

## ***Chapter 2: George***

My father George the first had the romantic notion that he was a captain in fancy garb. He treated his reign like a luxury cruise ignoring the harsh realities. Our population has grown, nearly tripled from when we landed our generation ship. Everyone has grown accustomed to endless land available and settlers have pushed well beyond the borders.

Lesser Albion, our neighbor on the far eastern border though smaller has suffered the same land crunch. Their settlers pushed into our land and we into theirs. More enterprising settlers have gone across the sea into kenam lands. Father's indifference has brought us to the brink of war with the natives and with the second largest kingdom on Albion.

To appease the settlers demanding protection against the savages we annexed the Tropicali peninsula, a bit of land across the narrowest piece of the shipping channel. It was a necessary move to meet the housing, food and fuel demands of our northern coastline. We could do more with the land than the few remaining kenam had managed to do with it in the years that they had been located there. They were an unfortunate inconvenience. As nomads, it was in their nature to wander and we expected them to leave our newly claimed land.

Kenam magic though added a wrinkle in the plan. We couldn't just deport them because they would reappear. When we first settled, the kenams lived on the main continent. They stayed out of our way and didn't make the full extent of their abilities known to the us. It wasn't until they had been relocated to Tropicali that it became obvious they had a lot of power. Individuals would appear in random places on the mainland but would disappear before the authorities could catch them and deport them. Clearly there was a safety problem if the natives could teleport whenever and wherever they wanted! As monarch is my duty to keep my subjects safe no matter what a few protestors say.

UNIGA law, written on Earth with best intentions, tied my hands. The law demands I keep the kenams alive. I can't order their extermination even though it's a tempting course to take. Should the news of genocide reach Earth my kingdom would be cut off from all economic and military support and we would be at the mercy of the other nations while we drowned in our own debt. There are however no laws against relocation, be it to another continent or another planet.

In trying to keep the kenam on the reservations, the authorities had learned their magic could be kept in check if they were kept in dim, heavily air conditioned confinement cells. What better place to contain the problem than on Shadow, the failed terra-forming planet in the next orbit from Albion? The abandoned base

could grow enough food to sustain the population but it is cold enough and dark enough to keep them there. Problem solved.

Unfortunately we did not have the spare resources to send the kenam there. I had to turn to my counter parts, the King and Queen of Lesser Albion. They maintain a regular space port, sending ships out to mine nearby planets and asteroids for resources. They claim gold rights on Shadow. To locate the kenam there I would need to pay them a huge bounty.

Lesser Albion has claimed its bounty in the form of Alfred, my son. He is to marry Princess Elizabeth, thus making her the next Queen of Greater Albion. It pains me, but I had to acquiesce, at the expense of alienating the Duke and Duchess of Hook and their daughter, the presumed future queen. It was either that or go to war with either the kenam or Lesser Albion.

### *Naga Kemjahdgaem*

We were ripped from our lands. Perhaps I should have killed the human naga but the teachings of Aklee\*ipse forbade it. Surely she would not have put us into a war we did not wish to fight. The land is older than either the keman or the human and it will wait for us to return. My duty was to my people and to get us home to the land that gave us life and agie.

I was newly pregnant when the ships lifted us to the coldness of achiak on our journey to Bagretoel, the world the humans called "Shadow." My daughters, each of them, had died on our home world, one from disease, one from an unfortunate meeting with a human kenaqabetaluechi and my last daughter died on the long trip to our new home of exile. This last baby was my only hope for the continued line from Aklee\*ipse herself but the fates told me to expect a boy. We all seemed to be having boys in this time of stress.

Aklee\*ipse in her wisdom gave me a son from Xarth, my aklee efxogi. I named him Löth and when I mediated after his birth, Aklee\*ipse spoke to me faintly from our distant home world. My heart lifted with her vision for the future I called counsel with my lady advisors, allowing Xarth to be present.

My ever handsome aklee efxogi came with head bowed, a sign that he expected demotion to the bottom of my tozipsiekipen. "I have failed you, Majesty, in your quest for a daughter," he said, head still bowed.

I smiled, full with the warmth of my vision. Catching my smile with a discrete glance, he took a step backwards, clearly surprised.

"We shall use our misfortune to our advantage. Those stupid humans value a man's word over that of a woman's. We will let them believe that he is my heir, though we shall of course strive to find our next daughter of Aklee\*ipse. But Löth shall be known as what the humans call 'crown prince' and when he is old enough

we shall include him in negotiations. He will serve the good of the people. It will take time but we will be returned unto our homeland."

***Freddie:***

Father should have just called it what it was: house arrest. I was cut off from the rest of the world and even most of the castle. Sometimes dreamt I had kenam powers and could just wish myself to her. Wouldn't that be grand? I tried emailing her a couple times but all my attempts were bounced back to my in box. When I tried calling her, I couldn't get an outside line. I once tried giving a servant a letter to mail for me but he shook his head and told me the king had ordered all correspondence destroyed.

"What were you thinking, son, when you were pursuing Howard Dinur's daughter? The Duke of Hook is a valued ally but I cannot abide you marrying his daughter. What of our indebtedness to Lesser Albion? It was their ships that helped us rid our kingdom of those pesky kenam. We in turn have agreed to not dispute their claims to land on our side of the Diamond Strait. Your marriage to Princess Elizabeth is our repayment for their kindness and the way to seal our end of the bargain," father said when he ordered me into his office. He hadn't offered a hug, or a handshake or anything. It was just a scolding followed by an ultimatum.

"I've never met Princess Elizabeth," I said.

"Next I suppose you'll be asking to marry for love rather than the good of the state? We are facing the distinct possibility of war with Lesser Albion if we don't grant them this small concession."

"Isn't that the usual thing to do? I thought that is what the Jubilee is for," I said. "You got to pick your consort."

My father scowled. "We are living in extraordinary times. We cannot afford such romantic notions as marrying for love. Perhaps your son can marry for love."

"Couldn't we find some better way of repaying our debt to Lesser Albion?"

My father's scowl lengthened and he grabbed me tightly by the arm, squeezing hard enough to leave deep bruises. With his free hand, he hit a button on the intercom. "Send in the Crown Prince's escort."

The two armed palace guard members who had brought me here entered. They bowed to Father. "Alfred you are to remain in your apartment until the Jubilee or until you come to your senses. Food will be delivered. You will not be allowed to send emails, write letters or make telephone calls. You are to use your time to prepare for the upcoming Jubilee. Do you understand?"

"Yes father," I said, looking at my feet.

He squeezed harder.

"Yes, Your Majesty." As I stared him in the eye I vowed never to do this to my heir. At last he let me go, right into the arms of the bodyguards. By now my arm had gone from sore to numb. I could barely make a fist.

As the guards escorted me back to my room for the remainder of my house arrest where not even my mother would be given leave to visit me, I began working out how I would protect future heirs from this abuse. My first duty as king would be to close any loop holes to prevent future monarchs from choosing consorts for their heirs. I also decided to start a diary, one that would be separate from the dry day-to-day record I was supposed to keep to aid in the writing of my future memoir. This memoir would be for my heir, whomever he would or she may be.

On the day before the retched Jubilee I was let out of my room and taken to visit the tailor where he had set up in a spare room near the ballroom. The tailor frowned. "I'm going to have to take this in, Your Highness. It appears you've lost weight," he said. I wanted him to ask me why I was so gaunt and depressed looking but he kept his thoughts to himself.

"I haven't felt like eating much," I replied.

"Of course, Highness. Nerves are understandable before such an important event," the tailor replied.

"Yes. Of course. Nerves," I said. How quaint, *nerves*. He thinks I'm giddy at taking the dance with my soon to be princess bride, I thought. The idiot! If only

he knew the truth. But then, why the hell should he care? I'm the Crown Prince; I'm probably spoiled anyway. That's what he would think.