



## seventeen

They found the others in a clearing not far from the village. Scorch marks littered the trees and Ikaris was standing protectively over Gilgamesh. Thena pressed to the large man's side as she supported him. Agil sped up his footsteps and fell to his knees next to them. Gil's face was creased in pain and Ikaris was panting heavily. There was blood on both of their shirts and Thena was looking lost. "What happened?"

"The big one", Gilgamesh wheezed. "It has a way of stealing our abilities".

"It did something to us", Ikaris voiced. "Seemed to draw energy from us. It makes it evolve. It can speak now. Has intelligence".

"Are you alright?" Sersi reached out to him in concern. Ikaris leant into the hand on his shoulder.

"It took more from Gil than it did from me".

"Hurts like a bastard", Gil groaned. Thena let out a worried chuckle.

The man sighed and formed a fist. For a second gold magic formed a gauntlet round his hands then it fizzled out. Gilgamesh let out a despondent sigh. "Whatever it did to me, I can't use my strength".

"We should get back to the plane", Kingo voiced. "We should find the others. Maybe Phastos will have a way of healing you Gil".

"Hopefully", Gilgamesh huddled as Thena and Agil helped him to his feet. He was weakened from the lack of celestial power. Face grey and breathing slightly laboured. The sight of it scared Agil and he was almost too afraid to touch him. Druig must have seen something in his eyes as he waved at Kingo to take Agil's place. The man did so without any protest, throwing Gilgamesh's arm over his shoulders. Sersi was at Ikaris' side, muttering to him in a soothing voice as they all stumbled and limped back towards the village.

"Are you okay?" Druig asked gently. Agil blinked. He was soaked through from the displacement from the pond and there was a burning in his side. He pressed a hand to it and it came away red. Suddenly, pain was filling his senses and all he could do was gasp as the adrenaline finally gave up. Druig let loose a worried shout as Agil suddenly slumped, arms reaching out to catch him as the man passed out.

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Agil woke to the murmuring of familiar voices and an ache in his bones. Everything hurt, from his muscles to his forming bruises and the throbbing pain in his side. Five hundred years and he had forgotten how much of a work out fighting Deviants was. They had all grown lazy and lax. The sorry state of them after the last battle was proof of that. He let out a groan and the voices stopped. He was lying on something leather and familiar. When he opened his eyes, blinking at the warm yellow of electric lights, he found himself laid out on the couch at the back of Kingo's plane. The man himself was visible at the bar with Karun and Sprite. Gilgamesh and Thena were in the flight seats. Gil snorting loudly and Thena reading a travel magazine.

"He's awake!" Kingo exclaimed with a dramatic wave of his arms. "We thought we had lost you for a minute there. I have never seen Druig look like that before".

"You're too loud", Druig's voice hissed as he stepped into view. Agil blinked as he watched the man exit the room in the back of the plane and drop to a kneel beside the sofa. "How are you feeling?" The words were so .

Agil pressed a hand to his side and instantly let out a hiss of pain.

"You had a pretty bad claw mark on your side", Sprite explained in a bored voice. "For a second there we thought you were going to kick the bucket". The deviant Sersi had turned into a tree must have caught him there when it was trying to rip him apart.

"You would just love that", Agil muttered as he flicked her the middle finger. He caught her sticking her tongue out back at him and let out a weak chuckle. He moved to sit up but hands were on his shoulders and pressing him back down.

Druig's eyes were concerned and his tone held a note of so ness.

"Easy there", he muttered, accent thick. "You are still healing. We may heal much faster than humans but Ajak isn't around to vanish away our scars anymore". Agil sighed but let himself be settled back against the leather. When he glanced down, it was to see his tshirt missing and blood stained bandages wrapped around his stomach.

"I can't believe you had to use first aid on me", he muttered.

"Next time don't bleed all over my plane", Kingo shot back. "Because of that, I am not sharing any of my drinks". He raised a cocktail glass and took a sip. Agil flicked him the middle finger too.

"Sersi and Ikaris went to talk to Phastos", Druig said as he placed a pillow under Agil's head. "You stopped bleeding about four hours ago but the wound sit still healing".

"How long was I out?" Agil knew that Phastos was somewhere in America, and they had been a few hours journey from the airport in Druig's village.

"Sixteen hours", Thena muttered in reply. She didn't look up as she turned a page of her magazine.

"How's Gil?" Agil frowned. The man wasn't as pale as before and was snoring pretty loudly, but there still wasn't all the colour back in his skin yet.

"Weak", Thena replied. "Whatever the deviant did to him sapped his strength. It will take him a long time to recover".

"Ikaris is fine", Kingo added.

"Ikaris is always fine", Agil rolled his eyes. Druig reached out to push a lock of his hair back from his face and Agil blinked, smiling at him for the gesture.

Kingo made a disgusted noise. "When did this happen? Ewww. Did I miss something the last thousand years? Since when was Agil and Druig a thing? Did you know?" He turned to Sprite.

The diner rolled her eyes. "Dude. They have been pining over each other since Babylon. Catch up".

Kingo let out a o ended gasp. "Did you two know as well?" Thena nodded and turned another page. "How was I the last to know?"

"Ikaris and Sersi don't know", Sprite o ered. "And a I doubt Phastos doesn't either. Makkari has been betting on it with Thena and Gil for the last thousand years though".

Kingo let out a frustrated hu of breath. "Shut up Kingo", Druig called.

"This is what I mean", the darker skinned movie star scowled. "Why him?" he asked Agil, before pausing. "But he loves humans, and you hate them? How did that happen?"

"I told you", Agil groaned. "I don't hate them. They just irritate me and I hold no love for them". Kingo snorted but seemed to give up. He turned to his drink and began complaining about the situation to Karun.

"Would you like anything?" Druig asked quietly. Agil pointed to where he had le his bag on one of the leather chairs and the man rose to retrieve it. Immediately the long haired male reached out to grab his pencils and sketchbook, but Druig held them out of his reach. "No bending over a sketchbook", he frowned. "Let yourself heal".

Agil scowled at him as the blue eyed man took a seat on the floor and leant back against the leather. "That's unfair", he muttered. "I'm bored".

"Can I see?" Druig asked as he pulled the sketchbook from the bag. Agil paused for a second, then sighed and nodded. Most of his works were hanging in galleries around the world. Druig had to have seen at least one over the years. Agil has never made a secret about his art. Druig flicked the book open and Agil closed his eyes, sleep settling over him as he listened to the muttering of voices.

unedited

no, Gilgamesh did not die. Yay!



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