

The tranquil coastline exudes a sense of peace and serenity. Waves lapped at the white sands, bringing and taking seashells from the shore. Crashing waves carried all sorts of oddities from the deep and deposited them on the sands. Mixed in with shells, the occasional relic or coin could be collected. Of course with the recent discovery of the depths, the beach was busier than normal. Several expeditions lingered on the beach. Awaiting the arrival of additional members or checking their gear before they set off.

North pawed at the water's surface, testing its temperature. The water was cold but quickly adjusted to a bearable temperature. Behind her stood a much larger dragon, observing her reactions to the water, before testing it himself. North looked on to her other companions, Peony and Monstera, who were going through the equipment bags.

"You better not have stuffed your cat in one of your bags." North barks at the two emperors.

"The celestial feline?" Peony asks. "She's at home?"

"I just saw you stuffing her into your bag." North snarls.

Monstera rolls her eyes at North.

The emperor grabs Persephone's bag and opens it.

"See, no cat in here-"

The fuzzy face of a celestial feline pops out of the bag.

Persephone quickly closes the flap of the bag and gives an embarrassed smile.

North shakes her head but drops the subject. The two scientists had hired these two mercenaries, Yggdrasil and North, to take them to the depths. Help provide protection while they gathered samples for research.

"The sun will not be up forever, if the equipment is sound we should head out now." North spoke, reaching for a bag.

"This one is yours." Peony presented North with an alternative bag. "That one is Yggdrasil's."

North handed the bag to Yggdrasil, who dipped his head in thank you. The dragons fastened their bags securely to their bodies.

"Reports say the water is safe to breathe in, like air." Monster spoke. "It should adjust to your body temperature as you submerge, but will be cold at first."

"They recommend putting your face in first and trying to suck a breath in." Peony began. "Instead of jumping in totally and getting panicked in the cold water."

North snorted and extended her vents with a powerful flare. The dragon was already acquainted with the cold dark seas of the ice fields. A tame beach with magical water would be no problem for her.

"Take these and affix the strings to your necks." North huffed. "Bottled fire, they will provide sight to us as we are down there."

As the dragons put the bottle necklaces on, they lit up. The mystical glass ignites and fuels the inner fire. North was the first one to venture into the water. She was curious about what lay beneath the surface. North, peony and Monstera watched with anticipation as she disappeared into the depths. Yggdrasil was the next, following after North. The water was cool and invigorating before magically adjusting to his temperature. Yggdrasil felt a surge of excitement as he joined North beneath the surface. He marveled at the play of light and shadow on the ocean floor. The vibrant colors of coral and the graceful dance of fish captivated his

attention. Without thinking, the dragon found themselves breathing in the water. The seawater entered his mouth, making him choke for a moment before he adapted to the magic, allowing him to breathe smoothly.

Eager to see what they would discover, Monstera and Peony followed close behind into the water. The water was cool and refreshing, embracing their bodies as they ventured further into the depths of the mysterious depths. The serpentine dragons found water movement to be similar to drifting in the breeze. They quickly adapted, slithering through the water after North and Yggdrasil. The two of them moved gracefully through the water, their movements fluid and effortless. North led the way, navigating through the underwater labyrinth with ease, while Yggdrasil followed closely behind, struggling to keep up with the aquatic dragon. Yggdrasil kept his senses keenly tuned to any potential threats.

The dark depths loomed below the group of four. They looked into the deep dark hole and felt a combination of excitement and nervousness. North began the dive, pushing herself forward through the water. The water was cold and dark. The bottled fire provided some light, but the darkness lingered. She used her diving experience to stay calm and focused as she went deeper into the unknown depths. As North descended, she saw ghostly shapes moving in the shadows, casting eerie shadows on the walls of the cave. Yggdrasil observed the approaching shadows, coming to a sudden stop, causing Monstera and Peony to do the same. Peony was confused, and looked around. Quickly she noticed a large shadow slither across the cave wall.

Her heart raced, but Monstera reminded them to stay composed and continue her exploration.

“We won’t be here for long.” Monstera speaks, as water swirls around her snout.

“The portal will take us away from here.”

Peony glanced nervously at Monstera before nodding in agreement. Hearing Monstera’s words behind him, Yggdrasil continued on. Following North, who had also halted to wait for the three others. She snorted in annoyance as the other three rejoined her. She turned and kept close to the others as she swam, slowing down to keep her in sights. The group moved forward cautiously, their eyes scanning the surroundings for any sign of danger. As they ventured deeper into the forest, the tension in the air was palpable. Each of them remained alert for the slightest sound or movement.

Finally, the blue glow of the portal pierced through the depths. As the vibrant hues cascaded across the cave, beckoning them to dive deeper. With a bit more swimming, the four approached the shimmering blue portal. North was the first to approach the portal, fearlessly swimming forward. As she reached out to touch the surface, a tingling sensation emanated from the portal, sending shivers down her spine. Despite the unsettling feeling, they couldn’t resist the urge to swim through and discover what lay beyond.

Yggdrasil watched as North’s tail vanished into the swirling blue portal. Yggdrasil, Monstera, and Peony shared a nervous look between each other. Yggdrasil turned, and pushed themselves through the portal. Monstera grips onto the dragon’s tail, and lets Yggdrasil pull them through. Not wanting to be left alone, Peony quickly follows after.