



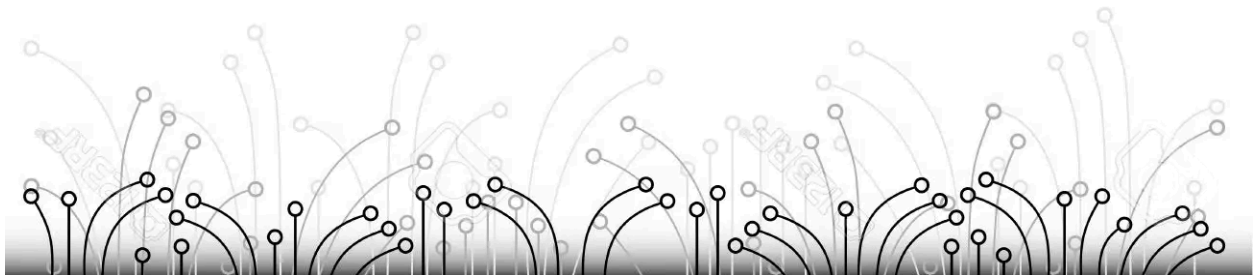
The Tale of Gorash the Great One

The pavilion tent grows suddenly quiet as the Following waits with no small anticipation for what comes next. Dozens of familiar faces, some with grins and others set with the stoicism the Kellid people are known for, are reflected in the ruddy light from the central bonfire. Tonight, bellies are full as Panuaku's hunters returned today with a triple brace of snow hare and several wings of grouse. The Mammoth Lords rise from their seats and slowly walk to the corners of the massive tent, arms folded in silent observance. Wipa helps Grandfather Eiwa, the ancient leader of Falcon House, to his feet before he shoos her away with a look of mock indignation. Eiwa makes his way through the crowd to the Falcon's corner of the tent before turning back to face the Following.

"Three nights from now," he begins in a gravelly, but strong voice, "we shall gather amid the standing stones of Rockloom, as our ancestors have done for ages beyond counting. There, we will celebrate the Night of the Green Moon and usher in a new and bountiful year. Songsister, if you will, sing to us now a fitting tale."

A drum begins to beat from somewhere in the Otter House section of the tent and Argakoa, the Following's Songsinger, Mammoth Lord and master of her House, begins a melodious chant.

It is said, long ago, Gorash, the Great One, walked these lands in search of the eastern sky spirit. Gorash was taller than six mammoths stacked tall, brother upon brother. His fur was the golden red



of the setting sun. His mighty trunk could trumpet mountains to dust. Upon his four tusks would sit a mated pair of each of the great animals: falcon, hare, glyptodon, moose, bear, raven, musk ox, sabretooth, big horn, otter, wolf and auroch. Gorash searched and searched for the spirit of the eastern sky, walking in wide circles across the entire land. Whenever he marched across patches of frozen mud, his flat feet left giant prints, out of which crawled the first people of the land.

One day, Gorash encountered Skode, the Hunter during his search. "Sister Skode, you are a skilled tracker, where can I find the spirit of the eastern sky?" But Skode did not know and told her brother to keep walking.

The next day he spied Gorum the Warrior, as he wrestled with the Wolfcrags. "Brother Gorum, where can I find the sky spirit of the east?" Gorum stomped on the Wolfcrags, which were much taller back then, and asked without patience, "Do you mean Gozreh the North Wind or Ng of the Seasons, Gorash?" But when Gorash said he did not know, his warrior brother simply ignored him and went back to his wrestling match.

The next day, Gorash came upon Erastil the Provider. "Brother Erastil, you are always so helpful. Can you help me find the eastern sky spirit?" Erastil, King of the Elk, looked kindly upon his brother. "Gorash, were this any other day, I would walk with you and help you find what you seek, but today I have discovered these new creatures that have crawled out of the mud, and they are naked and cold and hungry, and I have pledged to help them survive, so I cannot." And Erastil wished his brother luck on his quest.

The next day, Gorash came upon a great fire burning among some rocks. When he approached, the fire thawed the ice upon his back and his great toes and mighty ears felt warmth for the first time. He saw the fire contained a wild rose and the rose greeted him from amid the flames. "Brother Gorash, you have traveled far. Come sit near me so that you may rest and regain your strength." When Gorash did as he was told, he asked the rose who she was. "I am Cinder and I am your sister, too. I was here when you were born and I have watched you throughout the ages as you walk the lands. Now that you are here, I would ask you, what is it you seek? Why is it you walk the land for days on end?"

Brother Gorash let out a deep sigh, "Sister, I seek the spirit of the eastern sky, and once I find it, I will rest. I have spoken to many while I walked the land, but none can help me. I mean no offense, but I do not think you can help me either." The wild rose laughed a mirthful laugh when she heard the words of Gorash, but it was not an unpleasant laugh and Gorash smiled a wide grin despite himself.

"You would be surprised then, Brother, to know that I can help you. Indeed, that which you seek is difficult to define for the eastern sky has many guises and aspects. That which you seek calls



themselves Ng, the Keeper of Time on some days, and they call themselves The Scout on others. Ng can sometimes be Grandfather Gozreh of the Northwind and on others she is Grandmother Gozreh of the western waters. You may find them there.” Cinder said while pointing to the east.

“Thank you, Sister Cinder,” Gorash said as he lumbered to his feet. His body warmed and strength renewed he began to march eastward (as he had always done).

“I am very glad to know that I will soon find Ng, spirit of the eastern sky, so that I might rest,” he said in his grumbling happy voice.

The rose within the flames called out to him one last time, “I am disappointed in your brothers and sister for they did not aid you in your quest, Brother Gorash. This is a wrong that cannot go unpunished. For their transgressions, I shall compel them to follow you and to give you aid whenever you are in need until the day you find that which you are looking for.”

Brother Gorash gave those words little thought as he stomped toward the rising sun.

This is just one tale of Sister Cinder, told around the campfires of the Broken Tusk following. There are many others, including the tale of how, long ago, Sister Cinder helped guide the Mammoth Lords of all the followings through the Days of Endless Night. Another tells of how Sister Cinder lost her walking staff during The Great Quake and how it is every child’s duty within the following to keep an ever-watchful eye out for it during the days of migration.

~END

