

A dark shadowy vault containing a number of ancient tombs, graced with ornately carved sculptures of their noble occupants. A shadow falls across a black tomb - carved with the outline of a mighty Knight in full armour, a sword lain across his body like a cross. Suddenly, in the darkness we see a woman, it's NIMUEH...

She stands over the tomb and runs her hands over it, whispering a terrifying spell.

NIMUEH
Gehyre me, wan cniht, awac!

As she utters the words her eyes burn into the stone casing. Suddenly, a crack rips across the lid.

NIMUEH
Beo strangra ond steacra, forbrec
tha wanne...

The crack grows bigger in the tomb...

NIMUEH
Uparis; awrec Uther Pendragon!

CRASH! A hand clad in a black gauntlet smashes through the top of the tomb and reaches out towards the witch... A dark smile crosses her face...

CUT TO:

ARTHUR is knelt on an elaborately decorated wool sack before Uther. The Prince is dressed in ceremonial robes, MERLIN stands proudly to one side. A STEWARD holds a cushion carrying a coronet and a gold rod. It's the Prince's investiture. All around there are DIGNITARIES present, including GAIUS and MORGANA. Uther speaks quietly but formally to his son as he takes the rod and places it in ARTHUR's hand...

UTHER
Do you solemnly promise and swear
to govern the people of this
Kingdom and its dominions
according to the statutes, customs
and laws laid down by your noble
forebears?

ARTHUR
I do, Sir.

UTHER

Do you promise to exercise mercy
and justice in your deeds and
judgements?

ARTHUR

I do, Si re.

UTHER

And do you swear allegiance to
Camelot for now and for as long as
you live?

ARTHUR

I, Arthur Pendragon, do pledge life
and limb to your service and to the
protection of this kingdom and its
peoples.

They both smile. UTHUR places the crown upon his son's head,
he turns, addressing the room as well as ARTHUR, following
the words of the ceremony.

UTHER

Now being of age and being the heir
apparent, you shall hence-forth
become Crown Prince of Camelot.

The CROWD cheer.

MERLIN grins proudly to one side, next to him stands GWEN.

GWEN

(in a low voice)

So how does it feel to be servant
to the Crown Prince of Camelot?

MERLIN

(wry)

Washing his royal socks will be
even more of a privilege.

GWEN takes a sideways look at him.

GWEN

You're proud of him really. Even
though you complain about him
constantly.

MERLIN

I am not.

GWEN

You are. I can see it in your face.

MERLIN

Those socks are very clean. Of
course I'm proud of them.

GWEN laughs as ARTHUR soaks up the adulation.

But the moment is interrupted by the sound of smashing glass.

GAIUS
I don't believe so.

MERLIN
You didn't recognise his crest?

GAIUS busies himself with his work again.

GAIUS
(evasive)
His crest?

MERLIN
Which house is it?

GAIUS
I'm not sure. I didn't see it that clearly.

MERLIN
He's not someone you'd forget in a hurry though.

GAIUS
(busying himself)
No.

MERLIN
So you don't think he's from round here?

GAIUS
That would seem likely.

MERLIN
But then what's he doing here?

GAIUS turns to face him.

GAIUS
Merlin, your faith in my all-seeing knowledge is both touching and wholly misplaced. Maybe if you've finished your work for the day you could go to bed and leave me to finish mine.

MERLIN
Okay, I'm going.

He goes to his room. GAIUS continues with his preparations. A second later MERLIN pops out of his room again.

MERLIN
Gaius?

GAIUS
(weary)
Merlin.

MERLIN
Do you think Owain can beat him?

GAIUS
We will find out soon enough.

MERLIN leaves again. GAIUS looks after him, clearly more troubled by the night's events than he's letting on

CUT TO:

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Looking out through the window we see...

The BLACK KNIGHT standing motionless in perfect symmetry outside the gates of Camelot, planted in the ground next to him is a plain black standard.

GWEN (O.S.)
What does he want?

She is cautiously standing a few steps back from the window, watching the menacing stranger camped outside the castle.

GWEN
Why would he issue such a challenge?

MORGANA is pacing nervously...

MORGANA
(perturbed)
And why did Owain of all people pick it up? Owain!

GWEN
I know.

MORGANA
He's just a boy.

GWEN
He hates anyone saying that.

A guilty reaction on MORGANA's face. She turns to leave the room.

CUT TO:

GAIUS
You know why I'm here?

GEOFFREY OF MONMOUTH
The Black Knight.

GAIUS
So it is he?

GEOFFREY OF MONMOUTH
You saw his crest.

GAIUS
Have you confirmed it?

He looks down at the book ...

GEOFFREY OF MONMOUTH
It is the crest of Tristan de Bois.

GAIUS
And he's the only Knight to ever
have carried that crest?

GEOFFREY OF MONMOUTH
According to the records.

GAIUS sighs, concerned, his fears confirmed. He turns to
leave.

CUT TO:

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UTHER is alone, he hears a noise at the door and reacts -
fearful of what it might be. A moment, he moves toward his
sword lying on a table. He rests his hand lightly on it and
looks anxiously toward the door...

UTHER
Yes?

The door opens and in comes GAIUS.

GAIUS
I'm sorry to disturb you, Sir.

UTHER tries to hide his anxiety.

UTHER
What is it?

GAIUS
The Knight, the stranger...

UTHER tenses again.

GAIUS
He bears the crest of Tristan de
Bois.

UTHER
(quietly)
Yes.

GAIUS nods.

GAIUS
But he's been dead for twenty
years.

UTHER
I know. I killed him.

GAIUS
But how do you explain ...?

UTHER
(short)
Dead men do not return. Is that
all?

GAIUS bows and leaves. UTHUR sits alone in the empty room.
Despite his denial, UTHUR is a troubled man.

CUT TO:

OWAIN
(more fixated on adjusting
a buckle)
Yeah, I know...

ARTHUR
Listen to me. The problem is we've
never seen him fight. You have to
quickly get the measure of him.

OWAIN
(bright, innocent)
But I have the same advantage -
he's never seen me fight.

ARTHUR
(unconvinced)
True.

OWAIN
You've watched me.

ARTHUR
Yes...

OWAIN
And?

ARTHUR
And I know no one braver.

OWAIN smiles at MERLIN. MERLIN throws a glance at ARTHUR. He
can sense his concern.

ARTHUR
Remember, all it takes to kill a
man is one well aimed blow.

OWAIN thrusts his sword at an imaginary target. In a few
years he will make a good Knight, but he's still very much a
colt, a lightweight.

GWEN enters. OWAIN smiles.

GWEN
The Lady Morgana asked me to give
you this token.

She holds up a ribbon. OWAIN is slightly overwhelmed, he
looks at ARTHUR.

GWEN
She wishes you to wear it for luck.

OWAIN
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(he turns to Arthur)
I won't need luck.

We sense ARTHUR's gut churning feeling of responsibility.

CUT TO:

10

10

A DRUMMER pounding a slow rhythm. A large CROWD waiting expectantly for the fight, dispersed amongst them are Uther, GAIUS and MORGANA. The BLACK KNIGHT stands in the centre in his customary static pose. As Uther enters the tournament ground and takes his seat, the KNIGHT turns to face him

ARTHUR's concern intensifies - the BLACK KNIGHT is clearly an accomplished swordsman. Uther too looks concerned.

The two fighters circle each other, suddenly the BLACK KNIGHT unleashes a series of blows. His style is unhurried, precise, clinical, devoid of emotion. All OWAIN can do is block and parry, he's forced backward across the square unable to find a riposte...

GWEN
Come on, Owain!

ARTHUR
(belowing)
One well aimed blow!

MERLIN watches on fearfully, impotent to help.

The fight accelerates, blows rain down on young OWAIN. The BLACK KNIGHT is an awesome fighting machine, relentless, unstoppable...

MERLIN's eyes tighten...

Suddenly we're in MERLIN time: In slow motion we see OWAIN manage to unleash a single strike that pierces the BLACK KNIGHT's breastplate...

MERLIN reacts with joy.

MERLIN
Yes!

GAIUS gives him a puzzled glance...

UTHER stands up - did he see the blow too? The fight continues at normal speed again, the BLACK KNIGHT shows no sign of injury. Instead, he reacts with a flurry of frenzied blows. As the final stroke lands, the CROWD react with audible horror... Uther sits down in horrified realisation that OWAIN is dead.

The drum stops. A silence. We see the ribbon, Owain's good luck token, lying in the dirt, it flutters on the breeze...

The CROWD is silent. ARTHUR hangs his head. MORGANA has tears in her eyes.

The BLACK KNIGHT steps over OWAIN's body and throws down his gauntlet again - it lands before the King.

BLACK KNIGHT
Who will take up my challenge?

ARTHUR makes to step forward but Uther grabs him by the arm. ARTHUR flashes his father a quick look, and pulls himself from Uther's grip...

But as he turns back to the gauntlet, SIR PELLINOR steps forward and swipes it from the ground.

SIR PELLINOR
I, Sir Pellinor, take up the challenge.

BLACK KNIGHT
Single combat. Dawn tomorrow.

The BLACK KNIGHT stares at Uther...

Arthur spins round to Uther. Uther brushes him aside and turns away.

The BLACK KNIGHT starts to walk back toward the gates...

Merlin watches him, then glances at Gaius.

MERLIN
Should we tend to his wounds?

Gaius looks at him, confused.

MERLIN
He took a hit.

GAIUS
Owain didn't land a blow.

MERLIN
I saw it. It pierced his breast plate.

GAIUS
Are you sure?

MERLIN
(nods)
My eyes are quicker than yours.

They look at the Knight - He is walking purposefully with no hint of pain or impairment.

MERLIN
He should be dead.

Gaius looks concerned.

GAIUS
Maybe he already is.

ARTHUR angrily pursues UThER as he enters the council chambers.

ARTHUR
Why did you stop me?

UTHER
We have to give our Knights the chance to prove themselves.

ARTHUR
Have you seen how this stranger fights?!

UTHER
And Sir Pellinor will be a match for him.

ARTHUR
He's still not recovered from the wounds he suffered at Ethandun.

UTHER
I cannot help that.

ARTHUR
(incredulous)
So you send him to his death?

UTHER
(angry, turning on Arthur - with finality)
I didn't send him anywhere. I am not to blame.

CUT TO:

Suddenly, the door they came through slams closed and the room is thrown into darkness.

MERLIN
What was that?

GAIUS
Must've been a gust of wind.

A beat. They can't see and are unable to move.

GAIUS
We should've brought a torch.

MERLIN casts a spell...

MERLIN
Leohtbora.

....a flame flares - a flambeau on the wall lights itself.
MERLIN takes it off the wall.

GAIUS
Handy!

MERLIN
Yes.

GAIUS
Except it means you'll have to go first.

MERLIN frowns, then reluctantly takes the lead.

CUT TO:

13

13

MERLIN and GAIUS are now in the vault itself. We recognise it from our opening. MERLIN sees various tombs ahead of him...

MERLIN
What are we looking for?

GAIUS
Move your light to the left.

MERLIN does as he's told. The flickering torchlight creates all kinds of strange unnerving shadows.

GAIUS
There.

MERLIN shines the torchlight on the black tomb.

They move toward it.

MERLIN
(uneasy)
We're breaking into someone's
grave.

As GAIUS reaches the tomb he stops

GAIUS
We're too late... I think someone
has already broken out.

We see the top of the tomb has been smashed open with great

MERLIN
Men don't just rise up from the
dead though, no matter how angry
they are.

GAIUS
(consulting a book)
My guess is we're dealing with a
wraith.

MERLIN
A wraith?

GAIUS
The spirit of a dead man conjured
from the grave.

MERLIN
So this is the work of a sorcerer?

GAIUS
Powerful magic can harness the
grief and rage of a tormented soul
and make it live again.

MERLIN
How do we stop it?

GAIUS
(he looks up - a grim
expression on his face)
We can't. Because it is no longer
alive, no mortal weapon can kill
it.

MERLIN
Surely there must be something...

GAIUS
(shaking his head)
Nothing can stop it until it has
achieved what it came for.

MERLIN
And what's that?

GAIUS
Revenge.

MERLIN
On Camelot?

GAIUS gives a slight nod.

MERLIN
What does that mean for Sir
Pellicor?

GAIUS
I'm afraid it doesn't look good.

CUT TO:

15

15

The sound of the drum, beating its slow, ominous rhythm. The BLACK KNIGHT stands in the centre of the tournament ground in readiness for battle. His darkness is even more striking now that he's silhouetted against the sun. He stares at UTHER...

UTHER is determined to hold his gaze.

The eager CROWD has a nervous atmosphere. They cheer as SIR PELLINOR and ARTHUR enter the arena.

The pair stop, ARTHUR focuses on SIR PELLINOR to give him his last instructions...

ARTHUR
You've seen him fight.

SIR PELLINOR
(Looking at the Black Knight)
He's good.

ARTHUR
(forcing Sir Pellinor to look at him)
Not as good as you. Are you listening to me?

SIR PELLINOR nods.

ARTHUR
See the sun is low in the sky.

SIR PELLINOR glances toward the sun...

ARTHUR
Keep it behind you.

He holds up his hand (in arm wrestling position). SIR PELLINOR reciprocates and clasps his hand.

SIR PELLINOR and the BLACK KNIGHT exchange sword blows. SIR PELLINOR is an experienced fighter, he gives as good as he gets. He pushes the BLACK KNIGHT back with a series of lunges...

The CROWD cheer for their hero. Amongst them we see Uther, ARTHUR, MORGANA and GWEN. Standing to one side, viewing the fight from a different angle, we find MERLIN and GAIUS.

MERLIN
Maybe you were wrong.

GAIUS
I hope so.

The BLACK KNIGHT parries everything SIR PELLINOR throws at him, until finally SIR PELLINOR lands a blow which knocks the black knight's sword to the ground.

The BLACK KNIGHT is momentarily defenseless as PELLINOR thrusts his sword into his chest with what looks like a fatal blow - the crowd gasp and cheer as they see SIR PELLINOR's sword penetrate the BLACK KNIGHT's armour.

SIR PELLINOR steps back, triumphant. But the BLACK KNIGHT doesn't flinch. He retrieves his sword and responds with a series of crashing blows, that SIR PELLINOR struggles to block. The BLACK KNIGHT is unstoppable, a killing machine. He lands a fatal strike that coincides with a drum beat...

We cut away to Uther's face, appalled by what he's witnessed... The crowd look shocked. We go to GWEN and MORGANA.

GWEN
The sword went in - I'm sure of it.

MORGANA
(worried)
I saw it too.

The BLACK KNIGHT turns toward the King, starts to remove his gauntlet, but before he can throw it down...

A gauntlet hits the ground at his feet. The BLACK KNIGHT looks up to see where it's come from. He finds ARTHUR looking at him...

ARTHUR
I will not see anymore of my men die.
(a beat)
I, Arthur Pendragon, take up the challenge.

A murmur amongst the CROWD.

BLACK KNIGHT
So be it.

ARTHUR
(calling the shots)
Single combat. Noon tomorrow.

GAIUS catches UTHER's eye. He is white-faced with shock.

CUT TO:

16

16

ARTHUR, a determined look on his face, stands in front of UTHER.

UTHER
How could you be so stupid? I will
revoke the challenge.

ARTHUR
No.
(turning on his father)
The Knights' code must be upheld.
That's what you told me.

UTHER
This is different.

ARTHUR
Once a challenge is laid you cannot
rescind it.

UTHER
You are the Crown Prince.

ARTHUR
There cannot be one rule for me and
one for all the rest.

UTHER
I forbid you to fight

ARTHUR turns to face his father.

ARTHUR
You want me to prove myself worthy
of the throne. I cannot do that by
being a coward.

UTHER
No, Arthur, this will be your
death!

ARTHUR
(he walks to the door)
I'm sorry you have so little faith
in me, father.

UTHER
Arthur!

ARTHUR keeps walking. UTHUR hangs his head in despair.

CUT TO:

17

17

MERLIN and GAIUS discuss what to do.

MERLIN
You were right.

GAIUS
I wish I wasn't.

MERLIN
If Arthur fights that thing, he'll
die.

GAIUS
He is Camelot's greatest warrior.
If anyone can defeat it, he can.

MERLIN
But you said yourself, no mortal
weapon can kill it. Which means we
have to find a way to defeat the
wraith ourselves.

GAIUS
How do you propose to do that?

He runs up the stairs to his room...

MERLIN
If no mortal sword will kill it...

He disappears into his room and comes back with his magic
book.

MERLIN
Then I will have to. With mortal
magic.

GAIUS
Merlin, it's too dangerous...

MERLIN
We don't have any choice.

GAIUS watches him turning the pages and quietly leaves the room.

CUT TO:

18

18

A troubled UThER is pacing the room when GAIUS enters. UThER stops and stares at him in trepidation, anticipating bad news.

GAIUS
Good evening, Si re.

UTHER
Gai us.

GAIUS
There is something of great urgency
I must discuss with you.

UTHER
Then spit it out, man.

GAIUS
Tristan's tomb is empty.

UTHER face ices over.

GAIUS
I believe he has been conjured from
the dead.

UTHER is quiet for a moment, then resumes his pacing, his mind whirring.

UTHER
How is this possible?

GAIUS
I believe he is a wraith.

UTHER
A spirit?

GAIUS
(nods)
He has come to take vengeance for
Ygraine's death.

UTHER
(guilty)
It was magic that killed her. Not
I.

GAIUS
(gently)
Nevertheless it was you he blamed.

GAIUS hesitates. He knows he must tread carefully.

GAIUS
You cannot allow Arthur to fight.
No weapon forged by man can kill a
wraith. It will stop at nothing
until it has accomplished what it
came for. Arthur cannot win, he
will die.

UTHER
He will not listen to me.

GAIUS
Then you must tell him who the
knight is...

UTHER
No.

GAIUS
You cannot hide the truth forever.

UTHER
(angered)
I am the King! You will not bid me
what to do!

GAIUS
(calm)
That is your choice, sire; you tell
him or let him go to his death.

UTHER
(threatening)
No one but you and I will ever know
that secret.

GAIUS
The boy is of age, he should know.

UTHER
Never.
(he draws a dagger)
You made an oath, and I warn you
not to break it.

They two men stand face to face for a moment. GAIUS is first
to drop.

GAIUS
Very well, sire.

UTHER

Leave me.

GAIUS leaves the room. UTHER is clearly shaken by what he's just heard.

CUT TO:

19

19

The dead of night. The BLACK KNIGHT stands impassive, framed against the towers of Camelot.

MERLIN emerges from the shadows. Keeping to the shadow of the wall he slips along until the KNIGHT is in sight. The BLACK KNIGHT remains impassive, apparently oblivious to MERLIN's presence.

MERLIN holds his hand out in front of himself and starts to incant a spell.

MERLIN

Cume her fyrbryne.

MERLIN's eyes flash and a flame appears from nowhere. The fire races across the ground, encircles the knight and engulfs him in a ball of flames.

MERLIN waits, it looks like his magic has worked. But when the flames die down the BLACK KNIGHT is still standing, completely impassive.

MERLIN stares at him in complete astonishment.

CUT TO:

20

20

ARTHUR is preparing for the fight, rehearsing moves with his sword in slow motion, replaying and adjusting the angle of his wrist or the arc of each swing. He's a coiled spring, as anxious as we've seen him. MERLIN comes rushing in, frantic.

ARTHUR

Merlin... you know that conversation we had about knocking...

MERLIN

You have to pull out!

ARTHUR stops what he's doing and turns to look at him.

ARTHUR

And why's that, Merlin?

MERLIN
Because he'll kill you.

ARTHUR
Why does everybody think that?

MERLIN
Because they're right. Just pull out. You're the crown prince. No-one wants you to die for some stupid challenge.

ARTHUR
I am not a coward.

MERLIN
I know that. I've stood there and watched you overcome every fear you've ever faced ...

ARTHUR
It's what's required of me, Merlin.

MERLIN
But you are more than that ... you are not merely a warrior, you are a prince. A future king. You have proved your courage, but you must prove your wisdom ...

ARTHUR
I cannot back down.

MERLIN
(urgent)
Please, Arthur, listen to me. This is no ordinary Knight you're fighting. Look at him - he doesn't eat, he doesn't sleep ... He just stands there in total silence. Doesn't that tell you something?

ARTHUR
No one is unbeatable!

MERLIN
(Looking back at him -
desperate)
If you fight him you will die.

ARTHUR
I cannot listen to this, Merlin.

He throws the door open for MERLIN.

MERLIN
I'm trying to warn you, Arthur.

ARTHUR
And I'm warning you, Merlin.

He swings his sword. MERLIN darts from the room.

ARTHUR slams the door ...

CUT TO:

21

21

UTHER sits in the empty council chamber, a haunted figure. There's a rattle at the window, he reacts, looks toward the sound, clearly expecting the wraith to appear at any moment...

He turns back and is shocked to see someone standing in his room: NIMUEH. He stares at her fearfully, as if he's seen a ghost.

UTHER
(realising her
involvement)
I should've known.

NIMUEH
(with sense of relish)
It is more than I had hoped for,
Uther. Soon Arthur will be slain.
You will have sent him to his
death.

UTHER
You conjured this thing. Their
deaths are at your hand.

NIMUEH
Always so righteous, never to blame
...

UTHER
(angry)
Haven't you had your fill of
revenge?

NIMUEH
Haven't you! You began this war
when you threw me from the court
and slaughtered all of my kind.

UTHER
You brought it on yourselves with
the evil you practised.

NIMUEH

(irked)

I was your friend, Uther! You welcomed me here.

UTHER

And you betrayed that friendship!

NIMUEH

I did as you asked! I used the skills you so despise to give your barren wife the son you craved.

UTHER

Never speak of her that way! My wife was worth a thousand of you. And you took her from me.

NIMUEH

She died giving birth to your son! It was not my choice. That is the law of magic. To create a life there had to be a death, the balance of the world had to be repaid.

UTHER

You knew it would kill her!

NIMUEH

No, you're wrong. If I had foreseen her death, and the terrible retribution you would seek... I would never have granted your wish.

UTHER

I wish you hadn't.

NIMUEH

You wish you did not have a son? Well, that wish will come true tomorrow.

UTHER

I will not let you take him.

NIMUEH

That is your choice.

(a faint smile)

I have watched so many people I love die at your hands, Uther Pendragon. Now it is your turn.

A beat. There's a rattle at the window and the candles flame and go out. When Uther turns back, NIMUEH has gone.

CUT TO:

The room is dark. MERLIN is looking through a book, dissatisfied with what he's found. He begins searching the shelves again, he hears a noise, stops and listens. He waits,

GEOFFREY OF MONMOUTH
Several fables speak of ancient
swords...

MERLIN
That can kill the dead?

GEOFFREY OF MONMOUTH
The fables speak of swords which
can destroy anything - alive or
dead.

MERLIN
Can you show me one of these
fables?

GEOFFREY OF MONMOUTH
Well let me think...

He starts to search the shelves.

MERLIN
I'm sort of in a hurry...

GEOFFREY OF MONMOUTH
You young people always are.

He continues searching as MERLIN follows his every move.

GEOFFREY OF MONMOUTH
Here we are. The Chronicle of
Beltein. Now let me see...

He starts to go through the pages as MERLIN waits
impatiently.

GEOFFREY OF MONMOUTH
Yes, here we go...
(reading)
And Sir Marhaus looked upon the
great sword begotten in the
dragon's breath and found it
passing good...

MERLIN
What did you say?

GEOFFREY OF MONMOUTH
And Sir Marhaus...

MERLIN
Not about him... The dragon...

GEOFFREY OF MONMOUTH
The sword begotten in the dragon's
breath...

He looks up from the book but MERLIN has already disappeared.

GEOFFREY OF MONMOUTH
Always in a hurry.

CUT TO:

23

23

GWEN is busy with her chores, she hears a knock at the door and sees MERLIN.

He hears a noise and quickly turns to the door. He finds MORGANA watching him.

MORGANA
(for once showing her true emotions)
I don't want you to fight tomorrow.

ARTHUR stares at her, surprised by her conviction.

ARTHUR
MORGANA
ARTHUR
Why not?

MORGANA
(feeling some kind of premonition)

Why're worried about me

My father? I can't see the future.

W I U N D E R T A R N D

GAIUS is preparing for bed. A knock at the door. GAIUS goes to open it. He finds UThER standing outside.

UTHER
Am I still welcome?

GAIUS
Have you come to shout at me?

UTHER
I'm sorry.

GAIUS leads him inside.

UTHER
You knew that one day, all this would come back to haunt me.

GAIUS
Not quite so literally.

UTHER
I should've listened to you. You told me no good would come of using witchcraft.

GAIUS
You wanted an heir. You thought it was the only way.

UTHER
Nimueh told me there would be a price.

GAIUS
You were not to know that the price you'd pay was Ygraine's life.

UTHER winces at the memory.

UTHER
I cannot let Arthur die...

GAIUS
Then you must stop the fight.

UTHER
No... I will take his place.

GAIUS
You realise what you're saying?

UTHER
Ygraine died for him and so must I.

GAIUS
Uther...

UTHER
I have no other choice.

GAIUS
There must be another way.

UTHER
No! My death will stop the wraith
and Arthur will live.
(he sets his eyes on
Gaius)
It means that you will be the only
person left who knows the truth
about Arthur's birth. You must
swear to me that you will keep your
oath.

GAIUS
(a moment - finally
relenting)
I will take it to my grave.

UTHER
You always were a good friend,
despite my temper.

GAIUS
I always thought that would be the
death of you.

UTHER
(managing a smile)
I must ask you one last favour...

CUT TO:

26

GWEN returns to MERLIN carrying a sword ...

GWEN
My father's been saving this. He's
always said this was the best sword
he's ever made.

She hands it to MERLIN, he examines it.

MERLIN
It's beautiful.

26

MERLIN
It's for the love of Camelot.

GWEN
Mmm ... Yes.

CUT TO:

27

27

Instinctively, he looks down into the cavern and sees the sword hovering in the air before the GREAT DRAGON.

MERLIN
Will you burnish it to save Arthur?

The GREAT DRAGON considers this . . .

GREAT DRAGON
That is your destiny, young
warlock, not mine.

MERLIN
But if Arthur fights the wraith and
dies Camelot will have no heir. I
will have no destiny.

The DRAGON considers this.

GREAT DRAGON
A weapon forged with my assistance
will have great power.

MERLIN
I know. . .

GREAT DRAGON
(interrupting him)
You do not know. You can only
guess. You have not seen what I
have seen. If you had perhaps you
would not ask this of me.

MERLIN
What do you mean?

GREAT DRAGON
In the wrong hands this sword could
do great evil. It must be wielded
by Arthur and him alone.

MERLIN
I understand.

GREAT DRAGON
You must do more than understand.
You must promise.

MERLIN nods.

MERLIN
I promise.

The GREAT DRAGON exhales an almighty blast of fire . . . The sword is temporarily lost within the inferno.

When the flames recede we see the shining sword - the light flashes off it, almost blinding MERLIN. He turns his head away ...

And when he looks up again, he sees the sword has been returned to him. It is lying on the cloth blanket. MERLIN is captivated - it has a simple but majestic presence.

GREAT DRAGON
Heed my words ...

MERLIN stops and turns to the GREAT DRAGON ...

GREAT DRAGON
The sword was forged for Arthur and
him alone.

CUT TO:

30

30

UTHER standing at the window, looking out at...

The ominous unyielding figure of the BLACK KNIGHT standing before the gates of Camelot.

CUT TO:

31

31

ARTHUR is also standing at his window looking out through the curtains, he's unable to sleep. He hears GAIUS's voice outside his door.

GAIUS (O.S.)
I've brought you something that
might help you sleep.

GAIUS enters carrying a small phial.

ARTHUR
I'm fine. I don't need it

GAIUS
(he removes the cap from
the phial)
Here. It'll relax you, it'll take
the edge off your nerves.

ARTHUR finally concedes and downs the liquid with a grimace.

ARTHUR
I wouldn't drink it for pleasure.

GAIUS
Why don't you sit down for a moment?

ARTHUR
Mind you... if you forget the taste... the effects are...

He plonks himself down on this bed, already succumbing to the sedation...

ARTHUR
Quite enjoyable.

GAIUS
Lie back.

ARTHUR rests his head on his pillow.

GAIUS
How're you feeling?

ARTHUR
Mmm...

GAIUS looks at ARTHUR a moment, waiting for him to drift off. Satisfied that ARTHUR's asleep, he turns and walks quietly to the door. He gently removes the key from the doorlock...

CUT TO:

GAIUS leaves ARTHUR's room and locks the door behind him. He walks away along the corridor.

CUT TO:

MORGANA

I can't.

We hear the drum beat start, MORGANA looks to the window.

MORGANA

(shrugs - lifeless)

If he dies, I fear for the future.

GWEN

Arthur will win. He will live to be King.

MORGANA

How can you be so sure?

GWEN

Merlin is looking out for him. He won't let him die.

MORGANA smiles at GWEN's sweet faith in Merlin but obviously doesn't share it.

CUT TO:

34

34

The drum beats continue while a drugged ARTHUR sleeps, oblivious to the preparations for the fight that are going on outside.

CUT TO:

35

35

A windowless room somewhere in the depths of the castle. The slow beat of the familiar drum continues outside as MERLIN readies Arthur's armour and finally unwraps the new sword from its blanket. It shimmers in the early morning light. He holds it in his hand. Suddenly, the door opens and MERLIN turns expecting to see ARTHUR, instead it's Uther that enters.

UTHER

That's a fine blade.

MERLIN

It's for Arthur.

UTHER

He won't be needing it today.

MERLIN looks confused.

UTHER

I will be taking Arthur's place.

MERLIN

UTHER
It has an almost perfect balance...
Tom is not the Royal Swordsmith.
I'm surprised Arthur went to him.

MERLIN
It was me.

UTHER looks at him.

MERLIN
(he shrugs)
I felt he needed a better sword.

UTHER
(surprised - looking at
Merlin anew)
You do show him incredible loyalty.

MERLIN
It's my job, Sir.

UTHER
But you go beyond the line duty.

MERLIN
Well... you could say there is a
bond between us.

UTHER
I'm glad...
(a beat)
(aOUTHER(aOUTHER

UTHER steps forward. Shock rumbles through the crowd, including MORGANA and GWEN in the stands and MERLIN and GAIUS at the side of the fighting area.

The DRUMMER holds his monotonous rhythm. UTHUR walks calmly through the crowd, but we sense his tension within.

He arrives before the BLACK KNIGHT and stops inches from him, staring into his foe's visor...

UTHER

The King responds, parrying and countering with great skill, somehow managing to maintain his regal presence and command the fight... MERLIN watches the action intensely, reacting as the blows strike.

But the BLACK KNIGHT's assault is unrelenting. Suddenly, the sword is knocked from Uther's hand, it clatters across the cobbles. He is defenceless. He reaches for it, but the BLACK KNIGHT slices at his arm, striking a plate on his forearm...

GAIUS and MERLIN react to this turn of events against the KING.

UTHER reacts in pain, the BLACK KNIGHT closes in for the kill. Uther now has only his shield with which to defend himself...

In vain, he uses it to beat away the BLACK KNIGHT's blows. It's desperate heroic stuff...

MORGANA, sat next to GWEN, looks on in horror.

CUT TO:

42

42

ARTHUR wedges a spear into the jamb and forces his door open. He runs from the room...

CUT TO:

43

43

UTHER continues to desperately defend himself with his battered shield, but the BLACK KNIGHT drives him towards the wooden barriers. Uther appears doomed.

We discover NIMUEH concealed in the crowd, she smiles anticipating Uther's demise.

The BLACK KNIGHT makes a final lunge with all his might, but somehow Uther steps out of the way. The sword buries itself in Uther's shield. Uther hits the BLACK KNIGHT around the head, the KNIGHT's helmet flies off to reveal the hideous wraith underneath.

The CROWD's shock turns to horror...

Before the BLACK KNIGHT can remove his sword, Uther has regained his weapon.

UTHER
Die a second time.

UTHER strikes home with the sword, straight into the KNIGHT's breastplate. As he pulls the blade back, the wraith's mouth opens, his final breath hitting UATHER, who stumbles back as the wraith starts to burn and then explodes in a cloud of dust.

On MERLIN's shocked face. The sword is all the dragon promised.

The CROWD react...

An exhausted UATHER looks down at the wraith's remains - an empty suit of armour...

CUT TO:

44

44

GAIUS dressing UATHER's wounded arm.

UTHER
(smiling - still unable to
believe his good luck)
I thought you said a wraith
couldn't be killed.

GAIUS
Yes, it was remarkable ...

He eyes the sword on the nearby table.

GAIUS
Was that a new sword?

UTHER
Best I've ever fought with.

GAIUS
May I have a look?

GAIUS examines the blade, looking at the runes.

UTHER
I was interested in those markings.

GAIUS
On one side it says "Take me up",
on the other "Cast me away"

UTHER
What does that mean?

GAIUS
Where did you get it?

UTHER
Merlin gave it me. It was forged
for Arthur.

GAIUS reacts, but the conversation is interrupted by ARTHUR's
entrance. The prince doesn't look happy.

GAIUS
(to Uther as he
withdraws from the room)
That should heal pretty quickly.
I'll redress it tomorrow.

UTHER
Thank you, Gaius. Thank you for
everything.

GAIUS smiles and is gone.

ARTHUR
(his anger surfacing)
You had Gaius drug me ... I was
meant to fight him.

UTHER
No ... You weren't.

ARTHUR
The Knight's code ...

UTHER
(passionate)
Be damned! I believed you would
die. I could not take that risk.
You are too precious to me. You
are worth more to me than anything
I know ... more than this entire
Kingdom ... more than my own life.

ARTHUR is taken aback, it is the first time he has seen his
father like this.

ARTHUR
I've always thought ... well ...

UTHER
What?

ARTHUR
That ... I was a disappointment to
you.

UTHER
That is my fault, not yours ... You
are my only son.
(a smile)
And I would not wish for another.

ARTHUR is unsure how to react.

ARTHUR
What I saw ... You fought pretty well.

UTHER
Thank you.

ARTHUR
(preparing to head off)
You should join us for training sometime. Looked like you needed some help on your footwork.

UTHER
I'll give you some footwork.
(offering to land a kick)

ARTHUR grins and moves swiftly away. Uther smiles, pleased he's had this opportunity with his son.

CUT TO:

45

45

GAIUS and MERLIN are having supper. GAIUS looks at MERLIN. MERLIN tries to ignore him.

GAIUS
You know why I'm looking at you.

MERLIN
No.

GAIUS
Uther told me you gave him that sword today.

MERLIN says nothing.

GAIUS
It must be a sword of very great power to slay the dead.
(a beat)
Did you enchant it?

MERLIN
No... I didn't.

GAIUS
Who did then?

MERLIN
(he shakes his head)
Wasn't me.

GREAT DRAGON
You have betrayed me.

MERLIN
He's the King. I couldn't stop him.

GREAT DRAGON
You counted the promise you made to me for nothing. That is something you will regret.

MERLIN
I couldn't let him die...

GREAT DRAGON
You could. But yet you did not. And now he has the sword you begged from me.

MERLIN
I'll get it back...

GREAT DRAGON
The sword is in the world. It cannot be unmade. But now a curse will forever lie upon it.

MERLIN
What do you mean?

GREAT DRAGON
The sword forged by Arthur is now destined to be used against him. It will bring about his doom.

MERLIN
What do you mean? Is Arthur going to die?

GREAT DRAGON
Everything dies, warlock, it is only the manner of death that is in question. Your actions have made that choice for Arthur. What's done cannot be undone.

The GREAT DRAGON turns and is gone. A worried MERLIN stands there a moment, taking in what he's heard.

CUT TO:

49

49

MERLIN stares at the blade, shining in the early morning light. He takes it from its rack and wraps it in a bundle.

CUT TO:

50

50

Dawn. MERLIN leaves Camelot. He's carrying a cloth bundle.

CUT TO:

51

51

The calm water of a vast lake.

MERLIN takes out the sword, he takes one last look, then throws it into the lake...

The sword's hilt slowly sinks to the depths...