

# A Death in the Family

As Cassie forced her way through to the centre of the Rose Pattern, re-writing it to be an exact copy of Amber's Pattern, she sensed that this would cut-off (and possibly destroy) the Shadows beyond the Rose forever.

She sought for a way to leave a tiny thread to keep them connected.

[GM: Accepting a penalty on the roll to "fix" things and risking EVERYTHING to save her father – gained a FATE Point as it relates to your Trouble Aspect]

She also saw a kaleidoscope of visions suggesting where to go next.

She saw Tir Na'Nogth (even though it wasn't currently visible in the sky). It showed as a ghostly silver location with the pattern distorted and almost writhing. She COULD transport herself there despite the intangible state of the place.



She saw the battlefield where Julian in white plate, fought the Dark Queen in black plate. Both were mounted on impossibly huge horses. Julian was losing but the tide of battle rolled between them before the end.



She even saw an image of the Courts of Chaos. In the Temple of the Serpent, Bances of Amblersh stood arguing with Dara the Empress of Chaos in the chamber that holds the Logrus. Around the edge of the room Setep and his servant Neferu were setting up equipment – strange Orbs that Cassie recognised as his Stellae. The Logrus itself seemed to be freezing at the tips of its writhing tentacles.

Dara was shouting "You MUST try it" but Bances was saying "It would be SUICIDE". Then the roof crashed in and dark tendrils descended. Where they touched, things vanished - the Orbs – Setep himself. The vision faded, lingering on the rotted, frozen tips of The Logrus.



Aleyn rode hard and reached the battle where he leapt from the saddle to transform into his giant/dwarf form. He crashed into the Skaven with added weight and strength. The horde cut at him, but the Soulblade hacked them down and their energy seemed to strengthen him.



There were thousands of Skaven and only hundreds of Amber Troops, clearly losing and would have to retreat soon.

Kato Jet, the samurai son of the old Trump Artist, Kato Jen, dragged King Random's body from the fray – he was badly cut, but would live. While Aleyn held off the enemy, Jet raised a Trump for his father and took Random from the field.



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[GM: We switched to Aleyn's activity for a while with the meta-technique that Cassie was seeing it as a result of Pattern-induced visions]

Aleyn cut down one of the Skaven Chamions and got a glimpse into the creatures memories as his blade fed its soul to him. Some human MIND dwelt within the Abyss and served the Horror for reasons of its own. It taught the Abyss powers of Trump, Pattern and Logrus (or used such things in its service) that enabled it to create the Skaven by pure effort of will. It created Champions, imbuing them with experiences and skills for combat. It created Shamans with knowledge of the greater Powers along with Sorcery and Conjurations.

As he shook the dead champion from his blade a Shaman managed to touch him and dark energies coursed through his body and mind. [GM: The Shaman got a free hit because Cassie had refused to be distracted by warning Aleyn during her Pattern Walk].

The Shaman probed Aleyn's mind and triggered a flashback to a duel in medieval France. The killing (possibly accidental) of a beautiful artist with long red hair. Marque de Callais, an incredibly skilled young artist, had caused the drunken duel which had been only to first blood, but Aleyn scratched his pretty face and he leapt forward in fury, only to impale himself on the soulblade. This caused a massive display of lightning from the Quickening as the spirit of Marque was absorbed (far more potent than anything the blade had absorbed before).



The Shaman gasped "THE MASTER'S CHILD!" and Aleyn sensed the dark MIND swimming up through the abyss to focus on him, full of hate and rage. Around the battlefield about twenty Shaman snapped their heads around and began to converge on Aleyn.



[GM: To the players, both well-acquainted with the Amber Stories, it was now clear that Brand was working with "The Abyss" and that it was Brand's son whose spirit (and Pattern Imprint) had been absorbed by Aleyn. The blade's Quickening had absorbed life-force before over the 300 years of Aleyn's life, keeping him young and healthy, but never anything like this – his first Blood of Amber!]

In the moment of shock, he managed to cut down the Shaman and rushed forward towards Julian and the Dark Queen.

The coven of Shamans pursued and seemed to work together to make a strong binding spell, but it was shattered when Fiona appeared in a glittering rainbow shimmer. The Eye of Dworkin floated above her and the tendrils spread out for several yards, snatching up Shaman, tearing them apart and hurling the pieces away. The Binding failed and Aleyn reached his target.



From the centre of the Rose, Cassie projected herself to Aleyn's side.

The Soulblade hacked off a leg of the Dark Queen's horse and she went down hard. Her black armour (insect-like with jagged spikes) seemed impervious to attack but Cassie ripped open the visor intending to stab her. It was Deirdre. Thinner, more haggard, than in the Trump portrait. Not yet so haggard and tired as Cassie had seen in the vision in Tir Na'Nogth. There were no whites in her eyes, only roiling darkness.



Julian muttered her name and pulled aside his spear thrust.

Aleyn struck the greatsword from her hand. It was heavy. She should not have been able to wield it as easily as she had.

Cassie held her blade to Deirdre's throat and shouted "Mother". The woman looked confused "How?... I never..." and yet she stared at Cassie's face... Then kicked her in the ribs so hard, Cassie flew 20 ft.

Aleyn tried to hold her down, but Julian couldn't bring himself to kill his sister. Cassie rushed in close and activated the Jewel of Judgement, ensuring the red aura encompassed her mother too. The darkness drained from her eyes, and she spoke with a croaking voice. "Brand was in my head, making me ...". Cassie pulled out Llewella's Trump, made contact swiftly and then she and her mother were gone – to the Pattern Chamber in Rebma.

[GM: I forgot to tick off a Pattern Stress each time you activate the Jewel (so you'll now be down 3)]

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Aleyn and Julian managed a messy retreat from the battlefield back to the Great Stair of Kolvir. During the retreat the numbers of Skaven continued to grow and the Shamans drew back and performed some sort of group ritual that summoned the Abyssal Horror – a cloud of tentacled darkness a half-mile in diameter.



The cloud pursued them too, but was moving slowly as though pushing through treacle. Then Fiona gasped and clutched her head "Something bad just happened in Rebma – the Pattern is weakening!".

The terrible cloud drew nearer. Tendrils dropped to the ground and deposited a few huge 12ft tall Skaven who raced to the Stair.

Aleyn was fighting a rearguard action as the remains of Amber's army retreated up the Stair. With the approach of the monstrous creatures, it was beginning to look hopeless.

Suddenly a helicopter burst from within the cloud. It was one of the machines that vanished from Texicanna but it now had three glowing orbs (Setep's Stellae) fixed around it and was being piloted by Setep himself.

It swung low over the Stair and Benedict slid out on a gunner's platform, raking the Monsters with heavy machine gun fire. Once the first few monsters had fallen back and Aleyn had scrambled up a few steps, Benedict released a few rockets that exploded with a huge bang and destroyed a section of stairs.



The Amberites gave a huge cheer, but then the Horror struck the tail rotor, and the chopper began to spin out of control. Just before it hit the mountainside and exploded, Benedict ducked inside and there was a rainbow shimmer from the cabin.

The Horror began to scoop up its minions and then to slowly ascend towards Amber.

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As soon as Cassie arrived in Rebma, she deactivated the Jewel. Deidre stiffened, gasped and grabbed her arm, saying "Run....Run" as her eyes filled-up with darkness again.



Cassie fled up the stairs but realised Llewella had instead drawn a curved sword of green glass and stood her ground. There was a clash as blade met the spiked plate armour, then a cry of pain and a scream, cut off suddenly and the thud of a body hitting the floor.

Cassie found a group of Rebman guards at the top of the stairs, told them there was a dangerous enemy in the Pattern Chamber and then snuck back downstairs hoping to ambush her mother somehow and get her into the ruby aura again.

After a few minutes she realised Deidre wasn't climbing the stairs, so she slowly descended. Llewella lay dead in a pool of blood and Deidre was striding along the curves of the Pattern. Cassie felt hopeless to stop her as stopping on the Pattern would kill her. So she watched as her mother approached the final veil.

She dug deep into her last reserves of determination and sensitivity and tried to speak directly to The Pattern, trying to convince it that if Deidre tried to teleport from the centre, to re-direct her to appear next to Cassie.

At first it seemed that The Pattern understood Deidre was an enemy, as the level of resistance began to grow. As the possessing spirit of Brand realised it wasn't going to reach the centre, the puppet-master had Deidre raise the glittering green blade and turn it on herself. Unwilling to force Brand to do this, Cassie begged the Pattern to stop, and the resistance died down. Deidre staggered the last few steps.

She turned slowly to face Cassie, who expected her mother to teleport away, but instead she raised the blade and plunged it into her belly. Blood spurted out, sizzling on the Pattern and erasing part of it. As she fell forward, she said "Take me to the centre of the Pattern in Amber" and before she hit the ground, Deidre vanished in rainbows.

The Pattern seems to have finally understood Cassie, and Deidre shimmered into existence and fell at her feet, within the ruby glow, her eyes draining of the darkness. The wound was deep and there was so much blood! But Cassie managed to staunch the flow and prevent Deidre from dying. Her legendary endurance (even for an Amberite) should let her survive. To the controlling influence of Brand, it would surely have seemed like he lost control at the moment of death and there was no reason for him to attempt to possess her again.

Cassie called for the guards who carried Deidre away for treatment and imprisonment. Meanwhile, Cassie strode back onto the Pattern and used the ruby glow of the Jewel to re-write the disfigured sections again, burning away her mother's blood stains. It seemed easier this time and quicker as though the Pattern was helping a little.

Approaching the centre of the Rebma Pattern, Cassie commanded it to take her to Aleyn at the gates of Amber.

There was a brief re-grouping of the Elders of Amber.

Caine was dead (beheaded by the Dark Queen), Llewella was dead (gutted by Deidre). Fiona was exhausted by her magical efforts with the Eye of Dworkin. Julian was badly wounded, his usually pristine white platemail dented and bloody.

Random (at Kato Zen's mansion) and Deirdre (imprisoned in Rebma) were at Death's Door, and Benedict was missing again.

Florimel, Martin (Random's son) and Luke (Son of Brand) hadn't been seen for a few days.

Bleys and Dworkin had been missing since the end of the Patternfall War.

Corwin and Merlin were still in the Shadows Beyond the Rose.

Only Gerard was physically uninjured, but his spiritual reserves were low after days of Trump use to organise the defence of Amber.

Fiona was full of belligerent questions for Cassie when she saw the young woman emerge from the shadows wreathed in the ruby glow of the Jewel of Judgement. "What the hell are YOU doing here? Don't you have a rather important job to be doing? Why didn't you fix Tir Na'Nogth while the moon was up. It'll be 8 hours before nightfall, and we'll be lucky to last more than two or three! You should have started this DAYS (if not WEEKS) ago. That... THING... up there can only exist outside the Abyss because the Patterns are out of alignment. YOU HAVE TO FIX IT."

Cassie was visibly shaken – she had risked life and sanity by re-drawing two Patterns (one twice), she had gone from being an orphan to seeing both her biological parents and risked the fate of the entire Multiverse twice already today in order to protect them.

Faced with all this, the enormous loss of life in the Battle of Arden and the deaths of Caine and Llewella, guilt swelled up in her.

She watched as the great dark cloud rose above the edge of Kolvir, casting its vast shadow over the City of Amber. Somehow, she pushed guilt aside and pointed up into the darkening sky. As the sunlight faded, the faint shimmer of Tir Na'Nogth began to flicker dimly.

What is she willing to risk to end all this?

If she fixes the Pattern in the Sky, perhaps the Abyssal Horror will vanish, then the darkness will be gone and Tir Na'Nogth will cease to exist. What happens to her then?

With the two hapless city guards, Hennion and Massius and followed reluctantly by Aleyn, she heads for the base of the stairway to Tir Na'Nogth. Aleyn weakly protests that "Tir doesn't like me!" but Fiona is adamant. "That hardly seems to matter now. If anything stops Cassie from doing what must be done... EVERYTHING is lost. EVERYTHING" Her anger finally seems to drain out of her and her shoulders slump. "Unless you can think of anything better to do, go with her and guard her with your life".

On the hour's ride out to the steps, Cassie relates everything she's seen in visions while re-drawing the Pattern, including the apparent problem with the Logrus in the Temple of the Serpent. Aleyn is still carrying the Potion they suspect is a Logrus Booster.

In his Chaos Demon Form (as the huge, cunning dwarf) "Do you think it will need fixing at that end in the same way? Aren't Logrus and Pattern two opposing anchor points with the infinite Shadows arrayed between them?" the gnarly old dwarf scratches a ragged beard. "If you just fix this Pole of Existence, maybe the influence of the Pattern will grow and will hold sway over three-quarters of the Infinite Shadows instead of just half, limiting the reach of Logrus-based Shadow-walkers even further. It would serve Empress Dara right for what she tried to do but isn't going to make the folk of Chaos too happy."

