

# **GUENEVERE**

**By**  
**Susan Cinoman**

# GUENEVERE

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## GUENEVERE

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## GUENEVERE

GUENEVERE was the recipient of the Guilford Prize in Drama (GPD), produced by Peter Hawes and Carly Callahan and first presented at the Guilford Arts Festival, directed by Hannah Simms. It was then funded by the GPD in New York City, directed by Karen Carpenter.

It was subsequently presented by The Pawling Theatre Exchange, directed by Shellen Lubin. It was then produced by The Connecticut Theatre Exchange at the Thomas S. Perakos Arts and Community Center in Washington, Connecticut, directed by Tracy Liz Miller, dramaturgy by Jessica Tocci. The original costumes were designed by Karen Steinbacher. The set and production design were done by Kathleen Wiener, Colin Sheehan.

### ***The actors in Guilford were:***

Guenevere...Yvonne Perry

Arthur...David Girard

Morgan/Igraine...Barbara Hentschel

Lancelot...Sean Hannon

Mordred/First Guard...Robert Wiener/Patrick Ramsay Jr.

### ***The actors in New York City were:***

Guenevere...Kate Arrington

Arthur...Tom Pelphrey

Morgan/Igraine...Katya Campbell

Lancelot...W. Tres Davis

Mordred/First Guard...David Levi

### ***The actors in Washington were:***

Arthur...Pun Bandhu

Guenevere...Kimiye Corwin

Morgan/Igraine...Brenny Campbell

Lancelot...Kent Burnham

Mordred/First Guard...Michael Kevin Baldwin

# GUENEVERE

## **CHARACTERS**

GUENEVERE: Ages from 15 to 40's

ARTHUR: Ages from 18 to 40's

MORGAN: Ages from 20's to 40's

LANCELOT: Ages from 25 to 40's, a French knight (can be played by the actor who plays Mordred and/or First Guard)

IGRAINE: 70, gravelly-voiced (can be played by the actress who plays Morgan)

FIRST GUARD: Ages from 25 to 40's

MORDRED: 16, speaks with an Irish brogue, Morgan's son

**TIME:** 13th century

**PLACES:** Camelot, Cornwall, France, Ireland

## **A NOTE ABOUT SETTING:**

The settings can range from the extremely simple (Chairs, Tables, Lights Off and On) to the very elaborate (Moving Sets, Complex Lighting, Projections, Immersion). In other words, the fairy tale elements of the play suggest a stylized world, which becomes the choice of the company.

# GUENEVERE

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## SCENE ONE

*Lights up on an open field. In the background are shadows of flags, mountains and a castle. Wine and a picnic basket are in a field nearby. Two sword fighters thrust and parry with greater and greater intensity. One fighter loses his sword. The other steps on his throat and kicks the sword aside. The standing fighter takes off their helmet and chain mail head covering. Out of it comes a shock of long black hair. It's Guenevere. She's about 15. Arthur, her opponent, is maybe three years older, but smaller than Guenevere.*

**GUENEVERE.** Give up?

**ARTHUR.** Guen, owwww...

**GUENEVERE.** Give up?? I'll cut your throat and walk away.

**ARTHUR.** Yes, yes. I give up. Christ.

**GUENEVERE.** Did you think I'd cut your throat?

**ARTHUR.** At that moment...

**GUENEVERE.** Why would I do that? You think I'm that crazy?

**ARTHUR.** Some days.

**GUENEVERE.** *(Wiping the blade of her sword.)* I'm not that crazy. I'd never hurt you. You're my best friend.

**ARTHUR.** Well, that's good.

**GUENEVERE.** Aren't you going to tell me I'm your best friend?

**ARTHUR.** Yes, you are. All right? *(Laughing.)* You're my best friend.

**GUENEVERE.** Good. Now gimme the wine.

**ARTHUR.** "Gimme." So crass.

**GUENEVERE.** Just give it to me. *(She takes the wine bottle and swigs down a gulp.)* I have to be precious around you? I can't drink wine? I can't cut your throat? Why? Because I'm a girl?

**ARTHUR.** Because it's murder. And you can be polite when you ask for wine. It's not going to kill you.

## GUENEVERE

**GUENEVERE.** But maybe you will.

**ARTHUR.** I won't.

**GUENEVERE.** You won't want to. But we'll be fighting. And you'll get me to the ground. *(Pause.)* It could happen! *(Rooting through the basket.)* Oh God, Arthur. You hardly brought anything to eat.

**ARTHUR.** *(Beat.)* Wait, really? Huh, I brought a half a chicken...

**GUENEVERE.** Now what are we gonna do?

**ARTHUR.** *(Beat.)* I did have a thought.

**GUENEVERE.** What?

**ARTHUR.** Well, there's that festival.

**GUENEVERE.** Yeah. We could do that. We're probably not that far. We could go there and see what they have to eat.

**ARTHUR.** And see what kind of girls are there.

**GUENEVERE.** Yes. And cake!

**ARTHUR.** And... there's that rock.

**GUENEVERE.** What rock?

**ARTHUR.** That rock. The one that has the sword sticking through it. You heard about it.

**GUENEVERE.** Oh, I don't know. I didn't pay attention.

**ARTHUR.** Yes. You did. Kay told us about it. He's been talking about it off and on for a couple of weeks.

**GUENEVERE.** I don't listen to Kay. Dirty pig. He tried to climb into bed with me. Again. I took his hand and bit it so hard, I'm surprised he can wave to the neighbors. If he touches me again, I'm gonna cut off everything. I hate him. Kay and Gareth, they said we were going to play tag, and then they chased me like mad, then they tied me to a tree. So they could... it's not fair. We were all friends. All of us... until this... *(Her breasts.)* these... uch. I hate them. And I hate Kay even more.

**ARTHUR.** I'm sorry, Guen. It's because we're poor. So they can do what they want to us. It's only going to get worse.

**GUENEVERE.** That's terrible, Arthur. You're the older one. What should we do?

**ARTHUR.** We need money. If we had money, a lot of money, they couldn't touch us. They'd never touch you again. And if they tried...

**GUENEVERE.** I'd be so rich... I'd kill them!



## GUENEVERE

**ARTHUR.** No, you'd hire someone to kill them.

**GUENEVERE.** People do that? As a job?

**ARTHUR.** People do anything if you pay them. And that sword stuck in the rock, it's worth a lot of money.

**GUENEVERE.** How much?

**ARTHUR.** I don't know. A lot. Enough to get out of Cornwall. We could live in Camelot.

**GUENEVERE.** I don't want to leave Cornwall though. The ocean...

**ARTHUR.** You could be so rich, you could have a house on the ocean. And a castle in Camelot.

**GUENEVERE.** Really? Well, look then, let's go steal this sword. You're trying to get me to go steal it, right? Because I really do not have a problem with that.

**ARTHUR.** We have to walk a little ways. And then you'll see it. And it says something on it, the sword.

**GUENEVERE.** What does it say on it?

*(As they talk, the light changes. The stone appears. It's almost as big as they are. The sword, grand and shining silver, is extended through the stone, its handle reaching upwards.)*

**ARTHUR.** It says, "Whoso Pulleth This Sword From This Stone Shall Herewith Rule All England."

**GUENEVERE.** Whoever pulls the sword out is going to rule England?

**ARTHUR.** As king.

**GUENEVERE.** That's crazy!

**ARTHUR.** I don't know...

**GUENEVERE.** Oh God, I know. That's crazy. It's insane. How can that happen? Don't they know that the sword can be stolen at any time.

**ARTHUR.** It can't be stolen because no man can get it out. And everyone tries.

**GUENEVERE.** Oh Arthur! It's the most magnificent sword I've ever seen. I really, really want it.

**ARTHUR.** Yes. I thought you'd like it.

**GUENEVERE.** I do. It's gorgeous. I want it a lot.

**ARTHUR.** All right, so get it.

**GUENEVERE.** Wait, did you want to give it a try?

## GUENEVERE

**ARTHUR.** Uh... sure. (*Arthur moves to the stone and grips the sword. It won't budge. He pulls again. The sword won't move.*) Well. That's not gonna happen. Go ahead. Try.

(*Guenevere approaches the sword.*)

**GUENEVERE.** I'm going to put all my strength into it. No one's around? You checked.

**ARTHUR.** No one. We're alone. But listen...

**GUENEVERE.** What?

**ARTHUR.** If by some chance you were able to pull it out... and it did turn out that the craziest thing happened and people came around and they really did make you king...

**GUENEVERE.** King?

**ARTHUR.** Whatever. (*Pause.*) The thing is, if that happened, let me be the king.

**GUENEVERE.** Uh... wait, what?

**ARTHUR.** Guen, how can you be the king?

**GUENEVERE.** Wouldn't I be the queen then? The ruler? I'd be the ruler... of all England.

**ARTHUR.** Well, you'd want to be, or you think you would. But...

**GUENEVERE.** But... you think I couldn't do it? You think I don't have the guts for it. I would be an amazing king! I'd be the best king of all England! Because I'd be so... so just! And so fair! And brave! And I'd help the weak! And I'd vanquish the strong, the ones who hurt the weak with their strength, I mean. If I could pull out the sword, it would be my destiny. And I've always wanted to have a destiny. I really, really want a destiny.

(*She rushes to the sword and grasps it.*)

**ARTHUR.** But Guen, you'd have to let me have the sword. If they saw you with it, if you tried to claim it... they'd say you were a witch. They'd never believe it. How could you pull the sword out from the stone? You're an orphan farm girl. Even if they saw it with their own eyes, they wouldn't believe it.

**GUENEVERE.** But they'd believe you?

**ARTHUR.** Yes, yes of course they would.

**GUENEVERE.** You're just as much of an orphan as me.

## GUENEVERE

**ARTHUR.** Think about it. I'm the perfect prototype. No parents, seemingly ordinary but really full of personality! A wizard, Merlin, he grabbed me from my savage father, Uther Pendragon, and hid me away until it was time for me to rule! A king to be, masquerading as a peasant boy!

**GUENEVERE.** Oh. It does sound like a good story that way.

**ARTHUR.** Of course. How could it be any other way?

**GUENEVERE.** But if I'm the one who could pull it out. If it were really meant to be my sword, why couldn't it be... all about... me?

**ARTHUR.** Guen. Really. Does it sound like a story about you?

**GUENEVERE.** If I do it, will you let me live in the castle... and have a horse and a sword of my own? Please, Arthur?

**ARTHUR.** Guen, if you do it, you'll be right there with me! And you can be the queen.

**GUENEVERE.** Really, Arthur?

**ARTHUR.** Yes!! Of course! What did you think? You'll be the queen. Which is the very next best thing!

**GUENEVERE.** This is a fun game, Arthur. I love it. Let's play it again. Maybe tomorrow.

**ARTHUR.** But try to get the sword now.

**GUENEVERE.** Ha!! All right!! It's a mad thing to try!! But here it is!!!  
*(She exerts virtually no effort and the gleaming sword slides easily out of the stone. Bells magically ring out. There's the sound of trees rustling, feet marching closer on grass.)* What is that?

**ARTHUR.** It's the people! It's the people from the festival. People coming over the hills. They heard the tolling of the bells! They know the sword's been freed from the stone. Guenevere! *(Guenevere lifts the sword above her head, majestically.)* Guen! Give it to me! Hurry!

**GUENEVERE.** Arthur... I...

**ARTHUR.** Guen!! *(Guenevere holds back tears and hands the sword to Arthur. Trumpets blare. Arthur grips the sword firmly in hand.)* I have freed the sword from the stone! People of England! I am here! I am your King Arthur! *(Arthur looks pleadingly at Guenevere.)* Please, Guen...  
*(Guenevere falls to her knees and bows her head to him.)*

**GUENEVERE.** Long live King Arthur of Camelot and all England.

## GUENEVERE

*(A cheer swells from the crowd. Lights fade.)*

### SCENE TWO

*The castle in Camelot. Several months later. Morgan, 19, petite and adorable, alternates between crocheting and sipping a little brandy. Stitch, nip. Stitch, nip. Guenevere enters. She's caked with mud, in boy's clothes.*

**GUENEVERE.** Oh. I was... looking for Arthur.

**MORGAN.** You mean King Arthur?

**GUENEVERE.** Well, uh huh.

**MORGAN.** You didn't see any guards down the hallway?

**GUENEVERE.** I saw them. They let me by.

**MORGAN.** They must've thought you a dirty servant.

**GUENEVERE.** Sorry. I'm a little muddy.

**MORGAN.** Are you a dirty servant?

**GUENEVERE.** I'm Arthur's friend, Guenevere, from Cornwall.

**MORGAN.** Oh! Oh you're Guenevere. Well, greetings. I'm Morgan le Fay. Arthur's sister.

**GUENEVERE.** *(Shaken.)* His...

**MORGAN.** Correction! Half-sister. *(Giggles.)* A sister from another father, as they say.

**GUENEVERE.** Who said that?

**MORGAN.** Just making introductions, Guenevere. Small talk. You'll become accustomed to it, I'm sure. Arthur told me about his little friend from home.

**GUENEVERE.** When... when did you meet Arthur?

**MORGAN.** A week ago. It's been a whirlwind.

**GUENEVERE.** A week. People kept telling me Arthur's in school, or church. Or getting bathed. Or something. Has he been with you?

**MORGAN.** I mean, not every minute...

**GUENEVERE.** Look, can you tell Arthur I need to see him?

**MORGAN.** I can understand how agitated you must be. Not being able to do what you want can be very frustrating.

**GUENEVERE.** Will you?

## GUENEVERE

**MORGAN.** I'm glad that I'm finally getting to know my half-brother a little. And isn't he a handsome young man? When we met, I started to remember a little... my mother used to whisper something to me about a baby, that she lost. Or something like that. You know that literal way you think when you're a child? I thought, *how could Mother lose a baby?* Wouldn't it be crying and screaming so loudly that she'd find it, even if she forgot where she put it? *(Giggles.)*

**GUENEVERE.** Uh huh.

**MORGAN.** Well, guess he's been found now, that baby. And all grown up and everything.

**GUENEVERE.** Uh...

**MORGAN.** Guenevere, can I ask you something?

**GUENEVERE.** Uh...

**MORGAN.** When Arthur was younger, when you were kids together, running around Sir Ector's manor...

**GUENEVERE.** Yes... we did that.

**MORGAN.** I mean... sounds like you were Romulus and Remus the way you ran around, hunting and jumping on horses without saddles, jousting. I'm wondering so—you were jousting?

**GUENEVERE.** Yes, jousting. I taught Arthur to joust. Look, Morgan...

**MORGAN.** Lady Morgan, actually. Princess Morgan of the lands of Gorlois. Not that I'm offended. But one needs to learn these things. Court is not a very forgiving place. But the food is wonderful. It must be so nice for you to actually eat food, a person of your background...

**GUENEVERE.** Court could be a very useful place, if people would stop having parties and would start meeting about some of the problems in the country, from what I can see.

**MORGAN.** The what?

**GUENEVERE.** I was only asking about where Arthur is. I guess you don't know. Sorry to have bothered you. I hope... I really hope we can talk again sometime.

*(She turns away.)*

**MORGAN.** *(Sharply.)* No need to turn your back on me!

**GUENEVERE.** Sorry.

## GUENEVERE

**MORGAN.** You're learning, that's all. Arthur is being instructed as to the duties of the throne. He'll be crowned in a week and there's so much to do.

**GUENEVERE.** And he has the sword?

**MORGAN.** The sword. Arthur mentioned you were a bit of a tomboy. I'm learning how truly kind he is. But, yes, he has the sword. Oddly, the big stone is gone.

**GUENEVERE.** I know.

**MORGAN.** Went looking for it, did you?

**GUENEVERE.** Yes. I went looking for it. It disappeared so fast. But I thought maybe I could... find it again.

**MORGAN.** No need to be so upset by it. I mean, it's a rock.

**GUENEVERE.** Didn't anyone think to ask Arthur to pull out the sword once more? In front of them? No one ever thought that?

**MORGAN.** Guenevere, you've been away from your little peasant life out there by the sea. Is it safe to say you're not adjusting to things here at Camelot? As Arthur's sister, can I help you in some way?

**GUENEVERE.** Oh! You can stop saying you're Arthur's sister, first off. I'm the one who grew up with him. I'm more like a sister to him than anyone could be. Arthur's not your brother. Half-brother or whatever. I'm the one who pulled the sword from the stone! Which means I'm your half-sister. We have the same mother—Igraine. Queen Igraine, the exiled. Can you tell me anything about her? Is she alive?

**MORGAN.** Now you look here, little girl—or whatever you are. Arthur pulled the sword from the stone. Everybody saw it. There's a painting of it hanging in the castle room.

**GUENEVERE.** Arthur's lying. He does that a lot. He makes things up, that's always been a fun thing about him...

**MORGAN.** There is something very wrong with you, Miss. I am Arthur's real sister and he is the rightful king.

**GUENEVERE.** No! I can prove it. If I could just get the stone back. Or if there was something else. Where is our mother?

**MORGAN.** Do you presume to ask me the whereabouts of a queen Igraine—the queen to the great King Pendragon!

**GUENEVERE.** My father!

## GUENEVERE

**MORGAN.** Hogwash and horse manure! King Uther Pendragon was a butcher of a king and a tyrant. And now we are blessed by this new king, sweet and funny and winning. The kingdom is going to love him. And he's not going to kill them all, which will really be great.

**GUENEVERE.** No, Morgan—

**MORGAN.** (*Abruptly cutting her off.*) Though I'm sure I could persuade him of a different plan for you than the one he has. And since he's now king, who would question it? Besides... you. So a good idea would be to just change your mindset back to the original picture. Boy pulls sword from stone. Boy becomes king and finds long lost half-sister, who stands by him every step of the way. Masculine Girl does not go looking for Lost Queen. Because even if she found her, said Queen can do nothing for her or anyone else. New Pretty Half-Sister gets to live in castle. Guards back her up completely. (*Morgan moves to the bell pull which calls the guards.*)

**GUENEVERE.** Arthur would never let you hurt me.

**MORGAN.** All sorts of things happen you would never expect.

**GUENEVERE.** I know Arthur like I know myself.

**MORGAN.** Yet, you don't even know where he is and haven't seen him for over a week since you arrived. Hmm. You want to take a chance? You're a stranger. In a strange land.

**GUENEVERE.** (*Noticing the bell for the Guards.*) You're right. You're absolutely right in everything you say. Arthur just told me we were like a brother and sister. It was a game. The person who pulled the sword from the stone would be the royal heir of King Pendragon. And if by some crazy fluke, that person was me...

**MORGAN.** Which you agree... it was not.

**GUENEVERE.** But if it did happen that way—if a girl—a princess—had pulled out the sword...

**MORGAN.** That would be sorcery!

**GUENEVERE.** But if a boy pulls a sword that's embedded in a stone that no one else can budge, and then rules all of England because of it, that's not sorcery?

**MORGAN.** Of course not! That's a gift from God! Who doesn't see that? Not even people who live out in the countryside are that ignorant.

**GUENEVERE.** Of course. Just thinking it all through.

## GUENEVERE

**MORGAN.** Sometimes we need to say these things out loud to work them out. I had a very good nanny who taught me that.

**GUENEVERE.** Then, may I be excused, My Lady?

**MORGAN.** My Lady Morgan, please.

**GUENEVERE.** Thank you so much, Lady Morgan.

**MORGAN.** I'm glad we had this talk, Guenevere. Arthur seems so fond of you. And feels close to you, despite your differences of birth. And that is why...

**GUENEVERE.** You're going to kill me.

**MORGAN.** No! Not at all. Arthur's plan... Arthur does have a plan for you. You'll be sent away to be schooled. In France! So you can be educated. Finishing school. So you can be finished.

**GUENEVERE.** He wants me to go away?

**MORGAN.** Only for a while. But France is wonderful! You should be happy and grateful.

**GUENEVERE.** I should be.

**MORGAN.** Arthur told me you were good at so many things when it comes to you know... thoughts. That's why he wants you to write to him every week and send him some helpful hints about some of the things he's doing around here. Moving forward. You'll be telling him all the things you learn about running court and the countries, all that. *(Beat.)* It will almost be like you'll be his trusted advisor! Won't that be great?

**GUENEVERE.** Arthur doesn't know how to read. He doesn't know the names or languages of different countries. Or about religion. Or military history. But I do.

**MORGAN.** It seems you have some value for Arthur then. Arthur really loves all your little ideas about Camelot, the government... all those important topics! Aren't you the lucky ducky.

**GUENEVERE.** I would never let Arthur down, or the kingdom. No matter what.

**MORGAN.** Wonderful! I can tell my half-brother *(Giggle.)* that the "little stable-girl-who-could" is on board with the "plan"! That will make him happy. It's always a good idea to make the king happy.

**GUENEVERE.** Then that's definitely what we should do. *(Lights fade.)*



## GUENEVERE

### SCENE THREE

*Two years later. France. Lancelot's bedroom. The bed sheets are tousled. Outside, snow is falling. Guenevere, in a robe, enters from an inner room. She's reading some papers. She sits on the bed and lays the papers out so Lancelot can read them, too.*

**GUENEVERE.** So, then once the river has the bridge over it, both parts of the city will start trading and stop killing each other with these secret attacks and robberies.

**LANCELOT.** What about these marketplaces by the piers? Won't this bridge take them out?

**GUENEVERE.** Hmm. We can lease boats to them, through the court. At a very low price, they can go back and forth on the river with their wares.

**LANCELOT.** That's great! *(Beat.)* Michel! I can get him for the drafting.

**GUENEVERE.** We have to use an English engineer, Lance. Not a French one. This work on infrastructure creates jobs in Camelot at the same time it improves cities.

**LANCELOT.** Of course.

**GUENEVERE.** Look, maybe your friend can consult. I'll tell Arthur. This job is done. *(She writes down instructions to send to Arthur.)*

**LANCELOT.** You're good.

**GUENEVERE.** You're good, too.

**LANCELOT.** We're good together.

**GUENEVERE.** We are!

*(They kiss.)*

**LANCELOT.** That is, until we're bad. And then we're very bad.

**GUENEVERE.** The worst.

*(They kiss again.)*

**LANCELOT.** Practically diabolical.

**GUENEVERE.** Just on the verge of being criminals.

*(They kiss more.)*

**LANCELOT.** Let's go to hell. *(Guenevere gets up and starts getting dressed. Putting on tights, men's vestments.)*

**GUENEVERE.** God, I want to. But I can't right now.

## GUENEVERE

**LANCELOT.** You can't?

**GUENEVERE.** I mean, I'm leaving. I should've told you.

**LANCELOT.** Right now? In the middle of the night?

**GUENEVERE.** I'm sorry.

**LANCELOT.** You're leaving now and you're putting on the men's clothes. You know what it does to me when you put on the men's clothes. Aw, now you're putting on the men's boots.

**GUENEVERE.** Lance...

**LANCELOT.** Come back to bed. Come on, lie down here. You're hungry. Right? Let me go into the kitchen and put together something for you. A midnight snack? Cheese and Bordeaux.

**GUENEVERE.** I can't. I'm sorry. Lance. I... I found my mother.

**LANCELOT.** Your mother? You found her? Where? In the armoire? You were only out of the bed for ten minutes.

**GUENEVERE.** I found her. I had her found. She's in Ireland. In exile. In a little castle.

**LANCELOT.** But... how long have you been looking? When were you going to tell me?

**GUENEVERE.** I don't know. At some point. We have fun. I didn't want to ruin it.

**LANCELOT.** Guen, we have fun? Is that what you call this?

**GUENEVERE.** What do you call it?

**LANCELOT.** Love. I love you.

**GUENEVERE.** Lance. I...

**LANCELOT.** Don't you love me back?

**GUENEVERE.** I do...

**LANCELOT.** I want to marry you.

**GUENEVERE.** You do?

**LANCELOT.** Well, of course. Isn't that what we've been leading to?

**GUENEVERE.** I mean... I've been studying. Working for Arthur. Lance... I haven't really thought about it. I'm the Foreign Ambassador!

**LANCELOT.** Guenevere! You thought about it. We said it! Like a sword going through the two of us, when we first met, love at first impalement. Our spell.

**GUENEVERE.** I know.

## GUENEVERE

**LANCELOT.** Don't break the spell.

**GUENEVERE.** I'm not going to break the spell. I'm just going to meet my mother. Who knows... who knows how long my mother will live. I was told she's very ill.

**LANCELOT.** Your mother. The woman who took you to some random farm out in the middle of Cornwall and left you there.

**GUENEVERE.** Merlin told her to.

**LANCELOT.** Would you abandon your child if a wizard told you to?

**GUENEVERE.** Yes! If I thought the child was in danger. They were clearly protecting me from Uther Pendragon.

**LANCELOT.** Your father, the king.

**GUENEVERE.** Yes, Lance. My father, the king. My mother, his queen. What don't you understand?

**LANCELOT.** And no one wanted to protect Morgan from your father.

**GUENEVERE.** I can't imagine what happened there. But Morgan had a different father. She was older, I don't know why I was the one hidden. Maybe if someone had hidden her, she'd be different now.

**LANCELOT.** So when your mother finally sees you, she'll be thrilled. Because nowhere in your mind can you believe she wouldn't want to see you again.

**GUENEVERE.** Of course not.

**LANCELOT.** You gave the sword away to a peasant. Who is now the King of Camelot!

**GUENEVERE.** Teenagers make mistakes. She'll understand.

**LANCELOT.** Guen, I'm trying to protect you.

**GUENEVERE.** You're trying to keep me.

**LANCELOT.** Because I love you. Let's face it, it's not as if your mother didn't know where you were when you were little. She could've visited you, assured you that someday you'd be plucked from that manor house, instead of just thrown out to the barn like a scullery maid. Used and abused—I mean, come on, Guen.

**GUENEVERE.** We don't all get to have a mother like your mother. We don't all get to be pampered and coddled with the best of everything.

**LANCELOT.** Is that what you think of me?

**GUENEVERE.** Does this have to be about you?

## GUENEVERE

**LANCELOT.** I loved you at first sight.

**GUENEVERE.** Oh Lance. Why do people think obsessively about the first time they saw each other and yet that was the moment that they knew each other the least? In fact, they will never know each other less than they do at that particular instant.

**LANCELOT.** Why would you say something like that?

**GUENEVERE.** Because I'm going to see Igraine. She can help me become sovereign. And I deserve to be!

**LANCELOT.** You're never coming back to me. Are you?

**GUENEVERE.** Lance.

**LANCELOT.** You gave up the sword to Arthur for a reason. What was the reason?

**GUENEVERE.** Because he tricked me. I was too young.

**LANCELOT.** Why did you?

**GUENEVERE.** I trusted him. I believed him when he said no one would want me to be the ruler.

**LANCELOT.** Because...

**GUENEVERE.** Because I'm me. Because... I was young. Because... I was a girl.

**LANCELOT.** Because you *are* a girl.

**GUENEVERE.** Arthur said I could be queen. And I'm going to be queen. I just have to finally get my proof.

**LANCELOT.** There's a part of you that wants to be here with me!

**GUENEVERE.** I should've told you. I'm sorry. When I show the proof to Arthur, he won't be able to yield to Morgan anymore.

**LANCELOT.** Why not just keep sending Arthur instructions on how to manage everything like you do now. You tell him what to do, and he does it. He can't manage without you, you're safe. What's wrong with that? The country's doing great. If you really care about the country, what's the problem?

**GUENEVERE.** How can you say you love me and not know what the problem is?

**LANCELOT.** Things have been good here. Haven't they been good?

**GUENEVERE.** They've been good. They've been fine.

**LANCELOT.** Fine.

## GUENEVERE

**GUENEVERE.** But... I have a destiny.

**LANCELOT.** Because of some dim memory about a sword in a stone? That's not a destiny. That's a fairy tale. Guen, I love you. Who will be with you when you're sick, when you're old? Who will care about you more than me? I'll never feel this way about another woman. We belong to each other.

**GUENEVERE.** I know. I know. (*Guenevere throws her arms around Lance's waist and hugs him hard. They kiss.*) I never thought anyone would love me. Why would they? I'm a misfit, Lance. There's something wrong with me.

**LANCELOT.** There's nothing wrong with you! Who told you there was?

**GUENEVERE.** It doesn't matter now. Nobody told me.

**LANCELOT.** Arthur told you. And now you'll be his queen.

**GUENEVERE.** Arthur didn't tell me that. And I won't be that kind of queen. It'll be a political marriage.

**LANCELOT.** And Morgan will let you do that. Stroll in and become queen.

**GUENEVERE.** She won't have a choice. I'll have the proof. A document. A birth certificate!

**LANCELOT.** Then why do you need Arthur? Marry me and I'll be your king!

**GUENEVERE.** I can't do that.

**LANCELOT.** Because of Arthur.

**GUENEVERE.** Yes. Because of Arthur. It's too late now. Arthur's done a great job. He's done everything I said. We made a pact—I'd be queen already—if he hadn't met Morgan.

**ARTHUR.** You've created the perfect kingdom so a muckraker can be King Arthur.

**GUENEVERE.** Try to understand, Lance. When I go to Camelot with my birth certificate, Arthur will be happy. He will right the wrong from when we were at the stone, and he'll make good on his promise. He's just looking for way to make it happen.

**LANCELOT.** You grew up, Guen. And you made love to me. And you left all that behind. If you want to take your rightful place as queen, and if

## GUENEVERE

you can... I support you. I do. I'll come to you. I'll serve you. But Arthur... this con man? You'll need to get rid of him. This peasant.

**GUENEVERE.** Don't speak against the peasants. I was a peasant. And I'll serve for the peasants.

**LANCELOT.** So you shall, Your Majesty. Maybe I'll see you someday at your glorious "Round Table."

**GUENEVERE.** What?

**LANCELOT.** Your Round Table.

**GUENEVERE.** What are you talking about? How do you know about that?

**LANCELOT.** A proclamation went out to all the knights. The Round Table, it would have no head, and all the knights would be equal.

**GUENEVERE.** It was a stupid idea, The Round Table. That's what Arthur said. He wouldn't do it. I even ordered a round table from Amsterdam to convince him. He wrote and said he'd sent it back.

**LANCELOT.** He clearly changed his mind.

**GUENEVERE.** He never told me that.

**LANCELOT.** Why would he? Why should he? You're in his service and I'm sure he'll mean to keep it that way.

**GUENEVERE.** No, he won't. I'm not a little girl who doesn't understand what she's meant for anymore.

**LANCELOT.** Surely he'll greet you with open arms, push Morgan away, and be the king at your side.

**GUENEVERE.** It's dangerous for you to speak in that tone to a future ruler, Lancelot du Lac. Don't forget it.

**LANCELOT.** Are you threatening me?

**GUENEVERE.** I'm going to my mother to get the documents that certify my birth. It's important to me and to my country.

**LANCELOT.** But I'm French. I don't care about your country. I only care about you.

**GUENEVERE.** Maybe someday that will make us good allies.

**LANCELOT.** That's very cold, Guen.

**GUENEVERE.** Lance, I didn't mean it like that...

**LANCELOT.** You'll forget me. *(With resignation, no fight left in him.)*  
Well all right then. Forget me then. Let glory fill up your loneliness.

## GUENEVERE

Maybe a scent will bring the thought of us back to you someday. A rose, the air in late spring?

**GUENEVERE.** Don't be angry. I'll find a way to be with you again.

**LANCELOT.** Don't, Guen.

**GUENEVERE.** What do you mean?

**LANCELOT.** I can't wait around while you solve your Arthur issues.

**GUENEVERE.** Lance...

**LANCELOT.** I'll read about you in a book someday, maybe.

**GUENEVERE.** Why do you have to talk like that?

**LANCELOT.** Why? Because I'm a knight in a distant land, and you are the Queen of Camelot and all England. If you need me, my armies, we will serve you, future Majesty. I won't betray you. Though I fear the rest... oh, Guen. *(Lights fade.)*

## **SCENE FOUR**

*The next week. A ship crossing the water. Snow falling. The ship's whistle breaks into the night. The bow of the ship begins to come into view. A sailor's voice is heard: "Ireland! Ireland ho!" Guenevere comes to the bow and looks toward the land. A mist is all around her. Seagulls caw overhead.*

*Light change.*

*Igraine's castle, the throne room. It's musty, filled with fog that has floated in from the cold Irish sea. The throne room should appear to waft from the sea into place. The fog pours in through the windows, making Igraine cough. She adds to her irritation by filling up a pipe and smoking it. Gray and wizened, painted with white makeup and red lips, in dire condition, she takes some of her last labored breaths. Guenevere enters and kneels.*

**IGRAINE.** I'm sorry that things worked out this way.

**GUENEVERE.** Your Majesty, Igraine, I'm so sorry. I'm overwhelmed.

## GUENEVERE

**IGRAINE.** That's nice. But stand up. I can't really hear what you're saying.

**GUENEVERE.** I'm sorry... I...

**IGRAINE.** You're crying.

**GUENEVERE.** Uh... I had no idea. I mean, I didn't know anything. About where you were... all this time, I looked. And wondered. I pretended...

**IGRAINE.** I know. It couldn't have been easy for you. But you seem fine.

**GUENEVERE.** Oh, I am. I really am. You don't have to worry about that.

**IGRAINE.** I won't.

**GUENEVERE.** It must've broken your heart when you gave me up.

*(Beat.)* Right?

**IGRAINE.** I kept meaning to visit but there were just so many duties at the castle...

**GUENEVERE.** I dreamed of you.

**IGRAINE.** I'm dying, you know.

**GUENEVERE.** Your Majesty... Mother. I'm sorry... should I not call you that?

**IGRAINE.** Actually, I think Your Majesty works.

*(Igraine picks up the pipe and relights it.)*

**GUENEVERE.** Oh, but maybe you shouldn't...

**IGRAINE.** Please. You think at this point it matters? It doesn't.

**GUENEVERE.** I'm sorry.

**IGRAINE.** You're big boned, aren't you?

**GUENEVERE.** Am I?

**IGRAINE.** When I look closely at you, one of your nostrils is a little larger than the other.

**GUENEVERE.** Oh.

**IGRAINE.** Your sister, Morgan, is a very attractive girl.

**GUENEVERE.** Yes.

**IGRAINE.** I'm not exaggerating, when Morgan walks into a room, she lights it up! The whole room!

**GUENEVERE.** *(Straining.)* Oh!

**IGRAINE.** I was like that. That's why your father... well... she didn't get it from *her* father, that's for sure.



## GUENEVERE

**GUENEVERE.** Her father was Gorlois.

**IGRAINE.** Gorlois. He worshipped the ground I walked above. But *your* father...

**GUENEVERE.** I've heard terrible stories about him. I'm ashamed.

**IGRAINE.** Uh! He was a horror! Savage beast, sadistic, cruel. I couldn't get enough of him.

**GUENEVERE.** My father...

**IGRAINE.** You've got his dreamy eyes.

**GUENEVERE.** So you loved him.

**IGRAINE.** More than anything that ever lived or breathed. Then a wagon fell over on him. Do you know how furious that would have made him if he'd known? He would've killed a whole village for that kind of humiliation. I'm not over it.

**GUENEVERE.** I'm sorry...

**IGRAINE.** Uh... "You're sorry." Is it a catchphrase? Stop being so sorry. So, what is it you need?

**GUENEVERE.** I wanted to meet you. I finally found you! You're my mother.

**IGRAINE.** I'm Morgan's mother, too. And she doesn't feel the need to come to Ireland apologizing every two minutes. So...

**GUENEVERE.** So. Uh...

**IGRAINE.** (*Screeching.*) What!

**GUENEVERE.** Maybe it's too much right now. I'll come back tomorrow. Do you like milk? Or some fresh bread? I can get you some...

**IGRAINE.** There's not going to be a tomorrow.

**GUENEVERE.** Oh.

**IGRAINE.** So if you have something to say, better say it.

**GUENEVERE.** I heard...

**IGRAINE.** You heard...

**GUENEVERE.** I know you must have a document. A certificate of some kind, verifying my birth.

**IGRAINE.** All right.

**GUENEVERE.** May I have it?

**IGRAINE.** Why?

**GUENEVERE.** It verifies my birth. As queen.

## GUENEVERE

**IGRAINE.** And you want to be queen. After me.

**GUENEVERE.** Yes. Because I am the queen. The heir of Uther. The sole heir!

**IGRAINE.** Ugh...

**GUENEVERE.** The sword said that I was the ruler of all England.

**IGRAINE.** The sword.

**GUENEVERE.** The sword. In the stone.

**IGRAINE.** I could've killed Merlin. If he were mortal.

**GUENEVERE.** Merlin was a great wizard!

**IGRAINE.** Oh, he was great. When it came to figuring out politics, morality, all that crap, he was very smart. The man could do math. But do you think that for one minute he might've helped me with Uther?

**GUENEVERE.** You mean, to stop him from destroying the country?

**IGRAINE.** To keep him away from your sister, Morgan! Believe me, I tried to hold the king's interest, but the man had to have what the man wanted. How do you think that made me feel? I was still a very attractive woman.

**GUENEVERE.** What?

**IGRAINE.** What's that look? You! With your sword, and your brains, and your destiny? You got plenty from me, Miss. I don't need to feel your criticism.

**GUENEVERE.** I wasn't criticizing!

**IGRAINE.** I think you were. Don't start lying before you're even on the throne. I was a woman who loved a man above all else. And in the twelfth century, that's what's called wisdom, honey. If I was glad that Merlin took you away from me, it's not for you to sit and judge.

**GUENEVERE.** ( *Holding in her hurt.* ) Please, Your Majesty. I pulled the sword from the stone and I am the ruler of all England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales! I want the document that verifies my birth and I will bow to no man. And no man like Uther will rule again.

**IGRAINE.** That sounds good. So, what's the certificate going to do?

**GUENEVERE.** Verify me as the ruler.

**IGRAINE.** That's what the sword did.

**GUENEVERE.** Yes, but...

**IGRAINE.** But Arthur's the ruler now.

## GUENEVERE

**GUENEVERE.** Yes...

**IGRAINE.** So what's changed here? You're going to get a paper and that's going to make you the ruler. But the sword didn't. But a paper does?

**GUENEVERE.** I made a mistake with the sword.

**IGRAINE.** And you won't make a mistake with the paper.

**GUENEVERE.** No.

**IGRAINE.** Because now you've learned.

**GUENEVERE.** Yes!

**IGRAINE.** What did you learn?

**GUENEVERE.** I learned how to govern, for one. I learned about the justice system. I mean, that there was none. I learned protocol. And diplomacy. And military strategy. I created a new order, and Arthur signed the proclamations.

**IGRAINE.** Good for Arthur.

**GUENEVERE.** But it was all my idea! So was The Round Table. He told me it was a worthless idea and then he used it!

**IGRAINE.** That's why he's king.

**GUENEVERE.** He's not king! I am!

**IGRAINE.** And I'm the Virgin Mary.

**GUENEVERE.** Arthur shouldn't be king. It's not fair.

**IGRAINE.** Your sister, Morgan, would make a nice queen.

**GUENEVERE.** It's my birthright. Not hers.

**IGRAINE.** It is. There is no other with the blood of Pendragon. Without you, the crown would fall right out of the family. Always the way.

**GUENEVERE.** I'm qualified. It's my right!

**IGRAINE.** Why should you care?

**GUENEVERE.** I care. That's why I should be queen. I care!

**IGRAINE.** Ugh... here. I had my papers in order in case of all events. I was a very organized queen, at least. *(With a shaky, dying hand, Igraine gives Guenevere a document that she has taken from her robe.)*

**GUENEVERE.** The royal birth certificate.

**IGRAINE.** Signed by us all. At your birth.

**GUENEVERE.** Oh thank you, Your Majesty. I will make a great queen. Fair and just—

## GUENEVERE

**IGRAINE.** (*Cutting her off.*) You got what you came for. Spare me the flourishes. But uh... one thing...

**GUENEVERE.** (*Hopefully.*) Oh yes, Your Majesty?

**IGRAINE.** If you do talk to Morgan, if I'm still here... you can let me know... did Uther ever say anything to her about me? (*Guenevere bows to Igraine and begins to leave, then stops, looks at her mother a last time. Lights fade.*)

## SCENE FIVE

*Camelot. At court. The throne room. Several benches with velvet cushions are placed near the thrones and away from them. A chess table is set to the side of a sword collection. Large windows surround it. Outside, it's spring, warm and seductive. Guenevere enters the court hall. She wears a cloak. Under it protrudes a sheathed sword. Arthur appears, dressed in royal robes. First Guard stands in the background, guarding the king. With hesitation, Guenevere bows and kneels.*

**ARTHUR.** Rise, Lady Guenevere.

**GUENEVERE.** Arthur... I...

**ARTHUR.** You may rise.

**GUENEVERE.** I know I may rise. I may rise like this loaf of bread over here. (*Arthur sits on the throne.*)

**ARTHUR.** Morgan put together a spread of lovely food for your return. Wasn't that kind?

**GUENEVERE.** Our mother died. She should've been at the funeral.

**ARTHUR.** *Her mother.* And mine—though I never knew her.

**GUENEVERE.** Please, Arthur. I don't like this game...

**ARTHUR.** I wanted to protect Morgan from such sadness. She needs to put her past behind her. We all do, right? Right, Guen?

**GUENEVERE.** I suppose we do. Some parts of our past. Other parts are precious. We should hold onto them.

**ARTHUR.** But how can we do that? When they're gone? You can't touch them. Smell them. How can you even prove the past existed?

## GUENEVERE

**GUENEVERE.** You feel your past. You hear its whisper when you stand by the ocean or in the woods. Our past together was everything to me, Arthur. Our childhood.

**ARTHUR.** I envy you, Guen. And full disclosure, I'm a romantic like you. But I've refocused my romantic tendencies toward a more concrete present.

**GUENEVERE.** You mean Morgan?

**ARTHUR.** She has such elegance. Noblesse oblige. She teaches me so much.

**GUENEVERE.** Like how to read? How to govern with morality and responsibility?

**ARTHUR.** God no. Important aspects of noble life. Like how to choose the right wine. The right fork. I mean, any fork at all is a step up, right?

**GUENEVERE.** Arthur, stop fooling around. I want to talk to you about some serious things.

**ARTHUR.** I've been so proud of how you've helped shape our kingdom all over the continent. It's so impressive. Huh. You are a wonder.

*(Morgan pops in from the outer corridor, interrupting the conversation.)*

**MORGAN.** Guenevere! You haven't touched a morsel of your toast points and eggs!

**GUENEVERE.** I've lost my appetite for courtly meals.

**MORGAN.** Should we have prepared meat? We'll have some later this evening... Arthur, I thought that a little breakfast and wine would be enough for now...

**ARTHUR.** Guenevere jokes, Morgan. She's making a joke.

**MORGAN.** Oh! Is she? She jokes? Oh! You must have learned that in France. Oh Guenevere. It's so good to see you again. *(Morgan embraces her.)* Oh. What is that you're wearing under your cloak?

**GUENEVERE.** It's my sword. I wear a sword.

**MORGAN.** Yes. Well, of course you do. I mean why not? If you like it.

**GUENEVERE.** It's not that I like it.

**MORGAN.** It's just so heavy. It's got to add twenty pounds to you, right? I mean, good for you. *(She embraces Guenevere.)*

**ARTHUR.** Guen, sit. Tell us about France. *(Guenevere takes off her sword and puts it aside. She sits on a bench near the throne.)*

## GUENEVERE

**GUENEVERE.** Things are good in France. Relations are... stable.

**MORGAN.** Isn't Paris wonderful?

**GUENEVERE.** I was in Cannes. Nearer to the water.

**ARTHUR.** Which Guen loves.

**MORGAN.** Ah, do you? I don't. My hair. It's like it doubles in size... like it has its own thoughts. It's terrible.

**GUENEVERE.** The air is more humid around the sea. Either you like it or you don't. I like it.

**ARTHUR.** We lived by the sea, when we were kids, Guen and I.

**MORGAN.** Oh yes. Arthur told me a lot about the manor where the two of you lived. And about the terrible beheading accident of that poor Sir Kay. He was the son of Sir Ector, the manor lord, right? Knocked off his horse in the middle of the night like that. His head rolling down the hill right outside of Haggenwoggle. Terrible. There's nothing worse than a hit and run, isn't that right, Arthur?

**ARTHUR.** Might've been an act of revenge. On someone's behalf.

**MORGAN.** You mean you think someone might have murdered Sir Kay? Someone who knew him?

**ARTHUR.** *(Eyes on Guenevere.)* It's possible. How else could the other knight have known his comings and goings. Must have followed Kay, maybe got to know where he'd be.

**MORGAN.** Well, I can't see that it makes it any better one way or another. Sorry, Guenevere. He was from the only family you ever knew.

**GUENEVERE.** I wouldn't call any one of them family. *(First Guard clears his throat very loudly.)*

**MORGAN.** *(Leaning in to Arthur.)* Oh, Arthur. The First Guard begs for a word. I told him it would be all right.

**ARTHUR.** But...

**MORGAN.** He's a wonderful guard. We depend on him and his men so much. It seems like they are everywhere. *(Morgan gestures for First Guard to approach.)*

**ARTHUR.** Morgan... *(The First Guard steps forward and immediately bows.)*

**FIRST GUARD.** Your Majesty. I beg your pardon, Your Majesty.

**ARTHUR.** Very well, First Guard. What is it you want?

## GUENEVERE

**FIRST GUARD.** I thought I should alert you, Your Majesty, that the table is arrived.

**ARTHUR.** Well... I know that, First Guard. The table arrived... *(He shoots a look at Morgan. She smiles. Guenevere notices.)*

**FIRST GUARD.** And on behalf of the rest of the guards, and the captains of the armies and those who are still to be knighted, we are making good progress with the knights from foreign lands. We are banding together as a brotherhood just as you'd commanded. And if I may be allowed to say, Your Majesty, it is inspirational and working beautifully.

**ARTHUR.** Good, First Guard. I'm happy to hear it.

**FIRST GUARD.** To be ruled by a king who can knit together men's hearts into one mighty force for justice is a great gift from God above. Chivalry for the good of the people! We are humbled and we are devoted, Your Majesty. Thank you for allowing me to speak.

**GUENEVERE.** May I ask a question of you, First Guard?

**FIRST GUARD.** Oh your Ladyship, your help to the court of Camelot is well known throughout the land. We are also in service to you, My Lady, as the great representative of us to foreign lands—the Foreign Ambassador! If the king permits me to answer?

**ARTHUR.** Oh, well... go ahead. Why not.

**GUENEVERE.** Thank you for your kind words, First Guard. I am happy that everyone thinks of me as a handy helper. But may I ask, is the table round?

**FIRST GUARD.** Oh yes, My Lady. It is round and has no corners so that no one sits at its head, not even the king. Forgive me, Your Highness.

**ARTHUR.** Forgiven. Now... *(Tries signaling First Guard to go, but First Guard cuts him off enthusiastically.)*

**FIRST GUARD.** And everyone may speak their mind equally when it comes to world problems and all are there to help the other. A monarch who could imagine a government based on these principles must surely be one who will be remembered throughout time.

**GUENEVERE.** Only a truly great leader... could dream up the idea of a round table and all that it symbolizes?

## GUENEVERE

**FIRST GUARD.** Oh yes, My Lady. Everything that the beneficent King Arthur has created has made our land, Camelot, both the envy and the model of truth and goodness to the entire world.

**ARTHUR.** Once again, First Guard, we thank you for your loyalty.

**GUENEVERE.** Yes we do, thank you, First Guard. We thank you very much.

**MORGAN.** Thank you so much, First Guard. For alerting us to this information.

**FIRST GUARD.** I did as you commanded to the best of my ability, My Lady. *(He steps back to his place.)*

**ARTHUR.** My Lady Morgan le Fay, did you ask the First Guard to give us this information about the table, when we knew the table had been delivered quite a while ago?

**MORGAN.** Oh, did I displease Your Majesty? Forgive me, I wanted Lady Guenevere to know about some of what you had accomplished here. I just thought it was such a lot to accomplish for such a young king. That's all. Did I displease you, Majesty? Lady Guenevere?

**GUENEVERE.** I'm thrilled. And aware. I'm thrilled and aware.

**ARTHUR.** Morgan, I think that Guenevere and I... we must have audience.

**MORGAN.** Oh! Must you? Of course you must. Then I will have the ladies in waiting... lay out tea. While you're waiting! Ha! I mean, talking. Having audience.

**ARTHUR.** Thank you. My dear.

**MORGAN.** Oh, Your Majesty, it is my pleasure. As you know. We're so glad that you're back in Camelot, Guenevere. Hasn't it been such a long absence? Without you. *(Morgan exits. Arthur signals to First Guard that he should follow Morgan out. First Guard obeys Arthur.)*

**GUENEVERE.** You decided to go with The Round Table idea after all.

**ARTHUR.** Of course. It was always a great idea. You had.

**GUENEVERE.** You didn't say that at the time I brought it up.

**ARTHUR.** What? You thought I was serious?

**GUENEVERE.** "Oh Guen, only a child would think that a bunch of foreign knights would sit together united for some stupid cause."



## GUENEVERE

**ARTHUR.** Exactly! How did you not get the joke there? Guen, I'm sorry. Really. I always thought it was a great idea. I should have told you first. I'm sorry. How's Lancelot? Nice man. Good breeding.

**GUENEVERE.** Yes.

**ARTHUR.** Not like us, right? (*Beat.*) Look, the table was your idea. But I have to take credit for these things. We know that.

**GUENEVERE.** Arthur, please! We need to talk about my position here once and for all.

**ARTHUR.** Oh. Well, yes. Of course. It's been too long since we've discussed this. Guen, I should've written... it's just, Morgan...

**GUENEVERE.** Do not bring Morgan into it!

**ARTHUR.** Now, Guen. Orphans are in no place to make demands.

**GUENEVERE.** No, orphans aren't. But queens are.

**ARTHUR.** It was fun talking like this with you. When we were kids. But we're not kids now.

**GUENEVERE.** No, we're not kids. We're all grown up. I want my throne.

**ARTHUR.** Your throne.

**GUENEVERE.** Of course you have no plan to share it with me now because of Morgan.

**ARTHUR.** Actually... yes, I'm in love.

**GUENEVERE.** So am I. I love Lancelot.

**ARTHUR.** Guen, I'm happy for you. You should go be with him. Be happy.

**GUENEVERE.** I don't want that, Arthur. I'm ready to take my rightful place. As queen.

**ARTHUR.** I'm afraid that idea has a shelf life, hon. That was then. And this is now! These people of Camelot, the Camelot you gave me—they love me. I'm funny. My parties are great. I know just what to say depending on my audience. I don't mean to hurt your feelings. But honestly, even without your instructions? I think I'd be okay.

**GUENEVERE.** You've always been good that way. You boys. Kay and all, out together in the barn. I'd sneak in when I was supposed to be sleeping. You would all laugh together. What were you laughing at?

## GUENEVERE

**ARTHUR.** Guenevere! Not at you! All right? We were older. We were young men! You're not a young man! Why would you want to be?

**GUENEVERE.** It was all just talk then.

**ARTHUR.** Talk between young men.

**GUENEVERE.** Why didn't you have that kind of talk with me? Why did I get pushed to the side?

**ARTHUR.** It's not the kind of talk you have with a girl around.

**GUENEVERE.** Because if a girl was around, she might defend herself?

**ARTHUR.** She wouldn't need to defend herself when she had a friend who did it for her. I cut off Kay's head thinking of all the times his hands were on you.

**GUENEVERE.** Oh God.

**ARTHUR.** That's not the reaction a "leader" should have. You're as white as a ghost. Be a female Foreign Ambassador. Be proud of your achievements. Don't rock the boat.

**GUENEVERE.** Arthur, the boat's been rocked. Time for a brand new fleet!

**ARTHUR.** I'm trying to tell you, Guen. I'm a very, very powerful king.

**GUENEVERE.** (*Gathering strength.*) What will you do when France declares war on you?

**ARTHUR.** What?

**GUENEVERE.** What will you do? What strategies will you use?

**ARTHUR.** Is France declaring war on me? Why?

**GUENEVERE.** I didn't say they were.

**ARTHUR.** They couldn't. France, it's a bucolic little country of winemakers. It's going to declare war on me? And my knights?

**GUENEVERE.** Your knights. What strategy would you use if a war was on its way?

**ARTHUR.** I don't know. I don't know just now. Jesus, Guen. I'm not saying you wouldn't still help me think these things through...

**GUENEVERE.** Why would I want to do that?

**ARTHUR.** You'd want a secure place at court. No matter what it was.

**GUENEVERE.** No! I want what I'm entitled to! Emphasis on Title!

**ARTHUR.** Morgan has my heir.

**GUENEVERE.** Oh.

## GUENEVERE

**ARTHUR.** I have a son.

**GUENEVERE.** Congratulations.

**ARTHUR.** Morgan wants him to have the throne someday. I love her. And I love my son. I'm sorry.

**GUENEVERE.** Morgan's son has no claim to the throne. He's not a Pendragon.

**ARTHUR.** But I am. Or so everyone thinks.

**GUENEVERE.** You said I'd be queen with you... you promised.

**ARTHUR.** I can't.

**GUENEVERE.** Stone or no stone.

**ARTHUR.** That stone is gone. It's an artifact of myth. Guen, please. You did a great job as a diplomat.

**GUENEVERE.** I come by it naturally.

**ARTHUR.** Nature is only half the battle. From the beginning, you've lacked the basic requirements.

**GUENEVERE.** That hurts. It does. But in some ways, it doesn't hurt as much as it used to.

**ARTHUR.** Of course not, because you're a woman. And you've found what a woman needs.

**GUENEVERE.** That is true. And giving it up is painful. But taking insults from a peasant, that actually turns out to be pretty benign. (*Guenevere places the birth certificate on a table near the throne.*) This is my birth certificate, signed by Igraine, the queen, verifying my birthright. The laws are unequivocal.

**ARTHUR.** Igraine.

**GUENEVERE.** You thought I wouldn't find her? That she was dead? That's not how a king reacts. You're as white as a ghost.

**ARTHUR.** It's not as easy as all of that, Guenevere. What we've done together—it's worked. You shaping the ideas for the country, the good relations we've made with France. I mean, one could argue you were a bit unconventional in your methods, but I thought you were clever.

**GUENEVERE.** My relationship with Lancelot was personal.

**ARTHUR.** That's something else I've learned. There is no more personal once all this stuff gets put into motion. You've got a birth certificate. All right. You can have more say over what happens in court. You can have all

## GUENEVERE

the say, because you'll know who has royal blood. And that will give you that boost you're looking for.

**GUENEVERE.** I wanted us to do this together. Equals. Like we used to climb and play and it was great. I wanted you to say we were partners. It's a fairy tale. Read the document. Or get someone to read it to you. Your presence will no longer be required at my court. We will break the news to the nation slowly. In time, they'll rejoice that their rightful ruler is taking her place. If a little later than she should've. You may go.

**ARTHUR.** Guen.

**GUENEVERE.** Arthur! I said you have to go!

**ARTHUR.** You played a good game, Guen.

**GUENEVERE.** It's not a game. The reign of King Arthur is over. Long live the rightful ruler... me!

**ARTHUR.** Still a child. All I have to do is call my guard and you'll be locked in a tower until you turn ninety.

**GUENEVERE.** You can try that, but if you do, you'll have Igraine's army of Ireland waiting to defend me as the rightful heir. There are many who still believe in the power of the birth certificate.

**ARTHUR.** Guen, I thought you trusted me. But you had that all planned out. The Irish will never come through for you. Why should they?

**GUENEVERE.** I had the money saved up to pay the Irish soldiers. And they truly appreciate that. You know how that goes, Arthur. I make the money. You spend the money.

**ARTHUR.** Everyone likes a male heir, including Ireland. When they hear about my son, I'll have them. Nothing beats a male heir. Not even a bit of coin.

**GUENEVERE.** Are you willing to bet on that? A male heir? Isn't it all so yesterday?

**ARTHUR.** Some things never change. And they never, ever will.

**GUENEVERE.** Not if someone doesn't push through and change them. Which I can and will do.

**ARTHUR.** You're willing to see my loyal guards die to defend me? You, with the tender heart? The defender of the weak? Now it's time to send the weak into the fray so you can wear a crown.

## GUENEVERE

**GUENEVERE.** I'm the queen. I'm willing to sacrifice your guard. I've done all I can for them.

**ARTHUR.** You're afraid.

**GUENEVERE.** Not of you. Only of what will happen to this country if I don't become the queen once and for all.

**ARTHUR.** I'm the king. Kings win wars. While you've been traveling in foreign lands, I've been practicing my battle skills.

**GUENEVERE.** While you've been practicing how to shoot an arrow, I've been making alliances all over the continent. Face it, Arthur. You're done.

**ARTHUR.** I'm not done. But I admit, you've come back to court with some good points. I have a proposition then. As my oldest friend, I expect you'll hear it.

**GUENEVERE.** A proposition. More like a trick?

**ARTHUR.** No. I know I can't fool you twice. And I was really trying to protect you, though I know you'll never believe that.

**GUENEVERE.** Go on.

**ARTHUR.** Since you have always wanted us to do this together, let's do this together. The reality is, you have already created a great king—me. I have been the figurehead, and you've been the brains of the operation. I admit that. Freely.

**GUENEVERE.** It would be impossible for you to deny it.

**ARTHUR.** But your creation might be more successful than you could ever know. Why tear apart the country to find out. Let's rule together. As king and queen.

**GUENEVERE.** You would agree to that?

**ARTHUR.** Yes. You've won, it's true. Let me be your puppet king. You always beat me at games when we were kids. I'm used to it, right?

**GUENEVERE.** I don't know.

**ARTHUR.** You keep doing the real work. You can even sign the proclamations. You will be crowned and recognized as my queen.

**GUENEVERE.** What about your son?

**ARTHUR.** I love my son. Unfortunately, technically he's a bastard. I'm willing to lean into that aspect of his birth in order to facilitate this alliance between us.

**GUENEVERE.** Seeing that you have no choice.

## GUENEVERE

**ARTHUR.** Seeing that being a king under a queen is better than being no king at all.

**GUENEVERE.** I never wanted it to be like this, Arthur.

**ARTHUR.** Of course you didn't, Guen. You always clung to the idea we'd share the throne and equality would prevail. I love that. I admire it. What did I know? A fool for Morgan, then a father to her child? Did I become drunk with power? Yes, I did. But I am willing to admit my mistakes. And take up my old role as your friend, and partner.

**GUENEVERE.** Even in light of your son.

**ARTHUR.** He's a great kid. Looks just like his mother.

**GUENEVERE.** I won't have him set foot in Camelot. Ever.

**ARTHUR.** That will be painful for me. But I agree to it. But you agree not to hurt him?

**GUENEVERE.** I would never hurt your son. You know that. And Morgan?

**ARTHUR.** Love of my life.

**GUENEVERE.** She goes, too. I don't want either one of them in Camelot.

**ARTHUR.** You drive a hard bargain, Guen.

**GUENEVERE.** You can see her in any corner of the world. Just not in my corner. My castle. My Camelot.

**ARTHUR.** Look how nicely you pronounce your consonants.

**GUENEVERE.** Either you agree to it or not. If you don't do it this way, we fight.

**ARTHUR.** Then I think we do it this way.

**GUENEVERE.** And you admit, if you didn't have my counsel and ideas and everything else I offer, there would be no Camelot.

**ARTHUR.** What do I do?

**GUENEVERE.** You admit it.

**ARTHUR.** Guen, you freely handed over the keys to the kingdom to me when you gave me the sword from the stone.

**GUENEVERE.** Freely?

**ARTHUR.** Did I hold a knife to your throat? The way you'd done to me a few times?

**GUENEVERE.** I could've done it then. I could've ruled.

**ARTHUR.** Well, woulda shoulda coulda.

## GUENEVERE

**GUENEVERE.** Say it.

**ARTHUR.** This kingdom would fall apart without you. Without your brains, your experience, your instincts bestowed upon you by...

**GUENEVERE.** God. And Merlin.

**ARTHUR.** Well, God sure. You're Uther Pendragon's daughter. A brutal king. But a king nonetheless, right? And Merlin, crackerjack wizard.

**GUENEVERE.** You're stalling.

**ARTHUR.** It's you, Guen. It's all about you. Without you, I'm nothing.

**GUENEVERE.** Good. We'll do it together. A political marriage. But if you try to usurp me, in any way, I'll expose you as a fraud and a farmhand and take my chances with the guards and the armies. I'm sure poor Sir Ector who lost his only son to your hand will help back me up on any of that. Not to mention Ireland. And France.

**ARTHUR.** Yet you mentioned it.

**GUENEVERE.** No bastard heir with no lineage. No Morgan.

**ARTHUR.** Yes. That's how it will be. You've got me. (*Arthur rings for First Guard, who enters instantly, hand on his sword.*) First Guard, the Lady of Camelot, Guenevere, needs to be moved to the Royal Chambers. Make them ready for her. And tell the knights that they will need to assemble. Start calling them all in from their various trainings, exploits and Grail-chasing.

**FIRST GUARD.** Your Majesty, that will take some time. Is there some reason that...

**ARTHUR.** Don't try to figure it out, First Guard. This lady has needs, and as we know, what a lady wants, a good knight must try to provide. Or a good king. Or even just a good peasant. (*Arthur leaves the court hall. The First Guard stays behind. Guenevere wipes her nose and eyes. Lights fade.*)

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