

**Of the Sky, Of the Sea, and of the Stones**  
**Chapter 3 - Of the Sea**  
**Part 5 - Collecting a Heart**

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As the Eocar, Dairo, and the other hunters began breaking open the back of the dragon skull, I saw the immensely constricted pupil of the Grandchild of Ziz dart about in a panicked manner. With each crack that appeared on the bone, more and more blue-green light began to filter out, casting cool luminance that was at odds with the red and black blood dyeing the beach's once-white sand.

Soon, there was a great shifting of the head's back bony plate, which came away from the rest of the skull to reveal utter brilliance the likes of which I had never witnessed since. The same could probably be said for the hunters Kioshell, for they all stumbled back and shielded their eyes as the heart of the beast rolled out onto the bloodied sand with a splash. As it did so, out of the corner of my eye (for I was also shielding them from the heart's radiance), I witnessed the exposed eye of the skull immediately go unfocused before coming to a dead halt; all signs of life vanished.

"It's dead now," I announced to the group.

"Aye then, now w'at of t'is blasted orb?" Scowled Dairo while still blocking the harsh yet beautiful light from his vision.

Before I could respond, Eocar spoke up, "We cover it wit' somet'ing and bring it to Pyloc." The mohawked leader then turned to two hunters who were the closest, one with a blue bandana who carried a mace on his back with a round spiked head and the other a hulking mass that sported two gnarly hatchets on his belt, "Coeno, Birgus, go fetc' a tarp and some rope."

I nodded at Eocar, which got their attention. As I spoke up, I noticed that of all those present, including myself, they were the only one who was not flinching back from the light; their eyes were squinting, though otherwise unbothered by the brilliance. "Mighty Eocar, you and your fierce hunters do your people proud! It would be wise indeed to cover this heart and roll it somewhere safe, as it has great potential for energy. I don't know if Kioshell has the need for organic energy beyond the sun, wind, and waves, however, please be sure to put it somewhere safe. I don't really know what such a powerful organ is capable of."



The warrior with black face paint inclined their head in acknowledgment. Before more discussion could be had, Coeno and Birgus returned with the desired materials, and the hunters set to work on obscuring the orb's blue-green light. When they had wrapped and bound the heart until only faint wisps peeked out of the small flaws in the fabric, they began rolling the huge orb, that was about as tall as most of the hunters, toward the east, away from the village and harbour.

As the group left, I followed them, which earned me a harsh look from Eocar, "Elder," they began respectfully yet with force in their voice, "I appreciate your council, but we do not need your 'elp from 'ere."

"Oh, yes, of course! I would not even think about intruding so rudely," I placated before continuing, "However, I was hoping that I could possibly meet with this Pyloc fellow. If you trust them with such a mighty object so readily, they surely know much. I am here to learn, specifically of the Sea, and would like to speak with as many knowledgeable people upon the island as possible."

Eocar fully turned towards me and paused while waving at the others to carrying on, "You did advise us well. Very well, you may accompany us to Pyloc's 'ome. 'Owever, it is up to 'im if 'e will see you or not." The serious warrior spared a glance over my shoulder and clenched their jaw briefly before turning away to follow the other hunters.

I smiled at the chance to speak with someone who might know where I could find information about the Sea; maybe even the whereabouts of a temple or other ancient structure that has yet to be discovered and explored. I began to follow the hunters once more, though noted that there were only eight of them as opposed to eleven, not counting the hunter who had died in battle. My glee at the potential for

learning was then tainted by my curiosity to check over my shoulder at where Eocar was looking.

Behind me, there still rested that female hunter in the bloody sand who was overwhelmed by the death of her comrade. Two other hunters were walking slowly towards the deeper part of the water; where the beach ended and the sea began. Each was respectfully carrying half of the body of the fallen warrior. They placed the bifurcated man in water deep enough for the torso and lower body to sink out of sight: a shore burial. With a grimace, I bowed my head in respect to the fallen hunter and then turned away to catch up with those who transported the luminous heart, though, for the rest of the journey, I could not get the bloody beach or the sorrow upon it out of my mind.