

The Seventh Realm: Volume Two

By Mantrid Brizon

Episode 17: Epiphany

Waking from a deep sleep, Cy finds himself lying on his back and staring at the ceiling. He turns to look at Zakera who lies beside him, her shoulder tucked underneath his armpit and her head using his chest as a pillow. He brushes her wavy pink hair from her face, gently caressing her snout with a fingertip. Her fur is quite soft. She opens her eyes, looking up at him with vibrant cyan spheres, a little grin spreading across her lips. Turning his head, he looks toward the balcony and sees the dim light from outside.

“Do you think it’s morning or night?” He asks.

“I don’t know, but I wouldn’t mind if it was night.” She coos.

“Neither would I.” He says, glancing back to her.

The pair sit up simultaneously, looking to the balcony once more. Cy feels quite rested, though his muscles are still rather sore. The couple rise from their bed and head for the railing, stepping outside and looking to the sky. In the distance they see the day-moon rising; the purple night moon is on the other side of the fortress, dipping behind the horizon. They slept through the rest of yesterday afternoon and all through the night. Heading downstairs, they enter the empty dining hall and serve themselves a simple breakfast, listening to the sounds of the alien birds and wildlife in the distance as the jungle grows ever louder, the volume increasing with the rising of the morning sun.

Sitting beside each other as they eat, Zakera hooks his side with her tail as she has done many times before. After eating their breakfast, they sit in the dining hall and talking endlessly; they are only interrupted by the fortress dwellers who routinely enter to find food. Amanda, Michael and Daniel approach Zakera and Cy as they sit together.

“Ready to get started?” Amanda asks.

“Yes, I am ready.” Zakera nods.

“Started with what?” Cy inquires.

“You proposed a pledge.” Michael says.

“And I have accepted. I must now prepare for our pledge; tasks I must fulfill before I am truly yours.” Zakera answers.

“Oh, alright. Do you need help?!” He eagerly volunteers.

“No.” She chuckles. “This is my work.”

“Right... Well, what about them?”

“We understand the rituals and will help her gather supplies, but it is still her job to do. Daniel simply wants to observe; he’s never seen a Ketlan pledge.” Michael explains.

“I will not be long, my love.” Zakera says, leaning in for a kiss.

“Okay.” He says, meeting her halfway and kissing her tenderly. “I’ll stay busy until you’re done.”

Sitting back in his chair, he waves to her as she leaves with Daniel and the Judge siblings. Now alone in the dining hall, he wonders what he can do to occupy his time. Perhaps he can entertain himself with his personal weapons stored in his trunk upstairs? He leaves the dining hall and climbs the staircase to return to his and Zakera’s room. As he passes the second-floor landing, he hears Chris asking a question before immediately answering back, speaking to himself. He steps around the corner and heads down the hall for

Chris' room. Knocking gently on the door frame, he peeks into the open room.

"Are you alright, Chris?" He asks.

"Oh, hello there Cyrus! I was just examining my pistol. It seems to have malfunctioned." Chris answers.

"What a coincidence! Guns are pretty much the only thing I know." Cy says as he walks into the room.

Extending his hand, Chris passes him the old Remington 1875 revolver. Cy examines the weapon, slowly cocking and lowering the hammer, gently rotating the cylinder with his thumb, listening to the clockwork, testing the lockup, and dry firing it slowly. It is in perfect working order.

"I give up... How has this malfunctioned?" He asks Chris, puzzled.

"It's run out of ammunition." Chris grins.

"That'll do it!" Cy chuckles. "You can't reload the cartridges?"

"With what? We haven't found a source of sulfur or saltpeter, nor do we have any lead to smelt. And then the primers..."

"Good point... Come on, I'll replace it for you!" Cy exclaims.

He hands Chris his old sidearm and motions for him to follow before leaving the room. They walk up to the third floor and around the curving hallway of the hexagonal fortress, entering Cy and Zakera's bedroom. He approaches his trunk and opens it, removing the top shelf of assorted knick-knacks and digging around the bottom of the trunk. He retrieves a large and carefully wrapped bundle. Chris' eyes grow wide as Cy unwraps the cloth from around the artifact. In his hands he holds a beautiful, nickel-plated Colt Peacemaker with a seven and one-half inch barrel and rosewood grips. Rising to his feet, Cy presents the revolver to Chris.

“What a magnificent looking firearm!” Chris exclaims.

“Puma Westerner, made by Pietta! ... They’re Italian. It’s a faithful reproduction of the Colt 1873 ‘Peacemaker’, but this model is chambered in the modern .357 Magnum cartridge.” Cy lauds the gun. “It’s a very potent round, and one that I have in abundance *and* can reload. Moderate weight but well balanced, with a crisp trigger, perfect lockup, and the cavalry barrel.”

He holds the revolver to Chris, butt first. As Chris reaches for it, Cy opens his hand, dropping the revolver down and catching it by the trigger guard with his index finger. Quickly swinging back, he points the revolver at Chris’ stomach, cocking the hammer. Startled, Chris steps back and Cy immediately turns the barrel away, slowly lowering the hammer.

“I’m just kidding.” He says.

“I see... How American of you.” Chris smirks.

Cy holds the revolver out to him, gripping it from the side. Chris takes the revolver and examines it, opening the loading gate and checking the six empty chambers, all much smaller than he is used to. Looking back at Cy, he is presented with a large box of cartridges.

“Thank you, Cyrus.” He nods.

“No problem. Come to me if you need more, or you can find them in the armory downstairs. So... Do you mind if I ask why you bothered bringing that Remington? The 1875 was never as popular as the Colt Peacemaker, and I imagine the cartridges were hard to find even in the 1920s.”

“It was, but there is a reason for using a dated weapon with limited ammunition.” Chris begins.

“And what’s that?” Cy asks.

“It was my father’s, and I simply couldn’t leave it behind in London. Even now, with no ammunition, I believe I’ll mount it on my wall where I may always view it... Sentimentality is a powerful motivator.”

“Preaching to the choir, Chris.” Cy grins.

“So, what are your plans for today?” Chris asks.

“Well...” He sighs. “Come up with a plan.”

“I’m going out to look for copper and tin ores that I saw on the surface a few days before your group arrived. As you can imagine, it’s been too hectic the past few days to go mineral hunting. Don and Jack are joining me. Care to tag along?”

“Copper and tin... Interested in smelting bronze?”

“I have a few plans for it.” He remarks.

“Sure, why not! Let’s have a picnic.”

“Excellent!” Chris exclaims with an amused smile.

Waiting for his companion, Chris stands by the door as Cyrus puts on his belt, holster, magazine pouch, sheath, recurved knife, water bottle and another pouch. He takes a different sidearm from his trunk, not taking his two-tone Bersa Thunder 9 Pro; it’s a strange looking weapon that Chris has never seen before. Cy checks the chamber of his Glock 22 with threaded barrel before loading several magazines and holstering his sidearm. He takes a brown leather vest not dissimilar to Jack’s safari vest and retrieves yet another weapon from his trunk, a bizarre looking carbine. Cy loads and slings his Cobray CM-11 9mm Parabellum rifle before approaching Chris.

“Do you have enough weapons, Cyrus?” Chris chuckles.

“Why? You think I should bring more?” Cy asks.

Chris walks away from the room and heads down the hall toward the staircase, Cy following closely behind. As they walk past the second-floor landing, Yasmin peeks her head out of her room. Realizing that Cy is leaving without Zakera, she quickly reenters her room and collects her combat belt. She races down the steps to catch the pair, bursting through the double doors and nearly slamming into Cy who stands just outside. Startled, he turns back to her, waving politely as he stands before Chris, Don and Jack.

“Up for a rock hunt?” He asks.

“Mineral hunt.” Donald corrects.

“Whatever.” Cy murmurs.

“Sure. I’ve got nothing better to do.” Yasmin says.

Following Chris’ lead, they leave the courtyard and walk towards the cove where the Malevolence is moored. Chris explains that not long before the ship and her crew arrived, he had seen surface ores during a hunt with Jack. Chris enjoys the scenery as he rambles on about the minerals and the myriad of uses he has in mind. They leave the path-like field that stretches nearly to the cove and head into the jungle. Jack keeps his Lee Enfield rifle close as they walk, not following a particular trail but weaving between the colorful trees; Chris wanders through the forest aimlessly as he hunts for the surface ores. Cy and Yasmin lag behind as the elder Donald struggles with the rough terrain.

“So, why does Chris want to start smelting?” Cy asks.

“Oh, I hope you don’t mind but I had looked through your personal bookshelf while you were away with Zakera on that extended walk.” Donald begins.

“Lovely... I’m glad we can respect each other’s privacy.” Cy quips.

"I noticed several fascinating books; astronomy, physics, battle tactics, medicine, wilderness survival, but I was most interested in a book on metallurgy."

"My at-home knife-making book?" Cy asks.

"Yes! It showed a wonderful system for making a clay furnace to smelt scrap iron and steel, but copper is an ore we have seen several times before. I brought it to Chris' attention, who immediately concocted several plans for the mineral."

"You're welcome." Cy chuckles.

"Lucky you didn't go through my room like that; I'd have skinned you alive." Yasmin remarks.

"What a charming young woman, you are." Donald murmurs.

Stepping through dense brush, they find themselves in a clearing in the jungle with a large heap of stones in the center. Chris immediately recognizes the location, as does Jack. Rushing ahead, Chris stops near the rock pile and takes a close look at it. He takes out a chisel and small mallet that he had been carrying in a utility pouch. With a few strikes, he breaks off a piece.

"Ah yes. This is most definitely copper. It's a considerable quantity too." Chris exclaims as he looks over the large deposit.

"No all we need is the tin..." Donald remarks.

"Perhaps there is some nearby?" Chris poses.

Eager to search, the excited Christopher nearly darts into the forest before Jack can grab his shoulder to stop him.

"Hold on a moment. Perhaps one of us should lead." Jack suggests.

“Whatever for? Do any of you know what to look for?” Chris retorts.

“We weren’t following a particular trail. Do you even know where we are? Do you even know where the fortress is?” Jack asks.

Chris looks around at the clearing, then glances to the red-tinted sky. He has no idea where they are, and he knows it. Sighing, he looks back to Jack.

“Do you know where we are and where the fortress is?”

“Of course.” Jack replies.

“You weren’t keeping track?” Cy chuckles.

“Well... What do you suggest?” Chris asks.

“Let Cyrus or myself lead. If you find what you are looking for, you can let us know.” Jack poses.

Chris looks to the others. Donald gives a subtle head nod. Conceding to their will, Chris steps aside and pats Cy on the shoulder. Taking the gesture as a cue, he leads the group and heads further into the jungle while the others walk single file behind him. Chris stays near Cy, looking for any signs of surface ore that he could use. Moving carefully and with his carbine near his chest, Cy blazes a trail through the dense, secondary forest. After walking for some time, he suddenly stops as he passes through some bushes. He reaches back, his long gun in hand. The side of his carbine rifle presses against Chris’ chest.

Shouldering his weapon, he walks carefully forward as the audible click of his safety lever stimulates fear in the others. Chris holds up his new Puma Westerner while Donald draws his Mauser C96 ‘Red 9’ pistol from the leather holster on his side, Jack shoulders his Lee Enfield rifle, and Yasmin draws her Bersa pistol from her holster.

“Clear.” Cy’s voice calls out softly, almost whispering.

The group follows Cy into the clearing where they find two heaps. From a glance they appear to be large piles of obsidian jutting from a small dugout trench. Upon closer inspection they are actually the shiny scales of two Kaladez corpses. Chris looks closer and moves one of the Kaladez’s body, rolling it onto its back. As he and Donald examine the bodies, Jack, Cy and Yasmin keep their weapons at the ready. Their backs face each other’s in a triangular shape as they try to watch all sides. The corpses have large chunks of flesh missing, with ribs broken and pulled away to expose internal organs. Donald moves the arms of one of the bodies, looking intently at several bite marks. He examines the exposed bones of one carcass, which is also littered with jagged marks.

“I’ve seen these markings. These were made by Zajak teeth.” Donald says as he nervously scratches his beard.

“Are you sure?” Yasmin asks.

“Positive. I was very thorough in my initial examinations of the bodies. These bones were not cut with conventional tools. All of these marks were made by teeth. I suspect that the breaks in the ribcage came from a heavy rock, or were simply stomped in. There is also a considerable amount of blood loss. I think they were eaten, at least partially, while there were still alive. If they had been dead when they were torn apart, there would be much more blood pooled inside of the bodies.”

“Lovely...” Cy remarks.

“How did they get out here though? Could they have died here and were eaten, or were they placed here?” Chris thinks aloud.

“Maybe they threw out the parts they didn’t like.” Yasmin suggests.

“From where? They live underground.” Donald comments.

“I know where...” Jack says as he slowly walks towards more brush.

He steps sideways, holding the bolt-action rifle towards the brush. He moves the brush away, revealing a moderately large and dark hole underneath; the bushes hide the mouth of a cave system. Walking closer to the opening, Chris can hear the strange groaning and shrieking noises of the Zajak coming from inside. The terribly noises make his blood run cold.

"That's them..." Chris says, reliving his last encounter.

"Don't get too curious." Jack warns.

Chris looks to Jack and then turns back to the hole. Deep inside he can see a faint glow; Pinkish-purple gems osculate a pale light within the cave. A shadow moves past the light, startling the man as he stumbles back. Cy reaches out and grabs Chris' shoulder, pulling him back from the cave as Jack moves closer, his finger resting on the trigger of his rifle. As Chris retreats, a clawed hand juts out of the cave. Jack quickly fires a single round into the darkness, directly at the body attached to the hand. The creature inside falls to the ground with a loud thud. The sound of the body sliding down into the cave echoes throughout, followed by the shrieks of dozens of other Zajak.

"We are not alone here." Jack comments.

"We need to get back to the others, right now." Cy adds.

Chris nods as Donald and Yasmin help him up.

"What are we going to do about this?" Donald asks.

"We're going to blow up this cave. I'm sure Jack has more dynamite on him somewhere." Cy replies.

"I do." Jack smirks, pulling a half-stick from a vest pocket.

"But I saw the crystals in there!" Chris exclaims.

"That's a shame." Jack mutters, retrieving his lighter.

"Jack, we cannot destroy those crystals." Chris pleads.

"Well, we can't just go inside and ask them nicely." Cy retorts.

"We can ask! ... Just not nicely." Yasmin smirks.

"What if..." Donald scratches his beard. "We plant dynamite *beyond* the crystals. They might survive, a portion of them at least."

Chris shakes his head in refusal. The others know how valuable the crystals are; even the threat of Zajak should not deter them from progress. As he looks to Donald he can see the fear in his best friend's face, as well as the great concern of Jack, Cy and Yasmin. Chris looks back at the cave and sighs in disappointment.

"I'll try not to destroy them, Chris. I promise." Jack assures him.

"Here, take this." Cy says.

Stepping up to Jack, Cy draws his Glock 22. He removes the thread protector from the barrel and retrieves a suppressor from a pouch on his belt. Screwing the suppressor onto the barrel, he hands the pistol to Jack. With an appreciative head nod, Jack slings his rifle and takes the sidearm. As he turns on a flashlight and prepares to enter the cave, Yasmin volunteers to join him. Entering the dark hole in the ground, they look around at the small interior. They see a small pool of blood from the Zajak that Jack had shot, as well as a smear where it slid down deeper into the tunnel. Moving slowly into the cave, however, there is no body to be found.

"It's gone..." Jack whispers, disheartened.

"It doesn't matter. Let's do the job and get home." Yasmin growls.

As they creep deeper into the cave, they see bloody drag marks leading past a wall covered in faintly glowing crystals. The other Zajak must have taken the body away for food. The wall and ceiling are absolutely covered in the alien power source, stretching deep into the cave system and partially lighting the way.

"I hope you're worth all of the trouble." He says quietly to the crystals.

They follow the blood trail as Jack looks for a suitable spot to place the dynamite where he might not destroy the thousands of crystalline batteries.

"So, how's things with you and Rico?" Jack suddenly asks.

"What?" Yasmin asks.

"That is Rico you're sleeping with, right? It's hard to tell from just the grunts." He teases her.

"Fuck off." She grumbles.

"What are you going to do if you become pregnant?" He asks.

"I told him I'll kill him if he finishes inside of me." She grins.

"You're something else..." He says, shaking his head.

Unnerved by the assassin, they walk through the cave in silence. After a time, they pass the glowing crystals that surround them. Moving on, they see that the cave forks into two tunnels that sink ever deeper into the earth. The blood trail leads into the left, but a thinner trail also leads into the right; they must have torn the body apart. He looks over the entrances to the tunnels and sets the half-stick of dynamite near the fork. He takes out a lighter, spinning the wheel and sparking a small flame. He holds the lighter for a moment, as if

contemplating the decision. He turns to Yasmin, who glares impatiently at him.

“Get ready... Twenty seconds.” He tells her.

She nods and begins stretching her muscles, preparing to run. Leaning over, Jack lights the fuse. He gets up, closes the lighter’s lid, and runs as fast as he can back up to the mouth of the cave, Yasmin running just before him. The rocks slide underneath his leather boots as he struggles to make it to the entrance, sprinting past the long tunnel of glowing crystals. He hears a screeching noise as the rocks tumble down. The dynamite explodes, throwing a large cloud of dust that rushes past the pair and out of the mouth of the cave as Chris, Donald and Cy stand just outside. Emerging from the cloud, a filthy Yasmin and Jack falls to their knees, coughing violently.

Cy rushes to Yasmin’s side, helping her up and brushing her off. She turns and glares at him, but her chest grows warm at his concern. Chris and Donald tend to Jack, who seems to struggle to breath.

“Thousands...” Jack coughs.

“Thousands of what?” Donald asks.

“Thousands of crystals.” Yasmin finishes for Jack. “They lined a long tunnel that stretched at least one hundred meters.”

“Excellent!” Chris happily exclaims.

“We set the dynamite at a fork a distance beyond the crystals.” Jack adds.

They sit near the mouth of the cave and wait, their weapons trained on the opening in case the tunnels failed to collapse. After a few minutes, the dust settles. Jack, still struggling to breathe from dust inhalation, returns Cy’s suppressed Glock to him. With Yasmin by

his side, they join Chris inside of the cave while Donald stays with Jack in the clearing. They slowly head inside, creeping in to examine the cave's condition. Chris' eyes grow wide as he looks over the walls and ceiling lined with the faintly glowing crystals. Reaching the fork, they find that the cave has collapsed in between both tunnels and behind the crystals, effectively sealing it off while leaving the crystals intact.

"Wonderful." Chris murmurs, grinning cheek to cheek.

Returning to the surface, Jack has partially recovered from the dust inhalation. Chris shares the good news with his friends, excited to begin his various projects. Seemingly forgetting about the hunt for tin ore, he asks the others if they'd like to return to the fortress to celebrate clearing the crystal cave of the Zajak. Eager to return, Donald and Jack jump at the opportunity, while Cy and Yasmin merely follow their lead. Jack follows Cy's trail before blazing a new one through the forest, heading directly toward the long field that lies between the cove and the fortress. As Donald and Chris jabber endlessly about the possible uses for the strange crystals, the assassins walk silently at the rear of the group.

As they reach the field, Yasmin takes hold of Cy's arm. He turns to her, his brow furled as he glances down to her hand which grips him. She slows her pace, allowing the others to lead them.

"Are you alright?" He quietly asks her.

Remaining silent, she turns her eyes to the others, waiting for them to gain more distance. In a few more moments, they'll be far enough for her to tell Cy what's on her mind.

“Seriously. What’s bothering you?” He asks, eager to break the unsettling silence.

“You.”

“What?” He raises an eyebrow.

“You!” She yells.

Cy looks toward the others, who are now quite a distance ahead of them; they don’t seem to hear her raised voice.

“What are you talking about?! What’s wrong with me?”

“Ever since we came here you’ve become soft. You used to be the most cold-blooded son of a bitch I’d ever seen. You have twice the bodies that I do!” She yells.

Cy is thoroughly confused. Is she really jealous of his body count? He blinks, trying to understand what has made Yasmin so upset.

“It’s why I! ... I... Y-you mean...”

The pair stop, facing each other as their friends walk further and further away. If they do realize that they aren’t following, they aren’t showing it, giving the assassins their privacy.

“What are you trying to say?” Cy asks, resting his hands on her arms.

“I... Cy, I...”

Yasmin leans in, resting her head on his shoulder. Her arms wrap around his body, her hands gripping his back tightly. Feeling the

pressure of her coiling fingers, he finally realizes what it is that she is unable to say.

“Oh... Yasmin... We’ve known each other a long time. You’re my closest and most trusted friend. You’ve saved my life a few times, and I’ve done the same for you; I still would... But we’re not...” He hesitates to finish, worried about rejecting the Columbian woman.

“We used to be...” She sniffles.

“We were never a couple, Yasmin.” He says softly but bluntly.

The pain of his rejection cuts deeply into her chest. Her pain turns to sorrow, before quickly evolving into a seething anger.

“I’m sorry, Yaz...” He says, gently stroking her arms.

“Fuck you, Cy!” She yells, tearing away from his grasp. “Don’t you act like this isn’t your fault! You’re a fucking monster, just like me. I heard about some of the shit that J.T. had you do. Moving drugs and guns for him, torturing people, shooting cops and kids...” Yasmin cries.

“Just because I did my job to the best of my ability doesn’t mean it never bothered me.” Cy calmly retorts.

“You never told me that...” She murmurs.

“I never told you a lot of things.”

“Why? Was I not good enough?!” She growls.

“It’s not like that!”

They stand there for a moment, looking at each other. Yasmin’s eyes gloss over, as though the strong-willed assassin were about to burst into tears at any moment. Unsure of what to do, Cy looks toward the now faint figures of Chris, Donald and Jack. Resting a hand on her arm, he directs Yasmin to follow him back to the fortress. They walk

in silence through the grassy field as Yasmin wipes her eyes with the backs of her hands.

“So, how’s Rico?” Cy asks, hoping to spark a new dialog.

“Eh...” She shrugs.

“Well, is he alright with your uh... Relationship?”

“Like I care. It’s not a relationship, by the way; I just need his dick.”

“You *do* know that Rico is actually a person, right? He has feelings.”

“Since when did that ever matter?” She coldly retorts.

“It always did.” Cy mutters.

“It didn’t when we used to fuck.” She snaps.

“Didn’t it? Have you ever stopped to think that might be why it never worked between us?” He suggests.

“I don’t understand...” She murmurs.

“No, you don’t. You never asked me how I felt or what I wanted, and we never spent time together doing anything else; you only wanted to have sex every time we were alone long enough. I care for you Yasmin; there was a time when I felt a lot more than that, but you were emotionally unavailable and I wanted a real partner. I wanted a soul-mate to spend my life with.” Cy remarks, shaking his head in frustration.

“It’s hard for me, okay! It’s the only thing that makes me feel better, and it’s also the only way I know how to show that I care besides killing someone for you... We used to fuck all night, especially after a kill. It was amazing, Cy. Every single thrust made me feel cared for; like all you wanted was me. The way you’d stretch and fill me...” She coos.

Cy glances to her, flushing and becoming uncomfortable. She glances back, her lips curling into a faint smile as she does her best

job of being seductive, hoping to lure him in again with her gentle and fragile facade. Cy, however, is wise to her tricks. Three years working with a female assassin has left her with nothing to use against him.

“And when we would finish together, it was like we were the only ones left alive in the world...” She says softly.

“I’m flattered, but there’s more to a relationship than that, and you weren’t up for it.”

“I’m not, but that fucking cat is?! What makes that bitch so special?!” She snaps.

“Hey!” Cy yells.

Yasmin jumps, her heart racing as she sees the rage building behind his icy blue eyes. He stops in his tracks and turns to her, glaring at her and gritting his teeth, a balled fist trembling as he struggles to control his anger. He can hardly believe her bitterness toward his future wife. She knows that she has struck a nerve, but she will never apologize. Apologizing and admitting her guilt would make her feel weak, and the last person that she would want to see her as weak is Cy.

“Zakera is special because she is everything that you’re not! She’s genuinely sweet, not glib. She cares about me and what I have to say; she doesn’t force herself to listen just to get what she wants. She has depth of character beyond killing people and having sex. If I ever had that kind of a chance with you I would have taken it in a heartbeat. Zakera was the one who gave me that chance, and I’m not going to let it slip through my fingers!”

Exhaling, Cy can see the shock in Yasmin’s face. She looks quite hurt from his little speech. He apologizes as she steps away from him. Yasmin grits her teeth, wrestling with the pain of his rejection. Visibly trembling from both embarrassment and anger, Cy feels terribly sorry for her. Stepping closer to her, he gives her a comforting hug. Yasmin

buries her face in his shoulder, struggling to control her burgeoning rage.

“Yasmin...” Cy says softly, taking a deep breath. “I just wanted more from what we had. I’m not mad that you weren’t ready to give me that; please try not to be mad at me for moving on when I felt I had too.”

Yasmin remains silent, her fingers coiling as she clutches him tightly.

“Remember that we’ve saved each other’s lives more than once, and I still trust you with mine; you can always rely on me to be there for you.”

“Zakera’s a good girl... She deserves a good man... She deserves you, Cy. I hope you two will be happy together.” Yasmin says softly.

“Thanks... And go easy on Rico, alright?”

“No promises.” She chuckles.

The assassins release each other and back away. Yasmin looks up to Cy, who grins pleasantly at her. He turns his eyes toward the direction of the fortress. They have lagged so far behind that Chris, Donald and Jack are no longer visible, and have probably already returned home without them. They stand silently in the void of the field, the grasses swaying in the warm breeze.

“Ready to go home now?” Cy finally asks.

“No, I think I’ll stay out here all night and commune with nature.” Yasmin sarcastically replies.

“And you thought we’d work out with an attitude like that.” He smirks.

"You know you love our occasional banter." She grins.

The pair turn back and walk through the field, wading through the tall grasses as they march back home to the fortress. Cy isn't sure if Yasmin's words were sincere, but she has never violated his trust in her before. Hopefully she won't get in the way of his and Zakera's life together and will continue to remain loyal when faced with threats like the Kaladez and Zajak.