The Poisoned Chalice

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Summary

Nimueh drops a flower petal into the water. She watches Merlin in the water. She pulls out the petal, now transparent, and puts it in a silver goblet "We Gar-Dena in geardagum theodcyninga thrym gefrunon hut tha aethelingas Ellen fremedom! Sythan aerest wearth feasceaft funden. Hyran scold thara, ofer hronrade Camelot, hyran scold. Hyran scolde thara, ofer hronrade Camelot, hyran scolde Merlin."
first steps

The night before, tomorrow was every importing day for Camelot, for Arthur too. Lord Bayard of Mercia was coming to sign a treaty which will put end to the war between the Mercia and Camelot. When the King had explained what was going to happen tomorrow.

When the King left it left Guinevere, Arthur and Morgana sit around the table stun at what Merlin had wanted to do tomorrow. The oldest of the King children yet he will never be the next king, he wants to play manservant to Arthur the younger brother who would be King one day. This was crazy, this could put one son lives in danger but having Merlin close to Arthur while these visitors were here could hurt, but something in her Gut told her that this would get one or both them killed and over the years Guinevere learned to listen to her instinct.

What had Guinevere and Morgana's stun was the fact the Uther, King of Camelot had given his seal of approval to Merlin’s request. Guinevere had to wonder if Merlin knew what he was getting into, Arthur could be an Ass to the servants and she knew her future husband she knew that he would take full advantage of this situation, as a servant Merlin would be treated as one by all not just Arthur.

Arthur has been silent all through the dinner, Merlin and Guinevere kept looking at Arthur, has the two were the only once he had a voice what he wanted to do when he becomes King. He has ever been this quiet, during dinner he would be battering with Morgana or talk of his training, the young Omega Prince was through waves of mix emotions at this around the table.

Guinevere take slip of her wine stated, “you must happy Arthur, tomorrow the treaty between Mercia and Camelot well ensure unity of both Kingdoms and it will be the first steps Camelot take to make possible to same day unit all five Kingdom and bring about peace has you wished to bring to this land when your King” she glads the cross at him.

Arthur voice was soft but commanding, “there still so many ways this could go, there these within Camelot and Mercia that do not want this treaty to be formed”

Merlin stated, “there always going to be those who are greedy for power and some that profit from this war that would want to see this war continue”

Morgana said, “well then we will just have to make sure that this treaty does not fall apart”

Guinevere said, “Morgana is right”

Arthur asked, “how?” it was a word that weighed a ton for such simple a three letter, word.

Morgana said, “you who commands the of the Knight of Camelot, the noblest army the world has ever see, I am sure that you would figure out something” she smiled at Arthur.

Guinevere hide her smile behind her cup, the noblest army, she knew about that when these words were spoken of Camelot Army it was true, She sees with her own two eyes how some men from other Kingdom’s army, men who were born in to nobility that could not be called noble, the attuited of some commoners who were far more noble than any noble-born knights in some kingdom’s she had visited over the years most of the Mercia Knights fell in to the later too. She did not dare to voice this thought to the prince of Camelot, the friends called it night know the next day was going to be a long day.

In the throne room, Uther and his people wait in for the guesses arrival. Uther stands in front with
Arthur and Guinevere stand behind with a Knight on either side of them, Gaius and Gwen and Merlin behind the tow row of Knights with Morgana stand in middle behind Guinevere and Arthur. Bayard and his men arrive in Camelot, they meet Uther and his men in the Throne room.

Uther stated, “Camelot welcomes you, Lord Bayard of Mercia. The treaty we sign today marks an end to war and a beginning to a new friendship between our people.” Uther and Bayard grasp arms. Both parties applaud while Nimueh stares at Merlin.

Merlin passes Gaius in the Upper Corridor while carrying a heavy bag. Merlin first day and a servant he already complaining about it, “Why do I always get landed with the donkey work?”

Gaius pointed out, “You're a servant, Merlin. It's what you do”

Merlin complained, “My arms will be a foot long by the time I get this lot inside.”

Gaius pointed out, “one this was your idea Merlin, and two, It's character building. As the old proverb says, hard work breeds... a harder soul.”

Merlin stated, “You just made that up”

When Gaius denies it Nimueh fakes a fall right in front of Merlin. When she apologetics and Merlin be Merlin he had help, “Let me give you a hand with that.” Merlin crouches down and catches Nimueh's eye. They stand up.

He interduce’s himself to her shaking her hand. The overly beautiful woman named Cara when she asked, “You're Arthur's servant. That must be such an honour”

It took a few minutes to get his head around what she said, how did she know that he was Arthur servant, that only happened last night, even if he helps Arthur out for last few weeks. “Oh, yeah. It is. Well, you know, someone's got to keep the place running” he stated to her, it was the first thing that comes to his head.

He looks down at the pillow he picked up for her, he tells her, “Oh, right. Yeah. Er, no problem.”

Cara said, “It was nice meeting you.” Merlin watches her leave

Gaius tease Merlin asking, “Shouldn't you be busy running the place?” Gaius laughs

Merlin stated, “there something about her that I can’t figure out, and how did she know that I was Arthur Servant? That only happened last night”

Gaius said, “you have been taking on more of the role of Arthur manservant in last few weeks and been overly protective of the Prince, the servants talk about this thing with each other”

Merlin looks down where Cara had gone and he turns to Gaius say, “maybe, but there something about her that gives me creeps and I do not know why?”

Guinevere and Arthur were in his chambers, waiting for Merlin and Gi, the princess was going over some papers at the table and Arthur reading a book. Both of them had been enjoying a quiet afternoon in the chambers, happy to be in each other company.
Only an hour before the feast, Merlin found himself back in Arthur’s chambers. He had thankfully Arthur already told him what he wanted to wear days before and he had hunted it down to find that the jacket had been tucked behind the wardrobe and stank to high heavens. He had washed it three times before he got the stench out.

“Did you polish the buttons? They look a little dull,” Arthur grumbled.

“I have not polished the buttons, but I have a cloth right here,” Merlin replied.

“I’ll polish buttons, you get yourself dressed. I know that you can manage trousers and a shirt by yourself.” Arthur swatted at him, but turned and got dressed. About the time he had finished with the buttons, he had finished dressing. Arthur turned his back to his brother turn personal servant and held his arms back. Merlin slid the jacket up to his shoulders. He turned and he secured the ties at his neck.

Arthur has been a wait for this moment all day, “Alright, now you,” Arthur said with a grin. Merlin eyed him suspiciously.

“What?” he asked the prince.

“You’re going to be wearing the official ceremonial robes of the servants of Camelot,” Arthur replied. He still looked entirely too pleased with himself for Merlin liking. Merlin soon discovered why. He could wear his own trousers and boots, at least, and the tunic was fine-just Pendragon red with the crest on it over his usual shirt. But! There was somewhat disturbing looking short cape and an absolutely horrifying feathered hat.

“That! You can't be serious” Merlin asked his brother.

“If I have to sit through all these boring speeches, I’ll need something to keep myself entertained and thankfully for me, these actually are the traditional robes for a formal event like this.” Arthur was beaming. Merlin was horrified. But somehow, he ended up letting Arthur secure the cloak at his throat and put the feathered monstrosity on his head like he believed him that it was a hat.

Bayard signs the treaty in the Hall of Ceremonies. The feast was not as bad as Arthur had made it sound. Morgana and Guinevere both was at the feast, so Gwen and Gi was attending them so Merlin had someone to chat with,

Thankfully Gi had not reacted to the hat but Gwen chuckles at Merlin's feathered hat, she comments on it saying it was a nice hat. Merlin thanks her and then he catches Cara’s eye and takes off the hat. Gwen notices his gaze.

Gwen asked, “She’s, pretty, isn't she? For a handmaiden, I mean.”

Merlin looked at her and then back at his friend saying, “She’s pretty for a princess, let alone a handmaiden on the outside, however, I don’t know her to tell you if she just a shell or if she really pretty”

Gwen said, “umm…” Uther finishes signing the treaty and grasps arms with Bayard, the crowd applauds and Gwen leaves Merlin.

Bayard stated, “People of Camelot, for a great many years we have been mortal enemies, and the
blood of our men stains the ground from the walls of Camelot to the gates of Mercia. And though we remember those who have died, we must not allow any more to join them.” A serving girl brings in the box with the goblets.

Bayard counited, “As a symbol of our goodwill, and of our newfound friendship, I present these ceremonial goblets to you, Uther, and to your son, Arthur, in the hope that our friendship may last”

Nimueh approaches Merlin with fake anxiety in her voice, “Merlin, I need to speak to you.”

Merlin asked her, “what is it”

Cara’s say, “Not here, please. I don't know who else to tell.” Merlin leaves with Nimueh. Gaius notices.

Corridor Cara and Merlin talk and Merlin asked her to start from the beginning when the handmaiden started to talk about the goblet that was gifted to Arthur by the visiting king. Nimueh who called herself Cara said, “I was bringing Bayard his evening meal and I didn’t knock and we're supposed to and he wasn't expecting me and he was putting something in the goblet…”

Cara looked away, clearly worried. “Oh, I shouldn’t say. If he knows I said anything, he’ll kill me.”

“Just tell me. You have nothing to fear from Bayard.” Merlin told her.

“He said something about if Arthur was dead that Uther’s spirit would be broken and Camelot would fall,” Cara replied. Merlin knew there was something not quite right about the whole conversation, but there was only one fact that mattered.

“Arthur’s goblet, is it poisoned?” he asked.

“Yes,” Cara nodded. That was the truth. Merlin ran back into the hall and Merlin runs back to the Hall of Ceremonies and Nimueh smirks.

They were toasting and Guinevere had Arthurs goblet, the poisoned goblet, raised to her lips. It was as though Merlin’s heart stopped.

“Stop!” Merlin screeched. “It’s poisoned, don’t drink it.”

“What?” the King demanded.

“Merlin, what are you doing?” Arthur asked, full of concern.

“The goblet’s been laced with poison by someone. You’ll die if you drink it.” Merlin stated. Merlin runs up to Guinevere and takes Arthur’s goblet.

“Merlin, think this through,” Arthur urged. “You’re accusing him of trying to poison me.”

“No. I didn’t say King Bayard did it. I said the goblet was poisoned.”

“Pass me the goblet,” the King ordered. Arthur gave it to him. “If what you say is true, you have nothing to fear.” Bayard sheathed his sword and reached for the goblet. The King shook his head. “But if it is true I want the pleasure of killing you myself. He’ll drink it.”

“But if it has been poisoned, he’ll die,” Arthur protested, grabbing at Merlin’s arm and pulling him closer.

“Then he was telling the truth,” the King replied easily. Merlin shivered.
“And if the boy lives, as the goblet is not poisoned?” Bayard asked.

“Then you may punish him as you see fit.” Merlin did not even react. He knew that it was poisoned. Whatever had really happened to make it poisoned, that was the one thing he was certain of.

“Merlin, apologize,” Arthur ordered. He shook his head. “This is a mistake. I’ll drink it.”

“No! I’ll drink it.” Merlin took the goblet from the King. Merlin toasts to Bayard, Arthur and Guinevere, then drinks as Nimueh watches with glee. Guinevere takes a few steps forward in her anxiety Merlin swallowed all of it down. He knew that everyone was moving around them. Gaius had said something in protest. Morgana, easily distinguishable from everyone else in her jewel bright gown, was much closer. At first, he felt fine. His head hurt a little but nothing more. Had the whole thing been a trick? But why? Then he felt it take effect. His heart seized and he reached out for Arthur, whose face went ashen.

“Merlin!” he screamed, reaching out to catch him. Everything went dark.

Arthur somehow caught Merlin and eased him slowly down to the ground. Everyone was crowding close, but thankfully their attention was on Merlin, not his trembling hands.

“Guards! Seize them!” their Father ordered. Arthur barely noticed. Merlin had come to warn them, to save his life, and now he was dying. Arthur crouches over Merlin. Nimueh leaves. Gaius and Guinevere long with Arthur crouch over “Merlin. Merlin. Can you hear me? We have to get him back to my chambers. Bring the goblet. I need to identify the poison. Arthur picks up Merlin and Princess grabs the goblet.” Arthur managed to gather Merlin into his arms. The boy was too light, as though he was no heavier than some feathered pillows and Guinevere grabs the goblet and followed the old man and Arthur.
Arthur, once they finally reached Gaius’ chambers, Gaius and Guinevere followed, the old man stated, “Lay him on the bed quickly; he's struggling to breathe.” Arthur laid Merlin on the bed and Guinevere fetched some water and a towel.

Arthur asked, “Is he going to be alright?” his voice strong for this who did not know him well would have thought he was not worried has he first been when he saw his brother blackout and fall. But he was the future King and such he had learned to hide his emotions.

Gaius stated, “He's burning up.”

That was not an answer. Gwen tried to demand a response as well. Guinevere asked, “You can cure him, can't you Gaius?” she tries to cool Merlin down with a wet cloth.

Gaius stated, “I won't know until I can identify the poison. Pass me the goblet.”

Guinevere passed it over to him. Arthur felt frozen with helplessness as Gaius examined the goblet. “Ah. There's something stuck on the inside.” The old stated.

Arthur asked what it was and the old stated, “It looks like a flower petal of some kind.”

Guinevere tends to Merlin trying to keep him cool to help with his fear, while Gaius pulls out a book.

But then Gaius was telling him exactly what the poison was and what the antidote must be and where it was. “Ah. The petal comes from the Mortaeus flower. It says here that someone poisoned by the Mortaeus can only be saved by a potion made from the leaf of the very same flower. It can only be found in the caves deep beneath the Forest of Balor. The flower grows on the roots of the Mortaeus tree.”

Arthur looked at the book Gaius had and see there was a creature of some sort on the same page. He pointed to it and stated, “That's not particularly friendly.”

Gaius said, “A Cockatrice. It guards the forest. Its venom is potent. A single drop would mean certain death. Few who have crossed the Mountains of Isgaard in search of the Mortaeus flower have made it back alive.”

Arthur read little about the creature, Cockatrice is large, vicious, lizard-like creatures that are known to prowl the Forest of Balor. A Cockatrice is a creature with the legs of a dragon and the head of an Allosaurus. It is said that its’ guards the forest. Its venom is potent. A single drop would mean certain death. According to history the only way to kill it to cut his artery in the neck while cutting through the spine to paralyzed it and it will bleed to death. Some Cockatrice is also able to fly with the set of wings on its back and like the head of Medusa, the word Cockatrice comes from the word Cocatris, which means tracker.

Arthur stated, “Sounds like fun”

“Arthur, it’s too dangerous,” Gaius protested.

“If I don’t go, what happens to Merlin?” Arthur countered.

Gaius answered reluctantly. “The Mortaeus induces a slow and painful death. He may hold out for four, maybe five days, but not for much longer. Eventually, he will die.” Arthur nodded, turned and
left. He would ride out to the Forest of Balor and get the flower. For Merlin.

Of course, his father was less agreeable. He insisted that Arthur could not risk his life for a boy. He forbade him to leave. Arthur returned to his room, bitterly, to decide if he was letting Merlin die or defying his father for his brother. He understood that the kingdom must have an heir, that anything happening to him would put the whole kingdom in turmoil. But Merlin was the only reason Arthur had not drunk the poison himself and Merlin was his brother. Why could they not save him?

Morgana strode in and Arthur knew what his decision was.

“I’m going, Morgana,” he promised. A genuine smile lit up her face.

“Good. Come back safe.” She stated at the young prince.
CAVES OF BALOR

Arthur rides across the drawbridge “Halt!” yell at him but that Arthur rides past the guards out of Camelot. Morgana word in his head has he take the horse and ride out of the castle at full speed. What kind of king would Camelot want? One that would risk his life to save that of a lowly commoner? Or one who does what his father tells him to? Sometimes you've got to do what you think is right and damn the consequences.

Arthur rode hard and fast towards the Forest of Balor, not stopping for more than a few moments together. Arthur rides on his horse through the countryside, soon he approaches a large forest. Arthur rides through the mountains. Gaius had said that Merlin only had a handful of days left. He eventually found the forest and ended up walking his exhausted horse.

Should he not return there be great consequences not only for the hold kingdom but also the king would lose both his sons in one night. Arthur had no idea that it was about getting every dangerous. Nimueh watches him from her stone basin. She pulls up her hood and leaves.

Back in the castle in the medical chambers While Gaius and Guinevere attended to Merlin, Uther and Morgana were have a talk about the Arthur and his needed to disobeyed him or in this case it was mix bag of emotion for the king, pour fear of losing both his boys, he knew that if this was not the work of the visiting king doing than it had to be magic user and it was unlikely that they would have been around up with the visitors.

Uther stated, “I expressly ordered Arthur not to go!”

Morgana replied, “I'd say it worked like a charm, too.”

Uther said, “I should've put him under lock and key.”

Morgana said, “You can't chain him up every time he disagrees with you.”

Uther stated, “Just you watch me! I will not be disobeyed! Especially by my own son!”

Morgana pointed out, “Arthur's old enough to make decisions for himself.”

Uther stated, “He's just a boy.”

Morgana point out, “Have you seen your son recently? You have to let him make his own mind up.”

Uther stated, “Even if it means letting him go to his death?” King leaves the Medical chambers.


Gi said, “my lady the young handmaiden Cara that you asked me to find…”

Gaius said, “Let me guess, she wasn't there.”

Gwen stated, “No one has seen her since the banquet. Who is she?”

Guinevere asked Gaius, “Not who she claims to be? but you know, don't you?”

Gaius said, “Cara. Though, that's not her name. Not her real name, anyway.”

Gi asked, “Then who is she?”
Gaius said, “A powerful sorceress.”

Gwen said, “Well, we should tell the king. Maybe he could send riders out after her.”

Gaius said, “No, she'll be long gone. It's impossible to know where, though. Oh, no.” both Gaius and Guinevere face showed fear, not for Merlin but for Arthur.

Morgana asked, “What?”

Guinevere said, “She knows the only place an antidote can be found in the Forest of Balor. Arthur could be walking into a trap.” Her voice was low and full of fear for her mate.

Then she hears Merlin call out for Arthur and she stated, “there no point all of us losing sleep tonight. Gwen place sees to your mistress first then you may come back if ya wish. She smiled at both ladies, she knew what would happen next and Morgana and Gwen did not need to be here for it. Gaius and Guinevere both do their best to keep others finding out about who Merlin truly is... that would mean keep Gwen, Gi and Morgana way from Merlin while he did whatever he did to help Arthur who was clearly in some kind of trouble.

Forest of Balor, Arthur leads his horse through the forest. The Cockatrice hides under a fallen tree. Arthur leads his horse through the forest. He hears Nimueh's fake crying. And approaches her as she sits on a fallen log with fake bruises.

Arthur asked, “Hello? Are you alright?” The Cockatrice roars behind him. A young woman in the forest and just as he was trying to ask after her well-being, the cockatrice Gaius had warned him about the attack. Nimueh smiles as Arthur faces the beast. The Cockatrice lunges, Arthur rolls under it as it jumps, then throws his sword, killing it. Nimueh grimaces, she had not anapaite for that to happen she had been sure that Arthur would die by the Cockatrice doing. Arthur looks at her and she gets up and backs away in pretend fear.

He turned and the girl was backing away from him. “It's alright. I'm not going to hurt you. Who did that to you?” he asked her.

Arthur let himself be distracted for a moment. The girl was bruised and said, “My master. I ran away from him, but then I got lost. Please don't leave me.”

The high Priestess Nimueh asked, “you can take me away from here?”

Arthur replied, “Not yet. There's something I have to do first.” Arthur looks at the cave mouth

This beautiful girl had asked him why came to the cave, and when Arthur told her that he was looking for something that only grown in the cave. She immediately says “The Mortaeus flower? I know where they are. I'll show you.” Arthur is distracted for a moment in the joy of the fact girl would help him find the flower that he does not question that fact how the girl would know the area and yet get lost.

Arthur and Nimueh enter the cave with torches, she takes Arthur to the flowers and points them out, “There they are.”

The flowers are on the across a large gap with a narrow ledge and long drop. Arthur looks down it a long way down and could see the bottom of the fall, it was too dark. Arthur first concern was the girl not for himself. He tells her, “Keep back from the edge. Don't worry. We'll be out of here soon.”

Nimueh cast a spell, “Eorthe, lyft, fyr, waeter, hiersumie me. Eorthe ac stanas hiersumie me. Ic can stanas tobyran, hiersumie me.” The cave begins to shake and Arthur drops his torch as the rock falls
out beneath him. He jumps for the opposite ledge and catches it with his hand.

Arthur asked, “Who are you?!” the only answer the lady give is that her face will be the last face he ever sees. But they have a visitor, a giant spider shows up, Arthur edges away from the spider, draws his sword and kills the spider while dangling from the ledge.

Nimueh said, “Very good. But he won't be the last. I'll let his friends finish you off, Arthur Pendragon. It's not your destiny to die at my hand.” She leaves with the torch, leaving Arthur dangling from the ledge in the dark.

Of course, everything could not go smoothly. Arthur could not die here, not even managing to save Merlin. This could not be how it ended. Suddenly there was a blue-white glowing orb above his head, illuminating the ledge.

“Come on, then! What are you waiting for?! Finish me off!” Arthur screamed at it, frustrated. But the light did not seem to be menacing. Rather it started to move up, lighting the way for him to climb back to the surface. But Arthur spotted the flowers and ignored the light and the spiders crawling towards him in favour of getting what he had come for. Arthur moved as far towards it as he could and stretched to his full length, finally managing to snag the flower on the third pass. He tucked it in the pouch at his waist and then followed the light up.

As he climbed, just barely ahead of the spiders, his sword fell into the dark abyss below him. There was no time to mourn the loss or worry about how he would protect himself on the journey home. He just had to climb. The light stayed always at the perfect angle above him to illuminate the next handhold as he raced up to the top. By God’s mercy, he came up to an actual opening to the sky at the top of the sheer cliffside. Arthur managed to stumble back to his horse and rode back for Camelot. Though he was exhausted, it was already night again and his horse was well-rested. Arthur rode nearly straight through back to the castle.
Guards spot Arthur from the battlements Gregory stated “Inform the King! Arthur has returned to Camelot!” Arthur rides up to the drawbridge gate.

Guards block his way, Arthur demanded, “What are you doing? Let me pass”

Gregory stated, “I'm sorry, Sire. You're under arrest, by order of the King.”

His father had ordered him arrested. Arthur was too exhausted to fight and he had lost his sword. He let them drag him down to the dungeons, shocked and dismayed. How could he give Gaius the flower to make the antidote from the dungeons? He had not survived a cockatrice, a sorceress and all those spiders just to lose Merlin because he was not free to move around the castle.

Dammit and the king comes to see him and Arthur could not tell why the king is angry, was Uther angry for disobeyed him or fearful of that the fact Arthur would have been killed.

“You disobeyed me,” his Father was furious.

“A man’s life was at stake!” Arthur protested. “Do not let Merlin die because of something I did. He’s saved my life twice now.”

“He’s only a servant.” Clearly, his father was in no mood to see sense.

“He knew the danger in drinking from that goblet and if he hadn’t come rushing in, it would have been me on the floor. He saved my life!” His father turned in irritation. “There’s more, Father. There was a woman waiting for me where the flowers were. She was a sorceress. I do not think it was Bayard who tried to poison me.”

“Of course, it was,” his Father snapped.

“Please, Gaius knows what to do with it,” Arthur begged, offering the flower to his father. To his surprise and relief, his father took it. “Do whatever you want to me, just make sure it gets to him.” His father crushed the flower in his hand and let it fall to the ground. Arthur felt himself scream but he was too horrified to even register it.

“You have to learn there are a right way and a wrong way of doing things,” his Father warned. “I’ll see you’re let out in a week and you can find yourself another servant.”

“This is the second time this man saved my life and his blood is on your hands!” Arthur screamed at his Father’s retreating back.

This was not noble. This was wrong. Arthur sat down at the door to the cell, reaching for the flower. His arm was not quite long enough. Arthur twisted, forcing his shoulder through the gap between the bars. He must reach it. He eventually managed to get the tip of his finger to just reach the flower and carefully pulled it back within reach. He grabbed the flower and wrenched his shoulder, even trying carefully to get himself unstuck from the bars. Arthur paced and shouted at the guards and eventually ended up sitting morosely with his back against the stone wall. This was all his fault. He should never have let Merlin drink the wine for him. His father would have spared nothing to get the antidote for him but not for Merlin who was also his son even if he was not a noble born he was still a Pendragon by blood.

“You have my apologies,” Bayard’s voice came from a few cells down. “I was clearly not careful
enough with my belongings.”

“She was a powerful sorceress. I was lucky to escape from her with my life,” Arthur told him. “I’ve no doubt you did as much to safeguard the goblets as possible. There is little that can be done to safeguard against sorcery.”

“I suppose I may as well offer my condolences for your servant now. He was clearly very loyal to you.”

“Morgana may yet come down,” Arthur replied, mostly to himself.

“Father is more lenient with her.” There was silence from Bayard. Arthur knew he had tipped his hand in regards to Merlin, but he had done that days ago, insisting Merlin not drink it, catching Merlin when he fell, carrying him to the physician’s chambers himself, riding out to get the antidote. Arthur wanted to cry, but he had to have hope that someone would come down and take the flower to Gaius for Merlin.

Physician’s chamber Guinevere and Gaius are seeing to Merlin both sign when they notice the blue ball in Merlin’s hand vanish, for two reasons one was to know that Arthur was staff and other for Gwen could return any moment to her first love but it would not be her last. Guinevere knew that Gwen future was not with Merlin but it lay with other however the princess never speak of this the servant girl must find her own way in life just as everyone else in this world.

Gwen came running in tell them that Arthur was taken to the dungeons, by order of the King and no one is permitted to see the prince. Guinevere stated, “He hasn't got much longer. Has Arthur got the flower?”

Gaius said, “Only the leaf of the Mortaeus flower can save him.”

Guinevere said, “Uther won't allow anyone to see him especially me and we have to find out if Arthur has it.”

Gwen said, “I could sneak into the dungeon.”

Gaius said, “That would be very dangerous.”

Gwen stated, “I've got to. Merlin will die if I don't.” Merlin struggles to breathe.

Gaius said, “be careful”

Guinevere said, “take some food with you, the prince has not eaten for days he must be famished”

Gwen said, “good idea I will be right back”

Gwen walks down the Wrought Iron Stairway with a plate of food and approaches a guard in the dungeons.

Gwen stated, “Food for the prisoner” Guard unlocks the door for her.

Finally, Gwen came down with food. Arthur pretended not to have any notice of her, but she was very fond of Merlin, perhaps even fancied him.

Arthur said, “Set it down over there.” She puts it down on a small table and takes a step back. Arthur gets up and goes to the table.

Arthur thanks her and goes to the food and says, “Wait a minute” He tucked the flower in amongst
the food and then turned up his nose at it.

Arthur adds, “I couldn't possibly eat this, it's disgusting. The state its in, I'm not sure it's fit for anyone.” Gwen goes back to pick up the plate and smiles when she sees the flower on the plate. she leaves the cell. Even if no more food came, at least Gwen had the flower Arthur only hope that it is in time.

“Someone came for the flower?” Bayard asked.

“Yes,” Arthur answered. “I just hope it’s in time.”

“Have faith, boy,” he urged.

He added, “Your servant will be fine.” Arthur almost told the visiting king that Merlin was more than his servant that he was his brother but all he could do was nodded his head, he had to believe it, what Bayard told him, but he would worry until he had Merlin before him, hale and hearty once more.

Gwen see the other servant come down the with food she knew that she did not have much time to get out other she just made it to the stairs when she hears a dungeon guard yell, “Stay where you are!” Gwen grabs the flower before dropping the plate and dashes up the stairs, running all the way to Gaius Medical chambers.

Gwen runs in asking, “how is he?”

Gaius said, “Have you got the Mortaeus?”

Guinevere said, “His breathing's much worse. We have to hurry.”

Gwen sits down next to Merlin's sickbed as Gaius begins crushing the flower leaf and he stopped.

Guinevere asked, “Why have you stopped?” she knew that Merlin only had a matter of minutes left. She had seen the warrior loss the three lefts on a battlefield and so she knew what the last moments of the ding look and sound like and Merlin was there now.

Gaius said, “The poison was created using magic. We may need magic to make an antidote.”

Gwen was the first to speak up, “But we can't. It's forbidden. Even if we could.”

Gaius replied, “I'll try and make it work without it. Oh, I need some fresh water.”

Guinevere looked at him she knew better, she knew that without magic in the antidote would be useless. When Gwen volunteer to get some fresh water, she gives Gaius a look says good thinking old man.

He hands her a bowl and she runs off. Gaius lifts the bowl he's holding and start to cast a spell “Sythan” and stop, it be twenty years, he did not know if he could do it but he knew that he had to because if he did he would not be able to look his sister in eyes again if he let her little boy die.

Gaius stops and looks around, nervous to be practising magic again, Guinevere stated, “you got this Gaius”

Gaius hole the bowl in both his hands again and cast the spell, “Sythan arrest wealth feasceaf funden. Denum æfter dome. Dreamleas gebad he gewinne longsum.”

The potion sizzles and foams for a moment. Gwen runs back in and hands him the bowl of water before rushing back to Merlin's side. Gaius pours the potion into a small cup and goes to Merlin,
Guinevere tells Gwen “Hold his nose.” Gwen pinches Merlin's nose they all watch Merlin open his mouth to breath and Gaius pours the potion into Merlin's mouth.


Guinevere first to point it out, “He's stopped breathing. What's happening? Gaius?”

Gaius puts his head to Merlin's chest, Gaius said, “His heart has stopped.”

Gwen blamed herself, “It's my fault. If I'd have got here sooner. If I'd have been quicker.”

Guinevere stated, “He can't be. He can't be. It was his destiny to protected Arthur”

Gwen gets up and cries in Gaius's arms, the two of them start to blame themselves Gaius said, “No, no. It was me. I should've looked after him better. It's my fault.”

Guinevere pray to the goddess not to let her own child die here and now, that he had to live to see his destiny through to see Arthur become King and being not only magic back to his land but to help her to bring the mortals back to god too.

Somehow Merlin knew that some time had passed, a light suddenly appeared in front of her, a woman standing before her.

“Go back, little one,” she whispered, a maiden, a mother, a crone, all standing in the same spot. “You still have much to do.”

Merlin opened her eyes, to see Gaius tightly embracing Gwen. “That's disgusting. You should be ashamed of yourself. You're old enough to be her grandfather.” They both turned to face her.

“Merlin, you’re alive,” Gaius smiled.

“No, I’m the ghost come back to haunt you,” Merlin retorted.

Suddenly, Gwen swooped down and there were warm, salt-wet lips pressed against his own. Merlin did not respond, too shocked. After a moment, Gwen let go of his face and sat back. “Sorry, I'm just...I thought you were dead.”

Merlin tells her, “It's fine. It's more than fine. ...erm...what happened?”

Guinevere smiled, Arthur brother lives and Arthur would be out of his cage soon. But today she had lost all faith in the king. He was going to let his one of this son die in order to teach the other a lesson, what kind of man does that let alone a king.
Brothers forever

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

That night Merlin had one question for his friends, what had happened after he drunk the wine he could not remember anything after that. Guinevere had stated that she was glad that he was alright with a squeak of his shoulder she had left Merlin in Gaius and Gwen hands after she told Gaius that he may want to inform the king that this was of Nimueh’s handwork, not Bayard before Camelot find themselves in a war with the Mercians.

It was Gwen who explained to Merlin what had happened, “Well, you passed out,” Gwen explained. “Obviously. The prince brought you and the princess got the goblet back here. The King had Bayard and all his men thrown in the dungeon. Gaius figured out what the poison was and Prince Arthur rode out to get the antidote after the King forbade him to go. He’s in the dungeon himself now. The princess gave me the idea and I pretended that I’d been sent to bring the prince’s supper and he put the flower on the tray and I had to run back up here. Gaius said your heart stopped and for a moment we thought we lost you and the princess prayed but thankfully your heart didn’t stop and the antidote worked.”

“I think it did,” Merlin groaned. He was sore all over. “The Goddess herself told me to go back. At least, I would be willing to bet everything that it was the Goddess.”

“You saw the Goddess?” Gaius marvelled.

“She told me to go back,” Merlin told him. Gaius looked thunderstruck. Gwen was still a little wavery, teary-eyed and lip trembling, staring at him. Merlin had this feeling that it was not only relief at his recovery that had made Gwen kiss him. Hopefully, without Merlin encouraging anything more than friendliness, Gwen would set her cap for someone who loved her back soon.

Though Merlin was kept in Gaius’ chambers to the bed that night and Gaius needed to talk to the king. Someone had convinced the King that it had not been Bayard who had poisoned the goblet. It had probably been Cara who had poisoned it, whoever she really was. Her freedom with the given names of the royals had proven that she was no servant and she had certainly been more familiar with the halls of Camelot than any Mercian could be.

Gaius enters while Uther consults his advisors. The Old man asked if he could speak with the king that it was important, when Uther informed the old man, “Word of Bayard’s arrest has got back to Mercia. We’re about to be attacked.”

It takes Gaius few minutes to convince the king to take moment to talk with him, “I feel that what I have to tell you may have some bearing on your plans. Please, it will only take a moment.”

Uther steps aside with Gaius, that he said, “I know who tried to poison Arthur.”

Uther stated back at the old man, “So do I. He's locked in my dungeons.”

Gaius pointed out, “It wasn't Bayard. The poison was magical. And I'd recognise the hand that made it anywhere: Nimueh.”

The King stood there in disbelieve and Uther stated, “It can't have been. We'd know her. That witch's face is not easily forgotten.”
Gaius reminded the king, “She's a powerful sorceress. She can enchant the eye that beholds her. We never knew it was her.”

Uther asked, “Have you any proof?”

Gaius informed the Uther, “The poison used against Merlin was made more potent by the use of magic.”

Uther asked, “Are you saying that she conspired with Bayard to kill Arthur?” the old man think that the king was asked to go to war with Bayard and his men.

Gaius pointed out, “No, Bayard is innocent. Look at what's happening. This is what she's wanted all along. A war to bring strife and misery to Camelot.”

Uther asked one of his Knights, “How long before Bayard's armies reach our walls?”

Sir Cador stated, “A day. Maybe less. We should send cavalry out to meet them.”

Uther Instruct the knight, “instruct your men not to leave Camelot until I give the word.”

Sir Cador “Sire.” Knights bow and exit.

Gaius stated, “You are making the right decision” and leave the king the last thing the King stated was that would he ever be rid off, the witch.

Though Merlin was kept in Gaius’ chambers all the next day, Gwen had gone back to serving Morgana, since she had apparently spent the last several days at Merlin’s sickbed, and therefore knew almost all of what had happened and she stopped in for a moment with Morgana to check on Merlin.

They had informed Merlin and Gaius that Arthur had been released from the dungeons, thank the Goddess, and all of the Mercians were released as well. Apparently, someone had convinced the King that it had not been Bayard who had poisoned the goblet.

Morgana pointed out, “It had probably been Cara who had poisoned it, whoever she really was. Her freedom with the given names of the royals had proven that she was no servant and she had certainly been more familiar with the halls of Camelot than any Mercian could be.” At this Merlin felt foolish about the whole thing. Had he been a little more aware to that nagging voice in the back of his head, and a little less excited about making a new friend, he might have prevented more of this misunderstanding.

Gaius had not stopped teasing Merlin about Gwen clearly setting her cap at “him” now that Merlin was clearly not going to die. Merlin was less amused.

Later that morning at the top of the battlements stood Arthur, Guinevere, Morgana, and Uther. They all watch from the battlements, as Bayard and his men ride away from Camelot.

Morgana stated to Arthur, “Okay. Let the bragging begin. How’d you manage it?”

Arthur eyes never leave the group of Mercian head out of Camelot when he stated, “I'm not sure. All I do know is I had help. Someone knew I was in trouble and sent a light to guide the way.”

When Morgana asked “who” Guinevere had to keep her face well concealed because she had seen the blue light in Merlin's hand and heard the dying man cast the spell with her own ears, has long had Merlin protects Arthur she would keep his secret.
Arthur said, “I don't know. But whoever it was, I'm only here because of them.”

Guinevere whispered to herself only Arthur and Morgana could hear her, “I am thankful for whoever it was”

Morgana stated, “I'm glad you're back.” Morgana leaves and just Arthur and Guinevere with the king left. She could tell that the King wanted a word with Arthur, and so Guinevere informed him that she had a servant draw him a bath, and she left father and son alone. She may have lost all faith in the King when he had locked Arthur up and would have let his other son die, but Arthur still needed the man and so she would not come between the pair.

Uther asked, “Arthur? The woman you met in the forest, what did she tell you?”

Arthur stated, “Not much. She was too busy trying to get me killed. It was strange, though.”

Uther asked, “In what way?”

Arthur pointed out, “I was at her mercy. She could have finished me off, but she chose not to. She said it wasn't my destiny to die at her hand.”

Uther asked, “You must've been scared.” Arthur looked out towards the gates, he could tell if his old man now concerns for him true or not.

Arthur replied “Had its moments.”

Uther stated, “Those who practice magic know only evil. They despise and seek to destroy goodness wherever they find it. Which is why she wanted you dead. She is evil.”

Arthur said, “Sounds as if you know her.” Finally look up at his father.

Uther said, “I do. To know the heart of one sorcerer is to know them all. You did the right thing. Even though you were disobeying me. I'm proud of you, Arthur. Never forget that.” That was really shocking but it was good to hear too well not the every sorcerer bit but the last bit of the what his father had to say.

Arthur had his bath and talk with Guinevere while he got clean, the warm water felt good, he did not want to get and when he did Guinevere had told him that he was going to sleep as he has not slept in days after he had something to eat. She was being bossy and Arthur found that he likes it when his Alpha took charge of his wellbeing.

Before he turns in for the night there was one last thing he needed to do or he knew that he would not find any sleep. Arthur walked into physician's chambers to find Merlin was warped around him have his dinner. And Arthur interrupted his brother’s dinner asking “Still alive, then?” as he walked in.

Merlin turned and nodded, smiling at his brother stating, “Yeah, just about. I understand I have you to thank for that.”

“Yeah, well, it was nothing. A half decent brother is hard to come by,” Arthur shrugged, there was a little sparkle in Arthur's eyes as he adds, “I was only dropping by to make sure you're alright. I expect you to be back to work tomorrow.”

Merlin pointed, “wait minute the Bayard and his people have left which me Morris would be your half decent servant and I can get back to been your protector against sorcery, and if I asked to be a servant again for any reason you have my permission to hit me”
Arthur smiled and he turns to leave when Merlin called out, “Arthur?”

When Arthur turned towards his brother Merlin said, “thank you”

Arthur replied, “you too, I am told that it what is expected of brothers, get some rest” he leaves, he can now sleep soundly knowing that Merlin was safe and well.

Gaius said something about Arthur being a man of honour and Merlin casually agreed and was soon tucked into his bed, wondering if Gaius knew who Cara really was because he had looked a little strange when he told him he thought that he had been the target for the poison all along. “But destroying Arthur and Camelot wasn’t all she was after. She knew you would be forced to drink that wine. It was you she wanted to kill. Seems someone else knows you're destined for great things, Merlin.” That thought is a little distressing but he sure known that someone like Cara or would have to try to take him out first.

The next morning, Merlin rose early and went to fetch Arthur’s breakfast, but Steward’s tart niece had already gotten it, so Merlin just trudged up the stairs empty-handed and trying not to grumble. About half-way there, he ran into Arthur, in his sleep pants, rushing down the stairs in a panic.

“What’s happened?” Merlin asked.

“You…” Arthur stopped, grabbed him by the shoulders, stared intently at him, “You’re alright?”

“I’m fine,” Merlin replied. “I’m sorry I’m late, but I was told that Briallen had taken you your breakfast.”

“She did and I thought you’d gotten worse overnight,” Arthur admitted.

“Come on, before someone sees me rushing about in a panic.” He put an arm around his shoulders and led him up the stairs towards Arthur’s chambers. Merlin thought he was overreacting about the whole thing.

“I really don’t know why you panicked,” Merlin muttered. “You saw last night that I was fine.”

“And pale as a sheet,” Arthur retorted, herding him into his chambers. Merlin let him, clearly, he had woken up in a strange mood and so long as the request was not too odd, he would just let him be a bit off. Arthur only sat down to eat once Merlin had been seated, and he did not even give him a chore list for Morris to do. He was to attend with him at the meals, no mention of dogs or horses or laundry or cleaning. Merlin was not ungrateful for the respite. A day or two, if this strange mood held, of following Arthur around like a lost puppy with light chores would be a nice reprieve while he was still getting his strength back. He had spent three days on his back with a fever and he was feeling tired still but he was beyond ready to get out from under Gaius’ feet.

After breakfast, Arthur let Merlin help him dress and then had him follow him to the council. Normally, he wouldn’t have his brother at the council, it did not raise too many eyebrows and it did not. No one even noticed him, except one of the guards who very quietly asked after his health and smiled when he told him he was feeling much better, only a little tired. Arthur turned his head every so often to check that he was still standing behind him, though he was unsure if he thought he would have somehow fallen ill or run away. Then it was time for dinner, which Arthur ate in his chambers, with Morgana.

Morgana brought Gwen and both Merlin and Gwen got to sit down at Arthur’s table and eat dinner with Arthur and Morgana. Gwen looked very uncomfortable with the situation, but Merlin was grateful for the reprieve after nearly four hours on his feet during council. Morgana looked more than
a little amused by Arthur insisting on mothering Merlin, make sure that he finishing his meat and water and frowning at how much was left on his plate.

After dinner, Arthur let him help him into his training clothes, but he insisted on getting Morgana’s awning that he used on picnics to protect his complexion before they went down to the fields. Merlin thought he might die of embarrassment, but Sir Leon, Sir Bors, and Sir Ewan all helped Arthur stake the awning down next to the field without a word of complaint and they set the bucket of water to refill the water skins next to him in the shade it provided. None of the knights or squires mocked him about being settled in the shade like a child, and Geraint and Galahad came over and asked to sit in the shade with him. They both told him that he had been very brave to save Arthur’s life by interrupting the peace talks and drinking the poisoned wine.

Apparently, all of the knights had been talking about how brave and loyal he was, and how it showed Arthur’s good character and true nobility that he had defied the King to get the antidote for him. The guards had made sure that the call was not raised until Arthur was crossing the drawbridge and then did not chase him very far because they had thought it was wrong of the King to forbid anyone to get the antidote for someone who drank poison to save the prince.

Merlin was more than grateful for the chatty company since it kept his mind off how embarrassing it was that Arthur had hunted down Morgana’s awning for him to use when it was barely spring. After training was over, Arthur ordered Geraint and Galahad to take the awning down and put it back in the storage room it came from. Merlin made a sympathetic expression at them, but neither one seemed upset about it.

“Come on,” Arthur urged, leading Merlin back up to his chambers. Merlin was allowed to go down to the kitchens to fetch they supper only after he had assured him three times that he felt absolutely fine and had been drinking plenty of water all day. He was like a new mother with a babe just learning to walk. Merlin, of course, was perfectly fine. He went down to the kitchens, got they supper on a tray, and climbed the stairs up to Arthur’s chambers with no problem.

He stops he could hear Guinevere tell Arthur, “you know, you have to stop mothering Merlin, he is your brother, not your son and for the record he did what an older brother meant too, it is his job to protect you has your brother and it speaks well of you, for what you did was what is expected of a sibling but not all siblings love one another and would do what you did for Merlin and Merlin did you. You very lucky to have Merlin has your brother Arthur and he is equally lucky to have you has his brother. I could not have been more pourer of both of you.”

“See, here I am, no problems,” Merlin announced as he let himself in. The Head Guard was standing next to Arthur and he ducked his head, probably to hide a laugh, but Arthur did not even seem to notice, looking pleased that Merlin had the strength to climb stairs after sitting in the shade all afternoon like a child. It was a little ridiculous.

“Well, I’ll leave you to your supper, your highnesses,” the Head Guard bowed. Arthur nodded in dismissal.

“And may I say we’re all pleased to see you up and about again, Merlin. It was a very brave thing you did, drinking the poison yourself.” He said his way out.

“Thank you,” Merlin mumbled awkwardly, crossing the room to put the supper tray on the table. The Head Guard bowed out of the room. Merlin absently thought he should probably get his name soon.

“Sit, Merlin,” Arthur ordered, pushing the papers he had been looking over out of the way. “You’re eating too.” Merlin sat down, not arguing as Arthur portioned food off for him too.
“I really am fine, Arthur,” Merlin murmured in vain protest. He looked over at him and took a deep breath.

“You drank poison, Merlin. You were dying. I don’t think it’s uncalled for to worry that only two days later you were not up to strenuous responsibilities.”

“Not that I’m not grateful for not mucking out the stables, or hauling bathwater, but this is a little much. I’m perfectly well, just still a little more easily tired. I am fine. I will continue to be fine. There is no need for hovering.” He pointed out.

“I’m not trying to insult you,” Arthur mumbled, ducking his head as though embarrassed.

“I’m just concerned. That poison was meant for me and you drank it and nearly died. I could not bear to repay a life-death with you getting ill because I overworked you too quickly.” Oh. This was an honour thing.

“I can understand that” Merlin conceded. They chatted a little about the castle gossip, Morgana’s health, and then Merlin banked up the fire against the chill and went to bed early.

Chapter End Notes

Thank the next episode is coming soon I know this one short.

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