

The Adventures of Sir Lancelot the Great (The Knights' Tales Series, 1)

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Many years ago, the storytellers say, the great King Arthur brought justice to England with the help of his gallant Knights of the Round Table. Of these worthy knights, there was never one so fearless, so chivalrous, so honorable, so...shiny as the dashing Sir Lancelot, who was quite good at defending the helpless and protecting the weak, just as long as he'd had his afternoon nap. Behold the very exciting and very funny adventures of Lancelot the Great, as only acclaimed Arthurian author Gerald Morris can tell them. When Gerald Morris was in fifth grade he loved Greek and Norse mythology and before long was retelling the stories to his younger sister and then to neighborhood kids. He began carrying a notebook in which he kept some of the details related to the different stories. The joy he found in retelling those myths continued when he discovered other stories. According to Gerald Morris, "I never lost my love of retelling the old stories. When I found Arthurian literature, years later, I knew at once that I wanted to retell those grand tales. So I pulled out my notebook . . . I retell the tales, peopling them with characters that I at least find easier to recognize, and let the magic of the Arthurian tradition go where it will." Gerald Morris lives in Wausau, Wisconsin, with his wife and their three children. In addition to writing he serves as a minister in a church.

Chapter 2 The Fastest Knight in England

In no time at all, the storytellers say, Sir Lancelot became the most famous of all King Arthur's knights in shining armor. No other knight rescued so many damsels in distress or slew so many dragons or overcame so many recreant knights or, for that matter, kept his armor so tidy. He performed so many great deeds that he soon became known as Sir Lancelot the Great. Minstrels sang songs of his adventures, damsels sighed when he passed by, boys playing knights all wanted to be Sir Lancelot, and young knights dreamed of one day defeating Sir Lancelot, because whoever did that, they thought, would be regarded as the greatest knight in England.

That last part soon got to be a problem. Everywhere Sir Lancelot went, knights were waiting to challenge him, all hoping to win fame and glory with one battle. Sir Lancelot defeated them all, but fighting every knight he met grew rather tiresome. So, when he rode out on a quest, he chose lonely paths. This was why he was riding alone through a quiet forest one day when he heard an unexpected sound.

WAAAAAH!" It was a damsel in distress. When you ride out on enough quests, you get to know that sound. Sir Lancelot turned toward the wailing and soon came to a woman sitting alone beneath a great oak tree, crying with gusto.

"Good day, my lady," Sir Lancelot said politely. It was hard to know the right thing to say at times like this.

WAAAAAH!" the lady said. Sir Lancelot said, "May I be of service, my lady?" WOOOO-HOOOO-WAAH!" Can you tell me what is distressing you, my lady?" WAAAH! BLUH-BLUH-WOO-WAAH!" I'll just wait here a bit, then, shall I?" WIBBLE-BLIDDER-WO-WO-HAH-WAAH!" So Sir Lancelot sat on his horse and waited. No one can cry forever, and when at last the lady had used up all her tears, Sir Lancelot asked again, "Can you tell me what is distressing you?" "It's my . . . my fal-fal-falcon!" the lady gasped.

Now in those days, noble lords and ladies used to train falcons to hunt for them. They kept them on leashes, then set them free to hunt small birds. A well-trained falcon that is, one that would come back was quite valuable.

"What happened to your falcon, my lady?" "It flew away! It was a gift from my husband," the woman wailed, beginning to cry again. Not all falcons were well trained.

"I'm sorry to hear it, my lady," said Sir Lancelot. "I wish I could help you." "Would you?" the woman exclaimed, her tears stopping at once.

"Er . . . if I could," Sir Lancelot replied. "But how? I can't chase a falcon through the sky." "Oh, you don't have to chase her at all," the woman said, smiling brightly. "She's right up there!" The woman pointed up. There at the top of the oak tree was a falcon, her leash tangled in the small branches.

"Oh," said Sir Lancelot.

"You said you'd help," the woman reminded him.

"Er . . . yes, I did. The thing is, it's rather hard to climb trees in armor." "Can't you take your armor off?" the woman asked. She sniffled.

Sir Lancelot frowned. He had just had his armor shined and didn't like to leave it lying around. Then he sighed. "Of course, my lady." Twenty minutes later, his armor and sword stacked neatly beside a bush, Sir Lancelot began climbing the tree. While he climbed, he wondered how to untangle an angry falcon from a tree without getting pecked, but soon he saw what to do. Coming to the branch where the bird was tangled, he simply broke it off at the base and tossed the whole branch free. Bird and branch fluttered and crashed to the ground, and Sir Lancelot wiped his brow with relief.

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