

THE SWORD IN THE STONE

[version 6]

by

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CHARACTERS

Merlin
Actor 1
Actor 2
Actor 3
Actor 4
Actor 5
Uther
Igrayne
Herald
Arthur
Kay
Ector
Morgan
Urien
Messenger
Dragon
Thomas
Malory

SUGGESTED MINIMUM CAST BREAKDOWN

Male 1 — Merlin
Male 2 — Actor 1, Arthur
Male 3 — Actor 2, Uther, Kay, Urien
Female 1 — Actor 3, Morgan
Female 2 — Actor 4, Igrayne, Ector, Malory
Female 3 — Actor 5, Herald, Messenger, Dragon, Thomas

NOTES

With a larger cast, filling out crowd scenes with townspeople could be useful.

The Dragon may be portrayed by multiple people. The play is tracked so that with the minimum cast, Actor 2 and Actor 4 should also be able to comprise the Dragon.

The Actors' lines are written for the suggested minimum cast, but may be divided among however many the director sees fit.

(Lights are down.)

MERLIN

Poof.

(Lights up. MERLIN is onstage, examining a sword stuck in a stone.)

“Whoso pulleth out this sword of this stone is rightways King born of all England.”

UTHER

(From off.) Find him, Merlin.

MERLIN

Uther? Is that—Uther?

(UTHER enters. The other ACTORS filter onstage after.)

But you’re dead. Why have you come?

UTHER

It is time, Merlin.

MERLIN

Time?

UTHER

England needs a king. It is time. And here we are.

ACTORS

Camelot.

ACTOR 3

Society.

ACTOR 1

Beauty.

ACTOR 4

Riches.

ACTORS

Camelot, capital city of England.

UTHER

England is without a king. The crown is empty, and has been for—

UTHER/MERLIN/ACTORS

Thirteen years.

UTHER

Since the last king and queen passed.

ACTORS

Thirteen years ago.

UTHER

Me—

MERLIN

—Uther—

UTHER

—and my wife—

ACTOR 4

—Igrayne.

(ACTOR 4 becomes IGRAYNE.)

ACTORS

The last King and Queen of England.

MERLIN

Thirteen years ago.

UTHER

Igrayne had a daughter from a previous marriage.

ACTORS

Morgan.

(ACTOR 3 steps forward as MORGAN.)

UTHER

And Igrayne and I had a son together.

ACTORS

Arthur.

(ACTOR 1 hands UTHHER a bundle of fabric — a swaddled infant.)

UTHER

Igrayne died bearing Arthur into this world.

(IGRAYNE walks away from UATHER.)

MERLIN

You were wracked with grief. Your heart began to fail. You knew you did not have long, and feared for your children's safety. You sent them away.

IGRAYNE

My daughter.

ACTORS

Morgan.

UATHER

The King of the Northlands asked for her hand in marriage.

ACTOR 1

Mountains.

ACTOR 4

Waste.

ACTOR 5

And a fearsome, fire-breathing dragon.

MERLIN

The Northlands.

UATHER

So I sent her to Carlisle—

ACTORS

Carlisle, capital city of the Northlands.

UATHER

—to be married to the King of that land.

MERLIN

To King Urien.

UATHER

I had to.

Then, my son.

ACTORS

Arthur.

MERLIN

You tasked me, your advisor, with finding the newborn a family in England—

(UTHER hands the fabric to MERLIN.)

ACTORS

—in Camelot—

MERLIN

—where the boy could come of age in peace.

(MERLIN hands the fabric off to ACTOR 1.)

You gave me one other task.

UTHER

Protect the crown. Let no one wear it until my son is ready to be king. Protect the crown.

MERLIN

So I placed a sword in a stone with a simple message.

MERLIN/UTHER/ACTORS

Whoso pulleth out this sword of this stone is rightways King born of all England.

MERLIN

And by this test, the crown is protected.

UTHER

Over the years—

ACTORS

Thirteen years.

UTHER

—many have tried and many have failed.

(ACTORS 2, 4, and 5 pull at the sword. It does not budge.)

And now, every year, people from all over England flock to Camelot to try their strength against one another for the chance to draw the sword from the stone, for the chance to wear the crown, for the chance to become the next king of England. For this chance, they compete in the Tournament of Camelot.

MERLIN

I know these things, Uther. Why are you here?

UTHER

Because now, now my boy is thirteen. Arthur has grown, Merlin. He is of age. It is finally time for a king. Time for a crown. Time for the tournament.

(ACTOR 5 becomes the HERALD.)

HERALD

Tournament. Time for the Tournament. It's time for the Tournament! The Tournament of Camelot! It's time for the Tournament!

(All spring into action, readying for the Tournament. Shift to ARTHUR and KAY at the Tournament.)

ARTHUR

I wish every day was the Tournament.

KAY

Every day is a tournament when you're a knight.

(KAY assumes a knightly pose.)

I, a knight, am the bone of my blade, so by its deeds my worth is made.

ARTHUR

You're not a knight, Kay. Nobody can be made a knight without a king or queen to do it.

KAY

Well I am finally old enough to compete in the tournament.

ARTHUR

We're the same age.

KAY

I'm older.

ARTHUR

By a few days!

KAY

Still older, so I get to compete.

ARTHUR

I don't see why—

KAY

And knight or not, I have practiced and practiced for this day and my worth will show through my—

(KAY realizes something.)

Arty, I've forgotten my sword.

ARTHUR

How did you forget your sword?

KAY

I left it at home and now I need it. Go fetch it for me.

ARTHUR

Why do I have to fetch it? You're the one who forgot it.

KAY

Because I am competing today which means I need to stay here preparing—

ARTHUR

Preparing? You're just watching the Tournament!

KAY

I'm studying.

ARTHUR

It's not going to help.

KAY

Would you just fetch my sword, squire?

ARTHUR

Squire?

KAY

I am in the Tournament and you are not. So that's what you are. My assistant. My squire. Go.

(ARTHUR jumps at KAY. The two tussle. From off.)

ECTOR

Kay! Arty!

(ECTOR enters. KAY jumps up. ARTHUR remains on the ground.)

Boys, what is this?

ARTHUR

Kay—!

KAY

Father, I left my sword at home and Arty won't get the lead out to go and fetch it.

ECTOR

Arty, would you please fetch your brother's sword?

ARTHUR

But I want to—

ECTOR

Arty, I will not ask again. Go.

ARTHUR

Fine.

*(ARTHUR sets off, tracing a path around the stage. KAY and ECTOR exit.
ARTHUR reaches the sword in the stone and examines it.)*

This is what the whole Tournament is about. All that trouble over this sword.

*(ARTHUR goes to the sword. He grabs it and pulls it out of the stone with ease.
Lights or music may embellish this moment.)*

Oh no. I didn't mean to— It was supposed to be stuck! What do I do? Kay needs a sword. This will have to do.

(ARTHUR runs off as KAY enters from another direction, ECTOR behind him.)

KAY

Where is he?

ECTOR

Give him a moment, son. I am certain Arty will show when he needs to.

KAY

If I get disqualified because of him—

ECTOR

Was it Arty who left your sword at home?

KAY

No, but still—

(ARTHUR runs on with the sword. He extends the sword to KAY.)

Finally! I thought you'd gotten lost.

(KAY takes the sword.)

Did you get lost? This isn't my sword, you idiot! What am I supposed to do with this? I haven't practiced with—

ECTOR

Kay, let me see that.

(ECTOR examines the sword and thrusts it back to KAY.)

Arty, where did you get this?

KAY

I bet he stole it from someone to get out of going all the way home.

ECTOR

Kay.

KAY

I bet that's why he was running.

ECTOR

Kay, —

KAY

Did you steal a sword to get out of your errand, you lazy worm?

ECTOR

Kay, enough! Arty, I need you to tell me where you got this sword.

(ARTHUR points off where he came from. As he does so the HERALD enters.)

HERALD

Master Kay, it is time for you to compete! You must make your way to—

(HERALD sees the sword, screams, and runs off.)

KAY

What's gotten into everyone?

(KAY examines the sword.)

No.

ECTOR

Arty, did you pull the sword from the stone?

(ARTHUR nods as the HERALD enters with MERLIN in tow. ARTHUR hides behind ECTOR.)

HERALD

Look!

MERLIN

My stars and comets. What a special thing to see.

ECTOR

Sir, the boy has done it. He—

MERLIN

Allow me, please, friend.

(MERLIN turns to the HERALD.)

Go. Assemble the town in the courtyard. They would like to hear the news, I am sure.

(HERALD exits. MERLIN turns to KAY, who still has the sword.)

Whose sword is this, young master?

KAY

Mine.

MERLIN

By what means did this sword come to find itself in your possession?

KAY

From the stone.

MERLIN

Exactly, precisely how?

KAY

Well...

MERLIN

I need for you to answer truthfully.

KAY

Well...

MERLIN

A knight's worth is made not only by the deeds of his blade, young master, but by his own as well.

KAY

Fine! My brother was sent home to fetch my sword, but he brought this one instead. But then he gave it to me so now it is mine.

MERLIN

Would you point out your brother for me?

(ARTHUR emerges from behind ECTOR.)

MERLIN

Ah. There you are, Arthur.

ARTHUR

I go by Arty. How did you—?

MERLIN

Arty. What a name. Come. Let us join the rest of the town.

(The HERALD enters, passing in front of the others with his announcement, gathering the town. MERLIN, ARTHUR, KAY, and ECTOR walk a path around the stage to arrive in the courtyard as the HERALD finishes.)

HERALD

Come one, come all! Gather 'round in the courtyard of Camelot! The sword has been pulled. The heir is here. We have waited long. The time is now upon us. Come one, come all to the courtyard of Camelot!

(We now find ourselves in the courtyard. MERLIN stands before the crowd, reading the inscription on the sword.)

MERLIN

“Whoso pulleth out this sword of this stone is rightways King born of all England.” It's written clear as day, my friends. Finally, once again we have a king.

HERALD

What's the king's name?

ARTHUR

Arthur. I go by Arty.

HERALD

What a name. All hail, King Arty!

KAY

What if he's lying! Was anyone else around? You can't just give this worm the crown without any witnesses or anything.

MERLIN

True enough, friend. Let us all bear witness.

(MERLIN replaces the sword in the stone and tugs. The sword holds fast.)

We shall see if the feat can be repeated. Master Kay, would you like first go at the sword?

(KAY rushes to the sword and pulls with all his might. His grip slips and he falls backwards.)

KAY

Not fair!

MERLIN

Completely fair, actually. Sir Ector, perhaps with a little more brawn the sword may budge?

(ECTOR steps up to the sword and struggles. Nothing.)

ECTOR

No use. It's stuck.

MERLIN

Arty, if you would?

(ARTHUR crosses to the sword and pulls it out as easily as before. Lights or music may embellish again.)

All hail, King Arty.

ALL

All hail, King Arty!

ARTHUR

King Arty?

ECTOR

When is the boy to be crowned?

MERLIN

The law has it that Arty must be crowned in one week. So you had all best get ready!

ALL

One week! The king is to be crowned in one week! One week until King Arty's crowning! (*Ad lib.*)

(All but MERLIN and ARTHUR exit. MERLIN grabs ARTHUR's shoulder as he begins to walk off.)

MERLIN

A moment, Arty. If I may be so bold, I would ask a favor of the future king.

ARTHUR

Um...yes?

MERLIN

As you may yourself be aware, you are quite young.

ARTHUR

I'm thirteen.

MERLIN

You are to be King of England, Arty. You can certainly agree that thirteen is a little little for such a task.

ARTHUR

Probably, yeah.

MERLIN

To that point, I offer and would consider it a great honor to take you on as my student for this week before you take the crown.

ARTHUR

Student?

MERLIN

You must learn what it takes to be a great king to this great land.

ARTHUR

Sorry, but who are you?

MERLIN

Have I been so rude? Forgive me. I am Merlin.

ARTHUR

Never heard of it.

MERLIN

I was advisor to Uther, the great king before you. And I would be happy to advise the new king to his crown.

(ECTOR enters.)

ECTOR

Arty?

MERLIN

Think on it. It has been a big big day. Go home. If you wish, tomorrow morning come to my hut on the outskirts of Camelot, due east.

ARTHUR

Alright.

MERLIN

Until then, farewell, King Arty.

(MERLIN exits.)

ARTHUR

King Arty...

(ARTHUR and ECTOR exit as MORGAN and URIEN enter. MORGAN is carrying a baby.)

MORGAN

We have a son now, Urien. Carlisle is no place for our little Yvain. He needs more.

URIEN

I am king of the Northlands, Morgan. In Carlisle, Yvain is the son of the king. What more do you want?

MORGAN

Being son to the king of this miserable place is not enough.

URIEN

Hurtful.

MORGAN

Our son is greater. He is my son.

URIEN

He is also mine.

MORGAN

I am owed more than this life.

URIEN

By who? Who owes you?

MORGAN

England owes me.

URIEN

England?

MORGAN

My mother would not have sent me here, to these mountains and waste. It was—

URIEN

King Uther.

MORGAN

I called that man father. And he sent me away.

URIEN

Morgan...—

MORGAN

I belong in England, in Camelot, in civilization. And Yvain belongs in the court of Camelot, in service of a greater crown.

URIEN

Morgan, nobody wears that crown. Not since Uther died. There is nothing for Yvain to serve.

MORGAN

There is no crown right now, but —

URIEN

He belongs here. The prince of the Northlands belongs in Carlisle.

MORGAN

Urien—

URIEN

Enough. I don't want to hear any more, Morgan. Enough.

(URIEN exits.)

MORGAN

No crown now, but there will be. You will be raised as I should have been, Yvain. I will be queen.

(MORGAN exits as ECTOR enters.)

ECTOR

Welcome home, boys! Welcome to the home of a king! We must celebrate. I'll tell the chef! Arty's favorite, tonight! Chef!

(ECTOR exits as ARTHUR and KAY enter.)

ARTHUR

Really, who gets to be king from taking a stupid old sword from a stupid old stone? King Arty!

KAY

It sounds ridiculous.

ARTHUR

I, a king, am the bone of my blade, so by its deeds my worth is made!

KAY

You can dress a dog up in gold, call it whatever names you like. But it is still a dog.

ARTHUR

You can't talk to me like that anymore. I am going to be king.

KAY

You're no king yet. You're in my father's house.

ARTHUR

Our father's house.

KAY

No, Arty. It's time you knew. You're not my blood.

ARTHUR

What?

KAY

You showed up one day. You were left as a baby on our doorstep.

ARTHUR

That's not true. I'm your brother.

KAY

No. You're not. It is only because of my and my father's mercy that you're even allowed to stay here. That you're allowed to be my little brother and my squire.

ARTHUR

Allowed to be your squire? Allowed to fetch your sword and shine your boots? Well, you can shine your own boots now, Kay. In fact, you can shine my boots.

KAY

What did you say?

ARTHUR

You heard me. Shine my boots, squire. As your king, I command you.

KAY

I'll give something a shine.

(KAY and ARTHUR fight. KAY bests ARTHUR and lands a few too many blows for good measure.)

KAY

King, he says, and can't even stand on his own two feet. Before you brag about your crown, you should make sure it can fit on that big head of yours.

ARTHUR

You'll regret this, Kay.

KAY

I already regret you, Arty.

(KAY exits. ARTHUR gets himself up, goes to follow KAY, pauses, and exits the other direction instead. As ARTHUR exits, a MESSENGER enters from another direction.)