

The final run

As the hefty lance was placed into my shaking hand, I caught a glance of my servant's face. His pale complexion and wide eyes spoke volumes – he had no faith in my ability to succeed, as far as he was concerned, I was staring defeat in the face.

Anxiously, I clenched the lance tight, pulled down my visor and took a deep breath. This was it. Succeed or fail. The constant thudding in my ears increased to a deafening pitch. Thud, thud, thud. The entire crowd clapped along in synchronisation with my pounding heartbeat.

Suddenly he appeared. A tiny servant stood in the centre of the arena. The feeble peasant boy gave a warning glance towards me and then my opponent – Sir Percival (Camelot's bravest and most noble knight). Moments later, his arms raised the crimson red flag high into the air. It had begun!

I gave a heave on the reins. Within seconds the horse was at full speed. The chanting crowd became a blur of yellow and red. Everything seemed hazy. Yet, there in the distance it came. The dark figure of my rival was steaming towards me. Deep down I knew this was my chance to prove myself to King Uther. Tenaciously I rode on. The smell of victory lingered. I leaned in to aim my joust at Percival's chest – this was it.

Crash! The bright poplar wood splintered immediately on impact, creating a mist of tiny shards. The crowd gasped. Then ... complete silence. At first nothing seemed to happen, everything froze to the spot. The eerie howl of the wind whipped around the arena. I looked down to find my armour smeared with warm blood, but I felt nothing; I knew something was wrong. Then I saw it. The noblest knight had succumbed to my ferocious blow, Percival was off his horse!