

**Of the Sky, Of the Sea, and of the Stones**  
**Chapter 3 - Of the Sea**  
**Part 7 - Seaside Domain**

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“Sky dragons?” I replied, pondering this shaggy-maned fellow’s appellation for what must surely be the Children and Grandchildren of Ziz. However, before our discussion could continue, Eocar politely interrupted.

“Pardon us, gentlemen,” they began with an apologetic gesture, “But we must take our leave. Please take care of yourselves and t’e dragon ‘eart.” And with that, the hunter-warriors all followed their leader and went back the way we had come. Some waved goodbye and bid us farewell, which I returned, but bearded Pyloc merely grunted in response, eyes fixed on me.

After the others left, I responded to the blue-robed man’s questions as we stood on the ivory sands of Kioshell’s east coast. We stood next to his dark-wood floating house, which blocked most of the coastal gusts of salt and spray, and I was glad for it as I was able to think clearly instead of shivering incoherently. I recounted what I knew of the majestic winged rainbow serpents of the sky, which melted Pyloc’s hostile scrutiny into curious understanding. When he wasn’t scowling, the dusty-skinned man’s face featured a prominent nose and thick eyebrows supported by squarish cheekbones that made him look rigid and stalwart despite likely being around my (then) age of 50.

I spent a few minutes going over a summary of the major points about my adventure on Temptes Equit, though, before long, Pyloc decided to invite me into his home to continue the discussion in a more comfortable setting. Pyloc shared his thoughts on the huge, glowing, orb of a heart he now had somewhere nearby. “What wondrous anatomy! I had never thought that such incredible creatures could be so different from beasts of the land, or even the strange monstrosities of the sea! I remember getting wind of new information about The Sky and the arrival of some flying city folk at Mount Oros a few years ago, but I had no idea that was you! Athos, was it?” He asked for confirmation as he led me through his front doors, which were a pair of driftwood planks, much lighter in colour than the rest of the house, that had carvings of sea creatures upon them and seashell handles.

“Yes, Athos Angion, of Mount Oros but originally Euryph,” I supplied, noting the simple yet efficient construction of his house which seemed to be held together by many strategically placed wooden dowels of various sizes. There was not a screw in sight, nor any metal. Everything I saw within and without his home was organically taken and basically made, though carefully and with purpose.

Beyond the doors was a large, open area with a variety of wooden sculptures, furniture, and implements that I didn't recognize, including a cubic one that was glowing with a familiar blue-green light through a few small cracks at the corners. The ground was sand and pocketed with many shallow pools of cyan water from which rose constant but slight pink vapours and which also illuminated the big room in soft, turquoise light. “You can take off your outerwear,” my host suggested while removing his thick, cobalt robe and hanging it upon a free hook of a thin, tall octopus sculpture made from yellow-orange wood. He extended a hand towards me as an offer to secure my apparel.

“Thank you,” I took him up on his offer, and as I removed my dense, ash-coloured traveling cloak, I felt the heat much more noticeably. Pyloc placed my cloak on the tentacle hook of the coatrack next to his and removed his shoes as well before directly walking into the steaming pools of light blue that were like tiny lakes containing wondrous wooden creations. “Shall I de-shoe as well?” I asked, to which I received a nod and an inviting wave.



Upon doing so and following Pyloc, my feet were greeted by marvelously silky, warm water that smelled thoroughly of salt, stronger than the sea, but not overpowering or unpleasant to the nostrils. It was like someone was making soup but only added salt to the water and nothing else. I took each step carefully, unsure what to expect, though Pyloc smiled from his spot upon a bench that was part of a circle of other benches, all shaped like different kinds of porpoises chasing one another in a

ring. “It’s all right, the warmth and steam are from two kinds of bacteria exhibiting convenient symbiosis.”

“Convenient for humans, you mean?” I queried, relieved at the rational explanation, and took a seat upon the bottlenose dolphin-shaped bench of silver driftwood that was across from Pyloc’s oaken bench that resembled a melon-headed whale.

“Indeed!” He agreed, “There is a species that lives in the sand, Grain-Grazers, that eat sand and defecate salt, while in the water lives a species, Brine-Drinkers, that eat salt and defecate fresh sand! Both species live in the area naturally, but I was able to concentrate them in very favourable ratios. The rapid, constant feeding and defecation exchanges create heat enough to warm the pools and cause some of the water to evaporate, which gets refilled on occasion.”

I scratched my chin in contemplation, “Fascinating, you must be quite the scholar to deduce such a thing.”

“You appreciate the knowledge but are not impressed,” Pyloc stated, squinting at me as only a scholar jealous of another’s hidden knowledge would.

“No, it’s not that!” I began, worried I had offended him, though he held up a hand.

“Nevermind,” he shook his shaggy visage to dissuade me from any apologies, “You’ve clearly seen and experienced many significantly more interesting things than bacteria that eat each other’s shit!” He ended with a short laugh, to which I smiled in relief. “Now, you were telling me about a flying city and some sky dragons...” Pyloc leaned closer, eager for more knowledge.

I indulged him in his curiosity, and felt that I would possibly be able to ask for a return of information from him, though about The Sea instead of The Sky.