

Journal 10 - Corwin's Paris

Later that day I brought Guin her lunch and read to her from a technical handbook on helicopters as she ate. After she had finished I took the plate back downstairs to the kitchen, but I was distracted on the way by a call from the dining room for a bucket. I went in to see what was happening in there to require a bucket and found Intruder, his arms covered in bloody, elbow-length gloves opening up a giant man with several (presumably) surgical tools. The man lay on the table, on an off-green cloth, while several of his internal organs lay around the room in various bowls, buckets and glass jars. A small electronic device of some sort chattered in one corner.

Intruder was concentrating on both the organs he placed on the plate I held before me and on the results the device were displaying. Putting the plate of secondary heart (according to him) to one side, he told me that his subject was the individual who had attacked Victor and Guin. He was a skilled 'shapeshifter' apparently, and capable of imitating another while retaining his sense of self; this fellow had been imitating Gerard, that was how he was so strong and fast. He was also very similar to Gerard 'genetically', whatever that meant.

I did not know precisely what he was talking about; much of it went over my head. I presume it was the same thing that enabled Morianna to look and act like Intruder, only this person was better at it. Not that anything was made any clearer by this assumption.

I left, confused, and went for a walk around the city, this time with more of a goal in mind. I explored the centre of the city as well as looking at the Bastille. It was better here, not as cramped and inhuman as far as I could see, though still a prison.

In the early evening I found Andreas seated outside a small restaurant off one of the main streets. We talked for a while about how this place was different to the Paris I knew, and then he took me off on a tour of the back streets of Corwin's Paris.

He showed me places that I had known as slums, only here they were cleaner, better built; not so much slums as just another area of low-grade housing. We did not stay in that area long; apparently 'his Pattern' (Corwin's I would guess) was 'nearby' and we should not tarry too close for too long.

He led the way to a place very similar to the Moulin Rouge, only of a somewhat lower class. Here the girls were just as attractive but invited more intimacy, mostly because the majority of them spent their time dancing naked or mostly naked on tables, or even right next to customers who enjoyed a closer view.

I probably enjoyed several closer views that night, though my memory of the evening remains a little foggy.

The next morning Guin complained when I took her breakfast to her; apparently Andreas and I had been rather loud and boisterous when we had returned last night. Most of her complaints concerned the songs and jokes associated with the bottled organs of the dismembered shapeshifter in the dining room.

I returned downstairs to find our little (now not so little) party had increased by one again; a tall, very heavily built man with skin deeply darkened by the sun, long black hair and wearing simple clothing. He was introduced as Michael.

Inevitably, Tristan and his wife had already gone out; they were shopping again.

I was told we were to have another meeting after breakfast, over coffee. Corwin told Julie and Florence that they were free to go shopping for the morning to get away from our discussions; one of his maids would go with them to guide them around the city. They quickly finished and gratefully joined their guide out by their coach.

Fiona and Bleys did not grace us with their presence, though Dworkin did arrive about half way through the discussion.

It was suggested that since one of his caravans was in part guarded by a shapeshifter, perhaps Eric had somehow recruited shapeshifters from Chaos? He might have worked on how both they and he wanted revenge on those of Amber for both their defeats; his when he had died (or should that be 'died'?) and theirs when Amber had defeated them at the borders of the Courts (had they? It was the first I had heard of it). Perhaps these same

shapeshifters has also formed the Black Rose group that had struck several times in Amber before Eric had taken over?

The caravan that Victor and Guin had attacked, as well as several others according to reports from the Rangers, had mostly been carrying some form of ore. The exact nature of this ore was unknown, but it was known for being of use to enchanter's, to store magical energy. It had been thought that at least one of the supply caravans might have been carrying food to Eric's army, but apparently none were. The quantity of ore being moved into Amber was apparently sufficient to construct enough sets of armour and weapons for over a hundred million troops.

Why was his army being under-supplied? Was it to force the soldiers to ravage the land around Amber, to drive the people out and anger Eric's relatives? It looked as if he were not planning to stay long in Amber.

I asked if the ore could be intended for the fashioning of the stone giants that had been fielded against the Ents; presumably they would have no need of food and neither did they suffer any morale problems.

When I asked about the large scale destructive weapons I had read about, I was told that explosives on the scale of bombs were not supported by the physical laws on Amber. I wonder at the truth of that, and how coincidental it is for that state of affairs to exist.

It was put about that Eric might be working on creating his own Pattern, but the situation did not make sense if that were his intention. With the Jewel of Judgement in his possession he could make one at any time (another interesting nugget of information), but he had not done so, as far as could be determined. Perhaps he wanted the real Amber, not a substitute (albeit an equally 'real' substitute).

Dworkin added what he knew of the ore to the debate; it's properties were such that it was especially good at storing 'Pattern energy', 'in the same way as Corwin's sword', or so he said. He even named the compound that facilitated that property, though I do not remember what it was. It sent Intruder into a fit of muttering though.

It was unfeasible to work the ore into Pattern energy storing armour or weapons, according to Dworkin at least, but would be much more useful as some form of defensive mechanism.

The conclusion of the debate was that until another way was found to penetrate Amber for further reconnaissance all further actions were to concentrate on disrupting Eric's 'supply lines'.

Corwin then took us all out to dinner at yet another very high quality restaurant.