

The Return of Magic

Von konpaku

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Prolog: A New Beginning

It had been quite some time since the old man had last walked this road. He remembered when it used to be nothing more than a dirt track in the woods. Now it was part of a small town.

On the other side of the road he could see the houses that had been build over the years. They used to be new and nice to look at, by now they were old and weathered. 'Just like myself.' He mused when he thought about his current appearance.

It would have been easy for him to turn himself back into his younger self, but he discovered long ago that people left him alone much more often if he looked like a homeless old tramp rather than a young tourist. And right now, he wanted no one to disturb him.

For a moment he looked down onto the lake that spread out in the slope on his other side, guarded by the remainders of the forest. Or offspring of what used to be the forest, he wasn't too sure about that. It might have been completely new trees as well, he didn't care. His eyes wandered to the ruin of a very old tower that throned above the lake on a green isle. He still remembered vividly when that tower was even taller and less battered. He remembered all the times that he had come here.

To wait.

To think.

To hide himself from everyone and everything.

Yet he never managed to hide from himself.

His own memories tormented him more and more, the more years went by. He barely could grasp the good ones anymore, as the bad ones surfaced more often than not.

It was due to his long life that he had lost so much.

Lost more people dear to him than he dared to remember.

All these horrible memories of never dying, never aging, while everyone around him withered and passed away.

All these memories of failed destinies and misused chances.

He was tired.

So very tired.

Tired of living.

Living this immortal life of his.

Always waiting for the one person that mattered the most.

That was his destiny.

That didn't even had the decency to return in a normal amount of years.

Like fifty and not fifteen hundred and longer.

All his hopes that he really would return one day faded more and more with each passing decade.

It wasn't like he had given up hope completely, but he just didn't want to wait anymore.

He had made up his mind that what he was about to do was the right decision.

That he could take a little break after more than a millennium of waiting for the Once and Future King. He hadn't gotten his promised days off back when everything had changed, after all. So now he would be taking all of his remaining leave-days at once. He thought he deserved at least that much.

Grinning at the ridiculousness of his own thoughts he looked away from the collapsed

tower and continued on his way with new resolve. Much still needed to be done until he could finally rest.

As if it had waited for him to finish his musing, one of those awfully loud lorries passed him but he didn't falter in his movement. Not after living with these things for nearly a century.

After a few more steps he stopped again, when the trees opened up to show a wider view of the lake. Resisting to look this time he bowed and shook his head in resignation before he moved on again.

With the centuries had come the changes and while he liked some of the comforts he now had, he certainly missed the quietness they had back in the day.

Back in the times of Camelot. The times of kings and queens. The times of Magic.

About thirty years later...

"It would be nice if you could actually cast a spell once in a while..." A female Dragoon warrior grumbled while attacking a ginormous beast that towered in front of her.

Sharp claws slashing at her, while she slashed at the monstrosity.

"I'm working on it..." The Mage standing behind it exclaimed.

"Stop bickering and concentrate on killing this thing!" Remarked the Knight that attacked the foe from the Mage's right side.

The beast was solemnly focused on the amour-clad warrior in front of him, giving the others the chance to attack it, without being targeted themselves.

"Geez start healing Warlock or I'll drop dead." She complained when the monster was attacking more and more vigorously the weaker it got.

She only could land a couple more hits before the beast rose up to its full height and slammed its hands down on the ground, releasing a shock wave that replenished her remaining energy and caused her allies to be harmed as well.

"Brilliant." She commented sarcastically when the warrior's body hit the ground.

As soon as its original target was gone the beast focused on a new victim. This time the Knight, as he had stepped in, before it could attack the Mage.

"How about you hurry up and revive me, before that thing kills off Gwayne as well?" The warrior demanded.

"Stop rushing me!" The Mage complained.

"How hard can it be to push some friggin' buttons?!" She all but yelled at him, more than annoyed by how awfully bad this fight had turned out to be.

"Hurry..." The Knight whimpered as his health was dropping lower and lower by the second.

After several more dreadful moments of the monster attacking the Knight an energy blast emitted from the Mage and enclosed the Dragoon.

"Finally..." She commented, continuing with an attack that would lead the monster's attention back to her and away from the Knight.

"Now a group heal or you'll end up healing the Boss. Again." She ordered annoyed.

This time it took the Mage only a couple of seconds to do as he was told.

"If ALL of us now focus on attacking, we should be able to kill it." The Dragoon commented in a more calmer, but emphasized, tone.

Snorting the Mage threw an attack-spell at their opponent, while the Knight grunted as he launched another attack as well. Soon enough the beast fell to its knees and the battle was over.

"Now was that so bad?" The Knight commented as he went to pick up the treasures left behind by the beast.

"Yes" chorused the others.

"I can't see where the problem is. We managed to defeat the Boss with only getting you killed once. Better than last time." He continued with laughter in his voice.

"Yeah last time our dear Warlock managed to heal the opponent..."

"It's a Mage this time, they don't have a Warlock class here, remember?" The other teased before he added in a low voice: "And I told you I'm sorry for doing that..."

"One would think they would program this stuff to not make that possible..." Gwayne wondered.

"One would also think it isn't that hard to press the right buttons to cast a spell properly..."

Groaning the Mage countered: "Why are you always so annoyed when I screw up?"

"Because, your screw-ups usually get me killed..." She replied anger clearly in her voice.

"Ugh...cocoa as peace-offering?" He suggested with a sigh.

"You better add Marshmallows to that." She threaten playfully.

It wasn't like she was really that mad at him, but sometimes she just didn't know why she still allowed him into their team in Boss-fights. It was getting ridiculous how often he got them killed.

"I want cocoa with Marshmallows too!" The third one exclaimed.

"Then you shouldn't have moved out." The Mage joked and added "On my way to the kitchen" before a cackling noise could be heard.

He carefully placed his headset on his keyboard and stood up. Sometimes he wondered why he always picked the character class with magical abilities. He very well knew that he had a lot of trouble controlling them. Or rather controlling himself playing them. His lack of proper spell casting wasn't a problem of not hitting the right buttons, but rather of him trying to not enact a similar spell in real life.

With another sigh he made his way across his room.

He had a gift. He could make objects move without as much as a thought and even set things on fire with a bit more concentration. He kind of feared what might happen if he involuntarily cast a healing – or worse a revive – spell outside of the game. Even if he didn't know whether he was actually capable of that. But he wasn't going to risk it anyway. Therefore he needed a bit more time before actually activating spells in-game. He wouldn't use them until he was certain nothing would happen in the real world.

To get a little of the repressed energy – or magic as he liked to refer to it – out of his system he opened the door of his small room without touching it. His eyes changing from a bright blue to a shining gold for a second. When he walked onto the floor he hovered his hand above the handle, making it seem as if he was closing the door manually. He wasn't that content about sharing his little secret. It felt like something bad would happen if he ever told anyone. Not even his closest friends knew. But right now it was more important to get the promised cocoa done before he fell victim to another rant about incompetence. With a wide grin on his face he all but jumped down the stairs to the kitchen in the lower part of the house.

Kapitel 1: A Different Path

At the beginning of the day

It was early in the morning when Keileigh made her way up the stairs, clutching a small box in her hand. She didn't really care about being quiet as only his room and her own on the first floor lay close enough to hear anything. And as she was about to wake him anyway, she might as well give him a head-start. He could be quite grumpy when woken too early after all. Every other day she would avoid that if possible, but today she would make sure he was up and about in no time.

Grinning mischievously she opened the door to his room. The curtains were still drawn and the morning sun had little chance to enter the darkness. After she closed the door behind her she made her way to the bed where he was still deeply sleeping and snuggled into his covers, not even noticing her presence.

Her grin widening even further she placed the box on the desk beside the bed, so she would have her hands free to wake him. But before that she made her way to the other side of the room and opened the curtains. Though not even the sunlight managed to wake him. Deciding to just do it herself she stood in front of her sleeping friend and put her foot where she suspected his side to be and slowly shoved him.

"Rise and Shine, Birthday Boy~" She called out in a sing-song voice.

Jolting awake he nearly sat upright without warning, flinging lanky limbs in the air and giving her barely a chance to remove her foot. When he had adjusted to his surroundings he growled and sank back into his pillow, spitting out a: "What the hell, Keileigh?" before grabbing the sheets to cover his face.

"Oi! No getting back to sleep!" She interjected and grabbed the sheets to pull them into the opposite direction.

After a little struggle for the cloth they both broke out laughing and she sat down on his bed, while he sat up straight. Looking at each other, the laughter still in their eyes, the young woman closed the distance between them and hugged him tightly.

"Happy Birthday, Michael."

Returning the embrace, he just mumbled a "Thank you" into her hair.

Breaking the hug she then fished for the little box on the table. Dropping down to the floor she held it out and told him with a grin: "I got you a little something for your collection."

"Didn't I say you don't have to get me anything?" He scolded her but took the present with a smile.

Even though he tried to repress his excitement for what was in the box, he didn't manage to do so completely. The collection this would become a part of was one he had acquired over the years and over time it became harder and harder to find new things for it. Each piece depicted a person with magic: wizards and witches, druids and warlocks and several others that seemed like a combination of either. Keileigh knew his interest in everything Magic-related, though she didn't know the real reason behind it. Knowing her tendency for silliness he was quite curious what this new addition would be.

"It's an important Birthday after all." she complained in mock-disappointment.

"Yeah, you told me all week about this 'Coming of Age' stuff..." He quoted

sarcastically.

"Oh, shut up and open it already!" She urged, her own curiosity plainly visible.

To annoy her a little more he took his time unwrapping the small box. Before he actually opened it he looked at his friend: Her fingers tapped his mattress in anticipation and a smile was plastered on her face. Grinning himself, he then lifted the edges of the box and flipped it around to remove what was inside. The figurine that landed in his hand however was not what he expected. It portrayed an old man with a ridiculously long beard and a silly moustache right under a very round nose. He wore wide blue robes that reminded him of some kind of cross between night-gown and dress, completed with a long bent hat and crakows in the same colour. Looking the figurine up and down again he snorted and asked: "What's that supposed to be?"

Confusion on her face, Keileigh wasn't sure if she heard him correctly.

"That's Merlin." She declared in a matter-of-fact tone.

"Who?" He asked not any less confused.

"Merlin? The Sword in the Stone? Most powerful sorcerer to ever walk the Earth?"

"Nope. Doesn't ring a bell." He flatly told her.

"You're kidding!" She exclaimed and stood up.

"Are you seriously saying YOU of all people don't know who Merlin is?!" She demanded to know, not believing this one bit.

"Yup. I seriously never heard of him." He calmly replied, looking up at her, the figurine still in his hands.

After contemplating this information for a moment she sat down on his bed again.

"How can you not know Merlin? Everyone knows Merlin and the Arthurian legends..." She wondered.

"Arth-what? Seriously I have no idea what you are talking about." He repeated.

"Arthurian legends, King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table?" Keileigh tried a different approach.

But all she got was another shake of her friend's head, as he did not recognize those things either. After another long look of confusion and contemplation she started laughing, earning a confused look in return.

"You are the only person I know with such a profound knowledge about every little detail about different magic users in all kinds of media and you have no idea who the most important one of them all is..." She explained herself.

"But I bet you are more than willing to teach me everything I need to know about him." He proposed grinning.

"Not on an empty stomach." She returned and stood up again.

"Get on your self decent and get down for breakfast." The young woman then ordered.

"Yes M'am" He agreed jokingly.

When she had left the room he swung his long legs out of the bed and sat there for a moment, looking at the figurine in his hand. He briefly wondered why he did not know a thing about this person. This 'Merlin'. But he put the thought and the figurine aside and rubbed his eyes tiredly. He would learn about him soon enough, but before that he needed to find something to dress. Growling he looked at the different shirts and trousers that lay on his floor or hung over chairs or other furniture. Remembering the last time he and Keileigh had an early breakfast, where he just sat in his sleeping shirt and pants, he shuddered. Yes, dressing up before getting to the kitchen was unfortunately mandatory. Their other flatmate would otherwise get into another of her fits about hygiene and he didn't want one of those today. Not on his Birthday.

Sighing he stood up to pick up a pair of trousers, just to sit down again as he remembered that he wouldn't need to walk there in the first place. Concentrating on a pair he allowed the 'Magic' within him to lift the trousers and bring them to him. Unfortunately he wasn't awake enough to control their movement so the cloth hit him square in the face. Grumbling he untangled the legs from his shoulders and put them on, before heading out of the room.

Later that day

As it was a tradition for them he spent dinner on his birthday with his parents. It had been a long day of studying and learning all kind of things about that sorcerer and he was glad he could now relax a bit while spending time at home. His mother had prepared an extensive meal and he couldn't remember when he was last this stuffed. One of the perks of coming home from studying was after all the free food. Grinning at the thought he rubbed his belly and thanked his mother for the delicious meal. Brushing it aside the elderly woman stood up to take out the dishes. As he moved to help her she just put her hand on his arm.

"Not today my dear." She told him with a warm smile.

Michael returned the gesture and leaned back into his chair, watching his mother. That was until his eyes landed on his father that sat on the other side of the table and was looking rather worried.

"Somethin' wrong?"

"Don't worry my boy, I was just lost in thoughts." The old man tried to reassure him.

"Yeah, but those thoughts don't seem to be too pleasant." Michael remarked unconvinced, watching his parent carefully.

"Always so observant..." His father commented with a small smile.

Before he could ask any more questions his mother returned to clean the table and asked her husband to help her in the kitchen. He could feel their anxiety and was more and more suspicious of their behaviour. Something was wrong and they didn't tell him. In times like these he knew they were hiding something from him to protect him. Regardless if he thought he was old enough to learn what was going on. For a moment he considered trying to use his Magic to eavesdrop, but that would have been rude and distrustful. If they were ready to tell him what was going on, they would do so or he would simply ask and hope for an answer. Still he couldn't help himself but to move a bit to see his parents in the kitchen. It seemed as if his mother was pleading to do or not do something while his father had already made up his mind. Slightly his hopes to understand what was going on rose. His mother was indeed the one to treat him more like a child, not wanting him to grow up too fast, while his father gave him challenges and responsibilities to help him progress as person and also to control his gift. Whenever he thought about this he was more than grateful for his parents acceptance and support of it. Even though neither of them could explain where it came from in the first place.

After a few more moments he saw his parents hug and saw this as a sign that their conversation was over. Trying not to not make his chair topple over he returned to a proper seating position at the table. Putting on an innocent smile when his father entered the living room, he earned a suspiciously raised eyebrow from the old man. Looking down at the table he tried to hide his embarrassment of being half-caught for spying on them. With a sigh the elderly man sat down opposite of him.

"Michael, you are aware that you possess a unique gift?" He asked his son in a serious tone.

"Of course. Just this morning I was reminded to not use it when I am only half-awake..." The other replied sheepishly, earning a questioning eyebrow this time.

Growing up with them it was easy to see the differences in his father's gestures. But it had took him a while to not see every variation as a scolding.

"I kind of got tangled in my own trousers after I had made them fly towards me..." He explained with a slight smile and rubbed the back of his neck.

"Michael..." Was all the old man needed to say to make sure his son understood the meaning.

Before they could say anything more his mother returned with something that was wrapped in blue and red clothing.

"Didn't we agree you shouldn't get me anything?" He half-complaint, as again his wish of not getting a present seemed to have been overlooked.

"We didn't. Everything we would have gotten you would seem but a farce if you had a look at this" His father replied solemnly, a hint of sadness in his voice.

He then switched back to the other chair, so his wife would be able to sit as well.

"Than what is this?" Michael asked in confusion, gesturing at the bundle.

"This..." The old man tried, but couldn't bring himself to continue.

His wife placed a hand on his in a reassuring gesture. Exchanging a look of encouragement he began anew.

"This is the reason, why you have your gift and we don't."

"What? How? What?" Michael wasn't really able to properly comprehend what the other was telling him.

"Here my dear. Read this and you will understand." His mother told him and handed him an old letter she had just removed from the wrapping.

Where the letter would have been closed he could see the remains of an old wax seal. But before he could open it his mother put her hand on his.

"But remember: We love you. You're our little angel and nothing is ever going to change that." She pleaded, tears brimming in her eyes.

Worried and with a strange feeling in the pit of his stomach he nodded. She withdrew her hand and let him proceed. The anticipation of what he was about to learn was overwhelming, but so was the pride that they finally thought they could confide in him with this. The reason he had his gift. His Magic. He could feel his parents eyes on him when he peeled open the letter. Closing his eyes he braved himself for what he was about to read. All kind of different theories floated in his head. Had he been born with a disease that resulted in his gift? Was he experimented on as a child? His parents after all were both physicians. Sighing he opened his eyes to read. In a neat and fluent handwriting he could finally learn the truth.

Dearest Mr. and Mrs. Leach,

I have learnt about your troubles and you have my deepest sympathy for your predicament.

Though you have not noticed it, I have been observing your life for the past few months. What I saw gave me hope and allowed me to take the final step of a decision I have been putting off for far too long.

The child's name is Merlin and I would be honoured if you raised him as your own. I could

*see that you will be good and loving parents to the boy.
Be however warned: He has a unique gift that might seem frightening to you at first.
He does not wish to harm anyone and with the love you share with each other I am certain you will be able to share it with this boy as well and show him the right path, to use his powers for good.*

*As strange as this may sound to you: This boy is a Warlock. This means that he was born with Magic and capable of using it with a mere thought.
Therefore, do not be alarmed if your furniture is redecorated while you are not watching him. It is nothing to be afraid of and is as natural to him as breathing is to you.*

This boy is destined for great things and while I wish to prepare him for that, I also want him to have a normal childhood. A childhood filled with love and understanding. The only way I can see to make sure of this is to grant you the child you could have never had otherwise. To ensure that even further I would like you to not tell him of any of this until he turns Twenty One. This age might seem irrelevant to you, but in my time, it held great significance on a child's way to adulthood.

If that time has come, please give him the bundle, as it will lead him further down the path he needs to take, to ensure his destiny to be fulfilled. It contains a scroll with everything he needs to know, but it will only open when his mind is ready to accept it.

I wish you all the best and will be forever indebted to you and grateful that you will help this child grow up to be the man he needs to become.

Forever yours,

Emrys

Michael read the letter over and over again. No, this couldn't be true. It just couldn't. He was their child, not some random baby they somehow got a hold on. No, this wasn't right. His heart in turmoil he stood up and slammed the letter on the desk, the chair clattering on the floor behind him.

"This...this is the truth?" He all but muttered, not liking the words at all.

"Yes, my boy. That is the truth. Twenty One years ago we found you on our doorstep, covered in old clothing and laid on this bundle, the letter lying beside you." The old man explained in a calming voice.

"So...I'm...I'm just a random doorstep baby then? Everything else you've kept from me?" He spat out, his anger rising.

"Merlin..." The old man tried to calm him.

"Now you're even using the other name! You gave me the name Michael, so you might as well use it!"

"Darling, please calm down..." His so-called mother pleaded, as the dishes in the dresser rattled ominously.

"You should have told me! I had a right to know!" He yelled, ignoring her plea.

Accompanying his words something crashed into the wall above the table, causing the old couple to jump. Staring at the fragments Michael was surprised at what he had done. Hanging his head low he hurried out of the room, ignoring his wannabe-parents calls.

"Oh dear..." His mother repeated about to follow him.

"Give him a moment, Alice. I will talk to him, once he has had time to think this through." Her husband assured her, placing his hand on her arm.

"This went better than expected after all." He then concluded when she had turned to him.

"How can you say that?" She asked him in disbelief.

"Well, he only broke one vase and to be honest: A quite horrid one at that..." Was his attempt at lightening the mood.

"Gabriel!" She scolded him and gave him a light hit on his arm.

"You are right. We should get this cleaned in the meantime." He decided and started picking up the pieces.

When they were nearly finished their son – be he adopted or not – returned, his backpack in hand.

"Michael?" Gabriel asked looking at the bag.

"I...I'm sorry." He mumbled, lowering his head slightly.

"Don't be. You have every right to be angry at us."

"I...I need time to think." Michael declared after a moment, looking at his parents for a reaction.

When they both nodded in agreement he proceeded to the table and opened his backpack. For another moment he looked at the bundle and the shard that still lay between the foldings. He slowly picked up the fragment of the vase he had destroyed, regret at his earlier outburst filling him.

"Let me get that." His mother broke him out of his thoughts and carefully took the shard from his hand.

When he turned to look at her she gave him a warm and understanding smile. He might not be their own flesh and blood, but she said that they would always love him. Seeing her like this he didn't mind believing that. But he had made up his mind and with a small nod continued to stuff the bundle and the letter into his backpack before slinging it over his shoulder.

"Take care my boy." His father requested and placed his arm around his mother's shoulders.

"Take all the time you need." She in turn offered and put one of her arms around her husband's waist and her other hand on his chest.

Nodding Michael left the room and his parents home. It was weird to think of them as his parents, as he now knew that they clearly weren't. There was a lot he needed to think about.

On the train

As soon as he had entered the train he had hunched down on the bench. His head in his hands and his backpack between his feet.

"You alright?" Came a voice from his side.

Slowly he peeked between his fingers at the young man sitting there. He guessed him to be just barely older than him and had a concerned look on his face. Lowering his hands he muttered a mere: "Yeah" and proceeded to stare at the floor. He wasn't really in the mood for a conversation right now.

After a moment of silence the stranger spoke up again.

"You know, it sometimes helps to tell people you don't know and probably will never meet again of your problems."

"You some kind of psychiatrist?" Michael asked raising an eyebrow in a manner, he had picked up from his father, adoptive father, he reminded himself.

"No, but I can see that you are struggling with something and I couldn't forgive myself if anything would happen to you because of that and I wouldn't have at least offered you help." He told him sincerely.

Studying the other man with a small smile at his honesty Michael shook his head in amusement of his own decision. For some odd reason he trusted this guy.

"It's my birthday today." He started and stopped for the anticipated interruption.

"Happy Birthday then." The other congratulated as expected.

"There is nothing 'happy' about it..." Michael snorted.

When he earned a confused look he continued: "I just learnt that I was adopted."

He hoped saying it fast would make it hurt less, but it didn't. He still felt the pain in his heart and for some reason he also felt betrayed. Even though his parents, adoptive parents, were only doing what his actual parent had asked them to do. That is if that *Emrys* was indeed his relative. Maybe even his real father.

"That is not necessarily a bad thing." The other tried.

"Not necessarily, but it still hurts." Michael replied without second thought.

"And it probably will for a while, but if your folks love you then it won't matter. They have loved you all your life, knowing you were not their own. Why would that change now?"

Michael contemplated those words for a moment. Why would this change anything? It was a good question. But before he could find an answer the other pulled him out of his thoughts again.

"I'm Lance by the way." He said and offered his hand.

"Merlin." He replied taking the hand, before shaking his head adding: "I mean Michael."

He had spent far too much time thinking about the name in the letter that he had just used it instead of his actual name. Although the other one seemed to be his real name. Slight embarrassment on his face for the misused name, he hoped the other, Lance, would not dwell on it.

"It's nice to meet you Michael Merlin." Lance declared before shaking Michael's hand and letting go of it.

"No, it's Michael not Merlin or both, just the one." He tried but was only met with a small laugh.

"It's alright. But I'm afraid I have to leave you already." Lance told him, disappointment in his voice.

Standing up when his stop was called out he grabbed the handle above them.

"I wouldn't mind seeing you again, Michael." He bit his farewell.

"Yeah me neither, Lance. Thanks a lot." The other replied a grin on his face.

Waving at the stranger when he departed Michael was left with his thoughts once again.

Back at the flat

As he was too tired to search for his keys, which he might have forgotten at his parents place anyway, he rang the bell for the first floor. Lost in his thoughts he only noticed that he was still ringing when his hand was swatted away from the button.

"The hell you're doin' here?" His friend asked him in confusion.

Without answering he moved to step inside, his head hanging low, barely registering

the change in her attitude.

"What happened?" She demanded to know in a serious tone.

Slowly he lifted his head to look at her, showing her the pain he had managed to hide on his way here. Seeing sympathy in her eyes he wrapped his arms around her waist and buried his head in her shoulder. He wasn't crying, he couldn't, not even back when he had first learned about it. He just needed someone to old onto. Someone he knew would still be the person he knew when this day had started.

Awkwardly she patted the little space of his back that was not occupied by his backpack. She knew he deserved better than that, but he knew of her anxieties when it came to touching people so she just hoped this would be enough to calm him a little.

After a few more moments he straightened and let go of her, mumbling a faint "Sorry".

With an "'s alright" she stroked his arm lightly before she reached around him to close the door that had been ignored after his entrance. In the meantime he had started to remove his shoes and his jacket. His clumsy actions made her snicker lightly as she waited for him to finish, leaning in the doorway to the kitchen.

When both of them had settled down at the high kitchen table she waited for him to start speaking. Watching him carefully and playing out different scenarios in her head. She soon discarded the thought that something had happened to one or both of his parents. He wouldn't have returned if that was the case. Lost in her musing she barely caught what he said, when he finally began to speak.

"What?" She asked, her tone a mix of curiosity, worry and embarrassment.

"I was adopted." He told her again, his voice calmer and steadier than he had thought it would be.

Maybe it had really helped to talk to the stranger, Lance, on the way here.

"What?!" Keileigh repeated, this time in a *you-can't-be-serious-voice*.

"Yup...just a random doorstep baby." Her friend half-heartedly joked, a crooked smile on his face and the pain clearly visible in his eyes.

She looked at him for a moment, contemplating this new information. In a weird way it did made sense. Michael didn't really look like either of his parents, both being more round and not as skinny as him. She couldn't remember what his father's hair colour had been, but she was certain it wasn't black, neither was his mother's. Though that was not really a good thing to judge heritage by. Sighing she asked: "What did they tell you?"

And he told her. Told her about the day his parents had found him and the bundle and the letter. He hesitated for a moment before he pulled up his backpack to remove the items from it, placing them on the table. But he couldn't tell her everything that stood in the letter. Not even the name he was given at birth. She would just laugh at him and demand to read it. Absent-mindedly he stroked the parchment with his fingertips and waited for her to say something.

"May I read it?" She asked nodding in the direction of the letter.

Keileigh could see the struggle on her friends face. Whatever his real parent had written on the paper must be something he wouldn't want to share, but she tried nevertheless.

"I'm your friend. I want to help you. But it feels like you are keeping something from me." She told him honestly, hoping he would share his pain with her.

Michael studied her for a long moment before he closed his eyes. As much as he feared their friendship would be ruined by her finding out about his gift, as much did he fear it breaking because of him shunning her off and keeping this secret longer than he already had. She was here to help him and having someone else to talk about this, other than his parents, would be nice. Inhaling deeply he let out a long breath and opened his eyes again.

"You want a cocoa?" He asked then, a small smile on his lips.

"There never has been a better moment for it." She accepted his offer and waited for her friend to stand up.

But he didn't. He just moved a bit to the side to look at the counter behind her. Looking at him in confusion she could see a shimmer of gold in his eyes, before she heard clattering behind her. Turning around she saw two cups and a kettle floating in the air above the stove. Her mouth agape she faced her friend again.

"Are you...are you doing that?" She asked him in a hoarse whisper.

Carefully he landed the three items and looked at her, nodding slowly.

After several tries and tons of thoughts racing through her head she managed to ask "Is that telekinesis?"

"I prefer calling it Magic." He now fully grinned at her.

"Magic?" Keileigh asked for confirmation in a quite disbelieving tone.

"Magic." Her friend affirmed grinning even more at the look she must have had on her face.

Before the thought had completely formed in her mind she had grabbed the salt shaker and threw it at him. She wasn't that surprised when he caught it mid-air, his eyes glowing again.

"Stupid Warlock." She joked, sharing his grin.

"You have no idea how true that statement is..." Michael told her and released the spell on the shaker and let it fall into his outstretched hand.

"Do you still want to read the letter?" He then asked without looking at her while he put the item back where it belonged.

"Now more than before." She told him, determination in her voice and eyes.

Seeing the latter he handed her the parchment that held the truth about him, watching her closely when she started reading. A part of him still thought she would completely freak out or call him insane, but he hadn't missed the awe in her eyes when she had realized what he could do. It wasn't long until she snorted and looked up at him with an even wider grin. He knew exactly what she had just read and he wasn't so sure anymore that her present this morning was really just a coincidence. Refraining from breaking into full out laughter she continued to read the letter to the end. When she had finished her grin returned and she looked up at him as she folded the paper again.

"So you wanna be called 'Merlin' now?"

"No...I still prefer Michael." He told her, rolling his eyes.

She snickered a bit more before asking another question, waving in the direction of the bundle.

"Have you looked inside?"

"No." Michael answered, his voice a mixture of fear and anticipation.

"You wanna do it now?" The young woman slightly urged.

"You are just curious what's inside!" He remarked with a laugh.

"Are you not?"

"Of course I am..."

"So?"

"Fine..." He gave in taking another deep breath.

Turning the bundle over and over again he finally found the knots that held the blue and red cloths together. Searching for reassurance he looked up again and was granted a nod to continue. Just as he had done in the morning he slowly unwrapped the only thing he had of whoever had placed him on that doorstep. Only to be confused again. The letter had talked about a scroll, but this was a book. A really old book in leather binding. Just as he was about to say something the door to the house opened and a female voice introduced another person into their place. Looking at each other they both raised a questioning eyebrow and wordlessly decided to pause their conversation.

"And this is the kit- Michael! I thought you'd stay with your parents until tomorrow!" The voice, belonging to their flatmate, exclaimed.

"Yeah I kind of changed my plans..." He answered the unasked question sheepishly.

Crossing the room she came up to him with open arms. Seeing that she wanted to hug him, he turned to let her proceed. But not without sending a humoured look at his friend. This woman was usually not too keen on friendliness.

"Happy Birthday Michael and all the best." She congratulated, shortly rubbing his back.

"Thanks." He replied and couldn't stop the grin and amusement to slip into his face.

When she had moved away from him a second woman slowly approached him. She smiled in a genuine way and her eyes wandered from Michael to Keileigh and then landed on the book and she read the golden lettered title '*Le Morte d'Arthur*'.

"You like the Arthurian legends? They are my most favourite!" She exclaimed with excitement in her voice.

"Uhm...I kind of got into it...recently." He answered slightly embarrassed that all he knew was the crash course Keileigh had given him during the day.

"My name derives from the legends..." She mused slowly reaching out to touch the old book.

"Really?" The friends asked in unison, curiosity and interest in their voices.

"Oh, I haven't introduced myself!" She then realized reaching out her hand.

"I'm Gwen, that is a short version of Guinevere. I might become your new flatmate."

Barely remembering that that was the name of the Queen of Camelot, Michael bowed his head with a grin. He then shook her hand adding: "I'm Merlin...I mean Michael. Sorry." He repeated the same mistake he had made in the train and shook his head in embarrassment. But she found it more funny than odd and her light laughter filled the room in an infective manner. Gwen had long since let go of his hand when they all settled down again and turned to the other female repeating the gesture.

"I'm Keileigh." She introduced herself, smiling at her.

"Like the girl from 'A Quest for Camelot'?" Gwen asked her with interest.

"I think my name is written differently. But I see that you will fit in here quite well." She told her.

"You think so?" The young woman asked but before the other could answer Michael interjected: "What's that Quest-thing about?"

"You don't know that cartoon?" Gwen asked awed.

"He doesn't even know 'The Sword in the Stone'" Keileigh commented mockingly.

"What? How is that possible?" The young woman couldn't really comprehend this.

"It's one of my favourite representations of the legend! I don't even know how many

times I've watched the DVD" She exclaimed.

"You have the DVD?" The other woman inquired, an idea dawning.

"Yes. I also have the Quest and many others..." She shyly admitted.

"Than your requirement for taking up the empty room will be to bring the DVDs and provide us with drinks and snacks for the watching." Keileigh decided.

"I haven't even seen the room yet!" Gwen declared, blushing slightly.

"Oh, you're going to love it." Michael assured her with a wide grin.

"So that's settled then? As soon as you get the room, that will be what you have to do to win our favour." Keileigh more or less ordered, earning laughter from her friend and a warm smile from their soon to be flatmate.

And of course the confused look of their other flatmate that had hoped to finally get someone normal into their house. It seemed that those hopes had been in vain. With Gwen, Merlin as names from an old legend, the book and not to mention Michaels gift, this house would be even more strange now.

Kapitel 2: The Once and Future Prat

In the Living Room

It has been a couple of weeks since Gwen had moved into the flat, but only now was she able to live up to the agreement they had made on their first meeting. Several by now half empty bowls of chips, popcorn and sweets, as well as an empty decanter and some water bottles occupied the table in the living room. Gwen laid comfortably on the couch beside the door and took a moment to watch her new friends. Michael sat to her right on the other couch, intently starring at the screen of the television, his arms resting on his legs and his whole body leaning forward as if he was afraid to miss just the shortest of moments. Keileigh on the other hand slouched on the arm chair across from her. As soon as Gwen's eyes fell on her she turned her head to return the gaze. With a grin she nodded in Michael's direction. She was highly amused by his behaviour. A smile on her lips Gwen returned her attention to the screen. One of her favourite scenes was about to happen.

"Give the boy a chance." The black bearded knight declared

"Go ahead, son." Another man encouraged the young blond boy and shoved him towards the Sword.

With determination he stepped towards the stone and the anvil on top of it to grab the golden hilt of the sword that was stuck in it. When he touched the metal bright line shone from above and a choir started singing. With not much effort the weapon was freed from its prison and the boy stumbled a few steps backwards, the far too large sword in his hands, looking up at the light.

"It's a miracle ordained by heaven." Someone in the crowd surrounding them whispered.

"This boy is our king." Another declared.

"Well, by Jove." The boys guardian exhaled awestruck.

"What's the lad's name?" The knight demanded to know.

"Eh, Wart. Oh, uh, I mean Arthur." The other man managed to say and the crowd started to cheer.

"Hail, King Arthur!"

"Hail, King Arthur! Long live the king!"

But their chanting was halted and the picture froze.

Keileigh and Gwen both looked at Michael who held the remote in his hand. A deep frown on his face when he put down the device.

"He's too young!" He declared after a moment of starring at the screen.

"I know!" Gwen exclaimed right away.

Turning his head to her, he urged her to continue.

"I mean, that's what bothered me about it most as well. I love the film to bits, but I could never understand why they had to make Arthur this young. I know it's in some versions of the legend too, but it just feels wrong..." She ranted and then went quiet, as she was a bit ashamed of her outburst.

Michael offered her a kind smile. This notion was what made him stop the film in the first place. It just sounded wrong to him that Arthur was supposed to be a young boy whenever he read about it or now saw it. In his opinion – and apparently Gwen's too – he should have been a man, maybe a bit childish, but a man nevertheless. Though he didn't know what made him think that way.

A noise at the door however snapped them out of their thoughts. With yank the entrance opened to reveal a man with shoulder length, dark hair and stubble on his chin. Cheekily he looked into the room, a wide grin on his face.

"Having fun?" He asked when he slipped into the room and sat down next to Gwen's feet on the couch.

"Hi, I'm Gwayne and you must be the lovely lady that is now living in my room." He greeted her, giving her his most enticing smile and holding out his hand with the palm upwards.

Groaning Michael and Keileigh rolled their eyes at their friend, it was just like him to hit on their new room mate right away.

"Nice to meet you." Gwen smiled and took his hand to shake it, instead of giving him the chance to kiss hers.

"Yes, I'm Gwen, the new flatmate and I'm already dating someone." She added with a light laugh and took her hand away.

"What a shame..." He concluded in mock disappointment before turning his attention to the television instead.

"So, what are you wa....are you watching 'The Sword in the Stone' without me?" He exclaimed in outrage.

"How dare you!"

"Oh how we dared. Michael hadn't seen it yet and Gwen was only allowed to move in if we watched it together." Keileigh explained with a laugh.

"But without me isn't together!" The other stuck to his point.

"Why is everyone so obsessed with this film?" Michael wondered out loud.

"Are you serious, mate?" Gwayne asked instead, astonishment clear in his voice.

"Yeah. It's fun, but it's just a film..." Was all Michael could say to describe his view on it.

"Just a a...can you believe him?" His friend asked Gwen, who was just as dumbfounded by this.

"Sure the film has some flaws, like the singing..." Gwayne tried and Gwen interrupted shyly: "I like the singing."

"Then maybe not the singing" He changed his argument "Anyway, you at least have to admit that Merlin's Magic is awesome! Even though his beard is ridiculous."

"And utterly inconvenient if you ask me." Michael added thoughtfully.

"But I guess you're right. It's pretty cool what he can do." He acknowledged and added mumbling "Still no reason why I should like it..."

Groaning Gwayne gave up on the discussion. In some moments it was just useless to make his friend see a different angle.

"When I watch films like this I sometimes wish that things like that would be actually possible. But Magic just doesn't exist in this world..." Gwen confessed with a slight

sadness in her voice, watching her folded hands in her lap.

"Yeah, real Magic would be awesome. The things you could do with it..." Gwayne agreed.

Hearing this Michael looked over to Keileigh, who was already grinning at him. They had already talked about including the other two into their secret and now would be a perfect moment for it. With a sigh he worked up the courage to ask: "What if it did?"

"Don't be silly mate. You're a physicist, you of all people should know that the only Magic we have are ruses and illusions." The older man reprimanded him, disappointment clearly audible.

Again Michael and Keileigh exchanged a look, both with widening grins.

"You sure?" Michael asked, when a golden hue passed over his irises.

Confused Gwayne followed his friends nod to see the bowls no longer standing on the table, but floating in mid air instead.

"What the...?" He started and jumped up.

Gwen gasped and held her hands in front of her mouth.

Moving his hands above the bowls Gwayne checked for strings, but there weren't any.

"Is this telekinesis?" He repeated the question Keileigh had asked when Michael had first shown her.

"Nope. Magic." He simply answered and released the bowls.

With a clattering sound they landed on the table again. Two pairs of eyes stared at him in awe.

"How long?" Was all Gwayne could manage to ask.

"Can I use it or do I know about it?" Michael tried to close in on the question.

"Both."

"As long as I can remember and probably even before that I had these abilities. I was born with it apparently." He told them, shrugging his shoulders as if it was no big deal.

"So you're not just adopted, you're a freak as well?" Gwayne joked, sitting down again.

"That's what it looks like." Michael laughed.

He had to answer a few more questions about his knowledge, heritage and abilities and tried to explain everything as well as he could, but some of it was still a mystery to himself.

When he was finished Gwen asked: "Why did you confine in us?"

Though what she actually wondered was why he told her, as he only knew her for a couple of weeks.

"We're stuck. We need help figuring out, who this Emrys person is and we thought it would be good to get you two on board." Keileigh explained instead of Michael

"Gwayne has been a friend for years now and not just that, he also has a vast knowledge of history, even though he rarely uses it." She continued and waved her hand towards her sheepishly grinning friend.

"You on the other hand know a lot about the Arthurian legends and as his Birthday gift included the book you saw on your first visit, we figured your knowledge might come in handy as well."

"And I believe I can trust you two." Michael added with a smile.

Both of them returned the gesture, simply to overwhelmed to find words. They were granted an incredible view into something they didn't dare believe existed and therefore were simply grateful to receive this honour.

A couple of days later

"Guys? You're busy?" Gwen asked when she entered the living room.

"Nope, just wanted to torch this book anyway." Keileigh replied annoyed, slamming the large volume in front of her shut.

"It's university property, you shouldn't even consider damaging it." Michael scolded her, putting down a different one.

"It was an expression..." She replied with a roll of her eyes and leaned back into the arm chair, her arms folded in front of her.

"Anyway, I'd like to introduce you to someone." Gwen changed the topic, before the two of them would start off into another argument.

When she had their full attention she waved for someone outside the door.

A young man entered the room, a kind smile on his face.

"Well, this is..." Gwen started introducing him when Michael interrupted: "Lance!".

He stood up in astonishment, a grin spreading.

"Michael Merlin. I knew I'd meet you again one day." The other replied, stepping forward to take the offered hand.

"You know each other?" Gwen asked in confusion, looking from one to the other.

"We briefly met on a train about a month ago." Lance explained as a matter of fact, releasing the other's hand.

"You're the train-dude? He's the train-dude?" Keileigh asked in surprise pointing at him and looking at Michael.

Michael and Lance described their first encounter to Gwen. She was quite amused that the man that had helped her friend turned out to be the man she had been dating for about a month now. In fact their first meeting had also been on the same day, just before Lance got into that train.

When Lance and Keileigh were deep in conversation she pulled Michael aside.

"Does he *know*?" Gwen whispered.

"No, I only accidentally used the other name, like I did when we first met." The other cleared up.

Gwen remembered how he had done that and how she had thought it to be funny that he had used the name, when they were just talking about names from the book.

"Do you want to tell him?" She asked next, even though she felt like she already knew the answer.

"I don't know. I feel like I can trust him and the fact that we met before and that he's now your boyfriend, doesn't make this an easier choice... Not yet, I guess..." Michael explained, looking at Lance from his position.

"We're just dating..." Gwen tried to reason, but was met with a raised eyebrow.

"But I know what you mean. He is just an incredible person." She shyly added.

Some days later on the Campus

Michael and Keileigh were on their way to their first lessons, when they saw a group of people towering over a rather young looking boy. He clutched the books in his arms tightly, while one of the guys pulled up his backpack, he was still wearing, high over his shoulders, only to let it drop onto his back. The older students certainly enjoying the teasing and laughed at the boys whimpers.

Without second thought Michael stepped in to help him. He had been on the receiving end of bullying himself, so he wouldn't let anyone else suffer through it.

"That's enough my friend." He declared, addressing the blond guy that did most of the teasing.

"Do I know you?" The other wondered.

"No, I'm Michael." He introduced himself in a dry tone, not bothering to offer his hand.

"So I don't know you. Yet you called me 'friend'." The other concluded, causing his actual friends to laugh again.

"That was my mistake." Michael relented in an apologetic tone, lowering his head slightly.

"Yes, I think so." The apparent leader of the group agreed.

"Yeah. I'd never have a friend who could be such an ass." The other added with amusement dripping from his voice and a challenging smile on his lips.

As soon as he had said his words, everyone seemingly had stopped breathing in anticipation of what would happen now.

But before anyone could say or do anything Gwayne grabbed his shoulder.

"Come on mate, let's go, before you get yourself into trouble." He urged his friend in a low tone and tried to drag him away.

"Since when are you the voice of reason?" Michael shot at him.

"Since you start picking a fight with the wrong people." Gwayne explained and shoved him forward.

When they were out of earshot, he let go of Michael.

"As much as I like the odds in a good brawl, was what you just did rather suicidal when it comes to campus life." He told him.

"I don't care about that, he was being an ass! Why should I let a prat like him just bully someone?" Michael demanded to know.

"You can't stop an idiot from doing something by trying to reason with him." Gwayne tried again, feeling like he was just doing that.

"Besides, fights on campus are forbidden and you'd have dragged all of us into it." Keileigh stated as a matter of fact.

"All right, all right, I let it go..." Michael resigned and added mumbling: "For now."

Later that day in a pub

To get their mind off of the encounter on the campus Gwayne had urged his friends to join him in the pub. Michael, Gwen and Keileigh had already arrived and sat at one of the high tables close to the billiard table.

When their friend finally arrived Michael greeted him with a: "There you are..."

After he already had a couple of drinks Gwayne was re-telling the tale from before for the umpteenth time and as their friend was a brilliant story teller the group was

laughing full heartedly at the formerly serious topic.

It wasn't long until Michael noticed someone approaching from behind his friend. When the person had reached the table beside them he felt the eyes that were still glued to his back.

He turned around to find none other than the insolent brat from before right in front of him.

"You again." He simply stated.

"I could say the same thing." Michael retorted, the same challenging smile on his lips.

"If you're so sure about yourself why not settle this with nice match of billiard?" The older student suggested, a sinister grin on his face.

"Sure." The young man accepted right away.

That poor kid wouldn't know what he got himself into, as he would be playing against one of the best players on campus.

"The loser apologizes for whatever he did wrong." Michael added after he rose up in front of the other, offering his hand.

"I didn't do anything wrong." The prat argued.

"You bullied a guy."

"I showed him his place, there's a difference." He stood firmly by his believe of not having done anything wrong.

"Not for him, so are we playing or are you second guessing your suggestion?" Michael challenged.

"Bring it on, freshman!" The other replied grabbing his hand tightly.

They had played for a while and Michael had learned that the other was called Arthur, after Gwayne addressed him during on of his breaks. His friend had told him, they were in a few classes together, but it was still odd to see him associate with someone like that. He didn't like this prat one bit. That's why early on he had decided to use a bit help to manoeuvre his balls around. Even though he tried to make it subtle and suspenseful, were some of his scores a bit too miraculously.

Finally they had reached the last ball, only the black eight lay on the table and it was Michael's turn to pot it. He grinned at his opponent and positioned himself. With a soft nudge the ball rolled into its goal.

"Yes!" Michael exclaimed in excitement, while his friend cheered behind him.

"You actually won." Arthur affirmed in surprise.

"Yeah and you know what that means." The other reminded him.

Looking the victor up and down the older student simply stated: "Good match." and held out his hand.

"That's not what I meant..." Michael pointed out.

"That's all you'll get." Arthur declared, nodding in the direction of his hand.

"Well, it's a start." The younger student sighed, grabbed the hand and shook it.

After the match Gwayne invited Arthur for a drink and he stayed a moment longer. He participated in their conversation and seemed to have more to him than just being a bully. Still, as soon as he had finished his drink, he set off, wishing everyone a good night.

"He doesn't seem that bad..." Gwen wondered, a hue of red on her cheeks.

The two of them had shared a conversation about one of the seminars she was about to take, that he had already passed.

"I still think he's a prat." Was all Michael said to this and took the last swing of his glass.

"Speaking of prats: You cheated!" Gwayne exclaimed and pointed at his friend accusingly.

"Shh, idiot! Do you want everyone to know about that?!" Michael reprimanded him instead, looking around to see if anyone had heard the remark.

"At least he taught him a lesson!" Keileigh laughed and the others joined her.