

Tentacles

By Turakii #1 Lavasurfer

"This is the biggest canoe I've ever seen," said Amaya as she sat between Macku and Marka in the three-bio-long boat.

Behind her, Marka adjusted herself. "You know Kai and her ideas. If she could, she'd have made the boat big enough to fit the entire village!"

"A rowing club!" exclaimed Macku. "I wish I'd thought of that!"

Amaya chuckled. Her gaze moved past Macku to the prow, where Kai was cupping her hands around her mouth.

"Ga-Matoran!" she called. "Ready oars!"

Macku leaned back to speak over her shoulder. "That's those stick things, Amaya."

"I know what an oar is," said Amaya. She set her feet against the block under Macku's seat. Her eyes scanned the floor. "Uh...where are they?"

Macku patted the u-shaped swivel hooking on the boat's side. "Right where they belong. In the oarlocks."

"Yeah, uh-huh, sure," said Amaya. "Oarlocks." She grabbed her oar handles. "I can't believe I let you two talk me into this."

Marka laughed.

"Back it up!" commanded Kai. "Into position!"

Along with the five other rowers, Amaya pushed on her double oars to turn the boat away from the Ga-Koro lily pad and move it into starting position.

"Good!" shouted Kai. "Ready, row...and row...and row..."

Aware of the water surface skimming by, Amaya concentrated on the steady rhythm of Kai's commands. This wasn't that bad. The team worked as a unit. Turaga Nokama would be proud--

The boat jerked. A shriek erupted from behind Amaya.

"Hold water! Hold water!" screamed Kai. "Stop the bo--" The boat's stern tipped downward and Kai tumbled forward.

The sky whirled overhead as Amaya fell backwards into Marka.

"Help me!" Marka's scream mingled with those of the other Ga-Matoran.

Amaya struggled to shove herself upright, twisting her body to see the stern. She gasped. A thick tentacle gripped Marka's torso.

"Help!" cried Marka, pushing against the tentacle. "Get it off! Get it off!"

Amaya searched about her. "My oar! Where's my oar!" Her hand slid along the boat's side until her fingers wrapped around the handle. Of course. In the oarlock, right where it belonged.

She yanked the oar free and slammed it down on the tentacle. Marka screamed. Amaya raised her oar but froze in mid-strike as the creature dragged Marka over the side. Water covered her head, silencing her final cry.

"No!" Oar still in hand, Amaya flung herself into the water.

Through a flurry of bubbles, she saw a multi-armed, dark shape loom to her left. Two glowing eyes blinked at her. She hesitated a moment, then started jabbing at the eyes again and again with the handle of her oar.

The water exploded around her as Kai and her four Ga-Matoran teammates dropped into the sea. Amaya glanced at them and thrust her oar toward the Rahi's eyes again. Quickly, her teammates joined with her, stabbing and slashing at the Rahi.

Another bubble storm blinded them, and they paused their attack. The water cleared. Marka floated face-up before them. The Rahi had released her.

Amaya snatched Marka and carried her to the surface. One by one, the others surfaced beside her. They stared at the capsized boat and the bubbling wake of the fleeing Rahi.

"What was that thing?" someone asked.

"Where's it going?" said another.

Kai's eyes traced the direction of the Rahi. "Ga-Koro!" she said. "Quick! After it!"

While the others raced off, Amaya stared into Marka's unconscious face. Her dark blue Hau was gone, and her heartlight blinked faintly, but she was still breathing. "I've got to get you to shore," said Amaya.

Churning water halted Amaya a short distance from Ga-Koro. She bobbed in the water and watched the Rahi's attack. Huge tentacles reached onto the lily pad, tearing off pieces and dragging huts and equipment into the sea. The Ga-Matoran villagers attempted to beat off the Rahi with fishing staffs.

"They need help!" said Amaya.

Shifting Marka's weight, Amaya continued with strong, swift strokes until she reached the far western edge of the lily pad. "You'll be safe here," she said as she set Marka on the pad. She spied a coiled rope, and, with an idea in mind, she snagged it.

Amaya dived underwater and sped in the direction of the battle. The beast's enormous tentacles whipped the water ahead, but Amaya didn't slow. Ga-Matoran swam around the beast, stabbing at it with fishing staffs. Village debris floated and bobbed in the water.

Uncoiling her rope, Amaya darted into the twisting tentacles. She wrapped her rope around the nearest tentacle. Something knocked against her, pushing her back. She dashed in and wrapped the rope again, and again. Beaks at the ends of the tentacles snapped at her from all directions.

If I can just get--

A tentacle wound around her neck. Amaya grabbed at it with one hand and flung the rope around it with the other. The tentacle tightened. She pulled to loosen it, but it wouldn't budge. It began yanking her upward. She raised her eyes to the snapping, beak-like mouth above.

Uh-oh.

Amaya jammed the rope into the Rahi's mouth. It spit it out.

The exertion of the battle and lack of air weakened her. She felt faint. She tried to stuff the rope in again but missed. A tentacle slapped against her Komau, knocking it loose. A beak bit into her leg. She shoved again with the rope as the mouth loomed closer. She needed to breathe. She needed... Something clutched her foot, but she hardly felt it.

I need...

Her grip on the Rahi loosened.

I need...

Her world went black.

"Amaya."

Amaya stirred. The Rahi! The fight! She bolted upright. "The village!"

Turaga Nokama quieted Amaya with a hand to her shoulder. "The village is safe."

Amaya looked around. She was lying on the Ga-Koro lily pad. She held her breath. Marka. What about Marka? "Marka? Is she..."

"I'm right here!"

Amaya's eyes flew past the Turaga to see Marka, grinning and waving.

"Marka!" said Amaya. "You're alive! And you have your Hau!"

Marka nodded at the Ga-Matoran on Amaya's other side. "Macku got it for me!"

Amaya smiled up at Macku, who smiled back.

"She said you saved me," added Marka.

"She saved us all!" said Macku. "Tangling the Rahi up in a rope! That was brilliant, Amaya! Brilliant!"

"It was foolhardy and reckless," Turaga Nokama admonished. "You nearly drowned, Amaya. Or worse."

"I was certain of it," said Amaya. "What happened? How did I get here?"

"I had your foot," said Macku. "And I wasn't letting go. With the Rahi tangled, we went at it full force until it dropped you and swam away. Well, tried to swim. Hard to swim when you're all knotted up like that." She chuckled. "That was a sight."

Amaya turned her gaze to the Turaga. "What was it? Do you know?"

Turaga Nokama stared out at the sea and shook her head.

Marka wrapped her arms around herself and shivered. "I guess the big question is, will it be back?"

Amaya surveyed the wreckage of the lily pad. Huts down, the shoreline shredded... The amount of damage a Rahi that size could do...

She shivered, too.

Everyone shivered.

"Let's hope not," said Turaga Nokama.