

Crystalline Ascension

By: Dragonien

The expedition camp was in absolute chaos after the impact. The majority of the hunters and support staff rushed back and forth across the camp trying to put out both literal and metaphorical fires the resulting earthquake had caused. A few, however, found themselves paralyzed in place as they stared out over the horizon to the thick plume of smoke and dust rising up from the direction of the Wildspire Wastes. The surprise of seeing an actual meteor hurtling out of the sky had been shocking enough to distract everyone from bracing themselves for the inevitable earth-shaking result of such an impact. The whole camp had seemed to rock almost sideways for a split second, sending people and equipment flying everywhere and leading to the current chaos.

Thankfully the First Fleet Commander by this point had plenty of experience with unusual situations. All it took was a few shouted orders and smacks to the back of people's heads to get the camp well on its way to recovery. The damage to the camp had been relatively minor once people had moved to prevent further damage, and he wasn't worried about a few scorch marks here. No, what worried him was what kind of chaos must be going on in the Wastes now. The Heavens only knew what kind of creatures an impact like that could stir up, and the last thing he wanted was to be caught off guard when something came rampaging in the camp's direction. With that in mind he stormed through the camp, snatching up a few of the more experienced hunters he could find loitering around and tasked them with inspecting the impact sight. If, in the process of their inspection, they found anything that might be riled up from the disturbance heading in the direction of the camp they knew how to handle it.

The Wildspire Wastes were as hot and dry as they always were. The sun effortlessly burned through practically any cloud cover and left the area in a near constant state of bright, baking sunlight. Thankfully, by the time the hunter's arrived on the scene, most of the dust and debris in the air had been cleared out by the constant valley winds blowing through the area. There were only a few thin plumes of smoke drifting upwards from the impact site, most likely bits of plant life that still smoldered from the heat of the impact. The Hunters were glad for that at least, none of them wanting to deal with the added misery of breathing in dust clouds on top of the already unbearable heat.

It only took the group a few minutes to reach the northern-most canyon where the meteor had hit. Thankfully it hadn't been farther east or they would have had to deal with it falling into the sand traps and underground caverns that were the lair of the Diablos that roamed the area. No one wanted to cross paths with a Diablos pissed off at something smashing through the roof of its den.

Their heavy bow gunner climbed his way to the top of a ledge overlooking a good portion of the canyon to act as spotter for the others. He still couldn't see much inside the crater as there was still that cloud of smoldering smoke rolling up from the center of the impact site. While he couldn't get a clear look inside the crater he did caught a brief flash of something a bright blue color peeking out from within the smoke a few times. Frustrated at the obscured view, he pushed the mounting legs on his bow gun out and settled himself into a prone position, watching the various bits of movement nearby for signs of trouble.

The others three approached the crater at a brisk walk once their overwatch was in place, their desire to quickly finish their mission and get out of the scorching heat and sun softening their instincts to approach cautiously. None of them really expected to be attacked, since an impact like this had almost certainly scared off any creature for at least a mile. However they had not survived so long in such harsh environments by being reckless, either. When they finally reached the edge of the crater one of them tentatively tapped the toe of a boot along the inside of the cratered stone. Once he confident that it was cool enough to walk on and wouldn't crumble beneath him he began tentatively walking his way down the impact crater's incline towards its center, followed closely behind by the others.

As they walked deeper into the crater, which itself had to be over a dozen feet deep and with a diameter easily rivaling that of one of their fleet's ship, they started to catch glimpses of that strange bright blue coloration their companion had seen from up on the ridge. This close they could clearly see that something about the coloration was too distinct to just be brightly colored, rather whatever was down there in the crater was actually glowing! As they finally got down underneath most of the smoke and debris, they could see the source of the strange blue light.

It was a crystal.

The crystal was unlike anything any of them had seen before. It wasn't simply a bit of quartz sticking out of a rock. it was a pure, flawless glassy gemstone that somehow seemed transparent and yet not at the same time. The surface clearly looked as if you could see through it like glass but rather than seeing what was on the other side of it, the inside of the crystal seemed to be filled with a bright blue... something. As if it were somehow a solid piece of crystal, yet at the same time a thin, hollow shell surrounding whatever glowing blue stuff was inside. It made you want to pick it up and shake it to see if it really was solid or if it was full of some kind of liquid that would slosh around. Sadly none of them would be able to fulfil this desire, considering the crystal was almost as big as a full sized man.

The irregularly shaped, person sized crystal simply sat there in the impact crater emitting a soft blue glow across the three hunters. Oddly enough it still seemed perfectly whole despite what was obviously a violent meeting with the ground. They would have expected there to be shards broken off of what looked like such a fragile crystal littering the ground yet there was not so much as a single fragment laying anywhere away from the original. Nervously, one of the hunters approached the crystal with an arm outstretched to touch it. Before his fingers could make contact a sharp crack of sound followed by several more fired off in the distance caused his and the other's heads to jerk to attention in recognition of the sound: a bowgun firing. That was all

the warning they got before being sent tumbling by the abrupt charge of the Diablos thundered his way down into the crater.

The hunters were experienced enough to know how to handle themselves, and quickly recovered from the abrupt arrival of the violent party crasher. What they didn't notice, distracted as they were with their engagement with the beast, was a figure leaping down into the smoke-strewn crater. Something darted down towards the alluring blue glow and snatching it up to be cradled against a feathery chest like a precious child. The gleaming crystal pulsed briefly in response to the touch and seemed to flare a bit brighter as sharp claws dragged across its smooth surface to find proper purchase. Then, just as quickly as it had appeared, the creature leapt its way back up out of the crater and across the dunes with its stolen prize in hand. All that was left behind was a group of confused and frustrated hunters, fresh from driving off the Diablos and wondering where the crystal that they had all been looking for had gone.

The tracks hadn't been hard to find or recognize. Yulu-Ya-Ku weren't very aggressive creatures unless you encroached on their den or attacked them and even then they were just as likely to run as they were to actually fight. They did, however, have a knack for showing up at seemingly random intervals and snatching up whatever piece of food, egg, rock or anything else that tickled their fancy at the moment and running off with it. Of course whatever that crystal was, the hunter's had no intention of just letting the bird wyvern have it. What was confusing the hunters enough to give them pause was the unusual size of the tracks.

Usually even Kulu-Ya-Ku on the biggest end of the bell curve were only about 8 feet tall if it stood up straight. The tracks they were following, on the other hand, looked to be from one almost half again that size! Sure they'd all either seen nor heard of abnormalities in species that could lead to larger or more dangerous variants, but that usually seemed to only occur in the more aggressive predators. Never had any of them heard of it happening with a docile creature like a Kulu. They started to wonder if maybe their eyes were playing tricks on them, as the further they went they would swear the tracks were actually getting bigger as they went. None of them were surprised when they found themselves lead to a small cave set in the side of a large rocky mound. Though they were surprised when a small stampede of three Kulu-Ya-Ku barreled past them in a frantic escape from within the cavern, one of them ramming so hard into the bowgunner in their escape that he went sprawling to the ground!

When they had recovered and peaked inside the cave the hunters gave a sharp inhale of surprise at its contents. The single biggest Kulu-Ya-Ku any of them had heard of, much less seen, was standing in the center of the cave. Where a normal Kulu would be around six to seven feet tall this one looked nearly to be half again that! What was more, they all saw that the Kulu held the glowing blue crystal from the crater possessively in its sharp-clawed talons. Oddly enough while the crystal had seemed totally unharmed by its impact to the ground they could all clearly see three shallow scratch marks on either side of the crystal where the Kulu's grasping claws had gouged bits of it out while holding on to it.

When the hunters poked their heads around the edge of the cave the Kulu's head whipped around to stare straight at them. They swore they saw its eyes narrow slightly at the sight of them as if in irritation. What was more surprising to the hunters wasn't the strange gleam of recognition and intelligence in its gaze but the fact that the white sclera of the creature's eyes seemed tinted with the faintest gleam of blue that, in the dim light of the cave seemed to glow ever so slightly. One of the hunter's started to whisper to the others asking what their plan should be, but only got the first word out before being interrupted by a booming squawking cry from the Kulu that resonated around the cavern walls. The sheer volume of it thanks to the Kulu's abnormal size mixed with the amplifying echo of the cave nearly deafened all of them from a dozen yards away!

As if the hunter's attempt to speak had been some kind of signal, the beast rushed towards the edge of the cave with mayhem in its eyes. It's head and neck lowered down straight like a battering ram and slammed into one of the hunter's torso before they had a chance to get away from the cave entrance and sent him flying tail-over-teakettle a dozen feet through the air. The others started to pull their weapons but the bowgunner found himself smashed in the chest by the sweep of the Kulu's tail as it pivoted on one foot and spun away from him. With two of its four intruders on the ground in only a matter of seconds, the Kulu raised its head up and released a cry of challenge and triumph. The sound was akin to that of a raptor's scream, deepened several octaves by its larger-than-normal voice box. That's when things really got weird.

As its talons dug in to the massive blue crystal it held, as if shoring up its grip for its challenging cry, the tiniest crinkling sound of cracking glass could be heard. Miniscule fragments of the crystal broke off around where the beast's claws dug in to it. Oddly enough no fragment ever seemed to actually fall to the ground despite there clearly being small bits missing from it. Instead, a strange ripple of blue light seemed to roll up the Kulu's arms and across the rest of its form. Its body shuddered and strained itself back against those ripples like you might brace yourself forward against swells of water in the ocean rushing at you. As it did its body started to grow! Each ripple it pushed back against seemed to stretch and expand its body outwards in all directions, adding inch after inch of new size and dozens of pounds of additional mass to the already oversized beast!

The talons on its feet gripped at the stony outcropping it stood on and swelled over its edges, clenching hard enough the stone actually cracked under the pressure. Its tail whipped about behind it in time with the rest of its body's movements even as it stretched back far enough it brushed the entryway of the cavern. The crystal seemed to shrink in its grasp as its clawed hands expanded to cover more of the man-sized mineral. To the hunters it no longer looked quite as big as it had before when compared to the creature holding it. By the time the glow seemed to fade from both the crystal and the Kulu holding it the oversized beast had to be at least a dozen feet tall. The Kulu-Ya-Ku was nearly the size of a Barroth! The gathered hunters just stood there in a stunned daze, struggling to comprehend what they had just seen. A mistake that they should have known better than to make.

The Kulu's massive legs flexed, muscle fibers tensing and coiling like steel springs, then it leapt forward in a blur to smash into the ranks of the stunned hunters. Two were knocked out of the way and sent sprawling to the ground a half dozen feet away. A third had simply fallen on his ass, having been out of the direct impact zone but knocked down simply by so much weight smashing into the earth and causing it to shake beneath him. The last one was the worst off, nearly being crushed by a massive talon-clad foot resting squarely atop his chest.

He was acutely aware of how nearly his entire body was covered by the oversized appendage, some odd little part of his brain rebelling against the idea not so much of being stepped on but how the Kulu track he was being squashed down in to was far too large for a Kulu-Ya-Ku.

Before the Kulu's full weight could bear down on the trapped hunter a loud explosion rocked both the hunters and the monstrous Kulu alike, momentarily deafening them with the sound wave. The bowgunner had raised up to a kneeling position and had fired an explosive round right into the Kulu's side. Even with the Kulu's enhanced size it still didn't carry the raw mass that something like a Barroth or Diablos carried with all its natural armor plating so all the hunters were relieved when the impact sent it stumbling to the side and freeing their trapped companion. Their relief quickly evaporated, however, when another oddity made itself apparent. The impact site on its flank should have been badly burned, if not torn up and bleeding profusely. That round had been an armor piercing stinger bomb meant to break apart a creature's heavy armor and should have had no trouble shredding the Kulu's lightly defended flesh. Despite this the round seemed to have had almost no effect on the Kulu, save for the concussive force of the explosion knocking him off balance. Apparently more had happened to the creature besides just having its size increased.

The hunters did their best over the next few minutes to regain their composure and put up a proper assault against the Kulu, but the longer they fought the more the oddities about whatever was happening to the Kulu drove them to concern and despair. Bowgun rounds bounced off its hide like it had the armor plating of a Barroth or a Radobaan while their blades struggled to leave more than shallow cuts. Even their heavy hammer wielder seemed able to do little as the creature, despite its augmented physical durability and sheer size, still had the agility akin to its species. It was like an Odogaron wearing weightless steel armor that didn't constrict its movements. Just when they were ready to give up and retreat in hopes of finding reinforcements back at base help from an unexpected source barreled its way into the Kulu; Literally.

The Diablos rushed thundered its way over the hilltop in a full charge, moving so quickly that both the hunters and the Kulu barely had time to register its thunderous footsteps before the beast slammed its way into the Kulu's side. It didn't matter how much stronger or more durable the Kulu had become as far as physics was concerned. The bird wyvern could have been indestructible and even then having multiple tons of rampaging Diablos slamming into it would still send it flying. The Diablos was clearly pissed, though it was anyone's guess whether it was still angry about the hunters attacking it earlier or if it sensed a new threat in its hunting area. The reasoning was mostly academic in that it didn't change that fact that the beast was here, pissed, and now seemed to have its sights set on the Kulu-Ya-Ku.

The bird wyvern squawked in dazed outrage. Its bell had been rung quite hard by being thrown clean off its feet by the Diablos and slammed against the side of the cliff. The still-glowing crystal had tumbled from its grasp in the process and lay on the ground several feet away. Already the hunters were rushing towards it hoping to get it away from the augmented beast in hopes of keeping it from becoming even further empowered. Before they had a chance, though, the Kulu was back upright and screeching out a challenge to the Diablos. In response the massive armored brute opened its own maw to bellow a thunderous roar that forced hunter and Kulu alike to wince and shield their ears from the sounds. The Kulu shifted back and forth several steps, as if trying to gauge the Diablos' reaction time. with its back up against a wall like this the Kulu was effectively

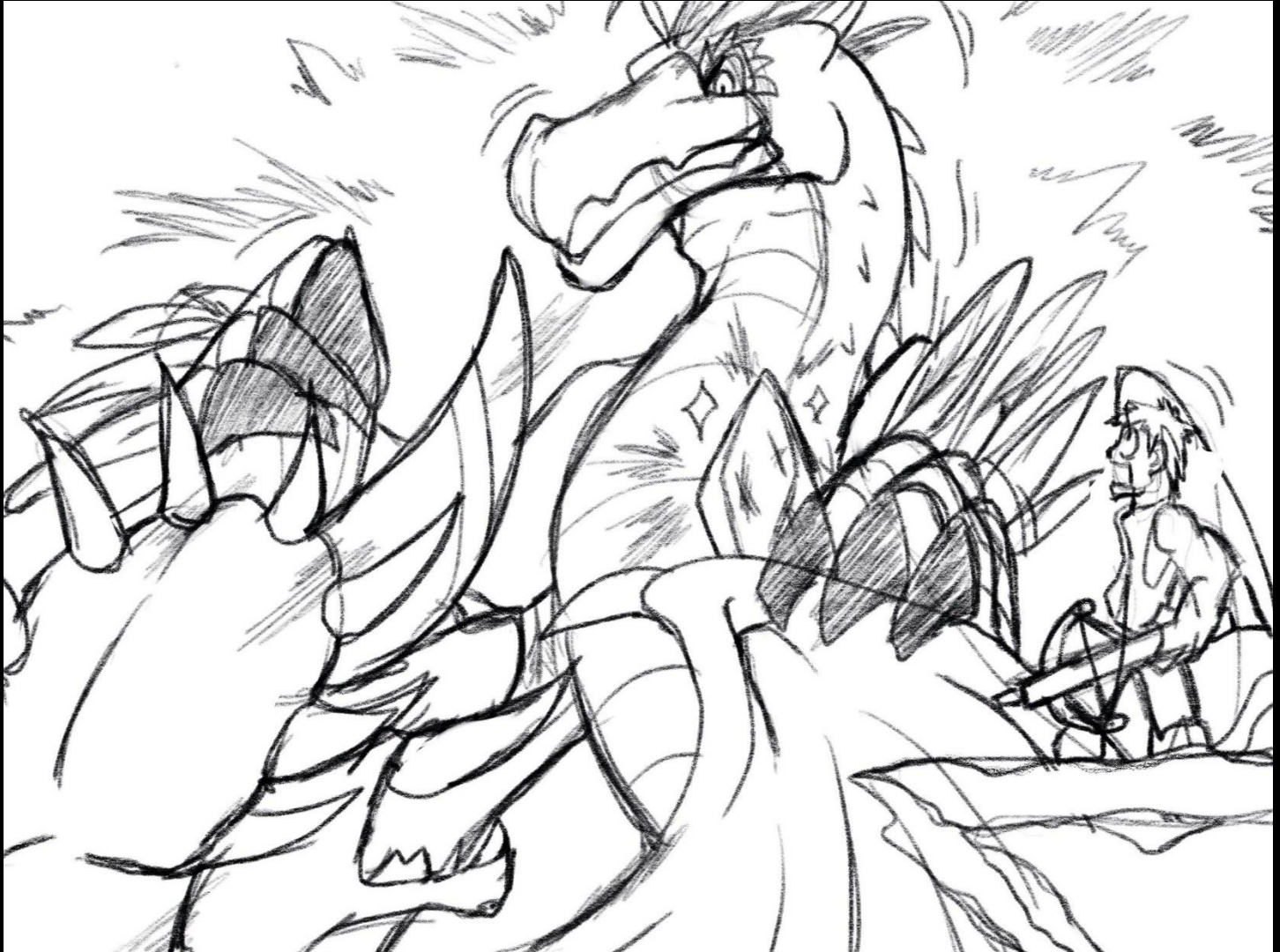
cornered, and only minor shifting of the Diablos' position was needed for it to be in position to charge again and pin the Kulu up against the wall of the cliff behind it. Unfortunately for the hunters, this made it hard to get close to the crystal without getting noticed or stepped on as the overgrown raptor danced back and forth looking for an opening. One of them had already been stepped on once today and none of them wanted to share in that experience.

The Diablos seemed to grow tired of the back and forth dance and began to advance on the cornered raptor who squawked and screeched in further protest to its advance. A gleam of intelligent defiance and anger flickered in the Kulu's eyes as it very uncharacteristically stood its ground even as the Diablos let loose another roar and charged. It was a stroke of luck for the Kulu that the Diablos was too close to get up much momentum in its charge, but that also meant it didn't have far to go and the Kulu had no room to evade. Recognizing this, the Kulu instead stood its ground and instead grabbed on to the Diablos's horns when they were within range! The Kulu's talons dug into the ground, claw tips scratching loudly across the sand covered stone looking for purchase. It pushed its weight as far forward as it could, trying to arrest the Diablos' forward momentum in a direct battle of strength against strength.

It was a losing battle. Foot by foot the Kulu skidded backwards towards the cliff wall where it seemed inevitable it would find itself impaled on the brute's enormous horns. It simply didn't have enough raw muscle strength or mass to contest with such a massive beast like the Diablos. One thing it did seem to have on its side, though, was luck. As the Kulu skidded backwards the back of one of its talons smacked right in to the crystal that had fallen to the ground behind where it had made its stand. In all of the chaos of the Diablos' attack the Kulu seemed to have forgotten about its precious prize from the meteor crater. The pressure of the crystal suddenly being dragged across the rough ground by the Kulu's foot started to scrape small chunks and bits off of it and, just like before, rather than falling to the ground those little scraped off scraps of crystal seemed to melt into blue light that began to flow up the Kulu-Ya-Ku's leg. As that light rolled its way up through the Kulu, once more, it began to grow.

Its feet swelled across the ground, expanding their surface contact area while the talons adorning them lengthened and thickened to give it a better purchase on the ground below. The blue light traveled up its legs and through the rest of its body to force more mass in to it to even the rest of the Kulu out with its newly expanded feet. As the raptor grew the stubborn forward locomotion of the Diablos began to slow. With each passing second it was able to push the Kulu less and less distance across the ground. It felt the growing resistance and responded with a rumbling growl of anger and protest as if furious at the sheer audacity of being resisted. It didn't even seem to notice that the talon-clad hands gripping at its massive horns were thickening and spreading wider to cover more and more of the ivory appendages. What was most unusual though was that this time the Kulu wasn't just growing in overall size. As if reacting to the lack of brute muscular strength that had driven it quite literally against a wall, whatever was causing the growth was now adding more and more muscle mass to the Kulu's frame in addition to overall size. Its thin, lanky arms thickened with new cords of muscle, giving it a far more defined and muscular appearance. Its legs and haunches burgeoned into monstrous pillars of raw strength that seemed to visibly strain the tan hide containing them as they pushed back against the Diablos' advance. The Kulu's posture even seemed to rise and straighten slightly, as if its spine had reshaped to a slightly more upright posture to better channel its newfound strength.

It wasn't until the Diablos felt himself stop cold that it finally started to realize something was wrong. Its feet were planted flat into the rocky ground, pushing with enough force that it should have been barreling right through a solid rock wall much less some scrawny bird creature. When it found that it could no longer force itself forward it stopped trying and instead raised its head enough to look at its prey once more. Then it found itself staring at a broad, tan colored torso and slowly angled its head further up to look the Kulu in the face.



The now monstrous Kulu could easily rival a Radobaan in overall size if not quite in mass. The Kulu now was more than a match to the Diablos in both overall weight and strength thanks to both its increased musculature and overall size even without the added weight of armor plating. Its hands still held the Diablos' horns in a vice grip that, when the brute tried to jerk free from, clenched their grip tighter and kept the Diablos from moving its head more than a few inches either direction. Anger mixed with concern in the Diablos' brain as its simplistic animal sensibility tried to make sense of the disappearance of its smaller, weaker challenger and the appearance of this much larger and more threatening replacement. It didn't get a chance to figure it out.

The Kulu's newly enhanced arms strained and jerked the Diablos by the horns to one side. Like a rancher wrestling an aggressive bull by the horns, the Kulu twisted its head and forced its body to roll with the movement until the brute lost its balance and smashed down onto its side. The impact made the beast's own

weight work against it, ringing its bell as its head was slammed into the ground under the combined force of its body weight's own momentum and the jerking motion the Kulu had forced upon it. The Diablos simply lay there, stunned for several moments as the Kulu released the horn closest to the ground and instead rested a talon-clad foot on it. Distracted by seeing the wickedly sharp talon of the Kulu's foot only inches from one of its eyes the Diablos didn't even realize what was happening until a sharp CRACK echoed through the valley and it was compelled to follow the sound with a roar of pain and fear. The Kulu had braced a foot on the bottom horn then jerked upwards with both arms and simply snapped the Diablos' horn off at the base and now held the severed piece of ivory victoriously over its head like some kind of trophy.

Desperately, the Diablos bucked against the weight of the Kulu's foot on top of its remaining horn. Its tail lashed around behind it and ineffectually smashing into the ground several times. The brute was able to push upwards enough with its head that it unbalanced the foot the Kulu still had resting on its intact horn, which caused the oversized Raptor to stumble backwards and release the pinned Diablos. As the Kulu stumbled backwards to regain its balance the Diablos hauled itself to its feet as quickly as a beast of its size and mass could. Rather than release another roar of anger and challenge however, it glanced up to meet the eyes of the now larger Kulu-Ya-Ku. Then it instead released a pitiful keening whine of pain. The Diablos turned its back on the Kulu and started to limp its way as quickly as it could back towards its lair and away from the monster that had bested it. Diablos was no longer the king of his little desert castle in this neck of the wastes.

By now the hunters had realized they were woefully outmatched by the monstrous beast the Kulu had become and had decided that discretion was the better part of valor. The group had already ran off by the time the Kulu had finished dealing with the Diablos. They had hardly even been able to scratch the beast before its latest enhancement and now they doubted whether anything they had could hurt it at all. As both they and the Diablos vanished over the horizon the Kulu-Ya-Ku raised its head up to survey its surroundings as its eyes gleamed with an intelligence unusual even for a typically clever creature like a Kulu-Ya-Ku.

When it seemed satisfied that no more threats were immediate, the monster turned its attention back down to the ground by its feet. Gingerly, it's now massive talons curled around the glowing blue crystal by its foot. Even though it had further cracked and lost more of its mass the thing was still nearly the size of a full grown man. Despite that the Kulu's new size made it effortlessly to lift in a single talon. Even the beast itself seeming to marvel how much smaller and lighter the stone was. It still vividly remembered that not hours ago the thing had required both of its arms to carry and had exhausted it just bringing it back to its cave. Now it seemed to weigh nothing and fit comfortably in one hand.

With an almost reverent care, the Kulu experimentally squeezed its fist around the crystal. It was as if its animal brain were trying to piece together some kind of understanding that was just beyond the edge of its mind's capability. The faint tinkle of cracking glass reached the Kulu's ears and immediately he relaxed his hold on the crystal for fear of shattering it entirely. Despite the relaxing of his grip, however, the crystal had already broken off another small piece of itself. Tiny little trickles of crystalline dust seeming to vanish into the skin of the Kulu's talons, which caused that now familiar sensation of energy coursing through the beast to begin once more. Its body rolled and gyrated forward as if it were squatting down then standing itself up straight, though

each time it did its head reached a little bit higher on the cliff behind it. Inch after inch of newfound size spread across the beast as its theory held true. Its foot-talons spread across the ground, feeling the stone beneath the sand actually crack as its weight finally became too much for them to hold together. Its tail stretched out until it smacked against the cliff with enough force to dislodge a small trickle of stones from the cliff face.

When the effects from the latest growth spurt had slowed to a stop the monstrous Kulu-Ya-Ku easily had grown to be a full 30 feet tall! It was now easily twice as tall as the Diablos had been and, thanks to the Kulu's enhanced muscular proportions as well as its new size, several times heavier than the bull-horned monster the Kulu had sent packing. More than that, further changes had taken place in more subtle parts of the Kulu. Its eyes gleamed with even more of that strange intelligence even as its sclera had gained a noticeably brighter shade of that strange blue illumination. It seemed to recognize things better, focusing its gaze more intently on various objects and nearby smaller creatures as if actually studying them rather than simply taking brief note of their presence. Were anyone still around to observe the mutating monster there would be no mistake in their mind that this beast wasn't just bigger than a normal Kulu-Ya-Ku, but was much more intelligent than a normal one of its species as well. However, neither that newfound mass or enhanced intelligence elevated the beast above its biology.

The Kulu was pulled from what was possibly its first moment of true introspection by a gurgling pang of discomfort in its belly. Its empty hand reflexively went down to cradle the curve of stomach as if consoling it for its suffering. The Kulu was hungry. Normally it would head off into the thin brush of the desert to scavenge for what it could find in the areas where the larger and more dangerous indigenous life rarely went. But today was different. Today, The Kulu felt like celebrating, now that it could grasp the idea of celebration. It had been elevated to a status and stature beyond any of its kind previously had reached, and had driven off predators from their own lands to claim as its own. Now, it wanted to feast on a morsel it rarely was able to partake in. As the beast the Kulu had become started to lumber its way down the path towards the thicker patch of forest on the edge of the wastes a strange feeling overtook its mind as it thought of the forest's inhabitants. Specifically the guardian of what the Kulu was lusting after. When it thought of said guardian swooping down from the skies to attack it and drive it away from the prize the Kulu sought after, the muscles around the edges of the Kulu's beak twitched in a strange way they never had before. It was almost like it was trying to smile as the anticipation of meeting the forest's guardian. The Anticipation of meeting it, and putting it too in its place as the Kulu had done the Desert king.

The nest wasn't hard to find. Kulu, as its budding sense of individuality had decided to call itself, had been to it several times before. He had even successfully stolen a prize from it once, and unsuccessfully attempted to a dozen other times. The dip in the ground level of the forest led to a small clearing surrounded by poisonous flowers. Kulu had no idea if the flowers had grown out of remnant poison that had come from the guardian's tail-barbs or the guardian had chosen this place as its nest specifically because the flowers grew here as a defense mechanism. Either way, Kulu had to be careful maneuvering his enlarged bulk down the path to keep from breaking open any of the fragile bulbs of poisonous liquid and pollen on several of the nearby flowers. It was difficult, but at the same time a strange sense of satisfaction filled Kulu as he carefully placed each footstep. Something about the feeling of being so much bigger and more powerful than he had been before that he had to be careful how he moved for fear of damaging things around him strangely appealed to his newly developing personality.

When he finally reached the bottom of the path he found himself looming over a broad, roughly circular pile of twigs, leaves, small branches, and even a few bones and other miscellaneous debris. Carefully nestled in the center of the makeshift bedding were a half dozen dull white ovals carefully pressed up against one another:

Eggs.

Saliva practically poured out of the edges of Kulu's beak as he stared at the eggs, imagining the taste he had gotten from his successful theft of one so long ago. He still didn't understand entirely what was going on with his head, but he knew he was thinking and understanding things much more clearly and broadly and he was eager to see if that would translate to an enhanced enjoyment of the taste of the raw eggs. Carefully, he tucked the prized crystal in the crook of one of his muscle-enhanced arms, and began crouching down over the nest. The tips of his talons gently poked and prodded at the bounty of unoccupied eggs, measuring them against one another to look for the largest one and looking for some less quantifiable idea of which one might be the tastiest treat. That was when the attack came.

The loud whipping of wind displaced by massive leathery wings proceeded the beast's arrival by less than a second as it dove down from the sky. Like a comet from the heavens the green scaled Rathian crashed against Kulu's side with fangs barred and talons outstretched to rake across the Kulu's hide. To the Rathian's surprise they didn't make it through. The impact barely even rocked Kulu sideways slightly despite the full weight and momentum of the Rathian crashing in to him while the razor sharp claws at the end of the Rathian's legs barely even left visible scratch marks across Kulu's impossibly durable hide. Momentary confusion only fed the Rathian's outrage that its nest was being plundered and, rearing up on its hind legs with wings spread wide, its maw opened and released a thick glob of white hot fire from its open muzzle!

The ball of fire splashed across Kulu's shoulder and upper back and exploded with enough force even the Rathian, being so close to the egg-thief, was rocked backwards slightly from the concussion. Kulu, on the other hand again only rocked to the side slightly. All the while through the Rathian's initial attacks Kulu had continued messing with the eggs while saliva dribbled down the edge of his beak in hungry little droplets. Slowly, Kulu started to drag his attention away from his prizes to look over his shoulder. A brief glance dripping of contempt down at his shoulder where the fireball had hit showed little more than a slight darkening of the hide, more soot and burnt leftover debris clinging to him than any real damage. Then his gaze settled back on the Rathian. That strange tugging feeling of the muscles around Kulu's face returned and he tried again to smile.



Kulu felt a sense of raw, smug satisfaction welling up in his chest when he saw how small the Rathian looked in comparison to him. The guardian creature, which before could have crushed him with its weight by stepping on him or swallowed him in just a couple of gulps, was now less than half his size. Now he was the one that could crush the Rathian with a step, he was the one that could swallow it down with little effort. Kulu, like the rest of his species, had never been predators. Mostly they foraged fruits, plants and maybe the occasional egg here or there. But now, standing here towering over a beast so inferior to him, towering over 'prey', Kulu started to understand the appeal of hunting, of being the predator.

Abruptly Kulu's arm swept out as he pivoted on one foot and swung towards the Rathian. His enhanced mass and strength, along with the momentum of his movement, sent the back of his enlarged forearm slamming into the Rathian's side with the force of a charging Barroth! The smaller beast was lifted clean off its feet and sent flying across the clearing, skidding to a stop only when it's back smacked against the trunk of an ancient tree a dozen or so feet away. As it shook its head to recover the Rathian felt a brief series of resonant impacts vibrate the ground beneath it, footsteps of the approaching Kulu-Ya-Ku. The green beast forced itself up on to its feet in time to look up to see the intimidating visage of Kulu towering over it, the light streaming in from the forest canopy to silhouette Kulu's enormous frame for the Rathian. Then, Kulu got to experience something that he had never imagined he would get to see.

The Rathian ran away from him.

Its maw opened to release a keening cry of challenge devoid of the power and confidence it had held during its initial attack. Then, just as quickly as it had come, the Rathian pushed off with its powerful hind legs and spread its wings to fly off beyond the forest canopy. For once Kulu wasn't the one being ran off and intimidated. He felt that burning gleeful pride welling up in his chest again, that sense of dominance and control that he had neither felt nor understood before today. First the cave where the rest of his pack had once stayed belonged to him after their alpha had tried to take Kulu's crystal away and he had fought for it. Then the Desert King Diablos had tried to drive him off its territory, seeing him as a threat to its power, only to have itself maimed and sent limping back to its cave to lick its wounds while Kulu asserted himself as the new Desert King. Now even the Sky King Rathian was being usurped as Kulu took its very nest from the beast and batted it around like a child. The last hadn't even registered as a challenge for dominance to Kulu, it hadn't even been an annoyance. He had ENJOYED how strong he had felt when the Sky King had been unable to do more than scratch him, and he wanted to feel that more. By now Kulu was the strongest creature in the , but it wasn't enough. He felt, he KNEW there were bigger and better challenges out there. Better territories, bigger enemies, tastier foods were all out there just waiting for him to find them, and Kulu knew just where to look.

Ever since the crystal had begun changing him he had been understanding more and more of the world around him as well as more about himself. Things that he had known before purely as instinctual feelings of 'don't do this' or "don't go there' were now starting to translate into more coherent thoughts that could be analyzed. One such thought told Kulu where he needed to go next, to find the biggest and baddest beasts on the island and show them who was boss. Where he needed to go to claim what he now felt, now knew, was his place as the King of Monsters. A valley almost all other creatures instinctually avoided out of fear for the beasts that lived within. The hunting ground of the Ancient Ones, The Elder Dragons. The place the island's hunters knew as The Elder Recess.

By the time Kulu had made most of the long trek to reach the boundaries of the Elder Recess the island's hunters had already regrouped and concocted a plan to try to deal with the oversized Kulu-Ya-Ku. Thankfully they'd already had most of the infrastructure in place from dealing with Zora Magdaros so it was just a matter of getting everyone back into position ahead of the creature. Unlike Zora Magdaros, the Kulu-Ya-Ku covered ground quickly and even with them having almost everything set up beforehand the hunters had barely gotten the barricade manned before Kulu was upon them. The hunters had heard the reports from their scouts shadowing the beast, but none of them had really been able to fully believe what they were being told until they saw the monster Kulu had become with their own eyes. It was bigger than any other monster they had seen on the island so far save for Zora Magdaros himself and every hunter there soon could literally feel its footsteps shaking the ground ever so slightly as it approached.

All they had done was shift some of the wooden wall barricades they had used to slow Zora Magdaros down onto the path leading up into the valley proper. If the Kulu wanted to get past it was going to have to try to smash through those barricades, or risk climbing up the side of one of the cliffs where a half dozen canons on either side were waiting to blast it back off the cliff with artillery fire. Either that or it'd have to jump down into the bay below where even if it was able to swim and try to continue fighting they had their flagship with the Dragonator at the ready just in case. They hoped that it would be enough to box the Kulu in long enough for them to pepper it with artillery and mundane weaponry to get the crystal away from it at the very least so they could keep it from getting any bigger. If they were lucky maybe they would even be able to wear it down to the

point that they could kill or at least tranquilize it. Unfortunately there was something that neither the hunters nor Kulu himself had planned on that threw both group's plans into chaos.

The ear-splitting roar deafened everyone present, including Kulu himself as the monster swooped down from the sky. Glossy, ebony scales gleamed as Nergigante descended upon Kulu with its talons outstretched. Even though the Nergigante was slightly smaller than Kulu it had more than enough mass and momentum to bear Kulu down to the ground under its assault and pin the slightly larger beast beneath it. To the surprise of hunter and Kulu alike the Nergigante's claws dug deeply into Kulu's flesh, tearing through the unnaturally durable hide like thick leather where its talons gripped at either of Kulu's shoulders. It was the first time since Kulu had started to change and become more self-aware that he had felt real pain, and his beak opened in a squawk of agonized distress. Desperately Kulu struggled and writhed beneath his captor even as Nergigante's claws dug deeper into his shoulders. Nergigante may not have been quite as big as Kulu was now, but it was a predator that preyed on Elder Dragons. It had the strength and natural weapons to take down even monstrous being like Zora Magdaros so to it an overgrown Kulu-Ya-Ku seemed no big challenge.

Kulu, meanwhile, thrashed back and forth for all he was worth beneath his attacker in frantic desperation. His eyes were wild with a mixture of outrage and fear. Having so effortlessly dispatched some of what he had seen as some of the strongest creatures he had ever come across had made Kulu far too arrogant and the sense of helplessness and fear he felt now at the hands of the Nergigante was overwhelming. But no matter how much he thrashed, no matter which direction he tried to roll or where he found purchase to grab on to or push against he could not dislodge the beast atop him pinning him down and digging claws deep into his flesh. He just wasn't big enough, wasn't strong enough to overpower the Nergigante like he had the Rathian and Diablos. It was then that Kulu's eyes fell on to the crystal laying in front of him. The assault by the Nergigante had knocked it from his hand and it had skittered forward to rest right in front of his beak. Thankfully the hunters around were too wary of getting in the line of fire of the two beasts fighting for them to try to retrieve it and take it away from him. Not that it would have made a difference. The crystal may only have been a couple of feet away but the Nergigante's grasp on his shoulders kept his arms pinned and unable to reach for it.

Kulu didn't know how the crystal worked, what it was about it that let it affect him like this. All he knew was that it was the source of all of his newfound power. It wasn't some stolen egg or precious treasure that he had found to take back to his cave back when he was a dumb animal, it was more than that. It was the source of his new fortune, the origin of his new power. It had given the ability to think beyond primal thoughts of food and survival. In a way, it had given Kulu life. The crystal had become the one thing that Kulu could never go without anymore. He didn't need to keep it around to look at and admire, he just needed it. Needed it like he needed air. Even as the thought formed in his head, the more primitive part of his mind that was hypnotically allured to shiny trinkets and baubles railed against the idea but Kulu pushed it down. He had become more than a dumb beast. And he would become much more. With a final longing look at the glowing rock that had peaked his interest as a dumb animal, and swelled him both mind and body into what he had become, Kulu made his decision. Straining under the Nergigante's weight he stretched his neck out, dragging his open beak against the ground and scooped the crystal up into his mouth

And swallowed it.

For a few moments that seemed to drag on for hours nothing seemed to happen. A creeping dread welled up inside Kulu, a new sensation he was no fan of, that he had made a terrible mistake. As those seconds dragged on he frantically took stock of his body looking for any of that telltale tingle or strange twisting of flesh and energy he had felt before from the crystal's effect. All he felt, though, was the searing heat of pain coming from the places where the Nergigante's claws had penetrated in to him. Then suddenly he felt it. It was like Kulu had been struck by lightning. A sudden surge of a familiar discomfort and disorientation that surged out from his belly rather than hand and spread throughout his body but magnified a dozen times over. Though he could not see it himself his eyes gleamed with that pale blue glitter and abruptly his irises changed color from golden yellow to a brilliant electric blue identical to that of the glowing blue light of the crystal. It was then that his body began to change.

Abruptly it lurched upwards, causing the Nergigante to snarl out in surprise and confusion as he felt himself lifted up higher off the ground. Out of reflex the beast's claws dug deeper into Kulu's flesh to keep his balance, eliciting another squawk of pain and anger from the trapped Kulu-Ya-Ku. Kulu could feel the flesh of his torso sliding across the stone floor underneath him as he spread out slowly in all directions. Oddly enough he wasn't growing any faster than he had been in previous interactions with the crystal, yet at the same time Kulu could feel something building like water pushing up against some metaphorical dam inside of him. As he grew, his body thickened and hardened as well. Nergigante's claws were slowly pushed out of his flesh as newfound muscle knit and wove itself around Kulu's body and forced the intruding claws free. His hide knit back together and almost visibly thickened as if responding to his attack and preventing such intrusions from happening again. No longer could the grip of the Elder Dragon killer's claws so easily pierce through Kulu's skin. Meanwhile that newfound strength was put to use as Kulu's arms were freed enough he could reach out in front of him and grip the stone in front of him while his swelling legs pushed against the ground behind him to slowly crawl him forward even with Nergigante on his back.

All the while Nergigante was lost in a mixture of confusion and rage. His claws dug and clenched harder still against Kulu's shoulders but no longer could seem to pierce the flesh. Neither was his weight nor the grip of his forelimbs enough to fully immobilize his prey anymore. All of that mixed with the strange feeling of his prey seeming to be spreading out and raising up underneath him paralyzed the monster with indecision as it tried to re-evaluate Kulu. It was that indecision that didn't let Nergigante notice where Kulu had crawled to until it was too late and, with a yelp and snarl of surprise from both of them, they fell over the edge of the cliff and into the waiting bay below. For almost half a minute everything in bay had gone utterly silent. All of the hunters looked around nervously, unsure of what they were supposed to do. Then the water's surface started to boil. A faint blue glow slowly spread out underneath the surface of the water where the bubbles were coming from. The surface began to stretch upwards, a large hill of water swelling upwards before bursting apart like some kind of membrane and sending a shower of water in all directions!

Kulu emerged from the water like some ancient monster from myth, towering over everything in the bay. The water in the bay was dozens of feet deep but as Kulu rose up to his full height the surface barely seemed to reach up to his knees! One of his enormous arms stretched out to slap down across the cliff face that Kulu and the Nergigante had been fighting on moments ago, nearly the entire rocky shelf covered by his enormous forearm and clawed hand. The Nergigante itself was still clinging to Kulu's back, though now it looked more shocked and uncertain than angry as it desperately clung on to one of Kulu's shoulders. Whereas before the Nergigante had been roughly the same size as Kulu now the Elder Dragon hunter could fit atop one

of his shoulders like a parrot! The monstrous Kulu-Ya-Ku had changed far more than in just size as his whole body seemed to be proportioned for a more upright position with thicker and more flexible arms. As he grew his body was taking on an almost humanoid shape.

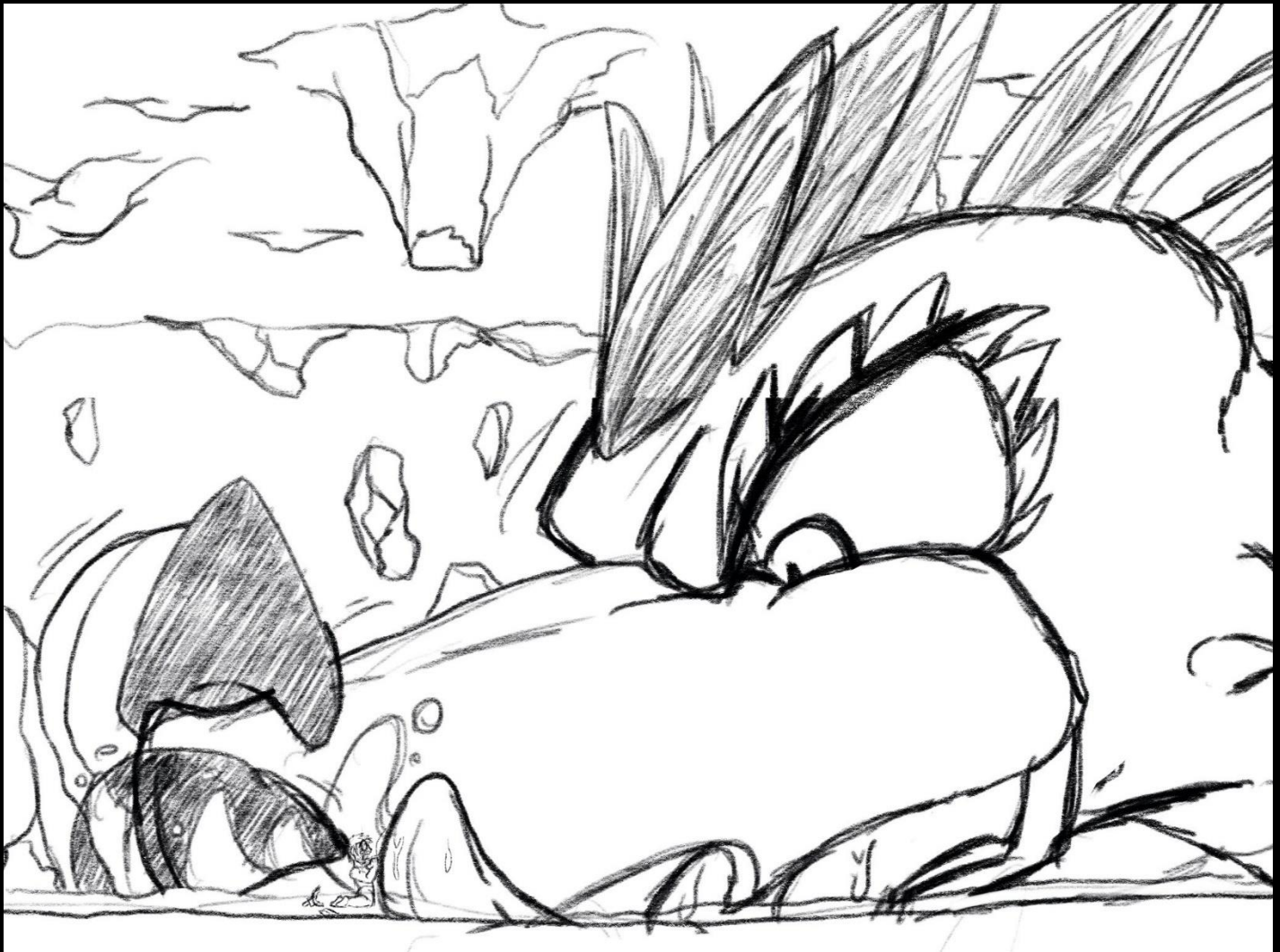


The hunters were in absolute chaos, those that hadn't simply been crushed by Kulu's arm resting atop the cliff or knocked into the water. The fleet's flagship rocked back and forth atop the churning waters, ready to capsize at any moment from the waves that Kulu's explosive rise from the water had caused. More than once the side of the boat crashed against the side of Kulu's enormous calf and nearly broke apart from the impact while Kulu didn't even seem to notice. Worse still it wasn't just the arrival of this monster of a Kulu-Ya-Ku that was now nearly as big as Zorah Magdaros itself that had them all in a panic. It was that Kulu was still growing.

The blue gleam in Kulu's eyes had brightened to the point his gaze was almost like a pair of spotlights, emanating a constant glow of electric blue illumination. Every few seconds that glow would brighten in intensity for a moment or two and when it did Kulu's body would lurch outwards in all direction. Hundreds of pounds of mass and dozens of feet of new size spread in every direction each time the light pulsed all the while his musculature and skeleton continued to alter and modify itself into what the light seemed to perceive as a more effective shape. Each time it happened Nergigante let out a yelping snarl of surprise and concern, claws

scrambling across hide it could no longer harm trying to keep a grip and not simply fall back down into the water below. Yet even as he felt his body growing larger, more powerful, and more unstoppable Kulu felt that he was just scratching the surface. He felt there was so much more to be had, so much more that he could do, so much more he could BE! His eyes swept across the bay, briefly down at the little boat rocking against his leg, then over the cliff side that he was now using as an armrest. It was there he spotted one of the hunters seemingly frozen in place, staring at him where most of the others had already ran away.

As if in slow motion Kulu crouched himself down towards the edge of the cliff. As the top half of his face came level with the cliff's edge a single gigantic, glowing eye came to hover in front of the stunned hunter, staring down at him in curiosity. The hunter was down on his knees, arms hanging slack at his sides as he stared back at that gigantic eyeball with a look of awe on his face. Even as he stared at it, he could see the eye briefly shudder, then expand visibly larger in his field of vision as Kulu experienced another growth spurt. He should have been running, he should have been scared out of his mind or have passed out from pure shock. Instead, he simply sat there staring up at the beast which had become simultaneously the most terrifying and most amazing and awe-inspiring creature the hunter had ever seen. He had seen firsthand how the Nergigante had attacked the Zorah Magdaros, how the best hunters in the fleet had struggled to put up a fight against it. And now this Kulu-Ya-Ku had become something so much greater that even a beast that hunted and devoured the most amazing and powerful creatures on the planet was like nothing more than a yowling newborn puppy in comparison.



Kulu on the other hand was scanning over the hunter with an appraising eye and taking in things he had never even conceived of before. Augmented mental faculties absorbing the look of awe and wonder on the hunters faced mixed with the scent of fear in the air. Seeing the body language of the hunter tensed to run but trapped by his own wonder and unable to act on the fight or flight response his brain must have been screaming through him. All of that culminating together into the understanding that it was him that had caused such a reaction in the little thing. Kulu had become something to be truly, genuinely feared on a bone deep primal level. He had become something that inspired an awe and wonder in these hunters that could override their own instincts and urges. He had become something more than just a beast that had become a bit smarter, a bit bigger. He was more than the other Kulu-Ya-Ku, More than the other creatures on the island, more than the hunters that hunted them. And it was that realization, that understanding of having become more than he or anything else on the island that seemed to finally trigger that surge of power that had been piling up inside of him.

His body exploded in size. Literally growing at such an abrupt speed that there was an actual shockwave of displaced air that surged out in all directions away from Kulu. Within only a second the monstrous Kulu-Ya-Ku had grown more than twice the size of Zorah Magdaros and showed absolutely no signs of stopping. The now forgotten gnat that Nergigante had become to Kulu tumbled down the ever increasing expanse of Kulu's back, not even felt by the living mountain his prey had become. The cove the hunters had set their trap in simply crumbled apart as Kulu's immense thighs and legs smashed into the stone walls to either side then forced their way through it as if it were nothing more than a bit of dried mud. Their flagship was pulverized into splinters again without the monstrous beast even seeming to notice as he basked in the intoxicating sensation of growth and alteration.

Kulu's mind whirled with changes as dramatic as those that were happening with his body. Information flooded into his thoughts as they amplified far beyond the beast he had been before, even beyond that of the hunters themselves. He was becoming something more than monster or hunter. Stronger, faster, smarter than anyone or anything the world had ever seen.

His gaze fell down towards the island before him. A harsh squawk of amusement, a concept that only hours before Kulu would not have even conceived of, escaped his beak when he saw how far down he had to look at the island. The largest mountain in the middle of the island only came up as tall as Kulu's neck, and that was with him submerged up to his stomach in the ocean. The shelf the cove had been elevated up on had long since crumbled under his immeasurable weight but even now in the depths of the ocean it wasn't deep enough around the island for Kulu to be fully submerged. The sight filled Kulu with a sense of unbridled glee and superiority at seeing the entire island spread out before him from such a high vantage point. He could make out individual figures scrambling across its surface, his unnaturally enhanced eyesight able to clearly pick out the miniscule figures despite the overwhelming size difference.



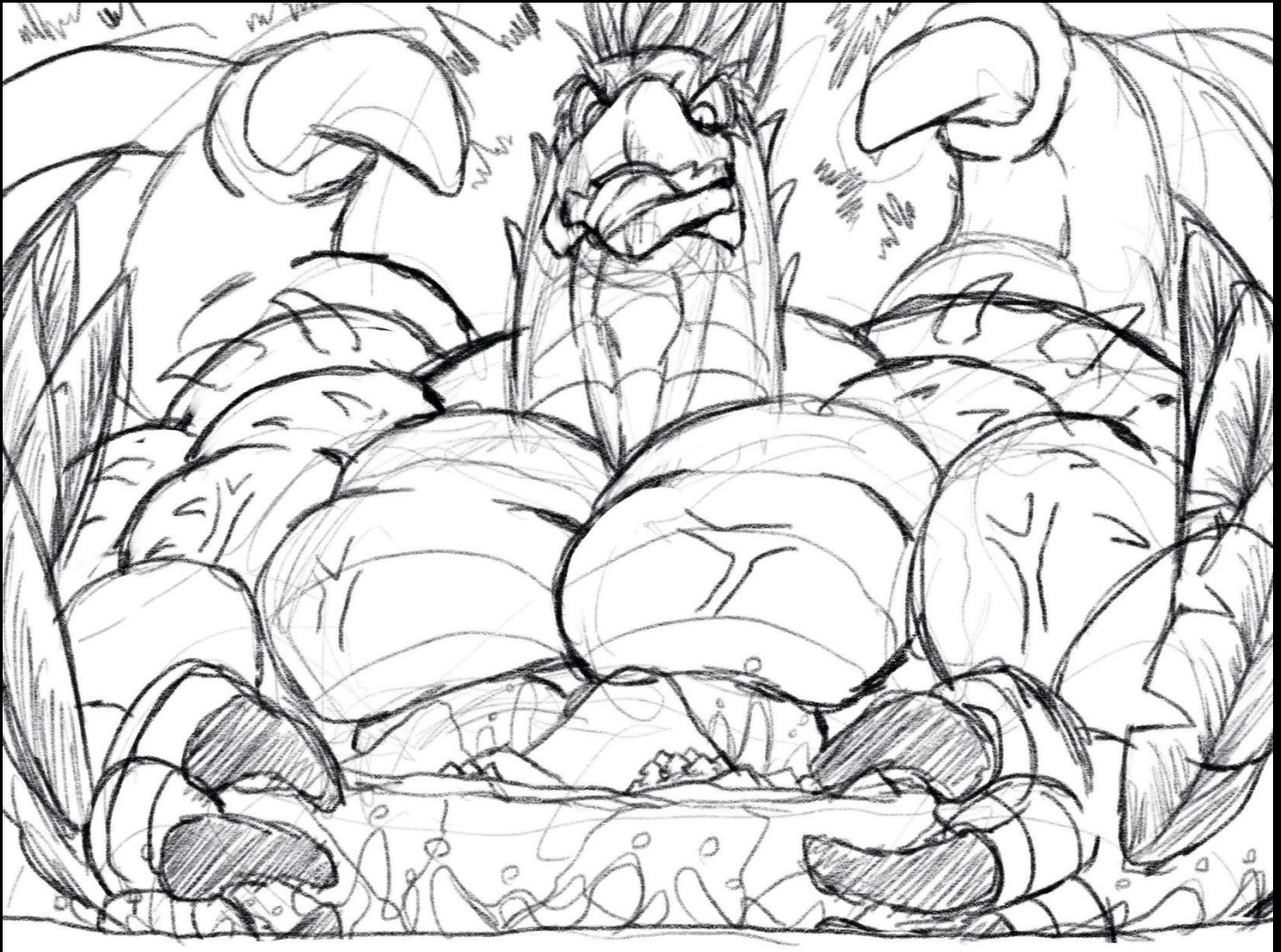
He saw a familiar Diablos with one of its horns broken off at the base scrambling in a limping run across the desert expanse of the wastes as it ran in abject fear of the quaking Kulu's growth was causing across the entire island. Near the edge of the wastes where greenery sprouted up into a lush oasis he could see flashes of green scales darting around beneath the tree line. More than once a scaly head with gleaming orange eyes would peer out from beneath the canopy, staring up into what must have been the sky-filling visage of Kulu only to dart itself back into cover to hide from the gaze of the monstrous beast overhead. Other creatures, some familiar and others not so much, ran and hid across the entire island from the presence of the growing titan Kulu was becoming. Seeing so many powerful predators running, cowering at the sight of him swelled his chest with such an overwhelming sense of superiority Kulu was literally salivating at the thought of any of the insects they had become daring to try challenging him now.

That desire for vindication, for revenge faded a bit when he caught a glimpse of more of his kind. Or rather, what had once been his brethren. He couldn't even properly conceive of him being the same as those Kulu-Ya-Ku specks down below. The thought of him, who only hours ago had been just another dumb weak little animal scraping by a meager existence and barely comprehending the world around him elicited the first laugh Kulu had ever generated. This only further startled all those down on the island as the rolling thunder of Kulu's laughter only added to the dangerous and violent shaking of the ground down below, which only further

engorged Kulu's ego knowing that even the sound of his own voice was like a force of nature to the creatures below.

His creatures...

The thought tweaked some deeply buried but integral part of his baser psyche. One of those tiny little pieces of the dumb wild animal he had once been before but amplified, altered and contorted through the increasingly complex levels of thought that his mind now worked on. They weren't just some little pests and former kindred beasts, they were HIS little pests and beasts. In the same way the crystal, or the eggs had been HIS when he picked it up, and no one had been able to successfully challenge him for it. Almost laughing again at the thought of someone challenging him now over the claim of ownership he was now making, Kulu's enormous arms reached down towards the island itself.



Claws, themselves now the size of mountains, smashed to either side of the island, burying themselves deep into the surf along the coastlines to grasp at the island's foundation. The quakes only intensified the island, as Kulu was still growing and now every tremor of growth that went through him resonated through the ground itself. Immense muscles built from cords of sinew thicker than tree trunks tensed as Kulu heaved upwards with all his might. It only took one try before the foundation of the island itself crumbled apart and the entire island lifted from where it lay on the seabed. Millions of gallons of water cascaded from the edges of the island as it was raised into the air by the monstrous Kulu-Ya-Ku. Yet despite his impossible strength Kulu's grip was controlled, ensuring he didn't put too much pressure in his grip or lift too fast and risk the structural integrity of the island itself. Though, before long that wasn't a problem either.

As Kulu's growth reached its peak, releasing one last explosion of size before finally settling, the island found itself cradled in a single one of Kulu's titanic hands. The entire land mass fit neatly within his palm as claw-tipped fingers cupped around the edges of the island like constraining mountain ranges. His monstrous body loomed above the ocean in every direction as he held the island what had to be miles in the air near his face. Even considering how deeply his weight had dug him into the malleable sea floor the ocean didn't even come up to Kulu's knees anymore. He had ascended beyond the creatures of the island, above the power of the hunters to hunt, and even beyond the reach of Mother Nature herself. The word came to Kulu like a whisper from the depths of his mind like some undeniable truth known on instinct like that fire was hot. A single word that described what Kulu had become, what he was now and forever would be.



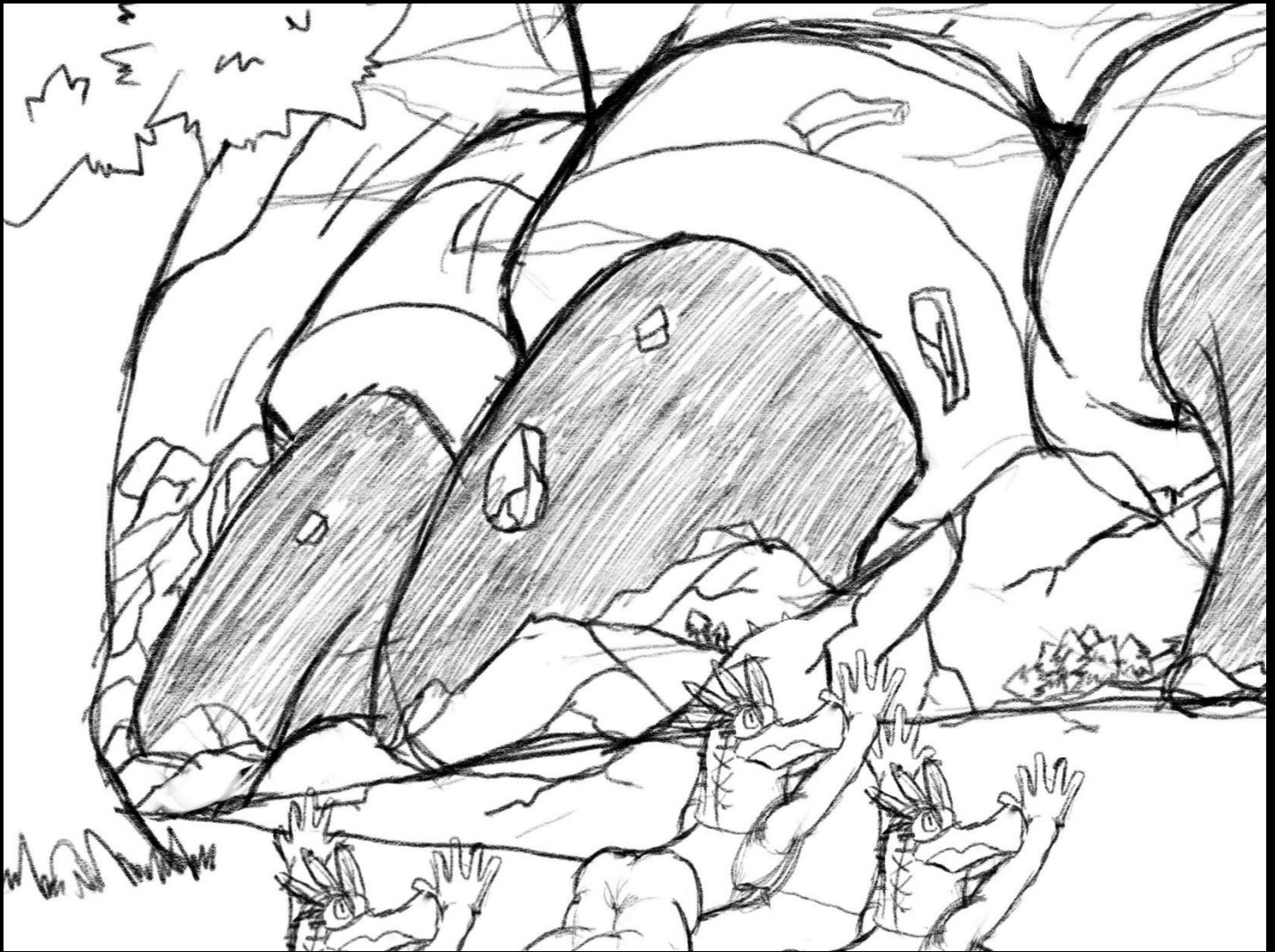
A God.

As time passed, many came looking for the hunter expedition and the island itself, but it was never seen or heard from again. Those that returned would say they could find no signs of it despite knowing they had found the proper coordinates. One or two would speak of seeing strange outlines off in the distance when they got in the general vicinity of where the island should be but eventually took it as cloud formations for rough weather. No one could ever get closer to investigate as the sea became so violently rough it was a death trap to try. Those that did brave those waters to find the island... they never made it back. After all, a multi-mile tall Kulu-Ya-Ku wading through ankle deep water is going to create some waves.

Those on the island had rapidly adapted to their new situation. Thankfully the island was a closed ecosystem so it was still fully self-sustaining considering its literal disconnection from the rest of the world. Kulu carried his prize island around like a trophy in his hands at all times, his titanic visage looming over the entire island day and night.

Most of the inhabitants had either tried to make a more permanent life for themselves, doing their best to resume their day to day activities of hunting and training, though not even the bravest or most idiotic of hunters dared lay even a scratch on any of the Kulu-Ya-Ku on the island. No one knew if their new deity would even care, but none of them were willing to find out.

Others had taken a more aggressive approach to reshaping their lives. Many had seen the rise of the Kulu-Ya-Ku into the titan it was as some divine sign. The rising of one of the monsters they had once hunted to a status so impossibly powerful and beyond them that they were nothing more than germs to it. The Cult of Kulu as they called themselves willingly worshipped the titanic Kulu as their new god and actively fought against the remaining hunters for daring to harm the island's creatures for fear of their actions bringing the wrath of their god down upon them. They would make pilgrimages to where the Kulu's mountainous claws held the edges of the island, gleefully basking in their closeness to a part of their new god.

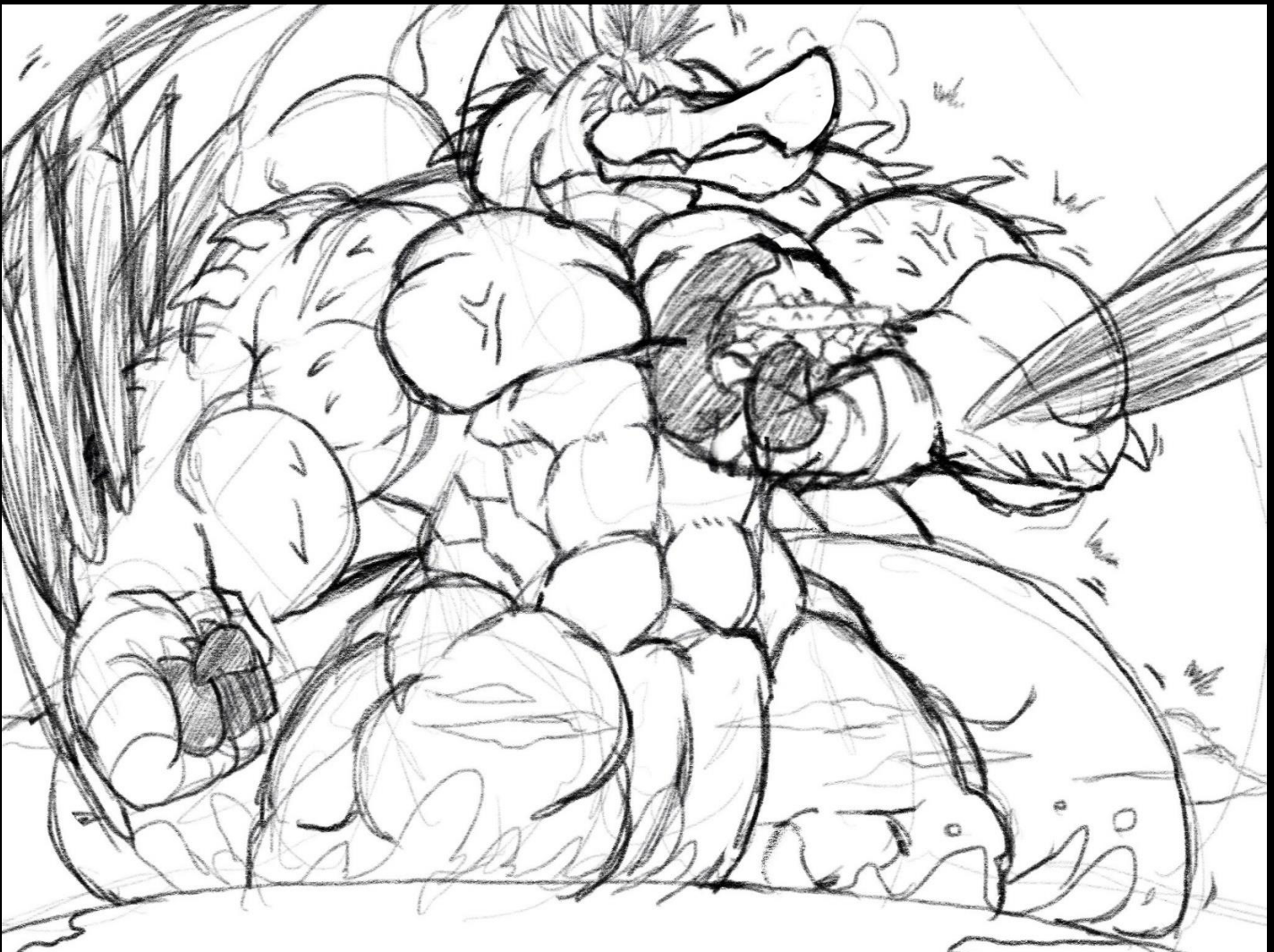


Kulu for his part happily ate up all of the praise. His senses had become something seeming beyond purely physical senses and he could perceive nearly everything that occurred on his island. The cult's praise made him feel powerful and important, a feeling that reminded him of the euphoric rush that he had felt every time he had grown. The hunters he couldn't care less about. He had no need to eat anymore so he had no real need of the relatively pitiful by comparison offerings the cultists set out for him, and neither the hunters nor the monsters they hunted would have been filling even if he had wanted to eat again. He only had one desire still within him to fulfil now that he had grown beyond the need to eat, to sleep, and to survive. He wanted to feel growth again.

The memory of the crystal's effect on his body stood out in his mind like flawless crystal, each instance and every sensation that came with it perfectly preserved in his head. Yet the crystal was gone, used up in its final effort to elevate him to his current status. But that's why he had been slowly, ponderously walking across the ocean. Somewhere, deep within himself he could feel it. That tiny tingle of energy so reminiscent of the crystal's energy tickling at his senses and pulling him ever so gently that he couldn't feel it unless he held still and concentrated.

There were more crystals out there.

He didn't know who had them, or if anyone at all had found them yet. All that he knew was that he knew they were out there, and that he could feel them. And as Kulu made his ponderous way across the seemingly endless ocean saliva started to drool from the edges of his beak again. A hunger, far beyond that for food or water or anything so mundane, drove him forward across the ocean. A hunger for power that rolled through his body and forced a single spoken word from Kulu's lips, the only word those on the island had ever heard spoken by their captor, by their caretaker, by their god. A word that dripped with so much ravenous and obsessive desire that it sent his cultists into a frenzy thinking they had displeased their master with their meager offerings. A word that signaled everything and the only thing Kulu wanted for himself now as the memories of that intoxicating feeling of growth replayed in his mind again and again and again.



“More...”