

An interview with

Anejo di Jinq

Interviewed by James Hockley

More information on the World of Ku is available

from James's website: www.jhockley.com

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Anejo is an honour of House Jinq; the leading family of the Mandari regime in the country of Ahan. She is also a senior student at the specialist military academy of the Mandahoi. The following interview takes place before the events of the Age of Ku.

[James Hockley] Welcome. I trust you're comfortable?

[Anejo di Jinq] Is that relevant?

[JH] Okay. Shall we begin?

[A] What was the purpose of this, again?

[JH] To give readers a bit of an insight into you. *Anejo rolls eyes.* Is that a problem?

[A] No, let's get on with it. What do you want to know?

[JH] Yes, we better had. You are an honour of House Jinq – what exactly does that mean?

[A] Pfff. Honour is an archaic term for the “ladies” of the higher families in Mandari Society. I am a member of one of these families, the Jinq family to be precise, and I am also a woman. Hence I am an honour. It's bloody stupid really.

[JH] Why is it stupid? It sounds like quite an ‘honour’, if you'll excuse the pun.

There is no laugh in response.

[A] It is stupid because it misrepresents the status of women in Mandari Society. Women are supposedly revered by our God, and yet they are shackled to the fringes of Society despite this. If women really had standing in Mandaria, then there would be women in positions of influence.

[JH] What about Lehcar di Mallahn?

[A] She is an anomaly. Look, do you doubt me?

[JH] No, not doubt. I merely question why it is not a more widespread concern? Most of Mandari woman-kind does not seem to share your views.

[A] Most of Mandari woman-kind is shackled into silence. Well, maybe not silence. I mean, it's not as if women are treated badly; it's just that they don't have a voice. But in a lot of cases, they don't have a voice because they don't see the problem – or they live such a life that the problem is concealed. I ... I'm not absolutely sure why the rest of Society doesn't see a problem with this. But it is a problem.

[JH] So does that make you an anomaly?

[A] Be careful – I am an honour of House Jinq.

[JH] Isn't that the title you are actively rebelling against?

[A] If I'm burdened with the title, I can use it.

[JH] So, you are rebelling against it?

[A] I'm not a rebel.

[JH] Then what do you call all this time you dedicate to your life as a Mandahoi.

[A] Escape. And, I suppose, I'm looking for a place where I can exert some influence. That's my problem with the position as honour of House Jinq – I have no influence. I become a trinket for my family to pass about and utilise rather than having real personal purpose. As a Mandahoi I have a purpose, something to strive for. I am on a level pegging. Well, not a level pegging. I'm better than most of my male counterparts.

A wry smile.

[JH] That sounds like rebellion to me.

[A] Fine, whatever you want to call it. I don't have a name for it because I'm not that narrow.

[JH] I get the impression that you don't like me.

[A] Maybe. I'm just wondering what gives you the right to ask all these probing questions.

[JH] I am your creator.

[A] Arrogant bastard! Do you really think I'm going to let—

A slither of steel appears at the head of her scabbard.

[JH] Let's move on shall we. Can you tell me about your relationship with your family?

[A] It's okay. *Accompanied by a shrug.*

[JH] So your family are supportive of your chosen path?

[A] No, of course they're not. They see me as a trouble-maker, shouting loud just to be heard. They don't listen to what I have to say, not really. They just hear that I'm shouting. My brother is particularly frustrated by my attempts to be noticed, but soon that'll morph into jealousy. When I get given my chance, they'll see what woman-kind is capable of. You just wait and see.

[JH] So it's a strained relationship?

[A] Not really. Well, quite often with my brother it is, but my grandfather is a good man, and we get on. I try to stay away, to smooth the path if truth be told. Keep out from under my brother's feet. But at the core of it, we're family, and we love each other. We all have Ahan at the centre of our interests, and that's all that matters really.

[JH] What about your father and mother?

[A] My father died in battle when I was two years old. My mother is a recluse as a consequence. Relationships with the deceased and the isolated are difficult.

[JH] I can imagine. So who do you have in your life? Who do you walk through this world with?

[A] That's easy – Xen. She's my oldest friend and my rock at the Mandahoi academy. I don't know what I'd do without her.

[JH] What is it about Xen that leads you to her?

[A] She understands me; that's what. She understands what I'm saying, what I'm fighting against. She also feels the need to influence the world, and so she came with me to the Mandahoi academy to train. We do have some disagreements, well, one in particular, but on the whole we are entirely aligned.

[JH] What disagreement is that?

[A] It's none of your business.

[JH] What if I told you I already knew?

[A] I'd say keep quiet on the matter, and don't try to coerce me.

A slither of steel once more.

[JH] What's your favourite food?

[A] What?

[JH] Sorry, I thought I needed to lighten the mood. So, no other friends?

[A] Well, I'm friends with most of the academy, but none stick out like Xen. None others are worth talking about.

[JH] What are you trying to achieve with your time as a Mandahoi?

[A] Haven't I already answered this? I want to influence.

[JH] Influence what?

[A] The world, somehow. Not massive – I'm not a narcissist – but I just want to show that 'woman-kind', though I hate that term, is capable of more than being a figurehead. We must be counted.

[JH] We or you?

A pause.

[A] I can only influence others, not coerce them.

[JH] You say that you have the interests of Ahan at the core of your being. Presented with the following conundrum, what would you do: you are an honour of House Jinq, and Ahan survives; or you follow your dreams and influence the world, only for Ahan to fall. Which do you choose?

[A] That's a stupid scenario. Utterly convoluted.

[JH] But which would you choose?

[A] The salvation of Ahan, obviously. But I would only act with the best interests of Ahan, so were I to influence, it must only be for the greater good of Ahan.

[JH] Are you quite sure about that? There is no chance you could do damage to your own?

[A] Of course not, don't be ridiculous. Are you questioning my loyalty?

[JH] Definitely not. And finally, what do you think is the greatest threat to your country?

[A] The Delfinians. Their ambitions know no bounds.

[JH] Not these rumours of dusk that we hear so much about?

[A] Of course not – that is a native fairy-story. If I didn't hold our chief sensor in such high esteem, I might believe that he is going quite mad.

[JH] Thank you for your time, Anejo. Would you be so kind as to answer any questions that our loyal readership wish to ask you?

[A] What? Do you want me to hang around answering questions indefinitely? I am not a bloody trinket—

[JH] No, no. The next time you come to me, whenever that might be, I will relay the questions.

[A] I suppose so, but I can't guarantee when I'll be back. I've got a busy schedule of influencing to get through.

[JH] Yes indeed. You go for it. I'm sure it will be an unparalleled success.

[A] Ah finally, some sense from you. Thanks kindly.