

**Of the Sky, Of the Sea, and of the Stones**  
**Chapter 3 - Of the Sea**  
**Part 1 - Northward**

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When I was 40 years old, I set out for the most eastern of the isles in the chilly Koivu sea: Kioshell Island. It was the bit of Koivan land closest to my Global Lore Researcher's Union chapter on Orosilla, so it made for the ideal place to start my search of the north.

Much of what I had learned 10 years earlier during my adventures in Temptes Equit, as well as the knowledge I had gained from living and learning with the Aetherian scholars who escaped the sinking of the flying city, pointed towards the Koivu Sea as a place where ancient knowledge could be found.

Compounding this with all the cryptic texts and damaged scrolls obtained from partially exposed temples peeking out of the ice and snow that have made their way into the GLRU's hands over the years further strengthened my resolve to head into frigid waters, despite detesting the cold.

Northward I went, accompanied only by my warmest clothes and a few supplies. I had learned from past experiences that traveling light was both efficient and less of a headache, however, I made sure to bring important tools like knives, ropes, and matches in addition to a variety of portable testing apparatuses.

I could not convince any of my fellow scholars to join me in this venture, as bookworms rarely wish to leave the safety of their study halls and libraries. I could not fault them, for I mostly felt the same way, yet my thirst for knowledge needed to be quenched.

Kioshell Island was renowned for its variety and quality of crab species. Its crustacean bounty was harvested regularly by the bravest fishermen and sailors, though dangerous conditions around the island prevented most from seeking this cold gold. I booked passage upon a fishing ship heading that way out of Lofous' western harbour and the trip was short, however, my stay on this icy island was longer than I had planned due to unforeseen consequences (which I will elaborate on a bit later).



We approached from the south and I bore witness to an impressive natural fortress of snow and ice; a place I could not fathom living, though the few bits of safe southern shoreline were dotted with settlements. There weren't many permanent residents, as the available space in which to live was very limited. Only the white-sand beaches, which looked permanently covered in snow despite their makeup definitely being small grains of sediment, were habitable. Along most of the island's edges, there were but sheer cliffs of grey stone and pale frost. More inland there was so much snow and ice, which regularly fell from above, that there was no point in building settlements further in because of the difficulty it would cause to maintain as well as travel to and from. The coasts were free of such issues due to the bitter winds that whipped them regularly prevented the frozen falling water from settling in inconvenient places.

The island of Kioshell was composed of two main portions: the western part that was mostly tundra and the eastern part that was like a great mound in the form of a gently sloping white mountain. The port we landed at was upon the eastern portion at the southeastern foot of the snowy mountain, which the locals called Ice Hammer, for its shape was not unlike that of a mallet with a rounded head.

Shortly after the fishing ship I was aboard docked, I disembarked and went straight to the inn nearest the harbour to find accommodations. Before I could make it through the door, however, I witnessed a terrified man running and screaming past. He was running away from the docks and was screeching about a monstrous crab devastating his fishing vessel, to which many who were milling about the area exclaimed in fright. Apparently, this wasn't an uncommon occurrence and was a cause for concern.

I had heard that some of the crustacean species on Kioshell were huge and dangerous, though nothing I had ever heard of, or read, compared to the sinister shelled sea beast that assaulted the docks then. Like many around me that were more curious than afraid, I moved towards the area of the docks that the screaming man was fleeing from.

As a group, a few other travelers, some locals, and I went to check out this clawed colossus, though we froze when we saw it, for the screeching fisherman had not mentioned the size of his vessel. Many assumed he was referring to a

single-person boat, but this was a false assumption. Approaching the docks, we heard the violent smashing of wood and the clanging of metal being pounded through the cold veil of white mist that hung in the air by the coast. With a sudden gust, the pale haze cleared to reveal a beast from the brine like none I had seen before or after my time on Kioshell. It was roughly the same size as the fishing ship that had ferried me here and was in the process of tearing apart a vessel of similar proportions with a cold fury, pausing only to fling away huge bits of debris or adjust the monstrous maw that was its shell: the living, partially decomposed head of a sky serpent.