

Marlboro was tired of being tired. Whenever his days were too long, he became curt. Normally articulate, he devolved into some kind of surly wall of muscle and fat, grunting more and more often when his greenhorns came to him with information. They knew better than to be lackadaisical when he was in a sour mood, and usually just put the most urgent things directly on his desk with a quick confirmation.

The work was endless. Even before Eeridi decided to decimate itself, the work had been endless. But then, it had been a lot more petty thievery and drunken brawls. Harmless and pointless things in the grand scheme of it all. Now, it was much more dire. Turf wars, people trying to make it in a world that was inhospitable for a lot of people.

All the humans and Nautipods that had made it through the fracture had to be on leave until they could reliably breathe, and Marlboro could do nothing. He'd even spoken to Howwer about it. Was there not something they could go back and change?

He already knew the answer and had asked anyway. Maybe Howwer could have offered something in this senseless storm of chaos. A bit of wisdom to soothe the soul. Unfortunately, they could offer no such thing. Nothing outside of a cup of tea and maybe a biscuit made unstale.

"It never feels good to know what comes next," Howwer had said pensively, staring into the cup. "The only thing you can do in unprecedented times is your best. Even when it feels that will not be good enough."

Marlboro drank his tea and ate his biscuit. It was a nice change of pace even though it hadn't amounted to much outside of getting to see Howwer again outside of a lecturing context. He just wished it could have been under better circumstances.

"There was nothing any of us could do," they added.