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## Blue Sub No 6: The Year After, Part 2

### Chapter 1

(Mutio)

*The story so far.*

A new development has come up for Hayami and Kino as a newly discovered Deep Sea Six cruised into the bay to pick them up. On their travels to the newly constructed blue base, the Deep Sea Six had picked up some unexpected guests.

Mutio and Tia were banished from their home, and Verg was up to his old tricks again.

But during an unfortunate accident with a Musuca, the Deep Sea Six sustained moderate damage, which has left them powerless. The crew were now faced with an embarrassing outlook as the Blue Sub No. 6 towed them to blue base.

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The high seas offered no comfort to Jake, who could not believe that he was stranded in the middle of the ocean with Iga, who was eagerly looking at their current predicament.

The stormy weather made the task of setting things up hard. So both crews agreed to postpone the towing set-up until the storm had time to settle down.

Iga walked up to Jake for the first time, standing tall and trying to keep his posture as he stood on the silky hull of the Deep Sea Six. The rain fell into his face as raindrops dripped from the front of his cap.

"Look at what Blue Fleet scraped from the bottom of the barrel," Iga spoke in perfect English.

Jake turned towards the sarcastic comment, wiping the rain of his face. "Well, at least I am not the shit underneath the barrel."

Iga looked at Jake with a cold and stony expression. The Blue Sub commander stood tall behind the darkness of the unruly weather as the odd wave broke in the background.

"Excellent Jake, you're always so stubborn at winning! How long has it been?" Iga said to Jake, keeping his distance.

"It's been a few months! And I hope your targeting skills have improved since our last encounter. I don't want to repeat that experience," Jake replied.

Kino interjected, after overhearing them. "So, what's the story between you two? Iga, you know Jake?"

Jake took the lead and answered for the old commander. "Iga fired one of his torpedoes at my vessel. It was supposed to detonate on the ocean cliff to subside it, but he thought my vessel was an easy target."

Iga moved closer; the crashing waves made it hard to hear. As he progressed, he slipped slightly before regaining his balance.

"From what I remember, I did apologise. And besides, I didn't cause much damage!" he said, portraying a slight smile on his face. "The strength of the torpedo was not enough to damage your vessel. But I still don't understand what you were doing in the firing range."

Iga walked closer to Jake, patted him on the back and continued. "Look, the world is at peace and the war's been over for a year. We've all been called to some meeting and I suggest we get along. Just think of the fun we could have again."

*Fun indeed, Jake thought to himself.*

He had no choice. In the past, Jake was paired up with Iga to perform a mission to a dangerous region of the ocean, and their times together were not always the best. However, they had bonded during the mission and had relied on each other's help. However, Iga always portrayed himself as the senior farther figure and authority often got in the way. Conflicts often aroused and the two parted ways after the torpedo incident.

Iga then changed to a more pressing matter. After having his pilot, Hayami, disembark a year ago, Iga was eager to get his favourite friend back. He approached Kino.

"Kino, I need to ask. Is Hayami onboard?"

Kino confirmed with a nod and Iga enquired to his location. However, Hayami had disappeared from the sub and no one had seen him since their rise to the surface.

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Hayami stood on the deck of the Deep Sea Six that stretched to as far as the eye could see. The vessel cut into the waves like a knife through butter, channelling the excess water back into the ocean. The sleek black and creamy metallic skin blended with the stormy environment as massive jets of water spewed into the air.

Visibility was poor. However, the size of the vessel could still be seen amongst all the chaos. The smell of salt water drifted with every current of air, creating a humid environment.

Hayami aimlessly walked along the hull of the vessel, not bothered if the waves that smashed onto the sides of the hull made his clothes wet. He just had the urge to go to the surface and feel the ocean. But he also felt something calling him. But more than likely he just wanted to see the Blue Submarine No. 6 berthed beside.

His location was not perfect; walking on the other side of the vessel made his journey longer, but he didn't care. The sub was not going to sink and his need to be on the surface kept nagging at him.

Hayami felt the environment resembled the time he was stuck on the Blue Dome's floating hull with Mutio. Hayami could only bring up a fuzzy, faded memory of the incident, but it was enough to keep him going.

The ocean smell and the rain on his face reminded him of the experience, impairing his judgement as he momentarily stumbled on a small bulge on the hull.

Looking down at the water flowing too and fro, he began to hear something, a sound he'd heard before and something he knew by heart. However, the passing of time had buried this memory. The song. He knew it very well inside his soul, and the person singing it.

He froze, looking down at the hull of the vessel. The memory slowly trickled back, bit by bit. The sudden gentle and passionate voice jogged his memory and he remembered the exact time he heard that song before.

A fragment of memory flashed before Hayami's eyes as he recognised the tune. It was the moment he sat beside a tent on the floating hull of the Blue Dome base one year ago...

*He looked up and saw Mutio sitting upright with knees bent and legs spread slightly, looking into the endless sea as seagulls flew effortlessly in the background. She turned to him. Caught up in the moment, he got distracted and flinched back when she appeared in front of him. She made a small noise with her throat. She was like an angel.*

The buried memory flooded back like a hammer blow.

His mind drifted back to reality; the song and the voice were the same. Frozen in place, he was scared to look up in the direction of the voice. The image of her was very faint and seeing her might open a whole new area of feelings that he was afraid to open up.

A wave splashed his face, giving him a faint sting in his eye. As he stood and attempted to wipe the stinging sensation, Hayami was unaware that he inadvertently faced in the direction of the singing, a position he wanted to avoid.

He opened his eyes and saw nothing but the blurry view of the vessel, water and rain. Then he saw it.

He saw something faint and white in the mist of all the chaos. As he rubbed his eyes again to get a clear view, Hayami was finally able to see the vessel's hull. Water flowed past and he managed to regain his balance and eyesight. He could not resist. He moved his head to the location of the song and saw her.

Mutio sat innocently at the end of the vessel's wing and looked deep into the ocean. The rain flowed down her hair and her legs disappeared halfway into the water. Her black and creamy yellow, fragile body could clearly be seen from a distance. She moved gracefully as she sang a melody from the bottom of her heart.

She closed her glowing, crimson eyes and carried on singing her song. The same song Hayami heard on the hull of the Blue Dome.

Hayami's heart began to race with excitement and shock. When he moved towards her, he shouted her name. "Mutiooooooooooooo!"

He wasn't able to finish the name as he plunged into the water. Not watching his step, he slipped on the wing and fell into the water.

While he fell, he saw Mutio's eyes turn and look towards him. He saw her standing up and then the side of the hull replaced her image as he slipped into the water, unable to hold anything.

Once he hit the water, Hayami was dragged under the wing by the currents of the ocean. Only a small pocket of air made the doomed man realize his dilemma. He was not prepared for this and now his life was out of his hands.

Suddenly, something grabbed him from behind. The salty water made his vision very distorted. However, he could see creamy yellow hands around him as sudden thrusts brought him back to the surface.

Hayami climbed out of the water, dripping all over the place and catching his breath. He spun in place to see Mutio.

Her eyes, exposed above the rippling water, gave Mutio her classic innocent look. A slight concern was in her face as she looked at the drenched man. Hayami's heart raced faster and faster. The last time he saw Mutio was in Antarctica being taken away by the beast man called Verg. Seeing her there made him almost jump for joy.

She looked at him with her compassionate eyes as her head bobbed up and down in the water. She blinked slightly as rain splashed seawater into her eye. Her scarred, bitten ear showed clearly against the moonlight. Hayami noticed it clearly.

The silence could not be broken between them until she vanished under the water, leaving only a ripple.

"Mutio! Come back!" he shouted over the stormy weather.

He stood on the deck, dumbfounded and frozen. Normally, he would have decided to take a cigarette and smoke it. However, that feeling had dampened when Mutio showed up.

His eyes squinted hard as he peered into the water looking for any sight of her; he checked every wave and splash.

He didn't go over the top at shouting her name. He just kept on looking around for any sign of her. He had waited to see the aquatic hybrid girl for so long that she'd even plagued his dreams. But just moments ago she had been right there in front of him as if it was yesterday.

He turned around and got a shock when he saw Mutio standing in front of him. She looked gorgeous. He looked deep into her eyes, feeling a slight sense of joy and happiness from her. However, he did not know what to do. He was stuck for words, action and feelings.

The rain dropped off her hair and parts of her body collected water droplets. Her skin shined with the sudden and brief shades of light emanating from the moon that were able to find a hole in the clouds. Mutio's delicate fins expanded to the sensation of the water, drawing Hayami's attention away from her eyes and onto her body.

Mutio raised her hand towards a cut on Hayami's face. She knew he had been hurt while falling over. She yearned to see Hayami again and this moment was like a gift from the gods.

Hayami offered no resistance to her touch, which sent shivers up his spine. This was the first time he was able to experience her gentle hand without the fear of war looming over them.

Then, suddenly, his intimate moment was interrupted as an overzealous Kino approached from a distance, shouting his name. Mutio flinched and then dived into the ocean, creating no sound. Hayami watched her glide under the water and into the depths of the ocean. He whispered her name before Kino trotted closer.

## Chapter 2

(After Effect)

Kino walked up to Hayami and tried her best not to slip on the sub's surface. "Ah... I've found you. Iga's been looking for you." She leered at the scruffy individual. "What are you doing here?"

Hayami looked at her with contempt. She had just interrupted the most important moment in his life and now Mutio was gone.

The many questions he wanted to ask Mutio could not be answered. Nerveless, how was he going to ask them anyway. The last he remembered was that Mutio didn't speak a word of Japanese, or English for that matter.

The atmosphere changed from calm seas to wild winds, but it wasn't enough to stifle the conversation.

"I was getting some fresh air," Hayami replied.

"Well, get back on the ship before you drown yourself."

Hayami bit his bottom lip as he turned away from Kino and towards the direction Mutio had jumped. *Why is she out here in the middle of the ocean with us?*

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The crowd of half-animal hybrids surrounded their master, Verg, who sat with all his pride. He leered at his females from a distance, who were swimming around in the water pool.

His concentration was disturbed when one of his minions blabbed a message to him.

Verg grabbed him by the scruff of the neck and shouted with his deep, terrifying voice, "I told you not to interrupt my thinking or you'll be my next meal!"

He lost respect for his kind after they had tried to leave him for dead at the bottom of the ocean when the ghost ship sank. Only Mutio came to save him. However, his mind was badly damaged and his line of thinking started to become distorted.

The small, frightened hybrid, which was already scared to tell him the bad news, had no choice but to inform him of the development. "Master, I... we are sorry! We have lost contact with Mutio and her sister!"

"*What!*" Verg shouted, throwing the semi-beaten creature to the corner of the room. He stood, his long flowing cloak hanging down behind him.

"You're supposed to tell me when they've been captured. Arrrrrrr!"

The aquatic hybrids in the water pool swam back in fear, their graceful heads bobbing up and down in the water.

"They were last seen entering a human vessel before it disappeared faster than we could follow."

Verg's razor-sharp shark teeth bellowed over the brown creature that was cowering on the floor. Drool dripped from his mouth and the smell of death hovered over him.

Verg turned. "That female has betrayed me too many times."

"I want you all to find her. Follow the humans if you have to. Get her sent back and kill anyone that gets in the way. Send Musuca Twenty-five and Twenty-six to track them down! They've killed papa and now I want my revenge!" he said as tears streamed down his face. He sat back down on his chair while his female creatures pampered him.

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"Care for a drink, Iga?" asked Jake, who was sitting in his room beside a wooden desk with a small light illuminating the area.

"Not sure if I should. I'm the captain of Blue Six and it's not a good idea to drink alcohol." Iga looked at a small, empty glass, reconsidering.

"It's OK, I won't tell anyone. Besides, you are on the Deep Sea Six and we can't do anything until tomorrow!" Jake then lifted up the bottle and encouraged him, "It's scotch!"

Iga face lit up and he agreed, "Where the hell did you get this?"

"Ah, don't worry, I got a box of them down in the hold. I've been saving them for a rainy day," said Jake, looking through the porthole in his room that displayed the rainy conditions.

An hour passed and all's well in the captain's cabin.

Iga sat back on his chair and looked at the aqua tunnel. "I could never understand the reason for the aqua tunnels. You told me they were for circulation and cooling, but they look too big for that purpose!"

Jake took another drink and replied, "Well, perhaps they're for emergency access too. I used them for such a purpose before." He then paused, deep in thought, holding his glass as the image of the female hybrid flashed into his mind. He carried on, "I ran across something in there a few hours ago, some kind of female creature."

This made Iga laugh out loud at the thought. "I know you've always been single. However, I didn't know you're that desperate!"

Jake replied with a hint of annoyance at his expression "Well, I'll put that down to your English translation! Now! Why don't you have another drink?"

The conversation then changed from joking to more serious matters.

"How did you find us?" Jake asked as he leaned back on his chair and held the glass in his hand.

"We discovered one of your missiles exploding and then a Musuca frantically rushing past us." He then said in a semi-drunken state, "I don't know what you did, but I guess it's not into human relationships!" Iga said making more fun out of Jake's encounter.

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Hayami sat in his quarters, going over the incident several times in his mind. He laid on his bed, looking at the steel ceiling with pipes and cables disappearing into a hole in the wall, which was filled with some kind of foam.

The stuffy smell of steel and a few dirty clothes was all that kept him from going too far into his daydreaming. But he could not hold back the inevitable; he fell asleep.

His dream became strange. All foggy, he could see himself sitting on the floor in the corner of a dark room slightly lit by the light from an open door.

Suddenly, someone with red eyes was standing in front of the door.

Her hands were placed angrily on her hips and the glare of her piercing, red eyes looked deep into his soul. She moved closer and he recognised the young woman. It's Mutio, very angry and scary. She walked tall and stepped into the room and yelled in Japanese, "*You killed Zorndyke!*" She then placed her bloody hands on his head and a flash of the memory came into Hayami's mind.

Standing with Zorndyke on the cliff-side with the spooky half-human tree offered no rest to his mind.

The old man stood there, and Hayami pointed his gun at him at point blank range.

"What will you do?" Zorndyke said, trying to speak with every breath he had left.

Hayami stood there with his gun. Looking into his eyes, he could see the old man was suffering. Killing him was not the answer. There'd been enough deaths and one more would not make a difference!

*What's the point?* he thought.

Placing the gun on the floor, he attempted to walk away.

Suddenly, the cracking of the tree caught his attention as the half-human tree tried to move. Its stiffness was like cries of pain. The thought of what Zorndyke had created went through his mind: why did he make a creature suffer like this? A tree? A person? Why?

Hayami turned and glanced at Zorndyke. Then he glanced at the hybrid tree, crying in pain. Then his memories about why he had come to Antarctica, all the people he had killed and the mess of the world came flooding back.

He couldn't resist. He walked right up to Zorndyke and placed his hands around his neck. Zorndyke tried to resist a little before he was overpowered and a tell-tale snap of his neck gave the sign that he was dead. Hayami felt an overwhelming sense of pleasure from this. 'Killing mankind's arch enemy,' he thought. No more creatures would suffer now.

Mutio moved back from Hayami. His face was covered in blood and Mutio stood tall in his foggy dream. "You killed our *papa*."

Her red eyes pierced into his mind, causing him to wake up. He held a packet of cigarettes, sweating. The hum of the room's air conditioning unit kept the mood steady, adding to the stormy weather outside.

Even with the lights turned off, Hayami didn't draw the curtains over the waterway windows. This made the room have an underwater feel, which was not the best after a dream like that.

Then the whole atmosphere became clear when a knock on the door bellowed through the room.

"Come in," said Hayami, trying to clean himself up.

Sitting up on the bed, he watched as Kino walked in! "Did you forget?" she angrily asked.

"Forget what?" asked Hayami in a slight trance.

"Our dinner date! You said you would come to my quarters!" Kino clearly said in the most clear way possible.

She then carried on complaining. "I spent a long time finding food and making the perfect atmosphere for us, and you stood me up. How could you?! Come now, you are coming with me." She then got angry and tried to drag him out of his room.

"Will you go away!" he said, frustrated, as he finally woke up from his slumber.

Kino walked back with shock. Her feelings were hurt at the comment. She needed to know. So without thinking and with the both of them standing close together near the entrance of his room, she decided to make the first move.

The position they were facing was perfect for her surprise. Kino's heart raced and her body heated up with the actions she was about to do. She started to sweat under her clothes.

Hayami was trapped close to her and he began to notice her body odour. Then suddenly, much to his surprise, she grabbed his face and placed her lips on his, her slim, fragile body noticeably pressed against his.

She moved her mouth, which eventually caused Hayami to open his, allowing a gush of cool, sweet fluid to transfer between each other. However, he became aware of what she's doing and immediately pushed her away.

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“Kino, what is wrong with you?” he exclaimed.

She looked deep into his eyes and saw no love. From the kiss, it was not special as she had hoped it would be.

She turned and wept, running away and leaving Hayami standing at the entrance to his quarters like a fool.

A sudden splash in the waterway drew his attention, which caused Hayami to run and look through the waterway window. The disturbance of water on the surface indicated that something was there. “Was it Mutio?” he prayed to himself. “Did she see us kissing?”

## Chapter 3

(On the Move)

Daylight hit both vessels, reflecting the sun's rays in a blinding display all over the area. The sea was as smooth as a piece of paper and blue as the sky itself. A slight purple wave marked the skyline, indicating that the northern lights were spreading throughout the world. Both ships could be seen clearly from the sky, as the Deep Sea Six dwarfed everything.

Soft swells of water swayed onto both hulls of the ship, creating a slightly damp mark before evaporating because of the sun. The parts of the ship not in the water became so hot that eggs could be fried on the hull. That was exactly what some crewmembers did.

Sam, the only one on the vessel's hull, sat with his trusty, straw hat and summer clothes. He took advantage of the hot sunny day. With a cooking spatula in his hand, he took the time to cook some eggs and bacon. He made sure that the aroma flowed down through the open hatch towards the crew quarters; he was such a devious fellow.

"Eggs and bacon anyone? My treat," said Sam.

"Man, where did you get this food from?!" someone asked, smelling the meaty smell of the bacon.

"Don't you worry about that. These are prime and fresh from the new London city!"

"And let me guess... you are not giving it away for free!" Then the ball dropped - cooking the food on the hull right next to the main hatch to the crew's quarters offered plenty of food for people that were willing to pay.

The scam worked for Sam, who was always trying his best to make a quick buck.

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One hour later, groups of people sat in different areas of the 'grub room', going about their morning routine of eating and chatting. Unaware to the chosen few, teams of people worked outside to tether the Deep Sea Six to the Blue Sub.

Massive towropes were wrapped around the wings of the Submarine and divers swam around like fish, securing cables and running safety checks. Eight main lines took most of the day to secure.

It didn't take long before the crew of the Blue Sub began to make jokes; they even created a sing-along! "Let's! All tow the big English submarine, big English submarine, big English submarine. Let's! All tow the big English submarine..."

The officer at watch, Jake's second in command, stared from the observation platform towards the Blue Subs crew, who were waving and singing the annoying song. Feeling a deep annoyance with the whole thing, he prompted Jake, "Captain, I could fire a torpedo at them."

"No, just stand tall and take it like a man," Jake replied, not amused at the singing. But he planned to get his revenge one day. Minutes later, everyone was ready.

Iga stood tall in his bridge of his vessel as he monitored the activities that involved towing set-up. It was a delicate task and one mistake could sink both vessels. This was a task he'd done before and it nearly cost him his life. If sweat could fall of his face, it would. But, as he stood tall and firm, he finally gave the go-ahead. "OK, everyone, start the prop slowly and build up speed. Control, tie in commands to the Deep Sea Six for depth control. All hands, prepare for towing!"

Spinning to life, the Blue Sub's props span frantically, causing the tow cables to strain. But the current power did not make the massive submarine move.

"More power!" said Iga, feeling the pressure of the two ships. He stood there, shifting his hat to the side of his head.

Then, with a sudden acceleration, the prop created a tremendous force that slowly began to drag the Deep Sea Six along the water!

Jake looked at the towing operation from the observation deck. The glare of the sun blinded him, so he pulled out his sunglasses out of his pocket and put them on. He enjoyed the moment as the sweet smell of the ocean stimulated his senses.

-o-

Deep within the aqua tunnels of the ship, a yellow and creamy-white figure, with graceful fins spreading out from the arms and legs, could be seen hovering in the water.

Mutio's sister floated under the water, drinking the warm, filtered water that was pumped out of a small pipe at the side of the tunnel. Her coloured fins swayed in the wake of the moving, warm water, and she opened and closed her mouth gracefully, gulping down the water. She was very content in that position.

She could feel the ship moving again, slowly, but she drank as much as she could, feeling safe in this exciting, interesting ship.

Mutio swam up to her friend and gently bumped into her. She showed a slight sign of unhappiness to her friend. In a comforting gesture, she comforted Mutio and tried her best to make her feel better. But at least they were safe. Feeling Mutio's sadness, she cuddled up to her. Their embrace would be heart-warming for any passerby.

-o-

Hayami gazed into the wilderness of the steel ceiling and pondered over the events that had transpired over the course of a few hours. He held his cigarette, shifting his view from the ceiling to the cloud of smoke hovering over him.

*Did she see me kiss Kino?* he questioned himself, feeling the burning guilt.

*What will happen if she did?* Hayami pondered, adding even more pressure to his doubtful mind.

Shifting his position in his bed, he recalled the encounter he had with Mutio on the hull of the vessel. The sudden and unannounced reintroduction to the aquatic beauty made him clearly aware of his feelings towards her. He just couldn't get the fresh, new image of Mutio out of his mind; her image kept plaguing him. Not only this, his morals also interfered with his logical thinking.

*She is one of Zorndyke's animal-human hybrid creatures, she is a different species and how can this work? If it can.* More questions plagued him and he chewed the end of his cigarette.

Hunger slowly began to get the best of him and Hayami decided to 'chill out' in the grub room.

-o-

Jake sat in the 'grub room', drawing a picture on a piece of paper of the young, hybrid girl's face he saw in the aqua tunnels. The room wasn't busy, but a few people were grouped in different areas of the room.

Jake's skills were standard for a man of his artistic skills. The sketch he drew (in colour) portrayed the girl's features in fine detail as he tried his best to remember what she looked like. As he was finishing, Jake's second in command walked in and Jake took the opportunity to interrupt him in mid-stride.

"See this. This is what I ran into while I was in the waterway. I want you to set up a search team to locate her."

The second in command took the image - which was almost shoved in his face - and looked at it. "Is this some kind of joke?" the man asked in a sarcastic tone. "Are you sure this is it?"

In full view to Hayami, his eyes sprang to life and he immediately snatched the image.

"Excuse me! Just what the hell do you think you are doing?" Jake exclaimed, almost shouting.

"Where did you see this creature?" Hayami exclaimed.

Both men stared at each other, and both men knew that they had some kind of interaction with the creature in the past.

They both looked at each other, waiting to see who would speak first. The whole atmosphere in the room became tense. "I saw this creature in the aqua tunnel. This is what attacked me."

"Did she have red eyes?" Hayami almost demanded.

Jake looked at him with an equal glare, as if it were a competition to see who would give in. *Red eyes?* he thought, not understanding his question. But he carried on.

"No, she had blue eyes."

"Are you sure?"

Jake leered at Hayami with contempt. *Is he questioning my judgement on something so simple?*

With the crew standing around staring, Jake had to take control. He was the captain.

"I am sure!" he replied.

Hayami marched out of the room, leaving Jake dumfounded. *Thank you very much.*

Jake handed the scrunched up image back to his second in command to start looking for the lifeform. However, this little job would have to take the backseat, a fact that was clearly stated to him. Another annoying delay, but Jake could live with it, for now.

-o-

Hayami marched back to his room with mixed emotions he didn't know what to do with. For once in his life he has a reason to live; however, his feelings were mixed between the actions of Kino, Mutio's sudden appearance, and the new discovery of Mutio's sister on this boat.

*Maybe she's here also.* He thought to himself. *After all, we're in the middle of the ocean and there's no Musucas for transport, so she must be onboard.*

The memory of the sudden 'splash' after Kino kissed him floated around in his mind. *Does she know about us kissing?*

-o-

Iga remained on his bridge, keeping a watchful eye on everything. Crews trudged back and forth, checking readings and handing clip pads. The towing was a massive task and the crew was more than thrilled to do it. They waited so long to do some good, and Iga knew this.

Some of the crew could not resist but send word that they would be arriving at dock in a few hours and to get ready for them. When they meant 'get ready', they meant: gather all your friends, drinks and see them TOW the biggest boat in the ocean into the dock!

One adventurous crewmember began to whistle the towing song; this prompted a stealthy thump by another crewmember.

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"Is the tether still purged?" Iga interjected. "We don't want that boat smashing into the back of us."

"Yes, captain. Tow springs are operating at one hundred percent, but we have a minor engine warning, nothing to worry about."

"Good, good, okay, stand by to flood ballast tanks, set depth to eight hundred feet and send the commands to the Deep Sea Six."

Both boats began to sink into the water with the Deep Sea Six the last to submerge due to its size. The massive engine props turned with the pull of water through them, before gliding under the water.

-o-

Jake sat and watched the water cover the outside view window. The bright sunlight that once lit up the room suddenly diminished, leaving only the florescent lights to do the job.

"All systems are running smoothly, only red indicators on all six engines are showing," said one of the crewmembers, typing on his workstation.

Slight tugs could be felt throughout the ship as different speeds created by both ships caused only a few, minor mishaps. The aqua pool in the control deck spilled water over the floor and a team of people scurried around to close the hatch. Jake turned to see the commotion before returning to his displays.

It took a moment for Blue Sub to stabilise its speed, gradually giving everyone a smooth ride to Blue Base.

"Captain, do you want us to take a team and find this creature?" asked Jake's second in command, showing him the sketch he drew of the young woman before.

"Yeah, you might as well, there's nothing happening at the moment. Let me know if you find something."

"Captain Iga is asking to come onboard." The communication officer sounded less than enthusiastic about that.

"Permission granted." Jake said, casually skimming the damage report that was less interesting than watching paint dry on a wall.

## Chapter 4

(Acts of the Heart)

Hayami moped in his quarters, looking at a few magazines he obtained while on walkabout. Oblivious to his surroundings and deep within his thoughts, he tried to work out all the incidents that happened during the day. Staring at the bulkhead wall with a few posters he'd pinned up before trying to 'own' his room, Hayami wondered if Mutio would appear. He often looked at the windows of the aqua tunnels hoping to see her.

Then he thought. *What am I doing?*

As he looked at the crunched up packet of cigarettes, Hayami could not hold back the stray thought that rummaged in his mind. He also mumbled about his last two cigarettes before making any more decisions.

Few bangs at the door raised Hayami eyes. He was not in the mood for visitors and he wanted his space. But more than that, he wanted his time. When the second knock echoed through the metallic room, Hayami roared. "Fuck off!"

"It's Iga. Hayami, any chance of a word?" Hayami recognised the voice straight away.

"Yeah, OK!"

The door opened and Iga walked into a dark, messy room with a small cloud of smoke drifting up into the ventilation system. He saw Hayami laid out on his bed with his hands behind his head, enjoying the ride to Blue Base.

"Are you OK?" asked Iga, pulling up a chair.

Hayami shrugged his shoulders and took another puff from his cigarette. "Just thinking, you know. Long journey and all."

"Tell me, why did you leave us one year ago?"

Hayami paused before answering. It's been a long time since he left the Blue Six and his reasons all had to do with Mutio. The horror he saw back at Antarctica. *That final moment!* That anger affected his very being and he had to keep away from the water for a few months. But the memories still lurked in the back of his mind, especially the memory of Mutio swimming away with Verg. *That animal.*

"I guess it was the same reason as before and-" he paused, bowing his head. "Other things"

"Other things?"

Hayami returned from his daydreaming. "Nothing, don't worry about it." He continued, changing the subject, "So, sir, what can I do for you?"

"Hayami, I've got a proposition for you and I hope you will take it. I want you to come back to Blue Six. I don't know what our mission is, but I would sleep better at night knowing that I have you on my crew."

Hayami felt warm towards Iga's kind words. However, he drifted his eyes towards the bulkhead of the submarine and wondered about the chances of finding Mutio again. After seeing her for the first time in years, he yearned to see her again.

Iga interjected his thoughts, again. "Well, what is your answer?"

"Let me think about it!"

Iga reached for his cap and clutched it with both his hands. "What's happened to you?"

Hayami's eyes snapped to Iga's location. "All I do is kill, kill, and kill. I don't want to do it anymore. All my life it was about one thing and now I want to change. Shall I tell you how guilty I felt when I killed Zorndyke?" he paused, waiting for Iga

to respond. He didn't. "I felt nothing, nothing at all. I want a normal life and not to start this killing cycle all over again."

"I am sure everything will be explained once we arrive at the conference. From what we already know, the creatures have disappeared and we hardly see them anymore," Iga carried on, with a tone of smugness. "If you don't want to be involved, why did you come?"

Hayami leered at Iga and was blunt about his answer. "I hoped to make some money from this."

Finally, Hayami ended the conversation with a smile. "Look, as I said before, let me think about it. However, I am staying on this sub for now. I get my own quarters and it's fairly big. Better than the accommodations on Blue Six and besides, I am a guest!"

Iga finished up with a smile; he placed his cap on his head and walked out.

-o-

Jake shuffled along the walkway in a penguin-like fashion, turning corners and walking up metal stairs. Eventually, he walked past Hayami's quarters, running into Iga, who was just leaving.

As if a storm had blown through, a young girl rushed past and was instantly grabbed by Jake. He squinted his eyes at the girl and then exclaimed. "What the hell is this? Why is there a child running around on my boat?" He tossed her to the side. "I never authorised this girl onboard! This is a highly advanced sub, not a playground."

Iga placed his hand on Jake's arm in an effort to remove it from the girl. He replied in the young girl's defence. "Jake, she's part of our crew. She uses the lorenziny system on Blue Six. They asked us to take her to the Blue Base and she wanted to come onboard and see this vessel." He got closer to Jake.

"She has a special gift which has helped us a lot. I see no harm in letting her look around."

Huang stared at Jake and then she appeared stoned and hypnotised. "I can feel them, something is coming, and they are mad!"

The group of people looked at Huang, puzzled by her sudden outburst. "Who is coming?" asked Jake.

"I don't know, they are far, but they are coming. Two hybrid sisters are onboard this vessel and they want them back." Huang pointed to the aqua tunnels.

"Two of them? You have some of those hybrids onboard?" Iga said.

Jake turned to Iga, "I ran into one of them in the waterways, but she vanished before I could get any more answers. I had no idea any hybrids were onboard! I've got search teams looking for them, but they've got the freedom to enter and exit the vessel at will. The aqua tunnels are connected to the open ocean."

Iga turned to the aqua tunnel window, deep in thought. "I would like to see the creatures in person." He turned with his hand on chin. "I've never seen them, except for their damn metal robots."

Overhearing the conversation outside his room, Hayami poked his head through the gap in the door to see what the commotion was about. As expected, Iga was chatting to Jake and then to a small girl, who he recognised. Her telepathic powers had increased and the things she said supported his theory that Mutio was onboard. However, Huang felt what Hayami was thinking and approached him.

"She's upset with you!" Huang said in a shy tone, holding her teddy bear.

"What?"

"I can feel Mutio's thoughts. She saw you kissing Kino and she is confused. You have upset her."

"Can you talk to her?" Hayami said, sitting up and destroying his cigarette. Huang shook her head, leaving Hayami to sit back down in his quarters, disappointed.

"Why is she here?" Hayami questioned.

"She was protecting her sister from the evil shark monster while escaping. They found this vessel and the warm water drew them inside." Verg's image haunted Huang's mind.

Then Hayami's deep thought was interrupted when Iga called for her.

When Huang left, Hayami was left alone in his quarters. The only thing he could do was question the information given to him. *Is it fate?*

All he wanted to do now was to explain his actions to the goddess of the sea, someone that he yearned to touch and feel again. *Mutio, when will I see you again?*

-o-

Huang got ready to board a small sub leading back to Blue Six. She wanted to see more, but Iga ordered her back. The commander did the tasks he needed to do and decided to head back to his vessel, running into Kino on the way.

"Kino, when will you be returning to us? We are short on pilots and I need you to convince Hayami to come back to us; he is in a world of his own," said Iga.

"I don't want to talk about that asshole!" she snapped.

Iga stood back with a slight shock at her sudden outburst. Over the course of their career, he thought Kino and Hayami were getting on very well. "That idiot can rot in hell for all I care!" she snapped again, walking away before disappearing around the corner.

"Things are really strange around here," said Iga, looking at the little girl as they boarded the transport sub.

-o-

On the command centre of the Blue Six, the chatter was that of system status and depth reports. The odd joke about the tugging back to Blue Base was thrown into the mix from time to time and that caught the attention of the officer at watch. But before he could do anything about it, the culprit hid into the shadows.

Freeda sat at her post, as she did one year ago, enjoying the easy piloting. But then she was ordered to head down to the launch bay and board the Deep Sea Six.

She complained, "I'm fine where I am!"

"We need a pilot over there to steer the Deep Sea Six. They're causing a tidal shear on us." The officer at watch gave Freeda a sporting glance.

"I'm not going on that *thing* we are tugging, I am happy sitting here! Why not send lover boy here?" Freeda gestured towards Cekerros, who was stealthily sitting next to her.

The officer then dragged her out of the chair and then proceeded to kick her out of the command room. "Get on it NOW!"

-o-

Jake returned to his quarters and threw his coat onto his mahogany table. His next order of the minute would be to make his tea, one of the few pleasures he could enjoy while away from the command deck. Still, he stared at the unpleasant pile of paperwork that demanded his attention.

A COM signal echoed over intercom. *What the hell do they want?*

He leaned over his table and activated the intercom unit; his reply was clipped and shallow. "Yes."

"Control here, commander. Blue Six is sending someone over to help with the piloting while we're being towed. Also, there's a slight stabilizer error in the seventh ballast tank," a bored voice muttered.

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“Reset the system. That should fix it!” said Jake, knowing exactly what the problem was. He leaned back on his chair and rubbed his tired face, thinking about having a shower.

-o-

Kino slumped onto her bed, almost crying at the events that happened with Hayami. She really liked him and had hoped that the kiss would wake him up. But it didn't, and now she was stuck on what to do.

Clutching the covers, she burried her head into the pillow and tried to hide her crying, so no one could here her through the thin walls.

However, soon she decided to stop. “I am strong!” she said. “It will be Hayami's loss. I don't need him.”

Yes, she was much older and wiser now, and Kino tried her best to convince herself of that, and the last thing she needed was a love triangle. *Yes, I don't need that, thank you very much.*

But deep down, she could not hold back the small warm feeling of love. A tiny spark that could not be extinguished. “Perhaps, time will change his mind,” she murmured to herself.

-o-

The night began to settle and the two vessels made their way through the open ocean. Dolphins danced and swam next to the hulls of the vessels, unaware that in the depths of the ocean, a menacing enemy was tracking them. Undetected, the two Musucas calmly followed, spying on the two large subs that were heading for the new Blue Base.

## Chapter 5

(Hot Encounter)

The day's events had finally taken their toll on Jake and he decided to use the remaining minutes to have a shower. This was the only moment he could look back and think about the day's events and decide if his actions merited any improvements.

The shower facilities were a privilege to a select few on the submarine, mostly to officers and guests. Surprisingly compact and simple, it would stay unused in the corner of the bathroom until such time it was needed. Constructed out of basic metallic components, water was drawn from the aqua tunnels and fed through the basic components for use. It was simple, cheap and easy to run, but expensive to buy.

Metal panels at the bottom of the shower amplified the sound of spraying water and a misty steam rose to the ceiling, filling the bathroom with fog. Jake undressed and prepared to enter the shower, leaving the bathroom door open to allow the steam to exit.

He stepped into the shower and felt an instant shiver as the hot water trickled down his body. It was his moment of freedom. Stray thoughts went through his mind, especially the ones about the mission and the humiliation about being towed back to Blue Base. However, once his boat was back under its own power, he could hardly wait to show off its potential.

A subtle jolt was all it took to wake Jake from his daydreaming state and it was also a constant reminder that his vessel was being towed, and rather roughly. He made a note to talk to Iga about his towing skills and any damage caused.

However, Jake was unaware that he was *not* alone in his room as something moved towards his location.

The construction of the bathroom had a design flaw that prevented Jake from closing the door; if he did, the small cubical would be engulfed in steam, an experience he preferred to forget. So, with the door open, cool breezes were allowed to filter out the excess steam. His drawn shower curtain prevented any unwanted cold air from ruining his time, but also stopped him from seeing the creature that was sneaking in.

Jake turned towards the metallic wall and placed his face under the flowing speckles of water that were removing all of the grime off his clean-shaven face.

Once he turned away from the wall and rubbed his face with his hands, he leapt back in shock when he saw 'it' looking at him.

She stood in front of him. Jake's heart began to race and his body temperature increased. He could not believe that the same girl he ran into the aqua tunnels was in his room, in his shower.

Jake's mind was empty, the sudden shock blasted all rationality out of his mind and all he could do was stand there naked in front of her.

His memories of when he was in the aqua tunnel came back to him. The only glance he managed to see was her face, not her body. His initial shock disappeared once he glanced at her again. He'd never seen such a beautiful creature before and was pleasantly startled at her appearance.

As before, he memorised every curve on her face; he couldn't help it. But his eyes took a life of their own and wandered around her delicate body. He remembered every detail and became captivated by her beauty.

The shower felt hot and Jake began to get nervous while she stood there staring at him. She spotted the bite mark on his chest and tried to touch it, but he hesitated and stepped back.

She paused, not knowing why he stood back. Perhaps he was scared of her and approaching him was a bad idea.

She appeared sad and her face dropped. Jake took heed of this discomfort and moved back to his original location. The running water moistened her skin and shimmer of light danced with the water droplets. He looked into her sky-blue eyes, feeling warm and safe, as if she was communicating with his soul on a level he didn't understand. Jake noticed the unique markings on her body, the prominent black and creamy-yellow patterns, mixed within her fish-like fins, which looked very compelling.

It was not long before he became aroused at her beauty and innocence, which she also detected. This made her feel better about herself and calmer. But she has never seen or felt emotions like these before, just fear and loneliness. Feeling wanted and affection almost brought on a shy smile.

When his mind switched back from his sudden trance, he noticed that she was touching the wound on his chest. The reality slowly struck home: he was completely naked, she was completely naked and both of them were alone.

Inevitably, a sudden impulse surged through his mind to hold her. However, this was conflicting with his moral thoughts. *I can't have sex with a fish. She's not even my own species. Why is she here? What does she want? What is going on?*

But her aquatic feminine look did not go unnoticed. She was so slim and so attractive; it was only a matter of time before nature took control.

Suddenly the whole room shook, causing the hybrid to lose her footing and fall. She recovered, realizing that she was pressed hard upon his body. Jake also clutched his hands around her to prevent her from crashing to the ground.

This act of compassion had made matters difficult. Now they were holding each other in a romantic embrace, as if the hand of God had moved the boat to get this result.

Jake could not help but notice her cool, slim, and graceful body touching his, sending uncontrollable shivers up his spine. Her breasts firmly pressed on his chest and her pink breast wings gracefully flowed over his arms, channelling the water away. Jake felt the cool temperature of her body compared to his own. She also noticed his body temperature and their current position. She felt very excited about the whole situation. She has no idea what to do, but something deep down urged her to do something.

Jake had doubt in his mind; his intelligence kept yelling at him, but his heart and manly testosterone said otherwise. He was in conflict! But that did not stop his hands from exploring her body. He immediately touched her webbed fins, which caused a rush of excitement to the rest of his body. Before long, he was feeling her all over. His heart went into overdrive and the two stepped out of the shower.

Once they left the shower, it shut off; the only sound was that of the sub's humming bulkheads and the beating of their own hearts.

They both stood straight with the girl slightly smaller than him. Then, without thinking and without realising the consequences, he kissed her. The intimate kiss only lasted moments, and it did not taste like fish as he had expected. Once his lips interlocked with hers, cool liquid seeped into his mouth and ignited an unimaginable flurry of emotions that Jake didn't even know existed. Her taste was so addictive that he could not stop, even if he could. Then to add more pressure, Jake could smell the fresh essence from her body. She was not what he expected.

Once the heated moment passed and he moved away from her lips, she stood, shocked. She had seen many of her sisters kissing, but nothing as caring and passionate as this. When Jake tried to do it again, she allowed him to do it and even followed his lead.

Initially, she wanted to check on the man she'd bitten in the aqua tunnel. But this new rush of emotions had swept her into the unknown and the situation then got out of control: before long, they were making love in the bedroom.

After one hour, she laid on top of Jake, holding him tightly with the look of love and utter commitment. She felt warm and loving all throughout her body. She didn't know what happened, but she felt a deep connection to him now. Jake looked back at her, feeling her excitement and intimate bond, something he couldn't do before. He was always a sea-dwelling person and sparking up relationships often ended in disaster. But this was utterly different.

But his mind raged a war: *I've mated with another species. What do they call this? How can I justify this? But who could resist a beautiful creature like this?*

Her silvery blue hair covered his chest and her cool body gave the most exhilarating sensation of being warm and cool at the same time. He ran his hands up and down her back and along the ridges that interconnected the webbed fins, before following the lines on her face and back. This made her feel relaxed and happy. She gave out a pleasurable cry when he touched her ear, a technique he used from time to time during lovemaking. It was exhilarating and he didn't want the experience to stop. Even the lovemaking was unbelievable.

A few moments passed and everything went dark. Then a call on the COM unit woke him up. He leaned his naked body slightly out of the bed and reached for the COM unit.

"Yes?" Jake grunted.

"Captain, we are approaching the Blue Base in a few minutes. You may want to get up here."

"Okay, I'll be right there." Then, realising what happened during the night, he spun around, expecting to see the aquatic hybrid girl sleeping beside him, but she had disappeared.

In fact, there was no sign of any activity at all. He looked around and then came to the conclusion that it must have been a dream.

"What the hell just happened?" he muttered to himself.

Jake scratched his head and investigated the room for any sign of the girl. It was the most bizarre moment he'd ever experienced. He looked at the aqua tunnel hatch that was unlocked and in the bathroom for any sign of her. But the harder he looked, the more normal it seemed.

"It must have been a dream!" he said slowly, dismissing the experience, but it would still plague his mind for the rest of the day. The dream was vivid. Yes, very vivid.

But for the moment, his vessel needed his attention, and when they arrived at Blue Base, that's when everything would probably go wrong.

As he opened the door and peeked out, something made him turn around back towards the room, something like a faint whisper in the darkness, something like a soul calling for him.

Was this a dream or not? The answers were there, but Jake neglected to look deeper in the bathroom.

## Chapter 6

(Blue Base)

Jake could have had all the answers to the riddle, if only he had looked in the bathroom. He would have seen the block of hair trapped in the drain.

With shifty eyes and a guilty conscious, he slipped into the command deck, trying to be as unobtrusive as possible. But his luck ran out.

"Are you OK, sir? You look different!" To his horror, someone spotted his shifty body language...Oops, he needed to divert the attention away.

"Different? How? I'm normal!" Clearly, this was only making the matter worse by evading even more questions and being childish. His body language said it all; his sudden and un-thought out movements drew more attention to him.

"Captain?" questioned his second in command.

"Never mind." Jake decided to evade the whole situation altogether.

As if the bell had saved him, his helmsman interjected, "Captain, we should be entering Blue Base momentarily."

"OK, follow Blue Six's commands and don't damage them."

The Blue Dome base, which was destroyed by Verg's Ghost Ship, still remained in pieces. The two vessels travelled down the channel into the main construction area. Most of the area was cleared and new construction was heavily underway to restore the facility. Nothing much existed except for a few defence turrets, which hadn't fired a single shot in one year, some new buildings, docks and a large facility that surrounded the immediate area.

To the crew, the whole area looked eerily quiet and dull; only speckles of light were seen through the facility's portholes.

Suddenly, without warning, all the floodlights sprang to life, illuminating the area and displaying the huge Deep Sea Six that measured four hundred and twenty meters from stem to stern.

The crew onboard looked and saw the most humiliating sight ever, all of the grease monkeys and scrawny workers peering through the portholes of the facility.

"Ho boy, they will not let this down," said one of the idling crewmen staring through the porthole at the subs.

The atmosphere broke out in more cheers and laughs, as the Blue Sub worsened the situation by flashing its lights. Such humiliation was something Jake would have to tally up later with revenge.

But as the huge vessel glided into the open area, which it nearly occupied, Iga demanded calm.

"OK everyone, let's bring the vessel to a safe stop. Now bring her in gently," Iga ordered, staring down the periscope.

"Damn, that thing's huge, we've could have used it during the war," Iga murmured to himself. "OK. Steady as she goes. All ahead dead slow, allow the water resistance to drag the vessel to a stop."

It took half an hour to nudge the ship to the docking arm because the vessel was much too large to steer into a bay. So berthed outside in the underwater harbour, a docking arm was extended and attached to the access hatch on the Deep Sea Six.

Once all the preparations were made, Iga eagerly ordered the towropes cut and both vessels departed. Crews that stumbled onto the main facility huddled in small packs and gazed at the English marvel that was plopped on the ocean floor. Crews scurried around the hull, replacing huge plating and steadying blocks of cables that resembled noodles.

-0-

Hours passed and submarines kept passing through the port. New and old faces arrived from all over the world. Excitement was its own entity in a place like this. People wondered what this mission was about and they chatted amongst each other, hoping that someone might know the answer.

Iga walked into a hall, which housed a massive memorial for all the people that died in the attack one year ago. He glanced at all the names on the massive statue and then removed his hat. He bowed and prayed to the fallen comrades who fought during the war, a war that was unnecessary.

Hayami strolled in and saw Iga. "Iga, you had the same idea."

Hayami paused and was amazed; thousands of names reached from one end of the room to the other all over the walls, names of the fallen.

"I've come to pay my respects. So many people died here one year ago, I feel I have lost something with them," replied Iga.

"It was an unnecessary war, something I hope never happens again."

The two men stood side by side, staring at the individual nameplates that aligned the walls.

Hayami did not know when to quit. He carried on. "History learns to move on. We will rebuild and remember - that's what the human race does."

"Does it? The human race remembers, time and time again. They always try and kill each other, now they make creatures to attack us..." He was angry and understandably agitated. He stared at a specific name plaque. Hayami didn't know the person, but it meant something to Iga.

Silence hung for a moment between the two individuals that had arrived to pay their respects. Hayami remained silent and eventually left, leaving Iga alone.

-0-

Hayami strolled down the endless corridors, following the scent of freshly cooked food on a mission to satisfy his stomach. But he ran into Kino.

The shorthaired girl looked scruffier than normal and a sour taste developed in his mouth. What did she want? Why was she here?

"H...Hayami, How are you?" she stuttered.

Hayami leaned on the window joint and played with his cigarette. "I am fine."

"Listen, I am sorry for what happened before, I didn't mean to force that on you."

"It's okay, Kino, I get that effect from women all the time, I am used to it."

Kino saw the grin creep onto his face and slapped him. She made a point to call him an idiot and walked away, nose scrunched up.

Hayami took a moment to recover. *Damn, that girl can slap. I feel sorry for her husband, when she gets one.*

Once his 'manly pride' was recovered, he strolled further down the passageway and stumbled upon Jake. He was a good guy who probably wouldn't flow a wobbly like Kino. *Perfect time to ask for something.*

"Jake, I would like to stay on the ship in my quarters if that is all right?" he asked, sparking up another cigarette.

"Why? You should have your own quarters on this station."

"These quarters don't have any showers and they are noisy, I feel much comfortable on your boat," Hayami looked through the windows and gazed upon the submarine. Mutio was out there...somewhere.

"Sure, if that's how you feel, but after the meeting everyone will be assigned their ships and you might lose your great quarters."

"I'll live with it."

With nothing much to say, Jake said his farewells and left the area. The day was still long and there was much to do.

-o-

People scurried around; crews did their repairs, and new construction was underway. It was like this every night and the facility was bustling with activity. But little did anyone realize, two Musucas were hiding inside a trench just outside the base's scanning range.

Hayami sat down beside the moon pool on the Deep Sea Six, waiting for something. As he sat, fiddling with another cigarette, he drifted into his mind and thought about Mutio.

The moon pool looked very calm and settled; only his hands disturbed the fine layer of water on the surface. He eventually lied down on the floor and placed his hands in the water. The instant cold sent a pleasurable shiver up his back; it reminded him that he was alive.

A gentle splash from the other side of the pool broke his train of thought. He lifted his eyes and he saw Mutio staring at him with half her head out of the water.

He didn't know what to do; emotions came flooding back to him. But she kept her distance and treaded water with very little movement.

Mutio was angry. Her piercing red eyes looked directly at Hayami; she felt betrayed and angry and she waited all this time for him.

He slowly got up from the floor and sat beside the moon pool. He knew why she was angry and there seemed to be nothing he could do to fix the situation.

Mutio barked. "KISS!"

Yep, Hayami now knew. Kino forced a kiss on him and now he was left to patch up the damage. It wasn't his fault because she did it. But he needed to convey this in a manner that Mutio could understand and make it believable.

After trying for a mere ten seconds, he turned the tables on her!

He stood up and told her, "Why did you go with Verg one year ago. After all we went through, all the trouble and all the help, I, I, I" he then failed to finish the rest of his sentence. All the emotions flooded in after one year of them being built up. It was something he wanted to get of his chest for a long time. He gave his reasons, now it was her turn.

He looked down at the water, expecting Mutio to vanish. Why would she want him now? zhe blew it.

A slight tear sneaked its way down his face and he quickly wiped it away. With Mutio gone, what was he to do? Then suddenly, she dived out the water and sat beside him. She offered her forgiveness in the form of gentle touches and cute staring. He knew Mutio wanted to talk, but she couldn't. Not yet.

Moving his head up slowly, Hayami saw Mutio looking at him. He felt hope and happiness. But that moment of happiness soon was interrupted when Kino wandered in. She took one look at the duo; her eyes nearly popped out their sockets and she yelled, "WHAT'S THAT DOING HERE?"

## Chapter 7

(The Mission)

Five minutes ago, when they touched and wiped away their tears, Hayami felt like he'd gotten lucky and was about to fix things up with Mutio. Now someone stood in their way.

The bulkheads of the room suddenly seemed distant to Hayami. The water was cold, like hundreds of needles in his legs. Mutio looked like a small kitten as the words "*what's that doing here?*" boomed throughout the room.

Hayami turned and saw Kino in all her fury. She appeared taller than before, but hidden in the shallow light. She stood with her hands on her hips, and her piercing, wide-eyes looked like they would blast away anyone she saw fit.

"Is that the fucking bitch you've been interested in?" Kino snarled. "What's wrong with you? You can't stick to your own species?"

She barged forward, like an unstoppable juggernaut intent on mowing Mutio to the floor. Hayami sprang out his hand in an effort to stop her rampaging campaign, but he was unsuccessful. She barged through and headed straight for her.

Kino charged into Mutio. With a sudden blast of water, both individuals disappeared under the water.

Feeling completely helpless, Hayami kneeled and watched the frantic splashes and Kino's rants and raves. He wanted to do something, he must do something, and it was his only chance to get Mutio back.

Kino punched and kicked several times before Mutio finally fought back, biting and hitting any which way she could. She then tried to drown Mutio, obviously forgetting that she could breathe underwater. But Mutio returned the favour by dragging her under.

Moments later, Mutio was kicked out of the water and onto the hard metal plating. Kino stood, angrier than ever. Water dripped off her uniform as she climbed through the shallow end of the moon pool and approached Mutio, who was lying on the floor.

With a hard thrust with her boot, she senselessly kicked Mutio again and again. Rage swelled inside Hayami and he lunged towards Kino, forcing her away. But this only invited the full violent attention from her. However, being a man, Kino's punches had little, if no effect on him.

Wrapped up in rage, Hayami had little choice but to toss her into the cold water. "Calm down!" he barked as she splashed in the water.

"She's a fish!" Kino shouted. "You can't love a fish or whatever it is! She can't even defend herself."

Hayami stared at Kino for five seconds and then finally said, "I think you should leave!"

Hayami felt bitter about the whole situation. How was he going to tell Kino that he didn't love her? How was he going to explain that he wanted to be with Mutio? He felt like a sting on the end of a wasp, just itching to do something, but in the end, Kino was his friend.

"Kino, you know I value our friendship, but that's what it is, a friendship."

Kino basked in the darkness of her own sorrow; Hayami had no interest in her, only in that thing, Mutio. She stood as the cold salty water dripped off her fine, figure-fitting uniform. Her words were like heavy lead in her mouth. She couldn't say anything. No, wouldn't say anything. She lowered her head and finally strolled away like a disciplined puppy, leaving the two lovebirds alone.

Hayami rushed over to Mutio and examined her body for any damage. But he was way out of league, he had no idea what constituted as damage and from his initial view, she only seemed busied. He did the next best thing; he picked her up and released her into the moon pool.

She floated on the water before sinking. Then, as if a switch had been flicked, she sprang to life. Hayami sighed and sat on the edge of the moon pool; he was relieved that she was alive but hated Kino's actions. He wondered why a girl like that would do such a thing, but the answers were obvious. The hybrids killed her family, and now one was trying to take away her partner. Hayami could understand, but she should control her temper.

Hayami felt very conscious about the looming threat of Kino returning with a gun, but due to his wet clothes, that thought was quickly shoved to the back of his mind. Mutio moved close to his pale face and kissed him on the cheek. He blushed as Mutio swam off to recover from her wounds.

He stood there in a small trance, trying to work out what just happened. *She kissed me!* he thought and then a slight glow appeared on his face.

As two crewmembers arrived on the scene, Hayami quickly regained his senses and returned to his quarters, stopping for a bite to eat on the way. He would eventually return, smoke a few more cigarettes, look at a magazine and fall asleep. His day was that interesting.

-o-

Daylight broke through the depths of the ocean, bringing a faint - but not too dim - light on the entire facility. The Deep Sea Six was still undergoing repairs and the whole facility was like a playground for the fish. Marine life climbed up the walls, swam through the tunnels and clung to windows. It was a sight to marvel at, which the crew did from the observation rooms.

Ready for any eventuality, two teams of Grampuses travelled around the perimeter watching, waiting. So far the day was progressing like all the others, no enemies and no surprises. Just the way everybody liked it.

Jake prepared himself for the meeting; his biggest thought was his dream he had about the aquatic girl. So real, yet so unreal. He couldn't get his mind around it.

As he brushed his teeth in his bathroom, he turned and noticed something in the shower drain. He stopped his rhythmic movements with the brush and investigated. Suddenly, he realized what it was. Blue hair! "My god!" he exclaimed. "It can't be a dream."

His mind underwent just the tiniest tweak of hope that the whole ordeal was not a dream and the proof was right in front of him. With thanks to the war being over, perhaps Jake could locate this girl and reassure her somehow. After all, she did run away. But for what reason, he wasn't sure. But before he could continue his entangled thoughts a call, which was announced by a high-pitched beep, came in.

"They are ready now, sir!"

"OK, I'll be right down," he finished.

-o-

The conference room looked impressive. It had the same design as a university hall with chairs everywhere on balconies. A large communication screen filled the centre of the room while several stations, perched on the high levels, were used for the translating staff. Each chair would have a small view screen that translated announcements to any desired language, and even audio was available.

An open clearing with a pedestal stood in the middle of the room.

It was not long until the room began to fill with people from all wakes of life. People from all over the world came to attend the meeting and find out what this was all about.

Each section was marked for everybody, but Hayami refused to follow protocol. He lounged around anywhere he saw fit and eventually caught the attention of Kino; in response she scrunched her nose and kept her distance.

Moments later, the room fell silent and the meeting began.

“Good morning, everyone.” A man in his mid-forties stood on the stage, re-poisoned his black glasses and looked at his papers on the pedestal.

“Can everyone understand me?” he said in English.

Everybody looked at the small translator screens attached to their chairs. After reading, or listening through the headphones, they reacted with pleased expressions.

“Let me introduce myself. I am Ian Ironhart, director of the Scientific Research Foundation into World Restoration.”

Hayami murmured under his breathe. “I bet that was a mouthful to get right!”

Iga looked up and gave Hayami such a look of scorn that he sat on the nearest vacant chair and listened.

“We at the institute have found a devastating discovery which Zorndyke had accidentally caused by flooding the world,” Ian announced.

He then picked up a remote control device and activated the massive view screen in the background. It displayed Earth and the Moon in their respective orbits; writing also filled the void of useless space.

“We’ve discovered that the Moons gravitational pull on the additional water would drag the Earth out of stable orbit from the sun.” Ian then carried on after changing the view on the screen to that of the Sun and Earth.

“As you can see, the Earth rotates around the sun in a ‘comfort zone.’ If our planet is too close, it will overheat and if it is too far, the opposite effect will happen.”

“Unfortunately, the Earth is being pulled out of its safe orbit and the effects will begin to show up shortly. Unless we find a way to remove the excess water within a given timeframe, this planet will be unable to support life.” Ian deactivated the screen.

“How the hell are we going to do that?” a voice within the crowd demanded.

Ian called for the element to be brought on stage. A scientist strolled on, holding a silver, cylinder-shaped tube. It contained a glass window on ether side and a small, marble-sized blue blob suspended in the middle of crystal-clear water was clearly visible.

The scientist gently handed Ian the device and then dashed off stage in a hasty fashion.

“What I am holding is here is Element Six Five Four Eight. Scientists from all over the world have been working on a cure for this problem and everybody believes they’ve found the solution.”

He then placed the canister on the table and the scientist reluctantly strolled back with a demonstration canister the size of a small inkbottle. As before, he promptly disappeared off stage.

“I know most of you will not believe what I am about to tell you, so I have arrange a little demonstration,” Ian said, walking over to a large pool of water in the middle of the room.

He twisted the cap for about five seconds, dropped the bottom into the water and then ran like hell to the other end of the room. Some people stared in disbelief, others looked worried. But Ian reassured them as he watched from a safe distance.

As the device popped open, the microscopic blue element floated down to the bottom of the tank and then burst. Immediately the freezing began. Within seconds, the bowl of water was compressed into an ice crystal while the surrounding air smoked from dried ice. The tank floor turned to a crisp white, as every unit of water was frozen solid into highly compressed ice.

However, the amount of element was miscalculated and the freezing, white weed left the tank enclosure and began to creep along the wooden floor like a disease, changing everything into ice.

Slowly, it spread in all directions, getting closer and closer towards the crowd of spectators, who sat back on their seats in fear. Then it stopped just mere inches from their feet.

Ian blurted out, "WOW...Sorry about that, but it looks like we have miscalculated the quantity."

The crowd settled down and stared at the frozen wooden floor. They then approached it with curiosity.

"It's okay, you can touch it. The freezing has finished." Ian walked closer to the onlookers as he tried to convince them.

Curious individuals touched and prodded the brittle wooden floor causing it to break under the strain. Many questions were to be asked, like, "What just happened?"

-o-

It wasn't long until word about this meeting managed to find its way back to Verg's lair, and this news only added to his annoyance.

"Damn that female, hiding out from me! I will take her back," he chanted.

One of his minions spoke into his grizzly ear about the news and Verg shot out of his chair. "Send the Musucas in for a closer look. I want to know what they are planning."

The creature also mentioned the organic vessel they've been building. Verg slowly sank back into his chair and grinned like a child. *Perfect, now I will have the means to stop the humans once and for all.*

This is the end of **Part 2**