

CRAMALOT

A PARODY TO GUIDE YOUR QUEST THROUGH THE
DARK FOREST OF ACADEMIA

By Laurie Bryant

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SYNOPSIS: A narrator introduces the audience to a time long past, where young academic-minded people were mired in an educational culture that didn't meet their needs. Arising from the mass of mediocrity is Arthur, who assumed his rightful destiny as King of the Students when, as a lad, he laid hands on *Excalibur*, a text of extraordinary length that he alone could read. Arthur travels the land in search of other gifted students to join him at Cramalot, a place where they can read, write and share ideas—preferably without being shut into medieval lockers. Along the way, Arthur and his growing band of brothers (and a sister or two, courtesy of Title IX), are aided by the Lady of the Lake, the famous Student-Assistance Counselor, and are charged by the Supreme Being—The Superintendent of Schools, with securing the Holy Grail, an Ivy League diploma. Arthur and his Knights of the Library Table learn many valuable lessons along the way, and poke more than their share of fun at students, teachers, parents, administrators, and, well, the state of education in general. (As if it isn't funny enough on its own.)

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(7 female, 5 male, 12 either, 4-10+ extras)
(flexible, doubling possible)

—ALL LINE COUNTS ARE APPROXIMATE—

HISTORIAN/NARRATOR (m/f).....	Academic, nerdy professor type. <i>(14 lines)</i>
KING ARTHUR (m)	Gifted, confident, well-spoken. <i>(102 lines)</i>
ROBIN (m/f).....	Insecure, timid and kind. <i>(49 lines)</i>
LANCELOT (m).....	Athletic and confident. <i>(48 lines)</i>
KYLE (m).....	Over-achieving and interested student. <i>(20 lines)</i>

CLAPSY (m/f).....	Put-upon loyal servant to King Arthur; few lines, but Clapsy is very sharp and must be able to portray physical comedy and reactions to what is going on around him/her. Claps erasers together to simulate galloping horses as actors pantomime riding. An actor of small stature with a huge backpack works best comically. (9 lines)
DEBEVERE (f).....	Spunky girl who wants to be a knight. She has a crush on Gallahad. (24 lines)
GWENEVERE (f).....	Dainty, pretty, but lacking in confidence. (12 lines)
THOMAS GALLAHAD (m).....	Mama's boy knight; sarcastic, but very bright. (46 lines)
MOTHER GALLAHAD (f).....	Overbearing and overprotective of Thomas; suspicious and resentful of school system. (18 lines)
MS. LAKE (LADY OF THE LAKE) (f)	Beautiful Student-Assistance Counselor; trendy and kind, overly positive. (15 lines)
LADY PATRICIA (f).....	Smart, basketball playing tomboy. (25 lines)
PATRICIA'S FATHER (m)	Overbearing sports dad. (9 lines)
STUDENT (m/f).....	(7 lines)
TEACHER #1 (m/f).....	(5 lines)

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- 3 PROFS WHO SAY “D” (m/f) Inseparable trio intent on shattering the dreams of potential students. They wear academic robes and mortar board caps, finish each other’s sentences and cackle with gleeful negativity. (*PROF #1: 10 lines; PROF #2: 9 lines; PROF #3: 9 lines*)
- GATEKEEPER OF UNIVERSITY (m/f)..... Abrasive and abrupt; the last thing he/she wants to actually admit any students to the university. (*9 lines*)
- FELTON (m/f)..... Like Clapsy, a backpack carrier for knights. Scruffy and overburdened, but loyal servant. Claps erasers together as the knights gallop. (*13 lines*)
- SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS (m/f) Authoritative off-stage voice from above; loud and powerful. (*11 lines*)
- OLD CHAR WOMAN (f)..... Unkempt and ancient, but a kindly old woman. (*4 lines*)
- 4-6 LADY OF THE LAKE GIRLS (f) Perky cheerleaders. (*Non-Speaking*)
- EXTRAS (m/f)..... As Desired: Failures / Knights / Villagers / Teachers / Professors / Foreign Language Teachers

DURATION: 60 Minutes

SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

SCENE 1: A MEDIEVAL VILLAGE
SCENE 2: GALLAHAD'S HOME
SCENE 3: A MEDIEVAL CLASSROOM
SCENE 4: LADY PATRICIA'S HOUSE
SCENE 5: EXTERIOR CROSSROADS
SCENE 6: THE ROAD TO CRAMALOT
SCENE 7: INTERIOR OF CRAMALOT LIBRARY
SCENE 8: OUTSIDE CRAMALOT LIBRARY
SCENE 9: CRAMALOT UNIVERSITY GATE

SET SUGGESTIONS

Most scenes could be set with a minimum of a few simple benches or tree stumps, or a suggestion of a stone wall, and decorated with trees and greenery. Medieval village backdrop is optional. The Cramalot library may be suggested by a round table and some chairs.

OPTIONAL SET SUGGESTIONS: The main set piece could be a rotating structure with the Cramalot library on one side, and the ivy-covered walls of Cramalot University on the other, as these are used multiple times and could be pushed back or hidden behind the curtain for other scenes with simpler sets.

The Gallahad house and Lady Patricia's house could use the same single flat, painted as a stone-walled exterior, and may or may not include a door. Decorate with trees and shrubs as desired.

- Gallahad's house needs a mailbox.
- Lady Patricia's house needs a basketball hoop.

The Medieval Classroom set (Scene 3) is a simple teacher desk and chair. There is a sign on the desk that reads: "I Can Only Pleaseth One Person per Day. Today is NOT Your Day."

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Scene 5 is a simple exterior road lined with trees and includes a few stumps or rocks for actors to sit on.

CRAMALOT LIBRARY SET

A 4'x8' platform serves as the base. Wall is extended on near side. Platform is on wheels to rotate. Actors standing at top of stairs may be seen from opposite side when Cramalot University walls are in use, so that the Gatekeeper may look down on King Arthur and his friends.

CRAMALOT UNIVERSITY

Ivy-covered walls on opposite side of library set. Stairs from library give University Gatekeeper access to lean on the wall and interact with Arthur and the knights from above the Cramalot U sign.

COSTUME SUGGESTIONS

Many medieval costumes, especially King Arthur's and Lady of the Lake, can often be borrowed or rented from local school or community theatre groups. Halloween costumers usually carry knight sets.

Peasant costumes, including Clapsy, can be created by simply using peasant style or oversize men's button-down shirts, belted at the waist with a simple rope. Leggings, solid color sweatpants or baseball style pants with high solid color socks or boots. Backpack carriers should carry as large a backpack as possible, ideally hiking style. Peasants should wear drab or earth colors if possible.

Lady of the Lake and Gwenevere should each be in a floor-length dress, ideally with wide, long sleeves and a belt. Used bridesmaid dresses are easily adapted.

Cheerleaders can cover their plain peasant outfits with oversized men's tank tops decorated iron-on lettering in the Olde English style.

King Arthur, his knights and other non-peasant males may wear dark trousers and shoes or boots. A long knee-length tunic may be draped over a long sleeve tee or sweatshirt. A thick belt with oversize buckle can be worn over the tunic. Arthur should wear his crown at all times. Simulated metal mesh may be added as desired.

Lancelot's jersey can be an actual sports jersey.

The Historian/Narrator should wear conservative modern clothes, something nerdy or very professional. (Ex: A suit or jacket with elbow patches, glasses.)

The Profs Who Say "D" should wear graduation robes and mortar board caps and tassels.

Gatekeeper should wear something intimidating: black trousers or leggings and perhaps a black and grey tunic with the Cramalot University logo on the front.

Mother Gallahad can wear a simple peasant skirt and apron, with boots.

Lady Patricia should wear leggings and an oversize shirt with a leather belt. She can wear regular high top basketball sneakers. Her hair can be in a ponytail.

PROP LIST

- Quills (for use as pens, any color as long as at least ONE is red)
 **Available from craft stores*
- Notebooks
- Rolled paper scrolls (diplomas)
- 2 large backpacks
- 1 very large book with cover: *Excalibur*
- 2 chalkboard erasers on a string (to clap together)
- Bell
- Blue school pass
- Newspaper
- Coffee cup
- Basketball
- Football
- Fancy scroll marked “Title IX”
- Trash can
- Candy dish with candies
- Lunchbox
- Mop
- Sport-style water bottle
- Thermos
- Apple
- Basket
- Posters or signs: “Success is a Choice” and “Attitude is a Little Thing That Makes a Big Difference” and “Write Like a Champion Today”
- Viking helmet (with horns)

DEDICATION

*With many thanks to the original cast, crew and
production staff at Lagrange Middle School in Lagrangeville, NY*

*And to all my fellow educators:
just keep laughing, teaching
and guiding students on their quests*

DO NOT COPY

SCENE 1

SETTING: *A medieval village.*

The action begins with the NARRATOR, the historian, setting the scene. He arrives on stage dressed in a suit befitting a university professor (perhaps knickers, argyle, and a bow tie), and behind him/her, various tableaux of uninspired student activity are evident. A backdrop or other image shows the map of the kingdom of Arlington [or insert the name of your district or school].

NARRATOR: Long ago in a district eerily similar to yours, students, both unmotivated and unsuccessful, drifted aimlessly through the halls of dreary learning institutions. Life was grim; standards were lowered, and the truly gifted were overlooked. But legend tells us of an extraordinary leader, who arose to unite a troubled district, a student with a vision who gathered others together in a remarkable Academic Quest. That student was Arthur, King of the Students.

ARTHUR enters, pantomiming riding a horse and followed by CLAPSY, who is carrying Arthur's well-loaded backpack and claps erasers together as Arthur 'gallops.' They approach a cluster of students who sit dejectedly on a nearby bench huddled over a notebook. The students are scribbling furiously with feather quills. LANCELOT sits nearby, working with student KYLE.

NARRATOR: Let us join young Arthur as he sets out on his journey to collect fellow students interested in pursuing academic excellence, students who willingly engage in class participation, and who, without reservation, always answer in complete sentences that include ample details from the text.

ARTHUR: *(To students.)* I beg your pardon. I'm new to your village, but if you are looking to expand your academic horizons, there is a way to look beyond what is in that little book. I am forming a group of knights who will sit at a round library table and contemplate the wonders of the universe, explore the thoughts of the great thinkers of our time, and...

STUDENT: Push off, mate. Can't you see we're copying Eugene's homework here?

ARTHUR: I don't think you understand. My name is Arthur, King of the Students.

STUDENT: King? Well, I'm a student and I didn't vote for you.

ARTHUR: You don't vote for kings. I was destined to become king after Excalibur came into my possession.

STUDENT: Excalibur? What's that? Like a sword or something?

ARTHUR: No. *(Turns to CLAPSY, who reverently crouches on the floor and turns the backpack toward ARTHUR, who then adopts the classic sword in the stone pose and slowly pulls out an enormous book.)* It's a book, actually. Excalibur. Read it as a young child. Six hundred pages! Though many tried, I was the only one in my class who could get through the whole thing. The Lady of the Lake had placed it in the class library in the hopes that someday its rightful owner would be able to read it. When I did, I fulfilled my destiny to lead all students in an academic quest.

STUDENT: *(Bored.)* You mean you fulfilled your destiny to give your donkey here a bad back.

CLAPSY makes a show of pushing up sleeves, ready for a fight.

KYLE: *(Trying to help, he holds up his electronic tablet.)* Hey, this small but powerful device holds like a hundred of those books and more.

STUDENT: Can it play music, videos and games?

KYLE: Well, I've only tried educational games, but it seems quite serviceable. *(He goes back to work near LANCELOT.)*

STUDENT: Yeah, that's what I'm talking about! *(To ARTHUR.)* Books? They're like so last century. Get thee with it, man. *(He goes back to his group.)*

CLAPSY is very interested in the device and hovers over KYLE'S shoulder.

ARTHUR: A remarkable machine, but I am sure I can make you see there is glory and satisfaction in reading such a massive tome. The feel of the pages in your fingertips, the musty smell of yellowing paper...

STUDENT: Seriously, dude? We. Don't. Read. Not on purpose anyway. So, move along, Nanna.

Confused, ARTHUR looks elsewhere for recruits as CLAPSY silently menaces the STUDENT before leaving. CLAPSY calls ARTHUR'S attention to ROBIN, who is leading a variety of dejected students wearing dunce caps. ROBIN stops beside ARTHUR and rings a bell as he calls out.

ROBIN: Bring out your failures! Bring out your failures!

ARTHUR: (*Approaches.*) I beg your pardon, but do you know where they keep the honor students? You see, I'm gathering together knights for a special academic quest.

ROBIN: (*Laughs nervously and looks around.*) Honor students? Oh, we don't get too many of them around here. In fact, (*Quietly.*) I'm the only one I know of in this village.

ARTHUR: Then why are you doing menial labor? What's your name?

ROBIN: Robin. (*Again, quietly, so only ARTHUR can hear.*) Look, if I show people how bright I am, they'll shun me, or worse. The last honor student we had around here was used as a practice dummy by the jousting team. And besides, I am working through a bit of test anxiety. (*He pulls out a scroll and frowns as he unrolls it.*) I have this geography test on France and I just don't know how to begin the essay.

ARTHUR: Then you must join us! There is safety in numbers. We'll get you the extra help you need. Together we will once again make it acceptable to succeed in school.

ROBIN: Oh, no. I don't think I could.

LANCELOT steps forward from the background.

LANCELOT: Extra help? Pah! Look, my name's Lancelot. I'm only a student teacher, but I have already learned that the only ones that actually come for extra help are the ones that don't actually need it. (*Indicating KYLE.*) Kyle here comes every day, and he has the highest average in the class.

ARTHUR: (*Interrupting.*) Please, friends! As you are both interested in serving students, join me. And Kyle, too! Together we can work for that most lofty of common goals: NICKELBY!

LANCELOT and ROBIN: Nickelby?

ARTHUR: Yes, N-K-L-B. That there should be No Knight Left Behind!

LANCELOT: Oh, please. NCLB? It's evolving even as we speak. Districts are busy 'racing to the top' now. And everyone knows that Common Core is the new buzzword. You really must try to stay current with all the new trends in education.

ARTHUR: (*Puzzled.*) But education shouldn't be about trends. It should be about the willful and lifelong search for knowledge, the opening of new horizons, and the sharing of new ideas.

A beat. Then the crowd erupts in laughter.

LANCELOT: Oh, sharing of ideas. Collaboration. Now you're talking. That's totally Common Core. There's an assessment for it, too, I think. Wait, I think I can find the standard number for that... (*He unrolls a large scroll of paper, searching for the right one.*)

ARTHUR: This is ridiculous. The true pursuit of knowledge isn't on that scroll. Common core? What we are searching for is some common sense! Lancelot, Robin, you must come with me. We can be knights together. We can take education from all the wealthy king's men and give it back to the students where it belongs.

KYLE: I thought you said you were King Arthur? Taking from the wealthy and giving to the poor is a theme from the literary legends of Robin Hood, and even the earliest appearance of Robin of Loxley won't be for hundreds of years yet. It's really an inappropriate reference for any King Arthur story to make.

ARTHUR: (*Embarrassed.*) Oh... well... Really? I am sorry. I don't know how that's happened—

KYLE: (*Brushes it off.*) Not at all. Common mistake. (*Hold up tablet.*) I tell you, these Smartscrolls are amazing, All the knowledge of the universe at your fingertips.

ROBIN: You know, I really would like to be a knight, but I have to admit that I'm afraid. What if I... fail?

LANCELOT: I'll be right there with you. Just stick with me, and I'll show you what to do. Be a refreshing change to work where I might actually make a difference. I can help with your studying.

ROBIN: (*Excited.*) Yes, you can help me with my assignment about France.

ROBIN AND LANCELOT: We will join your quest!

LANCELOT: Sir Robin!

ROBIN: Sir Lancelot!

They shake hands.

KYLE: (*Raises his hand eagerly.*) Ooh! Ooh! May I accompany you? I love educational field trips. And remember, No Knight Left Behind!

The group of students toss their scrolls at him and jeer.

ARTHUR: Of course you are welcome, young Kyle. And thank you, my friends, for joining us.

ROBIN: You may be right, King Arthur. I believe there is safety in numbers. With the great Lancelot as my study-buddy, I know I can prove myself worthy.

ARTHUR: And you, Lancelot? As a student-teacher, you are almost done with your undergraduate education, why join us in an academic quest now?

LANCELOT: Well, I've been thinking about getting a master's degree.

ARTHUR: Fine. (*Claps him on the shoulders.*) Welcome to you all. We must now travel throughout the land, recruiting more students to actively pursue their academic destinies.

ROBIN: How will we travel?

KYLE: Oh, I hope we get to ride in coaches...

LANCELOT: Yes, those bouncy yellow wagons make me cart-sick.

ARTHUR: No, my friends, we cannot travel together. We must separate so that we may cover as much of our land as possible. We will meet back in the land of Cramalot. Now, we must set off. Good luck, and remember—we seek only the students of great potential to join us.

The group disperses, riding off to either side of the stage. Blackout.

SCENE 2

SETTING: *Galahad's small home in a nearby village.*

NARRATOR: And so as Arthur and his trusty servant make a detour into a nearby cul-de-sac in search of deserving students to join his quest, he instead happens upon the Galahad family.

MOTHER and THOMAS GALLAHAD are seen in their front yard. A small lake with a shimmering waterfall is nearby, and THOMAS sits reading beneath a tree. MOTHER enters, having just checked the mailbox, which reads 'Galahad.' She unrolls a scroll.

MOTHER: Look, son. The mail's come. Oh, dear. Your progress report says your performance is inconsistent and you are not working up to your potential in your classes.

GALLAHAD: I try, Mother. But my teachers just don't seem to like me.

MOTHER: But how is that possible? You're so bright and well-read! They're intimidated by your brilliant mind! That school is just not meeting your academic needs.

GALLAHAD: It's the system. It is designed to neglect the individual and focus on vague group progress. I refuse to surrender my natural curiosity and individual socio-academic development to the district's desire for higher standardized test scores.

MOTHER: It's all about money, that is. I know what to do. I'll show them, I will threaten to home-school you! That will get their attention.

ARTHUR gallops in from right with CLAPSY close at heel.

GALLAHAD: (*Noticing them.*) Here. Who's that? A teacher?

MOTHER: (*Shakes head.*) Must be an administrator.

GALLAHAD: What makes you think he's an administrator?

MOTHER: (*Shrugs.*) He ain't got chalk all over him.

ARTHUR: Hello! I was hoping you had a child of school age here. My name is Arthur, King of the Students...

MOTHER: (*Interrupting.*) King of the Students? There's a laugh. Doesn't that go against the current trend of blending of the students together without regard for academic or social status?

GALLAHAD: It's ironic and contradictory, that's what that is. Treat us like we're all the same, and then go and make someone a king!

ARTHUR: Be that as it may, I am king, and I am recruiting gifted young people to join my band of sharp-minded knights on our quest to create a safe place for the academically gifted.

MOTHER: Ha! He's obviously an administrator! Head so far in the clouds, he can't see his own folly. There is no place in education for the gifted!

ARTHUR: I am not an administrator. I am a student, hard-working and just looking for my place in the academic world. And if society won't give us a place, we'll take it for ourselves—by force if necessary.

GALLAHAD: (*Disillusioned.*) Thanks anyway, sire. But we don't believe modern methods of pedagogy work. I stand before you a living testament to the failure of the modern school philosophy—highly intelligent, but with barely enough motivation to get out of bed every morning.

MOTHER: (*Puts an arm around THOMAS.*) A structured group environment isn't the answer for my darling Thomas. He needs a more individualized educational plan. We're considering home schooling.

ARTHUR: But we may have exactly what you seek! Our group will allow for individual differences and learning styles, and together we will utilize the many resources available to us to maximize our academic achievement!

GALLAHAD: Aw, pull the other one. We've heard it all before. No one cares!

ARTHUR: That's where you're wrong. There are people who care very much; teachers, guidance counselors, and yes, even administrators. Once I didn't believe, not in myself or the system, but someone made me see the light of self-motivation and perseverance. For we have behind us the strongest of all support systems; someone who not only cares, but can encourage all of us to do our very best and to keep on trying through the greatest adversity.

MOTHER: Not that Lady of the Lake person?

ARTHUR: Do you know her?

MOTHER: Well, I had a parent meeting scheduled with her, but I cancelled it. What sort of people have meetings at eight AM? How productive can that be? And really, a person employed only to provide student assistance? It sounds like it's all juice boxes and hugs. Ridiculous!

ARTHUR: No! She'll help you, Thomas. It's her job. She'll be right by your side through it all; testing, counseling, peer mediation, everything. She will help you find your inner honor student. Please, give it a try. *(He hands him a piece of paper.)* Here's a pass, won't you agree to go see her?

GALLAHAD: I don't know. I've heard tell of such a person, but I don't really believe in her.

ARTHUR: *(Calling out.)* Oh, Lady of the Lake, please prove that you are real.

LADY OF THE LAKE appears off to side. She is a vision of shimmering beauty and Thomas is in awe.

LADY OF THE LAKE: *(Sweetly calling to him as if in a dream.)* Young Gallahad? A small blue pass gives you passage to come and see me in my office anytime. I promise I can help you be all you can be. You can succeed in public school.

GALLAHAD: *(Entranced by her beauty and attention to him.)* Oh, wow!

MOTHER: But, son, what about our mutual mistrust of highly structured education? What about our plan to home school?

ARTHUR: Home-schooling might offer instructional freedom, but the right public education setting can offer your son something you can't.

MOTHER: And what might that be?

ARTHUR: Girls!

A group of appropriately dressed medieval cheerleaders, led by DEBEVERE, emerge from the lake and surround THOMAS, waving pom-poms and doing a perky little cheer in Gallahad's honor. CLAPSY can either awkwardly join in, or do a bit of harmless flirting.

When finished, the group departs, but one cheerleader, DEBEVERE, steps forward and takes GALLAHAD'S arm and leads him to a seat nearby.

GALLAHAD: *(Impressed, but distrustful of fellow students, especially pretty ones.)* And I suppose your name is, what, Tiffany or Kristin or something?

DEBEVERE: *(Shakes her head.)* Why, no. It's Debevere. *(Flirty.)* But you can call me Debbie.

GALLAHAD: Debbie, of course. I suppose you already have a boyfriend. Dirk? Or Sven? Or some other irritatingly masculine name.

DEBEVERE: Actually, no. I spend so much time in the perky, cheerful world of cheerleaders that I prefer spending time with the dark, cynical types that I come across working as a runner for the Lady of the Lake.

DEBEVERE offers GALLAHAD a candy from a little dish. He refuses. A lava lamp or other therapist knick-knacks sit on the table nearby. GALLAHAD sits dejectedly across from LADY OF THE LAKE, where he pours out his heart as she takes notes.

LADY OF THE LAKE: *(Kind and understanding.)* Talk to me, sweetheart. Talk to me.

GALLAHAD: I know I am very bright, but even in the classes I excel in, I always seem to have that one assignment that brings me down. It keeps me from achieving an average that reflects my true ability. See? (*He shows her a paper from his pocket.*) An 88! I always seem to fall just short of a 90, and without that, I will never be taken seriously as a student.

LADY OF THE LAKE: Oh, Thomas. We can work with that, and together we can turn a negative into a positive.

GALLAHAD: (*Skeptical.*) Oh, really? And just how can we do that? We can't change the laws of mathematics.

LADY OF THE LAKE: Oh, but we can!

GALLAHAD: How? (*Waving his test.*) By what magic can we change an 88 into a 90?

LADY OF THE LAKE: (*Rising and sweeping her arms.*) Why, by the magic of extra credit, of course!

GALLAHAD: (*Rising and following her with interest.*) How does one go about getting this...extra credit?

During this last line, TEACHER #1 enters from left and stands grading papers with a quill pen.

LADY OF THE LAKE: (*Indicating TEACHER #1 now standing at stage left.*) You have only to ask. And remember, I will be right by your side every moment, telling you what to say...

GALLAHAD: Um, excuse me, kind teacher. I need to talk to you. You see, it seems like once in every term, I bomb a real big test. I don't know, maybe I forget to study, or I do but I study the wrong stuff. It really kills my average... and I was wondering... Well, (*Losing his nerve, he turns to LADY OF THE LAKE.*) You ask... you ask for me, please!

LADY OF THE LAKE: (*Gently, from behind, pushing him to ask.*) Just be honest and say you'd like to do extra credit if any is available.

GALLAHAD: (*To LADY OF THE LAKE, stalling.*) Now let me get this straight, I have an eighty-eight—but what I really want is a ninety—

LADY OF THE LAKE: My dear, you have to learn to speak up for yourself, and no one can do your work but you.

GALLAHAD holds his breath, hurriedly scribbles on his assignment and hands it to his teacher, who adjusts his grade and hands it back. Wide-eyed, GALLAHAD rushes to LADY OF THE LAKE'S side and holds it up so she can see.

GALLAHAD: *(Excited.)* It worked! I went from an eighty-eight to a ninety-three! Thank you, Lady! Thank you for believing in me! *(Profusely thanking LADY OF THE LAKE, he kisses her hand; which makes DEBEVERE a bit jealous.)*

DEBEVERE: Brown noser.

LADY OF THE LAKE: I'm so proud of you!

GALLAHAD: *(Eagerly, to ARTHUR.)* I'll do it! I'll join your quest. I'll be a knight of the library table. *(He kneels before ARTHUR and bows his head.)* Sire!

ARTHUR: *(Dubs him.)* You shall be forever known as Sir Gallahad.

DEBEVERE: I'm coming, too! *(Quickly kneels before ARTHUR.)* I'll be Sir Debevere!

ARTHUR: You? But...you're a... a... girl. Knights are boys! What makes you think you can be a knight?

DEBEVERE: Them.

A pair of ATTORNEYS enter, briefcases in hand. One removes and hands ARTHUR a scroll. In large red letters, the back of it clearly reads: Title IX. ARTHUR unrolls it and reads.

ARTHUR: Title Nine? *(He reads aloud to himself.)* Educational institutions shall present equal opportunities for females... yadda, yadda... heavy fines... class action lawsuits...

CLAPSY: Is she coming, sire?

ARTHUR: *(Sighs, nods, and hands back the scroll.)* She's coming. *(Dubs her.)* Sir Debevere.

The ATTORNEYS shake hands. DEBEVERE shoots them a thumbs-up, and the Attorneys exit left. ARTHUR, CLAPSY, GALLAHAD and DEBEVERE exit right as LADY OF THE LAKE and MRS. GALLAHAD wave goodbye. Blackout.

SCENE 3

SETTING: *A medieval classroom.*

The NARRATOR is again at the podium; TEACHER #1, a stern, imposing academic, sits at a desk in an empty classroom reading a newspaper and drinking coffee. A sign on the desk reads, in Olde English lettering, "I Can Only Pleaseth One Person per Day. Today is NOT Your Day."

NARRATOR: The small band is working its way through the land to enlist more knights to join their academic quest. They visit villages and schoolrooms throughout the kingdom, searching for sharp young minds.

Lights up slowly as ROBIN 'rides' in with FELTON and a small entourage that includes LANCELOT and KYLE. ROBIN dismounts and hesitates.

LANCELOT: *(Giving ROBIN a gentle shove.)* Go on, Sir Robin. Off you go. Remember, this is a recruitment drive. Just as we practiced. Brave and sure.

FELTON: I believe in you, Sir Robin. And she looks *(Hesitates.)* nice.

ROBIN: Um, excuse me. Are you a teacher here?

TEACHER #1: Who wants to know? *(Guarded.)* Are you with the school board? *(She quickly hides the paper.)* Is this my unannounced APPR observation? Because if it is, I'd just like to point out that it is a Friday, and holiday break is coming up, and on top of that, it's Pajama Day for some reason—

ROBIN: No, my name is Robin and I am in search of sharp-minded students to join us on our quest to find an institution of higher learning that will prepare us for life in the world today.

TEACHER #1: *(Laughs.)* Ha! Good luck. No institution prepares you for life. *(Goes back to the newspaper.)*

ROBIN shrugs and turns away, only to be encouraged back by FELTON.

ROBIN: *(Reluctantly.)* Excuse me. Might you know of any students who might join up with us? With a letter of recommendation from a revered educator such as you, I am sure we can find room at our round table for more gifted students.

TEACHER #1: Write a letter of recommendation? What, now? I'm very busy. *(She seems put out, and thinks for a moment.)* Wait a minute, how do I know you are worthy of my students? I've worked very hard to get them where they are. Pretests, post-tests, mid-terms, finals, careful mapping of our curriculum to ensure that highly qualified teachers barely have any autonomy at all. I can't just hand students off to any Tom, Dirk, or Robin with a quest. Let me see some samples of your work.

ROBIN: Oh, yes, of course. My loyal servant carries my portfolio at all times.

FELTON reaches into the backpack and eagerly pulls out a stack of papers and hands them ROBIN, who hands them to TEACHER #1 with a flourish.

FELTON: Nervous?

ROBIN: No.

FELTON: I think you should be.

ROBIN: You said she looked nice!

FELTON: I lied, sire.

ROBIN stands fidgeting and biting his fingernails while TEACHER #1 takes a large red quill pen and sets to work on the papers, happily shaking their head in disapproval. FELTON watches over TEACHER #1'S shoulder, and we can tell by FELTON'S face that things are not going well. ROBIN grows sicker with every scratch-out. As TEACHER #1 grades ROBIN'S work, LANCELOT and KYLE silently slip away.

TEACHER #1: *(When reading, shakes head and makes a big show of marking things wrong and crossing out.)* I'm so glad to hear you are not in the least bit scared to edit and revise. That's rare in students today. Some students panic to see their words crossed out like this. I mean, most honor students quake to see an essay this hacked and mangled, but not you—

ROBIN: *(Realizing he's alone, he snatches back his papers.)* Never mind. I'll just re-do this and stop back later. Thanks anyway.

ROBIN stuffs his papers into the backpack and sheepishly departs without further comment. FELTON follows. TEACHER #1 sits smugly at the desk, sips coffee, and waves goodbye.

TEACHER #1: *(Somewhat lacking in sincerity.)* My door is always open. *(Sighs and smiles.)* It's all about the kids. *(Opens the newspaper.)*

Blackout.

SCENE 4

SETTING: *Lady Patricia's house.*

At a home in a village, young LADY PATRICIA sits beneath a tree with a basketball hoop on it. She is lovingly reading a book, while a basketball and sports bottle sit on the ground nearby.

NARRATOR: Continuing their recruitment drive, Sirs Lancelot, Robin and Kyle happen across the estate of Lady Patricia, whose name adorns both her village honor roll and record books alike.

PATRICIA: Ah, chapter two. *(Hugs her book.)* Each chapter is like a new gift. Someday a handsome knight will come to sweep me off my feet.

FATHER enters, angry.

FATHER: Stop all that reading! Those books will never get you anywhere. Sports are the ticket out of this village! I thought I told you to practice dribbling.

PATRICIA: *(Holds up bottle.)* I did, but the water kept getting on the floor.

FATHER: Don't sass me, young lady! Pick up that ball and practice. No dinner until you make 100 free throws. In a row! And no reading!

PATRICIA: (*Pouting.*) I love basketball, but I refuse to become one of those thick-headed jocks I see around school. Besides, I want to finish this book before I return it to the library. (*Despondent.*) If only I could find a way to stay true to myself and still please my father. But choosing between developing my mind and body is a choice no young person should have to make. Oh, I wish I knew someone who understood what I was going through.

LANCELOT and KYLE arrive with FELTON. ROBIN trails behind, reading through his corrected papers.

PATRICIA: I knew someone would come! Why, is that you, Sir Lancelot?

LANCELOT: You know me, my lady?

PATRICIA: But of course. The academic skill and reading prowess of Sir Lancelot are known throughout this land. I'd always hoped to meet such a legendary thinker.

LANCELOT: (*To ROBIN.*) Watch and learn, my friend. (*To PATRICIA, flirty.*) Well, perhaps we could have a little book talk together sometime.

PATRICIA: I'd love to, but my father, he'd never approve. You see, he favors the sports-minded, and hopes that someday I'll meet someone that is my athletic equal. The thing is, I actually like both sports and school.

FATHER re-enters.

FATHER: Who's distracting you now? (*Eyeing LANCELOT.*) Hey, don't I know you?

LANCELOT: I don't think so.

FATHER: (*Snaps his fingers.*) Sure! That's it. You once scored six touchdowns in a game against West Nottinghamshire. Can I have your autograph?

LANCELOT: I'm quite sure you have me confused with someone else.

FATHER: Really? My mistake, kind sir. I was hoping that perhaps you could give my daughter here a few pointers. She's got lots of potential, but she keeps wasting valuable practice time studying.

LANCELOT: Well, that is unfortunate. *(To KYLE.)* I can't help her. Choosing between sports and school? Ridiculous. She's obviously not our type. Let's move on.

FELTON: *(Aside to ROBIN.)* I think perhaps he doth protest too much.

ROBIN: Are you mad? That is Sir Lancelot! His academic career is unblemished.

KYLE: Come on, Lance. I think you know more about her situation than you are letting on.

LANCELOT: *(Defensive.)* What do you mean?

KYLE: Lancelot, you may as well 'fess up. Certainly, you score high upon any rubric, but I happen to know that underneath that tunic you harbor a deeply secret life.

FELTON: Told you. I'm never wrong.

LANCELOT: *(Pulls KYLE aside.)* How do you know? I've never told anyone, not even Robin or Arthur. I've spent my whole life trying to hide it. It's my greatest shame.

KYLE: Come on, you must be true to yourself. *(He puts an arm around LANCELOT'S slumping shoulders.)* Your real friends will accept you, even if you are...

He rips off LANCELOT'S breakaway tunic to reveal a football uniform.

KYLE: ... an athlete!

ROBIN reacts with surprise, while FELTON grins and points.

FELTON: A-ha! I knew it! I can spot a jock anywhere.

LANCELOT: *(To KYLE.)* But, you must tell me how you knew? Is it really that obvious?

FELTON: It's like I've got Play—dar or something!

ROBIN: Quiet!

KYLE: It wasn't that difficult. *(He pulls off his own tunic to reveal his athletic jersey.)* I guess it takes one to know one.

FELTON: *(Genuinely surprised.)* Ooh, didn't see that one comin'. He must be a fencer.

LANCELOT: What a relief. To think I spent so much time skulking about, playing only night games in distant villages. I never thought there were others hidden among the library stacks. (*Shakes hands with KYLE in an elaborate display of high fives.*) I guess you're right. My athleticism is as much a part of me as my intelligence.

FELTON: Is it golf? I mean that's not really athletic. No one could blame me if I missed that—

ROBIN tugs FELTON out of the way. FATHER grabs the football and PATRICIA'S quill pen.

FATHER: Hey, champ! How about an autograph? (*He hands LANCELOT the ball and quill pen.*)

LANCELOT: I suppose I can acquiesce this once. To whom shall I endorse it?

FATHER: Huh?

PATRICIA: He wants to know your name.

FATHER: Oh. Why didn't you say so? No names, please. It's worth more that way on Sir Craig's List. (*Takes his signed ball back.*) Gee, thanks!

FATHER shows the ball to FELTON, who takes it and assumes the Heisman trophy pose with one leg up and one arm out. FATHER grabs the ball and shoos FELTON away.

LANCELOT: So, you see, my lady. You can have it both ways. You can be an athlete and a student. Will you join us on our quest?

PATRICIA: Yes! (*Stands and grabs her book, ball and water bottle.*) Goodbye, father. I'll have my grades forwarded to you.

FATHER: Never mind your grades! Send your game schedule! (*Shakes his head.*) These kids today.

The group begins to disperse, but ROBIN pulls LANCELOT aside.

ROBIN: Lance, why didn't you ever tell me? You never talked about your interest in sports at all. Didn't you trust me?

LANCELOT: Well, it's not the kind of thing one talks about in intelligent company, is it? You never know the reaction you'll get. I mean, my own parents still aren't speaking to me, but thanks for understanding.

He pats ROBIN on the rear. It is awkward and unwelcome.

ROBIN: Yeah, don't do that.

LANCELOT: Right. Sorry.

They depart. Blackout.

SCENE 5

SETTING: *Exterior crossroads.*

NARRATOR: Arthur and his friends exchange tales at the crossroads, but their reunion is soon interrupted by an unexpected visitor.

The KNIGHTS enter from various directions. ARTHUR, ROBIN, LANCELOT, GALLAHAD, DEBEVERE, LADY PATRICIA and THE KNIGHTS discuss their situation as they reconnect with each other. A bright light suddenly appears through the clouds above, attracting the knights' attention.

SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS: *(Off Stage voice.)* Arthur!

ROBIN: It can't be!

LANCELOT: *(Craning his neck.)* Who? Who is it? I can't see.

ROBIN: Avert your eyes!

ARTHUR: *(Respectfully stepping forward and speaking upward with eyes lowered.)* It is I, Arthur, King of the Students.

LANCELOT: *(Looking around.)* Here, who's he talking to?

ROBIN shushes him and points skyward, then self-consciously covers the tip of his pointer finger with the palm of his free hand, so as not to point directly.

ROBIN: It's Him!

LADY PATRICIA: Who?

LANCELOT: (*Awed.*) You mean...

ROBIN: That's right...the Superintendent of Schools!

LANCELOT: (*Disbelieving.*) Go on! I've never believed HE spoke directly to students, no matter how high their average.

ARTHUR: (*Nervously, to the SUPERINTENDENT'S voice.*) What is it you want of me? If it's about that cheerleader trick, I can explain—

SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS: (*Off Stage voice.*) Arthur, I have an assignment for you.

The KNIGHTS cower, but murmur in excitement.

GALLAHAD: (*Groans, rolling his eyes.*) I bet it's a practice ELA test. Educators love to assign those.

SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS: (*Off Stage voice.*) Not that kind of assignment. A quest. I want you to find the Holy Grail!

ARTHUR: The what?

SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS: (*Off Stage voice. Thunderously loud.*) The Holy Grail!

ARTHUR: (*Covering his ears.*) No, I mean, what is it?

SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS: (*Off Stage voice.*) You and your honorable band of loyal followers are charged with locating and obtaining the most elusive of all academic achievements...an Ivy League diploma!

The KNIGHTS again murmur.

ARTHUR: A diploma?

ROBIN: But that's just a piece of paper.

GALLAHAD: And mind you, a piece of paper that doesn't necessarily reflect academic achievement. It's practically worthless.

SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS: (*Off Stage voice. Chastising.*) Don't be so skeptical. You know, attitude is a little thing that makes a big difference.

ROBIN: I've heard that someplace before.

DEBEVERE: It's on a poster out there in the lobby. (*She points into audience.*)

The KNIGHTS squint to see as DEBEVERE points.

SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS: *(Off Stage voice.)* Some diplomas carry great weight and prestige.

ARTHUR: I'm afraid I don't understand. You mean, you, the all-knowing, highly educated, superintendent of schools, needs a...a diploma? Don't you already, you know, have one?

SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS: *(Off Stage voice.)* It's not for me, and it's not just any diploma. Our district has students who can get diplomas from many fine universities, and the University of Phoenix online, but our district has yet to graduate a single student who can obtain one from a college with an elitist admission policy, woefully inadequate sports teams, and ivy-covered walls. Arthur, you shall be that student!

ROBIN: But how will we find one of these ivy-covered universities? All colleges seem to look alike.

SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS: *(Off Stage voice.)* Their secret locations are revealed in one of the most revered texts of our time.

ROBIN: *(Reverently.)* You mean...

SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS: *(Off Stage voice.)* Yes, the Baron's Big Book of Colleges and Universities.

ARTHUR: I don't know, sir. I mean we'd all intended to obtain a diploma as part of our academic quest, but to aim for one so lofty and prestigious. What if...what if we...well, you know—

GALLAHAD: Fail?

ARTHUR: *(Wincing at the very thought.)* Yes, what if we fail?

SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS: *(Off Stage voice.)* Success is a choice, Arthur.

ROBIN: Ooh, that one's familiar, too.

LANCELOT, LADY PATRICIA and DEBEVERE point to another sign hanging in the cafeteria. Robin nods in understanding.

ARTHUR: Success is a choice. *(Gaining confidence.)* We won't let you down, sir. Come on, friends. To our mounts!

They exit, galloping. Blackout.

SCENE 6

SETTING: *The road to Cramalot.*

ARTHUR and his band 'ride' in from left. LANCELOT and KYLE, trail ARTHUR and CLAPSY, while GALLAHAD, ROBIN and DEBEVERE follow with FELTON. At center is the beast known as, THE PROFS WHO SAY "D."

NARRATOR: With a new purpose, Arthur and his friends go in search of the Holy Grail. But it isn't long before they are stopped by a mythical three-headed creature; a cackling composite of negative-thinking teachers of all subjects. Before the knights can continue on their way, they must find a way to appease the beast.

PROF #1, #2, and #3: *(Blocking their way and talking at once in a high-pitched sarcastic voice.)* D! D!

The KNIGHTS cringe and cover their ears.

ARTHUR: Please, let us pass. Whoever you are, we have no quarrel with you.

PROF #1, #2, and #3: We are The Profs Who Say "D"!

The KNIGHTS cringe again.

ARTHUR: Please, kind professors. Do not say "D" to us! We are honor students and we find that to be a most disturbing sound.

PROF #1: What is your name?

ARTHUR: I am Arthur, King of the Students. And these fine individuals are my academic army. We are bound for the mythical land of Cramalot, to gain entrance into their ivy-covered university.

PROF #1, #2, and #3 pause for a moment, and then chuckle out loud.

PROF #2: Ivy?

PROF #3: You don't look like you have the brains.

PROF #1: Or the money.

PROF #2: Oh, let's just grade them now, shall we?

PROF #3: Oh, yes, let's! And we know which letter would end their dream, don't we?

PROF #1: Have you any idea how expensive it is to attend an ivy school?

ARTHUR and KNIGHTS look around and shrug.

ARTHUR: Well, all colleges are expensive...

PROF #1, #2, and #3 laugh heartily again.

PROF #1: (*Mocking.*) Expensive! He thinks they're expensive.

PROF #3: Prohibitive is more like it.

PROF #2: And ivy schools are the worst of all.

ARTHUR: Well, we'd like to try it just the same. You see we're on a superintendent's quest.

PROF #1: (*Unimpressed.*) Oh, please, my Aunt Tilly is on a quest! Simple entry into a top school isn't enough.

PROF #2: To get past this point, you'll need a scholarship.

PROF #3: A scholarship! To cover the ridiculous expense of an ivy education. Oh, but they are hard to come by! It's like they don't even want you to win one.

The PROF #1, #2, and #3 share a hearty laugh.

ARTHUR: All right. What must we do? What is the process?

PROF #1: Oh, there are applications.

PROF #2: Application fees.

PROF #3: Letters of recommendation. And assorted qualifying essays and tests. Here's a packet.

One arm hands over a pile of papers, and the eager KNIGHTS spread out and begin working.

PROFS #1, #2, and #3: (*Sarcastically, as they depart from view.*) Good luck!

KYLE: Well, this may all be a waste. What if we don't get in to that university? What then?

GALLAHAD: I'll tell you what awaits us then: the Civil Service test and a lifetime behind a desk at the Department of Horse-Drawn Vehicles doing repetitive tasks for an ungrateful public.

LANCELOT: Sounds an awful lot like being a teacher.

GALLAHAD: Stop whining. You get the summers off.

He paces near CLAPSY and FELTON, and dismissively shoos them away.

ROBIN: It can't be as bad as all that.

KYLE: Yes. We are the most talented our villages have to offer.

They notice for the first time that a beautiful young lady, GWENEVERE, sits alone working on some paperwork herself.

ARTHUR: Oh, hello.

GWENEVERE: Hello. My name is Lady Gwenevere. I've been here for some time now, working on this scholarship application packet the Profs gave me. I'm trying to get into a good school, but this process is getting me down. It takes me so long to get things done. I've missed Early Action and Early Decision.

ROBIN: What's the difference?

GWENEVERE: Nobody knows. And now the regular deadline looms large before me. *(Sighs.)* I'm about to give up. I may just go with one of my safety schools.

ARTHUR: No! You must join up with us. We are on the same quest. I am Arthur, King of the Students and we are on our way to Cramalot. Our library is not far from this place. Come with us, and together we can all achieve what we alone could not.

GWENEVERE: Oh, I wasn't completely alone. I'm a member of the National Honor Society. *(Points to a pin on her collar.)* See? I have the official pin and everything. They've helped me get this far, but I just can't seem to put things together.

ARTHUR: What's an Honor Society?

GWENEVERE: A group of highly recommended students who have demonstrated the finest academic achievements and character.

ARTHUR: How extraordinary. Do you study together?

GWENEVERE: Oh, yes. Sometimes. Though I suspect some people are in it just to be able to put it on applications like this one.

ARTHUR: Well, we have no such membership to put on our applications. (*Feeling defeated.*) How will we ever get through now? The Profs will certainly say “D” to us again and end our quest forever.

GWENEVERE: Cheer up, Arthur! All is not lost. You can start your own chapter of National Honor Society. I will accompany you to Cramalot and help you.

ARTHUR: And, Gwenevere, I will help you! We’ll see that you join us in getting these applications finished in time. Come on, friends. To the library!

They all depart together. Blackout.

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