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By

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King Arthur

Conventions

All stage directions are from audience point of view

Stage rotates from right to left (clockwise).

[Stage directions in square brackets.]

Character list

Merlin, also called Bleys: arch-mage and druid

Uther: current warlord of Tintagal, father of Arthur by Igraine

Igraine: mother of Morgan by Gorlois (former warlord of Tintagal, killed by Uther);

mother of Arthur by Uther

Heralds

Arthur: squire to Gawain, and then once and future king of Britain

Gawain: an older knight

Lancelot: Arthur's childhood best friend, and then right-hand knight at Camelot; Lancelot must be left-handed

Guinevere: loved by Lancelot and Arthur, a childhood friend to both

Female scribe: serves Uther and then Arthur

Archers: serve Arthur

Chatelaine: serves at Tintagal and Camelot; Merlin's consort Nimue

Chatelans, serve at Camelot

Cellar master: serves at Camelot

Morgan: daughter of Igraine; mother of Mordred by Arthur; sorceress

Mordred: bastard son of Arthur and Morgan

Lot: King of Orkney, husband of Morgan

Dithyramb chorus with 2 leaders: the male leader carries horn; the female leader carries an ocarina

12 women: 6 alto, 6 soprano

12 men: 6 bass, 6 tenor

Prologue

[Antiphonal fanfare. Wind, lightning and thunder, orchestra joins in.

Curtain up.

Sea center stage; big waves, spume onto a stone kneewall at stage left, semi-circle protecting a shallow stone patio, stone stairs meandering up a cliff to extreme stage left, Tintagel high overhead, left in the back. Fog streaming down this staircase.]

[Melin descends through the fog, emerges on to the patio facing the storm. He holds his staff in the middle, raises it straight and vertical in his left hand. Lightning strikes the staff, travels to his right hand, which he places on his chest. A lilac light emanates from his fingers. He levels his staff in both hands, sights across it, quiets the sea.]

[Lightning continues, thunder abates, wind dies down. Merlin traces a lemniscate with his staff in the air above him, strikes the staff on the ground with his left hand, and the ground shudders.]

M: Lux! Tenebros ego te adjureant
Venite Arthurus rex britonorum.
Ancient bastion of earth come forth.

[He shifts the staff to his right hand, points to extreme stage right, lilac light beams from the top of the staff and draws forth the cradle from the right oleo. The cradle appears with overhead follow spot. The cradle is white with gold trim. The cradle crosses the stage on the water, a wave lifts it up and sets it on the kneewall. He removes the child from the cradle, wraps it into his robe, turns, waves the cradle to return, which it does as he ascends the stairs back into the fog. Storm starts again, curtain falls.]

ACT 1, Scene 1, Part 1

[Continues the action of the prologue but inside Castle Tintagel. Tintagel's great hall: opposing balconies, curtains behind, two massive candelabra below each balcony, two arched doors, right door goes outside, left door goes upstairs to the rest of the castle. Huge fireplace on a dias, center back, two stained glass windows that flank the fireplace. There is a fire burning in the fireplace, long trestle table across stage center. The thunder is more muted but lightning can be seen through the windows.

[Ocarina and horn sound.]

[Sound of massive grinding stones moving. The fireplace opens up and a lilac light shines forth.]

[The dithyramb chorus enters through the fireplace. The two leaders carry insignia: the male leader carries a long horn, and the female leader carries a glass ocarina. The chorus members wear multi-colored vestiments, all wear soft-soled slippers, and have lilac hair. They circle the table once, split into two equal groups, one male, one female. The chorus sings as the leaders light the two candelabra above by pointing at them.]

CH: Ours is to witness, to ravel the veil
Of intrigue that plagues Castle Tintagel.

[The two halves of the chorus take up their stations at extreme left and right. The men are on the left and the women are on the right.]

[Merlin enters by the right-hand door carrying the newborn Arthur, crosses between the table and the back wall, and goes upstairs through the left-hand door. He comes back down moments later without the child, and exits through the fireplace. He returns again quickly through the fireplace with Excalibur. He closes off the fireplace portal, grinding noises as before. Merlin exits through the right-hand door. He can be heard outside chanting an incantation.]

M [offstage]: [hammer blow] Shrieking fire torn through the veil. [bell rings]
[hammer blow] Pounded into magnetic stone. [bell rings]
[hammer blow] Steel to stone to flint cannot fail. [bell rings]
[hammer blow] Crowning glory for him alone. [bell rings]

CH: Bleys floats a boulder, sets Excalibur,
Tolls the incantation, all is secure.

[Scrim descends.]

ACT 1, Scene 1, Part 2

Scrim up. It is 6 years later. Uther and his men sit at the table. The castle has become more prosperous: hourglass, tapestry, minstrel band on the right balcony. Arthur, Lancelot and Guinevere appear at the left balcony and watch the men below. They are 6 years old.

CH: Merlin fosters the child at Uther's hold.
His herald is white embroidered with gold.

[Arthur, Lancelot and Guinevere descend to the stage and play hide-and-seek under the table and among the chairs.]

CH: Watch for Guinevere of the burning mane
Making merry at playing winsome catch-me games.

[Herald enters by the right door.]

H: A scribe from Whitby presents her credentials [raised eyebrows that the scribe is a woman.]

U: Did you test her tin?

H: Yes sir, she seems fittingly deferential.

U: Well then, let's have her in.

[Herald exits, returns with the scribe. The scribe is wearing a nun's habit, carrying a portable desk and a scroll with a ribbon around it.]

S: Abbess Hildebrandt presents her compliments.
I am here at her behest and consent.

[She presents the scroll. Uther takes it but ignores it. She knows he can't read. He waves with his hand for her to continue.]

S: I read Ogham, Futhark, Latin and Greek
Some Aramaic scripture, and I speak
Oirish, Rhenish, Danish, Ork, Bork and Dutch
Some Pictish dialects but not too much.

I know seals and heraldic devices,
I'm good at solving domestic crises.
I don't hold to vows of celibacy.
I can see *you* don't [she indicates the table],
And right now that's me.

U [to scribe]: [He pulls a parchment out of his sleeve and hands it to her.]
Here, read this.

S: It's gibberish.

U [to someone at table]: Get her some castle attire.
You're lettered, all right, you're hired.

[Someone leads her from the table.]

[Scrim down.]

ACT 1, Scene 1, Part 3

[Scrim up. Another 6 years later. Arthur, Guinevere and Lancelot are now 12. The castle has continued to prosper. There are two antiphonal minstrel bands. The atmosphere is convivial. There is a chandelier. Igraine is present, and Uther and Igraine are sitting on more elaborate chairs, and there are more women at the table. Arthur is standing in front of the fireplace, acting as a castle page. Merlin, Lancelot and Guinevere are sitting on a bench near the left-hand door. Guinevere is seated between Merlin and Lancelot. Merlin and Guinevere are looking at her shoe aside. Lancelot is watching the action at the table.]

CH: Page boy, altar boy, princess of the pews
Strange toys, salted ploy, witchcraft in her shoes
Lancelot leans to smaragdine vestiments,
Both boys are dreaming of king, queen and quest.

[Chitchat at the table. Minstrel bands plays. Guinevere and Merlin confer.]

M [to Guinevere]: If you'd rather land these lads,
Smear mandrake on your leather pads.

[Table chatter]

Various women: They sure look good together.
Wild and wooly weather.
Better him than me.
Tomfoolery.
Prim pussy.
Juicy.
See?

M: [hands Guinevere a wand]: Hazel works well, but for bridal bonds
Typically a trident basil wand
To fellowship your natural flooze,
Lips and allure ...
[archer enters from stage right]
hello, here's some news [indicates the archer].

Archer: My liege, Lot of Orkney sends greetings *by boat*, archer hands Uther a message tube.]

U [to Arthur]: Fetch our scribe. [Arthur leaves by the left-hand door.]

U [to archer]:What kind of boat?

Archer: [knowing nod] Yes sir, double-keeled dragonprow, battle-racked shields.

[Lancelot nudges Guinevere and points at the table. Uther opens the tube, hands the scroll to Igraine. She examines the wax seals.]

I: This is my daughter Morgan's personal signet ring.
Lot is nursing ambitions to be king of your domains.

[She smooths the scroll on the table between them].

[Arthur comes back with the scribe. The scribe stands between Uther and Igraine and puts her hands on their shoulders familiarly, and reads the message.]

Scribe: Morgan invites her mother Igraine
to the solstice rites at Brodgar's Fane.
As for Lot, that borderline charmer
He demands gifts. His words are not! warm.
Beware his escutcheon, consult with Bleys.
There's blood in the wax, it smacks of malaise.

U: Shit in his lair, we can go if you like.

I [to Uther]: Don't you dare! He'll spit your head on a pike.

U: Let's bait that superstitious double hull,
Make trouble in his fishy scullery.

[dictates to scribe]: Our gnome has seen through your fallen soufflé.
It's so much foam, haul your ballast away.

[Scribe leaves through the left-hand door.]

U [to archer]: Keep him at bay. [to rest of the table] We'll answer Saturday,
May that anchored rat lose his way.

[Lancelot and Merlin nod, Guinevere looks quizzical, Igraine smiles at Guinevere, Arthur walks over to embrace Guinevere, the archer leaves by the right-hand door, smiling, giving the thumbs up.]

[Curtain down.]

ACT 1, Scene 2

[Another five years have passed; Arthur, Guinevere and Lancelot are now 17. The stage has rotated to reveal the tournament field outside the castle.]

[Gawain's pavilion tent, hung with tattered bunting around the upper edge [he is older] is skewed sideways to the right to reveal the interior, where a cot, trunk, jug in rattan, pots, pans, shield, and a sword and scabbard are seen. Gawain has been drinking.]

[Arthur is sitting on a bench next to Gawain's tent busy with Gawain's armour.]

[There is a firepit with low stone surrounds, centre stage, over which a whole ox is being roasted on a spit. There is a cauldron off to the side of the pit, holding stew that women are stirring.]

[Men are sitting around the pit on benches carousing, drinking mead from a cask provided by Merlin. Couples are courting. The occasional couple heads off into the woods, Guinevere and Lancelot are on a bench by themselves. The sword in the stone is far left, bearing an inscription on a plaque.]

[Tintagel is in the far back right, lists and seating far back centre, trees and ring wall far back left. Occasional cheers, much boasting, horse hooves crunch.

[The drinking song]

Men:

Thank you god for excellent sot
This keg does Merlin proud.
Watch your girlfriend stir the pot
And suck it down your snout.

Spitted beast is fit for the feast
We've got the itch for you
Let's get it right in our delight
And fit it tight in you.

Deeds alive when treason runs rife
We are the barratry
Snotty debauch waters our crotch
Piss on perfidity.

Hang the duke and his gang of crooks
The beer is getting queer
Bang the drum for kingdom come
And stick it in your ear.

[Merlin is talking with the men around the firepit who are enjoying contents of the keg. Merlin produces an astral double of himself, which goes over to the tent, takes Gawain's sword, and leaves, unseen by all present. The scabbard remains.]

CH: At seventeen, they're squires on the field
Aspiring to the saddle and shield.

[Gawain finds his sword is missing, pitches a fit. Lancelot changes places with Guinevere. Arthur takes the empty scabbard, searches the tent, surroundings, benches etc. Everyone looks at Gawain.]

CH: Comes the tournament, royals in the list
Gawain's sword goes missing. Hoy! is he pissed.

Gawain: Hercules and hades toff
Where's me bloody blade gone off?
Oi, I require my squire
To shovel all this duffle.
I can't be foighting empty-hand
Damn the devil's conniving band
Knoives and daggers dunna do
Who snagged me sword, you or you?

[He starts pointing at people to pick a fight. Arthur is scurrying about looking for it. Distraught, he grabs the sword from the boulder, sticks it in the scabbard, and gives it to Gawain. Gawain does a doubletake, proclaims himself king.]

Gawain: Hoy, I'm the royal spiff I am
And where's me royal missus then?
Help me take these drawers off.
Blakey Hawthorn, don't you scoff
I'll not have you scorn the king
Nor you, Tavener Tartin...
I'm the cheering champ, I loof.
Don't cramp my kine, here is the proof.

[Merlin whacks him on the back, which shuts Gawain right up.]

M: Wait just a moment, break-a-bone,
Let's see you take it from the stone.

Variouly [men]: Aye, let's give everyone a try.
We'll have the living truth or lie.
Taverner for king,
Haverstraw then Bing
All you thaners give a tug,
You too, Gawain, here's your mug.
[All the men fail.]

CH: For shame! Gawain, would you tarnish the throne
Your claim is false, sheathe that sword in the stone.

[Gawain goes into his tent to sulk.]

Various [in unison]: Now the squires take their chance,
Arthur, Firedrake and Lance.

[Lancelot refuses the offer. Arthur pulls the sword from the stone.]

[Merlin's prophesy]

M: I confirm your sovereign
Monarch of us all
Steward of the government
Keeper of the salt
Owner of the shrieking sword
Rue in bitter bread
Bind the land to one accord
Grandeur overspread.
His amighty victory
What none yet have dared
Be among the quick and free
You can start right there [points at the tournament and pavilions in back].

[Arthur is raised onto the stone edge of the firepit. Rousing chorus by men around the firepit.]

[The war song]

All: Kneel no more to custom past
We shall not be bent
Ours the lustral light at last
All our steel attend.

Off to war victorious
Heed the trumpets' call
Horse and helm? There's more of us.
Breach the rampart wall.

Burn the groaning dungeon keep
Halberds in a pile
As you've sown, so shall you reap.
It's our turn to smile.

And when the bitter days are done
Then we'll take a look.
Thank you god for everyone
Written in a book.

[CH and soldiers together]
CH: March to the morning, berserk in your beer,
To the intersection of sword and spear.
Soldiers: Tramp, tramp, tramp, tramp.

[Sounds of fighting, tumult, etc., cheers]

CH: Arthur shall be king, Lance his right-hand knight
Guinevere wins both singly out of sight.
Men! All hail the rightful king ascendant
Women! Your children shall not be threatened.

[Lancelot and Guinevere hug.]

[Curtain falls.]

[Battle noises continue while the curtain. Orchestra continues to play with horns etc.
Finally there is a great cheer.]

ACT 2, Scene 1, Part 1

[Great hall at Camelot, round table front and centre, 9-foot doughnut hole, 13 straight-backed chairs leaving a gap extreme front center to allow a sight line, goblets at each place, crests on the chairs, covered dish, pitcher in front, each segment of the table is draped, etc. on wheels for easy removal, Arthur center back, Lancelot to his right, general hubbub. Back wall is curved, balcony with rail round the back, 3 doors upstairs, curved staircase to left, large double bowtop doors at the bottom of the stairs, extreme stage left, 13 shields under the balcony, individually lighted, smaller door to stage right for service and removal of table segments, etc. Grand chandelier centered overhead, chatelaine stationed under stairs, heralds at either side of the big double doors, at stage left. Wall sconces, minor draperies, some artwork etc., no windows, no fireplace, no squires. Servitors leave, expectant silence, Merlin appears in a cloud of smoke in the middle of the table, takes the cover off the dish, sprinkles something in each goblet and passes the pitcher, and then administers the oath of chivalry.]

M: First the vows of chivalry extended
To defend the throne against all comers.
Run down evildoers and lay them low.
Go forth into the land and heal its wounds.
Ruin no one's farm field by inattention.
Clench no man's fist to your own advantage.
Grant succor to widow, wesen and waif.
Favor no one above any other.
Brothers at table, werekin at war,
Guardians of the Grail let none of you thirst.
And, if you fail me, lads, your balls are curst.

[Merlin leaves as he arrived in a cloud of smoke in the center of the table.]

CH: Merlin retires to his cavern bed.
His fires lie banked, he's not! of the dead.
Quo vadis? Where to now post-propter hoc?
Mostly self-service boasted on the oak.

[Quests.]

K1: Only the holy Grail suffice
I shall prevail at any price.

K2: The missing spear of Longines
The missing nail of Christ no less.

K3: I'll ken the I-am-that-I-am
For the ultimate pentagram.

K4: I'll ford the portal of dawn
For the lord's eidolon.

K5: A phoenix feather I'll connive
For writing on the scroll of life.

K6: I'll require a unicorn
For its curative spiral horn.

K7: I lather for the Loreleil.
I long to savor of the Sidhe.

K8: Imprisoned princess, secret tryst
Sinister wizard eat my fist.

K9: I'm tracking the Questing Beast
I'll be back at lenten feast.

K10: Gents! To wander through woods and
Land, and abstinence be damned!

K11: To hell with your screweries, Sir Kissalot,
I'm off to the breweries to piss a lot.

[The knights are all nodding in agreement. Each knight gets up after announcing his individual quest, takes his shield, and the light on his shield turns off, and his table segment and chair are removed. The knights tramp off together, leaving Arthur and Lancelot. First Arthur and Lancelot look at each other and move to center stage front. The remaining two sections of the table and the chairs are removed by the right-hand door. The chatelaine is hovering under the stairs.]

ACT 2, Scene 1, Part 2

[Guinevere comes out of the centre door on the balcony and regards the two.]

CH: Both friends ready to fight for her favor
Prove their delight, or who is the braver.

L [K12]: I stand by sweet Guinevere
And you shall cry in your beer.

A [K13]: I'll do proud by Guinevere
We'll have it out now and here.

L: Common lout, pissabed, you want more?

A: [to the chatelaine] Get out, lock the door [door bolt strikes home from the outside].

A [to Lancelot]: Bishop's pet, blockhead, ladykin.

[They dance around each other.]

L: Sphincter spew, I'm not afraid of you, cock-a-leak.

A: Cock-a-lack, let's see what you're made of, shortcoming.

[They close in and move to the pushing phase.]

L: Dumb ox, flummox, lummox, get it bent.

[Guinevere grips the rail, bends closer, they dance under her, looking up.]

A: I defend your honor.

L: Honor my ass, you tentagaul!

[They come to blows, move under the balcony, looking up at Guinevere, who comes downstairs, leaving glowing footprints, overhead chandelier dims to orange, the wall sconces flare. Follow spots. They meet her at the foot of the stairs.]

A and L: Choose me, choose me.

[She dances around each in turn, a figure 8 en passant.]

A and L: Lose him, lose him.

[She drops a shoe, Lancelot grabs it, smells it, dances with it, she circles Arthur.]

L: Swineherd, break your spine, she's mine.

[Guinevere drops her other shoe, Arthur grabs it, does likewise, she dances with Lancelot. Arthur and Lancelot square off, throw the shoes at each other, draw their swords, and cross swords while she circles both of them.]

A: Friends no more, it ends here, die!

L: Enemies, mortal fear, die!

[Arthur is on the left, sword in his right hand, Lancelot is on the right, sword in left. Swords clash 4 times. Guinevere comes forward between them. They grab her with their free hand and make to tear her apart, they rip off her dress, she wears a dagger in a sheath pointing at her crotch, she draws it, lays it in the center of the two crossed swords and binds their loyalty.]

G: I demand your obeisance.

A and L: We accept your command.

G: Your weapons press my advantage.

A and L: Power derives from you.

G [to A]: Royal privacy is assured.

A: Bravoura waxes bold.

G [to L]: I'll need your shoulder when he dies.

L: Your eyes can see beyond.

G: We weave a bondage fair complete.

A and L: To share the sweet and spoil.

G: Coil round me then, arise in me.

A and L: Wise woman of our dreams.

G: Queen of ruby carnelian gold.

A and L: To steel, to molten brass.

G: To heel, to run, we are as one.

CH: She'll keep her good looks, she will not conceive,
Dagger formidable, gall up her sleeve.

[A and L sheath their swords, embrace. She touches each on the heart with her dagger. She turns three times, heads upstairs with her dagger in her hand. They follow her upstairs, she slams the center door in their faces. Arthur goes to the right-hand door and Lancelot goes to the left-hand door. Lights come up, end of Part 2.]

Act 2, Scene 1, Part 3

[Musical pause of 10–15 seconds. Servitors roll out a long trestle table, already set, 8 chairs along the back. There is a wine keg on the right, a washbasin on the left near the door so people can wash their hands before sitting at the table, long bench along the front, bowls, beakers, wine pitcher, bread loaves, salt dish, cheese rounds, fruit. Fanfare outside. The double doors open, heralds stand at the sides of the doors.]

CH: Lot of Orkney and his wife conspire
That Arthur beget a bastard by her.

[A procession begins. The chatelaine comes in first, followed by the principals, plus 8 castelans who jockey for position at the table. We see from left to right: Lot's man, Lot, Morgan's maid, Morgan, Arthur, Guinevere, Lancelot and the scribe.]

Arthur's castelans: Welcome, welcome to Lot, King of Orkney.
Welcome to Morgan Le Fay, his consort.

CH: Behold Morgan plies her sorcerous gile
Seductive unction by smolder and smile.

Arthur's castellans: We offer our fare without rank or stint
And invite you to sample the vintage.

[The cellar master wears a large key, fills his own cup from the keg, tastes, nods approvingly, fills a pitcher, pours a glass for Guinevere first. She tastes and nods. Lot watches all this suspiciously.]

[Various chatter at the table:]

The summer campaign went well.
Quentin is coming home soon.
Stoner got married to Nell.
A dowry of silver spoons.

[The cellar master pours a glass for Lot's man, who tastes gingerly and nods approval. The cellar master pours for Lot, who tastes and then guzzles it down. Then the rest are served wine. The atmosphere relaxes.]

[Various chatter at the table:]

Good crowd for the tourmanent,
Poor showing by the Cornwall,
The Moorhead got theirs dented,
Barney took a nasty fall.

[The food comes in. Ribald repartee, the music turns jolly, much to-and-fro to the washbasin.]

Various:
Leg of sinner, anyone?
Looks like we snookered the keg.

Lancelot: Now we begin with the fun.

Guinevere [looking at Lot]: Bloater broods a cuckoo's egg.

[Arthur puts a stop to this innuendo.]

Arthur [to scribe]: Let's have the reading of the fief.

Lot: Now we'll see what greedy thief...

Morgan: Don't add grief.

Scribe [to Lot]: For your signature, I will read it first.

[He flinches at "read" – he's illiterate. Archers quietly enter the balcony from a secret draped door far right. Washbasin is scurvy by now, someone shows disgust.]

Scribe: All our war efforts shall be reimbursed.
We exact tribute, in your case not much.

[Lot hiccups, scowls, begins to work himself up, others smirk.]

Scribe: Rip up the Irish, and go chase the Dutch,
You may harbor the Isle of Wight at will.
Fight the Danish, since we both wish them ill [Lot sputters but looks mollified].
As for payment, we desire your wool,
Your famous yarn, dyed, dried, five hundred spools
Ten barges of finely dressed ashlar stone.
More wine? Marsh marigold and more and drone...

[Lot looks increasingly glazed, drains his cup, reaches for the pitcher, knocks it over, wine flows across the table, the castalans grab for articles and leave through both doors fast. Morgan reaches around her maidservant to quiet Lot, shushes him.]

Lot [to Morgan]: Don't harridan me, carnivorous witch.
Bar the threshold, blatant hippogryph bitch.

[Lot starts throwing stuff. Lancelot grabs Guinevere and leaves by the service door on stage right.]

Lot [to Morgan]: I'll not beholden, twaddling coont.
Go frolic with your kin, our plans are ruint.

[The scribe offers Lot the parchment fief and he rips it up. He shoves Morgan's maid and both maid and Morgan fall towards Arthur, who catches Morgan. Wine from Morgan's cup soaks her dress. Chairs fall over. Lot hits Morgan. Morgan uses one last ploy.]

Morgan: You annoy me with your drunken drivell.
Here, drink up, that your shank may shrivel.

[She throws her almost empty cup in his face. She is with Arthur. The two heralds come forward, grab Lot, dunk his face in the washbasin and frogmarch him out. The room is cleared.]

A [to Morgan]: Well, that could have gone better.
How can we salvage this mess?

M: We should fake him a letter
And I need to take off this dress.

A: Wet becomes you, it's not your fault.
Let's fare from here and share some salt.

[She precedes him up the stairs. They enter the center door. The door shuts. Morgan laughs in triumph. Curtain down.]

ACT 2, Scene 2

[It is noon. The scene is set outside with Lot's broch in back, Morgan and Mordred are foundling on a couch. She feeds him figs and little cucumbers.]

CH: Incestuous Morgan enchants her child,
Whoring him into a wanton defile.

Morgan: Brave heart, my marvelous bandy boy
We'll pave your way to the throne with more
Inhale my musk on the breast of joy
You will be grown successful in war.

[It is 6 p.m. Stage rotates a quarter turn. As the stage turns, the pair walk over to the next set. The change in lighting reflects the passage of time. There is an onyx skrying mirror. He sits in front of it and she stands behind him with her hands on his shoulders.]

Morgan: The hex of our power wax in you
The praxis of sex pinion your eye
Prize me above all others, my love
Your mother conjures your future bent,
Attend to our bond, hypnotic touch,
Clutch of my dragon, melodic, done!

CH: His poor self-image will compromise hers.
Their prospect dims, rising blurs their colours.

[The stage rotates again. It is midnight. The pyromancy scene. Brodgar's Ring is visible directly behind the broch under moonlight. There is a fire on an altar. She gazes into the fire.]

Morgan: You're oath-bound to meet at Tintagel.
No one will win, but you'll both prevail.
Magnificent fight, your bearing's bold
You'll wear the dragon on white with gold.
A female demon will befriend you.
All your dreams will be rendered to you.
The king himself will honor your claim.
Everybody remembers your name.

CH: Half-lie, entrapment he can't but believe
A pyro strappado with no reprieve.

[It is 6 in the morning, dawn. Stage rotates one last time. Kommet Stone working.]

Morgan: I am the stone omnipotent.
CH: Dripping in kinsmen's blood and cum.
Morgan: Command, commitment and consent.
CH: Hear his withershin-thudding drum.
Morgan: Scion of my womb, bairn of my bone.
CH: Mordred is a finely honed tool.
Morgan: Join to your doom, swear of the stone.
CH: You did not bind his soul, you fool.

She chains him hand and foot to the menhir, facing it, throws glittering dust at his back and leaves.

Curtain falls.

ACT 3

[Curtain up. Troops come on stage. Mordred's forces come from the left, Arthur's from the right.]

CH: King Lot and Morgan play tiddlywinks
With armies, their kid and horrible stinks.
Comes to the melee marshalled on the moor
We are mere playthings, our eye grows obscure.

[When Mordred appears, he trails a spectral Morgan by a thread above the battle. Tuba mirum from Berlioz. When Arthur and Mordred close in, a similar thread connects them.]

CH: [from male chorus on the left] We archive the truth
For every spirit
[from female chorus on the right] We convey the death
Through darkness and birth.

[Chorus enters battlefield.]

CH: On the blasted heath they find each other,
men with broken teeth, blind hacking brother.
Keen the demon of conjunction in death,
Crows scavenge the hulk, Skulda cuts a thread.

[Mordred and Arthur close, fight and both receive mortal wounds.]

Mordred [to Arthur]:

Death holds no agony for me
I've been as dead these twenty years
A rag doll weaned on sorcery
Folly crammed down my screaming ears.

I am the son you never knew
You freed me from my bonds
I am grateful to you, sir
I am eager to be gone.

[He collapses into Arthur's arms. Skulda cuts the strings to Arthur and Morgan. Arthur lays Mordred out. Mordred relaxes, smiles. Arthur takes off his tunic with the dragon and covers Mordred with it. Morgan keens her son, fades from view.]

CH: *Incestuous child!* His mother bewails
The chain that they've forged, the kingdom that fails.

A: Lot and Morgan were fools, my child,
More, they must live with what they do.
My throne and jewel all the while
I would have given them to you.

[He turns and looks up to the height where Guinevere and Lancelot are standing, unrecognizable.]

A: Weep no more for me, my wife
The game is almost done
No grave for me, no leman's life
I'm off to Avalon.

Keep her well, my friend
See to her needs
I go to cast my sword
Among the reeds.

[Arthur appears to stagger from stage left to right while the stage revolves imperceptibly. This is an optical illusion. Arthur arrives on a sandy rise, at the water's edge, surrounded by reeds and lilies, slightly left of center on stage so there is room the barge to appear from the right and cross a stretch of water. The battlefield is gone, Guinevere and Lancelot are still visible on a high dune far left, in the back of the stage. Arthur plunges the sword into the sand and rests on it with his hands. He occludes the sword from the audience with his body. The sword is quickly removed by stagecraft and replaced with a laser projection.]

A: Grasp hold, my lovely, I have no need for this.
I offer it to thee with one last kiss.

[He kisses the crosshaft and then hurls the sword up and away from him into the lake. The sword shrieks, a hand rises from the surface, grabs it, brandishes it, then sword and hand retract. The water quiets. Arthur gazes across the water to the right. The music descends to bass cleff, and celeste counterpoint. The funeral barge appears from stage right [i.e. from Avalon]. It is a scow draped in black with a lilac lantern on the prow. The transom is square to allow him to embark. There are three queens with silver crowns and black dresses. The barge turns 180 degrees so Arthur can get in. He is wades to the barge and is helped in by the queens. They lay him out on his bier. The centre queen cradles his head on her lap and takes his iron battle crown and sets it on a pillow behind her on the prow. The others chafe his hands. They sing a lullaby while keening the dead, and the choir [offstage] joins in. The barge proceeds to stage right slowly.]

Lullaby

3 queens [in unison]: Abide with me, my child
This world is not for you
Go ride your dreams a while
And savor what you do.

Adventure more you may
That which you sleep is real
Whatever bent, allay
Deep underneath your keel.

And if the world requires you
Take care, consider well
And always do what's true
For this I toll your bell.

[Centre queen rings the chatelaine's bell as the barge reaches extreme stage right, implying that she is indeed the chatelaine, and maybe Nimue, who helped Merlin put the sword in the stone. The two other queens are played by Guinevere and Morgan. The barge moves offstage.]

CH: No one won, let the tableau be frozen
De profundis, to the great deep he goes.

[Orcarina and horn sound.]

A muted trumpet fanfare sounds, echoing the fanfare before the prologue, and the chorus gives a far-off cry of acclaim or welcome.

Curtain down.

Appendix 1 –Thoth tarot card set characteristics

Merlin – XII, I, IX

Uther – As, IV, XVI

Igraine – XI, III, XIV

Guinevere – XV, II, VIII

Arthur – V, O, XII

Lancelot – IX, Ks, XI

Morgan – XVII, XVIII

Lot – Ad, Kc, Qs

Mordred – 7c, Ps, 10s

Nimue – 2c, II, 2w

Scribe – 4s, Ps, 2d

Appendix 2 – Costumery

Merlin – [gray-hooded robe, multi-colored druid chain, russet soft-soled boots trimmed with wolf fur, he always moves silently]

Uther – [hooded black vest, black pants, red dragon crest on his chest, hard-soled black boots]

Igraine – [red dress with orange trim, gold crown, soft shoes with bead trim]

Herald – [castle livery, carries trumpet]

Arthur – [white surcoat trimmed with gold, red dragon crest]

Lancelot – [green coat, green slippers]

Guinevere – [red curls, red dress with gold trim, hard-soled shoes, iron dagger with ruby pommel, mandarin sleeve pockets]

Guinevere – [costumes at varying ages with some changes during a single scene: Act I, scene 1 is yellow and gold [age 6]; Act 1, scene 1 is gold and orange [age 12]; Act 2, scene 1 is red, orange and gold [age 17]; Act 2, scene 1 is scarlet, orange and gold [age 22]; Act 3 is brown and gold [age 44]]

Female scribe – [monk's robe, hood, soft-soled slippers, carries a portable desk, scroll of office]

Archer – [bow, quiver, black boots, buckler, sword, helm]

Servitors – [livery]

Chatelaine [bell and wand]

Dithyramb 12 women, 12 men

6 bass, 6 tenor, 6 alto, 6 soprano

2 leaders – long horn, glass ocarina, multi-colored vetements, all soft-soled slippers, lilac hair?

Chatelaine is a non-singing part. She wears a bell and points directions to servitors and retainers. Same bell is heard outside at the setting of the sword into the stone. Is she Nimue?

Lot – chainmail hauberk grey boots.

Morgan – black dress, green trim, silver crown, silver + wand, later in Orkney a more motherly blue and silver.

Mordred – sickly green and yellow; on the field, silver and red.

3 queens – funereal black, brass crowns, silver bunting on the barge, lilac light on its prow.

Appendix 3

500 – Morgan born

518 – Morgan leaves Tintagel and head to Orkney

519 – Uther captures Tintagel

520 – Arthur is born

537 – Tournament with the sword/stone

540 – Round table at Camelot

541 – Mordred is born

561 – Arthur and Mordred both die. Mordred is 20; Arthur is 41. Morgan is 61.

Post Scriptum

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