

**SIR EGWYN  
SQUIRREL AND THE  
GRAIL**

**BY**

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# CONTENTS

1	Preparing to Plant.....	3
2	Brendan and the Ancestor.....	9
3	Egwyn and Guinevere .....	14
4	Arthur and Knighthood.....	20
5	Meeting Merlin.....	26
6	The Grail Quest .....	32
7	Joining Sir Gawain .....	36
8	Finding the Grail .....	39
9	Battle and Death of Arthur.....	49
10	Return to Ireland.....	56

**March** is a rainy month but to set up the anticipation of the new spring, the snowdrops shoot forth their beautiful white buds at the slightest bit of warmth. One can see the daffodils slowly sprouting forth, shoots of bright green, and then the tulips just behind them, with darker almost reddish

leaf shoots. Anticipation is in the air, a rebirth of the life in the garden. It is time to begin anew.

## 1 PREPARING TO PLANT

Setting out my seeds in the small greenhouses on a warm day, I chanced to walk back to the fern garden, still covered in wet leaves, and sat upon a bench to soak in some of the warmth. I looked about and saw the dozens of well-gnawed corncobs left from the winter-feeding of the squirrels, dropped here and there, as fallen trees swept aside in some violent windstorm. However, these were all yellowed cobs, every kernel removed, feeding now dozens of wandering

squirrels. They must have communicated over miles to tell all their relatives of this stash of limitless food. I laughed as I saw cobs in the most ridiculous places, birdhouses, under chair covers, in tree holes, stuck in fence openings. It looked like hundreds.

I laughed and sat back in the garden chair, and moved my face into the warmth of the sun, shutting my eyes and just feeling the warmth again.

Then without any warning, I heard:

“How why yah!”

I could not miss that voice and of course the accent. It was not the fiftieth state but a greeting, and a greeting from my old buddy Antnee.

I opened my eyes, my face still turned upward, and there above my head but a couple of feet away, hanging upside down from a branch, with those big brown eyes, and that wet black nose, with twitching whiskers, was Antnee. He continued:

“Tired Sir, I did not mean to wake you if that be the case, but you did not appear asleep.”

I almost near broke my neck as I twisted to see the face, and then he jumped across several branches and settled to my left on the bench, staring now up to my face.

I replied:

“Well good to see you my friend, did you have a good winter?”

He replied:

“Good, well yes indeed Sir, but the snow, some small amount is fun, but alas this winter was quite too much, quite too much indeed, Sir. I have heard of such winters but Sir, three months, three long months, and the ground was covered by snow!”

I could see he was happy to be in the warmth of the sun again. He had fattened up quite a bit, and his fur was so thick that he appeared as if he were merely a gray furry ball, with a mouth and tail.

He then continued:

“Well Sir, you must thank Lady Sara for the food, so much good food, I Sir especially enjoy the sunflower seeds, so sweet and delicious.”

I replied:

“Antnee, you appear to have shall we say overdone it a bit.”

He replied:

“Why Sir what do you mean. Overdone what Sir, have I offended Lady Sara?”

I replied:

“Antnee, you must have put on five pounds, and that is a great deal for you, you are the size of a basketball. That is what I mean, you should see yourself, and you must have a more balanced diet.”

His reply was a bit surprising:

“Diet Sir, why we are wild creatures, we strive every day to survive, we must seek out small bits of food ....”

“Wait!” I replied. “Antnee we fed you several bushels of corn, every day three or four cobs, hundreds of pounds of seed, and well whatever else you get. And that being out in the cold, well I watched you go down the roof vents with corn cobs, in the house behind us, into a warm dry attic, which most likely is now filled with empty cobs!”

He responded:

“Point well taken Sir, but you humans make so many comfortable places for us, so comfortable, why that is why you humans were sent by God, to keep us comfortable, or at least that is how the tale goes, Sir.”

I then replied:

“My good friend, just look about you here in the garden, outside the garden,

all over, why there are hundreds of corn cobs from you and your friends. Why one day when it had finished snowing, I must have seen more than twenty of your friends galloping like a herd of buffalo over the snow to the feeder, then when each had managed a cob of corn, they all galloped back, to where I can only wonder. I have but two questions; first, where do you all stay, for the nests seem gone, and second, how did all of these friends of yours find out about the corn supply?”

He looked at me somewhat puzzled and replied:

“Why Sir, we rest in those nice warm areas just under the roof of those houses, the people are so kind to give us shelter. Yes, and then we bring the corn up there, for Sir, you see about you, shall I say, just snack droppings, the true store of supplies lies above all

those house roofs. Then as to how so many of my family gets here, well Sir, it is my cousin Hattie, you see Sire she just talks to everyone, she tells Lester who lives by the lake, and Lester Sirs will then just tell all to the east. Then Hattie, Sir, tells Phyllis, and Phyllis, Sir, just cannot keep a secret, and to the west and south for miles Sir, the word spreads. However, thanks to Lady Sara Sir, none has gone to want. Many thanks to Lady Sara Sir for she is a fine person, and we all remember her good deeds!”

He made me laugh as usual, as if we human species were an afterthought to help squirrels in their quests. I often wondered how an all-human centric science could just neglect this dimension and then again, I thought that perhaps I am the only one alive holding court like this with the squirrels.

He then asked:

“So Sir, how did you and Lady Sara fare this winter, well I hope?”

I replied:

“Not too badly, but I long to be out in the garden, my friend, out amongst the green and warmth, even if it get too hot, I enjoy the activity.”

He replied:

“The same for us Sir, the same for us. Winter has its glory, the snow, the ice, the winds, why I remember this winter we had a day of never ending blizzard, three feet of snow Sir, three feet of fluffy snow, so much fun Sir, so much fun.”

I wondered what made it so much fun so I proceeded to question him.

“Antnee, what do you all do in the snow, play games, what makes it so much fun.”

He sat tall and wiggled his nose and at that point, I knew I had opened the Pandora’s Box of storytelling, for I must have found a spot that resonated with his list of long tales from the past. He thus responded:

“Why Sir, many games, many fun things to do, but the most special is the Grail game.”

I had been caught and thus I responded out of training as well as out of interest:

“Well Antnee, just what is the Grail game.”

And on cue, he started:

“Well Sir, it is a game based upon a tale from one of our famous relatives, Sir Egwyn Squirrel, when he was out with Arthur’s knights seeking the Holy Grail, Sir, a most exciting adventure, and the game Sir, is in miniature a recollection of that quest. Shall I explain the game Sir?”

I replied:

“No Antnee, tell me more of this Sir, what was his name?”

He replied:

“Sir Egwyn Squirrel, a true knight of the Round Table, a close friend of Sir Galahad. And of the good Queen Guinevere.”



I now knew I was hooked, and sat back and replied:

“Okay Antnee, I am all ears.”

I knew that now I was in for an interesting but somewhat long tale.

## **2 BRENDAN AND THE ANCESTOR**

Antnee began by first snuggling himself against the arm of the garden bench and raising his large fluffy tail over his head. His hands were up and he was gesticulating to add emphasis. I was now well aware of what I was about to hear, not the exact tale but its intensity and innovative view of history, squirrel history.

He began:

“You see Sir, it was I believe 529 in the year of our Lord, and the good Saint

Brendan and his fellow sailors had set out on I believe their eleventh voyage, the longest one yet Sir, across the Atlantic, and they landed at the mouth of New York harbor, of course Sire there was no New York there then, just some Leni Lenape tribes people, peacefully growing their crops.”

Well this was going to be a real interesting tale. He had somehow joined Irish history, King Arthur and the Holy Grail. Perhaps this would be a Hollywood thriller. I listened with anticipation of another tale.

Antnee continued:

“Well Sir, Brendan and his men had been at sea many months, and this time they sailed south along the coast of this new land and they went along the coast of Long Island, until they saw the harbor, and there sitting at the

edge of the harbor was a tree covered island, which they sailed around until they came to see the outer mouth again. They then sailed ashore, seeking food and water, and perhaps meeting some of the inhabitants. They could see the Leni Lenape settlements, the log cabins, small farms, dried fish racks, and the children at play. In fact Brendan looked upon these settlements on the green hillsides and remarked that in some ways they reminded him of Ireland.”

“They landed on a sandy spot across from the mouth of the outer bay, and just down from the narrows which made the inner bay. All the monks went ashore and they were greeted by the locals, the Leni Lenape tribe. Neither could speak the others language but they shared a meal and the brothers brought fish they had caught on the trip.”

“Towards the end of the second day as they were exploring the island, Brendan was certain he was being watched. Indeed, above him, following him on the lowest branches was a gray squirrel, fearless and overly inquisitive. Brendan looked up and held out some nuts he had in his pouch and the squirrel ran towards him fearlessly and ate them from his hand. Brendan slowly reached out and the squirrel stood still while Brendan patted his head. Then Brendan saw the squirrel look him in the eyes and smile!”

Antnee then reshuffled himself, as was his wont and continued:

“When Brendan saw that it was time to return, he had become befriended with the gray squirrel and his family, and he said to his fellow monks that they

should bring these fine animals back with them, they would make fine pets around the monastery. They all agreed. So they said farewell to the Leni Lenape and set sail to return. North they went, and the seas got rough, and the gray squirrels, for there were well over twenty aboard, ran all about the masts. The squirrels would sit while the monks spoke, when they prayed they were attentive, almost as if they could understand. Then one day at sea, the wind came up so quickly that the mast began to swing towards Brendan and it would have pushed him into the churning waves, but just before it hit him Brendan heard a shout:

“Brother Brendan, duck, now!”

“Brendan responded on instinct and the beam of the sail flew over his head blowing the remains of his hair straight up. Brendan turned to thank

his fellow brother and saw his squirrel friend looking at him eye to eye. He was shocked and said. You!”

And to his shock the squirrel replied:

“Yes, good Brother, it is I.”

“Well, Sir, Brendan almost fainted. He had never heard a squirrel before, and coming from Ireland, he had heard of the Druids and their animal friends and wondered if this was some devil, some Druid creature. Had he sent himself and his fellow brothers on a journey to hell. What had he done?”

“Well Sirs like any good squirrel our friend here took charge and spoke softly to Brendan. He said:”

“Brother Brendan, we are all God’s creatures and we must all look out for each other. I am sorry if I have

frightened you, I meant no harm. It took these past several weeks to learn your language but we can now talk.”

“Brendan was even more amazed Sir, you can very well imagine, yes indeed Sir, here at sea with a talking squirrel, a shipload at that, of talking squirrels, and one who Sir very much just saved his life!”

I then asked:

“So how many besides this squirrel were there on the ship?”

Antnee replied:

“Why Sir, a few dozen if history is correct, you see Sir, they had packed the ship with dry corn cobs, and well you know us squirrels and corn Sir, indeed you do! And many thanks to Lady Sara for them, Sir, many thanks!”

As I looked at Antnee and I saw this rotund gray furball sitting there, not a hungry day in his cold winter and realized how many hundreds of ears of corn they had already eaten I then thought of Brendan and his Irish monks sailing back across the Atlantic with a carnival like atmosphere with dozens of hungry gray squirrels. I responded:

“Due continue Antnee, what happened next?”

“Well Sir, once they sparked up a conversation, and squirrels like the Irish are some talkers Sir, a fine match, indeed a very fine match, Brendan decided to give each a good Christian name. They named the first to speak, Padric, after the great Saint Patrick, and you see Sir, Padric is the Irish way to spell it.”

“Then they went amongst all the brothers and each had a chance to name one, or two or even three, there were so many. Thanks to the corn the squirrels were well fed, and with the help of the squirrels and their eyesight the monks found great masses of fish which they gladly ate, the corn Sir requires good teeth you see.”

“After six long but peaceful weeks they came upon the coast of the green isle, Ireland. Padric was atop the mast and he was the first to call out land, and Brendan found that a confirmation of the calling of him Padric. They landed near their monastery and all climbed ashore and were glad to be on land again. Although after so many weeks at sea it does take time to adjust. Padric you see Sir, had never been at sea and what he noticed was that climbing about on trees not swinging

in the sea was different. Brendan told Padric he must get his land legs, whatever that meant.”

“And after a few years in Ireland, Padric had learned Irish and Latin quite well, and each of his children were also fluent in both tongues. The youngest was named Egwyn, a name from the Welsh lands, a Celt name, and not one of the Saints. “

I paused and took this all in. As usual Antnee had crafted a tale, supposedly true and factual, as to specific squirrels and their involvement with great figures of history. He was telling a Forest Gump tale but not of a single person but of a whole species. Perhaps that made sense as I mulled it over.

### 3 EGWYN AND GUINEVERE

I sat there amazed for here we have a gray squirrel, along with his family, making his way from what was to become Staten Island to Ireland and then across the sea to England. Antnee always had fantastic detail, and either he was a truly great story maker or he truly had been the keeper of the tales. I am beginning to think the latter.

I then asked him:

“So what happened to all these adventurers?”

That was just the nudge he needed to go into high gear. Off he went:

“Well Sir, young Egwyn was a true adventurer, indeed Sir, a seeker of new lands. So when the chance came to set out for the east, namely Wales and

England, Egwyn was the first to jump for it. He bade his family farewell, and set out with Brother Aiden and his men from the Liffey River and across the water to Wales. It was a three or four day sail, rough, cold, but his thick gray fur kept him warm and dry.”

“They landed and when Egwyn looked about it was different than Ireland, green, but not so green, much more trees, less grass and the winds were not quite as strong, it was softer and sweeter, it had travelled across the great ocean then it had been caressed by Ireland before descending softly on Wales. He went with Brother Aiden to a nearby monastery, where some monks had tried to set up a church and preach to the Celtic tribes who had inhabited this area. But Egwyn being so much more adventurous wanted to set out further east, to the lands where the Romans had been and then see how

far this land would take him. So Egwyn set out eastward, having bid farewell to Brother Aiden and his men he just started along the roadways following the route of the rising sun. Each day, a little closer, and now he no longer felt the damp air of the ocean, or of any of the great waters and he made it close upon a settlement of many buildings, and many of them appeared as Romans he had studied in the library at the monastery at Armagh. He knew Roman designs, he appreciated Roman engineering, and here for the first time he saw the buildings in real life. He was cautious as he approached the buildings. There were many people about, and great horses and the horses were covered in colored garments. He wondered what type of people these were and his curiosity got the best of him and he jumped down beside the largest building and peered in the windows. Inside were large pools of

water and some was steaming and about were all sorts of ladies, carefully assisting the lady in the bath. These were Roman baths, heated by fires, and again he had read about such at Armagh, and then Egwyn realized he must be in the town of Bath, the place the Romans had used just for that purpose.”

“Egwyn moved closer to the window, for he wanted to see better. There in the bath, surrounded by the beautiful young ladies ever, was an even more beautiful one, and she was called Guinevere. He heard the others say Lady Guinevere this and Lady Guinevere that, and then one said Queen, and Egwyn knew what a queen was and when he heard that he fell off the branch, through the windows, and splat right in the middle of the bath, right in front of Lady Guinevere, and

he surfaced with bubbles all over his head!”

“At first he just looked at the Queen and she at him, and he was terrified. The Queen at first was surprised and then when she saw it was a bubbly gray squirrel looking right in her eyes she started to laugh and all others followed suit.”

“Poor Egwyn, he was ashamed, he was mortified, and he had made a fool of himself in such an un-gentlemanly manner. What would the family think?”

“But then the Queen stretched out her hand and pulled Egwyn in and placed him on the edge of the bath, and there he shook himself dry and without thinking he said in his best monastic Latin:”

“Why thank you good Queen, and my deepest apologies for being such a fool. I, Egwyn of Armagh, am your humble servant.”

“At which point he bowed in the best courtly bow he could invent at the moment and awaited a reply.”

“Well you could imagine Sir what happened next, a talking gray squirrel, speaking high class Latin, and furthermore knowing the Queen! This was not Ireland, this was not a land of well-educated monks and kings and queens who felt one with nature. This was England and this was a Celt queen in a partially Saxon land. Why the ladies all screeched and were amiss, except the Queen, for she was truly a royal and showed no fear. She walked out of the bath, whilst Egwyn kept his head bowed, and she walked towards him and she said:”



“Why Egwyn of Armagh, I am pleased to meet you, I am Guinevere of Camelot, Queen of England, and it is truly my pleasure to make your acquaintance. Rise Egwyn of Armagh, and we shall talk.”

At that point Sir Egwyn was both terrified and comforted, he hope not to become dinner nor to be skewered by the guards, whose presence had been delayed by command of the Queen. Egwyn jumped atop the table as the Queen sat in her chair, and the ladies were giggling and shouting about them.

Lady Guinevere then asked Egwyn where he came from and Egwyn related the tale:

“Lady Guinevere, my father, Padric, came from west across the great sea

with Brother Brendan and his fellow monks. They are learned men, wise in the ways of the world while still being holy men. The Irish are a learned people who have given up warfare and have taken up the Church, they are true believers and their monasteries have grown in Ireland and have expanded to many other lands. Why there is a young monk, Columbanus, who has just set out to go to the farthest lands to the east, across all waters and to the lands of the Merovingians and the Goths, and the Vandals, and many others. I wanted to seek out such an adventure myself, so I bid my mother farewell, and set out from the monastery at Armagh to cross the waters and see what is in this great land. And alas my beautiful Queen, that is how I have found myself here. I am clumsy but I am smart, at least that is what the Abbot at Armagh tells me. I can speak four tongues,

Latin, Irish, Greek and Hebrew. I can even understand some of your local language since it is close to my Irish.”

The Queen responded:

“Well my little friend, you are indeed a worthy addition to my court. Perhaps we shall see how you fare. Come with us, for we return to Camelot, court of my King, Arthur. Camelot is four days journey from here. We leave on the morrow. Till then we can rest and enjoy this old town.”

They sat about listened to music and ate food, and Egwyn had never seen such food. He had berries, nuts, and he even tasted wine, but that was not for him. On the sunrise they started back, seven horses, the Queen and six of her maids in waiting, and not a single warrior. Egwyn was concerned but they told him that this land was safe. It was

under the protection of a Sir Perceval, a Welsh knight new to the court but of great loyalty to the king. Egwyn was always on the cautious side, as any good squirrel should be.

On the second day they entered a woods, dark and heavily treed. For this Egwyn felt at home, for he could readily jump to a tree top and scan about. He rode with the Queen, and she spoke softly to him, trying to gather as much as she could about the Irish. For it seems the British although also Celts were tribes to themselves. Egwyn related the tale of Patrick who was a Briton and the Queen was quite impressed.

Well into the deepest bowels of the forest Egwyn sensed as a good squirrel would that there was danger afoot. He excused himself from the Queen’s horse and jumped towards the trees,

swinging from branch to branch, ever so higher so he could see all about them. There, just a few dozen yards in front of the Queen and her maids was a pack of four wolves. The pack was hunting and not for squirrels. They were hunting for the Queen. Egwyn knew he must act, and act quickly. He scanned about and saw a herd of deer, twelve in all, and they could distract the wolves, because wolves would rather get the deer if they could see and smell them. But they were fixated on the Queen and her maids and their horses. He must act and do so now, no time to even warn them, the wolves moved within a few yards, close but hidden, if you were on the ground.

So Egwyn jumped as quickly as possible over to the branches which covered the deer, themselves just yards away from the Queen, and with all the strength he had he bit through

the branches dropping them on the head of the largest buck, who bolted and started to run, and Egwyn saw the wolves so close as to jump upon the Queen, that he jumped more than thirty feet down from the branch atop the head of the Queen's horse, who was then startled and jumped up, at which point Egwyn shouted to the Queen, "Hold tight good Queen" and as she did, the horse bolted and turned, the wolves aside, just as they were ready to pounce, and the wolves in the rear saw the deer, a better target, and off they went, leaving the lead wolf, looking dumbfounded at the massive horse, alone, and now Egwyn threw himself, claws out stretched, upon the face of the wolf, tearing his eyes, and screeching like some crazed devil. The wolf, now alone and terrified, thought that perhaps he was amidst some cluster of devils, and turned quickly

and with his tail behind him, ran to the shelter of the dark forest.

The Queen was shocked, but safe as were the six maids. The Queen looked down at Egwyn, who had been thrown off by the shaking head of the wolf, and said:

“Egwyn, are you safe?”

The Queen dismounted and picked up Egwyn who was a bit shaken by all the jumping and throwing and looked up at the Queen and said:

“Good Lady, I am fine but you, are you unharmed?”

The Queen replied:

“Why Egwyn, we are all fine, you are the bravest knight I have ever seen! Indeed you are a knight and I shall

have my husband the good King Arthur reward you as such. Now good friend, atop the horse, and off to Camelot!”

And off they went, the Queen and Egwyn in constant speech and the maids all in admiration of the bravery of the warm gray friend.

#### **4 ARTHUR AND KNIGHTHOOD**

Antnee was now on a roll. You could see that he was personally involved in this tale, one that he obviously had recounted many times before.

He continued:

“Well Sir, Egwyn was now befriended by the Queen, a good friend indeed. And off they went to Camelot, the castle in Winchester, to the east of Bath. Safely through the forest they

came out upon a plain, just to the west of Winchester and there one could see the castle, called Camelot.”

I stopped him and said:

“But Antnee, I thought the location of Camelot was some secret lost in history, why do you say Winchester, I have never been there, but I have gone by there.”

He turned and in those deep brown wise eyes I saw that I was to get one of those Antnee answers:

“Well Sir, have I ever been amiss before, no Sir, hardly not, you see we remember facts, details, they are important, like where we buried our acorns, we never forget!”

For a brief moment I wished to remind him of the futile attempts to find lost

acorns and the plethora of oak trees blooming all over the place but I quickly thought the better of that. He would just lecture me ever so more on squirrels and their memory! So I bit my tongue, help my peace and let him continue.

“Well Sir, down they went to the castle, and when the guards atop the walls saw the Queen they quickly opened the gates and squires came out to greet her. Now Sir, unlike all those tales of finely dressed knights and all the people being well so Hollywood, you know Sir, like a Robin Hood in some bright green tights and all, well Sir, the people were frankly dirty and smelly, for they hardly ever bathed, these Brits, and this is what Egwyn noticed first, dirt, smells, and trash just all thrown about, old vegetables, rotting on the ground, Sir what a mess, and why Sir, there was just unspeakable

things lying about, like those big nasty deer who mess up our front lawn Sir.”

Well I first never thought of this as “our” lawn, but somehow he had gained property rights, and second he did have a point about the deer, and third, well the dirt and grime was what I had expected in the sixth century, they frankly were not the cleanest folks, and thus the underlying memory of Arthur and fancifully dressed knights was soon wiped away. I could imagine a realistic scene of people, animals, waste, and smoke and water all mixed in the castle yards, and the squires as young but like others dirty young men, spending their days with the horses. Antnee then continued:

“Well, in no time at all, Arthur, the King, came out front to greet Guinevere and her ladies. Sir, they were in love, true love Sir, not what

some of the writers say, for the Queen was a fine and true lady, not what some French poet invents, or some Norman descendant. Upon dismounting the King said:”

“Dear wife, what is this creature you bring with you.”

The Queen replied:

“Creature this is not my good husband for he is Egwyn of Armagh, a brave as one could ever have, one who saved my life and that of my hand maids, single handedly, without weapon, and placing his very own life at risk! A true knight if ever I have seen one. And my good Lord, he is brilliant, for he speaks four tongues, he reads extensively, and he has been educated by the monks at Armagh. We must honor him for his efforts.”

The King, not believing the Queen, or perhaps thinking she was playing a joke, turned and looked at Egwyn and said:

“Well my little furry friend, perhaps we shall find a few nuts.”

Egwyn at this point was not willing to play such a game, first he had to bath, and second he had to get away from these smells! So he was brisk and abrupt:

“Good Arthur, the Queen, the kindest of all women, speaks the truth, I have been educated at Armagh, and as you Britons well know we Irish are the most educated in all of Christendom if not the world. I have saved the Queen from savage wolves, and her words are full of truth. But good Arthur, perhaps we may carry this talk elsewhere since I also must refresh from the journey.”

At which point Egwyn jumped from the head of the Queen’s horse bowed to the King and commenced bouncing up the stone steps of Camelot. He turned to the Queen and said:

“Good Lady, which way the baths?”

She pointed and turned to Arthur and said:

“Well good Sir, has he answered your questions?”

Arthur stood with mouth askew, not since the unproven Perceval of Wales had such an impudent come to court, but unlike Perceval this one is educated but more so a squirrel! The King looked at Guinevere and said:

“If all you say is such good Lady then this young, well this, ...”

She came up to him and said:

“This squirrel, I believe you are trying to say, and making him a knight of the Round Table would be just and frankly my Lord it would improve the class of those there!”

The King shook his head and said back:

“Good Queen, you speak wisely, it is always best to choose those who excel not matter from whence they come, the mix flavors the stew shall we say.”

They both went into the castle at Camelot. After cleaning Egwyn was accompanied to the large chamber, in which was a large round table, around which there stood many brave knights all in fancy fighting garb.

Then Arthur assembled all of them and told them of Egwyn, his bravery, and his wit. Egwyn spoke briefly, thanking the King for his kindness and praising the Queen as a person of extreme beauty and kindness. The knights asked him some questions and the King said:

“Fellow Knights, for his bravery, I desire to knight Egwyn of Armagh and have him join us at this Round Table. Come forth Egwyn, kneel.”

Egwyn come forth and before the King he sat on his haunches and knelt, as best as a squirrel could do so, and the King then took out his great sword and dropped it softly on Egwyn’s head and said:

“Egwyn of Armagh, for your bravery, for your intellect, for your courage, I knight thee Sir Egwyn of Armagh, and I



make you a fellow member of this glorious Round Table.

The King then said to those knights around the Table:

“Fellow Knights, we must give Sir Egwyn a shield and crest. What say you all?”

Perceval in his normal and nasty manner shouted out quickly:

“Ah I have just the crest, three acorns!”

The other knights laughed and Egwyn felt ashamed. Yet no sooner had the words been uttered by Perceval then the Queen came forth and said forcefully:

“To any man or knight, which of you has saved me with but their hands from a savage set of beasts, none but

Sir Egwyn, which of you has the wisdom of the ancients, none but Sir Egwyn, which of you shows total respect for woman, none but Sir Egwyn and of course Sir Galahad. So Knights I say that his shield and crest shall be three wolf heads, severed at the neck with snouts pointing inward, with a shamrock at the center. That will remind all of his bravery, his feats, and his Irish honor and wisdom.”

As soon as she finished, Galahad, the youngest of the Knights and the bravest, stood, and shouted:

“To Sir Egwyn of Armagh, to join us here and be the bearer of a shield as the good Queen has said, and Sir Egwyn, that you may sit at my right hand and fellow knight, it would be my honor!”

Then all the knights let out a cheer, except for Perceval, who was shamed for his insolence and ignorance.

They all settled down and ate a hearty meal. The Queen smiled at Egwyn and she made for him some select roasted chestnuts along with corn.

Antnee turned to me and said:

“Sir, I have not had roasted chestnuts, perhaps Lady Sara could prepare some when she has the opportunity.”

For me that was an instant disconnect. I replied:

“Ah right Antnee, roasted chestnuts, how many do we need.”

He replied:

“Let me get back to you on that Sir.”

Thus began the saga of Sir Egwyn of Armagh, knight of the Round Table.

## 5 MEETING MERLIN

Egwyn spent time about Camelot in Winchester getting to know the many knights and all the more the people of the town about the castle. There must have been several thousand in total, farmers and tradespeople, and Egwyn found England so unlike Ireland. In Ireland they lived across large masses of land and the monasteries were focal points. Here in England the castle is more important and there were no monks nor were there monasteries. The people clustered more about the center and there were many more trades people. Yet unlike Ireland here in England very few read or studied.

After a few weeks, Miriam, the head chambermaid to the Queen came to him in somewhat of a flurry. She told Egwyn the following:

“Sir Knight, the good Queen has sent me to tell you that Merlin approaches and that you should be aware, he is a magician of great powers and many fear what he may do. If you want, you may wait and see him but beware. I must go, I am fearful of that evil man.”

She turned all-aflutter and went back to the Queen’s chambers. No sooner had she gone and Egwyn heard the chatter announcing the arrival of Merlin. Egwyn looked down from his window, and there below was a man of medium height in a black robe, with a hood, and about his waist was a black rope tied in a strange manner. His hair was shaved yet he had a large full beard. The beard was gray, almost

pure white, and Egwyn could see his pale blue almost translucent eyes. He carried a large stick, it was oak, and as Egwyn was a master of such things, people swept away as he walked through the crowd.

Egwyn had seen men like him all over Ireland, they were Druid priests, and as Brother Aiden and Brother Columbanus had told him at Armagh they work their ways by fear, and they can make men see what is not there. Thus Egwyn felt well prepared. He wondered if Merlin had come because he knew Egwyn was here. Egwyn wondered whether he should stay aloft and watch or make his presence known. The warning from the Queen had a mixed message. For in truth he could not avoid Merlin, and the sooner he faced him the better. Thus Egwyn decided that a frontal approach would

be best, for Brother Aiden had prepared him.

He scampered down to the Round Table room, and walked directly to his seat, when he saw Merlin, talking to the King, and Merlin turned, saw Egwyn, and said:

“Arthur, is this the rodent that you speak so lovingly of?”

Before the King could speak Egwyn said in his strongest and deepest voice:

“Master Merlin”, and he jumped atop his chair, sitting on the highest point, now looking downwards to the eyes of Merlin, “I am he of whom the King speaks, and “rodent” Master Merlin I be not. For I am the son of Padric of Armagh, and have studied under Aiden of Armagh, the renowned abbot of the monastery, and I, good Master Merlin,

have met with the most learned of Druid priests as well. I assure you Master Merlin, I am no one’s familiar, and I am unto myself.”

At this point Merlin was turning white, he had not expected what he saw, and less in what he heard. Here was something well beyond any of his training, and one from Ireland, land of the true Druids, and he was but an infant in their world. What strange creature had he met. Merlin was intending to use all his powers but he paused and questioned if this creature might not just know more than he might. If such were the case he might be uncovered and lose what position he had with the King. Thus Merlin decided that befriending the creature might be more to his benefit. He replied:

“Greetings Sir Egwyn of Armagh, I have come to meet you and to converse with the good King on many issues. You look like a fine addition to the King’s Table, and as I understand you have gained the Queen’s respect and honor for your valiant deeds. My respects Sir Knight.”

Egwyn knew that he had just won the first round, and thus he would reply in kind.

“My thanks good Master Merlin, your skills are well known here as well as across the Irish Sea. I am of good friends with Gudried the Druid priest of Lietric, the head of all Druids, and he has spoken to me of you, your fame precedes you. My pleasure to make your acquaintance.”

Needless to say this further concerned Merlin since he wondered truly what

this creature was. It was wiser than any he had ever met, wiser than any human, and he had the ability to duel with his wit more than any of the Knights, who often relied on their prowess for they had little wit. This, thought Merlin, would be interesting to study, but even more so to respect and beware of.

The two of them spoke for a while and Merlin became more comfortable with Egwyn. In fact after dinner the two of them entered into long conversations and Egwyn told Merlin tales of the Leni Lenape Shaman and their powers and techniques, and he described the many Druid priests and priestesses he had met.

In fact during the next few days the two had become fast friends, Merlin having recognized that Egwyn was honest at heart but even more so one

who cherished intellect over any magical skills. To Merlin, Egwyn stood apart, not only in form and shape, but in style.

One day Merlin and Egwyn were approached by Perceval, who was always one to be brash and at times cruel in what he said, and he spoke to the two of them thus:

“Ah the two woods creatures, what evil are you two wizards conjuring up? Must we true knights beware, must we sharpen our swords? You two must beware for we true believers will be forewarned and on the guard!”

He then stomped off, in a haughty mood. Egwyn turned to Merlin and said:

“Merlin my friend, what does Perceval mean, what are wizards and what makes him act so?”

Merlin walked a bit and then said:

“Egwyn, let us sit here, I will try to explain as best as I can. You see these men are brave on the outside but they have deep fears, they believe their world is about to collapse, to disappear. Generations ago we had Roman legions which set out order, we knew what to do, where our boundaries were, we even had enemies, the Romans. The individual did not count, for it was us against them. Then the Romans departed, there was no them, it was just us, we became individuals, and we felt fear because being an individual has risks and rewards, but all they saw were the risks. Thus Arthur formed the Round Table, it became the vehicle to bind

men together so they could forget being dependent upon themselves, they could again belong, have a ruler.”

Egwyn interrupted Merlin and said:

“But Merlin, you live alone, you are not like the wolves in a pack, you are like say the chipmunk, you have your own territory, you guard it and you seem to feel comfortable in that role. Why we squirrels are at times alone and at time in groups. Are these men so afraid that they need to pretend to be brave?”

Merlin replied:

“Fear of being alone is a great fear. Much of my magic is based upon that, even the King fears what he does not know. The King needs these men and these men need the King. They then strangely then go out and enter combat amongst each other, causing

harm, and that is a contradiction. There are time Egwyn that I truly do not understand man.”

Egwyn replied:

“I agree Merlin, there are times that they fear and then as a result they do combat which is even more fearful. What if Merlin, just what if, they had some goal, some mission. That is they had something to unite them, not in combat, but in a good deed. Would than not perhaps help?”

Merlin sat back against a mighty oak, he was silent, he thought for a while, and then he turned to Egwyn and replied:

“Ah my friend, you are correct, they need a quest!”

Egwyn replied:

“Merlin, what is a quest?”

Merlin replied:

“My little friend, a quest is a glorious seeking, a search of the highest realm, a directive from God to seek a higher good, and a path requiring the fullness of goodness from each seeker. A quest my friend is what they need, and Egwyn, a quest is what they shall have. We have much work to do, we must assemble the quest, and my friend, we must be certain the King and his other Knights never know that the quest came from our minds, that would destroy the integrity of such an effort. Come my friend, to my home in the forest, we have a quest to prepare. We have a quest!”

## **6 THE GRAIL QUEST**

Merlin and Egwyn had hatched their plot, a quest would be planned. Merlin had devised a way to get Arthur to call for such a quest and he enlisted Egwyn to assist him, for the two of them had bonded a true fellows, men of the forest, men of intellect, and men who could find meaning both in themselves and in others. They now believed they had a way to bond the knights together while strengthening their individuality. But it must be upon Arthur’s call, and it must be agreed to by all.

Thus Merlin and Egwyn concocted their plan. It would be simple but elegant. It would be based upon the old tale of Joseph of Arimathea , the man who gave Jesus a tomb when he was executed by the Romans. As the myth went, Joseph went from Jerusalem and sailed west, then north along the coasts until he reached



Britain. It was he who brought Christianity to Britain and with his journey he brought certain artifacts from Jesus, which he kept and revered. Key amongst these was the grail, just what the grail was one may not have truly known because it was a myth within a myth. But Merlin suggested it was the dish that Jesus ate off of at his last supper. It was in Britain and the knights would seek it. But now how to get Arthur to seek it.

Egwyn suggested to Merlin a simple tactic. He would ask Arthur about the grail, and then after some discussion he would suggest that Arthur consult Merlin, at which point Merlin would suggest a quest, and Merlin knew how to get Arthur to then believe it was all of his doing. The plan was hatched.

Thus on the morrow did the knights meet about the great Round Table, and

sitting as he did next to Galahad, they all spoke of their feats, their jousts, their conquests. When it came upon Egwyn, he spoke, but not of battle, he said:

“Good King, and knights, as I go about the country side, from time to time I hear of the grail, the Holy Grail, a tale that even in Ireland brings fame to Britain, for it is here that Joseph of **Arimathea** had brought such. I was wondering if any know where it is, because such an important relic should have a place of highest honor. Good King Arthur, do you have such knowledge? For I should go to see the Grail and give prayer.”

The King found this an interesting question for he too had known of the Grail, but alas where it had rested he had no knowledge. So about the table the knights each had a tale but none

was the same and none were certain of their own tale. This further made Arthur curious and he said to Egwyn:

“Good Sir Egwyn, you bring forth a question of great interest and worth. How should we proceed?”

Egwyn replied:

“Good King, perhaps Merlin, a man of the wood, and a man who knows such that is hidden would have an answer.”

Sir Gawain said:

“Good King, Sir Egwyn speaks wisely, seek out Merlin, and return on the morrow and we shall decide.”

Thus the King did go forth to the forest and therein he found Merlin, about a large fire with a wide and deep metal pot in which he was boiling

herbs for his potions. The King approached and said:

“Merlin, I seek your advice. My Knights have been speaking of the Holy Grail of Joseph of Arimathea, and yet none knows where it is. We all want to place it in a location of honor and respect, for it is truly a miraculous thing, the dish of Jesus. What do you suggest?”

Merlin looked duly quizzical and after a reasonable period of time turned and looked at the King and said:

“King Arthur, I know that it is about but to get to it requires dedication and devotion from each Knight, to each individually, they must go out and prove their worth, not by fighting but by the path of good deeds. Then and only then will the Grail find them. For the Grail hides from the Knights because of their violence, the grail will

show itself to those who profess faith, those who perform the deeds for which Christ asked, and those who respect their fellow man, all of their fellows, including the creatures of the forest.”

Arthur said:

“We will do that, what shall I tell the Knights?”

Merlin replied:

“A Quest, a Quest for the Holy Grail, my King, each Knight on his own, sets out, and each Knight does good until the Grail finds him, then return, and place it in the Church in Winchester, and there it shall reside as long as peace rules the land. Go good King, start your quest!”

The King thus returned to the Round Table full of joy. He had a mission, his Knights would no longer fight amongst themselves, and they would go out and be one with the people. He arrived after a long night of travel, the sun was bright and when he entered the Round Table room, the beams of sunlight shone directly upon his chair. Sir Lancelot said:

“Greetings good King, the omen of the light from above bodes well. What news bring you from the forest home of Merlin?”

The King then told them of his conversation with Merlin, and no sooner had he finished the all in synchrony shouted:

“The Quest, off to the Quest!”

And thus did the Quest commence.

## 7 JOINING SIR GAWAIN

At this point I was totally involved for Antnee had put a twist on the tale in a way that I had never anticipated. So many people have played with this story but the reasons for why the Grail Quest was to be accomplished was always somewhat of a mystery. Here Antnee tells of the collaboration if not outright collusion between Merlin and Egwyn, an almost Druid like tale, albeit with an Antnee twist. I also noticed that as Antnee got into this tale his presentation was becoming almost classic in form and dialog. He had abandoned the Antnee humor and he was not truly a bard of Arthurian legend. I have tried my best to capture this change in style and those of you who have been on these tales with Antnee before I am sure will see what I am talking about. He was becoming

more Mallory than Mallory in his presentation. I truly enjoyed that.

Let me return to Antnee.

“And thus Sir the Grail Quest had commenced. Each Knight set forth in a separate direction, seeking the sacred platter, which Joseph of Arimathea had brought with him to Britain. None quite knew where it might have gone nor where their search would lead them. But each had a solemn sworn duty to seek doing his best and to do so alone unless and until the trail crossed with another knight at some time hence. Each had a solemn vow to do their best, and to continue until they had exhausted all possibilities.”

Thus off they went, with Arthur and Guinevere remaining at Camelot, to rule the kingdom. The bishop blessed them on their way. It was a mighty

sight, all the knights in full garb, each heading in a different direction, all together at the start, but as they each rode off the distance expanded rapidly between each as they went further from the castle, further and further apart, until no knight could see another, then each was on his own.

Egwyn had headed east towards Londinium, the old Roman town on the Thames, for he believed that there he might find the Grail, for now he too really believed in this quest. After many days, and he had stopped at every hamlet and enquired, he looked from every tree top, he was no farther towards finding the grail than before. Very few had even heard of the grail, and those few who did had no idea where it might be. He crossed into Saxon territory. Those were the tribes from across the water which had invaded Britain after the Romans had

left, the tribes that Arthur had defeated at Bath and had pushed back up across the Thames and from Londinium. But they were here and they were fearful. So Egwyn had to be cautious. He was safe with the Britons but with the Saxons, he was in danger.

He wandered about on rumor after rumor and he came to the town of Oxford, and he knew his path had been a winding one. There was a church, he must ask there. He went inside and saw the priest at the altar and approached:

“Good father, I am on a quest for the Holy Grail, the plate ...”

He was snatched up, a Saxon had come from behind a curtain, had seen him, and pulled him up and threw him in a bag. The priest called out but the Saxon struck him down with his

broadsword. Egwyn now thought he was doomed. What had he done, what had he done.

He was taken outside and there were other Saxons and Egwyn could hear their strange tongues yet he could not understand a word. They opened the bag and he was torn from it, held by his tail, with a wild Saxon taking a long knife to make Egwyn his dinner.

Just as the knife neared his neck, the head of the Saxon went flying through the air, the grip loosened and Egwyn dropped to the ground. He look up and there was Gawain, sword in hand, bright shining armor, and the other Saxons running at full speed.

Egwyn was so pleased, he scampered to Gawain and said:

“Sir Gawain, you have saved my life, many thanks, you are my savior!”

Gawain replied:

“My fellow knight, it is my duty, God guided me here at this time, and we have a quest, and we need each other. As our rule states, we stay apart until we come together, and God brought us together, so we shall never part while on our search. Come, you are cut, I shall fix your wound.”

Gawain repaired the cuts to Egwyn, then he found nuts and corn to feed him and finally food for himself. The two went to the church where the priest had been killed by the Saxons and then buried him in the church yard and said a prayer over him. Then Gawain said they should vigil the night in prayer that their next journey together would be fruitful.

The two spent the night in the now empty church, and Egwyn was impressed by the faith of Gawain, a true knight, the perfect knight, and his friend.

## 8 FINDING THE GRAIL

Thus Gawain and Egwyn set forth, Gawain upon his horse and Egwyn atop the horse's head, always on diligent lookout. They would talk and discuss what the best path forward would be. They went from town to town, chapel to chapel, and there was no news of the Grail, for some people had heard of it but alas it was in the deep dark recesses of history and folklore and none had themselves ever heard directly of the Grail.

After a few months of journey they rested in a town near the coast. They

were given quarters by the local priest in the stone chapel, a small room adjacent, rest for the horse, and time to think and pray. After two days they saw a rider approaching, and as he grew nearer it was clear that the rider was a knight, and the closer he got they saw it was Galahad, a fellow knight of the Round Table. Galahad came upon them and he was covered in mud and dirt from his journey, his horse needed rest, but when he saw Gawain and Egwyn he smiled and dismounted.

They embraced and wished each other greetings and then Gawain asked:

“Have you heard any news?”

Galahad replied:

“None, some have recollections, some even recall others saying where it may

have been, but none have any news worth following. I feel we may be on a fruitless task. I am weary and just seek rest. It has been a long quest and I feel we may be letting our good King down, for we should be able to find the Grail.”

Egwyn responded:

“Good Sir Galahad, seek some rest, for we have been here but two days and already our spirits have begun to mend. We had been sent out apart and alone when we first travelled, but now I believe we must go together, and each support the other, for I truly believe that we shall prevail on our quest. Bathe, rest, and we shall care for your horse, it too needs rest and repair. We shall speak on the morrow.”

Galahad repaired to the small rooms and did bathe and slept for many

hours. Egwyn and Gawain took his steed and did the same, they washed him down and gave him feed and water. All rested.

In the morning, they went to the chapel and prayed with the local priest and others in the parish. The day was bright and sunny, it was getting to be late spring and the air was now warm. They spent several more days this way, and Galahad returned to his normal self. His spirits improved and the presence of all three made for a better team. They spoke of ideas and what their next steps would be.

Then after two weeks there came a stranger on foot to the town. All saw him coming, a man in a black cloak, sandals and dirty feet, with a long red beard, but a head shaved so that it shined in the sun. As he came closer his eyes were almost clear, with just a



tint of light silver blue. He walked up to the chapel and sat upon the grass looking outwardly towards the path through the hamlet. Galahad went to him and said:

“Good Sir, you look weary from your travels, perhaps we can get you some water and food?”

The man did not turn or look at Galahad but responded thus:

“Sir Galahad, my thanks, that would be most appreciated.”

Galahad was shocked, who was this man, he had never seen him, and how did he know who he was, for he was dressed in but a light over-garment with no knightly garb. Yet he did not respond and just went back to Galahad and Egwyn and relayed what had just happened. They all prepared some

food and Gawain and Galahad and Egwyn went together to present it.

Again the man did not turn but this time he said:

“My thanks to you three, Gawain, Galahad and Egwyn, for you three are the best of knights. Come and sit with me for I shall tell you a tale.”

Thus they sat in front of him, along the dusty edge of the road, and they looked upon him. His eyes, those almost clear eyes, as if he could not see with them, but then again they felt them piercing to each soul. They were quiet but they could each hear and sense the fear and uncertainty that this wander brought to each.

He said:

“I understand that you seek the Grail, I have heard from many that it is your sacred Quest. I am here to assist you on your next step. Follow my words and you shall find the Grail, do not follow them and you shall each be destroyed.”

The three quietly and together thought what danger did this stranger bring, what truth were in his words. And who was this stranger. Yet none of the three spoke.

The stranger ate and when finished said:

“Now south shall you go, to the white cliffs on the sea, and below shall there be a boat and a captain. The boat shall take you cross the waters, and from there you shall obtain horses from a priest in a chapel for he shall be awaiting you. From there you shall

travel ten days to the south west, until you arrive at the town of Bayeux, there you shall find a stream, and beside the stream is a small castle with a sickly king, and from that king, and you shall find what you seek. But beware, ask carefully and listen well.”

Without further comment, without the slightest thanks, the man arose, placed the cowl upon his bald head, bent his head downward and walked back from whence he came.

The three knights just stood and watched until he was out of sight, not speaking a word.

Then Egwyn was the first to speak:

“Sirs, who this man was and from whence he came I know not, but I believe that this is a direction we must

follow, why I know not, but follow we must.”

Gawain replied:

“Indeed, and I agree with Sir Egwyn, we should follow and do so quickly.”

Galahad finally stood up and looked about, the horses were on the ready, they were refreshed, and he said:

“Strange, it is as if he knew all was on the ready, and he knew us, and he knew that we would follow. Perhaps he is good or he is evil, but let us do a Mass and then let us leave this very day. The quest resumes.”

The three did their Mass, got upon their horses and rode the same trail that the unknown man had taken into town, the trail that led to the white

cliffs, the sea and the boat, which was to await them.

It was less than a day’s journey, but noon on the second day as they rode above the cliffs, seeing the ocean water break along the narrow sand beach they saw in the distance a ship with a captain and a crew. They rode down. Then Gawain went to the captain and said:

“Good Captain, we have been told by a man with a red beard to seek a captain and his ship to take us across the waters. Is that you good Captain?”

The captain replied:

“You have been sent well good Knight, leave your horses with the young lad over there, he shall care for them well, and come aboard, but leave your armor with your horses, the sea is not

kind on a ship so weighted down. Then we shall sail.”

The three did thus and into the ship they went. The winds were with them yet the sailing was rough, and for Gawain and Galahad, it was their first time, and each suffered. For Egwyn, he had grown up on ships and took to the top mast, and watched the views, which reminded him of his early childhood and tales from his father Padric of the time from across the great sea. While Galahad and Gawain were sick and lying upon the wet wooden deck, Egwyn and the Captain spoke of various sea journeys, and as a result the Captain befriended Egwyn and took him into his confidence.

The Captain and Egwyn exchanged tales day and night. It took three days to cross since the wind had shifted. They landed on a sandy beach. There

were cliffs here as well, and they were smaller but rougher. As they were unloading Egwyn scampered to the top and looked about. There was a road, and green fields for miles. This land was almost like his home in Ireland. He felt comfortable. Just up the road some 200 yards was a house, made of stone, and two horses waiting. Strange he thought, this red bearded man is just a mystery.

He scampered down and went and told Gawain and Galahad. He then said farewell to the Captain, who strangely said he would return and be there when they did, and off the three went to get the horses.

At the stone cottage there were no people. Just the horses, ready for riding, and attached to each horse was a map, a map to where they were to go. The horses were well fed and strong,

thus they jumped upon them and off they rode.

After three days of riding, the days were cool and at times wet with rain, but the green of the fields was amazing, especially when the sun returned, they came upon a rider approaching them. It was Sir Perceval. When he came upon them Gawain said:

“Good Sir Perceval, we are surprised to see you, have you had any success?”

Perceval was his normal disagreeable self, and replied:

“Time wasted, totally wasted. I am heading back. You two, I mean three, why you should also turn back, just a waste of time.”

Galahad turned to me and whispered:

“He is defeated, a defeated man, a pity.”

Egwyn could see, for Perceval was always one who complained, one who felt himself better, yet one who often only half tried. But Gawain said:

“Perceval, come and join us, the fellowship we give each other has strengthened our resolve. We too were weak and ready to return but alas we did get strength. Come and join us.”

Perceval was never one to take other’s encouragement. He remained steadfast and replied:

“I am tired, there is no Grail, and I return to Court. Farewell.”

He drove his horse forward and was soon out of sight. Egwyn thought him a weak man.

After the fullness of the days indicated for the trip, they arrived at the small town of Bayeux. There was a small chapel, and strangely it was the chapel dedicated to Saint Patrick, or Patrice as they said it, and Egwyn felt even more at home. He saw this as a good omen. The three stopped here.

They went and spoke to the priest. Gawain asked:

“Good father, we are from the Court of good King Arthur and we are on a most sacred quest, a quest for the Holy Grail. Have you heard of it?”

And to the surprise of all the priest replied:

“Ah yes, our king has it in his possession.”

We were shocked. Galahad then said:

“And where is this king?”

The priest replied:

“He lives in the small castle down the road from the church on the edge of the large deep stream. He is sickly from a bad wound and he spends his days at the stream fishing, day in and day out. He is now called the Fisher King, for he claims that fishing is the only thing he can do to relieve the lasting pain from his wound.”

The knights rested and the next morning after Mass they went to call upon the King. They approached the small castle, which was astride the stream, which flowed through the town. There was a bridge which they crossed and then into the front gate of the castle. It was not a very big castle

and frankly not well defended, as if there was truly no threat. They told the soldiers at the gate who they were and that they sought the king. The soldiers were surprised at Egwyn but they let them through.

They were invited to the palace room a small poorly lit place and there upon a large chair sat the king. He was truly in pain, and one could see the blood still oozing from his leg, both sides, from a through and through lance. The king said:

“Ah, more knights, you follow Perceval, the rude, why are you rude as well.”

Galahad replied:

“No good King, we are sorry if somehow our band first was so poorly towards you, for we are but seekers.”

The King replied:

“And what do you seek, gold, fair maidens, jewels, what is your quest?”

Egwyn stood forth and boldly but with some fear and said:

“Sire, we seek only wisdom, we seek to understand and to learn, we seek to know, and to know about the Holy Grail, its meaning.”

Egwyn saw a young man aside the king who held a lance, and on the tip of the lance was blood, fresh and non-coagulating, dripping down upon the floor. He continued:

“An Sire, we seek wisdom of all in your land, such as the meaning of the lance and its blood, does it tell us wisdom that we may be better knights, better in our lives, and what can we take back

of this new knowledge which will help our fellows themselves become better.”

Upon hearing these words, the very questions posed, the King arose as if the pain and suffering had suddenly been lifted, he smiled, and came down to Egwyn and said:

“Good Knight, for you truly are the first and only to come and seek from me the true meaning of the Grail. You seek wisdom to do good and further to spread that wisdom to others.”

Gawain and Galahad now saw as he walked the wound that had been through his thigh was disappearing, the blood dried, and each step the King stood taller and the pain on his face was less. Until he stood before the three of them. Egwyn jumped atop Gawain’s shoulder and the King spoke:

“Come you fine three Knights, let us feast, for I have some wonderful fresh fish, and now that my burden had been relieved I can feel the love of life anew. Come you three.”

The King took the three between his arms and walked to the royal dining hall, it was filled with sunlight so unlike the small throne room. They had a feast and at the end he passed around a large bread dish, a bowl like item from which they each had some sweet fruit filled breads. The food was wonderful. Then the King said:

“I have enjoyed you three knights so well. You must stay for a few days, we shall talk.”

They all agreed. He then said:

“Oh, the dish in front of them, with the fruit filled breads, that my friends if



what you seek, it is the Holy Grail, and I have been safeguarding it until this moment. You Sir Egwyn, of all possible knights, alone sought wisdom of and from it, and you and your brother knights may carry it forward to its next home. You have saved me and may the Grail protect you all.”

The three were open mouthed, for they never had even asked to see it, and Gawain saw that Egwyn had been right, to seek meaning rather than goods.

The three knights spent three days with the King as he returned to health and then they set out back to the ship and then on to Camelot.

## **9 BATTLE AND DEATH OF ARTHUR**

After several weeks they were in sight of Camelot. Slowly they approached and when others saw them they rode out to ride in with them. Arthur was at the gate when they finally arrived. He said:

“Welcome back my friends, we have truly missed you all. Perceval said that you were lost but I had faith.”

Queen Guinevere came forth and Egwyn jumped to her arms and the two chatted like long lost friends. Arthur asked:

“Is all well, how was the quest?”

Galahad, it was agreed would tell the King. He started:

“Good King, we have the Grail, our Quest is done, and here it is.”

Galahad gave the King a well wrapped dish, wrapped in gold and purple silks from the Fisher King. The King opened it and the plate was sparkling in the sun. He smiled and said:

“Come into the great hall, come and tell us of this Grail, from whence it came, of this great Fisher King, come and spread the word.”

They all went to the Hall, and there was Lancelot, Perceval, Bors, and even Merlin had joined in. Egwyn was very pleased to see his old friend Merlin, and before seating themselves he and Merlin spoke. Merlin said:

“Egwyn, I am so happy you returned. But beware, for I sense a great darkness coming. The forest tells of this evil and sadness, and I want you and your fine friends to know. I tried to warn Arthur but to no avail. He is

convinced that all will be well. The Queen knows and she fears it as do I. We shall talk after, but be on your guard my friend.”

Egwyn was concerned for he trusted Merlin. Both he and Merlin were of the forest and this was a strong bond. What was this darkness. It would wait.

Arthur asked them all to sit at the table and they did, Egwyn sat between Galahad and Gawain and Perceval across from them. Arthur started by saying:

“Here returns three of the greatest knights, they bring back the Grail from their Quest, let us hear the tale.”

Gawain started and described the journey and their meetings and then he said:

“I shall let Sir Egwyn tell the tale, that of the Fisher King and the Grail.”

Egwyn started but not the way others had expected:

“Fellow Knights, the Grail Quest, the search, was truly a search for wisdom, seeking answers to questions, and that more than anything is what we received. The Fisher King had the Grail, but more importantly he had answers to our questions, and it was in asking those questions that we relieved him of his wounds. And what did he provide us with, answers of fellowship, of respect, of trust, not only for ourselves but for all people. The Grail is a large plate, not a jewel or gem for one person, but a fine complement to our Round Table, it enhances our fellowship as it did for Christ at the last supper. It was the plate upon which they shared the last part of their

final meal. Even the evil Judas was asked to partake of the platter that is how Jesus tried to include all. Thus the spreading of this word of friendship is symbolized by this simple plate, and here at Camelot it reaches another level of truth, that we Knights of the Round Table take upon ourselves the obligation to help others as did Jesus in his preaching.”

Galahad stood up and said:

“Sir Egwyn speaks the truth, and I at first was simple and looked for gems and jewels, but alas this simple plate and its simple truth has given meaning and purpose. Good King Arthur, the Grail Quest was a very worthy endeavor, and we bring this new truth back to you and all the people.”

All around the Table cheered except Perceval. Before partaking of the food from the Grail, he quietly slipped out.

For he was jealous of the three knights, worse he hated them for what they had done when he had been with the Fisher King first and was told nothing. Alas, he did not ask, he just demanded the Grail. He never saw the light, and even now, his world was darkening.

Perceval rode out from Camelot and north to the camp of Mordred. For Mordred was the enemy of Arthur and had assembled 400 knights all on horse and 1,000 men with spears on the ready to take Arthur. When Perceval arrived he met Mordred. Mordred was short, dark black eyes, with short cropped back hair, and a short black beard. The appearance was that of consummate evil. Perceval told Mordred that the time to attack was now. Thus did Mordred assemble all his men and in a day's march was upon the fields outside of Winchester.

The fields outside of Winchester are called Salisbury Plain and it was a wide clear grassy land, flat and open. Mordred and his men were sighted coming early in the day and a messenger was sent to Arthur. Gawain said:

“Good King, we are all ready for battle. Let us armor up and to our horses.”

Guinevere was truly worried, for Galahad, Gawain and Egwyn had just returned and they were weary. She called to Lancelot:

“Good Lancelot, take care of our young three knights and watch the King, he fears Mordred, and I fear that evil man as well. They will do whatever to kill Arthur.”

Lancelot replied:

“I shall do my very best good Queen. I agree this Mordred is evil and poor Perceval has joined him. Envy was his reason, and I suspect that he shall not see the night. Pray for us good lady.”

He bowed and took to his horse. Lancelot was second to the King. It would fall to him to become king if Arthur fell. Lancelot was a good and pure knight and he had no dreams to be king, for he felt he was not worthy. Perhaps Gawain or Galahad, but not himself.

They went out to Salisbury Plain to meet Mordred. The battle was joined. Arthur had at most 200 knights and less than 400 men with spears, but Arthurs men fought well, the knights engaged and one after another Arthur’s knights slayed those of Mordred, until there were less than

150 knights equally on each side. Mordred had a great loss, and he raged as he tried to close in on Arthur. Arthur saw Mordred coming and engaged him directly. Swords in hand, set upon the great horses then the men charged each other. Mordred swung wide across Arthur’s waist and cut him through the side, a deep wound, with much blood, but Arthur stayed on the charge. They met again, and this time Arthur slashed Mordred on his right arm, a slash that drove him from his horse.

The field was now a field of blood. Arthur dismounted and took at Mordred with his broad sward, despite the ever widening wound on his side. Mordred fought well, slashing his broad sword many times, often making small knicks in Arthur, and Arthur stood his ground. Then Mordred attempted a slice at Arthur’s

head, Egwyn who was near saw it coming and shouted to Arthur:

:Duck, Arthur, the sword.”

Arthur responded automatically and as Mordred missed his body rotated and Arthur rose from behind and with one slash removed his head.

At that point Arthur collapsed. Egwyn screamed:

“Lancelot, Lancelot, the King is down!”

Lancelot came immediately and cradled the King. He was now bleeding badly, and Lancelot saw it would not allow him to live. Lancelot suddenly saw Perceval on horse near and screamed to Egwyn:

“Egwyn, stop Perceval!”

Egwyn turned and saw Gawain, who had just subdued one of Mordred’s knights, he jumped over several knights with lightning speed atop Gawain’s horse and screamed:

“Stop Perceval!”

Gawain without even hesitating turned his horse about and charged directly at Perceval. Just before he got there he was attacked by another knight, but Egwyn jumped from the top of Gawain onto the face of Perceval, scratching at his eyes, and tearing at them despite Perceval smashing at Egwyn and breaking a few bones in his ribs. The pain for Egwyn was severe, piercing, but as it got worse he just dug deeper and Perceval screamed out. At this point Gawain and Galahad had finished their attackers and went after Perceval.

Perceval was almost atop Lancelot and Arthur when Galahad with one swing cut off Perceval's head, with Egwyn attached, severing a small bit of Egwyn's tail, and off into the air went the head and Egwyn, landing just a foot from the dying King.

Poor Egwyn was wounded and sore but he ran to Lancelot and the King and said:

"We have persevered good King, the good is righted."

Arthur turned to Egwyn and said, as his last words:

"You have brought back the best in men, my friend, you and your brother knights must go on. Farewell!"

With that Arthur passed. Mordred's troops and knights were destroyed and

the few then retreated never to be seen again.

They burned the remains of Mordred's men as well as Mordred and Perceval. Merlin stood by the fire and said to Egwyn:

"Egwyn, this is the fate of all evil. There will always be men who believe that they can conquer, but alas for the good men such as you and your brother knights, goodness will always have a chance."

Egwyn, Gawain, Galahad and Lancelot gathered up the King, and as was the custom Merlin prepared a small barge, filled with wood and flowers, and laid Arthur upon the barge. The priest from the castle came down and said prayers, and then with Guinevere tearfully waving, the barge was lit a

fire and sent out across the lake. Arthur was no more.

Lancelot was made king, and he took Guinevere as his wife. Both had loved Arthur so all felt that this was good for the land and the people.

## 10 RETURN TO IRELAND

Antnee showed that he was tired but also that the death of Arthur was a climatic event. But what of Egwyn. I asked:

“Antnee, what of Egwyn?”

He took his little paws and scruffled them aside his mouth, rumped himself back and forth in a sense of foreboding and began:

‘Well Sir, the tale does not end poorly, no Sir, despite what has happened

thus far. You see, Egwyn had seen much, and he had learned a great deal, but he too now wanted to return home to Ireland and tell others, tell and record his tale. For he also wanted to see his family and friends.”

“Thus Egwyn sat with Merlin and with the Queen and said to them:

“Good friends, I have become a better Knight from your acquaintance and from our Quest. I must return to Ireland and record my tale and also tell my friends and family of this, for many in time to come will be able to learn from this tale, a tale of friends and war, a tale of goodness and yes evil. A tale of men becoming the best that they can become, a tale of not just crossing a divide, but of building a bridge for others, setting for what I believe will be a legend. The legend must be told properly my friends, not



just of the battles and small adventures but of the ability of Knights to raise themselves to become true individuals, and men who when their time came could say that each had done their best. This tale I must record for generations to come.”

Merlin replied:

“Egwyn, you have become one of my closest friends. You are truly one who understands man. Do write this down, and I agree that it is best to do so at Armagh. But do come again if you can, I truly enjoyed your company, we think much the same way. And we can get men to do what we desire.”

The Queen replied:

“Good friend Egwyn, you have been there for me at the darkest hour. I will be ever thankful. Be safe on your

journey. I do hope we may meet again.”

Egwyn then jumped up and the Queen did give him a hug, he then jumped down and hugged Merlin’s leg, and they both laughed. He said as he departed:

“The tale of this adventure will live forever and inspire generations to come, farewell my friends.”

And off went Egwyn, following the setting sun, on the road from Winchester to Bath, then across Wales, the hills he crossed, and then down to the shore where he had first landed. Returning after so many adventures was different, this time he knew where he was going, and what he would see. His first task was to get a ship across the sea, but there were many sailors and that would not be a problem.

After a couple of days Egwyn spotted a ship readying for sailing west. He approached the captain, an Irish sailor, and said:

“Sir, I seek transport across to Ireland, I am off to Armagh and the monastery, to see Abbott Aiden and Father Columbanus, would you have some spare room, I would be most grateful.”

The captain, Brendan O’Neil, of the Neial clan, was a friendly captain and he thought it would be good to have some company. But he asked:

“What can you pay me little one.”

Egwyn said:

“I can tell you a great tale of King Arthur and the search for the Holy Grail.”

O’Neil said:

“Ah, another Irish story teller, and a wee little furry one at that. Very well my little man, hop aboard, I am off for Dublin, but you should be able to find your way north from there. Arthur and the Grail you say, this should be a fine tale. Is that the Arthur who himself was just killed, would that be?”

Egwyn look sad but responded:

“Yes indeed Sir, the very same man. A great man.”

O’Neil then asked:

“Now here, do not tell me that you yourself had known of this great king, you a little gray furry creature.”

Egwyn replied:

“Sir, I did indeed, and even more Sir, for I served him at Camelot as a Knight, and I went myself upon the journey for the Grail.”

O’Neil was aghast, for never before did he see a little creature with such verve, not even from the Druid ladies and their forest creatures. He then said:

“Hop aboard my friend, I look forward to your tales.”

Three days they sailed, and Egwyn did mast duty, looking out from time to time, and keeping the watch. When down with the captain and the crew of five other men he told his tale, from the beginning, from Brendan, through Arthur, the Grail and the final battle. When they landed by good fortune Egwyn had just finished. Ashore the

captain and the five crew gathered around and said:

“Egwyn, that was one of the finest tales we have ever heard. You are a master story teller. Wait here and I will get you a trip north, for you can earn your way anywhere in this world with such tales.”

The captain went away a brief time and return with another captain, one Eamon Hagarty, from Lietrim, and he was sailing north to Armagh with goods for the monastery. The captain had told him of the story teller, and he had agreed to take Egwyn north. They bid farewell and off Egwyn went on his next trip, and again he told the tale, but as he noticed each time it became smoother, and with greater intensity, certain parts were made stronger and others faded. He often thought of the story teller, based upon facts but the

facts get molded by the audience, time and the teller. Three more days and he arrived at Armagh.

He thanked his new crew, and they thanked him, and off to the monastery he ran, it was a true homecoming. The Abbott saw him as he approached and walked out in the green field and held open his arms and Egwyn jumped through the air onto the Abbott's arms and they hugged. The Abbott said:

“Well my little friend, tell me all that you saw, tell me it in full.”

And Egwyn told his tale again, and again and again. And the monks recorded it likewise, each monk making his own recording, and those recordings being taken back to Britain, then to Gaul, and the tale had a life which lived well beyond Egwyn,

Arthur, Merlin and of course Guinevere.