

# Adapting

"Fine Print"  
(Pilot)

written by

JB June

213-537-9880  
jb@jbjune.com

**EXT. ROCKY FIELD, DESERT PLANET - DAY**

We drop into the middle of an epic magic space battle beneath a reddish sun on a rocky, desert planet. Complete science-fantasy chaos-- CLASH of swords, PLASMA EXPLOSIONS, and MAGIC ENERGY BLASTS all around.

Dozens of ARCHANGELS-- young, stripling, winged warriors clad in ancient Roman-style body armor -- run and fly around the open basin between a parked spaceship and ancient stone temple ruins, battling hundreds of four-armed, demon-faced, purple-skinned, alien DAEVAN WARRIORS.

In the midst of the melee, a small team of human WARLORDS lead the fight against the Daevans, each armored and armed in a distinct style, unique to an ancient Earth culture with a magical-space-age twist.

EXPLOSIONS flash around the battlefield as the Warlords fight their way through the Daevan horde.

MATCH CUT TO:

**EXT. RED CARPET, SCI-FAN CONVENTION CENTER - EVENING**

Cameras flash amid a horde of adoring FANS and PRESS taking pictures of the ACTORS who were playing the Warlords in the magic space battle scene. Now dressed up in stylish, modern outfits for photo ops and appearances, they make their way through the crowd of cosplayers and genre media reporters to the red carpet and entrance.

DUSTIN (40s, ruggedly handsome leading man) takes his time signing autographs and giving fist bumps, eating up the attention.

As Dustin stops to take a selfie with a fan dressed as his on-screen King Arthur WarLords character, LAWRENCE (60s, posh, old-school, English gent) pushes past him impatiently to take two quick, obligatory red carpet photos-- his forced smile not quite hiding his annoyance -- before rushing inside.

BERTO (20s, self-obsessed playboy in the latest men's fashion) pulls two leopard-print-bikini-clad buxom twins from the crowd to pose for a photo, flashing a slightly skeevey smile.

**EXT. ROCKY FIELD, DESERT PLANET - DAY**

The epic space battle rages on. In bright feathers and jaguar pelts, twin Mayan warriors, XBLANQUE & HUNAHPU (both played by Berto) emerge from the cave-like temple at the far end of the battlefield, helping a LIMPING MAN draped in a bear-skin cloak.

MERLIN (Lawrence) spies them in the distance. With a magical POOF he blinks out of existence. Reappears in a burst of energy in front of Xblanque & Hunahpu at the other end of the basin.

The bear-skin-cloaked man lifts his head, revealing the bearded, chiseled, barely conscious face of ARTHUR (Dustin).

ARTHUR/DUSTIN  
(weakly)  
It...is...done.

He drops a golden chalice onto the dusty ground between them.

MERLIN/LAWRENCE  
The grail-key! And Mortus?

ARTHUR/DUSTIN  
Defeated...for now.

With a PAINED GROAN, he drops to the ground and passes out.

**INT. GREEN ROOM, SCI-FAN CONVENTION CENTER - DAY**

SOPHIE (28, awkward, untidy, biracial writer) watches the scene on a video monitor on the green room wall, dissatisfied.

Next to her, DANNY and DONNIE (20s, nerdy, neurotic, diverse writing team so inseparable and in sync that they're often referred to affectionally as the duo nickname "D&D") also watch and judge the final cut on screen.

SOPHIE  
So fucking melodramatic.

DONNIE  
I was gonna say "try-hard."

DANNY  
Super sweaty.

SOPHIE  
Took a me a week to write the perfect line for that moment. If he'd just done the scene as written, it wouldn't be so--

Dustin walks up behind, admiring his scene on the monitor.

DUSTIN

So evocative, right? I know you guys prefer it with all the words and dialogue you wrote and everything, but sometimes it feels better with an emotional action.

Overhearing, ALAN (50s, schlubby and unkempt, but clearly dressed up more than usual) comes over to save the writers.

ALAN

Sometimes you're right, Dustin.  
And sometimes it's nice to have both versions shot and in the can so we're not left with...  
(nodding at the monitor)  
... only one usable take.

Dustin's eyes betray offense, but he quickly covers--

DUSTIN

Lucky for us, one take is all I need. I fucking nailed it.

With a smug smirk, he walks away to join other actors.  
JOANNA (30s, vibrant, confident, Irish actress) walks up.

JOANNA

He's been like this since People's Choice. Acting like he's a personified gift to television.

SOPHIE

Nah, he's been acting this way since well before.

ALAN

I'm told he was quite pleasant as a child, though.

DONNIE

You were nominated too. Doesn't seem to have gone to your head.

JOANNA

Thanks, Donnie. But supporting actress ain't quite the same as best actor. Suppose that's just my role, eh? Not like you lot've given me a chance to showcase. I've done West End Shakespeare and here I am just...  
(pointing at the monitor)  
Well, you know...

**ON SCREEN--** Joanna, as fierce Celtic warrior GWENHWYFHAR, with face paint and fur cloak, SOBS wordlessly over the seemingly lifeless body of Dustin's ARTHUR.

**INT. AUDITORIUM, SCI-FAN CONVENTION CENTER - CONTINUOUS**

In a crowded convention center auditorium, WARLORDS FANS-- Geeks and cosplayers dressed like favorite characters -- sit in the dark, reverently watching the scene play out on a projection screen on a stage at the front of the auditorium.

**ON SCREEN--** Gwen CRIES dramatically. Merlin checks Arthur's vitals. Others run over to check on their beloved leader.

GWENHWYFHAR/JOANNA  
(distraught)  
Arthur, my love! I can't lose you!

MERLIN/LAWRENCE  
He lives. Though his life force is greatly drained.

GWENHWYFHAR/JOANNA  
We must get him to the Avalon system, where he can be healed.

MERLIN/LAWRENCE  
First, to end this battle. If Arthur has truly succeeded in destroying Mortus' corporeal form, we have merely attained a foothold in this war. It is not yet won.

**INT. GREEN ROOM, SCI-FAN CONVENTION CENTER - CONTINUOUS**

The party continues with great revelry as everyone ignores the final scene playing quietly in the background on the monitor.

**ON SCREEN--** Merlin and Gwenthwyfhar are clearly in a moment of great importance, though the dialogue is drowned by the DIN OF CONVERSATION in the room.

INTENSE WARTIME MUSIC plays as the monitor screen cuts to black. Credits roll.

**IN THE ROOM--** Everyone's attention turns to the monitor.

ALAN  
That's our cue. It's time.

**INT. AUDITORIUM, SCI-FAN CONVENTION CENTER - CONTINUOUS**

Lights come up on a panel table on the stage below the screen.

Panel host, AMISHA (20s) takes her place at a chair opposite the table. She APPLAUDS along with the audience, urging them to maintain the enthusiasm as she excitedly speaks into her mic--

AMISHA

How's that for a season finale cliffhanger, huh? I can't wait to dig into it with my guests, so let's get to it. Please welcome to the stage our favorite WarLords: Dustin Martin, Joanna Chance, Lawrence Gareth, Alberto Marquez, Indigo Dembe, Liam Skarsgård, Brandon Yang, and with creator-showrunner, Alan Weiss.

Each walks on stage as they're introduced, boisterously hamming it up for the adoring crowd. They find their seats on the panel and settle in beneath--

Their WarLords characters now projected on the screen behind them in a team-photo style portrait banner with character names-- **KING ARTHUR, GWENHWYFCHAR, MERLIN, XBLANQUE & HUNAHPU, KANDAKE** (Nubian warrior queen) **RAGNAR** (mighty Viking), and **XIAHOU DUN** (eye-patched, Chinese warrior monk).

Lawrence fumbles opening a water bottle, nearly knocking over a mic stand on the table in front of him.

ALAN

You'll have to excuse us. There was an open bar in the green room.

LAUGHTER from the audience.

JOANNA

We're celebrating! We haven't seen each other in months.

LIAM (30s, easy to see why he was cast as a hulking viking, Ragnar, as he physically looms over everyone, even seated)--

LIAM

Not since we wrapped in January.

BRANDON (30s, amiable attitude and effeminate mannerisms are a far cry from the terse, cold warrior monk he plays on-screen)--

BRANDON

We're a little over-excited.

Next to Brandon, INDIGO (20s, her playful, genuine smile expresses natural affability and authenticity) GIGGLES with Berto over a private whispered joke off mic.

DUSTIN  
You just have to--  
(like an on-set director)  
Action!

The cast suddenly pipes down, as soldiers called to attention.

DUSTIN (CONT'D)  
It's like a pavlovian trigger-response for actors.

AMISHA  
Well, now that we've got everyone's attention. Let's get to the first question: We just watched Arthur take down Mortus, becoming incapacitated in the process. Obviously, readers of the *Knights of New Realms* series knows where this storyline goes, but you haven't always stuck by the source 100% of the time. What can we expect for Arthur in season two?

JOANNA  
I, for one, wouldn't mind if we stuck to the storyline from the books. Maybe even extend it. Let Gwen lead the WarLords for a bit.

APPLAUSE and WOOS from the WOMEN in the audience.

DUSTIN  
But we can't kill off the cash cow just yet, can we?

The audience LAUGHS at his self-deprecation.

#### **INTERCUT PANEL STAGE/GREEN ROOM**

Watching the panel live-streaming on the monitor--

SOPHIE  
Ironical that he think he's the cow in this scenario, since he's the one milking the show for all he can squeeze out.

DANNY

And he's not as beefy as the other guys anymore either.

ALAN

I don't want to spoil anything, and we haven't necessarily finalized any decision yet. So let's just say Arthur's fate is still up in the air.

DUSTIN

Lucky I'm still under contract. I might actually be worried.

LAUGHS and CHEERS of agreement from the audience. They don't want to lose him either.

AMISHA

Fair enough. And speaking of changes from the books, in that final scene a certain regal title wasn't mentioned, and Excalibur hasn't yet been handed off. Some of us are wondering if Lady Gwen will be gaining the "One True King" title along with Excalibur as part of her transition to a leadership position next season, or if the omission in the finale was intentional. What are your thoughts on that, Joanna?

JOANNA

Yeah, I'm kinda wondering the same thing, myself. I can say this: We actually shot a version of the scene with all that on the day. The decision to cut it wasn't made until after we finished shooting. So we weren't really sure if any of it would make the cut until we watched the final, aired version.

ALAN

It's not that we won't be using the title at some point, we just didn't want to necessarily get into it all within the last five minutes of the season.

AMISHA

So Lady Gwen will get to be One True King next season?



JOANNA

I hope so.

Amisha looks to Alan, hoping the silence will pressure an actual answer. But finally--

ALAN

No spoilers. You can keep trying, but I can't give you the answers you want yet. We're still writing the season anyway. Pre-production starts next week, and like Joanna said, some of these decisions aren't even made until we're seeing how it plays in the edit.

DUSTIN

I like to think Arthur will always be the 'One True King,' even if Gwen gets to be temporary leader of the WarLords.

JOANNA

Yeah, our word for that is "King."

LAWRENCE

(under his breath)  
Rubbish.

Everyone looks to Lawrence nervously. Unsure of what he'll say.

SOPHIE

Oh no. Not this again. Didn't someone prep Lawrence for this?

DONNIE

I think that was before his third or fourth G and T.

SOPHIE

Move on. Move on!

AMISHA

Was there something--

LAWRENCE

It's all a load of rubbish. Gwen can't be the true king. This science-fiction nonsense constantly disrespects the institution of the monarchy.

Uncomfortable silence. Alan tries to break it--

ALAN

Lawrence always pushes back on the king and queen stuff. Apparently the British are still sensitive about a probably-made-up king from centuries ago.

UNEASY LAUGHTER. They can get past it if they just move on.

LAWRENCE

'cept it's not just ancient history, eh? The royal line persists and regal titles mean somethin' to us.

He brushes off Joanna's attempt to lay on a comforting hand.

LAWRENCE (CONT'D)

No, it's just not right. Only men can be king. Women can be queen, look at Queen Elizabeth, and it's just as good, but no, not for bloody exploitative author F.A. Emerson and...this whole lot.

Phones are out recording as people in the audience sense the outrageous possibilities of what else he might might say.

LAWRENCE (CONT'D)

Joanna 'n' I are the only true Britons here and no one else understands the importance of King Arthur and the monarchy to our heritage and country.

INDIGO

Excuse me?

LAWRENCE

Sorry, I just meant born and raised, you know?

INDIGO

My family moved from Kenya to London when I was three. Literally as far as I can remember, I've been English.

JOANNA

And I didn't move to Belfast from Dublin till I was 25. So...

LAWRENCE

Well...bloody, whatever.

(MORE)

LAWRENCE (CONT'D)  
Point still stands. It's bad enough that we're appropriating all these other cultures to have a fantasy collection including...  
(re: the diverse cast)  
...one of each kind, right?

An audible GASP from the crowd.

ALAN  
Again, we had a bit to drink backstage. Apologies.

AMISHA  
Well...uh...I guess we can talk about the, um...yeah, the discussion on some of the forums about diversity and inclusion. Some hail the casting as being the most diverse of any cable series to date, while others have called out what they see as tokenism and culturally insensitive stereotype. Perhaps you can speak to that?

Alan clearly wants to say something. Holds back.

BERTO  
We've had this discussion among the cast and crew many times. Alan has actually been very open to input from those of us with skin in the game, so to speak.

BRANDON  
We get that the characterization can sometimes feel a little cultural appropriation-y. But really, the idea is the WarLords are a group of real, historical figures from ancient cultures.

INDIGO  
Our wardrobe department takes very seriously the influence of my character's African origins. I actually feel more cultural respect from Alan, the writers, and our cast and crew than I do from these so-called fans.

BERTO

Discussions on those subreddits are filled with more shit-talking than fandom, that's for sure.

BRANDON

Not like you guys here. You're the real fans, right?

Self-serving audience APPLAUSE tells us they're back on board.

AMISHA

Pivoting on this idea of online critics, there seems to be two factions of vocal fans with strong, derisive opinions. One group of book-fan purists says the show ruins or detracts from Emerson's novels. The other ignores the source and is more focused on the cast and cultural portrayal. How much of that is taken into consideration in conversations about keeping the audience happy?

ALAN

We try to stay away from a lot of those sites.

SOPHIE

Except the daily 'Reddit and Weep' check-in, of course.

DANNY

Not to mention the troll-baiting Easter eggs we add in as well.

ALAN

We're fans too. We respect and revere the source, and Emerson's vision, but we have to adapt hundreds of pages of these science-fantasy novels into just thirteen forty-five minute episodes per season. There'll always be concessions.

AMISHA

So the #BooksDidItBetter memes don't have any influence?

ALAN

No.

(MORE)

ALAN (CONT'D)

In fact, we've been in talks with Emerson to bring her back in for a true, appropriate influence.

AMISHA

In what capacity?

ALAN

We had many hours of discussions with her in early development, and we were given her blessing to take it in the direction we did. We're happy to be having have those conversations with her again.

He forces a cheery grin, betraying a dishonesty to his words.

Sophie whips out her phone and frantically dials.

DANNY

What's going on?

DONNIE

What's he talking about?

Sophie holds the phone to her ear waiting for the pickup.

SOPHIE

I don't know but I think Alan just announced something that we were weeks away from--

(into phone)

Hey Stan. Yeah, are you watching this shit show livestream?

# **INT. LIVING ROOM, FAE'S CONDO - EVENING**

BEN (20s, tall, lumberjack-looking hipster) sits on a plush couch watching the livestream of the WarLords panel on an iPad propped up on a glass coffee table.

With a malicious smirk, he types manically on a laptop.

**On the computer screen--** He types out a scathing post about the convention panel onto a r/WarLordsTV subreddit page.

# **INT. OFFICE, FAE'S CONDO - SAME TIME**

FAE (40s, dressed like she means business, even at home) sits at a desk in her minimalist home office, facing a wall of windows overlooking Manhattan.

The laptop on the desk in front of her is open to a word document. Blank save for the heading-- **CHAPTER THREE**

The cursor blinks derisively under. She frowns. With furrowed brows she tries to will the words onto the page without typing.

She eyes a stack of **FINAL NOTICE** and **PAYMENT DUE** envelopes laying on the desk near the computer. Her gaze moves onto a framed photo, peeking out from behind the computer screen, of a younger, happier Fae with a smiling husband, FRANK (30s) and son BRADLEY (8). Haunting her attempts to write.

A BUZZ syncs with the blinking cursor-- Blink BUZZ. Blink BUZZ.

**INT. LIVING ROOM, FAE'S CONDO - SAME TIME**

The BUZZING is Ben's vibrating phone. The screen shows a **call from Paul**. He picks it up.

BEN

Hey Paul. I'm watching the panel stream now. Did you see Lawrence--

(beat)

No. They literally haven't even called her since the series order.

(beat)

Sure yeah. I'll get her.

**INT. OFFICE, FAE'S CONDO - CONTINUOUS**

KNOCK KNOCK.

Fae is still transfixed by the framed photo. Lost in thought.

KNOCK KNOCK.

The sound finally registers. She's back in the moment.

FAE

What? What the fuck, Ben?

The door gently opens. Ben pokes his head in.

BEN

Sorry to interrupt during your busy hours, Aunt Fae.

FAE

I told you, no more "Aunt" when we're working. Even if we're alone. Right now you're my assistant, not my nephew.

He glances at the computer screen with a blank page.  
She closes the laptop quickly in shame.

FAE (CONT'D)

And yes, I am busy. So what the fuck do you want?

BEN

Paul says they want you in L.A. on Monday. Something about a consulting gig.

FAE

Fuck off. By Monday? I can't just up and fly over there on a moment's notice.

BEN

I know. I'm sorry. It's just...here, talk to Paul.

He enters. Hands her the phone. She puts it to her ear.

FAE

This is ridiculous.

(beat)

I don't give a shit. After how they squandered my genius, I don't even want to help the third-rate, bloodsucking, rip-off, assholes. I don't care what--

(beat)

How much?

(beat)

OK, yeah. Fine. I'll be there.

**INT. HOTEL BAR, ST. REGIS SAN FRANCISCO - MORNING**

The cast and writers from the green room celebration the night before are strewn about a fancy hotel bar. Most are on their phones ignoring everyone else.

Sophie enters. Sits at the bar next to Alan.

SOPHIE

The airport shuttle should be here in about five to ten minutes.

Alan finishes a second glass of beer. Motions to the bartender.

ALAN

One more and then close out.

(re: Sophie's judgy look)

Five to ten minutes of vacation.

She considers.

SOPHIE  
Alright, fuck it.  
(to bartender)  
I'll have a jack and ginger.

She looks over at the actors trying to hide their faces with sunglasses and hats.

SOPHIE  
Don't they know that they're more obvious trying to disguise themselves like that? San Fran Sci-Fan Con comes once a year. I say let their adoring fans come recognize them.

ALAN  
They aren't all so much worried about the, uh 'adoring' fans.

Indigo and Brandon nervously keep an eye out like paranoids.

ALAN (CONT'D)  
And I think Liam's just hungover.

Liam lies on a couch, hat down, covering his eyes. GROANS.

SOPHIE  
So what's the deal with Emerson? You're bringing her back in? I thought it was decided she wasn't good for the show.

ALAN  
It was decided. But then Dana took over the network and that was undecided.  
(sips his fresh beer)  
Anyway, her agent says she'll be in to meet Monday, but she's not totally on board yet. Might take some convincing to finalize.

SOPHIE  
Surprise surprise. Big-time, famous author has some demands.

ALAN  
Sounds like she has some notes on season one as well. Because of course she does. Hell, I have notes on the season.

(MORE)



ALAN (CONT'D)  
It's not like I didn't want to  
make it better--

SOPHIE  
-- I know, Alan. Me too. Been here  
the whole time.

ALAN  
Her ideas were maybe too much for  
our freshman season, but I think  
we can fold her in better now that  
we established a process.

SOPHIE  
By "process" you mean we try  
everything we can to make a good  
show, and Stan and the network  
push back on everything?

ALAN  
Yeah basically. Until it's noted  
to death and crushed into a little  
mediocre cube of bullshit.  
(big sip of beer)  
But I think we can lump her into  
our bullshit cube. Then she feels  
like she has input, we get the  
bump from her authorial stamp of  
approval. It's win-win.

SOPHIE  
So it's all just part of some  
Machiavellian game to look better  
and change nothing?

ALAN  
Hiring her is a mandate from the  
new network brass. But if she can  
actually help us without getting  
in the way, I'm happy to take her  
counsel. Maybe we get the book-  
fans off our ass at least.

A hotel CONCIERGE enters the bar.

CONCIERGE  
Your shuttle has arrived. We're  
loading your luggage now.

Everyone gathers themselves together to leave the hotel.

**INT. BRUNCH DINER, MANHATTAN - DAY**

In a packed diner, Fae sits at a booth across from PAUL (50s, old school literary agent in a wool cardigan).

FAE

I just don't want to be distracted from finishing the book.

PAUL

Come on, Fae. We both know you're not close to finishing. My guess is it's barely broken in, right?

FAE

I've made headway into the first--

PAUL

-- If you'd just give outlines, this wouldn't be a problem.

FAE

Paul, you know I don't outline.

PAUL

And if you weren't my most consistent client, I'd push to change that, but I know you. That's why I know something's up.

FAE

Nothing's up. Just taking my time with it. It's the last book of the series. I want to end it right.

PAUL

Of course. Taking your time is fine. I want just as much as you to secure your legacy. And I won't sugar-coat it, you've got to stick this landing to keep the series as beloved as ever for posterity.

Their SERVER places a check at the edge of the table. Fae eyes it nervously then quickly looks away. Paul pulls a credit card from his wallet. Drops it on the check.

PAUL (CONT'D)

It's been almost three years now. After burning through the advance, we really can't wait on publish for cashflow. This consulting deal's just what we need.

FAE

I'm not entirely against the idea. It's just that these guys already fucked me before. They treated me like a darling, sweet lady lover through development and then they got picked up and dropped me like a sack of shit.

PAUL

That can't happen this time. They need you more than you need them. The new head of the network isn't as in love with the show as the old guy. I heard they're on the bubble for cancellation if they can't get this season right.

She grows more worked up and louder as conversation continues.

FAE

That just means they're going to stray even further from my material than before. Can't do it my way without some major changes.

PAUL

They wouldn't have invited you in if they didn't want your input. They may take it, they may not. But you'll get paid either way.

FAE

It's not about that. Sure, the money will be nice.

PAUL

It'll be necessary.

FAE

It's really not about the money.

PAUL

It's always about the money.

FAE

For you, sure. But for me it's about artistic integrity.

PAUL

You're a novelist with an offhands editor. Write whatever the hell you want.

(MORE)

PAUL (CONT'D)

End the book with the universe imploding for all we care. TV's different. These guys have to answer to a studio, network, and ratings.

FAE

I get it. But I can't just turn a blind eye to it all. If they want my thoughts on how they're doing, they're gonna get an earful of umbrage. I won't stand for them shitting all over my legacy.

PAUL

The books are your legacy. The show's a different thing entirely.

FAE

It's got my fucking name in the opening credits, Paul.

Other PATRONS can't help but listen in now.

FAE (CONT'D)

It may be it's own thing, but it's the only thing most of the country associates with my name. If I sign on and they still get cancelled, it'll be all anyone remembers of F.A. Emerson and *The Knights of New Realms*.

She stands to leave. Grabs her purse.

FAE (CONT'D)

Actually they won't even remember that. The hacks changed my title, so it'll only be remembered as that terrible fucking *WarLords* show that got cancelled.

PAUL

Take the deal. Make it not happen.

FAE

I gotta go.

She leaves. He calls out after her--

PAUL

Have a nice flight.

**EXT. DINER, MANHATTAN - DAY**

Fae exits the diner out into the cloudy, grey daylight.

Waiting outside, Ben looks up from his phone and sees her.

BEN

The car's just up the street here.  
Your bags are packed and  
everything's ready to go. I've got  
your boarding pass and itinerary,  
and I already checked you in on--

FAE

Shit. I left my jacket in there.

BEN

You want me to go back and get it?

FAE

Could you? I don't want to go back  
in there. I already--

BEN

-- Stormed off?

FAE

Made my exit. I didn't storm off.

BEN

Sure yeah. For what it's worth. I  
think you were right about  
artistic integrity. It's more  
important than the money.

FAE

What, were you spying on me?

BEN

No. Just keeping tabs. Reading  
your lips a little through the  
window. Plus, you got a  
bit... 'vocal' at the end there.

FAE

Just go get my jacket.

He pops into the diner.

She SIGHS heavily, exhausted. Pulls a pack of cigarettes and  
lighter from her purse. Takes one out. Lights it. Muttering to  
herself through her smoky exhale--

FAE

Fucking leeches. All of 'em.

**INT. HALLWAY, WARLORDS BUILDING - DAY**

Alan walks down the hall to his office with Danny and Donnie.

DANNY

We just don't know how to get them  
from Avalon to the Asgard system.

ALAN

By spaceship, as always.

DONNIE

Funny. But no, there's this  
dramatic gap between healing  
Arthur on Avalon and getting  
everyone to Asgard to find Fenrir  
that we can't quite figure out.

ALAN

What? We broke this part of the  
season weeks ago.

DANNY

Yeah, but we were vague on this  
transition and it doesn't feel  
right with the way we end 203.

DONNIE

We feel like it's unearned how--

ALAN

Guys. We can't be going back to  
rehash this. We broke this  
already. Get the notes from Abby  
and figure out how to fit it into  
your episode. I don't want to have  
to keep micromanaging you two.

DONNIE

OK, yeah. Will do. Don't worry.

DANNY

We got this.

He leaves them to go into his office. D&D share a unsure look--  
"Do we got this?" "Nope."

**INT. ALAN'S OFFICE ANTEROOM, WARLORDS BUILDING - DAY**

Alan enters the waiting room between the hall and his office. A  
few uncomfortable chairs line the wall opposite a desk. Behind  
the desk, LAUREN (20s, uncertain but determined) welcomes Alan.

ALAN  
I'm so behind this morning.  
What'd'ya got for me?

She hands him a stack of papers.

LAUREN  
Jane wants your input on the  
witches' wardrobe, and Bobby has  
questions about the art designs  
for space-views of Asgard. But  
don't forget you have a nine a.m.  
with Emerson before the read.

ALAN  
Of course.

LAUREN  
And it's already ten after.

ALAN  
Thank you.

He retreats into his office. She focuses back on her computer.  
A few moments later, Ben and Fae enter. Ben hovers over Lauren.

BEN  
Felicia A. Emerson for Alan Weiss.

FAE  
Christ, Ben. They know who I am  
already. They're expecting--  
(to Lauren)  
Can you let Alan know I'm here.

LAUREN  
Of course, Ms. Emerson.

Dustin enters. Brusquely pushes past, ignoring Fae and Ben.

DUSTIN  
I need a quick five with Alan.

LAUREN  
Um...I'm sorry Dustin. Ms. Emerson  
has a meeting scheduled for--

FAE  
It's fine. Let him have it.

Dustin looks at Fae. Recognizes her but can't place her.

DUSTIN  
Emerson? The author. I remember  
your face. Did we...?

He gestures, indicating a sexual relationship.

FAE  
Did we fuck? God no. I don't sleep  
with vapid, word-puppet actors.  
But you certainly tried back when  
we met the first time.

DUSTIN  
Right. Back in development?

FAE  
Yep. When you unsuccessfully hit  
on me back then too.

DUSTIN  
I don't unsuccessfully hit on  
anyone. Except the occasional  
lesbian.

He gives a questioning look-- "Are you a lesbian?"

FAE  
Fuck you. I was married.

DUSTIN  
"Was"? No longer?

FAE  
Was married. Is widowed.

DUSTIN  
Yikes. I don't want get into--  
(to Lauren)  
I'm just gonna go in for a sec.

He hurries away into Alan's office.

LAUREN  
I'm sorry, Ms. Emerson.

FAE  
It's fine. Really. I gotta go have  
a smoke anyway.

**EXT. WARLORDS BUILDING, SANTA MONICA - DAY**

Fae pushes out a set of double doors exiting a stucco-sided  
office building into the fresh air outside.



Pulls her cigarettes and lighter from her purse. Starts to light one.

A SECURITY GUARD appears. He CLEARS HIS THROAT pointedly.

She sees a sign near the door-- **No Smoking within 25 ft of any door or window**

She gives him a look-- "Really?"

He smirks. She moves about ten feet further away. Tries again.

Another THROAT CLEARING.

She flashes an even more emphatic-- "Really?!"

He nods- "Uh huh."

She defiantly inhales about half the cigarette in one breath. Flicks away the remainder. Struts back inside, staring down the Security Guard the whole time.

**INT. ALAN'S OFFICE ANTEROOM, WARLORDS BUILDING - DAY**

Ben sits on the edge of Lauren's desk, subtly looming over her. She looks up at him in a genuinely admiring way.

LAUREN

I didn't even know there were tribes still living in the jungle.

BEN

And I guess we were the first outsiders to visit the tribe since the nineties.

Sophie enters, briskly heading to Alan's office. She barely glances over at Lauren, dismissively--

SOPHIE

Sorry I'm late. I'm just gonna--  
(notices Ben)  
Ben?

He gets up a little too eagerly. Composes himself.

BEN

Oh hey Sophie.

SOPHIE

I didn't expect you to still be...

BEN

Fae's assistant?

SOPHIE

Yeah.

(looking around)

Where is the esteemed author,  
anyway?

Fae re-enters the room.

FAE

Trying to have a smoke. Apparently  
you can't within a quarter mile of  
a building anymore. Thought this  
was America.

SOPHIE

Y'know, they aren't as stringent  
about vaping. You could give that  
a shot and also be inhaling a lot  
less toxic shit into your lungs.

FAE

Sophie, right? Yeah, if I recall,  
you broke my dear nephew's sweet  
little heart last time 'round.

SOPHIE

Oh, I don't think I--

BEN

She didn't break my--

Alan's office door flings open. Dustin storms out, ignoring  
everyone on his way to the hall.

Sophie quickly retreats into Alan's office. Fae and Ben follow.

**INT. ALAN'S OFFICE, WARLORDS BUILDING - DAY**

Alan sits behind a desk cluttered with papers, scripts, and a  
laptop computer setup with an external monitor and keyboard.  
Fae and Ben sit in two small chairs facing the desk.

Sophie leans against the arm of a worn brown leather couch  
adjacent to the desk, half-covered in more loose papers.

SOPHIE

What's Dustin so huffy and puffy  
about? We haven't even had the  
season's first read-through and  
he's already in here complaining?

ALAN

Wouldn't feel like a normal day  
around here if Dustin wasn't  
bitching about something.

SOPHIE

Yea, I just thought we'd get into production at least before he'd start in on it.

FAE

Is it about today's draft? Because I read the script on the plane, and I have a few thoughts as well.

ALAN

It's a whole thing. We can get into it with the room later.

(rifling through the papers)  
Sorry, we don't have a lot of time. I'm running behind this morning, and gotta get to the set in a few minutes.

He finds a sheet with an organization chart. Hands it Fae.

ALAN (CONT'D)

This is just a rundown of where we see you fitting in and your role on staff. We'll have your full contract for you later today.

She examines the chart.

FAE

Why am I way the hell down here with the new low-level writers?

ALAN

As Consulting Producer, you'll essentially be at staff level, though you'll have your producer credit and we'll very highly consider your input on story.

FAE

Consider my input? Are you fucking kidding me? I am the input. It's all from my brain.

ALAN

Exactly. Which is why we're so lucky to have you on board.

FAE

I'm not on board yet. And if this is how you see me fitting in. I don't know if I will be.

ALAN

Look, I get it. The *Knights of New Realms* is your baby. *WarLords* is mine. Any authorial insight you have will be awesome, but big decisions are ultimately mine. I ran the show fine without you last year, and you're gonna have to trust me to keep steering the ship. We just don't have time to have anyone question my authority.

A KNOCK at the door-- Lauren pops her head in.

LAUREN

Sorry, Alan. You're needed on set.

Off Fae's look of consternation.

**INT. TABLE READ, WARLORDS SET - DAY**

Along the wall of a vast sound stage, a spaceship interior film set sits dark and empty. Off-camera and unlit, the futuristic space tech is clearly a cheap plastic and plywood fabrication.

Nearby, the *WarLords* cast sits at several long tables that have been arranged in a square with seats along the outside.

Various WRITERS, PRODUCERS, and DEPARTMENT HEADS fill the rest of the seats around the tables. Coffee cups, water bottles, purses, and scripts clutter the tables as everyone sits around on their phones or CHATTING as they wait.

Alan enters, followed by Fae, Ben, Sophie, and Lauren. Everyone at the tables gathers their attention to the incoming entourage. Now that Alan's here, they're ready to get started.

ALAN

(to Fae)

I've gotta go work something out with Shari from casting and I'll be at the head of the table for the read. You can sit with Sophie and the writers over here.

He indicates a table section opposite the area where actors and other VIPs are waiting for him to join. Leaves her there.

LAUREN

(to Ben)

You can come sit with the other assistants.

Ben looks to Fae. Hesitates. Allows himself to be pulled away.

SOPHIE  
Someday we'll get to sit up at the  
cool kids' table. Till then,  
welcome to the nerdy writers row.

She introduces each writer sitting along the table--

SOPHIE (CONT'D)  
This is Harris, our story editor.

HARRIS (20s)-- Cocky attitude, scruffy neckbeard and graphic  
tee, couldn't be bothered to look up from his laptop screen.

Next to him Donnie and Danny eagerly await their introduction.  
They stand nervously to greet Fae and shake her hand.

DONNIE  
Donnie Jackson.

DANNY  
Danny Patel.

FAE  
Really? Donnie and Danny? I'm  
never going to remember who's who.

SOPHIE  
Don't worry. You don't have to.  
They're a writing team, so they  
pretty much act as a unit.

HARRIS  
We usually just call them D&D.

FAE  
Oh, I love Dungeons and Dragons!

DONNIE  
You will be very welcome here.

Continuing, a trio of twenty-something awkward writers-- MATT,  
EDDIE, and LUIS -- wave and nod to Fae as they're introduced.

SOPHIE  
And this is Matt, Eddie, Luis. I'm  
sure you'll have a chance to--

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR (O.S.)  
(announcing)  
Ready!

SOPHIE  
Take a seat, they're starting.

They sit next to Harris.

A SCENE READER next to Alan narrates the scene description--

SCENE READER  
WarLords. Season Two. Episode One.  
"The Knights' Darkest Night"

CLAPS and CHEERS-- First table read of the season is exciting.

**INT. TABLE READ, WARLORDS SET - LATER**

Later, continuing on through the script--

SCENE READER  
Gwen closes her eyes and a bright  
golden light emanates from the  
device, engulfing her.

LAWRENCE  
It is done. Now, rise one true...

He hesitates, not wanting to say the next word.

SOPHIE  
(whispered)  
Seriously? Just fucking say it.

FAE  
He won't say "king"?

ALAN  
Lawrence? Are you gonna...?

LAWRENCE  
I won't. We've been over this. I  
can't get behind a woman as king.

ALAN  
You made your point. Keep reading.  
We'll talk about it later.

LAWRENCE  
Why read it now if it won't stay  
in the script?

JOANNA  
Why shouldn't it?

DUSTIN  
Not this again.

JOANNA  
Not what again?

DUSTIN

I'm with Lawrence. These characters aren't from this century. You can't just push your modern agendas onto--

JOANNA

They're on a spaceship in another dimension, for Christ's sake! They can have any viewpoint they--

Tired of arguing with Dustin, she turns to Alan.

JOANNA (CONT'D)

At this point, they're basically superheroes, right? Gwen can totally be as powerful as Arthur.

DUSTIN

It's not about being a powerful woman. It's about maintaining the integrity of the charac--

JOANNA

-- Oh, fuck your integrity!

ALAN

Cut the shit, OK guys? Just read the scene as written.

JOANNA

That's what I have a problem with. As written, Gwen is basically a damsel in distress. It's bullshit. I read the books. I know she's more powerful than that.

ALAN

I wrote the script. I know how she's written. Our version of Gwen is so not a damsel.

JOANNA

We're shortchanging her. I think we have an opportunity here to have her take on more than just the temporary title of king.

LAWRENCE

Can't we just say Queen?

FAE

(quietly)

Doesn't anyone read the fucking--

(MORE)

FAE (CONT'D)

(louder)

The honorific of 'One True King' was bestowed to Arthur with Excalibur from the Ancient Ones who are genderless. Gwen can have the same honorific. Doesn't matter if she happens to have a vagina.

JOANNA

Thank you!

DUSTIN

(re: Fae)

And why should we listen to her?

FAE

'Cause her made all this up when she wrote the fucking books!

ALAN

OK, let's take a break.

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR

(announcing)

That's lunch.

Everyone gets up and breaks off into small groups to leave.

Fae and Dustin stare each other down.

**INT. RESTAURANT, SANTA MONICA - DAY**

Fae and Alan sit next to each other at a table in the middle of a upscale Los Angeles restaurant.

STAN (50s, slick-backed hair, executive suit and style) finishes a phone call and joins them at the table.

ALAN

(to Fae)

This is Stan Lieberman, our studio head. He owns us, obviously, and goes between us and the network.

Stan offers his hand to Fae. As she shakes it--

FAE

Oh, I remember you.

STAN

Right, from back in development?

FAE

And my revenge fantasies.



A look of uncertainty, Stan then decides it's dry humor. He EXHALES a quiet half-chuckle.

STAN

Very good.

(responds to a text)

Anyway. I wanted to have lunch to go over a few details of your involvement with the show.

FAE

If I do come on board. I still haven't decided yet.

Stan sets his phone down forcefully.

STAN

Alan, you said you'd convince her.

ALAN

I said no such thing.

Alan digs into his salad and takes a bite.

ALAN (CONT'D)

(mouth full)

I got her here. Now it's your job to sell her.

STAN

Fine...I could sit here and give you the viewer data that went into this decision, but that's boring. It's my job to look at all that, and even I get bored. Fact is, WarLords is barely staying afloat, but I believe you can give us the second wind in our sails.

FAE

What exactly do you need me to do?

STAN

You wrote an exceptionally well-sold book series in a time when selling books is like selling floppy disks. We need your insight to help us do what's best.

ALAN

And by "what's best" he means "for the network."

STAN

As I keep telling you, what's best for the show is to make it what's best for the network.

He punctuates this by popping a shrimp in his mouth.

ALAN

So we can't get middle-aged women in Kansas to watch. It's a science-fantasy mythology show. It's always going to be niche.

STAN

When your niche pulls more than a two point six over a four-four share, then you can make it as weird as you want.

ALAN

Don't bust my balls about overnights! We're doing fine in the plus seven numbers. We know my viewers stream later in the week.

Stan notices Fae is completely lost.

STAN

Sorry. Told you it was boring. Point is: we think with your help, we can raise our metrics, appease the new network head, and stay under the cancellation radar.

ALAN

Dana cancelled basically the whole slate except us. Didn't have to keep us. Clearly she thinks we're doing fine.

FAE

What makes you think I can raise these metrics or whatever anyway? I may not understand them, but I just may not give a shit either. I didn't write these books because I thought they would ever be popular and successful. I wrote the only thing my mind could come up with, and my mind apparently trends towards a very specific, and albeit incredibly nerdy, niche.

ALAN

Exactly! I keep trying to explain this to these guys. WarLords is like my favorite thing in the world, but I feel like me and you, my staff, and maybe six other people in America appreciate this story for what it is.

STAN

That's a generous estimation. (checking another text message) Look, it's not personal, just business. And I have to make sure it stays a business.

FAE

If that's what you're after, I still don't know what you think I have to offer.

STAN

Oh right...offer. Here's the contract we wrote up for you.

From his briefcase, he pulls a binder with a thick stack of papers inside. Slides it across the table.

STAN (CONT'D)

The first page has the salary breakdown for the season. We sent a copy to your agent and lawyer to review as well.

Fae stares at the sheet, impressed.

FAE

That's a lot to turn down.

STAN

That's why I don't think you will.

Smiling, he pops another shrimp in his mouth. Chews.

**INT. FAE'S OFFICE, WARLORDS BUILDING - DAY**

Ben fills an empty shelf with *Knights of New Realms* hardcover books from a small cardboard box.

Sophie enters. Notices he's doing it wrong--

SOPHIE

You gotta put them in some kind of reasonable order, at least.

BEN

Oh, hey.

(re: his work)

I can never remember the order. I was just going to go alphabetical by title. Not like it matters.

She moves a book from the end to the beginning.

SOPHIE

Despite being last alphabetically, "WarLords" was first, obviously. That's why we named the show that. (rearranging more) Then "Knight's Day". Then "New Worlds." Actually, I'll just...

She shuffles books around, getting it right. Ben backs off.

SOPHIE

Voila. Proper chronological order. Well, narrative order, at least since much of "Forgotten Lands" is set in the past, but you get it.

BEN

Thanks, I guess.

SOPHIE

Y'know, you didn't need to bring all nine hardcopies. We have the ebooks available for everyone. Plus I have some old paperbacks in my office if you really need 'em.

BEN

I think she wants them more as a reminder or metaphor or something.

SOPHIE

Like the metaphor of you doing an unnecessary grunt-work job for her while she enjoys a fancy Hollywood three-martini lunch?

BEN

(seeing her point)

No.

She pulls a toy lightsaber-style techno-sword out of the box.

SOPHIE

And this?

BEN

Also a metaphor, probably.

She swings it around playfully, slashing the air.

BEN

Careful with that.

He snatches the toy from her. Her smile fades.

SOPHIE

Relax. It's a toy. We have a bunch like this in props.

BEN

It's actually a limited-edition, NECA Excalibur replica. Kind of a collector's item, so maybe we...

(gently places it on a display stand)

There we go.

She eyes him warily.

SOPHIE

I just want to say I'm sorry...For what happened last time.

BEN

Oh, don't worry about it.

SOPHIE

No, I shouldn't have ghosted you like that. I just got super busy.

BEN

(not buying it)

Sure. Yeah.

SOPHIE

I know that's like the cliché. But it's true. We were in development, then suddenly after the pilot and series order, I didn't even have time for my friends anymore, let alone a guy who I never, I don't know, I guess I never saw it going anywhere. You were only in town for a couple months before going back to New York. It seemed, well, not not worth it, but...

BEN

It's fine. I get it. I was kinda in the same place. Sure, we had some fun for a few weeks, but our lives were so different. Long distance wouldn't have worked.

SOPHIE

Exactly.

BEN

It's not like I was expecting it to go anywhere. I just would've liked to have had that conversation, I guess.

SOPHIE

I know. I'm sorry. You deserved that. It was just a weird time for me. Before the show I was just in this, like, self-destructive phase where I picked all the wrong men.

BEN

(sarcastically)

Oh cool. I was hoping you just got busy and wanted to leave it ephemeral and up in the air. Now that I know I was just being used as a sex-tool for your self-destruction, I feel much better.

SOPHIE

No. I didn't mean it like that. Maybe I'm explaining it wrong.

BEN

I think it's clearer than ever.

SOPHIE

Sorry. I shouldn't have said all that. I just thought...I don't know. You're right. That was fucked up. I'm sorry.

BEN

At least you can be honest now.

SOPHIE

This whole thing was stupid. Sorry I'm just gonna go. See you around.

She leaves. He watches her go, frustrated and hurt.

**INT. LAWRENCE'S TRAILER, STUDIO LOT - DAY**

Lawrence lounges in the seating area in his fancy actor's trailer, sipping a glass of scotch and glancing at a script.

Dustin enters--

DUSTIN

Hey Larry. Mind if I come in?

LAWRENCE

You already have.

DUSTIN

True. You got a minute?

LAWRENCE

Several.

Dustin plops down next to Lawrence.

DUSTIN

I just want to say I'm with you.

LAWRENCE

With me how?

DUSTIN

You know, like with all that stuff earlier at the read-through. I think you're right. The writers don't respect real history and the monarchy and all that.

LAWRENCE

(not buying it)

Uh huh.

DUSTIN

Anyway, this whole show is beneath you and me. We deserve better, and all these small-timers and newcomers are just using our star value to increase their own.

LAWRENCE

Make no mistake, I'm at a much higher caliber than even yourself. But I like the enthusiasm, so I'll allow your addition to the cause.

DUSTIN

We're so close to cancellation, I think I have an idea how to nix another season of this shit and get us off this stupid fucking TV show and back to blockbusters.

LAWRENCE

Blockbusters are for imbeciles and foreign markets. It's about prestige, not box office. And accolades, of course.

He points his cocktail glass at a three Oscars on a shelf.

DUSTIN

Why do you even have those here? Don't you have an awards shelf at home or something?

LAWRENCE

No one comes to see them there. And I want everyone who walks into this trailer to be reminded and feel the gravitas of my artistic accomplishments when they come to give me notes on trivial bollox.

DUSTIN

Sure. Whatever. I've already complained to Dana about this woman, and you know with my personal history with Dana--

LAWRENCE

Ah yes, we've all heard how you fucked your way past auditions.

DUSTIN

I didn't know she was VP at the time, I just thought she was part of casting and-- it doesn't matter. Point is: I've got some stuff in motion at the network, and I started an online petition to get some attention on this.

LAWRENCE

You need more attention online?

DUSTIN

No, not for myself. It's all anonymous.

(MORE)



DUSTIN (CONT'D)

It's just to get the Arthur Army in line with our interests, you know? We just need a little pushback against adding this sci-fi author bitch to our ranks. Make sure she doesn't start this consultant job and get in the way of our careers by keeping this dying show alive any longer.

LAWRENCE

Like I give a shit about her or her position on the show?

DUSTIN

Great. So we're in agreement. She's gotta go.

Lawrence sips his scotch. Eyes Dustin contemplatively.

**INT. WRITERS ROOM, WARLORDS BUILDING - DAY**

The WRITERS sit around a long table. The writers' assistant, ABBY (20) takes notes on laptop projected onto a big screen.

HARRIS

...then it's like they get past the gatekeeper to open the pearl gate to the Anunnaki realm.

Others nod and MURMUR agreement.

SOPHIE

That's good. But if we could make the gatekeeper one of the trolls, we can just re-use one of the day-players and we won't have to come up with a new costume.

Fae enters.

FAE

You're bringing trolls back again?

SOPHIE

Yeah. They tested well and they're much easier to shoot practical than frost giants. Plus they're a ton of fun to write.

FAE

But the giants defend the bifrost bridge and nine gates. That's just the actual mythology.

SOPHIE

Yeah, I know you kept pretty close to historical myths, but we allow ourselves to diverge slightly if it doesn't inherently affect character or season-level plots.

FAE

If you swap giants for trolls, how does Ragnar get the jötunn key?

DANNY

Actually, the jötunn myths are ambiguous on description. Either trolls or giants fit.

FAE

Thanks Donnie. Or Danny. Whoever. I've done the research. But your source isn't ancient scrolls or old texts, it's my text.

SOPHIE

It's not like we make anything up whole cloth. We take inspiration from the novels and make small adjustments.

FAE

Once, in passing, I mentioned a race of trolls living in the Asgard system and suddenly they're a major three-episode story arc?

SOPHIE

Giants required either more CG or complex camera set-ups that we just don't have the time or budget for. Trolls work in a pinch.

DONNIE

Plus we got to name them after some of our shittier online trolls and then kill them off.

DANNY

Like, we named Ja'Roll the Knights' Defender after one of the worst book-fan Reddit trolls and then he was disemboweled. Sweet schadenfreude.

FAE

Ben's on those forums all the time, and he tells me about all the vitriol on there, so I get it. But there's gotta be better ways to deal besides revenge writing.

SOPHIE

Like what?

FAE

Like maybe actually taking some of the feedback. Ben's mentioned that Knights Defender Redditor before. He's one of the book-fans, not the racist misogynists, I think. He mostly hates when you, how'd you put it? "Diverge slightly"?

SOPHIE

So you think we should just stick closer to the books?

FAE

Of course I'm a little biased. But yeah. I think it works better and could really help with your troll issues. Online and on screen.

SOPHIE

As a writer, I understand this need to think your version is the best and only acceptable one, but there are other factors at play. Like I said earlier, we have budgets, network notes, and so much other shit to consider. We can't just put out whatever fun idea pops into our heads like you.

FAE

Excuse me?

SOPHIE

No offense, Fae. But I'm sorry, writing novels is just easier. Or more straightforward, at least. You don't have to write under the same pressures we have.

FAE

You don't think I have pressure?

(MORE)

F AE (CONT'D)

You think it's easy to write books that actually sell these days, let alone best-selling spec fiction? You couldn't even handle the pressure I'm under. And I don't have a room full of fucking knuckleheads to help toss ideas around and put it all together. It's just all me.

SOPHIE

I guess you're just that much better than the rest of us, huh?

F AE

Well...yeah. Maybe I am.

They're all stunned and disappointed-- Don't meet your heroes.

**INT. DIGITAL ART ROOM, WARLORDS BUILDING - DAY**

Alan and Stan look over a rendering of a wintry forest scape background on a display from a DIGITAL ARTIST's computer.

ALAN

It's good, but this all needs to be bigger in perspective.

Sophie enters, waits for Alan to finish.

ALAN (CONT'D)

Remember, they're trolls, not giants. And you're working on the crystal palace digital pre-fab?

DIGITAL ARTIST

We'll have it by end of day.

ALAN

Excellent thanks.

He finally acknowledges Sophie with a look-- "What's up?"

SOPHIE

We've got a problem.

ALAN

Of course we do. Always problems. I'm going down to stage two. You can explain on the way. But first, Stan you were saying?

Sophie and Stan follow Alan out of the the room, into--

**INT. HALLWAY, WARLORDS BUILDING - CONTINUOUS**

STAN

Just keep in mind what I said earlier. Fae's offer is already a drain on the budget. If we become even the slightest of financial burdens, Dana won't hesitate to put us on first-play streaming like some fucking reality show.

SOPHIE

Jesus, is it really that dire?

ALAN

Any chance episode 204 looks to stay under budget?

SOPHIE

Well, that's the problem. We were. Then our dear beloved author came in throwing wrenches. She's in the room right now filling their heads with ideas that I guess might gel with her vision but will certainly cost us in the long run. The woman has no concept of compromise.

ALAN

Goddammit.

STAN

Bringing her in was supposed to be good for the show. If she's going to be a problem, it may not just be a demotion to streaming. We're looking at cancellation.

ALAN

I know! I know. Dana forced my hand! I thought we'd lean into it, appease book-fans and bring up your precious numbers with the official Emerson stamp of approval.

SOPHIE

There's still a chance of that. If you're willing to throw budget to the wind. Or at least convince her of it's importance.

The turn a corner and run into Dustin, who joins the pack.

DUSTIN

Ah, I was just coming to see you,  
Alan. It seems we've hit a snag.

ALAN

(sarcastically)

Fantastic. The more the merrier.

DUSTIN

I thought I should come to you  
right away. I was just talking to  
Lawrence, and I'm afraid he's  
gotten it into his head that Ms.  
Emerson, though I think we all  
agree is wonderful, is getting in  
the way of his star vehicle. He  
seems to feel that it's either him  
or her. Paraphrasing, of course,  
but if she stays, he walks.

ALAN

What the fuck?! What even is his  
problem with her?

Dustin shrugs, feigning ignorance.

STAN

I don't want pile on here, Alan,  
but need I remind you that  
Lawrence is an essential part of  
the package? We needed his star  
draw to sell the show in the first  
place. We can't afford his loss.

ALAN

No, Stan, you needn't. I know we  
need him. Or needed him, at least.  
Network churn, remember?

STAN

Maybe. But he's your biggest star.

ALAN

It's ensemble.

STAN

Either way. You're betting on a  
handful of still-unknowns and  
Dustin Martin  
(to Dustin)  
No offense.

DUSTIN

(offended)

I mean, a little.

**INT. WRITERS ROOM, WARLORDS BUILDING - DAY**

Fae sits across the writer's table from Donnie and Danny.

FAE

Bring it back to Gwen and Ragnar at Arthur's bedside. Then you have the passion building in the tension between them across the literal physical reminder of Arthur between them.

DONNIE

Oh that's good.

DANNY

Bonus for adding Arthur in another scene. That's a top 'try-to'.

He points to a top corner of the white board on the wall. Written there is a list of **Top Try-Tos**

In the middle of the list:

- **Try to maintain major character throughlines**
- **Try to fit Merlin in a scene.**
- **Try to fit Arthur in a scene.**
- **Try to tie B story to A story.**

FAE

Are they worried viewers will forget Lawrence and Dustin are on the show if they're not on screen?

DANNY

Way they put it, it's like since they paid for the stars, they want to use them as much as possible.

FAE

I don't see Gwen or Ragnar on the try-to list. Why are you leaning so hard into this storyline? It's just a red herring before the Ragnar & Kandake reveal anyway.

DONNIE

It's not an official try-to, but basically we're not supposed to rely too heavily on Kandake. Or Xiahou, either, for that matter.

FAE

What? Why?

DANNY

In two words: Toxic fandom.

DONNIE

Yeah, it's fucked, but they're the two most-hated characters. Indigo and Brandon were upset at first, but the less screen-time they got, the less hate and shit they got. They've come to terms with it.

DANNY

Indigo had to delete her twitter half-way through last season just to get away from it.

FAE

How is that possible? The Ragnar and Kandake romance is the most popular pairing from my series.

DONNIE

Yeah, sure. Real fans enjoy it. The closer we stick to your books, the better for them. But then the other half of the audience still apparently can't handle seeing an interracial couple on TV.

FAE

Christ, really?

DANNY

Damned if we do, damned if we don't.

FAE

OK, so I guess that means you'll downplay the Gwen-Xiahou love story too?

DANNY

Sophie says we may not even do it. Alan's weighing the options. Gauging interest.

DONNIE

We can maybe get away with Kandake and Xiahou instead.

FAE

But that changes, like, half of the Duat-Nubia storyline.

Donnie and Danny look to each other-- "Do we tell her?"



LAUREN (O.S.)  
Ms. Emerson?

She turns to see Lauren standing in the doorway.

LAUREN  
Do you have a minute? Alan says he  
needs to talk to you.

FAE  
Oh sure. Apparently there's a lot  
more to discuss than I thought.

**INT. ALAN'S OFFICE, WARLORDS BUILDING - EVENING**

Fae enters. Alan, Stan, Sophie, and Dustin suddenly stop talking when they see her.

ALAN  
(to everyone else)  
Can we have the room?  
(to Fae)  
Have a seat.

As the others exit, they gave Fae a look of condolence.

**EXT./INT. RENTAL CAR, WEST LOS ANGELES - DAY**

Ben drives a rented luxury sedan with leather interior.

BEN  
It's not like you got fired.

Fae stares out the passenger side window. Hiding frustration, anger, and disappointment behind oversized sunglasses.

BEN  
We can spin a rescinded offer as a  
conscious choice on your part to  
not take the contract.

She remains stoic. No response.

BEN  
Seems like they might get  
cancelled soon enough anyway.  
Better to not be associated with  
it when that happens.

FAE  
(quietly)  
Yeah.

BEN

And now you can focus on the final book. Y'know? I know Paul was hoping you'd finish it this year.

FAE

Yeah.

Ben almost speaks again. Knows it's enough. Fae just stares.

A box sloshes around the backseat, haphazardly filled with the unread *Knights of New Realms* hardcovers.

**INT. SOPHIE'S OFFICE, WARLORDS BUILDING - DAY**

Old, dog-eared and sticky-tabbed softcover copies of the *Knights of New Realms* books sit in a pile on a desk.

Widen to reveal the books on a desk near piles of other mythology and history texts in Sophie's cluttered office.

Sophie sits at her desk, writing something on her computer. Danny and Donnie enter. Hesitate.

SOPHIE

(without looking up)  
Stop hovering. What do you need?

DANNY

We were just wondering if you could help us with a beat.

DONNIE

We have a moment with Gwen and Xiahou that could be a great way to hint at their romance later.

SOPHIE

Guys. We've been over this. We may not do that storyline at all. But it's definitely not in this season as we broke it, so I don't want to waste too much time with a moment if we can't pay it off later.

DANNY

It's a small moment, really.

DONNIE

Barely even anything.

DANNY

Like, it's the smallest hint that, sure, may not pay off, but in that case we just brush past it.

DONNIE

But if it's something we do callback to at any point way down the line, it'll be great.

She finally stops typing and turns to them.

SOPHIE

I don't know guys. Why are you even-- Was this Fae's idea?

DONNIE

No. It's our idea. She just reminded us of our duty to the truth and heart of the story.

SOPHIE

Your duty, above all else, is to the show. Which is a business. That's why it's called "show business" not "show art of story."

DANNY

C'mon Soph. You know it's what we should do. For the story.

DONNIE

Are we really gonna give in to the twisted demands of the fucking racist trolls and twitterati?

SOPHIE

Alan's made this pretty clear. You don't think as the only woman, let alone the only woman of color in this writers' room, that I want to take any screen time from Indigo? It's not my decision.

DANNY

But Fae said--

SOPHIE

Fae's not going to be working here. So it doesn't matter. Now...

She shoos them out of her office. They exit hanging their heads in depressed defeat.

**INT. BEN'S ROOM, BEVERLY HILTON HOTEL - NIGHT**

In his hotel room Ben sits up on a king-sized bed, reading and taking notes in the margins of a dog-eared copy of Joseph Campbell's "Creative Mythology."

KNOCK KNOCK -- someone's at the door.

Glancing at the clock, a confused Ben checks who his surprise visitor might be through the peephole-- It's Sophie! But why?

He opens the door, she gives a half wave and a quiet--

SOPHIE

Hey.

BEN

What the hell are you doing here?

She pulls the Excalibur replica from her bag, bubble-wrapped.

SOPHIE

You left this back at the office.

He takes the sword from her, visibly appreciating the wrapping.

BEN

Thanks. You didn't need to bring it, though. I could've come back in for it tomorrow.

SOPHIE

Oh, no worries. This hotel's actually on my way home, kinda. If I take a different route. Across town.

BEN

Well, thanks again.

(beat)

Is there...something else?

SOPHIE

Yeah, actually. Can we just talk?

Ben opens the door wider to let her in. She hesitates. Enters the room. He plops back down on the bed.

BEN

Well?

SOPHIE

I'm sorry. I didn't intend to have the offer rescinded. I feel awful.

BEN

Do you really though? You didn't seem to want us around.

SOPHIE

Ok, well yeah. We can't afford to fuck around making the show she wants to make. But I'm sure we could still use her help in some, much less involved form.

(sitting next to him)

And you too. I don't know how yet, but something. Like, if Abby gets bumped up to staff next year, we'd need a writers' assistant.

BEN

I don't even have anything worthwhile to offer. I'm just Fae's shit-eating assistant.

SOPHIE

You probably have plenty to offer.

She sees his copy of "Creative Mythology" laying next to his notebook on the bed. Picks it up.

SOPHIE (CONT'D)

I mean, seriously. There's no way you're reading this for fun.

BEN

It's more like required reading. Trying to study up to help Fae with ideas. She's been kinda blocked lately. I'm trying to find something to get her out of it.

SOPHIE

So you've given yourself homework?

She smiles flirtatiously, mixed with pity and slight respect.

BEN

Yeah, basically. I've read all her novels, so I have a pretty good grasp of the universe she's created, but I don't have the background in real historical mythology that she does, so I'm boning up on it a little to have more to offer for new ideas.

She flips through the book, skimming pages of highlighted text.

SOPHIE

I remember studying Joseph  
Campbell back in school. I took a  
classical mythology course and  
he's the go-to--

She stops on a page with a copy of a drawn image of classical  
Greek muses. She's struck by a memory.

SOPHIE (CONT'D)

I always liked the idea of the  
muses. Minor goddesses of art. My  
aunt Thalia's named after one.

She points to the figure labeled "Thalia" in the image.

BEN

Cool.

SOPHIE

Technically they were  
anthropomorphized concepts, like  
mirth, splendor, comedy, poetry.  
That kinda stuff. But they usually  
took the form of women. Eventually  
they turned into objects of men's  
desire and artistic inspiration,  
but they were supposed to be the  
raw, feminine roots of creation.

BEN

We could definitely use a muse of  
creative inspiration about now.

She stares at the image for a beat, lost in thought.

SOPHIE

Actually, you're right.

BEN

Of course...But how do you mean?

SOPHIE

Fae kinda laid it out in the books  
already: Merlin's origins have  
always been mysterious and  
mythical. We know he's not really  
a human sorcerer. In book three he  
said his body is just the  
connection between his celestial  
being and the earthly realms.

Still unsure where she's going--

BEN  
Uh, yeah? OK.

Her brain is really firing now.

SOPHIE  
And he inspired each of the  
warlords to join the knights just  
like a muse.  
(excited)  
This could be it! Oh my god. This  
could be the way forward for  
Merlin without Lawrence.

BEN  
I'm not sure I--

Letting her excitement overtake her, Sophie kisses Ben.  
He's surprised, but quickly gives into the emotion as well.

They slowly break away from each other.

SOPHIE  
Sorry. I shouldn't've--

BEN  
-- No, it's OK. It was...good.

She looks around the room, avoiding his eyes.

SOPHIE  
I should probably go talk to Fae  
about this. I bet she has the  
whole idea already plotted out.

BEN  
Yeah...OK. Sure.

She spots the minibar in the corner.

SOPHIE  
Or actually I could use a drink.

BEN  
Yeah, but that stuffs so  
overpriced, maybe we should go--

SOPHIE  
-- The studio's paying for the  
room. Minibar's on the room. Ergo  
we drink in the room.

She opens a bottle of whiskey. Takes a swig. Winces. Grabs a  
coke. Cracks it open and sips. Another wince.

SOPHIE (CONT'D)

Ugh. Warm.

She takes a couple more whiskey swigs, chasing with warm coke.

BEN

I'll go get some ice from the  
thing down the hall.

He grabs the ice bucket off the minibar and heads out the door.

While pacing, she thinks out loud--

SOPHIE

Merlin's a muse. Muse of war?  
Goddess of magic? Feminine  
character...androgynous actress?

She goes to the desk. Finds a small hotel notepad tossed aside behind Ben's laptop. Starts writing a note and accidentally wakes the computer.

The screen lights up-- A browser's open on the r/WarLordsTV subreddit page. It's logged in with the **knights\_defender** username and the latest scathing post still on top.

SOPHIE

Mother fucker.

She puts the computer back to sleep. Finishes her note.

After a moment, Ben re-enters the room.

BEN

Tell me more about--

SOPHIE

-- Actually, I'm goin' to have to  
skip the drink. I wanna go hash  
this out with Fae.  
(grabbing the toy sword)  
Penthouse suite, right?

Without really waiting for his answer, she's out the door.

BEN

Uh, yeah.  
(calling out after)  
I'll be here if you guys need me.  
(to himself)  
Even though no one ever needs me.

Confused and disappointed, he sets the ice bucket on the bed.



**INT. FAE'S FANCY SUITE, BEVERLY HILTON HOTEL - NIGHT**

In an extravagant luxury suite, Fae lies on a couch watching an old episode of WarLords on a giant flatscreen.

Her phone VIBRATES on the coffee table in front of her, next to a nearly-finished glass and empty bottle of wine.

She pauses the TV. Looks at the caller ID-- **Legacy Ruiners**

She answers--

FAE

What do you need from me now? Are  
you kicking me out of my hotel  
room now too?

**INT. ALAN'S OFFICE - NIGHT**

Alan & Stan speak into the office landline at his desk.

ALAN

No, that's still yours for the  
rest of the week. Stan's here and  
we're connecting to Dana Salesky.

STAN

Hi Fae.

FAE

Hi Stan. Did you say Dana Salesky?

ALAN

Yep.

FAE

As in president of--

DANA'S ASSISTANT (O.S.)

Hold for Dana.

**INT. DANA'S OFFICE - NIGHT**

Swanky, spacious executive office with a view over Los Angeles, DANA (50s) packs some folders into a leather tote. Hands the bag to her ASSISTANT (20s), trading for the phone.

DANA

Hi. Felicia Emerson?

**INTERCUT FAE'S HOTEL/DANA'S OFFICE/ALAN'S OFFICE**

FAE

Dana, please, you can call me Fae.

DANA

OK. You can call me Ms. Salesky.

FAE

(sheepish)

Of course, Ms. Salesky.

DANA

Sorry we didn't have a chance to talk earlier. I wanted to welcome you to the Sci-Fan Channel family.

FAE

You're a busy woman; I understand. But I think it's a little too late for that now.

DANA

Because Stan and Alan rescinded our offer? Don't worry about that. I'm un-rescinding.

FAE

Stan said he speaks for you on financial and hiring decisions.

DANA

He should've said he speaks to me. Not for me. When I mandated they hire you, I thought I made it clear that any version of not getting you was unacceptable.

STAN

It was purely budgetary. You'd also made it clear that we need to keep WarLords on budget or else.

DANA

And it was decided you'd find room in the budget for Ms. Emerson.

ALAN

It wasn't just the salary. Any adjustments to incorporate Fae's ideas were just adding to the ballooning production costs.

DANA

I said find it in the budget. I don't like repeating myself. Don't make me do it again.

ALAN

We're already doing what we can to make it cheap, fast, and good. we can only afford two out of three.

DANA

We talked about cutting episodes to spread out the allotments. Not too late for that.

STAN

Let's not go there just yet. We'll crunch numbers and circle back.

DANA

Great. Now I'd like to talk just to Fae. You two can drop off now.

STAN

Thank you, Ms. Salesky.

ALAN

OK bye.

Alan and Stan hang up.

DANA

Listen, I respect you enough to be straight with you. I haven't watched the show. I don't really know if it's any good. The reviews are generally positive and if Alan can keep it on track under budget, it's not an unbearable financial strain. But the truth is I only had two reasons not to cancel it along with the rest of the programming slate I inherited from the outgoing network head, and they're right in the opening credits— Executive Producer: Alan Weiss, Based on "WarLords" novels by F.A. Emerson.

FAE

It's actually based on "The Knights of New Realms" by F.A. Emerson. But I get the point.

DANA

Right. To be honest I haven't read them either. But I know they're extremely popular. My assistant loves them.

Dana looks to her assistant, who gives a silent, middling "Meh" review with her face.

DANA (CONT'D)

I've also heard talk about this Lady Guinevere thing where she becomes kind of the lead. That's a good look for us. I'm trying to reshape the network by pushing female-driven stories and under-represented voices. We've already started planning a whole 'girl power' marketing campaign for this next season.

FAE

That's great and all, but you've got two problems, also in the credits: Starring Dustin Martin and Lawrence Gareth

DANA

Don't worry about Dustin. We're well aware of his antics, but we know how to handle his type. He talks big, but whether the show lives or dies does not depend on him whatsoever.

FAE

To be honest, Lawrence is the one you should worry about. He's not going to go along with any of that girl power shit.

DANA

It's true that the show wasn't greenlit until he was attached, but that was my predecessor, not me. I don't have the same reverence for the so-called classics that made Lawrence a household name. I think it was mostly schlocky, Oscar-baiting drivel. The academy might adore him, but I don't and I don't think our audience does either.

FAE

I think you might be right.

DANA

Of course I am. His star-power drew viewers to the pilot but they dropped soon after. We don't need Sir Lawrence Gareth anymore.

(MORE)

DANA (CONT'D)

Now it's the ensemble and the story that keeps the loyal fan base watching. That's why we need you to stay on. The fans trust you and we could use your support if we're going keep them watching through this Woman-King storyline.

FAE

I don't see how you can do the storyline when Lawrence can't even say the words woman and king in the same sentence.

DANA

Ah yes. They showed me the clip of him on the panel. I hear it's already a meme. But that's why we need you. I trust you can find a way to work around it and get us the girl power we need because, seriously, we're already cutting the promos together. We just need the show to live up to the promos.

FAE

I have no idea how I'm supposed to do that.

A KNOCK KNOCK KNOCK on the Fae's hotel-room door.

DANA

I trust you'll figure it out. Because if you don't, this'll be the last season of WarLords and without the screen rights, your books'll never be televised again.

Dana hangs up. Hands the phone to her assistant.

Fae opens the hotel door. In the hall, Sophie holds the replica sword as if offering a majestic treasure.

**INT. EDIT BAY, WARLORDS BUILDING - DAY**

Fae, Sophie, and Alan sit behind an EDITOR (40s) watching a rough cut of a scene play out on a large video monitor.

**ON SCREEN--** Lawrence as Merlin stands on a set built to look like an ancient Celtic temple.

MERLIN/LAWRENCE

Excalibur is yours to wield.

He turns to reveal an Excalibur prop on a pedestal behind him. Joanna as Gwenhwyfhar kneels before him. The video pauses.

**IN THE ROOM--**

FAE

The production design's all off.  
Those runes are more Scandinavian.  
You really want Proto-Anglo-Saxon.

ALAN

You realize we already shot all  
this, right? It's a little too  
late for that kinda note.

FAE

But you're going to reshoot,  
right? Why not fix it?

ALAN

Pick your battles. I'm not willing  
to die on the hill of 'technically  
inaccurate obscure runes'. And I  
haven't decided on reshooting yet.

He turns to the Editor.

ALAN

How many inserts would we need?

EDITOR

Seven to ten, depending on angles  
and if you redo the wide shots.

ALAN

(to Fae and Sophie)  
And we'd recast Merlin as a woman?

SOPHIE

Someone androgynous enough but  
skews feminine. It could work to  
not only deal with the Lawrence  
problem, but could maybe win over  
Dana as well.

FAE

She has a whole girl-power thing.

SOPHIE

Exactly! And I hear Tilda is  
looking for TV work. She'd be  
perfect and has an even bigger  
draw than Lawrence.

ALAN

But what about Merlin as a character? Won't turning him into this feminine-divine muse stray too far from your books?

FAE

I never explicitly mentioned how the healing ritual for Arthur may or may not have transformed Merlin's physical form. And honestly, it's a brilliant idea. Wish I'd thought of it.

SOPHIE

In a way, you did. I only got the idea because of the hints you've dropped throughout the series about his mysterious origins. I really thought I figured out a plan you had all along.

FAE

No. But it might be now. I was stuck on this last book, but this gives me all kinds of inspiration. I might just write all this in.

ALAN

But that'll have to wait, of course. Unless you can write your book while consulting on the show.

Fae gives him a questioning look.

ALAN (CONT'D)

As long as you understand everything has to go through me. When I'm not in the room, I trust Sophie to know what I want, so sometimes you'll have to win her over first, but it's always my final decision. Got it?

FAE

Yes, sir.

ALAN

(turning to Editor)

Alright, let's play it back one more time and mark the potential shots to cut.

**INT. DUSTIN'S TRAILER, STUDIO LOT - DAY**

Dustin reads a script with SportsCenter playing on his TV. The door opens. Alan pops in. Closes the door behind him.

ALAN

Got a sec?

Dustin looks up. Puts his script down.

DUSTIN

Of course. What's up?

ALAN

Just a heads up, there's gonna be a little production delay. We're rewriting the ending of ep 201. And Lawrence just walked off set. Don't know when he'll be back.

DUSTIN

OK. You could've sent a P.A. to tell me. Why're you really here?

ALAN

Well, the rewrite's going to affect you a bit. You see, Lawrence walked off because he's upset about the direction we're taking his character, which is that we are recasting it.

DUSTIN

What? Why? How?

ALAN

We'll know more when we've got the new pages, but seems like we're gonna gender-swap. Since this'll be the last act of episode 201, I figure it's gonna be the new focus of episode 202, which means Arthur may be incapacitated a bit longer.

DUSTIN

Come on, Alan. With Larry out, you're gonna bench your biggest star on the sidelines for the first two episodes back?

ALAN

Maybe longer.

Dustin is stunned silent.



ALAN (CONT'D)

You can act all charming around everyone else, but if I catch you stirring up any more shit amongst the cast, and I'll write you off just as fast as I wrote him off.

DUSTIN

Go ahead. My agent's itching to get me into some features anyway. You'd be doing me a favor.

ALAN

You can't get off that easy. Don't forget. You're under contract.

DUSTIN

So's Lawrence.

ALAN

Read the fine print. Tarnishing the network's image is a breach.

DUSTIN

So...

ALAN

Misbehave the slightest, I can fire you like that.

(snaps his fingers)

If I want to keep you in a fucking coma the whole season, there's nothing you can do about it.

Dustin stares. Shocked.

ALAN (CONT'D)

Don't fuck with my cast or my series. Show up. Read your lines. Whenever we give you some again.

With a self-satisfied smirk. He exits the trailer.

Dustin pulls out his phone. Opens reddit.

DUSTIN

Maybe nothing I can do about it. But the Arthur Army can unleash some shit on all you fuckers.

The glow from the phone uplights his creepy, malicious grin.

**INT. SOPHIE'S OFFICE, WARLORDS BUILDING - DAY**

Ben enters. Sophie looks up, feigns indifference.

BEN

I just want to say thanks. For getting us back on the show.

SOPHIE

I did what's best for the show. Always will. This time it worked out for you and Fae, but it won't always. I'm sure.

BEN

OK. Well, thanks anyway. I'm glad I get to stick around.

SOPHIE

Yeah, I'm actually kinda busy. I'll talk to you later though.

She turns back to her computer, typing gibberish to look busy.

BEN

OK. Yeah. Later.

He leaves. She stops typing. Her eyes linger on him.

SOPHIE

(shouting)

D&D! Get in here.

Danny and Donnie appear in her doorway.

SOPHIE

Tell me about this Gwen and Xiahou moment you were thinking about.

DANNY

Really?

DONNIE

Really?

SOPHIE

Yeah. Fuck it. Why not?

**INT. SOUNDSTAGE, WARLORDS SET- DAY**

Alan walks toward a set built on a soundstage that looks to be the ancient Celtic temple from the scene in the edit bay.

CREW MEMBERS hustle, preparing to start filming. On the set, HAIR and MAKEUP STYLISTS put the finishing touches on Joanna and TILDA (60s, androgynous haircut, in a more feminine version of Merlin's costume).

As Alan approaches, he meets Dustin, walking away.

ALAN  
You're not on today's call sheet.

DUSTIN  
Oh no. I just popped in to say hi  
to Tilda. We go way back.  
(sleazy wink)  
Anyway, I got get going.

ALAN  
(suspicious)  
OK.

Dustin walks off. Makes sure Alan isn't looking and gives a knowing look and nod to a P.A. SPY (20s) who subtly nods back.

Dustin exits the soundstage and the P.A. SPY starts recording a video on his phone of the set and strategically places it in his pocket to keep filming surreptitiously.

An ALARM SOUNDS and everyone but Joanna and Tilda clear set.

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR  
Quiet on the set!

DIRECTOR  
Action!

Tilda lowers a crown-like device onto a kneeling Joanna's head.

MERLIN/TILDA  
It is done. Rise, One True King.  
Excalibur is yours.

Joanna stands. Crosses to a faux stone pedestal holding realistic-looking Excalibur prop.

As she sets her hands on the sword, we are watching the final produced scene with CG GRAPHICS AND EFFECTS. A plasma blade jets from the hilt, CRACKLING and SPARKING with energy that lights her face in dramatic green light.

GWENHWYFHAR/JOANNA  
Long live the king.

END OF EPISODE