

## 15. Murder and Matrimony

The enthusiastic (over-enthusiastic!) moans from Queen Dara in the upstairs chamber of the bridal couple could be heard whenever the music paused. From 10pm to Midnight.

Cassie was approached by a tall handsome man – Lord Tamaril of House Helgram. Helgram are known to be experts in Logrus, and Tamaril is their best and brightest. His human form is charming, friendly and trustworthy. As Cassie has been spending time observing and using the knowledge from her dossier on the Courts, she notices from his House colours and walking stick that he had earlier been in the form of a 12 ft long humanoid crocodile.



Trellys suggested to Aleyn that they retire to his chambers to “discuss Art” and led him through the Thelbane’s public corridors, pointing out paintings and sculptures by her ancestors and her mentor Vincenzo (the old man who painted Cassie’s Trump when she first came to Amber. Vincenzo had been hired by Fiona and Florimel and had not mentioned he was from The Courts. They discussed how many of the shape-changing Chaos Lords use statues as Trumps. The King has a Gallery of Lords and the Lords can be summoned to a Trump meeting, inhabiting and animating their Statues as remote avatars.



They retired early and enjoyed each other’s company and slept well despite the party music that lasted until about 3am.

Cassie went out into the elaborate gardens with Lord Tamaril and they discussed Logrus and Pattern – the similarities and differences and how difficult it would be to bear the imprint of BOTH Powers. Dworkin, Oberon and Oberon’s two eldest children Finndo and Osric had managed it. Logrus Imprint first and then Walked the Pattern later. Brand was rumoured to have done it, centuries later – Pattern first, then Logrus much later (possibly contributing to his eventual madness). Most recently

Dara did it Logrus first and Pattern later, and then last year, her son with Prince Corwin – Merlin – had managed it, but both the Logrus and the Pattern experiences seemed to nearly kill the lad.

Tamaril's theory is that the Pattern is a static slice of the ever-writhing Logrus – a single Moment of it sliced at a specific angle.

Cassie lets him use Logrus Lens to examine her carefully and he is VERY impressed with the strength of the Pattern in her and asks if she has looked into ways to wrap it around her for defence or to hold it within. He mentions that Bances Amblerash would love to examine her with **The Eye of the Serpent** but isn't to be trusted.

When they part, he gives her a small statuette of his crocodile form that can be used as a Trump.

She heads back to her chamber, followed by the ever-attentive Batrian (12ft tall Frog Butler). Batrian shows her in to the apartment, explains that Aleyn is next door – with a guest, and then relieves the Plate-armoured Knight who was stationed outside the two doors. Batrian takes over the vigil.

It's about 6am when they are wakened by sounds of panic, cries of dismay and running feet.

Batrian politely deflects their questions, assures them there is no danger and asks them to stay put.

Aleyn notices a button is missing from his cloak (a brass button with a Unicorn stamped on it). It must have been pulled off with considerable force, presumably after he and Trellys returned to the room last night.

Batrian brings breakfast and all three of them are at a table on Aleyn's balcony when the long ululating blast of The Royal Funeral Horn is heard from the palace roof.

Queen Dara arrives (in her human form now) flanked by palace guards - Mantis warriors and Hellmaids (winged valkyries). Jurt (Dara's step-son) is trailing along behind, smirking.



A Mantis guard scoops up the cloak and points to the missing button. Jurt smirks some more and says "See Mother, I told you I recognised it". Dara is clearly annoyed with him and snaps "STEP-mother, you FOOL!".

She seems reluctant to blame Aleyn but explains that her husband was be-headed last night and she was found unconscious lying next to him – with Sleeping Gas still in the air of her chambers when the maid arrived at 6am. Aleyn's button was found in the room, hooked on some twisty-iron ivy carvings near the door.

The guards also find a spot of blue blood on the pommel of Aleyn's SoulBlade.

The blood is sent off for magical/scientific analysis.

Trellys provides Aleyrn with an alibi for the whole night – much to Jurt’s annoyance. She had come to the party as Jurt’s Plus-One, but had dumped him for his treatment of her on the dance floor – using her as a pawn to challenge Aleyrn.

Aleyrn went on to explain that he couldn’t have used his SoulBlade to kill a powerful Lord of Chaos, because of its very nature. He was forced to demonstrate by executing a prisoner.



The Lord of House Hellibore – Gareck - was dragged in – a very stocky, but bedraggled and malnourished dwarf. Gareck was guilty of an affair with one of King Fantos’ former wives – a crime of Treason for which he had been imprisoned for the last 20 years.

Aleyrn beheaded the dwarf (after a brief and polite exchange) and The Quickening tore the bedroom apart in shower of lightning and sparks. Aleyrn has the temporary (24-hour) powers of a Lord of Chaos bubbling within him – a bit of Shapechanging and a bit of Logrus, but no knowledge of how to safely use them.



Dara was quick to accept this evidence and they were allowed to leave the Courts after a few more hours. The blood was found to be the King’s but it was clearly a hasty and crude attempt at a frame-up. Somebody could have entered Aleyrn’s room before Batrian took over. They tracked down the guard who had been on duty and when Dara started to interrogate him (in private) he swallowed a deadly poison.



Cassie contacted Benedict but he couldn’t help. His opinion was that Dara had engineered the whole thing, but the crude framing didn’t seem to fit her style. They were pretty sure it was Jurt who had planted the evidence and that this wasn’t part of Dara’s careful plan.

Benedict offered to provide some training in Trisp and Fandon, in case Aleyrn or Cassie ever got into a duel with Jurt.

Trellys seemed genuinely fond of Aleyrn and gave them more info about Jurt. His demon-form was of a small 3ft tall winged gargoyle a being of grey stone - tough and not needing to eat or breathe. His Shape-changing ability also helps him “cheat” in duels. He can make the bone-spurs of the gargoyle form manifest instantly in his human form on his knees and elbows to jab and spike an enemy in a clinch. She also warned them about the strange jagged disks sewn into his cloak – these were magical/mechanical disks that can fly and spin and are controlled by his mind.



Trellys’ own Demon Form was that of a giant weasel! 10ft long. She doesn’t use that form very often except for combat.

She and Aleyrn made Trump Sketches of each other and Aleyrn even tried to sculpt a Trump Sketch of her but couldn’t quite get the Trump effect to take hold.

Late in the afternoon the Queen decided to let them go, probably to avoid a diplomatic incident with Amber, but invited them both back for the Funeral in a week's time. She gave Aleya her "human-form" Trump. They noticed that Jurt seemed to have pulled his hood forward to try and hide a fresh livid scar on his face.

They decided to head back to Amber and Cassie was determined to contact Fiona and get some further training in Pattern.

Aleya realised that while the Chaos Lord's stolen powers are temporary, he COULD choose to make one of them permanent if he acts quickly, binding it into his personality by stabilising it through his Pattern Imprint.

**GM: I decided avoiding a diplomatic incident was worthy of a Milestone, so the players can (with some narrative explanation) ...**

- **Swap a point from one Approach to another**
- **Change or Add an Aspect**
- **Gain One Point of Refresh and spend it on purchasing a Stunt (a Power or a Skill or +1 to an Approach).**