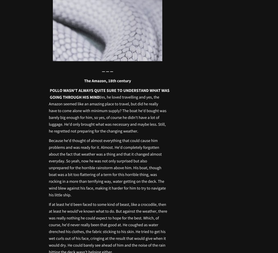

x - Toxic by Coral Snake (Feat. Druig)

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The Amazon, 18th century

POLLO WASN'T ALWAYS QUITE SURE TO UNDERSTAND WHAT WAS GOING THROUGH HIS MIND. Yes, he loved travelling and yes, the Amazon seemed like an amazing place to travel, but did he really have to come alone with minimum supply? The boat he'd bought was barely big enough for him, so yes, of course he didn't have a lot of luggage. He'd only brought what was necessary and maybe less. Still, he regretted not preparing for the changing weather.

Because he'd thought of almost everything that could cause him problems and was ready for it. Almost. He'd completely forgotten about the fact that weather was a thing and that it changed almost everyday. So yeah, now he was not only surprised but also unprepared for the horrible rainstorm above him. His boat, though boat was a bit too flattering of a term for this horrible thing, was rocking in a more than terrifying way, water getting on the deck. The wind blew against his face, making it harder for him to try to navigate his little ship.

If at least he'd been faced to some kind of beast, like a crocodile, then at least he would've known what to do. But against the weather, there was really nothing he could expect to hope for the best. Which, of course, he'd never really been that good at. He coughed as water drenched his clothes, the fabric sticking to his skin. He tried to get his wet curls out of his face, cringing at the result that would give when it would dry. He could barely see ahead of him and the noise of the rain hitting the deck wasn't helping either.

He cursed loudly as he finally managed to notice something in front of him, multiple sharp rocks in the water. He might not have been the best navigator, but had it been an usual day, he probably could've avoided them. However, while he did have enough strength, he didn't have enough talent for this. In a desperate attempt to save the boat, he tried to steer towards land, so he could spend the night there and wait out the storm. That would've been too easy. The world hated him and didn't want him to have anything he wanted.

All he'd managed to do was direct his boat towards one of the biggest rocks. He let out a yelp as he heard the rock scratching against the wood. Luckily for him, the wind had pushed towards the land, so he managed to crash his ship next to the shore. Or rather, onto the shore. He heard it crack beneath him as he held on to it as well as he could, knowing that if he drowned, Sprite would make fun of him at his funeral and that was really the worst thing he could imagine. That and the fact that he would die, obviously.

He took his satchel before jumping off the boat, slipping on some mud but managing to catch himself before falling and risking to hit his head. He sighed as he noticed the damage done to his boat, but he was slightly relieved to notice it was nothing he couldn't fix. Nonetheless, he knew that he couldn't stay on the shore for the night. He didn't want to risk a large wave to take him to the depths of the river while he slept. For the night, he would have to venture into the forest and maybe try to find a nice little cave to sleep in.

He patted his boat before walking away, hoping he wouldn't lose his way but also knowing that if he did, he had all the time in the world to find his way back. Still, he wasn't sure he would have enough food for more than one or two days, so he would have to try to remember the way. In the worst of cases, he could always eat a crocodile. He really wanted to fight a crocodile, just because he'd heard some human say that it was impossible and he loved proving people wrong.

Even though he was hiding under trees, the rain still managed to find a way to pass through. He'd dried to draw his clothes and himself by changing his temperature, but he'd quickly realized that it took too much energy from him when only two seconds later he would be soaking wet again. As he'd fought numerous monsters over his horribly long life, one of them being how overly involved in his love life his best friend seemed to be, the rain was nothing he couldn't handle, nevertheless it was still rather annoying. He held his satchel against his body, trying to protect it from the rain, knowing it contained both his food and journal.

He'd started writing journals a rather long time ago, not long after he'd started forgetting thoughts he had only seconds before. He simply loved travelling so much and didn't want to forget any part of his adventures, which is why he started writing down everything. In the last two centuries, he hadn't forgotten anything quite as worrying as half a day or hours of thoughts he had moments ago, for which he was glad, however that didn't stop him from putting on paper his travels. That was mostly so that he would not go twice to the same place before he'd finished exploring every corner of the world. The only places he'd gone back to, were those he'd barely had time to discover when he'd gone there with the other Eternals.

The Eternals. They'd listened to his words and hadn't showed their faces near him in the last two centuries. He was never one to hold grudges so, to be perfectly honest, had they did in fact tried to approach him, he would most likely have apologized and forgiven them. The one he really owed apologizes to was Makkari. He'd made a Druig of himself by not even glancing at her as he left after spitting horrors at everybody's faces. Actually, he might own apologizes to everybody but Ikaris, still, he felt more guilty when thinking of Makkari. Even so, he was glad to get some alone time. Making his own choices really helped him clear his mind. It didn't stop him from missing his family or having particularly bad moments, but he tried to ignore those. He might've hated how shitty they made him feel, yet he knew that he couldn't stop them, so he just did his best to live through them. He wasn't quite sure why he wasn't forgetting all those horrible moments anymore and he could have cared less. At least, now he knew that he wasn't imagining it all.

He groaned as he pushed some branches out of his way, now regretting not bringing a machete with him, thinking that, as an Eternal, he didn't need to. Anyway, it probably would've rusted under the pouring rain, so he shouldn't even have been thinking about it. He needed to focus on finding a cave or something of the sort. While his mind seemed decided on confusing him, going from one thought to a second in a matter of seconds, he still tried to fight to stay focused on his objectif.

He was surprised by the sudden feeling of something pinching his ankle. Reacting quickly, a rope appeared in his hand and he used to strike down whatever had caused him the surprise. He'd first expected to be met with a rather pointy branch, however it's with the now dead and smoking corpse of a snake that he found himself. He gasped, quickly going to cradle it in his arms, immediately realizing that it was too late for the red and yellow reptile.

"Oh, I'm so sorry. I didn't mean to kill you, I swear. Wound you, maybe, but not kill you," he breathed out. "It's just... You bit me! What other reaction were you expecting? I really hope you didn't suffer... sorry again..."

He sighed loudly once again, placing the corpse of the snake in his satchel, hoping he might be able to do something with it, whether it was to eat the creature or to bury it. Even though it was dark, he easily managed to see the black, yellow and red coloration of the reptile. It might've tried to bit him, but it was still beautiful. He always had a soft spot for Earth's reptiles, as they were probably the closest thing they had to a dragon. He actually loved pretty much all animals. Expect for Druig.

Now, he wasn't lying when he said he wasn't one to hold grudges, he really wasn't! And had he been facing Druig at this exact moment, he wouldn't have asked for any explanation or wouldn't have yelled at him. Still, he always found himself gritting his teeth whenever he thought of his friend's departure. He was still bitter about the fact that he hadn't even tried to ask him to come with him. He'd played over and over again what had happened that night, hoping he would find a better outcome. A thousand times he'd managed to make Druig change his mind and stay with them, with him, another thousand times he never even thought of leaving and even more often the mind controller turned around before leaving, meeting Pollo's tearful gaze. Nevertheless, this wasn't what had happened and now nobody knew where Druig was.

If he said that he never hoped to meet with his former friend on one of his travel, he'd be lying. Actually, one of the reasons why he spent so much time at only one place wasn't just so he could discover every corner of it, but also because he always wished he would find Druig's hiding place. Or at least, that's what he'd wished for at first. He'd now given up, knowing that the only way to find Druig was for him to want to be found. It might've been better that way anyway. He wasn't sure what he would say to him if they were to come face to face. Would he scream at him to get out of his face or would he hug him as tight as he could so that he would never leave him alone again? Maybe he'd cry and maybe he'd laugh. But all he really knew was that he knew nothing. Not how he would react, not where Druig was and not whether or not he wanted to see him again one day.

He let a rope of light intertwine itself to his arm, approaching it to his ankle so that he could see to his injury. On his ankle were two ridiculously small holes, not even bleeding. It wasn't swallowed, it hadn't changed colour and he could barely feel any pain. He tried touching it, not really feeling any changes. Glad to not have any major injury, he placed his sock above the little holes, making sure they wouldn't get infected nonetheless.

As he did so, he heard a rustling to his right. Frowning, he tensed up, getting ready for a fight but not wanting to act quite as rashly as before. He didn't want to kill some innocent bird the way he'd slaughtered a snake for a harmless bite. He narrowed his eyes at the spot from which the sound had come from. While seeing in the dark wasn't one of his few talents, the light that came from his rope was still enough to let him notice a shadow not so far from him. Carefully, he approached it, half hoping it might be some kind of bear who would lead him to its cave.

However it was not the case. The creature in front of him was small and in every possible way, harmless. It might have been half his size, if not less, with big brown eyes and the look of a kitten lost in the woods. But there was no kitten. It was a human. One of the little ones. A... kid. But what would a kid be doing here, alone, in the middle of the Amazon? It, or rather he, seemed just as surprised to meet with Pollo, his eyes going from the light around his arm to his face.

" You're like him", he exclaimed, pointing his finger towards him.

It took Pollo a good three seconds before he realized the small boy was speaking Spanish. Luckily for both of them, he'd spent a few decades mastering multiple languages, to the point where he barely noticed anymore if humans didn't speak the same language as him. However, there might have still been a few problems of comprehension on his part, because he wasn't quite sure what the boy had tried to say with that.

" Sure, whatever", he shrugged off. " What are you doing here alone, kid?"

" I wanted to play in the rain. What are you doing here?" He frowned, poking Pollo's arm.

He let out a small chuckle at the mere thought of his adventures. " That's kind of a long story, kid, but if I had to resume it... I crashed my boat, got bit by a snake I then accidentally killed and now I'm looking for a cave to sleep in".

" My name is Marco, not kid!" He correct him. " And what kind of snake bit you?"

" Your name is Marco? My name is Marco too! At least, it is sometimes", he ranted before deciding to answer the little boy's question. " And I think it was harmless, don't worry. But if you really want to see it..."

He took the snake's corpse out of his satchel, which made the child screech and take a step back. Pollo gave him a strange look as he looked at the reptile in his hand.

" Oh, don't worry, I killed it", he tried to reassure the child.

" It bit you?" The human asked again, as though it was particularly hard to believe.

" Yeah", he replied. " But it doesn't seem too bad".

" That's a coral snake!" He cried out. " Its venom is deadly!"

" Oh," simply let out the Eternal, not quite sure what to do with the information. " Uh... hypothetically speaking, let's say I was an immortal being from outer space, would it still be deadly to me? Not that it's the case, obviously, it's just, y'know, for science or whatever."

" We have to get you to my village! If we get there in time, we might be able to save you with the antipoison!" He took Pollo's hand, pulling him in the direction of his village before he froze, looking at the older man hesitantly. " My village... He doesn't want outsiders there. He says they might put us in danger. But... you won't hurt us, right?"

" Of course not, kid", he spoke, ruffling the little one's hair. " That wouldn't bring me anything. As soon as the storm is over, I'm fixing my ship and I'll continue my travels."

The child beamed brightly, in a way that was so horribly similar to Makkari's own smile. " Then I guess we'll just have to hide you from him! Come on, we have to go now before you die!"

Yeah, dying really wouldn't help him. He still had a lot to see and to do. And, like said before, he was pretty sure that, if Sprite wasn't the one to make fun of him, Ikaris would be. Oh, look at Pollo, died from being bitten by a snake. He fought Deviants for centuries but he couldn't escape from a snake. Pollo? Oh yeah, he's that Eternal who died poisoned because he wasn't looking where he was going. He wondered if the Eternals would actually come to his funeral. Last time he'd seen them, he'd shouted at them and asked them to leave him alone. They might never even know that he was dead.

And what about his family? If he died before he could ever come back to Olympia, they might not even get to bury his body. Was his brother still a kid, like Marco? Would he cry? Did he even remember that he wasn't an only child? Did their parents remember their older son, gone to protect the universe from monsters? He couldn't really speak, himself barely remembered them. It was hypocritical on his part to want them to remember a son that couldn't remember them.

The village seemed to almost come out of nowhere. Had he not been following Marco, he probably never would've found it, even if he'd stayed here for the next decades to come. He couldn't find the reason why a village would be so well hidden, but at the moment it was really the least of his worries. As soon as they entered, a truly terrifying woman walked towards them.

" Marco! Where have you been? I was looking everywhere for you!" Shot the woman whom Pollo assumed was Marco's mother.

" It doesn't matter, mamá", he quickly replied, tugging Pollo so he would be next to him. " I met another Marco and we need to help him! He's going to die!"

While not long ago the woman had been utterly terrifying, even making Pollo want to hide, she quickly lost all her colours, a look of horror on her face as she saw the man standing next to her child.

" Marco, no!" This time, she was whispering, as though the presence of the Eternal was the worst thing that could ever happen to them. " You know he doesn't want outsiders here. You need to make him leave. Now!"

" But mamá! A coral snake bit him!"

At those words, she looked at the man hesitantly. He tried giving her a reassuring smile, however the strangest thing seemed to happen. Right in front of him, a second woman appeared, the perfect reflection of Marco's mother.

" Maria," a cold yet calm voice spoke up, making Pollo snap his head towards it. " Did you finally find Marco?"

She didn't answer, shooting a scared look towards Pollo before going back to looking at the man that had just arrived. He had dead blue eyes, no spark of joy in them, and dark hair falling perfectly on his face, even when it was raining. Next to him stood his twin, completely alike to the other. Man, those two look a lot like Druig.

As soon as he thought this, the two strangers' eyes turned yellow as they went to look at him in perfect synchronization. They gaped at him, a look of shock plastered on their face as they started mouthing something that might have been his name. Still, he didn't manage to hear it or understand why he was now seeing double because the ground was now awfully close to him. He hadn't even hit it yet that the world around him had turned completely black.

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