

The Waters of Zior – A Heart Song **by Brian Honeycutt**

Sample Chapter One

Jorral paused on the threshold to the prince's audience chamber. So many feelings were running through him. He desperately wished he were back home on Zior with Ninnia. She had been his light and love for years now. Although he was a gifted seer, singer, and wordsmith who loved traveling through the vast terrain of the psyche and spirit, Jorral also deeply appreciated security, stability, and steadfastness. Flying through the universe on a quest of unknown destiny was hardly any of those things.

He missed her touch, her gentle smile. All the magical nuances he had discovered within her. When they first met, he felt an instant attraction, but he somehow knew that there were untold layers to be discovered within their relationship. He had always intuitively felt that he would need a partner with multifaceted aspects to their personality. Someone to keep him interested. Someone to keep his spirit hungry for more. Yet Jorral also needed someone who would be there for him should there be any times of confusion. Someone to shed tears with, someone to grow old with. Someone to live with, and eventually, die with.

Someone to share their very essence with him, and he in turn with them. A union on the most profoundly open and sublime of levels. With Ninnia, he had found that, and perhaps more. She enthralled him, took him into the depths of ecstasy, and through the mundane wash of everyday life. Let him become the provider, and the refugee seeking shelter from the rain. She let him wear every mask there was to wear, loving him for it all the while. She was his thousand-eyed fire dancer, his princess of the night, and his rock. Yet she was now millions of miles away across the vast leagues of space.

Yes, the mind meditations and viewings helped, but it wasn't truly the same. Part of him ached to be near her again. To roll in the sand of his beloved home world and lose himself in her arms. Still, perhaps part of his soul was grateful for the distance. It was one more dance they could play together. To live out the separation of space and once again reunite in the flame of love.

Ninnia's love wasn't the only thing Jorral had on his mind, however. The pools of Zior grew darker as the days passed. Very few had reported anything more serious than a nightmare or two, but in these slow rumblings, Jorral saw the possible beginnings of fully fledged mental trauma waiting in the wings. For one thing, Zior hadn't had anyone have what could truly be called a nightmare since the Great Crossing. Once they had gained a foothold on their conscious minds, the Ziorians had begun to see more peace in their dreams.

Then came the dream weavers, a group of the newly enlightened who saw the benefit of carrying the great cleansing work into the realms of the dreamworld.

Via dream transmissions and sleeping meditations, the dream weavers were able to instill a greater sense of bliss, compassion, and peace into the sleeping states of other Ziorians. Chaos was replaced by placid scenes that soothed the mind. Confusion and dreams of being hunted by abysmally vile creatures were chased away by dreams of flying, or playing in the jungle.

Eventually, nighttime was ruled by an epoch of relaxation and happiness. Zior awoke each day more at

peace and alive than ever before.

The benefits of this dream cleansing were obvious and numerous. An incredible amount of psychic baggage was dislodged in this way. These days, everyone started their waking period with their eyes wide open to the beauty of the world around them, as they had just awoken from the beauty of their inner being.

Now, however, nightmares were returning. What would the consequences be? Nobody knew for certain, but Jorral suspected the unfortunate results would be visible in the conscious world soon. Still, worrying wouldn't do anything but add to the problems. What Jorral needed was to try and find an answer to the dilemma, and soon. Maybe then he could put those haunting purple eyes out of his mind and return safely to his beloved.

Jorral pressed the admittance button and was quickly beckoned inside.

The Changeling Prince sat on his simple, yet elegant throne. The finely crafted arms of the chair suited the thin frame of his body. His hair hung long and black, much like Jorral's. His eyes were two deep ebony pools that reminded one of the abyssal depths of space.

His pale face betrayed nary a hint of emotion at the moment. This didn't surprise Jorral, however. It was rare for the prince to exhibit any great emotion outside of his appearances during visions. His was the world of the infinite, of time and space stretched into nothing. He seemed to walk through skies no one else could see. Paradoxically, he seemed to stare right into you, as if he could take in every atom of your being all at once and read your every vibration. What was more, behind the cold appearance one often had the impression that the prince was always laughing quietly to himself on the inside.

The prince stood and embraced Jorral. His body seemed surprisingly strong for how light it was. Jorral felt as if a hollow frame of the strongest, lightest material ever known were being pressed against him. Like the bones of space...

"It is good to see you, Jorral," the prince began.

"And you as well, Alex," Jorral returned.

Jorral was not sure what he had expected, but he was just the tiniest bit surprised to find himself feeling not entirely lost in awe in the man's presence.

"Please, sit." The prince motioned for Jorral to sit in a chair that was nearly identical to his own. Alex may have been a unique shapeshifting shaker of worlds, but he did his best to treat you like the equal he believed you were.

"I'd like you to see something," the prince said, pointing a gracefully carved finger towards a screen to his right. There was an image of a man and a child walking in one of Zior's parks.

"Please don't be alarmed by what I am about to show you, Jorral," the Changeling Prince said as the image began to move.

A film of the man and the boy walking began to play. The day was beautiful, the scene placid. It was familiar to Jorral, as it would have been to anyone of Zior.

Why would I be alarmed?

Suddenly, the boy began to pull at the pant leg of his father.

“Look, Dad! A Plastar bug!” the child beamed, as he looked at a scarlet beetle that flew through the air.

The father, however, seemed incredibly annoyed, agitated somehow. He rubbed his temples in slow methodic circles as the little boy continued to implore his father to view the crimson critter.

All of a sudden, the man exploded.

“Why are you bothering me with this *now* Rykell? Can't you see my head is hurting? Who cares about a stupid *bug* anyway?!”

The boy stopped and stared at his father. Obviously he was deeply hurt by the man's words, because he began to cry.

“Rykell, why are you-,” the man began angrily, then stopped when he saw that his actions had begun to cause others to stare in his direction. “Rykell,” he said more softly, “I- I'm sorry. I don't know what came over me. I think it's just these dreams I've been having lately. I'm not myself.”

With that, the man sat down on the grass and cradled his head in his hands.

“It's OK Dada, I forgive you,” Rykell consoled his father.

The prince paused the film.

“This is one of the men who reported having a nightmare recently,” Alex said with a whisper of concern in his voice.

It's as I suspected then, Jorral thought.

“And I suppose this is related to the pools?” Jorral asked, though he knew the answer.

“Of course. All of Zior drinks from those waters. Both physically, and metaphysically, in their dreams,” the prince replied.

“Yes. The physical affects the subconscious and dream states, which in turn affects the conscious state and vice versa. I had feared this would happen.”

“As had I. It is my most sincere wish that we find a solution to this problem before things get worse.”

It was unheard of for an elder to shout at a child in the way the man had.

Zior had all but eliminated stress from its existence. People eventually grew old and died, but this occurred painlessly and gracefully. No one ever had reason to lash out in anger, especially towards a child immersed in innocent curiosity.

“It is a far cry from the strife and wars of the past, but still, I share your concern,” Jorral acknowledged gravely. “I very much dislike the idea of any return to our previous ways.”

The prince leaned forward in his seat, black eyes glowing with light. “Do you have any suggestions as to how to proceed, Jorral? After all, you are perhaps the main reason why we are here.” The Changeling Prince stared into Jorral's eyes as he spoke.

“Me? But I don't understand,” Jorral protested.

“Look within yourself, Jorral. Don't you remember? This is your destiny.”

Jorral closed his eyes. He tried to think back, to how he had reached this point in his life. What had brought him on this voyage? He had thought it was his gifts as a singer, a weaver of tales and creative forces for which he had been chosen.

Then he thought back to when he originally discovered his gifts. He had been sitting near some stones in a desert. His parents were nearby, but he was basically alone. He was only six years old. The world was full of wonder, and he had the sudden thought to try and move the stones around him into a ring. He knew he could somehow do this using only the power of his voice, and his mind.

Without thinking about it, he began to sing softly to the stones, feeling their essence. Soon, they responded to his melodious vibrations, floating through the air towards him. The words and notes came and wove themselves together through the rocks and the air, until finally, the stones formed a perfect circle around him.

His father simply stared at him in wonder. He had come to tell Jorral that dinner was ready when the stones had been in mid-flight.

Jorral was one of the first truly naturally gifted singers in Zior's known history. Others had been known before him, but they had typically received years of training. Perhaps it was a sign of the times, but Jorral's abilities seemed to come without any formal training. Soon there would be other prodigy children in other fields; more and more as time went on.

One day, while Jorral was deep in meditation, he happened upon a vision. It was a vision of the stars. The vast cosmos opened up for Jorral. The planets and glowing nebulae seemed to share their secrets with him. He felt himself collapsing, expanding, drifting. Melting into the very essence of space.

Somehow he was able to penetrate into the deepest core of the fabric of reality. Time and space stretched like a web in all directions. He couldn't explain what he was receiving in words, but somehow he could *feel* the origins of existence, the universal core of all worlds.

As he delved further and further into the depths of creation, the mysteries of reality unfolded for him. Soon, he came to a place where stillness seemed to hover in the midst of chaos. Reality was being birthed from virtually nothing. Incomprehensible to the rational mind, but in that state Jorral felt that he understood.

Once this understanding came, Jorral was sucked back into his body as it was in its fetal state: miniscule arms and legs teeming with life, newly risen consciousness exploding in wonder.

He beheld then that imprinted in his eyes and mind were star formations. Constellations within, that informed him of his celestial origins. What was more, they told of distant galaxies he would yet revisit in physical form.

The last thing he saw in this trance state was the tiny hand of an infant, reaching for a purple star cluster in the distant black of space.

When Jorral awoke from this vision, he felt compelled by the knowledge of the star. He must make the voyage to this star cluster, that much seemed clear.

So it was that he brought his vision before the Council of Twelve. Twelve seers capable of penetrating deep into the purpose and plans of any soul. Beings capable of marshaling great power within Zior. When they saw the truth written within the spirit and called for action, all of Zior rallied to the cry.

Jorral found himself in the center of a small chamber made of stone. The walls were slick with moisture and well rounded from years of erosion. Here dripped the waters that fed all life on Zior. This chamber was deep underground, miles below the surface. Jorral had arrived via an elevator carved into the earth and rock that plummeted into the surface of his home world.

Translucent shining crystals lit the chamber with soft, glowing light. The Twelve were encircled around Jorral, murmuring their incantations and prayers. Jorral was bade to stay silent and try to relax as the twelve seers did their work.

The ritual took perhaps an hour to complete. When it was done, Jorral was told his request had been heard and honored within the true depths of his being. He would be granted every resource necessary to make his journey.

However, it was also revealed to the seers that the most suitable time for this journey would not arrive for years hence. So, Jorral was made to forget about this vision in his waking mind. Remembering only in the depths of his soul, in the star patterns enmeshed in his being, Jorral forged ahead in his life.

Eventually, he grew into the powerful and wise singer he was now. He had joined with the love of his life, Ninnia, as together they had fostered many dreams both terrestrial and cosmic.

Then had come the fateful day when the pools of Zior had grown dark and the Changeling Prince had summoned him on an interstellar quest of unknown destination. He had said goodbye to his lifemate, boarded the monolithic craft of the *Lightbearer*, and set sail for the stars.

“So you see, Jorral, this was all set in motion long ago, from before you were even born to the shores of Zior.”

Jorral stared into the prince's eyes, and suddenly knew in his bones that this was true. It was as if he were waking from a dream, or as if he had been sailing through a vast ocean of fog. Now, that fog was lifting, and he could see the shore that he had yearned for all along, though he knew it not in his waking mind. Jorral was going back to his true birth place. Jorral was going home.

Sample Chapter Two

“This way children!”

Lexi was leading a group of youngsters down a spiraling staircase cut from stone. The steps were set into the side of a cliff that wove its way inexorably down towards the sea.

To their left, waves broke gently on the soft sand of Zior. Gulls called overhead, and crabs wandered to and fro along the beach, their purple claws striped with streaks of blue held aloft as they snapped at the air.

Lexi was perhaps ten years older than the eldest child in the group. Part of the educational tradition of Zior called for the elder students to pass some of their knowledge on to the younger generation. In this way, their own education would be reinforced, and they would bestow the seeds of knowledge to the future inheritors of Zior.

Lexi was often surprised at how much insight could be gained from simply opening oneself up to youth and trying to offer some form of guidance.

They are so very full of energy, still quite shapeless in many ways. Budding branches in the dawn.

Along the way, children 'oohed' and 'aahed' at the different plants growing along the cliff.

“As you will probably notice, there is a great deal of moisture and sunlight to be found here,” Lexi told the children circling around him. “That makes it very easy for many of these plants to grow. Now, can anyone point out any of these species for me?”

A small, round boy's hand shot into the air.

“Ooh! I know, Mr. Lexi!” the child shouted. His eyes were as round and full as Atraxas, the moon of Zior.

“Yes, Colern?” Colern had wavy orange hair and soft rosy skin. His face was full of cheer, and puffed up slightly like a cloud. He was a very happy boy.

“It's a spine-berry plant!” he exclaimed gleefully.

“Very good!” Lexi returned, allowing a wan smile to move across his face.

Colern beamed as he swayed to and fro, squirming hands placed behind his back.

“And what do we Ziorians use it for?” Lexi leaned forward ever so slightly as he hovered over the group, scanning for someone who might answer him.

A little girl with jet black hair cautiously lifted her hand.

“Yes, Jalova?”

“Mmm, we use the berries for juice, or for lunch, or snacks.” She became more and more relaxed, more

excited as she talked. Her teeth stuck out a little, as did her pale turquoise eyes. “They're good for the heart, our blood, and they help our bodies relax when we're stretching. And, um...” She frowned ever so slightly, forgetting her words and lightly wringing her hands.

“Go on, dear,” Lexi gently urged her on.

Jalova's eyes shot out once again. “And the greens are edible too! They have lots of good minerals and vitamins for our bodies. And the green parts are also good for our lungs, helping us breathe and ingest more clean air so we can function better.”

“Excellent! You know quite a lot about this plant it seems, Jalova.”

Jalova flashed a quick smile and bounced a little with joy. Her eyes twinkled like the light shining off the waves of a pale blue green sea.

“Come now, class, it's down to the gardens for us.”

The children shouted with glee at the notion. It was all Lexi could do to stay ahead of the group and keep the little ones from bounding off the cliffside.

As they wound their way down towards the base of the cliffs, they could start to make out the gardening complex below. Glass walls curved around to form a semi-circular compound. Inside, rows and rows of plants of all varieties could be seen.

The scenery along the cliffside was changing as well. Here grew mostly purple and reddish scrubs and vines, home to masses of tiny red spiders and other insects. Here too crawled spotted lizard-like creatures with eight legs and two heads balanced on slender green necks. Their bodies were a roiling torrent of color, all the way down to the spiked yellow-orange of their tails. Lavender colored eyes darted to and fro as the children marched on towards the garden by the sea.

When at last they arrived at the base of the cliffs, they were met by a thin woman in her middle years. She had wavy black hair adorned with teal stones, and wore loose fitting silken clothing to match. The day was warm and moist, as were most days in Zior, so her feet, arms, belly, and shoulders were uncovered, revealing her smooth tan-colored skin.

“Hello, children, my name is Ninnia. Welcome to the garden of Palaxis.”

The children pressed in towards Ninnia, their eyes shining brightly with wonder.

“Now, who would like to take a tour of some of our plants here?” Ninnia asked, her eyes dancing just as brightly as the children's.

These class outings always brought out the inner child in Ninnia. It reminded her of when she was a girl and had taken the same tour. Almost immediately, she had fallen in love with the spirits of the plant world. They had drawn her in with their soft, yet vibrant energy. They captivated her with their abundant beauty and gentle power.

Ironically, these same plants also helped her connect with the adult version of herself. She felt the calling of feminine mother energy whenever she ushered the children into the garden. She was the

protector of the vegetable kingdom. Her knowledge would be passed on to these bright, young souls. Thus, the garden of Palaxis would be preserved for untold future generations.

“Now follow me, children, as we step into the world of nature! Our first stop will be the plants that could best be called *Noveni*, meaning possessing of a long, slender stalk that curls around, grows quite profusely, and generally produces many leaves that branch off the stalk.”

Ninnia noticed that some of the children's eyes seemed to wander a bit when she went into the specifics of the plants, but she was delighted to see others whose faces lit up as they took notes and photographs with their slender pictoglam. The pictoglam were tiny cylinders that hovered lightly in the air and captured images up to a mile in width when an invisible button was lightly pressed. Every child of Zior had one.

“Now here we see the lovely *Florip julium*, known for its violet flowers, incredibly fragrant aroma, and its, shall we say, unique chemical properties.”

“Ooh, I want to smell one!” A little boy proclaimed loudly.

“Me too!” a girl with ribbons in her hair chimed in.

“Very well, one at a time, please. Line up everyone!” Ninnia smiled as the children queued up to inhale a whiff of the vibrantly purple flower.

Several wrinkled their noses and giggled after their turn at smelling. When they were done, a little girl with sparkly amethyst hair named Veretta asked about the plant's “unique chemical properties”.

Ninnia smiled. “Well, it's been said that the *Florip julium* has been known to cause one's energy to flare up in cascades of blue, far beyond the realms of normal blue, for lack of better terminology.”

“What do you mean, *blue*?” a little boy asked, wide-eyed.

“Welllll, why don't we all try a piece and see? If that's alright with your teacher?” Ninnia asked, looking toward Lexi,

This man again! What can it mean, his appearing in my life so often lately? Ninnia wondered.

Lexi was a striking young man by anyone's standards. Thin, handsome, blonde, with piercing blue eyes. Still, it wasn't as though Ninnia really considered him of serious romantic interest. She had only desired Jorral for as long as she could remember. Pursuing other roads, even in her mind, often only led to confusion.

Lexi nodded. “Of course the children may try the plant. One at a time, please, children.”

So it was that each child took a small piece of the strangely attractive *Florip julium*. They stuffed the little leaves into their mouths, chewed greedily, and waited...and waited. Five whole minutes passed before a chubby boy with a mop of crimson hair and blue eyes asked, “How come it's not working, Miss Ninnia?”

“Patience, young...Fredlum,” she gently admonished, reading the floating name card above his head.

“Any minute now, and you will see. Let's all close our eyes and join hands while we wait. That should make the effect that much stronger.”

So they did as they were bade. When each pair of tiny eyes had been closed, a stillness crept over the garden. For a blissful moment, all was still, as is the ocean before a wave comes finally rolling in to break on the shore. Then their toes began to tingle, and next their legs, then their tummies, until finally their entire bodies were buzzing ever so slightly with a gentle tickling sensation.

And then, *Whoom!* a flash of blue light washed over the children's inner vision. *Whoom!* again, as a rush of blue came and went, thrumming through their bodies until it exited their heads through the crown chakra, gateway to the celestial kingdom. The waves of blue kept coming, bringing with them a rather funny sensation.

“It feels like my head is waving back and forth!” Timblex, a young boy with eyes like stars and skin like a lake's surface cried.

“Like a sheet in the wind!” Manari, a pretty girl with pearl white eyes added.

The children could no longer contain their glee as the blue energy continued to rush through them. Ninnia too was caught up in the sensation, a feeling she rarely indulged in. Though now she was wondering why.

Lexi felt it too. He hadn't smiled often enough lately, he now realized. He'd been too absorbed in his studies, too absorbed in helping the world. This rush of energy felt so good though! How could you not let yourself smile? He felt an enormous amount of tension simply wash out of him. His body was a wave of blue light floating in a sea of energy. None of the past mattered. None of the future either. There was nothing left to hold on to! He felt free, at peace. The universe was nothing but a gentle ebb and flow.

This is how life should be! he thought blissfully, eyes pressed closed, hands held between two youngsters full of loving energy.

With that thought, the waves began to slow. They all felt their bodies wavering motions slowing down. Soon only an occasional *Whoom!* of a blue wave passed through them, until finally, everyone let out a collective sigh of pure relaxation.

Fredlum broke the silence by saying what they were all thinking.

“That was *FUN!*”

Everyone laughed at once.

“As you can see, children, *Florip julium* is definitely an interesting species,” Ninnia declared. “Now, let's see what we have in our herbal section.”

“Do you have anything else like *that?*” Manari asked.

“We just may Manari, we just may.”

Sample Chapter Three

Space hung outside the window like a velvet curtain. A thin, yet omnipresent veil between this world and whatever lay beyond. Rax was tired. The stars were innumerable, stretching on and on forever. The thought caused strange reactions within him. Part of him felt supercharged by the notion of infinity. Another, smaller, older part felt the crush of never ending events, the compression of overactivity and the incomprehensible nature of things. That voice perhaps belonged to the child still within him. The boy that so long ago woke screaming with energy into the panoply of color and motion that was his home world.

Before the Great Crossing, the world was different. Zior was governed more by arbitrary rules than by guidelines seen as generally beneficial to all. Rax was a dynamo built to break down the walls of unnecessary rigidity. He could not function in a world so filled with delight, yet so filled with restriction.

Raised to act a certain way, but possessing the aching desire to rise like a butterfly into the free air above. So it was that Rax ended up fracturing, all his energy spent in the bursting of a frail shell.

Now his supercharged essence lay mostly in the Blue Guy, Speedy. In a way, it was a blessing. Rax definitely felt calmer these days, and he didn't feel the burning need for movement that he had as a child. He still felt the energetic presence of Blue Guy's essence inside him, always. It was like a phantom limb of sorts, a lost energy signature that permeated his essence on a very subtle level.

Rax had been so very open as a child. He had no filter with which to keep the hounds of the collective psyche at bay. The domineering and controlling way of life that ruled a sizable portion of his society had been swallowed up with complete innocence by his subconscious.

Deep within the folds of his mind lay those rules, those calculating and magnificently structured prisons, so deftly reasoned and justified with the coldest of logic.

Still, everything had its purpose, and those ways helped him function for a time. Within a certain structure, those methods were so incredibly useful. No way could he maintain them alone, however. Between his childlike enthusiasm and steady structure, something had to give.

Thus, the Doctor was born, and one boy became three. Now ol' Doc was his trusted right hand man. So very reliable, despite his grumbling. Maybe Rax ought to find a way to try and cheer him up, but how? The man always did as he was asked, but he seemed to detest his life at times. Maybe he was still carrying some of Rax's old baggage related to rules and authority. The Doctor did seem to find some enjoyment in his work, however. At least, Rax could have sworn he had been able to detect some glimmer of joy within the Doc's eyes when he was turning a screw here, installing a console there. Maybe that was his angle. Quiet solace and freedom through the joy of work and service.

In any case, he would have to do a little more investigation into just what made Doc tick. If there was any sadness within ol' Doc, Rax knew he still carried it within himself as well.

Who was Rax then, anyway? No longer a sewn together chaotic circus of dreams and ropes. No longer a youthful spitfire struggling to burst free of the chrysalis and fulfill his destiny. Now a man, with his own personal strength, desires, and attitude.

He was generally seen as calm and responsible by his friends. Easygoing and friendly, but with a certain gruffness. None too easy with sharing feeling with strangers, but always willing to listen. His heart beat as a rushing river. Mightily powerful and possessing of great depth deceptively hidden by a relatively placid surface. His was the type to look at the world in deep contemplation, letting time ebb and flow. His mind was at times quite sharp, at others a nebulous sea of dreams and visions.

His sleep was often filled with dreams of strange lands and grey dawns. Faraway towers, serpents devouring his being whole, or else dark birds staring into his soul.

As of late, however, a wild enchantress had stolen his heart's attention. She had woven herself into his dreams and liquefied the penetrating gaze of his intellect, transforming steel insight to roiling magma with the lightest touch.

Her feral nature had become more and more apparent in their love making, and her more primal side had found a home in his dreams as well. She tore through his soul like a wild beast, leaving gushing wounds of ecstasy flowing through his being.

Tysha was made of so much more than this wild passion, however. Her sweetness and shy fragility gave Rax the feeling of cradling a glass bird at times. Her heart was as open as his had been as a child, and now she was helping the river of love within him to flow once more.

The thaw was sweet, the tidal wave of love that obliterated his mind and took hold of his soul oh so much more than welcome. Together, the waters of their love were pouring together like two magnificent oceans, submerging each other in the purifying waters of love.

Rax looked out the window once more. He was still tired, but now not so weary. The child within was smiling, images of butterflies flying once more amidst tall and stately trees. Outside, space continued to hide itself away in the distant corners of reality, like some wandering ghost. Stars that once seemed overwhelming now seemed filled with exciting promise. Rax smiled and felt the world within turn to softly glowing embers. He was a man at peace, a man on the edge of a great chasm, a man alive with the fire of all creation, in love with the universe, and all that is.