

## THE DARK KNIGHT WAKES

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The day after he had killed King Arthur, Mordred opened his eyes to flickering candlelight and damp rock. There had been nightmares, screaming, and much pain. Terrible pain such as his pampered body had never felt before. But the worst had passed. His crippled form stirred in the shadows and his remaining hand closed about cold metal. Not his axe – he'd lost that on the battlefield, along with his right hand – but a magic mirror his mother had given him before she left the world of men.

He breathed on the black glass, and her image swirled to life. Raven haired and beautiful, she looked at least twenty years younger than when she had died.

“Who commands the Grail?” he demanded.

His mother's face flickered. “The one called Pendragon.”

“So it serves *me* now?” Mordred said, impatient. Even dead, his mother could be annoyingly vague.

“I'm not sure. It's unclear... I see a girl, a daughter...”

Mordred flung the mirror across the cave. “No!” he roared. “Arthur had no daughter! We would have known.”

He'd won the battle. He'd killed Arthur Pendragon, high king of men and guardian of the Round Table. Even now, his spies were looking for the Sword and the Lance. The Crown, snatched by a dragon from his uncle's corpse on the battlefield, was rightfully his. As soon as he got his hands – *hand*, curse it – on the Grail, he would be strong and handsome again, and the world would worship at his feet. But now this! Another with a claim to the throne.

Clenching his teeth against the pain, he rolled off the rocky shelf that served as his bed. He could not walk because his stupid horse had fallen on him and crushed one of his legs. He crawled across the floor, the bandaged stump of his arm leaving a trail of blood. The mirror had cracked, making a jagged line across his mother's face to match the scar Arthur's sword had left across his own.

“Where?” he hissed. “Where *is* she? She must die!”

The witch's face blurred, becoming old and then young again.

“Beyond our reach in Avalon. But not for much longer, I think.”

“What do you mean? Speak plainly, woman!”

His mother smiled. “I mean, Mordred my beautiful son, that you need to be patient for once. Heal. Grow strong again. Be crafty like the dragon that waits in its lair. Let the girl come to you. They took the king's body through the enchanted mists. If she has a drop of Arthur's blood in her body, she will come. And then you can kill her – or enslave her, as you wish. She's only a damsel, after all. She's grown up in a crystal palace where there is no disease or death, protected by magic. The world of men will be a shock to her. She's hardly going to lead the knights in battle, is she? How much of a threat can she be?”

*Famous last words? Find out more about King Arthur's daughter Rhianna in SWORD OF LIGHT, Book 1 of the Pendragon Legacy by Katherine Roberts.*