

The Legend of Greywinds – Book 2

Land of Meena

Chapter 1 – Palu

The shorter journey would have taken us across land through Assiral. Our other option, almost twice as long, was by sea. We had arrived in the land of Meena by water, avoiding the Assiral Plains at all costs. Though the trip by water took longer, the Council of Prophecy was not willing to take the chance of possibly losing one or both of the Chosen Ones. They made that very clear each time we met to discuss our journey. The Plains was a vast wasteland. Those crossing the Assiral Plains were often never heard from again. Fiera believed she could handle whatever the wasteland of Assiral inflicted on its visitors, but she had been uncertain that I could survive the ordeal.

“Come,” said Captain Redik. “I will show you where you will spend the night.” He unloaded the supplies and the two remaining horses. I took the lead for my horse and Fiera took the lead for hers. The others grabbed supplies from both ships as we moved down the pier toward the shore. This was a land that appeared to be mostly flat. As I stepped off the wharf onto the warm sand, I was a bit giddy. We were now in Meena. Palu to be exact.

I never dreamed of coming to this place. I had expected to live the life of a typical Shaylee—travelling to one or two hamlets beyond the Shaylee border and healing those in need. Yet in less than two moon cycles, I had visited Echo Harbor, Celie Hamlet and Tana Bay, encountered deadly creatures from the Assiral Plains, held a black bat plant, ate in a most beautiful cave, and sailed the sea to Meena. From here, our journey was less certain. We had a plan to get to Valana, but no one knew where our journey would lead after that. For tonight, I wanted to enjoy the time I had left with my new friends before their departure back to Tana. We arrived at an inn that was visible from the shore. The innkeeper showed us to our rooms. We unpacked as Captain Redik took the horses to the stable for the night.

Crabs, clams, and small game along with various fruit and vegetables were the fare for the evening. Palu was a seaside village with very friendly inhabitants. Many of the inn’s guests were regular visitors. We had a wonderful time that evening. This village was filled with people who enjoyed their leisure time. There were various types of gatherings throughout the village at all hours of the day and night. People here were happy whether they were working or not. And when they were not working, it was sheer enjoyment to be around them. It was no wonder visitors returned to Palu regularly.

That night I thanked the grey winds for keeping mine and Fiera’s horses from harm and asked for their protection throughout our journey into the unknown. I listened to villagers singing as I faded into a deep, restful sleep.

When I woke, I heard sounds coming from the streets of Palu. The first sun had just risen, but the second one had not. What was going on so early in the day? Then I

remembered that Palu was a village that never slept. It was a bit disorienting to say the least. If I hadn't seen the single sun, I would have thought I had slept through most of the day. I looked out the window of my room and noticed Redik and Leky standing at a fountain in the courtyard of the inn. I quickly dressed and went down to the fountain to meet them.

"Up a little early, are we?" chuckled Redik. "Did the excitement in the village wake you?"

"It is so unlike my home in Shaylee," I answered wide-eyed.

They both laughed as Jada joined us. She had just come from seeing Vee and Fiera. They were putting the final touches on our weapons. Jada suggested that I join them in short order for training. Jada saw my 'Do I have to?' look and answered before I could get a word out, "Fiera may not always be there to protect you. You must learn. If you are fortunate, you will never need to use these skills. In the event you do, you must be ready, Carena."

I knew she was right, but I was certainly not a warrior by any stretch of the imagination. I hoped Fiera and Vee would be patient teachers. Turning a Healer into a warrior seemed an impossible task to me, but I had to try. So, I nodded to Jada and followed her to the area where I was to train. Fiera and Vee were already engaged in a demonstration of combat with the daggers. I paid attention to how they used each and every weapon as they continued their demonstration.

While I trained, the others met at the fountain. Captain Leky had invited Losi, the great builder of Palu, to meet with our entourage. He told our group that he was expecting the remnants from two Blossom ships whose captains were killed during the last storm. He asked for the group's assistance in moving the disassembled ships to the southern side of Palu where he would begin the construction of a healing center for the people living there. The group offered its assistance as long as it did not interfere with its main reason for being in Palu, namely, to assure our safe and speedy departure from this seaside village.

Three blasts from a horn down by the shore signaled the arrival of the remnants from the two ships whose captains had perished in the recent storm. Losi signaled for the group to follow him down to the shore. Some of the villagers were already making their way to the wharf. Others were headed toward the site chosen by Losi. One of the villagers climbed on a large rock and motioned for the crowd to quiet down. Everything went still. Then he proceeded to give thanks for the gift from these two dead Blossom captains and asked the grey winds to bless them for their kind act. There was a moment of silence and then the wagons made their way to the shoreline. Villagers, visitors, and those in our group created lines from the wagons to the ships holding the cargo of remains. Pieces were passed down the lines to the waiting wagons. The loaded wagons then proceeded to the southern end of Palu where a site had been marked for the healing center.

Once the ships had been unloaded and the last wagons had been filled, everyone at the shore proceeded to the site to help the others unload the wagons.

It was late afternoon when Jada, Lexa and Arial came to find us. They stood and watched as I clumsily tried to work the bow. Only one out of five arrows actually hit the cross-section of a tree trunk we were using as a target. The sounds coming from the side of the

building were those of muffled laughter. I'm certain I presented a comedic show for anyone watching.

I had better aim with the blowpipe although I needed to pay attention to inhaling before I put my mouth on it. It only took a time or two of sucking the dart into my mouth to make me remember the proper way to use the blowpipe.

My attempts to throw the spear were cause for great laughter as well. And laugh they did. It became quite obvious that my only chance of defending myself against an attacker with this spear was to use it in hand-to-hand combat. Vee and Fiera did not like the idea of this option at all.

We spent a good part of the day working with the various daggers and knives, but it was apparent that I had a lot to overcome when it came to physical contact. Earlier in the day I simply froze each time Fiera or Vee came at me. So, they thought it might be best if I tried to be the aggressor. Each time I tried to attack one of them, I could not follow through. I was afraid to hurt one of them. By the end of the day, I was able to lunge at them, but I was still very clumsy with the daggers. I also did not enjoy the thrashing I took when Vee and Fiera defended themselves. So, when Ariel interrupted and said we needed to prepare for our evening meal, I was ever so grateful.

My entire body ached. The warm, relaxing salt bath was wonderful. I dressed and went down to the fountain to wait for the others. Within a few minutes, everyone was together, and we followed Jada to the south side of the village. We entered a tavern named after Captain Haw, a Blossom who passed away years ago. As I scanned the walls of the tavern, I noticed not only the wood from the ship, but the placard carved with the captain's name hanging above the barkeep's head. Displayed on the mantle of the fireplace was the aquamarine stone embedded in the bow of the ship. The wheel and rudder were mounted on each side of the entry door. Losi worked hard to design the buildings in a way where the stories that had been carved in the ship's wood were kept intact when reassembled as walls. It was a very strange feeling to be in a tavern that once sailed the seas. Still, it was a wonderful legacy for future generations.

I waved to Fiera to sit by me. As she approached, she held out a silver chain with a setting that not only held Adularia but made it look more striking if that was even possible.

"As promised, Healer, the silver setting you requested." She placed it in my hands and sat down.

"Fiera, it is stunning!" Silver waves on each side of the stone held it in place. "You have done this stone great justice," I remarked.

"No worries, Healer," Fiera answered.

I then slipped it into my sacred pouch.

As we ate, Fiera questioned me. "Healer, when we were at sea you said you had solved the issue of the visibility of your aura at night. How, may I ask, will you mask it?"

"If you will take a moment and follow me outside, I will show you," I answered. Fiera followed me out the front door of the tavern. My aura shone brightly as we stood under the night sky. I then opened my pouch and pulled out Adularia by the chain. As soon as

the stone touched my skin my aura disappeared. As soon as I held the stone by the silver chain my aura returned.

Fiera laughed and told me that is why I was a Chosen One. When my face showed confusion she continued, "You have special Healer gifts as this demonstration proves."

"This has nothing to do with my skills, Fiera. It is all in the stone itself," I responded.

"No, Healer, the stone works this way only with you. Of this I am certain."

I said nothing in response to Fiera's remark. I thought it best to leave her thinking whatever she wanted. It harmed no one.

We returned to our table and finished yet another wonderful meal. We spent time as a group and enjoyed ourselves by singing and learning the 'Tari', the local dance of Palu. The 'Tari' was a combination of simple footwork and precision handwork with a single scarf. Although Jada was able to perform the dance rather quickly, the rest of us were not that fortunate. It was definitely a much more difficult dance than it appeared to be, but we laughed and entertained each other with our feeble attempts to coordinate our feet and hands to the music.

Leky interrupted our festivities with his announcement that it was time to retreat to the inn and get a good night's sleep. It took a short while, but we all slowly left the tavern after saying goodnight to the other patrons. I told Fiera to go ahead so she left with Vee and Captain Leky. When Lexa saw me waiting, she came over to see what I needed.

"I thought you would have left by now. Is there something bothering you, Carena?"

"Not really, Lexa, but I do have a favor to ask of you." As we walked from the tavern to the inn, she waited patiently. I reached into my pouch and pulled out Adularia by the chain and handed it to her. She held the stone and commented on the lovely setting. Then Lexa looked at me and asked me what I was doing. I held out my hand and she placed the stone in my hand. Then she gasped. I nodded.

"Carena, I do not understand. What is the favor you need from me?"

"Did you by any chance notice another Shaylee in Palu this evening?" Lexa shook her head. "Are you sure?" I questioned.

"Carena, a Shaylee aura, no matter the color, is quite visible at night as you well know."

"Can you check with other Celie that may be in Palu? I need to verify whether or not this stone will hide only my aura or if it works with any Healer's aura."

After a few moments of silent communication Lexa looked at me and said the Celie she had contacted had not seen any Shaylee in the area. "It looks like you will have to wait to verify the effectiveness of your stone on other Shaylee. As long as it works for you, the answer to that question can certainly wait, can it not? Now get some rest. You and Fiera have a long journey ahead of you." She walked me to my room and reminded me that we were to meet at the stables once the two suns had risen. Then she bid me goodnight.

I entered my room and prepared my pack before retiring for the night. I also placed Adularia on the sill of the window in my room where the moonbeams could shine on the stone. I regularly cleansed my stones to rid them of latent energy. For some reason I knew that Reka's presence in the stone would not be removed with the cleansing. Her presence

was meant to accompany me on my quest. I gave thanks and prayed for a safe return to Tana for all my friends. Then I drifted off to sleep.

Arial woke before the rise of the suns and gathered fresh supplies for our journey. She was loading our packs when we entered the stable. Captain Redik was readying the horses for their journey. We would have to make do with our own horses. We would not have spare horses for our journey to Valana. Although neither one of us said anything, Fiera and I were both confident that our horses would be more than capable of making the five-day trip to Valana.

It was time to leave. We said goodbye to all our friends and wished them a safe journey back to Tana. Then we mounted our horses and started down the road to our destiny.