

ARTHURIAN TALES:
AMBROSIUS
AURELIANI

Leon Mintz



Erie Harbor Productions
Pontiac, Michigan

Arthurian Tales: Ambrosius Aureliani

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223 West Cornell Avenue
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10 ISBN: 0-9717828-5-7

13 ISBN: 978-0-9717828-5-3

Library of Congress Control Number: 2010934064

My many thanks go out to Dan, Jen, John,
and the ladies of New York for helping to
to point out the errors of my ways.

Please do not fault them for not finding them all.

Note from the Author

For the most part, modern names of the various locations have been used in Arthurian Tales: Ambrosius Aureliani. The notable exception is the use of Aureliani instead of Orléans. The intent is to reinforce Ambrosius' connection to this Gallic city, or more specifically to a villa in the nearby region. The reason for this is further explained in the section entitled The Making of Arthurian Tales.

It is truly hoped that the general reader will not find it necessary to read anything after page 352 to enjoy Ambrosius Aureliani. If it is needed, then I have failed as an author.

The point of the pages past the end of the story is to explain why certain key elements in Arthurian legends were portrayed in non-traditional fashions.

Ambrosius Aureliani is this author's vain attempt to present a historically plausible, "World-Restorer" scenario for King Arthur while utilizing a vast majority of the sources in a synchronized manner.

Note from the Narrator

Greetings. I am Merlinus or simply Merlin. It is the latter that I have been called of late. The trappings of Rome have fallen away like the features of a fading leper. The sights are horrid, and the losses sting with great regret. And though I am a Roman at heart, I have not lived under Roman rule in quite some time. Still, I possess documents revealing my legal claim to a large imperial villa on the shores of the Loire River near the city of Aureliani. It was many, many years ago when I first received that vast estate.

During the consulship of Constantius and Constans, a Roman senator and my father made a deal. In this deal, the Spaniard signed over his Gallic lands to me. In return, my father vowed to escort another nobleman's daughter and her newborn son to Barcelona. In addition, after a short stay, Father would bring her back to her home in Armorica. That was the plan.

But then, Father caught an ill vapor and died before he could execute his part of the deal. I stepped forward to fulfill Father's obligations to the senator. It was at this point that I became privy to the other elements of the plan. Father had agreed to exchange the daughter's child with the son of the self-proclaimed restorer of Rome, King Aduolphus. So I did what Father had arranged to do.

Shortly after this secret switch took place, the daughter's child became ill and died. Her baby was mourned as if he were Theodosius, the son of King Aduolphus and Princess Placidia.

So the son of the *Restitutor Orbis* lived on as Ambrosius. It was not until years later after gray strands had crept into his brown hair that he died. Many may scoff at what I write, but they are fools if they do. Life is not always simple, and I have no interest in telling lies. So become aware of the truth about Ambrosius Aureliani by your own free will or stumble into enlightenment as I did.

CHAPTER 1

The sun poured across the eastern horizon as I neared the end of my long walk. My destination was a certain church near Barcelona. The overpowering sun rolled over me. I closed my eyes, but still I could not block out its light. Blindly, I kept going until I tripped over a stone. On my hands and knees, I looked up and saw the church.

A line of people flowed through the church to pay their respects to the dead child. I joined their line and entered the church. Its center aisle divided two rows of benches. Ten of them, wooden and backless, sat in each row. People filled them all. Some stood behind them, waiting for an available seat, while others observed from afar. I took a seat when I could. The church had never held so many mourners at one time.

Some time later, Princess Placidia entered. The hurt in her face tore at my heart. I looked away, knowing I had caused it. Or, at least, I was partly to blame. I tried to forget about the young lady kneeling in front of the silver-plated baby casket. I tried to forget her beautiful face, her slender cheeks, soft dark eyes, raven hair, and olive skin. She moaned, reminding me that she was still there, crying her last good-byes to her baby, Theodosius. I felt nauseated. My hand trembled as it rested on my knee. I wanted to vomit. Sweat slithered down the sides of my face.

Her king, Adaulphus, stood behind her. He looked more Roman than Gothic. He sported a black toga with gold sashes. Though not tall in stature, Adaulphus was distinguished in beauty of face and form. Placidia's weeping grew; King Adaulphus placed his hand on her shoulder. She looked up at him with sad red eyes. Tears streamed down her soft cheeks. They had shared a lifetime, though they were together only four years.

For the first time in centuries, barbarians had sacked Rome, and this man standing behind the Roman princess had led them. As the brother-in-law of Alaric, Adaulphus fought and killed many Romans. He had captured countless prisoners for his Lord Alaric, but none so precious as Placidia. After Lord Alaric had perished in Italy, Adaulphus took control

of their mobile empire. Though barbaric and Arian, this great man left few doubting his self-proclaimed title of the restorer of Rome.

Originally seized from her home as a hostage, in time Placidia fell in love with Aduolphus. From the plunder of Rome, he gave her wedding gifts of jewels and gold. Together, they had united the greatest elements of their cultures. Now, they mourned their fate. The hope of a grand dynasty had passed like the spirit of the child in the closed coffin.

Imperial pleas and threats arrived continuously, all centered around Princess Placidia. Many of them came from men like Germanus, the Bishop of Auxerre. The bishop stood in the inner imperial circles. He was a friend of Budicius, a Spanish senator and cousin of Emperor Honorius.

Already that day, I heard the whispered words of divine judgment, as if the death of baby Theodosius was God's wrath against the Roman-Gothic union. His death fulfilled the prophecy of Daniel. Though joined, there would be no future heirs to keep the two empires together.

What would the masses say if they knew Theodosius lived? What would they say if they knew that the baby boy was being kept out in a nearby villa waiting for me to take him to the fringes of Armorica?

I needed to leave. I stood. My movement caught Germanus' attention, and he looked at me. The bishop had a light complexion. His face was long but not ugly. He was well-groomed, not a single black hair out of place. He kept it short. It glistened from oils in his hair. His beard ran thinly along his jawline. His regal attire revealed that Germanus spent more time primping than praying. His moral demeanor, which I had witnessed, didn't seem to warrant such a pious position. He smiled, knowing that I was leaving, finally, for the villa. Earlier, he had told me that I shouldn't have come to the service, and I should have left for Armorica instead.

I had inflicted the queen and her king with something worse than pain. I wanted no part of my father's circle of friends now. My father's friends were not mine. Sadly, I questioned the true character of my dead father. I had been suddenly pulled into this conspiracy with his death less than a month ago. Now it was my duty to complete what he had begun. With his dying breath, my father begged this from me: "Save the family."

I didn't return Germanus' smile. It melted into a frown, and he moved toward me. I didn't alter my pace as I made my way to the aisle. Germanus caught up with me before I could reach the doors of the church.

Though only fourteen, I was noticeably taller than the bishop.

“Why the long face, young Merlinus?” Germanus whispered.

Still walking, I glanced at him with the same sour expression.

“You act like you’ve done some terrible injustice,” he hissed lowly.

“Haven’t I?” I replied.

“No,” Germanus replied. “Your actions shall save Rome and all of Its Glory. You’ve shown that you’re a true citizen. As true as Caesar.”

“He was a dictator. Spare me your lies. The Empire is in greater peril than ever, if you think a baby could cause it to self-implode,” I barked as we stepped free of the church and into the light of day.

“You must see that if we didn’t do this, the Empire would be torn apart. None of the nobles of Rome would honor Adaulphus or any son Placidia might bear him, not even one named after her great father, Theodosius. For God’s sake, Adaulphus is a barbarian. And worse yet, Arian.”

“What’s not barbaric or unholy about our actions?” I asked.

“The boy is not dead,” Germanus answered.

I continued to walk in the direction of Budicius’ villa where the baby, Theodosius, was kept.

“Do we have a problem?” Germanus called out as he stopped.

“If we did, that whole church would know by now,” I replied.

“Good,” he replied, “so, don’t worry. Your family shall be rewarded for serving the Empire in this task. Budicius is a wealthy landowner. He has the ears of Honorius’ advisers. His Gallic holdings near Aureliani are immaculate. Your father would be truly honored.”

“My family is the only reason I am going through with this,” I declared.

My words and hard stare melted his false smile once more. Convincing him of my intent, I turned and continued in the direction of the villa. I had made a terrible error in judgment, and now I had to deal with it.

As I walked, I wondered why they insisted on handling it this way. If the child was a threat to imperial authority, then why not kill the child or leave him at the crossroads where some animal would do what the authorities couldn’t. Maybe Father was supposed to kill the child, and they thought that he had told me to do the same. He had never mentioned such a thing.

CHAPTER 2

After some time, I finished the long walk to Budicius' villa near Barcelona. I toiled over how my father fit into this dark conspiracy. I saw his part as the enforcer. Father had retired from the legion, but lacked the luxury that he sought. Father had convinced Mother that this imperial assignment would secure our family's future. Mother and Father had argued over the issue for some time before she finally conceded. He was dead now, and I stood in his stead.

Slaves tended to the upkeep of Budicius' land as I arrived. Several worked the large garden next to the outer wall that enclosed the living quarters and several barns. Others washed clothes while still more fed the tame fowl and wandering livestock. My appearance went unnoticed, or at least not acknowledged, by the workers.

When I had first arrived weeks ago, I was amazed and envious of this large, winged-corridor villa. The long buildings subdivided into the living quarters, kitchen, dining room, and audience chamber. They enclosed an immaculate courtyard. Fine ceramic tiles covered the various buildings' roofs and the rim of the outer wall. Many fine horses resided in its stables. Budicius had everything that I wanted. At that time, I wished to obtain a place such as this. Eventually, if I owned such a posh villa, then I would have achieved my dreams.

Now I knew that I might be on a path leading to material success, but I had strayed far from being an honorable man. I traded integrity for an income and sold grace to feed my greed. The workers felt the same as I did about this place. Sick of it. I made my way to the inside.

"Merlinus," a loud thick voice called out. "Where have you been?"

I saw Budicius. He had dark olive skin and short black hair. It was thinning heavily on the top of his head, giving the impression that it was tonsured. He walked toward me with an honorary *cingulum* draped over his white toga. The richly ornamental belt identified people of more pomp than power. His cold gray eyes glared at me.

“I was at the service,” I replied.

“There was no reason for you to go. You should have left at dawn.”

“Theodosius and I shall leave in the morning,” I replied.

Budicius backhanded me. My bottom lip bled, cut from his jagged ring. I tasted blood in my mouth.

“Don’t you ever call the baby by that name. His name is Ambrosius,” Budicius hissed. “Don’t make me regret honoring an old friend’s dying wish.”

Anger raged in me. I wanted to lunge at him and pound his face with my fists. Thoughts of my family barely restrained me from attacking him. Instead, I said nothing and walked away.

“Am I understood?” He barked as if I were a slave.

I wasn’t powerful, but I was still proud. I refused to reply.

“I said —,”

“I heard you the first time,” I walked off toward my quarters.

Ahès sat quietly holding Theodosius in her arms. The baby boy slept peacefully. She cared for him as if he was her own. He was a good baby, quiet most of the time. His pudgy legs lay motionless. I looked at the birthmark above his right ankle as he slept in her arms. Affectionately, she brushed away a lock of hair that hung over his face. She glowed with innate beauty. She was a vision with her long brown wavy hair, small frame, and soft curves.

Ahès had fared childbirth well. The extra weight gained from carrying a child had turned the girl into a young woman. Her plump breasts enticed my glance many times. She did not strike me as being promiscuous as Lord Grallon had portrayed her. The innocence was stripped from her soft brown eyes, though. However, I didn’t see the wanton glare I expected. Instead, when she showed joy, her smile was genuine and warming. Her beauty was naturally enchanting. Her thin eyebrows accentuated her high cheeks and full lips. Her small ears were hidden under her long curly locks of dark brown hair.

With a whisper, she asked, “Where have you been?”

I just shook my head as I walked toward her.

“Oh, what happened to your lip?” She asked.

“Politics,” I plainly replied. I sat down on the bed next to her.

“Huh?”

“It’s not important,” I added. “How long has he been sleeping?”

“Only a short while,” she whispered with a smile.

She had been too free with herself; too free for her father’s liking. For this reason she was sent to Barcelona. Ahès and her baby had to travel here with me. Now her baby laid in the silver coffin at the front of the small church near Barcelona. It fit all too well. Grallon, Ahès’ father, rid himself of a bastard grandson and the Empire lost a great threat to their authority.

How many people were involved? Whom could I trust? Would my deeds even be honored? Did they have to be? How could I force them?

I walked over to the table in the corner of the large rectangular room. I stared at the sealed documents, which I had viewed often since I had received them from Budicius. The property rights listed on the scrolls would provide substance and safeguard my family well beyond my own lifetime. What more could I do for them? All I prayed for was their safe journey to our new home in Aureliani.

CHAPTER 3

“Lord Grallon is aligned with unscrupulous associates. His ties run deep with imperial salt, *garum*, and wine,” Ahès whispered after laying the baby down. “You and I are mere victims in this debauchery.”

“Only you are,” I declared. “I am as foul as the fish in spoiled *garum*.”

“Your actions come from noble intent,” Ahès stated.

“That’s easy to say, but that still doesn’t justify the means.”

“Merlinus, you are up against something much larger than any one person. Budicius, Germanus, and Grallon are all part of the imperial network. They are part of the elite. Your father never was. He was an errand boy like you are, now.”

Ahès didn’t mean to sound cold but her words cut me. She walked over to me and then caressed the back of my arm with her hand.

“You’ve done the right thing under the circumstances,” she added. “Though tainted by treachery, take this moment and secure a future for your family and the child.”

“What if I leave the boy at the crossroads?” I questioned.

“I believe they expect as much from the likes of you, a poor provincial struggling for the sheer survival of his family. How easy would it be to neglect the delicate care of a child?” Ahès remarked.

The fate of the child lay with me. My father’s associates’ hands were clean and the Empire was safe for now. No. I wasn’t making it that easy for them. Theodosius would make the trip west to the Bay of Douarnenez. Lord Grallon would be forced to deal with the child. He would have to bring an early demise to this child, for I would not.

“What are you thinking? Don’t be foolish, Merlinus. You lack an army for your dreams of justice. Long, spirited speeches do little to stop short, shiny swords.”

Placing her hand on my shoulder, she asked, “When do we go?”

“In the morning,” I answered.

“I thought Budicius said we were leaving today.”

“We’re leaving in the morning.”

Several days had passed since Ahès, the child, and I had left Budicius’ villa with some of his men. Traveling light, we covered much ground. At first, we traveled northeast from Barcelona toward Narbonne on the Via Domitia. We rendezvoused with an armed escort at Alenya. Then, we cut cross-country with the regiment of Alans. Budicius’ lead man, Valerius, wanted to avoid the Goth-controlled town of Narbonne.

Ahès cared for the child. She took a big burden from me. She made the journey easy. From what Lord Grallon had said, I figured she would be more of a problem than the baby. Instead of keeping a close eye on her and the child, I kept it on Valerius and his crew of merchants.

Valerius was an ox of a man, about two hundred and fifty pounds. His body had no fat, from endless work on the docks. He kept his head shaved but maintained a wide beard trimmed short. It was mostly gray revealing the merchant’s age. His arms were thick and his chest was wide. He was so much like a bull that if Valerius went to the mithraeum, he’d be wise to remain on the benches or he might be sacrificed in the *tauroctony* instead of the wild bull.

My limited contact with Valerius and his crew left me feeling that they were like thin ice. On the surface, they were cold and expressionless. But if crossed, they would consume all that risked it.

Stopping for the night, the wagons had been drawn up into a circle. The sun had fallen behind the mountains long ago, and with it the temperature. Now the remanence of its light had all but faded away. Already, I felt the deep chill in the air. It was much colder than any night so far. I gathered up wood and placed it in the center of the camp.

“What do you think you are doing? No fires. There will most likely be no fires for the next couple of nights,” Valerius ordered.

“What? What about the baby?” Ahès questioned.

“That baby is not my concern. Besides, I am not the one that delayed our departure from Budicius’ villa. Direct your anger at Merlinus. He’s the one that held up our departure. I wanted to leave several days before we did. Merlinus refused to leave earlier.

“This is no-man’s land,” Valerius added. “Survival goes to the sharpest. We can’t expect protection from anyone out here. We are on our own until we reach Alaigne. There will be no burning fires to show the

demons of the night where I sleep.”

I thought to when we first went to Barcelona. That time, the rendezvous point was at Alaigne, which was twenty-five miles southeast of the Garonne River. We had traveled cross-country that time, also.

“Why wasn’t this an issue the last time we passed through here?” Ahès questioned.

“We were traveling in the middle of the summer. Therefore, a fire wasn’t necessary. You didn’t notice it, but we did the same thing at the time,” Valerius stated.

“It’s true,” I remarked.

I drew near her.

“I brought extra blankets. It will be all right, Ahès.”

Finally we reached Alaigne without incident. We stayed there for the night. As we joined their festivities and enjoyed their warm hospitality, the people acted as though there was nothing to fear. We toured the Alan settlement. It was truly enlightening to see how my people lived as they had before serving the Romans. I was twice removed from the old way, the ageless Alan traditions, nomadic in nature. My grandfather was the first to fight for Rome from my family’s clan.

Ahès halted before a small group of people huddled around an old man who was sitting on the ground. He had a long white wiry beard. He mumbled words, and I struggled to gather his meaning.

“What did he say?” she asked. “What is he saying now?”

“Shh,” I remarked. “I’m trying to figure it out.”

The old shaman directed his comments at a boy who sat facing him. The boy appeared nervous. He wasn’t even half as old as I was. His long black hair was pulled back from his face in a ponytail. His eyes opened wide as he waited for instructions from the old shaman. Though his face revealed fear like a misbehaving child about to be caught, the boy did not look away. Instead, he waited with his small hands in his lap.

“‘Your future waits for you,’” I translated the old man’s words for Ahès. “‘It shall find you if you lag too long. Pick up the osier sticks. Roll them in your hands until I say stop, then drop them. From them, I shall glimpse into the world beyond here and see you in the days of tomorrow. Your future shall be seen.’”

“What’s the young boy’s name? How old do you think he is?”

Ahès asked, cradling Theodosius in her arms while he slept.

“I don’t know,” I remarked.

“The boy’s name is Draco. He’s my younger brother and he’s only six years old,” remarked a young girl. “My name is Metelli.”

She had long black hair and wore a cloth that tightly bound her head. The tail of the fabric hung down behind her as her hair did. This custom had clung to the people, though they were far from their traditional home in Central Asia. She finished with a shy smile that quickly slipped away. Ahès smiled, seeing the girl’s interest in me. Although having the customary drawn head, she was still pretty to my Roman eyes.

Pointing at Ahès, I politely announced, “This is Ahès. And I am Merlinus. It is a pleasure to meet you, Metelli.”

With a bright smile, she added, “Draco begins his journey on the warrior’s path tonight. He must wander into the darkness of the night and maintain an all-night vigil. Besides his own wits, he shall have no assistance except for what the shaman tells him now.”

She fell silent, waiting for her brother to cast his destiny. Metelli and Draco had several similar features. Besides the indigenous dark eyes and hair, they shared the same high, thin cheeks and short noses. Both had long narrow ears, which their long hair would conceal if they weren’t in ponytails. The young boy quickly rolled the thin, straight sticks in his hands, but he seemed uncertain if he should keep up his pace. His eyes were fixed upon the old man. One eye twitched.

“Stop!” Commanded the old man.

Draco’s eyes grew wider. His nose flared. He dropped the sticks. They scattered across the sand in-between the boy and the old man in a random manner. One stick from the bundle stuck straight up while another slowly fell. Many of them crisscrossed each other.

“You’ll serve a good king, but save a greater one,” the old man said. “Your future waits for you now. It is here. Watching, watching us.”

The old man turned and looked directly at Ahès. She smiled and he leaned back from Ahès’ glance. Spooked, the shaman got to his feet and left without a word. The group of people scattered along with Metelli. Only Draco remained. He said nothing. He stared at us, studying us. And then, the young boy got to his feet and sprinted off into the night.

“What just happened?” Ahès asked.

“I don’t know,” I replied. “We should return to our wagon.”

The next morning, our group picked up the Roman road from Narbonne to Toulouse. Far enough between the two cities, there were no issues with the Goths. Our crew was vulnerable. Vandals still insulted authority in the area, whether it was imperial or Gothic. Although mostly driven farther south, some lingered, leeching a living like common thieves.

Our travels took us northwest to the Garonne River. The group met up with the ships that would sail us to Armorica. With careful timing, the ships past Toulouse at night. It was a Roman town, but the Goths held more and more influence there since they sacked Rome four years ago.

The boat sailed for the sea. The journey was peaceful and helped to clear my thoughts. Though winter approached, the weather wasn't poor. A breeze sped us on our way and took the edge off the strong sun. All seemed consumed by their own thoughts or tasks at hand. Few spoke, only Ahès remained vocal. She sang to the baby, whispered soft words, and treated his every need. She had grown attached to Theodosius. It was great for the child, but I worried for her. What would happen once we made it to Armorica? Did she think she could keep him? There's no way Lord Grallon would allow Ahès to keep the child. What would happen with the child, then? Who would care for him?

I felt sadness. She glanced at me. My expression soured hers.

"What's wrong?" She asked.

"Nothing."

"It has to be something. That look is from something."

With no one in listening distance as we stepped off the docked boat, I said, "What will happen to the baby once we reach your father?"

A surprised look formed on her face.

"You're not keeping him? Since you said you weren't going to leave him at the side of the road, I thought he was going to Aureliani."

"I was simply told to bring the child to your father," I replied.

"You're not keeping him?" she asked again.

"No."

The baby squirmed and fussed slightly. He drew Ahès' attention.

"Oh, it's okay, baby. It's okay," she cooed. She fluttered his lip with her finger. "See, it's okay, baby."

"It's hard to say what will happen," I remarked. "Grallon might give him to the church."

"If that was the case, Bishop Germanus would have taken him.

Grallon would want to keep him away from educated eyes, though. He might give the child to a peasant family to raise.” Ahès stated.

“Is there a chance that he might . . .” I paused as I thought the worst. Looking up from the baby, she peered at me to see my intent.

“No. I don’t believe he would do that. More likely than not, he will end up pawning the boy off on my stepbrother, Vortimer,” she answered. “Maybe I can talk him into allowing me to raise him.”

“Maybe,” I replied. Though, I doubted it even as I said it.

Lord Grallon would not allow such a scandal to live dormant under his roof. He had used his daughter in this conspiracy; he would not allow anything to go to chance.

With the baby in her hands, Ahès and I stood on the shore waiting for the men to unload the wine. They moved quickly as night grew more complete. It had been a long journey. The crew and ship had labored against the tidal bore of the Garonne River. The sea wasn’t any easier. Still, we had reached the Bay of Douarnenez safely.

Grallon had not come to the shore to greet us. His men stated that Lord Grallon traveled to Vorgium. They expected that he would return by late tomorrow or early the following day.

“Merlinus and Ahès, go ahead and get on the lead wagon,” Valerius ordered. “The driver will take you to the villa. We will follow after we unload the rest of the wine and load the garum and salted pork.”

“Okay,” I replied.

I took the baby. Ahès climbed onto the wagon. I carefully handed the sleeping child to her, then got on. The driver set the oxen in motion with a snap of his wrists. The wagon rolled forward with a light tug.

At a slow pace, we moved away from the sea and inched toward the villa. The night consumed the remaining light. Stars brilliantly lit the sky by the time we reached the villa.

Servants quickly gathered with torches in their hands as the wagons pulled through the gatehouse. After climbing down, I reached for the baby. Ahès got down, afterwards. Though tired, she smiled at me as I held the boy peacefully. I gave the boy back to her without a stir.

We walked quietly through the courtyard. Torches filled the open lawn with a strong flickering light. An older woman led us to our quarters.

“Sweet dreams, my lady.”

With a smile, she added, “You, too.”

CHAPTER 4

The next morning I rose early. My thoughts kept me from sleeping. I wandered through the quiet villa. Eventually I exited it by following the scent of the sea. I stood at the back end of the Roman building. The outer perimeter walls ran north and south and abruptly ended at the sea cliff. There was no outer wall running east and west to serve as protection at the back of the villa. Instead, the sea and a large statue stood guard. Curious, I walked up closer. A massive marble man towered at least fifteen feet tall. He held his hand out as if to stop the sea while in the other one he grasped a trident. From the tailbone of the statue a fish's tail curled out around the man's right leg forming part of the base. Standing directly in front of the statue, I read the inscription on its base:

To the divinity of Augustus and to Neptune Hippius, Caius Varenus Varus, of the Voltinia tribe, curator of the conventus of Roman citizens for the fourth time, has erected this.

I hadn't seen the statue's equal. I glanced once more toward the sea. From my elevated view, the harbor and this villa appeared lower than the bay in the distance. The harbor's shoreline stretched toward the northern horizon and nearly touched in the center. Its rising slope formed a natural dam. The docks and the area around bustled like a thriving city.

"The sight is enchanting if you have any love for the sea," a man called out from behind me. Turning I saw Grallon.

He stood regally dressed. It seemed odd seeing him this way, so early in the morning. His wavy hair was gray with remnants of black roots. It gave Grallon a dignified look. He had a narrow face and greenish-blue eyes. A thin beard covered his soft features. Even though I was extremely tall for my age, Grallon was still taller. This made him at least six and a half feet tall. He had a thicker frame, also. Thoughts of him snatching me and pitching me off the nearby cliff didn't seem unrealistic. A silver cape of fur draped his broad shoulders. A cardinal red cloth lined the inside of it. His silver wool tunic had red plates of light armor fastened

to it. He looked as though he was dressed for an imperial procession.

After slightly bowing, I remarked, "Good morning, Grallon, lord of Vorgium."

"Greetings, young Merlinus," he replied as he walked toward me. "I hope all has gone well?"

"As good as can be expected under the circumstances," I remarked. "I don't believe Valerius will report that things went as smoothly as they did. Our Alan escorts never filled me with a moment of doubt. They knew the lay of the land as if they had held it for a lifetime. No one was hurt or even harassed."

"Good. Then everything went as well as can be expected. Something always comes up and the plan must be altered to fit the present conditions. That's life," Grallon said as he walked past me. He walked closer to the cliff. I moved up but stayed out of arms length.

"You see this? Mark yourself as one of the fortunate few. For many have not seen things like these and some never will. Only powerful men of the Empire have stood where you do."

"And servants," I added with light conviction. The silence and the look from Grallon made me think I would have been better off saying nothing. Father said to never correct a superior.

Seeing no malcontent in the sharp remark, he fired back, "Even emperors have been called from the farmer's fields."

He turned back toward the sea, dignified with his hands drawn together behind his waist.

Without looking back at me, he called out, "Your father would be proud of you. You have handled things in the best possible manner. There is just one more thing I would like you to handle. If you agree to it, I will order a generous supply of salted pork and garum to be sent to Aureliani, today. In addition, a small chest of coins will be included."

"What task could warrant such an offer?" I inquired.

"Nothing you haven't done already," the lord of Vorgium remarked. "I wish you to sail to the western shores of Britain. I have honorary holdings there. I gained them when I served in the legion sent by General Stilicho. Instead of leaving when we turned away Britain's enemies, I stayed. The bulk of the men returned to the continent. Recently, in return for honorable service, I've given much of the lands to my men who still fight for me. At the holdings near Gloucester, I have stationed my

son, Vortimer. I want you to sail with the child, Ambrosius, to Gloucester. Once there, simply give the boy to Vortimer. And then, you shall be richly rewarded.”

“You have lands in Britain?” I asked.

“Yes,” Grallon said in a strong, proud tone. “I have many holdings here and on the island. Even in tough times, I have prospered. Times are changing. People must adapt or die in poverty. I have served the Empire well and I have been rewarded with wealth and prosperity. I am more powerful than Carausius and less blinded by pride than he was. Learn from my example, Merlinus. Use the Empire. Don’t fight against the system. It has consumed kingdoms before us. It has consumed Christ. It could easily consume you or I if we step out of line. So don’t, and you could gain all the riches you desire, as I have.”

After pausing for a moment, Lord Grallon added, “Let me level with you a moment. Few have realized it and I have done nothing to inform more, but I have never stood with my sword drawn on a battlefield.

“I served my time as a quaestor in the army,” Grallon said with a smile. “I helped to coordinate the transporting of Stilicho’s army to and from Britain. I am a rare Roman. I am renowned for my sea legs. Instead of taking payment for services rendered, I obtained parcels of imperial lands in various ports on the island, and on the shores of Armorica.

“In addition to these imperial grants in London, Portchester, Topsham, and Tintagel, there are family holdings in Demetia and Gloucester. And as I said, it is to Gloucester that I want you to take the boy. My son, Vortimer, stays at the villa in Gloucester.”

“That’s it?” I asked.

“That’s it,” Grallon replied. “Do this and you shall be richly rewarded.”

“Done,” I quickly replied.

CHAPTER 5

I watched and listened as Ahès and Grallon argued on the shore the next morning.

“You can’t send Ambrosius away. If you do, I’m going with him.”

“You can’t, child. What would you do, live as a slave mother, raising Ambrosius as your own? Impossible.”

“Absolutely,” Ahès cried out. She broke free of him. Ahès waded out into the water as the boat pulled away from the shore. Her eyes stared at me. Her lips shivered from the chill of the water. Still, she trudged through the deepening tide.

“Ahès, turn back before the waves pull you under,” I called from the boat as I held the baby. With no expression, he looked up at me.

“Ahès, stop,” Grallon ordered.

She did not halt. High waves rolled over her, as her hand frantically clawed at the stern of the boat. She spat out water and gasped for air, but still she reached for the boat.

“Give it up, Ahès,” Grallon shouted as he walked out into the waves after her. “Don’t force me to drag you in.”

“I shall wreak havoc upon your city if you force me to stay.”

“Young lady, I’m your lord and father,” Grallon barked, charging deeper into the rushing water. In no time, he was out nearly to Ahès.

Her nails dug at the side of the boat. The ribs of the boat flared up at such an angle that it made it difficult for Ahès to climb aboard.

Not wanting her to drown, I called out to her, “Let him go, Ahès. Let Ambrosius go.”

Releasing what little hold she had of the boat, we separated quickly as the drift of the sea set in. Ahès sank like a rock underneath the waves. Moments passed, but she did not surface. Lord Grallon watched for her. His face grew more frantic. He reached down into the water, first with one hand then with both. Calming himself, Grallon stood still and scanned the water. Spotting her silhouette, he shot into the water and a moment

later hauled her up from the depths of the dark blue sea.

The oarsmen got situated and worked the sea. The high waves heaved the boat up and down as it crawled across the choppy water. The rough ocean wore on me. I tried to keep Ambrosius as comfortable as possible. I turned into the center of the ship to help shield against the splashing waves. Still, its mist was inescapable. In time, we made it to the mouth of the Severn and eventually docked near Gloucester.

No one was waiting for us. The docks were bare and deserted. The merchants acted like nothing was wrong. I moved away from the shore. My eyes followed the road up toward the horizon. In the distance, a wagon rolled toward us.

After some time, the large oxen-driven cart arrived near the docks. I moved to climb aboard. He yelled something. I struggled to understand. The words had to be in one of the Brythonic dialects.

“What are you doing?” the husky driver barked in broken Latin.

“Are you not from the house of Vortimer?” I questioned.

“Yes,” the heavy-set man replied as he lumbered down from the wagon’s seat.

“Well, that’s where this child and I are heading. I am here by order of Lord Grallon. Vortimer will be expecting my arrival.”

After an odd look, the driver looked back and replied, “This may be true, but you cannot ride. There is no room. You will have to trail behind the wagon.”

“Won’t it be a long walk carrying a baby,” I declared.

“That’s not my concern. I’m just here for the wine,” the man stated.

“You can’t be serious,” I barked back at him.

“I am,” the man replied as he walked by.

“This is insane,” I began. “I will not –.”

With a tug on my arm, I stopped talking. Glancing down, I saw the baby pulling at my sleeve of my wool overcoat. The grumbling man’s words faded in the breeze. The wind blew a cold hard truth. Winter was settling quickly. I took the excess cloth of my tunic and cradled the baby in it so I would have both hands free while walking. I marched from the wagons and headed for the crest forming the immediate horizon.

Where had I promised to take this child? Though I would not personally kill him, was I not ensuring his doom by bringing him here? I walked to the town of Gloucester. Though not far, I struggled to

swallow the fact that no one was sent to greet our arrival. *But why would they? Vortimer could not be too happy.*

Luckily, it wasn't difficult finding lodging there.

For the next three days, Vortimer refused to meet with me. We walked out to his nearby villa. Each time, we were greeted by the same servant, Allectus: an elderly man with refined manners. His slate gray hair was trimmed short. The lines of age were quite visible, though his face lacked all other emotions. He had no facial hair to conceal this. Each time I asked for Vortimer, he repeated his same response.

"Lord Vortimer is unable to meet with you, today. I shall inform him that you have called upon him."

Each time, I gave the same reply, "Please inform your master that I shall call upon him tomorrow."

"I shall," he answered before closing the door.

On the fourth day, as I walked through the courtyard toward the front entrance, the door opened and Allectus appeared.

"Greetings," I called out to him.

With a reserved nod, he acknowledged our presence.

"I —," I started.

"He will not see you," Allectus cut in. "He has instructed that you leave the child with me."

"I —,"

"Young man, my lord, Vortimer will not see you," the old servant added. "You have done all that you can for the child. It's time for you to get on with your life. Go to your new home in Gaul and seek peace."

After hugging the baby, I kissed his forehead. Unfortunately, I had my own attachment to him.

"Take care, Ambrosius," I added.

Allectus took the child. The servant turned and walked away. As they entered the villa, Allectus closed the door without looking back. A strange emptiness invaded me. I had thought that once I was done, a burden would be lifted from my conscience. I was wrong. I didn't feel free. I felt worse. The uncertainty of his future pained me. I could do nothing to alleviate it. I lacked the resources to buy his freedom. I truly doubted that Grallon would allow me to do that, anyway.

With nothing left to do, I walked back to the inn where I had stayed the last few nights.

CHAPTER 6

I debated my next step. *How should I get to Gaul? Taking a ship from here would be outrageous. I could walk to Dover, see the island and then catch the short ride to Gaul from there.* I left the room and went downstairs. I sat at a table and ordered some roast and ale.

Nearly finished with my meal, I noticed two soldiers enter the quiet inn. Their eyes scanned the empty tavern. They were looking for someone. They saw me sitting in the back corner of the wide room. I looked back at my plate to finish off the final bit of roast. As I glanced back at them, they moved straight for me. My hand casually dropped below the table. My fingers slowly inched over the hilt of my dagger hanging on my right hip.

Why were they here for me? Were they Grallon's men? What did they want? It couldn't be good.

The soldiers stopped at my table. Remaining silent, I looked up. A dagger and a gladius mounted their right and left hips. Both wore red tunics underneath their *lorica segmentata*. This legionary-style armor was fashioned from a leather vest and protective bronze bands. Each man sported a cardinal cape fastened to their shoulders by golden brooches. They wore red trousers to stand the damp chilly weather.

The soldier on the right had short black hair and a thick beard like Hadrian. The other was clean-shaven and had wheat-colored hair.

“Greetings, young man. I’m Falco and this is Bellus,” stated the soldier to my left in Latin. They were both bigger than I and well armed.

“Hello,” I replied as I glanced at both of them, gauging their intent. I grew nervous in the silence that followed. The bartender behind his counter stopped what he was doing when he noticed their presence. His concerned look matched my feeling.

“Sorry about interrupting your meal. My men and I have recently been transferred from Lord Grallon. We’re heading for York. We’ve been instructed to contact you. I am to inform you that you may travel with us

to York. Once there, you may leave for Aureliani on a ship scheduled to depart in a short while. Your service has been greatly appreciated. Would you want to travel with our detachment?" asked Falco.

I said nothing. His offer made me leery. Grallon had said nothing about any men going to York. I didn't know what to say. Was this a trap?

"You are Merlinus, are you not?" Falco impatiently asked.

Bellus laughed and declared, "Falco, I don't think he trusts us."

I didn't.

Falco laughed and added, "You're right, Bellus."

"If we meant you harm," Bellus began, "who's stopping us from doing what we want with you? Who are you to anyone in Gloucester?"

As he finished, Bellus glanced around the tavern to see if anyone was stepping up in my defense. Looking at the bartender, Bellus smiled as the man's glance fell away as if he hadn't even seen us.

Seeing his point but sensing no ill intent from them, I asked, "When are your men pulling out of Gloucester?"

"Tomorrow," Falco answered.

"So are you interested in going to York with us," Bellus asked.

"Yes."

The next morning, shortly after sunrise, I met up with Falco and his men at the tavern's stable located behind the inn. The group contained fifteen men including Falco and Bellus. All of them were several years older than myself.

"Greetings, young Merlinus," Bellus called out from some distance as soon as he had noticed my approach.

"Hello, Bellus. How are things?" I asked.

"As well as can be expected," he replied with a light nod.

"Good," I added.

"So are you ready to head for York?" Falco said with his hand outstretched to greet me.

"Yes, sir," I replied as I grasped his hand.

"Good. We shall ride to Fosse Way and take that northeast to Lincoln and from there we will ride north to York," Falco finished.

"Will we make it to Lincoln tonight?" I asked.

The majority of the men laughed.

"No," Bellus added. "It will take a few days to reach Lincoln. It's over thirty leagues from here."

“Mount up, men. It’s time to ride out.” Falco shouted.

Days later, after spending a night in Lincoln and continuing north, we arrived in York. People from miles around crowded the forum, selling, buying, and bartering goods and services.

“So, have you ever been to York?” Bellus asked.

“No. Actually, my arrival in Gloucester, two weeks ago, was the first time I set foot in Britain,” I declared. “I like what I have seen so far.”

“If that’s the case, you should go with us to meet Duke Coel. He resides in the palace of Septimius Severus. He was the emperor that had the palace built over one hundred years ago.”

“It would be all right if I went?” I asked.

“Sure. Why not?” Falco remarked as he dismounted.

“I will gladly go,” I remarked.

“Good.”

Proceeding through the bustling town, we headed toward a spectacular stone building at the north end of the forum. Ten white columns supported the portico, six for its façade and two for each end. Servants greeted us as we walked under the open awning.

“Welcome, Falco,” called out one of the male attendants.

The four servants wore white ankle-long tunics. Each had a gold-embroidered V-shaped collar with a matching tassel belt. Leather-strapped sandals clad their feet.

“Lord Coel has been expecting your arrival. Your men may leave their mounts with us.”

“Very good, Cato,” Falco replied.

As I handed over the reins of my horse, Cato looked at me oddly.

Seeing the young man’s expression, Bellus laughed and added, “This young man is with us.”

“Of course,” the young man commented as he took the reins from my hand. “Please accept my apology.”

“There’s no need for it,” I answered.

Cato nodded and led the horse to the side of the building with the other men’s horses. I followed close behind the small group of soldiers as Falco led the way into the magnificent palace. Numerous sculptures filled the grand building ranging from alabaster busts to larger-than-life statues. As we neared an open room that housed one of these colossal emperors,

a regal attendant approached us. He appeared as the others did, in a white linen tunic with gold tassel belts and leather soles. He was older and taller than the others. He also had their bowl-shaped haircut.

“Greetings, Falco and Bellus. Lord Coel shall be glad that you’ve brought him so soon,” the young man announced.

A sinking feeling consumed me. I glanced at them, and their shifting eyes confirmed my suspicion. Instantly, my pace slowed. Noticing the change, a regretful look formed on the attendant’s face. He knew he had said something he shouldn’t have. Before anything could be said, a man appeared as if he had walked out of the statue behind him. The sculpture was a mirror image of the old man. I stopped some distance from him. His attendant stood to the right while Bellus and Falco were at my left. He was a man of average height, an inch over five and a half feet. He commanded respect with his presence. He had lived twice as long as most folks. “He’s one of the last Romans remaining on this island,” Falco had stated before we made it east. Though old, Lord Coel gave no impression of being frail. Instead, his manner presented a good-natured, youthful vigor. He appeared more as a scholar than a soldier. He wore a light gray robe with flowing sleeves and a V-cut collar. Bands of royal blue lined the edges. He wore a thin white tunic underneath the robe and a wide black leather belt drew them in around his waist. Because of his snow-white hair and beard, Coel looked like he could be Grallon’s old uncle.

Smiling at me as if we were old friends, he bellowed, “Greetings, young Merlinus. I hope your travels in my province have gone well.”

“All is well so far. Your lands seem quiet civil.”

“Ah yes, we’re far from the troubles of Spain,” the duke said. “Do you know why I asked you to be here?”

My fear deepened as I naively replied, “I thought I had come of my own free will.”

The old man smiled and, while glancing at Bellus, Falco, and his attendant, he remarked, “Leave us.”

They bowed their good-byes and walked out the way we came. It was a strange feeling that overtook me. I didn’t fear for my life. In no way had this man tried to intimidate me. In fact, it was quite the opposite.

“Will you take a walk with me?” The man asked.

I nodded yes.

CHAPTER 7

Lord Coel led me through a labyrinth of corridors. The treasures of the palace became more and more splendid as we went. More gold-laced vases, gold diadems, and gold-tipped spears for the statues. It appeared as though they had problems with flooding. I noticed water damage at the base of the walls. Various attendants smiled as we passed them. He saved his words and didn't speak.

He took me to the central courtyard of the palace. Full-grown trees lined its borders, and a fountain stood center stage. With her hands up in the air, the female stone statue looked like a Y. Water poured out from her raised palms and splashed into the pool below her. It was nearly winter and still birds sang in the courtyard, drowning out the noisy sounds of the street.

"This is where I go to get away from the craziness of the world," the old man remarked as he stepped out onto the grass. I stopped as I took it all in. Its beauty was breathtaking, a serene oasis within the busy town. Though no tropical paradise, its tranquility soothed me.

"This courtyard is incredible," I replied. Glancing back, a pure joyful smile brightened his face.

"I'm glad you appreciate such things. That says something about your character. Also, your coming to Britain really says something."

"I don't understand," I remarked. "Why does my coming to Britain say something about what type of person I am?"

The duke smiled at my question. I noticed an attendant approached us.

Turning, Coel remarked to the boy-servant, "Balbus, fetch my young friend and I some fresh water from the well."

"Yes, my lord," the young attendant replied.

"Would you like to take a seat?" He asked.

"No, thank you, sir," I smiled as the grass comforted my sore feet. Only sand would have felt softer on my leather soles. "I actually

would prefer to stand.”

“What I have meant was, you didn’t leave the child’s welfare to chance and brought the child to Britain,” he added.

“What child?” I asked.

He smiled. Taking a couple steps toward the approaching attendants, the duke took the two silver goblets off the serving tray. The young man turned and walked away. The duke handed the cool, long-stemmed cup to me. The water chilled my throat as I took a long drink.

“How old were you when Rome was sacked?” The old man asked.

“I was ten. I was living in Lyons at the time,” I declared.

“Everyone remembers where they were when the news reached them. I was having a banquet at the time. It was a grand celebration.

“So, you are only fourteen, now? You’ve done a lot of growing up since then,” the duke declared.

“Yes, a lot of things have changed. My father died earlier this year. That was more difficult to deal with.”

“Your father was a good man. He served Rome well. It’s unfortunate what happened to him,” the old man remarked.

“You knew my father?” I asked. I couldn’t hide my surprise.

“Yes, we served in the imperial legions together. I imagine you don’t know this, but I knew your father even before that. Your grandfather served under King Crocus back when the Alemanni chieftain was still alive and stationed in the Vale of York. My father was a magistrate of York. This is how your dad and I crossed paths.

“Your father and I joined the legions at the same time when we came of age. Ironically, we swore allegiance to a dead emperor. The same year we joined the British ranks, Maximus was executed in Aquileia.

“In truth, it mattered little. Rome was and is always in need of able, fighting men and willing to pardon some when misled by usurpers. It’s usually the leaders that lose their heads just as Marcus, Gratian, Constantine, and Gerontius have recently demonstrated. And those are just the British honorable mentions. Revolt seems to be Rome’s greatest export at the moment. It is being churned and cured everywhere as we speak. This chaos is not isolated to this island. At the moment, the Irish and the Picts remain checked at the fringes of the western shores of Demetia and the northern frontier. But this was only after much hardship and bloodshed.

“Your father and I served in defending this province. We both rose to leadership positions when the regiments sent by Stilicho arrived to help against the plundering Picts and Irish.”

“I wonder why I never remember living in Britain,” I remarked to Lord Coel as he drank his water.

“By the time you were five, your father’s unit had been withdrawn from Britain to counter the hostilities of Radagaisus and his Gothic army. Your father gained great honors in the battle of Fiesole serving under Stilicho. At the time, he only had a few more years to serve before retiring from the legion. But all that he had rightfully gained was wrongfully stripped away and confiscated when the Vandal Roman general met his demise and your father was punished through association. Your father kept his life, but lost half of his pension. That is the only reason that he got sucked into this mess with Grallon and his imperial cronies. I wish your father would have accepted my invitation to return to York. He was too proud for that. He thought it was a handout, but it wasn’t. I would have been thrilled to have your father fighting by my side once more. I still could use him if he were still alive.”

“I wish you would have been able to convince my father otherwise,” I remarked.

After a short laugh, he added, “I bet you do. I bet you do.”

Lord Coel paused as he looked skyward. For the first time, I noticed the coldness hovering in the courtyard. The standing torches and braziers threw off only so much heat. The stone walkway in and around the courtyard was hypocaust, which most likely kept the fountain water from freezing.

“I’ve seen and done many things but know much more. I know that you escorted Grallon’s daughter and a child from Barcelona. I know that you brought this child to the Isle and have given him to Vortimer. I have been told rumors about the boy. Are they true?” The man asked.

“That all depends on what they said,” I replied.

The smiling, old man nodded in agreement.

“I will stop needling you, son,” the old man remarked. “I already know if I ask you what the boy’s name is, you will say that it’s Ambrosius when it’s Theodosius. I could use this to know that you are willing to lie to me, but the truth doesn’t save a martyr.”

He let his words sink in. His candidness amazed me. It set me

at ease, but I didn't say anything. Instead, I waited.

"The sacking of Rome was like a pebble dropping into a pond. Its rippling effects have touched the shores of Britain. No longer can people choose what's right or wrong. Free will has been given a death sentence even before its appeal can be heard. And a close friend's son, Pelagius has been called a heretic by lesser men. Now the radicals are becoming the orthodox."

The old man turned away for a moment. A cold breeze blew down into the courtyard. The old man looked up and watched the few clinging leaves rattle in the trees. The chill of winter settled in deeper. I shivered.

Noticing this, the duke asked, "Do you want to go in?"

"No, not just yet," I added. "I would like to talk a little more if you don't mind."

With a little smile, he replied, "Sure. That's fine. So what's on your mind?"

As I walked over to the stone bench and sat down, I asked, "So why am I here?"

Casually following my lead, the duke sat down next to me.

"I called you here for two reasons. The first you already answered and the second I have accomplished so far," the old man declared.

"And what would that be?" I asked.

"I have maintained your safety," he answered.

"Huh? What do you mean?" I asked.

"Do you really think that Grallon plans on allowing you to leave the island?" The duke asked.

"I —,"

"You're no longer a boy. Merlinus, you can't afford to be naive. The debt I owe your father for saving my life is paid by saving yours."

His words stung like a dagger. I stood up and stepped away. Turning back, I asked, "What's saying I can trust you?"

"Nothing," he stated.

"What's stopping you from killing me, now that you know what you want to know?"

"Nothing," he added.

"You're not helping me feel at ease," I finished with a half laugh.

"Good."

"Huh?"

“Merlinus, what are you trying to achieve in this life?”

As his words sank in, I could think of nothing. This year had flashed by, though I had been living day-to-day. I hadn't had the luxury of thinking of the future. I had been forced into facing and solving my father's problems.

“You are not your father,” the duke declared.

“What?” I asked as I turned and looked at him.

“You are not your father, like I was not mine. We must face our own mistakes just as they did. We must know what our weaknesses are so we can be wiser men. I know you are old enough to know the faults of your father. You have taken on a heavy burden, but I believe you've completely miscalculated how long you are going to have to deal with it. You know it is going to be a lifetime.”

I looked down at the grass, knowing he was right. After a laugh, I replied, “Hopefully, I get to carry it until I am old and gray.”

“It doesn't matter if the quality isn't there. Merlinus, I promise to do everything in my power to get you back with your family. I will provide an armed escort to Aureliani. This escort is already headed for Armorica.”

“Refuse the protection of an armed escort? Who would be so foolish? Not I? When does it leave?” I asked.

“In two days,” the duke replied.

“Thanks. I appreciate the help you have given,” I replied.

“You're welcome,” he finished. “Your father would be proud.”

For the first time, those words felt good to hear.

CHAPTER 8

From York, I headed for Aureliani. I wanted to make sure my family was fine and there were no problems with them moving into the villa. I had anticipated problems, but there were none. It was as agreed. I had escorted Ahès and the child back to Armorica; in return, I inherited a villa in between Aureliani and the Loire River.

I arrived at the villa. It was early morning. Following the imperial directions from Aureliani, I approached a fifteen-foot-tall wall that ran east and west for as far as I could see in both directions. Within fifty yards either way, the trees blotted out the view of the wall. Though it had a thick double-door gate, it stood open for anyone to enter. I hesitated as my heart raced. For some reason, I was scared. Building up nerve, I took a step but stopped. My eyes had locked onto the villa's resident plaque. With immaculate craftsmanship, the bronze plate identified me by name as the owner of the estate, Budicius Merlinus Aurelianus.

Suddenly, I thought of Budicius in Barcelona and how the wealth of his villa had impressed me at first and then sickened me by the time I had left. Then, Grallon's words of advice sang in my ears: "Learn from my example, young Merlinus. Use the Empire. Don't fight the system."

I realized that I had done just that, and I felt sick. Though all the distinguished men said I had done my father proud, only shame filled my heart. There was a chance that Ambrosius was already dead. I had no clue anymore and that didn't make me feel good. I had traded my soul for this villa on the Loire River.

"You know you can go in. It is your place," someone remarked in a Gothic tongue. Surprised, I spun around to find my grandmother standing behind me. She had a bright, wide smile as she stared at me. Smiling back, I went to her and wrapped my arms around her. Grandma Sunilda felt tiny in my arms as I hugged her. She had her long silver hair bundled up with a hair pin. Though I could not recall her previous hair color, it seemed whiter than the last time I saw her. She was of average

height, hovering just over five feet tall. And though she was in good spirits, Grandma Sunilda seemed so fragile.

“It’s good to have you here, finally,” my grandmother continued in her native Gothic tongue.

“It is good to be here,” I replied in her native tongue. As I still hugged her, I whispered, “Is everything okay?”

“Now it is. Now it is,” she added with a brighter smile. “Let me show you around your place.”

“Sure, that would be nice,” I smiled.

Keeping my arm around her shoulders, I walked next to her through the open gate. Upon entering, I noticed a wooden staircase going up to the elevated walkway that ran along the length of the upper wall. A well-worn dirt path led from the entrance to the start of the long colonnaded portico that joined into the verandah of the winged-corridor villa. As we walked closer, two large oaks stood guard in the front yard in between the main gate and the portico. To my left on the other side of the one oak stood the barn. I heard the horses stirring in the stables. My horses stirring. Chickens and ducks strutting and waddling about were mine. White plaster coated the walls of the various buildings while rusty-red, clay tiles capped the roofs of them.

“You have some horses, but your horses need training,” Grandmother remarked as she guided me out around the villa.

“Aren’t we going in?” I asked.

“Most of the household still sleeps. We’ll go in later,” she replied.

“Okay. Sounds good.”

Quietly, we walked past the stand-alone kitchen, furnace, and bathhouse. Tall straight trees quickly consumed the otherwise vacant land. We strolled through the loose leaves for quite a distance. The enclosed land ran for a half mile before it terminated at the river. The slope of the bank made it nearly impossible to scale from the river whether the approaching party was swimming or sailing.

We circled back from the river’s edge. As we hooked back toward the villa, Grandmother guided me through a small orchard. It was far enough away so people on the river didn’t see it but still close enough to bucket water to all the fruit trees without much difficulty.

Returning to the front, we entered the villa. It still slept quietly. We did not wake it. We walked into the audience chamber, which led

into the dining room. These two rooms formed the center of the H-shaped villa. The center corridor ran east and west while the long wings went south toward the river and north toward the main gate. Grandmother took me to the southwest wing.

“This is where your quarters are located,” she whispered. “It’s closest to the library. My room is in the northwest wing so I’m not bothered by the sun and can sleep in.”

“Like you did, today?”

“Yes,” she replied with her heartwarming smile.

“Thanks,” I remarked as I leaned down and kissed the top of her head.

“No, thank you, my sweet Merlin,” she replied. Getting up on the tips of her toes, she kissed my cheek and added, “You’ve done what you have promised. You are a man of your word. Find peace with that.”

“I’ll try, Grandma. I’ll try.”

As I stood alone in my own quarters for the first time, I knew I could not find peace here. I didn’t deserve this wealth and prestige. I had taken a child from a loving mother.

This imperial estate had turned me into a monster.

CHAPTER 9

Mother treated me as if I was some lord that deserved the utmost respect. It felt unnerving. My conscience would not let me rest. Guilt weighed heavily on me. I didn't want to expose Mother to it. She had too much to deal with already and didn't need more. I had hired some skilled workers for various duties. When I was certain that all would be taken care of, I left them. I could not stay in Aureliani.

I gathered my things and started out for the stables.

"You weren't actually going to leave without saying good-bye?" Called out my grandmother in her native Gothic tongue. Every time she spoke to me, she used her native language. She loved that I had learned it at a very young age. Actually, she could have been the reason I had excelled at languages.

Suddenly, I felt guilty. I turned to her.

"Awh, don't look at me with such a sad face," she said as she raised a thin bony hand to my cheek. Her hand was cold. As I looked down into her warm eyes, I realized that this would be the last time I would see her alive. I wrapped my arms around her and held her tight.

"I'm sorry, Grandma. I know no other way," I whispered in her native tongue.

"Don't worry, my dear. You lead with an honest heart. Don't lose that and you will have no real regrets. You are a strong young man. You have proven that by what you have done. Most would have failed.

"Merlinus, you remind me so much of your father. You have a similar cowlick. When you crop your black hair short the way he liked to keep his, your hair sticks up in the back. Though you don't have a war-tempered physique as he did, you are somewhat taller.

"Your father hoped that you wouldn't have to serve in the imperial legions. He had higher aspirations for you. That's why you had a tutor whenever he could afford one."

Looking up, she added, "You even have his slate-blue eyes, but you

are much more than what he had become. He could never say no to women. He bent to their will. Maybe it was my fault, but regardless of the past, don't fall victim to the same.

"He found a good woman in Alicia. I still don't know why your mother waited for my son. She should have found a better man. Or he should have stayed with her when he had first met her. I guess the time wasn't right."

"What are you two doing out this early in the morning? What are you talking about?" Mother called out as she walked up behind us. Mother was only a couple of inches taller than Grandma Sunilda, but she was somewhat heavier. Mother and Julia, my sister, shared many of the same features. Both had light brown hair with dark brown eyes. Each had round chubby cheeks, but they were not ugly, or at least they were not in my eyes. As usual, Mother's hair hung loosely, free of any bows or pins. Her ankle-long tunic wasn't drawn in around her waist.

"Nothing," Grandmother replied in common Latin.

Mother just shook her head. She looked back at me and noticed I was ready to leave.

"Merlinus, what's going on?" Mother asked. "You are going already? You just mentioned it, the other night. I figured that you would give it a little more thought."

"I've been thinking of it since I left for Barcelona," I replied blankly.

A small smile grew on my grandma's face while a frown formed on my mother's.

"Everything shall be fine. I shall go and see the world. I promise to return," I declared.

"You'd better. You'd better," Mother whispered. "You know you should say good-bye to Julia. She would be heartbroken if you didn't."

"Your mother is right, my dear," grandmother said in her native tongue.

"I know. I know," I replied in two different languages.

Both of them smiled.

I wandered the lands of the Roman Empire and beyond. I traveled as far as the eastern ocean, farther than Alexander the Great had ever seen. Searching for enlightenment, I met countless people, both wise and foolish. From a wizard of steel, I learned the secrets of the forge. He showed me how to make swords fit for the God of War. I absorbed

all that I could and left nothing of importance behind. There was nothing I didn't want to know, nothing I couldn't learn. Many languages I learned and many secrets I gained. I even spent time with the monks of Egypt before heading for the eastern sea.

Fourteen years later, I longed for the faces of my family. *Would they even be familiar?* I could stay away no longer. As I headed for home, I heard news of all sorts.

By this time, Placidia had become a widow for the second time. Less than a year after I had originally left, Adaulphus had been assassinated in his personal stables by a servant named Dubius. Valia, the new king of the Visigoth, traded Princess Placidia back to the Romans for a large sum of food. Emperor Honorius had then forced Placidia to marry Constantius, a great imperial general. Within five years, though, Constantius had died, but not before siring a daughter named Honoria and a son named Valentinian the third.

Following the death of Constantius, Emperor Honorius pushed his half-sister and her two children into exile. They sought asylum in New Rome. That same year, Emperor Honorius died of dropsy. Factions within the Empire surfaced. Civil chaos followed. The whole chain of command was questioned and challenged. Power struggles ensued between the western military officers and the imperial family. At the regional level, the praetorian prefect of Gaul, Exuperantius of Poitiers was killed by soldiers in Arles. No one was brought to justice for his murder. Joannes the usurper might have secured the support of Gaul against Placidia's claim if Castinus or Aëtius had sought justice. Instead, the military leaders were impotent to the outrageous offense.

So with an army of Alans sent by the Emperor of New Rome, Placidia marched back to Italy and elevated her little boy, Valentinian, up as the Western Emperor. She stood in command as his regent and as Augusta, the Empress of the West.

And now, four years after the civil war, I was home once again.

CHAPTER 10

I returned to my villa south of Aureliani. The silence of night greeted me. Oddly, inside, so did radiating heat. It rose from the hollow floor beneath my feet. Someone had repaired the hypocaust system. It made me smile. This type of heating of a room highlighted Roman civilization. A furnace outside warmed my soles by heating the air under the villa's floor.

A couple of candles still burned. I picked one of them up and carried it with me. I headed for my chambers without announcing my arrival. As I opened the door, an unexpected smell greeted me. It was a sweet soft smell. It wasn't the stale air I had been anticipating. Instead, incense and flowers welcomed me.

Surprise filled me as I neared the bed. A woman lay there, sleeping. The flickering light of the candle showed a face that I never thought I would see again.

It was Ahès. I looked at her silently as she slept. She looked peaceful. I figured she would have looked much older. It appeared that the years had been kind to her.

Why was she here, then? Why was she sleeping in my villa instead of some place in Vorgium? What had happened? It could not be good.

I wanted answers, but I didn't want to wake her. I stood there for a moment. Thoughts from long ago consumed me as I stared at her. I lost myself in the past.

"Who are you?" Called out a young man from behind me. I turned slightly but stopped as I felt the tip of the blade in my back.

"I am the owner of this villa," I declared.

"You lie," the young man answered as the point needled my spine. "Now, who are you?"

"I am —," I started.

"Merlinus," Ahès declared as she sat up in the bed. "Merlinus, is that really you? We thought that you had died. No one has heard from

you in many years. Not even a whisper. Where have you been?"

As she spoke, the tip of the sword dropped away. I pivoted slightly so I could see the person standing behind me. He was a tall young man, just shy of my height of six feet. He was much stockier than I. Dark hair covered the top of his head. His dark eyes studied my every movement. He looked familiar. He looked like King Adaulphus. As Ahès leaned against the wall behind her bed, I sat down on the edge.

"Hah, look at you, Merlinus. There's nothing the same about you except your slate-blue eyes. You have eyes like those of Vortimer," Ahès said. Leaning forward, she ran her fingers through my black beard and added, "What is this? You leave with a baby-skin face and return with the waist-long, wild beard of a hermit. Have you been growing that thing since you left fifteen years ago?"

Laughing lightly, I replied, "No, just for the last six."

"So where are the rest of your things? Are they still outside?" she asked.

I lifted the leather sac I had slung over my neck and shoulder. It hung down to the side of my hip. With my right hand, I lifted up my long walking stick.

"These are my sole possessions," I declared. "Well, that is, besides this robe I wear."

"I guess that explains why you brought that sapling into the villa. You didn't want to take the chance of someone stealing it," she finished with a smile. "I would say I like the robe, if it didn't look like you wore it every day since you got it."

I looked down at what I was wearing, and I laughed when I realized that she was right. I had been wearing the same robe since I received it nearly four years ago.

Memories of the last six years of my life washed over me suddenly like the waterfalls of Mount Shaoshi in the Far East. I thought of the old grand master for the first time in months. From all of my teachers over the years, I could easily say that the lessons learned from Dom Fu had been the most valuable. And it was after he taught me the art of the forge that I received this blessed robe.

"Merlinus, are you still with us?" Ahès asked, drawing me back from distant memories.

"Yes, it has been a long time. Too many years. It doesn't seem

too much has changed around here,” I remarked. “Well, except for the hypocaust system actually working. Who fixed it?”

Even in the darkness shrouding the room, I saw her smile.

“Ambrosius repaired the system last fall,” she remarked.

“Ambrosius? You mean . . .” I started and stopped, amazed that he was now a young man instead of the baby with the birthmark that I still pictured.

“Yes,” she replied, “he repaired it. Ambrosius is very clever. There are probably a couple of things he could teach you, Merlinus.”

“Please, Mother, even a fool can show what not to do,” Ambrosius remarked. “Besides, you’re making more out of it than what it was. I simply replaced a damaged pipe. The furnace was in good repair already.”

Quietly, I listen to him. The baby boy had turned into a young man seemingly overnight. Amazingly, he still lived. And it seemed he’d grown into a good person. I found it difficult to say anything. There was much I wanted to ask, but I didn’t know what to say. My thoughts were too guarded, so I said nothing as I studied him.

“It’s a pleasure to finally meet you,” he began, “I am Ambrosius.”

“Hello, young man. It’s good to meet you,” I replied reaching out to shake his hand.

“Ambrosius, why don’t you head back to bed. Everything is all right. The two of you can get better acquainted in the coming days.”

“Of course,” the young man replied. Turning to me, he added, “Once more sir, it’s an honor to meet you. Sorry that it was at the point of my sword, though.”

“Forget it. It’s completely understandable.” I remarked.

With a slight bow, he turned and walked out of the room. He closed the door upon his exit.

Crawling across the bed, Ahès wrapped her arms around me and hugged me tightly. Pulling away, she kissed me on the cheek and hugged me again.

“Oh Merlinus, there is so much we need to talk about. It has been too long and so much has happened since we were last together. Where do I begin?” She asked.

“Fourteen years ago on the shore of Armorica,” I replied.

With a light smile, she replied, “Right.”

CHAPTER 11

I remained silent as I waited for Ahès to begin her story. Her wild, youthful beauty had been reined in by the years, but she glowed with a refined beauty now. Her dark brown hair showed only a few strands of gray. Within her soft brown eyes, a sadness lingered. Time hadn't made her face or her plump breasts sag. They still enticed my eyes.

"Did you know that Grallon isn't my father? My real father passed away when I was very young. He was such a big man, but gentle. He would toss me up in the air lightly and catch me. For hours it seemed. I would just laugh so hard for so long. He smiled the whole time. He loved me very much," she stated with a bright smile. The warm glow faded when she added, "Everything else is a reflection on a rippling pool.

"Grallon was a young officer under my father. They served Maximus and then Stilicho.

"Father was killed in a battle against the Irish in western Britain. He left Grallon in charge of his affairs in Armorica, at the time. Mother said Father wasn't much of a thinker. He didn't have time for such things. He was too busy making sure imperial plans were put into action. Father was a man of action, while Grallon was a handsome sailing merchant.

"She was candidly honest at the end," Ahès said as her voice trailed off to a sad look of silence.

"My mother relied more and more on Grallon's support as time went by. Through my mother, Grallon became lord of Vorgium. You see, my mother had come from an old, distinguished family," she remarked.

"The Voltinia tribe," I replied.

"Yes," she remarked with a surprised look, "How did you know?"

With a smile, I answered, "I recall the statue overlooking the bay."

She smiled and stated, "Mother's family controlled the salt tanks and garum trade on the Bay of Douarnenez for well over a hundred years."

She added, "Unfortunately, after the death of my father, Mother and I had fallen on hard times. The schools weren't what they once were.

The market hasn't been lucrative in years. Mother spoke of prosperity back when the Empire was still pagan and the worshiped Neptune kept our family strong. Mother watched as her beliefs and family's status became nullified.

"Grallon slithered into her soul and stripped her of what he wanted. At first, it seemed that he cared, but it soon became clear that he was only concerned with my mother's claims to Vorgium. With seven Roman roads radiating from there, Grallon wanted it for his shipping empire along with her family's properties in the ports of the Gallic Sea.

"And after taking claim to everything she had, he humiliated her by having an affair with a Saxon whore. The German slut bore a bastard," she added.

"So, is Vortimer your half-brother, then?" I inquired.

"No, Grallon and my mother had no children. Grallon was previously married. He had three sons from his first marriage. His wife died when she was giving birth to his youngest boy, Paschent. From what I have been told, she died a year before my father. Mother of Mary, so much has happened since we last spoke. Some of it hurts, so please bear with me and I will try to tell you as best as I can."

"Take your time," I replied, "we have all night."

"Hah," she laughed. "It will take longer than that."

"I'm figuring on being around for a while," I answered.

She smiled and pulled up the linen sheets around her. She fell silent as her eyes drifted down from mine. She struggled with something. Something that she wasn't sure that she wanted to tell me.

"I wonder if that statue is still standing," I joked.

"It's hard to say, with it being underwater," she declared.

"What? What happened?"

"A mile inland past the city of Ys has been submerged by seawater for quite some time. One night, the sea gate was unlocked and opened fully. The ocean engulfed everything. It was quite the spectacle."

"How could Grallon let that happen? Didn't he have the only key to the sea gate's lock?"

"Yes," she replied.

"So what happened, did he lose his mind?" I asked.

"You could say that," she mumbled. "In another drunken frenzy, Grallon forcibly took me. Luckily, the last time, his seed did not take."

“What? The child that you took to Barcelona was his?” I asked.

“Well, not really,” she replied.

“I don’t understand, Ahès, you’re not making sense,” I remarked.

“The actual child that went with us to Barcelona was the child of Hope, a girl that I knew. She lived in the village southeast of the Bay of Douarnenez. She had become pregnant and I helped her as she helped me. She could not keep her child and I really didn’t want to get rid of mine. So before you and I left, the girl and I switched our sons. She tended to Faustus while I brought her sickly child to Barcelona.

“It was Hope’s child that laid in that little silver coffin not mine. For the first couple of years, Hope’s family cared for Faustus. Without Grallon’s knowledge, I paid for the arrangement with coins from his personal coffer. In time, though, Grallon saw me stealing the money and I let him know why I was taking it. He was furious when he found out. He vowed to send the boy away. Fearing the worst for Faustus, I sent a letter for help.

“When Grallon tried to take Faustus, I told him that Bishop Germanus knew and that the bishop was heading for Armorica with a small imperial delegation. The redness in his face boiled past his eyebrows.”

“Bishop Germanus?” I cut in. “Hah, it’s a wonder he confronted Grallon for you.”

“It’s strange,” she remarked. “It may seem hard to believe, but Germanus seems truly committed to the Faith. Something happened after the episode with the baby Theodosius. A real transformation. He wears a hair shirt now and regrets his part in the conspiracy. Periodically, he drops in to check up on Ambrosius and every time he asks about you.

“Anyway, after I told Grallon, a short while later, Germanus arrived with a delegate of men. He brought charges against Grallon. They were not the charges you would expect; they had nothing to do with Ambrosius or Faustus. Grallon had grown neglectful in his duties to the Empire. The Bishop of Auxerre used my situation to temper the provincial council into righteous action.

“Grallon knew the nature of the charges that were being levied before Germanus publicly announced them. Trying to discredit the bishop, Grallon forced me to take Faustus and sit him on Germanus’ lap. I did as Grallon ordered, fearing for my life and that of my son’s. At the council meeting, I told the group of clergy and laity that Bishop Germanus was the boy’s father.

“Germanus called out, ‘Like a true father, I shall care for you, child, and never send you away. This is my promise as father of Armorica’s abandoned children. I will show you the world and its heavenly spectacles. It shall be this way unless your father of flesh says otherwise.’”

“Faustus glanced at Germanus and then at Grallon,” Ahès said as she continued her story. “While sitting in Bishop Germanus’ lap, the four-year-old boy called out to Grallon, ‘I go bye-byes? Papa, I go bye-byes?’”

“Grallon stewed as he stared at the boy,” Ahès added. “Faustus, then, hugged Germanus. Grallon stood up and stormed out of the hall. Germanus publicly condemned Grallon.

“It wasn’t much later that Grallon took me. In a drunken rage, he did it. When Grallon raped me the first time, I swore that if he ever did it again, I would finish him.

“He wasn’t gentle with me. The alcohol and the stench of fish from the garum he had consumed seeped from him. It didn’t discourage him that I wouldn’t let him kiss me on the lips. His slimy tongue licked my cheek.

“I struggled, but he had my arms pinned to the bed. With all my strength, I twisted and thrashed trying to break free. This was to no avail. He lay on top of me. I had trouble breathing from his heavy weight. With his body holding me down, he snatched my wrists in one hand and yanked up my dress with his other.”

She stopped. She could not hold back the pain that Grallon forced upon her. Tears streamed down her face as her hands covered her eyes. I went to her. I wrapped my arms around her and tried to comfort her.

“Ahès, you don’t have to tell me more,” I whispered.

“I know,” she said. “I’ll be all right. Just give me a moment.”

“Of course,” I remarked as I wiped away her tears with my thumb.

After a sigh, she continued, “As he was on top and having his way with me, I noticed the key for the sea lock dangling from his neck. And at that moment, I stopped resisting him. Soon after he had soiled in me, he passed out. As he began to snore, I slipped the gold necklace holding the key from his neck. He began to stir and I thought he would wake. Luckily, he did not. He simply rolled on his side, making it easier for me to escape.

“Immediately, I got out of the bed and raced through the villa. I did not stop. Once outside, I ran until I reached the shore. The salt in the air burned the inside of my chest. I stared out across the water. The full moon hovered close to the shimmering surface of the sea. The night seemed so peaceful as I stood at the water’s edge.

“After my rapid breathing slowed, I quickly walked toward the sea locks. I went to the dock on the other side of it. Getting into the small boat, I rowed out to the sea gate. I took the key and without hesitation unlocked the chains holding the spoke-wheel crank from lowering or raising the sea gate and I lowered the stone gate. The sea did the rest. It rushed over the edge like a waterfall and pounded the water below. The sea flooded through the opening.

“I heard my name repeatedly called out. Looking toward the villa, I saw a lone man racing along the shore. Slowly my name grew louder and his face became clearer. It was Grallon. I smiled watching him veer to higher ground as the sea swallowed up the land beneath his feet. That was the last time I saw him in Armorica.

“I began to row away from the gate before the sea could pull the boat through it. To this day, I still don’t know how I made it to the western shores of Britain in that little boat. I figured the sea would have swallowed me whole. As I grew tired from rowing, I laid in the belly of the boat and hoped the sea would consume me.”

She went silent. As her head fell in shame, she stared at her kneading hands. I reached up to comfort her. As my fingers touched her shoulder, her whole body shivered. Breaking her from her past, she turned with a sad smile and said, “I’m sorry. I must be a little cold.”

“I can remedy that,” I said as I rubbed her shoulders.

CHAPTER 12

After stoking the hypocaust furnace, I returned to Ahès' quarters with a plate of salted pork, cheese, bread, and some wine. She had put on a pullover tunic and placed on her feet some fur-lined slippers. She walked over to the small round table. It sat next to the window. Together, we settled in the chairs by the table.

As I prepared a light meal for us she continued, "After I lowered the gate and flooded the city of Ys, I headed for Britain in search of Ambrosius. Sometime later, I made it to the island. I don't know how long it took. By the time I had reached the shore, I was beyond delirious. Luckily, I was found and cared for by a gentleman named Constantine. He was from the rural districts of Cornovia above the Severn Valley.

"Constantine and his entourage had taken a different route home from the market. They had a good return in wool and had decided to visit kin in Gwent. Traveling the shores of the Severn Sea, he discovered me in my grounded boat. He placed me in one of his covered wagons and nursed me back to health as they made their way to the villa of Honorius in western Britain.

"Emperor Honorius?" I questioned.

"No. He is somehow related, though," she replied. "Constantine and Honorius were high officers on the island. They each commanded a cavalry unit in the island's mobile army. Regrettably, they both retired shortly before the last British revolt by the usurper named Constantine. The two men remained distant from the mounting revolt, having fulfilled their obligation to the army. Neither one of them was naive enough to believe that a usurper worthy only by the name would succeed when they had witnessed a better man fail.

"After regaining my health, I was informed that we had been at Honorius' villa for awhile. It didn't take long for my caretaker to realize who I was. Word of me had already reached the island. His son, Cai, rightfully warned him. Still Constantine assisted me.

“While at the villa in Gwent, Honorius told us how Grallon’s honorary titles were confiscated. Germanus returned with imperially endorsed orders and the backing of Agricola, the praetorian prefect of Gaul at the time. Residing in Gaul, Agricola controlled and provided security for the region, and at times, in the northwestern provinces. Grallon could not scoff or ignore this imperial mandate.

“Grallon went to Demetia in western Britain. He hides out now in the mountains of Snowdonia, in the lands that remain under his control. Even in those lands, Grallon falsely lay claim to holding. He gained them from his first marriage. The villa in Gloucester where Vortimer still resides was where his mother was born and raised.

“Now as the High Commander of the British Council, Grallon has hired Saxons to guard the remaining interests of the nobles. And so, the shepherd has the wolves tending the flock.”

“What has happen to Agricola’s troops? Have they been re-stationed in the East,” I inquired. “What happen to him?”

“Agricola died the year after the third consulship of Constantius. That same year, Constantius died. It had been only seven months since Honorius had made the tri-consul a colleague in power,” she stated.

“When did you leave the island?” I asked.

“Three years ago,” she replied.

“When did you catch up with Ambrosius?” I asked.

“The same year that I flooded the city of Ys was the same year that I met and married Constantine,” she added.

“You’re married?” I asked between bites of bread and pork.

Sadness returned to her face, the same sadness I saw before she sank into the sea when I sailed away with Ambrosius fourteen years ago.

“Constantine never looked down upon me. He was like you in that aspect. From the day that we shared our vows to the night he died, he loved me as if I was his princess and he were my king.

“When I first made it to the island, I relentlessly searched for Ambrosius. Constantine did as he promised; he helped me find him. Vortimer no longer sheltered the boy. Tired of being used by Grallon, the young nobleman rid himself of his father’s unfair burden. Choosing a worthy regent, though, Vortimer sent Ambrosius to stay with a nobleman and his wife in Ribchester on the eastern shores of the Irish Sea.

“At an early age, Ambrosius gained self-reliance and learned

horsemanship and hunting. He is quite a remarkable young man. Highly intelligent, but still cordial and polite.

“For Ambrosius’ safety, Constantine convinced me to allow the boy to stay in Ribchester,” she stated.

Pausing, she asked, “Merlinus, why did you go away for so long?”

Falling silent, I realized that I was holding my breath. I knew the answer and didn’t like it. I released the sudden pressure I felt.

“For all the good that I had done them, my family’s well-being reminded me of my own wrongdoing. I left everything that I knew and loved behind. I wanted to absolve myself of all my sins,” I remarked.

“Don’t punish yourself, Merlinus. Though you kidnapped the boy, you saved him. Look what happen to King Adaulphus. They killed the boy’s father in his own stables. There was no way that marriage was going to last. It is unfortunate that Ambrosius had to grow up so quickly. But what strife he has encountered has simply made him stronger,” she declared. “You gave him a chance, though.”

“He is definitely big for his age. I would never have guessed that he was only fifteen years old. He appears just shy of twenty,” I remarked. “Nearly a man ready to marry.”

“Yes, that’s truer than you know,” Ahès added. “After staying several years up in northern Britain, Ambrosius came back to Constantine’s lands in Cornovia. And for a few years we knew peace. Constantine treated the boy as his own. He taught Ambrosius to be a true man, honorable. And shortly before we were driven out of Britain, Ambrosius met the sweetest girl named Priscilla at a festival sponsored by her grandfather, Honorius of Gwent.

“Even now Ambrosius talks about her. And with the passion of his first love, he swears that he will marry her if he ever sees her again. It’s so adorable,” she added with a bright, warm smile.

“I’m sure it is, Ahès. You’re such a good mother,” I teased.

She blushed with guilt.

“I’ve told him that I am his mother,” she remarked. “Was it wrong that I told him I was his mother?”

“What kind of a person he is today is a direct result of your upbringing. That’s what a mother does,” I remarked.

She looked up and smiled at me.

“Hopefully, he will be able to overcome that,” I teased once more.

“Awh,” she cried as she swatted at me.

“No. Honestly, it seems like you have done a terrific job. He is well behaved,” I declared.

“I cannot claim what I haven’t done. He is innately that way,” she answered. “This is apparent in how he treats Geraint. He is the son of Constantine and me,” she added.

“How old is he?” I asked.

“Geraint is six and a summer’s child. He lives without a care in the world. He’s only down when he’s bored. That one is a handful,” she declared. “He idolizes Ambrosius, though. Ambrosius doesn’t mind. I think he enjoys teaching Geraint what he can. The boy is attached to his hip when Ambrosius is outside doing something. Only inside does Geraint avoid him. He fears that Ambrosius might try to make him sit still long enough to work on his reading and writing. Geraint does not enjoy the books the way that Ambrosius does. There are times when I swear Ambrosius has left the house, but then I enter another room and find him silently reading near an open window. He can speak a couple languages and read Greek. He speaks highly of Pelagius and warily about Caelestius,” she remarked. “You will enjoy speaking with Ambrosius. I guarantee it. Just ask for his opinion on a sinless life.

“One night, after we had been here for a while, he astounded me. He asked, ‘If a baptized man and a baptized woman have a child, does the child need to be baptized? And if not, then is there a true need for the Church when the grace of God is given at home?’

“I had no response,” she remarked as she shook her head.

The young man had touched on one of the key elements in the heresy surrounding Pelagius. The orthodoxy that the African bishops were preaching held little logic for me. It locked the believer into continuous servitude. A debtor of alms from past generations. No reprieve for self-control and personal actions.

“In truth, Ambrosius is like Geraint’s father,” she continued, “Unfortunately, Geraint doesn’t remember Constantine. It has been two years since Cai was here. That’s when Constantine’s oldest boy came over from the island to visit and check up on us. He stays in Britain fighting against Grallon.

“After the death of Emperor Honorius, or more important, the deaths of Agricola and Exuperantius, Grallon tightened his grip of power

over the British and Armoric provinces. He controlled the Gallic Sea, already. In an effort to consolidate his land holdings on the western side of the isle, Grallon helped his youngest son, Paschent, gain a foothold in Buihth. Soon Grallon's raids crossed into the lands of Gwent and into the rural districts of Cornovia. In the southern part of the island, he holds sway in Topsham and Tintagel through his shipping empire.

"Packs of German wolves infest the forests and fords of Britain. Grallon has done little to restrain their growing numbers. In fact, he has encouraged them as they help to consolidate his power.

"It all fell apart three years ago. I still wake up suddenly from dreaming about that night. In those nightmares, just as it happened, Constantine wakes me, saying that the house is on fire. I still hear him clearly. 'Wake, Ahès. Get up! Get up! My love, our home is on fire. Awake!'

"From the dream, I sat up in bed. My heart raced, just as it did that autumn night. Getting out of bed, I picked up Geraint and followed Constantine. Ambrosius followed us as we made our way outside.

"Even if there wasn't a full moon, I would have had no trouble seeing; the long stable stood fully ablaze. Though twenty yards away, the heat of the inferno pressed heavily upon my face. The horses circled restlessly in the corral. Our assailants moved up as we exited the villa. The large group of horsemen walked their mounts forward. As Constantine stepped up, he turned and whispered, 'Run.'

"At that moment, he drew his sword and engaged the horsemen. As I cradled Geraint in one arm, I snatched Ambrosius with my other hand. At first, Ambrosius resisted but stopped when Constantine ordered, 'Go! Go! They cut Constantine down right in front of us. Lifeless, Constantine dropped to his knees, and then fell face forward.

"We would have all perished if Cai and his friends hadn't returned as this happened. Cai had left with them earlier in the week. They had gone on a hunting trip. That night, though, Cai and his friends rushed in on horseback. Four of them threw up interference, while Cai swept up me and Geraint. Cai's friend, Kyle, snatched up Ambrosius.

"I was never so scared for my life as I was then," she whispered.

I poured the last of the wine into her goblet. Without a word, she picked it up and finished it off in a single draw.

"Once they killed Constantine, I brought Ambrosius here. Of course,

he wanted to stay, but I would have none of that,” she remarked. “For God’s sake, he was only twelve years old at the time. There’s no way he would have survived. I am not even certain if Cai is still alive. It’s been some time since we received a letter from him.

“Here, we have found peace. Britain seems a world away. There’s no way we would have made it if it wasn’t for the help of your family. Your mother, Alicia, has been incredible. Ambrosius and Geraint adore her or at least her cooking,” Ahès finished with a smile.

“Mother is good? What about my little sister, Julia?” I asked.

“She’s little no longer. She is engaged to a Roman soldier named Probus. They’re supposed to get married this summer. He has family near the Waal River; that’s north of the city of Cologne. I believe that they will move there.

“Your mother and sister are simply going to be amazed to see you. It’s funny that you’ve shown up as you did. That’s the way they said it would be. No grand, glorious entrance for Merlinus,” she replied.

“Well, I’m glad I didn’t disappoint them,” I replied.

“You must have some stories to tell,” she remarked.

“I might have one or two to tell, but not tonight,” I added.

“So how did you get here? Did you ride a horse?” She asked.

“No. Not for the last hundred miles. I had to sell the beast because I could not bring myself to eat it,” I answered. “Betsy was sold and I was full. Of course, I regretted it when I began walking the final hundred miles nearly a month ago.”

“Why didn’t you use it for hunting?” she asked.

“The animal had gone lame. Besides, I came upon a town with an empty stomach and smelled roast on a nearby spit. That’s all it took,” I replied.

“Merlinus, sleep in here for the night. I will take the guest quarters,” she replied.

“No, I couldn’t,” I replied.

“I insist,” she added. “I know where everything is. This way the household isn’t woken up and you actually get to sleep tonight. Fair enough?”

“Sounds good,” I remarked.

As she stood up, I did the same. With a smile, she moved close, kissed me on the cheek, and hugged me tightly.

Letting go and stepping back, she remarked, “It’s really good to have you home, Merlinus.”

“It’s good to be home,” I smiled.

CHAPTER 13

I woke with the sudden thought of moving — *wasting daylight. Get moving. Get home.*

I'd been dreaming. With a heavy sigh of relief, I told myself that I was home. I'd been here for a week now. I sat there in my bed letting my surroundings sink in. It felt good to be back. Out in the world, I had to be ready to fight to the death. The cities of men were far more dangerous than the deserts of God.

I got up and went out of the villa and did my daily exercises, which I had learned from Master Dom Fu. Afterwards, I drew some cold, well-water. Surprisingly, I found Mother out near the well. She just stood there, watching the birds flying by singing the song of spring. I viewed her differently after growing up and being away for so long. She seemed so small, so frail. Mother had lost much of her excess weight. I could only assume that the hard work at the villa had worn that away. Her hair had lost its dark brown hue a long time ago. Still, she kept her hair long and loose, though it was now snow white.

“Mother, is everything all right?” I remarked.

She turned with a warm smile, melting away my worries.

“Yes,” she said as she walked to me and hugged me tightly. I leaned down and kissed the top of her head as I towered over her.

“I've been thinking that we should have a grand celebration. We shall have it at Easter,” she declared.

“Mother, we shouldn't. Times are too tight for some extravagant party,” I remarked.

“My baby boy has come back to me. We're celebrating and that's final,” she remarked sternly. I smiled, knowing that it was.

I heard a noise and looked toward the gate. In the far distance, a large, impressive train of people, horses, and wagons rolled down the tree-lined lane toward the villa. My heart sank. The fear of losing the villa weighed on me.

I sprinted to the main gate. I quickly shut the large thick wooden doors and barred them, then I climbed the stairs to the wall's elevated walkway. There was no way to defend against this approaching party. The horsemen were four wide and at least ten rows deep as they rode in front of a center wagon while another ten rows guarded the rear. A line of infantry marched single file on both sides of the wagon. The army halted, holding formation. I noticed their standard-bearer. He carried a large wooden pole capped with a X encircled by an O. As the dust settled from the train, my eyes took it all in. It appeared more like an army than a church procession. It left an uneasy feeling within me. I waited, watching from the wall. A man exited from the back of the enclosed wagon. I wondered if it was Germanus.

As he walked closer, I realized that it was. Though he had gray hair and a worn look, I recognized him immediately. Germanus' long narrow face was unmistakable. His short coal-colored hair had smoldered to an ash gray. His beard was fuller and covered more of his face. His hazel eyes were more serene and less scheming. He was less primed but still proper. His attire lacked the pristine condition it had in Barcelona. He wore a off-white tunic with a hair shirt underneath. He sported an old red cloak. It was Bishop Germanus, only older.

What does he want?

"Greetings," he called. "I am Bishop Germa . . ."

He stopped and stared hard at me as if his eyes were deceiving him. I knew that I didn't look like I did before. The last time he saw me I was only fourteen years old. Now, after nearly fifteen years of growing and minor trimming, my beard covered much of my face and my bones had more stock. I felt like a changed man.

"Merlinus, is that really you? It's been nearly fifteen years since I saw you last! I prayed for your well-being but feared for your health. I'd thought that you were beyond this world," Germanus remarked.

With a smile, I remarked, "I've heard that quite a bit recently. Well, I guess we both know to not believe everything that we hear."

"It's amazing to see you. Whenever I stop here, I ask if anyone has heard from you. I was planning on doing it this time, too," he added.

"One moment, Bishop," I called down, "let me open the door for you and your men." I quickly walked down the stairs and went to the barred gate. Removing the wooden beam, I pushed the door outward.

As I walked toward him, I inquired, “What brings you this way?”

“Anymore, it’s never good,” he started. “Church business takes me to Britain. With my diocese in northwestern Gaul, I’ve been selected by Bishop Celestine of Rome to uproot the heresy preached by Pelagius. When Pelagius was alive, he wasn’t the problem. He bore all of the fruits of the spirit: charity, gentleness, joy, patience, and good nature. He did not think like a lawyer or a theologian. He was not Caelestius who is still stirring up trouble. Pelagius was concerned about actual events and consequences, not things that could possibly happen and their potential results. It is the implications and ramifications that the Church cannot and will not allow men to preach under the veil of the orthodoxy.

“A while back, a British deputation informed a synod that the heresy thrives on the island. Agricola, son of Bishop Severianus, has corrupted British Christians with his Pelagian beliefs,” Germanus remarked.

All of the infantry and troopers remained at least forty yards behind us. As Germanus spoke, a younger man similarly dressed walked up. This man had much thinner features than Germanus. It appeared that this boy of a man had lived his entire life behind the walls of aristocracy. His eyes were a gentle green, not hard and jaded like the majority of the upper class. He had no facial hair, and he kept the brown hair on his head extremely short. There were no streaks of gray, and oil made it slick and wet. His white tunic appeared bleached to a snow white. A red tassel drew the tunic around his narrow waist.

“Ah yes, this is young Lupus. He’s the Bishop of Troyes. He was also chosen to go to Britain. Bishop Lupus, this fine gentleman is Merlinus. This incredible villa is his. I hope Merlinus will offer us his hospitality for the day,” Germanus remarked as the young man approached.

“It is granted. With it being this early in the morning and no prior notice, however, very little can be offered immediately. It will take time.”

“Everything does,” Bishop Lupus added. “We must find the patience to deal with it and the wisdom to accept it.” Pausing, the young man glanced around and added, “This is a beautiful place, like a temperate Eden. You are a lucky man, Merlinus.”

“Thanks. I appreciate this place more and more,” I replied.

“Good morning, Bishop Germanus,” Ambrosius’ voice called out.

Turning, I noticed Ambrosius for the first time. If the bishops had seen him, their body language gave no indication of him. Mother stood

near the villa with a worried look on her face. As I smiled to her, she turned and walked away.

“Dear Bishop, what’s the need for such an army? I promised that my friends and I wouldn’t take anymore of the imperial cattle and we haven’t,” Ambrosius stated.

“I know, young man. It is true; I haven’t heard of any more trouble. I am proud of you, Ambrosius,” Germanus remarked with a slight bow. “Besides, this army is not here for you and your friends. We have business in Britain.”

“That sets my mind at ease,” Ambrosius replied. “At first glance, I thought we were being invaded.”

“No. Nothing like that,” Bishop Germanus replied. “As I explained to Merlinus, we are heading for Britain. Myself and Bishop Lupus have been sent by Bishop Celestine of Rome. There have been several reports of the Pelagian heresy thriving on the island and word of it has spread to the mainland. It appears that Agricola is the main heretic.”

“Hah,” Ambrosius laughed. “You make it sound like the plague.”

“Well, it is,” Bishop Lupus interjected. “It’s the plague of the soul.”

“Well stated, Lupus,” Germanus added. “It’s unfortunate that a better Brit wasn’t found to fill the see when Bishop Guithelinus died.”

“So, are you going to use this army to bleed the heresy out of the island?” Ambrosius asked.

I knew I should correct Ambrosius’ tone. I knew why Ambrosius was giving them a hard time, and I felt the same questioning cynicism. They sought to suppress the very beliefs I held high. Their orthodoxy had little regard for individual grace, free will, and self-control. I didn’t want to hold back his cutting tongue.

“If need be,” Germanus replied.

Germanus’ comment convinced me not to correct Ambrosius. Surprise filled Ambrosius’ face. He didn’t think that the bishop was capable of such extreme measures.

“There’s no way that the sword of God would be used against Christians led astray if they reconcile with the orthodoxy. The troopers will be used against the repentless heretics,” Lupus declared.

“So are you expecting trouble, then?” I asked.

“In all truth, they are simply the *armati* for the Church,” Germanus replied. “Numerous reports tell of a surge in the Saxons numbers, though.

The Saxons have been arriving continually by the boatload. It has alarmed and appalled many people on the island. Grallon has grown less and less receptive to the Council's concerns regarding the Saxons."

"The Council is a bunch of fools for electing Grallon High Commander in the first place," Ambrosius barked.

His sharp, bitter comment seemed to surprise only Bishop Lupus.

"That's beside the point, Ambrosius," Germanus added.

"We must still prepare for the worst-case scenario. I do not foresee a warm reception on the island for us." Bishop Lupus declared.

"How long are you going to spend on the island?" I asked.

"As long as it takes to uproot this heresy," Germanus remarked.

"What about the Saxons? Are you going to do anything about them?" Ambrosius asked.

"They are not our concern," Lupus replied.

"What?" Ambrosius barked. "How can you say that? They are pagans. I thought you stated that you were going to strike down all non-believers with God's sword," Ambrosius remarked in a sharper tone.

"We shall never seek out a fight," Lupus returned strongly. "That's not Christ's way. We shall unleash God's wrath only if we are physically confronted. The blood of the enemy shall only be shed in self-defense."

Ambrosius mumbled something as his foot pawed at the ground. His disposition soured. In these last few days since returning home, I hadn't seen this side of Ambrosius. There was true anger in his eyes. From what Ahès had stated, I didn't fault him for his hatred. Vortigern had killed the only father he had known and driven him out of his home. I would want Vortigern's head on a pike, also. Maybe Lupus was unaware of this. I wondered if Germanus knew the truth.

"Young Ambrosius, I know of the flames that consumed your home and now engulf your heart. Vengeance is not God's way," Germanus remarked.

"But I thought justice was," the young man quickly replied.

Silence fell between us; only the sound of restless horses filled the air. Their hooves shuffled, and the horses sputtered their sighs as the soldiers held their formation.

"There is only a fine line that separates the two when a passionate heart guides the hand of justice," I dropped in.

My comment broke Ambrosius' hold over the silenced bishops.

With a tilted head and a raised eyebrow, he gave me a queer look.

“A very thin one. One that is easily blurred,” Germanus remarked.

Once more, silence fell upon us. Once more, I broke it.

“Ambrosius, head back inside and get things started. Have some food prepared for our guests. Start with bread and some cold cider.”

As my words sank in, the bitterness in his eyes faded away and he replied, “Yes, sir. Right away.”

Ambrosius turned from us and headed back toward the villa.

“Although truly fortuitous, our meeting is very fortunate, Merlinus. Lupus and I are in need of you,” Germanus remarked.

“What do you mean?” I questioned. My stomach sank.

“Nepos,” Germanus called out. “Keep the men in formation.”

“Understood,” the man replied in a deep accent. It was hard to tell how tall Nepos was while he sat on his black mount. Nepos appeared to be the size of Ambrosius, but thinner. He sat with ease on his mount. His long, straight blonde hair was held in a ponytail. It was nearly as long as his horse’s tail. His natural tan gave an enhanced shine to his light-colored eyes. They were keen as a hawk. He wheeled his mount and called out Germanus’ order in an Alan tongue.

Germanus moved closer to the open gate. I drew closer, and he went a little bit further.

“These men you see behind us,” Germanus replied in a whisper, “were assigned to us by a decree issued by Bishop Celestine. In the beginning, we had left a council in Arles with a small unit of Alan warriors. Just recently, though, we met up with a large squad of men brought by a man named Carbo. As we travel, all of these men are under the command of this young man behind us named Nepos. He seems to be a reasonable man, but it has been brought to my attention that he ultimately answers to Goar, one of the Alan kings, and his son, Euthar. I don’t recall the Celestine’s deacon, Palladius, mentioning this. We thought that the Roman named Lucian was the commander of this small unit from Arles, but we were mistaken. Worse yet, Lucian acted as though he never expressed such a suggestion. Though he could fluently speak the Alan’s native tongue, he has departed for his homelands in Autun as we traveled north. Shortly after Lucian left for Autun, there was an incident. Some of the Alans from our group raided a villa in the nearby area. When this was brought to my attention and the men were confronted, the Alans argued

that there was a misunderstanding. They argued further that there was nothing out of the norm with their behavior. They argued that Euthar and his men engaged in raiding parties when he escorted the Church officials at previous times. Nepos has ensured me that this will not happen again. Still, we are at a tremendous disadvantage. This language barrier is unacceptable. Lives are at stake. I must be assured that my commands are understood and followed. Regrettably, I was going to ask Ahès if I could take Ambrosius with us.”

“What? He’s just a boy, Germanus,” I barked.

“I know. That’s why I’m hoping you will go instead,” he finished.

His words stopped me in my tracks. It was as if he asked me to walk back to the great eastern sea. As I stewed in silence, I knew I had to go. Either way, Ambrosius would go. At least if I went, I could try to protect him as best as I could.

“You can speak these barbarians’ tongue?” Lupus question.

“What was that?” I asked.

“You can speak the Alan’s native language, right?” Lupus asked.

“Yes, that’s one language I speak fluently,” I blankly replied.

“You can speak several languages?”

“Yes.”

“Fluently?”

“Yes,” I answered. “That’s my greatest talent. Latin, Greek, words from the holy lands and phrases from the Orient. Germanic dialects.”

“Amazing,” the young bishop replied.

“Right, and that’s why I’m hoping he will go,” Germanus added.

“I will,” I whispered.

“Good, young Ambrosius won’t have to go,” Lupus replied.

I tried not to laugh but struggled to hold it back. A smirk formed on Germanus’ face. He knew Ambrosius would still beg to go.

“Why do you feel that comment was funny?” Lupus questioned.

“I do not believe Ambrosius will be turned away from going to Britain. Ambrosius will want to see if he can gain any news of his brother, Cai. I know I lack the will and words to deter him. You may try, but I believe you would be wasting your time,” I answered.

“Good. You both shall accompany us to Britain,” Germanus said.

The Making of Arthurian Tales

Arthurian Tales rises up from years of research. The author has sown and cultivated the relevant folklore of Nennius and Geoffrey of Monmouth in a topsoil enriched by various fifth-century and near-contemporary chroniclers. Will Arthurian Tales decisively dispel the mystery surrounding King Arthur? Not likely. Though the author presents a plausible “World-Restorer” scenario, the waters of Avallon remain murky to this day. Even if new historical material surfaced, the author doubts that it would decisively settle the issue. There would be those who doubt its authenticity. Technically, the question – did King Arthur ever exist – would remain unresolved.

Still, a hero stands in the shadows of time. We are left with subjective stories about the man, the events in his life, and the ones leading up to it. We must pick and choose what we believe and build our own legends, accordingly. We must decide what seems more likely than not. There are those that have made a respectable career out of this. Scholars and professors highlight that list. The author does not pretend to be either. But having no ties to certain Arthurian dogma, the author has been able to formulate several unique arguments that have the potential of breathing new life into Arthurian studies. These key elements regarding Arthurian Tales follow the time line of Ambrosius Aureliani.

The time line has various markers that require some brief explanations. The symbol ~ marks an event on the time line that has a small variance in the year that it occurred. These events are mostly taken from the Gallic Chronicle of 452. The symbol * indicates an event dated conjecturally by the author. Some of these calculations are achieved by not associating the third consulship of Aëtius with the British appeal to Agitius. The basis for the event was developed by the author independently. In some cases, though, the author utilized the theories of noteworthy individuals such as Ian Wood’s opinion on when Germanus became a bishop and Geoffrey Ashe’s view that King Arthur was Riotimus. [] mark the author’s conjecture within an event. The author uses them to establish links with events mentioned by Gildas and the other sources. Starting in 425 and ending in 436, (yr1 through12) appears at the beginning of each year. This correlates with Passage 66 of Nennius.

Many may argue that any story based on these key elements would be ridiculous and need no further consideration. Unfortunately, the Arthurian Age is not well-documented or what had been written hasn't survived to modern times. Possibly, it went up in smoke as many books did upon the order of Pope Leo. Whatever the case, many times, only one source tells of an event and we are left with assumptions that cannot be verified by independent sources. This is what we are faced with when dating the British Appeal to Agitius. In its traditional interpretation, there is an inherent time variance spanning from the year Aëtius received his third consulship to the year he died. Some have even argued that the "tri consul" is not to be used as a time marker, but simply to identify the Aëtius being referred to. Faced with a possible margin of error over a decade long, it does not seem ridiculous to take a moment to entertain a different theory for dating the events within the sources. And from this effort, Arthurian Tales comes to light.

The Chronology of Ambrosius Aureliani

Source Abbreviations

- GC** - 382 ~ The British soldiers elevated Maximus up as emperor, then, he halted the invading Picts and Irish.
- GC** - 383 Maximus crossed to Gaul & killed Emperor Gratian near Lyons.
- Gi§13 / PA/N** - 388 Valentinian & Theodosius killed Maximus three miles outside of Aquileia.
- GC** - 391 ~Temples in Alexandria, including the ancient one of Serapis, were destroyed.
- OT9 / JA194** - 405 ~ Stilicho removed troops from Britain to fight Radagaisus at Fiesole.
- OT12** - 406 The British army elevated Marcus to supreme ruler.
Dissatisfied, the army killed Marcus & elevated Gratian in his stead.
- OT 9** - Various Germanic tribes crossed the Rhine nearly unopposed.
- OT12** - 407 After six months, the British executed Gratian. Constantine took his place.

The Chronology of Ambrosius Aureliani

Source Abbreviations

- 407 Soon, Constantine took his army to Gaul to validate his claim. - PA
- 408 ~ Saxons laid waste to Britain. - GC
- 409 The British expelled the imperial magistrates from the island. - Z
Z /
- 410 British cities received the Rescript of Honorius. - Gi§18
Alaric & his Goths sacked Rome & took Princess Placidia as a hostage. - OT3
Disease & raiders hit Spain. Famine forced walled cities to cannibalism. - OT30
/ H
- 411 Lord Alaric died & his brother-in-law, Adaulphus (Athaulf) became king. - OT10
Imperial forces killed the usurper Constantine in Arles. - GC
Jovinus usurped the Gallic imperial government. - GC
* The British appealed to Agitius [Agroetius] for help. - Gi§20
/ GT
- 412 * The Gallic people removed the magistrates from their offices. - CL/Z
* Conscripted, Germanus became the Bishop of Auxerre. - CL
- 413 Jovinus the usurper was killed. Pelagius declared the Doctrine of Free Will. - PA
~Enormous famine hit Gaul [& Britain]. - GC /
Gi§20.2
- 414 Holding his first consulship, Constantius shared it with Constans. - PA
King Adaulphus married Princess Placidia. - OT24
She gave birth to a boy & named him Theodosius in honor of her father. - OT26
Their baby boy died in Barcelona & was buried in a silver coffin. - OT26
* The daughter [Ahès] of Vortigern [Grallon] had his son, Faustus. - N/A
- 415 A servant named Dubius murdered King Adaulphus while in his stalls. - OT26
- 416 Goths traded Placidia for grain. - OT31
Palladius became consul. - PA
- 417 ~Asclepius toppled the statue of Mount Etna. - OT15
- 418 Council of Carthage condemned Free Will & Valentinian III was born in July. - PA
Honorius established the Gallic Council of the Seven Provinces when - OA
Agricola was the praetorian prefect of Gaul.
- 420 In Constantius' third consulship, Honorius made him a colleague of power. - PA
- 421 Agricola became consul. Emperor Constantius died. - PA
* A plague hit Farther Gaul [& Britain]. - / CL
Gi§22.2
- 423 Emperor Honorius died on August 27. With the help of Castinus & Aëtius, John opposed Valentinian III's claim to the Empire. - OT41

The Chronology of Ambrosius Aureliani

Source Abbreviations

- PA-** 424 Soldiers in Arles murdered the Prefect of Gaul, Exuperantius of Poitiers.
No authority sought to bring the evildoers to justice.
With an Alan army sent by Theodosius II, Placidia & Valentinian III returned to Italy as the recognized Augusta & Caesar.
- N -** 425 (yr1) * Vortigern [Grallon, lord of Vorgium] held an empire in Britain.
- OT46 -** The Alan forces defeated John the usurper & established order.
- PA-** Placidia pardoned Aëtius & sent him after the Goths besieging Arles.
- JA196 -** Felix became the master of the soldiers instead of Aëtius or Boniface.
- PA-** 426 (yr2) Barnabus the Tribune killed Bishop Patroclus of Arles.
- PA-** 427 (yr3) Felix waged war upon Boniface. The Vandals entered Africa.
- Gi§23 /**
N / GM - 428 (yr4) Vortigern & the British Council requested the English to come to Britain.
- PA-** Aëtius took Gallic lands by the Rhine from the Franks. Felix was consul.
- PA-** 429 (yr5) Bishop Germanus was sent to Britain upon Palladius' suggestion.
- Gi§23.5 /**
N / GM / CL- * Bishop Germanus battled the Saxons & Picts in Britain on Easter.
- Gi§25.2 /**
N / GM - * The Saxons left.
- GM / N -** * After Vortimer promised to restore the churches, he died.
- GM / N -** * On May 1st, Hengist and his men massacred many British nobles.
- Gi§25.3 / -**
GM / N * Ambrosius [& Bishop Germanus] marched out against Vortigern, laid siege to him & burned down his fortress.
- PA-** 430 (yr6) Aëtius put to death Felix, his wife, Padusia, & the deacon, Grunitus.
- PA/N -** 431 (yr7) Palladius became the first bishop of the Irish.
- GM -** * With Merlin's help, Uther [Euthar] took down the Giant's Ring in Ireland.
- PA-** 432 (yr8) Aëtius became consul. Boniface replaced Aëtius as the master of the soldiers by the orders of Augusta Placidia.
- GC -** 433 (yr9) Defeated by Boniface, Aëtius fled to the Huns after retiring.
- CL/GC -** Bishop Germanus became renown for miraculous deeds.
- GC -** 434 (yr10) Aëtius came under Placidia's good graces.
- GC -** 435 (yr11) Tibatto led a rebellion in Farther Gaul against the Roman state.
- N -** 436 (yr12)* From when Vortigern first reigned to the quarrel between Vitalinus and Ambrosius, twelve years elapsed.
- GC -** Aëtius & his Huns slaughtered Gundahar & the Burgundians.

The Chronology of Ambrosius Aureliani

Source Abbreviations

- 437 Aëtius became consul. - PA
Tibatto was captured. - GC
Rome waged war on the Goths. - PA
* Uther [Euthar] & Ygerna conceived Arthur after Eastertide. - GM
- 438 * Arthur was born in the spring. - GM
- 439 Aëtius lost Carthage to Gaiseric & the Vandals. - PA
- 440 Deacon Leo restored peace between Aëtius & Albinus. - PA
- 441 * Bishop Germanus went to Britain & formally condemned more Pelagian heretics. Afterwards, he helped the son of Elafius. - CL
~The Saxons subjugated the British provinces. - GC
- 442 ~Aëtius gave Farther Gaul to King Goar & his Alans. - GC
* Bishop Germanus parleyed peace with King Goar & vowed to get it imperially endorsed. Bishop Germanus died while in Ravenna. - CL
Bishop Germanus received an imperial funeral procession back to Auxerre.
- 443 Pope Leo had great piles of books seized & burned in the city of Rome. - PA
- 444 Albinus became consul. By ways of Cain, Attila took his kingship from Bleda the Hun. - PA
- 446 With no true contemporary fanfare, Aëtius held his third consulship. - EC
* Majorian & Aëtius battled Clodio, the king of the Franks at the Scythian wedding [of Goar, king of the Alans. King Goar died.] - GT / S
- 448 * Attila received the Sword of Ares from a herdsman. - PP / Jo
- 450 Placidia died. - GC
- 451 Attila assaulted Aureliani, a city of Gaul. - Jo / GT
- 454 Valentinian III killed Aëtius. - PA

Source Abbreviations

- A** – Vie de S. Guéanolé by Albert Le Grand. *The Saints of Cornwall, Part Two* by Gilbert H. Doble. (Felinfach, UK: Llanerch Publishers, 1997), p. 86
- CL** – The Life of St. Germanus, Bishop of Auxerre by Constantius of Lyons. *The Western Fathers*. Edited and translated by F. R. Hoare. (New York, NY: Harper Torchbooks, 1954), pp. 283 - 320
- EC** – Easter Cycle of 457 - Victorius of Aquitaine. Vermaat, Robert “The Text of Victorius’ *Cursus Paschalis* - years 367 - 497 AD” *Vortigern Studies*. <http://www.vortigernstudies.org.uk/artsou/victoriustabel.htm> (accessed March 23, 2010)
- GC** – Gallic Chronicle of 452. *From Roman to Merovingian Gaul*. Edited and translated by Alexander Callander Murray. (Peterborough, ON Canada: Broadview Press Ltd., 2000), pp. 77 - 85
- Gi** – Gildas. *Gildas: The Ruin of Britain and Other Works*. Edited and translated by Michael Winterbottom. (West Sussex UK: Phillimore & Co. Ltd., 2002), pp. 20 - 28
- GM** – Geoffrey of Monmouth. *History of the Kings of Britain*. Translated by Lewis Thorpe. Middlesex, UK: Penguin Books Ltd., 2002), pp. 135 - 199
- GT** – Gregory of Tours. *The History of the Franks*. Translated by Lewis Thorpe. (London, UK: Penguin Books Ltd., 1974), pp. 116; 124 - 125
- H** – The Chronicle of Hydatius. *From Roman to Merovingian Gaul*. Edited and translated by Alexander Callander Murray. (Peterborough, ON Canada: Broadview Press Ltd., 2000), pp. 85 - 98
- JA** – John of Antioch. *The Age of Attila*. Translated by C. D. Gordon. (Ann Arbor, MI: Ann Arbor Paperbacks, 1966), fr. 194, pp. 27 - 28; fr. 196, pp. 47 - 48
- Jo** – Jordanes, *The Origin and Deeds of the Goths*. Edited by Charles C. Mierow (Philadelphia, PA: D.N. Goodrich, 2007) pp. 33 - 43.
- N** – Nennius. *British History and the Welsh Annals*. Edited and translated by John Morris. (London: Phillimore & Co. Ltd., 1980), pp. 22 - 36
- OA** – The Gallic Council of the Seven Provinces. *From Roman to Merovingian Gaul*. Edited and translated by Alexander Callander Murray. (Peterborough, ON Canada: Broadview Press Ltd., 2000), pp. 169 - 171

Source Abbreviations

- OT** – Olympiodorus of Thebes. *The Age of Attila*. Translated by C. D. Gordon. (Ann Arbor, MI: Ann Arbor Paperbacks, 1966), fr. 9, p. 30; fr. 12, pp. 30 - 31; fr. 3, p. 34; fr. 10, p. 35; fr. 24, pp. 40 - 41; fr. 26, pp. 41 - 42; fr. 31, p. 42; fr. 15, p. 35; fr. 41, p. 45; fr. 46, pp. 46 - 47
- PA** – Prosper of Aquitaine. *From Roman to Merovingian Gaul*. Edited and translated by Alexander Callander Murray. (Peterborough, ON Canada: Broadview Press Ltd., 2000), pp. 62 - 76
- PP** – Priscus of Panium. *The Age of Attila*. Translated by C. D. Gordon. (Ann Arbor, MI: Ann Arbor Paperbacks, 1966), fr. 8, pp. 72 - 93; fr. 10, p. 93
- S** – Sidonius. *Sidonius: Poem Letters I - II*. Translated by W. B. Anderson. (London, UK: Harvard University Press, 1996), pp. 77 - 85
- Z** – Zosimus. *An Age of Tyrants* by Christopher A. Snyder. (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1998), p. 22

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In the following pages are the seven key elements to Ambrosius Aureliani. Though containing some radical reinterpretations, the elements utilize well-recognized sources to underscore the author's opinions. Their main intent is to provide a way to reconcile the various myths and sources into a more-concise, historical story.

Though brief, each element provides some unique insight on the various issues that shape this heroic genre. The space allotted for these elements does not provide enough room to adequately argue these points beyond a reasonable doubt, but these pages do allow a chance to cast a new light on the subject.

For the novice of Arthurian folklore, little attention to these key elements are required, but anyone familiar with the various works might want to glance through the seven elements. This will help to detach oneself from certain established dogma surrounding King Arthur. By doing so, the known myths and historical events stream together in a more natural flow and Ambrosius Aureliani can truly be enjoyed.

The Key Elements regarding Ambrosius Aureliani

The British appeal to Agitius did not involve the Roman general, Aëtius

The episcopate of Bishop Germanus ran from 412 to 442

The English/Saxons came to Britain in 428 and revolted in 429

King Grallon was Vortigern

King Goar inspired the legends of King/Ban Bors

There existed an association between Ambrosius and the city of Orléans

The Sword of Power and the Round Table were given historical bases

The British appeal to Agitius did not involve the Roman general, Aëtius

The British appeal to Agitius occurs at §20 in the part called Independent Britain in The Ruin of Britain by Gildas (trans. Michael Winterbottom). Traditionally, Independent Britain ranged from the death of Maximus to the third consulship of Aëtius with a possible nine year variance ending at the year that Aëtius was murdered (388-446/454). This time period is strictly based on the assumption that Agitius is Aëtius.

Various writers have debated over the Roman named Agitius, though. In Professor Christopher Snyder's book, An Age of Tyrants, he tells of the discrepancy in the identity of Agitius, stating that it could be Aëtius or even Aegidius. In the notes section of The Ruin of Britain, Dr. John Morris states that Gildas misplaced the appeal within his own narrative. Professor David Dumville has discussed the issue, also. The corruption within Gildas' text and/or the major inconsistency between the sources seems well-documented.

In the section called Independent Britain, the British enemies were the Scots and the Picts. Both brought war upon the British in §14 and §19. They appeared to be the reason for the appeal to Agitius in §20. Finally in §21, the Irish pirates and the Picts returned to their homelands. During this time of truce, the British slipped further into moral decay. Nowhere in Independent Britain did Gildas portray the Saxons as a major problem for the British. In fact, Gildas does not mention the Saxons at all in Independent Britain. Though the Gallic Chronicle of 452 (trans. Alexander Callander Murray, From Roman to Merovingian Gaul) makes note of a Saxon attack in 408, Olympiodorus of Thebes (trans. C. D. Gordon, The Age of Attila) writes that the British discontent with Rome stemmed from Stilicho removing the garrisons that defended the British from the Picts.

The Gallic Chronicle of 452 states that the Saxons subjugated the British provinces after the British had endured a variety of disasters and misfortunes. It was listed as occurring in 441 or 442. Considering this along with the details regarding the traditional time span for Independent Britain, the apparent problem between the sources can be underscored. With the Saxons subjugating the British, at least, four years before the third consulship of Aëtius, it puts the Gallic chronology at odds with the

The British appeal to Agitius did not involve the Roman general, Aëtius

chronology implied by Gildas' writing. This conclusion is made with the assumption that the British would have appealed for help before they were completely subjugated. Based on this, Gildas could not have seen or copied any appeal specifically mentioning the words, tri-consul, if the chronology of his narrative correlates with the Gallic Chronicle of 452.

It seems more likely that Gildas would have identified the wrong man instead of misplacing a major event within his own narrative. This seems to imply that Gildas relied upon an oral source for the appeal to Agitius or personally added the tri-consul gloss to the letter he copied. Either scenario makes the imperial title appear as a corruption within the text if the general chronologies of the sources do not contradict each other or themselves.

In light of these details, the third consulship of Aëtius has not been used to date the events within the writings of Gildas. Still, it is essential to date the events of The Ruin of Britain to use it with other available sources. Orosius, Prosper of Aquitaine and the Gallic Chronicle of 452 document the execution of Maximus as occurring in 388 (trans. Alexander Callander Murray, From Roman to Merovingian Gaul). Gildas mentions this happening in §13 at the end of the section entitled Roman Britain. Professor David Dumville establishes this as his starting point in his work, "The Chronology of De Excidio Britanniae, Book I" (Studies in Celtic History V - Gildas: New Approaches). The event serves well as a starting point for dating this part of Gildas' narrative.

The beginning of Independent Britain at §14 seems to rehash the events that ended in §13. With this assumption, the tyrant is identified as Magnus Maximus and not as one of the three British usurpers that rose briefly to power in the beginning of the fifth century. In §18 and §19, the Romans told the British to defend themselves and gave little prospect of returning. This is interpreted as the Rescript of Honorius noted by Zosimus (trans. Green and Chaplin, New History).

When the Romans left at the beginning of §19, the Scots and Picts wreaked havoc upon the British. The citizens abandoned the towns and the Wall in §19.3 as if to avoid the grips of cannibalism that seized the

The British appeal to Agitius did not involve the Roman general, Aëtius

cities of Spain (Hydatius/Olympiodorus). Echoing the words of Hydatius, the Gallic Chronicle of 452 tells of an enormous famine in Gaul between the years of 411 to 416. Gildas states that disasters abroad increased internal disorder on the island at the end of §19. With the British, also, suffering from food shortages, the famine ran from the Mediterranean to the western shores of the North Sea. This seems like a famine that would still be talked about in Gildas' day.

All the while, the British suffered from attacking barbarians. The British sent out a second appeal. This time it went to Agitius. Gildas mentions the event in the first sentence of §20. Effort should be made to not date this event, at this point. If taken literally, this event had to occur no earlier than 446 based on the year that Aëtius achieved his third consulship. Instead of decades elapsing as traditionally accepted, the dreadful and notorious famine still raged on as noted in §20.2. These events happened within the section entitled Independent Britain and there is no indication that any of these events went past 416 if Agitius is not considered to be Aëtius.

Though still nagged by a spelling discrepancy, during this narrow time period, there was a man of some stature in Gaul with a similar name to Agitius. Agroetius was the Head of Chancery for the usurper, Jovinus, according to Lewis Thorpe's translation of Frigeridus in The History of the Franks.

The second paragraph in fragment 26 of Olympiodorus tells of Roman rule returning to much of Gaul and possibly Britain. It further states that the imperial control remained until the death of Emperor Honorius. Based on this fragment from the Theban historian, this peace would have lasted until 423. Though maybe the conjecture of C. D. Gordon being interjected into the words of the ancient writer, the fragment still notes a small window of time where there was no war mentioned. This lack of fighting could give the illusion that Roman authority had returned to the island. In §21 of Gildas' writings, there is a period of a truce between the British, the Irish pirates and the Picts. Still the British's every action plagued their salvation.

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After §21, a plague swooped brutally upon the British people. This plague fell within the section called The Coming of the Saxons in §22.2. An independent reference to this plague can be inferred from Constantius of Lyons in section VIII of the Life of St. Germanus, Bishop of Auxerre (trans. F. R. Hoare, The Western Fathers). Gildas states that the plague laid low so many in such a short period of time that the living could not bury all of the dead. Constantius writes that the illness first struck the children and then the elders, bringing death in about three days.

The plague in section VIII occurred sometime before 429. This year is established by the ability to date section XII in Constantius' writings. Constantius tells of Bishop Germanus traveling to Britain to combat the Pelagian heresy. Prosper of Aquitaine dates this event to 429.

Though there is no known contemporary writers before Gildas that tell of the coming of the Saxons like he does at §23.3, later sources document the event. Nennius (trans. John Morris, British History and The Welsh Annals) and Geoffrey of Monmouth (trans. Lewis Thorpe, The History of the Kings of Britain) describe the event. Nennius gives 428 as the year that the English came to Britain.

In §23.5, the Saxons revolted after being hired to beat back the people of the north in §23.2. Constantius notes that the Saxons and the Picts made war on the British in section XVII while Germanus preached against the Pelagian heresy [on the east side of Britain] in 429. In §24, Gildas elaborates the destruction caused by the Saxons.

In §25.2, the cruel plunderers went home. Described more as raiders than conquerors, it seems inappropriate to assign this to the last British event in the Gallic Chronicle of 452. The famous mentioning of Ambrosius Aurelianus by Gildas appears in §25.3. All dates provided by Nennius that involve this Roman gentleman take place before 441. Upon the removal of the tri-consul reference, the dates provided by Nennius no longer conflict with the British appeal to Agitius.

In §26, the British and barbarians battled back and forth; both sides scored victories. This lasted right up till the siege of Badon Hill.

The British appeal to Agitius did not involve the Roman general, Aëtius

With a liberal view, sections 23.5 through 26 date from 429 to the 470's. The revolt of the Saxons erupted in 429. If Germanus' Alleluia victory was one of the four battles of Vortimer against the Saxons, it effectively dates some of the events in Geoffrey of Monmouth, possibly leading to the dating of Uther's first trip to Ireland. A slightly adjusted version of the dates suggested by the Cistercian monk, Alberic, can be inserted here. Geoffrey Ashe mentions these dates in his book, The Discovery of King Arthur.

The last mention of British affairs in the Gallic Chronicle of 452 happens around 441 as previously noted. After enduring a variety of disasters and misfortunes, the British provinces fell under the authority of the Saxons. The Saxons held this control or maintained an upper-hand against the British to, at least, 452. Otherwise, it seems likely that the Gallic Chronicle would have used different wording in the 441/442 entry or would have noted the power shift that seems to occur later between the two sides.

In Charles C. Mierow's translation, Jordanes indicates that the British had become a force of reckoning in section XLV of The Origin and Deeds of the Goths. The Gothic writer notes that the Roman Emperor, Anthemius, requested military aid from the British king, Riotimus. The year that Anthemius rose up as the Emperor of the West is deduced from Hydatius (trans. Alexander Callander Murray, From Roman to Merovingian Gaul). The British return to power would have been recognized by the year 467 but most likely would have occurred earlier than that.

So, by dropping any concern for the third consulship of Aëtius, the sources can be synchronized into a more concise chronology. The variance in the time of the Agitius' appeal shrinks by two-thirds from nine years to three years. The events of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicles and the work of Bede can be linked to the other sources, but some of the dates are null and void. These works color in the elements of the enemy of the British Romans.

Ambrosius Aureliani falls within the time period of Independent Britain and The Victory at Badon Hill.

The episcopate of Bishop Germanus ran from 412 to 442

In his work entitled “The End of Roman Britain: Continental Evidence and Parallels”, Professor Ian Wood provides a strong argument against the traditional years of 418 to 448 for the episcopate of Bishop Germanus. He suggests that Germanus became the Bishop of Auxerre in either 407 or 412. Comparing the Life of St. Germanus, Bishop of Auxerre, by Constantius of Lyons (trans. F. R. Hoare, The Western Fathers) to other contemporary sources, the latter of the two years has been chosen for Ambrosius Aureliani. It should be noted that F. R. Hoare accepted the traditional years for the episcopate of Bishop Germanus.

In section II, Constantius tells that the populace – clergy, nobility, townspeople and country folk – demanded that Germanus was their bishop. The sentence that follows it states that a war was declared by the people against their magistrate and they overthrew the official. The line seems odd at first glance but it echoes the words of Zosimus quoted in An Age of Tyrants. The cited passage told of Roman officials being expelled from Britain, Armorica, and other Gallic provinces around 409. Four men – Constantine, Attalus, Maximus, Jovinus – tried to usurp the Western Empire during the years 407 to 411. Each had magistrates and military personnel, giving rise to several sets of traitors during this time period.

Three interpretations can be made about the ascendance of Bishop Germanus. The first is that the magistrate stripped from his office was not Germanus and the election of Germanus was at the time that this civil war raged. Secondly, Constantius artistically expressed Germanus' ascendance and it had no historical connotation. Or alternatively, Germanus was a magistrate in one of the usurpers' governments. Removed from office but spared by popular-consent, the divine [imperial] authority conscripted Germanus to an ecclesiastical office. This view would account for his compulsion to receive the religious position. This would, also, explain why Constantius fails to note any of Bishop Germanus' deeds as a duke. It would be difficult even for a talented orator to honorably mention exploits against the Empire.

Sometime after becoming the Bishop of Auxerre, a plague hit the region. With a reevaluation of Independent Britain by Gildas, there is a

The episcopate of Bishop Germanus ran from 412 to 442

possibility that the plague that hit Britain happen around the same time. Though lacking the year for the plague that Constantius mentioned, it had to occur in between 412 and 429. The end date is based on the bishop's first documented involvement in British affairs, which began in section XII and ran through section XVIII. Much, if not all, these sections occurred in 429 when Prosper of Aquitaine notes Germanus' trip to Britain (trans. Alexander Callander Murray, From Roman to Merovingian Gaul).

The three references to miraculous powers in sections XX, XXI and XXII are dated to 433 by the entry in the Gallic Chronicle of 452 regarding Germanus (trans. Alexander Callander Murray, From Roman to Merovingian Gaul).

In section XXIV, Auxiliaris governed as the Praetorian Prefect of Gaul and warmly received Germanus when he arrived in Arles. Hoare places Germanus' visit between the year 435 and 439 based on his note for section XIX. There doesn't seem to be a reason not to accept this time period.

In section XXV, news of the Pelagian heresy troubling the British reached Germanus at home. This time, he traveled to the island with Severus, the Bishop of Trier. By prior points and with future considerations, the second trip to Britain happen between 435 and 441.

Returning from Britain in section XXVIII, Bishop Germanus confronted King Goar as his Alan tribes and cavalry filled the roads, ready to subdue Armorica. The Gallic Chronicle of 452 places this event around 441/442. The bishop went to Italy seeking a pardon for Armorica. Constantius doesn't give the impression that six years had elapsed between Germanus' trip to Britain and the one to Ravenna.

In section XL, Tibatto incited the people of Armorica to rebel, again. This event does not contradict the events of the Bacaudic revolt in the Gallic Chronicle of 452. Though said to be captured in 437, the Gallic entry does not specifically state that Tibatto was killed like other rebel leaders were. In fact, trouble continued for another eleven years. After being implicated in the Bacaudic revolt, Eudoxius fled to the Huns in 448.

The episcopate of Bishop Germanus ran from 412 to 442

In section XLII, Bishop Germanus died while in Ravenna.

So, Bishop Germanus' expulsion from office and his conscription to the see of Auxerre fits neatly within the chaotic times of 412 while his involvement with the Alan king, Goar, establishes 442 as the end of his life.

The English/Saxons came to Britain in 428 and revolted in 429

The fifth-century events mentioned by Nennius in Passage 66 (trans. John Morris, British History and The Welsh Annals) are taken as being accurate. Many have argued that its elaborate dating is glossed in or false. In either case, it points to an alternative dating for the reign of Vortigern than what is offered by Bede (trans. Judith McClure and Roger Collins, Bede – The Ecclesiastical History of the English People – The Greater Chronicle – Bede’s Letter to Egbert). Through the removal of Aëtius time-stamping in Gildas, the sources fall in sync. Passages 43 to 46 by Nennius and sections [vi.13], [vi.14], [vi.15] and [vi.16] by Geoffrey of Monmouth in The History of the King of Britain fill out this fifth-century time line. Bishop Germanus’ visit in 429 forms the keystone in synchronizing the three sources.

Both Nennius and Geoffrey tell of four battles that Vortimer waged against the Saxons. Geoffrey elaborates on other events in section [vi.14]. Soon after the fourth victory, Vortimer restored the churches as Bishop Germanus requested.

This gives the impression that Bishop Germanus was still in Britain after the four battles. Due to the timing and their general descriptions, it seems possible that the battle Bishop Germanus had against the Saxons and the Picts on Easter Sunday [April 8th] was one of the four battles Vortimer had against the Saxons.

In comparing the details described in sections XVII and XVIII of the Life of St. Germanus, Bishop of Auxerre (trans. F. R. Hoare, The Western Fathers) to the ones listed in Nennius’ passage 44, it seems that the Alleluia victory would have been the battle on the river Darenth or at the ford called Episford. This conjecture comes from the following line by Constantius of Lyons. Many [the enemy - Saxons and Picts] threw themselves into the river which they had just crossed at their ease, and were drowned in it. Other information used to form this conjecture was gathered from Peter Clayton’s A Companion to Roman Britain. He tells of the Lullingstone villa that sat on the Darent River not far from the village called Eynsford. The villa burned down early in the fifth century. Though lacking definitive archeological evidence and not suggested by Clayton, the villa’s fiery end could be attributed to Saxon rage.

The English/Saxons came to Britain in 428 and revolted in 429

According to Geoffrey of Monmouth, Vortimer laid siege to Thanet in his fourth and final battle against the Saxons. During a parley between the opposing sides, the Saxons sailed off to Germany in their longships. Vortimer was poisoned shortly after ordering the churches to be restored in section [vi.14].

John Haywood cites in his book, Dark Age Naval Power: (with a small professional sailing crew) In fair weather, each voyage across the North Sea would have been measured in days rather than weeks and the risks would have been slight. In terms of traveling time the 300-mile voyage between Jutland and the Thames estuary would have been no longer than a 60 mile-long journey overland.

The Saxons returned. During a meeting set up by Vortigern, Hengist and his men massacred many British nobles on the first of May, the date agreed upon in section [vi.15] and described in section [vi.16] of The History of the Kings of Britain.

It seems possible that one of the four battles of Vortimer, his death and the British massacre occurred in a rapid succession between Easter Sunday [April 8th] and May 1, 429.

King Grallon was Vortigern

The legends of King Grallon and Vortigern reek with debauchery and incest. As divine punishment for his sinful daughter, Grallon's city, Is [Ys], was submerged by the sea (Muirhead, Findlay, The Blue Guides -- Brittany). Nennius tells of Vortigern's fathering his daughter's son, Faustus (trans. John Morris, British History and The Welsh Annals). Both men lived in the fifth century based sources written centuries later. Though these events may not have occurred, it is still worth gleaning for details. This literary sifting has led to the belief that King Grallon was Vortigern.

King Grallon's activities centered around the Bay of Douarnenez in western France. The Life of Winwaloe written by Wrdisten presents this as an accepted truth in the second half of the ninth century (The Saints of Cornwall, part two by Gilbert Doble). Wrdisten describes Gradlon, Courentinus, and Winwaloe as three great luminaries and pillars of Cornouaille. Tutualus, a famous monk, preceded them. Findlay Muirhead states that the town named Douarnenez owes its name and origin to the priory of St. Tutuarn, founded on the neighboring Tutuarn-Enez, now called Ile Tristan. Allegedly, Is [Ys] was located in a lagoon on the Bay of the Departed. This bay forms the bottom point of the Bay of Douarnenez. Some Gallo-Roman remains are located in the nearby hamlet of Troguer.

Patrick Galliou and Michael Jones in The Bretons state that over sixty percent of the documented salting units in western France are located on the bay's shores. Based on the total volume generated, the authors figure, these fish-salting units produced more than what was locally or regionally consumed. They theorize that the surplus was shipped to other parts of the Empire and to the shores of Britain. They further speculate that the salting industry was extensively developed to supply the military markets of the British and Rhenish *limites*. These units had reached a "corporate-level" by the third century AD. From an inscription of that time, one learns of the worshiping of the Greek god, Poseidon Hippios, in the bay area. Galliou and Jones mark salting tanks just south of Quimper on a map. In Muirhead's Brittany, King Grallon established Quimper in the fifth century, calling the area Cornouaille (Cornwall), a name brought over from Britain. In the neighboring area of Quimper not a great distance from the church of Combrit, the remains of a Roman villa and baths were discovered. Farther south, one will view Ile-Tudy and Loctudy.

King Grallon was Vortigern

Besides holding sway over land by the sea, the saints associated with King Grallon reinforce his strong link to fish. It has been put forth that St. Winwaloe used a small almost black bell to attract fish. According to another source, St. Corentin had a miraculous fish that he would eat for his daily meal. Afterwards, the fish would reappear in a pool near his cell.

King Grallon could have been controlling the garum industry in the area. If Grallon ran this type of operation, two things become apparent. He dealt more frequently with sea-faring men, ranging from the Franks, the Goths, the Irish to the Saxons. Secondly, he had a source of wealth beside any generated by his lands in Armorica or possibly those in Britain. With this capital available and the increased day-to-day interaction with sailors, it does not seem extreme that Grallon hired Saxons to beat back the people of the north.

Logistically, Grallon's presence in western Armorica and possibly in western Britain would explain the need to hire out the defenses of the eastern shores of Britain. King Grallon's own fleet would have been busy guarding his personal interests. Safe harbors on both sides of the channel would have facilitated patrolling the western waters.

In passage 66, Nennius states that Vortigern came to power in 425. In the Life of St. Germanus, part 3, passages 47 and 48 compiled by Nennius, different stories spell out the eventual end of Vortigern. In one, Bishop Germanus drove Vortigern into exile twice. Vortigern fled first to Gwerthrynion and then to his fortress in Demetia. The bishop followed Vortigern and laid siege upon him. Fire rained down from the heavens and destroyed the fortress of Vortigern. In the last paragraph in section [viii. 2] of The History of the King of Britain by Geoffrey of Monmouth, the army of Ambrosius and the other Brits laid siege to Vortigern's fortress and used weapons of fire to burn up the tower. Another version tells of him wandering about and dying without honor.

In "Princess Ahez and The Lost City", Grallon and his men became lost in a forest. They came upon the hermitage of St. Corentin. The monk fed them with a single fish. Miraculously, the fish regenerated itself. For his hospitality, Grallon made Corentin the first Bishop of Cornouaille.

King Grallon was Vortigern

Possibly in gratitude, St. Corentin passed down the events of King Grallon's life in a favorable light. Vortigern's incestuous affair with his daughter was cast as the fault of King Grallon's promiscuous daughter.

To help establish a floruit for King Grallon, one could further review the religious figures surrounding him. In the chapter entitled "De altitudine et nobilitate Cornubie", Wrdisten implies that Grallon, Courentinus, and Winwaloe were contemporary while Tutualus was already established in the area and/or was from an older generation. According to Butler's Lives of the Saints, King Childebert insisted that Tudwal should become the Bishop of Tréguier. This occurred when the religious man was in Paris obtaining confirmation of his titles to land from the Frankish lord during the sixth century. Doble notes that the mentioning of Tutual puzzled many scholars due to the assumed association with the Bishop of Tréguier. This has led to the opinion that Tutualus and Tudwal are two separate individuals.

A much later source, the Sanctoral of Quimper of 1500, states that Grallon sent Corentin, Winwaloe and Tudy to Martin [Tours] to have him consecrate the most fitting candidate of the three. Corentin was chosen. Though Gilbert Doble dismisses this information as untrustworthy, his reason seems contested by other details he provides. Doble states that no Breton writer before the twelfth century would have written that St. Corentin was consecrated in Tours due to the primatial dignity of Dol. Still though, Doble establishes strong ties between Cornouaille and St. Martin of Tours. The monks from the abbey of Marmoutier near Tours proudly retained the body of St. Corentin during the Norman invasion of the tenth century. St. Corentin received an honorary mention in the litany of a psalter of Tours used at Christ Church, Canterbury, in the eleventh century. The influence of St. Martin traveled near and far. By the late fifth century, the prestige of Tours seems undeniable based on the letter from Sidonius to Lucontius regarding Perpetuus raising a new church over the shrine of St. Martin (trans. O. M. Dalton, Letters of Sidonius). Dated to the ninth century, the Book of Armagh has the Life of St. Martin copied within its pages according to the book, Saint Patrick – His Origins and Career, written by R. P. C. Hanson.

King Grallon was Vortigern

Winwaloe traveled to an island called Laurea to learn from Budoc the Zealous. The writer of the Life of St. Winwaloe, Wrdisten tells of Tudual carrying coals across an island. This same feat is noted by Doble being done by Bothmael, a companion of Tudy, in the Vita Maudeti. Gregory of Tours tells of Bishop Bricius of Tours, carrying burning coals in his cassock. In The Western Fathers, F. R. Hoare believes that the design for Martin's community near Tours was that of a laura. St. Martin's biographer, Sulpicius, tells that the hermitage was located on a bend on the River Loire with a high mountain wall behind it with one narrow approach [nearly an island].

This seems to offer a thin chance that Winwaloe traveled to the hermitage of St. Martin which could lead to the following conjecture about the Sanctoral of Quimper of 1500. It seems possible that it provides a general chronology of religious figures in Cornouaille. Tutualus came first and Winwaloe followed. As the Christian element developed even further, King Grallon sent Corentin to be consecrated as the first bishop of the area. The desire of King Grallon to have his bishop consecrate by a Bishop of Tours does not seem hard to fathom.

Albert Le Grand tells us that in his time several parishes on certain days would sing a service to repose the soul of King Grallon according to Doble.

King Grallon and Vortigern appear to be contemporaries operating in the same general region during the fifth century. It seems likely that both had dealings with the Saxons. In turn, the sexual controversies surrounding their daughters, now, seem less coincidental and this portrayal more convincing.

King Goar inspired the legends of King/Ban Bors

In Bulfinch's Mythology, King Arthur and His Knights, Chapter VIII, the following is stated, "King Ban of Brittany, the faithful ally of Arthur was attacked by his enemy Claudas, and after a long war saw himself reduced to possession of a single fortress, where he was besieged by his enemy. In this extremity he determined to solicit the assistance of Arthur, and escaped in a dark night, with his wife Helen and his infant son Launcelot, leaving his castle in the hands of his seneschal, who immediately surrendered the place to Claudas."

In the book From Scythia to Camelot by C. Scott Littleton and Linda A. Malcor, the authors suggest that Ban is a title much like Riothamus is considered.

Helaine and Elaine were identified as the wife of Ban and Bors in the Arthurian myths. In Chapter VIII of King Arthur and His Knights, the myth tells how, "(Helen) she was joined by the widow of Bohort, for the good king had died of grief on hearing of the death of his brother, Ban. They had two sons."

It seems possible that Helaine and Elaine could be variations of the same woman's name. Bernard Bachrach did suggest that the Alans were polygamous in A History Of The Alans In The West. Bachrach cites Salvian as the source of this information. Salvian was a younger contemporary of King Goar in fifth-century Gaul.

These various details and opinions can be construed as King/Ban Bohort being at war with Claudas. And eventually, his enemy took over all of King/Ban Bohort's territory. Breaking the king's spirit, King/Ban Bohort died of grief. Two wives and three sons survived him. One was his namesake; the other two were Lionel & Launcelot [Lancelot].

In The Age of Attila, Olympiodorus tells how King Goar helped Jovinus usurp the Empire just before Constantine died in 411. Jovinus' reign lasted only for a few years when Dardanus executed him in 413 after his capture. The Alan king ruled for many years though his reign remains somewhat obscure and its true duration uncertain.

King Goar inspired the legends of King/Ban Bors

Alexander Callander Murray provides the following translation for the Gallic Chronicler of 452 in From Roman to Merovingian Gaul. Murray states, “The lands of Farther Gaul were handed over by the patrician Aëtius to the Alans to be divided with the inhabitants. They subdued those who opposed them with arms, drove out the owners, and obtained possession of the land by force.”

W. B. Anderson notes that King Goar settled near Orléans around 442. Constantius of Lyons tells how Bishop Germanus of Auxerre confronted the Alan king in Armorica.

In A History Of The Alans In The West, Bernard Bachrach states, “With the aid of toponymical evidence it is possible to ascertain the probable location of at least some of the settlements established for Goar’s followers. Allains (Somme) is located some thirty miles to the east of Amiens and protects the roads leading from Cologne to Amiens and Soissons. Twenty-five miles to the south-southeast is Alaincourt (Aisne) which commands the roads from Tournai to Soissons and Tournai to Rheims.”

In The History Of The Franks, Gregory of Tours states that Clodio was a man of high birth and marked ability. It is alleged that he was a king of the Franks that lived at Druisburg in Thuringian. Gregory states that Clodio attacked and captured Cambrai after his spies told him what he needed to know. Afterwards, he occupied the country up to the River Somme.

In the panegyric to Majorian translated by W. B. Anderson, Sidonius orates how Aëtius defended Turoni [Tournai - instead of Tours as W. B. Anderson suggests - this is based on their geographical position.] sometime before they fought together where Cloio the Frank had overrun the helpless lands of the Atrebatas.

These lands might be referring to the people of Civitas Atrabatum, Arras, which is about thirty miles northeast of Allains near the Somme River. Since the early part of the fifth century, various Germanic barbarians had troubled the neighboring region.

King Goar inspired the legends of King/Ban Bors

Sidonius further tells of a Scythian [Alan] wedding party that is attacked near the village of Helena. Though not clearly stated, it appears that Cloio/Chlogio and his Franks attacked in the middle of the ceremony when the Romans arrived in Vicus Helenae shortly afterwards. Interestingly enough, the village bears the same name as Ban/Bors's wife, Helen. W.B. Anderson notes that the date of the attack by Clio/Chlogio and his Franks occurred some time after 440 and may have been several years later.

It has been assumed that it would have been before 451 AD due to the fact that an Alan by the name Sangiban controlled Orléans at the time of Attila's invasion of Gaul according to section XXXVII of The Origin And Deeds Of The Goths.

In the folklore, Bors the younger has been mentioned. He is portrayed as one of the sons of Bors the elder. This legendary son appears as the cousin of Lancelot and a great knight of King Arthur in the various myths.

In The Discovery Of King Arthur, Geoffrey Ashe argues that a man identified as Riothamus was King Arthur. The author goes further and cites Sharon Turner as stating, "Either the Riothamus was Arthur, or it was from his expedition that Geoffrey [of Monmouth], or the Breton bards, took the idea of Arthur's battles in Gaul."

W.B. Anderson states that Anthemius was created Augustus on the 12th of April, 467. According to section XLV in the translation of The Origin And Deeds Of The Goths by Charles C. Mierow, Jordanes states that the new emperor sent his son-in-law, Ricimer, against the Alan king, Beorg, and his army. Ricimer destroyed King Beorg and his army in the first engagement. It is in this same section that Jordanes tells of the events surrounding Riotimus and his activities in Gaul.

By comparing the above details, there seems to be a parallelism between Goar and Bors. It appears that Claudus, the enemy of King/Ban Bors, could have been Clodio/Cloio, the king of the Franks.

King Goar inspired the legends of King/Ban Bors

This Germanic ruler captured Cambrai and invaded the lands up to the river Somme. Allains on the river Somme was in the lands controlled by Goar, at one time. This site could have been Vicus Helenae where a Scythian wedding party was slaughtered when the Romans, Aëtius and Majorianus, battled the king of the Franks.

About twenty years after these events, an Alan by the name, Beorg, became king and was a contemporary of the British king, Riotimus, who is suspected in being King Arthur, the fabled ally of King Bors.

There existed an association between Ambrosius and the city of Orléans

In §25.3 of The Ruins of Britain, Gildas identifies Ambrosius Aurelianus as the leader of the wretched survivors [of the Saxon revolt], but provides little else about this Roman gentleman. Geoffrey of Monmouth mentions a man named Aurelius Ambrosius in The History of the Kings of Britain. Many assume that these two men are essentially the same man. Another legendary man connected to Ambrosius Aurelianus is referred to by Nennius. The Welsh called him, Emrys.

Various arguments can be presented in regards to the proper form of his name. Many may assume that it is the standard type of name utilized by the Romans. This assumption begs the question. What are the other parts of his name? With no further details provided in the major sources, a different interpretation has been made regarding his name. In Arthurian Tales, this enigmatic figure is portrayed as a Roman named Ambrosius that resided near Aureliani at various times.

Geoffrey of Monmouth presents several interesting details about Aurelius Ambrosius. When Aurelius and Utherpendragon were children, the brothers were originally given to Archbishop Guithelinus to be brought up. After their father's murder and the death of the archbishop, the brothers were taken to Little Britain so Vortigern could not murder them. A lord by the name of Budicius took them in. Though noted as the king of Brittany, Geoffrey of Monmouth states nothing more about this Budicius or the range of his power.

Within this information, a noteworthy point is the lack of similarities between the names of Ambrosius and Uther. It gives the impression that the brothers were actually raised by two separate families, with the first being Roman while the latter possibly Alan. The conjecture regarding Uther is based on the brothers commanding an Armorican cavalry when they returned to Britain, the details provided by C. Scott Littleton and Linda A. Malcor in From Scythia to Camelot about the title Pendragon, and the various spellings for Goar noted by Bernard Bachrach in A History of the Alans in the West.

There existed an association between Ambrosius and the city of Orléans

Geoffrey of Monmouth states that Utherpendragon and Aurelius Ambrosius still lay in their cradles when Vortigern crowned their older brother, Constans, the king of Britain. This gives the impression that the two younger brothers were both babies at that time and relatively the same age. This raises the possibility that they were twins.

Going with the assumption that a Roman family adopted Ambrosius, his name could have derived from his caregiver or from the region he lived in while exiled. Each scenario could imply that he resided in or around the Gallic city of Aureliani (present-day Orléans, France).

Tangent details provided by near-contemporary writers form the bases to these conjectures. An association between Ambrosius and the locale can faintly be seen in the writings of Jordanes. In section XXXVII of The Origin and Deeds of the Goths as translated by Charles C. Mierow, Jordanes states that the Alani king, Sangiban, promised to surrender Aureliani to Attila the Hun.

A precedent for someone living in the area with part of his name is established in a story from Gregory of Tours that was passed down by Fredegar. In the book, From Roman to Merovingian Gaul by Alexander Callander Murray, it states that Clovis sent a certain Roman called Aurelianus to inspect the king's future wife, Chlothild. Aurelianus lived in the region of Orléans.

Though an example of a name-place in Britain based on Aurelianus seems lacking, Dr. John Morris identifies Ambrosden, Amberley, and Amesbury as examples of locations named after Ambrosius in The Age of Arthur. If these examples are named after a person, it seems more likely that the person was known as Ambrosius or Emrys but not Aurelianus while in Britain.

Considering these various factors has led to the view that the Roman gentleman mentioned by Gildas was widely known as Ambrosius and, at one time or another, lived near Aureliani, but also fought battles in Britain.

The Sword of Power and the Round Table were given historical bases

Liberties were taken in the development of the Arthurian themes regarding the Sword of Power and the Round Table. Still, fifth-century events anchor them within Ambrosius Aureliani.

Littleton and Malcor bring up two influential points in From Scythia to Camelot about the Sword in the Stone myth. The authors ask why the whole episode is absent from British chronicles, as well as from Geoffrey's *Historia*. Secondly, the authors tell that the earliest appearance of the Sword in the Stone myth occurs in the writings from the regions settled by the Alans around Orléans.

This has led to the belief that the Sword of Power did not originate in Britain but somewhere in Gaul. Interestingly enough, contemporary and near-contemporary writers tell a tale about a noteworthy sword in the fifth century. Based on the known travels of its wielder, this sword rode through the region near Orléans.

King Bleda died in 446 according to the Gallic Chronicle of 452 in From Roman to Merovingian Gaul by Alexander Callander Murray. Sometime afterwards, a herdsman drew the Sword of Ares from the earth and gave it to Attila the Hun. In The Age of Attila, Priscus records this contemporary event and Jordanes passes the tale down in The Origin and Deeds of the Goths.

Gregory of Tours tells that Attila was turned away from Aureliani and that city of Gaul survived the Scourge of God.

In this mist of details, the Sword of Power will appear for the future king to claim.

The Sword of Power and the Round Table were given historical bases

According to the French writer that introduced the theme of the Round Table, Wace states that the tales of Arthur were not all lies nor all true. Geoffrey Ashe makes note of Wace's statement in The Discovery of King Arthur. This leaves us the task of once more, sifting through the various legends for an underlying history.

Geoffrey Ashe further cites a myth that Merlin made the Round Table for Uther. Geoffrey of Monmouth tells how Aurelius Ambrosius had Uther travel to Ireland with Merlin. They took down the Giant's Ring and brought it to Britain as a monument for the nobles massacred on the first of May [in 429 - based on the documented revolt of the Saxons by Constantius of Lyons].

With the trip to Ireland happening sometime after the massacre, the taking of the Giant's Ring is cast in the context of Palladius' trip in 431. Ambrosius, Merlinus and Utherpendragon [Euthar] take down the Giant's Ring on behalf of the Roman Church. The pagan symbol falls victim to the wrath of Christianity like the ancient temple of Serapis in Alexandria and the consecrated statue of Mount Etna on the island of Sicily. Unlike the others, Merlinus preserved it by moving it to Britain.

In Ambrosius Aureliani, this stone monument is not portrayed as Stonehenge, but instead as an enormous stone hoop, a ring that a giant could wear. Through the process of moving it, the idea of the Round Table develops within Merlinus.