

PART ONE COMING AUGUST 2020

# THE LAST TIDE

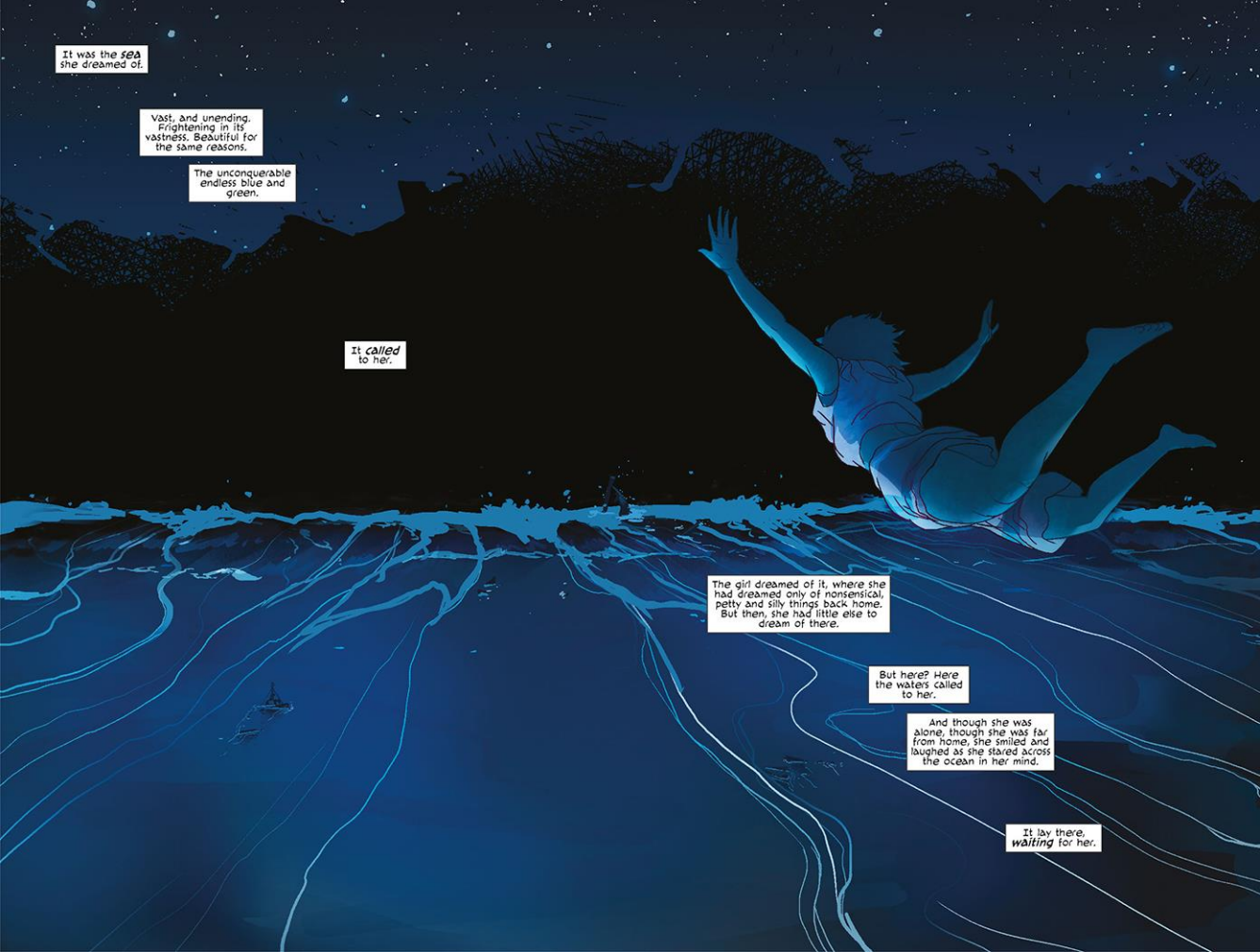
an InnVerse Story

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COMICS



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A monochromatic blue-toned illustration of a girl falling into the ocean at night. The girl is in mid-air, her arms and legs outstretched, as if she has just jumped or fallen. The ocean below is dark with white, glowing waves and ripples. In the background, the dark silhouettes of trees and buildings are visible against a starry night sky. The overall mood is dreamlike and serene.

It was the *SEA*  
she dreamed of.

Vast, and unending.  
Frightening in its  
vastness. Beautiful for  
the same reasons.

The unconquerable  
endless blue and  
green.

It *called*  
to her.

The girl dreamed of it, where she  
had dreamed only of nonsensical,  
petty and silly things back home.  
But then, she had little else to  
dream of there.

But here? Here  
the waters called  
to her.


And though she was  
alone, though she was far  
from home, she smiled and  
laughed as she stared across  
the ocean in her mind.

It lay there,  
*waiting* for her.



And as she slept,  
she *heard* it.

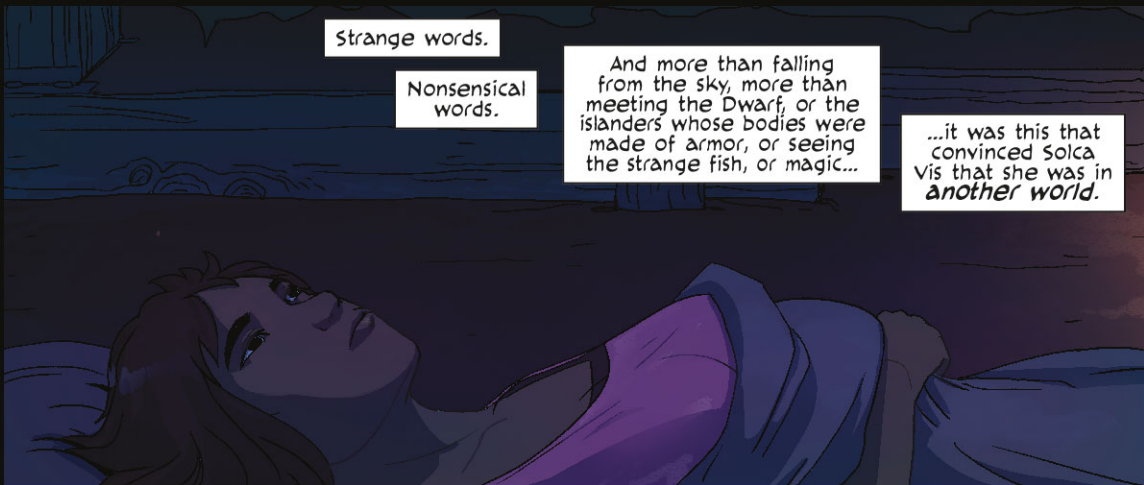
A voice in her  
mind... No, more like  
an *announcement*.  
She wouldn't have  
believed it came  
from any person.



The words  
interrupted her dreams  
and spoke themselves in  
her head, unforgettable,  
as clear as fact.



**FISHER**  
[ LEVEL 7! ]



Strange words.

Nonsensical  
words.

And more than falling  
from the sky, more than  
meeting the Dwarf, or the  
islanders whose bodies were  
made of armor, or seeing  
the strange fish, or magic...

...it was this that  
convinced Solca  
Vis that she was in  
*another world*.

The howling storms and monsoon winds that often struck the island could knock over the other villager's huts.

But this hut had absorbed the pounding of even the worst storm without so much as creaking.



The fact that anyone could build anything out of so much scrap was a masterful achievement...

...but Solca had slept in this hut for the last week.

She was convinced that it was not only sturdy, but **strong**.



However, even the best craftsmanship couldn't account for rot.

The rain at least, was like home.



Solca shook her head, and then turned when she heard the soft, rhythmic tapping sound coming from one of the other occupants of the hut.



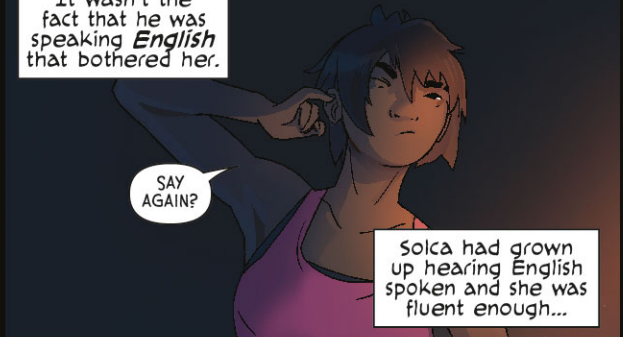
He could have been a man, if you knew nothing about the legends of *Dwarves*, like Solca.



However, her host claimed he was a Dwarf, and she had not argued with him on the point.



It wasn't the fact that he was speaking *English* that bothered her.



...but Taxus' accent was one of the *thickest* she'd ever heard, even from tourists.

This time she listened hard, and his confused sentence made sense.

YOU'RE ALREADY UP. I HEARD YOU THRASHING ABOUT IN YOUR BEDDING.



I... HEARD A VOICE. IT HAPPENED. AGAIN.

OH? YOU **LEVELED**?

She had 'leveled'.

It wasn't a word she'd known until a few days ago, but Taxus had explained the meaning to her, at least in part.



GOOD! THAT MAKES, WHAT, HALF A DOZEN LEVELS IN TWO WEEKS? FAST WORK, EVEN FOR A BEGINNER! NOT THAT IT FEELS LIKE YOU'RE ONE.

I'VE WATCHED YOU FISH. YOU'RE AN EXPERT, BUT WHY YOU HAVE NO LEVELS...

WELL, IT'S GOOD THAT YOU'RE GETTING SOME AT LAST.



THANK YOU. I KNOW HOW TO FISH. BUT I HAVE NO... CLASSES. AT HOME.



BETTER NOT TO SAY THAT TO **ANYONE**.

This time she understood him perfectly.



He spoke English, albeit with a deep voice and a thick accent she couldn't place. It was the language of this world, the language the announcement in her head had been spoken in.

And apparently everyone in this world spoke English and nothing else.

And there was still so much she had to ask. Solca wondered if this was the moment to ask again, but her stomach and mind both told her no. She was still groggy from waking, and hungry.

Plus, there was a more concerning issue.

TAXUS.  
THERE IS A LEAK.  
WATER.

DAMN  
LEAK. I'LL FIX IT  
LATER.

COME OVER  
HERE AND HAVE SOME  
FOOD. I'VE GOT...  
OYSTER SOUP.

So, *oyster soup*.

The broth tasted of the sea and too much salt. And the oysters, for all they were large, were slimy and tasteless.

SORRY IT'S  
ONLY WARM.  
I'D REHEAT IT, BUT  
FIREWOOD'S...

IS GOOD.  
**GENEROUS.**  
THANK YOU.

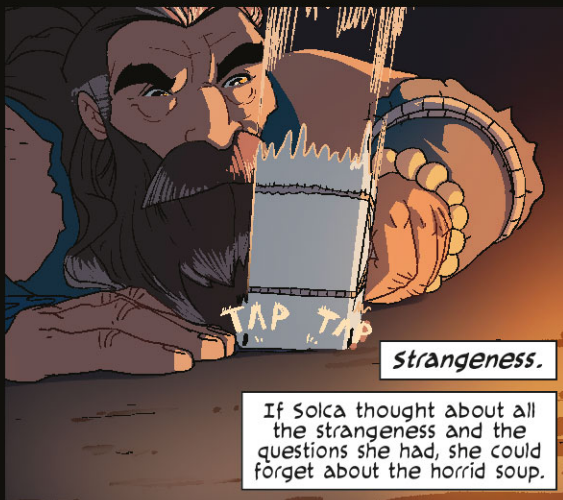
"SORRY."

She meant  
it *sincerely*.

Taxus ate what  
she ate and he'd  
offered what he had  
without stinting.

He was old. Apparently he was over a hundred and thirty years old. It sounded like a lie, or a joke. But his eyes had been serious.

And Solca had *believed* him.



*Strangeness.*

If Solca thought about all the strangeness and the questions she had, she could forget about the horrid soup.

SO, YOU LEVELED UP AGAIN. WHAT LEVEL ARE YOU NOW? SIX? SEVEN?

SEVEN. TODAY.

MM. DID YOU GET A SKILL?



She knew what he meant. She had three 'Skills' already, but their full meaning still eluded her.

She thought of the ones she'd gained, the first few nights she'd been here.

[ LUCKY HARVESTER ]

The ability to gather larger oysters while helping Taxus harvest along the beach.

[ STORM SENSE ]

Knowing when a storm, like the one today, was coming, and how large it would be.

[ BASIC CRAFTING ]

And finally, the ability to make things.



Solca hadn't needed the last one as much since she knew how to make most objects. But the first two were eerie.

And they were only the *beginning*.

NO SKILLS?

NO SKILLS.





YOU'LL GET AT LEAST ONE AT LEVEL 10, AND A GOOD ONE. WAIT UNTIL YOU GET AN ACTIVE SKILL.



THE ONES YOU HAVE ARE *PASSIVE*. THEY WORK ALL THE TIME. LIKE HARVESTING OYSTERS. YOU FIND BETTER ONES THAN I CAN NORMALLY. YOU HAVE GOOD LUCK. ALL THE TIME. SEE? BUT ACTIVE SKILLS... HOW CAN I SAY IT? BETTER TO SHOW YOU. HERE. LOOK.



SMACK



She stared at the earth. It was just dirt, and Taxus' hammer stone.

How had he done that?

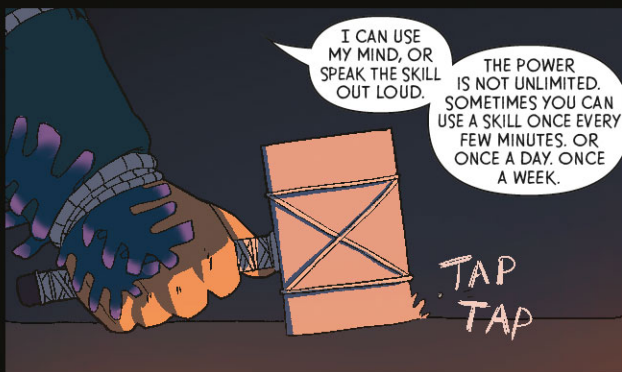


A TRICK FOR LIGHTING FIRES. OR FIGHTING. DON'T BE SURPRISED. IT'S A LOW-LEVEL SKILL.



HOW?

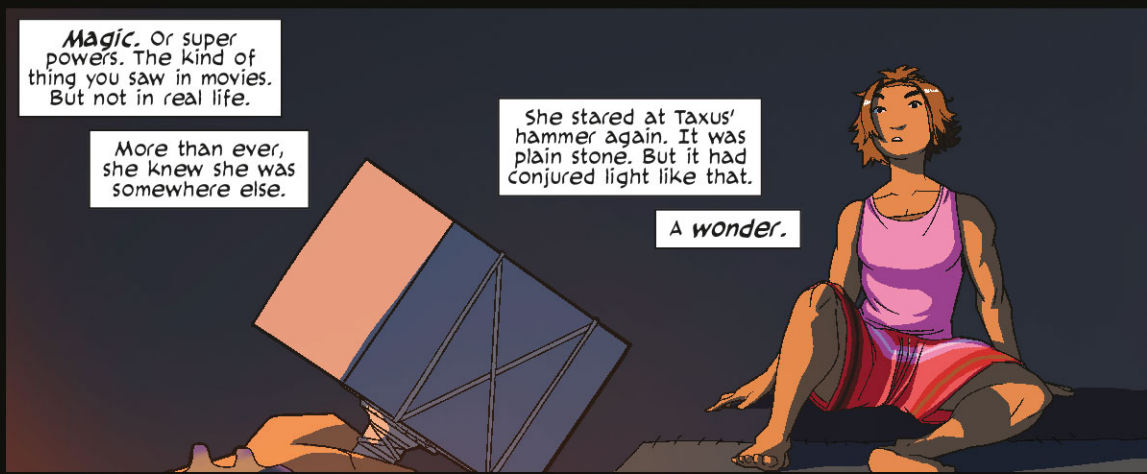
IT'S A SKILL. I USE IT AND... SPARKS.



I CAN USE MY MIND, OR SPEAK THE SKILL OUT LOUD.

THE POWER IS NOT UNLIMITED. SOMETIMES YOU CAN USE A SKILL ONCE EVERY FEW MINUTES. OR ONCE A DAY. ONCE A WEEK.

TAP TAP



*Magic.* Or super powers. The kind of thing you saw in movies. But not in real life.

More than ever, she knew she was somewhere else.

She stared at Taxus' hammer again. It was plain stone. But it had conjured light like that.

A wonder.

Taxus had magic, but he was still poor. So was the island.

That was reassuring, in its own way. This world still made sense.



How could anyone live like this? She knew what it was like not to have a lot of money compared to others. Where she came from, watching rich tourists walk about with money to spare was common.

But this was another level of poor.

Back home, even a rural village could get supplies from a town or city.

At need, they could buy what they needed, be it medicine or technology, parts for a boat. A smartphone. Money was the limiting factor, yes.

But here, on this island, money wasn't the only object.

There was simply nothing here of *value*.

Food was obtainable, but for someone like Taxus, whose skill lay in wood and metal, all he could do was gather oysters and salvage what washed up on the shore.

THE HAMMER. DOES IT HAVE TO BE STONE?

NO. A HAMMER'S A HAMMER. THE SKILL DOESN'T HAVE ANY BEARING ON IT.

BUT THIS? I MADE IT MYSELF. AND IT'S THE BEST HAMMER ON THIS DAMN ISLAND. THERE'S NO METAL. NO WOOD, SAVE FOR WHAT'S SALVAGED. NOTHING.

ANOTHER BOWL? THERE'S A BIT LEFT.

THANK YOU.

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an InnVerse Story

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