

Lasting Legacies

Ni'vim POV

6 Years Ago ...

On'taras cast his gaze upon the heavens above. It was night, and the sky shone with orbs, each glistening with fervor. An aurora had stretched across the skies. It was brimming with cerulean and pink. Altogether, the heavens glittered with the crescents of the twin moons. An astrologer would undoubtedly have gazed upon the sky with a smile on his face.

The air breezed with a chill. It brought forth neither solace nor terror to the world's residents.

"Perhaps my time has nearly ended. Soon I will dissolve into the great void from which all existence had sprung forth. Within it, there is no separation," said On'taras.

The old sage's body was wrinkled, with tufts of azure feathers aligning his head and arms. Layers of bags sagged under his eyes. As he raised his eyebrows, lines scarred his forehead. However, he wore them not with shame but with pride, as if each was a pearl stretched along a necklace of pearls. Age was no hindrance to his insight. Instead, the various bracelets of radiant rainbow along his arms were a testament to his experience.

Seated before a group of twenty students, On'taras narrated a tale. Dozens of pairs of curious eyes gazed upon him. Faces, once ridden with boredom, are now renewed with smiles and intrigue. I sat amongst the pupils, with my hands fidgeting with anxiety. I am amongst a race of blue-feathered humanoids known as the Sha'reena.

As On'taras narrated, I gazed at his heavily furrowed face, eager and curious.

He orated in Sha'vilo, the language of the blue ones, "There was once a language that existed in times of prehistory. No one knows of its origin or if it was even a tongue forged on Leea'doch. The ancients who had lived before the birth of civilization knew it only as Ei'lara. Few verses of this archaic language remain in the present."

Dozens of voices chattered in the background.

"Ei'lara!"

"The ancient tongue!"

"The speech and not the speaker itself!"

The elder said, "Some legends have alluded to a hidden trove of treasure contained within it. It is something that can neither be touched nor felt. Although many archeologists and linguists have tried to get hold of its fragments, their attempts were futile.

"Much of our understanding of its lore came from this ancient poem, gotten from buildings known as Tsa'mara:

The mind is a prison to concepts.
A snake perceives heat through its tongue.
An eagle through its astute eyes.
A bat, through echoes and sounds,
but none are ever close to the truth.

The word is the tool of the tongue,
just like syntax is of the mind.
All beliefs are mere symbols of the absolute.
They represent only a sliver of infinity.
Paradigms constrict, inasmuch as they free.

Primitive is the mind bound by concepts,
or by the conditionings of the world,
or of tenets which it holds dear.
Free is the mind unshackled from such.
It is free to roam high in the heavens.

But it is a mere fragment of divinity.
The cosmic soul is a flame without a candle.
To see and hear, it needs eyes and ears.
All truth needs perspective,
but one should never attach solely to any.

That is the goal of the universal tongue.
Both Ei'lara and Kol'lara are progenies of god.
When wielded, the truth of the cosmos is unveiled."

Indeed, the wise sage's words were not to be taken lightly. Although wizened and old, On'taras could weave together words in the most glamorous means. His verses, although scholastic, brimmed with elan and pride. The pupils all gazed merrily at him.

On'taras held a smoking pipe in his hand and sprinkled a white powder into it. With a torch cast upon it, puffs of smoke exited its hole. The sage inhaled, and his eyes rolled upward, turning

into a ghastly white. Almost like ash and smog, an outflow of gray flowed from his nostrils, forming a vignette. The once dull silhouettes merged into a ghostly form and held me spellbound.

Before me, the smog danced, setting ablaze the air with embers and choking ashes. They spun like a hurricane, turning into obelisks that pierced the skies.

The sage said, "Scattered throughout the world are these obelisks before you called the Tsa'mara. Legend has it that within them exist fragments of Ei'lara. The Kol'mara also accompany them. No one knows what they were for."

"Surely, such magnificent structures must have some bearing on this world," I thought.

The gray smog blazed and turned into a conflagration, burning as vividly as sunset perched upon an ocean. They curled, and their frills turned into a tome, with its pages flipping open.

"*Thus Spake Oneness!*" echoed the surroundings with the voices of many other children.

"The Tsa'mara are also home to a litany of sacred teachings," the elder said. "These catechisms form the core commandments of the Sha'reeni religion, Sha'rosha. Only fragments of these teachings remain. Many have tried to get its fragments and failed."

Once more, the fog morphed from its fluffy shape into a splendor of gold and silver. They turned into shades of multicolored specks.

As I gazed into them, the contours of a lustrous gold loomed. They transformed into humanoid forms with foam surrounding them. None could see their facial features, but their bodies bulged not with muscles and were slender, curving like embroidery. Standing tall and noble, the beings presided over me with eyes glowing like braziers.

Rivers of light flowed before me. So this must be the ancient world the elders spoke of.

The ebb and flow of the Yertian alps curved like ox-bow lakes. In there lay the wealthiest of all societies. Their cities glistened with the white of marble and alabaster. They were superb artisans who built structures that drifted on clouds. The yellow shimmer of their skins matched the glitter of their pediments and manors. Atop lofty clouds, this great race saw and beheld much prosperity.

"The *Unnamed Ones*," said On'taras.

"The unnamed people?" I uttered. What is this race that was so arcane that the peoples of this world have completely forgotten its name? With glee, I took out my papyrus scroll.

Dipping the tip of a quill with black sepia ink, I quickly scribbled his contents for future records.

"They were the ones who started it all ..."

"Started what?"

The visions turned an ashen-white, with dozens of colonnades flailing from their upright positions. Rubble and cobblestone fell like comets from the skies and left trails of fiery orange. I saw not who they were, but hundreds of bodies lay shimmering with a coat of scarlet. Like the ocean waves, a deluge of darkness caved in.

From the shadows came a crack, as loud as thunder. A sundering force smote the air and cleaved it apart. From its rifts came many vague forms that pranced like the flames of a torch. All were glazed in a smear of yellow that burned under a sky. On that day, the heavens sizzled with the stench of ashes and the crack of thunder.

"The collision of worlds ... the three worlds within Lura'doch ... Leea'doch, Sckogol, and Altendoch ... every few thousand years," said On'taras. "They thought they had won the war ... *they were wrong ...*"

Leea'doch – that is a beautiful name. They said, in the tongue of the forgotten race, the *Unknown Ones*, Leea'doch comprises two syllables – *Leea* and *Doch*, otherwise known as the "middle sphere."

The haze before me sparkled like stars on a lonely night. The skies burst forth with rivulets of ember and orange. The lands were once coursing with the chirps of birds and the scent of nectar. The skies were once a pure and deep azure. However, on that day, the fields were scathed by the march of death.

From high in the sky, a rift tore the very air asunder. And then from it intruded an unholy force that spoke the verses of death everywhere it went. With a swathe of desolate black wrapped around it like a cocoon, it left only rivulets of shadows etched upon the skies. The day became night, and night darker than any abyss.

The being wore a name that sent chills and shudders into everyone who heard it:

Qeazor.

The horrifying visage of smog spiraled before me, again morphing into a story. All of humanity's greatest achievements faced oblivion as the being gushed forth in the young world. Pediments and architraves, once bearing the most ingenious of sculptures and bas relief, met their ruin. Tabernacles and cathedrals, holding the most sacred teachings, were cleansed

from the world. Cities, once replete with the smiles of mortal people, were now smitten. In place was a world that saw its creations reduced to soot, rubble, ash, and ember.

Who is this evil entity known as Qeazor? The narrator's words suggested that Qeazor's intentions were unknown.

"The battle of Perevim," said the sage. "It was not fortunate for the Unnamed Ones. It was a final, desperate act, not of their choosing. The other six noble races formed an uneasy alliance with them."

My eyes stared into the vortex, with every detail so clear that I could hear every soldier's heartbeat. Two million soldiers gathered under the infernal heat of the suns, with sweat trickling down their bodies. An ominous gray bathed the skies. Soon the creatures of the nether met the carnage of spears and swords. Qeazor exhaled a gust of fiery breath, and millions of soldiers had their bones and flesh turned into fossil and ember.

No, no, it must be nothing more than fairy tales. Nothing further than mere mythology. After all, how can something so powerful come into existence? It could not be through strict reason! Nevertheless, it made an exciting story.

"They called him the manipulator and the destroyer. All hope seemed lost," he said. "However, at the mid-day of 18th Zan Pho'Luu-Ei, Year 582 O'hn, the manipulator was led into a beacon of glistening light."

"Can it happen again?" I asked.

"Maybe. But you do not need to concern yourself, dear child. Our people discern no signs of such an infernal intrusion yet."

On'taras inhaled from his pipe and coughed. Another outflow of ectoplasm gushed forth and morphed into a fiery radiance. A tremendous jolt of energy cleaved apart the air. It rang with a cacophony so potent that the entire world could hear its quaver. Lightning arced across the heavens, smiting Qeazor with a last burst of light. The attack was so lucent that night became day, and the day became as bright as the suns.

I covered my eyes, only to be deafened by the din. Light shone into the windows of my world once more. The silhouette of the ancient world surrounded me as though I was peering at the cataclysm through the eyes of its residents back then.

Although defeated, Qeazor hatched a final ploy. With the remains of his energies, four fiery splinters bolted across the skies. They raced to the corners of the world, hidden from mortals' view for a timeless period.

On'taras continued, "No one knows of their presence to this day. The perpetrator, Mirano Spectulus, never recovered from this act, however, for it came at a costly price. The unnamed race was the sacrifice. They disappeared forever and have since been extinct. Hyphora dissolved into feudal kingdoms. Many kingdoms, once strong and haughty, now lay buried."

Fire burned in the background, casting a crimson and orange light upon the soils.

Inhaling from his smoking pipe once more, he breathed out and said, "The details surrounding Ei'lara were forgotten. Qeazor became a tale of folklore. The collision of worlds became a fantasy. The ancient teachings of *Thus Spake Oneness* are the only remnants of the past. They now serve only to remind the present residents of the world."

Ei'lara? Hmmm, surely, there must be no conceivable way of getting most of its remnants. After all, it has been thousands of years. Perhaps my father would know the answers to such.

I walked towards the fiery maelstrom, and dozens of eyes gazed at me.

"You seem intrigued, Ni'vim. Or perhaps, athirst for adventure. You might be just a young girl of the proud Sha'reeni race now, but that may all change. Perhaps, it is you who may take up the banner to unravel the world's mysteries," said On'taras.

Cold quivers beset my limbs. I gazed at the sage, who looked back with a glint in his eyes. With one last verse, On'taras thundered, "Dear child, fear not. You do not know what is about to unfold in life. However, one thing is sure: the only way to find out is to experience it yourself."

The elder cast a spell with one final twirl of his fingers, and fires pranced before me. Placing his hands on my shoulders, he said, "This is the story of you, Ni'vim. And it begins right now."

Notes:

The plural form for many Sha'vilo terms involves adding an -a as a suffix. Therefore, the plural form of *Tsa'mar* is *Tsa'mara*. Adjectives involve adding an -i suffix. Please refer to the appendix for more information.