

Hold the Door Open

Drake Oranwood

(1. Opening)

Will you harken a while, for I must speak of Gareth:
My brother, my teacher, my friend;
Of the youngest and best of the four brothers Orkney,
But all stories come to an end.

He inquired once, “Gawain, will you do me a service?
My friend here needs somewhere to stay.”
It was Brangwin, the handmaid of Princess Isolde;
I had heard she’d been stolen away.

“Please, Gawain, keep her safe from all eyes, I implore you.”
I said, “Gareth, what’s this affair?
For what business should knights keep young women in hiding—”
He cut off my words with a glare.

“Are we chivalry’s legends? Read closely the tale,
In the margins it shows if we thrive or we fail.
Dear Gawain, eldest brother I prize and adore,
You will learn that as knights we owe more...”

“What might we hold, if we hold the door open?
What could we have, if a haven we make?
If we stand in need, and we hold the door open,
The might of our Table won’t break.
The might of our Table won’t break.”

(2. Brangwin)

Brangwin said, “My Isolde is in love with a young man,
But she was to marry a king.
So her mother contrived to ensure this alliance,
And she took me under her wing.

“I would pour her a drink that would change Isolde’s passion,
Make her husband king in her eyes.
I refused to do wrong to a lady’s consent—
Then she seized me, ignoring my cries.

“A cold night in the woods might bring me to my senses,
So I was left bound to a tree.
Palamedes the Saracen came to my aid;
He believed me, and he set me free.

“Will you keep Gareth’s promise that I won’t be caught?”
“Lady Brangwin, forgive me, I’d given no thought—”
“Sir Gawain, women all, be we servants or wives,
Should have sovereignty over our lives...”

“What might we hold, if we hold the door open?
What could we choose, with a choice freely ours?
If we stand in trust, and we hold the door open,
Our kingdom might shine like the stars.
Our kingdom might shine like the stars.”

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(3. Palamedes)

So I left her and sought after Sir Palamedes,
Who, each man he faced he'd unseat;
But no matter his valor, each tournament day
Would the Saracen end in defeat.

"Palamedes," I asked him when we were alone,
"Have you been holding back from your best?"
He said, "One of my color outshining these knights?
Sir Gawain, that's a risk I'll not test.

"Many say that I'm pining for Princess Isolde,
But it's Brangwin who's captured my heart;
She accepts me in fullness and gave me her word
That my faith would not keep us apart."

I said, "Good Palamedes, a fool have I been!
For your chivalry's not in your faith or your skin."
When he held Brangwin close on the day they were wed,
I remember the words that he said...

"What might we hold, if we hold the door open?
What is it worth, if we value each soul?
If we stand in truth, and we hold the door open,
Our kingdom might truly be whole.
Our kingdom might truly be whole."

(4. Gareth)

You recall, Gareth first came to Camelot nameless,
And served in the kitchen a year.
You discovered his virtues, and you gave him knighthood,
But there's more I need you to hear.

A few days before Yule, I approached him in private
And said, "There's a kinship I sense:
I could swear you were Gwyneth, my sweet darling sister—
What mean you behind this pretense?"

"O Gawain, hear me please, that is my name no longer,
For lady nor lord strikes me true.
But it's knighthood that calls me: if you keep my secret,
Then I'll be a brother to you."

Thus, at Pentecost next, our young knight won acclaim,
For a place at the Table Round bore Gareth's name.
Oh, we Orkneys, we kept this conspiracy fast,
But he idolized you to the last...

What might we hold, if we hold the door open?
What could we dream, if we dreamed it for all?
If we stand in pride, and we hold the door open,
Our fellowship, how could it fall?
Our fellowship, how could it fall?

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(5. Mordred)

Some months back, Gareth said, “Keep your eye upon Mordred:
He’s stirring up fear and dissent.”

I responded, “What mean you? He is our half-brother.
How can you malign his intent?”

“Brangwin told me, Gawain, that he laid hands upon her,
And when she declared she was wed,
Mordred hinted this place knew its share of adultery,
A queen might be caught in her bed.

“Have you heard how he whispers that Saracen blood
Is a blight with no place in our court?”

“Gareth, Mordred is kin, and the son of King Arthur,
I’ve seen nothing like you report.”

“You must heed me, Gawain! There are those who speak fair,
But their words they are venom, their questions a snare.
They will rise up by fostering division and hate,
Don’t you see what’s at risk if we wait?...

“Who must we hold, if we hold the door open?
Who of our kind, is unkind at the core?
If we stand alert, and we hold the door open,
There are some we must show the door.
There are some we must show the door.”

(6. Gawain)

We arrive, Lancelot, at the end of our story,
For Gareth, he died at your hand.
When you saved Guinevere, you saw not who her guard was,
Precisely as Mordred had planned.

With his death, I fell prey to my grief and my fury
And Arthur, I pledged him to war.
Though I know you loved Gareth as dearly as I did,
I could not forgive anymore.

I helped Camelot fall as I sought you in combat,
And this wound may cost me my life.
Palamedes at last gives the counsel I needed:
My brother sought justice, not strife.

So I ask, Lancelot, will you pledge Gareth’s creed?
Will you welcome the lost, and defend those in need?
Will you pass on this mission, until your last breath,
So our brother-knight lives beyond death?...

What might we hold, if we hold the door open?
How could we live, if we lived what we learned?
If we stand in love, and we hold the door open,
Could we see our kingdom returned?...

What might we hold, if we hold the door open?
How could the cost not be worth the reward?
If we stand in hope, and we hold the door open,
There may come a day it’s restored.
There may come a day it’s restored.