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Open on a figure, carrying a small backpack, clambering enthusiastically up a steep hillside. It's the last climb of a long journey ...

GREAT DRAGON (V.O.)
(a deep and sonorous
voice)

No young man, no matter how great,
can know his destiny. He cannot
glimpse his part in the great story
that is about to unfold...

We continue to follow the figure as he negotiates the final rocks that will lead him to the summit, as yet his face is still unseen ...

GREAT DRAGON (V.O.)
Like everyone, he must live and
learn...

The figure nears the brow. Ahead of him, slowly rising into view we see soaring spires and turrets ...

GREAT DRAGON (V.O.)
And so it will be for the young
warlock arriving at the gates of
Camelot. A boy that will in time
father a legend. His name: Merlin.

As his name drifts away on the wind, we see his face. He's an instantly attractive, bright eyed young man with unaffected good looks. We take in his wonder and share his P.O.V as he sets his eyes for the first time on the vast city of Camelot ...

CUT TO:

MERLIN hurries through the city gates. The road is jammed with carts and people pouring into the city. A sea of diverse multi-cultural faces much like any major city now. MERLIN can barely contain his excitement. He pushes his way through the traffic, keen to taste the noisy, colourful world within.

CUT TO:

3 EXT. CAMELOT (STREET B) - DAY 1. FR. 3

The city of Camelot stretches out below as MERLIN makes his way along the busy thoroughfare. High on the hill above stands the great citadel of Uther Pendragon.

CUT TO:

4 EXT. CAMELOT (MAIN SQUARE) - DAY 1. FR. 4

The sound of whistles, drums etc. An eager and jubilant CROWD is gathered in a large cobblestone square at the heart of Camelot.

A trumpet fanfare. MERLIN hurries to join the back of the audience. The crowd fall silent, all that can be heard is the steady beat of a drum. People shift their heads trying to get a look at the spectacle that is about to take place. We see a MAN, his head bowed, being ceremonially led across the square. The drum stops and we hear a voice ...

A smiling MERLIN looks up and sees UTHUR, the King. A strong, powerful warrior in his early forties standing on a balcony dominating the square.

UTHER

Let this serve as a lesson to you
all ...

(he stares into the faces
of the crowd)

This man, Thomas James Collins ...

MERLIN cranes to find a better viewpoint...

UTHER

...is adjudged guilty of conspiring
to use enchantments and magic.

MERLIN's expression of excitement pales...

UTHER

And pursuant to the Laws of
Camelot, these practices are banned
by my Royal Command.

A murmur amongst the crowd... A figure watches the scene from a narrow window high above the Square. This is MORGANA. She doesn't look happy about what she sees.

UTHER

I pride myself as a fair and just
King, but for a crime this
malevolent ... there is only one
sentence I can pass. Take the
prisoner forth...

A sudden drum roll, the crowd lean forward, straining to get sight of the CONDEMNED MAN.

MERLIN clambers up onto a wooden scaffold supporting a grandstand of temporary tiered seating, affording him a better view ...

His P.O.V: A brief glimpse of the CONDEMNED MAN and the EXECUTIONER raising his axe, then glancing over at UThER ...

UTHER has his hand raised aloft, he lets it fall ...

The EXECUTIONER takes his cue and swings his axe Suddenly, the CROWD in front of MERLIN stand up with a roar, obscuring the terrible sight.

We register MERLIN's shock.

At the window MORGANA flinches, then turns away. She can watch no longer.

Immediately, we hear UThER's voice booming out again over the square and see him standing arms aloft ...

UTHER

When I came to this land the
Kingdom was in chaos - but we
changed all that.

(he smiles)

With your help the dragons were
defeated and magic driven from the
realm. So I declare this week
a holiday to celebrate ten years of
my reign - ten years since the
Great Dragon was captured and
Camelot freed from the evil
practice of sorcery!

(he raises a goblet)

Let the celebrations begin!

But the cheers of approval are immediately interrupted by an old woman, MARY COLLINS. The crowd recoil at the sight of her grotesque and withered face as she pushes her way into the open square, shouting abuse at UThER...

MARY COLLINS

There is only one evil in this land
and it is not magic - it is you!
Your hatred and your ignorance.

GUARDS hurry from the crowd, circling the woman...

MARY COLLINS

You took my son and I warn you -
before your celebrations are
complete, you will share my tears!

MARY COLLINS(cont'd)

An eye for an eye, a tooth for a
tooth, a son for a son!

UTHER

(shouting)

Guards, seize her!

The GUARDS descend on the woman, but she reaches for a pendant from around her neck, holds it aloft and quickly mumbles a spell...

A sudden wind whips the dust around her into a vortex; and then, a split second later, both the wind and MARY COLLINS are gone. Only a cloud of dust remains, floating gently across the courtyard on the breeze...

The CROWD are aghast. A very worried MERLIN shrinks away from the scene...

CUT TO:

5 INT. KING'S PALACE (CORRIDOR 1) - DAY 1. FR. 5

MERLIN makes his way through the King's Palace. He stares in wonder at the preparations for the anniversary celebration that are already in full swing, with SERVANTS scurrying hither and thither with food, wine etc.

MERLIN reaches the end of the corridor and hesitates, slightly lost. He turns to a GUARD to ask directions ...

MERLIN

Where would I find Gaius, the Court
Physician?

CUT TO:

6 EXT. KING'S PALACE (CORRIDOR 2) - DAY 1. FR. 6

MERLIN makes his way down a narrow corridor deep in the bowels of the castle. In contrast to the earlier regal splendour, it is dark and shabby. He spies a narrow doorway marked "Court Physician".

MERLIN approaches the door. It's ajar. He knocks. No reply. MERLIN lingers a moment, slightly apprehensive, then calls inside ...

MERLIN

Hello?

Finally he decides to push the door open and peer inside...

CUT TO:

7

INT. GAIUS' CHAMBERS - DAY 1. UK.

7

A large circular room with a vaulted ceiling. Every nook and cranny is crammed with books, jars, vials, bubbling potions etc. MERLIN peers through the murk and dust - there's no sign of life.

He steps gingerly across the threshold. He makes his way through the clutter: the shelves of books and jars seem to go on forever. He calls out ...

MERLIN
(tentatively)
Hello?

No reply. He rounds a corner...

Perched on a rickety ladder, high above his head, MERLIN can just make out a shock of silver hair - this is GAIUS, rummaging in the rafters for a book or potion. He seems oblivious to MERLIN's presence, so MERLIN self-consciously clears his throat - GAIUS spins round in complete fright, topples from his ladder and plummets towards the flagstones below...

MERLIN's eyes widen - we hear the sound of his heartbeat pounding ...

GAIUS continues to fall, but his descent slows - we're now in SLOW MOTION: MERLIN TIME.

MERLIN glances across the room and spies...

A pair of large corn sacks resting in the far corner. MERLIN's eyes flare...

GAIUS continues his terrifying descent. But just before he hits the flagstones one of the corn sacks flies - at breakneck speed - across the floor.

GAIUS lands in a gigantic cloud of dust and corn husks.

A beat, GAIUS takes a moment to recover. He sits cradled in the sack staring at MERLIN ...

GAIUS
How the ...!

He looks toward the far corner and the other sack - there's no way MERLIN could've physically moved it.

GAIUS
What did you just do?

MERLIN
Uh ...

MERLIN looks alarmed, fearing he's given himself away. GAIUS struggles to his feet - unable to contain his amazement.

GAIUS
Tell me.

MERLIN
I don't know what happened.

GAIUS
If anyone had seen that

MERLIN
It was nothing to do with me. It was ...

GAIUS
(stern)
I know what it was. I want to know where you learnt to do it.

MERLIN
Nowhere.

GAIUS
Then how is it you know magic?

MERLIN doesn't know what to say.

GAIUS
Where did you study?

MERLIN stares at him - fearing he's in a lot of trouble.

MERLIN
Well ...

GAIUS
(insistent)
Answer me.

MERLIN
I've never studied magic or been taught

GAIUS
You're lying to me, boy; this is important.

MERLIN
What am I meant to say?

GAIUS
The truth.

MERLIN
I was born like this.

GAIUS
That's impossible.

MERLIN looks awkward. GAIUS stares at him.

GAIUS
Who are you?

MERLIN
(he searches his bag)
I have this letter.

He takes out a parchment and hands it to GAIUS. GAIUS examines it ...

GAIUS
I don't have my glasses.

MERLIN
I'm Merlin.

GAIUS
Hunith's son?

MERLIN
Yes.

A beat.

GAIUS
(thrown)
But you're not meant to be here
'till Wednesday.

MERLIN
It is Wednesday.

GAIUS stares at him. A beat.

GAIUS
Alright, then ... Well ... put your
bag in there.
(he indicates a door)

MERLIN looks grateful and heads toward the room.

MERLIN
(a beat - he turns back to
Gaius)
You won't say anything ...

GAIUS
No.

GAIUS looks up at the ladder to where he'd been standing ...

GAIUS
Although, Merlin ...

MERLIN stops at the door and looks back at GAIUS.

GAIUS
I should say 'thank you'.

CUT TO:

8 INT. GAIUS' CHAMBERS (MERLIN'S ROOM) - NIGHT 1. UK/FR. 8

A garret room, MERLIN finishes unpacking his things and sits down on his tiny bed - wondering what he should do next...

He glances up. Above the bed is a shutter, he opens it to reveal a small window...

MERLIN looks out over Camelot at dusk, it's aglow with small flickering torches that twinkle like fairy lights. He gazes down into the busy high street beneath his window - it's full of life, colour and endless possibilities. We can sense MERLIN's excitement and keenness to become involved...

CUT TO:

9 INT. GAIUS' CHAMBERS - NIGHT 1. UK. 9

GAIUS sits down to read the letter MERLIN gave him. We hear the voice of HUNITH, Merlin's mother.

HUNITH (V.O.)
Gaius, my dear brother, I turn to
you for I feel lost and alone, and
know not who to trust ...

FADE TO:

10 INT. MERLIN'S HOUSE - DAY 0. UK. 10

A simple workman's cottage. HUNITH, a comely woman in her 40's, sits at the foot of a bed. She looks down with tears in her eyes as she watches MERLIN sleeping with his head resting against his backpack.

HUNITH (V.O.)
... Merlin is my only child, to the
eye his smiling face is like any
other. It is every mother's fate
to think her child is special and
yet I would give my life that
Merlin were not so.

HUNITH(cont'd)

Ours is a small village and he is so clearly at odds with people here that if he were to remain I fear what would become of him.

FADE TO:

11 INT. GAIUS' CHAMBERS - NIGHT 1. UK. 11

As he finishes reading we can see the increasing concern etched on GAIUS' face.

HUNITH (V.O.)

In these times, he needs a hand to hold, a voice to guide, someone that might help him find a purpose for his gifts. To this end, I hope and trust, my dear brother, that you will have it in your heart to be that person. I beg you, if you understand a mother's love for her son, keep him safe. And may God save you both.

GAIUS puts the letter down and thinks long and hard. What is he to do?

CUT TO:

12 INT/EXT. KING'S PALACE (MORGANA'S CHAMBER/COURTYARD) - NIGHT 1. UK/FR. 12

The empty courtyard, the executioner's block and axe glint in the moonlight. MORGANA looking down over the scene through the open window, a knock at the door.

UTHER (O.S)

Morgana?

She turns.

MORGANA

Yes?

UTHER enters. MORGANA looks at him, then moves from the window.

UTHER

Why aren't you joining in with the celebrations?

MORGANA

I just don't think that chopping someone's head off is a fun way to start a party.

MORGANA(cont'd)

(beat)
That poor mother.

UTHER
(a sense of something
personal)
It is only justice for what he'd
done.

MORGANA
To whom?

UTHER
It is the law of the land.

MORGANA
Your law.
(lightly)
I'd be careful ...

UTHER glances at her.

MORGANA
The more brutal you are, the more
enemies you'll create.

UTHER
I don't fear them.

MORGANA
Maybe you don't - but you put the
rest of us in danger.

UTHER takes this in as MORGANA turns away from the window.

CUT TO:

13 **EXT. FOREST (TENTED CAMP) - NIGHT 1. FR.** 13

A small group of tents stand silent in the moonlight, a
couple of guards standing on watch.

CUT TO:

14 **INT. DAME HELEN'S TENT - NIGHT 1. UK.** 14

Inside her tent, DAME HELEN OF MORA sings as she plaits her
long hair, preparing herself for bed. Her looks are as
beautiful and striking as her voice. Suddenly, the candles
lighting the tent flicker...

DAME HELEN stops her song, turns and looks toward the
entrance. There's a sound outside... a twig breaking under a
footstep ...

DAME HELEN

Hello?

No response.

DAME HELEN

Sergeant?

A beat and a SOLDIER enters.

SERGEANT

Yes, Dame Helen.

DAME HELEN

Is all well?

SERGEANT

Yes, M'am. With luck we should reach Camelot by tomorrow.

DAME HELEN

That's good.

DAME HELEN remains uneasy.

SERGEANT

I'll be outside if you need me.

He leaves.

CUT TO:

15 **EXT. FOREST (TENTED CAMP) - NIGHT 1. FR.**

15

The SERGEANT steps out from the tent. He walks a couple of paces, then stops to listen. Again we hear the sound of twigs breaking under foot... The SERGEANT reaches for his weapon...

SERGEANT

Who's there?

Another GUARD walks round the side of the tent, going about his duties. The SERGEANT nods at him and heads to his own tent, relieved.

CUT TO:

16 **INT. DAME HELEN'S TENT - NIGHT 1. UK.**

16

DAME HELEN washes her face in some water... She stops... She's heard something. She turns to look... And comes face to face with the hideous, gnarled visage of MARY COLLINS.

MARY COLLINS is holding a rudimentary straw doll with a noose around its neck. MARY COLLINS snaps the noose tight ...

DAME HELEN's eyes pop and she grabs herself round the neck. She is being magically strangled, she's unable to breathe, unable to scream...

MARY COLLINS smiles as she watches DAME HELEN slump to the ground ...

A moment, then MARY COLLINS begins to change. Slowly but surely her face transforms into DAME HELEN's.

The new DAME HELEN stares down at the dead DAME HELEN, a broad smile crossing the now beautiful face. She tucks in her pendant, the only clue to her real identity.

CUT TO:

17 INT. GAIUS' CHAMBERS (MERLIN'S ROOM) - DAY 2. UK. 17

A new day. MERLIN asleep on the narrow uncomfortable bed, a slit of bright sunlight on his face. He opens his eyes, suddenly remembering where he is ...

CUT TO:

18 INT. GAIUS' CHAMBERS - DAY 2. UK. 18

MERLIN enters the room, still pulling on his clothes. He stops as he sees GAIUS standing by the kitchen table. Hunith's letter is still sitting on the table, next to it is a plate of food and a pail of water.

GAIUS

I got you some water, you didn't have a wash last night.

MERLIN

Sorry.

GAIUS

Help yourself to breakfast.

A hungry MERLIN sees the food and quickly reaches past GAIUS across the table ... Behind his back we see GAIUS deliberately knock the pail from the table ...

GAIUS

(as if the spilt pail is Merlin's fault)

Merlin!

MERLIN reacts, turns and sees the pail falling. He reaches out with his hands, but there's no way he's going to catch it. Instinctively, without thought, he uses his magic ...

The bucket and the tumbling water stop their fall and hang suspended above the floor.

MERLIN instantly realises what he's done and flashes a look at GAIUS. They lock eyes. We see MERLIN's panic ...

The bucket suddenly crashes to the floor, spilling its contents everywhere. GAIUS steps back to avoid the splash. MERLIN hurries to clear it up.

MERLIN

It was my fault.

GAIUS

How did you do that?

MERLIN looks at him.

GAIUS

Tell me. I want to know. Did you incant a spell in your mind?

MERLIN

I don't *know* any spells.

GAIUS

So what *did* you do?

MERLIN shrugs.

GAIUS

There must be something.

MERLIN

It just happens. I can't control it.

GAIUS stares at him, totally bemused by his powers. MERLIN continues to clear up. Finally, he looks at GAIUS.

MERLIN

What are you going to do?

GAIUS

It's not me you need to worry about.

(sighs)

But for a start you can help me out till I find you some paid work ...

GAIUS picks up a handful of remedies ...

GAIUS
Here. Hollyhock and Feverfew for
Lady Percival; and this is for Sir
Owain ...

(he hands him a phial)
He's blind as a weevil. Tell him
not to take all of it at once.

MERLIN
Ok.

GAIUS
Here ...
(he hands him some
sweetmeat)

He gives MERLIN a fatherly smile.

GAIUS
Off you go.

MERLIN smiles and prepares to set off, a spring in his step,
keen to get out into the city. GAIUS watches him, his
concern once again apparent. As MERLIN gets to the door,
GAIUS stops him ...

GAIUS
And Merlin ...

MERLIN looks at him ...

GAIUS
I don't need to tell you, but the
practising of any form of
enchantments will get you killed -
D'you understand that?

MERLIN nods.

CUT TO:

19

INT. KING'S PALACE (THRONE ROOM) - DAY 2. FR.

19

UTHER waits for DAME HELEN to arrive. MORGANA stands nearby
with GWEN, her maidservant. As DAME HELEN enters, MORGANA
turns to GWEN.

MORGANA
(whispering)
Have you ever heard Dame Helen
sing?

GWEN shakes her head.

GWEN
They say it's like having your ears
kissed by Cupid.

MORGANA smiles.

MORGANA
Sounds good ... Though I can't say
I'm familiar with that experience.

GWEN
(embarrassed)
Oh, no. Nor I am.

DAME HELEN reaches the throne. UThER rises to greet her.

UTHER
Dame Helen. Thank you so much for
coming to sing at our celebrations.

DAME HELEN
The pleasure is all mine.

UTHER
How was your journey?

DAME HELEN
Oh, the time it took, sire.

UTHER
(he kisses her hand)
I know, but it's always worth the
wait.

She touches the pendant under her clothing. For a moment her eyes flash with anger as she stares at UThER, although he doesn't see it.

DAME HELEN
I hope so.
(she smiles)

MORGANA rolls her eyes - not enjoying watching the crinklies flirt. Reveal MERLIN watching the scene from the doorway. A guard spies him and starts to head over. MERLIN ducks back through the door and continues on his way.

CUT TO:

20

INT. KING'S PALACE (CORRIDOR 2) - DAY 2. FR.

20

MERLIN hurries down a corridor and knocks on a small door. A man opens it. He squints at MERLIN.

MERLIN
 (holding out bottle)
 I brought you your medicine.

The man tries to take it but can't see a thing. MERLIN places it in his hand.

MERLIN
 Gaius said don't take it all...

He stops as he sees the man down the medicine in one.

MERLIN
 I'm sure it's fine...

MERLIN hurries away.

CUT TO:

21

EXT. KING'S PALACE (COURTYARD) - DAY 2. FR.

21

As MERLIN returns home, feeling pleased with himself and in no hurry to get back. He crosses a courtyard and sees a YOUNG LAD chastising his manservant, THOMAS, in front of a small group of MATES (including GALAHAD and GAWAINE) who are preparing to practise their combat skills ...

YOUNG LAD
 (a smile on his face)
 Where's the target?

THOMAS
 (slightly confused)
 There, sir.
 (he points at it)

YOUNG LAD
 It's into the sun.

The MAN SERVANT looks up into the sky.

THOMAS
 Well ... It's not that bright.

YOUNG LAD
 Bit like you, then.

His friends laugh. MERLIN smiles, it all seems good natured.

THOMAS
 (trying to excuse himself)
 Well, you've got to be able to
 fight in all weathers, sir.

YOUNG LAD
And what would you know about
fighting.

THOMAS
I'll put the target down the other
end, shall I, sir.

He quickly runs off to the target and picks it up ...

YOUNG LAD
(spying the moving target -
smiling)
This will teach him.

ANGLE on the MAN SERVANT carrying the target. Suddenly, a
dagger hits the bull with a thud. THOMAS reacts ...

THOMAS
Hey! Hang on!

Laughter from the MATES.

YOUNG LAD
Don't stop...

THOMAS resumes walking and places the target in the shade.

THOMAS
Here?

YOUNG LAD
I told you to keep moving.

THOMAS glances at him with an uncomprehending look and then
quickly ducks as the target is hit by another dagger ...

More laughter. MERLIN smile has gone, he looks awkward. His
disapproval is mirrored by GWEN, watching from the windows
above the courtyard.

YOUNG LAD
(insistent)
Come on , we want some moving
target practice.

THOMAS picks up the target again and slowly, nervously starts
to walk. He takes cover as it's hit by another dagger ...

YOUNG LAD
Run!

THOMAS starts to run. A series of daggers strike the target
and, in his anxiety to escape, the poor man stumbles. The
target goes cartwheeling across the courtyard and lands at
MERLIN's feet ...

The gang laugh ...

YOUNG LAD
Come on, pick it up again.

The gang re-arm ...

THOMAS nervously bends to retrieve the target, but MERLIN places a foot on it - preventing him from lifting it.

YOUNG LAD
Hurry up.

THOMAS looks up at MERLIN.

MERLIN
(turning to the YOUNG LAD
with a smile)
Hey ... Come on, that's enough.

The YOUNG LAD looks at him - clearly taking offence at MERLIN's interference.

YOUNG LAD
(wanting him to repeat it)
What?

He swaggers toward MERLIN ...

THOMAS
(to MERLIN - not wanting
any trouble)
It's alright.

MERLIN
(refusing to relinquish
the target)
No.

The YOUNG LAD comes face to face with MERLIN. They're about the same age, but MERLIN is a few sizes smaller. He looks a little nervous - but holds his ground.

MERLIN
You've had your fun, my friend.

YOUNG LAD
Do I know you?

MERLIN
I'm Merlin.

YOUNG LAD
So I don't know you.

MERLIN
No.

YOUNG LAD
But you called me "friend".

A beat. An awkward silence amongst the crowd. MERLIN can see everyone looking at him.

MERLIN
That was my mistake.

YOUNG LAD
I think so.

MERLIN
Yeah ... I'd never have a friend
who could be such an arse.

He smiles and turns away. His audacity draws a few laughs from the back of the crowd. We see GWEN is clearly impressed by MERLIN's intervention.

YOUNG LAD
Or I, one who could be so stupid.

He places his hand on the hilt of his sword. MERLIN sees the CROWD step back. He turns and looks at the YOUNG LAD, suddenly sensing the danger he's got himself into.

YOUNG LAD
(a smile)
Tell me, Merlin, d'you know how to
walk on your knees?

Laughter.

MERLIN
No.

YOUNG LAD
Well, I suggest you learn.

MERLIN holds a smile on his face - but displays a look of contempt. There's no way he's getting on his knees for this idiot.

YOUNG LAD
(an arrogant smile)
D'you want me to help you?

MERLIN's face hardens -

MERLIN
I wouldn't if I were you.

YOUNG LAD
Why, what are you going to do to
me?

MERLIN
You've no idea ...

YOUNG LAD
Be my guest.

He towers menacingly over MERLIN. MERLIN takes a nervous step backward ...

YOUNG LAD
Come on, then...

MERLIN sees the YOUNG LAD and his MATES bearing down on him. Suddenly, he is in MERLIN TIME...

EVERYTHING SLOWS, MERLIN looks at the gang, their ugly gloating faces grinning at him, we hear his heart pounding ... He turns his focus onto the YOUNG LAD. His eyes narrow...

MERLIN, realising what he's doing, suddenly breaks the spell and steps back...

YOUNG LAD
Oh, is that it?

The crowd laugh. MERLIN, humiliated, spins round and aims a punch at him, but the YOUNG LAD swiftly parries, grabs MERLIN'S arm and twists it up behind his back.

YOUNG LAD
I'll have you thrown in jail for that.

MERLIN
Who d'you think you are - the king!

YOUNG LAD
No, I'm his son - Arthur.

MERLIN, realising the young lad's identity, swallows hard.

YOUNG LAD
On your knees.

He kicks MERLIN on the back of his legs, MERLIN crumples to his knees and, before he can backtrack, he's surrounded by a group of SOLDIERS and bundled to the ground.

CUT TO:

22 EXT. CAMELOT - DAY 3. FR. 22

Dawn. The sun is crowning the castle walls, the mist lifting into the sky - giving the castle an eerie, unearthly quality ...

CUT TO:

23 INT. KING'S PALACE (DUNGEONS) - DAY 3. UK. 23

Morning. MERLIN deep in the bowels of the castle, languishing in a filthy cell. He lies on the floor, asleep. Suddenly, he hears a voice and wakes with a start ...

The voice is coming from somewhere deep beneath him, calling him, the earth trembles: 'Merlin'.

MERLIN jumps to his feet and retreats across the cell staring at the ground in shock...

The earth calls to him once more: 'Merlin'. It's a voice we might recognise from the opening.

MERLIN bends toward the ground and nervously places his ear to the floor ...

The voice again: 'Merlin'. Only this time it's loud and right behind him...

GAIUS

Are you a complete idiot?

GAIUS is standing in the doorway. He's furious ...

GAIUS

The one thing someone like you should do is keep your head down, and what do you do?

MERLIN

I'm sorry.

GAIUS

You're lucky. I've pulled a few strings to get you released.

MERLIN

(delighted)

Oh thank you, thank you. I won't forget this.

GAIUS
 Ah, well...
 (a beat)
 There is a small price to pay.

CUT TO:

24

EXT. CAMELOT (STREET B) - DAY 3. FR.

24

MERLIN's head in the stocks. A large rotten tomato skims his face. He looks up at GAIUS ungratefully ...

MERLIN
 Thanks.

A gang of eager CHILDREN arrive armed with sacks of rotten veg.

MERLIN
 Oh, Charlemagne!

Everything imaginable is hurled at MERLIN ...

As MERLIN takes his punishment, we see GWEN looking on sympathetically. She grimaces, feeling each shot as it hits poor MERLIN.

The CHILDREN finally run out of ammo and head off. MERLIN's face is dripping with rancid pulp, he opens his eyes to find GWEN gently wiping his face clean.

GWEN gives him a lovely smile, clearly smitten ... MERLIN smiles grimly back at her.

GWEN
 I'm Gwenhwyfer. But most people call me Gwen.

MERLIN
 Right. I'm Merlin...

MERLIN halfheartedly waggles a hand in the stocks - offering her a handshake. GWEN responds and sweetly shakes it.

MERLIN
 Although most people call me "idiot".

GWEN
 No, I saw what you did. It was so brave.

MERLIN
 (dismayed)
 It was stupid...

GWEN
Well, I'm glad you walked away, you weren't going to beat him.

MERLIN
Oh, I could beat him.

GWEN
(impressed)
Yeah? You think? Because you don't look like one of those big muscly fellows ...

MERLIN
Thanks.

GWEN
No... I'm sure you're stronger than you look ...

MERLIN glances at her ...

GWEN
It's just Arthur's one of those real rough tough save the world kind of men and, well ...

MERLIN gives her another glance.

MERLIN
What?

GWEN
You don't look like that.

MERLIN
I'm in disguise.

GWEN
(she smiles)
Well, it was great you stood up to him.

MERLIN
You think so?

GWEN
Arthur's a bully. And everyone thought you were a real hero.

MERLIN
Oh yeah? Excuse me ...
(he waves her aside)
My fans are waiting.

Another barrage of rotten apples hits the stocks.

CUT TO:

25

EXT. CAMELOT - DAY 3. FR.

25

UTHER stands on the battlements showing off his kingdom to DAME HELEN.

UTHER

Maybe one day I'll build a new
palace here - Fit for a Queen.

He looks at DAME HELEN.

DAME HELEN

(she smiles)

What Queen would not be happy here?
It's already so perfect.

UTHER

No, I want it gone, to start anew.

DAME HELEN looks intrigued. He sees her.

UTHER

There are too many ghosts here.

(a beat)

I've been at war for so much of my
life. And yet these bricks, these
walls will live on far longer than
my deeds. Have I built a Camelot
that will stand as a testimony to
my reign; a legacy that will be
remembered?

(a beat)

What kind of King am I?

DAME HELEN

A very attractive one.

UTHER

(he smiles)

Do I have the love of my people?

DAME HELEN

I can only speak for *one* of your
subjects.

UTHER

(his smile spreading)

What favours would you have me
bestow on you?

DAME HELEN laughs and moves away. He pursues her.

UTHER
I warn you I am ruthless ...
I do not let anything stand in my
way.

DAME HELEN
I know that.

UTHER
And I will not be denied.

They laugh.

CUT TO:

26

INT. GAIUS' CHAMBERS - DAY 3. UK.

26

GAIUS is preparing food, he glances up as MERLIN enters from his bedroom. He's washed and changed. MERLIN sits at the table and looks at the food.

GAIUS
D'you want some vegetables with
that?

MERLIN glances at him. GAIUS smiles and joins him.

MERLIN
(he doesn't eat)
I know you're still angry with me.

GAIUS
Your mother asked me to look after
you.

MERLIN
Yes.

GAIUS
What d'you think she would have
said?

MERLIN absorbs this. GAIUS watches MERLIN eat for a moment.

GAIUS
What did she say to you about your
gifts?

MERLIN
(he shrugs)
That I was 'special'.

GAIUS
You are special. The like of which
I've never seen before.

MERLIN

Why?

GAIUS

You promise me that you have not been taught.

MERLIN

Never.

GAIUS

This is beyond any human power.

MERLIN

I don't understand.

GAIUS

There was a time, when the dragons still walked the land, when magic was practiced freely, but it required incantations, spells... These had to be learnt from books. It took years of study; believe me, you have no idea.

MERLIN takes in the wall of books beside him.

MERLIN

Did you ever practice magic?

GAIUS

(evading the question)

You don't understand. What I saw you do ... It was remarkable. Elemental. Instinctive.

MERLIN

But what's the point if it can't be used?

GAIUS

I don't know.

(a beat)

You're a question that has never been posed before, Merlin.

MERLIN stares at him, slightly daunted by this.

GAIUS

(changing the subject)

Now, I've got another errand for you to run. There's a preparation for Dame Helen, she needs it for her voice.

CUT TO:

27 INT. KING'S PALACE (CORRIDOR 3) - DAY 3. FR. 27

MERLIN arrives at Dame Helen's chambers. He knocks. There's no reply. He slowly pushes the door ajar and peers inside ...

The room appears empty. Unsure what to do, MERLIN slips inside

CUT TO:

28 INT. KING'S PALACE (DAME HELEN'S CHAMBER) - DAY 3. UK. 28

MERLIN crosses toward the dressing table, the room is sumptuous. Despite his promise to stay out of trouble, MERLIN can't resist having a little look around.

CUT TO:

29 INT. KING'S PALACE (CORRIDOR 3) - DAY 3. FR. 29

DAME HELEN approaching down the corridor, she has a faint smile on her face following her encounter with Uther.

CUT TO:

30 INT. KING'S PALACE (DAME HELEN'S CHAMBER) - DAY 3. UK. 30

MERLIN sees an old book hidden beneath a goblet and some items on the dressing table. Intrigued, MERLIN takes it out, careful not to disrupt anything ...

He studies the book's mysterious cover ... and slowly opens it. Suddenly, he hears a noise outside ...

MERLIN rushes to return the book. In his panic he knocks over a jewellery box and the goblet. He scrambles to put them back into place.

He turns to face DAME HELEN. He doesn't see the reflection she casts in the goblet - for a split second we glimpse the hideous face of MARY COLLINS.

DAME HELEN
(quiet and menacing)
What're you doing in here?

MERLIN
I was asked to deliver this.

He picks up the pouch of medication and hands it to DAME HELEN. He beats a hasty retreat.

CUT TO:

31 INT. KING'S PALACE (CORRIDOR 3) - DAY 3. FR. 31

MERLIN shuts the door behind him and hurries away feeling a little uneasy ...

CUT TO:

32 EXT. CAMELOT (STREET B) - DAY 3. FR. 32

MERLIN hurrying from the Keep and entering the busy thoroughfare. Suddenly, he sees ARTHUR and his ENTOURAGE heading toward him. They look at each other, MERLIN can't avoid him ...

They come face to face, MERLIN tries to keep walking. ARTHUR blocks his path ...

ARTHUR
(smiling)
How's your knee walking coming along?

MERLIN keeps going.

ARTHUR
Ah, don't run away.

MERLIN
(disparaging)
From you?

MERLIN turns on him ...

MERLIN
I've told you, you're an arse - I just didn't know you were a Royal one.

A few GUARDS react...

MERLIN
What you going to do - get your dad's men to protect you?

ARTHUR
(smiling)
I could take you apart with one blow.

He puckers his lips and blows ...

MERLIN stares at him. There's no going back ...

MERLIN
I could take you apart with less
than that.

ARTHUR
Are you sure?

ARTHUR smiles and he tears off his top. MERLIN looks at him -
he's ripped like 50 Cent. MERLIN swallows hard ...

He removes his own top - it's not quite so impressive.

ARTHUR
Here you go, big man.

ARTHUR takes a pair of evil looking maces from the GUARDS and
throws one to MERLIN. MERLIN fumbles it. The gathering
CROWD laugh, further angering MERLIN. The two lads square up
for a fight. ARTHUR smiles, confident that he's going to
give MERLIN a whipping ...

ARTHUR
Come on, then.

ARTHUR begins expertly twirling the mace round his body at
high speed - like some ninja martial art expert. It's a
frightening display and the CROWD roar their approval.

Finally, ARTHUR brings the mace to a halt ...

ARTHUR
(a smile)
I warn you I've been trained to
kill since birth.

MERLIN
Wow - and how long have you been
training to be a bully?

ARTHUR
(forced to smile at his
audacity)
You can't address me like that.

MERLIN
Sorry - how long have you been
training to be a bully, my Lord?

ARTHUR reacts and suddenly arcs a high sweeping blow at
MERLIN ...

MERLIN ducks and comes up wide eyed ...

CUT TO:

33 INT. GAIUS' CHAMBERS - DAY 3. UK. 33

GAIUS is up a ladder. He hears a roar from outside in the street. He climbs down to see what the disturbance is.

CUT TO:

34 INT. KING'S PALACE (CORRIDOR 2) - DAY 3. FR. 34

GAIUS comes out of his chambers and walks over to a window. He looks out into the high street and we see his horror as below him...

CUT TO:

35 EXT. CAMELOT (STREET B) - DAY 3. FR. 35

MERLIN and ARTHUR are going at it hammer and tongs... To the CROWD'S amusement, MERLIN is inept; all he can do is duck, parry and retreat along the busy street - he's clearly no fighter.

As ARTHUR'S blows rain down, MERLIN suddenly crashes into a fruit stall. MERLIN falls backwards, sending the produce flying ...

He looks up. ARTHUR appears to have him at his mercy, he raises his arm about to apply the *coup de grace* ...

MERLIN

Oh ... Charlemagne!

We hear MERLIN'S heart beating and we're in MERLIN TIME...

MERLIN'S eyes flare and he looks up at an awning billowing in the wind above ARTHUR'S head.

We see the structure move ...

ARTHUR arcs a blow toward MERLIN, the mace catches the awning and is ripped from his hand...

ARTHUR reacts with surprise, reaches up into the awning to retrieve his mace...

MERLIN takes his chance, rolls away and gets to his feet. ARTHUR quickly grabs his mace and turns to MERLIN once more...

He's about to unleash another deadly blow. The sound of MERLIN'S heart and, once again, time slows...

As ARTHUR steps toward him, MERLIN'S eyes rest upon an upended wooden fruit box, his eyes blaze ...

The box tilts at a 45 degree angle, we see ARTHUR's foot land on the edge of the box, levering the top of the box toward his leg ...

The box whacks ARTHUR in the shin. He lets out a painful yell ...

It's MERLIN'S turn to smile. ARTHUR responds angrily and lunges with another blow ...

MERLIN's eyes gleam ...

A nearby ROPE snaps taut. ARTHUR trips over it and crashes to the floor, losing his mace.

The CROWD laugh. MERLIN's grin intensifies - we are in no doubt that the rope was his work ...

ARTHUR gets up with a smile - he can see the funny side. He reaches for his weapon, but MERLIN swings his own mace. Without a weapon to defend himself, it's ARTHUR's turn to retreat...

ARTHUR makes several lunges for the mace, but MERLIN drives him back - enjoying the upper-hand.

MERLIN

D'you want to give up?

ARTHUR, displaying his own natural speed of thought, grabs the bellows from the ironmonger's stall. He aims it at the furnace and slaps the handles together - sending a blast of burning embers into the air. MERLIN jumps back as the spray of sparks hit him ...

ARTHUR

I told you I'd take you apart with just one blow.

ARTHUR snatches up the ironmonger's hammer and aims it at MERLIN. MERLIN steps back, but collides with a wooden post. He ducks, the hammer embeds itself in the post. MERLIN stares at the hammer, we hear his heart beating ...

MERLIN TIME: ARTHUR tries to withdraw the hammer from the wood - he can't.

MERLIN and ARTHUR stare at each other. ARTHUR uses all his might to try to release the hammer, but it seems to be held by magic - which of course it is.

The CROWD give an audible intake of breath as MERLIN aims a blow at the defenceless ARTHUR, sweeping his feet from under him ...

ARTHUR hits the ground and, in the space he's vacated, MERLIN suddenly comes face to face with GAIUS watching on the sidelines. MERLIN sees the angry expression on GAIUS' face. He knows he has to stop using magic.

ARTHUR recovers, gets up and throws himself at MERLIN; disarming him in the process...

Now MERLIN is defenceless, he looks at ARTHUR armed with his mace, then looks at GAIUS - what's he going to do now? ARTHUR takes a swing, MERLIN's face is gripped with panic...

MERLIN lets out a yell as he is struck in the midriff. He doubles up, winded by the blow. ARTHUR stands over him...

ARTHUR

There's something about you, Merlin
- I can't quite put my finger on
it.

We see ARTHUR lift his fist and swing a punch - BLACKOUT.

CUT TO:

36

INT. GAIUS' CHAMBERS - DAY 3. UK.

36

MERLIN enters, a look of wounded pride on his face. GAIUS follows him into the room, closes the door and rounds on him ...

GAIUS

How could you be so foolish
Using magic like that will get you
killed.

MERLIN

He needed to be taught a lesson.

GAIUS

You're the one who needs to learn.
Magic must be studied, mastered,
and used for good. Not for idiotic
pranks.

MERLIN

What is there to master? I could
move objects like that before I
could talk.

GAIUS

Then by now you should be able to
control yourself.

MERLIN

I don't want to. If I can't use
magic, what have I got?

MERLIN(cont'd)

I'm just a 'nobody' - and always
will be. If I can't use magic,
then I might as well die.

Upset, he heads off into his own room. GAIUS watches him go.
He sighs - he wasn't cut out to be a surrogate parent...

CUT TO:

37 INT. GAIUS' CHAMBERS (MERLIN'S ROOM) - DAY 3. UK. 37

MERLIN is lying on his bed. He sees GAIUS enter, carrying
ointments and bandages.

GAIUS

Merlin ...

But MERLIN is still angry ...

MERLIN

Why isn't there anyone who can help
me?

GAIUS stares at him - unprepared for this.

GAIUS

Come here...

He takes hold of his face, sits down beside MERLIN and starts
treating his wounds.

MERLIN

You don't know why I was born like
this, do you?

GAIUS

(unsure how to answer)
No.

MERLIN

I'm not a monster, am I ...

He searches GAIUS's eyes...

GAIUS looks at MERLIN's pained expression.

GAIUS

Don't ever think that.

MERLIN

Then why am I like this?
Please. I need to know - Why?

GAIUS has no answer.

GAIUS
Perhaps someone with more knowledge
than me ...

MERLIN
If you can't tell me, then no one
can.

GAIUS feels this.

GAIUS
Answers aren't like that. They
don't sit there on shelves getting
dusty waiting for you to come
along. I believe there is an
answer. But it may well arise out
of events that we cannot yet know.
You must be patient.

MERLIN looks at him.

GAIUS
(he hands him a remedy)
Take some of this. It will help
with the pain.

CUT TO:

38 **EXT. CAMELOT - NIGHT 3. FR.** 38

The spires and turrets of Camelot silhouetted against a full moon.

CUT TO:

39 **INT. GAIUS' CHAMBERS (MERLIN'S ROOM) - NIGHT 3. UK.** 39

MERLIN asleep on his bed, his bed suddenly begins to vibrate with the sound of a deep voice that emanates from beneath the floor ...

GREAT DRAGON (V.O.)
Merlin!

MERLIN wakes with a start, unsure if he's in a dream ...

GREAT DRAGON (V.O.)
Merlin!

He sits bolt upright and listens. Nothing, silence, then the faint noise of something outside the door...

CUT TO:

40 INT. GAIUS' CHAMBERS - NIGHT 3. UK.

40

A candle burning late into the night. GAIUS is sat at the table surrounded by books, squinting through his rudimentary spectacles. As he reads, he becomes aware of MERLIN standing at the door to his bedroom.

GAIUS

Have you come back to shout at me again?

He smiles.

MERLIN

No.

(a beat - unsure whether to say)

Did you hear a noise?

GAIUS

No.

MERLIN

A voice...?

GAIUS

(he looks at him - a smile)

Probably the effects of the sedative I gave you.

MERLIN sits down at the table.

MERLIN

Why did Uther ban magic?

GAIUS

Magic corrupts, Merlin. You're too young to know - there was a time when people used magic for the wrong ends. It destroyed the natural order. It brought about chaos on earth. In the end, Uther put an end to it. He made it his mission to destroy everything from that time - even the dragons.

MERLIN

Why?

GAIUS

They knew too much. And Uther feared them. So he had them slaughtered.

MERLIN
 (appalled)
 What - all of them?

GAIUS
 Well ... There was one dragon he
 chose not to kill, but to keep as
 an example. He imprisoned it in a
 cave deep beneath the castle...

MERLIN
 (a realisation)
 Beneath the dungeon.

GAIUS
 Where no one can free it.

But MERLIN'S hardly listening. A penny is dropping in his
 mind.

CUT TO:

41 INT. KING'S PALACE (CORRIDOR 5) - NIGHT 3. FR. 41

MERLIN sneaks through the empty castle, fearing discovery at
 every turn ...

He hears the sound of the GREAT DRAGON calling him on ...

GREAT DRAGON (O.S.)
 Merlin!

CUT TO:

42 INT. KING'S PALACE (DUNGEONS) - NIGHT 3. UK. 42

A few sleeping PRISONERS and TWO GUARDS playing dice - very
 much awake. We see MERLIN peering through a door at them ...

A beat, MERLIN scans the dungeons until he spies a cave
 entrance in a disused section beyond the guards and away from
 the cells ...

He looks at the GUARDS, they're focused on their game, but
 there is still no way to get past them. A look of irritation
 passes across MERLIN'S face, then we see a familiar look of
 concentration take hold ...

A GUARD throws the dice, they bounce off the table and keep
 rolling. The GUARD gets up to retrieve them ...

But the dice keep rolling. Every time he bends and stretches
 for them they elude his grasp ...

Until finally, he reaches the far end of the dungeon (away from the cave entrance). He grabs for a die and finds it's lodged between two cobblestones, he can't move it ...

The other GUARD reacts ...

GUARD
What're you doing?

He goes over to help his colleague, they both struggle to release the die ...

MERLIN waits till their backs are turned and then makes a dash for the cave and slips inside ...

CUT TO:

43 **INT. KING'S PALACE (CAVERN) - NIGHT 3. UK.** 43

A long winding tunnel falling away at a steep angle. MERLIN descends into the darkness, unsure what he's going to find...

Suddenly, magically, an old rushlight on the wall flares into life. MERLIN looks surprised - it's clearly not of his doing. One by one, a series of torches burst into flame lighting the path ahead and leading him on...

MERLIN quickens his step. The tunnel gets narrower and narrower until MERLIN is virtually bent double.

Finally, MERLIN turns a corner and is faced with his own reflection glistening in a strange, black convex mirror ...

He hears laughter. He looks around, trying to locate the source of the disembodied voice ...

MERLIN
Where are you?

GREAT DRAGON
I'm here.

The black mirror suddenly recedes and we realise it is a huge eyeball ...

It disappears, leaving a large gaping chasm. MERLIN cautiously takes a step forward and stares into the void ...

Ghosts of smoke hanging in the air ...

MERLIN controls his fear and leans out through the hole...

We see a vast natural cavern and there, at the foot, is the GREAT DRAGON, some fifteen or twenty meters long.

GREAT DRAGON
 (amused)
 How small you are ...

The dragon's P.O.V: The tiny figure of MERLIN standing on a narrow lip of rock.

GREAT DRAGON
 For such a great destiny.

MERLIN
 Why? What d'you mean?

The dragon chortles ...

MERLIN
 What destiny?

GREAT DRAGON
 Your 'gift', Merlin, was given to you for a reason.

MERLIN
 So there *is* a reason!

The dragon smiles.

GREAT DRAGON
 Arthur is the once and future king who will unite the land of Albion.

MERLIN
 I don't see what that has to do with me.

GREAT DRAGON
 Everything. Without you, Arthur will never succeed. Without you, there will be no Albion.

MERLIN
 No ... No, you've got this wrong.

GREAT DRAGON
 There is no right or wrong. Only what is and what isn't.

MERLIN
 I'm serious ... If anyone wants to kill him they can go ahead. In fact, I'll give them a hand.

GREAT DRAGON
 (amused)
 None of us choose our destiny, Merlin ...

GREAT DRAGON(cont'd)
 (then with a hint of
 sadness)
 And none of us can escape it.

MERLIN
 No, no way, there must be some
 other Arthur, because this one's a
 moron.

GREAT DRAGON
 Perhaps it's your destiny to change
 that.

Suddenly, the dragon raises its massive wings and soars into
 the air...

MERLIN watches in a amazement as the giant beast circles in
 the darkness of the cavern and comes to rest on a ledge far
 above him...

MERLIN
 Wait! I need to know more...

But his words are lost in the vast expanse ...

CUT TO:

44 **EXT. CAMELOT - DAY 4. FR.** 44

Bright sunshine beats down on Camelot - the sun has risen and
 it's the start of a new day.

CUT TO:

45 **INT. GAIUS' CHAMBERS (MERLIN'S ROOM) - DAY 4. UK.** 45

MERLIN is asleep, exhausted by the revelations of the
 previous night. GAIUS enters. The place is a mess, clothes
 everywhere, a typical teenager's room.

GAIUS
 Have you seen the state of this
 room?

MERLIN
 (bleary eyed)
 It just happens.

GAIUS
 By magic?

MERLIN
 Yeah.

GAIUS
 Well, you can clear it up - *without*
 using magic.
 (a beat)
 Then I need you to collect some
 fresh herbs and deliver this to
 Morgana.
 (he passes him a phial)

MERLIN looks at it.

GAIUS
 It's a sleeping draught. The poor
 girl's having nightmares.

MERLIN
 I know the feeling.

CUT TO:

46 INT. KING'S PALACE (CORRIDOR 6) - DAY 4. FR. 46

MERLIN makes his way through the castle...

Finally he arrives at MORGANA's chambers. The door is ajar.
 He knocks, there's no answer. He pushes the door open, steps
 into the anteroom ...

CUT TO:

47 INT. KING'S PALACE (MORGANA'S CHAMBER) - DAY 4. UK. 47

As he enters the inner chamber he sees MORGANA trying out a
 dress in the mirror. MERLIN's heart skips a beat, spellbound
 by her sheer beauty. She is about the same age as MERLIN, but
 her obvious sophistication makes her seem slightly older.

MORGANA'S so intent on her own reflection that she doesn't
 notice MERLIN staring, slack-jawed, right behind her.

Before he can say anything, she slips behind a screen and
 starts to change.

MORGANA (O.S.)
 You know I've been thinking about
 Arthur...

MERLIN's captivated by her silhouette...

MORGANA
 I wouldn't touch him with a lance
 pole. Pass me that dress, will
 you?

MERLIN knows he can't afford to get into trouble - but knows if he lets on he's there, MORGANA will think he's been spying on her. He sees the dress on the far side of the room, he quickly throws it onto the top of the screen ...

MORGANA

I mean the man is a total joustier -
Just because I'm the king's ward
...

MERLIN tries to tiptoe away ...

MORGANA

That doesn't mean I have to
accompany him to the dance, does
it?

She doesn't get a reply ...

MORGANA

Well, does it?

MERLIN stops and is forced to respond...

MERLIN

(high pitched)
Un-uh.

MORGANA

If he wants me to, then he should
invite me. And he hasn't. So
d'you know what that means?

MERLIN

(high pitched)
Un-uh.

MORGANA

Where are you?

Just as she looks up over the top of the screen, MERLIN dashes to hide beneath it ...

MERLIN

(high pitched)
Here.

MORGANA

It means I'm going by myself.

MERLIN looks toward the open door, there's no chance of him reaching it ...

MORGANA

I need some help with the
fastening.

On MERLIN's face...

MORGANA

Gwen?

GWEN (O.S.)

I'm here.

A startled MERLIN looks up to see GWEN. She presses her finger to her lips, takes the potion from MERLIN and deftly slides behind the screen to help her mistress. MORGANA's none the wiser ...

MORGANA

So, it's whether I wear this little
tease ...

GWEN turns MORGANA away and gives MERLIN a smile. A relieved MERLIN quickly scarpers...

MORGANA

Or I hit them with something a
little more ... Medieval.

She twirls round holding a fabulous jewel encrusted black number tight to her body. GWEN just stares at her in awe.

CUT TO:

48 **EXT. FOREST (LAKE) - DAY 4. FR.**

48

The stark shapes of thorny trees, mist wreathing the ground. MERLIN begins picking herbs and flowers for Gaius. As he moves through the trees, we catch sight of a lake nearby...

MERLIN hears the sound of a woman singing ...

MERLIN peeks through the trees, straining for a view of the singer...

He catches sight of a figure - DAME HELEN, bathing in the water.

MERLIN can't resist stepping closer to get a better look ...

The song intensifies as he approaches the water...

But as MERLIN reaches the lake, the song stops. Silence.

MERLIN's P.O.V: The water rippling on the surface of the empty lake. There's no one in sight.

MERLIN looks slightly puzzled, then starts to head back in the direction of Camelot...

Suddenly, he hears a noise behind him. He spins round and finds himself face to face with the grotesque face of MARY COLLINS reflected in the lake.

MERLIN jumps back, his heart stops. He looks around, all about him tall rocks.

He looks at the way ahead, he senses someone is there. A beat.

Slowly, nervously, he starts edging his way backwards, the way he came. As he moves we feel something behind him, a shadow...

Suddenly, MERLIN turns and pulls back in alarm. DAME HELEN is barring his way.

DAME HELEN
Are you spying on me?

MERLIN
No.
(nervous)
I was picking herbs.

A moment. MERLIN quickly scrambles away - clearly unsettled by what he's seen...

He hurries back to the path and glances back over his shoulder...

DAME HELEN has gone.

CUT TO:

49 INT. GAIUS' CHAMBERS - NIGHT 4. UK.

49

An impatient GAIUS has his best robes on and is dressed and ready to go to the party. MERLIN strolls in, he's still preoccupied with what happened by the river.

GAIUS
Where've you been? I need you to get ready for the banquet. I've got you a job serving, remember.

MERLIN
Alright.

He heads for his room, then turns ...

GAIUS
Don't stand there. Get changed.

MERLIN
I've just seen Dame Helen. You
don't think ...

GAIUS
What?

MERLIN
(thinking better of it)
No.

He enters his room, still not hurrying, he picks up a fresh
tunic ...

GAIUS
Will you please hurry up.

MERLIN
You don't think there's something
strange about her?

GAIUS
Stop thinking and get yourself out
of the door.

He leaves. A beat, and then MERLIN follows.

CUT TO:

50

INT. KING'S PALACE (GREAT HALL) - NIGHT 4. UK.

50

A grand setting, lavish furnishings on a long rectangular
table. It's clear we're a long way from the Round Table of
Arthurian legend.

MERLIN and GAIUS come in and MERLIN sees the Prince messing
around with his mates - it's the first time he's set eyes on
ARTHUR since learning his destiny. It can't really be his
fate to protect this man! The group are larking around and
we can see MERLIN's disdain ...

Suddenly, ARTHUR and his group stop in their tracks ...

ARTHUR
God have mercy!

MERLIN turns to see what they are looking at ...

It's the arrival of MORGANA, she looks stunning - she smiles,
fully aware that the prince is staring at her..

MERLIN is dumbfounded, slack-jawed ...

GAIUS (O.S.)
(abrupt)
Merlin!

MERLIN can hardly turn his eyes away to look at GAIUS.

GAIUS
Remember - you're here to work.

MERLIN picks up a tray of drinks, but he can't take his eyes off MORGANA. He doesn't notice GWEN smiling at him...

GWEN
She looks great, doesn't she?

MERLIN
Yeah.

GWEN
Some people are just born to be queen.

MERLIN
(devastated)
No?

GWEN
I hope so. One day.

MERLIN looks at her.

GWEN
Not that I'd want to be her - who'd want to marry Arthur?

She starts handing out drinks.

MERLIN
(a smile)
Oh, come on, Gwen, I thought you liked those "real rough tough save the world kind of men".

GWEN
No, I like much more ordinary men, like you.

MERLIN
Gwen, believe me, I am not ordinary.

GWEN
(flustered)
I didn't mean you! Obviously, not you. But just, you know, I like very ordinary men, like you.

MERLIN
Thanks.

Reveal DAME HELEN with her eyes trained on ARTHUR ...

ARTHUR and MORGANA take their seats opposite one another. They smile...

ARTHUR
(lying)
Oh, I didn't see you arrive,
Morgana.

MORGANA
Oh, and I didn't notice you were
here or I would've come over,
Arthur.

ARTHUR
I've got to say - that is an
absolutely gorgeous dress.

MORGANA looks at him ...

ARTHUR
Have you seen it? The woman just
behind you, she looks fantastic.

MORGANA
(smiling)
Yes, I saw her earlier, she was
with that really handsome man.

ARTHUR
Not your type.

MORGANA
You don't know my type.

ARTHUR
Yes, I do. The ones you have to
chase.

MORGANA
(she picks up a chicken
drumstick)
No, I like the ones who have to
beg.

She looks down at a large hound sitting eagerly hoping for some scraps. She teases it with the drumstick and then delights in stuffing the chicken leg in her mouth. The dog tilts its head and whimpers.

CUT TO:

Music as MERLIN and GWEN clear the pewter plates from the top table. MERLIN has the humiliating task of removing ARTHUR's dirty platter. ARTHUR sees him and deliberately makes MERLIN wait while he savours his last few bites of food.

We see MERLIN's face...

The music is interrupted as the MASTER OF CEREMONIES takes to the floor ..

MASTER OF CEREMONIES
Your Royal Highness, my Lords,
Ladies and Gentlemen. Here she is,
the one and only Dame Helen of Mora
...

Applause. UTHUR smiles, adoringly. DAME HELEN appears and waves to the crowd. MERLIN turns to watch.

DAME HELEN
Thank you for your kind
introduction. I'd like to start
with something a little bit
different...

The DIVA starts to sing. ARTHUR and the rest of the audience are instantly gripped by her voice. The hauntingly beautiful notes drift through the torch-lit hall.

As the music grows louder, the room starts to decay before our very eyes. The colour drains from the faces of the banqueters, cobwebs start to weave over the arms and legs of the guests as the fruit on the tables starts to rot (think David Attenborough on the forest floor).

As the watchers are gripped by the paralysing decrepitude, DAME HELEN begins to stride towards her target: ARTHUR.

The decay creeps across the room, overtaking all in it's path. As cobwebs start to creep up MERLIN's legs, he realises what is happening... He stuffs his fingers in his ears, trying to block out the enchanted song.

Still singing, DAME HELEN advances on a defenceless ARTHUR, who stares glassy-eyed ahead, white as a ghost.

But one thing in the huge room still stirs. MERLIN still has his fingers in his ears and hasn't succumbed to the enchantment. As DAME HELEN passes he glimpses her reflection in a silver chalice. The grotesque face of MARY COLLINS stares back at him. MERLIN closes his eyes, he doesn't want her to see that he's still awake.

High above the hall a giant wooden chandelier holds a ring of burning candles.

MERLIN'S eyes flash open and suddenly we're in MERLIN TIME - one of the flickering flames starts to bend as if blown by an invisible wind. It blows the flame closer and closer to the rope that holds the chandelier.

DAME HELEN has nearly reached ARTHUR. She puts her hand in her robes and pulls out an evil-looking knife.

MERLIN stares at the chandelier. We can hear his heart beating. The rope starts to smoulder. Then it bursts into flames.

The DIVA is about to plunge the dagger into ARTHUR'S heart...

The rope breaks and the chandelier starts to fall - in agonising MERLIN TIME - towards the DIVA below...

Just before she delivers the fatal blow, the chandelier slams into DAME HELEN, knocking the knife from her hand and pinning her to the ground.

The instant the singing stops, the creeping decay is reversed. The cobwebs retreat, the fruit becomes fresh once again and the people's faces return to vibrant life.

UTHER'S one of the first to regain his senses, he sweeps away the cobwebs ...

UTHER

(he sees the giant
chandelier and the DIVA'S
crumpled body)

In God's name, what's happened
here?

Cautiously ARTHUR steps forward. He lifts DAME HELEN'S cloak, then starts back in horror as he sees MARY COLLINS' hideous face.

Suddenly, MARY COLLINS eyes flash open. With her last breath she mutters a final spell.

We see a statue behind ARTHUR start to topple...

MERLIN reacts instinctively - his eyes flare and we're in MERLIN TIME. As the statue plummets towards ARTHUR, MERLIN leaps on him, bringing him to the ground just as the statue crashes down, missing them by millimetres.

The CROWD cheer MERLIN for pushing ARTHUR out of harm's way.

Amongst the cheering crowd we see UTHUR. He's clearly shocked by the turn of events and DAME HELEN's metamorphosis. MORGANA turns to him ...

MORGANA

(whispers)
I warned you...

UTHER looks at her ...

ARTHUR and MERLIN get up from the floor together. Both men equally shocked by what's happened.

MORGANA
He saved Arthur's life. A debt must
be repaid.

She looks at Uther...

MERLIN
(delighted - but trying to
appear modest)
No, honestly...you don't have to
your highness.

MORGANA
Oh, absolutely, this merits
something quite special.

MERLIN
(conceding)
Well...

UTHER
(snapping, angry)
Yes, you will be rewarded with a
job for life.

MERLIN looks delighted.

UTHER
The job of Arthur's manservant.

The crowd cheer. MERLIN's face falls. So does ARTHUR's.

ARTHUR
(complaining)
Father!

UTHER
(lashing out at Arthur)
At least he can recognise a witch
when he sees one.

UTHER stalks out of the hall. MERLIN and ARTHUR look gutted.
Only THOMAS, ARTHUR's former man servant, looks delighted -
he gives MERLIN a big thumbs up.

THOMAS
Nice one, bruv.

All MERLIN can manage is a weak smile.

CUT TO:

51 INT. GAIUS' CHAMBERS (MERLIN'S ROOM) - NIGHT 4. UK. 51

A bewildered MERLIN alone in his room - reflecting on everything that's happened. There's a knock at the door. MERLIN looks up as GAIUS enters.

GAIUS
Seems you're a hero.

MERLIN
Hard to believe, isn't it.

GAIUS
No.
(a beat)
I knew it from the moment I met you
...

MERLIN
Yeah, right.

GAIUS
You saved my life, remember.

MERLIN
But... that was magic.

GAIUS
(he smiles)
And now it seems we've finally
found a use for it.

MERLIN
What d'you mean?

GAIUS
I saw how you saved Arthur's life.

MERLIN
No.

GAIUS
Perhaps that's its purpose.

MERLIN
Please, I hope not.

GAIUS hands him a small parcel ...

GAIUS
There you go.

He turns and leaves.

Intrigued, MERLIN opens the cover. It's a book. He opens the covers, the pages are filled with incantations and ancient runes. MERLIN stares at it in astonishment, then gets up from his bed and crosses to the door.

GAIUS looks up from his work - the hint of smile on his face.

GAIUS

I was given that book at your age,
but I've a feeling it will be more
use to you than it was to me.

MERLIN

(gratefully)
I will study every word.

There's a loud knock at the door and we hear a GUARD's gruff voice...

GUARD (V.O.)

Merlin! The Prince wants you right
away!

GAIUS smiles at MERLIN.

GAIUS

I'm not sure you'll have the time.

ROLL MUSIC AND CREDITS