

CBC TRANS CANADA

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THEATRE 10:30

“THE TRAGEDY OF KING ARTHUR
AND SIR LAUNCELOT” PART IV –

[Radio 15 July 1971]

“THE DAY OF DESTINY”

CBL/CBC: TBA

PRODUCTION: John Reeves

ANNOUNCER: THEATRE 10.30... We present “The Tragedy of King Arthur and Sir Launcelot” by George Whalley, adapted in five parts from the works of Sir Thomas Malory. Part Four: “The Day of Destiny.”

MUSIC #1: EST. AND TO BG: OUT AT (X) BELOW

MALORY: Now King Arthur had made Sir Mordred chief ruler of all England and also he put the queen under his governance, because Sir Mordred was King Arthur’s son, that he begot in ignorance upon his own sister, and thus Sir Mordred was also his nephew. Therefore it was that King Arthur gave him the rule of his land and of his wife.

And as Sir Mordred was ruler of all England, he had letters made as though they had come from beyond the sea, and the letters specified that King Arthur was slain in battle with Sir Launcelot. Wherefore Sir Mordred made a parliament, and called the lords together, and there he made them to choose him king. And so was he crowned at Canterbury, and held a feast there fifteen days.

And afterward he drew him unto Winchester, and there he took Queen Guenevere, and said plainly that he would wed her (which was his uncle’s wife and his father’s wife). And so he made ready for the feast, and a day prefixed that they should be wedded: wherefore Queen Guenevere was

passing heavy. But she durst not discover her heart, but spake fair, and agreed to Sir Mordred's will.

And anon she desired of Sir Mordred to go to London to buy all manner things that belonged to the bridal. And because of her fair speech Sir Mordred trusted her and gave her leave; and so when she came to London she took the Tower of London, and suddenly in all haste possible she stuffed it with all manner of victuals, and well garrisoned it with men, and so kept it.

And when Sir Mordred knew this he was passing wroth out of measure. And short tale to make, he laid a mighty siege about the Tower and made many assaults, and threw engines unto them, and shot great guns. But all might not prevail, for Queen Guenevere would never, for fair speech nor for foul, trust unto Sir Mordred to come in his hands again. (*SHORT PAUSE*) (X)

Then came the Bishop of Canterbury, which was a noble clerk and an holy man, and thus he said unto Sir Mordred –

BISHOP: Sir, I shall not fear me to do what me ought to do. And also ye noise about that my lord Arthur is slain, and that is not so, and therefore ye will make a foul work in this land.

MORDRED: Peace, thou false priest! for if thou chafe me any more, I shall strike off thy head.

MALORY: So the Bishop departed, and did the cursing in the most haughty wise that might be done. And then Sir Mordred sought the Bishop of Canterbury for to have slain him. Then the Bishop fled, and took part of his goods with him, and went nigh unto Glastonbury. And there he was a priest-hermit in

a chapel, and lived in poverty and in holy prayers; for well he understood that grievous war was at hand.

MUSIC #2: EST. AND TO BG

MALORY: Then Sir Mordred sought upon Queen Guenevere by letters and by messengers, and by fair means and foul means, to have her to come out of the Tower of London; but all this availed nought, for she answered him shortly, openly and privily, that she had rather slay herself than to be married with him.

Then came there word unto Sir Mordred that King Arthur had raised the siege from Sir Launcelot and was coming homeward with a great host to be revenged upon Sir Mordred, wherefore Sir Mordred made writs unto all the barony of this land. And much people drew unto him; for then was the common voice among them that with King Arthur was never other life but war and strife, and with Sir Mordred was great joy and bliss. Thus was King Arthur defamed and evil said of; and many there were that King Arthur had brought up from nought, and given them lands, that might not then say him a good word. And so much people drew unto Sir Mordred and said they would abide with him for better and for worse. And so Sir Mordred drew with a great host to Dover, for there he heard say that King Arthur would come ashore and so he thought to beat his own father from his own lands. And the most part of all England held with Sir Mordred, for the people were so new-fangled.

MUSIC #2: TO END & OUT

MALORY: And so as Sir Mordred was at Dover with his host, so came King Arthur with a great navy of ships and galleys and carricks, and there was Sir

Mordred ready awaiting upon his landing, to stop his own father landing upon the land that he was king over.

Then there was launching of great boats and small, and full of noble men of arms; and there was much slaughter of gentle knights, and many a full bold baron was laid full low, on both sides.

But King Arthur was so courageous that there might no manner of knight stop him landing, and his knights fiercely followed him. And so they landed despite Sir Mordred's wish and all his power, and put Sir Mordred aback, that he fled and all his people.

So when this battle was done, King Arthur bade search out his people that were hurt and dead. And then was noble Sir Gawain found in a great boat, lying more than half dead. When King Arthur knew that he was laid so low he went unto him and so found him. And there the king made great sorrow out of measure, and took Sir Gawain in his arms, and thrice he there swooned. And then when he was waked, King Arthur said –

ARTHUR: Alas! Sir Gawain, my sister's son, here now thou lyest, the man in the world that I loved most. And now is my joy gone! For now, my nephew Sir Gawain, I will discover me unto you, that in your person and in Sir Launcelot I most had my joy and my faith. And now have I lost my joy of you both, wherefore all mine earthly joy is gone from me.

GAWAIN: Ah, mine uncle, now I will that ye know that my death-day is come. And all I may blame on mine own hastiness and my wilfulness, for through my wilfulness I was causer of mine own death; for I was this day hurt and smitten upon mine old wound that Sir Launcelot gave me, and I feel myself that I must needs be dead by the hour of noon. And through me and my pride, ye have all this shame and distress, for had that noble knight, Sir

Launcelot, been with you, as he was and wished to have been, this unhappy war had never been begun; for he, through his noble knighthood and his noble blood, held all your cankered enemies in subjection and control. And now, ye shall miss Sir Launcelot. But alas that I would not accord with him! And therefore, fair uncle, I pray you that I may have paper, pen, and ink, that I may write unto Sir Launcelot a letter written with mine own hand.

MALORY: So when paper, pen and ink was brought, then Sir Gawain was set up weakly by King Arthur, for he was shriven a little before. And then he took his pen and wrote:

GAWAIN: Unto thee, Sir Launcelot, flower of all noble knights that ever I heard of or saw in my days, I, Sir Gawain, King Lott's son of Orkney, and sister's son unto the noble King Arthur, send thee greeting, bidding thee to have knowledge that the tenth day of May I was smitten upon the old wound that thou gave me before the city of Benwick, and through that wound I am come to my death-day. And I will that all the world know that I, Sir Gawain, knight of the Table Round, sought my death, and not through thy deserving, but mine own seeking. Wherefore I beseech thee, Sir Launcelot, to return again unto this realm and see my tomb and pray some prayer more or less for my soul. And this same day that I wrote the same letter I was hurt to the death, which wound was first given of thine hand, Sir Launcelot; for of a more nobler man might I not be slain.

Also, Sir Launcelot, for all the love that ever was betwixt us, make no tarrying, but come over the sea in all the goodly haste that ye may, with your noble knights, and rescue that noble king that made thee knight, for he is full straitly beset with a false traitor which is my half-brother, Sir Mordred. For he hath crowned himself king, and would have wedded my lady, Queen Guenevere; and so had he done, had she not kept the Tower

of London with strong hand. And so the tenth day of May last past my lord King Arthur and we all landed upon them at Dover, and there he put that false traitor, Sir Mordred to flight. And so it there misfortuned me to be smitten upon the stroke that ye gave me of old.

And the date of this letter was written but two hours and an half before my death, written with mine own hand and subscribed with part of my heart's blood. And therefore I require thee, most famous knight of the world, that thou wilt see my tomb.

MALORY: And then he wept and King Arthur both, and swooned. And when they were awaked both, the king made Sir Gawain to receive his sacrament, and then Sir Gawain prayed the king for to send for Sir Launcelot and to cherish him above all other knights.

And so at the hour of noon Sir Gawain yielded up the ghost. And then the king had him buried in a chapel within Dover castle. And there yet all men may see the skull of him, and the same wound is seen that Sir Launcelot gave him in battle.

MUSIC #3: BRIDGE

MALORY: Then was it told the king that Sir Mordred had pitched a new field upon Barham Down. And so upon the morrow King Arthur rode thither to him, and there was a great battle betwixt them, and much people were slain on both sides. But at the last King Arthur's party stood best, and Sir Mordred and his party fled unto Canterbury.

And then the king made search on all the downs for his knights that were slain and buried them; and salved them with soft salves that full sore

were wounded. Then much people drew unto King Arthur, and then they said that Sir Mordred warred upon King Arthur with wrong.

And anon King Arthur drew him with his army down by the seacoast, westward toward Salisbury. And there was a day assigned betwixt King Arthur and Sir Mordred, that they should meet upon a down beside Salisbury and not far from the seacoast. And this day was assigned on Monday after Trinity Sunday, whereof King Arthur was passing glad that he might be avenged upon Sir Mordred.

Then Sir Mordred raised much people about London, for they of Kent, Sussex, and Surrey, Essex, Suffolk and Norfolk held the most part with Sir Mordred. And many a full noble knight drew unto him and also to the king; but they that loved Sir Launcelot drew unto Sir Mordred.

MUSIC #4: BG FROM (X) TO (Y) "DIES IRAE" ?

MALORY: So upon Trinity Sunday at night King Arthur dreamed a wonderful dream, (X) and in his dream it seemed that he saw upon a dais a chair, and the chair was fast to a wheel, and thereupon sat King Arthur in the richest cloth of gold that might be made. And the king thought there was under him, far from him, a hideous deep black water, and therein was all manner of serpents and dragons and wild beasts foul and horrible. And suddenly the king thought that the wheel turned upside-down, and he fell among the serpents, and every beast took him by a limb. (Y) And then the king cried as he lay in his bed –

ARTHUR: *(CRYING OUT)* Help! help!

MALORY: And then knights, squires, and yeomen awaked the king, and then he was so amazed that he knew not where he was. And then so he awaked until it

was nigh day, and then he fell on slumbering again, not sleeping nor thoroughly waking.

So it seemed to the king verily that there came Sir Gawain unto him with a number of fair ladies with him. So when King Arthur saw him, he said –

ARTHUR: Welcome, my sister's son, I thought ye had been dead! And now I see thee alive, much am I beholden unto Almighty Jesu. Ah, fair nephew, what be these ladies that hither be come with you?

GAWAIN: Sir, all these be ladies for whom I have fought for, when I was a man living. And all these are those that I did battle for in righteous quarrels, and God hath given them that grace at their great prayer, because I did battle for them for their right, that they should bring me hither unto you. This much hath given me leave God for to warn you of your death: For if ye fight tomorrow with Sir Mordred, as ye both have assigned, doubt ye not ye shall be slain, and the most part of your people on both sides. And for the great grace and goodness that Almighty Jesu hath unto you, and for pity of you and many more other good men there shall be slain, God hath sent me to you of His special grace to give you warning that in no wise ye do battle tomorrow, but that ye take a treaty for a month-day. And proffer you largely, so that tomorrow ye put in a delay. For within a month shall come Sir Launcelot with all his noble knights, and rescue you worshipfully, and slay Sir Mordred and all that ever will hold with him.

MALORY: Then Sir Gawain and all the ladies vanished, and anon the king called upon his knights, squires, and yeomen, and charged them sternly to fetch his noble lords and wise bishop unto him. And when they were come the king told them of his vision: that Sir Gawain had told him and warned him that if he fought on the morrow, he should be slain. Then the king

commanded Sir Lucan the Butler and his brother Sir Bedevere the Bold, with two bishops with them, and charged them in any wise to take a treaty for a month-day with Sir Mordred –

ARTHUR: And spare not, proffer him lands and goods as much as ye think reasonable.

MALORY: So then they departed and came to Sir Mordred where he had a grim host of an hundred thousand, and there they entreated Sir Mordred long time. And at the last Sir Mordred was agreed for to have Cornwall and Kent for King Arthur's lifetime; and after that all England, after the days of King Arthur.

Then were they agreed that King Arthur and Sir Mordred should meet betwixt both their hosts, and each of them should bring fourteen persons. And so they came with this word unto Arthur. And Arthur was glad; and so he went into the field.

And when King Arthur was about to depart he warned all his host that if they saw any sword drawn, they should come on fiercely and slay that traitor, Sir Mordred –

ARTHUR: – for I in no wise trust him.

MALORY: And in like wise Sir Mordred warned his host that if they saw any manner of sword drawn, they should come on fiercely and slay all that stood before them –

MORDRED: – for in no wise I will not trust for this treaty, for I know well my father will be avenged upon me.

MALORY:

And so they met as their appointment was, and were agreed and accorded thoroughly. And wine was fetched, and they drank together. Right so come out an adder from a little heath-bush, and it stung a knight in the foot. And so when the knight felt him so stung, he looked down and saw the adder; and anon he drew his sword to slay the adder, and thought no other harm. And when the host on both parties saw that sword drawn, then they blew bugles, trumpets, and horns, and shouted grimly, and so both hosts dressed them together. And King Arthur took his horse and so rode to his party, and Sir Mordred in like wise.

And never since was there seen a more dolefuller battle in no Christian land, for there was but rushing and riding, thrusting and striking, and many a grim word was there spoken back and forth, and many a deadly stroke. But ever King Arthur rode throughout the battalion of Sir Mordred many times and did full nobly, as a noble king should do, and at all times he fainted never. And Sir Mordred did his duty that day and put himself in great peril.

And thus they fought all the long day, and never stinted till the noble knights were laid to the cold earth. And ever they fought still till it was near night, and by then was there an hundred thousand laid dead upon the earth. Then was King Arthur wildly wroth out of measure, when he saw his people so slain from him. And so he looked about him and could see no more of all his host and good knights left no more alive but two knights: the one was Sir Lucan de Butler and his brother Sir Bedevere; and yet they were full sore wounded.

ARTHUR:

Jesu mercy! where are all my noble knights become? Alas, that ever I should see this doleful day! For now I am come to mine end. But would to God that I wist now where were that traitor Sir Mordred that hath caused all this mischief.

MALORY: Then King Arthur looked about and was aware where stood Sir Mordred leaning upon his sword among a great heap of dead men.

ARTHUR: Now, give me my spear, for yonder I have espied the traitor that all this woe hath wrought.

LUCAN: Sir, let him be, for he is ill-starred. And if ye pass this disastrous day ye shall be right well revenged. And, good lord, remember ye of your night's dream and what the spirit of Sir Gawain told you tonight, and yet God of His great goodness hath preserved you hitherto. And for God's sake, my lord, leave off this, for – blessed be God – ye have won the field: for yet we be here three alive, and with Sir Mordred is not one alive. And therefore if ye leave off now, this wicked day of Destiny is past.

ARTHUR: Now tide me death, tide me life, now I see him yonder alone, he shall never escape mine hands. For at a better avail shall I never have him.

BEDEVERE: God speed you well, my lord!

MALORY: Then the king got his spear in both his hands, and ran towards Sir Mordred, crying –

ARTHUR: Traitor, now is thy death-day come!

MALORY: And when Sir Mordred saw King Arthur he ran towards him with his sword drawn in his hand, and there King Arthur smote Sir Mordred under the shield, with a thrust of his spear, throughout the body more than a fathom. And when Sir Mordred felt that he had his death's wound he thrust himself with the strength that he had up to the burr of King Arthur's spear, and right so he smote his father, King Arthur, with his sword

holding in both his hands, upon the side of the head, that the sword pierced the helmet and the skin of the brain. And therewith Mordred dashed down stark dead to the earth.

And noble King Arthur fell in a swoon to the earth, and there he swooned oftentimes, and Sir Lucan and Sir Bedevere oft-times hove him up. And so weakly betwixt them they led him to a little chapel not far from the sea, and when the king was there, him thought him reasonably eased. Then heard they people cry in the field.

ARTHUR: Now go thou, Sir Lucan, and let me know what betokens that noise in the field.

MALORY: So Sir Lucan departed, for he was grievously wounded in many places; and so as he went he saw and harkened by the moonlight how that pillagers and robbers were come into the field to plunder and to rob many a full noble knight of brooches and bracelets and of many a good ring and many a rich jewel. And who that were not dead utterly, there they slew them for their gear and their riches.

When Sir Lucan understood this work, he came to the king as soon as he might, and told him all what he had heard and seen.

LUCAN: Therefore, to my mind, it is best that we bring you to some town.

ARTHUR: I wish it were so, but I may not stand, my head hurts so. Ah, Sir Launcelot! this day have I sore missed thee! And alas, that ever I was against thee! For now have I my death whereof Sir Gawain me warned in my dream.

MALORY: Then Sir Lucan took up the king on one side and Sir Bedevere on the other, and in the lifting up the king swooned, and in the lifting Sir Lucan fell in a swoon, that part of his guts fell out of his body, and therewith the noble knight's heart broke. And when the king awoke he beheld Sir Lucan, how he lay foaming at the mouth and part of his guts lay at his feet.

ARTHUR: Alas! this is to me a full heavy sight, to see this noble duke so die for my sake, for he would have helped me that had more need of help than I. Alas, that he would not complain, for his heart was so set to help me. Now Jesu have mercy upon his soul!

MALORY: Then Sir Bedevere wept for the death of his brother.

ARTHUR: Now leave this mourning and weeping, gentle knight, for all this will not avail me. For if I might live myself, the death of Sir Lucan would grieve me forever. But my time passeth on fast. Therefore, take thou here Excalibur, my good sword, and go with it to yonder water's edge; and when thou comest there, I charge thee throw my sword in that water, and come again and tell me what thou seest there.

BEDEVERE: My lord, your commandment shall be done, and quickly bring you word again.

MALORY: So Sir Bedevere departed. And by the way he beheld that noble sword, and the pommel and the haft was all precious stones. And then he said to himself –

BEDEVERE: If I throw this rich sword in the water, thereof shall never come good, but harm and loss.

MALORY: And then Sir Bedevere hid Excalibur under a tree, and so as soon as he might he came again unto the king and said he had been at the water and had thrown the sword into the water.

ARTHUR: What saw you there?

BEDEVERE: Sir, I saw nothing but waves and winds.

ARTHUR: That is untruly said of thee. And therefore go thou quickly again, and do my commandment; as thou art to me lief and dear, spare not, but throw it in.

MALORY: Then Sir Bedevere returned again and took the sword in his hand; and yet him thought it sin and shame to throw away that noble sword. And so again he hid the sword and returned again and told the king that he had been at the water and done his commandment.

ARTHUR: What sawest thou there?

BEDEVERE: Sir, I saw nothing but water lapping and waves darkening.

ARTHUR: Ah! traitor unto me and untrue! now hast thou betrayed me twice. Who would guess that thou hast been to me so lief and dear, and also named so noble a knight, that thou would betray me for the riches of this sword? But now go again quickly; for thy long tarrying putteth me in great jeopardy of my life, for I have taken cold. And except thou do now as I bid thee, if ever I may see thee, I shall slay thee with mine own hands, for thou would'st for my rich sword see me dead.

MALORY: Then Sir Bedevere departed and went to the sword and quickly took it up, and so he went unto the water's side. And there be bound the girdle about

the hilt, and threw the sword as far into the water as he could. And there came an arm and a hand above the water, and took it and clasped it, and shook it thrice and brandished it, and then vanished with the sword into the water. So Sir Bedevere came again to the king and told him what he saw.

ARTHUR: Alas! help me hence, for I dread me I have tarried over long.

MALORY: Then Sir Bedevere took the king upon his back and so went with him to the water's side. And when they were there, even fast by the bank waited a little barge with many fair ladies in it, and among them all was a queen, and all they had black hoods on. And all they wept and shrieked when they saw King Arthur.

ARTHUR: Now put me into that barge.

MALORY: And so Sir Bedevere did softly, and there received him three ladies with great mourning. And so they set him down, and in one of their laps King Arthur laid his head. And then the queen said –

QUEEN: Ah, my dear brother. Why have ye tarried so long from me? Alas, this wound on your head hath caught overmuch cold.

MALORY: And anon they rowed away from the land, and Sir Bedevere beheld those ladies go away from him.

BEDEVERE: Ah, my lord Arthur, what shall become of me, now ye go from me and leave me here alone among mine enemies?

ARTHUR: Comfort thyself, and do as well as thou mayest, for in me is no trust for to trust in. For I must into the vale of Avalon to heal me of my grievous wound. And if thou hears nevermore of me, pray for my soul!

MALORY: But ever the queen and ladies wept and shrieked, that it was pity to hear. And as soon as Sir Bedevere had lost the sight of the barge he wept and wailed, and so took to the forest and went all that night.

MUSIC #5: BRIDGE

MALORY: And in the morning Sir Bedevere was aware, betwixt two grey copses, of a chapel and a hermitage. Then was Sir Bedevere glad, and thither he went, and when he came into the chapel he saw where lay a hermit prostrate on all fours, fast by a tomb new made. When the hermit saw Sir Bedevere he knew him well, for he was but a little before Bishop of Canterbury that Sir Mordred banished.

BEDEVERE: Sir, what man is there here interred that ye pray so hard for?

BISHOP: Fair son, I know not truly but by guessing. But this same night, at midnight, here came a number of ladies and brought here a dead corpse and prayed me to inter him. And here they offered a hundred tapers, and they gave me a thousand gold coins.

BEDEVERE: Alas! that was my lord King Arthur which lieth here buried in this chapel. (MOANS) Let me abide here with him still, here to live with fasting and prayers. For from hence will I never go, by my will, but all the days of my life here to pray for my lord Arthur.

BISHOP: Sir, ye are welcome to me, for I know you better than ye think I do: for ye are Sir Bedevere the Bold, and the full noble duke Sir Lucan de Butler was your brother.

MALORY: Then Sir Bedevere told the hermit all as ye have heard before, and so he lived with the hermit that was beforehand Bishop of Canterbury. And there Sir Bedevere put upon him poor clothes, and served the hermit full lowly in fasting and in prayers.

MUSIC #6: EST. & TO BG

MALORY: Thus of Arthur I find no more written in books that have been authorized, nor more of the true certainty of his death I never read, but thus was he led away in a ship wherein were three queens; that one was King Arthur's sister, Queen Morgan le Fay, the other was the Queen of North Gaul, and the third was the Queen of the Waste Lands. Also there was dame Niniva, the chief lady of the lake, which had wedded Sir Pellyas, the good knight; and this lady had done much for King Arthur.

Now more of the death of King Arthur could I never find, but that these ladies brought him to his grave, and such one was interred there which the hermit bare witness that sometime was Bishop of Canterbury. But yet the hermit knew not in certainty that it was truly the body of King Arthur; for this tale Sir Bedevere, a knight of the Table Round, made it to be written.

Yet some men say in many parts of England that king Arthur is not dead, but was brought by the will of our Lord Jesu into another place; and men say that he shall come again, and he shall win the Holy Cross. Yet I will not say that it shall be so, but rather I would say: here in this world he changed his life. And many men say that there is written upon the tomb this –

“Here lieth Arthur, King once and King to be.”

MUSIC #6: UP AND OUT

MALORY: And thus leave I here Sir Bedevere with the hermit that dwelled that time in a chapel beside Glastonbury, and there was his hermitage. And so they lived in prayers and fastings and great abstinence.

MUSIC #7: EST. & TO BG

MALORY: And when Queen Guenevere understood that King Arthur was dead and all the noble knights, Sir Mordred and all the remnant, then she stole away with five ladies with her, and so she went to Amesbury. And there she had herself made a nun, and wore white clothes and black, and great penance she took upon her, as ever did sinful woman in this land. And never creature could make her merry, but ever she lived in fasting, prayers, and alms-deeds, that all manner of people marvelled how virtuously she was changed.

MUSIC #7: UP AND OUT

ANNOUNCER:

MUSIC #8: FILL TO TIME IF NEEDED