

## II-The tale of Balen

In the linden-time, when spring turns into summer, a humbler, yet still noble-hearted Balen is released from imprisonment. Despite his lowly status, his spirit remains untarnished, eagerly awaiting the moment to reclaim his destiny. During this period, a distressed maiden clothed in royal garments and burdened by a sword no man could draw—save for a peerless knight—appears before King Arthur. She declares that only a knight of unblemished honor can free her from her anguish by drawing the sword. King Arthur, along with his bravest knights, including Launcelot, Tristram, and Lamoracke, attempt to draw the sword but fail, proving their unworthiness. The scene is tense, with onlookers including the formidable Queen Morgause of Orkney, whose presence adds a dark undercurrent to the challenge.

Amidst this, Balen, a knight of modest means and attire, steps forward. Despite skepticism from the maiden and disbelief from those who had failed, Balen successfully draws the sword, demonstrating his worthiness where others have failed. This act of valor not only astonishes the court but also distresses the maiden, as she knows the sword brings a grave fate. Despite her pleadings to return the sword and break the ominous prophecy tied to it—that Balen would kill the one he loves most with it—Balen refuses, accepting whatever fate may come. The maiden reluctantly resigns to this outcome, deeply troubled by the future she knows cannot be altered.

This chapter highlights themes of destiny, honor, and the tragic irony of fate. Balen, despite his humble exterior and previous imprisonment, proves that true nobility and valiant spirit are not bound by one's status or material wealth. His success where all other celebrated knights have failed speaks volumes about the qualities that define true heroism. However, his insistence on keeping the sword, despite the ominous prophecy attached to it, foreshadows a tragic turn in his journey, suggesting that even the noblest of heroes are not immune to the cruel twists of fate.