

## KING PELLINORE

One day a squire arrived at the court, supporting his master, Sir Myles, who had been mortally wounded. He described to Arthur how he had been attacked by King Pellinore at the well, and then begged that he should be buried, and that one of Arthur's knights should avenge his death. After the burial a squire named Gryfflette pleaded with Arthur to make him a knight; he was the same age as Arthur.

"You are too young to be a knight," Arthur said gravely. "Sire, but I beg you," said Gryfflette.

"It would be a shame," said Merlin, "to lose Gryfflette. He will make an excellent knight when he is older, but at the moment he would be no match for King Pellinore."

"I will make you a knight," said Arthur, "if you swear not to joust with King Pellinore more than once, and then return to me." "I swear it," said Gryfflette; so Arthur dubbed him.

Sir Gryfflette ran happily to his armor, and when he was clad and mounted, set off at a gallop for the well. He found there a brilliantly decorated pavilion, and outside it a horse, already harnessed. A multicolored shield hung from a tree, and a resting against it was a spear. Sir Gryfflette struck the shield with a ringing blow, and it fell to the ground. King Pellinore appeared at the entrance to his pavilion. "Sir, why do you strike my shield?" he asked.

"Because I wish to joust with you," Sir Gryfflette replied.

"You are but newly knighted, and too young," said the king. "Tell me, where do you come from?"

"I come from the court of King Arthur, and still I mean to joust with you."

"Very well, then; but I am reluctant to do so," the king rejoined.

The two knights met at full gallop: Sir Gryfflette's spear was broken and the shaft driven deeply into his side; he lost consciousness and fell to the ground. King Pellinore swiftly ran over to him and loosened his armor. Sir Gryfflette recovered his wind slowly and when he had done so, King Pellinore lifted him gently onto his horse. "God's speed, young knight," he said.

At King Arthur's court Sir Gryfflette collapsed once more; however, he was placed in the hands of a surgeon by whose skillful treatment the wound was eventually healed.

Meanwhile, twelve aged ambassadors had come from Rome, and in the name of the Emperor Lucius one of the many rules of the kingdom that made of Britain demanded tribute.

"Since you are only ambassadors," Arthur said, "we shall not put you to death for your insolent words; but tell your Emperor that if he tries to win tribute from us, that will be his fate."

The ambassadors withdrew angrily, and Arthur himself was doubly grieved: by the Emperor's message and by Sir Gryfflette's injury. He decided to avenge Sir Gryfflette secretly, so he commanded the chamberlains to take his horse and armor to the outskirts of the city at dawn the following day.

When Arthur was armed and mounted, he instructed the chamberlain to await his return, and then galloped off toward the well. He had not gone far when he saw Merlin being chased by three ruffians; he galloped up to them and the ruffians fled in terror.

"Your magic did not save you that time," said Arthur.

"It could have," Merlin replied, "had I so wished, whereas your anger will certainly not save you from the superior strengths of King Pellinore, whom you are about to challenge."

Merlin accompanied Arthur to the well, and when they arrived they found King Pellinore seated outside his pavilion. "Sir," said Arthur, "it would seem that no knight can pass this well without your challenging him."

"That is so," said King Pellinore.

"I have come to force you to change this custom of yours, so defend yourself!"

They jousting three times, each time breaking their spears, until the third time, when Arthur was flung from his horse. "Very well," said Arthur, "you have won the advantage jousting; now let us see what you can do on foot." King Pellinore was reluctant to dismount and lose the advantage he had won; however, when Arthur rushed at him boldly with drawn sword, he grew ashamed and did dismount.

The fought until both collapsed from pain and exhaustion; their armor was splintered and the blood flowed from their wounds. They fought again, until Arthur's sword broke in his hand. "Now," said King Pellinore, "you shall yield to me or die."

"Not so!" Arthur shouted as he sprang at him, and grabbing him around the waist, threw him to the ground. Arthur was unlacing his helmet when, with a sudden fearful effort, King Pellinore overturned Arthur and clambered on top of him. King Pellinore had loosened Arthur's helmet and raised his sword to strike off his head when Merlin spoke.

"Hold your hand!" he said; "you will endanger the whole realm. You do not realize who it is you are about to kill."

"Who is it, then?" "King Arthur."

Hearing this, King Pellinore feared that he would receive little mercy from Arthur if he spared him -so he raised his sword once more, Merlin adroitly put him to sleep with a magic spell.

"You have killed him with your magic," said Arthur hotly. "I would rather that my whole realm

were lost, and myself killed; he was a magnificent fighter."

"He is more whole than you are," Merlin replied. "He will not only live, but serve you excellently. It is to him that you will give your sister in marriage, and she will bear two sons -Sir Percivale and Sir Lamerok -who will be two of the most famous Knights of the Round Table."

They mounted, and Merlin led the way to a hermit, who treated Arthur's wounds, and in whose dwelling they rested for three days. They resumed their journey, which was to the Lake of Avalon, and as they were approaching the lake, Arthur said, "how sad that I broke my magic sword!"

"You shall have another one," Merlin replied.

Just then Arthur saw that in the center of the lake the surface was broken by an arm, clothed in white samites, and that the hand grasped a finely jeweled sword and scabbard.

"That is the magic sword Excalibur," said Merlin, "and it will be given to you by the Lady of the Lake, who is now crossing the water in her bark (boat). She comes from her castle, which is hewn in the rock, and more beautiful than any earthly dwelling. You must address her courteously, and do as she directs you."

The Lady of the Lake appeared before them. "My lady," said Arthur, "I beg you to make me a gift of the sword Excalibur."

"King Arthur," she replied, "Excalibur shall be yours, if you consent now to granting me whatever gift I shall ask of you in my own time.

"I swear," said Arthur, "whatever gift is in my power to grant." "Even so," said the Lady of the Lake. "Now use my bark and row yourself to the sword, and take it, together with the scabbard."

Arthur and Merlin tethered their horses to two trees, and boarded the bark. When Arthur had taken the sword and scabbard the arm disappeared into the water.

On the homeward journey they repassed King Pellinore's pavilion, and Arthur asked Merlin why

King Pellinore was not there. "He has been fighting Sir Eglame, and has chased him nearly all the way into Caerleon," Merlin replied.

"What a pity!" said Arthur. "Because now that I have this beautiful sword I should like to fight him again, and perhaps this time have my revenge."

"That you shall not do," said Merlin. "King Pellinore is already tired from his fight with Sir

Eglame. To win would bring you no honor; to lose would be to increase your shame. And lose you might, because he is still stronger than you are."

"I will do as you advise," said Arthur, as he examined his sword once more, admiring its beauty and temper. "Tell me," said Merlin, "Do you prefer the sword or the scabbard?"

"The sword," said Arthur. "You are a fool," said Merlin. "The scabbard is worth ten of the sword

because while you wear it, regardless of how seriously you are wounded, you will lose no blood."

They were drawing close to Caerleon when they passed King Pellinore; he appeared not to see them. "Why," asked Arthur, "did King Pellinore not speak to us?"

"Because he did not see us," Merlin replied. "I cast a spell over him; had he done so, you would not have escaped so lightly."

When Arthur and Merlin arrived at the court they were questioned eagerly on all that had happened; and when the story was told, Arthur's knights rejoiced in the boldness of their king.