

Largely Foreign Plots(cont'd):

- Joram's Palimpsest and Warin
 - Duncan seeks out his lay assistant Rothana to discuss Warin with her. He explains to her about that night in Morgan's castle, and how he, Morgan and Kelson were convinced that Warin was not Deryni, then goes on to share what he learned about the blocking from the palimpsest. He wants to learn from her how Warin is settling in at the schola, and wonders how he might take the news if he were found to be Deryni after all.
 - Rothana suggests concentrating on the Healing ability, since that is something Warin is most comfortable with (no doubt because of its association with saints and Christ). She has already set him to reading the *Annales Queroni*, and Duncan heartily approves of her choice.
 - Duncan and Rothana are discussing the strange variations in the shields of the Servants of Saint Camber when Arilan and Sion arrive. Rothana leaves Duncan with the visitors and goes to find Warin.
 - Arilan and Sion also want to know about Warin, and about the palimpsest. Duncan admits to telling Rothana about the blocking and the source of that information. Arilan is not pleased, but Sion suggests they introduce themselves to Warin in preparation for future probes. Both men inform Duncan of the Council's wish to interview him in the Council Chamber and ask that he say no more about the book until he is given leave.
 - The trio leave Duncan's study and find Warin and Rothana on a bench. Warin has the *Annales* and is questioning Rothana about the Gabrielites. Between Rothana and Arilan, Warin gets a précis of the order's function and history, particularly regarding St. Neot's.

Comments:

- ✓ Having just returned from the Anvillers and seen to any pressing duties (as well as informing Cardiel of his return) Duncan would want to consult Rothana. Her experience with the Servants (with their unusual shields and archaic practices), coupled with his relationship to her uncle Azim would be useful to him at this point.
- ✓ Rothana is a very service-oriented person, and she would likely spot that in Warin as well (she did spend time as a novice in a different convent before her time with the Servants).
- ✓ Introducing Warin to the *Annales* is intended to foreshadow Warin's destiny (heading a restored Gabrielite order).
- ✓ Duncan and Arilan have an old bone of contention regarding openness and secrecy. Arilan's instincts tend towards secrecy, not just from personal experience but also because once a secret is revealed, there's often no controlling it again. When Duncan confronted him about his secret identity as a Deryni priest, he answered, "I did what I dared, Duncan. I would that it had been more...I dared not jeopardize what greater good I might achieve by acting prematurely. You can understand that, can't you?" Duncan is not convinced that secrecy is always the best answer; when Arilan gave him a tongue-lashing for revealing his aura in public, Duncan retorted, "And just how long was I supposed to have waited? Twenty-odd years, like you? Is that how long you've been a priest? And you *still* haven't owned up to what you are! *Someone's* got to be first, if there's ever going to be a change."
- ✓ In yet another call back, I want to set the notion that St. Neot's might be someday rebuilt (perhaps as the second location for a *schola*. In an argument between leaving the ruins or rebuilding entirely, but perhaps the ruined Portal could become a kind of memorial.

Largely Foreign Plots(cont'd):

- Joram's Palimpsest and Morgan
 - After telling Kelson about the palimpsest, Morgan returns to his wife Richenda. He shares the experience with her, in part to see if she has ever experienced anything like it. They also discuss the blocking, and she suggests reviewing the memory of Rhys coping with Gregory's head injury, hoping that Morgan can tell from it approximately how and where Rhys did what he did (I.e. where Gregory's head injury was located). Together they do this, and Morgan feels confident he has an idea of what area to concentrate upon.
 - They are interrupted by the arrival of Laran and Sofiana via Transfer Portal. Morgan makes a snarky comment about the speed of their arrival.
 - Laran and Sofiana explain their visit, telling Morgan they know about the palimpsest, that the Council now has the item, and that they want him to come to the Council Chamber and report to the full Council.
 - A tense exchange follows: Morgan remarks that the last time he visited the Chamber, he was not welcome there, and he wants to know if this summons is an order or an arrest of some kind. Laran responds by telling Morgan that even he is not above the Council's authority, which prompts Sofiana to censure Laran, reminding him that Morgan has some cause to feel a bit badly used by the Council in the past. She then turns to Morgan and points out that the palimpsest could be either an important source of lost knowledge or a fake, and the Council must learn which it is.
 - Morgan asks when he must go; Sofiana replies that Duncan is being interviewed first, and Laran will stay at Coroth and escort him to the Chamber when they're ready.

Comments:

- ✓ Morgan and Richenda are not only close as husband and wife, she has had more extensive training in the *ars magica* than Morgan got, and he has been learning from her since their marriage began. She was also once a student of Azim's, so he would likely also sound her out on his actions in the matter, perhaps even ask what she knows about the Council.
- ✓ The Council will want to follow up on this palimpsest quickly, in part to control the information and in part to prevent tampering with it or the cousins.
- ✓ The tension between Morgan and the Council is well known, particularly when Morgan criticized them in their own chamber the night before the confrontation with Wencit at Llyndruth Meadows: "If I and my kinsman are liable only for the danger, and not the protection, of our blood heritage, where is the much-touted Deryni justice, my lords? I question your authority to place our lives in jeopardy for circumstances which are outside our control, sir." Laran was on the Council at the time, and he even voted to make Morgan and Duncan liable to be challenged to arcane combat without informing them of the fact (as half-breeds, they were immune to challenge before that vote).
- ✓ Sofiana is there partly in her office as coadjutor, and partly because she is Richenda's aunt; it is hoped the family connection will smooth the way, where Laran's grumpy hostility might not. She is also less hide-bound in her thinking. She once points out in Council that some of the others' veneration of Deryni bloodlines is misplaced, especially so long after the persecutions: "What does that mean anymore, to be 'of the blood?'"
- ✓ Laran's presence is secured in Coroth in part for the reason given (ensuring Morgan obeys the order), and to ensure he is there when another plot line begins...

Largely Foreign Plots(cont'd):

- Teymuraz in Byzantium
 - Teymuraz escaped to Byzantium and has since married into the imperial family there. It has been no more than three or so years since his escape, so he has at most one or two children. For the purposes of this story, he has a son of around three years of age.
 - Teymuraz has so ingratiated himself into the imperial family that he not only has a bride born to the purple, he has been made the emperor's colleague. This was touch-and-go for a time, since he tried and failed to convince the emperor to invade Torenth and Gwynedd. Outwardly, he seemed to accept the official neutrality and acted as if he intended to settle in with the Byzantines and forget his western kin and rivals.
 - Teymuraz is particularly intrigued by a piece of Byzantine technology called Greek fire. He tries to pass off his interest in it as a part of a general enthusiasm for everything about his new home, but is unable to learn its specific formula. Some key part of the secret is a prerogative of the emperor, like the decision to use it. Even when he is co-emperor, his elder colleague puts off sharing this with him, holding that it is intended for defense only, and the empire has no enemies whose threats demand its use. The emperor reassures Teymuraz that he will share the secret if that situation changes, or if he feels his own health declining (which he openly says is just fine and likely to remain so).
 - Not everyone trusts the new co-emperor. The empress has a secret alliance with one of the courtiers, in part because she wishes to rule in her own right after her father, and in part because she has observed his genial mask slipping once or twice. Her ally is the general Nikephoros.

Comments:

- ✓ Welcome to another history lesson. I've pattered Teymuraz' rise after that of real-life Byzantine Emperor Basil I, who actually rose farther in life, having started out as a commoner with a knack for training horses. He attached himself to the imperial household and rose through the ranks to become co-emperor. To forestall the rise of another courtier of Emperor Michael III, Basil arranged for a round of assassinations and became sole emperor as a result. Instead of marrying a favourite imperial mistress, I have Teymuraz marry an imperial daughter, since he comes from a Torenthi royal family rather than common stock, That might give him something of a leg up. Teymuraz will follow in his real-life exemplar's footsteps, but for different reasons. Per the *Codex* he has wed her by the year 1130.
- ✓ I particularly wanted to use Greek fire in this story. Partly because it's historical fact and true in-period, partly because it affords a way to seriously up the stakes of his conflict with his nephew and Kelson, but largely because it lends itself to terror and deception. Teymuraz can spring it on an unsuspecting (and unprepared) west, and its strange properties (water doesn't put out its flames) make easy for its victims to believe it is magical (Here I invoke Clarke's Third Law: Sufficiently advance technology is indistinguishable from magic.) Teymuraz will foster the impression this is some new sorcery to both terrify the populace of his rivals' lands, and in the case of Gwynedd undermine the new peaceable consensus between Deryni and the ordinary humans. He is well aware of both the history of strife between Gwynedd and Torenth and the history of anti-Deryni persecution which has only recently begun to lift.
- ✓ The ambitious empress and the conniving courtier have ample historical precedents in the real history of Byzantium.

Largely Foreign Plots(cont'd):

- Teymuraz in Byzantium (cont'd)
 - His spies tell Teymuraz of Liam's long-planned return to Gwynedd to receive his knightly accolade from Nigel Haldane, which prompts him to speed up the timetable for his takeover of Byzantium. Teymuraz takes this news as cue for action.
 - Teymuraz and a physician (his co-conspirator) disable the emperor through a combination of psychic power and drugs to make the court believe he has died of a stroke. The emperor is actually alive and even conscious, but he cannot move, speak or project his thoughts to any other person.
 - Other physicians in the court, as well as other courtiers cannot rouse the emperor and eventually find no pulse, so he is prepared for burial.
 - Teymuraz arranges to murder or have murdered his co-conspirator, making it look like suicide, with the excuse that the man felt he had failed his emperor by failing to cure him.
 - Teymuraz uses a version of the stasis spell Ariella attempted (which Camber also used on himself) to not only gain the emperor's knowledge (about Greek fire in particular), but also to draw psychic energy from him. He is pressed for time, as the Orthodox funerary rites involve many verbal readings over the body.
 - Unknown to him, Teymuraz is seen by his small son, who later informs his mother that "Papa prays funny." The child demonstrates the cupped hands gesture his father was using. The boy's mother reminds her son that his father came from the faraway west, but she later secretly consults Nikephoros about this. They agree that magic could be involved and the general is set to watch Teymuraz and report to the empress.

Comments:

- ✓ Teymuraz wants to attack his enemies in the west, but he cannot do so with an imperial colleague. He also wants the secret of Greek fire. To get what he wants, the emperor must die.
- ✓ Unlike Morag, the emperor is too important a person to be simply murdered and left to be found once Teymuraz has what he wants. There's also the risk of losing vital information as the brain begins to degrade after death and the memories are lost. Keeping the emperor alive in this fashion prevents this. That it is hideous to the point of being nightmare fuel might actually add to the plan's appeal for Teymuraz. Kelson once hears a man describe Teymuraz as "perhaps the worst of the lot" (meaning the worst of the brothers Furstán), so I put nothing past him.
- ✓ Teymuraz might well know as much as Ariella did about this spell; Wencit is shown reading one of her love letters in the short story "Legacy". He may even have done further research or even testing of it. Again, I don't think he'd be put off by any qualms of conscience.
- ✓ Likewise, it seems quite probable that Teymuraz might dispose of his partner in crime. He may even openly order the man's execution, though if he does so, he risks the man confessing the truth in an effort to save himself. If the man is merely human, Teymuraz could exercise mind control over him, but such might be detected by other Deryni at court.
- ✓ The hand gesture is key. It serves to indicate what spell is in use, but it is also similar to the clasping of hands some people use when praying. The child might be watching, himself unobserved, spot the difference between it and the postures other adults use while praying, and be candid and curious enough to ask his mother about it. His mother could both reassure her child and act on the information, or order others to act.

Largely Foreign Plots(cont'd):

- Teymuraz in Byzantium (cont'd)
 - Once the emperor's burial is accomplished, Teymuraz attempts to sort through the memories he has obtained, just as he had done after he took those of his sister-in-law Morag' years before. The process is not successful, for the emperor (secretly something of a mage in his own right, has used the connection Teymuraz forged to escape his own body and has joined his soul with that of Teymuraz, effectively possessing part of him. Teymuraz initially wrests back control of his own mind, but the emperor's spirit settles in to besiege the mind of his killer.
 - Teymuraz does obtain the knowledge he sought regarding Greek fire, and it proves quite satisfactory. He not only learns the formula for the liquid fier and the workings of the ship-mounted siphons, he also learns of an old book showing designs for smaller siphons that individual men might carry, so that infantry as well as naval forces could use the weapon. The weapon has been limited to ships out of a desire to keep the secret and use it defensively, but of course Teymuraz has no such limits on his desires. He is also gleeful over the interesting properties of the formula, including the sound the siphons emit when in use, and the fact that its flames cannot be doused with water. He searches out the designs for the smaller siphons and orders them into production, claiming to be following the wish of his dead predecessor to revive this knowledge.
 - Nikephoros joins with the other generals in following the new emperor's commands, but he sets spies among the imperial servants to observe Teymuraz night and day, and continues to report to the empress.

Comments:

- ✓ It is known from Camber's experiences in *Saint Camber* that a Deryni who has taken the memories of another person must have time to integrate those memories with his own, and that the failure to do so can result in worsening headaches and eventual insanity.
- ✓ It is also apparently possible to use the stasis spell on another person, for Camber considered using it on Rhys Thuryn in an effort to save his life after Rhys suffered a depressed skull fracture. Camber decided he could not make that choice for another person, but Teymuraz would be unlikely to feel himself bound by such moral strictures.
- ✓ That said, the stasis spell is apparently quite difficult to perform. Ariella failed in her attempt to use it at Iomaire, and Camber himself was in no position to undo it when he finally did cast it on himself. It seems likely Teymuraz could make a mistake, particularly when he was trying to acquire his target's memories at the same time.
- ✓ Dark magic can also bind a soul to a corpse, as Duncan found after he, Morgan and Kelson opened Brion's tomb in *Deryni Rising*.
- ✓ Since taking the memories and applying the stasis spell are two different things, the exact timing of the events could be quite separate. Teymuraz could try the stasis spell under the noses of the physicians and attempt the memory theft while the burial readings are being done, or even go back and open the tomb (implying that the emperor was effectively buried alive).
- ✓ Historical records indicate that portable Greek fire apparatus were invented in the 10th century, so a 12th century man might be looking for an old book about them. The records also mention the stuff burning on water (and even burning more fiercely when doused with water). The secret of the formula was well kept.

Back in Gwynedd

- Duncan's Interview
 - Arilan and Sion take Duncan to the anteroom of Council Chamber, Inside, the rest of the Council except for Laran and Sofiana are assembled. Once Sofiana arrives from Coroth, the four enter the Chamber and Duncan is conducted to Camber's Siege. The palimpsest is on the octagonal table, along with Barrett's wand of office; Sofiana places hers on the table before her place and takes her seat.
 - With Arilan standing behind him and channelling the memories to the *shiral* crystal above their heads, Duncan recounts the night he and Morgan read the palimpsest, showing the Council everything they learned from its contents, while the other Councillors are Truth-Reading him throughout. The story naturally elicits much discussion among the Councillors, which does at least give Duncan a brief mental breather before he is asked to attempt to read the palimpsest again. With Arilan once again behind him and joined by Sofiana, Duncan turns the book to the horizontal and drags one finger across the blade of the St. Michael figure, making Joram's words appear on the open page. He reads a passage aloud, with Sofiana and Arilan nodding faintly and following along.
 - Barrett thanks Duncan on behalf of the others and asks Sofiana to summon Laran and Morgan from Coroth, then tells Arilan to take Duncan back to Rhemuth for a rest and return for Morgan's interview. Sofiana favours Duncan with a slight smile and a reassuring squeeze of his shoulder before Arilan assists him to his feet, puts an arm round Duncan's shoulders and leads him to the Portal. Together, the two men appear in the Portal niche off Duncan's study.

Comments:

- ✓ Conceivably, many of these events (Morgan and Duncan arriving back from the Anvillers, Azim's presentation of the palimpsest to the Council, this interview and firing of Coroth Harbour) could take place on the same day. *The King's Justice* has several plotlines converging on a single day (Duncan's capture at Dorna, Kelson and Morgan catching Ithel and Brice, Jehana "overhearing" the Torenthi assassins, Nigel and Conall and Saer defeating the assassins at court), with a couple of chapters cutting from one to the next in a cinematic style.
- ✓ The Council have used the large shiral before as a sort of projector (Sofiana takes a report from one of her spies after Kelson's forces rescue Duncan, capture Loris and Kelson kills Sicard). This is likely a standard practice for them when interviewing someone in Camber's Siege, and someone could explain as much for Duncan's benefit as for the audience's.
- ✓ Joram's face and/or form could appear in association with the book once the spell is working. The filmmakers may even up the ante: have Joram's face appear on the pages when Morgan and Duncan first read it, and have a figure of a standing Joram (possibly beckoning) on the open pages when Duncan reads it before the Council (like Leia's hologram message from *Star Wars: A New Hope*).
- Duncan may have to make some mental effort to allow others to read Joram's text over his shoulder. I mention this only because Joram was a very thorough man, and he might well foresee the possibility of someone forcing one of his kin to reveal the contents of the book against their will. Yet Duncan is sitting Camber's Siege, so perhaps Camber will assist, I don't want Camber to manifest for the others (except possibly Arilan, if he's still monitoring Duncan directly—Arilan once said, "He doesn't appear to me."). I want to save that for the finale...