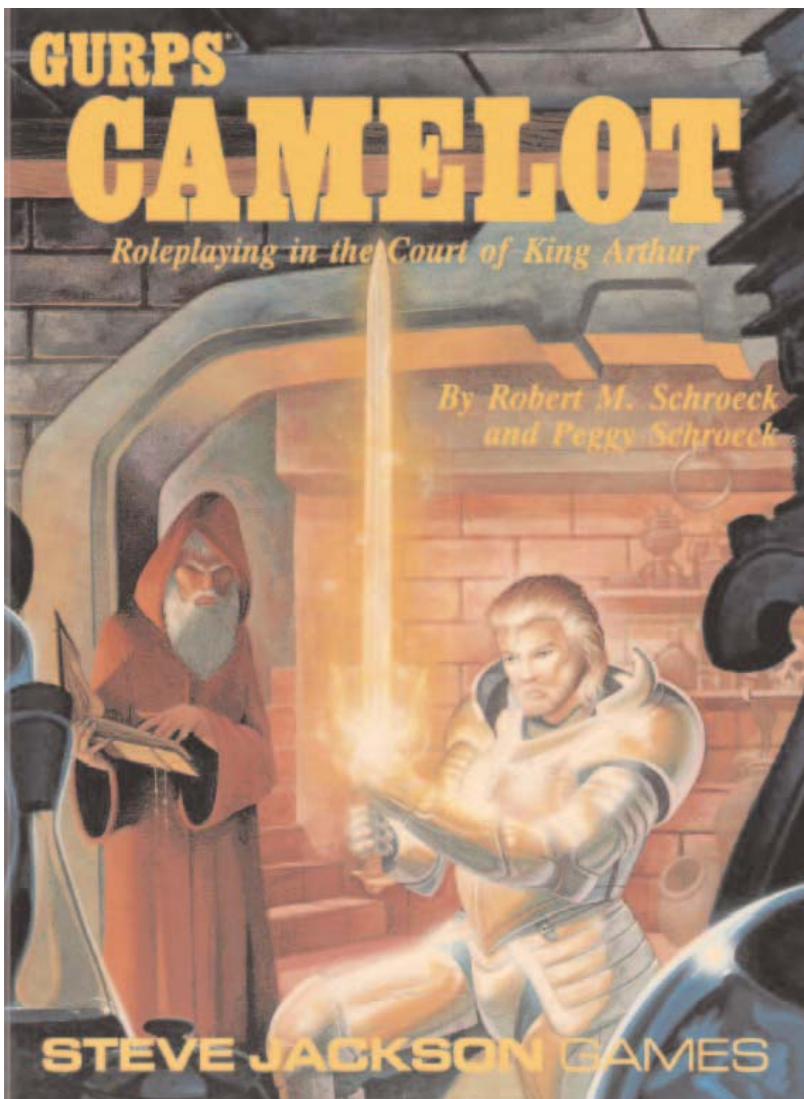


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- \* The modern Cinematic Arthur of swashbuckling adventures, and
- \* The Historical Arthur, the ancient British ruler who fought against Saxon invaders.

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**GURPS<sup>®</sup>**

# **CAMELOT**

*Roleplaying in the Court of King Arthur*

*By Robert M. Schroeck  
and Peggy Schroeck*

**STEVE JACKSON GAMES**





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*Arthur Pendragon. Arthur of Camelot. Arthur, overthrown at last by treachery, yet never truly defeated. Arthur, the Once and Future King.*

*Some day, in time of direst need, Arthur will return.*

Written by Robert M. Schroeck and Peggy Schroeck

Edited by Steve Jackson

Cover by John Zeleznik

Illustrated by Topper Helmers



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*Roleplaying in the Court of King Arthur*

By Peggy U.V. Schroeck and Robert M. Schroeck

Edited by Loyd Blankenship and Steve Jackson

Additional material by Aaron Allston and J. David George, Loyd Blankenship, Steve Jackson, Chris W. McCubbin, Steffan O'Sullivan and Daniel U. Thibault

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Carl Anderson and Larry McDougal

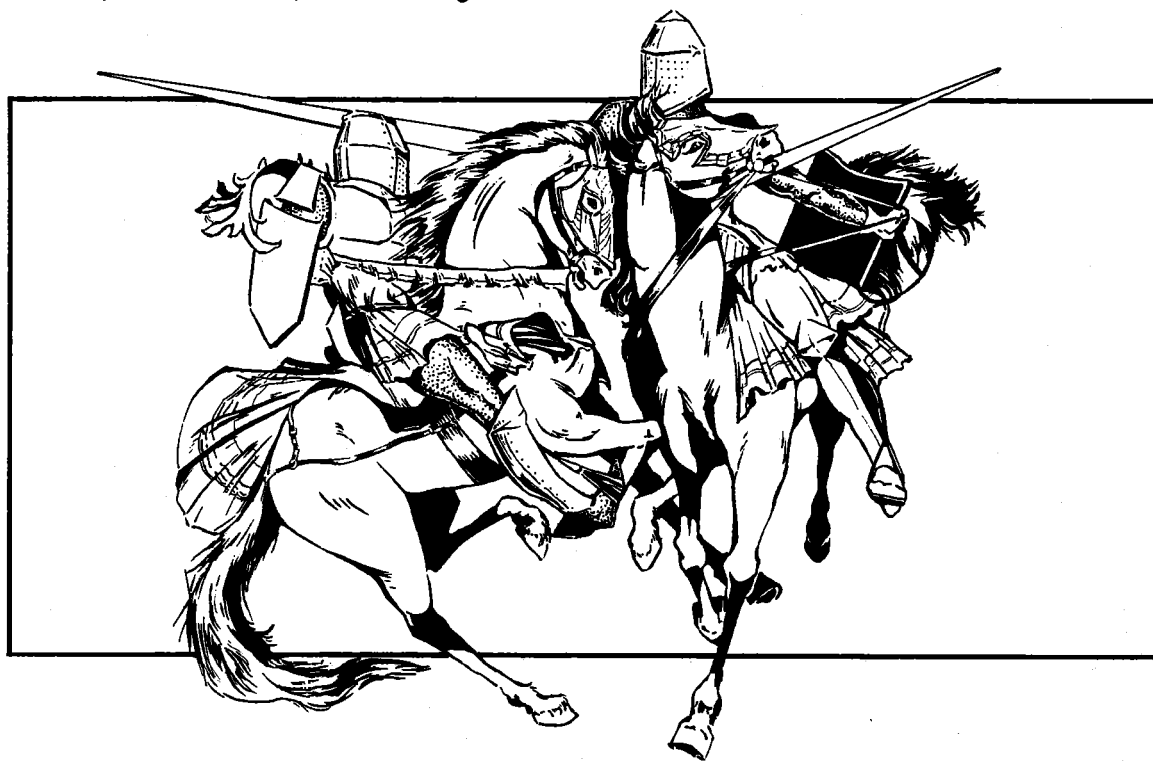
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# INTRODUCTION

Perhaps the most enduring legend of the Western world is that of King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table. For 15 centuries the tales have survived, and in that time they have undergone changes that would astound their original tellers! But still, something remains the same at the core of the myth, something bright and glorious that transcends the stories and evokes a brilliant, perfect vision at the mere utterance of the word "Camelot."

*GURPS Camelot* seeks to evoke of that vision. More than just a simple game setting, *GURPS Camelot* will challenge the players — and the GM — to live the ideals at the heart of the tales.

Although tales about Camelot date back to the 6th and 7th centuries, it was not until the appearance of Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britanniae* in 1136 that Arthur truly caught the public imagination. In less than 200 years, King Arthur went from a shadowy ruler in a few Welsh and Breton legends to a central figure in British and European culture. In France, a number of Breton tales were collected and embroidered to become what is now known as the *Vulgate* cycle. In England, stories ostensibly derived from "reliable sources" began to expand the sketchy career Geoffrey outlined. Arthurian verse appeared across the Continent.

The capstone was *Le Morte D'Arthur*, written by Sir Thomas Malory, and published by William Caxton in 1485. *Le Morte* drew together the widely diverse sources that predated it. Malory knew of both the French tales and British/Welsh traditions, and fused them in a masterly work that still survives as a classic today.

Malory's work set the standards and tone for Arthurian material for the next three centuries. It is considered the definitive reference and source to consult on the entire mythos, and has inspired countless later works. It, and the *Vulgate* which contributed to it, constitute the basis of the "mythic" Arthur.

However, the tales of Camelot are more than just myth. Scholars have begun to uncover the truth at the heart of the Arthurian mythos — the nearly-forgotten fifth-century warlord who drove a united Briton military force deep into the heart of France. This, too, can provide a colorful backdrop for gaming.

This book does not attempt to retell all the stories of Camelot. For that, the reader is referred to the works in the Bibliography, starting with T.H. White's *The Once and Future King* and Malory's *Le Morte d'Arthur*. *GURPS Camelot* seeks to explain and interpret the background, and to present it in a fashion that will be most useful to the GM.

In the true *GURPS* tradition, the GM is not limited to one "standard" Arthurian setting. This worldbook provides detailed guides to the three basic milieus: the "mythic" Arthur as perceived in the Middle Ages by Geoffrey of Monmouth, Malory, Chretien de Troyes, and many more historians and storytellers; the modern or "cinematic" Arthur as seen through the eyes of fiction writers such as Mark Twain, T.H. White, John Steinbeck, Marion Zimmer Bradley and Mary Stewart, and the historical Arthur. Guidelines for mixing and matching these elements allow the GM to create his own unique version of Camelot, true to the spirit of the mythos but shaped by his own vision and goals.

Prepare to enter a glorious bygone era, a time of gallantry and chivalry, a spot of light amidst a world of darkness.

Welcome to Camelot!

## About GURPS

Steve Jackson Games is committed to full support of the *GURPS* system. Our address is SJ Games, Box 18957, Austin, TX 78760. Please include a self-addressed, stamped envelope (SASE) any time you write us! Resources now available include:

*Roleplayer*. This bimonthly magazine includes new rules, variants, new races, beasts, information on upcoming releases, scenario ideas and more. Ask your game retailer, or write for subscription information.

*New supplements and adventures*. We're always working on new material, and we'll be happy to let you know what's available. A current catalog is available for an SASE.

*Errata*. Everyone makes mistakes, including us — but we do our best to fix our errors. Up-to-date errata sheets for all *GURPS* releases, including this book, are always available from SJ Games; be sure to include an SASE with your request.

*Q&A*. We do our best to answer any game question accompanied by an SASE.

*Gamer input*. We value your comments. We will consider them, not only for new products, but also when we update this book on later printings!

*BBS*. For those of you who have computers, SJ Games operates a BBS with discussion areas for several games, including *GURPS*. Much of the playtest feedback for new products comes from the BBS. It's up 24 hours a day at 512-447-4449, at 300, 1200 or 2400 baud. Give us a call!

## Page References

Rules and statistics in this book are specifically for the *GURPS Basic Set*, Third Edition. Any page reference that begins with a B refers to a page in the *Basic Set* — e.g., p. B102 means p. 102 of the *Basic Set*, Third Edition. BY refers to the *GURPS Bestiary*, and FB the *GURPS Fantasy Bestiary*.

## About the Authors

Bob and Peggy Schroeck were married in the middle of Bob's first effort for SJ Games, *GURPS International Super Teams*. After seeing the aggravation, isolation and total nervous breakdown that writing caused her new husband, Peggy had to try it herself . . . just for the thrill. Both are members of the Society for Creative Anachronism, and feel as though *GURPS Camelot* had been compiled from personal interviews with Arthur and Company.

# 1 CHARACTERS

The starting point level for characters will depend on the type of campaign. The standard allotment of 100 points will work for any version of Arthurian Britain — mythic, cinematic or historical. If the GM's particular plans include immediate questing and knight-errantry — or if the PCs have powerful enemies — higher starting totals may be more suitable. For example, GMs may wish to increase the maximum to 150 or even 200 points for the cinematic campaign. In the milieu of the Mythic Arthur, the GM may opt for 125 or 150 points.



# Jousting

## A Sample Joust

In this joust, Sir Uriel and Sir Tancred face one another. Both have ST 13, DX 12 and HT 12, Riding-15, Shield-12 and Lance-12. Each knight is carrying a 14-foot jousting lance. Both are wearing light plate, for PD 4 and DR 6, and carrying medium shields for PD 3, bringing their Blocks to 13. Their warhorses have ST 45, and do 5d+3 crushing damage.

In the first pass, both knights attack simultaneously, since their lances are the same length. (In a simple joust between two riders, it is not necessary to use a map — simply assume both have sufficient room to get to full speed.) First, Uriel rolls to hit, taking a -2 penalty for his 14-foot lance. He rolls an 8, and hits. Tancred must roll to Block; he misses with a 15. Since the attacks are simultaneous, Tancred rolls to hit before Uriel's damage upon him is calculated. He is also rolling against Lance-2, due to the length of his lance. He misses with an 11.

Now Uriel's damage to Tancred is resolved. Uriel rolls 12 points of damage, of which 6 get through Tancred's armor. Tancred must now roll to remain in the saddle; this calls for a Riding roll, taking a penalty of -2, since the blow did at least 8 points of damage, but less than 16. Tancred rolls a 10, which succeeds.

For the second pass, Tancred calls for a 12-foot lance. This time, Uriel attacks first, since he has the longer lance. He rolls against his Lance skill, still at -2, and gets a 10, which hits. Tancred rolls a 12 to Block — he caught the blow on his shield, and may be unhorsed. Uriel rolls 24 for damage. This exceeds the break-point of his jousting lance, which splinters, doing only 15 points of damage. To stay on his mount, Tancred must make a Riding roll, again at -2. Thus, he needs a 13 or less; he rolls a 7, succeeding comfortably.

In his attack against Uriel, Tancred is now rolling against his unadjusted Lance skill, since he is using a 12-foot lance. He rolls an 8, which hits. Uriel rolls a 15 on his Block, and misses, so he'll take damage. Tancred's damage comes up a 14; Uriel's armor stops 6, so the knight takes 8 hits. He must make a roll against HT to avoid being stunned, since he took damage greater than ½ his HT. He rolls a 14, which misses — Uriel is stunned. Now, Uriel must roll to remain on his horse. This roll takes a -2 penalty for the damage and an additional -4 for being stunned, so he needs a 9 or less. Uriel rolls a 12, and falls to the ground, taking an additional 1d-4 damage for the fall. This damage comes up 1; Uriel has the wind knocked out of him when he lands, but is not unconscious.

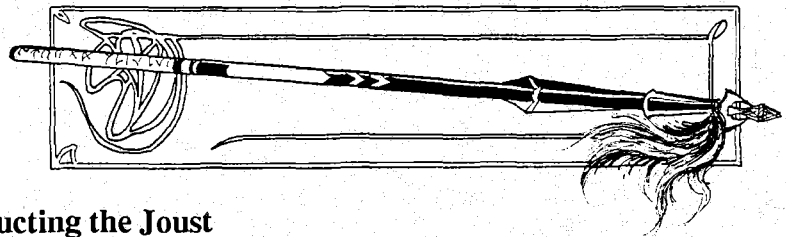
A joust — a formal combat between two mounted knights — uses the basic mounted-combat rules on pp. B135-137. In a formal joust situation, there is absolutely no need to play out every step the horses take. They make one pass, and the riders make one attack each. If nobody is unhorsed, a minute goes by and both riders will be ready for another pass.

In a joust, the contestants usually start 50 to 100 yards apart, to allow the horses room to get to full speed. When the lancers come into range of one another's lances — usually at three hexes distance — they roll to hit each other. Because lances hit almost simultaneously, both fighters roll to hit the instant their opponent comes into range, regardless of whose turn it is.

If both lances are the same length, they hit simultaneously. Each rider rolls to hit, and to block, if necessary, before damage for either attack is assessed. If, however, one lance is longer than the other, then the attack of the rider with the longer lance is completely resolved before the other lancer rolls to hit. Thus, the rider with the short lance may take damage, be stunned or even be unhorsed, before attempting his attack.

## Horses

Stats for various types can be found in the *GURPS Basic Set* and the *GURPS Bestiary*. Most jousters will use warhorses — the bigger and meaner, the better.



## Conducting the Joust

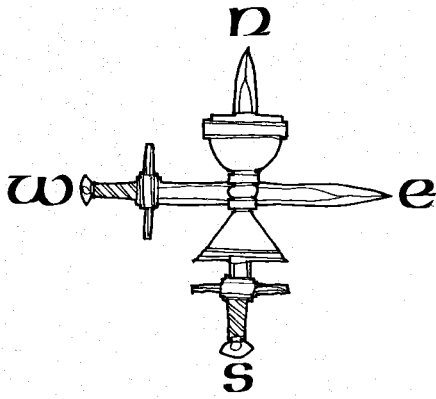
Several different styles of tournament fighting are seen in literary and cinematic sources. In the basic joust, combat is agreed to be just to the "first fall." This is the most Cinematic of formats.

It is possible — if two knights are using lances of the same length — for both to be unhorsed simultaneously. If this happens, the combatants may continue their combat on foot with their preferred weapons. This hand-to-hand combat after the joust is the distinguishing characteristic of the second major combat style. This is, in fact, the standard mode of tourney combat in most Mythic tournaments. The format of these one-on-one combats parallels the usual course of the more deadly battles between knights-errant in the field. In many ways, the one-on-one is similar to the modern concept of the duel, and is the usual format used for challenges of honor and trial by combat. In a non-lethal tourney, it is normally pursued until one party yields to the other.

Certain rules of conduct apply to this particular variant. An unhorsed knight may also choose to continue to attack his adversary with a melee weapon, but this may be considered unchivalrous in some quarters. It is definitely unchivalrous for a mounted knight to attack an opponent who is on foot. This gross violation of honor would be dealt with severely. In many tournaments, striking at a foe's horse was the act of a scoundrel, usually punishable by death.

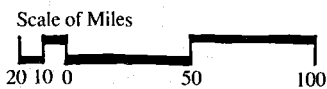
The third style of tournament combat is the melee. Malory tells of many cases where knights would stage pitched battles, with up to several dozen participants on each side. In theory, the same rules of conduct as for a one-on-one applied to these melees. Historically, knights enjoyed melee combat and took it very seriously as a way to gain reputation. Many contestants were badly wounded or killed; the Church frowned upon tourneys for this reason.





cinematic-mythic Britain

Principal Locations and Kingdoms



- LOGRES      Region
- Lothian      Subkingdom
- Camelot      Place of Note

Please remember that these are representations of legendary figures. They are much larger than life, even their medieval forms, and modern writers (with the exception of those writing historical fiction) have blown them up even further. In particular, most have much more than the standard -40 points in disadvantages. This is not to be taken to mean player characters can have more than the standard allotment! It is just the necessary result of accurate depiction of the characters.

Almost all characters given here are described as they were in AD 454 — the year Galahad joined the Round Table. This date was chosen because it is the only time at which the Table was complete, and most of the important characters were alive. To set the campaign at an earlier date, the GM really need alter only the ages of the characters; being legendary, after all, they change little over the years. But if the campaign is set early enough, some of these characters will not yet be born!

Because of the more-or-less eternal nature of Arthurian heroes — Arthur and Gawaine are still winning combats in their 50s, 60s and 70s — none of them have the Age disadvantage.

Any knight should be assumed to possess all the accoutrements appropriate to a knight in the GM's chosen setting unless otherwise noted. If a knight is known for errantry and adventuring, his personal gear will include at least one of each melee weapon he knows. Unusual equipment, such as magical or unique items, will be noted with a reference to its entry (if any), in *Magic Items*.

### Arthur Pendragon, King of the Britons (Artus, Artorius, Artur, Artu)

Male Briton, age 64, 6'0", 165 lbs., brown hair and eyes, bearded.  
**ST** 14 (45 points)      **IQ** 13 (30 points)      **Speed:** 6.5  
**DX** 14 (45 points)      **HT** 12 (20 points)      **Move:** 6  
**Damage:** Thrust 1d; Swing 2d  
**Point Total:** 347 points

#### Advantages

Appearance: Handsome (15 points); Charisma +1 (5 points); Combat Reflexes (15 points); Companion of the Round Table (15 points); Knighthood (20 points); Literacy (10 points); Reputation +2 (Britons, all the time; 5 points); Reputation +1 (Europe, on 10 or less; 2 points); Status 7 (1 level free from Wealth; 30 points); Strong Will +2 (8 points); Wealth: Filthy Rich (50 points)

#### Disadvantages

Chivalric Code of Honor (-15 points); Enemy: Morgan le Fay (12 or less) (-40 points); Enemy: Morgawse of Orkney (9 or less) (-10 points); Honesty (-10 points); Impulsiveness (-10 points); Sense of Duty to Round Table (-5 points); Stubbornness (-5 points); Vow, Minor: Never eat a feast until he sees a marvel or is told an adventure (-5 points).

#### Skills

Animal Handling-10 (½ point); Area Knowledge (Britain)-14 (2 points); Area Knowledge (Camelot area)-15 (4 points); Bard-16 (6 points); Bow-15 (8 points); Brawling-14 (1 point); Broadsword-18 (24 points); Carousing-10 (default from HT); Chess-15 (4 points); Dancing-12 (½ point); English-13 (0 points, native tongue); Falconry-13 (2 points); Gesture-13 (1 point); Heraldry-14 (0, default from Savoir-Faire); History (Britain)-10 (½ point); Knife-13 (½ point); Lance-18 (24 points); Leadership-16 (10 points); Riding (Horse)-16 (8 points); Running-12 (4 points); Savoir-Faire (Britain)-15 (0, default from Status); Savoir-Faire (elsewhere)-13 (0, default from Status); Shield-18 (16 points); Strategy-16 (10 points); Swimming-14 (1 point); Tactics-16 (10 points).

#### Quirks

Minor practical joker. Jealous about Guinevere. Brave to the point of foolhardiness. Regards Lancelot as a brother-in-arms. His word is his bond.

#### Equipment:

Excalibur and scabbard (5 lbs; see p. 29-30).

The Arthur of medieval legend is a born ruler and general, but that is not the sum and total of his character. Certainly he was capable of great personal feats of arms — Malory tells of his defeat of Lamorak, who the author accorded the third best knight in the world — but he did not live his life for fighting. His years in fosterage with Sir Ector of the Forest Sauvage not only prepared him for a military career, but turned him into a learned man. That learning blossomed into chivalry and the Round Table. Drawing upon the traditions and philosophies of both the Romans and his own British forebears, he turned a military force into a parliament, a justice system, and a mission. He believes strongly in what he is doing, almost to the point of overconfidence.

However, Arthur is no porcelain king — for all his ideals, he is a passionate man, with strong emotions in every direction. His love for Guinevere is frighteningly intense, as is his rage each time he feels that she has betrayed him. His devotion to his friends is as powerful as his will to conquer his enemies. Outside of tournaments, he is rarely the aggressor; his energies are expended in the defense of himself or his allies; only after he is attacked does he go on the offensive.



Much of his career focused around military activity, though; he faced no less than three revolutions, fought his way to Rome and actually became Emperor of the Roman Empire, all in the first few years of his reign! He was a fierce warrior, though not a berserker like Lancelot, and much loved by his men. In the later, more peaceful years of his reign, Arthur transferred his love of battle to the tournament field, which he often frequented with his men. Like many of his knights, he would adventure incognito. He is no small strategist, and given the vast forces at his employ (he once deployed a "small" force of 54,000 in Gaul), he is cautious with the lives of his men.

However great a military leader he is, Arthur is only an average king. He is a very good authority figure, and has a commanding presence, but his grasp of the detail of ruling is sometimes lacking. Much of the actual day-to-day ruling — the politicking, the diplomacy, the subtle games of influence and power, as well as the everyday management of the kingdom — is actually performed by Guinevere, who is a naturally-talented diplomat and administrator. It would be perfectly accurate to say that while Arthur is the iron fist, Guinevere is the velvet glove. His are the ideas and goals, hers are the means to achieve them peacefully. Together they are a perfectly matched team.



Perhaps an unconscious perception of how much he needs Guinevere fuels Arthur's fierce love for and jealousy over her. When at last her affair with Lancelot is revealed, his rage knows no bounds.

Arthur is not perfect; he is a proud man who sometimes lets his pride get the better of him. He also has a desire for power which, fortunately, he keeps mostly under control. He has incidents in his past he would rather forget — for instance, in a panic partly encouraged by Merlin, he ordered a Herod-like slaughter of infants in order to forestall Mordred's growth and eventual revolt. Not only was this unsuccessful, it accomplished several things that were to cause no end of trouble for Arthur: One, it triggered the second rebellion against him. Two, it ensured the enmity of his powerful half-sister Morgawse, and guaranteed her warping of Mordred against him. Three, Arthur's confidence in his success with this tactic was such that he never considered the possibility that Mordred was his son when the young man finally arrived at Camelot.

Although he has no legitimate sons, Arthur has at least one illegitimate son other than Mordred. Arthur begat his son Borre (or Bohart) le Cure Hardy on Lionors, a lady of his court, before he married Guinevere. Borre grew to be a knight, and eventually became a Companion of the Round Table.

**Cinematic Arthur:** The cinematic Arthur is not the self-reliant king his predecessor in the medieval tales is. Although a much better ruler, he lacks the complete confidence that would guarantee the success of his plans. He is a gentle and idealistic man, and forgiving even of Guinevere and Lancelot's affair, but bound by the legal system he created to watch her burn at the stake. In the end, it is his own compassion which allows the rot to enter the pinnacle of his ideals, and eventually bring about his downfall.

To represent the Cinematic ideal of Arthur, follow these guidelines: Raise ST to 15 and HT to 13. Raise Reputations to +3 and +2, respectively, and Charisma to +3. Add to Advantages Alertness +1, Intuition, Unusual Background and Voice. Remove Enemy: Morgawse and Minor Vow from Disadvantages, and add Major Vow: Realize the Britain of his dreams and 15-point Sense of Duty to People of Britain. Optionally, add a Delusion (Major): Merlin is real (see p. 57). The Cinematic Arthur's 10-point Unusual Background reflects his training by Merlin in political systems far in advance of the 5th century, as well as a hodge-podge knowledge of the future (mostly unusable) garnered from Merlin's off-hand comments. Add to Skills Administration-12; Area Knowledge (Europe)-13; Climbing-13; Diplomacy-14; Economics-10; Fast-Draw (Broadsword)-16; Fishing-12; Naturalist-12; Law (English Civil)-17; Musical Instrument (Lute)-10; Singing-14. Strike all medieval Quirks and replace with: Knows about Lancelot and Guinevere's affair but won't acknowledge it; Tries to mold Mordred into an ideal knight; Likes to "dress down" as often as possible; Still not entirely comfortable with being king; First reaction in a crisis is to look/wish for Merlin. *Cinematic Point Total:* 422.

## Guinevere (Guenevere, Genièvre, Ginevra, Gwenhwyfar, Guenhumara, "Jenny")

Female Briton, age 57, 5'4", 120 lbs., blonde hair, gray eyes, fair complexion

ST 10 (0 points)	IQ 16 (80 points)	Speed: 5.75
DX 13 (30 points)	HT 10 (0 points)	Move: 5
Damage: Thrust 1d-2; Swing 1d		
Point Total: 232		

### Advantages

Acute Hearing +1 (2 points); Ally: Her cousin Elyzabel (101-150 points, appears on 15 or less) (30 points); Appearance: Very Beautiful (25 points); Charisma +2 (10 points); Literacy (10 points); Reputation +2 (Everywhere, All the time) (10 points); Status 7 (30 points; 1 level free from Wealth); Wealth: Filthy Rich (50 points)

### Disadvantages

Duty to British People (15 or less, not life-threatening) (-15 points); Enemy: Morgan le Fay (12 or less) (-40 points); Honesty (-10 points); Secret: Affair with Lancelot (Possible death: -30 points); Sense of Duty to Arthur (-5 points)

### Skills

Acting-16 (2 points); Administration-19 (8 points); Area Knowledge (Britain)-17 (2 points); Chess-25 (18 points); Dancing-14 (4 points); Diplomacy-18 (8 points); English-16 (0, native tongue); French-15 (1 point); Heraldry-17 (4 points); History (British and Roman)-15 (2 points); Hobby: Blackwork-16 (1 point); Knife-13 (1 point); Leadership-18 (2 points); Riding (Horse)-14 (4 points); Savoir-Faire (England)-18 (0, default from Status); Savoir-Faire (elsewhere)-16 (0, default from Status); Swimming-14 (2 points).

### Quirks

Respects Arthur but loves Lancelot. Jealous about Lancelot. Possesses keen senses of humor and fun. Calm, collected and clear-headed in times of stress and never panics.

Guinevere is the daughter of King Leodegrance of Camelard. She is said to have been the most beautiful woman in all of Britain, and even as she grew older, her looks stayed with her. Geoffrey of Monmouth says that she came from Roman stock, and if her abilities are any indication, this is certainly so. She is a born diplomat and administrator, and in truth she (along with Arthur's foster brother Kay) does more of the actual ruling of Britain than Arthur does.

Guinevere first arrived at Arthur's court when she was 16, for her wedding to the king. Her marriage to Arthur was admittedly one of political convenience, but the young princess soon developed an infatuation for the grand romantic figure she had wed. Over the years, that infatuation would transform itself into a profound respect tinged with the love one would have for a close friend. It remained for the advent of Lancelot to bring true romance to Guinevere.

She did not arrive in Camelot alone; traveling with her was Elyzabel, her cousin, who would remain with her past the end of Arthur's reign. Elyzabel and Guinevere had grown up together, and they had become inseparable friends and intimate confidantes. Once in Camelot, Elyzabel took up the position of the queen's personal attendant. Other than La Beale Isolde, Elyzabel was perhaps the only person in whom the queen confided about her love for Lancelot. Elyzabel was a brave and resourceful woman, and on more than one occasion performed tasks Guinevere could trust to no one else.

The 16-year-old princess grew up quickly in Arthur's court, and soon discovered her talents for governing. Arthur was a spectacular military commander and an impressive figure as a king, but his administrative and diplomatic abilities were sadly lacking. Guinevere slid easily into the role of stateswoman and supplied Britain with the practical skill in ruling that it needed. It is debatable whether Arthur ever realized this; during the affair of the false Guinevere the kingdom deteriorated drastically but the king never noticed. Arthur may have loved his wife, but it seems likely that he never fully appreciated her.

Despite the burden of the duties she assumed, Guinevere did not lose her spirit. Cheerful and fun-loving as a child, she remained so as queen, celebrating Maydays uninhibitedly and personally catering parties for friends. Although Arthur himself was an outgoing and exuberant personality, it was Guinevere who brought Camelot to life and kept the royalty from becoming stuffy. Guinevere's *joie de vivre*, coupled with her style and grace, earned her the love of many. It is no surprise that she was popular not only with the court, but the common people as well. She inspired unusual devotion in a number of knights, including Gawaine and Kay, and eventually had her own order surrounding her, much as the Round Table surrounded Arthur. This body was known simply as the "Queen's Knights." Its membership overlapped the Table's, but when knights were on the Queen's business, they bore the *vergescu* — the blank white shield of a beginning knight — rather than their own blazons.

That Lancelot became the Queen's lover is well known; the romance and love she could not share with Arthur blossomed in her relationship with the best of his knights. Its exact start is uncertain, but it is certainly gossiped about by AD 430. Some traditions place their first declarations of love shortly after his first adventure in Britain, although that love would not be consummated for some years.

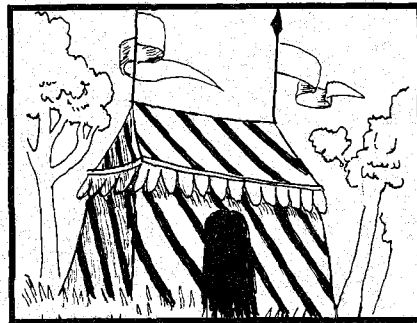
Their love affair seems to have been an open secret; if not at first, then within a decade. It seems possible that the couple deceived themselves about how well-kept a secret it really was. This is not surprising,

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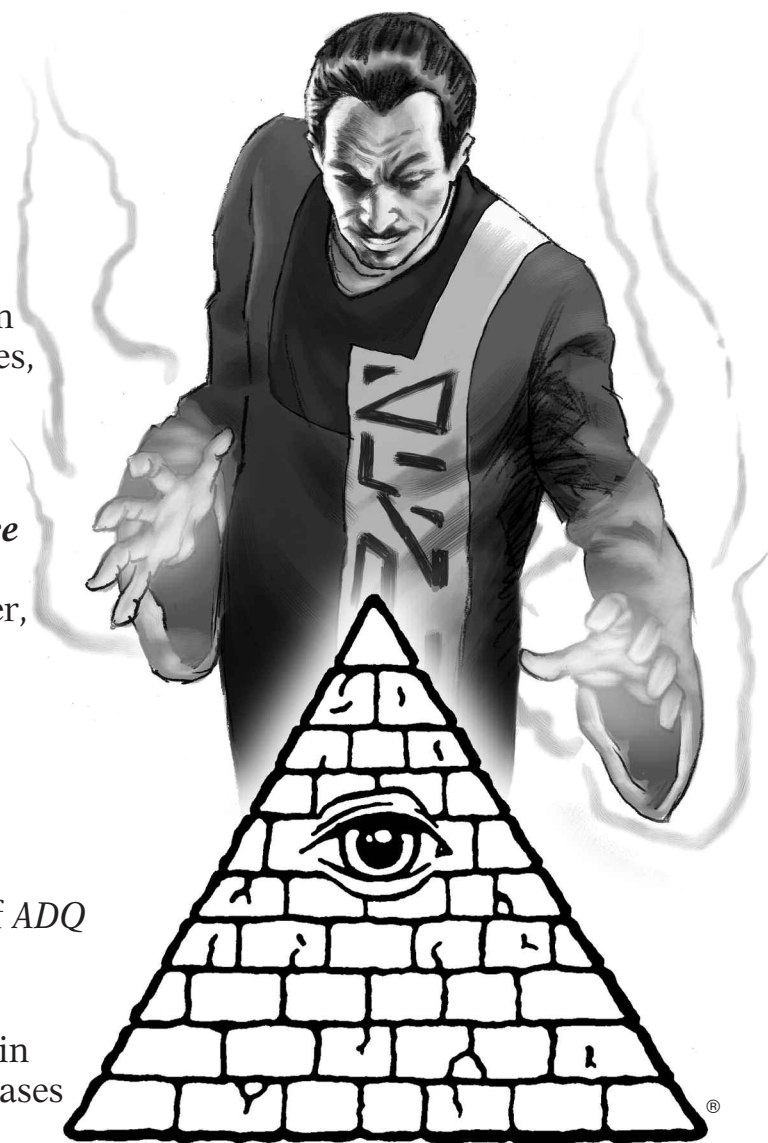


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