



Death of a Fair Knight*

After defeat at Camlann, as I lay near death's door
and after his much disobedience, Lord Bedivere
did cast Excalibur into the dark lake. And there
the Lady of the Lake plunged with my sword
into the granite silver waters.

And She, my mistress and my doom,
Morgan à Gwyr –hight the Fair Witch–
and her black-clad minions shippèth me
now unclad in my armour and disarmèd
to rest in somber Avalon Isle,
wherein I await in the Bardo
to return one more day
to my rightful throne
at Carm-àl-Uthr,
if She so please.

Good sirs, we leave bit by bit,
for already in the nests of old
there are no birds nowadays.
I was mad and now am sane;
I was Don Quijote de la Mancha,
and am now, as I've said,
simply Alonso...
May by your leave
my repentance and my truth
return me to the esteem
that was in me once held,
and do carry on, scribe:

«When I die,
I want you to dress me in straight-leg shoes;
a box-back coat and a Stetson hat.
Put a twenty dollar gold piece on my watch chain
so all the boys'll know that I died
standing pat.»

*Poem by © Pascual Delgado, May 9th 2018. Texts from the second and third stanzas are from *Segunda parte del ingenioso caballero don Quijote de la Mancha*, Part Two, Chapter LXXIV (1615); and from the song *St. James Infirmary* – by Irving Mills (1929), Lou Rawls version (1966). Illustration is from a medieval manuscript in the British Library *King Arthur returns his sword*, MS Additional 10294.