

Cassie - Lost Child of Amber

Cassie grew up on "Shadow Earth", although she knew it only as "Earth" until she came of age, and indeed had no idea of the possibility of growing-up anywhere else. She was an orphan with unknown origins, although a distinct memory of a man's figure – almost certainly her Father, she was sure.



She must have come from good stock as she found herself to be tough and strong with excellent reflexes as well as being a quick and clever student. If she hadn't tried to trace her family via her DNA, she could have had a bright future in Law or Medicine or Investigative Journalism.

The DNA results must have triggered some kind of alert that led Evelyn Flaumel, widow of the Governor of New York State, to track her down. It seems that Ms Flaumel owns a number of medical facilities specialising in DNA and Genetics and is very interested in Cassie's results.



They appear to be related, having a very rare blood type and certain "markers" in their genome that set them apart. Cassie undergoes a rather gruelling set of physical and mental tests before "Aunt" Flora (as Ms Flaumel asks to be called) slowly reveals the full extent of the uniqueness of her situation.

"Several of my brothers and a couple of their sons have visited Shadow Earth in the last few decades. Of course, brother Corwin was here for centuries during his amnesia and there really is no telling how many offspring he might have produced in that time."

"Shadow!" Earth! Centuries!

Only when Aunt Flora shows her the "magic" of her Trump Cards does she begin to believe any of it. At first the card – showing a handsome, smiling young man in medieval garb, might seem be an ultra-thin Smartphone with a hologram display when the picture swims into life above the card.



King Random invites Flora to "bring the girl through to Amber" next week for the Gathering, to attempt to "Walk the Pattern" and prove it one way or another. She uses a second card, this one of a weasely-looking chap – probably an Egyptian. Yosef seems pretty nervous at the start of the communication but when told to "Grab your stuff and come to me" he steps away for a moment, showing a tropical rainforest through the window of a corrugated tin hut. Two moons are rising over the treeline and one has rings!



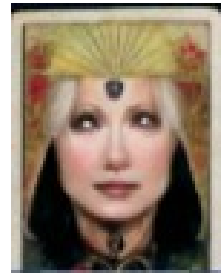
This could still have been a fancy background image – even though she could SMELL the rain and the GREEN! When he reached forward and took Flora's arm, she pulled him out of the picture and into the room.

“Cassie, meet Yosef Abranti. Yosef has worked for me for many years. I’m going to assign him to you for the time being – he can answer your questions and try to keep you out of trouble. Here’s a Trump for him, feel free to call him any time of the night or day... I suppose you’d better have one for me too, for real emergencies.”

When she had finished freaking out about the sudden appearance of a man out of thin air – Cassie spent the next few days asking questions and learning about Amber, her (probable) extended family and the nature of reality – infinite “Shadow” worlds. She also practiced with the Trump card of Yosef and learned the basics of Shadow Walking (although was not yet capable of making it work). “As I understand it Miss, Walking the Pattern should unlock the ability and give you much greater control over it.”

Amber

A few days later Aunt Flora was pulled through to Amber Castle and took Cassie and Yosef with her. They arrived in King Random’s office, where the King chatted with Flora in a strange language. Queen Vialle spoke some English and seemed friendly enough. She was blind and asked to feel Cassie’s features. As the gentle fingers traced the outline of her face, Cassie suddenly realised she was understanding the strange language – Thari. It seems Vialle has some strange psychic power and unlocked Thari in the young woman.



Amber seemed to be the name of the Castle and a City it loomed over as well as the name for the medieval World it lay in. There was something different about the place – not just the Renaissance Fair look of the buildings and the people – on one side the City lay at the coast and was clearly a Port city. But over to the East it appeared to be a city built at the edge of a peninsula with the Great Stair of Kolvir leading down into wooded lands far below.



For the first day she wandered the Castle in the morning, gazing down from the walls but then was called to sit for a portrait with one of the Court Artists – an old man with an unusual (Italian?) accent - Vincenzo. Although he spoke little, it seems he was not from her Italy, but from a Shadow in the Golden Circle (close to Amber) that was medieval, split into numerous city-states and seemed like a fantasy depiction of historical Italy. Vincenzo was not only a great artist, but had the gift of making Trump Art. The process took several hours and clearly exhausted the old man, but when it had finished he had produced three card-sized images of Cassie. One was given to King Random, and two to Flora (Princess Florimel) who passed one to Yosef.



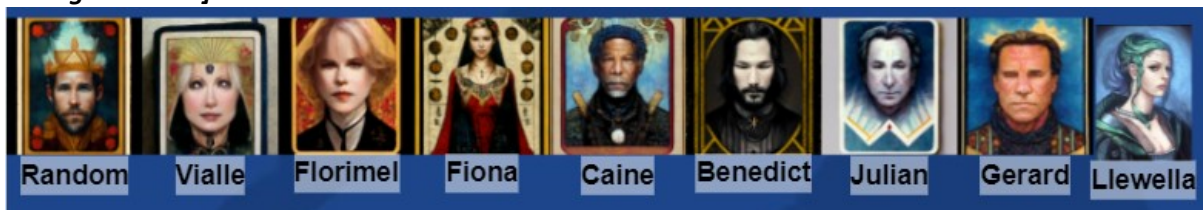
“Once you reach the centre of the Pattern, you’ll have the power to travel ANYWHERE. The Trumps should let us find you... in case you get into trouble.”

She learned about Rebma (the reflection of Amber City and Castle beneath the Sea) and Tir-Na-Nogth (the unstable reflection of it in the night sky) – a place where strange visions and prophecies might be experienced, but only when the Moon was shining.

The Family Feast

That evening she attended a Family Gathering held to discuss various “problems” afflicting the Realm (and various Shadow Worlds). One by one she was briefly introduced to each of the major players – the sons and daughters of Oberon. Each was given a brief description by Yosef, who stood behind her chair and acted as a waiter and personal aide.

[We used a few rolls for Guile, Focus and Intellect to guide how much was learned and deduced during the Feast]



Fiona – “Mistress of Magic and Psychic Powers” – seemed interested in the idea of a “Lost” Child of Amber, mentally or magically scanned her, but was unable to tell for certain if she was really “Of the Blood”. She mused on whether Cassie could be a descendant of Corwin – in which case she might follow Corwin and Merlin (Corwin’s son) into the Shadow Worlds beyond the Rose Pattern. Apparently Corwin had disappeared (presumed exploring his own worlds) a few years ago and Merlin had vanished (telling his mother he was going in search of Corwin). Both of them were out of communication.

Caine – “Master of Assassins – a spy and agent of the Crown” – later she did a bit of lip-reading when Caine was talking to Benedict – Caine was saying something like “...the report indicates he may have escaped!” Benedict’s reply seemed to be “You’d best go investigate personally, he could be a very dangerous individual”. Then it seemed Caine may have noticed her and Yosef deliberately moved between them and pretended to be continuing a conversation to cover for her.

Benedict – “Greatest Swordsman and General of Amber (and therefore in the World or in ALL Worlds”. He actually offered some advice to Cassie about how to “survive” the Pattern and made her realise that this was by no means a certainty! Flora had told her it would be an Ordeal, but not mentioned that if she truly wasn’t “Of the Blood” she would be instantly destroyed, and even if she

was, the Ordeal had been known to be too much for some who weren't strong enough either in Mind or Body. His advice was to "Never stop moving forward" and "Don't allow yourself to become distracted".

Julian – "Warden of the Forest of Arden"- arrived in muddy white platemail – seemingly mildly annoyed at this frivolous distraction when "The Forest of Arden" is in need of additional Wardens. He seemed keen to get troops from Benedict who explained (seemingly not for the first time) that things in the Courts of Chaos were not yet under control and he could spare no troops. When introduced to Cassie, Julian rather dismissively said, "Not sure why she's allowed to attend, but I suppose if she really is Family it will be proved soon enough and if she isn't, what she hears here will perish with her."

Gerard – "Admiral of Amber's Navy and the strongest man in Amber" was one of the last to arrive and certainly the most friendly and encouraging. Cheerfully slapping people on the shoulder and telling Cassie that she seemed strong and confident enough to easily face the coming ordeal. He speculated on her parentage – mentioning a few second-generation possibilities. Martin (Random's son), Luke (Brand's son), Merlin (son of Corwin and Dara), Dara (Benedict's grand-daughter?) and now head of one of the most troublesome of the Houses in the Courts of Chaos. He would probably have covered the lineage of everyone at the Feast if King Random hadn't called them to order. He gave Cassie his Trump.

Llewella – "A Princess from Rebma, not often seen in Amber". Some spell (actual magic spell!) kept her long green hair drifting about as though she was underwater. Yosef seemed to think this was an affectation, but also a display of considerable magical skill. Surprisingly Llewella seemed friendly – apparently keen to see more female representation in the Family. She insisted that Cassie move up the table to sit next to her (displacing Julian whose tight jaw seemed to get even tighter). She gave similar advice on surviving the Pattern and gave Cassie her Trump saying she would like to meet up when she had the time.

The Troubles of Amber

The "troubles" of Amber appeared to have been caused by the Patternfall War and the fall of the Black Road (which happened about 5 years ago), along with the re-forging of the Pattern by Oberon and the creation of the new Rose Pattern by Corwin.

These things appear to have caused enormous disturbances among the Shadows and also stranded many groups of Chaos Warriors in Shadow Worlds where they don't belong.

Benedict is providing troops to support the stabilisation of the Courts of Chaos after their crushing defeat by Amber. The Houses seem to be divided again with some secretly running a guerrilla warfare against Benedict while others were actively supporting them.

Gerard is helping to re-forging the sea lanes that allow trade between the Golden Circle Shadows. Many of the links have become unstable and it needs people with shadow-Walking powers to repeatedly travel to fix the Sea Lanes.

Julian complains that there are strange beasts still roaming in the Forest of Arden (probably left-overs from the Black Road) and the numbers should be falling by now, but it seems they are not.

Llewella's news is from Rebma, where their version of the Pattern has emitted some odd fluctuations in recent weeks – strange pulses at random intervals that have interfered with certain magical constructs – nothing significant as yet, but "The Pattern is not supposed to Change or do

anything Random". King Random and Fiona report that similar things have occurred in Amber, as yet unnoticed by the general populace as there are fewer magical constructs in place here than in Rebma.

Neither Benedict nor Caine bring up the subject Cassie overheard earlier.

The consensus is mostly to keep doing what you are doing, but that it would be a good idea to try and locate Dworkin – he might understand what's going on. Sadly, he vanished from his workshop beneath the Castle a few years ago and isn't responding to Trump calls.

Tir-Na-Nogth

Flora and King Random clearly expect Cassie to Walk the Pattern tomorrow, but she is no longer sure she wants to risk it. To clear her head (and maybe get some vision of prophecy that may help her) she decides to ride out that night to Tir-Na-Nogth. The Stablemaster secretly alerts Yosef, and they ride out together. Cassie knows he is spying for Flora, but on the other hand he is useful and could be helpful.

He seems nervous about the Phantom City in the sky. "I don't fancy climbing the vanishing stairs with you, but I can keep a lookout down here and if it looks like a cloud will cover the moon, I can call your Trump and give you a way back.... Probably – the Trumps hurt my head and sometimes take me a while to activate."

She heads up the stair and the semi-transparent steps that rise from the end of the time-eaten stones at the base seem to grow more substantial as she climbs. The ghostly image of the town and castle fade in as she reaches the top. The outer buildings are in ruins, pillars have fallen, roofs caved-in.



There are no people in the streets, but on a roof close to the castle wall she sees some movement and finds an intact stable block. A fallen column lies propped up at 45 degrees, offering a decent enough ramp to get up there.

[We used some Guile and Intellect rolls to interact with the monkeys and then some Haste and Force rolls when things got nasty]

There are three monkeys on the roof, scampering about on all-fours. Like large chimpanzees, maybe 4 ft tall if they straightened up. More disturbing is the vaguely human-like faces of the beasts. All seem familiar, one looks like Julian, grim and grinding its jaw. The face of the leader of the three seems like Caine's, but angry or in constant pain. The third, she can't quite place. They seem afraid of her at first, but she approaches gently muttering calming words and offering some food from her pack.

Hunger overcomes their fear and the beasts crowd around her. She'd been told that the spirits here were insubstantial, but she can feel their rough fur. Suddenly a nagging sensation at the back of her mind and she realises that a great deal of time has passed. Yosef is trying to reach her through the Trump. Without this warning, she would not have noticed the lightening of the sky. Dawn is coming!

[Yosef had been making Focus rolls to try and activate the Cards but either he was really unlucky or some property of the place was damping him out]

She tries to run back towards the Stair and can hear Yosef calling in the back of her mind and now in reality too. The monkeys grab at her arms, and she feels the sting of their nails and the strong grip of the calloused pads on their palms. They screech angrily, but she manages to pull herself free and races down the stairs, leaping over the gaps as some fade away completely. She drops the last few feet and is caught and steadied by Yosef. Behind her the stairway, the floating city and the apes are all gone.

Yosef looks exhausted, "Those damn cards, gives me a migraine every time. I just couldn't seem to get through, you were up there for hours!"

"It's OK, I heard you... eventually. Thanks".

"No problem Boss, wouldn't want to lose you – what would your Aunt do to me!"

Laughing, they rode back towards Amber.

Cassie was exhausted too although there are no marks from the scratches she felt earlier. She wouldn't be tackling the Pattern until she's had a good night's sleep and chance to ponder what that strange vision might have meant.

[Technically-speaking you were meant to start with having already Walked the Pattern (and survived it) but as a Prelude chapter this worked out pretty well. If you want to make the Pattern Walk part of the actual game, there will be some risk, but you'll get an additional FATE Point until you actually make it. Alternatively, we can narrate that you succeed (off-screen) and carry on from there – probably with the question of WHERE DO YOU WANT THE PATTERN TO SEND YOU?]