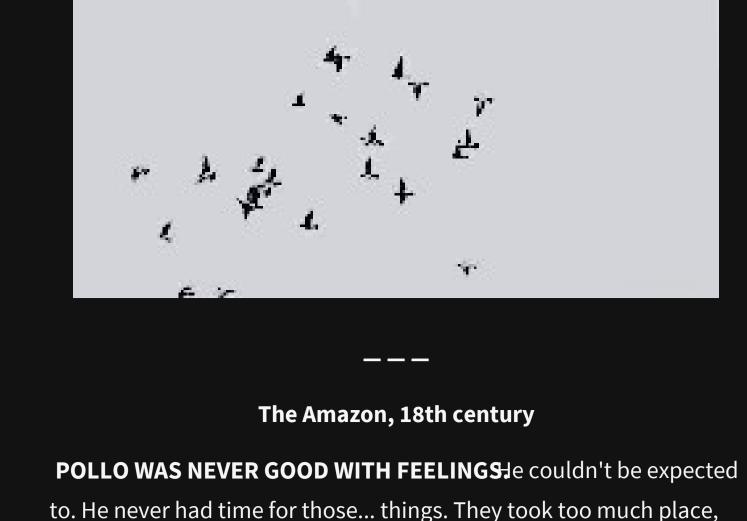
## xvi - The asshole that is Pollo's crush



something of the sort while in combat. He had feelings. How could he not? That's why he cried so much, why it all seemed to hurt so much.

were to complicated. He couldn't let himself be distracted by

He missed his family for that very reason. Because he felt too much.

This was why he seemed to be the only Eternal a ected by the fact that he was so far away from his family. He still stayed awake at night, thinking of them. Thinking that, maybe, he would find Olympia in the stars. He never did. He couldn't remember their voices, their faces, their names. He hated it. What kind of person forgets their own family? He never dared to speak about it with another Eternal, fearing

their names. He hated it. What kind of person forgets their own family? He never dared to speak about it with another Eternal, fearing that they wouldn't understand. Or that they would judge him for forgetting about the people he loved most. He had tried to remember his time on Olympia, remember if he'd ever dated anybody or if he'd been taught the di erence between friendship and romance, still his mind stayed blank. No memories came back to him.

And so he tried to see what he'd learned from the humans. However.

mind stayed blank. No memories came back to him.

And so he tried to see what he'd learned from the humans. However, if there was one thing he really learned it was that most feelings are all about time. Their ways of grieving and loving were dierent than from the Eternals, because they didn't have quite as much time. They came up with things such as love at first sight since they didn't have time to court each other, to spend centuries looking at the stars and then finally touching each other's hands. There are no such things as love at first sight. He was convinced of that. But there was love at last sight. When you realize how much you really love someone just

before you never see them again. Love was a strong feeling. Too

multiple looks, multiple laughs, multiple years. But then again, that's

strong to appear a er one look at each other. Eternals needed

Love wasn't the only thing that was all about time. A rather similar emotion to it was just the same. Anger. Anger needed time to appear, to develop. That's why there were so much wars in the human world. They fear that in their short little lives, they won't have time to see everything, feel everything. They wantto be angry. Which is why they directed their anger to the first person they get a glance at. As soon as someone would irritate them the slightest, they'd get angry at them. They would hate them, swear revenge on them and never let go of that grudge. For an Eternal, for those Eternals at least, it was di erent. Of course, they would get angry sometimes. But they rarely hated anybody. Pollo had never hated Druig. Or Ikaris. He hoped it

was the same for them. They'd gotten into arguments, had fought,

and though sometimes he would find them annoying, he never hated

them. His life was too long for that and he couldn't just ignore them

For him, the same went with love. His life was so long, there were no doubts at some point he would fall out of love. So it was better for him to never even fall in the first place. Maybe he had feelings for someone at some point, but it must've been so long ago, he couldn't think of any example. Had ever even had a crush on somebody? The obvious answer would've been no. He didn't spend enough time with humans to develop strong feelings towards them and his relationships with the Eternals were either friendly or rocky. Never had he ever felt something that might've been considered a crush. He'd talked about it with humans. What they felt whenever they were around the ones they loved, how they'd known that they were the ones. He'd ended up figuring out that love was more similar to a

sickness than an emotion. People described what they felt as

symptoms, which he'd made a list of, until he realized it was rather

similar to the flu. You were supposed to feel warm whenever they

touched you, you couldn't speak properly around them, your head

tickle and your heart ache, you would sometimes start trembling

started spinning when you spent time together, they made your chest

when too close to them and most importantly, it got harder to breath.

Pollo had treated human's sickness for centuries, he knew very well

that those symptoms were more likely to be the flu than love. He had the flu. It must've been some Amazonian variant of it, still he didn't doubt that this was the only possible explanation to what he felt. He didn't have it before, it had only started since he'd arrived in Druig's village. From time to time, he would lose control over his temperature, a warm sensation caressing his skin and making his cheeks flush. He would go back to his cabin at the end of the day, his heart hammering his chest until it was the only sound he could hear. That and the sound of his shaking breath, which always got caught in his throat with words he couldn't speak anymore. And oh, how it would all spin around him. It was rather similar to that time when he'd gotten bitten by a snake, which had been the reason he had to stay in the Amazon in the first place. Contrary to popular belief, Pollo was not stupid. But through his long life, he'd never been romantically attracted to anybody. He'd barely ever been attracted to someone. And the only person in this village was Druig He'd known Druig for so long without ever thinking of him

in any way that might lead to more than just friendship, so why would

it change now? Why would his skin suddenly start burning whenever

he felt the mind controller's fingertips caressing him? Why was he no

longer able to flirt with Druig the way he always had without

stammering on his words? It was something new and strange.

Something he hated. He refused to believe that, somehow, he'd

caught feelings for the other Eternal. The only thing he could've

But love, in a way, was a sickness. It wasn't something you could

control, it infected at the worst moments for the worst people. It was

no coincidence that being madly was called being lovesick. However,

love wasn't the flu. The flu was curable, it passed with time. Love had

no treatments that could be used to get rid of it. It's not like he could

just sweat it out! It's not like he was in love anyway. He couldn't be. In

He'd been infected, the horrible illness coursing through his veins

and haunting his dreams. It was Druig's fault. He'd came at a point in

the worst of cases, it was an infatuation. A crush.

caught was a sickness.

his life where it was always Druig's fault. He'd used his powers to trick him into feeling that way, it was all just a prank, something he did when he was bored. He'd never felt that way before and the logical explanation to this was because he wasn't really feeling it. It was something that the mind controller had made up to annoy him. Never before had he used his powers to cause him harm, still he couldn't seem to let go of this thought. It was an unlikely explanation but an explanation nonetheless. His only explanation, actually.

There were plenty of other explanations. The only reason why he didn't consider them was that he refuses to believe that it might be possible. The one who might have made the most sense was grotesque and frankly, rather terrifying. The simple knowledge of its existence was enough to make him cry of laughter. Of laughter or of fear, he wasn't quite sure, all he really knew was that it made him cry.

Had he still been talking with the other Eternals, they would have

subject. There was no way that he had a crush on Druig. No way

As soon as he allowed the thought to linger in his mind, it made its

home there. He could no longer think of Druig without the horrifying

possibility of his crush taunting him. It kept him awake at night, made

agreed with him. All expected maybe for Makkari. But Phastos, their

resident genius, would've given him reason, he had no doubts on the

him lose his appetite and even made his smile stop. This was the first he experienced what humans called a crash and he hated it. He hated thinking, hoping, that there might've been a possibility of happiness for the both of them. Druig barely tolerated it. And, anyway, it's not like he really had a crush on him. It was just a thought, a possibility, something he feared more than any Deviant he'd ever fought in the past.

He'd found another explanation. Not for why he felt that way, but for why he never felt infatuated with anybody before. He was already in a relationship. As he'd noted his list of symptoms for love, more than one human had told him that when you love somebody, you only see them. Nobody else matters. And he remembered so little of Olympia,

who was to say that he hadn't le a girlfriend or fiancé there? Maybe

he was already married. No, he wasn't wearing a ring when he'd first

woken up on the Domo. He knew himself well enough to know that

he wasn't the kind of person who would take o his ring as soon as

his partner wouldn't see him anymore. However, he did remember

that, at Sersi and Ikaris' wedding, he'd found himself thinking that

marriage wasn't something he cared much for. That it wasn't

married, he wouldn't have thought that way. Right?

something that seemed important for him. Had he already been

He could barely remember his family or Olympia, he shouldn't have

been so surprised that he remembered so little of his life before joining the Eternals. He wished it wasn't the case. Not remembering his life made it harder for him to continue living it. It meant that whatever he was doing, he might have already done it. Whatever hurt might have hurt him once before. How was he to protect himself if he couldn't remember what he needed to be protected from?

There must've been a flaw in his code, a glitch of some sort in his brain. There had to be a reason why he was the only Eternals that seemed so a ected by not being able to remember his life from before. They were all androids, perfect warriors chosen because of their tolerance for pain and their ability to shut up and listen to orders. Druig had been di erent. He didn't want to follow orders. He didn't want to trust people he knew nothing about. It must've been one of the reason why Pollo felt that way towards him. Because the both of them were messed up, incapable of trusting their friends or

understanding why they didn't seem to have a life outside of their

duty as Eternals. Nobody else had ever questioned it. No one had

conflict. They should have. He wished he'd thought about all this

before. He wished he could've been allowed to stop all wars and

illnesses that killed more people than any Deviant ever could. Why

were they not allowed to help humans? Was it not the whole reason

as to why they'd been sent on Earth? To defend them? Then again,

He was maundering again. He couldn't even remember what he'd

been thinking of to begin with. He was good at not remembering.

he was around Druig. It was as though someone was holding his

heart in their hand and trying to crush it. But he knew his heart

wasn't what really hurt him. It was the thoughts in his head. They

were taunting him again. Slipping through his fingers, making it

Still, he was le with a feeling in his chest, unlike the one he felt when

how could he defend them when he couldn't defend himself.

disagreed with the rule not to try and help humans when they were in

impossible for him to focus, to remember. It had all been much easier when he'd first arrived on Earth. Then, he didn't miss his family yet and he didn't know Druig well enough to feel that way towards him. Not that he had a crush on him.

Or maybe he did. But he couldn't let that happen. It wouldn't take much time before Druig would figure it out, whether it was with his powers or simply because it was obvious. He didn't want him to know. Then, he would hate him even more than he already did. And though his crush would lead nowhere, he refused to lose Druig as a friend. He'd worked to hard to try and make this friendship work just to throw it all away for a stupid infatuation. Being around Druig was enough to make him happy, he didn't need it to be romantic. It's not like he really wanted to tell him how he felt anyway. He wasn't even sure to understand what that was! He wouldn't risk their friendship for something so strange and confusing as this... infatuation.

He tried not to think too much about it for two reasons. First, he was

really hoping that ignoring his feelings would make them disappear.

He'd claimed before that love wasn't the kind of sickness you could

O en, when he'd feel particularly sad, he'd wait until he would simply

forget why he was even sad in the first place, so if it worked with such

was bound to pass at some point. It couldn't just stay and haunt him

for the rest of his days. The second reason as to why he tried to avoid

He really wanted to believe that Druig never used his powers on him,

once tried to read his mind before thinking of asking him if he could.

however it was rather unlikely. There were no way that he'd never

There were Druig had knowledge he could only have by reading

Pollo's mind, even if he wished that wasn't the case. So if at some

point he decided he wanted to play a prank on him or if he simply

heard his thoughts because they were too loud, then he wouldn't be

able to do anything about it. And the chances were that Druig would

anything more than annoyance towards him. The fact that he could

push him away, maybe even kick him out of the village.

There were no doubts in his mind that Druig would never feel

thinking about it was to make sure Druig would never accidentally

catch one of those thoughts.

a horrible feeling as sadness, why wouldn't it work with a crush? It

just sweat out, still he could only hope that he could wait it out.

even call him a friend was already surprising enough. Druid wasn't a particularly easy person to approach, mostly because he didn't wish to make friends and wasn't very pleasant to be around. What got Pollo to stick around and really try to be his friend, he couldn't say. But he did. And a er a lot of hard work and fights, they were... friends. It didn't quite seem like the right word, still it was the one they'd both agreed on. Heartbreak, tears, pain. These were all a part of their relationship at some point. Until now. A er all those centuries of bad communication and insults thrown at each other, they were better. They laughed and they felt good around each other. They were in a healthy relationship that wouldn't end with one of them leaving the other behind. For once. It had taken them a lot of e ort to make it work. Neither of them really knew a lot about friendship, they were Eternals whose only jobs was to protect human, they were never taught how to interact with one another. They knew how to kill, how to manipulate, but not

how to love. How to be kind. Pollo had to teach himself. Druig was

never taught. He didn't knew that his words hurt, nor that his actions

were remembered. Or maybe he did and just didn't care. No matter

what, they sure didn't know how to deal with a relationship, so there

was no way that Pollo would try to get into one. And, as said before, it

It was for the best. Forgetting this crush. He knew this was what Druig

was almost certain that Druig would never engage in such a thing

with him. He cared about power and control. Those things don't

would have wanted as well. This was a sickness, something that

made him feel horrible, wrong, and he has to get rid of it. It would

him anything, it was that everything pass, even the worst. A

pass, as things always did with time. If his rather long live had taught

ridiculous crush would seem like a worthless second he might even

completely forget about in a few years. Who knows, maybe one days

always mix well in a relationship.

he and Druig would laugh about it. Or maybe they would simply never talk about it. Both solutions were good. He knew it well. That Druig didn't like him and never would. It wasn't surprising that he wouldn't see him in such a way, as a er all he didn't really appreciate it that much. He was a flea on his back, not much more. Sometimes, he would even think that Druig hated him.

Pollo was never good with feelings.

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