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Tales from Camelot

An illustration by Paolo D'Altan. On the left, King Arthur is depicted with a dark beard and hair, wearing a dark tunic with a red cape. He is holding a sword with a wooden hilt. On the right, a woman with long brown hair, wearing a crown and a red cape over a grey dress, looks towards the viewer. The background is a simple light blue and yellow sky.

King Arthur and the Knights
of the Round Table

Illustrated by Paolo D'Altan



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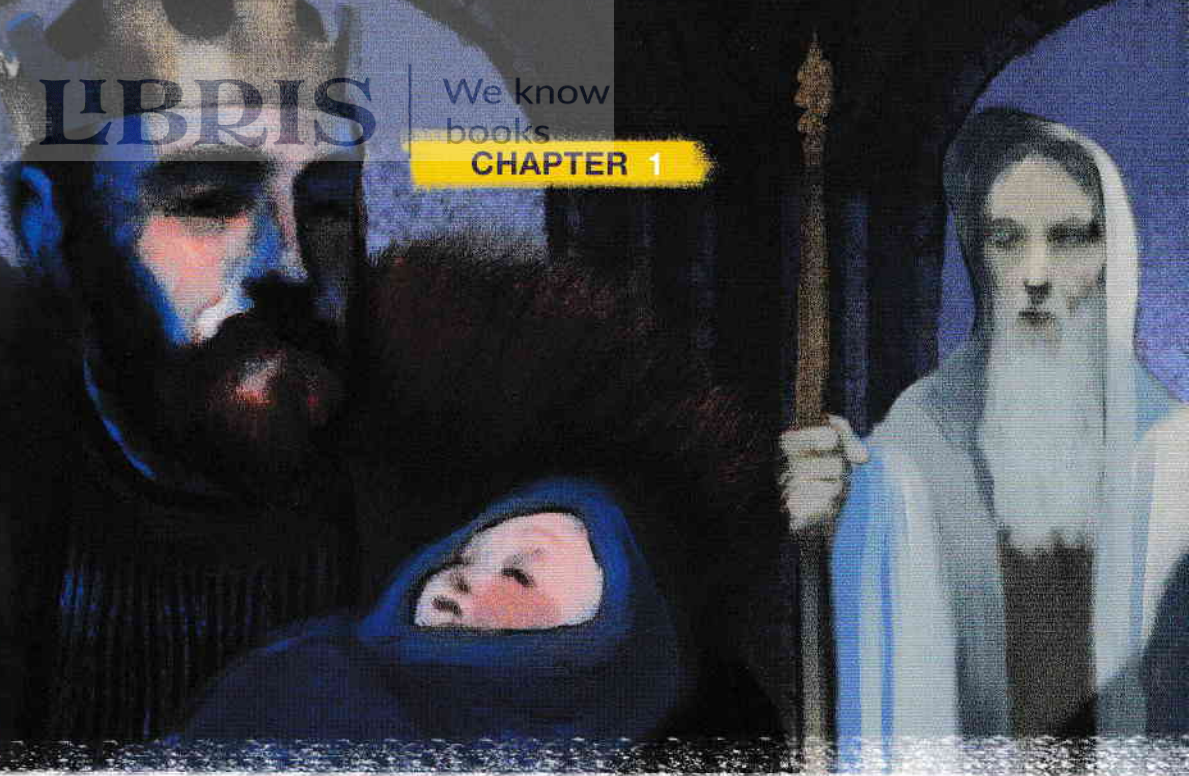
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THE MAGICIAN AND THE KING

In ancient times, the island of Britain was a strange, dark place, full of dragons, fairies and giants. Magical creatures walked the land, and, every new moon, wizards and witches made powerful spells ¹ to control nature.



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But it was also a time of war. The land was divided into many small kingdoms, each with its own king. Many of these kings wanted power over the others and sent their people to war. Their soldiers often fought against each other in terrible battles, and many soldiers were killed.

1. **spell** : instructions to do magic.

The High King of Britain was a good man. His name was Uther Pendragon, and he came from a long line of brave and powerful kings. It was his duty to control the small kingdoms and keep peace between their people. He was a strong fighter and was respected by nearly everyone but he was not a happy man. A beautiful lady called Igraine caused his unhappiness. He was in love with her but she was not in love with him. Unfortunately, she was already married to one of Uther's enemies, the Duke of Cornwall. The King's heart became heavy and sick with sadness because he knew that Igraine didn't love him. He knew that only the power of magic could help him.

One night, while he was sleeping, Merlin the great magician appeared to him. Merlin was known throughout the land for his special powers. People loved him but feared him too. He understood the secret art of witchcraft; how to change shape, how to move objects and travel backwards and forwards in time. Some people said it was Merlin who moved the giant stones of Stonehenge,² others knew that he could speak to animals and could control nature.

That night, Uther Pendragon felt the air around him freeze. He opened his eyes and saw a shadowy figure standing in the room. He recognised the long white beard and wild appearance immediately.

'Merlin,' he asked. 'Why are you here?'

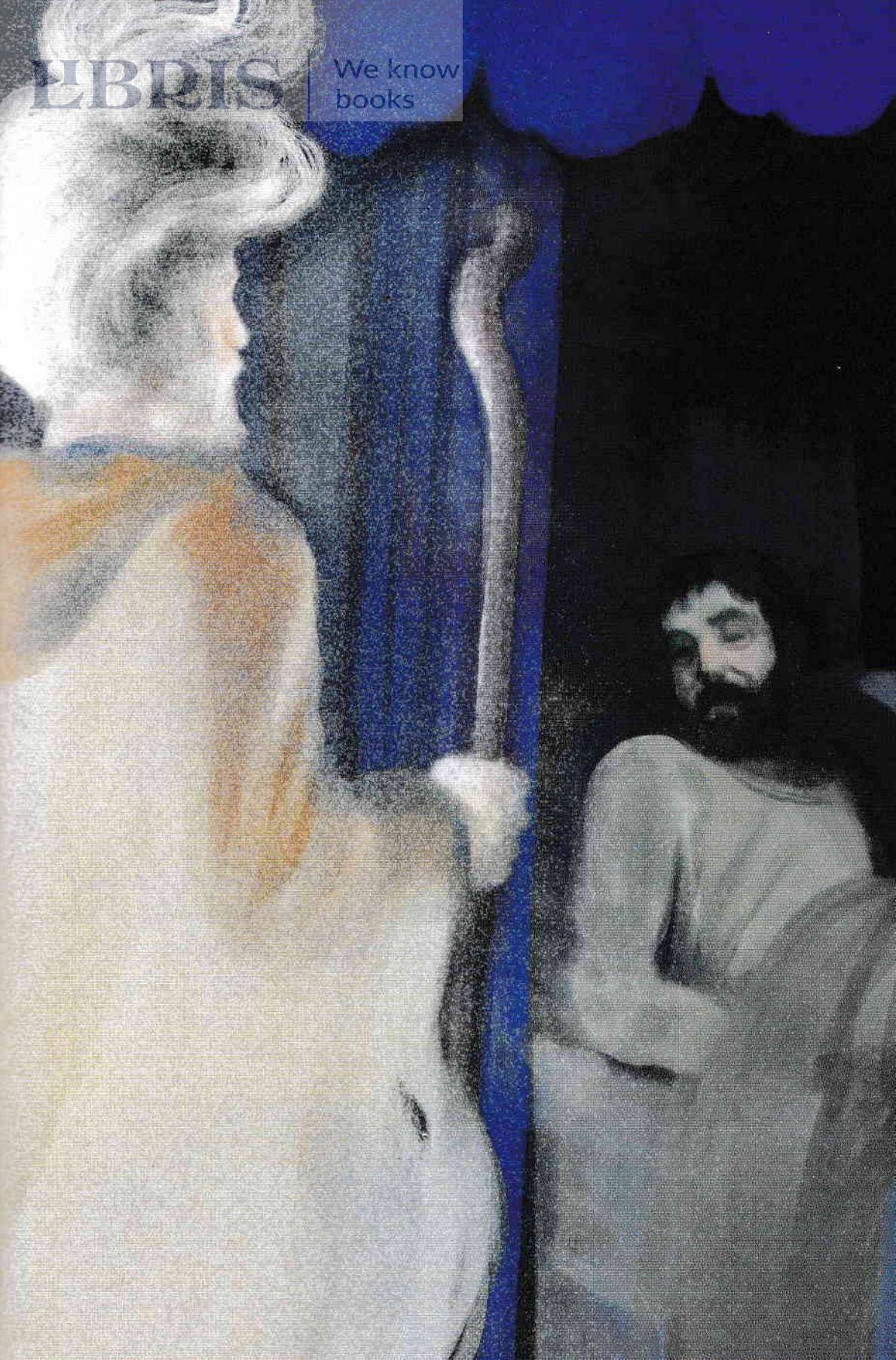
'I know you are sad,' Merlin said to the King.

2. Stonehenge :



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'I can see the pain in your heart but I can help you. I will use my magic to make Lady Igraine love you.'

Uther couldn't believe his ears.

'But there is something that you must do for me in return,' the magician continued.

Uther was very happy and replied 'I will do anything you ask, if Igraine loves me.'

'Igraine will love you and you will have a son with her. But when your baby is born, you must give him to me. I promise I will look after him.'

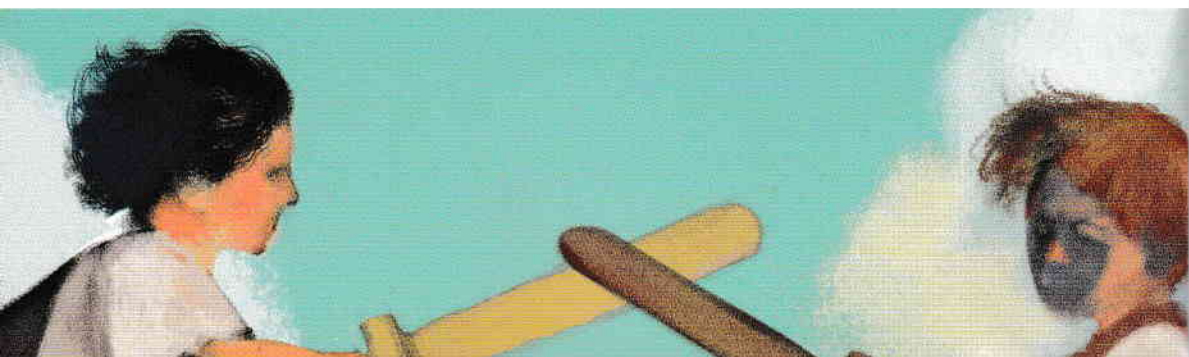
The King thought only about his love for Igraine and agreed to give Merlin his child.

So, Igraine became Uther's wife, exactly as Merlin said, and soon they had a son. They called the boy Arthur. The baby was born at Tintagel Castle and, when he was only three days old, Merlin appeared again. He asked for the child. Uther Pendragon remembered his promise; he put the baby in a gold cloak³ and gave him to the magician.

'I will take Arthur to a knight called Sir Ector. He is a good man and he will look after the baby well. When the time is right, the boy will learn his true identity.' Uther had no choice and, with tears in his eyes, put his baby son into the magician's old hands.

Sir Ector accepted the boy from Merlin without asking any questions. He didn't know who the child really was. Sir Ector already had a son of his own, called Kay, and the two boys lived happily together as

3. cloak :





brothers. Kay was three years older than Arthur and, as they grew, Ector taught them how to fight with swords, how to ride horses and how to be knights. Arthur loved his father and his brother and never once imagined they weren't his true family.

Fifteen years later, when Uther Pendragon died, Britain was without a king. Nobody knew about his son except for Merlin. Many nobles wanted to take the throne but Merlin knew that Arthur was the true king.



THINK!

Choose a character for each phrase 1-6.

Merlin • Uther Pendragon • Sir Ector

1. helping a friend
2. having an important responsibility
3. keeping a promise
4. falling in love
5. using magic
6. being a good father

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