

# THE THREAD OF INFINITY BY JON WHISTLER

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He stood staring at the sword behind the altar. What is Ambrosius thinking of, to put that thing there? Is it something to do with the Logos, or is it merely a reflection of Ambrosius' own pride, to be the last of the Roman kings in Britain? Either way, the sword is insulting! It will have to go, that sword, with its heathen, Roman center, or I will not consecrate this church! Ambrosius must be told that there is no compromising in this.

Standing there in silent meditation, Nilhem felt the hairs on the back of his neck prickle and rise. Besides himself and Dinas there had been no one in the building, but now he sensed another. He turned around and came face to face with the son he had not seen for more than seven years!

"Marlo," he said curtly.

Marlo only nodded and just as curtly replied, "Bishop."

They stared silently at one another, Nilhem seeing something new and wondrous in the sight of Marlo as a full-grown man and how well he looked in a suit of fine clothes. How naturally he wore luxury, like a courtier born and bred, and for one brief and completely illogical moment, Nilhem felt a glow of pride. Then, just as quickly, the moment faded, as Nilhem saw that Marlo's rich cloak was fastened at his breast by a clasp of gold and garnet, and that its circular design matched the pattern at the center of the hilt of the sword on the wall. A gift from Ambrosius, Nilhem guessed, and felt a sudden wave of hot jealousy. Only then could he speak, while his gaze wanted to fix itself upon the gilded clasp rather than look Marlo in the eye.

"So, you have found fortune and done well, Marlo. You have the ear of the king and are very famous for your deeds. We have even heard about them in Glastonbri." He paused, waiting for Marlo to say something, perhaps to brag, as he Nilhem would have done at the same age. But, when Marlo said nothing in reply, all the anger and contempt of the years began wanting to force itself from Nilhem's lips. He had a mouth full of bitterness and spleen and he just had to release it.

“But deeds are so ephemeral, are they not? Your use is fast coming to an end. However I do note that you have brought the King to heel, under the subjection of the Church, and this building...” he glanced around disdainfully ... “such as it is proves that. But now it is the turn of the true Church to order things, and in this you have no part. You should have strengthened your place in the world, Marlo, by putting in your lot with us where all true power lies. As it is, what are you? An isolated, wandering nobody who will outlive his present usefulness? A peasant in courtly disguise? Or a maker of temporary wonders and surprises, just a fairground magician? It doesn’t amount to much when there is nothing to come after, does it?”

Nilhem saw Marlo flush and was pleased by the effect of his words. The young upstart seemed taken down a peg or two and had no immediate reply. So, he kept on enthusiastically, buoyed by the taste of his own spleen.

“So, you have served your purpose, I’ll give you that. The King is ours now, thank you very much,” he said sarcastically.

Now for the first time Marlo spoke. “I have only done what must be done,” he said quietly, as if unsure perhaps.

The sound of unsureness, as he thought he heard it in Marlo’s reply, satisfied Nilhem even more. Yet, underneath, he was enraged by the calmness in Marlo’s eyes. He wanted to wipe that look away, to stir the young man and see pain and anger there, the same as he felt himself. Suddenly he felt gripped by a surge of force, as if a hand was gripping his skull and his brain was a stone that the hand squeezed until all substance dropped out of it, like blood being drained away. His brain felt hollow then and the words that echoed within it, bouncing off its empty walls, were not his own, and he listened with astonishment as they poured involuntarily from his mouth.

“Ha! Yes, that’s true, Marlo! You have been a willing slave to the Lords of the Upper Realm and the so called Master of the World. However, this world, here where you are now, is the domain of the great Master ‘R’, and this, I am sure, you know!”

Marlo was taken aback and puzzled. “What do you mean?”

“Fool! Do you think that all the pomp and ceremony in the mountain, that great initiation into that so called Brotherhood, means anything? You were

duped. You have wasted all these years of your life in the illusion that you are important. Ha! You are a fool, Marlo! The Master of the World! That is only a phantom! There is only one Master of this world and he is here, above you, on the true Cross of this world!”

Marlo stared at the golden sword on the wall, the facsimile sword that Ambrosius had ordered to be fashioned to represent the Logos and the Sword of Power. His mind was in a whirl. The depth of these contemptuous words, the force of them, was not of Nilhem. Nor was the harshness in the voice. He remembered El Sarros channeling Razparil, and looked harder to see the image of Razparil appear there suddenly. Razparil hovered, laughing.

Razparil had let go of Nilhem, and the Bishop stood dumbly by, as much in surprise as Marlo and wondering greatly at the words his mouth had spoken, for he knew nothing of mountains or brotherhoods or masters of the world. The huge monk, Dinas, was so stunned by everything that he moved away into a far corner and looked on in terror and confusion, thinking in horror that the Devil Himself was haunting this church – which He was.

Razparil laughed evilly. “So, Marlo, you were great, for a few seconds!” he sneered. “Found a brotherhood, got initiated, healed a king! All meaningless!

“Ha! Ha! You are nothing! And your feeble attempt to bring forth the Logos is nothing! The Logos can only enter the dimension through ME! Ha! Ha! Ha! You weakling, you are nothing, and will never be anything but one used by a spent Master.

“This is MY world, and all bow down to ME, for I am its Lord and have been so for countless millennia! You have wasted your life and now you will wander the world – a lost being!”

Marlo pulled himself together from the shock. “No, Razparil, you don’t fool me. There are far greater than you, and I have not wasted my years. I have been guided by a greater one, who knows all – the true Master of the World and your Master – Janix.”

“Janix? Who told you he is my Master?” Razparil blurted out, surprised and angry, for he had not expected that reply. “I have no Master!” he asserted in his pride.

“Not true,” said Marlo. “Even El Sarros knew it and told me how you have often failed your Master. And Janix himself, when he came to me on the moor those many years ago, was critical of you and told how you would use me in your quest to rule the minds of men and control their lives. You are lost in your own delusions, Razparil.”

Janix has betrayed me! Razparil thought. Why? Whatever the reason, he could not allow the frequency of doubt to enter his consciousness. He spat back: “And Janix has not used you for his own ends, Marlo? What do he and that fancy Brotherhood preach if it isn’t rule and control? Be honest with yourself and admit the truth!”

Marlo was glaring at him stubbornly. He’s deaf to all reason, thought Razparil. So there is only one way left to deal with him, otherwise all will be lost. I must destroy him now, if I’m not to lose him altogether. And I must do it through Nilhem.

“You are a traitor! A wasted soul, Marlo! For you are working to destroy all that has been built to preserve the role of the Holy Church in the world! You have sold your soul to the Devil, and that is Janix. Devil’s instrument, you soil this holy place! Nilhem, cast it out! Cast out this foul Devil!”

Nilhem started in shock and stumbled against the altar. “Cast him out? How?” he babbled. He looked frantically round the church, seeking Dinas, for he was very afraid. “Dinas! Dinas! Help me!” He waved at the big monk. “DO IT! Throw this man out of the church, for it is sacrilege for him to be here!”

Dinas was so confused, not even sure who was the true devil, Marlo or the thing hovering over the golden sword. Maybe they were all devils. But he felt the fear emanating from Nilhem and the Bishop was his master who he had sworn to protect. He lumbered toward Marlo.

Dinas was a head taller than Marlo and twice his body-weight. His fists were huge, like two red gammons. But Marlo did not move when he approached. He stared Dinas in the eye. “What do you want?”

The big monk stopped. Little men never usually challenged him. He looked to Nilhem for guidance, and Nilhem bawled: "Throw him out!"

Marlo gazed deeply into Dinas' eyes. He moved into the mind of the monk, becoming one in consciousness with him. There was so much uncertainty in that mind, it was not difficult to move it in the way he wanted. As he took control, he assumed the great body and turned it toward Nilhem. The two huge hands reached out ...

Nilhem's eyes bugged when he realized that his protector was about to attack him. "Marlo, no! Marlo, stop him!" he cried out.