

**Of the Sky, Of the Sea, and of the Stones**  
**Chapter 3 - Of the Sea**  
**Part 10 - Adventuring Party**

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The next morning, Pyloc and I awoke as the sun rose above the horizon and golden-orange light filtered in through the simple grid-like vents in the ceiling. As I laid there, I pondered what happened when it rained, which I voiced to Pyloc as he was awakening on the far side of the huge sea of sheets.

He got up and got dressed, while I did the same, and explained that he willingly let the frigid northern-chilled rain into his abode and let it wash everything, which he then allowed to dry in the sunlight, for the simple grids above us were moveable; they could fully open to make the indoors a mini-courtyard, or could be fully shut in the event of a harsh storm.

By the time my host had finished explaining his fascinatingly elaborate roofing system, we had packed supplies, a map, and everything else a short two-day archeological expedition would need, all at Pyloc's generous donation, for he had much of such resources from his explorations on the eastern coast of Kioshell island. However, he admitted that he has never found anything of interest along the northeastern shoreline he calls home. What he tells me of this temple within a cove beneath a small mountain upon a northwestern stretch of Kioshell's coast are all tales and whispers he has heard from the locals (Pyloc told me over dinner that he was originally from one of the many small islands south of Orosilla, which explained why he didn't speak like Eocar and the hunter-warriors who avoid "h"s).

We chatted about the tales and whispers he heard as we trekked into Cephalon; the port town I had arrived in not long ago. I was beginning to get familiar with this part of the island, though the bleak coldness still evoked a constant, underlying stress that was hard to ignore when there was nothing to do but march on in frequent stretches of the natural silence between words of a paced conversation amidst academics.

The chill that rigidly stroked my stubbly, aging face and caused my own breath to fog up my spectacles on occasion seeped into my very mind and seemed to freeze tableaux of terror in my brain as Pyloc recounted some of the more peculiar and specific details that the rare visitor of the temple just north of the Pleon Ruins (once

the town of Pleon, but was destroyed by extremely hostile crustaceans that have since settled there) had brought back with them, usually accompanied by terrified, frantic screaming and other maddened traits. These individuals thankfully calmed down after a time and were able to relay their findings, all of which told of horrific ghosts and something the locals called “The Thousand-Bitten”, which was a humanoid figure that was sentient and mobile, yet horrible mangled from the wounds created by many varying unknown sea beasts.

Following the near hour-long stream of terror-induced tales, we reached Cephalon and bumped into Eocar and a few of their monster-crab hunters heading back to their base with recently-purchased supplies from the general store. As we all exchanged pleasantries, Pyloc mentioned where we were heading, excitedly saying that he had always wanted a chance to check out the strange temple.

After exchanging bemused looks with their warriors, Eocar tried to convince us not to visit the temple by ourselves. While no one had ever been physically hurt, and most recovered from their mental afflictions, some explorers had never returned, including one of Eocar’s own cousins.



Pyloc and I exchanged bemused looks of our own, though we both understood where Eocar was coming from. The warrior-leader, whose subordinates called them “Captain”, offered to come along with us on our short expedition and even escort us back to town, for a modest fee. Eocar and the other warriors were in the business of protecting people from huge sea monsters that regularly threatened the towns of Kioshell, so it made sense for them to offer their services. I had no issue with the idea, as hearing the frightening tales and knowing of the island’s excessively hostile coastal fauna were plenty of reasons. Since Pyloc had fed and sheltered me, as well as exchanged information and supplied our expedition, I offered to cover the full cost of the escort fee, which was quite reasonable considering it was about half the cost of what I usually paid a ship for one-way transports between close islands.

And with that, we set off; Eocar sent two of their three accompanying hunters back to their headquarters on the southwestern docks of Cephalon with the bulk of their newly-bought goods while the third was to join Eocar, Pyloc, and myself on the voyage. Before letting his two transporters go, however, Eocar grabbed a couple of small packages out of a bigger one and handed a rectangular parcel to the other warrior (a lithe yet stalwart lass named Carpi) that would be in our traveling quartet. In the boxes were apparently a dried food (called “sea-bark”) made from kelp, a specific kind of crab shell, and various local spices that could both last a very long time in various conditions and was also a pleasant traveling snack due to how low-effort it was to store as well as the decent amount of sustenance it provided.

All packed, planned, and ready to go, the four of us set off down Kio Road, the only major pathway that stretched from Cephalon on the northeastern coast of the diagonally oblong island to the southeast town of Pereon, which resided along a large bay shaped like the open claw of a colossal crab. As we were to approach Pereon, the Pleon Ruins would be on the west side of Kio Road, and the temple north from there within a sea-mouthed cavern below the nearest and smallest mountain. The fifty-kilometer trip to the temple would take until nightfall and the return trip about the same, and would be quite draining, though worth it to discover ancient knowledge that could tell me more about the origin of The Sea.