

Episode Five – Discovering The Phoenix

In Terra Prime, everyone is feeling numb, given the unthinkable has happened. Amber has fallen and is now in the hands of an enemy. Benedict quickly recovers, if indeed he was ever “stunned” and wasn’t just thinking. He demands to know from everyone, all their knowledge of Annael and these robots. The PCs explain all their dealings with Annael, including the odd green flashes of power that seem to help Annael when he is in need. Benedict, having observed the one when Random was stabbed, remarks that he has seen similar effects on Trebernaxus in certain religious ceremonies he has quietly observed. He orders this to be investigated and tells Joshua and Kyle to do this. He also wants the matter of William cleared up, and he orders Corin to do this. He also tells Kyle that the Jewel of Judgement is too great an artefact to risk falling into the hands of an enemy, so he is to risk nothing in his investigations of Trebernaxus. Benedict, now Amber is in other hands, can think of no place that it is safe to leave the Jewel, but he advises Kyle not to stay too long in one place with it, and not to wear it. During the discussion Joshua feels a Trump contact, which he blocks.

Checks are made on Random, Gerard and the Unicorn. The Unicorn is as weak as ever, and now fully unconscious, or sleeping, they cannot tell. Random's brain waves are stable, but he is still unconscious. Gerard is the same, but the medics say that his spine is crushed and he will be unable to walk, even if he regains consciousness. Benedict tells the PCs that he will concentrate on retaking Amber, and says he is going to investigate the priming substance in the bullets in Corwin's guns. He explains that he knows Corwin used some material from Avalon and that he will start searching there first. Once identified, he will find a way to enhance it and start production of it, and plan the recapture of Amber. Benedict leaves Terra Prime.

The PCs spend some time resting and recuperating, hoping that Random and Gerard will recover enough to talk at least. Over the next few days Kyle takes the opportunity to spy on Annael and Amber. The populous of Amber continue to live, as far as Kyle can tell, and he can see many, many more Droids have arrived, and they must number the best part of one hundred now. But Kyle notices that Annael is having trouble with his Droids. Then on one day a confrontation happens between Annael and his Droids in the throne room. The confrontation turns very bad and a combat ensues. Kyle quickly gathers the PCs and they Trump into the Throne Room. They manage to defeat the few Droids present and grab Annael, who has been badly wounded and Trump back to Terra Prime.

Back on Terra Prime, they set about questioning the wounded Annael, but he is fairly free with his information. He explains how long ago he dreamt of a technology that could be powered by the Blood of Amber. He did this with a view to creating robots that could work in Amber, for he really believed that this would give him the power to defeat the family of

Oberon, and particularly his nasty brothers Finndo and Osric, and the aloof Benedict. He wanted robots that were independent enough to adapt their fighting to the different Amberite warriors, so at the same time he developed General Artificial Intelligence and combined the two technologies. But the recent event seems to prove that this may have been a step too far, and several of the robots developed too much, too fast and are now independent of his control.

Setting aside, for a moment, the fact that Annael knows the three oldest brothers of Amber and fearful of what was now happening in Amber, the PCs spy on Amber through Trumps. They observe the Blood Droids in the Throne room, with one of the Droids standing on the remains of the throne. They are stock still, but then begin to move. It becomes clear that one of them is heading for the Pattern. Kyle hurriedly sketches a Trump of the Pattern and opens it up for all to see. The Droid approaches the start. The PCs decide they need to act as they fear what is about to happen, and they Trump through to the Pattern room en masse, but the Droid has already started to walk the Pattern, and it is not being destroyed! The PCs, knowing that something that leaves the Pattern before completion is always destroyed, start hurling things at the Droid and trying to prevent its progress. They indeed manage to topple it from the web, and the Droid is destroyed by the unforgiving Pattern. The PCs flee again as they hear re-enforcements arriving.

The implications of what the Blood Droid was attempting is unknown to the PCs but they fear the worst. Spying again on the Pattern room, they see several Droids looking around, then they seem to look at each other, possibly in silent communion. They then leave the Pattern room, and bring the roof of the cavern down at the entrance of the underground hall, sealing it off. At least, the PCs think, the Droid must believe the Pattern destroyed their fellow Droid, and that another attempt will clearly not be attempted.

The PCs decide that with that danger over, they should follow the orders Benedict issued. But Kyle begs another day or two to see what progress the injured make, and if there is no improvement, then they will all leave. That night, Kyle, knowing it will be a full moon above Amber, draws a Trump of the Pattern Room at Tir-na Nog'th. As the moon rises, he Trumps in, and starts to walk the Pattern. Once at its centre he raises the Jewel of Judgement to his eye and walks the Pattern within, attuning himself to the Jewel. He then uses the power of the Pattern to transport himself back to his Shadow.

The next day Kyle and Joshua depart for Trebernaxus, and William and Corin set about trying to understand more about William's origins.

In Trebernaxus Kyle and Joshua go about trying to interact and talk with the religion of the Verdant God of Infinity, but they are met with open hostility at every turn. After a full day

of unsuccessfully trying to get some of the devotees to talk, they check in to a local Inn. Joshua goes out for a walk in the night and almost instantly feels something nearby, something bad. Joshua tries to pin it on something, but he doesn't have to wait that long. As night enters the early hours he is attacked. It is in fact a demon, but it clearly underestimates the power Joshua possesses, and Joshua overcomes the demon easily. The demon is difficult to crack in terms of getting it to talk. All the demon will say is that:

'It is the time of war and death. All who will not join the cause will die,
or suffer an eternity wrapped in the painful ecstasy of the Void'

The next morning Kyle and Joshua agree to give up on trying to talk to the religious nuts and instead decide to go to the source of the religion. The Verdant Tree. The holiest of sites for the religion. The Verdant Tree is a huge oak tree, but one that is a shimmering green, and one's eyes seem to slide off it when any attempt is made to observe it closely. Once in front of the tree, they start to mess with it, using Logrus Tendrils and Pattern Sorcery, as it is clearly a source of Shadow power, but one they find difficult to fathom. Their messing attracts the attention of something within the Tree itself, and a being (rather like a Spriggan from Skyrim) detaches itself from the Tree, in a swirling whirlwind of green fire. A fight ensues, and Kyle and Joshua flee, as Joshua recognises that the being appears to possess no fewer than three Spikards. Shadow beast or not, it has power at its disposal, far greater than they can call on at that moment. They both return to Terra Prime quickly.

After Joshua and Kyle leave for Trebernaxus, Corin and William set about trying to work more out about William's purpose and past. Using Logrus Tendrils to gently probe William's fire and dig under it, something clicks, and William begins to feel a tug in a certain direction, towards something far off in Shadow. Corin tries to enhance William's sensitivity to the pull, and they set off through Shadow. After Shadow walking for some time (something which William is clearly manipulating himself despite not being skilled in either the Pattern or the Logrus) they find themselves at Ygg, the midpoint between Order and Chaos. Ygg talks to them, astonished at William and calls him the Bearer of the Flame. Ygg cannot tell them anymore, only that it knew the Bearer would come at some point, and that William bears within himself the raw power of creation itself, as does Corin, if in a more refined and different form. Ygg tells William to follow his heart, and it will lead him home.

William and Corin travel for some time in Shadow, and again it is William who is seemingly unconsciously making the changes to the shadows around them. Shadow changes, bit by bit, to become a barren wasteland, and then all fades to black. They are no longer walking, but floating, and have the feeling of forward momentum. Far off in the distance they see a bright light. As they approach they keep seeing figures in the corners of their eyes, but

each time they move their heads to look, the figures vanish. They approach the light, which is rimmed by a huge archway. Massive gothic carved pillars on each side support a huge archway, much like the archway to Primal Chaos. Beyond the archway they see a vast world, which reveals two huge continents as it turns, that almost meet at their northernmost reaches, with a huge ocean between the bulk of the land masses, and a very large island in-between in a vague star shape.

They feel as though they could descend to the lands below, but before they can absorb much more than an initial impression, they are blasted onto their fronts. Turning whilst still on the ground they see behind them a vast and huge figure (rather like what Spock sees, when he sees the constructed figure of Ilea, when he investigates Veger, alone, in Star Trek: The Motion Picture). It is one of an insanely beautiful man, with perfect features, a perfect body, over which he wears a thin silky robe with a thin plain belt, and sitting on a stupendous and ornate gothic throne. His head is tilted slightly back, exposing his neck, and his eyes are closed, but it is clear he sees all. Hundreds of feet tall, his brow is crowned with white fire. Corin, using her Logrus sight, instantly recognises the fire as the same that William has within him, but this figure possesses power that is orders of magnitude greater than that which exists within William. Her sight also reveals the outline of a giant fiery bird merging with the form of this huge man.

William feels complete kinship with the being in front of him. It was as though it is a father figure to him. Corin too, but of a different kind, and she feels a burning within her that the figure in front of her is some kind of 'supreme being' and one worthy of worship. They both feel an overwhelming power sweep across and through them, and feel this being in front of them, now knows all it needs to know of them. The being reveals its name as Bennu (He who arises in Brilliance), the Maker of Worlds, the Inheritor of Creation. He explains how he had implanted the power of creation, the Abiding Flame, within his son, obviously meaning William. A power and substance Bennu acquired at the beginning of Creation. Corin recognised this power, now, as Primal Chaos, and this being in front of her, is clearly capable of manipulating and controlling it in ways that are beyond her knowledge, and is clearly capable of refining it in ways she cannot fathom. Bennu explains that in his youth, eons ago, he split Primal Chaos, taking a share of it with him on a journey through reality, and when the time was right he raised his voice in song to mould Primal Chaos, creating an existence separate from all others, an existence that he had complete control of, and the destiny of which was wholly down to his own will. But his song has now been disturbed by the removal of his favoured son, William, who he names Herual, the Lord of Twilight. And with his removal Bennu has changed the verse and melody of his song to mould reality without the need of this son, for Bennu has many children of like power. Although both William and Corin sense great grief within Bennu at the loss of William from the song, Bennu has no desire to know what power took his son from him,

and the song must continue without him. So, he banishes Corin and William until the time is more appropriate for them to return. Until then William will be his emissary to the rest of reality. And with a thought, and without giving William or Corin the opportunity to comment, they are both banished from Bennu's presence by a terrifying power, finding themselves back at Ygg. William tells Corin that he feels he can contact Bennu, but also know that such contact will be denied except in the most exceptional of circumstances. They both return to Terra Prime.