

MARIE JUDSON

A FAR CRY

BOOK 2 IN THE LOST XENTU SERIES

A FAR CRY

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A
Far Cry

Lost Xentu
Book Two

Marie Judson



PART I

Chapter 1

Yanda lay on her childhood bed, gazing through tears at her nearly one year old, half-elf son. "What are we going to do, Zami?"

Zami was nothing if not precocious. He blinked at her, trying to suss out what she needed from her thoughts, his whirling elven eyes studying her, seeing more than most could.

She pushed up on one elbow and gazed with a sad smile into his face. "I wanted to introduce you to your sister."

"Sister. Seiti," he said.

"Yes." They held a picture of her in their shared mind. It was from when she was six, nearly two years ago. She would look different now at eight.

Yanda listened for her adoptive parents. They would come to her room soon. At least Omshi, the only mother she'd known, would. Yanda, thirty-six in Alland years, was by profession a surgeon, but she'd just returned from Terlund, a planet where she'd been held captive for over a year.

"Yanda?" Omshi called from the hallway. "Please come out here and speak with me and your father. You at least owe us that much. Some sort of explanation."

Yanda pushed to standing and held out her arms to Zami. She swooped him up, twirling him, kissing his neck. He chortled. "We won't be here long," she whispered in his ear.

"We find Seiti." He spoke with assurance.

Yanda nibbled his ear. Her son's ability to talk with such maturity never failed to amaze her. She assumed it was due to the mind communication since even before he was born. Not just with her but with his Elven father, away in the Forest of Rotoul. She suggested quietly, "Glam your ears and eyes?" Much as she hated to ask it, she knew his reception in this world would be better if he showed no exo-signs. In fact, it could save his life.

His face crinkled with amusement, and like it was a game, he turned away, then back to her. No leaf-shaped ears, no whirling irises.

"That's very good," she said, throat tightening. Not for long, not for long, she chanted to herself.



"Who's this fine fellow?" Nedri set his pipe aside and opened his arms.

Yanda set Zami down. He was beginning to walk, if holding a finger.

"Come help with dinner," Omshi said from the doorway, watching their progress with crossed arms and creased brow.

Yanda's adoptive father pulled the boy onto his lap.

Zami solemnly examined the man who held him.

"So, what do you have to say for yourself?" Omshi handed Yanda a stack of plates.

Yanda set the table. Omshi brought dishes into the dining room from the kitchen.

"I didn't leave without word on purpose." Yanda took glasses from a shelf. "I was abducted."

Omshi turned to her, hand on hip, eyes narrowed. "Abducted. By whom?"

As if she doubts me, Yanda thought. Does she really think I ran off on purpose? "It's a long story. I can tell you over dinner." Yanda collected utensils from a drawer lined with shelf paper, a familiar task from her childhood.

"Your daughter cried every night." Omshi ladled stew into bowls.

"I cried for her, too."

"You should. You're her mother."

"Can't you have sympathy for me?" Yanda stopped laying knives, forks, and spoons. "I was abducted. Can't you ask, 'Did you suffer?'" Pressing her lips in a line, Yanda forced herself to stop. She and her adoptive mother had always gone at it. It did no good to talk to her mother like that. It only made things worse.

Omshi shook her head as she set a platter of meat on the table, followed by overcooked vegetables.

Nedri appeared in the doorway holding Zami. "Something smells

good." He was the peacemaker though he seldom took action in family affairs. That was Omshi's domain.

Yanda brought a stack of cloth napkins and started setting them with the utensils around the table. It had been nearly two years since she'd done such a thing. "Any new projects?"

Nedri returned to his chair, still holding Zami who did not protest. "I always have something going. You know that."

Yanda kissed the top of his balding head. He quirked a smile.

"I think I still have your high chair," Omshi said. "In the garage."

Yanda went to find it. The small garage, off the kitchen, had Nedri's work bench, and shelves neatly labeled. The high chair, paint-worn, stood to one side among furniture awaiting repair or give away. She lifted it, then noticed a box labeled "Seiti". Already they'd boxed her things? An old evaporator—converting waste to organic matter or air—bobbled its domed plaz lid as she pushed past and opened the box. Baby clothes, too small for Zami. What she needed was recent: notes, drawings, photos, anything that might give her a clue as to where Seiti went, who she might have met. She carried in the high chair.

Omshi said her blessing learned at the Church of Vital Promise, while Yanda thought her own silent prayer to find her daughter.

"All are welcome in our folds. Preserve their Way, Almighty Bright One, and light our paths toward goodness."

It sounded kind and healthy, but they were bigots, Yanda thought. They did not welcome everyone.

Omshi served herself a slice of meat and nodded for them to do the same.

Not being a meat-eater, Yanda put patat and limp sadi snip on her plate. She gave Zami the same.

"The boy might want meat." Omshi held out the platter.

"As you might recall, I don't eat meat," Yanda said, tasting the overcooked parsnip-like root, imagining it lightly sauteed in olive oil and garlic. "Neither does his father. When Zami gets older, if he wishes, he can choose to eat meat."

"His father...that man who brought you here?" Omshi eyed her with unfeigned disapproval. Tenali showed no signs of his Elven half but he wore the clothing of an unaffiliated space pilot, his hair long and unruly, covering his ears.

"No." Yanda did not add, "Zami is Tenali's uncle." One step at a time. "They're related, though. Tenali just brought me home. He's..." What was he to her? How could she sum up all they'd been through? Truth be told, she didn't much want to, seeing Omshi's pinched expression. "He's a friend. And has a ship."

Nedri cleared his throat. "You've got mail from the hospital."

"I bet I do," Yanda said, though she didn't know why it would come here and not to her apartment in the city. Her account was on auto-pay. She'd need to check on that, and go to the hospital, to see if she still had a job.

"It's on the cabra in the hall," Nedri added. The cabra was a cupboard that dried clothes if coming in from rough weather, which was rare on their world.

"Okay, thanks." Yanda gave him a small smile.

"Did your disappearance have to do with your...abilities?" Omshi asked with a look of disapproval, as if her ability were stripping or exotic dancing.

"Yes."

"I knew you shouldn't have made a spectacle of yourself, rising past men in the ranks of surgeons." Omshi tussled with a slab of meat as if it were her mortal enemy.

"That wasn't it. I was detected from another galaxy." She wouldn't say "called". That might sound to her mother as if she went of her own volition. If she told them her mind had been taken over by the most powerful object in the universe, then directed onto the Lark where she was shackled in psi-blockers, her mother would still believe she went deliberately, and could have at least called.

"Did they grab you in full daylight?" Nedri asked quietly. He glanced at Zami, who was playing with his food, making neat patterns. "The hospital said you walked out without saying a word and never came back."

"I was given false information. And then imprisoned."

"They said your name wasn't on any ship leaving," her father went on, corroborating her thought.

"I'm sure my abductors kept that from the records easily enough." Yanda said, smiling at Zami, trying to reassure him as the atmosphere got tense. She fed him a bite of sadi snips.

"They." Omshi slammed her knife on the table. "Who are these

people? What did they want with you? What did they do with you? Or have you do? If I can even believe this story of kidnapping."

"There's a very bad man, Kridenit." Yanda wouldn't say "mage". Magic was not in Omshi's chosen vocabulary.

"What did this Kridenit want with you?" Omshi demanded.

Yanda avoided saying anything that involved powers. Even bringing up her abilities had been risky. Omshi bought into her religious group's ideas on extra-sensory capabilities—that they were evil—and she seemed to get more fanatical every year.

"It's a long story, and I'm tired," Yanda settled on saying.

"So, who is the child's father?" Omshi asked.

Yanda started stacking their plates to clear the table, and stood. "He's Terlonian. I'm going to run Zami a bath, if that's okay."

"Are you married? Why isn't he here with you?"

Yanda carried dishes into the kitchen, Omshi hot on her heels.

"Bad enough we don't know Seiti's father. Now another?" she hissed. "What would the church say. You're not a...a..."

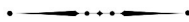
"What, Mom? A hussy? A harlot? A bogoy?"

"Stop with that language, Yanda." Omshi looked like she'd slap her. Instead, she picked up a plate with dark, moist spice cake slices. "Come have dessert." She returned to the dining room and served out bright orange cockleberry sauce and a dollop of whipped lali cream on each plate.



Running water in the bath, setting toys bobbing, with a naked Zami leaning at her side, watching, Yanda breathed a sigh of relief. She stripped and sat in the bath with her baby. They played for a half-hour, giggling and splashing, Zami making fae globe-lights float over the surface. Yanda had never learned the skill from the Elves. Maybe she wasn't capable.

Whenever they quieted, Yanda heard murmuring from the den down the hall.



When their skin puckered, prune-like, Yanda dried Zami and dressed him in his Elven snuggie. She put on her soft Rotoulian nightgown made from tree fibers. They were two of the few items

she'd brought in her single bag from Terlond. She'd spotted a knit baby hat in the garage that would hide his ears when he slept. She slipped it on him, tying it under his chin. His ears were so delicate, they made no impression on the cloth that covered them.

Carrying Zami down the hall to what was now Seiti's bedroom—Yanda's, once upon a time—she called out, "Good night," to her parents.

"Aren't you going to come and give a kiss—chat some more?" Omshi called.

Yanda heard her get up and approach the door. But Zami was tired. His ability to settle the Elven whirling of his eyes, and glamour his leaf-shaped ears was waning. "Let's talk in the morning. We're pretty scanda." She hoped Omshi wouldn't be too offended. But she hated the idea of more grilling, more disapproval. Frankly, she couldn't bear it tonight. She closed the bedroom door softly behind them.

Shelves in the room were jam-packed with children's books. Yanda perused them as Zami worked his way along the lowest, fingers gripping the books and shelf for balance. He'd never seen so much reading material. They chose an old favorite, about a sprite who wanted to be human for a day. Seiti'd loved this book, the story, the illustrations on the plaz pages.

Her daughter was gone. Yanda had waited a year and a half to see her, to hold her. The last thing she expected was to find that her daughter had left home. Had their adoptive parents been watching her well enough? She had too much guilt in her own abandonment to take them to task.

Not wanting to upset Zami, she hadn't yet had a good cry. She settled Zami in the child-sized bed, in the pajamas he'd acquired in the elven forest, his only pair, and climbed in after him, snuggling up against the pillow to read.

Soon his lids drooped. She nursed him until his eyes slid shut and his lips grew slack. Then she slid his head onto the pillow and climbed out of bed.

Footsteps approached.

"Are you asleep yet?" Omshi asked. "Want hot chaka?" That's what they called a sweet milky drink from a cocoa-like seed of the planet.

"No thanks, Mama," Yanda said in a low almost-whisper. "Zami's sleeping and I'm about to follow."

"Okay. Good night." Omshi's footsteps moved away down the hall.

Yanda listened for her steps to fade, then pulled boxes and baskets from the high closet shelves. She examined every item. Then she started on the desk drawers.

Omshi cracked the door open. "We looked through all that," she hissed.

"I know, Mama. I just have to see for myself."

"Thought you were tired."

"I'll go to sleep soon." Yanda kept her eyes on the sheet she held—a homework assignment, hoping to discourage further conversation. For good measure, she flicked a meaningful glance toward Zami's sleeping form.

Omshi followed her gaze, a frown creasing her brow. At last, she pulled the door shut a little harder than necessary.

Mama, you've shown your growing xenophobia. Guess what? I'm Xentu. That's why I see through things. They told me more on Terlond about myself than you ever did. How much did you know?

Yanda pulled everything from drawers—mostly school assignments and drawings in notebooks. Seiti could write when she was three. She would be keeping journals. Yanda was sure of that. Did she bring them all with her?

Yanda dropped to her knees by the bed and reached between the mattresses. Her fingers found a thin sheaf of plaz—the base of materials used throughout the universe, sourced from plants and recyclables, made as thin as onion skin for paper, or hard and durable for furnishings and machines.

Tugging out the pile, Yanda studied the pages. There were lines of tiny neat writing, probably from a buzz-pen, which produced only read by a decryptor. Where would Seiti have gotten such a device?

Her daughter was clever. Few knew how to use encryption pens. Every one of them was encoded differently; the decryptors were programmed uniquely. Seiti would have taken the device with her. Even if she hadn't, Yanda didn't know how to program them; She knew of them from confidential patient records and recognized the encoding.

Maybe this wasn't the most recent plaz-sheaf, just one Seiti discarded. Since Yanda couldn't read it, she found a plaz holder, placed the sheets in and tucked it into her single bag, woven by the Elves. Maybe someone else could decode it and find answers for her.

Opening the door a crack, she listened. The house was silent. Tiptoeing to the bathroom, she gathered a few toiletries for her and Zami. She got the mail from the front hall, then slid back into the small bed next to Zami and tried to sleep. Hours ticked by.

Glossary

Abdil: one of the fellow doctors Yanda had trusted.

Alland: terra-formed planet where Yanda grew up; no tall trees or mountains, no oceans

Alyena: Mingal scholar, Vatu's friend, visiting the Neyla.

Ambas: a saying, maybe an ancient god from an old belief.

Andle: rebel – female. Rescues wounded animals.

Aradon: Qontaqian; strong enough to subdue Jelat.

arash: a plant-based milk from an Allandian grain but a hybrid from several planets' genuses to suit the climate.

Arc: man of strong mind powers; centuries-old; keeper of Pedore.

Ash-don: Elf Stone of the Neyla.

Aspar: bright crimson Terlondian fruit.

Balyou: the small town on Alland where Yanda grew up.

Beril: young Pedorean, does childcare and other chores.

Blaz: planet known for

trafficking, violence, slavery.

Blenin: city on Shagal, where Seiti may have been spotted.

Button: Yanda's nickname for her son, Zami.

buzz pen: a decryptor.

Canda: woman on the farm, shelter to refugees.

Catatuga: like a carrot.

Cellin: powerful woman who seems to run Pedore.

chaka: like hot chocolate.

chepootle: a sticky bun with sweet spices and apricot layered in.

Church of Vital Promise: powerful single main church of Alland; has grown xenophobic; intimately tied with government.

Cillen: powerful woman who seems to run Pedore, Keeper.

Citadel: Krid's mansion in Dondar; prison for fems with powers.

cockleberry: orange fruit

Colo: little girl, Merem's daughter, at Pedore.

Cuffa: coffee of Alland.

Da-Lam: program allowing encrypted searches.

Dalaton: Merem's tiny town.

Dalatonean: encompasses the small settlements of Cillen and Soni.

dali frond: like chard.

decryptor: reads encrypted text, decoding.

dolu: sea flower.

Dundri: thin plaz blinds remotely controlled, suspended in air against transparent plaz windows.

Dondar: main city on Terlond's single continent.

Dorn: planet known for high quality, especially innovative high-end tech.

duddle-nuts: toasted spiced Allandian nuts like pistachios

ENAC 370: high end device

entati: rebel wanderer

exo-signs: marks of unusual origin.

fajan: lover, partner.

Farn: moon where Yanda was first imprisoned by Kridenit.

fems: females of humanoid species

Fiti: communication device on Alland.

floofle bennie: a filled puffy pastry.

froshers: analyze for disease at space port and entry points.

gallihoe: like a bus; powered by magnetic fields.

grest: cash on Alland.

hajar: green fruit like plums.

Ilan: big red-haired man; can

shield powerfully; from Qontaq. Part of the Alland underground.

Jelat: one of the Keepers of Pedore; travels to Skarth often; tech whiz.

Kalden: male Neyla, techie

Keelit: Qontaqian; Ilan's associate.

Kelef: rebel friend – male.

Kell: Neyla female, pinched features black hair, jealous over/of Mnenu.

Kishan: female matrix worker; met in Yanda's apartment.

Kodok: spice on Alland.

Kridenit "Krid": evil mage; collects objects and creatures with powers.

kran: coffee of the Neyla.

Lalut: prism-shaped electronic device.

lanten: sea form, for Elves

Lark: Tenali's ship.

Lassa: means young mother in Dalatonean.

Lo'l's Place: a café bakery in Balyou.

Malu: female Neyla who came for Yanda when she first landed in their waters.

meezy: term of endearment in Cillen's native language.

Merem: mother of a toddler Colo in Pedore.

Merne: leader of the Neyna elves, Zamani's daughter, hair brown and green; can

- transform herself into other shapes.
- Mingalean: from Mingal, a far planet at the edge of the known universe, all ocean.
- Mnenu: male sea elf.
- Muldoo sprouts*: veg like brussel sprouts.
- nagal*: meaning fantastic in Mingalean.
- Nedri: Yanda's adoptive father from infancy.
- Neyla: sea elves on planet Terlund
- Nic-nic: marsupial, with Andle.
- Ollie: an underground tech rebel in Skarth.
- Omshi: Yanda's adoptive mother from infancy
- Outer Alland: where rebels are hidden.
- Pedore: secret underground facility by Church of the Vital Promise.
- Plaz: synthetic material made from recyclables or plant fibers; can be thin as paper or thicker, molded into shapes like plastic.
- ploto*: tall Allandian bird that lays large eggs in marshlands.
- plunka-toys: plaz pieces fit together to build elaborate structures.
- Rari eggs*:
 Rotoul: Elven forest on Terlund.
 Rotoulia: of Rotoul.
- Sabra: gnomish Qontaqian.
sadi snips: root vegetable like parsnip.
- sala: poultry eggs.
- Sandor: rebel friend, male
- Sarsefi: lovemaking, also Tlali's ship name.
- Satarn: crater with gardens next to Pedore.
- Satiyati: sweet satiyati is used in baking, like nutmeg.
- Sawa ninga*: greeting in a language both Cillen and Soni speak.
- scanda*: worn out, tired in Allandian
- Sedon: Qontaqian associated with Ilan.
- sedpods*: single- or two-passenger bikes, some covered.
- Seiti: Yanda's \daughter, 8 years old.
- Sentori Sector: where Takmik is from.
- Setoin: a rebel in the outback.
- Shagal: moon where Seiti might have been caught on camera monitor.
- Shalt: immense power stone of the Neyna.
- Shatari: a game with picture cards.
- Sheffed: rough borough of Dondar.
- shilf*: hand held device at Pedore.
- Shouma*: woman with formidable mind powers, captive with Yanda, trained the fems.

sidu: Elven incense.

Sinisy: that part of the government that monitored talent, prevented its use, sequestered its powers.

Skarth: main city on Alland, where Yanda was surgeon; large spaceport.

Soni: a Keeper of Pedore; Healer.

Sutati: rebel gathering before breaking camp.

Swizzer: a sled that floats using a magnetic field, used especially in caves.

synth-sara-skin: Allandian carnivore, now extinct.

Takmik: sentient sea creature visiting the Neyla. Dome-headed, with pointy teeth—was it a he? Robed with a high collar, stately; eyes close set but bulbous, nose holes like a pair of sea caves.

Tenali: half-elf grandson son of Neyna leader, Zamani

Tellot: (Gisli) planet of fragile, semi-tropical climate and nonviolent culture.

Terlond: planet of Yanda's captivity; where the woodland and sea elves live. Mostly ocean.

tesu: dolphin like, on Terlond.

tika: like sesame.

Tlalit: Merne's love, now ship captain.

Tokong: rabbit in Qontaqian.

Tsatari: ancient sacred name of

the mountain, as well as the knowing that came only in this place of Ash-don.

vandamar: waiter.

Vashal: in the Elven forest; where the Crystal Pyramid houses the Circle of Elves trained to hold up the invisible protective dome.

Vatu: Yanda's friend, fellow fugitive from Krid; home planet Mingal, all water.

weejon: eel-like

Withum: flower whose pollen brings on a great mind-meld among the Elves one day a year.

woo-loo—tiny marsupial creature of Outer Alland.

Xentu: powerful, long-living people who have been missing from the known universe for some time.

Yanda: main character.

Yandawi: Yanda's Xentu name

Zamani: leader of the forest elves on Terlond.

Zami: Yanda and Zamani's son.

Za-Za: nickname for Zami.

Zebel: rebel friend of Setoin.

Zotoul: Neyla realm, including reefs and waters

Planetary Systems

Star system: Berson Sector

Alland (Yanda)

Shagal (wild trader city Blenin where Seiti was spotted)

Star system: Aband Sector

Terlund

Farn -moon of neighboring planet, captivity, no air

Star system: Craspel Sector

Romden (Beri)

Dorn: planet known for high quality, innovative tech, often elegant in style.

Tellot: (Gisli) delicate tropical planet

Star system: Sentori Sector:

Blaz:

Elznap: (Shouma, of the Sonda culture)

Ontil: (waterworld with farout sea creatures, many very intelligent such as Takmik)

Star system: Merdon Sector

Qontaq (Bonden, Dele) has martial element; also spiritual opposed to war

Sandu: planet with large freighter system

Erzon (planet of the Jejod; has Prokit's Moon)

Star system: Telori Sector (farthest out in the Known Universe)

Mingal

About the Author



Marie Judson, a Northern California native, is an avid fantasy and sci-fi reader. She's been an editor, a coffee roaster, and a college professor. She lives on the wild coast. Find her blog and more at www.mariejudson.com.