

“Excalibur”

DAWN’S LIGHT

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An Occlusion of Fact

Arthur eyed the meadow ahead of him, and then his eyes leveled on the top of the hill that sloped not so gently above it. His breathing was rapid, but easy enough, but his feet were beginning to ache.

Make note to myself, make better shoes, he thought to himself, a wry grin touching his lips.

Sandy blonde hair touched with a burnished red from the sun's wicked hot afternoon shine over the long summer, tossed from side to side as he loped easily along the meadow.

Grass fairies shot into the air from all sides as he passed, whirling in the air like swarms of fruit flies, but so much cuter.

Were they human size he'd even consider taking one out to the village dance. But they weren't. Just a tad bigger than his right forefinger, with long gossamer wings that scintillated and sparkled in the morning's stewing sunshine, which was struggling to break through the usual cloud cover, which seemed to perpetually drape the lands like a soaked blanket waiting to collapse and wet everything.

He snorted.

A lot to love.

A lot to fret about.

He leaped easily over a gnome patch. They were getting more relaxed about where they constructed their homes these days, thinking that man had ceded this area to them.

Arthur knew better.

King Uther Pendragon ceded nothing, except to his dark treasury of stolen wages and overly high taxes on pretty much anything that could move or be moved. Even a poor man's child was taxed for being born and if it died, taxed again because it had died and a double tax on the man for letting it happen.

As if man could control everything! Arthur thought bitterly for a moment.

But Uther thought man could. He demonstrated that every day by taxing everything in sight and removing anything that offended him. Often times with whippings and beatings.

Arthur sighed. He had much to learn before he turned his attention fully to that man.

Much.

Breakfast

Merlin stirred the pot of stew thoughtfully; his deep warm eyes focused inwardly, rather than out as normal. His hands carried out the kitchen task without thinking, almost as if magically induced to turn the pot slowly while stirring with the huge handmade spoon that Arthur had carved out of a broken branch for him.

Arthur!

What to do about that young rascal?

He was growing so fast these days.

Barely a teenager and already he was thinking like a man. Had a man's instincts to protect what was right, unlike the King and his men who only thought of protecting their own desires and possessions.

He shrugged that thought off.

No good to dwell in darkness.

Darkness breeds darkness.

As a reminder he felt a presence nearby. He could feel the smile of it beaming at him. When he got off track the smile and warmth vanished. Call it an angel. Call it his muse, or invisible friend. But whatever you called it, it was what helped him refine his own intuition further still.

Each year that passed he thought he had reached the apex of his personal evolution, only to have that shattered by a new experience which showed he still had much to learn.

One day he had sat in meditation on the Hill of Bones. What fellow monks called the small mountain they kept their homes within. One day he had been slipping into a deep quiet that seemed so hard to reach when his inner eye opened up and spread before him was a golden kingdom.

He felt the presence of something warm, generous, all encompassing. God? He didn't want to limit it by such words. He only knew it knew him far better than he knew himself and seemed quite capable of knowing all else without effortless ease.

How did he know this?

Because he tested it.

He was no fool.

He knew there were demons and warlocks who sought to control the minds of the weak. He knew there were the undead who sought to take over a new body because they refused to leave Earth to be with the One.

He knew all those things, and so he protected himself from self destruction. He always checked

himself to make sure the intuition, the feeling he received was pure and sanctified.

How?

He smiled.

By checking what he felt against his heart. His heart never stirred him wrong. It was the seat of the soul and the one arbiter that could do no wrong.

A far greater man than he would one day say, "Love one another," and be right. And some great souls even later still would proclaim to the world that love was all you need. They would all be right.

Love was the pendulum by which true life swung.

And speaking of intuition, "Good morning, Arthur!"

As usual, a sweaty, breathing hard, but strong young lad burst into the kitchen of his cave and sniffed the air. "Breakfast?"

"Did you doubt otherwise?" Merlin asked with a hint of sarcasm in his voice.

He felt a head go against his back right shoulder and strong arms grasp him tight about the middle.

"Not for a second!"

Arthur let go and took out the wooden bowls, spoons, forks and knives he had carved from fallen wood and began setting their humble stone table.

“Help?” Baxter the Troll asked from his home in the kitchen wall. It was set next to a natural water flow that Merlin had tapped into with the help of ingenious tools and a bit grunting and magic.

Baxter pulled his long green hair from the flow of water, squashed it between his knobby fingers, and leaped from the lip of his home to the kitchen table. He began arranging the forks and knives properly.

“Arthur, forks middle, knives inside, spoon outside.”

“Whatever does it matter, Baxter, the food makes it into the same place anyway?”

Merlin came over smiling. “Children, children, let’s not argue over our first meal.”

Baxter made a zipping the lips shut motion. Arthur just sat down, hunched over his bowl.

Merlin went from soup bowl to bowl, pouring out a bit of the stew into all until he was finished.

He replaced the pot of stew on the stone fire he had warmed up, and then waved a hand over it. The stone lost its brilliance and settled into comfortable warmth that would keep the stew warm, but not bake it dry.

Merlin sat down with his troll friend, Baxter, and Arthur, then bent his head forward and shut his eyes. He reached out his hands left and right.

Arthur took his left hand and Baxter rested his tiny one in Merlin's right.

"We thank the One for our bounty and good friendship he provides us. May all feel and experience the same."

He opened his eyes.

The others did too.

Arthur sniffed the stew. "Chicken!"

Merlin chuckled. "Well, actually, lizard, as the chicken was much too worried about her chicks for me to do that."

Arthur looked at him.

Merlin winked.

Baxter cocked his head. He could never tell when Merlin was telling a story or the truth. He shrugged and stuck his head into the stew and began gobbling it down.

Morning was always a time they enjoyed. A time to relax and share with each other.

But for Baxter, it was the gigantic meal he got every day. Even though it swelled his tiny stomach up three times, he didn't mind being rolled into his home, too fat to move. He always felt so good.

Another Day in the Life of

Arthur rolled over on the single bed of his studio apartment. His eyes fluttered open. The scene with him and Merlin and Baxter faded away, like a dream. That's all it was, wasn't it?

He frowned.

Sat up.

This was Earth. No trolls. No gnomes. No meadow fairies.

Then he remembered what there was. He clenched a fist. If Camelot had been real, then this world as it was now was the result of Camelot's destruction.

He sighed, reached over to his nightstand and plucked his special from its holster. He always kept it near. It wouldn't stop some things that might attack him, but it would at least give them second thought.

He held it out.

"Excalibur!" The word slipped between his teeth as effortlessly as breath.

The weapon turned into a blazing, golden sword.

Excalibur.

The mystery of this sword was tantalizing. He didn't understand the word he spoke. It was meaningless to

him and came from nowhere, seemingly, but when it did, this appeared.

He flicked the blade once and it returned to its shape as a special again. He reholstered it.

He got up, went into his bathroom and eyed the face peering back at him. "Who am I?"

He felt as if someone stood next to him. Somehow he felt, rather than heard the answer.

But he shrugged it off.

That was impossible.

Excalibur was real.

Magic was real.

He had evidence of both, but for what he felt...that had to be impossible.

So shrugging off any further thought about who he was, or even what he was, he turned on his cell.

He stiffened at the message on it, dashed from the bathroom and hurriedly dressed, fastened his weapon to his chest, threw on a jacket and then ran from the room.

An emergency.

And this was for real!