

NEW YORK CITY

1975

a

AURORA

"You're not that good at hiding, you know?" My bored tone rises above the everyday traffic. I look down at my coffee, holding it with both my hands to warm myself up.

So far, the winter here seemed to be rough, but I kind of enjoyed it. I liked dressing in my scarf and my jacket. I liked wearing my gloves and my beanies and watching as the snow coated everything with white.

I can see from my peripheral vision as she comes out from hiding, her illusion fading away.

I smile to myself, adjusting my beanie over my loose hair as she comes closer. It made my hair look a nicer shade of brown. Auburn and golden in some places.

She groans in defeat, shaking her head and finally going to stand beside me.

"I thought I was getting better at it"

I hum in amusement, tilting my head to the side as I watch people walk to and from places, all of them with the same New York rush everyone seems to have.

"Maybe in a couple of hundred years, you'll master it" I note. I finally turn to her, eyebrows creasing.

"What are you doing here, Sprite?" I finally ask, getting straight to the point. a

She looks up at me. Her nose is bright red from the cold, and she's wrapped in a thick jacket.

"I heard what happened. Ajak sent me here to check in on you" She explains.

I nod, rolling my eyes and taking a sip of my drink before staring into a walk. She starts walking beside me, following even though she doesn't even know where we're going.

"Tell Ajak that I'm fine and that I don't need checking up on" I grumble, my breath vaporizing in front of me.

"That's not what the Kingo says" She points out.

I sco in disbelief.

"Oh yeah, and what does she say?" I turn to her at a stoplight, lips pursed.

She looks at me up and down.

"That you're struggling" She answers. "That you're on the rails and that even he can't keep up with you" a

"He never had to. He's not forced to take care of me. He can leave if he wants" I'm getting tired of her. I appreciated the worry, and why she was doing it, but I was fine. a

As fine as I could be, anyways.

The team couldn't blame me for the way I'd handled everything. I know Sersi and Ikaris had already broken up, and Sersi had managed it unbelievably well. I was proud of her.

But I couldn't say the same about myself. I was a mess. I knew it. Everyone knew it.

Even though I'd wanted to, I couldn't actually bring myself to change. It was nice—not caring. Not expecting anything from anyone.

New York had given me the comfort I'd deserved, even if it wasn't in a good way. I'd gotten lost in the people. In the enormity of the city. I didn't normally like big cities, but they seemed to fit me now. The city made me feel what I actually was.

Alone. Heartbroken. Pathetic. a

Kingo had been living here for a few years now as a star. Even though he did Bollywood mostly, a lot of his business was based here. He'd introduced me to the entire New York party scene.

I have to admit, I'd never actually partied like I had this past year.

It seemed to relieve me, to make me forget, even if it was only for a few moments. It taught me to live like there was no tomorrow. It seemed all of the people here had the goal of getting shitface drunk every Friday and Saturday—maybe even Thursdays and Sundays.

Everyone liked having a few moments to forget, even though we knew the problems would still be here tomorrow.

I liked forgetting. I liked being on the edge. Not knowing what was going to happen.

Sometimes, if I wasn't feeling fine, the days blurred together. I'd noticed that when I was drunk the emptiness inside me didn't seem to be as bad. When I was drunk I wasn't sad.

And god knows I would take every opportunity I could not feel sad.

I know it was wrong. I know it is. I know it's self-destructive and continuing to do it only makes it worse.

But how could I care about myself when even the person who I was supposed to spend the rest of my life with couldn't? a

It had already been two years, but how could I forget thousands of years—thousands of moments and memories in just that little amount of time? The wound was still fresh. Fresh and bleeding, and the bandaids I always slapped on to keep it together didn't seem to be holding anymore.

I was miserable and alone, and the only thing I really wanted in the world was the only thing I could not have. a

"Aurora, you look like shit" Sprite's voice finally snaps me back to reality. "Your skin is all pale and you're eyes are all sunken. I'm pretty sure you've lost weight, even if that isn't possible for us" I can hear the worry in her voice, but I can't really bring myself to care. a

I turn to her, scowling.

"Since when do you care about what I look like? Since when do you even care about what I do?" I retort, not waiting for her and walking forward. At this point I don't even know where I'm going, I just want to leave.

"Look, if you don't want to talk to me then don't, but I don't like seeing you like this. Not over a boy", she calls out, walking quickly to catch up to me. a

I halt mid-step, turning to her, an incredulous look on my face.

"A boy? Just a boy? Sprite, that boy was the love of my life. And he's gone. He let me. I'm not going to apologize or try to stop my ways of trying to fix what he broke" I rant, staring right at her. a

I know my eyes are starting to gleam purple.

"So yeah, Sprite. I'm fine. You can tell Ajak and Kingo and whoever asks that I'm doing perfectly fine."

"But you're not fine, Aurora you need help" She pleads, her eyes inked with worry. "Gil can help. Gil will know what to do" She orders.

I shake my head, my lips pursing.

"If I need his help then I know where to find him, but there's no need. You can leave now" I fake a smile, pointing a thumbs up at her before turning to walk away.

She stays silent, not following me. I can tell she's worried for me, but she also knows when I've reached my limit.

"Aurora" She calls out suddenly. Her voice sounds unnaturally loud over the traffic.

I stop walking, closing my eyes and breathing in for a moment, preparing for another discussion. Turning slowly, my eyes open, and I face her, my face questioning.

She scans me, her face twisted with what seems to be regret and guilt.

For a moment I wonder why her face is showing those emotions.

She opens her mouth as if to say something, but then apparently decides against it. a

"What is it, Sprite?" I ask, curiosity lining my tone.

She hesitates, her mouth opening and closing several times. She seems to be looking everywhere but at me.

A gust of wind brushes through my face, the cold nipping at my nose and my eyes.

Then finally, she shakes her head, deciding against telling me whatever it was that she was going to say. a

"It's nothing. I'll tell Ajak you're fine" Her tone is filled with defeat. She waves me goodbye as if she couldn't get out of there fast enough.

I don't even have a chance to say goodbye to her back before she goes invisible and disappears in the crowd of people.

I stand still for what seems like hours, the people around me going to and from places. All of them seem to have a purpose. A place to go.

In the distance I can hear the soft tune of a Christmas, echoing through the buildings. It takes me a moment to realize I'm in front of the Rockefeller Christmas Tree.

I stare at it for a moment, absorbing everything it represents. Everything humans have made it represent over the years.

Maybe Sprite was right. Maybe I should go with Gil. I've been alone and miserable long enough.

I sigh, taking in the Christmas spirit around me. Then I look down at my coffee, watching steam come out of the small hole in the cup.

A white speck of something falls into the lid, dissolving as it meets the hot surface.

I smile, looking up at the sky.

It's snowing.

Little drops of snowflakes fall into my cheeks, melting as they touch my face. I can feel the snow becoming thicker, falling in thick drops around me and resting on top of my clothes.

I take a small sip of my coffee, turning to start walking again, my mind filled with tons of realizations.

I don't even have to make it back to my apartment to know what I need to do.

Alright, I want to explain that Sprite was going to tell her about Druig but didn't and yeah that's all. Just a filler chapter before we get back to the story!!!

also sorry for being gone so long, finals are destroying me a