

The Elder Pendragon

By Brent Holland

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DEDICATION

If I were facing the Portal Master with Byron Holland, Josh Lee and Sierra Holland... that dude wouldn't stand a chance. Just saying.

STORY OF THE PLAY

Years before he would ascend to become the legendary king, Arthur is called on by Merlin to defend the kingdom from a cataclysm that threatens to destroy the world. In a desperate mission that is led by Arthur's older brother Marcus, eight brave souls set out to combat the ancient evil that has plagued the world for centuries. The brothers and noblemen experienced in warfare, along with Guinevere and Lady Gaian, are tested as they encounter Gatekeepers, Seductresses, and other demons who know the humans' most primal weaknesses. Any failure results not only in the loss of their lives, but the complete erasure of their existence. How many, if any at all, will survive?

SETTINGS

Merlin's hall, mouth of the cave and the cave itself, 4 pedestals at a portal.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(6 m, 6 w, 4 flexible, extras)

MARCUS PENDRAGON: (M) A charismatic leader, the oldest son of Uther.

ARTHUR PENDRAGON: (M) Kind and brave, the second son of Uther.

GUINEVERE DE LYONESS: (F) The betrothed warrior princess of Marcus Pendragon.

SIR GARETH: (M) A vassal of Uther Pendragon and a cunning military leader.

SIR LUCAN: (M) A likeable and good-natured noble; a childhood friend of Arthur.

RIDLEIGH: (F) Deadly with a bow and quick-witted. The best friend and travel partner of Bors.

BORS DU AUSMENT: (M) Ridleigh's best friend. A powerful fighter with a serious demeanor.

LADY GAIAN: (F) Head of House Gaian. Arrogant and unlikeable.

LORD (LADY) ASPERAN: (E) A capable, but older commander.

MERLIN: (M) A legendary scholar.

GATEKEEPER: (E) A servant of the guardian.

GATEKEEPER 2: (E) A servant of the guardian who replaces the fallen Gatekeeper.

SEDUCTRESS 1: (F) A servant of lies. Overtly sexual and seductive.

SEDUCTRESS 2: (F) A convincing speaker. Very confident.

SEDUCTRESS 3: (F) Sneaky. Conniving.

PORTAL MASTER: (E) The guardian of the gateway between this world and hell.

EXTRAS: 1-4 Shadow Demons. (Or they can be doubled with the Gatekeepers as well as the Seductresses.)

Prologue

(AT RISE: MARCUS and ARTHUR are fighting a DEMON in all black. Marcus and Arthur wield swords of white, while the Demon has a sword of orange, representing fire. The fighting is intense.)

MARCUS: It's not getting tired!

ARTHUR: That makes one of us!

(As the fighting continues. MARCUS sees a hole.)

MARCUS: Arthur! Go high!

(ARTHUR attacks high, causing the DEMON to block only to have MARCUS attack low. The Demon is injured and screams as Arthur finishes it with a strike to the neck. SFX: The sound of thunder rings out. BLACKOUT.)

Scene 1

(AT RISE: Merlin's Hall. MERLIN is presiding over a meeting of specifically invited NOBLES and WARRIORS.)

LADY GAIAN: So this has happened before?

MERLIN: Yes. My research has led me to believe that it has happened many times before.

LORD ASPERAN: Many times?

MERLIN: That is my conjecture. I am almost certain it is the same affliction that struck our land in my childhood.

LORD ASPERAN: The cataclysm?

MERLIN: Yes.

LORD ASPERAN: My father told me stories about that night and the weeks that followed. We are lucky our kingdom survived.

LUCAN: My father has told me stories as well.

MERLIN: That was fifty years ago and well documented by those who witnessed it. But there have been more. My grandfather told stories of what he called “the night of death” which sounds remarkably similar to the cataclysm, yet they were from his own childhood, or maybe even before.

LADY GAIAN: Do you know the cause?

MERLIN: I have theories. I have read tomes that talk about generational destruction dating back hundreds of years, but in all cases the recollections are vague and often contradict each other. No specific cause is ever mentioned, or even presented as a possibility.

GUINEVERE: The recent attacks on the outlying villages... is this related?

MERLIN: Most certainly it is, Lady Guinevere. In the few accounts that exist, but especially in that of the most recent cataclysm, the world was shaken in the weeks leading up to the event.

LUCAN: In our lands, we have heard reports of corpses... flying corpses that attack in the night. At first, we simply assumed it was the rambling of scared shepherds, but I saw one with my own eyes.

MERLIN: Your father's lands, Sir Lucan, border the Black Mountains, which is where I believe the source of our troubles lay. Your great-grandfather fought this scourge in his own time, but his account of the events are painfully incomplete.

LUCAN: These are still spoken of as legends in our halls.

MERLIN: There is often a lot of truth to be found in legends.

LORD ASPERAN: Why have you called us here tonight, Lord Mage? Is it to scare us all with horror stories from the past?

MERLIN: No, Lord Asperan. Tonight, I have called you all here to tell you that the time has come for us to attack the source of this darkness.

BORS: Attack? What do you mean by attack?

RIDLEIGH: He means that we are going to offensively go after—

BORS: (*Cutting her off.*) Bors du Ausment knows what he means by attack!

RIDLEIGH: Then why did you ask? And don't do that thing where you talk about yourself like you aren't actually you.

MERLIN: If we can stay focused... In my research, the contractions that we have been feeling will continue to get worse. Eventually, if untended, I do believe that they would destroy our world.

LADY GAIAN: Our entire world?

MERLIN: I do believe so.

LUCAN: So, what can be done?

MERLIN: In my research, which is painfully incomplete... it seems that in each generation, these contractions... I think that's the best word...

GUINEVERE: Contractions... like in childbirth?

MERLIN: Precisely. These contractions are heading towards an event, or birthing.

LORD ASPERAN: I'm not sure I understand.

MERLIN: In each of the recorded situations, a group was sent into the Black Mountains to confront the evil that is plaguing us.

LUCAN: The flying corpses.

MERLIN: And worse, I'm afraid.

LUCAN: Worse than flying corpses? That sounds like fun.

BORS: (*Not getting the sarcasm.*) Flying corpses do not sound like fun.

LUCAN: It was a joke.

BORS: Understood. (*Beat.*) It was not a very good joke.

MERLIN: But while I know that in each situation a group was sent in to combat the evil, in almost none of the accounts do I know the conclusion, or almost any of the specifics of the encounter.

RIDLEIGH: But you know they happened? You're sure.

MERLIN: Quite sure.

LADY GAIAN: I've heard reports of the attacks in the foothills, but are you actually saying you believe that flying corpses are attacking Lord Tuscan's lands?

LUCAN: I've seen them with my own eyes!

LADY GAIAN: I believe you are convinced that you have.

LUCAN: Exactly what are you trying to say, Lady Gaian?

BORS: (*Matter-of-fact.*) She does not believe you.

The Elder Pendragon

- 7 -

(RIDDLEIGH makes a sound of derision.)

BORS: What?

RIDDLEIGH: Sir Lucan knows that she doesn't believe him.

BORS: Then why didn't he just say so?

LORD ASPERAN: I have known Sir Lucan since he was a child. He wouldn't lie about something like this.

LADY GAIAN: So, you believe in this as well?

LORD ASPERAN: If Merlin believes that our world is in danger, then I do as well.

GARETH: As do I.

GUINEVERE: I do too.

LADY GAIAN: Well, please forgive me for being a skeptic. I'm going to need more proof than that.

(MARCUS and ARTHUR enter.)

MARCUS: Merlin!

MERLIN: *(Quickly.)* What did you find, Marcus?

MARCUS: It is as Sir Lucan says.

ARTHUR: It's worse, actually.

MERLIN: Tell me.

MARCUS: We were barely into the foothills when we found a village that had been ravaged.

ARTHUR: There were no survivors.

LUCAN: What village?

ARTHUR: The small village on the Stinson River.

LUCAN: The village is called Perkin. There were no survivors?

ARTHUR: None.

LUCAN: I have to let my father know. His cousin was in charge of the garrison there.

MERLIN: There is no time for that, Sir Lucan.

LUCAN: He needs to know!

MERLIN: If the wraiths are as far inland as Perkin, then we don't have much time at all. Things are getting worse at a faster rate than I had anticipated. Sir Lucan, what is your father's cousin's name?

LUCAN: What?

MERLIN: His name! Do you know his name?

LUCAN: Of course, I do! It's... *(HE can't remember.)* It's... *(Struggling.)* He's my father's cousin! I grew up with his daughter... *(HE can't remember her name either.)* Why can't I remember their names?

MERLIN: It's as I feared.

LUCAN: What is?

MERLIN: In my readings I have seen a trend. It appears that when this darkness claims a victim that they befall a fate even worse than death.

LADY GAIAN: What is worse than death?

MERLIN: If the darkness claims you, it is as if you never existed. That's why the stories and tellings of the events always have inconsistencies. Lord Marcus, are you able to leave immediately?

MARCUS: Are we going to send a party in?

MERLIN: I think it is time to do so. Yes.

MARCUS: Then I would like to lead it.

RIDLEIGH: What are you talking about?

GUINEVERE: Lead what?

BORS: Is there going to be a fight? If so, Bors wants to be a part of it.

LADY GAIAN: We're sending people to fight?

MERLIN: Please! If you would all listen to me, I will be happy to explain. First, I am sure you are all familiar with King Uther Pendragon's two sons: Marcus and his younger brother, Arthur.

LORD ASPERAN: I have known them both since they were children.

ARTHUR: It is good to see you, Lord Asperan. I wish it were for less desperate reasons.

MERLIN: I sent Marcus and Arthur to investigate the claims made by Sir Lucan's father, and I take it that you have confirmed what the Tuscans say is happening there. Did you see it with your own eyes, Marcus?

MARCUS: Not only saw it, but crossed blades with it. If what it was wielding could even be called a blade. It was more like fire.

MERLIN: Did your own weapon protect you?

ARTHUR: Thanks to you, yes it did.

MERLIN: Thank heavens. How did you escape?

MARCUS: We didn't. We took the creature down.

(There is a beat as that sets in.)

LADY GAIAN: Do you carry proof of this?

MARCUS: No. As we removed the head from our attacker, the entire creature dissolved into smoke.

LADY GAIAN: Impossible.

MERLIN: That is consistent with what I have read in my research.

GUINEVERE: *(To MARCUS.)* Why didn't you tell me you were going on such a dangerous journey?

MARCUS: I'm sorry.

GUINEVERE: Do expect to be able to do such once I am your wife?

MERLIN: Guinevere, please do not give your betrothed undue grief for leaving without telling you. Time was very short, and you were still a day's travel west at the time.

MARCUS: I still apologize, my love.

GUINEVERE: I would have gone with you.

MARCUS: I know.

MERLIN: Did you see the storm?

ARTHUR: We did. Dark clouds in the east. Never ceasing.

MERLIN: We may be too late.

LORD ASPERAN: Too late for what?

MERLIN: To stop the end of the world.

MARCUS: You want us to leave tonight?

MERLIN: We have to assemble a party.

BORS: Bors du Ausment volunteers!

MERLIN: Everyone listen. I had hoped we had time to wait for Lord Declan and Lady Passmore to arrive, but I'm afraid to wait any longer. We must attack at once.

MARCUS: Then I will lead.

LORD ASPERAN: No. If our world is in danger, I will lead the assault.

BORS: And Bors will be at your side!

MERLIN: Lord Asperan, your leadership is desired... but it was my hope that you would return to your kingdom and prepare for the worst.

LORD ASPERAN: The worst?

MERLIN: If this party fails...

BORS: Bors du Ausment does not fail!

RIDDLEIGH: Give it a rest, Bors!

MERLIN: If it fails, the devastation will be severe, and we will need men like you to hold the kingdom together.

LORD ASPERAN: We have never failed in the past, have we?

MERLIN: It is my belief that we have failed repeatedly in the past. It's my opinion that the cataclysm and all of the previous destructive events have spawned from the failure to stop them. The failure of the men and women who tried. To be honest, I'm not even sure this generational evil is stoppable. I just know we must try.

LADY GAIAN: What do you want from us?

MERLIN: I want you and Lord Asperan to return to your lands and prepare.

LADY GAIAN: Prepare for what?

MERLIN: The worst you can imagine.

LORD ASPERAN: My son holds my keep. I will send word to him through a servant. I want to face this evil myself.

MERLIN: And I can't persuade you otherwise?

LORD ASPERAN: You can't.

MERLIN: Then you will lead. *(To the OTHERS.)* Who amongst the rest of you will go?

BORS: Bors will go!

RIDDLEIGH: Where Bors goes, I go.

MARCUS: I'm in. I would choose to lead this, but defer to you as my elder, Lord Asperan.

LORD ASPERAN: I'm sure your counsel will be needed, Lord Marcus.

GUINEVERE: You're not getting away from me that easily, Marcus. I'm in as well.

MARCUS: I would prefer that you stay.

End of Freeview

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