

Of the Sky, Of the Sea, and of the Stones
Chapter 2 - Of the Sky
Part 22 - Might of the Sky

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The Aetherians and I began to exclaim in shock at the disaster unfolding before us. Temptes Equit had been ravaged by flames but was soon to be overcome by the waters of Okeanos. Our shouting drew the attention of a few sailors, who looked towards the now distant city and joined our exclamations.

The great eel had pulled its head out of the broken entrance and now held a massive turquoise sphere in its jaws, which made the scholars shout about the city's Soul. This bright ball was coursing with clouds of blue and green energy, shrouding much of the red serpent's head. The colossal fiend seemed to be disoriented, as it wavered back and forth dizzily with the Soul in its grip.

As the crimson one undulated, the city began to descend into the waves. The mighty winds below the foundations were still present, though significantly weaker and dissipating more and more as seconds passed. As the first part of the city's bottom entered the ocean, the entire structure's balance shifted. The difference in resistance between air and water caused the city to tip to one side, like a capsized ship. With the momentum of thousands of tons, Temptes Equit tilted and crashed sideways into the waters of the North Peleca Sea, shattering many buildings and tossing a tremendous amount of debris into the currents, which sent up huge waves. With water now rushing into every nook and cranny, the once-flying city was towed under, never to see the sky again.

When the city was finally out of sight, I turned to observe the expressions of the Aetherians. Cais and the others all had immensely sad expressions and many had tears in their eyes. When the city was burning, there was a small chance that it could be rebuilt in the future, but now, after being sent into the abyss, there was no hope of recovery. Anyone and anything of value within Temptes Equit were now lost. I had no words that could soothe such grief, nor did any of the Bitterwind's sailors. Though, that didn't stop the corsairs from offering words of condolences to the cyan-skinned folk, who responded politely with gratitude but, understandably, could not bring themselves to speak any more than that after watching their home be destroyed.



Figure 29. Artist representation of what parts of this flying city must look like now

The destroyer, still clutching the vibrant gem that was the Soul of Temptes Equit, then seemed to regain its senses. It seemed to stare at where the city had sunk beneath the tide and contemplated for a short while. This did not last long and the red monster began to descend as well, though it was interrupted by a typhoon from the west.

Like before, another fierce gust came out of the west, propelling the Bitterwind east with great force, though this time we saw the cause. Descending from the clouds with a blinding radiance of many colours and a sky-splitting hiss like the shriek of the very air being sundered, came a child of Ziz. This being was much larger than the grandchildren of Ziz who burned the city, and even at a distance, it was obvious that it even dwarfed the kilometre-long crimson eel.

The colossal sky serpent dove straight for the one of the sea, the latter of which had their head still shrouded by the energetic haze of the city's Soul. The eel turned to face the threat but was too slow to react, likely impaired in vision enough not to recognize the full gravity of the approaching threat. Without any hint of mercy, the gargantuan winged beast erupted volcanic fury upon the red fiend below it. This fire was projected with such force that it blasted the eel backwards while scorching it. From a distance, it was hard to see what was happening in full detail, but the parts of the eel that could be seen amidst the flames and waves seemed to be bubbling horridly as it thrashed in agony.

Having no choice, it retreated under the waves with its treasure, though the radiant glowing of the Soul made its position known. Undeterred, the child of Ziz unleashed a different attack. Halting its flame breath, it inhaled deeply as it circled the air about where the Soul could be seen. Before the turquoise light could disappear into the depths, however, the painfully iridescent rainbow serpent shot forth a beam of multi-coloured light that reminded me of Temptes Equit's defence cannons, although infinitely more powerful. The technicolour ray pierced the waves and illuminated the seas so brightly that we could see monstrous shadows silhouetted beneath the surface

The beam seemed to hit its mark as the serpentine form of the eel shuddered and grew limp. Its corpse then rose to the surface and we all saw then the damage that the child of Ziz's beam had caused. Parts of the great eel's body were missing, having been either shorn free or simply disintegrated and left parts of its skeleton exposed. There was a huge cloud of reddish-black blood now, dyeing the ocean around the area of battle with the colours of death.

With a mind-rending shriek of triumph, the many-coloured victor swooped down and tore the city's Soul from the jaws of the dead eel with its own of solid, red-orange flame teeth and then ascended. Having recovered the object of value, it rose back above the clouds to where the gods of aether resided.