

Story Treatment for  
**“The Knight with the White Flower”**

Wessex has been ruled by an evil dragon named Halfdan for more than a century. Merlin is an old and mysterious wizard, who lives in a hut in the forest near a town. He has trained an adolescent boy named Alfred to fulfill the prophecy of the hero, and slay Halfdan. Accompanied by his incompetent friend Leofric, Alfred is to quest for the Lady of the Lake, retrieve from her the fabled sword Excalibur, and use its power to reclaim the throne of Wessex at Winchester. Having sent the two boys on their journey, Merlin enjoys his quiet home, chatting with the townsfolk in the marketplace. Alfred's sweetheart, Ealsa is especially interested in talking with Merlin, and she expresses concern for the viability of Alfred's quest. The wizard assures her that a Knight's power comes from his love, and if Alfred loves Ealsa, he will surely succeed. Merlin's wise words and quiet confidence reassure her, as the townsfolk continue to mingle, and anticipate their hometown hero's ascension to the throne. Merlin uses his magic staff to trap woodland creatures in the forest on his way home and conjures fire to cook them. But ceremoniously, without magic, he picks primrose flowers for a shrine on the grave of his wife. The next morning, Leofric returns to town square with tidings of Alfred's death at the hands of a Knight with a Black Shield. In the ensuing discussion, the townsfolk begin planning a subsequent quest, especially with the encouragement of Ealsa who wishes to see her sweetheart's quest through, and for revenge. Merlin warns that without a powerful hero like Alfred, such a quest is doomed to fail, but is immediately urged to serve as the hero, having trained Alfred in the first place. Despite his insistence that the prophecy specified an adolescent hero of particular bloodline, Merlin cannot help but feel pride at the townsfolk's enthusiasm, and pledges to lead the second quest for Excalibur, and for the throne of Winchester. Ealsa, Leofric, and Merlin depart the following morning, to attempt to take Alfred's place as the heroes of Wessex.

The first objective of the trio is to find the Lady of the Lake, the path to whom had been blocked by the Knight with the Black Shield on the first go around, but no longer, as the hero of prophecy has already been destroyed. Upon finding the Lake, its Lady, and inquiring for Excalibur, the trio are turned away, as only the hero of prophecy is worthy of the sword. Merlin insists that the hero is dead, but the Lady of the Lake does not believe him, and refuses to change her mind without seeing Alfred's head as proof of his demise. Leofric leads Merlin and Ealsa to the location of Alfred's death, but finding the head already removed, they seek out the Knight with the Black Shield to retrieve it. On account of the gruesomeness of the situation, Leofric attempts to comfort Ealsa, but only succeeds in distressing her further when he offers to replace Alfred as her sweetheart. Merlin uses his knowledge of nature and the forest to track the Knight with the Black Shield, and before long, they find him encamped in a clearing. Alfred's head is prominently displayed as a trophy. Merlin begins discussing a stealthy strategy for the head's retrieval with Ealsa, but Leofric quickly blows their cover. The hostile and powerful Knight recognizes Leofric and moves to kill him, but Merlin uses magic to tie the Knight down with branches. As they retrieve the head, the Knight accepts a chivalrous defeat, and asks to be released. Merlin refuses, but the Knight forces his way out of the trap anyway, and removes his helmet, introducing himself as Tristan. Ealsa immediately tries to kill him, but he holds her off as he inquires about their quest, and is ultimately sincerely welcomed aboard, with Leofric and Merlin agreeing to keep Ealsa at bay. When the four of them show Alfred's head to the Lady of the Lake, she becomes very confused, and assumes that Tristan must actually be the hero of prophecy, since he killed Alfred. She confesses that she no longer has Excalibur in her possession, but can offer its current location; Halfdan's mountain nest. She also warns that it is

trapped in a stone, so unless Tristan is the hero of prophecy; no one will be able to remove it. The quartet thanks her, but no one, not Merlin or the Lady of the Lake, actually knows where Halfdan's nest is. Therefore, Merlin leads the others to the city of Winchester so they can ask a cartographer for the location of the mountain nest. On the way there, Ealsa tries to kill Tristan in his sleep, but accidentally wakes Merlin up. Merlin finally convinces Ealsa to at least temporarily give up on revenge, imploring her to remember that they need Tristan to finish Alfred's quest. Upon arriving in Winchester, they seek out cartographers among the merchants and artisans. When they finally find one, he absolutely refuses to disclose the location of Halfdan's nest, identifying the party as adventurers and deeming it a threat to his King's safety. Merlin quickly realizes that they must extract the information about Halfdan's nest quietly, and so he directs his companions to a high class tavern, where they will try to learn what the nobles know under the influence of drink. Ealsa and Merlin finance this endeavor by pick-pocketing on the way to the tavern. The cartographer has the four adventurers followed. Leofric, Tristan, and Ealsa's efforts to get the nobles drinking are inhibited by their own growing intoxication, until only Merlin is still trying to extract information. Leofric makes a fool of himself, shifting his efforts to impressing Ealsa and drawing excessive attention to himself. Tristan and Ealsa begin teasing Leofric and flirting with each other as they keep drinking. Merlin learns nothing from the nobles he talks to, and seeing his companion's behaviour, also submits to booze until he notices a map on the wall. The cartographer brings four of Halfdan's guards to the tavern, having urged them to detain the adventurers that seek to harm the King. Leofric, Tristan, and Ealsa are detained and imprisoned in Halfdan's Castle, but the half-drunken Merlin clumsily moves for the map, and barely escapes by using his magic to morph behind a wooden wall. The next morning, Tristan and Ealsa chastise Leofric in their shared cell, for continuously sabotaging their budding romance. Merlin has infiltrated the castle, and he uses his magic to sneak past, and even detain the guards on the way to the dungeon. With the three youngsters rescued, the reunited adventurers attempt to escape Winchester, but an alerted group of guards intercept them at the drawbridge. Merlin morphs the bridge while Tristan defeats the disoriented guards. Leofric hides from danger and Ealsa makes fun of Leofric. Now in the clear, Merlin produces the map of Wessex that he stole from the tavern, and he leads the way to the snowy mountains, on the way to Halfdan's nest. The journey wears the adventurers down, but Merlin's ability to hunt for food and produce fire for warmth keeps them going. He even finds a patch of Primrose flowers that keep his own spirits up. They encounter a harsh blizzard while scaling Halfdan's mountain and Merlin's staff is there to light the way. All the same, in his old age, the weather and the travel wears Merlin down, and he has to finish the final stretch to the peak of Halfdan's mountain on Tristan's shoulders. Halfdan awaits them in his lair. The dragon-king moved to guard Excalibur after having been alerted by the cartographer of the adventurer's quest. Merlin and Tristan instantly attack. Leofric hides and discards his sword, which Ealsa takes up. The ensuing battle is dire, with Ealsa retreating from substantial wounds, Merlin's staff breaking, and Tristan being skewered, and ultimately killed. Satisfied that the only potential hero of prophecy is dead, Halfdan laughs at his defeated enemies, and returns to Winchester. Vengeful for the loss of Tristan, Ealsa angrily moves for Excalibur, but cannot lift it. She urges Leofric to try, and to try with her, but it will not budge. They ask Merlin to break the rock with his magic, but then notice his broken staff. The weakened and defeated wizard can hardly get up, and he informs the youngsters that their quest is lost. Leofric slouches, and agrees.

Primrose flowers begin sprouting at a magical rate, exactly where the broken points of Merlin's staff touch the ground. The patch of flowers grows until they surround Merlin himself,

Leofric, and then Excalibur, which begins shimmering. Ealsa hurries to help Merlin to his feet, and leads him to the sword, with Leofric already trying (and failing) to lift it. Thinking of his wife, the old wizard grasps the hilt, and triumphantly hoists Excalibur into the air. The trio celebrate as Merlin begins to regain his energy and strength. Halfdan is perched in his throne room, when a messenger bursts in, telling of a shimmering warrior at Winchester's gates, demanding for the city's surrender. The shimmering warrior is Merlin. In the ensuing rematch, Halfdan puts up a substantial fight, and even with his new powers, Merlin has to fight with poise and wisdom. The onlookers in Winchester are dazzled with the might of Excalibur. Leofric and Ealsa temporarily set aside their differences to cheer Merlin, as he ultimately slays Halfdan, and wins the day. Ealsa punches Leofric when he tries to kiss her. Merlin is crowned as king in Winchester. At the memorial service for Alfred and Tristian, Merlin gives Ealsa primrose flowers for her sweethearts' graves. Merlin gradually transfers the throne to Ealsa, and happily opts to stay in Winchester as her advisor, and guardian Knight of the crown.

### Genre

Historical – Fantasy – Comedy

*The Knight with the White Flower* is a fantasy adventure story in a semi-historical setting with many comedic elements. The comedy is in place to add whimsy and relief to the fantasy quest, which is the main focus. Halfdan, Alfred, and Ealsa are loosely based on historical figures. I decided to subvert genre expectations by using a Viking-age Anglo-Saxon kingdom for the setting (rather than the typical high/ late Middle Ages fantasy aesthetic, or the early Brittonic setting of King Arthur) and telling the story from the wise mentor's point of view, with him going on the quest instead of the "chosen one" or hero.

(This story uses many elements inspired by Arthurian legend, but is not based on any existing property or version of the story.)