

Khizara: Book 1 in the Tokorel Series

Drew Bankston

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An interplanetary alliance is formed and a prophecy uncovered in Khizara, a science fiction series opener with a hopeful future.

In Drew Bankston's series-opening science fiction novel *Khizara*, an intergalactic archaeologist discovers that she has a part to play in an ancient prophecy.

After a midnight prison break, Linsora winds up on the doorstep of the man she thinks helped to put her there. She hates him for his mind tricks. But with Linsora's blade to his throat, Permac instead convinces her to run away with him on a spaceship.

Linsora and Permac come from two different worlds, though they share many similarities (including clawed fingers). As they share the origin stories of their worlds with each other, they find that they have an ancestral name in common: Tokor. Permac is from Tokorel and worships Tokor; on *Khizara*, Linsora was taught to hate him. But the two worlds aren't as different as their residents are led to believe. Indeed, an interplanetary romance has been prophesied; it could unite the people.

While there are sections of the novel dedicated to both Linsora and Permac, some secondary characters also have their own sections. Subplots are introduced for later exploration through them, as with Moragh, who has a conversation with his father about Linsora and Permac; he hopes to separate the two and mentor Permac, helping him to hone his emotional-influence abilities and become the face of Tokorel. Through these secondary voices, there are also hints of the later discovery of Linsora's part in Tokor's ancient prophecy.

While Permac is often centered, Linsora's storytelling furthers the narrative the most. Indeed, Permac often fills in the gaps while Linsora is asleep or unconscious. For example, when Linsora is fed an excessive amount of a mind-altering substance, Permac's powers and strength are put to the test: he sends her mental images of salty beaches and serenity to carry her through.

The evocative worldbuilding comes via hints at the planets' pasts. Linsora and Permac discuss the source of Tokorellans' mental powers, for example—a tasty fruit that's introduced in childhood, chikara. It's but one piece of the pair's shared origins, as they continue to discover. Indeed, they use chikara together to peek into their futures and learn more about Linsora's true purpose. Excitement builds as they move toward a consequential mutual decision, even knowing that many people will try to stand in their way.

Hundreds of years of misinformation and judgment are challenged by an interplanetary alliance in the science fiction novel *Khizara*, a series opener with a hopeful future.

ERIN NESBIT (June 13, 2023)

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