

**Of the Sky, Of the Sea, and of the Stones**  
**Chapter 3 - Of the Sea**  
**Part 2 - Symbiotic Sea-Fiend**

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The tremendous terror from the sea smashed and picked apart the fishing boat, though it looked to be digging through the top layers of the vessel as if trying to get to the contents inside. What at first looked like furious destruction soon turned out to be frantic excavation. For when the great crab peeled up the last planks covering the central portion of the fishing ship, a stream of much smaller crabs rushed up and out of the boat, careening through and over the railings to return to the frigid depths they called home.

Despite the destruction caused, I understood the crab's reasoning. They were rescuing their weaker kin from humans butchering and consuming them; hardly a sentiment that I could resent them for, although the mayhem caused was most regrettable. The fishing community of Kioshell island, however, felt very differently.

The giant crab adjusted the still-living skull of the sky serpent that was on its back as it watched the last of the smaller crabs escape the mostly destroyed ship. When the little ones were all clear, the great crustacean unleashed true destruction; the kind that made their previous actions seem like gentle prodding.

Grand-shelled and glorious, they dug their eight pillar-like legs into the bone-white sand of the shivering shallows in the harbour before gently tapping on the sky serpent's skull with their smaller right claw. This seemed to rouse the conscious, yet very unfocused, severed head. The crab then clamped onto the stern of the mostly-wrecked ship with their lesser pincer while the greater one, fearsomely almost twice the size, clenched the forepeak hard enough to crack the wood and dent the metal. They then leaned forward until the majority of their frame was angled downward and their back, covered by their living shell, was very near to the ship.

The serpent head, that of a particularly large Grandchild of Ziz, was missing all of their lower jaw, leaving only the upper skull to rest upon their crustacean host. These creatures were known to be immensely resilient, though I had seen many, albeit smaller, sky serpents perish at the strike of a demonic eel's tail swipe long ago. This half-a-head was still in great condition, all things considered.



Some of the fleshy areas near the base of the skull were ragged and frayed, though not sloughing off like how rotted flesh would. All of the upper teeth seemed to be present and rested around the crab's right side and appeared almost like a shoulder guard that one can sometimes spy on soldiers for hire or other professional fighters. This made the cranium rest perpendicular to the crab's back so that the skull's left eye faced the same way that the crustacean would naturally be looking, while the right looked behind. All of the normally vibrant feathers adorned the skull, which is how I recognized it as a Grandchild of Ziz. Their rainbow brilliance was dazzlingly painful when beheld, though not so much as what viewing a full specimen would be like. The frill of longer feathers behind the head fluttered in the cold breeze while the sky serpent's head contemplated the ship held by its crab mount. The rainbow snake's left eye peered at the wreckage before a terrible howling seemed to pick up.

At first, I thought it was the wind, but then I noticed the semi-skull vibrating angrily. The howling made a terrifying crescendo, like an approaching tornado, and when it reached the apex everyone present had to cover their ears. Though, when this high point was reached, the colossal crab lifted and threw the decrepit remains of the fishing ship to its right. As the ship sailed for the final time, albeit through the sky instead of the sea, the source of the howling wind became clear. The sky serpent shot forth two vortexes of twisting typhoons, one from each massive nostril, which both collided with the ship's remnants and tore it asunder. This sent debris all over the harbour. At this, people began to panic. Much like the ship's owner had reacted upon his flight from the docks, townspeople, sailors, and many more fled west, towards the opposite side of the island.

I probably should have followed them, but my insane curiosity adhered me to my spot on the docks. I was far enough away that the debris did not reach me, though there was no guarantee that the symbiotic pair would not turn their ire inland to continue their rampage. However, they did not get a chance to do so as burly people came rushing onto the docks from the west. They were armed with massive axes as well as hammers and were yelling battle plans to one another as the group of five charged the ten-limbed terror. They were clearly intent on doing battle with the fiends who were assaulting Kioshell island.