



## Twenty one

Two hours later Agil was sulking back in Phastos' lab with the others, Druig seated against the window behind him with Gilgamesh. The mind controller radiating a subtle smug satisfaction at the ruined quality of Agil's clothes and the messiness of his hair. The asian man turned to shoot him a look and the man's smirk widened slightly. It was only the large beeping alarm going off that stopped Agil from dragging Druig back into his bedroom to finish what they had started. (Their rooms were in perfect condition, as if hundreds of years had never passed. Druig had taken great joy in pushing the smaller man across the mattress. If it wasn't for the emergence having started then clothes would have come off).

"What about the uni-mind?" Sersi asked as she entered the room. Ikaris hot on her heels. They were the last to arrive. Kingo and Karun in one corner and Sprite skulking in the gloom against the wall.

"I haven't found a way to connect us yet but I'm close, I'm very close".

"How much longer?"

"I don't know Sersi!" Phastos shouted. Stress and time sensitive things had never worked well with him. He pulled a golden disc from his pocket and leaned down to press it tightly into Makkari's hand.

"Find the point of Emergence". Then she was gone in a streak of gold and the man was stumbling slightly at the sudden space.

Agil sighed as Phastos turned his attention back to creating the Uni-mind. There was tension in the room and it annoyed him. He did not care much for the emergence. Humanity was just another species after all. He did not mourn them in the face of billions more lives that would be created if Tiamut was born, but he also understood where the others were coming from. Sersi loved this planet, Ajak had too. Druig cared for humans more than he liked to let on and Agil cared for Druig. He knew that the mind controller would side with Sersi and he would side with them too. He glanced over at the room. Druig and Thena were standing in front of a landscape painting he recognised as one of his own, made about four hundred years ago. The two were talking sofly. Sprite was still sour faced and Kingo was muttering with Karun. Ikaris and Sersi were nowhere to be seen.

As if summoned by his thoughts, Ikaris strode back into the room. He was dressed in his armour and at his presence, Phastos looked up.

"I'm close to figuring it out!". Then golden beams shot from Ikaris' eyes and the half finished uni-mind exploded. The force knocking Phastos to the floor and scattering metal. Gilgamesh stood up in surprise as everyone stepped closer in alarm.

"Boss! What are you doing?" Kingo cried out.

"I've let this go on long enough", Ikaris stated, voice cold and face devoid of emotion.

"Don't hurt him!" Sersi called as she ran in and immediately went to pull Phastos to his feet. "He lied to us. He already knew about the emergence". Agil raised his pierced eyebrow at the new information.

"No he didn't", Kingo shook his head.

"Ajak told me everything when we left Babylon", Ikaris revealed, this time a note of apology in his voice.

"I wonder if I should be surprised", Agil muttered. "But that does explain a lot. Why you were such a dick for so many centuries for one". Ikaris pointedly ignored him.

"You were never going to let us stop the emergence", Phastos breathed.

"No. I only wanted to protect you from the deviants".

"If Ajak wanted you to take her place then why did she choose me?" Sersi voiced. There was a slight flicker in Ikaris' face. Guilt, sorrow, shame. All of it flickering over his features as he faced them. Sersi swallowed and her voice trembled. "What have you done?"

"He killed her", Druig's voice was sharp and accusing as the man stepped up to Agil's side.

Ikaris didn't take his eyes away from Sersi. "I had to". Sprite blinked back tears as Phastos let out a whimper of sudden hurt and Kingo gasped silently. Agil felt anger bubble in his chest and grit his teeth at the sudden ache throbbing in his ribs. Betrayal was an old wound to him but still this hurt.

"She loved you", Sersi shuddered.

"Did she?"

"She loved you". The words were painful.

"You fucking bastard", Agil spat, voice bitter. "You absolute bastard. You were our family".

"Do you think it was easy to live with the truth. To live knowing that someday all of this would end. To lie to you. If we gave humanity the choice, how many of them would be willing to die so that billions could be reborn?"

"We are not giving them the choice", Phastos stated. "Is this, why you're willing to kill?"

"Willing to kill us?" Agil clarified. For a second Ikaris glanced at him and he recalled all the years the man had been his brother. His annoying, arrogant, arsehole of a big brother, but still a brother none the less. A comrade in arms who had saved his life on more than one occasion. Then the rage was back and betrayal was stinging.

"You are so pathetic!" Phastos' shout echoed around the room.

"I am an Eternal Phastos. I exist for Arisham. As do you. It's who you are".

"Just because he created us, you think we should obey him for eternity? Having our minds wiped again and again to play out the same storyline, like we are nothing more than slaves?" Agil snarled.

"Fuck off".

"I wouldn't change a thing about me", Phastos raised his chin, rage making him brave. "Born or made but I do not exist for Arisham. I exist for my family".

Ikaris' lip curled as he regarded the two of them. "Then you are making the same mistake Ajak did".

It was at this moment that a streak of gold blurred past and Makkari came to a stop. She smiled triumphantly at them. "I found Tiamut!"

"No!" Phastos shouted as Ikaris' eyes flared gold. Kingo leapt and the laser caught him in the shoulder instead of hitting its target.

"Get out of here", he ordered as Makkari tried to help him up. She nodded and was gone again. Ikaris' attention now on Kingo.

"Kingo", he called as he stepped towards him.

Kingo pulled himself to his feet and faced the other Eternal head on. Golden energy condensing in his palm as he raised his hand to point at Ikaris' chest. "You do not turn against your family. Gilgamesh almost died because of you. You murdered Ajak".

"You won't succeed against me", Ikaris warned. The threat rung with honesty as he surveyed them all. Sersi crying silently. Agil glaring with rage. Phastos staring numbly and Druig taking a slight step forwards. "I will kill everyone one of you if I have to". Then he was turning to go.

"Wait", Sprite called. "I'm coming with you".

"Sprite", Sersi's voice cracked on her name as the ginger teen stepped forwards to Ikaris' side.

Thena appeared in the corridor, confusion marring her face as she took in the scene. "What is this?" Then Ikaris and Sprite were gone in a cloud of moths that fluttered through the air for a few seconds before disappearing.

"The absolute cunts", Agil muttered, voice harsh in the silence. Druig stepped towards him and rested a warm hand on his shoulder. The long haired man sank into it, rage draining from him as empty hurt took its place.

"I agree", Phastos murmured. Sersi said nothing, she simply stared at the empty corridor with tear filled eyes.

**unedited**

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