

08 – The End of the World



Knowing they might need to return to the bell tower in a hurry, Aleyn asked Neferu for permission to create a Trump Sketch of her – she agreed and donated a drop of blood to the process. After quarter of an hour or so, Aleyn had created a good likeness that could be used in an emergency as a fragile Trump.

Cassie waited around, impatient to be off – chatting to Morgan.

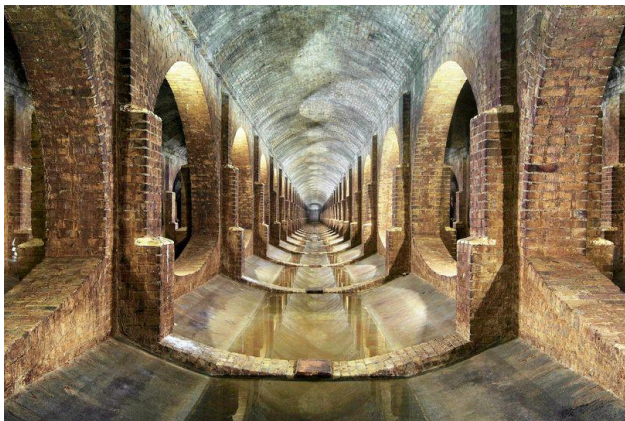
Soon they were trotting through the streets of the city, heading north. The borough of Camden had suffered rioting the night before and many windows on the wealthier houses were smashed. The people were milling about looking surly and rebellious.

The locator spell in Aleyn’s head lead them to a huge field surrounded by high barbed wire fences and covered in newly-laid strips of turf. The signs said this was Kiddapor Reservoir but where they had expected a large lake, it was just a field.

A squat brick-built structure with a padlocked iron door and tall chimney, seemed to be the only way in. On closer examination, the heavy bolts holding the clasp had already been torn from the wall and the door could be swung open and pulled-to easily.

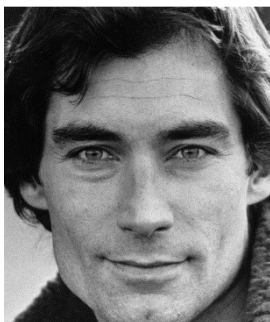
In the dark, windowless interior was a huge steam engine with numerous steel pistons descending into holes in the floor. A massive control panel full of switches labelled with numbers and letters stood next to it and a pile of fire-wood and bags of coal. Beyond was a big iron trapdoor in the floor.

Aleyn could sense his quarry was down there and off to the left. Morgan lit a couple of torches and led the uneasy horses inside. He waited with the four horses, while Cassie and Aleyn descended into the strange chambers below.



Beneath that newly-turfed field was a massive brick chamber with dozens of arches and narrow bridges. It seemed to be about a third full of water with plenty of room for more.

Apart from their torch it was in total darkness but as they came down the stairs they could see in the distance a second glow – from a lantern. They approached and could see in the pool of lantern light, a man lying beside the water, close to gushing water and a heavy sluice gate in the outer wall.



It was him – Patient 451 – the man from the photo in the medical file.

He wouldn’t have heard them above the roar of the water but seemed to spot their torchlight and quickly rose. His arm had been submerged, but as he stood they saw it was cut open with blood staining it and running freely, dripping off his hand.

As he turned to face them and pulled a long knife with his other hand, the blood slowed to a trickle, then stopped and the wound seemed to close. The Chaos Power of a Shapeshifter!

They still had an hour left before the Stellae was activated and tore this world apart. Although a fight seemed almost inevitable, they decided to try negotiation first. This man was most likely a member of their family, so they hoped to make peace and save him from the destruction to come.

He asked if they were from the Military Hospital and they said they'd been there but no. Then asked scornfully if they were the "Relatives" who were coming to "identify him". When they said yes to that he stepped nearer and began to raise the blade.

"I am Fain, son of Finndo. I shall wreak vengeance for the wrongs done to my father by his so-called family!"

Aleyn held up a hand and kept his blade lowered "What was done to him was done a thousand years ago – most who were alive then are dead and we had no part in it and weren't even aware of it until a few weeks ago."

This made Fain pause and keep talking. Cassie thought he might be playing for time, as he had seemed weary at first but was slowly growing stronger – perhaps the wound and the blood loss was still being knitted together by his shape-changing?

They talked for 20 minutes or so. It seems his blood released into the water supply would trigger the infection and madness that would make Britannia more "congruent" with Finndo's realm and allow the Wards of the accursed Dworkin to be shattered. Then all the Shadows of Finndo would finally be joined to all the Shadows of Amber and Finndo's Vengeance would begin.

Fain seemed mildly sorrowful at this – his Father's realm was a place of war, rage and constant violence. He had not experienced a world at peace (comparatively) until recently. Fain and many of his siblings had tried to pass through the "Fenris" Pattern (which was more of a Logrus ordeal than a Pattern!) and all but him had been torn asunder by it. He broke through into Finndo's Cell in some kind of amorphous form and escaped into the rubble of the rockfall. He thinks he was driven mad and lost some of his memories but knows he managed to claw his way to the surface as his body returned to solid flesh.

He fought and killed a few dark-skinned men (probably the troops from the Fort). One was much tougher and more skilled than the others and wounded him badly, but Fain's claws tore the man's belly open and left him for dead (almost certainly Caine, which explains how he got infected). As his memories were still foggy, it was easy to fool the troops at the Fort that he was a Brittanian Officer and then as his own mind became clearer, he let them bring him to the Capitol where he could do maximum damage.

Cassie began to sense fluctuations in the Shadow [GM: with a very loose interpretation of her Shadow Manipulation abilities – this should really be the sort of thing Pattern Lens would do] as energy from the mass hysteria and infection seemed to be feeding Fain in some way, restoring the energy he had lost earlier.

By the time they reached the surface, the city was in turmoil. The smouldering resentments of the Class War had been ignited and so had several buildings nearby. Gangs of rioters were shouting "Death to the Toffs!".

A group of rioters armed with shovels rushed at the riders, but Aleyn drew his sword and ran them down – the warhorse trampled and bit, the blade glittered and struck and six men lay bloody and dying around them. Fain seemed impressed for the first time. They rode on back to the Church

where policemen (with pistols) seemed to be trying to get the intruders in the Bell Tower to surrender.

They entered through the back door of the vicarage. Cassie and Aleyn sneaked in and knocked out two coppers then prevented Fain from slitting their throats. This seemed to surprise him – it's not his Father's way to leave enemies alive.

At the top of the spiral stairs, they found Neferu and her remaining Serpent-helmed Guard and the floating iron sphere – the Stellae.



Neferu seemed surprised to see them and whispered into her bracelet in ancient Egyptian.

Aleyn had long ago absorbed that language from an enemy he slew and heard...

"It is as you said Master, they have returned with the source of the infection"

A crackly voice spoke softly back. Despite the static, Aleyn recognised the voice of Setep the Destroyer from his distant past. "Keep him there, I will contact you with Trump so you may bring me to you – he will make a useful pawn."

Aleyn whispered this to Cassie and asked her to prepare a Trump contact to give them a quick exit. Fain, who had not noticed or understood this interchange seemed intrigued by Neferu and her Stellae (perhaps sensing their Logrus-imbued nature).

[GM: I was just about to have him try and smash the Stellae against the iron bell to prevent it working when you intervened! Would have had a cinematic combat in the Bell Tower to decide the fate of millions!]

Aleyn suddenly grabbed Fain by the arm and shouted "Now Cassie – get us out of here".

Cassie had lingered at the top of the stairs and pulled out a Trump. Everyone else had probably been told to block all unexpected calls because of the risk of infection. But Yosef?".



Yosef Abranti was back in the Shadow of Trappaz, in the rain forest jungles. Back with the Salisbury Expedition seeking the long-lost Dworkinarium (the mythical Dworkin's Workshop). He had been out of contact with Amber for months. He was startled from sleep by Cassie's call but as only his "Mistress" Florimel and Cassie had a card for him, he accepted the call without delay.

He hadn't expected it to be Cassie "...Oh ... Lady Cassie – what can I do for you?". Stand by to pull us through. His eyes widened "Us? Er... How many Us?" He looked worried, transporting more than one person can take a severe toll on the untrained. "only f... shit... NOW Yosef". With reluctance he offered his hand and grimaced expecting the strain and pain, but Cassie accepted the cost herself and dropped through onto his bed with a gasp – [GM: Fatigued is only -1 on all rolls. Unknown to

you in the moment, it cost so much due to the Time Differential between Brittania and Trappaz – it blew through your 1 remaining Trump stress (it had cost 1 to make the call, all 6 of your normal stress, then your 3 pattern stress and needed 2 more so cost you your Fatigue box as well. Normal stress recovers at start of next scene. Fatigue, Pattern & Trump stress requires some passage of time].

Cassie was holding Morgan, who was holding Aleyn and he was struggling to keep his grip on an unwilling Fain. Gods, but the man was strong!

Yosef's bedroom was small and cramped. The bed, up against a wall with a window at the foot looking out into the night – rain and jungle, had only narrow space around it. The rest was wardrobes and a table and chair.

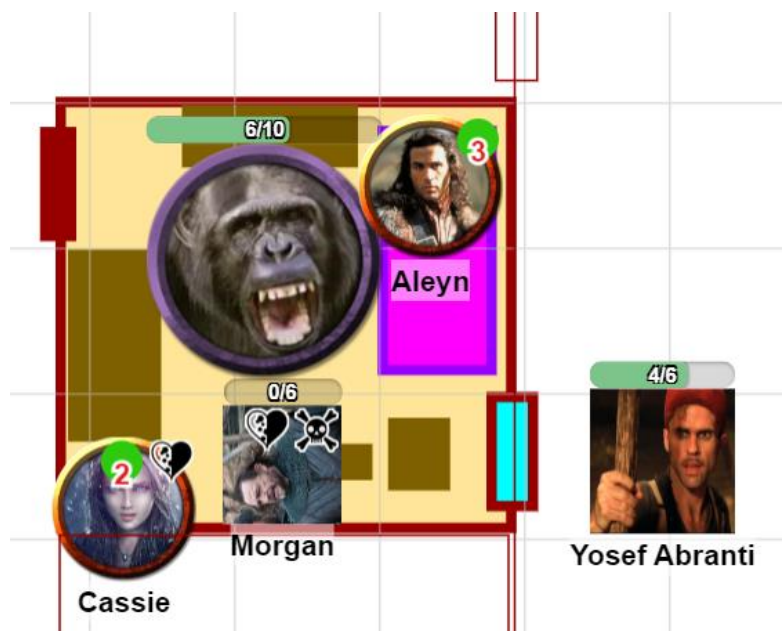
Fain lashed out at Aleyn with a fist (that grew claws!) clearly thinking this was some treachery. Aleyn dodged out of the way. Cassie tried to explain but was too breathless. Fain's arm was growing hairy and black, getting bigger. His entire body was getting bigger, and the cramped room was suddenly full of gorilla – still with a disturbingly human-like face – twisted with rage.

Yosef, naked but for pyjama bottoms, squealed and dived through the window out into the rain.

Morgan drew his sword and stabbed the furry monster in the guts. Blood spurted but the deep wound got only a dull grunt from Fain.

Aleyn clambered on the bed in order to leap on Fain's back, wrapping his arm around the gorilla's throat to try and choke him. If Fain had seemed strong in human form, in his Demon Form as a now 10ft tall gorilla, he was beyond even Aleyn's strength and shook him like a rag doll.

Cassie pressed herself against the wall to get cover from a wardrobe and watched with horror as the gorilla swiped a massive claw at Morgan, ripping through his leather armour and his chest and smashing him to the floor. Morgan's blood welled up from the wounds and in his mouth – he will need immediate medical attention, or he will bleed out. His blade was shaken loose from Fain and the spray of Fain's blood increased, bringing another grunt.



[GM: Due to real-world circumstances we stopped there. When we start again our heroes are in a desperate situation in a small room with a berserk gorilla – actually only 8 ft tall but seems much

bigger in the small room. Judging by the equipment on the shelves and the look of the stockade outside the window, the Shadow of Trappaz is a sort of 1920s amazon jungle setting with a bunch of “European” explorers and this is a wooden fort with this building having lightweight woven bamboo-like walls. It’s night, it’s still pretty hot and sticky, and raining heavily. The window has no glass but has an awning to prevent the rain and a flimsy curtain for privacy that Yosef tore down as he jumped through. I’ll be offering Cassie a FATE Point to tend to Morgan (who has demonstrated almost paternal affection for her) rather than help Aleyn with his gorilla problem. As we stopped mid-scene you won’t get your Fate Refresh just yet]