

Of the Sky, Of the Sea, and of the Stones
Chapter 2 - Of the Sky
Part 20 - Fleeing the City

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As we rowed along, we observed a few more of Ziz's grandchildren scorching the tops of buildings, ensuring that everything would be razed. According to the Aetherian scholars, the control mechanisms that kept the city afloat would be safe from the flames. But, the fires would likely trap people underground in areas possibly infested with the disgusting pink beasts that were transforming the sky folk into more of their fell kin. The scholars lamented at the plight of their people and their inability to aid them. The sailors from the Bitterwind assured them that getting out of the city was the wise thing to do, at which I vocally concurred. This seemed to ease the Aetherians slightly, but the loss of their home and likely most of their people, their families and friends, did cast deep shadows upon all of their faces.

Though, when we reached the harbour, our attentions were grabbed by a seen of utmost intensity. Upon the docks, the crew of the Bitterwind was doing battle with multiple tongue-beasts. The slug-like flesh-coloured fiends were trying to spew black slime upon the sailors, but the brave corsairs had armed themselves with barrel lids and planks of wood with rope handles, fashioned into makeshift tower shields. As a few blocked the incoming deluge of tar-like regurgitation, others were attacking beasts from the flanks, hacking and slashing at them with all manner of blades.

Near the gangplank leading onto the ship, Karcharia, Jogo, and Phole were defending the way, having arrived at the scene before us as the first mate predicted. When the boat came to a stop, a group who seemed to be waiting for this exact moment, leapt from the Bitterwind and cleared a path for us. A few picked up the large, yet valuable, escape boat and we proceeded together to the ship, wary of the fighting going on around us. There were a few close calls where tongue-beasts almost drenched me or another of the scholars in foul goo, but we all eventually made it onto the ship unharmed, yet terrified.



Figure 27. A representation of the Bitterwind's brave crew as they prepared to battle the pink fiends

Once we were aboard and the lifeboat was collected the crew fighting on the docks retreated onto the boat as well. With precise direction, Captain Roac guided the crew into an escape from the city. The scholars were told to head below deck for their own safety, which they complied with gladly. But from below I could still hear some of the captain's commands.

"Forward! Left! Right!" I heard him shout on occasion, but was surprised to hear that he was saying these words in Koivan. I gauged that he must have retained much information about Temptes Equit and its people. He and the crew must have learned how to verbally activate the passageways effectively without the need of a translator.

We seemed to be navigating the docks much as we had upon entering the city a few days ago. Descending via one of the spout-like passages, we flowed down back into the ocean waters of Okeanós, upon the North Peleca sea. It was then that the sails were fully unfurled and we sped away from the city. Though as we did so we saw a familiar demon of the deep rise up from the cold water. The Great Red Eel had returned to finish what it began.