

The Legend of Greywinds – Book 4

Winds of Zaria

Chapter 1 – The Mists

SPOILER ALERT
Reading this chapter will spoil
parts of Book 3 if you haven't
read it.

I watched intently as Serafina and Fiera climbed onto Rayn's enormous neck and slid down to where it met his shoulders. The witch presented Fiera with one of her magical chains that grew as long as was needed at any given time. Fiera flung it around Rayn's neck and once she had a grip on both ends, Serafina instructed her on how to fly with Rayn. Watching the way Fiera mastered this art so quickly gave me the impression she had done this before although I knew she had not. My companion made gliding through the sky with this colossal beast look as natural as breathing. Rayn again landed on the ledge outside the cave entrance. He lowered his head and Serafina slid down his neck to the floor of the cave.

"Healer, will you be the first to fly with me to Zaria?" asked Fiera in a tone unlike that of a Protector.

"I would be most honored, One of Fire," I responded.

I was not as graceful as Serafina when attempting to climb onto Rayn's neck. He was most patient with me. While we prepared to depart, Jenani cried out.

"What is it, dear friend?" asked Serafina.

Jenani came over to me with something in her mouth. She motioned to me to take what she had to offer. She had taken the piece of the little dragon's shell with the symbol of Fiera's dragon on it. Somehow Jenani fused it to a piece of shiny black rock, a staple in Edana. I now had the physical part to the fourth key.

"I am grateful for your gift, dear dragon," I said as I bowed my head ever so slightly. I then placed the piece in the sack with the other items representing the keys of the wind.

The others stood by as we took flight. What a strange sensation it was to be so high without solid ground underfoot. I had seen a few places from various mountaintops, but this view was much different. There was nothing blocking my sight in any direction. The shore where we first landed was visible, as was the entire Asar River. We flew above many summits including the mountaintops that were red with lava. As we made our way to the southern border, the thoughts flooding my mind were of Keara and Ulin. They were new-found friends who gave their lives to protect us. I struggled to hold back the tears.

The fiery beauty of Edana faded behind us. A sad and oppressive feeling quickly overtook me. We were now crossing high above the Assiral Plains. It mattered not in what direction I looked, this barren place was everywhere. Vayda said that Asar had destroyed over twenty clans in this part of the world. The immensity of it all was overwhelming. There was little here to validate life except a rogue plant here and there. Clusters of rock formations were scattered about, leading me to believe these may have been the remnants of hamlets long forgotten. A deep crevice ran south from the Border Mountains of Edana through the center of the plains.

Desolation. Despair. Despondency. I was not prepared for the bombardment of pain and suffering that attacked me. My friends seemed unaffected by the negative energy that surrounded me. I asked Fiera if she would allow me to hold the snowflake obsidian. Serafina told us it would ward off negativity. Even as high as we were, I could feel the overwhelming horrific impact of this place. I needed help. I held the stone, closed my eyes, and consciously began to funnel the negativity that I had absorbed into the stone. Once we reached Zaria, I would cleanse the stone and convert the negativity into positive energy releasing it into the world around us.

It took hours to cross over the Assiral Plains. *When will we reach Zaria?* I did not see Zaria at all. Before us was a large group of clouds. I thought nothing of them until Rayn began his descent. We raced downward which was quite frightening because I could see nothing but clouds. Trying to maintain my composure, I took very deep breaths, prayed continuously to the grey winds for a safe landing, and refrained from screaming to allow Fiera and Rayn to concentrate on their task. When I thought I could no longer stand it, Rayn's body began to level out a bit. I relaxed my clenched, aching jaw. We were no longer plummeting to the ground but gently floating down until the whoosh of his wings stopped and his feet softly landed in an area surrounded by a dense mist of sorts.

"Rayn says you must wait here. He insists that you do not wander from this area."

"I remember the story about Zaria and how the Mists would devour those who were not invited. I will do as Rayn asks and will not wander from this place."

"Rayn and I will return to Edana for our next passenger. Who shall be next Healer?"

"It matters not. All must come eventually. Take whoever is willing to go next. Since it will be days before everyone arrives, I will set up camp, if that is acceptable." Rayn nodded his approval. I handed the snowflake obsidian back to Fiera. "If anyone is anxious or distraught as you cross the Assiral Plains, have them hold that stone. It will rid them of whatever negativity they might absorb as they pass over that lifeless place. The cleansing will have to wait."

"How is it that I was not affected by the negativity?" asked Fiera with concern.

"I cannot say for certain. I only know that together you and Rayn emit a force that sets my skin to tingling. Perhaps you have the same effect as some of my stones. This is conjecture on my part."

"What stones?"

"Oh, stones such as malachite, black onyx, or black tourmaline. They are known for repelling negativity. I am pleased that you are not affected in any way, especially since the two of you will need to cross the Plains many times within the next few days." *Dear grey winds keep them safe*, I thought to myself as my friend and her beast of fire prepared to depart.

Fiera promised to offer her passengers the stone before leaving Edana. I said my goodbyes and watched as this marvelous beast spread his massive wings and with a spring of his forceful legs, left the ground. Within seconds they were gone from sight and the mist instantly filled the void they left behind. I set up camp and quietly sat remembering the