

**Of the Sky, Of the Sea, and of the Stones**  
**Chapter 2 - Of the Sky**  
**Part 6 - A Post-Dinner Conversation**

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“Shall we begin, or should they?” Captain Roac quietly asked his first mate. Loud enough that I could hear, but quiet enough that the advisors opposite of him could not. I doubted they would understand his words, but the captain seemed to think that they would be able to read his tone. Luckily, the ladies of Temptes Equit were chatting among themselves about the wine that the captain had offered to everyone.

“Our ship, but their city...” Karcharia growled. “Let’s get the jump on them,” she then added, licking the clam juice from the sides of her face with a dextrous tongue. She then leaned back in her chair and folded her thick arms.

“We’re not here to take anything.” the captain responded. “And remember that these people helped the lads and lasses injured by the...chaos from before.”

“Yeah, in their bloody city, because of their own bloody cannon-thing,” scowled the first mate. “If they hadn’t helped, I would’ve made them pay...”

“With this kind of damage, we’re not going anywhere any time soon. We need lumber. More than we have in storage. Also, I haven’t seen a single tree since entering this place. We’re going to need their help. Let’s allow them to ask the first question,” Roac concluded.

Karcharia did not seem pleased, as her lips coiled back briefly, revealing wicked teeth, not unlike that of a shark. Though, soon, she relaxed her expression and nodded, trusting the captain’s judgement.

Coincidentally, at this time, Senexa and her advisors turned their attention to myself and the Bitterwind’s leaders. While looking at the captain, the elder of cyan skin spoke to me, so that I could continue translating, “Thank you so much for the delicious meal and wonderful wine!”

“My pleasure, good food and drink is better with good company,” Roac nodded.

“It may seem ungrateful to do so, but...would we be able to ask you a few questions? About your arrival in our city and your reason for being here? If, that is, it is not too rude!” Senexa replied.

Roac looked to me and inclined his head, indicating that I should answer this one. I cleared my throat gently, which made Senexa turn her face towards me. “I have hired the good captain and his crew to bring me here. I am researching the Sources of the world, and saw Temptes Equits’ landing in these waters as a rare chance to learn of the Sky.”

“I see,” the regal woman acknowledged. She then smiled, “We feared that you were pirates who had come to plunder the city! But, am relieved to learn of your scholarly intent! You see, all are allowed to enter Temptes Equit, as the way in is automated for convenience, though we rarely have visitors for reasons that I’m sure that you can glean. Our city’s defenses are geared towards larger threats, so we need to be extra cautious when dealing with potential smaller ones, such as greedy privateers.”

At this the captain and first mate exchanged smirks. I chuckled in response to Senexa, though it was a nervous one, for the crew of the Bitterwind were, in fact, actual pirates. I had hired them in place of a more...conventional transport vessel because no one else would agree to take me this far north and this close to a flying city. All were too afraid, but for some reason, Roac and his crew did not seem nearly as daunted. I sensed that Roac had his own reasons for investigating the shining city, though I did not pry.

“Pirates? Us?” Roac baulked before laughing loudly. The guests from Temptes Equit smiled at his laughter, thinking it to be cheerful, but as Karcharia’s barking laughter joined the captain’s, I realized that it was in mirth. Though, the advisors seemed none the wiser.

“Well, since we have no reason to fear your intentions, we would be happy to show you to a place where you could find all the information that you could ever desire about Temptes Equit, as well as much about the Sky. Our library is open to all! Though, unfortunately, you will not be able to take books beyond its property since you are not a citizen of this city. It is one of our laws. It is quite late in the evening now,



Figure 13. Roac’s complex gaze.

though, but I can send some of my people to meet you upon the docks at sunrise to guide you there?” offered the elegant older lady.

“That would be wonderful!” I exclaimed happily and translated what she had said. But, as I did so, I then noticed Roac’s eyes shining with anticipation. I then chuckled again, reeling in my excitement before gesturing a hand towards the captain, who then spoke.

“Would it be possible to send a few more of your people? My ship needs repairs, and we lack the resources. I would like to see your market and purchase some supplies as well,” he inquired, though the tone he used made it seem as if his request was all but granted already.

“Of course!” Senexa replied. “That is a most reasonable request, as it is the city’s fault for damaging your vessel! I will send a voucher with my associates as well, so that you may purchase your repair supplies, as well as food and drink, at no cost to yourself!”

Both Roac and Karcharia smiled widely at this. “Free food and drink, you say...” Karcharia rumbled almost inaudibly while having to wipe small amounts of drool from the sides of her mouth.

Though, after these points were discussed, the conversation died down. Soon, Senexa, Tibia, Vinea, and Voxia left with a fond farewell and myself and the crew settled in for the night. We slept well, knowing that the following day would hold solutions and answers.