

FISH SCALES

CHAPTER 12



Chapter 12: Fix Everything

Growing up on Marshgreen Island, Feather and Itsuki had always been as close to each other as brothers, even if they weren't directly related. When Feather one day decided that he wanted to leave the island and start fresh in the Mushroom Kingdom, Itsuki joined him. There, he met the secretive Professor Nuht T. by returning a valuable object he had dropped. Getting to know each other more, Itsuki shared his story with the professor, who, in turn, gifted him modifications of his gloves which allowed Itsuki to have an artificial version of the same transformative power his brother had.

Three and a half years had passed since that day. Although Professor Nuht T. seemed shady at first, Itsuki grew to realize that he could trust him, and likewise, the professor saw his potential as an assistant. When Itsuki didn't have anywhere else to go and didn't have enough of a grip on how the Mushroom Kingdom's economy worked, Nuht T. allowed Itsuki to move into his lab and stay there, but under the oath that nobody else could know its location. Itsuki and the professor got along very well, and the small Yoshi had learned a lot about the technological advancements the professor was always working toward.

A ball hurtled toward Itsuki. He leaped out of its way, his face planting into the grass.

“HAH!” Feather shouted as he picked up another ball and chucked it at Itsuki.

Itsuki managed to roll out of its way, causing it to bounce off the ground and fly over him. “You thought!” he shouted while quickly jumping onto his feet. “But now, I have two of them, one for each of you!”

The three Yoshis, Itsuki, Feather, and Feather’s boyfriend, Sol, were all playing a sort of free-range dodgeball with each other in the open area in front of Feather and Sol’s home.

“Gehehehe,” Itsuki laughed while picking up the two dodgeballs that lay near him. He reared his arms back and ran toward the other two Yoshis. As he approached, he reared his arms back further, then chucked the balls toward Feather and Sol.

“Hup!” Feather bent his body to the side, narrowly dodging Itsuki’s throw.

Sol, on the other hand, caught the ball that was thrown at him. “You’re out,” he said to Itsuki with a teasing look on his face.

Feather immediately ran toward the ball that had flown past him, but before he even got close... WHACK! He was smacked on his back by another fast-moving ball. Feather slowed his movement and simply looked directly up at the sky, laughing.

The yellow Yoshi, Sol, smirked. “That’s game!”

“Wow, you’re pretty good at this!” exclaimed Itsuki in surprise.

Modestly, Sol shrugged. “I guess it comes with having to be as agile as I had to back then.”

Itsuki shook his head. "I still can't get over the fact that everything you two went through all happened before Feather even came back to the island. Like, I had no idea! None of us did!"

Trying to reaffirm him, Sol gave him a pat on the shoulder. "At least we made it out fine, maybe even better than before."

In their peripheral vision, the two of them could see an orange figure approaching. When they turned their heads, they saw Feather, holding the ball that he initially ran after before getting eliminated from the game. But, rather than looking like his usual Yoshi self, he was in the form of an orange-scaled, red-shelled Koopa Paratroopa, an anthropomorphic turtle-like species that also had wings that sprouted out through their shells. For some Paratroopas, the wings were artificial, only being attached to the shell from the surface of the shell's back. For others, the wings were a part of them, sticking out from their own backs and merely making it through the shell through holes in the shell's back.

Feather had a smug expression on his face and was looking at the ball while lightly tossing and catching it. "Anyone up for another game?" he asked as he looked at Sol with a grin and lightly flapped his wings.

Sol scoffed and swiped the ball from Feather's hands. "Only if you change back. Flying's not allowed!"

Feigning disappointment, Feather groaned and rolled his eyes. "Fiiiiine", he moaned while his head feathers and wings took on their usual glow. The blue light from them washed over his body like a wave of

water, morphing it back into the shape of a Yoshi with tail feathers instead of large wings.

He crossed his arms and turned away from the other two. "I think it's just time you two learn how to play with wings of your own, instead. It's not like I'm THAT good at flying!"

Itsuki rolled his own eyes and shook his head. "Whateveeeeeer, let's just get on with it."

Feather walked toward the most open area and placed his dodgeball down while Sol went to grab the other.

While waiting for the two to set the game back up, Itsuki looked into the sky. His mind began to wander as he looked at the position of the sun in the sky and saw that it was mid-day. Although staying with Professor Nuht T. was nice, lately Itsuki had been starting to feel burnt out. He was always gathering these supplies, having to hold this thing in place, keeping a close eye on that thing while the professor took care of this thing and that. The Yoshi barely felt like he had time to just relax and have fun like this.

Although he had mostly moved on, Itsuki was still plagued by the occasional thought about how he felt regarding his brother fleeing from Marshgreen Village and barely coming back. He hardly got to grow up with him after the Piranha Plant attack, and yet... he sort of got that back since moving to the Mushroom Kingdom, right?

He sighed. "*Not really...*" Itsuki somberly thought to himself. After all, he was still living a bit far from where Feather lived. He still had to help a more

authoritative figure with frequent tasks. He still had to intentionally go out of his way to hang out with his brother again. And, as great as the Mushroom Kingdom was, he didn't really know anybody, and he was far from his home and the rest of his friends and family. All he wanted was a more carefree life where he didn't feel so alone. He even... almost had that, somewhat, with Masako.

The statement Itsuki had made to the professor regarding the Piranha Plant attack continued to repeat itself in his mind.

"If... I could go back and change anything about it, I would."

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"If I could go back—"

The Yoshi was suddenly hit by a realization. *"The time machine!"* Professor Nuht T. had a time machine, and although neither of them had gone into that room in a long time, Itsuki never forgot about it. *"Maybe I can use the time machine to go back and fix everything!"* he thought to himself excitedly. But, was it a good idea? He barely knew anything about how the time machine actually worked. He shooed away the thought with a hand wave though. *"I'm sure I can figure it out."*

"Itsukiiii!" Feather shouted from the center of the field, where both of the dodgeballs were placed in front of him and Sol. "What are you doing?"

Itsuki turned to look at them.

"We're about to start the game!" Sol shouted, before looking at his boyfriend and shrugging.

“Oh! Alright! I’m coming!” Itsuki shouted in response. He ran toward the two of them, ready to go at it for another round, but with the thoughts of the time machine still on his mind.

Later that night, Itsuki returned to the lab in Dimble Wood. Being in a secluded area that already barely received any light, it was especially difficult to see around the entrance of the lab at night time. As he approached its door, Itsuki tripped over a tree root.

“Oof!” Itsuki fell onto the ground.

When he got up, he brushed himself off, then made his way up to the front entrance door. Itsuki gave it a knock. “Hello? Professor?”

There was no response.

He knocked again. “Professor Nutty, I’m back!”

...Still, no response.

“Hmm...” Itsuki closed his eyes for a second, then he smiled. If the professor wasn’t home, then that meant nobody could try to stop him. He opened his eyes and slowly felt around the right side of the door. His hand glided across three buttons, one shaped like a triangle, one shaped like a square, and one shaped like a circle. Having lived in Nuht T.’s lab for years, Itsuki knew the entrance code by heart.

The dinosaur pressed his gloved hand against the triangle-shaped button for three seconds, then he took his hand off the button and slammed it against the

circle-shaped button quickly. Just as quickly, the door to the professor's lab opened, and Itsuki entered.

As he expected, the lights were out. The darkness was so thick that it was completely impossible to see. Itsuki felt his hand around the inner wall on the left side of the entrance and flicked a switch. Suddenly, the lights came on. Cautiously, he looked around the lab to be certain that the professor wasn't home.

There was no sign of him at all. He wasn't at his computer, he wasn't at the table, he wasn't by the bookshelf. Professor Nuht T. was not home.

"I wonder where he could even be," Itsuki thought to himself as he approached the closed door in the back. Looking around one more time to make sure the professor wasn't watching him, Itsuki turned the knob on the back door and slowly opened it. The lights were out, but the professor didn't seem to be in the back room either.

Itsuki switched the lights on, and there it stood. The time machine still sat in the center of the room. It hadn't moved an inch since Itsuki last saw it. The Yoshi looked over to his right at one of the tables that had papers littered across its top.

Carefully, not wanting to mess anything up, he began to pick up the papers one by one and read through them. A few of the papers seemed to be mathematical equations, instructions, for how to precisely choose a point in time to travel to. The dinosaur gave each one a careful read.

Another paper was a map of the planet, with latitudinal and longitudinal coordinates. Itsuki's jaw

dropped while staring at the map. There were so many kingdoms, so many islands. The world was far larger than he had ever imagined it to be. Even the landmass that was labeled as the Mushroom Kingdom was only a very small fraction of the map he was staring at over his nose.

Itsuki looked closely at the map, searching for the undoubtedly small island somewhat near the Mushroom Kingdom that would represent Marshgreen Island. After hardly a moment, his eyes locked on to a peculiar shape. It was an island that had roughly the same shape as the one he had once recognized on a map of the island Chief kept in his house. Though, it was much smaller on this world map, of course. To make sure he wouldn't forget it, Itsuki folded the map up and stuck it halfway into his bandana from the top, keeping it held between the bandana and his neck.

The Yoshi continued to read through the papers. There were further instructions, this time about preparing the machine for time travel. All of the tubes that connected the time machine to the walls would have to be removed first. Furthermore, the gem, the machine's fuel source, would have to be placed into the bubble in the center console, and the bubble would have to be sealed shut.

"Ah... this is so much," Itsuki thought to himself. Although he did have a better understanding of the terminology the professor would often use in his notes, Itsuki still lacked the patience to read through pages upon pages of those notes.

He yawned, then turned around to look at the table on the other side of the room. The gem sat on that table, not close to any edges, so that it couldn't fall. Itsuki approached the table to grab the gem, but when he did, he noticed something else. The table looked off to him, and then he realized why. All of the papers that were previously on that table were gone. Had they been moved?

Itsuki looked below the table. The papers weren't there either. "Huh," he muttered to himself. Slowly, Itsuki picked up the gem. It had a faint blue glow, just as it did on the day he had returned it to the professor. He squinted his eyes at it, then looked over at the time machine. Once more, Itsuki took note of the faded brown cloth on the ground.

While staring at the cloth, an idea came to him! *"Feather can't know it's me trying to stop him from going into the jungle, so I'll have to conceal myself. I can wear the cloth as a cloak!"* the dinosaur thought excitedly. With the folded map sticking halfway out of his bandana, and the crystal gem in his hand, he walked over to the cloth and picked it up, wrapping it around his upper body like a cloak.

"Hmm..." he mumbled. "Doesn't quite fit perfectly." The cloth unfortunately didn't fully cover Itsuki. His large Yoshi nose still stuck out, making his face clearly visible, and the very tip of his tail also stuck out from under the cloak.

To conceal himself further, Itsuki pulled part of the cloak over his nose and held the cloth tightly together with his left hand. It worked much better in

keeping his identity concealed from the front, however pulling the cloak up did reveal more of his tail. To fix that, Itsuki let his tail droop downward, and the cloak naturally fell over it enough to keep it concealed.

“Phew...” he sighed. The Yoshi loosened up on his disguise a bit before walking around the time machine and pulling out each of the large tubes. Then, he entered the time machine and closed its door behind him.

Itsuki was amazed by what he saw. The design was far simpler than what he imagined it would be. There was a cushioned bench in the back of the time machine, as well as a driver’s seat fastened tightly to the floor in the front. Both the seat, as well as three spots on the bench had metal bars above them that could be pulled down to keep the driver and passengers in their seats. There was also a large, circular window on the side of the time machine parallel to the door. Even the door had a window, though it was much smaller.

The Yoshi sat down in the driver’s seat and looked at the center console in front of him. Even the controls looked simple. There were three small and simple screens: one with numbers representing the current spatial coordinates, one with a set of numbers representing the date, and one in the middle of the two that had information about the level of power the machine had and how much fuel was available... which, without the crystal placed in, was none. The machine was empty of fuel. There also seemed to be multiple other tabs, represented by icons in the background. But,

Itsuki didn't recognize the icons, so he decided to not worry about them.

On the console itself below the screens, there were number pads that corresponded to the space and time screens. In the center, there was a keyboard, as well as a touchpad below it. And above the keyboard was the bubble for the gem to be placed into.

Thinking about what he was about to do, going back in time to fix his and Feather's lives, Itsuki's tail wagged as he placed the gem inside the open bubble, then closed the dome over it. For good measure, he pressed both hands down against it to make sure that the dome clicked into place. The bubble lit up with the same light blue glow as the crystal, and when Itsuki looked up, he saw that the information on the screen had changed to show the fuel level gradually increasing. The dinosaur became even more excited, and his tail wagged at a rapid speed behind his back.

Suddenly, Itsuki stopped himself and held his hands in front of him, inhaling. Then, he exhaled, trying to calm himself down. "Alright," he said to himself, "I'll just go back to a few days before the Piranha Plant attack, warn him not to go into the jungle at all, and then everything..." he paused to inhale again. "Everything... will be fine. Hooo..." he exhaled.

He pulled the map out from his bandana and unfolded it, taking a close look at the coordinates around the beach-side of the island. Then, he looked at the left screen and memorized the current coordinates of the machine so that he could get back. After that, he used

the number pad to enter the numbers for Marshgreen Island on the screen.

“The Piranha Plant attack was... thirteen years ago, I think?” the Yoshi asked himself. “Sometime before the middle of autumn?” Itsuki propped the map against the top of the keyboard in the center, then used the number pad below the date screen to adjust the date back by 13 years and a few months. *“I... hope this is the right date. I guess there’s no harm in trying again if not, though,”* he thought with a slight feeling of concern.

After inputting the date, he looked back at the center screen and noticed a button had appeared to travel to the specified point in space and time. Itsuki gulped, then he moved the cursor toward the button using the touchpad. He inhaled one more time, beginning to feel nervous, and then he tapped on the touchpad to click the button.

Once he did, he noticed a bright light coming in through the windows and beginning to envelop the machine. There was a loud whirring sound all around him as the machine prepared to take off. The green dinosaur had to hide his face completely under the cloak and cover his eyes with his gloved hands because the light became so bright. But then, it faded. As he began to jostle around, Itsuki realized he didn’t have the bar placed over him, so he uncovered his eyes and pulled the bar down to make sure he stayed in his seat no matter what would happen next.

When he looked out the window, only one sound could escape his hanging mouth. “Woah...” What he saw more than amazed him. It gave him a feeling he

didn't know how to describe. The world outside the window was no longer a world he was familiar with. It was nothing but a large expanse of colors, predominantly blue, but with clouds and swirls of greens, purples, pinks, and even indigos. It was like a beautifully serene world of light, or rather, some sort of world of energy that emitted light. It was otherworldly, and unlike anything he had ever seen.

When Itsuki looked back at the screens, he saw his coordinates changing, and the date was rapidly rolling back. No longer quite afraid, Itsuki relaxed in his seat and looked out the window. He really was going back in time, he was finally getting a chance to prevent all of the misfortunes that happened to him and his family from happening. He could stop the attack, he could stop his father's tailbone from being permanently broken, he could stop Feather from leaving the island, and he could stop himself from leaving Masako behind. Everyone could finally be together, happily!

Itsuki gave the computer screens another look. *"I just... hope the professor won't be too mad when he finds out about this."*

END OF CHAPTER