

Episode One – The Gathering

November 1997

Joshua, an exiled Lord of Chaos, resides in Shadow, far from Amber or The Courts, where he is known as a powerful and reclusive sorcerer, and not one to be troubled lightly. His quiet life is disturbed, when the people of a village, near where he resides, approach him over some troubling activities and sounds that have been emanating from a nearby castle. The locals explain how a feeling of dread and fear has been emanating from the castle. Screams can be heard, and the lord of the castle has not been seen for many days. Joshua decides to investigate, although he expects to find nothing of real interest. Approaching the castle, his innate insights quickly discover threads of power reaching across shadow, and that whatever is happening within the castle is merely the consequence of events happening elsewhere in Shadow. Intrigued, he tracks the disturbance to a Shadow called Malkeeva, where he observes an army approaching a castle, which is exceptionally similar as the one that exists near his home. The army clearly has murderous intent. But Joshua is not alone when he arrives on the hillside.

Kyle, the son of Princess Fiona of Amber, is enjoying a quiet day in his personal Shadow (which needs a name!), when he is contacted by his mother Fiona. She hurriedly explains that he must return to Amber and attend King Random, as she was just contacted by the King herself. She explains that she does not have time to help Random herself, due to some pressing concerns (which she does not elaborate on). So, Fiona delegates to Kyle, to give whatever aid is necessary to the King. Fiona briefly explains that Amber has a visitor from The Courts of Chaos, a petite and pretty woman called Corin, and that King Random wants one of the more magically minded members of the family to “take care” of her and understand what she wants, and also that the King has had news of trouble in Shadow, that he needs investigating.

In Amber, King Random informs Kyle of the problems in Shadow involving an army from The Courts of Chaos. Nothing more is known, other than the mere presence of the army may be in breach of treaties signed after the Patternfall War, the army having invaded a Shadow, to which it is now laying waste. The Shadow, Malkeeva, is just on the Amber side of the half way point between the two poles of Reality, and whilst that is still far away, it is way too close to Amber for the King’s liking. Random orders Kyle to investigate this issue, but before he leaves, Kyle should stop off at the guest quarters and interview the young lady from The Courts, Corin, who arrived that morning. Random fears that her presence and the problem in Malkeeva are connected and would rather she be removed from Amber as quickly as possible. Apparently, she has questions about Amber, but Random tells Kyle to keep his cards close to his chest and try not to give away too many family secrets. Random makes it clear that Corin is Kyle’s responsibility whilst she is in Amber, and he must discover who she is and what she wants. Random also sends Caine with Kyle

as “moral support” and because Caine has been to Malkeeva briefly already, and given Caine’s Trump sensitivity, he can share an impression of the Shadow to allow Kyle to draw a quick Sketch Trump of the place, to cut travel time to a minimum.

Corin is a visitor from The Courts of Chaos, and knows she is related, in some way, to the Amber Royal family, but she does not know to whom. She has travelled to Amber, not only to visit that great place, but importantly to try and find out who her most direct relation is. Kyle and Caine meet with Corin and exchange a few words, and Kyle thinking to kill two birds with one stone, “invites” Corin to journey with them to Malkeeva, therefore removing her from Amber, and allowing them to talk. Kyle draws a Sketch Trump of Malkeeva and they all Trump through.

Kyle, Caine and Corin arrive on a hillside in Malkeeva overlooking a valley, where a squat castle stands, and where an army approaches from the south. Moments after arriving, and before they can even exchange a commentary between themselves about the purpose of the army, a horse mounted man (Joshua) steps through shadow, having drawn himself through shadow by his Logrus Tendrils. Tensions rise as both sides evaluate the other. In the exchange of words that follows, it is clear to both sides that neither knows why the army is present, nor who resides in the castle. Caine makes his distrust of the newly arrived Chaos Lord plain, whilst Kyle is more reserved.

Kyle knows what he must do, and keeps Caine on track, for it is clear something with “power” is in the castle and they are building up to something big, almost certainly as part of some kind of “ritual power letting”, which is crossing Shadow due to its significant power. It seems logical that the presence of the army is probably the reason. As the army arrives (which is now recognisably from Chaos), the power of the ritual is sending increasingly powerful ripples across Shadow. Joshua and Kyle’s group try to ply each other for more information as to what they are doing here, but both sides remain cagey and not much is discovered, other than both sides are “real” people with real power, and they are therefore cautious of each other.

While Joshua faces off with Kyle and Caine, Corin uses the Logrus (which Joshua notices) to see into the castle and follow the streams of power, emanating from below ground where the ritual is being conducted, to their source. Amazingly to Corin, the woman who is conducting the ritual, gleans that something is wrong as Corin’s Logrus Tendrils enter the room. She suspends her chanting, and rushes from the depths, to the outer castle walls, furiously issuing orders.

From the opposite side of the castle to which the army approaches, the gates open and a horseman rushes from the castle towards the PCs. Arriving, the messenger respectfully

invites the PCs to join his Lady within the castle walls, where they can talk safely. Kyle and Caine accept, taking Corin with them. Joshua delays, and instead he reaches into his saddle bags, pulling out a banner. He forms a simple pole in his hands, attaches the banner and unfurls it as he spurs his horse down the hillside. The banner is obviously of Chaos, but nothing more about it can be deduced by Kyle and Caine. Joshua canters his steed towards the army from Chaos.

A wave of shouts ripples across the Chaos army, with no small amount of fear and dread, as Joshua approaches. Joshua demands the army commander attends him to explain himself. The commander comes forth and explains that the reason for the impending battle is because a Lord from Malkeeva, far to the south, gave a terrible insult to the army commander (a Lord of Chaos, though a minor one) in times gone by, and now the Chaos army is here to punish the whole of this presumptuous Shadow. The commander is clearly very uncomfortable at Joshua's presence, but does not budge when ordered to withdraw by Joshua. In a moment of indecision, the commander's bravado gets the better of him, and he orders his forces to attack Joshua and then the castle. Joshua instantly teleports himself to the other side of the castle, high in the air, while his horse transforms into a huge black dragon. The dragon starts hammering the nearby troops, inflicting terrible damage to the Chaos army, and sending many fleeing. Joshua calls his steed off as the Chaosian's gather themselves and prepare a proper retaliation. It flies to join Joshua, who mounts it. But then something magical is released from the army of Chaos, a shudder runs through the dragon and its wings seize up, causing it to plummet to the ground. The dragon hits the ground hard, wounding it badly. Joshua, who flies free moments before impact, gathers his power and teleports him and his steed to a different Shadow to escape further retaliation from the Chaos army, and to find somewhere, where the badly injured dragon can be treated quickly.

Kyle, Corin and Caine are taken within the castle and waiting for them is a beautiful woman, the Lady Alesha, who they quickly discover, with their various powers, has the Blood of Amber within her! She explains how she is in the process of summoning the "Saviour", who she says will rid their land of the Chaos army outside. She has many followers and clearly has power herself, so rather than risk an unnecessary confrontation Kyle does not intervene in the completion of the ritual, but the three PCs stand vigilant just in case they do need to step in.

The huge gathering of power eventually is released and the ritual is completed. With a huge flash of light, and a burst of energy and acrid smoke, a figure appears lying on the dais around which the ritual was taking place. The figure is naked and the ground around him emanates steam and smoke. Kyle and Corin immediately see, through their enhanced sight, the figure **IS** power, and yet is not of either Amber or Chaos. Viewing him through

the lens of the Logrus or the Pattern, his power is huge and forms around his body as the purest and most brilliant of white fires, covering his body completely in small dancing flames, obscuring all other features.

The PCs also see that the Shadow has a source of power within it also, which is what has helped fuel Alesha's ritual. The material making up the dais is a refined form of the rock of which the land is mostly made. On closer inspection the PCs see that fine metallic filaments pervade the material, and almost all matter in this Shadow, quite unlike anything they have seen before. Alesha explains that in small pieces the material is pitiful, but in huge chunks, and with the necessary knowledge and preparation, its power multiplies and becomes huge. The PCs decide to take back a chest full of the refined material back to Amber with them, when they leave, just in case its properties work across shadows and closer to the poles of Reality. It is clear that the ritual utilises the innate power of this material, and the resulting outpouring of energy was drawn, like a lodestone to True Power (i.e.: a True Reality), which caused The Saviour to appear. It also seems clear that it did not, therefore, reach out to either The Pattern or The Logrus, as The Saviour's power is of neither.

Outside the Chaos army has begun its attack on the castle, and the defenders are losing badly. Alesha becomes desperate to awaken The Saviour, but he will not wake. Corin uses the touch of the Logrus to try and awaken The Saviour, and it does, although Corin gets mentally stung in the process. Alesha is overjoyed and starts questioning The Saviour furiously about what his plans are to defeat the enemy without. The Saviour remembers nothing before his awakening, not even his name. Alesha names him William, after a famous and powerful Saint who once lived in this land. After much pleading from Alesha he agrees to look upon the battle and see what he can do. The other PCs simply let events unfold. Once outside and standing on the castle walls, it becomes clear that the castle must fall soon, and given it is the home of an Amberite, unknown or otherwise, the PCs also intervene, and with their combined might the tide turns and the army is held at bay, but not wholly defeated. As the battle looks like it is concluding, with the near routing of Chaos, Corin is struck by visions of a different conflict, where everything is tinted green, a line of black scars the landscape upon which a different battle is fought. But the vision is only momentary.

Seeing the day is lost, the sorcerous servants of the Lord of Chaos commanding the army, decide to take it out in a very final manner on the whole Shadow at once, and they call upon Primal Chaos! The army is still large enough so the PCs realise they have little chance of battling their way to the sorcerers to prevent this. Nevertheless, it does seem to take longer than usual to summon the Primal Chaos, and once summoned, it seems to take longer for Primal Chaos to eat away at the land. The land itself, having some power, seems to be

resisting the destruction. But nothing can stand for long in the way of Primal Chaos, once released. Corin attempts something remarkable and tries to split the Shadow into two. Pouring in her own power, and her peerless control of Prime Sorcery she threads her magic and Logrus power into the ethereal substance of the Shadow and rends it, splitting it off the part of the Shadow the castle is in, off into an identical Shadow, but away from the destruction being wrought by Primal Chaos, and at the same time killing most of the Chaos sorcerers who brought the destruction of Chaos to the Shadow.

With the castle, and with most of the Shadow now safer, the PCs decide that it is time to return to Amber, and that they must take Alesha and William with them. Alesha, however, has no intention of leaving, explaining how she needs to look after her people, guard against another possible attack, and wait for the return of her brother, Annael, who has been gone too long. The PCs however are having no discussions about their course of action, and being completely at their mercy, Alesha is taken, against her will, back to Amber. Kyle realises that having found her, to not take her back to Random would not be looked upon well. Before they leave, Joshua returns with his steed (now a horse again), and asks to be allowed to accompany the Amberites back to Amber. Kyle, thinking it would be best to keep this powerful unknown being of Chaos close by, rather than out doing his own thing, agrees. Kyle Trumps them all back to Castle Amber.

Upon their return Kyle seeks a quiet word with Caine, and suggests that he “keeps an eye” on Joshua, whilst Kyle finds out as much about William as possible. Kyle decides to see what William is capable of. Certainly, he acquitted himself well in the defence of the castle, so Kyle thinks that seeing what William is capable of physically, against some difficult opponents, would be a start. All the PCs decide to watch this, for Joshua has not had the chance to observe William in detail yet, and they are all interested in where William has come from, and what he represents.

Kyle gathers a few Castle guards and sets up a skill at arms test for William. It becomes apparent, very quickly, that William is more than a match for any of the castle guards, and that they are not posing any issue for him at all. Since Joshua is watching too and is therefore staying close by, Caine decides that it is time William faced a proper opponent, obviously thinking that William will be no match for a Prince of Amber. Unfortunately, for Caine, William shifts up several gears, and it becomes clear, after an initial period of judging the skill of Caine, that William’s skill is indeed a match for those of Amber. The fight is hard on them both, but William clearly has the advantage, and overbears Caine several times, halting the fight each time, before a grim-faced Caine calls halt, trying to conceal his wonder at William’s skill at arms, and his stamina. During the melee, Gerard joins the group, and observes the fight with a critical eye. After Caine brings his fight to an end, Gerard steps forward and requests a weaponless bout with William. William gladly

agrees, not knowing who Gerard is or what he is capable of, and Kyle almost intervenes, not wanting to see William come to any harm...yet. William, bristling with confidence after his defeat of Caine, vigorously attacks Gerard. But Gerard has been watching how William moves and the first few minutes of the melee are clearly Gerard's, but he is unable to get a real grip on William. Realising that Gerard poses a much greater obstacle than Caine, William becomes more cautious. The combat lasts a long time. Gerard is clearly strong, but not so much so that he is able to "break" William. William is clearly faster, with more stamina and more basic skill in combat, and after a quarter of an hour of punches, kicks, throws and wrestling, Gerard calls a halt to the fight, with both men near exhaustion, obviously evenly matched, and finishing the fight with a firm arm clasp, both showing mutual respect for the other.

Given William has shown himself to be the match for two Amberites who are amongst the most deadly and powerful in all Reality, Kyle realises that they simply MUST get to the bottom of who and what William is, even more so than before. Wanting options, Kyle uses his extreme Trump ability to do a quick Trump roll-call of those in Castle Amber, hoping that Benedict is present. But Benedict is not in Castle Amber for the next few weeks, as he is on a diplomatic mission in nearby Shadow. William seems friendly enough, so Kyle does not bother to suggest Benedict returns to Amber quite yet. Taking William to some private quarters, neither Kyle, nor Corin (who he allows to examine William too) can determine much else about William, although they are able to tap into William's innate power, which seems to supercharge themselves, but causing obvious and significant harm to William himself, and which also makes it extremely difficult for them to control the power once taken from William. So much so that they find it difficult to see how useful this might be unless they can learn control of it somehow. Given his obvious power, Kyle decides to keep William close, always. Kyle does refuse to give permission to Joshua to investigate William's person, a tetchy conversation, during which in a fit of pique, Joshua reveals that he is in fact the brother of Oberon, and that it would be proper if his nephew (Caine) and Grand-nephew might show a little more respect, or something like that.

The PCs settle into Castle Amber, and are given rooms to stay in. Alesha is given a room to, but put under guard. Caine makes it clear that he will be keeping an eye on Joshua, to which Joshua betrays no reaction. And Joshua, with circumstances having resulted in his arrival in Amber, decides he must discover more about The Pattern his father scribed. Using his Logrus sorcery to render himself invisible, he sneaks from his rooms and cautiously searches the Castle. Eventually he is drawn to the depths, and finds the room where the Pattern resides. Moving to its beginning he raises a foot to try and begin walking it, but as he presses his foot down, it seems an invisible barrier prevents him from starting The Pattern. Bringing up his Logrus sight he notices Logrus Tendrils within the room, and they are not his.

Having returned to her room, Corin asks for a hot bath to be run, and she relaxes into it. With extreme caution, she sends her Logrus Tendrils out into the Castle to observe and discover. Sending them down, and given her sensitivity to Real Power, her tendrils find the Pattern quickly. She gently begins to probe the ground around the Pattern, but is not foolish enough to touch it.

In the Pattern room Joshua feels a build-up of energies, clearly emanating from the Pattern itself and he weaves some protective spells about himself. Joshua hears a deep, vibrating voice exclaim 'Begone Scion of Chaos', so he begins to back away from the Pattern. At the same time Corin has a split-second moment of prescience, but is unable to prepare anything before a metaphorical Pattern hand smashes down upon her, shattering the porcelain bath, and knocking her unconscious. In the Pattern room, Joshua sees the Logrus tendrils wink out of existence, and knowing of only one other in the castle capable of sending out such tendrils, he rushes to Corin's room.

Elsewhere, the shudders sent through the castle from the Pattern attack on Corin are noticed. Kyle, unaware of what has happened, but being more suspicious of Joshua than anyone else, and having spent the last couple of hours refining a permeant Trump of Joshua, attempts Trump contact. Joshua blocks the Trump contact, but Kyle, being possibly the most powerful mind within the family of Amber, save his mother Fiona, tries to force the issue ("Your Trump contact is blocked" ... "OK, I'll force it" ... "Yeah [confidently], you're still blocked"). But Kyle gets nowhere. Kyle can tell that Joshua is moving, and quickly, but can ascertain nothing more. But before Kyle gives up, to go and look what is going on himself, Joshua dodges in to a dark room, and accepts the contact. Kyle makes demands of Joshua, wanting to know where he is, where he is going and what he is doing. Joshua is not forthcoming with any meaningful answers, and Kyle, disgusted, breaks Trump contact.

Free from the Trump contact, Joshua hurries to Corin's room, getting there well ahead of the Amberites, as they are checking all sorts of things out, as to the reason behind the shudder that passed through the castle. Joshua finds Corin, naked and battered, amongst the ruin of her bath. He picks her up, dries her, puts her to bed and sits quietly in a chair next to her bed, and waits. Shortly after, Joshua hears running steps outside, which stop at Corin's door and Kyle and Gerard enter the room unannounced, Gerard with his blade drawn. Kyle and Joshua have words, and a belligerent Joshua comes close to having Gerard lay hands on him, but Kyle calms the situation down, realising that the shudder must have resulted from something Corin had been involved in. He clearly just does not like the fact that Joshua was here first, and suspects that only Joshua knows what really happened.

The next morning, the PCs breakfast is disturbed by a flurry of activity at the Castle gates. Word comes that a man has entered the city, that he has killed many city guards and is dragging their bodies behind him through the streets, and is now shouting outside the closed castle gates, making unintelligible demands.

The PCs gather on the castle wall above the gate. The man has buried a large hook, attached to a rope, into a dozen or so city guards, and has dragged them through the streets from the city gates, leaving a trail of blood behind him. One of the guards may even still be alive and groaning. So, the man is clearly very, very strong. He gestures at the gates and the castle walls, and is shouting words to the effect of wanting his sister back.

The PCs surmise this must be Annael, brother to Alesha. And he clearly has power over Shadow, to have arrived in Amber unaided. Caine bellows back saying how Alesha will not be returned, whilst Kyle studies Annael, and given his extreme Trump ability, quickly creates a Sketch Trump of the man. When the Trump is complete Kyle wastes no time in attempting Trump contact to engage Annael in a mental combat and paralyse him. Annael, surprised at first, hurriedly attempts to block the contact, and ends up having to use a Power Word to disrupt the contact, showing that Annael is not just a lost child of Amber who has Pattern Imprint, but has other powers too.

Recovering from the Power Word, Annael notices something high above, and screams for his sister to be released. The PCs then notice Alesha on the Walls, higher up, and with her (holding her arm) is Dworkin (not seen since the end of Patternfall). Alesha is desperately attempting to free herself from Dworkin's iron grip, but cannot. Thinking to help, and having heard enough, William jumps to the ground from the castle walls, landing lightly, and strides towards Annael. Kyle, seeing an opportunity, quickly create a Sketch Trump of William. Unprepared for the contact, William cannot stop the Trump contact, and Kyle seizes control of William's mind and body, forcing him to draw a blade and attack Annael, even though Annael has not yet drawn his blade. But being under the control of someone who is not skilled in combat, even though the body is willing, William is somewhat slower than he would otherwise have been. It becomes clear that William is no match for Annael, who is obviously a very, very capable swordsman. Annael, wanting no prisoners, deftly deflects an attack and plunges his blade into William's belly, right up to the hilt, and the tears it up and outwards, dropping William like a stone.

The rest of the PCs now break into action. Caine rushes to the gates with Gerard, getting them open and rushing towards Annael. Kyle, feeling his Trump of Annael still has some juice, combines his will with a willing Corin, and a vaguely interested Joshua, and forces Trump contact on Annael. With Kyles exception mastery of the Trump and the additional power lent to the effort by Corin and Joshua, the last vestiges of the Trump disrupting

Power Word that Annael initially employed are swept away, even as Annael pulls out a Trump himself. Annael is held in place, unable to employ his escape route, and Kyle reaches out through the Trump of Annael to nullify the Trump in Annael's hand. But there is a flash of power, and a small explosion of green energy, disrupting Kyle's contact, and allowing Annael to escape through his Trump, moments before Gerard was about to lay hands on him.

Kyle rushes down to William, and he immediately Trumps William to the urgent high-tech medical care his personal Shadow, leaving the other PCs in Amber.