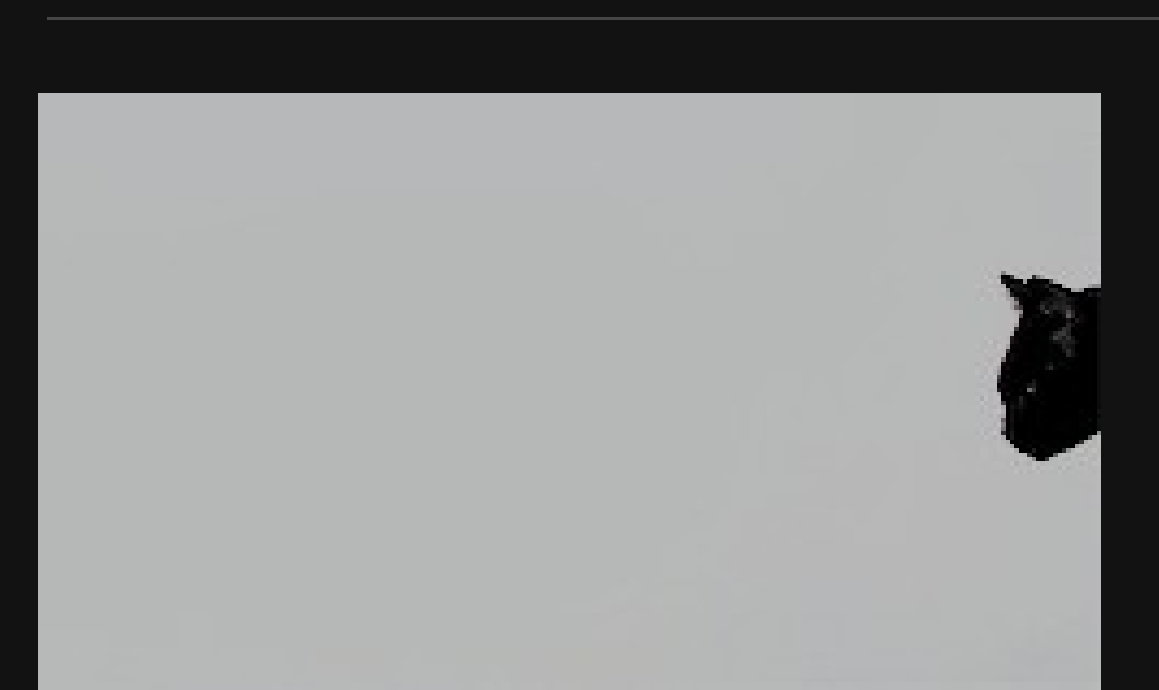
xxii - Kingo, Sprite and some random dude



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Amsterdam, 2023

" **LET ME INTRODUCE YOU TO ONE OF MY FAVOURITE ETERNAL.** Now, I know this sounds like favouritism, but believe me, you'll understand when you'll meet him," promised Kingo, looking into the camera held by his valet. "He's one of our finest warriors, yes, but he's also a literal ray of sunshine. He is everything you would expect in the god Apollo, except for the little A in front of his name. Oh, he's here! Pollo, the nicest killer you'll ever meet!"

As soon as he came out of the door, Pollo groaned, shielding his eyes from the sun with one hand and using his other arms to hold Dragon. He was wearing a black t-shirt with pants just as dark, and hadn't brought anything more than a bag with him. He had dark bags under his eyes and still smelt of ramen. He noticed the camera before he even saw his friends standing in front of him. He used the one hand that had previously protected his face to try and push it away, though he didn't want it to fall on the ground and break.

"Get that shit away from me," he mumbled.

Only then did he see them. Neither of them had changed, of course, that was the whole point of being Eternals, yet it didn't stop him from enjoying seeing them again. It was like he'd never left, except of course for the change of clothing, which had evolved with humans. There were no new scars, no sigh of a changed personality, which couldn't have been said of Pollo, who'd gained a pale scar on his cheek after getting one of his own rope in the face because he hadn't wanted to hurt Druig. Now he wished he'd let the rope burn him.

"Sprite, Kingo, my friends from college. It's nice to see you again." He knew very well how tired he'd sounded when speaking up, however he tried to hide it with a smile. "You haven't aged a day since I last saw you."

Kingo, who had seemed terrified by Pollo's previous reaction only a few seconds earlier, let out a high pitched squeal, opening his arms as he went to hug Pollo, making sure not to hurt his cat. "Po! I'm so happy to see you again! And you should be one to talk, you haven't changed either! Handsome fella, that one."

He tapped Pollo's chest, which earned him a frown from... Well, everybody. Though the taller man realized that his friend was talking to a camera held by a man he'd never seen before, he decided it was better not to question it. He walked towards Sprite who, granted, he'd never been particularly close to, still she'd been an Eternal and they had some good times together. They were friends, even if they hadn't talked quite as much as they'd talked with others. She liked making people laugh and for him, it was by using her powers to show him dragons, which he appreciated.

"Hey Sprite," he greeted. "How have you been?"

She glanced behind him, looking at Ikaris and Sersi before answering. "Pretty good. You? Do you still hate us?"

His smile didn't fall, but his shoulders still tended up. "Not really, so don't give me a reason to. I'm not scared to hit you just because you look like a kid."

"Yes!" Agreed Kingo, looking at the camera once more. "You see, Sprite is actually much older than what she looks like. We're all older than what we look like, but mostly her! We have been alive for thousands of years now! That's why we are called Eternals."

The man behind the camera, who was undoubtedly human, gave him a thumbs-up as he finished talking. Pollo sighed loudly, looking back from Kingo to the human. He tried to get an explanation from Sprite, who just shrugged. He knew that Kingo had become a famous movie star since they'd last met, but he hadn't expected for him to turn crazy as well. Well, he couldn't deny having heard that the movie industry was a cruel one. Maybe so many years playing roles had made Kingo lose touch with reality.

"Okay, I can't just act like this is normal," he finally spoke. "What's going with you and that camera?"

"Oh! I'm making a documentary about us, so that the world can finally discover how much we've done for them! And our cameraman is Karun, my valet. We've known each other for fifty years!"

Pollo raised an eyebrow, looking the human up and down. "Fifty years and he's still by your side, really? Be honest, how much does he pay you to be his friend?"

He heard Kingo but didn't pay him any mind. He knew the best way for them not to worry about him was to act normal. And normal was him teasing everyone with a smile on his face, never letting it drop.

"I'm not allowed to say, sir," replied Karun, shuffling onto place.

"Of course not," he mocked. "Well, it's good to see that you've been keeping yourself occupied, Kingo. I wouldn't want you to have gotten bored in these last centuries."

"Oh, far from that! Have you seen any of my movies?"

Yes, he'd watched them all. As soon as he'd heard Kingo had started a career in the movies industry, he'd decided it was his duty as a friend to follow his career. His movies were actually what interested him in a TV, as in the first place he'd not been particularly impressed by the invention. Now, he was kind of addicted to it.

Though he had loved Kingo's movies and wanted to tell him, he didn't want him to worry and the only way for him not to worry was if he was himself. If teased him. If he was dumb. Nobody had ever liked Pollo when he'd been smart. They wanted him to be a pretty face and a good warrior, nothing else. Being smart was left to a small group of the Eternals, of which he wasn't a part of. It's not like he was a genius anyway, so it didn't matter if he acted like he was dumb.

"You made movies?" He questioned, which earned him a groan from Kingo.

"I never really understood why you were friends with Druig, but now I see it," the other Eternal said. "You're both mean."

Even with all his strength, Pollo was unable to stop his smile from dropping. As soon as he noticed that his face had betrayed him, he tried to hide by laughing it off, still the others had noticed it. Worst of all, Karun had caught it on camera. It didn't matter. He could easily come up with a lie. Druig had left on bad terms with all of them, they would believe him if he just said that he was so angry at him it was enough to make his smile drop. Gosh, he really did hate Druig. He and the power he still seemed to have over him.

"I guess," he mumbled. "But Kingo, Sprite, you haven't even met my cat yet! I called him Dragon!"

"Of course you did," sighed Sprite, rolling her eyes. On the other hand, Kingo stayed silent and went to pet the cat.

"He is adorable, sir," stated Karun.

"Do you want to hold him?" Pollo suggested. "I can take the camera while you do."

At first, the human hesitated, glancing at Kingo for permission, before enthusiastically nodding. He exchanged his camera for the cat, who immediately started purring when Karun patted his head. Pollo let out a small laugh, both because of the heartwarming scene and the annoyed expression on Ikaris' face, who had been immediately hated by Dragon. Then again, Pollo's cat might have just been influenced by all the time he'd heard the Eternal mumbling about how much of an asshole Ikaris could be. The only way he would get an answer to that was if they met with Druig. If Dragon liked him, then he hadn't been influenced by Pollo's mumbling.

"Pollo, tell your cat to stop stealing my valet," whined Kingo. "Or at least let me hold him next."

To that, Pollo just laughed. It was loud or booming like he used to. It wasn't really warm either. But it was a laugh. A genuine one. And though he'd heard himself laughing in front of the TV before, it was still stranger to be laughing with the Eternals. After all this time, it was as though nothing had changed. It was like all those years of pain and love, though there really wasn't much of a difference for Pollo, they were still the same people they had been at that first party they ever had on the Domo. On that day, he'd laughed with them if he could barely remember their name. He'd flirted with Druig without fearing that anything would come out of it. That night had been perfect, even if he was unaware of it at the time.

And albeit it felt the same, he was well aware of how much had changed. How much he had changed. Nothing would ever be the same now. Sersi was the Prime Eternal. Ajak was dead. The Deviants were back. Druig hated him. Well, that last part might not actually have been such a new thing. Druig had never tried to hide his disdain towards him. The only change that was a good thing was Dragon. He was glad for him. It was strange, but the cat had stopped him from being so lonely all those years.

He wondered, had Ajak been lonely? She'd let them all go to do whatever they wanted to do, but what about her? What had she done? He remembered how she'd asked for them to tell her what they had done. Back then, he'd snapped at her. Today, he wanted to tell her. Everything. Even if most of it was just painful. He wanted to ask for her advice. She always seemed to know what to do. He could've told her about how he felt about Druig, though he wouldn't have been surprised if she already knew. She always seemed to know everything.

It must've been quite a burden, to know everything. As always, his mind manages to find a way to wander back to Druig. It must've been quite a burden for him to be able to learn anything he wanted about anyone in the blink of an eye without ever doing it. Had the roles been reversed, would Pollo have done the same thing? Erase Druig's memory to make him feel better? Well, the roles weren't reversed and he didn't have the answer to that. Or if he did, he refused to acknowledge it. Because the answer might mean forgiveness and he couldn't allow it when he was so close to meeting Druig again and being able to spit in his face all the horrors he'd thought of after they'd parted ways.

He couldn't forgive Druig now. Not when he'd spent so much time hating him.

"So! I hear we have a private plane to catch! Let's not make it wait!"

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Pollo to admit it, Kingo's jet was pretty nice. He'd rarely flown in first class, even less often by paying with his own money, so it was nice to get a small taste of what the rich life was like. The jet was cleaner than his appartement could ever be, that was for sure. Dragon had made his home on Karun's knees, who barely dared to breathe so as to not bother the cat. Pollo wanted to chuckle at how cute it was. Still, Kingo had asked to get an interview with him for his documentary and because Karun refused to stand up to film it, it's the two Eternals who had to settle down around him, Kingo on his left and Pollo in front of him.

"So, Pollo," started Kingo. "Tell us about your powers."

"Well, I can make burning ropes of light appear through cosmic energy manipulation, which I won't do right now, so as to not melt the plane, but maybe when we're in Australia," he spoke calmly, trying to keep a smile on his face. "I can also control my body temperature, so I can resist pretty bad weather of all types. It also really helps me boil water a lot faster."

"You're also a pretty good fighter, aren't you?"

"Yeah, but all Eternals are. We're naturally stronger than all humans, so that give us an advantage, but we were also chosen for this mission because of our skills, so I wouldn't be here if I couldn't defend myself," he tried to explain.

He knew he wasn't the best warrior of the Eternals, which was mostly due to his recklessness on the battlefield, and he didn't feel comfortable when people tried to lie to him by telling him he was a great warrior. He was far from such a thing but then again the only one who was particularly skilled in combat was Thena, along with Gilgamesh, maybe. The others were nothing without their powers, not even Ikaris.

"What about your relationship with the Eternals?" Kingo shuffled into place, a mad grin appearing on his face. "Do you have a favourite?"

He chuckled awkwardly as a pair of terrifying blue eyes flashed into his mind. He felt his whole body tense up but didn't try to hide it, as he knew it would look even more suspicious if he did. At least like that he could come up with a lie about being tired or something of the sort.

"I'm sorry Kingo, but I gotta say Makkari," he laughed. "She's awesome. But don't worry, you're definitely in my top ten!"

The man didn't seem amused by the last comment as he rolled his eyes at him.

"Fine, I agreed, Makkari is better. And you know what? I'm not mad as long as I come before Druig." He then turned towards the camera so as to explain what he was saying, unaware of how Pollo's nails dug into his own palms. "Druig is another Eternal and he's very annoying. Even then, he and Pollo used to be pretty good friends. Hey, Pollo, tell me, how did you manage to live with that guy? You must have wanted to punch him in the face at some point, right?"

He should've come up with a smart answer with that. Or a dumb one. It didn't matter. He should've answered. He should have nodded or shook his head. Instead, he kept the question close to his chest and even closer to his lips, ready to throw it up, as he stood up abruptly. He knew he wasn't supposed to act weird, still this reaction had seemed like the only good one to such a question.

"I have to use the bathroom."

The question played nonstop in his head, refusing to leave him alone. He hated Druig. Druig had always hated him. It was as simple as that. Yet, there had been a time, a time he'd tried to forget, even before the village, when they'd been... not quite friends, but close. Even back then Druig had been a real asshole. Always annoying him, always making him want to scream, always managing to find the perfect way to make him angry, always making him laugh... No. That wasn't the point of all this. The point was that Druig was an asshole. A jerk. A dickhead. But never, ever, had Pollo thought of punching Druig.

Well yes, he might have thought of abandoning him in a desert from time to time, yet he'd never wanted to hurt him. Never. He hadn't even questioned why they were still friend. He admitted that he's questioned at least once howthey had became friends, but never why they still were. Druig was an asshole. A dipshit. A bastard. Or was he? Why had they been friends for all this time if he'd been all those things? Maybe he'd been more than just that. Maybe he'd been an asshole with a silver heart and golden eyes. A jackass with good intentions. A prick who didn't want to be one. He'd spent so much time trying erasing everything good about Druig, he came to question if those things had really existed. Or was he making them up now to try and find an excuse to redeem Druig?

He had to stop thinking of him. He had to shred the image of him to pieces and burn them down. He didn't care if he burned himself as well while he was at it. All he cared about was for Druig to be out of his head and those terrible feelings to be out of his heart. He didn't want to cry and hate because of him anymore. He wanted to be indifferent. He wanted to be able to talk about Druig without thinking of all the things he hated about him. He wanted so many things he knew he couldn't have. Not without Druig, that is.

Druig, Druig, Druig, Druig, Druig. Why was that name always on his mind, even when his mind was empty? Why was it always there, lingering around him and caressing his skin? He had to get rid of it. This haunting had lasted long enough. Why couldn't Druig ever leave him alone.

Talking of being left alone... As a terrible headache, though not quite as terrible as his flashes, had taken over him, a knock on the door made him snap his head towards it. How long had he been here? How long had he been spiralling over one stupid name? Oh, what had Druig done to him to make him that way?

"Just as second!"

A silence followed his demand as he flushed the toilet, though it was still unused, and splashed water on his face.

"How do you know I was going to knock?"

Ikaris. His voice was enough to make him lose his anger towards Druig and redirect it towards someone else. He'd never been so glad to hear his voice before.

"You're not as stealthy as you think, Ikaris," he lied through gritted teeth.

He needed to stop thinking about Druig. After all, it was simple. He hated Druig. And Druig had always hated him.

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