



The Crossing is a six-part short story released in 2009 by BIONICLE book author Greg Farshtey exclusively for the *BIONICLE: Glatorian* series of mini books.

Part One

The village of Iconox had recently lost a match to Vulcanus. Because of this, they needed to safely transport a trade caravan of Exsidian to the winning village. However, the caravan would have to travel through numerous dangerous territories in order to reach it. The Agori Metus, who was in charge of the proceedings, attempted to persuade the Glatorian of Iconox, Strakk, to accompany it to its goal. But Strakk, after hearing the route of the caravan, vehemently refused, pointing out the huge risks and danger that it would pose. He also cited Metus' lack of trustworthiness, reminding the Agori of several past battles that he participated in and lost. However, Metus still continued to plead the Glatorian for his help and even introduced him to the Glatorian and Agori he had already hired to defend the caravan. Strakk eventually relented and agreed to defend the caravan in exchange for double his usual fee. Although he realized how much it would cost the village, Metus quickly agreed to the terms as the trade caravan desperately needed the help.

After agreeing to the deal, Metus left to inform the tribe leaders of the arrangement. One of the Glatorian, Gresh, recommended heading out as soon as dawn broke but Strakk insisted on adding extra Thornax and weaponry. He reasoned that it would be more useful to have more weapons than to travel more quickly. Disagreeing as they traveled, Gresh and Strakk kept arguing over the better methods of travel as well as dealing with the inevitable Bone Hunter conflicts. Strakk then started questioning the qualifications of their guide, Tarduk. Tarduk admitted that although he had traveled all over Bara Magna in the collection of rare historic items, he had never traveled along their current route. Kirbold then told Strakk that Tarduk was the only one who had volunteered, given the dangers that the trip would pose. Believing that there were Bone Hunters about, Gresh attempted to quiet the conversation only to find that Strakk was already aware of their presence. He claimed that the only reason they had not been attacked yet was because the Bone Hunters were not aware of contents of their cargo.

As they traveled, Strakk then began to reminisce over the Shattering and how he came to be stuck on Bara Magna after it. Turning to look back, he then noted that Iconox was not in sight anymore and ordered his Sand Stalker to stop. When the others began to question his actions, he revealed that he never intended to keep the bargain he had made. His plan was to wreck the caravan and split the treasure of the Exsidian between the escort, thus making it look like Bone Hunters had attacked and made off with the cargo. Gresh, however, refused to comply with Strakk's plan and aimed his Thornax Launcher at him, commanding him to keep traveling. As they traveled on, Gresh, Tarduk, and Kirbold discussed the other potential dangers they would face in the coming journey, such as the Sea of Liquid Sand and other similar areas. Strakk interrupted their conversation and started to complain about the dangers. Gresh then ordered him to keep his eyes open as a lookout to better avoid anything they might encounter. After a while, they eventually reached the base of the Black Spike Mountains. As they were approaching the base, Gresh, out of curiosity, asked Kirbold how he ended up as part of the convoy. Kirbold revealed that he helped mine the Exsidian and thus he wished to see it arrive safely. Satisfied, the Glatorian queried no further.

Upon arriving at a desired spot, the team set up camp until the heat died down. Kirbold soon asked Tarduk what dangers he believed were out there, but the Jungle Agori partially misunderstood him and instead enthusiastically talked of hidden ruins of long-lost civilizations. When the air finally cooled, the convoy set out once again. Mention of a Sand Bat Strakk spied attacking another desert creature then sparked a discussion among the group of the worst type of creature they thought existed. During the debate, Kirbold noticed some Dune Snakes approaching and quickly warned the other members of the caravan. He himself lingered to try and make the Spikit run faster, while the others rode their Sand Stalkers through a gap in the wave of snakes. Edging his Stalker on, Strakk made it through first only to be caught in a patch of quicksand and became quickly trapped.

Part Two

Quickly thinking, Gresh came up with a plan. Snatching a rope from the caravan, he had his Sand Stalker go in a quick dash, then took a long leap over the quicksand. In mid-air he threw the rope to Strakk and the Glatorian was pulled out while Gresh's Stalker landed. However, the caravan was still threatened by the Dune Snakes and Strakk refused to risk his life to help save it. Knowing that they needed the Ice Glatorian's help, Gresh offered to give him half his pay for the escort job and Strakk readily accepted. They quickly rode their Sand Stalkers past the caravan, and used the noise of their mounts' footfalls to attract the snakes. With the snakes on their trail, they turned to the direction of the quicksand and leaped over it. Ignorant of the trap, the pursuing creatures followed and were led right into the pit of sinking sand. Recovering from this escapade, the group continued onward.

Several hours later, they arrived at the Black Spike Mountains. However, they soon found that the path through was only just wide enough to accept the convoy. As they passed through, Strakk commented that nobody, not even Skrall, fought in the Black Spike Mountains during the Core War, due to the abundance of hidden traps. The mention of Skrall reminded Gresh of his recent defeat in the arena at the hands of a Rock Tribe warrior.

As they were journeying along, Kirbold suddenly cried out, and pointed to three figures on a ridge ahead. Gresh quickly realized they were just armor on sticks and guessed that they were set out by Skrall to deter unwelcome guests. Strakk, however, pointed out that the armor did not belong to the Rock Tribe and guessed that it belonged to dead Glatorian.

They were then surprised by a voice telling them to keep silent. The group turned to see exiled Glatorian, Malum. Kirbold began to worry that he sought to steal their precious cargo, but the ex-Glatorian told the group he just wanted to warn them of an increased Skrall presence in the area.

Meanwhile, in Vulcanus, Raanu was conversing with Metus, having just discovered that the convoy delivering the Exsidian to Vulcanus had to go through the Black Spike Mountains. Raanu warned Metus that if the payment did not arrive, Vulcanus would in turn not honor any goods that Iconox won from them in the arena. Both Agori hoped that the convoy would arrive, for if it did not the Glatorian system would soon break down and a second war would begin.

Back in the Black Spikes, Malum had left the convoy and vanished into the rocks. As the group continued on their way, they heard two calls of a Striker bird, although Gresh and Strakk both suspected the noises were signals rather than genuine bird calls. Deducing that it was a Skrall patrol, Gresh quickly started creating a plan of action, but it was too late. The Skrall came and soon surrounded them.

One of the Skrall announced that traversal of the Mountains was forbidden, and commanded the group to reveal the contents of the caravan. On seeing the cargo of Exsidian, the Skrall patrol leader ordered the metal to be confiscated. However, Gresh lied that the shipment was to accompany an apology from the Ice Tribe to Tuma, and told the Skrall that the Rock Tribe leader would be very angry if the Exsidian arrived without its guardians.

Fearing their leader's wrath, the Skrall disarmed the group and rode with the caravan, directing its way to Roptus.

As they moved along, Gresh grabbed a Exsidian ingot from the shipment and suddenly struck Strakk on the head, stunning the Ice Glatorian. Alerted, several members of their Skrall escort came to investigate. When they approached close enough, Gresh quickly attacked them with more ingots, and grabbed one of their Thornax Launchers. He then fired at the rock walls on both sides of the path, showering the Skrall with an avalanche of stone.

With the Skrall fleeing the rock slide, Gresh had the convoy make a break for it, but rocks were continuously falling into the pathway, hindering their way. Spotting several large boulders rolling towards them, Strakk then snatched the Thornax Launcher from Gresh and opened fire. However, at that point the entire hillside collapsed, and the group dived into the caravan for safety. Gresh quickly shoved a Sand Stalker saddle onto the roof in an desperate attempt to deflect some of the rubble.

Moments later, the caravan was completely buried under the stone. The surviving Skrall approached it and, after realizing that the debris would be impossible to move, the patrol leader ordered that no one speak of the incident. However, before leaving, the Skrall, having no use for them, tossed Gresh and Strakk's weapons onto the rubble.

Part Three

Strakk awoke to find himself buried and was pulled from the rubble into a tunnel by Gresh, who angrily chastised him for causing an avalanche. Tarduk then explained that during the rockfall, the caravan was pushed against the side of the path, and through a gap in the rock that opened up. They fell through into the tunnel and discovered that the way they originally came through was blocked by debris.

Examining the walls of the tunnel, Tarduk was intrigued to find they were strangely perfectly smooth, and obviously not natural. Kirbold calculated that the tunnel followed roughly the same bearing they had planned to take over ground, so the group set off along the passageway, which was wide enough to admit the caravan. Cautiously, they knew that if the tunnel overshot the Dark Falls, they would end up in the eastern territories. This territory was so filled with danger not even Skrall had ever returned from there.

As the group walked along, Tarduk briefly wondered why no wildlife had found its way into the tunnel, which somehow led to him thinking about what it would be like if the tribes of Bara Magna could wield the elements they drew their names from. However, remembering the devastation of the Core War, he decided that it was a good thing that Glatorian like Strakk did not have Elemental Powers.

Suddenly, Gresh spotted symbols on the tunnel wall, sharply highlighted by Tarduk's flaming torch. Tarduk examined them, and announced that he had seen similar characters in ancient ruins. He also deduced that they probably had something to do with the Great Beings. Gresh thought that the symbols were good news, but Kirbold then announced he wanted to go back, claiming he had left a flame torch at home.

Tarduk then began to think about how the inhabitants of Bara Magna accused the Great Beings for being responsible for the Shattering and the fact that he may be able discover something about them. Meanwhile, Strakk and Gresh wondered the reason for the Great Beings to have dug the tunnel. Speculating, Tarduk suggested that they may have left a guard and that they could perhaps ask him for directions. Strakk was skeptical of this, but he was suddenly interrupted by a noise.

Gresh went to check what the noise was, but then found himself in the middle of a swarm of Scarabax Beetles. He managed to escape from them, only to be attacked by a Sand Bat. The Glatorian closed his eyes, preparing for the worse, but suddenly heard the Bat desperately cry out.

Meanwhile, outside the cave, Fero, who wished to avenge a defeat at Vulcanus by Strakk and the other Glatorian, started reminiscing about how he had pursued the Ice Glatorian all the way to the Black Spike Mountains only to be frustrated by the Skrall and the avalanche. However, his Bone Hunter instincts had told him that the Glatorian and the Agori were not dead, but had found shelter in a cave. Fero decided to find another exit to the cave, ambush Strakk and Gresh and kill them.

Inside the cave, Gresh opened his eyes to see the Scarabax flinging themselves onto the Sand Bat, devouring it. When it was over, the swarm dispersed itself. As the other members of the group reached him, Strakk commented on how Gresh had been stupid when he walked in the midst of the swarm. Kirbold explained that the Scarabax had reacted to the sudden movements the Sand bat was making and had forgotten about Gresh. However, Strakk reminded them that if the Sand Bat had flown inside, it had to mean that there was another exit. As the caravan went on, Kirbold spotted sunlight coming out of a narrow slit in the wall. Gresh found a stone which he pressed, hoping to widen the slit. But instead, the mechanism caused the walls to start shrinking.

Tarduk discovered a button along the wall and pressed it, which stopped the walls from closing in. As they emerged from the tunnel, they found the unconscious body of Fero. Immediately after examining him, the group were surrounded by Malum and his Vorox.

Part Four

Malum explained to the group that the Bone Hunters raided one of his camps and stole his Flame Sword, which was then sold to the Skrall, which he wanted back. He ordered his Vorox to take Kirbold and Tarduk captive, which forced Gresh and Strakk to retrieve his sword from Roxtus in exchange for the Agori's freedom. So the two Glatorian travelled to Roxtus and sneaked past the guards of the city gates by hiding within the caravans entering the gate.

Strakk found a rusty chain on the ground and wrapped it around their hands, pretending to be prisoners. They approached an Agori guard, who was suspicious of them, but Strakk knocked him out. They both walked into a room full of treasure, weapons and a large map of Bara Magna. Strakk considered taking some of the treasure, but thought against it, realizing it would hinder his escape. Soon after he found the sword Malum wanted. He examined it, and realized it had the name "Ackar" inscribed on it, leading him to believe that Malum stole the sword from Ackar.

When Gresh saw the sword, he decided they would return it to its proprietor, but Strakk argued that if they gave it to Malum, he would free the Agori and let them live. When Gresh stated they had to get out of Roxtus, Strakk walked to the Spikit pen and released the hungry beasts, using the confusion they created to escape. After knocking Atakus unconscious, they fled in the desert. When they were at a safe distance from the Skrall city, Gresh realized it had been too easy and, while checking the sword, found an object which he remembered seeing on the collars of a group of Agori that had escaped from Roxtus. Realizing it was a transmitter, he crushed it.

As Strakk wondered why Ackar's sword had a transmitter on it, Gresh said that they probably hoped Ackar would come to get it back so that they could capture him. While talking, the two Glatorian had reached Malum's camp. Gresh stated they had to free the Agori and take the caravan back. The two Glatorian split up. Gresh found some stones emitting light and shattered them, covering his armor with their dust. As he entered the cave where the caravan was and scared the Vorox away, Strakk jumped on the wagon and led it away. As the Vorox pursued, Gresh jumped on the wagon as well, but the beasts rapidly gained ground on the tired Spikit. Strakk

led the wagon up on a hill, hoping to hide from the Vorox. However, on the other side he saw the Skrall River, and the Dark Falls, in which the wagon plunged.

Part Five

In their efforts to escape from Malum and his pack of Vorox, the caravan group accidentally plunged down the Dark Falls. Gresh managed to continue thinking clearly and dove headfirst into the water to avoid excess damage to his body. Despite his effort, however, he had forgotten that the headwaters of the Skrall River were very shallow, and he knocked himself unconscious on a rock at the bottom.

While unconscious, he had a vision in which he was standing on the Sea of Liquid Sand, somehow without sinking. In the vision, Vulcanus was burning, and Agori and Glatorian were ablaze as well, though they seemed not to notice. Malum and his Vorox then attacked, passing through Vulcanus into a group of Bone Hunters and a troop of Skrall, who were watching from the sidelines. Malum eventually initiated their own fight once the other two sides had exhausted one another. A shooting star soon then appeared, and rammed into the planet. A figure then emerged from the resulting crater, initially the size of a Glatorian, but the figure kept on growing. Gresh soon found himself slowly sinking into the sand and called for help, but nobody noticed him. The only one aware of his presence was the giant, who started to call his name.

Gresh then suddenly awoke to find Ackar and Kiina repeating his name. In response to his queries on how they had gotten there, Ackar explained that Raanu had gotten nervous when the cargo did not arrive, and asked for volunteers to go and find out what had happened to the caravan. Both Ackar and Kiina volunteered. Kiina revealed that they had arrived when Strakk had surprisingly fished him out of the river. Gresh was amazed at the selfless act until he found out that Tarduk had offered Strakk half of whatever store of rare artifacts he next found.

Ackar explained that while Gresh was unconscious, the caravan had been broken and the Spikit had run off. Worse still, the cargo of Exsidian was residing at the bottom of the riverbed. Without the wagon, they were unable to transport enough bars, and even if they did have a way they still needed to retrieve them from the river. Tarduk suggested acquiring a second caravan from Iconox, but Kiina informed the group that she knew someone who may be willing to help up north. The Glatorian formulated a plan, using Strakk as the bait.

Following the plan, Strakk traversed across the wastelands, waiting for a Skrall patrol to find him. Despite the improbability of a lost traveler having water, Strakk had refused to leave without a canteen and took a drink from it. Stronius, one of the elite Skrall, soon discovered him and ordered members of his Skrall platoon to return to Roxtus to bring back a wagon. The Skrall returned several hours later with a wagon and a Spikit but also informed Stronius that Tuma did not approve of his plan, although he still allowed it to proceed. Stronius, skeptical of Strakk's claim that he was the only survivor, ordered searches of the river to find the alleged dead bodies of his fellow escorts. Strakk was initially worried by the absence of any sign of his fellow Glatorian, but soon realized that they had hidden themselves thoroughly. Once the Skrall had fished all of the Exsidian out of the river, Stronius aimed his Thornax Launcher on Strakk, and prepared to execute him. Before he could do so, however, Ackar and Kiina unleashed their ambush. The Skrall, realizing the trap, quickly returned fire. Strakk then attempted to flee but was stopped by Kiina. Seeing as he needed a weapon, Kiina handed him her trident to defend himself with. The group was able to successfully repel the Skrall and hijacked the wagon. They attempted to outrace the Skrall, but then spotted Malum and his Vorox up ahead, penning them in.

Part Six

As the Vorox and the Skrall closed in, Ackar had an idea. He declared the Vorox were their allies, tricking the Skrall, hated enemies of the Vorox, into attacking them. As the Vorox counter-attacked, the caravan fled. Once far from the battle scene, Ackar commented he had not wanted the Vorox to be slaughtered by the Skrall.

Malum reached the caravan on a Sand Stalker and accused Ackar of associating with thieves. Gresh proposed to fight over the issue, but, after threatening the Tesaran Glatorian, Malum left.

While heading south toward Vulcanus, Tarduk and Kirbold talked about the route they had taken and compared it to the Dunes of Treason. Kiina approached Ackar to ask him about their being pursued, but they were interrupted by Gresh who noticed a giant crater in the sand and the bodies of Bone Hunters scattered around it. Kiina interrogated a Bone Hunter, who was just able to tell her about a Skopio attack before dying. The team decided to keep going towards Vulcanus, hoping the Skopio was not pursuing.

However, after a few minutes, the earth began to tremble and the Skopio emerged. However, seeing a figure in golden armor riding on it, Ackar realized the beast was actually the Skopio XV-1, driven by the mad Telluris. The Glatorian and Agori fled. To pursue, Telluris folded the legs of his vehicle and activated its treads. Gresh told everyone to split up, trying to confuse their enemy, but Telluris, seeing Ackar giving orders, went after him. An explosive Thornax threw the veteran Glatorian and his Sand Stalker to the ground and Kiina ordered Gresh to take care of him, while she managed to jump on the Skopio itself. Back on his steed, Ackar tried to divert Telluris's attention from Kiina, and succeeded in attracting his fire. To stop the vehicle, the two Glatorian took some chunks of Exsidian from the wagon and pushed them between the gears of the Skopio, effectively disabling the vehicle's wheels.

Jumping up to the cockpit, Kiina grabbed Telluris and threatened to throw him over the side. She gave Telluris the choices of killing him and keeping the vehicle for herself, risking shooting the power source of the XV-1 and causing a massive explosion, killing them all, or allowing Telluris to go free and attack the pursuing Skrall. Agreeing to the third option, Kiina threw Telluris over anyway, correctly deducing that after destroying the Skrall, he would be after the seven Agori and Glatorian. Ackar observed that Telluris was still alive, and the group quickly moved on.

The group finally came to Vulcanus. Raanu thanked the team for the help in not starting another war by abandoning the mission. Metus told Strakk he was hoping for a chance to put Strakk and Ackar in an arena battle, and Strakk approved of the idea. Kiina, at the time, pointed out to Gresh the mission was partially a failure, seeing as the new route they had discovered was much too dangerous. Gresh slightly disagreed, and Kiina requested Gresh to be trained under her lead to help improve the rookie's strength, with Gresh agreeing.