xiv - A second family

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The Amazon, 18th century

POLLO'S BOAT HAD BEEN A MESS WHEN HE'D BOUGHT IT. So no, he couldn't be blamed for all the damage he'd caused to it. Well, he hadn't really helped it, but still. It was fated to be destroyed at some point! And yes, maybe he'd slightly nudged it towards this fate when he crashed it, but he knew that it had been his only chance at survival, so he was trying not to think too much about it. Just like he wasn't trying to think about how the hell he was supposed to repair.

He'd found out that just ad he had not talents when it came to rowing a ship, he didn't have much more talents when it came to fixing one. Druig had o ered to send some villagers to help him, however Pollo had refused with little to no hesitation. He was aware that they would, without a doubt, had been much help to him, and that was the last thing he wanted. His deal with Druig was to stay for as long as his boat was broken, so why would he miss the opportunity to stay a bit longer when it was right in front of him?

But his mediocrity had its limits. Even if he wanted to, he couldn't be bad at everything. So slowly and surely, his boat started looking more like a boat. He ended up fixing the deck, with wood that a few villagers had collected for him, and a mixture that glued everything together almost perfectly. The sail that had been reduced to shreds by the storm had been replaced by covers sewn together. Though mediocrity might have been too strong of a word. He hated to admit it but he was at least a bit good at this. A bit too good.

His arrangement with Druig was that he could stay for as long as he had no ways to leave. No more no less. As soon as he would've finished fixing the boat, he would have to go. However, that was the last thing he wanted. He couldn't really understand it, but he wanted to stay. Which, he admitted, was weird, as he had no reasons as to why he would want to stay, still, he did. The thought of leaving made his heart ache and his smile drop. The thought was more present than he wished for it to be, always taunting him about his stay coming closer to the end as each day passed by. He knew he should've simply told Druig that he wanted to stay, not come up, with some scheme so he wouldn't be able to let him leave, but Druig was a mind controller. He must have already known that Pollo wanted to stay. And if he'd wanted him to stay as well, he would have told him.

Today was the day he would finish fixing his boat. He knew it, not because he wanted to or because he was just able to tell by how much he'd fixed until now, he simply had a feeling. He could clearly see himself finishing to fix a hole on the le side of the ship, almost hitting his thumb with the hammer and letting out a chuckle at that. Of course, it must've been some kind of metaphor, because the le side of the ship was already fully fixed and he hadn't ever come close to hitting his thumb while fixing the boat.

The sky was getting darker by the second and he feared it might start raining again. He wished to be back to the village before he got soaked, so he'd decided to finish what he was doing, quickly look at what would be le to fix in the next few days and then he'd head back. His boat looked better than it had looked before, which wasn't a very good sign if he wanted to stay at Druig's village. Still, he let himself be a bit proud of his work. Knowing that, in the past, he'd tricked Phastos into doing all of his tasks that required some inventing skills, he was doing rather well. For once he wanted to be bad at something and he wasn't. Why couldn't his mediocrity kick in whenever he wanted it to?

Far away, he heard thunder. Booming, roaring, he might have thought that Gilgamesh was calling out for him. He let himself smile at the thought of the warrior, who was probably having dinner with Thena at this exact moment. He wouldn't try to hide his regret about how he'd treated the Eternals before his departure, nor would he lie about missing them. But there was one thing he hadn't missed at all about them. The way they acted as though they were each other's family. They weren't. They already had a family, they didn't need some fake second one.

It was Ajak who'd started it all. She'd act as though she was more of a mother than a leader to them. And though he did appreciate her looking out for them, Pollo had never wanted her to start this idea that they were a family and that they didn't need the one they had le behind. Maybe she'd always known that killing the last Deviant wouldn't be when they would go back to Olympia. She might have been trying to prepare them for the shock and though he could easily forgive her for it, he was still aware that had she not tried to take this motherly role in their group, he wouldn't have been the only one to still care about his family. His real family.

Anyway, it was weird to think that some of them saw all of the Eternals as their family. Sersi and Ikaris were married! And yet people continue to see them as a part of one big family? What about him and Druig, who'd slept together? We're they a part of that same family as well? Actually, he had the answer to that last question. *No.* Even if the Eternals liked to see themselves as open-hearted, there was no debating that Druig hadn't been really close with any of them, except for Pollo and Makkari. Pollo used to wonder if the other Eternals feared he might try getting inside their mind without their permission, but they didn't know him as he did and he *knew* that he would never do something of the sort. The reason Druig hadn't seemed quite as much a part of their 'family' was also, without a doubt, due to him isolating himself. Since the first day, Pollo had really been one of the rare people to try and include him.

Then again, Pollo hadn't been a part of this 'family' either. Only now did he realize it, or maybe he'd known for a rather long time and had tried to ignore it. He hadn't *really* isolated himself from the Eternals, however he had never let them quite close enough. He feared more than anything that he might fall into their trap and forget his family. He couldn't. He liked them, just enough to call some of them friends, yet he would not risk it. They didn't understand. They didn't care about their families as much as he cared about his.

He sighed as he finished what he was doing, a sudden realization hitting him. He'd finished. He'd finished fixing the boat. He could go. He had to go. There were no doubts that Druig wouldn't let him stay if he had a way to leave. A er all, there must've been a reason why he used to be so mean to Pollo, and that reason would be the same as to why he couldn't stay. In a desperate attempt at not having to go back to the village just yet, Pollo turned around the boat, looking for a crack that would keep him for a few more minutes. A few more minutes when he wouldn't have to face Druig with the truth.

Against all expectations, even though there had been none, he found one last little hole on the le side of the ship. One plank would be enough to fix it and so he would do it now, still he was tempted to leave it as it was, so he wouldn't have to go just yet. But he couldn't. Even if he wanted to, something inside of him told him that he couldn't. He took the hammer in one hand and a plank in the other, kneeling in front of the hole.

In a matter of minutes, he'd finished. He was finishing to put the last nail in the wood when, distracted by the sound of thunder that seemed much closer this time, he missed his thumb from not much, even feeling the cold metal caress his skin. Stunned, he let out a low chuckle, realizing how lucky he'd been not to shatter the bone. With his strength, he would've probably hurt himself rather badly. Though he had to say, it might've been a good thing. If it gave him one last chance to stay a bit longer, then he would take it.

The storm was coming. The boat now fully fixed, he could go back to the village. He tried not to think too much about how he would have to leave in a few days, no more no less, and instead wished the storm would stay long enough for him to come up with a new excuse to stay. This time, he was much more careful as to not get bitten by a snake, knowing Druig probably wouldn't take pity on him for a second time. He'd probably just laugh at him for being beaten by a venomous snake twice. He'd laugh too, if it wasn't happening to him.

Luckily for him, he didn't have to worry about that, as he quickly arrived to the village. It hadn't even started raining yet. He looked around, smiling as he caught Druig's gaze. He walked towards him, forgetting for a moment that soon enough have to leave him.

Where were you? he heard Druig ask.

"I was... I was just finishing up some things," he said, playing with words as an uneasy smile made its way onto his face. "I managed to come back before the storm, though. Nothing to worry about."

The smaller man seemed to tense up at his answer. "I didn't say anything."

"Right, sorry. You weren't worried at all," he replied, winking at him.

"Of course not," spoke Druig, going back to his normal self-assured tone. "Why would I worry about *you*?"

At this point, Pollo was used to it. His smile wouldn't drop anymore, nor would he put his hands in fists. Those kinds of comments didn't make him feel particularly good, of course, still he would simply pout at the other Eternal, knowing, hoping, he would get the message that he'd crossed the line. Or, at least, that he was about to. Now, whenever he saw that little pout, it was Druig's smile who would drop, and he would stare at the ground, not apologizing but wanting to.

For the centuries to come, would try to convince himself that what would happen next only happened because he knew Druig so well. That the only way that he'd known how the mind controller would turn his back on him and start walking away was because they were close. Close enough that he'd learned every little thing about Druig. But the truth was; to this day, he still didn't knew Druig that much. He knew his smile and his skin, but not his reactions. The mind controller was unpredictable when it came to reacting to something. He could've screamed just as he might have laughed. And so the fact that Pollo grabbed his wrist to stop him from leaving before he'd even made a movement was a surprise for both of them.

"Don't leave. Not again," he pleaded, a frown on his face as a question that hadn't haunted his mind for years came back to him for the first time since Druig had le him with the other Eternals. "You never told me why you're always so mean to me. Will you tell me, now?"

He glanced at Pollo's hand, which he removed when he noticed the stare, before going back to look at his face. He opened his mouth once again, however he was interrupted by the thunder. Not so long a er, lightning cleared the sky, giving Pollo a strange look that was rather out of character for him. Yes, Pollo was a lot of things, but terrifying wasn't one of them.

"Let's go inside," he suggested, tugging at Pollo's shirt. "I promise I'll tell you. Once we're safe from the storm."

While he didn't seemed totally pleased by that, the taller man didn't try to argue with him, following Druig inside his cabin. As soon as they were both inside, Pollo closed the door, leaning on it. He didn't say anything, but he didn't stop looking at Druig, until finally the other man was forced to look at him as well.

"I don't..." he cleared his throat, trying to hide the emotion in his voice. "I don't want to be mean to you. I used to try not to be, but... I guess I just like seeing you angry."

They looked at each other, their eye contact only being interrupted by Pollo flinching a few seconds before the sound of thunder resonated not too far from them. He walked away from the door, keeping a distance between himself and Druig nonetheless. He passed his hand through his hair, looking at an invisible point just behind Druig, so he wouldn't have to look at his hypnotizing blue eyes any longer.

"You like seeing me angry? Well then, you're gonna freaking love me if you keep lying to me," he snarled.

A smirk danced on Druig's lips as he tried to approach his friend. He noticed how the other Eternal had taken a step back at his sudden movement and while it made him freeze at first, he then continued to advance. He didn't come quite as close as he usually did when he taunted Pollo, still he didn't try to hide the fact that he didn't like how the taller man tried to stay away from him.

"What makes you think I'm lying?"

"You don't like seeing me angry," he stated, as though it was obvious. It probably was. "Nobody does. I see how people look at me when I raise my voice. Anyway, when you're mean to me, I get mad and snap at you. I don't think anybody likes it when I snap at them."

"How very perspective of you, Polly," he replied, clearly still trying to get him angry. "You are half right and half wrong. Right because I am lying and wrong because I do like seeing you angry. No matter the state you're in, I always like seeing you."

Pollo chuckled as he felt Druig start to play with the sleeve of his shirt. "Now is not the time for this, my beloved Druig. If you want to play, then fine. We'll play. Just know that more you avoids my question, more I'm curious about the answer. And I might not have the motivation to pursue it, but I will keep asking. Every day. Until you finally tell me the truth."

"The truth, uh? The truth is that I'm testing you. I'm testing how long it's going to take before you finally realize how much of an asshole I am. I'm testing how long it takes you before you get tired of me being mean. I'm testing how long it's going to take before you leave me. Is that what you wanted to hear? The truth? Is it good enough for you?"

Pollo stayed stunned by the revelation. Not just because he hadn't expected this answer but mostly because he hadn't expected Druig to say the truth. The other man always liked playing with words, avoiding questions until Pollo was too tired to ask them. That was Druig's whole thing. He always had to be the person in control, whether it was by using his powers or knowing that he could turn each words into weapons. He was always quite good at making people angry.

He wanted to put his hand on Druig's face, whisper sweet nothing into his ear and stay in his cabin all night, trying to convince him of how much he really meant to him. But how could he convince him of that when he wasn't even sure what he did mean to him. Anyway, each time he tried touching him, Druig kept pushing him away. At that moment, he hoped more than anything in the world that his friend wasn't trying to read his mind, for he wasn't even quite sure as to what was going on. His thoughts were no longer thoughts, they were smells, Druig's smell, sticking on his tongue and caressing his skin. Snippets of old memories coming back to him, things that had happened so long ago he'd tried to push it in the darkest corner of his mind, even though he was still aware it had happened. And though the two of them were away from each other, Pollo could still feel Druig's hand caressing his neck, cold skin against warm one. He could feel his lips against his his, bitter taste of alcohol flooding through them.

He tried to shake away the thought, not because it wasn't a good one but it he was rather distracting. He needed to make sense of what had just happened, of what he might say next, and so letting himself wander towards something that was barely true anymore was of no use. He should have forgotten about this a long time ago. He wasn't even sure why those feelings still existed inside of him. He wanted to forgot them, however he feared it might make him forget Druig as well, which would probably be one of the most awful thing to happen to him.

"I would never abandon you," he promised, both to Druig and to himself. Maybe that's why he never told him he'd finished fixing his boat.

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Heyyyy! I know this took more time than usual, sorry about that, but in my defence, I just read The Song of Achilles so I needed some recovery time from that. I have the week o , so no school and no exams for a few days, however I still have some responsibilities, even if I try to do my best to publish as soon as possible! Anyway, I am back and as I make the rules, I have decided that Golden by Harry Styles is Pollo and Druig's song! Would anybody have some good Druig fanfiction for me? I think I have read pretty much all of them but I need to read more to stay obsessed with this story! So yeah, that's pretty much it for me today. I hope you'll have a nice day and here are a few incorrect quotes!

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Druig: Are you having a depressive episode?
Pollo: Depressive episode? I'm having a depressive series. We're on season five.

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Makkari: Out of all of us, who would you rather have sex with?
Druig: I gotta say Pollo, he's really hot.
Druig: Plus, I bet he's a screamer.
Pollo, entering the room: I am.
Makkari:
Druig:
Pollo: Wait, we're talking about panic attacks, right?

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Druig: You actually rank the Eternals by their appearance?!
Pollo: Calm down, number two

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Pollo: I'm gonna need a human skull but you can't ask why.
Druig: Only if you don't ask why.
Druig: *pulls four pristine human skulls out of his bag* Choose one.
Pollo:
Druig:
Pollo: This one will do.

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Pollo: We need to get through this locked door. Ikaris, give me your credit card.
Ikaris: Here.
Pollo, pocketing it: Thanks. Thena, kick down the door.

— — —

Druig: We need a distraction.
Sersi: Is anyone here good at jumping up and down and making weird noises?
Pollo, whispering: My time has come

— — —

Pollo, motioning to a Halloween display: All these ghosts! All these ghosts! I still can't find a boo.

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Pollo: Not trying to brag or anything, but I can wake up without an alarm clock now simply due to my crippling and overwhelming anxiety, so...

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Pollo: You're the 'second worst thing to ever happen to those orphans', what does that mean?
Druig: It means I was the second worst thing to happen to those orphans.
Pollo: But what's the first worst thing?
Druig:
Druig: Polly, they... they weren't always orphans.
Pollo:

— — —

Druig, talking to Pollo on the phone: Did you preheat the oven like I told you?
Pollo: You bet!
Druig: At what temperature?
Pollo: 535.
Druig: That's the clock.
Pollo:
Druig:
Pollo: 536.