

Mordred didn't speak to any of us unless he had to, which was to be expected. What I didn't anticipate was Morgan's added hostility toward us. If it was only me, I wouldn't have been as surprised, but her anger at Arthur was unprecedented. Granted, Mordred was her son, but what else could we have done?

I didn't mind having her away from my life, but what I did mind was the glimpses I got of her and Bishop Marius. They were together nearly every time I saw either of them. The thought of what my two worst enemies could be cooking up together made my stomach roil.

I couldn't decide if Arthur spending more time with me was good or bad. On one hand, he was my husband and I wanted him to trust me, to confide in me. But on the other, it kept Lancelot and I apart, which I was beginning to think wasn't such a bad thing. I cared for him, lusted after him, but after what Mordred had gone through, I was wondering if he was worth risking my life for.

About a month after the incident with Mordred, I was standing in the council room, looking out over the river, when Arthur put his arms around me. I turned, and he kissed me, even before I could speak.

"What was that for?" I asked.

"For being there for me through all of this." He hugged me tightly to him. "Sometimes I fear I am losing control of the kingdom. But when I'm with you, I know that, together, we have it all in hand, no matter what happens."

Guilt welled in my stomach. I had to put an end to things with Lancelot.

I smiled up at him. "I am your wife. Is that not what I am supposed to do?"

He picked me up and spun me around, something he hadn't done since the early days of our marriage. When he set me down, I stumbled, dizzy, over to one of the windows. When my vision cleared, I recognized a familiar silhouette on the riverbank.

"Isn't that Sobian?" I pointed. "When did she get a ship?"

Arthur scampered to the window like a little boy. "Is it finished? I knew she was supervising the construction of one, but I had no idea it was complete."

"Well, at least we know she didn't steal it," I said dryly.

Arthur gave me a wounded look, then grabbed my hand. "Come on! I want to see her up close."

"The boat or Siobhan?" I teased as we bounded out the door and down the road leading to the water. "Though I daresay you've seen Sobian very closely. You never have confirmed or denied that, you know."

"That's because what I did before we were married is none of your concern."

I stuck out my lower lip in a pout, which he promptly stopped and bit playfully. "You don't want to share me now. What makes you think you could handle knowing about those who came before you?"

I kissed him deeply. "I'm tougher than you think."

We were still kissing when we reached the water's edge. "Oh! The love birds have arrived!" Sobian yelled by way of greeting. "Who ordered the love birds?" She looked around at her crew, who only snickered in response.

"She is a beauty," Arthur exclaimed, running his hand over the oiled wood.

"Hey!" Sobian slapped it away. "Looking is permitted, but not touching. Isn't that the deal we struck when we reunited in [X city]?"

While the two old friends bickered, I admired the boat. In many ways, it looked like a magnified version of the boats we used to travel to Avalon. Long and sleek, it seated four pairs of oarsmen, and had three ropes tied to a central mast. The wood was pine, polished to a perfect light brown. There was ample room to store goods, and of course, seating for the captain and additional crew.

“Planning to return to your old ways, are you, Sobian?” I joked, shielding my eyes from the glare of the sun as I looked up at her.

“Gods, no,” she scoffed. “In this port, I can make more in a summer than I did in a year of looting. If Camelot had existed when I was a pirate, I’d have gone honest a long time ago.”

“But then we never would have met,” Arthur protested.

“And you’d be much less talented between the sheets,” she retorted. “Come aboard, won’t you both? We’re just about to set sail on her maiden voyage.”

Arthur stepped in first, and held out his hand for me. I was just about to get in, when I noticed a small vessel upstream. It appeared to be unmanned, floating with the whim of the current.

“What’s that?” I asked, pointing to the boat.

“Must have broken from its mooring upstream,” Sobian said. “Boys, bring it in before it crashes into my new lovely here.”

Two of her men scrambled into a rowboat and took it out to the middle of the river, before dropping an anchor to hold them in place. Once the renegade craft came within reach, they tied it’s {word for front of boat} to theirs and hauled it ashore.

As soon as I saw their faces, I knew something was wrong. “My Lord, you’re going to want to have a look at this,” one of them said as they docked the boat on the sandy shore.

I was first to reach it. When I saw what they meant, I dropped to my knees in the sand.
“Oh, no. No, no, no, no,” I cried, tears choking me immediately.

The boat was far from unmanned. Inside lay Elaine, clad in a white dress, a garland of flowers in her hair, her head resting against a small pillow, surrounded by all of her favorite flowers: lilies, daisies, roses and buttercups. She was pale and her eyes were open, staring forever at the heaven she always longed for.