

Jurnal 54 - in Amber and Corwin's Paris

As I was slowly walking back down the corridor, deep in consideration, my really rather painful train of thought was interrupted by the onset of a Trump contact. Perhaps unsurprisingly I was glad for the interruption, though I was prepared to leave whoever it was to their own devices if I felt like it. As it turned out it was Morianna that was calling me. She said she needed some help, something that required my "Franco German expertise." It sounded intriguing, so I agreed to join her wherever she was.

She was in Corwin's Paris, in Corwin's house in fact. Sat on the table in his sitting room was Corwin himself; Victor loomed on the opposite side of the room. I nodded to them both and asked what it was that had brought us together. Morianna informed me that Corwin had a favour to ask of us.

Corwin began by telling us he had a young daughter by the name of Lisa. She was being cared for in a Shadow by a woman named Julie; he gave no other details regarding her. He had a suspicion that his daughter was in danger; the now infamous men in suits had been seen in the area, probably part of the reason I had been called in. He briefly described the Shadow as being very similar to his Paris and to 'my' Europe in most ways except that it was capable of supporting some extremely advanced technology, a fact that significantly added to the danger of entering that world.

He would be able to provide us with some equipment that would help to even the odds, but would have to use it sparingly as overuse of the items would almost certainly attract the attention of those equipped to detect their use.

Additionally, the house could be booby-trapped with 'plastic explosives', which he explained was a form of explosive that looked somewhat like dough but was quite powerful; two kilograms could easily destroy his house, leaving only a crater. Potentially even worse, some or all of the house could have been subjected to the Zero Reality Effect.

Could we help? Corwin asked us.

Victor quickly replied in the affirmative; it was the sort of thing that I imagined his honour would require him to set right. Much the same as with me, I suppose. Corwin smiled and stated that Julie, Victor's fiancée, would nag him for letting Victor get away from her for 'so long'.

Morianna agreed to help also.

I said that I had nothing to do I would not mind getting distracted from and agreed also.

Corwin went on to give us some more details and answer some of our questions.

Fiona had done some investigation of the artefacts she had got her hands on and her preliminary findings had indicated that some of the 'items' were body parts of some kind of 'Zero Reality creature', presumably a being that can dwell in such a place.

The suit-men were able to detect the use of Pattern, and presumably Logrus as well. As such it would be unwise to utilise our Pattern abilities unless absolutely necessary.

With regards to entering a Zero Reality area, we would not be caught unawares; we would immediately feel very ill and 'depressed'. We would also cease to regenerate from our injuries. We would be alright for perhaps five hours, but Fiona had indicated that going beyond that time frame would be 'unwise'.

Victor asked how his hawks would fare in such a site; since they 'ran off him' (much as a mill runs off the water wheel perhaps) they would function in a Zero Reality zone for as long as he would. Victor seemed to be insisting on wearing his armour and wielding his massive sword when dressing as a gentleman would be more appropriate, but Corwin said he had something for him to help in that regard.

Morianna asked how her shapeshifting would fare in a Zero Reality area and was told that since it 'ran off' her 'Logrus power' it would be subject to the same draining as her natural capabilities. In fact, using her shapeshifting would in all likelihood drain that 'battery' quicker than not using it.

As an 'interesting aside', Corwin's mansion where his daughter was living was situated right next door to an old mansion that used to belong to Oberon. The girl's mother used to live there; was she a servant there or something else? He did not elaborate.

There were two other points related to the situation and each other.

The suit-men were supposed to be searching for something while they were there, possibly in Oberon's mansion.

Corwin asked us how much we knew of the Patternfall War. We all expressed ignorance, so he went on to explain how his family had been split into two cabals. One had consisted of Bleys, Fiona and Brand; the other had been led by Eric. Eric had located notes in Oberon's rooms in Amber regarding the use of the Jewel of Judgement; Eric and then Corwin had made use of the notes to harness the powers of the Jewel.

An interesting fact about the notes was that they appeared to be pages from a loose leaf book. If that were so, the reasoning went, where was the book and what further secrets did it hold? It could contain incredibly important information regarding the Powers, Amber and more.

Our second goal was to get our hands on the book before they did. Victor asked if we should destroy it if we could not; Corwin agreed with this idea, but very seriously told us to make sure we retrieved the ashes.

Almost as an aside, Corwin mentioned the other point: as far as anyone knew, no one had searched the king's rooms in Amber (now occupied by Random and Vialle) for the book. Random might have, but he did not know. Victor came right out and asked if he wanted us to search the royal chambers, but Corwin quickly announced that he had made no such request.

He left us then to discuss and to arrange a place where we could test the equipment he had procured for us.

I could see that Victor had more than a few questions to ask. Naturally, the first was about the suit-wearing men.

I gave him a brief sketch of their nature and activities, how they used Logrus Conduits and other means to travel, how they appeared to be using freebloods from Chaos to open ways through Shadow, and lastly how some of them dissolved into white goo when killed.

I then had to quickly explain to him that killing someone to find out if they were one of those people was not a good idea. I think he suggested the idea as a joke; at least, I hope he did.

We each sat deep in thought for a time, sipping our excellent whiskies, until Corwin returned. We had not really thought of a way of safely approaching the house without drawing the attention of our opponents. Victor suggested that perhaps we could just visit the house and introduce ourselves as relatives of Corwin; but Corwin said that although she did know of Amber and its royal family, the arrival of three of that line at the same time would arouse suspicion.

In one of his surprising moments of quick thinking Victor then suggested that just one of us, namely me, could be of the family. Victor could be a bodyguard and Morianna would be my wife. I grinned at that idea; the lady in question looked a little alarmed. But we both agreed it was a very good idea.

As to how we would travel, since we would almost certainly be taking on the guise of gentlemen travelling with a lady it was decided that a coach would be the best idea, but one with horses that could be ridden in an emergency.

Now that our approach was settled Corwin transported us in the blink of an eye to a large warehouse somewhere. There were a number of tables against one wall, covered in a variety of devices and weapons. Corwin took us quickly through the operation of them all; there were small palm-sized scanners, compact black energy pistols, and "personal force fields", which were belts that generated protective walls of energy around us. They had four settings: off, passive (where sensors detected an attack and turned the field on in a handful of seconds), active (much the same as passive but with the field "almost on" for a much quicker response) and on. With the fields on active or on they could be detected by scanners set to detect the use of the "energy cells" powering them.

Victor was, as usual, not keen on the pistols but Corwin demonstrated some stun weapons that could knock someone unconscious simply by touching them with it. The pistols also had a "stun setting" that had much the same effect.

There were also automaps (electronic devices that showed maps of the area), small "GPS" units that could tell you your position to within a few metres and also more normal paper maps. All the devices came with manuals, which I decided to get a good look at later.

Then Corwin revealed the device that he said Victor would find so useful. It was a Hologenerator, not unlike the ones we used in the City of the Big-Heads. The only problem with using it was that Victor was still the same size underneath, and the image would move as

he did. So when he ducked under doorways as he always had to the image would too. It would also look down when as he did when he talked to people. I came to the conclusion that it could prove useful but using it all the time would only attract attention to Victor's strange behaviour; thus it would be prudent to save it only for special occasions.

With regards to appropriate garb, Corwin had set several outfitters to the task of creating an entire wardrobe for Victor and Morianna; I asked for the opportunity to return to Amber to acquire the clothing I had there, since I had but recently purchased it in a place not unlike our destination. My request was granted, so I Trumped back to Amber and gather together the clothing I had bought in Magdeburg into one of the cases we had bought in New Mexico. I also made sure to pick up my new sword stick; it was just the thing for concealed protection where we were going.

I returned by way of Morianna. By that time the three of them had gathered up most of the clothing that they required. At the same time we took the opportunity to change into the appropriate gear.

Once the shopping trip was complete Corwin opened up some kind of portal, much like the ones Intruder created on occasion. Corwin assured us that despite appearances it was nothing to do with Trump, and we passed through to find ourselves in the yard behind Corwin's house. There a coach awaited us, with heavy travelling cases beside it open and ready to receive our baggage.

Soon we were ready to depart.