

MERLYN AUDITION PIECE

MERLYN: Arthur! Arthur, come down out of the tree. (There is no response) Your Majesty, I know you're up there. Come down at once. (There is no response) Wart, come down at once! You're perfectly safe. There's no one here. No carriage. No welcoming committee. No sign of your bride!

(KING ARTHUR peers through the branches)

ARTHUR: Why so angry, Merlyn? I know you are because you called me Wart.

MERLYN: Yes, Wart, Your schoolboy's nickname. That's what your behaviour warrants. Perched in a tree trying to steal a look at your bride. Will you never learn patience?

(ARTHUR jumps down. He is a boyish young man in his mid-twenties)

ARTHUR: (Imperiously) I'm the King. Others must learn patience. (Then, with sudden nervous enthusiasm) How is she, Merlyn? Is she beautiful?

MERLYN: I don't recall.

ARTHUR: (Irritably) Rubbish. Are you pretending you don't see into the future?

MERLYN: When you live backwards in time as I do, and have the future to remember as well as the past, occasionally you do forget a face.

ARTHUR: (Dictatorially) Merlyn, as your King, I command you to tell me if she is, or if she is not...

MERLYN: (Giving up) She's beautiful.

ARTHUR: (Suddenly almost frightened) Quite, or very?

MERLYN: Very.

ARTHUR: (Frustrated by his own discomfort) Merlyn, why have you never taught me love and marriage?

MERLYN: Don't scramble them together in that way. They are two different things. Besides, I did give you a lesson once, but your mind was, as usual, elsewhere. You had better heed me well from now on. I shan't be here long.

ARTHUR: Why not?

MERLYN: I've told you, I'm due to be bewitched by a nymph named Nimue, who will steal my magic powers and lock me in a cave for several centuries.

ARTHUR: Nimue! Fiddlesticks! Whenever you're displeased with me, you threaten with this creature Nimue.

MERLYN: It's not a threat; it will happen.

ARTHUR: Well, Merlyn, when you know she is near, why don't you change yourself into a bat?

MERLYN: One cannot escape destiny. She would come as a female bat!

ARTHUR: (At his most youthful and charming) Merlyn, do you remember when I was a boy and you changed me into a hawk? Oh, what a feeling, sailing through the air! For old times' sake, do it again. Right this minute. One last soar through the sky.

MERLYN: So you can soar through the sky to her carriage and see her through the window? No.

ARTHUR: (Furious) Merlyn, there are times when I insist that you remember who I am. (begging) Please, please, please! (then imperiously) Make me a hawk, or I'll have your head cut off.

MERLYN: Have my head, cut off? Oh, Arthur, it's you who keep forgetting who you are. Think of the joy you've brought to Camelot. A radiant young princess, never before out of her castle, come by treaty to bring peace between peoples. A royal marriage. A new Queen. And where is the King? Swinging in the trees. Thank heaven History never knew. Thank heaven Mallory and Tennyson never found out. Thank heaven your people are not aware of your behaviour. Now go back to the castle, my boy. At once. (He exits)

GUENEVERE AUDITION PIECES

#1 SCENE

ARTHUR: A thousand pardons, Milady. Wait! Don't run. (She stops in the corner of the stage and looks at him coweringly) Please! I won't harm you.

GUENEVERE: You lie! You'll leap at me and throw me to the ground.

ARTHUR: (Amazed, protesting) I won't do any such thing. (He takes a step toward her. She takes a step backwards. He stops)

GUENEVERE: Then you'll twist my arm and tie me to a tree.

ARTHUR: But I won't.

GUENEVERE: Then you'll sling me over your shoulder and carry me off.

ARTHUR: No, no, no! I swear it! By the Sword Excalibur! I swear I won't touch you.

GUENEVERE: (Hurt) Why not? (Sudden rage) How dare you insult me in this fashion. Do my looks repel you?

ARTHUR: No. You're beautiful.

GUENEVERE: Well, then? We're alone. I'm completely defenceless, what kind of a cad are you? Apologize at once.

ARTHUR: (At once) I apologize. I'm not certain what I've done, but from the depths of my heart, I do apologize.

GUENEVERE: (With sudden wisdom) Ah! I think I know. You heard me praying.

ARTHUR: I couldn't help it, Milady. You did pray rather loudly.

GUENEVERE: And you know who I am?

ARTHUR: Yes, you're Guenevere.

GUENEVERE: Yes, of course. You're afraid because I may be your Queen. That accounts for your respectful, polite, despicable behavior!

ARTHUR: Milady, I would never harm you for any reason. And as for what to do with you, I must admit I'm at a loss. I know you are to be Queen and I should escort you back to your carriage. At the same time, you're a maiden in genuine distress. It's chivalry versus country. I can't quite determine which call to obey.

GUENEVERE: (Looking off toward where her carriage was) You had better decide quickly. They'll soon reach the carriage and discover I'm gone. Then all of Camelot will be searching for me. At least that will be exciting. Unless of course everyone in Camelot is like you and they all go home to deliberate.

ARTHUR: (Thrown off balance, enamoured, captivated, and overcome by a great sense of inadequacy) Oh, why isn't Merlyn here! He usually senses when I need him and appears. Why does he fail me now?

GUENEVERE: Who?

ARTHUR: Merlyn. My teacher. He would know immediately what to do. I'm not accomplished at thinking, so I have Merlyn do it for me. He's the wisest man alive. He lives backwards.

GUENEVERE: I beg your pardon?

ARTHUR: He lives backwards. He doesn't age. He "youthens". He can remember the future so he can tell you what you'll be doing in it. Do you understand?

(She comes toward him. He never takes his eyes off her, as the wonder of her comes nearer)

GUENEVERE: (Now at ease) Of course I don't understand. But if you mean he's some sort of fortune teller, I'd give a year in Paradise to know mine. I can never return to my own castle, and I absolutely refuse to go on to that one.

ARTHUR: (Sadly) You refuse to go on? Ever?

GUENEVERE: Ever. My only choice is . . . Don't stare. It's rude. Who are you?

ARTHUR: (After a thought) Actually, they call me Wart

GUENEVERE: Wart? What a ridiculous name. Are you sure you heard them properly?

ARTHUR: It's a nickname. It was given to me when I was a boy.

GUENEVERE: You're rather sweet, in spite of your name. And I didn't think I'd like anyone in Camelot. Imagine riding seven hours in a carriage on the verge of hysteria, then seeing that horrible castle rising in the distance, and running away; then having a man plop from a tree like an overripe apple . . . You must admit for my first day away from home it's quite a plateful. If only I were not alone. Wart, why don't you. . . Is it really Wart?

ARTHUR: Yes.

GUENEVERE: Wart, why don't you run away with me? (She is enchanted by the notion)

ARTHUR: I? Run away with you?

GUENEVERE: Of course. As my protector. Naturally, I would be brutalized by strangers. I expect that. But it would be dreadful if there were no one to rescue me. Think of it! We can travel the world. France, Scotland, Spain . . .

ARTHUR: Oh, what a dream you spin Milady, and how easily I could be caught up in it But I can't. To serve as your protector would satisfy the prayers of the most fanatic cavalier alive. But I must decline.

GUENEVERE: (Angrily) You force me to stay?

ARTHUR: Not at all.

GUENEVERE: But you know you're the only one I know in Camelot. Whom else can I turn to?

ARTHUR: Milady, if you do persist in escaping, I'll find someone trustworthy and brave to accompany you.

GUENEVERE: Then do so immediately. There's not much time.

GUENEVERE AUDITION PIECE #2

ARTHUR: (Heatedly) You cannot deny the facts! Did I or did I not pledge to you five years ago that I would be the wisest, the most heroic, the most splendid king who ever sat on any throne?

GUENEVERE: You did.

ARTHUR: And in five years, have I become the wisest, the most heroic, the most splendid king who ever sat on any throne?

GUENEVERE: You have.

ARTHUR: Rubbish! I have not, and you know it well. I'm nothing of what I pledged to you I would be. I'm a failure, and that's that.

GUENEVERE: Arthur, it's not true. You're the greatest warrior in England.

ARTHUR: But for what purpose? Might isn't always right, Jenny.

GUENEVERE: Nonsense, dear, of course it is. To be right and lose couldn't possibly be right

ARTHUR: (Thinking) Yes. Might and right, battle and plunder. That's what keeps plaguing me. Merlyn used to frown on battles, yet he always helped me win them. I'm sure it's a clue. If only I could follow it. I'm always walking down a winding dimly lit road, and in the distance I see the outline of a thought. Like the shadow of a hill. I fumble and stumble, and at last I get there; but when I do, the hill is gone. Not there at all. And I hear a voice saying: "Go back, Arthur, it's too dark for you to be out thinking."

GUENEVERE: My poor love. Let me see you do it. Walk out loud.

ARTHUR: All right. (He crosses to the end of the stage) Proposition: It's far better to be alive than dead.

GUENEVERE: Far better.

ARTHUR: (Taking a step forward) If that is so, then why do we have battles, where people can get killed?

GUENEVERE: (Chews on it a moment) I don't know. Do you?

ARTHUR: Yes. Because somebody attacks.

GUENEVERE: (Sincerely) Of course. That's very clever of you, Arthur. Why do they attack?

(ARTHUR leaves "the road" and comes to her)

ARTHUR: Jenny, I must confess something I've never told you before for fear you would not believe me.

GUENEVERE: How silly, Arthur, I would never not believe you.

ARTHUR: You know Merlyn brought me up, taught me everything I know. But do you know how?

GUENEVERE: How?

ARTHUR: By changing me into animals and birds.

GUENEVERE: I don't believe it.

ARTHUR: There, you see? But it's true. I was a fish, a bobolink, a beaver and even an ant. From each animal Merlyn wanted me to learn something different. Before he made me a hawk, for instance, he told me that while I would be flying through the sky, if I would look down at the earth, I would discover something.

GUENEVERE: What did you discover?

ARTHUR: Nothing. Merlyn was livid. Yet tonight, on my way home, while I was thinking, I suddenly realized that when you're in the sky looking down at the earth, there are no boundaries. No borders. Yet that's what somebody always attacks about. And you win by pushing them back across something that doesn't exist.

GUENEVERE: It is odd, isn't it?

ARTHUR: Proposition: We have battles for no reason at all. Then why? Why?

GUENEVERE: Because knights love them. They adore charging in and whacking away. It's splendid fun. You've said so yourself often.

ARTHUR: It is splendid fun. (Steps forward) But that hardly seems reason enough. (He steps back)

GUENEVERE: I think it is. And from a woman's point of view, it's wonderfully exciting to see your knight in armor riding bravely off to battle. Especially when you know he'll be home safe in one piece for dinner.

LANCELOT AUDITION PIECE

LANCELOT: Oh, King Arthur, what caliber of man you must be. To have conceived of the Table! To have created a new order of life. I worship you before knowing you. No harm must befall you. Beware, enemies of Arthur! Do you hear me? Beware! From this moment on, you answer to me.

(The fallen Knight begins to come to, moaning on the ground)

LANCELOT: Now that you have recovered, Sir, I bid you good day. And the next time you raise a spear to me, remember you challenge the right arm of King Arthur. (He starts to leave)

ARTHUR: (Rising and removing his visor) Wait! I am King Arthur. (DAP falls to his knees)

LANCELOT: (Stunned) The King?

ARTHUR: Almost the late King.

LANCELOT: (Grief-stricken) I . . . struck you? Oh, my God! (He crashes to his knees before ARTHUR) Your Majesty, I am Lancelot du Lac. I heard of your new Order in France and came to join. Oh, I beg Your Majesty to forgive me. Not because I deserve it, but because by forgiving me, I'll suffer more.

ARTHUR: Really, dear chap, I don't want you to suffer at all. I want to congratulate you. Please rise. And you, too, Squire. (DAP rises. LANCELOT doesn't)

LANCELOT: I can't, Your Majesty. I am too ashamed to lift my head.

ARTHUR: Then I command you. (LANCELOT rises, his head still down) I tell you, I've never felt a bash in the chest quite like it. It was most spectacular. Where did you learn to do it?

LANCELOT: My skill comes from training, Your Majesty. My strength from purity.

ARTHUR: Oh. A unique recipe, I must say.

DAP: He's a unique man, Your Majesty. At the age of fourteen he could defeat any jousting in France. His father, King Ban, made me his squire when he was only . . .

ARTHUR: King Ban? Of Benwick? What did you say your name was?

LANCELOT: (Still -pronouncing it in French) Lancelot du Lac, Your Majesty.

ARTHUR: (In French) Lancelot? (In English) Lancelot! My word, you're Lancelot. Of course! I was told you were coming.

LANCELOT: You were told, Your Majesty?

ARTHUR: By Merlyn, our court magician. He said to me one day: "Arthur, keep your eye out for Lancelot du Lac from the castle of Joyous Gard. He will come to the Court of Camelot, and he will be. . . he will be . . ." What was it he would be. . . ?

LANCELOT: Your ally, if you'll take me? Your friend, who asks not friendship? Your defender, when you need one? Whose heart is already filled with you? Whose body is your sword to brandish? Did he prophesy that, Your Majesty? For all that, I am.

ARTHUR: (Flattered and almost embarrassed by the effusion) Really, my dear fellow, it's almost more than one could hope for, more than one should ask.

LANCELOT: Then you'll accept me?

ARTHUR: Oh, yes. Without hesitation. (LANCELOT kneels) (to DAP as he turns) We will arrange for his knighthood immed--- (turns to LANCELOT, speaking to where he was standing) We will arrange for your-- (to LANCELOT kneeling) We will arrange for your knighthood immediately.

LANCELOT: (Rising) No, Your Majesty. Not immediately. Not till I have proven myself. All you know of me now is words. Invest me because of deeds, Sire. Give me an order.

ARTHUR: Now?

LANCELOT: Yes, now! This moment! Send me on a mission. Let me perform for you. Is there some wrong I can right? Some enemy I can battle? Some peril I can undertake?

ARTHUR: Well, actually, there's not much going on today. This is the First of May, and the Queen and some of the Court have gone a-Maying. I was on my way to surprise her when you surprised me.

LANCELOT: Gone a-Maying, Your Majesty?

ARTHUR: (A little embarrassed and covering it with excessive joviality) Why, yes. It's a sort of picnic. You eat grapes and chase girls around trees . . . and . . .

LANCELOT: A picnic, Your Majesty?

ARTHUR: Yes. It's a custom we have here. England, you know. It's the time for gathering flowers.

LANCELOT: (Stunned) Knights gathering flowers, Your Majesty?

ARTHUR: Well, someone has to do it!

LANCELOT: But with so much to be done?

ARTHUR: Precisely because there is so much to be done.

LANCELOT: Of course, Sire.

ARTHUR: Besides, it's civilized. Civilization should have a few gentle hobbies. And I want you to meet the Queen.

LANCELOT: I should be honored. (To DAP) Dap, take the horse to the castle, feed him and dress him for battle.

ARTHUR: (Mildly) For battle? But there's no one to fight today.

LANCELOT: One never knows, Your Majesty. Enemies seldom take holidays.

ARTHUR: I suppose not. You know, Merlyn . . . (He stops himself, for a moment lost in thought)

LANCELOT: What is it, Sire? Have I offended you? Did I say something that displeased you?

ARTHUR: No, no, Lancelot. I suddenly remembered what Merlyn said of you. How strange. How wondrous. He said you would be the greatest knight ever to sit at my table. But that was long before I had thought of a table. So, he knew it would exist! I thought he meant a dining table. But he meant this: the Round Table. And I have stumbled on my future. I have done the right thing.

LANCELOT: Did you ever doubt it, Your Majesty?

ARTHUR: Of course. Only fools never doubt. (He holds out his hand) Welcome, Lancelot. Bless you for coming, and welcome to the Table! (They clasp arms)

PELLINORE AUDITION PIECE

PELLINORE: Forgive the interruption. Anyone here seen a beast with the head of a serpent, the body of a boar and the tail of a lion, baying like forty hounds?

DINADAN: (Coming forward) On your knees, Knight. (Indicating GUENEVERE) You are in the presence of Her Majesty Guenevere, Queen of England.

PELLINORE: (To GUENEVERE) Oh, really? Howdyado, Your Majesty. Will have to forego the bending. Beastly hinges need oiling. Been sleeping out for eighteen years. Do forgive, what? Know it isn't proper, but there you are. Stiff as a door, what? (Removes helmet) Oh, it stopped raining.

GUENEVERE: (Amused) Who are you, Milord?

PELLINORE: Name of King Pellinore. May have heard of me, what? What? What? (He looks around for recognition, which he does not receive) No matter. (To GUENEVERE) You say you haven't seen a beast with the head of a serpent, the body of a boar. . .

GUENEVERE: Please, I beg you, don't describe it again. It sounds much too revolting. We have not seen it.

PELLINORE: Called the Questing Beast, what? The Curse of the Pellinore's. Only a Pellinore can catch her; that is, or his next of kin. Family tradition. Train all the Pellinore's with that idea in mind. Limited education, what?

GUENEVERE: What?

PELLINORE: What? By the way, where am I now?

GUENEVERE: Don't you bow?

PELLINORE: Haven't the foggiest. (A few members of the Court laugh. PELLINORE is now a little angry) Oh, very easy to laugh, what? But nothing jocular about it to Yours Truly . . . always mollocking about after that beastly Beast. Nowhere to sleep, never know where you are. Rheumatism in the summer, sunstroke in the winter. I mean, rheumatism in the winter, and sunstroke in the summer. All this horrid armor that takes hours to put on. Then sitting up all night polishing the beastly stuff . . . But I'm a

Pellinore, amn't I? It's my fate. Oh, but sometimes I do wish I had a nice house of my own to live in, with beds in it, and real pillows and sheets. Oh, dear, what? Where did you say I was?

GUENEVERE: I didn't, but I will.

PELLINORE: Please do.

GUENEVERE: You're in Camelot.

PELLINORE: Thank you. Camelot? (Looks at the dog) Horrid, we've been through here, haven't we? (The dog, who is lying down, looks up at him) Come now, Horrid, look around, look around. (turns dogs head from side to side) Oh, you wouldn't know. All you can see is hair. But I remember. (Turns to wrong woman to continue conversation) I say, you've changed your frock! (Woman points to Guenevere) Oh, there you are! Spent a lovely day here years ago with a nice young chap named what, what, Will, Wendall, West, what, WART! (To GUENEVERE) Ever meet him, Milady?

GUENEVERE: Constantly. He's my husband, King Arthur of England.

PELLINORE: By Jove! Is he? Is he, is he? Good for him. Well done! Yours Fondly thought he was grand. Simply grand. Do say hello to him for me. Won't take any more of your valuable time, Ma'am. Have to mollock on, what? (To HORRID) Come along, Horrid. (The dog rises) The King of England. By Jove, Isn't that well done, Horrid?

GUENEVERE: Milord, I am sure the King would love to see you again. Wouldn't you care to spend the night?

PELLINORE: (Thunderstruck) Spend the night?

GUENEVERE: Yes.

PELLINORE: In a house?

GUENEVERE: In a bed.

PELLINORE: A bed?

GUENEVERE: A feather bed.

PELLINORE: Would it have pillows?

GUENEVERE: Down pillows.

PELLINORE: Oh, I'd love that. By George, I would. That's unkindly common of you ma'am - - - I mean, uncommonly kind. (Points to the dog) But could he sleep somewhere else?

GUENEVERE: Of course. Where would you like him to sleep?

PELLINORE: Oh, anywhere around the castle will do. The moat. I don't really like him very much, you know. No earthly use to me. Oh, he's a bit of company. But he's (covers dogs ears). . . a dog. Easily do without him.

GUENEVERE: He shall sleep in the stable. Clarius, would you escort our guest to the castle?

CLARIUS: (Coming forward) With pleasure, Milady.

PELLINORE: This is too nice for words, Ma'am. Most grateful. Come along, Horrid. (HORRID rises. PELLINORE starts to go) What a glorious day! There's even a hint of summer in the air. (Looks at the dog) Or is that you? (They exit. Everyone starts to laugh uproariously)

SIR DINADAN, SAGRAMORE, LIONEL AUDITION PIECES

PIECE #1

DINADAN: (To LIONEL) By George, that Frenchman is an unpleasant fellow.

LIONEL: He seems to have the King wrapped around his finger.

LADY SYBIL: (To DINADAN) He's so poisonously good.

DINADAN: He probably walked across the Channel.

GUENEVERE: (After a moment) Sir Dinadan . . .

DINADAN: (Coming forward) Your Majesty.

GUENEVERE: When is the next tournament?

DINADAN: A week from Saturday, Your Majesty.

GUENEVERE: And who are our three best jousters?

DINADAN: Sir Lionel, Sir Sagramore and, with all "humility," C'est Moi, Your Majesty.

LIONEL: (Coming forward) He shall have my challenge in the morning.

GUENEVERE: (Pleased) Thank you, Sir Lionel.

SAGRAMORE: (Coming forward) And mine.

GUENEVERE: (Delighted) Thank you, Sir Sagramore.

DINADAN: And mine.

PIECE #2

LANCELOT: (Sincerely) I wish you success, Milords.

LIONEL: (With a smile) Thank you, Milord. Are you being chivalrous or ironic?

LANCELOT: Neither. I mean it truly.

LIONEL: Then save your wishes for your continuing good health.

DINADAN: Have you prayed, Milord?

LANCELOT: I have, Sir Dinadan. I have prayed for us all.

DINADAN: How benevolent. How benevolent. Do you know what I shall be thinking, Lancelot, when I see you on your horse? There he is, the Sermon on the Mount. (He marches off. They all follow)

MORDRED AUDITION PIECE

MORDRED: Ah, Camelot. Where the Tables are round, but the relationships are . . . triangular. You poor things. Perhaps we can arrange a little rendezvous for you. (ARTHUR'S voice is heard. MORDRED drops back and out of sight as ARTHUR enters)

ARTHUR: (Entering) Lance! I have it solved . . . (PELLINORE follows him. ARTHUR turns to him. He does not see MORDRED) Oh, I thought Lance was here, Pelly.

MORDRED: (Coming forward, innocently) He just left, Your Majesty. He was here with the Queen.

PELLINORE: (Outraged) You're not a member of this Court. How dare you enter these grounds unannounced!

MORDRED: (Genially) But I was announced, Milord. Did the Chamberlin not say that there was a young man from Scotland who came with royal greetings?

PELLINORE: And were you not informed all visitors were to return tomorrow afternoon?

MORDRED: I shall be busy tomorrow afternoon.

PELLINORE: By Jove, what impertinence! He shall be taught a lesson. (He reaches for his sword and takes a step in MORDRED'S direction)

MORDRED: (Shrinking away in fear) Keep away! Don't touch me! I'm unarmed!

ARTHUR: Call the guard, Pelly, and have this young ass thrown out.

MORDRED: (Regaining his composure) That's not a very kind way to treat the son of Queen Morgause. (ARTHUR is stunned to the roots. He slowly turns and, almost fearfully, looks at MORDRED)

MORDRED: (Delighted at the reaction) Yes, Your Majesty. I am Mordred.

ARTHUR: (Shaken) Wait, Pelly. Mordred?

MORDRED: (Bowing low) Your Majesty.

ARTHUR: Leave us, Pellinore.

PELLINORE: I shall be waiting nearby, if you need me, Arthur. (He exits)

MORDRED: (Cheerfully) I bring you greetings, Your Majesty, from Queen Morgause and King Lot.

ARTHUR: I trust your mother is well, Mordred.

MORDRED: The Queen is splendid, thank you. As witchy as ever. Still beautiful, which of course she would be, with all her magic and sorcery. I've been wandering about the castle. I hope you don't mind. It's quite grand, really. I love the way you've mixed English with French. Very tasteful.

ARTHUR: And King Lot?

MORDRED: The King? Never happier. He was so delighted I left. He's always hated me, you know. Do you know what he did to me once? Mother had a youth potion that took off ten years. When I was nine, he gave it to me to make me minus one. I kept asking Mother why he disliked me so, and . . .

ARTHUR: (Acidly) What brings you to Camelot, Mordred?

MORDRED: A desire of blood, Your Majesty. I have quite a family here, you know. My dear aunt, Morgan Le Fey, whom I've never seen.

ARTHUR: (Pressing him) Nor has anyone else, for castle where she and her court live is quite invisible. It hardly seems reason for making this long journey.

MORDRED: (Looking him square in the eye) And there's you, Your Majesty. As I was saying, I kept asking Mother why King Lot despised me so, and one day, not long ago, she told me the marvelous news: he's not my father. How once, when she was visiting England, she met an attractive lad named Arthur, invited him to her room, and bewitched him for the night. Is that the way the story goes, Your Majesty?

ARTHUR: Yes. That's the way the story goes, Mordred.

MORDRED: You can imagine her surprise when later he became the King of all England.

ARTHUR: Ah, hah! Oh, yes, I can imagine her surprise. (Sternly) Very well, Mordred. Now you are here. What are your plans?

(ARTHUR turns away and as he does, MORDRED makes his way toward the throne)

MORDRED: That's for you to decide, Your Majesty.

(MORDRED sits on the throne)

ARTHUR: Very well. Then I shall tell you what I suggest, what I offer, what I wish. (ARTHUR turns to see MORDRED sitting in the throne. MORDRED quickly leaves the throne and bows before ARTHUR) You will stay here and become a Knight of the Round Table. You have youth, brains and a proper heritage. Much could be done, if you apply yourself.

MORDRED: How generous of you, Your Majesty! I can think of nothing that would please me more than to win your confidence.

ARTHUR: I'm certain of that. And I shall be watching carefully, very carefully, to see if you deserve it. (In full command) Tonight you will have dinner with the Queen and me, and we will try to get to know each other better. Tomorrow your training will begin. But I must warn you, Mordred, no favoritism will be shown. The right to knighthood must be earned, with virtue and proper deeds.

MORDRED: I shall try, Your Majesty.

ARTHUR: No doubt, you will. I will have you know, Mordred, that I am a civilized man, with occasional lapses. The adage, "Blood is thicker than water," was invented by undeserving relatives.

TOM OF WARICK AUDITION PIECE

TOM: (Frightened) Forgive me, Your Majesty. I was searching for the Sergeant of Arms and got lost. I didn't wish to disturb you.

ARTHUR: Who are you, boy? Where did you come from? You ought to be in bed. Are you a page?

TOM: I stowed away on one of the boats, Your Majesty. I came to fight for the Round Table. I'm very good with the bow.

ARTHUR: And do you think you will kill people with this bow of yours?

TOM: Oh yes, Milord. A great many, I hope.

ARTHUR: Suppose they kill you first?

TOM: Then I shall be dead, Milord. But I don't intend to be dead. I intend to be a Knight!

ARTHUR: A Knight . . . ?

TOM: Yes, Milord. Of the Round Table.

ARTHUR: When did you decide upon this nonexistent career? Was your village protected by Knights when you were a small boy? Was your mother saved by a Knight? Did your father serve a Knight?

TOM: Oh, no, Milord. I had never seen a Knight until I stowed away. I only know of them. The stories people tell.

ARTHUR: From the stories people tell you wish to be a Knight? (A strange light comes into his eyes) What do you think you know of the Knights and the Round Table?

TOM: I know everything, Milord. Might for right! Right for right! Justice for all! A Round Table where all Knights would sit. Everything!

(ARTHUR -walks away. Then suddenly he turns to the boy with a trembling inner excitement)

ARTHUR: Come here, my boy. Tell me your name.

TOM: It is Tom, Milord.

ARTHUR: And where is your home?

TOM: In Warwick, Milord.

ARTHUR: Then listen to me, Tom of Warwick. You will not fight in the battle, do you hear?

TOM: (Disappointed) Yes, Milord.

ARTHUR: You will run behind the lines and hide in a tent till it is over. Then you will return to your home in England. Alive. To grow up and grow old. Do you understand?

TOM: Yes, Milord.

ARTHUR: And for as long as you live you will remember what I, the King, tell you; and you will do as I command.

TOM: (No longer disappointed) Yes, Milord.

NOTE - Those auditioning for the parts of THE PAGE, SQUIRE DAP, CLARIUS and HERALD will read the audition pieces for DINIDAN. Those auditioning for LADY SYBIL and LADY ANNE will read the audition pieces for GUENEVERE.