xxvii - The mix between dreams, memories and reality

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HE DIDN'T SEE WHERE DRUIG WENT. All he knew was that he'd lost him while running back to the village. The other Eternal hadn't told him what was happening, though he'd still understood that it was urgent. He'd been able to see the distress in his eyes. Just after he'd seen the betrayal on his face, that is. He kind of wished he hadn't acted that way when seeing him use his powers, yet he really couldn't have stopped himself. And could you blame him? The last thing he needed right now was to get his memory erased. Or locked away.

All that was gold, or could've been, had disappeared. The sunset, the feelings, they were gone. He was left alone with both his and Druig's darkness. And without his anger. The Deviants were still out there, he needed it. Yet, he'd been foolish enough to let his guard down, letting the golden sun melt it away. He needed it, now. He could feel it inside of him. He was in danger. In a danger that was... familiar.

And he'd left Dragon at the village! While at first he got worried, he was quickly reminded that Dragon didn't need his protection. The only reason he had to worry was that he wouldn't be able to receive Dragon's protection. Then again, he wasn't quite sure what was awaiting him at the village and maybe he wouldn't need anybody's help. It was unlikely, yet he really did wish it was the case. They already had too much going on with the emergence, he really didn't need things to get complicated. Well, *more* complicated.

When he arrived to the village, it was chaos. There were one, two, maybe three, Deviants attacking as Sersi laid on the ground, Sprite helping her up. Kingo was aggressively shooting at them, though, as he's been warned, Pollo that it was healing itself. So Ajak really was dead. And the Deviants had taken her power. He clenched his jaw, the cold anger coming back to him. For once since he'd first left the village, it wasn't directed at Druig. He wasn't sure if his anger could ever be directed at Druig again. Not yet, that was for sure.

"Get behind me!" Yelled Kingo as he continued to shoot them.

"One of them took Ikaris," declared Sersi, making Pollo wonder if he shouldn't actually thank the Deviants. He didn't, of course, and instead just made two ropes appear in his hands.

He closed his hands in fists, getting into a fighting stance. At least, he hadn't been too surprised by the attack. Sersi had warned him that the Deviants would probably show up at some point. Still, it was strange to see them again, alive, when they were supposed to have killed them all.

"It's an ambush!"

As Pollo still didn't attack, knowing that when he did so it would make Kingo lose his focus and be an easy prey for a few seconds. His timing would have to be perfect if he didn't want anybody to be hurt. And even when knew how important it was that he kept his eyes on the fight, his mind wandered towards Druig, wondering where he'd went. Of course, his powers were no help against the Deviants, so it probably would've been safer for him to stay hidden.

And though he missed a part of the fight, he snapped back to reality when he heard Karun speaking. "Very nice, sir!"

He was hiding behind a tree, filming with some new camera. Pollo would have to remind Druig that he had to pay for the one he'd broken. Yet, as he looked at Karun, he was unable to find Dragon. He must have ran away from Karun when hearing all that noise, looking for Pollo. He could only hope that he wasn't lost.

"Are you mental?" Screeched Kingo when he saw his valet. "Hide!"

"We need action sequences." He then seemed to notice that the Deviant that Kingo must've thrown at a cabin was getting ready for another fight. "Sir!"

"Sprite, get Karun out of here!"

He shot the Deviant once more and, trying to help, Pollo wiped one of his ropes at it, though he quickly went back to a fighting stance. He couldn't let his guard down. Not now. As they distracted the monster from Karun, Sprite tried to pull him away.

"How many cameras did you bring, young man?" She asked, annoyance lacing her words.

A second Deviant jumped on one of the cabins, destroying its walls. Even if Pollo could hear the screams of the villager, he was still occupied with the first Deviant.

"Kingo!" Sersi called after the Deviant roared at her, though an idea seemed to come to her mind. "Come on!"

Pollo barely glanced at her as she tried to lure it away, yet he made a mental note to thank her later. He threw the ropes at the Deviant, managing to trap one of its legs. He tried to heat up the ropes, wanting its skin to melt as quickly as possible, and felt his eyes burn when it snapped its head at him. Its eyes. They were still Deviant's eyes, yes, still a part of them was... Ajak. The cold anger continued to climb inside of him, reaching his head, making it almost impossible for him to think rationally.

Before he could try to attack one more, maybe use one of his dope to twist it around its neck, Kingo came to help him, shooting balls of energy at it. Even if he'd known of his presence, the act surprised Pollo, who'd expected him to go help out Sersi, so he snapped his head towards him. A horrible smell was starting to come from the people around him. A smell he hadn't smelt in a long time. Fear, mixed with melted skin. The only fear he'd smelt in the last centuries was his own, yet this time he was surrounded by terrified humans.

And that's when it happened. The horrible realization, the déjà vu, all of that followed by horrendous pain. The flashes. No. Not now. What could've caused those flashes? It didn't take much time for him to find out.

The sequence he'd just gone through repeated itself, yet this time he felt trapped in his own body. Three different souls trapped in the same body. Two of them being the same. These flashes were a bit different from usual. Normally, he got to see something that had already happened. This time, he got to see something that had just happened. A dream. He'd dreamt of this. He'd known it would happen. How? Golden lights flashes in front of his eyes as he barely understood what was happening, screams making his headache ten times worse than it should've been. The smell of fear had doubled as well, making his head spin.

And when the flashes were over, he noticed the way the light of his ropes flicker. No. He'd lost focus. He tried to take back control of his rope, but it was too late. For a second, they fully disappeared. A second too much. He heard Kingo calling out for him, far away. Before it happened, he knew what was going on. He was going to die. He'd seen it, years ago. Still, he tried to fight it. He made one rope reappear and tried to wipe at the Deviant like he'd done before, which only resulted in making it hiss. He knew it would be its reaction. But he didn't want to die. He couldn't die. Yet, that's what happened.

He felt the Deviant's claw dug through his skin like it was made of paper, tearing it and letting the blood escape as Pollo could do nothing to escape his fight. For centuries he'd known, without remembering, that he would die today. He would die at the end as blood ran down his broken skin, painting rivers on his body. Painting a map of everywhere he'd gone. Death wasn't cold. Nor was it warm. It wasn't a feeling either. It was a certainty. Eternal or not, he'd been born to die, as were all other beings. And today he met his fate. In a way, it gave him peace of mind.

Except for the fact that he didn't die. Before the claws could even touch any of his organs, someone came to save him. In death, you are alone. In life, you don't have to be. And he was still alive. He still had people around him to help him. It's not Kingo who came to save him, as he was too shocked by what had just happened in front of him, the second death of an Eternal in a week. It wasn't Druig either, who was still nowhere to be seen and whose mind trick could have been the reason for Pollo's death. No. The one who came to save him as he'd accepted that he could not save himself was Dragon.

Pollo heard him growl before he saw him. A low growl that, granted, was similar to the one of a cat. But the Eternal knew that the creature he loved so dearly wasn't one. His black fur and blue eyes could've mistaken anybody. Not him, though. Dragon opened his mouth, tentacles coming out of it and wrapping themselves around the Deviant's body. The tentacles pulled him away from Pollo, making him groan in pain as the claws were removed from his chest with little to no delicacy. And then, Dragon swallowed the monster whole.

"What the f—"

Pollo ignored Kingo as he walked towards his flerken, panting as he could still feel blood spilling out of his chest. He kneeled in front of Dragon, patting his head lovingly as the beast meowed softly. Pollo roughly translated it as 'You're welcome'. He chuckled softly, trying to mask the pain on his face.

"You own a flerken?!" Kingo screeched. "Where did you get a flerken?!"

"Alien black market," he replied curtly, deciding not to waste his time explaining it. "I'm going to help Sersi. Take care of that other Deviant."

He was almost sure he heard Kingo complaining about not telling him that Dragon was flerken, still he wasn't listening as he ran towards where he'd seen Sersi leaving. She could use her powers to fight, yes, but she hadn't trained quite as much as the warriors of the team and he feared she wouldn't last long against a Deviant. As he ran, he was much too aware of his injury that desperately needed medical attention, even if he knew he didn't have time for that right now. He thought of Ajak, as pain flooded through his body. Had she been there, she could've healed him in a few seconds and he would've been able to go back to fighting. For now, he would just have to suck it up.

When he found her, she'd just turned his old cabin into metal, trapping the humans there. But as soon as she'd done it, the Deviant she'd lured away managed to throw her against another cabin. As she tried to get up, the Deviant was about to attack her once more. However, Pollo was quick to react, wiping one of his ropes at the monster, managing to distract it. He didn't want to die, he really didn't, but he'd rather it was him than to lose their Prime Eternal once more. Sersi was the leader now. Even if being an Eternal wasn't what he originally thought it meant, it was still Pollo's rôle to protect her.

The Deviant would probably have attacked him, finishing him off once and for all, yet it was distracted once more, this time by some of the villagers. They'd taken out rifles, which Pollo was unaware existed in this village, and started shooting at the beast. With its tail, the Deviant threw some of them away, undoubtedly killing them, or at least wounding them severely. Nonetheless, there was something strange about them. Their movements were robotic and too synchronized to be natural. Almost like they were puppets. Pollo got the answer to his question when Druig apparently came out of nowhere.

He jumped above the Deviant's tail, rolling on the ground as he took the gun left on the ground by one of the humans. He jumped above it once more, shooting it in the neck as he did so. Wanting to help, Pollo wrapped a rope on two of its legs, making it fall to the ground. Sersi, who'd managed to get up, turned the bottom of a tree into water and, as it started to fall, then turned it into metal, just like she'd previously done with his old cabin. It fell on the Deviant as Pollo made his ropes disappear at the last minute, feeling someone take him by the waist and making him fall just out of reach so that the tree wouldn't fall on him as well. They crashed on the ground, Pollo crying out in pain as the person fell on his still bleeding chest. They both breathed heavily, Druig, who apparently had been the one to save him, rolled off of him.

They laid there for less than a second, as they were well aware that the Deviant wasn't yet dead. Druig was the first one to stand up as, beside for a few bruises, he was unhurt. He gave his hand to Pollo who reluctantly accepted it, helping him stand up. While doing so, the taller Eternal groaned, making Druig notice the blood soaked shirt he was wearing. He looked down at his own shirt, noticing that fresh blood also stained it, though it wasn't his own.

"You're hurt," he started, worryingly.

Now, there are multiple ways you can answer to someone who is worried about you. Even more when this person obviously care about you. For some reason, probably because the flashes had been the reason for his injury, he decided that he would not show the same kindness towards Druig.

"I told you that the Deviant would kill me, didn't I?"

His voice had been harsh, harsher than it had needed to be. Yet it's not hurt or betrayal that appeared on his, but rather shock. He hadn't thought of that nightmare Pollo had in centuries. It had almost perfectly guessed what would happen on that day. How? As he was about to ask Pollo about it, or maybe even apologize, Sersi called out for him, running towards the both of them.

"Druig! Let them go!" She panted.

"Now is not the time, Sersi," he replied dryly and Pollo had to agree with him.

She grabbed him by the shoulders, shaking him slightly. "Please. I know you're better than this."

He threw an almost disgusted look towards Pollo, as though he was asking him what to do with her, however he was faced by his friend's —former friend?— cold facade. He pushed her hands away as the humans fired at the Deviant once more, the loud noise making Pollo flinch. Druig lifted his arm towards them, turning his head away from Pollo so that he couldn't see his eyes glowing yellow. He didn't need to see them to know he was using his powers, as the humans all lowered their rifles, confused looks on their faces.

"Druig," called the man Pollo had talked with earlier. "What's happening?"

"Go!" The mind controller yelled in English. "Get to the river!"

" *The river*," Pollo repeated in Spanish, gesturing at them to go. And that's exactly what they did.

The Deviant growled as it started to break free. Druig took Sersi by the arm, starting to run away, but as he was about to grab Pollo as well, the taller man shrugged it off. Those two needed to run, yes. They weren't warriors. But he was. It was his duty to fight. No, not his duty. His fate. All he'd ever known how to do was fight. And that's what he would do.

"Go, please," he said, his tone not quite as cold as it had been before. "I've got this."

Druig, though seeming unsure, still took Sersi with him as the Deviant managed to push the tree away. Without missing a beat, he wrapped one of his rope around its tail, trying to cut it off, and wrapping the other one around its neck. He struggled to keep the monster in check, and as he started to think he'd managed it, seeing some of its melted skin on the ground, he found himself hit by one of the Deviant's leg, flying away. He hit his head roughly against the ground, everything becoming blurry for a second. When he managed to see clearly again, the Deviant was gone. He could taste blood in his mood, spitting some of it on the ground, yet he still stood up, running after the monster.

When he arrived, Sersi was already passed out on the ground and Druig had fallen as well, fear in his eyes. Pollo had never seen him like that, except for one time when he'd almost died, Thena having attacked him. He was terrified. Then, he seemed to notice that Pollo had came, perfectly able to save him, still the terror didn't leave his face. Instead, he closed his eyes, apparently resigned to dying. It's only later that Pollo would understand that Druig thought he was going to let him die. Which was really stupid, as he didn't even need to think twice —or once, for that matter— before he attacked the Deviant one more time.

Pollo really wasn't a sight to see. His hands and shirt were soaked in blood, his lips were tainted red as well, his hair were full of dirt and there was even more blood on his face. He could very well have been trying to audition for the part of a zombie in a movie. And that's how he felt as well. Like a zombie. It didn't stop him from wanting to protect Druig. And Sersi, obviously.

Before he could try to attack once more, Ikaris landed in front of him, taking hold of the Deviant's jaws and keeping them apart. Then, he used the beams from his eyes to shoot it in the mouth, making the Deviant's head explode. As it did so, Sersi started to wake up, a confused look on her face. The tail of the Deviant's then tried to stab Pollo, who used his rope to cut it off. Almost as soon as they were sure that the Deviant was dead, Ikaris flew away without a word, Sersi running after him.

Pollo didn't try to stop them, he knew he couldn't. When had they ever listened to him anymore? He didn't give Druig a hand as he stood up, though he did give him a questioning look, silently asking if he was okay. He answered with a sharp nod, still no words coming from them. Pollo then opened his mouth, thinking of saying something, though he didn't know what, but they were interrupted once more. This time, though it was by a strange sound, like water was falling onto the ground. They turned around, walking towards the sound, only to find some kind of tree, which had obviously once been a Deviant.

They all looked in shock as Sersi stood up from the pond, now half empty. Ikaris heaved, running towards her. "Sersi! Are you alright?"

They both hugged, Sersi breathed heavily. Pollo, on the other hand, found himself being lightheaded, stumbling slightly. Druig passed an arm around his waist and though at first he'd wanted to push it away, he finally welcomed it. It's not like he could stand on his own anyway.

"How did you do that?" Asked Ikaris, parting away.

She seemed to hesitate before answering. "I don't know."

"Wait, guys," Pollo spoke, all heads turning towards him. "Where are Gilgamesh and Thena?"

All he needed for Ikaris to fly away once more was to say those words. They were quick to follow him, though Pollo still needed Druig's help to walk without falling. A few black spots had started to appear in his vision, though he kept it silent. When they arrived in the forest, Thena was on the ground, sobbing, against Gilgamesh's body. It might have been because he had a concussion, but it took him more time than the other to understand what was happening. He was just shaking his head, refusing to admit what he was saying as Druig pulled him closer. This time, he tried to fight it, though he was too weak to do so.

"I'll remember..." Thena breathed out, still holding Gilgamesh's dead body close to her.

No. He couldn't be dead. Pollo was the one who was supposed to die that day. Gilgamesh should have lived. He should have lived.

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