

THE LIGHT AT CARBONEK:

A Ceremonial Drama of the Grail

Celebrants:

the Fisher King (FK in the script)
the Grail Bearer (GB)
the Knight of the Quest (KQ)
three participants in the Grail Procession
three voices in darkness (V1, V2, V3)

Setting:

An open space in the center of a room, lit by a single light from above. There is a throne under the light. A short distance behind it is an altar, richly draped, bearing two white candles in candlesticks. There are two entrances, one in the east (behind the altar), one in the west (in front of the throne). The audience is located to north, west and south; the three voices in darkness are located in these positions as well, behind the audience if possible.

Materials:

the Hallows:
- the Grail
- the Spear
- the Sword
- the Platter, bearing bread, salt, and a plain cup full of wine
costumes for the celebrants
altar cloth, candlesticks and candles
a white silk cloth to veil the Grail
a book on a lectern by the throne
a gnarled walking stick for the Fisher King
a bell (low and deep, like a church bell)
a chime (high and clear)

Magical Work:

Will be provided in a separate document. The Grail Bearer is the magical center of the ceremony, as she is responsible for bringing through the magical energies of the Grail. (It is for this reason that she does not speak at any point in the ceremony.) The three voices in darkness construct and shape the context of energies in which the ritual takes place. All other participants take part in the inner work to the best of their ability, but their principal function is dramatic -- that is, their words and actions function as anchors for the magical energies.

Opening

<The three voices are in place before the beginning. All lights are turned out. After a moment, the central light is turned on, and the bell rings once.>

<The door to the east then opens, and the Grail Bearer, Fisher King, and members of the Grail procession enter in single file; they are not carrying the Hallows, which remain outside the room at this time. The order of the procession is as follows: one member of the procession, Grail Bearer, Fisher King, rest of the members of the procession. FK walks with a limp, supporting himself with a walking stick. All circle one and a half times clockwise around the throne and altar, ending with GB standing in the west; all face the throne, forming an open semicircle; FK steps in front of GB and then walks to the throne; others drop to one knee and bow heads as he does so, then rise after he has taken his seat and circle around sunwise to stand behind him in the same open semicircle.>

<After a short time, FK opens book on lectern, and begins to read aloud from it, slowly, as though the words awaken painful memories. He continues to hold the walking stick in one hand.>

FK: Then the Fisher King arose up fiercely, and said, Knight, hast thou slain my brother? Thou shalt die therefore ere thou depart. And he caught in his hand a grim weapon and smote eagerly at Balin; but Balin put the sword betwixt his head and the stroke, and therewith his sword burst in sunder. And when Balin was weaponless he ran into a chamber in order to seek some weapon, and so from chamber to chamber, and no weapon he could find, and always the Fisher King after him. And at the last he entered into a chamber that was marvellously well dight and richly, and thereby stood a table of clean gold, and upon the table stood a marvellous spear strangely wrought. And when Balin saw that spear, he gat it in his hand and turned him to the King, and smote him passing sore with that spear, that the King fell in a swoon, and therewith the castle roof and walls brake and fell to the earth. Then departed Balin and rode forth through the countries and cities, and found the people dead, slain on every side. And all that were alive cried, O Balin, thou hast caused great damage in these countries; for the dolorous blow thou gavest unto King Pelles three countries are destroyed.

<He sighs, closes the book and bows his head.>

V1: Winter lies on the Waste Land.

V2: No life springs from the deep earth. The voices of the wells are silent.

V3: No rain falls from the barren sky. The meadows wither. The forests die.

<The chime sounds once.>

V1: What is the Grail?

V2: The goal of the quest, the heart of the light, the vessel of the blood, the cauldron of rebirth, the stone fallen from heaven.

<The chime sounds once.>

V3: What is Carbonek?

V1: The Castle of the Peaks, the living heart of the realm of Logres, where the Fisher King sits wounded and waiting for the one who will bring healing to the land.

<The chime sounds once.>

V2: What was the Dolorous Blow?

V3: The breaking of the union between the life of the king and the life of the land, the life of the land and the life of the people, the life of the people and the life of all.

<The chime sounds thrice.>

V1: Who will right the ancient wrongs?

V2: Who will call springtime back to the wounded land?

V3: Who will ask the question that brings healing?

<The chime sounds once. There is a long silence, and then the Knight of the Quest pounds on the door three times and enters. He advances toward the throne from the west, then drops to one knee.>

KQ: My lord, I am a knight of the court of King Arthur. Long time have I ridden in search of the keep of Carbonek and the Grail, through forest and through waste. As I journeyed abroad ere sunset, I saw the towers of this keep from far off, and rode hither that I might ask shelter for the night.

FK: Be welcome here, sir knight. Peradventure your quest is at an end, for this place is Carbonek. Come, stand beside me.

<The Knight rises and does so. When he is in his place, the bell sounds twelve times, slowly.>

<At this the Grail Bearer and members of the procession, standing behind the Fisher King, turn left and go around in a clockwise circle to the west, and then to the east and out the door. They take up the Hallows, and come back out in the following order: spear; Grail, unveiled, carried by Grail Bearer; sword, unsheathed and point upright; and platter. The procession then

files back into the room and goes once clockwise around the throne and altar, east to east. When they reach the east, the Grail Bearer goes behind the altar and stands there, facing west, holding the Grail in both hands; the spear and sword bearers stand one to either side, while the bearer of the platter puts it on the altar and moves out of the way.>

<When this is done, the Knight, who has watched the whole process in puzzlement, turns to the Fisher King.>

KQ: My lord, whom does the Grail serve?

<The Fisher King is healed at once. He rises slowly to his feet, his face transfigured, and suddenly casts away the walking stick, which clatters onto the floor.>

FK: For long years beyond counting I have waited for that question. The blessing of the Grail shall be with you, sir knight, and with all who are present; and in time to come, you shall have the Grail in your keeping. Come!

<He leads the Knight around to the altar, and stands before it, raising his hands over the platter and bowing his head. The Grail Bearer raises the Grail high in both hands, so it appears above the Fisher King's head as he consecrates the elements of the communion.>

FK: Let the Guardians of this Mystery place their blessing in bread, salt and wine, so that all may partake of the gifts of the Grail.

<Grail Bearer puts the Grail down on the altar behind the platter, veils it with the white cloth, and then administers the communion to the Fisher King, and then to the Knight. As the Knight is being served, the Fisher King goes around clockwise to the west and addresses the audience.>

FK: We invite you all to join with us in the Communion of the Grail, so that the light and the healing of the Grail may go forth from you throughout the whole world.

<He gestures around clockwise to the east. At the same time the platter bearer goes around clockwise to the altar and takes communion, helping the audience get the idea. The three voices may also leave their stations at this point and get in line. The Grail Bearer serves all. The Knight goes to the West and stands beside the Fisher King when he is done; the platter bearer remains near the altar. The audience members go back to their seats. When everyone else is finished, the spear bearer and sword bearer take communion, and the Grail Bearer does so last of all, finishing the wine in the cup and placing the cup upside down on the platter. She then takes up the Grail again.>

<The bell sounds once. At this signal, the platter bearer takes

up the platter, and the Grail procession forms up in the same order as before. It goes clockwise around the space to the west, where the Knight and the Fisher King are standing. They become the front of the procession, and lead it out the door in the east.>

V1: Healed is the king.

V2: Healed is the land.

V3: Healed is the unity.

<The light goes out. The last words of the ceremony are spoken in total darkness.>

V1: Whom does the Grail serve?

<The chime sounds once, and the lights are turned on after a suitable pause.>

GRAIL RITUAL MAGICAL WORK

A. The Grail Bearer focuses throughout on the energies of the Grail, using personally relevant visualizations.

B. The Fisher King focuses on the concept and experience of his woundedness, and the woundedness of the land, until his healing; at this point, and from then on, he focuses on the experience of health and on the healing and blossoming of the land. All celebrants who do not have other magical roles join in with these intentions.

C. The Voices in Darkness establish, in the initial darkness, a triangle of energies linking the places where they sit. This triangle encloses the Fisher King's throne but does not enclose the altar; it may be visualized as a white hollow triangle on black. This is maintained until the healing, when a second triangle is established across the first, forming a hexagram. This second triangle is gold, and the Grail Bearer is at its apex; when it is formed, the background of both triangles changes from black to rich, verdant green. At the end of the ceremony, just before the final question is asked, the hexagram is dissolved into light and the light radiates out throughout the world.