

# 18- A HELL of a Funeral

Cassie stayed at Benedict's camp and borrowed some equipment from the medical tent to combine some of Dworkin's components and made two potions of Trump Booster and one of Pattern Booster. She keeps one set of ingredients in reserve. After the work, she contacts Aleyn to give him one of the Trump Boosters.



Aleyn had returned to Trellys at Jeseby Hall and, at Trellys' suggestion, brought Cassie through to join them so Trellys could finish a Trump of her. During that first day Lord Vincenzo spoke to Aleyn "Lord Setep has been in touch with me via Trump – he APOLOGISED! - for the intrusion the other day, and asked if I could arrange for a meeting with you here, or if you prefer he would send me a Trump of his servant so you could contact them – he has offered guarantees of your safety and safe return."



Aleyn decided to meet with Setep at Jeseby Hall.

The next day Setep arrived, alone, and spoke privately with Aleyn while Cassie watched.

"There has been an unfortunate misunderstanding between us. I had long given up on seeing how the experiment (you and your Blade) turned out and was a little too over-eager to continue when you re-surfaced after a thousand years. The nine blades were designed to gradually flow together combining their power and experiences. Finally the chance has arisen to complete the project. By absorbing the final blade you will unlock greater capabilities." Setep seemed genuinely eager to proceed.

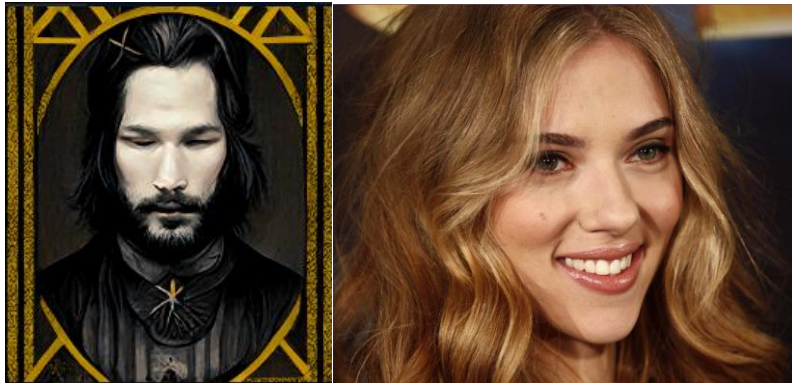
"How would you feel about missing out on tomorrow's Funeral and coming to my laboratory for the final stage?"

Cassie could see that THIS odd request was somehow deeply significant to Setep. When Aleyn said it was a political duty to attend the Funeral, Setep switched to warning them (vaguely) about rumours of a possible anti-Amber terrorist plot. He became VERY insistent that they "stay close to Queen Dara" "for your own safety". He even extended the warning to include Cassie "as I know Bances of Amblerash – High Priest of the Logrus – would not want anything to happen to YOU either, before he could examine your unusual Pattern Imprint through his Eye of the Serpent"

Before leaving, he gave Aleyn a Trump of Neferu so he could contact her if and when he was ready to proceed to "the next level".



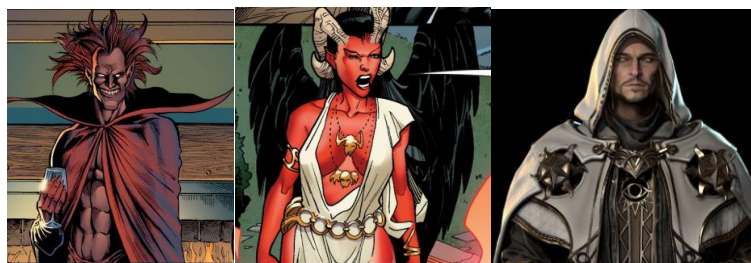
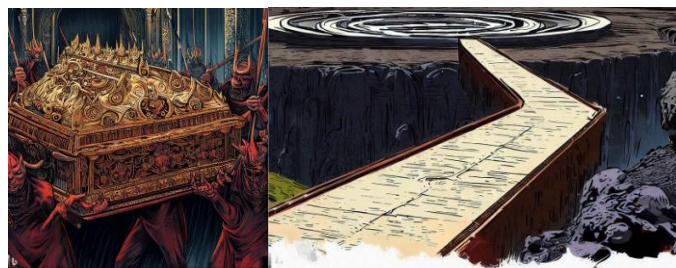
The so-called “Lord of Destruction” then used his own Trump to call Neferu and passed through to a workshop where they glimpsed Neferu and various Jaffar working with crates labelled F.R.



Cassie called Benedict to inform him of Setep’s cryptic warning and he advised them to follow the warning and stay close to Dara. Aleyn contacted Fiona to ask her opinion of Setep and got similar advice “It seems you are valuable to him alive – for his experiment – so LIKELY the warning is well-intentioned. House Amon have access to some unique and dangerous technology – You saw a few months back I paid him to destroy the Shadow of Brittania. He held up his end of the bargain and I just held up mine – I sent one of his agents to Shadow Earth so that he can Trump his way there in future.

### **The Funeral of Fantos Rex**

They were invited to travel to the Funeral with the Jeseby contingent. The senior members of each of the Twelve Great Houses would be there – the top 20 or so nobles from each – some were bringing even more to honour King Fantos.



There was a huge procession along a wide road – two miles long – between The Thelbane and The Abyss. At the Thelbane, Queen Dara addressed the masses. She spoke at length about how the opposing factions would no longer be at war. “There should be no hypocrisy at the Funeral, let those families who supported the King in life, support him in Death and follow the coffin to the Edge of the Abyss for the final Fireworks display”

Dara was (according to Cassie) pretending to be a grief-stricken widow, leaning on her stepsons Duke Mandor of House Sawall and Jurt. The Royal party followed along behind the procession and the huge ornate coffin – labelled **Fantos Rex**. Aleyn and Cassie accompanied the Royal party.

House Jeseby (led by Vincenzo and May) joined with seven other Houses (about 60 percent of the Houses) in the great Procession – including the “dwarves” of House Hellibore, the Mantis warriors of House Tekumel, Osiris and Bast from House Amon, and many others.



The Queen, appearing to be by grief, stumbled and had to be taken back to The Thelbane by Duke Mandor. They urged Jurt (her other step-son) to take Dara’s place and Cassie realised Jurt was very nervous and reluctant. Mandor covertly gestured to a Trump (showing Jurt in both his human and gargoyle form) and urged Jurt to go on.

The High Priest – Bances of Amblerash – approached Cassie and urged her to head back to the Thelbane with the Queen and then turned back himself to follow Dara.



About this time, Aleyn noticed the three small towers set up around the circular Abyss to control the “Fireworks”. Each had a cluster of figures around it – and familiar-looking crates labelled F.R. Neferu was close to one of them, apparently using a computer tablet! Strange! Modern Technology shouldn’t work here – but they remembered that Setep’s Stellae devices had been able to affect the Axioms of Britannia and allow both Magic and Technology to coexist there.

On some of the components they could see labels showing a stylised Hydrogen Atom!

Neferu and her workers vanished into the familiar rainbow shimmer of a Trump.

Jurt was looking more and more nervous, glancing back frequently towards Dara, now back at the podium by the Thelbane.

Dara’s voice emerged from the three towers.

“It’s good that all those who loyally supported King Fantos in life should join him in Death as a sacrifice to the Abyss”. Some form of shimmering bubble arose to protect the Thelbane.

Aleyn and Cassie FINALLY started to run away from the procession, beyond the line of Setep’s firework-disguised Stellae towers. Glancing back they saw a frantic Jurt swearing at his brother and step-mother and then transforming into a small stone gargoyle crouching face down in the dirt.



Aleyn fumbled out Random’s Trump and yelled at the King to pull them through. They felt the heat and were fortunately looking away when the Tactical Nuke went off at the edge of the Abyss. The blast melted the flesh from more than 200 of the Chaos Nobility, including the Hellibore dwarves, the Jeseby’s and even Osiris and Bast from House Amon!



Streamers of Dark Energy poured from the Abyss, like MASSIVE Logrus Tendrils! The ends dissolved into Shadow and the darkness POURED OUT in a thousand endless streamers.

Random pulled them through, tumbling out onto a small stage in a jazz club in a Texicanna town to the amazement of the audience and Random's fellow band members.

Cassie had the presence of mind to realise the blast and radiation would spread out and that Benedict's camp was only a few miles away. She hastily called him and explained. Benedict snapped at her to hold the connection and exerted his will to widen the gateway. His quick commands were instantly obeyed by the 300 troops.



Cassie had to use her Trump Booster potion in order to sustain the connection. Her body was already wracked with pain from the heat of the blast. Benedict's men began to pour through into the jazz club, racing from the edges of the camp while Benedict and Cassie struggled to hold the fragile gateway open.

At the last moment, Benedict himself stepped through and the gate collapsed, only a very few of his men had been lost.

Random sighed as his panicked jazz fans screamed and ran and the modern-day “american” club filled with medieval soldiers who spilled outside into the busy streets. “I guess I won’t be playing here again!”

