



Thirteen

Agil couldn't help the nerves that churned in his gut as they made their way through the trees. The forest was just as he remembered. The canopy of leaves blocking the sunlight and the heat mild but slightly sticky. He strayed towards the back of the group, letting Sersi and Ikaris lead the way. Sprite just behind with Thena and Kingo in the middle. Karun glancing around eagerly with excited eyes. For a second he envied the human. What must it be like to live for such a short time? For everything to be exciting and new? He couldn't imagine it.

"Are you okay?" Gilgamesh murmured. The man had strayed back to walk next to him. Agil tucked that one annoying strand of hair that always escaped the tie, back behind his ear and shrugged.

"I do not know". He glanced over at the others. They were far enough away that they wouldn't hear their low conversation. "I promised Druig that I would be back when I was better. I don't feel better. I still feel dirty".

"You are not dirty. Letting a human put a mark on you does not make you dirty", Gilgamesh stated firmly. He reached over and draped a massive arm around Agil's slim shoulders. "Stop saying bad things about yourself. That is Ikaris' job".

Agil cracked a smile at the joke about their fellow Eternal's critical nature but it faded with a sigh. "I don't feel sorry about Alexi anymore. That was a hundred and sixty one years ago now. I learnt my lesson".

"Have you?" The question seemed to hit him in the chest. Gilgamesh took a second to absorb the look on his face before patting his shoulder. "Because it seems to me, brother, that you're just using Alexi as an excuse to keep yourself emotionally walled away. When I visited you, there were no photos. None of your portraits were of anyone other than us. There was no connections. You may play with humans, sleep with them. But you still don't care for them. You still can't let them in. Was that the lesson you learnt? To wall yourself off from everyone, even us?"

"You can't come at me and say that", Agil scowled, pushing the arm around his shoulders away abruptly. He staggered away, chest suddenly tight and eyes wide. Gilgamesh gazed at him sadly.

"I don't think you have been healing. I think you have been cutting yourself off from the people who can help you deal with trauma".

"When did you become a therapist?" Agil scoffed as he stuck his hands into the pockets of his jeans.

Gilgamesh chuckled, the two of them walking in step. "I read a lot of 'how to handle trauma' books over the years. Some of them really helped Thena. You could let them help you too".

"I don't need to be fixed", Agil huffed.

"Are you calling me broken?" Thena turned to them with a questioning expression.

Agil blinked. "No. I just don't need to listen to advice from books".

Thena paused and seemed to consider something. Then she nodded and continued walking. "I liked the method where I was encouraged to draw what I was seeing", she called back. Agil didn't mention the hundreds of sketch books stored in his studio. The pages full of Druig's face in the temple, of Alexi pointing the gun. The roses spilled on the floor. "Maybe", Thena added. "You might find something else that works for you. You can't know before you try".

Her words seem to hang in the air for a moment as the silence descended over them. Agil let the thoughts roll in his mind. He had never told them of how he had returned to that English manor where he had left Druig. How he had flown in through the same window he had left through to see Alexi sprawled across the bed. The blood dried around his head and the gun clutched in his cold hand. Their bed, which had once been warm, stained beyond repair. He hadn't told them how he had collapsed at the side of the mattress, great heaving sobs wracking his chest as he placed his hands to pale cheeks. Those sea blue eyes staring unseeing at the window. That had been his lesson. Humans, no matter how much he cared or loved, always died. He had known it. Alexi just served to be a cruel reminder the one time he thought he had found something.

He never ended up loving Alexi in the way the man wanted. The man was not his soulmate or the love of his life. But Agil had cared, cherished a friend and lover. He still cared. Alexi had been important to him. All that caring had gotten him was scars and grief. Afterwards, in those nights alone with nothing, Agil had feared that there was something wrong with him. It was his fault that Alexi had ended up the way he was. His secrets, his lies, his inability to show how much he cared. It was those reasons, the things that haunt him, that he hadn't returned to Druig. The fear in his heart that he would ruin the other man too. That fear scared him more than the numbing loneliness.

Noise rose up ahead of them as through the greenery, rooftops appeared. Agil lifted his head and watched as the settlement drew nearer. It was both the same and different. Houses stood in the same circle structure around a small clearing but now they were all made of wood and metal. Cables for electricity spanned between them and pipes for plumbing jutted out of the earth. Walkways between the trees loomed overhead and Agil let soft butterfly wings condense over his shoulders. They lifted him up and he landed on one of the wooden bridges hanging over the central clearing. It swayed under his weight and he sat down on the wood, letting his legs dangle as he gazed down below.

Humans filled the spaces. Families, children. Some were tending to plants, others were carrying baskets of things between the houses. A couple of men were at a forge, the fire burning, and there were small children chasing each other round the trees. They all wore cloths of pale blues or earth tones. One of the children waved to Sersi as she passed. The humans unbothered by the newcomers in their midst. Agil watched them for a second. They were calm. More relaxed and visibly less under Druig's control than they had been when he had seen them before. For some reason that made him slightly pleased.

Sprite was walking up to a man who was busy carving shelves out of wood. He looked over as she spoke up in Spanish. "[Hey, We're looking for Druig. Is he here?](#)"

"Yes", the man replied with a frown. "[How do you know Druig?](#)"

Sprite paused for a second before going with the same excuse they had used when they had arrived for Agil. "We're friends from college" Agil snorted. He was pretty sure that Sersi was the only one out of them who had actually been to college. None of the rest of them had bothered.

His smile faded as the man suddenly straightened and turned around, eyes glowing completely golden. "Hello Sprite". The words were in English, accented in a familiar way. Agil jumped to his feet as all the humans dropped what they were doing and faced a barn in the corner of the clearing. Bridge swaying under him, he turned to face it too. The yellow doors creaked open as a dark haired man sauntered out.

Druig was smirking slightly as he descended the steps and came to a standstill. His hair was the same and those stormy blue eyes twinkled in amusement as he folded his arms behind his back. He was dressed in a dark grey wrap around jacket and matching trousers. The pale blue of his undershirt made the slight tan of his skin all the more obvious. He looked healthy, comfortable. Agil watched as his eyes swept over the clearing. For a second the smile faltered, then Druig looked up. Agil's breath caught in his throat as those blue eyes met his and the smirk redoubled. It felt teasing, smug and pleased and almost relieved. Guilt stole Agil's breath as he stared down at the man he had slept with, then abandoned. Warmth, relief and fear all warring in his chest. He cared so much it hurt, how had he not realised it before?

"I've missed all of you", Druig announced as he finally tore his eyes away from the man in the tree. The next words were spoken with a grin. "Please, make yourselves at home".

unedited

Reunited. oooooooooo.

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