

LONG-GRIN, PART ONE
THE COURTSHIP OF PRINCESS GWEN

An Original Screenplay by
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FADE IN:

EXT - WESTLES/LAKE IN GREEN WOODS - NIGHT

Bullfrogs CROAK and crickets CHIRP as the mists part to reveal a primitive hut nestled among the trees near the shoreline.

INT - WESTLES/MERLIN'S HUT - NIGHT

Wirey, 33-year-old MERLIN, sleeps on a cot, wrapped in animal hides. He is awakened by an UNEARTHLY SCREAM, followed by an unnatural SILENCE. Wrapping himself in his hides, Merlin goes to the door flap of the hut.

EXT - WESTLES/LAKE IN GREEN WOODS - NIGHT

Merlin throws back the door flap and peers into the mist, but there is no one in sight. He hears a GALLOPING HORSE coming toward him. Suddenly, a ghostly, see-through horse and rider burst through the hut and through Merlin!

Merlin staggers, but keeps his feet. He turns toward the misty lake behind him.

The SEE-THROUGH HORSE GRUNTS as the SEE-THROUGH MESSENGER leaps from his saddle in the midst of a SEE-THROUGH HOST, shimmering in the mist that swirls over the lake.

Burly, 30-year-old Romano-British, warrior king GALOWYN OF GALWALK, hosts the otherworldly hunt, flanked by an older veteran, FINGAL, his warrior-scribe and master of protocol, and YOGAN, Galwalk's mid-thirties Steward, the warrior in charge of feasts.

MESSENGER

Sire! It's a girl!

KING GALOWYN

A daughter?

GRIFFITH OF WESTLES, hearty adventurer and lone representative of Wales, is quick to congratulate King Galowyn.

GRIFFITH

A princess, Your Majesty! Good show!
(MORE)

CONTINUED:

GRIFFITH (CONT'D)

May she ever be the fairest flower
in all your kingdom!

Nearby, the 40-year-old Germanic warrior king ALARIC OF
OSTERLAW speaks softly to his silent champion, ANSELM.

KING ALARIC

(under his breath)

Flower without a stem...

King Galowyn reddens. MURDOCH pushes in to address his king.

MURDOCH

It's Fergus, Sire.

KING ANGUS

(dismayed)

Och. Is he dead?

MURDOCH

Not entirely, Sire.

Galowyn has overheard.

KING GALOWYN

Have him put in my chariot, Angus.
The widow Deirdre will soon have him
on his feet.

KING ANGUS

Aye, Galowyn. Her skill as a healer
is unchallenged in all the three
kingdoms!

MERLIN

(guiltily)

Deirdre...

Merlin watches the unconscious FERGUS, a handsome young
warrior, being loaded into Galowyn's ghostly chariot.

KING GALOWYN

(a proclamation)

Now hear me, one and all! Nothing
shall dampen our spirits on this
great day -- this day that our united
arms slew the last dragon in all the
realm!

The ghostly hunt GRUNTS approval.

CONTINUED:

KING GALOWYN (CONT'D)

And as is only just and seemly, in
honor of this auspicious occasion,
I, Galowyn, King of Galwalk...

Merlin reaches out, as if to get the king's attention, but
his hand passes through the king's body.

KING GALOWYN (CONT'D)

...Guardian of the Thirteen Laws, do
issue this, my decree.

FINGAL

(taking mental notes)
Sire?

KING GALOWYN

Let it be proclaimed throughout the
three kingdoms that this child, my
own first-born, princess of the royal
house of Galwalk, upon coming of
age, shall be given in marriage to
whomsoever shall then be deemed to
be the greatest warrior in all the
land!

Again, the ghostly hunt GRUNTS approval.

FINGAL

It shall be so.

KING GALOWYN

Let us away to Galwalk! There, no
warrior's platter is ever empty, nor
shall he find the bottom of his cup,
nor lack a winsome wench for comfort!

A CHEER rises from the ghostly hunt as they spring to their
horses and chariots. Galowyn leads the ghostly hunt back
through Merlin and his hut! Again, Merlin staggers, but keeps
his feet and turns to watch Galowyn's hunt disappear into
the misty woods.

Merlin's shadow on his door flap makes him aware of an eerie
glow that rises from the lake behind him. Shuddering, Merlin
speaks without turning to look toward the glow.

MERLIN

So it's you, is it?

Merlin turns and confronts the LADY OF THE LAKE, a serene,
life-size figure of light, a goddess manifested out of the
mist that hangs low over the surface of the lake.

CONTINUED:

MERLIN (CONT'D)

It's no good! I don't need you
anymore. No one needs you! No one
trusts you...

LADY OF THE LAKE

What has been done can never be
undone.

MERLIN

That's it? What has been done can
never be undone? Well, I'm sorry.
It's not enough. You used me!

LADY OF THE LAKE

What's yet to come will never be
forgotten.

MERLIN

Nothing is forgotten! Nothing is
forgiven!

LADY OF THE LAKE

Nothing is forever...

MERLIN

In sacred stone, in pool and tree,
I see, as you taught me to see.
Your face is but one face of three.
I see...the Queen of Sorcery!

LADY OF THE LAKE

To distant prison, stark and bare,
Will come the captive maiden fair,
Whose loins were formed a king to bear,
Whose beauty shall Nial's heart ensnare...

MERLIN

Nial? The child lives -- a child no
more. Grown. Suitable for sacrifice?

LADY OF THE LAKE

Of evil sorcery beware!
Her prison is the dragon's lair...

The Lady of the Lake begins to fade away.

LADY OF THE LAKE (CONT'D)

Whose destiny you're bound to share,
Whose life the gods demand you spare...

The Lady of the Lake is absorbed into the low lying mist.

CONTINUED:

MERLIN

The gods demand? What gods? Let the gods make demands of those who fear them! Come back here!

Only a single spot of light remains, illuminating the mist from below. Merlin shouts at it.

MERLIN (CONT'D)

Do you think you can just reappear after all these years, and take up where you left off?

Suddenly, the spot of light under the mist winds toward the shore. Merlin retreats, but when the glow stops at the shoreline, he moves cautiously back toward it.

MERLIN (CONT'D)

You'll not use me again. I care not for kings and kingdoms.

Merlin parts the glowing mist with his hands, revealing the surface of the water beneath and GASPS.

INT - FORTRESS/CAVERN - NIGHT

Surface ripples subside, revealing the image of a cavern, where LONG-GRIN, a red-backed, scaly, black-bellied, tusked, bat-winged dragon, coils in a corner, listening to AKIMERA, a fierce, emaciated sorcerer with tattooed serpents writhing on his bare arms.

AKIMERA (O.S.)

Now, the means are at hand. Now, my path is clear. The royal vessel through whom I shall be reborn, immortal, Sacred King of all Britannia...

EXT - WESTLES/ShORE OF THE LAKE - NIGHT

Unconsciously, Merlin shudders and whispers the name aloud.

MERLIN

Akimera...

INT - FORTRESS/CAVERN - NIGHT

The water ripples with the name, distorting the image of Akimera as he takes up MALABAR, his wand, a hideous, leathern, human head held in the talons of a grotesquely wrought bronze claw attached to a gnarled wooden staff.

CONTINUED:

AKIMERA

Malabar, awake!

Eerie electrical current engulfs the hand and arm which holds the wand, spreading to engulf the leathern head. Twitching, the severed head blinks and awakens, annoyed to be disturbed. Long-Grin cringes, fearful of the electrical current flowing between the sorcerer and the wand.

MALABAR

Wake me not for petty strife,
For I'm the power of your life,
And what use shall come of me,
Shall, likewise, still come of thee.

Akimera turns and peers back at Merlin on the "other side."

EXT - LAKE IN GREEN WOOD - NIGHT

Discovered, Merlin SHRIEKS and jumps into the water with both feet, splashing away the image of the sorcerer. As quickly, Merlin springs back onto the shore, but the eerie glow is gone and no sorcerer rises from the placid lake.

Crickets begin to CHIRP, frogs to CROAK. Merlin bows his head, shudders, then turns on his heel, marches back to his hut, throws back the door flap and disappears inside.

INT - WESTLES/MERLIN'S HUT - NIGHT

Merlin gathers his meagre belongings and begins stuffing them into a sack.

INT - PRINCESS GWEN'S BEDCHAMBER - DAWN

PRINCESS GWEN, an otherwise lovely young lady, sits up in her bed, looking bloated and miserable.

Her mother, QUEEN BRIGIT, a handsome woman of thirty-three, sits on the side of her bed, feeding her warm broth with a spoon.

QUEEN BRIGIT

Just a bit more, dear. This is one of Dierdre's best and most useful potions. You may rely on it.

PRINCESS GWEN

(fighting back tears)
But it hurts...

CONTINUED:

QUEEN BRIGIT

You're becoming a woman, dear. That's all.
Here, take some more. The pains will vanish.
I promise.

Gwen dutifully takes another mouthful of the potion, but then groans mightily.

PRINCESS GWEN

(fighting panic and pain)
Oh, this can't be natural. Something's wrong.

An older female HOUSEKEEPER of indeterminate age bursts into the bedchamber.

HOUSEKEEPER

Oh! Your majesty!

Galowyn, still hale and hearty in his mid-forties, bursts into the bedchamber, followed by old Fingal, now the king's chamberlain.

The king is joyful. The princess is embarrassed. The queen is vexed. The housekeeper is scandalized. The chamberlain is out of breath.

KING GALOWYN

So, it's true, then!

Gwen pulls her coverlet up to her chin, over her pillow.

PRINCESS GWEN

Father!

The king takes his daughter's hand.

KING GALOWYN

(beaming)
You're a woman!

QUEEN BRIGIT

Really, Galowyn!

KING GALOWYN

Now Brigit, this is a momentous occasion, and I'll not have you...

PRINCESS GWEN

Momentous!?!

KING GALOWYN

Gwen, Gwen, Gwen. Long ago, on the very day you were born...

CONTINUED:

QUEEN BRIGIT

Galowyn, this is neither the time nor the place...

KING GALOWYN

Nonsense! What better time? What better place? Gwen, beloved, you've come of age. It's time you had a husband.

PRINCESS GWEN

A husband?

QUEEN BRIGIT

We can discuss this later!

KING GALOWYN

I swore an oath...

QUEEN BRIGIT

(a warning)

Galowyn...

PRINCESS GWEN

(warily)

What oath?

KING GALOWYN

I swore an oath, bound in a Royal Proclamation, that when you came of age, you'd be given in marriage to whomsoever should then be deemed to be the greatest warrior in all the land!

Only the best for my Gwen, eh? What do you think of that?

PRINCESS GWEN

(horrified)

You put me on the block?

KING GALOWYN

(craftily)

On the block? I only made certain that you'd have a husband worthy of you. One who would defend you -- and the kingdom, needs be...

PRINCESS GWEN

(tearfully)

But what have I done, father? What did I do that turned you so against me?

KING GALOWYN

Against you? Nonsense, girl.

CONTINUED:

PRINCESS GWEN

(weeping)

Am I not the same me I was yesterday?

KING GALOWYN

(consolingly)

You are still and ever the fairest flower in
all the kingdom...

PRINCESS GWEN

(weeping)

Then why, when I'm suffering so...

KING GALOWYN

Ah, well. That'll soon pass, girl.

(to Brigit)

Tell her, Brigit!

(grinning at Gwen)

In three days time you'll be thanking me!

As abruptly as he broke in upon them, Galowyn is on his way
out, with Fingal scurrying to keep up.

KING GALOWYN (CONT'D)

Come along, Fingal! A Gathering is upon us.
Challenges must be sent forthwith.

FINGAL

You'll be wanting to talk to Yogan about the
feasting?

KING GALOWYN

All in good time...

The Housekeeper closes the door behind them and turns to the
Queen.

HOUSEKEEPER

(apologetically)

Your Majesty...

PRINCESS GWEN

Mother?

Brigit purses her lips and stares daggers at the door.

EXT - WOODS, HILLS, COUNTRYSIDE - DAY

TITLE MONTAGE: Merlin's journey on foot from the green wood
of Westles to Fellsgard, the rocky domain of King Angus.

CONTINUED:

INTERCUT WITH:

EXT - WOODS, HILLS, COUNTRYSIDE - NIGHT

TITLE MONTAGE: Merlin's campfires on his journey to Fellsgard.

EXT - FELLSGARD (ESTABLISHING) - DAY

END OF TITLE MONTAGE. Merlin views King Angus' villa. The villa dominates a broad commons within the ramparts of a hill fort atop a rocky crag overlooking a patchwork of small fields separated by low walls of sod and gathered stone. Of Roman military construction, the villa is but a provincial echo of Roman glory.

EXT - FELLSGARD/BALCONY OF VILLA - DAY

A wide balcony above the entrance connects two wings of Angus' villa. Old king Angus and Murdoch, his aging, bear-like champion, cross the balcony, pausing to watch the wrestling match on the commons, below.

EXT - FELLSGARD/COMMONS - DAY

Murdoch's handsome, 17-year-old son, BRIAN watches with detached amusement as 24-year-old PRINCE DUNCAN and Merlin's 18-year-old nephew, NIAL, stripped of their tunics, struggle and strain to throw each other out of a ring of scorched grass. Finally, through a combination of strength and cunning, Nial, the younger warrior, triumphs.

PRINCE DUNCAN

(springing to his
feet)

By the gods! How did you do that?

NIAL

You want me to show you, again?

BRIAN

I tell you, it's no use, Duncan. He does the same thing to me and all I get for my trouble is more bruises!

PRINCE DUNCAN

But, if I'm to win the princess...

CONTINUED:

NIAL

Never fear, my prince. You'll win your princess. And if you do get into trouble, I'll be there to put a bug in your ear.

PRINCE DUNCAN

I don't want a bug in my ear. I want to know how you did it!

BRIAN

(wagging his head)

Och, you shouldn't have said that...

NIAL

Well, let me see.

Again, Nial and Prince Duncan grip each other in their upright, wrestlers' stance, each seeking a weakness in the other.

PRINCE DUNCAN

Aye?

NIAL

I think I did...this!

The action is swift. For a second time, Prince Duncan is sent sprawling outside the ring.

NIAL (CONT'D)

Aye. That was it...

BRIAN

(helping Duncan up)

I warned you, Your Highness. Next time, settle for the bug.

EXT - FELLSGARD/BALCONY OF VILLA - DAY

King Angus LAUGHS, but Murdoch is not amused.

KING ANGUS

Did you get it, that time, son?

PRINCE DUNCAN

Och, no! Did you, father?

KING ANGUS

Och, it was too quick for these old eyes. Murdoch?

CONTINUED:

MURDOCH

Nay, Sire. But if young Nial would like to try his new trick on an old dog...

EXT - FELLSGARD/COMMONS AND BALCONY - DAY

MURDOCH

But if young Nial would like to try his new trick on an old dog...

NIAL

Och, Murdoch! You're king's champion still! Naught but a fool will challenge you for that honor for a good many years to come. But on the day that you decide to pass on your art, you'll find me an eager pupil.

BRIAN

You hear that, father?

MURDOCH

(rejecting the overture)
Much may happen between that day and this.

KING ANGUS

Aye, true enough.
(to Prince Duncan)
And as for you, we leave within the hour, so if it's not your deliberate desire to disgrace me, you'll give over wrestling and get a move on!

EXT - FELLSGARD/COMMONS/KING ANGUS' POV - DAY

NIAL

Aye, Sire!

BRIAN

Aye, Sire!

PRINCE DUNCAN

Aye, father!

The young warriors disperse.

EXT - FELLSGARD/BALCONY OF VILLA - DAY

KING ANGUS

You know, Murdoch, you really should give that lad a chance. He's strong, loyal, seems to have a good head on his shoulders...

MURDOCH

Sire, you saw it, yourself. He threw the prince, twice! That, when he should be building Prince Duncan's confidence, not undermining it.

KING ANGUS

Och, well...

INT - FELLSGARD/FERGUS' CHAMBERS - DAY

DEIRDRE, still attractive at 33 and now married to Fergus, (her recovered patient from long ago), carefully selects and lays out clothes for the journey to Galwalk. Behind Deirdre, her arms full of clothes, their cute, 13-year-old daughter, AVER, sighs mightily, as she gazes out the window.

Ruggedly handsome FERGUS enters, carrying a large trunk. Aver whirls back to her sorting, hiding her emotions.

DEIRDRE

Finally!

Nial comes in behind Fergus, taking one end of the trunk to help Fergus set it down.

NIAL

You should have waited, father.

FERGUS

(with a nod at Deirdre)
I would have...

DEIRDRE

(dismayed)
Och, Nial! Look at you!

AVER

(sweetly)
I've his bath ready, mother.

DEIRDRE

Be grateful your sister knows what a complete and utter fool you are!

Teasing, sweaty Nial moves to embrace Aver.

CONTINUED:

NIAL
And I am, mother.

Aver shoves Nial into another room, out of view.

AVER
Och! Be grateful after you've bathed!

DEIRDRE
Has he no sense at all?

FERGUS
Now, Deirdre. There's still plenty
of time...

Deirdre rummages through her closet.

DEIRDRE
And who's to see to the horses?

FERGUS
I'll take care...

AVER
Let me do, father!

FERGUS
(a pushover)
Well, all right then. Run along.

AVER
Och! Thank you, father!

Aver pecks Fergus on the cheek and rushes happily out the door, just as Deirdre pulls herself out of her closet, her arms full of clothes.

DEIRDRE
And where is she off to?

FERGUS
To fetch the horses...

DEIRDRE
Are you as daft as he is? Sending
her off to the stables, dressed in
her finest riding frock...

FERGUS
I expect she'll find some young man
to saddle the horses for her. You
would have, at her age.

DEIRDRE
Humph! I daresay, I still could.

CONTINUED:

Fergus pulls Deirdre closer, looking lovingly into her eyes as he takes the stack of clothes from her.

FERGUS

Och, I daresay, you're right...

NIAL (O.S.)

Ahh! This water's freezing!

DEIRDRE

Then you won't be long in it, will you?

Deirdre begins carefully packing her trunk. Fergus marvels at the process as he hands items from her stacks of clothes.

FERGUS

You suppose the one trunk will do?

DEIRDRE

We'll be there at least a fortnight...

EXT - FELLSGARD/STABLES - DAY

Flushed and excited, Aver forces herself to slow down to a lady-like walk as she passes a pair of GROOMS leading pack horses.

INT - FELLSGARD/STABLES - DAY

Brian fastens the girth on Nial's horse as Aver enters. Beholding her beloved, a strange transformation sweeps over the girl and all the yearning passion of a moment before disappears, replaced by a look of utter disinterest.

AVER

So, it's you he has fetching his horse for him. Why you let Nial take advantage...

BRIAN

(delighted to see her)
Och, Aver, I don't mind. I like horses. Besides, Nial had to get cleaned up and I didn't...

AVER

It's just that, well...

BRIAN

Aye?

CONTINUED:

AVER

I was hoping to find someone here to saddle my horse.

BRIAN

(eyes twinkling)

That horse?

Aver's horse, in its stall, is saddled and ready to ride.

AVER

Och...

Aver enters the stall.

BRIAN

There, now. I'm done...

Brian follows Aver into the stall, taking a quick look around to be sure that they are alone.

BRIAN (CONT'D)

And plenty of time for a grateful girl...

Brian takes Aver into his arms, turning her to him, holding her close. Feigning surprise, Aver does not pull away, but when Brian tries to kiss her, she turns her head to offer her cheek.

AVER

Och, you're a clever one, you are, Brian of Fellsgard.

BRIAN

Clever enough.

AVER

And with so much time on your hands...

BRIAN

(grinning hopefully)

Aye...

AVER

You won't mind fetching my mother's horse?

BRIAN

I'll still have time to spare...

AVER

To fetch my father's horse? Och, Brian, you are a clever one.

CONTINUED:

BRIAN

Hmmm. I will be...when I learn not
to let "Nial" take advantage of me.

EXT - FELLSGARD/COMMONS - DAY

The grooms and MEN-AT-ARMS are busily preparing for the journey to Galwalk. In the confusion, Merlin crosses the commons and enters King Angus' villa unchallenged.

INT - FELLSGARD/VESTIBULE - DAY

Gawking, Merlin crosses the vestibule.

INT - FELLSGARD/ATRIUM - DAY

Merlin enters the open inner courtyard, complete with reflecting pool. He stops to marvel at a sculpted bronze Nymph and Satyr fountain, almost failing to notice Nial as he crosses to the vestibule. Merlin turns and hurries after him.

EXT - FELLSGARD/COMMONS - DAY

Nial stands before the villa, spear in hand, peering out over the assembling entourage of grooms, men-at-arms and horses. Merlin steps in front of Nial, grabs both arms and looks intently into Nial's face.

MERLIN

(spookily)

From you shall spring a line of kings.
This much, and more, the future brings.

NIAL

(good-naturedly)

Och, I'm afraid you've mistaken me
for Prince Duncan...

MERLIN

(more intensely)

A sword shall rise from a sacred pool
And by this sword, your son shall rule!

NIAL

My son?

Merlin tightens his grip on Nial's arms.

CONTINUED:

MERLIN

(more intensely)

His son shall draw a sword from stone,
The sword by which he'll claim his throne.
The greatest king of all, he'll be,
Renown through all eternity.
All this I've seen, all this, and more,
Of what the future holds in store.

Nial pulls free of Merlin.

NIAL

An illustrious future, uncle, but
someone else's, I'm afraid...

As Nial continues, he fishes a gold coin from his purse and presses it into Merlin's hand.

NIAL (CONT'D)

But your good will is worth this
crown to me!

MERLIN

You have that..."nephew."

DEIRDRE (O.S.)

Nial!

Nial glances up at Deirdre, on the balcony above.

EXT - FELLSGARD/BALCONY OF VILLA - DAY

DEIRDRE

(scowling)

Did you find Aver?

EXT - FELLSGARD/COMMONS - DAY

Nial looks again and sees Aver and Brian leading the horses.

NIAL

Here they come, now!

Merlin looks up at Deirdre.

EXT - FELLSGARD/BALCONY OF VILLA - DAY

DEIRDRE

(a venomous hiss)

You!

EXT - FELLSGARD/COMMONS - DAY

Reacting to Dierdre's expression, Merlin sadly lowers his gaze.

Aver sees her mother bolt from the balcony.

AVER

I have to go...

BRIAN

But it's all settled?

AVER

Whisht!

Aver runs to a side entrance to the villa, avoiding the crowd gathering before the vestibule.

Brian unhappily watches her go.

NIAL (O.S.)

Brian!

Nial moves into the crowd, toward Brian. Merlin moves quickly to get lost in the crowd.

Scowling, Brian notices the stranger as Nial approaches.

NIAL (CONT'D)

Where's Aver?

BRIAN

Och, she had something to do. Who was that strange looking fellow?

NIAL

Ahh, Brian. You're too late again.

BRIAN

Not again!

NIAL

(making a joke)

That was a renown soothsayer. While you tarried in the stables, friend, you missed your chance to be king!

BRIAN

Och, that's a shame. I'd have made a good king...

NIAL

Would you?

Suddenly, Deirdre bursts into frame, seizing Nial, startling the horses.

CONTINUED:

DEIRDRE
What did he want?

NIAL
Who?

DEIRDRE
Merlin!

NIAL
Merlin?

BRIAN
Och! When you said a famous
soothsayer...

NIAL
He never said who he was.

DEIRDRE
What did he say? Tell me, Nial.

BRIAN
Aye!

NIAL
Och! A lot of nonsense...

DEIRDRE
Never that! Never that, Nial. You
may not see it, but certain there'll
be truth in it, all twisted up in
subtlety and deceit...

NIAL
No, mother. This time, he's wrong!

Nial leaps to his steed.

DEIRDRE
Nial! Where are you going?

NIAL
To make sure of it!

Nial spurs his steed toward the main gate. Desperate, Deirdre
turns to Brian.

DEIRDRE
Brian, you're his friend. Do
something!

BRIAN
Aye! I'll fetch him back, shall I?

CONTINUED:

DEIRDRE

Go!

Brian grabs a spear from a surprised passing squire, leaps to his horse and rides after Nial.

EXT - FELLSGARD/MAIN GATE - DAY

Nial gallops out the gate of the hill fort, then reins in his steed to look for Merlin.

EXT - FELLSGARD/COUNTRYSIDE - DAY

There are patchwork fields and rocky hills, but Merlin is nowhere to be seen. High in the sky, a HAWK CRIES, circles, then flies away.

EXT - FELLSGARD/MAIN GATE - DAY

Nial watches the hawk.

NIAL

Och, no you don't! Not this time!

Nial spurs his steed and gallops away, chasing after the hawk.

Shouting, Brian rides out the gate, galloping after Nial.

BRIAN

Nial!

After a beat, Merlin rises from the rocks near the main gate, watching the young warriors ride away. Again, the HAWK CRIES.

MERLIN

(appreciatively)

A nice touch, the hawk...

EXT - GALWALK (ESTABLISHING) - DAY

King Galowyn's low-lying hill fort has a single, well-defined approach along which PEASANTS hurry to provision the stronghold. Among them, we see Griffith driving a straw-filled donkey cart up toward the main gate.

EXT - GALWALK/MAIN GATE/COMMONS - DAY

Griffith breaks away from the peasants delivering goods to the kitchens, bypasses the hostel where GROOMS and MAIDS make merry, and drives his donkey cart across the commons toward the main entrance to Galowyn's villa. In the back of the donkey cart, OWEN, Mastersinger of Westles, sleeps in the straw.

EXT - GALWALK/MAIN ENTRANCE - DAY

Galowyn's porters, tall, lanky BITTERS and squinty, rotund SNOOT, eye Griffith's arrival with suspicion.

 GRIFFITH
 (softly)
Owen? Owen, we're here. Wake up,
Owen! Oh...

Disgusted, Griffith springs down from the cart to wake Owen.

 BITTERS
 (a challenge)
Hey, you!

 GRIFFITH
Huh?

 BITTERS
Get that rubbish out of here!

 GRIFFITH
 (indignantly)
Rubbish? Now see here...

 SNOOT
You heard him!

As the porters advance, Yogan calls out from within.

 YOGAN (O.S.)
Is that the vintner?

Yogan hurries out, followed by his two strapping sons, ISHLU and CROM. Griffith recognizes Yogan from days gone by.

 GRIFFITH
Yogan?

 YOGAN
Aye?

 GRIFFITH
Griffith of Westles!

CONTINUED:

YOGAN

By all the gods, so it is!

The old warriors clasp arms. Griffith beams. Yogan puts the porters in their places.

YOGAN (CONT'D)

This here's Griffith of Westles!
You might show some respect!

SNOOT

(muttering)

Strange looking chariot for a warrior.

Bitters and Snoot reluctantly return to their posts.

YOGAN

(to Griffith)

You didn't happen to pass the vintner
on the way in?

Owen suddenly sits up, blinking in the light of day, responding instinctively.

OWEN

Vintner?

Crom's hand goes to his sword, but Yogan stays his arm.

GRIFFITH

(apologetically)

Emm, Yogan, this is the famous Owen,
Mastersinger of Westles.

YOGAN

Aye?

GRIFFITH

(to Owen)

Yogan of Galwalk, as brave a man as
any I've served with.

Owen staggers as he clasps Yogan's arm.

OWEN

An honor and a privilege, sir. Honor
and a privilege.

Yogan reacts to Owen's intoxication and foul breath.

INT - GALWALK/GREAT HALL - NIGHT

Galowyn's great hall is an ornately carved timber barn with a flagstone floor. A clerestory allows light in daytime and provides ventilation for the smokey torches that light the room. SERVING WENCHES scurry from table to table, setting out the feast and a FIRE-BREATHER in a comical dragon costume blows dramatic flames toward the rafters.

Along the two long walls, tables are laid for the visiting kings and their retinues. King Angus and Prince Duncan are in the center of the Pictish delegation's table. Griffith and Owen sit at the end of the table, well below the salt. Two places between them and Prince Duncan are embarrassingly vacant. On the other side of King Angus, Murdoch and Fergus are arguing, despite their pleasant public faces.

FERGUS

I say they'll be here...

MURDOCH

And I tell you, he's out of control!
My Brian was always dependable 'til
he took up with your Nial!

FERGUS

Took up with? They've been reared
together since they were babes!

MURDOCH

It's not to do with you, Fergus.
You've done all a mortal man could
do. More, to my way of thinking. But
I tell you, the lad is tainted in
his blood and no good will ever come
of him!

At the head of the hall, Galowyn sits at table, flanked by Yogan and Fingal. He beams out at the full house, proud of the turnout.

KING GALOWYN

This will be a feast to remember.
Look at them all!

YOGAN

(concerned)

Aye. Alaric's brought an small army,
Sire.

A JUGGLER moves to reveal Osterlaw's table, where Germanic King Alaric sits among his warriors, flanked by his huge, handsome, muscular son and champion, PRINCE SIGISMUND, and his formidable old champion, Anselm and his three sons.

KING GALOWYN (O.S.)

Who are those three with Anselm?

CONTINUED:

FINGAL

His sons, Sire. Kenelm, Wystan and Hugh.

KING GALOWYN

Have they no daughters in Osterlaw?

Fingal turns his morose gaze toward the distant ladies' area.

FINGAL

Several, Sire...

At the foot of the hall, is a separate two-tiered enclosure constructed especially for the occasion, Deirdre sits among the matrons on the upper tier, directly above Aver, who cannot take her eyes off Osterlaw's voluptuous PRINCESS ULRICA and her three Battle Maidens, HILDEGARD, a statuesque beauty with eyes like melting glaciers, and the trim and supple twins, CLOTHILDA and MATHILDA, who brazenly peer over their goblets, sizing up all the young men.

FINGAL (CONT'D)

There's Princess Ulrica, of course, Anselm's daughter, Hildegard...

A GASP rises from the crowd. The ladies stand, looking toward the head of the hall where Queen Brigit and Princess Gwen have just made their entrance.

CRYER

Her Majesty, Brigit, Queen of Galwalk,
and her Royal Highness, Princess
Gwen!

For all her legendary beauty, Gwen's mouth is set in a thin, tight line and her head is bowed.

QUEEN BRIGIT

(softly, to GWEN)

Head up, dear, and smile. You're lovely when you smile.

Gwen grimaces, but, catching her mother's eye, smiles as a FANFARE BLARES from the Minstrel's Gallery above.

QUEEN BRIGIT (CONT'D)

(over the FANFARE)

Together, now. Ready...and step.

The royals and nobles alike watch in awe as the queen and princess glide across the floor.

KING GALOWYN

She's never been more beautiful...

CONTINUED:

Prince Duncan is properly smitten, but Hildegard, fairest of Princess Ulrica's Battle Maidens, watches broken-heartedly as Prince Sigismund bows deeply to Princess Gwen.

EXT - GALWALK/MAIN ENTRANCE - NIGHT

Bitters and Snoot huddle in the shadows near the entrance.

SNOOT
(with a dirty-minded
giggle)
You could do worse than her sister...

Merlin approaches the entrance.

BITTERS
(as Merlin approaches)
Here, you! Halt!

Merlin halts obediently. The porters swagger over to him.

BITTERS (CONT'D)
(sneering)
What are you, then?

MERLIN
I am called Merlin. I have come to
see the king on a matter of grave
import.

BITTERS
(a bored recitation)
Knife has gone into food, drink into
guests and there is thronging in the
hall of Galowyn.

SNOOT
None save the son of a rightful king
or a craftsman who comes with a craft
can be allowed in, now.

BITTERS
(indicating the HOSTEL)
But over there, you'll find food for
your dogs, grain for your horses...

MERLIN
I have no dogs or horses! I tell you
I must speak to the king, at once!

BITTERS
Oh, yeah? What about?

CONTINUED:

MERLIN
Visions. Portents.

BITTERS
Oh. Visions and portents, is it?
(to Snoot)
Isn't that Wednesdays?

SNOOT
(joining in the joke)
And the first Friday of even months.

BITTERS
First Friday?

MERLIN
It's most urgent that I...

BITTERS
Urgent!?! The king's right in the
middle of a feast! He's hosting the
greatest warriors in all the land!
He's got no time for visions and
portents!

SNOOT
Have you got any money?

MERLIN
Money?

Merlin fishes through his purse and extracts the coin Nial gave him.

MERLIN (CONT'D)
I've this one crown...

BITTERS
(seizing the coin)
Right! Now, come back in the morning
and we'll see what we can do...

MERLIN
Come back in the morning?

BITTERS
You heard me. Piss off!

Snoot, a demented grin on his sadistic face, brandishes his pike. Merlin withdraws.

The porters abandon their menacing postures. Bitters tosses the coin to Snoot, who tries to bend it in his teeth.

CONTINUED:

BITTERS (CONT'D)

(casually)

You were saying? About her sister?

INT - GALWALK/GREAT HALL - NIGHT

Gwen sits between Aver and Ulrica in the center of the first tier. The Battle Maidens of Osterlaw sit on the other side Princess Ulrica. Behind them all, on the upper tier, Queen Brigit's eyes sweep over the throng of young nobles.

QUEEN BRIGIT

I thought I'd be able to tell, but I can't. Which one is Nial?

DEIRDRE

(embarrassed)

I'm afraid he's not here...

QUEEN BRIGIT

Not here?

DEIRDRE

Late, as usual, Your Majesty. He and his friend, Brian, must have taken the long way round. Searching for adventure, they'll call it!

QUEEN BRIGIT

(amused)

Sounds like Gavran. Is he much like his father?

DEIRDRE

Too much, sometimes, but Fergus has been wonderful with him.

QUEEN BRIGIT

He's a good man, Dierdre? He keeps you happy?

AVER

(blushing furiously)

Princess Gwen? Mother says you compose verses...

Princess Gwen is surprised by Aver's sudden familiarity.

PRINCESS GWEN

I haven't been feeling very poetic, lately.

CONTINUED:

AVER
(scandalized)
But, if you've a gift...

DEIRDRE
(a reprimand)
Aver.

Aver falls silent, but Prince Duncan has overheard.

PRINCE DUNCAN
A wit as well as a beauty? Can it
be true? The vision has a voice?

PRINCESS GWEN
I know you not, bold sir. Only that
you are bold, indeed.

PRINCE DUNCAN
Easily remedied, my princess. I am
Duncan of Fellsgard.

PRINCESS GWEN
And I am Gwen of Galwalk...and not
yet your princess!

The exchange catches the interest of the crowd. Some laugh at him, but Prince Duncan is not easily discouraged. He speaks up, playing to the crowd.

PRINCE DUNCAN
I speak not for myself, alone, but
for all this company of noble suitors.
What say, gentlemen? Shall we have
a rhyme from the princess?

The crowd joins in Prince Duncan's call for a rhyme. He grins at the princess. With a slight nod of capitulation, Gwen rises, holding up one hand for silence. The crowd hushes.

PRINCESS GWEN
Is every lord in all the land...
So certain he would seek my hand?

Princess Gwen bids Princess Ulrica rise.

PRINCESS GWEN (CONT'D)
(looking puzzled)
Your form as lovely. Your lips as red.
You've found no lord to share your bed?

Princess Ulrica poses, pouts and then blows a kiss to the crowd.

CONTINUED:

The crowd responds with howls of delight, but Queen Brigit looks on apprehensively as Gwen offers a hand to Hildegarde, who rises to her full height, leaving Princess Gwen staring into her ample cleavage.

PRINCESS GWEN (CONT'D)

And you? You offer...ample charms...

Hildegard stiffens and stares boldly at Prince Sigismund as the leering crowd howls its approval. Prince Sigismund turns away, unable to meet Hildegard's gaze.

PRINCESS GWEN (CONT'D)

But sleep each night with empty arms?

Gwen addresses the crowd, her tone disapproving.

PRINCESS GWEN (CONT'D)

O, noble lords, for shame! For shame.
They're all unwed. Where lies the blame?

ISHLU

Not with me...

The crowd LAUGHS with Ishlu. Gwen pauses for dramatic effect.

Owen nudges his goblet toward an pretty, obliging SERVING WENCH, but Griffith scowls and waves her off. She smiles, curtsseys to Griffith and moves on. Owen pouts.

Gwen points at her father at the head of the hall.

PRINCESS GWEN

On my bold father, regal and wise,
Who offered me up as a prize...
That every noble lord -- and clown...

Gwen looks directly at Prince Duncan. Prince Duncan smiles tightly, nodding to her, granting her the point, if not the match, as the crowd guffaws.

PRINCESS GWEN (CONT'D)

Should try his luck to win my...crown?

The crowd ROARS with approval. Gwen moves on to have some sport at Prince Sigismund's expense.

PRINCESS GWEN (CONT'D)

A kingdom's yours, O noble lord...
If you but show the greatest...sword!

Hildegard turns crimson. Gwen addresses the ladies of Osterlaw.

CONTINUED:

PRINCESS GWEN (CONT'D)

The champion for me. Alas, cruel Fate!
Your husbands needs be...second rate.

Princess Ulrica gently clasps Hildegard's arm as she steps between Gwen and the statuesque Battle Maiden.

PRINCESS ULRICA

So? What if Gwen does take the best?
She'll have just one. We'll take the rest!

The CROWD CHEERS. Gwen nods to the clever princess of Osterlaw.

KING GALOWYN

You, there! Mastersinger!

GRIFFITH

(nudging OWEN)
Answer the king...

OWEN

(not sure which king)
Majesty?

KING GALOWYN

Know you a drinking song?

OWEN

A drinking song, Your Majesty? Indeed,
I am renown throughout Westles for my
large repertoire of drinking songs.
One might say, they are my forte!

KING GALOWYN

(to Fingal, a whisper)
His what?

FINGAL

His speciality, Sire.

KING GALOWYN

Well, why didn't he say so?

OWEN

It has been said, "Where there is
drink, there is Owen...and where
there is Owen, there is song!"

Owen loudly clears his throat.

GRIFFITH

(woefully muttering)
That's not all that's been said.

CONTINUED:

KING GALOWYN

You heard the Mastersinger! Fill
the flagons! By the gods, wine and
ale for all here!

Wenches hurry to obey the king's command. One SERVING WENCH deputizes herself to see to Owen's needs. He takes the goblet of wine she offers, drains it and holds it out for a refill. She scoops a flagon off Fellsgard's table and refills his goblet as Owen begins his song without accompaniment.

Griffith rises, subtly pursuing the Serving Wench, trying to signal her to cut Owen off!

OWEN

(singing)
Lift your cup,

A murmur of anticipation ripples through the crowd as all lift their cups.

OWEN (CONT'D)

And drink your wine...

The HARPIST plays a single clear note, in tune with Owen. In the gallery, the CONCERTMASTER and other MUSICIANS nod, take the key from the Harpist as Owen continues.

OWEN (O.S.) (CONT'D)

(singing)
Worry you not of the morrow...

The Harpist plays a proper arpeggio. From the center of the hall, Owen acknowledges the gallery, draining his cup in salute, then thrusting it back to the obliging Serving Wench for another refill.

Pleased, the Musicians take up their instruments, as the Concertmaster raises his arms to signal the downbeat.

OWEN (CONT'D)

Such good spirits be ever fine...
Tonight's no night to sorrow!

The Musicians provide accompaniment, as Owen continues his song, dancing and posturing his way around to Osterlaw's table.

OWEN (CONT'D)

Hold this night, no ill will...
Let the ale keep flowing...
Lift your cup and drink your fill...
Until you're warm and glowing!

CONTINUED:

Prince Sigismund is moody, but when effervescent Owen rings his goblet against the prince's goblet, Sigismund joins in the chorus as Owen drains his goblet, then holds it out to the pursuing Serving Wench who struggles to refill it as she follows him toward the ladies' area.

CROWD

(singing)

Drink good fellows and drink you well...
 Drink you what you will, now...
 Drink you, friend, and drink you, guest...
 Drink you all your fill, now.

OWEN

(singing)

Fair ladies, too! Don't be shy...
 The night is made for pleasure...
 So drink your cup and by and by...
 We'll take each other's measure!

CROWD

(singing)

Drink good fellows and drink you well...
 Drink you what you will, now...
 Drink you, friend, and drink you, guest...
 Drink you all your fill, now.

Owen skips back to Fellsgard's table, the admiring Serving Wench at his heels. Though his legs be unsteady, his voice is true.

OWEN

(singing)

Lift your cup and drink your ale...
 Sing and dance and drink and dine...
 Tonight we sup, come storm or hail...
 So sing the song and bring more wine!

During the chorus, the Serving Maid's flagon runs dry and she hurries away to refill it. Owen collapses at the end of the bench where he started and begins greedily gobbling up everything within reach.

CROWD

(singing)

Drink good fellows and drink you well...
 Drink you what you will, now...
 Drink you, friend, and drink you, guest...
 Drink you all your fill, now.

As the music continues, Yogan's sons, Ishlu and Crom, joined by a third Galwalkian Warrior, begin an athletic Celtic sword dance.

CONTINUED:

At a signal from Princess Ulrica, Hildegard, Clothilda and Mathilda hike up their long belted gowns, making their skirts as short as the warrior's kilts, draping the excess material over their belts in the Greek fashion, revealing their strong, shapely legs. The Galwalkian warriors happily yield the floor to watch the three Battle Maidens perform their subtly erotic, athletic exercise.

Anselm's three sons, Kenelm, Wystan and Hugh, leap onto the floor, joining the Battle Maidens and the dramatic exhibition escalates again.

Grinning broadly, Owen grabs a large beef roast in both hands, and bites into it.

Prince Duncan glances wistfully at the vacant places where Nial and Brian should be.

The Serving Wench re-enters the great hall, working her way around the hall, carrying a full and heavy flagon.

All eyes are on the energetic performance of the warriors and Battle Maidens of Osterlaw when suddenly, the Serving Wench SCREAMS, bringing the performances to an abrupt halt.

SERVING WNECH

Ahhhh! Murder! Bloody murder!

The mood in the hall is transformed. Warriors, brandishing their weapons, form protective groups around their kings.

KING GALOWYN

Porters!

Old Fingal struggles to draw his broadsword from its scabbard, but Yogan, to show he poses no threat, lays down his sword and moves quickly to the Serving Wench, staring at a pool of blood and two legs showing beneath Fellsgard's table.

Fearing the worst, Griffith's eyes search the room. Murdoch, sword in hand, moves warily around to the front of the table to see what has happened.

YOGAN

Stay calm. No cause for alarm...

KING GALOWYN

Porters!

EXT - GALWALK/MAIN ENTRANCE - NIGHT

BITTERS

(vexed)

What does he expect us to do? Charge
in there every time he shouts? Desert
our posts at his every whim?

SNOOT

He is the king...

BITTERS

Right!

Bitters wheels around and marches inside. Snoot follows.

When both are out of sight, Merlin emerges from the shadows
and stealthily follows them inside.

INT - GALWALK/GREAT HALL - NIGHT

Yogan crouches by the protruding legs, examining the "blood"
as Murdoch approaches.

YOGAN

This isn't blood. Someone give me a
hand with him...

Murdoch sheathes his sword and helps Yogan to drag the body
from under the table. It is Owen, passed out, clutching the
roast to his bosom, juice running all down the front of him.
Griffith approaches sheepishly.

GRIFFITH

Ah! Fine looking roast.

Yogan takes the roast and puts it on the table, looking
icicles at Griffith, who retreats toward Galowyn's table.

GRIFFITH (CONT'D)

(muttering softly)

And Galwalkian wine...

YOGAN

(to the crowd)

He's not dead. He's drunk!

The CLANG of Fingal's heavy broadsword hitting the floor
startles the crowd.

KING GALOWYN

Fingal, put up your sword...

Fingal can't. Crom helps Fingal return the heavy sword to
its scabbard.

CONTINUED:

YOGAN

Everyone...

Bitters and Snoot burst into the great hall, brandishing their pikes.

BITTERS

(reporting for duty)

Sire!

YOGAN

Put up your weapons! There's been no murder!

There are mutterings, but the warriors put up their weapons.

GRIFFITH

(to King Galowyn)

Galwalkian wine, Your Majesty.
Nothing so fine, or so potent in
Westles...

KING GALOWYN

Porters, the Mastersinger of Westles
is in need of some night air...

BITTERS AND SNOOT

(snapping to attention)

Sire!

KING GALOWYN

(scowling at Griffith)

We find it greatly alleviates the
discomforts of our Galwalkian wines...

Bitters and Snoot drag Owen away.

KING GALOWYN (CONT'D)

(to one and all)

Drink! Eat! This is a merry
occasion! Never let it be said that
a man left my table hungry! Never
let it be said that a man went thirsty
in my house! Never let it be said
that he lacked for comfort or feared
for his life under my roof!

INT - GALWALK/MAIN CORRIDOR - NIGHT

As Bitters and Snoot pass, dragging Owen away, Merlin steps from the shadows and stealthily moves toward the great hall.

INT - GALWALK/GREAT HALL - NIGHT

As serving maids clear and serve, Yogan CLANGS the hilt of his dagger against an empty tankard to get the attention of the guests. When the crowd quiets, King Galowyn rises.

KING GALOWYN

Tomorrow, at dawn, the contests will begin with a boar hunt. Not only will this be the first test of skill, courage and endurance for those of you here gathered in the hope of winning the hand of my daughter...

A murmur of approval rises from the crowd.

KING GALOWYN (CONT'D)

(making a joke)

But with any luck at all, we'll all be assured of a hearty supper!

The CROWD LAUGHTER is cut off by a brilliant flash of lightning, followed immediately by a terrible crash of THUNDER. Merlin seizes the opportunity to make his entrance, striding purposefully toward the center of the hall.

MERLIN

(in cadence)

Greed and corruption! Blood and gore!
Terror and turmoil! Betrayal and war!

DEIRDRE

(a curse)

Merlin!

Brigit shudders. Aver stares at Deirdre, never having heard such loathing in her mother's voice. Gwen is so captivated by Merlin's words, she forgets to breathe.

MERLIN

A dragon slays a noble lord.
A child takes up his father's sword.
A dragon dies within its lair.
A king begets no son and heir.

At the head of the hall, Galowyn turns pale. Merlin turns his baleful gaze on Princess Gwen.

MERLIN (CONT'D)

A dragon steals a kingdom's prize.
A vile, dire power blinds men's eyes.
No more in peace to drain a flagon,
'Til Princess Gwen shall wed a dragon!

As all eyes turn to Princess Gwen, a mighty crash of THUNDER and lightning shakes the great hall and she faints.

CONTINUED:

QUEEN BRIGIT

No!

Deirdre and Brigit rush to Gwen's side as Galowyn shoulders his way through the crowd to his daughter's side.

DEIRDRE

Give her room to breathe!

INT - GALWALK/MAIN CORRIDOR - NIGHT

Merlin hurries quietly down the corridor toward the entrance.

BITTERS (O.S.)

Wouldn't want to be on the ramparts
tonight!

Snoot and Bitters stare out into the night.

SNOOT

What about him, then?

The porters step out to look at Owen, propped up against the wall of the great hall. Merlin seizes the opportunity to slip out without being seen.

BITTERS

Rain might do him some good...

The porters return to their posts as Merlin disappears into the night.

SNOOT

Ever notice, just before it rains,
how your armor gets all clammy?

INT - GALWALK/GREAT HALL - NIGHT

The subdued crowd exits, going to their assigned quarters elsewhere within the stronghold. Brigit and Deirdre support the embarrassed princess. Aver and a florid King Galowyn walk with them.

KING GALOWYN

He can't have just disappeared!

PRINCESS GWEN

I feel fine, now, mother. Truly, I
do.

QUEEN BRIGIT

Of course, you do...

CONTINUED:

KING GALOWYN

Well?!?

Deirdre almost speaks, but thinks better of it.

KING ANGUS

'Tis sorcery.

KING GALOWYN

Sorcery? I want that man!

GRIFFITH

You'll not find him...

Galowyn whirls to face Griffith.

KING GALOWYN

No? Why not?

GRIFFITH

(fearfully)

He has the power...

KING GALOWYN

What power?

A hush falls over the crowd. The warriors and ladies move closer to listen. As Griffith speaks, Deirdre pulls Aver over to support Gwen and moves toward Griffith.

GRIFFITH

He can change his shape at will.
Look to your eaves, your rafters,
your windows and your chimneys! He
is the hawk that hovers over the
battlefield, numbering the slain...

ANSELM

(translating
unconsciously)

The merlin...

KING ALARIC

Merlin?

GRIFFITH

Aye! Merlin, he is called by those
who dare speak his name. Seer and
shape-shifter, born of the Mad Maid
of the Green Wood and no mortal man.
Be assured! All that he spake shall
come to pass, or has already come to
pass, for that was Merlin. Merlin
of Westles!

CONTINUED:

DEIRDRE
(furiously)
Merlin of Westles! Seer, shape-
shifter and master of deceits!

Fergus makes his way through the crowd to Deirdre's side.

DEIRDRE (CONT'D)
Or can it be that here, in Galwalk,
noble Gavran is so soon forgotten?
Gavran the brave, your champion in
battle. Gavran of the Green Wood,
unlikely twin to that same foul wretch
whose evil tongue brings only misery
and suffering! God-like Gavran,
whose memory... Whose memory...

FERGUS
(gently)
Deirdre...

Deirdre bolts from the great hall. The crowd is frozen.
With a nod to King Galowyn, Fergus goes after Deirdre.

KING GALOWYN
(bewildered)
I've never spoken ill of Gavran...

QUEEN BRIGIT
The night is long and we all have
much to ponder...

Ulrica quickly leads her Battle Maidens from the great hall.

PRINCESS ULRICA
(softly to her Battle
Maidens)
"Betrayal and war," he said. From
now on, we go armed.

QUEEN BRIGIT
Aver, would you stay with Gwen...

AVER
Of course, Your Majesty...

PRINCESS GWEN
You're welcome, of course, Aver, but
I assure you, mother, I'm quite all
right, now.

QUEEN BRIGIT
Of course, dear, but I'll be more
comfortable, knowing you're not alone.

CONTINUED:

KING GALOWYN

If you think she's in any danger,
Brigit, I'll post guards at her door!

QUEEN BRIGIT

You'll do nothing of the sort! Would
you insult our guests?

The Picts of Fellsgard are next to leave.

MURDOCH

Sire, my sword is ever yours to
command, but if evil has befallen my
Brian...

PRINCE DUNCAN

I trust Nial with my life, father.

KING ANGUS

Aye, Duncan, but where is he?

Another CRASH OF THUNDER and lightning punctuates their exit.

EXT - FOREST/NIAL'S CAMPSITE - NIGHT

Not far from their campfire, Nial and Brian rig a shelter
for their horses. Brian shudders as THUNDER BOOMS.

BRIAN

This may be the last we see of each
other.

NIAL

(dismissing the idea)
Och...

BRIAN

Hear me out, Nial. There's something
I must say, even if it turns you
against me.

NIAL

Aye?

BRIAN

You won't have noticed, being her
brother and all, but Aver's come of
an age...

NIAL

Is that all?

CONTINUED:

BRIAN

All? I'm telling you I plan to wed your sister!

NIAL

You don't think that's a secret, do you? Aver told me you would, more than a year ago.

BRIAN

But I've only just asked her, this morning.

NIAL

Prophecy runs in the family.

BRIAN

You're not against it, then?

NIAL

Brian, if you hadn't asked the girl, and soon, I was going to have to speak to you!

BRIAN

Och! Isn't it marvelous, though. You and I, friends all these years. And her, scruffy little thing, tagging along everywhere.

NIAL

(amused)
Scruffy little thing.

BRIAN

I wish I could see her now. Tell her that we've spoken. You don't think Fergus will object?

Nial wags his head. Brian bends down to pick up another branch for the lean-to, and comes up with the stripped drumstick of a game bird as well.

BRIAN (CONT'D)

You know, the worst part of this is, there's nothing left to eat. There they all are, feasting away to their heart's content, and I'm ravenous!

Brian tosses the stripped drumstick aside.

BRIAN (CONT'D)

One scrawny bird...

CONTINUED:

NIAL

Scrawny? When I brought it down, it was a fine, plump prize, easily enough for two!

BRIAN

Well. I'd missed mine, hadn't I...

A brilliant flash of lightning is followed immediately by a LOUD THUNDERCLAP.

BRIAN (CONT'D)

If I thought there was any chance I could find Galwalk in this awful dark of night, I'd go and now.

NIAL

I'll deliver you within sight of it in the morning.

BRIAN

I wish you weren't leaving.

NIAL

It's clear enough that for me to establish a royal house, some evil would have to befall Prince Duncan and I won't be party to that!

BRIAN

Och, you're doing the right thing, Nial. And the truth is, no one will be surprised, least of all, Duncan, to learn that fate has something special in store for you.

NIAL

Says Merlin.

BRIAN

Not just Merlin. After all, you're Gavran's son, and Gavran wasn't entirely human...or so they say.

NIAL

So your father, "Murderous Murdoch" would have you believe.

BRIAN

And Merlin? Will you pretend he's a man like any other man? I should say not...

CONTINUED:

NIAL

So you say, and you're my friend!
That's why I must to Westles. I'll
have the truth and from Merlin,
himself.

BRIAN

You may already have it.

Another flash of lightning is followed by a ROLLING CRASH OF THUNDER. The friends continue their work in morose silence.

INT - PRINCESS GWEN'S BEDCHAMBER - NIGHT

Aver, wearing an embroidered shift, examines the princess' tiny treasures and curiosities as Princess Gwen slips into her own beautifully embroidered shift.

PRINCESS GWEN

All I really know is that he was
slain by a dragon before I was born.

AVER

So they say.

PRINCESS GWEN

It's true, isn't it?

AVER

My mother says a shape-shifter took
him.

PRINCESS GWEN

Do you believe in shape-shifters?

AVER

Merlin flew up into the rafters and
out through a smoke hole...

PRINCESS GWEN

You saw?

AVER

It happened that fast...

PRINCESS GWEN

I wish I'd seen...

AVER

It was horrible. He might have taken
you! I thought he had, at first.

PRINCESS GWEN

Where, I wonder?

CONTINUED:

AVER

Somewhere horrible. It's not good
to talk of such things...

PRINCESS GWEN

No.

Gwen goes to her balcony to watch the growing storm. As the princess steps onto her balcony, a rush of wind brings Aver out of her dark imaginings and she puts on a shawl.

EXT - GALWALK/GWEN'S BALCONY - NIGHT

Gwen's shift clings to her as she holds her face into the wind, thrilled by the tumultuous atmosphere. Aver joins her, hugging herself against the chilly wind.

AVER

Princess Gwen? You don't mind my
staying with you?

PRINCESS GWEN

Of course not. I'm just not the
least bit sleepy.

AVER

Little wonder, knowing you're soon
to be a bride.

Another CRASH OF THUNDER and lightning sends Aver scurrying back inside.

PRINCESS GWEN

I've always felt there was a special
affinity between me and nature...

AVER (O.S.)

Well, try not to bring the roof down
on us!

The princess smiles and goes back inside, closing the door behind her.

EXT - GALWALK/MAIN ENTRANCE (LONG-GRIN'S POV) - NIGHT

The HIGH-ANGLE VIEW of the villa, sways slightly from side to side as the CAMERA CRANE draws nearer to the entrance.

INT - GALWALK/MAIN ENTRANCE/COMMONS - NIGHT

Bitters and Snoot huddle together, their backs to the chilly commons beyond the entrance, surly and dejected.

CONTINUED:

BITTERS

Where's the sense in it? What are we supposed to be guarding against? Anyone who might want to start trouble is already inside!

SNOOT

Off at midnight, back on at dawn. You can forget your lady friend.

BITTERS

And her friend!

A brilliant flash of lightning reveals the sorcerer, Akimera, holding Malabar, his fearsome wand with its severed head before him, crossing the commons, followed by the huge dragon, Long-Grin, unobserved by the two porters.

SNOOT

(after the THUNDERCLAP)

If it's going to rain, I wish it would just rain and get it over with. I hate clammy armor.

Both porters duck, reacting to an especially LOUD THUNDERCLAP.

EXT - GALWALK/NEAR MAIN ENTRANCE - NIGHT

A series of lightning flashes reveals Owen, bleary-eyed, but back on his feet, leaning against the wall of the great hall. He lurches out across the dark commons toward the main gate as the ROLLING THUNDER arrives.

Another series of lightning flashes reveals the sorcerer and his dragon moving past the great hall. As they move out of view, the lightning reveals Merlin, flattened against the wall, watching wide-eyed as the monster passes. More ROLLING THUNDER, more lightning flashes, and Merlin is gone.

INT - GALWALK/GWEN'S BEDCHAMBER - NIGHT

Gwen and Aver huddle near the fire.

AVER

The Lady of the Lake was the name given to both the priestess who kept her shrine, and the goddess, herself, one dwelling in the world of nature and the other...

PRINCESS GWEN

Mostly, it's that way.

CONTINUED:

AVER

Aye. And you'll know that at certain times of year, the goddess enters her priestess...

PRINCESS GWEN

If she didn't, there'd be no purpose in the rituals.

AVER

No.

PRINCESS GWEN

And I also know that some say that's how Gavran came to be part god.

AVER

Aye. But did you know the father was a shape-shifter?

Gwen did not know.

AVER (CONT'D)

Och, there you have it. The Lady of the Lake, priestess and goddess in one, and in the middle of it all, the shape-shifter transforming...

PRINCESS GWEN

Into what?

AVER

A dragon, I suppose...

PRINCESS GWEN

(shuddering with dread)
Ohhh!

AVER

Some say it was the goddess went mad, trapped in mortal form for the full term, but others say it was the horror that drove her priestess mad. With the shape-shifter, all the while lurking about, and she, so big, and believing a dragon grew inside her!

PRINCESS GWEN

No wonder she went mad!

AVER

In the event, she gave birth to twins. Both the shape-shifter and the goddess abandoned her, along with her reason.

(MORE)

CONTINUED:

AVER (CONT'D)

And that's the Tale of the Mad Maid
of the Green Wood and the birthing
of Gavran and Merlin as I know it.
The one, like a young god; the other,
after his shape-shifting father.

PRINCESS GWEN

I don't know. It's one thing to say
the priestess was fooled, but the
goddess would have known what was to
come of it all and would never have
submitted but to some good purpose.

AVER

Och, Your Highness, I don't pretend
to comprehend the mysteries of the
gods and goddesses.

PRINCESS GWEN

Nor do I. But it stands to reason...

AVER

I don't even know that the tale is
true. But if it is, and the dragon
and the shape-shifter are one and
the same, then Gavran was slain by
his own father, and it was his
unnatural twin, Merlin, who sent him
to his doom.

Another RUMBLE OF THUNDER echoes through the night.

EXT - GALWALK/GWEN'S BALCONY - NIGHT

His hooded cloak whipped by rising winds, Akimera stands on
the balcony, holding his hideous wand aloft. Malabar is
awake, electrical current flickering over his leathern face.

The nervous dragon, Long-Grin, waits below.

And Merlin observes all from the shelter of darkness.

MALABAR

With my awesome power infernal,
You hold the key to life eternal.
Bound by dire enchantment are we,
I to you and you to me.

AKIMERA

(undaunted, obsessed)
Magic of the darkest night,
Blind her guardians to her plight.

CONTINUED:

Sheet lightning illuminates the action as the heavens revolt against Akimera's incantations. Long-Grin is terrified, a creature of nature held in thrall by supernatural powers.

AKIMERA (CONT'D)

Enchanted sleep shall be my key.

Deliver Princess Gwen to me!

MALABAR

So be it.

The heavens explode in sustained THUNDER and lightning. Long-Grin tries to hide under the small balcony, rocking it, forcing Akimera to cling to the rail to keep from being knocked off his feet by the panicky dragon.

AKIMERA

(snarling at the dragon)

Be still!

When the terrified dragon fails to obey, Akimera launches a bolt of lightning. The lightning-struck dragon SCREAMS and trembles in fear of its master. Merlin watches the dragon cower, then pulls his head back into the shadows as a ruddy glow begins to spread.

Malabar glows like a lantern from within, revealing the skull beneath the leathern face. Akimera beckons with his free hand, calling the princess forth.

INT - GALWALK/GWEN'S BEDCHAMBER - NIGHT

Aver lies on the floor of the bedchamber, watching in horror, unable to speak or move as the somnambulant princess opens the door to the sorcerer.

A sudden gust of wind violently stirs the flames in the fireplace and extinguishes all the candles in the bedchamber.

Flashes of lightning and the glow of the wand reveal Long-Grin's head, long neck and wide-spread bat-like wings rising into view above the balcony.

The storm breaks. Torrential rain obscures the scene on the balcony, as Aver finally succumbs to enchanted sleep.

INT - GALWALK/MAIN CORRIDOR - NIGHT

Soaked in the downpour, Merlin stumbles over the sleeping porters in the corridor. The ruddy glow of the wand strikes the wall and Merlin ducks into the shadows.

EXT - GALWALK/MAIN GATE/COMMONS - NIGHT

Gwen sits astride the dragon, above its extended wings, entranced, staring at the glowing wand that lights their path as Akimera leads them away through the downpour.

INT - GALWALK/MAIN CORRIDOR - NIGHT

The glow of the wand passes from the walls. Merlin steps over the porters and goes out into the storm, following the kidnapers.

EXT - GALWALK (ESTABLISHING) - DAWN

The sun rises on Galowyn's stronghold.

EXT - GALWALK/COURTYARD - DAWN

As Yogan helps Ishlu and Crom to harness their chariot team, Prince Duncan rides out on horseback.

YOGAN

Now, what does a boar do when he sees a man on foot, eh?

ISHLU

Well...

YOGAN

He charges, doesn't he? Right to you like pork roast on a platter!

CROM

(doubtfully)
Still...

YOGAN

All right! Now, you've got your pig, but, just maybe, one of them horsemen has been as lucky. What does he do?

Hildegard's brothers, Kenelm, Wystan and Hugh ride out.

YOGAN (CONT'D)

He straps the great brute to his horse and he walks! Whereas you, my lads, pop your pig into the chariot and ride back in style. Don't you fret yourselves over any trousered horsemen! You can't beat a chariot for hunting!

CONTINUED:

Prince Sigismund and FOUR EXTRA HUNTERS ride through as Crom and Ishlu jump into their chariot and follow them.

YOGAN (CONT'D)
(proudly)
They'll do all right...

EXT - FOREST/STREAM - DAWN

Owen sleeps, cradled in the roots at the base of a tree. Upstream, a flock of birds erupts into NOISY FLIGHT, waking the woozy Mastersinger. He flails about as if under attack.

OWEN
Bats and owls!

Coming to his senses, Owen squints about in bewilderment.

OWEN (CONT'D)
What witchery is this? The great
hall, vanished?

Groaning, Owen rises, leaning against the tree for support.

OWEN (CONT'D)
Oh! What infamy!

He lurches forward, still under the influence of the evening's excesses, making his unsteady way toward the stream.

OWEN (CONT'D)
Turned out into the terrors of the
night! Abandoned in forest strange
and unfamiliar! So far we've fallen
under the Roman! So, are the gentry
brought to...

Owen reacts to his own chilling words, whirling fearfully, alert to danger.

OWEN (CONT'D)
(under taboo)
Gentry! A faery forest, then? By
all the gods, that was no earthly
hall! They've taken Griffith!

Owen spins quickly, as if to catch one of the "Gentry" watching. Suddenly, he grabs his head with both hands, reacting to his hangover, staggering, but keeping his feet.

OWEN (CONT'D)
Ahhh! No faery wine did this.

CONTINUED:

Owen gently kneels by the stream and scoops water into his face. His hat falls into the stream, but Owen can only freeze and wait for the throbbing in his temples to subside.

OWEN (CONT'D)
(self-pity, not remorse)
Galwalk! Oh, Owen. What have you
done? Nothing so serious, I trust.
They've left you your head...
(groan)
as punishment.

Owen gingerly turns his head, looking for his hat. To his dismay, he sees it drifting downstream.

OWEN (CONT'D)
Drat.

Owen's hat snags on a branch that has fallen into the stream. Hopefully, he reaches for the branch, but when he tries to pull it toward him, the hat floats free and drifts away again.

OWEN (CONT'D)
Oh, double drat.

Owen pulls off one shoe. There is SPLASHING upstream. Owen looks, shielding his eyes. Nial appears, a slow-motion nightmare figure silhouetted against the rising sun, galloping downstream toward Owen.

Owen scrambles to his feet, screaming in terror.

Nial's lowered spear scoops up Owen's hat. His horse rears and he brings the spear to bear on Owen, with the soggy hat hanging from the spear tip.

Owen reacts to the spear pointed at his heart.

OWEN (CONT'D)
Spare me! I beg you...

NIAL
Your hat, sir?

OWEN
Was! Was mine, if you fancy it,
milord...

Brian trots into view, enjoying the spectacle.

NIAL
A bit damp, perhaps, but a fine hat,
to be sure.

CONTINUED:

OWEN

A very fine hat, milord.

BRIAN

In that case, good fellow, you don't want to lose it.

OWEN

Emmm. No, I shouldn't, actually.

NIAL

Then take it and welcome!

OWEN

(wringing out the HAT)
Thank you, milords. Thank you, indeed. Allow me to introduce myself. I am Owen, Mastersinger of Westles...

NIAL AND BRIAN

(unison, dismayed)
Westles!?!?

OWEN

A friendly nation, milords!

BRIAN

(scowling at NIAL)
We seem to have lost our way in these woods. We were on our way to Galwalk Castle...

OWEN

So you are, milord. I was there, myself, just last evening.

NIAL

You see? I told you, if we followed the stream...

BRIAN

How much further to Galwalk Castle?

OWEN

Well, not far on horseback...

NIAL

There. As I said. Shall we away?
Good day to you, Mastersinger!

Nial and Brian spur their steeds downstream.

OWEN

Now, there's gentlemen!

EXT - FORTRESS (ESTABLISHING) - DAY

Built into a hillside is a ruined Roman fortress, abandoned for many years, overgrown, with breached battlements, on its way to being reclaimed by nature. A high tower, more ancient than the Roman work, is in relatively good repair and the high, arched gateway is sound.

EXT - MEADOW BEFORE FORTRESS - DAY

Merlin stands before the main gate. The portcullis is raised, but the gate is not inviting.

PRINCESS GWEN (O.S.)
(shouting)
I know you're there! Release me at
once! Do you hear?

Merlin foregoes the gate to move toward the wall, looking up at the ancient tower.

INT - FORTRESS/TOWER CELL - DAY

Gwen stands at a narrow, barred window in the tower wall, peering out into the morning light, angry, cold and frightened, still dressed only in her damp shift.

PRINCESS GWEN
Let me out of here!

No answer comes.

PRINCESS GWEN (CONT'D)
Answer me! There must be someone!?!

LONG-GRIN (O.S.)
Must you make so much noise?

Startled, Gwen whirls to face the barred entry to her cell, her eyes adjusting to the darkness. She is frightened, but imperious, every inch a princess royal.

LONG-GRIN (O.S.) (CONT'D)
You'll wake the master...

PRINCESS GWEN
Who's there?

Gwen reacts to the RUSTLE OF SCALES outside her cell, moving toward the bars. Long-Grin's head rises into view, his large, reptilian eyes blinking in the light, his neck bladders filling with a gentle hiss.

LONG-GRIN
Long-Grin...

CONTINUED:

Gwen SCREAMS, stumbles back, and collapses, driven witless by the sight of the dragon. Long-Grin recoils, jerking back out of view. After a beat, the dragon raises his head to peer into the cell at the unconscious girl.

LONG-GRIN (CONT'D)

What an extraordinary creature!

EXT - FORTRESS WALL - DAY

Merlin stands at the base of the ruined wall, eyes closed in concentration. He opens his eyes.

MERLIN

Extraordinary creature, indeed...

Suddenly, Merlin frowns and closes his eyes, again.

EXT - FOREST/STREAM - DAY

There is a deep imprint of a dragon's foot in a sandbar in the stream, partially obliterating the sorcerer's footprint.

BRIAN (O.S.)

It can't be...

NIAL (O.S.)

It can be nothing else! And it's stalking a man!

Nial points to the sorcerer's footprint, then springs to his steed. Brian grabs Nial's horse's bridle.

BRIAN

Don't be a fool, Nial. You can't go after it alone.

Nial tries to jerk his horse free, but Brian holds on.

BRIAN (CONT'D)

No, Nial! Ride with me to Galwalk!
We'll get help.

NIAL

That's the one place I can't go.

Nial jerks the bridle free and spurs his horse upstream. Brian grabs at the saddle, but is too late.

BRIAN

No!

CONTINUED:

NIAL
I must warn the Mastersinger!

BRIAN
You'll be killed!

NIAL
I'll mark a trail!

BRIAN
By the gods, Nial! You leave me no
choice!

Brian runs to his horse, putting the horse in motion, then
trick-mounts the galloping horse, heading downstream.

MERLIN (V.O.)
The Mastersinger?

EXT - FORTRESS WALL - DAY

MERLIN
(muttering dismissively)
He's in no danger...

Merlin moves along the wall toward the tower.

EXT - FORTRESS/WALL ABOVE RAVINE - DAY

Merlin's path takes him to the edge of a deep, rocky ravine,
with the tower still some distance off. Despite misgivings,
Merlin begins to climb out over the ravine.

MERLIN (V.O.)
'Til Princess Gwen shall wed...

INT - FORTRESS/TOWER CELL - DAY

Gwen writhes in a nightmare.

MERLIN (V.O.)
A dragon...

Terror awakens her. She sits up, shuddering, listening to
the RUSTLE OF SCALES, O.S., bracing herself for the sight of
the monster.

Long-Grin peers into the cell. Seeing her staring back at
him, Long-Grin quickly withdraws, then rises back into view.

LONG-GRIN
Hello...

CONTINUED:

Gwen's initial terror turns to awe. When she fails to answer, Long-Grin starts to withdraw.

PRINCESS GWEN

Wait!

Long-Grin stops. The princess and the dragon stare at each other for a long beat. Again, Long-Grin starts to withdraw.

PRINCESS GWEN (CONT'D)

You're not a proper dragon, are you?

Long-Grin manages an inquisitive HISS.

PRINCESS GWEN (CONT'D)

Well, you didn't eat me, or tear me limb from limb. And you can talk.

Long-Grin stares, enjoying the strange sound of her voice.

PRINCESS GWEN (CONT'D)

You're a shape-shifter.

LONG-GRIN

I beg your pardon?

Gwen rises and stares back at the dragon.

PRINCESS GWEN

(trying to remember)

You have a name...

LONG-GRIN

Long-Grin.

PRINCESS GWEN

(seeking a clue)

Long-Grin.

LONG-GRIN

My master says...

PRINCESS GWEN

Your master?

Long-Grin moves back into the shadows outside the cell. The princess moves to the bars, determined to get a better look at the dragon.

INT - FORTRESS/TOWER OUTSIDE GWEN'S CELL - DAY

Gwen presses her face against the bars. Long-Grin is curled up against the far wall, like a huge dog. Gwen sees the entire dragon for the first time and shudders at the size of him.

CONTINUED:

PRINCESS GWEN
Who is your master?

LONG-GRIN
Akimera. A very powerful sorcerer!

PRINCESS GWEN
So that's it! Sorcery!

Gwen notices that the dragon seems intimidated.

PRINCESS GWEN (CONT'D)
Do I frighten you?

Long-Grin's huge hind claws scrape the floor as he tries to curl himself up into an even tighter ball.

PRINCESS GWEN (CONT'D)
I am a princess, you know. I sometimes do frighten people. My father is a king.

Long-Grin fails to respond. Gwen tries another tack.

PRINCESS GWEN (CONT'D)
Do you remember your father and mother?

Again, Long-Grin's hind claws scrape the floor. An EERIE NOISE, something between a whine and a whistle escapes the dragon, but he immediately cuts it off.

PRINCESS GWEN (CONT'D)
(sympathetically)
You must have been enchanted at a very early age.

Gwen, accustomed to Long-Grin's docility is startled by the HISS of his inflating his neck bladders.

LONG-GRIN
Enchanted?

PRINCESS GWEN
Your master, as you call him, is a sorcerer. Obviously, you're not a real dragon...

Long-Grin rustles his wings and the sharp spines around his head and neck rise.

PRINCESS GWEN (CONT'D)
Well, look at you. You call those wings? You can't fly, can you?
(MORE)

CONTINUED:

PRINCESS GWEN (CONT'D)

If you were meant to fly, your forelegs would be wings. You wouldn't have both. Why, it's like having six legs.

Long-Grin HISSES LOUDLY as he draws wind, then blows it out both sides of his mouth, making a rude, derisive noise. Gwen, annoyed and a bit intimidated by the dragon's attitude, speaks with the absolute assurance of her Royal upbringing.

PRINCESS GWEN (CONT'D)

And dragons are brown, or gray, or green...

Long-Grin makes another rude, derisive NOISE.

PRINCESS GWEN (CONT'D)

And whatever else they may be, I do not believe they are rude!

Again, Long-Grin blows air through his jowls, making the derisive sound.

INT - FORTRESS/TOWER CELL - DAY

Gwen grows increasingly annoyed by the dragon's rudeness.

PRINCESS GWEN

I, of all people, happen to know a great deal about dragons!

O.S., Long-Grin makes the NOISE, again. Gwen storms away from bars.

INT - FORTRESS/TOWER OUTSIDE GWEN'S CELL - DAY

Long-Grin settles his wings and curls his tail around to act as both blanket and pillow. Gwen returns to the bars, but Long-Grin turns away, craning his neck to rest his head on the thickest part of his tail.

PRINCESS GWEN

On the day that I was born, the very last dragon in all the land was slain!

Long-Grin lays back his ears.

CONTINUED:

PRINCESS GWEN (CONT'D)

As a result, I've never had a single birthday that hasn't been the occasion for the telling and re-telling of all the tales of all the dragons that ever lived!

The dragon's ears prick up slightly and he peeks at the princess through half-lidded eyes.

PRINCESS GWEN (CONT'D)

I dare say, I know more about dragons -- real ones, of course, than you do.

Gwen turns away, pretending to find the conversation a bore. Long-Grin raises his head. She turns back and smiles when she sees she has his attention.

PRINCESS GWEN (CONT'D)

Shall I tell you about them...

Long-Grin nods affirmatively.

PRINCESS GWEN (CONT'D)

Well then, once upon a time there were many, many dragons...

INT - GALWALK/PASSAGEWAY - DAY

King Alaric and King Galowyn adjust their armor and weaponry as they hurry down the passageway with Fingal in their wake.

KING ALARIC

Mark me, Galowyn. Fellsgard's behind this.

KING GALOWYN

To what end? You heard Merlin...

KING ALARIC

That could have been Angus's doing...

KING GALOWYN

Well, we can't very well not hunt the dragon, can we?

KING ALARIC

Yo, Galowyn. We will hunt the dragon...

Alaric grabs Galowyn's arm, halting him in the corridor, his voice lowered conspiratorially.

CONTINUED:

KING ALARIC (CONT'D)

But I keep one good eye to the back!
"Betrayal and war," the Merlin said...

KING GALOWYN

Nial is Galwalkian by birth.

KING ALARIC

Na! That's a long time ago...

FINGAL

Sire, it was not Nial, but Brian,
Murdoch's lad, that brought us the
report.

KING ALARIC

Na, Galowyn? They may have killed
him! To imagine a youth going alone
after a dragon...

KING GALOWYN

(to Fingal)

Post a guard at Gwen's bedchamber.

With a grunt of approval, Alaric moves on.

KING GALOWYN (CONT'D)

And he's to stay by her, no matter
what Brigit says. Is that clear?

FINGAL

Aye, Sire.

Fingal hurries away to implement the king's order and Galowyn
hurries after Alaric.

EXT - GALWALK/COURTYARD - DAY

Yogan, the steward, honored to drive Galowyn's chariot, awaits
with the team ready to go at Galowyn's command. King Angus,
Murdoch, Fergus and Brian are mounted and waiting. Anselm
holds Alaric's steed as well as his own. King Alaric bursts
out the doorway into the courtyard.

KING ANGUS

What's keeping Galowyn?

KING ALARIC

He's on his way!

Taking his horse, Alaric mumbles a warning to Anselm.

KING ALARIC (CONT'D)

Keep one eye on Fellsgard.

CONTINUED:

DEIRDRE (O.S.)

Fergus!

Fergus dismounts to embrace Deirdre as she runs into view.

FERGUS

I'll fetch our lad home, Deirdre.
You know I will...

DEIRDRE

See that you fetch yourself home,
too -- and all in one piece.

King Galowyn enters the courtyard, scowling as he marches to his chariot. Fergus gives Deirdre a final hug.

FERGUS

Och. I've you to look after me, if
worse comes to worst...

Anselm and Alaric mount their horses. Fingal hurries into the courtyard through the outside gateway, carrying a two-handed pole-axe. Galowyn eyes the unwieldy weapon as Fingal takes his place in the chariot, then climbs aboard himself, speaking softly to Fingal.

KING GALOWYN

The other matter?

FINGAL

Aye, Sire. I've sent the porters...

KING GALOWYN

Well, then, Brian of Fellsgard, lead
on. We'll see this dragon of yours.

DEIRDRE

(to FERGUS)

Mind yourself...

Fergus mounts his horse as King Angus signals Brian to lead the way. Deirdre steps aside as Alaric and Anselm follow.

Queen Brigit rushes into the courtyard just as Galowyn gives Yogan the signal to move out. The chariot lurches forward, toppling Fingal's pole-axe, barely missing Queen Brigit as it crashes to the courtyard, leaving Fingal hanging half out of the chariot, clinging to the pole-axe with one hand and the chariot rail with the other. The dragging pole-axe makes an awful racket.

KING GALOWYN

Whoa!

CONTINUED:

Griffith throws open the shutters to his sleeping chamber, observing the chaos below with some amusement. Galowyn helps Fingal to his feet.

KING GALOWYN (CONT'D)

Leave it, Fingal. Should we encounter a dragon, I've no intention of plowing it under.

Deirdre hurries over and picks up the pole-axe.

KING GALOWYN (CONT'D)

(to Yogan)

Let's just go, shall we?

Fingal clings to the hilt of his broadsword, mustering such dignity as the situation allows, as the chariot starts out for the second time.

QUEEN BRIGIT

Good hunting!

Griffith laughs heartily. Queen Brigit scowls up at him.

QUEEN BRIGIT (CONT'D)

Griffith. I wonder that you are still in your nightshirt.

GRIFFITH

A dragon hunt? Really, Your Majesty.

Queen Brigit stares him down.

GRIFFITH (CONT'D)

(taking it seriously)

Your Majesty, had I been told...

QUEEN BRIGIT

The kings muster their warbands, Griffith. As sole representative of your nation, I expect you were simply overlooked.

GRIFFITH

By the gods!

Griffith pulls his head back inside, out of view.

DEIRDRE

A lot of help, he'll be...

QUEEN BRIGIT

More than some. Poor old Fingal.

CONTINUED:

Leaning the pole-axe against the wall, Deirdre opens the door for Queen Brigit.

DEIRDRE
(agreeing)
He shouldn't have gone...

QUEEN BRIGIT
Is Nial likely to engage a dragon on his own?

DEIRDRE
He's that much like his father...

EXT - FOREST/VILLAGE BY THE STREAM - DAY

In the tiny village, Nial is a rare curiosity on his prancing charger. Owen and the VILLAGERS crowd around Nial as he makes his way back toward the stream.

NIAL
You'll be safe here, Mastersinger.

OWEN
I'll sing of this adventure, one day!

Nial ducks a pointed staff wielded by VILLAGER TWO.

NIAL
With luck, I'll live to hear it...

VILLAGER ONE
What should we do, milord?

VILLAGER TWO
(eager for action)
Take arms! We'll take arms!

NIAL
No! Return to your homes! By now, the king is on his way...

VILLAGER THREE
The king?

VILLAGER ONE
We'll watch for him, milord!

Nial breaks free of the crowd. The awe-stricken villagers watch Nial gallop to the other side of the stream and ride out of sight.

CONTINUED:

OWEN

Honor and victory to you, sir!

VILLAGER TWO

I says we should take arms...

VILLAGER ONE

(to Owen)

So, you're a Mastersinger...

VILLAGER THREE

(nudging Owen)

Who was that, then?

OWEN

Nial of Fellsgard!

The name is unknown to the villagers, but they are duly impressed by Owen's knowledge and tone of voice.

INT - PRINCESS GWEN'S BEDCHAMBER - DAY

Princess Ulrica and her Battle Maidens crowd the doorway as Bitters and Snoot search the bedchamber. Deirdre stands by Aver, who sits on the bed, her head down, unable to face Queen Brigit.

QUEEN BRIGIT

A glowing, severed head?

Aver nods.

QUEEN BRIGIT (CONT'D)

And this...old man. The dragon obeyed him?

AVER

It seemed so, Your Majesty.

DEIRDRE

(horrified)

It's him, come back! It must be.

The Housekeeper shouts from the corridor.

HOUSEKEEPER (O.S.)

Your Majesty!

Princess Ulrica and her Battle Maidens make way as the Housekeeper enters with Griffith in tow.

HOUSEKEEPER (CONT'D)

I've got him, Your Majesty!

CONTINUED:

GRIFFITH

You sent for me, Your Majesty?

QUEEN BRIGIT

(to the HOUSEKEEPER)

Fetch my battle dress!

HOUSEKEEPER

Yes, Your Majesty!

The Housekeeper scurries from the room. Princess Ulrica and her Battle Maidens withdraw, too.

QUEEN BRIGIT

Porter, have my chariot made ready!

Bitters and Snoot, unsure which Porter the queen intended, both leave on her errand.

QUEEN BRIGIT (CONT'D)

(to Griffith)

I trust you can still handle horses?

GRIFFITH

Handle horses, Your Majesty? Why
I...

Reading the desperation in the Queen's eyes, all Griffith's boastfulness and pretense fall away.

GRIFFITH (CONT'D)

An honor and a privilege, Your
Majesty!

EXT - FOREST/STREAM - DAY

The three kings and their hunting party examine the dragon's footprint in the sandbar.

KING ALARIC

It's a dragon...

KING GALOWYN

Not a very big one...

KING ANGUS

Big enough!

KING GALOWYN

Oh, big enough...

CONTINUED:

FERGUS

(urgently)

If Your Majesties are all quite
satisfied?

KING ANGUS

Quite.

KING ALARIC

To horse!

Fergus and Brian gallop upstream, not waiting for the kings.
As Galowyn springs to his chariot, the rest of the kings and
warriors are already cantering away.

KING GALOWYN

(to Yogan)

Stay with them...

Yogan whips the chariot team into action, splashing back
into the stream, determined to keep up with the horsemen.

INT - FORTRESS/TOWER CELL - DAY

Princess Gwen sits on the floor, leaning against the cell
door, her face filled with disgust. Beyond her, Long-Grin
is still curled up against the far wall.

PRINCESS GWEN

My blood?

LONG-GRIN

(correcting)

Your royal blood...

INT - FORTRESS/TOWER CORRIDOR - DAY

Gwen rises, slowly filling with the same grim purpose evident
in her royal mother, Queen Brigit

PRINCESS GWEN

Then, his abominations shall bring
about his destruction...

Her words, ringing like an incantation, bring her comfort.

PRINCESS GWEN (CONT'D)

For the wine he seeks is more precious
than he knows, aged to that ripeness
and perfection that makes warriors
of peasants, champions of warriors
and kings of champions!

CONTINUED:

Familiar with Akimera's spells, Long-Grin shudders in anticipation.

PRINCESS GWEN (CONT'D)

By now, the crime is known; by now,
the search begun. The warriors come,
mad for slaughter, naked steel
gleaming! Nothing stands before
them!

LONG-GRIN

(enchanted)
Nothing...

PRINCESS GWEN

No force of nature...

LONG-GRIN

(inspired)
Nothing...

Her eyes gleaming, courage rising, Gwen thrills to the power of her words and Long-Grin's echo of her hopes.

PRINCESS GWEN

Neither man nor beast...

LONG-GRIN

Nothing...

The sight of the dragon brings Gwen back to her senses.

PRINCESS GWEN

(filled with foreboding)
Oh, Long-Grin...

Long-Grin hangs his head.

PRINCESS GWEN (CONT'D)

You do look rather a lot like a
dragon...

LONG-GRIN

But dragons are brown, or gray, or
green...

PRINCESS GWEN

Well, yes, of course. But warriors
may not take that into account if
they believe I'm in danger...

Long-Grin sighs, unaware of the threat to himself. Gwen tries to think of a way to escape without endangering him.

CONTINUED:

PRINCESS GWEN (CONT'D)

There must be something we can do...

(after a beat)

I don't suppose you could get the
key?

Long-Grin stares thoughtfully back at Princess Gwen.

EXT - GALWALK/COURTYARD - DAY

Griffith drives Queen Brigit's ornate ceremonial chariot into the courtyard. Deirdre, wielding Fingal's abandoned pole axe, climbs into the chariot beside him. Queen Brigit comes out the door, dressed for battle. As she mounts her chariot, she eyes the pole-axe with distrust.

DEIRDRE

(defending her presence
and her weapon)

I'll use both hands...

QUEEN BRIGIT

I shouldn't let you come.

DEIRDRE

I am a healer.

Princess Ulrica and her Battle Maidens ride up, armed with spears and dressed for battle, The others wear short tunics and ornate armor, but Hildegard wears a revealing wolfskin, bound together with leather thongs. Even her boots are wolfskin and her helmet is covered with a wolf's head.

PRINCESS ULRICA

Queen Brigit. My Battle Maidens and
I are at your service.

QUEEN BRIGIT

Princess Ulrica, I am honored and
deeply grateful, but I have no...

PRINCESS ULRICA

(interrupting)

With respect, Queen Brigit, the best
warriors are all hunting pigs! We
shall find them and follow you!

With a sharp cry, Ulrica spurs her steed and, followed by her Battle Maidens, gallops out the gate.

QUEEN BRIGIT

Bats and owls!

CONTINUED:

DEIRDRE

Bats and owls and pixie ale!

QUEEN BRIGIT

Just how good are you, Griffith of Westles?

GRIFFITH

Hang on, Your Majesty!

Brigit and Deirdre cling to the chariot rails for dear life as Griffith SHOUTS and lashes the chariot team into action.

EXT - GALWALK/VIEW FROM HILLFORT - DAY

Ulrica and her Battle Maidens fan out across the fields and into the forest. The Queen's chariot follows, racing along the road.

INT - FORTRESS/BEDCHAMBER - DAY

Akimera sleeps. As his door slowly CREAKS open, he awakens. SCALES RUSTLE, O.S. Akimera sigh and closes his eyes.

Long-Grin moves stealthily toward the reclining sorcerer.

The key to Princess Gwen's cell dangles from a chain draped around Akimera's neck. As Long-Grin stretches out a claw, the sorcerer suddenly rolls away and, wrapped in his blanket, springs to his feet.

AKIMERA

Well?

The startled dragon HISSES and FLAPS his wings, stirring up dust. Akimera shields his eyes and shouts.

AKIMERA (CONT'D)

Stop flapping those wings!

Fighting panic, the dragon swallows hard and quiets his wings.

LONG-GRIN

(disdainfully)

Wings? You call these wings? If they're wings, why can't I fly?

AKIMERA

I never let you! You were enough trouble without having you flying about...

(grinning cruelly)

And now, you've outgrown them.

CONTINUED:

LONG-GRIN
(an accusation)
You made me up...

AKIMERA
What?

LONG-GRIN
I'm enchanted.

AKIMERA
Enchanted?

LONG-GRIN
I'm not a real dragon. I'm under a
spell...

Akimera makes his way around the foot of the bed to confront the dragon.

AKIMERA
You've been talking to the princess...

LONG-GRIN
Her father is a king.

AKIMERA
True. And I? I am...a sorcerer!

A lightning bolt EXPLODES from Akimera's fingertips, engulfing Long-Grin. The dragon SCREAMS in anguish and terror.

INT - FORTRESS/GREAT HALL - DAY

Long-Grin's SCREAM ECHOES through the hall where a Roman marble statues of the MORRIGAN, the Kali-like ogress-war goddess of the Celtic pantheon sits in judgment.

INT - FORTRESS/CORRIDOR - DAY

Long-Grin's SCREAM ECHOES through the empty corridor.

INT - FORTRESS/STAIRWAY TO TOWER - DAY

The SCREAM ECHOES up the spiral stairway.

EXT - FORTRESS/WALL ABOVE RAVINE - DAY

Merlin, a third of the way up the tower wall, clings to the stones as the SCREAM FADES.

INT - FORTRESS/TOWER CORRIDOR - DAY

Gwen clings to the bars in her cell, her eyes flooding with tears, as the dragon's SCREAM DIES AWAY.

PRINCESS GWEN

They will come, Long-Grin. They
will!

EXT - MEADOW BEFORE FORTRESS - DAY

Nial is sprawled on the ground, pulling on the reins, trying to control his snorting, panicking, wild-eyed horse.

NIAL

Easy! Easy, there. It's stopped.

Shield strapped to his arm, Nial rises. His horse continues to snort and stamp fearfully as Nial tries to gentle it.

NIAL (CONT'D)

There, that's better. It's over
now.

Nial winces as he picks up his spear, then gazes across the open meadow toward the forbidding ruined fortress.

NIAL (CONT'D)

We'll go slowly from here on.

Warily, Nial leads his horse toward the fortress.

EXT - FOREST/BOAR WOODS - DAY

Wolfskin-clad Hildegard reins in her horse. Her eyes search the woods.

HILDEGARD

Sigismund!

Nearby, Prince Sigismund leads his horse, a huge boar lashed to its back.

HILDEGARD (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Sigismund!

PRINCE SIGISMUND

Hildegard?

Hildegard gallops to Sigismund, reining in her horse with a warrior's finesse. Sigismund is scandalized by her attire.

PRINCE SIGISMUND (CONT'D)

Dressed so? What has happened?

CONTINUED:

HILDEGARD

(icily)

I see you have your pig!

Sigismund plods on.

PRINCE SIGISMUND

I do what I must.

Swinging a long leg over her horse, Hildegard leaps to the ground at Sigismund's side.

HILDEGARD

Once, you said you loved me. Come away with me, Sigismund. Come away with me. Now. Give me sons and daughters...

PRINCE SIGISMUND

Hildegard, please...

HILDEGARD

Will you deny me my children?

PRINCE SIGISMUND

You'll find someone...

HILDEGARD

I shall take no other!

PRINCE SIGISMUND

My duty is to the king...

HILDEGARD

Then know, that even now, your father rides into danger!

Hildegard springs to her steed.

PRINCE SIGISMUND

What?

HILDEGARD

Your princess has been taken...

PRINCE SIGISMUND

No...

HILDEGARD

By a dragon and a sorcerer!

PRINCE SIGISMUND

That Merlin...

CONTINUED:

HILDEGARD
(scornfully)
I offered you my love and my life!
Now, I offer only death!

Sigismund tries to grab Hildegard's reins, but she backs away, leaving him tangled up with his boar-laden horse.

PRINCE SIGISMUND
Hildegard!

HILDEGARD
Follow me to glory, if you dare, for
none shall be before me in battle!

With a BLOOD-CURDLING WARCRY, Hildegard clamps her thighs to her steed and takes off at a gallop.

Sigismund draws his dagger, cuts the boar's lashings and, with one mighty heave, dumps its carcass to the ground, springs onto his steed and gallops after her.

PRINCE SIGISMUND
(shouting)
Hildegard!

INT - FORTRESS/TOWER CELL - DAY

Princess Gwen cringes against the wall of her cell as Akimera works his evil spell against her.

AKIMERA
You are mine, as the dragon is mine,
as all Britain shall be mine! Soon,
you will learn to serve me, yearn to
serve me, ache and moan and burn to
serve me!

PRINCESS GWEN
No!

AKIMERA
Through your sacrifice, through your
suffering, through your devotion, I
shall be reborn, a prince of blood
royal, a sacred king, nay, more --
an immortal god!

PRINCESS GWEN
You're mad...

AKIMERA
Not I, princess.
(MORE)

CONTINUED:

AKIMERA (CONT'D)

But the privilege I bestow upon you
has been granted to one, only, before
you, and she, a simple maid...she
went mad of it.

Akimera reacts to Nial's HORSE'S WHINNY. He abandons Gwen,
exits her cell and locks it behind him.

INT - FORTRESS/TOWER CORRIDOR - DAY

The sorcerer hurries to a narrow window overlooking the
courtyard, looks out and then ducks back from the window.

EXT - FORTRESS/COURTYARD - DAY

Nial pulls his reluctant horse through the gate, under the
ill-hung portcullis, but the frightened horse neighs again,
and tries to pull free.

NIAL

Easy...

The horse rears, pulling Nial back toward the gate, then
WHINNIES loudly.

INT - FORTRESS/TOWER CELL - DAY

Princess Gwen hears the HORSE WHINNY. Filled with hope, she
rushes to the bars of her cell.

PRINCESS GWEN

What say you now, sorcerer?

INT - FORTRESS/TOWER CORRIDOR - DAY

Without so much as a glance in her direction, Akimera extends
one hand and issues his command.

AKIMERA

Sleep!

The sorcerer hurries away, down the tower stairs.

INT - FORTRESS/TOWER CELL - DAY

Princess Gwen slides down the bars to the floor, unconscious.

EXT - FORTRESS/COURTYARD - DAY

Nial's horse slips its bridle, sending Nial sprawling. It gallops away as Nial leaps to his feet and warily retreats toward the gate.

NIAL

By all the...

EXT - MEADOW FROM FORTRESS - DAY

Nial's mount streaks across the meadow and into the woods.

NIAL (V.O.)

While you're at it...

EXT - FORTRESS/COURTYARD - DAY

Nial stands, bridle and reins wrapped around his shield arm, watching his horse run away.

NIAL

See if you can find Brian...

Tossing the useless bridle aside, Nial moves across the courtyard toward the great hall, spear at the ready.

EXT - FOREST/STREAM (MONTAGE) - DAY

Griffith drives Queen Brigit's chariot upstream, with Brigit and Deirdre, clinging to the side rails.

Battle Maiden Clothilda appears with Prince Duncan, cantering through the woods and down into the stream behind the Queen's chariot.

On the near bank, Hildegard and Prince Sigismund, leap their horses over a fallen log, keeping pace with the Queen's chariot until an opening on the bank lets them gallop down into the stream bed.

Battle Maiden Mathilda, the other twin, rides up the stream bed gaining on the others, followed by Ishlu and Crom in their hunting chariot.

Brigit and Deirdre are cheered by their growing warband.

Clothilda signals for Queen Brigit to look ahead, into the woods on the far bank.

From the woods on the far bank, Princess Ulrica gallops down into the stream ahead of the Queen's chariot, with Hildegard's three brothers, Kenelm, Wytan and Hugh.

CONTINUED:

The brothers ease the pace, letting the Queen's chariot pass, dropping back to join Prince Sigismund and Prince Duncan, riding just ahead of Crom and Islu in their hunting chariot, but the fierce Battle Maidens spur their steeds, passing the Queen's chariot to ride point with Princess Ulrica.

EXT - FOREST/VILLAGE BY THE STREAM - DAY

Owen clings to a wine-filled, wooden drinking bowl, watching in bleary-eyed wonder as the Queen's warband charges upstream.

OWEN

Bats and owls!

Queen Brigit's warband exits the stream where the cheering VILLAGERS, scattered along the banks, point to Nial's trail into the forest.

INT - FORTRESS/GREAT HALL - DAY

Light streams in through holes in the roof as well as the clerestory windows. Debris from the ruined roof is scattered over the floor. Nial moves cautiously to the center of the hall, dwarfed by a the huge statue of the Morrigan.

From the shadows of the gallery overlooking the hall, Akimera watches Nial, then steps into view, fingers splayed, hand extended.

A small cloud forms between Nial and the sorcerer. Suddenly, a bolt of lightning blasts, missing Nial by inches as he leaps aside and in a single fluid movement, hurls his spear up at the sorcerer.

The spear narrowly misses and Akimera retreats back into the shadows.

Nial peers at the smoldering hole blasted into the floor and draws his sword, nervously watching for the next attack as he backs toward the marble statue.

Another cloud forms. Nial sees it, hurls his shield and dives for cover behind the statue. The lightning strikes the shield and blasts it across the great hall.

Briefly blinded by the flash, when Akimera's eyes readjust to the dim light in the hall, Nial is nowhere in sight.

AKIMERA

It is useless to hide, boy, for to enter my hall is to die! Even now, your limbs grow heavy with fear.

CONTINUED:

Nial, cowering behind the marble statue, feels the weakness the sorcerer describes and his sword arm grows heavy.

AKIMERA (CONT'D)

You are unworthy. Surrender and your death will be swift.

Nial's anger overcomes the spell that saps his strength. He wills his sword arm to rise and with a triumphant HOWL, dashes from behind the marble statue and into the shadowy colonnade of the great hall.

The sorcerer steps out of the shadows too late to prevent Nial's escape.

AKIMERA (CONT'D)

So be it!

Akimera withdraws into the shadows of the balcony, above.

EXT - FOREST/ROAD - DAY

Brian and Fergus ride point, with Anselm and Murdoch close behind. Alaric and Angus ride close to Galowyn's chariot.

KING ALARIC

I only say that if we enter another kingdom under arms, it may be considered an act of war.

KING GALOWYN

(disgustedly)
Merlin, again...

Nial's horse trots into view on the road, ahead.

BRIAN

(pointing, with dread)
Sire!

KING ANGUS

By the gods...

BRIAN

That's Nial's horse!

Nial's horse bolts and runs. Brian and Fergus give chase.

MURDOCH

Brian!

KING ANGUS

(a plea for cooperation)
Galowyn?

CONTINUED:

KING GALOWYN

A curse on all seers and shape-shifters!

Yogan snaps the reins and the chariot lurches forward, getting the jump on the other kings, forcing Murdoch to make way. King Alaric and Anselm spur their horses forward, chasing after Galowyn's chariot. King Angus finds himself taking up the rear, a scowling Murdoch riding hard at his side.

INT - FORTRESS/CORRIDOR - DAY

Sword extended before him, Nial emerges from a square Roman stairwell, moves along the corridor, keeping close to the wall, until he comes to a dark passageway. Taking a deep breath, Nial enters the passageway.

Akimera enters the corridor, moving stealthily toward the Roman stairwell. With Nial nowhere in sight, the disgusted sorcerer abandons his search and moves swiftly to a heavy, armored door. He draws the bolt and goes inside.

INT - FORTRESS/LONG-GRIN'S CELL - DAY

Long-Grin trembles before the sorcerer.

AKIMERA

You have an opportunity to redeem yourself. Go to the tower and guard the princess.

Long-Grin brightens at the mention of the princess.

AKIMERA (CONT'D)

I shall begin my search below and work toward you. The warrior will be trapped between us.

LONG-GRIN

Warrior?

AKIMERA

I doubt you'll be blooded on him -- a youth, alone. The sight of you should send him running for his life. And I'll be waiting...

Long-Grin starts forward, eagerly, but the sorcerer blocks him, extending his hand, gnarled fingers splayed.

AKIMERA (CONT'D)

(cruelly)
Don't fail me, again...

CONTINUED:

Long-Grin's eyes widen in terror as the sorcerer's hand begins to CRACKLE with electrical energy.

INT - FORTRESS/STAIRWAY TO TOWER - DAY

Nial creeps up the circular stairway, alert to danger from any quarter.

EXT - FORTRESS/WALL ABOVE RAVINE - DAY

Merlin, high on the outside of the tower, feels out hand and foot holds as he scales the wall. The next hand-hold requires him to swing out and stretch for a niche in the irregular stone wall. He takes a deep breath and launches himself.

A flock of pigeons, roosting in gaps in the wall, bursts into NOISY flight. Startled, Merlin misses his purchase, leaving him dangling by one hand.

INT - FORTRESS/STAIRWAY TO TOWER - DAY

Some frightened pigeons fly into the confined circular stairway, startling NIAL, who SHOUTS, flails about wildly with his sword, and retreats part way down the stairs!

INT - FORTRESS/TOWER CELL - DAY

The FLAPPING birds awaken Gwen from her trance. She sits up, bewildered, but whole.

EXT - RAVINE BELOW TOWER (MERLIN'S POV)- DAY

Far below is a slide of jagged rocks.

EXT - FORTRESS/WALL ABOVE RAVINE - DAY

Merlin still hangs from one hand. All is still, but for the FLAPPING of his clothes in the wind. With a mighty effort, he swings back to the wall.

INT - FORTRESS/STAIRWAY TO TOWER - DAY

Nial, shaken by his encounter with the pigeon's, reacts to Merlin's faint GRUNT, O.S. He peers out a narrow slit window to investigate.

EXT - FORTRESS/WALL ABOVE RAVINE - DAY

Nial peers out the window, but doesn't see Merlin, clinging to the wall above and to the right of the window.

INT - FORTRESS/STAIRWAY TO TOWER - DAY

Nial takes a deep breath.

NIAL
(muttering)
Och, Brian, if you stopped for
breakfast...

INT - FORTRESS/TOWER CELL - DAY

Gwen looks out through the bars of her cell.

PRINCESS GWEN
(calling softly)
Long-Grin?

INT - FORTRESS/STAIRWAY TO TOWER - DAY

Nial flattens against the wall and listens.

PRINCESS GWEN (O.S.)
(calling softly)
Is that you? Did you get the key?

INT - FORTRESS/TOWER CELL - DAY

Gwen's hopes fade and she bows her head in despair.

INT - FORTRESS/TOWER CORRIDOR - DAY

Nial steps quietly into the tower corridor, staring at the imprisoned girl.

NIAL
(softly)
Is it a key you desire, or your
freedom?

Gwen looks up in wonder at the handsome young warrior. Nial is as stricken by her beauty.

PRINCESS GWEN
Is the enchantment broken, or begun?

CONTINUED:

NIAL

If this be enchantment, may it never
be broken.

Princess Gwen is torn between her attraction to Nial, and
fear that he may be the shape-shifter in disguise.

PRINCESS GWEN

(with a shudder)

If ever it be broken, so surely,
shall my heart.

Nial moves quickly to the cell door, rattling it to try to
force it open. Princess Gwen drinks in all the handsome
detail of her hero's face and muscular physique.

NIAL

Were I the key, this lock would be
undone!

PRINCESS GWEN

Were I the lock, you'd soon be my
undoing...

Inspired, Nial braces a leg against the cell wall pulls on
the bars with all his might. Gwen SIGHS. Inspired, Nial,
redoubles his efforts and springs the ancient cell door.

PRINCESS GWEN (CONT'D)

I knew you'd find a way...

NIAL

Whisht!

INT - FORTRESS/TOWER CELL - DAY

Gwen hushes and obediently steps back from the cell door.

INT - FORTRESS/TOWER CORRIDOR - DAY

Nial hears SCALES RUSTLING O.S., on the stairs.

INT - FORTRESS/TOWER CELL - DAY

Nial slams the cell door shut and steps back into the shadows.

PRINCESS GWEN

No!

Gwen, stunned by her abrupt reversal of fortune, rushes back
to the door, and barely stifles a SHRIEK when Long-Grin enters
the corridor.

CONTINUED:

LONG-GRIN

Hello!

Gwen staggers back, confused by the sight of the dragon. She deduces that Nial IS a shape-shifter, but that his alter-ego is her friend, Long-Grin, and not the sorcerer!

PRINCESS GWEN

It's true, then...

LONG-GRIN

Yes!

PRINCESS GWEN

I knew it. I knew all along, but if I hadn't seen it with my own eyes... Can you change shape at will?

INT - FORTRESS/TOWER CORRIDOR - DAY

LONG-GRIN

What?

Nial steps out of the shadows, sword poised to strike, moving stealthily toward the unsuspecting dragon.

MERLIN (O.S.)

(a shout of warning)

Nooo!

Long-Grin cringes away from Merlin, making the dragon even more vulnerable to Nial's sword.

Nial HOWLS and rushes at Long-Grin, but in that instant, the dragon's instincts take over. In a single swift motion, Long-Grin recoils, neck arched, jaws open, HISSING, ROARING, bat-wings spread, claws bared, horned ruff bristling.

Nial misses, his sword striking sparks on the stone floor.

Long-Grin's huge tail lashes out, knocking Nial senseless against the tower wall.

PRINCESS GWEN

What have you done?

Merlin drops into the corridor. Ignoring the agitated dragon, he goes to examine Nial's injuries.

LONG-GRIN

Me?

MERLIN

Hush, both of you!

CONTINUED:

Merlin listens for Nial's heartbeat.

MERLIN (CONT'D)

He'll survive. I suspect he's hard-headed enough to survive twice the blow.

(to Long-Grin)

Tear down the door. We haven't much time.

Long-Grin looks from Merlin to his claws, then back to Merlin, aware, for the first time, of his own formidable strength.

MERLIN (CONT'D)

Well?

Long-Grin fastens on the cell door with one powerful claw.

INT - FORTRESS/TOWER CELL - DAY

Gwen backs away as the bars begin to bend in the dragon's grip. She YELPS and retreats still further as the bars spring from their iron frame and CLANG into her cell.

EXT - MEADOW BEFORE FORTRESS - DAY

The kings and warriors are in disarray, their horses rearing and plunging, refusing to advance. With the exception of Yogan, struggling to control the chariot team, they all are on foot. Murdock pulls grass from his helmet visor.

BRIAN

They won't go on!

KING ANGUS

A sure sign that a dragon is near!

FERGUS

(bellowing)

Nial!

Galowyn grabs a spear from the chariot quivver and shouts to the seniors who make up his hunting party.

KING GALOWYN

Leave the horses! We'll go on foot!

The kings and warriors ready their weapons and advance, Brian, Fergus and Murdoch leading the way. Fingal, great sword resting on one shoulder, scrambles to keep up with the others.

KING ALARIC

Stay together...

CONTINUED:

FERGUS
(shouting)
Nial?!?

MURDOCH
(muttering)
If he could answer, he'd have heard
you the first time...

KING GALOWYN
We can hardly hope to take the
creature by surprise...

INT - FORTRESS/BEDCHAMBER - DAY

From a narrow window, Akimera watches the hunting party cross the meadow toward the fortress.

Trembling with rage, Akimera turns and draws away a threadbare shroud to reveal the mummified head of Malabar. He seizes the gnarled staff and electrical energy flows from his hand over Malabar's leathern face, causing the muscles to twitch, infusing the severed head with life.

AKIMERA
Malabar, awake!

Called out of the infernal regions, Malabar's red-rimmed, bleary eyes open.

MALABAR
(a curse)
You call upon my forces dire.
Demonic power you desire,
But, what use shall come of me,
Shall, likewise, still come of thee.

AKIMERA
So be it!

INT - FORTRESS/TOWER CORRIDOR - DAY

MERLIN
That's enough.

Long-Grin backs away from the twisted, sprung cell door. Gwen picks her way gingerly through the wreckage, awed by the enormous and potentially dangerous dragon.

MERLIN (CONT'D)
(to Long-Grin)
Come along...

CONTINUED:

LONG-GRIN

Who are you?

PRINCESS GWEN

Merlin. Seer and shape-shifter...

MERLIN

Shape-shifter?

PRINCESS GWEN

He must have flown to the roof.
It's widely known that he can turn
himself into a hawk.

MERLIN

Is it?

PRINCESS GWEN

It's no use pretending. You were
seen last night.

MERLIN

Then it must be so. Do you trust
me?

Gwen glances at Nial, still unconscious on the floor, then
at Long-Grin.

MERLIN (CONT'D)

(to Gwen)

Are you not free?

(to Long-Grin)

Did I not just save you from Nial?

PRINCESS GWEN

(recognizing the name)

Nial?

MERLIN

Do you believe I have the sight?

PRINCESS GWEN

Yes.

MERLIN

Then believe me when I say that if
you both do as you are told, no harm
shall come to you. Princess, if
you'll look after him...

Gwen kneels on the floor, gently raising Nial's head to her
lap.

PRINCESS GWEN

What do I do?

CONTINUED:

MERLIN

Keep him company. Nature will take
care of the rest. Long-Grin and I
will deal with the sorcerer.

Merlin starts for the circular stairway, but Long-Grin does
not move, looking instead to the princess for guidance.

MERLIN (CONT'D)

Come along...

Gwen nods and Long-Grin reluctantly follows Merlin.

INT - FORTRESS/GREAT HALL - DAY

Akimera stands before the towering marble statue of the
Morrigan, Malabar held high, electricity flowing between the
sorcerer and the wand as he invokes the Dark Queen.

AKIMERA

Powers of the regions drear,
Strike my foe with darkest fear.
Queen of Darkness, bloody crone,
Imbue with life this form of stone!

Akimera glares at Malabar.

AKIMERA (CONT'D)

Say the words. Say the words!

Dust and chips of marble rain down on the sorcerer and it is
the Morrigan, come to life, whose unearthly voice answers.

MORRIGAN

So be it...

Awed by his success, Akimera backs away from the living,
marble Morrigan.

BRIAN (O.S.)

He knew I was bringing help. He
marked the trail for us...

FERGUS (O.S.)

Aye, he did that...

Snarling, Akimera flees the great hall.

KING ANGUS (O.S.)

Shhh!

The kings and warriors step warily into the great hall, naked
steel gleaming, watching the shadows for the dragon. Yogan
sees the marble Morrigan and throws down his spear and shield.

CONTINUED:

YOGAN

By all that's sacred...

Galowyn sees the statue, source of Yogan's terror, and lays down his own spear.

KING GALOWYN

Go no further!

Recognizing the fierce goddess and fearful of committing sacrilege, King Angus drops his weapons.

KING ANGUS

The Morrigan! And us under arms...

The Celtic goddess is unknown to King Alaric and Anselm.

KING ALARIC

What is it?

YOGAN

We're all dead men...

KING ALARIC

Galowyn?

KING GALOWYN

Lay down your weapons...

KING ALARIC

With a dragon near?

Murdoch knocks Brian's sword from his hand and lays down his own weapons as he speaks.

MURDOCH

With naked steel in hand, will you stand before the Morrigan? 'Tis a privilege reserved for the doomed!

Alaric picks up Galowyn's spear, handing it back to him as he shouts at the others.

KING ALARIC

Take up your weapons! It's a statue!
Nothing more...

Galowyn hesitates.

FINGAL

Sire, I know this place. Morrigan Morte. This is no sacred shrine. There are mines here, Sire, all through these hills.

CONTINUED:

KING ALARIC

Na?

FINGAL

The Romans had that statue made to keep the slaves that worked the mines docile.

FERGUS

The mines are the dragon's lair...

Galowyn takes his spear.

Murdoch sees the Morrigan rising from her throne.

MURDOCH

Sire!

YOGAN

The Morrigan!

FINGAL

'Tis sorcery...

The Morrigan stands to her full height. Dropping his spear, Galowyn strips Alaric's spear and shield from him as the stunned King of Osterlaw stands unresisting. Fingal lays down his great sword as the Morrigan glares down at them all.

KING GALOWYN

Lay down your arms...

Anselm, shaken as he is by the threat of the marble Morrigan, is no Celt and will not die without a fight. He bellows his war cry and hurls his spear.

ANSELM

Wotan!

Anselm's spear strikes the marble Morrigan -- and bounces off.

The Morrigan laughs softly, an unearthly sound. Staring down at the puny mortals with her blank, chiseled marble eyes, the Morrigan HOWLS her own war cry, and a thousand banshees SHRIEK in the violent blast of wind and noise that issues from her cold, marble mouth.

Shielding eyes and ears, the kings and warriors flee in terror.

INT - FORTRESS/TOWER CORRIDOR - DAY

The tower quakes. Dust, mortar and stone rain down. Gwen leans over Nial, shielding him from the falling debris.

PRINCESS GWEN

Oh, you must awake. You must!

Nial pulls her to him and kisses her. A chunk of rock lands with a THUD and the princess breaks free of Nial's embrace.

PRINCESS GWEN (CONT'D)

Are you mad?

NIAL

I'm alive.

He kisses her again. She pulls away, again.

PRINCESS GWEN

The tower is falling down.

Despite her fears, Gwen returns Nial's third kiss. Nial, finally satisfied, gently pushes her away.

NIAL

Och! And you're real. Which means we're in real danger!

Nial rises, pulls Princess Gwen to her feet and retrieves his sword.

PRINCESS GWEN

I wouldn't want you to think...

NIAL

(interrupting)

Where's the dragon?

PRINCESS GWEN

The dragon? Oh. Merlin took him...

NIAL

Merlin?

PRINCESS GWEN

Well, he said...

NIAL

I'll settle with him, later. First, we must get you to safety. Come on.

Nial takes Gwen's hand and pulls her toward the circular stairway. There, he stops and looks deeply into her eyes.

NIAL (CONT'D)

If we get out of this alive...

CONTINUED:

PRINCESS GWEN
(blushing)
Yes?

NIAL
First, we have to get you out of
here.

PRINCESS GWEN
Oh.

Nial drags her along down the stairs.

EXT - FORTRESS/COURTYARD - DAY

Outside the great hall, the kings and warriors huddle in
disarray, most, without weapons.

FERGUS
What about Nial?

MURDOCH
'Tis sorcery!

FERGUS
Having said that, you've said nothing!

KING ANGUS
There must be some way...

BRIAN
(pointing)
Look!

They all turn to look out the gate into the meadow, beyond.

EXT - MEADOW FROM FORTRESS - DAY

Queen Brigit's youthful warband plunges across the meadow
toward the fortress, scattering the abandoned horses and
Galowyn's chariot before them. Suddenly, the gateway explodes
into flames, blocking Brigit's reinforcements from view.

INT - FORTRESS/THRONE ROOM - DAY

Flames dance in Akimera's eyes, but the haggard sorcerer has
aged. He clings to Malabar, the electrical field flowing
strongly, but the sorcerer's LAUGHTER turns into a coughing
fit that weakens him. Leaning heavily on the gnarled shaft
of the wand, Akimera collapses onto a sculpted stone throne.

EXT - MEADOW BEFORE FORTRESS - DAY

Deirdre clings to the chariot rail with one hand as she struggles to pull the pole-axe back upright with the other. Queen Brigit rises from the floor of the chariot and pushes the pole-axe erect as Griffith brings the rearing chariot team under control.

Brigit takes a spear in hand and springs to the ground.

Princess Ulrica holds her steed, dismayed by the fiery gate.

PRINCESS ULRICA

The sorcerer...

Deirdre leaps from the chariot with the pole-axe.

QUEEN BRIGIT

Nothing alive can get through that
wall of fire...

Hildegard gallops straight at the fiery gateway. Prince Sigismund pushes past Kenelm and Wystan, dragging his horse. Too late to block Hildegard's way, he leaps to his steed and gallops after her.

The others watch in horror as Hildegard and Sigismund charge toward the fiery gateway.

The fire in the gateway transforms into a huge flaming dragon's head. As Hildegard and Sigismund ride closer, its jaws open to swallow them up.

GRIFFITH

They'll be killed...

Hildegard and Sigismund gallop into the dragon's fiery maw.

EXT - FORTRESS/COURTYARD - DAY

The kings and older warriors scatter as Hildegard and Prince Sigismund burst through the wall of flames into the courtyard. The others rush to welcome Prince Sigismund, but Anselm stares at Hildegard, distressed by what he sees.

KING ALARIC

Sigismund!

INT - FORTRESS/GREAT HALL - DAY

The marble Morrigan is still, but behind her, crushed flagstones reveal her heavy path across the hall.

INT - FORTRESS/THRONE ROOM - DAY

Akimera clings to Malabar, but the electric field is gone. He has aged horribly. His breathing is labored and much of his hair has fallen out, but flames still flicker in his eyes. He blinks slowly, and when he opens his rheumy eyes, the flames are gone -- but the electrical field returns.

INT - FORTRESS/GREAT HALL - DAY

The marble Morrigan lurches forward, crushing more flagstones.

EXT - FORTRESS/COURTYARD - DAY

Bitterly, Hildegard observes Prince Sigismund's heroic reception.

Anselm slips out of his cloak and covers his daughter.

ANSELM

Hildy, are you mad?

A CRASH of falling stone draws everyone's attention to the facade of the great hall. Dust billows out the entrance. Brushing aside her father's cloak, Hildegard strides toward the great hall.

Cracks appear in the pediment. Sigismund, seeing the masonry breaking up, pushes through the crowd of well-wishers and dashes after Hildegard.

Sigismund reaches Hildegard, pulling her out of harm's way as tons of masonry crash into the courtyard.

When the dust settles, Hildegard slaps Sigismund.

HILDEGARD

Leave me alone!

Shocked, Sigismund does nothing to stop her as she wriggles free. She stops herself, staring up in awe at the towering marble Morrigan, standing in the midst of the ruins.

A glow appears in the marble where the Morrigan's heart would be. Suddenly, a bright light explodes from the Morrigan and the marble statue shatters.

Sigismund seizes Hildegard by her wolfskin and drags her to safety as the Morrigan CRASHES down into a heap of rubble.

As the kings and warriors dodge the rolling debris, Fingal hobbles toward the gateway.

FINGAL

Look!

EXT - MEADOW FROM FORTRESS - DAY

Queen Brigit's warband is already charging across the meadow toward the gate.

FINGAL (V.O.)
The flames are gone!

INT - FORTRESS/THRONE ROOM - DAY

The sorcerer is more dead than alive. No electricity flows between him and the wand. Malabar appears lifeless, a leathern, mummified head.

INT - FORTRESS/CAVERN - DAY

Merlin's torch illuminates the cavern. Primitive scaffolding and abandoned miner's tools are dimly revealed in the torchlight and stagnant pools of water dot the cave floor. Long-Grin's head hangs stubbornly.

MERLIN
All I ask is that you lead me to him.

Long-Grin, sways gently, but refuses to budge.

MERLIN (CONT'D)
Then kill me! Here and now! Or as surely, as the prophecy foretold, I shall destroy him!

LONG-GRIN
In your prophecy, Merlin, do I help you?

MERLIN
Yes, Long-Grin. You do.

LONG-GRIN
Then the prophecy...lies.

Long-Grin's tail lashes out, knocking the torch from Merlin's hand and into a pool of water, leaving Merlin in darkness. Long-Grin's scales RUSTLE as he speaks.

LONG-GRIN (CONT'D)
I do not regret freeing the princess.
I shall accept whatever punishment I deserve...

Long-Grin is slowly revealed by a new light source, small, but bright, moving toward them through the cavern.

CONTINUED:

LONG-GRIN (CONT'D)

But I will not help you...

The Lady of the Lake, the same figure of light that burst free from the marble Morrigan, flies into a narrow rift in the cavern wall.

MERLIN

Then this is good-bye. The same power that has guided me thus far, will guide me to your master.

Merlin slips into the narrow passageway, following the tiny, glowing Lady of the Lake..

As the cave darkens, Long-Grin SHRIEKS and charges the narrow passageway, claws tearing at the walls, chasing after Merlin.

INT - FORTRESS/GREAT HALL (RUINS) - DAY

In the dust-filtered daylight, Fergus and Anselm kneel to examine Nial's lightning-blasted shield.

ANSELM

It's been scorched.

The combined forces of King Galowyn and Queen Brigit cautiously search the shadows of the colonnades.

QUEEN BRIGIT

(calling)

Gwen?

KING GALOWYN

Have you forgotten the dragon?

Reacting to Nial's scorched shield, Deirdre cries out.

DEIRDRE

Nial!

INT - FORTRESS/CORRIDOR - DAY

Nial and Gwen step into the corridor, just in time to hear DEIRDRE'S distant shout.

NIAL

By all the gods! That sounded like my mother...

Gwen turns Nial to face her.

CONTINUED:

PRINCESS GWEN

You started to say that if we come
out of this alive..?

NIAL

We're not out of it, yet...

PRINCESS GWEN

Please! If that is your mother...

NIAL

Och! Don't worry. You look fine.

For the first time since Nial arrived, Princess Gwen realizes she's in her nightgown. Mortified, she turns away. Nial pulls her to him like a common wench.

NIAL (CONT'D)

Och! What's the worst that could
happen?

Gwen, loving the feel of Nial pressed against her, dares not speak.

NIAL (CONT'D)

I might have to marry you...

Gwen jabs Nial with an elbow.

PRINCESS GWEN

That's the worst, is it?

Gwen twists free. Nial winces.

NIAL

I come from a good family...

Gwen whirls back into Nial's arms, kissing him fervently. Nial, astonished by the girl's mercurial mood swings, enjoys the moment. Princess Gwen breaks the kiss and takes a deep, satisfied breath.

PRINCESS GWEN

Well. Shall we...meet the relatives?

Gwen walks briskly down the corridor toward the great hall. Nial catches up with her, pulling her back behind him protectively, scowling at her folly.

NIAL

More likely, the sorcerer.

Gwen nods obediently, enjoying Nial's protection.

CONTINUED:

NIAL (CONT'D)

I don't even know your name..?

PRINCESS GWEN

(happily)

I know!

INT - FORTRESS/GREAT HALL (RUINS) - DAY

Nial and Princess Gwen arrive in the clerestory gallery.

KING ANGUS

Look! We split up into three search parties...

PRINCESS GWEN

(calling down)

Mother?

QUEEN BRIGIT

Gwen!?!

THE WARBAND

The princess!

NIAL

(as if snake-bitten)

Princess Gwen?

BRIAN

Nial!

Gwen clings to Nial, whispering to him through her public smile.

PRINCESS GWEN

What's the worst that could happen?

FERGUS (V.O.)

Nial?

NIAL grimly contemplates "the worst."

INT - FORTRESS/THRONE ROOM - DAY

Akimera makes a final effort to cheat Fate.

AKIMERA

Malabar, awake...

The electrical current CRACKLES. Malabar's leathern cheeks twitch and his baleful eyes open.

INT - PASSAGEWAY BENEATH FORTRESS - DAY

The passageway widens. The glowing Lady of the Lake lights Merlin's way, but Long-Grin's HOWL and the sound of the passageway being torn apart by the pursuing dragon is near.

Long-Grin rips through the passageway, claws widening the walls, powerful muscles churning.

INT - FORTRESS/GREAT HALL (RUINS) - DAY

Brigit embraces Gwen, aware of a subtle change in her. King Galowyn, his daughter restored, studies Nial out of the corner of his eye. Deirdre hugs Nial, but Fergus watches the others, concerned with their reactions.

PRINCESS GWEN

Best of all, Mother, I have found my
champion!

Princess Gwen takes Nial's arm. A hush falls over the warriors. Galowyn clears his throat. Nial holds his head up, a condemned man bravely facing execution.

Prince Sigismund strides grimly toward Nial.

Deirdre looks anxiously to Queen Brigit.

Fergus' hand moves to his sword.

Prince Sigismund turns to address the kings and warriors.

PRINCE SIGISMUND

The princess has right!

KING ALARIC

What?

PRINCE SIGISMUND

While we hunted pigs, he rescued her
from this evil fortress that held us
all at bay.

Murdoch scowls and Prince Duncan weighs his response, but Griffith finds merit in Prince Sigismund's argument.

GRIFFITH

'Tis true...

Sigismund takes a deep breath.

PRINCE SIGISMUND

I, for one, acknowledge him
champion...

Sigismund draws his sword and assumes a battle stance.

CONTINUED:

PRINCE SIGISMUND (CONT'D)

And stand prepared to defend his
right to the princess!

BRIAN

And I!

FERGUS

And I...

QUEEN BRIGIT

As do I.

The matter is settled as far as Griffith is concerned.

GRIFFITH

Hail, Nial!

Hildegard is too stunned to react, but Princess Ulrica and the Battle Maidens quickly take up the cheer. Soon, all join in.

THE WARBAND

Hail, Nial! Hail, Nial!

INT - FORTRESS/THRONE ROOM - DAY

The warband's CHEERS ECHO from the great hall as the wall shifts, revealing a secret passageway. The tiny, glowing Lady of the Lake disappears as Merlin enters, illuminated by the ruddy glow from the wand, O.S.

Collapsed on the stone throne, the flickering electrical impulses weakening, the glowing wand becoming ever dimmer, Akimera smiles slightly, then wearily bows his head.

INT - FORTRESS/GREAT HALL (RUINS) - DAY

Galowyn holds up his arms for silence and the CHEERS cease.

KING GALOWYN

Ah, well. Done is done, eh?

Angus and Alaric exchange glances. Angus gets a nod of approval from Prince Duncan. Alaric has no choice but to agree. Galowyn clamps a heavy hand on Nial's shoulder.

KING GALOWYN (CONT'D)

Champion you are, duly acclaimed by
all here!

Gwen embraces her father.

CONTINUED:

NIAL
(protesting)
Your Majesty...

Prince Sigismund interrupts, bellowing to one and all.

PRINCE SIGISMUND
I have also an announcement!
(looking at Hildegard)
Since many years, there has been
only one woman to capture my heart...

Tears well in Hildegard's eyes. Princess Ulrica squeezes her hand hopefully.

PRINCE SIGISMUND (CONT'D)
Anselm, it is Hildegard of whom I
speak.

Ulrica and her Battle Maidens SHREIK with joy, but Hildegard cannot move or speak.

Anselm scowls at the Battle Maidens, who fall silent.

ANSELM
I do not give her away...

Hildegard stares at her father in disbelief. King Alaric is stunned that his son has been rejected. Hildegard's brothers move toward their father.

KENELM
Father..?

With a sharp, cutting motion of his hand, Anselm silences them all and continues.

ANSELM
She must choose the man she will
marry!
(gently, lovingly)
Well? What do you think of this
one, Hildy?

Anselm's sons grin broadly. Hildegard embraces her father and this time, lets him wrap her in his cloak.

HILDEGARD
We will make beautiful grandchildren
for you, Papa.

Kenelm, Wystan and Hugh lead the CHEERS as Hildegard goes to her champion's arms.

CONTINUED:

HILDEGARD'S BROTHERS

Sig-is-mund! Sig-is-mund! Sig-is-mund!

Prince Duncan moves close to Princess Ulrica.

PRINCE DUNCAN

Your form as lovely...your lips as red...

Ulrica cocks an appraising eyebrow at the bold Prince of Fellsgard.

Nial shouts over the CHEERS.

NIAL

Argh!

The warbands fall silent.

NIAL (CONT'D)

What about the dragon?

Gwen quickly steps forward.

PRINCESS GWEN

That's the best part of all! There's no need to slay the dragon.

KING GALOWYN

No?

PRINCESS GWEN

(to one and all)

Dragons are brown, or gray, or even green, correct?

FINGAL

Most dragons...

PRINCESS GWEN

(condescendingly)

But they're certainly not red!

The assembly chuckles.

KING ANGUS

Och, Your Highness, Imperial Dragons are red, but they have black bellies!

He and the others laugh heartily at the notion of a red dragon with a black belly, but Nial glares at Gwen and her confidence ebbs.

CONTINUED:

PRINCESS GWEN

They have?

KING GALOWYN

Well, I've never heard of them.

FINGAL

Imperial dragons, Sire, so called
for the horny protuberances atop
their heads...

Gwen begins to feel faint. Nial gallantly props her up.

INT - PASSAGEWAY BENEATH FORTRESS - DAY

Long-Grin, exhibiting all the characteristics described,
claws his way through the dark passageway.

FINGAL (V.O.)

Their crowns, as it were, found only
in the male of that species...

KING ALARIC (V.O.)

Na, ya! And the wings. They never
lose the wings. Not even when full
grown...

QUEEN BRIGIT (V.O.)

Well, I've heard of them, of course,
but surely, they're mythical beasts.

FINGAL (V.O.)

They are rare, Your Majesty.

YOGAN (V.O.)

They have tusks.

GRIFFITH (V.O.)

Tusks?

MURDOCH (V.O.)

Aye! Great long teeth...

Long-Grin HISSES menacingly as he moves quickly through the
widening passageway.

INT. FOTRESS/THRONE ROOM - DAY

Merlin advances stealthily toward the sorcerer and the dimly
glowing wand. Akimera's voice is barely a whisper, but
electrical current flows ever more brightly between the
sorcerer and his wand.

CONTINUED:

AKIMERA

Minions of the powers infernal,
With secret keys to life eternal,
Deliver me from Death's grim portal.
Heed me now! Make me...immortal!

Malabar's baleful gaze falls upon Merlin. Seeing Malabar's smile, Merlin seizes the wand to pull it from Akimera's grasp. The electrical current surges, engulfing Merlin, too, preventing him from pulling himself free. Malabar glows brightly, again. Realizing it is now his life-force that sustains the spell, Merlin SCREAMS!

The sorcerer's HOARSE, MANIACAL LAUGHTER is nearly lost in the CRACK and SIZZLE of the growing electrical field, arcing to the walls, blasting masonry where it strikes.

INT - FORTRESS/GREAT HALL (RUINS) - DAY

As the BLASTS build in intensity, the warbands retreat, shielding their eyes against the brilliant light and showers of sparks issuing from the throne room. A blood-curdling SHRIEK freezes the company.

PRINCESS GWEN

Long-Grin...

NIAL

(drawing his sword)
The dragon!

Gwen grabs Nial's arm.

PRINCESS GWEN

The sorcerer is your enemy, not the
dragon...

INT - FORTRESS/THRONE ROOM - DAY

Engulfed by the electrical field, Merlin and Akimera both cling to Malabar, the sorcerer growing stronger as Merlin grows weaker.

AKIMERA

Did you think to succeed where your
brother failed? Fool! The blood of
the dragon is thinner, still, in
you!

White light emanates from the Lady of the Lake as she materializes high above Merlin and Akimera, growing larger and brighter, overpowering the ruddy glow from Malabar as she speaks over the violent electrical storm.

CONTINUED:

LADY OF THE LAKE

There'll be no number to your days,
Nor shall Death end your evil ways...

Long-Grin burst through the wall into the throne room, ducking the lightning BLASTS that arc from Malabar's smoldering head.

The growing, glowing Lady of the Lake transforms into the Morrigan, clouds forming and swirling about her, illuminated by sheet lightning.

LADY OF THE LAKE/MORRIGAN

Forever more you now shall be,
Alive for all eternity...

AKIMERA

(gloating)

Now, see Merlin. Your "Lady" serves
me!

Struck by a lightning bolt, Long-Grin SHRIEKS, spreads his bat-like wings, arches his neck like a cobra, HISSING, crocodilian-teeth exposed, thrashing and writhing in torment.

The whirling clouds slow, then reverse direction as the Morrigan glows ever brighter.

LADY OF THE LAKE/MORRIGAN

No more of mortal flesh and bone...

Malabar's skull catches fire, then explodes in dust and ashes!

LADY OF THE LAKE/MORRIGAN (CONT'D)

But locked within immortal stone!

Long-Grin strikes, seizing Merlin in one huge claw, pulling him free of the wand. Above, the reversal of the energy field is complete and the cone of light explodes in a shower of sparks.

Utter darkness prevails. In the numbing SILENCE, Merlin drops to the floor with a THUD. As the dust settles, Merlin GROANS and looks up at the dragon.

MERLIN

Go! Save yourself...

INT - FORTRESS/GREAT HALL (RUINS) - DAY

The awestruck warbands stand frozen in the sudden silence and relative darkness of normal daylight. After a beat, Nial trots toward the throne room. The others follow.

INT - FORTRESS/THRONE ROOM - DAY

Merlin reacts to the sight of a metal shield, resting where a shield of stone, part of the chiseled throne, used to be. He touches the shield and a flash of reflected light crosses his face. As the warbands approach, Merlin painfully props himself against the throne to receive his visitors.

KING ALARIC
(pointing toward Merlin)
There, something moves...

Nial's eyes search the shadows for the dragon. The others hurry toward the stone throne.

GRIFFITH
By all the gods! It's Merlin...

Murdoch and Brian stare past Merlin at the horror mounted on the stone throne.

NIAL
(unpleasantly)
Well, uncle...

Gwen hurries forward, but Deirdre hangs back, not yet able to forgive the past.

NIAL (CONT'D)
What have you done with the dragon?

Vexed by his nephew, Merlin twists to display the gleaming shield, emblazoned with a Red, Bat-winged dragon rampant.

MERLIN
Here is your dragon, Nial of
Fellsgard!

PRINCESS GWEN
(sadly)
Long-Grin?

MERLIN
Know, that while you carry it, no
weapon will harm you and no disgrace
will come to you in battle.

Tears well in Deirdre's eyes as Nial takes up the Dragon Shield.

INT - PASSAGEWAY/SECRET ENTRANCE - DAY

Long-Grin observes the scene through the wreckage of the wall. A single tear forms in his reptilian eye.

CONTINUED:

MERLIN

Henceforth, this dragon is your emblem
and the sign of your heirs. Your
shield and your power!

INT - FORTRESS/THRONE ROOM - DAY

All gather around as Merlin hands the shield to Nial.

KING ALARIC

Power? What new sorcery is this?

MERLIN

(irritated)

Sorcery? There's an end to sorcery!

Akimera is of one piece with the throne on which he sits,
his face locked in his final moment of horror, hideous,
cadaverous, a ghastly vision of his permanent hell. At the
end of his stone staff, empty stone talons curl where once
Malabar's head had been.

MERLIN (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Stone he is and stone he will remain.
The enchantment is broken! And now,
if you'll all excuse me, I've had a
very long day!

Deirdre steps forward, kneels and offers Merlin a drink from
a flask she wears on her belt.

DEIRDRE

(brusquely)

This may ease your suffering.

Merlin locks eyes with Deirdre.

MERLIN

What has been done, can never be
undone...

Poison or cure, his mission complete, Merlin drains the flask.

Galowyn takes Merlin's arm to haul him to his feet.

KING GALOWYN

Come, then! You shall come with us
and tell us more of all these wonders!

Merlin pulls free and curls up against the hideous stone
throne.

CONTINUED:

MERLIN

No! Go away! Grant me the peace of
this ruin and let me be!

KING GALOWYN

As you wish. Henceforth, this ruin
is yours...
(indicating the statue)
And all in it.

Gwen crouches down to kiss Merlin's cheek.

PRINCESS GWEN

If ever you are in need...

KING GALOWYN

Come along, then. Back to Galwalk
castle!

Galowyn leads the warbands away.

KING GALOWYN (CONT'D)

There'll be rivers of wine! Oceans
of ale! Delights such as you've
never dreamed of...

KING ALARIC

Na, Galowyn! Your generosity is not
to question, but we of Osterlaw,
have also preparations to make...

Alaric graciously bows his head toward Sigismund's choice,
Hildegard. Although disappointed, Galowyn can find no fault
with Alaric's reasoning.

KING GALOWYN

Ah! Just so. Perhaps...

With a quick nod of his head, Alaric cuts off Galowyn's
suggestion. One can almost hear his heels click as he
addresses the warriors and Battle Maidens of Osterlaw.

KING ALARIC

Come! We must to gather our horses!

Galowyn SIGHS as the contingent from Osterlaw files out, but
seeing the concern on the faces of the remaining warriors
and ladies, determines that Alaric's precipitous withdrawal
will not dampen HIS planned festivities. He smiles, making
eye contact with King Angus.

KING GALOWYN

Rivers of wine?

King Angus grins happily. Galowyn casts his gaze on Yogan.

CONTINUED:

KING GALOWYN (CONT'D)

Oceans of ale?

YOGAN

(happily)

Aye, Sire!

KING GALOWYN

Ha! Away, then, to Galwalk! Never let it be said that a man left my table hungry! Never let it be said that I denied a weary traveler shelter! Never let it be said that any man went thirsty under my roof!

We have tales to tell, songs to sing, eager young wenches with generous hearts and warm dispositions!

As Galowyn's voice fades in the distance, the glowing Lady of the Lake returns, illuminating the hideous statue in which Akimera is eternally imprisoned. Merlin rises and stares at the sorcerer's horrible end.

LADY OF THE LAKE

Well done, my son.

Merlin nods, wincing from the pain in his ribs.

MERLIN

Milady.

The RUSTLE of Long-Grin's scales signal the dragon's arrival. Merlin stiffens, then looks at Long-Grin with trepidation.

MERLIN (CONT'D)

And you, Long-Grin? Will you more of me?

LONG-GRIN

What has been done, can never be undone.

MERLIN

What's yet to come, will never be forgotten.

ROLL END CREDITS.

FADE TO BLACK