

Chapter 34: Aquatus.

The Aquatic War Arc.

Everyone huddles around the diner area, munching the kelps like no tomorrow. The Lanturn shines her light, aiding everyone's sight. Ramon stares ahead, being behind the group due to his height. Yowa swims to the kelp stash in the corner, snatching a few of them and bringing them towards Larry while chewing on some. She sets it down, smiling.

"I'm not hungry," the School says, smiling back. Yowa pushes the kelps forward.

"Oh come on, hun! Momma's spent these lovely kelps with her daughter's hard-earned shells! Plus we got our lovely assistant Mary giving us light." Yowa gestures to the Lanturn, Mary staring ahead in an unphased fashion. "The least you could do is give 'em a taste."

Shells? "U-Um...Sure thing, ma'am." Ramon grabs one of the kelps, bringing them to his maw with caution. He opens and chews, his face scrunching. *O-Oh god, this is gross!*

Yowa tilts her head. "Eh? Something's wrong?"

"Mm." The School chows down the rest of the kelps, swallowing. He shakes his head before nodding. "Nope! P-Perfectly fine!"

Yowa widens her eyes. "My my! I guess the war has gotten ya mighty hungry, huh? Glad I insisted on you eating, then!"

Fisher lightly taps on Larry's side, chuckling. "The kelps were good, huh?"

Ramon nods. "Y-Yes siree it was! I forgot to get myself so-something to eat before randomly being thrown into war." He looks away. *So grassy and dirtish...I'm sorry.*

"Oh dear. Then I'll go grab you some more kelps at the stash!"

Larry jumps up a bit. "I-I don't think that'll be necessa—"

Yowa swims off to the corner, snatches a couple more kelps, and slams them in front of Larry. "Here ya go, hun!"

"Oh. Ni-Nice." *Aww...*

Yowa then swims beside Aquatus, being by Fisher. Once everyone starts eating, Yowa turns towards Aquatus and speaks, "So how was today's fight?"

"The usual: Having to keep attacking the Gyarados here and there. Nothing special about it besides meeting Larry."

"I see, I see. Well once again, momma's proud of you for comin' home alive!" Yowa smiles, shoving some kelps into her mouth.

"We're so happy that you came back, sis! That way, we can say you finally have a boyfriend!" Marsh follows as he and Beckett scoot close to Aquatus, the two giggling.

Aquatus sighs at the kids, smiling. "Thanks." She blinks for a moment before shaking head. "What? HEY!" Pouting, she frowns at them. "Stop insisting that I have a boyfriend solely because I bought a guy over for dinner! There is a thing as being friends, you know." She shakes her head.

"Relax, sweetie. They're just messing with ya, per usual." Yowa smiles, her fin lifting up and down.

"I can see that." Aquatus smiles while rolling her eyes, the two kids snickering.

Ramon shrugs, nudging his fins together. "S-So what are y-you two's thoughts on the war?" he asks Aquatus' parents.

Fisher lifts his head, closing his eyes. "Virtuous has the bright idea of showing those serpent *FREAKS* who's boss." Smirking, he glares at Larry. "Their wild attitude ain't got nothin' on our sardinstic beauty!"

Sardinstic beauty...What? Larry thinks, blinking into obscurity.

"Mhm, hun. And our large blues of glory form is a whole new level of beauty! Beauty that them GyaraDORKS don't have!" Yowa follows, her fin on her lips as she giggles.

Large blues of glo—I, what??? Larry tilts his head, completely dubious on what he just heard.

"Virtuous knew what was up when he boasted about these feats we have. Especially since we never liked them serpent trash in the first darn place!" Yowa sighs. "Honestly, I wouldn't mind if he was my husband because of those fiiiine, fiiiiiiiiine wisdom of his'." Yowa holds her fins together, shaking her head and smiling. "Also helps that he's a fine king, too."

Fisher raises his brow, eyeing the Solo form. "I'd be upset at that comment, but that's Virtuous. So I'll let it slide." Soon he and Yowa laugh, waving their fins at each other in flattery.

"I kid around, anyways. But his wisdom really does speak to us all, hun."

"Agreed." Fisher eyes his two young Wishiwashis. "Right, kids?"

"Virtuous is the best!" the two Solos respond, nodding afterwards.

Fisher grins before turning towards Aquatus, who's gradually nibbling on her kelp. "As for you, Aquatus: Thank you for not only making your family proud, but also *King Virtuous* proud for joining our cause." Aquatus eyes him, lips sealed. Fisher's grin devolves, leaning himself forward. "Something's wrong?"

"...Nothing." Aquatus jolts her lips up: Her smile trembling, her eyelids shielding the sorrows. "I'm honored to join Virtuous' cause, too."

Ramon eyes the sardine, lowering his head.

. . .

Everyone sleeps in their respective rooms at the top of the coral house: The young Wishiwashis sleep in the rooms on the right while the parents sleep on the left. Ramon and Aquatus are in the room above Aquatus' parents, lying down on the rough purple ground. Aquatus eyes the large fish, a hole-window providing some light thanks to the Lanturns.

"You really are lucky that this room can fit a School form. Otherwise, you would've been sleeping outside," Aquatus says before giggling.

The fake Wishiwashi eyes down at her. "Haha...Ye-Yeah."

"Anyways, have a good night's sleep, Larry." Aquatus turns to the side, her head lying on her fins.

"Goodnight." Larry remains on his belly, his eyes closing.

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The sun shines at the two foxes: The Zoroark sitting down with his legs spread while the Shiny Zorua rests on his lap, both gazing up. The clouds pass over them gradually, Ramon caressing the grass beneath him. The soft winds lean the greens to the side, tilting the Zoroark's fringe.

"So—" Nomar blinks. "A lot has happened, huh?"

"Yeah..." Ramon scratches the back of his head. "Getting to learn bits about who that Travis guy is, meeting Roan after returning his wristband, and now having to solve some war issues *just* to get across the lake."

Nomar stretches, yawning. "When you put it like that: Yeah, that's a *lot* to take in under one day."

Ramon lays down, sighing in exasperation. "It's crazy how all of this is even happening to begin with: From when I've woken up in that institute to dealing with this war." His brow raises. "It all sounds like some bizarre...mixed-meshed fairytale story. That includes the grudge Virtuous and Behemoth held against each other before starting The Aquatic War."

"Sometimes the craziest, most unbelievable things can happen to you."

Ramon's paws rest behind his head. "I suppose so. I'll just hope to recover my memories by the time I reach Glory Pride."

Nomar leans his head, gazing at Ramon. "I'm as eager to meet you in real life as you are eager to fully remember yourself!" He closes his eyes and smiles. "Let's do our best at reaching our goals."

The Zoroark gazes back before nodding. After a few minutes of silence, he asks, "...Can a Pokémon make evil decisions, especially those who are Intellicates?"

The blue Zorua tilts his head, giving Ramon the look of peculiarness. "Elaborate."

"I mean, I was wondering about this due to Roan mentioning about Zorua and Zoroark being known for deception." His ears lower, staring off.

Nomar shakes his head. "Don't think too much about it: They're just meaningless labels given to us by humans. It's their way of wanting us to feel inferior."

Ramon blinks and lifts himself forward. "You think so?"

"Nah: I *KNOW* so." Nomar frowns. "This is especially the case when it comes to labels like 'Intellicate' and 'Nativu', human's way of differentiating what are essentially two of the same Pokémon."

"Hmm..."

"Think about it: We hardly dress like humans, we don't walk like humans, we don't eat like humans, and we sure as *hell* don't communicate with each other like humans."

Ramon lifts his claw. "But we are capable of talking like one, seeing as how I can understand what Justin and Ada are saying. Perhaps that's what makes us Intellicates."

Nomar sighs, lowering his ears and shaking his head. "Regardless of that being the case: 'Intellicate' and 'Nativu' are purely imaginary terms humans use to manipulate Pokémon like Roan. Having them feel as though they're on the same level as them: *Inclusive*, in other words."

Nomar stares at the waving grass. “I believe all Pokémon are, well, Pokémon: Creatures meant to thrive in the wild, differing themselves from the twisted wasteland that are humans. Regardless of whatever false labels they give us, we *are* nature’s habitats. While they—” glares. “Are its *diseases*.”

“...I see, then.” The red fox lowers his ears. “Even then, I...think Roan could be right about Zoroarks. Considering what I’m doing right now.” He strokes the grass, his hair shielding his eyes. “Pretending to be an ally for Virtuous, and will do the same for Behemoth tomorrow.” Ramon clenches his teeth. “I’m deceiving those two....Like how those Zoroarks *deceived* Roan.”

Nomar remains silent for a moment, the serene winds brushing against him. He taps on Ramon’s leg, sighing. “Maybe that might be the case...” He eyes the Zoroark, frowning. “But always remember: At the end of the day, humans *are* at fault here. Windmill Forest’s hurricane wouldn’t have happened if the two Pokémon’s trainer didn’t abandon them.”

Ramon nods at a gradual pace, stroking his arm. “Agreed...”

The grass shifts, the wind blowing to fill the ounces of silence. Eventually it subsides when the Zoroark says, “Hey Nomar, you said you were going to tell me how you know about Transvolution. Care to explain?”

The blue fox gazes into the distance, ears flickering. “I forgot.”

Ramon lifts his brow, the blue sky shifting away. “You forgot?” Nomar nods. “How so? You’ve been so serious about me changing back into a Zorua earlier. I’m not sure how you’ve forgotten.”

Nomar lowers his head. “I’ve told you before that my knowledge is leaving me thanks to my death. I used to know about it, but now the thought is...slipping away...”

“But you sounded terrified, like you knew what I was going through.” Ramon folds his arms. “Seems important enough to not forget about.”

Nomar stares at the fox. “Hey, that Ada girl forgot about the Dne War four days ago, right? And that war was important, too.”

“Yes, but she isn’t dead: Her thoughts aren’t leaving her so easily compared to yours...If that’s how losing memories works in the dead...” Ramon shakes his paws in a defensive manner. “N- No offense, by the way!”

Nomar stretches himself out once more. “None taken.”

Ramon lays his paw on his chin. “Also, didn’t you say you don’t believe in those war stuff? Since you’ve told me they’re made up by humans, then why mentio—”

“Let’s focus on getting to Gloria Falls, alright?” Nomar says quickly. “I’m really sorry for forgetting about Transvolution. But maybe my memory of it will come back after you revive me. We’ll see.”

Ramon blinks for a moment, the sky dimming to dark orange. He nods. “Okay.”

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Ramon opens his eyes wide, gasping and flailing. He looks at himself being in his Zoroark form, gagging.

Si-Since when I decided to change back!? he thinks, gritting his teeth. He closes his eyes, surrounding himself in pink auras before shrinking down. The transformation ends with him being a Solo Wishiwashi, coughing on his fin.

He groans, clearing his throat and breathing in and out. Aquatus slowly lifts her eyes and groans, rubbing them.

“Mm...What’s going...” She eyes the abnormal breathing fish, swimming within seconds. “Are you alright, Larry!?”

Larry looks at the Wishiwashi. “Y-Yeah, I’m, uh fine.” He shakes his head. “Had a nightmare and ended up coughing like crazy from it.”

Aquatus pins her fins against her Mystic Water. “Yeesh! You cough after waking up from a nightmare?”

Larry nods meekly. “Mhm...”

“You must have had a panic attack. Want me to give you some space?”

“U-Um—” Ramon pokes his fins together, squirming while looking off. “Y-Yeah. That’ll be nice.”

The sardine backs away. “What was the nightmare you had? If you don’t mind telling me.”

Larry flinches, fidgeting his fins. “I, uh—” *Gotta think of something quick and effective.* “I...was dreaming about ge-getting killed out there in the war. Th-The thought of it terrifies me.” He whimpers.

Aquatus gives the other sardine a nonchalant look. “Is that so?” Larry nods. The lady Wishiwashi looks off to the side, chuckling within the wispy winds. “I get it: Randomly being chosen to fight for your kind is a scary feeling to have when it comes to death playing along.”

"Y-Yeah." *At least I'm half telling the truth here...Partially. Erm...Fully.* "A-And that's, uh, quite a way to phrase my nightmare there."

Aquatus shifts side to side, staring off. "I can be quite blunt that way, heh."

I can tell.

Aquatus looks out of her window, gazing at the dimly lit lights. Larry stares out as well, the two exchanging silence. The illusion Solo coughs a little, breaking the quiet barrier. "...So Aquatus —" he looks at her. "D-Do you believe Wishiwashis are stronger than those Gy-Gyarados?"

"Honestly...No." She swims close to the window, pressing her fin against the wall it's attached to. "I believe some are stronger than them while others aren't. The same can be said for the Gyarados, too." Smiles. "And that's fine since the strong can help the weak become strong. Besides, the weak can help the strong in cases that don't involve fighting."

"Really?" Larry tilts his head.

"Mhm. Such as alerting others of intruders infiltrating the palace." She eyes a Lanturn passing over her home. "Not like that has happened before, but considering how loyal the Wishiwashis are, I wouldn't put past a child warning one of the guards about an enemy being here. Heck, you were considering doing that while in your School form, Larry."

"R-Right." Larry blinks for a moment before shaking his head. "Wa-Wait, are you calling me weak!?"

Aquatus giggles. "*Maybe.*"

"H-Hey!" Larry whimpers, lowering his head.

"Even if I did, it's not really a bad thing. Again, you're willing to do whatever you can to aid others despite your weakness. Sure, there's a stronger Wishiwashi that does the job better. But a weaker one wanting to help is fine, too." Aquatus nods. "Personally...that's what true strength is: The will to help others *regardless* of one's power."

Ramon eyes the sardine, his lips sealing, succumbing to silence. *I've...never thought of it before, but Clinton was so confident in helping me when Travis almost killed me. He did this despite not being born with Magic type, knowing he's at a disadvantage with Travis.* He stares off. *He has a strong will to help others.*

Aquatus turns around, frowning at the illusion Wishiwashi. "This is the kind of view I desperately wished for Virtuous to see. To understand...His petty rivalry with Behemoth has involved both of our species because of pointless power bets: Always wanting to prove who's the strongest

between the two kinds when in reality—” she clenches her fins, glaring down. “It should’ve been us agreeing to disagree. Because both the strong and the weak are useful in *willpower*.”

“I see...”

Aquatus sighs, her fins unraveling, her eyes shutting. “If only Virtuous and the rest of the Wishiwashis saw it that way. How much that’ll set his grievances free instead of the war we’re in now.”

Larry keeps quiet, gazing at the melancholic Solo before him. He nods. “Agreed.” *And I’m being genuine completely.* “Although, if you believe in those things, then why did you join the war? Especially since you found it to be pointless.”

Aquatus shakes her head. “I have no choice.”

“S-So it was like my case where you were randomly recruited?” Larry elaborates.

“Not entirely: Virtuous wanted to create an army for the war as soon as possible. Sometimes it’ll lead him and his men to randomly slap recruits on someone without their consent. Other times they would ask others if they wanted to join. I was one of those Wishiwashis they asked to join the war.”

“I see. It doesn’t re-really answer why you took the offer, though.”

Aquatus looks up. “I joined so that I could take care of my family.” She waves her fin around. “Virtuous gives away shells to those that participated in the war. Shells that are valuable enough to be used for trades and such.”

“Huh...Where did he get those shells fro—”

“I have no clue where he got them from, either,” Aquatus says before shrugging. “That’s a mystery to all of us Wishiwashis, honestly. Although, I’d imagine he likely got them from his trainer.”

“I see...I didn’t see him hand out any, though.”

“Probably because you’ve made him mad for questioning his war decisions.”

“R-REALLY!?” Larry yelps.

Aquatus giggles, her fin on her maw. “Joking aside, he usually gives them away the next day. Keyword: Usually.” She huffs. “He can sometimes forget to do that.” She glares off to the side, folding her fins. “Some king he is.”

“Oh. That sounds inconvenient...Al-Also, hey! Don't joke like that!” The illusion Solo whimpers, lowering his head. “R-Really thought that I've offended our h-highness with an unorthodox question *THAT* badly.”

“Hehe.” Aquatus then stares out of the window again. “...You know, I've been thinking about meeting a Gyarados.”

“Wh-Why? Didn't y-you already meet one on the battlefield? Not to mention *m-multiple* of them?”

“Yes. But fighting them doesn't really represent what those species are.” She presses her fins against herself. “I wanted to know more about them than just the battles. See what they're like in conversations. What their interests are. And much more.” She sighs softly. “I feel like they're not as ruthless and vile as Virtuous makes them out to be.”

“B-But haven't you seen how they've attacked?” Larry gulps. “I-I mean, I can understand why Virtuous makes them out th-that way.”

Aquatus frowns at the illusion Wishiwashi. “Yes and that's because they were in the middle of fighting us. Do you genuinely expect them to look less ferocious during conflict?”

“I...” Larry stares off, his laughter raspy. “Fair enough.”

The lady sardine leans her head against the window, her fins clinging to the walls. “Honestly, I wish this war didn't exist because it prevented me from wanting to talk with those Gyarados. Even then, I'd probably be seen as some weirdo here. I wouldn't care though because I just... believe in forming a civil, calm discussion. Wanting to find some sort of common ground and understanding with the kind my species despise.” She shrugs. “Perhaps I may be weird for doing so, but it's better than holding onto irrational grievances and spite towards another kind, you know?”

Larry swims beside her, gazing at the yellow lights dimming throughout the palace's corals. “I suppose so, yeah.”

Silence.

The two continue their gaze at the dimly lit outside, maws shut. Soon, Aquatus eyes Larry.

“By the way, why are you in your Solo form now?”

“U-Uh...” *Shoot! Didn't realize I was even in that form! No wonder why I was seeing Aquatus at the same level as me!* “Um, I-I feel like the Gyarados won't intervene after really thinking about it.”

Aquatus quirks her brow. "But you were so insistent on them infiltrating the pala—"

"I-I was being super paranoid earlier. Unreasonably so," Ramon mentions quickly. "A-Apologies for the interruption, by the way."

Aquatus squints briefly before stretching her fins out, yawning. "Well anyways, I'll go back to sleep. Have a good night's rest." She swims to the center of her room.

"You too, Aquatus." Ramon follows, the two laying on the ground and closing their eyes afterwards.

. . .

"Rock!" Justin shouts.

"Paper!" Courtney exclaims.

"Uh, scissors???" Roan tilts his head.

And Lycus ends it all with the word: "Shoot!"

The boy, weasel, dragon, rabbit, and avian all lower their retrospective hands and paws, all except Courtney spreading their fingers: Justin expands two of his fingers, aiming it towards the middle of the living room as Sylock does the same thing. Roan and Lycus' hand and paw has two fingers out, aiming towards the middle along with Courtney's fur-covered hand, shielding her fingers.

Justin smacks his lips. "Shit, lost again!" Justin squints at the Lopunny. "Yo, you always choose rock!"

"Or at least we think she always chooses rock. Can't tell with her fingers hiding in those furs," Lycus mentions, shrugging while snickering.

Courtney presses her hand on her lips, grinning with deviants. "I can't help it: My furs are naturally bushy that way."

Sylock crosses his fingers together, forming an 'X' symbol before shaking his head. "*X for doubt*," he signs, smirking.

Roan nudges his head. "Wait, is this not rock?" He quirks his brow.

"Nah, fam: That's scissors." Justin's hands lay behind his head. "So you've actually never played rock-paper-scissors before? Like *ever*?"

Roan shakes his head. "Simon and I mainly hitchhike a lot and exercise. Something we usually do for fun."

"For fun'?" Justin folds his arms, shaking his head. "Damn. None of y'all thought of doing some basic fun like this? Bet you've never heard of hide n seek, too."

"Hide n what now?" Roan gives the boy the look of bewilderment.

"Exactly."

"Now now, we can always teach him that if any of us were to play hide n seek," Lycus mentions.

"True. Let's get back to our game." The five get in the middle again, raising their arms up and down in repetition. "Rock!"

"Paper!" Lycus shouts.

"Scissors!" Courtney nearly finishes.

"Uh, shoot?" Roan concludes, his tone perplexed. Everyone stops their hands in place, all except for Courtney spreading them, pointing towards the middle. Justin shoots his gaze at the Lopunny's hand, seeing her fingers not being visible.

"HAH, YOU DID ROCK AGAIN!" Justin shouts, slamming his fist down. "I—erm, we won this time!"

Courtney gazes back, her eyes half-closed while she smirks. "Look again."

"Huh?" Justin takes another glance at the rabbit's fur-covered hand, two brown fingers peeping their way out. "Man what the!?" The boy strokes his head while Courtney bursts into laughter, Sylock glaring at her with a smile.

"I love pulling this trick off soooooo much!"

"Dawg, that is so bull." Justin pouts, sitting down and folding his arms. "I ain't counting that. How are we supposed to know you showed scissors and not rock!? YOUR FUR IS HIDING YOUR FINGERS!" Courtney snickers more at the teen's rants. "Hell, I wouldn't be surprised if you were holding scissors in the previous round."

"Want me to tell ya a secret?" Courtney hovers her hand over her lips, leaning forward. "*I was.*" She grins.

"BRO!"

Sylock snorts, shaking his head. *"I knew that was the case."*

Justin eyes the Blaziken. "I don't know what you're saying, but your movement is telling me you knew about her doing this."

"And ye're right!" Courtney winks, lifting her arm up. "I like tricking him and the others into thinking my hand is rock cuz of my fur. Guilty as charged!" She snickers before sticking her tongue out playfully, leading Justin to lie on the ground with his hands against his head.

"I will never recover from this, man."

Lycus snorts before going into an all out laughter, covering his stomach. "Wow. She really messed with you badly, my guy."

Sylock shrugs, closing his eyes while smirking. *He'll get used to it.*

Roan stands there dumbfounded, slowly eyeing at his hand and poking it. He blinks rapid fire, raising his brow. "Hmm...So if showing two fingers is scissors, then...showing all of them is rock?" Roan lifts his finger. "Actually we all should win since we showed rock."

Justin turns his head at a gradual pace, squinting at Roan. "Fam: We all have paper, not rock. She has scissors, and scissors are effective against paper. That's why I'm freaking out about losing."

"Oh." Roan laughs in a raspy manner, stroking the back of his head. "Perhaps I'll understand how this game works as time passes by."

"Bro, it's really not that hard to understand." Justin strikes his head towards the Lopunny, frowning. "What is hard to understand is this Lopunny's ball furs! Man they're so puffy that they may as well become one with the clouds."

"Excuse you?" both Courtney and Roan say, the two ending up laughing afterwards.

"Yeah. In fact, I'd call those furs: Cloud Balls! A new addition to Wrists Incorporated!" Justin grins, his hands by his hips.

"What *the* hell?" Lycus and Sylock say, the latter signing in his case while jolting his brow. Courtney and Roan snort before falling flat on the ground, holding their stomach from all that laughter.

"I can't even. Wow." Courtney giggles.

Justin closes his eyes. "You're welcome to my education on Cloud Balls."

"I would like for you to never say that again, kid." Lycus' paw nudges his head, shaking. "That was terrible."

"That was GLORIOUS!" Roan counters, snickering while forming tears in his eyes. "I haven't laughed this hard since the time Simon told me about how *eggcited* he was to climb another mountain!"

That just tells me all I need to know about your sense of humor, Roan, Sylock thinks, sighing and shaking his head.

Justin bows his head. "Glad I could make y'all two's day better."

"No kiddin'," Courtney agrees, her laughter subsiding.

Justin stretches his arms out, standing. "I'll go see what the other three are doing."

"Alright. I'll play some more rock-paper-scissors, then."

"Same here," Roan follows. Sylock just shrugs and nods with the others.

"I might as well come along. Don't feel like playing more of this game," Lycus says.

"Aight."

The two walk towards the right, passing by the fireplace and being near the windows. Sitting by them are Ada, Coleo, and Mesmeren: Ada resting her elbows on the left window's edge, Coleo sitting on top of her head, and Mesmeren standing beside her. All of them gaze out of the window, at the void blues, at the...melancholic sky.

Ada sighs, staring at the raindrops hitting the grass. The droplets have lessened its aggression from earlier, becoming more calm and serene. The girl taps her cheeks. "I hope he's okay..."

Mesmeren gazes at her for a brief moment before nodding. "S-Same..." She presses her fingers together, wiggling in place.

"I hope he's alright too, fam," Justin says, capturing the three's attention. The boy slips his hands in his pockets, looking at the bleak sky. "The fact he hasn't come back yet has...gotten me worried for him, honestly."

Ada frowns. "I wonder why," she responds with resentment in her tone.

Justin looks back at her, raising his brow. He tries to say something before Coleo interjects, "I am sorry for involving ye all into this mess. It wasn't me intention..."

"Same here," Lycus follows, lifting his paw. "I've never intended for *anyone* to get in this crap. I apologize for this, too."

Ada puts her hand against her head, shaking. "No need to apologize for something out of your control. Although it's just..." She sighs heavily. "I...I still believe this might be a bad idea. This whole lying ordeal..."

"Hey man, give him some time to make this work." Justin lays a hand onto Ada's shoulder, smiling. "I know I'm worried about him not returning back, but there's a part of me that thinks he knows what he's doing. He'll be fine regardless of our worries, I believe."

Ada smacks the boy's hand away, clenching her fists. "You have every right to be worried because YOU'RE the one who insists on having him go through this deceiving train!" She grits her teeth, her fists trembling as Courtney and the others look at her. "If it weren't for the lies, Ramon would've come back by now. It makes me believe he probably got exposed and captured!" She stomps her foot, glaring directly into the boy's brown eyes. "This is *exactly* why I believe lying is wrong!"

Justin glares back. "Ah for crying out loud, fam! First off, it was Roan's idea to have Ramon be disguised as one of them, not me!" he snaps back, clenching his fists while Roan looks off in melancholy. "And secondly—" he stomps on the ground like an earthquake, pointing at the girl. "Don't you *dare* act like you're completely lying free when *YOU* lied to Isaac about not staying focused during that Gothitelle fight!"

"I..." Ada's fury collapses, fleeing as the look of shame takes her over.

"Who's Isaac?" Lycus asks. Justin slightly turns.

"A cop Ada and I met four days ago. He helped us out on solving Majestic City's crime issues."

"I see."

Ada strokes the side of her arm. "I mean...i-it wasn't entirely a lie."

Justin quirks his brow before folding his arms. "Are you kidding me, fam? Are you seriously trynna lie about your *lie*!?" Frowns. "NOW that's worse than what Ramon is doing. At least he's doing it to help resolve The Aquatic War. What you did, Ada, was to cover your silly harmless lie with an actual harmful lie. I SAW you staying focused during that fight! Don't you dare spit in my face telling me that you weren't!"

"W-Well..." Ada becomes lost of words. The girl, raised by her honorary father, is stumbled in a corner of guilt.

Justin slams his fist against the palm of his hand, leading the girl to flinch. "Face it, fam: Lying isn't entirely bad. It really depends on the situation. And what you did there was one that wasn't okay!"

"Hey, that's enough," Coleo says, raising his setae up. "Let us not get worked up over this." He looks down at Ada. "I know how ye feel about lyin', but trust ye matey on doin' this for an end to this war. For what he is doin' is not an act of malice, arrrgh."

"..." Ada simply turns towards the window, gazing. "I hope so..." She sighs, closing her eyes. "I hope he's...okay."

"Fam..." Justin lays a hand onto Ada's shoulder. "We *all* hope that he's okay." Ada slightly gazes at the teen, her eyes drooping into the blues itself. Then she turns back to the sky, remaining silent.

Soon the rest of the group looks outside, all staring at the raining void. Not a single full moon is there, nor the stars themselves. They all stare despite the lack of light.

Continue staring on...into hope.