

CAMALUS

A STORY

By Jordi van de Weerd

The discovery of an unknown island has stirred the court, and Camalus the dodo, King of Caelia, is ordered to explore. After receiving cryptic advice from Cerridwen the Wise, he returns home. Along with his advisor Coturnia, Camalus tries to find the Halcyon, a mysterious animal that might help him in his quest.

II.

“Camilus, I have done as you requested, and the librarian will be here momentarily. I was unable to contact the scouts, as they are currently investigating a disturbance in Incendia. They should be back within two days.”

Camilus nodded, and moved with Coturnia to the main hall. Camalus and Coturnia sat down at the largest table, the table commonly used for such meetings. Camalus had always rejected the idea of a throne, and preferred to be on equal footing with his people. It was not before long that the librarian came in.

“Welcome Lughus, 'tis good of you to come on such short notice,” Camalus said.

“No problem at all, my lord,” said Lughus.

Every time they met, Lughus struck Camalus as an odd fellow. The parrot always squinted through a monocle and was clumsily dressed, preferring to wear his gown at all times. For a moment, Camalus wondered if he had ever seen Lughus dressed in anything else. He couldn't seem to remember. Still, Camalus thought, he was a good librarian, and by far one of the most intelligent people in his realm. Lughus took a seat at the table, and stared at the company through his monocle.

“I understand that you have not been told what this is about?” asked Camalus.

“No sir, I have not,” Lughus hastily replied.

“I did not have time,” Coturnia said apologetically.

”It is all right Coturnia, I know I gave you little time,” said Camalus, trying to reassure Coturnia. He continued: “What we are about to discuss cannot leave this room, and is of the utmost importance to our nation. I believe I can trust you with this?”

“Of course sir, anything you say,” replied Lughus.

Camilus had already known the answer, but was pleased with the young parrot's enthusiasm.

“I'm sure that you will have heard about this new island by now?” asked Camalus.

“Yes sir, I have heard, but I thought them only legend and myth?”

Camilus replied: “So did I, but Muscio of Solum disagrees. He has tasked us with the exploration of this island.”

Lughus seemed puzzled by Camalus' words, and before he could think, he said: “But why us, we are not creatures of the sea? Sir?”

Camilus was happy that Lughus appreciated the problem ahead, and continued:

“Indeed we are not, and this I tried to explain. However, I was not granted my request, and we shall have no choice. Before I left Solum, I was visited by Cerridwen the Wise, and she spoke of a species who will be able to help us. This is why you were asked to come to the palace, we need you to find anything you are able to on this species.”

Lughus was apparently lost in thought after these words, for it took a clearing of the throat to bring him back to the conversation.

“Another species, you say? And if I may ask, what is the name of species sir?”

“They are known as Halcyon, and Cerridwen was absolutely sure of their existence,” replied Camalus.

“I have never heard of them sir, but I will do whatever I can, you have my word,” Lughus assured the king. “If you will excuse me now sir, I will begin at once!” he exclaimed, before rushing out of the room.

After Lughus had left, Coturnia turned to Camalus and spoke: “Are you sure this is going to be of any help?”

Camalus looked at Coturnia, and said “I do not know, but we need all the help we can find. I see no harm in letting him consult his books.”

Coturnia nodded, and was apparently satisfied by this answer. Camalus could see Coturnia hiding her impatience and doing a poor job of it, and he dismissed his advisor. Returning to his room, Camalus could suddenly feel the exhaustion that he had been pushing back during the meeting, and as he took off his jacket and tie, was happy that at least this day had come to an end.

Solum

“What news is there from Caelia?” asked Tharandar.

The parandrus had been patiently waiting for his scouts to report back from Caelia. While none were visible, Tharandar could sense the gathering of his kind.

To his right, a voice came: “We have not been able to find out much sir.”

Tharandar, unimpressed and impatient at this lack of news, flicked his tail and waited for another voice.

“Camalus is keeping everything very quiet. All we know is that his pet librarian has been called to the palace,” said a second voice, this time from the left.

This is why Tharandar always send out his spies in pairs. Where one was unable to uncover information, the other would. Tharandar prided himself on having the best spies in the kingdom, a fact leading to his species' promotion to the King's royal spies.

“You have done well,” said Tharandar. This acknowledgement was enough for the two parandruses, who immediately left again. Tharandar knew all he had to, and so he set off towards the castle. Using his spotted fur to camouflage himself, Tharandar easily avoided detection by the many guards patrolling the forest at this time of night. He had always excelled at hiding, and so had those he trained. He had made the night their territory, allowing them to be of use to the kingdom. Every year he would go and seek out young ones who held promise as either spies or assassins, and take them away. Trained from infancy to hide, sneak, steal, and kill – they made the best spies the kingdom could ask for. But they were not only trained to mindlessly spy and kill, for Tharandar had no use for such thoughtless creatures. Aside from sharp claws, he needed sharp minds, able to analyse a situation and, above all, critical. Besides the physical skills, cubs were also taught how to think independent of orders. This ability had proven useful many times over, and it ensured that the parandruses were not slaves of the king of Solum. Tharandar was loyal to the king, but made sure his kind were loyal to him. He knew well that loyalty is a peculiar thing, and that it easily shifts. By ensuring his kind's loyalty to him, he would need not fear being turned on by his own species. Nearly reaching the castle, he paused, as he always did, making sure he had not been seen or followed. When he was content he was alone and unseen, he snuck into the castle grounds, knowing the way even in the dark.

End of part II

Please send your questions and comments to j.weerdvande@gmail.com