

# Things Fall Apart

A Nocturnum Episode by Jason Vey (Episode 3:14)

*"The Second Coming"*

W.B. Yeats

*Turning and turning in the widening gyre  
The falcon cannot hear the falconer;  
Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;  
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,  
The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere  
The ceremony of innocence is drowned;  
The best lack all convictions, while the worst  
Are full of passionate intensity.*

*Surely some revelation is at hand;  
Surely the Second Coming is at hand.  
The Second Coming! Hardly are those words out  
When a vast image out of Spiritus Mundi  
Troubles my sight: somewhere in sands of the desert  
A shape with lion body and the head of a man,  
A gaze blank and pitiless as the sun,  
Is moving its slow thighs, while all about it  
Reel shadows of the indignant desert birds.  
The darkness drops again; but now I know  
That twenty centuries of stony sleep  
Were vexed to nightmare by a rocking cradle,  
And what rough beast, its hour come round at last,  
Slouches towards Bethlehem to be born?*

The two men faced down. Once brothers, now mortal enemies, they both knew that only one would leave this place.

"So," the first man said. "It's come to this."

"It appears so. I didn't want it this way."

"It took you long enough to figure it out. Perhaps I gave you too much credit."

"Why? Just tell me why?"

"If I have to answer that, you really don't understand anything. Power, my old friend. Power."

"You've betrayed everything the Order stands for! Everything!"

"No. It's the Order that has betrayed itself, by closing its mind. We're supposed to be scholars, and yet you ignore sources of the greatest knowledge and power!"

"So selling your soul to the greatest evil ever to threaten the world is opening your mind? I'll keep mine closed, thanks. What happened to you?"

"Nothing's happened to me. My eyes are open. The Great One is coming, and there's nothing any of us can do to stop it. I've merely thrown my lot in with the winner."

"You won't be around to see that victory. I've come to put an end to this, once and for all."

"Alone? I think not."

"Who said I'm alone?"

Explosions of mystical energy tore through the night.

## ACT ONE: INTRODUCTION

### A Morning Visitor

The episode begins as Anita rolls out of bed in the morning. Her shift at the Hive is not to start until noon, so it's roughly 9 am when she awakens, showers, gets dressed and heads downstairs for coffee. As she goes down the stairs, she hears a strange noise coming from the back room: a sort of half-coherent moaning.

Investigating the sound, she discovers Alan, beaten and bruised, in her dining room. His clothes are tattered and he looks much the worse for wear. He looks up at her and says simply, "I failed."

He will not have her call anyone; he's utterly paranoid at this point and she is the only one he trusts. His story is that he finally tracked down the Black Sorcerer and tried to kill him, but failed, and now is in grave danger. He's going deep underground, but will be back very soon. He may need her help to put an end to this once and for all.

Things get even darker. It was none other than Daniel he had to go after.

As they talk, Anita makes a Perception + Notice roll. If she succeeds, she sees a figure in black outside her window, leveling a silenced gun at either her or Alan (she can't tell which). If she fails, the shot rips through Alan's shoulder and he slumps to the floor.

Two Combine agents attack Anita in her house.

### Dark Tides

Arriving at the Hive early, Drake finds Jamie talking to Father Bob, terrified. She can't find Daniel and certain members of her Wiccan Coven have decided that it's time to fight back against the other Covenants, particularly the Rosicrucians, who they seem to believe have been keeping them down for centuries. They're calling this a second Burning Time and are determined not to let it happen.

John is approached by Sandra, who needs his help. She's just rescued Carrie and Kay Hito from a massacre and has them, "someplace safe." She asks John to come with her to talk. If he is hesitant, she tells him that Drake is welcome to come along as well, and tells him that caution is likely well-founded right now. She asks where Cyan is, and seems concerned.

Once John agrees to go along, she takes him to the Upstage, which is closed this time of the morning. Sandra produces a key and unlocks the back door, explaining, "I'm friendly with the owner. He lets me crash sometimes."

Inside, Carrie and Kay Hito sit quietly at a table. The two girls are beaten and bruised, but their injuries don't seem serious. They are very shaken up. Sandra begins the story. She has quit the Sentinels. She has a story about how they've declared war on all the other Covenants as enemies of Heaven and are collapsing in on themselves. When she was ordered to spy on her friends in other Covenants, she stormed out. She suspected that the corruption

couldn't just be in the Sentinels and went to find Carrie and Kay at one of the Cabal's safe houses. When she arrived, she found a group of unknown assailants attacking the place. Carrie speaks up, saying that she and Kay were coming out of their morning meditation when the attack happened. It caught everyone off guard. Kay's foresight enabled the two of them to escape more serious injury, and Carrie's telekinesis enabled them to fight their way towards the door. They met Sandra halfway, brandishing her flaming sword and trying desperately to get as many people out as she could. The two girls hail Sandra as a hero, and Sandra looks as embarrassed as John has ever seen her.

They dove down a sewer grate and made for safety, avoiding the demon underworld as best they could. Sandra brought them here so they could think a bit and track down help. She and Carrie will decline John's offer of sponsorship in the Templars; they're sick to death of the politics of the Covenants and want nothing more than to be on their own again. They've thrown their lot in with a looser affiliation of heroes, but at this time she can't say anything more than that. She assures John that he and the rest of the Cast will be approached with more information soon.

As they tell their tale, have John and Drake make Perception (doubled) rolls at a -6. If they succeed, they hear the quiet rattling of the locks to the front door. Someone is picking the lock. This will enable them to get the drop on their assailants and gain initiative, or at least have an initiative roll. If they fail, a Combine strike team moves quietly into the room and ambushes the Cast, though John and Drake (who both have Situational Awareness and/or Fast Reaction Time) can take defensive actions as standard. The Combine agents are wearing full riot armor, having tangled with John before, and are using government-issue taser rifles on John. They suspect he is a member of the Templars and wish to capture him alive to question him. Against the others, they use lethal force.

Sandra tries to summon her sword and it doesn't work. "They're humans," she proclaims. My powers won't work against them.

There are fifteen Combine agents spread throughout the place. On the second round, three agents in demon suits burst in to join the fray. Now Sandra calls forth her sword and shadow armor and says, "These guys, I can throw down with."

After the fight, Sandra insists that they weren't followed and she has no idea how the Combine found them. Kay, with a Perception + Remote Viewing Task, will note that someone has put a mystical trace on John and Drake, and probably their other friends as well. Likewise, a Perception + Telepathy roll on a living agent will reveal that these agents were given an anonymous tip. They were pawns used by someone else to eliminate the group.

### And the Bad News Keeps On Coming...

Amara shows up. Except it's not just Amara. It's Amara, sharing her body with Katherine. Because Amara is an ensouled undead, Katherine was able to create a more permanent bond with Amara, and Amara agreed. Some Tainted force is reinforcing the wall

between the Threshold and Death Realms, and Malkuth. If Katherine didn't create an anchor, she might not be able to get back to Earth. Throughout the episode, Katherine and Amara will switch off, talking. They'll be identifiable through their accents. Amara informs the Cast that the House of Thanatos is actively recruiting undead from the demon underworld, gearing up for war. Their first targets are to be the Twilight Order and the Iscariots. She suggests that Anita warn the Order, but asks that she return before dinner time. Amara has a few friends coming with whom she'd like the Cast to meet. If the Cast tells Amara about their misadventures this morning, she will be grim, but unsurprised. "It was only a matter of time," she says, "before our enemies targeted you. You are the only thing standing in their way. But there will be time to discuss this later. Now, the Twilight Order must be warned."

## **Act Two: Complication**

### **Order In Chaos**

Anita goes to warn the Order and is shown a surveillance tape of a battle in an alley between two agents of the Order that Anita knows personally, and two Rosicrucians that she's seen in the store. The Rosicrucians brutally murder the agents of the Order. She's told that's only one of several attacks on the Order by various Covenants and that the Order is going to war. She's ordered unequivocally to cease any and all contact with members of other Covenants. If she refuses, she'll be expelled from the Order and branded their enemy. A Perception + Necromancy roll on her part will reveal a subtle corrupting/manipulating influence on the necromancers in the Chapel House. If she tries to reveal this, her superior will say, "how do I know you're telling me the truth? Perhaps it's you who are being manipulated." He'll pull out a pistol and try to shoot her.

### **The Alliance**

Amara's friends arrive. Amara suggests they hold council in the theater. The newcomers are none other than the Archangel Michele and two other unusual characters: a huge one-eyed man dressed in a brown poet's blouse, breeches, and suede boots, who reeks of power and claims to be Odin himself; and the ghost of Benjamin Franklin. They have a story to tell and are looking to take the Cast in as a "war council" of sorts. For several years now, they have been preparing for the Reckoning, which they believed to be closer than anyone could've imagined. They believe that the Combine is behind it, and that in a twist of dramatic irony, the Combine has been infiltrated by a dark supernatural power.

Michele also has a dark revelation for the Cast: the Combine was founded by none other than the archangel Gabriel; this is the very reason Michele went into exile. Gabriel is one of the leading members of the Heavenly Host, and has manipulated his way into too much power for her to touch him. She has fallen out of favor with the Host and has gone underground until the time is right for her to come forward again. They also believe that a dark force rising within the Rosicrucian Order the Black Sorcerer is in league with the power behind the Combine's push, though they don't know exactly who this Black Sorcerer is.

The Alliance has come to the Cast because the heroes are embroiled in this plot up to their eyeballs, and the time for the power players has not yet arrived. "As horrible as things look now," Amara will say, "There are far worse terrors on the horizon, and to tip our hand now would be the destruction of what may be the world's only hope in the near future. The forces of darkness must not learn that the Old Gods have returned, and that an Alliance is being formed in the wake of the coming storm."

Right now the Templars, the one organization thus far untouched by the corruption of the war, are forming the backbone of this Alliance, and will be helping to absorb the castoffs from the coming storm into the organization.

A final bit of information from their council should turn the Cast's stomach. The Church of Revelations has gone public. It's now protected by the First Amendment, and untouchable without severe legal repercussions.

### **The Attack**

As they chat in the theater, they hear screams from the café proper, and as they race for the theater doors, an explosion rocks the place. Rushing outside after they get up, they'll see the front room in a shambles, with bodies laying about the rubble. Father Bob, Jamie, and Dana are barely alive under the mess. In an ironic twist, while the Gifted barely survived, Jim is dead. The story the Cast gets from various survivors is the same: a black automobile pulled up in front of the store, the window rolled down, and a man in a black suit threw a hand grenade into the place. The car then sped off.

Michele and Amara are grim: it seems that the Cast has been targeted as enemies of the conspiracy. Not unexpected, but disheartening that it should've happened so soon and so suddenly.

## **Act 3: Climax**

### **The Betrayal**

It should occur to Anita that there may be some clues as to this whole mess left behind at Alan's house. If she goes to investigate on her own, the scene should be played out in the kitchen, but with Bob present, as Drake will have a vision of the encounter.

Anita goes to Alan's and is sifting through the rubble. Many of his books and artifacts are still intact, including a few that she didn't know he had. A few which are somewhat...dark...in nature. With a Perception + Notice roll, she'll discover a few loose floorboards. Hidden under the floor, she'll discover two books. The first is an ancient manuscript written in a proto-Germanic language. It'll take time to translate, but deals with something called the Deeper Dark, a Black Stone, and an ancient sorcerer named Xalotun. It seems to be Hyborian in origin.

The other book is far more shocking: it is the very copy of the John Dee Necronomicon that had gone missing from the Rosicrucians after Anita turned it over 2 years ago.

As Anita looks at the books, a quiet voice rings out behind her, "I'd really hoped you wouldn't come here, Anita. I'm surprised the Rosicrucians didn't discover those after I got away."

As Anita turns, her worst fears are confirmed: Alan stands behind her, cloaked in black. He looks sad as he says, "You weren't ready for this revelation, yet."

Alan isn't stupid; Anita has used Wishkill on him once before. He now has both a physical and Essence shield up around him that will stop her powers. He isn't looking to fight; he'd much rather seduce her into joining him and will make very Darth-Vaderesque offers of power and glory to her if only she'll accept Leviathan into her heart. There should be real temptation here; Anita has been through a great deal and she's seen what Leviathan can do. Ideally, she'll refuse. If she does, Alan will beat her severely with his mystical powers. But then, as she lays on the ground, bloodied and waiting for him to finish her, she sees a touch of sadness, mercy, and conflict in his eyes, and he merely says, "I really do love you," and proceeds to bind, gag, and blindfold her, and drag her down to the basement, where he'll chain her to the furnace.

As she lays there, beaten and no doubt broken, another quiet, pained voice sounds from the darkness. "Anita? Is that you?"

It's Daniel, also chained in the basement and severely injured, but conscious. He will reveal to her that he was the one who tracked down Alan and discovered that he is the Black Sorcerer. Daniel came here to put an end to Alan's madness, and was unprepared for the strength of the sorcerer's Taint. Alan beat him badly, but couldn't bring himself to kill Daniel, and so dragged him down here and chained him up while he debated what to do with the man. "Now," Daniel says, "It

looks like we'll be sharing the same fate, whatever that is. Anita, I'm so sorry."

## ACT FOUR: RESOLUTION

Alan knows the rest of the Cast will eventually track Anita and Daniel down; he considers Daniel too dangerous to go finish off, so he leaves the two there, but leaves a few surprises behind to guard the prisoners, and buy him the time he needs to get away. Before he leaves, he summons two Shaitan, and six Hell Hounds, and leaves them behind to torment and guard the prisoners.

Drake's psychic vision of the exchange will lead the Cast to Alan's house, but it won't reveal the welcoming party. The Cast will have to do battle with the Shaitan and the Hell Hounds to get to Anita and Daniel. After they have rescued the two, Daniel will tell his story: Alan had disappeared months ago, and was always suspected of being in league with an Old One, but he wasn't able to tell the Cast for two reasons: first, the Order forbade him reveal his mission to find Alan, and second, he knew Anita would never believe him. He's also aware of the shadow war between the Covenants, and believes that Alan and Leviathan are behind it. He's willing to set up a meeting between the Cast and the leaders of the Rosicrucians to exchange notes and see if his organization can help.

Drake has another flash of memory from Draco: the secondary book that Anita found, the Black Sorcerer told Draco, is the book upon which Von Junzt based his own Black Book, *Unaussprechlichen Kulten*. If the Cast can get hold of a copy of that book, they might be able to get a clue what Alan's next move is. A quick search of underground and Internet resources will reveal that there is one in the University of Pittsburgh's Darlington Memorial Library, for access to which they'll need an appointment.

## Adversaries

### Arisen (Tainted Zombies)

Str 3 Int 1

Dex 3 Per 2

Con 2 Will 2

Life Points: 60

Ability Scores\*

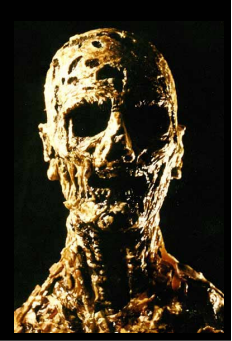
Combat 13

Muscle 12

Brains 8

Powers: Increased Life Points, Reduced Damage (Slash/Stab, bullet ½)

Notes: Attack with clubs (6 bash) or knives (6 Slash). However, they are not master strategists, and are generally of the 'attack until you die...again' mentality.



### Hell Hounds (Tainted)

Str 6 Int 2

Dex 7 Per 4

Con 5 Will 3

Life Points: 105

Ability Scores:

Combat 15

Muscle 18

Brains 12 (19 for perception-related rolls)

Qualities/Drawbacks: Enhanced Smell, Fast Reaction Time, Situational Awareness

Skills: Notice 4

Special Abilities: AV 10, Claws and Bite 12 slash/stab, Regenerate 5 LP's/Turn, Silver weapons increase damage modifier by 1, but are -3 from base damage. Serpent tentacles bite for 4 slash/stab plus Str 5 poison (Con dmg).



### Shaitan

Str 6 Int 1

Dex 4 Per 2

Con 5 Will 4

Life Points: 200

Armor Value: 10

Ability Scores

Combat 19

Muscle 18

Brains 10

Special Powers: Hideous appearance (tentacled horror) requires a Fear Test at -2, Damage Resistant (no damage type modifiers), Increased Life Points, Raise Dead (create up to 40 Arisen per round, at a cost of 2 Taint per Arisen, provided enough bodies are available).

Damage: Clawed tentacles 18 slash/stab, Teeth 10 slash/stab, or Taint attack (20 Damage, ignores armor, those struck suffer -5 to all actions the next round).



I haven't included stats for Alan, because let's face it: He's the Big Bad and he's going to get away by hook or by crook. He is, however, a high-level Adept of Leviathan and so has all appropriate Sixth Circle Adept powers, plus his Rosicrucian magic (Affect the Psyche, Gateway, Spirit Mastery, Shielding, and Symbols of Protection Invocations, all at level 5).