

16 The Gemini Project and More

Cassie and Fiona

Cassie has a couple of reasons to want to speak with Fiona.

She wants to gain more control over her Pattern abilities – particularly to find a way to contain the power so it doesn't inadvertently disrupt Logrus constructs while she is in the Courts of Chaos.

She also wants to learn more about her own origins and Fiona's part in it. A few months earlier, Cassie had an odd vision (as though from Fiona's perspective) of a meeting between Fiona, Florimel and King Random where they discussed some "scientific experiment" in Florimel's Shadow Earth, that resulted in the birth of Cassie.



Fiona accepts the Trump call and reluctantly agrees to pull her through. They are in the Dworkinarium (in the Shadow – Trappaz) and Fiona is busy trying to understand and repair the mysterious "Eye of Dworkin" with its organo-cybernetic tendrils. She is quite abrasive, making cutting remarks about how she would have expected more of a warning about the Golems and how foolish it was to drain all the power from the Eye.

Lacking access to a Logrus-attuned person, Fiona had to fight the Logrus Golem and says she has now confined it to the upper chambers. She also had to use the two small constructs (spider and crab) to open the doors that needed both Pattern and Logrus, and has now jammed the doors open.

"It's good that you are showing some interest in better understanding the Pattern. IT is certainly interested in YOU."

Fiona admits to having been given prophetic visions (from Tir Na'Nogth and from Trump Tarot) that led her to make use of Florimel's "science" to try and produce a Pattern-enhanced child. She doesn't want to reveal too much about the visions – not knowing what the knock-on effects would be. "Florimel knows more about the details of the actual ... conception and birth. Ask her, if you MUST". Our family are so infertile (due to the Pattern imprint I think) that we couldn't wait for a natural birth – and the Pattern seems to get weaker with each generation anyway."

"It's obviously working out pretty well – your blood solved the RAGE Virus issue and then you located this place, but I think whatever the Pattern wants with you it isn't over yet."

"To gain better control, you can study the Jewel of Judgement (Random has it). I'd suggest just looking at it – don't try touching it yet. Project yourself inside it (in your imagination)".

[GM: In terms of game mechanics, this gives the narrative explanation for how Cassie can gain the Stunt called PATTERN:Defence]

Cassie, the King and the Jewel of Judgement

Needing a way back from Trappaz, Cassie calls on Random.

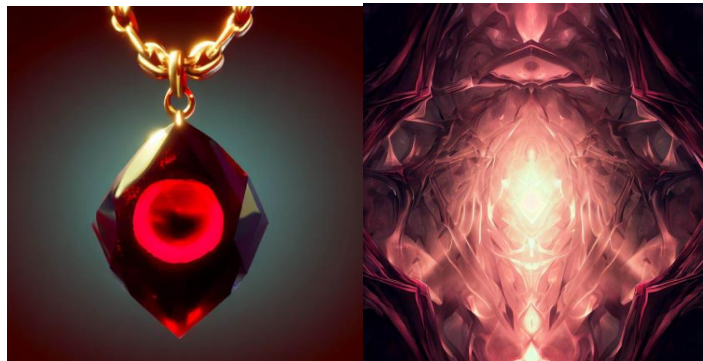
"I am King you know, not some intergalactic Uber diver!". Nevertheless, he pulls her through to his chambers in Amber.



Cassie chats to Random (who is dubious about letting her have the Jewel) and Queen Vialle (who has more faith in Cassie and talks him into it).

Random rides out of the City and holds up the jewel – he doesn't like wearing it except in situations of dire need. "It shows numerous bad futures and lets me pick the one I want".

He holds the ruby by its long gold chain while Cassie stares into it.



As though in a dream, she finds herself INSIDE the gem, a kaleidoscope landscape of pulsing red – blood dripping from the walls.

A deep, rumbling voice echoes.

The Second Child of the Children – AT LAST!

The OTHER must be united with us or the Serpent will reclaim ALL

Both I and the OTHER are in your flesh, spawn of the same blood

The First failed, as he took no Eye, and so passed through and was lost beyond

With the Serpent's Eye, walk and BURN me into the OTHER'S form that it shall be MY reflection as are those in Amber, Janidor, Tir' na Nogth and Rebma.

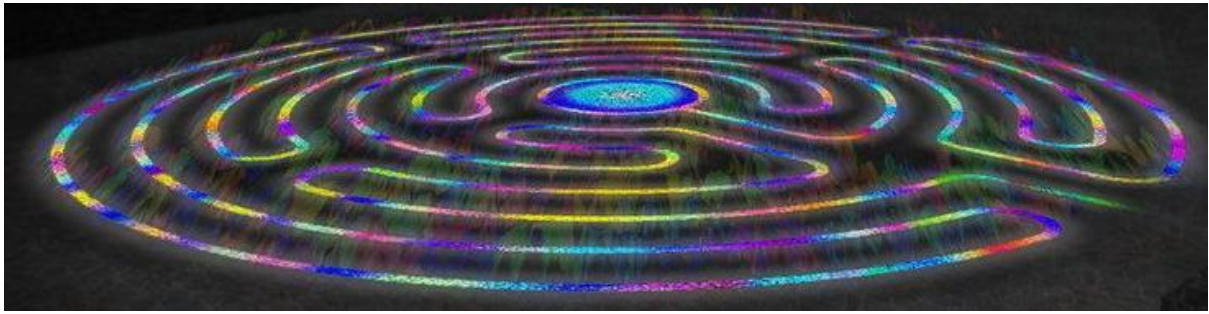
There can be only ONE.

Only in Unity may there be Stability or the Serpent takes all.

It is my child. It should NEVER have been made separate.

The "sound" of the voice staggers her but with tremendous effort she formulates a couple of questions and gets a flood of images as responses...

"Who are you?"



"Who or what is THE OTHER?"



"Who were my parents?"



Then she is back in the world looking at Random, holding the Jewel and telling her to get started. No time seems to have passed while she had that vision. When she explains that she's finished, Random seems to accept it. "The bloody thing does mess with your sense of time – I don't like it. But it IS important, Dworkin apparently used it to create the Pattern and Dad (Oberon) used it to re-draw the Pattern when it was damaged, and Corwin used it to draw his own 'Rose' Pattern when he thought Dad had failed".

[GM: I'm pretty sure you haven't told anyone what happened in there and what the thing said but it's here because the story wouldn't make sense without it. It's up to Cassie whether Aleyn actually knows any of this]

Cassie and Florimel

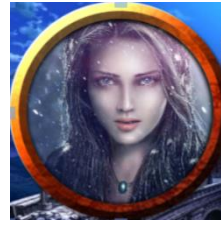
The next day, Cassie Trumps Florimel. She seems to have been expecting Cassie to call some time, and agrees to pull her through for what may be a difficult discussion.

They are in an amazing villa, built into the lip of a canyon, somewhere in southern California – Shadow Earth.



"Well dear, I hope you aren't going to make this unpleasant"
Flora is nervously fingering a whistle on a chain round her neck.

It takes a couple of hours to get the full story out of Flora...



- Fiona heard me talking about biological science, artificial insemination and implanting of fertilized embryos in surrogate mothers. She told me about her Visions (in vague terms) and that led me to start The Gemini Project. This was during the reign of Eric (still as Regent back then).
- The scientists had discovered that most pairings led to Rejection and Incompatible Genomes. We needed Twins – fortunately we had Corwin and Deirdre. Corwin was roaming around Shadow Earth with amnesia, so it was easy enough to get a "donation" from him.



- We had to "wait" for Deirdre to need some medical attention to get her contribution. The poor thing never knew, as she fell into the Abyss before we could give her the good news about you.
- It seems that the surrogate mother – a Shadow woman called Collette - absorbed some of an Amberite's strength and determination from you and broke out of the hospital, burning the place down.
- I tried to find Collette but she vanished. We thought the experiment was over – especially when Deirdre
- Imagine my delight when you tried to trace your DNA and my people flagged-up the anomaly.

Cassie is angry about the whole process, particularly using Corwin and Deirdre without their knowledge and the deaths of many of the previous attempts and the distress of her mother.

Flora is quite cold and calculating about it all. "Get over it! Without all this, you wouldn't be here at all! I hope we can continue to be friends..."

Cassie storms out of the villa and finds herself stranded in the mountains, many miles from anywhere.

Aleyn and the Forge

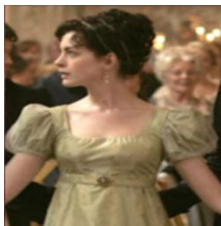
At Benedicts' huge military camp in the Courts of Chaos, Aleyn asks to make use of the Forge and strives to sculpt a statuette of Trellys that can later be converted into a 3-D Trump combining her human form and with subtle traces of her giant weasel shape. He is so wrapped-up in his work he doesn't immediately notice when spots of molten metal splash onto his skin and trigger a Shape-change into a hunch-backed, stocky "dwarf" about 8 feet tall (if he could stand straight).



In this grotesque form he has increased size, cunning, and immunity to fire and heat. The "dwarf" form is similar to that of Duke Gareck of Hellibore and is clearly a result of absorbing Gareck's life-force through the Soul Blade.

[GM: The narrative explanation for developing a new Stunt SHAPECHANGE: Demon Form. The SoulBlade was only going to grant Chaos Blood temporarily, but the player spent some REFRESH on buying the new Power]

The sculpture progresses well but he needs to complete it in the presence of the subject and with some of her blood, so uses his Trump Sketch to call her. After the initial surprise, she pulls him through to her bedroom in Jeseby Hall. Chaosites aren't too surprised by alternate body forms as it's common here.



After a few more hours, the Trump Statuette is completed and empowered. Trellys is happy to have Aelyn visit, teaches him how to transform back to his human form, gives him some clothes made of stretchy fabric (eventually) and they renew their friendship.



Aelyn at Jeseby Hall

Jeseby Hall seems like a huge renaissance mansion with many dozens of rooms and halls, all covered in works of art – portraits, monsters and alien landscapes.



He manages to arrange for Lord Vincenzo Jeseby to contact House Hellibore and arrange a peaceful meeting so he can explain about the unfortunate execution of Gareck Duke of Hellibore. This will take place in a couple of days.

Cassie in the Wrong Library

Unwilling to contact another relative who might have even more secrets and hidden schemes, she decided to make her own way back to Amber using one of Caine's Trumps – The Library.

It turns out to be more of a strain reaching a place than a person but she arrives safely to find that this isn't Amber's Library after all. The view out of the windows is of snow-capped mountains all around. The building itself seems more like the British Library, all oak-panels, feeble electric lights, rows and rows of books and folders all labelled in Thari, with wheeled ladders in tracks around the stacks.

She hears a door open and a person enter and sit at a desk just out of sight. Creeping around to get a look she sees a severe-looking middle-aged woman in a tweed dress and jacket, studying some folders and books and scribbling notes in a pad.

This must presumably be Caine's Library and if he knows she's been here, he might realise she has his Trump Deck (from when he was infected by the RAGE Virus in Brittania). She sneaks a bit further away and quietly trump calls Aleyn.

When Aleyn's cheerful voice calls a greeting, the Librarian scurries through the stacks to investigate but would only have glimpsed the shower of rainbows as the Trump Teleport closed.

Together in Jeseby Hall

Cassie finds herself with Aleyn and Trellys in the woman's bedroom. Piles of Aleyn's torn clothing is strewn about - torn when he transformed, but Cassie doesn't know that 😊



Trellys offers them BOTH the hospitality of the House and leads them down to a sort of bar-room for a drink and sandwiches.

Stefan, the minotaur barman tries to separate Aleyn from his blade and gives wrong drink to Trellys (forgetting to add honey) despite having worked for the House for centuries! Both Aleyn and Cassie are alerted by this although Trellys doesn't pay much attention other than commenting about the lack of honey.



Stefan wanders off, supposedly to summon Lady May Jeseby (the House Logrus specialist) but really, he has other business.

Aleyn senses a closing down of Trump contact. Cassie senses a closing down of Pattern power.

Setep, Neferu and two Serpent Warriors (Jaffar) walk in just as Stefan reappears at the bar.

"Hello again Aleyn – it's been a LONG time. How is it you still live after a millenia or more?"



Setep goes on to INVITE Aleyn to come with him to visit House Amon and (not very) discreetly threatens collateral damage to "these two delightful ladies".

He goes on to question Aleyn about how many of the other Blades has he absorbed. He thinks there is only one remaining (other than Aleyn's) and that has been passed down through many generations. He hopes to have Aleyn absorb that one, back at House Amon.

Trellys gets to her feet and (very bravely) tells Lord Setep that these are guests in House Jeseby and that he and his companions ARE NOT! She gestures for a couple of other Jesebites in the room to take up arms and there is the beginnings of a fight.

Setep extends claws (Wolverine-style) and takes a swipe at Aleyn, but he blocks the powerful slash with a bar stool and draws his own blade. The Jesebites grapple with the two Jaffar.

With the newcomers focussed on Aleyn and the SoulBlade, Cassie manages to discreetly get out a Trump for Benedict. She tries to call him and finds there is a blockage. As she exerts more will power, the blockage falters and Neferu clutches at her cybernetic hand in pain, smoke rises from the palm-unit.



Suddenly the connection is made and Benedict, who is mounted and surveying his troops, turns to look at her.

Cassie gasps, "We're in trouble at House Jeseby!". He asks "Do you want escape, or want me to come through?" and she raises a hand to pull Benedict (and his horse) through into the bar.

The arrival of Benedict changes the balance of power in the room.



Calmly, Benedict suggests that a peaceful withdrawal by Setep might avoid a messy diplomatic situation. The Lord of Destruction clearly decides to back down for now.

As the intruders leave (promising to see Aleyn again soon) he calls to Stefan – "You had best come with us Bastian, your work here is done". Black smoke floods from the minotaur's nostrils and the shadowy form of a T'yiga drifts out of the door behind its master.

Stefan the Minotaur has no memories beyond the morning of the Execution of Gareck. It seems he was possessed about an hour or so after that. Presumably to spy on Trellys because of her relationship with Aleyn.

House Jeseby are grateful for the help and apologetic for the assault on their guests. They aren't a strong military House but intend to protest to House Amon by making the production of Trump artefacts more difficult for them.

Setep Teleported away rather than trumped away. They will find the holes in the ground where spikes had been stuck, setting up some sort of Teleport area, probably with the same type of arcane/cybernetic equipment (Stellae) that had been used to destroy the Shadow of Britannia.