

Merlin - Winds of Change
Part One: The Spark of Life

Episode One
A Return

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First Draft: December 4, 2021
Revision: 2nd Draft (12/27/21)

Made in Highland

FADE IN

EXT. LAKE OF AVALON - DAY

It is a bright and sunny day. The lake is smooth, a small island with the ruins of a tower in the background. Suddenly, bubbles begin to appear on the surface of the lake. They intensify until a moment later ARTHUR emerges from the lake in his full Camelot chainmail, facing the island. He takes several deep breathes, frantically looking around extremely confused. Suddenly from behind:

MERLIN (O.S.)
ARTHUR!!!

MERLIN, his eyes fading from gold to blue, has run into the lake and is making his way to ARTHUR without any tact, splashing and tripping over himself. Once he is close enough he launches himself at ARTHUR wrapping his arms around his neck in a crushing hug.

MERLIN
(tearfully)
I can't believe it, is it real
this time? Are you really back?

ARTHUR is taken aback, not sure what is happening. After a moment he hugs MERLIN back.

Fade to black with the following text:

KILGARRAH (V.O.)
In a land of death, and a time of
destruction, the destiny of the
world rests on the shoulders of
two ancient men. Their names:
Merlin and Arthur.

EXT. LONDON ALLEYWAY - MORNING

CHYRON
2 years and 7 months later.

Brief glimpses of various parts of war torn London are shown, it looks nothing like what it used to - piles of rubble that used to be luxury apartments, tent cities full of homeless people around trash can fires, buildings on fire. Cars are few and far between, most people walk or ride bicycles, some on horseback or in horse-drawn carriages. A motorbike pulls up to the curb with two men on it, they get off and remove their helmets.

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MERLIN, with a head full of dark curly hair and a full beard, has seemingly lost much of his youthful positivity - he is tired; he wears a brown blazer with a dark red button up with dark trousers, all ill fitting. ARTHUR is much the same as we last saw him with shining gold hair and the demeanor of a king (but with no one to rule); he wears a red leather jacket with a grey knit sweater and dark jeans.

MERLIN and ARTHUR walk towards a crowd gathered outside a run down apartment building; police tape blocks the entrance, several officers control the crowd and a couple interview witnesses to the side.

MERLIN tosses ARTHUR a lanyard with an ID card hanging from it - he rolls his eyes at the identification on it: Arthur Smith Medical Examiner's Assistant and slips it over his head. MERLIN puts his around his neck, identifying him as Emrys Smith, Medical Examiner. Medical kit in hand he turns to ARTHUR.

ARTHUR

Ready?

MERLIN

(sighs)

You know me.

The bypass the crowd, flashing their badges to the officers and enter the building.

INT. APARTMENT BUILDING FLAT

MERLIN and ARTHUR pass through the chaos of a fresh crime scene and enter the flat where the crime occurred. Inside, there are a few officers taking photos, collecting evidence and dusting for fingerprints. A body lays on a bare mattress in the corner.

WALLACE

(off screen - American
accent)

There you are! 'Bout time.

DAVID WALLACE is standing in the doorway to the flat. A strange man with a nose to big for his face and an up-to-no-good grin; wearing a white button up, black slacks and a long trench coat he is the picture perfect image of a detective. He walks up to MERLIN and ARTHUR, clapping ARTHUR on the shoulder.

WALLACE

Hey, hey - my man!

ARTHUR

(amicably)

Hello, Wallace.

MERLIN
(impatiently)
What am I looking at?

WALLACE's face drops. He turns to MERLIN.

WALLACE
Vic's name is Anita Arash, 23.
Died this morning.

They walk towards the body. MERLIN places his medical kit on a table next to the bed, removes a simple gold ring from his ring finger and places it in his pocket then puts on a pair of latex gloves.

ARTHUR
You said it was *another one*? You think this is the same as the others?

WALLACE
Looks it. We won't know for sure until after the autopsy, but from here it looks like Sauron is at it again.

MERLIN
Saruman.

WALLACE
What?

MERLIN
Saruman was the wizard, not Sauron.

WALLACE
(offended, matter-of-factly)
Sauron was a necromancer.

MERLIN dramatically rolls his eyes.

MERLIN
We don't even know if the killer is a sorcerer.

WALLACE
(Scoffs)
Yeah, well, I don't know what else it could be if it's not magic. There's no cause of death for any of the victims - no wounds, no poisons.

(MORE)

WALLACE (CONT'D)
All healthy people, and their
hearts just stopped suddenly. And
you're tellin' me that's not
magic?

MERLIN continues collecting samples from the body.

MERLIN
For magic that strong to work,
there has to be a charm or
something close by. And there
hasn't been.

ARTHUR
Unless the killer took it with
them when they left?

MERLIN
(defensively)
That's still not how any magic
works! There would be a visible
cause of death! If it were voodoo,
it'd be a drowning on dry land or
a twisted neck. If it were a
Wiccan spell, it would be a
sickness or boils or — or
something! It wouldn't just be a
stopped heart. Something that
clean and fast is incredibly
powerful magic, and I've never
come across anything like that!
Not to mention anyone who could do
it. Except for, well, me, if I
wanted to. But it's not me, so — .

WALLACE
Would'ya keep your damn voice
down? The last thing we need is
someone wondering why the medical
examiner knows so much about
magic! Whatever. I'm not counting
it out, especially because this
makes — how many victims now?

ARTHUR
(solemnly)
Seven. Seven People.

WALLACE
Right. Seven.

MERLIN steps away from the body, takes off his gloves and
begins packing up his medical kit.

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MERLIN

Same as the other six, so far.
There's nothing else I can do from
here. The medics can take her to
the morgue.

WALLACE

Okay, but before you go, I think
there's something else you might
wanna know.

(leans in conspiratorially)

The manager of this building still
runs the CCTV from time to time.
Not often, but apparently this
building has had a theft problem
recently, so he puts them on at
night. It shows footage of a guy
coming in and out of this flat
last night.

ARTHUR

(angrily)

The killer? You know what he looks
like? Why didn't you start with
that?!

WALLACE

(shakes his head)

Camera didn't get a good look, but
there's something... weird on the
footage.

ARTHUR

...weird?

MERLIN

Weird how?

WALLACE

(knowingly)

Your kind of weird.

(smirking)

Of course, there's no reason a ME
and his assistant need to see it.

MERLIN

(warning)

Wallace.

ARTHUR

Relax, Merlin. He wouldn't have
said anything if he wasn't going
to show us.

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WALLACE
 (impressed)
 Anyone ever tell you you'd make a
 good detective?

MERLIN
 (sarcastically)
 No, just a good politician.

ARTHUR
 (Ignoring the reminder of his
 past life)
 Where's the footage?

They leave the flat and walk down the hall to the apartment building's office, stopping at the door guarded by an officer.

WALLACE
 You bag the tapes for evidence
 yet?

OFFICER
 No, sir.

WALLACE
 Well, why the fuck not? Jesus,
 it's evidence! It should be taken
 in! Whatever – give me a few
 minutes with it before you bag it.
 Get outta here. Go make yourself
 useful.

He hurries away. WALLACE holds the door open for MERLIN and ARTHUR as they enter the office.

INT. APARTMENT BUILDING OFFICE

The office is nothing more than a tiny room cramped with a desk, a couple chairs and other office necessities. The desk is overflowing with paperwork, food and trash - on top of it all an ancient television. WALLACE picks up the remote and turns on the TV, the black and white screen is already paused at 2:43:11 in the morning

WALLACE
 DVD's already in.

After a few moments a figure walks on screen, he is facing away from the camera with a hood over his head. He turns to the victims door and opens it without any trouble.

ARTHUR
 (surprised)
 The door was unlocked?

WALLACE

Apparently, not. Lends more to the magic theory, right? But, check this out.

WALLACE fast forwards the recording to 2:57:13 and hits play. The figure walks out of the flat, dragging something long and bulky covered by a quilt and tied with ripped bed sheets. It takes a moment for ARTHUR to realize what it is - a body, it is unclear if they are dead or unconscious. The figure is dragging the person by the feet, wearing riding boots uncommon for the time.

ARTHUR

What the hell?!

WALLACE

Watch what he does here.

The figure, having trouble dragging the body stops and looks over their shoulder briefly, before turning back and redoubling their efforts in dragging the body. Once they're off screen there is a gust of wind that causes the trash in the hallway to blow away.

WALLACE

See that? That look over his shoulder? I think he might be working with someone. Can't say for sure, though. There aren't any cameras in the stairwell, and there's no footage of them on any other floor. My working theory is that they went through the basement.

MERLIN

Can I see that?

MERLIN takes the remote from WALLACE and rewinds back to the beginning.

ARTHUR

What about that man he was dragging? Who is he?

WALLACE

No idea! We talked to the other building tenants. Everyone's accounted for. Not a single person missing since last night.

ARTHUR

It could have been the victim's brother or father.

WALLACE

Nope, only people who lived there were Anita and her younger sister.

ARTHUR

A boyfriend, then?

WALLACE

Sister said Anita didn't have one. She's at the precinct waiting to give an official report, but she swears the vic was alone. Sister'd been out all night at some rave or something. Didn't get back until early this morning, said she noticed the door was unlocked. That's when she found Anita.

ARTHUR

Maybe Anita was seeing someone her sister didn't know about?

WALLACE

That's what I thought, but we have footage of the sister leaving for the night. No one else came in or out until the killer – uh, suspect – ,showed up. And there's no fire escape leading to the window, either. No way in but the door.

ARTHUR

Surely, he didn't just appear out of thin air!

WALLACE

(grinning, he's enjoying this far to much)

Like I said, weird.

MERLIN continues scrolling through the footage, rewinding it over and over again.

ARTHUR

Let's say this man didn't just appear out of nowhere. What of the other murders? Had anyone gone missing then?

WALLACE

See, you're thinkin' like a detective again! Man, stop trying to steal my job. There weren't any reports of anyone going missing from those locations in the weeks after the murders. But I sent some people to do follow-ups. There's a chance we might have missed something.

MERLIN

Arthur, look.

MERLIN had paused the video where the figure had stopped and was looking over his shoulder. ARTHUR turns to look at MERLIN, confused until he follows his gaze to the television screen.

ARTHUR

(confused)
Merlin, what - ?

MERLIN

Look.

ARTHUR

I am looking! What am I looking at?

Frustrated, MERLIN fumbles with the remote. After a few tries he zooms in on the figures face. It was extremely blurred and pixelated, but part of the face wasn't as shadowed, ARTHUR squints at the screen refusing to believe what he sees.

MERLIN

(heavy)
You see it, too?

WALLACE

You recognize him?!

ARTHUR takes a deep breath and regains his composure.

ARTHUR

It's hard not to recognize the man who killed me.

MERLIN

(full of anger and fear)
Mordred.

WALLACE

(shocked)
Mordred? As in, legend Mordred?
The kid you had with your sister?

ARTHUR
 (confused, disgusted)
 The – What? No!

Annoyed ARTHUR turns to MERLIN and smacks him across the back of the head.

ARTHUR
 What rumors have you been allowing them to spread about me?

ARTHUR
 (back to WALLACE)
 Mordred was one of my knights. And a sorcerer. He betrayed me. Merlin, how is this possible? Mordred killed all those people? That means he'd been back for months. Why didn't you know about this? Aren't you supposed to be able to – to sense magic or something?

MERLIN stammers trying to come up an excuse.

ARTHUR
 (verging on panic)
 He *can't* be back. He's *dead*! I know he is! I *killed* him! ...Didn't I?

MERLIN
 Yes!

ARTHUR
 Then, where the hell did he come from?

MERLIN turns from the television, frustrated.

MERLIN
 The only place he could have come from. Avalon.

WALLACE
 Alright, look, I'll bring this image in and see if anyone at the lab can enhance it. We'll get it out on the news bulletins, tell people to be on the lookout.

ARTHUR

(authoritatively)

Look into all the checkpoints from here to Glastonbury. Find out if any of the agents saw him – and *when*.

MERLIN

No. He could have made them forget his face. Check the CCTV footage, if the checkpoints have them. It's possible he passed through one without knowing what a camera is. He may still not know. He didn't give the one here a second glance.

WALLACE

Okay, but not all the provinces are gonna be too happy giving up that footage. Glastonbury's in the Republic of Exeter. Good luck getting anything out of Chancellor Brown.

ARTHUR

There has to be a way.

He snaps his fingers at an idea.

ARTHUR

Ask your uncle to get them! He's the Police Commissioner. He'll have some pull.

WALLACE

Not without owing Brown a favor, he won't.

ARTHUR

People are dying!

WALLACE

Fine, I'll talk to my uncle, but if he can't do anything, we'll have to go with Plan B and steal the footage.

His up-to-no-good grin back and bigger than ever.

WALLACE

Yeah? Huh? Have us a heist? Who's in?

MERLIN
(unamused)
You'll figure something out.

WALLACE
Yeah, I'm always figuring out shit
for you, Merlin.

MERLIN
It's because I make you look good.

WALLACE
Yeah, well, seven people are dead
and the only lead I have is a
fairytale character. How does that
make me look good?

MERLIN
(ignoring WALLACE)
I need to do some research. I need
to figure out how this...

MERLIN gestures towards the television as he packs up his stuff
and turns to leave.

WALLACE
Wait, hang on! Just because your
buddy is back in town, doesn't
mean you get out of doing that
autopsy!

ARTHUR
Autopsy? Why does he need to do
that? We know how she died!
Mordred killed her!

WALLACE
I need an official report.

MERLIN
Fine. I'll do it this afternoon.
Let me go back to my flat first.
I'll take some books to the
morgue.

MERLIN pushes past WALLACE and makes to leave, he pauses in the
door and turns back.

MERLIN
And he wasn't my *buddy*.

WALLACE place a hand on ARTHUR's shoulder.

WALLACE
You alright, man?

ARTHUR, who had zoned out, too preoccupied with the revelation of MORDRED's return, snaps his attention to WALLACE.

ARTHUR
I'm fine.

WALLACE
You sure? It's a lot to handle - .

ARTHUR
(snaps)
I'm *fine*, Wallace!

WALLACE steps back and puts his hands up in surrender. MERLIN and ARTHUR leave the room.

WALLACE (O.S.)
Why hasn't anyone bagged the CCTV footage yet? At least pretend you're professionals! Chop, chop

INT. TINTAGEL CASTLE HOTEL FURNACE ROOM

A door opens to the laundry room of a yet to be identified location. The room is lined with industrial washers and dryers, linen bins and folding tables. MORDRED enters roughly pushing a hooded man behind him. The man is wearing clothing not of this time - leather riding boots, dark pants and chainmail. MORDRED pushes him against a wall and handcuffs him to a pipe above his head. The man struggles against his restraint to no avail.

MORDRED
Fight all you want. You'll never break free. Even if you had the physical strength those are enchanted.

The man slumps down defeated.

MORDRED
You'll see in time. You all will. There is no other way but to join me.

INT. MERLIN AND ARTHUR'S FLAT - SUNSET

MERLIN exits the bathroom in a cloud of steam, freshly showered he finishes drying his hair and hangs the towel on the door. Their cat, ARCHIE, is in the corner growling at something in a hole in the wall.

MERLIN walks the short distance into the living room where ARTHUR is sitting on an old beat up couch with his feet up on the coffee table watching a documentary about The Vietnam War and snacking on cheese puffs. MERLIN sits down and puts his legs up on ARTHUR's lap. MERLIN eyes the walkie talkie at ARTHUR's feet.

MERLIN
Any word from Wallace?

ARTHUR
(agitated)
Nothing.

MERLIN
(disapprovingly)
That's dinner, is it?

ARTHUR
We've got nothing.

MERLIN
It's the end of the month, the grocery stores should be getting their rations in. We'll check tomorrow.

They sit in silence for a few moments, "watching" the documentary but ARTHUR's eyes continuously flick to the walkie as his face gets more tense.

MERLIN
He'll call, he's got his work cut out for him.

ARTHUR huffs in frustration. He looks down at the bag of puffs but seems to have lost his appetite, he offers the bag to MERLIN who takes it and begins snacking. He watches in disgust as ARTHUR sucks the artificial cheese dust off his fingers.

They continue to watch in silence, but neither is actually watching. The air is tense until finally:

ARTHUR
Do you really think Mordred came from Avalon?

MERLIN
I don't know how else he would have gotten here.

ARTHUR

So, it's not just those beasts around Winchester that are coming back then? It's sorcerers, too – from our time?

MERLIN

I don't think so. I think we'd hear about it if people from the dark ages were suddenly roaming around the provinces. Even if the public didn't know about them, Wallace would. He'd tell us.

ARTHUR

Then, why him? Of all people? And how?

MERLIN

I don't know.

ARTHUR

He's up to something. All those people he's killed...

MERLIN

Mmm... Now that we know it's Mordred, we know his targets can't be random. Victims of serial murders usually fit a pattern, but maybe this one is more than meets the eye. They could have been people who practice some form of magic or maybe – I don't know, descendants of the Druids?

ARTHUR

Or he needs innocent lives to sacrifice for some *magic* he's brewing up.

MERLIN inwardly cringes at ARTHUR's reaction to magic. Despite his acceptance of MERLIN's, he still worries that ARTHUR hates all magic users.

ARTHUR

It's me he wants. All those people who died – it's because of me.

MERLIN

Whatever it is, we'll get our answers as soon as we get Mordred. And we can't do anything until Wallace gives – .

ARTHUR

— Us a lead, I know. And what if he doesn't? Even if he can get the footage, it doesn't mean anything will be on them.

MERLIN

Then, we'll find another way! We won't let Mordred get away with this.

ARTHUR

No, I won't have anyone else harmed because of him.

(Because of me is what he means). ARTHUR sinks down into the cushions.

ARTHUR

I just feel so useless sitting around doing nothing.

MERLIN

Yes, but you haven't got an army to deploy after him anymore, remember?

ARTHUR

(snorts into a small grin)
Don't remind me.

ARTHUR's attention is back on the documentary. He gestures to the screen:

ARTHUR

Ugh, now I've missed a lot. Why didn't America ever officially declare war?

MERLIN

(shrugs)
Because I told Eisenhower not to.

ARTHUR

(skeptically)
You know, Merlin, I'm starting to think you make up half the shit you say.

MERLIN

Half? Give me some credit. I make up at least two-thirds!

MERLIN looks down into the bags of puffs and finds it empty. He puts it down on the coffee table and then frowns at his cheese dust covered fingers. He looks up at ARTHUR and waves his fingers in front of his face making an inquiring sound.

ARTHUR

Mer-lin! Not this again. Don't be a child.

ARTHUR slaps his hand away.

MERLIN

But you like it! I don't! Are you really going to make me get up to wash it off?

ARTHUR

Will you ever stop being lazy?

MERLIN

Hmmm... probably not.

MERLIN continues to wiggle his hand in ARTHUR's face as tantalizing as he can - not easy with cheese dust covered fingers.

MERLIN

You have to. It was in our vows!

ARTHUR

It was not!

MERLIN

Yes, it was. See, I keep saying you never listen to me. It was sickness, health, death do us part - et cetera, et cetera - cheese puff dust. It's why I married you.

ARTHUR

(unfazed)

Well, if that was the only reason, you could have said no.

MERLIN

Hey! Don't forget who asked who!

ARTHUR

Yes, but you beat me to it by-.

MERLIN

-A day. Whatever you say.

MERLIN continues to wiggle his fingers, still unsuccessful he sweetens the deal:

MERLIN
Come on! I'll suck something of
yours.

MERLIN wiggles his eyebrows trying to be seductive.

ARTHUR
Well, now you're talking!

With surprising speed ARTHUR flips MERLIN under him and nibbles along his jawline.

MERLIN
(hoarsely)
Not what I asked for!

ARTHUR
I'm getting to that!

ARTHUR takes MERLIN's hand and begins seductively licking off the cheese dust. He finishes on his index finger, slowly releasing it with a pop.

ARTHUR
(teasing)
Satisfied?

MERLIN
Not even close.

ARTHUR leans down and kisses MERLIN, after a moment he pulls away looking down at MERLIN, who's eyes are full of emotion.

MERLIN
Arthur, whatever's to happen—.

ARTHUR
(trying to keep it
lighthearted)
Out with it, Merlin. You're not
going to start crying on me, are
you? Because that would really
ruin the mood.

MERLIN
No.

MERLIN closes his eyes and swallows hard, holding back the pressure building behind his eyes.

ARTHUR
Good. Because, whatever's to come,
we'll get through it.
(MORE)

ARTHUR (CONT'D)

If there's one thing I know, it's that you and I will see the other side of it.

MERLIN

(trembling)

Promise? I *just* got you back, I can't lose you again!

ARTHUR

Yes.

ARTHUR leans down and kisses him again, like MERLIN's life depends on it.

ARTHUR

(grinning)

Now, shall we take this to the bedroom?

ARTHUR tickles MERLIN, then jumps up and dashes towards the bedroom, MERLIN close behind. Both of them all laughter.

EXT. WAR TORN STREET

MERLIN stands among the rubble of destroyed buildings looking hopeless around him. Injured people wander the street, looking for loved ones in the chaos. All we see is death, destruction and sadness. Flashes of similar scenes in various parts of the world, some far worse, are shown. Back to MERLIN:

MERLIN

(whispers)

Where are you, Arthur?

A bomb goes off off-screen.

INT. MERLIN AND ARTHUR'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

MERLIN gasps awake; the bed, which had been floating off the ground, comes crashing down. ARTHUR jolts awake, ready to defend his and MERLIN's life - he reaches for his sword hanging from the bed but realizes it is unneeded before he unsheathes it.

MERLIN

(panting)

Sorry.

ARTHUR

What was it this time?

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MERLIN
(sadly)
Memories, I guess.

MERLIN runs his trembling hands through his hair, trying to regain his composure. ARTHUR places his solid hand between MERLIN's shoulder blades and sprawls out his fingers in an act of comfort.

MERLIN
(shrugs)
Don't really remember.

ARTHUR
Then forget it! Good riddance.

MERLIN
(annoyed)
I wish those damn sleeping pills actually worked!

MERLIN sits up cross legged and glances at the clock on the night stand, it is 4:06am.

ARTHUR
Hey - think of something else.
Something good. Tell me anything -
a secret.

MERLIN
Like what?

ARTHUR
(shrugs)
I'm sure there is *something* from all that time, Merlin. Here, I'll go first. When I was seven I snuck out of the castle to live in the woods because I thought I wanted to be a bandit instead of a prince.

MERLIN laughs out loud.

ARTHUR
That was my father's reaction when I returned the next morning, sopping wet from a rainstorm. I learned my lesson.

After a moment.

ARTHUR
Your turn.

MERLIN
 Alright. When I was a kid, I used
 to think it wasn't supposed to
 rain on Sundays.

ARTHUR
 Merlin.

MERLIN
 What?

ARTHUR
 You have over a thousand years to
 choose from and you pick something
 from when you were a child?

MERLIN
 It's the simple things.

MERLIN didn't like to think about the time after - before? -
 between? - ARTHUR. Everyday he sank deeper below the surfer and
 the day ARTHUR returned he finally broke through the surface.

ARTHUR
 Hey, don't start. It's not going
 to be one of *those* days, Merlin. I
 won't allow it, so don't give me
 that look.

MERLIN shakes his his head trying to clear his thoughts from
 spiraling.

MERLIN
 I'm not giving you a look.

ARTHUR
 Yes, you are. Look - .

ARTHUR sits up and gently presses his forehead to MERLIN's.

ARTHUR
 - I'm here.

MERLIN closes his eyes and savors the moment.

Fade to black.

MERLIN (V.O.)
 I know.

INT. HOUSE

MERLIN, ARTHUR and WALLACE stand over the body of a middle aged man. Cause of death seemingly the same as Anita Arash: a suddenly stopped heart. The man's wife is telling them about her encounter with the killer.

WOMAN

'e threw me against the wall, 'e did! No, not with 'is 'ands! Wif 'is eyes! They glowed up - gold! An' then 'e just ran out the door!

WALLACE

OK ok, let's get you to a doct-

WOMAN

What? No, I don't need'a 'ospital! Or to sit down! I told'ya, gold eyes! I got the bump to prove it!

WALLACE turns back to ARTHUR and MERLIN.

WALLACE

So you still wanna tell me this isn't magic? Must be your *friend* again.

MERLIN and ARTHUR glare at WALLACE. Another officer appears at their side.

OFFICER

Sir, I think we've found another victim in the cellar.

ARTHUR looks to MERLIN questioningly, but he is just as shocked.

WALLACE

(thrown)
A body?

OFFICER

No, sir. She's alive.

WALLACE

Show me.

INT. BASEMENT

WALLACE cuts through the crowd of people in the basement, ARTHUR and MERLIN on his heels. As they break through the crowd they see a woman on the ground, turned away from them, a medic checking her vital signs. She is distinctly not of this time - she is wearing a white tunic and an animal-fur shawl shoved into a thick leather belt with dark slacks, and faded boots caked in dirt. ARTHUR narrows his eyes at the mess of dark curls on her head - there is something distinctively familiar about her. The medic moves her hand and in the motion some of the hair falls from the victim's face. All the air is knocked from ARTHUR's lungs.

ARTHUR

Guinevere!

Before ARTHUR even realizes what he is doing he is on his knees grabbing GWEN's body from the medic and supporting her on his lap, cupping her cheek with his palm. MERLIN leans down to examine her, extremely wary. He goes to touch her forehead but retracts his hand.

ARTHUR

Merlin, how - ?

WALLACE

I take it you two know her?

(lowly)

Guinevere? You don't mean..?

WALLACE clears his throat.

WALLACE

OK, everyone clear the room, give us some space.

MERLIN

Arthur, look at me. We have to get her to the flat.

ARTHUR scoops GWEN up to carry her out. MERLIN looks up at them, an emotion too big to name dulls his eyes.

WALLACE

Wait, your flat? Hold on. She should get to a hospital.

MERLIN

Yeah yeah, we'll get her there.

WALLACE

Bullshit, you will.

MERLIN

Taking her to hospital would only complicate things. There are no records of her in the system. She's better off with us – and probably safer.

ARTHUR

Safer? From what? ...Mordred?!

ARTHUR's grip on GWEN intensifies, whether from the weight of holding her or from MERLIN's words he isn't sure.

WALLACE

(giving up)

You're just gonna walk out with her? What am I supposed to tell everyone else?

MERLIN

(shrugs)

Make something up.

WALLACE

Mhm. Always up to me to save your ass.

MERLIN

Thank you, Wallace.

MERLIN turns to ARTHUR and the two begin towards the exit.
MERLIN turns back to WALLACE:

MERLIN

Oh, we'll need to borrow your car.

WALLACE

My *what*? No way!

MERLIN

We took the bike over. It can't transport three people, much less when one of them is unconscious! Take these. Come round tomorrow morning and we'll trade back.

MERLIN tosses his motorbike keys at WALLACE, he stumbles but catches them.

WALLACE

Fine. You owe me.

WALLACE pats down his pockets, unable to find his car keys. MERLIN holds them up making a jingling noise with them. WALLACE blinks then laughs.

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MERLIN
Come on, Arthur.

MERLIN walks past ARTHUR, giving GWEN another small suspicious look on his way past and ARTHUR pretends not to notice, they leave.

INT. MERLIN AND ARTHUR'S FLAT

GWEN is laying on the couch still unconscious, MERLIN is sitting in the armchair watching her intently and ARTHUR is pacing in circles.

MERLIN
(in his thoughts)
I don't understand. The last time
I saw Gwen she was old. Why is she
as young as the day we first met.
Why is she alive?! ...if she even
is alive.

ARTHUR sharply turns to MERLIN.

ARTHUR
(angrily)
What do you mean if she even is
alive?! Of course she's alive!

MERLIN
She could be an illusion. Or a
Shade. Maybe this is all part of
Mordred's plan. I don't know.

MERLIN guiltily hopes that this isn't really GWEN. Because if it is then destiny meant for it, meant for her to be The Once and Future Queen, and that meant... suddenly ARTHUR's patience runs out.

ARTHUR
(barks)
Wake her up!

MERLIN sighs and steadies himself. He kneels in front of GWEN and places his hands above her forehead as his eyes glow. He gets up and moves to the side, ARTHUR taking his place as GWEN begins to stir.

GWEN
Arthur? It can't be.

GWEN reaches out and strokes his cheek, ARTHUR leans into the touch and MERLIN swallows hard.

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ARTHUR
 (full of emotion)
 It's me.

ARTHUR's eyes are glistening and red rimmed. GWEN sits up and wraps her arms around his neck, ARTHUR hugs back holding her tight around the waist, his eyes closed and face buried in her hair. MERLIN looks away, fighting hard to ignore the emotions inside. GWEN breaks the hug, but keeps her hands on ARTHUR's shoulders. He doesn't let go of her hand.

GWEN
 (remembering)
 You cannot be here! Camelot needs you! It is in danger of being captured. Merlin was certain you'd return to save it. Arthur, he waits for you.

GWEN thinks she is dead, that she was in the afterlife, and her husband was the first face to greet her. ARTHUR's gaze flickers behind her to MERLIN. Slowly, she turns in the direction of his eyes.

GWEN
 (in disbelief)
 Merlin? I don't understand.

MERLIN walks around the couch and kneels down beside ARTHUR.

MERLIN
 (genuinely smiling)
 It's good to have you back.

The woman before him was GWEN. There was no question about it. MERLIN is torn between joy at seeing his most valued friend, and self-hatred for wishing it hadn't been her.

GWEN
 Back?

MERLIN
 What is the last thing you remember?

GWEN
 (thinking hard)
 The Saxons were invading Camelot. I told you to leave the city. That is all.

MERLIN
 You died.

GWEN
(in surprise)
As I was speaking to you?

MERLIN's stomach drops, his eyes begin to sting, he can't look at her.

ARTHUR
(whisper)
Merlin?

MERLIN snuffles and blinks the tears from his eyes.

MERLIN
(quickly)
You've been dead a long time.

GWEN
And Camelot?

ARTHUR
(mournfully)
Gone.

MERLIN
You've got a lot to catch up on.

GWEN
How long have I been dead?

MERLIN
1,500 years. Give or take.

GWEN is shocked, she stammers for a moment unsure of how to react. She collects herself, regaining her queenly composure - chin held high and eyes full of understanding, anxiety, disbelief, pain and acceptance.

GWEN
1,500 years.

She turns to ARTHUR.

GWEN
How long have you been back?

ARTHUR
Almost three years.

GWEN turns to MERLIN.

GWEN
And you?

MERLIN swallows hard and looks away.

MERLIN

I never left.

GWEN is shocked, perhaps even more shocked than hearing how long she had been dead for.

GWEN

Merlin. I can't even begin to imagine. I'm so sorry.

(suddenly realizing)

Wait, Arthur you've been back for three years now? Merlin told me destiny would bring you back in the time of Albion's greatest need..?

MERLIN

Yes. I don't know what makes this time any different though.

(more to himself)

I've seen it all before. Far too many times. War. Famine. Death and destruction. This might be the worst, I guess. I don't know. The world has practically ended, but I still don't know why Avalon sent him back this time.

ARTHUR removes his hand from GWEN's and gently pats MERLIN's knee for a moment before quickly pulling his hand away. GWEN pretends not to notice.

ARTHUR

Mordred wasn't here before, though.

GWEN

Mordred?!

ARTHUR

(sighs)

Yes. He's been back for about three months now, as best as we can tell. He's been killing people, presumably for some sort of magic ritual, but we haven't been able to gather any information of where he is or what he is doing.

MERLIN gestures towards GWEN.

MERLIN

Until now.

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GWEN

Is that why I'm back? He brought me?

MERLIN

We can only assume. But it makes sense. Mordred killed that man and then you appear in his basement? But for what reason? And why would he leave you behind? What is he working at??

MERLIN gets up in frustration and runs his hand through his hair. Both GWEN and ARTHUR watch him, they don't have the answers to his questions. GWEN lets out a small yawn.

ARTHUR

You should get some rest, it's been a long day.

ARTHUR stands up and reaches his hand out to GWEN.

MERLIN

The flat across the hall hasn't been used in a long time but it has a bed and all the basics you'll need for tonight at least.

ARTHUR

I'll help you.

ARTHUR and GWEN leave the flat. MERLIN watches them as they leave and continues to stare at the door for a long moment after it's closed. He sighs and walks towards the kitchen and puts on a kettle for tea. He can hear the murmurs of GWEN and ARTHUR talking through the thin walls. He takes in a shaky breath and closes his eyes against the building pressure. The talking stops and MERLIN hears the door to the neighboring flat open and close. He quickly wipes his eyes and makes himself look busy making tea as ARTHUR re-enters their flat. ARTHUR walks towards MERLIN.

ARTHUR

She's resting. I doubt she'll be able to sleep tonight.

MERLIN

(very small smile)
You hardly slept for a month after you'd gotten back.

ARTHUR

Yes, well, I *had* been sleeping for over a thousand years.

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MERLIN

But you cut into my schedule. I was ready to throw your arse back into Avalon if you didn't give me some peace and quiet.

ARTHUR

Hey!

MERLIN

You where convinced you where under a spell and demanded I lift it! You threw a tantrum like a child who wasn't allowed sweets before dinner! You *threw* things at me!

ARTHUR

Yeah yeah ok I get it. But you also treated me like a child!

(mocking)

"No Arthur you can't duel that man for cutting you in line", "For the last time automatic doors aren't magic", "Stop walking into doors, not all of them are automatic". Or freaking out whenever I walked away from you for two seconds!

MERLIN

You gave me a heart attack every time! I thought I had lost you for good again.

(softly)

Or that you had never actually been there in the first place and I had gone crazy... again.

There is a moment of silence before ARTHUR turns the conversation back to GWEN and the situation at hand.

ARTHUR

But she wasn't asleep (?).

MERLIN

No. She was dead.

A wave of guilt washes over MERLIN as he remembers his last moments with GWEN. He has carried guilt over it his whole life.

ARTHUR

What you did, Merlin - I don't blame you. And I know she doesn't, either. You had no choice.

(MORE)

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ARTHUR (CONT'D)
If I had been in your position, I
would have done the same.

GWEN must have put the pieces together and talked it over with
ARTHUR.

MERLIN
(weakly smiling)
No. You would have found a way to
save her. To save everyone.

ARTHUR
(frowning)
Did you do what you thought was
right at the time?

MERLIN
Yes, that's the problem, Arthur.
Everything that has happened was
because I had choices, and every
time I chose wrong. I listened to
my heart. I didn't think. Not of
the consequences. Not of anything.

ARTHUR
(confused)
So, you're saying you don't listen
to your heart anymore?

MERLIN
It's what's best.

MERLIN didn't want to have this conversation anymore but was at
a loss at how to end it. Luckily he is saved by the tea kettle
whistle. He pours three cups and pushes two towards ARTHUR.

MERLIN
Chamomile. It should help her
relax. And you.

MERLIN stairs down at his cup.

MERLIN
(softly)
I'm going to sleep. You should,
too.

ARTHUR
I'm not tired. I think I'll stay
up a little longer.

MERLIN
(bitterly)
You mean, you don't know whose bed
to sleep in tonight. Mine or your
wife's.

ARTHUR's eyes snap up to MERLIN, who still hasn't looked up
from his cup.

ARTHUR
(wounded)
That's not fair.

MERLIN
(guilty)
I know. I'm -

MERLIN rubs his eyes to give an excuse for their redness.

MERLIN
You should go be with her.

ARTHUR looks like he is about to protest.

MERLIN
She needs you. She's got a lot to
process, and you know what that's
like. Help her. I wouldn't know
how.

ARTHUR
(shrugs sheepishly)
You did just fine with me.

MERLIN
You still know better than I do.

After a long moment MERLIN looks down at the wedding band on
his finger.

MERLIN
Are you going to tell her?

ARTHUR
Not tonight. We will. Soon. But...
You're right, she's got enough to
think about right now. We
shouldn't add to it.

MERLIN tenses his jaw to keep it from quivering, he nods but is
unable to meet ARTHUR's eyes. The air is tense as MERLIN removes
his wedding ring and holds it in his palm.

MERLIN

We shouldn't wear these until then. You know how observant she is. She'll catch on.

MERLIN reaches out to ARTHUR, urging him to hand over his ring as well.

ARTHUR

(scoffs)

That seems dishonest. I'm not wearing my ring for her, either.

MERLIN re-offers his upturned hand. ARTHUR sighs and slides off his ring. Inwardly MERLIN's heart shatters into a million pieces, outwardly he doesn't make a sound. ARTHUR places his ring in MERLIN's hand.

ARTHUR

For now.

MERLIN hums and nods in what he hopes is a casual manner, ARTHUR opens his mouth to speak but changes his mind.

ARTHUR

Goodnight, Merlin.

ARTHUR takes the two mugs and leaves their flat. MERLIN looks down at his untouched tea, lets out a heavy sigh and dumps it in the kitchen sink. He slams his fists down on the counter, staring at his hand holding the rings as his knuckles turn white from squeezing them. He pushes off the counter, rubs his temples and rapidly blinks his eyes as he shakes his head to prevent the tears from escaping. He turns towards his bedroom, enters and closes the door behind him to block out GWEN and ARTHUR's distant muttering. He goes to his dresser, places the rings in the top drawer under some shirts and takes two of his sleeping pills. He crosses to his bed and falls into it, curling up and pulling the blankets around him. After a moment he realizes the lights are still on, he sighs and turns them off with magic. In the darkness ARTHUR and GWEN's voices seem louder. MERLIN lets out a strangled sob before losing the battle he had been fighting all night and cries himself to sleep.

FADE TO BLACK

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