

The Seven Royals return in this epic sequel. They are pitted against The Wicker Man, an evil sorcerer who seeks to collect the Zodiac Seals and unleash terrible magic upon the land. Only they can stop him before it is too late.


The Seven Royals: Breaking The Stars

By Jacob Airey

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The Seven Royals
Breaking the Stars

Jacob Airey

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CHAPTER 1

Jasher sat cross-legged in a dark circular room somewhere deep within the castle. He had his hands on his knees, dressed only in a sleeveless white shirt and white trousers. His short brown hair was unkempt and he had the beginnings of an unshaven face.

This was unusual for him. He was always well-kept. Sure, he still had the toned, athletic body, tall stature, and blue eyes, but right now, as he sat in this empty stone room, something troubled him.

He was the King of Teysha and he always wanted to look his best for his kingdom and the other kingdoms on the circular continent called Craih. It seemed insignificant to the rest of the nations that were also marked on any map of this planet of Parania, but to Jasher, this was home. It was his to protect and he guarded it fiercely.

With the moon coming in, the scar over his left eye was glowing blue. It was the last of those scars to glow after the others were healed during his trip to the Overworld. They had once peppered his body like a roadmap, only coming out in lunar light, but now, only that which scratched his eye remained.

He had no reason to be concerned, they had a year to rebuild after the Fall of Thorne, but something was bothering him. He and his friends had stopped Fabius Thorne and his dark army, but he could sense a great evil that eluded him and as he meditated, he wondered what that could be.

Without warning, wooden tentacles surged from the ground beneath him. He cried out in pain as one wrapped around his ankle, but he reached out his hand. Within moments, he heard a chime ring out in the air like a stone rolling down a mountain, the Blue Blade, his signature

sword landed perfectly in his palm, allowing for him to seamlessly slice the tentacle trying to pin down his foot.

He stood up and made a run for a window on the opposite wall, dodging and slicing these strange tentacles as they tried to wrap around him. His blue sword began to glow and he channeled the cosmic energy within him, sending out a wave, cutting them all at once. He stood for a moment on the broken floor. Breathing heavily, relishing this reprieve, but it was short lived. To his shock and horror, another tentacle shot forth from the floor, this one moving fast than before.

Jasher had no choice, but to escape. He made one last jump and grabbed onto the window's edge, hanging on for dear life, he climbed it, but then a tentacle wrapped around both his legs, trying to pull him below.

The young king tried to hold on, but then another wrapped his waist, jerking him away. They started to pull him underground, into an abyss of darkness. With one last breath, he gave a cry for help.

“Jasher!”

Hearing his name pulled him out of the meditative state. He was not in an empty room, but was at an atrium in the Bluetree Forest located near the castle in the capital of Grandfire. The building had a glass dome in the roof with no walls, only six pillars connecting the dome to a white marble floor.

He was seated in front of Shade, the great red dragon whose scales shined in the sunlight and was Dragon Lord over his kind. He had been watching over the Seven Kingdoms of Craih years before Jasher and his father were born. It was through his blessing that one would become a dragon king, showing an alliance between these kingdoms and the dragons.

“What did you see,” asked Shade. His deep voice permeated their surroundings

“Tentacles, like vines,” the King answered. “They were after me, pulling me underground.”

“A warning. Even during this time of celebration, there is something foul afoot.”

Jasher stood, dusting himself. “It is hard to believe. We rounded up the last of the Sorcerer’s Society and outside of the lowlifes trying to take advantage of the reconstruction, nothing as powerful as what I saw in my dream has reared its ugly head.”

“Evil is always at work. Perhaps there is something closer than you think.” Shade looked up at the sun. “We will continue your training later. I want to focus more on the control you have on your cosmic power. For now, you should return to the castle. I promised the queen you would not be late for the ceremony.”

Jasher nodded. “Thank you, my friend. Your guidance has been invaluable. Whoever is out there, I hope they are prepared to face me and my allies should they come against the kingdom.”

In a small village not far from Grandfire, a wagon pulled a farmer dressed in overalls with a straw hat. He was moving quietly, avoiding any eye contact with his fellow villagers as he passed through. His small hamlet was alive with people discussing the sounds from the celebration at the castle. You could hear the music and shouts of happiness through the town square, and while his neighbors enjoyed the excitement, he put it out of his mind.

Not far from the town line, he came to a small road that crossed onto his property.

The farmer shivered as his wagon approached his simple farmhouse. “If only,” he said with tears in his eyes.

“If only I hadn’t used that wicker hand on my scarecrow.” He drove past a wooden mailbox that read ‘Farmer Brown.’

He was a staple in his community, one that everyone knew, but for the last few months, he had not been seen except when his large frame and long brown beard would pass by on his wagon. When folks would try to approach him and his straw hat, he would speed up the horses. No one knew why he had become so distant or the secret that haunted his farm.

He shook with his fear as he pulled to a stop so close to his house. He crept down from the wagon and slowly walked past a chicken coop where the skeletons of fowls were scattered about. That was only the beginning. He looked around at his dead crops and gulped shaking with fear as he approached his house. For years it had been kept up and glowing red with white trim. Now it looked decrepit and run down.

Farmer Brown opened the door to his farmhouse, holding a long staff wrapped in cloth. He opened the door to his single room home. He braced himself, for he knew what to expect.

The scarecrow he had crafted had come to life, but it was no longer lifeless. It was evil incarnate. He knew now that it was not just an inanimate object brought to life, but a dark wizard that had possessed his creation.

“Please, sir,” Farmer Brown pleaded.

In the living area, the Wicker Man stood, still in the form of the scarecrow. Though now the burlap looked more like wrinkled and scarred skin than a potato sack. He wore a black robe and hood with his wooden hands resembling claws.

The farmer teared up when he saw the Wicker Man caressing the cheek of his wife. Mrs. Brown sat huddled on a chair shivering, her eyes red from tears.

“Please, Sir,” he repeated.

“Lord,” corrected the Wicker Man. His voice was deeper than Farmer Brown had remembered, but it still had that sophistication that the villain was known for. “Address me as your lord. Do not make that mistake again. Now, did you find it?”

The farmer set the item on the floor. The Wicker Man’s left arm turned into a vine, he reached out and grabbed it. He removed the cloth covering it.

“The Thirteenth Seal,” whispered the Wicker Man. It was a cane in the shape of a cobra. “If only Thorne knew what he had. He thought it was nothing more than a good luck charm, but the truth is, this is something far more powerful. I knew keeping it hidden would pay off.”

The farmer swallowed. “It was right where you said it would be, my Lord.”

The Wicker Man smiled and said, “Obviously.” He could not resist clutching it tighter. “I was going to use this against Thorne after he killed Midas, but now, I shall use it for revenge.”

The farmer swallowed. “And us, my Lord?”

“Did you take care of the other things, as well?”

“Yes, the prison is expecting a shipment exactly as you suggested.”

The Wicker Man nodded. “Excellent. Very well. I promised this would end quickly if you helped me accomplish these tasks. You have succeeded. Have you told anyone?”

“No, my Lord.”

“When your neighbors did not see your wife?”

“I told them she was ill. No one came near this place.”

The Wicker Man turned his right hand into a claw and edged it closer to the wife’s throat. “Do you swear it on her life?”

The farmer looked at his wife, who nodded quickly. “Yes, my Lord, I swear.”

The Wicker Man smiled. "Excellent."

He suddenly stabbed the wife in the heart. She fell down, dead before she hit the ground.

The farmer screamed, "No! No!" He collapsed on the ground. "Why? Why? I did everything you asked. Why?"

The Wicker Man walked up to him. "I'm ending this quickly." He turned his left arm into a scythe.

White flowers decorated the city of Grandfire, along with maroon banners, no longer carrying the golden hand of Midas, but now a golden dragon flying upwards, the new symbol of Craih.

Through the city, there were still signs of repairs going on, as folks rebuilt what the dark army had pilfered. However, there was a spirit of optimism as the citizens walked together toward the entrance of the castle courtyard. Though some were intimidated at the mountain the castle rested on, most everyone had smiles on their faces as they awaited the new King and Queen.

In the center, just outside the castle's large doors, a temporary platform had been built. From there, those who could see tried to get a glimpse of their new King.

He was young, younger than any king had been crowned on Craih, but Jasher Kennan had been the one to save them. Just a few days after his birthday, everyone watched as he and his beautiful wife walked onto the platform, flanked by the other Royals. The King was dressed in golden ceremonial armor that would have been impractical for an actual battle, but its white and gold colors sparkled in the sun, dazzling the crowd before him.

His queen, the one called Ezri Snow from a kingdom far away, stood smiling beside him. She was dressed in a flowing dress that matched the king's armor. She was tall, athletic, had long flowing black hair, and white eyes which earned her the nickname Snow White.

They watched as the king bowed to the High Priest of Craih, Timothy Elishama, a large man with black hair and tan skin, dressed in the maroon robes with a small crown on his head that signified his position as the leader of the Church of Craih.

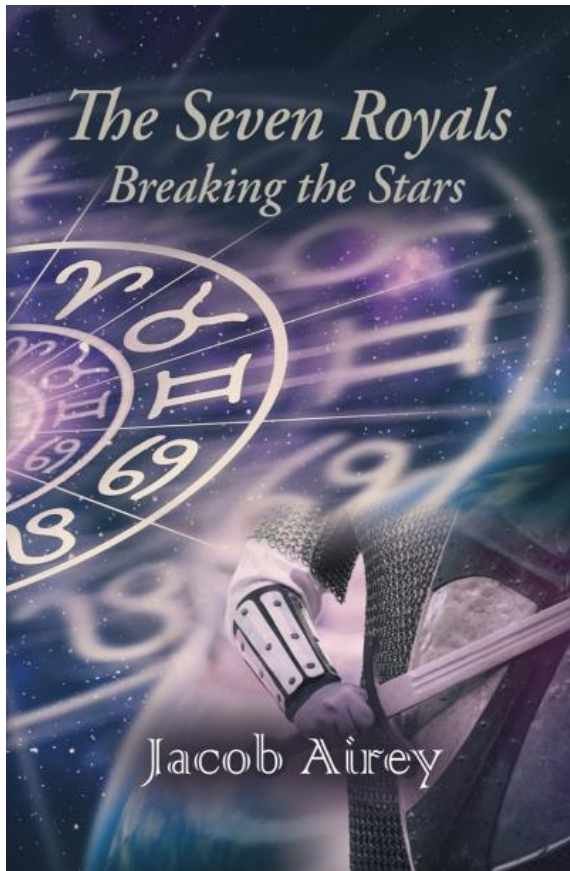
Elishama beckoned the king to rise and then turned to the crowd.

“I present to you Jasher Kennan, Captain of the Seven Royals, Knight of the Order of Grandfire, King of Teysha and the Dragon King of a united Craih!” He called out, “Long live the king!”

King Jasher waved as the audience applauded him. It was not forced as it had been with Midas and Fabius Thorne, but genuine excitement as the rightful king had returned to the throne. Several women in the crowd threw rice and rose petals as Jasher approached a podium.

Jasher said, “Today, marks the one year anniversary of a struggle. It was a struggle for freedom that every man, woman and child fought. It was hard, brutal, and painful, but from that fight for liberty, we are no longer divided into seven kingdoms. We are one nation, united forever. I wear armor not as an oppressor to crush you, but to promise you that I shall be a warrior king who will be your protector and your avenger. I will draw the line and will stand up for you, my citizens. I cannot speak to the future, but for me, I will not be a king who hides in his castle waiting for trouble. I vow to be a king who fights, fights for you and for all of the free folk. That is my promise as the Dragon King.”

The crowd let out a second applause. This one echoed through the city and could be heard for miles outside of Grandfire and into the surrounding villages.



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