

The Legend of Greywinds – Book 3

Fires of Edana

Chapter 1 – The Leky

“Captain Leky, will you make that wonderful seafood stew for us this evening? This is, after all, a celebration of sorts. And you know how much Carena enjoys seafood.”

“Jada, you have a way of making it difficult to say no,” he said with a smile. “I would be happy to make my seafood stew for our evening meal. I will need some fresh fish. Has Arial returned from Palu with her supplies?”

“Yes. She and that adorable little creature of hers returned before the first sunset.”

“Will you find Arial and tell her I would like to speak with her? She will need a list of sea fare to catch.”

Giddy and clapping, Jada nodded and quickly left to find Arial.

“She is definitely not a typical Echo, but she is an exquisite dancer,” said Vee.

“Jada is a young soul, wide-eyed and enthusiastic about the entire world around her,” he observed. “When she dances, she is simply mesmerizing. And I will wager she has no idea how beautiful she is to watch. All that is important to her is that she is enjoying herself. I truly like having Jada around. She keeps me from taking my life too seriously and shows me how to enjoy the simple pleasures of this world.”

“That may be, however I find her annoying at times,” said Vee. Captain Leky smiled and kissed her head. “Vee, you can be a tough woman as most Protectors are. Echo, Celie, and Shaylee are less assertive clans.”

Vee looked around to see if anyone was looking. “I have guarded various areas of Tana and every Echo assigned to me was a determined, knowledgeable, and observant Listener,” she said to him quietly, and then admitted, “I would not want Jada on an assignment with me.”

“We each have a purpose in this world. Jada’s purpose may not be to assist in protecting Tana. Come. I see Arial and her companion, Garam, approaching. I believe she is going to do a little fishing for me now thanks to Jada.” Vee looked confused but did not say a word. The two of them met Arial and Garam in the bow area of the ship where they determined what needed to be caught.

Fiera waited until Arial and Garam departed then she joined Captain Leky and Vee. “Our plans have changed, and we will need to go back to Tana. The second key we seek is connected to one of the images I saw in the Neroli Abyss. Jada and Lexa remembered a statue with that image at the Grotto of Aludat. We must go there, and we need to find a way to get the horses back to Tana as well.”

“The fastest way to get to the Grotto is to go west around the tip of Tana and follow the shoreline north to the Sands of Aludat,” said Captain Leky. “Vee, will you see if Captain Rego still has room for eight more passengers? If he does, then tell our patrons who are

still aboard the *Leky* that we will not be going to Tana Bay after all. They may board the *Rego* this evening for passage to Tana Bay early tomorrow morning. Tell Rego that I will make him my seafood stew to serve his passengers this evening. That should make the whole idea more palatable for everyone." We all laughed at that statement. The captain continued, "We must clear the ship and make room for the horses. They will come with us."

"Thank you, captain. Once the passengers have departed, I will prepare an area for the horses," said Fiera.

"I will assist you once I have finished helping Captain Leky," added Vee.

"I must pick the vegetables for this evening. I will see you both later," he said as he walked away.

"I have noticed that you spend much time with Captain Leky," teased Fiera.

"Nonsense. We have work to do and it so happens that our work puts us in the same places at the same times."

"Oh, I sense you are a bit sensitive about this situation. Would you like to prepare a place for the horses and I will work with Captain Leky in preparing the evening meal?" teased Fiera knowing what the response from Vee would be.

"That will not be necessary," Vee replied coolly. "Captain Leky and I have a method in place when preparing meals for groups. We assisted Arial with the meals during the construction of the Healing Center and took over for her in her absence. We are quite efficient together. Thank you for the offer."

"No worries. Let me know if you change your mind," said Fiera working very hard to hold back an enormous grin. Then she turned and headed toward the starboard side of the ship where Arial was preparing to launch a dinghy from the side of the *Leky*. "Arial, would you and Garam like some company on your fishing expedition?"

"You are more than welcome to accompany us. You carry quite the grin on your face. What is so funny, Fiera? Please tell me. I could use a good story right now."

Fiera helped Arial lower the dinghy while recounting her conversation with Vee about Captain Leky. "I do believe I struck a chord with Vee."

Arial laughed. "I believe you did." Grinning, they climbed down the rope ladder and joined Garam in the dinghy. They briskly paddled away from the *Leky* and began fishing shortly thereafter.

Lexa and I both emerged from short naps. The last sun was nearing the horizon and Lexa was now able to remove her cloak. Her lavender eyes were stunning but often hidden by the hood she wore when the suns graced the sky each day. Her skin was fair, and her shoulder-length hair was the color of snow. Her pearlescent white robe framed her small, delicate form. The gold wristbands and neckband were quite elegant. She had a gentle strength about her that commanded respect, a trait of those in her clan.

"It is good to see you again, Lexa. Would you do me a favor?"

"Certainly Carena, what is it?"

"Please contact Clar and let her know we are on our way back to Tana."

"I cannot contact Clar until we are in open water," she replied calmly.

"I do not understand. What does that have to do with your ability to contact other Celie?"

"As you know, the Assiral Plains border much of the western shore of Meena. We Celie and Echo cannot use our gifts when any part of the Assiral Plains stands between us and the one we wish to contact. Somehow the Plains prevent communication. No one knows why."

I was surprised. "I was not aware of that." At that moment my thoughts flashed back to part of our journey through Meena. "If that is true, then it was you who contacted Flora?" I asked thoughtfully.

"Do you speak of the gypsy?"

"Yes. She said she was visited in a dream by a woman with a hooded robe and gold wristbands and matching neckband who told her to help us. I thought it was Clar, but Clar was in Tana. That leaves you or another Celie. Since no one else but we few knew of this journey, it just occurred to me that it had to be you."

"It was I. I used my gift to contact receptive creatures in this land in hopes that they would provide you with assistance should you encounter them. It was all I could think to do to help you and Fiera once you both left Palu," Lexa offered serenely. "I entered the dreams of others as well, but it appears this gypsy was the only one you encountered on your journey."

"Clar did say many would be willing to help us. I simply did not understand to what extent others would go to assist us. You have my thanks." I was grateful and humbled by the new knowledge.

"I am glad I could be of service. I only wish I had Clar's level of ability with entering the dreams of non-telepaths. Others may have been able to..." Lexa trailed off as Vee reappeared.

"Excuse me Healer, our evening meal is ready," said Vee as she motioned for us to follow her.

"What a heavenly smell. Is that Captain Leky's famous seafood stew?" I asked.

"That it is."

We moved toward the center of the ship as the others joined us. We sat together and once again enjoyed each other's company. The conversation turned serious as the moons began their rise in the sky. Our focus would now be on the Grotto of Aludat and the sculpture created in recognition of Laree's great love for Mother Yerg's creatures. Fiera reported that she and Vee had created makeshift stalls for the horses. They would be collected from the stables early in the morning and once they were aboard, we would set off for the western shore of Tana.

The evening was clear with a light breeze. Lexa once again graced us with the music the Celie were known for and Jada joined in with lyrics and dance. It was a perfect evening and my night ended with thanks to the grey winds for the blessings in my life.

The next morning the clip-clap of the horses' hooves woke me as they were led aboard the ship. I dressed quickly and made my way to the stern of the ship where the horses were being boarded. The air was crisp, the first sun just cresting the horizon. What a magnificent image I witnessed as the sky went from deep reds to oranges. Then the sun tore away from the horizon and the bright yellow and green ball now floated on a soft blue background.

I waited for Epinette to arrive and spent time with my trusted companion. Fiera was talking to Jase like he understood her. Perhaps he actually did. "Fiera, I am certain Jada would be happy to relay whatever message you would like to say to Jase."

"That is not necessary Healer. Jase and I understand each other. There is no need for an Echo to intervene."

"I understand. Do you need assistance in loading feed, hay, and water for the horses?"

"Vee is on her way with that and other supplies. We have it under control," she replied.

I turned and headed for the center of the ship where I was certain Arial was preparing the morning meal. I gathered fruit and a full skin of grapa and quickly returned to where Fiera and Vee were spreading the hay.

"I will leave this on the small table near the first stall."

"Thank you, Healer. Please let the others know we will meet them later this afternoon. There is more planning to do before we reach Tana and the Grotto of Aludat."

"I will tell them. Enjoy your meals and do not hesitate to ask if you need assistance." As I left, the two of them were making their way to the small table.

Arial was already working on her next project. Jada was trying to befriend Garam as he hid behind Arial's legs and occasionally peeked out to see if Jada was still there. Lexa was sitting in quiet meditation on a beautifully embroidered hassock she brought with her from Celie. Captain Leky was preparing to leave the shores of Palu and his crew was raising the anchor and tethering lines. And I stood there watching everyone and thought to myself that if we failed on our quest, all of this would simply disappear. And all of Tana and Meena would vanish as well. Even the lands of Edana and Zaria, whose wonders were still unknown to me would be gone. The thought of all that made me more determined than ever to see to it that this world and all its marvels remained intact. I made my way to the tip of the bow and gazed upon the clear blue water as the *Leky* began to gain speed. It was a beautiful day to be at sea.

Later that afternoon I made my way to Lexa who was crafting a beautiful blanket with the image of the waterfall she called home and its surrounding vegetation and creatures. On our trip from Tana Bay to Palu, Lexa explained to me what it was like to live behind a waterfall. She enjoyed the cool breeze that the falling water gave off and she did not worry about the suns since the cascading water generally provided protection from their rays. I lived in a cottage surrounded by herbs and healing plants usually exposed to quite a bit of sun. Her home seemed much more exciting until I thought about how I so loved to be out in the warmth of the suns. I was often chilled by breezes and that made me uncomfortable. I suppose I was where I should be. I would always be able to visit my newfound friends in their homes, then return to where I was most comfortable.

“Lexa forgive me for disturbing you. Are you capable of contacting Clar now?”

“Yes, Carena, I am no longer blocked from contact with Tana. You asked me to tell her we are on our way to Tana. Is that all you would like her to know?” She paused. “You do know that she will ask me questions that I may not be able to answer?”

“A very fair point. This is a quiet part of the ship. Let us settle in and then you may contact Clar and I will stay by your side to answer any questions she may ask.”

“Very well, Carena.” Lexa put down her blanket and we both nestled ourselves into a corner at the back of the vessel’s dining area. Lexa contacted Clar and after what seemed to be hours of answering questions, Clar ended the conversation.

“I apologize for taking you away from your needlework. Please continue with your blanket. I have some thinking to do.”

After the midday meal we all gathered at the table to discuss our situation.

“Will you be joining us, captain?” asked Jada.

“Yes. Bor and Jeilu will keep the ship on course and manage everything in my absence. They are nearly ready to go out on their own, so this meeting is a great opportunity for the two of them to try their hand at being helmsmen without any assistance from me. Bor wants to captain a passenger ship and Jeilu prefers to captain a cargo ship. She has many animals of her own and wants to keep them near her as much as possible.”

“Wonderful,” I replied with a smile. “Then let us begin. Lexa and I spoke with Clar earlier today. She is aware of our plan to go directly to the Grotto of Aludat. She also insisted on a few things that Lexa and I will share with you as we develop our plan of action.”

“We should begin by mapping out our journey to the Sands of Aludat and determine the time it will take to get there,” said Fiera.

“I agree,” said Captain Leky as he rose from the table and proceeded to the port side. A map had been painted directly on the ship’s walls. Everyone repositioned themselves, so it was visible to all and we began planning the next part of our journey. Many things were discussed that afternoon and we went into early evening before we decided to rest for the night.

“Captain Leky, is it possible for you to be present during our planning sessions for tomorrow and the day after that as well?” I asked.

“I am certain that if I ask Bor and Jeilu to take over, they will probably be stepping all over themselves trying to accommodate our needs,” he answered, attempting to hold back a huge grin.

“We have our plan to get to the Grotto and to make certain that all parties on Tana are aware of our destination in the event they are able to meet us there. How can we plan anything more than that?” asked Jada.

“We may need to travel to Edana or Zaria or possibly across the Assiral Plains. We need to have as much information about these places as possible. We have less than six moon cycles to complete our task, we only have one key at this point in time, and there is not one of us here that knows anything about Edana or Zaria,” I pointed out. “We have all heard tell of those who travelled into the Assiral Plains never to return. Is that statement true or

is this the stuff of legends? We need to think of as many questions as we can, hopefully getting answers from all our ties on Tana before we depart once again.”

“Carena, once we determine our questions, Jada can contact Laree and I can contact Clar,” Lexa said. “We will relay the questions as soon as we are able. That should give them ample time to find the answers before we arrive at the Mystical Sands.”

“That is a well-thought out plan of action. With that, we should waste little time once we go ashore. Whether someone meets us there or we communicate through the two of you, we should be on our way earlier than I thought. Thank you, Lexa.”

The next two days were filled with more in-depth discussions about our travels through Meena. My mind was filled with concerns and the prophecy was closing in on us. I was grateful for anything that would save us time. Although we did not know where our travels would take us, we all wanted to be as prepared as we possibly could be. So, we created a long list of questions for Jada and Lexa to relay to their Council counterparts on Tana. With this advance notice, we hoped there would be answers waiting for us when we reached the Sands of Aludat.

Captain Leky had put up the hammocks under the wooden canopy. Lexa went back to work on her blanket. Garam was intrigued with the hammock. Ariel picked him up and they both settled into one. Jada sat and rocked in another hammock while musing aloud about where hammocks came from and why we were so enamored of them. I took my place in the hammock nearest the port side. There was just enough of a breeze to keep me comfortable. Jada continued with her rhetorical questions. Her words faded as the soft warm air gently put me to sleep.

I awoke to the sound of a distant bell and the swaying of the ship. The air had turned much cooler and the second sun was descending below the horizon. Captain Leky and Vee were at the helm looking out to sea.

“Leky, I do not see storm clouds,” said Vee. “Why is the sea so rough?”

“We are moving further and further out to the open sea. We must follow this course if we intend to arrive in one piece. Look at Tana in the distance. Larger ships are unable to get much closer than this because of an underwater reef. The waters are so shallow in some places that you would find it difficult to get your knees wet -- at least a Blossom’s knees. It will take a bit longer to reach the shore if these waves grow any larger. In the event the seas become calm, we should arrive at the Mystical Sands by early morning.”

This night was the least pleasant of our journey back home. I did however hold a feeling of giddy anticipation as Tana grew closer. It took me quite a long time to relax enough to fall asleep again, but I did relax, and I managed to enjoy a very deep slumber that night.

I was startled out of that deep sleep by the ship’s horn. There was commotion all around. We were now approaching the tip of Tana. This part of our voyage from Palu had taken nearly four days, longer than expected due to rough seas. It would be another half day before our arrival at the Grotto of Aludat. The clouds above were beginning the familiar swirl of the deadly storms that emanated from the Assiral Plains. Captain Leky had already motioned to his crew to begin preparing the ship for the impending storm. He sounded

his horn to alert any ships in the area of the approaching tempest. Vee and Fiera were going to remain with the horses and attempt to keep them calm. The rest of us helped the crew to place everything under cover, roll down and securely fasten the canopies and awnings, and make certain that everyone was at the center of the ship under cover.

Although we could not understand the language, Garam's song, as Ariel called it, was filled with fear; that much we could all sense. He was like a small child desperately clinging to his mother for protection. "Ariel take care of Garam. I will finish securing the awning for you," said Jada. "He is frightened and needs you to hold him."

"Thank you, Jada from both of us." Ariel took Garam to the center of the ship and sat with him. "Garam, we are safe here with my friends. There will be very loud sounds soon but do not worry. I will be here, and I will not leave your side. Do you understand?" Garam made a few sounds and nodded his head.

"How does he understand you? How do you understand him? May I play with him?"

"Jada, one question at a time if you don't mind," I quickly reminder her.

"I know I always have so many questions. I cannot help that. I want to understand so many things," she said ruefully.

"I cannot tell you how Garam and I understand each other," Ariel answered with a smile. "One day I could not and the next day I could. It must have been the same with Garam somehow. It would not surprise me if Orion had something to do with that, though. And to answer your last question, I am certain Garam would be willing to play at some point when he is more comfortable with you. Galuus are shy creatures by nature and all these new faces make him uncomfortable. Give him some time."

"Well, I suppose I can wait. We will be spending a lot of time together, so he will have lots of time to get to know me. When I first saw him, I hoped maybe that would be the third animal I could talk to," Jada confessed. "But I was wrong."

"Garam may look like a combination of animals, but he has the mind and soul of a child. He is intelligent, yet he has an innocence and vulnerability that are typical of children."

"I know many people think I often act like a child. I am who I am. Garam and I will become great friends. I may not know much, but of that I am certain." Jada's optimism was unwavering.

"Is everything in place?" yelled Captain Leky. "The storm is approaching quickly, and the winds are very strong this time. If there is anything still loose, tie it down now." He quickly headed for the makeshift stables to check on Vee, Fiera, and the horses. Leky's tone sent chills up my spine. I knew this storm was one better weathered on land. We quickly began gathering anything loose and placing those items onto large cloths. We gathered the ends together and tied the cloths to the wooden posts that supported the roof at the center of the ship. Then we made our way to the center of the covered area and sat quietly as the beast made itself known to us all.

The ship began to rock as the waves grew. The white caps were becoming much larger in size and frequency. Garam began to make strange sounds.

“Arial is Garam alright?” asked Lexa.

“He said his stomach feels funny.”

“Oh... the motion is making him feel ill. Here is an empty sack in the event he empties his stomach.”

“Thank you, Lexa.” Garam buried his head into Arial’s chest and began to moan. “I do not think it will be much longer,” said Arial trying to keep the sack near Garam’s mouth.

Lexa began to hum a soothing tune hoping it would take Garam’s mind off his stomach. There were now times when the ship lifted off the water and then came crashing back down with a whack that sent a shocking wave through each of our bodies. Each time we held our breaths waiting to see if that shock damaged the ship in any way. The swirls were crashing down, and the noise was deafening. This was a very bad storm and being at sea was a definite disadvantage.

I was very concerned about Fiera, Vee, and the horses. Frightened horses were dangerous at best. Fiera and Vee would have their hands full trying to keep the horses as calm as possible while making sure the two of them emerged from this event unscathed. Occasionally, between those deafening crashes of the swirls, we heard what sounded like the horses being knocked against the walls of the makeshift stable. “The horses are terribly frightened,” cried out Jada as tears rolled down her face. “I don’t know if I can go through this again.”

“Jada,” I yelled loudly. “Try to calm the horses. Do what Echo do best. If we are unable to get them under control, we may not only lose horses, but we may also lose Fiera or Vee.”

The look on her face as she took in my words was one of shock and disbelief. She did not move at all. “Jada,” I yelled once again. “Do it now! We are depending on you.” Her eyes began randomly moving in different directions. She was attempting to listen to the five horses. Then suddenly her lips began to move as she began to use her gift. Her eyes roamed, then she spoke in a language that the horses understood. Her brows furrowed, and her eyes squinted as she listened. I did not know whether the noise from the storm was making it difficult for her to hear or whether the horses were so distraught that their ‘words’ were difficult for Jada to discern. No matter what was taking place, Jada did not lose focus.

I turned away from Jada only to see Arial trying to contain Garam’s stomach contents in the empty sack that Lexa gave her. That was not an easy task as our bodies were launched into the air by the huge waves and then came crashing down onto the deck as the ship’s hull smashed against the angry sea.

Jada, who was concentrating on the horses lost her grip and began to slide to the side of the ship. I gasped as I saw her slipping away. She was concentrating so hard that she did not appear to notice what was happening to her. Lexa desperately reached out and grabbed hold of a large lock of Jada’s hair as she slid by her. Jada never flinched. While Lexa strained to pull Jada close to her, I grabbed Arial and we slowly made our way to one of the posts near the center of the ship. I wove a rope around the three of us and tied us all loosely to the post for added protection. Lexa noticed what I had done and nodded to me. She then

began to move herself and Jada to the post nearest them. She had no rope, so she opened the chest directly to her right and removed a long table runner. She wrapped the runner around the two of them and tied the ends in two clove hitch knots.

Jada continued her communication with the horses for what seemed to be hours. Garam suddenly began whistling and we all looked to see what was happening. Arial said to him, "You are absolutely right," and she hugged him like a mother hugs a child when she is proud.

"What is it Arial? Why is Garam whistling?"

"He says he is happy because the bad thing is leaving. He is right. The ship is rocking less, and the noise seems to be more tolerable," she answered.

We all waited a moment and smiles crossed each of our faces as we realized that Garam was right.

Jada's movements were more sedate now and her conversations were shorter in length and appeared to be less stressful. Within a few moments she was back to her usual self. "Wasn't that an awful storm? How is Garam? Did you see how I slid across the floor?" she asked, her eyes becoming very large.

"Yes, Jada, we did see you sliding across the floor," I laughed. "I must tell you that I was very impressed not only with your ability to keep the horses from hurting themselves or others but also with your ability to stay so focused even with all this commotion around you."

"I agree with Carena wholeheartedly," added Lexa.

"How are the horses?" asked Arial.

"Some are badly bruised, but overall they are well. Epinette asked if you were well and I told her you were. She stayed quite calm after that."

"Is Epinette one of the bruised horses you mentioned?" I asked very concerned.

"No, she is quite intelligent. When I asked her to lie down quickly, she did. That prevented her from getting thrashed when the ship left the water and came crashing down. Others did not listen the first time I told them to lie down. They are the ones who are bruised."

"Did they say anything about Fiera and Vee?"

"Jase said Vee was injured by a flying spade. It cut the upper part of her arm quite badly. He said Fiera made her better."

"How could Fiera heal Vee?" asked Jada. "She is not a Healer."

"She may not be a Healer, but she learns well," I answered with a proud smile.

"What do you mean, Carena?"

"When Fiera was in the abyss, she had two stones that I had given her. One was a piece of jasper, a very powerful healing stone especially for warriors and Protectors. With my help she began to heal a severe leg injury. I believe she remembered how to focus her energy. She was able to help her friend. I am very pleased."

"Can you show me how to do that?" asked Jada.

"Yesterday I would have said no. Today, after seeing the intense focus that you displayed, I believe you may be capable of at least some level of healing."

"I will keep that in mind. Someday I may actually consider trying it."

"Oh Jada, you are a strange one, but I am very pleased to have you with us on this quest," I replied, amused. "When we arrive in Echo, there should be ample time for you to stop by your hut and visit with your animals."

"Oh, that would be wonderful, Carena. I also need to ask Jaqua if she would continue to care for my animals now that you have requested that I go with you. If she cannot, I must make arrangements for their care while we are away."

"We will not leave Tana until you have arranged for the care of your animals. What about contacting your family? They will be anxious to hear from you."

"My parents passed many years ago on a ship going to Edana. Storm swirls ravaged their ship and all the passengers were either burned alive by the swirls or drowned."

"The Assiral storm swirls are unforgiving and many creatures of our world have perished at their hands."

"Laree knew my parents when they were all young children, so when they passed, she took me under her wing, in a manner of speaking, and raised me like one of her own. I wonder at times if she is disappointed in me because I am only able to communicate with two animals. I am an oddity among my clan."

"I cannot speak for Laree, however I do believe she will be very proud of the way you helped to build the healing center in Palu, your willingness to join us on this dangerous journey, your assistance in identifying the second stone's meaning, and especially in protecting Fiera, Vee and all the horses from harm in a very terrible storm."

"None of the things you mention are extraordinary for an Echo."

"I beg to differ, and I believe Laree will feel the same way once she is made aware of how you give yourself to others whenever needed. Sometimes simple gestures make great differences, Jada," I told her gently. "Do not underestimate the impact you have on someone's life. You most likely saved my mare and that impacts not only Epinette, but me as well. The same can be said for Fiera. Jase, Xela and Anto are her family. She would be devastated to lose any one of them. Our quest now revolves around the five, excuse me, the six of us. We are all important to protecting our world from destruction. That includes you."

"I did not realize that the things I did had such an impact on others."

"A simple smile to a passing stranger may have a profound impact on his day. That in turn may impact others with whom the stranger comes in contact. We are blessed with gifts that can help others and we have a choice whether to use them to that end, ignore their existence, or selfishly use our talents only to benefit ourselves."

"You are wise, Healer. Your words ring true. Thank you for helping me to see that the smallest of kindnesses are not small at all."

Our conversation was interrupted by strange noises emanating from Garam. One by one we began to laugh quite loudly. Garam was now whistling quite loudly and his face

had a look of total glee. I noticed the waves had softened to the point of barely creating a rocking motion. Ariel and I began to untie ourselves, as did Lexa and Jada.

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