



Zarda: The Journey Begins

Gwendolyn Curran

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A leather volume picked up in a dusty shop led me a merry chase for years. With the help of ancient language scholars, divination experts, and personal channeling, the secrets of Zarda's journey are in this first book in a series called "The Journey". Zarda is chosen by the Goddess Arduina, educated by her family, and then sent out to become a woman. In the village of Serniz she is captured by the charm of Manton, secret son of the Priestess and an apprentice healer. Manton chooses Zarda to bond with him. She accepts. The Priestess, Salu, senses immense spiritual power in Zarda. Salu uses her magic to turn Manton away from Zarda and sends her into the mountains with Rainbow Man (Namair). During the trip, Namair who is really Salu's lover and Manton's father, rapes Zarda and uses her to pull his cart of the bells. An avalanche sends Namair to his death and leaves Zarda stranded on a ledge. Rescued by passing shepherds and taken to Mt. View, their village, she is given her own hut, and is accepted as daughter by Mother Maya, a wise woman. Foretold in a dream-vision, Zarda travels through the forest and into the foothills to find the erotic cave of the Great Goddess who shares her wisdom with Zarda. Returning to Mt. View with a new life outlook, Zarda begins teaching the village children with tales, dance and love. Cara, one of the village women leads Zarda to a rare secret Women's Celebration deep in the woods. There Zarda, as Arduina's moon daughter, mates with the comet Madrone in the physical young man of the village named Kar. Soon after Zarda is charged with treason in a holy trial, or Tanul. During the trial Kar and his brother Bakmuk speak of the secret women's ceremony where they claim the maleness of their God was debased. Kar charges Zarda with raping him with her magic. Mother Maya tells her version of that night in support of Zarda. Zarda explains about her previous trip to the Great Goddess cave and begs them to let her return for advice. The Elders grant her wish and send Kar with her as a shepherd of Mt. View. During the walk to the cave Kar admits he loves Zarda and tells her that his brother, Bakmuk, told him what to say at the Tanul. Zarda listens, but resists Kar's magnetism. A magical swan appears and carries Zarda and Kar to the Great Goddess Cave, for she knew of their travels. At the cave The Great Goddess gives Zarda the gift of an amethyst embedded into her third eye. Zarda is overcome and returns by pulling her still beating heart out of her body and presenting it to the Great Goddess. Zarda is infused with undying universal love. Returning to the forest on the swan's back, Kar and Zarda argue. Still angry, Kar enters his brother's rooms and tells how Zarda was transformed into a bird, seduced him, gave her heart to the Great Goddess, and attacked him with her claws. Having forgiven Kar in her heart, Zarda returns to her hut to write of her cave visit. She also translates Maya's words of wisdom as puzzle poems. The Elders have received a request from Luna for a master healer. The Elders will send Zarda. However, Bakmuk turns the tables by getting himself crowned king and driving Zarda, naked and shunned, out of Mt. View. Mother Maya draws a small band of supportive people to follow Zarda's trail. Even Kar helps. Zarda is ill when they discover her. Maya joins Zarda in her dream-world and successfully cures her. Eventually the band finds shelter at the House of Pele, near Luna. Excitement reigns when Zarda is invited to Luna. Luna welcomes Zarda with joy, especially King Marcxis, who claims Zarda as his queen. A huge marriage celebrations follows and Luna enters its Silver Age. Marcxis sister, Bastet, is furious over Zarda. She shouts her anger at Marcxis. To save the peace, Marcxis makes her a royal emissary. Zarda knows she carries Kar's child. Under an eclipse of the moon Zarda almost dies giving birth to her daughter. Mother Maya takes Zarda and Dierdre to safety.

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