

**Of the Sky, Of the Sea, and of the Stones**  
**Chapter 3 - Of the Sea**  
**Part 4 - Meeting the Warriors**

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The warriors from Kioshell made short work of the giant crab. After hacking and smashing through its body they moved onto the legs and removed them from the sea fiend's torso with brutal efficiency granted to them by their greataxes and massive hammers.

When they were done, two warriors were seemingly issued instructions, left the scene, and proceeded west; the same direction the villagers had fled before the bloody battle. Nine fighters remained in the shallows that were dyed red with the blood of man but were becoming inky as well from the oil-like sanguine essence of the massive crustacean. The result was a thick ichor of red and black that coated the white sand and darkened the once crystal clear waters. Of the nine, the woman who was the most distraught by the death of their comrade returned to the bifurcated body of the man and she knelt by the two pieces of his body once more, completely unbothered by the crimson and charcoal shallows.

The other eight approached the partially buried head of the Grandchild of Ziz and seemed to discuss what to do with it. It was then that I left my perch upon the deck of the hut upon a snowy hill and made my way to them. I was tempted to roll up my traveling robe as I was about to enter the water but decided against it, for my resistance to the cold was already abysmal and I did not wish to invite illness that was borne from such climates and exposure to it.

So I waded into the shallows that reached my shins and sighed as the two types of blood began staining my somewhat-new robe, which I had purchased specifically for this voyage. However, it did not deter me from exchanging words with the warriors of Kioshell before me then. "Greetings, mighty slayers of sea monsters!" I addressed the group, most of who turned to me in response. There was a look of surprise in the eyes of the seven who regarded me then, though the last was still peering at the exposed eye of the dragon's huge skull.

"Old man, w'at are you doing 'ere?" demanded a gruff hulk of a warrior with a shaggy red mane and beard. "Did you not get t'e warning?"

“Oh, yes, I was quite aware of the danger! I retreated up to the shack while the battle raged, however, I didn’t flee with the others because I needed to observe the fascinating specimens!” The seven exchanged confused glances. It was clear that they could not fathom my reasoning, so I moved on quickly as to avoid unnerving them, “Er, I know of the creature that this skull came from! I can advise you on how to deal with it, if you wish that knowledge from me.”

“You know of t’is t’ing?” Turned the eighth then towards me, finally breaking their gaze with the Grandchild of Ziz, whose emerald eye was focused intently on me as well.



“Eocar, t’is old man is surely mad,” the gruff red-bearded one stated with a dismissive gesture in my direction. “Let us s’ove it into t’e sea and be done wit’ it!”

“And let it summon a storm again?” A blonde warrior woman with a chin scar asked in a manner that was more a statement.

The shaggy-maned man was about to retort to the blonde, however, was interrupted by the one known as Eocar, who only said “Quiet.” As this command, the others ceased their bickering immediately. “I would ‘ear w’at t’is elder would say of t’is beast’s skull,” Eocar locked their dark-irised eyes on me. Their short, black mohawk and vertical face tattoo that ran from their forehead to their chin in a series of intricately descending weavings of noir ink was intimidating to me. They seemed like a person to not cross under any circumstance, both from their piercing gaze and the clear indication that they were in charge.

“This is the skull of a powerful dragon known as a ‘Grandchild of Ziz’. They are no mere offspring, though, as you have seen. They have powers of wind, light, and fire, but not always all three. If you uncover it from the sand, it could cause as much havoc as before,” I explained.

“Powers of lig’t and fire...” Eocar quoted before sparing a glance towards the great emerald eye of the beast in question, whose pupil constricted as it leered at me. I got the impression that it was angry, though thankfully could not move in any way. Eocar, with keen intuition, picked up on this and commented, “it must ‘ave been ‘oping we would free it. We ‘ave never seen its like. W’at would you suggest, elder? ‘Ow to dispose of it?”

“All Grandchildren of Ziz, as well as Children of Ziz, have hearts that are the source of their power. Though, these hearts are not like yours or mine, or even like that of other huge organisms! They are crystalline spheres of turquoise that exude immense energy, however, I was not certain in what part of the body these hearts could be found, until now. I would wager that its heart is in the back of the skull, where the brain of most creatures would be. With your tools, crack open its skull, like you did that great crustacean, and remove the heart so that it can no longer cause you or your people any trouble,” I suggested.

Eocar nodded at my suggestion before they turned to their crew, “T’oug’ts?”

The shaggy red mane scoffed before replying, “Ack, we were gonna do t’at anyway!”

“Daft Dairo; dim as ever. ‘E already forgot ‘is own desire to force it into the deep water,” the blonde with the chin scar shook her head. After that, all of the others agreed to go along with my suggestion as Dairo scowled.

“T’en let us s’atter t’is skull and ‘arvest t’e ‘eart”, Eocar finalized as the warriors began to work. All the while, the emerald eye looked at me with a glare of utmost hatred. Its pupil was so constricted with rage that it was naught but a black dot in a sea of seething green.