

Of the Sky, Of the Sea, and of the Stones
Chapter 3 - Of the Sea
Part 12 - Ice Blockade

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Before us then, barring our way, was the frozen body of some disfigured cetacean. The huge size and bizarre shape, in addition to the white frost obscuring parts of it from sight, made it extremely difficult to interpret, even for biologically educated individuals such as myself and Pyloc. However, the folly in such thought is that scholars primarily know of things from books filled with information and illustrations, as was proven when Eocar explained what laid dead and encased in ice upon our path.

“T’is looks to be t’e carcass of a Brinefoam w’ale calf,” the tall and broad-shouldered warrior in brown and black armour said while examining the ice sculpture of a corpse closely and with a hand upon it, feeling its rugged, frigid hide with a palm encased in a chitinous gauntlet. “Looks to ‘ave been ravaged by some sort of toot’ed predator,” they continued while pointing to a tremendous bite mark that looks to have taken a huge chunk out of what appeared to be the dorsal fin and back of the Brinefoam whale calf.

“Yea’, looks like a Brinefoam w’ale calf,” Carpi agreed with an enthusiastic nod, though shortly after furrowed her brow and scratched her chin in thought. “But... ‘ow did it get all t’e way ‘ere? We’re probably six or seven kilometers from t’e s’ore,” the lass in thin red shell armour pondered understandably.

We were all at a loss for how to explain the icy blockade in our way. The frozen corpse was spanning the space between the mountain base on our right (north) and a leftside (south) steep hill in the snowy field we were crossing that had a slope covered in sleek, shiny blue-white ice. As the four of us discussed how to proceed, we investigated the area and noted dents as well as craters leading west along the frozen hill, though these depressions were in undisturbed ice, indicating that their possibly unnatural birth occurred before the most recent snowfall and freezing chill. Together, our party hypothesized that something, possibly the predator responsible for the wounds on the ten-meter-long Brinefoam whale calf, had flung the carcass inland all the way from the sea.

While agreeing with the hypothesis based on the information we had collected and interpreted, Pyloc still balked at the notion of a living creature with the strength to toss such a huge body so far. At this, Eocar and Carpi immediately, yet politely, informed Pyloc of at least a few things in the northern waters of Okeanos that could potentially perform such a feat. The bearded scholar, more familiar with smaller, coastal creatures that he regularly studied, gasped at some of the tales told of colossal squid and monstrous sharks. I corroborated Eocar and Carpi's tales by reminding Pyloc of what I told him regarding the Children of Ziz, which made him nod in respectful acknowledgement.



However, the formation of this incredible theory did not help us through the pass, and instead of trying to scale the slippery, rocky, and frigid slopes flanking the frozen carcass, we turned around and sought another way to reach the stretch of northwestern coast that held the Sea Temple and the mysteries within.

We traveled east for a bit before swinging south, around the hill that flanked the left side of the blocked pass, and then turned west, though, due to the severity of the ice and snow conditions, we could not proceed as north as we wanted or expected. Every time we tried to press northward, we were met with soft snow walls that allowed for neither climbing nor walking. Burrowing was not an option either, as such light snow apparently did not pack tightly enough together to allow for the creation of a safe tunnel. We kept on the western path, which shortly brought us to the broken rim of Old Pleon, bordered by a decrepit stone half wall. Separating the wall was a gap next to which a busted metal gate laid half-frozen in a snowbank coated with ice. As we passed through it, we noted that some of the vertical shafts of metal composing the gate door were sheared and cut in places and mangled in others, as if aggressive clamping and snapping had occurred; an ominous sign.

Eocar halted our march by the remains of the gate and spoke of the risk in proceeding. There were no recent reports of anything dangerous coming out of the Pleon Ruins, however, this was likely due to the fact that no one had come here since it was attacked and destroyed by hostile crustaceans and did not mean that the area

was safe. Though, as Carpi brought up, there was also nothing to say that the area was still dangerous. It was very possible that the deadly sea fiends who invaded from the shore had returned to the waves long ago, leaving behind the husk of a town. It was then that we took a vote. Since there was no proof of danger, Eocar did not insist on stopping the expedition, though was still wary. As the votes were cast, myself, Pyloc, and Carpi all voted to continue through the ruins of Old Pleon and keep as much to the north as possible in order to keep going toward the Sea Temple. Eocar grimaced before letting out a defeated sigh. However, they did not complain as they led us into the ruins, though, from what we found there shortly after, no one would have blamed them if they did.