xxxii - The final battle

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The Domo, 2023

PHASTOS HAD DONE IT. He'd created a way to form the Uni-Mind. Pollo hadn't really listened to his whole explanation, still he was glad for it. This could only mean that Druig could do it. He could put Tiamut to sleep. So why could he still hear those whispers and see glimpses of images he barely understood? It was strange, to now know there was a reason for all those things he would hear and guess. He'd tried to convince him that everything was normal for years and as nobody said otherwise out loud, he'd assumed they agreed with him. He'd been wrong obviously.

He let the black and gold suit wrap itself around him, closing his eyes as it did so. He hadn't worn his suits in years and thought he was still technically wearing his clothes under it, he liked being able to feel the armour once more. It wasn't heavy, still he knew it was all he needed for his protection. Nonetheless, even when seeing Druig in his armour, he knew something dangerous was afoot. And he really did fear for his life.

When all of them finished putting on their bracelets, they started scattering, two different groups forming. Yet, before Druig could go talk with Sersi, Pollo grabbed his wrist, stopping him from going any further. The mind controller shot him a curious look, however avoided his gaze, looking at the ground as he waited for the other Eternals to leave. They both stayed silent, worrying about what the other wasn't saying. In the end, it's Pollo who spoke first, looking up to meet his boyfriend's eyes, even if he seemed reluctant to do so.

"I don't want you to do this," he admitted.

Druig frowned, a confused smile on his lips. "You don't want to stop the emergence?"

"Well, no, I do, it's just..." he hesitated, looking around like he was about to share some kind of secret. "Something is going to happen. And I won't be able to protect you. Please. You can't do this, Dru."

"I don't understand," he replied. "What is going to happen?"

You're going to die It's only now that the answer came to him, clear and horrifying. It didn't feel right. It *couldn't* be right. Druig couldn't die as well. Not after Ajak and Gilgamesh. He didn't want to be left alone. Not again.

But instead of saying what he was only half sure of, he hid what might have been the truth. "I don't know, but it's not good. Please, Druig, you have to trust me."

He seemed to hesitate before putting a hand on his cheeks and smiling at him. Just with that, Pollo knew he hadn't managed to convince him, still he waited for him to be the one to speak.

"I do believe you." As he saw the hesitation on his boyfriend's face, he repeated his words, trying to convince him. "*I do* But I have to do this. I'm sorry, there's no other option."

There was. Had he been given a minute, Pollo was certain that he could've figured out all of them. And, for a second, he truly resented Sersi for making Druig do this when she could do it in his place. Still, he knew that while there was other options, this was the best one. Which is why he let Druig kisses him softly and stopped asking him not to go. Nonetheless, the kiss felt awfully like a goodbye kiss.

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Makkari had brought Sersi, Druig and him to the emergence point, leaving both Thena and Phastos in the Domo to distract Ikaris. In front of them, the volcano had started spitting out lava, a clear sign of Tiamut's awakening.

"It's time to put a god to sleep," declared Sersi.

All Druig needed to start the Uni-Mind was those words. He turned the bracelet until it clicked, which made it start turning around his wrist. The same happened to the three other Eternals, golden filaments appeared around them and changing the colour of their suits. Pollo gasped as he felt his feet get off the ground, his body being elevated along with the others'. Though he couldn't see what was happening around him, he felt his powers leaving him. It wasn't a particularly uncomfortable feeling, but it was strange, there were no doubts of that. It was like all along threads had been intertwined together inside of him and now someone was pulling on one of them, undoing the knots. It seemed that the invention, along with Druig's powers, really were working, as the volcano started to calm down.

Before Pollo could even think of the possibility that his fears had been nothing more than fears, two beams hit Druig in the back making him fall to the ground and breaking the Uni-Mind at the same time.

"I should've done this five centuries ago," claimed Ikaris.

It took some time for Pollo to really understand what was happening. Ikaris had grabbed Druig by the throat, flying away with him. Then, when he was high enough, he threw him in the ground, using his beams to make his fall go even quicker. He heard Makkari wails. He heard the sound of the Ikaris attacking the domo. He heard the whispers. But all he could focus on was Druig. Druig. He was dead. He was dead and Pollo had done nothing to stop it, even if he knew it would happen. He'd led him to his death.

He felt Makkari grabbing him, yet all he knew was that the Domo had crashed on the ground and the other Eternals were at his side. Ikaris landed next to them. Ikaris. How could he have killed Druig? How could he do such a thing?

"Druig's gone," he stated. "It's over."

No. It couldn't be. And he was proven right when Makkari ran into Ikaris, disappearing with him. That's when Pollo snapped out of it. And he ran after them. He knew he could never be as fast as Makkari, yet he was also well aware of the fact that she wouldn't be able to go very far, as they were already fighting. He couldn't let Makkari do this alone. He had to get revenge for Druig. He had to kill Ikaris.

They really hadn't gone that far. From what he could see, she was using her super speed to punch him without him seeing her coming. It was an efficient method, yes, yet Pollo knew too well that it couldn't last forever. At some point, Ikaris would get tired of this and decide to stop it, which is why Pollo decided to help her. Some rocks were flying towards them, so he decided to use them as an advantage rather than seeing them as a problem. He took one of his ropes and wrapped it around the rock, sending it towards Ikaris and successfully hitting him on the head. The man turned towards him, his eyes starting to glow as he was about to shoot beams at him, which Pollo avoided with the help of Makkari. She took him with her and placed him a few meters away from Ikaris before punching him once more, distracting him.

The sight of blood running down Ikaris' forehead wasn't enough to appease him. Druig was dead. Gilgamesh was dead. Ajak was dead. And he could've stopped each of those deaths had he tried to listen to the whispers. If he hadn't fought the nightmares. So, for the first time, he listened to them. He closed his eyes, stopped focusing on what was happening around him and he just listened.

The whispers weren't whispers anymore. They were thoughts. His thoughts, though not yet. Thoughts he would hear later, yet he could hear them now. They were clear and even came with images. Without really wondering why he was doing it, he took a step to the left, only opening his eyes when he heard the sound of an explosion where he once stood. He looked at Ikaris, whose eyes went back to their natural colour, and he smiled. Thank you for giving me back my anger.

Makkari pushed Ikaris against a rock, punching him until it started breaking. She went to attack him once more and Pollo heard his future thoughts once more. Before Ikaris could grab her throat, just like he'd done with Druig, Pollo threw a rope at him, wrapping it around his arm and pulling it towards him. He growled as he noticed the way the suit was protecting Ikaris from any injury, so he decided to do something he'd barely ever done before. He played with the temperature of the rope, making it go higher. He could feel his eyes burning, Ikaris becoming blurry for a few seconds, as the rope's light grew brighter, the suit starting to melt. He heard Ikaris wince, yet he'd been so focused on changing the temperature of the rope that he'd forgotten to listen to the whispers.

"Enough," snarled Ikaris.

With that, he shot two beams at Pollo, making him let go of the rope and fall into Makkari. He flew away, getting ready to attack them again before Thena and Phastos arrived, Sersi having left for whatever reason. She'd probably realized that their only hope to save humans was to kill Tiamut and that she was the only one who could do it.

Phastos threw some kind of wheel at Ikaris, which he exploded with his eyes, no surprises there, yet it still made him fall onto the ground and groan, having managed to hurt him anyway. He tried shooting beams at them once more, however this time Thena was there to protect them, as she made a shield appear in front of herself, stopping the beams before they could touch her. Phastos continued to throw what looked like fireballs at

Pollo jumped back on his feet, helping Makkari back up. As soon as she was stable once more, she punched Ikaris, the four Eternals all beating him up together. The speedster punched him a few times before Thena kicked him, throwing him onto a rock. Then, she tried to slice him in half with her spear but only managed to slice the rock. They fought and though she was still stronger than him, he managed to throw he away, Makkari grabbing her before he hit the ground. Pollo used his rope as a wipe, managing to hit Ikaris in the face. Or, at least, he assumed that's what he'd done as he heard him wince, because Ikaris was a bit too far away from him and it was harder for him to see him from here. Ikaris was about to shot him once more, but he managed to roll away before he could do so. Anyway, Thena had jumped in front of him, protecting the both of them with her shield. Phastos threw another one of his engine at Ikaris, making him loose focus as the inventor threw some mini bomb at him. Ikaris tried to fly away, yet the bombs seemed to follow him and still managed to hit him. He destroyed some of them with his beams before trying to attack the other Eternals again, however this time it's Phastos who used one of his device to protect them.

They were going to win. It's not a voice that told him that, still he knew it. And even if they didn't, the whispers had shown him that no matter what, Ikaris would die. Druig would be avenged. Pollo only hoped that it was at his hand, as he could already see the traitor's skin melting.

Running towards him, Makkari managed to throw in Ikaris's face, forcing him to close his eyes as Thena tried to attack him with her spear. Before the Deviant even appear, Pollo knew it was there. Yet, he didn't say anything, knowing that this was not a part of his fight. It was Thena's. He couldn't quite explain it, all he knew was that he was here to stay here on the beach, fighting Ikaris and waiting. But waiting for who?

The Deviant punched Ikaris in the face mid-air, making him fall to the ground for what seemed like the hundredth time. Not that Pollo was complaining. The Deviant and Ikaris were about to fight, however Phastos stopped it, throwing a device at it.

"Why are you helping Ikaris?" Questioned Thena and though Pollo was far from Ikaris' biggest fan, he was well aware that this was necessary.

"We can't let it absorb our powers," explained Phastos.

Just after that, the Deviant showed off Gilgamesh's power, making Pollo's cold anger freeze his veins. He could've threw his rope around its neck, made the skin melt and spill green blood, killing it. He didn't. Just like he had to get revenge for Druig against Ikaris, Thena had to be the one to get revenged for Gilgamesh.

"Too late," said the Deviant, because apparently it could talk now. He really wished people would start telling him about those kinds of things.

Thena, angrily walked towards it, Pollo not even trying to stop her, as she got ready to attack the green blur that was the Deviant. His eyes were still burning as he could feel his temperature rise.

"Thena, he's trying to goad you," warned Phastos. "Don't..."

As always, nobody listened to him. Makkari ran at it, trapping the Deviant in a small tornado. Even then, it somehow managed to see her, pushing both her and Thena away. It went to steal the speedster powers next, yet Pollo stopped it from doing so, throwing the rope around its arm. Almost immediately, its skin started melting, the rope now ten times hotter than it usually was as he could almost feel flames in his eyes. Things continued to get more blurry every passing seconds, so he used all of his strength to throw the Deciang inside a cave, Thena, now armed with a shield and sword, following after it.

For the first time since the beginning of the fight, Ikaris seemed to notice the absence of his former wife. "Where's Sersi?"

"You always did underestimate her," taunted Phastos.

Understanding what Phastos was saying, he tried to fly away. Pollo,having seen it coming before it even happened, chuckled, wrapping a rope on each of his legs and slowly pulling him back to the ground. He groaned as he felt blood spilling from his nose and into his mouth, staining his teeth.

"Phastos, you got something that could hold him down?" He questioned, as Makkari was still out cold and unable to help them.

The inventor smiled at that as he made some kind of device appear in his head while Ikaris was only a few inches away from the ground now. "Thought you'd never ask, Po."

He threw the engine at Ikaris, jailing him to the ground and restraining his movements. He tried to get away from it, yet it only seemed to make the trap harder to escape.

"I don't know about you, but this is really satisfying, right?" Mocked Phastos, earning himself a nod from Pollo as they both walked towards their fellow Eternal.

"Let me go, Phastos!" Ordered Ikaris. "I can't let her do this!"

Phastos shook his head at that. "I don't think so. I've been wanting to clip your wings for a long time, Ikaris!"

"And, anyway, you're not really in a position to give orders... boss," finished Pollo, high fiving Phastos.

The man tried using his beams, yet it failed, as they didn't go far enough to reach the two Eternals. Confused, he looked down at the trap, only now understanding just how dangerous Phastos could be when he wanted to. As Phastos used his powers to force Ikaris' head in the ground, trapping him for good, a part of Tiamut started to appear in the sea, making a chill go down Pollo's spine. They couldn't lose. Not now. Druig's sacrifice could not be useless. Druig. He hadn't cried for him. Not yet. He didn't actually have time to grieve. And something inside of him told him not to be sad. Even if the whispers had gotten clearer, they were still just as vague as before.

"Come on, Sersi," mumbled Phastos. "Come on."

Then, after fighting the trap for some time, Ikaris finally managed to get free, shooting beams at the sky and screaming. The force he'd used to escape was so strong that it created a shock, making both Phastos and Pollo fall to the ground. Pollo felt his head hit a rock, wincing as Makkari came to their side. Phastos tried to stand up as Ikaris flew away, wanting to stop him, but Pollo placed a hand in front of him, shaking his head as blood started spilling from the injury on the back of his head.

"This is out of our hands, now."

The two other Eternals didn't get to ask questions about the statement as Thena came back on the beach, having vanquished the Deviant. Pollo smiled at her as the metallic taste of blood appeared in his mouth. He was happy that she'd gotten her revenge, even if he hadn't gotten to kill Ikaris.

A few minutes later, the four of them felt themselves being lifted up off the ground once more, the golden threads reappearing around then. Sersi had activated the Uni-Mind. As Pollo could feel his powers leave him once more, the golden Celestial started turning into stone. Or, at least, he assumed it was strange. He could mostly see a grey blur, from where he stood. When it was dead, Sersi came to join them on the beach, hugging Makkari when she arrived.

"How did you do it?" Enquired Phastos.

"When I touched Tiamut's palm, I felt energy surging into me," she explained. "Tiamut joined our Uni-Mind."

"I always wondered how we survived the destructions of other planets that we were on." He started signing as he looked at Makkari. "By being connected to the Celestials as it emerged."

"That is so fucked up," stated Pollo, making the other laugh, though his own laughter quickly became a fit of cough, spitting out some blood as he did so.

Makkari turned her head, walking towards Thena and they smiled at each other. Pollo joined them, patting Thena on the shoulder.

"We became one..." continued Makkari. "...even Ikaris and Sprite, all because of Tiamut."

That's when the whispers got louder once more. They told him to be happy, to smile, to cry tears of joy. They also told him to turn his head. When he did so, he had to narrow his eyes at the dark blur that was walking towards them, and even if it took him a few seconds to realize who was coming to see him, he'd always known. He'd always known that Druig couldn't be dead.

He ran to him, jumping in his arms when he was close enough, starting to laugh as tears were mixed with blood, both rolling down his cheeks. He didn't want them to part ever again. They would stay here forever, holding on to each other like they would die if they ever let go of the other. Pollo was starting to think that they might.

Still holding on to Druig, Pollo stepped back a bit, his face inches from his boyfriend's. "If you ever make me think you're dead again, I'm going to tear off your eyeballs and make you eat them."

The threat didn't seem to scare the mind controller as he laughed, going in for a kiss, though he was stopped by Pollo placing his hand between their mouths. He was quick to let his hand fall back on Druig's shoulder as he got a confused look from his boyfriend.

"Sorry, it just I kind of got hurt like, a lot, and now I *really* taste like blood, so—"

He was interrupted by Druig crashing his lips against his own. He let out a noise of both surprise and indignation, though he didn't do anything to stop the kiss. He pulled him closer as Druig's fingers ran through his hair, tugging at it slightly. He heard Phastos clearing his throat awkwardly, so they pulled away from one another, to their foreheads were still touching as they smiled, eyes closed.

"Is he gone?" He heard Sprite say with a broken voice, making him open his eyes.

Sersi looked at Pollo and though she probably already knew the answer, she waited for his confirmation. He nodded. If Ikaris wasn't already dead, then he would be by the end of the day. Sprite looked at the ground, eyes watering.

"Sprite," called out Sersi, making the Eternal in question lift her head, letting a tear fall. "I still have energy from the Uni-Mind. I think I can make you human. All the things you said you wanted, you can have them. But your time will be fleeting and you'll die one day. Are you ready for that?"

"I am," she choked up.

Sersi gave her hand and she took it. Sprite might have betrayed them, yet neither of them said anything, all smiling sadly instead. It was over. Finally.

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