

A SPACE SAGA BY MICHAEL ZUMMO

d'mok revival



NEW EDEN

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By
Michael J. Zummo

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D'MOK REVIVAL: NEW EDEN

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This book is dedicated to my son Derek.

You are such a blessing in my life. Every day I marvel at the ways you grow. I'm so proud of the person you are and the ways you continue to evolve.

Inside you is an incredible heart and a beautiful soul. The world is a better place for you being in it.

I'm so lucky to be your dad. (And no, you're not Jask.)

Author's Note

So begins the next phase of D'mok Revival—a new trilogy. I remember when I finished the first three books, I didn't think there was more to the story. Boy, was I wrong!

The New Eden Saga tells what happens after Rhysus Mencari thwarted the Nukari Invasion. For those new to the series, you do not have to read the original trilogy for this to make sense. I've carefully included everything you need to know, where appropriate, in this book. However, if you'd *like* to go back and read the original trilogy, please do.

The big cliff hanger at the end of the Nukari Invasion Trilogy serves as the main thrust behind New Eden—Rhysus Mencari's family is alive! So, for all those that were floored by this development, this is what you've been waiting for.

This book would not have been possible without the love and support of family, friends, and professionals. I would especially like to thank: my incredible editor Arlene Robinson and my amazing 3-D illustrator Glenn Clovis. To my beta readers: Matt Ferrara, Samuel Zummo, Elizabeth Zummo, Pat Conley, and Dan Prust, thank you from the bottom of my heart!

Without further ado, allow me to take you on a journey!

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Prologue Jask

A young boy skidded to the edge of a mountain ledge. With a mischievous chuckle, a cloud of dirt and rock billowed over the side and careened hundreds of feet straight down. His body tingled. His heart pounded. He felt alive!

“Jask!” a beast-woman snapped from a ledge twenty feet below. Scale-covered arms shielded her large, yellow, lizard-like eyes as pebbles pelted her. Flesh-tearing teeth gritted; her leathery lips quivered moments from a snarl.

“It’s been over ten minutes. I’m getting bored up here,” he chided. The climb seemed an effortless feat for him, unlike his mentor, Shasa. Her scaly form worked best on flat ground, not near vertical, rocky surfaces. “Keep up the *good* work! Maybe see you in like, another ten minutes?”

“I didn’t pick this route,” she hissed, deflecting the chastisement and refocusing on her next foothold.

Jask put his arms back and shifted his weight. With perfect control he bent forward over the edge. His heart fluttered in anticipation. Would he fall? Would Shasa scream? He loved these training sessions.

“Jask! Get away from the edge!” she said, voice filled with fear.

He smiled, satisfied with the result. Shasa doted on him constantly; it was all well intended, but she needed to relax. He wasn’t in any danger. With all the

time they spent training, she knew what was a real threat. “But you always tell me to push myself—to keep testing.”

Focusing, a warmth spread across his body and with it a subtle golden glow. The weight of gravity faded, and he slowly floated backward. He playfully locked eyes with Shasa as he levitated. Holding her position on the cliff wall, she observed his corrective action. Though she didn't say anything, she didn't need to; he could see pride reflecting in her eyes. He'd come a long way in a short amount of time and they both knew she had a hand in that.

There was a time, not long ago, when no one wanted to train him. So different from the other created Nukari beasts, most thought he'd amount to nothing. He enjoyed proving them all wrong.

In an attempt to be an attentive pupil, he touched down a few feet from the edge.

“Test your abilities, *not* your mortality,” she said while she struggled up the steep ledge toward him, “or my sanity.”

His deep brown eyes looked upon the horizon and marveled. *This is the highest we've been yet!* Majestic purple mountains stretched as far as he could see, covered in thick blankets of emerald forests, patched with jagged, stony spires and capped with gleaming white snow. The view, his reward for exceeding his training, grew more amazing with each mountain they climbed. There were only two higher than this one. Shasa promised, upon their final lessons, they'd scale Mount Kaijuu. Not only did he like the challenge that brought, his stomach fluttered with anticipation of what the view would be like from there.

For the moment, he wanted only to take it all in.

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The crisp air tingled in his lungs. Mammoth birds of prey swooped in the distance. Even the clouds themselves seemed within reach. But not quite. He wanted to be higher. Levitating was for kids. He wanted to soar, just like the others. That reminded him ...

He pivoted and dashed across the plateau, then gazed into the valley below. Thousands of feet down, their makeshift camp teemed with life. Everyone looked so small, like little dots swarming around. His two beast mentors, Yezen and Ishara, were sure to be awake.

A perfect fantasy played in his mind. He'd return to camp soaring with style, flying above the rooftops. The others would be in awe of yet another record broken in the mastering of his abilities. They would cheer!

His heart fluttered. They might say he wasn't ready, but he knew he was. And now he could prove it to everyone else.

Ten feet of running space will be about right, he thought moving away from the edge. He nibbled his lip. *It's time.*

Slow, steady, deep breaths centered his mind. This was going to really push him. He'd have to keep his mind on-task the entire time. No distractions.

An image of a copper-skinned woman with long black hair overtook his thoughts. She lay prostrate on the ground, limbs twisted like a fallen marionette, a deep red stain spreading out from her body. *No!* His head shook trying to dislodge the evil memory. His heart raced, breathing quickened. *Not now.* An aching claimed his heart. The specter of loss clung to him.

Jask, remember who you are.

The memory of a gentle female voice filled his

mind. The image of the copper-skinned woman gave way to a majestic bird-woman with opulent white feathers. Ishara. Her gentle smile calmed him. His heart slowed; his breathing grew more relaxed. *Tell me who are you, Jask*, she said.

"I am Nukari. I am the chosen. I am a beast warrior!" he said aloud. Once more he breathed in the crisp air. His golden light returned.

A sound from behind drew his gaze. Shasa's hand reached over the ledge searching for a firm grasp. He grinned. She wasn't going to like this, but it was still going to happen.

He stomped into the stance practiced so many times before. Determination filled him. He charged forward, glowing brighter with each step.

"No—no, no! DON'T! YOU'RE NOT ..." Shasa gasped out as Jask tempted fate and leaped off the edge, into the air.

He giggled from the tickle in his stomach as he plummeted downward. The wind whistled in his ears. A rush of adrenaline accompanied the sense of great speed. With outstretched arms he intended to command his power.

But the glow around his body faded. The cold mountain winds began chilling his skin as if he were naked. His eyes grew wide. Something was wrong. Gravity's weight was asserting its full strength. It wasn't like this before. Where was the energy? Where was the sense of power that filled him before?

Focus! He must be too busy thinking about sensations and not enough on channeling his abilities. He tried to take a breath to relax, but couldn't. Panic claimed him, along with the thought that Shasa and the others were right. He wasn't ready.

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“Jask!” he heard Shasa shriek.

A mental ripple ripped through him.

He’s falling! I can’t help him!

Shasa’s telepathic scream. She knew it was bad. Her call for help would reach everyone in the camp below. His powers had to return—and fast—or *I’ll end up like ...* The image of the broken copper-skinned woman breached his mind again. *Mother.* He didn’t have time to think about that, not if he wanted to survive this. *I won’t die. I won’t die!*

A rocky ledge quickly approached.

Use your power phrase! Shasa commanded with telepathy.

Power phrase? Kids used those. He was eight now. Then again, if he wanted to see nine, perhaps he needed to stop resisting and just take her direction.

He closed his eyes and screamed, “*Sutā umare pawā!*”

Seconds passed.

Nothing.

He shouted again. “*Sutā ... umare ... pawā!*”

Still nothing.

The sinking feeling of defeat set in. Soon it wouldn’t matter anyway.

The snarl of his mentor, Yezen, echoed in his mind. *You arrogant little Gaki. Someday you’re going to get yourself, or one of us, killed.*

He knew he pushed boundaries and took risks, but all he wanted was to be like Yezen, that, and make him proud. When he saw Yezen’s mighty green glow, the tide of any struggle turned in their favor.

What would Ishara think of his failing? She always believed in him, encouraged him. She even stood up for him when others doubted the value of a “tan-

skinned Gaki.”

And Shasa ... he hadn't meant for this to happen.

The three were like family to him, especially after the passing of his mother. Why didn't he just listen to them? Suddenly he felt foolish, and undeserving of their love. He truly was a Gaki.

A memory of Ishara's gentle voice overtook Yezen's. She coaxed him with, “Try one more time. We are more than what people think of us. I believe in you....”

Her words echoed as he soaked in the message. Such unconditional love—it warmed his heart. The feeling spread, turning into a tingle across his body. The sensation became short bursts of energy, which pulsed from head to toe.

One more time, Ishara's voice echoed again.

With eyes opened, he shouted, “*Sutā ... umare ... pawā!*”

A ripple of power exploded around him. Though still in a freefall, the very stone of the mountain turned molten as he passed. A golden glow around his body radiated as gravity lost its mastery over him.

The ledge still approached quickly.

Pull up ... pull up!

Inch by inch, the angle of descent grew. A sigh escaped as the ledge narrowly whooshed past. He could do this. He just needed to pull up, and now he had a little more time to do it.

Below him, their camp was getting bigger by the moment. It looked like everyone was outside gawking and pointing at him. So much for flying in style; now the challenge was to avoid a legendary fail in front of them.

A brilliant pink glow flashed next to a powerful green one. The two streaked into the sky, headed

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directly for him. Ishara and Yezen. *No!* He wanted to do this by himself—wanted least of all to be saved in front of everyone. He got himself into this; he could fix it.

The two glowing colors approached. He had to do something fast, or there'd be no saving face. He mentally chanted his power phrase. His golden light flared around him, along with a burst of speed. Ishara gasped as he shot past. A moment of smugness turned to regret as the ground approached even faster, and his control further strained.

A warm presence trailed him. He didn't need to look to know it was Yezen and Ishara in close pursuit. No matter the circumstance, he could always sense them like beacons in the night. *I can do this alone*, he thought, knowing Ishara could hear it.

Little by little his death dive leveled out. Sweat burst from his pores as he pushed his rudimentary control to the limit. He yelped, narrowly missing the encampment's taller rooftops. A quick bit of dodging allowed him to avoid being snagged in a power cable strung between the structures.

Still too fast to land. He needed to go upward to erode his momentum. At least he avoided cratering in the ground, so far anyway. Dodging grew easier as he weaved and bobbed through the buildings of the camp.

He nearly had it. Things suddenly didn't seem so bad.

Okay, maybe next time he'd listen to Shasa. *Maybe.* He still needed to go back up.

Focusing his power, a sonic boom accompanied another burst of speed. *No, not faster, higher!* Ishara and Yezen had made soaring look so easy.

To his delight, he began to ascend. *Good, now how to stop?*

No sooner had he started to slow, Yezen and Ishara caught up. Ishara reached around and grappled him. As they slowed together, he noticed Yezen scowling, his furious gaze piercing.

“What were you thinking?” Yezen snarled.

It was a fair question, one that made him feel stupid.

“Now’s not the time for that,” Ishara calmly retorted, descending, her arms tight around him. “Where’s Shasa?”

He hesitated then pointed up to the mountaintop, feeling the first pangs of embarrassment.

Yezen growled and flew off toward the mountain. Once the green glow was far enough away, Ishara leaned in and said softly, “Jask, you shouldn’t have left her. She must be so worried right now.”

“I just wanted to show everyone I could do it.”

“And you did. But you’re still inexperienced—and lucky.”

He slumped in her arms. Ishara had this way of letting you know you messed up, while still feeling loved. She whispered playfully in his ear, “That was quite a show you put on. I’m very impressed. Just listen to Shasa—she will always tell you what’s best for you.”

With a sheepish expression, he looked to Ishara and nodded.

“And welcome back,” she added.

As they gently touched down, angry steps approached from behind them. He didn’t have to turn to know exactly who was approaching—and why.

“Jask!” Despite being next to him, her shrill voice

yelled as if he were across the encampment. Everyone would be within earshot of this lecture.

He swallowed hard and turned to face his persecutor. Her short-cropped, jagged, blood-orange locks flared angrily in the wind. *How appropriate.* She wasn't a created beast like them, she was a native Nukari. Though, her lip rings connected by silver strands to gaudy earrings sure looked monstrous. Sometimes it looked like her teeth protruded when she screamed at them.

"Explain yourself!"

Despite being their leader, she was never very nice to anyone. Always screaming and commanding. No one thought highly of her, yet they all feared her. At least that device she carried.

This time, he'd given her a good reason to yell.

"Master Kajlit'ga. Please forgive me."

"That's all you have to say? You grovel?"

He hesitated, trying to find the right words to quell her anger.

"I only want to excel for you—to be useful and effective for our missions."

She lorded over him, arms crossed tightly. Enraged eyes looked him over like rotten meat. Her nose wrinkled. "For breaking protocol with your trainer you will spend three nights in the pen."

He gasped. Three nights? The cold of the metal structure was bad enough. But the blunt metal spikes along the floor were torture. They didn't have to cut skin; he knew from experience he'd be moving around every night, all night, unable to find a spot that didn't hurt somehow.

"But, since you're back," she said, "advanced maneuvers are about to begin. Put on your encounter

suit and meet me in seven minutes in the Siege Box.”

Author Bio

Michael Zummo was born in Milwaukee, Wisconsin in 1974. Some know him as a software developer, others as a usability expert, still others as a board and video game designer. One little boy calls him father.

From his earliest days he was enthralled by computer games, specifically the Sierra On-line adventure games. They inspired his sense of exploration in strange lands, and interactive storytelling.

In 1996, he graduated from Carroll College in Waukesha, Wisconsin with a double degree in computer science and communications.

Throughout his winding career in interactive marketing, video game design, and creating user interfaces, each adventure held the same root. What motivated him wasn't just understanding people and creating digital interactions. Taking people through an experience—on a journey—is his true passion.

Writing has become the ultimate vehicle to make it happen.

