

Episode Eight – Corwin Defeated

24th June 2018

At the Primal Pattern, Corin and Joshua are in conversation with Dworkin. They remark to the old sage that his grandchildren are about to try and take back Amber from Annael's Blood Droids, and that it would be good to see what is going on. This piques Dworkin's interest, and he opens a window through Shadow that overlooks Castle Amber, so they can watch the fun.

Back on the outskirts of Amber, at the rally point for Benedict's forces, and at the Shadow staging point for Julian, Caine and Bannoq's troops, and on Terra Prime where the medical facilities have been put on alert, Kyle links everyone up through his Exalted Trump power so all may freely communicate with all others. But he is interrupted. A doctor enters, concern and pain written on his face, and informs Kyle that King Random has died. Kyle ends the Trump conference and rushes to Random's side. The King's brain waves are flat, and the only thing keeping the lump of meat alive is the life-support apparatus. Random is indeed dead.

Kyle immediately Trumps Corin, telling her what has happened and asks for her aid, as he believes her Life magic to be much better than his. Corin leaves Dworkin's study, via Trump, to Terra Prime. She confirms that Random is indeed brain dead. Using her powers of Life, she sees the neurons degrading and she halts the process, putting the King in a state of suspended animation. But she knows that such a spell will wear off rapidly unless maintained. So, she sends out a Logrus tendril to find a Prime spell battery, for want of a better phrase, which she can infuse with Prime power, and then hang her spell on it indefinitely, or at least until long after the attempt to retake Amber is over and she can return to find a more permanent solution.

Kyle returns to his study to re-establish the Trump conference. Benedict immediately kicks off his frontal assault of Amber. The rest of them wait for the instruction to attack. It comes a few minutes later, and Julian Trumps to the towers of Castle Amber. Bannoq and William Trump to the Courtyard, and Caine Trumps to the Pattern Room.

Caine immediately half screams an expletive before falling silent, obviously cut off by a sudden attack sufficient to render him unconscious or dead. Kyle immediately opens a Trump to the Pattern Room in his mind and sees Caine's troops engaged in a furious battle with half a dozen Blood Droids. In the background, he sees a seventh Blood Droid having almost completed walking the Pattern.

Fearing what this might mean, Kyle speeds Terra Primes speed differential up to the max (about 20 times Amber) and orders an EMP bomb delivered to his study. He manipulates the physics of his own Shadow too, to speed up the location and transport of such a bomb. The bomb arrives in a rush and he drops it through into the Pattern room. Without the necessary time to prepare, as he feared it might, it does nothing, and drops to the floor, inert.

Kyle trumps Joshua and asks for aid. At first Joshua asks Dworkin what he intends to do about the Blood Droid walking the Pattern, but Dworkin only seems curious as to what the end result might be. Realising no help will be forthcoming from Dworkin, Joshua agrees to help and Shape Shifts into a Blood Droid. Kyle uses his extreme Trump power to bridge Joshua across to the Pattern Room, and Joshua drops to the ground behind Caine's troops.

Some of Caine's troops notice the arrival of another Blood Droid behind them and cannot believe their luck. But Joshua wastes no time, and quickly scoops up Caine and returns to Dworkin's study before Caine's men can divert to much of their attention to him and away from the real enemy. Dworkin lays hands on Caine's head, which has a huge welt on it, and feeds his grandson some liquid from a vial. Before Joshua can act himself, Dworkin relieves Caine of his Spikard (that he acquired from the body of Bleys). Joshua hides it well, but he is very disappointed at not getting it himself.

Back in the Pattern room, things are not going well for Caine's troops. One Blood Droid has fallen, but so have half Caine's men, and on the Pattern the seventh Blood Droid completes his tortuous walk. As it steps to the centre of the Pattern there is an eruption of energies, sent out is a shockwave, seemingly from the Blood Droid. The Droids outer shell takes on a Chrome mirror-like look to it, and the Droid bellows a cry of exultation and wonder, sweeping its arm through the air. At the same time the remaining five Blood Droids in the cavern appear to be slammed to the cavern walls and fall to the floor inert.

Outside the castle building the fight continues and is furious. But the shockwave set off by the Blood Droid completing the Pattern continues to emanate outwards, and as it catches a Blood Droid, the droid shuts down. Many fall from the sky and are destroyed on impact. At the centre of the Pattern, the Blood Droid shouts with joy, and vanishes. Outside, the remaining Droids, as not all were rendered inoperative by the shockwave, are ruthlessly put down, and the process of gathering the remains of the fallen droids begins.

Back on Terra Prime, Kyle (happy that victory in Amber is now inevitable) looks in on Gerard and asks for an update from the doctors. He is informed (and can see) that Gerard is fully recovered, except for his severed spine, which has paralysed him from the waist down. Kyle knows that this may heal in time, but of all the injuries that his family suffers,

nerve damage is the injury from which recovery takes the longest. Kyle wakes Gerard and brings him up to speed on everything that has transpired since his injury. Gerard is greatly angered, and Kyle knows that if Annael were in arms reach Gerard would kill him in an instant. Kyle leaves Gerard and goes to his mother's room. She too has fully recovered, and he wakes her and brings her up to speed on all the events that have happened since she contacted him to return to Amber to help King Random. Despite being clearly annoyed, Fiona is much harder to read than Gerard.

Kyle asks Fiona what happened to her. She explains how she was contemplating at the edge of the Primal Pattern, when to her surprise she was approached by Corwin. Before they could talk, Corwin attacked and hit her on the side of her head with Grayswandir, which was the last thing she remembered.

Back at the Primal Pattern, Dworkin has tired of Joshua's presence and asks him to leave, as he will no doubt be needed back in Amber anyway. Joshua seems to be reluctant, and Dworkin becomes insistent (increasing in size a little). Dworkin takes Joshua by the elbow and walks him out of the study down through the tunnel towards the Pattern itself. Once there, Dworkin effects a reverse Trump and sends Joshua to the Castle Amber courtyard.

Once Kyle had finished the exhaustive conversation with Fiona, in bring her up to speed with everything that has happened, he sets Terra Prime back to a normal state of affairs and Trumps Fiona and himself through to Amber, arriving in the courtyard. There the whole family involved in the attack have gathered, along with Joshua.

Kyle informs them of Random's death. Julian turns grim, about faces and walks off. Benedict's jaw hardens, but he says nothing, looking over at Martin. Kyle quickly starts the discussion as to who takes control of Amber in the meantime. Benedict makes it clear he has no interest in ruling. Eyes turn to Martin who raises his palms exclaiming that he wants nothing to do with it. Martin then demands to be returned to Terra Prime. Kyle hands him a Trump of his study on Terra Prime and Martin disappears. Joshua suggests a triumvirate of Benedict, Fiona and Julian, as the three oldest currently compos mentis children of Oberon, or maybe all the descendants of Oberon form a Council. Few react to this. Benedict explains how Random was given the crown by the Unicorn, and that it should be the Unicorn that decides again, when it is better. Until then, he will act as Regent against the confirmation of a future ruler of Amber being appointed. Kyle passes Benedict the Jewel of Judgement, who takes it very reluctantly. Immediately after having done so, Kyle feels something very wrong has happened on his personal Shadow, similar to the feeling he got when Joshua summoned a demon.

During the battle in Amber, Corin located a Prime battery and brought it to her. She powers it up with her Prime magic and hangs her spell on it, which is maintaining Random's physical form, and preventing the further deterioration of his neurons.

Shortly after, she feels Trump contact, which she allows, and instantly regrets. A dreadful power flows through the contact, and she sees Lord Bances Amblerash, High Priest of the Church of the Serpent looking at her. Behind him stand a phalanx of other Priests of the Serpent, clearly channelling their power through Lord Bances, in case he needed it to cut through any barriers or protections that might have stood in the way of the Trump contact attempt.

Corin realises that the volume of power that has been employed to contact her is too great for her to break. Lord Bances demands that she return to The Courts to face trial and punishment for her flagrant opposition and disregard to the will of the Serpent. Corin refuses, and although more words are exchanged, Lord Bances quickly tires, and his men flood into the room.

Several immediately grapple Corin, but she has time to let off one of her racked Prime Bombs, which sends her nearest assailant flying. But they were obviously just the vanguard. Corin is unable to destroy the now well-established Trump Gate, and a more fearsome opponent steps through. Chinaway Hendrake, a High Lord of Chaos, and renowned for being one of the strongest, if not THE strongest being in Chaos. He leaps forward too swift to stop, and grabs Corin by the neck with his gauntleted hand. Choking, Corin releases another spell, which combines with her Shape Shifting to turn her into a tower of Prime energy and black smoke (think the smoke beast from Lost). But somehow Chinaway's gauntlet keeps hold, and Corin's thrashing send them both crashing into and through walls. Lord Bances creates a net of energy, which descends upon Corin and Chinaway, racking them both with intense pain, although Chinaway still maintains his grip. The net is then pulled through the Trump Gate.

Fearing something very bad has happened again, Kyle trumps himself, Fiona and Benedict through to Terra Prime, close to where the disturbance is. They appear in the corridor, off which is Random's medical room. The doorway to Random's room is gone, scorch marks are all around the new opening and the walls and something is "open" within the room that they cannot see. Several walls have been put through also. Kyle reaches into the JoI in Benedict's pocket, drawing on its power, and he roughly seals off his Shadow to everything. An explosion inside Random's medical room sends bodies flying. The "opening" is closed.

At the Cathedral of the Serpent, Lord Bances disrupts Corin's magic and Shape Shifting power with a Power Word of his own, and clamps Corin in rare and special power-nullifying manacles that suppress all her power, including Logrus and Shape Shifting. The net is dropped, Chinaway gets to his feet, and Corin is taken to the Abyssal Dungeons, to remain there until her trial.

The Chaosians left on Terra Prime get to their feet and look about themselves in confusion. One beast-like man spots Kyle, Fiona and Benedict, draws two hand-axes, bellows and charges. Benedict steps forward and strikes the beast in the eye, twists to the left and cuts down on the beast's out-stretched arms, severing them both at just below the elbow. The beast falls dead.

One of the Chaosians seems to recognise Benedict, his eyes widen, and he turns and flees. But he is frozen in his tracks as Kyle releases a spell. Fiona freezes another two. The remaining two charge Benedict, but they meet a similar fate to their beast companion.

Back in Amber, with everyone else having departed, Joshua makes his way to the Pattern room, hoping to experiment on the six droids he knows fell there, and which seemed in good condition, relative to those on the outside. Poking around in their chassis he locates the blood generator and tries to heat it. The heat he focuses on the generator spreads instantly across the whole droid chassis (the material they are made of is clearly a heat super conductor). So, he takes a different tack, and considers dumping a small amount of Primal Chaos on some of the piping coming out of the generator.

On Terra Prime Kyle reads the mind of the Chaosian who attempted to flee. The Chaosian is a minor Lord of Chaos, and part of the Church of the Serpent, Lord Farq. The attack was orchestrated by the High Priest of the Church of the Serpent, Lord Bances Amblerash, a powerful Chaos sorcerer and politician. Kyle also learns of a "Cult" in Chaos that worships Benedict, but Lord Farq is not a member, but knows of the cult and knows who Benedict is. Kyle discusses with Fiona and Benedict about rescuing Corin from the courts. Benedict is sympathetic will not get involved. It is not that he does not wish to, but he feels that Amber is currently weak, and an assault on The Courts, whether in secret or in open war, just for someone who they have only just met (relatively speaking) is just not possible or reasonable. Fiona agrees. Kyle understands, but is not so easily deflected, and trumps Joshua.

Joshua accepts the trump contact and Kyle brings Lord Farq to Joshua in the Pattern room. Joshua mind-reams the Lord and nothing is left unknown. Lord Farq's mind is peeled open like a sardine tin and his life, knowledge, and everything within is laid bare. Joshua passes a psychic impression of Farq home to Kyle and asks that he draw a trump of it. As Kyle sets

about this, Joshua throws Farq onto the Pattern. Freed from the mind control, Farq gets to his feet and tries to flee, but sticky lightning prevents his feet from rising too high and sucks them back down hard to the surface of the Pattern. The sticky lightning creeps up his legs, tearing through his clothing and shredding his flesh as it climbs. His arms are caught and pulled to the surface of the Pattern. Eventually the creeping sticky lightning reaches Farq's head and covers his body, peeling the skin away, shredding muscle, exposing bone, and causing his screams to become animal like in fear and agony. Finally, the sticky lightning collapses his body onto the Pattern. There is a hiss and some foul-smelling steam, and Lord Farq is no more.

Joshua agrees that a rescue of Corin is needed, believing her to have good potential for the future. Kyle agrees to accompany him, which Joshua appreciates. Joshua shape shifts into Farq, modifying his aura to ensure none could mistake him for anything else. Kyle turns invisible and masks his own aura to maximise the avoidance of detection. They trump through to Farq's home, which is near the Cathedral of the Serpent and the Halls of the Logrus. Bumping into members of Farq's family was inevitable, but Joshua puts them off, stating urgent Church business. They make their way through Chaos to the Halls of the Logrus. Activity in The Courts seems fairly normal, with the inhabitants going about their daily lives relatively normally. The only thing different from when Joshua was last in Chaos, is the near complete absence of Demonkind. Kyle can sense the Trumps he made for Corin within the Cathedral, as he passes it. They consider entering, but Joshua thinks it is better to talk to Suhuy first.

Entering the Halls of the Logrus, as Lord Farq, Joshua asks for an audience with Master Suhuy. He is put off, but then passes over a token that Suhuy give him at Ygg, and just asks the administrator to pass it to Master Suhuy. The administrator does so behaving as though no such audience will be granted. When he returns he is quite surprised and tells them to pass through a doorway, which will take him to Suhuy's study, and returns the token to Joshua.

As they pass through the trump like gateway, Kyles spells are stripped away, as is Joshua's shape shifting, and they appear as normal on the other side. Suhuy raises an eyebrow but is otherwise unsurprised. Kyle immediately absorbs a psychic impression of both Suhuy and his office. After an awkward hello, Joshua brings Suhuy up to speed on recent events. Suhuy is disturbed, but he is clear that he cannot publicly be seen to act in support of Corin. He explains that since the Patternfall war and the failure of the Chaos faction that sought to overthrow Amber, and due to The Courts being comprehensively beaten in the final battle outside The Courts, the Crown has lost much influence, as they were tacit supporters of the action against Amber. As a result, the Church of the Serpent (the most powerful religious institution in the Courts), has gain much power, as the Crown's has

waned. The Crown has not been the only victim of the rise of the Church, and the institution of the Logrus, which sat apart in Patternfall, has also lost influence, including Suhuy himself. He cannot act himself, for if he did and it were discovered, his position would become untenable. Suhuy will, however try to find out where Corin is being held, which could be in one of three secure dungeons; the Palace, the Cathedral, or the Abyssal dungeons.

It does not take long for Suhuy to find out, and Corin has been taken to the Abyssal dungeons. They discuss Joshua maintaining his disguise as Farq and going to the Abyssal dungeons to free Corin. Suhuy points out the Lord Farq is a minor Lord, and simply does not have the influence to ask for her to be freed into his care. It would be looked on with great suspicion. It would take one of Lord Bances inner circle to command such authority. Joshua toys with entering the Cathedral to confront one of the inner circle, but Suhuy warns against it, and explains that the inner circle are quite powerful sorcerers and will not be so easily mastered as Lord Farq. Certainly not so quick as to prevent one of them from alerting others of the attack, at which point, it is unlikely that even Joshua would escape the concerted efforts of several of the inner circle who would then turn up.

Instead Joshua decides to simply change his tact with the Abyssal prison and will seek to just check on Corin, at which point he will try to affect her escape. Kyle agrees to watch via trump and pull him out if necessary. Joshua re-establishes his disguise and departs on a filmy to the Abyssal Dungeons. The entrance is huge carved archway quite deep into the chasm at the base of which is The Abyss itself (but not so deep as to have any fear of being infected by the corrupting influence of the Abyss itself). The dungeons are a vast, vast network of cavernous tunnels that include layers upon layers of cells. Screams and moans echo through the tunnels. After passing through the archway entrance, Joshua sees a vast administrative floating platform in the centre of the entrance cavern, to which he descends.

Joshua locates a prison warden to whom he explains that he is on a mission of Lord Bances to check on the state of the prisoner Corin. The Warden is not impressed and speaks of irregularities, as his has had no forward notice of such an inspection. Joshua persuades the Warden to allow him to see Corin, after agreeing major Boons and favours for the Warden with Farq's House. This is enough to persuade the Warden to allow an accompanied visit. Joshua, the Warden and two huge prison guards step onto a filmy and speed off through the prison.

In her Abyssal cell, Corin knows that none of her traditional powers can serve her right now, so she begins to experiment with her relatively new-found Pattern power. She delves deep into it trying to understand it better in order to use it as some kind of tool to break

the hold of the manacles. She is unsuccessful, but her studies do enlighten her somewhat and she can now use Pattern as a defence. As she is studying the Pattern, she notices two points of red light in one corner of the cell and senses a presence. The points of light appear to grow bigger, or rush in from a great distance, she is not sure, and become red baleful eyes. A shadowy black being, human in form, steps into the cell, apparently ignoring the magics set on the cell to help prevent entry or escape. The being remarks that Corin looks familiar, similar maybe to someone he has met. Corin asks who, but the red eyed man is not forthcoming with a name. They talk, mainly with the man trying to tempt Corin with escape, and how he can make it happen. All she need to do, is accompany him to his master, who will relieve her of her manacles, so she can join and serve him. After some back and forth, Corin flat out refuses the man, which makes him very angry. He throws Corin across the room, slamming her into the door of the cell. He then grabs her by her throat, and the heat of his black hand burns her skin.

It is at this moment that Joshua approaches with the Warden. They step off the filmy with the two prison guards, and walk to the cell entrance, but they hear Corin's screams, and they rush the last few yards. They see the demonic man holding Corin, but at their arrival, and in an instant, the man melts into the floor and disappears, releasing Corin, who drops to the floor. The Warden orders the door opened immediately, as Joshua berates him and the security of the Abyssal Dungeon at keeping safe one of the most important prisoners they have ever held. The Warden is flush with embarrassment. But Joshua is not finished and speculates on what Lord Bances might do when he hears of this. Joshua demands that the manacles be removed, but the Warden balks at this, so instead Joshua demands that the Warden at least check on Corin to make sure no permanent harm has come to her. The Warden orders the guards to check the rest of the cell, while he examines Corin. Joshua places a hand on the Warden's shoulder and releases his mental power on him. He instantly overwhelms the Warden's mind. The "Warden" orders the guards out, and then Joshua wipes his mind clean of the whole series of events since Joshua's arrival, and commands the Warden to leave. Joshua picks up Corin and they tramp back to Suhuy's study.

Suhuy removes the manacles and sees to her comfort, at the same time expressing his disappointment with her. That she allowed herself to be caught and that she has taken such a strong stance against the Serpent. The Serpent is not to be fooled with or denied. She has done both. Joshua and Suhuy renew their agreement to keep in touch if anything radical happens, and then Joshua, Kyle and Corin depart for Amber.

Back in Amber, Kyle decides to spy on Corwin. He observes Corwin riding the Black Unicorn through a forested area. Alongside Corwin is a Pattern Ghost of Corwin, filled with Amber blood (Fiona's blood). Kyle sees the trees thin and then fall altogether and he sees Corwin

looking down upon the Primal Pattern of Amber. Kyle suddenly realises that Corwin intends to use the blood-filled Pattern Ghost to attempt to damage, possibly destroy, the Pattern. He urgently calls everyone available via Trump. Corin contacts Dworkin and warns him of Corwin's approach, and Dworkin enters a rage and rushes from his study towards the Primal Pattern.

Kyle trumps himself, Fiona, Benedict, Corin and Joshua through to the Primal Pattern. Corwin is arriving at a canter with his Pattern Ghost. Kyle acts immediately, letting off a freeze spell on the Pattern Ghost's horse. The horse instantly is held in position, but the Pattern Ghost's momentum is not stopped, and it flies over the head of the horse and hits the ground hard. Corwin wheels the Black Unicorn around expertly, slows down and puts himself and his steed between the party and his Pattern Ghost, and dismounts. In no mood for talk, Corwin slaps the rump of his steed and the Black Unicorn immediately picks up speed towards the party. Kyle release another spell, seeking to lift the Black Unicorn from the ground, but it has little effect on the divine beast. Instead of attacking, the Black Unicorn leaps over the collective party at the last minute, landing lithely behind them and continues its path. They look behind them and realise the Black Unicorn is headed straight for Dworkin, who has just emerged from his cave, enlarged and enraged.

The two mighty beings clash immediately and appear fairly evenly matched. But the Black Unicorn manages to stab Dworkin through is thigh with its Alicorn, and things don't look like they are going well. Corin releases a spell to blast the Black Unicorn and to try and turn the fight to Dworkin's favour, which is a qualified success, and the Black Unicorn is put on the back hoof.

Benedict advances on Corwin and they clash swords. Benedict is his expert self, but Corwin, surprisingly, seems to be a match, but neither seems to be able to break the other's defences.

As the Pattern Ghost gets to its feet, Joshua release an implosion spell on it. Blood bursts from its skin and falls about it to the ground, and the Ghost drops back to its knees, but no physical wounds appear, and no more blood leaks out. Seeing his Ghost in danger, Corwin, with unnatural speed, disengages from Benedict to stand in front of the Ghost. Corwin then raises his hand towards Benedict and Benedict is lifted from the ground, with his arms and legs pulled straight, as if by invisible ropes. Corwin screams at the party to back off, or Benedict will be pulled apart. But they know that to stop now would be to give Corwin the advantage and to court the destruction of The Pattern. Kyle and Corin immediately combine to dampen Corwin's effect on Benedict, Kyle to try to reverse the forces Corwin is employing, and Corin throws magic at Corwin to distract him.

Meanwhile the Ghost gets back to its feet and runs for the start of the Pattern, but Joshua has made his way to stand between the ghost and The Pattern already. The Ghost stabs at Joshua, too fast for him to avoid, taking him in the shoulder. Although it is only a construct of the real Grayswandir, it burns Joshua nonetheless, but not enough. Joshua, with the Trump of the Cathedral of the Serpent in hand, opens the trump and shape shifts to liquid at the same time, in an effort to avoid another stabbing. But combining his own significant power of trump and using his own power to pull the Ghost in, he and the Ghost both trump through to the Cathedral.

Corwin's grasp of Benedict is not so easily loosened, so Fiona and Corin combine their power, Fiona funnelling her power through Corin, and Corin blasts Corwin, forcing him to release Benedict, and dropping him to one knee. Benedict wastes no time and immediately jumps towards Corwin, stabbing his brother through the shoulder, but Corwin raises his blade from the floor as Benedict jumps and takes Benedict in the belly with Grayswandir. Both fall to the floor in a heap. But Corwin's wound is not as serious as Benedict's, and while Benedict cannot rise, Corwin does and staggers away, only to turn once again on the party.

Kyle reacts quickly at Corwin's half retreat, gets to Benedict and trumps him directly to the trauma centre on Terra Prime.

Corin and Fiona strike at Corwin again, and not even Corwin can take such an assault without retreating some more. He is forced away from the Pattern. Kyle then reaches out with his Trump power, sensing Corwin's set, attached to his belt. Kyle unravels a trump, causing it to detonate. Corwin is blasted sideways, to the ground, stunned, Grayswandir is flung away too.

Kyle wastes none of the time he has gifted himself with the trump explosion. He rushes to Corwin, via Grayswandir, raises the blade and hammers the stunned Corwin in the chest with his own sword.