

Of the Sky, Of the Sea, and of the Stones
Chapter 3 - Of the Sea
Part 8 - Cooking with Particles

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After I had recounted the entirety of my experience on Temptes Equit, Pyloc launched many questions at me. I responded to each one in crisp, clean answers so that my host would feel indebted to me and hopefully share some of his knowledge in return.

When Pyloc's stream of questions had ended, he seemed immensely satisfied, as if he had just partaken in an extravagant buffet. He stood up and stretched, causing his simple beige cloth shirt and shorts to ripple in the turquoise light. The veins of light from the luminous water and the pink vapours created a very soothing combination in my mind and body; as if all of my muscles were relaxing. I slouched into a position that was more lying down than sitting, though Pyloc did not seem to mind in the slightest. In fact, he encouraged the behaviour by offering me dinner and a place to rest for the night.

At first, I was surprised to hear him mention night, for I did not think it was that late in the evening. However, as I peered up at the grids of sticks that formed small, simple vents and chimneys, I saw that the sky was darkening. The day had passed by in what felt like a blur. One moment I was docking at Kioshell island's port in the city of Cephalon, then I was watching Eocar and their warriors fight a monstrous crab, and now I was lounging in the lair of someone who must surely be a fellow scholar in the company of a dragon's glowing heart. "What's on the menu?" I decided to ask instead of seeking a return of academic intelligence, for if I was spending the night, there would be plenty of time to speak during and after the offered meal.

"Morsus squilla," replied my bearded host as he walked towards a huge sculpture of a species of whale that I was not familiar with. It had many mishappen lumps for a body along with rectangular fins and an undulating, tapering body that ended in a spade-like tail. Pyloc went around to the far side and it sounded like he opened a door, which was accompanied by a gentle frosty cloud. Within a few moments, he returned with a wooden bowl full of minuscule crustaceans of conical shape who had proportionately massive mouths full of sharp little teeth. They had spindly limbs and antennae, though were thankfully motionless. "Ever had squilla

before? They're quite common in Koivan waters, though are not seen often in warmer climates. The 'Morsus' variety are known to be fierce little predators who hunt smaller squilla, which, in my opinion, makes them much tastier," he ended by licking his lips.

"No, I can't say that I have tried them, though am famished and would not mind doing so!" I replied hungrily, to which Pyloc nodded agreeably.

"The cold works up quite an appetite," spoke my host sagely. He went about gathering various tools and implements, seemingly for cooking, though he brought them all to the circle of small cetacean benches where I was now fully laying comfortably. "Earlier, you mentioned that this dragon heart can give off energy in a way to power things. I have a cooking instrument that requires fuel to produce heat and another device that is meant to separate aetherial and oceanic particles. I want to try and use both to get that big blue-green sphere to cook up the squilla!"

At this, I sat up and adjusted my chartreuse linen sweater and grey trousers, though simply sat and watched at first as Pyloc went about his experiment. He placed a stand of wire metal about half a meter in diameter in the center of the pool in front of me and rested a large vial on top of it, which made the glass structure sit about a third of a meter from the pinkly steaming cyan water. At the top of the vial, there was an opening where a metal fixture was installed that had a plate on top as well as a few knobs and other adjustable pieces. "What are your devices called?"



"The vial-like thing is called a volcano plate, as it acts as its namesake to send pressure upward and produces heat, though, it needs fuel. Usually, I use sunlight to heat the water in the chamber, but today we'll try dragon heart energy," explained Pyloc as he lifted the metal disk off of the volcano plate's glass neck and scooped a handful of water from the pool into the vase-like device before capping it once more

with the same disk. My host proceeded to fiddle with knobs as he elaborated on the other device, “the thing that separates aetherial and oceanic particles is less of a device and more of something I harvested from the fresh corpse of one of the crazy crabs that live here. Some unknown beast from the sea completely destroyed a Coral Strider, a lanky pink species about two meters tall, and tossed its corpse upon the shore just south of here. Striders feed off of tiny organisms in the air and sea, therefore they have an organ in their mouth that helps them filter-feed. I took this bit, and a few other select cuts, from the Coral Strider’s corpse.” Pyloc lifted the strider’s filter, which looked like a flute covered in thick, short, white hair. In the side of the vial was a corked hole, which Pyloc uncorked and inserted one end of the tube-like filter so that the Coral Strider’s feeding instrument stayed perpendicular to the volcano plate’s body.

“And now what?” I asked curiously, scratching my chin. I saw the logic in his plan and was familiar enough with chemistry equipment to see the reason behind the logic, however, I was unsure if energy could be manipulated in this manner.

“Now we position the fuel source...” my host spoke as he went over to the large crate containing the dragon’s heart and opened it to reveal aetherial brilliance that could only come from something borne of the Sky. Pyloc, with some effort, rolled the orb that was taller than himself over to the cooking pool. With some splashing, the scholar rolled the heart over and positioned it so that the free end of the Coral Strider’s filter touched it. Initially, nothing happened, however, after Pyloc fiddled with the knobs of the volcano plate a bit more (which he stated was to focus the pressure within the glass vessel), the small amount of water within the base of the vase began to bubble, which caused Pyloc to gasp and smile broadly. This was clearly the result he was after. I peered at the Coral Strider’s filter, which was now also radiating a blue-green light, and saw that it was drawing in the luminance from the sphere and was projecting it into the glass object before the energy swirled around and quickly became transparent.

“It seems to be working!” I stated, impressed, which earned a proud chuckle from the bearded man before me, who then handed me a small, square plate of orange-brown wood and a simple skewer made of the same material. My host then plopped one of the squilla onto the top of the volcano plate’s flat metal cap and it began to sizzle and gave off a mouth-watering briny scent. It was not long before we had a lovely meal going, which was full of Pyloc telling me of the most interesting bits regarding Kioshell’s geography; some of which were crystal clear indications of where I should head to next in my quest for knowledge about the Sea.