

2117

By Gabriela Utomo

“The next time you drag me to your morning marine adventures, I’m going to kill you.”

Irina glanced at her sister—at the pitch-black dark circles rimming her droopy brown eyes and the menacing scowl gracing her beautiful features. Seawater was still dripping from her long ebony hair down to her blue and black diving suit. Nadira was not a morning person, and Irina was nearly scratched trying to rouse and drag her to the dive boat.

“Didn’t you beg me to take you because ‘coral reefs and sea turtles are going to be so Instagram-worthy’?”

Nadira sat up straighter at that. There were only very few things that she cared more about than her perfectly curated account and five thousand virtual followers. “The pictures *are* gonna look so bomb on my feed. I’ll probably caption them with one of those save-our-oceans quotes or something.”

“Oh, please—” a flying plastic bottle interrupted Irina before she could even shake her head, landing on the clear surface of the Lombok Strait. She stared at Nadira, who stared back incredulously, and said, “What?”

“Nice way to save the ocean,” Irina remarked. Nadira snickered and gave her a hard shove, something they always did when the other was being annoying. But this time it caught her off guard. Irina slipped from the edge of the boat, and the last thing she remembered was her sister shouting her name hysterically.

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Irina’s eyes fluttered open and she was immediately greeted by a girl around her age hovering above her.

“Oh, thank God you’re not dead.”

She blinked a few times and took in her surroundings. The last thing she remembered was plunging into the water after Nadira shoved her. “Wha—”

“Relax, you’re okay. I found you washed up on the shore,” the girl said, smiling warmly at her. “Though I don’t really understand why you would want to swim *here*.”

“My sister and I were snorkeling. We were taking pictures of the coral reefs and sea turtles,” Irina explained.

“Oh, you’re one of those mythical creature hunters, huh.” The girl scoffed and shook her head, sighing. “Look, they’re gone, okay? Stop wasting your time. The only thing you will find under the sea is the beauty of underwater garbage. Plus, what are you wearing? Diving suit from 2017?”

Irina stared back at her, dumbfounded at the question. “Yes?”

“Well, welcome to the future, lady. It’s 2117. Time to donate that horrible suit to the museum.” The girl started to walk away, leaving Irina in shock. What on God’s green Earth is she talking about?

“The Earth isn’t even green anymore,” the girl replied, turning to Irina. Oh. Seemed like she said that out loud. “Are you an actress or something? Is this you getting into a character in a movie set in the 2010s? Is the movie about saving what’s left of the ocean? If it is, joke’s on you, you’re about a century too late.”

Irina grabbed the girl’s arm before she could continue with her rant. Despite a million more important questions fighting to leave her lips, she asked, “What do you mean, we’re a century too late?”

The girl stared at her in disbelief. “The fact that there is more plastic than there are fish in the ocean? The fact that that we’ve overfished and let some species go extinct? The fact that the ocean is overwhelmingly acidic and warm that it is nearly impossible to swim in? If you *are* from 2017 -- which of course, is impossible -- well, then, great job. Your ignorance is a blessing to us all.”

“Hey, I’m not ignorant!” Irina protested. “I care about the ocean as much as the next person does. I never littered the beach or the ocean. I know that overfishing is terrible, so is illegal poaching. In fact, I never fished in my entire life!”

“Oh, should we get you an award for that?” the girl clapped sarcastically and gave Irina a mock salute. “Did you care enough to at least share the information? Did you care enough to choose only sustainable seafood when ordering your sushi? Did you care enough to actually use reusable shopping bags or did you keep packing your groceries with more and more plastic? Guess where that plastic went, smartass. The ocean! Have you ever, even once in your entire life voiced your concerns about God’s beautiful Earth?” the girl was screaming now, her voice raspy and eyes glistening with tears. “No. Because all you do—all we do is take and take and take from the Earth that was entrusted to us and never give back.”

There was silence as the girl’s words started to have an effect on Irina and stabbed her right in the gut. Tears were now falling down her cheeks too.

“You didn’t even care enough to yell at your sister when she dumped her plastic water bottle overboard, Irina,” the girl added. Irina’s eyes widened. As she opened her mouth to ask a question, the girl shook her head. “It doesn’t matter. You’re not too late to fix this. But if you do nothing, if everybody does nothing, then, you’re looking at the ocean of the future.”

The girl gave her a weak smile and, before Irina could say anything, everything went black.

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“IRINA!”

Nadira ambushed her with a bone-crushing hug as soon as she came to. Worry was written all over her face and her cheeks were wet from crying. “Oh my gosh, I thought I killed you there!”

“Oh, you’re not getting rid of me that easily,” Irina teased, returning her sister’s hug. “I’m fine. You know what you’re killing, though? The ocean.”

Nadira's left eyebrow shot up. "Did you hit your head or something?"

"Probably. I had this super-weird dream while I was passed out." Irina chuckled and winked at her sister and rapped her on the forehead. "Look, if you don't want to see the cute sea turtle you posed with become the next mammoth, we've got work to do."
