

The Seventh Realm: Volume Two

By Mantrid Brizon

Episode 25: All The King's Men

Her wavy pink hair sways back and forth as she bucks her hips, her white claws scratching her lover's sweaty chest and leaving faint red trails behind. His hands caress the matted white fur of her chest as he gently fondles her perky breasts. Cy teases her nipples, causing her to squeal. His hands glide around her pink fur, his fingers following the pattern of her thin cyan stripes that flow through her sides and back. He sits up and necks her, his arms holding her sweaty body tightly against his own. Moving her snout to his cheek, she pushes his face away from her neck and forces a kiss; their tongues entwine. With his hands firmly gripping her tight buttocks, she wraps her legs around his waist and rides him as hard as she can.

Grunting and groaning into their kisses, Zakera can't help but climax for a third time. It isn't long, however, before she brings Cy over the edge as well. He grunts and then roars as he pulls her down atop his exceptional endowment. The Ketlan girl's tail flails as though having a seizure and her cyan eyes grow wide as she feels her mate pumping his fertile seed into her body, powerful jets shooting the magma-hot ooze as deep as it can go. She rests her chin atop his shoulder and leans forward, panting and stroking her lover's back. Gasping for breath, he does the same. Nuzzling her neck, he whispers his undying love for her, his words as warm and sincere as his embrace. She pushes against him so that he lay down, stretching out her legs but leaving his member buried within her.

"You were right..." Cy suddenly says through labored breaths.

“About what?”

“Being pledged did make it better.” He grins.

“I think that it will make everything better.” Zakera coos.

“I agree.”

He kisses her softly on her lips, stroking her face as though she were a china doll. Staying atop her mate and leaving him inside of her, she holds onto his shoulders and pushes herself back, as though trying to bury him even deeper within her loins. He groans from the sensation and gently strokes her back.

“It’s in all the way.” He chuckles.

“I just wanted to be sure.” She winks.

The feline woman nuzzles his face and strokes his scratched chest with her fingertips, enjoying every blissful second that she has with him. She knows that in the morning they will have to continue with the road ahead; she doesn’t want to regret a thing if either of them should parish in the near future. While Cy is alive, she wants to spend every second with him, enjoying his company. She also wants to ensure that his seed is firmly planted, hoping to bear the fruit of his loins. Though she is fairly certain that they’ve already succeeded, it never hurts to err on the side of caution. Leaving him inserted, Zakera finds herself growing tired, yawning as she lay atop her mate.

Cy can’t help but grin and silently chuckle every time this occurs; Zakera would always prefer sleeping atop him in this fashion, but he finds an incredible comfort in holding her from behind. The feeling of her soft fur against his chest, her buttocks against his groin and their legs pressed together is like no other. With Zakera in his arms, he can fall asleep in a matter of moments, even if they don’t exhaust themselves beforehand. Since he has been with her, he has never once been visited by the faces of the dead, his nightmares

ending the day their relationship began. Reluctantly sliding off of her mate, she spins around and presses against him. No matter how much she wants to try sleeping the other way, she knows that nothing can surpass the comfort she feels when enveloped in his full embrace.

The next morning, the couple awaken and get dressed before eating breakfast together. Zakera struggles to hold it down, hoping that Cy won't notice her illness. For the past week she hasn't felt well in the mornings, but now it is growing worse. If not for the upbringing of Kelanethaka children, who are taught of sexuality and allowed to experiment freely as juveniles, she would be more worried about her condition. Though Cy wants to bring her with him when he meets Mirkon, the human elder who once led the tribe that is now Sa'kesh, Zakera asks to stay behind. Knowing that there's a problem, she speaks a half-truth, telling him that she isn't feeling well but lying about the cause.

Though Cy wants her to rest and recover, he is reluctant to leave her side. It's a touching sentiment, but he and Zakera both know that he needs to begin. Still, however, she finds herself having to tell him to leave her and rule their people. No other being alive has the power to command Cy the way that she can. Before he departs, Cy asks Lara to check on his bride once she is done with Yasmin's now routine therapy session. Heading outside, he is greeted by a pair of Ketlan warriors, left behind at Katero's urging to act as Cy and Zakera's personal guard. Even Cy considers this overly cautious, but Katero is a cautious man, and as war-guide of the Kelanethaka, Cy wasn't able to prevent his order.

He walks through the trail cut by the Sa'kesh villagers, who still work tirelessly to fell the trees around their village. Flanked by his bodyguards, Cy finds Mirkon's yurt. Following Kelanethaka protocol, he asks for permission to enter from outside. In most ways the Sa'kesh are merely the Kelanethaka but without Ketlan villagers, adopting nearly all of their customs and rules. Cy had little problem with their village rules; he always found it odd how similar their short list of

regulations was to the ten commandments of the Christian Bible. The laws of the Sa'kesh are being carved onto wooden log slabs, as the Kelanethaka's are. In any case, copying the Kelanethaka's ways will only make the eventual merging of both tribes that much easier, and on a personal level, Cy genuinely appreciates their culture.

Emerging from his tent, Mirkon greets Cy and leads him through the village, eager to show his chieftain all that they have accomplished since they've arrived. In only a few days, they've cleared a considerable portion of land for building. Using the smaller wood for fire and the larger wood for construction, they have already begun creating beams from the biggest pieces. Adopting the mud brick construction method that Cy had given the Kelanethaka, the Sa'kesh villagers work tirelessly to mass produce the materials. Cy takes the opportunity to give his first set of orders as chieftain. He marks areas of cleared and soon-to-be cleared land, picking some for residential and industrial construction, as well as farming and ranching.

Never has the assassin ever given orders to a subordinate; Yasmin was technically his superior throughout his career. It's a strange feeling to speak words and see men immediately taking action afterward. Cy is quick to remember J.T. and humble himself; he doesn't want to make the same mistakes and succumb to the throes of power. After spending some time with Mirkon and plotting the development of his tribe, Cy and his guards join several of the original Sa'kesh. Chris wants to seed farms in honor of Donald, who practiced botany, using his books to the best of his ability. Amanda wants more hunting parties, Jack wants to train their own militia, Richard wants to build a school, and Michael simply wants to build.

Cy commands groups of villagers to aid them in all of these endeavors, allocating however many that his companions desire. Appointing Mirkon as a Governor, who will oversee the village when Cy isn't present, he instructs him on all of the tasks ahead and leaves a series of detailed instructions for him to follow. It also serves as a

back-up plan, should he not survive the confrontation with King Roland the First. Without further delay, Cy rushes back to the fortress to comfort Zakera. Though many of the human villagers find it odd that their new chieftain has wed a Ketlan woman, none can avoid feeling his radiating love for her; many of the village girl's dream to find a man as doting and affectionate as their chieftain.

Returning home, Zakera has recovered and spends her day with her mate. Later that afternoon, Cy gathers the original Sa'kesh in the fortress and uses the map that Mirkon had given him earlier to plan the assault on the king and his castle. Norv and Rico chart a course for the Malevolence that follows the shoreline. King Roland's capital town is very far away, roughly five hundred and eighty miles down the coast line and near the end of the great lake. Though well within the three-thousand-mile range of the Malevolence, which had full fuel when she left Belize, it will still take them twenty-five hours of non-stop travel at the ship's top speed of twenty knots. Erring on the side of caution, as spare parts are non-existent, the trip will take two days.

Cy decides to spend the next day preparing the ship and weapons for the assault, even though it could be done tonight. His decision is partly to allow them time to mentally prepare for the task at hand, but also to make sure that Mirkon can handle the local business while they are away. With Norv, Rico, Yasmin, Johnny and Zakera all volunteering for the mission, it is confirmed. They will depart the day after tomorrow, and two days after that they will launch their covert assault on King Roland's castle. The next day continues as planned and Zakera manages to control her morning sickness, hiding it from her husband.

Before returning home for the night, Cy visits Mirkon one last time. The nature of this visit, however, is far more sullen. Their primary concern is clothing that will allow them to blend in, should they need to abort their mission and evacuate the area. The villagers, grateful for what the Sa'kesh have done and are doing for them, gladly give

them whatever they need. The entire party are fully outfitted in the common clothes of Roland's kingdom, even Norv, who will never leave the ship. Knowing what they are about to do, Mirkon presents them with extra supplies for the journey, an entire sack of genashin jerky and sweetened faval bread.

Chris and Lara are collectively put in charge of the Sa'kesh in Cy and Yasmin's absence. They spend their last night before their mission preparing their weapons and supplies and comforting each other. Everyone realizes how dangerous this mission is, especially the recently pledged lovers. Though their fears keep many of them awake, the comfort that Cy and Zakera give each other sees to it that they sleep peacefully. Rising early the next morning the assassins head for the gate, ready to march toward the cove where the Malevolence is moored. They are all surprised by Katero and his party of warriors, who are already outside and waiting for them.

"What brings you all the way out here, and so early in the morning?" Cy asks, gripping Katero's forearm.

"I know that you are going on a grand raid. I have heard the rumors of this human kingdom. It is a threat, not just to you, but to all Ketlan. I would like to offer my services, and if necessary, die alongside my friends." Katero says with a smile.

"I'd be honored. You and your men are free to join us."

With Katero and his warriors as guards and all of the Sa'kesh heavily laden with weapons, except for Zakera, who's bag Cy packed himself, they march for the red grass field.

"Cyrus..." Katero suddenly begins.

"Yes?"

"What does 'Malevolence' mean?" Katero asks.

“The state of being malevolent; the desire to do evil to others.” Cy smirks.

“How appropriate.” Katero chuckles.

They continue the march to the cove in silence; they know the importance of their mission, and it begins to weigh heavily on them. As they through the field, they pass a group of Kelanethaka who are mining copper ore just beyond the tree-line with newly made cykera picks and chisels. Cy can’t help but smile, as he sees the gleaming metal in the sunlight. The Ketlan see the group and cease mining, standing and facing them as they pass by. They don’t seem to be gawking at the mixture of Ketlan and human, but watch in reverence as the Sa’kesh march off to battle.

“They looked happy!” Cy chirps.

“That is quickly becoming a common sight, as of late.” Katero replies.

“Really?!” Johnny asks.

“Indeed. Ketlan and human are not as separate as they once were. Many celebrate the day when the Sa’kesh lifted us from the dirt and gave us respect.” Katero answers.

“How did we give them that?” Rico sounds perplexed.

“By teaching us. Sharing your knowledge and skills has made many Ketlan feel that they are equal to you; they feel appreciated. Aside from your knowledge, the interaction many of us have had with your people has made us feel that we are truly alike. Quite a few Ketlan now take comfort in the presence of humans. I must admit a growing fondness for the Sa’kesh.” Katero says with a smile.

“Now doesn’t that just make you feel all warm and fuzzy?” Cy jokes.

“I am certainly fond of one particular Sa’kesh.” Zakera coos.

“Can you two wait until we get to the ship?” Norv laughs.

“I don’t know! Let’s find out!” Cy retorts before giving Zakera a kiss.

The small platoon soon arrives at the Malevolence, which has become a perch for many ethakona. Not commonly seen near civilization, the reclusive birds are quite imposing. With a body the size of a large breed dog, a wingspan of between six and eight feet, and an appearance similar to a pterodactyl, they’re carnivores with foot-long beaks and whip-like tails that always match their wingspan. Three-toed talons bear four-inch, curled claws like karambit knives, and their beaks hold rigged blades like piranha teeth. Their long feathers are vibrant shades of yellow, orange and red, often in bizarre swirled or stripped patterns that don’t seem to have any purpose, with vibrant, nearly glowing eyes, that match one of the three colors.

Sliding across the underside of the ropes carefully, Cy and Katero place down the gangplank for the others. They untie the Malevolence from its mooring points in the cove and bring the ropes and gangplank aboard. As they enter the ship, a wild moltaka leaps out of the jungle, grabbing an ethakona that sits perched on a nearby fallen log, before it can take off. It holds the bird’s throat in its mandibles and glares at Rico, who watches it for a moment before heading inside and closing the door of the superstructure. Johnny and Rico check the ship’s engines as Norv starts the electronics. Cy, Zakera, Yasmin, Katero and his men simply stand back and make themselves comfortable.

The Malevolence is in excellent shape, although the upper deck and catwalks could use a thorough cleaning. Cy returns to the cabin that he shared with Zakera on the night he rescued her from the Ketlan cultists. Norv slowly pulls the ship forward and away from the cove before turning the engines up to nearly full speed.

“We’re out and on our way!” Norv says through the ship’s dated intercom.

Cy sits at the empty desk and begins plugging in his long dead cell phone, MP3 player, power pack and portable speaker. Zakera sits on the edge of the bed and looks it over. She reminisces and gently strokes the mattress. He turns to her and notes the expression on her face, which almost appears sad.

"What's wrong?" He asks her.

"Just thinking."

"About?" Cy stands up.

"Many things..."

"Care to share?" He asks as he sits beside her.

His eyes turn to her fingers that stroke the small, faint blood stain left behind after Cy took her virginity.

"Do you remember when we first mated?" She asks.

"How could I ever forget? I think it was the first night that I slept peacefully in many years." Cy smiles.

"Was I that good?" She giggles.

"I didn't mean it like that." He smirks.

"So, I wasn't?"

"Yes, you are, but what I meant was afterward. I held you in my arms and you brought me so much comfort. I never wanted to let you go."

"Cy..." She coos.

"It's why I do everything that I do; for you, and hopefully our children."

Zakera smiles wide, her sharp canines gleaming. Her cyan eyes glisten as they well up with tears of joy. She wraps her arms around his neck, holding him tightly. Cy wraps his arm around her waist and nuzzles her face. As he holds her, Cy can feel her trembling.

"I am so happy to have you. You are everything that I ever wanted in a mate. Sometimes I wake up next to you and I wonder if this is all just a wonderful dream. If it is, I never want to wake up." She says.

"It's not a dream. Even if it is, it's probably mine." He chuckles.

"I love you." She sniffles.

"I love you too. Do you want to tell me what's wrong now?"

"No... But soon."

"Zakera, I-"

"Shh." She rests a finger upon his lips. "Please, Cy. Trust me as I trust you. When the time is right, you will know."

"Okay..." Cy quietly whines.

He gives her a tight hug and buries his nose in the soft fur of her neck. Zakera seems to purr as they embrace each other. Falling over onto their sides, the couple snuggle atop the bed. As they are both about to drift off to sleep, a common side effect of their cuddling, they are roused by a faint melody. Rico plays his acoustic guitar, something he hadn't done even when at the fortress. Cy had forgotten he even had it until Rico brought it with him on the trip. Soothed by both the music and their connection, they close their eyes and rest.

Yasmin and Rico sit in his cabin, which they will share. Rico plays his guitar as he sits in his chair by a small desk while Yasmin watches him, lying back on the bed with her arms crossed behind her head.

"That guitar's curves aren't as nice as mine." She says with a wink.

"I don't know... This guitar is pretty nice." Rico smirks.

"Seriously... Get the fuck over here."

"I was just playing." Rico says as he sets the guitar down.

"I'm done playing. I want to get serious." She says lustfully.

She reaches out for him, but Rico looks to the floor, his expression sullen.

"What's wrong?"

"What if I like you, for more than just sex?" Rico begins.

"This again?" She snickers.

"Just hear me out! I gave us another chance after... The incident... I took you back because I care about you."

"Well, you *are* idealistic." She smirks.

"So, you don't like me for more than my exceptional skills?" He jests.

"Rico..." Yasmin begins, looking down at her feet. "I... I wouldn't want to fuck you exclusively if I didn't care about you a little. But more than that is hard for me... I'm talking with Lara and trying to sort out my issues, so don't fucking push it..."

"I won't." He says as he takes off his shirt.

"Good." She snaps.

"Can you just do one thing for me" He asks as he closes the door.

"What's that?" She grins, pulling off her shirt.

"Can you try to be more... Gentle? Affectionate, even?"

“Sure, whatever. Now get over here!”

“That’s not gentle...” He sighs.

“Please?” She asks sweetly as she removes her bra.

Having just placed the food away, Katero and Johnny walk down the hall from the galley, passing the cabins. They stop and turn back from the sounds emanating from Yasmin and Rico’s cabin, quietly chuckling amongst themselves. They head back to the bridge where Norv sits, piloting the Malevolence. Several Ketlan warriors stand about, awed by the view from within the pilothouse. Norv holds the wheel as Johnny approaches a navigational device. Katero takes a seat near Johnny, looking outside the windows of the bridge, his eyes scanning the coast. The bridge is eerily silent.

“So... How are the others doing?” Norv suddenly speaks.

“They are spending their time together the way that many couples do, when left alone to their own devices.” Katero answers.

“At least someone’s having a good time.” Norv comments.

“You are not?” Katero turns to him.

“I... I miss my wife...” He sighs, staring straight ahead.

“I didn’t know you had a wife!” Johnny exclaims in shock.

“And two adult children...” Norv adds.

“What about you?” Johnny looks to Katero.

“Me? No. I have not met the right female yet. Maybe someday. And you, Johnny?”

“No.” The teenager sighs.

“What about Gomona?” Katero smirks.

“Oh... Well... We’re just kind of friends.”

“I did not realize that friends mated so often.” Katero chuckles.

As the other warriors join in the subdued laughter, Johnny shuts down from embarrassment. Even Norv can't help but chuckle.

"What's so funny?!" Johnny snaps at the captain.

"Just how quickly you've adapted to this world, Jonny-boy. You fit in well here. You and Cy both." Norv says.

"Do you not fit in well?" Katero asks him.

"No... One day I hope they find a way out, so I can take it." Norv murmurs.

They sit in silence for quite a while. Norv carefully steers the ship as it bobs gently in the water. Johnny watches the navigational equipment but regularly glances over to Katero, who sits beside him and stares out of the window.

"What is on your mind, Johnny?" Katero suddenly asks.

"When you go into battle, are you ever afraid?"

"Yes. Are you?" Katero turns to him.

"Yeah..." Johnny reluctantly admits.

"There is no shame in being afraid, Johnny. It is not bad to feel fear; it means that you have a life worth living. Take solace in that."

"Okay." Johnny nods.

"What *is* bad is allowing your fear to overtake you and cloud your judgement. Never lose control in the heat of battle."

"I bet a warrior like you never has that problem." Johnny gushes.

"I certainly try not to..." Katero sighs, balling a tremoring hand into a fist.