ROME 105 BC "Boo!"

"Nice try. Being married for almost four hundred years taught me to always look up when I'm out for a walk." Druig smirked crossing his arms over his chest as I hung upside down on a tree. "Phastos was searching for you all morning, beautiful." ď

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"I was with Sersi and Makkari all morning. Until Ikaris came and stole her from me and Makkari went to search for more items to trade for who knows what now." I shrugged holding his hands. "What about you?" đ "Just for a walk admiring the city. I think they're copying the Greeks."

He shrugged and I nodded jumping o the tree. "Though I must admit that the Coliseum is the most impressive thing I've ever seen so far." a "The Greeks have Adonis, the romans just mention Mars and Venus."

Druig sco ed and I laughed hugging his waist. "It's funny and you know it."

"Sure, have the bloodthirsty war god Ares but not the caring and pacifist mortal Adonis." He grumbled kissing my forehead and touched the braids Sersi did on me this morning. "These are pretty. They suit you."

"They're similar to the ones I used to do in Greece, that's why I like them so much." a



"Speaking of Greece... When are we going back? We had fun there, didn't we?" Druig smiled and I rolled my eyes linking arms with him and walked around the city. "We did! Especially the night that-"

"You swore we'd never speak of that night!" I gasped and he laughed. "It was a one time and you swore to never again mention it." ď "I wasn't talking about that night, but thank you for reminding me." "Then which?"

"Do you remember our first few nights in Greece? The nights we spent by the waterfall?"

"I have a faint memory." I teased. "We spent the entire day in the water and at night we would change the names of the constellations for fun and make up stories to tell the people someday." "Those nights reminded me of the moment I knew that I was in trouble." He said and I looked up at him confused.

"What kind of trouble?"

"The kind of trouble that makes you fall hopelessly in love with someone, my starlight." å

"And what moment was that?" "Way back during our first few years in Egypt. You were covered head to toe in Deviant blood, bruised and barely able to walk without any kind of help. But you still wanted to help the humans who got injured and help them rebuild what they lost. Ikaris and Kingo had to drag you kicking and screaming to the Domo and as soon as you were healed, you were back out in the city rebuilding houses with Phastos... That night we found you eating with one of the families and

dancing around with their children." "So you seeing me looking like a deranged maniac made you fall in love with me? Really romantic, sweetheart." I smirked and he rolled his eyes.

"It's the fact that you always put their needs over your own. Vena, that day you had multiple wounds and if Ajak didn't heal you in that moment, you wouldn't be with us today." Druig said and I smiled so ly. "It was your kind heart and fighting soul that won me over. You're never one to back down from a fight. Especially against Ajak

when it comes to how we deal with humans." "Neither do you, Adonis. You try and find a safer route but aren't

afraid to be caught in the crossfire if it means that you'll be able to protect the humans and those you love."

"I only love you, Vena. The others be damned." Druig said and I sco ed pushing him lightly.

"Yeah? What about Thena, Gil and Makkari? Huh? Because if I

remember correctly, you've risked your neck for them countless times over the past few millenniums. Way more than you've risked

your neck for me." I smirked and he pursed his lips before picking me

up and slung me over his shoulder. "Oh, come on!" "You're in trouble now, my darling Vena." He laughed spinning me as I hit his back repeatedly.

ส์ "If I vomit, it's your own fault!" I laughed and Druig stop spinning and put me down holding me steady. "Last one to the Domo has to sit

through one of Kingo's lectures without any sarcastic comments!" I started to run away but Druig picked me up bridal style stopping my

movements. a "If you seriously think that you're slipping away that easy, you have

another thing coming." Druig smirked and I chuckled resting my head on his chest.

"You know me so well."

"I married you, didn't I?"

"Where have you two- Nevermind!"

"Vena, come here." Kingo smirked as I walked towards him. "I'd fix my hair if I were you. Your braids are undone."

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"That's because I undid them on our way here." I pointed out. "And what's that on your neck?" He whispered and I turned to Druig

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wide-eyed.

"You bitch!" I exclaimed and Druig raised his hands in surrender.

"I'm sorry?"

"It's not that noticeable." Sersi stifled a laughter and I glared at her.

"It's just funny."

"Yeah? I'd take a good look in the mirror before you come here

running your mouth." I smirked and pointed at Ikaris. "Same goes to him."

"Nope! You're not turning the tables on me this time! We're talking about you." Ikaris crossed his arms and I smirked sitting on a table in

the lab. "Yeah? There's a twig in your hair... other than the one between your

legs of course." I teased and Druig bursted out laughing making his ď

way towards me. "So, Vena just killed Ikaris and she didn't have to li a finger. This is

the reason I love my life." Sprite managed to choke out between

laughs. "You're a little shit. Have I ever told you that?" I whispered to Druig

and wrapped my arms around his shoulders resting my hands on his chest.

"I thought I was a bastard." "That too." I rolled my eyes and looked at the rest. "I was told there

was a meeting?" "There is. We're just waiting for Ajak to finish talking to Arishem." Thena shrugged and looked at my neck. "It's not as bad as the one

Ikaris has. Next time, under the neck. That way the suit will cover it up."

"Tell that to the mosquito, not me." I said and hit Druig on the side of the head lightly. "Dumbass."

" Hi, mosquito.'Makkari teased sitting next to me and Druig rolled his eyes. đ

"I have news." Ajak said rushing inside the lab and looked around. "Perfect, everyone's on time."

"Except you, but I'll let it slide." I smirked and everyone pursed their

lips trying to stifle their smiles. "Arishem is pleased with the work we've done against the Deviants, though there's always room for improvement. He's especially

pleased with Ikaris, Vena and Thena for constantly being in the front lines and protecting the humans from harm."

"I just have one question, Ajak. Why the hell are there so many Deviants? We went from fighting three or four to tackling dozens a day. This is getting borderline ridiculous! Not to mention that sometimes it's just the three of us because the rest are injured or

fighting Deviants on the other side of the planet. I get that we may be some of the fighters in this batshit crazy family, but we can't tackle a dozen Deviants by ourselves without getting hurt. Albeit, Ikaris and I are the strongest and Thena's the most strategic, but still! I can't keep dragging an injured Eternal every single day while I'm bleeding out of the side of my leg or any other part of my body." I pointed out. "Vena's right for once. There's too many Deviants and they keep

getting bigger and bigger, Ajak. And it's not that we're getting tired of fighting, because we're not. It's the fact that every single day we're getting worked to the bone and one of us always ends up looking worse than the rest." Ikaris said and Ajak sighed.

"We've had a break today-" "These are the rare days. We've all fought Deviants from dawn to

dusk, collapse somewhere in the Domo or the city from exhaustion or blood loss, only to wake up at the crack of dawn and do the same thing over and over again. I can't count the amount of times I've seen Gilgamesh carry a sleeping Vena and Sprite, Thena practically drags a sleeping Druig and Makkari just so they can sleep in their own beds for one night, and the rest of us drag whoever collapses first on the way back. This is getting exhausting, Ajak." Kingo added and we all looked at her expectantly.

"Arishem gave us a mission. It is our duty that we see it be accomplished according to the plans he has for this planet." Ajak scolded and we all groaned.

"It's always the same thing, Ajak! Then why doesn't Arishem come down here and tell us that, huh? Why doesn't he come down here and tackle dozens of Deviants a day and still have the balls to get out of bed every morning despite the sore muscles and obvious exhaustion. Or better yet, why don't you come down and help us instead of barking orders from up here?" I spat standing up and stared her down. "I've never been this exhausted in the entire time we've been here. I can barely get out of my bed in the mornings because I'm so drained from using my powers every single day... It's not the first time

one of us has collapsed in the battlefield and if this keeps happening, I doubt it'll be the last."

"We're getting burnout, Ajak. It's not healthy fighting for as long as we have. We'd do anything to help the humans, but there's eleven of us and how many humans we have to protect? Probably millions. And on top of that, we have to stop them from hurting themselves." Sersi butted and we looked at her wide-eyed.

"We had one rule, Sersi! Don't snitch!" Sprite yelled and hit her arm. "Ignore that last part... What we're all trying to say is that we deserve a break, Ajak. We want to connect with the people and have fun before we're forced to move due to another Deviant problem who knows where."

"We're pushing our abilities way past the limits we feel comfortable with. It's not easy controlling the minds of an entire civilization while fighting a Deviant." Druig added and pulled my away from Ajak. a But you can do that from up here, Druig-

"But I don't want to and that's what you're not understanding, Ajak. Vena can manipulate the elements and the Deviants from the safety of the Domo, but she doesn't want to. Same with Sprite with her illusions and Ikaris with his laser eyes. We don't want to because it's not fair to those who have to go down and risk their lives every day." "I get that we have to follow orders, but this is getting out of hand. We're tired, all of us." Ikaris shrugged and Ajak sighed nodding.

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"I'll talk to Arishem and see what we can do."

"How long has it been since we last ate a full meal together?"

"I'd say about a century? Maybe two." Sprite shrugged. "Ajak's been talking to Arishem for a long time now." Phastos

mumbled rubbing his temples. "Anyone here know the cure for a

headache? My brain's about to explode." "That's because your thoughts are too damn loud. I can hear them

from here." Druig said as his eyes glowed and Phastos sighed in relief. "You're welcome. Anyone else?"

"Is there any way you can get into Arishem's mind to make him give us a damn break?" Kingo sco ed biting into his food.

"Arishem's a Celestial, dipshit. Our powers won't allow that." I rolled my eyes and stretched wincing in pain. "I swear, we need a break. My

back can't take it anymore." " It can't take the weight of carrying this family on your back//akkari signed and we all laughed. a

We heard a roar in the distance and I banged my head on the table various times before standing up and looked at the rest.

"How many do you think there are?" "I say twenty." Ikaris sighed grabbing my waist and flying towards the

Deviants just as Makkari grabbed Druig and sped away. "I stand corrected... THERE'S THIRTY!" đ "Break was fun while it lasted, huh?"

"What break?"

"Damn right!"

"Good point."

"Who's out?"

"Gilgamesh and Phastos. Kingo, Sersi and Makkari are extremely injured. Sprite just collapsed, Ikaris is carrying her to the Domo... that is if he doesn't collapse halfway." I heard Thena tell Druig as I limped towards them with an injured and barely conscious Sersi clinging to me. "And your wife... well, see for yourself."

"Bumps and bruises, nothing more." I smirked as my knees buckled and I fell down still holding onto Sersi who screamed out in pain. "Maybe something more."

"Vena-"

"Take Sersi... I can still walk." I mumbled standing up but fell back down. "Or I'll crawl back."

"I can take both of you." Druig said placing an arm around me but I winced and held my abdomen in pain.

"Dru, Sersi's barely conscious. Take her and I'll either crawl back or wait for Ikaris. But she needs to see Ajak now. There's no time to argue about this." I protested and he sighed in defeat.

"If I see Ikaris, I'll tell him." He grumbled picking up Sersi and limped away.

I removed the hand from my abdomen and noticed blood seeping through it making me sigh in defeat.

"That cut looks deep." Thena said crouching down in front of me. "No shit, Thena." I hissed when she applied pressure on it.

"Can you stand?" She asked and I shook my head. "If Gilgamesh was awake, he'd carry you no problem."

"We've all got our own injuries to focus on. I'll be fine, Thena. You should get that arm checked out." I winced and looked around. "Break was fun while it lasted."

"Sprite's down and out for the night. Some of the humans o ered to clean up so we don't have to worry about that. Gilgamesh woke up and is currently carrying a passed out Makkari. Druig just arrived with Sersi and I saw Kingo on his way carrying Phastos." Ikaris said once he landed and looked at me and Thena while clutching his head in pain. "You both are going to pass out from blood loss if I don't carry you to the Domo."

"Take Thena, I can handle myself." I mumbled trying to stand up but fell once again. "And apparently I'm crawling."

Ikaris rolled his eyes picking me up bridal style as Thena swung an arm over his shoulder.

"It's a long walk." Thena pointed out. "Are you sure?"

"Yeah, I think I am." "That's comforting."

"Shut up, Vena."

"I talked to Arishem. He says the mission still stands and that we are to handle whatever obstacle comes our way, no matter the cost." Collective groans were heard from the ones that were still awake as we laid on the floor of the Main Room.

"Someone's going to die if this keeps happening, Ajak." I said

clutching my head. "If that's the mission then-"

"It's not just a mission, Ajak. We're family... all of us." Phastos groaned and tried to stand up.

"We can't control the amount of Deviants coming our way, Phastos." "But we **can** control how they come to us. We need time to come up with a plan for situations like these. Because frankly, it's getting quite exhausting being in this exact same spot every single night." Ikaris mumbled and I handed him some ice for his head.

" If they keep ambushing us, we won't be able to come up with a plan.'Makkari sighed closing her eyes. Another roar was heard and we all groaned, either in pain or

exhaustion. "I won't be able to control their blood this time. I'm too worn out from earlier." I sighed standing up and helped Druig and Makkari. I turned to Ajak who had a significant frown on her face. "Are you sure

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there's nothing else you can do?" "I'm afraid not, Vena. I tried everything I could. I'm so sorry everyone." She said and we all sighed looking at each other with

solemn faces. "Next time... Tell Arishem where he can stick the Deviants. And tell him that I said that." I smirked slinging my arm around Druig's shoulders. "Well... let's go kill Deviants for a living."

"It was a nice break." Kingo sco ed and we all chuckled. "What break?"

"Exactly."

