

Episode Three – Attack on Amber

When all the PCs get back to Amber they gather together and report to King Random to explain what has happened. Random is not happy about the outcome, and had expected better of them. Random seems very stressed, muttering things about Corwin and Dworkin, and he tells the PCs that they had just better gather themselves up, get back there and finish Annael off once and for all. Random no longer cares that Annael is related to the Amber family. Given the habits of his father Oberon, he would not be surprised if there was a couple of hundred unknown children of Amber off in Shadow. Random is particularly pissed off with William, who failed to end the threat of Annael when he had the chance. William is not fazed by Random's anger, which just pisses Random off more. Random also remarks that Corwin has come back and is currently in his room, and as far as Random can tell, is sulking.

The PCs go about preparing for a return to Veddarth. William is handed a note by one of the castle guards, which is from Alesha, and requests that he come to Alesha quarters, for Alesha has important information for him. William, ever the innocent, wanders around the castle until he manages to find her quarters, and he politely knocks before entering. Alesha is waiting, but she is clearly on edge. She pats the seat next to her on a divan sofa. When William sits down she grasps his hands, with tears in her eyes, and William feels an enormous amount of sympathy for her, but as he meets her eyes, she furrows her brow and he can feel a power from her slip into his mind. He is unable to break the mind seizure. However, Kyle was watching William as he received the note from Alesha and after asking the castle guard who the note was from, he followed William to Alesha's apartment. Feeling the release of power, Kyle quickly opens the door and with his advanced knowledge of the Pattern uses it to disrupt Alesha's control. William rocks back as Alesha's hands shoot to her head with a scream of pain. William is very annoyed and he demands an explanation, as does Kyle. Alesha, in floods of tears, tells them she just wants to go home, and she was going to try and use William to get her there, and maybe back to Annael. She was just not sure how she was going to do it, and it is clear she is free from any real malice.

Kyle gathers the PCs and explains that he wants to travel back to his Shadow before they attempt another assault on Veddarth, taking Alesha with them. They attempt to question her some more about Veddarth, but her knowledge of the Shadow is from when she was a little girl, so she is not much help. They arm themselves with high-tech weaponry from Terra Prime, which Kyle, from what he has experienced of Veddarth so far, is convinced will work there.

Using his exceptional Logrus power, Joshua carefully opens a passage through Shadow to Veddarth and gingerly step through. Being extremely well versed in the ways of Shadow,

he takes extreme precautions to prevent his entry from being noticed. Holding the opening open, the rest of the PCs step through after him. Once all there, Joshua shape shifts into Alesha, for their plan is to fool Annael into accepting Joshua/Alesha, so they can find out more about his plans. As they all walk to the nearest city they acquire clothing to help them blend in. But Joshua's demon steed tells him that it feels something is wrong, but what it cannot say, just that it has a growing feeling of dread. Joshua trusts his demon's instincts and tells everyone that they need to proceed more cautiously than ever. Arriving at the city within which the laboratory they last visited was built, they book themselves into a hotel and settle in. Kyle and Joshua quickly acquire a limited understanding of the local tongue, enough to get by. They use terminals within the hotel to find out more about the Shadow world and Annael position within it. This merely confirms what they already knew - that Annael is the leader of the world, and that he is preparing the people for a war with three evil brothers, who have usurped Annael's right to rule a faraway land.

Corin starts to check out the city and quickly finds the laboratory where they appeared last time. Corin observes a lot of activity at the laboratory, including armed guards enter an antigravity vehicle, that speeds off in the direction of where the PCs appeared in Veddarth. Corin follows the speeder, and sees the troop exit the speeder and start a search of the area. Corin reports this to the others, and suggests, despite their efforts, their entrance to Veddarth was noticed if somewhat belatedly, and they had best speed things up.

Kyle, William and Joshua/Alesha quickly make their way across town to Annael's complex. Corin follows, but flying high up and invisible. Once there, they realise the chances of them getting in are remote to zero, so they take the direct approach, and armed with their new weapons, they hope that this time the result will be different. Joshua/Alesha shoots one of the guards from cover, and all hell breaks loose. Weapon fire goes off on both sides, and before long a robot descends from the sky, followed shortly by two more. Kyle Trumps back to the hotel room after coming under serious fire, but Joshua shoots one of the robots, which smashes to the ground, apparently damage enough to stop functioning. William rush forward, turning on the light-sabre he acquired from Terra Prime. With two swift strokes, a second robot is put down, with the liquid used within in it splashing everywhere, covering with ground with a red viscous blood like flood. The third robot is also shot, as are two others that arrive, and all three seize up and crash to the ground.

Corin who is studying the combat and the surrounding area looking for anything unusual, feels something 'ping' in the aether. The three downed robots almost snap to attention, back in control of themselves, in response to the 'ping'. Using her Logrus sight, Corin sees that a True Power has begun to energise the robots. Joshua/Alesha feels something too, and seeing the robots right themselves, from his hidden location, he discards his gun and

plays the frightened woman Alesha. More robots fly in, similarly powered by some power of Order, and they overpower William, and they take him and Joshua/Alesha below. Corin continues to watch from above.

William and Joshua/Alesha are taken to meet Annael, who rather than ordering his death, in recognition of the fact that William is not of Amber, and did not take Annael life when he had the chance, orders William frozen in a stasis field. Joshua/Alesha pleads for William to be released, as with the other Amberites no longer around, he/she is convinced that he/she can control him. Given that William did spare Annael life, Annael relents, and Joshua/Alesha shows that William will obey her. Annael asks Joshua/Alesha how she came here, and he/she explains how the Amberites sought to use her as leverage against Annael, but he/she managed to escape at the last minute. Annael leads him/her to a huge map room, to show him/her what he is planning. He reminds him/her that over the years he has draw a lot of blood from him/her, and he confesses from himself too. This blood he has combined with the high-tech power of this Shadow to lend special power his 'Blood Droids', and he has now manufactured dozens of them, which are now safe, somewhere else. Given the right signal, the blood chamber within each robot would turn on and in doing so give the Blood Droids to power to overcome almost any sorcery thrown at them, and to give them power enough to take down ever those of Amber. Annael is developing more tech, powered by the Blood of Amber, but the blood is now in short supply, so if the current supply of robots is not enough, then he would need to acquire more of the family of Amber to power his research, and ensure the downfall of Amber. Annael tells his men to take Joshua/Alesha to some comfortable quarters, while this time Annael insists on William being separated, and William to attached to a drip containing powerful drugs, which knock him out. The drugs are not as effective as Annael had hoped, and William soon shrugs off the initial impact of them, but he is being guarded by Blood Droids, and he decides not to try anything yet.

Joshua/Alesha is escorted, under robot guard, from the building to a waiting sub-orbital anti-gravity ship, which rapidly transports her to the other side of the world, where she is housed in a lush apartment. Some robots keep pace with the ship, using their own thrusters. Once Joshua/Alesha is alone in the apartment Kyle Trumps through to him/her.

Corin observes Annael leaving the city and decides to act and breaks William out of the compound. But William has a sudden feeling of dread. They decide to leave the laboratory rapidly and they steal a speeder, which they shoot off in, away from the city. Just in time, as Annael unleashes his Blood Droids on the city, where he obviously believes some of the PCs still to be, nuking the whole place. Corin and William are far enough away already not to be caught in the blast, but the EMP fries their Speeder and they take a heavy fall as their Speeder crashes. Both are quite badly wounded, Corin more so than William. But

suddenly, out of a nearby bush, the Unicorn appears to them and places its front hooves on Corin's chest, just below the collar bones, as she lies injured. Corin feels instantly refreshed and notices with her Logrus sight two hoof marks where the Unicorn touched her. The Unicorn departs rapidly. She does not understand what has happened and decides to return to Chaos, taking William with her.

Back in Veddarth Joshua waits no longer and decides to rip the Shadow from Annael's control. Kyle lends his power to Joshua's, and with their combine might, they tear the Shadow from Annael's control, despite it being his alone. Joshua turns off technology (knowing that millions will die, those under the sea, or in the air, or in space). They then spy on Annael, through a Trump, seeing that his sub-orbital plane has just (luckily) landed, and that he is somewhat in pain, holding his head, probably because of losing control of the shadow. But Annael then whistles, and a horse gallops out of nowhere, which he mounts and he pins a brooch to his clothing, which instantly breaks the Trump contact. Kyle tries Trump contact again, but struggles to get through. Kyle feels contact (and only then because of his extreme ability with Trumps), but he then feels the familiar explosion of a Power Word designed to disrupt Trump contact. Kyle's Trump connection goes dead, as does his Trump, leaving him with a stinking headache.

When recovered, Kyle quickly draws a Sketch Trump of the place where he had seen Annael, and he and Joshua Trump through. After a couple of disgusting displays of power all the locals run, but not before Kyle acquires two horses for him and Joshua. They try to track Annael, but he had predictably Shadow shifted and could now be anywhere, and seems very adept at covering his Shadow tracks. Kyle tries Annael's Trump again, but gets nothing. It feels to him as though the Trump just seems to not be able to find Annael.

Returning to Chaos (with William in tow), Corin makes for the comfort of the Logrus. William feels an odd sensation. A pull in a direction that leads in the direction that Corin seems to be going anyway, so he follows happily. But it isn't that long before William knows that the pull he feels is going to diverge from the direction Corin is going in. William, who seems to instinctively understand the Ways of the Courts, sets off on his own, but Corin follows instantly, wondering what is going on. Passing through the seemingly endless ever shifting Courts, Corin realises that William is heading for The Beyond, the place beyond the Courts. The source of Primal Chaos. The Courts end, and an area of ever shifting and morphing land is passed over until a huge gothic archway is approached. Above, to each side, and beyond it, is Primal Chaos. William feels such a strong affinity with it, it almost feels he is no longer in control. As he sets foot on the solid land on which the huge archway is set, the massive image of the Logrus appears in front of the archway, blocking the way through. The Logrus demands William retreat, calling him traitor and renegade and similar such stuff. William does not relent and a battle ensues. Corin can see

some of her countrymen flying in via various means, under their own power, or on demons, or on any number of devices. William seems energised and he pressures the Logrus, seemingly to be able to reach the Logrus with his weapons and hands. The Logrus scream in pain and frustration, and suddenly reaches out towards Corin, picking her up. Using her as some kind of amplifier, the Logrus blasts William away from the archway, seemingly into nothingness. Corin is rendered unconscious. She awakes in Suhuy's quarters, where they discuss what has happened. Suhuy is at a loss but will study the matter. Corin shows Suhuy the marks of the Unicorn, which are now visible and sprouting white hair. Suhuy has no idea what is going on and looks troubled.

William awakes, naked and in blackness and only vaguely aware of what just happened. Points of light appear and swirl all around him. He tries to control them, with some success and the gather around him, but then he seemingly loses control, as a gateway forms shaped like a huge gothic archway, and similar to that which led to Primal Chaos. Through it he sees a flat world of two large continents, separated by a huge sea. Some of the lights descended to the eastern continent and he, not in control, backs away from the gate. There are still lights around him and then another light appears, with form, and it looks like himself.

William wakes again, this time on a plain barren landscape, broken occasionally by rocks jutting from the ground. Whilst wondering what to do, and where to go, it isn't long before he is contacted via Trump by Kyle and William returns to Amber, directly into the Throne Room. Corin has also returned to Amber, but on her way to the Throne room, she runs into an agitated Corwin, who asks her what she had been doing, and she happily tells him, leaving out some details, like the bit about the Unicorn. Her pleasant nature seems to frustrate Corwin even more.

They all report to Random who seems quite disturbed about the whole affair on Veddarth and Annael's apparent ability to disappear, especially from such a talented Trump Artist as Kyle. During the conversation Kyle remarks that, Random is King "at the moment" this does not go down well, but after a few moments of silence, meaningful stares at Kyle, and raised eyebrows, everyone soon recovers and gets on with things. Dinner is a quiet affair, though there is still a tension between Corwin and Dworkin (both of whom at there), though it is far less pronounced. Drinks after are also a quiet affair. Kyle and Corin as to talk to Random briefly in private, and Corin reveals the Unicorn's hoof marks. Random is at a loss and wishes Fiona was present, to explain things to him (he is mostly being sarcastic, but he clearly just cannot fathom what the hoof marks mean). They are out of the main room only briefly before returning, so as to avoid any undue suspicion.

Joshua is watching everyone else, as most still seem uncomfortable with their new "Uncle". He thinks he sees Corwin from the corner of his eye, but that cannot be, as he also sees Corwin across the room looking poignantly at Corin. Corwin makes his way over to Kyle and apologises to him for his previous behaviour and suggests they meet up and go hunting sometime soon, to which Kyle agrees. Corwin then leaves. Taking Random's earlier comments about his mother as actually the best idea they have had that day, he tells Random and Corin that he will attempt contact with his mother, but wondered if Random knew he current whereabouts. Random tells him that she has not been seen since she left for the Primal Pattern, just before her initial summons of Kyle to Amber. Kyle pulls her Trump out and is immediately almost overwhelmed with concern as her Trump is lifeless. Kyle's worry obviously shows, but Random tells him not to worry, as Fiona is perfectly capable of taking care of herself.

The PCs rest the next day, given everything that has recently happened, and consider their positions. The day passes quietly, and dinner that night starts quietly. Corwin joins half way through, looking quite agitated again, and it becomes clear that he is either more than a little mad or just spoiling for a fight. Corwin starts to take almost everything that everyone is saying badly. Finally, he starts shouting about a new order of reality, that the current order is old and worn out, and that everyone had better get on board with the new, or face the consequences. Corwin finally loses his temper completely, and Kyle happens to be nearby and gets the full force of his wrath, before Corwin storms out of the dining room.

The next day was relatively peaceful again, until Joshua's steed goes wild in the stables. It shapeshifts into dragon form and destroyed the castle stables, killing many horses (including Random's favourite), as well as killing four castle guards. It then and flies off into the distance before Joshua can stop it. Random simply cannot hide his displeasure at both the dragon and at Joshua. Joshua is very put out at losing his steed. Soon after watching his dragon fly off into the distance, Joshua feels two Trump contact attempts, one after the other, which he successfully blocks.

Shortly after the dragon's departure, Corin has another vision whilst resting in her room, similar to the one she had when at Alesha's castle. This time she sees visions of a battle on the slopes of a mountain, but everything again has green hue to it. A wide fuzzy black streak runs through the landscape, and the vision is overlaid by the moans of terror and pain of a tormented man.

Late in the day Benedict returns to Castle Amber, back from a nearby Shadow called Trebernaxus, where he was helping negotiate accepting them into the Golden Circle. He explains to Random that negotiations went well once Benedict got involved, despite the

Shadow world being almost on the brink of war with Amber prior to his arrival. However, the negotiations are not complete, and Benedict has returned to Amber to gain the company of one of the family members more familiar with the ways of magic and Trump, to ensure negotiations are wrapped up honestly (as there are magicians on the opposing team, who, despite the relative proximity to Amber, seems to still wield considerable power), and upon completing, to also bring the Shadow closer to Amber to facilitate trade and limit the need for Shadow travel. Everyone hopes that Trebernaxus can be brought closer to Amber to facilitate easier travel between the two realms.

Benedict is quite open about Trebernaxus and the challenges there. It is a Shadow like Amber in technology, although with more magic that is normal for a Shadow so close to Amber. Most of the population worship a being called the Verdant Gold of Infinity, a god of nature and trees. Benedict has felt something with power in the Shadow for sure, which is possibly why the Shadow seems to possess more magic than would be normal. Benedict has little experience of the senior leadership of the religion, as they would not attend any negotiations, as is their custom not to be involved in such things. Plus, they made it clear they would not meet anyone from Amber, and Benedict is unsure as to why they are so stubborn and seem to dislike Amber so much.

In the evening Corwin contacts Kyle in a Trump like way (but clearly not by Trump), begging forgiveness for his earlier display of petulance and anger, and he suggests again that he and Kyle go hunting as Uncle and Nephew and put the past behind them. Strangely roping Corin into the conversation, Corwin suggests she come along to. They agree to meet in the morning.

The next morning Kyle and Corin meet Corwin at the Amber edge of the Forest of Arden, and he is riding a beast of epic proportions. After swapping pleasantries, during which Corwin couldn't be more friendly and helpful, they all set off on a hunt. After unsuccessfully chasing several beasts of the wood, they find themselves in the Grove of the Unicorn. Quietly dismounting at its edge, they observe the Unicorn appear. It knocks its hooves against a rock, and then notices and approaches Corin. As it draws near to Corin, only then does it notice Corwin. After a few moments of frozen, uncertain silence, Corwin makes a grab for the Unicorn. Stunned by what is happening, Kyle and Corin act too slowly, and Corwin uses some unknown Pattern based power to stun their steeds, and lays hands on the Unicorn. He immediately vaults on to his own huge steed and gallops off, starting a monster hell-ride. Kyle whips out Corwin's Trump and attempts contact, which he achieves, but it is unlike anything he has ever experienced. He can clearly see Corwin, but can make no purchase on Corwin's mind, his own power simply slides off what seems like a perfectly constructed and orderly formed wall around Corwin's Psyche. Kyle can see somewhat into Corwin's mind but cannot establish a psychic link. He can see that Corwin's

mind is clearly in turmoil. Corwin's hell-ride is the worst thing Kyle has ever observed, and Kyle has never seen or heard tell of a hell-ride of this magnitude before. Corwin is clearly moving faster through shadow than Kyle thought possible. Before long, Corwin arrives at the Pattern, but it doesn't take long before Kyle realises it is NOT the Pattern of Amber. It is Corwin's own Pattern, and he is moving to its beginning. Kyle observes long enough to get a feel for the location, and quickly sets about drawing a Sketch Trump of Corwin's Pattern as fast as he can.

Kyle and Corin Trump through to Corwin's Pattern just in time to see Corwin begin to walk it, and he seems to complete it in a blink of an eye. Kyle, knowing more than most about the Amber Pattern knows this to be impossible, although he has never seen Dworkin walk The Pattern of Amber for comparison purposes. They move to the start of the Pattern, but a Pattern Ghost of Corwin appears at the start of the Pattern and blocks their way. Kyle and Corin are in no mood for any delay and a combat begins in which Corin's Logrus powers and Kyle's Advanced Pattern powers, the Ghost is destroyed. As the Ghost is destroyed, Kyle and Corin see the real Corwin at the centre of his Pattern holding the struggling Unicorn up high, shouting obvious words of power. With a flash and a detonation of power (which knocks Kyle and Corin from their feet), Corwin "splits" the Unicorn into two. The original Unicorn, with a golden mane and white body hair, and the second, with a silver mane and black body hair. Another Pattern Ghost of Corwin appears, which Corwin orders to attack the PCs, but it is again defeated. Corwin laughs manically, exclaiming that the end of the old order approaches, and that nothing can stop him now. He then disappears with the black and silver Unicorn under one arm.

A third Pattern Ghost of Corwin appears and before it can be destroyed, it tells Kyle and Corin that without direct instructions, Ghosts have quite a bit of independence and that it is not here to harm them. It promises not to attack them and that once one is formed of a Walker, another one cannot be, until the existing one is removed or destroyed. The Corwin Ghost explains how it is a manifestation of Corwin, but only shortly after his creation of the Pattern before them, so well before the madness took over. It explains that it knows that Corwin is very ill due to having two Pattern Imprints within him, and something must be done, or Corwin's power will grow, and likely be too much for anyone to contain. The Corwin Ghost has no idea what to do though, as its knowledge is simply not recent enough. It also explains that it could not have appeared and be talking to them without Corwin's Pattern itself having knowledge of this, so clearly Corwin's Pattern understands the danger Corwin poses. It cannot countenance Corwin's death, and ultimately should Corwin demand it acts in a certain way, it will have to, but in those moments in between, it will do whatever it can to help. Kyle and Corin make more efforts to contact Corwin, all of which fail.

Kyle gets multiple Trump contacts from a variety of family back in Amber, which he can feel seems distant, probably because of Kyle's proximity to a Primal Pattern. Once contact is established, it is explained to Kyle that he is urgently required back in Amber, which is under attack. Kyle returns to Amber, whilst Corin stays to keep an eye on the Unicorn (which is still at the centre of Corwin's Pattern). On his return Kyle finds that Annael has somehow managed to begin an attack on Amber, having secreted a sizable army through Shadow to the very gates of Amber. The combat is too large for anyone to confront Annael directly. Having been in Amber, William and Joshua were present for the start of the attack and explain to Kyle what has happened. During the battle Julian does get close to Annael, but was pushed back by Annael's troops, however gains have been made, and it is clear that Annael had no real knowledge of how potent Amber really is, especially when its Princes are home. Eventually Random, leading an attack, nears Annael's position and breaks through to engaged in a personal combat with Annael. But Random's haste and success is not paid back with victory, for Annael proves to be a potent swordsman and starts to beat Random back. But Annael's forces are losing too quickly, and Random knows it and starts to fight fully defensively. Random's ability is sufficient to keep Annael at bay, but then Annael makes an unusual and deadly move and releases something like a Power Word, highlighted by a green flash of power, stunning Random, and Annael delivers a dagger blow to Random's chest. Random is very badly wounded and drops to the ground. Gerard goes berserk and hammers through the defensive line of Annael's last line of defence, and batters his way to Random's side. Benedict also breaks through, equally effectively and deadly, and with cool precision, forcing Annael to abandon his forces and Trump out with his personal guard. Kyle rushes to Random and Trumps him immediately to his home Shadow to get high-tech medicine. Once there Kyle removes the Jewel of Judgement from Random's unconscious body, knowing something of its potential draining impact on a body.