

PRESENT-DAY

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I find it strange, knowing I've been part of thousands of emergences, and yet I fail to remember any of them.

This team has been together for millions of years. We've lived thousands of lives and re-met each other over and over again for the majority of eternity.

I wonder if each time it's different. I wonder if I had the same personality each time, or if I got along with the same people. I wonder if I even had the same name

I wonder for a moment if, in all of those past lives, Sersi and Ikaris always ended up together. If Sprite always fell in love with Ikaris but never could have him. If maybe there was a time where all of us hated each other or one where we never split and always remained together until the emergence.

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Curiosity nips at me, filling me with questions I'm not sure I'll ever know the answer to because if we stop this emergence, I'm sure that Arishem will hunt us forever.

There was no way he was going to let us live if we went through with this.

I give myself a second to think about it.

I would be running away—probably for the rest of my life. I look around me, my eyes stopping on Druig for a moment.

My heart slows slightly, calm with the reassurance that whatever happened, Druig would be there with me.

I could run for a million years, but as long as I was with him I didn't really care.

Sighing, I take a seat one of the plush old couches Makkari has probably stolen from someone at some important point in history.

For a second I think about what might happen if we aren't able to stop it. Dread washes over me like a wave. There was no way I could forget Druig. I couldn't forget about all of us. This was my family.

Fear bubble up to my throat, a panic setting in behind it. The thought of forgetting their existence—of ever having met them scaring me out of my mind.

We would start all over again on another planet, but it wouldn't be the same.

I'd lived thousands of lives, and even though I didn't remember any of them, I had a feeling none of them compared to being here on Earth.

The couch dips beside me as he sits, exhaling a long breath he seemed to have been holding. I turn to face him, offering a small smile I know doesn't meet my eyes.

His eyes are shut, and he leans back, his head tilting to face the roof. I take a moment to scan him and his features—the way the stress lines on his forehead seem to smooth over as he relaxes.

As I watch him exhaustion washes over me, even though I know it's the last thing that I should be feeling. Not when the entire world is at risk.

I turn to look at my hands, running my fingers slowly through the scars that have been left over my years of fighting.

"What is it?" He asks slowly from beside me.

He always did know when something was wrong.

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"It's just—" I sigh out, running a hand through my face. "Everything, I guess. Ajak and Gil, Sprite. The emergence" I pause, looking around the room.

"It scares me to know in a few hours everything could be gone" Pursing my lips, I turn to him. "I just don't want to forget you" I whisper after a second.

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He smiles sadly, grabbing my hand and raising it to his lips.

"I could never forget you, Aurora. Even if Arishem wiped my memory, I'd always find my way back to you" He assures. "But it won't happen. We'll stop the emergence, and when we do we can go anywhere." He proposes, his eyes flashing a brighter shade of blue.

I smile at the thought, already thinking about all the places we'd travel to. All the time we'd finally get together after 50 years.

"I'll hold you to it, then" I chuckle out.

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Even though I don't want to, I let hope bloom inside me. I know that if we all work together then everything will be alright.

"And don't worry about Sprite. I'm sure you'll be able to tell her everything you're thinking once this is over" His voice seeps with anger as he mentions her. I laugh sourly, shaking my head.

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I couldn't wait for the moment I was able to tell her everything.

I turn to look around the room, all of us talking to someone or sitting in silence. Phastos stands in the middle, looking up at his design and moving the materials around. It amazes me how he's done everything with so much ease.

From my right side, Ikaris enters the room. I frown, noticing he's wearing his suit. He walks into the room with intent, glaring at the design in front of him.

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Phastos turns to him, eyes brightening.

"I'm close to figuring it out—" He doesn't get to finish as Ikaris's eyes shine bright gold, his lasers shooting at the design and destroying it completely.

Phastos is thrown to the side and into the ground, the pieces falling all across the room. I close my eyes, my hands going to cover my face as pieces fly in my direction.

I jolt at the sudden action, my frown deepening.

"What the fuck, Ikaris?" I question, making a beeline across the room and towards Phastos. "Hey" I help him up, holding his arm as he groans in pain.

I turn to look up at Ikaris, watching as Sersi runs into the room behind him.

He turns to me then, eyes blazing with anger. His entire demeanor is tight and strict, clearly on alert mode.

"I've let this go on long enough"

"He lied to us" Sersi pants out, a look of betrayal and hurt lining her face. She walks to me and Phastos, grabbing his other arm to help him up.

"He already knew about the emergence" She admits, turning to him. The hurt in her voice is clear.

Kingo steps forward, an incredulous look on his face.

"No, he didn't" He defends Ikaris, turning to look at Ikaris for confirmation.

Ikaris keeps a straight face, looking only at Sersi, eyes flashing with an unknown emotion.

Confusion fogs my head, not being able to understand what is happening.

"Ajak told me everything when we left Babylon" He finally speaks, confessing everything.

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We all stand in silence, staring at him.

"What?" Kingo finally questions, his expression falling.

Phastos shakes his head at Ikaris, realization dawning on him.

"You were never gonna let us stop the emergence" He breathes out, his face morphing into one of unease.

My heart drops.

I should have known he wasn't on our side the minute he'd left Sersi all those years ago.

In the past, I had never wanted to admit it, but I knew Ikaris had never been attached to Earth. He had always put his work first.

I curse at myself for not having realized it before. How could I have been so ignorant?

"No." The word comes out short and cold. "I only wanted to protect you from the Deviants" He admits, head tilting to the side.

"If Ajak wanted you to take her place why did she choose me?" Sersi asks, demanding an answer. I turn to look at her, watching her wild eyes as she stared at the man she'd loved all those years ago.

It struck me then how she must feel. To know the person she'd loved for thousands of years had betrayed her and was willing to kill an entire population without care.

Ikaris stays silent, his Adam's apple bobbing up and down as he swallows. His face shows no emotion, eyes unwavering as he stares at Sersi.

I can feel my anger rising, the energy starting to build up inside me. It's like everything starts to bubble up. All the sadness that I had been feeling, all the emotions I had been suppressing with the goal of not exploding start to burn inside me as I start to piece everything together.

I take a step forward, my skin heating up as I stare at him.

"What have you done?" I whisper, my tone deadly as it slices through the silent room.

His jaw tightens, eyes turning to me and scanning me up and down. He knows I'm mad. He also knows what happens when I'm mad.

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Blood rushes through my ears, drowning out everything around me. My fists clench, nails digging into the palms of my hands so hard I can feel blood pooling.

Still, I can hear Druig's muted voice seeping through the anger and into my ears as he speaks.

"He killed her"

It echoes inside me, his words repeating in my brain. I zone out entirely. It's like I'm underwater. I drown out the voices around me until they're murmurs in the background, ignoring whatever it is that they're saying.

I can't think straight. I can't see and I can't breathe.

My head is reeling with the information I've just been given. My ears ring and my vision blurs and all I can think of is how Ajak must have felt in her final moments. How betrayed she must have felt when she realized what Ikaris was going to do.

He killed her he killed her he killed her.

It repeats in my head on a loop, my head whirling with so much anger and sadness and resentment. I feel myself sway on my feet.

It had been him.

It had been him all along.

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He'd killed my Ajak. He'd been responsible for Gil.

My eyes start to burn with unshed tears, filled with anger. He'd made me suffer so much.

And then everything clears.

It's like I was drowning and now I have fresh air. I snap back into reality, returning back to my body.

I know what I have to do.

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I turn to Ikaris, my entire body vibrating with energy. I don't know what they were talking about, but I can't find the will to care.

He's saying something but he stills as I move, his head turning to me. It looked like he'd been saying something emotional, but he stops mid-word.

"You! My voice is deadly. I can feel my eyes shine bright. I take a step forward.

"Aurora" Sersi tries to stop me, her hand going to my shoulder. As soon as she touches me she reels back, letting out a yelp and clutching her hand to her chest in pain.

But I can't look. I can't see anything but him. I can't see anything but what he did.

"You killed her." My voice rises, distorted slightly with the energy coursing through my body. "You took us for fools. You mourned her just like we mourned. You mourned Gil when it was your fault. You pretended and you lied to all of our faces" I take another step forward, my entire demeanor threatening.

His face remains stoic, but his eyes flash with regret for a second.

It angers me more.

"You were supposed to be our family" I continue, my hands starting to shine purple with my power.

He looks down at my hands, his own eyes glowing in a warning.

"Take a step back, Aurora." His accent shines through. "I don't want to kill you, but I will if I have to" He warns.

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I laugh coldly, my head tilting to the side.

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"Kill me? Come on Ikaris. You know we've always been tied" I pause. "The only reason you never fought me was because besides Druig, I have never wanted to harm any of you" I explain.

A flash of doubt flashes through him, but I can tell he isn't going to back down from a fight.

"I'm telling you Aurora, you won't win" He takes a step forward until we are almost face to face.

I know he can feel the heat radiating from me, but if it's burning him I can't tell.

I smile in defiance.

"I guess we'll see, then"

I don't waste a second. My hands shine with balls of energy, and I start to charge at him. I see a movement from the corner of my eyes just as I send a ball of energy his way, but it doesn't hit him.

He disappears, a swarm of butterflies replacing him. The blast of energy reaches the wall, exploding the wall and leaving the room filled with dust.

I heave in a breath, finally coming back to my senses and looking around at the rest of the team, but I know he's gone.

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