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Les nouvelles du "Troisième cycle"

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Les nouvelles ont toujours été rares, difficiles à trouver. Leur diffusion a soulevé de nombreux débats sur les mailing-list françaises. Des traductions ont été faites par les fans. A ce jour et à ma connaissance, Présence du Futur n'a jamais tenté de publier une anthologie en français de ces nouvelles.

Les cinq nouvelles sont les suivantes :

- o THE SALESMAN'S TALE
- o THE SHROUDLING AND THE GUISEL
- o COMING TO A CORD
- o BLUE HORSE, DANCING MOUNTAINS
- o HALL OF MIRRORS

Les résumés qui suivent ont été rédigés par Jason Durall

THE SALESMAN'S TALE (published in Amberzine #6)

Luke escapes from the Primal Pattern and hides in the blue crystal cave which Merlin was trapped earlier in. He summons his father's Pattern-sword, Werewindle, to him, plots and plans. Luke casts a disguise spell over himself, and makes a Trump of Vialle. From there, he transports himself to Castle Amber where he meets with Queen Vialle, who initiates some sort of divinatory ritual using some of her statues. She learns that the magical rings known as the spikards are "awake" and seeking a return to power. There will be a mighty battle of some sort. Werewindle is mentioned as an item of similar power. Luke tries to contact Delwin, self-exiled Prince of Amber, who, along with his sister Sand, guards the spikards. Delwin speaks to him briefly, and is cut off when Luke's mother Jasra is mentioned. Luke is asked by Vialle to wait for Corwin's return to Amber, and agrees to do so.

THE SHROUDLING AND THE GUISEL (published in Realms of Fantasy #1 and Amberzine #8)

Merlin awakens, making love to a strange woman in some part of Chaos, after speaking to his father Corwin at the end of "Prince of Chaos." The mysterious woman reveals that she is his childhood playmate and first love Rhanda, who he thought was a vampire. She corrects him, telling him that she is a shroudling, a mysterious race which hides in the place beyond the reflected world of mirrors. She warns him that he is in great danger, from rivals to the throne, and from the alliance of his half-brother Jurt and his old girlfriend Julia, despite their agreement to help him. Rhanda tells him that a rival sorcerer, the most powerful claimant to the throne, has summoned a horrible creature from the mirror world to hunt Merlin and the other rivals. Even his step-brother Mandor fears this sorcerer, who's identity is unknown to Merlin or Rhanda. Nine rivals before him dead, Merlin is the next target of the creature known as the guisel. He enters the mirror world with Rhanda and confronts the guisel. He tries to summon his Trump-based supercomputer Ghostwheel, but it is unable to aid him. The rest of the shroudlings appear and try to aid him with a magical dirge-like chant of some sort. Reminded of a summoning he knows, he summons Kergma, his childhood demon playmate. Kergma tells him what to do. Merlin summons the Vorpall Sword from the Lewis Carroll-inspired bar to fight the guisel. It is trapped in a mirror-sphere created by Kergma, and hacked and banished piece by piece. When the creature is destroyed, Kergma creates for Merlin a new guisel and sends it after the sorcerer as a warning to the sorcerer to stay out of the mirror world and to leave him alone. Merlin heads off with

Rhanda for a last night together.

COMING TO A CORD (published in *Pirate Writings* Summer '95 issue)

Left tied to a bedpost in Brand's room in Castle Amber, Merlin's invisible, sentient strangling cord Frakir wakes up and wonders where Merlin has gone to. It slithers down the hall, finding itself in Princess Flora's room. She doesn't know where Merlin is, but tells Frakir it can wait around until someone who does know shows up. Sometime later, a sorcerer jumps through Flora's mirror, claiming that he admires her and is being pursued by a monster called a guisel. Frakir and Flora defend themselves against it, and Luke arrives, hearing the commotion. The sorcerer jumps out the door and escapes, and Luke fights the guisel. Frakir recognizes that the Pattern-sword Werewindle is along the class of objects of the spikards, and that infinite power can be drawn through it. Luke does so and destroys the guisel. Frakir asks him about Merlin, and Luke tells him that Corwin is showing up soon, and might be able to get him in touch with Merlin. Frakir warns him that something big is about to happen.

BLUE HORSE, DANCING MOUNTAINS (published in the anthology "*Wheel of Fortune*" edited by Roger Zelazny)

Corwin rides from Chaos on a blue demon horse. They enter an area where the landscape changes and the Shadows dance, and the demon steed is forced to stop for the night, turning into a winged, eagle-headed stone statue as it does each night. In the midst of a great storm, Corwin sees a fire or light from a nearby clearing. He investigates, finding a curious sight. Dworkin, the half-mad creator of the Pattern and the Trumps, father of the line of Amber, is playing a mysterious game of some sort with Suhuy, the master of the Logrus in Chaos, Merlin's "uncle" on that side of the family. The game contains pieces which represent various forces of Amber, Chaos, and Shadow. The two play several pieces, and Suhuy mentions that Corwin will fail to reach the Hall of Mirrors in time for the prophetic vision. Dworkin replies that Corwin has been underestimated, and has perfect timing, looking

across the clearing directly at Corwin in his hiding place. Dworkin makes a radical move with a Chaos piece, and Suhuy asks for time to evaluate it. They make plans to meet in three days and continue, and disappear. Corwin returns to the demon horse as it awakes and tells it that they must hellride to Amber to meet the Hall of Mirrors.

HALL OF MIRRORS (published in the anthology "*Castle Fantastic*", edited by John De Chancie)

Corwin, en route back to Amber, runs into a group of bandits. He doesn't cooperate, and when they try to kill him he discovers that he has become somehow immaterial, unable to affect them or they him. This does not extend to the material world. Corwin wonders if his time in the Dancing Mountains is responsible. Shask requests to remain Corwin's companion after their return to Amber, so Corwin stables him at the castle and scavenges some food, ordering it to be sent to his room. He heads for his chambers, and bumps into Luke, who thinks he's the Pattern-Ghost of Corwin, whom he's met. To prove he's human, Corwin has Luke try to cut him, but can't due to the immateriality. Taking the blade, he is able to do it himself without difficulty. Thinking that Corwin is under a spell, Luke volunteers to rid him of it. They head to Luke's chambers, but encounter the Hall of Mirrors en route. Inside, they meet with reflections of Luke's mother and Brand's wife, Jasra, who speaks to Luke and congratulates him on taking the throne. Next is the reflection of the late King Oberon, who tells them that the two swords are bound together and that they are needed in the struggle to come. More is related about the swords being able to control the other spikards. Corwin discovers that he and Luke have become immaterial, unable to touch each other save through the Pattern-swords they each bear. Princess Dara of Chaos appears in another mirror and tells them that one of them must be impaled by the blade of the other to return the winner to solidity. There is some speculation on the nature of the Hall of Mirrors. The reflection of Corwin's dead brother Eric appears to gloat. They then speak with the image of the dead or missing Princess Deirdre, Corwin's sister, who tells them that one of them must indeed run the other through to escape the



Hall. She pulls them through a mirror to "the killing grounds." They appear on a small glade at night, near a group of people. The people are witnesses, ordered to watch the duel by two hooded figures. Corwin and Luke dine with them first, then agree to fake a duel to find out what happens. They begin, but some force compels them to battle in earnest. The two hooded figures appear among the witnesses. Corwin and Luke try to end things by giving each other small injuries, but Luke ends with

his shoulder impaled and Corwin run through. Luke tells Corwin about what happened with the mirror and the guisel, and the mysterious so rcerer. The two hooded figures reveal themselves to be Fiona and Mandor, who claim that they were not culpable for the duel. Corwin passes out, and awakens next to Luke back in Amber, under medical care. Flora, their attending medic, suggests to them that the Castle Amber is "waking up" and becoming a player in the game.