd of filthy Britons!

Three more arrows whistle in hitting three Saxons
perfectly in their HEADS. The line SLOWS...

CYNRIC

(Saxon w/subtitles)

Move! Advance cowards!

KNIGHTS

Guinevere, Bors and Tristran reload.

LANCELOT

You have me wrong, lady; I love
all Britons.

(look to Guinevere)

But in particular their women who
I judge as nothing less than the
finest harlots on earth. Which is
what is needed to contain me!

GUINEVERE

Penis!

Bors and Tristran FREEZE on that challenge. But
Guinevere shoots.

FROM THEIR POV

a SAXON SOLDIER crumples, SCREAMING.

GUINEVERE

Reaches back for another arrow. A fresh wind fills
her hair.

GUINEVERE

I take it I win the challenge?

LANCELOT

Feel that wind?! Unleash the
dragon!

Arthur grabs Lancelot as he turns to run back to
the mules with Gawain.

ARTHUR

Those are hardened troops. We're
in for a fight. So, do it! Fast!

EXT. SAXON TROOPS - DAY

Cynric slaps one of four DRUMMERS on the shoulder
who starts an irregular beat and the Saxon line
robotically stretches to double it's original
length. As ONE they slip on leather helmets.

THE KNIGHTS

Ready for the fight.

ARTHUR

They're going to try to surround
the square. Hold the corners!
Lancelot?

Suddenly there's a surreal MOANING from the
Knight's square. Guinevere turns toward the sound.

LANCELOT (O.S.)

The God of Russia is free!

SAXONS

The MOANING reaches them. Though their faces are
nearly covered, their EYES dart back and forth to
their comrades. THEY STOP DEAD.

OVER THE KNIGHT'S SQUARE

A FIFTEEN FOOT DRAGON RISES LIKE IT WAS FLYING —
its serpent tail WHIPS. The face and body sparkle
bright reptilian BLUE and ORANGE scales, and it
makes an horrendous MOANING/HISSING.

ARTHUR

sees the frozen Saxon line, turns to the archers.

ARTHUR

Rapid fire!

Bors, Tristan and then Guinevere shoot as Jols
feeds them arrows. Guinevere sees the short
Russian bows reload and fire with amazing speed.

GUINEVERE

Never seen such bows.

BORS

After we kill everyone here today,
I'll teach you to use one.

Guinevere fires and laughs at their ego.

TRISTRAN

draws his compound bow back so far it looks like
the tips would touch - shoots.

SAXON LINES

Tristan's arrow goes right through a Saxon shield
into the arms that's holding it. Even Cynric is
taken back by the dragon. But for a moment.

CYNRIC
 (Saxon w/subtitles)
 Advance!

An arrow strikes the pennant shaft beside him.

CYNRIC
 (Saxon w/subtitles)
 Forward! Move! We cannot stay
 here!

Cynric beats on his soldiers' backs.

CYNRIC
 (Saxon w/subtitles)
 Advance or be executed where you
 stand!

The soldiers finally MOVE.

KNIGHTS' SQUARE

The dragon is the RUSSIAN BATTLE STANDARD — like a huge windsock the air fills it's body and the bronze lizard head has a reed noise-maker in its mouth. Lucan helps hold the standard pole against the wind.

ARTHUR
 Here they come! Hold the square!
 Archers, fire on the wings!

Everyone tense — Guinevere, Bors, Tristran firing and taking down Saxons on the wings — more men are pushed out from the center to replace them. Mercenaries and Young Soldiers ready for impact.

Arthur circles the square, shouting encouragement.

Jols comes on Horton cowering on his knees babbling prayers in Latin. Jols picks up a short sword and shoves it into Horton's hands.

JOLS
 Want to live? Kill!

Then Arthur checks Dagonet.

ARTHUR
 They'll try to swing around on you
 here, just HOLD.

DAGONET
 If you promise not to kill them
 all.

FRONT OF THE SQUARE

Guinevere firing as fast as she can, but getting nervous. Lancelot sees this.

LANCELOT

Think we're in trouble? You look worried. That's a whole lot of very lonely men out there.

Guinevere steadies.

GUINEVERE

Don't be afraid, I won't let any of them rape you.

Arthur returns to his position at the head of his troops, slowly draws Excalibur. Arthur — standing at the head of the square — is MAGNETIC. Suddenly The Young Soldiers and even the Mercenaries are galvanized by this heroic figure.

Without a word Bors swaps bows with Guinevere. Bors and Tristan slip bows into the holsters on their backs, pull swords.

ARTHUR

Knights! Soldiers! Death in battle is the choice of fools and cowards!

(points at the Saxons)
And here they come!

A ROAR rises from the Knights. Arthur backs up to his place in the square just as the Saxons CRASH into the square. And they hit them HARD.

Knights lean into their shields bulling against the Saxon troops. Blocking them with their shields the Knights go toe-to-toe with the enemy.

Mercenaries and Young Soldiers are pushed back into the square as the powerful Saxons threaten to overwhelm them.

GUINEVERE

mounts a horse. She pulls the Russian Bow back and it's SUPER-STIFF. But she CRANKS that baby back and let's an arrow fly.

TWO SAXONS

skewered by her single arrow.

GUINEVERE

gawks at the compound bow — what a toy! She ruthlessly fires POINT BLANK INTO THE SAXONS.

CYNRIC

stays back from the battle surrounded by his bodyguard. He motions to his drummers.

CYNRIC

(Saxon w/subtitles)

Press the attack!

Drummers POUND.

ARTHUR

At the head of the square. The Saxons really PUT ON THE PRESSURE, pushing forward, winning the shield-on-shield shoving match.

LANCELOT

The square is going to collapse!
We can't hold them!

Desperate, Arthur HOWLS, POWERS ahead and throws aside his shield in what looks like a suicidal move. But he brings up Excalibur with both hands leveling Saxons like he was cutting wheat.

AND GUINEVERE

Watching Arthur, mythic... perfect. A Saxon bears down on Arthur and Guinevere raises her bow — but Lancelot is there in a flash to take out the Saxon. Now these two fight side-by-side.

Still, the Saxons PRESS THE SQUARE — Dagonet is stuck and loses his sword. Hurt, he slips on his 'super-knuckles' and rips through Saxon chain mail with one-two punches of his knife-brass knuckles.

UNDER THEIR FEET

ice crazing and cracking...

ARTHUR HOLDS UP EXCALIBUR

waves it overhead.

ARTHUR

Fall back!

Unquestioning, the Knights pull back. And in a second, so do the Mercenaries and Young Soldiers. With a CHEER the Saxons rush into the gap. But under the weight of their armored bodies the ICE GIVES.

About half a dozen plunge to their deaths in the freezing water. The rest scamper back from the brink.

Arthur holds up his sword again stopping the Knights.

ARTHUR

Archers!

Tristan and Bors slide swords into their back sheaths, pull out bows again and FIRE into the Saxons struggling to get round the breach in the ice.

Guinevere sees the Saxon drummers backed by Cynric in the distance. She takes aim...

SAXON DRUMMER

an arrow lurches at him out of the distant fight and strikes him dead. Another splits a drum, killing the DRUMMER... last two DRUMMERS look nervously back toward Cynric. The next arrow kills one of Cynric's BODYGUARDS.

Cynric eases back, fighting panic. But it doesn't matter — his troops break and run coming right back toward him. Cynric watches helpless as his command melts. A FINAL ARROW fells another BODYGUARD and Cynric WALKS away from the battle.

CYNRIC

Turns to look back. An ARROW wings straight for him. But it dies, sticks in the ice at his feet.

EXT. FROZEN LAKE - DAY

Arthur holds up his hand.

ARTHUR

They're out of range!

Arthur leans on Excalibur, panting. He looks over at the equally exhausted Lancelot and they swap looks of mutual respect. This was a TOUGH FIGHT.

TRISTRAN

Arthur!

Tristran has found Dagonet, dead. The Knights pass wounded and dying Mercenaries and Young Soldiers and gather around Dagonet's body. Arthur sits on the ice and cradles Dagonet in his arms. He doesn't weep but it's like he lost a brother.

BORS

We're six, now. Six.

Lucan lays his hands on Dagonet. He forces himself not to cry but speaks to Dagonet in Gallic.

EXT. SAXON SIDE OF THE LAKE - DAY

Cynric completes his strategic retreat only to come face to face with his father, Cerdic. Cerdic glares at his son. Cynric puts his dagger to his own throat — before he can cut himself, Cerdic knocks the dagger away with his right hand then knocks Cynric down with a left cross.

EXT. EDGE OF LAKE - LATE AFTERNOON

Dagonet's grave, with his SWORD hammered into the ground to the hilt. Mercenaries, Young Soldiers and others give the Knights some space as they sit around the grave in a semi-circle for a fast moment of silence. They rise.

But Lucan steps up to the grave and stands over the sword. He kneels, grips the hilt and tries to pull the sword out of the ground. Arthur starts to react but Lancelot stops him.

The Knights are moved, watching something which is for them as natural as the passing of the seasons. Lucan caves in against the sword which he is unable to budge. The Knights crowd around him, patting his back — Lancelot embraces him.

LANCELOT

You know where it is. So, when you're stronger you come back for it...

EXT. FOREST - DAY

Arthur leads everyone away from the lake.

EXT. FOREST TRAIL - DUSK

Arthur and Guinevere riding slowly side by side.
Guinevere now can't take her eyes off him —
finally she lets it out...

GUINEVERE

That was magnificent! You were
magnificent!

ARTHUR

It's my job to look magnificent.

GUINEVERE

You made a joke out of that Saxon
force. A laugh!

She cuts off his horse with hers.

GUINEVERE

You stabbed them with arrows,
slashed them with swords, drowned
them in cold waters and sent them
crying for their daddies.

ARTHUR

It wasn't that easy. I wasn't
alone.

GUINEVERE

Soldiers, yes, but the heart of
this fight was you and six
Knights!

ARTHUR

Who are now five.

GUINEVERE

Imagine if you had a hundred!

ARTHUR

I had a hundred. And my father, a
thousand. And the first of us,
more than five thousand. Their
ghosts haunt this island. I am
not going to add any more.

Guinevere furious again.

GUINEVERE

And for yourself — Roman?

ARTHUR

Rome sounds like a dream to me.

He turns his horse, rides on ahead. Guinevere stays put. Watches him. Lancelot has caught up.

LANCELOT

Hard to like, isn't he? Well, when the Gods take everything you have and give nothing it's likely to put you in a permanent bad temper.

GUINEVERE

He's a Roman. Because of him and his kind this land is divided and ready to be crushed. It's because of the Romans that you were ever torn from your homes.

Lancelot is suddenly angry.

LANCELOT

Don't pretend you know how I or any of the others feel about Arthur. Without him we would have perished years ago, and there would be no more Russian Knights left to return home at all.

Lancelot just turns and leaves. Guinevere sees for the first time that Lancelot really loves Arthur.

EXT. TRAIL - DAY

Knights moving slowly ahead of the others. Tristran suddenly gallops back from point.

TRISTRAN

Foot soldiers!

Right behind him a single line of Cerdic's main infantry. They stop, blocking the trail. BRITISH SCOUT pushes through the ranks. The Scout sees...

THE RED DRAGON

on Lancelot's shoulder.

Saxon ranks part and four tough SOLDIER/BODYGUARDS come forward and set a SEAT on the ground then stand back.

THAT SEAT

Typical field chair except that the frame is decorated with SKULLS. There's a FRESH one impaled by a stake through the eye, still DRIPPING.

LANCELOT

looks to Arthur who stares ahead. Cerdic comes forward and sits on the Skull Chair as the Scout stands to his left.

SCOUT

Artorius.

Cerdic and Arthur bore in on each other.

CERDIC (THROUGH SCOUT)

I have heard of you. I am Cerdic.

Arthur reaches up, removes his head band and his LONG HAIR TUMBLES IN FILTHY CABLES TO HIS SHOULDERS.

ARTHUR

We've been expecting you.

Scout translates. A slave brings Cerdic a gold cup. He drinks. Watches the Knights. Snow falls in damp flakes

CERDIC (THROUGH SCOUT)

My army that I have brought to this country is like the leaves of a forest. Men cannot count the number.

ARTHUR

Tell him he's blocking our way.

Scout thinks twice, but tells him. Cerdic jumps to his feet.

CERDIC (THROUGH SCOUT)

Whose road is this? Whose country? Rome took it once. My turn, now.

He scans the rest of the Knights as if just noticing them.

CERDIC (THROUGH SCOUT)

You are the only fighters in this country who have impressed me. You alone are worthy of my praise.

(Scout whispers to him)

Russian Knights. Not Roman, not Britons. Fast. Takes infantry five days to go where you take one. Lose a battle, no matter. You're gone.

LANCELOT

We never lose.

(at Scout)

Be sure to tell him that or I'll
slit your filthy traitor's throat.

Scout scoffs, translates.

CERDIC (THROUGH SCOUT)

I also never lose. Two such
perfect warriors must fight as
one.

(pause)

I have a proposition for you, for
your Knights, Arthur: I need
cavalry. Teach my men and I will
make you powerful.

(points at all the
Knights, one by one)

Hear me, and decide now, for if
you refuse, when we meet in battle
you will all die. But together we
will crush the Britons. I will
make each of you my Barons and
instead of retiring on Roman
pension to a filthy hole, you can
rule.

Snow.

ARTHUR

Promise..?

Scout hesitates, then translates. Cerdic hurls his
gold cup at Arthur — it bounces off his chest but
splashes him with beer. Arthur Wipes the beer off
his cheek with his long hair.

CERDIC

Give me those Roman civilians you
are protecting.

The Knights pull their swords and Bors and Tristran
point their arrows straight at Cerdic's face.

ARTHUR

You're blocking our road.

Cerdic looks down the arrow shafts aimed at his
face. The tense string in Bors' hand is a gnat's
hair away from slipping off his fingers and firing.

Furious, Cerdic steps aside. Then as one, his
machine-like solders roll back a column leaving a
narrow passage on the muddy road.

Arthur, Lancelot, Gawain and Galahad move out escorting the civilians... Bors and Tristran remain, arrows locked on Cerdic.

CERDIC

Sweating... he slowly reaches behind for a THROWING DAGGER strapped to his belt. His eyes drop for just a second — he GRABS the dagger and...

Bors and Tristran are GONE.

EXT. FOREST TRAIL - AFTERNOON

Knights running fast alongside horses carrying civilians. Bors and Tristran ride onto the trail from the forest ahead and join the rest.

EXT. KNIGHTS' CAMP, FOREST - DUSK

Knights and civilians huddled together for warmth deep in the forest. No fires. Horses wear full head shrouds and are QUIET.

TRISTRAN

watches from hiding as Cerdic's forces pass in the forest.

EXT. KNIGHTS' CAMP

Arthur, Guinevere and Lucan close together beneath a blanket. Guinevere and Lucan sleep. Arthur forces himself to stay awake.

THE KNIGHTS

especially Lancelot, watching them.

EXT. KNIGHTS' CAMP FROM A DISTANCE - NIGHT

British Scout moves slowly toward a cluster of trees. He sets his hand against a tree and leans out for a look below. He's found The Knights. His smiles says: "Got you!"

Except the tree he's leaning on has a FACE. It's Tristran — who covers the Scout's mouth and STABS HIM. "Got you..."

EXT. FOREST - DAY

Bundled to the eyes, The Knights lead their horses to a stream. The wind HOWLS gusting snow. YOUNG MEN suddenly come out of the forest carrying bundles.

The Knights start to react but Tristran and Lancelot recognize the Young Britons from the house-to-house village fight.

LANCELOT
They're friends.

GANIS leads these villagers, and is proud to show off to his friends that he's pals with the famous Knights. He approaches Lancelot.

GANIS
My friend! I knew you would come through this pass.

He looks around to be sure his friends see he's cool, then pulls a loaf of bread from his coat and grandly presents it to Lancelot.

Lancelot locks eyes with Ganis. Then he spots FRESH BLOOD seeping through his shirt over his wound. Ganis turns his shoulder to hide the blood while keeping his chin high.

Lancelot breaks the bread, eats and hands the other half back to Ganis. As if this were the greatest honor in the world, Ganis takes the bread and eats.

AROUND THE CAMP FIRE - NIGHT

Another low-profile fire. All the British Youth are sharing bread and meat they've brought in. Galahad and Gawain are in heaven, stuffed.

GANIS
You are friends with... Arthur?

Heavy silence as eyes stray to Arthur. All The Knights are filthy, unshaven, probably stink. Arthur looks at Lancelot.

ARTHUR
You know him better than I.

Lancelot seems to consider.

BORS
A good fighter.

YOUTH #1
Brave in battle?

Knights swap uncomfortable looks.

GALAHAD

Yes... courageous.

GAWAIN

Better than courageous...!

GANIS

There is a rumor his mother was a Briton? Can that be?

NOW THIS gets Guinevere's attention. Suddenly looking at Arthur with new eyes. He looks back, then:

ARTHUR

Arthur's mother was a simple village girl. His father met her bringing food to the villages during a famine. She taught Arthur all about the forest and to love this land.

(maybe a moment)

When she died Arthur's father buried her in the forest. In a secret place. Where none but he would know.

FIRST YOUTH

Then how does Arthur visit her grave?

Arthur chews on some bread, thinking.

ARTHUR

Whenever he is in the forest, they are together.

Silence, and it's obvious this is a story the Knights didn't know. Can tell Guinevere is staggered by this revelation.

LANCELOT

Arthur has a strong and a noble soul. How else could he have held this wolf pack together?

GANIS

I think Arthur must be a brave man.

ARTHUR

You men are brave to bring us food.

Ganis rises and the others get to their feet, gather their things.

GANIS

There are more of us gathering supplies! We'll all meet at the Wall and destroy the Saxons! Long live Arthur and his Knights!

EXT. EDGE OF FOREST - DAWN

The knights and weary survivors cross the plain approaching the wall. The weather is nearly balmy and BRITISH BLUEBELLS have sprouted through the melting snow.

EXT. MUDDY ROAD - MORNING

Whole town turns out, shouting-happy at their return. Top of the wall lined with cheering Auxiliary Troops.

A WINDOW

Cardinal Sertorius rushes to view the returning Knights. Finally he spots Alecto and is relieved. One of his Bodyguards stands behind.

BODYGUARD

They say Marius perished in the quest.

CARDINAL SERTORIUS

But the son survives. After all, what do fathers have sons for except to be there... in case they don't make it.

EXT. MUDDY STREET - DAY

Arthur and Guinevere ride side by side down the narrow street. She looks at somber Arthur.

GUINEVERE

Is this how you return the love of your people?

Arthur lifts his arm on high — like it weights a ton. The people go WILD. The Knights astonished. Lancelot lifts his arm... people start throwing BLUEBELLS. All right! Now all the Knights respond and are showered with flowers...

Guinevere slides from her horse to ride on the back of Arthur's, arms wrapped around him, head laid against his back.

INT. ARMORY - NIGHT

Arthur and Guinevere making love in a heap of wolf and bear skins. Hearth glows on them. All around: weapons, banners, shields. His books have been moved here and lie in a heap.

AS THEY MAKE LOVE

Guinevere's hands explore his body and find OLD SCARS — sword slash on his back; arrow wound on his shoulder; dagger cut on his chest...

LATER

Guinevere watching him as he sleeps. For the first time he seems to be at peace and she seems to have finally gotten a clue who this man is. And why he might like nothing more than to retire to Rome.

INT. ARMORY - MORNING

Arthur wakes to find Guinevere studying one of his books. Seeing he's awake, she reads.

GUINEVERE

"Some say cavalry and others claim
infantry or a fleet of long oars is
the supreme sight on the black
earth. I say it is the one I love."

ARTHUR

Sappho, a Greek; she wrote that a
thousand years ago.

GUINEVERE

"To Eros, god of love: You burn me!"

She looks at Arthur. She lays her head against his chest as she reads.

GUINEVERE

"Slender fire quick beneath my
skin, my eyes are dead to light,
my ears pound and sweat pours over
me. I shudder, paler than straw,
and feel my mind slip as I go
close to death."

ARTHUR

Rome preserved these books, now I
fear the Church will burn them.

GUINEVERE

When you go back, you can save them.

(another book)

"I want to fight you, just as when I am thirsty I want to drink!"

Arthur allows himself a smile.

GUINEVERE

Why didn't you tell me you were a Briton?

ARTHUR

I honor my mother but that doesn't mean I deny my father.

GUINEVERE

You're like this country, Arthur. Britons with a Roman father. Now, with Pelagius dead, what they had in Rome and what they dreamed would replace it are both gone.

ARTHUR

Maybe they need to remember who they are.

GUINEVERE

And who's going to give that back to them? After four hundred years you think they can find it themselves? Arthur, Pelagius taught the Britons to be free. If the Saxons win they will set this country back a thousand years. And the Church will get exactly what it wants from Britain: silence.

Arthur rises to the window, perhaps thinking, maybe can't look at her.

HIS POV

The village beside the fort. The fresco of Pelagius on the wall. Galahad and Gawain in the street riding to the edge of the village.

INT. ARTHUR'S ROOM - MORNING

He turns and Guinevere throws herself into his arms.

GUINEVERE

I will always love you, Arthur
Castus and when, God willing, you
return to this island, find me.

She runs from the room.

EXT. KNIGHTS' CEMETERY - MORNING

Lancelot, Gawain, Galahad, Bors, and Tristran ride slowly through a graveyard of Russian Knights — there are hundreds of stones, many depict a Knight on horseback. Some have OLD SWORDS, tarnished by time, protruding from burial mounds. They ride in a silent farewell. At the end, they gallop away as if shaking off their melancholy...

EXT. FOREST - LATE AFTERNOON

Cynric's troops have rounded up dozens of VILLAGERS. One is the Elder from the village near Marius' camp. He's pushed along, a prisoner like the rest. Cerdic strides on the scene and his son grovels up.

CYNRIC

(Saxon w/subtitles)
Your orders, father?

Cerdic walks to a rise, Cynric follows. Finally they can see Hadrian's Wall in the distance.

CERDIC

(Saxon w/subtitles)
We need to make a display before
we go to battle. Arthur's a
Christian, isn't he?

EXT. FORT PARADE GROUND - DAY

The knights assembled facing off with SCRUFFY VILLAGERS who have been led here by Ganis and his pals.

LANCELOT

They took you at your word.

GANIS

We're here to fight. They're be
plenty of others if Arthur leads.

GAWAIN

You speak to Arthur, you ass!

Ganis' eyes get BIG. Slowly he drops to his knees. Behind him the other refugees do the same.

GANIS
My King!

Arthur, the Knights, staggered.

EXT. FOREST - NIGHT

Cerdic sits in his skull chair, Cynric to his side.
His thug bodyguard bring up the Elder, shove him
down at Cerdic's feet.

CERDIC
(Saxon w/subtitles)
Fire.

One of the bodyguard hands Cynric a blazing torch.
Cerdic indicates the Elder and Cerdic hands him the
torch. Elder looks around at SOMETHING WE CANNOT
SEE... and tries to attack Cerdic with the torch.

Cerdic has a good laugh as his bodyguard turn the
Elder into hamburger with their swords.

CERDIC
(Saxon w/subtitles)
You do it...

Cerdic picks up the torch and walks off to the base
of a freshly hewn POLE. Whatever it is he's about
to do, it makes even him pause. But he can feel
his father's eyes on his back. Cynric steps to the
base of the pole and now we see a VILLAGER is tied
to the pole top.

CLOSER ON THE VILLAGER

Arms tied behind him, his clothes and body drench
with DRIPPING PITCH.

BELOW

Cynric puts the torch to the bottom of the pole and
the flame RACES up a trail of pitch and ignites the
villager — who SCREAMS...

But the flame races across the forest floor and
ignites another pole and another and still another
— each one hold a screaming, burning villager.
The fire seems to RIP through the forest.

EXT. HADRIAN'S WALL - NIGHT

Arthur, Guinevere the Knights and Ganis rush out
onto the wall to see...

IN THE FOREST

A FLAMING CROSS the size of a football field blazing in the dark. And it's SCREAMING.

ARTHUR

Staggered, he leans against the wall top. Everyone knows it's a message just for him.

EXT. FOREST - NIGHT

Cerdic sits in his skull chair basking in the light from the blazing villagers. Can tell that for him this is way better than sex.

EXT. ARTHUR'S QUARTERS - DAY

Cardinal Sertorius watching from the window...

VOICE

Open the gate, Romans!

EXT. HADRIAN'S WALL - NIGHT

Arthur grabs a torch from one of the legionnaires.

THE PLAIN - NIGHT

A small door in the wall opens and Arthur emerges, holds up his torch. More torches DROP from above. They illuminate a few more Woads. Arthur approaches and sees the Woads have been bloodied in battle. Arthur and Merlin face off.

Then, Guinevere is by Arthur's side.

GUINEVERE

... father.

Merlin stunned — when he told Arthur that they'd all lost family in the war, he must have meant her. He drops his sword and they embrace. He's too tough to cry, but nods to Arthur.

INT. MAIN HALL - NIGHT

Eating, drinking; Guinevere cleans her father's wounds as they talk.

MERLIN

They always retreat to their belly-shooters and create a storm of arrows you cannot get through.

ARTHUR
Their shooting distance?

MERLIN
A hundred paces.

Merlin crosses to the leather map. It clearly shows the wall, the forest and the plain between. Merlin's hand comes down on a sketched hill.

MERLIN
This high ground...

ARTHUR
Badon Hill. You guess they'll take it?

MERLIN
Not if they see you there.

CARDINAL SERTORIUS
You won't be there! Your orders are to evacuate in the morning. Who is this man?

All turn to find Cardinal Sertorius and bodyguard.

ARTHUR
He's under my protection.

Sertorius thinks better of pushing this.

CARDINAL SERTORIUS
As of tomorrow morning, I and those you've rescued will also be under your protection, commander. Those are your orders.

Lancelot turns away, can tell he hates the idea that he's doing the Cardinal's bidding.

EXT. WALL - NIGHT

Arthur, Merlin and Lancelot survey the plain.

LANCELOT
Deny them Badon Hill and you have a set piece battle.

MERLIN
Victory in a set battle weighs odds or rapid movement. We have no cavalry. They have the odds.

ARTHUR

We could be seen on Badon Hill.

MERLIN

If you made a display there, they wouldn't dare take the hill.

ARTHUR

If my Knights agree to it.

LANCELOT

Why not? It's abreast the road so...

MERLIN

You secure Badon Hill. When the Saxons enter the plain my Woads will strike the belly-shooters. If the Saxons see you on the hill they'll have to believe you will attack and they may divide their forces to deal with us both. If they do I'll break away from Cerdic's belly-shooters and with my very best fighters attack Cynric's swordsmen. If we can beat the swordsmen... we have a chance.

Can tell Arthur barely believes Merlin has a chance.

ARTHUR

Then everything will be settled on the plain.

EXT. HADRIAN'S WALL - DAWN

The Auxiliary Troops marching away south, leaving the wall. Arthur and the Knights watching.

ARTHUR

Rome, leaving Hadrian's wall. Leaving Britain, for the first time in four hundred years.

Can tell that — deep down — the Knights are all moved by this idea.

LANCELOT

So, what are we waiting for?

EXT. FORT - MORNING

Knights loaded and ready to go. Cardinal Sertorius heaving last minute items onto Horton's already over-loaded mule cart. CHAOS as people scramble to join the Knights' caravan.

EXT. ROAD - MORNING

Road leading away from Hadrian's Wall, the Knights ride in formation followed by Jols, Horton and wagons of their gear. The road runs along a rise leading to the crest of Badon Hill. Once over the hill what goes on in the valley and the fort will be lost to sight.

Arthur reins in on Badon Hill and points out across the plain. The other Knights pull up and watch.

THE SAXON ARMY

pours out of the forest like a flood. SWORDSMEN form most of the ranks, then the dreaded CROSSBOWMEN. Cerdic walks in the center surrounded by his bodyguard. One sets the skull chair on a knoll and Cerdic sits.

Cynric and his SWORDSMEN come out of the forest just below and form ranks down the field from his father's force. BOTH Cerdic and Cynric shade their eyes and look toward the crest of Badon Hill.

EXT. BADON HILL - MORNING

Arthur turns toward the rising sun.

ARTHUR

Sun's at our back. This hill's...

LANCELOT

... perfect, isn't it..?

EXT. THE WALL - MORNING

The field between the Saxons and the Wall is vibrant with BRITISH BLUEBELLS.

EXT. FOREST - MORNING

WOADS appear in a thin line at the forest edge, Merlin in the center. One Woad steps out from the rest. It takes us a second to recognize Guinevere through WILD WOAD CAMOUFLAGE. She wears Bors' bow over her shoulder.

AND THE KNIGHTS

Shit... Bors starts to slip on his sniper gear.

BORS

One shot...

Arthur motions for him to keep moving. Bors turns his horse but Lancelot remains. Like all the other Knights his eyes are fixed on Guinevere.

GUINEVERE

She pulls her short sword which she now carries on her back, Russian style. She kneels and slices a long stemmed Bluebell. She considers the flower as if it might be the last she will see. Like Arthur did in the opening...

THE KNIGHTS

Cardinal Sertorius charges up on his mule.

CARDINAL SERTORIUS

We must run! Can't you see? God has predetermined the Saxons shall win! No man on earth can defeat them! God has spoken!

He casts a panic-stricken look at the plain, gallops off. Arthur and the Knights swap looks like they've received the ultimate challenge...

GUINEVERE ON THE PLAIN - MORNING

She puts the Bluebells in her back sheath and disappears with her father. DRUMS sound and the Saxons advance. Slow, methodic, a human tank.

LANCELOT

Gods, they're wide open.

GAWAIN

I know.

TRISTRAN

Hit them right there...

A SAXON marches ahead of the army singing/bellowing at the top of his lungs.

Arthur and Lancelot's horses NEIGH and TUG at their reins — they want to FIGHT.

EXT. PLAIN - MORNING

Singing Saxon takes an ARROW in the throat —
SQUEAKS HORRIBLY and DIES. CHEERS from the
villagers assembled atop Hadrian's wall. Guinevere
lowers her bow.

EXT. ROAD - MORNING

Knights with smiles.

TRISTRAN

She's got the good aim. Did we
ever have such women back home?

BORS

She has to have Russian blood.
One of our ancestors had a night
with a Woad.

EXT. PLAIN - MORNING

Groups of YOUNG WOADS surround themselves with
THICK SHIELDS and CHARGE the Saxon crossbowmen.
One after the other they power through the ranks,
drop shields and attack with axes and swords. In a
matter of seconds they're all cut down by bolts.

Two are British Youths who fought with Ganis in the
ruined village.

AND LANCELOT

Swaps a cloudy look with Tristran. Now the
Knights' horses go WILD — shaking their heads,
stamping the ground — Arthur's spins his in a
furious circle.

LANCELOT

Look at this beautiful plain, and
right in front of our eyes. Why
didn't we ever see this?

Knights ALL SWAP LOOKS, SMILES.

EXT. ROAD/WITH THE BAGGAGE TRAIN - MORNING

Cardinal Sertorius WAITS. Then The Knights return.
Arthur dismounts, slashes through ropes holding
canvass packs then rips them open revealing Russian
shock lances. He looks up at all the Knights.

CARDINAL SERTORIUS

What..? What are you doing?

EXT. WALL - MORNING

As the Saxons approach, nervous villagers led by Ganis stand at the base of the wall, prepared to fight and die. Then a HOWL draws all eyes to the hill top.

THE RUSSIAN DRAGON

wags its tail like a hungry puppy. And before it, like some clear vision of righteous power, are the Knights arrayed in their FULL RUSSIAN BATTLE GEAR.

Their horses are dressed for the party: each with an opulent saddle blanket, head dresses with silver spikes — hooves GLINT with razor-sharp battle anklets. Arthur's is the simplest of all. Lancelot's horse, however, wears a whole bear hide with the effect that the horse's neck EMERGES FROM THE FULL-FANGED MOUTH OF THE BEAR'S HEAD.

Each Knight carries a long shock lance, except Arthur who wields Excalibur. Their FULL LENGTH BODY SHIELDS have been painted with WILD IMAGES:

Gawain's has a FULL MOON with clouds against black. Galahad's shield has a LIGHTNING BOLT WITH A HORSE'S HEAD. Bors' shows a MOUNTAIN OF SKULLS. Tristran's has a LION WITH ITS TEETH AND CLAWS ARE ARROWS. Lancelot has an ORNATE RED DRAGON.

Arthur's shield has what can only be described as a CHRIST FROM HELL. Jesus has wild, Medusa-like hair, burning eyes and holds a cross out before him like he was stopping vampires.

CERDIC & CYNRIC

Getting a hugely bad feeling about this.

EXT. WALL - MORNING

A CHEER goes up from the villagers and Woads.

EXT. FOREST - MORNING

Guinevere and Merlin moving at the edge of the forest as they shadow the Saxons, stop at the cheering and look back at Badon Hill. Guinevere and Merlin moved, Woads SHOUTING CHEERS.

Ganis and the villagers raise knives and axes, cheering.

EXT. BADON HILL - MORNING

The Knights watch as Saxon Swordsmen veer from the main force and head their way. The wind rises, the dragon SHRIEKS... transported by the sound, Lancelot closes his eyes. Arthur stabs Excalibur in the ground, turns his horse to face the Knights.

ARTHUR

Knights, whither do we wander?
Home, which we forever seek, we
will never find. For when the
great gods created Knights, they
let death be our share, and bliss
withheld in their own hands. Our
songs are the arrow, our smile the
sword. Our lives like dew that
dies in the morning sun!

Then Arthur addresses the horses which paw the ground and toss their heads listening.

ARTHUR

God took a handful of the south wind and he
created horse, and he said unto it:
"Goodness I tie to the hair of thy forelock.
Booty shall come from the strength of thy
back.
My power shall be with you where ever you are.
I hold you above all beasts,
making you lord of them all.
Able to fly without wings,
You are destined to carry your masters into
eternity!"

Arthur turns to face the enemy,, pulls Excalibur from the earth.

ARTHUR

Bors, Tristran. Are you going to
have trouble whipping an army of
belly shooters? And are you going
to moan about it?

Jols and Lucan arrive with two quivers each for Tristran's horse and Bors'. Horton follows with a bale of arrows on his back. He's INTO IT.

BORS

You mean when we're done are we
going to have to help Gawain and
Galahad out of trouble?

GAWAIN

We'll just have to see who gets done first, then. It will take you half of forever to kill them all — so, Galahad and I will have a beer while we wait on you.

LANCELOT

Has anyone seen the damned sky?

VAST SHOT

Knights on the hill. The sky filled with fast moving black clouds lit from inside by sunlight. Like an emotion or a force of nature The Knights CHARGE DOWN THE SLOPE. Arthur with Excalibur stretched at arm's length, Lancelot, Gawain and Galahad shock lances leveled — HORSES snort with each thundering hoof-beat.

SAXONS

The first line of swordsmen take one look at these demons and BOLT. Cynric pushes his drummers and bodyguard forward to stem the panic. Drummers BEAT — the swordsmen stop but pack together.

CERDIC

Cooler than his son, from his field chair keeps his crossbowmen moving toward their range point.

THE KNIGHTS

slam into the confused, disorganized swordsmen — shock lances scatter them like toys. The horses rip them with their razor-hooves. Arthur reaps with Excalibur until his blade is RED.

WOADS

see their chance and rush Cynric's swordsmen. Guinevere picks off a Saxon COMMANDER, shooting for his RED LEATHER HELMET.

CROSSBOWMEN

turn on Cerdic's command to support Cynric. The front rank FIRES. As the first rank of Crossbowmen go through the slow reload process the second rank FIRES. Woads are MOWED DOWN.

Then TWO ARROWS flash in hitting TWO crossbowmen directly between the shoulder blades.

As Saxons TURN to see where the shots came from
Guinevere puts her arrow between the shoulder
blades of another OFFICER.

TRISTRAN & BORS

Gallop on the outside of the Crossbowmen's maximum
range. Twisting in the saddle, they load and fire
far faster than the Crossbowmen.

CROSSBOWMEN

drop from shot after shot...

GUINEVERE

with a grim smile leans against an oak delivering
fire into the ranks of the Crossbowmen.

CERDIC

Pushes through his Bodyguard to the Crossbowmen.

CERDIC

(Saxon w/subtitles)

Where's your commander!?

Crossbowman indicates a corpse.

CERDIC

(Saxon w/subtitles)

You're in command. Form for
attack on the Wall.

He gestures to a Bodyguard who takes the red helmet
of command from the corpse and sets it on the
Crossbowman's head. THREE ARROWS ZAP the new
Commander from three directions. He DROPS.

ARTHUR

From across the field sees Cerdic rallying his men
to move against the Wall. The first two rows of
Swordsmen are almost there... he spins his sword
overhead and gallops for the wall. Lancelot,
Gawain and Galahad turn back toward Badon Hill.

EXT. THE WALL - MORNING

Arthur brakes his horse and SLIDES to a halt before
Ganis.

ARTHUR

Get your backs off that stone!
Move away from the wall! If you
came here to fight, damn it,
fight!

A howling berserk CHEER as Ganis leads the villagers shrieking toward the Saxon swordsmen.

Arthur slow trots with them, horse prancing in tall, flashy steps. Villagers are STOKED. They CHARGE into Cynric's elite infantry.

CYNRIC

shaken by this surprising resolve.

LANCELOT

gallops full-bore down the Woad lines as they howl and cheer him on.

CERDIC

turns his crossbowmen to face the Woads. He is NOT shaken.

ARTHUR

satisfied, spins his horse back up Badon Hill. As Lancelot vectors to join him.

EXT. BADON HILL - MORNING

Arthur, Lancelot, Gawain, Galahad, Bors and Tristran regroup. Jols runs up with arrows in a leather sack which he dumps into the double quivers on Bors' saddle. Cardinal Sertorius frenzies up to the group on his terrified mule. Horton pushes past carrying Tristran's reload of arrows.

CARDINAL SERTORIUS

We have to leave! Horton!

Arthur bounces Cardinal Sertorius aside with his horse as he centers with the Knights. Lancelot is revved — his horse champing for more. Arthur looks at the Knights — they all want more...

ARTHUR

Right flank is bloodied.

LANCELOT

Hit them again!

Galahad sees blood on Gawain's side. Arthur puts his hand there and PULLS out a crossbow bolt. Gawain barely flinches.

GAWAIN

How did that get there?

They study Gawain. Then each other. At that moment they all know this is it...

The Knights form a tight line — Tristran and Bors on the wings. Arthur, Lancelot, Gawain and Galahad raise their body shields. Lancelot, Gawain and Galahad heft their shock lances. Arthur in the center raises Excalibur.

ARTHUR

All the way through!

He points dead ahead with Excalibur — they CHARGE.

EXT. PLAIN - MORNING

Villagers bitterly contest with the Saxon swordsmen, bodies heaping on both sides.

A Cynric BODYGUARD howls and points at Knights charging down Badon Hill. Cynric shouts and his drummers pound a hard staccato as the swordsmen turn their shields to face the knights.

The Knights CRASH into the Saxon shield wall with their shock lances, BLAST them aside. They jam their lances into the ground, draw swords and hack on through.

BORS & TRISTRAN

circling Cerdic's troops, fire into the crossbowmen. CROSSBOW BOLTS land at their horses' feet, just out of range. As their arrows strike the crossbowmen are forced back, losing men every foot of the way. Suddenly Tristran takes a bolt in his side...

THE TWO MUSCULAR BELLY-SHOOTERS

with their hand-crank crossbows, have got Bors and Tristran in their sights — and they can reach them.

EXT. FOREST - MORNING

Guinevere moves tree-to-tree, firing into the Crossbowmen.

MERLIN

and his Woads surge into the rear of Cynric's forces. Cynric sees the Knights powering through his lines, Merlin hitting him from behind — he screams at the swordsmen getting mowed down by the Knights.

CYNRIC
(Saxon w/subtitles)
Kill their horses!

Saxons stab at the horses' bellies — The Knights spin their horses, knife-hooves slash the Saxons. Gawain GOES DOWN — his horse stands. Gawain rights himself and lays into the Saxons with his two-headed mace.

Galahad wheels his horse and just when it looks like Gawain is about to be crushed, Galahad rides into the enemy. Galahad fights desperately with his bronze battle-axe, taking out Saxon after Saxon until finally he's buried in swords.

BORS & TRISTRAN

See Gawain go down, Galahad in trouble. Bors takes a crossbow bolt in the side, struggles to stay in the saddle. Tristran motions Bors to "back off", then he waits until the Muscular crossbowmen start cranking for a reload.

Tristran CHARGES, sword swinging — Tristran's horse leaps over Muscular crossbowmen's position, killing one.

As the second Muscular crossbowmen swings his loaded bow around Bors picks him off using his long range sniper setup. Tristran takes another bolt in the leg, but then gets back out of crossbowmen range. He joins wounded Bors.

BORS
I'm all right — don't worry about
me! Let's kill them all!!!

Like some magnificent animal Bors rears back in his saddle and unleashes arrow after arrow as he uses his knees to steer his horse. He and Tristran rapid-fire into the Crossbowmen.

GUINEVERE

breaks off her battle with Cynric's forces and launches arrows into Cerdic's Crossbowmen. But she watches at Arthur who pushes forward, supported now only by Lancelot.

ARTHUR & LANCELOT

still in the saddle, using their swords and horses to slash and batter a swath through the swordsmen. A HUGE SAXON rushes at Arthur with a spear —

GUINEVERE

swings her bow and SHOOTs killing the HUGE SAXON...

TRISTRAN

Hit by a bolt. He yanks it free, backs his horse out of rank, keeps rapid-firing. As the slow-loading crossbowmen pause to cock their bows, Tristran and Bors kill them.

CERDIC

watches his crossbowmen get chewed up. He leaps up from his skull chair in a fury, yells to his soldiers in a booming voice. Then makes a fist and pulls it to his chest.

Surviving Crossbowmen pack together toward the body of Cynric's troops who are under pressure from Merlin and Ganis. Two SOLDIERS pick up the skull chair and follow Cerdic as he makes his way toward the front.

BORS & TRISTRAN

Their horses exhausted, themselves wounded running to the end of their arrows, Bors slips from his saddle — Tristran tosses aside his reins and leaps to earth to join him. Swap a smile, Bors wipes the blood off his face like sweat.

Bors takes down his spiked club, Tristran draws his sword and they pursue the retreating Crossbowmen — killing one after another as they run.

GUINEVERE

tries to help, but Merlin's bloodied Woads are pushed back by the combined forces.

Finally, incredibly, there's just one crossbowmen left. Tristran staggers toward him as the Saxon backs up, terrified. He tries to load his crossbow, but it's busted, he lets it drop.

He turns and can almost see the arrow winging across the field that KILLS him.

Guinevere lowers her bow, looks out on the field. All the Crossbowmen are dead. Merlin grabs Guinevere and pulls her back toward Cerdic's forces where all the Woads are concentrating.

MERLIN

We have a chance! A chance!

ARTHUR & LANCELOT

Power through Cerdic's forces, emerge clear on the plain. Villagers surge in behind them to attack the swordsmen Arthur and Lancelot have cut away from the rest.

EXT. HILL - MORNING

Arthur and Lancelot arrive together at the hill top. Shields are gone, they're bloody. Both have serious wounds. Their horses are hurt. Jols rushes up and takes their swords.

They look down on the plain. Then they both start LAUGHING from exhilaration.

LANCELOT

Saxon manhood is getting its balls sliced off!

ARTHUR

How's your horse?

LANCELOT

Tougher than I thought.

ARTHUR

We chose well with these two.

Jols and Horton bring two silver cups to Arthur and Lancelot. They drink in silence. Stroke their horses' necks. Lancelot admires the sky.

LANCELOT

Gawain and Galahad up there, already?

They look across at one another for the first time. It's a look of genuine affection.

LANCELOT

You know, you might get hurt, considering what we're about here.

ARTHUR

I was thinking the same. Of you.

LANCELOT

Then, we ought to drink to each other, as we haven't done in a long while.

They fix on each other as they drink. It's a long look. Jols returns with their swords, now glistening clean.

LANCELOT

I have decided to kill that miserable child. In fact, I am sure it needs be done.

ARTHUR

Well, we can't have the father breeding more like him.

They throw the silver cups on the ground.

ARTHUR

Did you know there is no death..?

Laughing to each other, they raise their swords.

GUINEVERE

Sniping from behind trees as the Saxon army is reorganized by Cerdic. Cynric moves forward with half the army as his father leads the other. Merlin looks around at his tattered army.

MERLIN

Gods... they're coming again...

Guinevere looks up to see Arthur and Lancelot GALLOPING STRAIGHT FOR THE SAXON ARMY.

GUINEVERE

Arthur and Lancelot! Woads — fight — fight!

A CHEER ripples through the Woads — Merlin raises his short sword, yells to his men in Celtic and they CHARGE AS A MASS.

ARTHUR & LANCELOT

Bank off in opposite directions. Saxons crane their necks trying to figure where they're heading.

ARTHUR

Rushes into Cerdic's soldiers, Excalibur swinging. Cerdic is distracted with the Villagers who are suddenly a HUGE nuisance.

LANCELOT

Arrives on Cynric's flank. Pauses, to savor it. Checks his short spear, puts it in the sheath on his back and CHARGES...

ARTHUR

Like he was hacking his way through a jungle, Arthur plows deep into the enemy troops. Finally he bogs down enough for the Saxons to swarm him — one gets a blade into his side.

Arthur gives his horse a knee-signal and it begins a swirling dance of death — kicking and slashing Saxons with its armored hooves.

LANCELOT

The same, his horse is an angry reflection of Lancelot, kicking and killing with savagery as he reaps with his blade.

ARTHUR'S HORSE

Eyes wild he rears and stomps down on the Saxons as he pivots on his rear legs, comes down again and kicks BACK killing more.

Now Cerdic notices that Arthur is actually GETTING CLOSER. He turns to his bodyguard.

CERDIC

Six of you — kill that Knight!

NEW ANGLE

Fighting with her father and the Woads, Guinevere shoots to help Arthur, but she runs out of arrows. She grabs a Saxon sword and fights on. Merlin sees she's putting herself in trouble to get to Arthur.

MERLIN

Let him go!

ARTHUR

He and his horse, a war machine. Cerdic's Bodyguard — tough as the Saxon's get — are crushed. One sinks a dagger into Arthur's back. Arthur felt that one, hangs on. Then drives his horse FORWARD.

LANCELOT

Blazing his own trail, bit easier going as Cynric's soldiers collapse like playing cards under his whirling hooves and sword.

Cynric spots this mad Knight boring in on him. He picks up a hatchet, orders EVERYONE to attack Lancelot.

CERDIC

Twenty yards away sees troops being sucked off from the real battle... yells at his son.

CERDIC

(Saxon w/subtitles)

No! You fool! Forget them!

ARTHUR

Suddenly the door is suddenly open to Cerdic.

LANCELOT

Gallops straight for Cynric, kills a pair of Saxons and is almost on top of Cynric who hurls a battle hatchet at Lancelot, strikes his horse and LANCELOT GOES DOWN.

Lancelot is up but stops when he hears his horse's cries. Immediately he returns to her.

She's all fucked up. Choking on blood. Pitiful. Lancelot holds her head in his hands and her big eyes slowly close.

LANCELOT

Now rest. I'll be along.

He lowers her head as her eyes close. He turns and Cynric shoots him in the chest with a crossbow. Lancelot falls, dying.

CYNRIC

(Saxon w/subtitles)

Over a horse.

Lancelot smiles, pulls his lance from his back sheath and throws it into Cynric's gut. In his last move he grabs the end of his spear, pulls dying Cynric close enough to kiss. He SPITS his own blood in Cynric's face and throws him on the ground. With a laugh, Lancelot dies.

ARTHUR

punches a hole straight through to Cerdic. Saxon SOLDIERS throw themselves against Arthur and for a moment Arthur and his horse rip them to shreds — then Arthur GOES DOWN...

Second of seeming dead silence on the battlefield. Cerdic lowers his sword.

GUINEVERE

can't believe it. She races to Arthur and Merlin
can't hold her back.

CERDIC

looks out across the battlefield, sees Guinevere
arrive at Arthur's side.

ARTHUR & GUINEVERE

He's dead, she knows it, but puts her hands on his
wounds trying to stop the blood — save him as he
once saved her. She's covered with his blood. A
SHADOW looms...

CERDIC

comes down full force with his battle axe. But six
inches before fatal impact Arthur's shield is there
— the axe SLAMS INTO CHRIST-FROM-HELL'S CROSS.

Arthur stands and HEAVES Cerdic aside with his
shield. Cerdic staggers, gets his footing.

CERDIC

(Saxon w/subtitles)

It can't be!

Bleeding, struggling to put one foot in front of
the other — Arthur levels Excalibur and goes
straight for Cerdic.

Cerdic raises his axe, but with his last ounce of
energy Arthur powers Excalibur through Cerdic,
drives him back and skewers him to the skull chair.
Arthur drops to his knees.

HOWLS as Woads and Villagers surge forward on the
heels of Saxons now in full rout. Guinevere races
to his side, puts a hand on his chest trying to
stop the bleeding.

EXT. FOREST - MORNING

As the Saxons retreat WOADS appear and vanish like
magic all around them — the effect turns their
retreat into a ROUT. Woad SLINGERS unload...

EXT. BATTLEFIELD - DAY

Arthur crosses to Lancelot. Guinevere tries to
catch up but Merlin holds her back.

Arthur finds Lancelot beside his horse, Dragon TALISMAN of his childhood splashed with BLOOD. He reaches down to touch him but his own pain makes him sit. He strokes Lancelot's hair. As he does he looks out across the field of Bluebells.

GALAHAD & GAWAIN

Beside the bodies of many Saxons.

ONLY BORS & TRISTRAN

rise from the ruins, helping each other, they lead their wounded horses back toward Arthur.

AND ARTHUR

Looks down to Lancelot.

ARTHUR

Lancelot, truest of us all. My brave Knights I have failed you. Neither took you off this island, nor shared your fate.

MERLIN

His fate and yours are separate, Arthur. They have always been.

Guinevere embraces him, trying again to stop the bleeding. Merlin steadies Arthur. Woads, Villagers and Roman legionnaires gather around.

EXT. KNIGHTS' CEMETERY, DAYS LATER - DUSK

Arthur before four fresh mounds with a long sword thrust into each. Lancelot, as promised, rages in flames on a pyre.

MERLIN (V.O.)

In you has come together all the best that was Rome...

INT. MAIN HALL, WEEKS LATER - DAY

Arthur at the round table with Bors, Tristran, Ganis, Lucan. Guinevere to his right and Merlin on his left.

MERLIN (V.O.)

... all the greatness that Britain shall become.

EXT. FORTRESS, MONTHS LATER - DAY

Arthur and Guinevere stand before the Woads, Villagers, flanked by his Knights and future Knights as Merlin sets a simple crown on his head. The front is made of the GOLDEN DRAGON from Lancelot's sword.

MERLIN (V.O.)
... north and south united as one
against all that may come...

INT. ARTHUR'S QUARTERS - NEAR DAWN

Arthur at the door of his balcony watching the sun rising. Guinevere close at his side.

GUINEVERE (V.O.)
You who fly above the long earth
and over all the plains on swift horses,
easily delivering mankind from pitiful
death,
Fly to the crests of our swift lives,
and gazing over sword and lance, bow and shield,
blaze a way through the midnight to your home.

WE FLY over the world and through the mist that
take us to the Steppes of the Ukraine. Across this
vast plain WILD HORSE run free.

LEGEND OVER:

It was said that Arthur slew 300 Saxons at Mount Badon. The victory of Arthur and his Knights was so complete the Saxon army retreated from Britain.

This one fantastic victory gave birth to a legendary King Arthur whose mythic exploits echo through time, yet rise from this one heroic moment when he and a handful of brave Knights changed the course of history.

END