

CBC TRANS CANADA

SCRIPT ADAPTED BY: George Whalley

THEATRE 10:30

“THE TRAGEDY OF KING ARTHUR

[Radio 14 July 1971]

AND SIR LAUNCELOT” PART III –

“THE VENGEANCE OF SIR GAWAIN”

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 Three: “The Vengeance of Sir Gawain.”

MUSIC #1: *PRELUDE (NO BG)*

MALORY: Now turn we again unto King Arthur. When it was told him how and in what manner the queen was taken away from the fire, and when he heard of the death of his noble knights, and in especial Sir Gaherys and Sir Gareth, then he swooned for very pure sorrow. And when he awoke of his swoon, then he said –

ARTHUR: Alas, that ever I bare crown upon my head! For now have I lost the fairest fellowship of noble knights that ever held Christian king together. Alas, my good knights be slain and gone away from me, that now within these two days I have lost nigh forty knights and also the noble fellowship of Sir Launcelot and his blood, for now I may nevermore hold them together with my glory. Now, alas, that ever this war began!

Now, fair fellows, I charge you that no man tell Sir Gawain of the death of his two brothers, for I am sure when he heareth tell that Sir Gareth is dead, he will go nigh out of his mind. Mercy Jesu! why slew he Sir Gaherys and Sir Gareth? For I dare say, as for Sir Gareth, he loved Sir Launcelot of all men earthly.

KNIGHT 1: That is truth, but they were slain in the hurly, as Sir Launcelot was thronged in the thickest of the press. And as they were unarmed, he smote them and knew not whom he smote, and so by mischance they were slain.

ARTHUR: Well, the death of them will cause the greatest mortal war that ever was, for I am sure that when Sir Gawain knoweth that Sir Gareth is slain, I shall never have rest of him till I have destroyed Sir Launcelot's kin and himself both, or else he destroy me. And therefore, my heart was never so heavy as it is now. And much more I am sorrier for my good knights' loss than for the loss of my fair queen; for queens I might have enough, but such a fellowship of good knights shall never be together in no company. And now I dare say there was never Christian king that ever held such a fellowship together. And alas, that ever Sir Launcelot and I should be at strife! Ah, Aggravain, Aggravain! Jesu forgive thy soul; for thine evil will that thou haddest and Sir Mordred, thy brother, unto Sir Launcelot hath caused all this sorrow.

MALORY: Then came there one to Sir Gawain and told him how the queen was led away with Sir Launcelot, and nigh a forty knights slain.

GAWAIN: Ah, Jesu, save me my two brothers! For full well wist I that Sir Launcelot would rescue her, or else he would die in that field; and to say the truth he were not a man of honour unless he had rescued the queen, insomuch as she should have been burned for his sake. And as in that he hath done but in a knight's way, and as I would have done myself if I had stood in like case. But where are my brothers? I marvel that I see nothing of them.

KNIGHT 2: Truly, Sir Gaherys and Sir Gareth be slain.

GAWAIN: Jesu defend! For all this world I would not that they were slain, and in especial my good brother Sir Gareth.

KNIGHT 2: Sir, he is slain, and that is great pity.

GAWAIN: Who slew him?

KNIGHT 2: Sir Launcelot slew them both.

GAWAIN: That may I not believe – that ever he slew my good brother Sir Gareth, for I dare say my brother loved him better than me and all his brethren and the king both. Also I dare say, if Sir Launcelot had desired my brother Sir Gareth with him, he would have been with him against the king and us all. And therefore I may never believe that Sir Launcelot slew my brothers.

KNIGHT 2: Verily, sir, it is reported that he slew him.

GAWAIN: Alas! now is my joy gone!

MALORY: And then he fell down and swooned, and long he lay there as he had been dead. And when he arose out of his swoon he cried out sorrowfully ... and forthwith ran unto the king, crying and weeping –

GAWAIN: A, mine uncle King Arthur. My good brother Sir Gareth is slain, and so is my brother Sir Gaherys, which were two noble knights. Alas, my lord, how slew he my brother, Sir Gareth? I pray you tell me.... They bore no arms against him, neither of them both.

ARTHUR: I know not how it was, but as it is said: Sir Launcelot slew them in the thick press and knew them not. And therefore let us shape a remedy for to revenge their deaths.

GAWAIN: My king, my lord, and mine uncle, now I shall make you a promise which I shall hold by my knighthood: that from this day forward I shall never give up Sir Launcelot until one of us have slain the other. And therefore I require you, my lord, and king, dress you unto the wars, for I will be revenged upon Sir Launcelot; and therefore, as ye will have my service and my love, now haste you thereto and seek out your friends. For I promise unto God, for the death of my brother Sir Gareth, I shall seek Sir Launcelot throughout seven kings' realms, but I shall slay him, or else he shall slay me.

ARTHUR: Sir, ye shall not need to seek him so far, for as I hear say, Sir Launcelot will abide me and us all within the castle of Joyous Garde. And much people draweth unto him, as I hear say.

GAWAIN: That may I right well believe; but my lord, seek out your friends and I will rally mine.

ARTHUR: It shall be done, and as I suppose I shall be big enough to drive him out of the biggest tower of his castle.

MUSIC #2: BG FROM (X) BELOW

MALORY: So then the king sent letters and writs throughout all England, both the length and the breadth, for to summon all his knights. (X) And so unto King Arthur drew many knights, dukes, and earls, so that he had a great host, and when they were assembled the king informed them how Sir Launcelot had bereft him of his queen.

Then the king and all his host made ready to lay siege about Sir Launcelot where he lay within Joyous Garde. And anon Sir Launcelot

heard thereof and provided him with many good knights. Thus they were in both parties well furnished and garnished with all manner of thing that longed unto the war. But King Arthur's host was so great that Sir Launcelot's host would not abide him in the field. For he was full loth to do battle against the king; but Sir Launcelot drew him into his strong castle with plenty of all manner of victuals, and as many noble men as he might suffice within the town and the castle.

Then came King Arthur with Sir Gawain with a great host and laid siege all about Joyous Garde, both the town and the castle. And there they made strong war on both parts, but in no wise Sir Launcelot would ride out nor go out of the castle for long; and neither would he suffer any of his good knights to issue out, from the town or the castle, until fifteen weeks were passed.

MUSIC #2: TO CADENCE AND OUT

MALORY: So it fell upon a day in harvest time that Sir Launcelot looked over the walls and spoke in a loud voice unto King Arthur and to Sir Gawain –

LAUNCELOT: My lords both, all this is in vain that ye make at this siege, for here win ye no honour, but ill-will and dishonour. For if it pleased me to come myself out and my good knights, I should full soon make an end of this war.

ARTHUR: Come forth, if thou darest, and I promise thee I shall meet thee in the middle of this field.

LAUNCELOT: God defend me, that ever I should encounter with the most noble king that made me knight.

ARTHUR: Now, fie upon thy fair language! for know you well and trust it, I am thy mortal foe and ever will be to my death-day; for thou hast slain my good knights and full noble men of my blood, that shall I never recover again. Also thou hast lain with my queen and holden her many winters, and since then – like a traitor – taken her away from me by force.

LAUNCELOT: My most noble lord and king, ye may say what ye will, for ye know well that with yourself I will not fight. But whereas ye say that I have slain your good knights, I know well that I have done so, and that me sore repenteth; but I was forced to do battle with them in saving my own life, or else I must have suffered them to have slain me. And as for my lady queen Guenevere, except your person of your kindness and my lord Sir Gawain, there is no knight under heaven that dare make it good upon me that ever I was traitor unto your person... Queen Guenevere is as true a lady unto your person as is any lady living unto her lord, and that will I make good with my hands... I saved your queen from the fireAnd now methinketh ye reward me evil for my good service. And, my lord, meseemeth I had lost a great part of my honour in my knighthood if I had suffered my lady, your queen, to have been burned; for since I have done battles for your queen in other quarrels than in mine own quarrel, meseemeth now I had more right to do battle for her in her right quarrel. And therefore, my good and gracious lord, take your queen unto your good grace, for she is both true and good.

GAWAIN: Fie on thee, false recreant knight! For I tell thee this: my lord, mine uncle King Arthur, shall have his queen and thee both in spite of you, and slay you both or save you whichever please him.

LAUNCELOT: It may well be; but, my lord Sir Gawain, you know well that, if I were to come out of this castle, ye should win me and the queen more harder than ever ye won a strong battle.

GAWAIN: Now, fie on thy proud words! As for my lady the queen, I will never speak shame of her. But thou, false and recreant knight, what cause hadst thou to slay my good brother Sir Gareth that loved thee more than me and all my kin? And alas! thou madest him knight with thine own hands! Why slewest thou him that loved thee so well?

LAUNCELOT: For to excuse me, it availeth me not; but by Jesu, and by the faith that I owe unto the high Order of Knighthood, I would with as good a will have slain my nephew, Sir Bors de Ganys, at that time. And alas, that ever I was so unhappy that I had not seen Sir Gareth and Sir Gaherys!

GAWAIN: Thou liest, recreant knight! Thou slewest them to spite me. And therefore, Sir Launcelot, I shall make war upon thee, and all the while that I may live I shall be thine enemy – nor ever leave thee till I have thee at such avail that thou shalt not escape my hands.

LAUNCELOT: I trust you well enough: if ye may get me, I get but little mercy.

MALORY: But King Arthur was willing to have taken his queen again and to have been accorded with Sir Launcelot, but Sir Gawain would not suffer him, by no manner of means. And so Sir Gawain made many men to defame Sir Launcelot –

MALE CAST: False recreant knight! False recreant knight!

MALORY: When Sir Bors de Ganys, Sir Hector de Marys, and Sir Lionel heard this outcry, they called unto them Sir Palomides and Sir Lavain and Sir Urry with many more knights of their blood, and all they went unto Sir Launcelot –

BORS: My lord, know you well we have great scorn of the great rebukes that we have heard Sir Gawain say unto you; wherefore we pray you and charge you as ye will have our service, keep us no longer within these walls, for we give you plain notice we will ride into the field and do battle with them. For ye fare as a man that were afeared; for all your fair speech, it will not avail you, for Sir Gawain will never suffer you to accord with King Arthur. And therefore fight for your life and right, if ye dare.

LAUNCELOT: Alas! for to ride out of this castle and to do battle I am full loth.
(*CALLING OUT TO ARTHUR AND GAWAIN*) My lord Arthur, I require you and beseech you, since that I am thus conjured to ride into the field, that neither you, my lord King Arthur, nor you, Sir Gawain, come into the field.

GAWAIN: What shall we do then? Is not this the king's quarrel to fight with thee? And also it is my quarrel to fight with thee because of the death of my brother, Sir Gareth.

LAUNCELOT: Then must I needs unto battle. My lord Arthur and Sir Gawain, ye will repent it whensoever I do battle with you.

MUSIC #3: BG FROM (X) BELOW TO (Y)

MALORY: And then both parties made them ready on the morrow for to do battle, (X) and great purveyance was made on both sides. And Sir Gawain purveyed many knights for to wait upon Sir Launcelot for to overset him and to slay him. And on the next day in the early morning King Arthur was ready in the field with three great hosts.

And then Sir Launcelot's fellowship came out at the three gates in full good array; and Sir Lionel came in the foremost battalion, and Sir

Launcelot came in the middle, and Sir Bors came out of the third gate. And thus they came in order and rule as full noble knights. And ever Sir Launcelot charged all his knights that they were by any means to save King Arthur and Sir Gawain. (*SHORT PAUSE*) (Y)

Then came forth Sir Gawain from the king's host and offered to joust. And Sir Lionel was a fierce knight, and quickly he encountered with him, and there Sir Gawain smote Sir Lionel right throughout the body, so that he dashed to the earth like as he had been dead. And then Sir Hector de Marys and others more bare him into the castle.

And anon there began a great battle and much people were slain; and ever Sir Launcelot did what he might to save the people in King Arthur's party. For Sir Bors and Sir Palomydes and Sir Saffir overthrew many knights, for they were deadly knights, and Sir Blamour de Ganys and Sir Bleoberys, with Sir Bellynger le Bewse, these six knights did much harm. And ever was King Arthur about Sir Launcelot to have slain him, and ever Sir Launcelot suffered him and would not strike again. So Sir Bors encountered with King Arthur, and Sir Bors smote him, and so he alighted and drew his sword and said to Sir Launcelot –

BORS: Sir, shall I make an end of this war?

LAUNCELOT: Not so hardy, upon pain of thy head, to touch him more! For I will never see that most noble king that made me knight either slain or shamed.

MALORY: And therewithal Sir Launcelot alighted off his horse and took up the king and horsed him again –

LAUNCELOT: My lord the king, for God's love, stint this strife, for ye get here no honour if I should do my utmost. But always I forbear you, and yet you nor none

of yours forbearth not me. And therefore, my lord, I pray you remember what I have done in many places, and now am I evil rewarded.

MALORY: So when King Arthur was on horseback he looked on Sir Launcelot; then the tears burst out of his eyes, thinking of the great courtesy that was in Sir Launcelot more than in any other man. And therewith the king rode his way and might no longer behold him, saying to himself –

ARTHUR: Alas, alas! that ever yet this war began!

MALORY: Then both sides of the battle withdrew them to repose them, and buried the dead and searched out the wounded men, and laid to their wounds soft salves; and thus they endured that night till, next day early, they made them ready to do battle, and then Sir Bors led the vanguard.

So in the morning there came Sir Gawain, as fierce as any boar, with a great spear in his hand. And when Sir Bors saw him, he thought to revenge his brother, Sir Lionel, of the injury Sir Gawain gave him the other day. And so, as they knew each other, they couched their spears, and with all the might of their horses and themselves so fiercely met together and so violently that each bore the other through, and so they fell both to the bare earth.

And then the battle joined, and there was much slaughter on both sides. Then Sir Launcelot rescued Sir Bors and sent him into the castle, but neither Sir Gawain nor Sir Bors died of their wounds, for they were well helped.

Then Sir Lavain and Sir Urry prayed Sir Launcelot to do his utmost and fight as they do –

LAVAIN: For we see that you forbear and spare, and that doth us much harm. And therefore we pray you spare not your enemies no more than they do you.

LAUNCELOT: Alas! I have no heart to fight against my lord Arthur, for ever meseemeth I do not as me ought to do.

LAVAIN: My lord, though ye spare them, all this day, they well can you thank; and if they may get you at avail, ye are but a dead man.

MALORY: So then Sir Launcelot understood that they said him truth. Then he strained himself more than he did beforehand, and because his nephew, Sir Bors, was sore wounded he drove himself the more. And so within a little while, by evensong time, Sir Launcelot's party the better stood, for their horses went in blood past the fetlocks, there were so many people slain.

And then for very pity Sir Launcelot withheld his knights and suffered King Arthur's party to withdraw them. And he withdrew his party into the castle, and both parties buried the dead and put salve to the wounded men. So when Sir Gawain was hurt, they in King Arthur's party were not so haughty as they were before to do battle.

MUSIC #4: BRIDGE

MALORY: So of this war that was between King Arthur and Sir Launcelot it was noised through all Christian realms, and so it came at the last by report unto the Pope. And then the Pope took consideration of the great goodness of King Arthur and of the high prowess of Sir Launcelot, that was called the most noblest knight of the world. Wherefore the Pope called unto him a noble clerk that at that time was there present – the French book sayeth it was the Bishop of Rochester – and the Pope gave him bulls under his seal,

and sent them unto the king, charging him upon pain of excommunication of all England that he take his queen again and accord with Sir Launcelot.

So when this Bishop was come unto Carlisle he showed the king his bulls, and when the king understood them he knew not what to do: but full fain he would have been accorded with Sir Launcelot, but Sir Gawain would not suffer him. But to have the queen Sir Gawain thereto agreed, but in no wise he would suffer the king to accord with Sir Launcelot. So the Bishop had of the king his great seal and his assurance, as he was a true and anointed king, that Sir Launcelot should go safe and come safe, and that the queen should not be reproached by the king, or by any other, for nothing done in time past. And of all these appointments the Bishop brought with him sure writing to show unto Sir Launcelot.

So when the Bishop was come to Joyous Garde, there he showed Sir Launcelot how he came from the Pope with writing unto King Arthur and unto him. And there is told him the perils if he withheld the queen from the king.

LAUNCELOT: Sir, it was never in my thought to withhold the queen from my lord Arthur, but I kept her for this cause: insomuch as she should have been burned for my sake, meseemed it was my part to save her life and put her from that danger till better turn might come. And now I thank God that the Pope hath made her peace. For God knoweth, I will be a thousandfold more gladder to bring her again than ever I was of her taking away, with this I may be sure to come safe and go safe, and that the queen shall have her liberty, and never for nothing that hath been surmised before this time that she never from this time stand in no peril. For else, I dare adventure me to keep her from an harder conflict than ever yet I had.

BISHOP: Sir, it shall not need you to dread thus much, for you know well, the Pope must be obeyed; it were not in the Pope's honour nor my poor honesty to know you distressed nor the queen, neither in peril nor shamed.

LAUNCELOT: This is sure enough. For full well I dare trust my lord's own writing and his seal, for he was never shamed of his promise. Therefore, ye shall ride unto the king and recommend me unto his good grace, and let him have knowledge that the same day eight days, by the grace of God, I myself shall bring the queen unto him. And then say to my most redoubted king that I will speak at large for the queen, that I shall hold no one in dread or fear but the king himself and my lord Sir Gawain: and that is for the king's love.

MUSIC #5: BG FROM (X) BELOW TO (Y)

MALORY: So the Bishop departed and came to the king to Carlisle, and told him all how Sir Launcelot answered him; so that that made the tears fall out of the king's eyes. (X) Then Sir Launcelot purveyed him an hundred knights, and all well clothed in green velvet, and their horses trapped in the same to the heels, and every knight held a branch of olive in his hand in token of peace. And the queen had four-and-twenty gentlewomen following her in the same wise. And Sir Launcelot had twelve coursers following him, and on every courser sat a young gentleman; and all they were arrayed in white velvet with chains of gold about their quarters, and the horses trapped in the same wise down to the heels, with many brooches set with stones and pearls in gold, to the number of a thousand. And in the same wise was the queen arrayed, and Sir Launcelot in the same, of white cloth of gold tissue.

And right so... he rode with the queen from Joyous Garde to Carlisle. And so Sir Launcelot rode through Carlisle, and so into the castle, that all men might behold them. (Y)

And then Sir Launcelot himself alighted and left his horse, and took down the queen, and so led her where King Arthur was in his seat; and Sir Gawain sat before him, and many other great lords.

So when Sir Launcelot saw the king and Sir Gawain, then he led the queen by the arm, and then he kneeled down and the queen both. Then was there many a bold knight with King Arthur that wept as tenderly as if they had seen all their kin dead before them.

So the king sat still and said no word. And when Sir Launcelot saw his countenance he arose up and pulled up the queen with him, and thus he spoke full knightly –

LAUNCELOT: My most redoubted king, ye shall understand, by the Pope's commandment and yours I have brought to you my lady the queen, as right requireth. And if there be any knight, of what degree that ever he be of, except your person, that will say or dare say but that she is true and clean to you, I here myself, Sir Launcelot du Lake, will make it good upon his body that she is a true lady unto you.... For they that told you those tales were liars... for I was sent unto my lady, your queen, I know not for what cause, but I was not so soon within the chamber door but anon Sir Aggravain and Sir Mordred called me traitor and false recreant knight.

GAWAIN: By my faith, they called thee right!

LAUNCELOT: Sir Gawain, in their quarrel they proved not themselves the best, nor in the right.... My lord, ye shall understand that I and mine have done you

oftentimes better service than any other knights have done, in many divers places; and where you have been full hard beset divers times, I have rescued you from many dangers: and ever unto my power I was glad to please you and you my lord Sir Gawain.... And therefore to Gawain meseemeth ye ought of right to remember this; for, if I might have *your* good will, I would trust to God for to have my lord Arthur's good grace.

GAWAIN: Sir, the king may do as he will; but know you well, Sir Launcelot, thou and I shall never be accorded while we live, for thou hast slain three of my brothers. And two of them thou slew treacherously and pitiably, for they bare no harness against thee, and neither one would do.

LAUNCELOT: As Jesu be my help, and by my knighthood, I slew never Sir Gareth nor his brother by my willing, but alas that ever they were unarmed that unhappy day!

But this much I shall offer me to you, if it may please the king's good grace and you, my lord Sir Gawain: I shall first begin at Sandwich, and there I shall go in my shirt, barefoot; and at every ten miles' end I shall found and have built an house of religion, of what order that ye will assign me, with an holy convent, to sing and read day and night in especial for Sir Gareth's sake and Sir Gaherys. And this shall I perform from Sandwich unto Carlisle; and every house shall have sufficient livelihood. And this shall I perform while that I have any estates in Christendom, and there is none of all these religious places but they shall be completed, furnished, and garnished with all things as an holy place ought to be. And this were fairer and more holier and more perfect to their souls than ye, my most noble king, and you, Sir Gawain, to war upon me, for thereby shall ye get no avail.

GAWAIN: Sir Launcelot, I have right well heard thy language and thy great offers. Let the king do as it pleaseth him; I will never forgive thee my brothers' death, and in especial the death of my brother Sir Gareth. And if mine uncle King Arthur will accord with thee, he shall lose my service, for thou art both false to the king and to me.

LAUNCELOT: Sir, he beareth not the life that may make that good! If you, Sir Gawain, will charge me with so high a thing, ye must pardon me, for then needs must I answer you.

GAWAIN: Nay, nay, we are past that as at this time; for the Pope hath charged mine uncle the king that he shall take again his queen and to accord with thee as for this season, and therefore thou shalt go safe as thou came. But in this land thou shalt not abide past a fifteen days, such summons I give thee; for so the king and we were agreed and accorded ere thou came, else, thou should not have come here but at risk of thine head. For if it were not for the Pope's commandment, I should do battle with thee with mine own hands, body for body, and prove it upon thee that thou hast been both false unto mine uncle, King Arthur, and to me both; and that shall I prove on thy body, when thou art departed from hence, wheresoever that I find thee.

LAUNCELOT: (SADLY) Most noblest Christian realm, whom I have loved above all other realms! In thee I have gotten a great part of my honour. But fortune is so variant, and the wheel so mutable, that there is no constant abiding.... And so fareth it by me: for in this realm I had renown. I may live upon my lands as well as any knight that here is. But now that I shall depart in this wise, truly I repent me that ever I came into this realm, that I should be thus shamefully banished, undeserved and causeless. And if ye, my most redoubted king, will come upon my lands with Sir Gawain to war upon me, I must endure you as well as I may. But as to you, Sir Gawain, I pray

you, charge me not with treason nor felony, for if ye do, I must answer you.

GAWAIN: Make thou no more language, but deliver the queen from thee, and get thee away quickly out of this court!

LAUNCELOT: If the queen had been so dear unto me as ye say she was, I durst have kept her from the fellowship of the best knights under heaven. (TO THE QUEEN) Madame, now I must depart from you and this noble fellowship for ever. And since it is so, I beseech you to pray for me, and I shall pray for you. And tell ye me, if ye be hard beset by any false tongues, but quickly, my good lady, send me word; and if any knight's hands under heaven may deliver you by battle, I shall deliver you.

(CHALLENGING) Now let see whatsoever he be in this place that dare say the queen is not true unto my lord Arthur, let see who will speak – if he dare speak!

SILENCE

MUSIC #6: BG FROM (X) BELOW

MALORY: And therewith he brought the queen to the king, and then Sir Launcelot took his leave and departed. And when this noble knight Sir Launcelot took his horse to ride out of Carlisle, there was sobbing and weeping for pure sorrow of his departure. And thus departed Sir Launcelot from the court for ever.

(X) And so he took his way to Joyous Garde, and then ever after he called it Dolorous Garde. And he called his fellowship unto him and told them what he would do –

And they were agreed to depart with Sir Launcelot to his lands across the sea. And to make short this tale, they equipped and paid all that would ask them; and wholly an hundred knights departed with Sir Launcelot at once, and made their vows they would never leave him for weal nor for woe. And so they shipped at Cardiff, and sailed unto Benwick. For, to say truth, Sir Launcelot and his nephew was lord of all France and of all the lands that belonged unto France. And then he victualed and furnished and garrisoned all his noble towns and castles; and all the people of those lands came unto Sir Launcelot.

MUSIC #6:

UP AND OUT

MALORY:

So leave we Sir Launcelot in his lands and his noble knights with him, and return we again unto King Arthur and unto Sir Gawain that made a great host ready to the number of three score thousand. And all thing was made ready for shipping to pass over the sea, to war upon Sir Launcelot and upon his lands. And so they shipped at Cardiff.

And there King Arthur made Sir Mordred chief ruler of all England, and also he put the queen under his governaunce: because Sir Mordred was King Arthur's son, he gave him the rule of his land and of his wife.

And so the king passed the sea and landed upon Sir Launcelot's lands, and there he burned and wasted, through the vengeance of Sir Gawain, all that they might overrun. So when this word was come unto Sir Launcelot, that King Arthur and Sir Gawain were landed upon his lands and made full great destruction and waste, then spake Sir Bors –

BORS: My lord, it is shame that we suffer them thus to ride over our lands. For suffer ye them as long as ye will, they will do you no favour if they may seize you.

MALORY: Then said Sir Lionel that was cautious and wise –

LIONEL: My lord, Sir Launcelot, I will give you this counsel: let us keep our strong-walled towns until they have hunger and cold, and blow on their nails; and then let us fiercely set upon them and chop them down as sheep in a fold, that ever after strangers may take ensample how they land upon our lands.

LAUNCELOT: My fair lords, I am full loth to ride out with my knights for shedding of Christian blood; and yet my lands I understand be full bare for to sustain any host awhile for the mighty wars that formerly made King Claudas upon this country and upon my father ... Howbeit we will as at this time keep our strong walls. And I shall send a messenger unto my lord Arthur a treaty for to take, for better is peace than always war.

MALORY: So Sir Launcelot sent forth a damsel with a dwarf with her, requiring King Arthur to leave his warring upon his lands. And so she mounted upon a palfrey and the dwarf ran by her side and when she came to the pavilion of King Arthur, there she alighted.... And when she told her tale to King Arthur, the water ran out of the king's eyes. And all the lords were full glad for to advise the king to be accorded with Sir Launcelot – save only Sir Gawain –

GAWAIN: My lord, mine uncle, what will ye do? Will ye now turn again, now ye are passed this far upon your journey? All the world will speak of you villainy and shame.

ARTHUR: Now, sir Gawain, I will do as ye advise me; and yet meseemeth, Sir Launcelot's fair offers were not good to be refused. But since I am come so far upon this journey, I am willing that ye give the damsel her answer, for I may not speak to her for pity; for her offers be so large.

GAWAIN: Say ye to Sir Launcelot that it is waste labour now to sue to mine uncle. For tell him, if he would have made any labour for peace, he should have made it ere this time, for tell him now it is too late. And say to him that I, Sir Gawain, so send him word, that I promise him by the faith that I owe to God and to knighthood, I shall never leave him till he hath slain me or I him.

MALORY: So the damsel wept and departed; and when Sir Launcelot had heard her answer, then the tears ran down his cheeks –

LAUNCELOT: I was never so loth to do battle. For I will always fly from that noble king that made me knight, and will not go out to meet him in the field.

MALORY: So his knights held their tongues, and that night they took their rest. And upon the morning early, in the dawning of the day, as knights looked out, they saw the City of Benwick besieged round about, and foemen hurrying to set up ladders. But they within kept them out of the town and beat them mightily from the walls. Then came forth Sir Gawain, well armed, upon a stiff steed, and he came before the chief gate with his spear in his hand, crying –

GAWAIN: Where art thou, Sir Launcelot? Is there none of all your proud knights that dare break a spear with me?

MALORY: Then Sir Bors made him ready and came forth out of the town. And there Sir Gawain encountered with Sir Bors, and at that time he smote him

down from his horse, and almost he had slain him. And so Sir Bors was rescued and borne into the town.

Then came forth Sir Lionel and thought to revenge him; and both couched their spears and so ran together, and there they met violently, but Sir Gawain had such a grace that he smote Sir Lionel down and wounded him there passing sore. And then Sir Lionel was rescued and borne into the town.

And thus Sir Gawain came every day, and failed not but that he smote down one knight or other. So thus they endured half a year, and much slaughter was of people on both sides.

Then it befell upon a day that Sir Gawain came before the gates, armed at all points, on a noble horse, with a great spear in his hand, and then he cried with a loud voice –

GAWAIN: Where art thou now, thou false traitor, Sir Launcelot? Why keepest thou thyself within holes and walls like a coward? Look out, thou false traitor knight, and here I shall revenge upon thy body the death of my three brothers.

LAUNCELOT: (GRIEVING) So God me help, I am right heavy at Sir Gawain's words, for now he chargeth me with a great charge. And therefore I must needs defend me, or else be a known coward and traitor.

MALORY: Then Sir Launcelot bade saddle his strongest horse and bade fetch his armour and bring all to the tower of the gate. And then Sir Launcelot spoke loudly unto the king –

LAUNCELOT: My lord Arthur, and noble king that made me knight! Know you well that I am right heavy for your sake that ye thus harry me. And always I forbear you, for if I wished to be vengeful I might have met you in midst of the field ere this time and tamed your boldest knights. Half a year now I have forborne you and let you and Sir Gawain do what ye would do. But now I may no longer endure with patience, but needs I must defend myself, insomuch as Sir Gawain hath accused me of treason. It is greatly against my will that ever I should fight against any of your blood, but now I may not forsake it: for I am driven thereto as a beast at bay.

GAWAIN: If thou darest do battle, leave thy babbling and come off, and let us ease our hearts!

MALORY: Then Sir Launcelot armed him and mounted upon his horse, and both of them got great spears in their hands. And so the host without stood still all apart, and the noble knights of the city came a great number, then when King Arthur saw the number of knights he marvelled. And so the covenant was made, that there should no man come nigh them nor deal with them till the one were dead or had yielded.

Then Sir Launcelot and Sir Gawain departed a great way asunder, and then they came together with all their horses' might as fast as they might run, and each smote the other in the midst of their shields. But the knights were so strong and their spears so big that their horses might not endure their buffets, and so their horses fell to the earth. And then they left their horses and dressed their shields before them; then they came together and gave many sad strokes on divers places of their bodies, that the blood burst out on many sides.

Then had Sir Gawain such a grace and gift that a holy man had given him, that every day in the year, from morning till high noon, his strength

increased those three hours as much as thrice his strength. And that caused Sir Gawain to win great honour. But there were that time but few knights living that knew this advantage that Sir Gawain had, but King Arthur all only.

So Sir Launcelot fought with Sir Gawain, and when Sir Launcelot felt his might evermore increase, Sir Launcelot wondered and dread him sore to be shamed; for, he thought, when he felt Sir Gawain double his strength, that he had been a fiend and no earthly man. Wherefore Sir Launcelot traced and traversed, and covered himself with his shield, and kept his strength and his breath during three hours. And that time Sir Gawain gave him many sad blows and many sad strokes, that all knights that beheld Sir Launcelot marvelled how he might endure him, but full little understood they that travail that Sir Launcelot had to endure him.

And then when it was past noon Sir Gawain's strength was gone and he had no more but his own might. When Sir Launcelot felt him so come down, then he stretched him up and strode near Sir Gawain and said –

LAUNCELOT: Now I feel ye have done your worst! And now, my lord Sir Gawain, I must do my part, for many a great and grievous stroke I have endured you this day with great pain.

MALORY: And so Sir Launcelot doubled his strokes and gave Sir Gawain such a stroke upon the helmet that sidelong he fell down upon his one side. And Sir Launcelot withdrew him from him.

GAWAIN: Why withdrawest thou thee? Turn again, false traitor knight, and slay me outright! For if thou leave me thus, anon as I am whole I shall do battle with thee again.

LAUNCELOT: Sir, I shall endure you, by God's grace. But I will never smite a felled knight.

MALORY: And so Sir Launcelot departed and went unto the city. And Sir Gawain was borne unto King Arthur's pavilion, and anon leeches were brought unto him of the best, and searched and salved him with soft ointments. And Sir Launcelot called out to the king –

LAUNCELOT: Now have good day, my lord the king! For ye win no worship at these walls, for if I would my knights outbring, there should many a doughty man die. And therefore, my lord Arthur, remember you of old kindness, and howsoever I fare, Jesu be your guide in all places.

ARTHUR: (QUIETLY) Now, alas, that ever this unhappy war began! For ever Sir Launcelot forbearth me in all places, and in like wise my kin, and that is seen well this day, what courtesy he shewed my nephew, Sir Gawain.

MALORY: Then King Arthur fell sick for sorrow of Sir Gawain, that he was so sore hurt, and because of the war between him and Sir Launcelot. So after that they on King Arthur's side kept the siege with little war without, and they within kept their walls and defended them when need was.

Thus Sir Gawain lay sick and unsound three weeks in his tent with all manner of leechcraft that might be had. And as soon as Sir Gawain might go and ride, he armed him at all points and bestrode a stiff courser and got a great spear in his hand, and so he came riding before the chief gate of Benwick. And there he cried aloud –

GAWAIN: Where art thou, Sir Launcelot? Come forth, thou false traitor knight and coward, for I am here, Sir Gawain, that will prove this that I say upon thee.

LAUNCELOT: Gawain, ye shall not think that I shall tarry long, but since that ye unknighly charges me thus of treason, ye shall have both your hands full of me.

MALORY: And again Sir Launcelot armed him, and mounted, and came forth, and again – after their horses had been felled to the earth – did fierce battle with Sir Gawain. And again three hours he withstood Sir Gawain’s grace and might, and Sir Gawain did great pain unto Sir Launcelot those three hours, that he had much ado to defend him. And when the three hours were past, that he felt Sir Gawain was come home to his own proper strength, then Sir Launcelot strode near Sir Gawain and doubled his strokes, and ever Sir Gawain defended him mightily, but nevertheless Sir Launcelot smote such a stroke upon his helm and upon the old wound that Sir Gawain sank down and swooned. And anon as he did awake he waved and thrust at Sir Launcelot as he lay, and said –

GAWAIN: Traitor knight, you know well I am not yet slain. Therefore come thou near me and perform this battle to the utmost.

LAUNCELOT: I will no more do than I have done. For when I see you on foot I will do battle upon you all the while I see you stand upon your feet; but to smite a wounded man that may not stand, God defend me from a such a shame.

MALORY: And then he turned him and went his way toward the city, and Sir Gawain evermore calling him – ‘Traitor knight’ –

GAWAIN: Traitor knight! When I am whole I shall do battle with you again, for I shall never leave thee till the one of us be slain.

MALORY: Thus as the siege endured and as Sir Gawain lay sick nearly a month, and when he was well recovered and ready within three days to do battle again with Sir Launcelot, right so came tidings unto King Arthur from England that made King Arthur and all his host to remove from Sir Launcelot's lands and so go home to England.

MUSIC #7: POSTLUDE

ANNOUNCER:

MUSIC #8: FILL TO TIME IF NEEDED