

CBC TRANS CANADA

SCRIPT ADAPTED BY: George Whalley

THEATRE 10:30

“THE TRAGEDY OF KING ARTHUR

[Radio 13 July 1971]

AND SIR LAUNCELOT” PART II –

“SLANDER AND STRIFE”

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 Two: “Slander and Strife.”

MUSIC #1: EST. & BG

MALORY: So after the quest of the Sankgreall was fulfilled and all knights that were left alive were come home again unto the Table Round, then was there great joy in the court, and in especial King Arthur and Queen Guenevere made great joy of the remnant that were come home. And passing glad was the king and the queen of Sir Launcelot and of Sir Bors, for they had been passing long away in the quest of the Sankgreall.

Then, as the book sayeth, Sir Launcelot began to resort unto Queen Guenevere again and forgot the promise and the perfection that he made in the quest; for, as the book sayeth, had not Sir Launcelot been in his privy thoughts and in his mind so set inwardly to the queen as he was in seeming outward to God, there had no knight passed him in the quest of the Sankgreall. But ever his thoughts privily were on the queen, and so they loved together more hotter than they did beforehand, and had many such private ways together that many in the court spoke of it, and in especial Sir Aggravain, Sir Gawain’s brother, for he was ever open-mouthed.

MUSIC #1: UP AND OUT

MALORY: So it befell that Sir Launcelot had many resorts of ladies and damsels which daily resorted unto him, that besought him to be their champion. In all such matters of right Sir Launcelot applied him daily to do for the pleasure of our Lord Jesu Christ, and ever as much as he might he withdrew him from the company of queen Guenevere for to eschew the slander and noise. Wherefore the queen waxed wroth with Sir Launcelot. So on a day she called him to her chamber and said thus –

GUENEVERE: Sir Launcelot, I see and feel daily that your love beginneth to slacken, for ye have no joy to be in my presence, but ever ye are out of this court, and quarrels and matters ye have nowadays for ladies, maidens, and gentlewomen, more than ever ye were wont to have beforehand.

LAUNCELOT: Ah, madame, in this ye must hold me excused for divers causes: one is, I was but late in the quest of the Sankgreall, and I thank God of His great mercy, and never of my deserving, that I saw in that my quest as much as ever saw any sinful man living, and so was it told me. And if that I had not had my privy thoughts to return to your love again as I do, I had seen as great mysteries as ever saw my son Sir Galahad, Percival, or Sir Bors. And therefore, madame, it may not be yet lightly forgotten, the high service in which I did my diligent labour.

Also, madame, know you well that there be many men speaketh of our love in this court and have you and me greatly under watch, as doth this Sir Aggravain and Sir Mordred. And, madame, I dread them more for your sake than for any fear I have of them myself, for I may happen to escape and ride (away) myself if there were a great need, where ye – madame – must abide all that will be said unto you. And then, if that ye fall in any distress through wilful folly, then is there no other help but by me and my blood.

And you know well, madame, the boldness of you and me will bring us to shame and slander, and that I am loth to see you dishonoured. And that is the cause I take upon me more for to do for damsels and maidens than ever I did tofore so that men should understand my joy and my delight is my pleasure to have ado for damsels and maidens.

MALORY: All this while the queen stood still and let Sir Launcelot say what he would; and when he had said all she burst out weeping, and so she sobbed and wept a great while. And when she could speak, she said –

GUENEVERE: Sir Launcelot, now I well understand that thou art a false, coward knight and a common lecher, and lovest and holdest other ladies, and of me thou hast disdain and scorn. For now I well understand thy falsehood, I shall never love thee more, and look though be never so foolhardy to come in my sight. And right here I discharge thee this court, that thou never come within it, and I forfend thee my fellowship, and upon pain of thy head that thou see me nevermore.

MALORY: Right so Sir Launcelot departed with great heaviness, that he hardly might sustain himself for great dole-making. Then he called Sir Bors and told him how the queen had forbidden him the court, and so he was in will to depart into his own country.

LAUNCELOT: Now will I take mine horse and mine armour and ride to the hermit Sir Brastias, and there will I repose me till I hear some manner of tidings from you. But, fair brother, as far ye can, get me the love of my lady queen Guenevere.

BORS: Sir, ye need not to urge me of such matters, for well ye know I will do what I may to please you. Women in their hastiness will do oftentimes what after them sore repenteth.

MALORY:

And then Sir Launcelot departed at once and no creature knew where he was become but Sir Bors.

So when Sir Launcelot was departed the queen outwardly made no manner of sorrow in showing, but inwardly she took great thought; but she bare it out with a proud countenance.

So the queen called a privy dinner in London unto the knights of the Round Table, and all was for to show outwardly that she had as great joy in all other knights of the Round Table as she had in Sir Launcelot. So four-and-twenty knights dined with the queen in a private place by themselves, and there was made a great feast of all manner of dainties. And so it befell by misfortune a good knight, Sir Patrice, took an apple, for he was parched with heat of wine. And when he had eaten it he swelled sorely until he burst, and there Sir Patrice fell down suddenly dead among them.

And there openly Sir Madore accused the queen of the death of his cousin Sir Patrice. And the queen was so abashed that she could no otherwise do but wept so heartily that she fell down in a swoon. So with this noise and cry came to them King Arthur, and when he knew of the trouble he was a passing heavy man that Sir Madore charged the queen of treason.

ARTHUR:

Fair lords, I am sorry of this trouble, but the case is so that I may not have ado in this matter, for I must be a rightful judge. I regret that I may not do battle for my wife, for this deed came never from her. Some good knight shall put his body in jeopardy for my queen rather than that she be burned in a wrong quarrel. Therefore, Sir Madore, desire thou thy day of battle, and she shall provide her some good knight that shall answer your charge.

MADORE: My lord the king, I require you, as ye be a righteous king, give me my day that I may have justice – for all these four-and-twenty knights at this dinner have great suspicion unto the queen.

ARTHUR: Well, this day fifteen days, look you be ready armed on horseback in the meadow beside Winchester. And if it so fall that there be any knight to encounter against you, there may you do your best, and God speed the right. But if so befall that there be no knight ready at that day, then must the queen be burned.

MADORE: My lord, I am answered.

MALORY: So when the king and the queen were together the king asked –

ARTHUR: Where is Sir Launcelot? If he were here he would not grudge to do battle for you.

GUENEVERE: Sir, I know not where he is, but his brother and his kinsmen think that he be not within this realm.

ARTHUR: I am sorry for that, for if he were here, he would put an end to this strife. Go unto Sir Bors and pray him for to do battle for you for Sir Launcelot's sake: he will not refuse you.

MALORY: But when the queen besought Sir Bors to help her, he said to King Arthur –

BORS: If I do battle for the queen I shall anger many of my fellowship of the Table Round. But I will grant it for my lord Sir Launcelot's sake and for your sake: I will at that day be the queen's champion unless that there come by adventure a better knight than I am to do battle for her. She is in

the right, and I will prove that she is not culpable of this treason that she is charged with.

MALORY: Then Sir Bors departed secretly and rode unto Sir Launcelot and told him of all this happening.

LAUNCELOT: Ah, Jesu, this is come happily as I would have it. And therefore make you ready to do battle, but look that ye tarry till ye see me come as long as ye may. For I am sure Sir Madore is a hot knight when he is aroused.

BORS: Sir, let me deal with him. Doubt ye not ye shall have all your will.

MALORY: And so it passed until the day came and the king and the queen and all manner of knights drew them unto the meadow beside Winchester where the battle should be. And so when the king was come with the queen, the queen was then put in the constable's charge and a great fire made about an iron stake, that if Sir Madore had the better, she should be burned.

And anon Sir Madore came into the field with his shield on his shoulder and his spear in his hand, and so rode about the place crying –

MADORE: Bid your champion come forth if he dare!

MALORY: Then was Sir Bors ashamed, and took his horse and came to the list's end. And then was he aware where came, from a wood fast by, a knight all armed upon a white horse with a strange shield of strange arms, and he came driving all that his horse might run. Then they all marvelled what knight that might be that so took the battle upon him, for there was not one that knew him but if it were Sir Bors.

And then they rode to the list's end, and there they couched their spears and ran together with all their might. And at once Sir Madore's spear brake all to pieces, but the other's spear held and bore Sir Madore, horse

and all, backward to the earth a great fall. Then that knight descended from his horse and put his shield before him and drew his sword. And so they came eagerly to battle, and each gave the other many sad strokes, tracing and traversing and thrusting together with their swords as it were wild boars, thus fighting nigh an hour. And Sir Madore smote that knight through the thick of the thighs, that the blood burst out fiercely. But at the last this knight smote Sir Madore flat upon the earth, and therewith strode to him to have pulled off his helmet from his head. And so Sir Madore prayed that knight to save his life; and so yielded him as overcome, and released the queen from his quarrel.

Then the knight's partners of the lists took up Sir Madore and led him to his tent. And the other knight went straight to the stair-foot where sat King Arthur. By that time was the queen come to the king and each kissed the other heartily. And when the king saw that knight, he stooped down to him and thanked him, and in like wise did the queen. And the king prayed him to put off his helmet and to repose him and to take a sup of wine. And when he put off his helmet to drink, every knight knew him that it was Sir Launcelot. As soon as the king knew that, he took the queen by the hand and went unto Sir Launcelot –

ARTHUR: Sir, Grauntmercy of your great travail that ye have had this day for me and for my queen.

LAUNCELOT: My lord, I ought of right ever to be in your quarrel, and in my lady the queen's quarrel to do battle, for ye are the man that gave me the high Order of Knighthood, and that day my lady, your queen, did me worship. And therefore, my lord Arthur, I promised her at that day ever to be her knight in right or in wrong.

ARTHUR: Grauntmercy. I shall requite your goodness.

MALORY: And evermore the queen beheld Sir Launcelot, and wept so tenderly that she sank almost to the ground for sorrow that he had done to her so great kindness where she had showed him great unkindness. And then Sir Madore was put to leechcraft, and Sir Launcelot was healed of his play. And so there was made great joy, and much mirth was made in that court.

MUSIC #2: *CODA AND OUT: SHORT PAUSE: SEGUE NEW THEME, EST & TO BG: END AT X BELOW*

MALORY: In May, when every heart flourisheth and burgeoneth (for, as the season is lusty to behold and comfortable, so man and woman rejoiceth and gladdeth of summer coming with his fresh flowers, for winter with his rough winds and blasts causeth lusty men and women to cower and to sit by fires), so this season it befell in the month of May a great trouble and disastrous that came to no end till the flower of chivalry of all the world was destroyed and slain.

And all was due to two unhappy knights which were named Sir Aggravain and Sir Mordred, brothers unto Sir Gawain. For this Sir Aggravain and Sir Mordred had ever a secret hate unto the queen, dame Guenevere, and to Sir Launcelot; and daily and nightly they ever watched upon Sir Launcelot. (*SHORT PAUSE*) X

Now it misfortuned that Sir Gawain and all his brethren were in King Arthur's chamber, and then Sir Aggravain said thus openly, and not in no council, so that many knights might hear –

AGGRAVAIN: I marvel that we all be not ashamed both to see and to know how Sir Launcelot lieth daily and nightly by the queen. And all we know well that it is so, and it is shamefully suffered by us all that we should let so noble a king as king Arthur is, be shamed.

GAWAIN: Brother Sir Aggravain, I pray you and charge you, move no such matters no more before me, for know you well, I will not be of your counsel.

GARETH: (TO AGGRAVAIN) So God me help, *we* will not be party to your deeds.

MORDRED: Then will *I*!

GAWAIN: I believe you well, for ever even unto all unhappiness. But I would that ye leave all this, and make you not so busy; for I know what will fall of it.

AGGRAVAIN: Fall whatsoever fall may, I will disclose it to the king!

GAWAIN: Not by my counsel; for, if there arise war and strife betwixt Sir Launcelot and us, know you well, brother, there will many kings and great lords hold with Sir Launcelot. Also, brother Sir Aggravain, you must remember how oftentimes Sir Launcelot hath rescued the king and the queen; and the best of us all had been full cold at the heart's-root had not Sir Launcelot been better than we, and that hath he proved himself oft. As for my part, I will never be against Sir Launcelot, because of one day's deed – that was when he rescued me from King Carados of the Dolorous Tower and slew him and saved my life. Also, brother Sir Aggravain and Sir Mordred, in like wise Sir Launcelot rescued you both and three score and two from Sir Tarquin. Therefore, brother, me-thinks such noble deeds and kindness should be remembered.

AGGRAVAIN: Do you as you wish; for I will hide it no longer.

MALORY: Then, at these words, came in Sir Arthur –

GAWAIN: Now, brother, stop your strife.

AGGRAVAIN: That will I not –

MORDRED: – nor I.

GAWAIN: Well, will ye so? Then God speed you, for I will not hear of your tales, nor be of your counsel.

GARETH: No more will I; for I shall never say evil by that man that made me knight.

MALORY: And therewithal they three departed in great sorrow.

GAWAIN: Alas! now is this realm wholly destroyed and mischiefed, and the noble fellowship of the Round Table shall be dispersed.

MALORY: So they departed, and then King Arthur asked them what scandal they were making.

AGGRAVAIN: My lord, I shall tell you, for I may keep it in no longer. Here is what I and my brother Sir Mordred disclosed unto my brothers Sir Gawain, Sir Gaheris, and Sir Gareth – for this is all, to make it short – how that all we know that Sir Launcelot holdeth to your queen in loving, and hath done long; and we being your sister's sons, we may endure it no longer. And all we know that you should be above Sir Launcelot, and you are the king that made him knight, and therefore we will prove it that he is a traitor to your person.

ARTHUR: If it be so, he must be. But I would be loth to begin such a thing except I have proofs of it; for Sir Launcelot is a hardy knight among us all; unless he be taken with the deed he will fight with him that bringeth up the scandal, and I know no knight that is able to match him. Therefore, if it be true as you say, I would that he were taken in the deed.

MALORY: For the king was full loth that such a scandal should be upon Sir Launcelot and his queen; for the king had a suspicion of it, but he would not hear thereof, for Sir Launcelot had done so much for him and for the queen so many times that the king loved him passingly well.

AGGRAVAIN: My lord, ye shall ride tomorrow a-hunting, and doubt ye not, Sir Launcelot will not go with you. And so when it draweth toward night ye may send the queen word that ye will lie out that night, and so may ye send for your cooks. And then, upon pain of death, that night we shall take him with the queen, and we shall bring him unto you, quick or dead.

ARTHUR: I agree. I counsel you to take with you trusty fellowship.

AGGRAVAIN: Sir, my brother Sir Mordred and I will take with us twelve knights of the Round Table.

ARTHUR: Beware; for I warn you, ye shall find him strong.

AGGRAVAIN & MORDRED: Let *us* deal.

MALORY: So in the morning King Arthur rode a-hunting and sent word to the queen that he would be out all that night. Then Sir Aggravain and Sir Mordred took to them twelve knights and hid themselves in a chamber in the castle of Carlisle. These twelve knights were with Sir Mordred and Sir Aggravain, and all they were of Scotland, or else of Sir Gawain's kin, or well-wishers to his brother.

So when the night came, Sir Launcelot told Sir Bors how he would go that night and speak with the queen.

BORS: Sir, ye shall not go this night by my counsel.

LAUNCELOT: Why?

BORS: Sir, I dread me ever of Sir Aggravain that waiteth upon you daily to do you shame and us all. And never misgave my heart against your going to the queen so much as now, for I mistrust that the king is out this night from the queen because peradventure he hath lain some watch for you and the queen. Therefore I dread me sore of some treason.

LAUNCELOT: Have ye no dread, for I shall go and come again and make no tarrying.

BORS: Sir, I regret that; for I dread me sore that your going this night shall hurt us all.

LAUNCELOT: Fair nephew, I marvel me much why ye say thus, since the queen hath sent for me. I will not be so much a coward, but she shall understand I will come to her good grace.

BORS: God speed you well, and send you sound and safe again!

MALORY: So Sir Launcelot departed and took his sword under his arm, and so he walked in his mantle – that noble knight – and put himself in great jeopardy. And so he passed on till he came to the queen’s chamber, and so quickly he was had into the chamber. For the queen and Sir Launcelot were together; and whether they were abed or at other manner of disports, me careth not thereof to make no mention, for love that time was not as love is nowadays. But thus, as they were together, there came Sir Aggravain and Sir Mordred with twelve knights with them of the Round Table, and these fourteen knights were armed fully, as they should fight in a battle. And they said with great crying and a scaring voice –

AGGRAVAIN & MORDRED: Thou traitor, Sir Launcelot, now art thou taken!
(*confusedly*)

GUENEVERE: Alas! now are we undone both!

LAUNCELOT: Madame, is there here any armour hereabout that might cover my body withal? And if there be any, give it me and I shall soon stint their malice, by the grace of God!

GUENEVERE: Now truly, I have no armour, neither helm, shield, sword, nor spear, wherefore I dread me sore our long love is come to a sorrowful end. For I hear by their noise there be many noble knights, and well I know they be strongly armed. Against them ye can make no resistance; wherefore ye are likely to be slain, and then shall I be burned. For if ye might escape them, I would not doubt but that ye would rescue me in what danger that I ever stood in.

LAUNCELOT: Alas! in all my life thus was I never so beset that I should be thus shamefully slain, for lack of mine armour.

MALE CAST: (*confusedly crying out*) Traitor knight, come out of the queen's chamber! Thou art beset so that thou shalt not escape.

LAUNCELOT: A, Jesu mercy! this shameful cry and noise I can not endure, for better were death at once than thus to suffer this pain.

MALORY: Then he took the queen in his arms and kissed her, and said –

LAUNCELOT: Most noble Christian queen, I beseech you, as ye have been ever my special good lady, and I at all times your poor knight and true unto my power, and as I never failed you in right nor in wrong since the first day

King Arthur made me knight – I beseech you, pray for my soul if that I be slain. For well I am assured that Sir Bors, my nephew, and all the remnant of my kin, with Sir Lavain and Sir Urry, that they will not fail you to rescue you from the fire. And therefore, mine own lady, comfort yourself, whatsoever come of me, that ye go with Sir Bors, my nephew, and Sir Urry and they all will do you all the pleasure that they may, and ye shall live like a queen upon my lands.

GUENEVERE: Nay, Sir Launcelot, nay! Ye know well, I will not live long after thy days. If ye be slain, I will take my death as meekly as ever did martyr take his death for Jesu Christ's sake.

LAUNCELOT: Well, madame, since it is so that the day is come that our love must depart, know you well I shall sell my life as dear as I may. But a thousandfold I am more heavier for you than for myself. I had rather, than to be lord of all Christendom, that I had sure armour upon me, that men might speak of my deeds before ever I were slain!

GUENEVERE: Today, if it might please God, I would that they would take me and slay me and suffer you to escape.

LAUNCELOT: That shall never be. God defend me from such a shame! But, Jesu Christ, be Thou my shield and mine armour!

MALORY: And therewith Sir Launcelot wrapped his mantle about his arm well and surely. For by then they had gotten a great form out of the hall, and therewith they all rushed at the door.

LAUNCELOT: (shouting) Now, fair lords, leave your noise and your rushing, and I shall set open this door, and then may ye do with me what it liketh you.

AGGRAVAIN & MORDRED (& OTHERS CONFUSEDLY): Come off, then, and do it, for it availeth thee not to strive against us all. Therefore let us into this chamber, and we shall save thy life until thou come to King Arthur.

MALORY: Then Sir Launcelot unbarred the door, and with his left hand he held it open a little so that but one man might come in at once. So there came striding a good knight, a big broad man, and his name was called Sir Collgrevaunce of Gore. And he with a sword struck at Sir Launcelot mightily, but he put aside the stroke, and gave him such a buffet upon the helmet that he fell grovelling dead within the chamber door. Then Sir Launcelot with great might drew the knight within the chamber door. And then Sir Launcelot, with help of the queen and her ladies, was quickly armed in Collgrevaunce's armour.

AGGRAVAIN & MORDRED: (SHOUTING) Traitor knight! Come forth out of the queen's chamber!

LAUNCELOT: Leave off your noise, Sir Aggravain; ye shall not prison me this night. Therefore, if ye do my counsel, go ye all from this chamber door and make you no such crying and such manner of slander as ye do. For I promise you by my knighthood, if ye will depart and make no more noise, I shall tomorrow appear before you all and before the king, and then let it be seen which of you all will convict me of treason. There shall I answer you, as a knight should, that hither I came to the queen for no manner evil design; that will I prove and make it good upon you with my hands.

AGGRAVAIN: Fy upon thee, traitor! We will have thee whatever ye wish and slay thee, if we like! For we have the choice from King Arthur: to save thee or slay thee.

LAUNCELOT: Ah, sirs, is there no other grace with you? Then, guard yourselves!

MALORY: So then Sir Launcelot set all open the chamber door, and mightily and knightly he strode in among them. And anon at the first stroke he slew Sir Aggravain, and anon afterwards twelve of his fellows. Within a while he had laid them down cold to the earth, for there was none of the twelve knights might stand Sir Launcelot one buffet. And also he wounded Sir Mordred, and therewithal he fled with all his might. Then Sir Launcelot returned again unto the queen –

LAUNCELOT: Madame, now all our true love is brought to an end, for now will King Arthur ever be my foe. And therefore, madame, if it like you that I may take you with me, I shall save you from all manner perilous dangers.

GUENEVERE: Sir, that is not best, meseemeth; for now ye have done so much harm it will be best that ye hold still at this. But if ye see that tomorrow they will put me unto death, then may ye rescue me as ye think best.

LAUNCELOT: Well, then! for have ye no doubt, while I am a man living I shall rescue you.

MALORY: And then he kissed her, and each of them gave the other a ring, and so the queen he left there and went into his lodging. When Sir Bors saw Sir Launcelot he was never so glad of his homecoming.

LAUNCELOT: Jesu mercy! Why be ye all armed? What meaneth this?

BORS: Sir, after ye were departed from us we all that be of your blood and your well-willers were so troubled that some of us leaped out of our beds naked, and some in their dreams caught naked swords in their hands. And therefore, we deemed there was some great strife in hand, and so we

deemed that ye were betrayed with some treason; and therefore we made us thus ready, what need that ever ye were in.

LAUNCELOT: My fair nephew, now shall ye know all, that this night I was more hard beset than ever I was all the days of my life. But thanked be God, I am myself escaped their power. I have slain Sir Aggravain and twelve knights, and wounded Sir Mordred. And therefore, my fellows, I pray you all that ye will be of good heart, and help me in what need that ever I stand, for now is war come to us all.

BORS: Sir, all is welcome that God sendeth us, and as we have taken much weal with you and much worship, we will take the woe with you as we have taken the weal.

LAUNCELOT: Gramercy of your good comfort, for in my great distress, fair nephew, ye comfort me greatly. But this, my fair nephew, I would that ye do, in all haste that ye may, before it is far past dawn: that ye will look in their lodging that be lodged nigh here about the king, to find which will hold with me and which will not. For now I must know which were my friends from my foes.

BORS: Sir, I shall do my best, and ere it be seven of the clock I shall know of such as ye may fear, and who that will hold with you.

MALORY: The Sir Bors called unto him two-and-twenty knights; and when they were armed and on horseback they promised Sir Launcelot to do what he wished. Then there fell to them, what of North Wales and of Cornwall, for Sir Lamorak's sake and for Sir Tristram's sake, to the number of seven score knights. And Launcelot said to them –

LAUNCELOT: I have been, ever since I came to this court, well-willed unto my lord Arthur and unto my lady queen Guenevere unto my power. But this night because of my lady the queen sent for me to speak with her, I suppose it was made by treason; howbeit I dare largely excuse her person, notwithstanding I was by a plot nearly slain there, but that Jesu provided for me.

Now therefore, my fair lords, I am sure there is nothing but war unto me and to mine; because I have slain this night Sir Aggravain, Sir Gawain's brother, and at the least twelve of his fellows, now I am sure of mortal war. For these knights were sent by King Arthur to betray me; therefore the king will in this heat and malice condemn the queen unto burning, and that may not I endure – that she should be burned for my sake. For if I may be brave and patient and so taken, I will fight for the queen, to show that she is a true lady unto her lord. But the king in his heat, I fear, will not take me as I ought to be taken.

BORS: My Lord Sir Launcelot, since it is fallen as it is, I counsel you to guard yourself; as for my lady queen Guenevere, if she be in any distress, insomuch as she is in pain for your sake, I counsel you that ye rescue her in the knight's way; for if ye did any other wise, all the world would speak you shame to the world's end. Insomuch as ye were taken with her, whether ye did right or wrong, it is now your part to hold with the queen, that she be not slain or put to a shameful death. For if she so die, the shame shall be evermore yours.

LAUNCELOT: Now Jesu defend me from shame, and keep and save my lady the queen from villainy and shameful death, and that she never be destroyed through my default. So I put this case unto you: that my lord King Arthur, by evil counsel, will tomorrow in his anger put my lady unto the fire and there to be burned, then, I pray you, counsel me what is best for me to do.

MALORY: So, to make short take of it, they were all agreed that, for better or for worse, if so were that the queen were brought on the morrow to the fire, instantly they all would rescue her. And so by the counsel of Sir Launcelot they put them all in a wood as near Carlisle as they might, and there they abode quiet to learn what the King would do.

MUSIC: (BRIDGE)

MALORY: Now turn we again to when Sir Mordred was escaped from Sir Launcelot: he mounted his horse and came to King Arthur – sore wounded and bled white, and there he told the king all how it was, and how they were all slain save himself alone.

ARTHUR: Ah, Jesu, mercy! How may this be? Took ye him in the queen's chamber?

MORDRED: Yea, so God me help, there we found him unarmed, and at once he slew Sir Collgrevaunce and armed him in his armour. And he fought strongly and slew all save me alone.

ARTHUR: Jesu mercy! he is a marvellous knight of prowess. And alas, it sore repenteth me that even Sir Launcelot should be against me, for now I am sure the noble fellowship of the Round Table is broken for ever, for with him will many a noble knight hold. And now it is fallen out so, that I may not keep my honour except my queen must suffer death.

MALORY: So then there was made a great ordinance in his wrath, that the queen must needs be condemned to the death. And the law was such in those days that whatsoever they were – of what estate or degree – if they were found guilty of treason, there should be no other remedy but death; and either the deed itself or being taken in the deed should be cause of instant judgment. And right so was it ordained for Queen Guenevere: because Sir Mordred

was escaped sore wounded, and the death of thirteen knights of the Round Table, these proofs and evidences caused King Arthur to command the queen to the fire and there to be burned. Then spake Sir Gawain –

GAWAIN: My lord Arthur, I would counsel you not to be over hasty, but that ye would put this judgment of my lady the queen in respite, for many causes. One is this: though it were so that Sir Launcelot were found in the queen's chamber, yet it might be so that he came thither for no evil. For ye know, my lord, that my lady the queen hath oftentimes been greatly beholden unto Sir Launcelot, more than to any other knight; for oftentimes he hath saved her life and done battle for her when all the court refused the queen. And peradventure she sent for him for goodness and for no evil, to reward him for his good deeds that he had done to her in times past. And peradventure my lady the queen sent for him to that intent, that Sir Launcelot should come privately to her, thinking that that would be the best way to avoid slander; for oftentimes we do many things that we think are for the best, and yet peradventure it turneth to the worst. For I dare say, my lady your queen is to you both good and true. And as for Sir Launcelot, I dare say he will make it good upon any knight living that will charge him with villainy or shame, and in like wise he will make good for my lady the queen.

ARTHUR: That I believe well, but I will not that way work with Sir Launcelot, for he trusteth so much upon his skill and his might that he feareth no man. Therefore for my queen he shall nevermore fight, for she shall have the law. And if I may take Sir Launcelot, know you well he shall have as shameful a death as she.

GAWAIN: Jesu defend me, that I never see it or know it.

ARTHUR: Why say you so? For, by God, ye have no cause to love *him*! For this night last past he slew your brother Sir Aggravain, a full good knight, and almost he had slain your other brother, Sir Mordred, and also there he slew thirteen noble knights. And also remember you, Sir Gawain, he slew two sons of yours, Sir Florens and Sir Lovell.

GAWAIN: My lord, of all this I have a knowledge, and knowledge of their deaths sore grieves me. But insomuch as I gave them warning and told my brother and my sons beforehand what would fall in the end, and insomuch as they would not act by my counsel, I will not meddle with that, nor revenge me nothing of their deaths; for I told them there was no point to strive with Sir Launcelot. Howbeit I am sorry of the death of my brother and of my two sons, yet they are the causers of their own death: for oftentimes I warned my brother Sir Aggravain, and I told him of the perils that now be fallen.

ARTHUR: Make you ready, I pray you, in your best armour, with your brothers, Sir Gaherys and Sir Gareth, to bring my queen to the fire and there to have her sentence.

GAWAIN: Nay, my most noble king, that will I never do, for I will never be in that place where so noble a queen as my lady dame Guenevere is shall take such a shameful end. For my heart will not serve me for to see her die, and it shall never be said that ever I was of your counsel for her death.

ARTHUR: Then, suffer your brothers Sir Gaherys and Sir Gareth to be there.

GAWAIN: My lord, they will be loth to be there present, but they are young and full unable to say you nay.

MALORY: Then came Sir Gaherys and the good knight Sir Gareth unto King Arthur –

GARETH: Sir, ye may well command us to be there, but it shall be sore against our will. But if we be there by your strict command, ye shall plainly hold us there excused: we will be there in peaceable wise, and bear no harness of war upon us.

ARTHUR: In the name of God, then, make you ready, for she shall have soon her sentence.

GAWAIN: Alas, that ever I should endure to see this woeful day!

MUSIC #4: BG FROM (X) BELOW TO (Y)

MALORY: So Sir Gawain turned him and wept heartily, and so he went into his chamber. (X) And so the queen was led forth outside Carlisle, and anon she was undressed into her smock. And then her ghostly father was brought to her to shrieve her of her misdeeds. Then was there weeping and wailing and wringing of hands of many lords and ladies; but there were but few in comparison that would bear any armour for to secure the death of the queen.

Then was there one that Sir Launcelot had sent unto that place, which went to spy what time the queen should go unto her death. And as soon as he saw the queen disrobed into her smock and shriven, then he gave Sir Launcelot warning at once. (Y) Then was there but spurring and plucking up of horse, and right so they came unto the fire. And who that stood against them, there were they slain; there might no one withstand Sir Launcelot.

So all that bare arms and withstood them, there were they slain, full many a noble knight. And so in this rushing and hurling, as Sir Launcelot was thronged here and there, it misfortuned him to slay Sir Gaherys and Sir Gareth, the noble knight, for they were unarmed and unawares. Sir

Launcelot smote Sir Gaherys and Sir Gareth upon the brain-pans, and so they were slain in the field. Howbeit in very truth Sir Launcelot saw them not. And so were they found dead among the thickest of the press.

MUSIC #5: BG NEXT

MALORY: Then Sir Launcelot, when he had thus done, and slain and put to flight all that would withstand him, then he rode straight unto Queen Guenevere and had a kirtle and a gown thrown about her, and then he made her to be set behind him and prayed her to be of good cheer. Now know you well the queen was glad that she was at that time escaped from the death, and then she thanked God and Sir Launcelot.

MUSIC #5: UP BRIEFLY AND CONTINUE BG

MALORY: And so he rode his way with the queen unto Joyous Garde, and there he kept her as a noble knight should. And many great lords and many good knights were sent him, and many full noble knights drew unto him. And when they heard that King Arthur and Sir Launcelot were at odds, many knights were glad, and many were sorry of their quarrel.

MUSIC #5: UP AND OUT

ANNOUNCER:

MUSIC #6: FILL TO TIME NEEDED.