

THE KINGDOM OF AZERECK PT. 4

Rivalry

Based on a story by Chrisvin Jabamani



The Kingdom of Azareck now had a crowned prince, or so people thought.

The city was happy. The party went on through the night. The news that the kingdom would now have an heir was spreading to all of the other kingdoms.

It was a long day and night and Minzo was getting very tired. Even though he was excited about winning, he still wasn't quite sure what his future would be like.

Minzo went home to see his family to pack his things and prepare for his move into the castle.

His family greeted him when he entered his house. Everyone was excited for Minzo. He looked across the room and he saw his mother. She was smiling with tears running down her cheeks. She was so proud of her son. He walked over to her. Minzo's mother gave him a big hug.

"Are you sure that you want to move to the castle?" she asked with tears in her eyes.

"Yes, mother. As soon as I'm able I'll bring you and the rest of the family to the castle with me. I'll give you a good life," Minzo said as he hugged his mother back.

Minzo reached into his bag. "I almost forgot. I've got a letter from the king for you," Minzo said as he pulled a rolled paper out of his shoulder bag.

He handed the letter to his mother.

The letter said:

Dear Alize.

It gives me great honor to ask you to allow your son Minzo to be our heir and for you to give him to us to raise as a prince of the Kingdom of Azereck.

In appreciation of your gift to us, we ask that you and your family join us in the castle and become members of our household. You will be able to see your son whenever you want.

We are proud of your son and what he had done to deserve this high honor.

Sincerely yours,

King Walter

Alize began to cry. “We’ll never be hungry again. I’m so proud of you my son!”

The whole family started to jump up and down in excitement. And with that the family began to pack their things to move to the castle.

Unknown to Minzo, after the competition was over, the King made an unusual decision. He decided that because Rom and Minzo had been so closely matched in all of the events, he would bring both of them into the castle. Both of them would be trained to become king. Walter and Azul now had two sons.

This decision would prove to be one of the worst Walter ever made.

Rom was summoned to the castle. King Walter asked both of them to come to his throne room. When they arrived they were very surprised to see each other.

Minzo was upset. “What’s *he* doing here?” Minzo asked the king.

“I’ve decided that you will both be trained to be a king. You had a very close competition. I’ll treat you both as sons,” King Walter said with a big smile.

“What? You told us that the winner would be the crowned prince and would

become king upon your death,” Minzo argued with the king.

“I’ve made up my mind. You’ll both live in the castle and study with the best teachers in the kingdom. That’s my order. Now, go and begin your studies,” King Walter looked seriously at the boys.

Minzo and Rom looked at each other. How were they going to do this? Two crowned princes. Was it going to be another competition?

Rom’s family was also invited to move into the castle.

Things did not work out well from the beginning. The two families did not like each other. Everything in the castle became a competition.

Who was best at this? Who was best at that? Who had the handsomest children? Who had the smartest kids? Everything became a competition.

In the classroom, the two boys worked hard to be the smartest. On the athletic field, the two boys always wanted to win. During fighting lessons, the two boys competed to be the very best.

Over time, the two families became heated enemies. They would not talk to each other. They did not want to be seen together. The children were told not to play with each other. It became a big feud.

King Walter was too busy running the kingdom to notice the fighting that was going on in his castle. He was proud of the progress they were making in all of the subjects.

The people of the kingdom began to take sides in the feud. Some said that Minzo would be the best king, while other supported Rom. The kingdom was becoming divided.

One day the king decided to have a festival for the kingdom. He knew that the people of the kingdom enjoyed such events.

He invited all the residents of the kingdom to have a carnival at the castle. There would be music, dance, food, and best of all competitions that would be open to anyone who wanted to participate.

While this idea was a good one during normal times, it would prove to be a very

bad one at that time.

Messengers sent out messages throughout the kingdom about the big festival. The day of the celebration came and the castle filled with people ready to enjoy the day.

There were clowns and dancing ladies. There were jugglers and entertainers. There was food and drink. Everyone was enjoying the day.

Early in the day, the first event was the horse race. Just like when Minzo and Rom were competing, the horse ran out of the town, across the bridge, around the old oak tree and back into the castle.

There were twelve riders. The flag dropped and the riders raced out of the castle toward the old oak tree. Dust flew into the air as the racers flew down the dirt road in a crowded pack.

As the horses turned around the old oak tree, two riders fell off of their horses into the dirt, the rest of the horses headed back.

After the race was over the two riders, who had fallen off their horses, came walking into the town leading their horses behind.

It was Minzo and Rom. They had been fighting for position when they pulled each other off of their horses. They were dirty and scratched. They did not look much like princes. The people recognized them and began to laugh. Minzo went to the right and Rom to the left. They did not have anything to say to each other.

Rom had secretly entered the sword fighting while Minzo had secretly entered the archery event.

There were sixteen men entered in the sword fighting. It was easy for Rom to hide his identity under his armor.

He had practiced every day during his training to be a prince.

Rom won his first three matches easily. He was strong and remembered how he had lost to Minzo in the competition to become prince. Instead of being aggressive, he held his ground on each strike waiting for his opponent to make a mistake.

In the final round, his challenger proved to be very good. As the fight went on,

more and more people came to watch. Blow after blow the two circled the ring.

“Clang, clang, thud.” The noise resounded off the walls of the castle.

Rom scored the first hit, then another. He stood waiting for his rival to make a move. They walked slowly around the ring looking at each other waiting for the opportunity to strike.

“Clang, clang, thud.” Rom was hit on the chest sending him backwards into the rope. The attacker came at him, but before he could drop his sword, Rom hit him on the side and then again across the helmet.

His foe lay on the ground not moving.

Rom took off his helmet and when the crowd realized it was Rom they cheered.

Two men came to help the fighter on the ground. When they took off his helmet Rom was surprised to see his brother.

Rom bent down hoping he had not killed his brother.

Someone threw water on Rom's brother and he came to.

“What do you think you're doing, Klem?” Rom asked his brother.

“I just wanted to see if I could beat you,” he said with a smile.

Rom helped his brother to his feet and they walked together to the armory.

Minzo entered the archery event. It was very similar to the archery contest he had won against Rom. Five targets at different distances were spread across the lawn.

A large crowd came to see the event.

Monzo wore a disguise so no one would recognize him. He used his own bow, and he had selected his arrows very carefully the day before. He was ready.

By the last target, Minzo was in the lead, but there were still other archers in the contest close behind his score. Minzo had won two targets and the other two had each won one target. If either of them won the last target, they would have to shoot one more round.

The three lined up and one-by-one took their first shot. They all hit the target, but Minzo's was the farthest from the center. On the second try, Minzo went first and had the

best shot of the day, but one of the others, Thomas, put his arrow in the very middle.

Minzo and Thomas had to shoot at one more target.

Thomas went first and put his arrow in the center of the target once again. Minzo came close on his next two arrows, but Thomas won the contest.

Minzo was upset, but he went over to Thomas to tell him congratulations. Minzo took off his hat and it was then that the crowd realized that it was Minzo.

The people were impressed with Minzo and how he had handled himself after losing.

The main event for the day was the joust. In this event, two knights ride on horses at each other with long wooden poles. They try to knock the other rider off of their horse. The one who is successful at doing this, is the winner.

Minzo and Rom joined the joust without the king's knowledge. It was not customary for the crowned prince to take part in any events for fear that he might be injured or, even worse, killed.

Neither Minzo nor Rom knew that the other had entered the joust.

It took all day to complete the joust. Many of the competitors ended up on the ground looking up at the sky after being knocked off of their horses.

As expected, Rom and Minzo ended up riding against each other in the final event. They would have three passes to knock the other off of their horse. Neither one of them knew that the other was going to be in the final event.

The king decided in the late afternoon to attend the final rounds of the joust. The king found it to be entertaining to watch the skill of the knights as they rode toward each other and then the clash of the wood as it splintered into a thousand pieces after striking the armor of the rider.

Before each round, if the king attended, the riders were required to ride before the king and show respect. They were to ride slowly before the king, take off their helmets, and bow to the king.

This was going to be a problem. The king would recognize the boys and make

them quit.

Rom called one of his squires. "Harry, come here quickly, I need your help," Rom called out to his helper.

"What is it your majesty?" Harry replied.

"Quick, get into my armor. I want you to ride before the king and show him respect," Rom said as he took off his armor piece by piece and gave it to Harry.

"I can be put into prison for impersonating a knight. Are you sure you want me to do this?" Harry answered not sure if this was such a good idea. He put on the armor, which was big on him.

The other helpers lifted Harry onto the horse. He looked very uncomfortable and looked like he had never ridden a horse before.

"Are you sure this is going to work?" Harry asked threw the visor on his helmet.

"I have no other choice. If I want to compete the king has got to think you are the knight who is riding the horse. As soon as you get back, I'll switch with you," Rom tried to console Harry.

Harry rode the horse out onto the field toward the king. He looked very awkward riding the horse; in fact people began to laugh.

Some yelled, "He's drunk!"

Harry turned the horse to face the king. He bowed to the king and waited for the other rider to come.

The other rider appeared. He looked confident and fit. He trotted out onto the field and the people cheered. The rider lifted his hand into the air and waved at the crowd of people.

He too stopped in front of the king.

Harry took off his helmet. There was a gasp in the crowd. Was this young man really going to ride against the other more impressive knight? Was he even a knight at all?

The second rider pulled on his helmet. It would not come off. He tried again and

still it didn't come off.

The king waved for them to leave. He didn't care if he saw the face of the rider or not. He was there to see the joust.

When Harry got back to the tent, Rom quickly traded places with him. He put on the armor, mounted his horse and rode out to begin his joust.

The riders, at opposite ends of the field and stared at each other. They adjusted their saddles and shields. They were each given a long lance which they held onto tightly.

The horses were eager to run. The starter stood in the middle and then dropped the flag to begin the first pass.

The horses bolted toward the center of the field. Both of the riders leaned forward pointing their lances at the other. When they got to the middle there was a loud crash. Splinters of wood went flying in all directions. Both lances had hit the target, but the neither of the boys fell off.

Rom returned to his tent. There was a big dent in the armor where the lance had hit him.

"Wow, that was a hard hit. I almost fell off," he said as he looked down at the spot where the lance had hit him.

The blacksmith took a hammer and fixed the armor. Rom was now ready to battle again.

He rode out of the tent and took his position again. It was a few moments before Minzo took his position. He had a big dent in his visor. It would be difficult for him to see.

The horses bolted once again toward each other. When they reached the middle once again the wood poles broke into small pieces with a loud crash.

The crowd went crazy. Both riders stayed on their horses. Both lances were broken again.

Rom's horse went into his tent. When they tried to talk to Rom he did not answer. Harry took off the helmet and saw blood running down Rom's forehead. He had been

knocked out. Harry threw water in his face. Rom spit the water out and looked around.

“That really hurt,” Rom said as he rubbed his head. “Did I stay on my horse?” he asked.

“Yes, your majesty, but so did the other rider,” Harry informed Rom.

The blacksmith attempted to repair the helmet, but it was badly damaged. Rom put it on and could only see with one eye.

“This is going to have to work,” Rom said as he left the tent to return to the competition.

The other rider was waiting for him this time.

Once again they lowered their lances and rode toward the middle of the course.

Crash! Wood went everywhere. The horses continued to run, but both of them were empty. The two knights were on the ground. They had both fallen off of their horses. They lay motionless on the ground. The people were in shock.

“Are they dead?” a child in the crowd yelled out.