

Buried Legacies

Ni'vim POV

My former journey to hunt Ka'freyra did not bode well. After all, we Sha'reena are not used to the hostilities of spirits in the area.

Today, it was time for me to visit the Kol'mar that my father had planned. It was nearing Nozu'ra. This is the warmest season, and it has none of the usual cycles of night. I gazed up, beholding the two suns soaring high and loftily in the skies. Their combined brightness cast rays of blistering heat upon me. The azure pastures basked in their radiance.

I packed up my possessions, which comprised enough water and sustenance to last for several days.

"Ni'vim," said my father before I left. "As a means of self-defense, take these scrolls."

Each scroll was sewn together with papyrus reeds. They contained a rune carved into their center. Granules of dim light floated gently above them, feeling warm to the touch.

"These scrolls ... are they are not those of Vi'losu?" I asked.

"Peoples from the East refer to the use of wizardry as Vi'losu. To us, Sha'reena, sorcery contains a different connotation. Vi'la flows through the meridians of this world. Vi also channels through the veins of every person. For trees, we know this enigmatic substance as Vi'la Su, which permeates through their xylems."

"It's the foundation of all wizardry, is it not?"

"We Sha'reena refer magic to as Vi'la Re. They can arise from utterances and the weaving of bodily gestures. A trained user must remember hundreds of prefixes and suffices. We weave them into portmanteaus, each signifying a form of magic."

"Just like the numerals of a quadratic equation!"

"True," he said while exuding an air of calmness. "Articulation, however, would strain even the most gifted of memories. Thus, runes were drawn to crystallize such incantations to cope with such. We then invoke them as the scrolls open. Now Ni'vim, I want you to test them out as practice."

I had obtained four scrolls tucked neatly under my belt above the sides of each thigh. With glee, I cast an invocation.

One summoned a spiritual vortex of six orbs, which oscillated around me. They shone with lambency, letting me peer into the darkness.

"In battle, they would revolve around you, intercepting any blows. Likewise, they could strike foes with ferocity," said my father.

The second scroll unfurled, and lights sparkled like fireworks. With a cast, boulders materialized around me, being more impervious than iron.

"Now, daughter, this last scroll is of escape, which imbues the user with the ability to evade dangers."

Like most Sha'reena, I am no stranger to battles. If the situation demands, the stilettos by my side would be set ablaze with lethality.

I headed towards my destination on foot. Though it is summer, the climate remained especially cold. After all, the blue ones' lands are temperate and are thus spared from the tropics' heat.

Walking alone in pastures way beyond my village gave me a unique comfort. As an introvert, no situation would provide a better chance to commune with nature's mystical recesses and my mind.

Finally, after many steps, it was already a three-day journey away from my home.

Before me stood an enormous shard - a mythical Kol'mar. It was exfoliated and covered with green weed and vines on its exterior. The tower slanted and tapered towards the top, like the filed horn of a rhinoceros. Clearly visible were etches that stood as testimony to the attrition of time. The monolith was huge - spanning a hundred metric meters along its slanted length.

Village tales rumored this obelisk was of an origin that linked the indigenous Sha'reena with the celestials.

A dreadful silence loomed, free from the roars of Kosh'reea and beasts. However, nature is still a formidable foe. Between me and the destination was countless foliage.

Nature had reigned supreme here, for lush canopies and thickets of green and blue had spread across the lands. A continuous swathe of emerald glazed the ground - worsened by the protrusions of granite that forbade entry. Before me loomed the vines of thousands of Kaka'sha, dangling like vipers from branches.

As I traversed the green foliage, I could already descry the reddish hues of Kaka'sha. From afar, the lights from the twin suns reflected off them. They were aglow with scintillas of light and sparkled like stars in the darkness below the canopy.

Twinkling before me, sprightly red smeared the innocence of their appearance.

The Kaka'sha oozed secretions of scarlet glue at the ends of their vines.

Entering the thicket, the scarlet vines were quickly alerted to my presence. Hundreds and thousands of them crept towards me. Like vipers, their coiled bodies pressed forth but with such slowness that I evaded them.

With an invocation using my father's scroll, three orbs swirled around me with an evocation. They permeated the surroundings with a lustrous warmth. *Hot and humid*. The warm air flowed through my nostrils but was so moist that phlegm filled my lungs. Coughing and panting, the Kaka'sha approached me – but once they had neared me, they recoiled back. The sweltering heat of an invisible wall, formed by the orbs, blazed.

I eloped and bolted forward. Behind me, they lurked in their thousands, poised for the right moment to sink into my flesh. Before me, there was another danger: the Vesu'Ora.

A dove flew to the scent of the Vesu'Ora. Once it had entered one, the latter's razored fangs closed. I heard the crisp of a deep crush. The air echoed with the bird's final chirp. A sizzle followed as their acids dissolved the creature's prior beauty and turned it into a distorted mess of brine, blood, and marrow.

I gasped as my imagination filled my mind with the worst that would transpire if I had stepped into one.

The pits ahead contained many of such creatures, all filling the interstices.

On my clothing was a small tattoo etched by my father upon me. With me, I carried dozens of miniature Tra'fulu Akortosha.

The chasm ahead is small enough.

I hurled one of such to the other side. Once invoked, tumultuous light glazed the surroundings. The prior solidity of my body morphed into ether and then into nothingness. On the destined Akortosha, my body appeared across the abyss. My body ached and staggered.

Clearly, a method not to be exploited too generously.

A far broader chasm appeared, and I left one scroll on my starting point. No good. Another torrent of those fell creatures fluttering at me! I invoked the spell, diffusing into thin air until I reached my origin again.

"Wait, these vines!" I murmured.

Wringing my arms over it, I beheld many bundles of vines intricately interwoven into a tapestry above. Algae, moss, and

lichen covered them, giving them the appearance of beige-green. Fatigue grew within my arms as I crossed the chasm.

With a thud, I landed on the other side. A continuous sprawl of scarlet and green obscured a much larger pit beneath.

The Cha'rosi U'lan.

As I climbed over the vines, I looked down for a moment. The rhythm of my heart throbbed. It was as if the vessels in my body almost burst like an aneurysm. Tens of hundreds of gaping jaws lurked beneath. They had sensed me, for theirs were all ajar and poised to bite.

Minutes felt like hours as I crossed the chasm. By the end, my hands were already blistered and trembling. It was too much danger for a single day, but I was glad to have made across it.

After a tiresome hour, I had at last trekked through the dark of the undergrowth. Sodden with sweat, I was athirst. But thankfully, at the end was a glade conjoined by the slow trickle of a meandering river. With my elan renewed, I gushed towards the river, sinking my hands into it to scoop up some water.

My replenishment was interrupted as a school of Pul'rusa rushed towards me. Their eel-like bodies were mottled with black and white, and their prognathous jaws had terrifying canines aligning them. My body swerved and darted their deadly bites as they jumped at me. Tumbling, the creatures hopped on the ground before entering the waters once more with splashes.

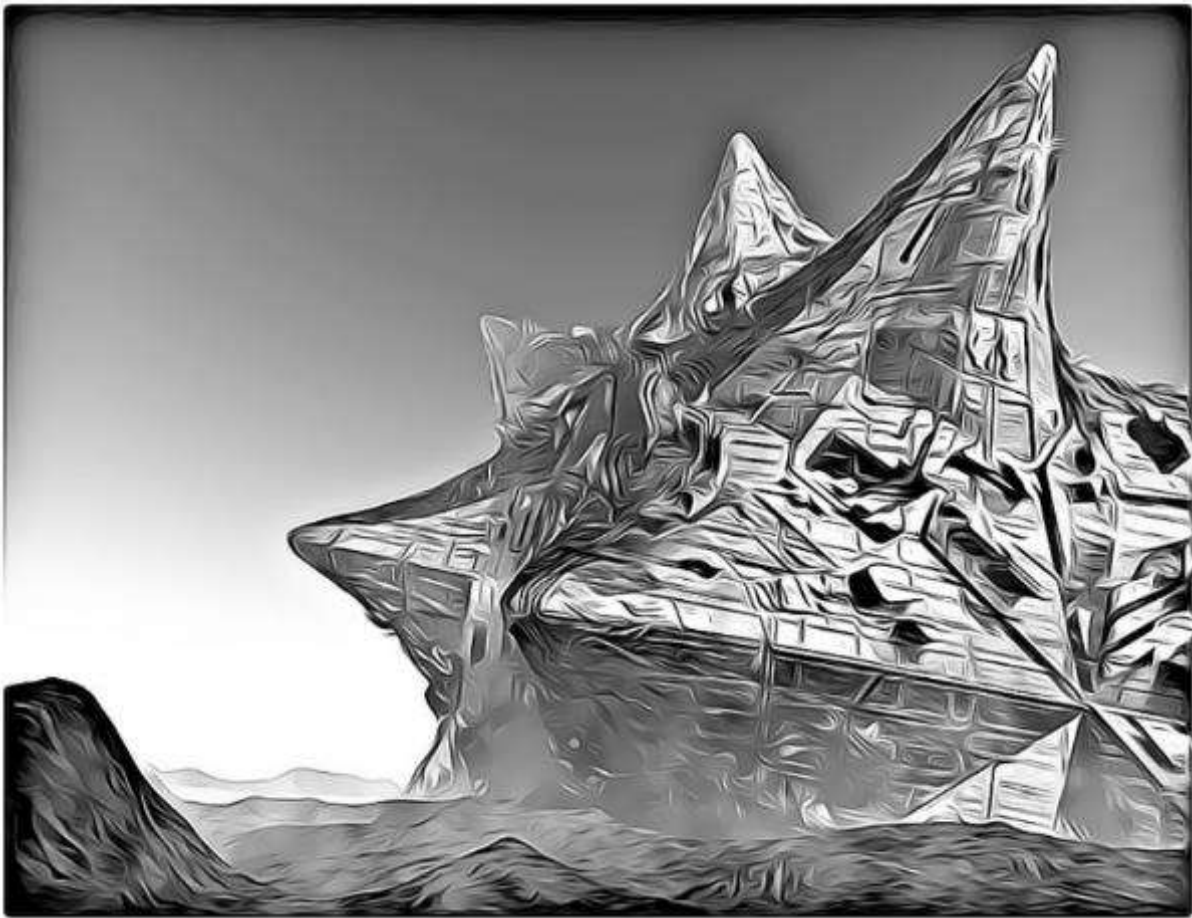
I folded one of my scrolls into a bucket and attached a stick at its end from a safe distance. Once I had collected the waters, I, at last, savored its freshness upon my lips as they trickled down my throat.

I wished I could spare a moment to shower, but as I sank my scoop into the rivers, dozens of Pul'rusa gushed at it. Their fanged molars sank into the device. All that remained were shreds of white, turned red by their bloodied fangs.

Regardless, I had earned the price of my adventure – the structure loomed ahead of me. And after a brief respite to rest my sore feet, I was at last ready to take another plunge into the unknown.

As I approached the enormous construct, I stood mesmerized and in awe of the scale of the building. It was a moment of suspense. Only when faced with enormity can a limited being see her insignificance compared to the scale of the cosmos. Sublimity has served its purpose if there was no need for a god to strike mortals with awe.

The monument slanted at an oblique angle, leaving a shaded area beneath where I could rest.



"Very interesting," I thought, seeing garlands and other victuals already offered to this location. It is apparent that our village was not the only one to have paid homage to this structure.

There were indeed other offerings from other villages. I saw different insignias left beside the offerings. Littering the entire girth of the shaded area, the offerings stood as annals that recorded the reverence of the blue ones towards the object. To some, the structure may have been a totem that signified their god. To others, it may have been a relic that connected them to the past. To me, it stood as an object of intrigue, more so than worship.

I approached the monolith and touched its cold, metallic surface. Then, I beheld something.

"Symbols ... there are symbols inscribed all over the building. What might have been their purpose?" I persevered in intense scrutiny of the relic.

With adroitness, I ascended the monolith from its sun-exposed side, which was facing upward.

Hanging on to the various vines and weeds as an anchorage, I climbed up the construct. As I ascended, I observed multiple patterns inscribed onto the surface of the entire obelisk.

"These symbols ... they are recursive," I thought. "There are two symbols, one looking like an unhatched egg and another like a cross. They are everywhere on this building, each about an inch wide and separated by an inch apart."

Murals conjoined the symbols carved on the walls. The latter painted a picturesque depiction of something which sparked an interest in me.

On the walls was an ancient sage, humanoid in shape. However, no colors were available, and I could not tell which tribe they belonged to or perhaps, whether they were Sha'reeni. A glistening halo crowned his head. I saw dozens of disciples, and they bowed beneath him. A single, sacred tome was handed down to them. Each passed down further copies of the compendium to further disciplines. It was almost like a hierarchy.

An energy passed through the entire edifice.

These psychic imprints ... these living memories. I see! The original tome was very similar to the central tenets of my people's religion. At the corner, somewhere below, a figure stood out and was glazed in blue. In his hands, he held something.

Thus Spake Oneness.

As I placed my hand atop the symbols, a word echoed in my head: Oneness. It was synonymous with divinity, and it appeared it was speaking to me directly. A chime resounded loudly in my mind, and something infused me with its sacred energies.

"Oneness ... the lessons from this tome of my people." I interpreted the thoughts imbued into my mind. "They were from a higher source ... passed down to intermediaries, and even more intermediaries. They were then passed down to countless other people and us. But much of it given to this world has been lost. We know not who gave it to us."

However, next to the blue figure was a person clad in a skin of white. He stood next to many pillars, and from them, he derived the knowledge from them.

White skins? What does this mean? Does it mean that we need certain people to get the tomes on our behalf?

A verse resounded louder than the cacophony of rasping noises and rings before me. A haze appeared before me and spun. As the swirling fog spun, it etched a luminous array of light that glowed with the words: "Planet Earth."

The mirage then morphed into the sphere of glistening light that my father once showed me.

Earth? Is that the provenance of these ancient teachings? Is it still around, and where is it?

How strange for a world to be round, unlike the blue lands' flatlands.

"They no longer exist," uttered a voice. "A race of simians long transcended space and time ... but some were greedy ... they stayed behind until they became the very thing they sought to expunge."

Is this why the ancient teachings have the names of so many strange authors and concepts?

Much was unknown for now, and thus I persisted in my explorations.

Something unusual caught my sight as I climbed: there was an opening within the monolith itself. Intrigued, I climbed towards the aperture.

So dark ... I wonder what is in there?

Six incandescent orbs swirled around me like moons around Leea'doch, providing light and comfort. Four of my spheres zoomed into the unlit vault with a swish.

As the orbs entered and illuminated the area, I mustered my bravery and entered the hole.

This is amazing; I don't think anyone has been in here before!

There was a corridor, aged and covered in dust. However, it was also arcane and artificial. Unlike the sinuous, weathered rocks sculpted by nature, it contained angular corners.

Entering the vault, railings and circular apparatuses aligned linearly throughout the ceilings and ground.

Following the path, I led myself into the trenches of a darkened and more spacious area.

"Orbs, all six of you ... light up the entire place!" I said.

I ditched the sanctuary offered by the six guardians and put my curiosity ahead of safety. The six orbs began their performance - wobbling through the terra incognita and setting alight the place.

This is marvelous. A hall ... a very, enormous hall.

It was large enough to be filled with every monument and statue created by my village. And even such, it would have more room for plenty more.

In the middle of the vault was an enormous pillar, which was cylindrical. It slanted in the same direction as the entire monolith.

As I approached, I noticed chairs riveted to the ground. Before them lay many rectangular objects of some obscure form. To us Sha'reena, no words beyond levers or pulleys could describe the marvels before me.

I approached the inner tower and laid my supple hands on its surface.

"Cold ... and as hard as bronze," I said. It makes a little clangor whenever I strike it swiftly with my fingers. And these symbols ... though much smaller than the ones I have seen outside, cover the entire tower. What could they be?

As I continued to survey the riddling puzzle before me, a sound echoed throughout the entire vault. It sent shudders down my spine.

I was not alone.

A haze of misty gold swirled around me like the arms of a cyclone. A gale gushed over me. It was of such frigidity that my body was quickly beset with quivers. As my limbs trembled, I held my hands before my mouth and exhaled a warm breath upon it.

Gazing ahead, the dust had settled. It had morphed into a sparkle of radiant dust, each glowing with a faint yellow. Altogether, the fog had coalesced into a form I could neither perceive to be alive nor living.

The ghastly entity spoke in perfect Sha'vilo, "It ... has ... been ... a ... while ... since ... my ... awakening. Thousands ... of years!"

"Who are you? Orbs! Rally towards me!" I bellowed.

A quake rippled throughout the vault. As it swirled before me, the androgynous voice echoed.

"Good day ... Sha'reen. What ... brings ... you here?" Its voice echoed throughout the tower, shifting between smoothness and raspiness.

"Who are you? How do you know I am a Sha'reen? What is this?"

"You are ... the first person ... that I have ... seen in nearly seven thousand years." The being's voice hastened from its staccato until its sentences became whole.

The first person? Seven thousand years? Just what are you all?

"Where are you coming from? Show yourself!" I yelled.

"I am the navigator. Sadly, wounds have scarred me beyond restoration. I cannot show." Its voice diminished slowly, as though speaking the language of languor.

"Navigator of this place? What do you mean?"

"Kol'mara are arks like this one, young one. Seek the answers out in the Tsa'mara, which were constructed around Leea'doch. All 156 of them."

"Tsa'mara? Yes, I know about them, but not of their actual specifics."

"They are creations left behind by a distant people."

"Hundred and fifty-six pillars ... wait, do you mean the pillars in the fields of Osphoria? The erect obelisks, seen as monuments to the gods ... those with shifting colors?" I placed my hands over my head, fingers combing my feathers.

"The Tsa'mara are not monuments to the gods. The Tsa'mar you have described has shifting colors, which change based on the auras of a Sha'reen of unreleased potency. Only a Sha'reen of pure blood may unleash the full power of those obelisks."

"What do you mean by a Sha'reen of pure blood?"

"White skins or Ul'tarans. They are people with unlocked powers from a traumatic event."

"I don't understand." I took a deep gasp and gazed into the air, with eyes imploring yet probably brimming with futility.

"We will leave you with this poem:

They came from the stars in their legions
yearning to break free from their bondage.
As they arrive atop the conscious world,
a hundred and fifty-six were placed,
thrust into the mantle of the earth.

For when their work was done and ripe,
the arks slept soundly atop the crust.
They all await the day of awakening,
which only those of pure blood may evoke.
Secrets latent within shall be unveiled.

The splendor of the stars shall be unleashed.
The anchor will connect the trinity.
Then to the empyrean realm, destiny awaits.
Soon will come the wrath of the deviant ones,
who only scour, destroy, and breed chaos."

"What? Please at least tell me more details regarding the Tsa'mara!"

"Only those with the resolve and right mentality may afford to know."

"And how may I prove to be such?"

Rivulets of white light swirled around me and no sooner was I within the maw of a cyclone that desired only to devour my essence. The once glimmering white morphed into the taint of a

dirty beige until no more was there a distinction between the light and shadow. Every swirl around saw the gradual dimming of my awareness within and outside.

A glint of lustrous gold appeared before me, with threads of silver extending from its core. I looked down, beholding none but a puff of velvet violet, almost like a cloud within a dream.

A voice echoed from the aura before me, with every modulation of its voice stirring an expansion of the threads around it.

"Our minds commune, young one," said the being. "In here, no lies can be concealed from the other."

"What do you want?"

"Why do you seek to know the secrets of the Tsa'mara?"

"To unravel Ei'lara and get the sacred teachings of *Thus Spake Oneness*."

"To what purpose would that be?"

"I desire to know of their origins and contents."

"Intrigue alone is no justification to warrant such," echoed the being as a mist of fluffy clouds swarmed around me, giving the impression of a miasma that choked me from within.

"You'll not divulge the secrets of such then?"

"Many acts of genocide and destruction begin from tampering with the unknown. Fools, whose naivete has outstripped their wisdom, often fall into folly and misuse. We'll need a better justification for such."

"Well, the truth is, *I don't know*."

"That's even worse."

"Indeed, *I don't know*. However, I suppose that it's the mystery and wonder of life. A medium once told me that, sometimes, one does not have to work towards any goal in life. Instead, one awaits their arrival and then act upon it."

"What are you implying?"

"If I said I knew, I would be lying. If I said I knew, I would be presumptuous. I'm not omnipotent. I'm immature and inexperienced. However, I only desire to know the teachings' purpose so I may one day frame my choices. Without, I cannot. Would you grant me the liberty of such?"

"A wise statement. Indeed, one cannot observe life. Its essence is experience, not understanding."

"But without precursors, there can be no experience."

"A final test," echoed the voice, sending reverberations that left me shuddering. "Pass this, or your life will be forfeit. *There is no second chance*."

A maelstrom of gold glimmered before me, turning into a single pillar that pierced the heavens. A halo spun around it, brewing

with a lustrous orange with fiery froth bubbling from its edges. I glared into its flames, with every glint as mesmerizing as the twin moons sailing across the skies.

"Look into this ring," said the voice.

Every gaze into it saw the distinction between me and the object diminishing into naught. It was a division, however, that with every blurring was a temptation, almost lustful, but encroaching upon the soul and virtue. Scarlet flames wrapped me until their whiz swirled and morphed into howls. A fierce gust whirled until my gaze was no longer one with a separation between the perceiver and the object.

Temptations of the sacred language's usage echoed in my mind. The thirst for dominance was no less than the avarice in my heart. Glimmering gold flashed as hundreds of shadowy beings bowed in unison. The eternal reflection's symbol loomed high, and my disciples gazed at it until they were no longer aware of their selves. An everlasting current of orange flames streaked across the skies until heaven and hell saw their unions.

No, no! I must dissent! I remember Sha'ra's test!

The surrounding contours morphed from its dream-like sensation until reality glinted before my eyes again. Again, we both assumed our luminous forms.

"You've passed the test," said the voice. "To resist the lure of Ei'lara's abuse is one that spares me from ending your life."

"The types of Tsa'mara ... I need to know them for my quest."

"Fine, I'll grant you the knowledge. It's no right for my kind to deny you of free will. Despite its potential abuse, your path is yours, and we respect it, knowing you have restraint."

"Thank you."

The silhouette of bleak grayness morphed into a resplendence. Soon, all around me was a sea of gold, almost like an undying sunrise. Once more, my awareness returned to my body, and I looked down, beholding the structure around me.

"There are many kinds of Tsa'mara," echoed the entity as the sparks of light on its body danced before me.

As it pranced, it took on the initial appearance of a shade that loomed of death. Its ghastly form coalesced into various shapes. At first, I beheld several oblong objects. They were spear-like and jutted upward at the heavens as though peremptory for attention against the gods.

A bluster of light glistened before me, effusing a sentiment of wrath. As it raged, its prior radiance morphed into a rainbow mist.

Although the being spoke not, the following message *thundered* in my mind:

On the Tsa'mara on Leea'doch:

Several major distinctions classify the structures known as Tsa'mara in this world. Only people with the white malady may access the hurdles present in them.

The first involves those where the seeker must face several puzzles. These may range from riddles that require the employment of wit to solve.

The second mandates a toll on one's stature and health. Many guardians, ranging from the most mundane to the most eldritch, act as custodians of these towers.

The third involves philosophical understanding. The seeker must employ tact and wit to resolve these debates.

Then, there is an assortment of many others that do not fall into the above-said categories.

All of the Tsa'mara are crucial because they house essential knowledge for any thriving civilization. They contain excerpts of the teachings known as *Thus Spake Oneness*. Some may contain spells or enchantments. Others may hold keys to the vernacular known as Ei'lara. Regardless, their role is to help a fledging race achieve its goal of cosmic realization.

"That sounds unusually convoluted. Regardless, what are the codes in this tower? What do they mean?" I asked.

"My time is fleeting ... the codes on the tower you see are ..."

The golden mist pranced before me, shifting from its protean form into rivulets of light. As the radiance flickered, the nebula expanded until its light slowly diffused. The fog no longer glittered. Every scintilla of its prior life vanished into the air. A silence loomed before me until the vault once more transitioned into a desolate gray.

"Are you there?" I asked.

Nothing left.

Fearful of the ghastly apparition with no body, I quickly left the structure.

I have over-stayed my purpose here. That was close. I might have died.

Regardless of my fear, an intangible mystery made me feel marooned.

"Pillars. And a tower with codes in it. Navigators? How did he know I am a Sha'reen? Symbols are written all over the monument. Arks for what? The deviant ones?" I contemplated. "I have to go back to my village. Perhaps they will know more about these. And a hundred and fifty-six pillars around Leea'doch? Not places of worship?"

My journey here had resolved my intrigue. However, more answers had been raised than solved.

Thus, I packed my possessions and returned home.

Regardless of what had transpired, it piqued my curiosity. *Thus Spake Oneness. Ei'lara.* For whatever they may contain in its complete form, I do not know yet. However, if no one were to take up the mantle to gather its fragments, no one else might.