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TENOCHTITLAN 1521 AD

AURORA

The first thing I remember is Thena.

The second thing I remember is Druig.

It takes me a moment to grasp what happened. My hands fly directly to my stomach, trying to feel for any sort of dent or sign that Thena's sword had stabbed me.

Thankfully, there's nothing except the stain of the blood around my suit.

I sit up straight, looking around me. It was still dark outside from what I could see, so I must have been out for only a short time. I'm laid in a small bed on the floor, a dim array of candles casting a warm glow in the room.

My mind goes back to the moments before I passed out. How Druig had looked at me when he'd seen the blood on my hands.

How he'd caught me when I fell, how he'd soothed me with his words and called me Rory.

That man was so different from the man I had known the past seven thousand years.

I had never seen him look so worried as he had right there.

It confused me to think that it had been me he was worried about.

In the past couple of hours, our relationship had developed more than it had in the past thousand years. I found it strange more than anything else, really.

Why now? Why had he cared so little until now? Why had it taken us years to agree on something?

Why did I hate him to begin with?

Regret sprung inside me, ricocheting in my brain like a loose ball. We had spent all these years fighting and hating each other when maybe we had just been misunderstanding everything.

Well, maybe I had.

I thought back to what he'd said before I passed out. It seemed wierd that he had said it with such security; such confidence.

Still, as much as I tried to figure it out, I couldn't really understand. Contact between us had been at a minimum after Gupta, and I had been far too scared to reach out.

Even more so because I knew he didn't like me. We were supposed to have this archnemesis thing going on. It confused me to think that I was supposed to hate him.

And yet hating him was the farthest thing away from what I was doing.

He annoyed me, of course. I hated that I liked him so much. I hated that every time he walked in the room my heart would skip a beat, or how I sometimes would go out to watch the sunset and leave some room for if he wanted to join me just as he had all those years ago in Babylon.

I hated liking him, yes.

I didn't hate him

Still, I made sure to stay indifferent to my feelings. I had seen how love worked. How relationships destroyed entire civilizations. How love was so complex and complicated.

Also, he hadn't given me any signs that he even so much as liked me.

There was no way he would ever think of me as I thought of him.

And yet... why had he acted like that?

Could it be...

no.

I forced the thought down, not willing to let my hopes up.

Druig was a complicated being. He was the only person on the team besides Ikaris that I couldn't quite figure out, as much as I wanted to.

I'm snapped out of my thoughts as the door opens. Druig walks into the room, his eyebrows rising when he sees me sitting up.

"Are you better?" His accent sticks out at his words. He goes to the table, grabbing a pitcher and an empty cup, filling it with water.

I assume it's for him, but it surprises me when he reaches over, holding it out for me to take.

"Yeah, I'm all better now" I offer a small smile, grabbing the cup and drinking a few sips.

He nods, standing there for a moment before clearing his throat.

"They have Thena on the temple. She's still asleep, but Phastos says she'll wake up soon if you want to see her" He motions behind him to the door.

I nod, placing the cup on the floor beside me. We're enveloped by silence, but I'm slightly startled by the fact that it's not uncomfortable.

He watches me in silence, his lips pursing, brow creasing, just like always.

"What are you looking at?" My tone comes out harsher than intended and I immediately regret it. I see the wall behind his eyes close up, his expression becoming void again.

"God, you can be such a pain in the ass sometimes" He mumbles, clearly annoyed. He places down the pitcher of water roughly, turning around and making a beeline for the door.

"Wait, Druig"

In a panic, I stand up, rushing over to him and touching his upper arm so that he stops walking. When my hand meets his arm he stills completely, back facing me.

I see him look down at where I'm touching him and then up at the door before he turns to me, not meeting my eyes.

"What is it, Aurora"

"What you said–back in the forest" I start, swallowing back the wave of nerves. "What did you mean by that?"

He sighs, running a hand over his face in what I suppose is frustration

"It–it was nothing"

I frown, flinching at his cold tone.

"It wasn't nothing, clearly" I state. I cross my arms over my chest, waiting for him to answer.

When he doesn't, my annoyance grows, the desperation of wanting to know what he meant–wanting to hear it from his own mouth–overwhelming me.

"I don't understand, Druig." I start, my voice rising. "You jump at every chance to sabotage me. You tell me mean things and you have avoided me since Gupta"

He scoffs, shaking his head and walking away from me and towards the table, pacing for a few steps.

I take his silence as a sign to continue.

"And then all of a sudden you're saving me and helping me and not snitching about me saving that family" I pause, heaving in a breath. "I don't understand you"

"You don't understand me?!" It's his turn to talk now. He reels back, turning to look at me, blue eyes blazing. "You've hated me since the beginning, you always started fights–" He starts ranting, his tone rising with every word. He makes a motion with his hands.

I give him an incredulous look, scoffing and shaking my head.

"Are you serious?! You were a complete ass when we met, Druig! How was I supposed to react? You literally hated me!" I'm full-on screaming now, my voice hoarse from the yelling.

At my words he stills, his face falling. Complete silence engulfs us.

"Hate you?" He starts after a moment. "Aurora, I don't hate you. I have never hated you" His voice is so soft and quiet, as if he'd just run out of energy completely.

Whatever I was about to say catches in my throat, my mouth snapping shut.

A fool. I was a fool. Had everything been just something made up in my head? Had we really been fighting all these years because of me?

"Never?" My voice comes out as a whisper.

He shakes his head, looking straight at me with those beautiful blue eyes.

"Not for one second"

"Then why–"

"You hated me. I always assumed you did. You acted as much" He sighs, running a hand through his face

"Why–why didn't you say anything?"

"Well, you didn't really give me a chance to talk, did you?" he objects.

My mouth opens and closes, my thoughts reeling. I'm not sure I can even speak right now.

"And Gupta? Why did you stop talking to me?" I finally ask.

His eyes open slightly, taken aback by my comment.

"You really don't remember, do you?" He asks, taking a step closer.

I shake my head, my head tilting to the side.

"Remember what?"

He laughs then, shaking his head as if everything he had been thinking had been wrong. When he turns to me, his expression is a completely different one.

If I hadn't known him I would have said it was content. He takes a step closer, a small smile lining his lips.

"I–"

The door opens abruptly, Gil bursting into the room. He pants, looking at the both of us before pointing behind him.

"Thena–she's awake"

Druig turns to look at me. We share a quick glance, knowing we would talk about this later before the both of us follow Gil and head to Thena.

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"What happened?" Thena's voice sounds small, almost a whisper.

Ajak looks at her, watching as she sits upon the altar she had been laying in.

"You attacked everyone" She motions to us, "You wounded Sersi, Phastos, you almost killed Aurora and Makkari"

At the mention of my name Thena turns to me, her eyes flitting down to the bloodied suit I was still wearing. She shakes her head, her eyes glimmering.

"I don't remember" Her voice cracks at her words.

"You have mad wy'ry" Ajak explains, her lips pursing. She walks so that she's face to face with Thena, her gaze pitiful. "Your mind is fracturing under the weight. of your memories"

"Isn't there something we can do?" I call out from beside Sersi, worry etched on my features.

Ajak shakes her head. "All I can do is erase your memories so that she can start over"

"What?" Sprite's small voice comes from beside Druig. She looks at Thena, her eyes wide.

Ajak nods, turning to look at all of us.

"I will inform Arishem and take you back to the ship where we have the technology to help"

I turn towards Makkari, watching as she signs.

But she'll stop being our Thena.

I nod in agreement. "Makkari's right. She wouldn't be herself" my heart beats quickly. I couldn't lose her.

"What if it happens again?" Kingo protests at what Makkari just signed. "She could have killed all of us"

I scowl at him, scoffing.

"You know what, Kingo–" I warn. Ajak turns, giving me a warning glance and making me halt mid-word.

"Please" Thena's voice comes out quiet, directed to Ajak. "I want to remember." Her lip quivers "I want to remember my life"

Ajak smiles sadly, holding Thena's hands with her own.

"Thena I love you but listen to me. It's not important if you remember or not. Your spirit will remain. You will always be our Thena deep inside. Trust me"

"Why should she trust you?" It's Druig who speaks now. He pushes himself off the wall, staring daggers at Ajak as he walks closer "You're asking her to erase who she is"

Ajak turns to him, shaking her head.

"Druig, I know you're upset–"

"Upset?!" His yell makes me flinch. I can tell the rest of the team is surprised by his outburst. He points to all of us, his gaze landing on me for a second before he goes back to Ajak. "We have trusted you for seven thousand years, and look you've gotten us" His tone is calculated, his accent thick.

He looks at Thena.

"You want to erase her memories." he points to me "You force Aurora to watch the people she believes in so much–die at the hands of each other. Over and over." His voice is filled with emotion, and I can see him trying to hold back tears.

"I've watched humans destroy each other when I could stop it all in a heartbeat." He chuckles bitterly. "Do you know what it does to someone after centuries?"

I wipe away a stray tear that has fallen down my cheek, my mind overwhelmed with emotions.

Druig was right. I had seen people I loved–cities I loved– fall into ashes, not being able to do anything about it.

Time and time again a piece of my heart shattered every time I was forced to see the massacre– the killing–that inevitably always seemed to happen.

"Could our mission have been a mistake?" He continues, his voice becoming hoarse. "Are we really helping these people build a better world, huh?" He turns to me, silent tears trekking down his cheeks.

"Are we really helping them live?" He swallows, regaining his posture. "You of all people know I'm right, Aurora"

I stay silent, the eyes of everyone on me.

He was.

He truly was.

I watched as he turned around towards the opening of the temple, where the chaos and war still laid before us. He stares down at them.

"They're just like us down there" He calls out after a moment "They're pawns to their leaders. Blinded by the loyalty" He pauses, taking in a deep breath.

"It ends now"

I can feel the energy of his eyes flashing gold. I gasp silently, looking down at the city before us as the fighting comes to a stop. Spanish soldiers drop their weapons to the ground, Aztecs drop their sheilds and their knives, all of them controlled by Druig.

In an instant, Ikaris is beside Druig, pushing him by the shoulder and against the wall.

"Ikaris" I warn, taking a step closer.

He ignores me, looking straight at Druig.

"Let them go" Ikaris forms the words through gritted teeth, staring daggers at Druig. Druig smiles tauntingly.

"You're gonna have to make me"

"Stop!" I call out, walking closer to Ikaris. He turns to me, an incredulous look on his face.

"Now you're on his side?" He asks, his tone cold.

I look at Druig for a second before turning to Ikaris.

"I'm on humanity's side" I respond, my guard up.

Druig turns to Ikaris, moving from the wall and motioning to himself.

"If you want to stop it," He looks at Ajak "You're gonna have to kill me"

He takes a step back, about to turn around when his eyes meet mine.

There's a small moment in which time seems to stop. For a second there's no Eternals, no fighting, no wars. He looks at me, and he finally–for the first time ever– lets his walls down.

As the world pauses around us, I can see every hint of every emotion that he has ever felt.

At that moment, I know he didn't hate me, and I hope he knows that I didn't hate him either.

I never had.

His eyes glimmer, his expression morphing into one of understanding.

He knows I can't leave. He knows I won't.

He knows and he doesn't blame me. The barrier behind my eyes falls as well, and a number of unspoken things pass between us, suspended in the air.

Everything in my being wants to let everything go and leave with him, but his ways of doing things are much different than mine.

He doesn't care who he hurts in the process. I do.

We have the same goal, but different ways of execution.

A million things pass between us, the second of understanding not being able to catch up with the thousands of unspoken things we've held the past years.

In that glance shared between us– I know it isn't the end, and that at some point– no matter where we are or what happens, we'll see each other again.

And then time resumes, and he turns around, walking down the stairs.

I wanted him to look back. I needed him to look back. If he looked back I knew I would leave everything and go with him.

He didn't look back.

Later, after he left, Gil would offer to take care of Thena, and Ajak would tell us that there was no need to keep the team together.

Just like that, all of us would go on our own paths–become our own people. I would keep in touch with most of them, except Kingo and Ikaris, but our relationship would fade to friends instead of family.

As for Druig? It would be 200 years until I saw him again.

a/n yuh

alright I just want to clear up that this isn't the last time they'll see each other before the 'present day' reunion, if that makes sense. They have a lot of things and eras to go through before we get to the present day.

also, they left on good terms and they kind of don't hate each other but they know something else is going on.

Continue reading next part