

The Seventh Realm: Volume One

By Mantrid Brizon

Episode 01: Spur Of The Moment

Jonathan "J.T." Thames sits at his hand carved, oak desk. A middle-aged man of mixed race, he was born in Detroit Michigan to a white mother and a black father. The crime lord rules a large patch of Belize from the safety and comfort of his compound, on the outskirts of the rainforest. He runs a hand over his slicked back, wavy brown hair and sighs, turning his vibrant green eyes toward the framed picture on his desk. He taps his fingers on the wood, grumbling as he stares at the image. A black-and-white photograph of himself, standing shoulder-to-shoulder with his once most trusted associate, Cyrus "Cy" Richter. Cy had rescued J.T.'s two older children three years ago from an assassination attempt. After interrogating the tall, black haired Caucasian, J.T. decided that he was not a part of the assassination attempt.

His actions to protect J.T.'s children, along with their own regaling of the incident left a positive first impression on the crime lord. He not only granted Cy his life, but also a job. It was a decision that J.T. would live to regret. He leans forward, flicking his cigar and dumping the hot ash into a genuine ivory tray. He glares at the framed picture, reaching out and quickly turning it over. Cy had proved himself in short order, surviving an attempted hijacking of valuable cargo and even killing the hijackers, thus earning the respect of J.T.'s soldiers. Gabriella and Jonathan the Second, J.T.'s elder children, already showed the German-American great favor and admiration. Worried that Cy was becoming too influential with his men, J.T. decided to take action.

In a clandestine attempt to thwart Cy's influence, he hired another cold-blooded killer, a notorious Columbian woman named Yasmin Silva. Yasmin is deceptively attractive, appearing quite harmless. With a lightly tanned complexion and big brown eyes, her long and slightly wavy black hair is often pulled into a low ponytail that rests between the center of her shoulder blades. At five-foot and four-inches tall, she weighs barely fifty-two kilograms, with a slim but athletic build, shapely figure and C-cup breasts. Though two-years younger than Cy, at only twenty years old when he hired her, he quickly promoted her above the man and declaring her captain of the guards.

Originally, she was to lead the men, Cy merely being one of them. Within the year, however, even she grew to respect the man; they became what could only be described as "war-buddies". For the last two years, Cy has been J.T.'s go-to assassin, but today that will change. J.T. most likely could not outright order his men to murder Cy; he has been forced to come up with a new plan.

"Jose!" J.T. calls out.

A young man dressed in military garb and bearing a slung SKS rifle opens the ornate wooden door to his office, stepping inside from the hallway.

"Yes sir?" He asks.

"I need to see Cy. Fetch him for me." J.T. speaks.

"Yes sir!" Jose nods.

The man closes the door, his combat boots thumping as he dashes down the hall to carry out his orders. J.T. reaches out and lifts the picture frame, placing it back where it was, so as not to arouse

any suspicions. After a minute of waiting, Jose returns, Cyrus by his side. The pale skinned, five-foot and eleven-inch tall man stands at attention, like a trained soldier. Though not necessarily muscular, he is certainly well-built, with an athletic appearance and weighing about eighty-two kilograms.

“You wanted to see me?” Cy asks cheerfully.

“I’ve got a simple job for you.” J.T. begins. Pointing to the table against the far right wall, he continues. “There’s a target who needs to be taken care of. Use that on them.”

Cy turns his icy blue eyes to the table, brushing back his shoulder length hair. Taking a manila envelope from a desk drawer, J.T. sets it atop and slides it toward Cyrus. It contains a dossier of the target.

“Absolutely.” Cy replies with a nod.

Cyrus picks up the envelope and walks towards the rifle, taking the Sako TRG 22 before returning to his private room. The rifle itself is one of six that J.T. had recently purchased for long-range defense of the compound. Cy had suggested the model to Yasmin, who passed it along for him. Opening the envelope, he pulls out the dossier, stopping in his tracks when he sees that the target is a teenage boy. He sighs in frustration and closes the envelope. He continues to his room, Isabella walking past him and into her father’s office. The fifteen-year-old glares at Cyrus as she passes him. Isabella is the black sheep of the Thames children; she was never fond of Cy, spending little time with him, even going out of her way to avoid long conversations.

Also, unlike the twenty-year-old Gabby and eighteen-year-old Johnny, she is much more like her father. She desperately wants to run

the family business one day and is a budding sociopath. She pokes her head into her father's office, peering inside.

"Is he going to do it?" She asks sheepishly.

"Of course he is." J.T. replies as he taps the end of his cigar into the ivory ash tray.

"Oh, thank you, daddy!" She exclaims, running up to him and throwing her arms around his neck. "What about my appointment?"

"Don't worry about that. We'll get you to the clinic tomorrow and take care of your little problem. By the time we get home, Cy will be gone." He answers with a smile.

"Thank you so much for this, daddy." She says as she kisses him on the cheek repeatedly.

Back inside his room, Cy examines the rifle, as he does every weapon he intends to use. As he dismantles it, he sees something that greatly disturbs him. Someone has purposefully plugged the barrel of the rifle, welding in a piece of metal just beyond the breech. Cy looks towards the direction of the office.

"You son of a bitch... After all I've done for you..." He mutters quietly.

Waiting until nightfall, Cy creeps out to the armory trailer and carefully slips inside. Looking around, he finds a set of identical Sako rifles. He checks a second rifle, making sure it is in working order. He carefully swaps the weapons, and then returns to his room. The next day, he follows the instructions on the dossier as he normally would. Carrying a somewhat large suitcase, he enters a building parallel to the town church and ascends the stairs. He keeps his hand over his suppressed S&W 39-2 with genuine mother of pearl grips. Turning a corner, a man dressed in a maintenance worker's uniform stands up from his small desk near the top of the stairs. The man begins to

speaking, but Cy draws the pistol and fires three rounds into his chest. The man falls backwards over his chair and slumps dead on the floor, blood pooling beneath him.

Cy looks at his body for a moment, then pauses to find his spent shell casings. He pockets the three casings and continues up to the roof of the building. Taking position, he watches the church doors and waits. He sets the suitcase down and opens it, revealing the rifle dismantled into its smaller components. He skillfully assembles the rifle, attaching a folding bipod and a low powered telescoping sight, already zeroed. He attaches the suppressor, and then carefully loads a single subsonic round into the chamber before closing the bolt. He takes a deep breath and waits, time ticking slowly by. The church bells ring and the doors begin to open. Children pour out, heading to the adjacent school after morning mass.

A young man, barely sixteen or seventeen years old walks out of the church and heads towards the school across the street. Cy takes aim. The target is so close he doesn't need to lead him. His finger caresses the trigger. He nearly hesitates, but comes through, squeezing and sending a round flying quietly out of the barrel. The round flies underneath the boy's left shoulder, tearing into his body and plowing through his heart. He is dead before his corpse hits the ground. People scream and look around, but Cy has already ducked behind the short wall of the rooftop. He grabs the suitcase and crawls away from the short wall. As soon as he nears the steps, he crouches and drops down. He rushes down the stairs to the first floor and runs out into an alley.

Entering the back of a smaller building, he quickly tears down the rifle, leaving the spent shell casing inside the bolt assembly. He packs it carefully but expediently into the suitcase, before locking it and walking through the building. He exits near a far corner, where a small black coupe is waiting for him. Police cars race past them as his driver, a nameless drone for J.T., casually drives them back to the compound. Upon his return, J.T. and Isabella are gone. Cy looks for

Yasmin but can't find her in her quarters, or the armory trailer. He eventually decides to check the interrogation shack. He enters to see her wiping blood off of the blade of a long buck knife, a twitching corpse sitting tied to the chair before her.

"We need to talk." He says sternly.

"Okay. He's not listening." Yasmin jokes.

"J.T. tried to kill me." Cy starts as he shuts the doors to the shack. "He gave me a rifle to use on some poor kid, then when I checked it last night, it was plugged. It would have blown up in my face if I hadn't swapped it out with a functioning rifle."

"Wait, what?" Yasmin interrupts. "Are you sure?"

"I'm not imagining this. He wants me dead for some reason." Cy answers, looking around the room as if to check for wire taps.

"Okay, calm down. We're not going to let that happen, and you know it." She reassures him, setting the knife down atop the bloody table.

"He can order the guards if he wants. They're on his payroll. Even you can't override that command."

"Do you really think they'll do it?" Yasmin smirks.

"Would *you* take that chance if you were in my place?" He poses.

"Alright then... We'll leave." She says confidently.

"We?"

"Yes, we. I'm not going to let him waste my best friend." Yasmin snaps.

"Aw... I thought I was your *only* friend?" He jokes.

"That's the attitude that probably got you on his hit list." She quips.

Suddenly, J.T.'s six door limousine arrives. Guards help Isabella out of the back and walk her inside. Cy turns to Yasmin, genuinely worried.

"I was getting bored here, anyway." She adds.

"How are we going to do this?" He asks, walking up to her and leaning against the table.

"There's a run tomorrow. If the men don't know that you are supposed to be dead, J.T. probably won't do anything to you when you report your success. Pack up quietly, and we'll take the semi. We can even hook to the armory trailer, putting our stuff in it. We'll head to The Malevolence at the shipyard during the night and 'borrow' it before he knows what's hit him." Yasmin explains.

"That's... Pretty good, actually. Have you been planning this?" Cy raises an eyebrow.

"I like to be prepared. I wasn't going to work here forever." She replies, picking up her knife. "Go report in, and if it goes bad right there in his office, just kill him. I'll back your play, and they won't waste you if he's dead; no one is taking orders from that little bitch."

Scratching his head nervously, Cy takes a deep breath, slowly nodding in acknowledgement. He walks out of the shack and across the courtyard. J.T., still walking towards his office, turns to see Cy approaching him. His look of combined shock and fear brings a little smile to Cy's face. He passes J.T. without incident.

"It's done." He casually says to his boss, walking into his room and closing the door behind him.

After a brief pause, he looks around his well decorated room. He looks over his wall of historical weapons, his desk with his laptop and electronics, his small bookshelf, and his neat pile of clothes. Shaking

his head in frustration and anger, he closes his laptop and begins unplugging the cables.

“Because this is *exactly* how I wanted my day to go...” He mutters to himself.

The day wanes as Cy continues to pack. By now, his belongings are tightly placed into his steamer trunk, a large record case, and his earth brown, M1936 style musette bag. Suddenly there’s a knock on his door. Cy jumps, quickly looking around the room and grabbing the Micro-Uzi that he left out. Has J.T. sent men to kill him? Holding the firearm tightly in his left hand, he keeps it near his side as he slowly opens the door. Jonny pokes his head in, looking to his friend. Sighing, he sets the gun down on the desk as Johnny steps inside. The boy is a near mirror image of his father, only with a lighter complexion, like a Brazilian, and wavy, shoulder length hair. He stands five-foot and nine-inches tall, with a slender build, weighing roughly seventy-five kilograms.

“So, it *is* true...” Jonny gasps.

“Yasmin told you?” Cy asks.

“Yeah. She probably thought I’d want to say goodbye or something.”

“Well, goodbye then.” Cy snaps out of frustration.

“We want to come with you.” Jonny says.

“We?” Cy raises an eyebrow as he turns to the boy.

Gabby steps into the room from the hallway outside. The beautiful young woman has a light and unblemished complexion, stands five-foot and six-inches tall, with a slender and shapely frame, A-cup breasts, and weighing about forty-eight kilograms. She turns her emerald green eyes to Cy, a man who she had seen as her mentor and guardian for the past few years. Her light brown hair is quite

wavy, yet still reaches to her mid-back. Her beauty is so renown in the compound, J.T. actually made it a crime for his men to look at her for more than several seconds at time.

"You two *really* don't want to come with me. This isn't going to be some picnic, or like the camping trips in the jungle that we used to take. I can't watch over you 24/7." Cy scolds them.

"We know. We just don't want to be here with our psycho father anymore. Do you even know why he had you kill that kid?" Gabby exclaims.

"No, and I don't want too." Cy answers, sitting on the edge of his bed.

"Look, we just want to get out of here with you. We'll pack light and be ready by sunset." Jonny exclaims.

"Please! Don't leave us here, with *him*." Gabby pleads.

"Jesus fucking Christ..." Cy mutters. "Fine!" He turns to the two. "Be ready at dark and we'll do this. We aren't going to get any sleep until we make it to the ship, so be ready for that."

Smiling wide, the pair darts out of the room. Cy shuts the door behind them, looking to the Micro-Uzi. He walks over to it and wraps the one-point sling up and over his left arm, letting it hang beside him from his shoulder as he rests on his bed. Time seems to stand still as he merely sits and waits. As he reflects, he can't help but find it funny how three years can be summed up into a single moment. Perhaps karma is real and he is finally being repaid for all of his past sins? Perhaps there is no such thing as redemption? He grows depressed as he imagines his own mortality; he's only twenty-five years old. As twilight looms, he's startled out of his self-pity by a quiet and calculated series of knocks. It is a code. Getting up, he opens the door for Yasmin. She steps inside and takes one good look around.

"Do you want to just take the whole damn compound with you?" She smirks.

“If we make it out of this alive, so is my collection.” Cy replies.

“Whatever. Let’s try and hurry this up. We don’t have long to get to the ship. I have already arranged everything.” She proudly boasts.

Cy slips on his tightly packed musette bag. With a heavy duty Dollie, they bring Cy’s steamer trunk and record case, stepping outside and into the dark courtyard of the compound. They carefully open the twenty-five-foot trailer that contains the primary armory. Aside from the weapons and ammo currently checked out, all of J.T.’s combat supplies are within. Using a portable ramp, they load Cy’s belongings inside, though he places his pack in the cab. As Yasmin sets her heavy backpack inside the trailer, Cy turns and sees his motorcycle where he normally parks it. It sits near a large chest of assorted spare parts, with a pair of full fifty-gallon fuel drums. The original green and black paint of the restored 1975 Honda CL200 glints in the fading sunlight. Yasmin looks at Cy in disbelief as he moves toward the bike.

“What the fuck are you doing?!” She quietly demands.

“I spent years rebuilding this thing. I can’t leave him behind... Seriously... It’s worth it!” He whispers loudly back, struggling to push it up the ramp and into the trailer.

“This is really stupid...” Yasmin grumbles.

They manage to load and strap the motorcycle to the wall, returning for the spare parts and the two fuel drums. Though they struggle, they manage to load them without making too much noise or drawing undue attention. As the killers climb down from the trailer, Jonny and Gabby show up with their bags packed.

“Are you stealing all of the guns and ammunition?” Jonny quietly chuckles.

“Yeah. Why?” Yasmin turns to him.

“Alright... Everybody climb into the rig. I’ll hurry and hook the trailer. Hopefully they won’t wake up to the roar of a diesel engine.” Cy murmurs.

“Wait... One last thing!” Gabby whispers as she darts off.

“God damn it. What now?” Cy whispers to her.

“Get the truck ready. We’ll be right back.” Johnny urges as he follows her.

Cy climbs into the cab of the semi-tractor and sits in the driver’s seat. He turns the key halfway, allowing the gauges to cycle and the fuel pump to activate. His finger almost burns as he twists the key further, the truck sputtering to life. With Yasmin guiding him, he leaves his lights off as he slowly backs the fifth wheel underneath the armory trailer, trying not to rev the engine loudly. It clicks as the kingpin locks into place. He quickly hops out, hooking the air lines to the trailer.

“Oh shit...” Yasmin murmurs.

Cy turns to her, and she points toward the main building. Jonny and Gabby drag Isabella out of the compound, each one holding an arm, with a gag tied over the girl’s mouth. Cy’s blue eyes nearly explode out of his head. He rushes back into the cab, deactivating the air brakes. Yasmin helps them push Isabella into the cab. Jonny and Gabby follow closely behind, holding her down in the sleeper-berth as Yasmin climbs in last, quietly closing the door.

“What the hell is this?!” Cy whispers loudly.

“We’re not leaving her here to be raised by a monster.” Gabby answers.

“God damn it...” Cy groans, shifting the truck into gear.

As he releases the clutch and presses the accelerator, the diesel engine roars loudly. Lights in the compound turn on and a few guards rush outside. As the semi and trailer pull away from the courtyard as quickly as they are able, a guard points a rifle at them. Pulling the trigger, it explodes in his face and kills him instantly. Other guards follow, taking pot shots at them with handguns as they drive.

“Well...” Cy takes a deep breath. “We’re probably screwed!” He chirps.

“No, we’re not. I had the Malevolence go radio silent in preparation for ‘the mission’. Just get us there intact.” Yasmin calmly retorts.

Voices suddenly appear on the CB radio, demanding the truck to stop. Yasmin grabs the radio and replies.

“Stand down. We’re making a night run to the city. That’s an order!” She growls.

The men don’t answer, but no one follows them as they leave. Have they succeeded? Cy doesn’t dare to stop and find out, driving as fast as he can without rolling over the rig. Swerving around the corners of the jungle road, they make it to the port in record time. Pulling up onto the dock near the Malevolence, he feels almost comforted by the routine feeling of the trip. The group departs from the cab of the truck, Jonny and Gabby each holding one of Isabella’s arms. The siblings drag the teenaged girl below deck, while Yasmin and Cy run up the gangplank and into the superstructure, quickly climbing up to the bridge of the ninety-foot trawler.

“Get that container crate, right now!” Cy orders a nearly asleep Juan.

Juan Gonzalez, the twenty-five-year-old crewmember, sits up from his stool and stumbles over to the crane controls. Shaking his head a few times, he puts the ship's crane over the container and carefully lifts it off of the trailer's frame. Cy and Yasmin return to the main deck, pulling in the gang plank and untying the Malevolence from the docks. Juan carefully swings the container crate over the open doors of the cargo hold, which takes up the first two-thirds of the ship, slowly lowering it inside. Norvin 'Norn' Abarca steps into the bridge from a lower level as the killers climb back up to the bridge. Norv, the Malevolence's captain, walks over to a control panel and presses a large yellow button, closing the hydraulically controlled cargo bay doors.

"So where are we off too?" Norv asks, turning to Yasmin.

"We're heading to Columbia." She blurts out.

Cy looks to her with a raised eyebrow, only for her to look back and shrug her shoulders in response. She is clearly making up her "plan" as she goes along. Norv turns on the engine as Emric "Rico" Cabrera, his twenty-nine-year-old first mate, joins them on the bridge. The ship slowly pulls away from the port, quickly fading into the dark of night. Cy looks back to the docks from windows at the rear of the superstructure. Calling out to Yasmin, she stands next to him as they watch a series of cars stop at the edge of the docks. One of them appears to be a six-door limousine.

"I think we made it." Cy whispers to her.

"Damn right we did." She quietly replies. "Maintain radio silence! This is a sensitive run!" She barks out to the crew.

She is thankful that the Malevolence does not use a satellite phone.

"Yes, Ma'am!" Norv nods.

Cy, overcome by the stress of nearly being slain by his former boss, stumbles down the stairs to the lower decks. As he returns to his usual quarters, he opens the door only for Isabella to run up and smack him.

"You won't get away with this, you bastard!" She snarls.

"Calm down. It's going to be okay!" Gabby says to her.

All three of J.T.'s children are inside of Cy's usual quarters, Johnny and Gabby attempting to calm down their younger sister.

"Fuck you! I didn't want to go! I'm being kidnapped. KIDNAPPED!" Isabella screams at the top of her lungs.

With no patience left to spare, Cy backhands her across the face. She stumbles back dramatically, bumping into the wall. Possible from the force of the blow, or the shock of actually being disciplined, Isabella promptly passes out. Cy shakes his hand and enters the adjacent cabin, locking himself inside. He sets down his pack and lies down on the bunk, stretching out. The Micro-Uzi, still slung under his left shoulder, digs into his side. He takes off the gun and looks at it for a moment, then carefully slides it up and underneath his pillow. His tired eyes seem to close under their own immense weight. He drifts off to sleep, but it is not peaceful. He is haunted by the visions of the slain, with the addition of the innocent maintenance man and the teenage boy. Their cold arms beckon him to Hell.

Cy wakes up as he falls to the floor, jolted right out of his bunk by the violent swaying of the ship. He stands up and stumbles to the closed porthole, struggling to maintain his balance as he peers

outside. A storm surrounds the ship, though he can't see any clouds in the darkness. Unlocking his door, he swings it open and rushes up to the bridge, bumping into walls as the ship bucks and jostles. Gripping the handrails tightly, he climbs the stairs and enters the bridge, where everyone else is already waiting.

"What the hell is going on?!" Cy demands.

"I don't know!" Norv says.

"A storm came over us, but it wasn't on our radar." Rico replies.

"That's impossible." Juan declares.

"And yet it's happening." Rico snaps back.

The ship jostles in the choppy waves of the ocean, swinging violently back and forth, side to side. Most of the crew are seated and belted in, except for Cy and Jonny, who don't have any seats left for them to use. The ship continues to bounce as Norv yells orders to Rico and Juan. They head for what they believe is the eye of the storm, though they are merely guessing at this point. The waves calm down considerably as they pass through a mist hovering over the surface of the water. Within the cloud is a perfect sphere of air, holding back the mist and the storm beyond it. The crew of the ill-fated ship look on in amazement as the sphere grows smaller and smaller. As the mist touches the sides of the ship, lightning bolts flash overhead.

The ship's metal skin seems to glow within the mist, which makes its way to the windows of the bridge. Bright purple lightning strikes all around the ship, only visible to them from the flashes through the dense cloud. Standing up near the center control panel, Cy looks at the lightning. He's amazed by how beautiful it is. The electronics aboard the Malevolence begins to malfunction. The screens buzz with static, shutting down completely as lightning strikes the main deck. The hull glows and another bolt hits. A third and final bolt strikes right in front of the bridge and everyone is pulled hard towards the floor.

Cy and Jonny topple over, glued to the floor as the ship seems to almost lift off, as though a geyser of water has thrown them and their doomed vessel into the air. The intense gravity suddenly reverses, and the two men feel themselves pull gently away from the steel plates beneath them. Only seconds later, a hard slam bangs Cy's head against the floor; he loses consciousness.