

Eight

1521 A.D Tenochtitlan

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They relocated to the tallest of the temples in the city. Below the fighting and bloodshed continued yet their room above seemed quieter than the forest. Thena was still on the alter, the flickering light of fires and candles glimmering on her hair. Agil stood in the corner, blood still soaking the back of his tunic and the stone cold against his skin through the rip that exposed the majority of his back. With his back to the stone you could almost forget the blood stains and dirt if it wasn't for the matching stains on Druig's thighs and sleeves where the man was standing across the room. They were darker patches in his clothes. The light catching on them as well as the blood on Makkari's and Ajak's abdomens. Luckily the gloom of the firelights made them easier to ignore.

"I thought Mahd Wy'ry was a myth", Sersi murmured. She was stood over Thena's unconscious form, concern on her face. Kingo was pacing the room as the others shared a grim silence.

"There's no cure", Phastos spoke up solemnly. "So no one really talks about it".

Thena woke with a gasp and everyone stepped closer. Agil was relieved to see her eyes were no longer glowing golden and that there was recognition in their depths. She blinked round at them, taking in their faces of worry and wariness. "What happened?"

Ajak's voice was calm but factual. "Thena. You attacked everyone. You wounded Sersi, me, you nearly killed Agil and Makkari". She reached out her hands and helped her sit up. Thena's expression was scared, vulnerable. Agil wasn't sure if he had seen her so uncertain before.

"I don't remember", her voice was small. It made his heart hurt to see his big sister so upset.

"You have Mahd Wy'ry", Ajak explained in that calm tone. "Your ming is fracturing under the weight of your memories. And all I can do is erase them so that you can start over". Thena shook her head, eyes watery. Gilgamesh looked as sad as Agil felt. Druig was starting with a storm in his eyes while the others looked on in concern and shock. "I will have to inform Arisham and take you back to the ship", Ajak's voice rose as she announced it to the group. "Where we have the technology to help".

" But she won't be Thena any more" Makkari spoke, hands slower than normal as she frowned at them.

"But what if it happens again?" Kingo replied. "She almost killed you. She could have killed all of us".

Thena's face was desperate. "Please, I want to remember. I want to remember my life". There was a stutter to her words and Agil couldn't help but cross the room to her. She turned to him with teary eyes as he took her hands in his and squeezed then reassuringly.

"Thena, I love you. But listen to me", Ajak met her gaze, voice so . "It's not important if you remember or not". She placed a hand over Thena's heart. "Your spirit will remain. You will always be Thena deep inside. Trust me".

"Why should she trust you?" Druig's sudden causing voice made them all turn. Agil kept one hand linked with Thena's as he gazed at the blue eyed man. His own blood staining Druig's clothes. Druig stepped away from the wall and round to the open doorway, city on fire lit up behind him like some cruel e ect. "You're asking her to let you erase who she is".

"Druig", Ajak's tone was firm. "I know you're upset-"

"Upset?" Druig shouted. Agil flinched. "We've trusted you for Seven thousand years, and look where you've gotten us. I've watched humans destroy each other when I could stop it all in a heartbeat. Do you know what that does to someone a er centuries?"

Agil let go of Thena's hand and stepped forwards. His chest constricted with anxiety and worry. He had never cared wether humans destroyed themselves or not, but watching the frustration and anger building in the other Eternal over the years hurt. His family was falling apart around him and there was nothing he could do. One hand reached out to touch Druig's arm but the man stepped away. "Could our mission have been a mistake?" His voice echoed over stone. "Are we really helping these people build a better world huh?"

He whirled, stepping back out through the door to the top of the temple steps to gaze out over the battle. The sounds were almost muted but they could still hear the screaming, see the fires. "We're just like the soldiers down there", Druig's voice was quieter but not less angry. "Pawns to their leaders. Blinded by loyalty". Agil heard the arrow aimed in the last sentence; shot at Ikaris, Ajak, Kingo and the others who had always followed Arisham without question. It was a cutting sentence.

"It ends now". Below, the screams and sounds go battle grew silent as Druig took hold of every human mind and forced them to stop. Ikaris was moving before the sounds died out, one hand grabbing Druig by the shoulder and slamming him into the wall.

"Let them go".

Druig's body language was relaxed, arrogant. "You're going to have to make me".

"Stop", Agil snapped, stepping forwards. "Ikaris. Stop". He didn't want to see them come to blows. Ikaris looked at him, eyes so ening, then at Ajak just over his shoulder. He let go and stepped back. Druig straightened and brushed o his tunic.

"If you want to stop me", he turned and met Agil's gaze before letting his eyes sweep over the rest of them. Sersi and Sprite silent with pale faces. Phastos worn and accepting. Kingo with wide eyes and Makkari understanding. Gilgamesh sad and Thena distraught. They were all silent, no one knowing what to say. "You're going to have to kill me". Then Druig was walking away down the steps. His figure a dark shadow over the flames. Agil stood on the top of the steps and watched as the humans below parted like the sea for him, before following like a tide out of the city. Druig disappearing into the forest with the humans.

"I'll watch over Thena", Gilgamesh muttered, defeated but also defiant in the same breath. "Let her keep her memories".

"One day when she attacks you, you may have to kill her", Ajak warned.

"I'll take that chance", Gilgamesh nodded. Thena smiled through her tears at him, a look so hopeful and loving.

"You may all go", Ajak announced as she gazed over them all. "The deviants are gone. There's no reason for you all to stay with me".

"Shouldn't you ask Arisham first?" Ikaris voiced. "We're a team, we should stay together".

"Fuck Arisham", Agil snarled, bitterness souring his voice. "We haven't been a proper team in centuries. A proper team works together and cares for each other. If we cared for each other then this wouldn't have happened". He gestured round the room in a wide sweeping motion. "All we have done for centuries is fight. Moving from place to place, fighting deviants again and again. What is the point? Why should we protect humans only for them to destroy themselves later? It's useless".

Ajak sighed sadly. "You may go Agil. Live a life for yourself. Th same goes for all of you. Find a purpose, not as soldiers. Find your own purpose. And one day, when we see each other again, I want you to tell me what you've found".

Agil let his gaze sweep over the room, taking in every face of his family. Then he turned without another word, huge golden wings bursting from his back, and leapt o of the steps. Wings beating as he took o into the air. Golden against the night sky before he was disappearing into the clouds.

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