

Aubrey Isaacman

Sinking

My heart is pounding, my head is throbbing, and I can't see a thing. The weights on my ankles and the ropes around me are chafing my skin. I can smell the salt as the boat races forward, the faintest hint of it hitting my tongue. We come to a sudden stop and I feel myself shudder. It's not like me but considering the circumstances, I won't beat myself up over it. I feel firm arms grip mine way too tight, practically yanking me off the cold, hard floor of the boat. They're talking. I can hear them perfectly but I'm in such a daze that I can't focus on what they're saying. If I can get out of here, I'm sure I'd beat myself up for that later. "Throw her in the water with the rest of the chum". My naked body is suddenly yanked so violently into the water that it nearly knocks my blindfold off. I barely had time to take a full gulp of air before sinking to the bottom. After a bunch of worthless struggling and what feels like forever, I feel my body hit the ocean floor. I hear the boat take off and I'm alone. If I'm lucky, I have maybe 2 minutes to figure out how to get out of here. I've always felt at ease in the water so I figure I have about 40 seconds before I start freaking out. I attempt to work my hands around the ropes, but those assholes tied them way too tight. Of course. Every few seconds, I see flashes of my life replace the blackness.

I see the meal the three of us ate together at home last night. We were laughing and having the most amazing time.

I think I finally have a good hold on one of the knots!

I see my first birthday I celebrated with my partners as a thruple. They take me to my favorite place, the aquarium, and take me to my favorite restaurant. We all gaze lovingly at each other.

I can feel the way the knot curves and bends.

I see the day we bought our first puppy. We all wanted different ones but she had the best temperament and we all bonded with her pretty easily. She loved trying to sit across all of our laps when we sat together on the couch. Back then she was too little for it, but now she could cover twice the length. Once she grew up, we ended up with 3 more puppies.

I've finally figured out the way the knot works but it's way too tight.

I see the look on Angela's face when she tried to come out to her father and tell her about us. Seeing her have to go through that broke our hearts, but we stood by her the entire way. We always will.

I've managed to get a good hold on the rope, I think it's finally coming loose!

I see my brother playing video games with Jael after I told him about our thruple. I was initially worried about his reaction but I've never felt more love from him than I had in that moment. It was short moment, but so meaningful.

I actually got it! My hands are free! I need to try the weights now.

I see myself at the market we went to a few years ago to find a gift for our friend's birthday. Angela and Jael fell in love with the place but we didn't go very often because it was so far. I made the long drive earlier today to look for an anniversary present for them.

As I reach forward for the weights secured to my ankles, I feel the blood rush to my head and can tell that my vision would be blurry if I could see. I can tell I'm starting to lose consciousness but I can't afford to freak out right now.

I see myself looking for the specific booth and seller that they liked but I got turned around. I somehow ended up in the seemingly abandoned warehouse the market would set up in front of.

I fumble with the weights with no luck. The locks are tight around my ankles and even if the key was near here, I probably can't find it.

I see the strange looking men and remember the illogical need to follow them.

I lean down even more and start searching frantically. I feel myself slipping away. God DAMMIT where is that key? A rock? Coral? Anything sharp!

I see myself following the strange men and finding the elaborate set up. I see the confusion on my face as I look around and attempt to make out what in the world could be happening.

I feel my body begin to convulse slightly due to the lack of oxygen. If I somehow manage to get out of here, I still have the bends to worry about.

I see myself walking through the sea of strange men towards the tanks as though my body wasn't my own, like I was in a trance. I feel the mysterious music more than I could actually hear it. I see myself put a hand on the glass and stare intently through the murky water.

I feel around the sand more quickly in hopeless desperation of finding the key. My body convulse more violently and I swear I can feel something else disturbing the water around me.

I see myself stand in front of the glass like a mountain, stubborn and unmoving. I see a few strange men take their turns at attempting to move me from the glass but for whatever reason, they can't.

I feel my body move in the most painful ways I didn't know were possible. My lungs burn as they fill with water, and I hear the most beautiful song. I can feel it more than I can hear it, almost like it's playing in my head.

I see the three strange men attempt to move me from the glass all at once. I see the shock on my face when I see the most massive, beautiful fish tail I've ever seen. I hear the most beautiful song getting louder and I start banging my head against the glass. I feel the song more than I can hear it, almost like it's playing in my head.

I feel my body attempt to convulse a few final times but something thick and slimy restricts me. My lung burns more than I ever thought possible.

I see myself break away from the glass and from my trance. I see the shock on my face when I discover that I took my clothes off somehow in the middle of all the chaos, and that my feet are wet.

I gasp painfully as I attempt to breath, only to bring in more water. Whatever it is that has a hold of me grips me even tighter. I feel a weird tingling sensation crawl up my spine and into my lungs and throat. I suddenly take a breath of fresh air! But I don't understand. I try to move but I can't move my arms but they're still pinned at my sides. I struggle for a few seconds, but if whatever this was wanted to eat me it definitely would have done so by now. After I calm down, I feel the weights effortless fall off, as though they had the ability to the entire time, and the rush of bubbles blowing past my face as whatever that was swims out of there as quickly as possible. I'm definitely still underwater, why am I not drowning? My body is shaking from fear instead of oxygen deprivation. With trembling hands, I slowly reach my fingers to my neck and find three symmetrical slits on either side. My body moves back as though it were trying to get away from itself. My eyes snap open and I scream, but it's not my human voice. I expected my eyes to burn from the salt but they don't, and I can see everything! This part of the ocean is so barren, it looks more like a drowned desert than an ocean. As my hands move along my new body, I discover webs between my fingers and my toes. I have never been more scared in my entire life. I need to find my partners.

I make my way down the coast (yes, I found the coastline, finally) and search for our boat. When I say "our" boat, I mean Angela's dad's boat. After she came out, he cut her off. She wasn't worried since she had already been working and making the steps

towards being independent, but we helped her steal his boat anyway because he's an asshole. Anyway, I've always loved the ocean and dreamed of this sort of thing, but it actually happening... I've never been this scared before. I just need to get home. I swim along the coastline and begin to hum to myself. Ever so slowly, fish continue to join me until I have a whole armada. I'm completely baffled but realize that the song I've been humming is the same song I heard before all of this happened. I let out a sob that sounds more like a scream of agony and every single fish around me scatters in the blink of an eye. After the bubbles dissipate, it's almost like they were never there. My body feels like it's crying but I can't actually see tears. I can't tell if I enjoy that or not. As I swim, I combat my fear with the meditative feeling of the water gently hugging my body when I bump my head. Not hard but I definitely need to pay more attention. Holy crap, I found our boat! I confidently swim to the bottom (thankful that I'm in somewhat shallow water this time) and use all of my strength to build momentum and get onto the back of the boat. I held my breath as I soared through the air and land on the deck. I let go a sigh of relief. I finally made it home! I begin to take another breath when all of a sudden, I can't. I'm gasping for air even though I'm on land again. I can't believe I forgot about my fucking lungs! I don't even know if they're home but I start thrashing on the deck of the boat, both out of the need to get their attention and the inability to breathe.

I see Jael and Angela taking care of our puppies through the window

I'm apparently a strong swimmer, I actually managed to land as far away from the water as possible.

I see puppy Artoo make eye contact with me. He barks and snarls like never before.

Does he not recognize me?

I attempt to calmly army crawl towards the side of the boat. I just need to get close enough to lift myself up.

I see Angela get up to see what's wrong. She sees me and screams.

I don't know if her scream was out of fear of seeing her partner in such awful shape, or disgust because she can see my new body from so far away. Either way, I shove down whatever emotions I start having about it. I need to get to the water.

I see Angela grab Jael. They make sure the puppies stay inside. Probably a good idea. I can tell they're trying to get to me as quickly as possible but everything feels like it's in slow motion.

I've never felt so dry. I feel like my skin is going to slowly chip off. I finally hoist myself up onto the bench. I'm so close...

I see my vision fading. I can't tell who is who anymore but I can tell one of them is carrying the shotgun. I've never approved of guns but Jael's military experience means they don't feel safe without it. I can't say I feel safe right now.

I reach for the side of the boat to attempt to pull myself over, but I can't help but claw at my throat. I thought drowning was painful, but this takes the cake.

I see my partners climb aboard. Upon seeing me, Jael dumps the gun. Both of them gently touch my skin, afraid of what they see but also afraid that they'll break me.

I reach for the side of the boat and pull myself up a little more. I feel my partners' hands on me, supporting me. I reach up towards them, looking into their eyes as I lose consciousness.