

THE LION'S TALE

[version 8]

by

Shaan Sharma

Inspired by Chrétien du Troyes' *Yvain, or The Knight of the Lion*

Shaan Sharma
(703) 217.6750
shaan.y.sharma@gmail.com

CHARACTER BREAKDOWN

1. YVAIN
2. LION/MESSENGER
3. QUEEN GWENEVERE/LAUDINE/LUNETTE/BROTHER/SISTER
4. GAWAIN/ESCLADOS/MAN 1
5. KING ARTHUR/CALOGRENANT/BARON/MAN 2
6. KAY/CHAPLAIN/DAUGHTER/HARPIN/MAN 3/MAIDEN

SETTING

King Arthur's England.

NOTES:

The Lion serves as minstrel for Act 1. You are encouraged to develop as much musical under-scoring as desired with the Lion for Act 1, and may add any extra layers of musicality that ability in the rest of the cast affords. Act 2 should have no live music.

The character breakdown beyond principal characters is suggestion. If something works better, trade it around.

When the Lion enters the world of the play, he can understand English speech, but he is not understood in return.

THE LION'S TALE
"A DRINKING SONG"

INTRO:

Bm A Em Bm G A
 -----2-0-----2-0-----
 -3--3-----3--2-----0-----3--3-----3--3-----2-----
 -4--4-----2-----0--4--4-----0-----
 -----4-----2--2-----4-----0-----
 -2-2-----0--2-----2-2-----0-----
 -----3-----

Bm A Em Bm G A
 -----2-0-----2-0-----
 -3--3-----3--2-----0-----3--3-----3--3-----0h2-----
 -4--4-----2-----0--4--4-----0-----
 -----4-----2--2-----4-----0-----
 -2-2-----0--2-----2-2-----0-----
 -----3-----

Ladies and gentlemen, may I present King Arthur's court.

 Bm Bm G A
 I've garnered the greatest and loved them all dear
 Bm Bm A D A Em
 We've sharpened the tip of Camelot's spear
 Bm Bm G A
 They're raucous and filthy and slur when they sing
 Bm G A Dsus2
 But I wouldn't go changing it for anything

 Dsus2 Dsus2 D6sus2 DM9
 So raise up your goblet, we'll fill it with wine
 A A Asus4 A
 You'll find your last drops by the moon's silver shine
 Dsus2 Dsus2 D6sus2 DM9
 Tell your best tale of valor and love
 A A Asus4 A
 And howl your revels to heaven above
 Em Em G
 Till we can't stand up any longer
 G A
 We'll be gone by and by

Which is why...

 Bm Bm G A
 I traverse through England and Scotland and Wales
 Bm Bm A D A Em
 Returning in valor with riches in bales

Bm Bm G A
You push till your last wind, you never fall short
And you'll bring naught but glory to King Arthur's Court
Bm G A Dsus2

Dsus2 Dsus2 D6sus2 DM9
So raise up your goblet, we'll fill it with wine
A A Asus4 A
You'll find your last drops by the moon's silver shine
Dsus2 Dsus2 D6sus2 DM9
Tell your best tale of valor and love
A A Asus4 A
And howl your revels to heaven above
Em Em G
Till we can't stand up any longer
G A
We have no recourse

And no remorse.
Look at them. So intense. So intent. So busy with everything out there, they don't appreciate what they've got.

Bm Bm G A
I'll live how I want to and never look back
Bm Bm A D A Em
There's nothing to it, I'm on the right track
Bm Bm G A
What do I care for spoils of quests and career
Bm G A Dsus2
When all I could ever want is right here

Dsus2 Dsus2 D6sus2 DM9
So raise up your goblet, we'll fill it with wine
A A Asus4 A
You'll find your last drops by the moon's silver shine
Dsus2 Dsus2 D6sus2 DM9
Tell your best tale of valor and love
A A Asus4 A
And howl your revels to heaven above
Em Em G
Till we can't stand up any longer
G A
There's nothing to say

Excepting Kay...

Bm Bm G A
Who has battled and thwarted monsters out of mind
Bm Bm A D A Em
Himself is a gift to all of mankind
Bm Bm G A
Just recently bested huge giants five

And to no one's surprise, returned ali-

Dsus2	DM9	D6sus2	Asus4
--0-----	0-----	0-----	0-----
--3-----	4-----	6-----	3-----
--2-----	5-----	7-----	2-----
--0-----	0-----	0-----	2-----
-----	-----	-----	0-----
-----	-----	-----	-----

PROLOGUE - A DRINKING SONG

(The stage is set with a large trunk and two long, backless benches. The trunk and the benches will move around the space, representing different scenery. Props and costumes used will come from inside the trunk. The LION enters.)

LION

This world is young. It hasn't fully taken shape. There's still magic in the corners where things haven't quite been figured out. This world is a toddler. Everything is new, strange, and grand. This is King Arthur's England. Knights and castles. Adventure and glory.

Thank you for coming, by the way. Really, thank you. *(To a specific woman in the audience.)*
You in particular, madam. *(To all.)*

This is an old story. I've told it many times. It is not my story, but I was there. When I could be, anyway. I tell this story to still be there. Because I think it's important. To be there. God hasn't left this world yet. He wanders the untamed country — in the mountains and the forests, playing with His creations and helping them along. Wonder is everywhere. Quests, treasure, tournaments, fair ladies, handsome gentlemen in shining armor—
(To the same specific woman as before.) Am I right, madam? *(To all.)*
—and of course, eating, drinking, and making merry.

Ladies and gentlemen, may I present King Arthur's court.

(The LION begins playing a raucous drinking song. Any other actors who can play an instrument - violin, flute, triangle, etc. - are encouraged to add layers to the musicality. Over the course of the song, the actors set the stage for the next scene, breaking out to sing their verses.)

ARTHUR

I'VE GARNERED THE GREATEST AND LOVED THEM ALL DEAR.
WE'VE SHARPENED THE TIP OF CAMELOT'S SPEAR.

GWENEVERE

THEY'RE RAUCOUS AND FILTHY AND SLUR WHEN THEY SING,
BUT I WOULDN'T GO CHANGING IT FOR ANYTHING.

ALL

SO RAISE UP YOUR GOBLET, WE'LL FILL IT WITH WINE.
YOU'LL FIND YOUR LAST DROPS BY THE MOON'S SILVER SHINE.
TELL YOUR BEST TALE OF VALOR AND LOVE
AND HOWL YOUR REVELS TO HEAVEN ABOVE.
TILL WE CAN'T STAND UP ANY LONGER,
WE'LL BE GONE BY AND BY.

GAWAIN

WHICH IS WHY...

I TRAVERSE THROUGH ENGLAND, AND SCOTLAND, AND WALES,
RETURNING IN VALOR WITH RICHES IN BALES.
YOU PUSH TILL YOUR LAST WIND, YOU NEVER FALL SHORT,
AND YOU'LL BRING NAUGHT BUT GLORY TO KING ARTHUR'S COURT.

ALL

SO RAISE UP YOUR GOBLET, WE'LL FILL IT WITH WINE.
YOU'LL FIND YOUR LAST DROPS BY THE MOON'S SILVER SHINE.
TELL YOUR BEST TALE OF VALOR AND LOVE
AND HOWL YOUR REVELS TO HEAVEN ABOVE.
TILL WE CAN'T STAND UP ANY LONGER,
WE HAVE NO RECOURSE.

YVAIN

AND NO REMORSE...

(Vamp or don't underneath a brief interjection from YVAIN.)

Look at them. So intense. So intent. So busy with everything out there, they don't appreciate what they've got.

(YVAIN singing again.)

I'LL LIVE HOW I WANT TO AND NEVER LOOK BACK.
THERE'S NOTHING TO IT, I'M ON THE RIGHT TRACK.
WHAT DO I CARE FOR SPOILS OF QUEST AND CAREER,
WHEN ALL I COULD EVER WANT IS RIGHT HERE?

ALL

SO RAISE UP YOUR GOBLET, WE'LL FILL IT WITH WINE.
YOU'LL FIND YOUR LAST DROPS BY THE MOON'S SILVER SHINE.
TELL YOUR BEST TALE OF VALOR AND LOVE
AND HOWL YOUR REVELS TO HEAVEN ABOVE.
TILL WE CAN'T STAND UP ANY LONGER,
THERE'S NOTHING TO SAY.

KAY

EXCEPTING KAY...

WHO HAS BATTLED AND THWARTED MONSTERS OUT OF MIND.
HIMSELF IS A GIFT TO ALL OF MANKIND.
JUST RECENTLY BESTED HUGE GIANTS FIVE,
AND TO NO ONE'S SURPRISE, RETURNED ALI—

(The LION stops playing as YVAIN cuts him off. Immediate flow into SCENE 1.)

ACT 1

SCENE 1 - KING ARTHUR'S COURT

(All actors assume the scene around the Round Table. ARTHUR, having been an engaged participant in the song, is very drunkenly slumped over the table with his lady GWENEVERE standing behind his seat. YVAIN, GAWAIN, and KAY sit around the table. These are the stragglers after a hell of a dinner. The knights have been drinking for hours and continue to do so.)

YVAIN

Hold the fuck up, you whupped how many giants?

GAWAIN

(RE: Language.) Yvain. Gwenevere.

YVAIN

Sorry, my lady. Chamberpotty mouth.

KAY

Five of the gruesome beasts.

YVAIN

By yourself.

KAY

It may have been four. I rode against them for a lord I met on my travels, as these villainous behemoth's had —

GAWAIN

Four! Or three, or two, or none, perhaps.

KAY

It was *at least* three.

(ARTHUR blows a raspberry.)

GAWAIN

The King is not satisfied with your tales.

KAY

Well you can bite my tail.

YVAIN

With a flash comes the lash of the tongue of the well-hung great Kay! Mayday!

KAY

And you —!

GWENEVERE

Peace, Kay, peace! I wish not to ingest any more of your poison this evening. We know your cup overfloweth, but that does not mean that you must taint ours.

(ARTHUR laughs sloppily and hiccups.)

I do believe my lord Arthur's bedchamber calls his name.

(ARTHUR blows another raspberry, then hiccups again.)

Sings it like a siren, it seems. Gawain, if you would assist me in retiring the King?

YVAIN

Aww, you don't want to hear the climax of Kay's conquest? It's a regular David and Goliath... and Goliath and Goliath and Goliath and —

GAWAIN

The manure will still stink upon my return. One need not sniff at the whole pile to grasp its smell.

GWENEVERE

Come, Gawain, we must retire the tired. Too much revelry does wear a man thin.

(They lift ARTHUR and stumble off toward his bedchambers.)

GAWAIN

Ohhh, my lord compounds by his cups! The revelry certainly did not wear him thin, my lady.

(GAWAIN and GWENEVERE exit with ARTHUR in tow. A few moments of silence.)

YVAIN

Do you wanna keep telling your story? Your audience sits captive.

KAY

Hold your tongue, Yvain. Speak not against me unless you can speak for yourself.

YVAIN

Speak for myself? I mean, I don't have a hand up my ass moving this mouth, so I'm not sure what —

KAY

Here is your fault and your impotence as a knight. You sit idly by and wag your tongue. And what have you accomplished? When I speak of giants, I have seen them. I have stared them down and ridden away bloody and a victor. Your greatest daily victory is over a chamber pot.

YVAIN

I gotta tell you, Kay. That cuts.

KAY

Would words would cut like blades.

YVAIN

Well they would, if I worried about it.

KAY

Yvain, there is no glory without knightly ventures and victory.

YVAIN

I venture victoriously against your mom nightly. And let me tell you, it is glorious—!

(YVAIN is cut off by KAY launching himself across the table at him. The two tussle. CALOGRENANT - played by ARTHUR - enters after having been away a long time. YVAIN and KAY remain locked in combat on the floor. CALOGRENANT attempts to get their attention to no avail. Finally,)

CALOGRENANT

Friends! Must you lock arms against one another? Lock them instead with me in welcome.

(They freeze mid-beating. YVAIN springs up.)

YVAIN

Cal! You're back! How the hell have you been, man? The others just left, hold on. GAWAIN! MY LADY! GAWAAAA—

KAY

Are you mad?! The King has gone to his chambers! Will you wake the sleeping king?

YVAIN

Kay, it would take a straight up act of necromancy.

KAY

True, he was deep in his cups...

GWENEVERE

(Entering with GAWAIN behind her.)

Who calls for me?

(Seeing KAY. Going off like a bottle rocket. YVAIN's line may overlap as he tries to get her attention.)

Sir Kay, you have such an incredible predilection for garish noise and disruptment, I am not entirely sure your mouth can be the origin of anything else. What evil humor stirs you to fling roaring summons with such a vulgar tenor at —

YVAIN

Gwen, love. Uh...my lady. As much as I *love* watching you rip Kay-bay-bay here a new one, and I really really do, I called for you. My cousin, Calogrenant here has just...

GAWAIN

The prodigal son has returned! How has it been with you, Calogrenant?

CALOGRENANT

Less fortunate than I might like. Much less fortunate.

GWENEVERE

What in heaven's name happened?

CALOGRENANT

Nothing in heaven's name, I assure you. Mind's eye has not seen, nor tongue created the trial I have been through. I pray you all to listen duly and understand that, while fantastical, the tale I tell bares nothing but the facts of my encounter. I speak no idleness, nor of dreams, nor of —

YVAIN

Can we skip the prologue?

CALOGRENANT

I was traversing the countryside in search of some adventure. I came upon a beast of a man in a field, tending to a herd of bulls. The behemoth was thrice as big as you or I, and ten times as ugly.

(They lean in, thinking this is the antagonist.)

At my approach he started and stood, towering above and casting a shadow to block out a mountain.

(Leaning in more.)

I knew not if he meant to strike, but was prepared for the worst.

(They're sure of it.)

I spoke out to him.

(All groan and sit back.)

“Come now, I know not whether thou art a beast or a man,” I said to him. “I am a man,” he replied. “What manner of man?” “The manner you see before you; I am by no means otherwise.”

YVAIN

He said, she said, what’s Andre the Giant got to do with anything?

CALOGRENANT

The bull-tender told me of adventure to be had. He gave word of a path thereabouts that would lead me into the Forest of Brocéliande, a home to things not familiar to this Earth. On this path I would find a magic spring by a chapel. If I were to take up some water from the spring and spill it upon a stone at the bank, such a storm would arise as would drive every beast from that wood. Not deer, boar, bird...

YVAIN

...lion, tiger, bear, oh my.

CALOGRENANT

...should remain. Thereafter, one monstrous protector of the spring should be summoned. Intrigued by this magic, I left the man and traveled directly to this place he described. I followed the instructions given and straightway heaven itself seemed to be torn asunder. Lightening blinded. Rain fell like I had never felt. Hail hurled so hard it were to dent my armor. When it finally abated, I thanked God, rejoicing that I had survived the horrific storm. I was too quick to thankfulness, however, for I then heard sound of a knight approaching.

KAY

Finally! The crux of the matter!

GWENEVERE

Hold your tongue or I shall hold it for you.

YVAIN

Kinky.

CALOGRENANT

I mounted my steed as this knight flew towards me and hurled a challenge. “Vassal, this storm you have conjured has damaged the domain I am charged to protect. Evidence of your treachery is all hereabouts. You shall pay for the harm you have caused to what is mine.—

YVAIN

He talks a lot for a man charging you on a horse.

CALOGRENANT

—Now, as a result of your actions, there shall be no peace between us!” At this, we locked arms. To my benefit, I will say his horse was stronger than mine and he was doubtless head and shoulders above me.

KAY

Any excuse to save your face from shame!

CALOGRENANT

I offer only the facts to...yes, reduce my shame if it be possible. I come not pretending to be the victor. Thereafter my story is evident. I was thrashed, and in this state I return to you — a broken and defeated man.

YVAIN

Wow. Shit, man.

(Beat.)

What, nobody’s got anything to say? Cal gets stung and all of a sudden cat’s got your tongue? No way. This asshole’s got a date with St. Peter...

KAY

Calogrenant, your story has stirred his humors. He is so full of wine it fills him full of words. Tell me, my liege, shall I ready your horse? Are your irons prepared and polished? In God’s name, Yvain, start you tonight or tomorrow on this quest?

GWENEVERE

The devil, Sir Kay! Truly, your tongue must hate you as well, for it only knows the bad in men.

KAY

Believe you that Arthur will grant you leave to venture to this forest alone? Simply wave you off as you trot out to this blindly vengeful duel - which can only end poorly.

GAWAIN

If you might allow your humors to settle, Yvain, Kay has a point in this matter. The King would see these marvels with his own eyes, I am sure.

GWENEVERE

In sooth, good Yvain. I admire your loyalty by your cousin, but my lord will doubtless assemble an entourage to go forth to the spring.

KAY

And I am certain that with the arrival of this insidious challenger, the King will wisely select his most excellent knight to do battle.

YVAIN

And who might that be?

(Flow into the next scene.)

SCENE 2 - THE FOREST OF BROCELIANDE

(Through the narration, YVAIN outfits himself with his affects to go adventuring from the trunk. The other actors set what props need setting, creating the world as YVAIN journeys through it. The LION ought to underscore these transitions. When the narration ends, the scene solidifies in the forest.)

LION

Yvain isn't interested in one of the others avenging his cousin.

NARRATOR KAY

He knows that, were Kay but to whisper his desire to Arthur, the duel would be granted to him.

NARRATOR GAWAIN

Or else were Gawain to ask first, he may secure it.

NARRATOR KAY

But it would certainly not fall to Yvain amongst such knights.

NARRATOR GWENEVERE

Kay's malicious tongue stokes ambitious fires in the brain of Yvain.

NARRATOR KAY

Here is your fault and your impotence as a knight...

NARRATOR ARTHUR

You sit idly by and wag your tongue...

NARRATOR GAWAIN

...And what have you accomplished?

(The fragments repeat cacophonously.)

NARRATOR KAY

...your impotence as a knight...impotence...your fault...your impotence as a knight...your fault...

NARRATOR ARTHUR

...You sit idly by...sit idly by...idly...sit idly by...idly by...

NARRATOR GAWAIN

...what have you accomplished...what have you...what...accomplished...

YVAIN

ENOUGH!

NARRATOR GWENEVERE

Yvain steals away in the night.

NARRATOR GAWAIN

He encounters no one.

NARRATOR ARTHUR

Desiring no company, driven to reach the spring before the others, he sets out with determined purpose to either return avenged -

NARRATOR KAY

- or in humiliation.

LION

But we'll get there.

NARRATOR GAWAIN

He travels long, over mountains and through valleys, past dangers and strange country.

LION

To the magic corners.

NARRATOR KAY

He finds the bull-tender, who directs him to the spring in the Forest of Brocéliande.

(This may simply be an actor standing on the trunk.)

NARRATOR GAWAIN

And upon his arrival at the spring, Yvain wastes no time in —

*(By the time YVAIN speaks, the forest and the spring are solidified in the scene.
YVAIN has scooped up water from the spring.)*

YVAIN

I hope you're thirsty!

(He almost dumps the water on the stone.)

No, wait. Hate to storm in like this!

(He almost dumps the water on the stone.)

Oh, OH! What's the King's favorite weather? HAIL!

(He dumps the water on the stone. The world shatters. Lights, rain sticks, pounding on the trunk for thunder, "offstage" actors blowing in the breeze, anything and everything. The storm is unforgivably, chaotically bonkers. After a moment, it fades away, leaving YVAIN huddled on the ground. ESCLADOS - played by GAWAIN - enters in a fury.)

ESCLADOS

I am the lord and keeper of this magic place.
Any so bold to disturb the spring, I must face.
In my own domain you attack me, foolish knight,
And now you shall pay for this unprovokéd spite.

YVAIN

Unprovoked? You kicked my cousin's ass!

ESCLADOS

I am charged to protect what is mine.

YVAIN

You and me both, brother.

(They fight. Use real swords, foam swords, dowel rods, their fists, whatever. The fight should be gripping. Impressive. Real. YVAIN should almost lose, regain himself, and mortally wound ESCLADOS. ESCLADOS exits.)

YVAIN

GET BACK HERE. I WANNA SEE WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE WHEN A BITCH DIES.

(YVAIN chases after.)