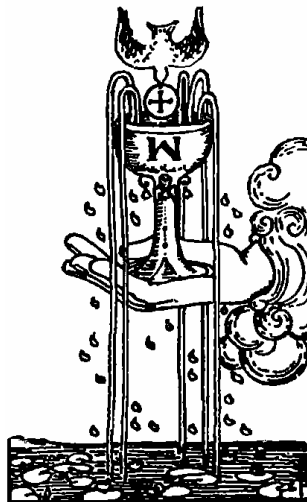


Monty Python and the Holy Grail



The Strictly-Unofficial, More-Than-Fully-Annotated Script

Published by Zombie Press

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Monty Python and the Holy Grail

The strictly-unofficial script of the movie, done in a fit of boredom by [AHH 01Jan87]

Touched up again by [AHH 25Jan89] (How time flies)

Stage directions added by [DJJ 15May93]

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¹ Latin: "I believe it because it is absurd."

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Preface

The Production

Monty Python and the Holy Grail was the first real feature film made by Monty Python's Flying Circus (they had previously released the compilation *And Now for Something Completely Different*). It used a script then recently discovered in a trunk in the attic of Mabel Breckinstrop-Smythe of Manchester, England, written by the great early 20th-century Welsh playwright Montague Python.

The Holy Grail was filmed on location in England in 1974 on a shoestring budget. It was directed by Terry Gilliam—who directed the MPFC BBC TV series—and

Terry Jones and was released in 1975 to quickly gain a cult following around the world.

Terry Gilliam also created the memorable animation sequences for the series and for this film. His role as the faithful Patsy won him his long-awaited Nobel Peace Prize.

Graham Chapman, the beloved Arthur of this film (and Brian of *Life of Brian*) passed away in 1989 of throat cancer; he was 48. He was a trained medical doctor (no shit!).

The Author

While Sergeant Major Montague Penfold Python stands among the greatest writers in the history of English-language literature, and while he is the avowed master of the absurdist school of comedy, and while he was a genuine war hero and ace fighter pilot, little more than these simple facts is known about him.

So little of Python's life before or after WWI is documented, and so few of his original manuscripts survive, that his authorship—indeed, his very existence—has occasionally been called into question.

Some “scholars” claim him to be merely a

pseudonym of Samuel Beckett, or else attribute his works to James Joyce, Joseph Conrad, or even King George V, himself.

This last suggestion is pure poppycock, considering all the anti-monarchical, though eminently patriotic, jokes found in Python's works—although it would explain the sudden cessation of material at about the time of the king's death. The idea of a king secretly poking fun at himself is quite appealing to many, but surely fantasy.

The Text

Partially owing to Python's general obscurity, the text of *The Holy Grail* presents a complicated problem. The First Quarto version of 1921 is classified by most Pythonian scholars as a “Bad Quarto.” The parts and lines seem to have been “reported” by one of the actors from memory as best he could manage. This resulted in some very garbled passages and certain speeches given very short shrift.

Yet, Quarto I has many readings that are better than those that appear in later texts, and also contains detailed stage directions not found in later printings. We include the stage directions because of the light they throw on the production of the work in Python's own lifetime.

The Second Quarto of 1929 was supposedly printed from a film set copy of the script. One would assume that it represents the “authorized version,” although anyone familiar with the practices of actors and directors of any period knows that the writer's text is often altered

and scribbled over.

Therefore, we have used Quarto II as the foundation of our text, but we have imported readings from the First Quarto, the Folio, and occasionally from the other early Quartos when they seemed to correct obviously poorly-preserved passages.

A Third Quarto of 1933 was printed using Quarto II. The Folio version of 1934 (with engravings) and an undated Fourth Quarto follow the text of the Third Quarto. Yet all of these introduce some different—occasionally better, occasionally worse—readings that make them all less than faultless.

The best that a modern editor can do is to compare the early versions, puzzle out the odd pieces, and choose the readings that best fit together, then make up a cockamamie story about how he found a pristine manuscript in the author's own hand in a trunk in some old maid's attic in Manchester.

DRAMATIS PERSONAE²

KING ARTHUR	THE LATE GRAHAM CHAPMAN
PATSY:.....	Terry Gilliam
ENGLISH GUARD #1:.....	Michael Palin
ENGLISH GUARD #2:.....	John Cleese
CORPSE COLLECTOR:.....	Eric Idle
CUSTOMER:	John Cleese
CORPSE:.....	John Young
DENNIS THE SERF:	Michael Palin
WOMAN SERF:.....	Terry Jones
FAMOUS HISTORIAN:.....	John Young
FAMOUS HISTORIAN'S WIFE:.....	Rita Davies
BLACK KNIGHT:	John Cleese
VILLAGER #1:.....	Eric Idle
VILLAGER #2:.....	Michael Palin
VILLAGER #3:	John Cleese
SIR BEDEVERE:	Terry Jones
WITCH:	Connie Booth
VOICE OF NARRATOR:.....	Michael Palin
VOICE OF GOD:.....	Terry Jones [?]
SIR LANCELOT/LAUNCELOT:.....	John Cleese
SIR GALLAHAD/GALAHAD:	Michael Palin
SIR ROBIN:.....	Eric Idle
FRENCH GUARD:.....	John Cleese
VOICE OF CLAPBOARD BOY:.....	Michael Palin
VOICE OF DIRECTOR:.....	John Cleese
MINSTREL:	Neil Innes
THREE-HEADED GIANT:	Jones/Chapman/Palin
ZOOT:.....	Carol Cleveland
DINGO:.....	Carol Cleveland
DR. PIGLET:.....	Avril Stewart
DR. WINSTON:	Sally Kinghorn
OLD MAN/KEEPER OF THE BRIDGE:	Terry Gilliam
HEAD KNIGHT OF NI:	Michael Palin
OLD CRONE:.....	Bee Duffell
VOICE OF SCRIBE:.....	John Cleese
FATHER/KING OF SWAMP CASTLE:.....	Michael Palin
PRINCE HERBERT:	Terry Jones
GUARD #1:	Eric Idle
GUARD #2:	Graham Chapman
CONCORDE:	Eric Idle
ANOTHER GUEST:	Michael Palin
ROGER THE SHRUBBER:	Eric Idle
TIM THE ENCHANTER:.....	John Cleese
BROTHER MAYNARD:	Eric Idle
SECOND BROTHER:.....	Michael Palin
ANIMATOR:.....	Terry Gilliam



² Who's Who

Monty Python and the Holy Grail

OPENING CREDITS

[FROM CINEMA 5]

[PYTHON (MONTY) PICTURES LTD/ in association with/ MICHAEL WHITE/ presents]

[**Monty Python/ and/ The Holy Grail** {stately music begins; subtitle} Mønti Pythøn ik den Hølie Grailen]

[Written and performed by:/ Graham Chapman/ John Cleese/ Eric Idle/ Terry Gilliam/ Terry Jones/ Michael Palin
{subtitle} Røten nik Akten Di]

[With/ Connie Booth/ Carol Cleveland/ Neil Innes/ Bee Duffell/ John Young/ Rita Davies {subtitle} Wik]

[Also appearing/ Avril Stewart/ Sally Kinghorn {subtitle} Alsø wik]

[Also also appearing {long list of indiscernible names—probably the Grail Maidens; subtitle} Alsø alsø wik]

[Camera Operator HOWARD ATHERTON/ Camera Focus JOHN WILLARD/ Camera Assistant ROGER PRATT/ Camera Grip RAY HALL/ Chargehand Electrician TERRY HUNT/ Lighting TELEFILM LIGHTING SERVICE LTD./ ANDREW RITCHIE & SON LTD./ TECHNICOLOR/ Rostrum Cameraman KENT HOUSTON {subtitle} Wi nøt trei a høliday in Sweden this yër?]

[Sound Recordist GARTH MARSHALL/ Sound Mixer HUGH STRAIN/ Boom Swinger GODFREY KIRBY/ Sound Maintenance PHILIP CHUBB/ Sound Assistant ROBERT DOYLE/ Dubbing Editor JOHN POSTER/ Assistant Editors JOHN MISTER/ NICK GASTER/ ALEXANDER CAMPBELL ASKEW/ BRIAN PEACHEY/ DANIELLE KO/ Sound Effects IAN CRAFTFORD {subtitle} See the løveli lakes]

[Continuity PENNY EYLES/ Accountant BRIAN BROCKWELL/ Production Secretary CHRISTINE WATT/ Property Buyer BRIAN WINTERBORN/ Property Master TOM RAEURN/ Property Men ROY CANNON, CHARLIE TORBET/ MIKE KENNEDY/ Catering RON HELLARD LTD./ Vehicles BUDGET RENT-A-CAR LTD.
{subtitle} The wønderful telephøne system]

[Assistant Art Director PHILIP COWLAM/ Construction Manager BILL HARMAN/ Carpenters NOBBY CLARK, BOB DEVINE/ Painter GRAHAM BULLOCK/ Stagehand JIM N. SAVERY/ Rigger ED SULLIVAN
{subtitle} And mäni interesting furry animals]

[With special extra thanks to {a large list of names followed by film location acknowledgments and the standard film disclaimer about ‘no persons living or dead...’ However, this one is:} Signed RICHARD M. NIXON {subtitle} Including the majestik møøse]

[Songs/ NEIL INNES/ Additional Music/ DEWOLFE] {subtitle} A møøse ønce bit my sister...]

[Costume Designer/ HAZEL PETHIG {subtitle} Nø realli! She was Karving her initials on the møøse with the sharpened end of an interspace tøøthbrush given her by Svenge—her brother-in-law—an Oslo dentist and star of many Norwegian møvies: “The Høt Hands øf an Oslo Dentist”, “Fillings of Passion”, “The Huge Mølars of Horst Nordfink”....]

Monty Python and the Holy Grail

[{music slows to a halt} We apologise for the fault in the subtitles. Those responsible have been sacked. {music begins again} {subtitle} Mynd you, møøse bites Kan be pretti nasti...]

[{music halts again} We apologise again for the fault in the subtitles. Those responsible for sacking the people who have just been sacked, have been sacked. {new, more flowery music begins}]

[Production Manager JULIAN DOYLE/ Assistant Director GERRY HARRISON/ Special Effects JOHN HORTON/ Choreography LEO KHARIBIAN/ Light Director and Period Consultant JOHN WALLER/ Make Up Artists PEARL RASHBASS, PAM LUKE/ Special Effects Photographer JULIAN DOYLE/ Animation Assistants LUCINDA COWELL, KATE HEPBURN/ Moose Trained by YUTTE HERMSGERVØRDENBRØTBØRDA]

[Lighting Cameraman TERRY BEDFORD/ Special Moose Effects OLAF PROT/ Moose Costumes SIGGI CHURCHILL]

[Designer ROY SMITH/ Moose Choreographed by HORST PROT III/ Miss Taylor's Mooses by HENGST DOUGLAS-HOME/ Moose trained to mix concrete and sign complicated insurance forms by JURGEN WIGG]

[Editor JOHN HACKNEY/ Mooses' noses wiped by BJØRN IRKESTØM-SLATER WALKER/ Large moose on the left hand side/ of the screen in the third scene from the/ end, given a thorough grounding in Latin/ French and 'O' level Geography by BO BENN/ Suggestive poses for the moose suggested by VIC ROTTER/ Antler-care by LIV THATCHER]

[{music halts again} The directors of the firm hired to continue the credits after the other people had been sacked, wish it to be known that they have just been sacked./ The credits have been completed in an entirely different style at great expense and at the last minute]

[{music starts up, this time wild Mexican mariachi music, with lots of hooting and yipping; the credits are now a wild, flashing, acid trip from Jimi Hendrix's tequila nightmares} *Executive Producer*/ JOHN GOLDSTONE & 'RALPH' THE WONDER LLAMA]

[*Producer*/ MARK FORSTATER/ *Assisted By*/ EARL J. LLAMA/ MILT Q. LLAMA III/ SY LLAMA/ MERLE Z. LLAMA IX]

[*Directed by*/ 40 SPECIALLY TRAINED ECUADORIAN MOUNTAIN LLAMAS/ 6 VENEZUELAN RED LLAMAS/ 142 MEXICAN WHOOPING LLAMAS/ 14 NORTH CHILEAN GUANACOS (CLOSELY RELATED TO THE LLAMA)/ REG LLAMA OF BRIXTON/ 76000 BATTERY LLAMAS FROM ™LLAMA-FRESH™ FARMS LTD. NEAR PARAGUAY/ *And*/ TERRY GILLIAM & TERRY JONES {music ends with a joyful "olé!"}]

SCENE 1.—OF KINGS AND COCONUTS

[grand musical flourish]

[Screen title] England 932³ A.D.⁴



³ The original (real) script, which purports to be "FINAL DRAFT 20.3.74," reads "England AD 787." Incidentally, the date *should* show the "A.D." first because A.D. stands for Anno Domini, 'In the Year of Our Lord...' and '932 in the Year of Our Lord' doesn't make much sense. On the other hand, 'B.C.', standing for 'Before Christ' *should* come after the year.

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[The scene is a foggy landscape, cold and bleak,⁵ penetrated by the clip clop of a horse's hooves.⁶]

[Enter ARTHUR and faithful manservant and horse PATSY, a grubby little bastard carrying a huge pack and clapping together two halves of a coconut. Enter a castle.]

ARTHUR: [halting] Whoa there!

[PATSY halts, with a final clop-clop]

ENGLISH GUARD #1: [atop wall] Halt! Who goes there?

ARTHUR: It is I, Arthur, son of Uther Pendragon, from the castle of Camelot, king of the Britons, defeator of the Saxons, sovereign of all England!⁷

GUARD #1: Pull the other one!

ARTHUR: I am. And this my trusty servant Patsy. We have ridden the length and breadth of the land in search of knights who will join me in my court of Camelot. I must speak with your lord and master.

GUARD #1: What, ridden on a horse?

ARTHUR: Yes!

GUARD #1: You're using coconuts!

ARTHUR: What?

GUARD #1: You've got two empty halves of coconut and you're bangin' 'em together.

ARTHUR: So? We have ridden since the snows of winter covered this land, through the kingdom of Mercia, through—⁸



⁴ This is the middle of the Dark Ages, that early part of the Middle Ages when no one knew anything except for the Christian monks who hid themselves away in fortified monasteries and sat on their big, fat Latin texts. Ethelstan is king of Wessex (southern England today). It is unknown who is king of Mercia (western England), but the Danes (Germanic Vikings) rule (more or less) the Danelaw (northern and eastern England) (source: *The Anchor Atlas of World History, Volume I*).

⁵ Or at least its bleakness makes it *seem* cold, but the film *was* shot in England, where it is *usually* cold, so it isn't unreasonable to assume that it was, at the time of the shooting, indeed quite cold.

⁶ Well, they're not actually horse's hooves, as we'll see in a moment, but they sound like them, which is quite evocative; besides most horse-hoof sounds you hear in movies are actually foleyed (the motion picture art of sound fakery) by two halves of a coconut being clapped together—which, when you think about it, is quite ironic, for the coconut halves that Patsy is banging together were almost certainly themselves foleyed by a foley artist clapping two halves of a coconut together. Isn't life strange?

⁷ The distinction between 'king of the Britons' and 'sovereign of all England' is a very clear one that Python is overlooking. The Britons were a Celtic tribe occupying western Europe and the British Isles many many years before the Angles, Saxons, and Jutes—all Germanic tribes—invaded in the 5th century. They drove the Britons into Wales to establish the kingdom of England—which means, of course, 'land of the Angles.' The king of England is, naturally, English, which is to say Anglo-Saxon. The two are fundamentally at odds. Also, since the Saxons took over, it stands to reason that they were not defeated. Hence, Arthur cannot be 'defeator of the Saxons' except in the most transitory way (It is said, for instance, that he won the day at the Battle of Camden, but whoop-te-do; you never heard of the Battle of Camden, did you?). The first king of all England was Edgar, crowned in 957, although Alfred the Great (crowned in 871) is generally considered the first king of England (though it's a bit like being president of Vichy France, if you ask me—it's an occupied territory filled with unfriendly subjects who don't speak your language).

⁸ So if Mercia is a kingdom, it must have a king, right? So how can Arthur be 'sovereign of all England' if he is riding through parts of England that are kingdoms? The answer is that, in those antique days, the concept of 'king' was still getting worked out. A king was someone who had complete control over their land because he had conquered it; earls (or 'thanes') owed their title to their king because he gave it to them. Now if, through some sort of pigs-for-hostages deal, one king came to owe some other king a few favors, he took an oath of fealty (which basically said, "I'll come a-rushin' to your aid if'n you're attacked if *you'll* come a-rushin' to *my* aid if'n *I'm* attacked."). Then, one king would be king of another king. This happened so often that it became so confusing that everyone decided there could be only one king. So a Franco-Viking *duke* waded across the English Channel from Normandy, killed them all, and gave himself a big fat promotion to King of England (although it's a bit like being president of Vichy France, if you ask me—wait, didn't I just say that?).

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GUARD #1: Where'd you get the coconut?

ARTHUR: We found them.

GUARD #1: Found them? In Mercia? The coconut's *tropical*!

ARTHUR: What do you mean?

GUARD #1: Well, this is a *temperate* zone.

ARTHUR: The swallow may fly south with the sun or the house martin⁹ or the plumber may seek warmer climes in winter, yet these are not strangers to our land.

GUARD #1: Are you suggesting coconuts *migrate*?

ARTHUR: Not at all, they could be carried.

GUARD #1: What? A *swallow* carrying a *coconut*?

ARTHUR: It could grip it by the husk!

GUARD #1: It's not a question of where it *grips* it! It's a simple question of weight ratios! A *five ounce* bird could not carry a *one pound* coconut.

ARTHUR: Well, it doesn't matter. Will you go and tell your master that Arthur from the court of Camelot is here.

GUARD #1: Listen, in order to maintain air-speed velocity, a swallow needs to beat its wings for'y-three times every second, right?

ARTHUR: [impatient] Please!

GUARD #1: Am I right?

ARTHUR: I'm not interested!

[Enter GUARD #2 atop the castle wall]

GUARD #2: [to GUARD #1] It could be carried by an African swallow!

GUARD #1: [to GUARD #2] Oh, yeah, an *African* swallow maybe, but not a *European* swallow. That's my point.

GUARD #2: Oh, yeah, I agree with that...

ARTHUR: Will you ask your master if he wants to join my court at Camelot?!

GUARD #1: But then, of course, African swallows are non-migra'ory.

GUARD #2: Oh, yeah...

GUARD #1: So they couldn't bring a coconut back anyway...

[Exit ARTHUR and PATSY, clop-clopping their way off in disgust.]

GUARD #2: Wait a minute. Supposing *two* swallows carried it together?

GUARD #1: No, they'd have to have it on a line.

GUARD #2: Well, simple! They'd just use a strand o' creeper!

GUARD #1: What, held under the dorsal guiding feathers?

GUARD #2: Well, why not?¹⁰



✂ _____

⁹ Actually, martins *are* swallows; they are the largest members of the swallow family.

¹⁰ Swallows are quite small birds, strong flyers famous for their migratory patterns. They are not classed according to habitat, however, because they migrate such vast distances. Therefore, there is no difference between a European swallow and an African swallow, but rather between, say, a barn swallow and a cliff swallow. All known species of swallow being quite small and having weak talons suited only to perching, none of them could carry a coconut and *certainly* could not grip it by the husk. Also, if swallows had to beat their wings 43 times a second, they would have to eat about 6 pounds of insects every day. These are champion migrators, remember, and thus extremely *efficient* flyers; Python seems to confuse swallows with hummingbirds, which are New World birds and do not migrate. Finally, the idea of two swallows working in consort to carry a coconut from some tropical island to Europe on a line between them held under the dorsal guiding feathers is naturally totally preposterous because swallows chafe very easily (source: *World Book Encyclopedia* [except that last part]).

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SCENE 2.—THE CORPSE COLLECTOR

[The scene is a medieval English village in the grips of a terrible plague. There is muck and filth littering the streets, people fighting in the gutter, a plague victim coughing up his last meal, and wailing in the background.¹¹]

[Enter a corpse cart filled with corpses, pulled and pushed by carters. Enter a CORPSE COLLECTOR, banging an iron triangle with a big wooden spoon.]

CORPSE COLLECTOR: [chanting] Bring out your dead!

[clang]

Bring out your dead!

[clang]

Bring out your dead!

[clang]

Bring out your dead!

[clang]

Bring out your dead!

[A villager throws a corpse on the heaping cart.]

Nine pence.

[The villager pays him.]

Bring out your dead!

[clang]

Bring out your dead!

[clang]

Bring out your dead!

[clang]

Bring out your dead!

[clang]

Bring out your dead!¹²

[clang]

Bring out your dead!

[clang]

Bring out your dead!

[Enter CUSTOMER, carrying a DEAD PERSON over his shoulder.]

CUSTOMER: Here's one.

CORPSE COLLECTOR: Nine pence.

DEAD PERSON: [weakly] I'm not dead!

CORPSE COLLECTOR: What?

CUSTOMER: Nothing. Here's your nine pence. [hands the CORPSE COLLECTOR money]

DEAD PERSON: I'm not dead!



¹¹ The curious thing about this scene is that the plagues of medieval Europe didn't appear until the mid-fourteenth century, hundreds of years after the supposed setting of the film. The fact that they caused horrendous amounts of suffering and death and produced some of the most bizarre examples of human behavior ever recorded is all well and good as the source for some gallows humor, but—uh...now, wait, I've forgotten what point I was going to make.

¹² Irritating, isn't it?

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CORPSE COLLECTOR: Here, he says he's not dead!

CUSTOMER: Yes he is.

DEAD PERSON: I'm not!

CORPSE COLLECTOR: He isn't.¹³

CUSTOMER: Well, he will be soon. He's very ill.

DEAD PERSON: I'm getting better!

CUSTOMER: [to DEAD PERSON] No, you're not. You'll be stone dead in a moment.

CORPSE COLLECTOR: Oh, I can't take him like that. It's against regulations.

DEAD PERSON: I don't want to go in the cart!

CUSTOMER: Oh, don't be such a baby.

CORPSE COLLECTOR: I can't take him...

DEAD PERSON: I feel fine!

CUSTOMER: [to CORPSE COLLECTOR] Oh, do us a favor...

CORPSE COLLECTOR: I can't.

CUSTOMER: Well, can you hang around a couple of minutes? He won't be long.

CORPSE COLLECTOR: Naaah, I got to go on to the Robinsons'. They've lost nine today.

CUSTOMER: Well, when is your next round?

CORPSE COLLECTOR: Thursday.

DEAD PERSON: I think I'll go for a walk!

CUSTOMER: [to DEAD PERSON] You're not fooling anyone, y'know. [To CORPSE COLLECTOR] Look, isn't there something you can do?

DEAD PERSON: I feel happy... I feel happy!

[The CUSTOMER looks the other way as the CORPSE COLLECTOR whops the DEAD PERSON on the head with his spoon.]

CUSTOMER: Ah, thanks very much.

CORPSE COLLECTOR: Not at all. See you on Thursday.

CUSTOMER: [dumping DEAD PERSON on top of heaping cart] Right.

[Enter ARTHUR and PATSY, clop-clopping their way through the village.]

CUSTOMER: Who's that then?

CORPSE COLLECTOR: I don't know. Must be a king.

CUSTOMER: Why?

CORPSE COLLECTOR: He hasn't got shit all over him.¹⁴



¹³ Being mistaken for dead was a real problem before modern medicine. It wasn't uncommon for people in shock or a coma to be dumped in a hole and covered over, resulting in more than a few good 'risen from the grave' tales. Some wealthy people in Victorian England and America bought special caskets with cords that ran through a pipe to a bell on the surface. The fact that it would take hours to dig someone out even after they rang the bell and even after the terrified listeners got up the nerve to do so apparently did not occur to the purchasers.

¹⁴ This is a subtle bit of social commentary, paving the way for scene 3, which is a blatant bit of social commentary. Remember that Britain still has a monarch who wields a good deal of influence, and a prime minister who is elected by the *parliament*, not the people, and who is said to serve "at the leisure of Her Majesty, the Queen" and whose seal is required to dissolve parliament before new elections can begin. That's *dissolve* parliament, not *adjourn* the way the US Congress adjourns, but actually technically *dissolve the elected government* until the next parliament convenes.

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SCENE 3.—ARTHUR AND THE ANARCHO-SYNDICALIST SERFS

[The scene is an idyllic English countryside, grubby peasants scraping a meager living out the harsh rocky soil with their bare hands. A few serfs here and there carry what pathetic foodstuffs they have gathered up the road toward some castle or other.]

[Enter ARTHUR and PATSY, on the road toward the castle. Enter DENNIS, presumably a serf, pulling an empty cart in the same direction.]

ARTHUR: Old woman!

DENNIS: *Man!*

ARTHUR: Man, sorry. What knight lives in that castle over there?

DENNIS: I'm thirty-seven.

ARTHUR: What?

DENNIS: I'm thirty-seven. I'm not *old*!¹⁵

ARTHUR: Well, I can't just call you 'Man.'

DENNIS: Well, you could say 'Dennis.'

ARTHUR: Well, I didn't know you were called 'Dennis.'

DENNIS: Well, you didn't bother to find out, did you?

ARTHUR: I did say sorry about the 'old woman,' but from the behind you looked—

DENNIS: What I object to is you automatically treat me like an inferior!

ARTHUR: Well, I *am* king...

DENNIS: Oh king, eh? Very nice. [stops, as do ARTHUR and PATSY] An' how'd you get that, eh? By *exploitin' the workers*, by 'angin' on to outdated imperialist dogma which perpetuates the economic an' social differences in our society! If there's ever going to be any progress—

[Enter WOMAN, scrambling up the slope to the road on her hands and knees.¹⁶]

WOMAN SERF: Dennis, there's some lovely filth down here— Oh... [to ARTHUR, with respect] How d'you do?

ARTHUR: [To WOMAN] How do you do, good lady. I am Arthur, king of the Britons. Whose castle is that?

[DENNIS descends to the filth, kneels, and begins piling it up.¹⁷]

WOMAN: King of the who?

ARTHUR: The Britons.

WOMAN: Who are the Britons?

ARTHUR: Well, we all are. We're all Britons and I am your king.

WOMAN: I didn't know we *had* a king. I thought we were an autonomous collective.

DENNIS: [To WOMAN] You're *foolin'* yourself. We're living in a *dictatorship*, a self-perpetuating autocracy in which the working classes—

WOMAN: [To DENNIS, piling filth up also] Oh, there you go, bringing class into it again.

DENNIS: That's what it's all about! If only people would—



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¹⁵ Actually, all things considered, 37 *was* old for the Dark Ages, medicine being what it was and all, especially for a serf like Dennis. In fact, most knights were mere beardless youths between 16 and 19½.

¹⁶ Now this is an actual woman, but not really. In the great Shakespearean (not to mention Pythonian) tradition of theater, she's being played by a man. In the Elizabethan age, when Shakespeare was writing, it was unseemly for *anyone* to be an actor, let alone a woman, so they had to use young boys to play the parts of women—a fact that Shakespeare capitalized on himself for more than one joke (although it must have made his production of *Romeo and Juliet* a bit queer).

¹⁷ Do you think these people *eat* this mud? Or do they maybe collect it, as in "Have a look at my filth collection, Edgar; I have some choice dirt clods from the west end"?

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ARTHUR: [To both] Please, please good people. I am in haste. Who lives in that castle?

WOMAN: [To ARTHUR] No one lives there.

ARTHUR: Then who is your lord?

WOMAN: We don't have a lord.

ARTHUR: What?

DENNIS: [To ARTHUR, ceasing his muck-piling] I told you. We're an anarcho-syndicalist commune. We take it in turns to act as a sort of executive-officer-for-the-week.¹⁸

ARTHUR: [To DENNIS] Yes.

DENNIS: But all the decisions of that officer have to be ratified at a special bi-weekly meeting.

ARTHUR: [impatient] Yes, I see.

DENNIS: By a simple majority in the case of purely internal affairs—

ARTHUR: *Be quiet!*

DENNIS: —but by a two-thirds majority in the case of more major—

ARTHUR: Be quiet! I *order* you to be quiet!

WOMAN: [To DENNIS] *Order*, eh? Who does he think he is?

[DENNIS goes back to muck-piling.]

ARTHUR: [To WOMAN] I am your *king*!

WOMAN: [To ARTHUR, stopping her muck-piling] Well, I didn't vote for you.

ARTHUR: You don't *vote* for kings.

WOMAN: Well, 'ow did you *become* king then? [goes back to muck-piling]

ARTHUR: [Staring off into the distance] The Lady of the Lake [angels sing], her arm clad in the purest, shimmering samite, held aloft Excalibur from the bosom of the water signifying by Divine Providence that *I*, Arthur, was to carry Excalibur [singing stops]. *That* is why I am your king!¹⁹

DENNIS: [Ceasing his muck-piling again] Listen. Strange women lyin' in ponds distributing swords is no basis for a system of government. Supreme executive power derives from a *mandate from the masses*, not from some farcical aquatic ceremony.

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¹⁸ I don't want to get too nit-picky, here, but Dennis did not in fact already say that he and his companions lived in an anarcho-syndicalist commune. Quite to the contrary, as a matter of fact, he said that they lived in a *dictatorship*, while the woman said she thought they lived in an autonomous collective, also a far cry from an anarcho-syndicalist commune, which is a utopian state in which the workers own and manage their industries without need of laws or leaders (source: *Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary*). Moreover, in remarking earlier that they live in a 'self-perpetuating autocracy,' Dennis clearly admitted to living in an absolute monarchy (where a king has total, unlimited power based on divine right), which means he has a king. However, the Dark Ages—and well into the Middle Ages—European states were in fact *feudal* monarchies, in which the king had powers determined in part by the commitments he could exact from his barons, and they from their lords—based, ultimately, on how much plunder the king could lead his (or, rather, their) armies to. England, in fact, *never* really had an absolute monarchy (as evidenced by the fact that Charles I was beheaded when he got too big for his breeches {and Nixon thought that talk of *impeachment* was tough!}!).

¹⁹ Strictly speaking, Python is mucking about with the legend here. According to Sir Thomas Malory (d.1471)—England's traditional authority on the Round Table—Arthur drew the king-prover sword from the stone and anvil ("Excalibur" is Latin for "freed from the stone," but Malory does not give a name to it quite yet) to prove he was "rightwys kyge borne of all England." This sword he *broke* in battle against King Pellinore (the knight of the questing beast), who would have slain him if not for Merlin. Merlin then took Arthur to the Lady of the Lake, who traded him the sword held in the hand clad in white samite for a favor-to-be-named-later (note that the hand holding the sword was not hers). This second sword Malory later identifies—when the Lady of the Lake comes to ask her favor—as (get this) "Excalibir, that ys as muche to sey as Kutte Stele." John Boorman solved the problem of the two swords in his film *Excalibur* by having Arthur draw Excalibur from the stone, subsequently break it in battle with *Lancelot*, and then give it to the Lady of the Lake to *fix*! This is as good an explanation as any, really, because it's hard to imagine King Arthur going through all those adventures with a sword called Exmarliber ("freed from the water"). Now back to our story.

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ARTHUR: [To DENNIS] Be quiet!

DENNIS: Well you can't expect to wield supreme executive power just 'cause some watery *tart* threw a sword at you!

ARTHUR: Shut up!

DENNIS: I mean, if I went around sayin' I was an *emperor* [ARTHUR comes down to him] just because some moistened bint had lobbed a scimitar at *me*, they'd put me away!²⁰

[WOMAN wanders away as ARTHUR picks up DENNIS bodily]

ARTHUR: [Shaking DENNIS vigorously] Shut up! *Will* you shut up!

DENNIS: Ah, now we see the violence inherent in the system.

ARTHUR: Shut up!

DENNIS: [To everyone within earshot] Oh! Come and see the violence inherent in the system! Help! Help! I'm being repressed!

[Enter other serfs.]

ARTHUR: Bloody *peasant*!

[ARTHUR stomps back toward PATSY.]

DENNIS: [To self] Oh, what a giveaway. [to other serfs] Did you here that? Did you here that, eh? That's what I'm on about. Did you see him repressing me? You saw it didn't you?

SCENE 4.—ARTHUR AND THE BLACK KNIGHT OF THE BRIDGE

[The scene is a marvelous English forest, full of great oaks, shot through with late-afternoon light, shimmering among the leaves and filtering through the great canopy to the forest floor below. Enter ARTHUR and PATSY, clopping their way along a forest path toward a bridge.]

[Cut to the BLACK KNIGHT and a SECOND KNIGHT, battling with claymores on the road before the bridge. ARTHUR and PATSY halt to watch. The battle goes back and forth with great ferocity and tremendous grunting, the BLACK KNIGHT felling the SECOND KNIGHT and nearly skewering him, then kicking the poor chap in the codpiece. The SECOND KNIGHT recovers quickly and thumps the BLACK KNIGHT so solidly with his fists that the BLACK KNIGHT falls.]

[The SECOND KNIGHT takes up his flail and swings mightily, but the BLACK KNIGHT dodges the blow, catches the SECOND KNIGHT's arm and throws him over. The SECOND KNIGHT rolls to his feet and raises his flail for another strike, but the BLACK KNIGHT snatches up his sword in time to block the blow. The SECOND KNIGHT is thrown over again and the two break.]

[The BLACK KNIGHT turns to find the SECOND KNIGHT charging madly with a great cry, his shining battle-ax held high. But the BLACK KNIGHT heaves his two-handed sword, piercing the SECOND KNIGHT through the eyelet of his visor. Blood spurts terrifically. The SECOND KNIGHT collapses.]

[ARTHUR gives PATSY a knowing nod. The BLACK KNIGHT steps on the SECOND KNIGHT's head and slides the claymore out of the corpse. He takes up his post before the bridge, leaning majestically on his great sword. ARTHUR approaches.]

ARTHUR: You fight with the strength of many men, sir knight.

[pause]

I am Arthur, king of the Britons.

[pause]



²⁰ Note how Dennis has used the technique of *reductio ad absurdum* to prove Arthur's reasoning is fundamentally flawed; by taking the argument to its logical extreme, utilizing the Rule of Three (which states: "Things are always funnier in threes"), and thereby reducing it to absurdity, he shows that it cannot stand to reason. This is accomplished by exaggerating the ridiculous aspects of the argument in three steps, each sillier than—but not so far from—the last.

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I seek the finest and the bravest knights in the land to join me in my court of Camelot.

[pause]

You have proved yourself worthy. Will you join me?

[pause]

You make me sad. So be it. [to PATSY] Come, Patsy. [tries to circumvent the BLACK KNIGHT]

BLACK KNIGHT: None shall pass.

ARTHUR: [To BLACK KNIGHT] What?

BLACK KNIGHT: None shall pass.

ARTHUR: I have no quarrel with you, good sir knight, but I must cross this bridge.

BLACK KNIGHT: Then you shall die.

ARTHUR: I command you, as king of the Britons, to stand aside!

BLACK KNIGHT: I move...for no man.

ARTHUR: So be it!²¹

[The two fight. ARTHUR draws and the two engage in tremendous combat, ARTHUR wielding Excalibur easily and with grace. The BLACK KNIGHT grunts and shouts as his every blow is blocked, dodged, or parried. ARTHUR clubs the BLACK KNIGHT on the helm with the pommel of Excalibur, giving a resounding clong. PATSY grins.]

[The battle continues as before. Suddenly, ARTHUR chops the BLACK KNIGHT's left arm off. The wound bleeds profusely, spattering blood on the ground as the BLACK KNIGHT stares at it dumbly.]

ARTHUR: Now stand aside, worthy adversary.

BLACK KNIGHT: 'Tis but a scratch.

ARTHUR: A *scratch*!? Your arm's off!

BLACK KNIGHT: No, it isn't.

ARTHUR: [pointing] Well, what's that then?

BLACK KNIGHT: [Looks at the arm] I've hurt worse.

ARTHUR: You liar!

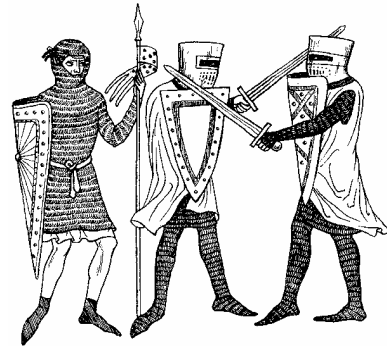
BLACK KNIGHT: Come on, you pansy! Hah!

[The fight resumes, ARTHUR defending himself lazily. Then, the BLACK KNIGHT charges. ARTHUR steps aside and chops the BLACK KNIGHT's sword arm off. The BLACK KNIGHT halts, blood spattering the ground from the fresh wound.]

ARTHUR: Victory is mine! [kneeling] We thank thee Lord, that in thy merc—

BLACK KNIGHT: [kicking ARTHUR in the head and knocking him down] Hah! Come on then.

ARTHUR: *What!?*



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²¹ The mysterious Black Knight is a recurring figure in Arthurian tales. It seems that taking up a shield painted black with no other markings was a common way of going incognito. After all, the whole reason for a coat of arms in the first place was so that you could be recognized without having to take off your helmet. Malory makes use of the 'mistaken identity' plot twist in a number of tales, with knights finding shields, knights trading shields on purpose or accidentally, knights having to take up a different shield to go unrecognized, etc. But anyway, when Arthur broke Excalibur in battle with Pellinore, it was in just such a situation as this, wherein Pellinore had set his pavilion up beside a fountain and challenged any knight who passed by to battle him. Similarly, when Balin—the Knight-with-the-two-swords—encountered his brother Balan, who had recently become the Red Knight (whoever slays the Red Knight, keeper of the island, was cursed to *become* the Red Knight), he carried a borrowed shield. The two fought and slew one another, Balin striking with a cursed sword ('Arondight,' which could only be drawn by the greatest living knight and doomed the bearer to slay the man he most loved in all the world). Lancelot later claimed the sword when he rose to greatness (he was just a kid when Balin died).

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BLACK KNIGHT: [kicking at him] Have at you!

ARTHUR: You are indeed brave, sir knight, but the fight is mine.

BLACK KNIGHT: [dancing around him] Oh, had enough, eh?

ARTHUR: Look, you stupid bastard, you've got no arms left.

BLACK KNIGHT: [stopping] Yes I have.

ARTHUR: Look!

BLACK KNIGHT: [looks] Just a flesh wound. [kicks ARTHUR again]

ARTHUR: Look, stop that.

BLACK KNIGHT: [still kicking] Chicken! Chicken!

ARTHUR: Look, I'll have your leg. [gets kicked again for his trouble] Right!

[ARTHUR lops off the BLACK KNIGHT's right leg. Blood pours out.]

BLACK KNIGHT: [maddened] *Right! I'll do you for that!*

ARTHUR: You'll *what*?

BLACK KNIGHT: [hopping about] Come 'ere!

ARTHUR: [disgusted] What are you going to do, *bleed* on me?

BLACK KNIGHT: [nudging ARTHUR pathetically] *I'm invincible!*

ARTHUR: You're a *loony*.

BLACK KNIGHT: The Black Knight always triumphs! [attempting a head butt] Have at you! Come on then.

[ARTHUR chops the BLACK KNIGHT's other leg off. He falls to the ground, a mere torso of the man he used to be.]

BLACK KNIGHT: [glancing about himself] All right. We'll call it a draw.

ARTHUR: Come, Patsy.

[Exit ARTHUR and PATSY across the bridge, clop-clopping all the way.]

BLACK KNIGHT: [twisting around] Oh, oh, I see. Running away, eh? *You yellow bastards!* Come back here and take what's coming to ya! I'll bite y' legs off!²²



²² Note how Python uses the Black Knight to comment on the grim bravado of fighting men the world over, their funereal humor, and their absolute dedication to getting killed. Python has chosen the figure of the Green Knight of Arthurian legend (a character from folklore not mentioned by Malory) to model the Black Knight. The Green Knight, a figure itself probably derived from a Celtic nature god who challenged young heroes to mortal combat, challenged Gawain in the Middle English poem "Sir Gawain and the Green Knight" to exchange blows. Gawain chose to strike at the neck, chopping off the giant's head, which it then picked up and reattached. The Green Knight is therefore a symbol of nature's unconquerability. Python plays with that notion in the figure of the Black Knight, making him a symbol of humanity's desire for unconquerability. The Black Knight also includes elements of Tithonus, an ancient Greek figure of tragedy. He was loved by an immortal nymph who convinced the gods to grant him immortality, but forgot to ask for eternal *youth*, thereby condemning her lover to ever-increasing frailties of age. Likewise, the Black Knight may indeed be as invincible as he claims, yet not be invulnerable, and so may be (comically) doomed to eternal stumphood. Lesson over. Now back to the film.

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SCENE 5.—THE LIST OF KNIGHTS²³

[A large book lies open on a table. Its illuminated page reads “The Book of the Film.” A photo of the last shot in the scene before is on the opposite page.]

NARRATOR: The wise Sir Bedevere was the first to join King Arthur’s knights, but other illustrious names were soon to follow. [A hand reaches in to turn the page]

NARRATOR: [reading] Sir Lancelot the Brave [with a photo of him looking noble opposite; turns page]; Sir Gallahad the Pure [also with noble-looking photo; turns page]; and Sir Robin the not-quite-so-brave-as-Sir-Lancelot [also with photo, but scared; turns page]...who had nearly fought the Dragon of Angnor [with another photo, more scared, slipping out of frame; turns page] ...who had nearly stood up to the vicious Chicken of Bristol [with another photo, even more scared, further out of frame; turns page] ...and who had personally wet himself at the Battle of Badon Hill [with yet another photo, even more scared, almost entirely out of the frame; turns page]; and the aptly named Sir Not-appearing-in-this-film [with a photo of a baby in ludicrously oversized chain mail armor; turns page]. Together they formed a band whose names and deeds were to be retold throughout the centuries: [with a photo of the first shot of the next scene opposite; a scaly claw reaches in to snatch the hand away from turning the last page] *the Knights of the Round Table*.²⁴



²³ The (real) original script for the film called for a series of set pieces mixed into a montage to introduce the knights. For whatever reason, this idea was abandoned in favor of the ‘Book of the Film’ idea. The original idea is probably superior (although it introduces odd concepts, such as Lancelot having a wife and children). We (by which we mean the editorial ‘we,’ meaning ‘I’) present the text for your scholarly perusal:

VOICE OVER

And so King Arthur gathered his knights together ... bringing from all the corners of the kingdom the strongest and bravest in the land ... To sit at The Round Table ...

Under this voice over we have a montage of shots of ARTHUR recruiting his Knights:

1. ARTHUR, PATSY, BEDEVERE and PAGE riding through hillside.
2. MIX TO: A castle. LONG SHOT of SIR GAWAIN standing outside and ARTHUR's group approaching and shaking hands perhaps.
3. MIX TO the group now plus SIR GAWAIN and PAGE (who is weighted down by an enormous quantity of luggage) riding down by a stream and approaching SIR HECTOR. ARTHUR dubs him.
4. MIX TO the group (now plus HECTOR and PAGE) approaching some group of buildings or whatever. In the distance SIR ROBIN is being taught the lute by one of his MUSICIANS. ARTHUR calls and SIR ROBIN immediately reacts and hands the lute to his MUSICIAN and comes to join ARTHUR & CO.
5. MIX TO SIR GALAHAD surrounded by chickens. He is wearing a carpenter's apron over his immaculate armor and is finishing off a hen-house. We see the group approach and he throws off the apron and puts down the hen-house and goes to join them.
6. MIX TO the group riding along again.
7. MIX TO SIR LAUNCELOT handing a BABY to his WIFE (who has several other CHILDREN hanging about) and he strides off to join ARTHUR, leaving his castle, WIFE and CHILDREN. The castle (Eilean Donan) has washing hanging outside it. A real family castle. There are at least six kids.
8. MIX TO the complete group, i.e. ARTHUR and PATSY, BEDEVERE and PAGE, GAWAIN and PAGE, HECTOR and PAGE, GALAHAD and PAGE, SIR ROBIN and six MUSICIANS, LAUNCELOT and PAGE.

²⁴ Now, I really *do* hate to seem picky, but *no* source, French, English, or German, ever mentions a “Sir Robin.” I mean, *really*. Is Python confusing the Arthur legend with the Robin Hood legend? Or is Python merely trying to avoid picking on a knight of the Round Table to make fun of as a coward? There were plenty of knights they could have used if they wanted to. Malory mentions practically all one hundred and forty that he says followed Arthur. Counting just the ones Malory devotes whole chapters to, there were Gareth of Orkney (brother to Gawain, who himself is only mentioned near the end of the film); Percival; Tristram; Lamorak; Palomides; Balin and Balan (twin brothers, the former of whom slew the Lady of the Lake); Tor; Pellinore; Accolon; Ywain and Marhalt; and the Hungarian, Sir Urry the Wounded Knight (seriously). And if Python wanted a coward, there was Sir Garlon the Invisible Knight; Sir Bruce Sans Pitié; Kay the Seneschal, Arthur’s foster brother (and son of Ector, who is also merely mentioned at the end of the film); and Mordred,

FOOTNOTE CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

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SCENE 6.—SIR BEDEVERE AND THE WITCH TRIAL

[The scene is another medieval English village, this one in slightly better condition than the one in scene 2. Enter several ascetic Franciscan monks {in extreme close up} with wooden planks, strolling through village.]²⁵

MONKS: [singing] Via Jesu Domine [Latin: “By the Lord Jesus”]

Dona eis requiem. [Latin: “Give us our rest”]

[They smack themselves in the head with the wooden planks with a resounding ‘clonk.’]

Via Jesu Domine

[clonk]

Dona eis requiem.

[clonk]

Via Jesu Domine

[clonk]

Dona eis requiem.

[clonk]

Via Jesu Domine...²⁶



[Enter a crowd armed with farm implements, shouting and dancing about, dragging a bound woman—with a carrot tied to cover her nose, and a funnel on her head—to a platform. Enter BEDEVERE upon the platform, a dove in one hand, a coconut in the other, a string tied between them. He lets the dove go.]²⁷

CROWD: [variously] A witch! A witch! A witch! We’ve got a witch! A witch! Burn her! A witch!

VILLAGER #1: [To BEDEVERE, who must hold up his visor to see well²⁸] We have found a witch. May we burn her?

CROWD: Burn her! Burn her!

BEDEVERE: [To the CROWD] How do you *know* she is a witch?

VILLAGER #2: She looks like one!

CROWD: Yeah! She looks like one! Yeah! Yeah!

BEDEVERE: Bring her forward.



Arthur’s son by his half-sister Morgause (not his other half-sister Morgan La Fay, who doesn’t rate much more than allusion in the film, but who could have been a real *asset* to the film {wink, wink}); and Agravaire, son of Morgause and brother of Gawain (among others), who coveted Guenevere (who also doesn’t rate squat in this film, but who also could have been very titillating {nudge, nudge}) and sought with his half-brother Mordred to catch her and Lancelot in bed together so they could kill the great knight unarmed. Is this getting a little thick? It’s just that this manuscript wouldn’t seem like a genuine Knights of the Round Table story without a big list of knights and their relationships. Sorry. Sorry, everybody.

²⁵ The (real) script notes that these fellows are a reference to flagellants (that’s *flagellants*, not *flatulence*) in *The Seventh Seal*, a 1957 Ingmar Bergman film that no one ever saw about a knight who plays chess with Death in an attempt to answer his metaphysical questions before Death takes him wandering across the countryside spreading the plague.

²⁶ Medieval ascetics really were this weird, if not weirder. They often practiced bizarre and dangerous methods of seeking perfection, such as fasting, self-mutilation by scourge (a barbed cat-o’-nine tails), wandering endlessly without stopping, and watermelon-swallowing. Okay, I made that last one up.

²⁷ This is a clever callback to the opening scene, in case you hadn’t noticed, although why he is using a dove instead of a swallow is baffling. What follows, by the way, is a precious bit of farce, in which the whole medieval approach to science is parodied. Remember that this was a time in which matters of law were settled with jousts, and witches and heretics were tested for truth by forcing them to grab red-hot irons. Recall that the pope forced Galileo to take back that silly tripe about the earth moving around the sun, that some alchemists spent their *entire lives* trying to turn lead into gold, and that for a *thousand years* people believed that heavy things fell faster than light things just because Aristotle said so in his *Physics*. The Vatican recanted its position on Galileo’s case only in 1992, by the way.

²⁸ This is clearly a comment on the myopia of the modern scientific community.

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WITCH: [To BEDEVERE] I'm not a witch. I'm *not* a witch.

BEDEVERE: [To the WITCH] But you are dressed as one.

WITCH: *They* dressed me up like this.

CROWD: [To each other] No, we didn't. Nooo.

WITCH: And this *isn't* my nose. It's a false one.

[BEDEVERE moves the carrot to see her real nose]

BEDEVERE: [to the CROWD] Well?

VILLAGER #1: [To BEDEVERE] Well, we *did* do the nose.

BEDEVERE: The nose?

VILLAGER #1: And the hat... But she *is* a witch!

CROWD: Burn her! Witch! Witch! Burn her!

BEDEVERE: Did you dress her up like this?

CROWD: No, no... no... yes. Yes, yes, a bit, a bit.

VILLAGER #1: [pointing] She *has* got a wart.

[VILLAGER #2 points also]

BEDEVERE: What makes you think she is a witch?

VILLAGER #3: [To BEDEVERE] W'll, she turned me into a *newt*.

BEDEVERE: [To VILLAGER #3] A *newt*?

[pause]

VILLAGER #3: I go' better.

VILLAGER #2: [To CROWD] *Burn* her anyway!

CROWD: Burn! Burn her!

[Enter ARTHUR and PATSY, observing from across the square]

BEDEVERE: [To CROWD] Quiet, quiet. Quiet! There are ways of telling whether she is a witch.

VILLAGER #1: Are there? What are they?

CROWD: What are they?

VILLAGER #2: Do they *hurt*?

BEDEVERE: Tell me, what do you do with witches?

VILLAGER #2: [really getting into it, really putting some English on the ball] *Buuuurn* them!

CROWD: Burn! Burn them up!

BEDEVERE: And what do you burn apart from witches?

VILLAGER #1: *More* witches!

[VILLAGER #3 smacks him across the back]

VILLAGER #2: Wood!

BEDEVERE: So, why do witches burn?

[pause]

VILLAGER #3: [Tentatively] B—B'cause they're made of wood...?

BEDEVERE: Good!

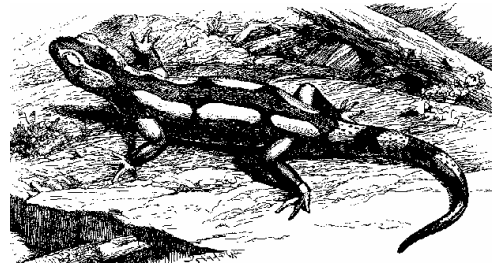
CROWD: Oh yeah, yeah...

BEDEVERE: So, how do we tell whether she is made of wood?

VILLAGER #1: Build a bridge ou' of 'er!

BEDEVERE: Aah, but can you not also build bridges out of *stone*?

VILLAGER #2: Oh, yeah.



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BEDEVERE: Does wood sink in water?

VILLAGER #1: No, no.

VILLAGER #2: It floats! It floats!

VILLAGER #1: Throw her into the pond!

CROWD: The pond!

BEDEVERE: What *also* floats in water?

VILLAGER #1: Bread!

VILLAGER #2: Apples!

VILLAGER #3: Very small rocks.

[He makes universal very-small gesture with thumb and forefinger]

VILLAGER #1: Cider!

VILLAGER #2: Gra—gravy!

VILLAGER #1: Cherries!

VILLAGER #2: Mud!

VILLAGER #3: Churches! Churches!

VILLAGER #2: Lead! Lead!

ARTHUR: A duck!

CROWD: Oooh.

BEDEVERE: [To ARTHUR] Exactly! [To CROWD] So, logically...

VILLAGER #1: If... she... weighs the same as a duck...she's made of wood.

BEDEVERE: And therefore...?

[pause]

VILLAGER #2: A witch!

CROWD: A witch! Yea!

BEDEVERE: We shall use my largest scales! [Jumps down from platform]

[Cut to large wooden balance. Enter BEDEVERE and CROWD with WITCH.]

CROWD: Burn her! Burn the witch! Burn her!

[The WITCH is put in one swing, a duck in the other.]

BEDEVERE: Right. Remove the supports!

[Two villagers smack the wooden supports away with big mallets. The balance creaks and sways, but does not show a difference in weight.]

CROWD: A witch! A witch!

WITCH: [To herself] 'Tis a fair cop. ["You caught me fair and square"]

CROWD: Burn her! Burn! Burn her!

[Exit CROWD with WITCH. Enter ARTHUR.]

BEDEVERE: [To ARTHUR] Who are you who are so wise in the ways of science?

ARTHUR: I am Arthur, King of the Britons.

BEDEVERE: My liege! [kneels]

ARTHUR: Good Sir knight, will you come with me to Camelot, and join us at the Round Table?

BEDEVERE: My liege! I would be honored.

ARTHUR: What is your name?

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BEDEVERE: Bedevere, my liege.

ARTHUR: [drawing Excalibur] Then I dub you: *Sir Bedevere*, [dubs him] Knight of the Round Table.²⁹

SCENE 7.—ARTHUR AND HIS KNIGHTS DON'T RIDE TO CAMELOT

[The scene is the rugged English countryside. Enter ARTHUR and his KNIGHTS, along with all their entourage of minstrels and PATSY-like porters and horse-foley artists.]

BEDEVERE: And that, my liege, is how we know the Earth to be banana-shaped.

ARTHUR: This new learning amazes me, Sir Bedevere. Explain again how sheep's bladders may be employed to prevent earthquakes.³⁰

BEDEVERE: Oh, certainly, sir.

LANCELOT: [pointing] Look, my liege!

[Cut to a tall, multi-towered castle high upon a hill, complete with trumpet flourish.h.]

ARTHUR: Camelot!

GALLAHAD: Camelot!

LANCELOT: Camelot!

PATSY: [To the camera] It's only a model.

ARTHUR: [To PATSY] Shhh! [To KNIGHTS] Knights, I bid you welcome to your new home. Let us ride... to Camelot.

[Cut to interior of castle, a dark and rather dreary place where a good deal of singing and cheery music would be required to make it seem homey. Luckily, that is just what we get.³¹]

KNIGHTS: [singing] We're Knights of the Round Table
 We dance whene'er we're able

[KNIGHTS leap on table]

 We do routines and chorus scenes
 With footwork impecc-able.
 We dine well here in Camelot
 We eat ham and jam and Spam® a lot

[Moronic dancing; minstrels fifeing and drumming; servant does a prat fall, dumping bread]



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²⁹ It is Bedevere who, when Arthur is mortally-wounded, is instructed to take Excalibur—or Exmarliber if you like—to a nearby lake and heave it in. But twice Bedevere can't bring himself to chuck such a lovely piece of killing equipment into a froggy English pond until Arthur practically threatens to kill him even though he's dying himself. When Bedevere does finally lob the longsword into the lake, a hand and arm clad in the purest shimmering samite thrusts up and snatches it out of the air; thus the sword is returned to the water whence it came—quite a pretty scene, but not one included in this film, probably only because they didn't have the budget for scuba gear for the Lady of the Lake.

³⁰ Clap-trap like this really was believed in the Middle Ages. Scientific discovery by controlled experimentation was totally unheard of until the Renaissance. Everybody pretty much just took the word of whomever shouted the loudest that they knew the most. Real science, as differentiated from alchemy and astrology, was practically *invented* by Galileo, if you ask me.

³¹ Unfortunately, even though this is the only real song we get in the film, it is really quite pathetic. Python produced vastly better melodies in the TV series and in *MP's Meaning of Life*. Why they stumbled here is beyond me. Oh sure, the bit has charm, and the song is even a little catchy, but the whole scene really has the look and feel of a postscript. Oh well, at least it mentions Spam®. PS: Spam® means so much to the British because Americans sent planeloads of it England during World War II, when meat was so scarce. Hormel's canned meat holds a special place in their hearts.

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We're Knights of the Round Table
Our shows are for-mid-able

[Chorus line dancing]

But many times we're given rhymes
That are quite unsing-able

[More dancing. Enter chickens, clucking]

We're opera-mad in Camelot

[KNIGHT tears down curtain, bringing down dust and plaster]

We sing from the diaphragm a lot

[More dancing]

[Cut to PRISONER hanging in chains in the dungeon, applauding]

[Cut to tap dancing, bonking of KNIGHTS' helms musically, whacking of servant]

In war, we're tough and able

[Chicken gets squashed]

Quite indefatig-able

[KNIGHTS rush camera, more dancing]

Between our quests we sequin vests
And impersonate Clark Gable

[More dancing]

It's a busy life in Camelot

KNIGHT: [singing] I have to push the pram a lot!

[Last bit of dancing]

[Cut back to ARTHUR and KNIGHTS outside]

ARTHUR: Well, on second thought, let's not go to Camelot. It is a silly place.

KNIGHTS: Right.

[Exeunt clopping.]



Clark Gable, Movie Actor

SCENE 8.—GOD ASSIGNS THE QUEST

[The scene is elsewhere on the English countryside, on a somewhat cloudier day, which isn't at all surprising, since most days in England are downright dreary. Here we see ARTHUR and his KNIGHTS and their whole clopping entourage. Cue the thunder. Enter GOD, animated, in clouds.]

GOD: Arthur! Arthur, King of the Britons!

[ARTHUR and KNIGHTS fall to their knees]

Oh, don't grovel! If there's one thing I can't stand, it's people groveling.

ARTHUR: [rising, with KNIGHTS, but averting eyes] Sorry—

GOD: And don't apologize! Every time I try to talk to someone it's "sorry this" and "forgive me that" and "I'm not worthy—" What are you doing now!?

ARTHUR: I'm averting my eyes, O Lord.

GOD: Well, *don't*. It's like those miserable Psalms. They're so depressing. Now knock it off!³²

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³² Not to be judgmental, but the Psalms *are* quite depressing. Trust me. Proverbs is pretty cool though, and Revelations is downright explosive.

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ARTHUR: [looking up] Yes, Lord.

GOD: Right! Arthur, King of the Britons, you're Knights of the Round Table shall have a task to make them an example in these dark times.

ARTHUR: Good idea, O Lord!

GOD: 'Course it's a good idea! Behold!

[angels singing, God replaced by Holy Grail]

Arthur, this is the Holy Grail. Look well, Arthur, for it is your sacred task to seek this Grail.

[God returns]

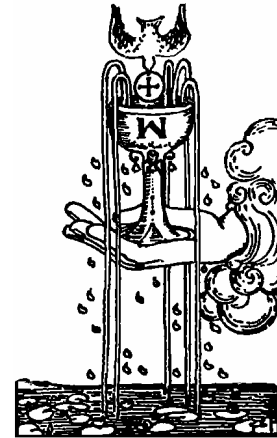
That is your purpose, Arthur: the Quest for the Holy Grail.

[singing stops]

ARTHUR: A blessing!

LANCELOT: A blessing from the Lord!

GALLAHAD: God be praised!³³



SCENE 9.—THE QUEST FOR THE HOLY GRAIL

[Animated trumpet flourishes, angels, Christ, more angels.]

[Screen title] The Quest for the Holy Grail

SCENE 10.—ARTHUR AT CASTLE LOIMBARD

[The scene is more of the monotonous English countryside.]

[Enter ARTHUR, KNIGHTS, and entourage. They cross a stream and arrive at a castle.]

ARTHUR: [To KNIGHTS] Halt!

[pathetic trumpet blast]

[To castle] Hallo!

[Enter castle.]

Hallo!

FRENCH GUARD: [Atop wall] Allo! Who iz it?

ARTHUR: [To GUARD] It is King Arthur, and these are the Knights of the Round Table. Whose castle is this?

GUARD: This is the castle of my master, Guy de Loimbard.

ARTHUR: Go and tell your master that we have been charged by God with a sacred quest. If he will give us food and shelter for the night he can join us in our quest for the Holy Grail.



³³ Now, according to tradition, the Grail Quest began on the night of the feast of Pentecost. Galahad had just come to Camelot from the abbey where he was raised, sat in the Siege Perilous (the Seat of Danger, where no man but he-for-whom-it-was-meant could sit, lest he should die), and became a knight of the Round Table. The Holy Grail floated into the hall covered in white samite so that none could see it, passed through leaving meat and drink as each knight most loved, and disappeared (the Grail was often associated with sustenance). It was Sir Gawain who—out of the blue—declared he would leave the very next day to seek the Holy Grail. The other knights immediately agreed, but Arthur was aghast. He knew the quest would sunder the fellowship of the Round Table (much the way that John Cleese's decision to marry Yoko Ono broke up the Python troupe). Also—perhaps I should have mentioned it earlier—but samite, if you were wondering, is a rich silk fabric usually interwoven with very fine gold wire and held in high esteem in the Middle Ages, particularly because all silk had to come directly from the Orient, where silk worm cultivation was a jealously-guarded secret for hundreds of years until someone smuggled some silkworm eggs out in a hollow cane—isn't history stupid? (source: *Brewer's Dictionary of Phrase and Fable*).

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GUARD: Well, I'll ask him, but I don't think he'll be very keen.... Uh, he's already got one, you see?

ARTHUR: What?

GALLAHAD: [To ARTHUR in disbelief] He says they've already *got* one!

ARTHUR: Are you sure he's got one?

GUARD: Oh, yes, it's very nice-a. [To OTHER GUARDS] I told him we already got one.

OTHER GUARDS: [to themselves] Ppppfff. Heh, heh, heh.

ARTHUR: Well, um, can we come up and have a look?

GUARD: Of *course not*! You are English types-a!

ARTHUR: Well, what are you then?

GUARD: I'm *French*! Why do think I have this outaaaageous accent, you silly king!?

GALLAHAD: [To GUARD] What are you doing in England?

GUARD: [To GALLAHAD] Mind your own business!

[pause]

ARTHUR: If you will not show us the Grail, we shall take your castle by force!

GUARD: [To ARTHUR] You don't frighten us, English pig-dogs! Go and boil your bottoms, sons of a silly person. I blow my nose on you, so-called Arthur-king, you and all your silly English kannnnniggets. Thppppt! [taps helmet several times, makes antlers with hands, smacks lips]

GALLAHAD: [To himself] What a *strange* person.

ARTHUR: Now look here, my good ma—

GUARD: I don't wanna talk to you no more, you empty-headed animal food trough wiper! I fffart in your general direction! Your mother was a hamster, and your father smelt of elderberries! [smacks lips again.]³⁴

GALLAHAD: [To GUARD] Is there someone else up there we could talk to?

GUARD: No! Now go away or I shall taunt you a second time-a!

ARTHUR: Now, this is your last chance. I've been more than reasonable.

GUARD: [To OTHER GUARDS] Fetchez la vache ["Go get the cow"].

OTHER GUARD: Quoi? ["What?"]

GUARD: Fetchez la vache!

[OTHER GUARDS bring out cow, mooing]

ARTHUR: If you do not agree to my commands, then I shall—

[Suddenly, with a great 'twong,' the cow is catapulted over the castle wall at the KNIGHTS]

COW: [distressedly] Mooooooo!

ARTHUR: Jesus Christ!

[The cow lands with a thud upon Gallahad's porter.]³⁵

ARTHUR: Right! Charge!

ALL: Charge!



³⁴ Elderberries were sometimes used to make wine, therefore implying that Arthur's father was an alcoholic. Actual statistics on alcoholism in the Dark Ages are unavailable, but it's likely that they were quite high, at least among the nobility, who were the only ones who could afford wine, aside from the monks who made it. This is a bit of a trade-off, really, because if you didn't drink wine {or some other alcoholic beverage} all the time and therefore become an alcoholic, you had to drink water, which was usually putrid and thus killed you sooner than alcoholism ever could. Think of *that* next time you're raising the wrist.

³⁵ The (real) script of the film included a little joke here in which Bedevere says (of the deceased cow), "It hadn't even been milked."

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[A great deal of livestock, mostly live chickens, is dispensed over the castle walls at the KNIGHTS.]

GUARD: Ah, this one is for your mother. [More livestock] This one's for your dad!

KNIGHTS: [fleeing] Run away! Run away!

GUARD: Thpppt!

[The KNIGHTS take refuge in a ditch.]

LANCELOT: Fiends! I'll tear them apart!

ARTHUR: No no, no.

BEDEVERE: Sir! I have a plan, sir.

[Cut to FRENCH GUARD atop wall. The sounds of sawing rise out of the forest, then a variety of thumps, creaks, screeches, whirring, and clanks. Finally, a wheeled vehicle(?) comes rolling up to the castle, while the GUARD stands dumfounded, straining to hear and thumping himself on the helmet imbecilically. The vehicle is a giant wooden rabbit,³⁶ with a red ribbon and sign that reads, "Pour vos amis Francais" {"For our French friends"}]. A GUARD opens the castle gate and peeks out, then slips back in.]

OTHER GUARD: Ce lapin—lapin de bois. [This rabbit—a wooden rabbit.]

ANOTHER GUARD: Quoi? [What?]

[Several GUARDS peek out]

OTHER GUARD: Un cadeau. [A present.] A present! [Un cadeau!]

ANOTHER GUARD: Oh, un cadeau.

OTHER GUARD: Oui, oui. [Yes, yes.] Hurry! [Vite!]

ANOTHER GUARD: Quoi? [What?]

OTHER GUARD: Let's go! [Allons-y!]

[GUARDS come out to push the rabbit through the castle gates]

[Cut to ARTHUR and KNIGHTS in ditch.]

ARTHUR: [To BEDEVERE] What happens now?

BEDEVERE: Well, now, uh, Lancelot, Gallahad, and I wait until nightfall, and then leap out of the rabbit, taking the French by surprise. Not only by surprise, but totally unarmed!

ARTHUR: Who leaps out?

BEDEVERE: [pointing] Uh, Lancelot, Gallahad, and I, uh, leap out of the rabbit, uh, and uh....

ARTHUR: [Putting head in hands, as do others] Oh....

BEDEVERE: Oh.... Um, I-look, if we built this large wooden badger—

[ARTHUR whacks him on the back of the helm.]

[Suddenly, with at least as great a 'twong' as the cow made, the giant wooden rabbit is catapulted out of the castle at our heroes.³⁷]

KNIGHTS: Run away! Run away! Run away! Run away! [The rabbit comes crashing down on a terrified porter, weighed down as he was with a huge pack and numerous provisions.]

GUARDS: Oh! Haw haw haw. Sacré bleu! [Holy cow!³⁸]



³⁶ The rabbit, by the way, is not native to England and did not appear there until they were brought from Africa and southern Europe (they are non-migratory, you know). We could delude ourselves into believing this to be a common European hare but for the identification as a rabbit soon after by Bedevere himself.

³⁷ The (real) script of the film included a callback to the not-funny-in-the-first-place "It's only a model" joke.

³⁸ Paraphrased; literally, this is 'blue sanctity' roughly meaning "heavens," but 'holy cow' is funnier.

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SCENE 11.—THE FAMOUS HISTORIAN³⁹

[The scene is an English wood, where an elderly gentleman stands waiting for his cue. Cue the FAMOUS HISTORIAN.]

CLAPBOARD BOY: [clacking clapboard] Pictures for schools, take 8.

DIRECTOR: Action!

[screen title] A FAMOUS HISTORIAN

FAMOUS HISTORIAN: [gesturing eccentrically] Defeat at the castle seems to have *utterly* disheartened King Arthur. The ferocity of the French taunting took him *completely* by surprise, and Arthur became convinced that a new strategy was required if the quest for the Holy Grail were to be brought to a successful conclusion. Arthur, having consulted his closest knights, decided that they should separate, and search for the Grail individually. Now, this is what they did—

[Just then there is the sound of hoofbeats. Curiously enough, these are probably real hoofbeats, because they sound different from the clapping of coconut halves and because we immediately see...]

[Enter LANCELOT, mounted upon a charger in full gallop.]

LANCELOT: Haaah! [slashes the FAMOUS HISTORIAN a bloody gash across the throat.]

WIFE: [rushing to the side of the fallen FAMOUS HISTORIAN] Frank!

SCENE 12.—SIR ROBIN AND THE THREE-HEADED GIANT

NARRATOR [reading screen title] The Tale of Sir Robin

[The scene is more of the English countryside, though more of a wilderness this time, with small trees arranged in rows, rather orchard-like really.⁴⁰]

NARRATOR: So each of the knights went their separate ways.⁴¹ Sir Robin rode north, through the dark forest of Ewing, accompanied by his favorite minstrels.

[The scene is...wait, I already said that. Enter ROBIN, MINSTREL {playing a lute}, and entourage {playing other medieval instruments, such as pipes and tabor (a small drum)}.]

MINSTREL: [singing] Bravely bold Sir Robin, brought forth from Camelot.

He was not afraid to die. O! Brave Sir Robin.

He was not at all afraid to be killed in nasty ways.

Brave, brave, brave, brave Sir Robin!



³⁹ The credits in the (real) script make a point of noting that this character is decidedly not supposed to be A.J.P. Taylor, apparently an attempt to avoid a lawsuit.

⁴⁰ One wonders if this was perhaps shot in a reforested area of England, so much of that nation's magnificent oak forests having been chopped down over the centuries. And for what? Firewood! Firewood and half-timber houses, which are all well and good in themselves, but they use a hell of a lot of wood if you ask me. And furniture. *Tons* of oak furniture; *huge* tables and chairs and beds and cabinetry and mantelpieces and such. Sure, oak is nice and there was a lot of it, but pine is nice too—although it's a softwood and doesn't take stain as well, but it grows one *hell* of a lot faster.

⁴¹ Technically, this should be 'each...went *his* separate way,' to maintain parallelism.

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[They pass by a signpost that reads {in triplicate} “Camelot 43 {presumably meaning miles or leagues or something in the direction the sign is pointing}. Certain Death 1 {mile—let’s assume it’s miles—in this direction}].

He was not in the least bit scared to be mashed into a pulp,
Or to have his eyes gouged out, and his elbows broken.
To have his kneecaps split, and his body burned away,
And his limbs all hacked and mangled, brave Sir Robin!

[They pass a signpost that reads {also in triplicate} “BEWARE!!!”

His head smashed in and his heart cut out,
And his liver removed and his bowels unplugged,
And his nostrils ripped and his bottom burned off,
And his penis split—



ROBIN: That’s— that’s, uh, that’s enough music for now, lads. Looks like there’s dirty work afoot.

[They pass a third signpost that reads {once again in triplicate} “DEAD PEOPLE ONLY!”

[Enter DENNIS and WOMAN, just passing through, carrying baskets.]⁴²

DENNIS: [To WOMAN] Anarcho-syndicalism is a way of *preserving* freedom.

WOMAN: [To DENNIS] Oh, Dennis, forget about freedom. As long as we’ve both got mud...

[ROBIN and party pass by a tree with three knights pinned to it, skewered by a giant lance.]

THREE-HEADED GIANT: Halt! Who art thou?

MINSTREL: [singing] He is brave Sir Robin, brave Sir Robin, who—

ROBIN: [To MINSTREL] Shut up! [to GIANT] Um, n-n-nobody really. I’m j-just um, just passing through.

THREE-HEADED GIANT: What do you want?

MINSTREL: [singing] To fiiight, and—

ROBIN: [To MINSTREL] Shut up! [to GIANT] Um, oo, n-nothing, nothing really. I, uh, j-j-ust to um, just to p-pass through, good sir knight.

THREE-HEADED GIANT: I’m afraid not!

ROBIN: Ah. W-well, actually I am a Knight of the Round Table.

THREE-HEADED GIANT: You’re a Knight of the Round Table?

ROBIN: I am.

LEFT HEAD: In that case I shall have to kill you.

MIDDLE HEAD: [To LEFT HEAD] Shall I?

RIGHT HEAD: [To LEFT HEAD] Oh, I don’t think so.

MIDDLE HEAD: [To RIGHT HEAD] Well, what do I think?

LEFT HEAD: [To MIDDLE HEAD] Well, I think kill him.

RIGHT HEAD: [To LEFT HEAD] Well let’s be nice to him.

LEFT HEAD: [To RIGHT HEAD] Oh, shut up.⁴³

ROBIN: [To GIANT] Perhaps—

LEFT HEAD: [To ROBIN] And you. [To RIGHT HEAD] Oh, quick get the sword out. I want to cut his head off!

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⁴² In place of this little bit, the (real) script originally had a several more dead knights lying around and a bunch of (live) maidens tied to a tree, one of whom replies to Robin’s cheery greetings with a sad “Bye.”

⁴³ The (real) script included even more of this bickering here, including a callback to Dennis the Serf’s “executive chairman of the week” bit. Originally, Robin was shown dramatically more brave throughout the scene, even badgering the giant to make a decision and such.

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RIGHT HEAD: [To LEFT HEAD] Oh, cut your own head off!

MIDDLE HEAD: [To LEFT HEAD] Yes, do us all a favor!

LEFT HEAD: [To MIDDLE HEAD] What?

RIGHT HEAD: [To LEFT HEAD] Yappin' on all the time.

MIDDLE HEAD: [To RIGHT HEAD] You're lucky. You're not next to him.

LEFT HEAD: [To MIDDLE HEAD] What do you mean?

MIDDLE HEAD: [To LEFT HEAD] You snore.

LEFT HEAD: [To MIDDLE HEAD] Oh, I don't. Anyway, you've got bad breath.

MIDDLE HEAD: [To LEFT HEAD] Well, it's only because you don't brush my teeth.

RIGHT HEAD: [To LEFT HEAD] Oh, stop bitching and let's go have tea.

LEFT HEAD: [To RIGHT HEAD] All right, all right, all right, we'll *kill* him first, and *then* have tea and biscuits.

MIDDLE HEAD: [To LEFT HEAD] Yes.

RIGHT HEAD: [To LEFT HEAD] Oh, not biscuits.

LEFT HEAD: [To RIGHT HEAD] All right, all right, *not* biscuits, but lets *kill him anyway!*

MIDDLE HEAD and RIGHT HEAD: [To each other] Right!

[Meanwhile, Robin has exited unnoticed.]

MIDDLE HEAD: [To others] He buggered off.

RIGHT HEAD: [To MIDDLE HEAD] So he has. He's scampered.⁴⁴

[Cut to ROBIN and party, scampering.]

MINSTREL: [singing] Brave Sir Robin ran away.

ROBIN: No!

MINSTREL: [singing] Bravely ran away, away

ROBIN: I didn't!

MINSTREL: [singing] When danger reared its ugly head,
He bravely turned his tail and fled

ROBIN: No!

MINSTREL: [singing] Yes, brave Sir Robin turned about

ROBIN: [passing by signs again] I didn't!

MINSTREL: [singing] And gallantly he chickened out.
Bravely taking to his feet

ROBIN: I never did!

MINSTREL: [singing] He beat a very brave retreat

ROBIN: Oh, lie!

MINSTREL: [singing] Bravest of the brave, Sir Robin!

ROBIN: I never!

[Exeunt scampering.]

SCENE 13.—MONKS INTRODUCE THE TALE OF SIR GALLAHAD

[A number of animated Franciscan monks trudge across an ornamented platform.]

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⁴⁴ The (real) script ended the scene originally with the giant attacking himself (themselves?) and the maidens commenting wryly on how lucky they were that he didn't have more than three heads.

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ANIMATED MONKS: [singing] Via Jesu Domine

Dona eis requiem.

[One by one, the monks begin bouncing on the diving-board-like end of the platform and diving into an ornamental pond of sorts below, with various cries, shouts, and splashes.]

Via Jesu Domine

Dona eis requiem.

[The third monk goes long and bounces off the leafy end of the G in Galahad,⁴⁵ is thrown into the body of the G—where a father confessor is hearing the whispered sins of another monk—twirls around a branch with much hooting, and winds up upside side before the priest, his robes falling down around his head, exposing his bare buttocks.

ANIMATED PRIEST: [admiringly] Ohhh...

NARRATOR: [reading screen title] The Tale of Sir Galahad.

SCENE 14.—GALAHAD AT CASTLE ANTHRAX

[The scene is a rainy English countryside at night, a much more accurate portrayal of the country than we have heretofore seen in the film. In the distance, wolves can be heard howling. It is dusk.]

[Enter GALAHAD, wet and weary, crawling over brush and muddy ground up a slope toward a distant castle. Cut to a tall, dark castle with a single lit window high in the wall, accompanied by angelic singing, suspended over which is the glowing, unmistakably-beatific form of the Holy Grail. GALAHAD looks over his shoulder one last time, a wolf howls, and the grail is gone, leaving the castle and its single inviting window. GALAHAD scrambles up the slope and makes his way toward the castle.]

GALAHAD: [pounding on door] Open the door! Open the door! In the name of King Arthur, open the doo—

[The door squeaks open. Galahad throws himself inside. The door closes behind him. Enter ZOOT and numerous beautiful nubile girls, accompanied by harp music.]

ZOOT and GIRLS: [warmly] *Hello.*

ZOOT: [holding torch] *Welcome gentle sir knight. Welcome to the Castle Anthrax.*

GALAHAD: The Castle *Anthrax*?

ZOOT: Yes... [sighs] It's not a very good name, is it? Oh! but *we* are nice, and we will attend to your every, *every* need!

GALAHAD: You are the keepers of the Holy Grail?

ZOOT: The what?

GALAHAD: The Grail. It is here?

ZOOT: Oh, but you are tired, and you must rest awhile. [To GIRLS] Midget! Crapper!

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⁴⁵ Yes, the spelling is different now.

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[Enter MIDGET and CRAPPER, two fawning lovelies.]

MIDGET and CRAPPER: Yes, O Zoot?

ZOOT: [To MIDGET and CRAPPER] Prepare a bed for our guest.

MIDGET and CRAPPER: [fawning] Oh thank you, thank you, thank you.

ZOOT: Away! away varletesses! [To GALAHAD, offering her hand and helping him to rise] The beds here are warm and soft...and very, very big.

GALAHAD: Well, look, I-I-uh—

ZOOT: What is your name, handsome knight?

GALAHAD: Sir Galahad...the Chaste.

ZOOT: [closing in] Mine is Zoot...just Zoot. [taking him by the elbow] Oh, but come!

GALAHAD: Look, please! [stopping] In God's name, show me the Grail!

ZOOT: Oh, you have suffered much! You are delirious!

GALAHAD: L-look, I have seen it! It is here, in the—

ZOOT: Sir Galahad! You would not be so ungallant as to refuse our hospitality.

GALAHAD: Well, I-I-uh—

ZOOT: [taking him along again] Oh, I am afraid our life must seem very dull and quiet compared to yours. We are but eight score young blondes and brunettes—all between sixteen and nineteen and a half—cut off in this castle with no one to protect us! Oh, it is a lonely life: bathing, dressing, undressing, making exciting underwear.... [puts away torch and enters chamber] We are just not used to handsome knights. [GALAHAD tries to leave, but she pulls him in, seating him on the big bed] Nay, nay, come, come, you may lie here. [touching his upper, inside thigh⁴⁶] Oh, but you are wounded!

GALAHAD: [brushing her hand away] No, no. I-it's nothing!

ZOOT: Oh, but you must see the doctors immediately! [GALAHAD tries to rise, but she stops him] No, no, please, lie down. [He lies down]

[ZOOT claps twice. Enter PIGLET and WINSTON, two other magically-delicious young ladies.]

PIGLET: [looking GALAHAD over] Well. What seems to be the trouble?

GALAHAD: [To ZOOT] They're *doctors*?!

ZOOT: [To GALAHAD] Uh, they've had a basic medical training, yes.

GALAHAD: [trying to rise] B-but—

ZOOT: [stopping him] Oh, come come, you must try to rest! [to PIGLET and WINSTON] Doctor Piglet, Doctor Winston, practice your art.

[Exit ZOOT]

PIGLET: [kneeling on the bed and undoing GALAHAD's belt] Try to relax.

GALAHAD: Are you sure that's absolutely necessary?

PIGLET: We must examine you.

[WINSTON gingerly raises his surcoat to have a look at his thigh wound.]

GALAHAD: [smacking it back down] There's nothing wrong with that!

PIGLET: [removing his hand and raising his surcoat] Please. We *are* doctors.

GALAHAD: [Sitting up and gathering his sword and shield] Ulk! Get off the bed! I am sworn to chastity!



⁴⁶ Right about *there*, where a little honey drives a girl *crazy*.

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PIGLET: [doctorly] Back to your bed!

GALAHAD: [sitting on the edge of the bed and looking away] Torment me no longer! I have seen the *Grail*!

PIGLET: There's no Grail here.

GALAHAD: [rising to leave] I have seen it. I have seen it. [exits though curtain] I have seen—

[GALAHAD has stumbled into the GIRLS of Castle Anthrax's boudoir, where numerous young ladies stand around in diaphanous slips with lutes and harps and brushes and orangutans and breakfast cereals and—wait, wait, that's later]

GIRLS: Ohhh...

GALAHAD: [clutching his sword and shield close] Oh—

GIRLS: [variously] *Hello*. Hello. Hello. *Hello*. Hello.

[GALAHAD tiptoes around, looking for an exit, thinks he finds it one, and runs headlong {so to speak} into...]

GALAHAD: Zoot!

DINGO: No, I am Zoot's identical twin sister, Dingo.

GALAHAD: [trying to get past her to the door] Oh, well, excuse me, I—

DINGO: [blocking the door with her soft, lightly-clad body] Where are you going?

GALAHAD: I seek the Grail! I have seen it, here in this castle!

DINGO: [To herself] No! Oh, no! Bad, bad Zoot!

GALAHAD: What is it?

DINGO: Oh, wicked, bad, naughty Zoot! [to GALAHAD] She has been setting a light to our beacon, which, I just remembered, is grail-shaped. It's not the first time we've had this problem.

GALAHAD: It's not the *real* Grail?!

DINGO: [To herself] Oh, wicked, bad, *naughty, evil* Zoot! [To GALAHAD, dragging him along back into the boudoir] Oh, she is a naughty person, and she must pay the penalty. [stopping] And here in Castle Anthrax, we have but one punishment for setting alight the grail-shaped beacon: you must tie her down on a bed and spank her!

GIRLS: A spanking! A spanking!

DINGO: You must spank her well. And after you have spanked her, you may deal with her as you like. And then...spank me.

GIRLS: [variously] And spank me. And me. And me.

DINGO: Yes, yes, you must give us all a good spanking!

GIRLS: [prancing around] A spanking! A spanking!

DINGO: And after the spanking...the oral sex.

GIRLS: [more prancing about] Oral sex! Oh, thank you! Oral sex!

GALAHAD: Well, I—uh...

[Enter LANCELOT and other knights]

GALAHAD: [being tugged away by DINGO] Well, I could stay a *bit* longer.

LANCELOT: [grabbing GALAHAD] Sir Galahad!

GALAHAD: Oh, hello.

LANCELOT: [getting between GALAHAD and DINGO and pushing him away] Quick!

GALAHAD: What?

LANCELOT: Quick!

GALAHAD: *Why*?

LANCELOT: You're in great peril!

GALAHAD: No I'm not.

ZOOT: [grabbing LANCELOT] No he isn't!

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LANCELOT: [raising his sword] Silence, foul temptress!

GALAHAD: [lowering LANCELOT's sword] Now look, it's not important.

LANCELOT: [pushing GALAHAD along in front of him as the other knights block the advance of DINGO and her quivering minions⁴⁷] Quick! Come on, and we'll cover your escape!

GALAHAD: Look, I'm fine!

LANCELOT: Come on!

GALAHAD: Now look, I can tackle this lot single-handed!

DINGO: [pulling at LANCELOT's arm as he pushes GALAHAD toward the door] Yes! Let him tackle us single-handed!

GIRLS: Yes! Tackle us single-handed!

LANCELOT: [to GIRLS, shuffling along] No. [to GALAHAD] Sir Galahad, come!

GALAHAD: [stopping] No, really, honestly, I can go back and handle this lot easily!

DINGO: [stopping] Oh, yes, let him handle us easily.⁴⁸

GIRLS: Yes, yes!

LANCELOT: [giving GALAHAD a good shove] No.

GALAHAD: [being rushed out the door] Please, please! I can defeat them! There's *only a hundred and fifty of them!*

[Exit LANCELOT, GALAHAD, and the other knights close behind.]

DINGO: [pitifully, stopping] Yes, yes, he'll beat us easily! We haven't a chance...

GIRLS: [in despair] Yes, yes. We haven't a chance....

[The door slams closed.]

DINGO: [to herself] Oh...shit.⁴⁹

[Outside, in the rain, LANCELOT is still rushing GALAHAD off against his will.⁵⁰]

LANCELOT: We were in the nick of time. You were in great peril.

GALAHAD: I don't think I *was*.

LANCELOT: Yes you were. You were in *terrible* peril.

GALAHAD: Look, let me go back in there and *face* the peril.

LANCELOT: No. It's too perilous.

GALAHAD: Look, I do feel as a knight I should sample as much peril as I can.

LANCELOT: No, we've got to find the Holy Grail. [rushing him around the corner] Come on!

GALAHAD: Oh, let me have just a little bit of peril?

✂

⁴⁷ And no quivering minion's advance ought to be blocked, if you want my opinion.

⁴⁸ Nudge, nudge.

⁴⁹ There is, perhaps, no moment in the film more moving than this.

⁵⁰ In the English legends, Galahad was the only knight to actually achieve the Grail, for he was the most pure and chaste of all Arthur's knights, so much so, in fact that he was, as Python would say, a right bore. It was Lancelot, Percival, Bors, and Gawain who were the interesting knights of the Grail. Gawain failed outright, Lancelot only managed a peek at the Grail, Bors succeeded in the quest but could not achieve the Grail because he had lost his virginity, and Percival just managed to avoid breaking his vow of chastity but could not achieve the Grail either because he was so sorely tempted. It is a combination of the stories of Percival and Bors that Python's tale of Galahad is based on. The tale of Sir Bors contains the tower full of maidens who turn out to be fiends, while the tale of Sir Percival contains the overwhelming temptation and the thigh wound, but it is at the *end* of the story that Percival gets the thigh wound (a traditional metaphor for castration) and he gives it to *himself* as punishment for being tempted. It is Percival's story (in the French version) that also includes a group of maidens who attend the Grail in the castle of the Fisher King (a.k.a. the Wounded King). These are known as the Grail Maidens (those clever scholars).

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LANCELOT: No. It's unhealthy.

GALAHAD: Bet you're gay!

LANCELOT: No I'm not!⁵¹

SCENE 15.—SEGUÉ TO ARTHUR AND BEDEVERE

[The Book of the Film lies open to a new page, accompanied by a photo of the end of the previous scene. The furry claw is back to turn the pages.]

NARRATOR: [reading] Sir Lancelot had saved⁵² Sir Gallahad⁵³ from almost certain temptation.⁵⁴

[Furry claw hand turns page to reveal a photo of the beginning of the next scene opposite the words 'Scene 24.'⁵⁵⁵⁶

NARRATOR: [no longer reading] But they were still no nearer the Grail. Meanwhile, King Arthur and Sir Bedevere, not more than a swallow's flight away, had discovered something.

[pause]

Oh, that's an unladen swallow's flight, obviously. I mean, they were more than *two laden* swallow's flights away. Four, really, if they had a coconut on a line between them. I mean, if the birds were walking and dragging—⁵⁷

UNIT OF MEDIEVAL INFANTRY ARRANGED IN A LINE ON A HILL: Get on with it!

NARRATOR: Oh, anyway, on to scene twenty-four, which is a *smashing* scene with some *lovely* acting, in which Arthur discovers a vital clue, in which there aren't any swallows, although I think you can hear a starling—whelp!

SCENE 16.⁵⁸—ARTHUR, BEDEVERE, AND THE OLD MAN

[The scene is a ramshackle dry stone hut with a little plume of smoke rising out of it. Nearby stand PATSY and another porter. Cut to the interior, where a deformed OLD MAN sits cackling by a crackling fire among a bird cage, loose roofing, and other junk. ARTHUR and BEDEVERE sit with him.⁵⁹]



⁵¹ It should be noted that if anybody needed saving from sexual temptation, it was Lancelot. *Nobody* got more babes than Lance, not even Arthur, and Arthur was almost as big on adultery as Guenevere. Mordred may have been Arthur's son by his half-sister Morgan La Fey, but Galahad was Lancelot's son by Elaine, sister of Morgause and half-sister of Arthur. And that's aside from Lancelot's long-term affair with Guenevere. And who *knows* what went on when Lancelot fled Camelot and wandered England in madness...? Oh, there I go again.

⁵² The book says 'saves.'

⁵³ Yes, the spelling changes again. Perhaps the fellow we saw in the scene before was a different knight, kind of like Balin and Balan; similar men, but different enough to be important, yet it being important that they be confused.

⁵⁴ This is one of those milquetoast phrasings that *really* makes my skin crawl, things like 'nearly put in possible danger' and 'could have a potential risk.' The words *temptation*, *danger*, and *risk* have the notion of possibility *built into them*. It isn't necessary to water them down further with subjunctive tense and equivocal phrasing. It's downright silly! Oh yeah, that's what this is all about. Sorry.

⁵⁵ The old man in this scene reappears in scene 29 and is referred to as "the old man from scene 24." It should be noted that, although this manuscript fails to number the scenes in such a way as that this line makes sense, the (real) script of the film numbers this scene as scene 16, while scene 24 is actually (our) scene 22, "Lancelot 8, Swamp Castle 0." Incidentally, our scene 24 is "Arthur and the Knights of Ni, Take 2."

⁵⁶ This is too many footnotes for such a little scene, isn't it? Be honest. I should cut down, shouldn't I?

⁵⁷ This is another callback to the opening scene, which is well on the way to becoming a running joke.

⁵⁸ Python apparently numbered the scenes so that this was scene 24.

⁵⁹ This scene is typical of the Arthurian Romances. Hermits popped up everywhere to help or hinder the hero for no good reason. I mean, when you think about it, if a person has decided to become a hermit for a living, you would think that that meant he didn't want to have anything to do with other people. But hermits in the Arthurian Cycles were gadding about, bothering people, spouting prophesies like they were going out of style....

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OLD MAN: Ah, hee he he ha!

ARTHUR: And this enchanter of whom you speak, he has seen the Grail?

OLD MAN: Ha ha he he he he!

ARTHUR: Where does he live? Old man, where does he live?

OLD MAN: [rubbing hands together] He knows of a cave, a cave which no man has entered.

ARTHUR: And the Grail... The Grail is there?

OLD MAN: Very much danger, for beyond the cave lies the Gorge of Eternal Peril⁶⁰, which no man has ever crossed.

ARTHUR: But the Grail! Where is the *Grail*!?

OLD MAN: Seek you the Bridge of Death.⁶¹

ARTHUR: The Bridge of Death, which leads to the Grail?

OLD MAN: [fading away] Hee hee ha ha....

[Suddenly, the shack is gone and ARTHUR and BEDEVERE sit before pile of smoldering leaves in the open wilderness, bewildered. They stand.]

SCENE 17.—ARTHUR AND THE KNIGHTS OF NI⁶², TAKE 1

[A foggy wood. Enter ARTHUR and BEDEVERE and their porters, the slop-slop of their coconuts echoing eerily off the trees. Snap goes a twig and ARTHUR spins to glimpse a tall, horned figure in the foggy shadows. Snap! There's another. He glances all about nervously. There are several figures dashing around! They've got us surrounded! Oh God! NO!—Sorry. Sorry, I got a little carried away.]

[Enter the HEAD KNIGHT OF NI, a huge, antler-helmed man of grave countenance.⁶³]

HEAD KNIGHT OF NI: Nnni! [the Knights of the Round Table cringe]

OTHER KNIGHTS OF NI: [in background] Ni! Ni! Ni!

ARTHUR: Who are you?

HEAD KNIGHT: We are the Knights Who Say... Ni!

KNIGHTS OF NI: Ni!

ARTHUR: No! Not the Knights Who Say Ni!

HEAD KNIGHT: The same!

BEDEVERE: [To ARTHUR] Who are they?

HEAD KNIGHT: We are the keepers of the sacred words: Ni, Peng, and Neuuwhom!⁶⁴

KNIGHTS OF NI: Neuuwhom!

ARTHUR: [To BEDEVERE] Those who hear them seldom live to tell the tale!

HEAD KNIGHT: The Knights Who Say Ni demand a sacrifice!

ARTHUR: Knights of Ni, we are but simple travelers who seek the enchanter who lives beyond these woods.

KNIGHTS OF NI: Ni! Ni! Ni! Ni!

✂—————

⁶⁰ There is that equivocal phrasing again. 'Eternal peril' would mean that the person suffers continuous *risk* of harm, as opposed to continuous harm. 'Gorge of Eternal Pain' would have been a better name—I mean, if you wanted to be clear. And it could be more specific, like the Gorge of Eternal Gout or the Gorge of Gastrointestinal Distress.

⁶¹ Now *there's* a good, solid, unforgiving name!

⁶² Python's spelling, from the (real) script.

⁶³ The Head Knight of Ni can only possibly remind one of the legendary Celtic nature-figure, the Master of the Hunt, who would race through the dark, misty forests of Britain with his pack of wild hounds, entrancing any who met them, forcing them to join in their mad hunt, running recklessly through the wilderness till the break of dawn. Ooh, it just makes your skin prickle, doesn't it?

⁶⁴ Python spells this two different ways in the (real) script; we chose a third way, just to be contrary.

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KNIGHTS OF THE ROUND TABLE: [greatly pained] Oh, ow!

HEAD KNIGHT: We shall say 'ni' again to you if you do not appease us.

ARTHUR: Well, what is it you want?

HEAD KNIGHT: We want...**a shrubbery!**

[dramatic musical sting]

ARTHUR: A *what*?

HEAD KNIGHT: Ni! Ni!

ARTHUR and PARTY: Oh, ow!

ARTHUR: Please, please! No more! We will find a shrubbery.

HEAD KNIGHT: You must return here with a shrubbery or else you will never pass through this wood...*alive*.

ARTHUR: O Knights of Ni, you are just and fair, and we will return with a shrubbery.

HEAD KNIGHT: One that looks nice.

ARTHUR: Of course.

HEAD KNIGHT: And not too expensive.

ARTHUR: Yes.

HEAD KNIGHTS: Now...go!

[Cut to constables looking over body of FAMOUS HISTORIAN and speaking with WIFE from scene 9.]

SCENE 18.—A SCRIBE INTRODUCES THE TALE OF SIR LANCELOT

[screen title] The Tale of Sir Launcelot.⁶⁵

[With a resounding boom, a SCRIBE's hand and quill pen is shaken such that it scribbles all over the page. Enter SCRIBE, seated at desk.]

SCRIBE: Dooughhh! Hrmph!

[Boom]

[The SCRIBE rises and enters the tower stairwell, descends around and around, flight after flight of stairs, mumbling all the way, accompanied by great resounding booms.]

SCRIBE: [tripping and crashing into something off camera] Oh!

[The SCRIBE crosses the floor and exit the cathedral tower, only to find the sun and clouds, with great legs sticking out of them, leaping up and down and making a tremendous racket.]

SCRIBE: [To all] Stop that! Stop that! Stop that! G'on. Clear off! Go on! Go Away! G—Go away! [Exit clouds. To sun] And you! Clear off! [Exit sun, setting. To himself] Hmmph. Bloody weather.

NARRATOR: [reading screen title] The Tale of Sir Launcelot.

SCENE 19.—PRINCE HERBERT YEARNS FOR A CERTAIN...SOMEONE...

[The scene is a large, rather run-down English castle with several squat towers and one somewhat tall one. Inside the tall tower, standing before the window are FATHER and HERBERT.]

FATHER: One day, lad, all this will be yours!

HERBERT: What, the curtains?

FATHER: [whacking him on the back of the head] No, not the curtains, lad. All that you can see! Stretched out over the hills and valleys of this land! This'll be your kingdom, lad!

HERBERT: But, Mother—

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⁶⁵ That's right, now *his* name has changed spelling!

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FATHER: Father. I'm Father.

HERBERT: But Father, I don't *want* any of that.

FATHER: [wandering to and fro] Listen, lad. I've built this kingdom up from nothing. When I started here, all there was was swamp. All the kings said I was daft to build a castle in a swamp, but I built it all the same, just to show 'em. It sank into the swamp—so I built a second one. That sank into the swamp. So I built a third one. That burned down, fell over, then sank into the swamp. But the *fourth* one stayed up. And that's what your gonna get, lad: the *strongest* castle in these islands.

HERBERT: But I don't want any of that. I'd rather—

FATHER: Rather what?!

HERBERT: I'd rather... just...

[music]

...sing!

FATHER: Stop that, stop that! You're not going to do a song while I'm here. Now listen lad, in twenty minutes you're getting married to a girl whose father owns the biggest tracts of open land in Britain.⁶⁶

HERBERT: But I don't want land.

FATHER: Listen, Alice—

HERBERT: 'Erbert.

FATHER: Herbert. We live in a bloody *swamp*. We need all the land we can get.

HERBERT: But I don't like her.

FATHER: [batting him about] *Don't like her?! What's wrong with her?* She's beautiful, she's rich, she's got huge...[gesturing suggestively⁶⁷] tracts of land.

HERBERT: I know, but I want the girl that I marry to have...a certain...

[music]

special...something...⁶⁸

FATHER: [To the sound man off camera] Cut that out, cut that out. [to HERBERT, grabbing him by the lapels] Look, you're marryin' Princess Lucky, so you'd better get used to the idea. [smacks him. To the GUARDS] Guards! [Cut to GUARDS standing at door with bill-hooks or glaive-guisarmes] Make sure the Prince⁶⁹ doesn't leave this room until I come and get 'im. [turns to leave]

GUARD #1: Not to leave the room even if you come and get him.

GUARD #2: Hic!

FATHER: [turning back. To GUARD #1] No, no. Until I come and get 'im. [turns to leave]

GUARD #1: Until you come and get him, we're not to enter the room.

FATHER: [turning back] No, no, no. You *stay* in the room and make sure 'e doesn't leave.

GUARD #1: And you'll come and get him.

GUARD #2: Hic!

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⁶⁶ Then apparently her father is a Danish Viking chieftain, because it was the Viking hordes that owned the biggest parts of the British Isles at that time. The Danelaw, as it was called, was essentially an independent nation on the northeast of 'England,' and not beholden to English kings at all. In all likelihood, it was the existence of these people that forced Old Saxon to meld with Old Norse to produce Old English, the precursor of our own language. The name 'Lucky' is, however, of later Dutch origin (source: American Heritage Dictionary).

⁶⁷ Say *that* three times fast.

⁶⁸ Syphilis?

⁶⁹ If Herbert is a prince, his father must logically be a king, right? Well, king of what? Mercia? Wessex? There were a lot of petty kings around at that time, but not many kings of swamps. He sounds like he's from lower London, if you ask me, but London isn't built on a swamp.

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FATHER: Right. [turns to leave]

GUARD #1: We don't need to do anything, apart from just stop him entering the room.

FATHER: [turns back] No, no. Leaving the room.

GUARD #1: Leaving the room, yes.

FATHER: All right?

GUARD #1: Right. [FATHER turns to leave once again] Oh, if-if-if, uh, if-if-if, uh, if-if-if we...

FATHER: [turns back] Yes, what is it?

GUARD #1: Oh, if-if, oh—

FATHER: Look, it's quite simple.

GUARD #1: Uh...

FATHER: [To GUARD #2] You just stay here, and make sure 'e doesn't leave the room. All right? [turns to leave]

GUARD #2: Hic!

GUARD #1: [turning to stop FATHER from leaving] Oh, I remember. Uh, can he leave the room with us?

FATHER: [To GUARD #1] N— No no no. You just keep him in here, and make sure—

GUARD #1: Oh, yes, we'll keep him in here, obviously. But if he *had* to leave and we *were* with him—

FATHER: No, no, [to GUARD #2] just keep him in here—

GUARD #1: Until you, or anyone else,—

FATHER: [To GAURD #1] No, not anyone else, just me—

GUARD #1: Just you.

GUARD #2: Hic!

FATHER: Get back.

GUARD #1: Get back.

FATHER: Right? [turns to leave yet again]

GUARD #1: Right, we'll stay here until you get back.

FATHER: [stops] And, uh, make sure 'e doesn't leave.

GUARD #1: What?

FATHER: [turning back yet again] *Make sure 'e doesn't leave.*

GUARD #1: The Prince?

FATHER: Yes, make sure 'e doesn't leave.

GUARD #1: Oh, yes, of course. [pointing at GUARD #2] I thought you meant *him*. Y'know, it seemed a bit daft, me havin' to guard him when he's a guard.

FATHER: Is that clear?

GUARD #2: Hic!

GUARD #1: Oh, quite clear, no problems.

FATHER: Right. [starts to leave. GUARDS follow immediately] Where are you going?

GUARD #1: We're coming with you.

FATHER: No no, I want you to stay here and make sure 'e doesn't leave.

GUARD #1: Oh, I see. Right.

HERBERT: But, Father!

FATHER: [turning back yet again, to HERBERT] Shut your noise, you! [pointing to wedding suit] And get that suit on!

[music swells]

FATHER: [returning, yes, once again] And no singing!

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GUARD #2: Hic!

FATHER: [stops] Oh, go get a glass of water.

[HERBERT coyly writes a note and attaches it to an arrow. The intensely stupid GUARD #1 smiles benignly. HERBERT takes bow and—plunk—shoots the arrow out the window. GUARD #1 smiles benignly again.]

SCENE 20.—SIR LAUNCELOT RECEIVES AN URGENT CRY OF DISTRESS

[The scene is outside Swamp Castle, where Lancelot is passing by, leaping from stone to stone to cross a stream, and giving his porter CONCORDE praise for correctly foleying his imaginary horse's hoofbeats.⁷⁰]

LAUNCELOT: Well taken, Concorde!

CONCORDE: Thank you, sir! Most kind.

LAUNCELOT: And again... [leaping] Over we go! Good. Steady! And now, the big one... [leaps] Ooof! Come on, Concorde!

[Thwonk, HERBERT's arrow hits CONCORDE in the chest]

CONCORDE: [keeling over] Message for you, sir.

LAUNCELOT: [kneeling to take CONCORDE in his arms] Concorde! Concorde, speak to me! [reads note] "To whoever finds this note:⁷¹ I have been imprisoned by my father, who wishes me to marry against my will. Please, please, please come and rescue me. I am in the tall tower of Swamp Castle." At last! A call, a cry of distress! *This* could be the sign that leads us to the Holy Grail!⁷² [To CONCORDE] Brave, brave Concorde! You shall not have died in vain!

CONCORDE: [raising his head] Uh, I'm-I'm not quite dead, sir.⁷³

LAUNCELOT: [drawing sword] Well, you shall not have been *mortally wounded* in vain!

CONCORDE: Uh, I-I think uh, I could pull through, sir.

LAUNCELOT: [a little dejected] Oh, I see.

CONCORDE: [trying to rise] Actually, I think I'm all right to come with you—

LAUNCELOT: [stopping him] No, no, sweet Concorde! Stay here! [rises] I will send help as soon as I have accomplished a daring and heroic rescue in my own particular...[sighs]

CONCORDE: Idiom, sir?

LAUNCELOT: Idiom!

CONCORDE: No, I feel fine, actually, sir.

LAUNCELOT: Farewell, sweet Concorde!

[Exit LAUNCELOT]

CONCORDE: I'll—uh, I'll just stay here, then, shall I, sir? [to himself] Yeah.

SCENE 21.—SIR LAUNCELOT ASSAULTS SWAMP CASTLE

[Inside the Great Hall of Swamp Castle, handmaidens decorate the fat bride and braid her horse-like hair. Wedding guests mingle near the fire. A hind is spitted. Minstrels play. Maidens dance a Morris dance.]

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⁷⁰ These ninnies act as though a horse could leap from stone to stone to cross a stream. Horses are very strong swimmers and can cross even good-sized rivers with a rider on their backs. It is patently absurd that a horse might choose to go tip-toeing across rocks rather than just stamping its way through a pathetic little stream like the one in this scene, coconuts or no coconuts! Thank you; I just needed to get that off my chest.

⁷¹ This should be, technically-speaking, "To whomever finds this note..."

⁷² What logic is this? Since when do Holy Grails send out cries of distress? Only Lancelot would make this Achilles' leap of logic.

⁷³ Now we get a callback to the corpse-collector scene. You see how this works? We're building running jokes here.

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[Outside, at the main gate, more guests enter, passing by the GUARDSMEN]

GUEST: Mornin'.

GUARDSMAN: [eating apple] Morning.

[LAUNCELOT charges across green to the sound of drumming]

[GUARDSMEN peer out at him.]

[LAUNCELOT continues to approach. However, he is not closer that he was a moment ago.]

[GUARDSMEN continue to peer out at him curiously. This goes on a total of five times.]

[Suddenly—]

LAUNCELOT: Ha-ha! [stabs one guardsman, enters castle]

OTHER GUARDSMAN: [dimly] Hey!

[LAUNCELOT lays waste to the entire wedding party, whacking servants, stabbing maidens, chopping the minstrels' pavilion support down, kicking guests, and doing in guardsmen, even chopping at flowers on the wall of the stairway, laughing maniacally all the way, until at last he bursts through the door of the top chamber in the tall tower.]

GUARD #1: [trying to remember his orders] Now, you're not allowed to enter the room—[LAUNCELOT stabs him] Uurrh!

LAUNCELOT: [kneeling before HERBERT] O fair one, behold your humble servant Sir Launcelot of Camelot. I have come to take—[realizing his mistake and rising] Oh, I'm terribly sorry.

HERBERT: You got my note!

LAUNCELOT: Uh, well, I got *a* note.

HERBERT: [taking LAUNCELOT's hand] You've come to rescue me!

LAUNCELOT: Uh, well, no. You see—

HERBERT: I knew that someone would, I knew that somewhere out there...there must be...

[music]

...someone...

[Enter FATHER]

FATHER: [To sound man] Stop that, stop that, stop it! Stop it! [to LAUNCELOT] Who are you?

HERBERT: [To FATHER] I'm your son!

FATHER: [To HERBERT] No, not you.

LAUNCELOT: I'm Sir Launcelot, sir.

HERBERT: He's come to rescue me, father.

LAUNCELOT: [To HERBERT] Well, let's not jump to conclusions.

FATHER: [To LAUNCELOT] Did you kill all those guards?

LAUNCELOT: Uh...oh, yes! Sorry.

FATHER: They cost fifty pounds each!

LAUNCELOT: Well, I'm awfully sorry, I'm— I really can explain everything.

HERBERT: [Getting bedsheet rope out] Don't be afraid of him, Sir Launcelot, I've got a rope all ready! [Begins tying it around bedpost]

FATHER: You killed eight wedding guests in all!

LAUNCELOT: Well, you see, the thing is, I thought your son was a lady.

FATHER: I can understand that.

HERBERT: [taking rope to window] Hurry, Sir Launcelot! Hurry!

FATHER: [To HERBERT] Shut up! [to LAUNCELOT] You only killed the bride's father, that's all!



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LAUNCELOT: Well, I really didn't mean to...

FATHER: Didn't *mean* to?! You put your sword right through his head!

LAUNCELOT: Oh, dear. Is he all right?

FATHER: You even kicked the bride in the chest! This is going to cost me a fortune!

[HERBERT crawls out the window and hangs just over the edge.]

LAUNCELOT: Well, I can explain. I was in the forest, um, riding north from Camelot, when I got this *note*, you see—

FATHER: Camelot? Are you from, uh, Camelot?

HERBERT: Hurry, Sir Launcelot!

LAUNCELOT: Uh, I am a Knight of King Arthur, sir.

FATHER: Pretty nice castle, Camelot. Uh, pretty good *pig* country....

LAUNCELOT: Yes.

HERBERT: Hurry! I'm ready!

FATHER: Would you, uh, like to come and have a drink?

LAUNCELOT: Well, that's, uh, awfully nice of you...

HERBERT: I am ready!

LAUNCELOT: ...I mean to be, so understanding.

[FATHER cuts HERBERT's escape rope.]

HERBERT: Oooh! [Exit HERBERT, stage down]

LAUNCELOT: Um, I think when I'm in this idiom, I sometimes get a bit, uh, sort of carried away... [Exit LAUNCELOT]

FATHER: [Exiting] Oh, don't worry about that....⁷⁴

HERBERT: Oooh!

[splat]

SCENE 22.—LAUNCELOT 8, SWAMP CASTLE 0

[In the Great Hall of Swamp Castle again, the maidens wail as the guests tend to their wounds. Baskets of fruit and platters of meat lie scattered all about.]

FATHER: Well, this is the main hall. We're going to have all this knocked through, and made into one big, uh, living room.

GUEST: There he is!

[The guests rush LAUNCELOT on the stairs.]

FATHER: [To himself] Oh, bloody 'ell.

LAUNCELOT: [launching into his idiom] Ha-ha!

[LAUNCELOT begins cutting down guests again.]

FATHER: [Grabbing LAUNCELOT by the arm and pulling him back up the stairs] Hold it, hold it! Please!

LAUNCELOT: Sorry, sorry. See what I mean? I just get carried away. I really must— [To guests] Sorry, sorry! Sorry, everyone!

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⁷⁴ Lancelot really was a complete savage when it came to knight-errantry, having literally picked up the role where Balin the Sauvage (a.k.a. the Knight-with-the-two-swords) left off, by taking up Balin's cursed sword. He joined the underdog in every fight he came upon, slew anybody who got in his way (including Gaheis and Gareth, who were guarding Guenevere when Lancelot came to save her from being burned at the stake, which irked their brother Gawain to no end), porked his courtly love (Queen Guenevere) in her chambers at Camelot, and screwed Elaine after he saved her (thereby begetting Galahad). Lancelot's problem was that idiom he's on about. He was the perfect courtly knight, but the quest for the Holy Grail required the perfect *holy* knight, and Lance just wasn't up to it.

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GUEST: 'E's killed the best man!

[guests yell]

FATHER: Hold it, please! Hold it! This is Sir Launcelot from the gorge of Camelot, a very brave and influential knight, and my special guest here today.

LAUNCELOT: Hello.

GUEST: He killed my auntie!

[more yelling]

FATHER: Please, please! This is supposed to be a happy occasion! Let's not bicker and argue about 'o killed 'o. We are here today to witness the union of two young people in the joyful bond of the holy wedlock. [murmuring among the guests] Unfortunately, one of them, my son 'Erbert, has just fallen to his death. [more murmuring] But I think I've not lost a son, so much as...gained a daughter! [guests applaud] For, since the tragic death of her father—

ANOTHER GUEST: He's not *quite* dead!⁷⁵

FATHER: Since the near fatal *wounding* of her father—

ANOTHER GUEST [the same one as before]: He's getting better!

FATHER: [giving the nod to a guardsman] For, since her own father... who, when he seemed *about* to recover, suddenly felt the icy hand of Death upon him...

[guardsman stabs bride's father]

ANOTHER GUEST: [also the same as the one before] Oh, he's died!

FATHER: And I want his only daughter to look upon me...as her own dad—in a very real, and legally-binding sense. [guest applaud] And I feel sure that the merger—uh, the union—between the Princess and the brave, but *dangerous*, Sir Launcelot of Camelot—

LAUNCELOT: What?

[Enter CONCORDE, carrying HERBERT]

ANOTHER GUEST [yes, still the same one]: Look! The dead Prince!

GUESTS: [pointing] Ohh, yes! Yes!

CONCORDE: He's not *quite* dead!⁷⁶

HERBERT: Ooh, I feel much better.

FATHER: [to HERBERT] You fell out of the tall tower, you creep!

[CONCORDE sets HERBERT on a table and backs away.]

HERBERT: No, I was saved at the last minute.

FATHER: How?!

HERBERT: Well, I'll tell you.

[music swells]

FATHER: [dashing down among guests] Not like that! Not like that! No, stop it! STOP!

GUESTS: [singing] He's going to tell! He's going to tell!

FATHER: Shut up!

GUESTS: [singing] He's going to tell! He's going to tell!
He's going to tell! He's going to tell!
He's going to tell about his great escape
Oh he fell a long, long way



⁷⁵ Here's another callback to the corpse collector scene. This joke is picking up steam.

⁷⁶ And with *this* callback, the not-quite-dead gag is now a full-bore running joke. Hooray!

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But he's here with us today

CONCORDE: [Overlapping, to LAUNCELOT] Quickly, sir! This way!

LAUNCELOT: [To CONCORDE] No, it's not in my idiom! I must escape more....[sighs]

CONCORDE: Dramatically, sir?

LAUNCELOT: Dramatically!

[Leaps from staircase, swinging on rope]

Hee! Ha!

[Crash. Swings to a stop as guests finish song with "What a won-der-ful es-cape!" and cheering.]

[To guests] Excuse me...could, uh, could somebody give me a push, please?

SCENE 23.—ARTHUR AND THE CYNICAL SHRUBBER

[The scene is a medieval English village, presumably different from the ones we've seen before, but markedly similar. There is the horrible sound of a cat screeching repeatedly, which is no wonder, because an OLD CRONE is soon seen beating a cat against a post.⁷⁷]

[Enter ARTHUR, BEDEVERE, and their porters, clapping along the cobblestone street.⁷⁸]

ARTHUR: [halting] Old crone! Is there anywhere in this town where we could buy a shrubbery!

[dramatic chord]

CRONE: Who sent you?⁷⁹

ARTHUR: The Knights Who Say Ni.

CRONE: [terrified] Agh! No! Never! We have no shrubberies here.

ARTHUR: If you do not tell us where we can buy a shrubbery, my friend and I will say— We will say... 'ni'.

CRONE: [greatly pained] Agh! Do your worst!

ARTHUR: Very well! If you will not assist us voluntarily.... Ni!

CRONE: No! Never! No shrubberies!

ARTHUR: Ni!

BEDEVERE: Nu! Nu!

ARTHUR: [To BEDEVERE] No, no, no, no. It's not that, it's 'ni'.

BEDEVERE: Nu!

ARTHUR: No, no— 'ni'. You're not doing it properly.

BEDEVERE: Nu! Ni!

ARTHUR: That's it, that's it, you've got it.

ARTHUR and BEDEVERE: [To OLD CRONE] Ni! Ni!

[Enter ROGER THE SHRUBBER, atop an oxcart.]

ROGER: Are you saying 'ni' to that old woman?

ARTHUR: [To ROGER] Um, yes.

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⁷⁷ Cats were, in fact, quite despised in medieval times, associated as they were with Satan and witchcraft. For hundreds of years, cats were singled out for persecution and tortured and killed by the thousands, sometimes in great massacres. All this almost certainly led to the huge infestations of rats and other rodents during the period, which undeniably produced the proliferation of fleas and other pests, which in turn unquestionably contributed to the enormity of the plagues Europe suffered during the same period. The ignorant, superstitious, kitty-hating bastards. They deserved it.

⁷⁸ Well they're not really clapping *on* the cobblestone street; they're clapping two halves of a coconut together, but by now you get the idea.

⁷⁹ This is a precious bit of acting here that the crone gives us.

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ROGER: [To himself] Oh, what sad times are these when passing ruffians can say ‘ni’ at will to old ladies. There is a pestilence upon this land. Nothing is sacred. Even those who arrange and design shrubberies are under considerable economic stress at this period in history.⁸⁰

ARTHUR: Did you say ‘shrubberies’?

ROGER: Yes. Shrubberies are my trade. I am a shrubber. My name is Roger the Shrubber. I arrange, design, and sell shrubberies.

BEDEVERE: [To ROGER] Ni!

ARTHUR: [To BEDEVERE] No! No, no, no! No!

SCENE 24.⁸¹—ARTHUR AND THE KNIGHTS OF NI, TAKE 2

[The scene is again the forest of the KNIGHTS OF NI. ARTHUR and BEDEVERE, et al. stand before them. A shrubbery, complete with little white picket fence, stands between them.]

ARTHUR: O Knights of Ni, we have brought you your shrubbery. May we go now?

HEAD KNIGHT OF NI: It is a good shrubbery. I like the laurels particularly. But there is one small problem.

ARTHUR: What is that?

HEAD KNIGHT: We are now...*no longer* the Knights Who Say Ni.

OTHER KNIGHT OF NI: Ni!

HEAD KNIGHT: [To OTHER KNIGHT] Shh shh. [To ARTHUR] We are now the Knights Who Say Ecky-Ecky-Ecky-Ecky-Pikang-Zoom-Boing-Gumzowehzeh....

OTHER KNIGHT OF NI: Ni.

HEAD KNIGHT: Therefore, we must give you a test.

ARTHUR: What is this test, O Knights of—[sigh] Knights Who ’Til Recently Said Ni?

HEAD KNIGHT: Firstly, you must find...*another shrubbery*!

[dramatic musical sting]

ARTHUR: Not another shrubbery!

HEAD KNIGHT: Then, when you have found the shrubbery, you must place it here beside this shrubbery—only slightly higher, so you get a two-level effect with a little path running down the middle.

OTHER KNIGHTS OF NI: A path! A path! Ni!

HEAD KNIGHT: Then, when you have found the shrubbery, you must cut down the mightiest tree in the forest...wiiiith...a *herring*! [displays herring]

[dramatic musical sting]

ARTHUR: We shall do no such thing!

HEAD KNIGHT: Oh, please.

ARTHUR: Cut down a *tree* with a *herring*? It can’t be done!

KNIGHTS OF NI: [greatly pained] Aaaaugh! Aaaaugh!

HEAD KNIGHT: Don’t say that word!

ARTHUR: What word?

HEAD KNIGHT: I cannot tell. Suffice it to say is one of the words the Knights of Ni cannot hear.

ARTHUR: How can we *not* say the word if you don’t tell us what it is?

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⁸⁰ In all likelihood, this is entirely true, and yet somehow moot.

⁸¹ I—I mean we—feel compelled to point out again that, while this scene obviously doesn’t contain the character referred to in scene 29 as “the old man from scene 24,” neither does scene 24 in the (real) script of the film. That character instead appears in (our) scene 16, (real) scene 14.

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KNIGHTS OF NI: Aaaaugh! Aaaugh!

ARTHUR: What, 'is'?

HEAD KNIGHT: No, not 'is' We couldn't get very far in life not saying 'is'.

BEDEVERE: My liege, it's Sir Robin!

[Enter SIR ROBIN, with entourage]

MINSTREL: [singing] Packing it in and packing it up and pissing about

Yes, bravely he is throwing in the sponge....

ARTHUR: [To ROBIN] Oh, Robin!

ROBIN: My liege! It's good to see you!

KNIGHTS: Aaaaugh!

HEAD KNIGHT: [covering ears] He said the word!

ARTHUR: Surely you've not given up your quest for the Holy Grail?

MINSTREL: [singing] He is sneaking away and bugging up—

ROBIN: [to MINSTREL] Shut up! [to ARTHUR] No, no, no— far from it.

HEAD KNIGHT: He said the word again!

ROBIN: I was looking for it...

KNIGHTS OF NI: Aaaaugh!

ROBIN: ...Uh, here, here in this forest.

ARTHUR: No, it is far from this —

KNIGHTS OF NI: Aaaaugh!

HEAD KNIGHT: Aaaaugh! Stop saying the word!

ARTHUR: *Oh, stop it!*

KNIGHTS OF NI: Aaaaugh!

HEAD KNIGHT: Oh! He said it again!

ARTHUR: [To PATSY] Patsy!

[Exeunt ARTHUR and his KNIGHTS]

HEAD KNIGHT: Aaugh! [to himself] Wait! *I said it! I said it! Ooh!*

KNIGHTS OF NI: Aaaaugh!

HEAD KNIGHT: Oh! I said it again! And again! That's three times! Ooh!⁸²

[Cut to constables covering the body of the FAMOUS HISTORIAN and speaking with WIFE.]⁸³

SCENE 24.5⁸⁴—KING BRIAN THE WILD

[28 EXTERIOR - DAY]

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⁸² In a dismal show of inconsistency, we find the word that the Knights of Ni cannot bear ('it') no fewer than *six times* earlier in this scene and in the previous Knights of Ni scene (Scene 17) with no reaction from the Knights at all. The *Head Knight himself* is even heard to utter once or twice!

⁸³ In the (real) script, the Knights of Ni show up briefly again after this brief insert. They hear someone else coming and discuss what they shall call themselves this time to get another shrubbery; they decide on "Knights who say Nicky Nicky."

⁸⁴ Before the animated set piece, the original script for the film included a drawn-out sub-plot about King Brian the Wild. This piece contained several keen callbacks to earlier jokes, spectacular insanity, some gruesome cruelty, and an alternate explanation of the demise of the minstrels. With some stern-minded revision, it might well have been a fine addition to the movie, but in fact cut, probably for monetary and time considerations. We present the full text of it here for your scholarly edification.

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[A Small group of PEASANTS are being shuffled into a group formation, at the apparent direction of someone behind the camera. A Few coughs as they shuffle together. a moment of silence. then they burst into pleasant (mellifluous) song.]

When the trees do blossom full and all the hills are green

Oh! Oh! We sing hey! hey! We sing our count....ry Song...

[A hail of arrow hits them and they crumple up. Sound of raucous laughter OFF CAMERA.]

[CUT TO Reveal a firing squad of ARCHERS kneeling not ten feet away from the group of SINGERS.]

[Sitting on the throne on a dais is KING BRIAN THE WILD. He is roaring with laughter, and his court is slightly shabby - bearing all the marks of a faded richness. It is a court without women, and nobody does the washing or shaves very well. Perhaps there is washing however on the line over the castle. KING BRIAN'S ADVISERS stand around him. Everyone bears the signs of past injuries (Except for BRIAN himself) I.E. they have an arm in a sling or head bandaged; all the people at court, except for BRIAN have their left arm missing (possibly the result of some violent edict a few years back)]

KING BRIAN: HA! HA! HA! HA! HA! HO! HO! HO! HO! HA! HA! HA! HA! Oh! Very good! Next!

FIRST ADVISER: (a Little uncomfortably - perhaps his arm is in a sling obviously giving him some pain) There are no more, Sir.

KING BRIAN: (grabbing him by the collar) What d'you mean, you filthy dog!

FIRST ADVISER: There are no more close harmony groups in the kingdom, Sir.

KING BRIAN: No more close harmony groups!!!

FIRST ADVISER: We have scoured the kingdom.

KING BRIAN: (lifting him bodily into the air and breaking his arm again slightly) You Miserable worm! You wretch! You walking son of a dunghill keeper! Guards!

[Two Rather shabby looking GUARDS approach. (as everyone else they also have their left arms missing)]

FIRST ADVISER: have mercy your MAJESTY!

KING BRIAN: GUARDS! Take him away and suspend him by his nostrils from the highest tree in the kingdom!

[The Guards grab him unmercifully and drag him off. he whines piteously.]

[29 EXTERIOR - DAY]⁸⁵

[CUT BACK to the glade where the KNIGHTS OF NI! were. A police car roars up. Two PLAINCLOTHES DETECTIVE and a CONSTABLE get out, look around suspiciously, perhaps kneel and examine the ground. One POLICEMAN finds PATSY's shoe and the other finds a strange scientific instrument that was hanging from BEDEVERE.]

[They nod grimly to each other. Climb back in the car and drive off.]

[30 EXTERIOR - DAY]

[Back in KING BRIAN's Court. the FIRST ADVISER has been dragged off. there are muffled screams coming from the nearby tree. the FIRST ADVISER is being hauled up it on pulleys.]

SECOND ADVISER: Your Majesty, I can Find you a Lute player, whose music is passing sweet.

KING BRIAN: It's not the same, You thick-headed fool! (KING BRIAN hits him on the back of the head. he falls.) There's no fun in killing soloists!

SECOND ADVISER: (picking himself up) He may have a friend...

KING BRIAN: GUARDS!

SECOND ADVISER: Oh Please your majesty! Please!

KING BRIAN: Take him away and tie his kidneys to the longest hedge in the kingdom!

[The GUARDS drag the ADVISER roughly away.]

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⁸⁵ This vignette appears in the final film as the tail end of scene 27, and shows the constables looking over the shrubbery.

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SECOND ADVISER: No! (he is dragged off screaming and protesting)

KING BRIAN: (roaring at the rest of the court) I will personally disembowel the next little bastard who tells me that there are no more close harmony ...

[At this moment we hear faintly the sound of singing. KING BRIAN stopped to listen. The entire COURT turns thankfully towards the mellifluous sounds.]

We're the knights of the round table
our shows are formidable
but many times we're given rhymes
that are quite unsingable...

KING BRIAN: Wait a minute! Five point harmony with a counter-tenor lead!

[Various members of the COURT sigh and breathe more easily.]

CREEP: Thank goodness.

KING BRIAN: Shut up! (punches him right on the end of the nose and shouts to the SECOND ADVISER) Oy you!

SECOND ADVISER: (doubled-up, Surrounded by soldiers busy with his stomach) Yes, Your majesty?

KING BRIAN: Go and get 'em!

SECOND ADVISER: (gratefully) Thank you sir! (He staggers off with some difficulty)

GUARD: 'ere... We'd just started taking his kidneys out.

CUT TO ARTHUR, BEDEVERE, GALAHAD and LANCELOT. (Garwin,thrstam [sic], Hecrot [sic]⁸⁶) plus all their pages. there are riding along singing cheerily.

KNIGHTS: We're baby mad and Camelot
we nurse and push the pram a lot
in war we're tough and able
quite indefatigable
between our quests we sequin vests
and dress like Betty gable [sic]
it's a...⁸⁷

SECOND ADVISER: HALT!

SIR GALAHAD: Who are you who dares to halt the knights of king Arthur's round table in mid-verse?

SECOND ADVISER: I bring greetings from the court of king Brian.

SIR LANCELOT: King Brian the wild?

SECOND ADVISER: Some call him that, but he's calmed down allot recently.

SIR GALAHAD: Are those YOUR kidneys?

SECOND ADVISER: (covering his stomach) No no... It's nothing - just a flesh wound. (The KNIGHTS look at each other) he has herd your beautiful melody; and wishes you to come to his court, that he may listen at his ease ooh!

SIR LANCELOT: You must be joking! (general murmur or agreement from the other KNIGHTS.) Go to the court of king Brian the wild and sing close harmony!

OTHER KNIGHTS: No fear etc.

SECOND ADVISER: (in increasing pain) It need not be close harmony oooh agh!

SIR GALAHAD: Ah but it would get round to close harmony, wouldn't it?

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⁸⁶ Who these people are and why their names are misspelled is a mystery. Maybe the writer died in middle of writing it. 'Sic,' by the way means 'thus' in Latin, indicating the text appears exactly as it appeared in the source, even if it looks like a mistake.

⁸⁷ Note how these lyrics differ from those earlier. The misspelling of Betty Grable's name is in the original.

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SECOND ADVISER: Not necessarily ... As I say king Brian is much more relaxed than he used to be.

SIR GALAHAD: I mean could we just stick to one line of plainsong with a bit of straight choral work?

SECOND ADVISER: Well obviously he'd prefer a bit of close harmony arghhh!

KNIGHTS: Ah! There you are!

SIR LAUNCELOT: We'd end unlike the Shalott Choral Society.

SECOND ADVISER: Oh that was an accident - honestly he's so calm now oh!

ARTHUR: No we must be on our way.

[They start off.]

SECOND ADVISER: (by now lying on the ground at his last gasp but still trying to sound threatening) If you don't come and sing for him ... ah ... he'll drive ... oh ... iron spikes through your heads.

KNIGHTS: Ah! That sounds more like Brian the wild!

SECOND ADVISER: (looking helplessly at his intestines) He ... he ... still gets irritable occasionally.

SIR GALAHAD: Like with close harmony groups.

SECOND ADVISER: Ooh ... Look if you're scared ...

SIR LANCELOT: We're not SCARED!

SECOND ADVISER: (With his last ounce of strength) Very well! King Brian challenges you to sing before him in close harmony!

ARTHUR: A challenge?

The KNIGHTS look at each other rather taken aback but an idealistic glow suffuses KING ARTHUR's eyes as he looks heaven-wards. The other KNIGHTS look at him rather fearfully.

ARTHUR: (majestically) It is a challenge. We cannot refuse.

SIR GALAHAD: King Brian's a fucking loony.

SECOND ADVISER: Great! (dies)

SIR GALAHAD: Are you all right?

[CUT TO KING BRIAN the wild on his dias {sic}. he sees the KNIGHTS enter the arena.]

KING BRIAN: Ah good!

[CUT TO TRUMPETERS who executes a rather bad fanfare full of missed notes. meanwhile various SHOTS of preparation.]

KING BRIAN: settling down.

KNIGHTS being led up to the podium. The last of the previous close harmony group is being loaded onto a cart and pushed away by the cart driver from scene tow (Perhaps we see him being paid off)

[SHOT of KING BRIAN on his podium and the HERALD being untied and having his gag removed.]

[SHOT of ARTHUR and KNIGHTS getting into a group on the podium still rather nervous. The fanfare comes to an end, and several wrong notes.]

KING BRIAN: (who can't wait) RIGHT! Carry on gentleman.

HERALD: KING BRIAN SAYS CARRY ON!

ARTHUR: (whispering) All right ... two tenor lines - I'll take the base.

[They all nod.]

One... Two... Three...

[Sound of Bows being drawn very near by.]

ARTHUR: looks up and frowns.

[CUT to reveal a line of twenty ARCHERS they all have their left leg missing, but they DO have two arms.]

[Their arrows are drawn back and point directly at ARTHUR & CO.]

ARTHUR: Hold it! Err ... King Brian!

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HERALD: (Louder than ever) ARTHUR OF CAMELOT ADDRESSES THEE OH MIGHTY KING BRIAN!

KING BRIAN: (truculently) What?

ARTHUR: What are THEY For? (Indicates the archers)

KING BRIAN: Them? they're... just to show you where the audience would be.

ARTHUR: Well we'd prefer to do it without an audience.

KING BRIAN: Oh you've GOT to have an AUDIENCE!

HERALD: KING BRIAN THE WISE AND GOOD RULER OF THIS LAND SAYS YOU'VE GOT TO HAVE AN AUDIENCE!

ARTHUR: We'd rather give a private recital.

HERALD: THEY SAY THEY'D RATHER GIVE A PRIVATE RECITAL! O WISE GOOD AND JUST KING BRIAN AND NOT THE LEAST BIT WILD!

KING BRIAN: (to himself) Turds...

[HE nods to the ARCHERS who turn and hop smartly off in step.]

ONE-LEGGED RSM: Left ... Left ... Left, left, left, left Left ... Left ... Left, left, left, left.

[They hop round behind a long fence and disappear from sight (Fence needs to be about 7 or 9 feet high)]

KING BRIAN: Right! Ready when you are.

HERALD: KING BRIAN IS READY!

ARTHUR: And ... One ... Two ... Three ... Four ...

[They are just about to sing when the ARCHERS, bows read and arrows points, peep over the top of the fence.]

HOLD IT!

SIR GAWAIN: (singing) We're

[Quick flash of ARCHERS sensed to fire, one tires to hold his shot back but fails and fires his arrows by accident in the air.]

[Quick flash of FIRST ADVISER who is hanging by his nostrils from the highest tree in the kingdom, moaning, getting hit by the arrow.]

KING BRIAN: What is it now?

ARTHUR: We're not entirely happy with the acoustics.

HERALD: THEY'RE NOT ENTIRELY HAPPY WITH...

KING BRIAN: (impatiently) Oh Sod the acoustics! Get on with the singing!

HERALD: KING BRIAN SAYS SOD THE ACOUSTICS!

ARTHUR: In that case we shall just have to perform elsewhere. (turns to his knights and begins to usher them off)

HERALD: THEY SAY IN THAT CASE THEY SHALL HAVE TO PERFORM ELSEWHERE, O RICH, FAMOUS AND EXTREMELY CALM KING!

KING BRIAN: (getting very angry and dribbling slightly) NO! you've GOT to sing on the target are - er - convert ... er ... thing ...

HERALD: KING BRIAN HAS STUMBLER OVER HIS WORDS! WHAT A WONDERFULLY HUMAN INCIDENT.

KING BRIAN: Don't editorialize!

HERALD: SORRY, KING.

KING BRIAN: Come on you bastards! Sing close harmony!

KING BRIAN: snaps his fingers and the ARCHERS rise above the fence without any pretense of concealment - fitting arrows into their bows.

HERALD: KING BRIAN CALLS THEM BASTARDS AND DEMANDS TO HEAR CLOSE HARMONY! WHAT WILL HAPPEN NEXT?

KING BRIAN: I said don't.

HERALD: Sorry, King.

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KING BRIAN: Right! On the count of three ... one ...

HERALD: THE KING'S SAID ONE!

KING BRIAN: Two!

HERALD: THE KING'S SAID TWO! THEY'VE ONLY GOT ONE LEFT!

[We hear the sound of bows being drawn back. Tension mounts. the KNIGHTS all look pretty grim. The end is clearly pretty near.]

KING BRIAN: (face in a paroxysm of blood-lust) Three!

HERALD: THREE!

[Sound in the distance of beautiful close harmony singing]

“Bravely, good sir robin was not at all afraid...”

[CUT TO see SIR ROBIN and his MINSTRELS approaching from round a corner of the castle. SIR ROBIN walks a few feet in from of the them looking rather embarrassed.]

KING BRIAN: (turning to the sound) FANTASTIC!

[CUT BACK TO ROBIN'S MINSTRELS]

“To have his eyeballs skewered and his kidneys ... argh!”

[They are suddenly pin-cushioned with arrows.]

KING BRIAN: HA! HA! HA! HA! HO! HO! HO! HO! Oh bloody marvelous!

[ROBIN turns and looks at the decimated remains of his MINSTRELS, surprised but relieved.]

ARTHUR: Sir Robin! this way!

[ARTHUR leads is MEN off the platform and they are joined by their PAGES and make good their escape.]

KING BRIAN: HA! HA! HA! HA! HA! HA! HO! HO! HO! HO!

HERALD: KING BRIAN'S SHOT THE WRONG GROUP!

KING BRIAN: Shut up!

[HE swings his sword and slices the HERALD'S head off.]

HERALD'S HEAD: (as it rolls away) PRESS FREEDOM INFRINGED!⁸⁸

SCENE 25.—SIR ROBIN'S MINSTRELS ARE EATEN

[In a little animated woods, we see the little animated ARTHUR and his KNIGHTS traipsing along as the NARRATOR speaks.]

NARRATOR: And so Arthur and Bedevere and Sir Robin set out on their search to find the enchanter of whom the old man had spoken in Scene 24. Beyond the forest they met Launcelot and Gallahad, and there was much rejoicing.

ALL: Yea! Yea!

[An evil-looking animated wind-figure blows out the sun. Snow settles on the mountain. ARTHUR's party passes behind the mountain.]

NARRATOR: In the frozen land of Nador they were forced to eat Robin's minstrels. And there was much rejoicing.

ALL: [from behind mountain] Yea!

[Cut to hillock with tree in depths of winter. A SHEPHERD is huddled under a cloak near his two sheep.]

NARRATOR: A year passed. Winter changed into spring. [Snows fade, tree sprouts.]

SHEPHERD: [Throwing off cloak] Mmm. Nice.

NARRATOR: Spring changed into summer. [Tree is in full leaf. SHEPHERD flops down for a nap] Summer changed back into winter. [Snows fade in. SHEPHERD pokes head out of snow.] And winter gave spring and summer a miss

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⁸⁸ Ooh, naked social commentary! I bet the prime minister himself asked that the scene be cut just because of that line.

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and went straight on into autumn. [Snows fade. Tree is in full leaf, then leaves, branches, and all fall and hit SHEPHERD on the head.] Until one day...

SCENE 26.—ARTHUR AND HIS KNIGHTS MEET THE ENCHANTER

[The scene is a rocky countryside, probably Scotland this time, given that we are about to meet an enchanter with an abominable Scottish accent. ARTHUR and his KNIGHTS are making their way along the highland road. A thunderous boom is heard.]

[KNIGHTS OF THE ROUND TABLE halt]

ARTHUR: Knights! Forward! [They start again.]

[Cut to TIM atop an outcropping, throwing pyrotechnic spells at various rocky crags. The KNIGHTS halt. Suddenly, TIM summons a ball of fire on the very spot he is standing. But he is gone! Just as suddenly,⁸⁹ TIM reappears in a cloud of smoke just a few feet away from ARTHUR. He continues to toss a couple more fiery spells.⁹⁰]

ARTHUR: [To TIM] What manner of man are you that can summon up fire without flint or tinder?

TIM: [Turning to ARTHUR] I...am an enchanter.

ARTHUR: By what name are you known?

TIM: There are some who call me...Tim?⁹¹

ARTHUR: Greetings, Tim the Enchanter.

TIM: Greetings, King Arthur!

ARTHUR: You know my name?

TIM: I do. [Blows flames from his staff] You seek the Holy Grail!

ARTHUR: That *is* our quest. You know much that is hidden, O Tim.

TIM: Quite. [Shoots a rocket from his staff at a tree, which explodes]

[KNIGHTS OF THE ROUND TABLE applaud politely.]

ARTHUR: Yes, we're—we're looking for the Grail. Our quest is to find the Holy Grail.

KNIGHTS: It is, yes, yup, yes, yeah.

ARTHUR: And so we're—we're—we're—we're looking for it.

KNIGHTS: Yes we are. We are.

BEDEVERE: We have been for some time.

ROBIN: Ages.

ARTHUR: Uh, so, uh, anything you can do to, uh, to help, would be... very... helpful...

GALLAHAD: [Stepping forward impatiently] Look, can you tell us wh—

[TIM throws a fireball in front of him. He stumbles back, holding his leg.]

ARTHUR: Fine, um, I don't want to waste anymore of your time, but, uh, I don't suppose you could, uh, tell us where we might find a, um— find a, uh— a, um— a uh—

TIM: A what...?

ARTHUR: A G—, a G—

TIM: A *Grail*?!

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⁸⁹ Or slightly less suddenly, since we've just seen him disappear.

⁹⁰ Python must have really forked over the bucks for this scene. Compared to every other scene, this is *Star Wars*.

⁹¹ Apparently, we are supposed to imagine that he would say “Merlin,” but I think by this point we have all given up hope of seeing the plot parallel the traditional legend. Merlin should have entered the story right at the beginning, anyway. And he should be entirely absent from the Grail Quest story, since he represents ancient Celtic druidic magic so completely opposed to Medieval Christian belief. The plot is so far off track by this time that the best we could really hope for is for it to veer toward the legend enough that we could at least just get it in sight again.

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ARTHUR: Yes, I think so.

KNIGHTS: Yes, that's it. Yes.

TIM: Yes!

KNIGHTS: Oh, thank you, thank you, splendid, fine.

[TIM shoots fire from fingers at rocky slope]

ARTHUR: Look, you're a busy man, uh...

TIM: Yes, I can help you find the *Holy Grail*.

KNIGHTS: Oh, thank you.

TIM: To the north there lies a cave—the Cave of Caerbannog⁹²—wherein, carved in mystic runes upon the very living rock, the last words of Olfin Bedwere of Rheged⁹³ [creates thunder] make plain the last resting place of the *most Holy Grail*.

ARTHUR: Where could we find this cave, O Tim?

TIM: Follow! [KNIGHTS begin to follow] But! [they halt] follow only if ye be men of valor, fo' the entrance to this cave is guarded by a creature so *foul*, so *cruel* tha' no man yet has fought with i' and lived! Bones of full fifty men lie strewn about' its lair. So, brave knights, if you do *doub*' your courage or your strength, come n' further, for *death* awaits you all with *nasty big pointy teeth* [makes universal pointy-teeth gesture].

ARTHUR: [To GALLAHAD] What an *eccentric* performance.

SCENE 27.—ARTHUR AND HIS KNIGHTS GET THEIR MEDIEVAL BUTTS KICKED

[The scene is a ridge above a rocky gorge. TIM leads ARTHUR and his KNIGHTS along the ridge. With the clapping of coconuts and a whinny or two from the porters, the party halts.]

KNIGHT: They're nervous, sire.

ARTHUR: [To KNIGHT] Then we'd best leave them here and carry on on foot. [To KNIGHTS] Dis-mount!

[KNIGHTS pretend to dismount horses. They lean down to get a view of the cave within the gorge, where bones and armor lie strewn about.]

TIM: Behold the cave of Caerbannog!

ARTHUR: Right! [To KNIGHTS] Keep me covered.

KNIGHT: What with?

ARTHUR: [To KNIGHT] Just keep me covered.

TIM: [pointing] Too late!

[dramatic chord]

ARTHUR: What?

TIM: [still pointing] There he is!

[Enter a snowy white rabbit, hopping out of the cave, among the bones.⁹⁴]

ARTHUR: Where?

TIM: There!

ARTHUR: What, behind the rabbit?

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⁹² Python's spelling, from the (real) script.

⁹³ Python's spelling, from the (real) script.

⁹⁴ At this point, I feel obligated to point out once again that rabbits qua rabbits were not known in Britain until they were introduced from southern Europe quite some time after the time this film is set (probably the 1200s). Look, it isn't a big point, but they could just as well have used a good old European hare and not had any problems—and a *brown* hare, thank you, not some laboratory mutant albino like this one. Rabbits, by the way—even mean ones—do not eat human beings.

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TIM: It is the rabbit!

[pause]

ARTHUR: You silly sod! You got us all worked up!

TIM: Well, that's no ordinary rabbit. That's the most *foul, cruel, and bad-tempered* rodent you ever set eyes on.⁹⁵

ROBIN: You tit! I soiled my armor I was so scared!

TIM: [To ROBIN] Look, that rabbit's got a vicious streak a mile wide. It's a killer!

KNIGHT: [To TIM] Get stuffed!

TIM: [To KNIGHT] It'll do you a treat, mate!

KNIGHT: Oh, yeah?

ROBIN: You mangy Scots git!

TIM: [To ROBIN] I'm *warnin'* you!

ROBIN: What's he do, nibble your bum?

TIM: [with appropriate gestures] He's got *huge*, sharp— He can leap about— *Look at the bones!*

ARTHUR: [To BORS] Go on, Bors. Chop his head off!

BORS: Right! [puts on helm] Silly little bleeder. [crawls over rocks to descend into gorge] One rabbit stew comin' *right up!*

TIM: [To ARTHUR] Look!

[Rabbit squeaks, then launches its furry little form at BORS's throat]

BORS: Aaaugh!

[dramatic chord]

[BORS' head comes off, spurting blood like a Sam Peckinpah western.]

ARTHUR: [To himself] *Jesus Christ!*

TIM: I warned you!

ROBIN: [To himself] I've done it again!

TIM: I warned you! But did you listen to me? Oh, no, you knew it all, didn't you? Oh, it's just a harmless little bunny, isn't it? Well, it's always the same. I always—

ARTHUR: [To TIM] Oh, shut up!

TIM: But do they listen t' me?

ARTHUR: Right!

TIM: Oh, no...

KNIGHTS: [To KNIGHTS] Charge!

[The vicious little fur-bearing critter lays waste to the KNIGHTS, snapping first at one and then another, its twitchy little pink nose and buck teeth covered with noble blood.]

KNIGHTS: Aaaaugh! Aaaugh! [running away] Run away! Run away!

TIM: Haw haw haw. Haw haw haw. Haw haw.

ARTHUR: [stopping some distance away] Right. How many did we lose?

LAUNCELOT: Gawain.

GALLAHAD: Ector.

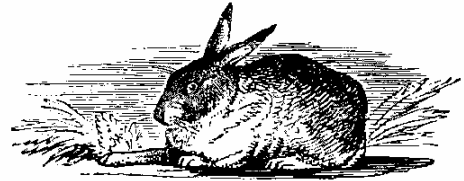
ARTHUR: And Bors. That's five.

GALLAHAD: Three, sir.

ARTHUR: Three. Three. And we'd better not risk another frontal assault. That rabbit's *dynamite*.⁹⁶

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⁹⁵ Rabbits, by the by, are no longer classified as rodents.



Monty Python and the Holy Grail

ROBIN: Would it...help to confuse it if we run away more?

ARTHUR: [To ROBIN] Oh, shut up. And go and change your armor.

GALLAHAD: Let us taunt it! It may become so cross that it will make a mistake.

ARTHUR: [To GALLAHAD] Like what?

GALLAHAD: Well....

LAUNCELOT: [To ARTHUR] Have we got bows?

ARTHUR: [To LAUNCELOT] No.⁹⁷

LAUNCELOT: We have the Holy Hand Grenade.

ARTHUR: Yes, of course! The Holy Hand Grenade of Antioch! 'Tis one of the sacred relics Brother Maynard carries with him! [to MAYNARD] Brother Maynard! Bring out the Holy Hand Grenade!⁹⁸

[cut to clerical cart, where the monks stand.]

MONKS: [singing] Via Jesu Domine
 Dona eis requiem

[A reliquary is brought out]

 Via Jesu Domine
 Dona eis requiem

[The MONKS give the coffer to BEDEVERE]

 Via Jesu Domine
 Dona eis requiem

ARTHUR: How does it, uh... how does it work?

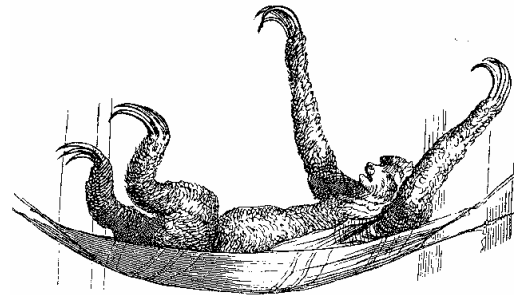
LAUNCELOT: I know not, my liege.

ARTHUR: Consult the Book of Armaments!

MAYNARD: Armaments, Chapter Two, Verses 9 to 21.

BROTHER: [reading, with a reedy tone] "And Saint Attila raised the hand grenade up on high, saying, 'Oh, Lord, bless this thy hand grenade that with it thou mayest blow thy enemies to tiny bits, in thy mercy.' And the Lord did grin, and people did feast upon the lambs, and sloths, and carp, and anchovies, and orangutans, and breakfast cereals, and fruit bats, and large ch--"⁹⁹

MAYNARD: [To BROTHER] Skip a bit, Brother.



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⁹⁶ Dynamite was not, of course, invented until the 19th century, when Alfred Nobel mixed up the first batch to make mining easier and safer. He later used the profits to create a perpetual trust to fund the Nobel prizes. On a different subject entirely, Gawain died, according to tradition, by the hand of Lancelot with Balin's cursed sword Arondight (Gawain was Lancelot's best friend, but they fought when Arthur and his knights went to retrieve Guenevere after Lancelot saved her and took her away to France). Ector died in the final battle with Mordred and his knights. And Bors never died; being one of the knights who completed the quest for the Grail, he was whisked away to Avalon with Percival and Galahad. There I go again; sorry.

⁹⁷ This whole affair could be cleared up rather quickly with a good old English longbow. Unfortunately, knights considered such weapons beneath them, preferring to face their opponents in melee combat on horseback (which is why the English yeomen of Henry V's army annihilated an overwhelming force of French knights at the Battle of Agincourt [1415] and changed the course of warfare forever). The stupid clods. It's nice of Python to make note of it, though.

⁹⁸ Now, I don't want to be a nit-picking scholar like those blockheads who review Beowulf a thousand years after it was written and bitch about quirks in the meter, but hand grenades really are a bit young to be found in medieval England. That's all I will say, except that Antioch was the capital of ancient Syria and the center of Christianity for hundreds of years. Interestingly, a chalice consisting of a plain metal cup set in a protective carved silver goblet was dug up in the ruins of ancient Antioch in 1910. Some claim this, the Chalice of Antioch, is the Holy Grail. You can even go to see it, if you like, in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. It's right next to the giant Brazilian Indian penis-sheath collection (source: *World Book Encyclopedia*).

⁹⁹ Note no rabbits.

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BROTHER: [reading] “And the Lord spake, saying, ‘First shalt thou take out the Holy Pin. Then, shalt thou count to three. No more. No less. Three shalt be the number thou shalt count, and the number of the counting shalt be three. Four shalt thou not count, nor either count thou two, excepting that thou then proceed to three. *Five* is right out. Once the number three, being the third number, be reached, then lobbest thou thy Holy Hand Grenade of Antioch towards thy foe, who, being naughty in my sight, shall snuff it.’”¹⁰⁰

MAYNARD: Amen.

ALL: Amen.

ARTHUR: Right! [pulls pin] One... two... five!

GALLAHAD: Three, sir!

ARTHUR: Three! [lobs grenade]

[The Holy Hand Grenade of Antioch sails into the vicious lepus’ cave and explodes. This instantly gets the attention of the constables investigating the death of the FAMOUS HISTORIAN several scenes away, where they have come upon the broken remains of the shrubbery in the woods of the KNIGHTS OF NI. They make their way toward the gorge.]

SCENE 28.—ARTHUR AND HIS KNIGHTS IN THE CAVE OF CAERBANNOG

[The scene is the interior of a large natural cavern. ARTHUR and his party enter and look about for the carved runes spoken of by TIM. Suddenly, they come upon some runes.¹⁰¹]

ARTHUR: [pointing] There! Look!

LAUNCELOT: [examining runes] What does it say?

GALLAHAD: What language is that?

ARTHUR: [To MAYNARD] Brother Maynard, you’re our scholar!

MAYNARD: It’s Aramaic!¹⁰²

GALLAHAD: Of course! Joseph of Arimathea!

LAUNCELOT: Of course!

ARTHUR: What does it say?

MAYNARD: It reads, [reading] “Here may be found the last words of Joseph of Arimathea. ‘He who is valiant and pure of spirit may find the Holy Grail in the Castle of Auuggggggh.’”

ARTHUR: What?

MAYNARD: [reading] “The Castle of Auuggggggh.”



¹⁰⁰ Okay, I will say a *bit* more. You see, Attila was never even *beatified* by the Catholic Church, much less *canonized* (although he did *meet* with Pope Leo I when he and his huns visited Rome {they had raged across Europe and now were going to rape Mother Rome herself and loot her ancient treasures, but the pope persuaded Attila to go home [How he did this, no one knows, but I’m willing to bet *somebody* was on their knees, and they *weren’t* prayin’]}). Also, there is no Book of Armaments in any Christian bible, although there *is* a Book of Numbers, which, I believe, has something to do with trinitular trigonometry, the religious study of the Three-in-One—a sort of holy book of logarithms. Oh, also, it’s funny that the monk should mention breakfast cereals and Attila almost in the same breath. It is a documented fact that Attila the Hun was the first person ever to go cuckoo for Coco Puffs® (source: *A Book I Read A Long Time Ago*).

¹⁰¹ These runes were apparently written by Joseph of Arimathea, the legendary guardian of the Holy Grail, given into his care by the apostles after the crucifixion, he having been the only man willing to offer Christ a tomb (stone tombs were quite expensive back then—not that they’re any cheaper now days, but it really was considered the only way to go), but why the apostles gave Joe the Holy Grail—the cup that Jesus drank from at the last supper—rather than, say the sandals He wore last or a lock of His hair or something, I don’t know. I guess it goes back to that symbolism of sustenance I was babbling about earlier, although it seems like history narrowly missed being filled with legends of the Holy Salad Fork.

¹⁰² Aramaic was a Semitic language (and therefore related to Hebrew) used by the Aramaeans and later by others of southwest Asia (including the Jews) first as a trade language and later as a daily language (source: *World Book Encyclopedia*). It, rather than Greek or Latin, was probably the language spoken by Jesus and the Apostles.

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BEDEVERE: What is that?
MAYNARD: He must have died while carving it.
LAUNCELOT: Oh, come on!
MAYNARD: [To LAUNCELOT] Well, that's what it says.
ARTHUR: [To MAYNARD] Look, if he was dying, he wouldn't bother to carve 'auugggggh'. He'd just say it!
MAYNARD: [To ARTHUR] Well, that's what's carved in the rock!
GALLAHAD: Perhaps he was dictating.
ARTHUR: [to GALLAHAD] Oh, shut up. [to MAYNARD] Well, does it say anything else?
MAYNARD: [looking again] No. Just, 'auugggggggh'.
LAUNCELOT: [To himself] Auugggh.
ARTHUR: [To himself] Aaauggh.
BEDEVERE: Do you suppose he meant the Camauuuugh?
GALLAHAD: [To BEDEVERE] Where's that?
BEDEVERE: [To GALLAHAD] France, I think.¹⁰³
LAUNCELOT: Isn't there a Saint Aauuuves in Cornwall?
ARTHUR: [To LAUNCELOT] No, that's Saint Ives.
LAUNCELOT: Oh, yes. Saint Iiiives.
KNIGHTS: Iiiiives.
BEDEVERE: [pointing] Oooohooohoooo!
LAUNCELOT: [To BEDEVERE] No, no: aauuuuuggh. At the back of the throat. Auugggh.
BEDEVERE: [To LAUNCELOT] No, no, no, "Oooohoooh," in surprise and alarm.
LAUNCELOT: Oh, you mean sort of a "Aah!"
BEDEVERE: Yes, but I— Aaaaagh!
GALLAHAD: Oooh! My God!
[Enter the animated girth of the legendary Black Beast of Auugggh, roaring menacingly]
MAYNARD: It's the legendary Black Beast of Aaaaauuuuu...! [Exit MAYNARD, into the maw of the many-eyed beast.]¹⁰⁴
ARTHUR: Run away!
KNIGHTS: [running away] Run away! Run away!
[The Black Beast roars. The animated KNIGHTS run to and fro in the darkness, but you can see them. The Black Beast chases them.]¹⁰⁵

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¹⁰³ The Camargue is indeed a beautiful wetland wildlife preserve in France.

¹⁰⁴ At this point, the original (real) script includes a joke about a Sir Alf who, feeding bread to the Black Beast off-camera, was eaten.

¹⁰⁵ Wait! I just remembered why I went into that whole bit about Joseph of Arimathea. You see, the Knights came to the cave of Caerbannog looking for runes detailing the last words of *Olfin Bedwere of Rbegeg*—but why Olfin Bedwere would know of the last resting place of the Holy Grail is beyond me. And it's really quite absurd to imagine that both Olfin Bedwere *and* Joseph of Arimathea would know of the last resting place of the Grail and *both* come to the cave of Caerbannog (who the hell is Caerbannog, anyway?) to carve it on the living rock and *both* die right there doing it. Although it *is* logical that they should both die in the cave if they ever got there, seeing as how it is the lair not only of the cruel and vicious rabbit (hey, maybe that's who Caerbannog is) but *also* of the Black Beast of Auugggh—but why the two hadn't killed each other long before the Knights arrived we'll never know. Maybe the two had a symbiotic relationship, the rabbit—we'll call him Caerbannog until we find evidence against it—killing any who approached the cave, and the Black Beast devouring them. That would explain the multitude of skeletal remains just outside the cave and yet the small size of Caerbannog. Anyway, let's get back to the action.

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KNIGHTS: [running away] Run away! Keep running! [sneaking] Shh, Shh. We've lost 'im.

[They go into a dark tunnel. The Black Beast roars.]

Ahhh!

[More running away.]

NARRATOR: As the horrendous Black Beast lunged forward, escape for Arthur and his knights seemed hopeless. When, suddenly, the animator suffered a fatal heart attack.

ANIMATOR: [at his drawing desk] Ulk. [falls over]

NARRATOR: The cartoon peril was no more. The Quest for Holy Grail could continue.

[Cut to the cave entrance. The constables arrive at the vacated cave area and look over the dead bodies of full fifty men strewn about.¹⁰⁶]

SCENE 29.—ARTHUR AND HIS KNIGHTS AT THE GORGE OF ETERNAL PERIL¹⁰⁷

[The scene is the rim of the Gorge of Eternal Peril, where smoke and lava sounds rise out of the depths of the gorge. ARTHUR, ROBIN, BEDEVERE, GALLAHAD, and LAUNCELOT skirt the rim, shuffling toward the rickety rope-and-plank bridge.¹⁰⁸]

GALLAHAD: There it is! The Bridge of Death!

ROBIN: Oh, great.

GALLAHAD: [pointing] Look! There's the old man from Scene 24!¹⁰⁹

BEDEVERE: What is he doing here?

ARTHUR: He is the keeper of the Bridge of Death. He asks each traveler five questions—

GALLAHAD: Three questions.

ARTHUR: Three questions. He who answers the five questions—

GALLAHAD: Three questions.

ARTHUR: Three questions—may cross in safety.

ROBIN: What if you get a question wrong?

ARTHUR: Then you are cast into the Gorge of Eternal Peril.¹¹⁰

ROBIN: Oh, I won't go.

GALLAHAD: Who's going to answer the questions?

ARTHUR: [To ROBIN] Sir Robin!

ROBIN: Yes?

ARTHUR: Brave Sir Robin, you go.

ROBIN: Hey! I've got a great idea. Why doesn't Launcelot go?

LAUNCELOT: [coming forward] Yes, let me go, my liege. I shall take him single-handed. [gesturing] I shall make a feint to the northeast—

ARTHUR: [To LAUNCELOT] No, no, hang on, hang on, hang on! Just answer the five questions—

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¹⁰⁶ Fifty-five—uh, fifty-three—since the attacks on Arthur's knights, as well as one rabbit.

¹⁰⁷ The original (real) script prefaced this scene with a callback to the signs in the three-headed giant scene. These signs read "Aaaaarrrrrrggghhh! 5 miles," and later one pointing the other way reads "Ni! 82 miles."

¹⁰⁸ And this thing really looks unsafe—I mean, *I* wouldn't try to cross it, especially with a name like "Bridge of Death." It's not hard to imagine how it got that name; probably hikers and Girl Guides falling off it all the time....

¹⁰⁹ Of course, according to our count, he is the 'old man from Scene 16.'

¹¹⁰ How Arthur knows all this is beyond me. I mean, he's dumb as a stump before this, asking everybody questions about everything, but all of a sudden, he's Arthur the Pathfinder or something.

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GALLAHAD: [over his shoulder] Three questions.

ARTHUR: Three questions—as best you can. And we shall watch...and pray.

LAUNCELOT: [going forward] I understand, my liege.

ARTHUR: Good luck, brave Sir Launcelot. God be with you.

[LAUNCELOT approaches the Bridge of Death.]

KEEPER: Stop! Who would cross the Bridge of Death must answer me these questions three, ere the other side he see.

LAUNCELOT: Ask me the questions, Bridge Keeper. I'm not afraid!

KEEPER: What...is your name?

LAUNCELOT: My name is Sir Launcelot of Camelot.

KEEPER: What...is your quest?

LAUNCELOT: To seek the Holy Grail.

KEEPER: What...is your favorite color?

LAUNCELOT: Blue.

KEEPER: [capitulating] Right. Off you go.

LAUNCELOT: [surprised—and a bit pleased as well, I imagine] Oh, thank you. Thank you very much.

ROBIN: [incredulous] That's *easy*!

[ROBIN strides forward confidently. The others follow.]

KEEPER: [To ROBIN] Stop! Who approacheth the Bridge of Death must answer me these questions three, ere the other side he see.

ROBIN: [overconfident] Ask me the questions, Bridge Keeper. I'm not afraid.

KEEPER: What...is your name?

ROBIN: Sir Robin of Camelot.

KEEPER: What...is your quest?

ROBIN: To seek the Holy Grail.

KEEPER: What...is the capital of Assyria?

ROBIN: [flabbergasted] I don't know that!

[ROBIN is catapulted off the path and into the Gorge of Eternal Peril.]

Auuuuuuuugh!

[GALLAHAD steps forward.]

KEEPER: [To GALLAHAD] Stop! What...is your name?

GALLAHAD: Sir Gallahad of Camelot.

KEEPER: What...is your quest?

GALLAHAD: I seek the Grail.

KEEPER: What...is your favorite color?¹¹¹

GALLAHAD: Blue. No, ye!

[GALLAHAD is also catapulted off the bridge and into the gorge]

Aaaaauuuh!¹¹²



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¹¹¹ The (real) script originally had Gawaine getting heaved off the bridge when he accidentally answers “Babylon” (the capital of Assyria) to the question “What goes ‘black-white,’ ‘black-white,’ ‘black-white?’” Now, if I—I mean we—were a really good editor, we would be able to tell you the answer to that riddle, but all we can figure out is that it has something to do with a zebra.

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KEEPER: Heh heh heh. Stop! What is *your* name?¹¹³

ARTHUR: It is Arthur, King of the Britons.

KEEPER: What...is your quest?

ARTHUR: To seek the Holy Grail.

KEEPER: What...is the air-speed velocity of an unladen swallow?

ARTHUR: What do you mean? An African or European swallow?

KEEPER: [nonplused] What? I don't know that!

[In a shocking reversal of fortune¹¹⁴ the KEEPER is himself catapulted off the bridge and into the Gorge of Eternal Peril]

Auuuuuuuugh!

BEDEVERE: [To ARTHUR] How do know so much about swallows?

ARTHUR: [To BEDEVERE] Well, you have to know these things when you're a king, you know.

[ARTHUR and BEDEVERE begin crossing the bridge]

INTERMISSION

[The intermission, with its cheesy organ music and tacky visual, lasts a mercifully-brief total of nine seconds]¹¹⁵

SCENE 30.—BEYOND THE BRIDGE OF DEATH

[The scene is the other side of the Bridge of Death, a bleak and foggy place, as are most places in English legend. After all, when you live in a bleak and foggy land, it's hard to even imagine, say, a sunny beach on the coast of Mexico, where the water is so clear you can see all the way to the bottom, thirty or forty feet below. Anyway, ARTHUR and BEDEVERE cross over the bridge and begin looking for LAUNCELOT.]

ARTHUR: Lancelot? Lancelot! Lancelot!

BEDEVERE: Lancelot! Lancelot!

ARTHUR: Lancelot!

[Unbeknownst to our heroes, LAUNCELOT, having been apprehended by the constabulary, is being frisked up against a police car.]

ARTHUR: Lancelot!

BEDEVERE: Lancelot! Lancelot!

[angels singing]

[Arthur and Bedevere are led by the singing to the shore of a great lake. The singing stops. Suddenly, a great dragon-prowed ship sails out of the fog, complete with its own frighteningly-orchestrated theme music.¹¹⁶ They

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¹¹² I really feel compelled to mention again that, by all accounts, it was not Lancelot who completed the quest for the Holy Grail. In English legend, it was Galahad, although, in French and German legend, it was Percival—there was even a German opera written about Percival. For some reason, Lancelot—the greatest knight of all—never got his own opera. Tristram did, but he doesn't even appear in this film. But I'm not bitter. Really.

¹¹³ The (real) script originally had these questions being answered off camera while we watched Lancelot; this made the surprise (death of the Old Man) play a bit differently—more subtle, but ultimately less effective.

¹¹⁴ Not to mention a capital bit of irony utilizing the Rule of Three *and* a precisely-timed callback to the opening scene of the film, now a fully-formed running gag.

¹¹⁵ This intermission shamelessly pirates the intermission of the Beatles' *Help!* of 1965. Actually, much of Python's humor pirates that of the Beatles—except that the Beatles didn't dress in women's clothing and they had rather better songs. Further Python/Beatle parallels can be found in Eric Idle's (and others) *The Rutles*, 1979. Okay, so maybe both the Beatles and Monty Python owe tribute to English dance hall burlesque, but still...the Beatles filmed it first.

¹¹⁶ The (real) script originally had a boatman say, "He would cross the Sea of Fate must answer me these questions 28," at

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climb aboard and sail across to an island castle.]¹¹⁷

ARTHUR: The Castle Auuggh. Our quest is at an end! [They clamber ashore] God be praised! [kneeling] Almighty God, we thank Thee that Thou hast vouchsafed to us the most holy—

[Just then, a sheep is catapulted over the wall at our heroes]

SHEEP: [distressedly] Baaaa!

ARTHUR: Jesus Christ!

[The SHEEP lands on top of ARTHUR. Cut to FRENCH GUARD atop wall of Castle Auuggh.]

FRENCH GUARD: 'Allo, daffy English kaniggets and Monsieur Arthur-King, who is afraid of a duck, you know! So, we French fellows out-wit you a second time!¹¹⁸

ARTHUR: [rising] How *dare* you profane this place with your presence!? I *command* you, in the name of the Knights of Camelot, to open the doors of this sacred castle, to which *God himself* has guided us!

[ARTHUR and BEDEVERE charge up the shore to the staircase leading to the castle gate.]

GUARD: How you English say, I one more time—a unclog my nose in your direction, sons of a window-dresser! So, you think you could out-clever us French folk with your silly knees-bent running-about advancing behavior! I wave my private parts at your aunties, you cheesy lot of second-hand electric donkey bottom biters.

ARTHUR: [pounding on gate] In the name of the Lord, we demand entrance to this sacred castle!

GUARD: [while ARTHUR continues pounding] No chance, English bed-wetting types. I burst my pimples at you and call your door-opening request a silly thing, you tiny-brained wipers of other people's bottoms!

ARTHUR: If you do not open this door, we shall take this castle by force!

[Muck is summarily dumped upon ARTHUR and BEDEVERE.]

[To himself] In the name of God and the glory of our—

[More muck, and much hooting from French guards.]

Right! That settles it!

[ARTHUR and BEDEVERE descend stairs, withstanding numerous meats, breads, and vegetables dropped on them from above.]

GUARD: Yes, you've had a lot of it this time and don't come back any more or we fire arrows at the tops of your heads and make castanets out of your testicles already! Ha ha!

ARTHUR: [To BEDEVERE] Walk away. Just ignore them.

GUARD: [With taunting gestures] Don't remain here, illegitimate-faced bugger-folk! And, if you think you got a nasty taunting this time, you ain't heard nothing yet! Daffy English kannnniggets! Thpppt!

[ARTHUR and BEDEVERE somehow cross the lake to the shore from whence they came.]

ARTHUR: We shall attack at once!

BEDEVERE: Yes, my liege!¹¹⁹



which point Arthur and Bedevere dump him into the water and steal his boat; a priceless callback that got cut.

¹¹⁷ This must be the castle of the Fisher King (out of the French Arthurian cycles), where the Grail was kept and guarded. The Fisher King's castle has the distinct advantage, as far as fortification goes, of lying outside the realm of space and time. It appears and disappears as necessary (quite to the consternation of Percival, who is most closely associated with it) wherever necessary. Balin the Sauvage (remember him?) was the only knight in Malory's version that discovered the castle—and he only by accident long *before* the quest for the Grail was begun. It was he, in fact, who wounded the Wounded King (he really was as wild as his name suggests), and using nothing less than the Spear of Longinus (the legendary Roman soldier who pierced Christ's side while He hung on the cross)! This may be the whole reason why the quest had to be undertaken in the first place, spiritually speaking. Ahhh, isn't literature fun?

¹¹⁸ How did the French Guard get across the Bridge of Death, which, until Launcelot, "no man" had ever crossed? Anyway, in the original (real) script, the French Guard also says, "We French persons outwit you a second time, perfidious English mousedropping hoarders! How you say: "Begorrah!"

¹¹⁹ Wait! I see now! The castle of the Fisher King is an element of the *French* Percival tale, particularly that of Chrétien de
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ARTHUR: [To SOLDIERS off camera] Stand by for attack!

[Hundreds of SOLDIERS appear on the horizon. Infantry assemble. Siege engines are set. Knights don their helms. Pikes are sharpened. Lines are formed. Drums roll.¹²⁰]

ARTHUR: [To castle] French persons! Today the blood of many a valiant knight shall be avenged. In the name of God, we shall not stop our fight 'til each one of you lies dead and the Holy Grail returns to those whom God has chosen! [to SOLDIERS] *CHARGE!*

SOLDIERS: YEA!

[They charge. Enter the police in cars and paddy wagons¹²¹, sirens blaring. WIFE gets out of one of the cars.]¹²²

WIFE: [pointing] Yes, they're the ones, I'm sure!

CONSTABLES: [variously to SOLDIERS, shooing them back] Come on! Everybody out! Come on! Back! That's an offensive weapon, tha' is. All right, sonny...

[confusion reigns as ARTHUR is taken into custody. End of film.]¹²³

HERE IS THE END OF THE WHOLE BOOK OF KING ARTHUR AND HIS NOBLE KNIGHTS OF THE ROUND TABLE
AND THEIR QUEST FOR THE HOLY GRAIL
AND HERE IS THE END OF THE STRICTLY-UNAUTHORIZED, MORE-THAN-FULLY-ANNOTATED
SCRIPT OF THE FILM¹²⁴



Troyes. Therefore, the subsequent arrival of the French castle guard seen *earlier elsewhere*, who claimed his lord *already had a Grail*, should be no surprise. Guy de Loimbard *does* have a Grail, *he* is the Fisher King, appearing and disappearing as necessary! *He* is the guardian of the Holy Grail, defending it against the English heretics who would deny the Holy Roman Church and set up their own Church of England! It all makes sense! It finally all makes sense after all!! This is genius!! Pure genius!!!

¹²⁰ Well, the drums don't actually roll, of course; I just mean that a drum roll is played on the snare drums. Of course, maybe it would be just as well if the drums did roll. I mean, everything else has gone to hell. Where did these soldiers come from? How did Arthur and Bedevere get across the lake? How do they imagine they will attack back across the lake? Aaaaauuuuuuggggghh!

¹²¹ The (real) script calls them 'black marias.'

¹²² Wait. Wait a minute. Arthur's right. God himself did choose him earlier in the film to retrieve the Grail. That sort of kills things. Maybe they haven't proven themselves worthy or something. That must be it; Arthur failed somewhere along the line. But where? The shrubberies? The cave? The bridge? Perhaps it was in 'allowing' the historian to die; 'warping history' as it were. Of course, Arthur isn't *supposed* to achieve the Grail anyway, according to all the legends—he wasn't *remotely* worthy. Everyone who was in the running has been lost or killed off. Hmm.

¹²³ Say, maybe this ending is a comment on the bankrupt nature of British society in the middle '70s. Maybe Python is trying to say that British society had forsaken the principles and ideals that had made it such a great empire. When THG was made, Great Britain was still suffering the effects of World War II, in which "mighty" Britain required the gracious aid of America to fend off the Nazi war machine. Britain's coinage no longer carried IND IMP (the Latin abbreviation for 'Emperor [or Empress] of India'), a daily reminder of the loss of India and other territories that made Britain an empire. King George VI had died and been replaced by his daughter Elizabeth in 1952—and this after the heir-apparent Edward had abdicated to George so he could marry a divorced *American* woman (and become Duke of Windsor). That, perhaps more than anything else, produced a certain feeling that those magnificent coronation ceremonies—watched on television by millions around the world—was the last gasp of the British monarchy. That institution, more than a thousand years old, was finally reduced to little more than figurehead status, mere ghostly echoes of "Pomp and Circumstance." The hope that, one day, the Once and Future King prophesied so long ago would at last return to rule the kingdom was insubstantial. Faith was lost. The Holy Grail was a hollow dream—an empty cup. More likely, though, Python just ran out of money. They couldn't even afford a nice big "THE END" in the final frames.

¹²⁴ My e-copy of the (real) script includes this note at the end:

August 5th, 1974.

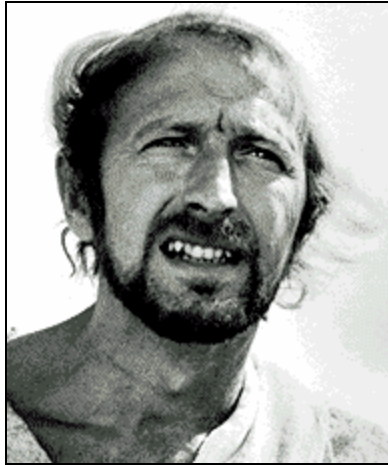
Dear Mike, [presumably Michael Palin]

The Censor's representative, Tony Kerpel, came along to Friday's screening at Twickenham and he gave up his opinion of the film's probable certificate. He thinks the film will be AA, but it would be

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SIC TRANSIT GLORIA MUNDI¹²⁶



This script was hand-crafted by north Chilean guanacos out of their own dung in kind memory of their Once and Future King¹²⁷

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possible, given some dialogue cuts, to make the film an A rating, which would increase the audience. (AA is 14 and over, and A is 5-14).[sic]

For an 'A' we would have to:

- Lose as may 'shits' as possible
- Take 'Jesus Christ' out, if possible
- Loose [sic] "I fart in your general direction"
- Lose "the oral sex"
- Lose "oh, fuck off" [replaced with "get stuffed"]
- Lose "We make castanets out of your testicles"

I would like to get back to the Censor and agree to lose the 'shits,' take the odd 'Jesus Christ' out and lose 'Oh fuck off,' but to retain 'fart in your general direction,' 'castanets of your testicles' and 'oral sex' and ask him for an 'A' rating on that basis. Please let me know as soon as possible your attitude to this.

Yours sincerely,

Mark Forstater

¹²⁵ The annotations are copyrighted by Zombie Press, 1996 ("Zombie—if we don't look good, *good*") with thanks to AHH, whoever he(?) is, for the initial drudge work.

¹²⁶ Latin: "Thus passes the glory of the world."

¹²⁷ He really was a medical doctor. Honestly. Look up his biography.