

Notes for Podcast: *Stranger in Olondria*, Book 3

A lot happens and is revealed in this section of the novel. It is an important one. Jevick is arrested and sent to the blessed Isle. He is “examined” by the Priest of the Stone,” and befriended by the priest’s daughter, Tialon. He is sent to an insane asylum. He finds out that his tutor, Lunre, had an association with the Priest of the Stone and with Tialon. He meets the High Priestess of Avalei. He talks with the ghost of Jissavet. He agrees to preside over a “Night Market” put on by the devotees of Avalei and leaves the Blessed Isle.

Book 3, Chapter Eight, The Tower of Myrrh

Jevick has been informed on by his landlord and arrested. He is taken to the “Blessed Isle” and sent to the Tower of Myrrh to be examined by the Priest of the Stone.

The chapter opens with a long description of the paintings and tapestries of the tower, with historical connections and background information gleaned from snatches of poetry that Jevick has remembered. It’s exposition, but in beautiful musical language with many odd metaphors and allusions.

Jevick is finally left in a room by the soldiers who escort him. He meets Tialon, the daughter of the Priest of the Stone. She is friendly to him.

Read on page 87.

The Priest of the Stone thinks that someone has instructed Jevick to pretend that he has been visited by an angel. He wants the name of that person. He thinks that Jevick is an ignorant dupe. He finally sends Jevick off to the Gray Houses, essentially an insane asylum.

In the Gray Houses, things are not as they seem. Jevick is still tormented by Jissavet. Tialon tries to cure him by reading to him. She believes that written words, unlike speech, have an order and that Jevick’s mind is disordered. This is the beginning of the reader’s understanding of what Jevick is up against. The cult of the Stone believes in order and proper thinking. According to Tialon, the cult of Avalei loves luxury, harlotry, and the pursuit of angels. This is an ancient conflict in our world as well. It is the Apollonian versus the Dionysian, the god of the sun representing light, reason, and harmony, while the god of wine represents revelry, license, ecstasy and intoxication. The reader is left to determine who is right. The devotees of Avalei are certainly friendlier to Jevick, except for Tialon, who believes in the Stone because it is what she has “built” and is really unable to question it.

A word here on the pronunciation of names and foreign words in fantasy novels. Some writers give you a pronunciation guide, but most of the time, you are left to your own devices. One choice is whether to use continental vowels, such as in Spanish or German, or English vowels that have undergone what is called “the Great Vowel Shift” (ask Dr. Baker about the vowel shift). Unless the work is particularly American, I tend to use continental vowels. Then there is the matter of accents. I think in earlier podcasts I said aVAlei for the name of the goddess, putting the accent on the second syllable. English likes to have the accent on the second syllable. But now I think that the author wants the accent on the first syllable. A-va-lei. Why? It is because of phrase that get repeated like “the High Priestess of Avalei.” It scans better with the accent on the first syllable.

But most readers just make up a pronunciation in their heads and silently stick with it. It is only when you read it aloud, or make podcasts, that you need to figure out the pronunciation.

Book 3, Chapter Nine, The Gray Houses

Jevick adapts to life in the houses. But Jissavet still comes. It is the custom of the islands to burn their dead. The people of Olondria bury them. Jissavet was buried. Thus she is among “the rotting dead,” a horror for her. Jevick thinks that finding her body and burning it will satisfy her, but it turns out she wants something more.

Tialon reads to Jevick, but he is not cured. Jissavet still comes at night. One day, Tialon sees Jevick reading the copy of Olondrian Lyrics that Lunre gave him. She remarks that it is an old copy and that he should take care of it. Tialon begins an emotional summary of her life, speaking about “building something.”

Read 102-03

A card drops out of a book. The card says, “Watch for us at midnight.”

Book 3, Chapter Ten, Midnight in the Glass Forest

Jevick is awakened and brought to meet the High Priestess of Avalei. It seems that even though the Gray Houses are controlled by the Priest of the Stone, the High Priestess is an inmate that the Priest of the Stone dare not kill, and much of the staff has sympathies for Avalei. There is drinking, music, conversation, and skinny dipping.

Book 3, Chapter Eleven, The Girdle of Avalei

Jevick awakens with a note in his hair that says they will return for him. After the meeting with the High Priestess, Jissavet leaves Jevick alone for two nights. Then Jevick is brought to a complex ritualistic ceremony in which he is given a hallucinogenic drug. Instead of Jissavet coming to him, he and the High Priestess call to her.

Read 120 bottom to 122 top.

It turns out that Jevick’s nurse, Auram, is a priest of Avalei. He is happy that they have found an Avneanyi, a saint who speaks with angels. Jevick is not happy. He just wants to burn Jissavet’s body so she will stop tormenting him. He does not intend to write a book for her. The devotees of Avalei want to learn mysteries from speaking with the dead. They will bring Jissavet’s body to him if he agrees to preside over a “Night Market” a kind of festival in which people ask questions of the avneanyi.

Book 3, Chapter Twelve, Tialon’s Story

Tialon returns to Jevick. She had not been back to see him after she saw his copy of Olondrian Lyrics and he said that he learned Olondrian from a tutor. She says that because they have spies, she knows that he has met the High Priestess and that he is leaving. But he is safe because she is his friend. When he asks why, she tells the tale of Lunre, who was a poor sickly boy who loved learning and eventually came to the Blessed Isle to work with her father. For a long while they were great friends, but then they began to disagree, and neither could really tolerate disagreement, especially her father. But Lunre, who was really her only friend, began to have romantic feelings for her, which he felt were unworthy

because of a 20 year age gap. For all these reasons, he exiled himself to Jevick's island. She says that as the situation between Lunre and her father became more and more strained, the stars began to disappear from the sky.

The chapter ends with Jevick being awakened to go to a boat that will take him away from the Blessed Isle.

Questions:

1. If this story has good guys and bad guys, which is which? Are Tialon and her father, the advocates of the mysterious Stone and its inscriptions the forces of good? Or is it the High Priestess and the cult of Avalei? Or are they all equally right or equally wrong?
2. Was Lunre right to exile himself?
3. What is the significance of the stars disappearing from the sky?
4. What does Tialon mean by "building" something? Does building something make her happy?