

If You Want to Look for Camelot

By Anna Von Reitz



Look for a small lake with a small island nestled in a mixed pine and hardwood forest --- a place that is very private with a small river and small waterfall feeding into the lake; it is described as being in the Auvergne Forest and having a perfect climate -- which implies that it is in-between the humid western Auvergne and the harsh dry east -- but somewhere where there is a perfect microclimate in this mostly wild and wasteland place.

That's the thing. Nobody would ever look for Camelot in the Auvergne. Even the tourist photos are discouraging. Dead volcanoes. Average looking countryside. Healthy looking cows. Nothing magical here.

This is why Camelot was called a "charmed place", because everything around it was not beautiful -- so that this little bit of land and lake struck people as being magical and out of place.

"A short distance away" you will find the ancient brooding citadel of Camelot, either in ruins or covered up by a modern city.

I have never sought the Citadel of Camelot. It is described as a "mountain" facing west, and somehow assuming a man's "stern visage gazing westward", enclosed on either side by massive stone walls made of blocks of stone the size of boxcars (Megalithic stone work) that "rise in tiers like steps". The treads of these "steps" are covered with dense forest and access to the citadel itself was by narrow tracks running along the top of these forested "stair treads" with each step providing access to a different level of the citadel built into the side of the mountain.

Directly in front of this forbidding place is a natural sheer cliff, then another strip of forest, and beyond that to the west, the Plain of Camelot where Mordred's armies camped.

Whatever joy or beauty or strength that was in this citadel has long departed; it is, by now, a place where even birds don't like to stay and it has a peculiar mournful emptiness as if one of Morgan's spells of doom still lingers over it. The light is odd, too, a very pale golden light like one sees occasionally in autumn, on days of very high altitude overcast. The sun bleeds through as if it is faded or coming through a filter.

"It is empty. Dry and empty. Amid tussocks of dry grass and rocks, our heroes bled." That's the report of one of those who went looking for it in the 1700's.

There are places in Germany and France where simply seeing photographs of them makes me sick to my stomach, much less being there in the flesh.

La Cathedrale Notre-Dame-de-l'Assomption de Clermont, also in the Auvergne, with its black spires ---is one of those places.

The hillocky pox-marked landscape of Verdun and the ghastly phallic-shaped Douaumont Ossuary still send chills and radiating fire up my spine and through my hands; a displaced sickness like mold creeping through the grass afflicts the place. A queer metallic smell still lingers, though not everyone can smell it, and despite the hundred years and more, the landscape of Verdun and the eight other ruined villages surrounding it, have barely begun a biological recovery.

I asked the Diplomat representing the Government of France why they have allowed this and done nothing but build benches and a Ossuary, turning it into a park -- of sorts.

Their answer --- "To remember." -- sounded lame, and somehow insincere, as if remembering in the sense of honoring the dead had nothing to do with it.

"To remember what?" I pressed. "The senseless death and genocide of a whole generation of men?"

The French Attache looked startled, surprised that anyone would not tamely back down and accept the politically correct answers. He looked oddly guilty instead. He glanced away.

"This was the second salvo of your depopulation plan," I spat.

"Second?" He finally responded mildly.

"The Crimea," I responded, "and when the truth about that was about to come out, they had to shoot Archduke Ferdinand, because he was an honorable man."

The mixture of shocked realization, the alchemy of the place, the disgust and repugnance and most of all, the frustration, boiled in my gut like a cauldron.

All those young men were slaughtered with less mercy than cattle, and at night the thieves stole over the battlefield fringes like shadows, pulling the gold fillings from their teeth, stealing pocket watches.

"The years have passed," I finally pronounced with a voice as if I were passing a sentence on criminals. "It's time for the Ossuary to be emptied like any charnel house, the bones returned to the Earth, and peace restored. The money you have wasted on this ghastly thing...." I stood looking at the Ossuary, a giant glittering penis. "...can't be saved or turned to any other purpose. You must tear it down, burn the pieces, salt the ashes, and bury what remains in the sea."

The well-trained functionary's eyebrows shot up to the middle of his forehead, "Madam....." he gasped.

"Nonetheless," I said, staring back at him, "what I say is true. If you leave these bones unhealed and leave the Earth to mourn, what you have done to them, will be done to you. Any fools-- much less a government, should know that much."

"Then," I continued, "you must heal this place. You must invoke the True God to heal it, not your sanctimonious master. Remove the dead ordinance, you cheap bastards."

Tears began pouring down my face.

"You have the equipment to do that now," I said, blinking, not wanting to touch my blazing hands to my face. "Make plans, or we will all be coming for you."

"We?" His voice squeaked out like a frightened little mouse, wondering furtively what I meant, sensing the unseen ghosts in the air around and through and in between us.

"Yes, we," I intoned and nodded. "You feel the cold, don't you?"

No need to ask. His teeth were chattering on this hot humid day in summer. I could smell the reek of the battlefield, still pungent. I leaned back away from him, my fists.

I took a deep slow breath and fought to overcome the smell of faded cordite, lead fuses, tainted bandages, the slime of wounds on gauze, trampled grass, mud, and pools of stagnant water.

"You didn't build this "monument" for them," I said. "Not to remember them. You built it as a monument to Death, like the Crucifix."

The French Diplomatic Corps bureaucrat pissed himself right there and then, the dark stain appearing suddenly and spreading and dripping from the hem of his pants. His eyes were very wide and staring, pop-eyed, as if I were choking him.

"Monsieur," I said wearily, "we see what you do in secret. We see how you are. We see how you mock Jesus while pretending to worship him. You do all that he instructed you not to do. He told you not to worship him, but that is your teaching. He told you to call no man "Father" --- and what do you do?"

The poor fellow was very softly gasping and staring straight forward at something beyond my shoulder. The cold was almost unbearable, but the fire rippling up my spine was keeping me warm enough. I paused. I tilted my head sideways.

"You leave Jesus on the cross, dead, because you want to celebrate your big moment of victory. You want to celebrate his death."

"Mon dieu!" The poor fellow managed and fell sprawled out, and lay panting like a dog in front of me. I poked at his bare ankle between his pant leg and the top of his rumpled sock, not with force, to encourage him to at least sit up.

"You call on the True God when you need him," I observed mildly.
"And are surprised when he still answers, after all the blasphemy and cruelty and evil that you've done."

He curled up in a fetal position in response, still shivering in the cold, but the worst had passed.

"You ---- " I said very softly, "Your government must heal this place and give those men a peaceful grave." It wasn't an order. It wasn't a request. It was a statement of fact.

I turned and walked away, back toward the parking lot, leaving him to find his feet and limp and bump awkwardly after me. I didn't turn and look at him until we got back to the car.

"I'm so sorry! I'm so sorry!" He was blubbering first in English, then in French, breathlessly, frantically.

I nodded, and said, "You should be."

He was one of those men who went to school, got good grades, had a homosexual experience when he was nineteen, got pulled into evil things that were way above his head, and convinced himself -- somehow -- that there would never be a reckoning. He grew smug, convinced of his intellectual superiority, convinced that he was untouchable and secure. Even right.

He never imagined anything like this happening. Tears were running down both sides of his face, but my tears had dried and the cool breeze that rises in the late afternoon washed over me.

I looked back at the Ossuary. It glowed dully in the changing light, still hideous, only now better lit.

"I am so sorry," he said, one last time, with his voice stepping down to something like normal.

"Don't give your apologies to me," I said. "Tell them, the men who died here. The men who never saw home again."

He looked out over the quiet scene; there were only a couple distant figures inching forward across the landscape, an elderly couple, half-leaning on each other. Perhaps they had family members buried here, and came out once a year, as some people do, to view the ruin and commune with the ghosts.

I was torn between letting him drive in his agitated condition, or take the risk myself. I had a momentary twinge of sympathy for him as he stared around like he'd just woke up in an alien world.

Nothing would ever be the same for him.

It was such a routine safe assignment. Take this no-longer-young American woman out to Verdun. Let her pay her respects-- yuck-yuck. Boring. Babysit the American tourist, saying all the usual things. Hot, humid....but now, he realized something more.

It was, it was....depressing. Heart-breaking. A new rain of tears came and his handsome face twisted.

Yes, he could feel again. He took a ragged breath, looking bewildered. He could *feel* again. He could sense his own life pulsing through his veins. He could hear. He could see.

And yes, the Ossuary was hideously ugly, but worse than that, it had an evil meaning. It wasn't created to remember the dead. It was created to mock them, mock their lives, mock their sacrifice.

It stood there erect in the middle of that awful landscape, saying, here's the Big One, Pilgrims. That, and nothing more.

How had France, once a noble nation, come to this?

Monsieur G. just stood there helplessly and wept. I let him. He turned away, leaning back against the other side of the car. He was trembling, but not with the cold of the Abyss.

He was trembling because his heart was broken; he suddenly had sympathy for all those young men, with all that they suffered, with all their lives unlived.

He could suddenly sense all the aged parents left lonely, the girlfriends and wives bereft, the children without fathers. The immensity of this bore down on him and crushed him, and I let it, because he needed to be crushed.

He finally turned back toward me. The sun was going down. I could hear the quiet burble of a Mourning Dove in the trees, and otherwise, for a moment, everything was perfectly silent. I said nothing. He said nothing.

The ghosts crowded around us again. So many had suffered such awful deaths, one second alive, the next, blown apart. It left them with no reference points, not even a moment to realize they were dead.

I silently opened my arms to the empty air and mentally hugged each one of them.

My companion opened the car door and slid into the driver's seat of the standard-issue Peugeot. All his smugness was gone. He stared straight ahead over the steering wheel as I got in the car. Without a word, he turned the ignition and we slowly worked our way to the main road. We didn't speak.

When we got to my hotel, the doorman rushed forward with a big smile to greet me and open the car door. I turned back just for an instant to grab my purse and found Monsieur G. staring at me.

He looked absolutely desperate. There was something he wanted to say, but the words weren't coming out. What do you say, after such an afternoon?

I felt my heart melt.

The impossibility of putting what he felt into words was self-evident to me. Some things are just too deep, too complex, and being given your life back is one of those things.

He went out to Verdun on a routine Veterans' Committee assignment, so smug, so selfish, so closed-off. He didn't even realize it, but he could no longer feel. He had been more dead than the soldiers at Verdun.

And now, he was alive again -- confused, drained, exhausted -- but alive for the first time in years. The world was his again, full of new possibilities.

"We'll probably never see each other again," I told him. "Not in this world -- but, you will go on and do great things. You will make the recommendations to rehabilitate Verdun. It will fall to you to do that. And you won't be afraid anymore, not of anything, not of anyone."

I turned away and closed the car door, knowing that it would be exactly as I said it would.

My advice? Don't go looking for Camelot. Be Camelot. Be that charmed country. Be that blessed space in the midst of ugliness.

Open your heart, and you'll open your eyes and ears, and the true mystery of life will come pouring back into you, surprising, alarming, painful....all those things, and more. Much more. Thrilling, humbling, rewarding, healing.... and still more. Love will come and peace will stay. You won't live in fear anymore. And the world will no longer be grey. Your heart will no longer be deadened.

Granna

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