

Synopsis for *Talon*: Book one of *The Astor Chronicles*

Talon, a young warrior of about eighteen is a member of a group called 'the Kriites' (CREE-AIGHTS), who have special gifts known as the *Astor* (A: Anzaii, S: Sleffion, T: Tolite, R: Rada.). They enable Kriites to 'bond' with another being, a telepathic/empathic relationship.

The Anzaii are the most gifted of all, reminiscent of the 'ancient survivors' who communicated telepathically person to person. With a sentient physical object as their bond-partner (kin), the Anzaii can learn to dispel the demonic conjurations of their enemies, the Zeikas (ZAI-KAHS) and to communicate telepathically with other beings, even fellow humans.

These abilities are the Kriites' best defence against the Zeikas who have magical abilities with fire, summoned monsters and immortal life from dark spirits. Along with their lust for power and pleasure, the Zeikas are on a genocidal quest to kill all Kriites.

There are a number of Kriite groups spread across Chryne, including the Tanzans who possess the Sleffion gift of bonding with skyearls (flying creatures with special water abilities), the Tolites of Watercrag, who bond with weapons, and the scattered groups of Rada who possess the gift of animal-bonding. Talon comes from Jaria, a secluded race of Rada. Without a Rada-kin of his own, he trains as both an apprentice quartermaster and a warrior for his people.

While out on one of his gathering trips, he unexpectedly meets an icetiger claiming to be his Rada-kin. Talon is soon tracked down by a group of Zeikas, who take the icetiger, Rekala, captive. Talon escapes with help from an earring that claims to be his new 'Anzaii'-kin.

He returns to Jaria with news of the Zeikas and meets fellow Rada Sarlice and her tiger-kin Kestric. Four years his senior, Sarlice is a female warrior from a nomadic Kriite settlement in Lyth. Together, they rescue Rekala and a group of captured Jarians. Talon is given a special Anzaii-artifact made from the leaves of a 'Great Sapphire Tree'. They are then sent on a mission to seek aid for the Rada of Jaria and Lyth.

They travel to Tasset and join with Lira, who is really the Princess Denliyan of Telby in disguise. They continue on to Sarm, then Telby, where Talon and Sarlice plead with the king to protect Jaria and Lyth from the Zeikas. Unfortunately King Flale's loyalties now lie with the Zeikas, so the pair decide to seek help from Tanza, the last great Kriite nation.

On the way to Tanza, Lira spell-binds Talon and makes love to him (this is to secure her throne and sow Talon's 'ancient' blood into her line). When Talon awakens he is unaware of what happened. Another encounter with Zeikas separates Lira from Talon and Sarlice. The pair suspect betrayal and do not pursue Lira. The Zeikas are trying to capture Talon in order to harness his 'ancient' abilities.

Talon and Sarlice continue on to Tanza, and pass through the 'barrier shield'. Talon obtains both a Tolite-kin (weapon) and a Sleffion-kin (skyearl) of his own. His Sleffion-kin is the Emperor Ciera, the highest ranking skyearl in Tanza. Talon is now an *Astor* because he has all four gifts.

By the time Talon and Sarlice reach Centan (the capital), it is too late to get help for Jaria and Lyth and they realize that an epic conflict between Zeikas and Kriites is only just beginning.

The Zeikas launch their biggest attack yet on Tanza. Talon and Sarlice agree to fight in the war and Talon becomes part of an elite Anzaii strike force, with his own personal guards. The king of Tanza gives Talon a second Anzaii-artifact made from the 'Great Sapphire Tree' of Centan and Talon discovers that he can use both artifacts to enhance his growing Anzaii abilities.

After weeks of battle, the Zeikas are winning. Talon learns that one of his own guards, Corypha, betrayed him, giving information to the Zeikas that has led to Sarlice's capture. Now one of the most powerful *Astors* left in Tanza, Talon fights in the last, desperate battle at Condii. Injured in a fight with the leader of the Zeikas, Talon is sent back to safety. He uses this time to confront Corypha and, in a berserker rage brought on by combat-fatigue, Talon nearly kills him. With the Zeikas taking control of the city, the remaining Tanzans flee to neighboring realm Ravra. The magic of the barrier shield around Tanza is reversed, trapping the Zeikas inside.

Once they arrive in Ravra, Talon is thrown out of the Tanzan army for mistreatment of a prisoner of war. *Talon* ends here, with the Tanzans safe from the Zeikas, but Talon about to embark on a new quest to confront the Zeikas and rescue his guide.

In this series, Talon faces many dilemmas, such as how a peace-loving person can wage war, self-sacrifice for a greater mission—hope, in an increasingly hostile world. It has a fast-paced, action-packed plot, engrossing high-fantasy setting and story and is a novel about friendship, courage, faith and change.

FURTHER INFORMATION

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