

MERLIN'S ISLAND



Margaret Mann

MERLIN'S ISLAND

The Merlin Series

The Merlin Set-Up
Under the Merlin Spell
Merlin's Island

MERLIN'S ISLAND

by

Margaret Mann

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DEDICATION

To my Great Grandfather – a notable Pembrokeshire missionary, and to my Cornish ancestors. Also to my forebears from the Welsh Marches.

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Thanks to Jim Marlow, who did some essential pruning of my work and gave good advice.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

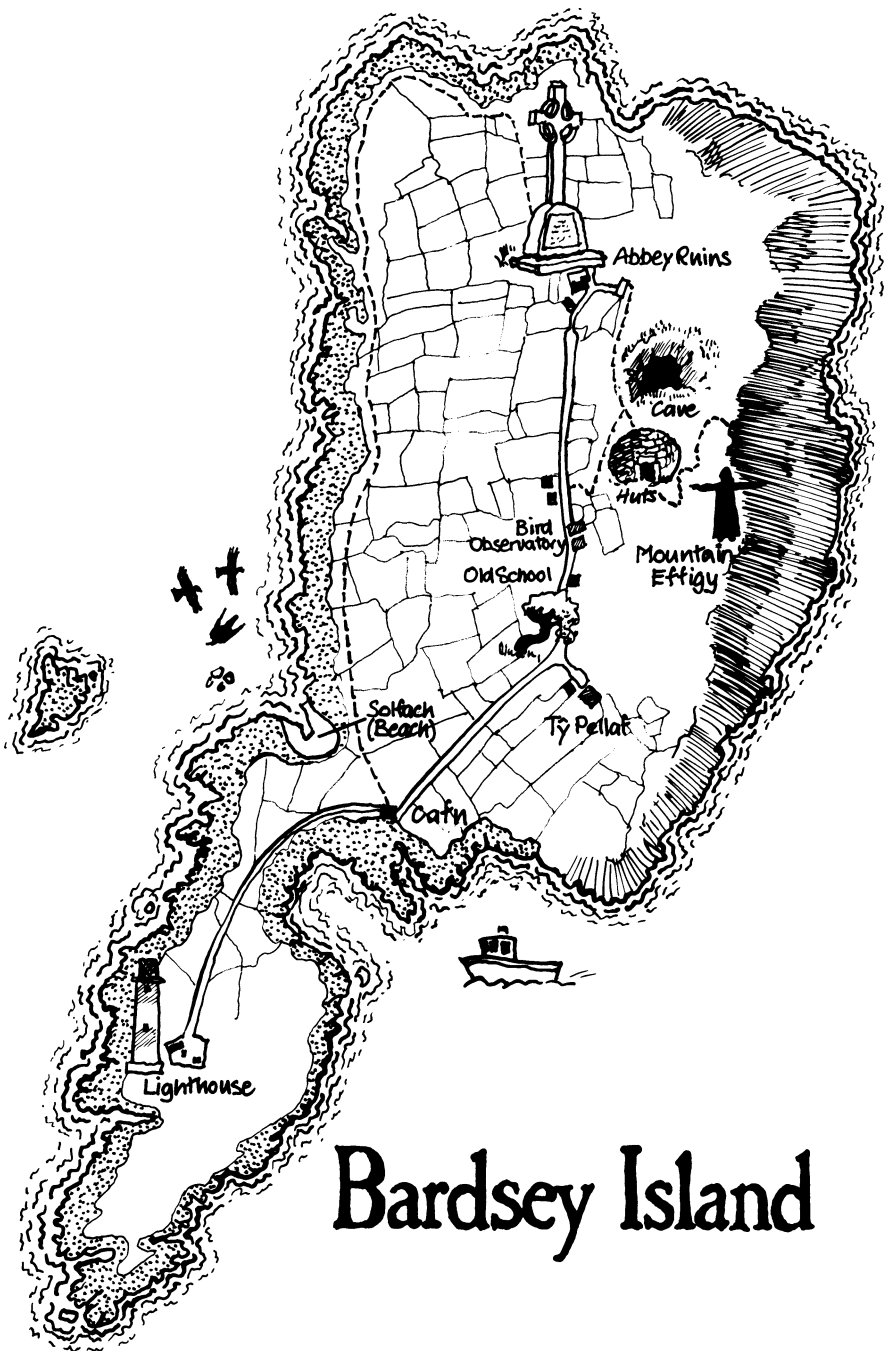
“Tayar” is the Merlinauts’ name for Teilhard de Chardin, the great priest scientist.

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Bardsey Island

ONE

THE CIRCUS AGAIN AND A SURPRISE

There is an island, surrounded by raging seas, lying off the Welsh coast, where it's said that gold and jewel-encrusted treasures lie hidden; Magical treasures of the first fleeing bearers of Christianity to these wild lands.

There, in the company of 20,000 sleeping saints, they lie waiting. Waiting... for the moment...

It was the beginning of the summer holiday. Our four Cybernauts, Sam, Gilly, Lucy and Jonathan (who was taking the place of Tom) had come to stay once more in Bath. This time it was for only a few days, because they were soon setting off from there, with Aunt Sophie, to Wales for a couple of weeks.

Gilly and her brother Sam had lately become aware that they seemed to have what can only be described as 'extra perceptive powers'. They appeared quite normal though, and full of fun, but both had heard voices in their heads from time

to time. Sam's inner voice convinced him that he had some special mission in life and Gilly had experienced strange encounters during dreams – sleeping and waking. She felt the presence of a spirit, which she called Merlin, working through her.

Once, also, she'd given refuge in her brain to a little tree sprite for a while. He was named Spriggy, and he'd promised to return to her again. The other three had heard his squeaky voice at times and Merlin's deeper one too.

Before this holiday Gilly had a very strange dream about Bardsey Island off the coast of North Wales in which Merlin had recited the mysterious statement, which is printed above. When she woke she wrote it down and fantasized over it.

Tom, Sam's friend, had now gone abroad on his 'gap year'. He'd wanted to suss-out the sort of things that made people tick in other countries and to explore new landscapes. He'd sent e-mails to Sam, as a fellow Merlin fan, telling him how he'd tested out the Merlin code and that it came up trumps.

Lucy was still with them and still Gilly's best friend. She often used to think that Tom was quite rude to Merlin at times – always arguing.

Jonathan, Gilly's younger brother, who was now ten years old and able to travel with them, had been looking forward to this holiday for weeks.

Though excited about their coming trip, on the second day in Bath they were keen to go up to the Circus again and to show Jonathan where they had first visited Merlin. This had been in his basement room in one of the houses forming the famous circle of Georgian buildings in the city.

Sitting under the shade of the five great plane trees in the centre of this seemingly magic place, three of the youngsters were reminiscing about how Spriggy had contacted Gilly and led them to Merlin's den from where they'd been sent on their adventures in Time.

It was not long though before Jonathan became impatient and the whole scene rapidly changed.

“I want to see the house now,” burst out Jonathan.

“We’ll pass it when we get up to go home,” said Sam in placating mood.

“No – show it to me now,” insisted the boy again, dancing from one foot to the other.

“But you know that Merlin is not there any more,” said Gilly. “It’s just like any of the other houses.” But Jonathan would not wait.

Up they all got and walked across the grass and over the road to find the house. They remembered it to be under certain objects depicted on the sculpted stone plaques overhead – a lighthouse, a sunflower, an anvil, they thought, and another motif that they’d forgotten – but they found it.

Looking down over its iron railings into the basement, they noticed that the small, half-hidden window was covered with a blind or curtain. The gate to the stone steps leading down to the low side door was firmly shut.

“Go on,” said Jonathan excitedly. “Walk up and knock on the front door – you never know!”

“We can’t do that!” stormed Lucy in horror. “Last time a very spiky woman came to the door and sent us away saying that no-one lived down there.”

Jonathan was now beside himself and acting in a quite irrational way, so Sam, to the surprise of everyone and with the exasperated exclamation, “Oh, alright, she can’t bite our heads off,” strode up the path to the large white door.

The others followed nervously.

Sam pulled the knob of the solid, brass bell-pull and after a few tense seconds the door slowly opened on its own. There was no-one there.

Half in a dream, the youngsters walked into the wide and well extended passageway, and Sam, remembering the basement stairs at the far end, led them down below.

Jonathan, now awe-struck, had his mouth open, and Lucy was actually trembling when they came to the door on the left-hand side which stood ajar.

Sam pushed the door open and there again was the slowly revolving crystal ball, reflecting the dimly-lit room, and beyond were the backs of four empty chairs, lined up and seemingly waiting for them. At Sam's loud whisper of "come on then," they all settled themselves in the chairs.

After a minute of eerie silence, Merlin's familiar voice boomed out, filling the room.

"Here we are again then," he greeted them. "Welcome, my Cybernauts, especially our new one. It is only just over a year since you three were here before, but I've returned earlier than I'd at first planned. You see, I've noticed how surprisingly well you others have retained your footing on the mind-shifting ground-work which I conjured up for you, giving you that splendid new viewpoint. It was so radical a leap in Christian evolutionary thought, that I was afraid it would take much longer before you were ready for the next K Files. But you've taken to the new patterns like ducks to the water – (Sorry, I'm mixing my metaphors a bit here!) Anyway, as you see, I'm very impressed."

"Aunt Sophie lent us one of the books by your 20th century Galahad figure – one she thought would be the easiest to start on. As we persevered with it we kept being reminded of all the things you had said and shown to us. That helped a lot," said Gilly.

"Well, you are now ready for KristOmega Files Two *and* Three!"

"But I've not even heard the first File yet," complained Lucy.

"And I've only played the first bit," piped up Jonathan.

But Merlin dismissed their objections, telling them that Sam would soon put that right and would, with Gilly, help them to catch up.

"I knew of your previous visits to the Welsh peninsular," continued Merlin. I had planned to join you on one of them. Now, I feel, the time is ripe."

"That seems a bit frightening to me," gasped Lucy.

“No,” countered Jonathan eagerly. “It’ll be really cool.”

“Oh, for goodness sake, Jonny, grow up if you want to stay with us,” said Sam with big brotherly disapproval. “This is dead serious.” Then in more solemn tones Sam asked Merlin what their instructions were.

“Right. Here goes,” responded the Sage. –“On your second day at the small coastal town, you must arrange to be seated at a table on the floor that’s above the main tea-shop – The Gegin Fawr. This, as you know, used to be ‘The Monk’s Kitchen’ in the middle ages. You will order and enjoy a pot of tea and then wait.”

“There may be other tourists coming up and going down the old stairs,” remembered Gilly, sounding worried.

“I will see to that,” replied Merlin in his most masterly tone of voice. “Anyway, you should be there at precisely 3 o’clock that afternoon, when it won’t be crowded. I’ll be there. When you’ve had your tea you’ll appear to be very sleepy. In fact, you will doze off for what, in real time, will only be ten minutes, but during that period, in my time and dream time, it will be a day of eye-opening adventure. It will all come together later.”

There was a drawing-in of breath before a stunned silence in the room. Then, the Master’s voice concluded by telling them that when they returned to Bath, they must come and see him again to discuss their reactions.

As the four whispered among themselves, a large screen lit up on the wall ahead of them and they were confronted with a life-like scene of Bardsey Island as seen from the end of the Lynn peninsular in North Wales. The sea around it was rough and heaving and there were ‘white horses’ atop the waves.

This myth-surrounded island had a distinctly magical aura emanating from it, and when the picture faded the watchers felt strangely deprived.

The voice then gently dismissed them, saying that they would soon be hearing it again, so, reluctantly, the youngsters left.

They made their way slowly back to Aunt Sophie's flat accompanied by Jonathan's lively chatter.

TWO

A SEASIDE VIEW AND LOST IN THE FOG

The first day of their visit to Aberdaron, the youngsters spent on and around the pebbly beach – including frequent jaunts to buy ice cream, crisps and drinks.

The Atlantic waves were friendly so all four could swim in the cool enlivening water and lie in the sun. Behind them on a raised stretch of land, but almost on the beach, was the simply designed old church. From its large graveyard, full of Celtic crosses, it looked out over the fast-flowing straits which separated it from the whale-like hump of Bardsey Island, hidden by the headland. The Isle of Bards is also called Enlli in the Welsh language – meaning Island of the strong currents.

Gilly remembered the last time, a few years ago, when they'd all taken a trip to Bardsey Island. It had begun from the very beach where they were now relaxing, in a large rowing boat with an outboard motor.

At one point, Gilly recalled, she had felt very frightened for it was a rough crossing. She had known the sudden shock of

feeling that this sturdy wooden frame was all there was between them and the awful deep. She had clutched the side of the boat, which suddenly felt very frail, and she understood how comforted the disciples must have been when Jesus got into the boat with them after walking on the water.

There was not much to see on the island – only a few old houses, with just one still lived in. There were some rough, unsurfaced roads, a ruined tower of the old abbey, a large graveyard and a single Celtic cross. There was the lighthouse of course, but no keeper.

They'd heard before of the twenty thousand saints said to be buried there and of intriguing connections to the Arthurian legends. Now, though, Merlin had told them much more, and for the first time they knew about the true glories of its famed early history – that it had been the first monastic Christian community in Britain in the fifth century and in the supposed period of King Arthur's reign. Perhaps, just merging from the European dark ages, the Gospel light was kept burning here.

Having viewed Bardsey from Merlin's room, and being now so near, kept them thinking about what would happen next day in the Gegin Fawr. They wondered whether Merlin's Earth body was really buried on the island, and if the Grail was hidden there, too.

They hadn't told Aunt Sophie about their appointment with Merlin, but somehow she always knew more than they thought she knew.

That evening, after dinner, the party set off on their favourite car trip up to Mynned Mawr (little moor). They ran across it, climbed down some steep stone steps and along the slippery rocks until they reached St. Mary's Well. This was situated at the side of a deep rift in the ancient Cambrian cliffs. It was where, in the Middle Ages, pilgrims boarded the boats that took them across to Bardsey – having drunk from the well to ensure a safe crossing!

"My goodness," Sam had once declared, while surveying the waves. "They 'sure' would have needed it!"

After returning to the car on this occasion, Sam, surprisingly, announced that he wanted to walk back to Aberdaron by himself, over the moor. It was only a mile or two in the distance and there was at least an hour or so before sunset, so Aunt Sophie agreed to it and was not worried.

“We’ll see you later,” she said, “when you join us for our bed-time hot drinks.”

So, saying he needed the exercise and also wanting time for a little ‘think’, Sam waved them goodbye and set off.

Before Sam was halfway through his return walk, a sudden, unexpected fog descended upon the moor. He had left the narrow road and was walking on the soft grass, and he soon realized that he didn’t know if he was travelling in the right direction. He knew he was lost, and it was almost dark. He was beginning to feel frightened and very cold in his thin summer clothes, but he kept on walking, imagining he could hear the sea and hoping for a path down to the coast.

Eventually, Sam saw a dim light of some sort up ahead of him. He went towards it with trepidation.

“Hello! Hello!” he shouted loudly. As he got nearer he saw it was a very small cottage and the light was coming from an open door. Standing outside was a robed, nun-like woman and, to Sam, she appeared like an angel.

The woman heard Sam calling as she was putting out some rubbish in her bin and called out, “Who’s there? Who’s there?”

Sam ran to her, explaining how he’d got lost and how glad he was to see her.

Surveying the distraught young figure, she immediately invited him in and led him to a seat by an open fire. He told her about the others in the town below who would be worrying about him if he didn’t turn up. She replied that she had no telephone and was afraid that the police would probably not know of her presence. They wouldn’t call, thinking it empty.

“You see,” she said, “the old man who lived here died and I’ve only been in residence for a short time.”

“So why are you living here like this on your own?” asked Sam, looking round at the frugal and shabby little room.

“Well,” she began, sitting down near Sam. “My name is Sister Christina and, occasionally, my convent allows one of us sisters to go off for a year and live as a hermit. This is only when it’s felt that the person would really benefit from a chance to sort out periods of niggling doubts and questions troubling her faith. This place seemed very suitable. I can see Bardsey island from here, you know, on a fine day.”

“We went to Bardsey once,” volunteered Sam, feeling more at home. “We come here quite often on holiday from Ireland, but this year it was going to be different. We’d been promised a special glimpse of how things were in Aberdaron and on Bardsey at the end of the thirteenth century. It’s our secret actually – but it’s fixed for tomorrow afternoon at 3 o’clock.”

“You’ll be there,” said Sister Christine, smiling indulgently. “I suggest you stay the night, for on-one will come searching in this sort of fog. It usually lifts by dawn, so I’ll wake you very early in the morning before I say my first ‘office’, bring you tea and set you on your way. I’ll show you the best route down to town, and you could be back by sunrise to put everyone’s minds at rest.”

Then Sam got his hot drink and he’d never enjoyed one more. While they both sat and relaxed, they fell into quite a serious conversation.

“Life around here in the thirteenth century was completely under the rule and enthrallment of Christendom,” said Sister Christine. “It was a large part of everyone’s life. You’ll soon see. I won’t question you about your secret plan to go back in time, for I have too much respect for youthful imagination, but I’m very interested.

“And I’m especially intrigued because lately I’ve been reading up the history of that Christian heyday. It brought home to me that the attitudes of today’s youth seem to be the complete opposite to those of the twelfth century, and indeed the thirteenth. Though the monasteries were already centres

of academic excellence and sources of education, worship of Christ was paramount. However, ignorance and superstition was still considerable.”

“How do you mean?” said Sam, feeling more at home now.

“Well, for instance, there was the woman who went around saying she was the Virgin Mary and had come back to tell people to repent of their sins – or else. Anyway, they tried her and then walled her up.”

“You mean, alive?” asked Sam in horror.

“Yes, I’m afraid so – shut in behind a wall and left to die. Also, of course, they burned anyone suspected of practicing witchcraft. The intolerance was so terrible it made me very depressed.” Sister Christine looked at Sam.

“You were thinking,” ventured Sam, “about the current fashion these days for condoning every new cult and where anything goes... where occult circles of witches, wizards and Pagans are quite common. You can pick up handbooks for teenagers, at any bookshop, on how to cast spells.”

“Good guess, Sam. In those days of the Middle Ages, anyone evil, and the devil himself, was depicted with a tail or horns and identified with animals. Today it’s animals to the fore, and back to nature all round. I *was* confused – but then I found a book by a great Jesuit scientist, mystic and poet – Teilhard de Chardin – and it changed my life. I don’t expect you’ve ever heard of him, but—”

“I certainly have,” interrupted Sam excitedly. “We call him Tayar.”

The sister seemed astonished but, after pausing for a moment, found her voice.

“How did you hear of him? And from whom?” she said, unbelievably.

“Well,” stuttered Sam, blushing a little. “Don’t laugh, but it was in a room in Bath. While on holiday in that city, my sister had a sort of daydream and we were led to a certain house. There we listened to a voice. It came from a presence who soon identified himself as Merlin... his spirit, of course. He

introduced us to Tayar and presented him as a present day stand-in for the legendary Sir Galahad.”

“What things did he tell you about this man, then? Tell me Sam.”

“Things that made everything look different, somehow – as though we were looking at the same old subject from a different angle. Take the word ‘supernatural’ to start with – we came to see it as just the ‘futurenatural’, unconnected with anything spooky, unearthly or weird, and quite natural to humans. Then he showed us how to look at humanity with the eye of a geologist or physicist, following the process of the atom instead of the cell. We saw how evolution precedes us in the same way as it has always done in nature. We learnt that the energies and emotional drives we feel in our hearts are no less physically real than the principles of universal attractions and repulsions... organic. Then we realized that all artificial and man-made things were as real as any tree or volcano.”

Here Sam stopped for breath. He’d completely surprised himself at how it had all poured out so easily. He met the gaze (somewhat awed) of the Sister.

“You’ve taken the words out of my mouth. May I call you Samuel? I think this Merlin character of yours must be very special and within you now! You know, that’s what I too learnt when I read this book, *The Phenomenon of Man* – the fact that spiritual does not necessarily mean invisible, intangible or abstract in opposition to material things. It was our reflective brains which had changed the face of our planet. We can love God through the world.

“Young people today need a God they can find and worship. It’s by sensing the miraculous in natural things that your Tayar is pointing the way.”

“Yes,” agreed Sam, warming to the subject. “I could never imagine what God was like, even vaguely, so I couldn’t relate to Him at all. Now I see Him as part of the future world we are, ideally, working towards – we’re sort of co-creators, in

harness with a power we can feel and whom we'll get to know more and more as we progress. Anyone can join in."

"Fair enough, but what did you learn about the role of Tayar's Universal Christ, who we know as Jesus of Nazareth – did that help?"

"Of course it did," said Sam as he launched forth again enthusiastically. "When I passed our local church the other week I thought that, somehow, it looked different – illuminated by an unusual light. Following an impulse I opened the door and looked inside. The dark nave of the sleepy church seemed suddenly, to me, lit up with a new light. There was a breath of fresh air blowing through the place. It may have been no more than a sudden burst of sunshine, but it did the trick! I thought of Tayar's Cosmic Christ of universal dimension who was once a part of our world – rooted in the earth and present in the atoms of the air we breath. We still remember Him with love and warm affection and relate to Him as a role-model."

"Oh *yes!* Very well put, I must say. You've really taken to heart the neglected Cosmic nature of the Christ of history – the motive force of evolution and receptacle of all the good developed by the universe, including our own faltering, but treasured, forward efforts." Sister Christine looked intensely at Sam. "Our planet – the universe – all Christified. Love is shown as an organic necessity for the future of life on Earth – or, anywhere else... Our Christ, the centre of a process of 'becoming' in God. Yes, Teilhard says it all."

After a few moments of silence, and then an apology from the Sister for going on a bit, Sam, suddenly feeling uncomfortable, asked for the loo and was told it was outside. Showing him through the fog to the little outhouse, the Sister warned him about the candle and explained the procedure.

When Sam returned he saw that a small camp bed had been brought into the room and that there was a pile of bedclothes and pillows beside it.

"I keep these things for the occasional visits from a member of our convent in England," said the Sister. "The 'Mother'

needs to check, from time to time, how I'm doing and if I'm alright. It's a bit early for bed so I'll not make it up yet. Anyway, I've also been reading about Bardsey since coming here, and I can tell you things that may surprise you – if you're not too tired."

"I'm OK, and interested, so please go ahead," replied Sam sitting down again and warming his feet by the fire, which his new friend was stoking up.

"You see, after the fall of the Roman Empire and the withdrawal of its protection for Christian communities, many leading figures in the churches fled to the largely unknown and uninhabited western isles. The more inaccessible the better, I read, and often on the Atlantic fringes of society. These wanderers included people like the Desert Fathers who were great scholars and influenced by Greek thought. They believed in the wholeness and interconnectedness of all nature – no walls between heaven and earth – and the reality of natural spirituality. They eventually settled on the wild islands off the coasts of Ireland, Scotland and Wales."

"And Bardsey was one of them," said Sam "Wasn't it?"

"Yes, Sam, it was, and a very important one. The settlements brought about a string of saints – Patrick, David and Columba – and then to Celtic missionaries, who took the faith to northern England and Europe. All that these early refugees could bring with them were their religious artefacts, jewels and some gold which they could hide about their persons. Of course their craftsmen came too. With the gold they could buy wood for building and so on."

"Of course, there weren't any trees on Bardsey, were there?" reflected Sam.

"And there are still almost none. That's a pity, for trees were regarded by the Celts as a great source of wisdom. I was also surprised to read that only one or two Celtic crosses are left standing there now, among all those graves!"

"Perhaps they were all thrown into the sea," suggested Sam, with a grin. "I was told that it happened to hundreds of crosses

on the island of Iona when the fanatics of the Reformation, or perhaps Cromwell's men, vented their hostility on such innocent symbols."

"I didn't know about that, Sam. Anyway, there are plenty of rocks and the sea-birds love it."

"Yes, it's now a Bird Sanctuary and Nature Reserve. It does have some sheep there and a few black cattle," Sam informed her.

"I'm so glad to hear it. Thinking of those Celtic crosses – did you ever wonder what they signified?" she asked.

"Not really." Sam thought for a moment. "Well, I suppose I've always imagined them as depicting the sun behind the cross."

"I like that. Especially because the ancient Celts worshipped a Sun God. But other theories say it is backed by the circle of nature in its complete unity. But I mustn't bore you. I'll go and set up your bed."

After Sister Christina had finished the job and the bed was ready, she moved her small table and old Aladdin lamp across to a position beside the wall – then pushed the bed over. Looking at some bookshelves nearby she pointed to one, saying it was about a ninth century Irish-born monk known as John Scotus. He too wrote that ideas have true reality and that to *know* more, was really to *be* more. His nature-spirituality, without fear and superstition, seemed to her very akin to some of Teilhard's philosophy.

"But surely," countered Sam, "evolution, even religious, never goes backwards, does it?"

The Sister came and sat down again.

"A good question," she said. "But if you think about the immense storage system of the human brain – surely, some by-gone school of thought and memories of its impact could be triggered off and well up into minds from the past. They could spread and combine with leading aspects of modern thought."

"Yes, I see that," said Sam. "And witchcraft can still attract people!"

“Today, I’m afraid there’s not much new excitement or adventure in Christianity.” Having said this she leaned down and prodded the dying fire.

“Let’s talk for a minute about your mysterious, disembodied intelligence,” the Sister suggested in brighter mood – and with a playful smile.

“I approve of evergreen mythology and legend,” she continued. “And the sort of wholesome magic your Merlin has involved you in. I expect you know that Bardsey was one of the places where he is said to be buried, but older tradition has it that he slept there in a fabulous glass castle till his time came again. He was surrounded by thirteen treasures of Britain and attended by nine bardic companions.”

“I knew the first bit,” said Sam. “But I’m confused now. I thought that the enchantress Morgana le Fay had imprisoned him in a tree!”

“Perhaps there *were* trees once on the island, Sam. I read that Merlin *wanted* to go there for his last resting place. And that’s also where King Arthur was taken to be healed of his wounds after the last battle, for Morgana lived there. She worked especially in the glass building (a last vestige of a forgotten Roman art) with her sisters. What better place to nurse and care for Arthur – and to grow apples in as well. Avalon... perhaps?”

“You mean,” exclaimed Sam, “it was a sort of sanatorium and greenhouse.”

“Well, an identification of Bardsey with Avalon (Isle of Apples, in Welsh) seems solid enough. An old manuscript speaks of the ‘Insula Sanctoram’ and states that ‘Arthur gave orders to be carried to Gwynedd in Wales, where he intended to stay in the Isle of Avalon’. So there you are! He would have had that wonderful structure to shield him from those fearsome winds.”

“Brilliant!” exclaimed Sam. “You sure know your stuff. It will stand us in good stead for our ‘Time Trip’ tomorrow. You see, much of Merlin’s magic is linked to new technology –

virtual reality, body scanning etc. He seems almost to know it all in advance and he summons up past details to order.”

“Yes, I do a lot of reading here, Sam. So, I expect you’ll learn tomorrow about the constant string of pilgrims waiting to go over the treacherous straits to the island and St. Mary’s Abbey. Three visits there were said to be equal in prestige to one to Rome. To think, it probably started just as a sort of retreat or hermitage. Hermits were in fashion then, until St Cadfan built his monastery there around 500AD. Of course, the name Bardsey is an early Viking one I gather... Now, I’m sure it is our bedtime,” she declared, getting up and moving towards the wooden stairs.

“Someone told us today, in the rooms where we are staying,” said Sam, with a big yawn, “that there was this old saying that ‘No-one dies on Bardsey except of old age’. It’s supposed to be very healthy!”

Sister Christina stopped to light a candle, and then, turning to Sam with an amused smile, she commented rather negatively about the local climate! She then gave the boy some instructions about how to turn off the Aladdin lamp.

“There’s an odd sort of T-shirt affair on your bed and a chamber pot under it, if you wish to use them. I’ll wake you in good time in the morning. Sleep well,” she said as she disappeared up the steep staircase.

Before Sam got into bed he had a look at the four mounted sets of words that had been put up on the wall and now lit up by the lamp. They were very carefully written in Old English script and beautifully bordered with coloured leaves of all kinds. Each quotation had Teilhard’s name underneath it.

Sam, reading them with interest, suddenly realized that they seemed to him to encapsulate all the things they’d just been talking about. Anyway, once in bed he fell straight away into a sound sleep.

Here follow the four copied extracts that Sam read:

- (1) *The sense of the Earth opening and exploding upwards into God; and the sense of God taking root and finding nourishment downwards into Earth.*
- (2) *...by allowing us to feel God in everything we do and in everything that is done to us (God creating in all things and being born in all things) it can bring true happiness to our generation.*
- (3) *Christ does not act as a dead or passive point of convergence, but as a centre of radiation for the energies that lead the universe back to God through humanity.*
- (4) *Christ is in the church in the same way as the sun is before our eyes. We see the same sun as our fathers saw, and yet we understand it in a much more magnificent way. 'Christ is seen in the extension of the human ideal'*

That night Sam had a vivid dream. In it, he met Sir Galahad, alone on the moor in the early morning sunshine. The knight was on a beautiful white horse (which Sam remembered Gilly had once so admired) and he was in full shining armour, with his helmet under his arm and a shield slung on his back. Straight away Sam knew he had seen him somewhere before. He stopped, leaned over, and smiled at Sam, who was transfixed, but the face that Sam saw seemed to radiate kindness and intense interest. The warmth of it the boy would never forget, and it brought him to life.

“I make a guess,” the man said, in a slightly humorous tone of voice, “that you are one of the discovered apprentices I heard about from that clever old wizard they call Merlin? Tell me your name now.”

“Samuel, Sir,” blurted out Sam. “And, please, are you referring to our special voice which we’ve been hearing in the Circus in Bath?”

“Ah! You must possess ears to hear then. Yes, that sounds

like Merlin. He can pick out hopeful material from anywhere. Well, my lad, I should congratulate you.”

There was a stiff sea breeze. A sudden gust made the horse restless and it veered round for a moment, making its rider’s cloak flap against his lance, which juddered in its socket.

“All this equipment!” muttered Galahad. Turning to Sam, he went on, “You see, I have no squire to back me up. Perhaps one day *you* may be...”

To Sam’s acute disappointment Galahad never finished the sentence, because Sister Christina was gently shaking him awake.

“Morning has happened,” she said, smiling at Sam’s pained expression. She turned to the table and began to stir a mug of steaming tea.

“I knew you didn’t mind my dried milk,” she said. “You seemed to enjoy it last night. While you dress I’ll boil an egg for you. My colleagues left me plenty of those.”

As the two of them sat at the table, the Sister confided in Sam:

“Sadly,” she reflected, “our fractured church has split into dozens of Christian denominations and sects around the world, and it has held itself together for a thousand years or so by sheer force of will (often at an unacceptable price). Your Merlin will show you how. I have to admit that our own church seems often, at times, to have shackled the forward march of true Christianity, in the same way that your Tayar’s Church shackled him... A real Galahad he was,” she declared, nodding her head in approval. “All those old encrustations had to go.”

“I dreamt about him last night,” Sam told her, rising to go.

The hermit Sister accompanied him to the door where he thanked her profusely for everything. She owned up that she would miss him, and pointed out the best way back to town. It was a grey dawn but the air was clear and fresh. Sam set off in good spirits.

Meanwhile, back in Aberdeen it had been a traumatic night

for Aunt Sophie and the other three Merlinauts. At first, when Sam didn't come back, they thought he must have called at the Ship Inn near the seafront where he had made some local friends the year before – but later they informed the police. Though the youngsters dozed off, Aunt Sophie sat awake all night.

The sun was rising when he entered the town at last and Sam was reminded of his dream. As Sam crossed the old stone bridge into the main street he saw it was quite deserted. He broke into a run, and arriving at their lodgings he woke everyone up and received an ecstatic welcome!

“Wow! A *super* dream,” proclaimed Gilly, after Sam had told her about it. She then reminded him of the ‘virtual reality’ trip that Merlin had sent them on from Bath – a Medieval one where they'd met Galahad and his squire in the Abbey Churchyard.

“On their way to Glastonbury,” Sam responded. “Of course. And Sir Newby was with them as well. I remember now.”

THREE

BACK IN TIME

On that same afternoon, our four Merlinauts (or Cybernauts, as Merlin called them) were upstairs in ‘Y Gegin Fawr’, a low, whitewashed old house, that was known as ‘The Big Kitchen’ in English. They were seated round a table in the corner of the room and had ordered their pot of tea according to Merlin’s instructions – but they’d also slyly included some homemade cakes. The whole café was truly ‘old-world’. They were alone there for the moment, but were risking some company unless they hurried with their unscheduled food. Realizing this, Sam urged Jonathan to swallow his second cake before they relaxed for their doze.

“Wasn’t it the end of a Medieval century,” recalled Gilly. “Perhaps about 1300, where Merlin said he was sending us?”

“I think so,” said Lucy, finishing the last cup of tea.

“We should be getting sleepy now,” Sam reminded them, leaning back in his chair and closing his eyes.

Within the next few minutes they all seemed to be sleeping peacefully, heads on their chests.

However, after a very brief spell, some noisy disturbance made them all suddenly believe they were wide awake again.

Looking towards the stairs they saw a very strange family coming into the room. Their long, loose-fitting clothes were worn and soiled – they all looked tired but happy. They took possession of a long table with benches and settled down, chatting away.

“They can’t see us!” broke out Jonathan.

“Nor hear us, obviously,” joined in Gilly. “Perhaps they are pilgrims and we’ve arrived back in their lifetime. Their accent is unfamiliar.”

As she spoke a man with his hair shaved on the top of his head and wearing a monk’s habit, arrived with a roughly-fashioned pot from which he ladled some sort of pottage onto each large hunk of dark bread which had been laid out on the table.

Silence fell while the hungry visitors sat relishing their food, and Sam, Gilly and Lucy heard the voice of a woman speaking, seemingly within their heads. They listened intently.

“What’s the matter?” asked Jonathan uneasily. “Can you hear something I can’t?” But Lucy, rather thoughtlessly, shushed him up without answering.

Shortly after this, Sam, seeing the wounded expression on his brother’s face, emerged from his fit of intense concentration and sought to reassure him.

“Bad luck Jonny, you obviously can’t hear this new voice. It’s because you’ve not yet developed the type of ESP (extrasensory perception) that the rest of us have attained through Mage-magic and dreams. Don’t worry; it will come. Meanwhile we’ll tell you what we are hearing and keep you informed.”

“But I heard Merlin’s voice back in Bath,” Jonathan complained.

“That was much stronger and more direct,” countered Sam.

“Who’s talking to you anyway?” persisted the indignant Jonathan. At this point Gilly took over from Sam, for the voice had finished speaking.

“You see, Jonathan, Merlin has sent us an old acquaintance of his to guide and look after us while we’re here for a day in

this strange century. She is called Ruth and she can't assume her full embodiment in case she's recognised by people in Aberdaron who might have known her in 1300."

"So you've only got her voice – but do you mean she's dead?" conjectured Jonathan impatiently.

"She was drowned, she says, while trying to rescue a pilgrim's child who had fallen out of the boat during a rough crossing to the island. The child was pulled out in time, but it had been too late for Ruth – a poor swimmer."

"A sort of heroine, I suppose," said Jonathan. "But how did she get to know Merlin?"

"Well," continued Gilly. "It happened to be during one of Merlin's regular visits to our own Earth that he noticed Ruth while she was studying at the Augustinian monastery just outside of a nearby settlement. She explained how she had always longed to learn to read and write, and after talking to one of the secular canons who came from there, it was arranged that she should go up to the monastery every week to be taught. She did so well that..."

"She actually became one of the first female scribes," broke in Lucy. "A *woman* writing their bills and letters for them! A real spectacle."

"A pity she didn't learn how to swim better," added Jonathan.

"You must take this more seriously, Jonathan," Sam told him, a bit sternly.

"Surely you can imagine how Merlin picked her out, and helped and encouraged her. Then, after her death, he always kept in contact with her. Now, he can call upon her to help us. So there you are, matey, and you're still our No.4 Cybnaut for Merlin, so we need you... It sounds as if the girls have heard something else now."

"Yes, Ruth is suggesting we go downstairs," said Gilly. "She'll meet us again right outside this place. She calls it a hostel actually. Come on."

Our four got up and skirted past the table where the pilgrims

were talking again happily, quite unaware of the youngsters' presence.

When Sam got to the top of the stairs he saw there was a young monk about to come up with some food. Making a quick decision, Sam started down and the others followed him.

"Wow!" exclaimed Jonathan (grumpy no longer) as they passed straight through the novice monk.

"Our invisible cloaks are much better than Harry Potter's. We can't bump into anything. Fantastic!"

Down on the ground floor they were given a shock. Full of pilgrims, who appeared to have arrived quite recently, and monks in attendance, the atmosphere was overpowering. The musty, acidic aroma of unwashed bodies and stale-smelling clothes filled the room. Some people were seated and some standing by a table upon which stood large jugs of wine and pots of ale. The sweating servants were taking some of these round and other monks were rushing in and out of an open door which led into the monk's kitchen behind – a great deal of smoke came from there. Our Merlinauts headed quickly to the door and out into the fresh air.

It was a summer's day, but most women were well covered with full, ground length skirts. Men were in various types of belted tunics.

The muddy street was dirty with some bumps in it and the small stone houses that lined it had thatched or slated roofs.

Sam, Gilly and Lucy were listening to Ruth again; Jonathan could tell.

"Come on... What's she saying?" he cajoled expectantly.

"Well," answered Lucy first. "She's telling us that today is the Feast Day of one of their favourite Welsh saints and that there will be celebrations."

Looking around, Jonathan could only see a priest in black, clerical garb, a few horse-drawn carts and more horses tethered at the side of the hostel.

"Ruth is now saying," reported Gilly, "that we're in luck today because there is a small funeral procession coming

through the town towards the beach to wait for transport for the coffin over to Bardsey.”

“They’ve walked with it all the way from south Wales,” added Lucy in awe. “And man-handled the bier, she told us.”

“Will they be able to take it over today?” asked Jonathan.

“We’ll see,” said Gilly. “Ruth says that if we go to the beach we’ll perhaps find one or two more coffins waiting for a change of weather.”

Our watchers were soon able to witness the funeral cortege as it passed through the town. The draped coffin, under a stylised portrait, was accompanied by an escort. This now included, as Ruth had told them, some Canons from the monastery where the party had stopped earlier for a good clean-up and refreshment. These men would help with the coming embarkation. As the cortege went by, people stood still, crossed themselves and bowed their heads.

“Does your Ruth know who it is in there?” queried their ever-curious No.4.

“Yes, Jonathan. She identified the body, tentatively, by the special coloured motifs on the draperies, as a famous and saintly character from a similar monastic establishment down south,” Gilly repeated carefully for him.

“Come on,” called Lucy from the road. “Let’s follow them.”

They all did just that and ended up in the graveyard of the chapel by the beach.

Here the coffin was transferred onto two curved and flattened wooden poles. It was carried to the beach and put down beside another one already there, waiting for the waves to subside and the sea to calm. A large rowing boat was beached beside them. The hearse was left for the return trek.

“Might they be there all night?” wondered Lucy, and she was obviously being reassured by the voice of Ruth, for Lucy soon announced that the coffins would be taken into the chapel at night-time.

There was some building work going on beside the old chapel and the youngsters were informed that a new church

was about to be built. While they lingered there watching proceedings and looking out to Gull Island basking in the sunshine, Sam had a sudden thought. How strange that this view of the island was the only thing that didn't seem to have changed at all. He pondered a little on the enduring quality of mountains and hills. But, he supposed, even those humpy shapes would not stay the same forever – had not always been there. TIME, he concluded, was deceptive, and quite baffling at the moment. Then his reverie was interrupted by Jonathan.

“It’s boring here,” he said. “I’m moving back to town – see you soon.”

They let him go and Ruth assured them he’d be all right.

Jonathan watched the unfamiliar sights – there was a man in the stocks being pelted by children and other onlookers. They were throwing what looked like rotten vegetables and his chained, dejected-looking dog was sitting beside him barking at his master’s tormentors. Jonathan had learnt in history about the use of stocks for thieves, but he felt really sorry for this man.

There was a stall with women selling something they called sweetmeats, which seemed popular, and groups of men were standing round it drinking from large mugs. There was a juggler and another stall selling crude effigies of the saint whose day it was. There were also preparations for some coming celebration. Jonathan was surprised to see two men fighting with quarter-staffs just for money. Onlookers were either cheering or booing and occasionally dropping coins into a bowl. The men were really hurting each other.

Suddenly there was a strange hush and Jonathan looked in the same direction as everyone’s heads had turned – towards the bridge into town. There he was presented with a truly splendid sight.

Coming towards them was a knight in full armour mounted on a great horse and accompanied by his colourful, tabarded squire and full entourage.

In a flash, Jonathan was back shouting to his co-Merlinauts on the beach.

“Come quickly!” he called. “There’s a sight to see and your Ruth must explain it all to us... Come *now*, hurry, hurry!”

When they joined him, the knight had dismounted outside the hostel. His horse was being taken and looked after by a lay monk. The picture that greeted Jonathan and his fellows was one of extraordinary glamour and colour. The knightly figure had a red cross on the front of his surcoat. The squire and herald accompanied their Lord into the hostel with all his equipment, followed by the rest of his attendants.

Jonathan was agog – watching the knight.

There, according to Ruth, he would discard his armour and all his fineries, helped by his squire, and emerge later ready to cross to Bardsey.

“But who is he?” pleaded Jonathan in exasperation.

“Be patient,” said Gilly, rather crossly, as they were trying to listen to Ruth’s rather difficult Old English terminology spoken with a Welsh accent.

Since Edward I established his rule over Wales in 1284, some locals had picked up bits of English, but most spoke Welsh. Ruth had learnt her English at the monastery. She’d also found out things about this very knight.

“We’ll tell you all in a minute, Jonny,” spoke up Lucy, soothingly.

Ruth then began to impart her knowledge of the man, his history and character. Her listeners were intrigued.

The knight’s name was Sir Edmund of Kilpeck. He had a fortified manor in the ‘Marches’ border district around Hereford. He was English and had ‘taken the cross’, a term which meant he’d been a Crusader. She remembered him from another year, for he used to come here regularly on pilgrimage.

“Wow! A real Crusader!” exclaimed Jonathan when he heard this.

Afterwards, seeing the others were listening again, he followed the man’s war-horse round to the stables at the back of the hostel.

Ruth then continued her reminiscences. She told her charges that she'd found out much more about Sir Edmund. She had met his personal scribe when they'd been staying the night at the Monastery and the scribe had once pointed out to Ruth the faint cross symbols on the hilt and guard of his great sword as it lay on a table. This meant, she was then told, that Sir Edmund must also have been a 'Knight Templar' – a special religious order devoted to the recovery of Jerusalem from the Moslems. She said, though, that being a modest and cautious man, he rarely spoke of this. Already the Church was accusing his order of various irregularities. Merlin had told her, though, that he needn't have worried, for the Church itself was often corrupt at that time. However, there were, he'd assured her, enough true believers practising their faith, and honourable Templars keeping their vows, to keep the Christian Church and it's best traditions alive... "Mary, mother of Jesus, pray for us," she'd ended.

"Ruth's got a bit carried away, hasn't she," noted Lucy. "She sounds quite upset."

"Well, in this period," replied Sam, whose best subject had always been history, "they were facing the conflicts and uncertainties of a new century. After all, that last Crusade had failed to win back Jerusalem. Even King Edward I went on Crusade before he came to the throne."

Jonathan rejoined them after exploring the stables and listening to the men talking.

"Your knight was actually a Templar as well," Lucy informed him and was about to tell him more, when suddenly their ears were assaulted by a new and disturbing sound... Then they were all woken up for the second time, but this time for real.

The racket had been made by a group of noisy tourists coming up the stairs to the room where they were sitting at the Gegin Fawr in today's Aberdaron.

"Good heavens!" stammered Gilly. "What a dream I've had. I was there."

The others were all rubbing their eyes and looking around unbelievably.

“We’re back in the 21st century for sure,” said Sam, surveying the tourists with mixed feelings. Jonathan and Lucy were lost for words and disappointed they would not see how Sir Edmund ended his pilgrimage.

FOUR

THEIR INTERPRETER'S ROOM REVISITED

Having finished their holiday in Wales and travelled back to Bath, the four Cybernauts kept their second appointment with Merlin at the Circus. They had promised to do this before they had to leave Aunt Sophie's to return home to Ireland.

"So, you enjoyed your little trip back in Time, did you?" asked Merlin, his mysterious voice filling the basement room.

"Mind-blowing!" proclaimed Jonathan promptly, and with enthusiasm. This was swiftly followed by Lucy agreeing with him but wishing it had all gone on a bit longer.

"Yes," responded Merlin. "It did end sooner and more abruptly than I meant it to – I hadn't bargained for those rowdy tourists, I confess!"

"But it was *so* real," remarked Gilly. "More real than ordinary dreams. I felt as if I was in a country beyond Earth-bound TIME. I was still myself though, complete with my memories. I knew I was dreaming."

"Perhaps," joined in Sam, "it was a taste of future

computerised development in Virtual Reality, or advanced research into the recovery of special information, or...”

“Don’t spoil it all with science, Sam,” complained Lucy. “It was wonderful.”

“I expect you all gathered how their religion was a large part of their life. Its truths were rarely questioned, and belief in a literal version of Heaven and Hell was widespread. People were always keen to make recompense for their sins. Yet there was still much violence and cruelty around – even the Crusaders were merciless as conquerors.”

“But Ruth’s Templar friend was such a good man,” said Lucy.

“That was so,” confirmed Merlin. “But, you see, the Christians found it so difficult to live up to and understand the Gospel message properly, as they still do. Revenge was still sweet, and the killing of people you didn’t agree with was still popular... Your Tayar, though, now tells us that, ‘The future is more beautiful than all the pasts’. We must have hope.”

“Why was Ruth so upset at the end?” asked Lucy, still puzzled.

“Well, though she’s a delightful, high-spirited and caring person who loved life, she’s also a very serious soul. She dearly loved her Mother Church and couldn’t bear to accept that it had ever been unfair or corrupt. Talking to you probably reminded her of the time I had prophesied to her about the future denigration and banning of the Templars by the Church. Ruth’s favourite saint was Saint Deniol.

“All the heroes and heroines in those days seemed to be either warriors or saints,” commented Gilly. “Just as today we have sports people and Pop stars. Even the name ‘Madonna’ is now demoted. It refers more often to an idol of American popular culture these days, than to the Mother of Christ,”

“I had an e-mail from Tom last week,” said Sam. “You remember him? He’s still on his travels, doing the modern version of the Grand Tour of Europe. He told me that he’d met people who’d admitted that they were depressed, embittered

and loveless. One had just walked out of a lucrative and growing concern. His job had been to think out or find and collect umpteen new ways of enjoying sex – sex and more sex, just for its own sake. It included sex toys and he had to photograph and describe things for a magazine. He is *so* fed up; in spite of the money he feels his considerable effort was somehow being wasted. He's empty and unfulfilled, and I'd say suicidal... Tom's worried," ended Sam.

"Is Tom staying near to this man?" enquired Merlin with some urgency.

"Yes," Sam replied. "Two doors from him; in a Backpackers hostel where this fellow has retreated."

"Well, Sam. You know what you must do. I'll quote you now some timely words from your Tayar, which, if you like them, you can e-mail back to him. I'll give your Aunt the references for you – she has his books:

*'Just trust Life:
Life will bring you high,
If only you are careful in selecting,
In the maze of events, those influences
Or those paths, which can bring you each time
A little more upward.*

*'Life has to be discovered
and built step by step:
a great charm,
if only one is convinced
(by faith and experience)
That the world is going
Somewhere.*

*'For you, there is only one road...
To remain constantly true to yourself,
To what you feel is highest in you.
The road will open before you as you go.*

*'The consciousness of each of us
is evolution looking at itself
And reflecting upon itself.'*

Merlin groaned despondently. "If only a few of these ideas would occasionally occur to drug-pushers, gun-runners and illegal arms dealers, it would be the first miracle – muggers and thugs as well might be made to think! If any of these finally sickens at what they see, perhaps, instead of having such negative goals, they could put their energies into building the future."

"But where to start?" questioned Sam, with little conviction.

"By doing your best to preserve and intensify in one another the love that is somewhere in all of you. So, you can become part of the fulfilment of the world and thus fulfil yourself as well."

"But are you also saying that, as with Tom's boss, sex without love is pulling us backwards?" said Sam.

"Sex in human beings has always helped discover and prolong the warmth and wonder of true, creative love between people, but addiction and surfeit spoil it all. Everyone deserves a second chance, so Tom must tell this to his friend."

"But Merlin, this man is probably quite unaware of the changed image of God which you first taught us about in the Circus – Tayar's Ultra-Personal God – and the Cosmic and benevolent presence that joins us all up with each other. You called it Kristic radiation. Then, of course, there was the Universal power that you explained to us – how it draws us ahead into the clearer and fear-abated zones."

"Yes, but I predict Tom will still remember as much of my teaching as you, Sam, have obviously done!"

All this time Jonathan and Lucy had been keeping very quiet and were, seemingly, quite embarrassed by the current conversation. Jonathan was playing with a model rowing boat which he had bought at the tourist section of the little shop

(Y Siop) next to the Gegin Fawr in Aberdaron. Lucy had with her the model lighthouse that she had chosen from the memorabilia there.

“Now, you two,” boomed Merlin, changing the subject as he addressed the younger Cybernauts. “Wake up! For it’s time to deal with your Templar-Crusaders and the knightly romances which have been passed down from the Fifth Century. Your knight might have been genuine, but I’m afraid that many of them by then were vain, callous and hypocritical. It was still a brutal age. The Normans needed to bolster up their popularity and took over the high ideals of the first fabled Christian reign of Arthur and his Round Table. Like all good stories, and legends founded on fact, they are set in the subconscious and must be told and finished intact. The pretence to chivalry and honour was common, but often unreal. Sorry about this.”

“Well, your Ruth seemed to like Sir Edmond, anyway,” grumbled Jonathan.

“Yes, my boy, you’re right. Sir Edmond was, I’m sure, genuine, and I want you all to understand the feelings in Europe after the Crusades. There was such shame and sense of loss, not being able to win back Jerusalem, that they transferred it in their minds to an idealistic New Jerusalem. Here they celebrated it in songs and poems. This famed example from his poem “Milton” which follows, is still sung today:

*‘And did those feet in ancient time
Walk upon England’s mountains green?
And was the holy Lamb of God
On England’s pleasant pastures seen?
And did the Countenance Divine
Shine forth upon our clouded hills?
And was Jerusalem builded here
Among those dark Satanic Mills?’*

*I will not cease from Mental Fight,
Nor shall my Sword sleep in my hand
Till we have built Jerusalem
In England's green and pleasant land.'*

“My William wrote that,” continued Merlin, “and I rate him as a herald and precursor to your Tayar/Galahad. I was with him when he was writing his long poem, ‘The Song of Jerusalem.’ It was at the time of the Napoleonic wars, but even then the content and meaning of his work had much affinity to that of Tayar’s 200 years later. I’ll give you some instances of this:

*‘Man is adjoin’d to Man by his Emanative portion
Who is Jerusalem in every individual Man...’*

“And:

*‘When souls mingle & join thro’ all the fibres of
Brotherhood
Can there be any secret joy on Earth greater than
this?’*

“And also:

*‘Let none... roam the stars in quest of God, who sees
Him not in Man.’*

“And:

*‘I am not a God afar off, I am a Brother and Friend.
In your bosom I reside and you reside in me.’* (From his poem “Jerusalem”.)

“Now, compare these concepts with the following mixture of extracts from Tayar’s work which seem to echo the former ones:

'The interaction of souls would be incomprehensible if some 'aura' did not extend from one to the other – something proper to each one and common to all.'

'We begin to discover in each other not merely the elements of one and the same thing but of a single spirit in search of itself.'

“And in another context Tayar assures you that nothing is so precious as the part of you which is in other people and the part of others which is in you. Surely this links it to Blake’s ‘Jerusalem’ in everyone? The link between the English seer and the French Jesuit is strong.”

“The ‘New Jerusalem’ idea seems a long way off, with all the present TV and teenage violence in our not so pleasant land. Are they just birth-pangs?” asked Gilly.

“It’s early days in our ‘Other Country’ time. When the evolutionary clock begins to register an increase in unity, time will accelerate, and a new life will dawn. It’s all a matter of faith and hope in your newly-lit storyline, with its cosmic proportions... I shall now arrange with Spriggy for you to obtain the new KristOmega files from my secret venue in Limerick – but for now, my friends, *Bon Voyage!*”

FIVE

THE RETURN OF THE SPRITE

One afternoon, in the month of May the following year, our four Merlinauts were sitting watching television. They were on their own in the house and they were enjoying a BBC ‘Blue Peter’ programme. It was showing pictures of very large trees, such as chestnut and beech, in their fresh spring foliage – the chestnut with its full quota of candle-like flowers.

As Gilly gazed at these magnificent specimens she realised that in the last few days she had been experiencing exceptional joy and wonder while noticing these things around her home in the Irish countryside. She had been newly amazed at the yearly miracle of the power that drove the life-giving water and nutrient up to the furthest twig and tiniest leaf, all from the distant earth below. Today she felt the same thrill as she watched the TV.

Then, quite suddenly, the other three heard a slightly squeaky voice coming from her direction, which Sam and Lucy instantly remembered as Spriggy. Gilly, looking surprised at first, was soon sitting back calmly in her chair with her lips unmoving.

“Hullo again,” was the greeting from the strange little voice. “Merlin has got a new job for me, my dear playmates.”

“Which is?” questioned Sam, after a pause to recover himself.

“Well, it’s the new K Files, you know. I helped him to make them some time ago, actually,” admitted Spriggy, a little less boastfully. “I just did what he asked me to, and now its me speaking to you from my memory.”

“You must be Spriggy, and you seem to have a fantastic memory,” butted in Jonathan with genuine amazement. “They told me about you!”

“Hmm-hmm...” muttered Spriggy. “Thankyou, boy, but none of you others need worry after my dubious record, because my master will be listening and if I get anything wrong, it will still come out right for you. I didn’t really want to do this, at first,” complained Merlin’s usually eager helper, “because we are going to Bardsey Island where there are no trees. I was told that the few little saplings that manage to struggle out of the ground from the ancient seeds deposited there during the warmer climate in Roman times are torn to bits by the fierce winds. I knew I would grieve for them.”

“So why did you take it on in the end?” ventured Lucy.

“Well, my crafty Mage told me about the one old Apple tree that still lives there, sheltered behind a small croft-like dwelling. No-one knows what strange species it is and I’ll be fascinated to converse with its sprites.”

“So tell us Spriggy, what now are our first instructions?”

“Right – here goes... Tomorrow we are going to that little CD and cassette store in Limerick where you went before and where someone named Claude will again be waiting for you – I hope you remember the way. Merlin was sure you would.”

“Oh dear,” complained Sam. “I hope so too. I’ve passed that area of the town many times since but could never seem to find that small, rather dingy side street, let alone the same store.”

“It will be there tomorrow,” pronounced Spriggy in a rather mysterious tone of voice. “There, you’ll be given K Files Two

and Three which will come with a small package of equipment. I'll tell you more about it on your return. Until then, I'll shut up and give my voice a welcome break."

Gilly got up and smiled at the others. Then, in her usual voice she said:

"It's good having my sprite back with me. I've had the feeling for days that he had returned as Merlin promised. I heard all he said to us."

They gathered round her in high spirits – feeling pleasantly excited.

It was the next Saturday afternoon. Sam and Gilly had made a successful visit to town and, as Spriggy had promised, managed to find the mysterious disc store quite easily. The tall grey-haired man had welcomed them and presented them with the two CD Roms together with the small bundle of equipment that Spriggy had told them about. They had bussed home, each holding the discs in turn. Now the four were alone again with Dad's computer. As Sam began opening the package Jonathan tried, impatiently, to pull out one of the fine lengths of cord – but Spriggy sprang back into action and Gilly relaxed into her seat.

"Hold on, you lot," came the piping little voice. "Be very careful with those – they're very special. Samuel, give the four of the cords out and then put them round your waists, under your clothes, and secure them firmly."

"Shall we do it now?" said Jonathan with his usual eagerness.

"No, not yet, for I've more to explain to you all," cautioned the sprite in an important tone of voice.

"I'll bet that almost 'billions of bits a second', as Arthur C Clarke once put it, will flash through Merlin's circuits for this programme. I remember when I was nine or ten years old being intrigued when I heard an older boy talking about the sort of computer speed forecast by Clarke for year 2010."

"What are 'bits'?" questioned Jonathan, a bit irritably. "And who is Arthur C Clarke?"

"They're computing units of information. Arthur C Clarke

is a famous writer of science-fiction. I'll lend you one of his books sometime – it's about a visit to Mars. You'll then be hooked as well!"

"But first, we're going to Bardsey Island," Jonathan prompted Sam.

"Now down to business, playmates," continued Spriggy. "I'm afraid you will only have me to talk to over there, apart from Merlin of course. At this stage, you see, my Master has not been able to scan the few residents or visitors on the island without their permission, nor had he enough advanced gear. He has, though, been able to take their vitally needed data, and process some of the wild life, which will come alive for you. It was possible to do this at the bird observatory building while they were ringing birds – especially, he told me, a rare specimen which he called the Bird of Bardsey."

"What was its proper name," asked Sam with growing interest.

"Well, it was such a queer one that Merlin said I could pronounce it as 'Chuff'. The real name was spelt as clough – Welsh, I expect... Oh, yes, and Merlin managed to get a few sheep 'on-line' during shearing time last year."

"Could anyone who wanted be processed in this way in the future, and enter into Cyberland?" asked Lucy, feeling it to be a momentous possibility.

"Yes, I suppose so," answered Spriggy after a moment's silence. "Even shortly after death, if desired, and if the essential equipment were available. Merlin was talking to me once about how fond humans become, when they are older, of their outer and visible body parts – even when these cause pain and do not work so well. They are warmly familiar and people view with horror the thought of these things rotting away. Merlin and I both find this strange, because we know that its these bodily shapes and patterns, both inner and outer, which have made each person their real selves and are still part of them – intelligent beings – which, like us, cannot die."

“My goodness, Spriggy!” gasped Sam. “*So* solemn, but Lucy did ask for it.”

“Merlin will tell you more about this when you’re ready for it,” said the subdued sprite, but I can, sometimes, be a bit phil... os... ical...”

“Philosophical – that’s the word you want,” said Sam. “But tell me this: When Merlin obtained the crucial DNA of Gilly, Lucy and me (given very willingly, I should add) while we were in Merlin’s room in the Circus, Jonathan wasn’t with us in Bath. So how come he is able to join us on today’s trip?”

“Ah! That was before your ‘Time Travel’ adventures, I remember,” replied Spriggy. “My master dealt with all that earlier. He obtained the necessary data before the boy enacted his ‘walking-dream’ episode... Don’t you remember – crossing that bridge with Galahad on the horse called Starlight. Merlin had Jonathan’s willing subconscious consent before in a vivid dream. Later, the Mage had set up, magically, an extra changing cubicle within the swimming Baths where Jonathan went. Your young brother, curious as ever, chose to use it and was duly scanned!”

This same Jonathan, now two years older, had meanwhile been able to fix his cord correctly and was raring to go, in spite of being mildly interested in what Spriggy was saying. He only vaguely remembered that bridge with the horrid gap at the top, so miraculously crossed and repaired. Now he kept the adventure shrouded with mystery like a half-remembered dream.

Sam now adjusted his own cord and speeded up the girls with theirs – listening at the same time to one last instruction from their very excited sprite.

“Hell’s bells!” spluttered Spriggy. “I nearly forgot. You’ve been given a special combination of numbers from those on your father’s computer. I’ll repeat them slowly a few times and give you time to learn them by heart. They are a verbal SOS rescue connection to the computer and if any of you get into trouble in Cyberland you only have to voice these numbers and an appropriate plan, from the disc, will be activated.”

“But what about the belts?” enquired Sam. “What are they for?”

“Oh! Didn’t I tell you?” said Spriggy apologetically. “Do you see the shiny button on each of them? Well, if at any time you wanted to opt out of Merlin’s Programme – if, for instance, you were frightened or didn’t like what you saw – you could press this button and you would instantly be back in your computer room. You would be back on Earth territory, in present time.”

“I should think it very unlikely,” said Lucy, “that either of us would want to leave our programme before it was finished. Merlin often quoted to us this saying of Tayar’s: ‘The future is more beautiful than all the pasts’. So what have we to fear?”

“Right. Well spoken Lucy,” conceded Spriggy. “Let’s get on now before Jonathan explodes! I’ll leave you all to it then.”

Our four Cybernauts sat down in front of the TV screen and Sam inserted Merlin’s KristOmega combined Files number Two and Three into the video slot.

SIX

BARDSEY WALKABOUT

As the youngsters focussed their eyes onto the large family TV screen there appeared a picture of Bardsey Island, taken, they guessed, from a helicopter. It was very detailed, with the mountain, plain and promontory depicted in different colours.

As they looked they felt themselves being drawn into the picture, until suddenly they found themselves actually standing in front of the lighthouse at the far end of the island.

Gilly remembered the words of Merlin, which Spriggy had repeated to them before they had entered the huge brain model in the second part of K. Files number One. He had assured them that though they were no longer outside Cyberspace working their computers, they were still their real selves, moving, seeing, thinking and speaking at will within a different dimension.

“You will be your Cyberselves in Cyberland 2050 and already almost independent of your physical bodies, but still in contact with them,” Spriggy had told them. “That is, until their death, when they become ‘all in one’ in Cyberland.

Jonathan was the first to stir after the initial impact. He was

prodding the soil with his feet and noticing its make-up. He broke the silence:

“What are all these tiny bits and pieces on the ground around here,” he said, in puzzled tones.

“I’ll bet they are the little bones of all the birds and moths that batter their bodies to death here every night in a longing to join themselves to the great light,” answered Lucy, finding her voice again. “I’ve heard about their attraction to it – a sort of heart-break house for them.”

As they all looked down, the voice of Spriggy rang out, seeming much clearer in this rarefied atmosphere. Gilly appeared to be unaffected.

“Yes, playmates, we’re here at last. Don’t worry too much about the poor but rather stupid little casualties around your feet. You’ll soon be in the vicinity of much larger bones – underground. Bones can come to life, you know,” went on the sprite in a somewhat playful manner.

“Stop it, Spriggy – now you’re frightening me again,” complained Lucy.

“Hold on. Only joking,” he countered. “But anything is possible here.”

As they all regained their composure they turned around and looked up at the red and white structure towering above them.

“I read somewhere that this was the tallest square-sided lighthouse in Britain,” said Sam.

“That may be so, Sam, but now we’ve got a lot to do,” remarked Spriggy rather officiously. “So, come on you lot and start along the track ahead of you leading to the heart of the island.”

The four adventurers got going straight away, and as they walked along the main track (the only one on the island) they began to see and hear many beautiful things around them – a covering of purple heather, some tall fox-gloves and a few yellow clumps of birdsfoot trefoil. When they crossed the narrow piece of land and were near to the coast, they also noticed tufts of bright pink thrift with butterflies on it poking

out between the rocks and from an old stone wall. As they passed they heard the moaning noises of a few grey seals as they lay basking in the sun. It was interspersed with the piercing call of an oystercatcher.

At one stage they thought they saw what must have been a Manx Shearwater flying over them with its huge wingspan. Gilly was excited.

“I know about those,” she shouted against the stiff breeze. “They’ve spent the winter in South America and now they build little burrows here on the banks of the island and only come ashore at night.”

“We haven’t seen a Chuff yet,” said Jonathan, doubtfully.

“You will,” Spriggy assured him smugly.

All these specimens of the natural riches of the island were shown up to their best advantage by the sun in the near perfect weather. This thought made Sam wonder about the regulation of climate and seasons in Cyberspace.

“How does Merlin organise the weather here?” he asked Spriggy.

“It’s all due to the genie of human perseverance and thirst for knowledge, as the Mage would call it,” Spriggy responded, endorsing his master’s abilities.

“He’d make a better job of his predictions, I bet, than our TV weather man!” quipped Jonathan.

Continuing along the route the party came to Cafn – the small harbour inlet where all the pilgrims had once landed. Mostly, they’d embarked from Porth Meudly which lay just over the hill from Aberdaron. Now the tourists, modern pilgrims and retreat-seekers still land here, though embarking from different places, and landing on a very up-to-date jetty from a closed and powerful boat. Lambs were shipped across from Cafn for auction on the mainland, but were no longer bundled into open boats. Sam and Gilly stood picturing the past. The others were impatient to get on.

Soon, after they’d left Cafn, Spriggy diverted them off the main route on to a dead-end cart track to the right of them.



Now, half way along this by-way, which led to some houses, there was a very badly bent-over hawthorn tree. It was growing out of a grassy bank bordering a field. There were two of these left on the island but one had recently died. It was the only other tree now living here except for the old apple-tree that Merlin told Spriggy about. At the moment it was heavy with May blossom and it was said that the hawthorn radiated qualities of health, growth and fulfilment at this time. It was also believed that the blossom helped prayers to reach heaven, in spite of, or because of, the legend that Christ's crown of thorns was made from hawthorn twigs.

As the four approached the old tree, huge drops of rain were plopping around it. The sun had gone in and the sky had darkened behind the tree which now looked more mysterious and magical than ever.

"I'm thinking that Merlin has arranged an appropriately seasonal thunderstorm for us," declared Sam as they stopped in their tracks.

"I remember reading that in the Celtic tradition, hawthorns protect against storms and lightning," said Gilly. "A safe haven perhaps?"

"Come on," called out Spriggy, rather shrilly. "We can all squeeze in under there for a few minutes, and I could try to coax out some secrets from the remaining sprites in this old tree."

The four of them crouched under the blossom while the short storm passed over, but they still got a bit damp from the drips that fell on them from the wet May flowers.

Spriggy was silent, but when the rain and thunder stopped, he spoke out in a very subdued and awe-struck voice. The tree spirits, he reported, had appeared very excited at first:

"They were feeling the strong presence of my Master's spirit on their island again after many years."

"Had Merlin been here before then – in the flesh?" asked Lucy urgently.

"Yes," replied Spriggy. "He had been staying in the old glass castle with Morgana Le Fey and her nine Druid sisters.

The legend was that he had come here to the Holy Island after he'd woken from his trance in the enchanted woods of Broceliande in Brittany – now part of France, they say.”

“That’s where our Mage was put under a spell by his girlfriend, Vivien,” burst out Gilly. “It happened, actually, under a hawthorn tree – he was imprisoned down among its roots for centuries, the old story goes.”

“That’s right,” squealed Spriggy in delight. “Now here’s the secret... He had brought with him, helped by a well-met holyman and other bards from Arthur’s Britain, some treasures and relics. These included a very important one, which, it was rumoured, he spent great pains to hide on this island. And... wait for it – no-one has ever found it, though many have tried.”

“How long did he stay here?” Lucy questioned. “And how did the Sprites know about all this?”

“The Mage had wanted to come here in the first place,” explained Spriggy. “But as he got older he began to feel homesick for his magical woodland haunts. He returned to Broceliande after a year and perhaps his body was buried there. It’s all real knowledge, you see, because Merlin told me how this sort of ‘info’ would be passed on from the spirits of older trees – something about the ‘species memory resonance’ he said, and he promised to explain it to us later.”

“Didn’t they give you any hints about where to look for this special treasure?” persisted Jonathan.

“They didn’t know,” was the answer. “But they *did* say that the only other sprites who might have some ideas on this subject were those who inhabited the oldest, and only other tree on the island... the crab-apple tree against the outside wall of the one completely unchanged house – Carreg Bach.”

“Come on then, let’s get cracking,” proclaimed the boy, leading them out onto the track.

“Hang on,” cautioned Sam. “First we should see where this roadway leads to.”

“Yes,” agreed Spriggy. “I think there *is* something more for us along here.”

Within a short distance they came to two farmhouses. Only one, Ty Pellaf, was still being used as a farm and it was the home of the island's shepherd. He himself was nowhere to be seen. In the front garden, however, they saw a woolly, half-grown lamb looking through the gate. The girls rushed over to pet it and talk to it.

"Oh, of course!" remembered their guide, rather belatedly. "That's one of the sheep family that the Mage managed to reconstruct, as it were. It was an orphan whose mother had died, and the shepherd hand-reared and kept it. It's a male lamb, I was told, and lucky not to be sent to market on the mainland with the others. Thinking back, I was also told we must watch all the sheep carefully."

As the four made to move off – Gilly and Lucy with some reluctance – the lamb started bleating and in its disappointment threw itself at the gate with such force that the gate flew open. The lamb started to follow them.

"Merlin didn't say anything about taking an animal with us," complained Spriggy doubtfully.

"Let him come – it won't hurt," Said Gilly reassuringly. So they started back to the main track with the lamb in tow.

"I shall call him Ramkin," stated Lucy as they walked along.

On passing the hawthorn tree again they saw it was now bathed in sunshine and looked wonderful. Gilly was reminded of things she had read about Celtic folklore and she made a suggestion:

"They used to dance round hawthorn trees at the season of 'Beltane' which was the time of the spring solstice, so couldn't we do the same?"

"Why not?" The joyful voice of their tree-sprite gave the answer. So they held hands and had a little dance in front of the May tree. Ramkin, catching the spirit of it all, performed spectacular frolics around them.

Back on the main route they continued along it with their borrowed pet gambolling beside them. This happy lamb would

never have to be bundled into a crowded boat – a saleable export from the quayside they had lately passed.

After the old school building (no pupils now) they came to Cristin, the bird and field observatory where the wildlife of the island was ringed, tagged and identified. And a short way on they found themselves at last outside Carreg Bach. The gate of the little house was open and there was no-one around. The present occupant worked at the observatory.

In a state of suppressed excitement the youngsters walked in through the gap in the wall and round to the sheltered side of the old building. There they saw a spreading shrub-sized crab-apple tree. It even had a few small blossoms at the ends of its gnarled branches.

They all stood looking at this in great awe – even Ramkin seemed rooted to the ground – and there was silence for a while. Then Spriggy spoke:

“These ancient spirits are glad to feel us around them,” said the Sprite in a grave and muted voice. “They’d been expecting some quite special visitors today, since Merlin aroused them. They want to communicate some important knowledge – if you listen very hard now, you might hear something.”

The four strained their ears in eager anticipation and Ramkin looked strangely interested. They began to hear a sad moaning whisper, like a breeze sighing through the leaves of the tree. They could pick out these words:

“Arthur was here – was here – was here.” The words formed in the heads of the listeners, then carried on with a surprising sequel.

“Passing by like a shadow – a shadow – a shadow of himself – once the king – the king the king – the king... A shadow – oo – oo – oow.” The whisper trailed off and the youngsters looked at each other incredulously.

“What do they mean?” Gilly said, appealing to her own sprite.

“They seem to think,” began Spriggy, attempting an answer after more silence, “that Morgan Le Fay and her sisters did a

botched and unfinished job on Arthur's terrible wounds, and that afterwards he was never the same and only half the man he once was. They sensed Arthur wandering around the Island, always searching for something, but he'd forgotten what he was searching for."

"Did they tell you where to look for the treasure?" asked Jonathan, unable to contain himself any longer. Silence again.

"I've asked," said Spriggy with slight annoyance. Then relenting a little, he admitted that he'd been given some hints.

"Their ancestors had promised the Mage that they'd keep it a secret, but now they've been given permission to say a bit more. We must look for a pathway to the east of the Abbey ruins – one that passes a fresh water spring and leads up to the slopes of the mountain ridge. There are caves, but we must watch the sheep, they insisted."

"We can't talk to sheep," grumbled Jonathan.

"Perhaps Ramkin can!" joked Lucy. "He's bleating again now. You never know, he may be able to find out something from other sheep."

"Anyway," finished Spriggy. "That's all they're saying and they've closed contact with me now... Let's go."

Despondently they moved away and back onto the track, Spriggy still very vocal.

"They know about these things," he assured them. "Merlin told me that this special species here probably came from somewhere in the East, just as the Glastonbury Thorn came with Joseph of Arimathea from the Holy land.

"I did read that there was a stone slab dug up here with a strange cross incised on it in a classical style – Greek or Roman," said Sam, who was the history buff of the group. "After all, these Romans did introduce the wild Rose into Britain. They thought that the hips from this hedgerow tree reduced the risk of rabies – hence 'Dog' rose."

Now they came to the ruins of the old Abbey tower and the houses nearby which were built in the 19th century by Lord Newborough. They walked round the presumed area of the

ancient graveyard dominated by the proudly erected Celtic cross, put in place at the same time.

They stood thoughtfully at this spot wondering how many revered Holy men had been buried there – the twenty thousand figure probably being only a nominal one and meaning just ‘a great many’.

“I remember something else,” said Sam, coming out again with odd bits of background knowledge he’d picked up. “While they were digging the foundations of the new houses, they were amazed at the hundreds of bones they disturbed. They were all male – no women or children.”

“Most of them had been bishops, abbots or founders of monasteries, like St. Deniol,” said Spriggy. “Merlin told me there were hermits too. The teeth of Elgar, the hermit, were removed and taken to the Cathedral at Landaff as a holy relic of the man they’d once hero-worshipped, and which now seemed so precious.”

“They must have been able to identify each grave,” marvelled Gilly.

“Until they lost most records,” conjectured Sam. “When they had to flee for their lives after raids by Vikings and pirates. They still knew, though, where to find the body of St. Dyfrig when they dug it up and re-buried it down at Landaff to join those teeth. These things would attract many pilgrims, they hoped, to the new site. Famous bodies and relics were very popular at that time.”

“That was an awful thing to do,” exclaimed their horrified sprite. “Those people who had longed to be buried here with all the other saints were sure they would wake together to be received by their creator. I heard the story that St. Lleuddad, of St. Mary’s Abbey on Bardsey, had requested the Almighty that no-one buried there would go to hell. It was widely believed that this request was granted.”

“Even today people can arrange to have their ashes brought over here to rest in peace,” commented Lucy. “It’s weird!”

“They’d probably be able to do some ‘profiling’ on some

of these old skulls any time now so we could see, roughly, what they looked like. If they did some DNA tests as well, some health problems might be shown up.”

“But their spirits will be somewhere else,” said Gilly consolingly.

“Most of the time!” added Jonathan, in mischievous tones.

“No ghosts, I hope... around here,” Lucy whispered, looking uneasy.

“Come on!” scorned Jonathan. “It would be really exciting – spooky, too.”

“I know you like being freaked out,” replied Lucy. “But I don’t!”

“Take no notice of him, Luce,” snapped Gilly dismissively. “Anyway you can be thankful there are no snakes, frogs or bees on Bardsey.”

After this, Jonathan took off in a huff, saying he was going to find the path to the caves that Spriggy had mentioned. Ramkin, having lifted his head from the very green grass he’d been grazing, saw him go and followed after him at a brisk trot.

SEVEN

RESCUE AND A CHANCE DISCOVERY

By the time our other three Cybernauts had passed the nineteenth century chapel and found the footpath, Jonathan was nowhere to be seen. On the new signpost pointing to the caves, they had read that this was the old mountain track. It went along the lower heights of Mynydd Enlli – Bardsey’s magic mountain. It wasn’t long before they came to the first cave and found boy and lamb inside. Jonathan was feeling around all the nooks and crannies, as many hopefuls had done before, looking for hidden treasure.

“Give it a break, Jonathan,” said Gilly in an elder sisterly way. “And don’t go off on your own again. We must all stick together.”

Spriggy then broke out, regaling them with stories about Elgar the hermit.

“Elgar may have lived in this cave for a while, you know,” the voice of the sprite sounding hollow, and resounded around the cave. He told them how the legend said that a pair of Gulls with their large wings had swooped overhead and dropped him

some eels at the mouth of the cave when he was starving. “Merlin remembers that Elgar hated the taste of eels, but he downed them all... to the glory of God, I presume!”

When they had persuaded Jonathan there was nothing more to see in the cave, they moved on up the path towards the next one. On the way they noticed several plots with the foundations of the little huts once used by the hermits and Holy Fathers for isolation and mediation.

As soon as they reached and entered the second cave they knew this one was different. There was a cold and oppressive feel about it. In fact, after following them in, Ramkin immediately turned and dashed straight out again.

“Merlin thinks this is probably the place where Arthur died,” explained Spriggy. “He’s worked it out that Morgana must have had his body secretly buried, but given it many imaginary grave-sites around the whole of Western Britain. She invested them all with a background of local history and legend.”

“I think we should get out of here,” said Sam, leading the way back into the fresh air.

As their path got steeper and rockier, the youngsters slowed down a bit. Jonathan was still a little ahead of them, with Ramkin at his heels. The others noticed that the lamb seemed to be finding the terrain more difficult than most free-roaming sheep. They realized that he, unlike the others, had had no practise in climbing while confined to the shepherd’s garden.

Then, as Jonathan negotiated a rather twisty turn in the footpath, he heard a loud bleat from Ramkin. Looking round saw that the lamb had lost his footing and was slithering over the path-side. There was an almost vertical rock face below them. Jonathan dashed to stop him falling and grabbed hold of a handful of wool – but it was too late. The boy found himself following Ramkin down the rock face.

The others watched in horror, but when they got to the spot and looked over, they were very relieved to see the pair standing precariously on a grassy ledge below, having quickly

managed to regain their feet. They appeared not to have sustained any serious injuries. The lamb was quivering in panic though, and Jonathan was holding on to it. He called up to the others.

“We can’t get up to you – and I’ve forgotten the emergency numbers,” he admitted as he looked at the worried faces peering down at him.

It’s OK, Jonny,” replied Sam. “I know the combination – I’ve written it on the palm of my hand. You’ll both be all right.”

Very soon after Sam and the other two had called aloud the crucial numbers, they heard a whooshing sound overhead. Then, an extraordinary looking machine appeared, hovering above the stranded couple. It was certainly not like a helicopter nor like any other aircraft they had ever seen before. There were gasps of amazement from the onlookers.

This shiny, oblong body, looking more like a spacecraft than a rescue vehicle, lowered itself into position level with the nervous pair and slid out a low-fenced platform. The unfenced end clamped onto their narrow, grassy ledge. Jonathan and Ramkin walked gratefully on to it and were lifted slowly to safety. The craft disappeared as suddenly as it had arrived.

“That was mind-blowing,” declared our ten year-old with great gusto, and the quickly-recovered lamb did a hop and skip on the spot.

“Guess what I glimpsed on the way up?” said Jonathan, addressing the welcoming party. “Another cave! It was further down the slope, to the left of our ledge.”

“Exciting,” agreed Sam. “And hidden from this path. It’s probably inaccessible though.”

“But I could just make out a fairly overgrown little track which must branch off from the main one somewhere a bit further along from here. Come on, let’s look for it!”

Intrigued, they all started off again along the route which now began to incline downwards.

They kept along the track till they came to the corner where

Jonathan thought they'd find the little path he'd seen branching off the main one. Sure enough, partly hidden by undergrowth, they discovered a sort of path, which they managed to follow. It seemed to double back from the other one and descend quite steeply. Though they had to keep brushing away the covering grasses, they followed it down as best they could.

Finally they reached a grass-topped knoll. To their surprise, they saw three sheep jump up onto it, stand stock still, and stare fixedly at them and then at something else. Our walkers noticed a few sheep grazing nearby earlier on, but *they* had completely ignored them.

As the youngsters groped their way around the knoll (the path having spread out confusingly) Ramkin suddenly became very uneasy and ended by running nervously back up the path, then round onto the knoll with the other unmoving sheep. Taking his place beside them, he too stared intensely down at his new friends. They remembered Spriggy's admonishment – watch the sheep!

"Perhaps," speculated Sam, "it's all to do with what scientists now call 'Morphic Resonance' – species memory banks, or something. The TV programme..."

"Anyway," interrupted Jonathan. "Ramkin has been programmed as well." Then, while they were still looking up, a bird flew low across them. It was black, and had widely-spread wings. It turned and swooped down, perching precariously on a nearby rock. With wings still raised, it uttered its cry of alarm.

"It's a Chuff!" confirmed Gilly. "Look at its blood-red beak and legs. I've seen one or two before, in Ireland, but they're quite rare."

"It's the Bardsey bird," said Jonathan. "We must be really near the cave."

The handsome, gentle crow cocked its head and, round-eyed, regarded them. So – after looking at each other, partly in wonderment and partly in disbelief, the searchers assessed the rocky outcrop stretched across their path, and decided they

could clamber over it. This they did with unexpected ease and 'Lo and behold' there they saw the unassuming but tell-tale mouth of a cave which, half-hidden from the ground, had been easy for Jonathan to see from above.

EIGHT

THE CAVE

Entering through the rather narrow entrance to this mysterious cave, our Cybnauts were surprised to discover that it was much larger inside than they had imagined. Standing still for a while they began to experience the sort of feeling one often has in old churches or places of prayer. When their eyes grew more accustomed to the place, they noticed the faded outline of a naked man painted on a flat part of the back wall. It was right opposite the entrance so that the light fell onto it.

Though this figure was crudely depicted, it still reminded Gilly of a well-known picture by William Blake of an idealized man, and which she named aloud as "Glad Day". As she looked at it, the others, following Jonathan's example, were already exploring the cave. Sam had taken out his little torch.

"Hey, Jonny," he called after a while. "I need some help here. I can feel something, but my hand's too big to stick in any further."

"Coming!" replied Jonathan gleefully, stumbling to Sam's corner.

Sam had come across a little alcove, and just above it, in the beam of his torch, he'd made out the shape of a heart

surrounded by many rather short lines radiating from it. The colour, still discernable, was a deep crimson. Feeling under the ledge he had felt the hard edges of some object, but when he tried to dislodge it and pull it out he couldn't.

Jonathan, with smaller hands, was able to wriggle it about, and he eventually drew it out with a shout of triumph. As he held it up, though, their spirits dropped. It was a well-worn old chalice with a triangular piece missing from the rim. It was fashioned out of a very hard sort of material and there was no colour or glaze left on its surface.

"Not exactly a crown jewel!" Jonathan exclaimed sarcastically and with an air of restrained disappointment.

After they had all examined it and Gilly had cleaned it up a bit with some tissues, Sam stuffed it into the pocket of his anorak, which he had donned for warmth in the first cave. The relic was quite small.

As the rather downcast youngsters stood around puzzling over the meaning of their find and of the two designs on the rock face – Sam had shown them the crimson heart – the jaunty voice of Spriggy came through again:

"Cheer up, playmates, you're still on track for your adventure."

"You've been very quiet lately, Spriggy," said Lucy, almost resentfully.

"Yes, Merlin wanted you to find this cave all on your own," explained the sprite. "Except of course for the sheep and the special bird."

"But we wouldn't have found it unless I'd had the fall with Ramkin – would we?" contested Jonathan.

"Ah, but you would have found it in the end. You didn't *have* to fall," corrected their guide. "My Master has what he calls, contingency planning. This fits in with your free will to follow your whims and desires on this island. Anyway get ready now for another big surprise..." And the next moment the voice of Merlin, just as they'd heard it back at the Circus in Bath, boomed out again, echoing around the cave.

“Do not grieve over the broken cup, my dear Cybernauts,” he said. “I spent much time in this cave and hid this relic here long, long ago. I dreamt it would be found one day by some young people like you in the next millennium. You were wondering about the figure and the heart...” Merlin paused to give time for the youngsters to recover from their initial shock.

“Yes, the weird man on the wall,” said Sam, regaining his composure. “What does it mean? And the dull, unromantic chalice?”

“I’ll start with riddle no.1: You were near the mark, Gillian, referring to My William’s transfigured ‘Glad Day’ masterpiece – I heard you speak those words. I’m hoping your world will now wake up to that day. With its coming of age in the 21st Century, you will surely be forgetting the Gods above the skies and seeking a God within the human heart.” Pausing again, the Mage asked if they would bear with him while he tried to explain – with help from his William.

“You’ll find a smooth ledge of rock on the wall to the right of you, where I often used to sit. You must be tired after your walkabout. Try it,” he said.

“It’s rather cold,” ventured Jonathan, after they’d all squeezed into a sitting position on the ledge. “I knew I shouldn’t have worn my shorts!”

“Well, it might be better on the floor, I suppose.” The voice sounded amused, but understanding. “You see, I was wearing thick robes when I was last here 1500 years ago! When you’re settled then, I can begin.”

“Are you *really* a Time Lord?” said Jonathan, after some fidgety moments.

“You could say that, I suppose,” replied the Mage. “Space-Time is only useful to me when I’m on Earth which, as I’ve often told the others, I visit about every 200 years. This cave is still familiar to me though. Yes, I can manipulate your Time or shift it when needs be. This is my ninth visit to your planet and a very important one. My last visit was when I lived with my William for a while, when he was painting, and writing

his best poems. He was a true prophet and I shall now mention some more of the treasures he left you.”

The youngsters were silent now and waiting expectantly.

“Well, for a start, William wrote about the Giant ‘Albion’ who was the spiritual form of the old Britannia and who had just awoken from a very bad dream of despair and disintegration.

“He saw a vision of Jesus as the good shepherd standing before him, and he knew it was the Lord, the divine and universal humanity. His form was that of a man and it was in the likeness of Los – William’s poetic champion of the imagination, the eternal prophet. They then conversed as man to man in ages of eternity. Anyhow, my Fellow Bard had all this in mind when he wrote:

*‘God appears, and God is light
To those poor souls who dwell in night,
But does a human form display
To those who dwell in realms of day.’*

“That says it clearly enough, don’t you think?”

“Well, he still uses rather old fashioned wording,” disputed Sam.

“I suppose so, but I now come to your Tayar, who William foreshadowed, and who deals with the phenomenon of Man for the twentieth century – and *he* says that you are all co-creators with God – that you are elements and not spectators to what goes on in the world. He brings to our attention the facts known to us today about our bodies, and connects them to a wonderful future. Things like the discovery that our genes are universal in themselves with enough coded information to re-invent the world. Then there’s his idea that each of us is a brain cell in the world’s nervous system and merged in the consciousness of God... This is where you should seek your treasure, my young friends.”

“It’s not the kind of treasure hunt I had in mind!” complained Jonathan.

“Take no notice of him, Merlin,” broke in Gilly anxiously. “He’s always like that – too young really. Actually, I thought it all very exciting. I did wonder though how it was that William Blake ‘foreshadowed’ Tayar.

“I will have a go at convincing you all... but first, relax. I didn’t think Jonathan was rude, you know – just boyish. I shall try to be simpler and not run away with myself. Anyhow, William *did* prepare the way for your Tayar/Galahad, for he presented or exposed his works of genius to the baffled eyes of the reticent and materialistic Englishmen and women of the time... at least to the few who bothered to make an effort to read him. But, my Cybernauts, ‘thoughts are things’ you see, and ‘ideas have wings’...”

“Spriggy said those words, Merlin, when we first met him,” recalled Lucy.

“Well remembered my dear friend. Now I’ve another verse of William’s:

*‘Tell me what is a thought? And of what substance is it
made?
Tell me what is a joy? And in what gardens do joys
grow?’*

The Mage mused on a while. “Yes, Spriggy learnt all that well,” he said.

“Can we have the answer to the second riddle now?” urged Sam politely.

“Ah, yes, of course. The heart design and the drinking vessel. Well, they suggest the possibility that Tayar’s risen Cosmic Christ is the very heart of the natural evolution of your world and that the old cup hidden underneath the ledge is the actual one that He used at His Last Supper.”

“Phew!” exclaimed Sam in awe, as he imagined his bulging pocket was becoming warm. “That’s a terrific statement. But this couldn’t be the Holy Grail.”

“No, Samuel. Don’t ‘freak out’ (to borrow an expression

from Lucy) for this is only your first clue to help you, as Merlinauts, in *your* search for the Grail! You must remember that beginnings are always weak and unspectacular – it’s what they *become* that is important.”

“Shall we find it here on the island then?” pestered Jonathan in his eagerness.

“You will learn where to look for it and may get a glimpse at the end of the day – you must have patience. The heart shape is red because all energy is in your blood which, when activated by a living faith, is sent coursing freely through your body. The heart of the Kristos sends Love, lighting up all things, right through to the smallest expressions of human love... The belief was, at that time, that Joseph of Arimathaea had caught some blood in this chalice from the wound of the crucified Christ.”

“But this is what Arthur’s knights were looking for,” said Gilly with obvious bewilderment and concern. “Do you mean that most of those men – the cream of the Round Table – were on a wild goose chase?”

“Not really, my dear Gillian. You see, they were setting off with very little idea of what they were looking for. They had seen this vision of the Grail in their great hall during a violent thunderstorm. The vessel came floating across the room in an almost blinding beam of sunlight. Then it disappeared, but while it passed by they stared in wonder at each other’s transformed faces, smelt an alluring perfume and saw on their plates their favourite foods. The experience had been powerful. They had a strong urge to go out and seek an answer to this phenomenon and the secret of its hidden contents. They also needed to prove themselves worthy of it by seeking hazardous ventures.”

“Instead of looking for the meaning within themselves. This is what you are saying, I suppose,” concluded Gilly in thoughtful mood.

“Of course,” agreed Merlin approvingly. “But, as you’ll remember, during the very last appearance of the Grail there

were some ghostly-looking maidens carrying the bleeding spear, the silver dish and the candlestick. Then came the Princess, who Percivale recognizes as his lost love, carrying the Holy Grail itself. And Galahad gets up and stops the procession. He takes his place in front of it until they reach the chapel at the top of the Grail Castle. There he heals the old king, with the Divine Hermit (perhaps from Bardsey!) at his side. Galahad now became Priest of the Grail.”

“Then Carbonek was freed,” added Gilly. “And the castle was no longer a mystery. Nor ever again set aside from the rest of the land – but was all joined up.”

“Where is Carbonek?” said Jonathan, beginning to feel a bit bored.

“It was the legendary term for the hallowed land of the Grail Castle where spiritual things were divorced from normality. Now, my young Cybernaut, we’ll see how a living Mythology can weave, as always, new stories around the old legends. Your Tayar/Galahad has done the same thing during this other Grail visit to Earth. He’s taken the past through to the future, perhaps to another Round Table Fellowship. You’ll have a few rather scary episodes ahead of you, but I’m sure you’ll think them quite ‘cool’... your words, I think!”

Merlin then reassured Lucy about his all-watchful presence on the island.

The voice was silent for a few minutes and the youngsters moved about restlessly, stretching their legs. They even had a look out of the cave mouth and were surprised to see that Ramkin was waiting, alone now, on the knoll.

“Don’t go yet, my friends,” came the voice again. “I’ve more to say to you, if you can settle for a bit longer. I *have* warmed the offending stones.”

“I wanted to ask you,” said Sam as he leaned back on the ledge. “Why were there only women in the Grail procession? I found that strange.”

“It portrays the feminine element in Celtic tradition, Samuel, which, linked to the Earth-mother image, comes out

strongly in early British Christianity. I've been remembering my first sojourn in this country in the time of Arthur's reign and the founding of the first Christian state. I had come from a Druid background and, as William says, 'they have a tradition that Man anciently contained in his mighty limbs all things in Heaven and Earth.' This was good, but they hadn't grasped the difference, as you now have, between supernatural superstition and the Paranormal and future-natural of today. This last just means that unusual happenings are merely beyond the scope of normal scientific explanation. So, everything to do with religion then was otherworldly and separated from ordinary life. A new Arthurian cycle would rectify that, and the feminine aspect is already repairing the imbalance that the church had between the sexes."

"That's the legend that Arthur will wake from his sleep one day, isn't it?" said Lucy. "Britain really is in great need now, I'd say."

The spirit of Arthur and his goodly band of men who stood for courage, chivalry and loyalty always sleeps buried beneath your country's nostalgic dreams. Who knows? He could return in some form. Perhaps in most unexpected ways! But Arthur was a broken man even before his fatal battle with Mordred, his misbegotten son. Arthur had found it hard to accept the occupation, by his own stepson, Galahad, whom he had barely known before, of the long-empty 'Perilous Seat' at the Round Table. Then, after the revealing of the Grail, Arthur had to accept the departure of the best of his knights from Camelot in the quest of the Holy Grail. Only three found what they were looking for and only Galahad was able to remove the cover and gaze into the 'cup'."

"But Sir Bors returned to King Arthur's Court to tell them what he had seen," related Gilly. "Didn't he?"

"He certainly did, and he brought a message of comfort to them from Galahad. Sir Percival went to rule a new land with the Grail Maiden, whom he married. Camelot was still divided within itself, and was fast breaking up."

“Like *our* country – The ‘Land of dope and glory’,” threw in Jonathan in mischievous frame of mind.

“Well, we’re to put the hope back into it very soon,” continued Merlin, his voice tinged with a hint of the new mystery to come. “There’s another crevice in this cave which all of you have missed! It’s right at the back and well hidden. It ends in a small, hole behind which is a large extension. In this space I’ve set up some 2050 techno-magic equipment, ready to demonstrate some future-natural faculties.”

The youngsters, regaining their full interest in the cave, found the crevice and, one by one, felt for the hole and pushed a finger into it. While so testing this discovery, they were suddenly surprised by a new voice coming from behind the wall and echoing round the cave. It sounded vigorous, enthusiastic and had a slight French accent. Then it as suddenly stopped.

“Yes, my Cybernauts, that was the actual voice of your Tayar,” said Merlin. “And it was a valid endorsement of his admittance into Cyberland, for it’s the only saved recording of his voice in existence.”

“Yet there were hundreds taken from people like Hitler,” remarked Sam.

“A good point... I acquired a copy of this old tape from its French keepers. Tayar was lecturing in America on the subject of some current research. Everyone’s speech has different energy patterns, you see, and I’ve worked on this tape, dissecting the voice quality – its vibrations, frequency and resonance, with its undertones of emotion. I can then use it in a special way.”

“When we were in Bath,” said Gilly, “you sometimes spoke to me about the history of the city, using an inner voice in my brain. Only I could hear it.”

“I did,” replied the mage. “Now your tree sprite has taken over and I’ve enhanced his voice so that your friends can hear him as well. You are gifted with natural powers of mediumship, my dear cybernaut – but now I wish to perform a short experiment with young Jonathan before you go out.”

“Why me?” said Jonathan with rising apprehension.

“Because you are the youngest and the most likely to get bored or impatient,” replied Merlin. “Now, listen carefully, boy. I want you to stand still in front of this crevice and think very hard about something you want to say.”

“What sort of thing?” queried Jonathan.

“Anything, as long as you really mean it... Then, we’ll all wait a few minutes for my advanced technology to pick it up.” Merlin paused, but soon there came back the slightly muted voice of Jonathan, like an echo from the other side of the crevice, repeating the boy’s mental statement:

“I’m a bit disappointed with the sort of magic we’ve been shown on this island, so far,” were the words, just as Jonathan had thought them.

“Mind transmission,” marvelled Sam. “And return audibility.”

“Thank you, Sam,” the Mage acknowledged approvingly. “You notice that your younger brother had been expecting cheap magical tricks and my real powers deal with natural wonders of which you are not yet aware. You will discover many of them in the next fifty years – the futurenatural... But thank you also, Jonathan, for demonstrating well for me and being honest.”

“I don’t want to be rude, Merlin, but can we go out now please?” said Lucy. “I’m really worried about Ramkin – he’s been waiting a long time.”

“Of course,” came the answer as they were dismissed from the cave and entrusted into the familiar guidance of Spriggy again.

They emerged into the salty, even sweet, smells of Merlin’s spellbound island. Ramkin ran round and jumped off the knoll, greeting them excitedly. Then it followed them as they headed back to Ty Pellaf, the shepherd’s house on the lower slopes.

NINE

THE PALACE OF GLASS

Having deposited the tired Ramkin back in the garden of the shepherd's house, the four Merlinauts climbed a little way up above the houses and sat down on a grassy bank. They gazed down at the cultivated fields below (some used for grazing) and across the narrow strip of land to the lighthouse and out-buildings. Then, they were astonished to witness a transformation – right in front of their eyes. The outline of the lighthouse faded swiftly from top to bottom, and in its place a new image was silently built up. The other buildings were gone and what was left was a large, dome-shaped edifice which seemed to the watchers like the legendary Glass Palace. All the lower, spherical walls were crystallized, and reflected the rays of the sun at hundreds of different angles, but the dome was plain glass. Our youngsters, dumbfounded, sat still on the bank – just staring.

“Let's go down and have a look,” broke out Jonathan suddenly. “We might be able to see inside.” They all agreed to head there at full speed.

As if in a dream, the four ran down and across the narrow piece of land, and then over to the new structure. Walking

round it they realized they couldn't see inside because of the wall's crystallization, so their main hope was to find an entrance. Eventually, they came to a very insignificant looking gap in one side. After a brief pause, Sam made his decision.

"I'll try to get in here," he said. "If it's OK, I'll give you all a call."

After squeezing through the small opening, Sam stood up in the splash of light across the floor. From there he could just make out some dimly lit scenes on either side of him – to his right, a mini forest with tall trees and winding paths and to his left an orchard with apples, lit up with an eerie light as they hung from the trees. He called for the others.

When they were all inside and had looked around, they began to move forward. Unfortunately, without realizing it, Sam and Jonathan found themselves on one side and Gilly and Lucy on the other – they seemed to be divided by the narrowing beam of daylight which cut the inside of the place in half. The boys then, strangely, lost touch with the girls, and wandering down one of the forest tracks they were beginning to feel more and more apprehensive – especially when they heard some rather creepy sounds around them. At one point, as they walked on, a small, black and odd-shaped creature leapt onto the path and crouched in front of them. It was about the size of a dog, with huge, shiny eyes and it just stared at them in a malevolent and intent way. After an exclamation from Jonathan, who'd stepped quickly aside, the thing just disappeared. Jonathan had certainly lost his 'cool' by now and admitted to Sam that he was pretending to be Harry Potter and that everything would turn out fine in the end.

"I think you're forgetting, Jonny, that we're still in Merlin's virtual computer game," comforted Sam. "Anyway, let's sit down on the log, and talk."

"There isn't much fun and games so far," complained his deflated brother.

"I've read about these sort of apparitions," said Sam, after they had settled down. "There was a bit in a library book about

some phantoms the researcher called ‘elementals’. These were evil entities, but with no solid bodies. They were like the goblins and demons of folklore and sometimes called ultra-terrestrials because, at certain times and places their dimension overlaps ours and they become visual. Merlin did warn us not to dabble in the occult, in case of attracting evil spirits – he is an Earth guardian, you know.”

Feeling calmer, the boys looked up at the glass dome above them.

They saw that there was a thin film of some sort spread across the inside of the dome, which dimmed the light entering through it. Reflected on this were moving patterns and figures – all strangely difficult to put a name to. Every now and then, though, the film slipped down and the natural sky, with its clouds and colours, could be seen. This really cheered them up.

When they looked down and around them again they saw something which disturbed them. They both saw a creature behind the trees, passing back and forth between the gaps, but couldn’t agree on its identity. Sam was sure it was a big cat and Jonathan was equally sure it was some sort of deer. While they were arguing hotly about this a frightening figure appeared round a corner of the path and approached them. They thought immediately that this must be an old-fashioned witch. Stopping in front of them, she surveyed them critically. With her long grey hair and aquiline nose she was scary. Her clothes were long and voluminous but seemed, almost, to be part of her body.

“You must be part of Merlin’s gang,” she said in a raspy sort of voice. “You don’t look very happy.”

“Actually,” began Sam, managing to find some words, we really would like, now, to get back to where we came in and to rejoin the others. Who are you though, if I may ask?”

“Of course – and I will tell you. I am Allewes the sorceress and companion to Morgana le Fey who presides over this place. You will be meeting her soon for she has a few things to

say to you lot – to put you right over some of the ideas that old Mage has been filling your heads with.”

“If you mean Merlin, we think a lot of him,” muttered Jonathan indignantly. Plucking up his courage he asked again for directions to get out of the woods and to find the others. Surprisingly, the sorceress complied at once.

“Retrace your steps,” she said. “When you come to the band of daylight coming from our outer gap, you must make a big jump over to the other side. That’s where the girls are – among the apple trees.”

Before the youngsters could thank her, they received another shock. From under one of her heavily draped arms, a very sleek, black cat suddenly leapt out and landed on Sam’s feet. Then, moving to the side of its mistress it sat and watched the boys with its luminous green eyes. Anyway, after a few minutes Allewes seemed to lose interest and started to walk back the way she had come, followed by her cat.

Our Merlinauts jumped up and ran. They soon found themselves facing the strip of outside light which crossed their path. Sam, at Jonathan’s request, made the first leap after a short run at it. He landed well on the other side and beckoned to his brother. When Jonathan tried, however, he landed just short and for a few seconds found himself still in the beam of light. Looking down it as it passed through the outer gap he had a brief glimpse of the landscape outside. The serene normality of the island’s green expanse gave him a sudden urge to rejoin it, and if Sam had not grabbed hold of his arm, he would have followed the beam out.

As soon as Sam had pulled Jonathan up beside him and sat down, his dazed look vanished and he soon recovered his enthusiasm.

“Not your best jump, Jonny!” said Sam in mildly scolding tones, as they set off towards the orchard. They were now walking on a glass floor, but under it was only dark brown earth.

They heard the girls’ voices and were nearing the apple

trees when Sam had another look down at his feet. He was amazed to see just water underneath them. Stopping abruptly and exchanging words of concern, they both knelt down and examined the underwater scene which was faintly lit from above. They saw fish! The earthy substance had ended in a solid face of rock descending steeply, and beside it was just sea. They saw more fish swimming by and even a solitary seal which nosed up towards them.

After watching in wonder for a few minutes the boys raised their heads and continued their progress towards the orchard. When they arrived they saw that the girls were on their hands and knees looking for something in the long grass. Hearing the boys' shouts of welcome they stood up and greeted them with open arms and much relief.

"What are you looking for?" asked Sam, realizing that the orchard and half-covered path were over dry land again.

"We've found what we think is a fossilized apple core," proclaimed Gilly, holding up a flat stone. "And we're looking for more because we think that once there were real apple-trees here instead of the ones we now see."

"A sort of fifth century 'Eden Project', you think?" commented Sam with tongue in cheek.

"Be serious, Sam," said Gilly, a bit resentfully. "You know Tayar would have been interested in this. Anyway, we've decided that these trees are not at all real and that the lighting effects are worked from the building that we spied through the trees."

Sam looked in the direction she was pointing and just made out a white, oblong structure with a squat tower at one end. Coming from its windows were beams of coloured light.

Meanwhile, Lucy had been showing Jonathan the many apples hanging down and glimmering with subtle colours. The light seemed to come from within each of them and the colours changed from time to time – the smaller ones from shades of green to goldish-yellow and the larger ones from russet to mature red.

“I daren’t touch them,” she told him. “I think they’re made of glass.” So Jonathan, being Jonathan, stretched up, grabbed one of them and pulled.

Immediately, the lights on the trees went out and they heard a distant rustling noise which was louder the nearer it came. Sam and Gilly straightened up and they all stood stock-still. There, in front of them, stood someone whom they quickly assumed must be Morgana le Fey. She was dressed in an elaborate, well-fitting gown which reached to the ground. It was sparkling with occult signs and symbols, jewelled broaches and a pendant hanging from her neck. She wore bracelets and earrings and her face was heavily made-up.

“So here you all are,” she said, looking at them one by one. “Secure in my house of glass. Now then, you little lot, I want you to follow me out of here and into my garden... We’ve got a great deal to talk about.”

The over-awed youngsters obeyed, and on the way Morgana related to them how her faint-hearted sisters had left her one after another and only Allewes, who the boys had already met, had stuck by her.

When they arrived at the severely laid-out garden beside her dwelling, she sat them down on an ornate marble seat and started to lecture them in a very patronizing sort of way.

“Your Merlin is leading you up the garden path, you know, and you shouldn’t take seriously all he tells you. He’s just a loveable old fool.”

“What do you mean, exactly?” said Sam, in protest.

“Well, look at how he allowed that Vivien to enclose him in the tree where he slept so long and missed so much.”

“We can all fall in love,” murmured Gilly. “And do silly things. He’s mostly human, after all.”

“Merlin only sees one side of things – only what he wants to see,” replied Morgana. “Look at his prodigy, Arthur, who was often a proud and wilful man who didn’t always take good advice. He even managed to be parted from the magic scabbard which would have saved his life. It was crafted specially

for him, you see, by a master of his craft – the best in the land at that time. It was made on this very island, along with his sword, Excalibur. I had that sword retrieved from the lake, after he died. I still keep it hidden here against the time it can be put to better use – by someone more skilled in the arts of sorcery, alchemy and the fight against hypocrisy.”

“The funny thing is,” blurted out Jonathan, “that we all know about and admire King Arthur even now in the 21st Century, but I’d hardly ever heard of *you* before!”

Morgana focussed her eyes upon the owner of this confronting voice and was about to say something when they heard a loud cawing noise. They turned saw a crow with a damaged wing ambling towards her in a very peculiar manner. As she bent to lift it onto her shoulder, Sam looked at Gilly.

“Arthur dumped her, didn’t he?” he whispered to Gilly. “She’s suffering from a ‘jealous scorned woman’ syndrome, I’ll bet!”

“The bird was lonely,” said Morgana, brushing aside, for the moment, Jonathan’s outburst. She again addressed them all with her brittle voice.

“Now, where were we? Ah yes, we come next to those pathetic Grail knights who you so naively treat as heroes.”

“But they did find the Holy Grail,” said Lucy, managing to speak up at last.

“So you say,” snapped Morgana. “But what good did it do, and who really should have found it if Arthur paid more attention to my instructions. Take Sir Percivale, for instance – an impulsive and headstrong man who often ignored past experience and took no precautions. Twice he almost allowed himself to be carried away by a fiend in the shape of a flattering temptress. Why his God saved him, I shall never know. This hero couldn’t even save his sister from bleeding to death.”

“Perhaps God saw the good in him,” suggested Gilly, “and liked it.”

“You’re living in cloud-cuckoo-land, just as your Merlin certainly is,” retorted Morgana. “And now we come to Sir

Bors who had all his priorities wrong. Do you remember how he left his poor brother to a painful death in order to go to the aid of a damsel who was in dubious danger of losing her virginity?"

"How about Galahad?" asked Sam with some apprehension, for Morgana had begun to walk up and down. Finally she faced them again with a defiant expression.

"He is a goody goody – too good to be true," she said. "Obsessed with lofty delusions and the importance of his mission. Just a crazy dreamer."

At this Jonathan sprang up, turned his back on Morgana and began to walk away, but she called him back with the promise of a picture-show he shouldn't miss. Thinking of rare magical treats, he returned and sat down reluctantly.

"Wait here," commanded Morgana to our four confused Merlinauts, and she walked quickly back to her strange abode. As she went in they were surprised to see her greeted by Allewes, the sorcerer. Later they noticed that something must have been opened up on the top of the tower, for shafts of bright light were coming from it.

When Morgana returned, minus her crow, she was carrying a big book. She sat down on a nearby chair with an owl's head image at the end of each arm. Then she looked sternly at the youngsters and gave instructions.

"Now," she began. "While I read this piece from one of those famous stories of yours – King Arthur and his knights – I want you all to concentrate very hard on what I am reading. Then, while you do this, look always up at the dome and see what's happening."

"Direct visualization of thought, sort of thing," guessed Sam.

"Well, we haven't quite perfected it yet, but it's coming on. We've tried it on other visitors – caught for a few hours here in time shifts," she explained, seeing their looks of unease.

Morgana then started to read from the adventures of Sir Percivale, in a loud and jarring voice. It was the bit where

Percivale loses his horse in an unnecessary confrontation – then accepts the offer of another one in exchange for a very rash promise to a strange maiden.

As they listened and watched the lower sides of the dome, the four adventurers began to see some hazy images moving around it. These gradually became more distinct, though not in colour, and there was no sound.

“It showed a man in armour, who they guessed must be Percivale, wandering up a forest lane, then lying down exhausted and falling asleep. Next, they saw a comely young woman appear beside him. They watched while she woke him and quickly persuaded him to accept her offer, with strings attached, of a replacement horse.

“You see how stupid he is?” commented Morgana, looking up for a moment. As Morgana continued her story, the watchers saw the woman disappear and return with a huge horse. After hesitating a moment, for the animal was very strong and fierce-looking, Percivale mounted and was immediately rushed out of sight in a bolting gallop. When they next saw him the horse was heading towards an expanse of dark water which was, perhaps, a reflection of the same water that the boys had seen below them as they’d crossed over to reach the orchard. Anyway, Percivale couldn’t stop his mount and after crossing himself, his horse reared up and threw him off before it plunged into the water. Flames burst out around the sinking horse, showing it to have been a fiend.

Morgana stopped reading and surveyed her listeners with satisfaction.

“You see, he asked for it,” she said. “He never learned about the dark arts and how to deal with enchantments and curses or how to combat them.”

“But he was a dreamer and a romantic,” protested Gilly. “He trusted women.”

“Think what you like, child. All that piffle wouldn’t get him very far!”

“But it *did* though,” intervened Lucy.

“Yes, and in spite of his being so susceptible to young women, he stayed faithful to his first love,” backed up Sam.

Morgana grunted scornfully and started to turn the pages of her book – back and forth again and again. She was looking for her next subject.

“She wants to replace our home TV sets with *her* zany ideas,” muttered Jonathan into Sam’s ear.

“Actually, their system *is* beginning to work,” marvelled Sam.

Now, reading from one of the adventures of Sir Bors, Morgana began her next story and her captive listeners gave it their full attention with all eyes on the dome.

They saw a new knight, with a different insignia, riding beside thick woodland. He turned into a wide forest track where he came upon an unexpected sight. Two men were beating another with thorny brushwood. The victim was naked, bound and thrown across the saddle of a horse. When this man lifted his head, Bors saw with horror that it was his brother. While the knight was preparing, angrily, to rescue him, he heard a desperate cry for help coming from behind him. He turned to see a lovely maiden being dragged, unwillingly, away by an armoured knight. She was hoisted onto a waiting horse and, with the knight mounted behind, they rode off.

“I expect you know what happened next,” said Morgana, interrupting her reading and looking up at her spellbound subjects. “Yes, he made his incredibly difficult choice, and leaving his tortured brother, he chased after the woman’s abductor. Obviously, Arthur’s church taught that rape was often a greater evil than death or cruelty and that fragile females must always be helped first.” Morgana laughed derisively. “Little do they know,” she said.

“We don’t believe that now,” ventured Gilly. “The Church has evolved with the rest of the world.” She was struggling to think straight.

“And Witchcraft hasn’t,” added Lucy, very quietly – but

Morgana wasn't listening. She had her hand over her ear, and, telling them to pay attention, started to read again.

Watching the dome once more, the youngsters saw the events that Morgana was reading about. The knight whom Sir Bors was chasing rode right round the dome, going faster and faster with the poor girl half falling off. When he decided that he could not escape, he pulled up his horse and let his victim slip to the ground. Then he turned and faced his pursuer. They fought, and Bors, of course, was victorious. The grateful woman, her shame averted, persuaded her champion to escort her back to her castle. They disappeared inside, but later, as the watchers gazed expectantly at the fortress they noticed that Sir Bors and the same young woman were on the tower together. The knight was resisting with desperation her seductive advances. There was bright moonlight. Bors, in his fear of committing that deadly sin, made the sign of the cross on his forehead. As he did this, the moon went out like a candle, there was a rush of wind and the flames of hell flared up. Then the moon came out again and the knight found himself on a bare moor with no sign of the temptress or her castle.

"You see," gloated Morgana, shutting her book and looking up again. "With supernatural powers of our ancient crafts we were always playing with these pretenders... We love to show them up to themselves – to make them see the stupidity of some of Arthur's heroics and his ideas of chivalry and Grail perfection."

"But Sir Bors *did* pay for it," braved Sam, summoning up all his courage. "He came across his brother later on, outside an Abbey, and was overjoyed to see him alive and well. But the brother, full of black hatred and resentment, wanted to kill him – in fact, he nearly *did*. If I remember rightly, when Bors prayed for forgiveness, this brother actually rode his horse over him and then tried to finish him off. That was punishment enough, but he was..."

"He was saved by a famous hermit who expelled the evil spirit from him," interrupted Morgana. "This I know, and his

rescuer was Naciens of Holy Carbonek which used to be centred here. This very ground was once the place of its castle at the time all these stories were told. All this legend is no longer relevant for I've taken charge of this island and many other such places. I rule here now."

This was too much for Jonathan. Losing all timidity and restraint, he exploded with pent-up anger.

"Merlin was, and is, *far* cleverer than you and far, far greater in Time and Space," he spluttered. "He's done all this 'thought stuff' in sound as well. If one of your lot hadn't tricked him into that long sleep, he would have gone on helping and protecting Arthur and all his knights. He would soon have tamed you and curbed your weird antics – the goodness of the Round Table would have lasted ages." Searching for some stronger words, Jonathan finally came out with one he'd heard on television:

"You're a *Feminazi*," he shouted.

Morgana glared at him with her large dark eyes, now glimmering with an evil light. Her face had become bright red and she turned and rushed back to her dwelling-place. The next moment the light from her tower was shut off.

"Nice one! Jonathan, you prat," exclaimed Sam, sarcastically. He stood up. "Look what you've done now. Goodness knows what she's up to in there. Come on, we must go – hurry, hurry."

They all jumped up and started running. They'd only got as far as the piece of ground between the orchard and the light-shaft (where the boys had seen the fish earlier) when a big hole opened up beneath them and they fell into the sea below.

Luckily, they could all swim, even under water with their eyes open. They found they were able to hold their breath much more easily and, as it turned out, for longer than was normal.

Very soon they saw a figure approaching them. He, or she, was rigged out, and masked, in a modern wet suit and was accompanied by a playful dolphin – swirling and circling

around. The diver turned and beckoned them to follow him (they decided it must be a man because of the muscular legs above the rubber flippers).

The dolphin swam round behind them as they started to follow their guide, and gathered them together like a trained sheep dog. Lucy, who was the weakest swimmer, began to fall behind, in spite of the dolphin's gentle nudges and squeals of encouragement. The diver seemed to become aware of the problem. Turning to assess the situation, he swam back immediately and took hold of Lucy's hand before resuming his position in front.

The youngsters imagined themselves in some underwater TV programme – only they couldn't see a camera! After what seemed like a fair swim, they saw their guide had stopped and was pointing up. He then started to propel himself upwards, so his followers did the same, frantically working their arms and legs. When they broke through the surface of the water and looked around, they saw a sandy beach not far away, but no sign of their rescuer – he had vanished into thin air (or perhaps magic waters).

“Come on – swim to the beach,” shouted Sam, as they took delicious gulps of familiar sea air. They had not got far when they felt the sand beneath their feet and they waded gratefully onto the deserted beach, where they lay for a while. It was a warm summer's day and the sun was at its highest point, but their thin, wet clothes were uncomfortable, so they decided to run up and down in the brisk, island breeze, hoping it would dry them sooner. Sam took off his anorak, which was still zipped up over his chest, and laid it on the sand before he took off. He remembered, with some trepidation, about the chalice in its pocket, so he took out the soaked relic with great care and laid it separately, beside the anorak, to dry off.

When the warmed-up youngsters returned, their clothes almost dry, they stopped short as they approached Sam's jacket. There beside it was a shining, transformed chalice – glittering with an unearthly light.



As our Merlinauts stood and stared at it, a black and wide-winged bird swooped down, grabbed the chalice in its red beak and flew off with it.

“It was a Chuff!” exclaimed Gilly. “The Bardsey bird.”

“Well, that’s that,” said Jonathan. “There goes our Grail sighting.”

“No, we’ll see it again,” comforted Lucy. “We’re on Merlin’s Holy Island now. He’s brought it into the 21st Century – there’ll be lots in store for us.”

Soon after this, having sat down once more to recover from their run and the latest shock, they were surprised but pleased to hear Spriggy’s penetrating little voice again.

“You’re right Lucy,” he said approvingly. “This *is* now the Bardsey Island of year 2050 AD. The reason that there is no one on the beach at the moment is because everyone has gone to a big ‘do’ (as you call it) at the wonderful new Grail Centre. Now, can you guess who your helpful diver was?”

There was a short silence. Then, having worked out a favoured possibility, they all called out ‘Galahad’ – meaning their Tayar, as well.

“Yes, of course,” confirmed Spriggy. “And in your next K File, which will be waiting for you one day, he will be patrolling those enchanted seas again to organize the building of an underwater tunnel which will join the island to the mainland.”

“What will happen to Morgana and her glass castle,” asked Jonathan.

“Wake up, Jonny,” said Sam. “That’s long gone anyway.”

“You’ll all be feeling slightly disillusioned after that ‘slagging off’ of your cherished heroes by Morgana. So Merlin has given me a short record of their true personalities and ambitions. Percivale, for instance, followed his heart, often before his brain. He always remembered his mother’s advice and, in the end, had the reward of combining his sexual desires with the fulfilment of finding the Grail and actually marrying the Grail Maiden.”

“They went on then to reign together over new lands of peace and unity, didn’t they?” filled in Lucy with enthusiasm.

“I expect you’re right. I get a bit mixed up with all the Arthurian characters,” admitted Spriggy. “You must correct me if I leave anything out. But take Arthur himself. You must realize that Morgana was intensely jealous of her half-brother, Arthur, and conscious of his power and popularity – though, at the end of his life she attempted to save him from dying of his wounds.”

“So you’re saying that they mostly got the wrong end of the stick and saw weakness and vanity where there was often strength and humility?” summed up Lucy tentatively.

“Well, they did indeed enjoy belittling Arthur, and Morgana even tried to kill him once.”

“But it was the Lady Nimue who saved his life that time... rather strange, I always thought,” joined in Gilly.

“You’re right,” endorsed Spriggy. “For Nimue was also part of that dark sisterhood of witchcraft – but they were always disagreeing with each other. Morgana and Nimue both resented Merlin’s good influence; Nimue though had her own ideas for his removal from the scene. They wanted to take over the show... They did have special powers of their own though – healing herbology and spirit communication. They often toyed with evil spirits but then only went as far as their guilt would allow them.” Suddenly, Spriggy started to giggle, as if something had tickled him. After a while he explained the cause of his mirth.

“Some time ago,” he began, “when Morgana was practising her roof animation, with the help of another group of young people whom she had caught in her web, she had a nasty shock. Merlin said he thought it was hilarious. She had got to the end of her readings and her subjects were feeling resentful, as you did, so they all concentrated on an image of St. Michael, like the one depicted outside Coventry Cathedral. Michael, the archangel, with his raised sword and the writhing, fire-spitting dragon under one foot appeared, large and

dramatic, on her flimsy screen. She rushed, terrified, into her lair and the tower light was quickly extinguished.”

“Just as she did when Jonny upset her,” remembered Sam.

“Exactly. To go back to Merlin’s memorandum entrusted to me – I now come to Sir Bors who was quite different. He was a family man with a son, and after *he’d* found the Grail and seen his realistic future, he returned to the society he’d left, with the will to enrich and update it. They had all, of course, been helped along the way by Naciens the legendary hermit of Bardsey – renowned by all.”

“So we can enjoy our stories again,” said Gilly with a pleasurable sigh. “Even though we know they come from very ancient roots they can still tell us something about ourselves.”

“Yes, they can,” agreed Spriggy. Merlin ended the communiqué by quoting something he’d heard from the mouth of a modern Arthurian research writer. Spriggy paused but was duly reminded by his master, and out it came: “‘The intermingling of ambition, human frailty and passion does not cancel out the power of the spirit’s yearning.’ We were at a Glastonbury festival when this was read out,” the sprite remembered.

Spriggy stopped talking and Sam stood up and looked around.

“What do we do now?” he said, and after a few minutes he got a reply.

The funny little voice was now dead serious and spoke with great care.

“Here are your directions then,” he began. “When you leave this beach turn left along the coastal footpath, walking in a northerly direction. This bay is called Solfach and is the only sandy beach on Bardsey. It’s situated on the opposite coast to Cafn, the landing cove directly to the east of us here... Now keep on this path for about a mile, then take a shortcut by turning onto a rough track leading inland across the island. This will lead you once more to the graveyard and the old Abbey ruins. From there follow the path you took before to

the caves and up onto the foothills. Head back again to Ty Pellaf – but many things will grab your attention on the way.”

“Will you be commentating for us as we go?” asked Sam, when Spriggy finished.

“On and off,” came the reply. “Merlin’s Island must start to speak for itself, but I will be around, so enjoy your adventures. Off you go, and remember you’re still in Cyberland.”

TEN

GLAD DAY – CARBONEK 2050

Soon after our Merlinauts had found themselves back at the Abbey ruins and had walked gingerly past the old graveyard, not without some trepidation, they turned up back on their familiar footpath. This one skirted the site of some of the island's springs, and Spriggy had told them that the main one there was the most reliable one on the whole island. The youngsters noted its position.

As they went on along the path to the caves, Gilly kept turning round to look back. When she did this she noticed that the others, too, seemed to be under the same compulsion to look back over their shoulders.

"I can tell you why you are doing this," declared Spriggy, coming reluctantly from Gilly again, and his little voice sounding different in the clearer atmosphere. "You are not sure whether you saw something, or not. Well, you *did*, but think back, Gillian, to that Christmas party, a year or so ago, when someone read aloud a certain story."

"Yes, I remember now," said Gilly, after a pause. "It was from an old book that a friend had found in a second-hand bookshop. It was a lesser-known version of the Arthurian

legends. We were all strangely impressed and it was about a *spring*. Perhaps passing by this one triggered some connection.”

“Funny,” said Sam. “I thought I saw a strangely-dressed female figure carrying a water vessel from the spring towards the new chapel that was being built nearby. I decided I was just imagining it all and shut it out.”

“Yes, I thought I saw that too,” said Lucy, “but only for a moment. It was a bit ghostly, but not at all frightening.”

“So did I,” burst out Jonathan, not to be outdone. “And I caught a glimpse of another woman as well, sitting beside the spring with her hands over her eyes.

“Please, please, Gilly,” he appealed. “Remind us of this story again – its getting exciting.” They all stopped walking and gathered around her.

“Well, I’ve forgotten the details,” began Gilly. “But it’s about one of Arthur’s rival kings who did a terrible thing. You see, the Celts believed that every spring and well was an entrance to their other world. Special ones were watched over by nine maidens. The story goes that the evil king raped some of them. These acts resulted in the formation of a wasteland which then surrounded the Grail Castle of Carbonek. We’d always believed that it was Sir Balin who’d struck the ‘Dolourous blow’, using the sword from the Grail Chapel, and so ravishing the land. This new version must have stuck in our minds.”

“It sure did,” said Sam. “I think Merlin was demonstrating the power of myths to us. When we imagine these things, the images can sometimes show up outside us as well. Myths are living energies, he’s saying.”

After this pronouncement, they carried on up the old mountain path towards the caves, for there was nothing more to see around the spring. A bit further up though, Jonathan, unable to resist one more look backwards, had another surprise.

“Wherever did *those* people come from?” he exclaimed.

Looking around and down to the Abbey ruins, they all saw two hooded figures walking together from the direction of the graveyard. They were heading along the main track towards the south of the island and the lighthouse.

“More ghosts perhaps,” suggested Lucy, uneasily, but Spriggy disputed this, speaking out with obviously borrowed authority.

“These beings are quite different,” he began. “They have solid, tangible bodies and are temporarily remade people activated with the presence and spirit of their originals.”

“This sort of thing can only happen in cyberspace, I presume,” said Sam. “But what will happen when, for a time, the advanced beings in the afterlife forget or lose interest in their Earth doubles here?”

“Well,” Spriggy answered hesitantly. “I suppose their Cyber counterparts would sleep for years hidden from view, and they could be woken at will. It’s rather like our Merlin who slept among the roots of that hawthorn tree... anything can happen here.”

While this conversation was going on, Lucy, who had very sharp eyesight, spotted what looked like a solitary figure walking on well ahead of the other two. This one seemed different, for he was dressed in familiar Middle Ages court apparel. The others, she’d noted, wore stranger clothes – one with a long, coloured tunic and the other with a pleated, kilt-like skirt. Both wore woollen cloaks, open down the front.

“Who *are* they though?” said Gilly. “Please tell us Spriggy.”

“Luckily I *can* give you that information very easily today,” announced her sprite gleefully.

“Why do you say that?” asked his puzzled host.

“I suppose I’ll now have to own up to something first,” went on Spriggy, rather sheepishly. “You see, when I heard that you were all having a session in Morgana le Fey’s glass house, I was so horrified that my master was shocked. He thought I might go beserk! We tree sprites have a great fear of her brand of sorcery. Anyway, I was allowed out during the time of your

visit there, Gillian, and I spent it hiding in a clump of heather which grew on a bank overlooking our beach. While I was there, waiting for you all, Merlin tested my memory many times on the subject of these three walking figures, in case I needed to know in a hurry.”

“I’m glad I didn’t know you’d gone, Spriggy. But now, we’re all ears,” said Gilly, eagerly.

“Right, here goes,” he started, brimming with confidence. “The two you first saw died in the sixth century and were buried here. One was St. Deiniol, or ‘Daniel’ in English. He was a much loved and revered Welsh saint and bishop who founded the monastery at Bangor. The other was St. Lleuddad who was one of the first abbots of Bardsey. The church at Aberdaron was dedicated to him along with St. Hywyn. On our island, the field right opposite Ty Capel, the chapel you’ve just passed, was known as ‘Lleuddad’s Gardens’ – in Welsh of course.” Spriggy paused.

“But what about the one in front?” asked Lucy eagerly.

“Ah yes,” came the increasingly faltering voice. “He was the chief court poet to a Welsh prince in the twelfth century, I think, and he composed a beautiful death-bed poem in which he expressed the hope to rise up on judgement day from Enlli, the ‘island of fair Mary’. I’m afraid I can’t tell you his name because I can’t remember it and could never pronounce it anyway. But don’t worry, for you’ll see part of his poem written around the walls of the fabulous Grail Centre where you’ll all end up. His name will be there as well.”

After Lucy had pointed out this figure to the other, she had a new concern.

“If Merlin had not brought us here through his KristOmega Files,” she questioned, “how would we have been able to enter this Cyberland, at all?”

“Oh dear!” said Spriggy, a bit taken aback. “That’s a difficult one for me and quite unrehearsed.”

Sam, trying to be helpful, suggested that every time anyone produced a new and creative work of art – in sound, words or

design, good enough to be recorded and reproduced electronically... it would live in Cyberspace and be accessible.”

“Thank you, Sam,” came the sprite’s grateful response. “How’s that, Lucy?”

“Well, I suppose I *could* work harder to develop any special gifts I may possess.”

“I can add to that I think, by repeating a phrase that my Master often quoted to me. It’s one of his William’s favourite sayings,” remembered Spriggy, who then repeated Blakes’ words: “Christ is the sun, the human imagination in everyone.” After briefly savouring this proclamation, the sprite added some further encouragement, urging them all to use their very special supplies of this inner treasure of imagination to ensure they had an exciting life and eventually, a quick passage through bodily death.

“So take heart, my playmates,” he ended. “Your imagination is your true life and is given permanence and purpose by KristOmega.”

A short silence followed all this, until broken by Jonathan’s urgent voice:

“But what will the CyberSaints do when they get to the Centre?” he asked.

“I’m not quite sure yet,” answered a rather vague Spriggy. “Merlin seemed to think that, somehow, they’d learn then that heaven was not their old notion of a paradise in the sky, nor out of this world, but right in it, and really just a very advanced state on Earth. They’d see, I suppose, how God had used the brave beginnings which they’d been part of on and around this island.”

The youngsters were unusually thoughtful as they carried on along the path. They soon came to the place where the hermits and early holy men had once had their huts, or cells. These little habitations had now been rebuilt from their exposed remains and they now looked like spherical, brown bubbles. The first one was the largest and possessed an easily recognisable entrance.

“Merlin wants you all in there now,” piped up Spriggy again.

Gilly, being the nearest to the strange-looking protuberance, opened its very ordinary door and they all went in – very quietly, I should add. Inside, there were some wooden chairs arranged in a rough circle and one part of the wall was stacked with an array of communications equipment.

After a minute or two, they heard the welcome voice of Merlin once more.

“These raised ‘Earth Hummocks’ are new types of cells and are used for promoting real communication between people in the visiting groups – also, often for meditation. But today I have another use for this one and a nice surprise, I hope. Sit yourselves down and listen – it’s all interactive and you’ll be able to ask questions and get replies. With my voice recognition systems, I’ve been able to persuade the spirit of your Tayar to co-operate with me today. You are very honoured, I can tell you.”

The youngsters, silently waiting, then heard the clear, vigorous-sounding and slightly accented voice of their champion which filled the space.

“Greetings! Merlin has told me all about you – that you call me Tayar and have adopted me as your present-day Galahad figure. I feel very flattered and only hope I can live up to your image of me. To exist in two places is indeed a marvel,” he exclaimed. “Any questions for me?”

After some moments of dumbfounded astonishment, Sam found his voice.

“Amazing,” he stuttered. “Well, Tayar, I would like to say that although Merlin has done his best to make many of your exciting ideas more familiar to us, some are still difficult to grasp just by reading your books. Galahad found the Grail, for instance, because he was ‘pure of heart’. How would you explain this quality to us now, in your own words?”

“A good question, Samuel (the Mage has told me your names) and I will try to answer it. You know I had little time

and opportunity to simplify my work because of many imposed restrictions. The word ‘purity’ has been so misunderstood. It has nothing to do with an enfeebling of sexual drive nor withdrawal from the world in piety – and certainly is not to be linked to repression but to zest for living. It is all to do with the passionate direction of energy towards a specific goal. Galahad set his whole heart, as a knight, on this unswerving quest.”

“But surely the first hermits here on Bardsey were all celibate,” persisted Sam. “The monks who followed them, (the Culdees) were the same.”

“True, but sex in those days was often a rather crude affair and not always as a result of falling in love, which is, in itself, an unequalled human wonder.”

Tayar paused, and then continued with mounting intensity. “But they had not yet learned to perceive it as the vital drive towards expanding love and universal unity, which it had been from the very beginning.”

“How could this be when it’s so often abused?” queried Sam.

“Well... after the dramatic change that this same force of attraction has undergone when humanised, people are still afraid to use it to the glory of God. What I’m saying to you, though, is that if there were no internal tendencies to unite, even at an elemental level – indeed in the molecule itself – it would be physically impossible for love to appear with us. Love in all its subtleties is the direct trace marked on our hearts by the converging of the universe upon itself.”

“I’m afraid that’s a bit much for us to get our heads around at the moment, but we’ll ask Merlin about it later. I understand about the early saints and holy men and how they would have had to preserve all their energy to survive. You also took the vow of celibacy though, didn’t you?” asked a puzzled Sam.

“Sorry, to you all, for forgetting my promise to simplify. I’ll try again, but first I must justify to Sam some of my inconsistencies. Yes, I did comply with the old rituals of my

church which, though I still loved it, was stuck with its awesome heritage. It's sadly out of date and still refusing to move on, so though I spent much effort attempting to expose all this, no-one listened except for my close friends. The truth is that my whole life has been a love affair with the world."

After more silence, Lucy pitched in with her question:

"Merlin told us that you wrote your book *The Phenomenon of Man* in China, and that you died in America. So why did you not live in France, which is your country?" she asked, thinking of his French accent.

"Ah! You must be Lucy, I guess (an Americanism I picked up in my last years). Well, unfortunately my church superiors didn't like the way I was communicating my new vision to the young priests to whom I was lecturing. It was during my time as professor at L'Institute Catholique in Paris. The students were, I thought, asking the right sort of questions – they were exciting and probing ones, like the kind that your knight, Sir Percivale, would finally have to ask. Those in distant Rome, however, having been told of my answers, didn't agree with them. They were afraid I was misleading my scholars. So, I was sent off to China, far away from Paris, with my unorthodox ideas."

"You must have been very unhappy for a time," consoled Lucy.

"Oh Lucy! To be young means to be hopeful, energetic, smiling and clear-sighted. So I pray you all will discover in KristOmega how to remain always enthusiastic and full of enterprise. This, I know, kept me feeling youthful and optimistic, in spite of being rejected and isolated."

"I can't imagine how you must feel about the fact that nearly 50 years after you died so few people know about you," broke in Gilly. "You, who have taken the past right through to the future, ready to burst upon the 21st century. Why, oh why, is this?"

"My dear Gillian," came the gentle answer. "I must admit that I do still feel some twinges of Earthly impatience at times.

My vision now seems to have had little impact on other young people – nor many others, for that matter.”

“Could you tell us a bit more about your initial vision perhaps, when you were a young man?”

“I’ll try to answer your question, my friend, but it’s a long way back.” Tayar paused for a while, and in the silence Jonathan fidgeted on his chair.

“During the First World War, I was watching the moon one night as it rose above the trenches,” Tayar’s voice resumed in nostalgic tones. “And as its light filtered across the coils of barbed wire, I had a vision. I seemed to want to salute the moonrise as a symbolic star prefiguring a new Earth, more conscious of itself and more united. It was coming to birth in the trenches in front of me, for humanity was struggling against itself. I dreamt of the hour for mankind when the spirit of discovery will absorb all the living force contained in the spirit of war.”

“Were you right up on the front line at that time?” marvelled Jonathan.

“Yes, I was in the thick of it as a stretcher-bearer, and I witnessed some terrible things – but also the courage of ordinary men. After this experience I began to wonder if my Church had built its city in the clouds and that Christianity should be brought down to Earth where it belongs – in touch with the natural world.” His voice was emphatic.

“And for over 80 years you’ve been praying for our churches to take note of what you then saw,” said Gilly unbelievably. “And you were never a heretic, were you?”

“No, I wasn’t – and at that time the transformation needed to change their forward direction seemed so simple and obvious to me in my youthful exuberance, for I knew that a cosmic domain must be opened up. And if that didn’t happen, then we would find the world of nature, of life and of humankind was greater and closer – even more mysterious and alive – than the God of Scripture. I wanted to show that spirit was *not* the opposite of the ‘touchability’ of the human sense, but a part of everything we see.”

“Well, Sir Galahad,” braved Jonathan again, speaking with great respect. “Here we are, your living fans. Please tell us how to start looking at things in the proper way.”

“Jonathan! We meet again – still no dithering with you. I like that, but you probably don’t remember much about Merlin’s dream sequence in which we featured – crossing the bridge between science and religion. I think that our Mage has blocked most of it out of your memory for your own good.”

“Well, I do recall, at times, that awful gap at the very top of the bridge, how I went across, and then how I came down again! But it’s all so vague now,” ended Jonathan rather impatiently.

“My young Cybernaut, as Merlin calls you all (Cyberland sounds wonderful to me) I’ll do my best not to let you down, for I see that Merlin has built up your faith in me.

“Words can still fail in their purpose, but I can start by saying that you should perform each ordinary task with an understanding of its enormous value. And you should accept that life is always groping, adventurous and dangerous. Do not be discouraged though. You should learn about the universe around you, of which you are a part, for Earth is not alone but only one starship in an immense fleet... Does that make some sense to you?” Tayar waited.

“But you surely don’t believe in horrible aliens, Tayar?” questioned Lucy fearfully. “Creatures who could one day invade our planet?”

“Of course not,” said Sam crossly. “Just more stories about space-travel and star-links rather than star wars – he’s suggesting they’d be good.”

“Sam’s right, Lucy. I believe that Love is the most powerful, and still the most unknown, energy in the universe. So don’t ever be afraid of these horror stories – put them in the same nonsense category as vampires if you like. I tried to show up the universal aspect of Love in my writings, but though they were taken good notice of when they were first published, they were soon swept aside by opposing factions – materialist and

fashionable sciences. My books were not published any more and became unobtainable.”

“But Merlin once told us that big cracks were beginning to appear in some of science’s treasured monoliths,” commented Sam. “I’ve lost confidence in them.”

“Right,” exclaimed Tayar. “That’s why, with others, I’ve been able to squeeze through those gaps again and see my books on sale once more.” Then, guessing at the youngster’s surprise, he added: “You’ll see, you’ll see.” His voice was humorous and affectionate but also becoming fainter. “My dear young questers – I must leave you now,” he continued. “I’ve enjoyed our interview very much and I’m glad that I too am in your Cyberland. Aurevoir and God bless.”

After a few moments, Merlin’s deeper voice took over again.

“The end of the session, my Cybernauts,” he confirmed. “So prepare to move out, while savouring your latest encounter and Tayar’s encouragement for you. Outside, keep climbing towards your next adventure.”

ELEVEN

THE MOUNTAIN EFFIGY

As our four Merlinauts proceeded along the mountain path, they often looked down to survey the view – and the main track stretched below them. They had just passed Cristin (the bird observatory) and the old school, but of course there was now no sign of the walking saints – who would surely have reached their destination by now.

The youngsters had walked under the highest point on the island, Mynedd Enlli, when they left the caves, and since the hut structures the path had begun to incline slightly downhill towards Ty Pellaf, the shepherd's house. Before they reached it they came to a smaller path turning off to their left and leading steeply up the hillside. As they stopped to look, Spriggy spoke up:

“Take the upward path,” he instructed. “And get a move on.”

As the climbers neared the top, having passed the line of growing grass, they were surprised to see the lower part of some very large and very strange objects that were emerging from the bare rock. Topping the smooth, flattened-out summit they were astonished to see that looming above them was a

giant model of a human being. Above the green, unshod feet and ankles, a long brown habit fell stiffly from the hominoid's shoulders. Its arms were raised up and its outsize hands were bent outwards at the wrist – palms upward and in a horizontal position. The fingers were held apart – the tips seeming unnaturally pronounced. There appeared to be a sort of dark purple cap pulled down over the face to reach the chin.

The youngsters stood a few paces away from this new phenomenon and just stared. After what felt like ages, the voice of Spriggy interrupted their trance:

“Snap out of it, my playmates,” he began, sounding highly amused at their shocked silence. “You can go into it, you know – it’s quite safe. Merlin tells me it’s made from fibreglass and is fashioned in a way that prevents all risk of fire. You have to enter through the large hole in the heel of the left foot, and you’ll be really chuffed by the method used for your exit and descent!”

Merlin’s young questers looked at each other with uncharacteristic signs of nervous indecision. Soon though, lead by (guess who!) our Jonathan, they stepped forward with awe and entered the dark hole in the giant foot.

Once inside they saw it was dimly lit and that there were some stairs in front of them. As they started to climb up they heard a recorded voice, obviously a commentator, welcoming them and explaining things in the following words:

“You have come in here walking beside the Achilles tendon. It is one of the largest in the body and attaches the heel to the leg muscles. In mythology it’s known as the possible weak point of the Greek hero, Achilles. The feet are the body’s closest connection to the earth, so your foot-entry was very important. The Achilles heel of many Christians is the way they break the harmonious relationship between the natural world and religion – they then find themselves in dire straits. Nature and the human body were often put down by Christians as unspiritual and by Buddhists as mere illusion. There was a one-time Buddhist belief that the saints and Gurus all leave the

body at death through the top of the head, but all others leave through the feet – the earth-friendly feet. You visitors however, will leave through the fingers! Your Tayar, I remind you, says that mind grows out of matter and matter always contains the essence of mind. I'll now leave you with the thought that the body has its own reasons, as the heart has, which the rational side of the brain does not know – for it does not understand anything of the mystery of life.”

The voice became silent and the youngsters went on up the handrailed stairs.

“I must look up the story of Achilles again,” said Gilly. “I believe his mother was a water-nymph – or something of that sort—”

“Yes,” cut in Lucy. “And she dipped him in the river Styx – the border between life and death – and she held him by the heel!”

“His father was a king,” added Sam. “Achilles himself was a great warrior, but I think he was killed by a poisoned arrow in his left heel.”

As they neared the top of the leg they noticed that there were intermittent flashes of light coming from above them, and when the stairs ended and they stepped onto a solid platform they could trace the source of the strange lights. There was a sort of scaffold which filled the hollow shell of this huge model and from their position they saw a central patch of dark, velvety material surrounded by lengths of a fibrous, rope-like substance. It was all resting, they supposed, on a covered support. While they looked, this area suddenly became suffused with changing shades and degrees of brightness. There were surges of movement and then, as suddenly, the reddish lights faded and its turbulence ceased. There were still some dappled lights coming from the twisted trailers hanging all around.

“You’ve arrived now,” came the voice of the commentator again, “to the first of the three chosen areas of the human body whose newly-disclosed significances will be demonstrated

here. Although the brain and the body are one, the brain has in this instance been left out – I’m told that some of Merlin’s young apprentices *did* make an exploratory trip through there once. But the body has its own ups and downs and its evocative happenings to value. Here then, the site of the sexual organs is given special importance – even discounting its life-giving properties. The unique quality of facial expression, though hidden here by a cap, will be made clear to you when you enter the Grail Centre later on. Now, carry on up the steps while I talk about the area you have just seen.”

They all looked up above them and saw that the stairs went on up a long way and were steep, but undaunted they started to climb. The voice began again:

“You’ll be surprised to learn that all the ‘nothing-lyrics’ and crazy antics that once accompanied the pop songs are, in the middle of the 21st Century, now out of fashion – and mad shriekers as well! The media no longer focuses on the negative aspect of sex, nor fickle preoccupations of the last decades when life was one big party for young people. The population is beginning, at last, to grow up and show some maturity to benefit the 21st Century. Today, the lyrics are more likely to have been written by real poets. The concern of this region is to show you the crucial significance of the effect, due to emotions raised here, on the stability and balance of the whole of society. An individual’s sexual expression, however varied (granted it’s legal) should result in a happy and companionable person, committing no purposeful harm to anyone. Freed from the poison of inherited sexual guilt, which is often dangerous, accept the fact that each one of you is made wonderfully different.”

There was a pause and Jonathan intervened.

“All this soppy stuff,” he grumbled. “We’ve heard most of it before... Where are we heading for and how do we—” He was here shut up by Sam.

“I must remind you of the curse of those loveless and casual sexual relationships which still clouded the beginning of this

century,” began the commentator again in a much more sombre voice. “The puerile squandering and mocking of the sexual act, plus its loss of meaning, which resulted in mental and physical disease, must never happen again – it could blot the future scene.”

As they approached the wide platform above them they noticed that many radiant streaks of light shot down past them, coming through tiny holes in the platform. Sam reached the top steps first and was told by the voice to push open what looked like a trap door. He did this quite easily and they all climbed through and found themselves in a roughly built, tree house type of room. It was warm, and on a table in the centre was a beautifully fashioned nest with four coloured eggs in it. Their smooth surfaces were lit by a beam of light and the markings could be identified by any birdwatcher as belonging to the eggs of the Bardsey Chuff. What amazed the four arrivals most, though, was the sight of Sam’s transformed chalice – it was here, propped up on the back wall, beneath a shaft-like passageway down which it must have fallen. This wonderful chalice was giving out bright shimmering light and filling the room with a golden glow. The small space they were in was pulsating with some sort of energy.

“Welcome to the heart!” the commentator began. “The nest and eggs are symbols of the rhythm of the persistent and recurring life of the seasons. The three-dimensional image that you see is a computer-enhanced still photograph of the actual Chuff’s nest above – taken one spring and frozen here in time. There is a small hole in the side of the neck of this model, big enough to attract attention. For years the bird has been flying in to build its nest, with the help of its mate, so each spring they have successfully reared a family and the fledglings have then flown. The nest is left deserted till its ‘spruce up’ for the following year.”

Our youngsters were still looking with fascination at the scene before them.

“Well I’ll be jiggered,” exclaimed Jonathan, his eyes on the



chalice. “How on earth did that get down here?” The commentator had paused a while.

“Now I come to an extra-exciting happening which occurred today,” the voice continued. “It explains the newly-revealed presence of the Holy Grail – or perhaps the image of it.” The commentator’s voice sounded slightly different, the listeners thought – as if it had been added on to the main recording. Anyway, it went on... “This bird was simply unable to resist the urge to pick up the shining object lying on the beach. It remembered its temporarily abandoned nest and how its mate always approved any added decoration, so it picked up the chalice. Instinctively, our Bardsey bird flew in here with it and dropped its treasure, so it thought, onto the side of its old nest. The bird missed its target and the vessel tumbled over and fell down the shaft-way into the room where you now see it.” There was another pause, and then an instruction:

“Merlin wants you four Grail Questers to go now and look under the table in the middle of the room.”

They all moved quickly to lift up the cloth hanging from the table, and in the shadows they made out what appeared to be a large chocolate Easter-egg.

“Take it out,” the voice directed, “and carry it over to the chalice.”

When the youngsters had got it out, Sam held it up to look at and they all studied it with growing curiosity. On one side of the silver-wrapped egg was a stylised portrait of a strangely arresting face. It was an almost mystical type of countenance which, for any one who viewed it, took on the features of someone that person specially loved. On the other side, a band of early spring flowers, printed in realistic shape and colour, curved along the top part of the paper. Below was a band of fat, brown buds, with green shoots rising from an earthy bed – promises of marvels to come.

At the bottom, in gold, were the words: ‘I am the Resurrection and the Life.’ Under that again was written: ‘Where do I live, you seekers? Come and see.’

The next unexpected order came in the form of an urgent invitation to the waiting Merlinauts for them to take the egg and fit it (the more pointed end downwards) into the top of the chalice. There was another pause.

The four moved forward as though sleepwalking, for everything now seemed hazy and dream-like. Sam noted, with mild surprise, that the same chalice had been straightened and secured. It looked much larger, so he placed the egg carefully into the glimmering vessel. All of them felt their hearts missing a beat at this moment. They then stepped back and peered intensely at it, but as they looked the features of the face seemed to be changing. Then, after a few moments, Lucy let out a sudden cry of recognition.

“It’s J.C.” she exclaimed in amazement, turning to her friend.

“Yes,” confirmed Gilly soon after. “It’s the face of Christ from the large tapestry in Coventry Cathedral, and it’s still looking straight at us.”

Keeping their eyes fixed upon it they now noticed that it was gradually beginning to melt away. Soon it had all disappeared down into the bright chalice which then was itself moved onto a small screen that had suddenly appeared on the wall behind. This was an even more radiant Grail image – almost hurting their eyes – but it began to recede from them up a long highway extending into the distance. In the foreground were four figures walking along the road, and one of them, behind the other three, was turning and beckoning to them. As the figures moved forward, so the Grail receded further, but it never disappeared.

There was a wooden cross set in the ground beside the road. Its lower part was half overgrown with flourishing, shiny green holly which still had one or two red Christmas berries left on it. In the background was the familiar shape of Bardsey Island with the sculptural, stereoscopic figure of Blake’s ‘Glad Day’ image bestriding the topmost mountain hump. The new animation styles used here made all these images, miraculously, into a shimmering, magical vision.

The length of road between the figures and the receding chalice was shown in a wide band down the centre. It went from pale to brighter and brighter shades of green the nearer it got to the Grail.

“The three figures in front are the three Grail knights from the Court of King Arthur,” explained the commentator. “They are in armour with their shields slung over their backs – the middle shield has a red cross on it. The female figure behind is Dindrane, Percivale’s sister, and she is wearing just a plain, medieval garment (everyday clothes) and it’s she who beckons to them.

Now the voice took over again and explained more about the green band:

“When you young adventurers decide to continue the quest and follow the knights – though today, without armour, you will instead have crash helmets, face shields, knee and elbow pads – perhaps even wet-suits or space gear – so you will get by! If you face the challenge you’ll find great reward. Merlin tells me that the green band represents the varying future opportunities, just ahead of each one of you, which could actually begin to close the gap between you and KristOmega. With each effort you will draw nearer to understanding the God with whom you are co-creators and who, so Merlin says, ‘Resides in you and you in Him’. Think it out, Questers.”

After this the screen disappeared, as suddenly as it had bobbed up.

When they returned nervously to the table and looked again for the heart-shaped egg, the spectacle and the brightness had disappeared and there was just the old terracotta chalice that Sam had found earlier, lying there. He walked slowly up to it and put it back in his pocket. It was still warm.

Feeling confused and as if they had just woken from a dream, the would-be questers, who had felt that they had achieved their goal, now felt an overwhelming sense of anti-climax.

“Well,” said Jonathan, breaking up the mood. “That really

is it then. It all happened, and always will happen, in our own hearts. That's OK with me. Now for the arm trip and those 'Finger Flights' we were told about. Come on!"

Luckily, the commentator soon took over and directed the visitors back out the way they had come in. They were told to cross over to the other side of the model and head on up the right arm.

The Cybernauts then made their way slowly along the well-constructed walkway, which had railings on either side. As they went they were still reflecting upon and discussing their recent experience and matters of the heart.

"When I first got in that little room," recalled Lucy, "it reminded me of the stable background shown in most Christmas crib models, but without a baby."

As she said this, Lucy was quite startled to hear Gilly beginning to sing an old hymn. It was the once popular one that goes like this:

*'Tell me the old, old story,
tell me the old, old story,
Of Jesus and His love.'*

"For some reason," said Gilly, after being questioned by the others, "I've got this song on my mind. Back in Bath, Aunt Sophie used to say that it always comforted her. She told us how her mother used to sing it to her while playing the tune on the piano. Perhaps it's telling us something."

"Well," pondered Sam. "I'll admit that the Gospel story is the best and most powerful story ever written, and it's about the man who started it all – our faith in human nature and God as our father. Tayar's new ideas have all grown from this. I actually felt my heart beating faster when I heard Merlin's explanation of the green band in the road. I saw that the more fully I played my part to bring my efforts to bear on present reality, the more I will become merged in that same life of Christ – the actual time when this old drinking vessel originated."

“And in its future glorification as well,” added Gilly. “I remember Merlin telling us that though God, as eternal Being, was at the core of everything, it was the Divine humanity of his special son we must learn to love and revere.”

By this time the wondrously inspired youngsters had reached the fairly steep incline leading up the arm, and the commentator was droning on about its acquired functions – reaching, throwing, hitting and waving. Great stress was being put upon the capability of embracing one another for love or comfort. Also the familiar phrase was quoted: ‘Underneath are the everlasting arms’, but this last was qualified by sad acknowledgment of growing doubts and fears.

However, this did not dampen the feelings of the hurrying enthusiasts, who had already reached the narrowing wrist and were approaching the sharp right hand turn which would take them into the hand.

Even Jonathan was beginning to catch on to the spirit of excitement for their future role and its implications.

“I’d like to follow the Grail knights in a spacesuit,” he declared, suddenly.

As they entered the space inside the large hand and walked along its palm, they were surrounded by sensations of movement and the sound of various activities. The voice, by means of ‘sound over’ explained that these laid-on additions were to emphasize the surprising fact that the workings of the hand occupied a huge portion of the living brain. This area, they were told, was concerned with the changes that had made apes into human beings – when the use of hands started that chain-reaction.

Next, they heard an orchestra playing a well-known composition and this was followed by the rhythmic noise of a large factory. Then they smelt the very appetizing aroma of a meal being cooked and they realized that these were all possible only through the skill of the hands. They remembered one of Tayar’s chief admonitions – to treat all man-made productions as natural and just as wonderful as those changes in species

and their extensions developed earlier in evolution. What's the difference in achievement, he'd asked, between the wings of a bird and those of an aeroplane? They understood again at that moment how evolution was now working in and through mankind and was conscious of itself.

After a few moments they located the four entry points to what they hoped would be the fingers, and walked towards them.

"The thumb must be a 'no-go' item – it's barred up," discovered Jonathan after they'd reached the area. "A pity," he commented. "I was going to choose that one. Now I suppose I'll have to take the smallest one – the little finger!"

In the end, Sam went into the index finger and the girls entered the two middle ones. The small passages curved upwards and were equipped with shallow steps and a side rail. When they came to what should have been the fingernails, they found compact and polished machines, obviously in good working order.

"Go past the machine," came the instructions from the voice, now relayed to each of them. "Sit down on the roofed seat in front of it. Fix the safety-bars, as you do in a fairground, and also the belts round your waists, as in your car. Then press the button on either arm of your seat and that's it. You will be in no danger and will land securely, even gently, back on the island's high plateau. The seats, when vacated, will be drawn up to the fingers again, and then you can all walk down and on to the main track once more."

After this operation had been successfully completed, the four were jubilant.

"It was the best ride I've ever had!" exclaimed Jonathan. "Except, of course, for the one in my flying horse dream – it was all totally and utterly cool."

"It struck me as a mini version of a fighter-pilot's ejector seat, the way we shot into the air," said Sam. "Perhaps a Mark 4 model," he joked.

The girls were still slightly dazed and obviously awe-

stricken. They looked up at the tall effigy from where they'd been transported so easily. Above the giant figure Gilly noted the many variations of cloud and bright blue patches which lit the ever changing sky.

Then she made her first new resolution.

"I'm sure we should never again look up to the skies for God and for our treasure in heaven, but forward to the future for our treasure on Earth – so lets hurry to get back on track towards the lighthouse and new Grail Centre."

"That's where those recomposed sixth century characters were being drawn," said Lucy. "We're all following our own inner highways as well, I suppose. I think that Johnny still wants to find some treasure he can touch or take away, though." Jonathan stretched and grunted his approval of her guess.

As they finally hit the main track and made their way along it, their eyesight seemed to them to have shed a thin layer which had been dulling it. Looking around them they felt as if, in the words of an 'oldie' song: 'Everything wants to be noticed.'

TWELVE

TREASURE ON EARTH

The four Merlinauts were walking southwards along the Island's main track, and they were still discussing new ideas arising from their period inside the strange effigy.

"I'm thinking," suggested Gillian, "that Tayar would have agreed that there is a sort of shrine to be found in the very core of our own selves and that it's centred, we imagine, around the heart. This fragment of God's light within each of us must be brought to the surface. Perhaps our quest has just been the discovery of this and a way to nourish it."

"Well said, Sis," said Sam, in response. "I'm sure that the old story of the Holy Grail is still very important in our subconscious minds... Actually, each of us is living our own special life story, probably drawing from some inner mythology. Merlin told us that myths can show us we're members of a universe that has meaning and purpose. He insisted that it was in the mythic content of our memory store where we'd find our treasures. The figures in myths could be aspects of ourselves, written large – if you get me."

"Well," said Lucy. "You've remembered what Merlin said, so clearly that I'm quite awe-struck! I was thinking though,

about what Gilly said about not looking for God and Heaven in the sky. I've been reminding myself of some of the hymns we used to sing in school, pointing us skywards: 'Heaven's morning breaks and Earth's vain shadows flee', for instance. Perhaps it should say: 'Earth's morning breaks and Heaven's vain shadows flee' instead?"

"Come on then," said Sam. "We must head on to the Centre now."

"I think, at this point, that I should intervene again," piped up Spriggy. "The Centre should be further explained. It all started, Merlin told me, with a few personal and visionary happenings felt by some inhabitants and retreat members on this island. The incidents consisted of realistic sightings of the Holy Grail and each one seemed slightly different. All these lucky individuals met together to discuss their experiences and soon this central meeting-place grew and grew. As others heard about it, Grail-watchers and spotters from all over Europe were attracted to it and it ended up as it is today. Its official name is: The Grail Interpretation Centre. Anyhow, you Merlinauts will soon be able to enter this place and see for yourselves."

Passing by Pencafn, on the way, they noticed more new houses around them there, all of these were very low buildings with strange roofs. While they were admiring the new jetty in the little harbour, they heard Jonathan shouting. He had gone on ahead again and had reached the narrower strip of land leading to the south end of the island.

"Hurry up, you lot," he called. "I can see it from here – the Grail Centre and everything... It's cool!"

When they joined him they saw a long, low structure, half of it underground, they suspected. The building was painted white, except for the roof, and attached at one end to the lighthouse. Being now early evening, and a magical atmosphere, the youngsters were very affected by the many rays of light coming from the whole building, as well as the lighthouse. The sky was illumined overhead in a mystical and

expectant fashion. Around the Centre was nestled a collection of smaller houses, also white, and built in the same style. The roofs, they noticed were all made from some sort of reflective material.

Our Merlinauts walked quickly down towards the open door. They saw that there was a circled Alpha/Omega design set on the lintel of the door, and looking round, they saw that each house had a similar logo on its door, only much smaller, of course. There were some shallow steps down to the entrance hall – a ramp as well. As they entered the large room, the first thing they noticed was a beautiful standing cross fixed to the floor a little distance from the left-hand wall of the hall. The cross was not of a great size but heavy-looking with large jewels set in gold and silver. The different coloured stones had been polished so that they twinkled like stars.

“Hey!” exclaimed Jonathan. “That’s *really* cool.” And he went straight over to it.

The next thing that gave the others a tingling feeling down the spine, was the sight of the three strange figures they’d seen on the track, now sitting together on a bench. Gathered round them were some smiling and attentive admirers – a few with cups of tea in their hands. The three youngsters moved nearer and a kindly woman standing beside them told them, in the pauses of the general conversation, what had happened and what had been said.

When the three characters (remade by computer in cyberspace) had found themselves near the graveyard, they’d been bitterly disappointed. They still had their full spirit and memory, and on surveying the nearby ruins of the Abbey and the strange-looking buildings beyond, they decided they could not now be in heaven. As they walked along the adjoining track they knew they were on Bardsey because of the lay of the land and they seemed to know where they must go. When they entered the Centre they were looked after and seated together while some Welsh speakers were hurriedly sought for. Two had then come forward.

The visitors from the past had been offered food and drink, but had refused it, saying they were not hungry or thirsty but only curious. One of the things they asked about was the nature of the queer brown liquid which people were drinking, and those funny cups on their little plates – very different to them from wine or ale. They'd asked about the large sign over the main door and been told it was the initial letters of the Greek words meaning the beginning and the end – the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet – and they were happy with that.

When the two translators discovered who these strange visitors were, they had first dealt with the court poet, whose name was Meilyr. He was the figure the youngsters had seen in front of the other two, walking along the track. It was the part of his poem which was written in English around the walls of the entrance hall. They'd gladly shown it to him and Meilyr was incredulous, but pleased – though a bit sad that it wasn't in his native Welsh. Here it is:

*'Waiting that trumpet,
May I lie quiet
in a cloister; and on it
The beating sea,
Deathless its fame,
and it so lonely,
Round its graves the breast of the salt sea –*

*Fair Mary's island,
Pure island of her pure ones,
To wait resurrection
Within it, were lovely.
Foretold of the cross,
Christ knows me, guides me across...
The Creator who made me, he'll receive me
Among true folk of the parish of Enlli.'*

After Meilyr had returned to his seat, our three young people heard how he and the others couldn't understand why they were still on Bardsey. They'd hoped, when they saw the jewelled cross by the door, that they might be entering heaven after all. The other two saints agreed that their Earthly lives had really been a pilgrimage to the Kingdom of God and they wondered where they were now. They were told that there had certainly been many, many pilgrims coming to *their* own graves.

The exchange then became more serious. One of their new friends told them, in sympathetic tones, that most Christians at this future date believed in the Teilhardian truth that the kingdom of heaven is the hoped-for future for our planet and that we should be joining with God to make it happen.

"We know you heard no trumpet," he said, "but we believe now that things happen naturally and in their own time."

The other interpreter, noting the confusion that followed this statement, now proposed a new line.

"Why don't we show them a video recording relevant to their situation here," he suggested. So they all agreed to set up the big screen for them on the right-hand wall. They then rummaged through the Centre's large collection of videos to find the right one. They moved the bench and resealed their VIP's who were conversing anxiously between themselves.

Meanwhile, as our other three were wrapt in wonder witnessing these extraordinary conversations, Jonathan was studying the magical cross. He read the notice saying how it had been dug up during the new building programme and dated back to the third or fourth century. He remembered the legend that Merlin had brought thirteen treasures with him to Bardsey Island. He only counted twelve precious stones on the front of the cross, so, looking carefully behind, he found an empty hole just at the place where the four sections crossed each other. He was intrigued.

While the preparations for the video show were still going on, Sam felt a series of desperate nudgings from behind. He

turned to see Jonathan, begging him for a loan of the torch. Sam, resenting the hassle, took it from his pocket and gave it to him, thinking no more about it.

The video began with an announcement that they were about to see only the good and very successful achievements of the last few decades. Many other successes and failures though, it went on, and how they also had changed the world, would take much longer and make depressing viewing. They were then treated to a series of spectacular shots of quickly-changing subjects. These included buildings, cities, bridges, motorways, and the giants of air-travel. It also portrayed a new version of Concorde. This part ended up by showing the view of our blue planet Earth, photographed as a spacecraft emerged from behind the moon.

There was then a break in the filming, leaving our visitors from the first millennium flabbergasted and looking at each other in complete disbelief, wondering if heaven could ever be anything like that. They'd noticed too that missing out on this scene of material progress were churches and chapels, with few new ones.

The voice of the presenter then came back and asked a rhetorical question:

“When, oh when, will our spiritual growth catch up, to allow miracles of advanced construction and speed to unite the world, rather than divide it more – as it still seems to do? Why can't the present millions of Christians and those of other popular faiths, begin to put their ideals into practise? There has been equal progress of negative development, so the gun and weaponry culture still poisons our forward thrust.”

The next half of the video was taken up with exquisite photographic studies of subjects from the countryside – the newly opened buds of the daffodil as it exposes its yellow trumpet, a woodland carpet of bluebells under the spring-time leaves of the beech tree and apple blossom against a blue sky. The sun was shining on all these things and there were shots of many quite different plants, animals and birds on the wing.

There were dolphins and whales, but it all ended up with the scene of a young squirrel playing about in frolicsome mood among the mauve crocus flowers. It then sat up on its haunches to nibble and look around.

When the show had finished and the VIP watchers, who still thought the screen must be magic, turned happily to their Welsh interpreters. They told them that they had been enchanted by the whole end section of the film, because they remembered seeing these things themselves on the Welsh mainland during their Earth lives. They also admitted they now knew they were still, and always will be, a part of this world.

While they were discussing these things there was a sudden commotion. Jonathan rushed towards them and pushed through the surrounding people to get to Sam again. He was holding something tightly in his hands. Sam was standing quite close to the three special guests and they now turned to look at the boys.

Jonathan had found a small round object hidden behind the cross, beneath some pieces of floorboard that must have been broken up during the setting up of the cross. The object, revealed by the torch, must have fallen in at the same time and sunk beneath the surface. When Jonathan tried to pick it out, it had come apart, but while retrieving the two halves a very fine necklace had slid into his hand. He had replaced the find and pushed the sphere back together.

Now, beside Sam, Jonathan opened the strange container and tipped out the delicate, golden coloured chain. There were gasps of breath from the watching saints, and also from the eleventh Century poet. The three of them became very excited and were exchanging gabbled sentences between each other. St. Lleuddad then called to one of the interpreters and told him something, accompanied by great emotion. The wondering onlookers were then told what it was all about:

“Lleuddad said,” began the interpreter, “that it was rumoured, during his time, that the thirteen legendary

treasures, supposed to be hidden on the island, were really all combined in one artefact. Of these jewels, one of them was far more precious than all the others...”

After this momentous statement the saint moved forward and, with trembling hands, picked up the thin gold chain from Jonathan’s outstretched palm, let it fall out and then held it up for his friends to see. He spoke to the interpreter:

“This could be the very chain that our Lord wore until the day before his death, when he gave it to St. John for safe keeping. It was given to him as a boy when his uncle, Joseph of Arimathea, took him to Glastonbury and acquired this item of jewellery there. It was made of Welsh gold.”

Giving it back to Jonathan, Lleuddad then said to the waiting interpreter:

“Tell the boy to take it over to St. Hywyn’s church at Aberdaron as soon as he leaves here. He should give it to the priest on duty who will get it to the nearest monastery for identification. We’re very grateful to have seen this.”

“Well done, Jonny!” called the girls in chorus.

“At last!” added Lucy.

“Yes, congratulations,” conceded his brother. “But I’m afraid it will have to go to a museum, you know.”

Jonathan did not mind. He’d found his treasure.

THIRTEEN

THE ROOM OF ROOMS

Soon after this excitement an announcement was made asking everyone to return to the conference room – they had been, actually, on a protracted tea break. This particular day was the monthly conference day on which all the different groups came together with the Island group.

Now, people started surging through the oddly designed door at the back of the hall and our newcomers joined them. The three mesmerized celebrities got up to follow their Welsh friends, having been briefed on the coming procedure – they then appeared to mingle with the crowd. The youngsters were in front of them and after jostling themselves through the door, they waited to see the VIPs come through, but they never came. Our four began to suspect that they'd not see them again. Gilly was quite still now, and staring straight ahead.

“You’re listening to Spriggy again, aren’t you?” said Lucy, who was standing beside her. They all looked enquiringly at Gilly, and then waited.

“Yes,” she confirmed. “He’s saying that Merlin told him that those three men, previously long dead to Earth – would at this stage revert to their other dimension. And Spriggy is

adding that he himself thinks they'd had enough for now! Although, the Master *had* told him that they would now find it easier to progress to their higher state." Gilly paused and listened intently again. People were looking at her as they passed by.

"Merlin is going to put the three of them in touch with Tayar," Gilly went on. "And his message to us, says Spriggy, is this: surely, we should all know by now, that the Death-barrier has been breached." She then relaxed and started to look around, so they all began to move forward into the room.

When the company had cleared a bit the Merlinauts were surprised to see three life-size model figures, side by side, in the centre of the room. They were the Grail knights – Sirs Galahad, Percivale and Bors – and were dressed in simple cotton tunics corded at the waist and of different colours. Galahad's had a red cross on the front – he was in the middle. All signs of armour were now plainly absent. There were no swords to be seen, for even Arthur's Excalibur, which Sir Bedivere had thrown back to the Lady of the Lake, was no more needed – it should now have greater symbolic use for fighting inner battles.

The striking aspect of these figures were the faces, which, the youngsters now guessed, were living likenesses of the three twentieth century 'stand-ins' for the old Grail heroes. This was an advanced example of the newly perfected art of fleshing out and moulding a copy of the human face in its 3D rounded form – built up from an original photograph. Some expressions could even be realistically altered.

A little way in front of the three figures was the robed and outstretched effigy of Dindrane, Percivale's sister who had died to save another – in the same way as a mother would die to save her children. Her head was covered but her face looked serene. She was lying in an old open boat – sharply stylised and with an image of the Grail at the helm. This would have been the last journey for this model of female exchange, as she went to join the Grail knights.

The three Grail finders were named and easily identified, but Spriggy had been told by Merlin to explain to Gillian about Dindrane, and she passed it on to the others. At first, while looking at this sad set-up, she thought that it reminded her of one of Teilhard's favourite themes: 'The Eternal Feminine' – deeply embedded in our consciousness.

Behind the Grail knights stretched the shelves of a mini-library with three sections. These consisted of the main works, from each of the three great spiritual innovators of the last century – Teilhard, Paul Tillich and Charles Williams. There were lexicons which made it easy to look up any special theme or subject from all the literary treasures left by these fine thinkers and personalities.

Our Merlinauts, fascinated with the idea, were keen to try it out. They consulted each other after reading about the possibilities from a notice beside the figures. However, they felt ill at ease amongst all these strangers. Looking around, they now took in the fact that it was a very spacious room, with rows of chairs in it – but nobody was sitting in them. They noticed that everyone was chatting and drifting towards the six small, very ordinary-looking doors, three on either side of the room, and forming groups there. The youngsters gathered that the main conference must be over and people were waiting for the next stage, so, gazing again at the benign faces of the three Grail Knights, they felt they must try to make some use of the books.

While the four confused young cybernauts were attempting to look up some favourite themes, some of the people watching them offered to help. This speeded things up a lot and, after finding and reading aloud their selections, a screen behind the shelves lit up. On it, to their delight, were shown their chosen passages. The first one, from their Tayar, read as follows:

“Either there is an escape from death – somewhere – for an individual’s thought, for his self-consciousness, or the world is a hideous mistake... Since the uselessness of going on is an idea intolerable to everyone, the alternative must be to BELIEVE. To awaken this belief shall be my task. I swear it.”

After this, they found some more texts from all three of the knights (if people want to read them, please note that they’ll be reprinted in the notes at the end of this report on the present KristOmega File).

Suddenly, at a moment when our four were planning one last subject for display, they felt a strong pressure and saw the chairs disappear into the floor. The whole room seemed to heave, for it was actually contracting. The six doors seemed to be coming towards them, looking larger and larger – the big hall and its contents seemed to be converging upon them. Then suddenly again, it stopped, and a welcome voice made an announcement:

“The Centre is now ready for the six groups to re-enter their side rooms in order to access what they have learnt during the conference, and how to contribute to world unity... For those here for the first time,” the voice continued, “I should explain that this is a breathing room – it accommodates the various discussion groups, when needed, and can expand at will into the great hall where everyone can come together and aspire to dreams of wholeness.”

All the people, locals and mainlanders, began to file into their chosen doors on which the patterns, near-to, looked really exciting. Our Merlinauts, left alone, didn’t know what to do and the three of them looked hopefully at Gilly again.

“Spriggy says”, she finally began, “that Merlin has informed him our time is nearly up, but he first wants to show us something. Spriggy will explain it to me – he’ll stay with us. We must go outside now,” she ended.

They then took a last affectionate look at the faces of the

four Grail figures who seemed almost to smile at them, and they left, feeling that inner warmth.

On the way out, Sam retrieved his torch from behind the cross, and was soon glad of it – for it was night time. With the help of lights from the Centre they set off to a west coast inlet, not far from cafn, where surprises awaited them. They seemed to arrive at their terminus in no time at all.

All around them were signs of recent activity and the beginnings of a large engineering project. The workmen had gone but the youngsters read a notice which said: ‘Tunnel to the mainland under construction’.

While they were looking, Jonathan took out from his pocket the curious little ball containing the chain, just to assure himself it was alright – but he dropped it. They all started to look for it... and the next instant, they found themselves back home in their sitting room. The KristOmega disc had finished and had only taken ten minutes in real time.

The End.

April 2003

POSTSCRIPT

That very summer, when the four Cybernauts were on their next visit to Bath, Gillian had a message from Spriggy. It was summoning them to a further visit to Merlin's basement room (or 'den', as the youngsters called it) which was in one of the houses in the Circus – a sort of Georgian roundabout affair.

As soon as possible, and following the usual procedure, they arrived at the half open door and admitted themselves into the mysterious room where the four seats were placed ready for them.

After a greeting from the familiar, deep-sounding voice of Merlin, they were asked if they had learnt anything from their experiences on Bardsey.

"I think," began Gilly, after a lengthy pause, "that it's made me even more convinced that by 'walking with Tayar' I should be able to find my way into his new Creation story and live from it."

"Good," exclaimed the Magus. "Perhaps you saw how this man's vision has brought together cosmic, human and divine dimensions centred on Christ and in the process of becoming greater and greater – ending, according to Teilhard, as a personality of personalities."

"Well, yes – I see it in a way. But must we discard all the rituals and comforts of the traditional churches... which seem irreplaceable."

"I'm quite certain that nothing should be discarded – just

extended,” came the reply. “Quite radically, I admit, if it’s going to be Christianity squared. The older practises will be invested with a fresh and 21st century meaning. I hope the new symbolism will lead to the discovery that you can pray through your work and be participating in building the Earth just by dedication and hope, which is an organic necessity for your survival.”

“But how could we praise God without church services and hymns and so on?” asked Lucy, joining in the discussion.

“Well,” pondered Merlin. “Leading on from these highly developed acts of worship you’ll learn to praise God also in the practise of your own creative arts. They will incorporate more and more your desire to express your love and devotion to a God who lives and breaths the life and breath of creation.

“How about you, Sam,” enquired the masterful voice filling the room.

“There *is* something I now understand much better,” replied Sam. “It’s the fact that soon the miracles of all this new technology will replace the witchcraft and sorcery of the past with the true magic of the future – that will be a completely normal and natural part of our lives like Cyberspace and the Internet. I can also begin to connect all this with Tayar’s Noosphere.”

“Well spoken, Sam. I can see you’ve taken the evolutionary leap into the next millennium. That noosphere idea is a potent one, described by Tayar as ‘The living membrane which is stretched like a film over the lustrous surface of the planet which holds us.’ It’s like ‘a halo round the Biosphere.’ In the City of Bath the great geologist, William Smith, dictated ‘The Order of the Strata’ over 200 years ago – now he could have added another one. Carbonek was just a part of Arthur’s country, Logres, but was a place where the Holy could be glimpsed, and so is the island of Bardsey where the saints were buried. Like Tayar’s Christosphere, which is the spiritual part of the noosphere, one day it will join up and permeate the whole of the planet and, with other faiths, will become the soul of the World.”

There was a longer silence after this last exposition. Then

Jonathan was asked if, as the youngest Merlinaut, he had something to say.

“I wish I could find that real chain,” he answered dolefully. “Perhaps it actually exists?”

“I can assure you, young Jonathan,” said Merlin in sympathetic tones, “that you will soon be able to find many new treasures as you delve into the coming spiritual upheavals – there are sure to be new discoveries, unearthed from the past, which could connect you closely to the historical Christ. So keep using that lately-enhanced eyesight of yours. There’ll be clues in plenty for the mentally alert.”

“That’s it then, my loyal apprentices. But I must tell you first about the last KristOmega Files which will be withheld for a few years, until you’ve reached more grown-up adulthood. Spriggy will alert you when the time is right, and will make Disc Numbers Four and Five available. You see, the next phase of Tayar’s ‘Third Era Gospel’ will be when, among other happenings, the Island of twenty-thousand saints joins with the mainland. This feat, as well as tunnelling under stormy waters, will do the same thing for the agitated state of the world’s collective subconscious. It’s a symbolic counterpart of the time when the detached part of Logres (Holy Carbonek) was freed by Galahad and merged back into Arthur’s Kingdom.”

“But what form will they take?” asked Lucy, trying to think ahead in a somewhat bemused state of mind. “Will we go on another trip?”

“Yes, my dear Lucy, our team worrier. You will all go on the ultimate trip. But it will be a sort of Epilogue, really. In this you will all have a chance to access and identify some ways that the spiritual and material are beginning to come together in a form of cosmogenesis... Nothing to worry about – so off you go, my friends, and just remember that ‘Everything that rises, converges’ – Tayar’s special saying – and that matter grows towards spirit. God bless, and speed you on your way.”

Our young people left the room, but on their way out they noticed these words of Teilhard de Chardin printed on the wall:

*“The sense of the Earth
opening and exploding upwards into God;
and the sense of God taking root
and finding nourishment downwards into Earth.”*
Building the Earth, Chapman 1965, p.117

ENDNOTES

Chosen passages by the Merlinauts from the three 20th century knights. All these quotes refer to the coming of the power of reflection to homo sapiens – from life to superlife.

Teilhard

a) *“...The awakening of human thought. Finally, by its very appearance and perpetual rebirth, it provides evidence that a vital link has once and for all been established between our efforts, which hasten, and the upper goal, which directs the progress of hominization.”*

The Vision of the Past, Collins 1966, p.79

b) *“With the threshold of reflection, we really arrive at a new form of biology”*

The Phenomenon of Man, Collins Clear-type Press, 1959

c) *“As soon as evolution reflects, it can no longer accept nor carry itself farther, without recognizing that it is irreversible, that is to say immortal.”*

Writings in Time of War, Collins 1965, p.79

d) *“Reality always follows the most favourable line of development.”*

Writings in Time of War, Collins 1965, p.79

e) *“Reflection: The transition which is like a second birth from simple life to life squared.”*

The Heart of Matter, Collins 1978, p.35

f) *“The current which carries souls along with it is irreversible. In the end it runs free. Nothing can divert it from the goal it has sensed. Once the eye of the spirit has seen, it never loses sight of it.”*

The Future of Man, Collins 1964, p.155

g) *“From time to time a great common aspiration comes to the surface from roots that lie deep down in mankind – in one body they set out together as though to find a new Holy Grail.”*

The Future of Man, Collins 1964, p.155

h) *“You know that for some time now the principal interest in my life is no longer Fossil Human, but the Human of tomorrow; or, more exactly, ‘the God of tomorrow,’ since I am more and more convinced that the great event of our time is a kind of change in the face of God in which the pure ‘God of above’ of yesterday is being combined with a kind of ‘God of ahead’ (in extension of the Human).”*

Letters to Two Friends, Rapp & Whiting 1970, p.114

i) *“To know that there is a way out, that there is air, and light, and love, somewhere beyond the reach of all death. To know this – to know that it is neither an illusion nor a fairy tale.”*

Activation of Energy, Collins 1970, p.238

Charles Williams

a) *“Eyes then are compacted power; they are an index of vision; they see and refer us to greater seeing. Nor has the stomach a less noble office. It digests food; that is, in its own particular method, it deals with the nourishment offered by the universe.”*

b) *“The sacred body is the plan upon which physical human creation was built, for it is the centre of physical human creation.”*

c) *“The greatness of man is written even in his incapacity, and when he sins he sins because of a vision which, even though clouded, is great and ultimate.”*

*Selected writings, Oxford University Press 1961,
pp.118 & 119*

d) *“The supernatural must in some sense include the natural. A new Earth was promised as well as a new heaven. Whatever the promise means, that Earth is presumably in some relation to this Earth.”*

*Selected writings, Oxford University Press 1961,
p.106*

e) *“Logres (from the Greek word, Logos meaning ‘word’) was designed for the coming of the Grail. To be conscious of them (i.e. the incarnation and the sacrament) as one is conscious of oneself – Christ-conscious instead of self-conscious is the achievement of the Grail – is the perfect fulfilment of this, the thing happening.”*

*Selected writings, Oxford University Press 1961,
p.140*

Paul Tillich

a) *“Where the New Reality appears, one feels united with God, the ground and meaning of one’s existence... One accepts one’s self as something which is eternally important, eternally loved, eternally accepted.”*

The New Being, SCM 1956, p.22

b) *“Our period has decided for a secular world. That was a great and much needed decision. It gave consecration and holiness to our daily life and work. Yet it excluded those deep things for which religion stands: the feeling for the inexhaustible mystery of life, the grip of an ultimate meaning... and the invincible power of an unconditional devotion. These things CANNOT be excluded. If we try to expel them in their divine images, they re-emerge in daemonic images... we feel our period’s sickness unto death.”*

The Shaking of the Foundations, Penguin Books 1949, p.181

c) *“That which we have seen with our eyes according to our gospel is the Word, the eternal Word or Logos in whom God speaks, who can be seen through the works of creation and who is visible in the man Jesus.”*

The New Being, SCM 1956, p.127

Others, who also set out in search of the Grail, have not been forgotten – especially Sirs Gareth, Gaheris and Lancelot (John Robinson, Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Havelock Ellis – the 20th Century stand-ins) who also had great insight and extra gifts of imagination and resolve. They’ll be dealt with later in K File Number Four.

They failed to achieve the Grail, but found out many truths for us on the way. So, as William Blake, Merlin’s William,

tells us in his ‘Prophetic books’ – “The imagination is not a state: it is the human existence itself.” In the same long poem he also declares that “Christ is the sun, the human imagination in everyone.”

*“In the beginning was the Word. What the Word was,
God was.”*

John, Chapter 1. The New English Bible.



MERLIN'S ISLAND

After a strange encounter with the wizard Merlin – the Master of Space and Time – Sam, Gilly, Lucy and Jonathan take another magical trip, this time to Bardsey Island in North Wales.

Bardsey was the home of one of the very first Christian communities in Britain, and has been a place of pilgrimage since the Middle Ages. The four teenagers explore the island's past and future, with the help of Merlin, Tayar (Teilhard de Chardin), and characters from Arthurian legend, and become involved with ghostly appearances and a strange enchantment.

Merlin's Island is the third book of Margaret Mann's wonderful "Merlin Series". It will be enjoyed by all who have followed the previous adventures, and by everyone who enjoys a good story.

Written with humour and insight, *Merlin's Island* will be an inspiration to all who share a passionate hope for a better world.

The Merlin Series:
The Merlin Set-Up
Under the Merlin Spell
Merlin's Island

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