SWORD OF AVALON

A feature screenplay — Fantasy / Adventure / Comedy

Third Place, Sci-Fi/Fantasy/Horror —
19th Annual StoryPros Awards

The Lady of the Lake gives Excalibur to the wrong guy — an emotionally-jaded Florida bartender who must shield her from the vengeful wizard Merlin while learning that true chivalry isn't about heroics, but sacrifice.

In the vein of *The Princess Bride*, *Stardust*, and *Enchanted* — a modern fantasy adventure where Arthurian legend collides (literally) with a guy who just wanted a quiet vacation.

The following is the opening of the script. If it grabs you, the whole thing is one email away.

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EXT. BRITISH LAKE SHORE - DAY (537 A.D.)

SUPER: "BRITAIN, 537 A.D."

Murky fog rolls across a dull gray lake surrounded by thick, dark forest. Dirty, bloody, and battered, SIR BEDIVERE (30's), a knight of the Round Table, staggers to the lake shore. His ragged breaths crystallize into mist.

His bleeding hands desperately grip a blade of shining blue steel: *Excalibur*.

Haunted, confused, Bedivere readies to throw the sword into the lake. No. He can't. *Excalibur* is just too stunning.

A gust of wind whisks back matted hair from his eyes. It's now or never. Bedivere HOWLS furiously at the injustice and hurls *Excalibur* toward the center of the lake.

A lithe FEMALE ARM, clad in white samite, suddenly THRUSTS UP from the water. It CATCHES the sword by its pommel. Swings it in a circle three times. Pulls it under the surface.

A shaft of sunlight stabs through the fog. Bedivere sweeps his arms open, bathing in the affirming glow. Awed, he genuflects and crosses himself.

For a moment, tranquility reigns.

His task complete, Bedivere finally rises and trudges back to the darkened forest. Behind him,

THE LAKE

froths and bubbles. VIVIEN (20's, hauntingly beautiful), the Lady of the Lake, rises directly up from the water as though raised on a pedestal. Her fair skin, nightfall black hair, and shimmering white dress dry instantly in a magical breeze.

She observes Bedivere, her gaze darkening.

EXT. BATTLEFIELD - DAY

Bedivere reaches a large clearing in the forest. Once green, it's now a muddy ruin littered with the bodies of the dead and wounded. More than men and horses have been lost in this battle; here a dream has died.

Bedivere drops to a knee by KING ARTHUR (late 30's), weakly propped against a sheltering tree. Arthur's battle helmet is all but crushed - he's suffered a mortal blow.

BEDIVERE
Arthur. Arthur!

Arthur jolts awake, struggling to focus his eyes.

ARTHUR
Bedivere?

BEDIVERE
I have done as you commanded, sire.

ARTHUR
You falsely claimed so before. Pray do not deceive me again.

BEDIVERE
I swear it, my King. Your deed is done, though it cost me my heart.

ARTHUR
If so, tell me: what did you see?

BEDIVERE
I hurled *Excalibur* toward the lake. A woman's arm emerged from the water and caught the sword by the hilt. She brandished it three times then pulled it beneath the water.

Arthur is visibly relieved.

ARTHUR
Then *Excalibur* is at last beyond the reach of Morgaine La Feé.
(MORE)

ARTHUR (CONT'D)
You have served me well, trusted knight. Now, I can rest. Finally.

Arthur's eyelids flutter. Bedivere struggles to right him.

BEDIVERE
Arthur! What torment, to be so powerless to aid my friend and king. If only Merlin yet lived! He could surely mend your wounds.

ARTHUR
No. This is to be my fate. Merlin was powerful, but the healing ways were beyond even his ken.

Arthur GROANS, pain the only thing keeping him conscious.

BEDIVERE
There must be something I can do.

ARTHUR
There is. One final task, dear friend. Deliver me with haste to the water's edge. Summon the last of your strength and speed - there may yet be time.

Bedivere does not question. With surprising tenderness, he hefts Arthur across his shoulder and makes his way back to the haunting trees and underbrush.

BRITISH LAKE SHORE

A small barge rests on the bank with FOUR LADIES on board: Vivien, cloaked in blue, and three others wearing cloaks of black, including MORGAINE LA FEÉ (early 30's, sharp-featured but striking). She pulls back her hood, revealing long fire-red hair. She gestures briskly to Bedivere.

MORGAINE
Gently to us, brave knight.

Distraught, Bedivere delivers his king to Morgaine and Vivien. Morgaine sits and rests Arthur's head in her lap.

MORGAINE (CONT'D)
Brother. Look what all this has wrought! Your wound has gone cold.

BEDIVERE
Dare not feign concern, Morgaine! This tragedy lies at your feet.
(MORE)

BEDIVERE (CONT'D)
England's existence is bound to her king; if he dies, then I so swear-

MORGAINE
Yes, you'll slay me and put my head on a pike or something equally savage and justified. Tell me, with your very kingdom at stake, shall we dally here and argue at the cost of Arthur's very life?

Vivien steps between them to stave off a battle. Her entrancing emerald eyes seek and hold Bedivere's gaze.

VIVIEN
Sir Bedivere. Hear me! Your concern is admirable, but your king will be safe and cared for by myself and the Ladies here.

MORGAINE
Yes, listen to the Lady of the Lake. You entrusted her with *Excalibur*. Is not your king's life at least as precious?

Bedivere backs down, though eyes Morgaine with distrust.

The OTHER TWO LADIES take up poles and push the barge out into the lake.

Anguished, Bedivere bolts to the water's edge, but stops as his boots kick up muddy splashes of water. The barge disappears into the mist. His shoulders sag with frustration.

Vivien's voice haunts him from the distance.

VIVIEN (V.O.)
We journey now to Avalon. If you hear no more of Arthur, pray for his soul. Pray for us all.

EXT. FOGGY LAKE - DAY (PRESENT)

The haze hangs like a quiet blanket over the tranquil lake. Arthur and the barge have passed, as has time. The quiet is broken by the CRACKLE of an INTERCOM.

CLAIRE (V.O.)
We now venture into King Arthur's Avalon, rich in myth and folklore.

Claire speaks with a classic British infliction, very stylized as a neutral accent of a professional tour guide.

As she speaks, her voice becomes tinny and modulated as if broadcast over outdoor speakers.

CLAIRE (V.O.)
Imagine distant times, where history fades into legend, when Glastonbury Tor was an isolated island surrounded by sea.

A modern day tour boat gently parts the fog and drifts past.

SUPER: "England: Modern Day."

EXT. TOUR BOAT - DAY

The boat is crowded with various TOURISTS; TRAVELING FAMILIES with CRANKY BABIES struggle to see through the pea soup; OLDER TOURISTS sigh at the wasted use of their savings; BORED LOCALS shrug indifference.

At the boat's helm, bubbly CLAIRE ASHFORD (30's, cute) continues her cheery dissertation.

CLAIRE
Next we'll take a fascinating tour through Glastonbury Abby itself, fabled last resting place of King Arthur and his Queen, Guinevere.

Tourist WALT NOBLE (hiding in his mid-30's) holds a cellphone vertically in front of his face to snap a photo. He gives up. Lowering the phone, the reason is obvious - his glasses are completely fogged over.

Squinting, he rubs the steam from his lenses. He puts his specs back on, but his situation has not improved. He grumbles with an obvious MIDWESTERN AMERICAN ACCENT.

WALT
I still can't see squat.

Two marginally sinister British henchmen, ARCHER (30's, gaunt and shifty) and PIKEMAN (40, living testimonial for weight training), take his comment as a cue. They shift from aloof to uncomfortably, aggressively friendly.

ARCHER
First time here, eh? Nice of the weather to go all cliché.

PIKEMAN
Yah. It ain't always this fogged up. Sometimes it just rains.

WALT
If this was a horror movie, here's where the Loch Ness monster would bite the boat in half.

A pang of concern washes the color from Pikeman's face.

PIKEMAN
What, are we close to Loch Ness?

WALT
Oh, uh, no. It's a few hundred miles that way - in Scotland.

ARCHER
Git. He's just taking the piss.

CLAIRE
Perhaps the handsome lad from the States with the keen sense of geography can guide us through this pea soup. Care to give us a go?

The tourists LAUGH. Walt politely waves them off. Archer elbows him in the ribs.

ARCHER
I think she fancies you. You ought to give *her* a go.

WALT
She's basically asked me to dinner three times already.

PIKEMAN
And you ain't said "yes" yet?

ARCHER
Hey, shut it, mate. Maybe he bats for the other team and don't like the ladies.
(to Walt)
It's not our place to judge. Freedom of choice and all that.

WALT
No. I am ALL about the ladies. That's usually where the trouble begins, if you know what I mean.

PIKEMAN
Who says you can't sneak out the back window after having a bonk? I've done it.

Claire has been gleefully eavesdropping. Her accent shifts - less BBC documentary, more *Saturday night at the pub*. Real.

CLAIRE
That sounds like something I can help with, as the actress said to the bishop. Fancy a drink later?

Archer holds up four fingers and wiggles them. *Four times.*

WALT
Oh. Uhm, really, thank you, but -

Before Walt can work up an excuse, he HEARS a sudden STRANGE, QUIET BUZZING. He shrugs it off. Visibly relaxes.

WALT (CONT'D)
You know what? Yes. Did I say that?

CLAIRE
I've the entire boat as witnesses!

A small round of both appreciative and annoyed CLAPPING.

EXT. FOGGY SHORE - DAY

The tour boat abruptly WASHES AGROUND next to a dock.

CLAIRE
Ladies and gents, we're back at dock. Let's disembark and take a look at the Abbey, shall we?

TOUR BOAT

A HURRIED MALE PASSENGER pushes past Archer and Pikeman, almost bumping Walt overboard. Archer catches Walt's arm, swings him away from the water.

ARCHER
Careful, mate.

Pikeman puts a massive paw on Hurried Passenger's chest. Stops him cold.

PIKEMAN
Ain't no rush. Wait your turn.

Pikeman effortlessly shoves the passenger to the back of the boat; he nearly flips over the edge. Archer pats Walt's arm.

ARCHER
You OK, then?

WALT
Yeah, yeah. Thanks, fellas.

ARCHER
That's OK. Can't have you getting all wet now, can we?

CLAIRE
Yes, do leave that for me.

EXT. DOWN THE SHORE - DAY

A raven settles on a branch, fluffs its wings. Watching Walt with keen interest, Vivien pulls her blue cloak back from her head. A brief green sparkle dances around her fingers as she rubs them together - the source of the BUZZING NOISE.

EXT. BRITISH PUB - NIGHT

Patrons seek out the comforting glow of a corner British Pub.

INT. PUB - NIGHT

The atmosphere is warm and jolly. NOISY CONVERSATIONS intermingle. A CROWD at the bar raise pints in a LOUD TOAST.

TABLE BY THE WINDOW

Walt drums his fingers while he checks out the pub. Claire squeezes through the crowd holding two mugs of beer.

CLAIRE
Here you go, love.

WALT
Where I work we have these special people called "servers," so you don't *have* to get your own drinks.

CLAIRE
Moan, moan, moan. Take your Stout. Puts hair on your chest.

WALT
It's a good thing I like hairy-chested women.

CLAIRE
So you *do* fancy me then?

WALT
Cheers.

He toasts her. Her laugh is genuine and inviting.

CLAIRE
I could have a day off tomorrow and be your personal tour guide, if you're up for it.

WALT
What do you have in mind?

CLAIRE
How about the Tower of London, or taking a pop over to Salisbury Plain and visit Stonehenge which you Americans seem to fancy so bloody much?

WALT
Yes! Yes to all of that. But you know what I want to do first?

CLAIRE
"Me?" she says hopefully.

WALT
I'd like to go back to the lake. To take some photos without all the fog. If I don't bring back pics, my regulars at Captain Grady's will never believe I took the trip.

CLAIRE
It's your hard-earned vacation money you're wasting.

WALT
Not really. I won an all-expense paid vacation playing trivia.

CLAIRE
You're having me on! A proper vacation just for being smart?

WALT
That's what I do. I pour drinks and I know things.

CLAIRE
Well, here's another reward for your big brain. My flat’s just up the road. I've got a bottle full of something nice, and a dress full of something nicer. What do you say?

Walt feels a stab of panic and chokes it back.

WALT
I appreciate the offer, but- I'm not great at keeping things casual. I'm like relationship kryptonite.

CLAIRE
It's just a bit of fun. It's not like I want to marry you or anything, is it?

WALT
I have that effect on women.

Claire tries to comprehend the apparent rejection. She quickly comes to a horrifying realization.

CLAIRE
Oh God, you don't have a... I mean, you're healthy, yes?

WALT
What? Yes, clean bill of health. That's not it.

CLAIRE
And everything still works?

WALT
God, yes! I mean...

Now she gets it. Claire takes this VERY personally.

CLAIRE
Well, that's me told, isn't it?

WALT
No. No, it's not like that.

CLAIRE
Then why didn't you stop me from throwing myself at you? I've clearly misread the situation entirely. Aren't I the fool?

WALT
You're not- I'm just totally over-thinking this. It's become a habit.

Claire tosses back the rest of her pint. She pushes away from the table. Rejected. Bitter.

CLAIRE
Right, well... message received loud and clear. That's it, then?

EXT. BRITISH LAKE - MORNING

Twin ravens fly over the same foggy lake. Below, Walt sits in a rental boat. Alone. Very alone.

CLAIRE (V.O.)
Sure you aren't making a mistake?

Walt ignores the line of his unattended fishing rod drifting in the water behind him. Mad at himself. Stewing.

WALT
No, I'm not sure!

SMALL FISHING CANOE

In the murky distance, pretending to be "inconspicuous," Archer and Pikeman watch Walt complain.

WALT (CONT'D)
What were you thinking, what were you thinking?

WALT'S BOAT

WALT (CONT'D)
Idiot. Just say no. You want to be left alone, this is what happens.

He gets a bite! The line on Walt's fishing pole jerks tight. The pole gets YANKED out of the boat. Skis across the water. Finally gets dragged under.

Walt, dumbfounded.

WALT (CONT'D)
I don't even like fishing.

Walt stands in frustration. Catches his balance. Works his way to the back of the boat.

WALT (CONT'D)
This whole country sucks. I'm done!

Walt tugs the motor's pull-cord. The motor RUMBLES and GURGLES. Refuses to start. Then again.

WALT (CONT'D)
No way. Are you serious right now?

Walt fiddles with the engine. Behind his back, the water in front of the boat begins to GLOW.

This is the moment of legends. Vivien's arm, wearing sparkling white samite, breaks the surface of the water. It wields the sword *EXCALIBUR*!

PIKEMAN AND ARCHER

jolt alert. *This* is what they've waited for.

WALT'S BOAT

drifts toward the arm and sword. Walt barks at the engine.

WALT (CONT'D)
You are not stranding me out here!

With a final yank, Walt successfully starts the motor. The boat immediately LURCHES FORWARD! Walt immediately lurches BACKWARDS. Over the edge and INTO THE WATER!

The boat picks up speed and SLAMS directly into the arm holding the sword! It flops into the water. Vivien bobs to the surface, face down, wearing her heavy cloak.

PIKEMAN AND ARCHER

jolt again! This is *not* what they've waited for! Fearful of blame, Archer motions for Pikeman to take up an oar and they paddle quietly further back into the fog.

THE LAKE

Walt breaks the surface. He spews water as his boat putters off into the distance.

WALT (CONT'D)
Mother F -

He drifts into the floating body of Vivien.

WALT (CONT'D)
Oh, shit. I hit somebody.

Walt swims behind Vivien, pulling her into the standard water rescue "cross-chest carry." He paddles backward.

EXT. THE SHORE

Walt drags her up on land. Blood is smeared down the side of her face.

WALT
Oh God, don't be dead.

He administers marginally competent CPR. After a few attempts, Vivien coughs up a lung-full of water and wakes.

She speaks weakly in OLD ENGLISH.

VIVIEN
Ic don na laðian gyst mann cyssan min self buton gecynde alyfan.

WALT
Great. I hit the one person in England who doesn't speak English.

...and that's where it stops being a vacation.

What Walt doesn't know: the woman he fished out of the lake is bound to a sword that everyone wants. Magic he doesn't believe in, a romance he can't trust, and a 1,500-year-old grudge are all about to wash ashore behind her. The story only gets stranger, funnier, and more dangerous from here.

Want to read the rest?

The full script (and a guy who pours drinks and knows things) is one email away: **creative@rleebrown.com**