

Merlin & Mike

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SAMPLE

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MERLIN AND MIKE

FADE IN:

EXT. VILLAGE, MEDIEVAL ENGLAND – NIGHT

A family of PEASANTS cower together, training panicky eyes on a distant CASTLE high above.

Thunder bangs like battle drums. Pyrotechnic pandemonium flashes across night skies...

PEASANT WOMAN

Merlin! The work of that wizard is upon us...

GREY-BEARD PEASANT

No! It is the woman, Vivien, that wicked wench he has taken in...

Their upturned faces freeze with fear. They watch the center of the storm...

MERLIN'S CASTLE. An emblem of its era, this magical masterpiece crowns a mountaintop surrounded by a sea of OAK.

Gray clouds swirl about its turrets. Lightning scorches jagged arcs on the castle walls.

INT. MERLIN'S CASTLE

MERLIN, the ancient wizard – the icon of magic – with long gray beard, whose wise and weathered countenance strikes others as pleasing. His SCOTTISH BROGUE would warm an honest woman's heart. If only he had an honest woman.

He lies on a cold marble floor. His lanky frame struggles against GLISTENING BONDS and the magic they possess, but it's useless; all he can do is glare at his betrayer–

VIVIEN

–whose raven braids crown her lovely head. This sorceress would be even more beautiful if not for the dark expression crawling like a toad across her porcelain skin. She is drunk with new-found power, alternating vixenry with anger.

She whirls about, arms outstretched, and the surrounding CASTLE

SIZZLES, POPS, then SHOOTS AWAY IN PIECES carried by bolts of lightning.

Leaving them in the OAK GROVE.

VIVIEN

(*almost merciful*)

Do not struggle so hard, old man. The bonds are powerful indeed. You will not escape. (beat) And your loving Vivien sends you this small gift...

A small laugh. She exhales onto her hand, blowing a PUFF OF SPARKLING SMOKE above Merlin.

The smoke floats...

Then MORPHS into a COLOSSAL GRYPHON, a really nasty monster. This gryphon is merged from two beasts: an enormous EAGLE'S HEAD rides atop a massive LION'S BODY that boasts four legs ending in RAZOR-SHARP CLAWS. This horror flies overhead on its devil's WINGS.

The gryphon has a terrible hunger for Merlin meat. It claws and snaps at the prone wizard who manages to roll and squirm to escape.

Gathering his wits, Merlin concentrates all his energies on the beast above him...

MERLIN

Spirit of dreams, I command you!

The monster BURSTS as though it were only a soap bubble. A *furious* wind kicks up.

VIVIEN

So I cannot deal with you ... yet. But you are from the old times and new times are coming. I will find the power, I will! When I find it and have it — you will die. Until that day...

Vivien raises her hand to a bare spot in the earth and there is LOUD RUMBLING. A GIANT OAK TREE springs from the ground.

Sprouting leaves, it comes to rest quickly.

Merlin gulps hard. He knows what's coming.

MERLIN

We were friends, companions!

VIVIEN

You were a fool.

Now she she cleaves the air with her hands, parting the North Wind from the South. In response, the tree –

SPLITS DOWN THE MIDDLE and reveals an OPENING large enough for one...

VIVIEN

(giggling sarcastically)

Pray I do find the means to kill you...or you shall be captive forever.

A wave of her hand and Merlin floats, struggling, into the belly of the tree.

MERLIN

Arthur will not rest until I am free! By those powers that grant the Earth space and time it will come to pass–

Now, that truly interests the sorceress. Fire burns in her eyes as she draws nearer the tree.

VIVIEN

No mortal will ever be certain what became of the great Merlin!

Assuming the stance of a warrior, she raises one arm.

VIVIEN (CONT'D)

...and what of Arthur?

EXCALIBUR, the brilliantly flashing sword, appears in her hand. She aims it toward the night sky...

VIVIEN

That wretched excuse for a king? That mere mortal? He'll need this!

She thrusts the sword...

Into the BASE of the TREE. Only its HILT protrudes.

Her laughter rings with sinister fury. Over this, Merlin bellows his last...

MERLIN

You shall lose, Vivien! You HARPY!!!

He breaks the bonds...but it's too late.

In his face –

Giving up, he cracks his old, sore knuckles in thanks for the effort.

MCBRIDLE

I'm no king, and – I guess – ye know it.

He sits at the base of the tree and gingerly removes his tattered mittens. Searching his pockets, he comes up with an apple and a knife. As he slices away PEELING, it drops to the ground and is SUCKED UNDER INSTANTLY. He doesn't seem to notice...

MCBRIDLE

(to himself, sort of)

No one believes anymore. What they're doin' to you...it's criminal. America. They're more Brit than England now.

He slices off a chunk of fruit and eats it. Gingerly, he places the rest on the ground beside him.

He leaves, and THE BREEZE PICKS UP.

Because he's walking away, McBridle doesn't see the TREE ROOT SLIDE UNDER THE EARTH to the spot where the apple was placed...

WITH A SUCKING NOISE, the apple DISAPPEARS INTO THE GROUND. One moment later, THE APPLE CORE POPS UP – FFFT! – AND FLIES PAST THE MAN. McBridle pauses.

AGONIZED MOANS surround him.

He forces a deep breath ... but still doesn't look.

MCBRIDLE

Fare-thee-well to you too, old friend.

CLOSE

ON TREE BRANCHES

waving in farewell...

DISSOLVE TO:

CLOSE UP:

ON Branches of a different sort.

EXT. LAKE HAVASU HIGH SCHOOL — MORNING
 PALM TREES line a sunny lane along the edges of the ballfield where
 CHEERLEADERS in mini-Beefeater suits cavort...

CHEERLEADERS
 GO, GO, CHEERIOOOO!

Along a school building wall...

Are plastered a series of posters. Various students vie for class president. There's one
 fellow who doesn't have a poster. Freshman MIKE PENDRAGON skulks past...

He's a good-looking young chap, with black curls framing a square-jawed face. This kid
 could be class president...someday.

He wears a backpack, overstuffed, with neatly-rolled papers sticking out the top.

A HUGE HAND CUFFS HIS SHOULDER, nearly sending the poor boy to the ground.
 BYRON SCHAEFER towers over him, sneering.

BYRON
 What are you looking at? Give it up, dufus! The whole
 school would eat raw snails before they'd elect you garbage
 man.

Mike draws a short breath. He looks down – his expression a mix of irritation and
 embarrassment.

MIKE
 I'm not trying –

BYRON
 Good! Keep it that way, loser.

But then he smacks Mike on the shoulder again, this time a little harder.

Rubbing the sore spot, Mike shifts his gaze to Byron, and he glares. Then, he has an
 idea...

MIKE
 (forcing a smile)
 Hey, I bet you could use a little magic in your life, right?

BYRON
 Buzz off!

MIKE

Wait.

And he reaches up to Byron's ear ... pulling a \$5 bill from it. Poof! Nicely done.

Byron snatches it from his hand, examines it.

BYRON

Fine. I'll keep it. Now pull your Chemistry homework outta my other ear. Hear me, punk? Hand it over.

Mike sighs. There's no reaching this guy with a magic trick – or a few bucks.

Reaching up, he pulls HOMEWORK PAPERS from his backpack. Slowly, he unrolls them, fingers them, and holds onto them. His magician's smile has hardened into a fierce glare.

Byron snatches them quickly.

BYRON

Better be a C.

Byron re-rolls the papers carelessly then bats Mike on the head with them. He snickers.

MIKE

Byron...that's my homework! And it's no "C"!

BYRON

Got somethin' to say, punk? Go ahead; just say somethin'. Put me in such a bad mood I might just have to take it out on you and any other puny punk Freshman gets in my way.

He leans in, nasty-faced, and stares down the smaller boy.

MIKE

Nothing...

BYRON

Good. Real good.

He swaggers away.

Watching him go, Mike curls his lip angrily.

MIKE
 (under his breath)
 Neanderthall. Gad, I hate this town!

But he's managed to keep one thing, if not his dignity...the \$5 bill!

MIKE
 (under his breath)
 Go on, lean in and threaten me some more. I'll start taking your money next!

BEEP BEEP BEEP BEEP...

Time for class.

INT. CLASSROOM – DAY

Chemistry 1A – not a fun place to be on any breezy morning. A classload of kids sit, watching their instructor prepare noxious goo in a test tube.

MS. ZIMMERMAN, the teacher from ninth-grade Science hell, drones before her captive students, standing behind a huge contraption, sporting a rainbow of bubbling TEST TUBES...

MS. ZIMMERMAN
 ...Carefully pour the contents of beaker A into beaker B.
 Shake. Wait forty-five seconds. Check color. Shake again...

Past the students we find

Mike

allowing his Chemistry book to sag on the desk. Young Mike's dreamy blues wander out the window to study the cheerleaders outside.

Those girls are something. They spin, they bend, they twirl around the MASCOT IN KNIGHT'S HELMET. Finally, they turn away to huddle and...

something's not right...

Mike blinks and stares harder.

One by one, the girls swing back—only they're NOT GIRLS anymore –

Each has become a HARPY – an UGLY WINGED-GIRL CREATURE – in CHEERLEADER SUIT!

The harpies literally fly into a pyramid formation and once there almost seem to be posing as real cheerleaders, until...

THE ONE ON TOP reaches up with its scary-sharp talon and brushes the knight's helmet off to reveal a wild-maned semi-human girl's head. But it stares with GLOWING EYES directly through that school window...

At Mike! Launching from the pyramid, this birdy-beast sails through the open window, landing...

INSIDE THE CLASSROOM

But this is no ordinary bird-babe in a classroom. This one grows big, nasty claws and a hungry look in its eyes – starved for fresh Mike. It snaps at him.

Shrieking, Mike leaps away from his desk, scattering his books. He climbs over his fallen chair and flees across a table. Other kids just stare, shocked.

MIKE
RUN FOR IT! RUN FOR IT, EVERYONE!!!!

But all the kids and the teacher see is...

Mike, standing on the table, yelling, for a reason no one can figure...

BACK TO what Mike sees...

To his chagrin, nobody follows orders. They just stare.

But this nightmare's far from over. The creature chases Mike around the Science Lab. He passes a HANGING MODEL OF AN EAGLE and shrieks again, pushing it away – those babies can really bounce.

A bookshelf provides momentary shelter when he grabs an oversized Chemistry book. Thinking quickly, he holds it up like a shield but lets go even faster when the nightmare lunges, impaling his book on a claw. The harpy stops for a moment to work it free from her nail job and flings CHEMISTRY I across the room.

Mike grabs a larger book. It says ORNITHOLOGY in bright letters. There's a picture of a...bird...on the cover. Upon noticing what he's holding –

MIKE
Aaaah!

He tosses the book at the creature but it ducks and continues to charge at him. In his panic, Mike knocks down the entire bookshelf. Still the monster pursues, flapping and snapping...

The entire class is aghast, watching...

As Mike runs about the room, tossing books every which way...why?

They just can't see what Mike sees...

That monster just won't give up, even when he scrambles over Ms. Zimmerman's desk. Truly desperate now, he grabs two of those bubbling beakers, and launches them straight at the harpy. The first one misses, but the second catches it square on the jaw-bone, splattering a lovely shade of electric purple –

As the others see it...

PURPLE GOO SPLATTERS ALL OVER BYRON SCHAEFER. The big, dumb hood's too flabbergasted to speak.

Furious, Ms. Zimmerman charges for Mike...

Just as Byron reacts –

BYRON
(wiping at himself)
Nobody messes with me!!!

Grabbing Mike by the collar, Ms. Zimmerman drags him toward the door (and away from Byron).

MS. ZIMMERMAN
You're outta here, mister!

Squirming from side to side, Mike surveys the war-torn class.

NO HARPY...anywhere.

That pulls Mike back to reality. His eyes go wide as he realizes what must've happened, especially when he sees Byron. He struggles, more gently now, with his teacher.

MIKE
Wasn't it here??!! Didn't you see it?

But it's no use. He's outta there.

EXT. PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE ESTABLISHING

Students mill in the hallway, eagerly chattering about the recent events.

INT. PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE

The traditional checkered floor, pink wall, plastic-framed diplomas kind of place.

PRINCIPAL APRICOT props an elbow on his large, wooden desk. Ms. Zimmerman leans forward, almost out of her seat.

MS. ZIMMERMAN

...this was the worst. Your nephew actually attacked another student this time!

She's reporting to his AUNT NELVARA DOONES, known locally as Weird Nellie. She wears a hot pink slack set and matching scuffies. Her outfit's topped off with enormous hoop earrings pushing out from a hot pink scarf that barely cools hot red hair. Her constant companion, a Tiparello, hangs forgotten from one corner of her lip. She could be the poster girl for Vegas slot queens.

MIKE

I didn't mean it. I'm sorry, Aunt Nel!

MS. ZIMMERMAN

Sorry just won't do here. Who knows what those chemicals will do to poor Byron Schaefer—

NELVARA

Byron Schaefer! That dumb ox? Lady, any chemicals would be an improvement!

MS. ZIMMERMAN

Oh, and I suppose you'd like to have chemicals poured all over Michael's head, Nelvara Doone!

She spits out Nelvara's name as though it were bitter on her lips.

NELVARA

Well now, that all depends—

PRINCIPAL APRICOT

— Let's just get to the point.

NELVARA

The point??!! Maybe you're boring. Maybe this whole damn school in this two-horse town is boring. Ever think of that one, pucker-puss?

MS. ZIMMERMAN

I'm only doing my job...which is more than I can say for your brat!

PRINCIPAL APRICOT

Now, stop it! We're here to help young Mickey—er, Michael—with his problem...which, I believe I can diagnose rather easily.

MIKE

Diagnose? You think I'm sick?

Principal Apricot leans back in his chair. He tosses a small red ball, one-handed, into the air repeatedly.

PRINCIPAL APRICOT

Could be a case of Attention Deficit Disorder.

This is too much for Nelvara. She rises and paces.

NELVARA

Let me get this straight. You guys bore the kid to death. He falls asleep, has a couple of bad dreams. So then, you drag me in here to sell me your ... crackpot theories?

MS. ZIMMERMAN

(irritated, but avoiding the bait)

I agree with Principal Apricot. Something's got to be done for the boy.

NELVARA

Too bad they couldn't do anything for you...

PRINCIPAL APRICOT

Ms. Doones! We're giving Michael here a few days off.

NELVARA

What??? You've gotta be kidding!

PRINCIPAL APRICOT

Not at all. With the weekend approaching, I don't want to see this young man before next Thursday – is that clear? (off Nel's fury) Technically, I'm suspending him for disrupting class. We'll forget about the goo on Byron Schaefer ... if you take your boy to a doctor.

MS. ZIMMERMAN

(excited)

A short trip to the pharmacy and he'll be back in school, doing much better. Trust me.

NELVARA

Trust you? Trust some doctor, too? If I'd trusted doctors before, I'd be in the looney bin right now.

Everyone exchanges quick glances on that one.

NELVARA

Strike that.