

Episode Nine – A little knowledge...

14th October 2018

Kyle attempted to remove Grayswandir from the body of Corwin, fully intending to finish Corwin off, but for some reason the sword cannot be removed. Seeing Corwin down, Corin swiftly turned her attention away to focus back on the fight between Dworkin and the Black Unicorn, but a shadow passes over her. The Black Unicorn had disengaged with Dworkin and jumped high over them towards her fallen master, Corwin. Corin instantly turned gaseous, seeking to surround the Black Unicorn as it passed overhead and trap it in mid-air. Mid jump, the Black Unicorn, lets out an explosive shout towards Kyle, blasting him from standing over Corwin. Corin's efforts are semi-successful, in that she sends the Black Unicorn off course, but she is unable to gain solid purchase on the form of the Black Unicorn. The Black Unicorn lands hard, but nevertheless manages to gather its feet and move like lightning to stand over Corwin, snorting in anger.

Getting back to his feet, Kyle tries to open a Trump Gate to Corwin and drag him away, but something is clearly interfering with the area around Corwin and not allowing him to enact the gate. Kyle stops and instead sets the remains of Corwin's trumps to explode. The Black Unicorn does not shift, but Corwin is clearly badly damaged.

Corin's black column like gaseous form, strikes at the Black Unicorn, trying to grasp its leg and lift it high, but the Black Unicorn begin to seethe and crackle with the power of order, and Corin's Logrus power sorcery cannot gain any purchase on its flesh. The Black Unicorn, clearly cornered and on the defensive, remains in place, and expands and enhances its aura of protection around it and Corwin.

Seeing the impasse, Kyle established telepathic communication with his companions and his mother, Fiona so they can talk without the Black Unicorn hearing, but Corin stills wants blood. She casts a monofilament net over the Black Unicorn, fully empowering it with her peerless reservoirs of Prime sorcery. The net does not touch the Black Unicorn, and the forces of Chaos and Order can clearly be seen in conflict, with Corin trying to tighten the net, and the Black Unicorn trying to hold it a bay.

Telepathically Fiona advises caution, but Corin ignores her, and continues to successfully tighten the net due to her extreme Prime power. The Black Unicorn begins to tremble with the effort to keeping the net off its skin and off Corwin. Fearing an event, Kyle cast a wall of order between the conflict and the Primal Pattern to try and ensure no damage comes to the Primal Pattern.

Fiona become most forceful in her demands for a pause. She positions herself between the Black Unicorn and Corin, demanding a negotiation. Finally, Corin pauses her closing of the net, but does not remove it.

They feel an approaching power, and the icon of Corwin's Pattern manifest some distance off and rushes in. It slows at it approaches, stopping some 30 yards away, opposite Fiona's position. An aura of conciliation and regret flows from it. Corwin's Pattern asks to approach in peace, but Kyle demands that it hold its ground, from where it can speak. Corwin's Pattern accepts. It begins by reminding them of the conversation they had, just after the Unicorn was split, that it recognised Corwin's destructive ailment, and it wanted to help, but that whilst Corwin was conscious and capable of giving commands it must obey him. It suggests that this is an opportunity to keep Corwin unconscious, but that it cannot countenance his death. Corin flippantly suggests death might be best, and that it has no choice in the matter right now. Dworkin hobbles over, clutching at his leg, looking unhappy.

Corwin's Pattern assures them that it can put Corwin into suspended animation, for whatever period is necessary whilst a cure for his condition is sought. Corin remains unconvinced and asks why. Corwin's Pattern explains that Corwin's actions have weakened Order by splitting the Unicorn, and that when Chaos understands this fully, then both the old and the new poles of Order will need to work together or be singly overcome.

Kyle dismisses that there can be two poles of Order, and that the Unicorn must be made whole again, and seeks the advice of Dworkin. Dworkin is not certain such a reunification is possible, and he would have to meditate on the matter. But Dworkin confirms what Corwin's Pattern has said, that Amber's Pattern, and Order in general, has been weakened by the splitting of the Unicorn, and that therefore both Patterns might need to be allied to withstand Chaos.

Uncertain what to do, Kyle asks collectively what next? Corwin's Pattern reiterates its offer, and the Black Unicorn snorts in anger, but Corwin's Pattern silences it with a stern glance.

Kyle does not believe Corwin will get better whilst he maintains two Pattern images, and says that if they are to work together, then there will be conditions. All present will have full access to Corwin's pattern. No more barriers. The overall drive being for the survival and greater good of Order. Corwin's Pattern agrees, but advises against any of them walking it, unless they wish to suffer the same madness as Corwin. They all agree. Kyles wants a merging of the Patterns, but no one, not even Corwin's Pattern understands how that might be possible. Kyles asks for assurances that Corwin will stay suspended, and they

agree that Dworkin might be able to monitor his condition. Corwin's Pattern suggests that should Dworkin walk it, which it would allow, then his existing power over Order might be sufficient for his mentality to contain two Pattern Imprints without suffering Corwin's fate. Dworkin agrees with much of what Corwin's pattern has said and agrees to try. Dworkin remarks that he can feel the two Patterns gravitating towards each other. That Corwin scribed his Pattern so "close" to Chaos during Patternfall is irrelevant. For as soon as it was created, being a symbol of Order, a multitude of Shadows started to fill the space between it and Chaos. Chaos missed their opportunity to influence Corwin's Pattern without it now being a major undertaking. Whilst there may be disruption across Shadow as the Patterns close in on each other, he does not feel right now they will ever meet.

In the following pause, Kyle informs Bannoq (who is in Amber) of Benedict's wound and send him a Trump of the infirmary on Terra Prime where Benedict is being treated. Reluctantly Corin release the Black Unicorn from the monofilament net she had encased it and Corwin in, and she returns to her human form. Kyle then opens a Trump gate to Corwin's Pattern.

Corwin's Pattern seeks confirmation that they have an agreement and Kyle nods. Corwin's Pattern orders the Black Unicorn away from Corwin's body, and needs to repeat the order before the Black Unicorn reluctantly moves away. Kyle walks back to Corwin and removes Grayswandir and steps away to Dworkin and Fiona, handing the sword to Dworkin. Corwin's Patterns powers flows from it and it wraps Corwin in a skin-like cocoon, which hardens around Corwin and levitates him from the floor.

Corwin's Pattern, the floating Corwin and the Black Unicorn all pass through the Trump Gate. From the Amber side of the gate, they all observe Corwin's actual Pattern. The silvery dome at its centre dissipates. The manifestation of Corwin's pattern and Corwin, float over the Pattern and Corwin's cocoon turns vertical over the centre of the Pattern, and then seems to be absorbed down into the Pattern. The manifestation of Corwin's Pattern returns to the starting point of the Pattern. And invites Dworkin through.

They all follow Dworkin through, although Kyle pauses momentarily to accept Trump contact from Bannoq, asking only to be kept up to date with what happens. Dworkin walks up to the start of Corwin's pattern, and pausing for a moment telling everyone that he knows what he is doing, prompting an under her breath response from Corin, that "no one" know what they are doing right now. Dworkin steps onto the Pattern and walks it. After what seems like an hour, Dworkin completes his walk and then it looks like he starts to meditate at its centre.

Corin takes this opportunity to re-rack her spells. Fiona looks concerned, obviously fearing a second madness for Dworkin. After 15min or so Dworkin opens his eyes and teleports back to the group. He confirms that Corwin's Pattern has been true to its word. Dworkin remarks that he can feel the second Pattern image, but his knowledge of Pattern and his affinity with Order is more than enough to manage two imprints. Dworkin remarks that he has placed some of his own enchantments on Corwin now, so he will be aware of any change. And he does feel that Corwin's Pattern can be trusted.

Dworkin confirms that he can feel now more than ever, that the two Patterns edge closer together with every passing moment, but has no idea how long it will take, or that they will ever actually meet. Dworkin then walks to the manifestation of Corwin's Pattern, and something mental clearly passes between them. Corwin's Pattern manifestation, if it were possible, looks humbled. The Amberites all return to Amber's Primal Pattern, although Corin chooses to stay, as she has some things to do.

Bannoq, having received a Trump for the infirmary on Terra Prime, quickly uses it and arrives within the hospital. In this Shadow, Benedict has only just arrived, and the doctors are working furiously on him. Bannoq is told that whilst it is a serious wound, it is not life threatening, and Benedict is on the operating table right now. Bannoq goes to observe and sees a multitude of robotic arms working almost more rapidly than can be seen over Benedict's prostrate form.

Bannoq senses the lead doctor is nervous, which Bannoq asks about, and the doctor explains that Martin turned up a while ago, very unhappy, to see the body of King Random. He left even more unhappy than when he arrived, and angry. The flight path of his speeder suggested he was going to the prison where Annael is being held. Bannoq contacts Kyle and leaves things with Bannoq asking only to be kept up to date but passes Bannoq a Trump of the Prison.

Bannoq Trumps to the prison, arriving ahead of Martin. He warns the prison guards to lock the place down, and he walks through the prison to stand outside Annael's cell. Annael's look of exasperation is legendary and he starts to issue sarcastic comment after sarcastic comment. Bannoq hears sounds of fighting, and then the doors to the hall are blown inwards. Martin enters with a very large firearm like weapon in his arms and walks up the stairs to the first level walkway, where Annael's cell is.

Martin tells Bannoq to get lost, but Bannoq refuses asking Martin to calm himself. Martin takes a shot at the ceiling above Bannoq, and dust and bits of ceiling fall all around him. Bannoq is unmoved. Martin screams that Annael needs to pay for his father's death, but Bannoq remains calm, and asks Martin what Benedict or Random would think of what he

is doing right now. Martin fears that no one will punish Annael, but Bannoq tells him that he will regret it if he kills Annael in cold blood. Martin curses, shoots more of the ceiling and the walls, but eventually throws the weapon to one side and storms out. Annael gives them both the golf clap.

Bannoq catches up with Martin telling he has done the right thing, but Martin simply harrumphs and jumps back into the speeder and zooms off. Bannoq updates Kyle (who has just returned to the Primal Pattern and asks if Kyle can track Martin via his Trumps, which Kyle does, and confirms Martin is simply speeding off within the Shadow Terra Prime.

Corin begins walking Shadow, seeking the bird of her desire, also focusing on the events that led up to her capture by Lord Bances. She finds a letter, penned in her hand, with the words she wishes related to the High Priest of the Church of the Serpent, and on a whim, it is embossed with the symbol of the Phoenix, as close as she can get it to the image she saw surrounding Bennu when she observed him with Logrus sight. The bird arrived, and she attached the letter to it, and she commands it to seek Lord Bances Amblerash in Chaos, fuelling the sentiment of words in the letter with all the venom she can muster. The letter reads:

Lord Bances Amblerash

All the powers of Chaos will desert you. The powers of Order will hound you. I will see your life blood spilled over the alter of the cathedral of the Serpent. And as the last breath of life leaves your ruined body, it will be cast into the Abyss. From this moment your life is cursed, and you will know no rest. Ten thousand years of torture by the demons of the Abyss would be your choice over what I will do to you, before I rip life from your pathetic <inert worst Chaos insult> you call your body.

Corin of Chaos

Not wanting to Trump back, but unable to walk to Amber's Primal Pattern, Corin starts to walk back to Amber itself.

Back at the Primal Pattern, Kyles seeks advice as to what they do next. Dworkin is convinced they are all safe from Corwin. They discuss other challenges. The Black Unicorn clearly seems somewhat independent of Corwin's Pattern, but defers to it for the time being. Dworkin senses that the Black Unicorn is not a match for the Unicorn of old at this time. Dworkin explains that the Unicorn is an ancient being, but not without limits, and accepts that maybe only the Serpent knows how to heal her. Kyle remarks that that bridge may now be burnt, and why would the Serpent heal her anyway? They talk of Corin's visions and the mark the unicorn placed on her, which none of them understand. Dworkin

is still keen to talk of the Blood Droid that successfully navigated the Pattern in Amber. There remains much to investigate. Dworkin sees the goals as; Corwin's healing; the protection of Amber, including Corwin's Pattern; and contact with the Blood Droid; maintenance of the balance between Order and Chaos.

Kyle speculates as to whether the Jewel of Judgement might heal the Unicorn, but Dworkin does not believe so. Dworkin explains that the Serpent and the Unicorn are not of Chaos or Order but have rather allied themselves to these two poles. After all, the Jewel is the eye of the Serpent, and yet the Pattern could not have been created without it.

Back on Terra Prime, Bannoq gets an update on Benedict's status, which is good, and after discussions with the doctors of the unusual nature of the damage to Benedict, gets them to check out his own wound delivered by Grayswandir. They confirm the damage is similar, but nothing of concern. Bannoq gives up some of his blood to aid in Benedict's recovery.

Kyle Trumps in Bannoq and then sets about drawing a full Trump of the Blood Droid. Completing it, he then tries to make secret contact, which is successful. He sees the Droid flying through Shadow. Best described as a hell-fly. It's tech seems to be working everywhere, and it shimmers with Order, but does not seem to notice Kyle spying on it. Eventually it lands in a barren, almost primordial landscape, with a dull light, but no obvious light source. It nods to itself and hammers its chrome fist into the ground, shattering like a bullet passing through glass. A multitude of thin tentacles shoot out from its arm, and enter the ground, and something seems to be passing from the Droid into the land. Kyle cuts contact.

Bannoq considers whether or not the weapons used to retake Amber will still work against the Droid. But they will not work everywhere, and he is uncertain if they will now work against a Pattern powered droid. Bannoq does not believe the Droid is going to turn out friendly, but Kyle is not sure, seeing it as a being of Order now, and maybe therefore a potential ally against Chaos. Bannoq wants to act quickly and they consider Trumping to the Shadow, taking control of it, and wiping it out with the Droid present. But Dworkin wants to talk to the Droid if possible and advises against aggressive action right now. Besides, right now, he wants to check on Caine and the Unicorn. They all enter his caves.

They find Caine, still sleeping, and without his Spikard. Kyle asks after it, and Dworkin reveals that he has taken it, for he has never had the chance to study one before. They enter the room where the Unicorn is resting, only to find her gone. They are all stunned, and Dworkin demands Kyle set about finding her immediately. Kyle draws a sketch trump, and is able to make contact, although he feels that great power is being deployed to block him.

The Unicorn is moving slowly through Shadow, looking ashen, with her head down. Maintaining Trump contact is difficult, and she is clearly attempting to cloak her movement, but Kyle's Trump power is equal to the task of maintaining it. Kyle tells Dworkin and Fiona that he cannot make contact. Frustrated Dworkin starts to draw his own Trump, but Kyle subtly negates the power of Trump locally, so when Dworkin tries the Trump it does not work. Dworkin, enraged, charges off to the Pattern. Fiona looks concerned and questions Kyle's ability not to be able to contact the Unicorn, but follows Dworkin, to make sure he does not do anything bad.

Kyle turns back to his Trump of the Unicorn and tries to establish contact, but gets no more contact than before, despite pushing. He sends a message in the hope it will get through and tries to cloak the Unicorn to further Trump contact. He takes note of the Shadow she is in and the land around her, as she has clearly stopped shifting Shadow. She is in a wide glacial valley, and in a wide-open area, she is clearly approaching a tall muscular, but lean, man. It is the Serpent in human form.

Kyle breaks contact and quickly sketches a Trump of an area 75 odd yards from the meeting place. Corin Trumps Bannoq, who brings her through, in time for Kyle to then Trump them all to the hiding spot he chose, as Corin turns them invisible.

On arriving, Kyle maintains contact with the Unicorn and starts to "record" the conversation between the two beings, but it is in a language, similar to Thari, but different enough to make understanding what is being said impossible. The Unicorn, in her pure and delicate horse form, has lain down, with her head on the lap of the Serpent. They talk quietly and tenderly. Kyle subtly checks if anyone has control of the Shadow (which is still quite close to Amber) and feels no control. It is a populous Shadow, roughly at the 1800s stage of technology of Shadow Earth. Kyle discusses with Corin about making the Shadow harder to access, by whatever means, but they conclude that any meddling will likely make their presence known to the Serpent and the Unicorn. Kyle, with his more developed power of Trump, makes the Shadow impervious to Trump contact coming into the Shadow. While Kyle and Corin talk and discuss options, Bannoq maintains close watch on the two beings, watching for anything unusual, trying to pick up on any body language tells. All he sees is two beings comfortable with the others presence, and very much in love. The Serpent however is quivering with emotion. A shimmering starts in the air around the Unicorn, as the Serpent strokes the exhausted Unicorn's mane, his eyes full of tears, and she shifts into human form herself. The Unicorn is exquisitely beautiful, with a golden mane from her head down to the middle of her back.

Corin and Kyle feel a build-up of power, as though energies were rushing past them towards the Unicorn, like air would rush towards a vacuum. Corin brings up her Logrus sight and sees the gathering of power. The Serpent shakes his head, as the unicorn touches his cheek. The energies gather faster and faster. There is a pause, and with a sudden insight, both Corin and Kyle slam up some defences around them. The Unicorn's hand drops away from the Serpent's cheek, and at the same time there is a detonation of energies in the aether. The only physical manifestation, however, is a slight eruption of dust around and away from the Unicorn. The Unicorn is dead.

The Serpent pulls the Unicorn in closer in floods of tears, but making no sound, and oblivious to the protective power Kyle and Corin just released, which in other circumstances it must have noticed. Corin continues to evaluate what the ethereal explosion was and what it has done but cannot fathom it.

Suddenly, the Serpent raises his face skyward and howls in despair. A huge detonation of power erupts from him, shredding all things as it expands in the blink of an eye. Kyle and Corin feel nearby shadows torn asunder; the land around the Serpent buckles; and Kyle and Corin themselves are thrown from their feet. Only Bannoq manages to keep his feet. After a moment of mental stunning, Kyle and Corin, and Bannoq to a lesser degree feel an absence of any connection to their poles of power and to any other ability they possess. Corin feels a faint and vague connection to the Logrus, but she cannot grasp it. Looking back at the Serpent and the Unicorn. The Unicorn's physical form fades from existence, leaving only her Alicorn, which drops to the floor, tinkling as though made of glass. And the Serpent arises in wrath.

The Serpent transforms into a cobra-like form, continuing to scream, so loud now that it hurts the ears of the Amberites. Seeing the three of them, the Serpent charges towards them with unearthly speed. Bannoq stands his ground but dodges at the last minute. Lacking all power Kyle and Corin run for their lives, in opposite directions, but it becomes clear that the Serpent has eyes for just one. Corin.

The Serpent grows to even greater, more terrifying proportions, being now over 100 feet in length. Corin, realising she will be caught in mere moments tries to access her absent sorcery, and partially succeeds, becoming partially insubstantial in her smoke form. Bannoq runs to keep up with the Serpent and realising she cannot escape Corin turns and moves back towards the Serpent, hoping her partial spell success will be sufficient to protect her from the Serpent's wrath.

The Serpent's tail whipped around, striking Corin at her ankles, shredding her defensive spell, and instantly wrapped around her multiple times, pinning her arms to her sides,

before wrapping several times around her neck, stretching it, and making her eyes bulge. Corin's clothes and skin began to burn where the Serpent's tail encircled them, and the Serpent raised her from the ground, 30 feet into the air to meet its head. The Serpent bellowed and hissed words of power and potency, each one striking Corin and causing her skin to ripple, as though she were in a high-g centrifuge. Her hair, skin and flesh crisped, blackened and began to burn away with each word. Her last conscious thought was to send to the Serpent an image of the mark the dead Unicorn had left in her body.

The Serpents attack stops, and its eye widens at the image Corin has sent. Corin is lowered to the ground, and the Serpent morphs back into human form, standing over her broken form, with a stunned look on his face. Bannoq tries to talk to the Serpent, explaining that Corin has only been trying to help all along, but the Serpent ignores him and everything else, merely looking down at Corin. The only bit of Corin's body that remains untouched by the Serpents power is the white hair on her chest, the mark left by the Unicorn. Bannoq attempts to move closer to Corin to see what can be done, but this does get a reaction from the Serpent, who gazes at him and hisses. Bannoq halts and repeats what he said earlier about Corin. But the Serpent moves to stand between Bannoq and Corin and turns towards Corin.

The Serpent kneels by Corin's head and begins speaking in the ancient tongue, which they heard him and the Unicorn using earlier, his head drops in resignation. Kyle looks for the Alicorn but cannot find it. The Serpent places his palm on Corin's forehead, his little finger and thumb pressing on her temples. Both Corin and the Serpent are outlined in a soft red nimbus and Corin's body heals, leaving her in a calm and trouble-free sleep. The Serpent gathers some dust and throws it across her, as it settles it turns into a soft ruby colour blanket. The Serpent turns to Kyle and Bannoq. Bannoq says "Sorry for your loss.", but the Serpent ignores him. He raises a hand and out of its palm comes the Alicorn, and the Serpent speaks in a voice ruined by loss:

Here! Take the Alicorn. [throwing it, and it embeds point down at the feet of Kyle] You will need its power in the days to come. Death approaches from many sides. The elder spawn of Oberon scheme against you; the Master of the Void seeks to annihilate all of creation. And with the death of my beloved, the vaults that hold back the Old Gods will now finally crumble. Although they will be weak at first, their power will grow as they reclaim the potency lost to them in their defeats in ages past. Yes, you will have need of the power of the Alicorn in the times to come. All my desires have passed with the death of my beloved, and I will lament our struggles for the rest of Eternity. Your fates are now your own, and maybe the fate of all of Shadow and Reality are yours too. We will not meet again.

The Serpent then pivots on his heel and strides off, fading as he walks. Kyle feels his power slowly returning, and checks on Corin, who is in a calm dreamless sleep. Kyle wakes her gently. She recalls nothing much of the encounter with the Serpent and asks for them to

explain what happened, which they do. Kyle is convinced that the Serpent was bent on killing Corin but stopped short when he saw the mark of the Unicorn, and Corin explains that she sent the same image at the Serpent as it struck. Kyle relates the last words of the Serpent.

They work through the statement trying to piece things together. Corin relates her rescue from the Abyssal dungeons again, but this is the first time Bannoq has heard it, and of the attempt by a mysterious demon, who seemed uninhibited by the powerful magics placed around the dungeons to prevent access and escape. They frown over who the Old Gods might be, although Corin speculates that the Unicorn, the Serpent and Bennu are examples of them. Possibly the Master of the Void too.

Kyle is more worried about what the “elder spawn of Oberon” are. They run through the family members, highlighting those that are dead and those that are alive. They discount it might refer to Benedict, as if he wanted to be ruler he could be, and there is probably little anyone might do to stop him. They recall that Annael is coeval to Benedict and consider if it might refer to the children of Oberon whose deaths might be in doubt, i.e.: Finndo, Osric, Delwin and Sand.

Their powers now having fully returned they can sense that the Shadow is in turmoil, as are many Shadows radiating out from their position. Kyle and Corin reach out with their power to stabilise this Shadow and those nearby. They spend several hours doing this, but they realise that the turmoil spreads too far for them to have a realistic chance of calming it all, and they sense strong Shadow Storms have been triggered that are probably beyond their power to dampen without something like the Jewel to aid them.

Corin speculates that the enemies arrayed against them might require both Order and Chaos to come together to fight them. They wonder if Bennu has felt the death of the Unicorn, and wonder again who the Old Gods are, why they are locked away, and who put them there, and how does the Black Unicorn now fit into their number, if at all. And what of the Alicorn, which they all want to examine closely. They feel great power coming from it, of the same order or magnitude as the Jewel. Corin is eager to investigate further, especially as she carries a mark given to her by the Unicorn. But they just don't know enough about the Alicorn, although they fear it will have the same warping effect on Shadow as the Jewel.

They agree to keep the death of the Unicorn secret for now, but they just know Dworkin will find out eventually. They agree to return to Terra Prime and have a strong drink. Kyle and Bannoq decide to check on Benedict and leave Corin to study the Alicorn. Corin tries

to contact Suhuy but is unable to due to Kyle's historic Trump block on his Shadow, so she decides to leave the Shadow, so she can establish contact with her mentor.

Benedict is awake and sitting in a chair next to his bed, reading a book. He immediately asks about Corwin, and Kyle explains what has happened. Benedict is happy with the outcome and glad that Corwin did not have to be killed. Bannoq explains about what Martin tried to do, which Benedict understands but is, nevertheless, obviously disappointed. Kyle checks where Martin is, and he is now off in Shadow. Kyle wants the Annael problem dealt with, Benedict restates his position. Kyle then explains what happened with the Unicorn, explaining that he has kept things from Fiona and Dworkin. Benedict understands and agrees with Kyles actions. Kyles replays the scene as captured by his Trump, up to the point the Serpent explosion of emotion seemed to switch powers off. Benedict is reminded of a similar absence for a short while after Oberon fixed the Pattern, so such a phenomenon is not unheard of. Kyles then relates the Serpents final comments. Benedict cannot help, other than support the conclusions already arrived at. He knows nothing about the "elder spawn of Oberon" or the Old Gods. They agree that they need to talk to persons older than Benedict, and Benedict speculates that since Oberon was a High Lord of Chaos for eons prior to the founding of Amber, there could easily be children of his, born in those times, that no one in Amber has any knowledge of (except Dworkin maybe). Benedict seems convinced that he is the oldest child of Oberon, post the founding of the Pattern, but would think the Serpent knows what it is talking about. They discuss the Black Unicorn and whether it might carry some of the knowledge of the Unicorn, and therefore might know of the elder spawn. They agree that it depends on what was transferred in the splitting. Speculating on all the topics, Benedict says that contacting Bennu is very important now, as he may have insights that are simply not open to those of Amber. Their conversation over, Kyle plans to check on Corin and then to talk to Dworkin.

Corin quickly and quietly wanders into Shadow and makes contact with Suhuy. Suhuy explodes as contact is made, saying how Joshua has done something dumbfoundingly bad. Corin interrupts him and explains the fate of the Unicorn and the last message of the Serpent and explains how she believe it may need both Chaos and Amber to solve the coming challenges. Suhuy, initially dumbstruck at the news of the Unicorn and the Serpent, recovers only to admit he does not know what to do. Corin then shows him the Alicorn. Suhuy's head swims! Suhuy then explains how Joshua dumped the Pattern Ghost of Corwin on the door step of the Church of the Serpent. Given time naturally runs much faster in Chaos, a lot has happened since this event. Joshua fled the scene, pursued by a host from the Church of the Serpent, and the Church of the Serpent imprisoned the Pattern Ghost in the Cathedral dungeons. Suhuy thinks this is bad for whoever "donated" the blood, as there are some in the Church who practice Blood Magic of the most terrifying

kind. Corin smiles. Suhuy tells Corin to warn whoever gave the blood, that bad event might now happen. Suhuy explains that things are getting worse in Chaos, with almost zero demons, investigations into the Void are now blocked by some power, and the Church of the Serpent's influence is growing ever greater as they spread rumour about the Crowns inability to solve these issues. The Church of the Serpent is using the Pattern Ghost appearance as an example of an attack from Amber. Corin asks about the Old Gods and tells Suhuy he needs to marshal support to deal with the potential return of Old Gods. Suhuy seems to find something familiar about "the Old Gods" and will look into it. Corin asks if Bances had received any unusual messages recently, but Suhuy does not know. Suhuy warns Corin against coming home, given how the Church of the Serpent might react. They talk of any children of Oberon while he was a High Lord of Chaos. Suhuy says he will investigate this too. Suhuy says he will be in touch soon, and Corin wanders back to Terra Prime.

Bannoq see that Corin has gone and let's Kyle know. Kyles turns Trump access back on and Bannoq Trumps Corin and brings her through.

Kyle trumps through to the Primal Pattern, where Dworkin is still meditating at its centre. Fiona is still nearby, near the start of the Pattern. Kyle tells Fiona of what has happened, less the fact that he prevented her and Dworkin from tracking the Unicorn, and not including the conversation with the Serpent. Fiona mentions that Caine awoke a while ago but is now asleep again. Leaving Fiona, Kyle goes to see Caine and enters his dreams to see if he knows of the Old Gods and whether he has plans to take over. He finds nothing of the sort but does pick out from Caine's memories that he and Julian plan to kill Annael, given the chance, as revenge for Random's death, as they are both full brothers of Random. They have at least talked about it, at length. Kyle draws a trump of Annael's prison cell and leaves it near Caine. Kyles then goes back to the Primal Pattern, and Trumps back to his own Shadow to talk to Bannoq and Corin.

Corin relates her conversation with Suhuy, and how Joshua dumped the Pattern Ghost in the Courts. She talks of how everyone is going to have to come together, and it is their task to make this happen, but Kyle points out how unwelcome Corin is in Chaos, and how they are Amberites, so how can this be done? Kyles immediately attempts to draw a Sketch Trump of the Pattern Ghost. They speculate on what happens to the Church of the Serpent now the Serpent is gone but agree that nothing much is likely to change. The Crown was in pre-eminence at the time of the Patternfall War, but now the Church of the Serpent has grown in influence. Kyle cannot get through to the Pattern Ghost. It is very far away, and Kyles knows there are fool proof ways to block Trumps, and that the magicians in Courts of Chaos are probably very adept at this sort of thing.

Kyle urgently trumps Fiona and calls her through and tells her what has happened to the Pattern Ghost, filled with her blood. She is extremely upset, mostly at Joshua, not understanding what he thought he was doing and expressing the well-known motto she heard in some blackwater Shadow: "There's no cure for being a c**t!" Corin finds it hard to suppress her grin during the conversation, and it is very unseemly. Ignoring Corin, Fiona decides to return to Castle Amber to walk the Pattern. She trumps through to Julian and is gone. A debate is had on the merits of Fiona's efforts to destroy the Pattern during Patternfall vs. Corwin's recent attempts. Corin thinks Corwin had the excuse, given he was mad, and that Fiona has no such excuse. Kyle watches Fiona walk the Pattern through her trump. Everyone can tell that Fiona is not happy and very agitated.

Bannoq brings Benedict up to speed regarding Fiona, causing Benedict to muse over whether or not it is time to instruct Chaos again as to the wisdom of messing Amber and her children. They wonder if such a move is reasonable given that demons might erupt at any moment. But they also question whether the final words of the Serpent are trustworthy. Benedict reiterates that Bennu needs to be contacted urgently to try and enlist his aid. Corin agrees. They contact William and bring him through, bringing him up to speed on recent events. William seems reluctant to attempt any contact but does admit Bennu said he could make contact if he needed to. But William does not think Bennu wants to be disturbed by a visit. Bannoq explains that recent events change things dramatically and William reluctantly agrees to try to contact his father with his mind. And then if that fails then he will try to do so the hard way with the help of someone who can Shadow walk, which most seem to have forgotten William cannot do. He is uncertain about how long that will take, and he wanders off the try.

Bannoq brings up the Blood Droid, and whether they need to attempt contact with it, or at least get an update as to what it is up to and intervene if necessary. Kyle spies on the robot. He recognises the fact that the Shadow's time speed has been sped up to about 20:1 (the maximum). They see the Droid is now wandering through the streets of a hi-tech metropolis, where millions of objects zip everywhere; where buildings look like they are self-constructing; but the streets seem devoid of any inhabitants they would recognise. The Droid wanders into a large building with a silver sheen, and into a large circular room, at the centre of which is a circular dais on top of which is a large apparatus. The Droid stands in its centre. It begins to glow, and the Droid obviously enjoys basking in its light. After a few minutes, the Droid then gets off and observes a multitude of ethereal screen around the edges of the room, causing the occasional one to zoom towards it and expand as it does, so the Droid can observe what is happening somewhere in its shadow. Kyle takes in a psychic impression of the room, and of several of the locations seen on the screens, so he can make a Trumps of them later. Kyle then attempts trump contact.

Contact is made (the Shadow is roughly halfway to Chaos), and Kyle receives a sense of shock from the Droid, as though it was unaware of what is happening. Kyle calmly introduces himself and asks for the Droid's name. The Droid calls itself Stålmannen, and asks what Kyle wants. Kyle wants to know its intentions are, but Stålmannen is cagey. So, Kyle presses the point and tells Stålmannen that whatever its plans are will colour how Amber reacts to it. Stålmannen asks why Amber should want anything to do with it, given Stålmannen has left, and states it is no threat to them any longer. Stålmannen does not understand why either they or their enemies should care about it. Kyle talks of the problems in Reality and seeks to understand whether Stålmannen is an enemy or an ally. Stålmannen says it cares nothing for Amber's enemies and suggests that they probably do not know Stålmannen exists, so why should it fear them. Kyle casts doubt on this. Stålmannen admits to having felt certain powers in Shadow and he has taken precautions. It admits it's ignorance of the power of Trump, but now he will take precautions against that also. Stålmannen seems quite happy to leave Amber alone, if it is reciprocated, and it will not seek to speak or interfere with others, elsewhere in reality either. Kyle cannot speak for them and seeing no profit in further conversation, cuts the contact.

Kyle reports the conversation and that he considers Stålmannen is a threat, even if veiled at this time. Corin is not concerned right now, and she believes Stålmannen is simply a new kind of being, trying to find its way right now. Kyle fears its morals and what its plans might be as it flexes its new found powers. Bannoq thinks it will deal with threats as they appear and does not think provoking it right now will help. Corin does not think the powers arrayed against them will care for the droid. Bannoq points to Stålmannen's last statement, that it's enemies would need to be "educated", suggesting that Stålmannen will likely go after potential threats, so its Shadow and actions need monitoring at the moment, to see how it reacts to other threats if they appear. Corin is keen to talk to it to get help, but Kyle says it did not seem to be interested. Corin makes an analogy to it being a "baby", not knowing anything right now, other than the need for self-preservation. Corin does not believe it is a threat unless it starts to work against them.

Kyle asks about the Alicorn, but Corin has not really had the chance to study it. They have a long discussion about the connection between the Jewel and the Patterns, and what comparisons they might make with the Alicorn. Ultimately, they agree that the Jewel is a tool, with which the Pattern was created; that the Jewel existed prior to the Patterns; and that the Pattern is not required for attunement to the Jewel. Dworkin's was attuned, possibly with the help of the Unicorn, and used the Jewel to create the first Pattern. And they recall that Corwin helping to attune Random at the end of Patternfall. Who else was attuned at some point? The full list being, Dworkin, Oberon, Eric, Corwin and Random, at least. They speculate why the two Patterns are different, when they were created by the same Jewel. They speculate that anyone one person's view of the Pattern in the Jewel is

slightly different due to the different facets of the Jewel. Hence the differences between the two Patterns. So, theoretically any number of Patterns might be created, depending on who did the scribing.

Kyle wants the Jewel and asks Benedict where it is. He has locked in his quarters in Amber. Corin wants to walk the Pattern carrying the Alicorn, to see if she can attune herself to the Alicorn. Kyle wants to prove Bannoq's theory that different patterns exist in the Jewel, depending on one's perceptions.

So, Kyle and Benedict depart for Amber via Trump, where Benedict retrieves the Jewel and hands it to Kyle. Kyle studies the Jewel. The Pattern within looks like Amber's Primal Pattern. As Kyle twists the Jewel, he thinks he notices differences, but then on closer inspection the Pattern within still looks like Amber's Primal Pattern. Kyle and Benedict return to Terra Prime and ask Corin to look through the Jewel. In a moment of mental weakness Corin considers to herself the wisdom of bringing the Alicorn and the Jewel together.....but refrains. Corin doesn't really see anything within the Jewel. Probably because she is not attuned. Bannoq takes the Alicorn whilst Corin studies the Jewel, which he studies and feels it tingle against his skin, but he cannot make anything else of it. It feels odd, but that's it. But then Bannoq admits he does not possess the necessary skills to investigate it.

They speculate that there seems nothing specific to Chaos or Order about the Jewel (and probably not the Alicorn either). Corin again proposes she walk Corwin's Pattern carrying the Alicorn, to try and investigate it and attune to it. As though in an effort to head off any questions, she explains that she has nowhere to go, so she is not going to run off with it. Bannoq meditates while holding the Alicorn, but other than having a calm experience he gets nothing.

Corin asks after Fiona, with a grin. Kyle explains that she is walking the Pattern, and Kyle pointedly asks if Corin has a problem with his mother. Corin's sarcasm is positively pouring from her mouth and asks why she should have any issue with someone who has wanted to destroy known reality.

Anyway, Benedict does not like Corin's idea. Corin sarcasm continues and asks what magical expertise he brings to the conversations. Benedict calmly responds, none, but he does have over 3000 years of general experience, which has included observations of many different magics, including the Jewel, and that sometimes it is better to do nothing than something which might have a bad or unforeseen outcome. Benedict makes the point that the Pattern, having been created by the Jewel, taking the Alicorn on a Pattern Walk, is probably not a great idea. Corin shuts up. Also, given it seems highly likely that Benu is

a being of the same order as the Serpent and the Unicorn, Benedict suggest he might help understand the potential of the Alicorn.

They agree that the Alicorn needs to be returned to Amber, somewhere safe, where it will not corrupt the Shadow. Corin is not in full agreement, and has another spat with Benedict, and sarcastically brings up the elder spawn of Oberon threat from the Serpent. They have not come to any final agreement, when Kyle gets Trump contact from Julian. Julian asks them all to return, as long-lost brother Delwin has returned, who won't talk to anyone individually, and he asked to speak to Kyle. Julian brings them all through, along with the Jewel and the Alicorn. They appear in the Royal Court, where guards line the walls, although all are fairly relaxed.

They see Delwin standing at ease near to Julian. Delwin immediately asks to speak to Kyle alone. They wander to a balcony off the court room. Delwin tells Kyle that he has arrived to take Kyle to see his "Master", and whoever else wishes to come with them. Kyle asks why, and Delwin says there are people Kyle needs to meet urgently, people who can help regards the current situation and the future, and they have lots of information that will prove helpful. Unless they are more forewarned about the future and the past, then Amber and Chaos will fall. Kyles asks where he has been, Delwin just says working with his friends, who want to protect Reality, without wanting to master it. Kyle uses passive sorcery to try and pick up on "tells" and odd body language being given by Delwin, to see if he is telling the truth. As far as Kyle can tell, Delwin does seem to be telling the truth.

Kyle wants to know who these people are. But Delwin can only confirm that Sand is one of them. Delwin says Kyle does not have to come on his own, who can bring almost anyone or anything with them. Kyle asks where they are going and who they will be seeing. Delwin says he will be taken to his "master". Kyles asks why this cannot be done by Trump and Delwin explains that Trumps will not bridge the gap between this Reality and where his "master" resides. Kyles wants to know how, therefore, they will get there. Delwin says they it will mean going through a place that it is highly unlikely they know about, been to, or could access on their own. Only Delwin and a few others in Reality know how to get there. Kyle asks if there was a reason for the need for privacy, and Delwin explains that when more are present it all too often turns into a debate, and also that he is sick of the Barriman family, the goings on of their father and the tiresome political intrigue of the place and hoped he might avoid such a multi-personality conversation. Delwin has been convince by his "master" that a meeting between Amber and him is needed, and thought that as the younger generation, Kyle might be the best person to start the conversation with, given the absence of "baggage".

As they return to the courtroom, Corin uses Logrus sight to examine Delwin, but sees nothing unusual, and Kyle explains the conversation to everyone else and asks who wants to go. To Corin's sight, Delwin is definitely magically active (but no green "tinge" as she feared), and obviously has Advanced Pattern powers. Delwin says that none of his siblings are invited. Delwin looks dispassionately at Julian, who responds by exclaiming that Delwin always was a bit of a tosser before stomping off.

Benedict hurries the guards away, and finally nods to Delwin, saying that it is good to see him again. Kyle gives the Jewel to Benedict for safe keeping, and Benedict leaves. Delwin merely nods back to Benedict.

Bannoq remains suspicious and wants to know the purpose, Delwin repeats what he said to Kyle about the need for allies and knowledge. Bannoq is not impressed. What sort of thing is coming? Delwin lets them know he is aware of what the Serpent has told them and echoes it and knows more, to be revealed by his master. Bannoq asks if Delwin can ID the factions of which the Serpent spoke. Corin says he had better not mention demons as they already know of that danger. Delwin says that Oberon had three children in Chaos before the Pattern was scribed, two sons and a daughter. The eldest of these children had his own children, through incest with his mother. These are the ones of which the Serpent spoke. They were named in order; Darrius, Marcus and Nimueh. It was Darrius who is the father of the other two children. All are older than Benedict by a considerable margin.

Bannoq wants to know how Delwin knew of him. Delwin explains that they were aware of Bannoq from his birth, but they would need to accompany Delwin to his master to learn more. He explains that his "master" is an observer of time and Reality, who he and Sand have allied themselves to, in order to protect reality, by giving those in most need, knowledge of the troubles they face. Bannoq suggests it might be that they pretend to give knowledge, with the purpose of seducing those who could protect reality, and therefore prevent them from actually helping, and remove them from the picture. Delwin says "one has to trust someone", and that those of Amber already had, in the form of Corin, even though she of is Chaos. Delwin says again they can bring anyone they choose, other than his siblings.

Kyle trumps in William and explains to him who Delwin is. Delwin is surprised at William, and remarks that they have already has access to a powerful potential ally in Bennu, if he can be persuaded to come to your side. Kyle explains to William who Delwin is and who he now serves. Corin makes some remarks about how trustworthy Delwin is and compares him to the rest of the generation. Delwin suggests they ask the uncles and aunts the reasons why Sand and Delwin left. Kyle struggles with Delwin's reticence to tell them who they are going to see and where they are going. However, Kyle reluctantly agrees, and asks

Delwin to lead on. Corin remarks that if they get captured, then it would be Joshua who might have to rescue them, after which he would utterly insufferable until the end of time. Kyle disagrees and suggests that providence will simply not allow such an obscene set of circumstance to come about.

While Corin re-racks some Logrus spells, Delwin suggests to Bannoq that the Alicorn should remain in Amber. Bannoq wants to know why, but Delwin just wants it protected and for it not to be lost or damaged in Shadow, and that they are going to a place where it might accidentally be damaged. Not knowing much of the Alicorn, he cannot be sure. He believes it is wise to leave that in Amber, but that Bannoq's sword should be OK. Bannoq listens and leaves the Alicorn with Benedict.

They wander off with Delwin, who starts to shift shadow as soon as possible. Kyle senses that Delwin is carrying Trumps. They quickly leave the Golden Circle and begin to move through Shadow rapidly. They are not on a hell-ride, but more of a hell-trot (much mirth followed). Eventually they arrived at a mountainous region. In the side of a mountain was a large opening/cave. Delwin warns them they need to pass through realm of reality that will be very uncomfortable to them, and that is a place where their powers will be suppressed and may not even work. But they will get through it as quickly as they can.

Before entering the cave, Bannoq updates Benedict as to their location. They enter the cavern, and very soon they pass over the threshold into the negative world of Undershadow, as they come out of the other side of the mountain. They feel their powers are indeed suppressed and cloaked, but not totally cut off. They wander through a negative landscape until they come to a city. Pattern sight is suppressed and localised and inhibited. Trumps are not working at all. They pass through the streets of the city where they see figures wandering around, seemingly aimless and occasionally passing through them, with a shudder and an odd look. Far off in the distance there is the occasional super bright light. Delwin remarks that they are other entrances into this place, but they could be the other side of the mountain range they entered Undershadow through or be as far as the Courts of Chaos. Distance works very differently in Undershadow.

They arrive at a cathedral like building where there is a greater concentration of these incorporeal being. They enter the cathedral and at its centre is a huge white dome of energy, which Delwin describes as the gateway to the Realm of Knowledge, where his master resides. There they will regain full access to their powers, but somethings cannot be achieved, such as shadow-walking. They pass through the dome and find themselves in a wide-open plain, normal Shadow like (a bit like Monument Valley in Arizona, USA). They can see many Mesa's. Delwin leads them on a long walk through the valleys. In the distance they see a singularly huge Mesa and built onto its front on its top and on the sides

are huge buildings. Only small parts of the Mesa sides and plateau can be seen. This place feels odd, but they do indeed have access to their powers. They do not believe they are in any Shadow that exists between the Courts and Amber.

They walk up to some huge gates in the main building on the side of the Mesa. Two beings guard the gate. As they look at them, their eyes slide off the guards and though they have trouble keeping their eyes on them or even seeing them properly. One guard seems to become clearer and walks forward, holding up a hand. Delwin explains how he is bringing guests to speak to The Patriarch. The Guard bows and allows them to pass. Delwin lets them know they are in the Realm of Knowledge, dwelling of The Great Patriarch and his acolytes, who record all things that happen in the Reality between Chaos and Order. Here they might start to gain the knowledge they require to support their future toils, although some knowledge takes longer to acquire. Delwin leads them through great halls, passing many genderless beings who wander the halls on a multitude of unknown tasks. The travel inwards to where they think must be near the centre of the Mesa, which opens into a huge circular and dome roofed Amphitheatre. At its centre is a seemingly bottomless 20 feet diameter circular hole, hovering at its centre is a huge white globe-like gem, fully 4 feet across. For 30 feet or so around the hole is a flat walkway, and kneeling at its edge, facing the hovering gem, is an old man, eyes closed, as through meditating. As they enter he looks up, slowly gets to his feet and wanders up the steps to greet them.

As they walk down the steps, Kyle and Corin feel a frightening amount of power emanating from the gem at the rooms centre. More powerful than any singular power they have yet had experience of. It is reminiscent of the power of Spikards but on a vastly greater scale. It outshines even the Jewel of Judgement.

The Patriarch bows to them as they come close. He invites them to sit so they can talk. The Patriarch dismissed Delwin who graciously departs. Kyle takes the lead and asks his name, but he repeats his title only. Kyle pressures for a name, but The Patriarch only repeats his title. He is the Patriarch of the followers of Fintan. Corin asks "what" he is. The Patriarch explains he has no gender, and he was created eons ago by Fintan, whose teachings and purpose he follows. His purpose is to gather knowledge of all Reality, by the command of Fintan, so it can be imparted to those of worth, and who serve the best interests of Reality. Bannoq asks who Fintan is and the Patriarch explains he is his Lord, to which Corin adds that the Patriarch must be Fintan's High priest. The Patriarch acknowledges this, and also remarks that Fintan is lost to reality many eons ago. The Patriarch explains that Fintan was the same kind of being as the Serpent, the Unicorn and Bennu.

The Patriarch explains he knows of what the Serpent spoke to them in its final meeting. Kyle asks him to elaborate. The Patriarch tells them to follow him. They pass along several

corridors and up many stairs, slowly circling back on themselves, and they get the feeling that they are now above the Amphitheatre. They arrive at an old iron bound door. He opens it into a huge natural rough-cut cavern. At its centre is a huge stalagmite, that has had a spiral staircase carved into its outer skin, and from which at regular vertical intervals of around 20 feet, are arched gangways which link to walkways formed around the inner edge of the wider cavern. Inscribed and carved on the inner walls of the cavern are hieroglyphs of some kind that obviously tell a creation story, and of the events that followed, as the hieroglyphs move up the cavern walls. The hieroglyphs themselves seem to morph occasionally, as if there is not enough wall to contain the whole story, so as some elements shrink to near nothing, other symbols expand so they can be interpreted as the story progresses. Every so often bit of dust falls off the changing symbols, and they see cones of dust on the floor, scattered all around the cavern floor. To read the whole story would require one to ascend the spiral staircase and read each level. The cavern is very, very high, and the story very long. The Patriarch then begins to tell them the story of the Old Gods:

In the infinite, before time and space, there was nothing. And yet in the expanse, there was something, and from something was born Primal Chaos. Primal Chaos exploded, forming time and space, and it raged for eons, making, destroying and remaking things beyond the imagination of any mind that was to be.

After what must have been an eternity of the destruction and renewal, even the fury of Primal Chaos abated. In this calm, beings came to be, which were proof against the ongoing creation and annihilation of Primal Chaos. These beings were legion, and of every mental and physical disposition imaginable.

As many of these beings fought and died in a mindlessly conflict, some few allied themselves, seeking to master the still raging chaos around them. Islands of stability were formed and between these islands of reality other realms emerged, shadows of the dwelling places of these beings, but of substance nonetheless, and proof against the chaos around them. This plethora of possibilities these beings explored eagerly, for although within them was the power of creation, they knew not all its wonders, and they explored to learn more of existence. These beings formed the first languages to aid in their understanding, and they named themselves the Vanyrie.

But they were not alone, and the mad cousins of their shared substance raged in between and across the Shadows of their creation. So, the Vanyrie used their knowledge and power in concert, and they threw down these mad beasts of the void and chaos. But like the Vanyrie, these mad beasts were immortal by nature, and their substance ever regenerated almost any wound or affliction. So, the Vanyrie combined their might in unison one last time, and formed a prison for their mad cousins, casting each of the beasts into a realm of its own, where it could live out all eternity however it wished, without intruding on the reality of the Vanyrie. And the Vanyrie set guardians on this prison, mindless constructs of vast physical potency, whose only tasks were to keep the mad beasts imprisoned, and to obey only the Vanyrie should they come to the prison again.

As the Vanyrie become more familiar with their own power and with the wider reality, they observed strange shapes being created within Shadow and in between, and they took on aspects of that which they saw, aspects that pleased them, including names and bodily shapes.

Abaddon was the greatest of the Vanyrie and adopted the masculine gender. He took on a shape that would be known as the Scorpion. Abaddon was mighty in form, in both mind, body and soul, all in equal measure. And so, Abaddon believed that he should be Lord of the Vanyrie, and of all Reality. In his soul was a darkness that drove him to dark thoughts, dark words and dark deeds. He had no allies amongst the Vanyrie, and he hated his fellow Vanyrie for this.

Artio was wild, ferocious and powerful, and adopted the feminine gender. She took on the shape that would become known as the Bear. She and Centaurus were closer in mind and character than any of the other Vanyrie, and long would they range across Reality, discovering new things, and seeing new sights. She loved the wild places and was forever a defender of them. But she was vain and petulant, and was often in conflict with Hrolleif, and the Bear and the Wolf were forever enemies. But most of her ire was directed at Fintan, whom she envied his great knowledge.

Bennu revelled in the light and the free skies of Reality. Taking on the masculine gender and the form that was to be known of as the Eagle, he flew higher and further than all others. He found solace in the company of Cygnius and Macha more than all others. He always sought to learn more of the primal forces of Reality, and craved knowledge that would allow him to fashion worlds and peoples of his own, and in this pursuit, he had no peer.

Centaurus loved to speed boldly across all Reality, more often than not with Artio, taking on the masculine gender, and the shape that would be known as the Stag. Artio was his constant companion in the early days of existence, but he found equal affinity and pleasure in the company of the Unicorn, whom he loved as a sister. Centaurus was wiser than Artio, and often calmed her to prevent the worst of her excesses.

Cygnius was a soulful and peaceful being, forever concerned with the thoughts, peace and love that others might have for themselves and each other. Cygnius took on the feminine gender and adopted the shape that would be known as the Swan. Cygnius, alone among the Vanyrie, was loved by all the Vanyrie, and they would always listen to her council, which she gave freely. Cygnius perceived things that none of the other Vanyrie, except Fintan perhaps, could, and she was able to bring peace among her brethren, so that whilst she lived, there was no lasting conflict between them.

Fintan had a mind that was greater, wider and wiser than any of the Vanyrie. He did not adopt a gender, but his fellow Vanyrie considered him masculine. He adopted the shape of a mighty Salmon that swam through the substance of Reality. Fintan's knowledge of Reality was greater than all that were, are or that will be, and some among the Vanyrie feared and envied this knowledge, fearing it gave Fintan power over them, for Fintan saw further and deeper than all others.

Hrolleif adopted the masculine gender, and he was the most ferocious of the Vanyrie. Quicker to anger and violence than any of the Vanyrie, this anger and violence is matched only by his loyalty

to those he considered his friends. He adopted the shape of the Wolf. When rage was upon him, few could stand long against such raw potency, fewer still might hope to master Hrolleif, unless great preparations had been made, and only Cygnius was capable of calming him.

Maahes was a noble and proud being, adopting the masculine gender. But his conceit was vast and he proudly desired lordship over all of Reality, as his birth right. He took on the form that would be known as the Lion. His martial prowess was without peer amongst the Vanyrie, as was his pride, and his lauded his victories over those he defeated.

Macha is the most magical of all the Vanyrie. Her knowledge of Reality was second only to Fintan, and her magical aptitude without peer. She adopted the form that became known as the Raven and she flew often with Bennu and Cygnius. But she also delved into the matters and substance of Reality, and her magical power grew so vast, that whatever she might conceive in her mind, she was capable of achieving in Reality.

Serpent, only slightly less mighty than Abaddon, took on a masculine gender. He was the most cunning and secretive of the Vanyrie, he took on the form of a huge Snake. Serpent has few friends among the Vanyrie, but few enemies also, until near the end. He always sought to take the advantage where fate offered it, but in those early eons, he rarely confronted his fellow Vanyrie directly, preferring secrecy and subterfuge.

Tauron was the strongest the Vanyrie and took on the masculine gender. He is slow to anger, slow to forget and slow to forgive. When he determined the need for action, few could withstand his power on the field. Tauron took on the form of that which become known as the Bull. Tauron kept to himself in all things and remained apart from his fellow Vanyrie until drawn into their War by the actions of Maahes.

Unicorn was the most beautiful of the Vanyrie and took on the feminine gender. She sped through Reality, much like Centaurus, but faster and with a grace that none could match. She took on the form that would be known as the Horse. She was a strong ally of Fintan and Centaurus, whom she often admonished for his friendship with Artio, whom she considered a lesser being.

And lastly, Watatsumi, Lord of Waves and all fluids, he took on the masculine gender, second only to Tauron in physical might, he also possessed a great mind and had martial prowess that was second only to Maahes. He took on the aspect that become known as the Seahorse. In battle few might hope to stand against him, for he was so mighty in all physical aspects.

The Vanyrie adopted names that pleased them, which were:

- Abaddon, the Lord of the Dark
- Artio, the Wildling
- Bennu, the Lord of Light
- Centaurus, Soul of the Wild
- Cygnius, Lady of Grace
- Fintan, Lord of Knowledge
- Hrolleif, the Ferocious
- Maahes, the Warrior

Macha, Lady of Enchantment
Serpent, the Ever Changing
Tauron, the Indomitable
Unicorn, the Delicate
Watatsumi, Lord of Waves and Wind

Eons passed, and the Vanyrie learnt to control creation with more skill and they achieved great things. But none learnt more or understood Reality more deeply than Fintan. He gathered knowledge of all things, of all possibilities, and with the growth in his knowledge, his fear for its misuse by his fellow Vanyrie grew. So, he guarded his knowledge, jealously, using powerful magics to ensure it could not be forced from him. Abaddon, who grew impatient with his own power of Reality, demanded knowledge from Fintan, but Fintan denied him, and enmity was born between them.

As the Vanyrie put forth their powers to mould Reality to their will, the creative forces of Primal Chaos continued to rage, and in the areas of stability that the Vanyrie had helped create, new beings formed. Weaker, more numerous, and in a multitude of shapes and sizes. Some say these were pale reflections of the Vanyrie themselves, some say they were independent of the Vanyrie and were yet more expressions of Primal Chaos trying to understand itself. Some of these beings clearly had intellect, and when they came into contact with the Vanyrie, they recognised the potency of the Vanyrie, and some began to worship the Vanyrie as gods.

Macha became the Mistress of Magic and her power and ability with it surpassed that of any other being that might ever live within the boundaries of Reality. Her knowledge also increased, becoming second only to Fintan's, and in some aspects of magical knowledge, even more so. Macha became obsessed with creations of her own, and she put forth her power, slowly, painfully, but with a potency that no other among the Vanyrie could match. Macha disappeared for many Eons, even to the penetrating sight of Fintan, and it was long before she returned.

The worship given the Vanyrie by the ever-growing multitudes of Shadow struck the Vanyrie in different ways. Maahes found the worship pleasing and sought ever to grow his numbers of worshipers, and eventually his pride grew so great that he sought dominion over the Vanyrie themselves. At first, he sought dominion through persuasion, desiring his fellow Vanyrie to voluntarily acknowledge him as Lord over all the Vanyrie and of all Reality, for he surely had the largest following. But he was denied by all, and the seeds of conflict were born amongst the Vanyrie.

In those ancient times, some among the Vanyrie developed closer relationship. Unicorn and Serpent fell in love and were for a time inseparable. But even in the throes of love, they remained fundamentally different of mind on so many things. Yet their love and union remained for many Eons until it was broken when Serpent fashioned The Logrus. Abaddon, seeing within the relationship between Unicorn and Serpent something he could not fathom, desired it all the same, and he began to woo Cygnius.

Fintan's quest for knowledge continued unabated, and such was his knowledge that he fashioned the first and greatest of the Spikards, investing it with much of his own power, to aid him in his quest. Using the Spikard he became greater than all other Vanyrie and was capable of vast and

powerful acts of creation, so great that he feared what such power might do to him, so he used it rarely. Absent the Great Spikard, he was much diminished, and always hid this knowledge from his siblings. Only with Watatsumi, Fintan's great friend, did he share this knowledge of how to fashion Great Spikards, and Watatsumi fashioned one for himself, although under Fintan's instruction, not one that required him to give so much of himself, and so his Great Spikard was itself, not as potent as Fintan's.

But this knowledge could not be withheld from the other Vanyrie, and on discovering of their existence, most of the other Vanyrie attempted to create their own Spikards, but without Fintan's instruction, all these objects were of much lesser potency. Nevertheless, many Minor and Major Spikards were created by the Vanyrie, although most are now lost to annals of history. Unicorn, in an effort to mirror Fintan and Watatsumi's Great Spikards, feigned friendship with Fintan to gain the requisite knowledge, but Fintan saw through her, and whilst he shared some knowledge to prevent Unicorn from realising he was aware of her ruse, Fintan did not impart sufficient knowledge for Unicorn to be able to create her own Great Spikard. Nevertheless, the knowledge that Unicorn did garner was of great help to her eons later.

As the eons passed, some of the followers of the Vanyrie were invested with divine power, transforming them into true beings, and giving them the power to move between the Shadows of Reality. Fintan's knowledge continued to grow and he began to have premonitions of the future. He formed the Realm of Knowledge and placed a veil of secrecy between it and the rest of Reality, so that not even the other Vanyrie could penetrate it. Fintan took those he considered his people to the Realm of Knowledge and set about creating for them a place where they could look out upon all of creation, and he invested within them more power, so they could see and record all that happened across the Realms. At the centre of the Realm of Knowledge Fintan placed his Great Spikard, to help fuel the Realm and to protect it, and he instructed his chief servant in its use. Fintan's new knowledge of the future stalled all further development, and he began to frantically scribe all he knew of what was to come.

In the Lands of Shadow, Abaddon's courting of Cygnius became more fervent and desperate. Abaddon wanted Cygnius' beauty for himself alone, believing through her he would gain power over the other Vanyrie. Hrolleif, most ferocious of the Vanyrie, warned Abaddon to give up his desire for Cygnius or face the Wolf. Abaddon is apoplectic with rage but hid his anger. Then at one of the many great feasts of the Vanyrie, Abaddon poisoned Hrolleif for the insult he had given. Hrolleif was sent into an uncontrolled rage, becoming mentally unstable, with an unquenchable thirst for violence. Only Cygnius, as ever, was able to calm him, and forestall disaster. Hrolleif's fits of rage became frequent, meaning Cygnius had to expend much of herself in his calming.

During one of the times of peace, Abaddon secretly sought Cygnius' hand once again, but she denied him, knowing how Hrolleif needed her, and being wise enough to know that she must give herself to all her kin, not just to one. Abaddon's rage became incandescent, and he struck out at the fatigued Cygnius, slaying her. Appalled by his actions, but remaining ever selfish and spiteful, he covered his crime and sent his servants across Shadow to lay false trails of information, implicating others among the Vanyrie, in the death of Cygnius.

Cygnius' death was felt by all the other Vanyrie, so close they had all become with her. Hrolleif flew instantly into an uncontrolled rage of destruction, directed at all the other Vanyrie. So sudden

was his rage and ferocity, the Vanyrie were scattered, and they fled before him. Abaddon's lies resulted in the Vanyrie splitting into factions, accusing each other of the death of Cygnius, and none would be moved from what they believe to be the truth. The War of the Vanyrie began.

Serpent kept his own council and kept out of the early conflict for the most part, preferring to see how events play out. He maintained limited contact with all sides, but particularly with Abaddon and of course Unicorn, both of whom, he foresaw would play significant roles in the war and the times to come after the war.

Maahes gathered his forces rapidly and struck swiftly at the other Vanyrie. After several quick and successful battles, he had many of his brethren beaten back, and he expanded his influence to absorb their lands. But he expanded too far and was fighting on too many fronts, and with no natural allies, his advances halted. With the death of Cygnius, Hrolleif's rage was uncontrollable, and he is indiscriminate in his attacks on the other Vanyrie, slaying many of their servants and driving them before him. Abaddon continued to act in secret, spreading lies and sowing deceit amongst all his kin. This hardened their hearts against each other's, and a peace seemed impossible.

Maahes, trying to gain ground on new fronts, attacked Tauron, who had to that moment remained apart from the conflict. Tauron was slow to anger, but when woken, his wrath was fearsome to behold. Tauron responded, supported by Unicorn and Abaddon (because Abaddon feared a victorious Maahes). Tauron conquered the realms of the overstretched Maahes. Maahes' pride was too great and he refused to surrender. So, at the end Tauron slew him in single combat to end his efforts at dominion.

Watching from afar Serpent saw the death of Maahes, and he has also become aware of some of the deceits of Abaddon, who he knew was the mightiest, if also the most craven of the Vanyrie. But Serpent was more cunning than his fellow Vanyrie, and using same tactics against Abaddon, sowed lies and deceits of his own, causing the other Vanyrie to revolt against Abaddon. In the ensuing battles Abaddon lost much of that which he had gained through his lies, and these great losses continued for some time after. But none of the Vanyrie understood the full reserves Abaddon could call on. In a fit of rage and vitriol Abaddon claimed the other Vanyrie unworthy custodians of creation and claimed the title of Emperor of the Vanyrie. He unleashed forces and powers that he had in reserve and it seemed he was bent on the utter destruction of all the Vanyrie.

Having seen the power of the awoken Tauron in his defeat of the mighty Maahes and fearing how powerful Tauron would be if allowed to fully recover, Serpent quickly struck at the weakened Tauron, defeating him with ease. Serpent imprisoned Tauron secretly in the Realm of Prisons, for only the Realm of Prisons was secure enough, and the Sentinels of the Prison potent enough to contain one of the Vanyrie.

Artio and Centaurus conceive (correctly) that Fintan had the knowledge of who might be the murderer of Cygnius and they sought him out, to demand this knowledge. Unable to locate Fintan, they looked for Watatsumi to gain the knowledge of where Fintan dwells, knowing they were close. Watatsumi warned them off attempting to influence Fintan. But Artio took the 'advice' very poorly and conflict erupted between them. But Watatsumi, possibly of all the Vanyrie, had the

best combination of physical and mental might, and they had found him in his own lands where his power was greatest. Seeing the might of Watatsumi, Centaurus urgently called upon the aid of Bennu, whilst Artio and Watatsumi battled. Artio was powerful, with endurance of legend, but Watatsumi could match her for strength, and far exceeded her in military prowess and primordial magical power. And being in his home lands and therefore being additionally enhanced, Watatsumi soundly defeated Artio. But Watatsumi had already decided that he could not kill his sister, for his honour among the gods was without peer. It was upon this scene that Bennu arrived and fearing the worst Bennu and Centaurus combined their power and struck at Watatsumi. The sudden strike overwhelmed Watatsumi and by some fluke, slew him. Bennu was troubled by the death of Watatsumi, for he knew Watatsumi was one of the best of them.

Fintan, who had observed the ruin being wrought by his kin, returned from his Realm of Knowledge. Wishing to remain apart during the war, and favour no side, as he understood what was to come, but nevertheless he was drawn to the death scene of Watatsumi. Artio and Centaurus demand to know what Fintan's knew of Cygnius' death, and the reason for the war of the Vanyrie. Bennu joined the coercion when he learnt Fintan might have knowledge of Cygnius' murderer. But Fintan refused, saying that in the unwarranted killing of Watatsumi, they had lost all honour and right to such knowledge, but also in the confines of his own mind, Fintan knew what was ordained to be. At Fintan's refusal to cooperate, Artio and Centaurus attacked him. As one unsuited to combat, and being away from his Great Spikard, Fintan was easily overcome. In her rage Artio dealt Fintan a final death blow. In his last breath Fintan completed his fate and revealed Abaddon's murder of Cygnius. Bennu was struck dumb by this news, that all the conflict between the gods had been due to the selfish nihilistic mind of Abaddon. In grief beyond understanding, Bennu withdrew from the war to consider his next move, seeking counsel with Macha only.

Against the advice of Centaurus who refused to stay for the act, the raging Artio consumed the body and mind of Fintan hoping to gain his knowledge, but instead was sent mad by the sudden influx of the reality that all the Vanyrie have been played by Abaddon. Artio flew into an uncontrolled rage, and she bent all her will to the destruction of Abaddon. Artio confronted Abaddon, but in her madness, she lost control, and Abaddon was still the greater. Artio was thrown down by Abaddon and captured. She was tortured by Abaddon's servants and eventually her material form was damaged and diminished so much, it faded from Reality.

With Artio gone, Bennu sought for Tauron and discovered Serpent's defeat of the Bull God. Bennu demanded Serpent release Tauron from his gaol, and when Serpent refused, there was war between them. Both were strong and relatively undamaged in the war to date, so neither could overcome the other. And there grew a lasting hatred between them.

Realising that Hrolleif could not be allowed to continue his random rage of destruction, Unicorn and Macha lend their power to Centaurus. Centaurus battled Hrolleif for many, many days, finally defeating the great Wolf (but not wanting to kill him). As Serpent had done with Tauron, he placed Hrolleif in the Realm of Prisons, where Hrolleif's rage could do no more harm. Centaurus was utterly exhausted by his efforts, and Unicorn and Macha departed. Serpent took advantage of Centaurus' weakened state after Centaurus' defeat of Hrolleif. Serpent bit Centaurus causing Centaurus to fall into a deep slumber, and Serpent once again sealed one of his brother Vanyrie in the Realm of Prisons, where Centaurus yet resides, sleeping.

Bennu, seeing and feeling the ruin of his brethren and, with the knowledge gain from Fintan, blaming for the most part Abaddon as the primary instigator of the war, attacked the weakened Scorpion god with all his might, having been lent huge magical power by Macha. Exhausted by the previous aid lent in the defeat of Hrolleif, and now even greater aid given unto Bennu an exhausted Macha fades from existence during the final conflict with Abaddon. Bennu threw down Abaddon and laid him low and cast him into the Abyss, along with all Abaddon's servants, sending him into an eternal sleep, which will never end so long as the power of Serpent, Unicorn and Bennu held sway over reality. With only three of the Vanyrie left alive in the Shadows of Chaos, much of the essence of the fallen Vanyrie was absorbed by the remaining three, making them greater, in some respects, than they had ever been, but only while the other Vanyrie were lost.

Bennu turned to the source of all, and used his new power to split Primal Chaos, taking with him a large portion of it. Splinters of Primal Chaos were thrown across shadow, and where they fell, Shadows are either destroyed, or they acquired great power. Bennu merged with the Primal Chaos he had taken and used his newfound energies to syphon a small portion of reality off from the rest of Shadow. Only he knows how it was achieved, and only he can move or allow others to move between his own reality and the normal reality. Bennu collapsed the Shadows he took, and remoulded them into Ea.

Seeing what Bennu achieved when merged with a portion of Primal Chaos, the Serpent and the Unicorn created The Courts of Chaos in an effort stabilise reality after the tumults of the War of the Vanyrie and Bennu's own act of separation. The tumults caused by Bennu, Serpent and Unicorn's creations sends turmoil into every corner of Reality. Stability of a kind is finally arrived at due to the existence of The Courts. But Reality remained chaotic outside of The Courts, with the homes of the Vanyrie becoming ever smaller islands in the growing storm of Chaos, as the power of the lost Vanyrie faded or was absorbed elsewhere. Around the edges of The Courts, the mix of chaos and stability aided in the evolution of the first shape-changers, with help from the Serpent and the Unicorn, and so The Courts was inhabited by many beings, able to change their forms near at will.

Eons passed, during which Bennu was not heard of, all the other Old Gods are either, dead, permanently faded, or imprisoned, and eventually the relationship between the Serpent and the Unicorn deteriorated. The shape shifters of Chaos begin to favour a form known in the future as "human" form, but many kinds of being remained and they retain a connection to their Primal Form, that they never lost.

The ever-tempestuous relationship between Serpent and Unicorn only got worse. Serpent wanted to master all of Reality and wanted to form tools to help him do so. So old now was Serpent and so powerful, that he conceived The Logrus, a true primal power that might even exceed the Great Spikard of Fintan. Helped by the most loyal of the High Lords of Chaos, most of whom died in the effort, The Logrus was formed, an ever shifting morass, always changing shape, and never repeating the same form. The Serpent gained great power with the reformation of The Courts due to the creation of The Logrus, and Unicorn no less strong, due to her Eons of existence, would not allow such an act to go unchallenged. And there was war once again between the Vanyrie.

The Amberites and Corin hold back a flood of questions...unsuccessfully.

Bannoq asks about the conversation between the Unicorn and the Serpent. The Patriarch explains that the Serpent was saying farewell and expressing his regret of how things turned out. The Serpent's final words when he spoke over the body of Corin were:

Alas my love, even in death you exceed me. I shall allow this one and the others to live. Your foresight surpasses the wrath of the Serpent. I will trust your faith in them, and this one especially. I cannot deny your victory, or your wisdom. But, I shall now depart, for in your passing, I find that my heart has also perished.

Kyle frowns at the comments about Corin and does not seem happy. But moving on, Kyle asks about Oberon's elder children. The Patriarch explains that Oberon was a High Lord of Chaos. In Ages past, he met a Lady of Chaos called Savik, who bore him two sons, Darrius and Marcus and a daughter too, Nimueh. The Patriarch does admit, that he cannot see all things in all places, as Savik originally came from a place that is hidden to the Patriarch. She used her feminine guile to seduce Oberon, who, by all accounts, ended up truly loving her. Then Dworkin scribe the Pattern. The Wars between Order and Chaos began, and Oberon, still in Chaos, was imprisoned with his brother Joshua. Savik disappeared even to the sight of the Patriarch. They do know she had two more children by her eldest son Darius, Severin and Victor, as they picked them up in their scrying after they had travelled from their home to the Reality we all know. THEY are all the elder spawn of Oberon, and they are much more ancient than Benedict.

Corin asks whether they need to marshal both Chaos and Order against the Old Gods, and do they need the help of Stålmannen? The Patriarch cannot comment as they have not seen enough of the sentient Blood Droid yet. Bannoq asks about Stålmannen intentions, but all the Patriarch can say is that the droid is learning at an exponential rate, so trying to project what it might do next is nigh impossible. Due to its walking of the pattern it no longer needs its Blood generator. It can traverse Shadow by willpower alone, indeed it has discarded its blood generator as no longer necessary. The Patriarch does know that it has attempted to replicate himself but has failed. The Patriarch does not believe it can succeed in such a replication. However, the Patriarch believes it will not be long before Stålmannen will become an extraordinary being, due to its rapid rate of learning. It might have a truly great and utterly unforeseen influence on the future.

Corin asks how long they have before the Old Gods return, but the Patriarch cannot see the future. He simply does not know. All he knows is that with the death of the Unicorn, as the Serpent said, the barriers that hold them back, either through design or circumstance, have begun to crumble. As each of the Old Gods faded, or was imprisoned away from Reality, the Patriarch believe that some of the power that they utilised, escaped them and become "free" within the bounds of creation. This power was naturally accessible to, and indeed absorbed by, the Serpent and the Unicorn, making them much

greater, effectively, than they would ever have been before, or if the Old Gods had never disappeared. Possibly greater than they had ever been, or than their brothers and sisters had been, during the time they all roamed free together. Greater in what specific way the Patriarch does not know. The free existence of the Serpent and the Unicorn solidified the rules of reality and the barriers of existence between the Realms. So, with the death of the Unicorn and the departure of the Serpent, much of the power they had absorbed is now free again and will naturally coalesce around the ancient powers with which it has so much natural affinity in the past, i.e.: the Old Gods. Due to the freeing of this power might the Old Gods return, but how long it might take remains unknown to him. The Patriarch does say that he does not believe that the “imprisoned” Gods can break out, as the prison was built to hold beings coequal to the Old Gods themselves.

The talk of Abaddon is clearly already conspiring against them, making the link between him and the Master of the Void. Kyles asks whether or not the elder spawn of Oberon are looking to break the Old Gods out, but the Patriarch does not believe they are even aware of the Old Gods. Few in the reality between Order and Chas are. The Patriarch explains that Savik was abandoned by Oberon at Dworkins behest, despite her braking him free from his Chaosian gaol, and although it was reluctant on Oberon’s part, he did abandon her, nevertheless. She returned to the place they cannot see but given the few times they have seen them since, it is clear, they have their own plans against Oberon and his kin.

Bannoq asks whether they can see into the Abyss, to which the Patriarch confirms they can, but only the upper levels, and Bannoq asks if this might be where Savik came from, but the Patriarch says unlikely. He can tell the difference between a demon and a being of flesh and blood.

They ask about Corwin, and the Patriarch seems somewhat sympathetic to him. Further to this, the Patriarch seems to believe that Dworkin should have no issue incorporating two Pattern imprints, as he is so much more knowledgeable than Corwin in such matters. In order to effect a cure for Corwin, the Patriarch believes that Corwin would need one Pattern Imprint removed, or that he be infused with some power of Chaos to balance his spirit.

Bannoq asks about the Black Unicorn, and how much she recalled of the past. The Patriarch is uncertain, but he does not believe she will recall anything before the split. Kyles asks if the Black Unicorn might take on the role of the Unicorn in the future. But the Patriarch thinks not, and he also speculates that the Black Unicorn, powerful though she is, is unlikely to gain the power of the original Unicorn.

Bannoq asks what will happen if the Patterns meet, but the Patriarch explains that such foresight is beyond him. As he is a simple gatherer of knowledge, and such beings as the Patterns are, are beyond his ken to anticipate. All the Patriarch can say is that he does not believe they ever will merge, only gravity towards each other, and solidify as a dual pole against Chaos, and dependent on each other to hold off Chaos. The Patriarch does not believe that Primal Pattern of Amber is weakened by the existence of the other but has been by the loss of the Unicorn. Corwin's Pattern was never as strong as the original Amber's Pattern, and the Black Unicorn cannot be the same kind of icon for either. Corwin, mad with the Imprint of two Patterns, simply could not see this. The Patriarch says that erasure or destruction of Corwin Pattern would be dangerous and likely kill whoever tried such an act.

They speak briefly of Alesha as a potent magician and how she is yet to be allied to Order or Chaos. They also talk of how it is possible to navigate the Logrus and walk the Pattern, and there are no generational barriers.

They speak of what happened to William in the Courts of Chaos, and how he was attracted to Primal Chaos, and that the Logrus did everything it could to stop him. The Patriarch explains that the Logrus is the child of the mind of the Serpent, and the protector of Primal Chaos, which is the foundation of all reality. It is jealous of its access to Primal Chaos, and although it did not exist at the time, it is likely that at that moment, it feared a similar event to Bennu's splitting of Primal Chaos, and sought to prevent a repeat of the event, being totally unaware of what a second split might result in.

They talk of more small things. Corin asks about the Verdant Tree, and the Patriarch says it is an unforeseen Shadow link to the Children of Savik. The Patriarch expresses sorrow for the tortured man, Annael.

Bannoq asks about the Alicorn and the Patriarch feels it will have an important role to play bringing balance to Reality in the near future. It is well that it was not brought near to the Great Spikard, as the Great Spikard would almost certainly have tried to absorb its power. The Patriarch only has a certain amount of control over the Great Spikard. The Great Spikard is the gift of Fintan, and it is the foundation of the Realm of Knowledge, and it cannot be allowed to leave. As to attunement, the Patriarch is not sure. It is a new object in Reality, utterly unforeseen. The Patriarch advises time and patience, or a friendly God to instruct the initiate. The Patriarch and his followers cannot see into the minds of others, but it was clear that Dworkin received instruction from the Unicorn which resulted in his attunement to the Jewel so long ago.

Corin remarks that it is now clear that Annael was plainly an unwitting accomplice to the elder spawn of Oberon and became a tool for them to exact revenge on the hated Oberon and land of Amber.

Corin asks who her dad is, and the Patriarch answers, Merin of Chaos, son of Dara and Corwin, how else, other than being of the line of Corwin, did she think she was able to walk Corwin's Pattern unopposed. But the Patriarch explains that anyone can walk a Pattern, if they have the permission of the Pattern in question. But also, that any DIRECT descendant of the maker of the Pattern in question, does not need permission and cannot be denied access to it. The Patriarch does not advise walking a second Pattern, unless they wish to suffer Corwin's fate. None of them has Dworkin's power, which is what would be needed to survive the experience, mentally intact.

They wonder how much time has passed in Amber since they departed. The Patriarch explains that time pass strangely in Undershadow, but how they try to keep the Realm of Knowledge broadly in line with Ygg. But they can only observe Reality from the Realm of Knowledge, the only way to travel to and from the Realm to Reality, is via Undershadow, as direct travel was lost with Fintan on his death.

They discuss what power is accessible to the Children of Savik, and how it might differ from the Logrus and the Patterns. Why does it have a green tint? The Patriarch does not know, and reminds them that whatever place they depart to, is beyond his sight, as are the lower level of the Abyss. Whatever power they possess, it must be from the place come from, otherwise the Patriarch and his acolytes would have seen signs of its existence. What this strange power gifts them, is also unknown to the Patriarch, but he fears it.

Finally, Corin brings up a pressing personal issue: what the f' is going on with the hair on her chest?