

## Character interview with Sabre from *The Cyber Chronicles*

**Interviewer:** Vanessa Finaughty

**Series author:** TC Southwell



I've recently had the pleasure of interviewing Sabre from best-selling author TC Southwell's sci-fi fantasy series, *The Cyber Chronicles*. For those who aren't familiar with the series, Sabre is a cyber warrior – formally known as a cyber-bio combat unit. Sabre's metal-plated bones and internal body armour render him practically indestructible, with the downside that he can be controlled by a micro-supercomputer embedded in a brow band attached to the skull plating under his scalp.

It was rather daunting meeting Sabre for the first time, knowing that beneath his gentle features lies what is considered to be the most dangerous weapon ever created. He has split-second reactions and is trained in every art of combat, able to use any weapon, speak every language and operate any craft, plus the data stored in his brain, intended for the supercomputer's use, is updated at regular intervals. He is so dangerous, in fact, that Cybercorp has ensured no cyber will ever gain a sense of self, with all the ramifications that stem from it.

When a freak accident freed Sabre from his control unit on the post-holocaust world of Omega Five, he befriended Queen Tassin Alrade whilst rescuing her from her enemies. Thanks to Tassin, Sabre has become what Myon Two has always dreaded: a free cyber. All Tassin and Sabre want is to live in peace, but Cybercorp's enforcers will never stop hunting them.

The first things that struck me about Sabre were his impeccably good manners and gentle mannerisms – I expected a brusque, unhappy person, knowing what he is and how angry he must be about what was done to him, but the man I met seemed quite content.

No longer under cyber control, Sabre had discarded the cyber-issue uniform in favour of a well-fitted royal blue velvet jacket over a black shirt, matching jeans and boots. After introductions, he sat on the couch with the lithe grace usually only seen in felines, his eyes scanning the room with alert vigilance before coming to rest on me. He appeared shy and a little ill at ease at first. The control unit was off for our interview, with only a tiny amber light flashing at short intervals, indicating that it was in standby mode. This gave me some form of relief, knowing I was talking to Sabre, not the control unit.

Over tall glasses of fresh orange juice, I brought up the first time Sabre saw Queen Tassin, when she opened his casket in her castle dungeons. When asked if he recalls having any thoughts about her voice the first time he heard it, Sabre smiles and says, "She sounded young and kind of pissed off at the time, but it was a nice girl's voice." He gazes across the room, his smile fading and expression distant. "The first time I saw her clearly was in the cave. I thought she was beautiful, but she looked a bit scared. I didn't want her to be scared of me. Most people are wary of cybers, with good reason, but I

knew she didn't really understand what I was, so I hoped she wouldn't be too scared. I was afraid that if she ran off she could be hurt or captured by Torrian's men. I wasn't in any condition to go after her at that stage."

Sabre's answer reminded me of my own unease at being in such close proximity to a cyber, and it hit me again how much his past must haunt him. I couldn't help but ask if there's ever been a moment in time when he felt truly human without the thoughts that usually torment him. He shakes his head and says, "Not really. It's hard to forget that I'm a freak when I have a supercomputer welded to my forehead. Even now that it's switched off most of the time, I'm still aware of it. The only time my inner voice shut up for a while was when I was Cybercorp's prisoner. Somehow, being treated like a cyber again made me feel more human. I don't know why."

I suspect this is because, when one grows up being treated a certain way, it feels more normal, thus more 'right'. I asked if he can recall any other thoughts while under cyber control, specifically when he rescued Tassin from the first battle for her kingdom and she threatened to have him roasted over hot coals. I wanted to know if he imagined that happening and how it would feel, like most humans would. Surprisingly, he chuckles, then says what I'm thinking: "It's ironic that I can laugh about it now." He adds, "At the time, the cyber was in full combat mode, so my mind was full of targeting data, battle schematics and mission solutions."

Sabre goes on to say that he didn't take much notice of Tassin's threats at the time, because a person with command privilege can't deliberately damage a cyber, and he didn't imagine what it would be like to be roasted over hot coals when Queen Tassin threatened it, although he pretty much found out when he was at Cybercorp.

When one wears something often, such as a watch, and neglects to wear it one day, one often feels naked without it. Sabre feels the same way when his scanners aren't working. "My combat abilities are compromised when I'm not using the scanners; enemies could sneak up on me. So I feel a bit exposed, which makes me tense. Tassin doesn't like me using the control unit, so I switch it off when she's around, mostly. There are times when I forget to check the scanners, though."

When asked how he feels about so many strangers reading all the intimate details of his life in *The Cyber Chronicles*, Sabre says, "Kind of weird. I doubt they can relate to what I went through, even though the author did a fairly good job of explaining my feelings and motivations."

We all have intense likes and dislikes, and Sabre's are no different to those most of us can relate to. "I most dislike Myon Two. Someone needs to blow up that shithole planet and all the shitheads who work at Cybercorp. Whoever came up with the idea of turning human clones into cyborg fighting machines should have been shot. Sure, we're faster than robots and androids, but why is it that humans are capable of torturing their fellows without compunction? Did no one ever think that the men they use suffer horribly?" He shakes his head. "Tassin's who I like the most, of course. Without her, my life would be empty even if I was still free, and I wouldn't be free, so... she makes it all worthwhile."

My eyes rest on Sabre's scars. He notices and glances down at his hands. I know about those caused by the operations to fit barrinium to his bones, but he rolls up his right sleeve to reveal pale, swirling patterns on his forearm. "These are from my fight with the Core. The neosin was so concentrated it burnt me. The rest are from sword cuts or laser

burns from all the battles I've been in. It would take hours to tell you about all of them, and I don't really like to talk about them."

Speaking of battles, I point out that it must be difficult to know who is trustworthy when one has so many enemies. I'd heard that a cyber's scanners help with regards to that and asked Sabre to please explain how. He grins and wags a finger. "Cyber design is classified, you know." He snorts and his grin fades to a smile. "Cybercorp would have fits if they knew I was telling people this stuff. It's one of the reasons they'll never stop hunting me; I know all their secrets. The cyber can detect when people are lying, thanks to the bio-scanners. The scanners are complex, but I'll try to explain them in simple terms. There's a row of microscopic emitters along the top of the brow band; they emit engineered subatomic particles in faster-than-light sweeps, which are designed to reveal a lot of information when they encounter matter. They're a bit like invisible light, or X-rays. The row of receptors is at the bottom of the brow band. The cyber analyses the information, so I know what's biological, mineral or vegetable. I can tell if it's a man, whether or not he's armed and with what sort of weapons."

Sabre pauses to take a sip of his orange juice. "Since all brains have a different neural configuration, I can tell what species the scanners have detected, and I can identify individuals by their brain configuration. If I tag a brain scan result, I can recognise a person from afar. The bio-scanners' field of detection is one hundred and eighty degrees, a little further than the brow band extends around my forehead, which is why I have to turn my head to detect things behind me unless they're close." He smiles again. "I hope that was simple enough."

By now, my brain is overloaded. I ask Sabre what he thinks the most overrated trait or virtue is in a person. He laughs and says, "What a strange question. I'm not really sure. I'm still learning about what it is to be human. There's a lot to it." He ponders for a moment. "I'd have to say honesty, because I know when someone's lying and that tells me a lot about them, whereas people who tell the truth are more difficult for me to read. All I know is they're being truthful, while that doesn't necessarily mean they're trustworthy."

Sabre's closest friend is Tassin, and he trusts her completely. They met almost four years ago and she taught him that he's human even when he doesn't feel like one. Tassin never doubted or gave up on Sabre, and taught him what love is and that he's capable of it. He also learnt through her that being human is more than having human DNA – it's about being worthy, noble and honourable.

Sabre is pretty sure that Tassin returns his trust, but acknowledges that won't always stop her from being afraid. "She gets a bit freaked out when I take off the anti-collision and fly the shuttle through a forest at speed, even though it's perfectly safe when I'm in control. Tarl only came once. I think he's afraid I'll give him a heart attack. When I invited him again, he asked if he had 'idiot' tattooed on his forehead. Kole never had the nerve, although he tried to get Martis to try it. He didn't, either, but Estrelle did. She knows what the control unit can do. I have to use it for that." He chuckles. "I don't see the problem. Adrenaline is good for you!"

The first thing Sabre tends to notice about people is their threat level, and the biggest lie he's ever told was to Tassin, but that was in order to save her life. The only thing to date that makes Sabre queasy is beer. "The first time I hurled was after I got drunk at that inn in Arlin. It wasn't a fun experience."

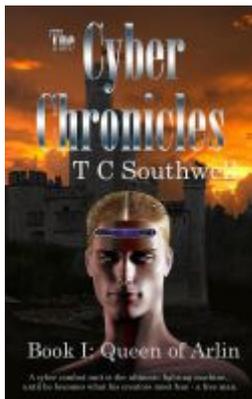
Sabre frowns when admitting that the torture of cyber hosts makes him angrier than anything else. He would like to put an end to that, but feels there's not much he can do about it. After being a slave to the cyber for most of his life, Sabre is understandably not fond of authority figures in general. "The freedom to make my own decisions and live my life the way I want to is a wonderful thing. Tassin tries to boss me around sometimes, but she doesn't have much success. The rest will get thumped if they try." He smiles and shakes his head. "I'm kidding, of course, and they know better by now."

I have to wonder how they learnt to know better unless they'd been thumped a few times... but I don't dare ask.

Sabre's favourite smell is freshly mowed grass, something many of us can relate to. It's one of the few things the cyber can't list the ingredients of, though Sabre isn't sure why. He speculates, "Maybe because there's no point."

With that, we had to conclude our interview, as Sabre had plans with Tassin that he didn't want to be late for. Those who find Sabre as fascinating and strong a character as I do can follow his adventures in *The Cyber Chronicles* – Book 1, *Queen of Arlin*, is free, so grab your copy without delay!

### A word from Sabre's creator, fantasy author [TC Southwell](#)



The popularity of *The Cyber Chronicles* series has been a dream come true for me. People send me wonderful emails all the time; I love reading about how much they enjoyed the books, and I always reply. It's especially gratifying to hear from people who say they've never written to an author before, but felt compelled to tell me how much they loved the books.

Ah, Sabre is a sweetheart. I just love him to bits. I love all my heroes and heroines, of course, but I have an especially soft spot for Sabre, maybe because he's such a gentle man despite his abilities and what was done to him. It's amazing that he survived his ordeals with his sanity intact, never mind retained such a wonderful personality. Tassin's a lucky girl, although I know he can be a bit of a handful when it comes to feats of derring-do. He's an adrenaline junkie, not surprisingly. Seeing him so relaxed, in civilian clothes, was a real treat. I miss our adventures together, and hope to see more of him and Tassin, and their bunch of hangers-on, in the near future.