

The Sword In The Stone

Based on the book

by

T.H. White

screenplay by
Charles Sturridge

C/o Anthony Jones Esq.,
Peters, Fraser, and Dunlop Ltd.,
Drury House,
33-42 Russell Street,
LONDON WC1

FADE UP

EXT TINTAGEL CASTLE, CORNWALL - DUSK

1

The sun is setting behind the castle which clings dramatically to the rocky Cornish coastline, the towers and battlements seeming to be part of the cliffs that they are built on.

TITLE: TINTAGEL CASTLE, CORNWALL, ENGLAND

EXT HILLSIDE CORNWALL - DAY

2

The contour of the hill is set sharply against the red sky of the sunset. The CAMERA moves, across the empty landscape until VERY BIG IN FRAME we find a SOLITARY OWL. The CAMERA moves around the OWL which is totally still like a statue perched upon an out crop of rock staring unblinking at the hillside. SUDDENLY the OWL TAKES FLIGHT. At the same time along the hillside the tips of FLAGS AND SPEARS begin to appear, at first just one or two but as we watch it becomes hundreds as the army of Uther Pendragon assemble along the peak of the hill.

EXT HILLTOP - DUSK

UTHER PENDRAGON, King of the shaky amalgam of kingdoms that comprise the nationstate of England is dressed in FULL BATTLE ARMOUR and escorted by a COMPANY OF KNIGHTS whose armour glints in the last rays of the dying sun. Uther pulls up his visor and looks out towards Tintagel. Behind him he hears something and turns to see TWO LARGE GUARDS dragging A YOUNG PRISONER towards him, covered in blood.

UTHER

Well?

GUARD

Nothing yet. But he'll talk my Lord.

UTHER

Kill him. There's no need for him now.

As the prisoner is dragged away Uther moves forward away from the group. A KNIGHT follows just behind him.

SIR ULFIUS

My Lord?

UTHER

It will be just as the wizard said.

UTHER spurs on his horse down the slopes towards the CASTLE followed by SIR ULFIUS. Behind them the army follows, KNIGHTS ON HORSEBACK first with foot soldiers following but Uther is still ahead galloping down the hillside.

EXT GATES TINTAGEL - NIGHT

3

UTHER reaches the great gates of the castle. He walks his horse up to them and using the blade of his sword he pushes at them. They swing silently open and Uther followed by ULFIUS move slowly in, swords drawn.

INT COURTYARD TINTAGEL - NIGHT

4

The courtyard is empty as UThER and SIR ULFIUS walk their horses slowly in. UThER dismounts, climbing the steps to the main keep of the castle grabs a flaming torch off the wall and moves inside, ULFIUS follows. The FIRST WAVE of MOUNTED KNIGHTS clatter into the courtyard. They stop, amazed at the silence and the lack of any activity.

NARRATOR

Uther Pendragon was King of England
when he fell in love with Igraine, the
beautiful Queen of Cornwall.

EXT TINTAGEL WALLS - NIGHT

5

SIEGE LADDERS are laid against the castle walls and men start to climb them. It is silent and there is no opposition to the assault.

NARRATOR

The King of Cornwall was a powerful man
and his army famously brave. So Uther
asked for help, magical help.

INT CORRIDOR TINTAGEL - NIGHT

6

UTHER holding the torch moves through the unlit corridor. ULFIUS follows. He reaches a doorway and turns back to ULFIUS.

UTHER

This is the chamber. Give me the
wizard's potion.

SIR ULFIUS

Here, my Lord.

ULFIUS hands him a small glass VIAL. UThER looks at the pale liquid in the glass, then quickly opens it and pours the contents down his throat. At first nothing happens then he starts to breathe more heavily.

UTHER

I can feel it. How do I look?

SIR ULFIUS

You look sick my Lord. Perhaps it is a
poison and we have been deceived.

But SIR ULFIUS stops as UThER'S face HAS BEGUN TO CHANGE. In the torch light we see his features begin to move. He is being TRANSFORMED, his skin is like clay as his features rearrange. ULFIUS is too amazed to speak but the potion has worked. The transformed UThER thrusts the torch into ULFIUS's hand and without a word moves into the bedroom.

NARRATOR

So, disguised as his rival Uther entered
Igraines bedroom. But this help was
given to him on one condition.

(MORE)

NARRATOR (CONT'D)
That the first born child of this union
should be given up.

EXT TINTAGEL - NIGHT

The castle is now blazing with torch lights. We see the
great gates pulled open and a cloaked figure on horseback
emerges CARRYING A CLOSELY WRAPPED BUNDLE.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)
Uther kept his side of the bargain and
when his son was born, the child was
carried into the forest and disappeared.
Neither Uther nor Igraine ever saw him
again.

A terrifying SCREAM rolls through the night.

IGRAINE (V.O.)
Noooooooooooooooooooo.....

FADE TO BLACK
FADE UP

A CANDLE in the darkness.

The CANDLE dances in the darkness, twisting and flickering,
at times it appears to go out completely and the screen is
black. Then a minuscule amount of warmth is visible and it
manages to rekindle its flame and battle on with the wind.
Again it flickers and appears to die and again it struggles
back to life never quite defeated.

INT CHAPEL CASTLE SAUVAGE - DAY

7

As the TITLES continue the CAMERA begins to move around this
LONE CANDLE whose struggle for life has occupied our attention
and begins to reveal other CANDLES a mass of them and then
as we start to climb we see that these are votive candles in
front of a STONE STATUE OF THE VIRGIN MARY in a chapel. It
is HARVEST FESTIVAL and the church is packed with a
congregation drawn from all walks of medieval life, everybody
is there, labourer and Lord. In front of the altar are
heaped decorative SHEAVES OF CORN, elaborate ROPES OF FRUIT
AND SACKS OF GRAIN. Standing in the front pew is SIR ECTOR,
whose castle this is, a broad, friendly faced man, next to
him his friend SIR GRUMMORE, tall and thin with a small
moustache .

It is the end of the service and the ELDERLY PRIEST gives a
blessing to the congregation and SIR ECTOR watches with pride
as his twelve year old son picks up the crucifix and prepares
to lead the procession out of the church. KAY is a large
boned boy with rugged good looks, if a little awkward, but
he is concentrating hard on his role. Behind him we may see
a smaller and slighter boy WART (9) whose job it is to hold
the priest's train.

INT SACRISTY CASTLE SAUVAGE - DAY

8

The TWO BOYS dash into the room, their ceremonial dignity abandoned.

KAY

Come on there's still time if we hurry.

He flings off his cassock and rushes out of the room leaving WART still struggling with his.

EXT COURTYARD CASTLE SAUVAGE - DAY

9

The TWO BOYS run across the busy courtyard ducking and diving between the congregation and run smack into SIR ECTOR and SIR GRUMMORE, winding the latter.

SIR ECTOR

Steady on.

KAY

We're going to take Cully and see if we can get some rabbits.

The BOYS run off.

SIR GRUMMORE

No discipline, that the problem with youngsters these days, you need to get them a tutor!

SIR ECTOR

(absentmindedly)

I was thinking the same thing myself. Let's go and open a bottle.

INT MEWS CASTLE SAUVAGE - DAY

10

The Mews, where the hunting birds live, is next to the stables and the kennels. The SCREEN PERCHES to which the birds are tied, separated by sacking shrouds, run the length of the room. HOB, an old man twisted like a piece of rope, is coaxing one of the birds as he strokes its feathers. As WART and KAY run it.

KAY

Hob, we're taking Cully.

He slips on a GAUNTLET and starts to call out to the bird.

HOB

He's heavy in moult, Master Kay.

KAY

He'll be all right. He just needs holding, that's all.

CULLY has not responded to his calls and is looking distinctly uneasy, but KAY pays no attention and sweeps him off his perch.

HOB

Take one of the other birds.

KAY

I know what I'm doing. He's mine anyway.

WART looks at HOB as he watches KAY leave.

HOB

(low)

You keep your eye on 'im now. Master
Wart.

WART nods and runs after KAY.

EXT MEADOW NEAR CASTLE SAUVAGE - DAY

11

CLOSE on a RABBIT, watching the TWO BOYS are running through the long grass. KAY is holding the HAWK on his gauntleted left arm. Behind him trails WART who is carrying a leather bag over his shoulder. KAY sees the rabbit and with a shout loses CULLY.

KAY

Go on. Get him. Go go go.

ON THE RABBIT as he sees the danger and starts to run. THE CAMERA STAYS WITH THE RABBIT as he cuts across the field - swerves to the left - and then DIVES DOWN A HOLE.

INT RABBIT HOLE - DAY

12

THE CAMERA continues to follow the rabbit moving fast down the hole until it reaches a bend in the tunnels where FIVE OTHER RABBITS are waiting.

EXT FIELD - DAY

KAY and WART run up to the rabbit hole. They look around them for the hawk - no sign.

KAY

(peering down)

We could dig them out.

WART

(looking around)

Where's Cully?

(calling)

Cully, Cully!

(pointing)

Look he's there.

KAY

Where?

WART

In that tree on the edge of the forest.

EXT FOREST SAUVAGE - DUSK

13

TRACKING with KAY and WART as they move cautiously through the undergrowth at the edge of the forest. Twisted trees rise high above their heads and the ground covered with moss and lichen. Creepers trail from the branches of the trees and there is a sense of watchfulness all around them.

KAY

Let him go, then. He's no use anyway.

WART

We can't leave him. What will Hob say?

KAY

It's my hawk. What does it matter what Hob says? He's a servant.

KAY turns and stalks off. WART watches him go and calls out after him.

WART

Look, I'll stay, if you'll send Hob when you get back.

KAY does not look back. WART turns his attention back to CULLY but it is too late, he has gone.

WART (CONT'D)

Cully, Cully!!

He looks around nervously and then having no option starts to move deeper into the forest.

WART (CONT'D)

(whispering)

Cully! Cully!

Nothing. There is a noise and WART looks round frightened. He can see nothing but as he moves off we see a sleek shape follow him, A GREY WOLF.

EXT GATE HOUSE CASTLE SAUVAGE - NIGHT

14

KAY is sneaking through the gateway which is lit by burning torches. HOB is standing in a corner watching.

KAY

I don't know where he is, he ran off.

HOB

He's not near the forest is he?

KAY

I said I don't know.

HOB looks out into the night, not believing him.

EXT FOREST SAUVAGE - NIGHT

15

There are THREE WOLVES now, and they are trailing WART with little attempt to conceal themselves. He senses that there is something behind him, but is not sure what. He starts to run, the WOLVES pick up their pace. WART, terrified now moves faster until....CRASH!! he trips over what seems like a dead body but which is in fact a LARGE DOG. Who immediately starts barking.

The WOLVES are as startled as WART is by this appearance and back off snarling, the DOG tries to follow them, but is prevented because he is attached to a long leather leash which is TANGLED ROUND A TREE, the other end is attached to a FULLY ARMoured KNIGHT, standing motionless in the moonlit clearing. Startled by the barking, his WHITE CHARGER rears up and gallops forward. Too late WART realises what is about to happen as he turns to see the tangled dog's lead tighten and the GHOSTLY FIGURE is JERKED OFF THE BACK OF HIS HORSE, thrown into the air - landing with a TERRIBLE CRASH on the ground. WART approaches the mangled heap of twisted metal.

WART

Excuse me...

KING PELLINORE

(sitting up)

What, what?

WART runs up to find KING PELLINORE, a tall thin and distinguished looking figure, not in the prime of his youth, scratching around on the ground looking for something. He has a pair of WIRE RIMMED SPECTACLES hanging precariously off one ear, and his helmet is lying on the ground.

KING PELLINORE (CONT'D)

Dear, dear now!

WART

I'm terribly sorry I just....

KING PELLINORE

DON'T MOVE BLAST YOU!

(Drawing his sword)

Where are you now eh?

He is spinning around trying to cover himself from all directions but without his glasses has no idea where WART actually is.

KING PELLINORE (CONT'D)

Show yourself hobgoblin. I'm ready for you now. You won't catch me twice! Do y'know?

At this point KING PELLINORE trips over his HELMET and as his glasses fly off his face, he realises too late that he had them on all the time and ONCE AGAIN LANDS ON THE GROUND WITH A DREADFUL CLATTER OF CRASHING METAL. Dizzily he starts searching feverishly for them. WART realising what he is looking for, picks them up, wipes them, and hands them to him.

KING PELLINORE (CONT'D)
(putting on his glasses)
Ah-hah! Thank you...Well whom have we
heah, what?
(looking around)
Where are all the others then? Hmm?

WART
Please, sir I'm lost.

Still suspicious that WART is part of an attacking force.
KING PELLINORE circles him keeping him at swords length,
watching for ambush.

KING PELLINORE
Really? Funny thing that, I've been
lost for seventeen years. Name of King
Pellinore. Expect you've heard of me,
eh?

He carefully pick up his HELMET with one hand and tries to
put it back on.

WART
Well...

KING PELLINORE
Seventeen years, last Christmas, and
been after the Questing Beast ever since.
Boring, very.

WART
I should think it would be.
(pause)
What is the Questing Beast?

KING PELLINORE finally gets the helmet on and the visor
immediately clamps shut.

KING PELLINORE
(voice echoing)
*Burden of the Pellinores. Only a
Pellinore can catch it;d' you see?*
(he gets it open)
Train all the Pellinores with that ideah
in mind. Limited eddication, rather.

He starts to mount his horse.

KING PELLINORE (CONT'D)
Sometimes I wish I had a nice house of
my own to live in, with beds in it and
real pillows and sheets.

Swinging his leg over the weight of his armour topples him
over onto the other side.

WART
If you could show me the way home, I'm
sure my guardian would invite you to
stay.

KING PELLINORE

Really? Do you think so? I mean with a bed an' all that sort of thing?

He starts to remount, this time WART comes up behind him and gives him a leg up.

WART

A feather bed.

KING PELLINORE

A feather bed by Jove!

(suspicious)

I suppose I should have to share it with somebody?

As he looks down to talk to WART his visor slams shut.

WART

You'd have one of your very own.

KING PELLINORE

(opening visor)

With pillows?

WART

Lots of pillows.

KING PELLINORE

And this gentleman really sent you to invite me?

WART

Well...

(truthfully)

He will be very pleased to see us.

KING PELLINORE

How nice of him, how very nice. Don't you think, what?

At this point they are interrupted by a loud noise that vaguely resembles the sound the Gaderene swine might have made as they jumped to oblivion.

KING PELLINORE (CONT'D)

God's teeth! It's the Beast!

They set off, the BRATCHET barking wildly HEADING STRAIGHT FOR A TREE WITH A LOW HANGING BRANCH. WART cannot bear to look as KING PELLINORE crashes into the tree, turns his horse around and gallops off.

WART turns sensing that he is not quite alone. THE WOLVES have returned. There are FOUR of them now and they advance towards WART. There is a rhythmical rumbling sound in the distance. The animals hesitate. WART takes advantage of the moment runs towards a GNARLED OLD TREE, scrambles up it and leaps out, grabbing hold of one of the lower branches, a WOLF jumps after him, SNAPPING at him as he pulls himself up.

The noise is getting louder, and to the amazement of all THE QUESTING BEAST enters the clearing. It is like a SMALL DRAGON with THREE SNAKELIKE HEADS a short STOCKY BODY and a long SNAKELIKE TAIL. All three of it's heads are braying and screaming and the WOLVES SCATTER in terror. Not far behind the BEAST is KING PELLINORE and the BRATCHET, oblivious to WART they gallop past.

KING PELLINORE (CONT'D)
Tally-ho. Tally- Ho.

EXT CASTLE SAUVAGE - DAWN 16

The castle with the early morning light picking out the stonework of the battlements, and a SOLITARY TRUMPETER on the topmost turret blowing the morning 'reveille'.

EXT TREE FOREST SAUVAGE - DAY 17

WART yawns, and stretching, fails to remember in time that he is in a tree. He falls, grabbing a branch on the way and ends up hanging precariously. He freezes as beneath him he hears a sound and watches as a STRANGELY DRESSED OLD MAN carrying a bucket walks past beneath him, without noticing him. WART drops to the ground and follows.

EXT MERLYNS COTTAGE FOREST SAUVAGE - DAWN 18

WART finds himself in a small clearing where the ground slopes gently away from him and a small stream twists through the middle. Beyond the stream, is a well, and beyond the well, a small stone cottage covered with ivy. THE STRANGELY DRESSED OLD MAN is drawing water from the well which involves walking round it pushing a giant wheel which in turn raises the bucket. He is wearing AN OLD BLUE GOWN EMBROIDERED WITH THE SIGNS OF THE ZODIAC AND OTHER CABALISTIC SYMBOLS, and perched on the end of his nose are a pair of horn rimmed spectacles, he is muttering to himself...

MERLYN
Drat the whole thing! You'd think after all these years of study one could do better for oneself than a by Our Lady well with a by Our Lady bucket and a....

WART
Please sir...
(MERLYN looks up)
Can you tell me the way to Sir Ector's castle?

Putting down the bucket slowly.

MERLYN
Your name would be Wart I suppose?

WART
Yes sir.

MERLYN
Hmmm. My name is Merlyn.

WART
How do you do.

MERLYN
Do you like peaches?

WART
Very much.

MERLYN
I thought so.

He stalks off towards the cottage, WART picks up the bucket and follows him.

INT MERLYNS COTTAGE, FOREST SAUVAGE - DAY

19

The cottage is divided into two sections, in one half there is a store room with a narrow staircase leading up to a small study bedroom, while the main area into which MERLYN leads WART reaches the full height of the house. The wizard goes over to the stove where a kettle is already boiling and sets about making the tea while WART looks around in awe. It is the most amazing room he has ever seen. There are BOUND LEATHER BOOKS shelved, piled and stacked on every conceivable surface. There are STUFFED ANIMALS, mounted on the walls and standing on the window ledges including POPINJAYS, KINGFISHERS, PEACOCKS, TIGER CLAWS, and BOAR TUSKS as well as a CORKINDRILL HANGING FROM THE CEILING. There is a table at one end of the room where a number of SCIENTIFIC EXPERIMENTS are set out, as well as an AQUARIUM with SIX ADDERS inside it, a BEE HIVE, a box containing TWO LIVE HEDGEHOGS and a BABY BADGER and an ANTS NEST between two glass plates. Elsewhere there are CRICKET PADS, some University College Oxford rowing photographs dated 1911, the fourteenth edition of the Encyclopaedia Britannica, some fossils, the HEAD OF A CAMEL LEOPARD, an ASTROLABE, three globes of the known geographical world and a COMPLETE SET OF CIGARETTE CARDS DEPICTING THE WORLD SERIES OF 1938.

WART wanders among these hardly daring to touch anything. He passes an OWL on a stand, whose covering dome has become the temporary house of a small colony of beetles. WART reaches out to touch it but ARCHIMEDES (for that is the name of the OWL) flies up and flaps round the room and lands on MERLYN'S HEAD.

MERLYN
Do sit down, everything is ready I just need to pour a little hot water. Are you familiar with the drink tea. No, of course you aren't how silly of me. Never mind perhaps you would prefer water?

WART
What a beautiful owl.

MERLYN
(to the OWL)
Don't be offended. It's only a boy.

ARCHIMEDES

What boy? I don't see a boy.

Both MERLYN and ARCHIMEDES have their backs to WART so he is not quite sure who said the last phrase. MERLYN turns and places the TEAPOT on the table which is already set for breakfast for two.

MERLYN

We see so little company that Archimedes is a little shy of strangers.

MERLYN bows low so that ARCHIMEDES and WART are looking eye to eye.

MERLYN (CONT'D)

Come on, I want you to meet a friend of mine called Wart.

The OWL blinks.

MERLYN (CONT'D)

Hold out you finger and put it behind his legs..

(WART does)

Now lift it up under his train.

WART sweeps ARCHIMEDES off his feet literally, and the owl sits on his hand, feathers ruffled, looking sulky.

MERLYN (CONT'D)

Say 'how do you do' properly

ARCHIMEDES

Shan't.

This time there is no doubt about who said what and WART stares at the owl in amazement.

WART

He talks! Will he talk to me?

MERLYN takes off his skull cap and produces from it a small grey dead mouse.

MERLYN

Perhaps if you were to give him this mouse, politely, he would learn to know you better.

WART takes the DEAD MOUSE, holding it by the tail in front of ARCHIMEDES, who looks at it for a moment, then very gently leans forward and with an odd sideways nibble takes the mouse with his beak, then using his right foot takes the mouse out, turns it and swallows it whole. ARCHIMEDES then flaps off to the top of the bookshelf to digest his breakfast.

MERLYN (CONT'D)

Leave him for now. Perhaps he doesn't want to be friends with you until he knows what you are like.

(MORE)

MERLYN (CONT'D)
(turning to the table)
Now breakfast. You must be hungry.

MERLYN lifts the covers off two plates that are already set out revealing bacon, sausages, egg, tomato, kidneys etc.
WART sits down.

MERLYN (CONT'D)
Mustard?

WART is about to reach for the MUSTARD POT when IT STANDS UP AND WALKS ACROSS THE TABLE TOWARDS HIM, LIFTS ITS LID WITH A WHITE CERAMIC HAND, AND PLACES A SMALL SPOONFUL OF MUSTARD AT THE SIDE OF WARTS PLATE. (Note: the arms and legs of the POT, like those of a frog, seem to fold back seamlessly into its ceramic surface when they are not needed, so that at rest it looks like an ordinary pot). WART, like a child touching a spider, leans forward and strokes the lid.

WART
Oh I love it! Where did you get it?

MERLYN
(eating)
It's not a bad pot. Although it's inclined to give itself airs.

INT BOYS ROOM CASTLE SAUVAGE - DAY

20

The small circular room is in the east tower of the main keep. It has two straw pallet beds side by side and is filled with the usual clutter of boy's life, ARROWHEADS, a COLLECTION OF FLINTS, early examples of WOODWORK etc. NURSE is miserably making WART's bed. KAY is sitting by the window.

KAY
I don't know what everybody is making such a fuss about. He's nine, and he's old enough to look after himself. And anyway it's not my fault.

The NURSE just sits on WART's bed and cries.

INT MERLYNS COTTAGE, FOREST SAUVAGE - DAY

21

WART has finished his breakfast and sits back watching MERLYN.

WART
Can I ask you a question?

MERLYN
It's what I'm for.

WART
How did you know to set breakfast for two?

MERLYN looks up.

MERLYN

Have you ever tried to draw in a looking glass WART shakes his head. Looking glass!

He holds out his hand and small LADIES MIRROR appears in it. Irritated he throws it over his shoulder and to WART's astonishment is disappears before it can hit anything.

MERLYN (CONT'D)

(to the air)

Not that kind you fool. Something I can shave in!

A HUGE DRESSING TABLE MIRROR lands on the table in front of him with a crash.

MERLYN (CONT'D)

No!

Pushing it over, where is dissolves into the table like ice into warm water. Next, FOUR SMALLER MIRRORS OF DIFFERENT SIZES appear on the table in front of him - each is thrown immediately over his shoulder.

MERLYN (CONT'D)

(briskly)

No! No! No! No!

One appears to be about to hit ARCHIMEDES but disappears just in time. Finally a SMALL SQUARE MIRROR IN A PLAIN WOODEN FRAME appears. MERLYN is about to throw it and then realises it is exactly what he wants.

MERLYN (CONT'D)

Thank you. Paper and pen for the boy please, and no nonsense.

A QUILL PEN appears in WART's hands and a THICK PIECE OF VELLUM PAPER. MERLYN hands him the mirror.

MERLYN (CONT'D)

Now I want you to write your name, your real name that is, not your nickname, looking only in the glass.

WART starts to draw on the paper.

MERLYN (CONT'D)

Where was I? Ordinary people are born *forwards* in Time, which is relatively simple, as simple as writing your name forwards, instead of backwards and inside out which is what you are doing now.

WART has written two very snaky letters that just might spell AR.

MERLYN (CONT'D)

I, unfortunately, was born at the wrong end of time and have to live *backwards*

(MORE)