

Non-Canon / Abandoned

The voyage across the seas was uneventful. Many nights were spent cuddled up with the Celestial Feline. Winds provided a swift journey and the seas were calm this time of year. The passengers left the ship and found themselves in a small village on the coast of the gloom empire. Not far from the coast the swamps and wetlands began. Plans to set out the next day were made by the Aether Guard.

Persephone and Stera stood on the edge of the swamps with their celestial feline sitting between them. Looking out into the dark forests ahead. Another dragon approaches while they are distracted by their new surroundings.

“You two do not look ready for the journey ahead.” The dragon sneers.

Persephone and Stera are surprised and quickly spin around to greet the voice. They are greeted by a brown emperor adorned with the medals of a general.

“Have you two seen combat ever in your lives?” The emperor carries on.

“Ah!” Persephone bows. “No, we haven’t! Uhm....? General-”

“General Polliwog.” Polliwog snorts. “I am the one who told Ioulo about the cave, or should I say The Garden as they are calling it now. I know where it is, and I will be escorting you and the others to the garden.”

“General Polliwog, I am grateful for your assistance.” Stera bows to the general.

“That being said.” Polliwog continues. “The Gloom is full of many bandits. They like to set up camps in the murk as it is harder to stomp them out. We may face them on our way to the garden. You two are not soldiers, and potentially our most important cargo. I don’t like that setup. Both of you need to learn to defend yourself. It’s a miracle you weren’t lost in the Aemon attack.”

Stera opened her mouth to argue with the general but stopped. She remembered the Aemon charging after her and Persephone. How she was helpless as the creature breathed that corrupt ball of fire at her. She would be dead if it weren’t for a miracle. If she was dead, what would happen to Persephone? Persephone probably would have stayed back with Stera’s corpse and been killed as well.

“Thank you but-” Persephone was cut off.

“You’re right.” Stera cut in. “We should learn something to defend ourselves. It’s a miracle we escaped the Aemon alive.”

Persephone looked surprised and Polliwog nodded.

“The day is still young,” Polliwog spoke. “We set out tomorrow. Why don’t I see where you two are at before we start training? We should start with a spar. Who is first?”

“I will be first,” Stera spoke, stepping forward.

“I think we should fight together,” Persephone spoke. “Two dragons are better than one.”

Polliwog chuckles and nods. The three dragons give each other space as they prepare to spar.

Persephone pounces at Polliwog. Polliwog easily jumps back to dodge the blow. The older emperor slaps their paw on Persephone’s face. Spooked, Persephone jumps back. Stera lunges forward at Polliwog, trying to grab them. Polliwog moves its tail in the way so Stera grips it. Stera latches onto Polliwog’s tail and tries to bite at it. Polliwog whipped their tail around, sending Stera flying into a tree. Stera smashes into the tree and splashes into the swamp

below. Polliwog turns to Persephone. Persephone backs down immediately. Not knowing how to fight Polliwog other than getting close to her and swiping.

“Is that it?” Polliwog snorts.

Stera crawls out of the swamp and shakes the water out.

“You must have breath elements right?” Polliwog.

Stera and Persephone looked at Polliwog with blank expressions.

“Take a deep breath, and exhale out forcefully.” Polliwog sighed.

Stera breathes in and forcefully exhales like she was instructed. A ball of shadow is launched out of Stera’s mouth. Polliwog is caught by surprise and tries to dodge, and gets their fin clipped. A small tear is left on the fin where the beam touched.

“Good!” Polliwog applauds. “Come at me again! Don’t forget to use your breath abilities!”

Stera runs at Polliwog, then dodges to the side and fires another shadow ball to catch Polliwog off guard again. Polliwog slaps the ball from the air with its tail and it dissipates. Persephone breathes in and forcefully exhales, producing a glittering beam into the air. The beam is poorly aimed and does not land anywhere near Polliwog. It creates a shower of sparkles that distracts Stera. Seeing an opportunity, Polliwog blasts Stera with a hot blast of fire breath. The fireball singes Stera’s shoulder, and she yelps, falling onto her side.

“Stera!” Persephone gasps as she sees the fireball explode on her companion.

Persephone gasps, dashing over to Stera’s side. Quickly, the nurse assesses Stera and finds her unharmed. The fur around the blast is singed and smells awful. Stera gets back onto her feet and shakes the leftover soot off her body. Persephone winces as the smell of burning fur fills her nostrils.

“You didn’t think I would hurt her?” Polliwog shakes their head.

Persephone snorts, annoyed. The nurse squares up to the general, who in turn squares up as well. The two circle each other from a distance. Persephone makes the first move, pouncing forward while firing another glittering beam of light. Polliwog slaps it with her tail, causing it to disperse, then dodges Persephone. In return, Polliwog jumps forward as a counterattack. Persephone ducks under Polliwog, dodging the attack. Persephone goes for a swipe as Polliwog passes over her, but misses. Polliwog hits the ground incorrectly and rolls an ankle. They yelp as they tumble a couple of times before coming to a stop.

Polliwog stumbles back to their feet. Stera and Persephone paused, expecting the general to call off the spar after the injury. Polliwog tries to shake it off and pounces again. The ankle causes them to stumble and fall flat on their side instead of launching them through the air. Polliwog flops into the dirt instead of sailing through the air.

“Augh!” Polliwog yells. “I... I think that's enough for today.”

“Oh no, it looks like you rolled your ankle...” Persephone approaches the general.

“You’re going to need some ice, painkillers, and-”

“You two! Dismissed! Get ready to depart tomorrow.” Polliwog barks at the emperors.

Persephone halts, wanting to help Polliwog, but is dissuaded by the dragon’s sharp glare. Stera motions for them to leave Polliwog.

“Yes sir, thank you.”