

To Know Is Not Enough by Otlal3
Chapter 14: The Shore of Two Seas

Author's Chapter Notes:

Rated R - WEP owns all things Voltron.

The royal falcon called Cera was thrown from her perch with a sharp pull. Razor talons and a tight grip could not keep her steadfast to the ship's main mast as it crumbled beneath her. She had the luxury of flight and her wings instinctively moved when her feet came empty, lifting her high into the air over the shattered vessel. Swift wind carried her recklessly over the tops of giant waves that stretched into her sky. She hovered and tilted her head, listening to the wind's constant, groaning song broken by the popping of wood.

Her eyes focused on the spot where she had last seen her charge, the man who carried Alfor's sword, and she saw only darkness. The distinctive jewels of the powerful weapon served as a beacon from her atmospheric domain; she had once followed the great king on many adventures by such means, and it had never failed her. Until now. She scanned with sharp eyes, searching for the glow and the glimmer of the sword, but there was only the pale gray of a dark sea churning in its battle with the whipping air. The sword was gone, as was the man who donned it.

Cera fought the wind with wide, sweeping circles but the angry air latched onto her and thwarted any progress through the night sky. But she was designed to fly fast and far, and she prepared her body for this mode of flight. With tail feathers tightened and primaries tucked, she became a bullet of precision. Darting down into the darkness, gravity alone pulled her through the shredding air. A large wave rose up to greet her and she leveled her flight with fanned tail feathers and rapid wing beats. Despite the disjunctive peaks and valleys of turbulent waves, the surface air was calm and predictable and Cera soared in a continual search.

The bird flew for hours, her circles growing wider as she skimmed the surface of chaos beneath her. As the night sky split open to the reaching arms of the morning sun, she once again soared high into the air. She was in need of a perch soon – a tree, a plank – anything to give her rest. Increasing altitude gave her perspective and it became clear that she was very far from land. Cera felt the electromagnetic pull of the poles and an innate navigation took hold as she flew in the direction of the land she had left behind. Her charge was gone and she did only what she had been trained to do – return to the castle until a new journey was relayed. No parchment would be attached in this flight, no communication of hope and promise. Instead her empty arrival would bring the simple and dreadful message of death.

A life-giving entity reigned high in the sky, warming the soils, feeding the plants, and bringing smiles to the faces of man. But this entity, the glorious sun of Arus, beamed relentless rays onto Keith's body as he floated on a plank in the Sea of Meemore. His clothes were in shreds, leaving

skin vulnerable to the sun's direct aim, but he felt nothing – no burn, no ache, and no joy. Keith was resigned to the caressing hands of death as they chilled him despite the heat and kept him conscious despite the solitude. He was face down, his fingers grasping the corners of his makeshift boat, the one remaining link to a life he was certain no longer belonged to him.

Keith didn't know how long he had been afloat. The days had mingled and danced with ever-lengthening nights, and separate bodies of time became indistinguishable in his journey. He resisted each breath, uncertain of the consequences of staying alive. With each intake came pains that were instantly extinguished by their familiarity. It was all just a humming in his head and a vibration in his body that had become routine and oddly comforting. He could depend on the elements of air stroking him, on the heat of the sun burning him, on the motion of the fluid beneath him, on the promise of numbness in his body. With them he would not die alone.

A loud splash came next to Keith's head and he pulled his eyes slowly open. The haze of the sea took shape as he blinked away the crust of tears that had taken hold in his ducts. Matted hair stuck to his cheeks and forehead, extending out to harass his lashes and inhibit his vision. He blinked again and lifted his head when the splash came a second time. This movement felt foreign to him and he weakened quickly, his head slamming against the wood as it fell. Without moving, he scanned the horizon in front of him. He watched as an object fell from above and hit his arm, then bounced into the water. His eyes shifted upwards and he caught a shadow overhead. A bird? *Bird... means... land.* Keith felt the sparks of cognition and he parted his cracked lips. With swollen and dry tongue, his throat burned as air expelled from nearly empty lungs.

"Cera?" he whispered. Instantly, the effort robbed him of consciousness and he fell into a blackened web of memories. Keith's mind was full of streaming images, but with the poison of Meemore feeding his nerves and embracing his mind, he witness the twisted and cold, the joyous and light, until he fell toward one scene he didn't recognize.

He saw Lance's brother, Scout, determined and focused, walking briskly across the campus green of the Space Academy. His arms moved to keep pace with his quickening stride until his progress was suddenly halted by the impact of metal on bone. Keith watched Scout fall to the ground, clutching his crushed leg as several large figures emerged from the surrounding brush. A giant booted foot connected with Scout's jaw and he shook his head back into alertness. Scout's arms and legs were quickly bound as errant curses escaped from his bloodied mouth. His attackers erupted into laughter and one responded with a simple warning: "Get ready, P-One. That's just a glimpse of what you'll have for the next 50 years of your life."

Keith's mind reeled with the vision before him. *What the hell is this? Scout's dead... but...*

Keith felt an urgency rise in him as questions filled his mind.

"Scout!" he called in desperation. He thought of Lance and all the years of uncertainty, all the hours of grief that had vexed his best friend. Keith had to know, he had to pursue this image, this unknown memory. He needed more information. But as he called out once again, the image was pulled from him and into a pinprick hole until it was extinguished by darkness.

Scout!

Scout...

Scout.

A woman sat upon a sloping hill under the warmth of the late morning sun. She concentrated on her fingers which deftly broke open pea pods and pushed the tiny green orbs into a rolling journey down her palms and into the basket below. It was rhythmic and meditative work, and a pleasure to feel the smooth pods between her thick fingers and the tickle of the falling seed against her skin. In her reverie, she saw the deep lines of fortune in her palms, darkened by years of plying the Arusian soil. She was proud to wear the mark of the land.

Her task continued unfettered by musings and her mind was still. In her quietness, she felt a familiar pulling at her chest and she paused as a voice rose from her heart into the ears of her soul. *I'm dying. Save her.* She saw the man who spoke the words, and she watched the scenes of his life stream past her. Moments of joy sang out and the smiling eyes of this dying man shone brightly before sorrow came in a quick wave at the many horrors he had survived. She felt his longing to live and his quiet love that remained unfulfilled. Then, as quickly as he came to her, he left.

The woman rose from her place amid the tall grass and buzzing insects, and walked down the hill toward her home nestled in the trees below. She came to the heavy wooden door which creaked open at her touch and inside saw the silhouette of a seated man who carved at a wooden staff with a glistening blade.

"Darling husband," she cooed, stepping over the threshold and into the sun-warmed abode.

"My lovely wife," the man responded in a gravelly baritone.

"I have seen a man who lies dying on the Shore of Two Seas where Meemore and Normore meet. He has called me and I need you to bring him here." The woman spoke firmly as she gathered supplies into a satchel. Her husband rose from his seat and watched her. He hated leaving her, even if for just the afternoon, but her actions made it clear this was an urgent task and a man worth saving. He remained silent as she stepped before him with intent. "He has survived the rage of Meemore, but his clothes are scraps and his skin will be raw from the sea and sun. You must remove what remains of his garments and pour this oil over him. Wrap his body in the linen and bring him to me quickly. Do not touch this man's skin as it seeps with the poisons of Meemore."

With sword and cloak, the man walked out the door followed closely by his wife. A loving embrace and gentle kiss passed between them, and the man mounted his horse. A soft hand fell to his knee and he looked down into her sharp eyes. "You know this man, my love. You will

know his name as well as his courage, but his aura has darkened. He is troubled and no longer filled with the hope of youth.”

The man nodded and rode off at a steady pace, wanting only to return home to his wife before the hours grew dark. A single moss-covered mountain rose into the sky between the man’s home and the great expanse of merging seas. The gray face of the mountain was covered in a carpet of green mosses, dotted with lichens as though flecks of silver in an aging man’s beard. A faint trail wound over the treeless peak and the man was thankful that this journey was not requested in winter when their course would have been hindered by fierce winds and drifting snow.

As he rode, his mind passed over all the courageous men he had encountered in his lifetime. As a warrior, he had known few as friends, but killed many. For many years this haunted him, the knowledge that so many had died at his hands. But his life was simpler now and he wished nothing more than to retire in a state of peace. Man and horse arrived at the Shore of Two Seas after several hours, their arrival marked by the noon sun glaring off the smooth waters, a fluid diamond on the landscape. The man was familiar with this shore and he left his horse to graze a good distance from the waters while he walked along the beach. Cracked and splintered planks littered his path and he shook his head at the apparent demise of a sailing vessel. The glare was bright and the man squinted as he clamored over the broken ship and under bowing trees, their twisted trunks shaped by the unpredictable ocean winds. This was a beach of rocks, smoothed by the waves and compressed into flat ovals of gray and red. As he walked, the stones shifted slightly under foot and clinked together like the tinny sound of a toy piano.

He rounded a peninsula in the cove, a colorless arm of stone reaching out to the sea, and spotted a swarm of seabirds hovering over the clear waters of the Sea of Normore. He marveled at the dichotomy of nature – the mergence of two seas, one full of poison and the other full of life. Like oil and vinegar, the waters converged in a fluid plane, both repelling and complementing each other. And here he stood on the shore where crystal blue waves lapped over the faint traces of poisonous white.

The man noted more seabirds gathering and he observed their activities, watching as they dropped clams to the stony ground in an attempt to crack the sealed bivalves open. His eyes followed the journey of one as it plummeted down and landed on something other than stone – a motionless and prone human figure. Immediately, the man responded and moved quickly toward the figure as he clutched the bag of provisions tighter against him. His mind raced with images of men he had known and he wondered who of them was strong enough to survive the Sea of Meemore.

As he neared, the severity of the dying man’s injuries became evident. It was barely a human being that lay before him with skin burned by the relentless sun, open wounds oozing puss and blood, and large bruises scattered between. He bent down to the face of the man and a quiet gasp parted his lips. “Keith,” he whispered, and his motions became urgent as he recognized the angular features, straight nose and dark brows behind the swollen and raw face. He quickly shuffled through his bag for gloves and oils which he poured over Keith. He spread the linen over Keith’s back and then turned him over, quietly calling out to the young captain.

“Keith, stay with me,” he spoke gruffly, a hint of futility in his words. The man continued to prepare Keith’s body for the ride home, wondering how the young captain had come to be here. He resisted the urge to slap Keith’s marred face, but he desperately wanted to see those dark eyes flutter open. He needed a hint of reassurance that his friend would live, and as he used the last of the linen roll, the man heard a quiet groan vibrate in Keith’s throat.

“Keith! Listen to my voice. Wake up, lad. Arus needs you,” the man implored.

“Scout,” Keith’s lips parted and hot breath burst the single word into the air.

“That’s it. Come back to us, Keith”

“Scout... Scout.” Keith coughed as the sting of physical pain swelled to his throat and he pleaded with the last image swimming in his mind – that of Scout’s abduction.

“Open your eyes, Captain. My wife awaits you. Now show me you want to live.”

“Scout...” Keith whispered and his eyes lifted, revealing hollow and ailing orbs of brown. Barely alert, he saw the foggy shape of human features – wild ropes lifting in the wind, dark ovals slanting down in sadness and concern, a thin line of pink frowning with intent. Slowly, distinction came like the crisp lines of a sharpened pencil and Keith saw the face of a man he knew and trusted.

“Scout isn’t here, Captain.” The man looked down into Keith’s pained eyes and he felt the grip of fear in his gut, a sensation that rarely flirted with him. And then, the fear faded as Keith spoke the one word that he had hoped to hear – his name.

“St...r-r...ide?” It came out in a whisper and Keith blinked heavily. His impending death grew more distant and Keith felt the pangs of loneliness drip from him with a single tear that fell from his tired eyes.

“Yes, Keith. I am here and my wife is going to help you. You’re going to be okay.” Stride watched as Keith swallowed and with a sigh, peacefully closed his eyes.