

The Veracity of Aquaria

Story Summary

In a “Cyberpunk” meets “Little Mermaid” underwater world, Aquaria, the sheltered heir of the Aquivlo Empire, Lorin, is arranged to marry into the Orcinus Kingdom to end the war between the two nations. Lorin speaks out against their mother, the Empress Leandra, for this decision. As punishment, Lorin’s magic is sealed away temporarily using the Empire’s magic stone in a public event. As Lorin is being transported to the Orcinus Kingdom, they are rescued by the leader of the Slums, Novi. The Slums is a polluted region occupied by merfolk who have no magic or physical capabilities. Novi tells Lorin that a toxic smog has been polluting the Slums and attempts to rally Lorin in helping them. Although they are sympathetic, Lorin doesn’t believe this until they witness the knights of their kingdom slaughtering innocents. Lorin swears upon their magic to work with the Slums to protect the people. Along their journey, Lorin finds allies and together they form a plan to expose the Empire’s nefarious actions to the public.

Plot Points

ACT I

1. Lorin was an heir to the Aquivlo empire, whose empire had met a stalemate in the war against the Orcinus Kingdom because the Orcinus Kingdom had captured a major fort of the Aquivlo Empire.
2. Empress Leandra of Aquivlo came to an agreement with the ruling faction of the Orcinus kingdom, where they will submit their kingdom’s rule to Aquivlo and have their citizens pay taxes to the empire, in exchange, they will help Orcinus with their pollution problem, and Lorin will be arranged to be married into the Orcinus’ kingdom.
3. **Inciting Incident:** Lorin is unwilling and speaks out against the empress, and as punishment, their magic is temporarily sealed away using the magic stone in a public event.
4. As Lorin is transported, they are rescued by a group of merfolk from the slums. The leader Novi, seeing the heir’s resistance against the empress, tells the heir about the pollution getting worse.
5. **Hero refuses the call:** Although Lorin is sympathetic towards Novi’s cause, they did not fully believe them until the guards searching for the heir ruthlessly attacked those in the slums while interrogating them.

6. **Point of no return:** Seeing the corruption of the guards, Lorin now wants to help the people in the slums and swears an oath so that all of their magic will permanently disappear if they do not help.

ACT II

1. Novi asks Lorin to find a source of magic to power the machine they are making that can purify some of the non-renewable waste. Lorin decides they will sneak back to the empire to find their childhood friend, Wenna, who they saved when they were younger. She has powerful magic and has no ties to the royal court.
2. Lorin takes the gear Novi provided them and overhears Orcinus soldiers in the wild talking about a plan to ambush the Aquivlo empire. The soldiers notice Lorin and attempt to kill them, Lorin uses the new technology to escape but is intercepted by the prince of the Orcinus Kingdom.
3. Lorin learns that the Orcinians are disproportionately affected by the pollution due to their physical traits. The Orcinians had hoped to acquire the magic crystal of the Aquivlan empire to cure their people.
4. **Midpoint:** The prince, Glace, promises Lorin that if the Orcinus Queen is cured, the war will end. Lorin agrees and both find Wenna and bring her back to the slums.
5. They realize the machine works but it needs the magic crystal to be used long term. They plan to infiltrate a large festival taking place in the Aquivlan castle, where all citizens of Aquivlo and the Orcinus royalty are invited for a ball.
6. Wenna and Glace cause a distraction at the front gate and Lorin and Novi are able to slip in through the back. Lorin finds the secret document room and finds documents regarding the empress's corruption.
7. Lorin realizes the empress had been using the crystal for her own gain. She never regenerates any magic because she was born without any and instead turns into a smog. The empire benefited from the pollution since it weakened the Orcinus kingdom.
8. The empress appears and tells Lorin that she had full knowledge of their plans and set a trap for them in this room so that as soon as they step in she is alerted.
9. Lorin is discovered from snooping around. The empress gives Lorin an ultimatum. Whether Lorin and Novi can get out right now together or the people currently in the ballroom will die. Lorin chooses to save the people and is sent to the dungeons to be executed. Novi also gets captured and is tortured. Lorin felt powerless and disgusted that the kingdom was built upon oppression.

10. Wenna and Glace meet up at the predetermined regroup spot and realize Lorin and Novi are missing.
11. **In the belly of Jonah's Whale:** The jail that Novi and Lorin are stuck in has a magical sensor. The sensor requires two people to be in the cell, which is a type of cell Lorin has studied before due to their responsibilities as the heir.
12. Wenna proposes to take Lorin's place inside the cell in order to repay her debt when Lorin saved her life when they were younger. She thinks that Lorin is the best candidate to announce the truth of the empire to their people.
13. Lorin realizes the best way to protect everyone is to dismantle the kingdom entirely. They go to the document room again to get the documents but along the way they are stopped by an increased number of guards patrolling the area.
14. **Recognition:** Glace tells Lorin to go on ahead and he stays behind to fend off the guards. Lorin arrives in the ballroom just in time for the empress's big announcement that the Orcinus Kingdom will now be officially a vassal state of the Aquivlan empire.
15. Lorin tells the people the truth of the empire in the middle of the ballroom with proof. They rally those in the empire to overthrow the monarchy.

ACT III

1. **Ticking Clock:** The empress is enraged and draws on more of the magic crystal's power which begins to depower the city that needed its power to run. The smog begins to grow more and more potent, starting to cause those around it with weaker magic to fall unconscious.
2. **Obligatory Scene:** Lorin fights the empress in order to gain control of the magic crystal.
3. **Climax:** Lorin defeats the empress and manages to disable the crystal, rendering Aquivlo soldiers/royalty powerless.
4. **Denouement:** The empress is exposed for her lies and dethroned. Lorin rejects the crown, and takes the crystal. They lead their people to help those who live in the slums.
5. The slums are now part of the Aquivlo empire and Lorin and their friends now work together to drastically improve the living conditions of the area with better infrastructure. They also started taking significant measures to control the pollution using Novi's machines.

Character Profiles

Name: Lorin, (appearance customizable), 20



Position: Heir to Aquivlo empire (previously), fugitive/rebel

Keywords: Calm, determined, responsible, caring

Arc: Lorin of the Aquivlo Empire had always put up a calm and responsible front to the people since they are viewed as a symbol of greatness. Deep down, they are lonely since everyone they interact with in the royal court is trying to gain social or political influence from them. When their mother decided to marry them off to the Orcinus Kingdom, Lorin was furious because they were viewed as a trophy of beauty, not recognized for their skills and contributions to the empire. Lorin had always hoped for something more than what their mother had told them – an easy life with no worries, but they don't know what that something is. When Lorin took a stand against the empire and found their friends, they began to understand that they are allowed to make mistakes. Embracing their weaknesses and their strengths, they are finally able to recognize their own emotions and do what they truly believe is right.

Opposing drives: Complacency vs. Freedom

Strengths

1. Responsible. Lorin keeps their people's well-being in mind each time they make a decision.
2. Determined. Lorin never gives up fighting for what they think is right.
3. Ambitious. Lorin has a strong drive to be successful and works hard to achieve their goal.

Weaknesses

1. Ignorant. Lorin lacks understanding of the world around them, specifically the slums and the royal family.
2. Push-over. Lorin minimizes their own feelings in order to please those around them.

3. Distrustful. Lorin thinks people around them are not reliable or honest, each with their own agenda.

Emotional needs

1. The need to form genuine connections. The relationships in Lorin's life are transactional, so they want to find those they can trust.
2. The need to make mistakes. Lorin was under constant public scrutiny, so they had to be perfect all the time.
3. The need to recognize their own emotions. Lorin's feelings were used against them, and they had to suppress how they felt.

Regrets

1. Lorin regrets that they obeyed their parent's orders even when it was wrong.
2. Lorin regrets that they couldn't explore different activities because they needed to uphold their image.
3. Lorin regrets that they have hurt many merfolk through their inaction towards the royals

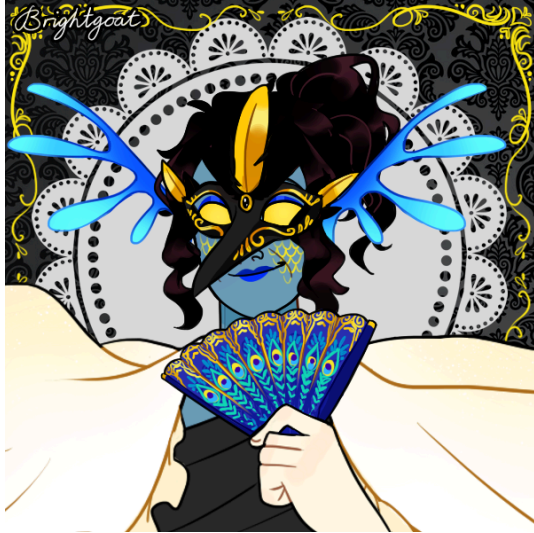
Wishes

1. Lorin wishes that they can follow their own will and be indifferent to how the court views them.
2. Lorin wishes for others to understand them and connect with them.
3. Lorin wishes that they can improve the conditions of the slums and the underwater world

Dialogue

1. "Watch your words. How dare you imply that the empire is unjust. This is treason against the Aquivlan throne."
2. "I, Lorin of Aquivlo, shall do everything in my power to bring justice to the slums and those residing here. I will protect those who need my help and stop the pollution. If I've forsaken these terms, my magic will be voided permanently, so let it be."
3. "People would rather believe in a pleasant lie than face the truth. When I just told others what they wanted to hear, it made things a lot smoother than when I told them how I really felt."

Name: Empress Leandra, female, 50-60



Position: Empress

Keywords: Cordial, warm(surface level), two-faced, calculating, deceitful

Arc: Born to the royal family of Aquivlo without any magic, Leandra was cast out as a child to the slums. The slums were turbulent since there was a lack of resources. A merman, Ely, helped her when she was being attacked by looters. The two grew close and had a romantic relationship. One day, Leandra was notified that a member in the line of succession was assassinated and that she had an opportunity to return to the palace. Leandra was conflicted, but eventually agreed to go to the palace because she wanted a better life. She promised that she would help the slums once she came into power. When Ely visited the court again she tried to explain to him that she could not support the slums since she had a low status in court because she lacked magic. Ely is disgusted with her excuses and leaves. The magic stone of Aquivlo used to power the empire, can take magic from other merfolk. Leandra secretly started using the stone, but realized that since she does not have any innate magic, the magic she took cannot regenerate and turned into a toxic smog. She grew desperate and took away magic from children when they were born. These children whose magic core got depleted were cast out into the slums.

What are the opposing drives: Need for control vs. Need for love

Strengths

1. Cunning. Leandra is skilled at lying and hiding information from others.
2. Strategic. Leandra forms well-rounded plans that take into consideration potential dangers.
3. Observant. Leandra is able to perceive situations and others around her and understand the truth behind them.

Weaknesses

1. Insincere. Leandra hides her true feelings towards others around her and creates a persona to manipulate others.
2. Unreliable. Leandra does not help the slums despite promising that she would make things better.
3. Insecure. Leandra feels weakness inside of her and constantly feels that she would lose her status.

Emotional needs

1. The need to be in control. Leandra was constantly exploited by her environment so she seeks control over others.
2. The need to feel safe. Leandra grew up in the slums, where staying alive was a challenge.
3. The need to be recognized for her strengths. Leandra's strengths were often overlooked by those in the court because she had no magic.

Regrets

1. Leandra regrets she chose power and left her lover in the slums and returned to the empire.
2. Leandra regrets that she let herself be publicly humiliated in the castle.
3. Leandra regrets that she felt ashamed because she was born without magic.

Wishes

1. Leandra wishes that she had magical powers stronger than everyone else.
2. Leandra wishes that she can be remembered as the greatest empress in Aquivlan history
3. Leandra wishes that she can mock and oppress those without magic like other royals do.

Dialogue

1. "I've spent ten years of my life worrying if I'd wake up with a knife at my throat. While they sat on their thrones, comfortable, knowing they had ruined a child's life. I can't move on from that... Ely, I promise, I'll make it to the throne and change things here. If only for you."
2. "The nobles care not for the worthless, which is why I have nothing to lose."
3. "Things were more complicated than I thought they'd be. Listen Ely, my position in the court still isn't stable. If I were to openly support the slums, it would ruin me."