

The Department of Meteorology Pantomime 2001

King Millibarthur and the Knights of the Coffee Table

Dramatis Personæ
(in order of appearance)

MERLINUX	<i>A wizard</i>
GALSTONE	<i>A mathematical court jester</i>
SIR CUMFERENCE	<i>A well travelled knight</i>
ALAN LE FEY	<i>Leader of the forces of DARCness</i>
MILLIBARTHUR	<i>Tea boy and future king</i>
SIR TALKALOT	<i>A verbose statistician</i>
SIR GALAHADAM III	<i>A paleo knight</i>
SIR FISS PRESSURE	<i>A very bad pun</i>
The GWEEN HOUSE KNIGHT	<i>Expert in noxious gases</i>
The GREY KNIGHT	<i>Traitor and keeper of goats</i>
SIR PLUS-TO-REQUIREMENTS	<i>Totally unnecessary</i>
ELLIVERE	<i>A radiant damsel</i>
LATEALOT	<i>An unpunctual joke</i>
LADY SLINGO	<i>Occupant of the Warm Pool</i>
ROBIN	<i>Naan Trek captain</i>
KILLINGWORTH	<i>Guardian of the Urn</i>
GUILLAUME LE HOZ	<i>Compiler of dreadful acronyms</i>
PPM	<i>A smooth Belgian charmer</i>
The Champion of BRACKNALLIA	<i>A fearsome opponent</i>
The Champion of SHINFIELDIUM	<i>Another fearsome opponent</i>
Dr JIM	<i>Keeper of the Keys</i>
The MAGIC DRAGON	<i>Puff!</i>
EXCALIBUR	<i>The punning sword</i>
The PIE WOMAN	<i>Purveyor of pastry delights</i>

ACT I

Scene I

As the play opens, there is no one on stage. Merlinux and Galstone are waiting 'in the wings', so that their entries can be quite quick.

Spotlight on Narrator. The stage is in darkness.

NARRATOR: There came a time in days of old when Britain no longer had a king. The old king had died without an heir, many moons ago, and darkness had fallen upon the land as rival lords waged war on each other in the hope of getting closer to the throne. In these dark and dangerous times, many pacts were formed and then broken, allies became enemies, rivals became friends, people got confused, and loyalties and allegiances changed as frequently as the weather.

When the old king had died, most, but not all of the court went their own way and scattered across the land. Two faithful fellows stayed behind though, and looked after the castle. One was a great wizard, an enchanter; bearded, but wise. He had been the old king's most respected advisor. His name was Merlinux.

Lights up. Enter Merlinux.

NARRATOR: Secondly, there was the mathematical court jester. Having been trained at the Royal School of Juggling, Clowning, Mischief and Melodrama, or JCMM, he had been at the old king's side for many years, entertaining him with his amazing wit and humour. His name was Galstone.

Enter Galstone.

GALSTONE: What do you get if you cross a cow with a sheep?

MERLINUX: I don't know.

GALSTONE: Mod cow, mod sheep, sine theta.

Merlinux groans

GALSTONE: Why did the chicken cross the Mobius Strip?

MERLINUX: Go on.

GALSTONE: To get to the same side.

Merlinux groans again.

GALSTONE: There was a man from Cornwall,
Who knew about magic and all.
He knew about spells,
To save damsels and belles,
But always got lost in the mall.

MERLINUX: (*grumpy*) Galstone, stop it!

GALSTONE: Why don't horses understand rectangular geometry?

Merlinux sighs

GALSTONE: Because you're *Descartes* before the horse.

NARRATOR: Many years had passed and during this time Merlinux was getting weary of the state of the kingdom.

MERLINUX: I know! Galstone, why don't we let the people choose their new king? We'll organise some ballots and hold some elections throughout the whole of Earley. I hear the Americans have had great success with this thing they call Democracy.

GALSTONE: Hey diddle diddle,
Here is a riddle:
How do we find our next king?
We'll let the people and chads decide,
And employ foolproof Floridan counting.

How many large-scale dynamicists does it take to change a light bulb?

MERLINUX: (*weary*) I don't know.

GALSTONE: Two. One to hold the bulb, and one to stretch the room vertically.

MERLINUX: Galstone, that's enough! And light bulbs haven't even been invented yet!

NARRATOR: One night, while gazing at his Sun, Merlinux had a vision. In his vision he saw a sword in a stone and heard a voice. (*Adopts 'vision voice' – or voiceover, perhaps*) Merlinux, you must create a sword; a sword which shall be called Excalibur. Whosoever then removes the sword from the stone shall be the rightful king of all England.

Merlinux prepares to do some magic, by putting his hat on.

GALSTONE: Merlinux's got his hat on,
Hip-hip hip-hip hooray,
Merlinux's got his hat on,
We'll see magic today.

MERLINUX: Galstone, please be quiet. I'm trying to concentrate. (*Conjuring voice*) By the power of thermal wind balance, I summon the principles of PV-inversion and conjure up a (*SFX: drum roll*) Sword in the...

GALSTONE: Merlinux...

MERLINUX: ... Galstone!

SFX: Dum dum duuum!

Black-out. When lights come up Galstone has a sword sticking through his head.

A cloaked figure (Sir Cumference) approaches from the left.

MERLINUX: Halt! What yonder Knight dares enter the Gates of Earley Castle without a swipe card?

SIR C.: Why, Merlinux, you old wizard! Don't you recognise me?!

MERLINUX: Can't say I do.

SIR C.: Well, here's a clue: I've just returned from my three-year trip around the world.

MERLINUX: Hmm... let me see... oh yes... you must be Sir Boast-a-lot!

SIR C.: No, no, no! He's nowhere near as good as me! (*Cheesy grin at audience; sound effect: "ting!"*)

MERLINUX: So you must be Sir Plotalot?

SIR C.: Nay! My PhD squires are there for that!

MERLINUX: Sir Late-a-lot?

SIR C.: (*surprised*) Isn't he here yet?

MERLINUX: So you must be a Knight that says 'Ni'!

SIR C.: No, no, no! Wrong comedy team, old wizard. Look... I've just returned from my three year ROUND WORLD TRIP! It's me: Sir Cumference!

MERLINUX: What, the mighty Sir Cumference, the slayer of dragons, rescuer of maidens? The same Sir Cumference who felled the gruesome ogre of the Three Tuns and the same Sir Cumference who can hit ...

SIR C.: That's me! (*Grins again at audience, "ting!"*)

MERLINUX: No, sorry; never heard of you.

SIR C.: (*grin turns to a sneer*) Well, since you're a bit ill-informed, I'll have to fill you in regarding my adventures.

MERLINUX: No, it's alright (*yawns, begins to leave stage*)

SIR C.: First I travelled to the Court of Hadley...

MERLINUX: (*turns, interested*) Oh, really? Nice relaxing place for a holiday, I hear.

SIR C.: Yes, but I had to move on.

MERLINUX: Why?

SIR C.: Didn't like the climate. (*Boom Boom Tish!*)

MERLINUX: Anyway, all very interesting...must be going...need to see a man about a dragon. (*Turns to walk off*)

SIR C.: ...then I made my way to the land of Bracknallia.

MERLINUX: (*turns, interested*) Really? What was that like?

SIR C.: Beyond your wildest dreams - a paradise on Earth! But there was one problem...

MERLINUX: Oh yes?

SIR C.: Yes - every jousting competition I attended, every damsel in distress I rescued... they made me wear the most ridiculous corporate armour.

MERLINUX: Let's have a look then.

Sir Cumference turns away from audience and opens cloak to show Merlinux his armour, embarrassed.

MERLINUX: (*shields eyes, steps back*) By Hoskins! All that blue - it's giving me a headache! And...er... (*peers more closely*) what sort of coat of arms do you call that? What are all those wiggly lines supposed to mean???

SIR C.: *(cloaks himself again)* I told you it was bad. That is why I've returned. I'm here to prove that, I alone, am worthy of being King; only I will be able to pull the sword from the stone!

MERLINUX: *(sheepish)* Ah, yes the sword in the stone. I'm afraid we've had to make a few compromises to the usual fairytale set up. You see, ever since the reign of Chaos began, magic isn't as powerful as it once was and more to the point our special effects team are completely rubbish. So, I've um... err... had to make a few approximations. This is Galstone, our mathematical court jester.

GALSTONE: What do you get if you integrate one over cabin with respect to cabin?

SIR C.: I don't know.

GALSTONE: A natural log cabin.

If you're needing the old wind's direction,
Then the light sculpture begs close inspection.
You may love it or hate it,
Call it Art, or berate it,
But you can't miss that massive erection.

(Alternative: If you're ever in need of the wind's direction/Then the light sculpture begs a closer inspection/Whether you love it or hate it/Think it's art, or like to slate it/You cannot miss that enormous erection.)

SIR C.: *(to Galstone)* Gosh, doesn't that hurt?!

GALSTONE: What this? Naaaah! Believe me, I've had much worse going thru' my bonce: quasi-geostrophic potential vorticity, Hamiltonian symplectic structures. Compared to these, the 5 inches of cold work-hardened steel presently lodged inside my cerebellum is a positive picnic. I'm in seventh heaven!

Alan Le Fey bursts in. Dramatic music.

LE FEY: *(evilly)* Ah ha! I am Alan le Fey. *Oh kneel* before me, you ignorant fools. For I am the Lord of *DARCness*!

Audience prompted to boo & hiss.

LE FEY: *(turns to audience and waves arms apart)* Cut that out! That's totally un-called for: I'm not lecturing now, you know! Merlinux... ah and Sir Cumference... long time, no see. I'm here to pull the sword from Galstone's head to prove my rightful place as King!

SIR C.: Tough toffees, Le Fay! I was here first; you'll have to wait your turn.

He attempts to pull sword from head. special effects: squeaking sound. The sword stays in.

SIR C.: It's no good! You're head is too thick!

GALSTONE: It appears that the inviscidity approximation breaks down in this case.

LE FEY: You're just too feeble, Sir Cumference. Let me show you how a real man does it. Stand aside lads, *(limbers up)* I'm about to PULL!

Same again: the sword stays in. Millibarthur wanders on.

MERLINUX: Ah, here comes Millibarthur the coffee boy.

MILLIBARTHUR: Galstone! You appear to have a sword stuck in your head! Let me get that out for you! *(he grabs hold of the sword)*

LE FEY: What, you? Millibarthur the coffee boy? You'll never get that sword out – it takes years of study at Knight School to be able to do that kind of thing!

MILLIBARTHUR: Oh, don't be so melodramatic!

Lights suddenly go out & everyone gets of stage. Projector screen comes on and slowly read out the following:

PROJECTOR: Ladies & Gentleman; Unfortunately, owing to its gratuitous and violent nature, the visual content of the following few seconds has been blanked out. However, we are still able to bring you full audio coverage.....

FX: *Long drawn-out sucking sound, followed by a loud 'finger-in-mouth' pop!*

PROJECTOR: Thank you for your patience. Visual content will now recommence.

All back on stage.

Lights back on. Millibarthur standing, cleaning sword, unaware of significance; Galstone wearing bandage around head. Everyone apart from Millibarthur is gobsmacked. Everyone else bows down and Millibarthur lifts sword.

Music: First few bars of Beethoven's Fifth, last movement.

LE FEY: Cut the pompous music!

The music abruptly ends with a needle scratch.

LE FEY: Millibarthur, you haven't heard the last of me. Alan Le Fey does not give up so easily! *(He leaves, in a huff)*

NARRATOR: And so, having pulled the Excalibur from the head of Galstone the jester, Millibarthur became king. But Alan le Fay swore to claim the crown for his own.

Lights down. Exit all.

ACT II

Scene I

Spotlight on Narrator

NARRATOR: Nevertheless, a seemingly Golden Age settled on King Millibarthur's realm. As far as his subjects were concerned, he could do no wrong, although he did have a spot of bother with Dirt-track, the company that his predecessor had got in to run the nation's packhorse network. Despite this, his Gallup rating remained good, and everywhere he went, his people hailed him as a Great Ruler.

But all was not well at Earley Castle...

Lights up on stage. Enter Millibarthur and Merlinux.

MILLIBARTHUR: Oh, it's so frustrating! The Conkers Tournament was rained off *again* today! I was so looking forward to seeing whether Dan Lunt's syrup treatment could overcome the Polton Smash.

MERLINUX: Yes, these sudden downpours are *most* perplexing. But I'm told it could get much worse.

MILLIBARTHUR: Surely not!

MERLINUX: Alas, yes. I got a report from the Itinerate Philosophers' Council of Camelot today.

MILLIBARTHUR: What, the IPCC? That bunch of beards?

MERLINUX: Yes, Sire. They say that we could be having serious moat-level rise, and plagues of frogs across the whole realm by the end of the decade.

MILLIBARTHUR: Sounds serious. But what can we do? We need *sage* counsel in the ways of the weather, or we could run out of *thyme*. Hundreds of *chives* could be lost!

MERLINUX: The astrologers say they can predict the weather – apparently, they use a five-star constellation, called Orion Hoskins.

MILLIBARTHUR: Oh, I've seen those forecasts – my ensemble of seaweed is more accurate!

MERLINUX: Or you could run some forecast integrations on a fast stone circle. The Druids tell me they have just upgraded Stonehenge to run during daylight hours using a Sun operating system.

MILLIBARTHUR: No... It's just too un-PC, Merlinux. No. I'm going to have to think this one over.

Exit Millibarthur and Merlinux.

Scene II

NARRATOR: Later that evening, Millibarthur was walking alone by the lake near the Castle, mulling over the possibilities.

Lights up on Millibarthur walking slowly across the stage (R-L), mulling things over. From the right enter the White Knights. Talkalot is heard talking loudly as they enter.

TALKALOT: ...Of course, there might be a correlation between the number of ladybirds on this bush (*indicates a member of the audience's hair, perhaps?*), and the Annual rainfall at Earley Castle...

The other knights look bored/glum.

TALKALOT: ... Or maybe there's a correlation between my shoe size and the likelihood of snow in Caversham. Could be, could be...

They reach the front of the stage and encounter Millibarthur.

MILLIBARTHUR: Sounds unlikely to me.

TALKALOT: You think so?

MILLIBARTHUR: Yes, and I would know, for I am Millibarthur, King of the Britons.

TALKALOT: That sounds *awfully* familiar to me. Maybe there's a correlation...

MILLIBARTHUR: Who cares? Who are you, anyway?

TALKALOT: I am Sir Talkalot; well, at a 95% confidence level, anyway. I am one of King *Stephen's sons*, and these are my companions, the White Knights. May I introduce Sir Galahadam III.

Millibarthur and Galahadam shake hands.

MILLIBARTHUR: Are you all right? You look a little *paleo*.

GALAHADAM: I'm always like this – I'm of *primeval descent*. My grandfather, Galahadam I, took part in the AMIP Crusade.

FISS PRESS: ...1008...

TALKALOT: Err... yes. And this is Sir Shinealot, the Gween House Knight.

MILLIBARTHUR: Don't I recognise you from somewhere?

GWEEN HOUSE: Maybe, I often appear on Gardener's World as the *warm-up* act.

FISS PRESS: ...1007...

TALKALOT: And this is the Grey Knight, with her *SCAPE-goat*.

GREY KNIGHT: Pleased to meet you. (*aside*) My friendly exterior is really just a *warm front* - don't tell anyone though, or I'll *sue*.

FISS PRESS: ...1006...

MILLIBARTHUR: What *is* he going on about?

FISS PRESS: Oh, I'm Sir Fiss Pressure. 1006, falling slowly...

MILLIBARTHUR: (*indicating Sir Plus-to-requirements*) And who's this chap?

SIR PLUS: I'm...

TALKALOT: Oh, don't worry about him – he's Sir Plus-to-requirements.

Sir Plus-to-requirements looks bewildered, and exits dejectedly. Meanwhile, Millibarthur notices Ellivere for the first time.

MILLIBARTHUR: (*as suave as he can manage*) And who is *this*?

ELLIVERE: I am Ellivere, of Earley Gate.

MILLIBARTHUR: *(aside)* Such a radiant damsel! *(to Ellivere)* May I kiss your hand?

ELLIVERE: *Highwood* if I were you...

Millibarthur kneels and kisses Ellivere's hand.

TALKALOT: Radiant she may be, but you'll soon change your *tune* when she starts playing that sax...

Enter Sir Latealot, running down the aisle to the stage. He causes Millibarthur to break off what he was saying.

LATEALOT: Oh, I'm so sorry everyone – there was a tailback of oxcarts on the Glastonbury road, and then I ran into the *Road Knight* – she was singing a *carol*. I'm Sir Latealot, by the way.

He shakes hands with Millibarthur.

MILLIBARTHUR: Whiteknights, it is indeed good fortune that we should meet at this time, for our very survival is at stake. Have you not noticed the lake levels rising?

GALAHADAM: *Water* you talking about?

GWEEN HOUSE: The last king's *rain* wasn't like this!

FISS PRESS: Why should we *hail* your ideas?

MILLIBARTHUR: No, it's true! Strange things are a-*foot* – I can feel it in my *soul*. But with you in *toe*, we can take *steps* to de-*feet* this menace!

TALKALOT: But *how* are we going to solve this problem?

Enter Lady Slingo. Obviously, we really want her to be emerging from the surface of the water, but this might be a bit tricky logistically. Perhaps she can wear cardboard cut out waves, or something.

LADY SLINGO: Can't you lot keep the noise down? It's bad enough constantly being pestered by Alan le Fay. Why do you disturb me in this cacophonous way?

MILLIBARTHUR: We were just discussing the weather...

LADY SLINGO: Well, I can tell you, down there in the lake it's as *DAMP* as the Department of Applied Mathematics and Theoretical Physics at the University of Cambridge. But without the T.

TALKALOT: What on Earth were you doing down there?

LADY SLINGO: I live down there – I am Lady Slingo of the Warm Pool, and I am wise. *(pause)* And very modest.

GWEEN HOUSE: Well, if you're so clever...

GREY KNIGHT: ...then you'll know about weather.

FISS PRESS: Will you help us to know...

LATEALOT: ...when it's likely to snow?

LADY SLINGO: Well – if you ask with affection
Then I'll give you direction...

MILLIBARTHUR: Oh, these terrible rhymes
Take up *far* too much time!
Please, just tell us what to do!

LADY SLINGO: Ok. Ahem – Go thee forthwith unto Tintagel...

TALKALOT: Tintagel? Where's that?

GREY KNIGHT: Oh, it's beyond Exeter somewhere...

TALKALOT: Exeter? That's *miles* away!

LADY SLINGO: Yea, verily I say to thee. Go unto Tintagel, for there you shall find a Holy Urn,
whose boiling waters confer upon the drinker complete meteorological
knowledge.

The knights gasp.

MILLIBARTHUR: We must go there at once! Who will join me on this great quest for the Holy Urn?

THE KNIGHTS: (*raising their swords*) We will!

MILLIBARTHUR: And since we seek the Urn, we shall henceforth be called 'The Knights of the
Coffee Table!'

THE KNIGHTS: Hurrah!

Exit all.

Scene III

Heroic music, and the sound of galloping hooves, with other general horse-type noises. These continue under (or over) the following narration.

NARRATOR: (*best heroic narration style*) And so our tepid heroes charge off towards deepest,
darkest Devon, and thence onwards to Cornwall, and Tintagel.

With the thunder of hooves, and the whinnying of their trusted steeds; the wind
whistling through their hair, the landscape merely a blur; this, this is the stuff of
true adventure, true romance. And always, always, being urged on by Millibarthur
– their leader, their King, their inspiration.

The music and sound effects end suddenly.

(*suddenly reverts to normal speech*) Well, to be honest, it was all a bit dull, so
let's leave that bit out. We rejoin our heroes as they arrive at Tintagel.

*Lights up. On stage is Robin, seated, with the Holy Urn to his right. Robin is nibbling a popadum
critically, and so doesn't notice the knights, as they enter from the left.*

MILLIBARTHUR: Er... hello?

ROBIN: (*half to himself*) Hmm. Not quite crispy enough – don't you think? Marks out of
5?

*He proffers the popadum for Millibarthur to try. Millibarthur takes the popadum with some hesitation,
and tries it gingerly.*

ROBIN: See what I mean? Doesn't score very highly on the Hogan crispiness scale...

MILLIBARTHUR: Err... no. Um... we're on a quest for a Holy Urn – you haven't um... you, err, don't happen to know where it is, do you?

ROBIN: A quest, you say? I too am on a quest – the quest for the Perfect Curry!

GWEEN HOUSE: I hear they do curry experiments at the Lab of Gu.

TALKALOT: But what about the Urn? Is that it over there? *(to Millibarthur)* There's not much of a guard – maybe we should just take a *popadum*.

ROBIN: The Urn? Yeah, that's it. You're welcome to it.

GREY KNIGHT: What? No deadly challenge to overcome first? I expected a bit of an *argie-bhaji*.

ROBIN: Oh no. *(to himself)* Really not crispy enough...

FISS PRESS: You expect us to *phall* for that? Aren't there any ferocious, many-headed beasts to fight?

ROBIN: No, no. *(to Gween House Knight)* The, err, Lab of Gu, you say?

GWEEN HOUSE: Yes, that's it.

ROBIN: I shall give it a try! Enjoy the Urn – see you later...

Exit Robin, in pursuit of curry.

The knights gather round the Urn, in a state of awed excitement.

MILLIBARTHUR: So this is it? The Holy Urn? The source of all meteorological knowledge?

Enter Killingworth, running, sword in hand.

K-WORTH: Not so fast! You may have distracted my faithful servant, but you have me to reckon with now! *(confidentially, looking over his glasses at the audience)* I would have got here sooner, but I've been at a conference in Japan all week, and then there was a PhD to examine in Toulouse – it's such a whirl, you know. *(addressing the Knights again)* I am Killingworth, guardian of the Urn, and this is Chilbolton, my sword: the Largest Steerable, Pointable Sword in the World!

Killingworth starts scanning the sword round towards the Knights, slowly, RADAR-style. This is pretty ineffective, so one of the Knights stabs him easily, he falls over, they grab the Urn, and make a run for it. We could have some dramatic music for this bit too.

Exit all.

Scene IV

Horse noises and heroic music.

NARRATOR: And so they returned to Earley Castle with the Holy Urn. This time the journey was much more interesting, full of diversions and dangers. *(Music and FX ends)*. But I'm not going to tell you about it, as there isn't time.

During the next bit of narration, the Knights come back on stage, and mime behind the narration – drinking coffee, drawing charts and tephigrams, that kind of thing. The music is jolly renaissance music – lots of cornetts and sackbuts.

NARRATOR: *(at a leisurely pace, to allow for humorous mime on stage)* When they finally returned to the castle, the Holy Urn was installed in pride of place on the coffee table, and the Knights of the Coffee Table drank freely of its enlightening waters, and all was well in the land. Suddenly they could predict the weather perfectly, and all fears of cancelled conker tournaments were banished from their thoughts. Crops were planted at exactly the right time, and Bank Holidays were planned years in advance to avoid rainy days.

Sudden change to 70s disco music (and lighting). The Knights dance appropriately.

NARRATOR: Some weekends there were outbreaks of *Saturday Knight Fever*, but this was usually just embarrassing, and not actually dangerous.

Sudden change back to renaissance music, normal lighting, Knights behave normally, etc.

NARRATOR: In general though, life was completely idyllic, and there seemed to be nothing which could possibly spoil their happiness.

But then, *disaster* struck...

LATEALOT: *(running to Millibarthur)* Sire, sire! The Urn – it is broken!

All the knights gasp, and gather round, muttering worriedly.

NARRATOR: Thus the shadow of ignorance fell over the land of Millibarthur. And lots of unpredicable rain...

Dramatic end music. Lights down.

CURTAIN

ACT III

Scene I

NARRATOR: And now, we return to Earley Castle, where the breaking of the Holy Coffee Urn, the fount of all meteorological knowledge, is causing a severe headache after a heavy knight out.

Lights up. Galahadam III and the Gween House Knight are sitting around with empty coffee mugs in their hands.

GALAHADAM: Arghhh, my head hurts. I'm desperate for a cup of coffee after the pub-crawl last night, but there's none to be had!

GWEEN HOUSE: Yep, I feel awful. I haven't been so drunk since last year's Christmas Party. That last mead at the Purple Beaver really finished me off.

GALAHADAM: So it was nothing to do with the seven you had before then? By the way, if it's any consolation, I don't think you're the only one feeling rough: I just saw Sir Shaffrey rushing off behind the stables, looking very green.

GWEEN HOUSE: Urgghhh. When are they going to fix that urn?

Sir Talkalot, King Millibarthur and the Grey Knight enter.

MILLIBARTHUR: Oh, this is terrible! Without coffee, my knights will become as unproductive as an HDR forum meeting.

TALKALOT: A little unfair I think, Sire. In fact, just yesterday we approved the inclusion of an extra category in the thesis committee report form. As well as satisfactory, we now have "Not quite as bad as unsatisfactory, but don't go making any holiday plans for this summer".

MILLIBARTHUR: Ah, splendid! Progress indeed! Anyway, what are we going to do with this damn coffee shortage? Personally my research has felt as dumbed-down as a Channel 5 weather forecast since the urn broke down!

TALKALOT: Why don't we ask the Lady of the Warm Pool for advice on fixing the urn – it was her who led us to it in the first place.

The Grey Knight has walked off to the side of the stage.

GREY KNIGHT: Yes, we could all go.

The lights go down, except for a spotlight on the Grey Knight.

GREY KNIGHT: *(to the audience – evilly)* And we could leave the urn undefended. God, I'm clever; I make Sir Hoskins look like a first year PhD student!

Lights back up.

MILLIBARTHUR: Great idea! Yes, we'll leave for the warm pool immediately. But we cannot leave the castle undefended. *(calls)* Sir Plus-to-requirements!

Sir Plus-to-requirements enters.

SIR PLUS: Yes, your majesty?

MILLIBARTHUR: We are leaving for the Warm Pool, to ask the Lady her advice on fixing the urn. You stay here and guard the urn, and Ellievere, my queen. We won't be long. Come on, knights. You too Grey Knight, come along now!

GREY KNIGHT: I'm sorry, but I won't be able to come; I've got a conference tomorrow. I need to print out some more overhead parchments and you know how temperamental the printer can be!

MILLIBARTHUR: Of course. Thank you for reminding me. Yes, I must get onto Sir Ellis about that one – if he ever stops prancing about on his new Marely Davidson horse. Come! lead on, Galahadam III.

GALAHADAM: Yes Sire!

The Whiteknights troop of stage minus Sir Plus and Grey knight.

GREY KNIGHT: *(To audience in a kind of loud whisper)* Ah-ha! My ruse about the printer succeeded. Now I can tell my evil master, Alan le Fey, that the Urn is *(glancing at a pathetic Sir Plus)* ...virtually undefended. Ha ha ha ha!

Exit Grey Knight

Scene II

NARRATOR: And so, the Grey Knight makes her way to DARC Towers, where Alan le Fey, still bitter about his lack of pulling power in Act I, is plotting with his evil henchmen, Guillaume Le Hoz and P-PM about how to defeat King Millibarthur and so claim the throne.

LE HOZ: ...I know, I know! How about we dress up as Lithuanian dancing girls and seduce Millibarthur and his Whiteknights.

LE FEY: No, no. I tried that one last year when I applied for the head of the Hadley Centre... All I can say is it didn't work! We need something original, something they won't expect. P-P, do you have any ideas?

PPM: Hmm, yes; how about I come to the court of Millibarthur dressed as a famous Belgian, drug their drinks and kill them while they sleep!!!

LE FEY: *(looking unsure)* I see a slight flaw in your plan.

PPM: Hmm, yes, it may be difficult to come across enough drugs for all the Whiteknights. Yes, you're right.

LE FEY: Oh no, that's not a problem – I have plenty left over from the sixties.

PPM: So you think killing them is a little harsh then?

LE FEY: Oh no, it's the least they deserve for having more pulling power than me!

PPM: So what is it? What's the flaw in my plan?

LE FEY: Well, for the life of me, I can't think of a famous Belgian. *(shrugs shoulders)*.

PPM: *(Annoyed and under his breath)* Mon Dieu! Poirot! Tin-Tin!

LE FEY: Guillaume, do you have any suggestions?

LE HOZ: I'm sorry Alan, since I thought of the DARC acronym I've use up all my creative juices. I've got about as many ideas in my head as a Christmas Panto script writer!

There is a knock at the door. The baddies look defensive and are prepared for an attack.

PPM: Who is zat?

LE FEY: Oh, I know – I'd recognise that coded knock anywhere. It must be my secret mole I planted in Millibarthur's court many years ago. She has risen steadily through the ranks and, against all expectations, has joined the inner circle of Millibarthur's most trusted advisors... She is the Grey Knight. Enter, my cunning, evil friend.

The Grey Knight enters.

GREY KNIGHT: My evil master, I come with good news. Earley Castle is currently undefended - apart from Sir Plus-to-requirements, who is plainly useless. They've all gone off to the Lady of the Warm Pool, because the holy urn has broken down.

LE FEY: At last! Now I have my chance. Good work, my loyal Grey Knight. You will be rewarded handsomely with a third floor corner office when I am king.

GREY KNIGHT: You are too kind my lord.

LE FEY: Right. We will enter the castle in a cunning disguise, and steal the Holy Urn whilst the Knights are away. Without the Holy Urn, all their papers will be rejected by every peer reviewed journal across the land... except Weather, maybe... Their salaries will remain unchanged year upon year, and, worst of all, their conference travel grants will become as pitiful as the Agriculture sandwich fillings. Ha ha ha!! Let us prepare our disguises.

Exit all. Lights down.

Scene III

Spotlight on Narrator.

NARRATOR: Meanwhile, the Whiteknights have arrived at Whiteknights Lake, the watery palace of Lady Slingo of the Warm Pool.

Lights up on Lady Slingo in her warm pool. Enter the Knights.

TALKALOT: Lady Slingo, oh Lady Slingo

LADY SLINGO: Wait! Hold your horses - I'm just filling in this NERC grant proposal. Now, where was I? Computing budget...eeny, meeny, miny, 10,000 pounds. Mind you, I could do with a new PC at home – 20,000 pounds. Come to think of it, the TV's a bit ropey too – 30,000 pounds. That'll do – got to be professional about this. OK – who is it? Oh no, not you lot again!

TALKALOT: We have come to ask about...

MILLIBARTHUR: Whoaa there! I'm king around here – I'll do the talking.

TALKALOT: But on my NERC Gradschool course they told me that I need to be more assertive, and to take control. (*proudly*) Apparently, according to the assessment they did, I've got leadership potential.

MILLIBARTHUR: Oh shut up. All you did on that course was get drunk, and decide to leave academia for ever. I'm in charge here. Ahem. Lady Slingo, the holy urn, whose resting place you so generously directed us to, us has broken down. In fact, it's about as useful as a lunchtime seminar on data assimilation. Can you help?

LADY SLINGO: Oh I don't know, I'm a bit busy at the moment. Since my Lord, Alan le Fey, bugged off to form his own company, and started hanging around with that DARC lot, I've had to do all the work around here.

GWEEN HOUSE: But I thought you did all the work before anyway?

LADY SLINGO: Bloody good point. OK, I'll see what I can do.....let's see what I've got here in my watery vault....Oooh, I haven't looked in here for years.....(*pulls out massive book, blows dust off*). Ahhh, Hoskins, McIntyre and Roberson. Well I won't be needing that anymore, it's been completely outdated (*she throws it away, pulls out another book*) Circulating atmospheres, always makes my head spin, that one (*throws it away*). Ahh, my photo album (*she opens up a book. As she turns the pages, pictures appear of lecturers when they were young, or doing stupid things, which are projected on the screen, she puts the book away*). Ahh, here we go, the solution to all problems, a good long screw....driver. (*she pulls out screwdriver*).

MILLIBARTHUR: Thank you good lady. We will leave you to finish writing your proposals. (*The knights leave*)

LADY SLINGO: Right – travel grants. Oooh, the Bahamas – I haven't been there for a while – 50,000 pounds...

Lights down.

Scene IV

NARRATOR: Meanwhile, back at the Castle, Sir Plus-to-requirements and the radiant Ellivere are engaging in a little small talk.

Lights up. Sir Plus and Ellivere are on stage. Perhaps they are seated at a table?

SIR PLUS: So, just me and you then... err... err... Do you come here often?

ELLIVERE: I live here, you buffoon!

SIR PLUS: Oh yes, of course you do... err... err... We're not used to women around here, you know. We had one before, but she left in mysterious circumstances – very Fishy...

Enter Alan le Fey, Guillaume le Hoz and PPM from the left, dressed as maintenance. They knock on an imaginary door, with the appropriate sound effects. Sir Plus opens the door to them.

SIR PLUS: Hello?

LE FEY: Hello, we're from the maintenance department – we've come to fix your urn.

SIR PLUS: Ah, great. The other knights must have called you. Come on in.

ELLIVERE: Are you sure this is a good idea? They don't look very professional.

PPM: (*to Ellivere*) Ah! Come, come, my dear! Why don't you and I go off together for a little, er, you know... tête-à-tête.

ELLIVERE: Ooh, the continental charmer!

Ellivere and PPM walk off to the side of the stage slowly, arm in arm. Ellivere is oblivious to the remainder of the proceedings on stage, as PPM is wooing her extravagantly.

LE FEY: Now, tie the other one up, and then we can get the urn!

Le Hoz grabs Sir Plus, ties him up, and gags him.

SIR PLUS: Ow! These bonds are tighter than the NERC travel grants for PhD students.

LE FEY: At last, the holy urn is mine! Let us go. Ha Ha Ha (*evil cackle*).

PPM: Can I bring the lovely lady with me?

LE FEY: Yes – we may need her to operate the urn. (*To Sir Plus*) Deliver this message to King Millibarthur: Alan le Fey is now the keeper of the holy urn! Ha Ha Ha

Le Fey, Le Hoz, PPM and Ellivere leave.

NARRATOR: Minutes later, the Knights return from the warm pool.

Knights enter.

MILLIBARTHUR: Sir Plus, Ellivere, we're home! (*sees Sir Plus tied up on the floor*) Oh, Sir Plus, not again. What have I told you about your kinky evenings in? Next time, make sure you invite me too.

TALKALOT: No Sir, I think he's trying to say something (*takes off gag*)

SIR PLUS: Oh! Oh! King Millibarthur, Something terrible has happened! Alan le Fey and his motley crew have stolen the Holy Urn!

Knights gasp

SIR PLUS: And they've taken Ellivere too.

MILLIBARTHUR: This is terrible – what are we going to do about the urn? We cannot let this lie! I propose a quest: we will travel to the castle of DARC, and retrieve the holy urn. And, if there's time left in the last scene, maybe we'll rescue Ellivere as well.

Mission Impossible Music.

GALAHADAM: This quest will be very perilous. Sir Gween House, fetch the parchment.

Gweenhouse fetches scroll, on which is drawn a map.

GALAHADAM: First, we must cross the land of... Bracknallia

The Knights gasp.

GWEEN HOUSE: Bracknallia is a land full of government-funded soldiers. They are organised, efficient, and well funded.

GALAHADAM: Next, is the land of... Shinfieldium

The Knights gasp.

GWEEN HOUSE: Shinfieldium is full of mercenaries from other lands. They speak in strange tongues and have expensive horses.

TALKALOT: And they get tax-free hay – lucky or what?!

MILLIBARTHUR: We are not afraid. Let us begin our quest.

Exit all.

Scene V

NARRATOR: After travelling for many days, and crossing many roundabouts, the White Knights finally arrive in the land of Bracknallia...

There is a big black knight on stage (The Champion of Bracknallia). He has a shield with the Met Office logo on it. The Whiteknights enter.

TALKALOT: Oh dear, he is much bigger than us, and his technology is far more advanced. *And* doesn't have to renew his contract every three years! What shall we do?

BRACKNELL: None shall pass. I am the champion of the land of Bracknallia. In order to pass through this land, you must challenge me to mortal combat.

GWEEN HOUSE: That sounds a bit extreme! How about we challenge you to a game of football?

Bracknell knight scratches chin and ponders this idea.

GALAHADAM: No – are you mad? We lost 10-0 to them last time! We'll probably do even worse if we play them now.

GWEEN HOUSE: Yeah, but now we a star immigrant knight, Sir Lawrence of America. Or was it Arabia?

GALAHADAM: Exactly! We'll probably lose 20-0!!

TALKALOT: I know, we'll just wait.

MILLIBARTHUR: What?

TALKALOT: Trust me on this one – just wait and see...

Everyone freezes.

NARRATOR: 3 hours pass by...

FX: *Ding.....*

BRACKNELL: *(looking at watch)* Ooh, must go! *(he leaves)*

MILLIBARTHUR: *(Surprised)* How did you know he was going to leave?

TALKALOT: *(with finger in the air)* Ah ha! Everyone knows that the knights of Bracknalia never do any work after 5pm.

GWEEN HOUSE: Good stuff, Talkalot. Now let's go while the coast is clear!

NARRATOR: And so, having cowardly... err, bravely defeated the evil Champion of Bracknalia, the next day our noble knights continue onwards to the rich and tax-free land of Shinfieldium. Progress was slow... but not quite as slow as the ITS help desk.

The knights enter the scene. The Black Knight of Shinfieldium is there with a shield with the European flag on it.

SHINFIELD: None shall pass! I am the champion of the land of Shinfieldium. In order to pass through this land you must challenge me to mortal combat!

TALKALOT: Oh God, not again!

MILLIBARTHUR: What can we challenge him to this time? Hmm, I know, a game of cricket.

GWEEN HOUSE: Oh no, not a good idea. Sir Woolnough is back from the crusades and you know he'll want to open the batting. It could take days... *(he plays a Boycott forward defensive stroke with his sword).*

The knights look at Galahadam III suggestively.

GALAHADAM: I can't challenge him – I'm still hung over from the pub-crawl.

GWEEN HOUSE: I can't either – I'm still injured from the play-scrum I had last night with Sir Frame

The knights huddle in a circle.

MILLIBARTHUR: *(Whispering in a shouting kind of way)* What are we going to do? One of us has to challenge him.

SHINFIELD: *(Annoyed)* I will give you until dinnertime to decide who your champion will be. Meet me back here then. I haven't got time for this – I need my European siesta.

Everyone leaves.

NARRATOR: At 6 o'clock that evening the knights return.

MILLIBARTHUR: *(Looking puzzled)* So where is he then?

GALAHADAM: Yeah, it's well past dinnertime and I ate all my sandwiches at 11am.

TALKALOT: Consulting my PDF tables, the most likely outcome is that he's bottled it!

MILLIBARTHUR: OK Whiteknights, let's shift one's bottoms and press on to DARC Towers!

GWEEN HOUSE: I hope it's not too far – I'm as worn out as Alan O'Neil's departmental credit card.

The knights leave.

NARRATOR: Some three hours later the Shinfield Knight returns...

SHINFIELD: Ahhh – dinnertime! I'm looking forward to my snails and Bratwurst with a paella and pasta accompaniment, followed by a Belgian bun and Guinness to wash it down with... Now where are those English knights?

A realisation suddenly dawns on the Shinfield knight.

SHINFIELD: Ahh! Holy Macaroni! I forgot that these uncultured English scum dine at 6pm. Arrrggghh! So they have escaped. I had better keep this quiet or the next thing I'll know I'll get sacked and end up working for some fly-by-knight cowboy company like... like... Weather Informatics!!!!

NARRATOR: After luckily outwitting the Shinfield champion, the fearless and talentless knights move on to DARC Towers...

ACT IV

Scene I

NARRATOR: And so, after a long journey, our intrepid heroes finally arrived at DARC Towers, the imposing headquarters of the *Dreadful Acronym Research Centre* or DARC. It was protected on all sides by huge walls and had only one entrance. Along the walls ran sophisticated defensive fins. Atop the main tower was a fiendish looking device which many observers (Ken Spiers included) thought was used for communication with other EVIL organisations such as the *Unusually Gaudy And Morbid Postdocs* (or UGAMP).

We join our heroes as they try to rescue the urn, and the lovely Ellivere.

MILLIBARTHUR: *(to Narrator)* Oh yes, of course – she’s here as well, isn’t she... Ah-ah! DARC towers!

GWEEN HOUSE: Doesn’t look that impressive to me – half of it’s not even built yet.

GALAHADAM: What now my liege? How are we going to get in?

GWEEN HOUSE: What about tying ourselves to a big balloon and floating in over the top?

TALKALOT: Or... We could try and starve them out by stopping their chocolate supplies.

GWEEN HOUSE: If we wait ‘til summer they’ll all come out to play croquet and we can sneak when they’re not looking.

MILLIBARTHUR: But by then Le Fey will have completely assimilated the urn’s knowledge into his model.

NARRATOR: And he will have claimed the beautiful Ellivere as his bride.

MILLIBARTHUR: Maybe we could wait a bit... No, we must get the urn back. Anyone got any other ideas?

TALKALOT: There’s statistically more chance of us getting in if we use *bi-normally distributed tactics*.

ALL: What?

TALKALOT: Split up.

MILLIBARTHUR: Why didn’t you say so, then? Ok, we’ll try it. G’ween, Galahadam– see if you can find a way in round the back. Talkalot, you’re with me – we might as well try the front door. *(Gld, G’ween off stage Millibarthur Talkalot continue)*

DR JIM: STOP! Who goes there? I am Dr Jim, the keeper of the *keys*. You’ll be in *treble* if you try to get into my *bassment*.

MILLIBARTHUR: Stand aside and let’s us past, or we’ll knock this castle *flat* and send you *Bach* to where you came from!

DR JIM: *Stave* away, I say - or you’ll the taste the edge of my... butter knife?

NARRATOR: *(from the side)* a..a...a I’m terribly sorry, but I think you might have the wrong implement...

DR JIM: Ah - sorry. Just wait a *minim* – I’ll just go get something a little bit more *sharp* – and then you’ll be *four-four* it.

NARRATOR: Right - now remember the increase in tempo in the last scene. From A? Here goes.

DR JIM: *Stave* away I say – or you'll taste the edge of my ..

TALKALOT: Oh, this is hopeless!

MILLIBARTHUR : Come on Talkalot, we've got a *score* to settle with Alan le Fey.

The push Dr Jim aside, and walk off stage to the sound of indignant clarinet music.

TALKALOT: (*going off stage*) Do you know what the chances of the narrator being able to interact with the cast of a play are?

MILLIBARTHUR: QUIET! We don't want to let them know we're here.

Exit all.

Scene II

NARRATOR: Meanwhile, Galahadam III and the Gween House Knight are looking for a way into DARC towers.

Enetr Gween House and Galahadam III

GWEEN HOUSE: We've been all the way round this place – I don't see how we're going to get in – the wall's just far too high.

GALAHADAM: We could climb in if it wasn't for those infernal erm... Well, what *are* they exactly... sunshades?

GWEEN HOUSE: No, they're more like....

GALAHADAM: Anyway we've got to get in... Hang on I'll just get my pocket Cray out. (*grossly oversized sunflower seeds fall out of his pocket together with an unfolding palm top computer*) Ooh – what are these? I think I *seed's* a way out of this mess.

GWEEN HOUSE: Not sunflowers! *Leaf* them out of it! I had enough of them over the summer. People were always *stalking* about the size of Polton's and what Done's had on the end of it. Anyway, how are we going to grow them fast enough? You're not going to be able to cut the top and bottom off them like Dame Lunt – that didn't work anyway.

GALAHADAM: No problem – I can make the Sahara green at the push of a button. We'll just put them in a perpetual July model...

GWEEN HOUSE: And I'll add some of my own noxious gases – I'll *C-O two* to it that it grows like the clappers. We'll be over the wall in no time.

GALAHADAM: Well, *water* are we waiting for...

Lights down. Exit all.

Scene III

NARRATOR: Meanwhile, inside DARC Towers, Le Fey's evil henchpeople are working on what they do best – concocting dreadful acronyms.

Lights up on Guillaume Le Hoz, PPM, and the Grey Knight standing around supping cups of tea – Alan le Fey is in the background.

LE HOZ: How about ... *Hot Eastern Refreshing Drink, or HERD.*

GREY KNIGHT: Well, that's *sue-per* but it reminds me a bit too much of goats.

PPM: What? *Global Ocean Atmosphere Transfer Schemes?*

GREY KNIGHT: No, just goats.

LE HOZ: Ok, Ok, try this... *Brown Leafy Oriental Beverage, or BLOB.*

GREY KNIGHT: I *sue-pose* so, but it's not very romantic.

LE HOZ: Hmm. I've got it – *Very refreshing and pleasant drink made from dried leaves and served with milk, or PROMISE.*

GREY KNIGHT: Guillaume, that's just *sue-blime*.

LE FEY: Will you stop trying to make up an acronym – it's just TEA! What are you doing? Millibarthur and his Whiteknights are here and we haven't yet assimilated all the urn's meteorological knowledge! Haven't any of you *FOOLS (aside) Foppish Over Learned Simpletons...* come up with any ideas on how to stall them yet?

PPM: Well... I was sitting studying my magic books and then... poof! It came to me. We get them with (*whisper into Le Fey's ear*)....

LE FEY: So in essence... *Pouff... Magic Dragon.*

(Dragon enters in some fast or blindingly slow way – GleH from the other wing)

LE FEY: Well there's *snout* for it! (*aside*) This scene is really starting to drag on... Send the dragon outside to attack them from behind (*evil laugh, PPM talks to dragon, dragon lumbers off stage*)

Now as for the main defence I'm afraid it's up to you three – I'm going to protect the urn...

NARRATOR: ...and the beautiful Ellivere?

LE FEY: No, just the urn.

GREY KNIGHT: I don't fancy this – battling the Whiteknights indeed! *Sue-ddenly*, I'm a little busy – byee! (*runs off stage in the opposite direction*)

Lights down. Exit all.

Scene IV

NARRATOR: Meanwhile, back at the very back of DARC Towers...

Lights up on Galahadam III and the Gweenhouse Knight. The sunflower has grown to its full height.

GALAHADAM: Right that's it – any more and the flower will break the model top.

GWEEN HOUSE: Do you think it's strong enough? Its structure looks a little unrealistic.

GALAHADAM: You don't have much experience with models do you?

GWEEN HOUSE: Oh well! *Me-thanek's* I should climb up first.

GALAHADAM: No way, don't be stupid. I'm always first in the *queue*, and anyway I'm not following behind you and all your *gases*. I'll go first – you can cushion me if I *crash*.

Mock climbing scene – sunflower descends.

GWEEN HOUSE: Now what? Do you know where we're going?

GALAHADAM: Well, judging by the filth and squalor, this must be the PhD wing.

GWEEN HOUSE: In that case, their headquarters are just down here on the right.

The dragon has finally got back onto stage G'ween and Galahadam don't notice, dragon follows G'ween and Galahadam as they search for DARC control.

GALAHADAM: are sure you *N-O* where you're going?

GWEEN HOUSE: Can you smell something burning?

GALAHADAM: Now that you mention it, I can. Smells a bit earthy

It's behind you scene – lines along the lines of 'It's behind you', 'What', 'Drag-on', 'No I'm wearing manly clothes', etc.

GWEEN HOUSE : I think the stench is coming from outside (*Galahadam shakes his head*). I'll shut this window, which has been carefully placed on stage as a plot device.

The dragon, realising it's on the wrong side of the window, makes a leap for it and smashes into window, collapsing into a heap.

GWEEN HOUSE: Ha! I told you I was right – they even put a helpful silver plaque on the wall. *DARC - The Dreadful Acronym Research Centre*, sponsored by the *Nefariously Evil Rent Collector*, or *NERC*.

Lights down. Exit all.

Scene V

NARRATOR: Meanwhile, King Millibarthur and Sir Talkalot are still on the trail of the Urn.

Lights up. Millibarthur enters with Sir Talkalot

MILLIBARTHUR: Can't be far now - we've searched the whole place.

Guillaume Le Hoz and PPM jump onto stage cackling.

PPM: A-ha! We have you now. When we're done with you, you'll be covered in *Bruges*.

MILLIBARTHUR: *Ghent* out of the way – we're here for the urn.

PPM: You're too *choco-late* – the urn is almost assimilated

TALKALOT: That pun was more than I can *beer*. (*to Millibarthur*) Let me at them, my *Liege* – you go and get the urn. (*Millibarthur leaves*) Right, let's see if you and your assimilation scheme can handle this: **'The weight of a PhD thesis is proportional to the monthly-averaged units of alcohol consumed.'**

LE HOZ: Easy! Come on, make this a challenge!

PPM: Enough of this waffle, you little *Antwerp*.

TALKALOT: **The dress sense of academics (*aside*) defined by a standardised style factor... is inversely proportional to their salary.**

PPM: Guillaume! The model does not perform well here – the statistics are too realistic!

TALKALOT: **The net weight of facial hair explains 80% of the variance in the number of peer-reviewed papers in publications.**

LE HOZ: Ahh! He's right – I cannot take it.

TALKALOT : **Everything... is explained by PV!**

LE HOZ/PPM: Aaagh! Uurgh! (*crumple in a heap – Talkalot runs off to find Millibarthur*)

Lights down.

NARRATOR: So, having dealt with the evil henchmen, Sir Talkalot departs in search of his King.

Scene VI

Lights up. Le Fey is tinkering with the urn – Ellivere is in the corner with a sax round her neck, perhaps playing it?

LE FEY: Not long now, I think! And once we have assimilated the knowledge of the urn, commercial superiority will be mine.

ELLIVERE: Your dastardly plan will fail – the urn can only be used for true research and will not give up its knowledge to you Le Fey. You cannot assimilate it.

Millibarthur bursts in.

LE FEY: Oh, what do you want? Can't you see I'm busy – make an appointment with my secretary!

ELLIVERE: Oh Darling! You've come to save me.

Millibarthur ignores Ellivere completely

MILLIBARTHUR: Give it up, Le Fey – return the urn to it's rightful home, or you will face the wrath of Excalibur!

LE FEY: What, that little piece of metal?

MILLIBARTHUR: Yes, for now its true power to be revealed for the first time – forged in the head of the court jester, 'Excalibur' is the ultimate punning machine.

LE FEY: That scare me – soon I will have all the knowledge the urn can supply. I won't *COW*er before you or your sword.

SWORD: *Moove* over Le Fey – it's time you went to *pastures* new. The audience is *udderly* fed up with you *milking* your part. They can't *stomach* any more.

LE FEY: Argh! Stop it, you're driving me nuts!

SWORD: *Braziliant!* Feel the strength of the pun *cracker!* You never thought we'd *cashew*, but we knew you'd *shell* out in the end.

LE FEY: Argh! This is just not *cricket*.

SWORD: You're on a *sticky wicket* with that talk, Le Fey – we've got you and your *order stumped*. You are about to be cut out of the *pitchure*.

LE FEY: I give in, I give in – here take your urn and leave me alone – and take her with you. I can't stand the sax anymore.

Millibarthur takes the urn. At that moment, Talkalot, Galahadam III and the Gween House Knight arrive, from different directions.

MILLIBARTHUR: Talkalot! Gween! Galahadam! Success! It's time to go home.

They make to leave (stage left).

ELLIVERE: Millibarthur!! Wait for me!!

She runs off stage after them, casting her saxophone aside.

Scene VII

Lights down.

NARRATOR: And so our heroes returned victorious to Earley Castle. *(at this point, everyone starts to arrive on stage from the right. Millibarthur and co. are last)* The urn was repaired and returned to its rightful place and the weather forecasts improved. The occupants of DARC Towers still plotted and schemed, but nobody paid any attention to them.

Enter Merlinux from the left.

MILLIBARTHUR: Ah, Merlinux – where have you been? We could have done with a bit of help back there.

MERLINUX: Well... the scriptwriters forgot about me until this point, so I've been down the pub.

MILLIBARTHUR: Well, as everyone's here and the urn is back where it belongs, I think this calls for a right knees-up – bring on the pies!

PIE WOMAN: Right, here's today's list. *(quickly)* dragon and leak, chicken and leak, dragon and chicken, dragon chicken and leak, leak chicken and dragon, dragon chicken leak chicken and dragon...

SONG: *Oh what a Knight.*

THE END

Followed by much merry making and such like.