

Kruphix's Insight

Kelly Digges

From set *Journey into Nyx*

Diantha took a deep breath, centered herself, and knocked.

There was a pause.

Sometimes, their guest did not wish to be disturbed at all. Other times, she would request, through the still-closed door, that food be left in the hall. And, occasionally, she would invite the acolytes in and engage them in conversation, as though she liked them, as though she wanted to be here.

“Come in,” said the oracle.

Diantha opened the door.

The Oracle of Kruphix was a beautiful woman with long, black hair. She was looking out the window, as she often did, arms braced against the window frame. Two more arms, diaphanous, half-real, waved lazily at her sides. Kruphix marked his oracles well, so that none could mistake them, and none save fools and savages would bring them any harm.

The oracle turned to face her, and smiled.



Prophet of Kruphix | Art by Winona Nelson

“Hello, Diantha.”

Diantha set down the tray—mutton, fresh from the fire, and an assortment of grilled vegetables, fresh olives, and cheese. Kruphix had few worshipers and his temple in Meletis was small, but they spared nothing for the oracle of their god.

“Greetings, Oracle,” said Diantha. “I hope you are well?”

“Well enough,” said the oracle. “I was just thinking about the temple.”

“The temple, my lady?”

The oracle smiled.

“Kruphix’s temple—his true temple—where two great trees stand sentry at the ends of the earth.”

“You...” Diantha hesitated. “You speak as if you’ve seen it, My Lady.”

“I have. When I was in danger, Kruphix spirited me away to his temple. I spent time with him there during the upheaval.”

Diantha bowed.

“That is a very great honor, to learn from Kruphix himself.”

The oracle’s smile faded.

“Learned,” she said. “Yes. Yes, I suppose I did.”

Diantha almost bowed, almost turned, almost left the room.

“I envy you,” she said, instead.

“Oh?” said the oracle.

“Yes, very much,” said Diantha. “I am a priest, and as a priest I have faith—faith in Kruphix’s wisdom, faith in his authority over the other gods.” She looked down at her feet. “But I do not hear his voice, My Lady, and I have never walked in his presence. Is there...”

Diantha hesitated. She should not ask.

“Is there anything you can tell me? Of what you learned?”

The oracle turned to stare out the window again, eyes fixed on the distant horizon, and for a long moment she said nothing at all.

From her perch within the great branches of Kruphix’s Temple, Kydele saw it all happen. She braced herself against the living wood with her living hands, and against the starry night with the two misty, insubstantial arms that Kruphix had given her when she awakened as his oracle.



Temple of Mystery | Art by Noah Bradley

Kydele saw when Xenagos became a god, roaring across the pristine surface of Nyx like a wildfire. She saw the arrival of the human Elspeth Tirel and her leonin companion, Ajani. She saw them walk through Kruphix's body, a portal to Nyx, and step into the sky. She saw Elspeth use the blade called Godsend to cut Xenagos from the sky.

And she saw Heliod, who styled himself the greatest of the gods, snatch the weapon from Elspeth's hands—the blade he had consecrated for her, marking her as his champion.

You are too much like the satyr, the god of the sun had said. *Your eyes have seen things I can't fathom. And a champion cannot know more than her god. I am lord of the pantheon. I am the greatest of these.*

And then he murdered her, his own champion, with her own weapon.

The crisis was passed. The pantheon was secure, and Nyx was healing from Xenagos's violence.

Kydele felt dead inside.

Most oracles heard the voice of a god loud and clear in their heads, ringing like a bell when pronouncements came and falling otherwise silent. Poor Daxos, oracle of every god and no god, had heard all of them, all the time. A deafening chorus of divinity. But with Kruphix it was different. Kruphix spoke in her mind almost constantly, a whispered litany of images and events hovering just beyond her ability to hear, like the sun lurking below the horizon.

But since Heliod's act of betrayal, the voice of her god had fallen silent. Even here, in his temple overlooking the great waterfall that bordered Nyx, she heard nothing. She caught occasional glimpses of his shadowed form moving through the rooms of his temple, but he never spoke.

It was difficult to say how much time had passed, here at the edge of the world.

Kydele was strolling the temple grounds, lost in thought, when the familiar voice of her god echoed all around her.

You are troubled.

It was not, uncharacteristically for the god of mysteries, a question.

Kydele turned to face the starry, four-armed outline of Kruphix on the horizon.



Kruphix's Insight | Art by Igor Kieryluk

"It seems I'm not the only one," said Kydele.

Kruphix said nothing, but gestured for Kydele to walk with him. As he approached to walk beside her, he shrank, a bizarre inversion of perspective, until they were the same height.

"Was it a good thing, what happened?" asked Kydele. She folded her true arms gracefully in front of her, but her mist-arms waved uneasily. They were not entirely under her control.

Good that Xenagos became a god? asked Kruphix. *Good that Elspeth struck him down? Good that she fell in turn?*

Kydele shrugged helplessly.

"Order is restored," she said. "All is right in Theros and Nyx. Xenagos menaces the world no more, and the Nyxborn again serve and guide mortals as they should."

Kruphix waited. He was always waiting.

"So why," she finished, "does it all feel so wrong?"

You speak of the greatest mystery of all. Of existence, and its purpose.

"Xenagos's ascension raises troubling questions," said Kydele. "About Nyx, and the nature of the gods. The philosophers teach that the gods are ageless, unchanging. But if a god can be born and die in a space of weeks, then what does that say about the others?"

That , said Kruphix, is no mystery. It is simply a question whose answer few people truly wish to hear.

"I wish to hear it," she said immediately.

Kruphix regarded her for a long moment before he spoke, inscrutable.

The gods are beliefs that took form within the fabric of Nyx.

"The gods inspire belief," said Kydele. "Surely the gods came first."

I am the oldest , said Kruphix. But even I do not predate mortal belief. The first time a mortal of Theros looked up into the night sky and said "I wonder..." some part of me came into existence. I am the unknown, the unknowable. I am what sits beyond the far horizon.



Kruphix, God of Horizons | Art by Daarken

I watched as the others took shape. Death came next, ultimate and inescapable. Then sun and sea, forest and forge. After that, more abstract domains emerged—warfare, deception, insight, love.

"Love?" said Kydele.

Indeed. And more, that mortals have forgotten. Or did you think Helioid was always the sun god?

"How can there have been other gods? We would remember them."

If you remembered them , said Kruphix, they would still exist. As soon as Helioid took his place in the pantheon, he was the sun god—and always had been. Mortals have short memories in these matters. If they had longer ones, Nyx would tear itself apart with rivalries and contradictions.

Four arms spread wide in a gesture of all-encompassing defeat.

Perhaps I was not even the first, said Kruphix. *How would I know?*

Kydele said nothing for a long time.

“So the gods are more fragile than they seem,” she said. “And their existence depends on mortals believing that they are not?”

So it would seem.

“Why?”

Why does time pass? asked Kruphix. *Why does water flow downhill?* Stars shifted within his cloak, the suggestion of a shrug. *Some things simply are.*

“The philosophers in Meletis debate such things,” said Kydele. “The cause of motion, the nature of time.”

Then let them debate, said Kruphix, with uncharacteristic hardness. *If they learn the answers, perhaps the people will revere them instead.*

“Are you saying you don’t know?”

Kruphix turned his hood toward her, and she felt a sudden rush of vertigo, the sense that she was gazing not over to a companion, but *down*, into a deep abyss full of stars and blackness.

I am saying that if there is a reason—if there is some purpose behind the nature of the gods—then I do not wish to know.

“It is your duty to know,” said Kydele. “That *is* your purpose...isn’t it?”

She had never contradicted Kruphix so directly. Many other gods would not tolerate such impudence, even from an oracle.

Kruphix only sighed, a sound like the night breeze.

I am the knower of all that is known on Theros, and much that is not, he said wearily. *But of late, I have learned things, about our world. About its safety.* He paused. *Does that surprise you, that I might still be capable of learning?*

“It does.”

In fact, it did much more than surprise Kydele. It disturbed her. Kruphix was the god of mysteries. He knew the answer to every question, so that he might decide which of those answers mortals could safely know...or so she thought.

It should.

He said nothing after that.

“What have you learned?” she asked.

Are you certain you wish to know?

“I am.”

If an oracle of Kruphix flinched from the truth, what did she have left?

Do not be, said Kruphix. *Knowledge is cruel. It will break your heart and test your allegiances. Are you certain you want this curse?*



Dictate of Kruphix | Art by Daarken

Kydele took the time to consider. She knew things no other mortals dreamed of. She had gazed down into Nyx so often it had become commonplace, had watched Kruphix etch the names of the gods onto his great tree to bar them from Theros. Knowledge was power.

But Kruphix was the god of horizons, and some things were never meant to be known. No matter how far you travel, there is always another horizon.

Except here, at the last horizon.

“Yes,” she said. “I am certain.”

Very well, said Kruphix.

He walked in silence, and she waited. At length, they came to the edge of the world itself, where the ocean roared into the infinite depths of Nyx and the grounds of Kruphix’s temple extended like a promontory into a sea of night.

Kruphix stood and gazed out into Nyx.

Theros is one of many worlds. Did you know that?

“I take it you’re not speaking of Nyx, or the Underworld.”

No. There are entire worlds out there, beyond Theros, beyond Nyx. Worlds you cannot see when you look up at the sky, places where the gods of Theros hold no sway. Worlds that you—and I—can never visit, with their own civilizations, their own histories, even their own physical laws.

“Their own gods?”

Again, the sense of vertigo as Kruphix regarded her.

No , he said. The word rang like a bell. *Some, perhaps, have gods like us. But as a rule, no. We are...a local phenomenon.*

“And you’ve only recently learned this?”

Kruphix shook what passed for his head.

No. There are beings who can walk between these worlds. The first such to set foot on our world did so long ago. I am the knower of all things that are known in this world, and I learned all that she knew.

Kydele thought for a moment about everything she had heard and seen from her perch in Kruphix’s great trees.

“Elspeth was one of these...world-walkers, wasn’t she?”

Astute , said Kruphix. Yes. She was. But not only her. So was her companion Ajani, the leonin who carried her body out of Nyx. So was the triton—the merfolk—Kiora, who called herself Callaphe and earned the ire of Thassa.

And so , he continued, was Xenagos.



Xenagos, the Reveler | Art by Jason Chan

Kydele nodded.

“He traveled to other worlds where there were no gods...and realized he could become one?”

Close, said Kruphix. *He traveled to other worlds where there were no gods, and decided everyone on Theros should know the gods were a lie.*

“I don’t think he succeeded,” said Kydele.

He did not, said Kruphix. *People saw the chaos. They saw the destruction. They saw, in short, a usurper into a domain that had otherwise remained, by all appearances, indefinitely stable. Perhaps, if he had lived to take his place among the pantheon, people might remember that there had not always been a god of revelry, and come to wonder what that meant about the other gods.*

Kruphix shrugged again.

I suspect, however, that they would have learned to worship him, and forgotten his mortal origins. They would have come to believe that he had always been there, waiting for their veneration. That is the way of things. In the end, he threatened nothing.

“Then he is not what’s troubling you,” said Kydele.

Kruphix laughed—actually laughed, a hollow, echoing sound.

You see a great deal, My Oracle.

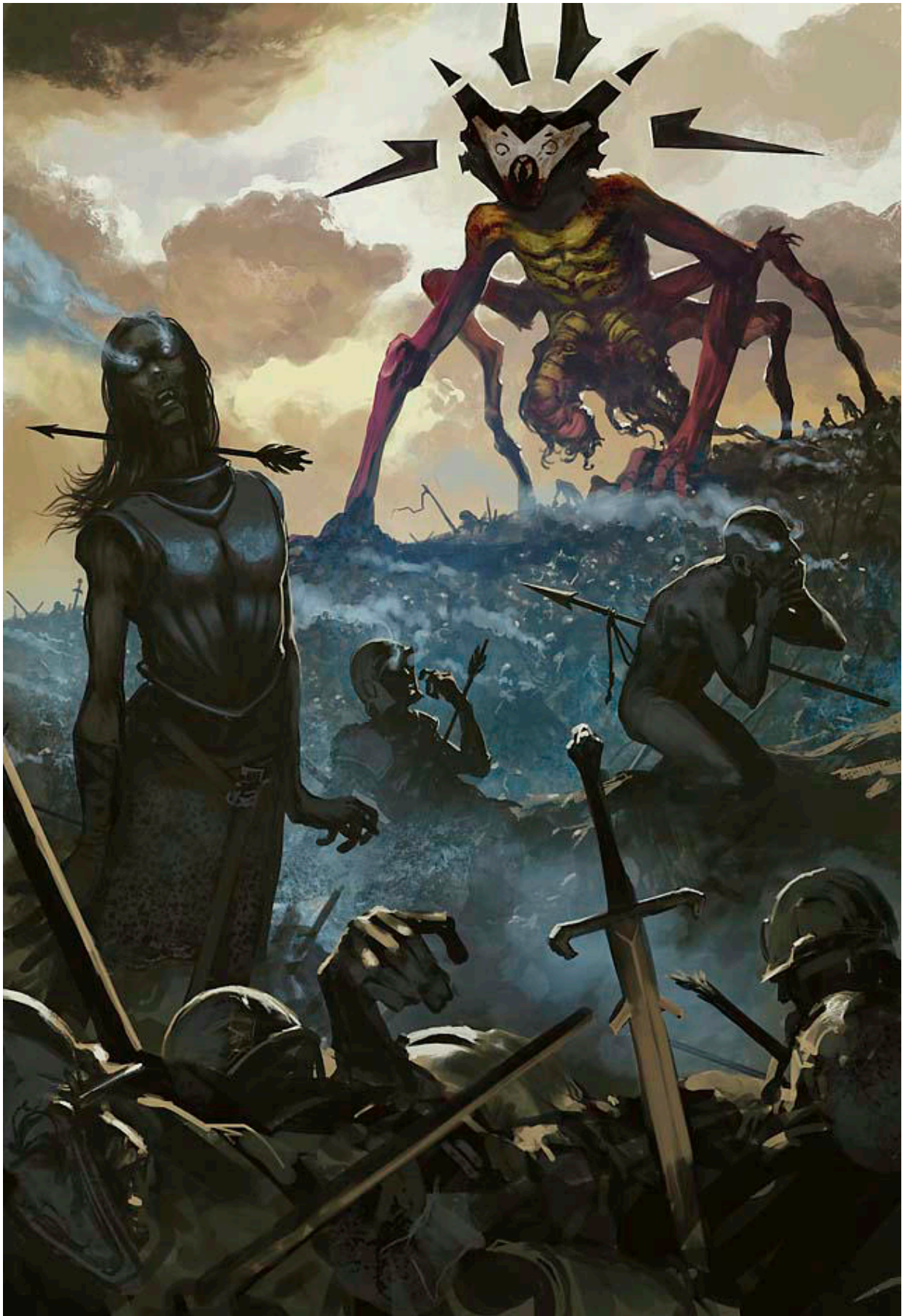
He folded his starry hands in front of him.

Yes, I am troubled, and not by Xenagos’s ascension, nor by the existence of these world-walkers.

I am troubled by what troubles them.

There it was. The dark, ragged edge around which they’d been tiptoeing.

The merfolk Kiora, said Kruphix, *came here from a world whose existence was threatened by something called the Eldrazi. They are vast and terrible, the equal of any god. And they eat worlds, My Oracle. Strip the flesh from the bones of the earth and leave a dead husk, moving on to the next.*



It That Betrays | Art by Tomasz Jedruszek

The leonin Ajani has faced an immensely powerful foe, a fellow world-walker and a dragon. He is unfathomably ancient, even to me. He seeks infinite power and immortal life. His plots span worlds and centuries, and he will spare nothing and no one who stands in his way.



Cruel Ultimatum | Art by Todd Lockwood

And the human Elspeth...she came here from a place called Phyrexia, an entire world of flayed skin and twisted metal, ruled over by vicious, monstrous beings who style themselves gods. It is an affront to nature, a dark parody of life that corrupts all it touches and touches everything in time. And it has already made its way from one world to others.



Rout | Art by Igor Kieryluk

Kruphix looked out into Nyx, night staring into night.

If any of these things come here, to our world, he said, even the gods may be powerless to stop them. And all your prayers, all your pleas, will fall on the deaf ears of a silent sky as this world is rent asunder or remade or worse.

One by one, the stars in Kruphix's cloak began to flicker and die, until only blackness remained.

That is what I fear, My Oracle. That is what troubles the mind of a god. Theros is a minnow swimming in a deep, still pond, heedless of the depths, not knowing that something bigger rises up to devour it in an instant.

He faced her, four arms spread wide, a hole of pure darkness set against the starry light of Nyx.

So now you know. What will you do with this knowledge?

Diantha waited.

"No, Child," said the oracle. "There is nothing. Nothing at all."

She said nothing more, and Diantha took it for a dismissal. She turned away.

Behind her, the oracle stared out the window, past the city, past the horizon, as though gazing into an infinite distance.