

Adtraic Verity: Journey For The Truth - Chapter 5

After the bright flash, the darkness around his vision propelled away like an expanding balloon, revealing a storm of bubbles rising up to a rippling watery ceiling.

Schools of fish swam around walls of coral and beams of sunlight pierced through the ceiling of blue, barely skimming over his pale face. Threads of his white hair flew back and forth like the sea kelp on the sea bed beneath him. His hearing muted. His lips closed. He hadn't known where he was, and barely could he recall what happened beforehand.

Saltwater stung his eyes.

Clusters of bubbles continued to slip out his mouth.

With just five seconds, Asahi realized that he was underwater. His mind grew numb from the surge of water bursting into his body; the seconds of the clock ticked as the light above him grew denser and denser.

It felt to Asahi that all of his strength had dissipated. And yet, after two minutes, he didn't drown yet.

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He couldn't hear anything. His legs were stiff, and his arms were... barely moving. The silence of the underwater threatened him, and yet... he still felt calm.

(Is this my world?) Asahi thought. (No... it can't be. Why am I underwater? Where is Aletha?)

Aletha. That name— that realization, made Asahi panic. He kicked his legs and flailed his arms, floating above the sea bed and searching for Aletha.

Just before he lost hope, Asahi found a girl with long white hair, slumped and floating above the roof of a ruined building. He cut through the vines and swam upward, dodging vicious sea creatures before finally grabbing the girl.

Five minutes have passed.

Not a bubble was seen.

Asahi realized he had the ability to breathe underwater. If he obtained this power, so should his sister. With all the energy he had left, he carried Aletha up to the surface.

The weight of the lady constantly dragged Asahi down; yet he fought the force with all his determination and kicked his legs as strongly as he could.

As his windpipe moved, Asahi felt a current of cold electricity pass through the air. His ears unclogged. The sounds of the waves, the droplets, the sea creatures— he could hear again.

The waves were merely sleeping, sluggish and slumbering in their liquid robes. Asahi took a deep exhale and clutched Aletha tightly, keeping him and her afloat. He rubbed Aletha's cheek and saw the tattoo glimmer bright from faint rays. A relieved smile cracked up from his worried frown.

"Thank goodness you're safe." He whispered as he carefully swam forward. "Now, where did that thing take us?"

The dark blue of night gradually faded away to a bright amber color. Shadows of the great puffy clouds hovered over many patches of the water, unveiling the morning light like a robe. He realized that it was just seconds before morning.

Asahi turned to the horizon and saw a glistening orange ball of fire rise up from a wall of clouds. The warmth of its luxuriant golden rays shone across the expanse of the sea, then to their faces.

"Is this truly... the beginning?"

As he whispered that, suddenly, a huge wall of water approached them. It was a colossal wave tinted with crystal cold blue, bubbling up with salt. His heart race, his palms numbed.

Before Asahi could even see the tiny shoreline south of him, Aletha and Asahi's bodies were swept away to the shore with the wave, like ragdolls being juggled.

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Asahi and Aletha dribbled up to the sandy shoreline; waves shuddered and drizzled their sea spray onto both of them, whisking across the white sand before drawing out.

His ears twitched to the sound of waves crashing and sweeping along a shoreline, the birds chirping, and the sounds of trees waving back and forth.

Asahi wriggled his toes and fingers, feeling the cool air brush against his face and the grainy, golden pebbles tickling his long white hair and sliding in-between his toes.

Suddenly, he felt several liters of water rushing up his throat and bursting up his mouth. His eyes swiftly opened to the blinding morning light.

(I...)

Asahi hurriedly lunged his body down to the ground, planted his two hands on the sand, and roughly coughed, gushing amounts of thick salt water out his mouth.

He patted his chest and collapsed on the sand with pure exhaustion, staring at the blue sky above him.

“I can’t believe it.”

Though confused about how he got from underwater toward the dry, moist coastline, he spread his arms, relieved at feeling solid land.

“I... made it.”

cough

Asahi heard a loud cough sounding toward the right of him.

He hurriedly turned his head and felt his heart burst with a sense of relief. After a quick search, he found a young girl with long white hair, crystal gray eyes, and dark attire coughing up water.

Droplets slid down his pale amused face; he quickly sprinted to the girl and wrapped his arms around her, embracing his sister with absolute disbelief. He whispered to her with a trembling tone.

“Sis... y-you’re alive,” A cold tear slipped down his face. “I-I... thought I lost you.”

“E...Eh...?”

Aletha’s gray eyes broadened in shock. She had no clue what her brother was talking about; All she remembered was that vast white void and the petals. She never remembered being underwater and the monster.

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The waves sashed near them. Aletha took a deep breath of relief, coughing up the last bits of water in her mouth. She analyzed her surroundings, seeing a lush forest behind her and more extending land to her left.

“Brother, what happened? I’m confused.”

Asahi turned toward the forest and nervously chuckled, remembering everything that happened at that devastating awakening under the sea. He made a half shrug and scratched the grainy sand off the back of his head.

“We were underwater....”

He facepalmed, struggling to recollect any more information. He remembered swimming and pulling Aletha up toward the surface while nearly drowning.

“... and that’s all I can remember.”

Aletha expressed with a surprised look in her bulging gray eyes.

“Really...?”

“Yeah... unfortunately. I don’t know how we got here.”

The conversation paused.

“Could we just have been washed up?”

“Maybe...”

Another tame silence emerged from the two.

Asahi and Aletha couldn’t think of what to do next after that event.

They never had a sole objective when they returned to their world; they believed it was still in shambles.

And to their surprise, the world could not have looked any cleaner and brighter than they remembered.

The siblings pondered as they watched the frothy waves crash against the sandy shore.

“Is this truly our world? What... happened...?”

Aletha swiftly shook her head and turned toward the wall of trees surrounding them. Lush green vibrancy, hills, and bushes with birds and another wildlife bouncing.

She grew impatient, crossed her arms, and yelled as she stomped her feet.

“Come on. I bet there’s more land ahead of us.” She continued as she sprinted along the stream of rocks and seashells. “Let’s go! We don’t have all day.”

Asahi sighed deeply, agreeing.

“I guess you’re right...”

“ALRIGHT!”

Before he could finish his sentence, Asahi watched Aletha sprinting and running up the shore to the forest without a care in the world. He shrugged and sighed, then followed his sister into the woods.

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When they ran through the bushes, a gust of wind entered their bodies, their vision clearing up to a beautiful sight.

“Woah!”

Golden fingers of sunlight lit up their eyes, with the dawn chorus of melodic birdsong drifting in and the fresh breeze carrying the floral scents.

Asahi and Aletha’s eyes darted to the horizon seeing a large fleet of bright swollen clouds drifting over the azure sea.

The view looked was a vast, nearly treeless grassy plain; with rolling hills, large patches of beautiful flora, and clear lakes. Aletha gasped, stunned by the beauty in front of her.

“Wow!”

Asahi nodded silently, and a radiant smile emerged on his fair face. He pointed out and hollered to Aletha.

“Hey, sis! Look over there!”

They turned their heads to their right and saw a tall green mountain piercing through the clouds. It stood boldly behind the towering and small grassy hills and valleys. A castle stood at the top, barely visible from their distance.

“I can’t believe it. I thought our world was in ashes. First thing I remembered was being a different world, then a void, and now we are teleported here? Strange.”

Asahi closed his eyes, sighing with a breath of remorse.

“Me too. But I guess our world... has changed? This place looks nothing like what it was before.”

Aletha shook her thoughts aside and screamed with a frantic voice.

“Nevermind. I like this more! Look at it, brother. Our world looks beautiful now! What even happened?!”

Asahi’s heart leaped up in shock. He covered his ears and yelled angrily.

“Ah, I can barely hear myself! Do you WANT to break your voice? Quiet down.”

Aletha bent down and apologized while twiddling her thumbs.

“Sorry, bro. It just... looks so beautiful. I can’t stop looking at it. It’s like a painting.”

Asahi released a sigh of contentment and accepted his sister’s apology. He replied to Aletha in his modulated and silvery voice.

."It's okay, I understand. Anyways, stop getting distracted from the view and focus. If we want to get anywhere, we must find people first."

Aletha pressed her hands to her cheeks and replied softly.

"Okay."

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Asahi scratched his head, turning from one unfamiliar horizon to the other, expressing with a worried face.

"Okay, sis. I'm genuinely lost. I didn't think we would get this far. What should we do next? Where should we go? We can't stand here and do nothing..."

The siblings' stomachs growled.

They knew that haven't eaten anything in days.

In desperation, they both analyzed their surroundings to find anything that sparked their interest.

Despite Asahi's failure to find any buildings, Aletha, on the other hand, saw something.

"Huh?"

Far in the distance, behind a small mountain, stood tall buildings, walls, and a castle. Aletha squinted and could hardly determine if it was just a mirage or a town. She couldn't help but feel excited, and swiftly she jumped up and exclaimed with an eager voice.

"Bro, I found something!"

"Where?" Asahi murmured meagerly.

Aletha pushed Asahi forward, slapped his face, pointed, and yelled at him with an enthusiastic tone.

"Right over there! I think it looks like the walls of a city. Maybe there's food in there?"

Asahi neglectfully shook his head.

“Are you sure? Also, why did you slap my face?”

Aletha growled.

“UGH!”

She stomped her feet frustratingly toward him and forced her brother’s head forward. Asahi gasped.

“OH!”

There were windmills, paved cobblestone roads, tall buildings, a castle on a mountain, and archery towers. Asahi concluded that it was a city, a teeming place for opportunity, a place to wander and socialize.

Regardless of what they saw, Asahi turned to his shiny brown boots and realized.

“How are we going to get there?”