a rather long time. He'd sit down on a rock and look at the river, letting the rays of the sun caress his face. Only when the sun had

The Amazon, 19th century

POLLO HAD GOTTEN USED TO LIVING IN DRUIG'S VILLAGEe'd

even developed a routine. He woke up every morning with the sun

and would go out for a walk, o en going to the river and making sure

no one had found the cave where he'd hidden his boat, now fixed for

finished rising would he head back to the village, knowing that Druig would wake up in the hour to come and not wanting him to panic if he wasn't in the village. So he would sit down on the stairs in front of Druig's cabin, looking for funny rocks on the ground that he would either keep or use for ricochets. When Druig would finally wake up, the mind controller would open his door, already knowing that Pollo was waiting in front of his cabin, and invite him to eat breakfast, probably aware that he hadn't eaten yet. Then, they'd hang out for a while, until Druig would tell him that he had to go check on the village. Two possibilities follow that statement. The first one was that Pollo would come with him. Then, he would be more of a shadow than an Eternal, which could've been considered out of character for him if you hadn't known him for centuries. Though he talked loudly and smiled brightly, he liked to erase himself. Become a part of the scenery, people being aware of his presence even though they barely noticed it. He was more of a feeling

than a person, you knew when he was there, felt a warm tickling

energy similar to electricity next to you and yet you never thought

'Hey, Pollo's here'. And so, when he followed Druig around the village,

he always stayed a bit behind, listening to the conversations without

being a part of them. Most would've believed that that role would've been reserved to Druig while Pollo laughed and talked with others, however neither of them really liked conversing with anybody they didn't know well, so they simply switched from time to time. Legend has it that, once, they'd chosen who would've have to talk with strangers while the other stayed behind through a game of rockpaper-scissors. However, Druig knew most people from his village, so they never needed to fight over who would talk to the village and who would be the shadow of the other. The second option was that Pollo would continue on with his day, leaving Druig alone. On those days, he'd o en spent a few hours in his cabin, writing in his journal. On those occasions, though they were in the majority, he would o en get bored. He only had so little to write about and so when he would have nothing else to do, he'd go on another walk. He was always trying to keep his mind occupied, not wanting it to wander in places that were just a bit too dark for him. Since he'd arrived in Druig's village, maybe a few months ago, he'd started forgetting again. And, contrary to popular belief, he wasn't dumb. He realized that he always seemed to lose a bit of his memory

whenever he was around Druig. But the thought that one of his most

trusted friends could do something of the sort without his consent

a

was simply grotesque. Druig would never be this dumb. But let's go back to the original subject. He had to keep busy if he didn't want to risk some kind of memory loss or mental breakdown, and so he would walk around, learn every corner of the place. Had he wanted to, at this point he could've drawn a map of the forest, however he would never do anything of the sort. He didn't want it to fall into the wrong hands. A er all, Druig had trusted him with the location of his village and he would never betray him in such a way. So yeah. Those were his two options a er breakfast. Stay with Druig or don't. However, no matter what happened, they would always find their way back to each other for lunch. He couldn't really remember when they'd agreed to always eat together, probably because they'd never said such a thing. It had a been a silent agreement. As both of them would've eaten alone had it not been for the other, they'd ended up eating each meal in the company of the other. As they ate, they would ask each other about their morning if they hadn't been together, but if they had, then they would ask what they were planning on doing next. Their a ernoon was a bit more changing. The only thing that stayed the same everyday was they did their best to spend as much time as

they could with each other. They would talk about everything and

They'd never been able to do that before. They'd always needed

something to say, or else the silence would become awkward. He

liked that, now, they could just walk around without saying a word,

Druig looking at him while he skipped stones on the river, or simply

being able to lay down next to each other and look at the clouds. Still,

whenever those things would happen, he would groan at the thought

Pollo would've expected himself to be sick of Druig by now. He was

of Makkari's dumb grin if she ever found out about all of this.

nothing, or when they ran out of things to say, they stayed in silence.

never that good at this whole socializing thing, o en getting tired not lying a er the beginning of a conversation. And, a er all, he and Druig used to fight so much, he wouldn't have been surprised if they ended up at each other's throat once more. But no. They were still enjoying each other's presence, still laughing at the stupid things they said. Pollo loved it.

But that day, this whole routine was shattered as they were eating breakfast. Normally, they didn't day that much in the morning. A few polite questions, still Druig was o en too tired to have an actual conversation. So imagine Pollo's surprise when his friend was the one to talk first that day.

"You told me that, finally, Thena didn't get her memories erased,

Even though he'd been surprised at first, he didn't waste time before

answering. "Yeah. She and Gilgamesh went to Australia, if I'm not

wrong. Then again, I kind of le in a hurry last time I saw them, so..."

He didn't finish his sentence, not knowing what more to say. Even

a er all this time, he still felt bad about how he'd le things with his

fellows Eternals. He hadn't thought about it that much since he'd

arrived at Druig's village, or at least he didn't remember thinking

much about it, but the guilt was still hidden in a corner of his mind.

right?"

As he realized that the conversation still wasn't over, he tried to shake away those thoughts so as to stay focused on Druig.

"I was thinking of going to see them," the mind controller stated. "We didn't leave on the best terms, but I still want to help with Thena's Mahd Wy'ry if I can."

"That's... actually pretty nice of you. But I don't know precisely where they are," he admitted. "It could take a lot of time before you find them. You do know that, right?"

A sly smirk made its way onto Druig's face and as he always did

that it was rather rare that the smaller Eternal would get cocky

whenever his friend would get cocky, Pollo rolled his eyes. He knew

without having a particularly good reason to do so, still it annoyed

it, but a cocky Druig was, in some strange way, pretty attractive.

follow that," he explained.

"I'll be able to find their minds as soon as I'm there. I'll just have to

Pollo hu ed, looking away from the other man's face as he felt his

him. But not for the reasons some might think of. He hated to admit

own face heat up. "How do you know it'll work? You've never controlled an Eternal's mind before."

And just like that, his smirk had faded away. As Pollo hadn't been looking at him when it happened, he didn't see it, still he felt the change of energy in the room. Suddenly, it all seemed to get colder, darker. He was tempted to look outside for a cloud that would warn them of an upcoming storm, however he knew very well that the weather had nothing to do with the sudden change. These times, he

o en found himself denying obvious truths, but as it did not yet hurt

him, he'd decided that there was nothing wrong with trying to save

"I'll manage," he cut him o , though he must've noticed how dry it

had sounded as he let his face so ened slightly and reached out to

wondering if you could watch the village for me. You're the only one I

grab Pollo's hand. "I'm leaving today. But, while I'm gone, I was

himself from unnecessary heartbreak.

trust enough to do so."

"We're not going together?"

It was stupid and childish, he knew, but a small part of him had hoped that Druig would include him on his travel. Of course, he wouldn't have been much help against Thena's Mahd Wy'ry, still he'd gotten used to Druig being a part of his routine, of his life. It was strange to think there was a world where they were apart. The thought made him cringe, and he hoped that Druig hadn't heard it, because it was so impossibly cheesy, even for him. Of course there was a world where they were apart. This world. Just because they'd found each other once didn't mean that they would stay together forever.

"Yeah. I'm sorry," apologized Druig, though he had nothing to

apologize for. "It's just... You told me that when you le you yelled at

Gilgamesh and... well, everyone. I didn't think you'd want to come.

Pollo sighed, passing a hand in his hair. "You're right. Like always.

The taller Eternal tried to hide his disappointment, not so as to make

sure Druig wouldn't feel guilty about leaving but because he knew

Even then, it was pretty hard to hide that he'd lost all appetite and

the only thing he really wanted to do was hug Druig. Of course, he

how much his friend would enjoy knowing that he would be missed.

"I don't know, it'll depend on them. But at least a week."

Also, like I said before, you were really the only one here I could

entrust with the care of the village."

didn't. He never.

Well, how long do you think you'll be gone?"

"Can you..." he cleared his throat, trying to hide the sudden weakness in his voice. "Can you tell them 'Hi' for me?"

Druig's smile had come back. It wasn't smug anymore, just... there.

He liked it when Druig would smile just because he could, just because he was happy. He never used to do that before. "Of course."

———

Pollo had never been one for leadership. He couldn't even handle

being a second in command. He never really had the motivation for

such a task. So a er Druig had le , he'd feared he would be unable to

control the village and that his friend would come back to a pile of

ash and dust because of him. Quickly enough, he realized he didn't

have to be a leader of any sort. The village didn't need him to work.

anything, anyone, trying to attack them. And that, being a soldier,

He still wasn't very good at talking with people, still he was slowly

getting the hang of it. He could name at least three people in the

village, which was, believe it or not, more than before. That day had

been rather calm. Though he did notice Druig's absence, it's not like

he was going to die because of it. He missed him a bit, yes, a er all it

him. He had, before. Why had he ever feared that he wouldn't be able

to do something of the sort? Sometimes, he really did hate his brain.

had already been a week since he'd le, but he could live without

he'd always been good at. He would even dare to say that it was one

They only needed him to make sure they were protected from

of the only things he was good at.

an odour.

Marco".

" He was so young'

stupid he could be.

hundred and three years old.

His eye had caught the sight of smoke coming from the beach, and though it didn't alert him much, he still followed it. As he approached the place, his confusion grew stronger as he recognized the smell that tainted the forest. He'd smelled it too many times not to have its taste tattooed on his tongue by now. Burnt flesh. The smell that human's flesh had when it burned was slightly dierent to the one of a Deviant's. For the monster, the smell was stronger and much worse, which might've been why he'd gotten used so quickly to the smell of human's flesh melting. Still, now it forced him to remember the last time he'd seen the other Eternals, as Tenochtitlan had reeked of such

As he came closer to the fire, he was faced by a small crowd of

people, a few he recognized from the village, all surrounding a pyre. A

corpse that could no longer be recognized through the flames had

cried the few memories of them that they might have le . A small

him and yet still still needing the answer. He wasn't important

he'd known earlier, so that he could've helped build the pyre.

"Who's this? He asked so ly, not wanting to make the boy cry.

The child didn't seem to realize that he was standing next to him, to

the point where Pollo almost feared he hadn't heard him. " My abulo

Now, don't make no mistake, Pollo was, in fact, still very bad with

a

a

enough in the village to know when someone died, still he wished

been laid there, as those who were probably their family and friends

child stood a bit further away from the place, an unreadable look on

his face. Carefully, Pollo came to sit by his side, not wanting to bother

names and faces. But had there been more than one Marco in the village, he would've known. It had been his name for years, a er all. Still, the one Marco that lived here was a little kid. Less than a few months ago —fine, a year ago— Marco had led him inside the village, helping him and Druig meet again, yes, but also saving him from having to stay alone in a forest a er having been bitten by a snake. But the Marco that little was talking about —though he had to admit that the kid and little Marco did look alike— was a grandpa. And though it was probably stupid, Pollo felt anxiety crawled under his skin, and so he found himself wanting to confirm his thoughts.

" Maria's son?

" Si," confirmed the boy, nodding.

" I don't understand, blurted out Pollo, still whispering. The last

thing he wanted was to make the child sad on a day such as this one.

The good news was that the kid didn't seem insulted by that. The

the man sitting next to him, as though he'd only now noticed how

" My abulo was the elder of the villagë, he spoke. " He was one

No.He couldn't have been that old. That would've meant that Pollo

explained why it seemed so hard for him to imagine a world without

together, but there was no way he'd been there for so long without

noticing. He was well aware that his eternal life sometimes made it

harder for him to guess how much time had passed, but he'd spent so

had been there for about a century now. More or less. It would've

Druig now that they'd spent so much time just the two of them

lesser news was that he was now rather confused. He was frowning at

much time around humans, he'd probably noticed if he'd been there for a century. It wouldn't have felt like a couple of months. It shouldn'thave felt like a couple of months.

And even if he hadn't noticed, then surely, Druig must have. He liked it when everything was under his control, even time. And he soient so much time around the people from the village, he must've seen them grow up. And, let's be honest, the mind controller was far from stupid. He must've known that it didn't take a century to repair a boat. Why would he have allowed Pollo to stay so long when he was well aware of his lie?

A small part of him wanted to believe that it was because Druig really did care about him. It was unlikely, he knew that, still he liked the idea that his friend had noticed time passing but had decided to stay silent about it, not wanting to scare o Pollo. Then again, it was impossible to tell what happened in Druig's mind, it always was, but

he liked to believe that he'd gotten to know him well enough to tell a

few things, over those last months, no, years. Never before had Druig

missed an opportunity to remind him of his superiority. Making him

realize that he was better than Pollo to notice time passing would've

helped him feel that way, it was certain. So why hadn't he? He could

still feel that little hope that started to overflow his heart and mind,

wishing that this truly meant something. For the first time in his life,

might've not realized how much time had passed and then force him

So if Druig had kept silent about the clock ticking, then so would he.

he let the hope take over him. Still, he couldn't risk that Druig

to leave when he would.