

Of the Sky, Of the Sea, and of the Stones
Chapter 2 - Of the Sky
Part 13 - Securing the Library

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As I rushed down the wide hallway I came to Cais's desk soon enough, though out of breath. I saw the head librarian in counsel with his three assistants: Relva the green cat with fur like grass, Olhos the orange and black one with a stern gaze, and Maos, the iridescent violet feline that had given me a bookmark.

The head librarian nodded briefly at me before returning his attention to the very high-strung cats. They seemed to be communicating something very important to their leader. After a few more meows, Cais dismissed them with instructions, to which they seemingly bounded off to follow. "Is everything well, mister Athos?" he then looked at me, his expression welcoming but gravely concerned.

"No sir, it is not!" I replied honestly, "monsters, pink...slug-like fiends that were once people. They are in the city and attacking and turning people into more...tongue-like abominations!" I stammered out in what was likely very poor Koivan. My mind was reeling from the horror of what I had just witnessed, though the cyan skinned man before me seemed to understand clearly.

"My assistants just gave me a similar, though more detailed, report. Come, let's not waste any time. I've asked Relva, Olhos, and Maos to secure the building's entrances and exits. We actually have recently updated emergency procedures and protocols, so everyone should know exactly what to do," the navy-maned man assured me, though his hands, resting upon his desk, were clenched very tightly. He then stood up quickly before continuing, "there are things that I need to do as well, though I could use a hand."

Understanding his meaning, I responded, "It would be my pleasure to assist you!"

And with that, we set off, but this time down a different path than the one he had taken me before. Through a smaller corridor than most, lined with shelves packed with folders and drawers for filing cabinets, we travelled until we reached a cramped stairwell that descended on the right and ascended on the left.

We took the left and rose until we reached an upper area that consisted solely of thin, yet railed, walkways of grey stone that ringed the circumference of the grand Central Library. This seemed to be a way to access, and observe, much of the surroundings. On one side we could see most of the library, and on the other we could see directly out of the large, circular stained glass windows set into the domed roof.

“I want to do a lap of the library, to check all the ins and outs,” Cais stated before leading me around the upper walkway. “Please act as my second pair of eyes,” he asked, to which I nodded. I had no actual obligation to help, though the head librarian’s previous kindness and friendly demeanor simply made me want to assist him.



Figure 20. Depiction of a gorgeous stained glass window of the Central Library

As we proceeded, I decided to ask of the things I saw and heard outside, hoping that the scholar would have knowledge to share. “Do you know what ‘ma-hoo-ee-zo-tal eel-hoo-ee-cat-tal’ means?” I queried, though probably butchering this strange language in the process.

The head librarian spared me a quizzical look before something seemed to click within his head. “Oh, you must mean ‘mahuizotl ilhuicatl’,” he responded before turning away and leading me onwards, though he continued speaking, “it means ‘honour the sky’ in Zizzian, the language of the Gods of Aether. It is only used in prayer and communication with clerics. You must have been around when Xiuh, the herald, arrived.”

I nodded, both in agreement to his statement and in understanding of his translation. “The language of the gods...” I mused as we came to our first stop.

Cais looked out the round window at the paved stone pavilion beyond and grimaced at the sight. I followed his gaze and saw what was causing such a reaction. Below, three tongue-beasts had cornered a young woman against an ornate obelisk. She screamed as they began spewing black slime all over her. Shortly after, she fell to the ground and, in the same manner as the man and crone I had witnessed before, transformed into a tongue-beast. Together, the four pink fiends then undulated grotesquely away, likely in search of more victims to convert.

“There was a man...” I began while Cais observed the surroundings and checked the various areas of importance. “...He transformed like that, but he was the only one...at first. He said that he fell ill from the black slime that drenched the city the other day, so that would indicate it took him two days to transform...”

“...But that woman, just now...” Cais continued my thought, catching on, “...she transformed right away. Does this mean that more of that vile tar means quicker...transformations?”

I shrugged in response. “That’s as good a theory as any,” I acknowledged as the blue-haired man led onwards around the ring. Without more information, there was little point in pontification, so we focused on securing the library from above.

Together, the head librarian and I checked all the entrances and exits from above. Cais even had me help him check the integrity of the cables holding up various signs that were dangling rigidly below certain parts of the walkway. They were immensely heavy, but thankfully we only needed to lift them enough to make them sway. When Cais saw that there was no apparent decay, we moved on, for all he cared to know was if they were in danger of falling.

After our lap, Cais was happy to note that nothing seemed to be amiss from above, though as he led me back to the library proper, he spoke, “I need to meet with my assistants once more, to confirm all is well on the ground floor.” We passed through the same tightly packed corridor from earlier and were once more at the head librarian’s desk.

Upon it, peeking out from under a stack of papers, I spied a golden sun illustrated on the cover of some unknown book. It made me remember Xiuh the herald. “Mister Cais,” I started, causing the librarian to turn to look at me as we stood by his desk, waiting for his assistants to return. “...The herald, Xiuh, is a cleric, correct?” to which Cais nodded. “Interesting,” I continued, “clerics are meant to be religious leaders, though when Xiuh saw the plight of Temptes Equit’s people, he seemed...unfazed. Apathetic, even.”

“Unsurprising.” The cyan skinned man frowned, “Gods are not always gracious.”