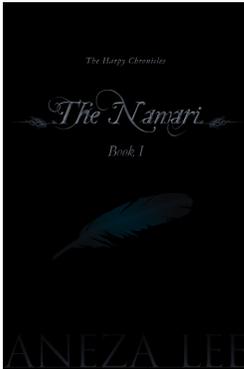


# Character Interview with Kirin from Aneza Lee's fantasy series, *The Harpy Chronicles*

Interview by: Vanessa Finaughty



One rainy night in Alvahar, Kirin, a Namari – a race of incredibly gifted people – was drawn into a war between two goddesses when she had a seemingly chance meeting with an elf upon the road. It was the first step upon a journey that will not only teach her to harness a goddess-given gift of foresight, but will place her in mortal peril in a realm beyond her own, where magic and slavery are very real. She will have to learn to control her abilities to save not only herself, but her people.

I recently had the pleasure of meeting Kirin for an interview, and must say I was impressed by her impeccable taste in décor. The interview took place in an oval chamber whose walls were decorated by a latticework of vines and blossoms in delicate shades of pale green. A fireplace took up one entire wall, with a centrepiece resembling the world tree, Yggdrasil, with the fire in its belly, and globes of light hung from the ceiling on long chains, like giant pearls lighted from within. We sat near the fire at a polished wooden table and drank from goblets with the crest of the House of the Silver Swan emblazoned on each – I must say, I felt spoilt before we'd even begun!

If you met Kirin for the first time, undoubtedly, if you only remember one thing about her, it will be her eyes. The gaze of a Namari is penetrating and can leave one feeling rather exposed! With a wry smile, Kirin says, “Being goddess touched leaves its mark.”

To get started, I ask Kirin to tell me a little about her home and day-to-day life before her adventures began. She appeared deep in thought for a moment, then smiled and said that her childhood was an easy one in which she was lucky to be surrounded by gentle people who genuinely loved her. She adds, “I was an avid scholar with a tireless interest in anything elf kind. It is the reason my mother sought an elfish tutor for me, I think.” She laughs. “I drove her to distraction with all my questions. I remember that I hated being fussed over and was eager to embrace independence, hence my delight at the idea of lessons at Dragnar Castle. It made me feel very grown up to be let out on my own to make the journey every other day. I recall that there were many occasions that I was not allowed to participate in things because I was a girl and that irked me to no end. Tirai’el could do things that I could not, like going on duck hunts with Father.” She hesitates. “I mean, Arnaud. It is why I insisted on weapons training; I hated being excluded because I was to be raised as a lady.”

Namari are all touched by the goddess Namarra and her chosen bear a silvery mark from her touch, usually upon the shoulder. Namari have the gift of prophecy, facilitated by an ability to trace and connect to the web of life. They can locate others by tracing their life energy to their physical vessel, enabling them to see through the other person’s eyes. A properly trained Namari can cut or mend these threads at will, manipulating life

itself and the outcome of events if they so choose. About being a Namari, Kirin says, “No one can say for certain why the goddess chooses as she does and, though I may be loyal to Alorana, I am a true child of Namarra when all is said and done. It is believed by many that Namarra only chooses a new disciple when elfkind is in great peril. I am humbled to be chosen.”

When asked about her prophetic visions, Kirin chuckles. “For the longest time, I had no control over my visions. They would often devastate me, as I had no idea what to do at that moment when I became a conduit. It was like being blinded by lightning and the intensity of seeing what has not yet been seen – let’s just say that it can take your breath away. I am still learning control, but I am lucky enough to have Lorka as a tutor in that he is well acquainted with this gift.”

Kirin says the first time she had a vision, she felt a great sense of fear, and then wonder. “To be simultaneously a part of *everything*, to know that, with a mere shift in consciousness, I can see through the eyes of a frightened slave in Nirassa or know the mind of a powerful magician as he traverses the Black Stair, his secrets laid bare should I wish to know his mind... that is a power that could easily corrupt. The power of the Namari is only limited by the vessel it chooses and, though I did not understand the full implications of what was happening to me, I knew that it was something uncommon.”

Kirin travelled with Kherilon, the handsome trader who the goddess Alorana commanded to escort her to her biological father. The trader intrigued Kirin from the moment she laid eyes on him. “It is strange how you can be drawn to another without knowing their name or purpose. Perhaps on some level I recognised a kindred spirit, though consciously I was not aware of it at that time.” As the two travelled together, it became clear to Kirin that Kherilon was wise and had much to teach her, but she also sensed something brooding beneath the surface. “If you know the tale, you will recall that our meeting with my father revealed something more about Kherilon that led me to question his integrity.” She shifts restlessly in her chair. “I felt as though I had been unforgivably misled, yet Tenuvar’s regard for him had me second-guessing myself. I’ll not deny that I was...” She pauses. “...Attracted, intrigued and simultaneously vexed!”

With two goddesses ‘at war’ over her, I imagined that Kirin might sometimes feel like ignoring or hiding from both. When asked if her disguises would work on a goddess, Kirin says, “Honestly, no.” She smiles and looks somewhat embarrassed. “This will sound somewhat haughty, I’m sure, but cowardice is not an elfish trait. We are subject to the same emotional responses as mortals are, no mistake there, but we are hardwired a little differently. Dark or light, good or bad, depending on their alignment, an elf will always serve what he or she believes to be the greater good. For me, that decision was easy, in choosing to serve Alorana. For Hasfal Ullo’Mai, the slave trader who sold both my mother and the captain of the royal guard, Khendra Mirlauck, into slavery, it meant obeying the goddess Olunagh, to whom he is loyal.”

Kirin appears thoughtful as she ponders the question further. “The gods are not easily fooled. Perhaps, at first sight, the ability to glamour might have been effective as a disguise, but any interaction, or simply drawing their attention, would quickly result in them realising that they were gazing upon an illusion.”

Kirin’s brother, Tirai’el, is half elf, half human. As such, the elves call him ‘cousin’, while Kirin, a full-blooded elf, is called ‘sister’. When asked what it would be if there was just one thing she could do for her brother, assuming she wasn’t limited in any way,

Kirin says, "I think what he would like most is the life of an adventurer or warrior, perhaps to serve in Lorka's royal guard, but he feels trapped by his position. As the only son of a landowner like Arnaud, he is obligated to learn how to care for the estate so he may keep it in good order when the time comes. Were it in my power, I would grant my brother the life he wants and perhaps suggest he appoints a steward in his place, but, for now, Arnaud would never allow such a thing."

If, during her travels, Kirin had known everything she knows now, she would do certain things a little differently. "Hasfal Ullo'Mai owes me a debt. Or rather, he owes my family a debt, for what he did to my mother so long ago. He is the slave trader who sold her, just a young girl at the time, to the pleasure houses before her First Rights initiation. It was simply barbaric." She scoffs in disgust.

I asked Kirin who her greatest enemy is and how she came to think of that person as an enemy. She says, "It is difficult for me to think of it in terms of enemies and friends, right and wrong, because we justify our motivations to ourselves, no matter how crazed they may seem to others." She finally takes a sip of the spicy blackberry cordial, favoured alcoholic beverage of the elves, from the silver goblet on the table. "Olunagh is certainly one I would consider my most formidable enemy, along with her servants. She has caused us much pain and loss, but, from her point of view, she was entirely justified in her actions. She became my enemy through various acts of violence against my kin and me, which began when she had her man, Mandalar, attack me in the stables."

Kindness, wisdom and generosity are most likely to endear you to Kirin, and disrespect is the one thing that will *always* earn her disfavour. When she's angry, she rides her horse, Twilight, out to the water's edge or vents her frustrations in the practice yard. She smiles mischievously when she adds that 'it all depends'. When asked if there's anything that makes her laugh every time she thinks about it, Kirin gives me an infectious grin and says, "The sight of Aello learning to ride a horse. I can't say why, but it always elicits a smile."

Kirin thoughtfully swirls the dark cordial in her goblet and adds, "I do believe that I can trust Aello with my life and, as it turns out, I have done so already. Lorka stands on equal footing on that score." Asked who she trusts the least, she says, "That would be Hasfal Ullo'Mai, for obvious reasons." She winks.

I wondered if, given the chance, Kirin would trade any of her gifts for another gift. She says, "Tough question. Foresight is a heavy burden, because you cannot predict what you will see or how you can alter it if you do not like the outcome... and then there are the moral implications of altering an outcome to suit yourself. I always fancied myself a conjurer, but, in the end, I am content. I'd not trade any of my gifts for another."

When asked if she has a habit she's embarrassed about, Kirin says, "I could tell you, but I'd have to kill you." Although I've heard this phrase more times than I can count and never once taken it seriously, I have to wonder for a moment if she's serious. She smiles, but something in her tone makes me speculate and I think it pertinent to ask what three words best describe her, to which she replies, "Dedicated, loyal and determined."

It's Kirin's fondest wish that slavery be abolished. It is a barbaric practice, to have your sense of self stripped away and to be considered of no more worth than a tool or an object." Her expression hardens. "No being should ever suffer such a fate."

When asked what Kirin's greatest achievement in life is, she says, "I hope that, when next we meet, you might ask me this question again and that my answer will be that I have mastered what it is to be a Namari. That would be an achievement to be proud of."

To those striving to attain their goals, Kirin advises, "I can say only this: never give up. Keep on dreaming. If at first you do not succeed, do not see it as failure, but see it as an alternate path that did not achieve the desired result. It still brings you that one step closer to your success, as you have just eliminated one more obstacle along your path."

Those who find Kirin as captivating as I do can read her story in [\*The Harpy Chronicles\*](#).

### **A word from Kirin's creator, fantasy author [Aneza Lee](#)**

The Harpy Chronicles was many years in the making and I am very proud to finally see it in print. Kirin was great to write and, to date, she ranks highest on my list of favourites, so seeing her come alive while being interviewed has certainly been a fun experience and I plan a very active life for her. In short, she'll be back! I love getting mail from fans who tell me how much they enjoyed her as a character. Another character I am keen to develop is Khendra, as I feel she has a delightfully dark element that I'd love to harness in future adventures. Aello is, of course, delightful in her own right and it was a fun challenge to create an entire society that is so very different to what is portrayed in mythology. This is also something I am going to focus on in future books. I was really delighted when Vanessa requested an interview and I hope it has given you some enlightening insights into Kirin's character.

Thank you for reading!