

Princess of the Yaihami Islands

Chapter 1 *The Courtiers*

The dawn bells rang marking the start of the morning prayers to the fire goddess Yaiha.

Yarri yawned and sat up in bed. She got dressed in a purple knee long dress tunic and embroidered gray pants. Her lioness growled from the door. "I'm coming Raina," Yarri said, walking over to the table and grabbing her bow.

She led her hungry lioness through the palace's winding halls. "Yarri!" she heard her mother call. "Ugh," she sighed and ran through to the Private dining hall where the royal family had eaten for hundreds of years. "Elenyarri, I'd like you to meet Madeline and Orajane Dwengor, Courtiers from Moreln." Yarri stared at her mother, Queen Melacolemi and the two young women in plain dresses.

"Are you sisters?" Yarri asked rudely. "Elenyarri Yesajey Coriar!" Queen Melacolemi yelled, offended by her daughter's unstatey question. "It's ok your majesty," Madeline said with a smile. "Hhmmm," Melacolemi said, glaring at Yarri. Raina growled and snapped at Madeline's leg. "No Raina!" Melacolemi said.

"Well, lovely to meet you all," Yarri said. She walked out of the main hall. Raina followed. "You don't like them do you?" She said, stopping at a gate. Raina shook her head and growled. "Ya, I don't really like them either. Mami's too trusting."

She opened the gate and they walked across the courtyard to her aunt's house, where her best friend and cousin lived. "Yarri what are you doing here?" Aunt Dellemia asked, ushering her inside. "Oh Aunt Dellemia there are these awful courtiers from Moreln and I don't know why they're here, probably because of the war. Mami likes them but there up to no good!" Yarri said breathlessly.

“Oh my! Well, Yelaina's not here. She's in Corsheli Island visiting your Aunt Vejerai,” Dellemia said. “Oh that's too bad. Look's like Raina's off. I'd better go,” Yarri said.

She went back to the main hall, hoping that there was some breakfast left. “Elenyarri,” Queen Melacolemi said, coming out of a door left of the giant table. “What?” Yarri said, looking warily at her mother. “She has something to tell you,” Yarri's father said, stepping out from behind her mother. He was a tall light-skinned man with black hair and an air of importance. “What?” Yarri asked suspiciously. “Well then come on, it's private,” her mother said. She turned, her long knee length black braid swishing. Yarri and her father followed Melacolemi through the halls, past the maid's quarters, and into the royal family's private rooms.

“We shouldn't tell her Mela,” Yarri's father said out loud. “Qubei!” Melacolemi said, opening the door to the entrance room of the royal family hall. “Wellll?” Melacolemi said uneasily, glancing at her husband. “It was your idea to tell her. You tell her,” Qubei said sharply. “Alright,” Melacolemi answered, her hands playing with her embroidered blue dress.

“We have decided to join the war. Two sides were pressuring us to join. So we chose” Melacolemi said.

“Which side did you chose!?” Yarri asked impatiently as she played with her bow. “Moreln” her mother said coolly.

“Ok but that's not how things work! They'd have to buy your trust and cooperation!” Yarri countered.

“I told you this wasn't a good idea,” Qubei told Melacolemi. “They bought our trust with your hand in marriage,” Qubei said, looking sharply at his daughter.

Chapter 2 *The Map*

“What!” Yarri yelled.

“We made the arrangement with King Edmond and Queen Thayne of Moreln to have you betrothed to crown prince Raoul,” Qubei said, losing patience.

“How dare you! You never did this to Karalani! I knew you liked her better than me. You’d rather I had died!” Yarri’s anger at her parents and the courtiers erupted from her hunger from not having breakfast and poured out of her into twisted evil words that knocked her parents back a step.

“Yarri,” Melacolemi begged as Qubei wrapped his arms around his sobbing wife.

Karalani had mysteriously died three years ago, when she was fourteen. Her parents were still mourning her. Yarri felt powerful making her parents feel sad and upset, but when her anger left her lips she felt guilty and empty. “I-I’m sorry,” she sobbed. Melacolemi held her close while she cried. Qubei sighed. “M-mami I’m s-so sorry,” Yarri said, pulling away. “It’s ok, we’re going to have to let go of her some day,” Melacolemi said softly.

Qubei left them to talk. He had more pressing things to do as king.

“Your Papa has a map of the world. The countries are colored based on their side of the war. Come see it,” Melacolemi said. She beckoned to their bedroom which was larger than all Yarri’s rooms combined. “It’s big!” Yarri exclaimed. She had never been allowed to enter before, but now she followed her mom over to a desk with neatly piled stacks of scrolls. “Here this one,” Melacolemi said, handing Yarri a scroll with a broken seal that smelled like peppermint.

“There are four sides?!” Yarri asked. “Yes indeed. See Moreln’s side shown here in green is mostly being attacked by Norsur’s factions, the purple. Senphe and Maren’s side is yellow, and Salidaj and Bazi’s allies are orange,” Melacolemi explained.

“Huh but Senphe and Maren are big countries. They could win easily,” said Yarri. “Well yes, but since all the countries are in the war it could easily last twenty years,” Melacolemi explained. “Oh, I would be thirty-two!” Yarri said.

“Yes you would be. Hopefully it doesn't last that long, but who knows,” Melacolemi offered with a sigh. She rolled up the map and gave it to “Yarri.

“Why are you giving this to me?” Yarri asked.

“We have extras. MoreIn sent us six,” Melacolemi said.

“Oh right, MoreIn,” Yarri grumbled.

“Oh yes, about that. A ship is supposed to come for you in two weeks. It will take you to MoreIn where you will stay until it is safe to come back. Also, you have to meet the prince,” Melacolemi said, winking at Yarri, who scowled.

“You’d better pack,” Yarri’s eighteen year old brother Innakure said, walking into the room.

“Were you listening the whole time?” Melacolemi asked.

“Mabey but I did hear that you are engaged,” he said making awful kissing noises.

“Innakure,” Melacolemi said. She glared at him then turned back to Yarri.

“You should pack though, I’ll come with you to help.”She and Yarri ducked past Innakure then exited the room and walked down the hall.

Melacolemi stepped inside Yarri’s quarters. She swept the room with her gaze. “Hhmmm it’s too clean in here, not home like,” She said.

“I like to keep things neat,” said Yarri.

“Oh well, better get packing,” said Melacolemi, turning to the wardrobe.

Chapter 3 Two Fights

Three days later Yarri was half packed and on better terms with her mother. “I’m going to visit Aunt Dellemia and see if Yelaina’s back,” she said. She had been packing and getting ready all day, every day since she found out she was betrothed.

“Ok will you ask her if Vejerai’s ok? She was very sick just like your grandparents were before they died,” Melacolemi asked. “Sure Mami,” Yarri said.

Raina had been staying outside mostly. Her keen lion senses felt autumn on the horizon. She wanted to stay outside while it was still warm.

Yarri ran through the old twisted halls to the courtyard where Dellemia’s husband and five children’s house had been built.

Yarri knocked at the door. Sariell answered, fifteen years old, dark haired, and pretty. “Hi Elenyarri, Yellaina’s been waiting for you to come. She’s out back,” Sariell said with a smile.

“Ok, thanks Sariell,” Yarri said, returning her pleasant smile. She ran to the back of the house where she found Yelaina practicing archery. “Hi Yely!” she said.

“What are you doing here?” Yelaina shouted.

“What? I can go back if you want, but I don’t have much free time now.” Yarri was surprised at Yeliana’s meanness.

“Huh!” Yelaina snorted, “You don’t have time for your best friend either I suppose...”

“I do too!” Yarri fired back, “ You’re just all stuck up because you got to go to Corsheli Island.Well I don’t care! I don’t want to go to Corsheli Island any more!”

“You’re just stuck up because you have a higher ranking than me!” Yelaina yelled.

“Well I was going to tell you something. But now I won’t!” Yarri said with finality, and stalked away. Yelaina glared at her back.

Yarri retraced her steps through the halls. Every nook and cranny had memories of her and Yelaina. Playing. Laughing. Hiding. She sighed. “I don’t understand why Yelaina was mad,” She said to herself. “She was always the nicer one, the prettier one. Now she suddenly cares about ranking? I don’t understand!” She cried. She went back to her room and kept packing.

“Elenyarri do you want to serve the Courtiers dinner?” Melacolemi asked. It was seven o’clock and the sun had just gone down. “Yes! I do,” Yarri said, sliding out from under her bed with another chest of clothes.

“Great. Change into presentable clothes and meet me at the private dining hall,” Melacolemi said. She turned and walked out, her royal yellow gown swishing behind her.

Yarri met her mother in the private dining hall. There were platters of richly spiced rice and beans and a blueberry, cherry pie that smelled like summer. “Here, take these to them first,” Melacolemi instructed. “Ok,” Yarri said. She picked up the platters that Melacolemi had indicated. One was filled with yogurt sprinkled with rosemary. The other was filled with fresh breads, butter, and raspberry jam.

Yarri walked down a hallway to a small open air courtyard with two large trees under which sat a small table set for two. She set the platters down on the table and retreated behind a tree where she was concealed by the leaves. A few moments later the courtiers walked in.

As the dinner went on Yarri heard a few snippets about the war and a man named Jounio. It sounded like he was the leader of their group. Orajane seemed to not like him very much. But it sounded like he and Madeline were secretly engaged.

“Maddy, we can’t do it. It’s just too mean! What have they done to us!” Orajane protested, raising her voice so Yarri could hear her plainly.

“Don’t call me Maddy! I’m twenty-two now Orajane!” Madeline accused.

“Alright but they’re our age. We can’t just kill them for no reason!” Orajane yelled.

Yarri stifled a gasp. They were trying to kill somebody! Madeline turned around and looked right at her. Yarri did her best to look casual.

“I didn’t know we were being spied on,” Orajane said, looking worried.

“I should have expected it,” Madeline said icily. She got up and pulled a foot long black dagger from in her sky blue sleeve. She advanced quickly but Yarri, having been hiding near the door, quickly pulled the latch.

It was locked. Yarri pulled out the knife she always wore for protection. “Don’t kill her! She isn’t who we came for!” Orajane screamed, closing her eyes.

“You soft- hearted girl! We’ll be killed if I don’t!” yelled Madeline. She stabbed at Yarri’s leg. “You’ll get killed whether you kill me or not!” Yarri yelled desperately, flinging her body left and right to evade Madeline’s well-aimed blows. Yarri looked for a way to escape. She knew Madeline was more skilled with the blade than her. She suddenly had an idea.

She ran to the tree that Orajane was facing. Orajane peeked through her fingers every few seconds. “No!” Madeline yelled as Yarri pulled herself into the tree. “Ora, I need your help!” “Ok,” Orajane said suddenly calm. Yarri climbed up the tree and jumped into the other tree. “Ora, I’ll go after her from behind. You block her way,” Madeline instructed. Yarri scampered into the thin upper branches of the tree and found she was trapped.

Orajane had climbed into the second tree and Madeline with her long dagger was climbing up the trunk towards her.

“We’ve got you now. Surrender, you are mine,” Madeline said with steel in her voice. “Never!” Yarri shouted and jumped onto the roof. “After her!” Madeline screamed, still climbing toward Yarri. Yarri looked down at the dark water of the moat and jumped.

Chapter 4 *Captain Jefferano*

The dark water closed around Yarri like a mouth. She let herself sink to the bottom, then pushed herself to the surface. She swam to the bank and hauled herself up out of the water, coughing and spluttering up water.

Thank the gods we don’t have alligators or crocodiles, Yarri thought. She ran inside to tell her mother about Madeline and Orajane.

“My lady, can I get something for you? Maybe some dry clothes?” a maid inquired, seeing that the princess was soaked. “Yes, where is the Queen?” Yarri asked.

"I believe she is in a meeting," the maid answered. "Thank you," said Yarri. She ran through the halls dripping dirty water over the beautiful floors. She opened the door to her quarters and fell onto the bed.

The next morning Yarri woke up feeling stiff and cold. She got off the bed and put on a forest green blouse and a light brown skirt.

"You need to take a bath and then go to the courtyard outside the smaller public dining room, ok?" Melacolemi said as she opened the door. "Why?" Yarri croaked.

"The ships from Moreln are here," answered Melacolemi.

"What! You said they'd be here in a month!"

"Yes, they're early. Now I have to get ready for a meeting. You can take care of yourself I trust?"

"That's too soon," Yarri moaned.

"I know but I need to go, now take a bath quickly. You have half an hour!" Melacolemi said firmly as she closed the door.

Yarri climbed into the bathtub and turned the wheel to let warm water in.

It was all going too fast. She had meant to tell Melacolemi about Madeline and Orajane. But there wasn't enough time. She felt the tension rising in her veins.

Yarri washed her whole body which felt so good after the late night dip in the moat.

Half an hour later Yarri was dressed in one of her finest gowns and her waist long black hair was brushed and hanging down her back.

"Is this the princess?" A man asked as she stepped into the courtyard. "Yes, this is my daughter, the betrothed to Prince Raoul," Qubei said proudly.

"I am pleased to meet you," said the man. "My name is Jefferano Sealshin and I am the captain of the ship you'll be sailing on."

"Oh, I am Princess Elenyarri Coriar," Yarri said.

“Come to dinner. For you will be leaving early tomorrow,” Qubei said, ushering them into the smaller public dining room.

“Tomorrow?” Yarri asked, shocked.

“ I thought your Mami told you,” Qubei said.

“She must have forgotten,” said Yarri as she walked through the doors.

“Hello Jefferano, fancy seeing you here,” said Madeline as they stepped inside. She was seated in between Yarri and Orajane. They were already seated because they were not as high ranking as Jefferano, Qubei, and Yarri.

“You know each other?” Yarri asked.

“Let’s eat,” Qubei said as he took a sip from his goblet.

Chapter 5 *I’m Sorry and Goodbye*

The dinner was mostly small talk about the weather and the food. At the end of the meal Yarri bade everybody good night and left the room with a curtsy.

Yarri didn’t know what to do. She was leaving early in the morning and she needed to tell somebody she trusted about Madeline and Orajane. They had tried to kill her! She also felt really bad about quarreling with Yelaina.

The next morning Yarri woke up feeling worried. She prayed to the goddess Yaiha for time to make up with Yelaina and for time to tell her parents about Madeline and Orajane.

She got on a nice sky blue dress. She had decided to talk with Yelaina first because it was on the way to the lion’s field where Raina was spending her time.

Yarri walked through the long halls that wound left and right. Finally she got to Yelaina’s house. She knocked on the door. While she waited for an answer she noticed a cluster of poppies in the field around the house. Yarri remembered when she, Yelaina, and Karalani had

planted them under the supervision of Aunt Dellemia. That had been four years ago, a year before Karalani died.

Thinking about Karalani made Yarri sad but also hopeful.

Yelaina answered the door. She looked warily at Yarri, "Hello," she said.

"I came to say sorry and goodbye," said Yarri.

"Goodbye? Where are you going?"

"I thought you would have heard by now. I thought everybody knew. I'm betrothed to the Crown Prince of Moreln, I can't remember his name," said Yarri.

"Oh, you must have nearly killed Aunt Melacolemi and Uncle Qubei!" Yelaina exclaimed.

"I didn't, but I was mad at them. I'm leaving in a few hours so I had to come say goodbye and I'm sorry. That's why I'm here," Yarri explained.

Yelaina looked stricken, "you're leaving today?"

"Yes," Yarri said impatiently.

"Well I'm sorry too. I was just worried about Aunt Vejerai," Yelaina said with that familiar softness creeping back into her voice.

"When are you coming back?" Yelaina asked.

"I don't know. Hopefully soon. But I think when the war is over, which could be a long time. I should go now. I have to tell Mami and Papa something before I board the ship," Yarri responded.

"Goodbye Yarri," Yelaina said tenderly.

"Goodbye," Yarri called as she closed the gate.

Chapter 6 *Setting Sail*

Yarri walked through the corridors until she got to the lion's field. There she found Raina playing with one of Melacolemi's lionesses.

“Raina!” she called. Raina ran up the hill toward Yarri and nuzzled her. Raina followed Yarri to Melacolemi and Qubei’s quarters and stood guard at the door.

Yarri knocked and Qubei answered, “good morning Yarri, you’re up early. It’s only seven-thirty, your ship leaves at nine o’clock,” he said.

“Yes I know. I need to tell you something,” Yarri responded.

“Ah, well your Mami is settling last minute plans with Jefferano.” Qubei strained his blue and red shirt. “Now, what do you have to tell me?” asked Qubei.

“I need to tell you that Madeline and Orajane are trying to murder us! They tried to kill me when I was in the courtyard with them but I jumped in the moat,” Yarri breathed.

“Yes, we know. We are trying to spy on them,” Qubei said matter of factly.

“What! You knew! Why didn’t you tell me?!” Yarri yelled.

“Because your Mami and I know you might not be able to keep it a secret. But we don’t know any of their secrets yet, and we need to,” Qubei said, as calm as the well trained king he was.

“Hello Yarri,” Melacolemi said as she walked through the door. “Oh Mami!” Yarri said, and collapsed into her mother’s arms.

“What happened?” Melacolemi asked Qubei.

“I told her about Orajane and Madeline,” Qubei answered.

“I see,” Melacolemi said, stroking Yarri’s hair.

“They tried to kill me!” Yarri exclaimed.

“But did they?” Qubei asked.

“Yes in the courtyard... I overheard them talking about...”

“I didn’t think they would go after you. But then we don’t know much about them,” said Qubei.

“This war is mysterious,” said Melacolemi, “but you’re safer than you know. That’s why you are going to Moreln for your safety. Now come on, you will be boarding the ship in an hour, so let’s finish getting you packed,” Melacolemi said.

“Ok Mami,” said Yarri feeling stunned and loved at the same time. She followed her mother through the open door.

At eight-thirty a horn blared signifying that it was time to board the ship at the harbor.

Yarri and Melacolemi had finished packing Yarri’s things and were standing with Qubei at the harbor when the horn blew, along with the rest of the family. Yarri’s four older brothers were there. Aunt Dellemia and her family were too, but Yelaina was nowhere to be seen.

“Goodluck Yarri, hopefully you don’t get seasick,” Kojeo, her oldest brother said, as he hugged her.

“Goodbye sister,” said Mosejeo, the second eldest as he shook her hand firmly. He was always very serious and formal.

Suddenly Yelaina ran up, carrying a beautifully carved wooden box with hummingbirds and roses etched onto it. “I thought you had forgotten,” Yarri exclaimed.

“I’m here, aren’t I? Besides I had to give you this,” Yelaina explained.

“I see,” Yarri said, taking the lovely box in her hands. “What’s inside?” she asked.

Yelaina smiled and put a finger to her lips. A tear ran down her cheek. She gave Yarri one more hug and ran off.

“Goodbye, little sis,” Innakure said. He had been very close to Karalani, which had always felt like distance to Yarri.

“Bye sis,” her youngest brother Aleo said. As her brothers left, the people started to board.

“Oh, Elenyarri we’re going to miss you so much,” Melacolemi sighed.

“I know Mami I’m going to miss you too,” Yarri said.

“Last passengers!” a voice called from the ship.

“Goodbye Elenyarri, may the gods be with you,” Qubei said as he hugged his daughter.

Melacolemi patted Raina and hugged Yarri then she and Qubei stepped back.

Yarris chests had already been brought on board, all she would need for the next three years.

She stepped up to the ship’s steward. With a nod he let her pass. With her faithful lioness by her side, she walked off the dock onto the ship that would carry her, little did she then know, into the heart of the war.