vii - Another party

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Babylon, 575 BC

WHY DID BABYLON HAD SO MANY PARTIES? Did the people of this city ever sleep? Pollo felt like the only thing he'd done since he'd arrived here with the others was stay up late and drink a little too much. Only a week ago he was partying, drinking and making mistakes. One of those mistakes being rather extreme, actually.

He still couldn't believe he'd slept with Druig. Yes, there was no doubt that the mind controller was good looking, but not once in the last centuries had he ever felt attracted to him. Had he wanted to tear off his head once or twice? Yes, absolutely. We're there other times where he wanted to hug him? Obviously. But never had he ever thought of kissing, let alone sleep with him. And yeah, he'd been drunk when it had happened, but why had he done it? Had he been the first one to initiate it? Honestly, he had no idea and he was pretty sure that Druig didn't either.

There were no doubts that he would have handled this in a much better way. Kicking Druig out of his room after rambling about how much of a mistake it had been was quite rude, but he wasn't going to lie. He did saw it as a mistake and he did prefer not to talk about it. But since then, his relationship with Druig had been awkward and sometimes even painful. They had gotten into fights before, but this was different. It was passive aggressive and nobody could try to help as they ignored what they had happened between them. Maybe he should try to apologize and explain that he hadn't meant to come off as rude, but he didn't want to give Druig false hope.

He was pretty sure that Druig never had feelings for him either, but he still didn't want to risk their friendship because of that. It was too late, though. Their friendship was already ruined and he had no idea how to fix it. What do you say after those kinds of things anyway? *I'm sorry we slept together after getting drunk on a bet you started, hope we can still be friends because we're living together for the next few centuries anyway?* No, that's stupid! He did feel bad about how he'd handled things before, but he was still sure he'd done the right thing, even if it had been in a rude way. The best thing to do was to ignore it and simply let things go back to normal.

Makkari had found people who swore they had the Emerald Tablet in their possession, so she'd asked him and Druig to be there to translate for her. Well, technically she could've just asked Druig, but there were rumours that the Emerald Tablet led to the only dragon on earth and Pollo couldn't miss this opportunity, so he came as well.

But Makkari was late. And both he and Druig were early. Or at least, Druig was early and Pollo was on time. Realizing that it might awkward, he thought of turning around and coming back later, but he realized that Makkari could make her appearance at any moment and he didn't want her to do the trade without him, so he decided to just act as though he didn't know how awkward it was supposed to be between them.

"Druig!" He waved, making the other man flinch. "You're early."

"So are you, Polly." The taller man was relieved to hear his nickname, as he was pretty sure that Druig had never once spoken his real name, not even in their worst fights. "Is Makkari with you?"

"No, I think she's late," he laughed. "Hey, could you move? I don't want to have to stand for the whole trade."

The young man seemed to hesitate and almost started to move away before his eyes went cold and his expression became harsh. "No."

"No? But why? There's plenty of space for both of us."

Realizing that he was saying the truth, Druig slang one of his leg on the rest of the bench. "Not anymore."

He wasn't quite sure whether Druig was acting out of spite or if he was just back to usual mean self, but he wasn't having any of it. He'd just spend his whole day fighting Deviants and he was tired. Of course, the mind controller couldn't understand that, as he'd barely done anything of his day. Pouting, Pollon let himself fall onto his friend's lap, humming teasingly.

"What are you doing?" Basically screeched Druig, trying to push him off without success. "Get off!"

"Nah. Just because you won't move your fat ass doesn't mean I can't sit down." He stuck out his tongue at him, but he wasn't quite sure the mind controller had seen it.

"You're calling me fat?" For some reason, he seemed to be making a much bigger deal of this than it really was. "You're the one who's crushing me!"

"I wouldn't have to if you just moved," he stated, clicking his tongue in annoyance.

"Fine, fine!" Finally complied Druig. "Just get off!"

"As you wish, oh light of my life," he sneered, even bowing mockingly.

After he stood up, the mind controller finally moved, letting some place for Pollo. A satisfied smile on his face, he took his seat without complaining. Still, he nodded the hesitation on Druig's face, which was a very rare sight. The shorter boy barely ever hesitated and when he did, he didn't let it show.

"Polly..." he started in a low tone, even though the two men in front of them couldn't understand their language. "Should we talk about...?"

He didn't finish his sentences, but it's not like he had to. They understood each other perfectly. "Yeah, uh, I'm really sorry about how I acted. I had no idea what was going on and I totally freaked out. I didn't mean to be rude. But... I stand by what I said. I do think it's better for us not to talk about it, y'know? So that we can go back to normal."

As always, Druig was quite hard to read. He'd been taken aback by Pollo's words, but he wasn't quite sure if it was a good or a bad thing. "Exactly what I was about to say."

His voice was cold, however it had become a habit for the mind controller to talk to him in that way, so he didn't question it, giving him a warm smile instead. Almost immediately, Makkari appeared, putting down a bunch of stolen objects on the table.

"My beautiful Makkari," spoke Druig all while signing, seemingly relieved to see her. "You're late."

"I needed to get enough artifacts to make a good trade," she justified. This was one of the best things about Makkari. She might've been a thief, but she always wanted her trades to be fair.

"Don't blame her, Druig," teased the taller boy. "It's not her fault you arrived awfully early because you had nothing better to do."

Maybe Pollo would've said something or maybe Druig would've tried to bite back, but both of their eyes were distracted by a sudden movement behind Makkari. One of the men was stealing one of the objects Makkari had placed on the table as he leaned towards the second man.

"Just lie to her," he whispered in Babylonian.

Big mistake, because Makkari immediately felt the vibration and used her speed to take a hold of the man's wrist. Pollo let a smirk dance on his lips while Druig lazily passed an arm around his shoulders. He really hoped she would beat up those guys for trying to take advantage of her deafness.

"I can sense vibrations. Even the tiniest movements," she explained, signing, while Druig translated in Babylonian for the two humans. "Including your voices when you speak. Did you two just waste my time?"

"Also, where you two really stupid enough to think that Druig and I wouldn't hear you?" Questioned Pollo.

While he was both pissed off and offended, the scared look on their faces was enough to make him smile again. He felt Druig's grip on his shoulder tightened a bit, so he quickly brushed his knuckles with his own hand to make him understand he didn't plan on getting in a fight today.

"The Emerald Tablet you're searching for... is a myth!" Shouted one of the humans before they both hurried off.

Pollo let out a scoff at the sight, but it was drowned out by the sound of people fighting. He was rather disappointed, but not surprised. He knew very well that Earth wasn't able to have dragons without them killing all humans. Still, he would've liked to see another dragon. He couldn't help but frown at the thought. It felt like such a long time ago since he'd last thought of his family and of Olympia. He hoped he wasn't forgetting them. He loved them too much for that.

He turned his head towards a group of humans fighting each other, probably for some stupid reason. Both the noise and Pollo's movement made Druig notice the situation as well. He sighed loudly, pushing Pollo softly so that they could both stand up. His focus stayed on the humans as his eyes turned yellow. The taller man had to admit it, he didn't like when his friend did that. He wasn't quite sure why, but seeing the mind controller's eyes change colour gave him a strange feeling of anticipation. As though he was the one getting controlled. However, he knew it was stupid to think like that. He trusted that Druig respected him enough to never try something like that without telling him about it first.

The humans' eyes turned yellow as well and they hit themselves in the face before laughing and going to hug whoever they had been fighting before. Pollo started playing nervously with his fingers, not knowing whether he should be happy or not. On one hand, Ajak told them to never interact with human conflicts, but on the other hand, could this stupid fight really have been considered a conflict? It's not like it would've changed the course of history anyway.

"When humans have conflict, Ajak tells us not to interfere." Reminded Makkari.

Druig smiled as he took one of the objects she'd taken to make the trade for the Emerald Tablet. "Well, she also says that stealing is very, very bad."

"If you don't tell, I won't tell." She grinned.

He faked thinking about it before he answered. "Deal."

Leaning on the wall, Pollo looked at them with a confused smile. "Why are you always so nice to Makkari and yet so mean to me, Druig?"

"Because I prefer Makkari." He shrugged.

"Well, yeah, of course, everybody prefers Makkari," he continued, "But that doesn't explain why you're mean to *me*"

He pouted, making Druig roll his eyes. Next to them, Makkari sat down, grinning madly. He knew that it was just in Druig's nature to be like that, but it always bewildered him how nice he could be with their common friend. He waited for an answer, but as none came, he just sighed. While he couldn't know that Druig didn't have the answer, he was still saddened by the fact that his friend wasn't even trying to explain. But then again, it was Druig's nature to be mean. He shouldn't have been questioning it.

"Fine," he spoke, letting go of the subject. "But if you won't answer me, then at least dance with me. I'm bored."

The mind controller narrowed his eyes at him, looking for a trap in his words. When he realized that his words were genuine, he let out a bitter laugh. "No."

"Why not?" Wondered Pollo, titling his head on the side.

"Because I don't want to," he explained bitterly.

A frown appeared on the taller boy's face. "You don't want to dance at all or is it just because it's me?"

"A bit of both." He smirked.

Pollo felt his nails dig into his palm and suddenly realized he'd closed his fists. He tried to calm down, letting out a cold chuckle and placing a fake smile on his lips. He wasn't quite sure what he had expected. It wasn't a surprise for Druig to refuse to dance, however he felt tired of his friend acting like they weren't friends. He took a deep breath, letting his emotion of hurt show on his face.

"See?" He asked, earning himself a confused glance from Druig. "This is what I meant when I said you were mean to me. But it's okay. I'm used to it by now." He turned his a bit, but kept eyes on the other man. "Makkari? Would you do me the honour?"

She was looking between the two of them, trying to understand what had just happened, but as she couldn't find a clue, she simply nodded. She quickly told Pollo to go ahead, swearing she would come find him in a minute. Pleased to have a reason to leave, he hurried off, barely looking at the two. As soon as he saw the way Makkari looked at him, Druig knew he'd messed up.

She was furious, glaring daggers at him. For a second, he feared lasers would come out of her eyes, like Ikaris, and that she would strike him down. Of course, he knew very well that she didn't need lasers to kill him. She'd fought and killed countless Deviants with the others, so a mind controller would be of no problem to her. He was about to try and explain to her what had really happened, even though he wasn't sure what he was explaining himself for, but she didn't let him.

"I don't know what's your problem or what happened between you two," she started, "but Pollo is trying, okay? He's been having a really hard time lately and you're not helping. I know you think it's just a joke, but it's not. Not to him. So lay off him."

He knew that Pollo wasn't feeling very well. He hadn't had time to clean his mind from all the darkness haunting it yet, or maybe he'd just been too petty to do it. What was he even petty for? Because they'd slept together? He agreed with what Pollo had said, he has no reason to be petty. Unless... unless, of course, he didn't agree with Pollo. But why not? Why couldn't he just do like the other man and stop thinking about it in a second?

"I'll apologize in the morning," he promised.

This seemed to satisfy her as she smirked, leaving him alone to go dance with Pollo. And so he stayed alone with his questions. At first, teasing Pollo was just that. Teasing. When did it become mean? Maybe it only started being mean because he refused to stop. Since they'd met, they'd flirted and fought. Because those were the only things that got him genuine reaction from his friend. No. Friend wasn't quite the right word. Or at least, it didn't feel like the right word.

But then what was the right word? Was there even one? No, of course. Because to Pollo, friend was the right word. It's just to him that it wasn't. He didn't really understand it. That weird yet painful feeling in his chest he had from time to time. He'd thought of asking Ajak about it, but he never dared to. Because if she told him that there was nothing and he was perfectly fine, he didn't know what he would do.

It was a curse, to live around the same person for all of eternity. Nothing good could come from him. As time passes, feelings appear. Good, bad, a little bit of both. What it is, he was cursed to feel a little too much about his fellow Eternal. To care a little too much. He hated it. He wanted Pollo to be the one feeling the pain he was experiencing. He wanted to be the one in control, knowing full well that one sideway smile would be enough to make the other go into cardiac arrest. But for one of the first times in his very long life, he was far from being in control. And he hated it almost as much as he hated Pollo.

Because it had to be hatred. The feeling in his chest, his blood boiling in his veins, only hate could bring so much pain. So that could only mean that he hated Pollo. Yes, he could see himself hating Pollo. It would explain a lot. And anyway, he was easy to hate, with his perfect hair, his brown eyes that seemed to turn golden under the sunlight and his crooked smile. It was easy to hate the way Pollo played with his hands, passing them in his hair or tapping a finger against a table. It was easy to hate the way he hummed random tunes when he was bored or the way he hopped a little whenever he did something well. It was easy to hate the way he loved his family so much that he forgot to love himself. And it was just so fucking easy to hate how his voice changed a bit and his face lighted up when he started talking about dragons.

Every little perfect details about Pollo could be hated. Yet, he didn't really wanted to. Pollo didn't deserve to be hated, he knew that. If only Pollo had been Ikaris. Then he could've hated him so easily. But he wouldn't have been Pollo. And Druig wouldn't have tried to much to hate him. As those thoughts passed through his mind, he found himself humming a tune he'd heard from Pollo as he looked at his two friends dancing and laughing. They seemed to be having fun and to have completely forgotten the disappointment that came with no finding the Emerald Tablet.

And as he looked at Pollo smiling, he kind of wished he'd accepted to dance.

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