

THE QUEST OF THE RED BLADE

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THE QUEST OF THE RED BLADE

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This scenario is set in the wilds of Cambria, sometime during the reign of King Arthur. The Gamemaster may set these events any time after the founding of the Round Table, though most likely they take place during the Romance or Tournament Periods (see The Great Pendragon Campaign for reference).

Gamemasters may use the pre-generated knights provided with this scenario or else drop the scenario into their own ongoing campaigns.

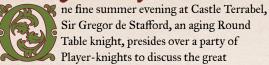
The Player-knights are confronted with a difficult moral choice, as the object of their quest is held by an unworthy man who is also their host. Yet there are even more terrible events transpiring at the Castle of the Kite, and what starts as a simple quest for a magical sword soon presents an opportunity to sacrifice everything in the name of a boy in need—or else to descend into the darkest depths of horror and depravity.



Sir Gregor pres-

ents the Quest.

Starting the Story



Arthurian Question: Where's the Adventure? (He has already done his mandatory boasting for the night.) Living where he does, Sir Gregor receives lots of news and gossip. At the end of each day, he relates the latest to passing knights. Tonight he tells of the Quest of the Red Blade:

"A magical sword is in the possession of an evil king at the Castle of the Kite, a fortress in western Cambria. The king is reputed to use evil magic to maintain his youth, though no one knows what kind of magic specifically. Whoever gets the sword would benefit greatly, and the world would be a better place without this vile king."

Sir Gregor then urges the knights to swear to the Quest. This, he explains, is the difference between an Adventure and a Quest. On an *Adventure* you take what comes, you gain Glory as it comes. But on a *Quest* you gain extra Glory after it is finished because you have sworn to do it beforehand, and everyone expects you to succeed.

Inform the Players that this is indeed a significant Quest. They must travel across the wilds of Cambria: through the brooding kingdom of Powys and thence to the Dyfi River valley, which takes them into the cursed kingdom of Meirionydd.

"What do you say, my heroes?" inquires the old knight. "A bit of adventure and peril, but also the chance to lay claim to the sword Angau Coch—called the Red Death Blade!"

Objective: Obtain the sword called the Red Death Blade

Setting: Castle of the Kite, Meirionydd Problem: The sword is possessed by King Cadwalader of Meirionydd

Characters: King Cadwalader; his men; his son, Pig Boy

Solutions: Kill the king and take his sword; save Pig Boy if possible

Secrets: The king is a century old and has surprising combat skill due to his infernal pacts and magical blade

The Journey West

he route, Sir Gregor explains, is simple enough, at least as far as the Red Castle. "And from there," he says reassuringly, "you can engage a local guide to assist you the rest of the way to Meirionydd."

The Player-knights ride south-east initially, to the market town of Stafford, before turning south and



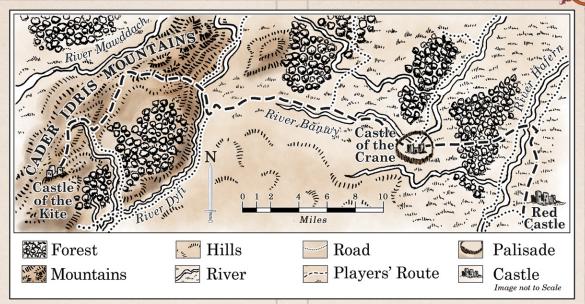
linking up with the old Roman road at the fortress of Penkridge, where they overnight as guests of the castellan of King Leodegrance of Cameliard. Departing the next day, they follow the well-paved and sturdy road as it drives due west, fetching up at the castle-town of Shrewesbury on the banks of the mighty Severn as the last rays of light fade on the horizon. There, Count Orofoise quenches their parched palettes with some of the locally famous ale over a generous feasting board. Characters who make a successful **Heraldry** roll know that the count is vassal to King Belinans of Powys—they have now entered foreign territory!

The count provides two of his own household knights as escorts the next morning, taking the Player-knights deeper into the hills of Powys. Mid-afternoon brings the knights to the mighty, eponymous edifice of the Red Castle, ruled by the chief of the Cydewain Tribe. With Orofoise's knights as escorts, the Player-knights are welcomed warmly. Questions about how to get to Meirionydd, or simply passing a Courtesy roll, prompt the Cydewain chief to call for Dogmael, a local holy man.

"Brother Dogmael here can show you the safest route over the mountains, though I advise against it. You will be going west through lands of the Cy Feiliog and Meirionydd tribes. Do not bother the people. Even your great King Arthur cannot help criminals in this land." (That is an empty boast.) "Be warned that the King of the Crane is a thief and a liar and no friend to strangers." (This is provincial prejudice and nothing more.)



Red Read



The Castle of the Crane

rother Dogmael rides a mule, which proves an able mount as the party navigates the rocky peaks west of the Red Castle. He is an amiable traveling companion, though he complains often of his sore back and gout-afflicted ankles. Nevertheless, he clearly knows the paths between Powys and Meirionydd.

Sometime in the afternoon, after passing most of the day without seeing another soul, while riding west along a ridge the party reaches its down slope and can view a valley below. Visible is a very tall wooden tower, five stories in all, and atop it is perched a very large bird, quite visible even at this distance. A **Hunting** success indicates this is a common crane, albeit an unusually outsized specimen. It turns its head to look at the approaching party of knights and squawks a croaking "fraaak" loudly enough to be heard over the intervening distance. The magical giant bird can see equally well in day or night, in storm or sunshine, and can even see invisible creatures.

Riding up the slope of the hill come six armored men on horseback. They bear no insignia or heraldry. One of their number turns and gallops away, presumably to bring a message to their leader of strangers in the land. If allowed to approach, the leader of the band tells the Player-knights that they are in the territory of the Cy Feiliog tribe and asks the usual questions of who they are, where they are from, and what their business is. He then introduces himself as Band, a follower of King Garan, called the King of the Crane. He invites the knights to visit his lord and offers them this protection. The warning of the Chief of the Red

Castle may still be fresh in the Player-knights' minds, and **Trusting/Suspicious** rolls may be in order.

If the knights instigate hostilities for some reason, the warriors ride away. If pursued, after a short ride the knights are ambushed by longbowmen hiding upon a slope that is too steep to ride up. They have a skill of 15 in Longbow and do 4d6+10 points of damage with their arrows. The Player-knights are in a tactically untenable spot and will eventually need to retreat or else perish under a hail of arrows. Since there is no other way forward from here, the adventure is over.

Assuming the Player-knights ride on with Band and his men (a **Hospitality** roll reassures them that, once protection is promised, it cannot be revoked), they approach the great Castle of the Crane. Surrounding the wooden tower is a twelve-foot-tall log palisade with several gates. Its diameter appears to be about a mile in radius—obviously too large to be an effective defensive structure. East and west of the palisade a pair of small brooks run northward. Descending to the valley a couple of peasant houses cluster nearby.

Upon passing through one of the gateways, the large gates swing closed behind them. The Player-knights are greeted at the castle and their horses shown to a nearby stable with their squires. Band escorts them to the wooden stairway that ascends to the door on the second level of the tower and into a hall. At the far end sits King Garan.

The king greets them formally and, as usual, inquires as to their identity, business, and so on. If any of the knights have 8,000 or more points of Glory, the king comments that he has heard of them. He welcomes them to his hall and invites them to stay the night. Upon acceptance, Band leads them to a simple

An encounter with Band of the Crane.

but well-appointed guest house where they may clean up after their journey—ewers of water are provided for washing, as well as wine and bread for refreshment.

Later in the evening over dinner King Garan presses for information concerning the knights' ultimate objective; if the information is not volunteered, he outright asks them if they are seeking the Red Death Blade. If the Player-knights lie (earning a check to **Deceitful** in the process), the king knows it and asks them why they would besmirch their honor with a lie.

"I swear to you," he says, "that even though I have a claim to the weapon I do not seek it, and would rejoice in King Cadwalader losing it—even lend assistance to those who might avenge my ancestors. It is a deed fraught with great danger such that I would not attempt it myself, nor are my men allowed to enter my foe's lands." Player-knights can detect that he is telling the truth with the usual **Trusting** rolls. Presumably they come clean if necessary, whereupon King Garan shares his story.

The Story of King Garan

My ancestor is Cunedda Imperator, descended from the line of Beli the Great. King Cunedda came from the far north to this part of the mountains at the invitation of the High King in order to combat the Irish who had settled hereabouts. With him was his son Einion the Impetuous, who was later the King of Gomeret after Cunedda; and also Meirchion, the son of Typipion ap Cunedda. Typipion had gained the sword Red Death on a great adventure, and had died in noble battle long before his family moved to Cambria. During the fighting Meirchion slew the Irish leader Beli, son of Benlli the Giant, and as a reward was given the lands of the Dysynni and Dovey Rivers as his fief. It is still called after him, Meirionydd. He ruled with wisdom and justice.

Meirchion had three sons: Cadwalader, Cadwallon, and Bleiddud. The youngest was a holy man and fathered many holy people who wished no possessions of this earth. King Meirchion left all his lands to the elder, Cadwalader, as is the custom, and he left the sword to the younger, Cadwallon. Though Cadwallon served his brother loyally and well, it was insufficient because a kingdom was not enough— Cadwalader had to have the sword as well. Cadwallon was sent on a mission and disappeared, but the sword returned to Cadwalader. Naturally everyone suspected foul business, but they were silenced. When the son of Cadwallon came of age, he demanded his father's sword but was refused and barely escaped with his life.

This son of Cadwallon was Gordon, a good man who married well. He collected many loyal followers and often raided his uncle's lands, driving off many cattle and sheep. He obtained the support of the King of Gomeret and they invaded the valley where the evil king lived, and though they were more numerous they were slain to a man because Cadwalader was the sworn subject of the evil god Idris, who sits upon a great throne, a mountain in that land.

Guiard was the son of Gordon. He was with Emperor Macsen Wledig and helped him to become emperor. He heard of the Adventure of the Crane and left the army to pursue that, and achieved it because he was the most Just man in the world. He returned to his birthplace, here, and built the tower and wall that you see. The Crane, the objective of the quest, is the mighty creature that sits atop the tower and warns us of any strangers who approach. Being the Crane of Justice it is attuned to the unjust King Cadwalader and has warned us whenever he has attempted to attack us. The powers of Idris cannot reach this far, and so we have driven off every raid and invasion.

Guiard had a son named Gilvathon, my own father who bequeathed his patrimony to me. Each of us in turn has resisted the evil designs that our own kin has thrust upon us without success. Each of us has attempted to obtain the sword. Guiard and Gilvathon both died while trying to retrieve it. We have all failed.

He falls silent for a moment.

"This sad tale is to warn you: your journey bears great danger. I bid you to consider this overnight, though if you wish to pursue it I will help you as I said, with directions to Castle of the Kite. I ask only one thing: swear that should you succeed in obtaining the sword you must return through my castle to bring it to me, for I would fain look upon it once before it departs forever." If the knights do not swear, they get no help from Garan. They may pass on the next day, but at best will wander in the mountains risking ambush at every vale from bandits armed with longbows.

"But enough of me. Please, if you would, tell us of yourselves and your deeds, for we have few strangers here and know nothing but old rumors of the world outside, ever since the merchants ceased to pass through."

After listening to the heroics of the Player-knights, if they have exhibited sufficient valor and prowess in their lives, the Lord of the Castle of the Crane says, "Perhaps you have virtue and prowess enough to succeed. But one word of caution: do not tell King Cadwalader the purpose of your visit. The sword is his most precious possession, and revealing your reason of coming will land you in the dungeon, or dead."

He also offers to outfit the knights with food and to rent mountain ponies to ride upon. If taken, the mountain ponies should replace the usual

King Garan calls for tales of daring and feats of arms.

Red Blade

rouncys, which remain at the Castle of the Crane for them until they return. The ponies are far more surefooted for the rugged terrain they are to cross. Their squires can, as usual, lead the chargers.

The next day the king gives the party supplies.

"My man here, Band, will guide you to the edge of our lands," he says. "Further would be too dangerous for him." Brother Dogmael also agrees to continue on with the party, though he looks rather pallid at the thought.

Knights of Gomeret

and and Dogmael guide the Player-knights on a chilly, fog-shrouded journey along mountain paths as they venture the passes that take them into Meirionydd. They spend a chilly night camping in the wild, and in the morning catch sight of the long summit of Cadair Idris in the golden sunrise.

"The Throne of Idris," says Band, joining the Player-knights in surveying the mountain. "That is where the evil god of King Cadwalader lives. It is a vile, dangerous place with a deep lake hidden in its valleys where a dragon lives and plunders the nearby countryside if the god Idris does not receive his sacrifices.

"And it is from here that I can go no further," announces Band. "I will await your return for thirty days." He then provides Dogmael and the Player-knights with directions on how to get to the Castle of the Kite from here.

The party begins its gradual descent into Meirionydd. Around mid-morning, successful **Awareness** rolls spot three knights riding towards them from the north.

Roll **Heraldry** with –5 modifier for the strangers: Success indicates they recognize the knights as men of Gomeret, a kingdom to the north. If everyone fails then Dogmael quickly recognizes them from a distance. "Knights of Gomeret!" he cries, and immediately turns and runs among the rocks and hides, leaving the Player-knights to meet the strangers. They are not approaching with open hostility.

"Hail good knights!" says the leader. "Do you seek to enlist?"

Of course, this begins a rather dangerous conversation. The Player-knights will wish to know: "enlist for what?" One of the Gomeret knights rather foolishly states, "For the conquest of Castle of the Kite!" He is silenced by their leader, who then wants to know, "What are you doing here if you have not come to enlist?"

If the Player-knights are evasive, the other knights become suspicious and quickly turn hostile. If the Player-knights state they are heading towards the Castle of the Kite, the Gomeret knights become immediately hostile. Weapons are drawn and they fall upon the Player-knights. If the knights lie, perhaps saying they are just traveling through, they get a **Deceitful** check and the Gomeret leader warns them that evil lies ahead and they ought to take a road north to Gomeret instead. If the knights agree, they are Out of the Adventure—they will eventually be recognized as Logres knights, captured, and given to King Maelgwyn of Gomeret for ransom. However, if they insist on continuing on, the now-suspicious Gomeret knights get hostile and draw weapons.

A melee ensues. Use the stats for the "Knight of Gomeret" on p. 15 for the Player-knights' foes.

If the fight goes against the Gomeret knights, they do not wait to fall, but after a few blows turn and gallop away. If the Player-knights are riding ponies or rouncys, the Gomeret knights (mounted on chargers) get away. Player-knights on chargers have a chance of catching them: roll opposed **Horsemanship**, but give the Gomeret knights a +5 bonus, as their mounts are fresher.

If the Gomeret knights win, then the surviving Player-knights are taken prisoner and brought to King Maelgwyn and imprisoned, to be held for ransom. The adventure is over. Ransom is paid next springtime, and they return home defeated without arms, armor, or horses. Of course, they may once again undertake the adventure, perhaps this time with more caution.

Presuming that the Player-knights win, Dogmael comes out of hiding. He is very proficient at First Aid with skill of 18. If any of the knights suffered a Major Wound, he pulls out a flask of holy water, prays over it, and administers it to the hurt knight(s). The draught does not restore any Hit Points, but it allows the knight to erase the mark for "Chirurgery Needed" and avoid Aggravation and Deterioration damage. (See the *King Arthur Pendragon* rulebook, p. 151.) It is possible that not everyone will be healed to full capacity, of course.

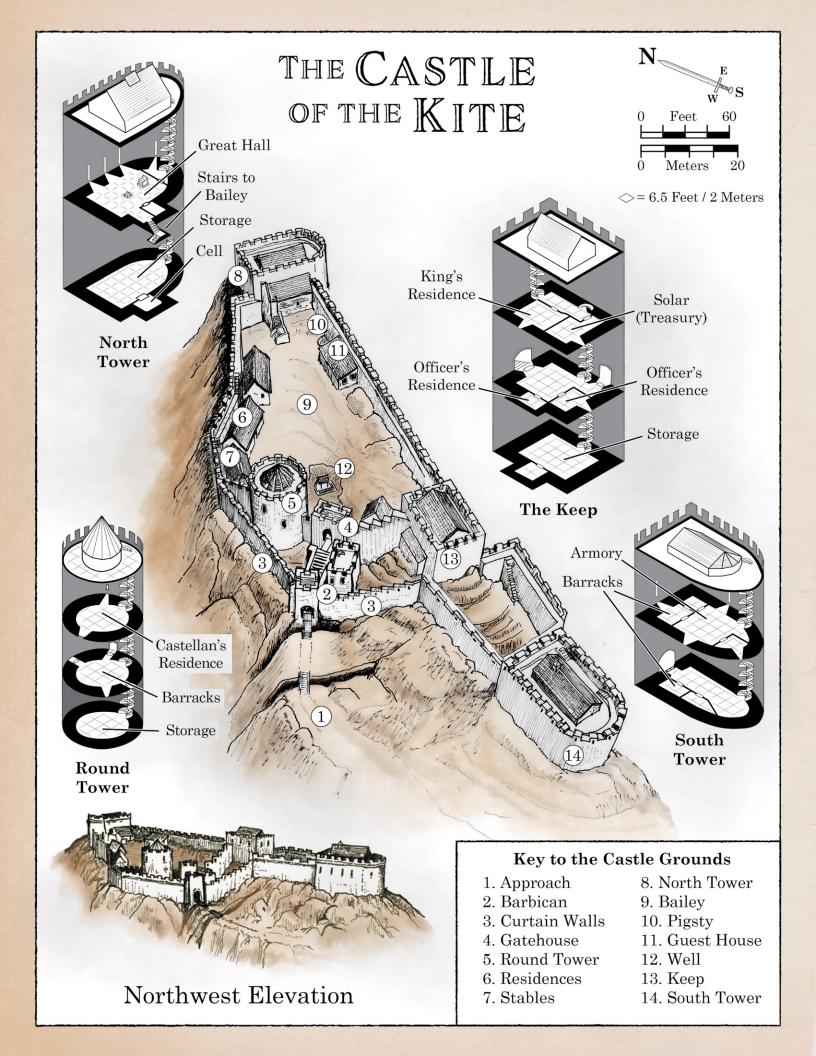
Dogmael is unequivocal about the danger they are in. He begs the knights to turn back. If they insist on going forward he urges them to go quickly, and to ride into the night if possible, or to hide among the rocks along the way and set off early the next day. Dogmael himself departs for home immediately, confident that any mountain bandits along the way will not harm an obvious holy man.

No enemy knights show up again for that day. The Player-knights continue on their way. A total of ten Band explains about the Throne of Idris and the evil that lies over these lands.

Dogmael departs.



Rod Read



more miles remains to reach the hamlet of Abergynolwyn, according to Dogmael's directions. After a night camping out, another full day's ride remains, and towards the end of it, after passing little Minffordd, a dozen warriors, well armored and armed with spears and swords, await them on the road. Each bears the arms of King Cadwallader. After acquiring the names and the intelligence that the visitors wish to see their king, they escort them to the Castle of the Kite.

The Castle of the Kite

he Castle of the Kite is an impressive stone fortress which stands atop a rocky hillock reached by a winding road. Three towers stand around a tall curtain wall

and square keep. Through the barbican and gatehouse is a large bailey surrounded by buildings against the walls: stables and residences for the castle staff. On the east side are some pens for animals and a ramshackle guesthouse. A large well also stands within.

At the north end is a tall tower called an *apsidal*, or D-shaped building with an entry on the second floor, accessible only by stairway. The entryway leads to the main hall which has a large central hearth that vents out a covered aperture in the pitched ceiling. The rest of the hall floor is tiled, with reliefs of humans and animals are carved into the walls.

The roof is accessible from the spiral stairway, and is surrounded by parapets. Lookouts are always stationed there.

The floor beneath the hall is used for storage, with one room which can be locked that is used as a jail cell. It is accessible by the circular stairway and has no other access or windows.

The keep is the location of the king's residence, some smaller quarters for his officers, and a solar which would be for the queen, if there was one; instead it is used as an armory and treasury.

The knights are escorted into the bailey through the barbican and gatehouse. The people of the castle, all dressed in dreary hues, eye them suspiciously. Grooms offer to take the horses to the stable, but do not object if the knights insist that their squires accompany them and tend the horses.

Everyone should make a **Battle** roll as they walk across the bailey. Success indicates that the Player-knights are aware, after looking around, that King Cadwalader does not have many heavily-armed knights like them. (The castle's garrison consists of knights equal in number to the Player-knights, double that number of warriors in the castle, with another fifty experienced warriors living in the surrounding lands,

and several hundred militia-type warrior

THE SHAPE

commoners.) The castle is quite vulnerable to attack from Gomeret.

The knights are led by the castellan across the courtyard, up the stairs, and into the great hall of the north apsidal. Guards stand along the walls, and the king sits at the far end upon a large throne that rests upon a raised dais, as is common.

The king is old, pot-bellied, and spindly-limbed, with long white hair and beard. He bears a sour look.

The greeting proceeds as usual. Every Player-knight must roll **Courtesy**. Success indicates that the knight is aware of his best option for a friendly welcome is to warn King Cadwalader that they know that King Maelgwyn is preparing an attack upon Meirionnydd.

First, however, the king questions the Player-knights as to their purpose in his lands, saying "Who are you and what is your business here?" Some obvious responses—and the king's reaction—are given here along with consequences.

"We seek adventure."

Reaction: Scorn.

"Making trouble where there was none before. Upsetting century-old forces which are best left alone. These dangers existed since ancient times and will be here long after you are gone."

"To destroy the evil Pagan practices of this land."

Reaction: Anger

"What right have you to decide our faith for us? Idris has blessed our land for centuries without you! Go away from here immediately and I will give you an hour to ride before we rise to hunt you down for your arrogance."

See "Pursuit" on p. 10 for what happens next.

"Just passing through."

Reaction: Suspicion

"No one simply passes through here. Nevertheless, I give leave for you to stay and eat at my board, and to sleep within my walls. But I warn you: if one of you foul outsiders puts hands to the flesh of any maiden here, I will have it chopped off; if one of you speaks to a servant or underling, I will have the slave killed on the spot. You will depart in the morning, at first light. If those conditions are not agreeable then go away now."

"To look upon the Red Death Blade."

Reaction: Suspicion

"Why do you wish to see this thing? It is a family treasure, an heirloom of my father's, not a public artefact."



Tipe of

If he or Red Death are praised, then Cadwalader submits to showing it out of pride. But he alone holds it, and never lets anyone close to it. If a knight urges to see it closer, the king says, "Any closer and it will be your death wound."

"To retrieve the Red Death Blade."

Reaction: Rage

"What!? Thieves! Traitors! Guards, take these men away now for the effrontery of their desires. Knights, kill them and bring me their heads to send to the King of the Crane."

See **"Fight or Flight"** on p. 8 for what happens next.

"To aid you in your war with Gomeret."

The fact that Gomeret is planning an invasion is alarming news to the king. He questions the source of the information and learning that it is first-hand knowledge alarms him even more. Hearing that knights have been enlisted by his foe is even worse.

If the Player-knights make this offer, then King Cadwalader demands an oath of fealty, and accepts their help.

King Cadwalader orders scouts to go up the road to watch out, and then he orders the hall to be prepared for dinner. The knights are shown to the "guest house" off the bailey (see below), and later are summoned to a solemn dinner. The king and his advisors then retire early to confer.

King Cadwalader's Hospitality

The Player-knights may become guests of King Cadwalader. It may be temporary, if they have said they are passing through. It may be longer term if they need to rest while healing from their fight with the knights of Gomeret, or if they have sworn fealty to King Cadwalader.

In all cases, the king provides the minimum he deems necessary to meet the requirements for Hospitality. He cannot be provoked or shamed to do any more. He does not want to give anyone a reason to remain.

The services provided are terrible. The offered quarters are an outbuilding in the courtyard next to the pigsty, whose stink permeates the rickety building. For the daily meal, a surly servant brings a tray of half-cooked goat meat and stale bread with water to drink. In the stable, the squires tend their own horses and must keep watch over the goods so they are not stolen.

During the length of their stay, the knights are subjected to whispering and sniggering from the people in the castle.

Seizing the Red Blade

As indicated throughout this scenario, taking the Red Death Blade from King Cadwalader carries grave risks and consequences. Unless and until the king violates the rules of Hospitality, the Player-knights will lose points of their Hospitality Passion (and quite possibly Honor as well) if they try to take the blade from him by force or deception. Nevertheless, this may be a cost some are willing to pay.

King Cadwallader carries the blade with him at all times when holding court or venturing beyond the castle walls. If he cannot have it on his person for some reason, he either stores it in the keep's treasury (guarded by his most loyal knights) or else keeps it within easy reach (such as when he sleeps).

Players may concoct a caper to steal the blade, and it is left to the Gamemaster to rule on the feasibility of such a venture and respond accordingly. However, the plight of Pig Boy (see following sections) should soon become the primary focus of the Player-knights' concern, all else being equal.

Fight or Flight

There is a chance that King Cadwalader may order an attack upon the Player-knights in his own hall. This occurs if anyone threatens to take his sword, if a Player-knight commits some grievous error (like fumbling a Courtesy roll), or for a reason stated elsewhere in this adventure.

The king leaps behind his throne and shouts, "Kill the intruders!" The assembly screams and all noncombatants dash for the doors, blocking them in the process so that no Player-knight can exit. During the panic, the guards require a full Combat Round to get through the fleeing people and the Player-knights may arm themselves and shout out orders or instructions to each other. When the crowd clears the room only guards remain.

All Player-knights who wish to do so may attempt a Hospitality roll. Success indicates that they get the appropriate Passion bonus, as Cadwalader is in flagrant breach of his obligations as a host.

One knight per Player-knight are on hand, along with eight warriors. Other warriors are nearby and come running as combat ensues. There are three warriors per Player-knight, but their arrivals are staggered: one-third appear on the fifth, another third on the seventh, and the final third on the tenth round, if combat is still going on. Other knights warriors are off arming themselves but will not appear for thirty melee rounds, at the least.

Use this section the first time the Player-knights cross King Cadwallader and invite his wrath.



KING CADWALADER IN COMBAT

The king is old and weak, but he has good armor and his magical sword. Additionally, he never attacks alone but always with at least one knight by his side. If ever confronted while alone he withdraws, facing his enemy, fighting Defensively until he gets more help. If necessary, he flees at his best chance. See "The Red Death Blade" on p. 15 for details on his magical sword.

The Meirionydd knights have some Honor, despite their lord. They recognize the station of their knightly foes, and especially that they have a ransom. They are happy to wound their foes and take them prisoner—they want and need the money for themselves. Surrender is honored. If they are seriously wounded they may beg for mercy too, promising ransom. They will even protect captured knights against their evil king, who dares not offend his best men and allows the ransom. Squires who are of gentle birth are also captured and ransomed. All equipment and horses are kept by the victors.

The warriors assist their knights, but are not as courageous: they gang up on knights if possible. If a warrior must face a Player-knight alone, he fights Defensively and tries to escape. If all the Meirionydd knights are dead, disabled, or surrendered, then the warriors will all flee from the hall.

Cadwallader hangs back and lets his men do the fighting. If the fighting turns against them, he flees the hall for the safety of his keep, ideally before the Player-knights can engage with him. If the king is slain, a terrible baying breaks out in the distance as the leader of the Wild Hunt, Gwyn ap Nudd, and his Cŵn Annwn—his pack of spectral hounds—comes howling to take his soul. Everyone must make a Valorous roll at -5. Critical success indicates the knight looks Gwynn in the eye as he passes by to snatch up the king's soul; Success indicates the knight stands by, watching what occurs; a Failure or Fumble indicate the knight cowers in fear, covering their face, until the noise ceases. Those who are watching see a spectral form of King Cadwalader torn screaming from his cooling body and thrown to the Cŵn Annwn, who tear it limb from limb in a savage display before the whole host departs, taking the king's parts (his head still screaming) with them.

Despite the odds, the Player-knights may win there. If they manage to empty the hall of foes they have a choice; remain; go elsewhere in

the keep, perhaps to seek out the king; or flee. As the last sounds of combat die down, the Player-knights should attempt **Awareness** rolls. Success indicates that they hear the shouting of other knights in the keep as they arm, and of officers preparing more warriors for combat.

Remain

To linger in the hall after the fight is foolish—more combatants are assembling. A horn sounds outside to muster the warriors in the courtyard. Time is short. After the time required to armor up, more knights appear, including the king (if still alive), whose presence keeps the new warriors from fleeing.

Go Elsewhere

This is the worst option. Any action will only take the Player-knights farther from the safety of their horses and the promise of escape. However, Players are capable of foolishness and may attempt the following:

Pursue the King

A valiant thought. The Player-knights must cross the bailey and ascend a spiral staircase to the keep, which is defended by a pair of doughty warriors who have a +5/-5 modifier for height advantage on the stairs. Once inside the keep, should the knights reach it, they find the king and his remaining knights (one per Player-knight, less those already slain in the hall) in various states of armoring up, being assisted by squires and ladies. Melee ensues (assume the king and his knights have half their normal armor protection and no shields), with more warriors (three per Player-knight) streaming up the stairs to help their lord.

Free the Serfs

A silly, anachronistic thought. Once in the courtyard the knights might shout for the serfs to run away. They won't. They are terrified, know nothing of the outside world, and have no interest in aiding the invading knights.

Find the Treasury

Located on the top floor of the keep, in a room off the lord's personal chamber. The Player-knights must first cut their way through the chamber where the knights are arming, as detailed above. If this effort succeeds, the Player-knights may ascend a smaller set of spiral stairs which bring them to the treasury, where they may help themselves to £150 in goods and gold—and then must reach home to make good of it.

Flee

Flight is the best option. Go to the next section.





Pursui

If the Gamemaster owns Savage Mountains, as option lead the Player-knights through The Adventure of the Best Wine in the World for those that go this way. Otherwise, just bave a friendly peasant guide them to the border of Gomeret; if the Player-knights killed any knights of Gomeret, or are recognized as King Arthur's men, they are politely imprisoned by King Maelgwyn and ransomed.

If the knights succeed in getting out of the hall they wind up in the courtyard. The knight in the barbican is unsure of whether he ought to shut the gate and keep

unsure of whether he ought to shut the gate and keep the foes inside, or leave it open to let them escape. He leaves it open.

A half-dozen warriors are in the bailey, having come down from the walls, but they scatter before any aggressive display on the part of the Player-knights (this might be as simple as the knights emerging splattered with the blood of their foes!).

The Player-knights must go to the stable to get their horses. Each Player must attempt a Squire Roll: success indicates that the squire figured out what was going on from the noise and the horn blowing, and has saddled his lord's charger and a rouncy for himself. A failed Squire Roll indicates that the charger is saddled, but no rouncy—the squire must ride bareback. A glance around shows that several native grooms are laid out around the stable, victims of the squires' fighting skills. Everyone mounts up and heads for the gateway as warriors and half-armed knights exit the keep.

Direction

The first thing the Player-knights need to do is to decide which way they will go. Unless they have been through here before, they know nothing of the local geography, such as paths or roads. If they take any paths, of which there are many though none are on the map, they are lost in the mountains. Travel is limited by available routes, many of which are dead ends. They will pass by small clusters of houses and herdsmen with flocks, all of whom will report their passage to the pursuing warriors who do know their way around, make better time, and will eventually catch up. Only two roads leave from the castle, one going northeast which the knights came in on; and one going southwest, which is unknown. Directly north and south are mountains that are too difficult to cross with horses and without a local guide. Mountain climbing may be necessary.

A successful **Hunting** roll indicates that the knight knows the following facts:

Southwest lies the sea, just visible from the castle. It is about ten miles of mostly downhill distance. The Dysynni Valley is easy to follow, passing by villages ruled by King Cadwalader whose tenants will report the knights' passage. Upon reaching the coast, the knights may turn north for the kingdom of Gwaelod or south to the port town of Aberdovey.

Travelling on the only northward road will bring the Player-knights along the road they came in on—their most obvious route, and the one King Cadwalader is most likely to pursue. See "The Flight North" in the following section for more information.

If the characters head southwest and reach the coast, the land off to the right, then northwest, is the broad land of Gwaelod, barely visible in the distant fog. At a few miles along the coast is a gibbet (gallows) with remains of a long-rotted corpse hanging from it. Gibbets are usually found at the boundary of two separate lands. Gwaelod is known as the "Land Behind the Dike," and is rarely ever visited by any outsiders. Its lord is unknown. He may be a vassal of the King of Gomeret, a king hostile to King Arthur. The king has no love for King Cadwalader.

If the Gamemaster owns Savage Mountains he can lead the Player-knights through "The Adventure of the Best Wine in the World" for those that go this way. Otherwise, just have a friendly peasant guide them to the border of Gomeret; if the Player-knights killed any knights of Gomeret, or are recognized as King Arthur's men, they are politely imprisoned by King Maelgwyn and ransomed.

Alternately, the Player-knights may turn south at the coast. This brings them to Aberdovey, a port belonging to King Cadwalader. There is no river crossing at Aberdovey. The knights must turn upriver. If possible, residents hurry to Pennal and report strangers if the knights pause at Aberdovey. The garrison at Pennal prepares to fight, and sends word to the king of strangers roaming the land. If the Player-knights get past these defenders they must still go up the Dovey Valley.

The Dovey Valley is dotted with villages. From Aberdovey it is 27 miles to Manwydd. The road is relatively clear, and if the knights manage to outride their pursuers they will reach Manwydd and then pass out of the Kingdom of Merionydd. Go to "The Return from Meirionydd" for more.

The Flight North

Player-knights may try to flee due north to Gomeret. Since King Maelgwyn is hostile to King Arthur, and the Player-knights may well have just fought against him, this is a bad route. If taken the knights are politely imprisoned by King Maelgwyn and ransomed.

To the right the path continues around to Mallwyd, and then out of the Kingdom of Meirionydd. Band is waiting for them where he said he would be, and he guides them back to the Castle of the Crane. Go to "The Return from Meirionydd" for more.



The Player-knights presumably stick together over the course of this pursuit, and are thus restricted to the speed of the slowest riders. These are the squires on their rouncys, or possibly their sumpters or ponies, if present.

Noble Squires

Realizing that they will slow down the knights on their chargers, the squires offer to slow down their pursuers. "Why don't you leave us squires behind? We are of gentle birth and have a fair ransom. Though the king seems evil, his knights seem honourable enough. We will ride away and stall them when we surrender, helping you to escape."

Agreement by a knight warrants a loss of I Honor, something the Players should be made aware of before they make their decision.

If the knights refuse this then they will see that the squires are actually quite relieved at this. However, this guarantees Cadwalader catches up.

The Pursuers

If King Cadwalader and his men reach the escaping knights, a fight ensues. He has left behind everyone who could not keep up, and so he has Id6+I knights with him and Id6 warriors. They are all mounted on hill ponies, and so do not charge with lance, using their swords instead. This gives the Player-knights an advantage. They need to decide if they will fight to kill all their foes, or only enough of them to escape safely.

Pig Boy's Plight

his is an incident of great consequence and could go in several directions, depending entirely upon the Player-knights' actions.

On the first night after arriving at the castle, upon their cold reception and retiring to their quarters, the Player-knights may attempt an **Energetic** roll. Success indicates that the knight awakes in the middle of the night hearing a commotion in the courtyard. It is a messenger arriving with news that the forces of Gomeret have crossed into Meirionydd!

Activity starts early, before sunrise. King Maelgwyn's scouts were seen heading down the road. King Cadwalader sends a large band of mounted warriors out to drive them off, and takes his hastily assembled army out of the castle. It includes many warriors, archers, and even a large band of ill-armed commoners eager to defend their lord and land.

If the Player-knights swore fealty to the king, he orders them to remain behind as the castle garrison. If they have not sworn fealty, they are ignored. Either way, they are left largely to their own

KIDNAPPING PIG BOY

The Player-knights may decide to simply grab the boy and run. If they do this in daylight, the gate is open as usual, and the alarm is shouted. See "Pursuit" on p. 10 for details on how to flee the kingdom. The knights have saved Pig Boy but failed in their quest for the Red Blade!

Everyone participating loses 2 points of Hospitality. The next day the king and his men set out in pursuit. Villagers along the way direct him. Go to **"Pursuit"** on p. 10.

devices, though constantly under observation by the remaining residents. The raid lasts most of the day, with King Cadwallader returning in triumph near sundown after a successful ambush of the Gomeret forces.

Before that, however, around midday, the Player-knights hear a plaintive voice through the cracks of their quarters: a boy's sad voice comes from the pigsty, mourning the coming death of a youth.

If the Player-knights speak to this voice, either through the wall or from outside the stinking pigsty, the youth identifies himself as Pig Boy, son of the King. He says he is due to die very soon—that indeed he would have died today were it not for the matter of the war with Gomeret—but wishes that he could reach towards greater aspirations. He does not tell how he knows of his impending death. He begs the knights to take him away with them right away. **Courtesy** indicates that the knights know this is a breach of Hospitality which would cost them 2 points of the passion. He also warns them not to speak to the king about him. As a guard makes his rounds the boy stops speaking and says no more that day.

Later, if the knights ask the king to let them take the boy away, he flies into a rage and orders them out of his castle immediately. Go to **"Fight or Flight"** below.

King Cadwalader did indeed intend to sacrifice his son in a horrific magical ritual that day, and his victory over Gomeret has only brazened his desire. He calls a feast that very night (see "The Terrible Feast" on p. 13) and invites the Player-knights to attend.

Crisis

If the Player-knights fail to act before nightfall, as the feast is being prepared the entire castle erupts into turmoil. At first it seems perhaps the Gomeret knights have returned in force and battle is imminent: squires and grooms are bringing saddled horses from the stable, armed men are forming into units or mounting up. You may decide to have Pig Boy escape at any dramatically-appropriate time in the scenario.



* Red Read

Women and

Women and servants are dashing about in apparent panic. But King Cadwalader stands at the entrance to his hall shouting, "Find him! Find Pig Boy or suffer my wrath!"

Player-knights may sense an opportunity and offer to help. If not, the king sees them and orders them to approach. If they refuse, or are just too slow, the king impatiently waves his arms about and hurries to them. He looks extremely worried and pleads with them, "My son it gone! My son is gone, damn it! Help me, can't you?"

Any knight who agrees gets a **Merciful** check. If none volunteer, the king cries out, "I would give my sword to get him back!" Every knight must then attempt a **Selfish** roll with a +5 modifier. Success indicates it would be worthwhile to help.

However, they king is lying and will not give up his sword even if a knight returns with his son. Nonetheless, the knight who brings the boy back now has a just claim on the sword, and may take it from the king without loss of Hospitality for that particular deed.

Refusing to Help

The Player-knights may simply refuse to help search. If so, the king is enraged even more and tells the knights they must leave the next morning. He does not want them out while his men are searching, afraid that they may find the boy instead. They may leave sooner if they wish, since all the guards go out to search.

If the knights remain, then late that night the king returns dragging Pig Boy after him. The king orders him taken to confinement and orders the knights, once again, to depart at dawn. They get no dinner that night. The feast is then pushed back to the following night.

If they do not depart at dawn, they are attacked in their sleeping quarters. See **"Fight or Flight"** for details, although of course this is not in the Great Hall this time.

Later that day King Cadwalader performs his unholy sacrifice, as detailed under **"The Terrible Feast"** on p. 13.

Helping the King

Player-knights searching for the boy are in unknown territory, searching under moonlight. They must attempt to find their way around using a **Hunting** roll at –10: a failure indicates they get lost.

Whether lost or not, they eventually must make **Awareness** rolls, also at –10. Those who succeed spot a solitary figure trying to hide behind a rock. It is Pig Boy! If no one succeeds, as is likely, Pig Boy spots them first and comes running out, not concealing his happiness to see them.

"Sir Knights," he says when he comes out of cover, "you're far from known trails. What has brought you here?"

Player-knights now earn **Honest** or **Deceitful** checks, depending upon what they say. Whether they tell the truth or lie, the Pig Boy says, "You, as guests, would be better off not to become involved in this at all."

If questioned further he says, "Do you not know the custom which my father keeps? Very well, I will tell you. The king is already a century old. He doesn't always look as decrepit as he does now, for he has a way of rekindling his youth by killing and eating his own sons. Yes, this is true, and though everyone knows it no one will dare to say so." A successful **Trusting** roll indicates the lad is telling the truth, while a successful **Suspicious** roll indicates the boy certainly *believes* his own story whether it is true or not.

Players have time to discuss their options. A successful **Courtesy** roll again indicates that they will indeed lose Hospitality for taking the boy away from his father. After a short time, everyone must make another **Awareness** roll, this time with no modifier; success indicates they hear horses approaching, and they have enough time to commit to whatever course of action they have decided on. If everyone fails, they are taken by surprise by the advancing party.

The knights have three choices:

- Let Pig Boy go. He starts to weep but nods in understanding, scrambling up a slope and disappearing into the darkness. Shortly afterwards, the searching warriors arrive, as below, and the Player-knights may tell them where the boy went or not, warranting Honest or Deceitful checks. Regardless, Pig Boy is later captured, dragged back home, killed, and eaten as per the events of "The Terrible Feast" on p. 13.
- Turn him in. Pig Boy begs them not to. Merciful indicates the knight does not want to, while a Fumble indicates he insists upon it. Alternately a Cruel roll does the opposite. When the king receives his prisoner and hears of the knights' part in it he is both astonished and delighted. His attitude changes completely and he invites his guests to join him at the high table for the feast that night (see "The Terrible Feast" on p. 13).

 Help Pig Boy. A band of mounted warriors come
 - Help Pig Boy. A band of mounted warriors come into view. There is one per knight, including the leader. The leader sees the knights, then the boy, then points at him with his spear and shouts, "There he is! Get him!" Pig Boy dodges behind the knights as the warriors attempt to push their way through. The leader remains back



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a ways, watching. After evading or fighting the king's warriors, the knights or their squires can go back to the castle to collect their gear without any trouble—everyone is away searching. Go to "Pursuit" on p. 10 for what to do next.

If a knight fights the king's warriors he receives a Merciful check. The encounter takes place too close for a lance charge—the warriors are literally among the knights—but the warriors are not expecting to be attacked by their "allies," and so the knights get one round of unopposed weapon attacks. One knight will have no opponent and can either attack one of those others, or rush the leader, who is prepared and fights as normal.

Unless all the warriors are disabled in the same round, the survivors try to escape using their Horsemanship against the knights' weapon skills. Fleeing warriors gallop down the pathway, then go off-road down a steep slope. Inform any pursuer that there is a –10 modifier to **Horsemanship** to attempt the same. Unless the Player-knight succeeds critically, the rider escapes into the night anyway.

After the warriors are gone or defeated, Pig Boy starts sobbing. "Yes, I am Pig Boy, and all my life I have been destined to be killed and eaten! The king's priest keeps saying it is an honor and blessing, but I don't want to be killed! Please help me! I am the son of an evil king, but nonetheless a nobleman like you, destined for a most foul fate if you do not aid me."

The Terrible Feast

f Pig Boy is captured and the knights are still present at the hall afterwards, they witness a woeful ceremony.

Everyone is disarmed before entering, except for a few guards. An Awareness roll success indicates the Player-knights know the guards are watching them in particular. Everyone is there: knights, warriors, servants, even many peasants, all crowded in so tightly it is difficult to move. The room is hot and smoky. The king's knights lead the visitors to the front of the circle, closest to the cauldron so they have a good view. Mugs of strong drink are going around and everyone is drinking. The drink tastes of strange herbs.

A great cauldron is boiling in the center of the room. A table is to be used as an altar and butcher's block. A priest and the king mumble prayers before the cauldron. Everyone starts to sing a song praising Dark Idris, calling him "Giver of Gifts."

Pig Boy is brought out. His throat is unceremoniously cut, he is dismembered, and his parts thrown into the cauldron. Everyone keeps singing until he is cooked, perhaps thirty minutes, and then portions are fished out, cut up, and handed all around. Knights get large parts, warriors slightly smaller, servants and peasants just scraps. The king and the priest get the largest.

Everyone eats. As he consumes his portion, King Cadwalader changes before everyone's view. His age melts away—he stands tall, his muscles flesh out, his pot belly shrinks, his hair and beard turn black. He is smiling, laughing. His wrinkles are gone. At last he leaps upon the table and shouts, "It is done! I am your king! Let the celebrations begin!" He reaches towards the crowd and a young woman takes his hand and steps up upon the table where he tears her clothing off. The crowd erupts in throaty cheers and begin tearing off their own clothing as a general orgy ensues.

Taking Action

Corrupt or evil player knights may well take part in the ceremony. They receive checks to Lustful, Arbitrary, Cruel, Reckless, and Indulgent.

Normal Player-knights ought to be horrified at all this. After all, they had a chance to prevent it! While the crowd is engaged, they may force their way out unnoticed. If they leave the castle they are not pursued. The adventure is over.

Player-knights who intervene at any point invite the king's wrath. Go to "Fight or Flight" and proceed through the combat as indicated, with the additional difficulty of a couple hundred panicked bystanders ensuring that the first 1d3 rounds are fought with -5 penalties to all weapon skills and DEX rolls for all combatants.

As the feast proceeds, Players must attempt an Honor roll at each stage, where a critical success indicates the knight is required to intervene and protest immediately. Success shows the Player-knight knows it is wrong, and they must either intervene, leave, or lose double the points listed below. Failure means the Player-knight does not have to act, and simply loses the points listed below. A fumble indicates the Player-knight's sense of Honor is not offended and they need make no further rolls, but do lose the all the points listed (up to -10 Honor!).

Each knight present must test to lose Honor:

- one point for turning the boy in;
- one point to attend the ceremony at all (unless Pagan);
- two points if the boy is killed;
- five more points if they eat any of the flesh;
- one point for participating in the orgy (unless Pagan, in which case check **Lustful**; all others

Adjust this section's explicit borrors to fit your group's comfort



The next day the king invites the knights who fully participated to join his household and renounce their other fealty and homage. If any do so, they are out of the game. The others must return home, dishonored and ashamed. If they conceal their part, they get **Dishonest**, **Worldly**, and **Arbitrary** checks each year of silence.

The Return from Meirionydd

he Player-knights most likely return by the same route they came. Other possibilities are discussed above under "Pursuit" and will need to be filled in by the Gamemaster.

The Gamemaster may also have to ad lib events below if the Player-knights have failed miserably or committed evil acts.

Having rendezvoused with Band, the party approaches the Castle of the Crane and the crane cries out as they enter the gate a mile from the castle. The king and a small honor guard ride out to greet them, and invites them into the castle to rest.

In the hall the king is in his high seat. "Welcome back to the Castle of the Crane. Tell us of your adventure," he says. He listens intently, as does the court, but if they do not mention the Red Death Blade the king will ask about it. "Do you have it? Did you see it? Did you try to get it?"

If the knights have the sword, King Garan reminds them of their promise to let him see it. He wants to hold it. He was promised this, and a Player-knight gets a check to both **Selfish** and **Suspicious** if he refuses. If he hands it over, the character gets a **Trusting** check.

Upon receiving the blade, the king is rapt with admiration of it. He tests its balance, strokes the blade, eyes the keen edge.

"With this," he says, "I could overcome any foe. I could conquer all Meirionydd. I could slay the Cadair Idris dragon." He looks at the player knight who holds it.

"Will you return this to me?" he asks. "In the name of largesse, give me back my due!"

If granted, the player gets a **Generous** check and 100 Glory. King Garan also gives him a gold armband worth £10, a herd of ten ponies, his loyal friendship forever, and offers the hand of his daughter.

If the knight refuses to give it away, the king says, "This is *my* sword, earned by the blood of my ancestors! You *must* give it to me!" He raises the sword as if to brandish it in a fight.

Before the players can react, or anything else can happen, a loud "SQUAWK!" sounds from the roof of the tower. The sound of wings flapping is audible, and another squawk. King Garan glances upward, surprised

for just a moment. He turns the sword and offers it hilt-first back to the knight.

"My ancestors gained the friendship of that bird through Justice," he says, "and without Justice it will not remain here. It is not mine. Take this back, and may you use it well and for good. I thank you for your trust in letting me handle it this way. If it is destined to fall into my hands again it will be done fairly, and not at cost to you. You are all welcome here anytime, and may all stay as long as you wish. In the meantime, rest while we prepare a feast to celebrate your accomplishments."

The adventure is over, for now.

Glory

- ★ 100 each for taking on the Adventure of the Red Death Blade
- ★ 50 each for slaying an enemy knight in mortal combat
- 20 each for slaying an enemy warrior in mortal combat
- ★ 200 total for slaying the King of Castle of the Kite
- * 150 total for attaining the Red Death Blade
- ₩ 100 total for freeing Pig Boy

Red Blade

Gamemaster Characters

King Cadwalader Glory to Overcome: 200 SIZ/KD: 13 DEX: 9 STR: 12 CON/MW: 13 Hit Points: 26 Unconscious: 7

Move: 2

Armor: 14 + shield

Weapons: Dagger 10, Lance 18, Spear 10, Sword 20 Traits: Chaste 6, Forgiving 2, Generous 5, Just 2, Merciful 0, Modest 4, Trusting 0, Valorous 12

Passions: Honor 4

Skills: Awareness 18, Battle 18, Courtesy 12, Heraldry 10, Horsemanship 18, Hunting 15, Tourney 5
Note: All of King Cadwalader's stats reflect his decrepit and aged condition. If he successfully completes the Ceremony of the Terrible Feast, use the stats for a "Notable Knight" given on p. 205 of the King Arthur Pendragon 5.2 rulebook.

Pig Boy

Glory to Overcome: I SIZ/KD: 8 DEX: 9 STR: 12 CON/MW: 10 Hit Points: 18 Unconscious: 5 Move: 4 Avoidance: 14

Armor: none
Weapons: none

Traits: Energetic 16, Honest 14, Modest 15, Valorous

10

Passions: Honor 16

Skills: Awareness 12, First Aid 10, Folk Lore 8,

Hunting 4

Knight of Meirionydd

Glory to Overcome: 50 SIZ/KD: 14 DEX: 11 STR: 14 CON/MW: 14 Hit Points: 28 Unconscious: 7

Move: 3

Armor: 12 + shield

Weapons: Dagger 10, Lance 15, Spear 10, Sword 19

Traits: Valorous 15

Passions: Loyalty (Lord) 12, Honor 10

Skills: Awareness 12, Battle 15, Courtesy 6, First Aid 10, Heraldry 4, Horsemanship 15, Hunting 12,

Tourney 5

The Red Death Blade (Angau Coch)

These facts are not known to anyone except the person who owns the sword, and even they do not know the number values given—these may only be discovered by wielding the blade in combat.

The Red Death Blade, or "Angau Coch" in the Cymric tongue, is magical. While using it the wielder:

- Is better than normal (+10 to Sword skill)
- Does normal damage, which may be blocked by shield and armor, but...
- Always inflicts damage on a Win in an Opposed Combat roll: if the damage to the foe after subtracting armor and shield is less than 6 points, the sword does a minimum of 6 points of damage, no matter what armor protects the foe

Angau Coch has a weakness, however: it never strikes with extraordinary damage even if it hits a weak spot. In other words, the sword never does double damage on a Critical Success!

Warrior of Meirionydd

Glory to Overcome: 20 SIZ/KD: 10 DEX: 12 STR: 10 CON/MW: 13 Hit Points: 23 Unconscious: 6

Move: 3

Armor: 6 + shield

Weapons: Dagger 6, Spear 10, Sword 10.

Traits: Valorous 12
Passions: Loyalty (Lord) 10

Skills: Awareness 10, Horsemanship 14, Hunting 10

Knight of Gomeret

Glory to Overcome: 50 SIZ/KD: 14 DEX: 11 STR: 14 CON/MW: 14 Hit Points: 28 Unconscious: 7

Move: 3

Armor: 14 + shield

Weapons: Dagger 10, Lance 15, Spear 10, Sword 19

Traits: Valorous 15

Passions: Loyalty (Lord) 15, Honor 15

Skills: Awareness 10, Battle 15, Courtesy 12, First Aid 10, Heraldry 12, Horsemanship 15, Hunting 12,

Tourney 10







GREG STAFFORD (1948-2018)

GAME DESIGNER, MYTHOLOGIST, SHAMAN, FATHER, GRANDFATHER, HUSBAND, BROTHER, AND FRIEND

To honor Greg's memory the family requests, in lieu of flowers, that you strike up a conversation with someone you don't know, go somewhere you haven't been, face a personal challenge head on, read about something new, and enjoy life.

#WeAreAllUs