i - The beginning of the end

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Mesopotamia, 5000 BC

AS SOON AS HE AWOKE, POLLO STARTED MISSING HIS FAMILY AND HOME PLANET. He was still too groggy to quite remember the names and faces of his parents or siblings, but he did remember his world. Olympia. He'd spent all his life there until Arishem chose him and a few others to protect the planet Earth from the Deviants. He knew that leaving his family had been for the greater good and that, as an Eternal, it was his duty to protect the weaker species, but that didn't mean he wasn't lonely. Which was somewhat strange as he had only been awake for a few seconds now.

A black and gold costume had appeared around him, wrapping around every inch of his skin from under the neck, and made so it would protect him from the attack of a Deviant without restraining his movements. Everybody had a similar one, but most had different colour schemes, for some reason. He felt out of place, around all those people with whom he would share the next centuries, fighting the Deviants until they had fully disappeared. It wasn't just because none of them seemed united due to a lack of uniform —except for a muscular man and Ajak, the woman in charge of the operation, who were both wearing yellow and blue— but also because, even if he knew they were all from Olympia, he couldn't quite place any of them. Of course, Olympia was big, he couldn't expect to know everybody, but still... Even if there was something a bit familiar about them, they didn't look like a team. Not yet, at least. They were each individual people and while they were all there for the same reason, there was no way for them to know who would fight in what way and with what powers.

"You seem awfully gloomy for a guy who just woke up," spoke an unknown voice next to him.

His first reflex was to snap his head in the direction of the stranger, but he stopped himself from doing so, refusing to acknowledge he'd been surprised by the sudden appearance of the man —because he could assume from the voice it was a man who was talking to him—at his side. "Well, what can I say? I do love a good nap."

He heard a scoff and then almost immediately felt the loneliness coming back to him. He let himself look behind him, glancing at the figure that was now leaving him behind. Whoever had spoken was wearing black and red colours, which were, in a way, a bit similar to Pollo's. Maybe he should've been trying a bit more to get to know the people on the Domo, but that's not what he was here for. He would start by fighting those Deviants and only after would he take the time for some chitchat. He walked towards the statue of Arishem, standing in the middle of one of the ship's rooms, where everybody else had already gathered.

"Are you ready?" Asked Ajak, looking at each of them.

He was. He wasn't quite sure what he was ready for, but he knew he was. And now, with the knowledge of a fight in a more than near future, all thoughts of his family or home planet had left him before he could even start wondering what their names were. And the next thing he knew, he was on Earth.

The Deviants were attacking a tribe next to the ocean and Pollo wouldn't have been surprised if they'd already gotten a few bites out of those people, but the man wearing similar clothing to Ajak had quickly attacked. The Eternal didn't let his teammates' fights distract him from his own, as he closed his eyes for a few seconds, focusing on the cosmical energy flooding through him. And when he opened his eyes, a long rope made of light appeared in his palm. While to him it felt like handling some sort of cold metal or something like that, he knew that anybody else who would come in contact with it would end up with, at best, second degree burns and scars for the rest of their lives.

A Deviant rushed towards him, unaware of the danger that would await it as a smirk made its way onto Pollo's face. He waved his hand in front of him, making the rope follow his movements. With one curt hand gesture, he made it curl around one of the Deviant's legs. He pulled it towards himself, making the monster fall onto its back with a holler passing its deadly jaws as smoke started coming out of where the light had trapped its leg. He then wrapped the rope around its neck, tightening it so he could hear the Deviants's cry of pain. A sizzling arrived to his ears, making his smirk grow wider as he tightened the rope once again, knowing that, in not long, the light would have burned through the bone and flesh, cutting off the Deviant's head.

But before he could do anything about it, a blond woman jumped onto the Deviant and pierced its skull with her sword. He scowled, letting the rope disappear to show the melted skin of the monster as he went into a more casual posture instead of a fighting stance.

"I was handling that!"

She looked at him for a second, scoffing before she let her sword disappear as well. "You were being too slow about it."

He noticed another Deviant coming their way and before the woman could even understand what was going on, he shot another rope at the creature, making it fall to the ground. Hearing the sound of the monster's body hitting the ground, she turned around, cutting its head with a new blade Pollo hadn't seen before. He raised an eyebrow, impressed by her quick reaction.

He clicked his tongue, looking the warrior up and down. "I guess you're not that bad."

"And I guess I should say the same about you."

They didn't speak another word as she bolted away, going to fight against another of the other monsters. He looked around, trying to find another battle, but it seemed everybody was taking care of it, so for a few seconds, he simply stood there, doing nothing. Only then did he notice that the humans didn't seem to understand that they were allies. Probably that, to them, the Eternals seemed just as dangerous as the Deviants, if not more. He approached them as they all raised their spears at him and hid their children.

"Get back," said Pollo, even if he knew that they didn't speak his language. Since he'd woken up, he didn't really have the time to learn a whole new language, so this would have to do. "We're here to protect you. Not to hurt you."

They were less than convinced by his words as one of them threw a spear at him, making Pollo shiver as it brushed against the skin of his neck. It had barely scratched him, but he still hated the feeling it had caused him.

"Rude," he scoffed, furrowing his eyebrows as his rope reappeared into his hand.

With a small wave, he caught a few spears and made them clatter to the ground. He was about to finish taking the weapons from them when, out of nowhere, their bodies all went completely stiff and their eyes changed to a pale yellow. Those who were still holding spears lowered them and they all took a step back at the same time. He turned his head, trying to see what was causing this, only for his eyes to fall onto a man wearing an Eternal armour, his eyes the same colour as the humans but his hand raised towards them, as though he was trying to reach them. When he finally let his arm fall back next to his body, a teasing smirk spread onto his face and his eyes met Pollo's.

"I see you've never heard of diplomacy." It was the person who'd talked to him before. He recognized the voice, the accent, and the colours of his armour.

He wasn't sure if that was supposed to be an insult, but he took it as such. "Oh, like you're any better! I wouldn't call mind controlling people 'diplomacy'."

The man just scoffed at his reaction, like he'd done before, before leaving like nothing had happened. As the stranger turned his back on him, Pollo stuck out his tongue at him but almost immediately, he heard his voice again, but on his left instead of in front of him.

"I saw that," one of the humans spoke up with the man's voice.

"Oh yeah?" Huffed Pollo as he showed the human his middle finger in a less than kind manner. "What about that? You saw that too?"

He didn't wait for an answer, though he knew it was unlikely he would get one, as he jogged towards Ajak and the others, who were all standing still, dramatically looking at the people in front of them, except for one of the Eternal. A woman with dark hair and green armour kneeled in front of a little boy as she took a knife made of stone. In less than a second, it had changed to gold and blue, making it much prettier and much deadlier. They all stayed there a few seconds, without moving, not knowing what they were supposed to do now that they'd gotten rid of those Deviants. It's only when Ajak spoke that they let themselves relax a bit.

"You did a good job today," she started. "Tomorrow, we'll continue to hunt the Deviants, but today, you can rest. Learn to know each other, and have a good night sleep. Our mission has only just begun."

And while Pollo knew that she was right, it still felt like fighting Deviants had been the only thing he did for centuries. He wasn't sure he wanted to rest. He was scared he would dream of his family. Scared that, in those dreams, he'd been gone so long that they'd forgotten about him.

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It was hard to rest with everybody laughing and cheering. As soon as he was back on the Dormo, he'd gone to hide in his quarters, trying to give them a bit of life. They were so cold, he had to do something about it, about the lack of colour. Still, he didn't stay focused on the task very long, distracted by the noise he heard coming from the main room of the Dormo. Finally, he wasn't able to resist the temptation of meeting the others, learning their names, so he left his room, the covers lying on the ground and traces of burnt on the walls.

"Look who finally came out of his room!"

He couldn't quite figure out who had spoken, because they all started cheering and raising their glasses towards him. He rolled his eyes, but let a smirk dance on his lips as one of the other Eternals approached him.

"Nobody blames you for missing the beginning of this," claimed the man in such a kind way that made Pollo believe that he was telling the truth and that nobody was holding a grudge against him. "I would've missed it too if they hadn't forced me to come."

He titled his head a bit, not quite sure what to answer to that before he decided to stretch his hand towards the man. "I'm Pollo. It's nice to meet you."

"Phastos," answered the man as they shook hands. "Come on, I'll introduce you to the others."

That's not necessary, he wanted to say, but of course, he didn't. Because it *was* necessary. They might be going to spend the next thousands years together and he couldn't spend all this time without knowing their names. First, Phastos led him to three people, all drinking together. The first one was a little girl with messy hair, the second one seemed to be the only man in the conversation, all dressed in purple, while the last was a woman with a mad grin stuck on her face.

"Pollo, this is Sprite, Kingo and Makkari."

He pointed to all of them as he named them one by one. Sprite smiled at him without giving him much attention, Kingo mimicked a little bow and Makkari simply waved at him. Kingo took a still completely full glass that seemed to have been lying around for no reason and handed it to him. He didn't even question what was in it before taking a large sip of it. A shiver went down his spine as the liquid burned his throat, but he quickly drank from his glass again, ignoring its awful taste.

"*You're a good fighter*," signed Makkari. "*What you did was really cool.*"

"Thanks," he answered all while signing to make sure she would understand. "I'm sure you guys are pretty good too. What can you do?"

A glint of mischief appeared in the woman's eyes and before anybody could react, she was gone. He only had time to blink before she was back in front of them, a childish grin plastered onto her face and a new drink in her hand.

"Running really fast, okay. Anybody else wanna try?"

"I would but I don't want to hurt any of you," Kingo spoke smugly. "I too manipulate cosmical energy, but it's less focused and more destructive than yours."

Pollo wasn't totally sure if the other man was gloating or complimenting him, so he just nodded along, a tight smile stuck on his face. Sprite must have noticed how uncertain he was as she quickly took this as her cue to speak up.

"I can make illusions."

Now, that caught his attention as his eyebrows shot up. "Nice! Can you make a dragon?"

She seemed to take this as a challenge, huffing as she concentrated on something invisible to everybody else. And then, there was a dragon flying around Pollo's head. Granted, it was much smaller than it should've been but he guessed Ajak wouldn't have liked it if an enormous dragon appeared in her ship. He stayed dumbstruck by how realistic the illusion was as he focused on the light hitting its golden scales and its wings flapping in the air. As it passed right in front of his face, it even let out a small flame. He approached his hand and though he was disappointed to see the illusion pass right through his skin, it was nothing less than what he had expected.

"I miss dragons," he breathed out, not leaving the creature out of his sight. "We had plenty of those on Olympia, so why isn't there any on Earth?"

"Because humans wouldn't survive two seconds with dragons here!" Exclaimed Kingo.

He was too preoccupied by the dragon to try and hide his frown. "And? Who cares? Dragons are so much cooler than humans."

"You should care," Phastos laughed bitterly. "It is our mission to protect humans, after all. And, not that anybody cares, but I can create and invent pretty much anything."

Only with those words did he realize that he'd forgotten about the man who'd introduced him to the others. He gave him an apologetic smile as the dragon disappeared. "Excuse me. It's just... Dragons"

Makkari nodded along to what he said, seemingly agreeing with his opinion. Then, as Phastos was about to argue, two people arrived next to them. One of them was the blonde woman from earlier but he didn't quite remember the man next to her.

"What are we talking about?" Enquired the woman who'd killed his Deviant.

"Pollo's love," sneered Kingo.

The unnamed man looked around until his eyes fell onto Pollo and he finally understood who they were talking about. "Oh? Does this love have a name?"

"I wish," Pollo sighed. "But I don't think I'm worthy of giving them names. They are majestic creatures who aren't owned by anybody and I wouldn't want to disrespect them by picking up a name that isn't worthy of them. I only approached one of them once and it was the best day of my life. I could never forget what it felt like."

"Just to make sure," spoke the man as he leaned towards Phastos, "he's not talking about a girl, right?"

"Oh, no." He shook his head. "This is about dragons. Pollo! This is Gilgamesh and Thena."

"Yeah, I know her." He narrowed his eyes at the blonde who was now smirking at him. "She stole my Deviant. Anyway, I have nothing against you guys, but I think I'll try to mingle a bit more, now."

"Mingle?" Wondered Sprite. "But there's nobody left to talk to. Ajak is... somewhere, Sersi and Ikaris are talking over there, but I'm pretty sure you don't wanna interrupt that I mean... there's still that guy over there, but he doesn't really look like he wants to talk."

He glanced at whoever she was talking about only for his eyes to meet the ones of the young man from before. Neither of them broke eye contact as the blue eyed Eternal took a sip of his drink before he finally let his gaze wander away. Pollo felt the corners of his lips lift up as he looked back at the people surrounding him.

"I think I'll take my chances," he spoke. "But thank you. We'll talk later."

He patted Phastos' shoulder before leaving, drinking a bit of his beverage to give himself some courage. The man he still didn't know the name of was staying away from everybody else, sitting not far from the window as he stayed in silence. If he felt Pollo approaching, he showed no sign of it.

"Mind control guy," he called out.

While he was already taller than the other boy, it didn't help that he was also standing up. He barely received a glance, as it seemed the stranger refused to admit he needed to look up to see him fully, before he answered with a huff.

"Diplomacy guy."

"Y'know, actually I prefer being called Pollo." He let himself fall on a chair nearby, a smile lingering on his lips as he pressed them against the glass. "If you don't mind, of course."

Now that Pollo was sitting down, the other man let himself look at him a bit longer, as though he was analyzing whether he was worthy of an answer or not. "Druig."

"Druig" He let the word roll off his tongue like the bitter liquid he'd been drinking since he'd arrived here, testing it before he could continue to use it. "You know, Druig, it's a bit sad that you're sitting all alone here, when everybody else is having fun."

"What makes you think I'm not having fun?" If he'd been shy at any point of the conversation, it had completely faded away as he now refused to let his gaze snap from Pollo, smirking at him the way a predator would smirk at his prey.

He easily saw through his little game and decided to let it go on as it wasn't bothering yet. "Because you're sitting alone in the corner of a party when you could just go to your room."

"I'll go if you come with me."

Druig's attempt at flirting didn't fail to make him laugh as he passed a hand through his hair. "You're funny! See? I'm sure the others would appreciate some of that cutthroat humour!"

The Eternal's smile did not disappear, but he did seem a bit more at ease after being turned down that way. Not that he was ever expecting Pollo to take him up on that offer, of course. "I'm not sure cutthroat is a compliment."

"Me neither," He admitted. "I guess we'll just have to see."

"Agreed."

Pollo stood up once again, leaving his glass on a table as he dusted invisible dust from his clothes. "It was nice to meet you, Druig."

He hadn't been lying. It was nice to meet him. Getting to know him, though... Well, that was a completely different story.

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