Oddity in the Water

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Summary

The life style as a biker gang boss has taken its toll on old Mako. Now he wants nothing more than to live a peaceful relaxing life after leaving his gang. With the stroke of luck, Mako's aunt is looking for someone to take care of her old home near a small lake in the Australian outback. How can a man's passion for nature and a peaceful life reject such an offer?

Notes

After five billion years, I finally muster up the courage to write my own Roadrat fic. What a way to start it off by doing one of my favorite kinds of cliche AU's out there, MERFOLK/MONSTERS. More tags will be added as the story progress goes. At the moment, this chapter is the longest that I have planned out thus far and I can't wait to write later chapters. I will also post links to art work (sketches and concept ideas ) for the fic at the end notes.

Huge thanks to my two beta readers, Rye and Al. :)
Mako has always been a man who kept his secrets and his personal life to himself. Even in the prime days of his youth, Mako was able to hide a secret from his family for more than 20 years. A hidden side of what they all thought Mako could never be. The sweet, kind, humble giant of a man was actually the leader of a notorious biker gang that resided just outside of Perth in Western Australia. They called themselves the “Wild Hogs Gang”. Roadhog was his name; dubbed so by his gang mates because of his deep breathing and snorting like a pig whenever Mako was out vandalizing and drinking. He never minded the pet name from his mates. It suited him well and it was another way to hide his identity from friends and family. Despite being with a gang of 12 burly built wild men, just like his blood family, Mako kept his personal life to himself. Perhaps that’s one of the reasons Mako finally decided to retire as gang leader. Really, he wanted to retire in general, even if only at the age of 48.

Mako wanted a more peaceful life. He wanted to be happy like many of his previous friends have accomplished. Although, he never wanted the nuclear family dream, a massive home, a loving housewife and children running around the house and causing mischief. No. There was no real reason Mako would ever want something like that. Even if he did, he would leave the wife and children out of the picture. But that was beside the point for the ex-gang leader. Yes, he needed to retire. The roar of the bikes, the shouting and hollering from his mates, the endless fights in the pubs… It all began to plague his mind daily. Even in his sleep.

The boisterous days with his mates were always entertaining in the early years, but with the constant daily hauntings of not escaping from his consciousness, Mako’s usual rough nature took a step too far. There’s been many times where blood has been spilled across Mako’s massive hands, but the one instance that made him want to quit was one that invaded his secrecy. The fuck wit called him a “fag” when a drunken Mako had his arms around two of his favorite mates. No one was really sure if the man who insulted Mako survived. From what he was told the night after, the fucker looked like a pile of ground meat. Mako beaten him to a pulp with his brass knuckle wearing fist. The Maori biker needed to end his career as a leader a year after that incident happened. His closest mate next to him was promoted as the new leader during his last night with the leather jacket-wearing men. The goodbyes were short and quick, but the farewell party lasted until dawn. None of them questioned why he would leave, or why that one fight in particular had broken his long years of being in the gang. As they respected their ex leader, they allowed Mako to retire and live his life to be more at peace.

Aside from the hobby of riding his big bike along the red and black Australian roads and making it roar across the old cracked up concrete highways, there was only one true love that Mako had since childhood. A Hobby that he wishes to return to and would give up anything to be able to have the opportunity to do daily; Fishing.

Ever since his family moved to Western Australia from New Zealand, ten-year-old Mako took the move hard. He lost all his closest friends, his old beat down home, his classmates, everything. Now here, in this completely new environment, going to a new school, living in a new home. It was all so completely foreign and caused him to grieve the loss of his hometown. However, his father knew the right trick to pull him out of his depressed state. Grabbing two massive poles, a tackle box and rain boots, Mako and his father would spend endless weekends going out to the fresh water lakes in the outback and fish. Such nostalgic memories always flooded in his mind whenever Mako felt the urge to escape from city life. The lifestyle of living in the city was getting too repetitive. The gang mates failed to understand what Mako really wanted in his life. Then again, he’d never really told any of them his wishes, his memories, or details of his life. The life of partying in pubs,
drinking endless hours until they all pass out, the violence they would create amongst other bikers, and the endless hours on the road. It had all become so tiresome.

After months of contemplating on what to do with his life after leaving his gang, he received a phone call he never expected to receive. His old aunt Maggie called Mako while he was living just outside of the city of Perth. Her voice sounded older than what he remembered. It was more dry, exhausted, and weary when she spoke to him on the phone. The last time he saw Maggie was when he turned 26 years old. The same age and time when the Maori man left his folks home and joined in the Wild Hogs Gang. Twenty-two years had passed and she was finally able to get a hold of her wayfaring nephew. It turned out she was moving from the home she settled in after the entire Rutledge family migrated to the Western territory. She wasn’t really moving of her own volition of course, as she muttered under her old breath. She was moving to her eldest son’s home. An old woman like her can’t live by herself, especially being alone for so long after her husband died. Something about a bacterial infection in his lungs that got only worse over the time they lived in that home. An unexpected and overdue surprise.

Mako could hear that her voice paused several times. Hesitant of his reaction towards his late uncle’s death. Despite how quiet she was, he felt--no--he knew she was crying. A feeling Mako himself was unfamiliar with after the loss of the person you loved and lived with your entire life. But he knew better. The years and experience with being in the bike gang had taught him various of lessons of showing any weakness. Heaven forbid if you cried in front of another gang mate. You had to drink your sorrow away and deal with it. With Maggie speaking once again after a chain of silence, his aunt had a proposal. The old home, the one she spent her entire life in was being offered to Mako. However, it was not the home that caught Mako’s interest. It’s what was just outside the house. A lake.

“It’s just a ten-minute walk right outside of the shack. It’s a really small lake but it’s just as lovely as any other.” Maggie spoke in a soft tone. “Your uncle used to fish there all the time, especially during the early spring.” Her voice sounded more cheerful, memories of her late husband’s fishing hobby made her smile. Mako smiled behind the phone as well. “We caught a lot of tilapias and bass during those months. Your uncle and I got all fattened up by the fish there. It’s all we ever ate during those good fishing months.” She laughed loudly behind the phone. “Mako, I know you would love that little place. I’m sure you remember how to fish, aye?” Now it was Mako’s turn to stay silent. With a hard swallow, he spoke in a low deep voice. “Yeah.” Maggie’s tone of voice suddenly switched. “Do you want to move in there and take care of the place, Mako?” Her voice sounded desperate and full of hope, she wanted anyone in her family to take the little home and look after it. Her two sons refused to live in a small country house in the outback. Their responses were either cold and uncaring for the home they had grown up in. She had no one else than the nephew who disappeared for 22 years. Once again, his voice was deep, but a smile stretched his lips as he spoke, “Yeah.”

The drive from Perth to the outskirts of Wyndham took several days. Just like in his late childhood, Mako had to give up everything and start anew. Only this time it wasn’t as much of a personal blow to him as it was when he was just at the end of being considered a “kid”. The apartment was emptied out. He took with him some personal belongings and the necessities he would need the first week, and shoved them all into cardboard boxes of various shapes and sizes. Mako had his bright blue rusted down truck loaded up and set off towards the north. The ride was mostly done during the late afternoon. Mako really wasn’t in the mood to be driving with a truck full of boxes during the scorching hours of the day. Neither did the late hours sound too pleasing. Too many back roads and cliffsides where the pale skinned Maori man could get lost or worse yet, get his
truck jacked up by driving in the wrong neck of the woods. The late afternoon hours were just as perfect as ever. The orange Australian skies would slowly fade into the darkness of night. It was a beautiful sight that Mako enjoyed personally. He’d done it several times when had his glorious hog. Drove just outside the city and into the canyon nearby, staring up into the starry night sky that was littered with cosmic dust and splendors.

After six days of being on the road, Mako finally reached the small town of Wyndham. The sky was completely dark, save for the glowing stars up above. With how late he arrived at the town, there was just no way he was planning to see the house just yet. He wanted it to be more of a surprise for himself. A reward for sitting on his ass for countless hours during the day, driving on the endless black, single roads, singing aloud to his old heavy metal albums he’d had since high-school that were always stuffed into the glove compartment. Yes, he wanted to see the old house during the early hours of the day. Mako had been able to book a night at an old run-down motel just up near the backroads his aunt mentioned in her directions she gave him before the drive.

Well, the directions up until he arrived at Wyndham, everything else was done by the help of the multiple maps he’d bought along the way. The hotel owners were fairly nice people… Fairly, as they kept on staring at Mako throughout their short conversation. Of course, it’s something that the Maori man was used to when it came to being around strangers. A seven-foot-tall, 500 lbs, light-skinned giant was always out of the ordinary. Mako stuck out like a sore thumb amongst a crowd. It was something he got over in time. Not to mention it has been something that he used for the exact purpose of intimidation. He thanked the old couple at the check-in desk once they gave him the key to his room, walked through the small corridor and entered his room. Mako had no recollection exactly what the room looked like during the night. Once he entered the room, he quietly kicked off his old worn out boots and passed out on the small mattress with its thin white blanket below.

When Mako arrived at his destination during the bright hours of the late morning, the actuality of the house was that it was more of a shack. It was made of wood that has by now been cracked and darkened over age, steel roof ribs replaced the various places in the walls that must have gotten damaged over the years. The color of the old shack was a light teal color. Must have been darker but the sun’s rays beating down on this tiny home for so long had bleached it. The light color of the house made it look more appealing, honestly. It blended well with the bright blue Australian sky and the red earth surrounding it. There were some clay pots surrounding the front porch of the shack. Some were emptied out completely or had various small cacti that’d been undamaged and untouched for years. Surrounding the house was a fence made of old recycled wood pallets and a small gum tree stood just next to it. It wasn’t all that bad on the outside. But now came the real test; Looking at the true contender. The inside of the house.

Underneath the old multicolored rug on the front porch Mako pulled out a single golden key. Maggie told him that there was no one who would really break into her home even when she moved out. If they did, they would have done it a long time ago as she was living there alone. There was no real danger to her and she completely trusted Mako. His massive fingers held the key, slowly unlocking the door, and taking a quick peek from the crack of the old creaky door. Much to his disappointment, the house wasn’t all that bad either. It was small, very small compared to the behemoth size Mako himself was. It was a fortunate thing he at least didn’t need to hunch over to keep his head from hitting the ceiling of the house. It was smaller more-so in the context of what the place had. A kitchen with a stove, fridge and sink included, a single bedroom with the bed that belonged to his aunt and uncle still unmoved from what he could tell, and a bathroom that still had a toilet and bathtub. That was it. Maybe that was all Mako needed. Just the simple basics of living in a tranquil place like this one. Nothing but peace, quiet, and fishing. Oh god yes, fishing! Mako was now beginning to romanticize the place almost immediately. Mako ran
out of the house, causing the screened door behind him rattle harshly when it shut, beginning to unload the cardboard boxes from out of the trunk of the truck and into the shack.

The day continued with Mako working endlessly around his new home. His truck was completely emptied, save for the burger wrappers, empty water bottles, and potato chip bags that littered the passenger seat next to him. (You can’t really expect a person to be eating healthy when they’re on the road.) All his clothes were placed neatly on his new bed. Mako really needed to buy some new blankets as he discovered with some closer investigation that there were some mystery stains on the old quilted blanket that was currently on the bed. Then again, Mako was sure there were even worse stains in the various motel rooms he had spent the nights in during the trip. With Mako leaving the bedroom, he began to inspect the other locations around the house. “Some repairs need to be done with the pipelines.” The voice of aunt Maggie flooded Mako’s thoughts when he bent down under the kitchen sink, tapping it lightly with the nail of his index finger. “Shouldn’t be so hard.” Mako told himself, hoisting himself up with his knees as he looked at the sink. Maggie mentioned the old hardware store that pretty much knows the insides and outsides of the shack. She and her husband were regulars, everyone in town knew about them of course. Mako was curious on how their reaction would be once they see a big Maori man like him taking over his aunt’s old home. It made Mako laugh to himself, it was always a treat to have the jaws of onlookers drop to the ground when they see how massive he is up close.

Mako sat down on the old bed, which creaked in protest under his weight. He held a small pen and notepad that had been sitting on the night stand next to him. A list of what to do for the week ahead was a good plan to prioritize for the upcoming days. “Go to town...” Mako spoke himself as he wrote down on the notepad. “Pick up tools, groceries…” He tapped the end of the pen onto his chin, thinking out-loud as he built his list. “A fan… Gonna need that. Clean the shit out of this place.” Mako looked at the corners of the room. Globs of dust bunnies and cobwebs coated them. It almost made Mako’s lungs contract by the mere sight. He’s not going to save this for the next day. God no, he’s going to clean this place up. Now.

Mako found many of the cleaning supplies he’d need just under the kitchen drawer next to the sink. The broom was tucked between the stove and fridge--the first tool to kick off this cleaning process. Small trickles of water from the kitchen sink filled up half of a white paint bucket up that was mixed in with bleach. Never in his life has Mako cleaned a place so thoroughly. He was on hands and knees, scrubbing away at all the rust and mold that coated the bottom of the bath tub with a single scrub brush. A little bit of bleach and water never really killed anyone outside of cleaning. The fact that the condition of the house was left this bad was ghastly to him. Perhaps the potential of black mold lingering in the house was what killed his uncle many years ago. Surprising that Maggie hadn’t met the same fate as her husband. There was also no way in hell Mako was the next person to die in this house either. As sensitive as his Asthma is, Mako covered his face with a bandana as he brushed the dust and cobwebs to the front door. Completely littering the red soil with globs of dust. As long as it was out of the house, he didn’t care.

“Finally.” A sigh escaped his lips, still covered from the bandana as he patted his two dirty hands on the light brown denim shorts he was wearing. Mako was already worn out from an entire week of work. The moving, the packing, the drive, the nights at the motels, the unpacking and now the cleaning on his first day at the house. In it’s worth the shack looked better since the first year it was built according to the new owner. With a deep breath, Mako’s lungs filled with fresh, cool air. Having absolutely no idea how late it was until he began to hear soft chirping within the distance. It sounded like... croaking. Its rhythm was similar to that of a heartbeat, taking no less than two seconds to repeat its little chirp. And then it hit him right in his thick skull; The lake. The sole purpose as to why Mako wanted to move here. The favor to his aunt was another reason, of course, but for his selfishness Mako wanted to move because of the lake. His own private billabong where he can fish and swim to his heart’s content.
The Maori man opened the old wooden screen door and walked out of the shack. The door clapped lightly behind him as he made his way past the fence. He wanted to see the lake during the day, but the calling of the frogs piqued his curiosity. The lake might look just as beautiful during the night as it would during the day. With the sun setting slowly in the horizon, it might look even more otherworldly. The twilight and orange sky cast a mystical spell across the outback. Despite the harsh heat and the scorching sun biting on flesh the moment one would step outside of the shade, the red earth and the blue sky were glowing sublimely. Mako followed the chirps and croaks coming from the west side of the shack. From what Maggie told him, the lake was just a seven-minute walk from the shack. And it was exactly what Mako needed. A small, short nature trail.

The red earth below his old boots crunched loudly. Eucalyptus leaves and twigs snapped and crumbled under the weight of the man’s steps. There were some impressive and massive old eucalyptus trees surrounding the trail to the lake. Some had trunks that were painted by age and the sun’s vicious rays, changed the colors to brighter greens and reds surrounding it. The tree’s shadows stretched out as the sun slowly sank below the horizon, casting a perfectly cool and inviting shade for Mako, still walking slowly on the small dirt trail. The dryness of the air made Mako’s lips crack, despite still having a bandana covering them. The taste of sweat filled his taste buds as he licked his lips. Excitement was seeping into his blood, almost like a dog waiting for its’ owner to give him his well-earned meal. Mako can’t imagine what kind of fish he might be able to catch and cook for himself. If the fates of fortune are on his side, he might have the chance to catch some mud crabs or yabbies that dwell underneath fresh water mud. His mind was suddenly making his stomach growl, having not really eaten much throughout the day as his priority of making the house dust-free was his goal.

Mako’s excitement had finally paid off. Never in his life has Mako seen a lake quite as beautiful as this one. Thick lily pads coated the surface of the lake like a blanket, covering the fresh water surface with bright colored flowers blooming on top of them. There was the occasional splash of fauna that would skip and swim between the water lilies, adding into the twilight music that was rehearsing around the lake. Just a bit farther at the center and far edges of the lake, large mangrove trees sprouted from its surface, looking like long, slender, wooden arms stretching out to touch the sky with their long fingers twisting and bending in a way that would deem unusual for humans. There was a bit of an uncanny sensation surrounding the lake as well. Nothing that Mako could really pinpoint exactly, but one he would guess is just how dark the lake really looked. Was there a giant hole in the middle of it? Would he need to buy a small boat to go out and catch the best fish swimming deep in the sink hole if there was one? The admiration of the lake was briefly interrupted by a low buzzing sound near his head.

SMACK!

Mako’s massive hand swatted the back of his thick neck. The smack stung for a second as he slowly released his hand back to look at what disturbed him. He groaned in disgust. Mosquito guts and blood were smeared in his already sweaty palm. Mako’s dry throat uttered another soft groan, wiping off the bug guts on the side of his denim pants. Then, there was another low buzzing sound.

SMACK!!

Another mosquito.

SMACK!!

Another one. Must have missed it. Just a second too slow.

SMACK!
Alright. Mako was starting to get annoyed with hitting himself on the back of his neck and the constant aggravating buzzing. You couldn’t really blame the flying pest, however. In front of them was a giant walking blood bag that could feed them and their future generations for a millennium. Mako had enough of the view of the lake for now. He decided to head back to the shack at a much faster pace than when he had made his way to the lake, mosquitoes buzzing behind him.

SPLASH

Mako quickly turned around to look at the lake behind him. The splash was loud and whatever caused the splash, sounded massive. Adrenaline was now rushing back to his bloodstream. Another glorious excuse for the mosquitoes to swarm back and fly around the behemoth of a man. He paid absolutely no mind to the buzzing. Could this lake hold one of those giant barramundis? Or maybe some other type of big ass bass? Yeah. He can run down to the nearest town in Wyndham and grab a couple of strong poles, crab traps, bait, and a whole lot of mosquito spray. Mako needed to get supplies for the shack anyway. Best that be it, a plan for him to do the next day. For now, Mako turned his back to the lake and returned to the shack. His stomach and excitement made him weary, and he needed to eat something before getting ready for bed. Chores will come first tomorrow, of course, and then perhaps at the end of the day, Mako can treat himself to a little test fishing. His life of relaxation in this tiny little shack in the outback was only just beginning.

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It had been only twenty minutes since Mako left the shore of the lake. The sky was now completely black. All but the bright twinkling stars casting a mystical glow on the moonless night sky. The chorus of frogs will continue to sing till the break of dawn, not stopping by any means unless they find their mate. A few frogs would occasionally leap out from one lily pad to another, finding the best spot for the amphibian to be the loudest of the choir. Crickets and other insects also joined in the symphony. It was what anyone would expect to hear when they’re far away from civilization. Being surrounded only by nature herself. All was peaceful in the small lake just outside of Mako’s new home.

There was a loud splash. All the frogs went silent, clinging to any lily pad as the waves swung them to and fro by the force of the splash. The crickets had also stopped, leaving nothing more than an eerie silence above the water. The silence was broken. There was a loud crunch just above the surface of the lake and a mangrove tree. The sound of bone and flesh being torn apart by sharp teeth could be heard in the silent lake. Blood coated the area of the lake where the crunching and grinding sound came from. An unfortunate frog had wandered too far from the lily pads and swam directly into the mouth of the largest predator in the lake.

He was looking up in the dark sky above, still consuming the frog flesh with his sharp carnivorous teeth. Night was the ideal time to seek out and hunt. One frog was never enough for his appetite. He would have to hunt once again after he finished what was left of his prey stuck between his teeth. His eyes kept locked on the sky, bright amber eyes glowing with each twitching second. There was a peculiar smell tonight. A smell that hadn’t filled his sinuses for some time. The amber eyes wandered over to the east, slowly wading himself with his worn out tail and single arm. Can’t remember the time when he had two of them, either way, the prey in this lake was easy. Just one quick bite with his teeth did the trick. He kept smelling the air with his long human nose, the gills around his neck slowly spread open each time water touched the fragile vents. The smell finally clicked. It was the smell of smoke.

Those great golden eyes widen slowly, looking now like fireflies in the complete abyss of the night. His sharp blood and guts coated teeth began to grind and click. A realization of what happened while he was slumbering below one of the massive mangrove trees. A human. A human had returned to the lake. The long and slender black and dirty tail of his began to shake slowly. The sharp fins spread along his spine were rattling loudly against the cold muddy waters. Slowly, the
resident of the waters began to turn back towards the deeper side of the lake, submerging himself back into the depths of the watery abyss. The sharp back fins waded between lily pads before they too sank below the depths. All was quiet again in the lake. One frog was brave enough to let out a soft croak. Then another one chirped in response. Only until the frog choir felt everything was safe again did they continue, and the symphony of the lake returned to normal.
Cicada

Chapter Summary

The drive was short. It was only a mere twenty minutes before he could see the peculiar wooden sign to the right side of the road. It was an old sign, painted in dry wood with large white and green letters which read out, “Town of Murungal”

Chapter Notes

Well, will you look at that! A new Chapter! This time, things are starting to get a little bit interesting.
I also like to mention that I said this chapter would be shorter than the first one. LOL
Nope, things got a little bit too descriptive but I actually enjoy setting up places a lot.
Another huge mention I want to state out is that this fic will use some Australian Aboriginal words for locations and myths to aid the story as it progresses.
I did a bit of a conceptual illustration of Mako arriving at the lake for the first time! (http://demonsfromthesun.tumblr.com/image/164651280621)

Huge thanks to my two beta readers, Rye and Al. :)

The Australian heat has always brought discomfort to those who try to sleep after the morning sun begins materializing over the horizon. Even in the early spring month of September, the sun bared its teeth in an unending snarl of anguish. Even as a new resident to the small shack in the middle of nowhere, Mako would hardly be spared by the heat. Despite his attempts to stay cool during the night--opening the window next to the bed frame, sleeping with the thinnest blanket, laying in the hot room while in the nude--all his efforts were in vain no matter how hard he tried.
With the window open there would be a small breeze that whirled inside the room and relieved the oven like temperature inside. But still, it wasn’t enough. Sleeping soundly in his aunt and late uncle’s bed, sweat was dripping from his body and staining the bed sheet underneath his hulking back. All the brightly colored quilted blankets were laying on the floor. Mako had kicked them off the first hour he laid asleep after the sun inched its way higher into the morning sky. His feet dangled from the edge of the bed, which creaked loudly whenever Mako turned his body, adjusting himself to get a more comfortable sleeping position. With his back now turned to the side he could feel the coolness of the air touching his moist back. It gave him a bit of relief, but it would soon fade as the heat quickly dried it up and began to crack the rough skin of Mako’s back.

Mako’s breathing was deep and low as he slept. His nose would twitch every so often with his roaring snores. Anyone standing outside the shack would be easily able to hear the sleeping giant. No doubt it would scare off anyone trying to bust inside the shack--or anywhere Mako was slept. There would be nights where Mako would crash at one of his gang mates place for the night, sleeping loudly after a night of drinking heavy beers to the point where one would think his liver would shrivel up. Jokes of Mako sleeping like a hog in heat was what caused him to avoid sleeping
around other people. Despite so, Mako couldn’t help his eardrum-shattering snores. Years of suffering with asthma always made the ex-biker’s lungs clench whenever he breathed through his nose in his sleep. Suddenly, there was a sound that joined in with Mako’s ear splitting-snores. It was a loud, high pitch shrieking like sound coming from right outside Mako’s window. The sound droned for several seconds before it suddenly stopped. It paused for just a few seconds before starting up once more. Mako’s mouth parted in a loud smack. The pink tongue within laved along the side of the giant’s dry lips and Mako could taste the salt of his own sweat on his skin.

The screeching continued. However, there was a slight change that made things more irritating. More of the same high-pitched droning shriek joined in, each one starting at a different point until it all just merged into a long droning noise. It was the never ending white noise from the cicadas, perched up high on the gum trees around the lake. “Great…” Mako grumbled under his breath, his tired eyelids slowly opening to see how bright the room was. Mako’s mind was slowly regaining consciousness, trying to adjust to the reality he was in. “This time of year?” Another groan came from his lips, only this time Mako sat up on the bed, leaning back against the light brown wooden bed frame on the wall. His aunt Maggie never mentioned to him that the cicadas would arise from their deep sleep and emerge with their shrieks of desperation for mating. Mako remembered hearing the tiny insects the first year him and his family moved to Australia. It was so mesmerizing then, but now they were just aggravating.

It was no use going back to sleep. With how the heat was cooking up his house only a desperate idiot would go back to sleep. They’d probably end up dying from heat stroke. Mako was beginning to miss the luxury of having air conditioning whenever he was at his home near Perth. Hell, he was even missing those shady hotel rooms he stayed in when taking his road trips across the country. All those places had some sort of air conditioning or at the very least some good fans. Unfortunately, that luxury is now in the past. The only other way to keep himself cool now was to buy himself a heavy-duty fan that would blast air on him. That thought aside, it was time to get up. Moving his legs to the side of the bed, Mako hoisted himself up with a low grunt of protest. Back bones cracked loudly as Mako arched his back in a stretch. A sharp needle-like sting through his muscles made the giant hiss in pain. His whole body felt wrecked from sleeping in the double sized bed. Another loud crack came from his back when Mako bent down to grab a clean pair of briefs inside the small drawer near the bed. Mako was thankful for being smart enough to unpack some of his clothing into the drawer last night. No way did he want to wear the same sweaty and noxious clothing he soaked in last night. He grabbed a pair of muted green camo shorts and a blue tank top, clothing that would be much easier for his skin to breathe in the heat. Anything to make today more bearable, Mako welcomed it.

Mako made his way into the kitchen, each footstep sounding heavier than the last as he walked. Despite the clothes he was wearing now the heat was not helping with his exhaustion. He felt sluggish, hungry, and irritated. With a quick glance at the kitchen, Mako’s grey-blue eyes shifted to look at the sink where small pots were piled up. one pot in particular made Mako grunt loudly from the memory of the previous night. It was charred on the inside. The burnt remnants of what was once barbeque baked beans were still clinging to the old iron pot. It was a wound on Mako’s first attempt at trying to cook with a 15-year-old stove. He never really got a full understanding how the settings worked until it was all too late. There was no fresh food in the kitchen. Most of what Mako found was all canned food in the poorly painted white pantry next to the stove. The only other thing Mako could find in the even more dated refrigerator was old condiment packets, a jar of peanut butter and an empty Tupperware. Mako honestly found it a miracle how some of the pipes and electricity were still working inside this tiny shack. Mako’s late uncle really must have made a deal with the devil or something just to be able to survive out in the bush like this.
The giant made his way to the fridge, taking only a quick glance at the inside to measure the spacing inside. His right hand clutched the stained fridge handle, thinking aloud to himself, “Hmmm, need some eggs, milk, cheese… Maybe some fruit… Beef.” Mako’s free hand reached over to scratch his prickly chin, closing the door of the fridge once he’d decided what to purchase. Mako remembered the grocery list in the small notebook he wrote just last night. It lay on top of the kitchen table right next to the cute salt and pepper shakers that were in the shape of porcelain pigs. “… Best I go to town now.” Mako’s spoke to himself again, heading for the painted pantry. He took another peek inside just to make sure there was something for him to eat before leaving for the store. He wasn’t in the mood to cook. He just needed something quick to grab and take on the road. Mako had no intentions of burning another pot this morning.

The giant’s gaze turned to the canned goods inside the pantry. More canned beans, chicken noodle soup, mushrooms, and dog food? Now that he noticed it, there were actually several cans of dog food inside the pantry. Mako figured that Maggie must have had a dog before. How peculiar… Maggie had never mentioned owning a dog. There was something else in the pantry that made Mako’s tired eyes open a bit wider. There was a bag of biscuits, unopened and just the right kind for Mako to end his hunger. He closed the pantry’s door, quickly opened the bag, and shoved one into his hungry mouth. It was sweet, nostalgic, and chocolatey. Mako really couldn’t help wondering if Maggie placed the new packet of biscuits there as a token of appreciation. Did she think Mako was still 10 years old or something? He crammed another one in his mouth, making his way towards the table in the middle of the room and grabbing the small notepad. A few things can be added to the list that his tired mind forgot to write down. Maybe, if he was lucky, the small market in town would have these biscuits. Again, anything to make his new life more comfortable.

The old screen door clattered shut behind Mako as he walked out of the old blue painted shack. The large man’s boiling brain thought it would be best to get his chores done early before the day got any hotter than it already was. He patted at the back pocket of his shorts, fiddling around to find the keys to the truck. “Huh…” Mako made a surprised sound, noticing that there were still some boxes in the back of his truck. He must have forgotten that there were still some of his valuables tucked away in the cardboard boxes. “Must have been too tired to notice.” His voice cracked under his breath. Mako turned the key in the truck’s door, unlocking it with a click. That was good sign. A sign that no one bothered to follow his truck when he arrived. No trespassers. Nothing. As far as he could tell, his home and belongings were safe.

A loud slam of the metal door, the engine turning with a roar, and Mako’s truck sputtered back to life. It rattled with a ravenous growl before calming into a soft, low purr. Mako reversed the truck back, and switched the gear to drive with a loud metallic crunch from the gear shift. The road was still earthy in the driveway that headed towards the old cracked highway towards town. Mako bounced in his seat, the truck leaving a cloud of red dust behind from the uneven Australian earth below. The road only had two lanes. From what Mako could remember, the town was down the Northbound road.

The drive was short. It was only a mere twenty minutes before he could see the peculiar wooden sign to the right side of the road. It was an old sign, painted in dry wood with large white and green letters which read out, “Town of Murungal”. The town was just one of the small scraps of villages that were near Wyndham. Murungal was the one that was the closest to Maggie’s old shack. She mentioned this to her nephew. The town was her old ticket to get food, supplies and any other necessities she needed. It could go without mentioning that she had been a regular in Murungal, having been a teacher for the young and wonderful children of the town. She brought her ways and experience of being a teacher when the whole family left New Zealand. “It’s a small little town, Mako. Everyone knows each other like family. I am sure you’ll fit right in once you tell ‘em you’re one of Ol’ Maggie’s kin.” His aunt’s voice rang inside Mako’s mind, remembering all of their
conversations over the phone the day before leaving Perth.

Murungal was nothing like Mako expected it to be. It was very small. Smaller compared to the neighboring towns outside of Perth. A few buildings were scattered around here and there. It was enough to provide for and keep a town's population satisfied. In all honesty, Mako had no clue why Murungal is considered a town and not a village. Either way, there was no use in puzzling over an answerless question. The truck’s engine sputtered as Mako arrived at his first destination. A two-story building with the same decorated style as the town’s sign on the road in. Large white letters were on top of the building, “Andersons Market, Fresh Produce, Meat and Dairy.” Right below the sign in front of the greasy, dusty windows of the shop were two stands. On top of the stands were brightly colored citrus fruits in different shapes and sizes. Mako set the truck to park in front of the building, the gear shift crunching in mechanical protest.

There was a small chime of a bell when Mako opened the front door of the building, casting a massive shadow that dimmed the interior of the building slightly. It was quiet… Too quiet for Mako’s liking. However, he found out why the silence was awkward. Right behind the counter near the antique register, stood an elderly man. He looked to be about in his early 70’s, wearing thin framed glasses over beady eyes. The man gawked at the giant of a man, completely awestruck with wrinkles warping his stunned expression. Mako seriously hoped the old man didn’t crap himself. Mako knew he looked terrifyingly intimidating. In his old gang, there was no room to not look so. Fear is what got you things. Fear is what drove others away. Fear is what would get you killed if you were unlucky. A bitter taste coated Mako’s tongue from the uncomfortable atmosphere. All he wanted was just to get food, pay and get out. Thoughts flooded Mako’s thick skull as he walked down an aisle, “Play it cool. Show yourself you’re not a threat to this old bastard.” The aisle lead to more stands with neatly piled up fruits and vegetables. Mako picked up a worn out plastic basket that looked more like a toy with how girthy his hands were. He stopped at the lemons, eying them for a moment. They had been piled up with such tender care and dedication. Mako plucked one up from the bright yellow pile, placed his large nose over the bright citrus and gave a deep inhale. Ah, lovely.

The elderly man behind the counter kept his eyes focused as the stranger explored his market. Old, tired, wrinkled fingers, were trembling on the edge of the counter, which just beneath his double barrel shotgun was secretly nested and tucked away from plain sight. There was an inkling fear in his mind that this would be the end of his long life. Ended by the monstrous hands of this hulking stranger. This stranger who was now… Smelling some of the fruits?... Picking up a liter of milk from the glass door refrigerator… Then a stick of butter… If this man was going to rob his precious shop, he was doing a depressingly bad job at it.

Several minutes of perusing the aisles and Mako finally found himself at the counter staring down at the shop’s owner, looming over him like a titan, standing tall and firm. Mako’s rough face was perfectly calm in its expression. “You, uh...” Mako spoke dryly, scratching his neck with dirt coated nails, “You only had pork. Is that all you have?” The elderly man blinked at Mako’s deep but quiet voice. “Do you have beef? Or mutton? Don’t like pork.” Mako explained softly. Of course, there was no elaboration on his reason for disliking pork. That was his business only. “Only p-pork this time ‘round. We’ll be getting some beef sometime this week.” The elderly man’s voice, while still nervous, was polite enough. Those old bony fingers reached up to push his glasses back onto the bridge of his nose, before going about ringing up Mako’s items on the antique register.

There was an awkward silence again. Mako stood firm, watching as old hands worked, the occasional beep from the electronic register breaking the silence between them. The elderly man finally spoke up, “You ain’t from around here, are ya? I ain’t ever seen a bloke like you before.” Wanting to keep up the friendly conversation and not be taken off guard by the behemoth in front
of him, his eyes kept locked. Mako’s fingers curled lightly from the question, “Just moved in here. Live right by the lake... Taking care of Maggie’s place.”

Almost immediately, the anxiety lifted and the weary man’s frown pulled into a smile, suddenly looking up at the outsider with a different perspective. Now it made sense. Sort of. “You one of Maggie kids then? I’m so glad to hear that ol’ kiwi finally found someone to take care of the shack.” The man chuckled as he rang up the carton of eggs and placed it into one of the paper bags. Mako scratched the side of his chin, dry lips slowly curling into a grin. “Nephew, actually. Her kids didn’t want to take care of the place from what she told me...” Mako paused to hand the other man the perspiring liter of milk, “…Hadn’t seen her in years and she just calls me out of the blue and offers me a house by the lake.” Telling this to someone else felt a little surreal. One day you’re a biker and then suddenly the next day you’re living out in the middle of nowhere by a lake. And here he was, telling his story to an old geezer who—unknowingly to Mako—had been ready to blow his guts out across the floor. Yeah... Too surreal alright.

The smile never left the old man’s wrinkled, liver-spotted face as he finished bagging up all of Mako’s groceries, “That’s Maggie for ya. Always been generous to everyone in this town since she moved here... She used to be a teacher, y’know.” He waved a finger at Mako playfully, as if the 48-year-old Maori man was a ignorant child. “Well, if you’re gonna be looking after the ol’ run down shack of hers, best we keep in touch... er...” There was a pause. “Mako.” Mako finished the man’s sentence, lifting the brown back carefully with a large hand. “Mako! Right, right! Name’s Anderson!” Anderson reached his hand out to shake the Maori’s. All the worry and anxiety from earlier had erased. Mako turned and headed for the door. “OH! Mako!” Anderson called out to him, quickly waddled from behind the counter, and shuffled over to the larger man on tired legs. “Aye. Think you can wait ‘til the end of the week for that meat you wanted? I know you live by that lake...” The elderly man paused as confusion pulled onto Mako’s expression. “It’s best you don’t fish in that lake. Fish there taste awful.” Anderson made a gesture with an arm, a foul expression playing on his wrinkled features. “It ain’t safe in them murky waters either.” Confusion held steady on Mako’s face as the man protested the lake. A brow arched slightly as he responded, “Okay. Thanks for the warning.” An awkward smile tugged at Mako’s lips before he exited the building. He could feel Anderson’s eyes on him as he moved to his truck and climbed in, placing his grocery bags on the passenger seat. The truck drove off, heading back for the cracked concrete road and Anderson bit his lip softly, shaking his head. No doubt Mako is just as stubborn as Maggie and her husband were.

There was just one more stop Mako wanted to make before going back to the shack. Not far from Anderson’s shop was another two-story building that was just a few blocks north. A convenience store displaying a large wooden sign with a bass painted on the walls beneath. “Bait and Tackle Available.” Finally he could get the supplies he’s been wanting since the beginning of his trip. It was exciting. He passed through several aisles, grabbing a few necessities for his stay at the shack; Hygiene supplies, the fan Mako wanted, and a toolbox to fix the pipes that needed attention. Mako made his way to the front counter of the store, grabbing a fishing pole, one crab trap cage, fishing lines, rope, hooks, a brightly colored lure in the shape of a cicada and a hunting knife. Mako felt like a kid in a toy store as he collected his fishing supplies.

The owner of the shop—a large aboriginal woman who looked about the same age as Mako--whistled loudly as the stranger paced back and forth between the aisles and the front counter. The
counter was crowded with all the supplies the large man was collecting. “Ain’t seen you around here before. You just move here or just passing through?” The woman boldly spoke up, her gaze on Mako, scanning every inch of his hulking figure with her thick arms folded over her chest. Mako’s voice was calm despite the woman’s distrusting demeanor as he replied, “Moved here. Taking care of my aunt Maggie’s place while she’s gone.” The woman blinked bewilderedly before chuckling. “I see the resemblance now!” Mako really wasn’t sure exactly what the shop owner was talking about as she pointed at his thick nose. Then again, it’d been 22 years since Mako last saw his aunt. “What’s yer name, big boy?” The woman’s tone was cheerful, her arms still crossed but posture more relaxed. “Mako.” God, he really should get a nametag or something.

“I tell you what, Mako. I see you got a ute there. I could use an extra person to help me deliver goods around the other towns when I get orders from Wyndham. How’s that sound?” Mako blinked. It’s only been two days and he’s getting a job offer? It was fortunate considering there was no telling how long Mako’s finances would hold out with him living in the outback. The Maori man scratched his chin thoughtfully, feeling the prickly hairs against his fingertips. “Yeah, sounds good. Don’t think I can last more than a week or two with what money I got.” Mako answered as he reached into his pocket to pull out his wallet. “Aye, good on ya! Name’s Lidia by the way. Maggie’s husband used to work for us. Figure it fitting we offer one of her kin to work for us too.” Just like the shop owner before her, Lidia took Mako’s large hand in a friendly shake. “Come back in two days and we’ll start talking more about the routine here, Mako. I got a feeling you’re one of them quick learners.” Her chuckle was contagious in a way. Enough so to bring a grin to Mako’s stern face.

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Today had been a good day. With a fine stroke of luck, Mako had been able to get enough food to last him for a week, supplies he needed to sustain the living conditions inside the shack and was even offered a job. Mako was back in Maggie’s home, sitting on the kitchen table after putting all his shopping away—save for the fishing supplies. The chair under him creaked loudly as he slowly worked the fishing line onto the reel, being careful not to mess up his new pole. With a quick snip of the line, Mako could get the brightly colored lure at the tip of the fishing line. The lure looked deceptively like one of the cicadas that were singing outside the gum trees near his house; bright yellow-green with transparent wings tucked on its back. Mako’s gaze turned to the window. It was still just as hot and bright as it was when he left the shack to do his shopping.

Feeling like the day wasn’t getting any cooler Mako figured it would be a perfect time to test his new fishing gear out at the lake. With his pole now prepped and ready to be tested, the giant man hoisted himself off his chair. He placed the hunting knife back in its sheath, buckling the strap to the side of his belt and keep it on check. Mako then grabbed up his pole and the crab cage with his left hand. All he needed now was bait for the crab cage, and Mako knew the perfect bait to tempt any crustacean lurking in the muddy waters. The cans of dog food would do just fine. There were tons of them and there was no way he was going to eat it himself. Mako tucked a can inside the crab cage, making the trip to the lake more accessible and effortless while carrying his fishing gear. With his thick heavy leather boots ,Mako made his way out of the shack and headed for the trail to the lake.

Just as he thought. The lake looked absolutely magnificent in the bright daylight. The sight was astonishing. The tall, pale mangroves emerging from the water had such thick green leaves that spread above the arching branches. The gum trees on the dry, red earth also illuminated beautifully in the sunlight. Leaves waved gently in the warm afternoon breeze and small bush finches with
their bright, colorful feathers would let out joyful chirps as they fluttered about. The occasional call of a magpie perched above in the trees would whistle loudly to the cries of the cicadas. It was almost hard to believe that this place existed just right outside his new home. It felt absolutely dream-like. Mako snorted softly as he passed by some of the eucalyptus trees before noticing a dock at a small edge of the lake. It looked like it’d seen better days, but Mako’s eagerness blinded him to safety. Taking one step onto the dock and the boards creaked in protest under his boots. Another step, another agonized creak, but it held. “Eh, seems sturdy…” He spoke under his breath, still clutching the pole and cage in his left hand as he inched himself to the edge of the old wooden dock.

Mako placed his belongings down on the sun-bleached wood of the dock. First thing’s first. The crab cage should be the first thing to be taken care of. He opened the cage door, pulling out the canned dog food. With his new hunting knife, Mako opened the lid of the tin can with a pop. A sloppy red glob of processed meat plopped out into the bait compartment. Mako grimaced at the smell. Awful. Touching it was even worse. With the bait trap sealed and the front cage door left open to lure in the hungry yabbies, Mako wiped his hands off on the side of his jeans. A move he immediately regretted. “God Dammit!” Mako hissed, rolling his eyes at his own stupidity. His shorts were gonna smell like dog meat for days. With the bright yellow rope Mako made a tight knot on the handle of the crab cage… And promptly doubled the knot just in case. This cage wasn’t cheap and it would ultimately suck if he lost it on the first go. The crab cage finally prepped, the giant took a hold of it with both hands. With one hard toss the cage flew up in the air, small chunks of dog food twirling out of the bait trap before it hit the water hard. It bobbed for a second, before slowly sinking down into the murky water.

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Down below the depths of the lake where the mangrove roots twisted and stretched into the muddy soil, and where the light of the sun’s rays were dimmed by the murky waters lay a massive nest that resembled a hoarder’s trove. The owner of the nest slept soundly on top of its pile of trash. The nest was a little out of the ordinary for his kind. It consisted of a collection of bones from the different animals he preyed upon in various stages of decay and overgrowth. Additionally, there were also traces of metal objects protruding from numerous places in the muddy nest--items that had been dropped in the lake by careless visitors over the years that the large predator had taken to collecting. Hooks, nails, scrap metal, wrenches, fishing lures, anything that glistened in the light where there piled up with the remains of his previous meals.

Still in its deep sleep under the dark depths of the lake, the long gills around the creature’s neck swayed with its gentle breathing. All was calm and quiet in these murky depths, until a loud splash sparked the fins along his jawline. Both of his eyes opened slowly, his long, slender, eel-like lower body coiling around his precious nest. The fin that along on his back cautiously lifted in caution. Who was out there? What was out there? Human? Prey? His train of thought ended abruptly as a familiar scent caught his senses. Familiar. Old. Was it really there? The creature began to slide away from his nest, ignoring the potential for danger. His slick, powerful tail made swimming easy in these murky waters. It wasn’t long before the creature came across what had disturbed his slumber and awakened his senses.

There in front of him was a small metal cage. A cage that was far too small for his size, but one that the creature was all too familiar with. No doubt there were pieces of crab trap cage scraps around his nest. Ones he’d found trashed up along the muddy bottom of the lake, left behind by many stupid fishermen. The creature inched closer to the trap. The smell was coming from the bait
sealed within? A long, clawed, slender finger of his left hand reached out, poking and probing at
the inside of the cage. Fortunately for him, his claws were long enough to open the little latch of
the bait trap, releasing the slimy dog food to float out slowly in front of the creature. The sharp,
hungry mouth lapped and nipped at the processed meat. It sent a wave and joy down his bony
spine. The slits in his eyes dilated with excitement—he practically shivered from it. The creature
slowly swam to a part of the lake where the lily pads were thick enough to cover his face when he
surfaced. Those big golden eyes of his clenched shut with the abrupt brightness of daylight,
fluttering his eyes with his third eyelid to help his vision adjust to his surroundings.

Up on the docks he could see a human. Not just any human. One that was seemingly massive from
his perspective. No doubt this human, clothed in shorts and a dark blue tank top was the one who
threw the cage out. No doubt this human knew one of his favorite treats. And there was absolutely
no doubt that this human looked painfully familiar. With a slow kick of his tail, the creature swam
back down into the depths of the water.

There was a loud splash that startled Mako from his daydreaming. The Maori man was still
standing tall, holding his new fishing pole as the line waded out in the deeper waters. He was
proud to still being able to cast out so far like his father had taught him. Just one quick swing over
the shoulder, and out it flew like a spinning gem. Mako heard the splash again, and his eyes flicked
over to where the mangrove trees emerged from the water. A grin tugged at the corner of his
mouth at the sight of a massive bass jumping out of the water. “Oh, hell yes.” Mako whispered to
himself, wiping the sweat from his forehead as he began to reel in the line slowly. The bright
cicada lure twitched with each pull, trying to catch the attention of a potential catch. If Mako could
catch something today, he’ll be satisfied with his decision to come all the way out here.

Mako froze. There in his peripheral, the giant man saw something move. It moved… strangely.
Grey-blue eyes shifted to get a better look and his blood ran cold. Heavy lips dropped in a silent
gasp. There in the water, just beside him where the tall grass and lily pads were protruding from the
green water was a--… Something. A creature that looked something between man and monster.
Patches of blond hair covered in algae and mud were on top of the creature’s dingy scalp. Big, torn
up fins stuck out where human ears should be. Just beneath them were odd slits on its neck from
where more delicate-looking fins emerged, pulsating slowly as it took a breath above the surface.
The creature smiled at Mako, exposing its sharp, stained teeth that hinted at the stench of rot within
its mouth. Mako was frozen in place, staring blankly at the creature as it grinned menacingly.
Slowly its long, clawed fingers emerged from the water, wriggling slowly.

It waved.
Crane fly

Chapter Summary

Was the cause for him to run like a bat out of hell, real? In that grimy murky water…
A cross between a man and monster… Was it even real? Mako did see it move. It waved at him. A smile stretching out its face like a wicked portrait. All its sharp teeth protruding out through its gums in a way that would make a crocodile jealous. Its eyes looked predatory, peering up at Mako as if he were a gigantic slab of meat.

Chapter Notes

New Chapter update! Thank you to everyone who've been waiting patiently for the next chapter update and telling me you're loving the fic so far. It means the whole world to me ppl are digging it! AND WE'VE ONLY JUST TOUCHED THE SURFACE..EHEHHE GET IT?!

Not only that, but there's a new conceptual illustration done for the previous chapter. http://demonsfromthesun.tumblr.com/post/165275527871/the-creature-smiled-at-mako-exposing-its-sharp
I'm thinking of trying to do one illustration per chapter which would help with the overall theme of the story.

Huge thanks to both Rye and Al for being my betas!

If there was ever a reason for Mako’s tired legs to jump start into action, fear would be the only way to get him sprinting in the blink of an eye. The man’s wheezing breaths were rough as he ran away from the lake—snorting and gasping desperately to pull more oxygen into his lungs. Sweat dripped from his forehead, his massive round gut bounced, and the thuds of heavy leather boots crushing both earth and dried eucalyptus leaves sounded his charge as he sprinted. The world around him was quiet, senses overloaded with flight response; something so out of the ordinary for Mako. His thick legs began to ache as he finally made his way through the poorly made wooden fence in front of the shack. Was the cause for him to run like a bat out of hell, real? In that grimy murky water… A cross between a man and monster… Was it even real? Mako did see it move. It waved at him. A smile stretching out its face like a wicked portrait. All its sharp teeth protruding out through its gums in a way that would make a crocodile jealous. Its eyes looked predatory, peering up at Mako as if he were a gigantic slab of meat. Mako’s lungs gave up for a moment, causing him to cough roughly under his palm. He leaned back against the screened front door, still trying to catch his breath with deep wheezes. It’s a miracle that he’s not having an asthma attack despite how much his lungs and muscles were aching. Mako was just glad he was far away from the lake. Far away from whatever the fuck he just saw.

Mako walked in the front door, still wheezing slightly as his heartbeat began to ease its panicked hammering. A meaty palm wiped all the sweat from his forehead. Heat and panic made his entire body exhausted beyond belief. Mako wasn’t even sure what to do now. Should he go back? He did
just leave all his fishing gear on the dock. Instincts had just kicked in to run like fuck. The hunting knife was still there. If he did plan to go back, there would at least be a weapon for Mako to defend himself with… No. It looked big. It looked like it had arms, too. Thoughts ran through Mako’s mind like a drill until it finally ceases to spiral any deeper. Perhaps Maggie might have a weapon stored somewhere in this shack. An old woman like her must have defended herself somehow. There wasn’t a great amount of reassurance that this place was ‘safe’ from looters or wild animals. “She must have a gun in her room…” Mako thought aloud, heavy breaths began to fade more into low grunts from his nostrils. Making his way towards the bedroom, thoughts bumped around his mind as to where exactly an old woman would keep a gu-

“Mako!”

The heavy man halted in front of the doorway of the bedroom. There standing next to the bed where he slept naked in the early hours of the night at the original owner of the mattress, the room, and most importantly, the house itself. “Aunt Maggie?” Mako’s voice cracked. His aunt was a short, heavily built like Mako, dark-skinned woman. The long black hair she once proudly wore in her youth was bleached by age, tied up to the top of her head in a white bun. She was wearing the usual flower pattern dress that she’s well known with wearing every single day. The old woman grabbed the end of the quilted bed sheet, neatly tucking the extra length of blanket under the mattress. A white cane lay next to the mattress, once finished with her chore of adjusting the bed, old wrinkled hands reached out to grab the rubber handle of the cane. Her warm welcoming smile stretched her face, inching herself towards the sweat-drenched man standing in the doorway. “Oh, Mako! I thought that was you coming in! I looked all over for you when I noticed your ute out in front of the fence.”

Maggie’s voice was soothing to hear after having such an unnerving experience not too long ago. Her arms stretched out, embracing the man she hadn’t seen for 22 years. “You’re just as I remember when I last saw you... Only...” She trailed off, pointing at the white pony tail standing tall on Mako’s scalp. “A little greyer.” The old woman’s plump fingers patted the man’s cheek affectionately, making soft slapping noises that awoke Mako from his trance. “M-Maggie?” Unfortunately for Mako, that was all his lips could mutter at the moment. “‘It’s good to see you again’ is what most people would say, you know.” Maggie’s croaked out a short chuckle, her hands gripping on the rubber handle of her cane. “How... How did--…” Mako stuttered, licking his dry lips and trying to talk like he was a toddler. “How did I get here?” She replied smoothly, her teasing smile not helping with the bewildering predicament. “‘Driving, of course! You don’t expect an ol’ lady to be walking out in the bush do you?’ That grin never left her face. “My son drove me here, Mako. He got a phone call from Anderson telling me that you’d already arrived here. I’m staying with my son up in Wyndham and helping take care of his kids.” Maggie’s hands were on her hips, looking up at Mako like a looming tower. “It’s just about a two hour drive from here and back.”

“Is he here?” Mako’s head turned to look around the room for any other signs that there would be another guest in his new home. He really wasn't in the mood to talk to a family member he hadn’t seen since he joined the bike gang. Last time he remembered Maggie’s son was on his 18’th birthday. “Oh, no! He’s in Murungal right now. I asked him to grab a few things for me before we head back. Besides...” Maggie’s hands reached out to touch Mako’s plump face, squeezing his cheeks tenderly to the point his lips pouted slightly. “I much rather have a one to one talk with you! You have no idea how glad I am to see you here. You’ve been gone for so long I thought something happened to you. But here you are! In my old hom-” Maggie paused as her grey eyes fell on Mako’s own void, pouty face. She let her grip on the man’s face go, realizing that his expression of fear made him pale and silent. “Mako?” The mention of his name made the large man shake his head, snapping back into reality. He was hardly aware of his own eyes darting around the room; From the slowly flowing white curtains with tiny flower patterns on the window,
to the cracked white walls that surround the bedroom, to the now neatly placed quilted blanket that was arranged with care and dedication. There was a peculiar smell coming from Mako too. It smelt familiar. Nostalgic but not a far distant memory. “Mako?” Her voice was low, almost like a loud whisper. The old woman’s grip was now clinging to her nephew’s thick hairy arm, pulling him closer to speak in secrecy, “Did you see it?”

Mako’s attention snapped instantly. Every fiber of his being had hoped that his aunt knew. That the woman who lived near the lake in the middle of nowhere knew exactly what was lingering in Mako’s psyche. “Y-yes. I did.” A long silence came between the two adults, broken only by the chirping of the cicadas just outside the window. Maggie’s vision dropped down to her own feet, followed by a soft hum buzzing out of her thick lips. “You must never tell anyone about him.”

Mako’s eyes widen, asking loudly, “What!” “You heard me, Mako. You must never tell anyone about him. Not to Anderson. Not to anyone in Murungal. Not to anyone in Wyndham either. No one.” The old woman’s lips tightened as she gave her nephew a stern glare. Mako gaped for a moment before responding, “Wait… You know that thing?” At this point, Mako’s tone was suddenly confused, no longer sounding shaky. Now he was only more perplexed. A stern nod from Maggie was her quick answer. “Don’t you dare tell anyone about Jamison.”

Okay, what the hell? Did she just mention it with human name? Mako raised an eyebrow, looking down at the old woman who was making direct eye contact with him. He couldn’t help but let out a quick snort of a laugh. “You named that… monster… thing?” His wheezing breath made his laughter cut short, tightness around his throat causing him to cough softly. He seriously can’t believe this was happening. Was his aunt just insane? Was he going insane? Is this what happened to his aunt’s late husband? Dying from insanity by being neighbors to a lake monster? The coughing was cut short. Pain jolted his senses as his aunt wacked the man’s thick arm with the handle of her cane. “Don’t take me for an old crazy hag, Mako! I maybe old but I’m not senile!” The crazy old hag’s pointed finger poked harshly at the already red spot that was growing on Mako’s arm.

“What you saw in the lake, is a Muldjewangk” Maggie said calmly, looking at her nephew as they walked out the screen door. They both took a step out into the Australian heat, sun rays beating once more on Mako’s sweaty flesh. Mako now held a canvas bag with two cans of dog food and a can opener rattled against each other whenever the giant man took a step. He knew now to bite his own tongue whenever his aunt spoke, not wanting to make the judgement again that his aunt was insane unless he wanted another whack from the old Maori woman’s cane. “A what?” Mako asked, looking at his aunt who began to chuckle softly under her breath. “It’s a creature that lives in lakes or rivers.” Maggie’s hand swooped in an expressive manner. “They’re creatures from bushmen myths of some sorts. Half human, half fish. They’re known to eat children who wander too close to deep water.” Mako let out a soft snort, a sharp canine pinching the soft tissue of his lip. “So, this creature is a boogey man of the water of some sorts? And you gave it a name?” The man’s voice was low as they made their way out towards the wooden pallet fence.

“My husband, Jack and I found him many years ago. There was a massive flood… I think fifteen or seventeen years back. It was such a bad flood.” The woman's plump finger pointed out to the east side of the shack. “There’s a huge river that’s not too far from here called ‘Garrayura’”. It’s one of the main rivers that flows through here and reached up to the sea.” The fat dangling on her arms wiggled whenever Maggie swung her left arm, never ceasing her expressive movements as she talked, “All of this will get flooded whenever we have bad monsoon rains. The river floods everything in the bush. Small lakes that are near Garrayura river all get flooded up, stranding some fish and animals who live in the water when the flooded lakes dry up.” The white bun on her head bounced as she shook in disapproval to how unforgiving nature can be, remembering that one early morning seventeen years ago when she found Jamison. “That’s how we found Jamison. Found him
alone, scared, in pain, wild. No one in town knows about him--Not even my sons. Just me, Jack and now you, Mako.” A chuckle escaped her lips, as she walked down the trail to the lake with her nephew by her side. The echoing whistle of a magpie, the droning sounds of the cicadas perched up in the trees and the chipper songs of the bush birds broke any silence that was between them. It helped Mako’s rattled mind feel a little more at peace again.

“So, you kept a pet monster? Why are you telling me all of this now?” Mako side-eyed his aunt who was walking closer to her nephew and about ready to give him another whack if he dared start being a smart ass again. They were just about at the lake, and it seemed nothing has changed since his encounter with the creature as far as Mako could see. Nature continued her course around them. “Your uncle was the one who found out exactly what Jamison was.” Maggie’s shoulders shook as she giggled warmly. “That old bastard was clever. Jack told me when he was a young boy he saw a Muldjewangk in a river where his family was camping near Southern Australia.” Her dried mouth swallowed hard, the heat soaking up all moisture from her as she spoke. “Jack told me about the stories of them. Tch… I’m more scared to shit about the crocs swimming in Garrayura than Jamison!” The warmth of her smile returned once more. “I wanted to give the little guppy a home. Even used my skills as a teacher to teach em’ how to talk. You know, make him more human than animal. Not to mention it was a way for him to tell me what he wanted rather than just screaming and jerking that big ass tail around.”

“That still doesn’t answer my question, Maggie.” Mako stopped walking for a second, bracing himself for his aunt to turn around and glare at him, cane at the ready. Even if she did attack, the giant of a man still couldn’t believe this was real. It’s not out of the ordinary that you’ve been out of touch for more than twenty years and just now find out your aunt had a daycare center for a lake monster. “Why did you choose me? Why didn’t you choose your own kids?” The tightness of his lungs clenched when he let out a low laugh, shaking his head a few times, making the ponytail on top of his head swing around like a mace. “I can’t stay here. Not with that-- That thing there. Maggie, sell your old shack. I’m sure someone would be happy to buy your home.” He paused. “I can’t stay here.” The old woman froze, turning ever so slowly to look at her nephew standing behind her. Her lips squeezed tightly against each other, provoked that her bumbling nephew broke the peace in the bush. “And where will you go? Back to Perth? Take that long ass trip back and start all over in the city again, Mako? You’ve already got a pace to stay here, free of charge.” Maggie’s dark hands were tightly clutching the rubber handle of her cane. The sun was beating down on them both. “If you leave, Mako, where will you go? Where will you stay? Ya ain’t any richer than I am and with that fat gut of yours you won’t last a day without food.”

Mako’s eyes rolled, plump lips pulled into a pout by the scolding from his elderly aunt. Even to this day she still treats him like a child. She will never know that Mako, the once toughest son of a bitch in his gang, was now being treated like a ignorant brat. The cloud of anger in Mako’s skull was interrupted by Maggie’s cane. It clacked loudly on the red earth, an attempt to wake the man back into the situation. “Come on, Mako. I’ll show you him. I’ll prove to you that he’s not dangerous and you’re just being a stubborn baby!”

Upon arriving to the lake everything was just as it was. All Mako’s fishing gear and equipment was still on the dock, untouched. Mako was afraid that his own fear might have caused him to flail his fishing pole out to the murky depths of the lake. Next to the fishing pole lay the hunting knife, still covered in the disgusting sludge of wet sloppy ground meat. “Okay, Mako.” Maggie spoke softly, inching herself closer to the edge of the dock, observing the brightly colored lily pads and reeds. “Open one of the cans for me.” Mako groaned, digging his hand inside the canvas bag to pull out one of the cans and the metal can opener. With the sharp edge of the metal opener and the tremendous strength of his arm, Mako popped the lid of the can in an instant. The pungent smell of meat filled Mako’s nostrils again. This time, however, he remembered not to wipe any of its juices
on his clothing. “Done.” He muttered under his breath, standing behind his aunt like a towering shadow, offering the can to his aunt like an unpleasant gift. Her head moved to nod, but her eyes were still focused on the lake, leaving Mako to hold the can awkwardly in his palm. Maggie’s old white cane lifted from the wooden floor, held up for a few seconds before the rubber end of the cane came down hard on the wooden dock below.

SLAM!

Mako’s heavy shoulders bounced from the sudden shock of the noise. There was no warning. But with the second loud sound of wood and the rubber end of the cane, Mako braced himself. The sound echoed loudly through the lake. Birds perched high on the tree branches fluttered away in fright from the loud bang. Any fish below the dock, scattered in fright by the vibrating waves from above. There was no way this creature wouldn’t be able to hear it.

Not far from where they were standing, next to the large gathering of lily pads and thick reeds, the said creature of the lake poked his head up slowly. A lily pad nestled gently on its scalp, almost like a bonnet. With the brightness of the day the creature’s bright yellow eyes slowly adjusted, catching a glimpse of two figures standing on the dock above. Nostrils and gills flared, taking in the surrounding smells. There it is again. The familiar scent. But now, there was another smell. A smell that made the pupils in his golden eyes dilate. He could see a short, stocky woman. A bun tied up to the top of her head. The inner clockwork of his “primitive” mind finally clicked. Gills flared opened wide when it let out a gasp. It sank back to the dirty depths of the lake below, using the shade of the water to swim towards the dock at a fast pace. Mako eyes were able to catch the creature. Unfortunately, he was too slow to reach out for his aunt in time and pull her to safety. He watched in horror as the creature sprang out from Maggie’s reflection, pinning the old woman down with his massive abnormal body.

To any normal person, they would be screaming bloody murder. In total fear that they were face to face with an abomination against nature. Not his aunt. Maggie’s elderly body was pinned by the weight of this creature, whom was now cackling loudly like a demented hyena. Seeing the full detail of what was in that lake made Mako’s blood run cold. It was a cross between man and fish. The upper torso of the creature was that of a human. A mixture of being both thin and muscular. Muted orange and yellow fins sprouted from its body like shredded weeds, connecting with long black spines that looked deadly to the touch. The missing arm on this creature was cleaned right off to the elbow, leaving only a brightly pink colored scar on the end. Where human legs should be was where the torso ended--replaced by a long, massive, dark brown tail. A tail that looked like it was coated in oil slick, brightly shining reds and yellows under the bright sun above them. The dorsal fin on the end of the tail was all in shreds, more signs of scars were embedded in the missing tissue.

Maggie had absolutely no sign of fear for this abnormality. Her jubilant laugh vibrated across the bush, joining in with the creature’s cackles. The creature rubbed its balding head on the woman’s chest and shoulders. It made quick gasping like breaths, the same kind one would make at the edge of a sneeze. The end of the tail slapped loudly on the wooden floor, almost a complete imitation of a dog wagging its tail happily, body shivering with excitement. The single finned arm wrapped around the old woman in a tight squeeze. Another shrill like crackle joined with the old woman’s laugh. “Yes! Yes, Jamison, It’s me!” Maggie spoke happily, pushing the heavy creature off her slightly. The flower printed dress of hers was now ruined. Dirtied by the mud and slime the creature carried on its body. She didn’t care. All she cared about now was the creature in front of her. Mako noticed that the man side of it looked a lot younger than he expected. Maggie’s chubby fingers ran through the dirty patches of blond hair on the creature’s head. Playfully cooing at the creature like a babe. “Have you been good, Jamie? No one saw you since I left, right?” Mako’s feet were still frozen solid on the wooden dock, bewildered by this thing. This thing that was now
shaking its wet head. It opened its mouth, exposing sharp teeth once more, and spoke, “I’ve been good!”

The Maori’s man blood ran cold, pupils shrinking to pinpricks, appalled that it spoke just like a human. A raw, raspy voice, but it was speaking, “I thought it was you when I found some of me grub in a cage!” The creature turned to look at Mako, lips stretching out wide to offer a menacing smile. “HIM! I saw him! Is this that Mako person, right?” Oh God, Mako was sweating bullets. It knew his name. Its golden eyes were locked on the giant in front of him for a few seconds before turning to gaze at the elderly woman. Maggie was slowly inching herself out from under the creature’s weight, causing him roll to the side with a thud against the wooden dock. The small pectoral like fins at the beginning of his fish body held the creature up slowly. They were small, fragile looking, but they were strong enough to carry his human side’s weight. “Yes, Jamison. This is my nephew, Mako. Hope you take a good look at him, as he’ll be taking care of my home, and you.”

Mako’s entire body sprung back to life as he blurted out, “WHAT!” Some native birds fluttered away from the booming voice of the Maori, squawking in protest to the voice that scared them shitless. “NO. WAY. I ain’t babysitting no one! Especially not a fucking fish freak! This is fucking ridiculous! I’m leaving!” Before Mako could turn around and storm out of this situation, the ‘freak’ let out another chilling cackle of a laugh. “Oi! That’s a new word! How do you say it again? Re...rick… redick… ridiculous?! Oooooooh flows off the tongue just right!” Its laughter was cut short, silenced by the elderly woman’s hand against its dark lips. Maggie approached her nephew who was on the verge of storming out like a mad wild boar. “Mako. I only ask for this one simple thing from you.” Old wrinkled hands grabbed a hold of her nephew’s thick, hairy arms. Her grip wasn’t rough. It wasn’t stern or angry like her usual temperament with Mako. It was gentle. Almost pleading for her nephew to listen to her request, “This place is the only thing I have left. I can’t let the years me and my husband worked so hard for go to waste. I can’t live here anymore.” The old woman paused. The rattling sound of leaves being blown by the wind easing the anxiety between them. “I don’t know how many years I have left.” The boiling anger in the Maori’s blood slowly melted away. God, he felt like a complete asshole. It was true, his aunt wasn’t getting any younger and if she stayed in the outback alone, the same fate that claimed her husband will get her as well.

“I trust you, Mako. You’re the only one I have left in my family that I trust that will keep this place safe.” Mako let out a defeated sigh, shoulders sagging, easing away any tense muscles in his body. Maggie’s arms stretched out to embrace Mako’s round belly. She held him close to her, squeezing the younger man’s gut, clearly appreciating that he stayed, listening to her, and had not ran out of the situation. The old woman turned her head to look at the creature who was still smiling at the two humans who were embracing each other. “I only ask for this one simple thing from you.” Old wrinkled hands grabbed a hold of her nephew’s thick, hairy arms. Her grip wasn’t rough. It wasn’t stern or angry like her usual temperament with Mako. It was gentle. Almost pleading for her nephew to listen to her request, “This place is the only thing I have left. I can’t let the years me and my husband worked so hard for go to waste. I can’t live here anymore.” The old woman paused. The rattling sound of leaves being blown by the wind easing the anxiety between them. “I don’t know how many years I have left.” The boiling anger in the Maori’s blood slowly melted away. God, he felt like a complete asshole. It was true, his aunt wasn’t getting any younger and if she stayed in the outback alone, the same fate that claimed her husband will get her as well.

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“Mako, this is Jamison. Jamison, Mako.” Maggie stood aside, making room between her nephew and the beast. He couldn’t help it, Mako was just having a hard time with this happening. Maybe this was all just a dream. A weird dream that involves befriending a new neighbor that’s a monster. Jamison’s eyes glanced up at Mako’s, amber orbs transfixed on the human’s heavy structure. “G’day!” The creature shrieked happily, only making Mako more bewildered that it spoke... with an Australian redneck accent of sorts. Jamison’s twitchy eyes shifted to Mako’s right arm, now noticing the opened can of dog food. The rich smell of meat attracted large flies in the bush, buzzing loudly around the can and Mako’s hand. “Why did you name it Jamison?” Mako spoke softly, only to take a quick step back as the creature slowly lifted its left arm, trying to reach and snatch away the canned meat from Mako’s grip. A frown pulled onto Jamison’s face, looking
unpleasant for someone who’s half beast. “Well, we all need names, Mako. I wasn’t fond of Jack calling him ‘fish’. I decided to name him after my father.” The woman’s laugh was sweet, remembering the time of naming the young Jamison when he was found. Jamison looked up at Mako again, its slick black tail pushing the creature slowly to reach closer to the human’s tight grip. Jamison’s webbed, clawed fingers were finally able to touch the human’s dry hand. “TAKE IT!” Mako shouted, shoving the can to the creature’s palm. If there were a competition for disgusting sounds from wolfing down a can of dog food, Jamison was the winner of that special award. Loud slurs and hungry breathing escaped through sharp teeth. Gelatinous meat was easily chewed up and swallowed down by the creature, desperate hungry noises as if he hadn’t eaten in weeks. Then again, he just had a portion of dog food not too long ago. “He’s... Not the best when it comes to table manners.” Maggie spoke, looking at her nephew sheepishly. “I know you two will get along just fine. Especially with fishing here.”

A bell inside Mako’s mind rang. Hearing the magic word sparked a bolt of energy into his body once more. That was the reaction Maggie was hoping to get from her nephew. A coy smile stretched her plump lips, gazing up at her nephew from below. “Ah, that got your attention, did it? Jamison here loves to catch fish. He always caught us the biggest bastard in the lake for dinner when we were down on our luck with cash.” Mako’s eyebrow raised slowly. “How big we talkin’ here?” His aunt couldn’t help but laugh softly at him, patting the thick wall-like back of her young nephew. “Pretty big. Barramundi sized.” Goddamn It if Maggie wasn’t luring him in even deeper. “I can’t believe I’m doing this.” Mako pinched the bridge of his nose, sighing loudly. The slurping of meat stopped. Jamison finished eating everything that was concealed inside the can. Got a few flies still buzzing around his dirty face, making the creature bite the air in annoyance. Amber colored eyes looked inside the can, looking for anymore bits of juices still clinging to the tin walls. The creature opened its maw, letting a pink and purple tongue out to lick up the leftovers. Mako grimaced at the sight. Was this thing part dog or something? Another deep sigh escaped Mako’s lips. It’s going to be difficult to get accustomed to having a next-door neighbor that’s...well...THAT. “Alright. I’ll stay.”

Maggie let out a loud gasp. Thick fat arms wrapped around Mako’s gut once more. At this point Mako’s tank top was coated by the same mud Maggie had on her dress. Who could blame her? The old woman was overjoyed. Hearing the words she wanted to hear again from her nephew, only this time it wasn’t over a phone line. Mako patted the old woman’s back before he wrapped his thick arms around Maggie, hugging her tightly. Really, he was unsure if this would even last as long as his aunt would hope. Jamison smiled as he watched the two embraced humans. However, an uncomfortable feeling crept along its long, slender body. Heat was drying him up and pain began to swell every nerve ending. It was time to go back. Still holding the red labeled can in his left arm, black claws tapped the metal object carefully as it slowly inched himself closer to the edge of the dock. A new addition to his collection. His hoarding pile would look wonderful with another metal object placed in his nest. Staying above the surface was out of the question for him. In the blink of an eye, Jamison rolled over the edge of the dock, falling into the rich, cool lake water below with a loud splash. Still clutching the can tightly in his hand, he swam back towards the heap of trash he called his nest as the two humans remained in their embrace above the surface.
Mosquito

Chapter Summary

In all honesty, the whole experience felt like a fever dream. It couldn’t have happened. There was no fucking way there was a half man half fish creature swimming in that swampy lake. But it spoke to him. It behaved like a human; waving its single arm around every time it spoke. Odd gestures, but it was very… human.

Chapter Notes

Hello once again everyone! A new chapter is all up and ready for those who are eager to read what happens next!
Pretty happy with how this one came out as it’s finally Jamison's and Mako's 'first' interaction.

Another new OitW illustration for Chapter 3! This time, it feature Maggie and Mako! I have yet to do a full colored concept design for her, but overall this is what I plan for her to look like. http://demonsfromthesun.tumblr.com/post/165885678901/youre-just-as-i-remember-when-i-last-saw-you

Huge thanks to both Rye and Al for being my betas!

A couple of weeks had passed since Maggie visited the old shack. The visit came as a surprise to Mako, not having expected company after almost shitting his pants by witnessing his new strange neighbor. The entire situation was surreal. Absolutely crazy. Mako just found out that his aunt babysat a lake monster for God knows how long. The old woman acted as if it was no big deal. Acted like Mako was just overreacting about the whole ordeal. Only twenty minutes passed once they made their way back to the old run-down home. Mako’s youngest cousin, Maggie’s son, showed up in an old rusted up station wagon right outside the wooden fence surrounding the home. Again with the surprises. Mako’s younger cousin and his small family were gathered around the home. They were all wonderful people, really. Happy people. People who had love and support amongst each other. A bit of Mako’s soul envied that. He envied how supportive they all were. The giant of a man wished his mother had been Maggie. Despite her “tough love” attitude towards him, the old crazy woman by the lake cared about Mako. With a few words from his long distant family and several goodbyes, they left the old shack in a trail of red dust. Mako stood by the entrance of the shack, looking over the horizon as a realization hit him like a wave.

Mako was alone.

The same week of his small family reunion Mako worked with Lidia on his new job. An ideal job of just lifting heavy crates of goods from Wyndham to Murungal, all loaded up in his truck with no problem. A good hour or two of driving back and forth on the open road, seeing nothing but dry orange earth and the blue sky above was relaxing. The dusty wind blowing against his rough face was always soothing. It helped anytime the sun beat down on the cracked earth below. Lidia was
generous with her payment. It wasn’t the same wage as if living in the city. No, nothing like that. The area he lived, the people he met in the middle of nowhere weren’t the rich moneybag bastards Mako detested when he lived in Perth. These were all good people. He hadn’t set foot in that lake ever since the visit. With his job occupying him there was no time to take a breather and fish. In all honesty, the whole experience felt like a fever dream. It couldn’t have happened. There was no fucking way there was a half man half fish creature swimming in that swampy lake. But it spoke to him. It behaved like a human; waving its single arm around every time it spoke. Odd gestures, but it was very… human. From what he could remember, that thing had a thick Australian accent, somewhat familiar to Maggie’s old late husband, Jack. Or so he believes that's how the creature got that thick Australian redneck accent from Jack. The fuzzy memory was locked away somewhere deep in the vault of his psyche. The only memory he had of Jack, was that the man was from Australia, married Maggie when they lived in New Zealand and moved out of the main country again. Still, the idea that the creature spoke like him, almost to the point that it was kind of uncanny, sparked an interest in Mako. Perhaps it all wasn’t a dream?

Mako was able to finish the deliveries for the day. This wasn’t the usual trip to Wyndham and then back like usual. Lidia granted an easy job for the giant. Not that he was complaining. Money is money. The delivery was at the local school in Murungal. The same school that Maggie had been a teacher at for more than two decades according to Lidia. It was strange to be recognized as the nephew of one of the most beloved locals. Maggie was a celebrity in this forgotten town. With the shipment being done, Mako drove off and headed back home. It was noon. The sun nestled high in the bright heavens above. It was the perfect time to grab lunch and find a plan to spend the rest of the day to himself. It was a perfect time to fish.

----------------------------------------

Mako stood by his truck, parked just outside of the easy pathway towards the lake. The toothpick on his lip twitched, eyes scanning the entirety of the vast green lake. It was quiet outside from the usual cries of the native birds and the shrills of the cicadas. It was all white noise to him now. Mako turned back to look at the trunk of his vehicle. He came more prepared this time around to make the day a little more tranquil. A bright blue colored lawn chair hooked tightly under one thick arm and in his hand, was a green and white small cooler box filled with ice, a couple of beers, a mayonnaise and cheese sandwich and a roll of plastic wrap. All his other fishing supplies, save for the crab cage that was lost deep in the lake depths since his last visit were in his other free hand. Heavy leather boots began to walk towards the lake, leaving a trail of crunched leaves behind. Anxiety crept up the man’s spine as he inched closer. What was he really expecting? For the creature to be just sitting there in one of the mangrove roots combing his hair like a fucking mermaid? Come on, Mako. Get real.

Mako placed his belongings gently on the wooden dock. The rattling sound of ice and beer cans bounced when Mako placed it next to the folded plastic lawn chair. To be honest with himself, Mako would be surprised if this cheap plastic thing would last under his weight and girth. It was the only thing Lidia had available in her shop at the time. If it does fail and break under his ass, Mako might have to bring in one of the kitchen tables. The human was making a ruckus of noise with setting up the chair and slowly inching his buttocks onto the plastic seat and making it creak softly under his weight. Ah, good. He’s not sitting his ass down on the ground yet. Mako reached to the right to grab the prepped fishing pole. The cicada lure still clung tightly to the fishing line and a hook underneath it. Everything seemed just about ready to go. With a quick swing back and a hard push, Mako casted his line over him. The loud whistle of the reel twirling as the line flew
above, twirling for a few seconds before splashing far to the empty spot near the thick green reeds. His eyes wandered down next to the green cooler where a hunting knife lay flat on its side. Just in case. Just... in case.

There was silence. A click of the fishing pole popped when Mako turned the reel in for a few inches. There was another sound that made the giant’s ears tingle. A small, gentle splash. The trickle sound of water moving gently, creating ripples he could see out the corner of his eye. He saw it once again. “G’day! I was hoping you’d be coming back.” The creature’s voice sounded absolutely ecstatic. Pleased to see the human returning to its watery domain after a short hiatus. Its muddy head was poking out from the water, shoulders resting underneath the smooth cool waves of the lake as it inched closer to the dock like a meddling magpie. He was real. He was real and was swimming up towards him with such composure in the murky water. “So, It wasn’t a dream then. You’re real.” Mako’s gaze turned back to look at the nearly invisible fishing line. The light of the sun shined brightly on it for a fraction of a second, reminding Mako where exactly his line was cast and the surface above. Jamison wasn’t exactly sure what Mako said about being real or not, suppose that it doesn’t matter either way. “Don’t know what you’re talking about, mate. Boy am I glad to see you!” The creature’s voice was full of joy, completely ignoring Mako’s statement. The creature was wading right next to Mako, its tail curling around the thick wooden poles of the aged dock. Mako grunted softly under his breath. Not precisely sure why it was glad to see him. Their first interaction wasn’t what you would call pleasant.

“You know, you’re the first person to fish in this lake for a while.” The creature spoke sincerely. “Don’t remember the last time I saw someone fish here that wasn’t Maggie’s ol’ bloke, Jack.” Mako swallowed the saliva pooling in his dry mouth, thick fingers turning the knob of the reel slowly. Desperately trying any attempt not to lose his cool and concentrate on fishing. It was still talking and it noticed the line tightly attached to Mako’s palm. “Catching some fish are ya?” The creature chuckled disgustingly, shifting itself slowly to get a better look at the plain looking fishing pole. Dirty blond patches of hair swung side to side, shaking its head in disapproval. “You’ll never catch a fish with just one boring ol’ rod!” There was a loud thrust like grunt that awoke Mako from his trance. The creature tried to hoist himself up to the dock with its one measly arm. The attempt was a complete failure and it fell back hard with a loud splash as it crashed down to the water again. Large waves swung the peaceful lake violently, disturbing any fish who were interested in Mako’s tempting lure. The Maori man exhaled a heavy breath. Be patient Mako. Be patient and keep your cool.

Cackling laughter echoed through the lake and bush when the creature resurfaced once again. A bad effort to try and join the human who obviously wanted peace and quiet. “What ya need is a bigger rod! A big one to catch the fat ones out there. Else you’ll be catching them small waste eating whoops crawling under the mud and rocks.” Bright pink gills flared once he let out a loud snort of a laugh. This creature isn’t a monster. It’s an annoying little rat that wouldn’t shut the hell up. Why did Maggie teach this thing to talk? “Oi! If you wanna catch one of the big...” He paused for a few seconds, letting the clockwork of its mind tick spontaneously as he tried to find the right words. “… Bass, was it? That what they’re called? I don’t know, you humans have the weirdest names for things. Did you know that? I mean why do you call fish different names? It would be simple to just call a fish big or small!” The creature’s single arm swung around as he spoke. Mako still hadn’t muttered a word, just relying on the inner voice in his skull begging for the creature to shut the hell up. Sweat formed on his brow as the sun’s heat cooked his body slowly. Thirst began to ache Mako’s dry throat, making any of his senses feel itchy. With his free hand, the man reached over to the handle of the cooler and his eyes darted back to the hunting knife laying comfortably on
“You don’t say much, do you?” The creature spoke, tilting his head to the side from the confusion of how silent his neighbor was. The long ripped up fins on the side of his cheeks flared. He was trying to listen to any noises coming from Mako by using his fins like ears. A peep. A whimper. A sigh. Anything! Only the long drone of silence from the man and the choir of nature surrounding them. “Ah! That’s fine, that’s fine. Just let ol’ Jamison do the talking for ya then!” A grin spread along its grotesque lips, exposing all the yellowed sharp teeth that smelled of rot. “I know I heard you talk when we first met. But if you’re shy, that’s okay! I won’t judge. Meself is a bit shy sometimes, or that’s what ol’ Mags said when I was yo- oh what's that!?” The creature’s eyes sparked with curiosity. Mako was holding something tight in his left arm that made Jamison’s golden eyes widen. It was one of the golden colored beer cans. The click of the ring tab opened the can loudly, adding invasive noises to the natural world of the lake. The golden can hissed loudly before Mako moved it slowly to his lips. His dry throat welcomed the cool fermented elixir within.

Jamison’s eyes carefully scanned the human above. Curiosity still ticked the inner gears of his ‘primitive’ mind. He has seen that can before. Its smooth shape, the gold and brightly colored design seemed all too familiar with him. The creature’s eyes squinted as its mind worked slowly until he finally realized what it was. “Is that… beer?” Mako said nothing still. The large man took another sip, placing it down besides the lawn chair. It was out of his vision. Jamison wanted to get a closer look, perhaps even a taste for himself. “Maggie never let me have any of that. Said it wasn’t good for me health or sumthin. Ol’ Jack always drank that stuff. He acted funny when he’d had too many.” Jamison let out another loud shrill of a laugh. “I remember this one time, when Jack had one too many, he bumped his noggin flat on the dock right e’re! Mags was really upset. She told him if he ever did something like that she wou-”

“SHUT UP!”

Birds surrounding the lake suddenly screamed and fluttered away in fright. The disturbance of the natural world was broken by Mako’s shout. It wouldn’t shut up. Why wouldn’t it just shut up!? He never asked to have a neighbor that’s a monster. And he certainly never thought it would be THIS annoying. Mako stared angrily at the creature. Its head was submerged in the water, looking up at Mako with its clear eye lids. Jamison slowly rose up to the surface, keeping his mouth shut as Mako pinched his nose bridge. “Look…” He sighed loudly as his tone returned back to normal, “I’m trying to fish here. I had a bit of a busy week. I just… Want to try and fish.” Perhaps talking slowly would give the hint that this monster needed to shut the hell up. Jamison nodded slowly, biting his lower lip and resurfacing up to his shoulders. “Got... Got it.” The creature looked down, still kneading his own lip with his stained teeth.

“Good.” Mako spoke coldly, returning his gaze back at the lake in front of him. The fishing pole balanced on his palm, gripping tightly on the soft foam padding at the end. And then it happened. Something that Mako thought wouldn’t and couldn’t happen to him between man and monster. He started to feel... guilty? The creature hadn’t attacked nor had it talked back to him like a bickering twit. Jamison hadn’t sprung up from the water, pulling Mako down to the murky depths of the lake and slit his throat with those stained sharp teeth. No. He just floated there, pathetically chewing on its lips and twiddling those sharp claws of his against his shoulder. It was picking on its skin? He was picking on the muddy flakes of skin like an anxious rat. Oh god dammit. Mako let out another deep sigh, turning his head to look at the pathetic, rattled creature below. “Can you catch fish?”

Life sprung back into Jamison. His eyes glowed brightly in the sunlight. The strange fins on its jawline rose up in sheer excitement, forgetting everything that just happened a few seconds ago. “Can I catch fish!?” Jamison waved his single hand at Mako, almost boasting with confidence that the human asked such a stupid question. “Do birds fly? Or do they just, swim around in the air like
leeches?” It laughed at its own horrible joke. “Of course, I can catch fish, mate! It’s what I do best!” The Maori man rolled his eyes, begging to differ that fishing might not be what Jamison is best at. “Alright then. Catch me the biggest fish you can find.” If Mako wasn’t going to have any luck with catching fish with his pole, then this freak better be of some use. Besides, Maggie had pointed out to him that Jamison used to catch them fish in the past. “Uhh…” Jamison looked up at Mako, poking his own sore lip with his claw. “Does it matter what kind? I mean there isn’t all that many kinds down ‘ere. I can try and get ya some of me favorite like cods or som--” “Any is fine.” Mako interrupted, his lip twitched in annoyance and regretting himself for allowing to give the creature an opportunity to babble once again. “Okay!” Before even having the chance mutter out another word, the creature was gone. Only waves motioned around the area where Jamison once perched. At last. Peace and quiet. The natural sounds surrounding Mako eased the hot blood flowing through his body. Ah, yes. This was more like it.

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The hot scorching sun beat down on the dry earth like a hammer. Sweat pooled in the tight crevices around Mako’s body staining his grey shirt with musk and moisture. Mako kept himself cool with occasional drinks of the once iced cold beer beside him. The warbled whines of wild crows perched high above the trees broke the silence around him. Mako could’ve sworn one of them almost sounded like that freak. Loud, whiny, high pitched, weird…. Obnoxious. At this point, Mako thought that the monster must have gotten bored. Must have gotten distracted by the fish surrounding the lake and did... whatever lake monsters do. Mako doesn’t have a full understanding in the psychological aspect of monster behavioral. Certainly no one did other than maybe Maggie. Mako reached a hand in the cooler, shuffling around to grab the icy cold sandwich for a few bites. Suddenly, there was a pull on the fishing line. The hairs on Mako’s neck jolted up, quickly grabbing the pole and reeling it in slowly. There was a forceful tug from the other end of the line. Mako’s arm strength focused entirely on the fishing reel, pulling and twisting carefully. There was absolutely no way that he was going to lose this bite! Adrenaline jumped through his body like a lighting bolt, it brought back so many happy memories. Happy catches that him and his father always had back in his youth. And now, after years of hiatus from fishing, it came back to his spirit at full force. There, in front of Mako at the end of the line, was a massive Murray cod. It’s green speckled body shined bright against the sunlight. The sight of the fish dangling at the end of the line made Mako grin happily. His first catch after so long.

“Now that’s more like it.” Mako spoke softly to himself, placing the fishing pole down beside him as he began to prepare to unhook the fish from the lure. There was something odd with the fish. Hell, there was something strange about how the fish was hooked. The lure was jammed deep in its mouth. Almost to the point that the jaw of the fish looked absolutely ripped in half. The force of the fish wasn’t all that strong enough to rip through cartilage and flesh. There was another mystery. Huge bite marks around the fish’s throat were pierced through. Gills punched by sharp teeth. Teeth that no other fish around the lake would naturally have.

“Ya caught one, mate!?” There it was again. That loud scratchy voice. It definitely wasn’t the crows perched above the trees this time. Jamison floated above the surface, looking up at Mako with excitement written all over its face. “That’s a beaut’! Looks mighty big to feed a big guy like you.” Mako held the fish by the jaw, eyes piercing at Jamison as if the creature was mocking him. This creature still had that stupid grin splattered on its face. Did he think Mako was THAT stupid? “Did you put this fish on the line for me?” Jamison let out a loud nervous laugh, the slick like eel body of his shifted under the water. Failing horribly at lying to the human standing tall above. “ME?! Me!? Tsh, naw naw, ‘course not! It was all you, mate!” The creature’s webbed hand spread out wide, presenting Mako in all of his fishing glory by how marvelous he was at catching this morsel.
Okay, this creature is either insulting Mako’s abilities, or he’s just plain stupid. “It has bite marks on it.” Mako spoke deeply, pointing at the dead fish’s neck. Trickles of blood and water dripped down to the wooden floor below. “Could’ve been anyone in the lake!” Jamison suggested, still shifting his body around the water. The reeds and lily pads around him bobbed with every shifting move of his torso. “Certainly it wasn’t Jamison who helped you out.” A toothy smile spread his lips apart, his attempts of looking completely innocent was fooling no one. Mako sighed loudly. This was getting really...really stupid.

At this point, there was no used to arguing with this monster. Jamison helped him catch a fish like he had asked. Mako bent down to the ground of the dock, grabbing a hold of the hunting knife. It was time to prepare to fillet the fish, especially with its size and all, it would be no problem for the experienced fisherman. The sharp blade of the knife scrapped the heavy scales around the fish. It flaked off like dried skin with every scrape. Jamison’s amber eyes watched the human’s work carefully, slowly swimming up closer to get a better view of his work. Unfortunately, all he could see was above Mako’s shoulders and the flakes of fish scales scattering around in the air. The rich smell of fish entrails filled the air around Mako. Jamison’s senses tingled with the scent of meat, especially one that’s all too familiar with him. Mako looked pleased with his work. Fish guts and scales spilled all over the dock like a morbid abstract painting. It wasn’t pretty for Mako, but it’s a job to be done.

“Do you like it here?” Mako turned to look at the monster below who was still gazing up at Mako like a pup. A very dirty, ugly, mangled looking pup. “It’s nice.” The Maori’s answer was quick, still focusing on getting the slice of fish meat off the bones just right. “Good! Good.” Jamison’s voice raised up to the usual irritating pitch. “Lake here is a good place to fish. Lots of food during this time o’ the year.” Jamison’s gaze never left Mako. “Especially after the rains! More fish are around that time. Same with frogs! Oooooo, frogs taste good too! Maggie told me humans don’t eat frogs as much. But I think you’ll like em’ just as much as fish!” Mako was too focused on smearing the fish scales and blood off the hunting knife with his own fingers. A quick flick with his hand and the remains splattered on the lake below, glittering brightly under the waves slowly which made the creature flinch while chattering, “Often times I see big birds try to swoop in here and catch me fish.” Jamison’s tone shifted into something a little more inflamed, “Let me tell ya, birds are nasty! They’re always fluttering around, squawking, and swooping around, stealing my foo-”

“Do you ever shut up?” Mako’s grey eyes looked down at the creature. His question was cold, uncaring, and irritated. Jamison paused for a few seconds, looking around at his surroundings before gazing up at Mako. “Me?”

“No. The other fish monster-- of course you.” The wrinkles around Mako’s nose pinched as he snarled at Jamison. Never did the creature expect a human to act this bitter with him. The creature ducked his head slowly under the water. The fins on the side of his head pinned back slightly. “S-sorry, mate.” Jamison hesitated for a few seconds, “Just... Been awhile since I had me some company.” “I wonder why.” Mako’s cold tone still lingered. “Maggie said she’s getting too old to come to the lake.” Jamison’s torso slowly began to shift. Swimming up to the front of the dock. “Her hips was hurting. I saw her one last time before she left.” The thick oil slick colored tail propelled the creature slowly. “Told me a lot about you coming. And how you were gonna look after the shack and lake.” Mako looked at the swimming creature below. It was mesmerizing. Delicately swimming with its powerful tail and fins. Never in his wildest dreams would he ever thought to see a bizarre creature swim so elegantly.
Guilt crept up the human’s spine like a curse once more. Jamison sounded sad. Desperate and hungry for any means of attention and socialization with another sentient being. “She told you about me?” Mako’s work below his hands began to gather up mosquitoes and flies. Buzzing loudly around the fish entrails and flesh. “Well, yeah! Told me her neph—… ne—… ne-something was the ‘sweetest’ man she knows. Ain’t got a clue what that means. But I guess that means you, righ’t?” A short laugh sputtered out of Mako’s lips. A meaty hand waved above the small swarm of insects above his prized fillets “Old lady doesn’t know squat. Been through a lot since I last saw her. She still sees me as a kid.” Maggie’s memories of a young Mako still clung to her mind like a leech. Mako grunted loudly, swatting his hand at the flies once more before turning to look at Jamison. “You eat this stuff?” Fish guts trickled on his fingers, holding up the entrails to show to the creature below. “Oh. Oh, yeah yeah! I eat that all the time!” Jamison’s eyes widen by the sight of the fish remains on the human’s hands.

Well, that certainly answered his question. Mako reached over to dangle the fish remains above him like a treat. The creature opened his mouth wide, exposing the rows of teeth and swollen red gums. The creature’s pink and purple patterned tongue rolled to the side of his mouth, allowing his jaw to open wider for the treat above him. Mako grimaced at the sight. No way was he going to put his hands anywhere near those diseased teeth of his. “Ugh. Use your fucking hand you idiot.” His mouth snapped shut, pouting slightly as he reached his single hand out to reach up to the fish guts above. It fell into the strange webbed hand of his with a wet plop. Jamison slurped it loudly in his mouth. The mixture of loud smacks and slurps of fish guts made Mako almost throw up in his own mouth. Mako reached over to hand the cod’s head, bones and fins to the monster. Bone crunching sounds made Mako’s skin crawl once more. Well, at least the fish didn’t go to waste.

As the day passed and the sun began to skin lower to the horizon, Jamison was able to help Mako catch more fish after the first one. The thrill of catching the fish with his rod wasn’t all there as the creature could just stalk a fish and catch it with his clawed hand. Three freshly caught fish were properly descaled, gutted and filleted properly. Mako wrapped his prize neatly with the plastic wrap. All the cuts were neatly stuffed in the cooler, some of the ice having melted away, but it was still cold enough to store the fish perfectly with the other cans of beer. A good catch from Jamison didn’t go unrewarded. The creature was fed the remains like table scraps. It wasn’t all that bad. Though, Jamison would enjoy having a little bit of meat more than just bones and slimy fish guts. But the creature can just hunt more later if his hunger struck him anytime soon. Mako began to pack all his belongings neatly. The Maori was excited that tonight he’d have a fresh fish dinner on his plate.

Jamison’s head bobbed up above water, observing the human walking back and forth to his truck and back to the dock. The creature slowly inched closer to the edge of the shore, his soft belly touching the muddy earth, trying any means to get Mako’s attention before the human left for good. “You’re leaving?” Mako turned his head to look back at Jamison. Only the light hint of sunlight began to fade slowly, making the creature look more ominous in the blue lighting. “Yeah. Gotta cook the fish tonight. They taste better when they’re fresh.” Jamison’s head tilted to the side. It smiled softly, looking desperate at the human in front of him. “Will you be back tomorrow? I can catch more fish for ye. Or… Or maybe we can talk some more.” Jamison’s tail slowly moved as he waited for an answer. “Hmm. Don’t know. Don’t care. I’ll have other food at home. I’ll only come here when I want fish. That’s all.”

Jamison’s fins drooped low. His wide smile slowly faded away into a frown. What did he do wrong? Certainly, he did everything the human asked him to do, right? When Maggie or Jack asked Jamison to catch something for them, they always rewarded Jamison. Praised him for his hard work. But this human. This giant, fat, muscular, stubborn, rude, human won’t offer any real reward
for Jamison’s hard work “Well, I’ll see you.” Mako turned his back to the lake, heading back to his packed-up truck after a long day.

“WAIT!”

Jamison shouted. Mako stopped in his tracks as he looked behind him. “Wait ‘ere, mate!” In a desperate attempt, the creature wriggled his body back to the deeper edge of the shore. Loud splashes of water from his heavy tail flailed around. Mako watched the creature disappear into the water below, not exactly sure at what it was trying to get at. This was just all too weird for him. Mako had no time for this nonsense. Besides, it was getting too dark for his own comfort. The engine of the truck roared loudly in the distance. The bright headlights faded away as Mako drove back to the shack with his prize. Jamison resurfaced with a loud gasp of air. Holding something in his single finned hand. It was the crab cage. The same cage Mako used in his first day of fishing. Mud coated the corners of the cage and any remains of dog food were long past gone at this point.

“I found it! I saved your-...” Jamison paused. No one was there. Only the darkness of the creeping night surrounded the lake, along with the slow beginnings of frogs croaking. The monster looked down at the cage. His last attempt to keep company had already headed home. The fins on his head pinned back, a snarl of a shout escaped his teeth as he tossed the cage over to the dock. “Fine! Don’t leave your trash here again, you shithead!” Sound of metal clanging loudly on the wooden dock caused the choir of frogs to freeze. Jamison sunk down to the depths of the cold lake and swam over to his dirty nest. The only place in the lake where he can ease his anxiety momentarily.

The thick roots of the mangrove trees hid the bright half-moon’s light above in the sky. Even with someone living in Maggie’s old home, Jamison’s hopes of having company at a constant basis wasn’t all that much of a possibility. The creature’s massive body coiled around himself on the treasure trove nest of his. There was no need for him to go out and hunt tonight. No. His belly was still full of fish. The memories of Mako feeding him lingered in his mind. Jamison kept his eyes open, looking at the reflection of the moonlight above him wave around in a hypnotizing motion. It wasn’t fair. He did everything the human told him to do and just like that, Mako just plainly left him in the darkness of the lake. Maybe what Maggie said about this human was wrong. Jamison’s frustration kept brooding deep in his thoughts, looking around the darkness of the muddy depths of the lake, a realization crept around him like an unforgiving shade of neglect.

Jamison was alone.
Chapter Summary

The night he cooked his fresh caught catch by the lake, was perhaps one of the most pleasant dinners Mako has had in a while. It was amazing. Rich in flavor and melted in his hungry mouth like warm butter. It was one of the best tasting freshwater fish for Mako. Cooked nicely with a side of rice, topped with a variety of dusty spice bottles scattered inside the old pantry. Ah yes, nothing like simple spices like salt, pepper, and thyme can give an extra kick in flavor for a delicious meal. Mako wanted more.

Chapter Notes

A new chapter is up and ready for those who are waiting so eagerly what's gonna happen next! This is by far one of my favorite chapters I have done thus far. Why may you ask? Let's just say, the entirety of this chapter is fear based and that's the kind of content I love to write. It isn't as big as most horror based writings I do. Also, I will leave a huge content warning in this chapter; THIS CHAPTER DEPICTS SEMI GRAPHIC ANIMAL DEATH. So be warned!

As usual, a new illustration for chapter 4 is also done!
http://demonsfromthesun.tumblr.com/post/166868083926/mako-grunted-loudly-swatting-his-hand-at-the

Thanks to Rye and Al for being my betas and getting first dibs!

The night he cooked his fresh caught catch by the lake, was perhaps one of the most pleasant dinners Mako has had in a while. It was amazing. Rich in flavor and melted in his hungry mouth like warm butter. It was one of the best tasting freshwater fish for Mako. Cooked nicely with a side of rice, topped with a variety of dusty spice bottles scattered inside the old pantry. Ah yes, nothing like simple spices like salt, pepper and thyme can give an extra kick in flavor for a delicious meal. Mako wanted more. He wanted to be more experimental next time around. What other flavors and sides could he add to make the next meal more delightful? God, with how good the fish tasted, there was no need to buy meat over at Anderson's. The price is fair from the old man's shop, but no doubt everything was all refrigerated, stale from the days of being frozen no doubt. He wasn’t about to stop going to that aged little market anytime soon. Fish can be good, but Mako can’t eat it all the time. He need to buy fresh produce, bread, dairy, all the other basic needs in his food pyramid. Maybe, with those old empty clay pots outside of Maggie’s shack, Mako could start planting some herbs. Fresh fish with fresh herbs no doubt would be just as pleasing.

Mako arrived at Anderson’s. Just finishing his last shipping order from Lidia’s place. The loading and unloading shifts from Murungal to Wyndham and back were a breeze. But it can be dull. Repetitiveness for Mako always made him agitated, especially when his fat ass goes numb from all the constant sitting and slouching. Today was different. The plan for today after his shift was to head to the lake, catch some more fish and have another nice fish dinner. Maybe a can of beer by
his side while he fishes out in the peaceful bush. The perfect life of a bachelor.

Anderson’s turned his head over to look at the old creaky door in front of the building. That old wrinkled face of his stretched into a soft smile, showing his sunken tired eyes at the greying giant approaching him. The fear that once flooded Anderson’s voice with their first encounter was long gone. Now, the old man treated Mako like a close friend. A friend that not long ago, was going to get a bullet in that massive gut if he tried to do anything stupid. “G’day, Mako!” Anderson’s squeaky voice chirped loudly at the behemoth of a man, who was now going through the aisles with a dusty old basket in his thick fingers. Mako muttered softly, waving his free hand over at the elderly man. Still, even with knowing Anderson for a while, the man enjoyed his privacy when going through the small aisles around the store. Mako found a few items he’s been searching for, placing them neatly in the basket in an orderly fashion.

Not long after going through the aisles around the various small tables of fruits and vegetables, Mako finally finished his ‘shopping spree’. The bright green colored basket was placed over the old cracked wooden counter where Anderson stood behind. “All done now, big guy?” Anderson smiled, grabbing the contents of what was inside the basket. A fresh lemon, a stick of butter, a bottle of paprika and a bundle of asparagus. The old man mumbled under his breath, pressing his crooked fingers on the register to calculate the price of each item. At first, Mako flinched with each ring coming from the register, but for now it became an annoyance. “What’s for dinner tonight?” Bless Anderson's old gentle heart by how chatty he was with Mako. The discovery of this giant man, a man that none the less looked like he could crush your skull with his bare hands was Maggie’s “sweet nephew” he heard so much about. But the giant wasn’t rude. Or so he would like to think to himself that he wasn’t rude. A huge fat lie. The old man would suggest dishes and recipes to try. Meals that was inexpensive and flavorful for the heavy man. Every suggestion he’s gotten from Anderson, always satisfied his taste buds, be it with just cooking up vegetables or rice.

Thick plump lips smiled down at the scrawny elderly man. “Hmmm. Fish again. Caught myself some fresh cod not too long ago. Best tasting fish I’ve ever had too.” Anderson let out a gleeful chuckle. The old freckled hands of his reached out to place the groceries inside the small brown bag. “Aye, mate. The fish in Garrayura river are simply the best there is! No other fish taste just like ‘em anywhere else.” No doubt that many of the town folk here go out to fish by the river that Mako has yet to see for himself. Perhaps they do taste just as good as the one in the lake by his home. Why bother with going out to the river when he’s got a nice lake right outside his door. The giant shook his head. The white ponytail on his head swayed in disapproval. “Didn’t fish there. Caught them by the lake near Maggie’s home. Bet they taste just as good.”

The smile on Anderson’s face faded away like a cool breeze on a hot summer day. His old eyes were locked at the Maori man’s face, transfixed in a deep and frighten stare of that similar to a sick animal. “I-I told ya before, Mako.” Anderson’s bottom lip quivered as he whimpered in his own breath. “It ain’t safe to fish in those waters.” What hair was left in the old man’s head slowly flared up, fear was in his voice and Mako couldn’t understand why. “Ain’t Maggie tell ya?” The elderly man inched closer to the giant in front of him. His voice was a harsh whisper as he continued “That lake, Mako. It’s no good. There’s something lurking in that forsaken lake. Something that just doesn’t feel right. Almost evil.” Anderson sounded like a whimpering anxious child. It crept him, like a cold icy touch. “I saw it. With my own eyes, Mako.” Anderson paused, swallowing hard as he continued. “Something wicked swims in those murky waters. It’s not a croc for sure. Something, not natural.”

Anderson at this point, was just repeating himself over and over. As if Mako’s hearing was just as bad as his. But no. Mako heard the old man clearly. But what he was saying, brought more confusion to his head. Did this old buzzard saw Jamison? Sure, Jamison looks out of the ordinary.
An abomination of the natural order of Australian fauna… but evil? If anything, that fish was more of an annoying little prick that likes to talk a lot. Though, Mako wasn’t going to lie to himself. He was terrified when he first saw the creature rising up from the dark waters in the lake, with his sharp teeth and glowing orange eyes. Maybe Anderson only saw a fraction of Jamison’s alien body. The Maori man hummed softly, cracking the bones on his already stiff neck. “What exactly did you see there?”

“A bunyip.” A frighten tone shuddered in Anderson’s voice as he finally placed all of Mako’s groceries inside the paper bag. “A... bunyip? What’s that?” Mako had to admit to himself. He isn’t so savvy with the native fauna of the land. Sure, he knew his basics; wallabies, koalas, those noisy whiny sounding magpies, and invasive animals that are doing more harm, but he’s not a zoologist. “They’re these horrible creatures that live close to billabongs and rivers.” Anderson swallowed his own fear back down to his belly.

“They’ve…they’ve got the face like a croc. Body like one too. But they look much more mangled… Kinda like a sick dog almost. W-with human teeth!” Mako was starting to feel kinda bad with watching this tiny old man rattle himself up with the vision of his so-called monster. “It’s got long fur too. I... I saw it there when I was planning on fishing at Maggie and Jack’s place a long time ago.” Another hard swallow. “It was around before dawn I believe. Think I wanted to catch some fish early before the run rose up. Then I saw it. It was wading by the shore, looking for something.” The elder man whipped the sweat from his forehead. “I think it saw me. It made a horrible… terrible scream before it scurried out of the water and into the bush. It sounded like a woman.”

This old geezer was definitely not talking about Jamison. A crocodile dog that screams like a woman? Naw. The ‘monster’ he was more familiar with was a muldeja--.., something. Whatever that word Maggie said that his scraggly neighbor was. While Jamison does look out of the ordinary, there was nothing monster-ish, personality wise, with him. Mako hummed lowly. “How long ago you say this was?” Mako asked, while looking down at the elderly man below. The man reached to his back pocket, pulling out the black leather wallet to finally pay for his groceries. If he stayed here any longer, the butter would melt like ice cream on hot asphalt. “Fifteen years ago.” Anderson still hasn’t moved his eyes away from the fat Maori man. “Mako. Don’t fish there, mate. If you keep fishing in that lake, you’ll attract it.” A dry sigh came from Anderson’s lip. “Lord knows how long Maggie was able to dodge the bullet from that…that thing.”

At this point, the old man was fidgeting his boney fingers against the back of his hand and the leather looking skin around his knuckles. Even now, Mako was starting to get a bit uncomfortable by how much this small man was shaking and drenched in sweat. Mako let out a sigh before nodding firmly to Anderson. “Alright, alright. I won’t fish there anymore, old man. I’ll try and fish out in that river nearby.” The beady eyes of the elder man widen under his thick framed glasses, quickly looking up at Mako with hopeful eyes that he finally got through his thick skull. “Ya promise me? Promise me you won’t even think about swimming in those waters either?” A pig like snort came out of Mako’s nose, nodding his head once again. “Yeah. I promise.”

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If there's one thing humanity excels at when it comes to survival, it’s deception. Mako’s plan to return back to the lake again wasn’t to just to end today. An old buzzard’s paranoia of whatever he saw in that lake fifteen years ago wasn’t a good enough excuse for him. It was most likely that
Anderson saw Jamison. Must have seen that big ass tail of his in the water, confused by the shape and form and thought it was like that of a croc. Just like last time, Mako parked his truck at the edge of the trail leading towards the lake. All his fishing gear was tucked away at the back of the truck, all prepped up for another relaxing day of fishing. All the groceries he bought at Anderson’s were with him, still in the brown paper bag from earlier. The plan for today, was to catch, cook and eat at the same spot. A small fire pit would do nicely just by the dock.

Mako grunts as he placed the heavy ice cooler down on a dry patch of earth by the shore. The only thing inside the container, where things he needed to cook. An iron skillet, sturdy enough to be placed on top of hot coals and cook just as well as a stove. A fire near the cooler would do just fine. “Best start the fire pit now before fishing…” The voice in Mako’s mind spoke towards himself. He scanned the area, looking for any large dried up branches that have fallen long ago. The man’s heavy footsteps trailed along the edge of the lake, still observing around and finding fuel for his fire. That’s when he noticed something was odd. Something that was unusual for the lake at this time of day.

It was dead quiet.

The repetitive chirping of cicadas was almost nowhere to be heard. Mako could’ve sworn he’s heard it not too long before he realized how quiet it was. A whistle came to his side when he felt a slow breeze brush against his dry skin and hair. Green and brown leaves rattled against the wind, only to stop momentarily when it subdued. The calling and cries of birds were also absent. There was a fraction of a second where Mako could’ve sworn he heard the flutter of wings behind him, but there was no sign of the bird anywhere. “Oh...kay, then.” Mako said to himself, feeling uneasy by how silent the world around him was. It’s not out of the ordinary that nature would take a day off and make everything sound like a graveyard, but he had been away from the lake for a while. Maybe the change of weather made all the cicadas flutter somewhere else and find food?

Mako found more branches and twigs for his fire near a rotting remains of an old eucalyptus tree. Strong hands snapped the heavy branches into two, until some of the dead wood was small enough to be placed in the short mound of tree debris. Anytime Mako snapped the branches, the sound would echo loudly through the bush like a wave. It sounded unnatural to the point it made a sound similar to bones breaking and crunching. A sound all too familiar with Mako. He can’t recall the amount of times he’s gotten into fights, punching stupid drunk men with his bare fist and crunching their skulls with his strength. The memory made his thick hide crawl, white arm hair slowly rise up like static.

Suddenly, there was another sound. A sound that made Mako’s heart almost jump out of his thick barrel like ribcage by how noisy it was. It sounded like a man. A man crying in pain and fear. All the small pieces of branches dropped from his hands, glancing over to the direction of where the wailing noise was coming from. It was coming from behind a thick dried bush that once flushed beautifully after the winter rains. Now, there were two men? Another low, mumbling cry. No, wait. Mako’s squinted his eyes slowly, looking at the bush far from the edge of the lake. The dried bush rattled violently, shriveled up leaves falling and twitching as whatever was making the cry was lurking behind the bush.

The Maori man’s feet were planted onto the red cracked earth. Ready to hightail it out of there if whatever was behind that bush, decides to chase after him. Was this that bunyip that Anderson was talking about back at his shop? The terrible creature he saw lurking by the lake fifteen years ago? Maybe it really wasn’t Jamison. Maybe the bunyip is real. Wait. Mako’s grey blue eyes fluttered several times, seeing small horns poke out from the bushes as the figure emerged out from his refuge. A huge sigh of relief came out of Mako’s lips, seeing what he was so afraid was now something so harmless and pitiful. It was a small black and brown goat.
Soon, there were several more goats coming out from the thick wild bush surrounding the area. These were all feral goats that have escaped from a pen many years ago no doubt. Now, roaming around the Australian outback like invasive vagabonds. Some bleated softly to each other, communicating to the heard that after a long day of wandering around in the outback, they finally found fresh water. Five goats in total were all gathered up at the edge of the lake, quickly nipping and drinking the sweet fresh cool water with their soft lips. Their tails wagged in excitement, cleansing their dried throats first before deciding to meander around the lake and eat any fresh greens that recently sprouted. Mako would be in denial if the site of the creatures didn’t make him smile. It seemed odd, but there was a sense of comfort that he would be having company not too far from the lake that’s more wildlife. Well, with the sound now being that of just harmless goats, best to finish and get the fire started.

Mako bent down to the small mound of tree branches and dried vegetation all neatly placed on top of each other. It looked just about ready. Mako reached to the back of his pocket and pulled out a match box out. With several quick flicks of the match head to the thick striker at the back of the box, the match lit up in an instant. It popped several small embers when Mako placed it on a clump of dry grass, slowly letting the flame grow as it touched the fire pit. “Much better...” Mako spoke to himself, looking down at his creation as the flame grew larger by each second. The small popping sound of wood and grass rang into Mako’s ears. There’s just nothing like a nice camp fire while you’re out fishing. The man thought it would be best to find more branches to let his fire grow more steadily as he fished. Mako got up from his knees with a low grunt. The man could hear the goats bleating in the back, some of the younger goats started to romp and prance around the shore of the lake. The playful goats, the sound of the fire slowly cracking and Mako’s footstep were all that echoed around the quiet lake.

Then it happened.

There was a loud splash followed by a loud wailing scream that rang loudly through Mako’s ears. Mako caught it completely while he watched one of the last goats to drink. A black, massive shadow sprung from the water and coiled around the caprid. It was a long, black, wild creature that Mako was all too familiar with. It was Jamison. The creature ambushed the sickly looking small goat, bleating loudly for its life as Jamison sank his jaws deep in its throat. Long eel like body coiled tightly around its prey’s hairy body, squeezing it tightly as Jamison held on with every inch of strength he had in him. All the other goats scattered away in fear, bleating loudly as they ran away like lost ants. All that was left in the lake was Jamison, his catch and Mako. Mako was just staring in shock as he watched the whole thing happening. Jamison’s body slowly began to move closer to the lake, pulling his prey hard with his jaws, dragging the frightened creature down to drown it. The gills on his neck flared as he tugged even harder. The black eel like skin in his lower body began to release something odd. It looked like mucus?

With one last pleading cry from the poor innocent goat, trapped by tight clenched jaws and slipper coils, Jamison and his prize sank deep into the watery lake. Both were gone. Silence once again returned to the lake like a curse. Mako watched the entire event happen and just stood there, his entire body was completely frozen. All the other goats that survived were now long gone, traumatized by losing one of their herd and by the grotesque creature they saw sprung out from the water. Mako knew Jamison was there, in the deep crevices of the muddy lake below. Drowning and eating his meal in the disgusting sludge like water below. Jamison was a monster. A beast that hungered for flesh and blood like a crocodile. Maybe Anderson was right. That old geezer must have seen Jamison in this lake that day. Mako’s blood ran cold, sweat pooling on his back and staining his dark grey tank top, transfixed on the lake still.
Witnessing an animal being slaughtered, screaming for its life wasn’t in his to do list for the day. Mako returned back to the fire pit, looking down at the bright embers coating the dark burnt branches. Mako wasn’t even sure what to do now. Should he just pretend what he just saw never happened? Or, should he just head back to the shack, broken and hungry? There was no denying that Mako was waiting for a sign. Anything at all to make his brain function once again back to reality. The heavy man groaned under his own breath, verbally frustrated at himself. His heavy feet began to walk towards the dock, hands deep in the old dirty sand colored shorts. Upon reaching to the dock, the man looked down at his own reflection at the water below. No clue how long time has passed since he’s been staring at his own reflection. Seconds? Minutes? It didn’t matter anymore. All of that was suddenly broken by Jamison’s bright golden eyes peering at Mako under a patch of slimy lily pads.

“You came back!” Jamison boasted happily, slowly swimming his way up to the dock and under Mako’s reflection. The creature looked feral as the rich stench of death reeked out of his sharp mouth. His eyes still glowed brightly, still captivated by the human’s returning back to his domain. Not a single word was uttered from Mako. The man was silent, hands still deep in his pockets as his grey eyes continued to scan around Jamison’s face. “Are ya planning on fishing today, mate?” The creature smile still wouldn’t fade. “Boy, let me tell ya. The fish today are kinda scarce. Been having a hard time catching anything down there me’self. But don’t worry! With your bait and my genius, you’ll still be eatin’ fish tonight!”

Mako was just as silent as the bush surrounding them. “Ah, typical Mako. Always shy around me.” Jamison thought to himself, still failing to see the blank emotion on Mako’s face. “Well, just so you know ol’ pal!” Jamison chirped happily, lifting his sharp chin up proudly with a giggle. “I ain’t hungry right now. Don’t think I will be for a few days, really. So, there’s no need for you to feed me any more fish guts right now. I just recently got a belly full already, and-”

“I saw.”

Jamison looked up at Mako, surprised to see that the human finally spoke, at last! Jamison was starting to forget what the human sounded like again. It has been a few days after all. Jamison’s smile turned into a grin. A boost of pride filled his ego that a human, none the less a strong looking human, watched him at his best work. “Ya saw me hunting, mate!?” The dull orange fins in his jaw line frilled up in excitement. “I did really good this time! Not often am I so lucky with catching something that big too! Maybe a few wallaroos now and then, but this time...oi, it was a biggun! Blood tasted really rich-”

“Do you eat people?”

Mako spoke again. Only now, it sounded colder than the first. Jamison’s excitement started to slowly drain, as his brain ticked slowly at the question. Jamison pouted slightly, looking up at the human with a confused voice. “Eat people?” Sharp claws crept out from the water to scratch the delicate dirty scalp of his, scratching and rubbing on his patches of hair at his own confusion. “Uhhh… I don’t ever recall I have. Or wanted to, mate. Plenty of other stuff to eat in the lake.”

“But you killed something outside of the lake”

There was a sense of venom in Mako’s words. It was harsh, cruel to Jamison that the human was pointing fingers at. The poor creature was still having a hard time understanding just exactly what Mako was getting at. Of course he just hunted something outside of the lake? Anyone with two sets of eyes would have noticed. It’s not the first time Jamison has ambushed an animal from the land, he’s done is many times before. Just as he said before, most of his prey were smaller animals. Jamison always had his goal towards the younger or sickly-looking ones whenever he watched
them from under the lily pads or reeds. “Well, yeah. I wanted to eat something other than fish.”

The human didn’t look convinced by Jamison’s honest answer. A sneer twisted Mako’s face, his eyes still locked on the pitiful monster below. The glare stung viciously like an insect bite for Jamison, making him sink his head down in submission. “I... I don’t get what ya trying to get with me. I mean...” Amber eyes gazed up at the human above him. “I mean... You come to my lake, catch and eat my fish.” A webbed hand reached out to scratch the prickly fins around his head.

Anxiety came to him like a wave, once again picking the mud and algae off his skin. “It ain’t a fair bargain at all.”

Jamison had a point. The lake was his home, his terrain, his world. Mako was an invader of his territory whenever he stopped by to fish. And with the creature breaking the rules of leaving the lake to hunt an animal, was strictly taboo for Mako. “Sides, I never thought about eating people.” Jamison quickly mentioned when Mako looked down at the water for a second. “Only ones I know are Maggie, Jack...” There was a slight pause. “And you. I ain’t known any humans other than that.” Jamison slowly swam to the left side of the dock. “Would like to see more humans. I always remembered old Mag’s talking about the young humans she used to teach in town.” The creature’s toothy smile eased his anxiety whenever he thought about Maggie. “I always wanted to go with her.”

“A freak like you shouldn’t be anywhere near people.” Words were colder than the frigid nights in the outback. No amount of Jamison’s human features would convince Mako that he was nothing more than a monster. Jamison’s expression changed instantly, eyes widening slowly at the same time as his frown. “If you act like an animal, you can’t be anywhere near people. How do I know you’re telling me the truth?” Amber eyes darted up at Mako, sharp yellow teeth biting down on Jamison’s cracked lips. Mako was rubbing more salt on the wound already. “I get it now. I get where you’re going at with me.”

The creature slowly started to back up, glaring at Mako with a vicious snarl like that of a hungry flea-bitten dog off the streets. “You think I’m nothing but an animal, righth? An animal that just crawls on its belly and let you have all the spoils of being more civilized because you’re ‘human’?” Yellow stained teeth gnashed at the human above. All his fins began to flare up with bright colors as blood pumped wildly throughout his body. Jamison turned his back towards Mako, the fish like hip slowly adjusted slightly to curve above the water. The long ripped finned tail scooped up enough water as it trashed violently to the human, sending a wave of water at the giant’s direction that hit him like a hard slap. Mako was completely soaked.

“You little shit!” The giant shouted, wiping water off of his face as some got into his eye. Giant fist reached up to rub the stinging eyelids slowly, grumbling loudly in frustration. Jamison was gone. The creature sank down into the watery depths below after splashing Mako. The human pushed too many buttons for one day. It was his own fault. Jamison was just doing what he can to survive all on his own in this pitiful hole filled with water. That didn’t matter to Mako. Angry footsteps made the human storm out of the dock, heading towards the fire pit and kicking dirt to extinguish the burning branch. A day of fishing is all ruined, no thanks to him.

Mako packed all his belongings back to the truck. The day was completely wasted for his own prejudice and arrogance. Jamison never resurfaced when Mako was packing his belongings. No doubt that the creature would be eating his ‘prize’ down below, contaminating the waters. Mako’s mind replayed the day when Maggie visited, mentioning that Jamison’s kind are known to swoop children who were too close to the edge of the water. Give him the chance and Jamison would more than likely do the same to any children living in Murungal if they ever got too close. Mako
failed to realize something as he was driving back to the shack. It was getting dark at an alarming rate.

With how quiet the bush has been all day and the night sky advancing to Mako’s likings, the Maori thought that things felt too surreal. With the last items he was unloading from his truck, Mako headed back to the shack with quick feet. The screened door slamming loudly behind him once he entered inside the dark house. First things first, He’s gotta get out of these soaking wet clothes no thanks to that little fuck. Mako reached his cold hand to the light switch next to the kitchen door way, the light above the ceiling sputtered for a few seconds before slowly giving the warm yellow glow around the room. Even with light turned on, the unnerving feeling crept about the shack.

As Mako walked towards his bedroom to grab a pair of dry clothes, the man heard something that broke the silence surrounding him. It was a disturbing sound that set the white hairs on his neck to shoot straight up like an electrical current. A loud scream that echoed loudly through the wild barren lands of the bush. No other known creature could even possibly replicate this sound, this scream. It was a mixture of a woman...and something else. Something more sickly and twisted. Mako could've sworn, he heard gurgling between the pitch of the human like scream. What made his blood run cold, was that the scream sounded close. Too close.

Mako didn’t care that his clothes were still soaking wet when he rushed back to the front door of the shack. Trembling hands began to lock the front door instantly. Never in his life has he heard something so terrifying before. He was scared by the bleating cry of the goat from earlier, but this was much more alarming. It was haunting. The giant took a few steps back, eyes gazing at the front door and making sure that there was no way whatever was outside would even get in. But, what if it can’t? What if whatever he heard outside, was Jamison? Could it be that the scream was the very monster living out in his own lake? Another proof for his senses that his neighbor was indeed less than human.

However, it sounded much different than the cackle and shrills of that of Jamison. Yes, they were loud, annoying, and aggravating like nails on a chalkboard, but they sounded like laughter he heard in the streets, in towns, in bars. It was more human. Whatever did make that sound was the complete opposite of human. Mako had no choice. Tonight, he would be sleeping with the hunting knife close to the nightstand. It’s been a long, long time since fear would cause a disturbance in Mako’s sleep.
Chapter Summary

The warm air of the Australian outback brushed softly against the cracked red earth below. Clouds of red dust floated up with the gentle breeze across the sky as the orange glow of the setting sun gazed upon the land. There was an empty highway, a road that only traveled to one direction that made no sense to where it was going exactly. Over the distance of this barren, single roaded land, a low humming bellow that sounded like a roar.

Chapter Notes

WAHEY! New chapter is up and I get the feeling this one is shorter than the previous chapter I've written. Huge thanks to Rye and Al for still being my betas!

The warm air of the Australian outback brushed softly against the cracked red earth below. Clouds of red dust floated up with the gentle breeze across the sky as the orange glow of the setting sun gazed upon the land. There was an empty highway, a road that only traveled to one direction that made no sense to where it was going exactly. Over the distance of this barren, single roaded land, a low humming bellow that sounded like a roar. A roar that didn’t dare to stop for a breath of air as it grew closer, louder, hungrier from the horizon. The roar was that not of a living being. It was a roar that sounded metallic. Specifically, it was a motorcycle of the chopper kind. A bike that was custom made to look more animalistic. Filled with sharp pointed spikes from its wheels. Designs of wild angry boars were coated around the open vehicle like tattoos. It fit the rider’s personality and name perfectly. The beast was named ‘Roadhog’.

The rider looked just like he did almost every day whenever he was taming the “hog”. Thick leather jacket with spikes poking out from the shoulders, more pig-like motifs etched at the back of his jacket just the same as the metal coating on the bike. A cough mask covered his nose and lip to ease his breathing against the chopper’s thick oily smoke. Everything the man owned had that similar design, a pig wearing a gas mask. It was his name, his title as the boss for one of Perth’s most ruthless gangs out there. Normally his mates would be trailing alongside him, following their leader as they ventured through the open roads of the outside of Perth for hours. This time, the man was alone. For whatever reason, he was alone in this barren red clump of dirt.

The sun’s heat wasn’t bothering him one bit as he wore his heavy jacket. But the sun still reared its heated fangs out even as it slowly sank over the horizon, but for some reason, it felt like the glowing hot orb above the sweltering sky wasn’t moving an inch. The air felt thick, dry and hot but still, not a trace of sweat was beating down on the man’s head. He just rode his bike on the empty highway, black asphalt heading straight to the skyline for miles to whatever purpose lies ahead. The Hog continued to follow the black path ahead, wind blowing softly against the rider’s dry and cracked skin. His white ponytail brushed against the wind like a nervous dog’s tail. Slow and steady, but a trace of nervousness and restlessness. Despite how fast the giant was driving his bike,
the wind around him was soft, weak and forgiving.

No sense of direction the man felt like he was going other than ahead. He could be heading north, south, west, east? Did it really matter to him at all? The giant was on his most prized possession, his status still remained as it was, his leadership unchanged. The man’s head slowly glanced to the side of the road, tall red hills sprouted from the earth like infected boils. All were too similar shaped against each other, only patches of empty space between them made the hills different in an unspecific way. Another turn in the other direction besides him, the same as it was to the right. Unchangeable. Indistinguishable. There was something odd going on.

The man’s eyes glanced down at the massive bone-crunching tires of his purring vehicle. The tires weren’t moving. The spikes at the side of the tires weren’t spinning viciously with the rubber soles of the tire. No, nothing from his bike was moving other than the engine snarling loudly like a feral cat. Despite the oddity, the man wasn’t disturbed one bit. Why should he be? Everything felt just fine. Time felt like it was passing through slowly. Seconds felt like hours on this lonely road. The sun still hadn’t moved an inch since the realization of this world. The star above just nestled between the crimson sky and the earth below. At that point, the man felt like it was taunting him with a grim-looking smile on its face. If his mates were here with him, they would burn out that punk ass flaming ball of hot gas instantly. Such a shame. None of his mates were here. It’s just him and Roadhog.

Roadhog.
Mako.

The crimson hills around him were now frozen in place over the distance. It was almost as if the world itself has stopped. Time was non-existent in this realm where he stood on top of his vehicle. Mako climbed off of his bike, there was no need to push on the breaks and put on the kickstand on. It balanced perfectly by itself on the cracked black asphalt. Mako looked around the horizon, the setting sun still beating down on the earth below. That was just it, all that was around him was red clumps of earth and the bright orange sky. The man was in complete isolation. A world where only he existed by himself. Did his previous life exist before? Are his gang mates still around or are they just a fragment of his imagination in this empty warm void? Was he in purgatory and his punishment was to remain alone for the rest of his pitiful existence?

Mako’s boots crushed any minuscule clusters of red dirt laying on the black road. The crumble of dirt stained his boot like chalk. For some reason, Mako wanted to walk out towards the empty fields, abandoning his Roadhog in its place on the road, leaving it in the only trace of human activity surrounding him. The Maori man took very slow steps ahead before there was a loud creaking sound of metal behind him. Shock made his guts twist in a knot, as he turned in a flash by how loud the sound was becoming. His bike, his roadhog, his status as “Boss” was slowly beginning to crumble down into a pile of metal debris. The tires deflated slowly once the front suspension gave away, crumbling on itself as the bike fell over on it’s side. There was nothing he could do but watch as his bike become little more than an unrecognizable pile of metal, rusting slowly by the natural elements in a matter of seconds.

Mako felt completely naked. Out in the middle of nowhere with his only means of traveling to whatever destination now just a pile of rusted decay. There was nothing else to do, but to keep on walking forward. The man walked alongside the empty highway, hands buried deep in the pockets of his leather jacket. He could feel that there was something inside the right pocket. Something long and sharp that pricked the tip of his finger like a bee sting. The man pulled out whatever was hidden inside, only to come to realize it was a hunting knife. A knife that reeked of decaying flesh.
Bright colored scales coated a side of the blade like glitter. Fish Scales. Did he always have a knife in this pocket? Did it always reek of fish entrails and smell like waste bin of a fish market? Why hadn’t his mates told him that he stunk like a dead fish?

Out in the distance, the man could see something ahead of him that blurred by the heat wave beating on the earth. His footsteps grew louder booming like thunder as he ran towards whatever he had glanced up ahead. Someone or something was here with him in this barren isolated wasteland. Friend or foe, the man didn’t care other than the fact that he wasn’t alone. While he paced faster, there was a sudden change surrounding him. Something that caught his attention the moment it happened. The sun began to set. The once orange sky above him, faded to a bluer like color. The heat surrounding him faded in a soft breeze as cold coated his exposed cracked face. Orange hills slowly faded into the abyss of the night, no indication that they ever existed in the first place. Complete shadows by the fading light.

Mako continued to walk. Pounding footsteps paced faster as the clay earth crumbled below his feet. He felt he was getting closer. Closer to whatever was awaiting ahead of him. No matter how much he tried, how much his breath wheezed under his heavy gut as he ran, the man was getting nowhere. The distance was still the same. Still, too far, farther than he would have expected. Just like when he was riding his bike. Mako stopped to catch his breath, the cloth mask sucked in with every inhale from his mouth, touching against the bristles in his chin. Grey eyes squinted towards the object ahead of him that was soon slowly fading into the night sky. He could finally capture what exactly was ahead of him.

It was another human. At long last, someone else. Mako could just get there in five seconds flat if whoever was ahead of him would just stay there and wait. The giant wanted to run again despite how exhausted his old lungs were, but something held him down. Something cold, wet and solid. With the sun now a distant memory and the night sky darkening the world around him, the man couldn’t tell exactly what held him down.

Mud.

His boots were cemented down into the earth, slowly sinking him down with uncomfortable pressure. Mako reached his hand out to pull his leg up with tremendous strength, only to fall flat on his stomach with a loud muddy slap. No amount of struggling and pushing with his powerful limbs was strong enough to pull himself up from sinking mud. He was like a fly, stuck deep in the web of a hungry spider, soon to lurk out from the shadows and catch it’s prey with sharp venomous fangs. The smell of mud and sweat filled his senses to an intoxicating level, breathing becoming thinner like a single thread.

Down the man sank in deeper into the cold unforgiving mud. Down till his head poked out from the last surface of fresh air around him. His body wouldn’t budge under the mud which oddly made the sinking progress even faster. Something that made his blood run cold. It was a scream. A scream that was all that too familiar. A scream that sent the hairs on his neck straight up as it would be something to keep him up at night. A scream that was just bellowing, right behind him. Shaken eyes slowly turned to look at his thick shoulder. Whoever or whatever was behind him was inching closer, with deep hungry sounding breaths.

Mako’s breathing became heavy as he sank in further down into the red clay. The hot steamy breaths behind him fogged his hearing, no longer able to listen to his own. Eyes shut tight as he awaited for whatever it was, to touch him, to drag him out of the sinking mud and end this momentary suffering. But Mako wasn’t pulled out of the mud by the crushing jaws of death.
Rather, Mako was pulled down into the red earth by a mysterious force. A force that wielded a human-like hand.

Mako opened his eyes. He was floating. Floating in a dark watery abyss like world that was hidden under the sinking mud. There was no sense of worry, no sense of dread surrounding him as he drifted in this void. The man’s pale eyes looked above him, the moonlight beamed across the surface of the water in a harmonious calm. Bubbles wriggled up to the surface when the man opened his mouth, there was no sense of worry about drowning. Mako could breathe just fine. He could see something swimming above the edge of the water above him as the gentle moon rested above. It was a figure, a long slender eel-like figure, swimming gracefully against the moonlight above. Roadhog wanted to reach his hand up and join with whoever was swimming above. He wanted to be with someone, anyone, just as long as he wasn’t going to exist in the world all alone. Perhaps this void would be much kinder to Mako than the surface above.

No amount of kicking and paddling was enough to make Mako swim up towards the figure. Exhaustion hit his body like a wave. Arms and legs slowly went limp in pain, eyes still focused on the figure peacefully swimming above. Mako could've sworn the whoever was above him, was waiting for him. Waiting to join in this serenade of the night with open arms and a smile on its face.

Nothing was happening.

No.

Mako was sinking.

Tired limbs made no effort to struggle even more. The man just sank. Down into the dark watery abyss. Down to the point that the moonlight only glistened like a dying gem. Down, till the figure swimming above him only looked like a speck under the fading light. Mako was sinking, down to God knows where. Down, till nothing was felt but complete isolation and loneliness. Down, till the man awaited for death to claim him in this watery grave below. Down, till there was no memory of his existence and no one would ever remember the man, Mako Rutledge.

Mako woke up.

The Maori man gasped loudly as he sat upon his bed. Sweat dripped from his moist shoulders and stained the sheets under him. The room was still dark as the only source of lighting was the moon high above the black veil sky. Mako’s mouth felt dry, cracked and irritated. A lick of his lips eased the dryness, reaching a hand over the nightstand and grabbing the cup of cool water he always placed there every night.

The coolness of the water in his mouth eased the man’s anxiety momentarily. It was nice to come back to reality after experiencing something too uncomfortable. But even with it being a dream, the memories plagued Mako’s mind. It felt too real. His muscles felt sore and throbbing like he had been swimming a marathon. The reality of being completely isolated in the middle of nowhere, only accompanied by the barren natural landscape of the Australian outback, wasn’t too appealing for Mako. He missed his mates, his bike, the countless miles of just riding out on the open road with his roaring hog for hours. All he has are those fond memories of yesterday. Everyone was back in Perth. His Roadhog now belonged to his best mate who’s now the ‘boss’ of the gang. That
life is now long gone. Only a memory.

Mako’s head turned to the window, white greasy hair covered his eyes as he focused to the darkness of the night with a realization coming back to his mind. Who was that person in his dream? The one he saw above the surface before sinking into the earth? Was it one of his biker mates? Or maybe Maggie? Anderson? Lydia? Jamison?

Mako shook his head, pulling his greasy hair back slowly as he chuckled. Not even in his dreams, was Mako safe and sound from that freak next door. “God..” Mako mumbled softly, adjusting himself back into his bed more comfortably between warm and damp blankets.” Little shit can’t give me peace.” Mako’s eyes looked at the window, still dark with the faint choir of crickets outside the shack, slowly lulling the giant back to each passing second. Whatever was behind Mako in that barren wasteland of a dream world, Jamison must of pulled him down in that water like abyss. Maybe, pulled him down to safety away from the dangerous above? Even with the hunting knife secured in his pocket, ready to strike out at the mystery being behind him, Mako was too scared to fight back. Maybe..

Maybe this was a sign to give Jamison a chance.

Mako’s eyes slowly closed to that thought, drifting off into slumber once more. Crickets still chirping softly over the distance, as the black sky slowly turned blue with the warm sun slowly inching over the horizon every passing minute.
Mako sat in the comfort of his old beat down truck, parked securely under the old nailed up gum tree that sat right next to Lidia’s shop. Dirty fingernails dug into the black rubber cover of his steering wheel, grey eyes completely set on the ‘bait and tackle’ poster just behind the shop’s dusty windows. Mako’s mind was completely blank, only focusing on what exactly was that thing that caused that horrifying ghastly scream?

Hello everyone and happy new year! I've been a while since I've last updated. Last month was pretty busy for me and I haven't had the time to finish up this chapter as I hoped. But luckily, I have plans to upload this and one more chapter this month to make up for the lack of updates.

This chapter is a bit shorter just like the last. Trying to further write the character development for Mako and for him to stop being such a dickweed. Thanks to Rye for being my beta and helping me out!

Several days have passed ever since Mako had that strange dream after watching Jamison hunt for the first time. He couldn't shake his mind off how real everything felt. The dryness of the air surrounding him, the loud bellowing purr coming from his once valuable prized chopper, the smell of dry cracked earth baked from the sun’s bitter heat. There was also that strange thing Mako heard breathing deeply behind him, making the bristle hairs on his neck stand. There was the other conniption at the end of his strange night terror. The mysterious figure, over the distance that seized his imprisonment in the mud and the hand that pulled him down to safety, only to be sinking down in the deep water of his dream world. Mako would never forget the silhouette of the figure above him, swimming peacefully on the moon’s reflection, waiting for Mako to join him in his slow waltz under the surface.

Just like every other day, the sun-scorched through the outback like an oven. The only difference this time was the humidity growing ever so thicker as the day went by. Humid weather, while a bit agonizing for humans, the wildlife flourishes happily with the sudden wet jungle climate. Buzzing cicadas hummed even louder above the gum trees, successfully finding mates to copulate and bring forth more noisy insects. Flies and mosquitos have grown larger in numbers with the change, buzzing loudly every passing second and joining in the jubilant commotion of the bush. Nature and time had absolutely no memory of that once silent day. The same day where Mako last visited the lake and witnessed a hungry predator in the lake. The same day, where Mako heard a deadly screech that sent an icy cold chill in every bone in his massive body. It was a memory that made the Maori fear of the unknown surround his tiny home.

Mako sat in the comfort of his old beat down truck, parked securely under the old nailed up gum
tree that sat right next to Lidia’s shop. Dirty fingernails dug into the black rubber cover of his steering wheel, grey eyes completely set on the ‘bait and tackle’ poster just behind the shop’s dusty windows. Mako’s mind was completely blank, only focusing on what exactly was that thing that caused that horrifying ghastly scream? Whatever or whoever it was, Mako’s mind couldn’t make sense of it. Was a person murdered out in the bush? It sounded almost exactly like that. A loud shrieking woman’s scream. But it sounded more... sinister. Not even the noisy ruckus of the bush surrounding him would snap the Maori back into reality. A magpie warbled loudly above the roof of Lidia’s red fading building, snapping its ivory beak at the large buzzing house flies coating the hot roof. Everything was just the same for Mako. Undistinguishable. Unrecognizable. Unintelligible. No way to tell what or who, was making noises. That was until a loud metal banging of metal rang loudly in his ears that was soon followed by a sweet and loud familiar voice.

“Oi, Mako? You aight’ there? Looks like you’ve seen a ghost.”

The Maori man’s eyes fluttered, his mind quickly bringing him back to reality once he heard his name out loud. It was Lidia, standing just outside his truck’s door with a smile on her face. The aboriginal woman was wearing a bright maroon dress covered in thin orange and yellow stripes. She looked down at the sweaty man inside that beaten down truck, raised an eyebrow just as her dried hand banged the door of his truck once more. Mako coughed slightly, completely embarrassed by Lidia catching him dozing off into space. He slapped his plump cheek with his own clammy palm, wiping the trail of salty sweat dripping from his face. “Yeah. I’m fine.”

“Ya don’t look fine to me.” Lidia pouted, humming softly to herself while getting a closer look at Mako's face like a nurse. “Can’t have my kiwi working for me if they're feeling sick,ey?” The woman grinned as she watched Mako’s eyes dart at her, responding with an eye-roll and a side smile. The two have gotten along well ever since he started delivering, loading, and carrying goods from Murungal to Wyndham for her business. It's a good job. Always has been since he started working in the middle of nowhere. The roads were now becoming familiar to the Maori with living near Murungal for almost a month and a half. Often times, both Mako and Lidia would throw snarky remarks at each other as they worked. Even with how well the two work together, a part of him felt that they’re both were just coworkers. Lidia’s has her own family, helping amongst each other with running the shop. The Maori only does the job the others didn't have the time or energy to do. It paid decently and got food on his plate, but there might not be a possibility for Mako to find another job in this lonely town. Many of Lidia's family worked and ran other businesses in Murungal. He remembered seeing a younger cousin of Lidia’s, working at a gas station that Mako drives by when heading to Wyndham and back. Everyone all seemed to be connected in this small, little town in the middle of nowhere. Everyone here, including Maggie, were all just part of a big community.

A family.

“I ain’t sick.” Mako finally muttered after several seconds of delay. “Just.” Pausing slightly before letting out a deep exhale “ Thinking the heat is finally getting to me. It ain't this hot back in Perth.” Mako whipped his forehead once again, sweat trailed down to his lips which made him scowl at the salty bitter taste of his own flesh. The aboriginal woman let out a soft snort at Mako's sour face. “Ain’t gonna last that long.” Her muscular arm rested on the top of Mako's truck with a light bang. A good thing the shade of the gum tree made the metal cool enough for her to place her arm there for her to lean on. “Heavy rains are coming in soon, especially right after this mini heatwave at this time o’ the year.” Lidia's fingers tapped on the roof of the truck, playing a rhythmic metallic tune as her dark eyes looked down at the greasy Maori man. Mako's eyes grew wider. Rains? Soon? Maggie did indeed inform him about how severe the rains are out here, even to the point of there being floods in the bush. Mako was also sure the house needed some revisions done as well. Holes and cracks still linger on the roof of the house and if Mako wanted to sleep dry, he better get that
problem resolved first before it’s too late.

Lidia’s hand smacked the roof of Mako’s rickety old truck that made the giant’s heart jolt. “Tell you what. I’ll send ya home and let you work on stuff you gotta do to get ready for the rainy season coming up. If that ol’ shack of Maggie’s ain’t ready for the rain, best you be sleeping at an Inn.” It was almost as if Lidia was reading his mind. Her contagious smiled beamed brightly at her genius memory of Maggie’s old shack and the constant revisions that house needed almost yearly.

“Trying to get rid of me?” Mako snorted loudly with a light chuckle. But Lidia did bring up a good point. The rains were coming in soon and Mako had never experienced what it means to ‘rain’ in the bush. Back in Perth, Mako had the safety of living in an apartment complex, completely protected by the natural elements in this untamed red continent. Lidia shook her head in disapproval as she spoke loudly. “If I was trying ta’ I would have done it a long time ago.” She laughed "You're one scary looking bastard from afar, Mako. You're lucky you're Maggie's side of the family.” The woman slapped her hand on the metal door, finishing up the conversation with her final decision. “I’ll let ya go, early.” Lidia paused. This man might not have experience with well, fixing tiny beat down shacks. "But come inside the shop. I’ll show ya what you’ll need to fix the holes in your roof, city boy.” Lidia’s smile was still contagious. The same goes for that boisterous laugh whenever she was in a good mood. It made Mako smile. A small, soft cheeky smile that showed off some of his yellow stained crooked teeth.

A heavy sigh escaped from Mako's lip like the sound of rolling thunder. He already gave up on Lidia's game and took the offer of staying home for the day. The Maori man stepped out of his truck once Lidia took a few steps back, her arms were crossed as she waited for the Maori. “You win this time, boss.” Mako joked, shutting the door behind him right before arching his back. Hot red blood slowly pumped back to his sore and aching muscles. He walked alongside the heavy woman, boots thudding loudly on the old dried wooden steps towards her shop. “You know I don’t like it when you call me that, Mako.” Lidia let out a low huff, patting Mako’s back and shoulder firmly. “You’re a good man, Mako. Ol Mags is lucky to have a nephew like you.”

The hot evening sun continuously beat down on the dry red earth below. Even with the rains approaching, the sun didn’t spare any mercy with its heat. Chirping cicadas wailed loudly on the shrubs surrounding Mako’s home. But now, there was a loud banging sound that disturbed the natural chaotic melody of the bush. A lone sulfur-crested cockatoo perched high above one of the gum trees close to the wooden pallet fence surrounding the shack. The curious bird looked down at the tiny home, trying to get a glance as to what exactly was making that loud echoing noise. The bird’s bright yellow crest frilled up with excitement, tilting it’s feathery head as it finally found the source of the loud commotion.

It was Mako. Standing tall with the aid of an orange-tinted ladder, leaning over the roof of the shack with a nail and a hammer on each hand. It was a blessing that Lidia lent him this ladder for the day, it definitely would make his work on fixing and covering all of the cracks and crevices easier. The giant hammered loudly with careful precision on a spot where the cracks were peering through the old rusted metal roof slats. Filling it in with slabs of new metal panels and wooden planks that would last for several years. The ringing sound of his hammer echoed loudly through the bush with every bang. Mako held a few nails between his plump lips, continuously hammering on the clean metal slat against the old cracked roof. There was high doubt on his mind that this old tiny shanty could support his massive weight and the smartest choice was to stay on Lidia’s ladder. Sweat rolled from his forehead down to his chin, dripping onto his muted green shirt with a fading image of a cartoon pig in the center of his chest. Even with how exhausted he was, with the sun biting his skin, all the hard work would be worth it. The Maori would much rather have the sun
burning his flesh momentarily than sleep in a wet damp bed during the rains. The hammering continued to echo across the vast wilderness. Mako’s grey-blue eyes were completely focused on the silver nail, sinking down further with each hammering while being absolutely careful not to smash his own thumb. More sweat stained his overly washed shirt that made the giant feel much more uncomfortable. The harsh heat surrounding him and the sun’s reflection on the metal slats made Mako’s vision blurry. It was as if his brain was slowly being cooked in an iron skillet. The man’s white ponytail flopped to the side of his scalp, heavy with the amount of sweat it was soaking up. He needed to get this done. The sooner the better. Just one last nail on this slat and…

“GRAAWWNKKKK!”

All of his hard work, concentration and careful precision was completely wrecked. Paranoia kicked in inside his well done cooked mind. His hammer missed the nail completely, slamming hard on an edge of the metal slate and leaving an ugly dent. It was a miracle Mako didn’t smash his thumb. Mako turned his gaze to where the shrieking sound was. No one was there. No one except Mako. Completely alone in the middle of nowhere.

“Grawwwnk!”

There it was again. The scream was coming from behind him. Mako turned his head to look, ready to either fight or make flight. ”Oh…” Mako’s dry voice almost sounded like a whisper, finally figuring out what the noise was coming from. It certainly wasn’t human. But it was the cockatoo, perched high above the eucalyptus tree was squawking in response to the loud noise Mako was making. It's bright yellow feathers frilled up beautifully, looking down at the human who was now thankful it was just something harmless.

Perhaps he was overworking himself too much. All of these noises and heat were playing with his head. Thirty minutes on top of a ladder fixing the roof of this old beat down shack can be exhausting. Not to mention, Mako isn’t that all too fond of staying up high on a ladder for that long. There was that lingering fear that anytime when he least expect it, the ladder would fall to the side bringing Mako down with it. Heights was one of Mako’s least favorite things to deal with. Heavy muddy boots climbed down on the metal steps with a shudder. Mako’s anxiety was piling up every step down he took. With one last leap from the last step, his feet were flat on the ground with a harsh thud, lifting up a small cloud of red dust. Mako really needed a break. His aching body was writhe for a quick escape from the sun. Besides, the urge to pop open a can of beer and grab a quick bite really sounded delightful. Mako’s eyes scanned the bush, making sure the cockatoo wasn’t planning to give him another heart attack. Just before he started to walk back, his peripheral vision caught something unusual. Close to the back of the shack, near the pallet walled fence was the old dunny. Its door was mysteriously wide open, allowing swarms of insects to buzz loudly around it. It made Mako grimace with disgust. The man walked around the dunny, looking at it with a sour pout and closing the door with a quiet shut. It suddenly re-opened slowly, letting out a loud creak of old wood and metal. Ah, there’s the problem. The door lock is completely rusted. Better he gets that fixed before other animals would want to mysteriously venture inside.

The Maori man rubbed his chin slowly, closing the door one more time and placing a large stone that was lying near the dunny, sealing it shut for the time being. It wasn't a priority now, Lydia's shop has plenty of home hardware he's sure to grab. Mako turned around to head back to the shack, eager for the cool taste of his beer and snack. That was until he caught something else. Something that Mako completely forgot since the first day he moved to his new home and until now. Just behind the shack, below the window to Maggie’s room, was a large blue tarp. The blue veil was
hiding something like a prized treasure. Just a quick peek to look what’s inside wouldn’t hurt. Mako walked up towards the large tarp, using his palm to brush away all of the old dried up eucalyptus leaves and red dust coating the blue plastic blanket. What exactly was behind this tarp? The size was pretty massive, almost in the shape of a tub or something of the sort. Perhaps some of Jack’s old belongings? Or maybe just a pile of collected junk? With a hard tug of his tremendous strength, the blue tarp flew over his shoulders, falling down to the red earth with a loud dusty slap. Mako’s eyes fluttered for a few seconds, realizing his mistake of releasing old dust to fly over his face. Quickly he held his breath, turning his head to the side as the dust cloud flew by him with the wind. A miracle that his asthma wasn't triggered by his stupid mistake.

A girthy arm swung the remaining cloud of dust away from his greasy face, looking down at whatever the mystery prize he had just won. To his disappointment and confusion, Mako’s eyebrow lifted slightly at the ‘prize’ below. It was a beaten down tub made out of pure wood. By the looks of it, it might have once been a hot tub. It was old, cracked and filled with cobwebs that many insects now made their home. The rust surrounding the old nuts and bolts had given away to the elements, leaving only the trace of where they once were while only being supported by the metal bands surrounding the wooden planks. But that wasn’t the only thing inside the massive tub that made Mako blink in confusion.

There was a wooden dog house resting in the aged tub, nestled perfectly at the bottom with the natural decoration of leaves and cobwebs piling up on it. It too had been aged poorly by the elements just like the tub. Dusty, bitter and cracked. What exactly was all of this? Before Mako could even try to put the puzzle pieces together, he spotted something on top of the dog house also resting perfectly in this time capsule. A purple dog collar with its tag still neatly dangled to the front of the collar. Mako swallowed hard, carefully dusting away the old wooden tub with his bare red dust coated hands. With closer inspection, Mako noticed there were claw marks surrounding the walls of the tub. They all looked sharp and deep indicating that something lived inside it. Something or someone was forced to live inside this thing like a fish bowl. It clicked, as he could now guess exactly who. The only other person Maggie would know in this lonely shack.

Jamison.

Mako’s head turned to look at the left of him. His eyes wandered over to the direction of the path that leads to the lake only to be covered by a grove of gum trees, slowly swaying to the warm gentle afternoon winds. Was Jamison Maggie’s pet? Was this old collar and dog house belonged to Jamison too? Who on earth would want to adopt a monster? Maggie boasted constantly on her visit, that the creature was just as smart as a human. It talked like one, acted like one, sort of looked like one too. Mako’s dirt coated hand reached down to grab a stick lying nearby. The purple collar was out of his reach with his own hands. If he did try and reach down to grab the collar, the tub would snap by the pressure of his massive muscle gut against it. With a quick flick of a stick, Mako was able to nab the collar, dangling brightly with the sun’s reflection. The old tag still had its original owners name, perfectly engraved on it like a headstone.

“‘King’. King?” Mako read softly as he cleaned the tag off with his girthy thumb. To his surprise, the man thought that the monster’s name would be engraved on the tag. Well, the dog house certainly does confirm it. But since when did Maggie have a dog? There are many things that Mako still didn’t know all that well about his aunt. His own fault for staying far away from his own blood. From the collar nestled gently in his hands, to the cans of dog food tucked deeply in the pantry, things slowly clicked. Maybe everything he thought about Jamison was wrong. Maybe he really wasn’t a monster. Maybe Maggie and Jack really did adopt Jamison and raise him to be a human. Hell, maybe this dog, might have been Jamison’s pet?

Scratching the back of his bristled neck and looking down at the purple faded dog collar, snuggled gently on the Maori’s palm, the man gulped harshly with a dry throat. Guilt was beginning to swell...
his mind over his stupid bigotry like a boil. Perhaps Jamison wasn’t a monster like he thought.
Course he looks like one, not every day you would see a human with an eel-like tail, but the freak
wasn’t a vicious rabid lunatic that would rip out his throat if given the chance. Hell, Mako has done
worst shit in his life while being in his bike gang. Violence was the daily life of a biker, just like
almost murdering someone for starting shit or looking at you funny. But, were they really
different? Memories quickly flashed through Mako’s mind of that day. The day when he saw
Jamison hunt the vulnerable goat, completely oblivious to the dangers hiding under the lake
waters. But, just like any other living creature on this planet, they need to eat. Humans eat meat just
like any other carnivore. Jamison was doing something that came naturally to him and Mako was
no better about it.

If Jamison truly wanted to have human meat on his menu, he could have just pulled Maggie down
to the depths of the lake, sealing her fate and leaving her whereabouts a complete mystery. The
lurking creature in his dream after that day wasn’t Jamison. There was something much more
primal, heavy and old that felt more primitive than a hungry fish man. Jamison did appear in his
dream. The hand that dragged him to the safety of the waters before the creature could come even
close to a trapped Mako. His silhouette above the moonlit water that begged for him to come closer
and join him. Then everything fell apart in the end. For his own punishment, Mako was alone at
the end of it. Alone in the dark abyss of his dream. Only to be awakened back to reality and realize
even here, he was alone in this haunting outback. The giant gently placed the collar back on top of
the dog house nestled in the tub. Covering it once more with the dirty blue tarp like a blanket,
returning the relics back to their slumber under the Australian heat. This house has too many
secrets. The mystery of how exactly Maggie found Jamison was still up in the air for him. Mako
should have asked every full detail of how she and Jack found Jamison. That of course, would be
another thing he would have to ask next time they meet. For now, his own instincts were begging
him to get into shade.

Mako quickly walked into the shack and headed towards the small kitchen. Finally, his body can
enjoy the cool shade of the little shanty. Mako popped open the fridge, reaching in to grab a can of
beer to cool his dry throat. Another minute longer and Mako could have sworn he would die of
heat stroke and be part of the mystery surrounding this place. The mystery of why an idiot Maori
man didn’t take shade for a second and died like a jackass. With a loud crackling pop, the giant
began to drink slowly, trying his best not to chug the can with his undying thirst. It hit all of the
right spots and already he could feel his body temperature slowly cool down. Mako let out a deep
exhale as his shoulder slumped. At last, his thirst was eased. Mako’s feet moved towards the small
kitchen table, sitting on the rickety old white painted chair while glancing over at the window near
the sink. The bright blue Australian sky shined brightly over the horizon, with a small flock of
parrots flying high above the gum trees. There were many thoughts that ran through Mako’s mind
to the point it all sounded like static. The giant’s fingers flicked on the tab of his beer can, letting
out a quick ring each time his fingernail clicked it. Who knows if Maggie would ever forgive him
for being a complete dick. For her nephew not being the person who she thought he was. Maggie
trusted Mako to look after her home, her lake, and her monster. God only knows if the old woman
would even want to see him again. Especially Jamison. That poor, pathetic looking freak of nature
that was once crammed inside that hot tub like a trapped hairless rat. He could almost envision
Jamison grinning happily in that tub, happy to at least have a companion with him. No clue as to
how long Jamison might have lived in that tub before moving into the lake nearby.

Maggie must have told Jamison that he would soon have a friend who can visit him in that
billabong. A friend who would visit him almost every day when she had to live with her son. A
friend to remind the creature, that he wasn’t alone in this desolate wasteland. And now, Jamison is
living closely with the biggest dick hole on this side of the continent. Mako might be Jamison’s
third encounter with a human. A terrible human from the city. The Maori slapped his face softly,
his own fingers trailing down and pulling his swollen lips down with a deep groan. Maggie would never forgive him if she did come back to check up on her home. Maybe, she would be so upset at him, the old woman would just die in front of him with a broken heart. All because he thought Jamison was a complete sin against nature. God, he really did fuck up big this time.

“I can’t get that little shit off of my head, can I?” Mako’s conscious spoke to himself, taking another harsh drink from his beer and finishing the can with several gulps. “Come on Mako. You’re no better than he is. A big cunt like you almost killed a few fuckers for just calling you a ‘fairy’.” A smile spread across his lips as his voice raced through his ears “That freak sputters like a gangly rat. He's harmless. The freak is harmless and if he does try anything, you can just fuck him up like those blokes at the bar.” The giant hummed softly, turning his head over to look at the pantry next to the stove. If he was going to do this, he’d better do it right.

The man got off of his chair, walking over to the old white painted pantry and swung one of the doors wide open. What was once a semi-empty pantry when Mako first visited, was now filled with various canned goods, boxes of instant macaroni and cheese, rice in glass jars, pickles and yes… the can of dog food still where they first were when Mako first visited. Still nicely tucked far in the back for crab baiting purposes. The original plan to use them for yabbies were out of the question. Perhaps, it was time to use the dog food as bait again. Only this time, he planed on catching something of more interest.

Something bigger and far smarter.
With the buzzing swarms passing above the surface of the calm waters, other animals would try and take advantage of the egg-laying madness. It was the perfect hunting ground for dragonflies and other carnivorous insects that preyed on the pest. Their large wings would beat loudly like a toy drone, chasing and catching any slow moving mosquito off from the air with their sharp mandibles. Two dragonflies quickly became three. Four. Ten. Until they became a swarm of themselves.
One young overweight barramundi caught serval unlucky dragonflies in less than ten minutes. Small pieces of the insect's wings still clung to its toothy gaping mouth as it swam around. Its large eyes scanned the surface of the lake, using the sunlight to pinpoint the shadows of the massive hovering insects. Its main focus was hunting, catching and eating. Completely distracted from the dangers lurking in the darkness below, where even larger predators hide behind the thick flora and dark tree roots, waiting for the right moment to strike. There was a sharp force that stung the fish for a second before it could react. Sharp scale piercing teeth snapped around its plump belly like a bear trap. No amount of struggling and kicking off its short tail would set the fish free from the grip of a clenched jaw. The sharp teeth sank in further, letting out a low crunching noise that made the fish gasp in pain.

It was Jamison. He was the top predator in this small mosquito infested lake and it was him that made the laws of nature abide by his needs. The taste of blood gently lapping on his tongue made Jamison’s excitement spike, pupils shrinking down to size and triggering his predatory senses. Jamison shook his head in a harsh and rapid force, an attempt to assure the fish was good and dead. Blood and bubbles wriggled out from the monster’s face and from the opened wound around the barramundi belly. Small pieces of guts and blood rose up to the surface, staining the water around the monster like a red mist. Jamison quickly stopped when he was getting himself dizzy, slow spinning glowing yellow eyes looked down at his prey. Oh yeah, it was really dead alright.

Jamison took the fish out of his mouth, gripping it gently with his webbed hand before placing it back in his mouth to eat. The crunching sound of bones and cartilage against yellow stained teeth were muted by the denseness of the billabong water. The creature has had a few years of experience with hunting before. But from what he’s learned, the slightest weather change would indicate the ideal prey to hunt. Wet and hot weather? Perfect time to fish with the insect activity going on above. Hot and dry weather? Perfect time to hunt thirsty land animals who want to take a drink from this lake. Almost every day, whenever he wakes up from the shadows of the mangrove roots, the creature would wise up to the surface to check the weather for the day. An added bonus would be the long and thin fins on his jawline. The sensitive membrane could feel the temperature change more easily than his own skin. A strange benefit of being half amphibious.

Jamison disappeared to the muddy depths where the sunlight glowed in a dim golden light. Twitchy hands still clinging to his meal, chewing voraciously in a bloody mess. He sank further down until his pale underbelly touched the sludgy decayed tree remains on the lake bed. With a harsh gulp that extended the gills around his neck, the monster finished off the most savory bits of the barramundi. All that remained was its mutilated spine, half of its head and a shredded tail. All wouldn’t go to waste. Jamison dropped the remains beside him, watching it slowly skin down like a feather. Not that bones and cartilage can’t be digested, he just preferred to just eat the meaty parts for now.

A purple and pink splotchy tongue licked his dirty upper lip, cleaning off any remains of fish scales while spontaneously enjoying the flavor around his putrid mouth. A few licks suddenly stopped when he felt a dry itching feeling in the back of his throat. Pink gills flared slowly, trying to wriggle his tongue to figure out exactly what's going on. It was sharp, flat and flaky. A sharp fish scale no doubt, clung tightly to the soft squishy flesh behind his tongue. Jamison hacked loudly, trying to shove a finger in his mouth any attempts to clear out the scale. He needed to be absolutely careful, any tug or scratch in his mouth from his claws would be bad. Jamison swallowed some water, hacking while shaking his head rapidly. It wasn’t working and now things started to feel more uncomfortable. The long oil slick scared tail of his slowly coiled onto a large chunk of decaying tree branch, knocking it over slightly with his strong grip all the while he was continuing with hacking. Completely oblivious to the creature that was wriggling slowly under the rotting wood.
With a harsh gag that sounded like Jamison would regurgitate a slurry of fish guts, the scale was slowly pulled away with the tip of his dirty clawed index. Jamison’s jaw extended slowly, still trying to keep his meal inside with deep gulps of rancid water. The wood shifted once again in a slow shove and Jamison felt it under his skin. His amber eyes darted to the side of his black tail. Then towards where the tip of his wounded tail and fins were touching the branch. There was another sensation that was all too familiar. A thin, prickly and sharp leg climbed on the end of his tail at a sluggish pace. It was the legs of a blue yabby with long pinchers that snapped at the creature as a threat display. Jamison’s pupils expanded, quickly moving his arm over to swat at the crustacean off of his tail in a panic. Unfortunately, he was too slow to stop the yabby from pinching a spot with a fresh pink scar on his silky tail.

Jamison let out a yelp that was muffled by the water. Quickly darting away from the comfortable rotting greenery below with a harsh kick of his tail, letting out a stream of small bubbles. The crustacean let go of the oily eel-like skin, falling slowly to the lake bed and scurrying away to the safe slime-coated rocks. The sensation of the yabbies tight pinchers, gripping to the healed up scars on his tail made Jamison’s skin crawl. If there was one creature Jamison would not eat or even want to touch, its yabbies. He absolutely hated everything about them. Their small beady eyes, the strange shape of their heads and their long slender legs. There's been countless of times where Jamison would wake up to one of them crawling on his back, their legs pinching and pulling on his skin like tweezers. Jamison would never understand why humans loved eating these ugly looking things. Both Jack and Maggie told him it’s a “delicacy”. All he knew, Jack and Maggie would always get excited whenever he brought them back a crab cage full of them. It was only worth it for the reward he got for his “hard work”. Two cans of dog food and leftovers from the previous night.

Blond algae covered hair slowly swayed to the gentle current of the lake. A tight feeling was creeping up on Jamison’s chest that stung even worse than the yabbies pinchers. It always comes up whenever the fish remembered them. His humans, Maggie and Jack. They were always so kind to him, showering Jamison with affection that made the creature feel he was just as human as they were. Jamison’s claws gripped on his left pectoral as more memories flooded his mind. Golden eyes reflected brightly from the sun’s rays above the surface, shining down on the creature as if he was in a spotlight. He missed seeing their faces every morning whenever he was woken up by Maggie’s cane thumping on the dock loudly. Jamison would scamper out of his nest and rise up to the shore to see them, always having food ready to feed their strange-looking friend. After eating who knows how many cans of dog food, the three would just sit down and talk. Talk about nothing in particular but everything Jamison wanted to know about the world surrounding him. It worked perfectly for Maggie, being a teacher for the children in Murungal, she and Jack answered all of his questions the best they could. “Why do humans have to go to school, learn to read and write. What is the concept of money, why do humans need it? Why does the moon change shapes and sizes?” The questions were endless just as his curiosity.

Shaking his head, Jamison was trying to snap himself back into reality. He just can’t stop thinking about them. The dispirited feeling overwhelmed that balding blond head of his. It was time to retreat back into the mangroves. Back to the safety of his own nest and sleep off another flashback of a time he can never return to.

Thick, dark tree roots stretched out in a twisted mess through the dark depths of the billabong. Digging deep into the mud below in a tangled mess to sustain the drying trees above the surface. Jamison’s nest awaited him in its filthily glory. It nestled quietly just underneath one of the largest hollowed out mangrove in the lake. It was made out of soft mud, dead flora, smoothed out river stones and most importantly, his ‘treasure’. Old findings of metal scraps and junk the creature had collected over the years that were trashed in the lake. Cleaned out skulls of various animals, covered in algae and mud like icing on a cake. From Kangaroos, koalas, rabbits, foxes to the
newest addition to the hoard, a goat skull with flesh still clinging tightly around the cranium. The once bright red labels on the cans of dog food were completely washed away by the water, only replaced with rust and grime. Same goes for the variety of fishing hooks he found scattered in the littered waters.

Like a snail retreating to the safety of its shell, Jamison ducked under the thick roots of his hallowed tree dome, coiling up till his whole slithery body was completely under the tree. The massive dorsal fin on his back wriggled as Jamison was trying to adjust himself more comfortably, trying to smash his face against a soft pile of greenery until he finally found a more comfortable spot. Jamison’s yellow eyes scanned the murky waters, waiting for his body to feel tired and sleep off his intrusive thoughts. But in reality, Jamison didn't want to sleep. Days were always shorter for him when this happens. But he couldn’t help it. The isolation and loneliness were consuming him at a slow but agonizing pace. There was just nothing else to do in this lake. No reason to go out and explore the lake for the hundredth time, he knew this sinkhole like the back of his webbed hand. Jamison shared his home with many amphibious creatures but he can’t talk to them. He can’t ‘speak’ fish, or cockatoo, or cicada, or frog. Only the same language as people can. But the last person he talked to thought he was an asshole. Mako, Maggie’s ‘sweet’ nephew from the city called him a ‘monster’ for no reason. Golden eyes quickly disappeared when Jamison shut his eyes tightly. His single hand dug deep into the eye sockets of a small wallaby skull, shaking enough to cause the fin in his arm to tremble.

This lake isn’t a home at all. It’s a prison. A prison that's slowly spiraling him down into insanity by how isolated it was. He can’t see Maggie or Jack and relive the life they all had together. He wanted them back, or at least return back to his home before living in the lake. The old home that resided right behind a human’s bedroom window, shaded by a big blue tarp to protect the young monsters sensitive moist skin. It was just him and his strange “family”, as Maggie would often say. Tormented feelings rushed back into Jamison’s chest that made his lungs ache. A bitter sob escaped from gritted teeth as he tried to keep himself still. His own thick oil slick tail curled even tighter around the nest, tensing up more to stop from shaking. There’s no use. Always wanting to sleep his memories away whenever they come back to haunt him. Jamison cried to himself with no one else to hear him. Completely alone in the middle of nowhere. Jack will never come back and Maggie might not either. That thought alone made Jamison sob even louder, only to be muted by the thick murky water. No matter how much he sobbed and hissed, no one can hear the lonely monster in the lake.

Exhausted, sore and emotionally drained, Jamison’s sobs subsided once he drifted off to sleep. His entire body was frozen in place by the comfort of his nest. Fins would occasionally twitch every second or so by the sounds of cockatoos screeching outside his lake. His chest would expand with every breath of water he took, exhaling through the sensitive gills on his thin neck. The large fin on his back and arms sank down to the spine of his tail, relaxing slowly while falling deeper into his sleep.
Time had passed on. The bright sun slowly sank further down to the horizon, making the sky shine brightly in a warm pink and orange glow. Many of the residing frogs around the lake croaked quietly with the fading rumble of the last dragonfly hovering above the water, belly full from feasting on the mosquitoes. Gentle warm winds from the east began to brush against the dried up eucalyptus leaves on the earth below with a quiet rattle. It was peaceful. Many residents living out in the bush forget to appreciate the beauty of the Australian sunset. Especially one before a storm soon approaching.

A loud banging continuously rang loudly that woke Jamison up with a loud snore. All of the orange fins around his body sprung out, ready to hightail out of the safety of his nest as his heart pounded rapidly. The sound came back again. Only, it was more familiar. Jamison knew this sound. It was as if it was calling him. And he knew exactly who was. “M-Maggie?” Jamison whispered as his fins began to adjust to the location where the sound was coming from. There it was again just right above the docks. It was her. Bright yellow eyes radiated with the realization. Quickly clawing himself out of his nest and swimming towards the docks. Swimming through the safety of the thick tree roots, passing through a dense clutch of reeds and lily pads. Jamison’s heart rate didn’t stop and neither did his powerful tail. Has his wish come true? Has his pleading to see his Maggie finally returned back to him?

The monster quickly emerged his head out from the water between a few lily pads and bonked against one another with Jamison’s shoulders. There was a harsh glare that flashed for a second before fading away once Jamison’s pupils adjusted. Everything was a blur anyone who was standing on the dock looked a lot like a shadow. It looked like her, standing tall and holding something in her hand. With the sun more towards the skyline, Jamison’s eyes finally adjusted to the brightness of the surface world. His big toothy yellow smile began to melt into a confused look, then into a frown. It wasn’t his Maggie at all. It was Mako, standing still while looking down at the creature with an expressionless glare. As usual.

“Oh.” Jamison’s spoke in a harsh and raspy tone, haven’t really been speaking to anyone else for a while. “It’s you.” Jamison’s took a ‘step’ away from the dock with his tail, unsure exactly why this human was here. The monster thought he made it clear that this big dick head isn’t welcomed in his territory. But there he is, standing there with a canvas bag in one hand while there was a metal pole to his left. “What is that? A new fishing rod or something? Huh, pretty pathetic if you ask me.” Jamison’s thoughts rang in his own mind as it made his eyes roll while looking at the human.

“Look. If you’re planning to go fishing today, forget it.” Jamison was the one to break the silence between the two. “Fish somewhere else.” There was a sharp venomous tone proceeding, waving his clawed hand at Mako like a loud annoying fly covered in dung. “This is MY lake. MY fish! And I ain’t helping ya! Ya got that!?” There was a moment where Jamison should have just ended it there. Jump back down into the water with a loud splash that would get the fat human wet once again. However, this was the first time after a week of seclusion that he finally gets to talk to someone. Perhaps his desperation for contact with another intelligent creature was keeping him above water. The giant’s stiff body remained still above the dock, tired looking grey eyes watched the creature glaring up like a nervous stray cat. “I’m not going to fish today”. Mako spoke, but his voice sounded calmer than usual. Not the bitter and annoyed tone he always had with Jamison.

“Good! Cus ya ain’t gonna fish ere’ tomorrow either! Not now, not ever!” The creature's voice echoed across the billabong that would shame the sleepy cockatoos perched high above the trees. Mako didn’t move. Crickets began to chirp quietly under the safety of dried bushes. Frogs joined in with the insects, in sync with the approaching night sky. Mako let out a surrendering sigh, they weren’t getting anywhere with just being completely quiet. His massive hand clutched the handle of the canvas bag that made the two cans of dog food clinked against each other. Thick lips separated as he spoke quietly almost like a whisper.
“I’m sorry.”

Jamison was not expecting that. Then again, he wasn’t really sure what he was expecting. He just met Mako weeks ago and only got to see the human being angry, mean and scared. One of his bushy blonde eyebrows raised up, the sensitive fins on his jawline flexed towards the direction of the massive human. Maybe Jamison was hearing things wrong.

“I’m not apologizing just to have you fish for me.” Mako’s shoulders relaxed, taking a step closer to the edge of the dock to get a better look at the skeptical monster. The man swallowed hard, remembering this time he had nothing to protect himself. The hunting knife was back at the shack and if Jamison did try to take a swing at Mako, he was prepared to at least put up a fight with his own girthy fist. Jamison recoiled from Mako’s sudden approach, but his eyes never left the human’s face. “Sorry, for what I said last time.” Mako’s voice was soft and gentle. Sincere again, “Didn’t mean to make you sound like a freak.”

The frowning face of Jamison subsided the moment he heard Mako, looking at him with such bewilderment that all of his fins surrounding his body shrank. There were no words that Jamison would say without stuttering, his own throat and gills felt completely dry, making it much harder to swallow his putrid saliva.” Ya...s-s-serious?” He paused for a second. “I mean… what ye said about me, being a monster and not being near pe-

“It was wrong of me to say that.” Mako interrupted, slowly crouching down to make himself less intimidating. A loud creak shrieked from the wood below him as the giant adjusted himself more comfortably. Jamison continued to watch Mako with cautious eyes, wondering if this was all just a trick of some sorts. Who can blame him, Jamison’s skepticism was probably a smart idea if someone was planning to deceive him. Mako looked down at the fish, letting out a deep exhale from his swollen nostrils. “Hungry?”

Well now, that certainly was unexpected. Jamison tilted his dripping wet head to the side, wondering exactly what he meant by “hungry”. Then, he saw it. The canvas had that was nestled right in Mako’s lap, the very same canvas bag with the unwashed stain of dog food slop from years ago and God knows what else the stains are on that old bag. All of the fins on Jamison’s body sprung to life, a reaction that made Mako smile intently. The human took that as a ‘yes’. Mako pulled out one of the cans and a punch can opener from the stained bag, quickly puncturing the lid and letting out a loud snap that made the monster’s eyes widen with excitement. It was the same brand of dog food too! The same bright red and yellow colors, that weird looking winking spotted dog on the front label that always told Jamison it tastes just as amazing with the first bite. And the smell. At this point, Jamison’s mouth was wide open with drool sliding down to his chin. His stomach growled loudly under the surface as he caught the whiff of it. God, was he craving for red meat.

Jamison approached the sitting human slowly, momentarily forgetting their earlier conflict the past several days. But still, he kept cautious. A voice in the back of his head warned him that this still might be a trick. A lie. Mako may still try to be a jerk and pull something awful with him. The monster waited patiently, looking up at Mako in complete silence as his gills slowly twitched. The giant extended his hand out, holding the can of cold dog food that was waiting to be eaten. “Didn’t expect you to accept my apology so quickly.” Mako’s voice was still calm and patient with the leery creature. There was a long pause between the two that made the human’s lips dry slowly. “I did think you’re a freak. A monster. But...” Mako swallowed harshly from the dry heat in his throat. “I’m no different.”

Jamison made a sound that sounded odd. It was a low, curious sounding exhale from his sharp mouth, Mako definitely had his attention now. The creature’s own tail coiled against the thick
reeds near the shoreline, listening to Mako as he inched closer to his massive tanned hand. “Used to be a leader of a biker gang.” Does Jamison even know exactly what any of those words mean? But he continued. “I was the one in charge of my mates. We did a lot of terrible stuff together. Had many people call us ‘freaks’, ‘monsters’.” The giant’s eyes looked down and saw Jamison, still being quiet and wary with fins pinned back like that of a scared mongrel. “I... Ain't so proud of the stuff we did.”

Flies were beginning to buzz around the can of sloppy red meat. Better to move his hand down to a more reachable position for Jamison. Mako stretched out his arm as far as he could, watching him slowly inch forward. “I uh…” Another quick pause. “I remembered you like this stuff. Thought I should bring you some and... apologize.” What Mako was doing was completely stupid as hell. But all of the shit he’d done with his bike mates was just as stupid. Jamison slowly extended his left arm out with twitching fingers. His golden eyes darted up at the massive human, who was perfectly still and looking at the lake creature with contemplation. For someone who lives in water, Mako never realized how soft Jamison’s webbed hand felt once it brushed gently against his own. They both looked at each other in complete silence. The frogs and crickets continued to chirp, followed by the trickling waves of the lake surrounding them. A clawed hand rested peacefully on top of Mako’s feeling the massive knuckles and fingers carefully that it made Jamison smile stupidly.

“W-what?” Mako was already starting to feel uncomfortable by how long they were holding this pose. Any longer and his thick arm would start to cramp. Mako was expecting this freak would swipe the can off his hand, chug down the wet mess of meat and told him to fuck off. But that didn’t happen. The pink gills on his neck flared as Jamison spoke, trying to muster words without tripping on them. “That's...the nicest thing you’ve done for me, mate.” Jamison bit his lip before speaking again. “I mean. Ya fed me guts and all... but… you came back, knew me favorite grub and… said sorry.” This was getting a little bit too awkward for Mako. “Y-yeah. I did.” Oh God oh God! Mako better act fast. “Here, take it.” Quickly, he pushed the can to Jamison’s cold clammy wet palm. Mako pulled his arm back once Jamison held the red can, avoiding cramps and the awkwardness between the two.

Jamison’s sloppy eating habits hadn’t changed. With a tilt of his balding head, the monster widened his mouth to let the slurry of processed meat fall into his awaiting hungry mouth. Any sound that was coming out from Jamison’s bloated cheeks would make anyone quiver in disgust. Maggie should have really taught him some proper eating manners. Jamison continued to eat loudly with his smacking lips, a bit more scraps still clinging to the can. The monster’s splotchy tongue slid out and lapped furiously inside the can.

“Ahhh!” Jamison exhaled once he lapped up the last fragment of cold meat, licking his own clammy lips and savoring any taste still left. “Ain’t nothing in this lake that taste just as good as that.” Mako huffed, shaking his head as goosebumps still crawled on his skin from disgust. “That’s what Maggie fed you all the time?” Even if he was grossed out, Mako was curious. Wanting to know more about Jamison’s history with his aunt.

Jamison’s eyes looked up at Mako, still busy with picking his stained teeth with the tip of that splotchy tongue. “Naw, Naw. Ol’ Mag’s fed me lots of stuff.” The creature waved his arm. “She fed me leftovers from last night or sometimes made food just for me. But the can stuff is just my favorite.” Forgetting his earlier anger with the human and acting as if nothing had happened between them. Perhaps a little bit too soon for Mako to take in. But the creature’s bliss, the quick eagerness to forgive and talk, made Mako smile burn brighter. The giant’s hand reached back into the canvas bag, grabbing a hold of the other can and opening that one too. He was doubtful that Jamison was already full with just one can.
The sky grew darker with the setting sun. A dark fading blue color surrounding them like the tarp back at the shack. There were no signs of danger this time, as all of the creatures around the lake were singing harmoniously. The loud siren-like screams were only that of a fading memory. A very odd and terrifying memory. The giant stood up tall with a loud grunt. Thick bones cracked softly behind his flesh from the long stretch of his back. Mako was exhausted from fixing the cracks on the roof but now, hopefully, he would be more prepared for the upcoming rains. Mako’s gaze turned to look down at Jamison, slowly disappearing by the approaching night sky. Only the bright glow of his eyes shined brightly in the dark. “Rains are coming soon,” Mako spoke peacefully. "You’ll be alright?"

A soft laugh came out from Jamison, looking up at Mako with a sly grin on his wet face. “Mate. I live, eat, sleep and breathe in these waters every day, ain’t a little bit more gonna hurt me. Sides, been a while since it last sprinkled around here.” A low hum rumbled under Mako’s throat, sounding a bit annoyed that he even asked such a stupid question. Jamison’s fin perked up. “More water means more fish.” There was a cocky tone in the fish’s voice that sparked an interest in Mako’s mind. Well, he hoped it did. The creature was really hoping he would return back to the lake. Perhaps, just perhaps, this was a way to show Mako that the offer to fish is still up now. Penance for his crimes had now been paid. “Only if I’m allowed here,” Mako spoke again before looking to the side.

Jamison looked up at the human with a cocky smile that made his teeth look sharper than usual by the glow of his eyes. “What say this, mate? For every fish I help you catch, you bring me a can.” The creature began to swim in circles, slowly pushing the still lily pads and reeds with the motion of his slimy tail. “That’s a fair deal I if I do say so me’self.” Already freak fish was haggling with him? Mako let out a short snort of a laugh, gripping tightly on the dangling canvas bag “Who taught you how to haggle like that?” Mako thick eyebrow lifted at the wading Jamison. Still keeping that shit-eating grin plastered on his face like a mug shot “Yer auntie. Taught me all I know. Well, Her and Jack of course.” Jamison’s radiant eyes looked at Mako, waiting for an answer. “What do you say? A fish for a can?” Oh, how Jamison hoped Mako would say ‘yes’. No longer would he be alone in this god forbidden lake. No more days of isolation and lack of socialization. Even if Mako is a bit of a stick in the mud, Jamison didn’t want to be alone. Just say yes.

Mako’s smile turned into a toothy grin, his monstrous arms crossed over his gut with a firm nod that made his grey ponytail sway. “That’s fair. One fish, one can. Two fish, two cans.”

For the first time since moving to the desolate wilderness, Mako felt more at peace with himself. Finally, things were starting to feel like he was home. And it was all because he stopped shoving his own fat head up his ass. He had company in this barren bush. A neighbor that he can just walk to the lake and have an entire place to fish till his heart’s content. While his neighbor was still a freak of nature, there was more humanity in him than Mako thought. And perhaps, Mako can learn from Jamison.
Mud wasp

Chapter Summary

Despite the rains prolonged arrival replenishing the outback, it was fortunate that the usual expectancy of it lasting just a day wasn’t as predicted. It was certainly due for a fresh revival. Two days had gone by as the rains continued to pour rhythmicity. Honestly, it was a nice change of scenery for Mako. Only several months had passed since moving to the tiny shack, and it had been nothing but a long drag of heat and sweat.

Chapter Notes

Callooh callay! A new chapter has come this way! Thank you all for those who have been waiting patiently for a new chapter. Life’s been getting rather hectic on my part, but it’s always nice to come back and work on this fic whenever I have some spare time. Here’s hopes that maybe next month, there will be TWO chapters up! As always, huge thanks to my beta, Rye for editing!)

Enjoy this "messy" chapter!

Despite the rains prolonged arrival replenishing the outback, it was fortunate that the usual expectancy of it lasting just a day wasn’t as predicted. It was certainly due for a fresh revival. Two days had gone by as the rains continued to pour rhythmicity. Honestly, it was a nice change of scenery for Mako. Only several months had passed since moving to the tiny shack, and it had been nothing but a long drag of heat and sweat. Surprisingly the shack was holding off well with the renovations Mako worked on. A sense of pride boosted his ego with fixing his aunties old home, save for the few cracks that crept deeper than the giant could reach. Water droplets rang loudly in various places across the home. Small pails, pots, and food containers were scattered around the wooden floor of the shack, gathering rainwater to keep the home dry and moistureless.

Even with the genius idea of keeping water off of his valuables, the off sync drips were slowly driving him insane. Three pots ringed loudly with every water drop as Mako was in the kitchen, cooking up macaroni noodles in a small pot above the hot stained stove. Normally in this hour, the man would be out on the road, delivering shipments as usual. But not in this weather, unless he had a ‘death wish’ of getting his truck stuck in the mud in the unpaved roads. Lidia understood completely, hell she was the one to told him to go back home when he showed up the previous day. It would be a peaceful break from driving if it wasn’t for all the irritating noise of bubbling noodles and the pitters of raindrops hitting metal.

With irritation boiling his senses, Mako turned around and headed towards the kitchen table behind him. It was riddled with old dirty dishes, a few books of unfinished crossword puzzles, the cute porcelain pig salt shaker, pepper shakers, and of course, the small radio/stereo that he kept with him since his youth. Thinking that perhaps it was time to mute all of the noise around him with his own music, Mako eagerly turned the dial. Grritty but delicate fingers pulled the antenna up high,
hoping that even with this weather, there might get a signal for more than one station. Certainly would be a miracle if he could even get one. One click from the dial and there was the ear-piercing noise of static. Another turn of the dial, only to be met with more static. Another. And then another. Until there was the recognizable muffle of a human voice coming from the metal box.

“Rains….continue on….for the next….two….be advised….for….flooding in……northern……roads…..avoid…….the…….thunder……stor..” The signal was lost and only static filled in the remaining gaps of human speech. Mako grunted deeply under his bare teeth with admitting his defeat. There was just no way he can win right now, is there? It’s a good thing this tiny little radio was also a cassette player and it’s an even more wonderful thing that Mako has plenty of his old mixtape since venturing into this new life. One of the usual mixtapes Mako constantly played was right inside. All it took was just one click of a button and music started blaring out of the small side speakers. Mako’s plump lips curled into a smile at the tune. The white ponytail on top of his head bobbed to the melody, turning back to the bubbling pot of boiling pasta. The once annoying drips and pings surrounding him were drowned out by the loud strum of a guitar.

“Strut on a line”

Mako opened the oven with slow and careful precision, avoiding the hot stream of air rushing towards his tanned face. The rich aroma of freshly cooked fish filled his nostrils with delight that almost made him see stars. Two large baked seasoned cod fillets were deliciously baking inside, caught fresh just the other day by the lake. A reward for Mako’s amending his ‘conflictions’ with Jamison.

The two made a pact. For every fish Jamison helps Mako catch, the human would offer the creature a can of dog food. While keeping each other well fed, it was nice to have someone to talk to that had a different perspective on life. Unfortunately, it was mostly Jamison asking countless questions about cities and life outside of the bush. Every question the freak asked, Mako answered as truthful as he could. Well, save for the occasional little lies here and there, but the answer made Mako feel smarter.

“It’s discord and rhyme”

The smell coming from the kitchen was divine. Mako’s tired eyes closed as he took in another sniff coming from the oven, letting out a pleased exhale from his lips. Baked fish with lime and salt, topped off with a bowl of macaroni and cheese was just the perfect meal for a rainy day. Fish stew would have been ideal to him, but with the lack of the proper ingredients like potatoes and celery, it would have to be skipped this time around.

“I howl and I whine I'm after you”

The door to the oven slowly shut tight, letting the fish cook for just a bit longer. A kitchen towel with cute flying pigs designed in the fabric was picked up by the giant, cleaning his wet meaty hands before draining the pot of noodles.

“Mouth is alive all running inside”

Mako turned his gaze over to look at the kitchen window right above the skin. Fog coated the edges of the glass by the warmth of the shack. Darker clouds rolled in by the harsh winds. Pale grey eyes blinked softly as they gazed outside. He could have sworn he heard something over the distance. Something like a shriek that spawned right behind the thick wall of trees. A shriek that sounded unnatural and haunting.
“And I’m hungry like the wolf.”

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Strong winds and rains gushed viciously throughout the day. Despite the weather, many creatures surrounding the lake rejoiced happily for the break from the dry spell. Trees would rattle joyfully through the rain, allowing old and damaged leaves to twirl down to the red clay below. What was once dried and empty cracks in the ground were completely filled with water as it would be the perfect aid for new flora to grow. The frogs that made the lake their home joined in the celebration of the rain. Croaks and whistles from bloated green cheeks surrounded the lake like a parade. Every once in awhile, the roaring sound of thunder echoed through the horizon like a murmur, sending many birds to take flight from the distant rumble. The usual pair of Sulphur-crested cockatoos were happily perched above one of the tallest gumtrees. Spreading their magnificent wings out as they happily bathed with the occasional squawk.

Jamison was no different when it came to joining in the celebration. Dirty blonde hair swayed under the rippling surface as he crept closer to the shore, lifting his head above the water while his delicate eyes adjusted to the blinding light above. Rain welcomed the creature in a loving embrace. Cleaning the grime off his skin and hair with every fresh drop of water. Oh, how it felt nice. With an extension of his mouth and a drop of his tongue, Jamison allowed the clean water to rinse his putrid mouth. Too long has his lake started to reek of pond rot by the baking sun. He hoped that the rain would continue to come in, allowing the small billabong to expand just a bit further than usual.

A sliver of hope crept Jamison’s mind that Mako would be at the dock, all prepped up with his usual fishing gear and equipment. Sitting on that massive bright blue lawn chair with the icebox laying right next to the human’s hairy legs full of ice cold drinks, snacks, and gutted fish. And of course, the most important fishing item of all, the canvas bag full of dog food. Jamison’s ugly smile turned to a frown when his eyes gazed at the dock. There was no Mako. It was just the creature all alone in the serene wet wilderness. It was to be expected. From his years of experience with living with humans, Maggie and Jack never came to the lake when it rained. Something about being out in the rain you can catch a “cold”?

With his long dark slime coated tail, Jamison swam up closer to the shore like a slithering snake. The pale underbelly of his fish body touched the soggy earth below as he closed in closer. Gravity took over with a heavy force, pinning him down to the mud and decaying twigs. There were no thoughts for him to step back, but to move forward with full intentions. A hiss escaped through bared teeth as his arm reached out to claw the red earth, pulling his long body out of the murky water. The tail dragged behind him by the pull of his single arm. He was going to need a bit of extra help to get through this.

The small fins below Jamison’s hip sprung to life. Despite how off the fins appeared compared to the other long and sharp fins on his body, the fins began to serve their true purpose. They slowly pushed and pulled mud away from the slick eel body, working as extra limbs for Jamison to crawl out. He struggled against the force of gravity with every agonizing pull. Exhausted pants and groans escaped the monster’s lips, but finally, his hard work was paid off. Jamison was completely out of the safety of the lake, now laying in a bed of wet dark mud.

“T-there! I-I made it!” Jamison cheered to himself with heavy pants. The pink gills on his neck flared painfully from the workout and exposure to air, thankfully the cool rain eased the dry burn. But Jamison was victorious, slapping his long tail against the muddy bed around him, the creature laughed as his panting slowly subsided. Some of the algae and scum on his skin began to melt away, showing off patches of pale freckled human amphibious skin above his torso while his tail
remained the same. “Starting to get a bit harder.” The creature mumbled as the shredded fin on his tail slapped the mud once more. Definitely not the first time Jamison had done this, but it only ever happened when it rained.

Like a prehistoric amphibious fish, Jamison's real intention of crawling out of the lake was clear. He dropped himself into the mud with a loud slap that was muted by the rain. The long oil slick colored tail flailed wildly in the air, rolling around in the mud like a gleeful swine. Mud, leaves, and twigs coated his skin with every shake and wiggle while rolling around in the same spot. A giggle or two would escape from his pale lips, forgetting the burning pain coursing through his out of shape body. Oh God did he ever love taking a mud bath. The single web hand scooped up a large glob of wet earth, slapping it on his bare chest and neck. It slid up to his chin, shielding his eyes as it passed over his scalp and forehead, repeating the process once more until his entire hair was completely caked in mud. It felt wonderful. Relief hit him like a wave that drowned out any reminiscence of stress from his mind. This was the distraction the monster needed.

There was a sudden pause that rushed through Jamison’s mind, stopping him from his cackles. The fins on his jaws began to shift and move like ears, listening to the whirr of raindrops pouring down on the lake and earth around him. All of the creature’s senses tingled faintly when his nose caught the scent of something just on the other side of the lake. A single finger whipped the mud off his eyelids, fins flared in curiosity by the foreign warm scent. It was food. Human food. Only this time, it didn’t smell burnt at all. Muddy nostrils flared as he took in another whiff of the scent. If only there was a way for him to pay Mako a visit and perhaps offer the invitation of taking a nice ‘bath’. Maggie did mention to him that humans don’t take baths like he does. More so, with clean water and soap. They’re completely missing out on the real fun. But the temptation of paying a visit lingered in his thick skull. “Yer pushing yer luck again there, Jamie.” Small drips of mud fell from his chin as he spoke. “Ain’t making that mistake again! Puh! Jack was really pissed at ya too for scarin’ Mag’s half to death.”

Clumps of mud twirled in the air when Jamison shook his head like a soaked mutt, ruining the slick back hair and looking more like a complete mess. The creature was in complete bliss, eyes gazing up at the sky and watching the waves of dark clouds roll by and the falling drops of water hit his filthy face.

An ear piercing shriek broke the silence across the lake, bringing the monster back into reality from his trance. Every fin on his body sprung out alert, sending more clumps of mud flying off his body. Jamison frantically sat up and looked around, anxiety rushing through his blood as he was ready to take flight. But there was nothing. Nothing but the usual trees and bushes around his home. A dry gulp stretched his neck as the shriek reminded in his mind. The pathetic monster heard it every once in a while at night, most notably in the rain. Desperation allowed the creature to pick himself up in an instant. He wasn’t going to wait and see what exactly made that noise, especially while he was a fish out of water.

Getting out of the water was already a hard job, but going back in was easier said than done. Jamison flailed and slithered back to the lake with the use of his fins and tail. There it was again. Shrieking even louder than the previous cries it made Jamison yelped in fright. Green water began to mix with mud the moment Jamison splashed on the lake, completely startling all of the roosting frogs and insects laying on reeds and lilypads. Jamison had submerged once again, taking refuge from whatever was out there. He waited, glancing up at the bright surface above. Waiting for whatever it was, to leave.

All of the mud on his body, save for a few spots, slowly melted away from the dense murky lake
water. Such a shame that his tranquil bath ended too abruptly. Jamison really wanted to stay up on land a bit longer and admire the different view of his home and the world surrounding his billabong. He was trapped in this god awful lake once more.

Jamison’s right fin picked up something else. It was faintly muffled by the heavy water, but it was loud enough for Jamison’s sensitive ears to pick up. It wasn’t a shriek or the scream he heard just a few seconds ago, but a whistle. A loud single note whistle that rang across the lake shore. Golden eyes widened as the creature spoke to himself, excitement filling his blood as it replaced the fear once pumping through his veins.

Mako was standing at the edge of the dock, carrying the usual canvas bag on his girthy hand and a black umbrella in the other. There was no way Mako was going to head out of this weather with just a measly umbrella. A thick green raincoat and fishing boots were keeping the human dry as possible. Standing there in silence while admiring the view of the lake, Mako waited for a response before placing two fingers on his dry lips. A loud whistle blew loudly that made the joyful frogs chirp in response. A few splashed back in the water by the shrieking sound, but some jumped by the movements of reeds shuffling by a slow force from the lake. The human noticed the shuffling reeds, glancing down and finally seeing the toothy grin of the real owner of the billabong.

“Hey,” Mako spoke deeply, waving a hand at the creature below. “Thought I’d stop by for a bit. You busy?” The once mean, heartless asshole human that Jamison saw at first, had changed completely. It took a while for Mako to really treat the fish like an equal. Well, not a complete equal. There were a few slip-ups and confusions between the two, but they were both slowly learning about each other. Jamison still had no idea what a biker gang is, but he figured if it was a way for him and Mako to become friends, he’d listen. Not to mention, the pair have a pact to keep.

The creature waded above the surface, his tail slowly paddling him around in a circle as he spoke. “Busy? Oh no no. I was just….” A slight pause as he thought of the right words. “Was just taking a bath.” A goofy grin plastered his face like a portrait, of course not lying about his abrupt bathing session. Curiosity made one of Mako’s thick eyebrow raised up, not really sure by what Jamison meant by ‘bath’. “Why are you here, Mate? Ain’t all that pleasant to be fishing out in the rain.”

Mako rumbled under his breath. “Thought I’d stop by. Made lunch with the fish we caught yesterday.” The human paused for a few seconds, hearing the rain pattering on the fabric of his umbrella. “Thought I’d, uh…give you a sample.” A low rumbling grunt escapes Mako’s lips once he knelt down, dropping the brown canvas bag between his feet with a low plop. Mako’s hand shuffled the contents of the now soaking wet bag, grabbing the only more solid square shaped thing inside. It was a food container. A massive scoop of macaroni and cheese nestled messily next to a strip of baked cod, still warm from the protective plastic container sealing it inside. There was a powerful smell that struck Jamison’s hunger faster than a kick from a frightened wallaroo once Mako popped the lid open of the container. The creature’s pupils slanted by the smell, inching closer to the edge of the dock with drool dripping from his wet lips.

Jamison’s constant hunger was really amusing. The creature always looked at any food like it’s the most delicious thing on earth and exclaimed that it also tasted just as good. Oh, but Jamison wasn’t a fool. Those desperate amber eyes squinted at the massive human in front of him, holding his big meaty hand out while offering the plastic container filled with savior-ish food. “Oi! What’s the catch?” The freak of nature pouted at the human, eyes still squinting with skepticism. “You trying to change our plans with the deal we had?” Soon, that pout morphed into a grin. A sly teasing grin that made the human’s lip twitch with agitation. “You trying to make me find ya bigger fish now?” A snort escaped Jamison’s nostrils, still watching the frozen human with his arm still extended out.
as the rain began to cool the once-hot meal inside the container.

“Ain’t no catch..” Mako’s throat rumbled lowly. “Wanted you to try my cooking. But, If you don’t want it, I can always—” The human didn’t even have enough time to finish his sentence as a webbed hand swiped the container right off of his palm. A reflex for being the top predator in these waters.

Despite these reflexes, Jamison’s sense of manners were just as disgusting. Fast chewing and harsh swallows made Mako’s skin crawl from the loud sounds. There’s no need to know table manners when there’s no table to eat at. Jamison’s face was buried deep in the container, messing up his already stained face with cheese and noodles. Groans and moans were muffled by the plastic border as he licked and tasted the cheesy edges, leaving no spot unlicked. Flavor filled his mouth while he ate loudly, quickly lifting his head up to look at the fat grossed out human. “Mate…” Cheeks widened and puffed with food as the fish excitedly shouted. “MATE!” The once cat slit-like pupils dilated like that of an excited mongrel, a drip of cheese and noodles dripped into the green lake water. “I lovth it! Besph tathing thuff I’ve eber had!”

“Don’t talk with your mouth full.” Mako’s voice was low with the hint of disgust, by the quiver of his lips that curled into a smile. He was able to pick up exactly what Jamison was saying with his ecstatic approval. With a harsh swallow from partly chewed up fish and pasta that made the gills in his neck frill out, Jamison let loose a loud pleased sigh. For some strange reason, it made Mako smile, even more, seeing his neighbor blissfully enjoying his home cooked meal, loudly licking the side of his cheesy stained lips. “You gonna fish today?” Jamison asked while picking out a piece of fish stuck between his sharp teeth with his dirty claw. “It ain’t the best time to fish with the weatha’. But I know that wouldn’t stop me.”

Mako let out a low hum as he picked himself back on his two feet. “Not today. Gonna pick up more groceries if it’s still gonna rain like this.” Jamison’s excited face slowly morphed into a frown. Disappointed but not upset for missing another day of chatting and fishing with the mammoth-sized human. With the food container cleaned out completely, Jamison surrenders it back to the human, his yellow teeth exposed as he spoke. “Afraid of a little water? Well, I’m sure a big guy like you wouldn’t mind getting a bit wet. Besides, Fish ere get more...lively when it rains.” Blonde bushy eyebrow wiggled as he spoke. The tall white ponytail on Mako’s head shook gently at the giggling fish below. It was hard to believe that the two had a short-term confrontation. It was like a distant memory now, despite it only being less than a month since they gained this new friendship. Mako shoved the emptied food container back into the wet canvas bag. He would have to bleach the hell out of it if the human wanted to use it again for himself. Better yet, it would be wiser to use it for offering Jamison more of his cooked meals. Mako placed the bag around his thick meaty fingers, gazing down at wading monster with a warm smile. “I’ll be back tomorrow then.”

Jamison’s eyes grew wider than the dinner plates back at the shack. All of the fins on his slimy wet body quivered with excitement, trying so hard to keep his composure as he spoke. “I’ll be here then! Ain’t going anywhere! Nope! It’ll just be you ‘n me and those sweet sweeeeeeet cans.” Mako raised an eyebrow, licking his upper lip slowly as he watched Jamison wiggle. “Really hope you’ll be here when I get back, tomorrow. Not like you can walk out of the water or something.” Unless perhaps Jamison is actually more mermaid-like and can shapeshift. This is getting too weird.

“I’ll be seeing you later then.” Mako began to head back towards the trail leading back to the shack. His rainboots squeaked loudly with the creaking wood below. His hand made a light wave at the creature when he took a quick glance back.

“W-wait!” Jamison’s voice shook in desperation in hopes that the human would pause his steps this one time. “Wait right there, Mako! Don’t move!” Don’t move? Before Mako could even ask
exactly why, Jamison had disappeared. Vanished, leaving only the shrinking ripples of the lake surface. The temptation of shrugging his shoulders and heading back to warm shelter lingered in his mind. He really wanted to get out of this cold rain and strip off these tight boots. Curiosity did get the better of him. Perhaps Jamison found something hidden deep in the lake bed. Whatever it was, Mako stood there patiently as his grey eyes explored his surroundings. The lake looked completely different with the heavy pouring rain trickling down. It was more refreshing, bringing the vibrant colors out from the gum trees and shining in bright reds and greens.

The tranquil sounds of raindrops hitting his plastic umbrella were oddly soothing and the scent of rain eased his damaged wheezing lungs.

The peaceful silence was broken by a loud splash and a gasp of air. It snapped Mako back into reality as he heard Jamison calling out his name. Something was clinging to the creature’s hand. It was large, metallic and square shaped. Mako’s tired eyes widened slowly, realizing exactly what was in Jamison’s grip. “Is that the crab cage?”

“That’s right, mate!” Jamison boasted loudly, waving the cage like a prized trophy. “Been stuck between some reeds and roots since we first met. Fished it out for ya!” There was no way that Jamison was going to mention this wasn’t the first time he tried to give the human back his belongings. The human’s squeaky boots took steps back to the dock, reaching over the shaking algae coated cage. “Thanks. Forgot about it.” Mako’s smile turned into a face of disgust once he grabbed it with the hand holding the canvas bag. It was disgusting. Coated in pond scum and slime from God knows what else. But a good rinsing ought to fix the problem. “Maybe we can catch some yabbies.”

Mentioning of the small crustaceans made Jamison’s skin squirm with discomfort, giggling in his own breath. “I ain’t a big fan of em.” voice raising up to a nervous high pitch tone. “Got too much of a crunch and those little snippers on em hurt.” The reaction coming from the so-called ‘monster’ was pathetic and endearing. “Their tails are the best part. It’s fine. Can’t let you do all the work. “ A low snort escaped from Mako’s thick nose, clutching the cage with a firm grip. “Just don’t eat the bait I set up next time.”

A sly yellow grin stretched Jamison’s face as the fins on his head flared out to the side with the exaggerated expression. “Well now. It would all depend on what the bait is.” The fish snorted “You know I ain’t letting a good can of mushy meat go to waste like that.” Seriously, who taught this freak to act the way he is? Was it Jack or Maggie? In Mako’s mind, he might think it’s all Maggie’s doing. Once again, the giant rolled his eyes and let out a short sigh. His head shook gently as he smiled, rubbing the metal cage with his index finger. “Best find something else to bait em’ then.” Mako’s tired eyes gazed at the creature once more, his smile calm and sincere to the wet monster swimming below the dock. “Thanks for giving me my cage back.” Perhaps coming out in the rain to offer some warm food to his voracious neighbor really eased Mako. “Should head back. I’ll catch you tomorrow, Jamison.”

The once sly shit-eating grin plastered on the creature’s face began to fade into that of a slight pout, making the fins on his cheek sink further back. “Tomorrow for sure, right? You’ll be back?” They both looked at each other in an absolute silence that made Jamison’s skin crawl once again. Was he pushing it too quickly? Did he set something off that made himself too clingy? Who can blame the monster when he’s living alone all the damn time, but the silence was met with a firm nod from Mako’s head. “Yeah.”

The monster watched the human walk back to the dirt trail leading to the shack. The muddy earth that Jamison rolled around with was met with one of Mako’s thick boot prints. Jamison didn’t submerge back into the water as he watched Mako walk off. The clear eyelids fluttered by the rain hitting his face, frozen in place in the direction where the human left. “He’ll be back.” Jamison’s
own voice echoed loudly in his skull “He’ll come back. Ye ain’t alone anymore, Jamie.” The creature swallowed hard that made his pink grills throb by the anxiety running through his veins.

“He’s a friend. It’ll be alright.”

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The rains continued to pour down heavily on the earth, creating a soft murmur in the dead of night. The once usual soft chirping of lonely crickets and desperate frogs were absent this bewitching hour. It was a silence that was completely unnatural, but recognizable around this part of the bush.

Something lurked behind an array of old dead bushes that were once covered in a thick collection of bright leaves before the year’s past dry season. It was something old and ancient. A shadow that’s massive in size but still lowered itself down to the muddied earth below with its soaked belly. A webbed foot sank further down into the wet soil, crunching old twigs and leaves with its weight. Each step the shadow made through the dried bushes made an abnormal gurgle under its hot sharp jaws. A pair of crimson eyes scouted over the lake like a hungry scavenger, scoping through the dense wet darkness.

A cloud of heat escaped from its ancient maw as it slowly inched closer to the edge of the lake. Each step growing louder with the rustling of the decayed bushes brushing against its rough warty body. Only the pair of bright piercing red eyes were visible from the dark, glowing like a hot coal on a dying fire. Just as the shadow moved, there was a sudden pause. Frozen completely as its nostrils flared up completely by a foreign scent. An invasive, alien scent that it had caught many times before that made the thick bristle-like hairs on its neck stand in fright. It was the scent of a human.

The shadow retreated away from the lake, startled by the scent of man stinking around the billabong. It took cover in the same bush and trees it was once hiding, dragging its enormous tail on the wet dirt with a loud plop. Its head turned back to look at the lake, nostrils flaring by the disgusting alarming scent. It stood there, eyes blinking as it gazed back at the lake, lifting its heavy head up and letting out an ear piercing scream that shook the leaves on the soaked gum trees surrounding it. A scream that no other beast or human could ever imitate close to. It screeched loudly, retreating back to the darkness of the outback. To the small and secluded lakes that were so minuscule in comparison to the fish’s own home. This certainly isn’t the first of its visits near this lake. And It certainly wouldn’t be it’s last.
Monstrously sized stratocumulus clouds shifted across the heavens at what felt like a snail’s pace when gazing from below. A brief burst of winds would still come every so often as the wet weather persisted. The storm still lingered in small doses. Only short sessions of light rain would come and go with the dimly light sky. The sun’s bright rays would pierce through thin and weak clouds, radiating back onto the damp red earth once more. It was refreshing to see The Bush in a new state once again. Definitely cleansed and recovered from the bone-dry look weeks earlier. Aside from the pools of heavy mud scattered across the dirt road.

Hello once again! A new chapter is up and loaded! This time, there's gonna be a bit more dialog in it and whole lot of sappy stuff between Mako and Jamison. :')

Huge thanks to Rye for being my beta!!

Monstrously sized stratocumulus clouds shifted across the heavens at what felt like a snail’s pace when gazing from below. A brief burst of winds would still come every so often as the wet weather persisted. The storm still lingered in small doses. Only short sessions of light rain would come and go with the dimly light sky. The sun’s bright rays would pierce through thin and weak clouds, radiating back onto the damp red earth once more. It was refreshing to see The Bush in a new state once again. Definitely cleansed and recovered from the bone-dry look weeks earlier. Aside from the pools of heavy mud scattered across the dirt road.

The sound of Mako’s truck roared loudly across the soggy empty road. It was a saving grace that its owner was driving more cautiously around puddles of visible mud in a slow but steady pace that made him seem like he could only see three feet in front of him. Slowly snaking its way around with a deep smoky rumble from its exhaustion pipe with every bump and dip. It didn’t matter to him. It was nice to be back in town even if it was just to pick up some groceries.

Seeing Anderson and catching up with the old coot was pleasant for the first five minutes before it started to get too obnoxious. The old buzzard couldn’t let go that Mako survived the nights of continuous rains without bringing up that ‘life here isn’t the same as the city’. All Mako could do was roll his black-ringed eyes and mutter in agreement in hopes that Anderson would shut it for a second. Nevermind that the city slicker was able to prepare himself before with repairing the cracks and holes in the roof. No need to mention the few he missed but at least the mammoth of a man was able to sleep in a dry bed those nights.

The yammering continued when Mako was wandering through the small aisles, grabbing a few cans of dog food and placing them next to the glass bottle of milk. Anderson was curious why Mako had more than two cans with him. A little white lie never hurt anyone, right? “Gonna use em’ for baiting yabbies” Mako would mutter the feeble lie. But it worked. Anderson nodded his head and continued on with “the best yabbies to catch were always 2 miles south of town, next to
the Garrayura”. A soft nod and a “yup” made the nerdy looking old bloke shut up. Though, he took the advice to heart as he’d not seen the river since his arrival. Another thing to add to the “to do” list. Just to see if what Anderson was saying was right, that the fish were better there.

The muttering purr of the mud-coated truck came to a halt as it parked right next to the wooden fences outside his shack. Sore and tense muscles ached with the loud crunch of his aged bones as with the stretch of his meaty arms. A low yawn rumbled his throat loudly and ended with a hint of pain at the end. Joints in his arms and knees cracked loudly as he walked back to his damp home with bags full of groceries. He seriously couldn’t wait for this weather to change back to normal. The atmospheric pressure was slowly deteriorating his body, making the previous night the most painful night he slept through the storm. A cold gust of wind brushed violently against his raincoat, causing the white ponytail on top of his scalp to flutter like a miniature white flag. Mako hurried up his pace and rushed back inside the shack, the door rattling loudly behind him like a creaking cackle.

A quivering whistle greeted Mako once he was inside the cozy little shack. The only window in the kitchen was shaking intensely against the breeze. Now came the question if it was even a wise decision to go out and ‘fish’ like he had promised. It’s not like he was really going to do all the ‘fishing’ per say, but it felt more like a promise than something he sought after. Mako sighed loudly, the dark grey raincoat squired with him placing the groceries in their rightful spots across the kitchen. Ignoring all of the noises coming from outside for the moment before realizing the contents of his bag.

He forgot to buy meat for himself and had three brightly colored cans of dog food. Looks like he’s keeping that promise after all.

A strong gust of wind blew the leafy canopy of tower gum trees like an anxious quiver. All of the noisy insects like the green cicadas and crickets were faintly chirping, taking cover from the unpredictable weather. A few hid carefully under fallen branches and twigs that have decayed over the years from the eucalyptus trees. Scattered around like puzzle pieces on the moist muddy earth. It wasn’t something that Jamison was bothered by. Hell, with all the natural litter surrounding the shore and edge of the lake, it reminded him of his disorganized nest under the mangrove tree. The abnormality laid lazily on the small shortline that was littered with leaves and decaying reeds covered in mud. Just like yesterday, Jamison was exposing himself to the elements. This time however in the much more secure edge of the muddy water. His mud coated tail slapped lazily against a small collection of roting lilypads as he laid on his stomach.

An arm rested under his sharp chin as his moist elongated body enjoyed the blissful tranquility of light rain beginning to trickle down his body. The bright pink gills on his neck slowly flared as he breathed. There was nothing that could break this peaceful spell for Jamison. Not even the sound of the squishy footsteps of rubber boots crossing over puddles of mud.

“What are you doing?”

Jamison’s eyes shot wide open by the alarming voice that crept behind him. His dirty head turned back in a flash, sending the mud that was caked on his hair flying in all directions. Panic pumped through his veins as he was ready to take flight or fight for himself. Luckily there was no danger. It was just Mako. Standing tall with the same black boots and grey raincoat he wore yesterday. Only this time, the human was carrying the usual icebox and canvas bag he brings with him when it came to fishing.

Jamison let out a loud reassured sigh, head hanging low while his heart slowly began to beat normally. “Don’t scare me like that! Almost threw up me…” The creature paused, gulping noisily
that left a sour taste of bile on his tongue.” Breakfast.”

There was the slip of his memory of Mako’s promise to return back to the lake the next day. Well, it was made only if the weather was fair. It was nice to see that the fat human kept his word on coming back. Fright left Jamison’s mind like dandruff off his scalp. He smiled toothily, looking at the confused human who kept observing the grinning idiot. “Beautiful weather today, aye? It’s perfect for me fins and tail.”

If there ever was an award for the most “ugly innocent grin from a monster”, Jamison would be first place winner for it. Honestly, Mako was surprised the idiot isn’t flailing around like a fish out of water. He took a step closer, seeing mud and algae covering the thick tail and fins. There was something else that shined brightly in the visible light above. It looked almost like slime. Well, if the monster isn’t freaking out about being this close to shore, then no need to point it out.

“Yep. Nice day today.” Mako’s smile joined in with Jamison’s repulsive grin. The smile looked oddly attractive compared to Jamison’s. Despite the windy conditions, the day was nice. Hadn’t gotten worse yet from his own experience. The sky was still dim from the dark hovering clouds. Small patches of sunlight would rip through the weaker stretches, letting the bright and warm beams stretch the earth with a delicate touch.

The gleeful abnormality slithered under the decaying patches of reeds and mud, shifting his whole entire body with the small fins on his hips and his single arm.

“Been a while since we last fished, roight?” Jamison giggled. “Can’t wait for you to slice up more fish after catching em, mate!” The macabre frenzy made Mako uneasy by the mentioning of him gutting fish. Then again, it was mostly due to Mako handing over fish intestines to the always hungry freakishly larger fish. “Love how their guts always slurp down my mouth. Especially after eating more dog chow!” another cackle made Mako shudder harder than the cold breeze against his exposed face. His tired grey-blue eyes rolled to the direction of the dock, still moist and dark from the rains and murky lake.

“Common. Let’s fish.

Mako stood tall and stiff by the edge of the slippery dock. His hands dug deep into the rubber pockets of the coat, keeping his hands warm while waiting patiently. His gaze never left the lake, observing it carefully by the changing ripples above the surface. Wind and rain would continue on in short scattering phases, whistling through the trees and bushes behind Mako in a soft hiss.

A mild splash was picked up by Mako’s ears. It came from a location right beside the nearest mangrove trees. There it was again. Now drawing closer towards the dock. He now knew exactly where Jamison was hunting as many fish would take shelter behind the tall reeds or the deep roots of the mangroves. The human could see the tip of Jamison’s dorsal fin poking out of the water like a sailboat. Snaking his way like an eel with a prize clutched tightly in his sharp jaw. The giant of a man kneeled down in a low painful grunt that made his knees crunch under flesh while squatting. His balance was off, wincing in pain for a brief second before using his own girthy hand to keep his posture right. Never letting his sight leave away from the approaching fin. Clearly, he could see Jamison under the water, fish in his mouth and eyes shut tight when resurfacing his human half with a trickling splash.

“Nice job.” Mako praised when his sights caught the eye of the clenched fish. Jamison’s eyes fluttered slightly as he tried to open then once again, pupils small like pin drops adjusting to the brightness of the surface world. Mako reached his arm out to retrieve the fish from the momentarily blind monster. Snot dripped from his wet nose as he looked at Mako, a hint of
retaliation, of keeping his prized fish to himself. He did all the scouting and hunting after all, why
does this fat human want his prize? The iron taste of blood coated the creature splotchy tongue,
drool oozing coming out of his rancid lips. Jamison surrendered the fish to Mako’s dry hand with a
wet slap. It was completely covered in his saliva and the unfortunate fish’s blood. Seriously, that
was fucking disgusting. But, a fish is a fish. A quick wipe from his index finger ought to clean it
off for now.

“Try to keep your slobber down next time.” Mako’s deep voice rumbled under his breath as he
adjusted himself in a more comfortable position with his knees on the wooden floor, protected only
by the rubbery coat. Mako placed the dead fish next to the stained wooden cutting board. Fish
scales from previous sessions still clinging, only a few to be blown away by the wind.

“Can’t count on that, mate!” Jamison spoke loudly, followed by a short cackle. The blood on his
mouth struck his appetite faster than his hunting session. Blood still clinging to his taste buds,
licking his thin lips slowly as he spoke. “Ya can’t expect me to hand it over all sparkly clean?
These ain’t the clean waters, yanno.”

“That’s because you piss and shit in it.” Mako joked back, snorting under his breath with a soft
chuckle as he began to descale the dead sleepy cod. It was a joke that made Jamison frown for a
second before changing into a loud burst of a laugh. “It adds flavor to em!” Mako rolled his eyes as
his ears rang from the monster’s giggles. It was fucking disgusting reminder that Mako had to
make sure he would desensitize the hell out of his fish the moment he arrives home.

Mako made quick work on descaling the rather small sleepy cod. A quick slide under its belly and
a twist of the bones, the fish’s guts were pulled out and placed aside the cutting board. Jamison
watched carefully, waiting for his fair share of the bargain of their deal. The fins on his cheeks
twitched in agitation by the squeaking rubber boots. “C’mon! Where’s my piece of the pie?” Of
course, Mako hasn’t forgotten the deal. “Hold on. Hold on. Give me a second.” His hand reached
back to the canvas bag, pulling out the bright red can with the winking dog on the wrapping. A
snap and a loud pop was music to Jamison’s ears. It was always so heavenly to catch a whiff of that
dog food smell that made his eyes flutter. It always amused Mako when Jamison’s mood changes
so swiftly. The giant’s hand reached back out to the edge of the dock, handing it over to the
creature’s twitchy fingers.

While there was still some getting used too, the two unlikely neighbors had grown a friendship
amongst each other. Mako can honestly confirm to himself that he was glad to gain a friend that’s
different from the people in Murungal. A friend that was slowly making him feel more comfortable
with himself. Never in his life did he think he would ever have that thought with a monster.
Jamison had no clue how his life was in the city, nor could he judge the giant for it. Or how cruel
and fucked up most people could really be. There was more humanity in Jamison than the shithead
people in suits taking advantage of the poor. The thought made Mako lip curl into a smile as he
watched the abomination slurp loudly on processed meat slop.

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Two more fish were caught in less than half an hour. Both were in much more better state when
they were alive as Jamison would bite viciously on their necks to kill them off in one quick
 crunch. The last one the creature caught was a much bigger sized sleepy cod with bright colored
scales covering its entire body.
Jamison floated lazily as he held the last can Mako brought in for the day. Three fish for three cans and maybe a little bit extra fish guts to top it off. Just the way Jamison liked it. His tongue licked the contents clean around the lid, being absolutely careful not to snag the long splotchy tongue on a sharp edge. Mako continued to descale the last fish of the day. Scales flew in a frenzy and landed in various places around the dock. It was silent, save for the scraping sound of a knife and the bobbing water. Jamison watched Mako carefully. Observing the human’s concentrated gaze while 'working’. He seriously looked like he was deep in his own thoughts too. This mood always happened when the two were eerily quiet with each other.

“Mako,” Jamison spoke almost like a whisper, his single hand clutching on the empty red can with its paper label slowly peeling off from being exposed to the murky water. Mako’s concentration was broken, turning his heavy head to look at the pathetic creature floating on the surface of the lake. Until then, he just realized how quiet it was.”What is it?” Mako spoke just about the same as a whisper. No sense of fury in his tone with having his zen broken momentarily.

“What you said...back then when we first met.” Jamison paused as his voice cracked between words. “Do you really think I shouldn’t be near people?”

Silence once again returned like an unwanted rash. Mako sat there, knees aching by his own weight and being frozen by Jamison’s anxious gaze. A painful reminder of how much of a dick he was just about a month and a half ago. Ignorance and stupidity that made Mako’s gut ache worse than his knees. “I don’t know.” The human spoke again, knife clutched tightly on his scale covered hands. Sweat slowly pooled from his back as he tried to figure out the right words to say.

“People aren’t nice.” Mako continued, breaking the silence while flicking off the scales attached to his hands. “Some are cruel, nasty and ignorant with things they don’t understand.” The man swallowed harshly on his itchy throat. “They sometimes say horrible things to things they’re afraid of. Kinda like I did.”

Jamison looked away at Mako, his eyes wandering to the wet rattling reeds beside him. “Is that what you did a lot back at home?” Mako hummed softly at the question. If it was anyone else, he would tell them to mind their own business. Honestly, it really wasn’t Jamison’s business to know about his previous life in the city all too deeply. All the creature knows is that Mako had a bike gang, lived in a city far away from the lake and did bad stuff. Hurt people. Him and his mates. “M-more with you. I said that you shouldn’t be near people because I was afraid of you.”

“Why? I mean, ya aren’t scared of me now, are ya?” The creature spoke softly, gently returning his gaze back to the human. Almost looking like he was pleading that there was no fear between them. If there was, would it mean that Jamison would have to live alone in the lake again? He almost wished that he could read the human’s thoughts. Figuring out what made him look so terrifying that Mako had to make him be mean.

“No,” Mako spoke, looking at the pathetic quivering wet creature. “Not anymore.”

“But why were ya scared of me?! I gotta know what makes me look so scary? Maggie n Jack would tell me all these things about people ‘n how they’re great ‘n all. But they said people will hurt me because I look different. I don’t wanna hurt anybody, Mako!” Words flooded out of creature’s mouth a bit too fast for Mako to pick up. It didn’t help that his own ratty voice cracked with his trembling arms and shaking fins.

“Jamison. I know you don’t wanna hurt anyone. But they don’t know that. They just think people like you are dangerous and want to protect themselves. They’ve never seen someone like you before.” A deep sigh escaped Mako’s thick lips. “Kinda was like that when I first saw you. I thought you were going to pull me down the water or something and drown me. Maybe eat me.”
Jamison rolled his eyes at the reasoning. “Told ya mate, I don’t eat people! Never had either cus I ain’t never seen any other human than Mag’s ‘n Jack.” The lake creature snorted loudly, wiping his rosy nose with the stump of his right limb.

“I know that now!” Mako’s lips twitched in annoyance. “But when I first met you, I didn’t. I didn’t think you could even talk. Not everyone has experience with meeting…” Mako paused, trying to find the right words without offending the creature. “... someone like you.”

“Is that what people think I’ll do when they see me?” Any trace of Jamison’s usual laughy cackling voice faded back into obscurity. Golden eyes fidgeted around, looking in various directions as he spoke to the only human he’d talked to about this. Large house flies began to buzz loudly around the human’s plump hands, landing on the large gaping wound on the fish’s neck. “Maybe. I don’t know.” Mako’s hand swatted above the flies, sending them all into a frightened frenzy. “People don’t know that you won’t hurt them. But anything that looks different than what they’re used to would have them be scared. People rather do the whole ‘run now, ask questions later’.”

Dread filled Mako’s brain with the vision of people spotting Jamison. What if they’ll think the same thing like Anderson does, thinking that the monster of the lake is some sort of bunyip. There would be no way that they would react the same as Maggie and Jack did. What if these people were carrying guns and knives? Poachers? Would they rather shoot first and ask questions later with the corpse of a monster? Or would they capture Jamison and take him in for money?

A gear clicked the moment that realization came to him. Grey blue eyes looked down at Jamison, still anxiously shivering while picking off the flakes of dried algae off his dirty blond hair. There, in front of him was a creature that would maybe be worth thousands of dollars. Perhaps even millions. Mako could just say ‘fuck it’ and capture this stupid rat like freak and turn him in a zoo and be living in a giant mansion like home back in Perth. Become the very people he hated so much and not be stranded here in the middle of buttfuck nowhere. It would break an old woman’s heart if that were to happen. Something that Mako wouldn’t bare to think about. Even if the temptation was there.

“Jamison,” Mako spoke as his knife moved in to poke the soft bellow of the cod. “People can change. Sometimes for the better or the worst.” The tip of the knife punctured the soft belly, cutting smoothly like warm butter. “Those who don’t change do so only because they’re still afraid.” Guts slowly oozed out from the gaping slice, only to be picked off my Mako’s thick fingers in a loud sloppy mess. He looked at it with disgust in his eyes, but a small trace of glee with the sight of gore wriggling in his fingers. It was oddly nostalgic. The gory hand extended out towards the confused and apprehensive freak, only hiding in the human’s large shadow.

“But there are some good people, Jamison. People like Maggie, Jack...me. They’re the kind of people who wanna keep their promises to the people they care about.” Jamison blinked at Mako, amazed by how much kindness the human was showing to him. A strong but pleasant emotion crept up in Jamison warmly, making the thin lips on his face curl into a smile.

“Maggie cares about you. She made me promise I would keep you safe.” His words were gentle as the creature reached out to grab the fish guts coating the human’s hand. They squished softly under the webbed fingers and palm, shifting it slowly to his rancid smelling mouth and chewing slowly.

“She made me keep a promise, Jamie, and I gained a friend along the way.”
The sun just set thirty minutes ago, making the sky glow in a bright radiating blue across the stagnant sky. Mako turned to look at the kitchen window, still wide open to let in any cool breeze ease the giant’s overheated and exhausted body. Sounds of whirling cicadas, the shrills of lonely crickets and the echoing bellows of frogs were all singing loudly from the dark bush. It wasn’t the heat from the day that was still making the tiny shack still hot.

Hello everyone!
It's been a while since I last posted! Last month was fairly busy for me as I had to leave town for about a week. No time to really sit down and work on the next chapter until sometime this week. I'll be aiming to write down two more chapters next month to pick up the slack I left off. ;)

This chapter is fairly short and FINALLY..NSFW. lol

Huge thanks to Rye for being my beta!
Enjoy!

With the rains now finally departed, the agonizing mixture of moisture and heat made the bush feel more unbearable. Despite sweating continuously while working, Mako had to catch up all of the late deliveries within the next couple of days. It was repetitive driving back and forth under the sun’s boiling rays for several hours. To add to Mako’s dismay with the heat, most of the deliveries weighed close to 45 kilos and had to be taken up several floors when arriving at Wyndham. But the drive to town was pleasant. Seeing the bush completely rejuvenated by the early spring rains brought new growth from the red earth. The warm wind would blow Mako’s silver hair whenever he stuck his head outside the window. An easy way for him to keep his own brain from cooking inside the boiler like truck.

Even with going back to work, the sweaty giant was longing for a break again. He wanted to go back to the lake. Catch some big cod with his obscure neighbor and just talk for countless of hours. Why, just the other night, Mako had to remind the jittery fish that he was not sure when he’d be around the lake this week. “All work and no play for now.” Mako would say as Jamison tilted his head while chewing loudly on a shredded fishtail, completely confused still to this day as to why humans have to constantly work for ‘money’. It made absolutely no sense for a creature who dwells in mud and algae. Nevertheless, there was nothing Jamison could do other than bring up the option of just stopping by, exchanging a few words, make sure Mako is in one piece and Jamison isn’t dwelling in his complete isolation of sentient contact.

Mako sat alone in the brightly lit kitchen, looking down at the almost completed crossword puzzle.
he’d been staring at for almost an hour, the sharp buzz of flies audibly flying over the empty plate near his gargantuan arm. Bits of rice and fish still cling to the plate which was just the ideal meal for the buzzing pest. The sun just set thirty minutes ago, making the sky glow in a bright radiating blue across the stagnant sky. Mako turned to look at the kitchen window, still wide open to let in any cool breeze ease the giant’s overheated and exhausted body. Sounds of whirling cicadas, the shrills of lonely crickets and the echoing bellows of frogs were all singing loudly from the dark bush. It wasn’t the heat from the day that was still making the tiny shack still hot.

Just on top of the old stove was a large pot filled with fresh water, boiling at a snail's pace. Steam rose from the pot and filled the kitchen ceiling, distributing some of the moths clinging on the wooden creeks above. Drops of sweat rolled down Mako’s forehead, trailing down to his oily nose and chin, finally falling down to the crossword puzzle and leaving a wet mark. Mako groaned loudly, wiping the wet mark on his finger. With a loud creak of his chair, Mako got up and walked over to the boiling pot, turning off the burner with a loud click. The steam caressed his face in an odd embrace that made Mako even more excited for what's to come.

He just can't wait to finally take a bath tonight.

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There was only one room in the entire house where the heat wasn’t as stagnant. It was also the only room that lacked any proper electricity and was a claustrophobic night terror. Completely covered in icy cold tiles with a single drain in the center, it was the designated ‘Shower room’, as Mako would later find out when he first moved in here. Since then, he's taken plenty of baths to escape his own oily skin and body odor. Aside from the drain, there laid a large white pail half full of cold water, a pale blue drinking cup that floated in the still water inside the pail. The rest of his cleaning kit also stood by the pail and drain, ready and waiting for Mako to step in.

Mako walked into the room while carrying the boiling hot pot of water. The bright pink cooking gloves always came in handy as he made his way to the cold dark room. Thankfully the light from the kitchen behind him allowed the giant to see just enough without slipping onto his ass and pouring boiling water on himself. The steam of hot and cold water mixing in together let out a soft hiss for a second that slowly built up the excitement of getting washed up.

It was just the right amount for the pail to be completely filled with clean warm water. Without hesitation, Mako began to undress just right outside the shower room door. He began to strip the dirty socks off his feet, tossing it next to the pile of dirty laundry beside the door. Clothes from previous night showers that Mako was sure that soon he’d get to washing. A low grunt escaped from his nostrils as he began to remove the dirty white tank top, tossed into the pile next to the socks. It was so relieving to have his wide gut exposed to the stagnant air. Like his skin could breathe again. Mako’s grey tired eyes looked down at his round belly.

Yep. It was still there, the tattoo that earned him the nickname “Hog” amongst his mates back in Perth.

A cartoonishly but cute drawn pig surrounded by flames and a motorcycle’s handlebar was still attached to his pale belly. Only it was damaged by years of fights, accidents and complete recklessness. Healed scars were slashed around the adorable pig’s face and Mako’s belly button. Ah, It was no big deal. That broken beer bottle nearly missed spilling off his guts. Besides, the guy who gave him that scar called Mako a “faggot”. His only response to that had been to beat the living shit out of that asshole.

The clanging of his belt buckle echoed loudly as his pants were dropped on the wooden floor. His grey briefs fell right next to the blue camo pants. Tossed to the pile as Mako stood beside the door
completely nude. “Ah. Much better” Mako hummed to himself, scratching his own chest as he was finally freed from his cocoon. The tile was cold on his bare feet once he walked in the tightly fitted room, there was enough space for him to walk in and move around, but not much else other than just standing upright as his gut touched the icy tiled wall. Dirty fingers reached over to pull the hair tie off from his head, letting he shining silver hair float down to his greasy face and shoulders. Elegance never favored the ex-biker, but it wasn’t something he ever thought about in regards to himself. Mako hovered above the pail, touching the warm water with his fingertips and checking to see if it was just right before grabbing the bobbin drinking cup inside.

It was perfect. As nothing compares to the complete relief of having warm water being poured down from the tip of your greasy dry scalp, down to your cold bare sweaty feet. Another scoop of water splashed on his face and neck. Already feeling a million times better as the dirt and grime on his body melted away down to the small drain below his feet. Mako’s girthy hand reached down to grab the bottle of shampoo and soap, squeezing the bottle so firmly above his head that it let out a loud disgusting squirting sound. The ‘Ocean waves” scent of the bottle filled tickled Mako’s nostrils as it was such a soothing clean scent that was a personal favorite of his. Dirty wet fingers reached over to scrub the shampoo and silver hair. Suds and bubbles coated the giant head, dripping loudly in a clean soapy mess. Mako was in complete bliss. His eyes were kept closed as he enjoyed the lonely cleaning session. Echoing slaps of soap suds fell into the tile floor once again, an indication of how alone and quiet Mako truly was inside this little shack. With his eyes still closed, Mako grabbed the cup once again, pouring warm water on his scalp and rinsing all of the water off. It had only been less than five minutes and Mako felt like new. Once again he arched down to grab a bar of soap next to the pail. Circular motions around his large girthy arms, guts, and back made Mako’s sense pool deep inside his gut. Grey blue eyes looked down below his gut, noticing his hardening cock and the hand cleaning below his waist. “It’s been a while...” Mako thought to himself while cleaning his hairy thighs, moving his hand while holding the bar of soap slowly away from his member. His free hand reached down to clean his cock slowly, letting the soap suds from his round stomach drip and fall to the base. A slow and pleasing stroke made his breathing grow deeper, nostrils taking in the refreshing scent surrounding him. The brightly colored head poked out from the thick foreskin that made Mako be pleased with his own shape and size. “No one is here.” Mako’s own voice echoed softly in the titled room, reminded him that this is his home now. His own private home in the middle of nowhere. If he wanted to jack off in his own bathroom. He ain’t gonna stop now. Not with this pulsating hard dick in his palm.

The sound of his own hand stroking his hardening flesh echoed awkwardly in the small room. In fact, rubbing one out in this room really isn’t all that comfortable. But that wasn’t going to stop him. Mako leaned back slowly towards the icy wall as his head tilted back slightly. Slow strokes picked up the pace around his girth, reaching up to rub his palm on his sensitive head. It brought warmth to Mako’s gut, increasing his pleasure but not yet to the extent of being on the edge. Really, has it been that long since he last jacked off? When was the last time his own hand gripped his own meaty cock? Let alone, when had someone last sucked him off? A frustrated grunt escaped his swollen lower lip as he kept arguing with his own mind. In reality, the last time he got sucked off was a few days prior to leaving his gang.

Mako’s free hand reached over to wipe his own face. Suds and warm water dripped from his tanned skin, taking a quick break to catch his own breath before letting the other hand continue with beating his throbbing cock mercilessly. He was trying to visualize a few of his mates that
would always want to meet to “fool around for a tic”. Recall a few scenarios that were really up to
par for his own taste. There were a few of them with mouths that looked like they were born to
suck dick for days. Even more frustrating was building up in Mako’s head as he thought deeper.
Trying to focus all of his own concentration to remember what it was like to have thick warm lips
suckling on the spongy head, down to the base of his heavy sack. The thick foreskin around his
head was pulled back slowly, giving off a soft throb in response. Everything was just drawing up a
blank.

“Okay.” Mako thought to himself, letting out another deep exhale as he continued beating himself
off. His eyes were closed to keep his concentration in check.” Just keep thinking of one of your

Finally, Mako’s vision began to concentrate on a mouth. A mouth with soft wide lips that look like
they would stretch wonderfully if they ever opened their mouth wide to taste his cock. The lips
would suckle the head of his cock, making a long trail of kisses down to the bottom of his girthy
sack. “There we go..” The wet giant exhaled deeply, feeling his libido spike up by the fantasy
playing in his own mind. The vision continued as his eyes were still closed, slowly feeling a tongue
slip out from the soft lips and began to trace around the ridges of his foreskin, leaving a messy trail
of drool. The face still wasn’t there. With all honesty, it wasn’t of Mako’s concern.

Those same lips surrounded his cock in a wet embrace that left Mako moaning quietly under his
own breath. Imagining the warmth of this stranger’s mouth and how inviting it really was. His
hand's rhythm matched the mouth, bobbing up and down slowly until Mako grew more impatient
with the pacing and his own imagination.

However, this mouth. it was just perfect. It was warm, wet, sharp, slimy. In fact, it was very slimy.
Like a thickly coated slime that would come from the gaping mouth of a fish. But it fit his rock
hard cock in like a glove. It all made Mako’s body tense up even more than usual when it came to
visualizing a blowjob. Heavy pants escaped his lips as his climax soon crept under his gut, ready to
shoot his load on the face of the man giving him the perfect blow job. He wanted to cover
whoever’s face with thick ropes of his pent up cum. Mako wanted to create a painting like never
before.

The vision soon became a shock when Jamison’s face appeared in Mako’s vision. There he was, in
a dark void in Mako’s psyche with Lips spread tightly down to the base of Mako’s dick, before
letting it out with a loud gasp. Orange eyes looked at the human with a deep hunger that was
slowly being fulfilled by the taste of Mako’s cock. Jamison’s mouth was wide open, the splotchy
tongue hung out from the side as he waited for Mako’s load. Mako let out a sharp gasp as he came
hard. His balls tightened and throbbed with every gush of hot cum being released. It splattered the
cold wall of the room, and just like a painting, it began to drip down slowly.

Out of all the people he wanted to spill his cum on, it was him? Him!? Mako placed his hand on
his own face as shame sunk deeply in his own gut, completely embarrassed that he just visioned
that with Jamison. Not too long ago was he afraid that the creature would pull him down to a
watery grave, only to end up becoming friends from several misunderstandings? And now this?
Mako’s skin crawled with a quick shiver. He reached down to the large bucket and poured water
over his head and body to wake him out of that state. Water poured loudly on Mako’s pale silver
hair, covering his reddened face as he leaned back against the wall once again.

Mako really did need to find more friends. At least find a few hookups.
A low natural dull hum echoed inside the water, as an odd white noise for the sleeping monster. Jamison laid on his stomach, resting peacefully as his bright pink gills extended while he breathed slowly. His mouth hung open, staining his crooked teeth and tongue with the mud and filth covering his putrid nest.

Greetings everyone!

Golly, another chapter update? Well, It so happens to be my birthday and I thought the best gift would be to give my readers another sappy chapter! lol I had lots of fun with this one and honestly, I'm glad many of you are enjoying the slow burn. It's my favorite kind of burn. HA!

Huge thanks to Rye for being my beta!

Enjoy!

It was almost as if the high summer heat across the outback would never cease to exist. Temperatures would rise above 32 degrees at noon, scorching anything alive that wandered too far in the outback. The only other natural sanctuaries from the sun’s blaring heat were any of the scattered lakes. Murky green waters glowed brightly under the sunlight, creating an odd dream-like world for an outsider. Tall reeds swayed slowly in the waters, their tips poking above the surface and rustling against the gentle dry winds. The world below felt much slower, quieter, and of course, boring. Boring for the sentient being residing inside these dense waters.

A low natural dull hum echoed inside the water, as an odd white noise for the sleeping monster. Jamison laid on his stomach, resting peacefully as his bright pink gills extended while he breathed slowly. His mouth hung open, staining his crooked teeth and tongue with the mud and filth covering his putrid nest. For years he’d been used to the taste of the scum surrounding him, it was familiar to his senses and not at all disruptive.

Fish would avoid the creature’s territory at all cost, fearing being caught by the top predator whenever they were spotted remotely close to the creature’s whereabouts. Even the larger and voracious fish like barramundi and bass would scatter away in a frenzy the moment they saw Jamison’s eel-like tail. Even if Jamison wanted to follow these scared fish, it would only be a waste of energy. That’s not Jamison’s style of hunting. The monster was an ambush predator, preferring hiding under the shadows or reeds before rushing in and snatching his prey. Lately, Jamison hadn’t been in the need to hunt for himself, when he did, it was usually now delivered back to Mako. Just like a retriever pup, Jamison would catch fish with his teeth and get rewarded with rich, sloppy, processed dog food.

Bright red label cans were scattered across Jamison’s nest like a reckless hoarder, collecting all of
the cans Mako rewarded him and treating them like a precious souvenir. The creature would toy with the cans, filling them with shining colored stones, scraps of metal objects like nails and screws that polluted the lake years ago, and animal bones from his previous successful hunts. Many of these items were buried under the thick rooted weeds or scattered around in the muddy bed. They all were his ‘treasures’, as he would show off and boast about them to the unimpressed Mako.

Speaking of Mako, it’d been several days since the human arrived at the lake. Granted, he does visit and chat for a few minutes before heading out to work or expressing how tired he was from driving for hours. It still feels like Mako hardly ever visits to relax and wind down. When he does visit, it’s usually just to check up on Jamison, give him some of his leftovers that’s been in the fridge for too long and chat for a few. All this small talk was spiraling Jamison back into being alone. Bored out of his mind and sleeping ´it off until his yearning for food strikes.

Dirt coated lips twitched annoyingly as Jamison began to wake up from his slumber. His pupils shrunk by the bright glow surrounding his lake home, indicating there’d still be daylight and a chance to grab a meal. A foul taste filled his wet mouth as he yawned grossly, stretching out his jaw and showing off his yellowing teeth and bright pink gums. Bubbles twirled from his dark eel-like tail, stretching it out with a loud crack from sore and tensed bones. Blond hair swayed in a slow hypnotic motion like the weeds surrounding his nest, Jamison was trying to keep himself awake. If it wasn’t for his growling stomach, the monster could seriously sleep until sundown.

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The outback was just the same as any other early summer day. Scorching hot and humid air that felt like it’d all been mixed in a boiling hot stew of misery. The cicadas were pleased with the weather, chirping loudly across the lake while hiding under the luscious dried vegetation and gum trees. At long last, crickets competed with the boisterous cicadas as their numbers grew tremendously during the summer. A magpie whistled loudly above the canopy, joining in the serenade of noisy insects and lonely songbirds.

Right by the collection of lily pads by the edge of the dock came a sound of trickling water. A single lilypad rose up, protecting Jamison’s balding scalp as his head slowly emerged from the water. Golden eyes scanned above the surface, scanning the bush for any new potential opportunities to feast. God, did Jamison really wished Mako was there, standing above the dock with a hand full of dog food and leftovers from who knows when. Or maybe Mako holding his fishing pole and ice box. Or just, standing there and wanting to have a chat. The last conversation the two had was about Mako’s job history, something about the worst job he’d ever had was being a pizza delivery boy when he was 18 years old. It was at the worst part of town, filled with druggies across every corner. Almost got mugged by one of them as he was delivering a pizza, and Jamison took that like a grain of salt, absolutely no clue what any of that all is. Other than pizza being something you can eat. Maybe someday, Mako could bring him one?

The loud snap of a twig awoke Jamison back into reality. Fluttering his eyes as he faced the direction of the sound, finned ears detecting what that noise was. The sounds of rattling bushes came from the just south shore of the lake. Another odd sound followed through. Low grunts, scampering of hooves, and obnoxious snorts that oddly made Jamison’s body jolt with excitement. He knew damn well what was hiding behind those bushes.

It was a small herd of feral pigs, all emerging out from the dense bushes and grass. Unlike the wild goats that roam across these parts of the outback, these pigs are much less experienced with living
out in the wild. They knew not to wander too close to the river, only taking shade and water from the small lakes and ponds. They too competed with the native wildlife and feral goats, but to Jamison, they were a food source he favored. Especially the smaller ones. Three sows grunted as their snouts sniffed the ground and soft mud. Clouds of dirt would puff out from their snouts, curly tails wagging as they made their way to the edge of the lake. The sows were accompanied by small brown furred piglets, happily oinking and following after their mothers for a peaceful drink of cool water.

“Perfect.” Jamison muttered quietly, trying to contain his cackling giggles after licking his thin lips. He could almost taste it now, blood-rich red meat. Oh, how he longed for that taste, especially fresh. Fish is fine and all, but there was just nothing that beat the taste of eating something with more blood. Wouldn’t be the first time Jamison had pork in his diet, certainly wouldn’t be the last. Piglets are easier to catch of course, but perhaps someday he’d catch a much bigger and fatter pig. One that would feed him for days.

Jamison dived back down to the foggy waters, leaving behind ripples above the surface where he once was. His tail moved slowly, swimming to the direction of the pigs, the poor animals unknowing of the danger they were in for.

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Two of the older sows hid under the shade of a tree after taking a refreshing drink, finally taking a break from the skin biting summer heat. Dozens of piglets wondered across the lake, exploring this new territory while taking refuge. Some nursed with the two sows taking shade for themselves, others played by the edge of the lake and coating their small bodies with cool mud.

Jamison’s eyes glowed once he hid under a collection of tall reeds. His soft belly barely touching the muddy floor, crawling at a slow pace while inching closer. The monster could see small hooves running around the shore, triggering his hunting senses to make the perfect ambush. He had to pick the right one, just the one that’s just close enough for him to leap out and snatch. Amber eyes glowed as he waited while his fins pinned back, completely focused on the lights and shadows of the pigs above.

An overly exhausted young sow waddled her way towards the small group of piglets besides the tall reeds, her thick brown fur coated in mud and dirt after bathing to rid the annoying bugs prickling at her skin. A low snort escape from her snout, observing one of her piglets as it wondered deeper into the lake, in search of anything it can nibble or play with. There was no indication of there being any danger. The lake was new to her, but with the natural sounds still occurring, there wasn’t much to fear. The only scent her old nose could pick up was the faint scent of a human.

The silence was broken almost instantly. The sound of a crashing splash and a shrieking squeal woke any creature resting by the lake. It happened too fast. Jamison had his teeth sunk deep into the old sow’s throat, biting hard and latching with his strong jaws. His ears rang whenever the sow screamed out in pain, only clenching tighter to the throat and hopes to squeeze the sow’s windpipe shut. Honestly, Jamison was aiming for one of the small piglets, not really expecting today being the day he catches the biggest hog. Fear exploded through the lake, sending all of the other pigs running for safety from a threat that was already claiming it’s prize.

No matter how much the pig screamed, the monster’s tight grip of his jaw didn’t lose for a second. Dark wet coils wrapped around the struggling sow, slippery skin surrounding bristled fur in a slow and agonizing squeeze. Slime slowly began to ooze out of Jamison’s tail, an attempt to weigh down his prey more, all of his hunting instincts rushing into his brain in a flash, urging him to move
further down to the lake. Gills flared out wildly as soon as Jamison began to shift his fins, pulling the wriggling pig further down, water filled her gaping mouth as she let out another squeal. Jamison paid no attention to the feral pigs returning to the scene. Neither did he pay attention to the charging shadow of a giant boar heading straight towards him.

Pain stung Jamison’s ribs like a smoldering hot branding iron. The father of the many squealing piglets rushed out from the bushes and into the lake with his mouth wide open and razor-sharp tusks beared. It bit and thrashed viciously to Jamison, slicing the monster up and letting out his own blood and mixing it with the mud, slime, and lake water into a gory slurry. The creature retaliated, quickly letting go of the exhausted sow as he writhed in pain.

“Shit!” Jamison shouted, grinding his teeth as blood poured out of his open wound. Luckily for his own sake, nothing was punctured or broken. Only ripped open flesh below his ribs. He had to get out. Wriggling away like a frightened cod and screaming in fear, Jamison tried to rush back to the lake depths, ignoring the pain on his tail as the boar charged once again. Hooves slammed on the slime-coated tail that would soon create new scars. Not even with retreating did the pig understand that Jamison wasn’t much of a threat anymore. It didn’t matter anyway, especially not to the boar. It charged once again at Jamison, hitting so hard onto his ribcage that it flung him to his side with a loud splash.

And then, silence.

The frightened sow retreated back to her awaiting piglets, panting in exhaustion as her piglets sniffed the slime coating her body. Blood trickled down her neck, both her’s and Jamison’s combined. Pain ached the monster’s body as he began to move once again. The last charge was the one that did the most damage, staining the putrid green lake water with a faded red glow. The gash on his rib was open, pouring out quicker by the second. The boar still stood at the edge of the lake, looking at Jamison with extreme caution. Whatever energy Jamison had left, it was all for the creature to flail out of the edge and into deeper waters. He retreated back into the safety of his nest as a trail of blood followed behind him in a hypnotic wave.

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Hours had passed since the wild pigs abandoned the lake after the nightmarish scene. Wounds would heal for the old sow, but the trauma will linger in her mind. Only hoofprints were left by the feral pigs that Mako quickly picked up as he walked around the lake. The giant stood on top of the dock, reminiscing that there were piglet tracks around the dock as well. Shame he had to be at work and not witnessing what would have been the cutest herd of piglets. A missed opportunity that he hoped to see in the future.

Mako’s sandals stomped on the wooden floor, making his ponytail swing around like a flail. He always smiled at the weird way of letting Jamison know he was here. In his hand, he held a small container filled with leftovers from the past week, steamed rice, scrambled eggs and scraps of fried fish. Topping it off with a fresh can of dog food as a special treat.

“Hmm.” Mako waited a few seconds before stomping once more. Nothing. Another loud stomp. Still, nothing.

This was odd. Jamison would always respond within the first five seconds of his arrival. Maybe wearing sandals isn’t lough enough for Jamison to hear. That freak might be asleep, maybe ate too many fish or whatever and passed out in a food coma. Whatever the reason is, Mako sighed slowly and hoped he would see Jamison before heading to bed.

“Alright. Guess this is going back in the fridge. Don’t know if it can last one more day in the-”
Jamison arose from the same spot he peeked out earlier in the day. Water trickled from his body and surfaced up to his shoulders. Mako’s frown turned into a smile, as he bent down on his knees with a low grunt. “There you are. Thought you were asleep when you didn’t pop up the first knock. Got you some food.”

Not a single word popped out of Jamison’s mouth. Actually, he wasn’t even looking at Mako. Only glancing down at his shoulders and the rippling waters around him. “What’s wrong?” Mako mumbled at the quiet and still monster, tilting his head in a way that made his plump cheek wiggle. “You ate already?” He asked once again, placing the container of odd food down beside him.

“No.” Uttered Jamison’s first word in a cold and hurt tone. Still avoiding looking at Mako, completely ashamed of today’s events and in pain from his wounds. Oblivious to Mako, the human continued. “Got you some leftovers like always. Added in some egg from this morning too. Wasn’t in the mood for something scrambled.” Silence still surrounded the two like an unwanted house guest. Mako still looked down at the pathetic creature with concern. Something is going on.

“I don’t need yer help.” Jamison’s voice cracked as he spoke deeply, his dirty lips twitched while his fins pinned back like an angry cat’s ears. “I can feed me’self! I don’t need you to fatten me up with your crap!” Confusion rattled Mako’s head like a can of marbles. This behavior coming from Jamison was definitely off. “The hell happened today? I feed you leftovers all the time and you’re suddenly mad at me?” Mako paused as he swallowed. “What’s gotten into you?”

“Nothing!” Shouted Jamison as his fins flared out in frustration. Yellow teeth were bared out at Mako in annoyance, before hissing under his breath as the pain returned back to the open wound near his ribs.

“Bullshit,” Mako shouted back. “I ain’t that stupid. Cut the crap and tell me what's going on with you.”

Oh, how Jamison wanted Mako to be wrong. In complete defeat, the pathetic creature shifted himself to his right side, floating his body up like a dead goldfish and showing the stern-faced human what his problem was. The damage to his ribs was a hideous sight to behold. The wound was still open, leaking out blood and slime that looked almost infectious. The scrapes on his tail were still red, irritated but would heal just like the other scars around his shredded tail. Mako’s eyes widen as he looked at Jamison’s body and the mud-coated red wound.

“You fucking idiot..”

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The sky glowed a heavenly orange and pink as the sun set slowly over the horizon. It was comforting to see the sky this bright once again with rolling purple clouds that looked as if they were made out of fairy floss. The mood was calm and quiet between the two neighbors. They both found a spot around the lake where there weren’t any deep tree roots, tall prickly reeds or soft mud. It was a quiet and clean spot, perfect for Mako to attend to Jamison’s injuries with the first aid kit Mako had in the shack. Jamison laid on his side, his left arm rested under his chin as Mako poured in clean drinking water on the wound. His tail still moved under the still waters of the lake, keeping himself hydrated on his soft amphibious skin. Unfortunately for Mako, Jamison’s skin began to produce more slime, making it difficult to keep the wound clean.

“Stop that…” Mako groaned, wiping the thin slime off of Jamison’s human-like skin with a hand towel.

“Can’t help it. Me slime always comes out when I’m not moist enough.” Jamison almost let out a
giggle at Mako’s ruthless work, but it quickly turned into a harsh painful hiss.

The giant’s hand gently placed an antiseptic wipe on top of the bruise, cleaning off any infection still above the surface. The muted orange fins on Jamison’s tail splashed widely on the water, followed by the monster’s annoying painful whines. Water went everywhere, soaking Mako and the first aid kit as the fish flailed. “Hold still!” growled Mako, holding both of his gigantic hands on top of Jamison’s tail and hip. Slime oozed on his dry hands, trying to keep Jamison to calm down just for a second.

“That hurts! Get it off me!” Amber eyes glared at Mako as Jamison panted deeply, his eyes were wide and wet. The pathetic thing felt like the world was just against him today.

“It’s gonna hurt worse when it gets infected, you idiot. Stay still!” Mako’s voice trailed off at the end, his hands still holding Jamison down, only this time, they were much more gentle. “Let me fix you. You’ll be alright.”

It’d been such a hard day already for him. Jamison told Mako exactly what happened today. It was such a major blow to his ego as the top predator in this lake, Mako just doesn’t understand it. The human mentioned what he did was the stupidest thing he’s ever done. Not the stupidest. Jamison has done worse before but he was not going to mention it at a time like this. The monster had the scars to prove it. But for now, Jamison felt much more at ease with this human attending to him in a way he hasn’t felt before in a long time. Mako’s hands patted the creature’s hips. It was Mako’s first time finally touching Jamison’s odd fish-like skin. It was soft, wet, slimy and warm. The two were quiet again, only the chirps of crickets were heard.

“You’re very good with your hands,” Jamison spoke, resting his head back down on his own arm in an exhausted slump. If there ever was a time when Mako’s face turned red, now would be it. His hands quickly pulled away from the wet hips, blinking rapidly while not realizing how much he was touching Jamison. The giant’s mouth was dry and hot, swallowing harshly while looking away at the beached monster.

“I’ve done first aid stuff before, with my bike mates. Used to treat each other’s wound when we got into fights.” God did Mako wanted to disappear, but there was no time for that now. His hand returned back to the antiseptic wipe, cleaning off any remaining congealed blood around the gaping wound. It made Jamison shut his eyes tightly, hissing under his breath while trying to keep himself from jumping around.

Jamison’s hiss turned into a chuckle once the wipe was out of his wound. The cool air made the stinging pain ease away. “I’ve done it before. Mostly with the little ones.” The monster’s fingers twitched as the burning pain subsided. “Didn’t intend to catch a big one even tho I was pretty hungry.”

Mako groaned while reaching for the first aid kit. “I feed you plenty of food. You don’t have to go out there and hunt like a wild animal.” Just the image of Jamison springing out of the water and catching a piglet brought Mako’s heart down to his gut. “I don’t like the idea of you killing pigs, either.” Phantom squeals of fear and pain echoed loudly in Mako’s mind while holding the dry hand towel, dabbing lightly at the wound to keep it dry once again.

“It ain’t the same, mate.” The monster whined as he rubbed his head on his own moist arm. “Nothing beats the taste of fresh red meat. Ah, especially from younger pi.”

“Stop.” Mako interrupted Jamison mid-sentence while pouring few drops of hydrogen peroxide on the gash. Bubbles began to sizzle loudly on the pink bruise that made Jamison’s fins twitch. Before the creature could ask what was going on Mako butted in once more. “I don’t want you to hunt any
more pigs.”

“Why?” The creature asked in a tone that made him sound like a spoiled brat. “They taste good and they’ve got plenty of mea-”

Mako’s attention darted to Jamison as he stared at him in the eyes with a threatening glare. “You kill another pig, I ain’t coming back here and I’ll leave you to rot in this shit pool. Got it!?”

If there was one way someone would get the idea of how serious Mako is, it’s the dead stare of a man who wouldn’t hesitate on beating you to death. His voice was low, deep, much more intimidating than Jamison’s own primitive claws and teeth. The creature sank down, hiding his face from the human while nodding quickly, shocked by the human’s sudden outburst.

Mako licked his lips slowly, watching the bubbles on the cut fade away in a slow sizzling pace. It was quiet again, saved only by the natural sounds surrounding them. “Guess I’ll have to find a way to get you more of that red meat.” Mako paused, reaching back to the first aid kit as he spoke. “Know someone who had butcher scraps back in town. I’ll uh..fetch you some there.”

Why does Mako care so much right now? Why is he willing to help out this freak of nature’s sudden craving for flesh? Sure, he’s got the teeth set for eating meat but, Mako could just let him scavenge off the bottom of the lake. Let him search for loaches or if he had a craving for warm-blooded animals, at least eat anything else that wasn’t pig-like. Mako let out a soft sigh, pulling out a dry stitching thread, tweezers, and needle out from the kit while gazing at the moist cut on Jamison’s chest. The creature was still silent, looking away from Mako’s gaze as the human began to stitch slowly.

“Do you like hunting?” Mako wanted to break the silence. He at least wanted to know exactly what’s going on in the creature’s mind.

“It’s the only thing I can do right, most of the time. Ain’t got anything else to do other than sleep when yer not around.” A soft exhale from Jamison’s nostrils made Mako’s heart skip. “I get bored and lonely. Always eager to have you around.” Mako’s face turned just as pink as earlier when he touched the smooth skin on Jamison’s hip. Seriously, this guy is really testing him. Mako remained cool, calm as he pulled the needle with the tweezers, closing up the wound slowly without making Jamison too uncomfortable. “Used to collect all the scraps laying around the lake bed before. They’re me treasure, but ain’t sure that there's anything left to explore here. Place is all dried up. Collect bones from my catch and put it on me nest.” Jamison trailed off while smiling as he spoke about himself. Always happens.

“Ow! Hey! Whatcha doing there again?!” Jamison lifted his head, looking at Mako’s work as best as he could.

A giant hand pressed Jamison’s head back down, trying to urge the blonde not to move again. Being absolutely quiet while finishing up, Mako’s face was still pink, glowing the same hue as the setting sky but undetectable beneath the vanishing light. “Jamie,” Mako spoke in a soft tone that made the impatient creature pause. “I’ll do what I can to bring you stuff to keep that brain of yours busy and to keep me from doing this again.” The soft tone trailed off at the end, the usual Mako rough teasing tone that made Jamison’s twisted face grin widely for a split second before gasping from the various pricks on his pale skin.

There the two were, at the edge of the lake and one treating the other to the creature’s wounds as the crickets chirped peacefully to the rose painted sky.

“Thanks, mate” Jamison spoke as soft as a lake monster ever could.
Silverfish

Chapter Summary

Hello hello!

A new chapter is up and ready! Just in time before the month ends. Speaking of months. Next month (August) will be the 1 year anniversary of Oddity in the Water. One year already!? PHEW! I remember just talking writing this fic to a few roadrat buds! Expect two chapters next month as a little celebration.

Huge thanks to Rye for being my beta! Also, before anyone asks, yes I really love Dead Kennedys and had to include a song in this chapter.

Chapter Notes

It was a relieving sensation whenever there was a small gust of wind that would brush against Mako’s greasy, warm and moist face. The wind blowing in the trucks rolled down windows was warm from the several days of the excruciating heat wave. It barricaded the air like the suffocating heat inside of a boiling oven, cooking everything and everyone in this unforgiving spell until they’d reached beyond ‘well done’.

It was a relieving sensation whenever there was a small gust of wind that would brush against Mako’s greasy, warm and moist face. The wind blowing in the trucks rolled down windows was warm from the several days of the excruciating heat wave. It barricaded the air like the suffocating heat inside of a boiling oven, cooking everything and everyone in this unforgiving spell until they’d reached beyond ‘well done’. Mako swore that his tires would melt under the hot asphalt, leaving him stranded in the middle of nowhere between the towns of Murrungal and Wyndham. Luckily, that’d be the worst-case scenario that had yet to happen, and Mako hoped it never would.

Thirst made Mako reach his hand out to grab the can of root beer that was nestled securely in the cup holder below the stereo. The liquid was slightly warm, disgusting at the moment but it did its job with wetting Mako’s dry mouth and throat. A few gulps and the can was empty, tossed aside on the giant pile of unwanted trash laying next to the passenger side of the truck. Mako turned the dial on the stereo, thinking that perhaps a bit of music to take his mind off of the heat would make the trip less dull. There was a small click that came from the cassette tape inside the stereo as it began to play out music from the speakers next to the truck’s doors. It was loud. Rambunctious and crude, just how Mako liked it.

“Tonight's the night that we got the truck
We're going downtown, gonna beat up drunks
Your turn to drive, I'll bring the beer
It's an easy shift, no one to fear
Let's ride, ride how we ride
Let's ride, low ride”
Mako’s fingers tapped on the steering wheel to the beat, his dry voice cracked as he sang, not really giving a shit that anyone could hear him. In the road, Mako could be just as loud as he wanted to, which that would also include the rattling noises coming from the back of the trunk. Clouds of red dust trailed behind the dirty rubber tires as he drove loudly across the single road. The dust coated everything lying behind the trunk of the ute, including the delivery he was returning back from Wyndham. It was a relatively short shift, only coming back for a quick delivery he dropped it off in town months ago so that could be repaired by the only man who can fix old appliances. It was an appliance that was dropped off a week ago and by god, this wasn’t Mako’s first time dealing with the good for nothing geezer.

One of the locals back in Murrungal wanted their old wringer washing machine fixed up after years of collecting mold and rust inside the machine. Unfortunate that such an archaic appliance could only be repaired by one man, only reachable by a two-hour drive just to deliver a washing machine and then another two-hour drive back home. It was all fair, as that’s what Mako was being paid for anyway. However, the job would be simple if the repairman actually did his own job. It wasn’t the first time a client would have to wait weeks to just get their appliance repaired by this lazy bloke. Good thing that the last time the guy wanted to be lazy, he had to deal with an impatient giant who wasn’t cutting any slack for that kind of lazy shit behavior.

“Got a black uniform and a silver badge
Playing cops for real, playing cops for pay
Let's ride, low ride“

Tired grey eyes looked at the rearview mirror, gazing back at the rattling boxes and the washer behind his dusty trunk bouncing with every small crack and turn on the road. He was pretty sure it’d survive the drive safely. Hell, an appliance like that could be sure to survive a post-apocalyptic world and still work just fine with the proper repairs. Heavy and sore shoulders shrugged as Mako’s eyes wandered back to look at his own greasy face above the nose bridge. God, he really needed to get some good sleep, but it just ain’t gonna happen with this heat wave going on. The most sleep he can get is maybe four hours with struggling to keep himself cool by opening the windows and lighting up a mosquito repellent coil on his nightstand.

Finally, after hours of driving, the first homes of Murrungal began to appear over the distance. The towering telephone poles stretched out towards the small houses scattered outside of town, homes that looked a lot like Maggie’s shack. They were put together with only a few resources available to them and built with love, covered by wood, concrete blocks, metal sheets and painted in various colors. Mako slowly began to turn the music down as he drove by the scattered homes, not really wanting to make a scene of himself and his choice of music. He could see a mother hanging out clothes besides two trees and a clothesline. Bright red, yellow and blue clothes hung out heavily on the clothesline as her children were playing beside her. The kids were playing football, using the hanging clothes between the trees as a goal post. It made Mako smile seeing the town’s residents living their lives peacefully. Perhaps they’re more used to dealing with this heat than him, it is his first time living out in the bush after all.

“Let's ride, ride how we ride
Let's ride, low ride.”

Asphalt soon became dry crumbling red earth once Mako made a turn heading into the town’s driveway. Rubber tires crunched loudly upon the uneven road, rocks slowly being crushed by the
weight of the ute as it bounced. Quickly, Mako turned the dial of his stereo all the way down, not wanting to disturb anyone with his choice of music blasting through the muffled speakers. Many of the locals were out of their homes in town, hiding under the shade of trees and buildings while they went about their own business. Children were out playing like normal. Two large mangy dogs barked playfully with their human companions, chasing after the small group of children who were riding on tattered up bicycles. The truck drove slowly, carefully avoiding the kids who were riding beside the tattered up dusty vehicle. They were all familiar with the giant of a man. Word spreads quickly in this small town as Mako would find out the first week of living here, but it was fortunate that everyone in town wasn’t afraid of him after getting to know Maggie’s nephew more.

Mako passed by Anderson’s shop who had several folks walking in and out of the only market in town. He passed by the small school building where Maggie used to teach many years ago and finally drove up to Lydia’s building, spotting the heavy woman outside of her porch as she was sweeping the dust and leaves off of the front entrance to her shop. Her wide grin stretched the moment she saw Mako drive up closer. She shielded her eyes from the sun’s glare hitting the truck that made it look like a glistening beetle, rolling its way towards her building and finally stopping in front of the gumtree besides the shop.

“Oi! Mako!” The woman shouted, waving her wide arms out as Mako began to exit out of his truck with a low agonizing grunt. The sensation of peeling yourself out from a seat that’s damp with your sweat for hours isn’t one of Mako’s favorite feelings after driving for so long. “Back so soon? Thought Richard would start working on that wringer the moment you arrived.” Her loud hyena-like chuckle was something Mako would never get tired of hearing, always meant his boss was in a good mood. “You really gave that ol bastard a scare that one time.”

Mako let out a low huff as he walked up the steps, his sandals slapping against his sore feet as blood flowed back to his numb legs. “I ain’t waiting three hours again just for him to do his fuckin job.” Another low grunt escaped from his nostrils. “Getting that old fridge you sent me months ago was the last time I would wait for him.” A sigh escaped from his lips as he scratched his bristled neck. “...don’t know why he’s the only guy who can fix these old appliances. Fucker should have lost his job years ago.”

“It’s all we got, Mako. It’s either wait fer a few months or nothing at all. It ain’t like the big city back at home for ya. Besides, we got the job done n’ we all got paid.” It was clear that Lydia was unfazed by the last experience Mako had with the mechanic back in Wyndham. Perhaps it was a blessing that many people in Wyndham are severely intimidated by Mako, other than his relatives living there.

Lydia wiped her hands, placing them on her plump hips, once there wasn’t any sign of dust that would stain her flower printed blouse, and looked up at Mako. “Well, ya maybe one scary looking fucker, but you’re a softie like a teddy bear. Mrs.Brown will be happy to know she ain’t waiting long again to get her kid’s clothes cleaned. All thanks to the big bear!” Lydia’s lips pouted at the last remark, chuckling playfully to the pale giant in front of her.

“Piss off.” Mako shook his pink face while laughing, the ponytail swayed with every chuckle. “I just ain’t putting up with someone who can’t get their shit straight.” A statement like that made Lydia burst with laughter. Her head hung low all the while her hair covered her face, snorting loudly as she took in a deep breath. “Mrs.Brown deserves better anyways. Shelia’s got five hungry little mouths to feed. Be best if something good happened to her for once.”

Mako just learned about Mrs.Brown a few months ago, a middle-aged mother with five children. She was the sole provider for her family as her husband died years ago after the birth of the fifth child, some sort of fishing accident over at the Garrayura river. It was a cruel reminder to the
town’s people that one shouldn’t venture out alone in these parts of the bush, especially out in the river. Many suspected it was the work of the massive crocodiles that waded around the vast river, possibly they had found an opportunity to ambush a lone fisher, using the darkness of the night as an advantage. The tragedy made Mako more sympathetic to a woman taking care of her children without a husband. Taking the job with delivering the washing machine to get it repaired by the only jack off who could do it. Least he could do to help.

“Ya can’t blame Brown for her misfortunes.” Lydia’s laughter subsided when she saw how quiet Mako was. “You give up fighting when yer’ too exhausted. But ya gotta pull through.” the large woman shook her head in a stern nod. “How it is in this life.”

“Yeah,” Mako spoke a tone that was low but soft. Placing his dirty hands inside the pockets of his shorts, looking down at his own sandals as though there was intense nervousness inside his gut. With learning of the fate of Mrs. Brown’s husband, there was a curiosity of what really happened back in the river. There was something odd with the whole story of a man getting killed by crocodiles. Sure it happens, but Mako had yet to see the river himself. The only body of water he usually sees is the one next to the shack, and it’s a lake with a monster dwelling inside it. Mako licked his dry chapped lips, his eyes looked over at Lydia, who was walking down the steps of her porch and towards Mako’s truck to look over at the washer.

“Hey...uh” Mako swallowed slowly as he paused. “You’ve ever seen anything out in the bush that’s odd?” hands still clenched deep in his pockets as he spoke, dirty nails playing with the balls of lint deep within the vastness of his pockets.

“Tsh! By odd ya’ mean the music you blast with yer speakers that everyone in town can hear ya a mile away?” the heavy woman jokes while her dark-skinned stubby fingers reached out to grab the washing machine out from the trunk. Mako blinked as he quickly walked down the steps realizing what Lydia was doing.

“No, no, no. Not that!” the giant of a man explained as he reached to the trunk and grabbed the other end of the machine. They both grunted with a single lift of their muscular arms while hoisting the washer out from the trunk. The wringer is smaller than a normal washer, but it was a retro model was made to be built to last, weighing more than the much-modernized washers.

“I mean..” Another short pause as they both set the washer down with the most care. “I mean, have you seen anything out in the bush that’s odd? Or hear anything different than the usual sounds?” Mako wiped his forehead as more sweat dripped from his scalp by just merely lifting something up for a few seconds.

“Anderson got to ya too, eh?” There was a bit of arrogance coming from Lydia’s voice after she rolled her eyes. “That codger always likes to spread his stories out in the bush, especially seeing something around any bodies of water.” Her plump hand patted Mako’s back with a hard slap that made the sweat roll down his skin. “Whatever he told ya, it ain’t nothing. What he probably saw was either a saltie or a dead animal. Ain’t no biggie.”

Mako scoffed at the uncomfortable feeling rolling down his spine. Perhaps Lydia was right. What if what Anderson saw was just his imagination? Then again, the possibility that Anderson saw Jamison and had mistaken it for another beast was also probable. Anderson might of went around town, spreading rumors about that whole bunyip thing, but what if it was real? What if it did take Mrs. Brown’s husband or any other town’s folk who were unfortunate enough to wander near the lake? What if it’s one of Jamison’s own kind?

“I sometimes hear screaming at night. Don’t think a cockatoo or a magpie could make such a sound. Sounds like a screaming woman.” His eyes looked at Lydia, examine her face as he
continued. “What if Anderson is right about that whole bunyip thing?” The woman was not meeting Mako’s tired grey eyes. She was hyper-focused on the washer. Her hand touched the large lever, dry fingers brushing against the old metal figure of the leveler before giving it a slow turn.

“Mako.” The woman’s usually loud and cheerful voice suddenly vanished and was replaced with one that was anxious and serious. “Imma tell you this. As an aboriginal woman to a Maori bloke like yourself.” She paused for a second, swallowing hard before continuing “There are some things you know that you can talk about. And some things you can’t.” Lydia placed two fingers on a side of her lips, making a zipper motion to the other side of her face. She knew exactly what Mako was trying to get at. Hell, a lot of people in town were wondering various reasons as to why when the accident occurred. No one in this small town wished to talk about it, except perhaps Anderson with his persistence of what lurks out in the bush.

“Keeps us on our toes and close to our families. That’s why we don’t fish at night.” Mako remained silent as he put the pieces together in. A sense of realization came to him what he was trying to get at with Lydia. She knew, maybe even the whole town knows, but no one dares to speak about it. A wave of shock flowed through his entire body again, as Lydia slapped his back once more and brought him back to this reality.

“Aye, let’s forget that now! Common! I need yer gut to help me out and take this to the back of the shop. We’ll have it next to the pile of other stuff that needs to be fixed!” Lydia’s arm waved at Mako so quickly that it made the fat under her arm wiggle in a hypnotic motion. It certainly brought Mako back to reality, shaking his head before hunching over and grabbing the washer with both of his girthy arms. He grunted loudly like a tired boar, following his boss out to the back of the shop that was guarded by a small wooden fence made out of pallets. Lydia quickly opened the small self-made gate that leads to the back. The giant grunted deeply, walking a few steps inside the gate before placing the washer down underneath the shade of a blue tarp. Mako dropped the washer gently, letting out a loud gasp and a continuous crunch from his sweaty spine.

“That doesn’t sound too good,” Lydia exclaimed as she walked behind Mako and looking how red his face was getting. Might be either the heat or just exhaustion, or a combination of both.

“M’ good. Dealt with heavier stuff before with all the goods you make me deliver.” Mako spoke as he stretched his back to relieve the tense muscles on as a choir of bones cracked back into place.

“I’ll call Mrs.Brown today. Sure one of our boys can go and send it to her home. So you don’t have to worry about breaking your back, old man.” Laughter exploded from Lydia's mouth once again that made Mako roll his eyes with a smirk on his face. “You head home now, Mako. Sure ya wanna get some rest now.”

“Ain’t resting yet.” Mako whipped his forehead and his moist chin. “Gotta do some shopping first.” The giant paused for a second, looking at the back of the shop for a few glances before an idea slowly popped up in his cooked brain. “Reminds me.” Mako’s meaty arms crossed above his chest as he spoke. “Got any unwanted trash?”

An eyebrow raised from Lydia’s face that made her cheeks puff out. “Trash? Ya wanna be my garbage boy too? We already got that job filled.” The woman joked loudly, shaking her head in disapproval.

“Naw. Don’t want actual garbage. More so…” Mako’s head turned to look at the various metal bits of trash laying around at the back. Old appliances, metal scraps, tools and even a broken down 1950’s ute that’d been rusted by the elements laid in this metal graveyard. “More like junk.”

Lydia’s confusion did not leave her face as Mako continued. “Working on a project back at home. Need some junk and metal scrap to get it done.”
“Ahhhh. I see. Sure ya wanna get more parts of that shack patched up, huh? I hear ya.” Her hands were crossed above her breast just like Mako, looking at the sweaty giant of a man in front of her. “What exactly do you wanna pick then, Kiwi?”

“That old ute there.” Mako pointed out at the old rusted truck laying underneath the shade of a gum tree. “Mind if I grab a few pieces from it? Been sitting there ever since I started working for you.”

“Longer than that, mate. Been me father’s since I was a kid. Used to take road trips around the NT. Broke down when Maggie first moved here with Jack.” There was a sense of quietness that came from Lydia’s tone that sounded different than usual, sad almost. Always happened when she remembered two of the most beloved folks in Murrungal. “If ya want car parts, I have a few bits of other scraps I can hand ya. Can’t let ya tare that one apart, Mako.” She nodded firmly. “Tis been in the family.”

Mako let out a low hum and nodded back at his boss. “Gotcha.” There was a bit of quiet between the two that Mako felt odd being in. Lydia turned to look at him and pointed over to the other side of the old sitting ute that was covered in other car parts laying around.

“Well, take whatever you like in that there junk pile. It’s all yours! You’d be doing me a favor!” Lydia smiled and patted Mako’s back once more, grinning happily at the giant before walking with him over to the pile of rusted and wasted junk.

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Another uneventful day passed by over at the lake as the sun-scorched high above the pale blue sky. The water was far warmer than usual, a result of the heat wave spread across the bush. The change of temperature in the water made Jamison feel more sluggish and lazy, making the past few hours feel almost an eternity. Not to mention the previous night was too awful to get any comfortable sleep, what with the bandaged healing scar on his chest. He usually laid on his smooth belly, tail coiled around the filth surrounding his nest, but any time he tried to nestle in like usual, a stinging sensation would jolt his sense up with mild pain.

The creature sighed deeply, golden eyes looking out from the thick mangrove roots on his nest and into the deep void of the lake. Bubbles fluttered from his pink gills, waiting patiently for whatever to happen. The temptation of going to hunt frogs came up as one swam passed the reeds beside his nest, in search of a better spot around the lake to capture hovering dragonflies. The creature groaned deeply, placing his hand on the pile of mud and twigs his long body nestled on top of. A small snail with a bright yellow colored shell crawled out from the soft heap of mud beside the large webbed hands. Its eyes scanned around curiously at the bored creature. Jamison stared back at it, looking at the brightly colored snail for a few seconds before plucking it up from its shell.

Thoughts ran into the fish’s mind as the snail slithered slowly with its thick mucus around Jamison’s finger. Was his life always this boring? Jamison just wanted to see Mako again. He wished the human was out above the dock right there, holding a bag of his favorite canned processed dog food and ready to talk for hours. Hell, they didn't even have to fish. Jamison just wanted to see Mako.

Mako.

The vision of the large mammoth sized human made Jamison’s face feel warmer than the water surrounding him. He could see Mako giving off that big warm gentle smile whenever he spoke softly. The vision of Mako’s big warm hands touching his wet skin again when being treated for
his wound, Jamison’s eyes growing wider as he remembered that day. Blood flowed through his body that started to make something that wasn’t a displeasurable feeling. It was a feeling that brought bliss to Jamison’s whole body, one that made him smile. A stupid but comforting smile that an infatuated monster could only make. The warmth was slowly changing him from the inside and out. The once dull muted colors on his fins began to glow. Glow in a slow radiating orange that almost was as bright as a small ember.

TAP TAP TAP

A burst of energy rushed to Jamison’s thick head from the sudden loud tapping from the surface. He Blinked rapidly as the fins on his head slowly relaxed back from their pinned position. He began to swim out of his nest in a slow slither, heading towards the direction of the small dock and up to the surface. He knew exactly who was up there, ready to greet Jamison with food, admiration, and companionship, just like always. Jamison’s tail kicked harder as he swam up, the thick warm waters surrounding him felt as if it was pulling him back right before he popped his head out with a glorious splash and a flick of his wet blond hair.

“Mako! Ya came back-” Jamison’s eyes widened the moment he saw a large shadow float above him like a creeping falcon. It was big, circular and coming down at him fast. He let out a loud yelp before diving deep into the safety of the lake’s waters. His entire slimy body felt the vibrations of a loud splash right above the area where he just surfaced. There it was again, the shadow above his head floating in its strange circular shape with a hole in the middle. Before Jamison could question, he could hear the boisterous sounds of laughter coming from the world above.

It was Mako.

Jamison quickly swam away from the floating object before popping his head out from the other side of the dock. There, he could see Mako, clutching his round gut as he laughed loudly. His hand covered his wide mouth, looking down at Jamison and noticing the creature’s piercing gold eyes, glaring at him.

“The hell was that!?” Jamison shouted, swimming over closer to the dock and looking at the strange object on the other side. “The fuck!? Why are you laughing!? Ain’t funny, mate! That thing could have killed me!”

“Relax..” Mako gasped as he tried to control his laughter with his loud nasal snorts. “Just a tire. Thought It would be a nice gift for ya.”

“A tire!? A TIRE!?” Jamison shouted loudly before pausing for a few sounds. “...wot’s a tire?” Jamison’s fins slowly sank down as he looked at the floating object. Clearly, there’s no sign of any danger other than the wheezing human above him. He swam towards the strange floating rubber object, bobbing and sloshing slowly above the warm lake waters.

“It’s a part of a car. Thought you might like it..” Mako placed his hands under his pocket, looking at the creature touching and feeling the tire with his strange eel-like body.

“Mate. I love it! Ya so good ta me!” Jamison’s hand nestled around the tire, feeling it’s strange bumps and curves around its rubber figure. It was odd to see someone so transfixed on a tire. What was even odder was watching Jamison smell and tasting the piece of rubber.

Mako let out a soft cough, catching Jamison’s attention for a second. “Not the only thing I brought you.” Mako spoke, pulling out the same canvas from behind his feet, handing it over to Jamison with the utmost care. Jamison’s eyes widened as he looked at the content inside the bag. It was more, strange looking objects that were made out of metal. They were all car parts, sprockets,
gears, an exhaust pipe and even a gear shift rod. It was all new, foreign objects that Jamison had never seen before, but it was something Mako brought to him. The human knew the creature enjoyed his small treasure trove of metallic human objects, and with this addition to his collection, Jamison felt a familiar feeling rush back into his heart. The same feeling when he thinks about Mako.

If only he could find a way to have Mako be apart of his collection.
Assassin Bug

Chapter Summary

Rain had come once again to replenish the dry spell across the barren wasteland. Despite its refreshing arrival, the looming rain clouds were only momentary. Thunder rumbled in the distance in a loud booming roar that could be heard across the bush following every flash of lighting across the dark sky.

Chapter Notes

New chapter!

This one is fairly short, but I was itching to finally write another horror scene. Part 1 out of 3 chapters for this month with it being the 1 year anniversary of Oddity in the Water.

Huge thanks to Rye for being my beta.

Also, CW: Chapter depicts Animal death and gore.

Rain had come once again to replenish the dry spell across the barren wasteland. Despite its refreshing arrival, the looming rain clouds were only momentary. Thunder rumbled in the distance in a loud booming roar that could be heard across the bush following every flash of lighting across the dark sky. Rain gently trickled down to the muddy red earth, giving the thirsty trees a small drink and cool energizing shower. It was an hour past midnight. The moon shined brightly between the cracks of rain clouds as they followed the western winds. It was a full moon, it’s light illuminating in a gentle glow that hid all of the other twinkling lights across the heavens. Always glowing ever so beautifully for a moment, shining down on the wet earth once again before the rolling dark rain clouds tucked the light with their enormous size.

Across the bush, there were a collection of billabongs. They were minuscule compared to the river, even smaller than the lake beside Mako’s home. They were orphans of what was once various lakes that were spread across and connected to the Garrugya river many years ago. Floods were the only time of the rainy season where these pools would connect to the river, but now, with the drought, they were a rather pathetic resemblance of what they once were. The rains were not the great threat to the people living in these parts of the desert. The change of the seasons had made the rains only come and go in short burst, no longer raining like they once performed many years ago. The current rains only lasted for the night as the heat would rise up the next morning and eliminate any moisture that was left behind. What were once small lakes that connected with the rivers, were now only pools filled with mud and drying reeds.

A low inelegant snort escaped from the wild pig’s dirty wet snout, tickled by the rain splashing on her cold snout. It was the very same herd of wild pigs that came across Jamison’s lake days ago, now taking shelter under the safety of two large dead tree trunks that rotted on the muddy floor.
below. The herd wandered far off, continuing their lives after their frightful encounter with Jamison. They wandered deeper into the bush, looking for a safer source of water and food than the one being occupied by a monster. All three sows laid comfortably beside each other, nestled by the tree trunks and the wet bushes. Piglets squealed happily as they feed on their mother’s milk, pushing and shoving in search for the best teat to suckle. The sound of rain trickling down on the small pool was relaxing even for the exhausted sows.

One of the sows hoisted herself up from the wet ground with a low grunt. A few of her piglets squealed in protest, watching their mother take a few steps towards the small pool. It was the very same sow that was attacked by Jamison. The wounds were still on her neck, never really healing properly and becoming infected. Blood and discharge would pulsate from the wound every so often, making the sow feel more tired, overheated, and thirsty for fresh water. Weary black eyes slowly scanned the pool and the slow-moving reeds that were being brushed by the scattering raindrops. Thirst urged her to move closer to the pool, but trauma made her cautious to come anywhere near the open water.

Something startled the wounded sow for a split second. A heavy grunt and the trotting of heavy hooves against the wet earth, coming right behind her and heading towards the direction of the stream pool. It was the boar, tall and strong as ever, unaffected by the dangers that lurk deep within the trenches of the outback. As long as he was around, his herd would be safe. A long bristled tail swayed when approaching the water, his caked hooves sinking deeper into the wet mud. Its large snout touched the cool water, drinking loudly with impatient groans. The injured sow looked at the boar with curiosity and caution. Her eyes kept locked on the boar, inching closer and deeper into the pond as thunder roared over the distance.

One of the piglets squealed softly at the rumbling sound of thunder. Its round belly was full of fresh warm milk as they snuggled closer with all of their siblings, trying all at once to stay warm and dry from the light rains. The entire herd was all set and ready to sleep the rain off and rest up for another day of foraging for food and human trash just outside of Murrungal. The wounded sow lowered her head, she too needed to get some warmth and sleep. The boar took a few more slurps of water, smacking its mouth loudly as mud filled its long snout and covered his pointed tusks. Water dripped on its mane loudly as mud filled it’s long snout and covered his pointed tusks. Water dripped on its mane as it turned to look back at the sows, keeping an ever closer eye on the herd and making sure there weren’t any sign of predators hiding in the bushes or trees.

It all happened too fast. A loud earth shattering splash echoed through the darkness of the night, silencing the gentle chirps from the crickets in an instant. The ghastly shriek of a pig squealing filled in the silence that made all of the pigs huddled together stand on their toes.

It was the boar.

It squealed loudly in an ear piercing scream as a massive set of jaws locked tight on its head. Teeth sank deep into the flesh of the boar, keeping its grip tighter than a vice as a shadow slowly emerged from the stream pool. The boar was hoisted up off its toes as the shadow arose from the darkness, water trickled down its girth, it’s size making all of the wild pigs run away with fright. No amount of struggling from its hooves would see the boar break free form the trap. Its tusks were no match for the shadow’s powerful grip from the inside of her mouth.

One more squeeze from her jaws and the boar was silent with a skull-shattering crunch. The boar was dead, it’s limp body hanging from the shadow’s jaw. Two large red eyes glowed in the dark, her gaze scanned the area as the prize hung low from her jaws. Already she could taste blood on her tongue, urging her senses to feast on her prize. Finally, she can feed tonight after days of waiting for the right moment to catch prey big enough to satisfy her ever-growing hunger. The boar dropped down into the pool with a loud splash, it’s blood staining the muddy dark waters in a
crimson glow. Her jaws opened wide, letting out a shrill of a scream that echoed loudly through the night. Louder than the boar’s painful scream and much more haunting than the rolling thunder.

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Jamison heard it loud and clear. Right when he was in the middle of taking a mud bath after feasting on a couple of frogs, he heard the dreadful sound. Jamison was sitting on the shoreline of the lake, where the mud was wet and soggy enough for him to roll around. He never missed an opportunity to get a mud bath when it rained, even if it was in the dead of night, but this session would have to end despite not wanting to. Jamison’s fins pinned back, slowly struggling to get himself back into deeper waters with his elongated tail. A few hard smacks of his tail and a push from his fins and Jamison was safe. His glowing eyes scanned the bushes and trees surrounding his lake, looking for any signs of her.

“She can’t get me here.” He spoke softly, swimming towards the deeper end of the lake, biting the claw of his index finger. Anxiety filled Jamison’s muddy face that made him twitch frantically. “Yer safe here. She can’t get ya. She can’t swim in deeper waters.” Again, muttering to no one but himself.

Nothing appeared from the shadows as he still looked around, the tip of his claw getting dull from his sharp teeth grinding against the nail. Rain suddenly ceased as the clouds slowly parted, revealing the gentle glow of the moon above between patches of hollowed clouds. Jamison couldn’t bare to stay above the surface any longer. He dove back down with a quiet splash, his eyes looking up at the glowing moon above. No doubt Jamison is going to have more trouble sleeping tonight.

The creature swam back to his nest, now looking much different as he had to include all of the gifts Mako gave to him the day prior. The tire rested comfortably in his nest, now used as a pillow or a toy. Honestly, he’d used it more as a toy, swimming through the large hole and even hauling it on his back. It felt odd, but it felt right for the fish. Perhaps the tire was the perfect temporary solution to keep Jamison busy from total boredom. His long, slimy body coiled around the soft mud of his nest, eyes gazing up to the surface of the water, noticing the pitters of raindrops falling from above. The creature was safe in the sanctuary of his own prison. Shuddering from the memory of the shriek he heard just a moment before.

“She can’t get me here.” Jamison mumbled in his own mind, his claws pricked on the edge of the tire as he tried to get more comfortable. “She can’t get Mako either. She’s too afraid of humans.” Jamison’s delicate fins pinned back, fearful of something terrible happening to Mako. Worse yet, coming in contact with her.

“She wants me lake.” The creature whispered lowly, his eyes still scanning around the dark as anxiety crept through his spine. “She’s too afraid of humans. Afraid of the deeper water. I’m safe here. I got Mako with me. Two peas in a pod...” A bubble crept from under Jamison’s lip. Eyes still dazed and scanning out into the dark abyss of the lake. A smile slowly crept to Jamison’s lip, just the thought of the human brought comfort and warmth to him that there was someone out there who’s reassuring for his safety.

“I’m safe.”
Chapter Summary

He thought for a few seconds, reaching over to the small nightstand to grab a hair tie, gathering all of his silver hair as he tied it up into his usual ponytail. No work for him this weekend as all shipments were done, for now, leaving him with his day completely open. There was a thought about going out to fish with Jamison, but even with this heat, Mako wouldn’t last long up on that dock while being cooked alive under the sun.

A small spark of an idea popped up in his skull that made his throat feel dry. It was an idea that could either be rather pleasant, or completely idiotic.

Chapter Notes

Hello! another chapter is once again up! part 2 out of 3 chapters being uploaded this month for the fic's one year anniversary!!

Huge thanks to rye for helping me out with editing and being my beta.

Next chapter will be up before the end of the month. And I will say, it's one way to celebrate the 1 year anniversary ;)

There was absolutely no way to keep this small little room comfortable, especially with the usual tension of the summer’s heat still looming around. Not even the open bedroom window was able to help keep Mako cool while he slept in the rickety old bed that belonged to his aunt. The two fans seemed useless, whirring loudly with a metal rattling sound coming from inside them. It felt like they were just blowing the hot air around. Mako swore that he was going to die of heat stroke in his sleep, that or die from drowning in his own sweat. No kidding that the summers here were cruel, even at night. Especially right after it rained during the night, making the moisture and humidity rise up to unbearable temperatures. Mako felt like a drenched overheated pig in heat.

The giant laid motionless in his bed as the warm night continued on. The sounds of crickets chirping outside the window in the summer night were oddly relaxing. Once in a while, a few high pitch croaks would echo through the bush, adding in another sound to the choir. Unfortunately, that wouldn’t be the only sound the pale giant would hear coming from his window. A mosquito hovered above Mako’s fat sweaty body, trying to find the perfect perch before feasting on warm blood. Still, Mako kept sleeping on, dreaming various scenarios of blurred images that would be forgotten the moment he woke up. Dreams of familiar faces, locations, and conversations that were nonexistent and years old. There was no sense of stress in his own sleep as his breathing was slow, calm and hot.

A soft pinching feeling came right from the massive scar on Mako’s belly tattoo that broke the sleeping spell. It was a massive mosquito, buzzing loudly in a haunting high pitch tone that even invaded Mako’s sleep. It voraciously pricked it’s needle-like snout on his skin, taking in a few
gulps of fresh blood in aid for passing on to the next generation of pest. Not a second too soon, the feast was halted by Mako’s massive hand in a quick rumbling slap.

The giant woke up, slowly lifting himself and looking at the mess made underneath his palm. A wipe on his bedsheets made it a quick clean. Tired eyes looked out at the window as there was a slight breeze that trailed inside his bedroom. He could see the slithering heat rise from the earth and there was just no way he’d be able to get back to sleep now. Mako shifted his feet to the side of the bed, sitting upright as his rustled silver hair soaked up the sweat from his face. Taking a shower wouldn’t be an option to get out of this heat unless he planned to use up all of his water supply.

Mako sat on his bed in complete silence. His eyes slowly shifted towards the window of his bedroom. Like always, the memories of a dream would always fade away a few minutes after dreaming. All except for one part of his dream that never fails to leave his mind. It was always him, that little shit with his golden eyes, cackling smile and massive slime coated tail. The giant couldn’t precisely pinpoint what happened other than just seeing Jamison. There had been a few dreams where things had gotten a little bit intense that Mako would wake up with a stiffy. However, for some reason, this dream was mostly Jamison, calling for him, wanting to see Mako again and spend time together. Hell, maybe that freak also asked him to quit his job so they could keep themselves company every day. How odd that his life had changed to this ordeal. Jamison wanted to see Mako almost every single day. This strange infatuation was starting to eat him alive at a pace that gradually began to pick up with every conversation between the two oddballs.

He thought for a few seconds, reaching over to the small nightstand to grab a hair tie, gathering all of his silver hair as he tied it up into his usual ponytail. No work for him this weekend as all shipments were done, for now, leaving him with his day completely open. There was a thought about going out to fish with Jamison, but even with this heat, Mako wouldn’t last long up on that dock while being cooked alive under the sun.

A small spark of an idea popped up in his skull that made his throat feel dry. It was an idea that could either be rather pleasant, or completely idiotic.

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Warm winds smoothly scraped against the dry leaves of the dusty trees near the lake. The short rain that occurred last night brought in some slight replenishment for all that was green, or in this case, all that once was green. It only lasted for a brief moment, leaving no trace of the sudden rains. The sun’s rays would evaporate any stranded puddles in less than half an hour, leaving only cracked brittle red mud.

Several wild sulfur cockatoos were drinking at the far right side of the lake’s edge, where the long dried roots of gum trees dug deep into the lake’s cool waters. With years of experiences, they too have resorted to desperate measures learned from previous summers heat waves. The exhausted birds were temporarily taking refuge from the heat before continuing on in search of a more comfortable location for nesting. The small flock’s squawks and high pitch shrieks echoed loudly amongst the trees, adding to the choir of shrieking cicadas and fluttering songbirds. The cockatoos would huddle up together, hoisting their heads up with every rich cool drink and tasting the murky water with their black tongues. Their small beaded eyes scanned the area, cautiously searching for any dangers or predators ready to take the opportunity to snatch an unsuspecting bird.

A sound of a twig snapping made one of the birds raise its head up high. It’s crest frilling up like a bright yellow crown, eyes diverted to the direction of the sudden intruding noise. There was another snap, only this time the bird was able to spot exactly where the alarming crack came from.
Water dripped from its ebony bill as it stared directly at a small collection of dried reeds and branches. It’s small eyes detected movement from the reeds, rattling slowly as if it was shivering. A long, dark muddy eel-like tail lazily moved under the dying vegetation, slithering deep among a cool squishy pile of red mud and slime that followed with a wet slap. There was no other creature the cockatoo had ever seen before, inexperienced with the stranger oddities hidden deep within the Australian bush.

Of course, it was none other than Jamison lazily basking under the shade of a tree as his entire body was coated in mud and slime. There was just enough wet mud by the shore of the lake for Jamison to have another mud bath in. A loud yawn escaped Jamison’s mouth that rattled his pink gills in an unsettling way. His belly was still bloated from the early morning hunt, a young unsuspecting wallaby having crept up a little bit too close to the edge. It was small, but definitely satisfying for the monster’s craving for rich red meat.

With there being no change in the heat wave the lake water temperature still remained warm, making Jamison feel even more sluggish and lethargic. It was a small luck that there was enough energy still inside the creature to be able to ambush the wallaby early in the morning. Perhaps his own hunger sparked a little jolt of what drive was still left in him. Jamison’s drowsy eyes slowly opened as he heard another shriek from the white-coated birds. All three cockatoos flew up to the trees after hearing Jamison yawn. They joined together with their remaining flock, perched up high in the safety of the trees, looking down at the lazy fish with curiosity and caution in their minds.

“Noisy birds,” Jamison mumbled as his eyelids drooped back down, exhaling loudly through his muddy pointed nose with a snort like a piglet. “Mnnh. Yer all lucky I don’t like eating ya...”

A wet webbed hand covered his face, shielding himself from any other bright light beaming down into his eyes. Sleep slowly pulled Jamison back in, ready to send the monster back into their lazy afternoon snooze. Lips parted as he continued to squabble lightly. “With yer...yer feathers and...noisy shrieks...”

“Can’t say they’re the noisiest ones in the lake.” A familiar voice rang through Jamison’s ears like the pleasant ring of a dinner bell. That previous jolt of energy returned to the fish, hastily opening his eyes and sitting up on the wet dead reeds with a wet flop. Joy and excitement sparked his golden eyes, making his smile widen and exposing his yellow stained teeth. Oh, it was always a delight to see his favorite neighbor come down for a visit. His favorite human. Perhaps both food and his neighbor really do pump life back into this pathetic soul.

“Mako!” Jamison’s shrieked, which was far louder than the high pitch squawks from the cockatoos perched high above. Jamison’s brightly finned tail slapped against the murky water, splashing everywhere behind him. The giant of a human lifted his hand up in a shortwave while smiling at the pathetic soaked fish-like monster.

“I stand correct,” Mako replied before laughing under his breath.

“Oi, now, There are lots of other things around this lake that are just as noisy.” Jamison paused as he tried to excuse his own recklessly noisy behavior. Really, there’s nothing else in the lake that was as loud as him, not even the whirling cicadas could match his level.

“Anyways! What’s the plan for today?” Jamison stood up tall with the aid of the muddy wet fins on his hips.” Wanna catch some fish today? We haven’t fished in a while, have we?” The monster bit his lips as another idea popped up. “I can try and find ya some yabbies if ya want! That time we caught some, I could only find a few...” Jamison swung his arms up with enthusiasm “Maybe this time we’ll catch more! I don’t like em, but the look on your face is worth the catch!” Oh, how Jamison tried to keep his excitement to a lower, calmer level. Really.
“Naw.” A shake from Mako’s sweaty head as he muttered softly, his hands dug deep in the pockets of his shorts, fiddling with the tiny scraps of lint clinging to the fabric. “It’s too hot to fish. Sitting in one spot under the sun would roast me.” Mako moved a little bit closer to Jamison, looking down at him and the bed of reeds the fish made for himself. “Thinking I wanna cool off this time around.”

“Cool off?” Jamison lazily scratched his head, letting mud and water drip from his blond hair down into the lake. “Ain’t anything ‘cool’ around here, mate. It’s been too hot around, it’s even affecting me waters too.” Another loud yawn escaped his sharp mouth, momentarily interrupting his sentence. “Makes me sleepier than a bloated trout floating belly up.”

“Well then, don’t know how the water will be like until I get in it.” Mako shuffled his way towards the dock as his sandal crunched stranded twigs and leaves under his own weight. Jamison blinked a few times, a bit puzzled by what Mako meant. He followed the human, swimming steadily towards the dock.

“Whatcha mean by that?” Jamison’s tail swam gently but approached the dock faster than the human could walk. He waited there, coiling his tail around the wooden pole like a snake coiling tightly on a tree branch. Yellow eyes glanced up at Mako who finally made his way to the edge of the wooden dock, where he kicked his sandals off of his dry swollen enormous feet.

“It’s simple, Jamie.” An annoyed grunt escaped Mako’s nose that made his lip twitch. His foot kicked the sandals to the edge, already burning from the hot texture of the smoldering wood. “I’m gonna swim in the lake.”

Realization hit Jamison’s soggy brain harder than a swarm of loud angry wasps buzzing and stinging a sensitive spot on the tip of his tail. His eyes widened, pupils growing larger and letting out a short gasp.

“Really!?” the creature shouted as excitement boosted back within Jamison, cackling loudly and flailing around the dock in pure thrill.

A light-hearted chuckle came out of Mako’s baked lips. A small part of him was expecting the little freak to react like this. After all, the two have been friends for almost seven months now. Relatively, this would be the first time they would finally be together that isn’t all that awkward for Jamison’s odd elongated body. It’s a damn good thing that Mako knows how to swim. Maybe he wasn’t the best swimmer, but he knew how to keep his head above the water.

Mako’s chubby fingers gripped the bottom of his stained green tank top, pulling it over his shoulders and letting it fall on top of the light brown sandals.

It was pretty awkward having Jamison’s steadfast stare on Mako’s plump body, the fish’s lip curling when finally gazing at the strange looking tattoo covering his gut. He’d never seen anything like that before. Do most humans have strange little pigs on their bellies? Maybe that’s what it takes to be human. Amber pupils dilated when gazing at the cute little round piggy, with a belly button nose. Its face was round and pink fixated to Mako’s plush belly. The creature could have sworn those little-beaded eyes on the pig blinked for a second.

Mako gulped, trying to find a way to break the unsettling silence. “Like what you see?” A white eyebrow quirked up as the staring was slowly starting to piss him off. Mako didn’t come here to get started at by a gaping-mouthed fish-like idiot.

“It looks like a pig with fire!” Jamison finally spoke, his long, clawed finger pointed towards the pale human belly. “Do all humans have that? I don’t remember Maggie and Jack having a pig in
“No. Only I do.” Mako licked his cracked lips while a hand traced his plush gut. “It’s called a tattoo. Some people like having them around their bodies.” Mako began to unbuckle his belt as he spoke to the curious monster. “Some tattoos have meaning, often representing a loved one or yourself.” Mako tossed the belt towards the pile of clothes, clanging loudly as the metal buckle tapped the wooden floor.

“Does yours mean you like pigs?” A claw tapped Jamison’s chin while thinking loudly. “That explains why you don’t want me eating pigs! Cus ya like em’.”

“I like them and more.” Mako continued on as he continued to undress. “Remember that bike gang I told you about? The one I hung out with my mates?” Jamison nodded hastily to the question, sending water flying from his blond hair. “I was their boss. Was called ‘Hog’ and my bike was ‘Roadhog’. Sometimes they’d call me both.” Mako let out a short laugh. “Mates told me I was as meanest cunt in town; Tough like a pissed off wild hog.”

Mako’s dirty fingers traced the scar above his tattoo that ruined the cute image of the pink pig, the other hand finally finishing unbuttoning his shorts. Dropping down to his ankles in a loud flop while only wearing tighty whities marked with small tears and holes below the waistband. He hummed softly, kicking the shorts to the pile and finally standing there in front of Jamison in all of his half-naked glory.

“I don’t get called that anymore. Not that I expect anyone to. It’s fine.” Mako took a few steps towards the edge of the dock, looking down at Jamison who was still keeping a close eye on the human. “What?” Mako asked in confusion towards the quiet monster below. Jamison couldn’t help but bite his lower lip before speaking, nervously gazing to the side of the dock and looking at the pile of dirty laundry.

“Didn’t know you go by a different name, always knew you as Mako!” Jamison's voice was raising up to that annoying high pitch tone once again.

“You can still call me Mako. Hog is something only my mates called me.”

“But aren’t we mates!” Jamison’s anxious whines rang so loudly they rattled the fins on the side of his jawline.

Mako stood there, standing tall and in his underwear. Completely bewildered by Jamison. “Yes, you idiot. We’re mates. I never let you call me Hog before because I just told you now. You just saw my tattoo for the first time.”

Fuck this. He didn’t come here to talk to Jamison while standing on the deck half naked. He came here to swim, and that’s exactly what he was going to do. Mako kneeled down as he began to sit on the edge of the dock. His pudgy toes barely touched the tip of the surface, inspecting the temperature for just a second. Ah, It was cool, inviting, and refreshing, something Mako desperately needed to escape the heat. Too bad Jamison was standing a little too close for Mako to plunge peacefully. Mako scooted to the left, underwear scrapping on the spot where he once gutted a barramundi and finally using his arms to push himself into the cool waters with a short pathetic splash.

Mako floated up the surface with a disappointed and disgusted grunt. His feet could feel the slimy mud right between his toes, squishing and squirming under his skin. He needed to get the hell away, swim farther out towards more open water until there was nothing squirming under his feet. Mako’s legs began to kick, hastily using his arms and paddling towards open water. Just like
always, Jamison followed Mako close by, only this time, it was following behind the giant human.

“See, the water’s too warm. It feels really off and it makes me more sleepy than usual.” It was no trouble for Jamison to swim around Mako. His tail could easily paddle above the surface, circling Mako around like a hungry shark.

Already Mako could feel his body cooling down from the water. Finally, there was enough space for him to swim more comfortably without any reeds or sticky mud rolling under his legs. His head tilted back, letting his own massive body float up as he was in complete bliss. “It’s perfect. Just what I needed.” A warm smile stretched Mako’s lips, his eyelids lazily closing as he floated above the water, the water is absolutely what he needed to relax “Been a while since I’ve swum.”

“Tsh. I do it every day...” Jamison spoke while looking at Mako’s peaceful smile, a smile that genuinely made the fish’s lips curl into one as well. Always nice to see Mako looking happy. “...but, it’s me first time swimming with you.” Jamison’s fins around his jawline twitched as he spoke, giving Mako a smile in return.

“Sap.” Mako gently splashed at Jamison’s direction with his hand, hitting the fish’s face resulting in him letting out an annoyed shriek. “My first time swimming with an idiot like you.” The giant moved back down till his shoulders were above the surface. “Guess today’s a first time for everything, aye?”

The two neighbors were quiet, floating above the surface in the silent glow of the lake. The whirring cries of the cicadas echoed so loudly through Jamison’s ears that triggered a sliver of anxiety. Mako was right there, right next to him. He was just floating around like a bloated corpse of a bullfrog that bobbed towards the monster, roasting under the hot sun. Mako just looked at Jamison, already picking up the signals that the fish was getting nervous for some reason. The twitching of his eyelids and the fins on his chin was the first indication, followed by his insistent nervous skin picking on his shoulders.

“Hey.” Mako finally spoke. A gentle voice that Jamison only heard every once in a while when Mako was sensible. A voice that eased any tense muscle on Jamison’s tail, snapping the fish back into reality with a quick glance.

“Let’s swim together.”
Never would Mako mutter an endearing and tender voice to another individual. Not even those who know him personally like his biker mates, the townspeople in Murungal, or even Maggie. Then again this was Jamison he’s talking too, the only other person near, right outside his home, and he isn’t even human.

Huge thanks to Rye for being my beta and to all of my readers, thank you all for keeping up and encouraging me to continue on with this fic. This is certainly one way to celebrate OitW first year.

Enjoy!:

Never would Mako mutter an endearing and tender voice to another individual. Not even those who know him personally like his biker mates, the townspeople in Murungal, or even Maggie. Then again this was Jamison he’s talking too, the only other person near, right outside his home, and he isn’t even human. To others, Jamison would certainly be seen as a sin against nature. But despite the unusual reality, the monster is nothing more but pathetic like a mangled wet rat. Not to mention he's even got the brains of one. A muldjewangk, who Mako had formed a close friendship with, perhaps a little bit too close considering how his own infatuation seemed to be increasing every time the two saw each other. It’s a bond that no one knows other than himself. A secret that’s best kept hidden away, just like Jamison’s existence, to the world outside of this watery prison.

Tied silver hair blew quietly with the short nod towards the floating fish. A tanned girthy arm swung towards Jamison’s direction, a simple invitation of reassurance before back peddling to deeper waters. Ah, there it was again. Mako’s smile that brought a blissful feeling to Jamison’s chest that could only be responded to by a stupid toothy grin. The motion of his tail slithered behind the giant man, colors radiating brightly on his body that made Jamison forget his temporary fatigue. Mako is here. Mako is here swimming in his lake with him. His lonely home where he’s lived countless hours without any other interaction other than the usual wildlife that most likely would end up being a meal. Warm waters or not, Jamison can’t miss this opportunity to swim with his favorite human. The human who may be the one. The one who could be all his.

Jamison followed Mako close behind, his tail made little to no work with keeping up. Every pedal Mako swung with his arms, Jamison would have had circled around him twice and rightfully doing so with a cheeky smile of sharp yellow teeth. Letting out a low snort, Mako laughed at the creature who was circling around for the fourth time.

“You swim too fast,” Mako spoke loudly, halting himself while his arms were burning slightly from the exercise. Seriously, when was the last time he swam like this? “I ain’t got any of them
fancy fins and tail like yours.”

“Eh? Fancy?” Jamison spoke in a sudden gasp that made the fins on his head prod up in alarm. Did Mako really think his tail and fins were fancy?

“Well, I would say the same to ya about yer chunky trotters when it comes to walkin. They’re plenty fancy, just as me tail.”

“Fuck off!” a small wave of water splashed towards Jamison’s direction. Mako used his meaty arm to create a wave, directly hitting Jamison’s face with a loud slap. The monster yelped loudly with a cackle. The fish hastily turned towards Mako, lifting the long orange finned tail up high before smacking water back with a loud whack.

“Me tail ain’t just for swimming!”

Water splashed Mako in a glittering spectacle that shined brightly with the sun’s rays. It hit the massive human’s shoulders with a loud wet slap. Another splash came at Mako fast, followed by another. Mako shielded himself before he decided to defend himself, splashing back at the wild monster with a boisterous laugh. Jamison cackled loudly, his mouth wide open while a wave of water splashed towards his face. A gurgling howl of giggles escaped from the bright pink neck gills that sounded almost sickly. Water squirted out of the pink gills, almost looking like it was a miniature pink fountain, lasting only a few seconds before illuminating in rapid pulses.

“Oh, you alright Jami--” Right before Mako could even finish his sentence, another waved splashed at Mako’s face that made the silver ponytail droop behind his scalp. Dirty water splashed on the human’s already dripping wet face. There was something in the water that made Mako hiss. A small drop of water with a flake of dirt got caught in his right eye. It stung painfully in the corner of his eye. Mako’s wet hand only made it worse while rubbing it impatiently. It wouldn't be as bad if Jamison stopped splashing dirty water like an idiot.

“Cut that out you little dipshit! Got something in my eye.” Mako was getting a tiny bit more agitated, letting out a short grunt while his fingers rubbed on his burning eye socket. A shake of his head sent water flying around by the soaked silver hair, only to have the ponytail dangle behind his head once again. It helped to finally not have water splash on his face for once.

“Erm, think it’s out,” Mako mumbled quietly to himself as the pain began to subside. It must have been a speck of dirt. Seriously, he better not get an infection the next day. Mako turned back to look at where Jamison last splashed him a moment ago. A meaty arm raised up high, ready to send another wave of water at the monster’s twisted face. It was then that Mako’s wide smile turned into a frown. His eyes scanned everywhere in a confused and unsettling panic.

Jamison was gone.

Did he really sound that angry that made that little cunt scamper away? the two were just fooling around. Splashing and laughing out loud like nitwits. Mako spun around in a rippling twirl, floating steadily above the surface while his chunky feet kicked every few seconds just to keep him afloat.

“Goddammit.” the human’s voice echoed in his thoughts in a slight panic. He didn't mean to snap like that. Seriously, what the hell went wrong? Where's Jamison? Is that little shit cowering under the roots of the mangrove trees as he mentioned before? Mako waited for a few seconds for any signs of the fish. Seconds turning into a minute. Then two. Five. Ten. Mako exhaled deeply with his nostrils, his eyes scanned the lake once more before making one last decision of either staying alone in the lake or at home. Yeah, would be best to come back here another time.
A loud splash broke the unnerving silence surrounding the bush. It wasn’t the same kind of splash that the two neighbors were fooling around. It sounded more heavy, with a low rumbling drop like someone just dropped a corpse into the water. Mako turned around to look at the direction of the crash only to suddenly have a wave rushed that his chest with a slight force that smacked his hairy chest. Ripples followed just behind the wave, creating a hypnotizing wave of colors just above the surface of the murky water. There it was again. Only a glimpse from the corner of his eye was he able to catch a dark shadow that sprung out from the depths of the lake, floating mid-air with a dazzling twirl that lasted half of a second before crashing back down in a watery thud.

"The hell is going on?" Mako thought to himself, eyes scanning around the lake to see what the commotion going on. What that Jamison? Nah, couldn't be, could it? Mako's own brain boiled in its own juices of being disorientated, scratching the wet hair under his swollen chin, turning his head at just the right moment and catching the glimpse of the spectacle before him.

Jamison jumped with a glistening shine of sunlight and sparkling water surrounding his long eel-like tail. Blood pumped vigorously through all of Jamison's fins, glowing in a radiating gradient that looked almost like fire was exploding out from the water. It left Mako feeling completely perplexed by the fish's unusual behavior, looming in closer and closer with every jump until Mako realized the obvious difference from Jamison's new 'colorful' appearance.

Mako wanted to speak, wanted to ask what was wrong with Jamison's fins but most importantly, what the hell has gotten into him? Did too much of this smelly swamp water get lodge into his wet brain? Or maybe Jamison was he trying to show off with how good he can jump and create a massive wave that would knock Mako off his feet?

"I get it I get it. Quit being such a show-off." Mako made a loud snort that sounded almost watery. Chunky legs kicked as he swam closer to the watery spot where the performing freak had just landed with a watery explosion. The rippling waves didn't help Mako catch a glimpse what's lurking below his feet. Nor did it help to exactly pinpoint where Jamison was planning to sprout out the water like a hooked cod.

"Jamison?" The gentleness of Mako's voice returned, hoping that would get a response from the slimy blonde lurking below the dark lake. "Jamie?" Mako called out again.

At last, the monster finally responded to Mako's pleas. Jamison steadily rose up to the surface right in front of the wet human, stopping right at the bridge of his long pale nose. Golden eyes glancing up to look at the already relieved Mako. Seriously, he was just glad that Jamison is back or upset by yelling at him. If he was, it was stupid of the fish to be upset about that. Mako didn't even shout that loud at him. The creature’s gills frilled as he panted, exhausted from jumping up high and twirling up in the air like a shining gem made out of water and slime. Air exhaled out of Jamison’s nose, creating a few small bubbles that popped immediately in the surface.

"You doing okay?" Mako asked while tilting his head slowly. "Didn't mean to sound angry at you.” Already he could feel his own hands prune under the water and his mouth becoming dry by only merely speaking to the quiet fish. "You just splashed water and I guess something got caught in my eye.” Another hard dry swallow.

"Uh, your fins look different. Did you get an infection from your wound?"

The tip of Jamison’s left fingers moved down to touch his bare pale chest. The bandage that Mako placed there a few nights ago was long gone. Only a few remnants of the stitched lining still clung to Jamison’s skin. Fortunately, the wound was able to heal quicker than usual with the aid of modern medicine. Despite his fingers touching the scars on his pale chest, the throbbing sensation of his gills and the rapid beating of his heart, the monster’s eyes never left Mako’s sights.
Something deep implanted in Jamison’s mind awoke when the two were playing, an instinct that’s been locked in the vault of the fish’s mind that he didn’t even know was there. An instinct that told Jamison he had to show he was worthy of this human. Worthy enough to consider a close kinship bond.

No words would come out of the monster’s mouth to explain the intimacy feelings he has for Mako. Not yet. Only the vibration of his fins rattling wildly against the surface of the lake, creating small splashes and ripples that surrounded the colorful fish that glistened under the bright rays of the scorching Australian sun.

“The fuck is wrong with you?” Mako’s patience was slowly growing thinner with the silent stares once again. Already confused by the creature’s sudden disappearance, abnormal behavior, and overall creeping silent staring. Seriously, did Maggie or Jack have to deal with this too? Did they ever get in the water with Jamison? Why the hell does his aunt never explain all this shit in details.

“Yer acting like a complete shithead.” Mako huffed, pouting at the creature who now began to shift his eyes away from Mako’s face and down to the cute pink pig tattoo. “What’s got into you?”

The only response Mako got was Jamison moving in closer in a snake-like glide with the long eel-like tail. Almost looking he was hunting the human. The fire like fins on his body glowed above the surface of the water making Mako look at them with confusion but now, growing curiosity as they waved above the watery surface. “They’re really bright.”

“You like it?” finally, the fish’s usual raspy, annoying voice rang through Mako’s round ears. It may have been a soft reply, but it was one that Mako was glad to hear. The bottom half of Jamison’s tail rose up, displaying the dorsal fin on his tail and spine, vibrating and making small splashes with rippling waves around his body that looked like miniature fireworks made out of swamp water.

“Like it?” Confusion once again made Mako feel even more lost from the question. What? Did he expect to like the weird jumps and splashes that Jamison was making? Is this something he’s supposed to like because they’re friends? Maybe this is something Jamison’s kind is supposed to do when fooling around amongst each other.

“Umm, yeah sure I guess.” There was no other way for Mako to really answer the question thoroughly. But he had to admit, the way how Jamison was splashing around and glowing like that was pretty impressive.

Jamison stared, mouth still but eyes locked on Mako’s dripping wet face. “You like me fins? Me colors?” Long cold fingers reached up to touch the human’s soft and round inked belly.

“Me?”

All of the rattling on Jamison’s fins ceased. The ripples surrounded their bodies slowed down as their eyes locked at each other. Mako was completely speechless, mouth hung open, feeling all of the air on his damaged lungs rush out in a low heave. The peach colored skin on his face turned into a bright pink hue the longer the two stared at each other. When was the last time Mako blushed like this?!

“W-w-what?” Mako couldn’t help but mumble on his own lips. The monster’s webbed clawed hand reached up to touch Mako’s plump chest, feeling the silver hairs caught between the sharp pointed claws. “Y-you?”

Jamison’s eyes rolled by Mako’s response. Really, are humans this dull? Do they all act this stupid when they’re being courted? Of course, this is the first time Jamison is performing for a potential
mate. The two clicked well over time, became good friends, kept each other fed, not to mention Mako treated his wound after being attacked by the feral pig. Jamison felt like the one thing he needed more than escaping this lake, was a mate. A mate he wishes to have and to hold. To cherish their moments together as partners. Even if there was a boundary between them.

But of course, Mako just hovered there looking just baffled and flustered with Jamison’s query and the intimate touching on his belly. But the human wasn’t flinching, wasn't shouting or backing away from the gentle touch of the clawed hand. Mako felt no danger, but he did start to feel something deep within his chest that lured him to stay. Still, Jamison couldn’t help but think that Mako still might not even get it. There was at least one way that humans expressed intimacy and affection with as far as the fish known. A way that the fish was taught by Maggie and Jack many years ago.

Jamison inched himself up towards Mako, grabbing the human by the shoulder with his single arm and using the strength of his tail to hoist him up higher. He was cold, wet and slimy, but his claws were gentle to the human's plush skin. Jamison's face grew in closer until the tip of his nose pushed against the fuzzy peach skin of Mako’s cheek. Cold lips were placed on the warm round cheek, Mako’s chin chair and stubble tickled the bottom of the fish’s nose. It was cold, wet but intimate. It made the white hair’s on Mako’s arm frizzle from the shock; the shock of being kissed sweetly by someone who he never thought would have a similar feeling towards him.

Jamison pulled back, smiling at the human with putrid yellow teeth and a mouth that smells like rot. “That's how you humans do it, aye? To show ya like one another?” Jamison turned to look at his fins for a second before looking back at Mako, speechless and pale. “Don’t know if you’d get me to dance to show that I like ya. But I do, mate!”

“I want ya to be mine.”

“Jamie,” Mako spoke, placing a hand on the creature’s chin and looking back into those hypnotic golden eyes of his. Is he insane? Was this fish seriously proposing to him in such a manner? Does, Jamison really want this old cunt to be ‘his’? Mako only thought the infatuation would go away over time, but here it was once again. Hitting him hard on the chest that made Mako’s heart race. Can it work between them? He’s a monster and Mako’s a human…

Mako reached down to pull Jamison closer with his massive arm. It alarmed him for a second, but upon realizing how gentle Mako was not to hurt his fins ease the anxiety. Just like before, Mako placed his own plump lips on the monster’s soft cold and wet mouth. A kiss that would be regretted minutes later by the smell and taste of Jamison’s sharp mouth. Who knows what he had eaten that was making his breath so foul, but Mako didn’t care.

Jamison took it. Both of their eyes were closed as lips were smashed together, kissing sweetly in a way that made the fins on all of Jamison’s body frill up. More blood pumped into the thin colorful membranes, almost appearing like he radiating heat. The two floated there, sharing a sweet kiss above the lake as cicadas continued their shrill and noisy song. Gentle winds brushed against the trees and bushed surrounding the lake, creating a silent hiss amongst them. They were completely alone in the bush. And Mako loved every second of it.
Chapter Summary

The last remnant of Summer slowly began to fade away like a feverish dream. Its days would be slowly drawing to a close in the upcoming weeks, soon to relieve everything from the unbearable heat. A few bursts of warm tropical rains would come in to replenish the crackling earth, but it wasn’t enough for the bush to draw away from this obscure drought.

Chapter Notes

Hello everyone!

Been a while since I last updated! A lot has happened in two months life wise and I will admit it's still pretty stressful as hell. Two of my pet birds have gotten sick, needing to head to the vet multiple times, work being stressful by the end of September and juggling with finances for me and my partner. Things are slowly picking up and I'll try to add another chapter up soon when the time is right for this month. I miss writing this fic and doing illustrations for it.

I do hope you enjoy this chapter as I left off with a pretty happy conclusion.

Huge thanks to my partner, Rye, for being my beta. <3

The last remnant of Summer slowly began to fade away like a feverish dream. Its days would be slowly drawing to a close in the upcoming weeks, soon to relieve everything from the unbearable heat. A few bursts of warm tropical rains would come in to replenish the crackling earth, but it wasn’t enough for the bush to draw away from this obscure drought. Even with the rains venturing to the east, the strong and dense humidity seems to cling harder even to all of the residents of Murungal as the heat dwindled. Despite this, the minuscule town continues to thrive under the sun’s scorching heat despite the variety of hardships coming from nature herself.

Mako sat in the comfort of his well-overheated truck parked right in front of Anderson’s shop, his tired and weary eyes looking at the red dust covered front window beside the entrance, seeing the open sign right at the corner of the window still there. Not that he was expecting the shop to be closed by the early hours of the afternoon, but with his shift lasting longer than he anticipated without having a bite to eat for lunch was really wearing him down. Yet alone, the aching pain on the giant’s lower back with lifting up heavy boxes and unloading pallets on the back of his ute for hours.

The sound of the bell right above the front door rang softly once Mako entered inside the dimly lighted interior. A pile of green colored plastic baskets rested neatly beside the entrance, making Mako reach down to grab one with his enormous hand. It was empty, per usual at this time of the day, as most of Anderson’s shipments would come right at 8:00 am. Not like Mako would ever want to wake up that early and drive up to town just to pick up a few fresh produce like milk or
eggs, the sacrifice of wanting to sleep in a couple of hours before heading to work.

“Mako!” An overly cheerful squeak of a voice startled Mako once he made his way towards the aisle where the boxes of dusty old bran cereal stood. “Always a pleasure to see ya big mug here!” Like always, the old buzzard was standing right behind the counter with those crooked glasses hanging right at the edge of his nose, a week-old newspaper crinkled under his wrinkled hands. Typical for Anderson to read while on the job, well, more like solving the sudoku puzzle that’s been unsolved for days. “Just got out of work, I take it aye?”

A firm nod from Mako’s sweaty head made the silver ponytail above bounce. “Yeah. Got out late, but it’s payday.” A low hum escaped his nostrils all while walking towards the produce aisle. Everything felt a little bit limited, leaving only the most unappetizing fruits and vegetables in the wooden crate container. “You’ll get your shipments of canned goods in the morning from Lydia.”

“Excellent, mate! Excellent!” Anderson’s feeble grin made Mako’s lips twitch. “Bout time too. Been short on the produce lately with this here drought. Seems the farms south of Wyndham and Guwara are getting rather dry this time around. Not to mention, the shipments from Perth going from town to town north takes days.” The old man placed the newspaper down on the counter as he used his wrinkling hand to wipe the sweat off of his bald liver-spotted forehead.

“That so?” Mako asked while holding a small weak looking peach with odd-looking spots around its base. Eh, it still looked edible. He’ll most likely just cut the bottom of it and eat the more sanitary and less squished parts.

“Yeah. Rain’s been short this year. They’ll come back after the summer, but ain’t nothing plentiful right now.” Anderson chuckled softly as he cleaned the dusty lenses of his glasses. “We’re all stuck with canned goods and meat right now.”

Reluctantly, the giant turned the to other side and looked at the aisle of various cans all displayed in a disordered fashion. It was a cluster fuck of a mess that made Mako’s lips tighten. There were just so many cans of pork and beans laying with the cans of black olives. The thought of eating pork made the giant feel queasy. Anderson let out a hearty chuckle at the grown man’s expression. “I getcha. You told me plenty of times ye ain’t a pork eater.” The old man’s finger shook towards Mako. “Ain’t never seen someone who dislikes eating meat before. You city folk are awfully odd. This why ya fit here with us oddballs here!”

Another playful chuckle rang through Mako’s small ears as he finished picking up any ‘fresh’ remaining produce and canned vegetables. It was fortunate for Mako to find some canned tuna hiding behind a can of labeled red beats. Anderson watched Mako place the basket down on the counter as his beady eyes looked up at the towering giant before him. “Oh, right! Forgot ya like to eat fish! Guess ya do eat some meat after all.” A wrinkly hand reached down to grab the first can out from the basket and adjusting his glasses with his other hand, Anderson looked down at the tag sticker behind. “One of these days, I should fish with ya down by the river. I’ll show ya the best spot to catch some trout there.”

“Maybe,” Mako spoke as his plush lips pouted at the beady-eyed buzzard. “Been there just a few days ago and I ain’t caught a single thing there even with all the junk I’m tossing as bait in there.” Mako gazed over at the deli window display right next to the counter, his lips licking slightly as he forgot to grab one last thing coming to the register. “Speaking of…” A grin stretched Mako’s lip that almost seemed like he was being purposely obscure to the confused mole looking man. “Need some more lamb scraps.”

“Oi. Again with the scraps, mate?!” Anderson’s head turned over to Mako with a puzzled gawk. “I know ya don’t like to eat meat, mate. But you don’t gotta chuck it all out on whatever place yer
fishing at!” He sighed under his breath, placing the can of lima beans down and huddled over behind the lit up deli refrigerator.

“Heh. Told ya, I only avoid pork. Everything else is fair game for me and my fish” Oh, how Mako couldn't help but grin at that last remark. He placed the basket above the counter, watching Anderson grab a hold of the silver tongs before opening up the glass door. The smell of cold meat smacked Anderson’s small nostrils, making him grimace at the scent of cold cuts and blood. It didn’t help that there were a few flies now hovering inside the refrigerator in a frenzy. Mako couldn’t help but laugh, watching the shaking tongs try to grab a hold of the heavy scraps lamb bones. Meat chunks falling with a disgusting thud against the butcher paper on the scale above the refrigerator.

“I’m sure the fish you feed your leftovers too really must like ya!” Anderson reached back inside to grab another massive lamb bone and smacking it down to the butcher paper. A splash of pink meat juice staining the already messy apron the elderly man was wearing. Mako’s lips turned into a sly smile. A smile that Anderson missed completely as he reached in deeper to grab a bigger piece of lamb entrails.

“Yeah, they do.”

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Despite the ending days of summer soon approaching, there was something so surreal with the ways the sky would appear during sunsets. The bright blue Australian sky would fade into pink, orange and yellow, as the radiating sun would set over the horizon in a slow and impending pace. Heated winds would brush against the dried eucalyptus leaves on top of the towering canopy, only having the weak and dried leaves to fall down to earth and the still murky water of Jamison’s lake. The eastern side of the bush was slowly fading into a blue hue with clouds looming over the horizon all while the crescent moon began to glow right behind the looming clouds. The faint croaks of frogs hiding below the tall reeds soon began to sing out, drowning out the whirrs of the afternoon cicadas, only sounding less with the upcoming of the new season. Everything just felt like a dream. A dream that was warm, pleasant and serene.

Just like every other day, the sentient resident of the lake would lay beside the cool mud near the edge of the lake. Always at the same spot beside the dock and the flat reeds that have been crushed by Jamison’s slithering tail. Waiting patiently for Mako to arrive at the lake as it’s been like this every day since performing his mating ritual. Not to mention, their first kiss. A kiss that would be one of many the odd pair would share. Of course, it was awkward at first, what with not knowing exactly what to do and how to express the reality of their situation between the new pair. But now after a bit of time, it felt more natural, more sincere, save for the fact that Jamison was a terrible kisser and god-awful with keeping his teeth in check.

Jamison lazily laid on top of the crushed reeds as his tail slowly swayed between the muddy floor and the lily pads nearby. The fins on his cheek would flick with every high pitched croak that echoed loudly behind him. It drove his predatory instincts to full gear, making his empty stomach growl loudly and his sharp mouth water. But no, he had to wait. This was the time of day when Mako would arrive back from work, he would always come by and bring him dinner the two can enjoy together. His finned arm rested tenderly below his chin, keeping both of his eyes closed while waiting patiently.

The pangs of hunger ended the moment his fins picked up a low rumble that lifted his eyelids wide open. It was a rumbling sound of footsteps, crunching on dried leaves and twigs that littered around the lake. Only to be soon followed by a heavy voice that Jamison swears he could even hear even
“Hey,” Mako spoke as he stood over the moist beached fish, holding the very same canvas bag he brought to the lake every single day since the first time the two fished together. Jamison rolled to his back the moment his glowing eyes caught the sight of Mako, smiling wide from ear to ear with his razor-sharp stained teeth.

“There he is. Me favorite human.” Jamison spoke in a playful manner while lifting his soaking wet tail above the surface, up and over his bare chest. A trail of smile oozed down with a wet smack on his filthy skin that made Mako roll his eyes and smile down at the stupid fish below. Jamison always did know the right buttons to press whenever Mako arrived. It felt nice to always return back to the one place that brought him comfort in the middle of this forsaken desert.

“Soaked some more sun today, Jamie?” Mako’s tired grey blue eyes looked down at the fish’s patchy blond hair as it was dry and flaked with dirt.

“Just a tad bit o’ some sun.” Jamison spoke as he laid comfortably on his back, getting the dried blond hair of his covered with mud once again.. “Found some yabbies lurking deep in me nest when I slept there. Felt one of them crawl all over me back and well, had to find a better place to snooze fer a while...” The creature stretched his long tail and arms out that made the bones on his spine crunch lowly, if Mako didn’t arrive so soon and if his hunger was appeased, Jamison would have just knocked out there on the mud.

Mako shook his head as he dropped the canvas bag right next to his feet. A low and grumbling inhale of soreness and exhaustion rattled his body the moment his knees bent down to sit on the dried red earth. He sat close to where Jamison was laying, but far enough for Mako to not get his already dirty clothes caked in mud. Good think Mako planned to do laundry the next day.

“Dinner time,” Mako muttered as he reached inside the bag, scrambling around to find the two small containers filled with fresh warm food, all with the ingredients Mako just bought a couple of hours ago.

Jamison’s eyes widened the moment he heard those marvelous words being spoken out so beautifully from Mako’s plush lips. Like a young hyperactive mudskipper, Jamison rolled around the muddy bed with a loud slap, soaking up his entire body with mud, water, and his own fresh slime, a concoction only created by Jamison. It was indeed the easiest way for him to approach land and get closer to his favorite human. A few more wild spinning rolls that sent mud and water flying everywhere and Jamison was set. The small fins under his waist began to push forwards. The long eel-like tail slithered slowly like a snake while heading towards Mako’s direction.

“Ooo! I’m starvin’.” Jamison heaved loudly, his pupils dilated as he finally reached up Mako’s dust-coated boot. The fins on his back flexed as the muddy tail coiled around himself and his massive human, already learning to lay beside Mako and not pounce on him like a needy cat. Mako watched him carefully, sighing softly as he placed the red lidded containers besides his left leg. “Bet you were. You’re always waiting for me at that spot.” Another deep sigh rumbled through his nostrils. “Told ya to stay hidden.”

“Ya tell me that every time, Hoggie.” A nickname that Mako felt comfortable sharing with Jamison finally after that day. But if he was being honest, the term ‘Hoggie’ can sometimes be a little bit too much for him.

“Nothing has happened. Don’t get yer fat head stuck under the mud. There ain’t been any other human than you lately.” Jamison retorted.
While it was nice that the two were far alone together in this barren bush, the thought of danger still lingered. Jamison doesn’t know that Anderson thought he was a different kind of monster the last time that old geezer came around a year ago, but maybe Jamison was right. Maybe there was no danger of anyone else seeing this freak of nature and the two were perfectly alone, completely isolated from society and hidden away in the Australian bush. “Maybe you’re right.”

“Of course I am!” Jamison spoke so loudly with a puff from his chest that it startled from Mako’s own deep thoughts. He looked over at the troubled human with a warm and comforting smile that drew Mako’s attention back to him. “What are we sharing this time?”

“Only your favorites.” Mako reached to the containers right beside him and grabbed the one with Jamison’s name labeled on top, popping it open once Jamison got closer, revealing the disgusting concoction of food that was a perfect meal to a lake monster. It was cooked bones, meat and lamb intestines, mixed in with two cans of dog food and topped off with leftover rice from last night’s dinner that Mako had a bit of extra of. Not to mention, it was seasoned in a way that would make the meal much more appetizing despite’s Jamison’s repulsive pallet and sudden discovery of how much the creature loved lamb meat.

“Awww really, mate!? Bone marrow and all? And would ya look at that, looks like there are some guts in there too!” The fish flopped closer to Mako with the aid of his tail, already putting his slimy hands on the human’s massive arm. Mako nodded, his smile still not fading despite how much Jamison was touching him with dirty fingers. It’s something Mako grew to get used too and even liked.

“Got it fresh today.” Mako handed over the container towards Jamison. He reached down to grab his own labeled dish, not the same as the others, oh God no. It was mostly macaroni and cheese, mashed potatoes and a small fresh fish fillet.

It didn’t take long for Jamison to be shoving his face down on his own dish. Water and slime coated his own meal as it dripped down from his chin, while sharp teeth nashed on the sloppy and meaty mess with repulsive chews. A disgusting sight that would leave anyone to be nauseated. Everything that Mako was now far used to it at this point. The human sighed gently, chuckling under his own breath as he too joined with Jamison and began to eat his meal.

“Mako?” Jamison spoke after making a hard swallow of dog food caked with lamb bone marrow, all dripping down on his pointy chin while looking at a large human.

Mako paused right before shoving the fork in his mouth, his tired eyes gazing at the smiling monster in front of him. “Yeah?”

Jamison swallowed hard on any remaining meaty scraps left in his mouth, licking his own lips before moving closer to Mako in a creeping slither. Jamison’s head rested comfortably on the human’s arm, rubbing gently against the stained fabric of Mako’s shirt. Again, a good thing that Mako was doing laundry. Jamison rubbed affectionately, still holding the container with his only hand and never letting his meal down.

“Can we do this every day?” Jamison paused, looking up at Mako wistfully. “Yanno, forever?” Mako grabbed a hold of the can of root beer, silent and keeping Jamison on the edge while that wet head of his still rubbed against his arm. His meaty fingernail popped the lid open, letting out a small hiss from the carbonation. Mako smiled as his eyes looked down at Jamison’s pathetic looking face.
“Been doing this since the first time we kissed.” Mako held the can tightly on his palm as he spoke. He’ll admit, it’s been really comforting to be doing this every day when Mako got out of work, or even in times when Mako didn’t have work, he would just spend the entire day down in the lake with Jamison. Either, fishing, swimming or just chatting. The direction of where his life was going as an odd, one that he never imagined would happen. Mako nodded slowly, taking a small sip of the rootbeer before placing it down in the dry earth.

“I’m okay with that.”
Another quiet night gently looms across the dry crackling earth in the outback. Dawn was approaching within the next hour, leaving the vast bush in still serene darkness despite the celestial lights. Crickets chirped as they hid in the dense bushes surrounding the lake, only to have their cries be occasionally drowned out by the rhythmic tribbles of eager frogs. The edges of the lake gently splashed with every warm gust of wind brushing against the tall water-bound reeds, the nocturnal choir still singing with a content motion before the dawning of the Australian sun. Soon enough, the chirps and croaks of crickets and frogs would be replaced by the last remaining shrills of cicadas and ecstatic cockatoos perched high above the gum trees.

None of the nocturnal noises ever woke Jamison while he slept deep within the depths of the lake. Any sound from above was always drowned out completely by the density of his aquatic home. The only thing that would grab his attention would be the heavy vibration of splashes above the surface. Even if something did awaken him in the middle of the night, it never really bothered the creature all too much. If the creatures don’t go tense over another predator, neither should he. Often times, big splashes would mean an easy late night meal, but fortunately for the prey, Jamison gained a new habit of stuffing himself a few hours before heading to sleep.

The deafening hum from the dense murky lake always made sleep easier for Jamison compared to sleeping above the surface. A white noise that lulled him gently into slumber as he laid his polluted nest. Weeks had passed since Jamison’s collection grew to a more unorganized level of hoarding. Metal trash littered the lake bed surrounding his nest. From empty cans, car parts, old banged up tools and even a mailbox. They were all covered in mud and algae just like the bones laying beside these contraptions. The tire that Mako brought him was now the perfect object for him to sleep on.
top of. It was like a rubbery pillow. One that he’d been stuck inside various times with the weight he’s been gaining on his massive tail from all the healthy portions of rich human-made food. Claw and teeth punctures surround the edges of the tire, all from times where he’d gotten trapped while keeping himself entertained with it. At the end of a long day, Jamison would hunker down upon the top of it, fill it with dead vegetation and coil his tail around it like the perfect nest object.

The still moving current of the lake made the muted colored fins on Jamison’s body sway in a hypnotic motion. Mud stained hair would tangle amongst itself as he slept quietly, pink gills expanding wide with every deep inhale. The peaceful slumber would soon end as a twitch from his lips began to bare rancid teeth as he slept, torn between experiencing a deep dream and the urgent need to wake up. Clawed hands would tic just like his dark lips, fighting the urge to open his eyes. The monster wanted to keep dreaming. To keep going on with his sleepy fantasy that just felt oh so real. He was just so close. So very, very close.

Golden eyes fluttered and at that moment the fantasy was ruined. Everything surrounding him was pitch dark, an abyss that he shared with the other aquatic creatures living in the lake. A prickling feeling of rubber bumps against his fleshy human skin made him itch, accelerating his agitation with his sudden break from the dream. Discomfort from the trash underneath his nest would result in Jamison feeling more drained, a reminder to add in more mud or plants on top of the heap of junk to cushion it only a bit more. The hint of darkness could only mean he’s gotten just a few hours of sleep, no real estimate exactly, but given that his body feels even more flushed, it might have not been all that much.

Jamison rested his head on the tire as he exhaled loudly through his mouth. Ain’t the first time he’s been woken up by his own dream. Nightmares are a constant plague for proper sleep but dreams? Ah, it was a dream that made Jamison’s lips curl into a smile. A dream that felt so warm, welcoming, tender and passionate. It all felt so similar yet it was going nowhere the fish wanted it to go. Jamison would ask over and over for Mako to touch him as they held tightly onto each other’s arms, just above the lake’s surface. Asked him to touch the soft underbelly between those two fins on his hips as Jamison instructed. To use those big fat human fingers to touch and prod on his flesh in all the right places, to bite on Jamison’s shoulder as Mako explored his greedy body.

But every single time Jamison asked that giant for every deprived favor, Mako would just smile that big fat smile of his and nod. Was this Mako stupid or deaf? Maybe both? Just thinking about it made Jamison grunt with flared fins. Heat rushed into his face as the vision continued, reminding him that every night like this always ends up the same. Jamison’s own cock was already throbbing hard within him.

Rolling to his back using the length of his massive eel-like tail, Jamison laid flat on the beaten up tire. His tail coiled around the tire like a snake, shifting to a more comfortable position to have his hips hover above. His only hand explored his abdomen, sliding down on the cool and wet amphibious skin. Right between the two small fins on his hips, a small pink bump was emerging out from a slit. Fingertips touched the small nub and the soft sensitive skin between the slit, sending a wave of pleasure through Jamison’s drowsy body. It grew, pulsating by the touch as it emerged from the tight fleshy walls surrounding it. All of Jamison’s fins began to change color, once again returning to the fiery wave just as when he was courting Mako many weeks ago. Another deep exhale from Jamison’s mouth made the gills in his neck flare. What was once a nub nestled between two skin folds, was now a full-sized abnormal cock. It was long, oddly bumpy in the base with a pink to peach fading hue. Dark rigged pink flesh surrounded the bottom of his cock as it grew, arching back as it throbbed on his grimy fingers.

Just two strokes and Jamison’s head was already tilting back, hitting the end of the tire as teeth softly sank on his own lip. It always felt so nice jerking it at night. The day is fine and all but he’d
much rather go out hunting, sunbathe or spend time with his mate in their usual hourly routine together.

Just thinking about that big, fat, grey haired cunt made Jamison gasp like a hooked fish. His love for this human is so far different compared to the anything he felt for the other two he loved before meeting this giant. Courting was just the first part of the deal, Jamison can only think the next step is for them to fuck each other as mated pairs would, however, a massive human-like Mako and a scrawny Muldjewangk like Jamison could manage to. Another sharp gasp broke the silence in his mind as he touched the spongy tip of his cock, stroking slowly and imaging giant plush lips wrapping it in a tender and loving kiss.

“Mako.”

A voice echoed through Jamison’s thick skull, eyes fluttering by the mention of his mate’s name. It repeated again, sending a wave of heat that was building up in his guts spread all across his body. The motion of his left hand paced up, fingers touching the odd fleshy bumps below his cock and up towards the head. The two small fins on his hips twitched with every soft pulsating buck, jaw hanging low as he gave out heavy breaths. He wanted Mako. No. He needed Mako. Needed those big wide strong arms of his, touching every inch across his body, touching, sucking, fingering...

Natural slime oozed out from his hand, making it far easier for Jamison to stroke faster with whimpering moans. The never ending build up of frustration didn’t leave with just simple strokes. With the utmost gentleness of his own claws, Jamison’s middle finger slid down to the base of his member. Down towards the faded pink slit, to where a small opening was being hidden by flesh. His finger slides in the bottom of his opening, just barely touching the warm walls made Jamison shudder with delight. It was always more fulfilling whenever stroking his shaft wasn’t enough. It felt nice, warm and incredibly slimy. Just one finger inside the fleshy walls made Jamison’s body react in a feverish way. While fingers were fine, there is always a chance he’ll rip something inside with how pointed his dirty claws are. It’s a good thing Jamison has a bunch of trash laying around.

Hastily, Jamison reached over by the side of the tire in search for the perfect thing to shove inside. Smooth and round stones are perfect to leave inside his slit while stroking his cock, letting them pop out as if they were eggs. Or possibly some long bones from unfortunate prey that’d been lingering around his nest for weeks, those are long enough to ‘scratch his itch’. Jamison’s eyes blinked when he found the thing exactly what he’s looking for. He pulled out the gear stick Mako gave him months ago. It was long enough to push in and out of his slit with ease, plus girthy at the end and making a satisfying pop when pulling it out. He wonders if maybe humans made this hard metal object just for this reason. If so, it’s an invention worth praise.

There was no hesitation for Jamison to start pressing the rubber handle of the gear stick into his opening, stretching him out wide enough that his cock responded with a hard throb. Jamison bit his lip as he let out a weak hiss from the stretching sensation. Sliding it in further before pulling it out and once again back in. Amber eyes would close tightly, feeling his own imagination take his craving to the deep end. Only thoughts of Mako would rush into his flustered mind. Feeling the human’s massive hands over him, touching, exploring, poking at his entrance with those big meaty fingers and shoving deep inside till he felt the end of Jamison’s meaty walls. It was all a phantom sensation, but one that Jamison’s body was begging for.

“Mmmm” The creature moaned softly, tilting his head to the side as his arm pushed the gear stick into slow thrust. A sharp tongue licked his own lips, leaving the prodding object inside his flesh as his hand returned to stroke at his neglected pink cock. Easy but tight strokes as his palm cupped the tip, down to the ridged skin below the base. The small fins on his hips twitched as he neared his climax, gills opening with irritation as it crept up closer. Oh, how he wanted Mako right there.
Right now. Fucking him raw till his slit stung from the pain of being stretched out. He didn’t care if it hurt if Mako would be rough on him. Hell, pain to Jamison is often something he seeks out when it comes to playing with his junk like so. Eyes shut tightly as he let out another loud hiss under his teeth. All the fins on his body glowed in those same bright oranges and yellows during the courting. He was growing close, so close.

“Mako!”

A clawed hand scratched the bottom of the tire, mouth hanging out wide as he came hard. Shooting ropes of cum that hovered above him like foam, cock still throbbing with every pulsating spray until he ran dry. Jamison panted deeply, his chest rising while soaking up on that glorious glow of warmth and pleasure. A smile stretched his face, laughing under the dense darkness under the roots of the mangrove tree and murky lake, only his amber eyes glowing brightly in the apparent abyss. Cum started to sink down to Jamison’s torso like confetti, quickly using his hand to rub it against his own body while regaining consciousness. One of these days, Jamison’s going to cum so hard he’ll knock himself right back out to sleep.

The gear stick was lazily squeezed out from his slit as his cock began to shrink down into his flesh, returning back to the fleshy walls inside the creature’s opening. Pushing out any remaining water buried deep inside his own body in a tiny gush. Jamison’s tail curled slowly around the tire, eyes looking up and only still seeing darkness. This isn't the first time he’d thought about this with Mako. He really, desperately, wanted to engage with that lumbering idiot. That stupid, giant lug that enjoys the awkward moments the two have together, especially physical contact. Oh, just imagine how the two would get on when they root together. Wrapped around in each other's arms as they courted.

Jamison let out a deep sigh, eyes slowly shutting, his breathing returning to a slow and steady pace. The creature wonder alone in the darkness if Mako did anything like this. Maybe wake up in the middle of the night and think about Jamison? Still lost in a world where human customs are the norm, the anxiety with proposing something as such would end up in a way that might end their partnership. Humans are strange. Jamison is strange. These feelings for his mate, however, seemed natural to his mind. The creature’s golden eyes opened up, looking over the side of the thick roots of the mangrove tree and seeing a light just over the distance of the surface. What was once pitch black, was slowly turning blue. A blue that indicated that the sun was slowly rising from its slumber and waking over the cool outback. Perhaps, Jamison should bide his time with this.
With all these future projects for himself, Mako couldn’t help but feel more accomplished whenever he was able to get one off his checklist. Whence that was done, there was one chore that felt more of a reward than an obligation, and that obligation was to have a nice placid evening by the lake with the one other person in the whole of the bush who made him feel far more human. Not to mention, far happier.

Hello everyone!

It's been a long time since that last update, hasn't it? Well, I can certainly say the beginning of the year was really rough life wise. Plus, I haven't had much motivation to write around that time and I had to rewrite this chapter twice. It was kinda agonizing just not updating every month and wanting to get further into the plot but the last two rewrites just didn't fit in with the story overall. But I finally got it to the way I like it and going on with the main plot.

I will be updating every month once again! And a huge thanks to my partner, Rye, for helping me with this chapter and being my beta. <3 love you

Hope you all enjoy!

The last remaining cicadas had subsequently withered away within the arrival of autumn. Succumbing to their instincual breeding needs after the end of the scorching heat of the summer sun, the ring of their chirps faded leaving only the next of kin tucked away under the shadows of the towering gum trees. It was eerily quiet without the insects pitched shrills echoing across the bush. Occasionally, the silence would be broken by the wails of wandering flocks of cockatoos and parrots passing through in the constant search for fresh water. It took a couple of days for Mako to get used to the new calm. At long last, there was enough time to renovate the shack to Mako’s own personal taste and likings. He figured since the shack was all his, it would be superb to make it feel a little bit like it’s official.

What was once terribly dull and cracked walls, was now a fresh paint of thick, dark grey tone that coated every wall within the interior of the shack. It brought in more life, light from the lamps dangling above the room would bounce off and give more shine to it. The old and rusty screen door was replaced with a brand new one to keep any creeping bugs out of the kitchen. Finally, there won’t be any mozi’s buzzing around Mako’s head while sleeping at night. The chalky scattered clay pots outside in the lawn were now neatly placed beside the stairs to the front door, now given a second chance to grow new seedlings of herbs, vegetables, and succulents to at least make the shack look more lively on the outside.
The antique wooden tub that slumbered behind the shack was finally cleaned out for future plans. Mako hoped to make good use out of it whenever the weather was too agonizingly hot. A miniature pool or even a bathtub would be perfect for his heftier size. It was getting too awkward bathing inside the closet-sized shower, especially with his bulging gut against the walls. The dog house that was once inside the tub was stripped apart for its wood, then used to fill in the holes of the tub and replacing the rotting and damaged wood. Not like Mako was planning to get a dog out in this hellish environment.

Nor did he want to have an empty dog house that was just collecting cobwebs and dried up leaves. Shit like that brought big ass venomous spiders! It was best to make good use out of that old house. However, Mako kept the dog collar that once rested on top of the dusty dog house. Placing it right above the entrance of the front door, it would shine brightly to the doorway, the golden etched letters spelling out “king” within the vibrant Australian sun.

With all these future projects for himself, Mako couldn’t help but feel more accomplished whenever he was able to get one off his checklist. Whence that was done, there was one chore that felt more of a reward than an obligation, and that obligation was to have a nice placid evening by the lake with the one other person in the whole of the bush who made him feel far more human. Not to mention, far happier.

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The gentle crackling of fire rang through Mako’s pudgy round ears as it drowned out any other sound over the distance of the lake. The small campfire gnawed on dried up twigs, leaves and sliced up branches of dead brush laying beside the towering eucalyptus trees. Several stones surrounded the fire to keep it from spreading out into the bush. The pungent smell of burning wood hypnotized Mako's senses, making all of his aching muscles relax. The campfire was to the left of Mako, just a few feet away but enough to feel the twirling flames welcoming warmth.

Dirty sandals relaxed on the pale ice box, filled with a few cans of Mako's favorite beer and freshly caught fish that'd been culled earlier in the evening. Tired eyelids calmly closed in the passing seconds, underestimating just how peaceful staying out in this 'crap hole' of a lake can really be. A warm gust from the sun's heat brushed against Mako's bristled skin. Pudgy ears listened intently to any other sound other than the crackling fire and the rustling of leaves. A deep exhale escaped Mako's cracked lips. Both of his chalked hands positioned above his inflating gut, breathing steadily as Mako's eyelids drooped once again. From his delivery shift to all the work he’d done at home, the giant’s lumbering body wanted to just nod off for a few seconds before returning to reality.

Aching muscles tensed when he heard something disturbed his zen-like state. Mako could have sworn he heard his own name being whispered against his right ear.

“Mako?”

There is was again.

“Hey, Mako?”

And Again, only this time sounding more agitated and raspy

“Mako !?” Once more but to no avail.
An intense and disgusting wet slap of mud-slicked flesh against the earth broke the peaceful silence. Mako’s eyelids shot wide open, sitting upright with a short gasp while his head turned in all directions to the defining slap.

“What, what, what?!” Mako stuttering was cut short by a low snort from his thick flat nose. Tired silvery eyes finally looked straight down and finally found the culprit. It was Jamison, laying his upper body against the ice box with a glaring frown. The monster was completely coated in slime and mud, covering his smooth and sensitive skin from the sun’s blaring rays and intense heat. Unfortunately, there were some parts of his fins where the mud was starting to flake off.

“Ya keep falling asleep on me!” Jamison wailed, swinging the tip of his chewed off tail down to the moist earth. “If I wait any longer fer ya, I’ll dry up faster than a writhing worm under this sun!” Jamison paused as he slowly crept up closer to the human, using both the fins on his hips and the strength of his tail. Long sticky fingers trailed up to Mako’s exposed calf from his rather shorter than average shorts. Jamison squeezed the plush muscle with the tips of his claws. Mako grimaced at the sensation, shifting his leg slightly from the uncomfortable approach. It only made Jamison’s mouth curl into a smirk. “Not that I mind watching you snooze off on me like that, but I’m getting bored waiting for ya.”

A deep and low grumble escaped from Mako as he moved his leg away from the scummy grip. Even with Jamison’s hand off of his skin, the phantom sensation of those long claws touching his skin made the white hairs on his neck frizz.

“M’ sorry. Sorry.” A hand whipped the sweat right off Mako’s swollen face, down to his thick chin. The ponytail behind his head swayed by the sluggish movements of adjusting to a more appropriate position. Small trickles of tears gathered up at the corner of his eyes, yawning so loudly that it made Jamison’s pupils dilate. “I’m a bit worn out today.”

“Worn out?!?” Jamison hollered, the fin’s in his cheeks twitching at the mere suggestion of ‘exhaustion’. Tilting his head while the fish’s, yellow eyes scanned Mako carefully like a hawk. Miraculously, Jamison remembers Mako’s life outside the lake is far more productive, moving around to different places and fixing here and there. Such the life of a human was far too much work.

One idea suddenly sparked inside that wet head that made the fins on the fish’s back glow into a vibrant orange and yellows. “I know what’ll solve that ol worn out phase of yers, mate!” A putrid yellow grin stretched his face once again, only he was giggling like a mad man and it made Mako feel slightly concerned. “Let’s go swimming! I know you love swimming with your favorite mate!” A hand raised up to slap Mako’s thick leg repeatedly, staining with every contact and making the slime build up and stick to the human’s skin like glue.

A low and deep groan pierce out of Mako’s dry and chapped lips. “Oh, come on. Been busy all this week with the shack.” Mako’s large hand slapped against the spot where Jamison slapped his already grimy calf. “Ain’t got the energy to take a dip today.” God, it really was sticking tight to his leg hair. Shit is far worse than glue “Besides, you always want me to get in that piss nasty water of yours every time I visit.”

All the harsh jokes tended to make Jamison’s golden eyes roll. The fish has been far used to human sarcasm with how much of a ‘joy’ Mako can be at times. Both of Mako’s swollen feet slid off the icebox, sitting more upright and causing his spine to crack loudly with the shift of positions. “Besides, you just want an excuse to coil around and slobber all over my face again.” He knew Jamison’s lame attempts to get up close and personal with him when he heard them, not that he disliked it.
“That’s right! But ya say it like it’s a bad thing!” Jamison snickered and pointed at the meaty human, as a trail of slime and mud dripped from the bottom of his sharp claw. "Ya know you like it when I kiss that big mouth of yours! " A cackle of laughter escaped Jamison's mouth, all while his eel-like body coiled around himself tightly like an adder. He adjusted placing his elbow on the thickest part of his moist chunky tail to, which it excreted more slime into the already soaking wet tail.

“You should be swimming with me every day since we’re mates. It ain’t easy crawling in and out like a bloated frog just to get to ya.” The creature watched the human’s expression carefully, seeing those pale silver eyes gazing at the fish with a cautious focus.

“It ain’t easy.” Jamison swallowed hard, the gills on his neck slowly flared as he mumbled. “I get about as worn out as you are right now when I do it. Crawling out to the mud that is. I do it cuz I want to. And cus I like ya. Like really really like ya!”

“How touching,” That little proclamation brought a smile to Mako’s stoic and soggy face. His sweaty head turned to look at the curled up fish, abnormally looking more anxious as he waited for Mako to finally give in and jump in the cool and refreshing lake. Mako sighed softly, scratching the back of his neck as he spoke once more.

“But, just like I said. I ain’t got the energy to swim today.” A squeak from the lawn chair wailed as Mako moved to reach a hand out to open up the lid of the icebox, still looking at Jamison and noticing that nervous smirk turning into a pitiful frown. Orange fins pinning back in disappointment, even to the point their bright amber glow began to fade into a muted tone.

Mako lifted an eyebrow as he watched Jamison’s physical reaction speak for the monster without so much as muttering a squeak. “Oh, common. Not like I ain’t ever gonna swim with you again.” A loud pop came from the beer can vibrated for a second as Mako placed the cold drink to his cracked lips. Eyes still looking at Jamison who watched him with a quirked eyebrow. Jamison returned the gesture, his left eyebrow raised as his rotten mouth pouted in disbelief. "There’s been plenty of times when we got our little plans together, just you and me out ‘ere in me lake.” Jamison’s face melted into an anguished frown, the back of his webbed hand touched his slick forehead while he yammered.

“And then, there’s always something going on with ya that's more important than our get together.” The fish paused, “It ain’t fair, mate. I spend almost all day waiting for ya. Waiting for me human to come home ‘ere only to get ya leaving me...”

The ugly freak was right. There’s been plenty of days where their evening plans would be consistently switching around and swapped for Mako’s priorities. Some, of course, were days where Mako felt like his body was going to shatter by how sore his whole being was with just driving or lifting deliveries for hours. Still, it wasn’t fair to Jamison. Hell, it wasn’t fair to Mako. The two sat there in silence as words were drowning in each of their minds as they try to figure out exactly what to say. What exactly can you say to that? Especially to someone who’s not exactly human? A sharp swallow with his already beer coated throat made Mako exhale softly through his nose, placing the can of beer on top of the icebox and looking to the creature’s strange glowing eyes looking directly to his.

“ Sorry.”
It was a soft, compassionate and soothing voice that brushed gently against the warm air between them. Warmblood began to pump into the thin membrane of Jamison's fins, brightening the flesh into a radiant glow that would match the small campfire beside them. Mako's sympathetic tone always made Jamison's chest feel like it was melting into a pile of horrifying goo.

“I never meant to make you feel like you’re not my priority, Jamison.” Mako continued, still using that calm tone. “Sometimes work drains me a little too much for my liking, but I guess I always felt like we both can have the same plans but just the next day.” Both of Mako’s hand squeezed against each other as he spoke as he made a point of being completely sincere to this atrocity against nature. “I promise you. We’ll both be swimming in that piss stained lake together since you like it so much.”

This was weird. So fucking weird to be saying that to a monster. Of course, their relationship is a little bit strange, but the idea of them together always brought a bit of life back to Mako. There was a strange voice in the back of Mako’s thick head that said he was too old to fall in love again. A concept that’s too sore from his own youth, especially with men. If it was love, the human couldn’t bear to admit to himself that it’s with a monster. Nor would he ever admit that he questioned the possible sexuality with the said monster. That thought troubled Mako for many nights ever since that one fantasy in the shower room. His pale blue eyes looked at Jamison, smiling and wriggling in his own coiled tail as he looked at Mako with a loving gaze. Amber orbs that glowed as bright as his fins, bright as the crackling fire right next to their resting bodies, bright as the glowing rays from the sun above.

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The sun began to slowly sink towards the western horizon, illuminating gorgeous pastels with the slow moving thick clouds above the Australian sky. Crickets began to chirp tenderly, every so often it would bring out a small croak from the frogs wading on lily pads and washed up reeds, eagerly waiting for an unsuspecting cricket to creep up closer to the lake's edge. The trees surrounding them began to fade into towering hissing shadows. All except for the ones that were near the campfire, gleaming into a red bloom as the campfire continued to crackle in its own bursting heat and radiance.

Mako and Jamison sat a bit closer to the bonfire as the two watched their dinner cook and hiss under the heat of the fire. The smell of fresh fish and burning wood wafted through their nostrils to which their stomachs twisted in hunger. Two properly prepared murray cod were skewered on roasting sticks right above the twirling flames of the bonfire, seasoned to the couple's own liking and being kept straight by the warm stones surrounding the fire. Droplets of fish oil only fueled the fire to an intense heat that danced and twirled into a glamouring spectacle.

It certainly caught Jamison’s attention. The glow of the fire made his amber eyes shine brightly like gems, as his mind drew into a complete blank with how deep in a trance he was. But oh how he loved it. There was that impulsive desire of sticking his hand out to touch the bonfire, fortunately for Jamison and his sensitive palm, however, Mako was there to pull him back into reality. The giant slouched, noticing Jamison’s eyes hyper-focused on the glowing spectacle.

“Don’t you even think about touching it,” Mako spoke deeply before drinking his cold and bitter ale. He chuckled after a few sips, the ponytail above his greasy head swaying. “Unless you want to end up like these cod's in there.”

“Ya wouldn’t dare, mate!” The gawking creature gazed back and forth at the sparkling flame and his human. Only briefly being mesmerized by its hypnotic dance of heat and radiance before turning back gawk at the unimpressed lounging giant in the lounge chair. “I was just merely
admiring it!" A sly unimpressive grin made Jamison's sharp teeth poking out from his drying lips. "No need to worry about me! Already feeling like I'm cooked myself.”

Jamison’s coiled body wriggled slightly, already feeling exactly what he just grumbled about. A single dirty hand reached out to swoop his patchy drying scalp, attempting to coat it with the abnormal mucus. One swoop becomes another. And another. Until Jamison realized that his scalp was too dry. Dehydrated enough to notice visible flakes of slime and earth chipping off of his balding head. Hesitantly, the fish scanned at his own palm, arm, torso, and tail. There were more flakes of mud and dried up surrounding his whole form. Jamison was slowly drying up, the consequence of spending too much time above the surface and not drinking water. Even a quick splash of water on his body can help with bringing back the moisture for his amphibious body, but Jamison has been far too distracted to pay attention.

An uncomfortable bark coming from below made Mako look down at the withering and nervous creature.

"Mako,” Jamison’s voice had a dry and bitter edge as words sputtered from his lips. “M’ thirsty again! Feeling all d-dry!” It was almost like a pained whine. A clawed hand reaching over to grab the human’s denim shorts, tugging firmly to get Mako to jump on his two feet and act quickly before he would surely completely dry up, according to his exaggerated mind.

“And here I thought you liked being hot and dry, considering you like staring at that fire for so long.” Mako couldn’t help but exhale deeply while watching this pathetic partner of his squirming around on the flat red earth. A loud squeak of the chair shrieked loud enough to disturb the natural twilight melody as Mako stood out of his resting spot. Causally making his way towards the edge of the campfire, where a few other of Mako’s items rested behind the sparkling flames, things Mako usually brought for his bonfire nights like so. One item was the main priority if Jamison was going to be out of the murky lake water for several hours, a small white pail with evidence of dried grey paint and fish scales splattered on the inside.

“Water is better for m-” An interrupting gurgling hack flared Jamison’s gills while he explained this to his human. All of his monstrous instincts were blaring at him to crawl back into the lake promptly and dwell deep within the muddiest pits of the lake bed. But of course, Jamison knew better. The monster anxiously watched Mako reaching out to the shore of the darkening pool, filling the splotched pail with the finest fresh scum water this side of the outback has to offer. Just the way how Jamison liked it.

“What’s taking so long? He should have already been here by now with those stocky fat human legs of his! Why is he so damn slow?! Common ya freakin drongo! Just fill the bucket with water and chuck it over ‘ere at me!” Jamison’s mind rang loudly in his own skull, waiting for several seconds was too much for the impatient fish. Swinging open the lid of the icebox, Jamison reached inside to soak his hand in the freezing melted ice water. Painful, but god he needed water right there and now. Jamison huffed at the freezing temperature, cupping his palm and splashing water to his mouth and neck. It temporarily stung on his already sensitive gills, but the relief was worth the pain.

At long last, Mako began to approach the dwindling fish with a pail full of cloudy water. Jamison could almost taste that sweet relief, licking his icy dark twitching lips to the substance he was always familiar with. “Goddammit. You can wait just a few seconds, can't you?” Mako bickered disappointedly. "Acting like I'm the slowest bastard you've ever met."

Jamison glanced up at the bitter hulking human, exhaling loudly as his yellow teeth chattered by the bitter cold. Only a small cackling giggle was an answer Jamison could come up with.
"You idiot." Mako just sneered as he began to pour the pail of freshwater on his fish crusty and muddy tail. Cool water smoothly splashed on the elongated tail, bringing it's bright and vibrant colors back in an instant. Jamison let out a lusty replenished exhale as his whole body felt just wonderful. His anxiety melted away, trickling down to the soft mud resting underneath his soft and warm belly. By now, the fish was feeling the last ounces of water trailing up to his exposed neck, allowing his gills to take a bit of a break from the bitter dry air with the refreshing touch of water. Even by just one pail of water poured on the monster, his slime began to ooze out from the wet tail. Jamison’s eyes glanced over to the lake, watching his beloved human walking back to the lake to fetch more for his unquenched thirst.

"Warms me heart to see ya do this for me," Jamison spoke in a hoarse tone as he kept examining the hefty wobbling human, bent over on those thick meaty legs. A site to behold as Jamison was fortunate enough to see.

Mako could only grumble for a response, pacing back to give the scum sucking fiend another soak. Only this time, the water splashed directly towards Jamison's repulsive face and flaring gills. Jamison caught on and opened his mouth wide enough to let some of the water splashes inside his putrid mouth. “Next time, I’ll throw you at the lake if you pull this shit again.” Mako spat, irritated that Jamison didn’t speak sooner about his sudden wave of dehydration. “You know I don’t like seeing you freaking out like that.”

“Sorry, mate! Thought I could last a little longer this time.” Jamison paused, grinning as his soaking wet hair flipped to the side of his scalp. “Got me all distracted with that pretty fire twirling around on them fish there.” A loud wet slap of mud and newly lubricated flesh that made Mako’s tired expression jump in a slight shock. Jamison rolled and squirmed against the newly refreshed red mud as slime oozed out of his abnormal pores. Any remaining flakes of dried skin and mud were vaporized by the new wave of gunk. Mako seriously couldn’t look at the repulsive spectacle in front of him. Mud splashed and splattered everything whenever that heavy tail crashed down hard with every roll. Just as long as Jamison doesn’t get any of that shit in his clothes, he can roll around on the dirt like a squealing piglet.

Tossing the small pail to the side of the icebox, grunting loudly as he sat back down on the creaking chair. ‘That deserves another can of beer.’ Mako’s own inner voice in his skull would tell himself casually as he opened the lid to the box. “You often have this happen to you when you crawl out to the surface?” Mako asked while watching Jamison squirm and wriggle. The bitter taste of alcohol on Mako’s throat made his stomach growl in hunger as it was soon to be dinner time with the setting sun. He’s only been sipping on beer this whole time and finally, hunger is settling in. Grey eyes quickly turned to look at the roasting skewered fish, cooking now to the point where their fins have turned into char, fish oil leaking out of that horrifying gaping mouth full of small teeth.

“Naw.” Jamison would croak loudly, dirt dripping off his chin in his muddy caked body. His head would shake off any remaining muck clutching on his fin as he cackled joyfully. “I only come out to land when you’re around. I ain’t ever out of me lake. Especially at night.” The fish paused from the shaking as nausea kicked in momentarily. A single clawed hand swooped his frizzled scalp, adding more slime and earth in a strange slick concoction.

“Always swim back to me nest after the sun goes down when you’re gone.” He paused once more. “Often times I do catch some frogs when I’m hungry at night. But I stay put in me nest when it rains.” Another pause. “I never leave my nest when it rains at night.”

“How come?” Mako spoke while hoisting himself off of his chair, approaching the bonfire as the two fish were fully cooked and ready to eat. Grabbing the two skewers by the end of the stick, droplets of fish oil fell to the steamed rocks, letting out a low bubbling hiss. “Always thought you
were more active at night or crawling around on your belly since you can see so well in the dark.” The pungent smell of fish against his nostrils made his alcohol stained mouth water with hunger. It was time for them to finally chow down.

“Me, out at night? Hell no!” Jamison hollered out as he watched Mako approach him with the two smoking fish skewers. The monster’s mouth began to drool with the scent of cooked fish wafting towards his direction. “Yeah. Yeah! I can see in the dark just fine!” Jamison paused, still observing Mako as the human sat back down to the lawn chair. “It’s just...”

The paused lasted longer than Mako expected. Still holding both of the fish on each hand, he broke the silence with a question. “Just what?” A silver eyebrow raised up as he watched Jamison, coiling slowly around his newly wet body and sweating slime from his pores. The silence lasted for ten seconds with Jamison looking far past the edge of the lake. To the setting horizon and the dark shadow of gum trees of the outback.

“I’m scared.”

Laughter was the only way for Mako to respond. Was this idiot for real? A monster that’s afraid of what's out there in the bush? For God’s sakes, Jamison is a sight to behold and would cause terror to the people in Murungal with the whole myth of Muldjewangk’s. Mako snorted loudly, shaking his silver head in disbelief. “You gotta be shitting me.”

“Oi! That ain’t funny!!” the monster hissed loudly, looking at Mako who almost dropped one of the precious cooked cod from snorting so much. “I’ve been ’ere longer in this lake and it ain’t all peachy like during the day!” His coiled tail came undone, now using the hip fins to inch closer to Mako’s chair. “There’s a monster out there in the bush. It comes to the lake from time to time when it’s raining, sometimes before it rains.” Anxiety crept in once again. “I have seen her, Mako.” Jamison’s hand reached out to grab a hold of Mako’s bulging arm. The human still held onto the cooked fish between his fingers, looking down at Jamison with confusion. Sharp nails dug to the bristled tanned skin, Jamison fearfully kept observing the campsite and the lake surrounding them.

“The hell are you talking about?” Confusion by how seriously paranoid Jamison was being really made Mako’s laughter halt. “You must have seen one of those wild pigs again. Ain't nothing to be afraid of if you left them alone like I said you should.”

“It ain’t no bloody pig, Mako!” Jamison shouted as his golden eyes glowed in the dim twilight sky. “It’s a monster. One that shrieks out screams that echo in the night.” Swallowing hard, Jamison paused as he looked at Mako, desperate for the human to react to him sympathetically. “She comes to the lake, Mako. She comes here and she wants my lake.”

“Oh yeah? Then why hasn’t this so-called monster taken the lake then? What's keeping it from waltzing right in here right now and scaring the piss out of us?” Mako’s disbelief wasn’t all that solid. There were several times when he did hear something shrieking in the middle of the night, far past midnight. A scream that sounded like a wailing woman crying out as though she was dying in the most barbaric way imaginable. One slimy claw pointed at Mako directly as glowing amber eyes reflected the flame coming from the campfire behind them.

“Humans.”
Chapter Summary

There was a wave of sheer bewilderment that plagued Mako’s mind from the unusual reasoning that Jamison stated. Sitting still in his lawn chair while the darkening blue sky above them crept feverishly like a silent dream. All was right with sitting in the darkness. The bonfire, right beside the two odd couple, illuminated the campsite with a vibrant amber glow, making the pair outcast shine like the flickering specks of a flame.

Chapter Notes

Hello and long time no post everyone!

This month marks the two year anniversary of Oddity in the Water! Two whole dang years already!? Also, we're right into the 20'th chapter too and even if it's a short one and dialog heavy, it's one that will lead into something that I'm sure a lot of you have been dying to get to lol.

Thank you so much for reading OitW for two whole years to those who have read it from the begning. And for those who are new , thank you too! Your comments really keep me going with continuing this story!

Huge thanks for Rye for being my beta!

Enjoy!

“Humans?”

There was a wave of sheer bewilderment that plagued Mako’s mind from the unusual reasoning that Jamison stated. Sitting still in his lawn chair while the darkening blue sky above them crept feverishly like a silent dream. All was right with sitting in the darkness. The bonfire, right beside the two odd couple, illuminated the campsite with a vibrant amber glow, making the pair outcast shine like the flickering specks of a flame. The hulking human looked down at his companion who now looked a lot like an uncomfortable wriggling eel that fidgety glanced at his surroundings. Nervous and anxious by the mere shadows of the tall gum trees surrounding the lake. With Mako, the 'human' word repeated in his exhausted mind as he tried to consider exactly why a mysterious monster would fear people.

“How’s a monster the one you’re talking about scared of humans?” Mako’s voice was dry from the building thirst on his throat. He wasn’t in the mood to take another sip of his beer anymore. Mako held on to the sizzled skewered fish with the tip of his dirt coated fingers. Plush lips began to blow on the sizzled flesh, trying his best to cool his meal down before taking a voracious bite. “What’s this thing even look like?”
An abrupt breeze brushed against the leaves above the eucalyptus trees, a rattling hiss that made
the hairs on Jamison’s neck slowly spike up and yelp nervously. Never has Mako seen Jamison act
like this. It was like watching someone writhing in their own paranoia and the fear of impending
death by even mentioning a grotesque appearance.

“ Huge. “ The fish’s voice croaked, swallowing hard as his hand grasped onto the boney right
shoulder. “She’s like...like a monster! Tugging along a huge and long tail that drags on the dirt.
Lookin like a...a big..hairy lizard!” His shrill of a voice suddenly turned into a harsh whisper. “I
don’t get a good look at ‘er. But if there’s one thing I know when she’s here. I can see her big red
eyes that glow behind the trees ‘n bushes.”

It was as if the lake was eavesdropping into the uneasy conversation about the unwelcomed
trespasser who lurks within the muddy shores. The bush went completely silent. There wasn’t a
desirous croak of a lone frog or a chirp of a deserted cricket that wanted to continue with the
nightly choir. Every living creature, including the lake itself, were feeling the same fear of
Jamison’s hysteria.

“Let me guess...” Mako broke the eerily silence of the lake while looking at the trembling fish,
who was nervously picking on the dried flakes of slime and mud off his shoulder. “This thing
called a ‘bunyip’, right?” Mako asked before leaning back into the lawn chair with a loud creak.

Jamison’s eyes snapped and looked up at the lumbering human who was sitting in front of him. A
toothy jaw dropped in sheer disbelief that Mako knew exactly what he was talking about. But to be
mentioning the real name of the intruder without hesitation brought an acidic taste to the eel’s
throat.

“Y-y-yeah.” The apprehensive fish stuttered, nodding his head rapidly that some of the dried flakes
of slime fell off his scalp. “That’s what she’s called.”

Anderson always spoke about the mysterious horrors of the bunyip to Mako whenever he stopped
by the small family-owned market to pick up his weekly groceries. It only got worse whenever it
rained throughout the entire day. It all started with the month Mako moved into this side of the
outback. Brought up by the meer discussion of fishing in the very same lake his grey pupils was
gawking at right now. Maybe Anderson was right. Maybe that old coot really did see the Bunyip
that one time he whined about fishing.

“Anyone else, seen it other than you?”

“Yea,” Jamison spoke softly, almost sounding like a hiss as the tall spiked fins on his spine began
to shrink back into his grungy moist flesh. Smooth black claws scratched his oily left cheek as the
gills on his neck flared, speaking in what seemed both a whisper and annoyed rasp.” Jack and
Maggie saw her too. Not often like me.” Jamison paused, eyes darting to the hidden shadows
amongst the trees and reeds. “ I..It’s mostly when it rains when I do see her. Walking around my
lake all slow like.” The claws moved to scratch a painful dry patch of skin on his hip that reacted
the small pores to ooze out fresh moist slime. Relieving the painful sting of dehydration
momentarily. “Only at night. I ain’t ever seen her during the day when it sprinkles. I keep myself
low and stay in me nest.”

“That so?” Mako's posture made all of his muscles throb by how intensely he was still while
listening. A long stretch of his monstrous arms made the numb bones on his back snap, crackling
once more and releasing a tingle sensation of relief. Mako never expected the supernatural dangers
of living out in these parts of the Outback until just now. Not only was there just one monster, who
was now his 'mate', but now there's two. However, the new monster knows of Mako's existence
and the potential threat this big ass human can be. Keeping her away from the freakish competition
of owning this pathetic mud puddle.

” It’s not afraid of you, but it’s scared of people?" A hand reached out to rub the bristle silver chairs
on his chin while finishing.” I take it might have to do with Maggie and Jack, right?”
Nostalgia and a wave of warm emotions flashed through the anxious fish’s mind. Color began to shine back to the delicate fins on Jamison’s body as he remembered Maggie and Jack’s compassionate love. They raised him as if they were one of their own. Keeping the monster safe and educated enough to know better. The silence lingered longer that Mako would have expected, nor did he expect Jamison to have his eyes closed, smiling while speaking once again. “They always told me that she can’t get me. That they were both there to keep me safe.” Jamison whispered while keeping his tired eyes closed. “They always kept an eye on me. Even when I lived back with ’em.”

The wind blew gently on the campfire, flicking the radiant glow on the couple as they sat quietly. Mako didn’t even have a chance to ask exactly what the fish meant as Jamison butted in. “Used to live with Maggie and Jack back at the shack. Lived in this large thing called a...uh-” Jamison poked the side of his patched scalp “Tub! Yeah, that’s right. It was the tub. I was in that ol’ thing since I was a whelp. Ain’t remember much before then, but when I got bigger, they moved me here.” That pungent-smelling mouth ran dry as the fish spoke, looking up at Mako with his amber-colored eyes that shined brighter with the twirling fire beside them. “Until I moved here, the bunyip started to appear. But Jack did something to her.” Pausing, catching his breath with brief inhales from moist nostrils before continuing. “It was something loud too. Really really loud.”

“Wait, wait, wait!” Mako shook his head as he disrupted Jamison suddenly, a fish oil coated hand shook in front of his hairy knees, looking down at his strange companion.” Did you live back in the shack? Really?” A silver eyebrow raised. “You lived in that tub you’re talking about that’s right outside their window, right?”

Excitement jolted up Jamison’s weary face into that signature goofy wide grin. “Yeah yeah! That’s the one!” A single black claw pointed at the giant human, surprised that his old ‘home’ was still there after all those years. “Maggie used to open that window and poked her head out every sunrise and use to say ‘good morning my little tadpole’ or ‘rise and shine!’ Ahh, Good times.”

Jamison’s impression of Maggie was terrible to the least, but it did bring a smile to Mako’s stoic face. Until Jamison’s slight happiness began to melt away into the shadows and the vibrant colors faded away from his body. Jamison's first humans were starting to feel more like ghosts. Only one still remains living, only to be far, far away from his knowledge and location. Never knowing where she is or if she needs him ever since she lost Jack to that mysterious illness years ago. They took care of each other, raised the slimy monster from a time Jamison couldn’t remember. “Used to have them around me all the time. Maggie, Jack, and King.”

“Take it King was their dog, right?” The reclining giant took a small bite of the already cooled down fish, flavoring the rich white meat with his moist tongue. Mako still had Jamison’s portion of the fish to the side of the icebox, cooling down from the cold gust of wind. Yet, Jamison wasn’t interested in eating at the moment. An extremely rare occasion with how the fish is a living garbage disposal of consuming anything that has flesh. The blond turned to look back at the lake behind him, dried tufts of hair waved to the gentle current of the whistling wind. Drying out both skin and hair but not bothering to venture back into the comfort of his home.

“Yeah. Was Jack’s dog.” Jamison’s voice ached by the question, gold eyes focused on the lake with a bitter growth of hatred towards it. Never asking to be trapped in this pitiful, lonely, desolate, scum infested lake. Nor did he asked to have a wandering monster wanting to take over this home. And neither did he asked for his two humans to be taken away from him in two different ways. But, the times have changed now for Jamison. The only other human companions he has is one the fish refers to as a mate. His mate. A strange and usual mate that Jamison itches to have Mako with him at all times. To swim deep in these murky waters with every day and share food together grotesquely and messily way. Slumbering together in the depths of Jamion’s nest, cuddling tenderly
in the dark watery abyss. Small tears started to form on the corners of the amber-colored eyes.

It wasn’t fair at all, to be trapped all alone.

“You ever had the chance to visit the shack again after you moved here?” Mako's voice was like hot coal swizzling on a painful unsealed wound.

Jamison’s eyes closed tightly as he tried not to sob in the lingering silence, biting on the thin lip with his stained teeth. Desperately attempting to speak coherently without letting out a mourning whimper. “No, I ain’t ever been there since. I’m not able to go anywhere even if I wanted too. I’m trapped here, Mako.” Jamison instantly turned towards Mako with an anxious pace. Small tears rolled from the side of his crusty golden eyes, sobbing with every inhale of air he breathed in with a slight hiss. ”I have nowhere else to go. I told you, Mako. There’s no place for me to go even If I wanted to leave this shit hole!” Orange fins rattled hesitantly as he grieved into his own dirty palm. “I ain’t got nowhere to go, mate.”

“I’m sorry.” Mako slumped deeper into the chair as he watched Jamison sob as if he was completely lost in grief. The long eel-like tail coiled into his own body, sinking further into the slime coated earth. Jamison didn’t care that his own body was slowly drying up with how little moisture he had left. Depression has always been a curse ever since Jack's death and the decline of daily visits from Maggie. Mako’s chest ached as he watched Jamison like this. He knew Jamison was alone every single day. He knew that his own aunt and late uncle were the ones who raised him like their own son, a blessing I’m sure that many would find alarming. Mako knew the couple's strange way of raising a child and their unconditional love for a family.

Yet, Jamison isn’t the only one who feels isolation with living here. Oh, how Mako wished Jamison was able to hang out. Hell, Mako even wished that Jamison was human. The two of them could live together, side by side at the shack. He didn’t care if others would know he was in a relationship with a man. Mako’s a goddamn boss of a biker gang, nothing really ever scared him. He’s dealt with worse shit and a few homophobic bogan's back at Perth. But, the two could go to different places together, road-tripping town to town out in the desolate skirts of the outback. Driving endlessly on the open road and endless roads.

On the open road...

Jamison’s quivering sobs began to lessen over the few huffs on his exhausted lungs. The last remaining tears rolled down into the slime caked earth. Sniveling loudly with oozing snot dripping out from dry nostrils and joining the tears down below. Jamison really was the most unpleasant creature to look at whenever he sobs. Not like Mako cared either way.

"Someday, I’d like to think I’d see that ol’ shack one more time.” A bitter cough and a hack made the monster spit out to the side. Aiming one of the smoldering stones surrounding the burning campfire. The sobbing subsided, only just sniffs and a low raspy voice came out from the monster's mouth.

“I like all the stuff you tell me what's outside ‘ere. All the places and people you see every day when you're out at work. Must be nice.” Tired and watery eyes looked up at the hulking giant, desperately wanting to change the subject and smile pathetically to his mate. Not wanting to cause any outburst of emotions again. He looked at Mako, waiting for a response from the giant silver human who now crept up from the lawn chair with a creak.

Silver eyes glanced down at the wet golden pupils. A smile crept to the side of Mako’s dry lips, patting down any remaining crumbs of fish on his shirt. “Alright then,” Mako grumbled, taking one step ahead of the icebox. Leaves crunched as he approached the whimpering lonely fish. His lonely and pathetic looking fish.
Mako's giant hands reached down to touch the cold finned spine while crouched down to Jamison's level with a short grunt. The nurturing palm began to rub gently on the boney flesh, sliding up towards Jamison's lankly shoulders and that thin gilled neck of his. Chubby fingertips parted any dry blond hair, pulling the monster's head closer to Mako's forehead. Jamison didn't have a moment to ask specifically what Mako was going at. Melting into the tender embrace, shutting his eyes and humming to the frail touching to his body. One that he grew accustomed to since Mako became his mate. A mate that Jamison won over with his hard work of strange courtship and company. Mako's voice broke the serenity of their silent time together, pulling his head away from Jamison as he looked straight into his eyes. “Made up my mind for what we're doing tonight.”

“We’re going for a ride.”
The peaceful presence of nothingness enveloped deep within the quiet bushland. Only the glimmering stars provided the last remnants of light in a cosmic glow. Chirps and whistles of various insects hum faintly like a mournful whisper. All of the serenity and silence of the midnight hour would be broken in an instant.

The light blue truck rattled with every fractured dip on the road as it ventured on. Passing farther from any town or any other isolated shacks that resided off from Murungal. Mako was driving anxiously, carefully keeping a close eye out in the void with the beams of light from his truck. Both hands gripped the rubber steering wheel as sweat rolled into his palms that left a gross mixture of textures between dusty fingers.

The unnerving fear of coming across an unexpected accident was what made the giant man sweat with dread. What if a kangaroo would hop in front of his truck, blinding it with the truck’s beaming lights and wrecked his precious truck? Or worse yet, what if he wasn't one only one out there in the dark void? He's heard too many stories from the folks at Murungal of why one should never drive out at night alone, especially out in the wastelands during the devil's hour. It's a good thing Mako's a defensive driver and a stubborn hardass or so his conscience keeps repeating those words into his already worn-out brain.

Mako’s silver eyes looked up to the rearview mirror, observing the devilish red glow coming from behind. Red brake lights shined brightly into the abyss, looking almost like he was escaping from a hellish world. A world that Mako was leaving behind for the time being before returning once more. Music faintly played on the side door speakers, only to be muted by the purring engine. But it was just loud enough for Mako’s pudgy ears to catch the familiar tune of heavy rock. A sweaty
finger tapped to the tune of his scratched up mixtape, tapping to the rhythm as the man's lips parted, singing softly within whispers that it too was drowned out.

A long, slender and monstrous shadow suddenly shuffled at the back of the trunk, reflected by the rearview mirror that dangled in front of Mako's vision. He was able to catch it from the window behind his seat, watching the shade squirm and writhe like a worm. But the shadow didn't bring any shred of fear. There was no reason to panic, slam on the breaks and scream bloody murder. There was just absolutely nothing to be worried about. It did tho, bring a warm smile to Mako's dry lips.

After ten minutes of driving and approaching his destination, Mako steadily turned to a dirt road with a giant trunk of an old and withered gum tree. Some worn-out signs were made out of plywood, nailed into the old trunk. It indicated a white arrow and withered words that were painted on the plywood many decades ago. Mako knew he was on the right path.

Lights jerked by the rickety and uneven earth. Rubber tires bounced on the fat clusters of red soil and the ankle-deep holes. The man has driven to this place several times before, but there wasn't any reason to return. It was suggested to him by some of the folks in Murrungal who knew their ways in these neck of the woods.

"Just pass the sign to the left as you head down south from town. It would lead you to the Garrayura river where all the best, fresh, and healthiest lookin' fish are lurking about in that big ass river". Mako always shrugged it off when the locals urged him to try it out. He figured the fish by his lake were just as good if not better. He's got the perfect fishing crew anyone in the town could ever have.

Silver eyes glanced back into the rearview mirror, observing the reflection of the wriggling shadow. Flailing its tedious form with each earthly skips and bumps. Mako wanted to burst out laughing when a whimpering yelp from one deep skip against a chasm that sent everything airborne for less than a second. He could have sworn the shadow cursed deeply under its raspy breath. The giant smirked, shaking his ivory ponytail from the almost comical scene. It was almost too ridiculous. But just the perfect timing, as now he approached the end of his trail.

The truck made a sudden halt at the natural unseen road. A mist of crimson dust arose underneath the tires, adding a new coat to the truck's blue paint. It turned its direction. Now the trunk of the ute faced a pit that was just as dark as the night itself. Only to be illuminated by the glowing red brake lights that gave it a more portentous presence. The ute’s red and white glow of the beaming lights suddenly vanished with a simple click, halting the grumbling engine that disturbed the natural quiet.

"We’re here. ” Mako called out while exiting the truck that made a deafening metallic crunch. Muddy boots plopped on the dusty earth as weary silver eyes adjusted into the unfamiliar river. Being out far from the shack this late at night was a first for him. Of course, it wasn't something he planned on doing all by himself. Having someone with him made the trip far less threatening and more adventurous.

"W-we are?” A miserable grumble materialized from the battered trunk. Two golden eyes appeared in the shadows, radiating a glow that Mako never noticed how brightly it beamed until now. Perhaps it was the shining of the stars above that brought forth more accessible lighting. A silhouette of an abnormality began to take form for Mako’s tired eyes. The long slender tail shifted with a loud slap of metal against delicate skin.

"Oi, I didn’t think going out like this would be...urk!” The raspy voice moaned, placing its familiar head on the edge of the trunk. It was certified that nausea was wearing down the abnormal passenger.
“That’s the roads here for ya.” The lumbering giant guffed, placing a dry hand on the familiar but patchy scalp. Fingers ruffled on the damp blond hair, not helping with looming nausea. Mako regretted doing that, quickly swatting his palm away as he felt the usual repulsive feeling between his fingers. A trail of slime coated the dusty palm, looking twice as dense than usual. Almost looking thick as glue. Mako whipped the slime off on his tank top with the utmost disgust. The same hand reached down to his right side pocket and pulled out a miniscule flashlight. With a click, the dim light shined at the back of his trunk that made Mako grimace and snorted at the mess that resided within his vehicle.

Jamison spread there, thoroughly soaked within his own dripping mucus that almost looked like he was covered in snot. The density of the slime was thick, a harsh indication of dehydration for the freak. The monster’s tail extended out to coil around a water-filled icebox that rested beside him. Filled up to the top so he could splash himself if dehydration occurred during the trip.

Underneath the slimy eel, a blue tarp blanketed Mako’s trunk to keep any more moisture and slime off of his vehicle. Of course, the true reason was to store all that moisture for Jamison. Mako unintentionally shined the puny flashlight to Jamison’s face when he took a few paces towards the trunk’s door.

“Watch it!” Jamison spat, his predator pupils shrank from the intruding light, blinded him momentarily. The human snorted and watched his passenger writhe once again while reaching out to grab the door handle of the trunk. Another booming creak of metal rumbled across the terrain, shrieking out loud till it stopped at the man’s waistline. Small trickles of water and slime dripped into the red earth, creating a minuscule crater of moisture. With one heavy grunt, Mako climbed on top of the door, steadily hunching himself with the weight of his body towards Jamison’s side.

“You’re fine,” Mako brushed it off as he let out an exhausted huff. His aching knees cringed while he twisted himself to sit down beside the soaked blonde. The ute slightly bounced with the newly shifted weight resting in a peculiar spot behind the driver’s seat.

“Good night to be out.” The man continued the conversation, finally able to relax after that short anxious ride. He placed his massive right arm on the edge of the ute, speaking smoothly to the sickly patchy eel. “Ain’t seen a single cloud since we started driving.” Lips curled into a smirk, nodding light that his silver hair bounced. “How are you holding up there?”

Nauseated and momentarily dazed, Jamison’s tail uncoiled itself from the icebox. Golden pupils adjusted to the darkness but not to the foreign world surrounding him. “Peachy.” The monster wheezed. "Just, peachy.” Jamison gave the human a clawed thumbs up while he spoke in sarcasm that wasn't hard to notice. His slender face grimaced while he rambled.

“Scared me’ self half to death when it started to go all wobbly. It was fine when you were just driving. Felt nice to have the wind in me hair n fins. How can you humans stand that and not feel like you want to puke your guts out!? Being out on the road and bouncing around like a bunch of confused frogs.”

The lid to the icebox was flipped open with a monstrous clawed hand. Trailing off in a ramble only made him more thirsty and desperate to get rid of the thickening ooze. He could feel it tightened within his gills. Inside the container was water from the lake, filled to the top in hopes that it would last long enough for the trip. A metal copper mug bobbed around the cold surface so it would be easier for him to drink. The fish licked his thin lips, grabbing hold of the mug and filling it to the top with a loud bloop.

Jamison splashed it in the direction of his face and chest in complete desperation. One splash became two, three, and four followed by several gags. It was just enough for the blonde to be
soaking wet, hair slicking back behind his scalp. Not to mention, all that splashing water got into Mako’s shorts and bottom. It felt liberating to have moisture back on his sensitive skin.

”Ahhh!” Jamison sighed admiringly that made his dark eyelids drooped into a pleased grin. Already his body began to absorb the moisture in an instant, producing a fresh thin coat of slime that made it far much more bearable and breathable on the amphibious skin. The tender pink gills on his slim neck flared gently as it absorbed the trickling trails of water. “Much better.”

The alarmed but highly amused man watched the creature soak himself. Not really caring that the monster was getting his clothing soaked with continuous splashing. He’s already gotten far too used to it. “Think it’ll hold you up for the night?”

Jamison’s face glanced at Mako, nodding assuredly. “Oh yeah. Couldn’t get me’self wet while we were on the road. Too fast n too bumpy. Would’ve spilled the water everywhere.” A shake of the blond’s hair sent droplets of water flying. “Life's gotta be all steady and smooth, like swimming.” Jamison paused while his black claws combed his wet hair. Amber's eyes glanced up at the resting human who was looking out into the darkness. The fish took a look for himself. Pupils widening to catch anything lurking out within the shadowy outlands.

“So uh, where are we?”

Mako’s meaty arm dangled at the side of the trunk while his eyes glowed by the lights of the thousands of stars. The celestial display above twinkled with the vibrant radiance of the cosmos.

“We’re deep in the outback. Just south of our home. We’re right by the Garrayura river. Been told to come over here and fish by the town's folk. But I ain’t caught anything.” Mako's smile was contagious, looking over at the curious monster beside him, who smiled back.

“I got better luck with the lake back at home than here.” That made Jamison's grin glow with pride.

“I was told something else about this river.” Mako continued.

“Whenever there's a storm and it rains for days, the river floods. Connecting any of the stranded lakes nearby. It used to connect to yours.”

“It does? Huh. It hasn’t happened since I lived there. Ain’t a storm that long enough to cause any flooding.” The fish was perplexed while his head fins twitched. It was until then when Jamison finally realized it. The full exposure of the celestial lights above their heads. His jaw dropped, eyes expanded as he was dazed by this new discovery. It was hard to see the stars above his lake whenever there was a moonless night. All of the towering gum trees made it difficult for the fish to see it in full. The sky stretched out as far as he could see towards the horizon. It was all so new that it brought a wondrous feeling that there was a world to discover.

“I ain’t never seen so many stars like this!” Jamison gasped while his fins flared in excitement. But that wasn't the only new thing he discovered. Something small, something bright, was approaching him in a mesmerizing twirl.

“What….what the hell is that?”

A single bright green glow approached from the sky as it swirled and danced in the air. Moving steadily towards the direction of the two visitors at a snail’s pace. It was hypnotic and alarming to have this unknown little glowing oddity come towards Jamison's direction.

“The fuckin’ hell is that thing?!”

“Calm down you silly cunt. It’s just a firefly. Little bugs that shine a light on their ass whenever they fly.” Mako answered with a sincere tone in his voice even with the crude name-calling. Still, he was at peace, calm with how alone the two were. His tired gaze continued to look farther out into the distance, noticing more and more green flickers of light emerging from the tall reeds near
the river’s edge.

“Ain’t never seen anything like this.” The monster inched closer to the hulking human, using his single hand to pull himself forward to see the spectacle before his eyes. More of the strange little insects floated high above the tall brush, dancing slowly among the placid cool winds.

“Surprised that you haven’t.” Mako paused as his ear ringed from the chirping of crickets. “Think the frogs in your lake might have eaten them given the chance.” Mako looked out as a few of the insects began to twirl and fly closer around the truck. “Saw them when I visited here the first time. It was right about sunset too. Usually the time they come out. Glad they're all out and about this late. Hmmm... must be because of my truck lights.”

The performance of insects dancing and chirping made the silence feel far less distant. Neither of them spoke, Jamison was all too busy looking out at the insects, excited and gleeful like anyone would when they see fireflies for the first time. Mako was trying to find the right words to continue on.

“I get what you mean when you say you feel trapped.” Giant fingers curled into his palm, nails digging into the dry flesh of his hand with a small pinch. “When I’m out on the road, or in places like this. I feel...free.”

“I feel free whenever I'm driving on an open road and seeing all this nature. Back in the city, I was trapped. I didn't know why I felt so suffocated, but until I lived here I came to realize what it was. People, buildings, noise, cars, city life. Everything fuckin' was choking me to death. Until now.” Mako sighed, shaking his weary head with the memories of his previous life. He continued on. "But I wanted to show you here. Kind of hard to see the river this dark at night but.."

Mako was briefly interrupted. A large firefly hovered just in front of the two strangers, mostly heading towards Mako's direction. It danced right above his breast, catching a break on the warm fabric of his tank top. The giant hummed, happily placing his right index finger underneath the beetle's front legs. the tiny insect wings fluttered, letting out an illuminating glow from its rear, which made Jamison gasp and giggle.

"Oi! don't hurt the little thing!” The fish whispered in alarm, inching his face closer to the flashing beetle to make sure it was still in one peace. It was unusual for Jamison to worry about the life of another creature all that much. Whenever an animal crept to the edge of his lake for a drink or a bath, the fish would either scare it off or turn it into a meal.

“Not gonna.” Mako answered, his hand lifting high above his head to let the small insect catch some air, fluttering away in a dizzy twirl. " I want to show you more places like this that I'd think you would like.” The man smiled warmly, looking at the glowing beetle that faintly flew towards a collection of reeds.

How unreal was this whole situation? To be feeling such deep intimacy towards someone. Someone that is not even human. Mako's own ideals of romance never occurred in his overly stagnant life. It was all just for sad and desperate people who want to feel like they have a reason to exist. Maybe that reason is the need to be loved. It was all just so stupid and pointless for someone who's a hard-ass like Mako. An ex-bike gang leader who crewed with the toughest cunts in the city of Perth. There was no longing for romance. Sure, one would have the itch of wanting a quick fuck with a mate, but it wasn't love. There never was that desperation back in the city. However, that's exactly the opposite of what Mako was feeling.

A deep infatuated longing that clenched tightly to Mako's chest. His own heartbeat pulsed loud enough for Mako's eardrum to vibrate. Jamison looked at the flustered giant with a look of concern
until his hand was blanketed by the human's massive palm.

“Wanna share it with you.”

It was as if time itself had stopped. Frozen and entering into a surreal world of weightlessness and warmth. Fireflies flickered their glow as they hovered just above the truck, blending in with the millions of stars across the cosmos. Jamison’s whole body ran cold, his pupils grew ten times its size that it almost looked like they were solid black. He almost wanted to sob, wail at the strong feeling his whole being felt of sheer disbelief. The fish glances at his own soggy palm, realizing that it was blanketed by Mako's own giant hairy hand. Mako grew closer with a loud creak of the truck under them. Inching closer to the monster's face until their lips met in a sweet and passionate touch.

Jamison welcomed it. Lips smothered tenderly, tongue lapping against another as both of their eyes closed, feeling like the pair were melting. The monster was always the first one to start smooching. Loud, wet, sloppy kisses that were followed by the contagious cackles like that of a kookaburra. Not the most experienced of kissers, but it was what he learned after their first kiss in the lake. But the monster learned to try and not nip on Mako's tongue with those dangerous sharp teeth. But this was different. It was a feeling that made the two feel "alive" inside their aged vacant bodies.

One clawed hand reached out to grab the thin fabric of Mako’s shirt, tugging on the fibers to hoist himself up closer to the plush tender lips. Jamison's neck ached from the previous position, but now his nose was pressed against Mako's soft and fuzzy cheek. Teeth and tongue traced each other under moist breaths, letting out hot exhales through wet lips. Mako’s massive hand reached back to touch Jamison’s blonde head, combing the awful wet and dirty patches of hair with his girthy fingers. Mako could do this for an eternity if he could. No doubt Jamison feels the same. Blood pumped all over Jamison's body, reaching up to all of the creature's fins and changing it's hues completely into the bright oranges and reds. The same colors for a primordial courtship.

“Mako...”

Hearing his own name under Jamison’s putrid breath sparked a jolt through his bulky spine. Replying with a tight pull against the monster’s waist, bringing him closer against Mako's cushioned stomach. Both of their eyes opened in unison, looking only at each other while they sat in this dark natural world. Mako felt like he was being hypnotized by those gorgeous amber eyes, faintly illuminated by the lighting of the fireflies. Never realized just how predatory those eyes really were.

Out of nowhere, something peculiar began to poke and prod on Mako's exposed knee. It was long, slimy and strangely hard. The man glanced down at what was that unknown object that began to swell every second. It might have been one of Jamison's fins beside his hips. Hard to tell exactly what it was with the proper lack of lighting. It suddenly became obvious. The giant pulled his lips away, looking at the fish in front with his mouth still in a kissing posture. It was so hard not to burst out laughing with how stupid this shocking conclusion was.

"What?" The eel asked as his eyes opened up sounding almost disappointed that it ended so abruptly. "Yer done with the kissing already?"

“Did you seriously get hard from kissing?” Mako's voice almost cracked. Underestimated just how god damn good he was at kissing. However, now his face was flushed. Pink from his cheeks all the way up to his earlobes. At least that solves one burning question if the fish's got a cock or not. No clue if it's close to looking human or fish-like. Do fish have cocks? Curiosity crept deeper till it
ached his giant belly, wanting to get a good look at whatever Jamison got between his fins. Moving his knee to the side, letting it rub and bounce on the newly discovered organ. It was too fucking weird. But was Mako ever so inquisitive.

“Eh?” Jamison was perplexed by the abruptness of their kissing. His amber eyes peeked down. Tail coiling under its silky moisture while the creature tried to place all the pieces together. It was until his cock poked Mako's knee as it kept growing with a wet throb. A shock on his nerves let out a short pleasured hiss between sharp teeth. "Ohh, that's just me bits." Jamison spoke with utmost arrogance. Ultimately failing to show any sign of embarrassment with this situation compared to Mako's brightly pink face.

"It comes out when I ..." Pausing for a few seconds, trying to find the right word that a monster would translate to human. “When I get the tingling feeling of wanting to...well...yanno. Want to 'root'. ” There was a bit of a sly tone with that last remark. “Not the first time I got hard since we kissed!"

As if getting a hard-on from kissing wasn't enough, using the term "root" was what made Mako almost jump to his feet. Who the hell taught him that word? Either way, the pink giant bit his lower lip, trying to find a situation out of his awkward predicament. It was until Mako realized it. Jamison has never had anyone talk about this. Was Jamison a virgin? Course he has to be. By the sounds of it, the freak might be aware of the wonders of jacking off with your hands. Mako's teeth bit his bottom lip as he tried to cut the stiff silence. "It's fine."

There was something else that was nagging on the back of the human's mind. Dare he pleads for more personal questions to Jamison while his cock is dangling about? Would it be rude to just ignore it and continue kissing? They were a couple after all, right? Sweat dripped down Mako's bright rosy cheeks and nose, swallowing hard before parting his lips. "You, uh." He coughed. "You..touch yourself thinking about me?"

A response like that was met with a tight squeeze on Mako's left leg. Slime stuck to the prickly hairs on his calves with a loving embrace. It only made Mako's heart pump louder, vibrating deep within his sensitive eardrums. "All the time." The creature whispered, his pointy face drawing closer to the panicking human once again. Creeping ever so closer as the fireflies hovered above their bodies. "I like to think about you a lot when I'm in me' nest. " Golden eyes looked upon Mako's face in the dark. Only shined lightly by the insects that fluttered peacefully in the night sky. The creature drew his face ever so closer, placing his lips once again on the humans all while his lengthy pale cock twitched against the cold air.

"I... do too." Mako felt like he wanted to coil in his own sweat with his embarrassing confession. All because Mako was expected to hear cackling laughter that would echo across the outback. But, there was none. There was no teasing, no giggles. No spontaneous snorts or shoving like there were a couple of good chums. All was silent, except for the natural noises of the bush and their hot breathing. A webbed hand reached out to touch Mako's expanding belly, rubbing it tenderly that easily made any of the human's anxiety melt away. Perhaps, with the way Jamison's palm was rubbing against the tank top or it being in the moment, Mako felt warm in his own groin.

"Think about us a lot when I'm at the shack... at night."

"Yeah?" The monster's voice squeaked with joy in an excited whisper. His eel-like tail coiled tighter to the meaty calf, soaking it more with fresh rich slime. All of the fins on his body began to pump more blood, radiating a brighter hue that was shaded by the night. That same web hand
squeezed on that springy round belly, minding his dirty sharp claws. One clench led to another. Mako's own palm rested on the fish's hips, tenderly rubbing on the delicate fins below his groin. It made Jamison's dick throb. Muttering a soft moan that brought forth a burning question for the human.

"May I?" Mako asked with a calm exhale from his nostrils.

"Yeah. Course. we're together after all."

One gentle rub against the neglected pale organ made the creature shudder with a sigh. Fluids started to seep out from the opening of the pink slit, lubricating the cock more with its own wetness. Throbbing, pulsating with pre seeping out from the tip as Mako's pudgy fingers stroked. Poking, touching, needing. It felt strange for Mako. He's fucked several men in his life but this. This is new. Course, Jamison is male despite his cock is a little different and strangely wet. No doubt it feels just as good as a human. Fingers stroked and rubbed, down to the base and up to the pointed tip with drooling pre. Jamison's eyelids closed, biting his lip with a smile stretching his mutated face.

"Fuck, mate....that...that feels good." Tender bucks against Mako's leg brought excitement to the human as well. The human's index, middle fingers, and thumb began to pump, sliding all the way down to the bizarre opening hole near the fish's slit at a gentle pace. Mako's own cock felt like it was going to burst underneath all of that prison of clothes by how unbearably stiff he was getting. Tugging on the fabric that held tightly to Mako's waist, Jamison's hand gripped on the zipper to try and return the favor. He's never really seen Mako's own before, as the human would always be swimming in his underwear. But he was impatient to see what a human's 'bits' looked like. Jamison was sure that this is what humans do. 'Scratch the other one's back'. The feeling of a growing bulge behind the shorts brought forth a hiss to Mako's breathing, figuring his partner might need a little help with returning the favor. With a zip and a tug from his unbuttoned shorts, Mako placed his unused hand on his fat warm cock, stroking it several times as it finally grew its full firm length.

"You...." Mako was getting stupidly bashful about asking. Pausing for a few seconds before licking his drying lips. "Want to touch it?"

"Yeah! I want to see it." Jamison’s excitement eased any remaining tension for some weird reason. It made Mako smile. Pulling his underwear down to let his darkened cock out more, bouncing out from the folds of the white briefs with a firm tug. Was the eel ever so fortunate to have night vision as he was able to see that fleshy rod bounce and drool pre. Quite impressed with the way how this human organ looks, especially one like so that his partner possesses. Never seeing what human 'bits' were exactly. His previous guardians never brought up the question of human reproduction.

"Holy fuck, it's huge!" Whispering harshly. Jamison inched closer with wide eyes. His sharp nose flared at the unusual stench of body odor and musk, pulling away with a disgusted smirked. "Oof, what a smell. Smells a lot like you when you don't shower, ya hog!" There were those little giggle fits Mako was waiting for.

"But it looks different." Jamison continued on, creeping in closer once again. "A little bit different. No bumps nor opening like mine. Quite nice and meaty lookin'."

"I’ll take that as a compliment.” Mako snickered as he watched Jamison glorifying his flesh. "Guess this is your first time seeing it, huh?" The pair of human hands stroked each of their cocks steadily with the spread of all that slime glazed their figure. Crawling closer with the aid of his tail, the monster's own sticky hand stretched out to rub Mako's own cock. Stroking it the same pace as that big hand was working.
"Mmmnh, yeah. Fuck.” the human grumbled with a nod. “Easy there. Don’t grab too hard.” Mako exhaled through his mouth, feeling the tightness against his shaft easing down. “There we go. Nice and slow...pull the skin gently when you stroke down.” Every sentence was responded with Jamison’s excited chirps if he was doing it right.

“Feels good?” A question that was feeble to ask with just how much Mako was grunting by the stroking of a slimy hand. Jamison’s facial fins perked up when something slid between the opening in his slit. Mako's own bulky finger slid just enough for Jamison to shudder out a moan. For some peculiar reason, that little slit was much wetter than the eel-like skin on Jamison's tail. The human couldn't help but smirk by just how horny this monster was getting.

Jamison replied with his hand, sliding up towards the spongy head of Mako's cock, squeezing it till his foreskin puckered to the tip. It's a wonder that the fish was being extra careful not to scratch up the goods below his belt. Mako's hands are safe enough for the pacing to quicken on the monster's pale cock. A blessing for Jamison's strong libido.

“Hooley….mph!” Jamison hissed through his teeth with the momentum quickening. Clawed fingers twitched while trying to remain his composure, halting his stroking to Mako's cock. It felt all so good. Good enough to leave a trail of drool dripping from your lips and down to your chin. Finally feeling what it's like to have someone else work on your bits other than yourself. An experience he hopes won't be the last. Mako's hand was working all just too well for him to keep up. The sounds of flesh being stroked rang loud enough to mimic the cricket's chirping. It was all too unreal, but too tiring for a single-armed monster.

"Getting tired?” Mako halted his speed while he looked at the whimpering fish. It was until then that Mako realized just how sticky his digits were getting. Any longer and his skin would prune.

“Yeah. Me arm is starting to ache.” The eel groaned by how cold his cock was getting without those warm fingers. Probably not as bad as how much his arm was starting to cramp. Until then, an idea popped up in Mako's head. Something he thought would be a safe bet for the two of them. Not to mention, it's a peculiar idea that Mako has enjoyed several times with his 'dates'. One meaty hand reached out to stroke his aching cock once again, eyes still locked to Jamison's own and giving him a nod.

“Lay on my gut. I know what would be easier for us.”

It was always best to do what Mako says since the giant lug knows what's good. That oil slick colored eel tail released its grip on Mako's leg, sliding forward to the human’s massive pelvis and gripping to the tank top with his claws. Jamison's cock rubbed against the exposed flesh of fat when he moved to a new position, releasing more pre that it smeared on Mako's skin. Jamison settled down, easing comfortably between Mako's legs. Chuckling with a short rattle of every prod and poke on the mushy skin, only irritating Mako further. One giant hand reached down to grip still onto the monster’s hips, mumbling for Jamison to keep still for a few seconds. Finally, easing him down further until both of their warm cocks finally touched.

“Ooh..” Jamison closed his eyes with this new feeling. The fins on his jawline pinned down as his giggle fit eased into silence.

“Fuck...that's really good.”

“Mmmnh, hell yeah it does.” Mako beamed when Jamison's own hips began to buck against his flesh. Sounds of slime against tender flesh, heavy breathing and moans were all that the unusual couple could hear. Mako bit his lower lip, reaching out both of his hands to aid his partner's motion. One resting on top of Jamison's hip and the other, gripping on their stiff cocks. Squeezing, rubbing ever so lovingly between bucks. Mako could have sworn he felt the small slit release more fluids, dripping down to his base and towards his heavy balls.
“Oh fuck,” Mako mumbled under his breath while their pacing quickened. Squeezing both of their spongy heads together that sent a jolt through both of their spines. The creature couldn't stop panting, groaning out in gentle moans that it brought Mako close to the edge.

“Mako...” Jamison mewled, his grip clinging tight to the human’s tank top with a sharp pull. Both of their chests met with a thud. Not stopping any time soon for a break.

“Hmmh, Say my name again.” the giant’s voice rumbled with a moan as they bucked. Now a new sound joined their session. The faint sound of the creaking rubber of his truck's tires. Neither of them paid any attention to it. It was too early to care about anything else in the world surrounding them. What was important now, was them. Their moment together. Their cocks rubbing against their wetness and musk.

“Mako..."
"Fuck yes. Say it again.."
"Mako..."
"Mmnn, Jamison..."
"Hnh...Mako!"

Jamison’s head arched back, moaning audibly while his grip toughened. Black claws ripped across Mako's chest until it pinched one of his fat and sensitive breasts. Hissing sharply from clenched flat teeth made Mako lose it. Nasal snorting with heavy inhales that expanded his ribcage like a barrel. Jamison couldn't help if its hips gave one last hard buck, rising all of his brightly colored fins as if they were sails. The pair came together. Mako splattering thick ropes of cum to the monster's belly. Coated all in white fluids that matched just as dense at Jamison's own slime. The monster's own cum splattered on Mako's palm, still squirting out of any open crevices and painting the human's massive belly like a canvas.

It was almost too surreal to experience an orgasm out in the middle of nowhere. In the complete darkness with you and a water-dwelling monster that happens to be your 'mate'. Sitting out among the stars with the fainting lights of the fireflies passing by. It was as if nothing could break this moment. A moment that never crossed Mako's psyche that it could ever happen. But it wasn’t a moment he would regret. Both of their breathing synchronized. Recovering from their intense orgasm as reality settled in with each breath. Mako's eyes opened when he felt pressure on his abdomen. Jamison nestled his head on the warm belly with a soft clicking sound that replicated a joyful trill. Both of their fluids meshed well with the water and slime, neither of them minding it. It's a problem for another time.

The two looked at each other for what seems like forever. Both silver and gold eyes glanced amongst one another in sweet and loving bliss. Mako has never felt this way before. This warm, this real. Like it all suddenly mattered to him. It drew on to Mako that he was in love. Finally admitting it to himself that he was in love with a monster. A monster who made him feel more human than anyone else has before. The same hand that held Jamison's hips moved up to stroke the dry patchy blond hair of his partner. Gently moving the trails of sweat off of the monster's forehead with a warm smile followed by words that would seal their total commitment.

“I love you.”
“I love you too, Mako.”
The midday sun was secluded by the looming spread of grey clouds as mist brought forth of autumn's gloomy weather. Moisture would latch onto any surface, taking the form of minuscule droplets that rejuvenated the desert. The towering gum trees soaked up water from any of its surfaces. From the crackling leaves up in the canopy, down to the twisted withered roots hidden by red earth. The rain halted for the entirety of February, leaving the outback to suffer through a mild but agitating drought. Occasionally, summer brought waves of thunderstorms that would linger around the bush for days in a blanket of rain and humidity. Not this time. This summer brought forth a few misfortunes. A dry withering spell of heat and the agonizing droning of cicadas that lasted for months. The arrival of the grey skies was a new welcomed blessing.

Small flows of dew latched to the red dusty window of Mako’s truck as it ventured out into the desolate but familiar road. Even with the weather looking dreary, there weren’t any signs of the droplets advancing into a larger size. Nonetheless, it was the perfect opportunity for Mako to extend his work on the dismantled tub. All he’s gotta do now, is to grab a few more scraps and supplies to fix up the last remaining unsealed patches. The only other place he knew where to obtain these missing pieces was at Murungal. Notably, Lydia's shop. Just a few nails, wood or metal scraps, a can of expanding foam and finishing it off with a fresh coat of paint. Just to make it more lively than the dull decay of old wood and mold.

The bitterness that latched onto his soul was melted away by how placid he was. It was all thanks to that freakish eel who changed him all for the better. Even down to calling Jamison his 'partner”. The freak brought a feeling of euphoria that Mako thought he lost long ago. The awareness would spark every night when the pair headed out into the wasteland. Out in nature, in pure darkness,
with no one else other than themselves. What mattered was their time spent together out by the Garrayura river, talking endlessly about their day or anything that came out of mind. Even if it was just Mako doing most of the talking, explaining how the complicated human world works to a curious lake monster. Never once was Mako made fun of for a question he couldn't answer. But Mako knew it was always better to be honest with uncertainty. He didn't need to make a lie just to avoid a question, the man was constantly fed lies when living in Perth so much it grew bitter in his palet. Mako elaborated that despite his age and being a human, he too was learning.

Pleasant thoughts of a completed and revamped tub rushed into Mako's mind. How blissful would Jamison be if he was right beside Mako’s window every evening? Of course, he wasn't going to leave the fish in that cooped up tub forever. Something that cramped would be more like a prison even if Jamison protested to stay for longer than a few hours. Having Jamison out by his window would be a better way to keep a functional sleep schedule. Mako indefinitely couldn’t keep up with Jamison’s ecstatic energy every night out by the river. Their minutes of swabbing spit and rubbing against each other would drain Mako’s energy despite the lustful need to experiment more.

Mako’s truck moved steadily as it drove on the red unmarked road of Murungal. A crowd of the town's local children was laughing and playing out in the pathway. All would halt their session of football by the site of the blue ute passing by. Their smiles gleamed with excitement, waving their arms at the sheepish giant behind the wheel. Immediately, some of the kids paced up to the driver’s door, grinning widely as Mako eased his truck with a gentle break.

“Your auntie at the shop?” Mako asked after he rolled down the driver window. Three of the children that clung to his truck were Lydia’s nieces and nephew. They all shared the same personality of thinking everyone's got marbles in their brains.

“Where else is she gonna be?” One of the older girls laughed at Mako's obvious question, tapping her hand at the car door. ‘Why are you here? You’re not working today! Go home! Or do you wanna play with us finally?’ The girl’s dark eyes twinkled as she looked at Mako’s confused and irritated face. The giant man sighed, rolling his eyes and looking back at the kids who obviously loved to tease Mako like he was part of the shopkeep family.

“Nah, ‘fraid not. Gotta do some shopping from your Auntie. Fair, I give her some of the money that she pays me, right?” He lightly mocked which made the other kids laugh but groan as his rejection of joining in their game.

“One day we’ll get you to play with us, Mako. Maybe Auntie Lydia can give you a few dollars to be our goalie.” The youngest of the three siblings suggested, seeing at the hulking silver-haired delivery boy would be an excellent goalie for their minuscule homemade goal post. Mako playfully scoffed as he looked at the three kids, nodding slowly with a short laugh.

“Oh, We'll play. When you're Auntie gives me a million dollars. But it ain't a no. Okay, gotta pick up a few things to work on the shack.” Mako spoke calmly as he watched the joking kids move away from his ute when they heard the engine start up again. These were all good kids, good people to be around and watching them greet Mako like he was part of the town was pleasant. Unusual at first but it felt like home. The children ran backward as they waved to the silver driver, all were shouting and screaming with cheer as they returned back to their game and continued to enjoy the cool afternoon.

The mundane ring of the bell by the door’s entrance always made Mako irritated. He would constantly hear it go off whenever he was loading boxes to his truck. The giant looked around the interior of the shop, seeing his employer behind the counter and speaking through the aged yellow
wall phone. Her back was turned when Mako entered the building, she already knew he was here with how loud his ute can be and the heavy thuds from his boots.

“Hey.” Mako muttered as he looked at his boss, waving his hand out in a quick greeting. She turned around and looked at the sweaty man with a quirked eyebrow, her attention was highly focused on the person on the other line. He got the hint. No doubt it was a business-oriented call from the other towns who needed something delivered soon, or someone’s appliance needing to be sent to Wyndham for repair again. Mako hoped it wasn’t the latter.

“Doing some shopping today.” His bellowing voice was lowered into a whisper as he walked through an aisle. Never wanting to be rude by interrupting one of the many calls Lydia had to partake during the weekday. Mako’s seen her blow her top at the other line when someone made a mistake or didn't fix the appliances like they said they would. It was a bit entertaining seeing his boss curse and rant the same way he. Then again, that anger would be taken out with a punch in the mouth of the said person who “fucked up”. No doubt Lydia would do the same. Perhaps that’s why they both got along so well in the first week of delivery. The giant passed through the aisle of bathroom and laundry necessities, scanning through the various items until he found the bottle of expanding foam spray.

“Oh yeah, yeah!” Lydia’s voice was always loud and boisterous when she was on the phone. “Mmmhm. Yes, honey, everything is fine down here. We had some stragglers who came to town looking for gas just the other day but ain’t too scary down here.” Lydia paid no attention to Mako who was waltzing through the rows of aisles. Turning around to look up to the whirling ceiling fan above as she continued speaking.

“School is doing well too, honey. Got the youngest nephew attending last week. You'll never guess that his mum wants to start teaching too!” The woman chuckled as her left hand gripped to the receiver while the other hand twirled on the bouncing phone coil to keep herself entertained. “Learned it from the best of course!”

Mako looked at the bottom shelf of the tools aisle where the paint would mostly be tucked in. A few cans of new paint were stacked neatly at the bottom despite the shelf being covered in dust and cobwebs. The tip of his boot would move one of the cans towards him, looking in disgust by the choice of colors and the sight of a dead moth.

“Tch, Olive green? That’s all we got? Looks like puke.” Mako whispered with disappointment through sealed lips. The color wouldn't blend well with the overall environment of his shack. Still, he wanted this to be a nice treat for the lake creature.

“Paint is paint.” Mako shrugged as his free hand grabbed one of the giant cans, holding it from the handle with his hefty fingers while his other held tightly to the expanding foam tube. He was sure that the fish wouldn’t mind the color looking this repulsive. In the end, it suits him with his unusual taste of sewage and decay. Mako huffed as he headed towards the sign covered counter where Lydia stood behind, still occupied by the voice on the phone. He turned around to grab another can of paint when an idea sparked on his mind. Any paint leftover would be good to reuse and paint that creepy old looking dunny as well. Seeing all the spots and smears of black mold was enough to make the giant almost not want to crap in there again. Guess that would be a new project on the “to do” list.

Finally, after taking a minute longer than he hoped for, Mako grabbed the last item he needed. A box of nails and a tube of expanding foam sat neatly on top of the two cans of paint. He figured he got everything at this point other than the few scraps of metal from Lydia’s yard. Mako’s lips parted as he was going to ask that every request when the chubby woman stuck out her index finger
“Yes yes, I know love. I know. We’re all good down here in town and we all miss ya!” The woman held tightly to the handset as she looked up at Mako. Her attention was still at the person on the other line, only now her gaze peered down at the items on the counter. Mako raised a white eyebrow at how annoying this situation was getting. By now, he got the indication that this wasn’t a business-orientated call by how much she was grinning.

“Guess what, love. He’s here!” Lydia’s voice raised loud enough that made Mako snap back into reality. The two looked at each other awkwardly, pulling the receiver off of her sweaty ear and handing it over to the giant man.

“For you,” Lydia said as she shoved the phone right to Mako’s round gut. He nabbed it right before it fell into the counter with the other junk he was purchasing. He whipped the sweat with his T-shirt, holding the phone closer to his ear as he spoke gently.

“Hello? Mako speaking,” His dry voice spoke professionally once he grabbed the receiver. The only time he’s ever used Lydia’s phone was mostly business orientated with deliveries. However, to hear Lydia call someone ‘sweetie’ on the other line was peculiar. Perhaps it's a family member who needs a delivery? Mako sure hoped that wasn't the case.

“Oh, there’s my handsome nephew!” The voice let out a familiar but haunting chuckle. It was a laugh that felt every pore of his skin sweat with distress and shock. The voice continued, halting the awkward pause. “I’ve been waiting for you to hop in Lydia’s shop sometime today. How’s my big nephew doing?”

Mako could feel his body temperature running cold as if he just heard a ghost through the receiver. A voice that made the man’s whole world shudder by the unexpected surprise. It was the voice of the person who made him drive and move to the middle of nowhere. A voice that changed his life all for the better, given the unnatural companionship of his new partner. Dirty fingers twitched, gripping tightly to the yellow plastic as he tried to speak coherently only to fail miserably with a slight stutter.

“M-M-Maggie?”

“Of course it is. Who else would it be, dummy? I hope you haven’t replaced me with a new Auntie already.” Oh yeah. It's definitely Maggie. Mako felt like his whole body was stiff. Not expecting to get a call, especially from a blood relative at a time like this. Who could blame him, he hasn’t heard a single word from his dear aunt since she passed the keys to the shack months ago. There was an unnerving feeling that he would never see his aunt again, only to hear of her passing from Lydia or Anderson. Fortunately, that isn’t the case any longer. Trying to muster up the right words without sounding like an embarrassed blubbering idiot.

“I don’t get many phone calls from anyone,” Mako sputtered, as his eyes turned to look at Lydia who was eyeing him carefully with a big wide grin on her face. Mako’s expression was enough to make the woman burst out laughing playfully teasing the man's surprised reaction. “Um, how are you, auntie?”

“Good! Been better since you last saw me, never told ya’ that my son William’s a doctor did I? Well, he’s taking care of me and I’m keeping an eye on the little ones in return. Been so long since I’ve been with family every day.”

She sounded well, far better than Mako remembered or expected. This gave him reassurance that Maggie is in the best of hands. How his cousin became a doctor out in the outback was a mystery.
Then again, Mako's lost touch of family was his own fault. A fault that lasted almost twenty years and until now, it became relevant.

“That’s good,” Mako spoke as he inched closer to the phone that was latched to the wall. His unused hand reached back to scratch the bristle hairs on his neck, irritated by how much his scalp was littered with sweat and dandruff. “How did you know I was coming in today?”

“I have my ways.” The older woman giggled with a sense of pride. Mako could picture it perfectly how she was nodding to herself by how familiar her timing was. “William called a few days ago as I told him to get a hold of Lydia. We kept calling on your days off or just when you're leaving. Though we tried one more time today and it looks like we got a hold on you just in time.” There's that chuckle again.

"Called right when you were parking your ute. Guess we Rutledge’s got a good sense of timing don’t we?"

Perhaps Mako has been riding sky-high with his private life that he forgot life outside of the lake and Murungal. Mako's nostrils flared as he took in a deep breath, exhaling through his mouth while speaking softly.

“Good timing I suppose.” Mako's lip curled into a nervous smile. That's when it hit him. It hit him hard on the chest that made his pupil shrink into a pin drop. A realization of the possibility that Maggie might be calling him in the first place. He swallowed hard before asking.

“Are you….coming back?”

“Oh, no. I'm not coming back, dear.” The old woman’s voice ceased momentarily. There was a slight click on her tongue when she continued. “I’m staying put here with William and the family for now on.” Mako felt terrible for getting excited that his Aunt wasn't planning on moving back into the shack. He knew that his aunt longed to return to the place she lived with her late husband and to see Murungal once again. To live by the side of the river and the quiet nature of the outback. Seeing only the desert and the home you created with your husband. A yearning that seems improbable to return.

"We’re just a little bit north of Wyndham and It’s about two and a half drive from there to here. Nice little town, way more developed and more people here. It’s nice but... This is my new home, love. I’m staying put here.”

There was a deafening pause from both ends. Mako wasn’t sure what else to say. Should he apologize? Should he mention that the shack looks better than what she left it as? Fixing her years of negligence to her own home that it looks completely different. What else is there to say? His aunt’s health isn’t the best with her age and being with more sustainable aid would be far better than living back in the bush. How she was able to feed herself while living alone was hard to comply. Mako closed his eyes as his thick fingers rubbed his greasy nose bridge. Trying to muster up the right sympathetic words his scrambled mind could muster. But anytime he tried to speak, no words would come out.

"I wanted to talk to ya, Mako.” Maggie’s voice interrupted his static thinking. “Wanted to let ya know that the family is gonna go on a little vacation next month.”The tone in her voice shifted. “They’re heading to Sydney for a week and I was thinking you should come over and visit me when they’re gone.”

Well, he certainly didn't predict that. One surprise after another, Mako blinked a couple of times of the positive response. Lydia's smile beamed by Mako's contagious reaction, already knowing where this was going.

“See you? Y-yeah! That sounds like something I could do. But, you’ll stay at the house while
they’re on vacation?” Mako switched hands with the receiver, looking at his boss while she stacked all of his purchasable belongings in a paper bag, minus the cans of paint. Lydia already rang up Mako's items on the old register and waited patiently, it’s not like there was a line waiting to get the last remaining boxes of nails, Mako had all the time in the world. She just mouthed the total price and pointed it to the teal archaic register.

“Course dear. I’m not too fancy about flying. Shit gives me the woolies and I only did that once since we left Zealand.” She snorted softly and Mako could have sworn he heard a child voice giggling in the back of the line. A giggle and soon a cackle of two children rang loudly behind the line. It sounded so lively where Maggie was at. Perhaps this was the thing his Aunt needed more than anything.

“Mako.” The tone suddenly changed when Maggie asked for something in secrecy. Maggie pulled the phone away for a brief second, hushing the two children who were howling in laughter with their roughhousing. It sounded like Maggie was now alone after the noise of the children faded into obscurity from her scolding.

”Mako, how.......is ” Maggie's voice hesitated with the slow pause. She wasn't really sure how to address it without making Mako sound like he was insane on his side of the phone line, but he already knew. He knew what she wanted to ask. He was certain that Maggie wanted to say nothing more than for the previous life she took care of in her last years in the shack. Mako's eyes glanced over at his boss, who started to walk away from the counter and into the supply room next to the counter to retrieve a new stack of paper bags. His tensed shoulders eased with a low exhale as he spoke.

“He’s good too.”

“Really?” Her voice almost broke, sounding shocked but excited from the response. Perhaps her nephew isn't a big dummy as she thought he was.

“Yeah.” The man spoke with reassurance as he tried to limit the conversation of the lake monster as much as possible. Lydia was still present, humming softly as she searched through boxes inside the supply room. Even if she was eavesdropping the conversation, Mako could be talking about anyone in town. "Doing better than good. Got along with him and we've been keeping each other company. We-” Mako paused with a firm seal on his lips. Better to not bring up that the two are now a pair. Or bring up that they've jerked each other off in the back of his truck. Thank God Lydia's got her back turned or she'd noticed just how pink Mako was getting.

“Hush! We can talk more about that later, Mako. Been worried about you both ever since I left Murungal.” Maggie sighed as she continued to squabble "How I miss my little guppy. My poor boy who's always alone in that muddy lake.” another sigh escaped from her lips. Inhaling deeply with the slow pause, she pleaded to her nephew. "Please. Please come, Mako. I know you like to be alone and all but with the family gone, it'll be just me. I just want to see you again. I don’t think I can bear the fact that you’re there with him and are all alone." Mako's heart sank as she continued to speak in desperation. "I know I left you with the shack and the lake but. I'm only asking you one more thing, love. Do you think you can come and visit me?”

The overwhelming feeling sunk deep on Mako's gut by how much Maggie was reaching out. At this point, she was begging, almost on the edge of tears by the sounds of her cracking voice. Mako's mind felt too chaotic to pinpoint exactly what he was feeling. Regret for abandoning his family long ago? Sympathy for a widow who will be alone for a week? Whatever it was, Mako felt like he needed to do what was right. In all honesty, perhaps this was the time for him to sit down and ask questions from his aunt. To reconnect with his old family and relive the life he once
abandoned. He just hoped he didn't have to spend a whole week there taking care of his aunt. Despite the conversation and reaching out to this was all too strange. It was a strange but willing challenge that Mako accepted. Mako swallowed once more, sighing and agreeing to her request.

“Yeah, I’ll come. I’ll come and see you, Auntie.”

End Notes

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