

Stories from the Silver Isle's

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A Song of Lorelei; Unseen Destinies

I can feel the shivered and shallow depths of the ice capped waters that I rest in. The gentle ripples left by the slow-moving islands of frozen death that awaits those caught in their grasps. A floating abyss of quiet and ear shattering silence. Its in these waters that I live to watch the ever-shifting molecules.

My father once told me that the changes in time can be read in the ripples of the ocean's waters. His main point being that of the waters quick reaction to things that disturb it from its slumber. He would look on in wisdom as the school of fish cradled themselves in the warmth of the heat geyser near our home. I was skeptical until the waters spoke of his death and not soon after the waters stilled with his breath.

It was also his wisdom that the earth is the most ordered of Primals. "Earth does not move easily, not without the hammer" were his words, planted in my mind to remember them to this day. But it is on earth that fire burns unwatched, rampant and dangerous. "Man is naturally made of Fire. A Fire deep within their core that surfaces when their frigid waters melt. When the Earth does hold their waters back from stemming their fire, that is when war surfaces and the ocean feels their ripples." Father was wise, I wish he was here. I wish he was here to interpret the ripples in the ocean, for now I must read of their wheel and woe.

I couldn't help the skepticism or the need to look back on my father's wisdom as I watched the kelp that looked strangled in the distance; A few fish floated upon their touch. The Geyser has risen in heat and the whale bone made artifact has shadowed with a storm that brews energy too dark to behold. It bothers me that I do not know what is to be done. There is light in this darkness, but I don't know where to seek this light or how my touch will help.

I couldn't help but struggle as a cold breeze washed through the waves. The feeling of woe passing through the atmosphere and I could feel my gills freezing under the pressure. It was a few moments before the feeling passed by. I could only catch my breath before, within the guise of water born spirits, my eyes were caught by the sight a few mermaids as they beckoned me.

I couldn't hesitate with the signs that were shown, and I rushed after them and followed. Bearing my head to the surface frightened me. The open air pressed down upon my skull and the warm rush passed through my body. It left me shivering, but the spirits nodded my attention to a floating figure, its arms pushing against the waves that mattered it.

The woman's body was colored blue, like mine, the bleeding pink of hair pressed against her skull as her heavy gulps of air left me still in the water as I admired her beauty. I felt the breath catch within my lungs... my mind whirled as I felt warmth fill my cold-blooded heart. I watched her push

on against the onslaught; the fierceness and bravery enamored me. I was nudged to follow the woman by the spirits, and I did so. Pushing my own body against the bruising fight. I did not know what she was looking for or where she was going but I could only push on.

She stilled in the water, her breaths heavy and her eyes lidded as I looked on from afar. The droplets of sea water dripping from her face and her skin glistened in their tracks. Father's words filled my mind, "There are those that are not of fire, but of a light deep from the bowels of the world's creation. Those destined by the Primal to move earth, to ripple water, to snuff flames, to gust wind, and to harness arcane. Heroes and villains, those who define history. You will meet one eventually, the waters have destined that, and one day you will know where you are needed. Ask yourself; are you ready for that destiny?"

I turned my head to the spirits to see them off in the distance. They were restrained and unable to further help the woman, the clear look of a worry etched in their ethereal presence. I looked back at the lionheart to see her eyes rolled back and her body attempting to push forward. I've seen that look on father's face long ago and I myself had taken that very same look when I "saw". I realized then that this wasn't real. A dream perhaps, but it sure felt real. I remember when I had my first vision where I saw all creatures as soulless entities. Their eyes pure nothing; a void where something should belong. I did not belong here in this realm, but I was needed. This was her vision not mine and it only confused me more.

I will admit to myself that my heart fluttered and plummeted to know I wouldn't see her eyes. To be able to see her soulless wasn't enough, I wanted to see her for who she was inside. I wanted to look into her eyes and feel my heart swell with her beauty. I could already feel my cheeks chill as they blushed under her allure; as I was so named for.

A crack of lightning lit up the sky and the crash of thunder reminded me of where I was. The sight of the woman as she struggled against some unseen force within her mind. It scared me, but her bravery as her arms pushed forward struck a chord in my heart and I swam forward my arms stretching towards her.

I don't think she was aware of my presence as my hands touched her, pulling her forward through the waters, as I pressed my warmth into her skin. Whether through some help or the effect of her proximity, warmth flooded my own form as I used the hammering of our hearts to ignore the thunder that filled the skies. I tried to memorize the feeling of her against me as we pushed forward, the battle no longer fought alone as the ice tried to overtake her and the waters beating her.

I was growing tired as we eventually hit the shallows of an island. The shores almost glass as our bare skin pressed into its frostbitten sands. I pulled her close and with me as she mindlessly clawed her way forward, my hands slipped against her smooth skin, and her eyes flitted across the landscape. I could see the skin-burned sheets of ice that formed across her arms. My eyes latched onto her chest as her shirt pulled taught and parted from its newfound weight. The sight of ink drawn into her skin kept me enamored and pulled the cold from my form even further, a symbol I only saw once before and had long forgotten, but I am sure I won't forget again; a skillfully etched compass rose against her water blue skin.

A rumble and growl from nearby drew my attention and I turned my head to then shutter in fear. This Spirit was enormous and that of a bear. It shadowed me under its maw as its eyes pierced into my soul. It wasn't long before the Spirit nudged me towards the woman, who shivered against the ground, her arms tried to push herself upwards, but it was clear she was once again under another onslaught of psychic pain. I looked back towards the Spirit before I crawled forward and cradled the woman's form.

I reached my hand to caress her collar and pulled for my Primals. The feeling of positive warmth filled me as my eyes shifted to watch my Spirit Animal peak itself from around my back to study the woman. The small polar bear Spirit sparked with healing energy and warmth that cascaded around us. I could see and feel the positive effect it had on her. It flustered me and filled me with pride knowing that my energies could help even a goddess.

There was another growl and her Spirit nudged me. Its eyes convey the simplest of commands, "leave". I don't know why, but that truly dug shattered ice into my heart with jolts of pain. My cold heart turned numb as the woman gathered herself and moved forward. She pushed herself up and followed the Spirit into the whitewashed lands without a second thought. My voice caught in my throat as I wanted to holler out. It surprised me to watch as my Spirit rushed off after her, the normally frightened thing, bouldering its way towards the fading forms.

My help was no longer needed, I was no longer apart of her vision and I could feel it, and It pulled my heart to lay in the frozen shore. I felt weak and I could remember my father's last spoken words as I felt my vision darken and I stumbled to un-cradle myself from the ocean floor within my adobe, "There will be a time, when you are needed, the ocean will call you to its behest, and then the waves will move on without your touch. Your heart will swell and warm with love; you should remember that, perhaps in time it will find its way home."

This place did not seem like my home anymore. The geyser that boiled with a gush of heat and the kelp fields that swayed with the water's movement, nor the small cove that I rested within. They were nothing to the fluttering of my heart that lay upon that frozen shore. I was filled with a wish to see that woman's face just one more time, whether in my dreams or in life, to see her eyes and to see her beautiful light.

Battle of Desperation

It's the painful writhing of the necrosis This Night , the blood pulsing like a drowning arachnid, that wakes me up. The soft divine light that sheds away its light exacerbating the affliction further, but there's a familiar storm like energy that moves with it, the sound of a jester's laugh in the silence of my echo chamber. The dark nightmare playing once more in my mind's eye leaving me feeling numb. I wasn't meant to be on deck that night, to think that had I chosen to fall asleep I may not have had the chance to react.

My hands had been stained black with the ink that painted itself into the parchment that was pierced to the table. I remember the feeling of cold and the sound of the waves washing upon stone in the chamber; It can be quite irritating when one only wants to concentrate. The already sleepless nights becoming even more so. I just couldn't tell anyone that I haven't really taken a trance in days, let alone truly slept. I felt anemic and broken, I still do.

Hearing the story of Cordelia, and her struggle to return home after abandoning it for freedom, that hit home. Is that what I was doing all this time? Would father be irate with me? Could I return to be what it is that he wished for me to be? Those are the thoughts I was able to get out, not even answer, before the sound of the water stilling drew my attention and then a choked scream. MY head whipping up to stare out the double doors of the conference room to watch the figure drop the life drained corpse with a heavy thud.

The stench of death filled my nostrils and my throat with vomit at the sight of the creature. Its large form hunched, its bulbous nose thick with scabs around its nostrils, and the heavy dark robes hanging open. The abundance of necklaces all strung with teeth, ears, dried eyeballs, and other entrails of humanoids probably once killed by this creature. It was obvious to me that the pink leathery skin stitched along his left ribs was not his own, nor were the other various stitching of skins along its chest. Some holding partial tattoos of its once owner. The sea troll turned its red gaze towards me and with a sickening grin, his serrated teeth showing in his black maw, the roiling tentacles all hanging like a beard around his lips dripping a mucus to the floor with each lumbering step.

My eyes dart with a quick glance at the staff held within his hands as it walked itself beside him with its own clomps, the gem at its zenith seeped with a dark necrotic pulse. The bodies that littered the deck, a few in mid throes of soundless screams as the skin wrinkled and darkened, the fat melting away from the body as amidst the screams they vomited black and green mucus that evaporated with a green energy that was whisked into the gem of the staff. The grin frightened me to my core, and I could feel the tremors within my very being.

The creature, dare I say vestige, lumbered forward hand outstretched towards me. Its claws yellowed and black as he gripped a tiny pebble of dark stone within his hand. "Look towards me half one, you are powerful I can feel it, the weak have been culled do not worry for you have use..." Its voice a growl that combined a grinding of teeth with the lick of a tongue along its upper lip. The voice was interrupted as it was stopped in its tracks, the purple scaled form of Cordelia's draconic friend slammed into and its teeth shredding into the forearm of the troll.

That was enough to throw me out of my fright as the troll grunted in frustration the heavy thud of the faerie dragon slamming into one of the double doors before me. A clomp of the troll's staff against wood sent a pulse of necrotic energy about it and from the corpses awoke my horrors. The bodies shifting and snapping back, their spines twisted to reform as the undead pushed and crawled their way to life. The sound of thuds and crashes below deck brought more crawling humanoids upwards. "Stupid and weak... you will suffer for that..." An explosion was emitted as my hands scrambled to my staff and with a familiar energy within of the storm sending sparks between my fingers, a small bead of flame emitted from the staff and slammed into the ground before the troll and sending a few of the undead flying overboard. There was a crack of the storm from within me and I vaulted myself towards the Faerie Dragon while diving the last feet to land prone my hand grasping about its tail and pulling it away from a sickening bolt of necrotic energy. The squeak it gave me was a comedic moment of the dragon's head glaring at me that was short lived as from the smoldering embers the troll stood untouched its grin now a snarl.

"I see, quite powerful indeed. Tell me, you are young... perhaps you would wish to join me... no, well I wouldn't have taken you living at least... very well, a messenger I keep for those fools to find. Let us test your might little sorcerer." The troll smirked towards me and with its last words, my tongue caught in my throat.

I remember the days my father's head mage had learned of my inner powers; upon his tower I had come into contact with a storm so strong that it filled me with joy. I remember the days spent learning magic and learning the ways of a knights dual and a wizards dual... Mage Walrist I had always thought to be the most powerful elven arcane user I had seen. The stories of his battles both in competition and in the wars before spoke of his this even further.

But the dual that followed with the troll surpassed this. It left me drained and it left me... dead inside... the storm abandoned me as I slumped against the saloon's walls. The troll watched me from a few feet away admiring the damage surrounding him. The blackened spots and cracks along the ships haul striking points of my lightning bolts. A layer of ice filling a large area about him and a heavy darkness that filled with a vapid necrosis filled the deck, remnants of his lazy or uncommitted spell work. A sign that he hadn't even tried and simply let me run myself out. He

hadn't even moved only turned to keep his red gaze with me. "Who are you? " were the words that fell from my lips in a tired breath. The sight of the faerie dragon peaking from behind some broken crates ready to pounce before stilling at the shake of my head.

"You are worthy, little half one. I am Sollix, the Damned to Drown, the Soul Carver. Your power intrigues me Talia Permin, an heir apparent Permin of Karn. Where did you find it?" As Sollix drew his staff back to the crook of his arm, he riffled through his robes. His words made me feel defeated and broken.

"Why don't you just take it from my mind like the rest!?" I felt a bite of frustration bring me strength, but with the amused look Sollix gave me I slumped further to the floor. "I found it when I was young, inside myself... a storm struck me when I was younger and again on a mages tower..." my voice faltered as he step forward to kneel down by my side. I tried to move but I felt the spell take hold of me and keep me still.

"An interesting insight into magic... why they would leave such a valuable sorcerer aboard a ship to waste it's abilities... Either way half one, I have need of a messenger and with your close connection to those 'Heroes' and that savage princess that wander the sea floors, I think you will do nicely. Don't worry, as a gift for your worthiness I will leave this one alive." Sollix nodded towards the dragon and a small sense of relief filled me. " As well as yourself. Such should not be wasted and maybe in time you will see and favor what I am doing."

I eyed him, my lips barely moving as I spoke, "Why, what did we do?" I felt tears fill my eyes in shock. I just didn't understand what happened. I had tried my best, but he spoke of the others, so they must be safe. I closed my eyes as his claw brought that stone close to my neck.

"To bring the world to order, so those who think they should rule through name alone will understand that Magitocracy is the only path and those who control the powers should rule. To return that which was rendered from this world by those with stupid goals and notions of morality and ethics. You have a strong will, Stormsinger. I wish to hear your storm sing one day, so that I can truly see your power so I may emulate it, control it. I wouldn't stay here long the others are beginning to reawaken and they like the taste of flesh." With a press of the cold stone I felt heavy stinging in my neck as it burrowed its way into my flesh. It was oddly painless for those few moments but as a flash of green light filled my vision my body writhed in pain and my throat become hoarse from the scream that ripped its way from my throat.

My vision turned black and with a pulse of energy I felt my strength begin to return as I blinked. The feeling of a kick against my side as I turned to find the faerie dragon screaming at the undeads that lumbered their way forward. I could feel the red eyes watching from somewhere, but I couldn't find them and as one of the once crew, a dwarf, lunged towards the dragon I raised my hand with a charred stick pulled from my ripped tunic. A blast of lightning slammed into the form encompassing the area in light and burning away at the tatters of its clothes. The undead being pushed away by the blast of energy. Another lunged towards me this time its hands gripped at my shirt, I in turned lifting my free hand to grasp at the biting skull and with a burst of lightning the creatures head popped covering me in its gore. Then I turned and with that free hand I grasped at the dragon as with a flash of lightning I felt myself get tugged by my inner storm to land upon the Forecastle and I took a breath as the feeling the lightning bolt slam into another undead below and in the process

leaving another flash of light to cast its way in the chamber.

It was dark and cold as I felt myself shiver as I watched a few more crawl their way from below. I felt fear fill me and a regret pushed its way into my heart. As the red gaze seemed to shift away to leave me alone, I concentrated while I grasped the Faerie Dragon close and with a burst of lightning, I found myself wobble to being sickened, at the sight of the captain's quarters I felt relieved. Rushing outside into the conference room I grabbed the staff that fell to the floor in my panic and I glimpsed the rushing undead forms as they made their way into the room and with the last bit of energy I had I sprinted back into the quarters. Turning as the undead rounded the corner I let the last two embers within the staff fly forward and two explosions left the entrance to the captains' quarters in flame as I slammed the door closed. I let out a tired and wobbled breath before I grabbed the vanity and with the dragons help, we pushed it to seal the door closed. I slumped to the floor the last of the energy leaving me as my eyes began to darken.

"What would Barnaby do? What would Clarence do?" I whispered in my horror and exhaustion, before a voice filled the room.

"I gotcha okay, so just rest and we will watch over you. You guys really need to stop getting into trouble or someone's gunna get killed... again." I couldn't even see, as I opened my eyes to darkness to frantically look about. "Ill keep his nightmare away, but I can't do much else so try to be strong... and for Luna's sake don't die. I don't think I could explain this to your captain." Before I could ask the voice answered my inner thought, "names Cesper, but you can call me Philip, got it?"

With a moment of tense fight or fright I felt myself give up and I soon followed suit. I slumped prone with my eyes closed and let out what felt like my last breath. The feeling of prickling pain burst in my neck superseded by the need to sleep.

The nightmare I lived in the time to follow, before waking up to vomit in Barnaby's arms, were moments I wish to never relive but I know I will be reliving them the rest of my life. That and the pain of Necrosis that now fills me are reminders that I need to grow stronger. I don't ever want to feel so helpless again. I return back to sleep This Night just like the last few nights to endless suffering, wondering if I could ever feel inner warmth again, and whether this necrosis could be healed.

Samara's Insight

Sam - do you know what it is like to feel pain, from the loss of love never gained?

Muse - What do you mean?

Sam - It must be nice to live where others have framed your being. I was stricken and thrown from my people, and then yours, long ago.

Muse - And why were you excommunicated from your people?

Sam chuckles and Muse looks on in wonder and curiosity.

Sam (flippantly) - because I loved someone, because I loved a woman, because of love.

Muse - You loved? That seems preposterous... (unsure) What was this woman's name?

A smile stretches across Sam's face and she almost dances merrily in place.

Sam (tenderly) - Juniper, they called her Ezthra, but I called her Juniper.

Muse - Juniper, you loved her? You speak as if they call her nomore.

Sam (growing angry and then softens) - They killed her, they thought her tainted by me and drug her to the queen's feet to be skewered like a rat. Gutted with her heart pulled to dangle like a necklace from her throat. I couldn't do anything but watch from my knees. Then they changed me and forced me above to suffer with the memories.

Muse - And how did they change you? Did you at least get a memory to say goodbye to this love?

Sam falls into a state of uncontrollable laughter, almost keeled over, before straightening back into a gentle pose.

Sam (inwardly hurt)- no, she didn't know my name and found me hideous faced. I wasn't like this before, they forced me into this... sickness.

Muse (thoughtfully) - hmm, she didn't know your name? What is it your implying?

Sam's visage seems to shift a furrow into anger, her eyes darkening and her back hunching under the tense pose. Muse feels a different aura cast from the woman's being as she interrupts him.

Sam (angry) - I watched her from afar, we never spoke, SHE DIDN'T KNOW MY NAME! that is what I am implying your insolent fool, she was dead. has your wisdom been drug so far into the abyss...?

A breath is released, and Sam stills and slackens back into a softer pose.

Muse (knowingly) - Is that why you seek power? To bring her back.

Sam fills the room with tinkling laughter.

Sam (softly) - if only it was that simple (darkly) I have done things I wish I hadn't, more than a fool like you would understand. (tears up) I wish I hadn't done it...

Muse (worried) - What have you done, woman!?

Sam (tearfully) - I need power to fix her... to put her back...

Muse's worry grows as Sam shifts in place to stand far away from the sage.

Muse (pointed) - Where is she? Where is this Juniper?

Sam's face furrows and then stretches in a grin, her eyes darkening and muse notices with a wince the red bead of color staining her iris.

Sam (both fearfully and savagely, two voices speaking almost at once) - I am (she is) right here.

To Be Continued...

The Crown rests in Perl

When the crown rests upon pearl, to see the dragon's future, and evil rests before the crowns hand, like thorns in his death time will be spent and kept. For the dragon's rider must meet fire to the flame of her destiny.' Those were the words that were emblazoned within my mind's eye. Claw Night's words always ran through my mind like sharpened blades. An unfair future for me, but a glory I accepted when I took an oath from my throat to his blade. The rain stung just enough, and I found myself pierced with another blade from that mages staff, this one too faded like ice to water.

As I fell, I was reminded of all those long training hours in my youth. The war formed exhaustion that I had not felt up to that point in a while. Claw's blades like a storm that grew violent and red but these blades weren't his; These blades were of my death.

I found my eyes wandering as a yell drew my attention, the sight of the others rushing into the courtyard, the obvious ploy and trap finally found out and the butchered troll would be stopped. 'At least I would leave them with a quarter of his power to deal with' was my thought as a reminiscent chuckle left my lips and for a moment it sounded more like that of an old friend. I counted on them, Lady Cordelia and her friends, the heroes this moment was truly divined for, to bare the future for. My sight of the battle was lost as I toppled only to be replaced by the heterochrome amber brown and blue eyes that stared down in shock.

"It has been a long time since I have seen those eyes stare back at me, dragon rider, a long time since I have been frightened of the future." I mumbled and watched the young Nara stare at me unsure and confused. "Your mother was always kind to me as a child and later in my life. I only regret I wasn't able to convince my father to let her free sooner. And your father was the steel forge of my life. More so then any other." Both our attention was torn for a barest of moment to watch as the Soul Carver rend the earth in two, sending us toppling aside, but it wasn't long before I was gently lifted and a hand pressed into my chest stoppering the bleeding to the best of the young rider's ability, the feeling of the divine energy withering as she pressed her divine powers to heal. I knew this feeling well, "when fate choses your destiny, no magic can thwart the Tapestry, those were your father's words ..." I coughed as I looked back and forth from the sight of the group exhausted, wet, and enraged pressing harder into the fight with the Soul Carver. I could see his power weening and pride entered me for them, for Cordelia. I turned my head back towards Nara as she finally spoke.

"You knew my father and my mother?" Her voice was meek and shocked as I could tell my death would weigh heavy on her even with those words. "You saved me too?" and now there was also confusion.

I could not help feeling the pain seep deeper into my organs as my vision went blurry. I had not even noticed the quieting of the courtyard as the rain stopped. I squinted against the blurriness and I watched the glaive tear itself from the troll's form as it toppled and Cordelia step back her spine arched and the exhaustion evident before she turned on her heal rushing towards me. I

turned my gaze back upon the teary eyed tabaxi and nodding a short nod, "He was a father to me and your mother a healer long before that. I was the one to help protect her from the mountains to the monastery and I..." I fell short a blackness consumed my vision but struggling I found myself back, the others surrounding me. Bleeding into the courtyard, those fighters who came to protect against the evils outside wandered in. Many of their faces in shock and many eventually found acceptance at the sight of me.

I looked towards Cordelia and found myself smiling before turning once again towards the young face full of tears next to me. It still shocked me the resemblance that Nara had to them both, and more so the sight of the bronze dragon the lumber over us watching on. I noticed the obvious nod of pride towards me from the being. "Disguised; I was the one that left you with the Tomfellows." I looked towards the crowd and then at Cordelia and as I gazed at her face, I realized I could not tell if she was crying. Lifting my head and feeling Nara's hands help me up I looked about and hollered, "Listen Brothers and Sisters, I lay here having done my duty to not only you, our family, or the Silver Isles, but also to the world, to Eldar! I spill my blood for all of those under my wing and our nest! And I did not fear, I did not falter, I did not hesitate!". I coughed and quieted before calling out feeling my voice weaken, "nor shall you... You know of what I expect of you, Listen well to me and spread these words... The Bloody King of Roedaren will not wait for you to learn to fight, he will not wait for when it conveniences you, he will not wait for your nest to grow! So do not wait for him, follow those who will see his downfall, rise up and carry each other and love who you are and cherish the nest..."

As the numb feeling my body had entered into caught up to me and I felt my eyes wanting to slip shut I pushed hard for a third wind... 'one more' I pleaded to the Moonsisters as they gazed down upon me. "Listen Brothers and Sisters, stand beside your new queen, stand besides Lady Cordelia, Queen of Maristela and The Silverrise Waters, Champion of Light, bringer of peace to the lands of the Silver Isles, Slayer of the Soul Carver! Nara, give her my amulet and do not cry, this is not the end for you, you must stay strong."

As Nara reached for the symbol hanging from my neck, the silver eagle heavy in her hands she hesitated before pulling it from my neck and handing it over to the surprised triton woman. I looked towards Cordelia, her face set in shock, and I spoke directly to her as my eyes began to close, "This will prove all you need to others, no other can bare this amulet without the permission of the family of Silverrise. You must see that Nara finds her destiny; the Dragon Riders must return. Take care of our nest, take care of my brothers and sisters, take care of all...you are queen now, you must not waste the time we have. I am proud that you have proved me wrong, you are strong, and you should not fear, your father and mother would be proud of you, you are going to be a strong queen to all. When you feel Ana is ready, help her take her seat."

My words falter as I watched her lips move and a high-pitched noise coiled into my ears. My vision blackened and with each beat slowing, the soft soothing sound of a song I had not heard in a long while pierced the last moments of my life. "The eagle flies to be free, and it must spread its wings, leave the nest with the wind, you are the eagle that will set us free." And then a singular thought as the sound of Mellow Nights voice lulled me into sleep, 'I am free and will be waiting to see you free'.

The Severance of Sol

It was an exhausted broken breath that left me leaning against a splintered fence pole. My eyes wandering to watch as a local farmer as he dragged a cart loaded up with a thick yellow rind fruit and as he passed a flood of a heavy burnt spleen smell filled my nostrils and left me gagging to choke on my feeble breath. The farmers eyes turning to watch me as he passed causing me to pull my heavy cloak about myself in my embarrassment and insecurity.

Turning away with a huff and looking into the roads distance, the large cathedral buried in the mountains wall, the colored glass windows sending a scatter of rainbows in the nearby waterways, I found myself fruitlessly dragging the heavy boulder behind my trail. It weighed a ton and I hated it. It was a useless job for a useless fellow. To think Kril'grox wanted this test to pain me and leave me brain dead. I wasn't stupid and knew of his attempts to end me, 'A proper apprentice dies at the follies of his tasks.' It may be considered a test to some, to others like me, it was torture.

I worked damn hard to gain the merits of a disciple of the Sun. To be spat upon by those that called themselves good willed. I wasn't even sure why I continued to study under their terms. Rumors of the Silvered Isles to the far south presenting a freedom and advancement in recent years, perhaps I could find a place there. Maybe I am stupid, I grunted in frustration as with a heavy tug I pulled the boulder further along the path.

I could measure the sun's movements as the time passed, the boulder proving to strain my already breaking spirit. I left my village to get away from the fears, bullies, and darkness. Yet I only traded one master for another.

'Bring the boulder to the cliffs, that way you can drop it in as proof of your strength of will. I will not have you cheating, and he will know of your heresy if you do so, do you understand?' I had nodded my head then when Kril'grox said those words, but now that they played themselves in my head again, I once again grunted at my own stupidity. With another heavy shove the boulder made its way further and further.

The closer I got to the cliffs the more I found relief, only a few hundred feet left along the back end of the Cathedral. Sure, it was uphill, but at least it wasn't too steep of a trip. I think after this I am gunna return home. The other masters spoke of letting their apprentices make their way home to reunion with their families and I don't think it will take much convincing of Kril'grox to let me do the same. I wonder if Maey would be happy to see me. It has been a few years since we saw each other it would do wonders for my sanity to hear her voice once more. At those thoughts time seem to pass much faster and the path dwindled away in thoughts.

I let out a relaxed breath as I watched the waters wash against the cliffs base. The smell of salt and the warmth of the setting sun washing over me. I finally made it with my test complete. I only needed to wait for Kril'grox to watch on in witness. My mood darkened as the sun set and I took a moment to clutch under my robes at the holy symbol that felt warm to the touch. My prayers were usually simple, but this time with the recent thoughts of Maey I went much simpler. "Let Maey live happy, that is all my Sun, for I have no other purpose." I smiled slightly as a burst of warmth filled the symbol; That was until it turned ice cold.

I felt my body lock still and my hand tightly gripping the metal and it pierced into the skin of my palm. I tried to blink, to move, or to speak, but nothing seemed to work. I felt my heart turn cold as, barely perceptible, I felt a snake slither at my feet. Its tail wrapped and twisted about my boot's ankle. Its form morphed to that of a tightly knotted rope that melded into the boulders surface besides me. Fear took over my mind as without a moments hesitation the boulder began to roll, not downhill, but towards the edge of the cliff. It teetered for a few moments, my heart hammering as I struggled against the magics that held me.

A voice filled my ear, "I have seen your heart, you blither fool. Your heresy to the sun and will be judge harshly and the Sun will be better off without your darkness in the weave. You damned to be drowned, human heretic." With that the boulder tipped over the edge and the heavy tug sent me falling. My head cracking against the ground, sending stars in my eyes, and the spell was released causing my body to slacken. It was to late, my hands clawed to find purchase on anything to stop the dragging. I felt my fingers snap and brake as I tried to grip at the edge. My arm being ripped from its socket as I plummeted over the edge.

I don't understand. That was all I could think and hear in my head. It washed away the scream from my lips. I only got a few thoughts before my body slammed heavily into the waters surface as the boulder dragged me deeper into the waters. My body was so fragile as It took on a frantic mind of its own; desperate to reach the surface. It was like all my training was lost in this moment. Eventually, my body stilled from its attempted escape. I was left to wrinkle and drown, but in these last moments my mind tried to reach out to a singular person. A plea for help, yet none came.