

The shrine was ancient and weathered, yet maintained. The air tasted thick with the smell of incense. Candles adorned the walls, with long trails of wax cascading down below them. It was dimly lit, and decorations littered the sides of the hallways and dangled down from above. As your eyes adjusted you could see engravings on the wood and stone walls. Depicting ancients past and beasts of many kinds. The aura of this area was like no other. It felt ancient. It looked ancient.

Megalo's eyes adjusted to the dimly lit surroundings. Allowing them to further inspect their surroundings. Koine noted the structure of the building was different, as if it had been built over centuries. As walls crumbled from age new ones were built over the rubble, and it was apparent. Koine looked back, wishing to point out this interesting fact to Megalo, but they realized the shark probably wouldn't care, and kept quiet.

Around them were other humans. In prayer, resting, or generally mulling about the area. Rarely did they raise their heads to notice the dragons slipping by. New dragons were occasional visitors to this shrine. Koine and Megalo approached a curtain covering the end of the hallway.

"Companion, are you ready? To meet our elder?" Koine asked Megalo.

Megalo shrugged before Koine turned and stuck their head through the curtain. Expecting to see the dragon of legend, Solaris. They were bitterly disappointed by a ragged looking moss covered warden. The dragon lounged on a pile of pillows and was draped in blankets. Looking quite comfortable on their plush pile. The ragged dragon greeted them wordlessly with a smile, happy to see their fellow draconids in their company. Koine pushed through the curtain with burst. Obviously a bit annoyed.

"And whom may you be?" The dragon said with annoyance. "You are not the wyrm of legend, you are but a moss covered lie!"

Koine's voice slightly echoed through the halls. Causing the shrine go-eres at the edges of the room to lift their heads. They had not heard someone address the elder dragon with the slightest disrespect before.

"K... Koine. Keep your voice down." Megalo urged Koine. "They may not be Solaris but they are still our elder."

"I am Ilurin." Ilurin's smile faded from their cheeks. "I am the keeper of this shrine. Protector of it's pilgrims. You would not be the first to come here expecting the shrine of Solaris. It is a common mistake. Yet we still worship the ancients just the same."

Koine and Megalo looked at the elderly creature. Megalo was disappointed, Koine annoyed.

"I can still offer you guidance, young ones." Ilurin spoke, breaking the silence. "Elders are still vast resources of knowledge, regardless of how widely they are known."

"I did not come seeking guidance, I came to gaze upon a legend in the flesh." Koine sighed. "To bask in the glory of thy radiance."

"And you?" Ilurin sighed while motioning to Megalo.

"I wished the same. I came from my waters this far inland for the chance to speak to Solaris." Megalo mumbled quietly.

"I am sorry to be such a disappointment." Ilurin snorted. "Yet you are here now, you might as well take a rest and enjoy some company."

Koine and Megalo were offered some large pillows by the pilgrims lining the walls. They settled down into their pillows as Ilurin waited for them to get comfortable.

"Do you two have names?" Ilurin asked. "I am Ilurin. I help upkeep this shrine. Maintaining it's halls for visitors."

"Tidings of the shrine matter not when the pathway lays in disgrace!" Koine chuffed.

"We try to keep it maintained but the mountain stirs too often for me to keep up. I am not the spring hatchling I used to be. Dragons often have wings to avoid the debris in the first place. I am not a stranger to ferrying pilgrims up the mountainside anyways." Ilurin explained. "I will admit. The more aquatically inclined of our species does not often make the pilgrimage up this mountain."

"My companion did have some trouble." Koine tilted their head to motion to Megalo sitting beside them. "No difficulty for I."

"You floated right over everything!" Megalo protested.

"Well... Most dragons who come here do have wings like I said. They can fly over the debris." Ilurin looked at Megalo. "Am I mistaken when I see the wings hanging from your sides?"

"I was raised below the waves. Wings are flippers." Megalo spoke.

"Then the trek you made is even more impressive!" Ilurin praised Megalo as Koine rolled their eyes.

The dragons carried on chatting for a while. It was difficult to tell time under the shrine's roof. As no sunlight peeked through and the behaviors of the inhabitants never changed from resting or prayer. Finally Koine began to stir, remembering they were hired to bring the merchants through the canyon. They raised to their feet and looked expectantly at Megalo.

“Companion we have promises to keep, coin to earn.” Koine chuffed at Megalo. Megalo got to their feet. The two dragons gazed at Ilurin who nodded.

“Understandable. You are not the first dragons hired by the passing merchants who have stopped by here on their way into the canyon.” Ilurin spoke with a small dip of his head.

The dragons said their goodbyes and began their way out of the shrine. Behind them Ilurin’s voice rose again. Echoing down the halls after the two fleeing dragons.

“When your journey is done, I recommend partaking in the kingdom’s festivities. I believe it is holiday time for them. Much free food to be had.” Ilurin said before falling quiet again.

Koine and Megalo hurried out of the shrine. Ducking back under its doorway. The sun had finally appeared in the skies. The merchants were likely looking for them right now, wanting to proceed through the canyon with them. Quickly the dragons began making the trek back down the mountain, dodging the debris they had clambered over not long ago.