

WATERS OF REDEMPTION

A MUSICAL JOURNEY

COMPOSED AND PERFORMED BY

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TRACK LIST

01 - PROLOGUE (OVERTURE)	3:04
02 - CHAPTER I: HARREN'S HOPE	4:10
03 - CHAPTER II: SETTING SAIL	2:37
04 - CHAPTER III: CORSAIR ATTACK / SHIPWRECKED	3:15
05 - CHAPTER IV: THE CARAVAN	3:01
06 - CHAPTER V: THE GATES OF VAZ'DINAH	1:05
07 - CHAPTER VI: SLAVER'S MARKET	2:42
08 - CHAPTER VII: A CONCUBINE CHOSEN	0:57
09 - CHAPTER VIII: THE REBEL HIDEOUT	3:01
10 - CHAPTER IX: PARTING WAYS	0:41
11 - CHAPTER X: THROUGH THE CATACOMBS	3:00
12 - CHAPTER XI: ASSAULT ON THE PALACE / REUNION	3:01
13 - CHAPTER XII: BETRAYAL AND SORCERY	3:30
14 - CHAPTER XIII: THE NEOTARCH TRIUMPHANT	2:29
15 - CHAPTER XIV: ESCAPE FROM VAZ'DINAH	2:01
16 - CHAPTER XV: THE JOURNEY HOME	3:17
17 - CHAPTER XVI: REDEMPTION	6:26
18 - EPILOGUE	2:41
 TOTAL PLAYING TIME	 50:54

GEOGRAPHY



NARRATIVE

PROLOGUE (OVERTURE)

CHAPTER I: HARREN'S HOPE

Far to the northwest lies the frontier settlement of Harren's Hope. There lives Tyrin and his two years younger sister, Elyn, along with their mother and father, Juna and Eoberth. While life in Harren's Hope is not bountiful, the two children lack not for love and happiness. But in Tyrin's 16th year, the crops fail and the cattle are stricken with disease. Facing starvation and death as winter draws near, the family decides to abandon their homestead and return southeast across the sea to Brenland, where they still have relatives that might take them in.

CHAPTER II: SETTING SAIL

In the port town of Greenstone, the family boards the merchant vessel *Herald* destined for their homeland. To pass the time, Eoberth entertains the family with stories of his growing up in Brenland (he and his brother Burl were the village rascals), and Juna teaches the children Brennish songs and fairy tales from her youth. But only days into their voyage a storm blows the ship off course, driving them far south.

CHAPTER III: CORSAIR ATTACK / SHIPWRECKED

Before the captain and his crew have a chance to return to their original course, the *Herald* is intercepted and attacked by southern corsairs. Juna and Eoberth are slain during the attack, Elyn is taken captive, and Tyrin himself falls overboard. Clinging to a floating barrel he watches in helpless horror as the merchant ship is set aflame and the corsairs sail off with his sister.

CHAPTER IV: THE CARAVAN

On a nameless southern shore, a band of traveling merchants discover an unconscious Tyrin, still roped to the barrel that saved his life. They take him in and tend to his wounds, and he slowly recovers as the caravan makes its way to the fabled city-state of Vaz'Dinah, the *Jewel of the South*.

CHAPTER V: THE GATES OF VAZ'DINAH

When told of Elyn's fate, one of the merchants, Olinnon, informs Tyrin that the corsairs normally sell their captives as slaves in Vaz'Dinah. Feeling sorry for the boy and his sister, Olinnon offers to buy Elyn free, should she turn up at the slaver's market.

CHAPTER VI: SLAVER'S MARKET

Five days into Tyrin's stay in Vaz'Dinah, he and the merchant leave their caravanserai to visit the slaver's market, same as every day since their arrival. This day, however, luck shines on them, and less than an hour into the auction a shackled Elyn is led up on the dais. Olinnon bids on Elyn, but suddenly a hush falls over the crowd as a man in livery makes his way to the front.

CHAPTER VII: A CONCUBINE CHOSEN

The liveried man declares that the Neotarch Zalim, ruler of Vaz'Dinah, has chosen this girl to be his concubine and all bidding will stop. Tyrin attempts to interfere but is held back by Olinnon, who warns him of crossing the Neotarch, who is said to be a tyrant and a decadent madman. Again, the boy is forced to watch as his sister disappears to an unknown fate.

CHAPTER VIII: THE REBEL HIDEOUT

Leaving the slaver's market, the boy and the merchant are approached by a man who says he has overheard their conversation, and there is someone who would like to meet them. The man leads them to a squalid part of the city, where in the secret back room of a tavern they are introduced to Nessah, a former captain of the palace guard who is planning an uprising. In just a few days time, Nessah and her men will secretly enter the palace through the city's old catacombs and lead an assault on the Neotarch. But she needs more men and asks Tyrin to join their cause, in exchange for which the rebels will help him free his sister. Tyrin agrees, seeing no possible way of rescuing Elyn on his own.

CHAPTER IX: PARTING WAYS

Olinnon, who has too much to lose to get involved in such a risky venture, refuses to have anything to do with the rebels. But he promises Tyrin that no matter the outcome of the attempted uprising, he will help them both get back to the north if the boy manages to free his sister and escape with their lives. Wishing him good luck, he bids Tyrin farewell.

CHAPTER X: THROUGH THE CATACOMBS

Led by Nessah and her second-in-command, the former gladiator Ulos, the band of rebels cautiously make their way through the catacombs. It is an ancient place, shrouded in an eerie stillness, and the air is thick with the smell of damp and decay. Beneath the palace, Nessah's men have broken down a section of a wall, which leads them into the lower levels of the Neotarch's sprawling residence.

CHAPTER XI: ASSAULT ON THE PALACE / REUNION

As the rebels begin their assault on the palace, Tyrin and Ulos take advantage of the ensuing confusion to make their way to the Concubine's Quarters. There they are confronted by a quartet of eunuch guards, and a brief battle follows. The skilled and ruthless Ulos makes short work of three of them. Tyrin's disgust at having slain the fourth is quickly replaced by joy and relief at finally being reunited with his sister.

CHAPTER XII: BETRAYAL AND SORCERY

When Tyrin, Elyn and Ulos attempt to rejoin the others, it suddenly becomes clear that they have walked into a trap. Someone among the rebels has betrayed them and alerted the Neotarch to their plans. A large contingent of soldiers have Nessah and the rebels surrounded in the palace gardens. Nessah is captured in the battle that follows, and as she is dragged away she orders the others to flee and fight another day. The two siblings, along with Ulos and a handful of rebel survivors flee down to the catacombs, but they find no safety there. With a rumble and a groan the countless tombs start to break open, and they are attacked by the mummified remains of the ones buried there — a measure taken by the ruler's High Magi to ensure no one gets away. They fight their way through the undead menace, and Ulos sacrifices his life to allow the others to escape.

CHAPTER XIII: THE NEOTARCH TRIUMPHANT

After the failed uprising, Vaz'Dinah enters a state of martial law. Bent on rooting out all opposition, the Neotarch begins a purge, capturing or killing everyone even remotely suspected of being in league with the rebels. Disguised as lepers in rags, Tyrin and Elyn watch in horror as a series of public mass executions begin. Nessah is among the captured, and it takes her three whole days to die.

CHAPTER XIV: ESCAPE FROM VAZ'DINAH

Tyrin and Elyn spend two miserable weeks living in the gutters of Vaz'Dinah, until one day a beggar child seeks them out bringing word from Olinnon, who has also gone into hiding. They meet with the merchant, who is holed up in an abandoned bathhouse in the Temple Quarter. After having expressed his relief at seeing them both alive and well, he informs them that he will be leaving Vaz'Dinah in two days, and urges them to join him. Dressed as pilgrims they will join a group of worshipers on their yearly pilgrimage to the Martyr's Shrine in Jafir to the east.

CHAPTER XV: THE JOURNEY HOME

In Jafir, the two siblings bid Olinnon farewell and board a ship set for the north. After an uneventful voyage they arrive in the town of Alysport in western Brenland. The remainder of the coin provided by Olinnon buys them two seats on a merchant's cart headed north. Despite their joy over seeing the rolling springtime landscape of Brenland, Tyrin can't help but notice that his sister is troubled and somehow distant. After a fortnight they finally arrive in Barwycke, a village by the river Elwyr and home to their uncle Burl.

CHAPTER XVI: REDEMPTION

Burl, a miller, a widower, and a ageing man of few smiles, takes the siblings in without question, but also without apparent joy. He makes them work hard and sleep little. As spring becomes summer, Tyrin notices that his memories of the south and their lives in Harren's Hope before that grow increasingly distant. But at the same rate he finds hope again, Elyn becomes more silent and reclusive. She waves off his questions and his worries, saying she will be fine. At one point though, when he asks what is wrong, she says "I just want to go home." Three weeks later Tyrin wakes up after a night of restless sleep to find Elyn's cot empty. In the pre-dawn gloom he goes out to look for her. And he finds her, floating face-down in the dam by the mill.

EPILOGUE

The Neotarch Zalim is pleased. It has been eight months since the purge, and his enemies have been rooted out or has fled the city with their tails between their legs. Life is good. Especially so since his servants will be bringing new flesh from the market to his chambers tonight: a northern youth, just shy of manhood. Zalim has always had a taste for fair hair and skin. He drinks his wine and smokes his Khash, anticipating, while the servants prepare his new toy.

As the boy is brought before him, naked, oiled and shaved, Zalim experiences a tinge of expectation. This youth has an air of defiance about him! While the Neotarch doesn't mind innocence and fear, there is nothing quite like breaking the minds and wills of the strong. As he orders the boy to come forward and kiss him, he reminds himself to reward the slaver handsomely. In a world of cretins, it is important to show capable men the gratitude that they deserve.

To his surprise, the northern youth obliges without hesitation. And as Zalim feels the burnt, bitter taste of Dragon Lotus on his tongue, the boy smiles at him.

"For Elyn," the boy says. "For Elyn."

CREDITS

Waters of Redemption was composed and recorded at various locations (coffee shops, parks, buses, my girlfriend's kitchen, and my own) in and around Gävle, Sweden between April and November 2016. For more information about the technical details of the project, please visit www.mattiaswestlund.net.

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