

## **Trouble at Sea**

Parum takes the horn and heads out along with Kristoff and Pierre (a grog). After leaving Sylvie, Parum lays out his plans for travel. He wants to take the Horn to Val Negra, staying out of sight as much as possible and staying at Hermetic covenants along the route. From the moment they set out it seems like they are working under a dark cloud. Bad luck follows them everywhere. The weather turns sour, a backpack strap breaks, a roadside inn is too full to even let them sleep in the barn, and Pierre badly sprains an ankle stepping in a gopher hole. They finally make their way back to the city they docked at. Kristoff makes arrangements with a ship captain to take them to Le Havre, along the coast near the mouth of the Seine. From there, they will take a river boat to Paris or follow the merchant roads. From Paris, they will make their way to Orleans, follow the Loire towards Tours, and head south from there. Other than a couple of goats and the Horn, they are traveling fairly lightly.

Just as the ship is about to pull away from the docks, a leak below decks is discovered. After a delay of a couple of days to fix the leak, they finally set sail. As to be expected, the passengers are not very popular on the ship. Parum is creepy and Kristoff a bit odd looking with his very bright eyes. Rumors spread when a week into the trip, one of the goats is dead. Kristoff asks the ship's cook if he wants the meat or if the carcass should be thrown overboard. The cook takes the meat, but by meal time no one seems to be hungry.

As night approaches a bad, late season storm comes upon the ship suddenly. It takes all the captain's considerable skill to keep the crew moving and the ship intact. Kristoff thinks he sees something or someone in the storm, but can't be sure. It could have been faeries of the air, which would not be too unusual in such a storm. By morning the storm has passed and the sea is calm. Very calm. The ship is still afloat but her mast is broken. The crew rig up a small lateen sail on the front of the boat where they sometimes add cloth to take advantage of good winds. But there are no winds. They are becalmed. So the crew spends the next two days repairing sails and working on the ship. By the third day the dark looks at their passengers are getting darker and the muttering is getting more noticeable. Parum notices the second goat is looking a bit sickly and decides to act. He tries to use unseen servants to move the boat, but that does not seem to work. It may be that the boat is just too big or that the unseen servants cannot push against the sea. He plays around with the idea of creating a new mast. But even with his strong ability in Creo, he doesn't think he can create anything that will last long enough to for the crew to rig sails (provided they could get some wind). So he has a word with the Captain, who at this point is willing to listen to any reasonable solution, and finds a comfortable spot near the front of the ship. With Kristoff on guard, he brings up as much wind as he can muster and concentrates. Though the crew is elated to have wind for their small sail, they seem more intent on getting to shore so they can dump their passengers than in expressing any sort of gratitude.

The captain makes for the nearest port where he thinks the ship can be repaired. After several excruciating days of slow travel, and the last drops of blood from the second goat for Kristoff, a natural breeze finally picks up. Parum

is exhausted from almost continuous concentration during daylight hours. The next morning the lookout cries out that he has spotted their destination. The excitement of the crew is quickly snuffed out when it is reported that one of the crew, Old Ned, has been found in the hold with his throat torn out - but there is very little blood around him. Kristoff swears to Parum that it wasn't him. Parum believes him. The trio holes up in the captain's cabin for the remainder of the day and, at dusk, the ship limps into harbor. After the figures in the storm and the fate of Old Ned, Kristoff vows to keep an eye out for things not easily seen. Parum has decided the hell with secrecy, they need to focus on speed.

The good news is that Pierre's ankle has had a chance to heal. The bad news is someone left a coil of rope by the gangplank that he trips on, becomes entangled, and pitches into the water. They manage to fish him out. He has re-sprained his ankle and suffers the effects of nearly drowning.

After getting settled, Kristoff scours the local docks looking for someone who will take them the rest of the way to Le Havre. It seems that the crew of the last ship has spread a lot of nasty rumours around about them. Kristoff finally manages to convince a merchant coaster captain to take them, the price is high and he notes that their funds are now running low. The trip on the coaster goes well enough at first. A few times Kristoff thinks he sees something out of the corner of his eye, but when he turns to look, nothing is there. Again, they suffer some bad luck. A meal on the ship that everyone ate was bad. Over half the crew become violently ill, with the rest feeling nauseous. It doesn't help that none of the three of them were bothered by the food at all. When they get into Le Havre Kristoff makes sure that Pierre, of the again healed ankle, makes it safely off the ship. They head to an inn, get a meal and a room. Just as they're finishing dinner there is a commotion in the tap room. Someone has rushed in and said that the captain of a certain coaster, his crew, and the local marshal are headed for the inn. They just got in to port and found their entire cargo had spoiled.

## **Down River**

Not wanting to get arrested or kill a bunch of people needlessly, the trio makes immediately makes their way out the back. They follow a trade route south that generally follows eastern side of the river. Pushing hard, they make to Rouen in a matter of days tired and hungry (bad luck with foraging and no good candidates to steal food from along the way). Pierre seems to be getting sick, possibly from his attempts to breath water earlier. Parum has heard rumors of a new covenant in the area and wants to see if they find shelter there. Seeking food and information about the location of this covenant, they plant themselves in the middle of a tap room and create a very uncomfortable atmosphere staring at customers, trying to engage them in conversation, etc. Finally the proprietor, seeing his customers leaving quickly, approaches and offers them a free meal on the porch in back. Kristoff starts asking about any odd "scholars" in the area or other odd folks. The man looks a bit nervous and motions them to the back. He brings them some food and drink. When pressed he admits there are stories of some people living in the cliffs above a particularly nasty stretch of rapids about a

day and a half down river. The boat masters always use the far shore, away from the cliffs, for portage and to guide their boats through this rough stretch of water. There are stories a few favored captains for whom the water is always calm through here. On the other hand, he's sure the stories of haunting voices that emanate from the cliffs is just the wind in the caves and any mention of water faeries is pure rubbish.

Pretty sure this is the place they're looking for, they bully their way into a free room for the night, with breakfast, and then they head downriver. Once again, bad luck dogs them. Rains come, making the trail slick and tough going. The river swells and overflows the banks in some areas, forcing the trio to push through the brush to get around it. At one point Parum creates a wall of stone to act as a bridge, allowing them to cross a swollen tributary. Finally, late on the second day they arrive at what they assume must be the place. As they search they hear eerie voice-like sounds coming from the caves above them. Parum finds some steps cut into stone the form a winding path up and around the cliffs. As he sets foot on the first step, he feels the familiar tingle of crossing an Aegis. Climbing around the side of the cliffs they come upon a cave. Set back into the cave is a large, stout, wooden door. Kristoff pounds on the door a few times. Shortly, a small panel of the door at head height opens and a voice calls out in Frankish "Who's there?" Parum holds his sigal up and responds in Latin "Salvate Soldalis."

After a brief discussion they are admitted into the Covenant of the Singing Cliffs. In residence are two fairly young magi, Tressius of House Criamon and Genessium of House Bjorner. They are surprised to see Parum and a bit nervous to have an obviously driven Flambeau in their midst. They do their best to make the three of the comfortable. When asked, they don't recognize the face Parum shows them. The fare is simple, but good. The number household staff appears to be small. Kristoff counts one older woman that cooks and cleans, a tinker of sorts (he seems to keep the place in generally good repair), three men at arms (only one of which looks like he was actually a soldier at some point in his life), and a really old dog that doesn't seem to mind Kristoff or the magi (Parum is somewhat surprised when curls up against his feet and promptly falls asleep). The covenant itself looks to be a warren of caves and passageways that go fairly deep into the cliffs. Tressius talks a lot, but is hard to follow. He's interested in the bag that Parum carries, saying there is a riddle to be solved there. Parum is cagey about what he's up to, but he does make it clear he's in a hurry. Genessium doesn't talk much, but when he does, he comes straight to the point. He notes that their man Pierre is sick and thinks he has the lung fever. He says he'll watch over him if they want to leave him - but it won't be his fault if he dies. Parum agrees and thanks him. Genessium gives them rough directions to Mont-Sainte-Genevieve a couple days this side of Paris and tells them how to find Eboris in Paris. Tressius takes his leave. For the next few hours, stretches of silence by the fire are broken up by short conversations. Kristoff learns how they can wrangle their way onto a river boat.

The next day, with a sack of provisions and a scrawny goat the cook was loathe to part with, they cross the river on a stone bridge of Parum's making and

wait. Sure enough a short while later a river boat, using a small sail and oars to move upriver, is pulled to shore down river from the rapids. As the crew hops off to unload the cargo Kristoff approaches them and offers to help in exchange for a ride the rest of the way to Paris for a couple passengers. A deal is struck, cargo carried down a well-worn path to the bottom of the rapids, and the boat is nursed up river using poles and ropes from shore. After they reload, Parum joins them and hops on the boat. Kristoff is quite sure there are water faeries here and he would like to be gone before they take notice of either him or Parum. Kristoff picks up snatches of conversations. Obviously the captain assumed the other person was going to be Kristoff's girl. Not happy about the situation, he bites his lip and makes best speed for Paris. Parum decides to skip Mont-Sainte-Genevieve and ride straight into Paris. Nights on the river are spent on the boat, with it tied to shore. The night before they reach Paris, the ever watchful Kristoff sees a figure standing near a sleeping Parum, reaching for the bag. Kristoff leaps into action, but his sword passes through thin air. He realizes he's seeing a ghost. The figure then fades away. Hearing the news, Parum only seems more driven to make speed for Val Negra.

### **One Night in Paris**

In Paris the pair heads straight for Eboris. There are three magi in residence, all from House Jerbiton. The covenant is in a fairly non-descript building in the heart of the city. Inside is a different story. The covenant is luxurious, the food fantastic, and appears to be manned by a staff the size of a small army. Quite the contrast to the Covenant of the Singing Cliffs. The mage they primarily deal with is Armand. Armand does recognize the face Parum shows him. The boy is (was) Quirinus, an apprentice finishing his gauntlet. He was from the Coeris Covenant of the Transylvanian Tribunal (Hermetic Lore tells you this is the Domus Magna of House Tremere). The next morning Armand has arranged for a sumptuous private breakfast at what he deems to be an "uncivilized early hour." Kristoff's glass is filled with fresh pig's blood, a fact which is studiously ignored by Armand and the staff. Over breakfast Parum nearly chokes when Armand casually mentions that he has been approached by a friendly party to see if he can broker a deal for whatever type of Horn Parum is lugging about. He slyly tells them that he was told to offer 50 pounds of gold, but he's sure he can get them up to at least 65 (you get the impression that there is, of course, a small consideration for brokering the deal).

Parum discusses the matter with Armand, digging for information. It's pretty clear that Armand is a master of conversation and a fantastic negotiator. After a few minutes he politely smiles and tells Parum that he understands there is no interest in selling the Horn. He was happy enough to present the offer, but has a feeling it might be better if he doesn't get involved. He will confirm that the person who contacted him was a member of the Order, and a very powerful one. He doesn't have any idea how they know Parum and Kristoff are here. Perhaps someone knew they were coming or they were followed?

Talk turns to helping them along their way. Armand seems eager to help them, thinking he might have need of their help at some point in the future.

Parum offers a season of help from Filius or Albus, but Armand prefers the agreement be between the three of them and kept quiet. He specifically would rather other magi did not know of his help. Parum agrees. Armand gives them directions to a stable nearby. He has a cart and driver there. The cart will take them to Orleans. In Orleans, his driver knows a couple boat captains that owe Armand favors. From that point they should be able to use a combination of rivers and trade routes to get to Bordeaux. Armand also provides them with a fair amount of coin.

Just as they are ready to leave there is a pounding at the front door. A couple minutes later a servant whispers something to Armand. There was a murder next door last night. A man had his throat torn out and his head nearly torn off. Strangers were seen coming here last night. Armand quickly takes them to a basement. Once there he unlocks a door and leads them through an underground passage. Parum quickly produces light for them. After about 15 minutes they come upon another door, which Armand unlocks, and leads them up some stairs to the back of some sort of leather shop. The smell is pretty horrible, but Armand doesn't seem to notice it. Out the back of the shop, he gives them directions to the stable and quickly heads off the other direction.

Kristoff tells Parum that he didn't commit the murder. Again, Parum believes him.

The trip continues on this fashion. The pair is plagued by bad luck. Kristoff sees ghosts on-and-off. The ghosts don't seem to be able to touch Parum or his possessions, which include the horn. Murder also seems to follow their path. Kristoff is very troubled by this, but doesn't have time to really look into it. Outside of a night spent in Amberite, a small covenant along the Loire near Blois, they don't encounter any other magi.

They finally reach Val Negra with the Horn. Parum spends a long evening going over everything with Elaine and she takes the horn for safekeeping. A few days later Filius, stopping by here on his way back to Calor Novus, arrives with a contingent of DOTO. Parum and Kristoff join him for the trip home.