

External Debate by Reyadh Rahaman

The many-headed beast crawled out of the water and onto the rocky shore of a small island. The volcanic stone was hot, having recently been transformed from lava. Nearby, the volcano still oozed molten rock, though the serpentine heads were too busy debating amongst themselves to care much for their surroundings.

“...Fools! Again, what do you think would happen if we assaulted it from underneath?!” the central, and greatest one, hissed as his other heads.

“The soft underbelly would RIP open?” A lesser head responded, their narrow jaws snapping repeatedly at the thought of prey, flashing needle-like teeth.

“No, dimwit,” disagreed a third, their proportionally larger and nearly bulbous head hinged open at the mouth to reveal thick, conical teeth. “That city is seated upon a literal storm. The only thing that would RIP open, would be OUR belly.”

“By the winds. The twisting, winds! The hungry winds! Like the claws and teeth of a primordial beast of the sky. The SKY!” added yet another, as they writhed, imitating the wind they spoke of, their thin neck dexterously moving amid the others to their mild annoyance, though few of the other heads paid them much mind.

“Yes, YES! We have established this. Now, what do we DO about it? This is a rare opportunity. One that we cannot pass up,” directed the central, grandest head. Their crest, the only head with such adornment, rose from the back of their neck to a single horn upon their brow. They turned to look at their other heads, curious for input, until one spoke up.

“Attack the walls of the city, pierce through and cause havoc from afar,” suggested one with a triangular snout, they bared their fangs and applied some pressure to the venom sack in the roof of their mouth, which caused a few test drops of the deadly cocktail to drip forth. The few drops that were freed fell to the hot stones below and melted into their mass, revealing a layer of magma beneath.

“From the top of the volcano, we might have a suitable vantage point. Those that can unleash sufficient power can combine theirs into one that would reach the city from here,” elaborated one with a rectangular snout, pitted with heat sensors on the front among their nostrils.

“Let us SEE. Let us LOOK. Let us KNOW,” encouraged the last one that had yet to speak, their massive jaws, disproportionately large compared to their head, snapped and swung, though their teeth were so massive, that their mouth never fully closed. Air, and sometimes water, flowed in and passed out of gills along their neck.

The hydra climbed the mountain of fire, unbothered by the heat and lava. When they reached the zenith, they spotted the flying city, though approaching it by sea was a red shadow, almost

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as massive as the city. "Damn, someone beat us to it..." growled the crested head in annoyance.