

Episode Two – The Prodigal Son

Arriving in his personal Shadow, Kyle immediately gets William on to life-support, but he is unsure what he can do other than hope for the best, and hope that William will respond like other Real beings. William does stabilise, and begins to recover. Kyle speeds up time in his Shadow, relative to Amber, as much as possible, to aid in the speed of William's recovery. William takes several days to get to the point where he can walk again, but recovers very quickly once he is on his feet. Five days (Kyle's time) after being wounded, Kyle and William return to Castle Amber, where no more than five hours have passed.

In the throne room Random, absent from the castle gate scene, is fuming that an obvious enemy could get so close, and to kill many Amber's citizens. He orders Kyle and Caine to investigate the new threat of Annael, and to deal with him. If they need aid, they are to call on any family member who is easily available to help. Those not of Amber, Corin and Joshua and told that they can help (since they are partially the cause and/or involved), or leave Amber and not return.

Kyle and Caine decide to start with Alesha (who is back in her rooms, under heavier guard, having been returned there by Dworkin), and the other PCs agree to help as much as they can. Kyle questions Alesha, but she refuses to answer anything, spouting off that they have no right to hold her, and that her brother will be back with re-enforcements if they don't release her and return her to Malkeeva. Kyle is having none of it, and uses a mental link to overwhelm her mind and start to sift through her memories. He sees that she has memories of two very different Shadows, Malkeeva (where she was found) and Veddarth, a Shadow of high technology (much like Kyle's). To Alesha, Veddarth was a wonderous place that her brother had only taken her to in her youth, where men flew like birds, in chariots of steel, and where some men were made from metal and helped their soft skinned masters in all things. Strong in her memories, throughout her life in Malkeeva, was of Annael taking blood from her at regular intervals, probably monthly, before going away on lengthy trips. She did not object, as her brother had always been there for her, ever since birth, and she trusted him without question. It is clear from her memories that the people of Malkeeva also trusted Annael, and believed he was preparing them for battle against three evil nameless brothers. Finally released from the mental bind, she screams at the PCs that they would all die once her brother returns.

Kyle, now having the time, draws a permanent Trump of Annael, and given Kyle's control over Trumps, uses it to spy on him, without any contact being made. Kyle observes Annael in a high-tech laboratory for some time, where Annael was clearly set up to eat, sleep and work. Kyle breaks contact and draws a new Trump of the laboratory room itself. Before any other plans could be made, or discussion is possible, the PCs hear a sudden thrum of

activity outside the room, for the guest room corridor overlooks the throne room. Leaving Alesha with her vitriol and her guards, they departed to investigate.

Down below they see that Prince Corwin has returned. Having not been seen since the end of the Patternfall war, his presence is a surprise to all. In the throne room Corwin is greeted by King Random by a brief embrace, and they both then walk off to Random's study.

Sometime later, all the PCs are invited to attend King Random in his private dining room that evening. Corwin is in attendance, and seems to be his old self, to those who knew him. Dinner passes pleasantly, and they all retired to a large study for after dinner drinks. Corwin remains pleasant to begin with, but it was clear he was consuming an awful lot of drink, even for an Amberite. He gets quite boisterous with some of the Court ladies and his sister Flora, becoming quite insulting to those who did not play up to his lewd comments. Despite the occasional question, Corwin gives nothing away as to where he had been since the end of the Patternfall war. Then another unexpected visitor arrives. Dworkin walks in and crosses the room to speak to Random. Dworkin and Corwin's eyes lock momentarily, and Kyle, Corin and Joshua feel the temperature in the room literally drop, and they feel a noticeable build-up of static in the air, the source being Corwin. Other than the glance Dworkin and Corwin share, they do not acknowledge each other. Kyle moves over to Corwin to make sure everything is OK, to which Corwin angrily retorts that young whelps and senile old men should mind their business, keep their opinions to themselves, and keep out of the way of the new lords of Reality. Corwin finally turns to Flora, insulting her for becoming such a bore and strides from the room.

Joshua follows Corwin out and uses his Logrus Sorcery to make himself invisible, but he has not followed Corwin far before Corwin turns to him (despite Joshua's attempt to cloak himself) remarks that Joshua had better return to the sewer from which he came. Corwin then leaves, leaving Joshua somewhat stunned at being insulted so. Kyle makes his excuses and moves to a quieter corner of the room, where he covertly pulls out Corwin's Trump and follows him through it. However, Kyle quickly gets the feeling that Corwin knows he is being spied on and by whom, so Kyle breaks the contact before anything serious can happen.

The next morning, continuing to fulfil Random's edict, the PCs prepare to Trump to Annael laboratory, on Veddarth. Using the Trump that Kyle drew, the PC's observe the laboratory and it appears to be empty, so they Trump through. The Shadow is clearly high-tech, as the laboratory is as advanced as any of the laboratories Kyle has on his Shadow. Now being quite far from Amber, they are able to utilise their sorcerous powers more effectively and those who can render themselves invisible, and cover those who cannot, do so. Leaving

the laboratory, they walk down corridors, seeing all sorts of experiment rooms, where strange looking firearms have been constructed and tested. The facility they are in, is clearly on a weekend or something, for all they see is the occasional security guard wandering at the end of a corridor.

They make for the outside to see the lay of the land, and they realise that Annael's command of this Shadow must be absolute, and no one comes or goes without him being aware of it. Annael is waiting for them as they exit the building. Above Annael and arching in a semi-circle around the exit the PCs leave the facility by, hovering in the air, are large robots (X-Men: Days of Future Past, Trask's 1970s style). Annael explains that none enter or leave Veddarth without him being aware, it is HIS Shadow, and the time for the PCs to pay has come. Not wishing to waste time with talk, the PCs attack.

William immediately aims for Annael, and they engage in a melee fight. It becomes clear that Annael is superior with a blade, but William is stronger, and they are evenly matched. The rest of the PCs attack the robots, who return the favour, but things start to go badly. Unfamiliar with this kind of technology, Corin is shot and slammed to the floor by the attack. Joshua leaps to her aid, letting off numerous sorceries that send the robot rocketing away, out of control and finally crashing into a nearby building. This distracts Annael, and William takes the opportunity to press the attack, and it is sufficient for William to get the upper hand. Meanwhile the rest gather around Corin's fallen body, doing whatever they can to fend off the robots, and the scream at William that the time has come to leave. William, swiftly floors Annael and has him at his mercy, but feels a sudden pang of guilt. Annael is not William's enemy; Annael stabbed him when William was not in control of his body; and it is still unclear what Annael's purpose is, so instead of dealing a death blow, William knocks Annael unconscious and leaves him to engage the robots. Joshua waits no longer and after taking Terra Prime Trump, he Trumps out with Corin's body, to get her aid. William gets surrounded and things are not looking good, and it is only Kyle's mastery of the Trump that allows him to Trump in closer to William and then to Trump them both out back to Amber. In Terra Prime, Corin's injury is not as bad as everyone feared, and seems to have been more of a shock attack, than one intended to do damage. So, after a brief rest she and Joshua return to Amber.