



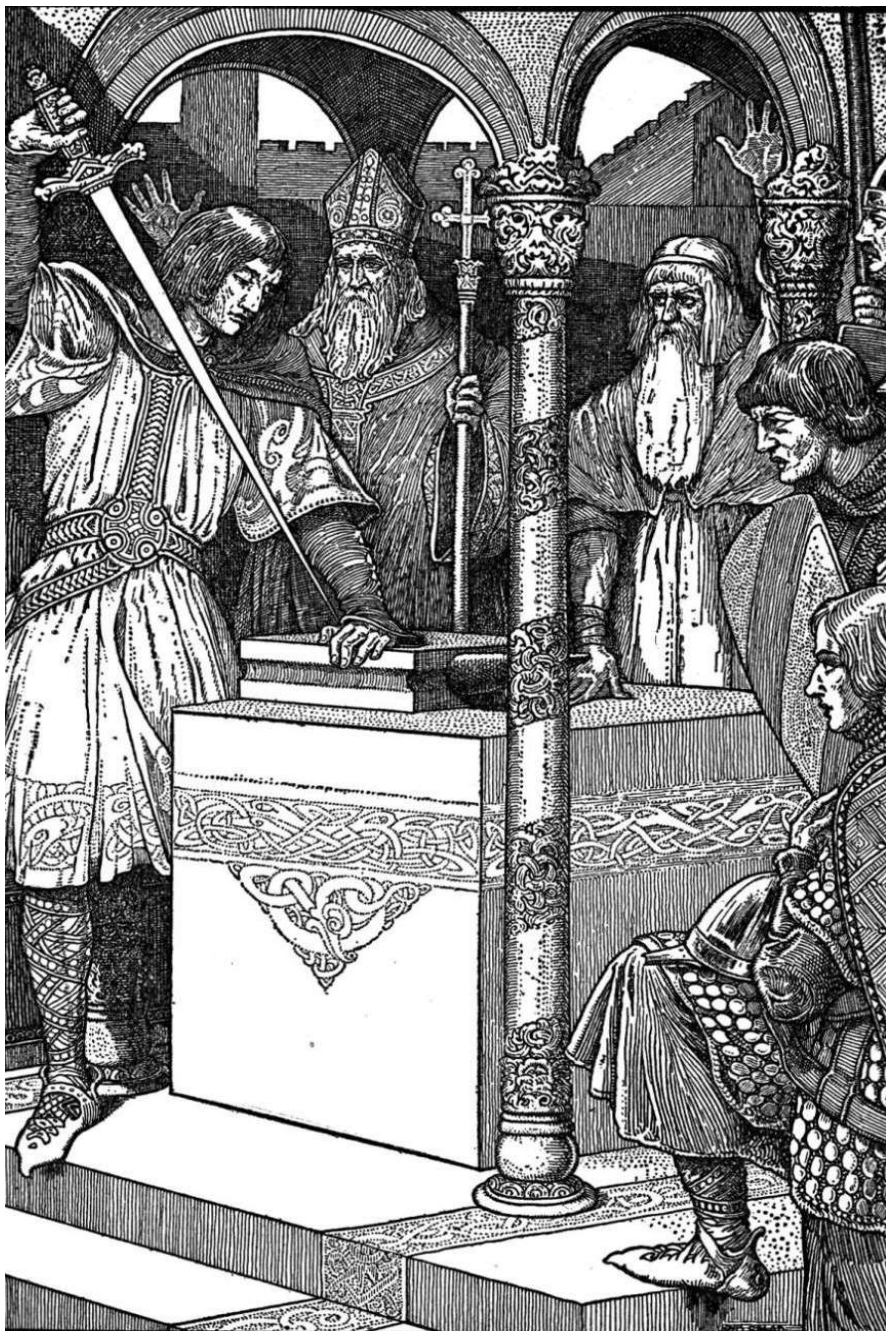
# The Black Hart of Camelot

A live roleplaying game by Ryan Paddy

### *The Omen*

*Ere Arthur made he Guinevere his bryde,  
In Camelot whereat he spake his trothe,  
And was in sacred bands of wedlocke tyde,  
To Queene and Kingdome married fullie bothe;  
A Stag of Whyte amazd the gatherd hoste.  
Now shadows mirk the age of chyvalrie,  
Tis seen a Hart of Blacknesse dark and lothe,  
An omen needing none to augurie;  
Enchaunter Merlin hight a preace of mysterie.*





# Introduction

It is a kingdom that never was, and always will be. The tale of the rise and fall of Camelot has been told and re-told over the centuries and has often strayed far from the truth. Now shall we uncover the true history of Camelot, and of all the lords and ladies that had a hand in its shaping, and eventual undoing.

Arthur is King of Britain, with four vassal kingdoms under him. To the southwest lies Cornwall, whose influence is growing. West is Cameliard, birthplace of Guinevere. In the north is unruly Lothian. East is noble Listenoise, home of the Fisher King. These four royal families vie for land and favour within King Arthur's court and their sons serve as Knights of the Round Table. Over the western sea lies the Kingdom of Ireland, fiercely independent of Britain.

The new ideal of romantic chivalry is tested against the old rule of might, and Christianity clashes with the old pagan ways. Blood feuds are fought and unseen powers vie for the land's soul. When a black hart enters Camelot, Merlin arranges a gathering of those who will decide the fate of the land after this omen. Now a crucial lost chapter in the history of King Arthur's Britain will unfold.





# Setting

Before King Arthur's time, Britain was ruled by mighty warlords. Arthur's father, Uther, was one such king, and conquered almost all of Britain by force before his death. When Arthur grew to maturity, he called for a new Britain where everyone would be subject to the law, including lords. There was resistance from some of the lords at first, but in time they swore fealty and Arthur became the first King of Britain.

Britain is now Christian, and the old pagan ways are being branded as devilry. Dangerous creatures such as dragons have largely been eradicated. Magic still abounds, although its sources are increasingly questioned. Noblemen from throughout the realm form the Knights of the Round Table, who swear to live by the new code of chivalry. As yet only Sir Galahad has proved virtuous enough to achieve the Holy Grail.

The kingdoms of Cornwall, Cameliard, Listenoise and Lothian are Arthur's vassals. He directly rules the land of Camelot. The armies of each of the five kingdoms are evenly matched. Times have been relatively peaceful until recently, but now conflict between the monarchs is brewing. Cornwall and Cameliard are in dispute over the land of Gloucheton where the Lady of the Lake dwells. In a separate conflict, King Pellinore of Listenoise and King Lot of Lothian have been killed and there are rumours of a blood feud between their successors.

Arthur has stated that none of his kingdoms may go to war with each other, and that disputes must be decided by trial. Yet it is only the good will of his vassal lords that holds Britain together under his laws.



# Characters

## Selecting your character

There are 24 characters to choose from. Each character's gender, approximate age and allegiance is noted on the *Cast of Characters* chart at the end of this guide. Let the game master know which character you'd like to play, with second and third choices. You'll be sent a briefing that describes your character.

## Playing your character

Read your character briefing before the game and ask the game master if you have any questions, particularly about your character's goals. These give you reasons to interact with the other characters and you should pursue them vigorously.

How the event turns out will depend on how the characters are played. The game master in this larp does not really affect what happens, their role is to facilitate play. You may succeed in your character's goals, but failing tragically is just as appropriate.

## Costuming

Any medieval costume is suitable. Knights can wear armour to enhance their costume, but it does not give any other advantage. For physical combat, use shields and foam weapons that meet your local safety standards.

The characters span three generations. *Young* characters are roughly in their late teens, *mature* characters at least in their thirties, and *old* characters in their fifties or older. Use costume, makeup, and roleplaying to convey your character's age.



# Rules

## The game master

The game master will be playing Kay, the Seneschal of Camelot, who is Arthur's master of ceremonies for this gathering. If you have any questions during play, please ask the GM quietly away from the other players. Please do not approach while the GM is talking to another player privately.

## Enchantment

The word *verily* will be used to indicate that magic is occurring. If you hear a statement beginning with *verily* you will perceive it as true, however unlikely it may seem. A command starting with *verily* must be followed, even if it is against your own interests. Characters do not hear the statement, so they will not realise enchantment is occurring unless the result is very strange.

## Enchanted items

Some items may be enchanted. They will have a ribbon attached that describes the effect of the item, or you will be informed of the effect. Only read a ribbon if you are holding the item.



# Combat

There are two types of combat that can be used in this game. Your game master will let you know which one you'll be using.

## Physical combat

In this option, players fight with foam weapons. Each blow that lands on you removes one hit point. Blows that land on your weapon or shield do no damage. Your game master will let you know any local rules, such as avoiding strikes to the head.

## Rock-paper-scissors combat

Alternatively, rock-paper-scissors can be used. The players state their current hit points. If the difference is more than two, the person with more hit points wins. Otherwise, you play rock-paper-scissors. If one player has more hit points than the other, they will win if the result is a draw, otherwise draws should be replayed. The loser is defeated and loses all of their hit points. The winner loses one hit point, unless that would reduce them to no hit points.

## Hit points

Each character has a number of hit points that represent their skill at fighting. Enchantment can increase or reduce hit points.

## Defeat and healing

If have no hit points you are defeated, and at the victor's mercy. You cannot fight until you have at least one hit point. If you are allowed to live, then for each minute you are cared for by another character you regain one hit point. Your hit points can be restored back to your starting number, plus or minus any enchantments.

# Arthurian customs

The following customs describe some formal aspects of the lives of noble families in King Arthur's Britain. These customs rely on the willingness of the King's subjects to accept his practices and his judgements. To date he has not been challenged, although rulings have sometimes been appealed and he has sometimes reconsidered them.

## **Trials**

If a person is accused of a crime or two parties are in dispute, a trial is held. The highest authority is King Arthur, so he will judge if available. Anyone can give evidence. If the judge deems the evidence overwhelming, they will declare the result immediately. If the situation is uncertain, then the judge can rule a trial of combat is required to decide the question. The two sides may fight for themselves or have champions fight for them, and the winner declares the truth of the matter. Once a ruling is made, the judge will state the punishment or the resolution. Murder and treason are punishable by death. Punishments for lesser crimes are at the discretion of the judge.

## **Chivalry**

Knights of the Round Table are expected to maintain chivalrous behaviour, lest they return to the barbarism of the old knights. A chivalrous knight will do no harm to a lady, and always help a lady in distress. They will be loyal, courageous, fair and merciful, whether with their lords, fellow knights or with the poor and the weak. They will clasp to Godly ways, and listen not to the Devil.

## **Swearing fealty**

The kings and queen present have sworn fealty to King Arthur. At any time a monarch may swear fealty to a different character, in public or privately. Please inform the GM of a change of fealty immediately. If war arises after this gathering, the outcome will be determined by the number and strength of the armies of the kingdoms that have sworn fealty to the leaders of each side.

## **Heirs**

If a monarch dies then succession must be decided. The law says that their declared heir should assume their throne. None of the kings or queens present have declared heirs yet, including King Arthur. If a monarch decides to declare their heir, they should inform Kay the Seneschal so that a public announcement can be arranged.





# Cast of characters

<b>Argante</b> <i>Female - Young - Avalon</i> A young warrior-maiden who lives in Avalon with Nimue.	<b>Gawaine</b> <i>Male - Mature - Lothian</i> Chief Knight of the Round Table, eldest son of Morgause and presumed heir of Lothian.
<b>Arthur</b> <i>Male - Mature - Camelot</i> The king of all of Britain via his vassal lords, and direct ruler of the kingdom of Camelot.	<b>Guineth</b> <i>Female - Young - Cameliard</i> Second daughter of Leodegrance, half-sister of Guinevere.
<b>Brangaine</b> <i>Female - Young - Ireland</i> Handmaiden of Isolde who has travelled with her from Ireland.	<b>Guinevere</b> <i>Female - Mature - Camelot</i> Queen of Britain, wife of Arthur and first daughter of Leodegrance.
<b>Clarissant</b> <i>Female - Young - Lothian</i> Daughter of Morgause and Lot, sister of Gawaine and cousin of Mordred.	<b>Isolde</b> <i>Female - Young - Ireland</i> Princess of Ireland who has travelled to Britain with Brangaine and Tristan to meet Mark, her betrothed.
<b>Elaine</b> <i>Female - Mature - Listenoise</i> The princess and presumed heir of Listenoise, daughter of Pelles and mother of Galahad.	<b>Lancelot</b> <i>Male - Mature - Camelot</i> Champion of Camelot and adopted son of Nimue, whispered to be having an affair with Guinevere.
<b>Galahad</b> <i>Male - Young - Listenoise</i> The only knight to have achieved a vision of the Holy Grail, regarded as a young man of unsurpassed virtue.	<b>Leodegrance</b> <i>Male - Old - Cameliard</i> King of Cameliard, gave his daughter Guinevere in marriage to Arthur and gifted him the Round Table.

<b>Lyonesse</b> <i>Female - Young - Cornwall</i> First daughter of Mark, has been offered in marriage to Leodegrance who has not yet responded.	<b>Morgause</b> <i>Female - Old - Lothian</i> Queen of Lothian since the death of her husband Lot. Older sister of Morgan and half-sister of Arthur.
<b>Lynette</b> <i>Female - Young - Cornwall</i> Second daughter of Mark, he is said to be keeping her unmarried to look after him.	<b>Nimue</b> <i>Female - Mature - Avalon</i> Ruler of the isle of Avalon in Glouchdon. Known as the Lady of the Lake, gave Arthur the enchanted sword Excalibur.
<b>Mark</b> <i>Male - Mature - Cornwall</i> King of Cornwall, has been gradually expanding his vassal lands with the help of his champion Tristan.	<b>Palamedes</b> <i>Male - Young or Mature - Cameliard</i> Champion of Cameliard, a Saracen knight who wishes to join the Round Table.
<b>Merlin</b> <i>Male - Old - Camelot</i> Advisor to Arthur, said to be a sorcerer and a prophet. Helped to raise Arthur.	<b>Pelles</b> <i>Male - Old - Listenoise</i> Inherited the Kingdom of Listenoise from his brother Pellinore. Known as the Fisher King, guardian of the Holy Grail.
<b>Mordred</b> <i>Male - Young - Lothian</i> Illegitimate son of Arthur and Morgan, raised by his aunt Morgause.	<b>Percival</b> <i>Male - Young - Listenoise</i> Son of the recently killed Pellinore and nephew of Pelles. Is questing for the Holy Grail but has not yet been successful.
<b>Morgan</b> <i>Female - Mature - Lothian</i> Younger sister of Morgause and half-sister of Arthur, mother of Mordred, often called Morgan le Fay.	<b>Tristan</b> <i>Male - Young - Cornwall</i> Champion of Cornwall and captain of Mark's army. Has just returned from Ireland where he won the hand of Isolde for Mark.



# Family tree and factions

Bold names are player characters in game. Grey names are deceased.

