

Investigation Report and Summary of the Independent Enquiry into the Apparent Death of King Merlin of Chaos

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Introduction

The apparent death of King Merlin of Chaos was, naturally, a matter of the upmost seriousness and potentially very politically charged. In order to preserve the impartiality and integrity of the investigation the decision was taken to invite an impartial Amberite to head up a parallel investigation to the standard CSI Thelbane Enquiry and to liaise with them with the aim of finding a swift and stable conclusion to this affair.

I Felicia; daughter of Cameron; son of Fiona of Amber, took on the responsibility of leading this Independent Enquiry and was assisted by Bastian; son of Patricius; son of Benedict of Amber, Nathan; son of Kathleen; daughter of Fiona of Amber and Rosie; daughter of Charles; son of Gerard of Amber.

I, Felicia, was appointed to this role by Fiona of Amber while Bastian, Nathan and Rosie were appointed to assist me by Benedict of Amber.

The Crime Scene

Once the apparent death of King Merlin of Chaos was reported, the crime scene (King Merlin's study) was a politically disputed area with representatives of House Sawall and House Jesby both wishing to preserve the integrity of the crime scene from one another. Upon arrival, CSI Thelbane closed off the site and prevented anyone else from entering until I arrived.

Timeline of Events

What follows is a timeline of events as reported to me by CSI Thelbane investigators upon my arrival:

- During the second turning of the day cycle King Merlin is reportedly seen alive by his Mother Dara.
- It is believed the crime took place during the third or fourth turning of the day cycle on that same day.
- Various demons and staff enter and leave the crime scene without discovering the evidence behind the desk (see 'Evidence' below).
- During the sixth turning of the day cycle the crime is reported by a servitor demon
- Representatives of House Sawall and House Jesby disagree over jurisdiction of the crime scene.
- Officials from CSI Thelbane arrive and seal off the crime scene and disperse representatives from Houses Sawall and Jesby.
- Investigators collect a list of the seventeen citizens and staff who entered Merlin's study since the estimated time of his apparent death, and interview five of these who could be located. (Full reports of these interviews can be obtained from CSI Thelbane)

Evidence in Situ

What follows is a description of anything of note discovered or observed within Merlin's study by myself or members of my team. Images of everything described in the manner in which they were discovered can be obtained from the report produced by the CSI Thelbane Crime Scene Photographer.

Organic Matter

Organic residue in keeping with that from a shapeshifter was discovered in a gelatinous puddle behind the desk. A sample was sent to the lab for testing.

Trisp

Found under the desk, this ceremonial duelling weapon did not appear to have been used and had no identifying features denoting ownership. This was bagged and sent to the lab.

Bottle of Wine

On the desk, this half full bottle had clearly been uncorked and recorked. The label appeared to suggest its origin lay somewhere off in Shadow. This was bagged and sent to the lab.

Pile of Ash

On the floor to the side of a desk, a small pile of ash was discovered. A sample was sent to the lab for testing.

Beer Glass

On the desk, knocked over as if in a disturbance, a beer glass containing the dregs of a liquid which looked and smelled to be beer. This was bagged and sent to the lab.

Vial

Behind some undisturbed books upon the bookshelf a glass vial containing a small measure of clear liquid was discovered. A sample of the liquid was sent to the lab for testing whilst the vial was bagged and sent to the lab.

Trapdoor

A hidden trapdoor was discovered in the ceiling in the centre of the room. It looked to have been undisturbed for some weeks and was very dusty. The space above was empty. This was photographed and replaced.

Missing Items

Neither King Merlin's Trump Cards nor his personal strangling chord Frakir were found within his study, or anywhere else. No trace of the clothes he was wearing that morning were discovered.

King Merlin of Chaos

It was reported from the keeper of the King's appointment diary that the day in question was one that he had kept clear for personal use. Although not receiving of official appointments on this day, the King did meet with some close friends and family at various times. These persons were the King's mother Dara, brother Despil and friend Gilva Hendrake.

It seemed well-known that the King had been on the throne for decades and was growing tired of his duties.

Lab Report

The second day of the enquiry returned the analysis from the CSI Thelbane report. What follows is a summary of their findings (more details can be found in the Lab's official case report).

Organic Matter

Tests confirm that the organic matter was identifiably that of King Merlin, although it was unclear whether or not this represented the entirety of His Majesty. The equivalent mass of the remains was similar to that of one of the King's arms although given his abilities as a shapeshifter this was

inconclusive proof of his death. The amount of organic matter remaining would be consistent with the process involved in the King adopting his primal form. His remains also contained traces of the hallucinogenic drug LSD.

Trisp

This ceremonial weapon was confirmed to have been unused - too sharp a point which would have been blunted if used as a weapon. The item was clear of any fingerprints and was completely unidentifiable meaning it would have been specially commissioned to be so. Usually weapons of these sorts are well marked with maker's marks and family emblems and it is traditional also that the blades are poisoned. Unusually this Trisp blade was un-poisoned.

Bottle of Wine

The wine remaining in the bottle contained traces of shapeshifting poison, a substance which blocks the ability to shapeshift once ingested and usually results in death. The bottle is confirmed to come from Mador Sawall's personal collection of Shadow vintages. The bottle has no fingerprints upon it.

Pile of Ash

These ashes seem to be the burnt remains of roughly forty to fifty sheets of paper. No significant traces of ink that stand out.

Beer Glass

The dregs at the bottom of the glass are confirmed to be beer but contain traces of LSD. The glass is covered in King Merlin's fingerprints.

Vial

The clear liquid in the Vial contains the source of LSD traces in the Beer Glass and Organic Matter. The vial is clean of any fingerprints.

It seemed clear that the King, whether by his own hand or another's, had ingested beer laced with LSD shortly before his apparent death and although there was traces of shapeshifting poison in the Bottle of Wine, this did not appear within the Organic matter suggesting that this had not been ingested shortly before his apparent death. There is no conclusive evidence that the King is dead, although this will be the primary focus of this impartial investigation.

First Round of Interviews

What follows is a summary of the points raised from each set of interviews. For full transcripts or accounts please see separate interview reports care of CSI Thelbane.

Palace Kitchen Staff

The kitchen staff prepared the last meal that we can confirm was eaten by King Merlin on the day in question. No one unauthorised was allowed into the food preparation area as is normal protocol. The meal included the beer glass full of beer as is normal with some of the King's meal preferences however the wine bottle is unknown to them. The King often brings his own wine which bypasses the influence of the kitchen. The meal and beer were delivered by a serving demon who has yet to come back on shift but will be picked up by police for interview on behalf of CSI Thelbane when they next appear for work. The serving demon who collected the empty meal was originally interviewed by CSI Thelbane investigators before my arrival (Full reports of these interviews can be obtained

from CSI Thebane). They said the tray was left by the door but the beer glass was not on it. Without venturing into the room the tray was retrieved and the Beer Glass left within the study.

Dara; Mother of the King

I informally interviewed Dara alone, not wishing to overwhelm her at such a distressing time. She appeared well collected on the surface but deeply troubled and upset beneath her facade. She often became agitated and distracted throughout our conversations.

Now acting as Regent in her son's absence, Dara is very busy and has inherited a lot of responsibility. She last saw her son at breakfast where he seemed very happy and upbeat. She recounted that Merlin had experienced a new lease of life recently after gaining a new hobby and friend and that he was often very enthused about their shared project. She gave details of this that the King had been spending time with Dracon (lineage unknown) and that they had been studying a New Pattern together off in Shadow.

She insisted that the Organic Matter was that of Merlin despite this conversation taking place before the return of the Lab report. However she couldn't name anyone who might wish to hurt her son and described the political situation under his rule as 'peaceful'. She named the line of succession to the crown as her other sons Despil and Jurt.

Gilva Hendrake

My colleague Rosie interviewed Merlin's friend Gilva Hendrake. It was rumoured that the two were engaged in a romantic relationship.

Rosie reported that Gilva appeared genuinely distraught at the thought that Merlin might be deceased or harmed.

Initial Lines of Enquiry

What follows are notes upon the direction the investigation was taking at this stage and brings in additional information that impacted on our future lines of enquiry.

Dracon was someone we were very keen to talk to formally. He had appeared in Trump contact with me as a member of the Amberite Funeral and Coronation Delegation in residence at the Amber Embassy and requested access to the crime scene in order to cast divining magic in the place. I deemed this an unacceptable risk and breach of protocol, given that we wished to interview him about his close relationship with the victim. He was a reported friend of Merlin and had been spending much time with the King on the study of this New Pattern.

Vail (unknown lineage) was reportedly recovered from Shadow and escorted to Chaos to make a bid for the throne. Whilst unconfirmed at this time, the idea that he could either be making a bid for power or have been manipulated out into the open was an area we wished to explore.

There was of course the possibility that the King was not dead. If he had faked his own death or had been kidnapped, then finding him was something we had to aim for.

Second Round of Interviews

What follows is a summary of the points raised from each set of interviews. For full transcripts or accounts please see separate interview reports care of CSI Thebane.

Dracon

In order to preserve the integrity of the investigation Dracon was fetched by police for a formal interview by CSI Thelbane investigators. Members of my team Rosie and Nathan observed the interview out of sight but advised on the questions to be asked. Dracon was accompanied by Sebastian; son of Tabitha; daughter of Benedict of Amber as a chaperone.

Rosie and Nathan reported that Dracon denied seeing Merlin recently or frequently and answered questions very evasively and aggressively. During the course of the interview he attempted to cast some form of magic which tripped the alarms in CSI Thelbane.

CSI Thelbane investigators warned Dracon not to leave Chaos until the investigation was concluded and he declared that he couldn't agree not to leave the courts citing diplomatic immunity.

Mandor Sawall

In order to determine the origins of the Bottle of Wine containing shapeshifter poison Mandor was contacted. He said he often opened up his wine cellar for the King and was able to point out the place where the bottle came from. It was unusual, he said, as King Merlin normally picked from his favourite wine section far on the other side of the cellar whereas this bottle came from an area which had gone untouched for a lone while. Mandor thought it unusual that Merlin would pick this bottle.

The Very Sensible Plan

Dracon's evasiveness during the interview surprised us but was sufficient grounds for us to place him top of our suspect list. We were intrigued by his earlier request for access to the crime scene and wondered if it was a cover to remove some evidence or some such. We thought it pertinent to set up a controlled experiment to investigate his motivations more.

This plan of action had two prongs, as there was another individual who we wished to allow into the Study to read the aura of the room. However, it was imperative that both experiments run concurrently so we liaised with CSI Thelbane to get everything set up for the next morning.

The Dracon Experiment

Overnight CSI Thelbane had constructed a replica crime scene down to the smallest detail. The room was built to detect and store information about any spell cast within and was observable. There was no replica Organic Remains as that would have been in poor taste. Differences to the real crime scene were that a different, identifiable, Trisp laced with poison was present, a replica vial that did not contain LSD was present and a replica pile of ash was present.

Dracon was brought through to the replica crime scene by Nathan where I met with him. He attempted to look into the past of the room but this magic was blocked by the room's wardings. He claimed that the spell's failure was due to waiting too long before casting, furthermore he stated that Merlin had personally taken down all of his own spells in this room before departing. Dracon then requested a sample of the Organic Remains in order to "grow a clone" from it to confirm that it was part of the King. He reiterated his stance that did not know Merlin at all well and named Despil and the High Priest of the Serpent as suspects without evidence to back it up. He swore Dara's innocence and claimed to trust Morgan entirely.

The Heron Experiment

Heron; son of Amya; daughter of Llewella of Amber was brought through to the real crime scene by Bastian and was accompanied by Shade; son of Tamara; daughter of Benedict of Amber. Heron preceded to read the room to gain an understanding of the aura of the space. Heron was

overwhelmed that the major feeling in the room was one of love and protection. He said it didn't seem like a place of murder.

Conclusions from these concurrent experiments confirm Dracon as a suspect. Although he genuinely didn't try to sabotage the crime scene, his behaviour was sufficiently erratic to be suspicious. Additionally his accusations prompted us to resolve to investigate Dara and Morgan further. Heron's information seemed to confirm our suspicions that the King was not in fact dead but either missing or kidnapped. Our primary theory at this stage was that Merlin had enlisted the help of his friend Dracon to fake his own death and run away from his responsibilities on the throne.

Character Testimonials

It transpired that Morgan; daughter of Kathleen; daughter of Fiona of Amber was the leader of the Amberite Funeral and Coronation Delegation and had arrived initially as a core team including Declan; son of Viviane (lineage unknown), and Dracon.

At this point I contacted King Random of Amber to ask for his opinions on these delegates as the King's opinion on character is impeccable. King Random vouched most strongly for Morgan and Declan but said he viewed Dracon with suspicion and didn't know much about him.

This was sufficient for me to confirm Dracon's position on the Suspect List but to remove Declan and Morgan.

King Random also said that Sebastian was assembling a team to go and find Merlin and recommended that I contact him to arrange to join the expedition. I did so.

The Funeral

It was important that my team and I attended the funeral procession so we assembled outside with the rest of the crowds and delegates. Much to everyone's surprise Dara; mother of King Merlin, appeared to the crowd and announced that her son was not dead but in fact kidnapped. She did not offer any concrete evidence to back up her claim and all but accused Gilva Hendrake of being behind it. When I spoke to her again she appeared very evasive of questions but did confirm that Merlin never went anywhere without his Trump deck and strangling chord. She stated that Gilva Hendrake is too close to chaos and accused her of kidnapping Merlin to save him from the responsibilities of the crown.

The Rescue Mission

With all haste, Sebastian assembles his team and declares the identity of the kidnapper is none other than Osrice of Amber. I have encountered Osrice before and can attest to his villainy but was a little hesitant to jump to conclusions given the lack of logical evidence.

What follows is a list of the persons assembled for this rescue mission to Osrice's section of Shadow:

- Sebastian; son of Tabitha; daughter of Benedict of Amber
- Felicia; daughter of Cameron; son of Fiona of Amber
- Bastian; son of Patricius; son of Benedict of Amber
- Nathan; son of Kathleen; daughter of Fiona of Amber
- Rosie; daughter of Charles; son of Gerard of Amber

- Morgan; daughter of Kathleen; daughter of Fiona of Amber
- Declan; son of Viviane (lineage unknown)
- Dracon (lineage unknown)
- Heron; son of Amya; daughter of Llewella of Amber
- Shade; son of Tamara; daughter of Benedict of Amber
- Juanita; daughter of Casimir, Son of Caine of Amber
- Llyr; son of Godric; son of Llewella of Amber
- Vail (lineage unknown)

The place to which we arrived was set as a trap and immediately we were set upon by Osric and his forces. We fought and were victorious however Osric himself escaped. There was no trace of King Merlin. The rescue party were vocal about having been betrayed to Osric by one of our number however their identity was not revealed.

Conclusions

The Independent Enquiry into the Apparent Death of King Merlin of Chaos is now in its fourth day and has taken several dramatic turns.

My team and I had made good progress, determining that the King was more than likely alive and was pursuing the idea that he was assisted in faking his own death by his friend Dracon who continually acted evasively and aggressively towards police investigation and abused his diplomatic immunity to evade CSI Thelbane Investigators.

Aims Going Forward

Whilst this conclusion is one I would investigate further, I am also anxious to discover Dara's part in all this and would be very interested to interview Gilva Hendrake once again. The general feeling amongst the rescue party is that Merlin was kidnapped once from his study and then kidnapped once again from the original kidnappers. This is a theory I would wish to confirm and perhaps draw up a timeline and motivation set for at least two potential sets of kidnappers. I still have not ruled out that King Merlin is himself one of these.

Current Suspect List

What follows is the official list of suspects as it appears at this current point in time:

- Dracon (lineage unknown)
- Dara; mother of King Merlin
- Gilva Hendrake
- King Merlin of Chaos
- Osric of Amber
- Vail (lineage unknown)

Conclusion of the Investigation

The Independent Enquiry into the Apparent Death of King Merlin of Chaos was set up with the aim of determining the identity of the assassin responsible for the death of the King and their motivation. Given that the situation has now changed and there is a possibility that the King may be recovered I determined a wider scope to the initial brief. Also the situation that the King is himself a suspect in this broader enquiry is a factor that must be taken into account.

Therefore I have determined that The Independent Enquiry into the Apparent Death of King Merlin of Chaos cannot be ended officially before:

I personally have spoken to King Merlin himself and either:

- ascertained his innocence to the charge of faking his own death,
- ascertained his guilt to the charge of faking his own death and reported this and his motivations for doing so to CSI Thelbane,

or

King Merlin is confirmed to be deceased in which case:

- the assassin is caught and their motivations discovered,
- the cause of death is ruled to be accidental,
- the assassin is confirmed to be dead before they can be questioned.

In the event of any of these outcomes or any other unforeseen but equivalent outcome, this investigation will be concluded and a full report submitted to CSI Thelbane.

Signed



Felicia of Amber,

Official Independent Impartial Investigator on behalf of Amber