

English 4 Honors

Unit 2: Chivalry Unit Project

One would think that, as a renowned Knight of the Round Table, I cherished my privileged life. Yet memories from Camelot tell a different story. When my mind intermittently gifts me images of my past, they are stained by death and dishonor. They are cold to the touch. They emit no light. They are empty and deeply melancholic.

My mind reveals to me no memories of life before knighthood. My mother and father are not beside me and neither are my childhood companions. Instead, I merely recall King Arthur's keen blade declaring my promotion to his closest, most trustworthy clan of deeply passionate knights who sold their souls to the kingdom of Camelot. If my past were a material, it would be solid iron, honed at the edges and glimmering in the moonlight. It appeared as a deadly extension of my arm, as well as on the harness of my horses. Never did this iron warm my scarred hands to the touch, granting me heat. It was in perpetual winter.

I suppose I should give you my name. I am Sir Edward of Camelot, Knight of the Arthurian Round Table. My feelings towards this kingdom did not always resemble this dejection. There was a time when I treasured the honor of the position.

I was just outside kingdom walls, serving my daily night shift as a guard. The sharp, frosty wind bit at my face, causing me to squint my eyes. From my horse I received a steady stream of comforting heat. Trained for years, he remained perfectly rigid despite the harshness of

winter. The brilliant sky, a majestic painting of red and purple streaks, became my form of entertainment for the evening.

Yet while I marveled at the colorful beauty before my eyes, I caught sight of a dark figure emerging from the horizon. It seemed to grow at a constant yet meager pace. My mind ran through the possibilities. A fellow knight of the Round Table? A traveler looking to trade?

As the mysterious, dark figure neared, I resisted the urge to approach him. My duty was to remain at the kingdom walls, so I obliged, eager to please King Arthur. Yet curiosity reared its ugly head all the same.

At once, the lanterns illuminated the path between us. The figure, now 100 meters or so in front of me, was suddenly engulfed in yellow light. The knives at his side glimmered—pure iron. The hooves of his horse echoed rhythmically, piercing the silence of the night. His face revealed to me no recognition or familiarity. **I was being approached by a rogue.**

He was a young fellow, perhaps in his early twenties. Yet his face resembled that of a rock. Emotionless, stern, rigid. Even while he spoke to me, his expressions seemed subdued, restrained, even.

“Good evening sir,” I said.

He gave no immediate response, and instead contemplated my presence thoroughly.

“Could you tell me your purposes for travelling here?” I said.

He lifted his hands to his head and removed his helmet. “I seek the king.”

“The king may not be willing to converse at this hour, sir. Perhaps you could—”

“The king. Bring me to him.”

His name was Sir Richard of Mercia. I led him through the labyrinth that is Camelot and we arrived at the room of the Round Table. Delicate paintings of God, nature and life filled the walls. Intricate ornamentation decorated the ceiling, shining in pride and prestige.

Our arrival sparked no extreme reaction from the court—*as chivalrous knights we welcomed visitors with open arms* (Gardner 233). King Arthur was the first to speak.

“Greetings, Edward. Who do you bring with you to the Round Table?” His resonant voice echoed throughout the hall.

The rogue spoke before me. “Sir Richard of Mercia, your Highness. I fled a war that has left my companions and king dead. I come seeking shelter and refuge, and perhaps a position at the Round Table.”

Utter confusion found its way to the knights’ faces, but the visitor was emotionless. Such a request was surely in jest, we all thought. One could not simply become the king’s knight just by soliciting a measly request...

The king thought otherwise. “We will gladly take you as an apprentice, Sir Richard. A king never declines a man’s dream. Yet at this moment you are largely unknown to us, including your intentions. You must work to show your respect for Camelot. You must demonstrate your honor, bravery and willingness to protect the weak, as these are the principles which govern the Knights of the Round Table!”

Sir Richard was declared an apprentice knight that very day in the hall which houses the Round Table. While I tried to mirror the king’s enthusiasm, I couldn’t help but doubt Sir Richard’s mysterious intentions.

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It came as no surprise that King Arthur grew fond of the rogue just days after his arrival. Though he was physically weak, he had a drive to defeat evil unlike any other of my fellow knights. Although his face conveyed little emotion, his eyes held a deep passion for upholding the wishes of King Arthur and protecting the kingdom of Camelot. He rode on the front lines as the Knights of the Round Table stormed into the desecrated land of Mercia in search of survivors. He regularly shared his food with poor, malnourished townspeople. He was swift in learning the art of chivalry.

One night, at the time when the moon glowed its brightest in the sky, I rose up the castle to get to my chamber. **As I climbed the steps, lined with gold figures and lit by candle light, I caught sight of a lady leaning nonchalantly on the landing.** Her delicate hands were placed elegantly on the railing, shielded by an equally graceful dress. She had silk clothing decorated with golden flowers. Her voluminous, ginger hair was tied back to reveal a pale, small face with strikingly blue eyes. These eyes pierced through my own and seemed to hold me back. There I stood, several steps from the landing, staring up at the illuminated figure before me.

Before I had the chance to speak, she turned and glided away down the corridor. I hurried up the stairs, but when I cast my eyes down the hall, she was gone.

When I dreamt, she appeared before me again. She did not speak, and neither did I. But in this dream we held each other's gaze, and no other form of communication seemed necessary. As I paid visits to her in the kitchen and outside castle walls, I saw in this lady a guiding light towards chivalry. From her I found the drive to be brave and to protect the weak as those were my duties as a knight. *On that night, I devoted my every action to her—I strived to get ever closer*

to this mysteriously elegant lady of the court, as I knew she would aid me in my quest for chivalry (Blackwolf 1).

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“Good evening, Sir Edward.”

The voice came from behind me. I kept my gaze out towards the horizon, maintaining my guard as the night watch job required of me. His steps grew closer and the man appeared in front of me, staring up at my eyes. It was Sir Richard.

“I admire you, I really do...”

His voice trailed off. His brows were unusually tense, wrinkling up his entire complexion.

“I am challenging you to a duel, sir,” he said. His voice trembled with the cold.

A duel? Whatever for?, I thought.

“May I ask what purpose drives this request?” I said. The cold bit at my skin, sending shivers through my body.

“Avelina. The lady of the court. You’ve demonstrated passionate interest in her, I have come to realize. I feel we should settle it once and for all. The winner shall have her hand in marriage.”

Conflicting love—this would lead to my downfall. The thought that any other knight may lay their hands on her ignited a violent fire in me. I would not be defeated at the hands of a rogue with no place in the castle of Camelot. I would crush him mercilessly if that would lead me closer to love. I would protect my honor.

I accepted the duel.

On a cold winter evening, I sat on my horse in a clearing in the nearby forest. I was alert, scanning the surroundings for any sign of Sir Richard. My hands were placed on the hilts of my weapons, patiently waiting to unsheath. My heart pounded in my chest and my mind was taken over by an elegant, lovely, and inspiring figure: Avelina.

I was too slow. Sir Richard suddenly galloped into the clearing at full speed, sword in hand and ready to swing. My arms pulled at my weapon, getting it ready just in time to parry my opponent's strike. The screeching sound of iron against iron burst through my ears, and I was thrown off my horse due to the force of the impact. I hit the ground but rolled into position once again. Sir Richard got off his horse to face me. He was fuming with rage, fury, and passion.

I heard the tip of his sword as he swung it toward me, slicing my shoulder. But I was no apprentice. Years of swordsmanship were in my blood. I saw the opening, sidestepped, and swiftly brought my blade into the rogue's neck. He dropped to the ground, blood oozing onto his chestplate. I had won, but the world seemed to fall on top of me. I struggled to breathe, I choked helplessly. A devastating feeling ruptured my heart.

How could I disobey the code so severely? How could I choose violence over teaching and companionship? How could I take the life of an apprentice, a loyal companion, who wished only to honor his new king (Gershon 1)? I wished to pursue love and honor, and lost both in the process.

My final memories from Camelot are blurred both by the tears in my eyes and the speed at which my horse galloped into the woods, away from the place I used to call home. I fled from my king, my land, and my love. As I rode out into the darkness, away from the castle, I turned

my head to catch a final glimpse of my home. Yet what I saw was merely a hazy blur of golden light.

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