

Chapter IX

One week before the Emergence, California

"Could you reach her?"

She looked over at Ikaris, pulling the jacket tighter around her body. He shook his head.

"I'm sorry Ajak."

The woman took a slow breath, even if she had expected that answer. "I have always been honest with you, Ikaris," she said after a long pause, staring o into the endless fields of grey grass.

Ikaris had his eyes on her, a frown forming.

"What is it, Ajak?"

"I let her go that day. But sometimes I question if it was the right thing to do.

She needed me and I threw her out into the world alone."

He placed a hand on hers, making her gaze shift over to him.

"You did the right thing."

Ajak laughed, but it was rather at his sore attempt for comfort.

"No, it might have been back then. But she is no longer the girl she used to be, all those millions of years ago."

Visions of the young Persia flooded her mind.

They were vivid, in contrast to how colorless the girl was. Shy and pulled back.

Blushing at every little thing that was even slightly embarrassing. Although she evolved, part of that never faded.

Until they came to earth.

She bloomed with love, excitement

Even through the dark times she had that sparkle of joy in her eyes.

And until the moment that she had le her alone in Tenochtitlan.

"Her magic has changed." Ajak li ed her voice again, "I thought if I kept an eye on her, protected her all I could, she'd be fine."

Her voice betrayed her as she spoke.

"She isn't one of us. Persia is not an eternal, there's more to her. And we have let her believe that it was all her own fault for being unlike us."

Ikaris knew.

Everyone knew.

They had lied to Persia for centuries, persuading her with petty pats to the bed and singing lullabies to her.

Kept her at distance from the only person who had his doubts.

"I let her down, Ikaris." Ajak hardened her features, sternly meeting his face.

"I have followed Arishem for millions of years and I have never doubted him.

Until now."

"Why now?"

He pulled back slightly.

"Why now?!"

"Five years ago Thanos erased half the universe. Delayed the Emergence. But the people of this planet brought everyone back, with the snap of a finger.

You know, a er I let you all go, I travelled the world living among them-

I have seen them fight and lie and kill.

But I have also seen them laugh and love.

I have seen them create and dream."

Ajak has lost herself to her words, she didn't even notice how she cut short on air.

"This planet and these people have changed me. The cost of Arishem's desire is not worth it.-

Not this time!"

She tried reading his expression.

Jaw clenched shut, eyes darkened.

So throughout, though.

"I trust you Ajak."

The words didn't seem easy to leave his mouth.

"I will follow you to the end, as I always have."

"Thank you," she smiled weakly, back at the fighter who had always stayed at her side.

Ajak was lucky to have him as her spine, he gave her the support which she needed.

"We have to bring everyone back together."

"There's something I have to show you first."

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Wind swooshed past her face, burning where the scratches le lines along her skin.

She bit down on the mouthguard, inhaled a deep breath before racing her fist across the face of her opponent.

Persia let a smile cross her face, sweat running down her temples. It wasn't long until she dropped it again, as her body was pushed to the side by a leg, unable to hold her balance.

The impact was weak enough for her to break free, roll over and get back on her feet again.

She growled, let a curse slip, shaking her fingers to release the tension.

The man in front of her had blood running down his nose and when he showed his teeth through a cheeky smile, red tinted white.

"Come on pretty girl, is that all you got?"

He dared her, waving his hand gesturing for her to come at him.

That was all she needed.

Persia tightened her hands back into fists, locked her jaw shut and rushed towards him.

He knew, tried blocking his side where she aimed, but she wasn't going for his right at all.

Just in front of him, she dropped to the ground, using the speed she created to kick his feet and knocked his body to the ground.

A measly thud made the ground shake, echoed in her head and made an ache spread between her eyes.

Persia wiped her nose with the back of her wrist, pushed herself towards him o the ground.

Her loose hand gripped at his shoulder and ripped him back down as he attempted to get up.

She swung around, dug her nails into his skin, the other hand crashing into his nose.

A crack, he fell back down.

Persia crawled on top of him, pushed her knee right between his ribs making him gasp for air.

She spat the mouthguard into his face,

"What's wrong, pretty boy?"

Her face lowered until there was barely any space between her nose and his.

Heavy breaths shook her body, hot air making her skin crinkle.

"Is that all you got?"

The man looked at her, a smirk spreading.

Hands traveled up her hips, locking in place.

Persia was done, this was too pathetic.

Her face cut through the air, creating a distance before she smashed her forehead into his nose.

The hold collapsed, his hands dropping beside his body.

"Time?"

Persia let go o his shoulders, pushed herself up and let her eyes adjust to the lights again.

Her head was racing, finally filling with the voices of other people as if they hadn't been there the entire time.

People rushed over to the man on the ground in front of her, checking for his pulse.

He whimpered at their ever so slight touches to his nose.

"You broke his nose, Pear"

She turned to follow the voice, put on a small smile at her words.

The brown haired girl had her eyes glued to the medic helping the injured man get up, too embarrassed to meet Persia's gaze.

"Maya," Persia called, looking back at the girl, "I justbroke his nose."

Brown strands of hair fell into Maya's face, crossing her arms in front of her chest and shook her head dismissively.

"I guess I should be thanking you then."

Persia pushed herself out of the fighting ring.

"You're verywelcome."

Maya laughed and put an arm around her shoulder, pulling her face to Persia's, even if it was coated in sweat.

As if she heard her thoughts, she sni ed at her skin and stuck her tongue out, making a sound like gagging.

"Take a shower."

Persia pushed her away with a laugh, then snatched her hoodie o of a chair and pulled it over her head.

"Come on," Maya was already halfway up the stairs, swaying back and forth at the railing.

"Let's get out of here before I have to see another broken body part."

"Will you buy me food?" Persia called out, running up the stairs trying to catch up with her. She had to squeeze and wiggle herself past more people than usual.

Maya didn't answer, but ran faster towards the exit.

Persia wasn't as fast, but taller and could see her head bouncing between the crowd.

"A race?" she asked, throwing in apologies back and forth.

Both girls reached the exit and threw themselves out of the door, the cold air snatching in their faces without mercy.

Maya supported her hands on her knees, trying to catch her breath.

"You had a head start!" Persia argued, patting a hand on Maya's back.

"You couldn't beat me-if you tried to," she replied between heavy breaths.

Of course, Persia had no chance.

A smile was set bright on her face, eyes searching about the nearly empty streets.

"Get up, you crybaby," Persia nudged Maya, who gave her an angry glance still having a hand placed on her heavy rising heart.

She locked her arm with hers, walking down the street towards their apartment.

They had moved together during Maya's college years, Persia was out of school already.

The stupid naive girl had talked to Persia during a fit, almost got herself killed during it.

One of the lowest points in her millions of years.

And what did Maya do?

Pick up every rationalperson would do.

Wick up the mess Persia was and took her to the nearest Mc Donald's she could find.

They had been inseparable since.

"You need to stop staying for so long."

Maya said, kicking a rock on the street.

"I mean, somehow you're always exhausted and then get a kick."

Persia ran her tongue across her teeth, sighting.

"I need to blow o my steam so I don't lose control."

Maya hu ed and looked over at her.

"Yeah, but there's other ways that by beating people!

Now it was Persia's turn to sco and roll her eyes.

"Don't try to play the wise girlnow."

"I support you Pear. And I'm sure that guy in there deserved it but-"

"I did him a favor by breaking his nose!"

"I mean, you're not wrong but-"

"Hold on a second."

Persia stopped in her tracks, concentrating on her stance.

The energy around her shi ed rapidly, like it hadn't done in years.

Her heart was pounding harder in her chest, erupting her rib cage.

She moved a step forward, Maya's arm giving up her hands.

The hairs on her arms stood from her body, a shiver traveling down her back.

She croaked down to the ground, placed a hand to the ground.

"Anyone around?" she asked Maya, who panically flinched and looked around her.

"No."

Threats of black crawled out of her hand, mixing with strands of shimmering gold that reflected the illuminating street lights.

They ran around the ground, craving for the source of the sudden cosmic energy.

"Woah." Maya gasped behind her, her voice suddenly far away.

"Maybe we should take a route around this area." Persia said, eyes thinning as she still searched across the buildings.

Her power didn't stop slithering across the ground until it was out of her view.

Maybe it was one of the other eternals lingering close.

She got up and brushed her hands at her trousers, shaking o the specs of power taking up her mind.

Maya had her eyes fixed on the road, the black seeping into the ground until it was gone.

Then her eyes so ened.

"Pear, you've got to be kidding me."

Persia looked up at her in confusion.

"It's justa dog."

Then her eyes shot open a little further.

"A bigdog."

Her hand reached for Persia's sleeve and held on tight.

"A very bigdog."

When Persia finally turned to follow her line of sight, heavy impacts to the ground sounding in a rhythmic pattern shook their bodies.

"Maya," she alarmed, throat dried out in shock. "That is not a dog!"

Persia's family screech ring through her ears.

"Oh fuck!" she whispered.

The Dog crashed where they stood, creating a crater in the middle of the road. Persia could pull Maya aside, but unfortunately couldn't get herself out of range before she was catapulted to the other side.

Her back collided with a building, groaning heavily.

"Persia, what is going on?"

The creature spun its head around and gave o a horrid scream, now heading a er the frightened girl.

"Run!" Persia yelled, pushing herself o the ground and running towards the Deviant.

She called for her power, and didn't care for her losing control.

Her eyes were consumed by black, the fog of power buzzing around her.

She gritted her teeth and threw a ball of manifested energy a er the Deviants head.

The sphere burnt itself through the Deviants skull, causing it to scream again, jump around in place.

It gave her enough time to reach, slide under it and grab at its clawed paws.

She concentrated and allowed her power to rush through her veins.

Her body was li ed o the ground, then thrown down again.

Finally, she had enough energy collected to blow up its ankles.

Persia was never good at calculating the right amounts of power.

Her body was flying through the air one direction, the Deviant in the other.

She could hear people starting to panic and scream, trying to run to safety.

Somehow she managed for her collision with the ground not to be so hard, pushing her knees down.

The fabric burnt against the concrete, then through to her skin.

Her eyes wide open, stuck to the Deviant which was knocked out on a beeping car.

Head split in half, muscles torn.

She was breathing heavily, wiping her nose.

Blood running down her sleeve.

Persia got up from the ground, ignoring the stinging pain in her legs and headed for the creature.

When she stopped and took a closer look, she couldn't believe her eyes.

They were supposed to be gone.

It's body was radiating so much heat and energy that she was scared of setting o an explosion.

"What the hell."

Her face looked up, Maya opposite on the other side of the car.

She was gaping at the beings' destroyed head, mouth falling open.

"Was this one of your siblings?"

Persia thought she didn't hear correctly.

"What"

"You told me there are other beings like you."

Persia burst into laughter, pressing a hand to her forehead. Her body was almost trembling from the sudden power but she couldn't hold it in.

"No, Maya. This was not one of them."

"Oh god?"

"I will explain once we-"

Maya cut her o, a little click sounding.

"Persia, it opened its eyes."

Persia moved her hand from her face and looked at the Deviant.

Steam stood in the air, the disgusting smell covering her body.

She watched as the loose, dead muscles started reconnecting.

How it's face started knitting together again, the golden eyes shining threateningly bright back at Maya.

There was something that shone with their color that caused nostalgia to rise in Persia.

It elevated from the car, Persia taking a few steps back.

Another scream, worse than both before, echoed in her head, the Deviant showing its sharp teeth.

"Round two," she muttered in the direction of Maya who understood and made a run for it without hesitation.

Persia headed for the opposite direction, trying to get the Deviant out of range from the civilians.

If it could really heal itself, there was only one option.

Her feet ached from all the running, her throat plastered with cold air that hurt as she took her breaths.

When she reached a small clearing, she stopped, the Deviant immediately aiming its paws at her, missing her by the breadth of a hair.

She fell to the ground, didn't hesitate to dig her nails into the ground.

A gasp for air, the cosmic energy still running through her veins along with her blood.

Persia concentrated on the being, drowned out its ability to heal.

The Deviant noticed.

Before it could react, Persia allowed the emptiness to consume her.

The world voided, all sound gone.

A thud.

A rattle.

Then she was pushed back into reality, collapsing on weak knees.

Her eyelids were heavy, still, she could help but to stare at her mess.

The Deviant was charred down to its bones, the muscles screaming like they had a voice box.

Nothing but a vague form and ash in her view.

Her hands were inked black, patches of the Deviants intestines sticking to her body.

She looked like she bathed in shit.

"That was insane"

"Maya, are you really that stupid to get this close?" she looked up at her friend, who couldn't have done that distance in such a short time.

She was still fighting the urge to faint, dropping her back to the ground.

A cough a er another, slowly the feeling in her skin returned but the pain did with it.

Maya walked up to her, crouched down.

"That wasn't supposed to happen." she spoke to herself, regaining the grasp on her own mind.

"They should be dead. They shouldn't be able to do that."

"You can worry about that later, get up."

But Persia knew what that meant, and she didn't like the thought of it.

She hated it.

Persia grabbed the hand that Maya held out to her, getting up and slowly walking past the corpse.

"You look terrible." Maya chuckled, wrapping a hand around her waist to keep her from falling.

She was smearing the dirt all over her shirt.

Persia would definitely get that fired back at her, but she would gladly pay for a new shirt instead of a funeral.

Persia nodded, forcing a small smile.

She was drained of energy, and somehow it still looked cosmic her mind.

There it was again, the awareness of something holding cosmic energy being close to her.

It didn't let her go.

Her ears picked up a noise, Persia flinching around.

Without even thinking, control bubbled and flooded her hands.

Black slashed the air, a cloud of pure sizzling energy emerging from her body.

"Deviants don't contain that much energy," she talked, eyes darkening again.

"But an eternal does?"

"Pear-"

Maya tried calling her to calm down, but the words died on her tongue.

She looked forward, where the black and gold had ran a path across the messed up road.

Three people stepped up, their outlines barely visible through the thick fog.

"Call it back, Persia."

Maya didn't know the voice, but Persia could never forget it.

Her lips were pale, skin lacking color too.

The strands of white hair which had formed over the years seemed to shine in the light of the moon.

"Oh," Persia cooed, pushing herself out of Maya's hold.

The fog cleared, the figures sharpening.

Persia tried straightening her back, but her face twisting in discomfort didn't make her attempt at a confident appearance easy.

Finally, the cloud was vague enough for the people to start moving again.

Maya saw them and they couldn't have been more different from one another.

One standing tall, the other slightly shorter, the last barely reaching their shoulders.

Hair shining like the blade of a silver sword, the other a dark, silky brown and the last a messy orange.

A man, a woman and a child.

"Oh," Persia exhaled, eyes hardening on the set of people who stopped.

A curl to her lip made it fade into a crooked smirk.

Her face dozed in the nauseating a ertaste of the endless magic.

There was a tint to her expression that Maya had never seen before.

Her family neither.

A kind of insanity that threatened to make her explode again.

"Maya, didn't you say you wanted to meet my family once?"

A/N: Things are picking up pace!

I'm actually so excited to write the present, I have a bunch planned.

also, I hope the little hints and parallels are noticeable hehe

Thank you so much for 2k reads, I'm incredibly grateful for any kind of support and love.

Continue reading next part