

Episode Seven – The Gods Battle

29th April 2018

The party looked down upon a shadow valley, watching a war between two great powers. The Serpent (which must have approached 100ft long, with a body that was over 6 feet thick, and probably weighing at least 2.5 tons), and the Black Unicorn, are laying waste to the shadow as they battle. The Black Unicorn has a speed and swiftness that is incongruous with its size, it being larger and more muscled than any other horse the watchers have ever seen. The Black Unicorn uses its speed and strength well, and spears the Serpent with its Alicorn, inflicting grievous wounds. But the Serpent's power too is great, and being of such great stature, age and power itself, despite its wounds, it takes mastery of the combat, hammering its tail onto the Black Unicorn, bashing the Black Unicorn from its feet; and sinking its lance-like fangs into the horse's hind quarters. Wounded by fang and tail, the Black Unicorn is clearly losing the battle.

Kyle draws a sketch trump of the Black Unicorn, possibly in an effort to give it a way out of the combat, but on trying to use it, it has no effect, indeed no contact at all seems to be made. He then tries to Trump Corwin but cannot establish a good link. All Kyle can pick up is that Corwin is definitely at his own Primal Pattern. Kyle brings together his Trump of the Black Unicorn and Corwin, trying to link the two, but to no effect. Failing to get much success with his Trumps, Kyle turns off Trumps in the locale.

After communing with The Logrus, Corin sends out her supreme Logrus power to form a barrier between the combatants, and knowing she faces two of the primal powers of reality, she seeks aid from William, recalling that William's power can be tapped, or transferred to others. William willingly aids her, grasping her arms and flooding her with everything he has. Corin's feels the elation that comes with near "ultimate" power and her Logrus power builds to extreme levels. She interposes her power between the two primal beings and successfully forces them apart.

The Black Unicorn takes this opportunity to limp away, clearly beaten and looking to escape, Corin's wall gives it exactly the opportunity to do just that. The Serpent, momentarily confused, then seems to understand what has happened, and in a flash, it raises and slams its tail down on the wall, splitting it asunder. Corin suffers an immense feedback of power, but with the gates of power still open with William, it floods directly into William and Corin escapes the worse of the feedback. William is blasted off his feet, his hands and arms badly burnt.

Silence washes across the scene, with the only sounds being the whistling wind, the distant clip-clop of hooves and the heavy breathing of the enormous Serpent, now near collapsed at the bottom of the valley.

Corin, having avoided much of the damage of the energy feedback, advances on the Serpent, who opens its eye as she approaches. Kyle and Bannoq (from a distance), and Corin up close, try to get the Serpent to understand how childish this fight is, but the Serpent is having none of it and demands that it be given the Unicorn. The Serpent rants, letting slip a host of information unknown to the party, and possibly unknown to almost all in reality. In its fury the Serpent tells how only it can save the Unicorn, and that only it can heal the Unicorn.

Kyle, turning Trumps back on, contacts Benedict and appraises him of events. Benedict warns against any dealing with the Serpent and advises following the Black Unicorn to find out more about it and Corwin.

In her conversation with the Serpent, Corin maintains the stance that the war must end. The Serpent then fumes how it's child's plans are not opaque to it, and that it is its own power that formed The Logrus, its own power that was used to form The Pattern of Amber and that of Corwin. That its own power pervades all the substance and sinews of all reality, and that it will not be denied! It also remarks that should the Unicorn die, other than it holding the party and Amber responsible, then the vaults that hold back dark and ancient powers will begin to crumble, and that none will survive the release of such ancient powers. Exasperated Corin walks off into Shadow and the Serpent slithers off too, still wounded and very angry.

Joshua, unconvinced by the Serpents protestations of wanting to help the Unicorn, quietly leaves and starts pulling himself through shadow with his Logrus power. He heads for Terra Prime, making himself unseen along the way. Arriving at the medical facility that hosts the Unicorn, Random and Gerard, Joshua enters the room where the Unicorn is being monitored. Equally unconvinced that the Unicorn is being helped on Terra Prime as it would be with the Serpent, Joshua forces his mind upon the nearby medical staff. He re-writes their memories to show that the Unicorn got up of its own accord, apparently healed or recovered enough to move under its own steam, and leaves. Additionally, he implants the memories that Kyle congratulated the staff for their efforts. Joshua then shifts Shadow, leaving Terra Prime behind, and heading of Ygg, the midway point between Order and Chaos, Amber and the Courts.

Agreeing with Benedict's advice Kyle follows the Black Unicorn but keeps his distance. Clearly the Black Unicorn is going to Corwin's Primal Pattern, and upon arriving Kyle and William hide.

Meanwhile Bannoq evaluates the wreckage of the battle of the powers. Both Black Unicorn and Serpent blood is strewn across the landscape. He looks through shadow for a container that might hold the Serpents bubbling blood. He finds what he hopes will do the job, but upon contact with the Serpents blood, the container itself dissolves to nothing. The Black Unicorn's blood, however, has hardened to stone, and is easily collected, so Bannoq takes samples and stores them safely.

Kyle Trumps Corin and Bannoq and requests their aid as they arrive at Corwin's Pattern, and they come to him, and Corin turns them all invisible. Corin speculates about the nature of Bennu and give the image she saw of a phoenix like bird surrounding Bennu when she used her Logrus sight, that maybe Bennu is of the same order of magnitude as the Serpent and is represented by this fiery animal form.

They observe at first, seeing the Black Unicorn approach the edge of The Pattern, at the centre of which is a dome of shining light, almost too bright to look at. The Black Unicorn, still looking badly wounded, paws at the ground. A ripple in the side of the dome shines brightly and a being of seemingly pure energy exits the dome, floating 15 feet or so off the floor. As it approaches the end of the Pattern, it takes on more solid features, and it became obvious it was Corwin. Kyle Trumps Dworkin, getting through to a grumpy Dworkin, who is able to offer little help. The Black Unicorn backs away enough to allow Corwin to set his feet on the ground. Looking on the injured beast, Corwin extends his hand to rest it on the brow of the Black Unicorn, but Kyle chooses that moment to act.

Corin releases a spell that blasts Corwin away from the Black Unicorn, and onto his own Pattern, the Black Unicorn too is pushed towards The Pattern, but not onto it. Corwin does not appear to be affected by not traversing the Pattern properly. Corin lets off another spell to attack Corwin, to lesser effect, and it is clear Corwin has surrounded himself with a protective globe of energy. Corwin pulls Grayswandir and advances off his Pattern, hurling insults at the group. Kyle release a spell that shoots shards at Corwin, as he advances on the group. Most bounced harmlessly off Corwin's shield, but some hit the target, cutting Corwin, but no blood visibly drops onto his Pattern.

As Corwin advances beyond the collapsed Black Unicorn, William charges to the attack. Corwin, full of fury, raises Grayswandir as they engaged and brings it down upon William. William parries, but Grayswandir cleaves through William's blade, and William only narrowly avoids being hit himself, dodging at the last second. Corwin has William on the

back foot and unbalanced enough that his kick, aimed for William chest, lands, knocking him further back and out of sword range, and follows it up with words of power of such devastation, that they blast William through the air, and he lands hard, stunned.

Bannoq moves in front of Corwin's continued advance. Corwin's eyes narrow, as though he recognises something within Bannoq. Bannoq manages to narrowly avoid Corwin's initial attack and thinking he might continue to just avoid Corwin's blade, he continues to dodge, leaving his own Pattern blade sheathed, trusting instead to his great healing abilities. But Corwin is an exceptional swordsman, possibly secondly only to Benedict for many years, and such a play by Bannoq cannot last. Indeed, Corwin quickly scores his attack, thrusting Grayswandir through Bannoq's left upper arm. Pain floods through Bannoq's body, for Grayswandir, already a potent sword, is now the weapon embodiment of the power of a whole Primal Pattern.

Corin avoids the melee and approaches the near unconscious Black Unicorn, and lifts it with a telekinesis spell, and she lopes off through Shadow.

Kyle attempts more magic, but he was unable to move, and the Jewel of Judgement is pulsing rapidly. Kyle had been paralysed, possibly by Corwin, who probably has a more intimate knowledge of the Jewel than Kyle does. Panicking, Kyle desperately Trumps Benedict, informing him that Bannoq is in trouble, and using his extreme Trump power, he swaps places with Benedict. Benedict interposing himself between Bannoq and Corwin. Doubt entered Corwin's eyes immediately, and his advances stopped, but Kyle is not prepared to wait around, and he extends his Exalted Trump mastery power, and Trumps Bannoq, William and Benedict away, giving Corwin the rainbow bird as they leave.

Corin travels some distance in Shadow, but she does not get far before the Black Unicorn shrugs off her spell and stands before her. Despite still quivering in pain due to the combat with the Serpent, the Black Unicorn is clearly unimpressed with Corin's words and protestations for the need for peace and begins to leave. Corin allows the Black Unicorn to leave but follows her. After some time, Corin observes, from the safety of the treeline, the Black Unicorn meet up with a figure on a hill, obviously Corwin. Corwin reaches up and wraps his arms around the Black Unicorn's neck and they stand motionless for a time, but eventually Corwin leads the Black Unicorn off into Shadow.

Joshua arrives at Ygg, where Ygg attempts conversation, but *boring* Joshua was not interested. Joshua attempts Trump contact with Suhuy and gets it! When he realises who has called, Suhuy is very surprised to get the contact, but not that Joshua is alive, as rumours have started to rush around The Courts of Joshua's reappearance, after the defeat of the Chaos army on Malkeeva. Joshua offers Suhuy parley and asks Suhuy to join him at Ygg.

Suhuy agrees and steps through. Joshua explains recent events to Suhuy focusing on the summoned demon encounter and the intervention of a great power through that demon, and the urgency the Serpent has to take ownership of the Unicorn's ill form. Joshua and Suhuy discuss the possibility that some "Master" demon, of the same kind of nature as the Serpent and the Unicorn, has awoken and is calling all demon kind back to The Abyss. It is remarked that Joshua's demon has left, and Suhuy reveals that most demons in the Courts have too, and it is a matter of extreme worry for the High Lords of Chaos and their King (Joshua does not like the mention of King Swayvill's name). Suhuy remarks that although they are investigating, anything to do with The Abyss is fraught with peril, as to descend into it, is to court death. No one comes back unchanged, sometimes in horrible ways, and to spend too long in The Abyss means certain death due to the corrupting mark it leaves in the flesh, which no one in the Courts has ever been able to purge. Suhuy does remark that on the face of it, it seems like it would be a poor decision to allow the Serpent access to the Unicorn. He also remarks that whilst he has a great affection for Corin, she should be warned that The Church of the Serpent is not happy with her and is making all sorts of unpalatable noises about her betrayal of their god. Finally, they both agree to maintain open lines of communication. Suhuy then departs.

Kyle, Bannoq and William find themselves in an encampment of a small army (possibly 3-4 thousand), of man-sized, grim looking, thin limbed, hairless meercat like creatures. They are practicing with a variety of firearms and modern projectile weaponry. Julian is overseeing the encampment. All three set about learning what they can of the weapons. Bannoq and William quickly master them, and although Kyle can handle them easily enough, he is not a natural marksman.

Kyle takes this opportunity to try and contact his mother, Fiona, and with the greatest of efforts he gets through, but is unable to picture her fully. Great confusion reigns in her mind, and there is some kind of what can only be described as "duality" at work. What he can sense is that she is at the centre of Corwin's Pattern, probably making her his prisoner. Kyle wants to act, but he and Bannoq agree that Bannoq should try to enter the dome instead, leaving Kyle ready to pull him to safety, if needs be. But how to get through the dome? Bannoq cannot walk Corwin's pattern. Bannoq suggests he walk the Amber Pattern, after which he might be able to teleport himself to the centre of Corwin's Pattern, and with a little luck, be fast enough to get Fiona and Trump out to Kyle.

Kyle draws a sketch of The Pattern of Rebma, and Trumps them both through, and Bannoq walks The Pattern. Kyle trumps back to Julian's camp and opens up Trump contact with Bannoq, who himself then teleports. The teleport is successful, but rather than appearing at the centre of Corwin's Pattern, he finds himself on a platform, hovering some 15 feet or so above the Pattern. The dome itself is much, much bigger on the inside than it appears

to be from without. On the inside surface of the dome are dozens of windows into other worlds, at the level of the platform, that one might jump through from the platforms edge quite easily. Whether these are doorways into Shadow of the reality between Amber Pattern and the Logrus, or some new reality that has come into being due to Corwin's Pattern, is not clear.

The platform has a central column, off of which sprouts several seats. Two of them are occupied. One by Fiona, and the other by Corwin, but it is clear that this is not a real Corwin, and therefore it is probably his Pattern Ghost, created by his own Pattern. Tubes connect Fiona to the Ghost, and blood can clearly be seen passing slowing from Fiona to the Ghost, slow enough that Fiona can obviously keep replenishing her blood, but fast enough to keep her in a near permanent state of unconsciousness. She IS very pale.

Bannoq cuts the tubes immediately, and assesses the chairs and the occupants, who are both trapped to the chairs by metal wrist and ankle straps. Bannoq decides to chop away at the struts connecting Fiona's chain to the platform and the central column. The material is very tough, but Bannoq's Pattern blade eventually cuts through after 3-4 strikes per strut. As the chair falls to the floor, Bannoq and Kyle notice a shimmering at the edge of the platform, and Corwin steps through. He is completely surprised, and Bannoq is in no mood for a rematch given the need to rescue Fiona. Bannoq whips the chair and Fiona into his arms and Kyle pulls him out of the dome.....rainbow bird!!!!

With his mother in a bad way, Kyle immediately Trumps them all through to Terra Prime and hands her over to his medics. Bannoq asks them to analyse the chair and what its purpose was. They are eager to help, and finally Kyle learns of the disappearance of the Unicorn and the false memories that have been implanted in his people's minds. He observes the CCTV, and sees the strange looks his people take on, while the Unicorn disappear, and he fears intervention by someone he may well know. He also takes a look at the CCTV of Benedict's conversation with Annael and learns of the pact. This pact he relates to Bannoq. Bannoq hands his vials of solidified Unicorn blood to the scientists in Terra Prime and asks for them to be analysed. After walling his shadow off to everything he possibly can, he Trumps back to Julian's camp with Bannoq.

Meanwhile Joshua Trumps Corin and informs her of Suhuy's words and the danger that the Church of the Serpent may now pose. Corin is unimpressed and getting rather peevish with her elders, regardless of race or gender. They discuss what to do with the Unicorn and agree that a good course of action would be to find Dworkin and his Primal Pattern. Maybe there the Unicorn can be healed, or at least be as safe as anywhere in reality. But they have no way of getting to Amber's Primal Pattern, and no real knowledge of who

might be able to take them there. Firstly, they need to get to Amber, and then walk from there. All they know is that the Primal Pattern can be walked to from Kolvir.

Joshua draws a trump sketch of the docks of Amber, and they trump through. The city is in ruins, the populous clearly having been driven off. Joshua renders them invisible, as they see Blood Droids flying overhead, and they cannot afford to be spotted. They leave the city of Amber and make their way up the steep climb from the city at the base of Kolvir, up onto its forested, more sedate, mountain side. Realising that they now can go no further without aid from an Amberite, they judge that Benedict is the most likely to be someone who would have been to the Primal Pattern, so they trump him.

Benedict comes through to them on Kolvir. He listens to them, and is unhappy that Joshua has taken the Unicorn, and he asks them to return the Unicorn, but as the retaking of Amber is his first priority, his attempt is somewhat half-hearted. Nevertheless, the youthful and petulant Corin compares him to the Serpent, and denies him, telling him how untrustworthy he and his entire family is. Plus, Joshua points out that he has as much desire to see the Unicorn returned to her former glory, and more power to protect the beast than anyone else. Benedict agrees with Joshua and drops the subject. Sardonicly remarking that they probably wouldn't be much use in the retaking of Amber, Benedict returns to Julian's camp.

Corin and Joshua decide to join their power and try to trump Dworkin. After an initial delay they break through and see a somewhat annoyed Dworkin, sitting in his study near the Primal Pattern. Upon hearing that Corin and Joshua have the sickly Unicorn, Dworkin immediately brings them through. After a brief discussion, Dworkin agrees that this is the best place for the Unicorn, and he takes the beast from them and lays her on his bed. Corin shows Dworkin her hairy breasts, but Dworkin has seen nothing like it, and cannot help. They discuss the healing of Corwin. Dworkin warns them that taking Corwin down will be nigh on as difficult as an attack on Dworkin himself, that is to say, unbelievably difficult. Corwin's Pattern will not allow him to be killed and will defend him if an attempt was made. Dworkin sees no way of healing Corwin without an infusion of Chaos.

When Benedict returns to camp he calls his family together, Julian, Caine, Kyle and Bannoq. He outlines his plans to hell ride to nearby Amber (within the Golden Circle), and then Trump Kyle through. Kyle will then set up a Trump Gate and Trump back to the camp, where he will set up a second Trump Gate, so the army can flow quickly through to Amber. Kyle is to then Trump back to his own Shadow and setup a third Trump Gate, linked to the first two, so the injured can be sent through if necessary, and then link everyone using the power of his Exalted Trump, so they have complete communication. Julian will prepare a contingent of troops to go to the towers of Castle Amber, where they will set up anti-

aircraft guns. Caine will take a contingent to the Pattern room to secure it against the unlikely event of another attempt by the Droids to walk the Pattern. Bannoq will take a third contingent to the Castle courtyard, to secure the castle gates. All three teams will destroy any Droids they encounter. The three teams will attack once Benedict gives the signal, which he will do once the main, and most dangerous assault, has begun on the city gates, which will hopefully draw most of the Blood Droids away. Benedict draws Bannoq to one side and explains his deal with Annael, and that that is just the way things must be, for the family to find some peace from this misguided, dangerous fool.

Benedict then departs on Glemdenning (his mighty stripped stead), and hell-rides away. Once he arrives within the Golden Circle, he trumps Kyle and enacts his plan. The Trumps Gates are set up, the troops flow through, and they wait the signal to attack.