

Footprints in the Sand

By Caitlin Schaefer

Water lapped against a pair of tall green boots. A young girl walked along the shore of the beach. Her dark brown hair was ruffled and bruises covered her olive skin. Her sky blue eyes were dull compared to the sun that was beginning to rise up from the calm ocean.

Her stomach grumbled. She didn't have anyway to know where food was, considering she was lost.

"This way!" A voice echoed behind her.

She forced herself into a sprint and jumped into the closest bunch of shrubs. Leaves covered her sleeveless dark green shirt.

Unable to see, Yarra still knew the guards were passing, by the sound of their metal armour.

Yarra's heart thumbed so loud that she swore the guards could hear it.

"She went this way!" one yowled. "Look! Footprints!"

Yarra waited for the clanking of the armour to fade away before she emerged from the bushes. She brushed the leaves and twigs of her long oak brown pants that were tucking into her boots. A gentle wind brushed against her.

She walked along the beach, clutching her right arm with her left hand in pain. The sound of sand crumbling beneath her thick boots gave her comfort.

When she came across the footprints of the soldiers, her feet veered to the left not wanting to meet them again. *Maybe trying to steal the Heathland Crown was a bad idea.* Yarra frowned and walked on.

Her signature green and brown clothes would have for sure given her away as a forest tribe member. *As if I am not in enough trouble.* She thought. *I'll be doing the dishes for months. Heathlanders hate the tribes enough already.*

Yarra paused when she came across another set of footprints. Too small to the soldiers. She bent down, placidly touched them and bathed in the smell of herbs like the ones the elder used at her village.

Scanning ahead, Yarra spotted a small bark hut. A common structure built in the Forest Tribe. She smiled at the thought of home as she wandered up to it.

Knocking on the hard wooden door she waited a few moments before it opened. She stood there tense and firm as the door unlocked. Grassing plants waved in the now colder wind.

An older lady opened the door. She was wearing a brown coat and dark green pants. "Enter." She almost demanded in a sweet tone.

Yarra entered, pleased to be out of the cold. The older lady grabbed some herbs and a wet cloth and began to dab it on the girls wounds. She flinched but there was soon something soothing about the ladies touch. Yarra sat waiting for the elder to finish.

She looked around the hut spotted three other doors. One brown door was in front of her. Beside her was a deep green door and staining her neck she look behind her at a dark blue.

When she was done, Yarra asked, "Who are you?"

"That does not matter young one." the lady answered standing to her feet. She put down the leftover herbs on the bench then opened the green door with a simple push.

"Now, you want to go home. Don't you?" She asked.

Yarra nodded .

"Follow the Footprints." The older woman instructed.

There was a narrow sand path with grassy land on either side that soon turned into lush green forest plants. The forest ahead was dark, but comfortable to Yarra. Sandy footprints layed on the path.

What is going on? She wondered sure that this forest had not been here before. *So where did the other doors lead.* The only sound was Yarra's soft breath and the crunching of the stray leaves that had been blown onto the path. Her skinny legs brushed against the soft plants.

When Yarra placed down her right foot, it seem to match perfectly into one of the older footprints and a weird tingle struck her body.

As the forest seemed to draw her in, the elders voice called behind her:

"Footprints in the Sand, lead you Home."