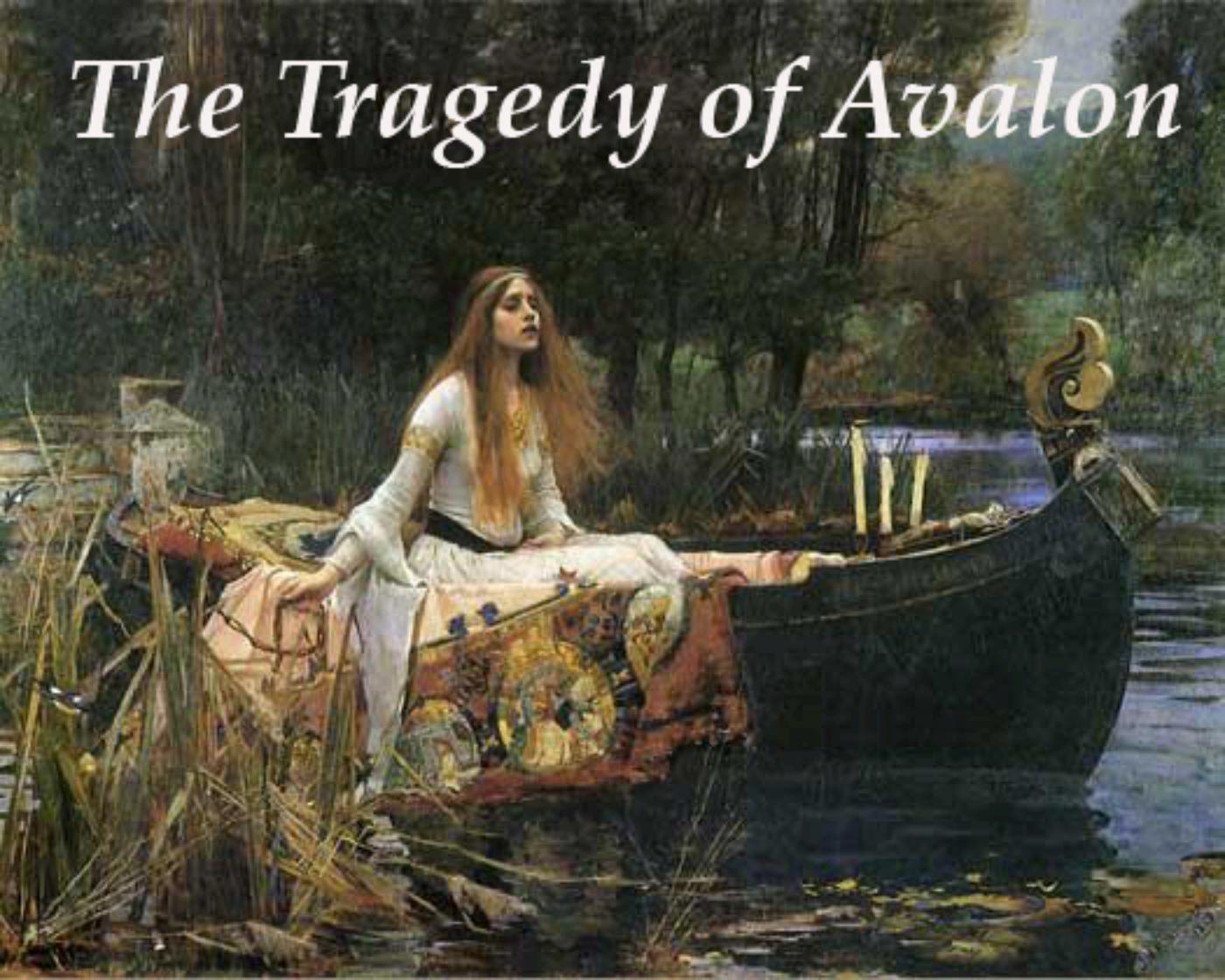


The Tragedy of Avalon



Avalon

A drama of love in five acts

by Christian Lanciai (1996; 2005)

The characters :

Merlin
Vivianne, high priestess
Igraine, her sister, mother of Morgan le Fay
Morgan le Fay
Arthur
Guinevere of Lyonesse
Marianne, Guinevere's maid
Sir Gawaine
Sir Kay
Sir Tristan
Sir Gareth
Sir Sagramour
Sir Lancelot
Sir Aggravaine
Sir Pellinore
Sir Percival
Sir Cedric
Mordred, bastard son of Morgan le Fay
Sir Lionel, her servant
other servants and followers of her
other knights and attendants

The action is in England in early medieval times

The drama is developed from an earlier drama called "The Fall of Camelot" (1996)

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Avalon

Act I scene 1. A glade in the forest.

Vivianne What is Avalon really, Merlin, you who know everything.

Merlin Alas, don't ask me of that, dear Vivianne. It's an ancient tradition. No one knows where it comes from. The point is that it is human, and that is enough for it to deserve to be maintained as a tradition. I don't wish to burden you with it, dear Vivianne, but you who are a sensible woman with a sense of responsibility therefore have great propensities qualifications and prospects for maintaining it correctly.

Vivianne But couldn't you explain to me the meaning of it?

Merlin Who can explain the meaning of life? Everyone can question the meaning of life, and therefore no one can answer the question and I least of all, since I am regarded as the wisest of all, since I most of all question the meaning of life.

Vivianne Is then calling the meaning of life in question part of the secret of Avalon?

Merlin Perhaps. It's an interesting question.

Vivianne So it is not just for sharing your power that you give me such a responsibility.

Merlin Avalon has nothing to do with power. Avalon stands above all earthly power and rather constitutes its opposite.

Vivianne Why then does the office of the high priestess of Avalon give me such power?

Merlin Just because all power is powerless against the anti-power of Avalon.

Vivianne That I cannot understand.

Merlin I can understand that you cannot understand that. No one can understand it.

Vivianne Not even you?

Merlin Dear Vivianne, throughout my long life I have exclusively devoted myself to try to understand the matter and essence of life without even having succeeded in understanding its most basic secrets.

Vivianne Still you are not stupid.

Merlin To the degree that you realize your own limitations and that there is much you don't know and never can learn to know, you might to some extent get somewhat detached from total stupidity.

Vivianne And to that sovereign level you wish to elevate me to something of your equal in wisdom, although I am just a vain and stupid woman.

Merlin Nothing is more prone to arouse respect of a woman from man than her higher sense of sensitivity, which a man never is able to reach.

Vivianne Not even you, the wisest and most knowledgeable of all?

Merlin I am just a man, Vivianne. I can never be a woman.

Vivianne Is woman then above man?

Merlin As little as man is above woman. But they can't manage alone. Only together they are both sovereign and equal. A man can acquire the advantages of the female psyche by entering a woman, and a woman can acquire the spiritual force of man by accepting a man, and together they are like a divinity, but never each one alone.

Vivianne Still you always were a bachelor.

Merlin You can't guess how much I have loved women, Vivianne, although I seldom went to bed with them. Love isn't just sex. Real love is anything but sex.

Vivianne I believe you. Therefore all women could always trust you. You understand them just because you always loved them without using them.

Merlin I always tried to do the right thing. Therefore I could actually with a clear conscience say that I never made myself guilty of any abuse.

Vivianne No, Merlin, in that matter I can't believe you. No man can live without abusing his life. If it isn't sexually, it is politically or by intrigue. I don't think you were quite innocent in the way my sister Igraine was pregnant with a son although her husband was dead.

Merlin That is the very reason why, dear Vivianne, I wanted to reserve you and your life for Avalon, so that you wouldn't have anything to do with the problems of this world. Don't ask me how my ward Arthur came into being. He had to be born. It was a necessity. We needed a future king for the salvation and continuity of the country. We could not allow disorder and barbarity to take over.

Vivianne But Igraine was sacrificed.

Merlin Nature demanded it. No force can withstand nature.

Vivianne Don't tell me that you are not manipulating with nature.

Merlin Are you accusing me of ruling nature, which cannot even rule itself?

Vivianne I think the secret of Avalon has something to do with this.

Merlin You could be right. Avalon is as intimately connected with the very essence of the life of nature as that new religion invading our islands is trying to alienate man from nature.

Vivianne You mean Christianity. Is it then unnatural?

Merlin Yes, in its capacity and effort to place itself and man above nature. It will never work. All human life is dependent on man's humility to nature. If she abuses nature, man must to the same extent as nature suffer for it and perish before her.

Vivianne So Avalon is opposed to Christianity?

Merlin No, but it takes a position of defence and aims to defend nature against the abuse of it by man. Nothing threatens our islands, our people, nature and humanity as much as the egoistic hubris of man.

Vivianne Which Christianity encourages?

Merlin Yes, unfortunately. That is why it is a dangerous religion.

Vivianne I understand, father Merlin. Thanks for informing me of where I stand.

Merlin Consider it a mission of administration, dear Vivianne. Avalon is a secret which man must not lose, for in that secret is embedded the root of all human life.

Vivianne I will do my best to maintain it. And when do you intend to give Arthur to the world as the only rightful king of Avalon?

Merlin As soon as he is mature enough.

Vivianne What man will ever be mature enough?

Merlin Don't judge other men from your own bitter experience of love. All men are not necessarily villains.

Vivianne I am sorry. I loved my husband, Merlin, and my child with him was no child of sorrow. I wish him if anything all possible luck in his life with especially love.

Merlin He is a beautiful child who could be even more handsome as a man.

Vivianne A mother's highest bliss in life is to be able to bring forth beautiful children for its enrichment and multiplication to even greater beauty.

Merlin As a good mother you did succeed in that.

Vivianne But my husband died, and I have never been able to look at any man after him. His violence filled my life with abomination of all male war madness forever.

Merlin It was not his fault that we were invaded by barbarians from the east.

Vivianne But it was his fault that he warred against them.

Merlin He felt it was his duty.

Vivianne When shall we ever be spared the abomination of violence, Merlin?

Merlin That's perhaps where there is a mission for you and Avalon.

Vivianne Do you think Avalon could redeem humanity?

Merlin Yes, if Avalon may live and its secret may be kept alive.

Vivianne Will I ever get to learn the secret?

Merlin Future will show. The main thing is that the secret of Avalon may be kept and advanced. Whoever is worthy of it will get to learn it, and therefore it is vital that it may always be kept alive and available.

Vivianne Here is now Igraine.

Merlin Welcome, sweet Igraine.

Igraine (enters) Merlin and Vivianne, have you now been at it intriguing again?

Vivianne Merlin has only made me high priestess of Avalon.

Igraine And you accepted it?

Vivianne Why wouldn't I accept a mission of honour bestowed on me by Merlin?

Igraine Is it for the fight against Christianity, Merlin?

Merlin No, sweet Igraine, it is only for saving and protecting life.

Igraine Like all male manipulators you dress your political intrigues in beautiful words to get away with them.

Merlin Don't be bitter, Igraine. We are all just trying to do our best.

Igraine I didn't ask for the death of my husband.

Merlin Fate interferes without anyone asking for it and in such a way that no one would ever have dreamed about it. That's the law of destiny.

Igraine I will never believe, Merlin, that you were entirely innocent of my husband's death and that his murderers were allowed to ravish me.

Merlin Even love follows its very own laws, sweet Igraine. Uther Pendragon loved you.

Igraine I loved my husband.

Vivianne What has occurred has occurred, Igraine, and no one can change it afterwards. And you did have a son although you lost your husband.

Igraine A son that was taken away from me by Merlin here.

Merlin Igraine, he is the future king of England. Only he can save England, if it can be saved at all. Therefore he must be protected at any cost and his upbringing kept secret until he comes of age. Or else he would probably all too soon be murdered without even being able to defend himself against the domination of the age of rude barbarity and brutal violence.

Vivianne Merlin knows what he is doing, Igraine.

Igraine And you are following him on his leash.

Vivianne My sister, we have a responsibility. I have accepted it.

Igraine And I was bereft of the responsibility I had by force.

Vivianne Does that have to make us enemies?

Merlin Sisters, I must beg you not to argue. Let Igraine be a Christian if she wants to, Vivianne, and I beg of you, Igraine, to tolerate Vivianne's capacity of high priestess of Avalon.

Igraine We shall never harm each other, Vivianne, but we shall also never be agreed.

Vivianne We are sisters, Igraine. We shall never be parted, and no matter how reluctantly we shall always be together anyway.

Igraine I think I had better leave.

Vivianne Yes, go and shut yourself up in your convent, Igraine.

Merlin Don't insult her, Vivianne.

Igraine It doesn't matter. I can take insults better as a Christian than she will do as the defender of paganism. (*leaves*)

Vivianne She is angry.

Merlin But she is the better one of you.

Vivianne But she will never accept Avalon.

Merlin The more important then that you stand guard of it.

Vivianne You can always trust me, Merlin, but I fear that we will never be able to trust any Christian.

Merlin We can manage without the Christians, Vivianne. We don't need to trust them.

Vivianne I hope you are right. But they are ambitious for power. That's what makes them dangerous. And on the day when they get the better power over us it will be the end of Avalon.

Merlin That's the very sort of matter which Avalon stands above, Vivianne. That's why I have given it to you.

Vivianne I fear, Merlin, that my administration will mainly consist of tests and trials.

Merlin All life consists manly of tests and trials, but it's by getting through them that we survive at all.

Vivianne We shall survive, Merlin, no matter the cost, even if the secret of Avalon would be buried alive by the ignorance of Christianity.

Merlin That's the spirit, Vivianne. I think I have chosen the right high priestess. *(takes her around her shoulders, and they walk out together.)*

Scene 2.

Morgan No, mother, I don't want to.

Igraine I know you do not wish to, my love, and I don't wish it either, but those who have more power than we demand it.

Morgan How can you then leave me to them?

Igraine We are only women, Morgan. We have no voice and no right to oppose the decisions of men. Also your aunt Vivianne gives them the right, and she is our high priestess.

Morgan Have we then no freedom just because we are women?

Igraine We are born without freedom for being women and can only achieve some freedom by compromises with oppression. My love, *(embraces her)* I believe the only way to any freedom for you is to obey Vivianne.

Morgan Vivianne is the warlock Merlin's slave, and I don't want to be their slave.

Igraine Merlin is the wisest druid we have in the country. He has never made a mistake, which is also confirmed by Vivianne.

Morgan I am afraid of them, mother.

Igraine We have every reason to be afraid of all powers and forces, my love, but Merlin and Vivianne are still the safest among them.

Morgan You already had to give up Arthur to Merlin. No one knows what they will do to him. Whatever will they do then to me?

Igraine We simply have to trust them, my love. We have no choice. Here is Vivianne now.

Vivianne (enters) How is she?

Igraine She is not willing, Vivianne.

Vivianne It's good that she is obstinate. No quality is more valuable and essential for her calling.

Igraine She is so young and inexperienced. She is just afraid of everything.

Vivianne Everyone is afraid of the dark until they understand it's just a cover for the light. She must learn to look through life, Igraine, and she can learn that the best and fastest way by us.

Igraine You must not harm her.

Vivianne All women are harmed by life. My own son was taken away from me to be educated in France. It's our destiny and plight to be harmed, Igraine, in order to

learn how to endure worse trials and damages. Morgan will at least remain here on our island.

Morgan What will you do to me?

Vivianne (takes care of her) We intend to educate you, Morgan. You are destined for high purposes since you so early proved yourself to be able to observe what others can't see. We intend only to take care of you and help you onwards, so that your special gift never could be abused.

Morgan And how could it be abused?

Vivianne All exceptional endowment means power, and all power can be misused. Only we in the order of Avalon stand above all misuse of power and work against it. The purpose is that you should become one of us.

Morgan Isn't it just to save me from becoming a Christian?

Vivianne Your mother has compromised with Christianity, which it is why it is important that you are separated from her. She has realized that herself.

Morgan What's wrong then with Christianity?

Vivianne You will find that out when you join us.

Igraine Take her now, Vivianne, and go away with her. Don't make my separation from her more difficult.

Morgan Will I be a priestess like you, aunt Vivianne?

Vivianne It's the intention, little Morgan, that you will be much more than that. After I am gone one day you shall be our high priestess. Merlin has ordained it.

Morgan Why is he in command of my mother?

Igraine My daughter, one day you shall know. That's just how it is. Also your brother Arthur will one day know who he is the son of. – Take her, Vivianne. Cut my torture of having to part with her as short as possible.

Vivianne You are always welcome back to us, Igraine. Even you will one day realize the limitations of Christianity and its innate falsity.

Igraine Let's not start all that all over again. We are each other's opposites, Vivianne, as you have taken it on you to defend our old religion of nature against all modernisms, while I have taken it on me to make the intrusion of Christianity into our world as lenient as possible.

Vivianne You always were the diplomat among us, Igraine.

Igraine And you were always without compromise.

Morgan When shall I see you again, mother?

Igraine When God wills it, my daughter. And I am sure he will.

Morgan And if Merlin doesn't?

Igraine Merlin has nothing against me, and also he is subject to the good will of fortune. (*Vivianne starts leaving with Morgan.*)

Morgan Mother, I shall always long to get back to you!

Igraine And you will always be welcome back.

Vivianne Return to your convent now, Igraine. We are leaving it.

Igraine Vivianne, don't be too hard on Morgan in her education.

Vivianne I will not be harder than necessary, and it will not be harder than destiny and life itself.

Igraine That could be the hardest of all. Don't let any harm come to her.

Vivianne We would never have chosen her if she hadn't had clear indications of capacities for enduring anything, sister Igraine. (*leaves with Morgan.*)

Igraine Alas, what will become of us in these evil times of hard discord and strife? All forces are tearing us apart in different directions, while only I tried to bring them together in reconciliation, but alas, I am the loneliest of all. (*sinks down in resignation and grief.*)

Vivianne (to Morgan) You have nothing to fear, my child. Everything will arrange itself for the best of all.

Morgan How do you know, aunt Vivianne? Are you then quite aware of what you are doing?

Vivianne We know what we are doing, my child, and it is for the best of all and the country.

Morgan And what then do you intend to do?

Vivianne You shall be initiated. Then a course will be settled that never can be interrupted.

Morgan You make it sound so simple.

Vivianne The thing is to make it as simple as possible.

(They reach Merlin who stands waiting.)

Morgan Father Merlin! Are you the one to take care of me?

Merlin No, my daughter, your schooling will be led by Vivianne and other women.

Vivianne Merlin will only explain the situation to you.

Morgan Is that my initiation?

Vivianne Hopefully nothing more will be needed.

Morgan Speak, father Merlin! What have you got to say to me?

Merlin Far too much, my daughter. I regret that I cannot accept you as I brought up your brother Arthur, who will be king of the country, but you shall not be the queen but only a shadow queen in the background, as an insurance against what eventually could befall your brother.

Morgan What could happen to my brother?

Merlin Something could go wrong. You never can tell. I brought him up as my son although he isn't, while unfortunately I may not bring up my daughter, although she is.

Morgan (moved) Are you my real father?

Merlin Yes, my daughter. Come in my arms. I can't conceal it any longer.

Morgan (hurries in his arms) I always suspected it.

Merlin You were always too much like me.

Morgan Why did you never reveal yourself?

Merlin I didn't want to compromise your mother. It was vital that she should be kept absolutely impeccable, if she would be able to give birth to the king of Britain at all. Her husband's authority had to be kept out of question.

Morgan He was always like a stranger to me. He was base and brutal and mishandled my mother, and he never acknowledged me.

Merlin He was an honest and brave soldier who made a good job of the defence against the Saxon plunder raids. He always defeated them and fortified our part of the island. They never come here any more. He made a good job, and for that I was deeply grateful. But he knew that he could never fecundate your mother.

Morgan Do you mean that he made allowance for your becoming my father?

Merlin He asked me to. Igraine loved me. In those days I was in my best age and irresistible with my beauty and authority. Yes, Morgan, even I was young once upon a time, even though it was a very long time ago.

Morgan I can well imagine, father. Mother always loved you and was like wax in your company. She adored you and taught me to cherish you as much as she kept me at a safe distance from her coarse husband.

Merlin Your mother was the best mother any children could have, and she gave life to the two most gifted and beautiful children of our island realm, who have unique possibilities to make England a paragon nation for the world, Arthur as the best of all kings and you as the ideal guardian of the most sensible of all religions.

Morgan Vivianne already told me that I was destined to be ordained high priestess after her.

Merlin That is our wish, Morgan. You could lead both the country and Arthur the right way.

Morgan But Vivianne hates Christianity.

Merlin Yes, it's the influence and importunity of Christianity in which the greatest threat lies to our future, for the Christians are dangerously greedy for power. They want to impose their religion by force and delete all traces and remnants of all earlier religions, although these are much older than Christianity and much more sensible. But our way out of that dilemma has been opened for us by your mother. We must follow the course of compromise and accept Christianity even if it doesn't accept us. Therefore it will be Arthur's obligation as a king to marry a Christian queen, so that our timeless religion of nature can unite and transform the Christian religion into something sounder than what it is.

Morgan Do you really think it is possible?

Vivianne Nothing is impossible.

Merlin It's just to let the impossible become possible by allowing it to come forth, and it will be possible, – like I intend to let Arthur come forth to the throne and you to the overthrone of Avalon.

Morgan For you nothing is impossible, father.

Merlin I am aware of it, my daughter, thanks to the fact that I have such a daughter as you. The realm needs a son to build a future of continuous stability, but

humanity needs daughters, since only daughters can become mothers to the sons of the realm. You will be the mother of the nation.

Morgan That must imply a continuous collaboration between me and Arthur?

Vivianne Of course. Both of you just have to become established to begin with. Then we can start working.

Morgan Does Arthur know about how the course of my life has been decided?

Merlin He knows that he will see you again when he is king. But by then you must already be fully educated as a moon priestess.

Morgan (offers her hands in submission) Do what you will with me. I now understand that what you have decided for me and the country is the right thing. And I am certain that Arthur just like me will do the very best we can of this undertaking.

Vivianne We were hoping just for such words from you, my girl.

Merlin I didn't think less of you, my daughter, than that you immediately would understand what it was all about. Welcome to your quest. Although we will meet only seldom we will always remain in touch with each other. She is yours now, Vivianne. Take well care of her.

Vivianne Your education will be long and difficult, as it must be for a woman of whom much is expected and demanded. But you will never be subjected to anything that you will not be able to cope with. Consider, that your prime mission and task concerns the female part of life, especially motherhood and propagation. It is mysteries of that kind that you will be initiated in to some considerable depth.

Morgan May I be a mother myself?

Vivianne Of course, but not just with anyone.

Morgan May I choose my husband myself?

Vivianne (and Merlin looking at each other) It depends.

Morgan On what?

Vivianne Your first husband should be totally unknown to you like you should be to him. But if there is a child from your first union with a man you will then be free to choose anyone for your husband. Such are the regulations for a becoming high priestess of our religion.

Morgan And if there is no child?

Vivianne Then the regulations ordain that you will always remain a virgin.

Morgan Then I would rather choose the first.

Merlin The will does not always command your destiny, but I hope it will be as you wish.

Morgan I now understand, dear father, whom I finally have retrieved and whom I will never lose any more, and you dear aunt, that you really wish for me the best as much as you carefully have thought out the best for the entire country. And it will be a joy and honour for me for the rest of my life to follow your will.

Vivianne That pleases us, my dearest. All we hoped for was your cooperation, and if we only achieve as much as that, anything will succeed for us, for you and for England.

Morgan My only wish is that you both will remain in life as long as possible.

Merlin And we intend to as long as we can, but not even that we are fully capable of deciding for ourselves.

Morgan Lead me, Vivianne, into your realm of mysteries and female improvement for the benefit of the whole country, so that I rightly could manage my capacity of motherhood for the entire people.

Vivianne Come, my daughter. There is much for me to teach you on the way.

Merlin Take well care of her, Vivianne. You have the most important soul of our country to cultivate and guide.

Vivianne Arthur is just as important, Merlin, and only you can guide and instruct him.

Merlin They are both equally important to us all.

Vivianne The main thing for us is to do our best, so that also they might do their best.

Morgan Come now, aunt, so that we some time could get started.

Vivianne Quite so, my daughter. Impatience and obstinacy together make supreme indomitability.

Merlin Go now, dear ladies, to your work, so that I may go to mine.

Morgan Greet Arthur from me, father.

Merlin He will send his greetings back to his beloved sister.

Morgan Farewell.

Merlin Farewell, my child.

(Vivianne and Morgan leave.)

We have done all we could to eliminate all thinkable dangers for the future, but still I know that there are worse dangers which are quite impossible to foresee. May Morgan and Arthur be able to withstand them when that time comes, for the dream that we have made possible for our realm and the future is too wonderful to ever be permitted to break. We mortals can never do more than our best, but more is always needed, and that's where religion enters the scene, a religion that for that very reason must be kept absolutely pure and free from abuse. Only Morgan's maintenance of the complete tolerance of our old religion of nature could open the door for that opportunity. May she just manage those trials and ordeals of life that all women have to go through to irreparable damage to themselves. *(leaves)*

Scene 3.

Vivianne (officiating as high priestess with her arms spread in prayer) Tread forth, all you beings and spirits who further and favour life! This is your holiday entirely dedicated to you and to everything in life that favours and furthers its progress! We are celebrating the return of life in triumph after the long dark nightmare in the troublesome sleep of winter, when life starves from lack of its own life; but the light of life and the life of light never die and fade except to return in triumph!

(turns to Morgan) And to you, my daughter, it is also the highlight of your life, when you will be initiated into the full power of life, the deepest mystery and secret of which carries the name of love. This is a feast of love, and you in the capacity of the highest bred and born daughter of the country shall have the privilege to first choose what cavalier you first wish to discover love with. But the rules are strict. You may only choose one, and you will have him for your one and only love only until the light returns. You must never know who he is, and he must never know who you are, for the feast of love gives free reins to love only under strict anonymity: you like he and all other lovers of this night shall be masked unto absolute unrecognizability.

So come then, my daughters, all beauteous virgins standing quaking for the gate of the secret of the love of life of your future, and choose the one you wish to share the night and your first night with according to rank and order. Morgan, you are the noblest of all the ripe virgins of this realm. Choose the man you desire and be sure of him.

(The virgins appear in line masked to unrecognizability, while another line of equally masked young men appear from the opposite direction.)

Morgan Vivianne, tell me, why may we choose and not the men? Man is after all the stronger part who choose for themselves whatever we women may think about it.

Vivianne This special night is an exception, for on this night life triumphs, it is the high holiday of the matrix, and then for once we women may take the initiative. It is most of all to open the matrix of every untouched virginity, so that every virgin should be given the chance of life.

Morgan (selects a well shaped young man with a red mask of cloth tied around the higher part of his face) I choose you, because you wear the most intense of colours which is love's own glowing passion and love's fury going straight on.

The Man I would myself have chosen you, sweet dark madonna dressed in black with the loveliest hair let loose that I have ever seen. Your black mask can not bury the light which like stars emanate from the flashes of the diamonds of your black eyes. I don't think love can fail with us.

Morgan That sounds promising. Come, let us retire from the crowd and in privacy explore with care the symbolism and meaning of the feast.

The Man I belong to you for this night, my unknown goddess.

Morgan Then be to me like a natural god of love, that I can worship devotedly forever, if it were possible.

The Man Everything is possible on a night of love like this. *(They join hands and walk aside, where they give each other a first and long kiss.)*

Vivianne Now it is your turn, each one in due order, dear virgins. Choose whatever groom you desire, and he will belong to you in limitless love until dawn. Then you must separate forever so that you may never learn whom you have loved, for the only important thing is that you open up to love and get to know it.

(The other virgins choose their partners accordingly and vanish with them out of sight.)

Vivianne (officiating again with her arms spread for blessings) Let this be a happy night of all the possibilities of unlimited love, so that the goodness of love may triumph by her life as the highest power in the universe, which no mundane power has the right or even any possibility to overcome.

(The night is filled with love with relevant plays of light (like torches) and sounds (like of orgies and orgasms) while lovers run around in their fantastic clothes and masks and hairs let loose like in a witches' Sabbath but of a positive and edifying sort.)

Merlin Whom did you give to Morgan?

Vivianne She chose for herself.

Merlin Whom did she choose?

Vivianne You know best yourself, Merlin, that no one can know. She chose by instinct and found the right one at once.

Merlin And she was for certain an inexperienced virgin?

Vivianne You know, Merlin, that only virgins are allowed the privilege of this feast of the night.

Merlin But if she chose without hesitating it would almost indicate that she already knew love.

Vivianne You worry about her for nothing. She can take care of herself.

Merlin But with such a readiness for love there is a risk she might immediately become pregnant.

Vivianne She is not alone in taking that risk. Any objections?

Merlin I have no right to any objections, but I fear that love could become a competitive power for her soul while her future office will demand everything of her.

Vivianne We must take that risk, Merlin.

Merlin Yes, I guess so.

Vivianne No woman can manage without the risks of love, while you men always get away, since you easily can leave love behind, while we women only live for love.

Merlin I have also been a lover, Vivianne.

Vivianne Yes, Merlin, but it was a long time ago and only with my sister.

Merlin You were loved by better men than me.

Vivianne That is debatable. I would rather have a daughter like Morgan always in my vicinity than a son that I may never see.

Merlin But that son is second only to Arthur in beauty and power if even to him.

Vivianne What good is that when I may never see him? *(They proceed.)*

Morgan I never thought love could be so sweet and there could exist such a good lover.

The Man My love, we must never separate.

Morgan We may only live for this one night.

The Man Who can make such inhuman laws?

Morgan Those who govern.

The Man And who are they?

Morgan Those who hold power over us subjects.

The Man I thought this country was ruled by total anarchy.

Morgan That's why we may love.

The Man Then let anarchy rule forever, so that we may never have any cease-fire to the supremacy of our love.

Morgan My love, it is so supreme and perfect in absolute quality just because it is by necessity so brief.

The Man Who has then the right to take a stand as a prosecuting judge over the absolute right of love to limitless freedom? Who can be so vain? Wouldn't that be the supreme foolishness of vanity?

Morgan The high priestess, who rules over me and determines my destiny.

The Man The evil Vivianne?

Morgan She is not evil. But like all people she has her limitations but handles them as well as she can.

The Man My lovely girl, I will never love anyone but you.

Morgan I never had anyone before you. You received my virginity to keep it with my love and without rivalry forever.

The Man The same about you, and man's virginity is on the same level as the innocence of the virgin maid.

Morgan That's what you say now. But what will you say when you get married to another?

The Man That I'll never will be, if I may decide.

Morgan In our time no one is the ruler of his own life.

The Man I never intend to let you go.

Morgan My love, there is one way only for me to always be able to keep you, and that is only by loving you, whoever else I may embrace in the duty of love later on.

The Man In all that you say you prove yourself so much more mature and older than myself, and that most of all confirms my prevailing consistent faithfulness to you. I will gladly be dependent on you forever.

Morgan I fear that you already are.

The Man We have more than obviously found each other. How could then anyone stand in the way for us?

Morgan You know the laws of this feast. Its only purpose is to allow virgins to be fecundated and initiated into the inmost secrets of love, which must remain secret. Therefore anonymity is sacred for all lovers in this night.

The Man For good reasons and only for beneficial purposes I intend to break this law.

Morgan But it is sacred. You mustn't.

The Man I don't need to know who you are. But I want to see you.

Morgan You tempt me. I also wish to see whom I have loved, even if I may not know him.

The Man Shall we break the law and dare to remove our masks?

Morgan It's a crime against the laws of love of the moon goddess.

The Man I dare to break that law. Do you?

Morgan I think we both dare. We may not meet again, we must not stay in touch, but no one will see if we may see each other.

The Man I want to be able to recognize you if I ever see you again.

Morgan The same accounts for me, my love. I never want to live any more without the image of you in front of me, even if I may only keep it in my thoughts.

The Man So let's reveal ourselves.

(He removes her mask, and she removes her lover's.)

The man So that's how you look. I knew that you could be nothing but beautiful, but I never imagined that your beauty could be so – personal.

Morgan My love, you are much more beautiful than I ever could imagine.

The Man So then we know each other. May we never let each other out of sight.

Morgan I almost already feel the child you have given me.

The Man I cannot doubt it.

Morgan My love, there is still time for another round before the sun rises to our future.

The Man We shall always share it, together or separated, for no one can separate our souls.

Morgan It feels as if I always had known you.

The Man I feel the same for you.

Morgan Let us not continue our investigation in whom we are. We could learn too much about it. Let us respect the right of absolute anonymity of the night of love.

The Man I obey you, my love.

Morgan Put on your mask again. We have seen each other and can now keep each other forever. When you see me again, my sign of my fidelity to you shall be that I will always remain dressed equally in black.

The Man My black bride, your light can never be transcended even by the most blonde and purest bride in white. Let me just linger yet a moment in the light of your truth, so that it may burn forever in me at the furthest depth of my soul and next to my heart.

Morgan I will also remember your image forever printed in my mind, but such a temptation could be perilous – we could then get fixed by reality, so that we could forget that we must abstain from it. We could be tempted to refuse to give each other up. *(returns his mask to him.)*

Arthur We could never do it anyway. Our truth is of such quality and character, that not even an entire lifetime could hide it or mask it. The timelessness of it is the unmasking and revelation of eternity itself.

Morgan Let's continue loving still while the night is lasting, for when the sun comes we must face reality whether we like it or not and no matter how much we resent it. Our comfort and solace shall be that it is only temporary. Put on your mask again, so that no one may guess that we have broken all the rules.

The Man Also you must remain masked for the protection against the mundane vanity. Remain my dark bride forever. *(replaces her mask and kisses her. They sink back.)*

Vivianne (appears) Thus we are nearing the end of our marvellous night of love, a night of joys and ecstasy in the freedom of nature without end, in which many virgins have been brought in to life and for life in a joy of love for a lifetime. There is nothing more true and free and more divine than the true love of a woman. Thus she will be the mother of a future, which forever will continue to bring forth life to constant promotion.

Merlin I have heard nothing but laughter and tones of happiness this night.

Vivianne It has been a true night of love for all beings, and all life and all nature has only benefited from it.

Merlin How did your daughter manage?

Vivianne I guess we shall know when she some time returns to reality. (*Morgan appears.*)

Merlin My daughter, we were just talking about you. Did you succeed in finding any worthy lover?

Morgan I found the only right one for my life, and I intend to keep him for the rest of my life.

Vivianne But you haven't known him. This night of love is only for love and not for binding any lasting connections.

Morgan Aunt, I already know for sure that I carry his child. No one and nothing can take him or my child away from me. He is mine forever.

Merlin (worried, aside) Love has turned her fanatic.

Vivianne No one can know that yet, my dearest child. If you have become pregnant we shall know it in time, and when we know it, if we get to know it, the father of the child will long since have vanished out of sight.

Morgan Never to my mind's eye and for a fidelity stronger than any legal bonds.

Vivianne (to Merlin) She seems to have made up her mind.

Merlin I wonder who he was. Do you have any idea?

Vivianne No one can know it. You know that. It's the law of this night. But the risk is that she has fixed him in her memory to be able to recognize him when it suits her.

Merlin At least he seems to have been worthy of her.

Vivianne Yes, that seems obvious.

Morgan I thank you for this night of love from the bottom of my heart. I shall never forget it and always keep it in my heart and there grow it as its only love for all my life. It has made me happy, and it shall remain the only happiness in my life. I thank you and now beg to retire to have some rest. (*embraces and kisses Merlin, bows to Vivianne and leaves.*)

Vivianne In time she will grow to be the most ideal possible high priestess.

Merlin Yes, unless love interferes.

Vivianne On the contrary. It shall bring her forth.

Merlin I am afraid it has always brought her a bit too high.

Vivianne A typical male scruple. Love can never be brought too high.

Merlin A typical female pretension. We men are more careful and alert.

Vivianne For you fear love most of all.

Merlin I call it caution and care. We wish to maintain life, not consume it.
Vivianne It's thanks to you, my good Merlin, that life always is maintained and survives.
Merlin It wouldn't work without the assistance of women, but they need to be guided.
Vivianne Guide us if you can. You never can, but we love you anyway if not for anything else then at least for your benevolent effort.
Merlin We try to do as well as we can. Behold, light is increasing and starting to take over from the night. It's time for this night of love to reach an end.
Vivianne And a new start, like the light of day.
Merlin All is just regeneration forever.
Vivianne And that is the essence of life.
(They piously walk out together with their arms around each other, like old friends.)

Scene 4.

Arthur So am I then the king, and the realm is saved, and I owe everything to my father and teacher Merlin, who with exceptional prudence, wisdom and providence has brought us to this wonderful historical opportunity in a possibility to for all times create a truly ideal state. Still clouds are not absent on my sky. There is a stern competition and latently dangerous enmity between the druids, the religion of the old believers, and the new aggressive and expansive doctrine of Rome, which rather ruthlessly demands submission by haughty pretensions. But here is now my teacher.

Merlin I heard your speech as I arrived, and I share your worry, king Arthur.

Arthur My learned teacher, we are totally agreed concerning uniting the two faiths with each other and forcing them to live together in freedom of conscience without any conflicts. But my stalwart knights have a propensity to take sides, and they do not hesitate in provoking each other.

Merlin But the best of them stand above all that, especially Lancelot but also Sir Gawaine. And as long as they refuse to take sides for any one-sidedness, you have nothing to fear.

Arthur Gawaine has tendencies towards the old believers, and Lancelot was brought up a Christian.

Merlin But they haven't taken sides and they detach themselves from any dogmas. They tolerate each other and carry a good example for all the others with their tolerance and open minds.

Arthur Therefore they are my foremost and noblest knights.

Merlin But you, Arthur, are yourself brought up by me in the old sacred faith in all life in nature as the highest and most sacred thing and are not a Christian. For that reason the warriors of the new faith consider you a pagan and refuse to take you seriously.

Arthur What do you intend to do about that?

Merlin You have everything but stand alone. You ought to start thinking of the future and your progeny.

Arthur Whom shall I marry?

Merlin You have your own freedom of choice. Is there no one you could be in love with?

Arthur Yes, there is.

Merlin Who is it?

Arthur I don't know.

Merlin How can you love a woman if you don't know who she is?

Arthur I was chosen by her on the night of the great love feast, and that night I will never forget nor her. She had the same feelings for me, and we exchanged sincere fidelity for life. But she was masked, so was I, such was the law of free love for that night, and therefore we have never been able to find each other again.

Merlin In such cases the lovers usually break the rules and unmask each other.

Arthur I believe I could recognize her if I was ever to see her again.

Merlin You are now the most famous person of our realm. Has she not tried to look you up herself?

Arthur No.

Merlin In that case the risk is of course that she might have forgotten you.

Arthur I would not think so. But she might be in difficult circumstances and live somewhere far away – there could have been practical impediments.

Merlin The most beautiful woman of the islands is generally considered to be Guinevere of Lyonnesse.

Arthur I have seen her. Yes, she is beautiful. And she is even blonde with blue eyes. But she is a haughty Christian who has no understanding for our traditional religion.

Merlin But she is the foremost and loveliest maid among all the Christians. If you chose her for your Queen you would have all Christians for your friends, and it would immediately result in a peaceful unification of all Christians with those of the old faith. You would remain their leader, while at the same time they would embrace your queen with love. Thereby peace would be secured with both parties for all the entire duration of your government.

Arthur That's indeed worth considering.

Merlin Perhaps you are willing?

Arthur Is Guinevere willing?

Merlin It would be easy to ask the fair princess.

Arthur Could she come here, or do I have to set out on a wooing-quest?

Merlin You don't have to do anything. She is already here. (*claps his hands. The beautiful Guinevere, a brilliant beauty at the height of her blooming youth, is escorted in.*)

Arthur (enchanted) She is more beautiful than I remember.

Merlin Yes, she has reached maturity with the years.

Arthur (rising) My fairest maid, you come to me precisely at the right moment. Was it perhaps intentional?

Guinevere Noble king Arthur, I just happened to pass by. But I know your desire.

Arthur Has Merlin then warned you about my intentions?

Guinevere Yes, since some years. I was practically brought up to be your queen.

Arthur Why haven't you mentioned your plans earlier, Merlin?

Merlin Like you for a long period of time had to be prepared and allowed to mature with care for your great mission, likewise your wife had to slowly grow into her natural role.

Guinevere It's not the fault of our teacher, Arthur. I was with my high birth ordained by my brethren and sisters of the faith to be the sacrifice of atonement of the Christian community to the pagans and to you.

Arthur Are you then not willing yourself to be my wife?

Guinevere If I weren't I would probably become a nun.

Arthur Then it's settled. All we have to do is to prepare for a wedding.

Merlin Arthur will always remain a leader for the druids however, Guinevere. He can never be made a Christian, just like you never could be unchristianed. It is in the interest of both and all and the country that you both piously remain as faithful to your original religions as you have been so far.

Guinevere I was hoping though to be able to convert Arthur to the only true and sacred church.

Merlin You must forget that. If Arthur turns a Christian, you will turn half of the country against you, and then new civil wars could not be avoided.

Guinevere So it's only for political reasons that you have brought us together?

Merlin You are the two most beautiful youths of the country, you fit well together, and love appears to be there already. Is it then not proper that you are married?

Guinevere It couldn't be more proper. You must excuse me though, dear Arthur, but I will always influence you with my Christianity. There is an evident risk that I might convert you.

Arthur Dear Guinevere, I will never make resistance to you. You may instruct me in your Catholic and Roman doctrines as much as you like, but I shall never abandon Merlin and my forefathers. As a king it is my most sacred duty to preserve the traditions of my country and carry them on.

Guinevere Do as you like. I love you anyway.

Arthur Let us then seal our agreement and engagement and its beauty at last with a kiss. *(kisses her. She answers the kiss. They clearly already love each other. But...)*

Merlin What is it, Arthur?

Arthur I suddenly remember something...

Guinevere Don't tell me you are already engaged with someone else.

Arthur I may be inexperienced, but that is not our problem. No, Merlin, I remember my sister, from whom I was separated far too early since we were to be brought up differently.

Merlin Morgan le Fay.

Arthur I want her here at my court. Could it be arranged? Can you find her? Tell her that I wish that we at last could be reunited.

Merlin I know where she is. I'll see if she can leave her duties. She could come here at least for your wedding and maybe sporadically afterwards.

Guinevere I didn't know you had a sister in real life. Is she a pagan like you?

Arthur She is ordained to serve Avalon and will in time be their high priestess.

Guinevere Then I would gladly allow her to stay there.

Merlin She will have to decide that for herself. If she wishes to come here she may. You have no right even as a queen to separate Arthur from his only sister.

Guinevere Pardon me. If I love Arthur we will surely get along well.

Arthur I am certain of it. They say she is the most beautiful lady in the country.

Guinevere Could she then be more beautiful than myself?

Arthur I can't judge that. We were separated as children, and I haven't seen her any more since.

Merlin She is at least equally beautiful, my Guinevere, but in a totally different way. One could say that you compliment each other, for she is just as dark and wild as you are Christian and bright.

Guinevere A wild one? A heathen priestess? She seems exotic.

Arthur Suddenly I was filled with longing to at last see her again.

Guinevere Was it just because you kissed me?

Arthur No, certainly not. I have actually warmly longed for her all my life.

Merlin If you get her on your side as your friend, Guinevere, you have nothing more to fear in life from the people or the country.

Guinevere Does she have such an awesome power?

Merlin She is brought up by Vivianne, the present high priestess for all druids, for mastering all nature.

Guinevere Is she then manipulative?

Merlin No, she is only serving in humility.

Guinevere I like humility but only in others.

Arthur Bring her here, Merlin, and let's get done with it.

Merlin I think it could be arranged. Now I leave you to your destiny for the time being for you to make the best of your engagement.

Arthur That will not be very difficult.

Guinevere Come, Arthur. Show me around in your castle, since that is to be my home.

Arthur It will be my pleasure.

(Merlin leaves. Arthur and Guinevere kiss and then walk away hand in hand as happily engaged.)

Act II scene 1. Camelot.

Arthur I thank you all from my heart, my brothers and knights, my counsellors and friends, my Merlin and everyone else. Your gifts for my and Guinevere's engagement are too overwhelming for me to be in any possible way able to appropriately express our gratitude. Tread forth, my beloved Guinevere! You are the one who will now and forever be the central figure here in our world home of Camelot!

Guinevere Arthur, you just keep flattering me. Who am I? Just a humble woman, who is not intent on anything else but to simply do my best and who thereby accepts her limitations. You all know that I am Christian, and to many of you this has imported some apprehensions, but I promise you, that Arthur's religion and tradition is my own, like my faith and cultural background now has become his own. Like we are one flesh and blood together, we also have become one soul together, and I never intend to do anything to upset anyone's circles who prefers to stay out of Christianity.

Many Hear! Hear!

Arthur That is why I have chosen you, my beloved Guinevere, for you are the very element of tolerance and amiability, who just has to be loved with everything you stand for even by non-Christians.

The Knights (like before, enthusiastically, with gallantly raised swords) Hear! Hear!

Gawaine We are all for you, Queen Guinevere, Christians and non-Christians alike!

Percival None of us will ever fail you or King Arthur!

Gareth We all swear fidelity to you for a lifetime!

Sagramour If a pagan can't love and embrace Lady Guinevere with all his love he is a dunce.

Merlin Arthur, also your sister has arrived to bring you her homage.

Arthur My sister?

Merlin Have you forgotten Morgan le Fay?

Arthur My sister! I haven't seen her since we were children! I was seven years when I was separated from her. Is she here?

Merlin She has arrived.

Arthur Where? I can't see her! (*looks eagerly around across to everyone*)

Morgan (treads forth, looks Arthur straight in his face) I am afraid I oughtn't have come.

Arthur (paralysed, when he recognizes her) Morgan! Is that you?

Morgan I am afraid that we have recognized each other.

Merlin (noticing that something bothers them) What is it? Is anything wrong?

Morgan No, father Merlin. We have just seen too little of each other during our course of life.

Arthur Yes. We were separated as children. We should never have been.

Guinevere But embrace your sister, Arthur. What are you waiting for?

Arthur Only your allowance, Guinevere. You must excuse me for having known my sister long before I knew you. (*embraces Morgan, all in black, who embraces him with equal tenderness and sincerity*)

Guinevere Why were you not allowed to stick together?

Morgan Lady Guinevere, as the noblest children of the country our courses through life were settled from the beginning and in different directions, since we were of different age and sex. That's normal for royal children. We were simply brought up for different purposes on different locations.

Guinevere Then it's about time you repair the damage. I hope you will stay with us now, Morgan le Fay?

Morgan That's for my brother to decide.

Sagramour Perhaps Lady Guinevere should be informed that Morgan le Fay is a priestess in the pagan religion of the druids and as such ordained a life of frivolity and antichristian immorality.

Arthur Sir Sagramour, that's precisely the kind of Christian prejudice that my queen has detached herself from.

Sagramour Am I not telling the truth? Hasn't Morgan le Fay a child without a father? How many have not loved her? Isn't she devoted to a life of free love by your own controversial aunt Vivianne, the hardest opponent against Christianity in the country?

Arthur Sir Sagramour, that's enough! This is my engagement feast! Have you forgotten the occasion?

Guinevere Sir Sagramour, you had better get out of sight immediately and consider what you have stated until you are minded to come back and apologise to my husband and Morgan le Fay.

Sagramour (*submits, bows*) My sovereign lady. (*leaves promptly*)

Arthur Nothing must cloud this engagement feast with the most beautiful and virtuous woman in the world. And this is only the beginning of the festivities! Morgan, I am infinitely grateful that you finally arrived.

Morgan I am ready to leave at once.

Arthur Never. It's out of the question.

Guinevere I say the same. Be my sister, Morgan, like you are my husband's.

Morgan Thank you, lady Guinevere. I hope you may honour your husband's life and throne as he deserves and as no one else can do it.

Guinevere (*somewhat perplexed*) What do you mean by that?

Morgan Only, that I care for my brother. (*retires*)

Arthur Let us all now retire to a common festive banquet to the impeccable and eternal honour of my becoming queen! May we all pay her homage for what she is worth, for her beauty, intelligence and diplomatic example!

(*All retire in good spirits out to the banqueting hall – except Merlin and Morgan.*)

Merlin What was it, Morgan? What bothered you and Arthur?

Morgan You heard what we said. We haven't seen each other for too long.

Merlin There was something else. I saw both you and Arthur get the shivers.

Morgan We recognized each other too well although we haven't seen each other more than once in twenty years. It became something of a shock to both of us no matter how well we knew each other. I felt it exactly like he did.

Merlin You only have one parent in common. Is there something else between you?

Morgan Even with only one parent in common, you can still be like twin souls.

Merlin You evade the question.

Arthur (returns) Merlin! And Morgan! Why aren't you coming?

Morgan Merlin just wanted to ask me some questions. I had better not join you.

Arthur But you must! Neither I nor Guinevere could accept anything else! Or else, what would people think?

Morgan Arthur, I know too much. We both know too much. I don't want to disturb your happiness. She is Christian. Vivianne is right. Christianity will only result in crises for this country. It is overbearing and enforces its pretensions with ruthlessness, taking for granted that everyone must be a Christian, and whoever objects and makes resistance risks his life. But Christianity is no satisfactory religion, which Vivianne is all too well aware of, and so am I and perhaps also Merlin. It is not tolerant, Arthur. We are the tolerant ones who welcome Christianity although some of us know that it will extirpate our old more natural cult.

Arthur I assure you, Morgan, that Guinevere will have nothing to do with Christian presumption and arbitrariness. She respects us, even if all Christians don't. That's just why Merlin selected her for me as the best possible queen for a peaceful unification of our different cultures, the old one with the new one, the past and the future.

Morgan You are naïve, Arthur. You can't think or believe anything bad about anyone. Your idealism is too good for this world. In a hundred years our religion will be extirpated while Christianity will have enslaved all free Englishmen and brainwashed them into inane and obedient fools.

Arthur (benumbed) Lucky for us that Guinevere can't hear you. She would take your speech as downright blasphemy.

Morgan That's why I make myself guilty of it.

Arthur Is Morgan right, Merlin?

Merlin I hope not. But we don't know, and only the future will answer.

Arthur Morgan, you are and remain my beloved sister whatever happens and whatever you do. Let there never be any conflict between you and me or between you and my becoming bride, for she is already a part of me.

Morgan If there will be a conflict, Arthur, between Christians and our old traditions and its guardians, it could only be started by the Christians.

Arthur (embracing her) Morgan, why didn't you come here earlier! There has been no one I missed more ardently all these years! Why did you never appear to us earlier? You must have known that I was king in Camelot.

Morgan Arthur, honestly speaking, I saw you only as a king and brother. Not until now when we meet again after so many years I realize that you always were so

much more. I have seen you today for the second time, and I never thought it could be the same person as the first time.

Merlin You speak in riddles.

Arthur May a brother and sister not do so when no one else would understand them?

Merlin By all means, just carry on. I will join your knights and tell them that you will certainly come right away with or without Morgan le Fay. *(leaves them.)*

Arthur (after a while, still in touch with her) My sister, I have no words.

Morgan Neither have I.

Arthur What kind of an unfathomable game is it that destiny has played with us?

Morgan We are innocent, Arthur. We knew nothing.

Arthur We followed the rules of the old religion. Was there a child?

Morgan Yes, Arthur, but I may never acknowledge him as yours. He must never know who his father was, which I swear to you. So far he has been able to live as totally unaware of that matter as I have been. We must go on with that role play.

Arthur Yes, we must. And no harm is done if only Guinevere gets pregnant.

Morgan I envy her.

Arthur I will never be able to love her as much as you, Morgan. Your love was the only true one for me for all my life.

Morgan I have had many men after you, that has been a matter of routine, but also for me you were the only one.

Arthur I saw that as soon as I saw your clothes.

Morgan I have kept my promise and stayed true to our oath of love no matter how many men I have known.

Arthur I am certain and convinced thereof.

Morgan And Guinevere? Will she ever know anything?

Arthur Never.

Morgan Right.

Arthur She is as innocent as we were then, and unlike us she will remain as happily innocent.

Morgan We have nothing to blame us for, Arthur. We were disguised and loved each other under the protection of nature according to the rules.

Arthur Christianity will never be able to see it in the same way.

Morgan No, that is the problem. It is limited. Our religion wasn't.

Arthur Will you join me and the others for the banquet? It would look strange if you didn't.

Morgan I will come, Arthur, since you wish me to. But let me keep a certain distance from you, your marriage and your wife.

Arthur You have every understandable right to. *(offers her his arm to lead her in. Then Guinevere enters.)*

Guinevere Why do you tarry so long? Everyone is wondering and whispering speculations about that you might be quarrelling over me.

Arthur We are not quarrelling, Guinevere. We were just coming both of us.

Guinevere Well, that was about time! *(to Morgan)* No problems, in other words?

Morgan Absolutely no problem neither on mine nor Arthur's side.

Guinevere Neither from mine. From where could there then arise any problem?

Arthur Let's not try to pry into that since there are no problems. Come now. The knights and Merlin are waiting for us. Our installation is over, and now there is only the long great celebration of life waiting for us. You only saw a fraction of my closest knights today, *Guinevere*. The whole world will come to our wedding.

Guinevere I am looking forward to it.

Arthur And you shall all dub them personally to your own knights in your order, so that none of them will ever be able to fail you.

Guinevere Thank you, Arthur. You are a gentleman.

Arthur Come now, my ladies. No one can be closer to me in life than anyone of you.

(leads them both out, Guinevere to the left and Morgan to the right.)

Scene 2. The great hall of Camelot.

Arthur (rising from his throne) This is a solemn holiday of unsurpassed excellence. We have achieved peace in all Britain. There are no enemies any more within our island, for they have all been transformed into our friends. This presents us with a historical moment of the highest truth and a wonderful golden opportunity without precedence. We have a unique historical possibility to make a good example to all the world and thereby to lead the world!

Knights Hear! Hear!

Gawaine (cries out) Not for nothing was king Arthur made king of Britain!

Knights Hear! Hear!

Sir Kay (steps forth) King Arthur, you were to me a younger brother whom I loved. We hunted and wrestled together as mischievous lads until we grew up to a dark reality of violence and war and barbarity. I could never guess in those days that you could be the one who would redeem this blessed realm of Britain from that darkness. You were placed as a changeling among us, and the one who stole the baby to hide it in the protection of our family, well aware of the difficult quest and secret mission he thereby achieved, was our old wise priest Merlin, the high priest of our ancient Celtic religion and its highest impeccable authority and leader.

Arthur Brother Sir Kay, what is your implication by this?

Kay Just that we owe precisely the same amount of limitless thanks to the venerable Merlin as to you, to him for his religious authority, and to you for your magnificent organization of the country.

Arthur Thank you, my brother. But we have another religion also in the country. Have you forgotten all about Christianity? For I cannot think that you would have neglected it on purpose.

Gawaine (calling out) Christianity has equal rights and justification as Merlin and the druids!

Arthur Exactly. You didn't include that consideration, brother Kay.

Kay Your father Merlin gave us you and the unity of the country. Christianity wishes to divide us!

Several knights Hear! Hear!

Arthur (protests) No! No! That's precisely why I summoned you all on this day. Sir Kay, you are perfectly right about that I with Merlin represent our old Celtic philosophies of nature. But we must show Christianity some consideration. It is the religion of the future.

Tristan It's a straitjacket for our nature and freedom and for our traditional free way of life!

Gawaine Sir Tristan, do you then demand for your haughty promiscuity to continue to be commonly and legally valid for the country?

Tristan Quiet, Gawaine! You don't understand what I am talking about! I am speaking of the harmful effect which Christian fanaticism with excommunication and limiting blinkers, the cowardice of hypocrisy and intolerance will have on our entire nation!

Gawaine You want anyone to be able to deceive his consort with anyone and that the consort then must be quiet! Like you yourself are deceiving your best friend and noblest benefactor and foster father!

Tristan Shut up!

Arthur No quarrel, I pray! Privately you may duel, but my court is a court of peace, and our knights are welcome in it only as long as they keep their peace! If there is anything I cannot tolerate, it's meaningless quarrels. Just to achieve the most desirable reconciliation of all and the only one remaining to be reached, the very highest possible achievement, I have summoned you all to court today. In the capacity of an old Celtic traditionalist, I have decided to offer my hand to Christianity in reconciliation and marriage. Tread forth, my Queen Guinevere!

(Queen Guinevere appears in full regal outfit.)

All the court catches their breath, expressing surprise and admiration.)

Arthur This, my knights, my court, my country, my people, is now your Queen. We are already united in marriage and twice. Merlin himself has united us and given us his unreserved blessing, and so has the Christian bishop of Britain.

Sir Kay Who is then this queen Guinevere?

Arthur A Christian. She is of high birth and a good family that were among the first Christians of this country. One could say that she both leads and represents Christianity in Britain. Thereby the supreme reconciliation, unification and settlement of peace have taken place in this country between both our religions.

Kay Merlin, did you really sanction this?

Merlin Yes, I endorsed it. I myself proposed it, since I felt it was the wisest thing Arthur could have done. Also it was about high time for him to get a wife. Can you complain of her lack of beauty? *(merriment among the knights)*

Gawaine Answer, Sir Kay!

Kay (bows his head) No, I can't complain. *(The knights laugh.)*

Tristan Thank you, Queen Guinevere! We wish to get to know you!

Guinevere My noble knights, gentlemen and noble ladies, I am shy and not much of a representative. I have a weak and tender heart, which easily gives way to compassion and pity and other human emotions, but I am implicitly faithful. I belong to Christianity, this new, difficult and modern faith, which you view as a foreign intruder, but for me Christianity is only love. Christ was a king like king Arthur but who gave his life for the world by compassion and love. I would like to give you all my love, like I give it to king Arthur, whom I adore and wish to love for all eternity.

Tristan (cheerfully) King Arthur, I think we can accept her.

Gawaine Yes, since she is beautiful!

Gareth Perhaps the loveliest of all!

Aggravaine We swear our faith to her, like we swear it to king Arthur!

Several knights Hail our Queen! Hail!

Many Hail!

Arthur Then I am satisfied. My Queen, tread forth now here to my throne and take your place here by my side. Thereby we introduce the party with theatre plays and entertainment, sport competitions of all kinds, tournaments and banquets galore! *(Guinevere advances to king Arthur's side and turns to all with her hand in his.)*

Gawaine Hail Queen Guinevere and King Arthur!

All (with raised swords) Hail!

Arthur Like all my knights have sworn allegiance to their king and I have dubbed them by my sword, so may you all now likewise appear to Queen Guinevere and also swear allegiance to her while she dubbing them with her sword will grant them her own royal trust.

Gawaine I am first!

Arthur In alphabetic order, Sir Gawaine! No one shall have any advantage to another! No one must be considered more worthy with more respect than anyone else, for a true and honest knight is the supreme ideal.

Gawaine Brother Aggravaine, you shall then be the first.

(The knights commence their procession to Guinevere. They all appear one by one, kneeling to the Queen with personal compliments, and she dubs them one by one gracefully and feels extremely flattered.)

Tristan (aside) Morgan le Fay, you don't seem quite enthusiastic.

Morgan le Fay Sir Tristan, who can be glad in this moment if she sees what it will lead to?

Tristan So you then prophesy misfortune as a result of this ultimate reconciliation accomplishment of king Arthur's?

Morgan Sir Tristan, he is a victim of his own blind and naïve self-deception.

Tristan What do you see then that others can't see?

Morgan That Christianity is a monster of power greed, bloodthirst, betrayal and folly.

Tristan Are you so frustrated in your love that you therefore refuse the religion of love?

Morgan It has nothing to do with me. This religion of love is only a treachery against humanity. Arthur has now offered it the finger of his wedding, and his marriage with it cannot be broken. In powerless silence we shall witness how it will eat and consume his hand, his arm, his soul, his realm and its future, until nothing remains of our history, our identity and everything that we with pride called Celtic and our own.

Tristan But Arthur will stand up to his traditions. He will not fail us and our religion of nature.

Morgan That's what you think. He is married. His wife will demand of him everything. She will not be satisfied until all England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland are enslaved by the power monopoly of only one religion, which will crush and smother the freedom of all alternatives. We shall die, Sir Tristan, with our freedom, which will be suffocated and exterminated by the inhuman and absurd sado-masochistic ideas of that upstart about God's death on the cross.

Sir Sagramour Sir Tristan, it will soon be your turn. You must pay homage to the Queen like everyone else.

Tristan Just relax, Sir Sagramour.

Sagramour Don't let that dark witch trap you by her magic.

Tristan Sir Sagramour, Morgan le Fay is King Arthur's sister.

Sagramour Yes, but she is well known for her black arts. *(leaves)*

Tristan Morgan le Fay, I think you are just being jealous. Everyone knows that you have loved Arthur.

Morgan No, my friend. It was king Arthur, who is no more than my half brother, who gave me his love himself.

Tristan That's the same thing, isn't it?

Morgan Not quite. I did not seduce him. He seduced me.

Arthur Sir Tristan, don't stand there flirting with Morgan le Fay! My Queen is waiting for your homage!

Tristan Queen Guinevere, I beg you to extend your goodness and excuse me, but if a number of ladies demand the attention of a true knight, he must give them all the same polite attention. *(kneels to the queen)*

Guinevere Sir Tristan, you are well known for never refusing any lady whatever she may ask. I give you full allowance and all your freedom to generously court whomever it may please.

Tristan You are convincing enough, Queen Guinevere.

(She dubs him as graciously as all the others.)

Morgan (aside) Only duplicity can be so convincing. Deceit is never falser than when it shows no trace of any duplicity. She has already turned the mind of king Arthur and seduced my poor half brother. Then she will innocently with the same unawareness seduce the entire court and king Arthur's entire ideal realm. Nothing will remain when queen Guinevere has finished her job.

*Arthur (when the procession is completed) To the festive banquet! To the tournaments!
(The entire court breaks up with feasts and joys, cheerful expectations, music and dance.
Morgan le Fay retires.)*

Scene 3. The tournament. The public gallery.

*(King Arthur and Guinevere take their seats at the centre under a canopy or sun protection.
When all have arrived with eager cheer, king Arthur rises.)*

*Arthur (gives signs in different directions) Let the games begin!
(flourish. Arthur is seated.)*

Guinevere It certainly is greatly impressing, but isn't it slightly barbaric?

Arthur What, my dear?

Guinevere Are all these stately and handsome knights to club each to death?

Arthur Have you never seen a tournament before?

Guinevere I have seen armed men fight and meet on horseback, but never in an organized scale and without being enemies.

Arthur Then you know nothing, my dear. It's not at all as dangerous as it looks. They are not going to beat each other to death. They will only try to unhorse each other.

Guinevere But will it not hurt?

Arthur It could hurt, if you commit mistakes. The thing is not to miss and make a mistake.

Guinevere But the horses could be harmed!

Arthur Could they indeed? Then perhaps also the knights could be harmed, when they hit the ground and perhaps get a horse on top of them. What do you think this is? Child games? Forget your scruples! This is all about sport!

Guinevere Do you call violence sport?

Arthur I know you are Christian, Guinevere, but you mustn't be over-squeamish. Only men could get beaten, no women. You can take it easy.

Guinevere Then explain how it works, please. Unfortunately I know nothing.

Arthur It's very simple, my dear. First all knights meet in two lines, rushing at each other. Half of them are then sorted out at once. The remaining knights form two new lines but only half the size of the first ones. They jostle again, and then only a fourth remain in their saddles. And so they go on. In the end there will only be two knights left. The last one who still keeps in his saddle is the winner.

Guinevere And if there are three remaining at last?

Arthur Then they have to draw lots. But there is usually never any odd man out. Many also pull out of the game without having falling off their horses.

Guinevere They are the wisest.

Arthur Maybe, but also the greatest cowards.

Guinevere Do you mean to say that wisdom is a coward?

Arthur Yes, always. Or else it wouldn't be wise. Courage is never wise, because if it would always calculate the risks it would never come to blows. The wise will either be driven over or withdraw as cowards.

Guinevere But Christianity commands us to turn the other cheek and not to resort to violence.

Arthur Tell that to a fighter in the field. Between men it's bang on that counts, and women should stay out of it.

Guinevere I think we must put an end to these bloody tournaments.

Arthur If you mean it you will become the most unpopular person in Britain. There! The signal! (*flourish*) Here they go! (*rises, excited*)

(*A tremendous noise of clanging armour and loud cheers and screams mixed with cries of pain and great physical exercise in heavy efforts.*)

There! Sir Sagramour hit the grass! And Sir Percival! And even Sir Aggravaine! But there are some new ones that I can't recognize. Merlin! Do you mark that tall fellow with a shield with no coat of arms who is more straight upright than anyone else?

Merlin I don't know who he is.

Arthur Neither do I. But something tells me that he will be the victor of the day.

Morgan le Fay It would be about time for someone else than Sir Gawaine to be the victor.

Arthur I agree with you, my sister. But what do you think, Merlin? Could it be anyone we know?

Merlin If he didn't carry the sign of a lady in his helmet, I would have thought it was Sir Lancelot.

Guinevere (*between Arthur and Merlin*) Who is Sir Lancelot?

Arthur The truest and sincerest knight of all. He lives like a monk and is more consistent than anyone else in sticking to celibacy for an ideal.

Morgan le Fay (*on the other side of Arthur*) Are there such persons?

Arthur He is a Christian, Morgan.

Guinevere Then I hope it is he, so that a Christian knight will carry the day.

Arthur If he is the one it seems that he has found himself a lady.

Morgan So much for that celibacy.

Arthur Therefore it can't be him.

Morgan What a pity.

Guinevere I still hope it is he.

Arthur Here they go again! (*flourish*) We are lucky with the weather today. It is warm, but the veils of clouds obscure the sun enough not to make anyone blinded by it. The odds are the same for all. Now! (*rises excited. The same total din and noise as earlier.*) There Sir Pellinore was blown off the horse! And there Sir Gareth went down to earth! And there Sir Tristan swept the horse clean of Sir Archibald!

Guinevere Cruelty to animals! Barbarity! Vanity! Madness!

Arthur You'll get used to it.

Morgan Your queen seems to regard your tournaments as pagan rituals, my brother.

Arthur No, it's not that bad. She is just ignorant.

Guinevere No, it's worse than that! I can't stand the sight of blood! I will leave now! (*rises and wants to leave*)

Morgan Wait a moment, dearest friend. The unarmed knight with a lady's sign is still leading the tournament.

Arthur It must still be Lancelot!

Morgan But what lady could possibly have won his heart?

Merlin (worried) It bodes no good. I hope to God it isn't Lancelot.

Morgan Why, Merlin?

Merlin Because he if anyone must never find himself a sweetheart.

Guinevere Why not?

Merlin Because Sir Lancelot is the best and most handsome man in the realm!

Morgan (meaningly as always) Interesting. Isn't it, queen Guinevere?

(Guinevere sits down again.)

Arthur Sir Gawaine is looking up Sir Tristan. But he doesn't dare to challenge the unknown.

Morgan He wants to save him for the last row.

Arthur (explaining to Guinevere) Gawaine could never stand Sir Tristan. They always meet at tournaments, and the fight between them is always even.

Morgan Although Sir Tristan is older while Gawaine is more aggressive.

Arthur Gawaine is not afraid of making mistakes.

Morgan While Tristan always is calculating, especially in bed.

Guinevere Morgan le Fay, you appear to be curiously well informed about the bed habits of various knights.

Morgan I am the only expert.

Guinevere Aren't you ashamed?

Morgan Queen Guinevere, you will be ashamed long before me.

Guinevere (to Arthur) Your sister is touchy.

Arthur She is just my half sister. And she is jealous of you.

Guinevere For being the Queen?

Arthur No, for being as bright as she is dark.

Guinevere She wouldn't make such a dark impression if she didn't always dress in black.

Arthur Attention! Here they go again!

(Flourish. The same rumble as before. The king rises in excitement.)

He did it! There he was blasted into the dust to make it reek!

Guinevere Who? I can't see anything for the dust.

Arthur Sir Tristan!

Guinevere I can't see him. Everything is in such a muddle.

Arthur Sir Gawaine struck down Sir Tristan! It hasn't happened for many years!

Guinevere Childish! Gladiator games! Male chauvinism!

Arthur No, my queen! Sport! *(pushes her almost violently but friendlily)*

Morgan (smiles) Don't forget she is the queen of England, Arthur.

Guinevere Another push like that and I will leave the gallery!

Arthur Don't be upset, my love, It's just for fun. *(pinches her cheek)*

Guinevere Don't you dare pinch my cheek!

Arthur Would you rather that I pinched your bottom? (*reaches behind her*)

Guinevere No, fie!

Morgan She is Christian, Arthur.

Merlin You are forgetting the games.

Tristan (*enters*) May a defeated knight approach the royal gallery?

Arthur Come up, Sir Tristan! (*He gets seated beside Morgan le Fay.*)

 You had a nasty fall there by the skilful lance of Sir Gawaine! It must have given you a pain in your arse?

Tristan The trick is to fall in the right manner, and it will not hurt. The whole field belongs now to Sir Gawaine and the unknown.

Arthur Does nobody know who he is?

Tristan He showed up just as the games were about to begin. He hasn't spoken a word.

Arthur Do you think it could be Lancelot?

Tristan I would think so, if he wasn't in France.

Arthur Perhaps he has returned.

Tristan Everybody believes it to be Lancelot, and all know that it can't be him, for he is the last man to wear a lady's sign in his helmet.

Morgan Perhaps it's just the perfect disguise.

Merlin Let's hope so.

Arthur Merlin is worried about that Lancelot might have found himself a lady.

Tristan Well, it's Merlin's *job* to worry about all kinds of things.

Morgan And he always has reasons enough to worry.

Arthur Attention! The next round is about to begin! (*flourish. The King rises in excitement.*)

Guinevere Sir Tristan, is he always like that at all tournaments?

Tristan Yes, but only because he may never take any part himself.

Guinevere Perhaps we could let him take part himself, so he could feel himself what it is all about.

Tristan And what is it all about according to you, queen Guinevere?

Guinevere Sadistic slaughter and the supreme vanity of mad presumption!

Tristan But you'll have to agree that it's a great show.

Guinevere Never!

Tristan Why are you then still here?

Guinevere (*is quiet*)

Morgan She wants to see who the mysterious knight is.

Tristan (*meaningly*) I see.

Arthur (*wild with enthusiasm*) There he went down to blazes! Now it's just Gawaine and the unknown left! They must break lances with each other!

Guinevere And batter each other to death.

Arthur No, my child. It's a noble sport.

Guinevere Yes, I have never seen such a noble way of mutilating each other! A number will even be crippled for life!

Arthur Don't take it so bloody serious, my child.

Guinevere And I am not your child! And you will never have any child by me, if you intend to go on like this!

Arthur What do you mean?

Guinevere Govern by festivals of massacres!

Arthur But my love, if I were to forbid all tournaments in the country there would be rebellion everywhere! It would be very unpolitical!

Guinevere But this spectacle is most unchristian! What do you prefer? Christianity or the power?

Arthur But, my love, we have to unite them.

Guinevere Peace can never be united with violence.

Arthur But this is not violence, my beloved. It's only sport.

Morgan Save the political debate for the parliament. Here is now the encounter between Gawaine and the quiet one. *(flourish)*

Arthur Now we shall see what the nameless one is good for.

Merlin Only Sir Tristan and Sir Lancelot can defeat Sir Gawaine.

Tristan Have you met Sir Lancelot, my Queen?

Guinevere No. I was married so recently.

Tristan If you are lucky you will see him here.

(A crash. All rise in exalted cheer.)

many Hurray! Hurray! Well done! Great show!

Arthur My beloved, did you see? Sir Gawaine almost made a somersault in the air before he came down head over heels!

Tristan *(applauding)* Splendid! Splendid!

Many Off with the helmet! Helmet off!

Morgan The quiet one won't give in. He wishes to accept the laurel of victory first.

Tristan And perhaps offer it to someone.

Arthur To his lady, of course.

Morgan He is moving in this direction.

Arthur It must be Lancelot.

(Enter a knight all in armour with waving plumage riding on his horse with a laurel of glory on his lance, which he offers to the Queen.)

Guinevere *(wants to say something, but Arthur comes in between.)*

Arthur Queen Guinevere thanks you for the great honour you show her at her first games of tournament. But who are you, mysterious knight?

Lancelot *(laughing, removing his helmet)* Who did you think? *(He is Lancelot, blond with a sea of golden locks and an irresistible charm.)*

Arthur *(astounded)* Lancelot!

Tristan But the sign! You had a lady's token in your helmet!

Lancelot Yes, I thought it might surprise you! That's why I made such a great show of it! My lady is the lovely Elaine of Shallott, whom I rescued from a grave danger, and who therefore entrusted her life to my care.

Morgan Will you marry her?

Lancelot If God wills it.

Guinevere Are you Christian?

Lancelot Am I a Christian! Am I not a Frenchman?

Merlin Sir Lancelot, something tells me that you might already have made the fair lady of Shallott with child, which is why you should immediately get married.

Lancelot (still laughing) Before anything worse, happens, old Merlin?

Merlin I think you understand my train of thought.

Lancelot Don't worry. Everything will be all right. But, my dear sovereign king Arthur, I didn't know that *you* had married.

Arthur I thought it would surprise you well enough when you returned.

Lancelot But what a lady! Who is she?

Arthur Guinevere of Lyonesse.

Lancelot I heard about her. The fairest of innocents and the purest of virgins.

Arthur Not any more.

Lancelot My Queen, have forbearance with your husband. He never means the harm he makes it sound like.

Gawaine (enters, all beaten up and furious) Vengeance! Vengeance! So it was you, you arch villain, who appeared as a coward in disguise! You will regret this! King Arthur, I demand another tournament!

Arthur Of course, but not today.

Gawaine So when, then?

Arthur When Lancelot gets married.

Gawaine That means never!

Arthur Haven't you marked the lady's token in his cap?

Gawaine But he gave his wreath of victory to the Queen!

Arthur But he will marry the lady of Shallott. He only intended to flatter his Queen.

Morgan Since she had never seen a tournament before.

Tristan Or Sir Lancelot.

Lancelot Here, queen Guinevere, you see the only danger that can threaten you at the court of king Arthur – his lewd half sister Morgan le Fay.

Guinevere I was looking forward to converting her to Christianity.

Morgan Like I was hoping to convert you to paganism.

Merlin Sir Lancelot, king Arthur married the virgin Guinevere primarily to reconcile Christianity with our old Celtic traditions.

Lancelot Your wise old brain is behind this constructive scheme, my dear Merlin.

Arthur But I do love her also.

Lancelot Of course.

Guinevere My Christian love is even greater, though. But tell me, Sir Lancelot, what evil could I have to expect from Morgan le Fay, my half sister-in-law, who wishes to convert me from Christianity to her satanic rituals?

Lancelot Morgan le Fay, you should answer that question yourself.

Morgan My Queen, I am well known around the entire realm as its most knowledgeable witch. I could bewitch anyone. I am expert on all drugs and have all

recipes, which I could make anyone dependent on. I am the pagan witch number one and the highest priestess of the satanists.

Arthur (laughing) She just exaggerates. Don't worry, Guinevere. She is just speaking ironically over all the Christian prejudices against her. My half sister Morgan le Fay simply represents all the old Celtic traditions of religious mysteries in nature. She is the foremost expert of all herbs and medicinal recipes but only in the capacity of the most accomplished doctor in Britain.

Guinevere But why is she always wearing black? Is she in constant mourning?

Merlin It's her female colour as high priestess in the Celtic religion of nature and as my disciple.

Tristan To her official outfit appertains also her long loose hair.

Morgan Which happens to be as black as my soul.

Arthur Don't listen to her. She is just dramatizing.

Guinevere Does it also appertain to your office to know all about our men's habits between the sheets? She seems to know everything about every human erotic error in this country! *(leaves upset)*

Gawaine Morgan le Fay, I think you should go home to Scotland.

Morgan Will all my paganism?

Gawaine With all your arts.

Morgan Sir Gawaine, pardon me, but no matter how Christian you make yourselves here in Camelot, and no matter how you refine your lives by Christian manners and artifice, you can never exclude or bypass nature. No matter how far man advances in development, Mother Nature will always be in charge of it, or man will go to perdition. *(leaves)*

Tristan Are these the two opposites, King Arthur, that you wish to unite?

Arthur Yes, and I shall succeed!

Merlin If there only were two religions it would work, but alas! Here the conundrum is about two extremely different ladies.

Arthur Her life's first tournament has become somewhat overwhelming to my queen, so that she in her emotional exaggerations has hurt my half sister, so that both have left us in anger. But they shall be united! Now the banquet is waiting for us, and as surely as I am alive they shall sit there at the same table!

Lancelot King Arthur's good will is the most sacred law of our country.

Tristan And probably the only one that keeps the country together.

Gawaine (irritated) But when will then our next grandiose tournament be?

Arthur (taking him gently around his shoulder) That, my friend Gawaine, we will have to discuss at the banquet.

(They all go out in good moods.)

Scene 4. Avalon. Morgan le Fay's castle.

Mordred When may I meet my father?
Morgan You have no father.
Mordred Yes, I do. Or else I couldn't have been born.
Morgan My son, you have no father, for he is a Christian.
Mordred Is it then so terrible to be a Christian?
Morgan It's not terrible, but as a Christian you are lost.
Mordred But they say it's a good religion.
Morgan They are naïve and allow themselves to be duped.
Mordred What is it about it then that is so bad?
Morgan It only strives for power.
Mordred Is power something evil then?
Morgan Yes, my son. Power is the only evil there is.
Mordred So king Arthur is evil, who holds all power in the country.
Morgan No, my son, king Arthur is a good man who has only done a lot of good in this country. But he is ruled by a Christian queen.
Mordred So she is the one who is evil.
Morgan No, my son. No human being is evil. Only power is evil and make people evil when it possesses them.
Mordred Are then all Christian people evil?
Morgan No, only as long as they want power.
Mordred Then I will destroy all power in the country.
Morgan Do that, my son.
Mordred But why are you so beautiful?
Morgan Because you haven't any father.
Mordred People think you are in mourning for always dressing in black. But I think it's something else.
Morgan What?
Mordred I think you are angry.
Morgan Why would I be angry?
Mordred I think you are angry with the whole world and all humanity. I think you were cheated of your life and that you therefore constantly brood on retaliation.
Morgan My son, the life of a lonesome mother is never easy.
Mordred So you are no witch?
Morgan No, I am just natural. *(The sound of a bell.)*
Mordred Mother, we have a visitor.
Morgan Yes, I hear, and it surprises me. No one comes here for a visit.
(Enter a servant in a black robe.) Yes, who is it?
Servant It is Sir Tristan, madam.
Morgan Sir Tristan? What does he want?
Servant A secret errand.

Morgan They always come here only on secret errands. Show him in. My son, you had better leave.

Morgan May I not see him?

Morgan You will meet them all when you have grown up and your moment is come. Until then no one must know that you exist.

Mordred Why?

Morgan Because, my son, you have a secret mission in this world. Remember, you are to destroy all the power in this country. Go now. (*Mordred leaves.*)

Servant (showing in Sir Tristan) Sir Tristan of Cornwall, madam.

Morgan Greetings, Sir Tristan.

Tristan (falling on his knees and kissing her hand) Always unchangeably beautiful, always equally exotic, always as irresistible.

Morgan Don't waste your time on meaningless flattery. You know that I am not receptive to that vanity. After all, I suppose you didn't come here to propose?

Tristan No one dares to propose to you, madam. You are too dangerous.

Morgan Still no one knows my secrets.

Tristan And that might be fortunate.

Morgan That's why they will remain my secrets. But to the point. What brings you here? You yourself or someone else?

Tristan Someone else.

Morgan If the matter is murder by poison the answer is no.

Tristan No, my lady, it is a far more sensitive matter. I am sent by my foster father king Mark.

Morgan The old fool of a bachelor? Does he wish to propose to me?

Tristan Not at all, but he asks for your help for his wedding.

Morgan So he still intends to marry?

Tristan Yes.

Morgan And who will be his happy bride?

Tristan That's the problem. He intends to propose to the fair Isolde of Ireland, and he will send me there as the messenger of his proposal.

Morgan (can't resist laughing) If he makes you his pimp, what does he then want with me?

Tristan He is afraid that Isolde the fair will not fall in love with him.

Morgan His realism astonishes me.

Tristan It's no laughing matter.

Morgan I am sorry. I forgot that you may not laugh at fools like king Mark, since they are so dead serious in acting like fools.

Tristan I think you could help him with the most difficult bit.

Morgan The most difficult bit will be to make her accept him. I can't help him with that. No power can do anything about the free will and least of all concerning the free will of a woman.

Tristan No, the most difficult bit is not to make her accept him, because she already has. She will only be too happy to get away from her bunch of boozing monsters who are her suitors on Ireland.

Morgan What is then the most difficult bit? Is he impotent?

Tristan Lady Morgan, he wants Isolde to fall in love with him.

Morgan Impossible. No woman can fall in love with him, and least of all a beautiful woman like Isolde the blonde.

Tristan He knows about your art with drugs.

Morgan What does he want? A love potion?

Tristan Exactly.

Morgan He doesn't know what he is asking for. Such stuff is dangerous.

Tristan He trusts you.

Morgan If something goes wrong it's not my fault. Managing such drugs is a highly dangerous responsibility.

Tristan You will have no responsibility.

Morgan Then you must take the responsibility, Tristan. If anything goes wrong it will be your fault.

Tristan I accept the responsibility for the sake of my beloved stepfather.

Morgan Well, you shall have the potion.

Tristan What is your price?

Morgan Such services cannot be measured by money. King Mark knows my principle. I demand nothing else than equal services in return when and if needed.

Tristan That's why all England stand in debt to you.

Morgan And most of those debts I will never demand. That's why debts keep growing to me from grateful clients. But you must carefully get to understand how this drug will work.

Tristan Instruct me.

Morgan The drug is to be served in two people's cups. They will drink together. The first person they see after having taken the drug will be their hopeless love for life. They must love that person alone until they die. Do you understand? That is why it is so important that they drink together and alone.

Tristan I understand.

Morgan You shall have the drug as you leave tomorrow and stay here for the night.

Tristan With you?

Morgan Yes. I have been alone far too long. Just one night.

Tristan No one could deny you this, Morgan. On the contrary, there are many who would dream about that opportunity.

Morgan Why do they never come here then?

Tristan Because they fear you. They think you will bewitch them.

Morgan Christian prejudice and superstition.

Tristan But why do you ask me to stay? Is there anything you want from me?

Morgan Tristan, you must know, that no woman acts without calculation. Yes, Tristan, I need your help in a very important issue.

Tristan Tell me.

Morgan Have some wine first. After supper we shall talk. (*sounds a bell. The servant enters.*) Bring us some food, fruit on a tray with cheese, and wine.

Servant Yes, madam. (*leaves*)

Tristan What kind of devious schemes are you hiding in your long sleeves?

Morgan How is the new queen getting along?

Tristan Like a fish in water. Everybody loves her. Lancelot is already forgetting his Elaine for the charm of the queen.

Morgan Yes. I saw it coming. She is more for a Lancelot type than for an Arthur.

Tristan Is that an insinuation?

Morgan No, just bad forebodings. Lancelot and Guinevere are both dangerously superficial and lacking in character. They both mainly live only for their pleasures, while Arthur is serious.

Tristan She loves Arthur above all else.

Morgan Of course, she must, for she is the queen. And how does she propagate her Christianity?

Tristan She has become the highest protector of all churches and monasteries, and she has initiated the construction of new churches and convents everywhere. More and more are getting baptized and become Christians only because she makes so good publicity.

Morgan That's what we must do something about. Are you with me?

Tristan With you against Christianity?

Morgan Yes.

Tristan I would love to, but how?

Morgan We shall use their own weakness. They love miracles and relics. They will believe anything, if only it seems enough miraculous. I have a plan.

Tristan Tell me.

Morgan What do you think about letting Christ's own cup from his last supper appear as a revelation in front of the gathered congregation at Camelot?

Tristan It would result in great astonishment and exultation.

Morgan But it must be well performed. No one must suspect a bluff. All knights who aren't Christians must be absent from Camelot on that occasion.

Tristan And Merlin?

Morgan (*hesitates*) We can't get him away.

Tristan He sees through everything.

Morgan Let him do so. He is wise enough not to say anything, for he will probably understand the intention and accept it.

Tristan And what is your purpose?

Morgan To teach the Christian fanatics a lesson! From sheer enthusiasm they will set out on the great quest for the holy cup of the last supper, which so miraculously has appeared to them. They will leave the country for France,

Germany, Italy, Greece, Turkey, Egypt and even Jerusalem! And they will wander around the world for years, perhaps decades, and finally return home all washed up, completely disillusioned, and they will realize that Christianity was just a deceptive delusion.

Tristan An infernal intrigue.

Morgan But realistic! It could even lead to all the old Celts returning back home to their old natural religion!

Tristan Home to Morgan le Fay, their sensual high priestess, to the worship of all living life in nature as the highest manifestation of God, to the devotion and adoration of natural liberty.

Morgan The only true, sound and realistic religion!

Tristan The only sanity and soundness in the world.

Morgan While Christianity is just unnatural.

Tristan Morgan, I will help you in this venture. I just hope it will succeed.

Morgan And you shall have your love drug for your sentimental stepfather. Just be sure not to apply it yourself, for then no one will be responsible for the consequences.

Tristan Are there any side effects?

Morgan Yes, but that secret is for your ears only. King Mark may drink of it at his own risk, his Isolde will fall in love with him and he with Isolde, but the passion which will result must lead to both lovers remaining deeply unhappy forever.

Tristan From their passion?

Morgan Yes.

Tristan Obviously some love worth living for anyway. Life must give pain, so that you feel that you are alive. Cheers, Morgan le Fay!

Morgan Cheers, Sir Tristan, the most liberal of knights!

(They drink together and then start having their supper with lively conversation in very comfortable and relaxed positions.)

Scene 5. Camelot.

Guinevere How did it happen?

Maid (combing her long light hair) She appears to have drowned herself.

Guinevere But why?

Maid Why do people go drowning themselves? Unlucky love.

Guinevere But hadn't she just become a mother?

Maid Maybe that was the reason why. The gods know, that it was a miracle for her to become pregnant with such a husband.

Guinevere What do you mean?

Maid If he loved her a little in the beginning, it was less with time.

Guinevere Are you insinuating something?

Maud Not at all.

Guinevere But what then?

Maid Your highness, everybody knows and sees that you and Lancelot have eyes for each other.

Guinevere Would that be the cause of Elaine's suicide?

Maid He was just married when he met you for the first time.

Guinevere Would that have ruined Elaine's and his love?

Maid I just know, that she felt alone, and more alone with time. She just felt superfluous.

Guinevere Still he never deceived her.

Maid To be sure. Or else it would have looked bad indeed.

(A careful knock.)

Guinevere Ouch! Take care! That's enough, Marianne, before you tear my hair off! I can manage the rest myself.

Maid Shall I leave?

Guinevere Yes. The other door. Quickly. *(Marianne leaves by a back door, stops outside to listen, which is seen. Guinevere opens the main door and lets in Lancelot.)*

My love! *(embraces him)*

Lancelot My Queen, it is now time for tears and laments. No joy is proper now.

Guinevere How you sound melodramatic!

Lancelot (sternly) Elaine is dead, madam. My wife is dead.

Guinevere Yes, I heard. It certainly is terrible.

Lancelot You don't sound very compassionate or convincing.

Guinevere What do you want me to do? I am no crybaby. Also the church considers suicide the supreme egoism and a mortal sin.

Lancelot That's where your church shows some fallacy. If you condemn suicides you are inhuman and completely without human understanding and compassion.

Guinevere I am sorry.

Lancelot (kneeling to her) Guinevere, we can't continue like this. It must come to an end. We only deceive ourselves.

Guinevere Lancelot, I have neither deceived king Arthur nor you Elaine.

Lancelot But we will, if we allow it to continue.

Guinevere Do I then mean more to you as a queen or as a woman?

Lancelot What kind of a question is that?

Guinevere Lancelot, Arthur married me only because I was a Christian and of noble birth. Our marriage was a political marriage between the church and celticism. He has never loved me. He can never love me. He married for a political idea of reconciliation and unity. It was wise of him, but it was not love. Now I am first of all a woman, and I need love. I love you. You also love me. Our love is real. What could possibly stop us then?

Lancelot Guinevere, everything you say is true, but don't you see the impediment?

Guinevere What impediment?

Lancelot You said it yourself. You are a Christian. What would it look like if a Christian queen deceived her king with his own first knight? Christianity would look

ridiculous in all Britain! You would shame your own religion! And that's just what your enemies are wishing for! All are speculating in our relationship and betting on whether we will commit adultery or not. Everyone is waiting for your fall. That's why it must not happen.

Guinevere Do we have any alternative?

Lancelot I must go abroad for as long as possible.

Guinevere That's only the second worst thing after your death.

Lancelot If I stay both my and your position will become untenable.

Guinevere But what about if Arthur would agree to it?

Lancelot Why would he?

Guinevere Because he can't love me. Because there is still an unsurmountable wall between us. And because he wants a son.

Lancelot No real husband could be that tolerant. I don't believe in it.

Guinevere Let's ask him for his permission.

Lancelot No, Guinevere. It would break his heart. Next to you I love him the most. I don't want to hurt him.

Guinevere Then we find ourselves in hell.

Lancelot That's what I mean. And that's why I had better go away.

(kneels again and kisses her hand) It's the best moment now when I have a deceased wife to mourn and I still must give my son a new home.

Guinevere Where will you go?

Lancelot I will place him in a monastery and then go on endless journeys on my own and perhaps end up a monk in a monastery where no one can find me. They say there is a monastery on the Mount Athos in Greece that would suit me. No one is admitted there except holy monks.

Guinevere Then you abandon me to a worse fate than death.

Lancelot Now it's you who are being melodramatic. Farewell, my queen. I must get over my pain in this way. You should also try to get over yours. *(leaves)*

Guinevere (alone, covers her face in her hands and cries bitterly. The maid carefully enters again.)

Maid Believe me, your highness. It's best this way.

Guinevere Is it you, Marianne?

Maid Yes. *(comforts her)*

Guinevere Have you been listening?

Maid I heard every word.

Guinevere You will not gossip?

Maud There is nothing to gossip about. But if I would be called on as a witness, I could only confirm your innocence. You are still a virgin, aren't you, madam?

Guinevere (desperate about her shame and frustration) Yes. *(bursts out crying again)*

Maid I thought so. Poor girl. *(pats her and comforts her.)*

Act III scene 1. The great banqueting hall in Camelot.

Arthur (rising solemnly with his raised cup) For once I may honour someone else than Sir Lancelot as the victor of today's tournament! It is always a pleasure to see you two clash together, Sir Gawaine and Sir Tristan, for you are always equal and the most accomplished of all, but today it was a greater pleasure than ever, for you both knew that one of you had to be the victor of the day! You gave it all! And I raise my cup to the victor number one for today – Sir Tristan!

All Hear! Hear! (*All share the toast with enthusiasm.*)

Tristan (has risen) Glorious king, friends, comrades, Sir Gawaine, Queen Guinevere, all our ladies, I won today only for one reason. It was a day of sorrow, since Sir Lancelot's Elaine is dead. A tragedy has happened in our midst, which we never thought could be possible. Our constant feast of happy comradeship and strenuous games of fighting have been altered into a solemnity of sorrow – for the sake of a woman, who took her own life, and everyone is wondering why. That's the only reason why Sir Lancelot has withdrawn and declined from taking part in today's games. That's the only reason why I have won his glory instead. But I can't tolerate it. I can't accept a break in the festivities. And I have given Sir Lancelot a solemn vow to cheer him up. For that reason he has promised to appear here tonight.

Guinevere Will Sir Lancelot come here tonight?

Gawaine It is correct. He has been seen on his way here.

Gareth Even if he has lost Elaine he should be able to get merry again.

Pellinore Cheers to that! We will get Sir Lancelot back in his good humour! (*raises his cup and drinks*)

Many Cheers to that!

Several Hurray!

Sir Lancelot (enters) What a boundless mirth I am met with here tonight! Is it just because another than I happened to win today?

Tristan Sir Lancelot, if you wish, we could meet, you and I. You could still win.

Lancelot No, Sir Tristan, you honestly deserved your victory. Keep it. I only came to bid you all farewell. I will go into exile. I will become a monk.

Gawaine What are you saying, you sanctimonious hypocrite? Can you imagine Sir Lancelot in a tonsure? (*general guffaws*)

Gareth Never!

Gawaine You hear, Lancelot! You will never be taken seriously as a priest!

Lancelot Then I will be a lonesome hermit instead. That would teach you that I neither will do any more as any company for you.

Gareth Get yourself a new lady, Lance! If you lose one, thousands will remain! And you are the most attractive among men in Britain!

Lancelot Gareth, I was recently made a widower.

Gareth That's no excuse for bad acting. We just don't believe in your new deadly serious role, Lance.

Lancelot You only make me feel even more of a failure, brother Gareth.

Arthur What Sir Lancelot needs is a new carrot to motivate the donkey to continue trotting around the well. Is there anyone who has any proper new carrot to offer Sir Lancelot?

Guinevere I think I could tempt him to remain.

Arthur If you could cheer him up, Guinevere, you are better than all my knights together.

Guinevere He needs no tonsure, no monk outfit, no priestly chasuble. All he needs is a fellow being's Christian love.

Arthur But what is this?

(The Grail comes incandescent down over the congregation, like sailing from above.)

Pellinore A sign! A sign!

Tristan It looks like the holy Grail.

Pellinore It *is* the holy Grail! It can't be anything else! The holiest of all relics! Which has been searched for during hundreds of years! But why does it appear to us here today?

Gareth What do you think of this, Gawaine?

Gawaine It must undoubtedly be a sign from above.

Percival King Arthur! What is the meaning of this?

Arthur My friends, if this be the holy Grail, which its magic definitely proves itself to be, this is a remarkable sign in the middle of the crisis of Sir Lancelot's loss. Sir Lancelot, how do you interpret this sign?

Lancelot It's a sign for me! It's the answer to all my questions! I shall move out in the world and search for the holy Grail! And I shall find it! It will be my atonement!

Gawaine Lancelot, here we have the answer to your absence at today's tournaments! Here is a new tournament and competition offered to us on a far higher level. May the best one of us find the holy Grail!

(The chalice is elevated again above the community and vanishes.)

Gareth Gawaine has given us the word! May the best one of us find the holy Grail!

Many (repeat the keyword, drink and cheer:) Hurray! (The enthusiasm is irrevocably contagious.)

Arthur Wait a moment! What has Merlin to say about this?

Merlin (rising) Have you then all lost your senses? Will you all run headlong across to the continent and leave the country without protection for the sake of an illusion? This sight is perhaps just a trick to some diabolical purpose...

Guinevere Good old Merlin, you are blaspheming Christianity.

Gawaine Merlin is old.

Merlin I am sorry, young man, but I can't believe in the purposed meaning of this sight. I don't understand it and suspect an infernal scheme behind it, which no one can understand, since we are too good. I resign and ask your leave. *(leaves)*

Gawaine Merlin is a pagan. He is too old and obstinate to ever be able to convert to Christianity.

Tristan Or too wise.

Lancelot What do you think, Tristan? You always tend to agree with Merlin and the old Celtic believers, whom the Christians call Satanists. Will you join us on the quest for the Holy Grail, or will you stay at home?

Tristan (rising) I am sorry, my friends, but I have more important matters to attend to. I must first go to Ireland to propose to the lovely Isolde on the part of my stepfather. That is *my* sacred duty. (*leaves*)

Gawaine (laughing) He intends to win Isolde for himself!

Arthur Merlin and Tristan have left us. Are there any more who intend not to care about the holy Grail?

Lancelot Imagine what a glory it would be for us, king Arthur, for all our world, if we were the ones who were able to bring the holiest cup of the holiest supper home!

Gawaine It would be worth more than all tournaments!

Percival It could raise our knighthood to the holiest order among knights!

Gareth Merlin is old, and Tristan has his own obligations to think about. Everyone else is on!

Guinevere It pleases me, my knights, that so many among you are so clearly and outspoken as Christians! I hope to soon be able to share the joy with the Holy Grail in my hand of being able to give my blessing and my protection to the most Christian order of knights.

Many (raising their swords) Hurray!

Lancelot For Queen Guinevere, the highest protector of our order!

All For Queen Guinevere! (*the general sentiment is irresistibly enthusiastic*)

Lancelot I will find the Holy Grail for you, Guinevere, so that I may never see you again until I can present to you the highest degree of holiness in life.

Guinevere In that case you will find it.

Arthur (stealing up between them) A word with you both.

Guinevere What do you want, Arthur?

Arthur I want to speak with both of you alone before Lancelot leaves us.

Lancelot My king, I am always at your and the Queen's humblest service.

Arthur I know, Lancelot. That's why I want you both alone with me. Come to my bedroom, Lancelot, when this banquet is over. (*leaves*)

Guinevere Do you think he suspects anything?

Lancelot He has nothing to suspect, since we have done nothing.

Guinevere But there must be something on his mind.

Lancelot He always comes with new surprises. I think he will do so now again.

Guinevere In that case I hope it will be nothing unpleasant.

Lancelot Whatever it is I will humour him.

Guinevere Lancelot, I hope he will always be aware that you are his best and only friend.

Lancelot And yours as well, my Queen. (*bows and leaves.*)

Guinevere (alone) Could he really guess that I love him? We shall see. If he questions our relationship, Lancelot can deny everything but not I.

Scene 2. Arthur's bedroom.

Arthur sits on his bed when Lancelot enters.

Arthur Welcome to my bed, brother.
Lancelot What has gone into you, Arthur?
Arthur I am just possessed by my ordinary good common sense. It's nothing dangerous.
Lancelot What's your idea?
Arthur I know that you and Guinevere love each other, Lancelot.
Lancelot The whole world knows that. But we haven't done anything.
Arthur For that you should be rewarded.
Lancelot Arthur, you know, that the supreme joy of my life is to serve you and your court. Everything else is of lesser importance. That includes queen Guinevere.
Arthur Still you want to go away and leave even her.
Lancelot I lose my court and company but also being tormented by her.
Arthur By your love, you mean?
Lancelot You know everything, Arthur. I have no secrets, and least of all to you.
Arthur Because you are like a brother to me.
Lancelot But why did you ask me here? Was it for sentimental reasons?
Arthur Not at all. Let's await my wife.
Lancelot What do you want with her?
Arthur Just love her, like always. You have nothing to fear, Lancelot.
Lancelot You have something in mind.
Arthur You can be sure of that. Here she is. (*enter Guinevere.*)
Guinevere So Lancelot is already here. What did you want with us, Arthur?
Arthur I want you to share my bed with me tonight, Guinevere.
Guinevere That's nothing new. You don't have to command me for that.
Arthur Together with Lancelot.
Guinevere What do you mean?
Arthur Just what I am saying. I want you and Lancelot too make love with me in my bed tonight.
Guinevere Are you out of your mind?
Arthur On the contrary.
Lancelot What is the meaning, king Arthur?
Arthur What happened to your familiarity?
Lancelot The Queen is here, and her presence demands dignity.
Arthur Bullshit. Here in the bedchamber we are just lovers all three of us.
Guinevere Explain yourself, Arthur. We don't understand you.
Arthur It's very easy. Guinevere, I can't make you pregnant. I then want to give Lancelot the chance to make you pregnant instead.
Guinevere Are you out of your mind?

Arthur We need an heir, Guinevere. I have never been more serious. You just keep crying month after month when you never can get a child with me. I want to cure your grief. Make a child with Lancelot.

Guinevere (finds it hard to control herself) I am Christian, Arthur, and you ask me to commit adultery!

Arthur It's not adultery if you commit it with me in our bed.

Guinevere You mean, that you give me your blessing for my adultery?

Arthur I repeat, it's not adultery if it is done in my presence. I love both of you.

Lancelot You mean, that we would both make love to Guinevere?

Arthur Something like that.

Lancelot Guinevere, the King commands us. We have no right not to obey him.

Guinevere It's against my nature, Arthur. My religion forbids it.

Arthur Forget for one time's sake your moral restrictions, Guinevere. We must have an heir. Or else our royal house will fall, and England will relapse into endless civil wars and barbarity.

Lancelot Arthur, I love you like I love Guinevere. On a night with her and with you I would give you both all my love without reservations.

Arthur I know that, Lancelot. That's why I ask you. – Lancelot has nothing against it, Guinevere. I hope you haven't either.

Guinevere (trembling) Lancelot is right. If the King commands it we have no right to refuse.

Arthur I think you are more willing than you wish to show.

Lancelot All ladies always are. They say no when they mean maybe, and when they say maybe they mean yes. They never mean what they say, but you have to find out what they really mean the other way.

Arthur Meaning?

Lancelot By going behind them.

Arthur No obscenities, please, Lancelot.

Lancelot We are to spend the night together.

Arthur If Guinevere is willing.

Guinevere (lets her dress fall) Gentlemen, I belong to you and am at your disposal quite willingly and the more willingly because the king has commanded me.

Arthur That's the spirit.

Lancelot Guinevere, it will be a night for a lifetime.

Guinevere The only one. That's my only condition: that it will be for once only.

Arthur It's fair. What do you say, Lancelot?

Lancelot I obey my Queen.

Arthur Come then, my friends. It almost feels like some kind of an incest operation since you are both like a brother and sister to me. But I must not love my sister. I may only love a queen I can't make with child and my best friend whom I even less can have a child with.

Lancelot We shall give her a child, Arthur. We shall both love her, so that no one afterwards can tell who the father was, but it will still be your son.

Merlin No, Morgan. By deceit and foul play.

Morgan That's what I call Christianity.

Merlin That is what Christianity becomes if it is manipulated by unchristian hands.

Morgan What is your point?

Merlin Morgan, the knights are scattered abroad by all the world's wayward winds. Many are lost since many years and will never be found again. Others have perished by hardships and ordeals. A few have come back as broken old men without any faith in life any more. The realm is without defence. And in Camelot your son Mordred spreads bad rumours about the Queen so that Arthur's worries and troubles are more than doubled.

Morgan Father, you speak with an accusing tone. Please be more specific.

Merlin (takes a seat) Morgan, I gave you everything and taught you everything. You were brought up to be the foremost bulwark of Britain for our old Celtic religious traditions. But I never taught you guile and deceit.

Morgan Again I must ask you to be more specific.

Merlin You know very well what I mean.

Morgan Then say it.

Merlin The holy Grail.

Morgan That's a Christian problem.

Merlin You made it a Christian problem.

Morgan The Christian problem was there before the Grail.

Merlin (angry, rises, hits something with his fist) Don't dodge the issue! The revelation of the holy Grail in Camelot was a trick played by you, staged only to create confusion among the knights and scatter them out on senseless crusades all over the world! You sent most of them to their death!

Morgan You have never spoken hard to me like this before, father. You are right. I staged a trick, but only to show the superstitious Christians what fools they are with their blind faith. I wanted to teach them a lesson. I wanted to show them how ridiculous their religion is.

Merlin To what constructive purpose? No, Morgan, your intention was evil. You wanted to destroy Christianity. You wanted to take a fight with another religion just to smash it and further your own!

Morgan (sits down) My father, you make me weary. In all my life I served your religion. I belonged to you and your interests. I never lived for anything else. I am what you made me. If I now have disappointed you and grieved you, I am sincerely sorry.

Merlin (sits down again, buries his head in his hands) No, Morgan, I am the one who is sorry. All my life's work is going to perdition, and it's not just your fault. I am the fool of my own vanity and happiness. I created king Arthur and Camelot, this happy world, this perfect monarchy, this ideal island realm, and I thought I reached the summit of happiness and success when I made Arthur choose the most beautiful of Christian queens to establish peace and confirm national reconciliation for all time.

But for some reason that's where something went wrong. Why did you turn, my own daughter, against queen Guinevere?

Morgan That's something I can never tell you.

Merlin (uses his fist again) You must!

Morgan Because I am a woman.

Merlin That is no answer.

Morgan Because Mordred is my son.

Merlin The whole world knows. That's no answer either. The whole world and especially Britain is full of bastard sons.

Morgan He is no bastard.

Merlin How can you say so, with all your innumerable lovers?

Morgan I only had one, whom I really loved, and who really loved me. And that is Mordred's father.

Merlin Who is then his father?

Morgan King Arthur.

Merlin (stupefied at first) What are you saying?

Morgan The truth.

Merlin It must have happened long ago then?

Morgan Arthur was hardly even king yet. He was young and uncertain. I comforted him. We didn't even know who we were at the time. I chose him just because he looked so helpless.

Merlin What do you mean?

Morgan Arthur didn't know that his mother was the same as mine when I allowed him to seduce me.

Merlin This is unheard of. Did *you* know?

Morgan I didn't, but I guessed it and felt it. There's my only blame. I didn't say anything of what I feared.

Merlin And therefore you turned against Guinevere. You still loved Arthur and was jealous.

Morgan I am the only one he has loved. Guinevere will never get a child by him.

Merlin Alas, my daughter, what a mess you have created in your female vanity! I brought you up correctly, you did indeed honour and do everything for our old Celtic religion, but you were only a woman! I should never have given you such a responsibility, just because you were woman. But how could I know? How on earth could I divine that Arthur would happen to fall for you of all women?

Morgan You sense dangers that I don't understand.

Merlin Morgan, you don't understand how the most sacred and secret laws of religion work. Nothing is more dangerous than to manipulate with a religion in destructive purposes. Such a practice will always hit back on you more than on anyone else. Do you know what your reputation in the country is among the Christians?

Morgan They must think that I am the worst of witches.

Merlin It's much worse than that. They call you a Satanist. They see you as a female Antichrist. There are legends about you that you enslave all your guests by giving them drugs and keep them dependent on your drugs while you use them sexually until they die or are transformed into some kind of phantoms as slaves without a will of their own.

Morgan They may believe what they will about me. All legends about me are flatteries to my female vanity.

Merlin Can't you retract your evil conspiracies against Guinevere for the sake of king Arthur?

Morgan No, father, I can never retract anything. She is a fake. She has come between me and Arthur. I can never forgive her for that. She also represents that loathsome upstart religion Christianity, which is directly unnatural and intolerant in its very essence.

Merlin Then you are implacable and unforgiving.

Morgan Yes, as a woman and lover of king Arthur.

Merlin Then the risk is that your love will lead to the destruction of the country including yourself and our old Celtic religion.

Morgan I don't understand what you mean.

Merlin Reconciliation and appeasement with Christianity I saw as the only possibility for our ancient Celtic culture to survive. Christianity is full of vitality and initiative, which is just what we old Celts need. Christianity could have renewed us, if it had tolerated our old knowledge. But if we resist Christianity it must crush us. For the least criticism and resistance it will only brand our old traditions as witchcraft.

Morgan So you don't think we can defeat and overcome Christianity?

Merlin If we try, it will be our destruction. Intolerance is not inherent in the Celtic mind.

Morgan Father, what can we do?

Merlin Recall Mordred.

Morgan Impossible. He is Arthur's son.

Merlin Is Arthur aware of it?

Morgan None of them know.

Merlin If they get to learn about it, it will only make matters worse.

Morgan I think it will get worse whatever we do.

Merlin Mordred is one of the few who have not fallen for the Grail fancies. He is not Christian, so he is not likely to do so either. And he leads the unchristian party among the knights, directed against Guinevere. And he will not get it very easier now when Lancelot has returned.

Morgan Has Lancelot returned?

Merlin Yes, and for the worst possible reasons. He couldn't live without queen Guinevere in his vicinity.

Morgan How strange that the greatest of knights should be the most sentimental! What news about the others?

Merlin Gawaine and his brothers are active and at least keep in touch. But Sir Tristan is lost.

Morgan How?

Merlin He went to Ireland to propose to queen Isolde on behalf of king Mark, Tristan fell in love with Isolde, and it seems to have been mutual, for she committed adultery with him. Sir Tristan can never come back to England.

Morgan (rises, clasps her head) Morgan, everything you do turns out the wrong way!

Merlin Tristan's fate was not your fault. He and Isolde have themselves to blame.

Morgan No, it was my fault! What happened to Isolde?

Merlin She was confined in a convent.

Morgan And that Christianity you want me to tolerate! I would rather see the whole world perish than allow that monster religion to rule!

Merlin Morgan, don't blame yourself for more than you have done.

Morgan Father, I am more implacable now than when you arrived! It's too late! Nothing can make me go back on my purposes! I and my son have to go through the whole way!

Merlin Morgan, I was hoping to speak some sense with you. You are still my daughter.

Morgan Father, if you can't understand that I represent the common sense in this fight for life and death against the madness, hubris and blind faith of Christianity, you might as well leave!

Merlin (rising) I have made you angry. I am sorry.

Morgan No, father, nothing can ever forgive me and least of all I myself! You are at least innocent! Go now!

Merlin My daughter, I am sorry that I came and made your worries worse.

Morgan No, father, you just strengthened me in my intentions. I felt guilt for my sabotage against Christianity, and I rake my responsibility for the trick with the Grail bluff at Camelot, but I swear myself free from all responsibility for all those Christians who fell for the simple hoax! It's neither mine nor your fault that so many knights chased themselves to death for the sake of the Christian bluff! They are just martyrs to their own stupidity! You mean that Tristan and Isolde should blame themselves, but to a much higher degree must all Christian blunderers and idiots blame themselves! It's not I or you that deceived them with the Christian religion, but it's their church fathers and themselves, who by their human weakness and stupidity wallow blindly in their own delusions! To hell with them! I am innocent, for I am fortunately pagan!

Merlin (can but resign) Your passionate reason is terrible, but I am afraid it is not entirely unjust.

Morgan Go now, father, before there will be worse eruptions between us, if you can ride home in the storm.

Merlin If I could ride here I could also ride back, if it would take a few days though and the weather is the worst possible. (*dons his hood and leaves.*)

Morgan (starts to repent) Father, I didn't mean to throw you out. Stay here if you wish.

Merlin Thank you, my daughter, but I must return as soon as possible back home to my duties with Arthur in Camelot. He needs me more than you. Farewell, my daughter. Even if we don't meet too often, we always remain in close touch with each other. *(leaves)*

(When he has left there is a clash of thunder with lightning.)

Morgan Welcome, barbaric night! Chistianity has ravished me! They will succeed in making me into what they imagine that I am: their most irreconcilable enemy and the most infernal of all satanic witches!

(Thunder and lightning.)

Scene 4. Camelot.

Mordred I tell you that the queen is corrupt and that king Arthur must divorce her!

Sagramour It's a terrible accusation, Sir Mordred. How can you present it without evidence?

Mordred My mother has the evidence! Ride to her castle and get informed!

Kay Sir Pellinore went there but has not returned.

Mordred Because he has learned the truth! No one wants to set his foot in Camelot any more after having learned the truth about Guinevere at my mother's!

Percival Let her come here instead. Why is Morgan le Fay never seen any more at court?

Mordred Because if she came here, Guinevere would immediately have her murdered by poison since she knows too much!

Gareth And why do you present these accusations to us and never to the queen, king or Sir Lancelot?

Mordred Because I have an instinct of self-preservation.

Gareth Others would call it cowardice.

Mordred Sir Gareth, you are Sir Lancelot's best friend and like a brother to him. Can you be as naïve as king Arthur and put a blind eye to Guinevere's relationship with Lancelot?

Gareth There is no evidence, and since the king doesn't do anything, no else will think anything evil about the queen either.

Mordred One day the evidence will be obvious! I take it on myself to one day expose the queen as a whore of double standards, preaching Chistianity in daytime and deceiving the king with his foremost knight in the night!

Lancelot (has entered) What kind of an outrageous smear is that?

Mordred Sir Lancelot, is it a lie that you love the queen?

Lancelot No, I love queen Guinevere, like all knights love queen Guinevere. Only those who slander her do not love her.

Mordred I claim that I am not slandering her but telling the truth when I assert that you are her lover.

Lancelot Such rotten eggs like you should be purged out of Camelot at once!
(*draws his sword*)

Mordred (*answers at once in the same way*) Answer the accusation, Lancelot!

Kay No drawn swords in the King's banqueting hall! What kind of lack of self control is this, fellow knights? Disarm them at once! Lancelot, control yourself, for the king's sake!

Lancelot Sir Kay, that bastard has smeared the queen's honour!

Mordred And by what right do you call me a bastard, you royal traitor!

Lancelot Everyone knows you never had a father! Everyone knows your mother is the most notorious whore in the country!

Gareth Separate them, for God's sake!

(*commotion and turmoil. King Arthur suddenly enters.*)

Arthur (*booming*) You imbecile demented children, what kind of a bad show is this? All swords to be sheathed at once! (*The brawl is halted in confusion.*)

What is this all about, Sir Percival, my most truthful warrior?

Percival King Arthur, I wish I had never seen or heard what presently took place here!

Arthur Out with it!

Percival Sir Mordred accused Sir Lancelot of irregularities with queen Guinevere. Sir Lancelot answered the allegation by calling Sir Mordred a bastard.

Arthur (*booming, to the knights*) Is this true?

Several Yes.

Arthur (*to Percival*) What else?

Percival They pulled their swords.

Arthur Who did it first?

Percival Sir Lancelot.

Arthur Is it true, Sir Lancelot?

Lancelot King Arthur, you know very well that I can't accept insults to our Queen.

Arthur (*booming to Lancelot*) No one has ever before pulled his sword against another knight in my house! (*calmer, to Percival*) What else?

Mordred King Arthur, we are both equally guilty of the offence. I insulted your queen. He insulted my mother. But I claim that my accusation was true and that Sir Lancelot's was false.

Arthur So you claim, you little ignorant brat, that my queen betrays me with Sir Lancelot?

Mordred Sir Lancelot has not denied the accusation.

Arthur Don't you know, poor savage harebrain, that we live in a free country? Do you think I am ignorant about the slander against my queen and Lancelot? And why do you think I haven't intervened? In my country lovers have the right to love

each other. If Guinevere and Lancelot love each other and I don't intervene it gives no one else any right to intervene!

Mordred But with respect, king Arthur, queen Guinevere is a Christian and casts doubts on her entire church if she doesn't even drag it into the dirt.

Arthur That's her own responsibility in that case.

Percival King Arthur, Sir Mordred also presented another curious statement.

Arthur Well?

Percival Sir Mordred claimed, that whoever wanted evidence of the queen's infidelity would go to the castle of Morgan le Fay and there learn the truth. Sir Kay then claimed that Sir Pellinore and other Christian knights had gone there to know the truth but without returning. Sir Mordred then claimed that they would not return after having learned the truth.

Arthur So my Christian knights are not only lost on the quest of the holy Grail. They also get lost at Morgan le Fay's.

Percival That's how it seems, king Arthur.

Kay There is something weird going on.

Gareth Sir Mordred, Morgan le Fay is your mother. What does she know that we don't know?

Mordred I don't know, because I don't want to know. Those who want to know should go to her.

Sagramour She hasn't been seen here at court since the great hunt for the Grail started. (*Merlin enters slowly.*)

Arthur Merlin is the one who saw her last, and he has returned. We are discussing the mystery around Morgan le Fay, Merlin. How was she when you visited her?

Merlin Your half sister is well, Merlin, but she is in a bad mood.

Arthur Can you tell us about it?

Merlin (stops, troubled) It's about Sir Tristan.

Lancelot Another one who disappeared. Whatever happened to him?

Merlin An unfortunate affair. As you all know he was going to Ireland to propose to queen Isolde on behalf of his foster father king Mark. Everything went well to begin with and Isolde accepted him, but when they went back to Cornwall after the mission, Isolde and Tristan fell hopelessly in love with each other. But the marriage could not be averted. They fell so in love, that they just had to commit adultery. They got away with it in the beginning, but they had to get caught in the end. Tristan was then sent abroad, and Isolde was confined to a convent. This brought Morgan le Fay to such a desperation that she was quite beside herself, and she appeared to give herself the blame for Tristan's and Isolde's unhappy fate.

Sagramour I met Tristan almost dying in France. He was badly wounded after an unnecessary fight with the Huns and just wanted to die. The last thing he said to me was that the only thing that could save him now was if Isolde came to his side.

Merlin Does Isolde know?

Sagramour Naturally I immediately sent a message about this to her, and I think she left at once. But I don't know the outcome.

Lancelot We have departed from the subject. I demand satisfaction from this impertinent upstart who thinks he can shame and sully me and the queen without consequences.

Mordred Why don't you go to my mother and find out the truth about your queen first?

Lancelot Because I will cut out your tongue first! The only snake in all England is here in Camelot, and its name is Mordred!

Mordred (bows) Pardon me, Sir Lancelot, that I don't like to see our king be turned into a cuckold by you.

Lancelot (furious) Listen to him! His shamelessness knows no bounds!

Mordred (ironically) Says you, Sir Lancelot.

Lancelot I must demand satisfaction and insist on a duel! A joust unto death with all weapons!

Mordred I shall be delighted, Sir Lancelot, but why not find out what my mother knows about your mistress first?

Arthur No, I forbid it! Two of my own knights must never fight a duel! Just to put an end to such madness of violence was my realm created with Camelot!

Guinevere (has entered unnoticed and listened for a while, now shows herself) Gentlemen, since the matter concerns me, maybe I should have a word in it as well. Evidently there is a misunderstanding here. I can neither feel guilt nor defend mine and Lancelot's beautiful friendship, which Arthur and almost all of you have pleased to encourage and accept. I can't understand that anyone of you could suspect any irregularity. Obviously someone among you thinks he knows more about me than I know myself. What is it that your mother knows about me, Sir Mordred?

Mordred I don't know and don't want to know.

Guinevere Merlin, you were with Morgan le Fay. What secrets is she keeping to herself?

Merlin Don't ask me, my good queen Guinevere. I have told you all I know. All I can say is, that she is better than her reputation, since she has been slandered and verbally dishonoured much more than you yourself but only by Christian knights.

Sagramour There is something behind all this. I suggest that we ride to Morgan le Fay and search her out.

Gareth It would be better to get her here.

Lancelot We can't force a lady to come with us if she is unwilling.

Arthur I advise you not to try to investigate Morgan le Fay. We have happened to far too many tragedies already. I don't want to lose any more knights.

Mordred Are you afraid, king Arthur?

Arthur Of what?

Mordred Of the unknown? Of the truth?

Arthur Mordred, I know your mother better than you think. I know what danger I am giving a warning of.

Mordred Can you be specific, – uncle?

Arthur (doesn't know whether he should fear or loathe Mordred) Your mother, Mordred, has a certain propensity for exaggerations and dramatizations and is easily carried away by her own fantasies, so that she sometimes makes the wrong decisions in jumping to conclusions, whereafter she realizes her mistakes and repents them but too late. She would therefore be extremely dangerous in politics, wherefore I was always careful about keeping her out. All influence she ever had she has abused. That concludes my statement. Now I leave. *(leaves)*

Sagramour There is something behind all this.

Percival Yes, you said it. Shouldn't we go to Morgan le Fay and look for ourselves what she is up to?

Sagramour Yes, let's do that. It sounds intriguing.

Percival Let's say nothing to the others about it. *(they leave together.)*

Mordred Arthur has left us to ourselves, Sir Lancelot. You are free to continue bedding the queen.

Lancelot Mordred, I don't know you and don't understand you. But henceforth I shall avoid you like the plague and never again exchange any word with you. *(sheathes his sword and leaves.)*

Mordred (to Guinevere) And you, my queen?

Guinevere Sir Mordred, I don't understand how you could become a knight.

Mordred My truthfulness. And I am Morgan le Fay's only son. The king is my uncle.

Guinevere If you didn't have a name already I would call you Antichrist. *(leaves)*

Merlin Mordred, don't provoke the knights.

Mordred Is it wrong to speak the truth?

Merlin Yes, if it hurts.

Mordred Should justice then be ignored and forgotten because it hurts?

Merlin We have no criminals or offences that need judgement.

Mordred Yes, one.

Merlin Who?

Mordred The Christian church, which consumes our country, extirpates our traditions, robs us of our identity and expropriates everything we own.

Merlin You are your mother's son, Mordred.

(Mordred sheathes his sword and leaves.)

Act IV scene 1. The castle of Morgan le Fay.

Morgan (speaking to her cloaked servant) So, you poor dragon killer, you never found your dragon. But without doubt you showed signs of exceptional bravery as long as you kept chasing and searching for him. But it is all over now. You are now no hero any longer. There is an end to your heroic deeds here. *(Sounds of horns outside.)*

We are getting visitors. Go and see who it is. No, not you, Pellinore. Go and find it who it is, Lionel. *(Another cloaked servant goes out.)* Can you even remember how many dragons you met, Pellinore?

Pellinore (whose face is not seen) Did you ask me about something, ma'am?

Morgan Do you remember how many dragons you killed?

Pellinore (wavering) I remember that I once hunted a dragon, but I don't know if I ever saw him.

Morgan Well, you will hardly see him any more now. And that's probably best for you. *(The other servant returns.)* Yes, who is it?

Servant They say they are Sir Sagramour and Sir Percival, madam.

Morgan Two errant knights?

Servant Yes.

Morgan Show them in then. We will invite them for dinner. Sir Pellinore, tell the creatures in the kitchen to make the usual preparations: fruit and wine. Our guests shall be happy and pleased.

Pellinore Yes, madam. *(leaves, shuffling)*

(Enter servant with Sagramour and Percival.)

Morgan Welcome, gentlemen! How nice with some company! You arrive just in time for supper! Sit down, make yourselves comfortable and hang off your clothes! No one carries weapons in here. We are all unprotected.

Sagramour You are as beautiful as ever, Morgan le Fay. *(kisses her hand)*

Morgan Thank you, my friend. And what news from Camelot?

Sagramour Some quarrel between your son and Sir Lancelot, madam.

Percival Only king Arthur himself could avert a duel. It was very painful.

Morgan I can understand that. What was the quarrel about?

Sagramour Your son accused Sir Lancelot of adulterating the queen.

Morgan And what do you think about it? Is it true or not?

Percival Lady Morgan, everyone discusses this at court. Everyone finds it improper that the queen is seen more with Sir Lancelot than with the king.

Morgan So my son is right?

Sagramour We don't know. Nothing is proved. Neither the king wants to look into it nor Lancelot deny it.

Percival But Mordred claimed that the truth is here with you.

Sagramour That's why we came here the long way.

Morgan You arrive just in time. *(The servant brings a sumptuous supper on a rolling table.)* Help yourselves! *(pours the wine)*

Sagramour You are not drinking yourself, lady Morgan?

Morgan If you insist I will be glad to drink with you. Get me another cup, Lionel. (*the servant leaves*) But go ahead and start. (*Sagramour and Percival help themselves with a good appetite.*) You must be hungry after having ridden the long way.

Percival Fortunately there were some lonely inns on the way.

Sagramour But tell us, lady Morgan, what do you do to keep yourself so eternally young?

Morgan Don't you know that I am the foremost expert in Britain on medicinal herbs?

Percival So there is an elixir of life?

Morgan There are many. The thing is to only use the right ones.

Sagramour Tell us.

Morgan One kind are those herbs I used to prepare your cups. You have already had so much, so I might as well tell you now. It's a very special drug which I have worked on for very long to cultivate, which has the effect, that its divine intoxication is immediately addictive, while at the same time the victim has his memory partially deleted, so that he gets completely disoriented and confused, so that the only important thing for him left in life becomes the urge to go on escaping into the positive effects of the drug. All my servants here in the castle are on this drug. I produce it myself and am very liberal about its distribution. And all my patients are very grateful to me for keeping supplied and entertained with it.

Sagramour Lady Morgan, you are lovelier than ever.

Morgan Yes, the drug stimulates the sense of beauty and increases the sexual appetite. Would you like to sleep with me tonight?

Sagramour I would love to more than well. And I want to have your sweet wine forever.

Percival Me too.

Morgan Percival, you look exactly as if you just had found the holy Grail.

Percival And so I have. In your company. In your bosom. In your delightful wine. In your divine drugs.

Morgan That's the spirit. But I will take Sagramour first. Lionel, bring Percival down to the dungeons and lock him up there in a solitary cell for the time being. We will then have to keep him on this diet till he has forgotten his name and who he was, like all the rest. You see, dear friends, I am collector of men.

Sagramour We are happy to be able to oblige.

Morgan Have some more wine, Sir Sagramour. You have a long night ahead of you. (*Lionel brings out the completely submissive Percival.*)

Sagramour Pardon me, lady Morgan, but wasn't this cloaked and hooded servant earlier Sir Lionel, one of the knights of king Arthur's round table?

Morgan Yes, and the most Christian of knights, just like you and Percival.

Sagramour Why do you dress them up in black robes?

Morgan Isn't it exotic? It's to make them seem like brothers in the order of a holy sect. Didn't you all wish to advance to a kind of higher society of Grail?

Sagramour Yes, that was our very ambitious Christian idea.

Morgan This is your reward for your trouble. It is much more gratifying to be a slave with me. You will have all drugs free of charge.

Sagramour You are irresistible, madam.

Morgan You also, Sir Sagramour, will do well in a black robe covering all and reducing you forever into an anonymity without identity in my paradise.

Sagramour I am looking forward to the long night, my lady.

(She mounts him. He starts giggling like an idiot.)

Scene 2. Lady Guinevere's bedchamber.

Lancelot and Guinevere in bed.

Guinevere It's not our fault, Lancelot. We were driven to it.

Lancelot Yes, we allowed ourselves to be driven by nature, and that is our own fault.

Guinevere No, Lancelot. The evil slander of the pagans drove us to it. Ever since I was made queen I have been hated for the sake of my Christianity, although I never wanted to do any harm. There was never an evil thought in my mind.

Lancelot I know. I saw that at once.

Guinevere But the slander! I had never met with evil or meanness before. I didn't even know what cruelty was, until I was confronted with it all in the ruthless and merciless slander. The pagans started spreading rumours about our friendship at once.

Lancelot I know.

Guinevere Another woman could never bear with that. The worse the rumours spread around, the more I needed you as a friend, sine Arthur offered me little comfort. He just asked me not to care about it.

Lancelot And I needed you, Guinevere. I may be a weak character, but there is nothing wrong with my sincerity and love. I am not ashamed to say it. I fell in love with you at first sight. I immediately forgot Elaine, or at least she paled, for you at once answered to all my ideals: the perfect beauty, purity, innocence and goodness.

Guinevere So you deceived Elaine already with me in your thoughts?

Lancelot No, I was faithful to Elaine as long as she lived. But her death cast me with the full force of destiny into your arms. I had no choice. I tried to make resistance, and the Grail revelation came like a salvation for my soul. I tried by that quest to relinquish you, but it was impossible.

Guinevere Fate meant us for each other. The king has never interfered. On the contrary, he opened the door to us. How could anyone be so evil that he wishes to deny us, repress and forbid the truth of our love?

(Noise outside. Voices: "Out of the way!")

Lancelot I fear some disturbance.

(Suddenly the door is broken up and a number of knights storming in, headed by Mordred.)

Mordred (triumphant) Ha! And you dared to doubt me! Taken in the middle of the act and in bed! Do you believe me now?

Lancelot (jumps furious out of bed reaching for his sword. Only his private parts are covered with a loin cloth.) Get out of the Queen's bedchamber, you cursed devils! *(attacks them with fury, cuts down several of them, manages to force his way out and disappears.)*

Mordred Let him go. He is lost anyway. But guard the queen! We are five witnesses! Get the king, Sir Gareth!

Sir Kay Mordred, Sir Gareth is dead.

Mordred What are you saying?

Kay Lancelot cut him down. He probably didn't see who it was.

Mordred That will make Gawaine happy. Get the king, Sir Kay! We will guard the queen with our swords!

Kay This will be the most painful moment in the history of our country. *(leaves)*

Mordred So your most Christian majesty thought she could get away with it, did she?

Guinevere Now your malicious joy knows no bounds, Sir Mordred! Now you can let out your entire evil nature like a stinking poisonous dragon of its cracked egg of nauseating rottenness!

Mordred Save your worms until the king comes, your highness. Then you can drivel about your slimy vomit as much as you please, as the vile toad you are disguised as a Christian!

Sir Cedric The king is coming!

Several (outside) The king is coming! The king is coming!

Arthur (enters) What is this? Lancelot in panicky flight from Camelot all naked on a stolen horse like a frothing madman with his sword flashing, and my queen threatened with arms in her own room in her own bed? Return your swords immediately in your covers! And get out, all of you! I want to speak alone with the queen.

Mordred King Arthur, all present here are crown witnesses to her majesty's adultery with Sir Lancelot! We found them in bed together.

Arthur (booming) Shut up! Get out! This is a matter between the queen and me! And carry out these two bodies, for God's sake! *(Mordred bows and retires with all the others, who are very alarmed and remove the bodies.)*

Arthur (sits down tenderly by Guinevere's side on the bed) Are you all right?

Guinevere Aren't you angry with me?

Arthur I can understand that you were shocked. Is it better now?

Guinevere Your calm disarms me and enables me to speak.

Arthur You understand that we must talk?

Guinevere Yes.

Arthur I am not at all angry with you, and it's important that you relax. You are in perfect safety. Not one hair will be touched on your head as long as you live. But I am very, very sorry.

Guinevere So am I.

Arthur You will manage since you are a woman. But I will not manage since I am a man and also the responsible king. I gave you Lancelot in my own bed, and you made the condition yourself that it would only be for once. I believed in you, Guinevere. I nourished constant hopes that the latest rumours about you and Lancelot were just thoughtless and mischievous slander.

Guinevere So it was.

Arthur (raises his hand) Wait. Let me finish. Let me make the whole picture clear to you before you defend yourself. You need not defend yourself at all, for I will do so against the whole world until I fall. I accuse and reproach you for nothing. I just want you to understand the situation. *(rises and starts walking around)*

When I with the help of old Merlin created this Camelot, this court, this knighthood with this flowering British state I saw it as a unique chance to make a good example to history, to create an oasis in an age of universal barbaric darkness, to maybe succeed in achieving something of lasting value that was good. And the jewel in the crown was you. *(sits down with her again)*

You represented the religion of the new age. You were the future. If I could unite you with our old Celtic traditions I would have succeeded. Then I could have maintained and preserved our Celtic realm for a Christian future. Merlin encouraged me and helped me, and you were willing to cooperate. Everything seemed to be able to work and succeed. *(rises again)*

I saw the friendship between you and Lancelot as something beautiful which fitted the picture perfectly. He represented the world outside England, he was French and like a key to the entire continent. I saw no harm or danger in that. On the contrary I found it so good that I didn't want to disturb it at any price. And my own ethics, my own high ideal of state and our ways here at our chivalrous court made it obvious for me to trust you. I had to rely on that you kept within the frames of common sense. I gave you all and opened all doors to you, which I could do since my world was one of decency, and for me it was therefore self-evident that you as leading actors this world would remain decent and keep within that frame. You were actually the one who demanded it yourself.

Therefore I discarded all the later rumours. *(sits down with her again)* They always came from Celtic sources, from those who wanted nothing to do with Christianity, from those who envied you, who feared what you represented. I put my trust in that you as Christians would not give your enemies fuel to their fire.

Do you understand the situation?

Guinevere (collects herself) Yes. What happens now?

Arthur Now everything is destroyed. As I see it there is nothing that can halt a civil war. It will spread like a fire across the whole country that Christianity has revealed itself by double standards and self-sufficiency. Nothing can restore its credibility, since you, its highest ideal and leading star, has fallen.

Sir Lancelot will fight for you and lead the Christians, and he will never surrender but might even be ultimately victorious. But the situation is further complicated by the fact that he in his fury happened to kill Sir Gareth, Gawaine's

brother, one of your noblest knights. Sir Gareth and Sir Lancelot were each other's best friends. Everyone loved Sir Gareth like they loved Lancelot, but Sir Gareth was nobler and more stable. He was our one ace of diplomats. This the temperamental Sir Gawaine will never be able to forgive Lancelot. All Scotland are followers of Gawaine and his party, and I fear that this will separate Scotland from England maybe forever.

Guinevere Talking about crises and mistakes, I must ask you something. Did you never commit any mistake yourself?

Arthur What do you mean?

Guinevere I often heard rumours that you and your half sister Morgan le Fay once had an incestuous relationship.

Arthur That is correct. It was long before your time and shortly before my ascent to the throne, when I was still young and uncertain. Morgan le Fay offered me safety and guidance, and she was then at her most beautiful and irresistible. I didn't know than that she was my own half sister.

Guinevere Was there any child?

Arthur I don't know. Why?

Guinevere Some believe that Sir Mordred is your son.

Arthur That can never be proved. Morgan had many lovers after me, but it could be possible that Mordred is my son. It can't be excluded. But Mordred never claimed such a right himself, and I never by any word encouraged such an idea in his mind. I even forbade Morgan le Fay to do so, and I know that she hasn't. Mordred himself doesn't know who his father is.

Guinevere Why did you make him a knight?

Arthur He was brave and truthful. That was enough.

Guinevere It was not for the sake of Morgan le Fay?

Arthur She is my half sister.

Guinevere Do you still love her?

Arthur Guinevere!

Guinevere Your mistake was to marry me although you loved Morgan. She has hated me from the beginning from pure jealousy, and she is the one who by her son runs the whole conspiracy against me and Christianity.

Arthur Guinevere!

Guinevere Confess! You married me just to unite Christianity with your state! It was never love! Not even with the help of Lancelot could you give me any child! That was the definite sign that everything was wrong from the beginning!

Arthur (considering) It is true, that without you for a queen Britain would have remained a Celtic and limited nation dominated by paganism...

Guinevere In your naivety you thought your power could be fused, united and strengthened by Christianity. But Christianity isn't like that! It's against all worldly power! You have deceived yourself, king Arthur!

Arthur I loved you, Guinevere, but I never wanted to harm you. That's why I allowed you to keep your virginity...

Guinevere You are too kind, king Arthur! You are too incurably, credulously, simply kind and good, you poor impossible fool! (*leaves furious by the other door after having put on a very light nightgown. Arthur is left alone and buries his head in his hands.*)

Scene 3. Out on a desert moor. Dusk and torches.

(Great congregation of men in black robes, headed by Morgan le Fay by a kind of altar, her hair longer and more loose than ever, in wider sleeves than ever.)

Morgan This is the night of the black moon, when the moon priestess has summoned you all to her sacred altar service. From now on our rituals will have another direction. Many years ago our resistance against Christianity was successfully introduced against its religious monopoly, its bullying attitudes, its robbery, greed and hypocrisy, its double standards and blind faith. We keep and stick consistently to nature and common sense as the two only true manifestations of the one and eternal God of everyone. As a sign of our resistance against Christianity I have imported a cross here, which we shall establish on our altar – like this!

(*A great cross is carried in, and Morgan places it with the help of some hooded helpers upside down on the altar.*)

Various voices The crucifix upside down! Yes, that's proper! Shouldn't we have an ass or a devil or a goat on the cross as well? Why not a devil's goat? Suggest it to Morgan le Fay, our holiest high priestess! Make laws to us, Morgan le Fay! You are the sovereign grand master of our brotherhood!

Morgan I am your holy moon priestess, according to the ancient Celtic tradition. Our laws are simple and natural. Cherish nature. Spare all life. Nourish the memories of the dead. Spare and respect the spirits that sleep. Harmony with nature and with the realm and dimension of spirits is the only thing that can give humanity peace.

Several voices The love command, Morgan! Don't forget the love command!

Morgan You all know my love command.

Several Lets' hear it! Let's hear it!

Morgan Say it, Lionel.

The servant (previously Sir Lionel) Free love – free drugs! Free love – free drugs!

Morgan (cries and spreads her arms) Hold, my friends! This is a holy night, the intensified night of the black moon, when the moon cycle starts again from nothing. We have a great task in front of us – to cleansweep Britain from all Christian foreign influence! Britain shall never again be ruled and controlled by Rome! We did not get rid of the Roman soldiers to make Christian monks and nuns come here instead to baptize us by force and enslave us under their order of restrictions. No, we shall always be free! May nature and common sense now forever rule Britain and the world, and may God save us from all sanctimonious deceits!

Several Declare the guidelines! Declare the guidelines!

Morgan (reading aloud) A member of our Celtic order is recognized by that he effaces himself and wears the black cloak at all reunions as a sign of humility to nature and God. Both women and men will wear their hair loose and as long as possible as a sign of freedom and fecundity! A member of our community marks himself by fidelity to the king, king Arthur as long as he lives, and thereafter to king Mordred, as the one of king Arthur's knights who has dared to resist and challenge the Christian corruption. The only thing we have to offer Rome and its mad church of power greed is our disdain. May we rather prefer their enemy Satan than their sanctimonious oppression, and may we rather choose the freedom of death than slavery under their dogmas.

Several Long live our queen Morgan le Fay! Free love – free drugs!

Morgan No, I shall never be queen. I am only your holy moon priestess, your human protector of all life in nature, which the moon endows with life and cause to flourish and bloom and grow by regulating the waters of the world that bestow all life.

(bows deep in humility for the altar. Vaguely the new moon starts appearing above as the thinnest line of a sickle.)

Morgan (triumphant, stretches out her arms) The new moon is born again!

All (falling down on their knees in deepest veneration) The new moon is born again!

(A great mumbling of prayers and evocations follow.)

Morgan (triumphant) The moon, like life itself shall never go out and fade without being born anew!

All (answer) The moon, like life itself shall never go out and fade without being born again!

(The mumbling of prayers and invocations grow incessantly.)

(Morgan leads the common prayer by stretching forth her arms to the moon and withdrawing them, like as if to attract the first beams of the moon, like in a magic ballet, which could be improvised suggestively until the curtain falls.)

Act V scene 1. The battle at Barham Down.

Arthur (alone) I never wanted this battle, I never wanted this war! I tried desperately to avoid it by any means, evade it and have nothing to do with it, but the lack of detachment with all parts still forced out this the most evil possible tragedy. My heart is torn asunder with my soul, and never even in the eternity of eternities will this wound be healed or my soul recover its shape and identity, myself. Everything is lost, and there is no way back to the light that still was yesterday. Here now dawns or rather darkens the evil dark new age for the darkest of all possible worlds, a world ravished by barbarity, tortured to death by agonies of atrocious tragedy and ruined by folly, bigotry, fanaticism, hatred, envy and over-dramatized frustrations. There was a last faint hope before the battle started today. The general order was, that no one would start to fight until someone from the opposite camp raised a sword of

battle. The same order was strictly given by Sir Mordred to his men. What happened then? A soldier was surprised by a snake and then raised his sword just to kill it. This was misunderstood from both sides as a belligerent initiative, and both armies attacked simultaneously. It was the last disastrous seal on Britain's tragedy. Here now the most splendid and glorious knights of Britain are slaughtering each other, and there will probably be no one left in the end, the way it looks. But who is coming here? Who are you, stranger? Speak or die! (*raises his sword*)

Morgan (enters unrecognizable in a cloak, throws off her hood when she appears to Arthur)
Sheathe your sword, Arthur. It's only me, your sister. How could this manslaughter occur?

Arthur By accident, hopelessly by accident. No one wanted it.

Morgan Can't you then bring the fighting to an end?

Arthur Don't you think I have tried?

Morgan Your enemy is led by Sir Mordred, who fights in your name for you.

Arthur And why has he then started this civil war?

Morgan To crush the power of corruption in the rotten church of Christianity.

Arthur We can't fight Christianity, Morgan. It is doomed to prevail. Don't you think that I would have fought and resisted it if there had been the faintest trace of a possibility that we might have got rid of it? Do you think I gave in to it by capitulation? Do you think I made Guinevere my queen for any other reason than thereby win Christianity for our cause, as our servant and not as our master?

Morgan Arthur, in your goodness you have compromised away your kingdom. You were too kind. That was your only fault. You could never see through Christianity and discover its thirst for power and its fanaticism.

Arthur No, I only thought well of all people, until your son Mordred started a rebellion.

Morgan Arthur, Mordred is your son.

Arthur What are you saying?

Morgan He is your only son, your only heir.

Arthur Are you sure?

Morgan Arthur, I never loved anyone but you. Yes. I am sure.

Arthur Am I then of all blind fools in this country the blindest, the most stupid and most misled? I always took it for granted, that the possibility for me to be Mordred's father was practically non-existent, as you always made almost a boast of your promiscuity.

Morgan That boast was only for protection by deceiving. No one came me as close as you.

Arthur So is it then my fate to encounter here in this battle my own son? No destiny, no divinity could be that cruel!

Morgan You can spare him if you win the battle.

Arthur The odds are too even. Does he know then that I am his father?

Morgan No. By your express command I was never to encourage such ideas in my son.

Arthur And you obeyed me, although you knew he was my son?

Morgan Obedience is a kind of love.

Arthur Poor sister, why was I not told this before?

Morgan Nothing is ever too late.

Arthur Yes, Morgan, this could really be something that now is too late.

Morgan Where is Sir Lancelot? I can't see him among your men.

Arthur Mad and deranged, escaped and alienated from all human community, after his treason against me with Guinevere he appears to have run wild into the woods and out on the moors to live like an animal, until some friendly monks at last took care of him. They say he is now a pious hermit.

Morgan And your queen Guinevere?

Arthur The painful scandal went so deep into the poor girl's mind that she stifled in feelings of guilt and also retired into a convent.

Morgan Is that then the melancholy end of the glorious Arthur saga: that all the heroes fence themselves in at monasteries as eunuchs and sterile nuns?

Arthur Unless they die in battle like here. Gawaine raged against your son's friends like a raving mad Akhilles on the hunt for his brothers' murderers but found only deep wounds and destruction to cure his wild audacity. But what do you know about Sir Tristan?

Morgan It was all my fault. Sir Tristan came to me on behalf of king Mark to obtain a reliable elixir of love, since king Mark was no young man but very uncertain of queen Isolde's attitude. I warned Sir Tristan against possible consequences if the elixir was abused. And obviously that's just what happened. Perhaps someone thought it was poison and gave it to Sir Tristan to have him disposed of, but instead Sir Tristan fell a victim to a tragic love of Isolde, which she shared. They died together.

Arthur I heard about how they betrayed king Mark, how they were exiled and put away in monasteries but not about how they died.

Morgan Tristan called on her when he knew that he would die. She received his message and immediately went down to the continent to his camp, but she arrived too late. Then she died herself but in a most peculiar way. She left her body quite voluntarily to share another existence with Tristan's spirit.

Arthur How did it happen? Did she commit suicide?

Morgan No. She went to rest but never woke up again from her sleep. Nothing could wake her up. The body had been abandoned by Isolde's soul. She slept and couldn't be awakened or fed or helped in any way, and finally the sleeping body ceased to breathe. The body died of lack of the soul, which had left the body in advance by her own will.

Arthur One tragedy among far too many. Morgan, help me to get away from here. I don't want to meet our son Mordred on a bloody battlefield. May he prevail and become king, if he wants to when all nobles of Britain are dead.

Morgan Do you abandon the kingdom?

Arthur Yes, I abscond by the back door. I don't want to be seen any more. Bring me home to Avalon.

Morgan You carry the royal insignia. Your sword Excalibur, which you pulled out of the rock, gave you with its sheath an impeccable invulnerability.

Arthur They are not needed any more. Look! (*removes the sheath with the sword*) I throw them into the river! (*does that*) Nonsense and vanity is all what all these royal legends are. You were the only one still standing as a friend when all the others fell. Let me age in your sisterly company.

Morgan And your son, our Mordred?

Arthur Let him never know that I was his father. If he learned about it, with the knowledge of all the disasters that he initiated, I am afraid he wouldn't be able to bear it. Even Mordred has a heart that could be crushed.

Morgan Let us go then, Arthur, home to Avalon and out of this tale that is reality.

Arthur Support me, sister, until I die, for you are all that remains of all the glory that was the dream of an ideal realm as a political reality the name of which was Camelot.

Morgan You accomplished it in reality, and you showed that it was possible. Everything was not just vanity, king Arthur. Vanity was just all that which you now discarded, to one day return to the creation of your ideal when our world and man is more mature.

Arthur Thank you, my sister, for being so wise. There were not many wise people in this world.

Morgan No, but it's the nature of wisdom, that if there is only a small number of the happy few, at least two, that wisdom will strangely enough still be quite sufficient as there will be no end to it.

Arthur So let that be enough, and let us leave.

(They discreetly leave the stage while the war crashes on in the background.)

Scene 2. Another part of the battlefield.

(Enter Sir Mordred, bloody, dirty and in tatters but still eager to fight.)

Mordred How could this happen? How could king Arthur take part for the Christians against his own kin and origin? Where are you, king Arthur? Have you gone into hiding? I have searched for you all day among the damned Christian fanatics to persuade you to come to your senses and join the right side, but you seem to have vanished. They are all dead. We have killed all the Christians, and the Christians have killed almost every single distinguished knight of those that were left fighting for the old and right cause. But no, there are still a few left. And there I see the greatest maniac of them all, the seducer of all England, the mad Christian warrior who ruined the entire world order! Lancelot, come out of the mists and fight like a man face to face with the last defendant of king Arthur's life's work! (*attacks Lancelot*)

Lancelot Mordred, at last I meet the chief responsible for this entire tragedy of madness!

(They fight furiously.)

Mordred Blame yourself! Who was it that betrayed the king and seduced the queen?

Lancelot Who was it that plunged the country into civil war?

Mordred It was you!

Lancelot No, it was you!

Mordred The whole world accuses you!

Lancelot No, it accuses you!

Mordred I am the one who fights for the king!

Lancelot No, I am the one who fights for the king and queen! The king never failed the queen! Only you did and betrayed her in your meaningless hatred against Christianity, the religion of love!

Mordred You damned fanatic, it's time to reach a settlement!

Lancelot All history will condemn you forever, Mordred, for your intolerance! The king was first of all an advocate for tolerance, and it's his life's work that you have ruined!

Mordred No, it was the Christians who ruined it by forcing upon us a new religion although the old one was so much better! And you, old miserable fool, turned yourself into the vainest defender of that absurd doctrine!

Lancelot Your old religion was a satanic sect which practised human sacrifice!

Mordred And you accepted the foul rumours and exaggerated fairy tales about it without bothering to find out the truth!

Lancelot Everyone knows that your mother was the leading whore of Britain!

Mordred But she was the only one to always remain faithful to king Arthur! And your mother was her own sister! You are the greatest traitor against our old faith!

Lancelot What are you saying?

Mordred Your mother was our high priestess Vivianne, sister of Arthur's and Morgan le Fay's mother Igraine! By betraying king Arthur's life's work you have betrayed and murdered all that your own mother lived for!

Lancelot Are we then cousins, Mordred?

Mordred I am your cousin's child! Haven't you got that until now?

Lancelot Was Vivianne my mother?

Mordred Who did you think was your mother? Did you think you were born without a mother, old fool?

Lancelot I never learned who my mother was. I was called to Vivianne, but I was never allowed to visit her unless I renounced Christianity. My father brought me up a Christian and never wanted to discuss my mother.

Mordred Lancelot, no matter how much related we are, you are still guilty of having brought about the downfall of king Arthur's kingdom by bedding his queen behind his back, and she was your accessory! You are guilty of high treason, and in king Arthur's name it is my duty to execute your sentence to death!

Lancelot You are just as guilty, Mordred, if not even more, for it was your ill will only that started the civil war!

Mordred So lets' finally settle the matter! May he perish who is the most guilty of us! And if it will be me, may I then be the foremost martyr of all to king Arthur's ideal!

Lancelot (grievously unhappy) Mordred! Mordred!

(They fight more furiously than ever. Mordred falls to Lancelot.)

Mordred So it was I who became the martyr. You will go on living, Lancelot, with your entire cursed Christian deception!

Lancelot I am sorry for you, Mordred. But who were you really? Why did you become the first among fanatics?

Mordred My mother was only harassed by the Christians. How could I then become anything else than their prime hater?

Lancelot If your mother only was harassed by Christians, maybe your father was a Christian.

Mordred No, he was no Christian. But he was the one who least of all made any resistance against Christianity.

Lancelot Do you know then who your father was?

Mordred I have always known it.

Lancelot Who was it? Was it Percival?

Mordred No, Lancelot. It was the one who we all held dearest.

Lancelot (quakes) Suddenly I recognize a look which I have only seen in one man's eyes before. Don't tell me, Mordred, that you were the son of even...

Mordred King Arthur. Yes, Lancelot, I was his only son.

Lancelot It must not be true!

Mordred Lancelot, no matter how true it was it was not allowed to be true. Both my father and mother knew about it, but they concealed it from me on purpose. But my mother could not have loved anyone else than king Arthur before I was born.

Lancelot Have you had it confirmed?

Mordred My mother talked in her sleep. She could sometime mumble and mutter again and again, when she slept badly at night: "Arthur, Arthur, Mordred must never know that you are his son. The child of the sorrow of our love must never know that he is, as little as we knew ourselves whom we loved in the other one... That's why our love was so sacred and our son even more sacred, but only as long as he doesn't know about it..." Her secret was so deep that she would rather have died than told me. I respected her for it, and I respected hers and king Arthur's secret as long as I lived. Now I die for having given my life for both of them and respected their secret to death. They didn't know themselves who the other one was when they loved each other according to the ancient mystery of love initiation of our religion. You Christians may condemn us for our pagan rituals, but there was never a love more sincere and true than theirs, so they kept it secret even to their only son.

Lancelot Mordred, you must not die in a moment like this!

Mordred It's my joy, Sir Lancelot, to be allowed to die in such a moment by a Christian murderer's hand. *(smiles)*

Lancelot Your tragedy is an eternal scorn and mockery of the entire future of Christianity!

Mordred And a conscious one. Live with it if you can, Sir Lancelot. (*dies*)

Lancelot No! Arthur, have I then killed your own only son? What kind of a cruelty of destiny is this without parallel? Take back your damnation of your own Christianity, God! Am I then the murderer of my own king's life's work? And for that I am sentenced to stay alive! Under the circumstances, there couldn't be any worse punishment. Arthur, where are you? Have you yourself deserted the world you gave us for an eternal joy, which we ourselves in this way have destroyed in our human folly? I feel like being Arthur's own murderer. What then could remain for me in life but the eternal remorse of the ultimate madness? Run, Lancelot, anywhere but away from reality, which you yourself have turned into the supreme defeat, the ultimate failure and the final extreme of what cannot be endured! (*throws his sword and runs away.*)

Scene 3. A monastery.

Igraine (as nun) Lady Guinevere, you shouldn't have come here.

Guinevere I have nowhere else to go.

Igraine You are not fit to be a nun. You are still too young and beautiful.

Guinevere Mother, I am Christian, although I have been married to king Arthur.

Igraine I know you are. It doesn't change the fact that you are too young and beautiful to be placed in a monastery. You still belong to life and should dedicate yourself to it.

Guinevere I came here to Glastonbury to atone for my offences and try to cure my bad conscience by dedicating myself to prayers, meditation and asceticism.

Igraine The civil war was not our fault.

Guinevere Why then do I feel guilty of it?

Igraine Because you are a woman. We all feel responsible for our men for what they do.

Guinevere I deceived my king and husband with Sir Lancelot, which triggered the civil war.

Igraine No, my daughter, it was Morgan le Fay's son who deliberately brought about the civil war without himself understanding why he did it.

Guinevere You sound as if you knew why.

Igraine I know that Mordred was the child of Morgan le Fay and king Arthur.

Guinevere So it was true!

Igraine But it was not incest.

Guinevere What was it if not incest?

Igraine Neither Morgan nor Arthur knew they were brother and sister when they loved each other. They were both innocents, and they remained faithful to each other all the way until Arthur married you.

Guinevere Did then Morgan le Fay never let her son know that he was Arthur's only son?

Igraine No, she never let him know about it, since she didn't know it herself when she gave birth to him.

Guinevere What kind of a strange game of destiny is it that has turned our lives into such a hopeless tangle of misfortunes? Arthur loved his half sister more sincerely than me, and I could only love my Arthur when I deceived him. Why must love always be so perverse?

Igraine That's a typical question of the kind which you can only put to God and be sure of never getting any answer of.

Guinevere Everything that I detached myself from by Christianity from the very beginning seems to have hit me hard with constant calamities.

Igraine Not even Christianity can claim any superiority to nature, destiny or providence. Least of all can you do so as a human being with Christianity as your means, if you try.

Guinevere Mordred fell in battle in a fight against Lancelot, but Arthur disappeared. They said he returned to Avalon.

Igraine Yes, my daughter brought her brother home to Avalon. Now they need never depart again as brother and sister.

Guinevere All Arthur's knights were killed in battle or disappeared. But everyone wonders where Lancelot went after having refused to accept the honour as the victor of the last battle.

Igraine That was the main reason why I told you that you shouldn't have come here.

Guinevere Is he here?

Igraine Yes, Guinevere, he is here.

(A door opens, and Lancelot appears and enters, aged but still beautiful but sad.)

Lancelot (reaches his arms towards Guinevere) Guinevere, still as beautiful as ever.

Guinevere I thought you were dead.

Lancelot So I was, and voluntarily, until I heard that you had come here.

Guinevere I never thought I would see you again.

Igraine I will leave you two alone. You must have a great deal to talk about.
(retires)

Lancelot Have you come here to stay?

Guinevere I don't know if I can stay when you are here. Lady Igraine was right. I shouldn't have come here.

Lancelot But you did come.

Guinevere Lancelot, the whole world accuses us for the fall of Camelot.

Lancelot The whole world will acquit us when it learns the truth. Everything was designed by Mordred, and he is dead.

Guinevere He was the son of king Arthur and Arthur's only rightful heir. As such you owed him fidelity. But you killed him.

Lancelot I didn't know myself who he was, and he fell in battle like a man. If I hadn't killed him, someone else would have done so.

Guinevere But Arthur's kingdom has fallen, and we can't restore it.

Lancelot I believe you are wrong also on that point. It was such a wonderful creation, that I think we will always try to recreate it.

Guinevere (embraces him) Still Camelot would never have fallen if we hadn't loved each other behind Arthur's back.

Lancelot (hugs her in return) Also that is debatable. Whatever happened, it has happened, and we have found each other again.

Guinevere (pulls back a little) In a monastery. Why did you come here?

Lancelot To retire and try to atone for everything I did that went wrong.

Guinevere That was also my intention in coming here. Lancelot, we can never love each other any more, for our love was criminal as it developed, and therefore we must devote ourselves to atone for it.

Lancelot No love is ever criminal, and no matter how much you atone for it you can never get rid of it.

Guinevere Do you still desire me?

Lancelot More than ever.

Guinevere Then you must suffer like Tristan, for I have grown cold through my own fault.

Lancelot You still are to command me. If you want me to leave the monastery you have chosen, I will obey you.

Guinevere No, we can continue together, but only under the laws and restrictions of Christianity. We can continue as brother and sister, like a holy brother with a holy sister, and even if we never can love together any more we can still pray together.

Lancelot Yes, sister. We can after all unite in prayer.

Guinevere (falls down on her knees in prayer with her eyes raised to altar of the chapel) I caused very much harm to Morgan le Fay and the old believers in the country, who rather worshipped God by nature than by the church.

Lancelot She took her revenge and seduced the whole country away from you and back into barbarity.

Guinevere We were both Christians and judged her partially. I think she was innocent.

Lancelot She was never punished, so never sentenced.

Guinevere The church judged her by our prejudice.

Lancelot (kneels beside her) Still I think she managed better than we.

Guinevere That was rightfully deserved in that case.

Lancelot She got Arthur in the end. We lost him.

Guinevere And we lost Camelot with him. Do you think he can ever have it redeemed?

Lancelot Hardly in this lifetime.

Guinevere What do you mean?

Lancelot According to the old believers, this life is not the only chance. You can be reborn to new opportunities. What you lose in this life you can win in another. Christianity accepts only one human life, one possibility to blessedness by the

church, one only chance, which, if you miss it, will condemn you forever to hell. That was perhaps the great mistake of the church to thus limit man's possibilities. Morgan and Arthur wanted to keep all possibilities available to man.

Guinevere Do you mean that paganism was better than the church?

Lancelot At least it offered more freedom. We should have learned from it instead of exterminating it. Now when it is gone it is too late to take care of what was good in it.

Guinevere You talk like Arthur.

Lancelot I was his cousin, Guinevere. My mother was Igraine's sister.

Guinevere Which one of them?

Lancelot Vivianne.

Guinevere The high priestess herself, the leader of all Celtic resistance against Christianity?

Lancelot Yes.

Guinevere How then did you become a Christian?

Lancelot My father demanded that I should live with him in France. When he fell I was left there. My mother never succeeded in getting me back. That was her greatest sorrow in life, and I was never allowed to see her alive again.

Guinevere I am sorry, Lancelot.

Lancelot When I came back, Arthur was already married to you, and instead of looking up my mother I was stuck in your court. I always postponed my visit to her, she lived far away in Avalon and never came to court as she loathed Christianity with all her heart. But I had a message from her once. She let me know, that if I wanted to visit her I must be prepared to drop Christianity on the way. I interpreted her message that I had to abandon Christianity altogether. I couldn't do that, since you needed me, your foremost knight, as a Christian. Thus Christianity betrayed us, Guinevere. It cost us all our holiness.

Guinevere So you finally ended up a heathen.

Lancelot Yes, Guinevere. Finally I had to give Morgan le Fay and king Arthur the right with their poor son and you wrong. But you were innocent except of your own self-deception.

Guinevere And my love for you.

Lancelot No human being can judge you for that. Love always follows its own laws standing above all other laws. Our criminal love, Guinevere, saves our eternity although it was doomed when it cost us and humanity Camelot.

Guinevere We were perhaps worse Satanists than than Morgan le Fay.

Lancelot We did more wrong and more damage. But the greatest damage was done by Christianity, which branded all opposition with Satan's name, an old pagan idol, which it used to mark everything with, that it feared, and most of all any higher and older form of wisdom than Christianity.

Guinevere Alas, I have very much to atone for.

Lancelot We both have, Guinevere, especially our folly.

Guinevere Forgive us, Arthur and Morgan.

Lancelot They will certainly forgive us in their liberal minds. The problem is that we can't forgive ourselves.

Guinevere We must make another and better effort in another life.

Lancelot Do you believe in that?

Guinevere Lancelot, I realize late indeed that my only chance is to take that chance even if it means that I like you must apostatize from Christianity and become a heathen.

Lancelot Let's make good our crimes against Avalon by trying to find what we excluded ourselves from.

Guinevere That will be a more eternal quest than that of the Grail.

Lancelot But more sacred.

Guinevere It's our chance. Let's take it.

Lancelot Yes, Guinevere. That is our prayer that saves us.

(They pray quietly in stillness together.)

The End.

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