

Lost Child of Amber 005

As the echoes of screams and shots dies away, our heroes are victorious and all of the fort's inhabitants are dead, except for the unconscious officer and whoever (or whatever) is screaming with rage from the furthest of the three huts.

[Because Esther's player was absent...] Shocked by the noise of the guns, one of the abandoned war horses galloped off into the desert. Esther went in pursuit, returning about 30 minutes later with the animal.

Meanwhile, Cassie approached the locked hut, used keys they had found on the officer, and opened the door. Caine was inside, semi naked in torn rags, and with feet and hands chained to an iron post driven into the ground.



Spitting and screaming, Caine hurled himself to the extent of the chains but couldn't reach Cassie. There was bestial murder in his eyes. He was covered in blood from where the manacles dug into his flesh and also from frequent beatings. A couple of blood-soaked clubs rested against the inner wall of the hut.

They decided to attempt to speak to Caine's mind through Trumps. From outside the hut, Aelyn stared at Caine's Trump until sweat ran freely down his face. Cassie was in the doorway casting worried looks between the two men. Although Aelyn made no obvious sign, she realised that his facial muscles were spasming in time to the roars of Caine.

Aelyn felt Trump contact happen, but instead of seeing Caine's face, he was falling towards a roiling storm cloud, shot through with red and black. He was feeling the same rage and hatred but much worse, as he had felt when his blade drank the bloodstain at the rockfall a few hours earlier.

Cassie passed a hand over the card and severed the contact before his mind succumbed to the Rage.

They ransacked the officer's quarters and found Caine's belongings.

A serviceable sword with a hidden compartment in the pommel containing a first aid kit, half a dozen diamonds, a vial of green liquid marked with a white circle and green cross.

A full pack of Trumps for all the Elders, including Finndo and Osric (another missing, old-time, son of Oberon) along with a few non-standard cards. There was one for a trooper (clearly the same uniform as those in the Fort – must be Caine's agent here – presumably dead at the rockfall?). There was one for "Michael" one of Julian's Rangers they had met in Arden. There was one of a black soldier in modern-day military gear – most likely from shadow-earth. The final card was for a place – a cosy-looking Library, but not the one in Amber Castle.



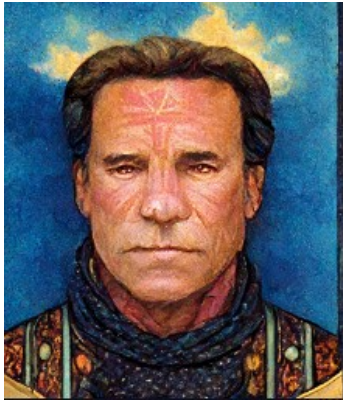
There was also a knife for concealing in a boot and a knife with a scabbard to fit tightly concealed to an arm.

The hut also contained various books, maps, a **world atlas** and a log of recent events.

[The World Atlas showed a huge single continent map of this world. Similar to <https://images-geeknative-com.exactdn.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/10003148/Hyborian-Age-of-Conan-the-Barbarian-map.jpg?strip=all&lossy=1&sharp=1&ssl=1> but with the Isle of Britannia about 20 miles off the coast to the west and “Pictish Wilderness” called Gaul instead. Almost everything west of Vendhya (India) and south of Hyperborea (Russia) is coloured red as part of the Britannian Empire. Now I’ve found a suitable map, the City name I mentioned changes to **Ayodhya** in the NE of Vendhya instead of Agraphuur and the unconquered but tribute-paying foreigners nearby are from Uttara Kuru. The Helio Tower that is mentioned later will be in the Mountains of Fire in the middle of the Zuagir Desert, rather than in the Alps.]



[They would probably have waited for Esther to return if her player was present, so I’ll pretend that they did wait and she didn’t raise any objections.]



When Esther returned, they informed her what had happened and together decided to contact Gerard (famously supportive and protective of the family) by Trump and get him to come and rescue Caine. They thought he'd have more luck getting through to him and more chance of keeping him restrained without having to kill him. Gerard came through and took Caine away with him. Caine had eventually worn himself out trying to attack them and passed out from blood-loss and exhaustion. He called someone they didn't know – a stern-looking servant - and stepped through into a finely-appointed manor house. He remembered to ask them what the hell was going on and was in too much of a hurry to probe when they told him a few half-truths (no mention of Finndo).

Their experiments with Trumps had revealed that there is some sort of 3-second wave of static and interference. Communicating with Gerard had been more difficult and when he stepped through, he staggered and fell.

Morgan, although used to serving medieval witches, is wide-eyed at the powers (Trump Contacts and Trump Teleport) he has now witnessed.

They studied **the Log of Subedar Singh** (the captured officer).

5 weeks ago, the Mountain collapsed.

When the dust cleared two days later, two troopers and a corporal went to investigate. There was a second rockfall and they never returned. The Subedar decided not to risk approaching the Mountain again.

A day later a naked, white-skinned man staggered out of the desert. He seemed to be a Brittanian Officer but had severe amnesia. Singh sent him on to the nearest City Ayodhya (100 miles east) with a Trooper and a couple of cam-mules (a cross between mules and camels). The Trooper also carried the message about the collapse of the Mountain.

A week later a dark-skinned man (they realised this was Caine) charged out of the desert, bleeding and raging and almost dead on his feet. He killed a couple of Troopers before they subdued him and chained him up.

Singh was hoping that the messenger would result in an Airship coming to visit with Brittanian Officers to tell them what to do with their guest.

A few days later there were reports of disciplinary problems and rumours of sedition.

About a week ago, the reports of Subedar Singh changed significantly and became a polemic against the Brittanian Empire as oppressors of Vendhya (the name of this country).



When the Subedar came round, they questioned him. At first, he raged at them (but not like a beast this time) as "White Devils!" and "Brittanian Dogs!", but they talked him around and convinced him they weren't Brittanian Oppressors. They even managed to talk him into accompanying them towards the City of Ayodhya. Singh's intention is to rabble-rouse and overthrow Brittanian Rule. Aleyn convinced him to try guerilla warfare rather than a one-man all-out attack. It seems that Aleyn has experience of a similar situation (to

Cassie, he seems to have been in India during the Raj! Surely he's too young and yet Esther has mentioned being away from Amber for 600 years, so maybe it's true).



Two days into a six-day journey they are picked up by an Airship – The Pericles, a ship of the **Royal Brittanian Command**. Confused and wary soldiers led by a Major Franks, descend to speak with them and shoot Subedar Singh! It seemed very heartless, but they explain that Ayodhya has just fallen to a Great Mutiny! The natives had become uppity and eventually burned down the Embassy and the Troopers turned on their rightful Brittanian Commanders. The Pericles is now en-route to the nearest Helio Tower (a few hundred miles west in the Mountains of Fire) to get messages back to Londra. They hope to return with an Air Fleet and bomb the natives back to the Stone Age!



Captain Jackson welcomes them on board, telling them how lucky it was that they killed Singh before he murdered them in their sleep. There is even room aboard for the horses. They are given more appropriate clothing and take dinner at the Captain's table where they have to make up some tale of being a sight-seeing expedition.

When they ask Major Franks about the amnesiac Unknown Soldier, he remembers reading about it in the newspaper back in Ayodhya. The man had been sent to Londra in the hope he could be recognised.

The Brittanians claim that this Mutiny spread like a plague – an actual infection! - and also claim that the infection can't infect decent Brittanians! However, it is clear that their bloodlust against the dark-skinned Vendhyans is surprisingly strong and their logical thinking faculties don't seem too good – convincing them of the flimsy sight-seeing explanation wasn't too difficult.



A couple of days later, as they approach the Helio Tower, it finally occurs to them that if "The Rage" really is an infection, then Caine clearly had it, and they sent him back to Amber (or somewhere near Amber) with Gerard!