

Arthur Lives!



Modern Tales of the Once and Future King



by Jason Tondro



**Requires True20 Adventure Roleplaying
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Arthur Lives!

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DEDICATION

This one's for Mom, who gave me my first book of Arthurian legend.



INTRODUCTION

Arthur Lives! is a True20 roleplaying game of supernatural adventure, conspiratorial intrigue, and occult mystery. Heroes and villains from Arthurian myth have been reincarnated, coming back to life in the cinematic present. At first, these individuals don't remember their former lives, but as they begin to recognize each other, old feuds and tragic affairs resurface. Why has the King returned now? Does some unseen danger threaten? And even if the answer is yes, will these legendary heroes be able to put their old grievances aside long enough to oppose it?

Players in Arthur Lives! make characters who are, secretly, these reincarnated figures from Arthurian legend. In the traditional campaign set-up, the heroes are not aware of their former lives at the start of play. Recognizing yourself, learning who you truly are and the nature of your new existence, is one of the first major turning points for your character. As you grow in power and regain more of your memories of the first Arthurian Age, you may recover some of the magical artifacts you once wielded, you will meet old friends and family, and you will be confronted with some of the same adversaries. But these meetings seldom go as planned; friends may turn out to be rivals or even enemies, and an old nemesis may be your only ally. Slowly you part the curtain that separates you from the truth of your rebirth, and your quest for knowledge is always hand-in-hand with a fight for survival.

There is room for great diversity when it comes to heroic type, from action stars to academics. Government agents, New Age philosophers, conmen, university professors, bounty hunters, students, Army vets, actors down on their luck, gamblers, rogue cops, by-the-book cops and, yes, the occasional medieval recreationist are all welcome. Because all the characters are tied together by their shared Arthurian heritage, you can even make a character who would normally avoid adventure at all costs and who has no training for such heroics, but who is nevertheless drawn into stories related to her former life. The race, gender, and social class of your incarnation is up to you, the player; Lancelot used to be a French white aristocrat, but this time he may come back as an Israeli secret agent, an African mother with two kids, or a beggar on the streets of Chicago. Arthur has gone viral.

This is a supernatural world, full not only with vampires, ghosts, and monsters under the bed, but with relics, dangers, and spells from Arthurian legend which have manifested as "echoes" in the 21st century. Stories are painted with a broad palette: paranormal mysteries (X-Files, Fringe), modern magic (The Dresden Files, Harry Potter), supernatural thrillers (Anita Blake, True Blood), conspiracy theories (Holy Blood, Holy Grail or Angels & Demons), the rich vein of our own occult tradition (the Golden Dawn, John Dee), and of course the many legends of Arthur and his knights, which can serve as inspiration and initial outlines for player-driven stories which end with unexpected outcomes and surprising twists.

For make no mistake, if Arthur and his knights are living second lives, they are also empowered to change their destiny. At its heart, Arthur Lives! is really a story about second chances;

given the opportunity to learn from your mistakes, will you choose to live this second life different than the one before? Can you do better? Or perhaps the real lesson is that, in this life as much as the next one, your mistakes are the only things that you can truly call yours. Perhaps we should focus less on the do-over, and more on being true to ourselves.

It's your call. But while you're thinking, you're going to be shot at by hired assassins, pursued by Masonic FBI agents and Templar wizards, stalked by the vampire menace, hunted by chimera crawling across the Faerie Veil and, ultimately, confronted by another version of your own self – one who thinks she's got more right to live than you do. Arthur Lives! has its cerebral moments, but they alternate with high-adrenaline action in the Hollywood tradition. Do try to keep up.

WHAT YOU HAVE

You are holding the first of three books which together make up Arthur Lives! This is the Player's Guide, which includes all the rules for character creation and magic. If you are not intending to Narrate an AL! campaign, this book is all you need.

Character creation rules are first; AL! uses the customary three classes for True20 Roleplaying, but each player also chooses a Path that includes game rules which simulate the character's first life in the Arthurian Age. Ten characters from Arthurian myth are singled out for special treatment; you will recognize some of them, but others will be surprises. Chapter Two is a small collection of new feats, many of which are options for magic-using characters in the setting. Chapter Three covers magic in more detail, including a new supernatural philosophy with special rules that model the way magic appears to work in Arthurian myth. The magic chapter also includes all kinds of other things which Warriors and Experts will use, including magical treasures and powerful potions brewed through alchemy and lore rather than with powers. Finally, there is a chronicle of important events in the first few years of Arthur's reign. This summary of events should help you roleplay characters who come from this key period in Arthur's history.

The Arthur Lives! Narrator's Guide delves into things which players either should not know or do not need to know, including the secret history of the setting, information on the magical cosmology of Heaven, Hell, and Faerie, and plenty of advice on organizing and Narrating the campaign. Many options are given for unusual campaigns that veer away from the traditional story of Arthur Lives! Game statistics are included for various allies and enemies. A third book, The Best Knight in the World, is a complete introductory adventure designed to bring a diverse group of characters together and lead one or two of them to recognition of their true nature. Neither of these books are required for players, but Narrators will want to investigate them.

OTHER TRUE20 MATERIAL

Arthur Lives! makes casual use of many True20 resources, and it does not reproduce those rules here. Besides True20 Roleplaying and the True20 Companion (which was combined with True20 Roleplaying for the Revised Edition), you will also want

access to the Warrior's, Expert's, and Adept's Handbook. Narrators will need the True20 Bestiary, an invaluable resource that includes statistics for all the most common Arthurian monsters (by which we mean giants, dragons, and demons). If you see a feat or power in this book that is marked with an asterisk (*) it means that power or feat came from a book other than this one or True20 Roleplaying. If you don't have the rules for the feat or power, you will want to swap it out for something you do have rules for and which seems appropriate to the character.

CHAPTER ONE: CHARACTERS

MAKING YOUR CHARACTER

Making a character for Arthur Lives! is much like any other True20 game, though you will want to ask yourself how your character fits into the story of Arthur's return. Are you the reincarnation of a famous knight? After all, an Arthurian game without an Arthur, Guinevere, or Merlin is definitely missing something. Or were you one of the little-known supporting characters from the story, only now getting your chance in the spotlight? Arthur Lives! has room both for "footnote" characters from the legend who only appear in one or two stories, and for original characters of your own creation who lived in the Arthurian Age but who have been unknown to us until now. Does your character know about the supernatural and the strange, or has her life been ordinary up until now? The world of Arthur Lives! is rich with secret occult activity, conspiracies, and secret societies – groups which your character may know about, or even be part of! Although most AL! campaigns will begin with heroes who are ignorant of their status as reincarnations of Arthurian figures, your game may be different, and your character may already know who and what he really is.

Follow these steps to make your Arthur Lives! character:

- 1. Decide your incarnation.** Who were you in your previous life? You can select any character from the myth. There are special rules given for knights, for magic-wielding enchanters, for kings, and for the damosels and ladies who so often accompanied knights on their quest. You do not need to pick a character who is memorable or famous; you might select a little-known character who gives you more personal freedom and room to be creative. You could even go one step farther and create an entirely new Arthurian character – someone whose name is no longer recorded in the myth, but who had his own story when he was alive. Now that character has returned with the rest of the Arthurian cast. Besides the rules for knights, damosels, kings and enchanters, ten characters of great importance to Arthur's early life have been signaled out for special treatment. Regardless of which incarnation you choose, your choice may have some prerequisites; note these prerequisites for later reference. Your character will not be able to recognize herself – and thus become aware of her true nature as

an Arthurian reincarnation – until she fulfills these prerequisites.

- 2. Choose your Ability Scores.** Characters in Arthur Lives! have the same six points to divide among ability scores as other True20 characters do. If your character is 6th level or higher, you will have extra points to allocate.

- 3. Pick your Role and Core Ability.** Arthur Lives! uses the three core roles in True20 Roleplaying. You are not required to stick to only one role, but most knights will have levels of warrior, enchanters will need levels in adept, and damosels will rely on levels of expert. Your Narrator may allow you to select an unusual core ability, but AL! presumes that most warriors will have Determination and most experts will have Expertise. Enchanters should select the Supernatural Philosophy of "Enchantment" and the Irresistible Magic core ability, but if your adept is not an enchanter you will probably have The Talent instead. (See Chapter Three for more on magic, enchantment, and supernatural philosophies.) Your choice of incarnation may also have an influence on your role or core ability.

- 4. Pick a Background.** All AL! characters are human beings, and you will not pick a background that is based on a non-human race. Instead, select a background which models your character's life before she begins her heroic adventure as a reincarnation from Arthurian myth. There are many backgrounds to choose from, but the ones provided in the "Horror Adventures" section of the True20 Companion or True20 Roleplaying, Revised Edition are particularly useful. Your background will give you one or two bonus feats, some bonus skills (which you will get 4 ranks in), and some favored feats. Note these favored feats for later because, while you do not get them for free as you do bonus feats, you might select them later.

- 5. Select your starting feats.** You already have one or two bonus feats from your background; now you get at least four more for your role and level. Remember your character can already use simple weapons like knives, baseball bats, and pepper spray, but if you want to use a gun or an archaic weapon like a sword or bow you will want to select the necessary feats. Armor Training is not as necessary in the modern era as it is in other genres, because your character will often be in situations where wearing armor would draw unwanted attention, but knights will probably want it anyway. Finally, look at the prerequisites for the incarnation you have chosen; there may be a feat or two which you will need to have before your character can recognize herself for who she truly is.

- 6. Select your starting skills.** You start with 4 ranks in all your starting skills, including the bonus skills you got as part of your background. Your character also speaks one additional language for every point of Intelligence she has; choose those languages now.

- 7. Do the math.** Now that your ability scores, feats, and skills are all selected, you can figure out the char-

acter's Reputation, Conviction, Wealth, Fortitude, Reflex, and Will.

8. Purchase your equipment. Use your Wealth bonus to buy your starting gear. Most new characters will have low Wealth scores and will not start with much equipment; this makes your job easy! Start by buying any item that has a Purchase DC equal to or less than your Wealth bonus. As long as these items have a DC of 15 or less, you can buy them easily and your Wealth bonus does not change. Don't forget lifestyle items like clothing or living arrangements. Once you have a short list of all these inexpensive items, pick the single most expensive thing you want to have – this is usually either a weapon or a vehicle. If the item is within 20 points of your Wealth bonus, you can buy the object, but your Wealth will suffer as a result. If the item is more than 20 points higher than your Wealth, it is simply too costly for you to afford (at least, for now). Each expensive item you pick will lower your Wealth bonus by at least one, but as long as your bonus is still above zero you can continue picking expensive items and adding them to your sheet. Stop buying things when one of two things happen: you either run out of Wealth bonus (it has gone down to +0) or you choose to stop with some Wealth bonus remaining (characters with a Wealth bonus of +4 or less are noticeably poor, and will have a very hard time buying even ordinary things).

9. Calculate your combat statistics. Add up your Toughness save, Attack, and Defense values from your role, ability scores, and feats. Your equipment may modify your Toughness save, and weapons will determine the damage you inflict in combat.

10. Write down the details. Note your character's age, appearance, and history. Where is she from, and what was her life like before she was called to adventure? Your character probably has some family and friends who will be surprised when your hero recognizes herself and begins acting strangely. Think about ways in which your character's modern life echoes or imitates his life in Arthur's Britain; your character probably does not know of her past life, but she has subconsciously surrounded herself with people, places and things which nonetheless remind her of it. A knight who once had an eagle on his shield may keep a bird as a pet or decorate his house with pictures of eagles; a damosel who led knights on adventures through the wilderness might be a forest ranger or environmental activist; an enchanter known for his mysterious prophecies might be an online psychic, an economic forecaster, or a science fiction author. All these details seem perfectly ordinary and unsurprising to your character now, but once she recognizes herself these mundane characteristics of her modern life will take on new meaning.

Incarnations and Recognition

Virtually all player characters in *Arthur Lives!* will be reincarnations of people who lived during the fantastic and enchanted reign of King Arthur. (The exception – mundane individuals who aren't reincarnations, but who are surrounded by those who are – have a strong role to play in many stories, but are the exception which proves the rule.) If you are making a character, choosing your past life – your incarnation – is the first major choice you are forced to make, and it will influence your character for the rest of her gaming life.

In the world of *Arthur Lives!*, very few people know why Arthur, his knights, his foes, and all the other magical supporting cast of his myth have returned from death. Instead, your character will be asking questions like "Why are we all here? Why have we come back now?" The situation has been made more complicated by the fact that there is more than one incarnation of each Arthurian character! That is to say, there is more than one Arthur reborn, more than one Guinevere, more than one Merlin. How could this be? How many other versions of you are there? Is one of them more real than the others? Which one of you is the right one? Your Narrator knows the answers to these questions, but your character may not learn the answers for some time. Asking and answering these questions is a very important part of every *Arthur Lives!* campaign, especially at the beginning.

In your character's past life, she was a knight, enchanter, queen, or other figure of Arthurian myth. You may have been someone famous and well known to us today – the Lady of the Lake, perhaps, or a great knight like Sir Gawaine – but you might have been a minor character about whom we know very little. Arthurian myth is filled with these supporting characters who appear in one or two episodes but who were eclipsed in life by famous names like Lancelot and Merlin. Your character might be one of these people, like Sir Marrok (who was made into a werewolf by his wife) or Sir Patrise (who went to a dinner party held by the Queen only to be accidentally poisoned by an apple intended for Sir Gawaine). When these minor characters are reborn in the modern world, they get a new chance at heroism and an opportunity to escape the shadow of Arthur's famous knights. Because we know so little about these heroes, you have a blank canvas on which to paint; you can fill in the blanks in the character's past life, and you have fewer restrictions on how your character's story progresses from this point forward. The most extreme version of this strategy is to make a character who is never mentioned at all in Arthurian legend, but who was nevertheless a resident of that magical time. After all, there were many seats at the Round Table; not all the knights who filled those seats are known to us today. Likewise, Arthur's Britain had room for many kings, sorcerers, and heroes whose exploits are now forgotten. You can make those heroes live again.

Regardless of who you were before, your past life has been a mystery to your character for most of her life. In fact, she probably still does not know about her previous life in Arthur's world. Instead, she thinks she is a perfectly ordinary person

in a perfectly ordinary world: the world outside our own window. But in fact, magic and myth hides in the shadowy corners of that 21st century world, and there are secrets under every street. Modern magicians carefully work their spells where no one else can see; supernatural beings from the world of Faerie slip over into our world and disguise their monstrous shape in order to walk among us unseen; horrifying stories of ghosts, vampires, and other monsters in the closet are more real than anyone would like to admit. Your character may have some knowledge of the world's hidden supernatural elements, especially if she is an adept or is trained in Knowledge (Supernatural).

Although your character does not remember her previous life, she nevertheless is surrounded by things that seem familiar and which might remind her of who she once was. After all, she is still the same person, whether she remembers it or not, and so she still has many of the same likes and dislikes. An Arthurian damosel who preferred the rain to any other kind of weather will still prefer the rain in the 21st century, and might even move to Seattle just to get more of it! A knight famous for his pet lion might decorate his home with art depicting those animals, keep a big cat for a pet, or even work with lions at the nearby zoo. Many modern incarnations will be drawn to professions which resemble the ones they had in their former lives, so that knights will often be found among the ranks of law enforcement or soldiers, while kings and queens continue their life's work as politicians, administrators, or corporate executives. Incarnations often find that their current family situation models that of their former life.

One of the most important things to happen to your character is that moment in which she recognizes herself – she suddenly realizes who she once was, and that she is a reincarnation of that person in the modern world. Recognition is guided more by story than by rules, but there are some things which we know for sure. A person cannot simply be told she is a reincarnation; that is such a fantastic and unreasonable argument that the mind of the incarnation instinctively recoils and rejects this truth. After all, if someone tried to tell you that you were King Arthur, why, that would be crazy! Instead, an incarnation must be led to the truth; she must come to the conclusion on her own through an emotional realization. Often this involves a return to familiar places, holding familiar objects, or contact with seeming strangers who the incarnation has deep, unexplained, emotional feelings for. One of the best ways to stimulate an incarnation's memory is through re-enactment; when an incarnation finds herself going through the same actions as her former self did in the Arthurian age, the whole body can wake up at once with physical memories which the mind has – until now – been blind to. (You can read more about recognition in Chapter Three.)

Once an incarnation recognizes herself, some of her former memory will return to her ... but not all. Different incarnations react differently to the truth once it has been revealed. Some give up their modern existence entirely, and abandon friends, family, and job to devote themselves entirely to the person they were before, who feels more “real” despite the distance of time and myth. Other incarnations reject their Arthurian life and refuse to answer to their former name, instead trying to

hold on to the normal world in which they live and love. Often this struggle is made more difficult by the presence of multiple, conflicting, relationships; if an incarnation of Guinevere is already married in 21st century America, and then recognizes herself, how does she reconcile her mundane husband with Arthur, her former one? And what about Lancelot?

Over time, more of the incarnation's original memory will return, but that time is seldom available, since the world is a dangerous place and Arthur still has many enemies. Some incarnations recognized themselves years ago, and have been hard at work since that time gathering allies, building resources, and organizing schemes for mysterious ends. Not all these incarnations are friendly to Arthur, and sometimes even apparent friends have hidden goals and cross-purposes. Because there are multiple incarnations of many Arthurian characters, these rivals are often brought into conflict with one another. Each battles the others to determine which is the “real” Arthur, Guinevere, or Merlin. Sometimes these conflicts are physical, but just as often they become conspiracies and plots too elusive for any simple knight to overcome. No one knows why there is more than one of each incarnation, but it has proven very difficult for them to cooperate without trying to destroy one another.

These are the challenges that your character will confront: Who are you, really? How will you come to recognize yourself? When you do, how much will you really remember of the world that came before, and will you embrace those memories or reject them? Will you try to find those who were important to you in your first life and, even if you don't, what will you do when they find you? When you find Arthur, will you side with him or against him?

Gender, Nationality, and Race

It may not seem so at first glance, but the characters of Arthurian myth are pretty diverse considering the world they come from. That world is British, but in that Britain you will find Scots (King Lot and his five sons), Welshmen (Ryons and his brother Nero), Cornishmen (Tristan and his uncle King Mark), Irish (Iseult and her brother Marhaus), Frenchmen (Lancelot, of course, and his family and foes), and even Saracens (Palomides), Hungarians (Urre), and Greeks (Sagamore). Arthur's tales spread throughout Europe and soon we had Italian and Spanish knights; a couple of centuries later American authors added characters like the Connecticut Yankee and Prince Valiant. By the end of the 20th century, Mike Barr and Brian Bolland gave us an African Gawaine, a Japanese samurai Sir Galahad, and a Lady Tristan!

This is all a long way of saying that Arthur may have started out a white, male, Englishman, but there's no reason you have to do the same. As Arthur's tale has grown to include an environmental aspect – renewing the Wasteland of our Earth with the waters of the Holy Grail – Arthur has become a truly universal figure, no longer “English” at all. While it is helpful if your character can speak English (and communicate with the other player characters), it doesn't even have to be his first language. Your Merlin may practice voodoo in Haiti, Tibetan Buddhism, or aboriginal Dreamtime magic in New Zealand.



Your Guinevere may be a Chicago policewoman, an Indian tech support specialist, or a Brazilian archeologist. Characters that were one gender can be reincarnated in another – and this will cause a whole new set of problems when the character tries to juggle both of his (or is it her?) lives. You can be as conventional as you like, or as risky as you dare.

Game Effects

- Each player character in Arthur Lives! should choose an incarnation. You can put off this choice for later, if you don't want to know who your character was in her past life!
- Your choice of incarnation is also known as your path. Each path has certain prerequisites. Your character cannot recognize herself until she fulfills these prerequisites
- To recognize herself, your character will need to succeed in a Will save or spend a point of Conviction at an appropriate time. Your Narrator will build moments into the game when your character might recognize herself, but other player characters might help you with it, or it may even happen at an unexpected time and place. See Chapter Three for more details on recognizing yourself and others.
- Once your character recognizes herself, she immediately gains one Bonus Feat for every two levels she possesses, rounded down. These feats must be chosen from a unique list based on your path. Whenever you gain an even level (4th, 6th, 8th, etc.) you gain another bonus feat from your path. You must satisfy all the prerequisites for path feats that you select.
- If your character already has every bonus feat on your path, you may select any other feat that has, as one of its prerequisites, a feat on your path.

Your Nemesis

Some incarnations have a nemesis – a particular person or creature against whom they gain special combat advantage. Often, your nemesis was responsible for your death in the first Arthurian Age. Sometimes your nemesis is someone you wanted or even tried to kill, but you perished before you were able to finish the job. Your nemesis may have killed someone close to you. Blood feuds were a famous and very destructive force that worked against Camelot from within. The first significant such feud was between the sons of King Lot and King Pellinore, who killed Lot. Once Pellinore was murdered, Gawaine and his brothers moved on to Lamorak and Pellinore's other family members. When their own mother Morgause became Lamorak's lover, revenge won out over blood: Morgause was killed in her bed. The nemesis trait helps represent these long-standing grudges in Arthur Lives! games.

Nemesis also represents your knowledge – and distrust of – other incarnations of yourself. Incarnations of the same individual are natural rivals; they not only compete for the same friends, family, and equipment, but they even compete for the same identity! Your other incarnations will know how you think and they can sometimes predict your actions and responses. All of this is represented by the nemesis trait.

Every incarnation gains the feat Favored Opponent (Nemesis) for free. Other incarnations of you always count as your nemesis; you may have an additional nemesis depending on your incarnation. In order to gain the benefit of nemesis, you must have recognized your nemesis. At 6th and again at 12th level your rank in Favored Opponent (Nemesis) increases by one, to a maximum of three ranks. You are never obligated or compelled to attack your nemesis. The grudge is a powerful one, but old, and you can choose to bury the hatchet and leave your nemesis alone if you so choose.

Paths

Your Arthur Lives! character is a reincarnation of an Arthurian figure; you decide who. Once you do, that choice brings with it some special rules. Those special rules are collectively known as your path. For most characters, your path consists of a couple of prerequisites and a collection of ten bonus feats that you will gain as your character increases in level. A few characters have special powers or other abilities that take the place of one or more bonus feats.

Each Arthur Lives! reincarnation has a path, and once your character recognizes himself, his path will never change. But until your character has recognized himself as a reincarnation, your true nature is not perfectly known. You can choose a different path for him than you first intended. It is even possible to put off the choice of path until the moment of recognition, if you are not sure what path you want your character to take. In cases like this, your character's true self did not change; you just have more accurate information now than you did before. When you make a character and leave his incarnation undecided, only to eventually choose the path of Arthur, that doesn't mean your character chose to be a reincarnation of Arthur. It means your character was always a reincarnation of Arthur; you just didn't know it until now.

Characters who have recognized themselves and are on a path are more powerful than those who are not. At low levels the difference in power level is quite small – only one or two feats. But as your character gains more levels, he will gain more and more feats and powers until the difference is quite noticeable. There is not, however, any drawback to recognizing yourself late. Once you find your path, you gain all the benefits of it retroactively, so that a 10th level hero who has only just recognized himself gains all the same bonus feats as a character who recognized himself at 1st level and “worked his way up.”

DAMOSELS, ENCHANTERS, KNIGHTS AND KINGS

Your Arthur Lives! character could be a reincarnation of anyone in the Arthurian legend. A short list of ten characters has been given special rules, but there are hundreds of potential incarnations – and that's not even including all the wholly original Arthurian characters you might devise! All of these incarnations have certain prerequisites and lists of bonus feats that are available to your character once he recognizes himself.

You can simulate almost all Arthurian characters with the four paths presented here: Damosel, Enchanter, Knight and King.

Knight

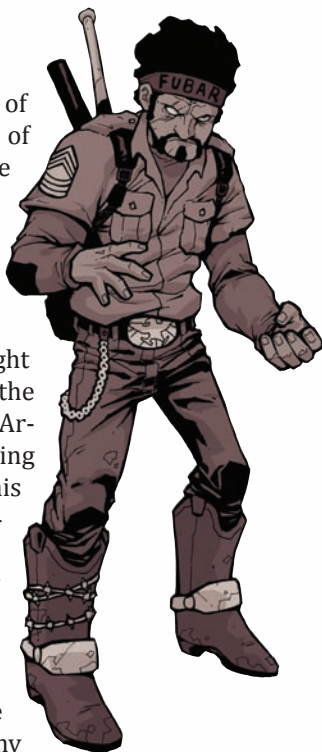
Knights were the elite warriors of the Arthurian age, sworn vassals of kings and other lieges. Most were of noble birth, though not necessarily of noble character! Armed with the very best weapons, armor, and mounts, they formed the core of any king's army, and the mounted charge of a knight was the ultimate weapon on the battlefield. War was common in Arthur's early years, but soon the King brought peace to Britain and his knights traveled the land dispensing justice and helping those in need. When not adventuring, they kept in shape by participating in tournaments filled with jousting and foot battles; knights who won in these tournaments gained fame and glory, not to mention wealthy prizes. Between tournaments, war, and questing, knights saw to their castles and estates or visited their lieges in court, where they were expected to give advice, perform in courtly entertainments, and bring glory to their lord. This lord is of key importance because knights were part of the feudal system, in which each knight (known as a vassal) swore obedience to a superior (known as his liege).

Knights are the warriors of Arthurian society, and if you select the knight path for your incarnation you will need to take your first character level in the warrior role. Knights are distinguished from common soldiers by their mount – in Arthur's day each knight had many horses, but today you may rely on more mechanized forms of transport. Once a knight recognizes himself, he gains access to feats that improve his fighting ability, his wealth, and his riding or vehicle skills. The knight's oath of vassalage is represented by the Dedicated feat.

There are many examples of knights in Arthurian myth; characters like Tristan, Lancelot, Gareth or Mordred can all be created with this path. This path is also suitable for less-famous knights like Ector (Arthur's foster father), Bedivere (who threw Excalibur back into the Lake after Arthur's last battle), or Tor (Pellinore's bastard son).

If you want your character to be the incarnation of a knight, you must:

- Have a Warrior core ability.
- Have training in Drive, Ride, or Pilot.



Once your knight recognizes himself, you may select feats from the following list:

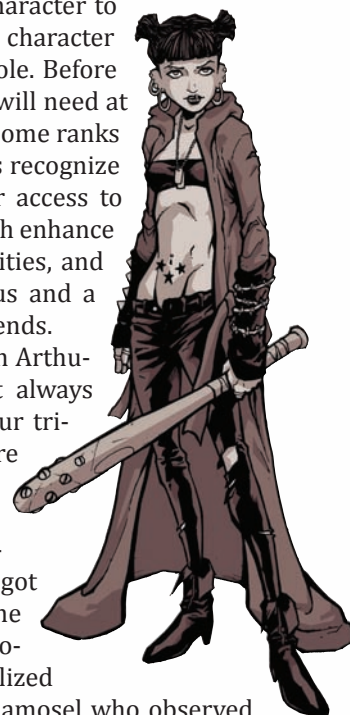
Attack Focus, Attack Specialization, Dedicated, Fearless*, Heavy Armor Proficiency, Improved Critical, Light Armor Proficiency, Tough, Vehicular Combat, Wealthy

Damosel

The women of Arthurian myth are resourceful non-combatants. Many are skilled in intrigue and the social arena of court, while others are famous surgeons known for their healing talents. Others are best known for being kidnapped, but even when at the mercy of brigands they think quickly enough to leave clues and help behind for those knights who ultimately rescue them. Most interesting are those ladies who are found in the wilderness, in pavilions by the road, or in remote castles, from which they issue quests to knights and lead them into adventure. These maidens always seem to recognize the knights they come across and they are quite at ease in the wild, even if they don't do much fighting themselves. When their knights fail to perform on the battlefield, damosels know how to motivate them to success – whether through loving inspiration or sharp-tongued humiliation. Not every damosel is benevolent; some are evil and wicked, and a few are rumored to have magical powers such as prophecy or the brewing of potions; this can be represented through the Prophecy skill (True20 Adept's Handbook) and Craft (Chemical). Potion-making is covered in more detail in Chapter Three of this book, while the Arthur Lives! Narrator's Guide has specific guidelines for the use of Prophecy in the game.

Damosels are the non-combatant experts of the Arthurian world, and if you want your character to take the damosel path her 1st character level should be in the expert role. Before she can recognize herself, she will need at least one interaction skill and some ranks in Sense Motive. Once she does recognize herself, her path will give her access to feats which buff her allies, which enhance her wilderness and travel abilities, and which reflect high social status and a large network of family and friends.

Damosels are everywhere in Arthurian stories, though we don't always learn their names. When Arthur triumphed in an early battle before meeting Guinevere, he sought refuge at the castle of the lady Lyonors, who had lost her father in the same battle; they got along so well together that she bore him a son. Elaine of Astolat, whom Tennyson immortalized as the Lady of Shallot, was a damosel who observed Lancelot from afar in a magic mirror before finally dy-



ing out of unrequited love for him. Guinevere's malicious twin sister – also named Guinevere, and boy was that confusing – was a particularly dangerous damosel who even replaced her twin on the throne of England and convinced Arthur she was the real thing!

If you want your character to be the Incarnation of a Damosel, you must:

- Have an Expert core ability.
- Have training in Sense Motive and at least one interaction skill.

Once a Damosel recognizes herself, she may select feats from the following list:

Connected, Fascinate, Helpful*, Inspire, Leadership, Set-up, Taunt, Trailblazer, Wealthy, Well-Informed

Enchanter

Merlin, Morgan Le Fey, and the Ladies of the Lake are the most famous of Arthurian magicians, but the legends boast many individuals capable of working magic to fantastic effect. There was more than one way to learn magic in Arthurian Britain; for some, magic power came from Hell, either through a familial tie (such as that of Merlin, whose father was a demon) or through devil-worship. But other magicians, like Morgan, learned their art through long study and the reading of ancient books. Finally, characters like the Ladies of the Lake seem to be heirs to occult traditions beyond ordinary human experience. By crossing over into the land of Faerie, they came into contact with magical beings, places, and powers which they were somehow able to master. No matter how an enchanter got his abilities, he could count on being feared by ordinary mortals, who wisely recognized his power. Enchanters who lent their powers to kings were usually benevolent advisors who could be relied upon to use their magic for good, but there were many black magicians who tried to kill or imprison their enemies through magic, and there is also a tradition of evil queens who, working with Morgan Le Fey in a kind of supernatural conspiracy, tried to weave a web of black magic around all Britain.

Distinguished by their magical powers, enchanters are True20 adepts, and if you wish your character to follow the enchanter path you will need to take your 1st character level in the adept role. Arthur Lives! includes a new Supernatural Philosophy called "Enchantment" and a core ability that accompanies it; these traits will better represent the kind of magic we

read about in Arthurian myth, but you do not have to choose these traits if you want your enchanter to demonstrate another kind of magic. You will, however, need to have some level of education in supernatural topics if you want to recognize yourself as an enchanter reincarnated. Once you do, your path will give you access to some of the most common powers found among Arthurian enchanters, as well as feats that allow you to create magical objects and perform rituals.

Enchanters abound in the legend: When Merlin traveled to the court of the French kings Ban and Bors, he taught their advisor Gwenbaous much about magic – magic which the new enchanter then went on to use on behalf of his lords in their war against their rival King Claudus. The Queen of Norgales (Northern Wales) was considered a dangerous sorceress, and cooperated with Morgan and King Mark in various plots against Arthur. Morgan herself, the most infamous sorceress in history, can be represented with the enchanter path.

If you want your character to be the incarnation of an enchanter, you must:

- Take your first level in the adept role.
- Be trained in Knowledge (Supernatural).

Once an enchanter recognizes himself, he may select feats from the following list:

Cloud Minds*, Faerie Glamour, Imbue Item, Iron Will, Psychic Shield, Ritualist*, Scrying, Supernatural Focus, Supernatural Insight*, Wellspring Adept*

King

The great nobles of Arthurian myth are skilled leaders, veteran tacticians, and highly respected figures treated with courtesy even by their foes. Every king has a realm of his own, even if it is relatively small, and this ensures the wealth not only of the king but also his extended family. At first, the kings of England, Wales, Cornwall, Scotland and Ireland answered to no one, ruling their lands in complete autonomy. Over the years, however, all eventually bowed before Arthur. Some were conquered by force, but many more were so impressed by his just, prosperous, and peaceful rule that they joined him willingly. A very few kings abandoned their homelands and became knights-errant; for kings of this sort (such as Pellinore), the path of the knight may be more suitable.

Unlike other paths, the path of the king does not require that your character have levels in any particular role. Some kings are great warriors, like Lot and Arthur himself, while others are wise elders or clever tricksters like King Mark. Kings like Pellam, the Fisher King and keeper of the Grail, are part of a mystic bloodline and endowed with the holy powers of an adept. What is certain is that a king is always influential and respected; even his enemies are reluctant to harm him, and his true friends are always careful to consult him. A king's bonus feats grant him followers, a headquarters, wealth and more reputation. He gains a network of informants and an improved ability to lead others in both combat and non-combat tasks.



Kings appear in the legend as both allies and adversaries. Among the former are King Ban and King Bors, French brothers who lent critical aid to Arthur in exchange for his own promise to help them – a promise he failed to keep. King Ryons of Wales had already defeated eleven kings when he decided to make Arthur the twelfth; Balin and Balan captured him in ambush and delivered him to Arthur in attempt to win a pardon. Perhaps the most common sort of story is that of Barant, the King of a Hundred Knights, who first allied himself with Lot in the revolt against Arthur's rule, but then changed his allegiance and joined Arthur's cause after a mysterious dream warned him of his own future.

If you want your character to be the incarnation of a king, you must:

- Have a Charisma of +1 or more.
- Have a Reputation feat (see p.26 of True20 Roleplaying).

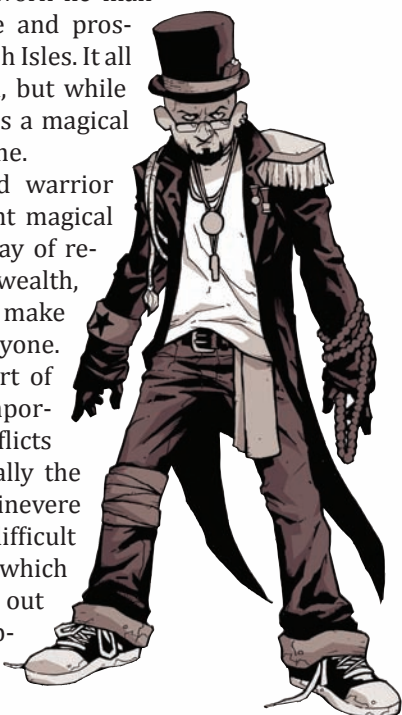
Once your king recognizes himself, you may select feats from the following list:

Commission*, Contacts, Estate*, Inspire, Leadership, Master Plan, Organized*, Renown, Stylish*, Wealthy

Arthur, the Once and Future King

Arthur's reign over England was engineered by Merlin, who arranged for the boy's birth, took him from his parents, gave him to a foster family, then re-appeared when Arthur was (barely) old enough to stake his claim. Merlin didn't really know what kind of king he was getting; Arthur was something of a wild card. What Merlin got was an idealistic and proud man who took his oaths of fealty seriously. He needed a lot of guidance at first, and it was in his early days that he made most of his worst mistakes, but with work he managed to bring peace and prosperity to all the British Isles. It all collapsed in the end, but while it lasted Camelot was a magical place in a magical time.

Arthur is a good warrior with access to potent magical weapons and an array of resources (reputation, wealth, followers) that can make life easier for everyone. He's also at the heart of many of the most important personality conflicts in the game, especially the love triangle with Guinevere and Lancelot. It is difficult to imagine a story in which Arthur's player runs out of roleplaying opportunities or has nothing to do.



Your Past Life

You grew up believing Sir Ector, a country lord, was your father and that Kay was your older brother. You served him as squire and anticipated being knighted yourself one day when, at a great tournament in London, you found yourself able to draw the Sword from the Stone. You promptly gave it to Kay, whose sword you had run to fetch. Kay claimed the sword at first, but he soon admitted that you had done the deed. Ector revealed that Merlin had given you to him when you were but an infant; the magician himself soon appeared to claim you were the child of the last king, Uther Pendragon, and his Queen, Igraine of Cornwall. Although you had drawn the Sword, not everyone accepted your claim to the status of King of England. In particular, King Lot of Scotland declared his intent to take the title by force.

With Merlin's constant help, you organized a government and re-staged the Sword-drawing stunt a few times to persuade more lords of England to join your cause. You were in the middle of a very closely fought war with Lot when you committed your great sin – you allowed yourself to be seduced by Lot's wife, Morgause. At the time, you had come to doubt the story that you were Uther's son and thus Morgause's brother. It was only after Morgause had returned to Scotland that your mother, Igraine, emerged from a convent and confirmed Merlin's tale. Only you and Morgause knew you had committed both adultery and incest. In a panic, warned by Merlin that your son would one day kill you, you ordered all the boy children born in May to be rounded up and drowned. Your orders were carried out and, when Lot learned of it, he renewed his war with you. He never learned that Mordred was not his son. With the help of Merlin, Kay, Balin and Pellinore, you killed Lot and his allies and claimed the crown. Soon after, you married Guinevere, the daughter of your ally Leodegrance of Camelard.

Your wars continued, though you were always responding to the aggression of others. When you refused to pay tribute to Rome, the Emperor rattled his sabers. In return, you invaded the Continent and were briefly Emperor yourself. The Saxons were a constant thorn until the battle of Badon Hill, when you succeeded in killing an entire generation of their warriors. Your lords and barons extended your rule into Ireland and France. Eventually all the major wars were over and a long peace – the Pax Arthuriana – settled over the land. Your magnificent castle, Camelot, became the magical capital of a magical land. Within its halls, the Round Table embodied all that was just and good. Your knights – inspired by the examples of Lancelot, Perceval, Tristan, and Gawaine – pursued quests all over the land and brought exhilarating stories back to your court. By this time, most of your fighting was over. You had become an administrator and a dispenser of justice, the most famous, respected, and influential man in the world.

The greatest of these quests was that for the Holy Grail, which appeared in a vision to you and your court. The quest was necessary – Balin's Dolorous Stroke many years before had put a wound in the world which only the Grail could heal – but in many ways the Quest for the Grail proved the begin-

ning of the end for your perfect society. Some of your greatest knights never returned from it, many others were killed.

Your old sin would not be forgotten. Mordred, the youngest of Morgause's children, came to your court and was made a knight. Soon his true nature was revealed to him, and his personality turned cruel and evil. Blood feuds – especially the one between Morgause's sons and the Pellinore clan – began tearing your court apart. It was Mordred and his brother Agravaine who eventually exposed the long affair that Guinevere had been having with Lancelot, an accusation that had been made many times in the past but which the Queen had always been proven innocent of. In Lancelot's escape from the trap, several knights were killed, adding to the crime.

You felt obligated to put Guinevere on trial. Before she could be burnt, Lancelot arrived with a small force to rescue her. More of your knights were killed, notably Gareth and Gaheris. This prompted Gawaine – your greatest remaining supporter – to swear vengeance on Lancelot. There seemed no option but to pursue Lancelot to France, where he had holed up with many of your remaining knights, who supported his side in the feud. Incredibly, Guinevere returned to you and, even more incredible, you allowed her to rule as Queen while you were in France.

Mordred tried to seize the throne in your absence but Guinevere outwitted him and fled to the Tower of London, where Mordred could not get her. You hurriedly packed up your army in France and returned to England, where Mordred and his many foreign allies met you in climactic battle on Salisbury Plain. He was the last man of his army to remain standing; you dealt each other mortal blows. He died. You lingered long enough to order Bedivere, one of your longest-serving knights, to return Excalibur to the Lady of the Lake. Then four queens, your half-sister Morgan le Fey among them, arrived to bear you to Avalon, where your wounds were to be healed. That's the last you remember.

You believed that strength should be used to aid the weak and powerless, not to impose tyranny. You were generous to your allies and guests, slow to punish those who were close to you, but proud and wrathful once aroused. Because you had been raised the second son of a country knight – and not the heir apparent to a warlike king – you empathized with the common people of your kingdom and preferred peace to war. You were capable of great feats of arms – such as the defeat of Sir Lamorak (credited as the third best knight in the world) and the defeat of the Giant of Saint Michael's Mount – but as you aged, becoming more and more of a symbol, the heroic deeds of your knights soon eclipsed you.

There were women before Guinevere (the lady Lyonors, who bore you a son, and of course Morgause) but none after. You loved her, though you did not always appreciate her. Once, she was kidnapped and replaced by an evil twin – it took you more than a year to notice. You may not have been the most observant king, but you were relentless in the energetic pursuit of your desire to bring peace, justice, and prosperity to the world.

Recognizing Arthur

Arthur is likely to be younger than some of the other PCs, especially characters like Merlin, Nineve, Kay, Balin and Pellinore. He may be an orphan or raised by someone other than his acknowledged parents. As the Pendragon, he may have some connection to dragons or drakes. He's almost certain to pull something (a crowbar, a baseball bat, whatever) out of something immovable. There are some suggestions the name Arthur may be related to Artus, the Latin for "bear," suggesting bear-like qualities, or a Welsh word meaning "dark." He is often depicted with red hair and may be in a leader position of some sort (chairman of the board, quarterback).

Virtues and Vices for Arthur: Fair, Generous, Honorable, Truthful; Proud, Rash, Vengeful

Part of the appeal of the myth of Arthur's return is the idea that anyone could turn out to be the King. Arthur Lives! maintains that notion, but you should always check with your Narrator if you think you want to take on the role of Arthur.

If you want your character to be an Incarnation of Arthur, you must:

- Only have levels of warrior and expert.
- Have the Lucky feat.

Nemesis: Your nemesis is Mordred, your son by incest with your sister Morgause. When Mordred was still in the womb, God delivered you a dream warning you of your sin and your eventual defeat at Mordred's hand. You repented and did public penance before God, crawling up the steps of St. Stephen's cathedral. Consumed by shame and afraid for your own life, you ordered all the boy children born in the month of May to be put on a ship and drowned. Miraculously, Mordred survived your plan and grew up ignorant of his true father. When the truth was revealed to him by a prophetic hermit, he became a cancer within Camelot. Eventually he exposed the Queen's long-running love affair with Lancelot and you were humiliated before the entire kingdom. Lancelot's resistance to your arrest led to the death of many excellent knights, including two of Gawaine's younger brothers. When you pursued Lancelot to France, Mordred tried to seize the throne. You returned to battle him at Camlann, and killed him with Excalibur. It was too late. He had already driven a spear through your body but, more importantly, he'd already destroyed your dream.

Once Arthur Recognizes himself, he may select feats from the following list:

Commission*, Dedicated (Justice), Diehard, Fearless*, Heavy Armor Training, Inspire (Command*), Leadership, Peacemaker*, Renown, Wealthy

Adventures with Arthur

- Arthur will often find himself at the center of stories; it may be more challenging to tell stories that take the spotlight off him. A good Arthur story will focus on responsibility. For example, he may be forced to choose between loyalty to his allies and doing what is right. He may offer protection to someone, only to later be put in a position that makes him regret that offer.
- Arthur has done terrible things, including incest and the murder of hundreds of innocent children. Now that he has been given a new life, how does he feel about those crimes? Does he still deserve to be punished, and if so, to whom can he go for absolution? Is there a way for him to “make up” for the sins of his former life?
- One common trope in modern retellings of the Arthurian legend is the notion that Arthur has to be educated or taught how to be king, usually by Merlin but sometimes by his other knights. It’s possible to structure many early sessions of Arthur Lives! as lessons which teach Arthur some virtue or principle which he will require later in life. This is also a great way to get the other PCs involved, as they will have to decide amongst themselves what Arthur needs to know and how he should learn it.

Balin the Savage, the Knight with Two Swords

One of the best warriors from the early years of Arthur’s reign, Balin became known as the Knight with Two Swords when he acquired a second blade from a mysterious woman in Arthur’s court. Balin was an extraordinarily deadly fighter, but was cursed with bad luck. A series of rash decisions eventually resulted not only in his death but in the Dolorous Stroke and the creation of a Wasteland which would only be cured years later by the Quest for the Holy Grail. Balin is little known today, but it can be argued that Arthur would have died without Balin’s help in a critical battle. In a modern setting, he pits his twin swords against a new generation of foes, living fast and furious before his inevitable death.

Unlike most other knight characters, Balin isn’t Dedicated to anyone or anything and his resources are not particularly good. He lives by his wits, surviving on plunder he has taken from his foes. Balin is exclusively a warrior; his focus on fighting with two swords makes him especially dangerous in hand-to-hand combat. Balin’s curse ensures his life will be a brief but brilliant one; he is at his best when he ignores his impending death and fights the good fight as long as he can.



Your Past Life

You got started on the wrong foot in the early days of Arthur’s reign. You were imprisoned half a year for killing the cousin of the king of Northumberland, but this was in revenge for the death of one of your own brothers who had been poisoned by Nineve, the Lady of the Lake, so you considered yourself wrongfully jailed. Arthur needed the support of everyone he could get in those days, and he freed you and many other prisoners so that you might join his army. You were free again, but impoverished, lingering at the court when a mysterious woman, claiming to be a servant of Nineve, arrived wearing a large, bulky sword which she said she could not take off. In fact, no one could remove it unless that person was the best knight the damsel could find. You alone of all the knights present were able to draw the sword, and even though she warned you it would bring you only misery and death, you vowed to keep it.

As you were out putting on your armor, Nineve herself arrived. This was too good to be believed, since you had hunted her three years in an effort to gain justice for your brother’s death, but you had never been able to find her enchanted Ferie home. Nineve had given Arthur Excalibur and was now in Camelot to collect a favor in return: she demanded either your head or the head of the maiden with the sword. You emerged about this time, brand new sword in hand, and swiftly decapitated her in front of Arthur and all his lords.

The King was furious, as he considered Nineve to be under his protection. You tried to explain that Nienve had killed many knights including your brother, but Arthur banished you from the court. Quickly getting on your horse, you were nevertheless followed by a prince of Ireland, Sir Lanceor, who sought to gain favor in Arthur’s eyes by killing you. You fought Lanceor in a fair joust and slew him. Lanceor’s girlfriend Colombe happened to see the whole thing, and she fell on Lanceor’s sword. It was turning into a pretty bad day for you.

King Mark of Cornwall was passing by and he found the dead bodies. He asked you your name and your brother, Balan, who had finally caught up with you, answered: “Sir . . . ye may see he beareth two swords, thereby ye may call him the Knight with the Two Swords.” That’s how you gained your famous title.

You sought to regain Arthur’s favor, and so you captured one of his earliest enemies, king Ryons of Wales. Ryons had been leading an army against the Boy King, and while his capture didn’t end the problem, it certainly helped. When Ryons’ brother Nero took over the army and began the Battle of Castle Terrabil, you waited until things looked bad for Arthur before leading a charge out of the nearby forest and helping to turn the tide. Some say you killed king Lot, one of Arthur’s most dangerous

foes, but in fact this is not true. Nevertheless, Arthur publicly regretted banishing you.

Unfortunately, you weren't around to hear this. Instead, you were pursuing an evil knight by the name of Sir Garlon, who just happened to be invisible. You killed him, but a boy was injured in the fighting and while you lingered to see to him Garlon's brother, king Pellam, showed up. Now Garlon might have been a villain, but Pellam was the Fisher King and one of the most sacred people in England. When you tried to defend yourself, your sword broke. (Your first one, not the one you got off the maiden.) You fled and, in a rush, grabbed a spear off the wall and threw it at Pellam. Unfortunately (again) this spear turned out to be the Spear of Longinus, which killed Christ on the Cross. Putting the Holy Lance through the keeper of the Holy Grail turned out to be the magical equivalent of matter and anti-matter: your single blow leveled the entire castle, created a Wasteland that instantly destroyed three kingdoms, and tore a hole the Faerie Veil. This was called "The Dolorous Stroke" and it has gone down in history as All Your Fault. Merlin pulled you out of the wreckage of the castle three days later.

You would think that tearing a magical hole in reality (and destroying a good chunk of Britain in the process) would have been the low point of your career, but it got worse. On an adventure to an island called Melliot you found yourself in a duel with a mysterious knight clad head to toe in red armor. The two of you mortally wounded each other before you realized this man was your brother, Balan. (He hadn't recognized you either, because you were using a blank shield at the time and your face was covered by your helmet.) Both you and your brother died. After your death, the supernatural sword you had claimed for your own was refurbished by Merlin and given to Galahad, who used it to complete the Grail Quest and heal the Dolorous Stroke.

In the end, you were a valorous and highly capable knight who was true to his word and tried to do the right thing. Nevertheless, you were doomed to a brief life of unfortunate deeds. Perhaps this time around, things will be better. Perhaps they will be even worse.

Recognizing Balin

An incarnation of Balin might be a loner or even an outlaw. He may be in prison, or recently released. He may have a brother to whom he is particularly loyal. He'll probably be trained in fencing or the martial arts, and he'll be down on his luck. He may be trying to work for an authority figure who doesn't want or appreciate the help. Because of Balin's emphasis on swords, he is one of the most likely Incarnations to be found in medieval recreation societies or working at a "Medieval Times" dinner theater. Perhaps he's a fight choreographer or stuntman.

Virtues and Vices for Balin: Determined, Sincere, Valorous; Impulsive, Savage, Stubborn

If you want your character to be an Incarnation of Balin, you must:

- Only have levels in the warrior role.
- Have the Weapon Training feat.

Nemesis: Your nemesis is Nineve, a Lady of the Lake who killed one of your brothers with a burning poison and who came to Arthur's court at Camelot to demand your death from the King as payment for Excalibur. Taking Nineve by surprise, you lopped off her head right in front of Arthur, which got you exiled. You spent the rest of your brief, cursed, life trying to win back Arthur's favor, but you never regretted killing the Lady of the Lake. After all, she would have done the same to you.

Once Balin Recognizes himself, he may select feats from the following list:

Ambidexterity*, Blind-Fight, Greater Attack Focus (sword), Greater Attack Specialization (sword), Heavy Armor Training, Light in the Hand, Seize Initiative, Smite Opponent, Two-Weapon Fighting, Two-Weapon Defense

Balin's Curse

Balin is an excellent warrior, but he is doomed to make fatal mistakes of judgment and perception that result in tragedy. When he challenges a mysterious masked man to a duel to the death, that man just happens to be his brother. When he chops off the head of the enchantress who killed his mother, it just so happens Arthur was in debt to that enchantress. When he grabs a weapon to use against someone trying to kill him, the spear he picks up just happens to be the Holy Lance and the resulting strike creates a magical wasteland for hundreds of miles around and rips a hole in the Other Side.

The exact method by which Balin's curse plays out is up to the Narrator, but the curse is partly reflected in the requirement that Balin can take levels in no role other than warrior, thus ensuring that he is really good at only one thing: killing people.

Adventures with Balin

- Balin might adventure to reclaim his magic sword, the one he claimed from the maiden. There might be an echo of it somewhere. He may need to perform some kind of trial to get it, as he did originally when he pulled it from the scabbard around her waist. Alternately, the sword may be waiting for Galahad, in whose hands it may be the most powerful supernatural weapon in Arthurian myth. (See Chapter Three for more on echoes and Balin's Sword.)
- The last time Balin saw Nineve she was asking Arthur to execute Balin as payback for the gift of Excalibur. She's not going to be happy with Balin, and when you're an enchantress and Lady of the Lake you can make life pretty difficult for a simple swordsman like Balin. Balin may find himself harassed by supernatural creatures summoned from Faerie and sent to kill him, or Nineve might get close to him without ever letting him suspect her true identity.
- There was one person Balin could always count on: his brother. Balan's tragic death at Balin's hand may be even worse than the Dolorous Stroke (at least as far as Balin is concerned) because it is so much more personal. Balin might try to find his brother just to apologize. Certainly, he could use a friend.

Gawaine, Heir to the Throne

Gawaine is one of the most famous knights of the Round Table, and one of the few whom even those unfamiliar with the legend will at least recognize by name. While Lancelot was created by French authors, Perceval was primarily the topic of German tales, and Tristan was Cornish, Gawaine remains the quintessential British knight, a trait borne out by his close relationship to Arthur (he is both the King's oldest nephew and designated heir to the throne) and his starring role in the tale of the Green Knight. But as other knights crowded into the saga, Gawaine's role changed, until he was no longer the courteous exemplar of knightly virtues. Instead, he devolved into an overly aggressive, even murderous, warrior whose lustful and bloodthirsty ways ensured he would be a miserable failure in the Grail Quest. Players of Gawaine can stay true to the early version of the character as a model knight and Arthur's good right hand, they can cleave to the later Gawaine and use his physical prowess for revenge and personal gratification, or they can try to find some balance of the two (perhaps in a Gawaine who, seasoned by his tragic death, seeks to atone for past misdeeds).

Incarnations of Gawaine have a lot of connections to family and friends; it seems Gawaine either killed, was related to, or was best friends with just about everyone else in the Arthurian story. He is also remarkable for his superhuman strength, which was said to increase the higher the sun got in the sky. This ensures that any incarnation of Gawaine will be good in hand-to-hand combat. Gawaine also has access to supernatural weapons and equipment, as well as a famous mount. Finally, he was notable for his many romances with women throughout the story; he was considered a champion of women everywhere and had many wives, but these relationships seldom lasted long.

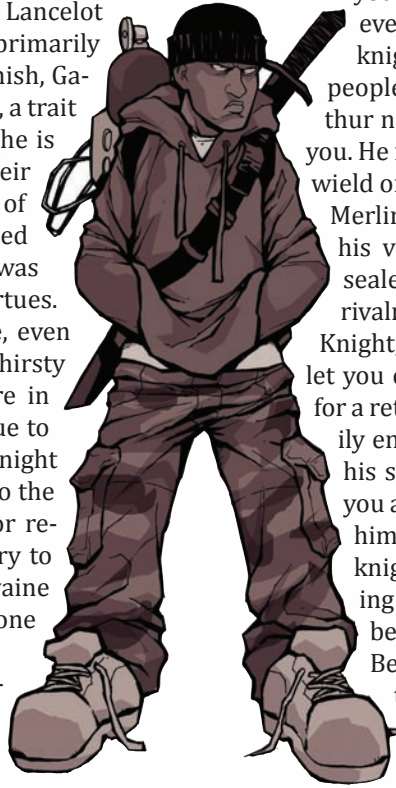
Your Past Life

You were the eldest son and heir of king Lot of Orkney and queen Morgause, who was herself the daughter of Gorlois of Cornwall and Queen Ygraine. Thus, you were King Arthur's nephew, and you were first brought to court by your mother when – unbeknownst to you – she seduced him in an effort to force a peace between your uncle and your father. When the peace failed and your father went to war against Arthur you were not quite old enough to take the field. Your father was killed by Pellinore, and although you swore revenge as a good son should you were nevertheless of divided loyalty. You had seen Arthur's court, and the wisdom and justice of the king (so close to your own age!) had impressed you. When Arthur announced his marriage to Guinevere, you convinced your mother to bring you to Arthur's court, where you became one of the Boy King's greatest knights. Your other brothers would soon follow you, acting first as your own squires, then as knights themselves.

For a time, you were the greatest knight of Arthur's court. You participated in heroic quests, and you were instrumental in the war against Rome. When Lancelot arrived at court, you took his superior fighting skills in stride and eventually came to love him like a brother. More knights came and your status slowly gave way to people like Tristan, Pellinore, and Galahad, but Arthur never wavered in his affection and respect for you. He named you his heir, and gave you Excalibur to wield on his behalf. You were the last person to "see" Merlin alive, though actually all you did was hear his voice coming out from the cave Nimue had sealed him into. Your greatest adventure was your rivalry with Sir Bertilak, the mysterious Green Knight, who came to Arthur's court and offered to let you chop his head off if he would get the chance for a return blow. You cleaved Bertilak's head off easily enough, but he walked over and put it back on his shoulders! The enchanted Green Knight gave you a year to live, but just before you were to meet him in battle you were lured into a test of your knightly virtue. By remaining true and not yielding to the seductive temptations of Bertilak's bewitching wife, you proved your worth and Bertilak spared you. By the time you returned to Camelot, you had become a champion of all women everywhere, and you were legendary for your courtly grace.

Many women and many battles followed, but your long-promised vengeance finally came to pass: you and your brothers murdered Pellinore. In this case, loyalty to your family trumped your loyalty to a fellow knight of the Round Table. Later, your mother began a romance with Pellinore's son, Lamorak. With your brothers, you snuck into her bedchamber and cut off her head. Lamorak refused to fight you and escaped alive, but you and your brothers later cornered him and overwhelmed him through sheer numbers, killing him too. Your devotion to Arthur – who warred with your father but did not kill him – and your willingness to kill Pellinore and his family – who killed your father in Arthur's name – is a complex puzzle that suggests you might have felt guilty for your father's death, or perhaps displaced your vengeance off of Arthur and onto those who were easier for you to hurt without consequence.

When the Holy Grail appeared, you were the first to vow that you would find it, but in fact your amorous habits and battle-lust ensured that you were an utter failure on the Quest. You returned to Camelot as your youngest brothers were conspiring to catch Guinevere and Lancelot in bed. When they did and Lancelot escaped, your love for your fellow knight led you to persuade Arthur not to go to war over the matter – but when Lancelot's rescue of the Queen resulted in the death of two of your brothers your stance predictably reversed and you led the charge into France. But Lancelot was still your better on the field, and each time you dueled him he left you wounded but alive. Finally, Mordred led a revolt back in England and Arthur abandoned France to return home. On your deathbed you



saw the error of your ways and forgave Lancelot for the death of your brothers.

Throughout your life you were brave, skilled in battle, and good with the ladies. But the early dedication to the virtues of knighthood which served you so well in your contest with the Green Knight withered in the face of your need for revenge against Pellinore and his family, and you clung stubbornly to your wicked younger brothers even when they were conspiring to bring down Arthur's throne. You were passionate and loyal, both to a fault, but from the day of his wedding to the day of your death you were someone Arthur could always turn to: next in line to wear the crown, and the man who bore his arm.

Recognizing Gawaine

You can expect Gawaine to have a large family, and to be responsible for that family in the absence of an elder father figure. He may have many ex-girlfriends or even children of his own. He may have a love/hate relationship with his own mother. Gawaine's shield is said to have sported a five-pointed star; this may appear in jewelry or clothing worn by a modern Incarnation. He liked apples so much that one of Lamorak's cousins tried to poison him with one, knowing Gawaine would eat it. In the Welsh stories which influenced the Arthurian saga, Gawaine is represented by the character of Gwalchmai, which may mean "Hawk of May." Therefore, Gawaine may be associated with hawks or the month of May (also the month in which he died). There is a belief that he may be related to a solar deity, which explains his supernatural strength linked to the location of the sun, so he may live on the beach or otherwise be associated with a sun-worshipping culture or profession, like astronomer, lifeguard, or solar panel installer. As the original Knight of the Garter, Gawaine is often depicted with a green sash across his chest: the symbol of his victory over Bertilak the Green Knight; look for Gawaine to be wearing a green tie, belt, or garter.

Virtues and Vices: Devoted, Practical, Trustworthy; Lustful, Superficial, Vengeful

If you want your character to be an Incarnation of Gawaine, you must:

- Take your first level in the Warrior role.
- Have no levels of Adept.
- Have a Strength of +1 or more.

Nemesis: You gain the benefits of Nemesis against Pellinore or any member of his family (including not only incarnations like Lamorak and Percival but also mundane family members of Pellinore's mortal reincarnation). It was Pellinore who killed your father, king Lot, who was Arthur's great rival for the position of High King. You never blamed Arthur for warring with Lot, but you did blame Pellinore for dealing a mortal blow in battle, and you and Gaheris murdered Pellinore in cold blood ten years later. When you discovered that your own mother had taken Pellinore's son for a lover, you and Gaheris murdered her too, in bed, but Lamorak refused to fight you and es-

caped. Finally, teaming up with all your brothers save Gareth, you tracked Lamorak down, killed his horse, and ganged up on him for three hours before Mordred finally managed to stab this great knight in the back.

Once Gawaine Recognizes himself, he may select feats from the following list.

Attractive, Brute Force*, Connected, Dedicated (Family), Renown, Second Chance (to attempt or resist seduction), Shield Training, Strength of the Sun, Vehicular Combat, Wealth

Strength of the Sun

This power is unique to Gawaine. It works just like the Enhance Ability power, but can only be used to raise Strength. It cannot be used until the sun begins to rise wherever Gawaine is (though he does not have to be able to see the sun and might even be indoors), and its effects end instantly when the sun sets. Gawaine has ranks in Strength of the Sun equal to his character level +3, and he uses Charisma as his Key Attribute. If Gawaine fails a fatigue save when using Strength of the Sun, he does not become fatigued until the power's duration expires (that is, 1 minute later).

Adventures with Gawaine

- Perhaps more than any other character in the Arthurian saga, Gawaine's personal problems are centered around issues of family. Some of his family are near-perfect role models (Gareth), while others have almost no redeeming features (Agravaine). Yet he tries to remain loyal to all of them. This forces him into some very difficult situations – situations which inevitably force him to choose between one family member or another.
- Gawaine was also infamous for his vendetta against Pellinore and the knight's family. This hatred even led Gawaine to participate in the murder of his own mother! Players of a Gawaine Incarnation can count on confronting this vendetta head on; will it be continued, or abandoned? And even if he admits he was wrong in his former life, will his victims be so quick to abandon revenge?
- As Arthur's heir, Gawaine could take a leading role in many Arthur Lives! stories. He may be searching for Arthur himself or be the agent of an Arthur who is off-stage, either unwilling or unable to perform heroic deeds himself. In campaigns without an Arthur or Guinevere, Gawaine makes a good leader for the group, since he has a close connection to the King, is known to have wielded Excalibur, and has connections to many other characters in the saga (be they enemies, friends, or family).

Guinevere, High Queen and Lover

Arthur's wife and Lancelot's lover, Guinevere is famous as a woman torn between responsibility and passion. Loved by the greatest knight in the world, she eventually came to return that love. But we really know very little about how she regarded her own husband. She was idolized and adored by the other knights at court, especially Gawaine and Kay, and indeed everyone seems to have been at least a little in love with her. This universal affection for the Queen helped patch over quarrels, make peace with foes, and keep the kingdom running smoothly even through the Grail Quest – when many knights were killed. It was only at the very end, when she and Lancelot got careless and allowed the affair to be brought out into the open (where Arthur could no longer ignore it), that Guinevere truly failed as Queen. But that was also when she was most honest with herself.

Incarnations of Guinevere excel at intellectual challenges and social activities, though neither of these things preclude her from being an active warrior in a century which is far more open to women in combat. She makes an excellent alternative to Arthur in campaigns which do not have an Arthur player character; indeed, without an Arthur or Lancelot around Guinevere may feel like she finally has a chance to shine and forge her own destiny. If Arthur or Lancelot are around, of course, Guinevere's relationship with them becomes key; will she pick one over the other, try to balance both, or try to leave them both behind her.

Your Past Life

Your father was king Leodegrance of Cameliant, but he was not faithful to your mother. On the same night that you were conceived, Leodegrance slept with the wife of his seneschal and engendered another daughter. Magically, when she was born she was identical in appearance to you, differentiated only by a small crown-shaped birthmark on your back. Perhaps because it was no longer possible to pretend he was not the girl's father, he even named both you and your half-sister the same name: Guinevere.

You first met Arthur when he and his knights came to the aid of your father, who was under attack by king Ryons of Wales. Arthur was brave, handsome, and young, not to mention revered by the many knights who followed him. You were sixteen years old; it was easy to fall in love then. In time, Ryons was defeated and his army shattered. Arthur chose you to be his queen and your father gladly consented; he gave the Round Table as a wedding present, along with all the knights that sat around it. As the daughter of a king, you had been well taught in the skills of governance, and you became Arthur's partner in rule. Your youth, grace, generosity, intelligence, courtesy, and beauty set the bar for courts throughout Britain. But despite an energetic love life, you were unable to give Arthur a child; Arthur never held this against you (choosing his nephew Gawaine as heir), but it was the first strain on an otherwise storybook romance.

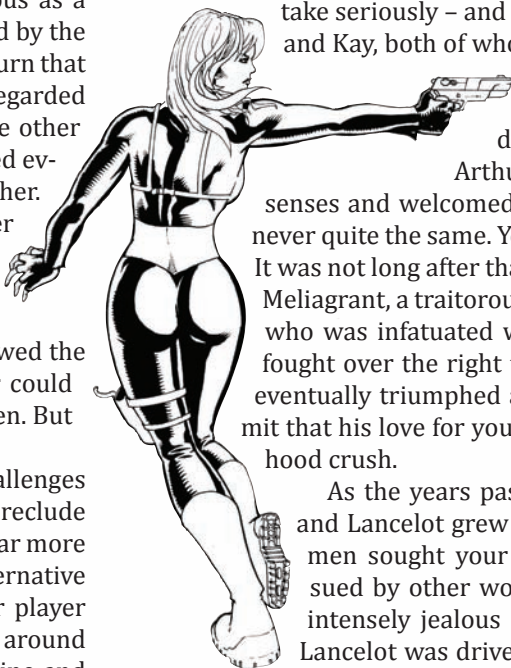
Much more serious was the return of your twin half-sister. Conspiring with others, she arranged to take your place at court, and Arthur became convinced that you were the im-

poster, not she. You fled with Lancelot – who had already proclaimed his love for you but whom you had not yet come to take seriously – and were protected by Gawaine and Kay, both of whom were especially devoted to you. It wasn't until your half-sister was struck down by a divine curse that Arthur eventually came to his senses and welcomed you back, but things were never quite the same. You never really forgave him. It was not long after that you were abducted by Sir Meliagant, a traitorous knight of the Round Table who was infatuated with you. Kay and Lancelot fought over the right to rescue you, but Lancelot eventually triumphed and you were forced to admit that his love for you might be more than a boyhood crush.

As the years passed, the love between you and Lancelot grew and matured. Just as many men sought your eye, so Lancelot was pursued by other women, and you were always intensely jealous of them – so much so that Lancelot was driven to mad grief by your displeasure and fled the court. Nonetheless, your stormy relationship eventually went from semi-harmless flirtation to intimate encounters; Arthur knew, but always turned a blind eye. In the Grail Quest, Lancelot swore to break the affair off, but instead when he returned to court the two of you became more passionate – and reckless – than ever. Two of Gawaine's youngest brothers, Mordred and Agravaine, conspired to catch you and Lancelot in bed together. It wasn't hard.

Lancelot killed many knights in his escape and your husband, who had been willing to ignore the affair as long as it didn't put the realm in danger, ran out of patience and put you on trial for adultery. He ordered you to be executed, but Lancelot (predictably) appeared and rescued you, again killing many more knights in the process. More of Gawaine's brothers died; although he had once been one of your defenders, Gawaine now led the attack against your lover. Weary of fighting, your marriage, and your impossible situation, you chose not to go with Lancelot, but you were not alone in England for long before Mordred tried to force himself onto you in order to claim the throne. You pretended to agree to this, but on the excuse that you had to do some shopping to prepare for the wedding, you went to London and promptly locked yourself into the Tower. There you remained until Arthur returned, fought Mordred, and was mortally wounded. You went into an abbey and took the holy vows of a nun. Lancelot visited you one last time but you again refused to go with him, urging him to forget you and take a wife. Your royal status ensured that you were soon abbess, but in a few years you died, and Lancelot came with his companions to take your body for burial.

There's no question that your long affair with Lancelot was partly responsible for the fall of the kingdom, but with that exception you were very nearly a perfect Queen. You were wise, kind, generous with gifts and praise, and a good administrator. When danger threatened, you were clever and resource-



ful. You were beloved by everyone, from the common folk to the knights who came to court and fell in love with you at first sight. Indeed, you eventually had to create your own order of knighthood just for all the knights who swore themselves to your service. The Queen's Knights bore white shields and they were friendly rivals with the Round Table, even though many knights were members of both groups. For all the storybook qualities of your marriage and reign as Queen, it is perhaps perfectly ordinary that you should fall in love with a devoted man ten years younger than you. What made this tragic was the high position you occupied; bound by duty to the realm yet enslaved to the power of your heart, you chose to love, no matter the risk. You were willing to pay the price for that love, but in the end it was not you alone who was forced to pay it. Your affair brought down a kingdom, even as it made you into a legend.

Recognizing Guinevere

Guinevere had gray eyes, blonde hair, and a pale complexion (indeed, her Welsh name Gwynhyfar means "white phantom"). She was the best chess player in Arthur's court, and may be known for this skill in the modern world. Of course, she was also incapable of bearing children. She may have a twin sister whom she hates, and she inspires amorous attention (both wanted and unwanted) in those around her. She was known for a crown-shaped birthmark on her back, which might manifest as a tattoo.

Virtue and Vices for Guinevere: Compassionate, Friendly, Generous; Jealous, Suspicious, Vain

In order to be an Incarnation of Guinevere, a character must:

- Have an Intelligence and Wisdom of +1 or more.
- Have the Attractive feat.

Nemesis: Guinevere's jealousy over Lancelot was legendary, especially when it came to Elaine of Carbonek, the daughter of King Pellam the Fisher King. Elaine twice tricked Lancelot into sleeping with her by pretending she was the Queen. She became the mother of Lancelot's son, Galahad, and Guinevere's rage over the whole business drove Lancelot mad on at least one occasion. Elaine died in Carbonek during the Grail Quest and Guinevere eventually forgave Lancelot. Perhaps, by the time she retreated to an abbey, she had forgiven Elaine as well.

Once Guinevere Recognizes herself, she may select feats from the following list:

Affable*, Canny Dodge, Connected, Dedicated (Lancelot, Arthur, or both), Inspire, Leadership, Redirect, Renown, Silver-Tongued*, Wealthy

Adventures with Guinevere

- Players of Guinevere have some important questions to answer: did Guinevere love Arthur, or just respect and admire him without passion? (Or neither!) Does she regret the affair, and will she act differently now that she

has the chance? Narrators who want to make things easy for Guinevere will introduce a Lancelot Incarnation early, and leave Arthur off stage for a while; by the time he shows up Guinevere will have made up her mind and Arthur will be the poorer for it. But if a Narrator wants to turn the emotional screw, introduce Arthur early and portray him in a sympathetic and admirable light. This makes Guinevere's decision hard, not easy.

- Campaigns without an Arthur can base themselves around Guinevere and her Queen's Knights. In this setup, the Queen is out to prove that she can make it on her own, without Arthur, Lancelot, or anyone else to support her. She may be an active warrior, but will also have the allegiance of knights sworn to her service. This concept can even be introduced in games that have an Arthur already: in this case, Guinevere becomes a Narrator Character who refuses Arthur's advances (and her feelings for him) out of a desire to avoid his shadow.
- If there is one type of story in which Guinevere figures more than any other, it is the Abduction. If Guinevere is a Narrator Character, the story plays out much as it always has, with Arthur and the knights rescuing her. But if she is a player, Guinevere can demonstrate her modern action movie pedigree by freeing herself, thwarting the expectations of the audience and her captors.

Kay, Arthur's Older Brother

Sir Kay is one of the oldest characters in the Arthurian saga, with a history that stretches back to Welsh legends (where he is known as Cei). He began as Arthur's brother but was quickly assigned the task of seneschal, one of the most highly-placed posts in Arthur's realm. From this position he managed much of the kingdom's day-to-day business. But he was always ready to defend the king, even in the last days of Arthur's reign. In the early tales, Kay was considered one of Arthur's greatest champions, but as other knights were added to the legend – especially Gawaine and Lancelot – Kay's star was eclipsed. Nevertheless, his presentation in later retellings has kept true to his source material in at least a couple of respects: Kay is a sarcastic braggart (these days we'd call him "snarky"), but his support of Arthur is beyond question.

The contrast between Kay's early training as a knight and his later career as an administrator is a perfect example of a True20 character with mixed roles. In fact, in the old Welsh legends, Kay is remembered as one of the "Three Enchanter Knights of Britain" and he has multiple supernatural powers, including the ability to swim underwater for nine days straight, emit burning heat, and grow as tall as a tree! Players wishing to represent this version of Kay can take levels of adept and use True20's regular rules for powers to simulate the wild stunts of Welsh heroes.

Your Past Life

You were raised to inherit your father Sir Ector's title and estate. Arthur was your little brother and served you as squire. But at a great tournament in London, Arthur drew the Sword from the Stone ... and gave it to you! For a few minutes you claimed the Sword for your own, but it didn't take your father



long to get the truth out of you. Before you could get another word in, Ector had accepted Arthur as King of England and asked – as a reward for raising Arthur from childhood – that you be made Arthur’s seneschal (an office that required you to manage the operation of Arthur’s court). Arthur agreed that you would fill this position as long as you lived, and he kept his word.

In the early years you were Arthur’s greatest knight, winning tournaments and proving instrumental in the war against King Lot. But after the War with Rome (during which you were a member of the King’s bodyguard) and the War of Five Kings (two of whom you killed in a single battle, earning you a seat at the Round Table) your fighting skills dulled. Court duties took up more and more of your time. You proved yourself a very capable administrator, demanding but not cruel. Throughout it all, you kept your sarcastic sense of humor. No one seemed to realize how much work your job was. When things were running smoothly, no one noticed, but when something went wrong, you were always blamed.

When young aspiring knights came to Arthur’s court seeking to prove themselves, you were the person the king chose to joust with them. A quick fight would determine if the contender had what it took or was a hopeless poser. Unfortunately, if you won these fights you earned no glory, and if you lost you never heard the end of it. But when Arthur took young men (like Gareth) in for training, he often assigned them to you, and you took pride in your protégés, who always turned out to be great knights.

As Arthur’s older brother and seneschal, you were in a position of absolute trust, and you were never jealous of your brother. Whenever Arthur would send a small, select group of knights to perform some special task, you were invariably included. You were also very close to the Queen. Indeed, your life-long working relationship with Guinevere developed into an intense devotion. Unsurprisingly, there was a strong rivalry between you and Lancelot, one in which you never seemed to get the upper hand. It was Guinevere, not you, who decided your relationship with her would be platonic.

Your most memorable trait was your sharp tongue. You were surly and foul-mouthed. You bullied other knights, bragged constantly, and were quick with insults and sarcasm. You often tried to take credit for heroic deeds you did not do (like the Sword in the Stone incident). But despite all this, your loyalty to Arthur never wavered. You performed only one truly evil act: Arthur’s illegitimate son, Loholt, killed a giant and, out of jealousy, you murdered him. Perhaps it was this that prompted you to amend your ways a little. When Lancelot put on your armor and traveled across Britain defeating countless foes in your name, your reputation soared, but you knew the truth. When you got back to Camelot, you explained to Arthur what had happened and insisted Lancelot – your greatest rival – get the credit he deserved.

You may not have been the most famous knight in the world, and you certainly weren’t the nicest, but you did your job without complaint and when Arthur needed you, you were always there.

Recognizing Kay

Kay may be a duplicitous wisecracker, but he will be loyal, especially to his brother. He may be someone’s right-hand man, like a platoon sergeant or an executive vice-president. Other people will underestimate him, but he may be responsible for training young people or keeping a large organization running smoothly. He may be butler to a large estate, a “Big Brother,” or a mentor figure. His early willingness to lie to get ahead might manifest in a criminal past which Kay is now trying to extricate himself from. His loud mouth makes him a scrapper; he might even be a stand-up comedian or someone who lives by his wit.

Virtues and Vices: Honest, Loyal, Self-Sacrificing; Cynical, Gloryhound, Surly

In order to be an Incarnation of Kay, a character must:

- Have a Warrior core ability.
- Have the feat Dedicated (Arthur) or (Guinevere).
- Be trained in the Bluff skill.

Nemesis: You were a foul-mouthed braggart who often came out on the short end of a joust, but you didn’t bear a grudge. Kay has no nemesis beyond other incarnations of Kay.

Once Kay Recognizes himself, he may select feats from the following list:

Attack Focus, Dirty Fighting*, Estate*, Heavy Armor Training, Organized*, Squire, Set-up, Scrounger*, Taunt, Vehicular Combat

Kay's Estate

Kay does not need to have Diplomacy or a Wealth bonus of +15 or higher in order to select the Estate or Great Estate feats. Instead, he may choose another incarnation (such as Arthur or Guinevere) to be his liege, and use that character's Leadership score and Wealth for the purpose of Estate and Great Estate. If he chooses to use this option, he gains followers to staff his estate equal in number to the followers which the liege received from Leadership. The consequences of his periodic Diplomacy skill checks affect his liege's Wealth rather than his own.

In addition, Kay can use any interaction skill (Bluff, Intimidate) to substitute for Diplomacy when making his periodic estate skill checks, but he cannot delegate this roll to another follower. He may do this whether he has a liege or not.

Adventures with Kay

- If Arthur is in trouble, Kay is always going to be the first man at his side. This means that anyone who wants to hurt Arthur is going to have to come up with a way to get rid of Kay first. Or, even better, turn Arthur against his own brother, possibly by framing Kay for some awful deed.
- Kay grew to love Guinevere, but both his brother and Lancelot were in the way. This time, that might not be so. If Kay can Recognize Guinevere before either of his other rivals do, he might finally be able to find the happiness he was denied in his former life. Of course, he'd again have to choose between family and personal happiness. Or perhaps Guinevere will reject him yet again?
- In one tale, Kay is given a blood-red horse of incredible speed. Once he Recognizes himself, Kay might try looking for that horse, which could manifest as an echo of virtually any size or shape. Try looking for cars named after horses (Mustang, Charger, Colt, and so on).

Merlin the Magician

Merlin is the most famous magic-worker in Western literature. He is the archetypal wizard: a mysterious trickster traveling from place to place issuing prophecies that no one understands until they come true. He is something of a kingmaker – it was he who arranged for Arthur to be raised in secrecy by Ector, and he placed the Sword in the Stone so that Arthur might draw it and claim the crown. While Arthur struggled for acceptance by rival lords, Merlin was his chief advisor and strategist. Men feared him, but none dared disobey him. Eventually he fell in love with the maiden named Nimue, to whom he taught all his magic. But his love was unrequited, and to be rid of him Nimue imprisoned the great wizard in a cave for all time.

Incarnations of Merlin have prodigious magical gifts, and they also enjoy a famous reputation as a powerful wizard and advisor to King Arthur. Merlin can count on being welcome in Arthur's company even if mistrusted by Arthur's other com-



panions, and Merlin takes upon himself shady dealings which it would be better that the king not know about. When Arthur does screw up, Merlin often takes the blame himself in order to protect the king's reputation.

Your Past Life

You were intended to be the Antichrist, and were born to a virgin nun impregnated by the Devil himself, but God intervened to give you the power to decide your own destiny. As a result, you inherited the power to know all future events from your mother, and the power to know the past from your father. From the day of your birth you could speak perfect English and you were covered in thick black hair. Understandably, your mother was going to be burned at the stake for witchcraft, but using your prophetic gifts you revealed embarrassing facts about the judges, who were so shamed that they let your mother go free.

Famous as "the boy without a father," you were captured by agents of King Vortigern, who had been told by his court astrologers that only the blood of a child without a father would save his crumbling castle from collapse. Your prophecies at that castle saved your life (you exposed the astrologers as frauds) and made you a legend. About this time you slipped away to study magic at the foot of Blaise, who began as your master but became your biographer. His book collecting your prophecies would go down in history.

Using a combination of magic and architectural science, you moved the rocks of Stonehenge all the way from Ireland to Britain and constructed them in their current form, using them to mark the tomb of Ambrosius Aurelianus, a Roman commander whose leadership of the British Isles you supported as advisor. The kings that followed sought out your wisdom, though you tended to appear and disappear without much warning. Eventually Uther Pendragon asked for your help. He was infatuated with Igraine of Cornwall, who was married to the powerful duke Gorlois. Using your magics, you gave Uther the appear-

ance of the duke while also disguising yourself and Ulfius as two of Gorlois' companions. While Uther's army fought Gorlois in a night battle, you, Ulfius, and Uther walked into Castle Terrabil and Uther had his night with the duchess.

Gorlois died that very night and Uther soon took Igraine as wife. As Uther agreed, you were given the child that resulted from that magical night. You took Arthur and gave him to Ector, a humble but honorable country knight, to be raised. You traveled the world as Arthur grew up, expanding your knowledge and spreading your reputation. When the time was right, you set the Sword in the Stone and helped organize the great tournament that brought knights to London from all over. When Arthur drew the Sword, you appeared to confirm that he was Uther's son, though for years no one believed you. It was assumed that you had made Arthur, a naive bastard, into your puppet ruler. Eventually Arthur's mother emerged from a convent and that largely settled the matter.

Throughout Arthur's early battles – when he fought to become High King against king Lot and others – you were his best general. Your advice turned the tide at the Battle of Carleon and, later, you enchanted Lot to keep him from leading reinforcements to Castle Terrabil until it was too late to do any good. You helped Arthur choose a wife and create the Round Table. You saved him from king Pellinore (who would have killed him in battle) and arranged for Nineve, the Lady of the Lake, to give Arthur Excalibur.

Soon after Arthur's coronation and marriage, however, you fell in love with Nimue, a maiden with great magical talent. You taught her everything you knew in an attempt to woo her, and took her with you on a tour of the world, but she never answered your love. Since you would not give up trying to persuade her, she eventually used your own spells to get rid of you, imprisoning you inside a magic cave where you entered a kind of half-life. Neither living nor dead, you were visited by occasional knights to whom you prophesied, but you never earned release from that cave. To this day, you're not entirely sure what happened between then and now.

For your entire life you were an inveterate prankster, constantly adopting the shape of a beggar, a child, or an animal just to test Arthur's intelligence. You were often critical of those around you, and although you were constantly rattling off prophecies, you seldom bothered to explain them. You came and went as you pleased, without explanation. When you gave advice, you expected it to be obeyed. Most people hated and feared you. Some of your awful reputation was not really your fault: Arthur's most dishonorable acts (like his decision to murder the May Babies in an effort to kill Mordred) were often blamed on you, but you accepted this in the name of preserving the kingdom. Often you showed up at the scene of some awful tragedy only after it was too late to avoid it – your powers of foresight had already told you the outcome, so you did not try to avert it. Instead, you appeared afterwards to commemorate the people involved and make sure their virtues were not forgotten. Not everyone seemed to appreciate this point of view.

Why make Arthur king in the first place? It's a good question. By Uther's time you had seen many kings of Britain and

few of them were worth a damn. Most were hopeless, power-hungry tyrants. You believed that what Britain needed was a king who didn't want to be king, a king who knew what it meant to serve others, a king who was in touch with what the people needed, not adding to his own glory. You had Arthur raised as a squire because you hoped it would teach him humility. You continued trying to shape Arthur into your ideal ruler, but he still had a long way to go when Nimue arrived and interrupted your long-term agenda. As your lifelong project, you could say that Arthur could have turned out better. But he also could have turned out a lot, lot, worse.

Recognizing MerLin

A merlin is a kind of falcon, so Merlin might be associated with birds, hunting, or some business or enterprise which uses the falcon as a symbol. He may have black hair or some association with devils, have a holy person for a mother, or an evil individual for a father. Merlin may be a world-traveler, and he is certain to have a powerful talent for magic, though that talent may not be realized yet. He may be something of a conman, deceiving even his friends with tricks and disguises. He may be an influential mentor or advisor, whose opinion is sought out by others.

Virtues and Vices: Protective, Thoughtful, Wise; Condescending, Mysterious, Obsessive

If you want your character to be an Incarnation of Merlin, you must:

- Have an Adept core ability.
- Have training in Bluff and Disguise.
- Have the Visions power.

Nemesis: Merlin has no nemesis other than his fellow Merlin incarnations. Although eventually imprisoned underground by Nimue, he was infatuated with her and powerless to resist her. His other foes, such as Vortigern, lived and died before Arthur was born, and have not been reincarnated.

Once Merlin recognizes himself, he may select feats and powers from the following list:

Empower, Excellence (Knowledge: Supernatural), Fearsome Presence*, Master Plan, Mind Over Body, Move Object, Self-Shaping, Sleep, Supernatural Insight*, Supernatural Travel

Adventures with MerLin

- Merlin is going to be looking for Arthur or watching out for him once the king is found. As Arthur's chief magical guardian, he will be the target for many supernatural foes. His knowledge of the future will help lead Arthur to other Incarnations, and this is another good reason for Arthur's enemies to target him.
- Any source of supernatural lore is going to be a big temptation for Merlin, and could be used to draw him into adventure. He will seek out supernatural items both for

himself and for his fellow knights, who might use them as weapons. And whenever anything mysterious turns up, you can bet that Arthur and his men will turn to Merlin for an explanation.

- Merlin's habit of keeping secrets will often lead to tension among the characters, who will all suspect Merlin knows more than he is saying. Merlin has shown himself willing to work with some dangerous individuals whom Arthur might not normally associate with, and his nefarious reputation means that he is always under suspicion. Narrators who want to bring in some of Arthur's villains as supporting cast may be able to do so through Merlin, who might be willing to meet with them and strike up deals that Arthur would never permit were he to know about them.

Morgause, Queen, Spy and Mother

Morgause is most famous as the mother of Mordred, Arthur's killer. She was not aware of her incest with Arthur at the time, and in fact was acting as a spy for her husband Lot, who was at war with Arthur for the title of High King. After Lot's death Morgause took over rule of Lothian, and her five sons (counting Mordred) all became Knights of the Round Table. Morgause is Morgan le Fey's older sister. She was killed by her own sons when she took Lot's killer, Lamorak, as her newest lover.

As a hero in *Arthur Lives!*, Morgause presents a wealth of character challenges. How does she feel about her incest with Arthur? About the blood feud that resulted in her death at the hands of her own sons? Morgause is absolutely fearless and makes an excellent character for anyone who assumes Arthurian women are all quiet wallflowers who live only to be rescued or seduced. In some versions of the story, Morgause has magical powers like her sister Morgan; you can easily represent such abilities by taking levels of adept.

Your Past Life

You were the oldest daughter of duke Gorlois of Cornwall and the beautiful, devoted, Queen Igraine. You had two younger sisters: a quiet, oft-neglected middle sister named Elaine, and the young, haunted, littlest sister Morgan. King Uther Pendragon fell in love with your mother, who refused to have anything to do with him. In answer, Uther made war upon your father and killed him, taking your mother as wife. At this time you were already in your teens, and so you were pushed off into a political marriage designed to solidify Uther's reign and keep Britain at peace. You were married to Lot, king of Lothian, a self-made warlord who had conquered much of Scotland. (Elaine was also married off, but Morgan was too young and sent to a nunnery.)

As the queen of Lothian, you bore Lot four sons, all destined to be great knights: Gawaine, Gareth, Gaheris and Agravaine. You were in your thirties when a boy of unknown lineage (but backed up by Merlin's powerful magic) claimed the rank of High King, a title your husband also coveted and was willing to take by force. War broke out, but when Lothian was invaded by foreigners your husband had to turn his attention to self-defense and he sent you to Arthur's court as an ambassador-spy.

You, however, had your own agenda for this long visit to the court of the Boy King. You did not believe the stories that Arthur was Uther's son (and therefore your half-brother) and you were impressed with Arthur's generosity, sense of justice, and idealism. You sought peace between Arthur and Lot and you hatched a dangerous scheme to force that peace. It was not hard to seduce Arthur (he was a virgin and you were a beautiful queen) and you didn't head back north until you were sure you were with child. When you got home, your husband welcomed you and within the year you gave birth to a son, whom you named Mordred.

Your intent had been to forge a union between the lines of Lot and Arthur. Mordred was Arthur's child in blood, but would be raised by Lot as his own. Eventually you would reveal Mordred's true parentage to Lot, but by that time Lot would have come to love the boy as he loved you, and Lot would be forced to accept Mordred as his son. According to your plan, neither Arthur nor Lot would ever be High King, but Mordred – their mutual heir – would be and the inheritance would pass peacefully, without war. It was a bold plan, one which hinged on your knowledge that Lot was absolutely devoted to his family. But fate conspired against you, and your scheme to save Britain from war instead became a dagger stabbing the kingdom from within.

Your mother Igraine emerged from a convent and confirmed that Arthur was her son. Only you and Arthur knew that you had committed incest on top of adultery. Your horror and revulsion was largely internalized; after all, Lot was away fighting invading Saxons and you still had a kingdom to run. Not long after, agents of Arthur arrived at your court and stole Mordred from you. Sometimes you wonder if you let them do it. Soon you learned that all the boys born that May had been collected – most people were blaming Merlin. The May Babies vanished. Your tears were half misery and half relief. But Lot was furious with anger and returned to vigorous war against Arthur, this time motivated by Arthur's crime against Lot's own family. In a climactic battle outside Castle Terrabil in Cornwall (the same castle where your mother had hid from Uther, and where Arthur had been conceived), Lot's army was defeated and your husband was killed by king Pellinore.

You were made a widow and though you came to Arthur's coronation with all four of your sons, you left with only the youngest, Gareth, while the rest remained with their uncle to be made knights. You ruled Lothian alone and capably, avoiding attention and trouble, comfortable in the close protection of your brother the High King. Although in your forties by this time, you took a young lover: Sir Lamorak, one of the greatest knights of Arthur's realm. Unfortunately, he was also the son of Pellinore, the man who had killed your husband. Your sons

