

In ancient legend, it is said that all life was born from the sea. As beings of flesh and fur left for the land, the goddess of the sea wept for their departure. From her tears was born a pocket, a space between spaces where she mourned her loss. Here, she created a forest of stone, endless statues in rows. Each was carved into the likeness of every being that did or ever would walk the land. It is said that when the end came, and the seas rose, all that would remain as evidence to their empires would be this endless garden.

It was these myths which he dreamed about. Declan knew himself to be asleep but was too curious to wake himself. Fog barring his sight at any significant distance. Standing on a small boat, he rowed through dark waters with an oar in hand. Around him, stood rows and rows of statues stretched on far beyond his sight. Most were unrecognizable, depicting every being which would ever walk the land, they showed infinite humans and beasts which had died long ago or were yet to be born. Occasionally, he would catch a hint of recognition from one, likely some distant relative of himself or a friend.

Eventually, his gaze caught on one of the stones. Carved in perfect detail, the statue resembled him perfectly. He froze upon seeing it, marveling at its likeness and the fact that some deity had cared for him so to create the piece.

The waves splashed against the statues, gradually wearing down the stone and shifting their shape. That was how they remained so perfectly attuned to their owner's form, carved by the marine erosion. Those creatures long dead now preserved by statues locked in the static shape of their prime. He was left to wonder whether they were shaped by the changes of their humans, or if their mortal fates were controlled by these chunks of stone.

Turning away, Declan sought to avoid the existential fear rather than face it. He rowed for quite a distance, time being a difficult concept in sleep. Eventually, the shapes of humans grew sparse, and the stone stares of beasts accompanied him. Distracted in his own thoughts, he bumped the vessel into a statue. As he turned and gazed upon the fearsome glare. The snarling visage of a dragon looked down upon him. Frozen and unchanging, the beast bore the stasis he knew to reveal the owner's death.

Curiously, he reached out and touched the beast's stony flank. He marveled at the detail, each scale carved with lifelike precision. A surge of heat jumped from the statue, his flesh burning

where he had touched the stone. Looking down in horror, he saw the burning skin dry and grey. The pain quickly subsided, numbing as his skin turned to stone. Falling back onto the boat, he gripped his hand, watching until he returned to waking.

Lost on stormy winds, the WyeWillard sailed blindly on dark, choppy waves. The brigantine was tossed by the gale winds and towering waves. In the commotion, one aboard the black ship raised their country's colors, as though the merciless salt and storms might be humbled by the royal banner.

Declan awoke with a start, checking his hand, but finding nothing. He looked around the dark room, his hammock rocking and rain pattering against the window to his side.

Dark clouds had whirled around overhead since they left port. By then they were accustomed to the storm but still forced to maintain the sails and rudder constantly. To keep afloat, they divided the crew in two, always switching between sleep and working the deck. It was exhausting, but it kept them sailing at a steady pace.

"Trouble sleeping?" Brennen asked, the subtle scraping of his whittling barely audible.

"Something like that," Declan muttered.

"Best keep your strength up. Captain says we'll reach the island shortly," Brennen advised.

"Tis advice you could use as well."

"I got rid of half my hours in a game. Yah should really let me teach you."

"I shall have no part in your games. Some of us still see honor in the service," Declan chuckled in mock insult.

"If there's honor in killing, then there's honor in cards."

Chuckling, Declan lay back down. Brennen was right, at least about rest. They were the king's Far-rangers, warriors tasked with forging paths and exploring the vast lands around their kingdom. Theirs was a dangerous task, these distant places often rife with barbarians or more dangerous beasts. Now, their crew was tasked with exploring a rocky grey island in the northern sea. Spotted by wayward fishermen, the island was a curious find for which they were sent. Such a large crew

would not be normally needed for a simple island, but rumors circulated that wyverns nested on the land. Few had ever done battle with dragons and their kin. Some were excited, but most were scared; rightfully so.

Weariness took him quickly, and he sank back into darkness. Strangely, his mind reemerged from the oblivion, but his vision did not follow.

He gazed around, seeing only darkness. “Where am I?” Declan murmured to nothing, thankful at least to hear his own voice. Cold stone beneath his feet, he knew himself in some dark cave, but could not recall how he arrived to such a place. For a time, he wandered aimlessly through the darkness, holding out his hands as he reached for the several stone walls. Eventually, he froze, another sound reaching his ears.

Another presence, the steps and breath of a second creature with him, a much larger creature. Hearing the sound near, he sprinted through the darkness, heart pounding with fear as the beast chased him through the inky black. Feet slapping against the stones, he hurried through the tunnels before painfully striking a solid wall. The blow echoing through his bones, he fell to the ground, unable to flee as talons clicked against the ground.

A great mass could be heard shifting around him, pinning trapping him against the wall as the creature blocked any other escape. Closing his eyes, he awaited the beast’s attack, but sharp fangs never closed around him. With a hiss and a huff, the massive creature sniffed him, and he whimpered in fear.

Lips smacked, and heavy breath passed through the massive monster’s lungs, hot wind blowing against him. Eventually, he lowered his arms, sensing little threat from it. Its exhalations continued to blow past it, the musky breath filling Declan’s own lungs. Gradually, his fear drained away, warmth taking its place. He put a hand to his chest, confused. Heat saturated and filled his entire body, not unlike the warmth granted by strong drink.

The growing fire within him began to take a form outside simple sensations. Like kindling embers within him, the pungent breath inspired a baser drive within him. Squirming slightly with excess energy, he felt a hunger taking root within him, a want with little direction or focus. Needing

something, anything, he took a step forward. Warmth radiating from his core, he reached out for the creature, begging for aid or attention to sate his want.

As something touched his chest, Declan grabbed the object, rising from his hammock. Looking around in confusion, he found himself back in the crew quarters. Red light danced from the candles, Brennen standing above him with a hand on his shoulder.

“You all right? Yah seem feverish,” Brennen said, keeping a slight distance from his friend.

Calming himself, Declan ceased his flailing. The heat within him slowly faded, his dream growing distant as his mind returned to waking. “Sorry, just strange dreams,” Declan murmured, rising to his feet.

“Well, tis your turn at the sails. Best stand to action. Captain will soon notice your absence.”

With a nod, Declan walked outside and got to work. Toil on the boat was difficult but dull. He tired himself by dumping buckets of water from the bowels of the ship or holding down lines or sails. The storm fought against them with every gust, rain beating down upon them as they sailed slowly onwards.

He worked diligently, but his mind was elsewhere. Almost in a trance, he worked with his thoughts on the strange dreams from the nights before. He usually slept soundly, his dreams fading swiftly upon waking. Yet strangely, the two from that night stuck with him, always worming their way back into his mind as he attempted to focus his attention on his jobs.

For the first time since leaving port, the storm around them eased. Clouds shifted to a dark-grey as rain thinned to a light drizzle. Gaining newfound speed, they flew over the crashing waves northward. As the sun set in the west, they saw the dark shape of an island far ahead. A cheer rose up from the men, as they saw the land beyond them. They broke out casks of red wine, reveling in a long journey finished. Yet they kept a cautious eye on the sky above, a fear present in all of them that the dark, scaled wings would descend on them with sword-like talons and hellfire breath.

But nothing ever attacked. Nearing the islands, they saw no large movement above the black cliffs or rocky shores. It was an impressive island, covered in dark rocks and dull grass, crowned

with a tall mountain but bearing an ominous aura around it. The men's worry was palpable, though most attempted to hide their fear in tasks and celebration.

With deep bays, they dropped anchor close to the rocky shore and rowed over in smaller boats. They kept their gaze skyward, ever wary of the draconic rumors which surrounded this mysterious island. Cold water lapping at the sides of the vessel, they paddled to the island and tied the small wooden craft to the standing rocks.

It felt strange to stand on solid ground, Declan's land-legs wobbly beneath him. A longsword by his side and a bow on his back, he set about exploring the surrounding beaches and hills. Several others went off to hunt, shooting at seabirds or hopelessly searching for larger game. He got to work pitching a tent, working alongside several others to set up their camp for the coming days. This was not the first island they had mapped. Were the rumors false, they would be here for a boring few days of collection and writing before they finally returned home.

That night, they sung drinking songs, huddled around a pitiful fire, each with a full cup in hand.

*“Now we drink to captive, then
 Drink a third to living men
 Fourth, to great men truly bred
 Fifth, to cheer the faithful dead;
 Sixth, vain woman when she errs.
 What hundreds, nay, what thousands think!
 Drink, drink, drink, drink, drink, drink, drink...”*

Other songs rang out into the night air, as they washed down burnt seagull and old bread with juniper ale. Brennen began a large game of cards on a relatively flat stone. Declan chuckled, his friend had gained his love of cards only a year ago, but the boy was always swift to grow obsessed with new hobbies and games. All that remained consistent was a quick wit and a quicker knife.

Head beginning to grow fuzzy, Declan realized his ale was getting to his head. It would certainly be fun to lose his hard-earned coin in a game of cards, but he needed to keep his head about him. Stuffing small wads of wax into his ears to block out the revelry, he lay down in his tent and awaited sleep to take him. A nagging worry kept him up for a time, fear for the strange dreams which plagued him, and what might come that night.

Eventually, paranoia could hold off sleep no more and Declan sunk back to the unconscious world. He found himself flying. Winds rushed by and clouds passed beneath him. It was exhilarating, the world rushing past like it never had before, powerful wings beating by his side. Heart pounding within him, he tilted and dove through the summer sky, but eventually realized his movements were not entirely his own.

In his dreaming state, he could not fully comprehend or question the force which controlled his body. Riding along like an observer, he lived like the creature whose body he possessed, accepting its wishes and almost forgetting his former self.

Flexing his claws, his eye caught on an animal below him. Folding in his wings, he dove down, craning his long neck and extending powerful talons. The deer noticed him too late, attempting to sprint away from the massive shadow. Caught up in the moment of the hunt, he tilted his body, whipping the ground with his tail, and grabbing the animal with his hind leg.

He landed and inspected his kill, warm blood running down his scaled legs and inhaling the sweet scent. Folding in his wings, he used the limbs as legs as he bit into the animal, savoring the rich, raw meat and letting blood pour down his throat and fill his stomach.

Leaving behind nothing but a red patch of grass, he took off once more. Leathery wing-membranes catching the wind, he flew once more into the blue. Warm sun and wind filled the frill along his back as he flew towards a tall mountain in the distance. His nose picked up a faint smell from a dark cave in the side of a peak. Nearing the cavern, the scent grew stronger, an unplaceable odor which comforted him and made him feel at home.

Crawling slowly into the gloom of the cavern, he let out a comfortable sigh and relaxed. He curled up on the ground, covering his snout with his tail. For a time, he rested in his den, lying peacefully until another shadow passed over the mouth of the cave.

Another wyvern entered the dark alcove, talons clicking against the stones as crept deeper. Declan raised his snout, nuzzling the other as it licked his snout-horn. Hot breath puffing against him, the other wyvern sniffed his body as it lay down beside him. She rested her head on the other's wing and enjoyed its company.

Nostrils flaring and tongue flicking from his mouth, Declan recognized the scent which filled the cave. T'was springtime and they were in season. A musky scent emanated from both, mingling and marking their territory. As the thick air ran through his snout, he felt a burning warmth spread through his body. The heat drew him close to the other, drinking in the pheromones as his mind fogged and a sensation seemed to pool between his legs.

Declan's body reacted to the scent, he noticed something off about his anatomy. Or rather, her anatomy. The wyvern whose body he possessed was clearly female and responding well to her mate beside her. A low rumble sounding from her throat, she raised her tail. Scales parting, her own scent flooded the room as she looked back in invitation. The male rose, nudging her under-area with his snout and licking in the inviting pheromones.

She quivered at the touch, enamored by his touch and scent. Bestial urges filled her mind, wiping away all human thoughts and concerns. She rumbled submissively, passage moistening as she felt the powerful male place himself atop her.

Waking with a start, Declan rose from his bedroll and looked around his tent. "Come on," he muttered in disappointment and frustration. As the words left his mouth, he paused in confusion. "The hell is wrong with me?" he asked quietly, turning his nose in disgust at the thought of being rutted as some lumbering reptile. It was nothing but the confusion of sleep, he argued with himself, disgusted with, and banishing the dream as anything more than a stroke of madness.

He crawled from the tent, seeing embers slowly dying in the firepit, and silver moonlight shining through a gap in clouds above. Brennen emerged from the tent beside him, rubbing his eye sleepily. "Could you at least piss quietly?" he muttered, checking his surroundings with good soldier's instinct. "Oh, Declan... didn't realize it was one of those dreams," he chuckled, his eyes turned mockingly to Declan's pants.

Looking down, his face turned red as he saw a dark spot on the front of his pants. His first, embarrassing assumption faded as he realized what liquid was. It seemed his body responded to the dream, a patch of precum soaked into the front of his pants. "The mind does what it will," Declan joked, nervously pulling down his shirt to cover the patch.

“Someone I know?” Brennen jested, milking all the entertainment he could from his friend’s embarrassment.

“That towhead from the inn. Twas like she was shaped by the gods themselves,” Declan lied, willing to die before he told any what his actual dream was.

“Oh yes, she was a fine one. Best save yourself for the return though,” Brennen muttered, retreating tiredly back to his own tent. Declan did the same, putting on a fresh set of linens and lay back down, silently begging his mind to grant him a dreamless sleep.

It seemed to oblige. At least, when next he awoke, he remembered no other strange dreams from that night. The clouds had dispersed in the night, leaving only a pale grey covering above. After a breakfast of sausage and biscuit, the men organized themselves into several groups. Some watched over the camp. Two separate groups would travel around the island from either direction. And one would climb the great mountain at the center of the island. Declan and Brennen were chosen to ascend the peak, the most treacherous of the tasks.

Once they finished their meal, the sun was just rising over the horizon. They started up the rocky peaks, talking and speaking at first, but growing silent as the hike became difficult. While tiring and tedious, they found easy paths and footholds around the cliffs. Their trek was hasty, soon giving them excellent views of the small island as trees shrank and vanished with altitude. Near the peak, the sun high in the sky above them, they stopped for lunch, gnawing at salted meat so tough they way as well be eating steel.

With a final effort, they reached a gaping cave at the mountain’s peak. The entrance obscured from the from the base of the island, they examined the hollow curiously. “All right boys, stay close, we don’t need idiots losing their way in the dark,” the captain instructed, lighting a torch. A murmur of disapproval passed through the men as they examined the ominous cavern. But this is what they came for.

Huddled close together, they lit torches and started off into the gloom. Flickering red light danced across stones and corners, twisting shadows only fueling their fears. “What a place of wonders,” Brennen murmured, marveling at the smooth stones of the walls, sparsely decorated with carvings of ancient runes and symbols.

Whatever ancient people had occupied the small cave left behind only the etchings to mark their presence. The cavern ended abruptly, terminating in a wide room still in view of the dimly-lit entrance. Sitting at the end of the tunnel, sat upon a bed of dried, ancient grass was a large egg. Taller than a man and a dull green, the smooth shell was dappled with darker spots.

Approaching cautiously, the captain touched the end of his blade to the solid surface. The sound of breath halted, as men watched nervously, some casting fearful glances to the entrance as they expected the mother to return. Such an event was unlikely. Even at a distance, Declan could see a layer of dust on the egg. Clearly, none had entered the cave in quite some time. The captain scraped his blade against the shell, producing an unpleasant sound but leaving no mark. Feeling more secure, he pressed a hand against the surface but received no reaction. "Tis carved from stone."

Lowering their weapons, some men walked up to touch the statue, musing over what its purpose might be. Declan did not mirror their actions, the object seeming familiar to him, reminding him of his dreams. Though he knew not why; the thing worried him. "You afraid it will hatch?" Brennen mocked, ever keen, and patting Declan's back.

"I've seen that thing before," Declan murmured, lost in his own thoughts.

"What sort of hens do you have back at yours?" Brennen laughed pushing him forward. "Have a go, ya nansy."

"Sod off," Declan muttered, stumbling forward and stopping before the egg. Reaching out, he pressed the tip of his finger against the cold stone. He shuddered slightly, unsure of what to expect. At first, it seemed like mundane rock, but he noticed his finger sinking slightly into the surface. "What the hell?"

"You all right?" Brennen asked, Declan looking worriedly at his finger but finding nothing.

"Twas like it was water," Declan murmured, slowly reaching out again, curiosity overcoming fear. He pressed his hand against the surface, almost expecting its previous state to be but a trick on his mind. At first, the cold stone resisted his touch like normal material would, but as he pushed further, his hand began to sink in. It felt like clay covered his hand, and he marveled at the

strangeness, almost his entire hand absorbed. “What is this?” he murmured, pulling back, but the material resisting the attempt.

“Declan? How the hell are you doing that?” Brennen asked worriedly, noticing as his companion struggled to remove his hand.

“This isn’t me!” Declan shouted, panicking as he pulled at his hand. It seemed he was sooner to break his wrist, the egg only sucking him slightly deeper with each second. Men flew into a panic behind him, some grabbing him and helping to pull, others suggesting the cut off the arm before the curse took him entirely. None touched the egg anymore, terrified by its powers.

Half his forearm taken, he flailed desperately against the pull, but could not extract even an inch. To further her strength, he put a foot against the shell and pushed with all his might. He quickly realized his mistake, his leg sinking into the object rather than forcing him away. The pulling of his companions threatened more to tear off his limbs, and he yelped in pain. Its pace picked up as more of him was taken, his leg now too deep to be cut.

The cold stone covered his hips, his hand and foot now so deep he almost felt a warmth surrounding them. As his waist was absorbed and his chest touched the shell, he attempted to look back, could not crane his neck enough to see his companions. Shivering as his cheek pressed against the rock and began to be drawn in, he held his breath and closed his eyes, expecting death to follow quickly.

Shouts from Declan’s crew faded instantly as his head was absorbed and he was entirely taken. All senses went completely numb as he floated through the egg. To his surprise, only the shell was hewn from stone, its inside filled with a thick, clay-like liquid. Though he could move, the dense fluid pressed down upon him, pushing him into a ball if he gave no resistance. His lungs burned with need, but he dared not open his mouth, knowing the surrounding fluid would rush to fill his throat.

A warmth presented itself before him, a pocket of heated fluid separated by only a thin membrane. He panicked for a moment as the hot area pressed against him. A pain in his stomach made him flinch, but this faltered as the pain in his lungs eased.

Blood circulated through he and the membrane, returning rich and filling him with heat. Realizing the object's purpose, he thrashed and attempted to sever the connection. The struggles were swiftly ceased as a loud, gong-like sound rung through him. His bones seemed to resonate with the noise, his thoughts were scattered, and he felt a wave of calm pass over him.

Declan's mind returned but was dulled as he entered a state between sleep and trance. The magic in the egg quickly infused him, lulling him into compliance as it got to work reshaping his flesh. His skull gradually pulled forward as his tailbone cracked and pushed outward.

The changes summoned a resurgence of his previous instincts, and he fought to retain his humanity. Not a moment after he began to resist when another sound pulsed through the shell and rattled his mind. This time, his mind only revealed itself. He was aware that his former thoughts existed, perhaps able to reach them again, but this would require effort. Lulled into a quiet state, he saw no reason to struggle for his former self.

He was vaguely aware as his blood circulated through the membrane and returned in an altered state. He was vaguely aware of hollow thumping against his casing, as a crew tried to crack the shell and free him. He was vaguely aware as a layer of dull scales grew from his skin, and his bones slowly clicked into new shapes. He cared little about these events, his thoughts slow as tar in his head, and too calmed to worry over anything.

Time slipped by, and with each of the sounds, memories began to seep into his consciousness. It was just images at first. Fragments added as his own past seemed to drip from his head. The last spark of his resistance crying out, he attempted to grasp his fading history. But anytime he reached for something, it faded further. The more he lost, the less he saw any reason to cling to old scenes, the less he valued his former self, the less that annoying little voice shouted to keep himself. In her half-consciousness, her mind shifted to the grand forest of stone statues. With each sound, a wave crashed against his statue, weathering and shaping it as he became something entirely different.

Dull and tired, his mouth opened slightly, and the thick fluid filled him. Resounding rings had weakened him, leaving him too tired to resist anything. With no reference for his former self, he simply accepted whatever changes occurred, as how he had always been, for why would he assume otherwise.

His flesh was always covered by thick scales, for that was what wyverns possessed. He grew larger and filled up the egg, compressed into curled position, waiting to hatch. His member pulled inwards, soon inverting and filling out his innards, but this made sense, for she had always been female, had she not?

She remembered not why she struggled, the changes were welcomed, her mind a comfortable empty. As another gong sounded in her head, her fatigue took hold, and her minimal consciousness sank into sleep.

Morning light beat down on her as she spread her wings and sunned herself. Another landed before her, flattening the grass of the meadow they rested in. The male approached her, head held high and chest puffed out as he showed off. She drew back coyly, instantly recognizing him.

Memories were a curious tangle to her. She knew this to be a scene from some previous life but could not recall any lives aside from this. She knew this but a scene from her past, but the experiences still felt fresh and unexpected as they occurred.

This other wyvern had been courting her since the beginning of spring. She was fond of him, enjoying the attention and finding him quite impressive. Until then, she played the game, accepting his presence but ducking his advances. Recently however, her season took hold. She found herself craving his attention more and more. Loneliness shifted to emptiness, becoming a pressing need as her heat stirred.

Rumbling softly, she lowered her head, licking his chin as he approached. He returned the affection, purring and nipping behind her horns. She rubbed against her, walking beside him and wrapping the tip of her tail around his. Nostrils flaring, he caught the scent she been releasing for a time. Stretching a wing, he put it atop her and began shifting himself closer.

The memory came from a younger time when she was just reaching maturity. This was her first heat, her first time receiving this kind of touch from another. It was exhilarating but torturous. Heat burned within her, a pressing need which burned as she looked upon him. His back spines flared, and a musky scent emanated from him. Such an impressive specimen, she was irresistibly drawn to him, instincts taking over as she flushed with molten heat.

Lowering herself submissively, she lifted her tail and invited him atop her. He needed no other hints, locking their wings together and entwining their tails. She turned her head back, rubbing her snout against his and drinking in his sweet breath. Closing his eyes, he rubbed his head against hers and their horns locked together. Rumbling happily, she lowered her head passively. He gently bit the back of her neck, pushing her head down as he adjusted his hips.

Her scales parted as his scent filled her nostrils. The want within her boiling over as she whimpered for him to hurry. Her flesh felt like liquid and her insides painfully empty.

Equally overcome with her scent, he teased her no longer. Pulling her tail to the side, he curled forward. She yelped as he pressed his hot member into her waiting slit. Rolling his hips, he wasted no time thrusting deeper and deeper into her. Panting as his bite tightened, she moaned at the ridges and barbs of his member locking within the notches of her inner walls.

She had experienced wanting instincts before, heard of the experience, but it was nothing like she expected. Heart racing and her mind blurring, she stood awash with pleasure as he hastened his motions.

Tongue lolling from her jaw, she whimpered in ecstasy as the heat burned stunningly through her entire body. Her inner muscles clenched over her lover's member, locking around it and sending waves of pleasure through both. His warm seed sprayed deep into her, the heat pooling within her and awakening maternal instincts in her mind as an egg took.

Panting as fatigue set in, they collapsed atop one another, basking in the afterglow of their mating. Linked together as her inner walls worked his length for every last drop, to ensure their egg's fertility. Affectionately licking the ridges behind her eye, he snapped her from her hazy trance. She nuzzled him in return, a hissing purr rose from their throats as they fondly relaxed in one another's presence.

Even in the stone egg, she smiled to experience the memory, her body no completely shifted into the great wyvern she had once been. Another gong-like sound echoed through the egg, rousing her from the nostalgic sleep.

The egg so silent and still it seemed stone all the way through, there seemed no way Declan could ever have been absorbed by it. Brennen sat on a nearby rock, sharpening his blade as he watched the strange object. The rest of the men had returned to camp, pouring through scrolls and tomes for any clue as to what the mystic egg might be. He volunteered to watch over the object, wallowing in his own guilt as he looked upon it. *It was not my fault*, he argued internally. There was no way he could know the egg would take no others and absorb Declan. But this gave him little solace. He pushed his friend forward, perhaps killing him right there.

“Don’t you die on me, buddy. We’re gonna get you out of there,” he whispered to the egg, near praying that his friend still lived.

Another drop of water fell from the ceiling, splashing from the top of the egg. The roof was carved with lines and symbols leading to a small hole above the object. Drops of water would occasionally fall from the aperture. They always fell with the same amount of wait between them, likely some other complex structure in the ceiling was dropping them in rhythm. “That sound any different in there?” he asked, wondering what his friend would be like after days within that thing.

As if responding to his words, a loud scrape echoed through the cave. Brennen jumped to his feet and gripped his dagger, fighter’s instincts quickly taking over. In the flickering torchlight, he saw a long crack open on the side of the stone shell.

Another gong-like sound roused and energy within the slumbering wyvern. In her mind, she saw her statue, now completely taking the shape of a great wyvern. She was suddenly made aware of the cramped pose her egg forced upon her. Her back ached, and she needed to stretch her wings. Using the horn on the end of her snout, she scraped and pecked at the inner walls of the shell until it broke. Spitting up a mouthful of fluid and filling her lungs with fresh air, flexing her claws and pressing against the break.

More of the shell cracked, and she pushed forward into the light. Shaking off the residual membrane, she opened her eyes and looked around the cave, ancient draconic text carved into the walls. She saw a human sprinting from the cave, not noticing him until he was almost out of the entrance.

She whipped her tail and shook off the last drops from the egg, scales gleaming in the red firelight, polished with the previous moisture. Flexing her wings, she looked to the sunlight outside and sought to fly. Though she began walking towards the exit, a heavy feeling in her waist sparked different instincts within her.

Looking back at the oversized egg from which she emerged, she brushed aside the broken shards and curled up on the nest. Her breathing grew heavy as blood rushed to her slowly opening slit. Folds parting, she felt a weight shifting down in her swollen gut. Raising her tail, she clenched her jaw as her muscles worked at the mass within her.

She winced in pain as the egg began to crown from her opening. A small drip of clear fluid preceded it and spilled onto the branches. She lifted a leg and craned her neck, licking the coming egg lovingly and pressing her stomach slightly to nudge it forward. Panting as a mixture of pleasure and pain shot through her, she felt a wave of satisfaction wash over her as maternal instincts took hold of her mind.

Her passage stretched, and the solid shell rubbed against her inner walls. Pushing with all her strength, she felt her opening widen, and the egg fall into the nest. Circling her young, she licked the shell affectionately, feeling instant, overwhelming love for the new life within. Rumbling contentedly, she felt immense satisfaction after the ordeal, her maternal instinct shoving aside all other thought which could pass through her head.

Closing her eyes to rest after laying, she curled around her egg and rested her head on her tail. A tiny ember of warmth could be felt beneath the shell, her child taking shape far slower than she had. She pondered the child's future, already fantasizing over raising the wyrmling once it hatched.

Clatter and footsteps woke her from her dreaming. Hissing menacingly, she saw a crowd of humans entering and holding out swords threateningly. She rose and held her head high, watching them quiver at her size as she stepped between them and her nest. Bearing her fangs, she felt her flame gland open in preparation to roast the soldiers. Such tiny beings ought show respect for real power.

Her breath caught as a human stepped in front of the rest, showing his palms in a display of good intentions. Tilting her head curiously, she held her attack, intrigued by the string of words

escaping him. He seemed not to realize her inability to understand his tongue, attempting to communicate as she pondered a use for the creatures.

Behind the man, the other humans showed far more hostility, a motion they would quickly regret. She had no use for charcoal, but humans were keener than common prey, their wits could prove valuable... with instruction.

The crowd froze as her eyes gleamed. Smiling slights, she raised her head high and gazed at the men, eyes shining with faint light. They experienced a sudden calm, forgetting their fear for the wyvern, forgetting their mission on the island, forgetting all but the light gleaming in the dragon's eyes.

Entranced, they lacked the resistance to keep the wyvern's invisible claws from toying around in their heads. She allowed them keep their minds and memories, for she had no use for such things. All they needed was a slight change in priorities.

Near falling to their knees, the humans realized their folly in drawing arms against such noble creatures. They dropped the iron, realizing their duty for to the wyvern. Twas an honor to serve the dragoness, a charge which superseded all else.

She recalled the small island she nested upon. It was a tiny place, scarce of sizable prey. But her new servants had a large ship, a homeland sorrowfully lacking in worth beings. She commanded the humans prepare the hold to house her child and herself. Without a hint of doubt or resentment in their minds, the humans got to work readying their lady's ship, contented looks on their faces as they were given purpose.

The egg needed not constant heat, and she crawled to the entrance. Her servants bowed as she passed, in awe as she spread her wide wings and jumped from the cliff. Wing membranes catching the rising air, she flew into the dark clouds. Her heart pumped with exhilaration as winds whistled by and the land below grew small.

Looking off across the sea, imagining the rich land which awaited them, she heard thunder clap in the distance and admired the sublime skies on which she flew. She would not tarry long with her new egg still waiting in the cave. But her wings would ache if not used for too long, and there was no thrill like flight.