

Journal 11 - Corwin's Paris

The next four days were a time of rest and luxury. We spent much of the days relaxing or going out, whether it be for walks or exercise. We even did a few hours of training. Every night we dined in a different restaurant, each with its own breed of cuisine.

Guin missed out on all but the relaxation, and Victor on most of the more strenuous activity, since they were both still recovering from their various injuries. Guin became rather irritable, bound to her bed (so to speak) and unable even to walk from one side of the room to the other. Victor was comforted by the fact that his young lady Julie, a cheerful and pretty lass by anyone's standards, went with him everywhere he went and stayed with him when he could not join us. Such devotion; is he *that* likeable?

I did not see Joe and his wife, Florence, for very long; after the second day it was announced by Corwin that they had gone to stay somewhere else for a time, to 'prepare'. I do not know what it was they were preparing for; a personal thing, or so I presumed.

Eventually, however, business intruded into our little holiday; Corwin called a meeting one morning.

We met in the main living room of his townhouse. Morianna was there, as was the still slightly injured Victor. Tristan was there, and remained uncharacteristically silent. Joe was not in evidence; Corwin informed us that he would be staying in his Paris for a time, to train some of his army physicians. Then he got down to the matter in hand.

There was, he said, an 'inconsistency' in one of the Shadows traditionally linked by treaty to Amber. The 'energies' of the Shadow were 'fluctuating' in an unnatural way, something to do with the ley lines. Knowing what ley lines were in no way helped me to understand what he meant. How could the leys shift position? Obviously this was going to be rather complex.

We were to travel there and investigate the problem, find the cause, and remove it. Such a 'realignment in the Shadow' could cause 'untold and unknowable damage' in the area. We could leave whenever we wished, but Corwin was going to see about taking Victor to a high technology Shadow first to greatly increase his recovery.

I could only hope that the task ahead of us was not as daunting as it appeared at first.

The same advanced physicians that were to see to Victor were also going to visit Guin, though according to Corwin her 'more human physiology' would require more treatment than we needed. While Victor would be fully recovered in maybe four hours, it would take Guin at least three two-hour sessions to reach the same state of health.

The place we were to go to was described as 'pre-Renaissance', presumably intended to mean medieval. No gunpowder or steam power, just swords and a feudal society. It was also in a temperate area, much the same as middle Europe, and autumn, so we had to be prepared for extremes of weather.

Corwin said that he and Fiona would engineer a piece of trickery to transport us into the 'immediate area' of the Shadow from where we would have to make our own way there. Victor knew the way.

This time, the only objection made was by Morianna. She wished to be doing something she felt was more useful. When Corwin asked if she wanted to talk about it privately, she agreed, asking if I could join in the discussion. Lord only knows why she asked for me.

I agreed, of course, requesting if one of the fine backpacks I noticed the others had could be provided for me in the meantime. Corwin concurred, and suggested that I prepared myself before we talked.

So I went upstairs to pack, or at least got ready to pack, and found myself having to repeat most of the conversation to Guin, who had missed out again because she was bedridden.

Finished, I returned downstairs to find Corwin and Morianna waiting. He brought out a Trump card, and transported the three of us to a small boat floating in the middle of a deep blue sea. The blue sky was speckled with occasional clouds and the sun burned down brightly like summer in Spain.

The boat itself was perhaps half again as large as the yacht we had used and then sunk off Amber. This one, however, had much more deck space, with only a small hut-like cabin about two thirds of the way towards the stern. It seemed about large enough for a snug, two-man cabin, or perhaps bunk or hammock space for four. The strangest thing was that there was no single keel, rather two smaller keels with the sail, mast and cabin on the deck fixed between them.

Corwin fixed up a light lunch while Morianna got straight to the point; she did not like or trust Tristan sufficiently to have him accompany her on any journey. This had something to do with him proclaiming to Joe, in front of her, that Joe was the only one he trusted. Not a good way of making friends.

I suppose she had asked me to be there to hear what she had to say about Tristan, warning me of his apparent untrustworthiness.

Instead, she would prefer to return to Amber once again, this time specifically in search of Julian; she would enter Amber along the River Oisin (which passed through Arden) and seek him among the Rangers in the forest.

Corwin advised her against this course of action. Because the Rangers would not be able to identify her to a sufficient degree of certainty to deem it safe to take her to Julian, the risk was too great. Morianna glumly agreed not to go.

Corwin said, however, that he would arrange for Tristan to go elsewhere and perform some other function.

I then asked Corwin if he thought that the task we had been set might end up being too much for us to deal with, above our ability to comprehend, let alone solve. He seemed confident that we would do our utmost to resolve the situation, but that we could call on assistance if we required an emergency exit. There was risk in such an exit, however, as it could draw attention to us.

Once we had finished our lunch, Corwin transported us back to his townhouse where one of his few servants was waiting with my new backpack. I went upstairs to pack and found that the backpack contained another of the Ranger First Aid Kits, along with a number of small bags made of some metallic material, two thick but compacted blankets and a folded square of cloth. A number of pockets were filled with a variety of small devices and some sort of multiple-bladed knife. I packed what I could into what space remained, which was surprisingly large.

I dressed in appropriate clothing and went to see Guin before we left. She looked a little fatigued; she told me she had had her first treatment. She looked better, if tired.