

PLAYS FOR  
**New Audiences**

A Division of Children's Theatre Company

***Merin and the Cave  
of Dreams***

by Charles Way

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## **Merlin and the Cave of Dreams.**

Characters.

Arthur  
Ceï  
Ector \Rhitta of the Beards  
Gwyneth\ The Washer at the Ford  
Merlin  
Igraine  
Uther Pendragon

### **Act One**

Scene One -The Green Kingdom.  
Scene Two -Hearth and Home.  
Scene Three -Two Brothers.  
Scene Four -The Cave of Dreams.  
Scene Five -The Washer at the Ford.

### **Act Two**

Scene Six -The Lady of the Lake.  
Scene Seven -Rhitta of the Beards.  
Scene Eight -The Dragon's Lair.  
Scene Nine - Merlin and Arthur.  
Scene Ten -The Sword in the Stone

Note.

The lines beginning, 'I am Merlin, I dream perfect dreams---'  
[etc], are freely adapted from an anonymous 13th century poet  
who wrote, 'I am Taliesin. I sing perfect metre,  
which will last to the end of the world.' [etc].

I am indebted to the translation of Sir Ifor Williams.

**Merlin and the Cave of Dreams**  
**Act one . Scene one.**

Merlin           How long ago it was.  
                  It was long ago  
                  When the world was all wood and moss  
                  And the trees were as many as the stars  
                  And stretched forever greenward to the sea.  
                  How long ago it was,  
                  in the time of swords.

[The skies darken over Merlin and we hear the dark foreboding sound of crows. Merlin senses the shift in mood and quickens his pace as if his need to tell his story has been increased.]

                  How long ago it was  
                  in the dark days,  
                  When men wore the skins of beasts  
                  Upon their backs  
                  And hunted the deep woods  
                  With bows and spears.

[Enter Arthur, followed by Cei]

Cei               Are you lost little brother?

Arthur          No.

Cei               Which way shall we go then?

Arthur          This way.

Cei               You'll meet your death down there. For sure.

Arthur          --Liar.

Cei               Go then- go that way.

[Arthur starts to leave]

Cei               That way lives a brown bear, who's been asleep most of the winter. If you wake her, sudden like, she'll be angry, hungry and you brother would make a tasty little snack.

Arthur          How do you know this?

Cei            There's not enough meat on you for a full meal.

Arthur        How do you know about the bear?

Cei            We already passed it, twice.

Arthur        How could we have passed it, brother, if it's down that way, and we have just arrived this way?

Cei            Because, since you took the lead we've been going round in circles. I'm getting fairly dizzy, and I'm thinking perhaps I, who am sworn to look after you, should lead the way.

Arthur        And I'm thinking, that it's my turn, to take the lead-for once. We shall go---- this way.

                 [Arthur exits but not towards the bear. Cei shakes his head and follows]

Merlin        How long ago it was  
                 In the days of Uther Pendragon.  
                 King Uther was mighty and cruel  
                 and ruled the Kingdom of the trees  
                 with a deadly sword, the length of a man.  
                 But who would rule the day King Uther died,  
                 for a kingdom without a King  
                 is a mean and lawless place?

Cei            Arthur. Arthur!

                 [Enter Arthur followed by Cei. Arthur stops impatiently.]

Merlin        How long ago it was  
                 when two brothers  
                 walked in the deep woods  
                 hunting and hunted.

Arthur        Shall I walk a little slower?

Cei            No. You go on alone brother.

                 [Arthur turns away]

Cei            But that way leads once again to a certain, painful death.

Arthur        Why? What lies down that path?

Cei           Thorns.

Arthur       I'm not afraid of a few thorns.

Cei           A field of thorns. Push into them, they're soft enough, come in they say-welcome-but try to turn back and oh they get angry then and sharp as any blade.

Arthur       I don't believe you.

Cei           Go if you must, but when you're dead don't come complaining to me.

Arthur       Alright- brother-which way shall we go?

Cei           Why, are you lost ?

Arthur       No more than you.

Cei           But I am not lost.

Arthur       Then lead on.

Cei           Oh- me? You want me to lead. I shall- indeed.  
[He sits down. Takes the bow off his back.]

Arthur       What are you doing?

Cei           This is it.

Arthur       This is what?

Cei           It.

Arthur       'It', what?

Cei           Our hunting ground. This glade --. Father cut it back last leaf fall. Don't you remember? All we have to do is sit and wait.

Arthur       Sitting and waiting isn't what I call hunting.

Cei           But still sitting and waiting is what we must do.

Arthur       I wish I'd stayed at home.  
[Cei ruffles his hair]

Arthur Don't do that.

[Merlin who has been watching them, moves in the trees behind them.]

Arthur Cei-did you see that?

Cei What?

Arthur Something moving in the trees.

[A single shaft of light comes through the canopy above.]

Cei A shadow perhaps.

[The single shaft of sunlight is joined by many others and a beautiful emerald light fills the space.]

Cei Father has made a lovely place of this- it was wild and dark before.

Arthur I'm sure I saw----- something.

Cei Are you hungry? Hey?

[They sit and eat.]

Cei We'll have to make a hide of course.

Arthur I know.

Cei We'll use oak. Even though Father doesn't like it. He says that when oak is cut down it screams like a man.

Arthur I know.

Cei You know?

Arthur Just because you're older doesn't make you more intelligent- or stronger- -- I'm stronger than you.

Cei Oh?

Arthur And-

Cei And?

Arthur           And twice as clever. I heard Father say 'Ceï has the brains of a stoat', or was it a weasel--well whichever creature has the smallest brain- or was it a ferret perhaps? No -it was a stoat. Brains of a stoat. That's you brother. [They eat for a moment longer, Arthur waiting for the attack he knows is coming and delights in. Suddenly Ceï leaps on him. He starts to tickle Arthur without mercy.]

Ceï                Take it back- take it all back.

Arthur           I do- I do. You are the strongest, best looking- intelligent--- stoat-that ever lived.

[The tickling assault continues]

Arthur           Stop-stop-stop-. Please. Please.

Ceï                Now we have scared off every animal in the wood. We'll have to wait till we are forgotten.

[With the following words Merlin induces sleep in the two boys.]

Merlin           The two brothers sat down in the lovely glade,  
straightened their arrows of ash, sharpened the dark tips of iron.  
A long time they lay, waiting for a deer or wild boar  
to come snuffling for the green shoots of spring.  
The day became warm around their skins  
as the first bees of the year mumbled in the heavy air.  
The food their mother had packed became a memory  
and finally sleep came over them,  
soft and warm as a woollen robe all golden at its fringe.

[Music has gathered behind these words, and the boys sleep. Merlin, now makes the sword in the stone appear.

Arthur wakes. He sees the sword and is slowly drawn to it as if in its power. He tries to pull it clear but cannot. He touches the blade and cuts his hand. He cries out]

Merlin           That's a nasty wound .

Arthur           Who's there? Who's there?

[Merlin steps forward.]

Merlin           And for what? Were you thinking thoughts ?

Arthur           Cei?

Merlin           Were you thinking that you a mere lad, a stripling, could pull the sword from the stone?

Arthur           Cei, Cei wake up!

Merlin           He'll not wake, until I give my say- and nor will you.

Arthur           Stay back, I will defend myself.

Merlin           Why? Are you under attack?

Arthur           I have nothing to steal.

Merlin           I can see. I was wondering, Arthur, what you would look like.

Arthur           You know me?

Merlin           All your days.

Arthur           Who are you?

Merlin           Who I am is not the matter of this dream.

Arthur           This is no dream- my hand.

Merlin           Is bleeding. Blood is important Arthur. A gift that flows from the past to the future.  
You've heard of the sword in the stone?

Arthur           Of course.

Merlin           And you know whoever pulls the sword from the stone shall be called the one true King of The Green Kingdom.

Arthur           Everyone knows.

Merlin           Isn't it strange, that this stone, should appear before you- four days walk from where it truly stands.

Arthur           [Sleepily] Yes.

Merlin           Then be persuaded, this is a dream, and there's a message in it ,that on waking you must recall.



Arthur A message?

Merlin A knowledge.King Uther is dead and gone to that other place across the ford . Even as I speak his mortal blood is being washed away. King Uther is dead. Do you have that now? Arthur?

Arthur Yes.

Merlin Sleep then.

[Music. The stone vanishes, and Arthur sleeps. The lights change as the day fades. Cei wakes with a start.]

Cei Arthur. Arthur wake up. The sun has gone. Arthur. [He Kicks him.]

[Arthur slowly wakes-his hand still badly cut. He winces]

Cei Let me see . How did this happen?

Arthur It was here Cei. It was here.

Cei Give me a clue brother? What was here?

Arthur The sword. The sword in the stone.

Cei Ah. You had a dream, like you always do, and you went walking in your dream, like you always do, and you fell over and hurt yourself, like you always do. Mother will blame me for this wound.

[Cei wraps a bandage round Arthur's hand.]

Arthur He's dead.

Cei Who's dead?

Arthur King Uther is dead.

Cei Idiot. Who could kill him? He has a sword the length of a man and when he rides into battle he breathes fire ,like a dragon.

[Arthur grabs his brothers arm.]

Arthur He's dead I tell you. I know it. We have no king.

Cei If the King were dead the likes of you and I would be the last to hear the news.

[Merlin, who has been watching, now pulls the bear skin on his back over his head, thus to the boys eyes becoming the bear itself. They hear a deep growl.]

Arthur        What's that?

Cei            Stay there.

Arthur        What is it?

Cei            [Slowly backing up] its the bear. It's woken now with all your dreaming.

Arthur        We have to run.

Cei            Don't run. Don't run. Just slowly, slowly, head down, head down. Don't stare. Arthur? Arthur?

[He looks round and Arthur has gone. The bear growls and Cei runs. Exit. Merlin becomes himself again.]

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