

LANCELOT & ELAINE

by

ALBERT COATES

LANCELOT & ELAINE

A. COATES



Complete H.C.

LANCELOT & ELAINE

ACT 1.

Scene 1. Palace by the River

Scene 2. Banquet Hall in the Castle of Astolat

Tournament Music

Scene 3. Hermit's Cave

ACT 2.

Scene 1. The Tower

Panorama Music

Scene 2. Palace by the River

LIBRARY
Center
Dramatic
65

LANCELOT & ELAINE

ACT 1.

LANCELOT & ELAINE

PERSONAE
In order of appearance.

Arthur The King

Guinevere The Queen, his wife

Lancelot premier of all Arthur's knights

Lord of Astolat A nobleman

Torre his son

Lavaine his younger son

Elaine his young daughter

Dumb serving man

Hermit

Chorus of courtiers, lords and ladies of the realm

Vivien lady of the court

Modred Nephew of the Queen

Dagonite, the King's jester

LANCELOT & ELAINE

ACT 1.Scene 1. The Palace by the River

The scene takes place near the Queen's bower where Arthur, Lancelot and Guinevere are all three talking.

Arthur

Are you so sick, my Queen, you cannot move to these fair jousts?

Guinevere

Yea, Lord, ye know it. For who loves us must have a touch of earth.

Arthur

Then will ye miss the great deeds of Lancelot, and his prowess in the lists, a sight ye love to look on.

(The Queen's eyes turn to Lancelot. He thinks he reads their meaning - 'Stay with me, I am sick, my love is more than many diamonds'.)

Lancelot

Sir King, mine ancient wound is hardly whole, and lets me from the saddle.

(Before the King goes out, he looks both at Lancelot and his Queen but says not a word.)

Guinevere

To blame, my lord Sir Lancelot, much to blame! Why go ye not to these fair jousts? The knights are half of them our enemies, and the crowd will murmur 'Lo the shameless ones, who take their pastime now the trustful King is gone!'

Lancelot (next at
having lied in vain)

Are ye so wise? ye were not once so wise, my Queen, that summer, when ye loved me first. Then, of the crowd ye took no more account than of the myriad cricket of the mead, when its own voice clings to each blade of grass, and every voice is nothing. As to knights, them surely can I silence with all ease. But now my loyal worship is allowed of all men; many a bard, without offence, has linked our names together in his lay, Lancelot the flower of bravery, Guinevere the pearl of beauty; and our knights at feast have pledged us in this

Lancelot (cont.)

union, while the King would listen smiling. How then? is there no more? Has Arthur spoken aught? or would yourself, now weary of my service and devoir, henceforth be truer to your faultless lord?

(Guinevere breaks into a little scornful laugh)

Guinevere

Arthur, my lord, Arthur, the faultless King, that passionate perfection, my good lord - but who can gaze upon the Sun in heaven? He never spake word of reproach to me, he never had a glimpse of mine untruth, he cares not for me: only here to-day there gleamed a vague suspicion in his eyes: some meddling rogue has tampered with him - else rapt in this fancy of his Table Round, and swearing men to vows impossible, to make them like himself: but, friend, to me he is all fault who has no fault at all: for who loves me must have a touch of earth; the low sun makes the colour: I am yours, not Arthur's as ye know save by the bond.

And therefore, hear my words: go to the jousts; the tiny trumpeting gnat can break our dream when sweetest; and the vermin voices here may buzz so loud - we scorn them but they sting.

Lancelot

And with what face, after my pretext made, shall I appear, O Queen, at Camelot, I before a King who honours his own word as if it were his God's?

Guinevere

Yea, a moral child without the craft to rule, else had he not lost me: but listen to me, if I must find you wit: we hear it said that men go down before your spear at a touch, but knowing you are Lancelot; your great name, this conquers: hide it therefore, go unknown, Win! by this kiss you will.

(Guinevere Kisses Lancelot)

And our true King will then allow your pretext, O my Knight, as all for glory; for to speak him true, ye know right well, how meek so'er he seem, no keener hunter after glory breathes. He loves it in his knights more than in himself: they prove to him his work.

Win and return!

C U R T A I N

LANCELOT & ELAINE

ACT 1.

Scene 2. The Banquet Hall at the Castle of Astolat.

The curtain rises and finds Lord Astolat seated at table with his two sons, Torre and Lavaine, also Lancelot. Elaine and their dumb serving man are waiting on them.

Lord of Astolat

Whence comest thou, my guest, and by what name livest between the lips? for by thy state and presence I might guess thee chief of those, after the King, who eat in Arthur's halls. Him have I seen: the rest, his Table Round, known as they are, to me they are unknown.

Lancelot

Known am I, and of Arthur's hall, and known, by what I by mere mischance have brought, my shield. But since I go to joust as one unknown at Camelot for the diamond, ask me not, hereafter ye shall know me - and the shield - I pray you lend me one, if such you have blank, or at least with some device not mine.

Lord of Astolat

Here is Torre's: Hurt in his first tilt was my son, Sir Torre. And so, God wot, his shield is blank enough. His ye can have.

Torre

Yea, since I cannot use it, ye may have it.

Lord of A (laughing)

Fie, Sir Churl, is that an answer for a noble knight? Allow him! but Lavaine, my younger here, he is so full of lustihood, he will ride, joust for it and win, and bring it in an hour, and set it in this damsel's golden hair, to make her thrice as wilful as before.

Lavaine

Nay, father, my good father, shame me not before this noble knight for nothing. Surely I but played on Torre: he seemed so sullen, vext he could not go: a jest, no more! for, knight the maiden dreamt that some one put this diamond in her hand, and that it was too slippery to be held, and slipt and fell into some pool or stream, the castle-well, belike; and then I said if I went and if I fought and won it (but all was jest and joke among ourselves) then must she keep it safelier. All was jest. But father, give me leave, an if he will, to ride to

Lavaine (cont.)

Camelot with this noble knight: win shall I not, but do my best to win: young as I am, yet would I do my best.

Lancelot (smiling)

So ye will grace me with your fellowship o'er these waste downs whereon I lost myself, then were I glad of you as guide and friend: and you shall win this diamond, - as I hear it is a fair large diamond, - if ye may, and yield it to this maiden if ye will.

Torre

A fair large diamond, such be for Queens and not for simple maids.

Lancelot

If what is fair be but for what is fair and only queens are to be counted so, rash were my judgment then, who deem this maid might wear as fair a jewel as is on earth, not violating the bond of like to like.

(There is a silence. Elaine gives Lancelot a long loving look. The dumb man appears again with more dishes for the table. Lord Astolat, seeing Lancelot looking at him, explains as follows-)

Lord of Astolat

Ten years ago, the heathen caught and reft him of his tongue. He learnt and warned me of their fierce desing against my house, and him they caught and maimed: but I, my sons and little daughter fled from bonds of death and dwelt among the woods by the great river in a boatman's hut. Dull days were those, till good Arthur broke the Pagan yet once more on Badon hill.

Elaine

O there, great Lord, doubtless, you have fought. O tell us - for we live apart - you know of Arthur's glorious wars.

Lancelot

I have fought with Arthur in the fight which all day long rang by the white mouth of the violent Glem: And in the four loud battles by the shore of Duglas; that on Bassa; then the war that thundered in and out the gloomy skirts of Celidon the forest; and again by castle Gurnion, where our glorious King had on his cuirass worn our Lady's Head, carved of one emerald centered in a sun of silver rays, that lightened as he breathed. And at Caerleon I helped his lord, when the strong neighings of the wild white Horse set every gilded parapet shuddering; And up in Agned-Cathregonion too, and down the waste sand-shores of Trath Treroit, where many a heathen fell; And on the mount of Badon I myself

Lancelot (cont.)

beheld the King charge at the head of all his Table Round, and all his legions crying Christ and him, and break them; and I saw him after stand high on a heap of slain, from spur to plume red as the rising sun with the heathen blood, and seeing me, with a great voice, he cried, "They are broken, they are broken" For the King, however mild he seems at home, nor cares for triumph in our mimic wars, the jousts - for if his own knight cast him down, he laughs saying, his knights are better than he - yet in this heathen war the fire of God fills him: I never saw his like: there lives no greater leader.

Elaine

Save your great self, fair lord.

Lancelot

But now we must away, the diamond joust awaits us.
This shield my friend, where is it?

(Elaine brings him the shield)

Elaine

Fair lord, whose name I know not - noble it is, I well believe the noblest - will you wear my favour at this tourney?

Lancelot

Nay, fair lady, since I never yet have worn favour of any lady in the lists. Such is my wont, as those who know me know.

Elaine

Yea, so, then in wearing mine needs must be lesser likelihood, noble lord, that those who know should know you.

(Short pause)

Lancelot

True, my child. Well, I will wear it: fetch it out to me: what is it?

Elaine

A red sleeve brodered with pearls.

(Elaine goes to fetch the favour Returns and binds it on Lancelot's helmet)

Lancelot (smiling)

I never yet have done so much for any maiden living

(Elaine brings Lancelot the shield. Lancelot gives his one to Elaine)

Do me this grace, my child, to have my shield in keeping till I come.

LANCELOT & ELAINE

Elaine A grace to me, twice to-day. I am your squire!

Lavaine Lily maid, for fear our people call you lily maid in earnest, let me bring your colour back (he kisses her)
Once, twice, thrice: now get you hence to rest.

The following is Lancelot's description of the Cave:

(Lancelot kisses his hand to her and with Lavaine he goes out. Elaine watches them go, then turns and takes the shield in her arms.)

In the white rock a chapel and a hall
On massive columns, like a starry cliff cave
and cells and chambers: all were pale and dry;
The green grass grew beneath the rocky roof;
And in the meadows tremulous poplars,
And poplars made a noise of falling showers.

CURTAIN

Lancelot is seen lying in one of the inner chambers in the cave while Lavaine is outside attending to things for him.
Elaine and her maid ride in on horse back. Elaine immediately recognises her brother, Lancelot.

TOURNAMENT MUSIC

Elaine My lord, my lord, my lord, Sir Lancelot!

Lavaine My lord and Elaine! my lord, Sir Lancelot! How know ye my lord's name is Lancelot?

(The hermit hearing voices appears on stage)

Elaine From Sir Gawain. He gave me this (she shows the diamond) which our lord, Sir Lancelot won.

Hermit Gawain, Gawain, Redred's brother! The people speak not well of thee. 'Tis said they mock both the king and our lord here. Nay, they are not Arthur's men; from now on, Arthur is alone, but for our lord here.

Elaine My lord, my lord!

Hermit Peace child, be sleepy. Dost know of his great wound given to him in this last tournament? My brother here was with him when he fell and if it were not for him he would be at earth beneath the grass.

LANCELOT & ELAINE

ACT 1.

Scene 3. The Hermit's Cave

The following is Tennyson's description of the Cave-;

The hermit "had scoop'd himself
In the white rock a chapel and a hall .
On massive columns, like a shorecliff cave
and cells and chambers: all were fair and dry;
The green light from the meadows underneath
Struck up and lived along the mulky roofs;
And in the meadows tremulous aspen-trees,
And poplars made a noise of falling showers."

Lancelot is seen lying in one of the inner chambers in the cave while
Lavaine is outside attending to things for him.

Elaine and Torre ride in on horse back. Elaine immediately recognises
her brother, Lavaine.

Elaine Lavaine, Lavaine, how fares my lord, Sir Lancelot?

Lavaine Torre and Elaine! why here? Sir Lancelot! How know ye
my lord's name is Lancelot?

(The hermit hearing voices appears on stage)

Elaine From Sir Gawain. He gave me this (she shows the diamond)
which our lord, Sir Lancelot won.

Hermit Gawain, Gawain, Modred's brother! The people speak not
well of them. 'Tis said they mock both the King and our lord
here. Nay, they are not Arthur's men; from now on, Arthur
is alone, but for our lord here.

Elaine My lord, my lord!

Hermit Peace child, he sleepeth. Doest know of his great wound
given to him in this last tournament? Thy brother here was
with him when he fell and if it were not for him he would be
as earth beneath the grass.

(Elaine looks round and sees the favour she gave Lancelot still on his helmet. Torre wanders off in a queer mood towards stables)

Elaine My sleeve, tho' carved and cut and half the pearls away,
still bound to his helm!

Hermit The lance-head here.

Elaine Ah, my sweet ord, Sir Lancelot.

Hermit He dread him if he drew it, my lord would die.

Lavaine (shuddering) That great, marvellous shriek, ghastly groan and half his blood bursting forth and down he sank for the pure pain and wholly swooned away.

Hermit We bear him in and staunch his wound and there in daily doubt whether to live or die, for many a week now hid from the wide world's rumour by the grove of poplars with their noise of falling showers and ever-tremulous aspen trees, he lays.

(Lancelot begins to move, Elaine goes towards him, utters a dolorous cry, controls herself and then murmurs)

Elaine Your prize, the diamond, sent you by the King. Sir Gawain, being sent with others by our King to look for thee came though late to Astolat. He told us that thou didst win the diamond but parted from the joust hurt in the side. He deemed I knew full well where my great knight was hidden so left his quest with me, the diamond also.

(Elaine kneels by the corner of his bed and lays the diamond in his open hand. Lancelot kisses her forehead. Tennyson says 'she slipt like water to the floor'.)

Lancelot Alas, your ride has wearied you. Rest must you have.

Elaine No rest for me, nay, for near you, fair lord, I am at rest.

C U R T A I N

Had I chosen to wed, I had been wedded earlier, sweet
Hilary but now there never will be wife of mine.

No, no, I care not to be wife, but to be with you still,
to see your face, to serve you and to follow you through the
world.

LIBRARY
Central
Department
51

LANCELOT & ELAINE

ACT 2.

Scene 1. The Tower

The scene takes place in Elaine's room in the Tower. She is robing herself in her festal garments and as she does so she murmurs to herself.

Elaine
Vain, in vain: it cannot be. He will not love me: how then? must I die? Must I die?
Him or death; death or him. Death or him; him or death.
If I be loved, these are my festal robes, if not, the victim's flowers before he fall.

(Enter Lancelot)

Lancelot
I do beseech ye, fair maid, ask of me some goodly gift for thyself or thine and do not shun to speak the wish most near to your true heart; such service have ye done me that I make my will of yours and Prince and Lord am I in mine own land, and what I will I can.

(Elaine turns pale. Lancelot seeing that she witholds her wish speaks)

Delay no longer, speak your wish, seeing I go to-day.

Elaine
Going? and we shall never see you more. And I must die for want of one bold word.

Lancelot
Speak, that I live to hear, is yours.

Elaine (suddenly and passionately)
I have gone mad. I love you: let me die.

Lancelot
Ah, sister, what is this?

Elaine (innocently extending arms)
Your love, your love to be your wife.

Lancelot
Had I chosen to wed, I had been wedded earlier, sweet Elaine: but now there never will be wife of mine.

Elaine
No, no, I care not to be wife, but to be with you still, to see your face, to serve you and to follow you through the world.

Lancelot

(Enter Lord
Lavaline)

Nay, the world, the world, all ear and eye, with such a stupid heart to interpret ear and eye, and such a tongue to blare its own interpretation - nay, full ill then should I quit your brother's love and your good father's kindness.

Elaine

Not to be with you, not to see your face - alas for me then, my good days are done.

Lancelot

Nay, noble maid, ten times nay! This is not love: but love's first flash in youth, most common: yea. I know it of mine own self; and you yourself will smile at your own self hereafter, when you yield your flower of life to one more fitly yours, not thrice your age; and then will I, for true you are and sweet beyond mine old belief in womanhood, more especially should your good knight be poor, endow you with broad land and territory even to the half of my realm beyond the seas, so that would make you happy: furthermore, even to the death, as though ye were my blood, in all your quarrels will I be your knight. This will I do, dear damsel, for your sake, and more than this I cannot.

(While he is speaking, Elaine turns deathly pale and stands motionless. Lancelot bows and goes towards the door)

Elaine (alone)

Of all this will I nothing.

(Elaine falls in a swoon. Pause. She comes to and sings
'the song of Love and Death')

Sweet is true love tho' given in vain, in vain;
And sweet is death who puts an end to pain:
I know not which is sweeter, no, not I.

Love, art thou sweet? then bitter death must be:
Love, thou art bitter; sweet is death to me.
O love, if death be sweeter, let me die.

Sweet love, that seems not made to fade away,
Sweet death, that seems to make us loveless clay.
I know not which is sweeter, no, not I.

I fain would follow love, if that could be;
I needs must follow death, who calls for me;
Call and I follow, I follow! let me die.

(Enter Lord of Astolat and Elaine's two brothers Torre and Lavaine)

Elaine

Sweet brothers, yesternight I seemed a curious little maid again, as happy as when we dwelt among the woods, and when ye used to take me with the flood up the great river in the boatman's boat. Only ye would not pass beyond the cape that has the poplar on it: there ye fixt your limit, oft returning with the tide. And yet I cried because you would not pass beyond it, and far up the shining flood until we found the palace of the King. And yet ye would not; but this night I dreamed that I was all alone upon the flood, and then I said, 'Now shall I have my will!': and there I woke, but still the wish remained. So let me hence that I may pass at last beyond the poplar and far up the flood, until I find the papalce of the King. There will I enter in among them all, and no man there will dare to mock me; but there the fine Gawain will wonder at me, and there the great Sir Lancelot muse at me: Gawain, who bad a thousand farewells to me, Lancelot who coldly went, nor bad me one; and there the King will know me and my love, and there the Queen herself will pity me, and all the gentle court will welcome me, and after my long voyage I shall rest.

Lord of Astolat

Peace, O my child, ye seem light-headed, for what force is yours to go so far, being sick? and wherefor would ye look on this proud fellow again, who scorns all?

Torre

I never loved him: and I meet with him, I care not howsoever great he be, then will I strike at him and strike him down, give me good fortune, I will strike him dead for this discomfort he hath done the house.

Elaine.

Fret not yourself, dear brother, nor be wroth, seeing it is no more Sir Lancelot's fault not to love me, than it is mine to love him of all men who seems to me the highest.

Lord Astolat

Highest? Daughter, I know not what you call the highest; But this I know, for all the people know it, he loves the Queen, and in open shame: and she returns his love in open shame; if this be high, what is it to be low?

Elaine

Sweet father, all too faint and sick am I for anger: these are slanders; never yet was noble man but made ignoble talk. He makes no friend who never made a foe. But now it

Elaine (cont.)

is my glory to have loved one peerless, without stain; so let me pass, my father, howsoever I seem to you, not all unhappy, having loved God's best and greatest tho' my love had no return. Yet seeing you desire your child to live, thanks, but you work against your own desire; for if I could believe the things you say I should but die the sooner.

(speaking to
Lavaine)

I beseech thee write as I devise a letter, word for word.

Lavaine

Is it for Lancelot, is it for my dear lord? then will I bear it gladly.

Elaine

For Lancelot and the Queen and all the world, but I myself must bear it.

(The letter)

Most noble lord, Sir Lancelot of the Lake, I, sometime called the Maid of Astolat, come, for you left me taking no farewell, hither, to take my last farewell of you. I loved you and my love had no return and therefore my true love has been my death. And therefore, to our Lady Guinevere, and to all other ladies, I make moan: pray for my soul and yield me burial. Pray for my soul, thou too, Sir Lancelot, as thou art a knight peerless.

(to her father)

O sweet father, tender and true, deny me not, ye never yet denied my fancies - this, however strange, my latest: lay the letter in my hand a little ere I die and close the hand upon it. I shall guard it even in death. And when the heat is gone from out my heart, then take the little bed on which I dies for Lancelot's love, and deck it like the Queen's for richness and me also like the Queen in all I have of rich and lay me on it. And let there be prepared a chariot-bier to take me to the river, and a barge be ready on the river, clothed in black. I go in state to court to meet the Queen. Then surely I shall speak for mine own self. And none of you can speak for me so well. And therefore, let our dumb old man alone go with me to that palace, to the doocors. And, now, sweet father, go call the ghostly man hither and let me shrive me clean and die.

(A silent scene. A priest is fetched and after his duties have been performed Elaine dies)

SCENIC CURTAIN

(Lancelot. LANCELOT & ELAINE led with courtiers, lords and ladies of the realm who pass at the on-coming barge)

ACT 2.

Scene 2. Palace by the River

The same scene as Scene 1 Act 1. The Queen is alone on the balcony. A moment later Lancelot enters.

Lancelot

Queen, Lady, my liege, in whom I have my joy, take what I had not won except for you, these jewels and make me happy, making them an armlet for the roundest arm on earth or necklace for a neck for which the swan's is tawnier than her cygnet's: these are words: Your beauty is your beauty and I sin in speaking, yet O grant my worship of it words as we grant grief tears. Such sin in words perchance we both can pardon: but my Queen, I hear rumours flying thro' your court. Our bond, as not the bond of man and wife, should have in it an absolute trust to make up the defect: let rumours be: when did not rumours fly? these, as I trust that you trust me in your nobleness, I may not well believe that you believe.

Queen

It may be, I am quicker of belief than you believe me, Lancelot of the Lake. Our bond is not the bond of man and wife. This good is in it, whatsoever of ill, it can be broken easier. I, for you this many a year have done despite and wrong to one who ever in my heart of hearts I did acknowledge nobler. What are these? Diamonds for me! they had been thrice their worth being your gift had you not lost your own. To loyal hearts the value of all gifts must vary as the giver's. Not for me! For her! for your new fancy. Only this grant me, I pray you: have your joys apart. I doubt not that however changed, you keep so much of what is graceful: and myself would shun to break those bounds of courtesy in which as Arthur's Queen I move and rule: so cannot speak my mind. An end to this! A strange one! yet I take it as Amen. So pray you, add my diamonds to her pearls, deck her with these, tell her she shines me down: an armlet for an arm to which the Queen's is haggard, or a necklace for a neck O as much fairer - as a faith once fair was richer than these diamonds - hers not mine - nay, by the mother of our Lord himself, or hers or mine, mine now to work my will - She shall not have them.

(Queen throws the diamonds into the stream. At the same time the barge with Elaine appears. Queen retires into palace followed later by

(Lancelot. Stage is gradually filled with courtiers, lords and ladies of the realm who gaze at the on-coming barge)

Chorus

What is it? (Gaze at the dumb man) He is enchanted, cannot speak - and she, look how she sleeps - the fairy Queen, so fair? Yea, but how pale! what are they? flesh and blood? or come to take the King to fairyland? for some do hold our Arthur cannot die, but that he passes into fairyland.

(Enter Arthur with knights. The dumb man rises and points to letter in Elaine's hand. Arthur silently takes the letter, breaks the seal and reads it.)

Arthur

Most noble lord, Sir Lancelot of the Lake, I, sometime call'd the maid of Astolat, come, for you left me taking no farewell, hither, to take my last farewell of you. I loved you and my love had no return and therefore my true love has been my death. And therefore to our lady Guinevere, and to all other ladies, I make moan: Pray for my soul and yield me burial. Pray for my soul, thou too, Sir Lancelot, as thou art a knight peerless.

(Chorus look from Arthur to Elaine and weep)

Lancelot

My lord liege Arthur, and all ye that hear, know that for this most gentle maiden's death right heavy am I; for good she was true, but loved me with a love beyond all love in women, whosoever I have known. Yet to be loved makes not to love again; not for many years, however it hold in youth. I swear by truth and knighthood that I gave no cause, not willingly, for such love; to this I call my friends testimony, her bretheren, her father who himself besought me to be plain and blunt, and use, to break her passion, some discourtesy against my nature: what I could, I did. I left her and I bade her no farewell; tho', had I dreamt the damsel would have died, I might have put my wits to some rough use and helped her from herself.

Queen

(The barge moves) Ye might, at least, have done her so much grace, fair lord as would have helped her from her death.

Lancelot

Queen, she would not be content save that I wedded her, which could not be. Then might she follow me thro' the world, she asked; it could not be. I told her that her love was but the flash of youth would darken down to rise hereafter in a stiller flame toward one more worthy of her - then would I,

Lancelot (cont.)

more especially were he, she wedded, poor, estate them with large land and territory in mine own realm beyond the narrow seas, to keep them in all joyance: more than this I could not; this she would not and she died.

Arthur

Lancelot, my Lancelot, thou in whom I have most joy and most affiance for I know what thou hast been in battle by my side, and many a time have watched thee at the tilt strike down the lusty and long practised knight, and let the younger and unskilled go by to win his honour and to make his name, and loved thy courtesies and thee, a man made to be loved; but now I would to God, seeing the homeless trouble in thine eyes, thou couldst have loved this maiden, shaped, it seems, by God for thee alone, and from her face, if one may judge the living by the dead, delicately pure and marvellously fair, who might have brought thee, now a lonely man wifeless and heirless, noble issue, sons born to the glory of thy name and fame, my knight, the great Sir Lancelot of the Lake.

Lancelot

Fair she was, my King, pure, as you ever wished your knights to be. To doubt her fairness were to want an eye, to doubt her pureness were to want a heart. Yea, to be loved if what is worthy love could bind him, but free love will not be bound.

Arthur

Free love, so bound, were freest. Let love be free; free love is for the best: and after heaven on our dull side of death, what should be best if not so pure a love clothed in so pure a loveliness? yet thee, she failed to bind, tho' being as I think unbound as yet and gentle as I know.

O my knight, it will be to thy worship as my knight and mine, as head of all our Table Round, to see that she is buried worshipfully. Let her tomb be costly and her image thereupon and let the shield of Lancelot ay her feet be carven, and her lily in her hand. And let the story of her dolorous voyage for all true hearts be blazened on her tomb in letters gold and azure!

(The barge moves off stage followed by all. Darkness falls.
Lancelot enters alone)

Lancelot

Ah simple heart and sweet, ye loved me, damsel, surely with a love far tenderer than my Queen's. Pray for thy soul? Ay, that I will. Farewell too - now at last - farewell, fair lily.

Lancelot (cont.)

Why did the King dwell on my name to me? Mine own name shames me, seeming a reproach. For what am I? what profits me my name of greatest knight? I fought for it and have it: Pleasure to have it, none; to lose it, pain; now grown a part of me but what use in it? To make men worse by making my sin known? Or sin seemless, the sinner seeming great? Alas for Arthur's greatest knight, a man not after Arthur's heart! I needs must break these bonds that so defame me: not without she wills it: would I if she willed it? nay, who knows? but if I would not then may God, I pray him, send a sudden angel down to seize me by the hair and bear me far, and fling me deep in that forgotten mere, among the tumbled fragments of the hills.

Queen (enters)

Lancelot, forgive me; mine was jealous love.

Lancelot

That is love's curse; pass on, my Queen, forgiven.

Queen.

O Lancelot, get thee hence to thine own land, for if thou tarry we shall meet again and if we meet again some evil chance will make the smouldering scandal break and blaze before the people and our lord the King. I half foresee that he, the subtle beast, Modred will track our guilt until he find, and mine would be for evermore a name of scorn.

I cannot front in hall or elsewhere Modred's narrow foxy face heart-hiding smile and gray persistent eye. The Powers that tend the soul, to help it from the death that cannot die and save it in extremes, begin to vex and plague me. Many a time for hours, besides the placid breathings of the King, in the dead night, grim faces come and go before me or a vague spiritual fear - like to some doubtful noise of creaking doors, heard by the watcher in a haunted house, that keeps the rust of murder on the walls - hold me awake: or if I sleep, I dream an awful dream; for then I seem to stand on some vast plain before a setting sun and from the sun there swiftly makes at me a ghastly something and its shadow flies before it, till it touches me and I turn - when lo! my own, that broadening from my feet and blackening, swallows all the land and in it far cities burn and with a cry I wake.

And all this trouble does not pass but grows; till even the clear face of the guileless King, and trustful courtiers of household life, become my bane.

O. Lancelot, if thou love me get thee hence.

(They go towards the bower. Music gives impression of a madness of farewells. Love scene, no words. Meantime, Vivien brings

(Modred to the Queen's apartments and shows him the couple in the bower embracing. They then rush to the bower and cry out)

Modred

Traitor, come out, ye are trapt at last.

(Lancelot goes quickly towards Modred, hurls him headlong. Modred lies motionless for a moment, his knights then carry him off stage)

Queen

The end is come and I am shamed for ever.

Lancelot

Mine be the shame; mine was the sin; but rise and fly to my strong castle overseas: there will I hide thee till my life shall end, there hold thee with my life against the world.

Queen

Lancelot, wilt thou hold me so? Nay, friend, for we have taken our farewells. Would God that thou couldst hide me from myself! Mine is the shame, for I was wife and thou unwedded: yet rise now and let us fly for I will draw me into sanctuary and bide my doom.

her

(Lancelot goes for her white horse, seats ^{her} thereon and they kiss)

Queen

Too late, too late.

(both exit)

(Stage darkens. Arthur enters and looks to the Queen's balcony but finds it without light. He moves a few paces and comes across somebody sobbing at his feet. It is his jester)

Arthur

What art thou?

Jester (sobbing)

I am thy fool and I shall never make thee smile again.

C U R T A I N

THE END