

The legends had said a shield had been forged from the stars, themselves, and had been lost at the untimely death of its valiant welder. The Elder Wars had been a time of desperation, but had forged such remarkable spirits through its raging fire.

Kazimir had known that such a shield would be a perfect offering for Weifang, and together with Sjur had set out to find it. There were only tales and speculation on their path, to start. The turn of millenia upon millenia could have meant *anything*. One path had led them to the mountains, where a trail of storms threatened their lives. Lightning dances to the songs of whispering winds in the valley, and the rain was heavy and unwavering.

They had sought shelter in the caverns, hoping for the storm to pass. The darkness was a tangible foe, the silence screams of hidden dangers and their breath frosted before their faces. The rain had brought a flash flood upon them, and they had both been washed deep into the maze of the caverns. Kazimir had held Sjur with all his might, but the waters had been too strong.

It took days to find each other, days more to find their way from the cavern. They spent some time in a small inn on the other side of the mountains once that had managed to cross and escape the dangers. Yet, nothing had terrified Kazimir more in his life than feeling he had lost Sjur forevermore.

They had spent much more time calculating hints, clues and evidence to the tales spun over the thousands of years since its creation. To believe that such a shield would still remain in the Graveyard of the Ancients was a foolish ideation. Sjur, on the other hand, offered the possibility that if everyone thought as much then it could still remain.

It was so obvious that it wasn't. It had to be in the ruins of an ancient battlefield, under the light of old souls that could not rest. It was never said in any of the tales told that it didn't reside among the remnants of a fallen hero, its surface untarnished by time, reflected as a tapestry of battles long past.

The desert had been their next destination, and hopefully their last. In the heart of the vast desert, where the sun scorched the sand into a sea of gold, there began their arduous journey. Kazimir and Sjur had been prepared, cloaked in the garb of the desert nomads, set forth on a camel, guided only by the stars and tales of old. Each day, the sun rose as a fiery blazon to remind them that it was just as cruel as it was benevolent. Casting long shadows of them both into the seas of sand and heat. At night, the sky turned into an ocean of stars, each one a story from the ancient times.

Finally, after what seemed like an eternity, they crested a dune and beheld the Graveyard of the Ancients. It was a valley of the gargantuan bones of Elders of the past. Smaller skeletons decorated the ribs and skulls. A silent testament to the glory and the fall of those who came before. Kaz and Sjur walked among the remains, feeling the weight of history in every step.

Here, amidst the echoes of the past, Kazimir could almost hear the screams. The horrors faced by countless generations before them was undeniable.

Yet, they found no shield. Disappointment was a word that just barely scratched the surface of emotion that Kazi and Sjur felt. They had been just about to depart from the Graveyard, yet they had been found by a peculiar individual. The way his scales protruded made him seem almost skeletal in spots. Sjur had confused the potent magic wafting from his head and back to be flames. The magic, itself, was almost as somber as the Graveyard surrounding them.

It was purely happenstance, the strange one from the desert had sparked a conversation of unexpected results. Kazimir had inquired if he had known of the shield they searched for. The stranger had, surprisingly, revealed to them that it had once belonged to him - and he still had it. Shocked, Sjur had wanted to know the truth. The shield's wielder was said to have died a long time ago.

Funny thing about stories and tales told through word of mouth for so long, they weren't always true. This stranger did, however, mention some part of him that had died when he had been cursed. He was even willing to give it to them, when they explained why they wanted it.

The ancient shield that had been given to the couple, a relic of formidable power, once wielded by a warrior whose very name was synonymous with valor and might. This shield, forged in the depths of a long-lost civilization fallen among the Elder Wars, bore the marks of countless battles. Its surface was a tapestry of history, etched with intricate runes and symbols that shimmered with a spectral glow, hinting at the potent magic within. The metalwork had come from a master of their craft, with motifs of mythical beasts and legendary heroes engraved in its face.

The center of the shield was dominated by a raised emblem made of jewel, carved as a creature of such fearsome aspect that it seems to ward off evil with its mere presence. This emblem was not merely decorative; it was the source of the shield's ancient magic. A warding charm that had protected the original bearer from spells and blades alike. The edges of the shield are scalloped, each dip and curve representing a victory, a survival, a story.

Despite its beauty, the shield was not pristine. It carried the scars of war; nicks and gouges marred its surface. Each was a testament to the close calls and fierce battles its bearer survived. The once-bright metal was dulled from years of service, and the leather straps on the reverse side, now brittle with age, speak of a time when a steadfast grip was the difference between life and death.

This shield had seen the rise and fall of countless souls. It had been held aloft in triumph and clutched in desperation. It was a piece of history, a tangible connection to the past and the legendary warrior who once carried it into battle. The magic imbued within it has not waned; it lied dormant, waiting for a worthy successor to awaken its power once more. In the right hands,

this ancient shield is not just a defense, but a legacy, a challenge, and a promise of greatness to come.

Upon the reverse, hidden by the brittle leather straps, hid the engraving of the Quian clan's mark. The warrior which had fought with such valor had once been a part of Weifang's clans, perhaps among its earliest members. Sacrifice had paved the path in blood and loss, and many Shiji had fallen to unfortunate fates far before their time should have come to the hands of evil whispered upon the wind. The evil that sought to destroy the Shiji, themselves. This was the offering they presented to Weifang in hopes of gaining her blessings.