



Regiena Heringa

A New World Awaits

It was called the Great Boulder Divide.

“Can the huge boulders in the Divide really hide the sun whenever they please?” asked a youngster in the evening village circle. The inhabitants of the mountains of mauve and the oval-rimmed foothills, nodded solemnly.

“I’ve even seen them move to erase the stars and their companion moon from the heavens,” murmured one villager who had lived in the region for a very, very long time.

It was a mystery. Sometimes, the bigger boulders would lift up their black, militant shoulders, block the sunlight and push back the fierce winds that tried to break through. Did the Divide separate dark from light? Were there other places that did this? Stories in the land spoke of shadow and light carefully circling around each other. It was whispered that not so long ago furious horse riders with black hearts had raced from the Westerly Unknown into the great, sacred forest of Mareithia intent on destroying it. (See the story *Waxxar and the Distant Riders*.)

Thus, the history of shadow and light in the land remained unclear.

Zeranne and Solin, close friends and fellow students, had also come across this same vague history of dark and light in their study hall, the *loganos*. *Loganos*, in the ancient tongue means “a place of investigation and knowledge.” The two were often asked by the villagers to go on expeditions to study the many curious secrets of nature and then share their discoveries around the evening fire. The villagers, listening closely, often wove imagination into the stories and created tales that thrilled everyone.

Solin, a lanky boy moving into adulthood more quickly than expected, had always admired young Zeranne’s fortitude and leadership. He was shy, but when Zeranne smiled she opened a door so wide that Solin’s affection for her soared up into the heavens.

One fine day, with hearts and knapsacks full, Solin and Zeranne set out to explore the Great Boulder Divide.

“Do you think it is true that the boulders move?” asked Zeran as they hiked up a steep hill.

Solin shrugged his shoulders a little nervously. “Perhaps. What I don’t like is knowing that between the boulders there are grim shadows and grimy pools waiting for us. I realize we are on an exciting adventure, but I already feel that something is not right.”

“Hmmm,” replied Zeran slowing her step as they reached the rocky terrain. “I agree. It all feels dismal, so different from the foothills.”

The closer they got to the boulders, the more they stumbled and slid. Grappling and climbing, their shoes damp and dirty, Solin and Zeran noticed a foul odour coming from a greasy fog that was slowly advancing towards them.

Zeran grimaced. “What a smell! Let’s sit here for a moment, Solin, just for a short rest and hope the fog changes direction.” She plopped down heavily on a grey piece of rock and cringed at the wild screeches of the birds overhead.

As Solin sat down beside her, he noticed an exquisitely tiny, glistening green beetle emerging from a dirty, jagged crack near his feet. “Look at this!”

Zeran peered at the little beetle. “Oh! What is this lovely insect doing in such a gloomy place?”

A musical voice suddenly sailed in between the shrieking of the birds: “Where are you exploring today?” The gentle, sweet voice was like a pink blossom drifting lazily on a summer stream.

Solin and Zeran froze.

“Where are you exploring today?” repeated the bell-like voice as it travelled and danced around them on a perfumed breeze of pine trees and meadowland flowers.

Zeran took her friend’s cold hand and together they stood up very slowly. In front of them the thick, soupy fog had disappeared and in its place billowed a great white mist, filled with a moving circle of multicoloured lights. The sweet, melodic voice came from inside it.

"Would you like to explore in here today? In this marvellous mist and colour? You are most welcome."

What an opportunity! thought Zeran and felt Solin excitedly squeeze her hand in agreement. *Imagine what our colleagues at the loganos will say!*

Both vigorously nodded their heads: Yes!

Hand in hand they walked into the mist. In the twinkle of a star they were gone, faraway from the foothills and The Great Boulder Divide into a world of...foothills and The Great Boulder Divide! The colourful mist had disappeared. The voice was silent.

"How can this be?" Solin's question, filled with disappointment, dropped like a ball in front of Zeran's feet.

"I don't know. We left and then we came back." Zeran's response was calm and reflective. After a moment she added with rising enthusiasm, "But we're *not* in the same place! Look! Listen!" She pointed up to the sky and then down to the stony ground where they had sat and to the glistening green beetle that was still there.

The insect was still beautiful but it had become larger and more elegant; the call of the birds overhead was now sweet and melodic and the foothills were warmed by a brilliant sun glowing in a radiant clear-blue sky. In between the boulders, now luminous and rounded, flowed crystal clear sparkling water. Gone was the damp shadowy darkness that penetrated the hard places. The earth had been refreshed. It had taken on a greater strength and had become a place of beauty and harmony.

The shimmering voice in the fragrant air returned: "You are correct, my lady, this is another place. It is a new world and it can be yours if you want it."

"How?" asked both friends simultaneously.

"Simply by becoming it." The answer echoed laughingly throughout the brightness of the land.

Solin and Zeranne looked at each other puzzled, *becoming it?* And then abruptly, transported by a whirlwind of coloured lights and white mist, the two friends were back in their own world. Their heads echoed the instructions given to them by the laughing voice: *Look, choose and understand.*

Both gazed around a little dizzily: Yes, they were back in the Great Boulder Divide they had set out to explore that day and yes, they wanted to follow the strange instructions.

Walking quietly, looking around intently, avoiding the murky pools and the rocky shadows, they both waited for something to catch their eye.

Solin approached a small, dark plant with spotted leaves which he never particularly liked. Now, however, as he examined it closely he realized that the plant was really quite beautiful. The speckles on the leaves reminded him of the fine sand near the golden lake in Mareithia's forest and even of his own skin.

The marks on the plant, the sand in the forest and the freckles on my skin are similar. We are somehow connected! With a smiling heart, Solin began to befriend the plant.

Meanwhile, Zeranne's eyes fell on a long, curving rocky fissure that looked dark and foreboding. As she observed it more closely, however, she realized that the form of the crack reminded her of the veins in her hands and the meandering streams in the meadowlands, and even the branches of the willows that lived there. *These are all the same patterns,* she thought. *There is a connection between us all.*

Although they didn't quite understand everything, a new way of thinking and feeling had begun to blossom inside them both.

Walking back to the loganos the friends discussed their experiences in small, reverent tones.

"Solin, does this mean that the Great Boulder Divide is not really a place of darkness?" Zeranne asked.

"I think it depends on us," he replied smilingly.

Zeranne smiled back. "Well, it seems to me that all life is connected whether it is a plant, an insect, a crack in the rock or an unknown place. If so, it helps me to understand the world a little better because I can make a link between people and things. Then I can create friendships and help build a world of harmony and beauty like the one we experienced today."

Solin admired her insight and happily nodded in agreement. "And just think of the wonderful stories we are going to share around the evening fire tonight!"

"Oh yes!" Zeranne cried out enthusiastically, seizing Solin's hand and running with him the short distance back to the loganos and their friends.