

CHAPTER 1: The Dream

His eyes fluttered, opened for one instant—to a face: hard, female.

But she drifted away into stars and warm darkness as the power from the talking head welled up, filled him. And he forgot the metal encasing his skull, fell into the dream he must tell.

Out of this darkness she came again. But now her eyes were softer, those of a friend. She asked, “What are you worried about?” as they entered Cathedral.

Its warm, moist air enfolded them. Flower scents drifted through tree fronds and filtered sunlight; in the background was the muted rush of a waterfall. Across Azure Lake he saw the cliff from which he had thrown himself during his testing. He felt no fear.

“All is well,” she said. “You are High Tek now. Since Journey began, it is you who must break the circle. Let the shapes flow. Follow them. Do not fight.”

But then her face changed, replaced by a female Duran cadre of Pak Wolfe. Her dangerous smile embraced him, spears and longknife held before him, a tight dress pushing her breasts up, her eyes enfolded in shadow, their molten centers glistening with desire, with—

And he was flying. Clouds. Rain streaking his face. Yet he was beginning to sense the direction of the dream connections, the conflicting relationships within him, the struggle he must go through in order to say what had to be said to Allera’s Assembly.

Abruptly he stood on Kiera Lookout, bathed in sunshine. A soft breeze blew off the Clear Sea that stretched into mist-ridden distance. Wilder Island was a faint darkness on the horizon. Light formed within this vast space. Rays of blue, magenta, cyan, green, and orange pulsed in all directions; an arc of silver played across the dome of heaven, gems of lightfire glistening in the sea.

Without any warning, the sun exploded: its ball of fire fragmented into white-hot beams that shot straight towards the four edges of the world.

Towards Territory; towards Sundera; towards Wilder Island; towards the White Waste—