

The Hovan Narratives Newsletter

#6 - January 1, 2026

Christopher Iolaire



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Welcome to the sixth edition of The Hovan Narratives Newsletter!

Forestton

*A man, haunted by the reoccurring nightmare of the loss of his wife,
attempts to escape the anguish with a change of scenery.*

The wizard, using his magic, moves to Earth.

Someone followed. Or preceded him?

Whichever, they do not want him on the planet.

Or alive!

The feeling is mutual.

*Dangers that he is uniquely positioned to confront threaten him at home
and on Earth.*

*This good man, capable of violence, must protect this magically vulnerable
planet.*

Someone has to.

So much for escaping the memories.

Welcome to the sixth edition of The Hovan Narratives Newsletter.

I told you in the last edition of the newsletter that I had finished the last edit and was done!

Well...

The proofreader, Lisa Gilliam, returned the manuscript. She corrected a handful of typos and punctuation mistakes, but also alerted me to a change in the pattern of capitalizing titles. I followed her suggestions and made the changes so that it is consistent throughout the novel. Repeatedly rereading the novel while working on changes causes me to sometimes read what I expect to be typed instead of what is actually written.

Stephen Moore of Condor Publishing was the copyeditor for the novel. He is an established author and had valuable suggestions. He also offered to look at the cover that I had designed. It is a rule in writing that the author should not make his or her own cover. One, I don't have the experience with either cover design or graphic arts. Two, the job of the cover is to sell the book. Writers get concerned about the details. Full disclosure. I liked the cover that I developed! I have shown it to several of you. But Stephen convinced me that Condor Publishing could do better. I hired them! Toulla Corti of Condor Publishing did the design work. The cover that she came up with is amazing. Everyone I showed her design to liked hers better than mine. I mean everyone! That made the decision easy. I am not ready to reveal the cover yet. Perhaps I will in next month's newsletter.

Then, another editor joined the team. One that I was not expecting. Fantasy is not her genre. My wife did not want to read the novel until it was done. I told her I had finished, and she said, "Okay, I'll read it now." She had not gotten very far into it when I heard, "Can I make a suggestion?" Having a set of eyes from outside the genre is proving to be very helpful. In an annoying, I thought I was done, kind of way. So, I put the formatter on hold to provide me with time to address her concerns.

I am still learning the business side of publishing. The plan is still to self publish. The launch date is yet to be decided. Spring is the best I can suggest now. Perhaps that is poetic, for it is the start of the growing season.

Also, I continue to build an email list and an Instagram following. Join me on Goodreads.com as well. If you wish to help, please spread the word and repost. You can find me on Facebook at Christopher Iolaire and on Instagram at @christopher_iolaire.

Now, the next scene from the book. The scenes in the previous editions of the newsletter are from the opening of the book. The first three scenes occurred in Boston. In the fourth newsletter, Julian left Boston and drove to the lodge in the Berkshires. This scene picks up there. If you wish to read the previous excerpts, then click on past newsletters at Christopheriolaire.com.

Take care,

Chris Iolaire



Julian exchanged thrusts and parries with Sanlar in a stylized sparring drill. They each held dull practice knives. Julian recognized that Sanlar, the master, was going at a speed that Julian could handle, but still challenged him. Practicing in the large basement, Sanlar had turned off his disguise magic. Julian preferred seeing the elf without the magic. The Hispanic man persona that Sanlar adopted when visible to others never seemed right to

Julian. Perhaps because he was comfortable with elves and knew Sanlar for what he was.

Sanlar's knife grazed Julian's forearm. "Too slow," instructed Sanlar.

Julian thought that Sanlar's accent did not sound so strong when he spoke in Dahican. His momentary loss of focus caused him to get touched by the knife again.

"Move off line."

Julian focused and moved through the rest of the exercise successfully.

"You seem out of practice. Your protector should challenge you more."

Julian answered in Dahican. "The next time I see her, I will not tell her that." Julian hoped his touch of humor would end Sanlar's train of thought.

"Her place is by your side. She should keep your training intense if she allows you to travel without her."

"I am in no danger here." Julian spoke without humor, but stated what seemed to be an obvious fact, wanting to end the elf's criticism of his absent protector. "No need for her to follow me to a place where she does not know the language or customs."

"None of us knew the language or customs when we came. If she is your protector, she should learn and be with you. And not let your training lapse. That is her job!"

"Sanlar, please do not speak ill of my protector. She would be here if I asked. There is nothing for her to defend me from here. She better serves me and Forestton by helping to deal with the cre'tlen annoyance in western Forestton."

Julian noted Sanlar raising his hand in a truce. "Miserable little creatures. Cre'tlen are an annoyance by just existing. But hopefully, nothing more."

Sanlar handed Julian a curved wooden sword. "Mind your footwork."

Sanlar drove Julian off the practice mat several times. "At least your sword work is no worse."

Noting the sarcasm in Sanlar's comment, Julian responded in kind. "Thank you, Master."

"I suppose if your protector is in western Forestton and you were in Boston, you did not train with her this week."

"No."

Sanlar collected the swords, hanging them on holders on the wall. He took down two short staffs and tossed one to Julian. "You train with her regularly, do you not?"

Julian hesitated to answer, not wanting to continue this conversation or to lie. "I practice what I need."

Sanlar twirled the staff in one hand, warming up his wrists. He switched hands. "I do not approve of your practice schedule. From your tone, I assume she does not either. If you avoid your home because of the memories of your wife, then bring your protector here. We can train together."

Sanlar moved his staff into the ready position.

Julian mirrored him, but did not respond to Sanlar's suggestion.

Sanlar pointed his staff at Julian. "Your protector is not here because you do not want her here. You are avoiding her too. Instead, you have her chasing cre'tlen in the snow."

Sanlar's conclusions upset Julian, mainly because they were too accurate.

Sanlar circled around Julian on the mat. "Staff is your weapon of choice. Impress me."

Irritated, Julian answered, "My weapon of choice only when I choose a weapon."

"Sometimes, that choice is made for you."

And Sanlar attacked.

Julian met Sanlar's attack and countered. After five rounds, each had won once and sparred to a draw three times.

"Very good. At least you practice staff."

Sanlar hung both staffs back on the wall. "You cannot hide from your memories, my friend. Stop trying. Work hard to make new ones."

Sanlar headed for the stairs. "I will send Racine down. Give him his magic lesson while I shower and cook dinner."

Julian laid out two floor pillows a few body lengths apart. He sat on one cross legged with his arms resting on his knees. He closed his eyes.

Now we enter my realm. My expertise. I am the master here.

He opened his eyes when he heard footsteps coming down the stairs. Julian nodded to Racine, who sat on the other floor pillow.

Julian made a slight hand gesture, nothing more than a roll of his hand. Reaching out with his mind, he addressed the elf sitting across from him.

"Welcome, Lord Racine. Am I being clearly received?"

"Yes, Lord Wizard. Am I?"

"Yes. Excellent. It has been some time since we attempted mental contact. I am glad that we have maintained our link. With your permission, I would like to contact you after I return to Forestton. To test if we can contact over that great distance."

"I would think that we can. It would be a gift to have you assess my magic more frequently, even though nothing replaces one on one training with a wizard."

"My plan is to train offensive magic tomorrow, defense today. 'Defense prepared before opponent engaged' to quote my teacher. Does my agenda meet with your approval, Lord Racine?"

"Yes. And please, just Racine. I have long since given up the title."

"You are, and will remain, the firstborn child of a duke. Still, I will honor your request."

"I would like to start with you evaluating my ability to move three plus myself by magic."

"Allow me to stay in your mind as you weave the spell to move by magic. I will assess your strength."

With his left hand, Julian made a quick, almost imperceptible motion. Julian watched Racine begin hand motions, actions to focus the mind. He observed the outline of the magic Racine was building.

The elf held his left hand as a vertical blade as he built a sphere of magic around it. The soft glow expanded on three sides like a barely visible, inflating, but lopsided balloon.

Satisfied with the structure of the magic, Julian closed his eyes and moved his focus inside Racine's mind to judge its power. He then left the elf's mind, opened his eyes, and spoke aloud.

"Excellent, Racine. The structure and the power are more than enough to transport three plus yourself. Just be ready for the extra strain when you execute the magic."

Julian stood. "Time to practice defensive magic."

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