

Of the Sky, Of the Sea, and of the Stones

Part 7 – The Fourth Source

Written by Athos Angion
Loremaster of the GLRU – Mount Oros Chapter

Illustrated by Elador Loam
Novice of the GLRU – Mount Oros Chapter

Quil pressed her body against the metal bar while reaching into her backpack. From it, she pulled out a rolled up leaf. This leaf was from a sub-species of palm tree known as tropius trees.

At this part in Quil's telling of the tale to the village youths, she went into great detail about the nature and evolutionary path of the tropius trees. I shall spare you the majority of the specific facts in favour of a general overview.

Tropius trees are a sub-species of palm found only on Quil's home island of Gainsborough, in the far west waters of Okeanos. They were renowned for being able to grow incredibly tall. Able to reach the stature of large hills and small mountains while remaining relatively thin. Their height allowed them to stretch past all other trees competing for sunlight, which granted them a massive advantage, but oftentimes nature does not know when to say when. This thrust the tropius trees into the sky, where their leaves were subjected to the harshest of winds. Though, these trees had also evolved a thicker, waxy coating upon their leaves. Usually, this waxy coating, called cuticles, were meant to allow plants to retain water in their leaves, but in overabundance they also acted as structural reinforcement.

So, Quil took the rolled up tropius leaf out of her pack and, after a deep breath, released the lodgium bar. She was thrown into the sky violently, but managed to retain her wits. When she was sufficiently clear of her former vehicle, she unfurled the tropius leaf, which caught the wind magnificently and caused the adept to start gliding instead of falling. She surveyed her surroundings and then realized just how far she had been sent. Behind her, she spied the canyon that once held the lodgium gate. But below her she saw only blue waves. She had been rocketed off the island of Agalloch, but luckily in a promising direction. Ahead of her, she saw the ship which had brought her to the island, still resting just offshore of the southwestern beach.

She was headed towards her way off the island, but she was gliding quite slowly, she recounted to me. While doing so, she said that she had ample time to contemplate her experiences upon the island of Agalloch. These thoughts, I shall relay to you, but with my own

findings that took place years after Quil's adventures upon this strange isle. For I once had an opportunity to examine a specimen from that odd isle in my own adeptness, many years ago.

As a merchant ship was passing by Agalloch, a gull carrying a strange bone fragment soared above the vessel at sea. Though, for some reason, the gull careened into the mast, causing it to fall hard onto the deck, which killed the poor bird. In its talons was a chunk of bone, likely something that it was planning to add as a structural component to its nest, though the sailors who witnessed the gull's accident claimed that it was like no other bone that they had ever seen. The captain, stirred by the commotion, examined the bone himself and decided to keep it, in case it was valuable for some esoteric reason.

And, as it turned out, it was. Upon docking at their destination, the captain had struck up a conversation with an erudite of the GLRU, who immediately wished to study it, for they were one who made the study of animals one of their key focuses as a researcher.

When he brought the specimen to his local GLRU chapter for study, myself and a few others were present. The normal method of identifying the nature of a biological specimen was to see what particle traces were left upon it.

Particle traces are a topic that one could lecture upon for days on end. I have unfortunately been an attendee at various seminars and lectures about this subject that stretched on far too long to be worth staying put for. Therefore, I shall inform you of the basics, if you are not already familiar with this concept. If you are an expert in such matters, you may skip the next paragraph. Below, you'll see the GLRU crest depicting a coat of arms and the words (from left to right) "Sky", "Stone", and "Sea" in ancient Koivan, the language of our oldest histories.



There are three sources for all known matter and energy upon Okeanós. The Sky, which gives aethereal particles. The Sea which gives oceanic particles. And the Stones that give geological particles. By rubbing a specific combination of chemicals upon any biological specimen, it will give off one of three shades of blue. For aethereal particles, cyan; for oceanic particles, cerulean; and for geological particles, a deep navy.

But, when this queer bone shard was swabbed, it gave off no such particles. Putting the pieces of the puzzle together in my mind, I theorized that this old fragment was from one of the trolls of Agalloch that Quil had told me about in my youth, but one warped and twisted by an unknown force.

Nothing had ever failed the particle test so conclusively. Nothing we did could help us identify the nature of this bone. We had, apparently, discovered a new source. Or possibly something that removes the source particles from others. With great care, we tucked the specimen away, for a time when we knew more of this strange phenomenon.

Though, with resolve, I set out to learn more. Quil's time on Agalloch ended as she glided down to her transport and sailed off back into the west, and her experience with that hungry, eroding force assailing the trolls ceased as well. Her interests pertained to the many structures and flora of the world, therefore she never returned to Agalloch to examine the destructive force. I initially intended to head there after examining the odd fragment, but as I was sorting out a few matters before leaving, I heard a whisper of another strange occurrence. One of such rarity, that a trip to Agalloch must surely wait.

I heard of one of the rarely glimpsed cities of the sky, home to the rarest of all source originated life, aethereal particles, had descended below the clouds and was now hovering near to a mountain in the far northwestern reaches of the planet. So, instead of heading to Agalloch, I travelled in the opposite direction, towards a fabled city of the sky. This I shall tell you of in the coming chapter, which will be one dedicated to The Sky and the various wonders it holds.

For The Sky was the first of the sources, and the origin of all life, if our oldest known theories are correct. Maybe those who dwell in a world above our own know more by observing us from up high, like a scholar peering at a fungus with a magnifying glass. For the clouds obscure many secrets. Not just flying cities and foreign cultures, but magnificent winged beasts, the most powerful of winds, and a sublime light undeniable to all who witness it.