

## 027 The Paris Strangler (S02E02)

Corwin is concerned that his son, Merlin is still trapped in the “Paris” Shadow with no memories of Amber. He is unwilling to risk returning himself as the place was specifically created to appeal directly to his own desires – he would have very little chance to avoid succumbing to the effects.

Cassie and Aleya offer to go back in and look for Merlin. Cassie has learned that her Pattern Defence ability can help protect her, and she can erect a similar defence around Aleya too. This should hold for a few hours.

*[GM:according to the rules, Pattern Defence should only have lasted for 1 hour, but never mind this time. It will be limited to an hour in future sessions]*

They took a few days to prepare before re-entering the memory-stripping Shadow. Aleya drew a Trump of a nearby small town with a welcoming Inn. They should be able to Teleport out to here once they locate Merlin.



First, they headed to Corwin’s lodgings, above the Bistro. They managed to break the door lock without being spotted by the patrons and searched Corwin’s possessions to find his set of Trumps. This was a full set of the Family and also one of Merlin, and one of a shadow-earth middle-aged balding man in a formal business suit.

They had been told that Merlin had enrolled in the “Academy of the Imaginationists” a school dedicated to an Art Movement mixing photo-realistic styles with abstract fantasy imagery.

The Academy was based at a large, converted warehouse containing classrooms, studios and a few apartments for the faculty members. It seemed to have about 100 students. They approached a group of students at trestle tables in the gardens and joined-in a critique of various works in progress. Aleya managed to impress them with his knowledge and suggestions and a young woman – Jennine – offered to take them to Merlin “He’s a junior member of the Faculty now and has an apartment on the top floor”.

They also learned that the Academy and the surrounding district had been victim to some recent (last 2-3 weeks [GM:coinciding with the removal of Corwin]) grisly murders by “The Paris Strangler”. A couple of members of staff and a couple of students and a life-model from the district had all been found with their throats crushed.

As Jennine led them into the Academy, four gendarmes arrived who were on their way to interview Merlin. The gendarmes were suspicious of the two strangers and questioned them a little before heading inside to find Merlin. Aleyn and Cassie followed them at a discreet distance.



When they reached the top floor, they found Merlin running from room to room to evade the gendarmes. He seemed to be treating it as a bit of a joke, but eventually they cornered him. They placed him under arrest for “suspected of involvement in the murders”. They had evidence that he personally knew each of the victims and had even been seen in the vicinity of two of the crime scenes (turned out to be in the apartments either side of his own).

Aleyn introduced Cassie as Merlin’s Lawyer and they all headed for the local police station. The gendarmes were surprisingly useless – but this was almost the first serious crime the city had experienced (it being a blissful, idyllic place).

Because Aleyn refused to hand over his sword, he wasn’t allowed into the Interview room.

Merlin seemed to be struggling to answer the police questions although when pressed he vaguely remembered “A snake... there was a snake!”

Cassie smashed the table to get Merlin free and then opened a Trump Portal to the Inn, shouting to Aleyn “We’re Leaving”.

Aleyn and one of the gendarmes burst into the room at the same time. The gendarme grabbed hold of Cassie and was drawn into the Trump Teleport. Aleyn knocked him out quickly as they materialised.



Merlin was panicked, but soon the memories began to return. The murders had been committed by Frakir – his animated strangling cord. He had left it behind when traversing the Rose Pattern as it is a separate entity and NOT of the Amber Bloodline. The “creature” looked a bit like a yellow snake when slithering along the ground. Merlin hadn’t recognised it and had shouted at it to “get away from me!” Each time it had approached. It had clearly decided that the people around him were a threat.

Frakir could sense Merlin’s direction through Shadow from the time Cassie “reconnected” the Sub-Rosa Shadows to the Amber Universe. Judging from the timing, it had apparently followed the trail of Aleyn and Cassie when they visited to rescue Corwin or when they left.

Merlin thought he had a spell that could protect him (similar to Cassie's Pattern Defence) and intended to return and recover some works of art he had created in his time there.

Cassie risked a return journey, just long enough to drop off the kidnapped gendarme, soaking him in wine in the hopes nobody would believe his story.