vi - Guess who invented drunken one-night stands?

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Babylon, 575 BC

POLLO WAS NOT DRUNK. Not yet, at least. But that was his plan for the night, that was for sure. It's not like he particularly liked parties, they were loud and filled with strangers he didn't really like, but he never missed one. On one hand, Makkari loved trying to find new things at those parties so she always dragged him to those things and on the other hand, he hated to admit it, but it was kind of fun. Stressful, yes, but still fun. So that he could both have fun and be free of stress, he would always end up with maybe two drinks in his hands. But never more than two. Not until today, that is.

Ajak had made Phastos promise he would come and Pollo really hoped he would, because he was a bit bored and he wouldn't be against a friend to talk to. He'd arrived with Makkari and they'd stayed together for some time, but she'd heard rumours of something called an Emerald Tablet and went off to learn more about it. He didn't bother looking for the others, knowing whatever they were doing would bore him. Of course, that was just because he forgot about one of the Eternals.

Druig stood not far from him, looking at his cup in silence and sending a few dirty looks towards people who were laughing loudly. He wasn't sure why he'd decided to come, maybe it was Makkari who'd convinced him, but now he was here and he hated it. People spoke and thought too loudly, a bitter smell had taken a hold over the place and there barely was any food. Worst of all, any Eternal he found a bit nice had disappeared somewhere and he was now alone with a glass he'd barely touched.

There are some moments when things seemed to be fated. Moment when it is impossible to explain it in any other way than fate. They would both deny it for centuries, but this might have been one of those moments. For a second, no more no less, the crowd seemed to part in half. And in that same second, both Druig and Pollo turned their heads so slightly, accidentally meeting each other's gaze. This second didn't last forever. Just long enough for them to realize they were both bored and alone at a party. Now, they could've done anything with that moment. Forgotten it, even. But Pollo did not like to be bored. And so he walked towards the Eternal, a smile plastered onto his face.

"Druig!" He waved as he pushed a few humans away from him. "I didn't know you would be here!"

The shorter man had to admit it, he was happy to see his fellow Eternal. Pollo might be a bit annoying from time to time, but at least he wouldn't have to stand awkwardly in a corner any longer. And it was always better than having to stay with Ikaris. Pollo leaned on the wall, grinning at the other man.

"It might've been better if I hadn't come," he spoke bitterly as he took a sip of his drink.

That caught Pollo's attention as he raised an eyebrow. "What do you mean? Are you not having fun?"

"No, not really," he admitted with a shrug. "I'm not even sure why I came in the first place."

"To see my beautiful face, I'm sure." This was enough to get a small smile to appear on Druig's face, which pleased the warrior. "Just kidding. You're probably just here for the drinks. Though the one in your hand doesn't really look like you touched it either."

They both looked down at their glasses, only to realize that while Pollo's was half empty, Druig had only taken a sip out of it. They were both at their first glass, but if the night continued like it had started, it wouldn't take long for them to be at their third.

"Yeah, I don't know, I guess I just wasn't in the mood."

The playful smirk and teasing glint in the taller man's eyes were enough to even make a Deviant run away. "Or... maybe you just can't take it?"

"Excuse me?" Frowned the mind controller, not sure to understand what his friend was trying to say.

"You're excused." He waved off before continuing. "All I'm saying is that I don't think you can drink one more than a drink without getting shit-faced. And that's why you're being so careful! Because you don't want to look stupid in front of us!"

For some reason, the accusation offended him more than it should've. But, after all, that one of Pollo's talent was to be able to make him do stupid things with only a few words. "I can drink more than just one glass! Actually, I think I could drink more than you!"

When has this sentence ever ended in something good? The warrior knew very well that those kind of bets couldn't end well, but he could never resist a challenge. Or a chance to show off to Druig.

"Yeah? Well I beg to differ," he laughed, passing his hand in his hair. "And I will show you right now!"

"Fine," huffed Druig, a teasing smirk now stuck on his face, "proving you wrong always make me happy."

"I guess that's why you never smile, then."

Only a second passed after the taunt and the other boy didn't have a chance to respond because Pollo was already drinking the entirety of his glass, not even budging. It's only when it was completely empty that he separated his lips from it, taking in a deep breath.

"That's one against zero, darling of my heart," he mocked. "So why don't you hurry, eh? We wouldn't want you to lose this challenge that you started, now, would we?"

And with that Pollo disappeared in the crowd, looking for another glass. He would never let himself lose a drinking contest, against Druig out of everybody. This wasn't the first party he went to and he'd seen the other Eternal drinking. He never took more than one glass and didn't often finished it. He'd only take little sips and while he did the same, he knew for a fact that he could drink his glass all in one shot. He wasn't so sure that it was Druig's case, though. He was sure that he could win this challenge.

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Pollo wasn't so sure that he could win this challenge. He wasn't quite sure how many drinks he had, but he couldn't deny that the world around him was turning and that he could hear a buzzing noise in his head. He found himself giggling at nothing and everything, humming under his breath as he skipped instead of walking. He wasn't quite sure if the party was over or if he was still surrounded by people, but he didn't quite see the difference. Everything seemed to be a blur. Was this how Makkari saw the world when she ran?

The only consolation he might have found if he hadn't been so drunk that he'd forgotten about the challenge was that Druig was just as, if not more, drunk as he was. They might not be sober enough to realize it yet, but soon enough they would have to see that this contest was far from being their best idea. Phastos, of course, hadn't showed up at all to the party, Makkari was still looking for artifacts somewhere and Ajak might've been sleeping already. So anyone who might be able to stop them from doing anything stupid was gone. And the other Eternals either wouldn't care or wouldn't understand what was happening, not used to seeing those two drunk.

The tallest of the two sat next to a very confused human, sobbing loudly and ranting in a language the humans didn't yet understand. "And see, there were dinosaurs here, before, so I don't see why you guys can't have dragons? Dragons are so awesome, what do you humans have against dragons? Yeah, they breathe fire and they're deadly, but they're also so cute. It's just so sad that you can't have dragons. Maybe I'll ask Sprite to show you dragons. But it'll never be like the real dragons. You humans will never know the satisfaction that comes with petting a dragon just after it tried to kill you."

The human gave him an uneasy smile before he stood up, leaving the Eternal alone. Almost as soon as he was gone, Druig came to sit next to Pollo, making him stop crying for a few seconds. They looked at each other, Pollo's vision blurred by tears and Druig's blurred by alcohol. And though they were both incapable of really understanding what was going on, they were able to recognize each other. But they weren't able to realize what they were doing. Which might have been why they kissed.

Pollo knew he was kissing someone and he knew that this someone was Druig, but it was as though it wasn't happening to him. He was just watching it from outside his body. The kiss as a whole was good, but it was also messy and had the bitter taste of alcohol. He reacted slowly, not really understanding everything that was happening, but after a few seconds, he slung his arms around Druig's neck while the other boy passed his fingers through his hair. Except for the buzzing noise in his head, all other sounds got droned out.

What am I doing? The thought played nonstop in his head, without ever doing any sense. He simply couldn't make sense of the words, unable to connect them to each other and to understand what they were supposed to mean. All he really knew was that he was doing something. And gosh, he wasn't quite sure he wanted to stop.

The two men parted ways, their foreheads touching as they both took deep breaths. They stayed like that for a little while, closing their eyes to try and make the world stop spinning. The taste and smell of alcohol on both of them was far from appealing, however they would have cared less about it.

Pollo opened his eyes, keeping them focused on Druig's lips as he saw that they were moving. But the buzzing sound had gotten too loud and his voice seemed far away, as though he was trying to talk with his head underwater. Still, he managed to read one or two words on his lips and while that wasn't much, it was enough to understand what he was trying to say. My room. He nodded softly, letting his arms fall back to his side. Druig took his hand, helping him stand up, and both left the party, unnoticed and ready to make a few drunken mistakes. Yet, that one thought didn't leave Pollo's mind. What am I doing?

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What had he done? This was the first coherent thought to pass through Pollo's mind as he woke up with the worst headache ever witnessed in the story of humanity. Every once of his body was hurting, from sore muscles to a great need to tear off his eyeballs. It took him some time to fully wake up and be able to think without his brain dying, but when he managed it, he found himself in a state of utter panic.

He was in a bed that was definitely not his own, completely naked with a just as naked Druig lying next to him, his arm slung around his waist. They both had a stink of alcohol and sweat on them, and the covers had been thrown in a corner with their clothes. He let out a whimper as he passed his hands over his eyes, hoping that when he would open them again he would realize that it was all just a bad dream. But it wasn't. If it had been a dream, his head wouldn't be killing him and he had no idea why he would even be dreaming of waking up in the same bed as Druig in the first place. Now, he was only left with one problem. Well, no, he was actually left with multiple problems, but there was one bigger than the others.

He had been in Druig's room before, Makkari and him making sure the mind controller wouldn't stay in his room all day, and this was not it. And if he wasn't in his room or Druig's, then where the hell were they? He tried to look around, noticing the multiple notebooks lying around and a few metal thingies. This was, without a doubt, the room of an inventor. Which meant... Oh fuck.

He jumped on his feet, pushing Druig's arm away, which made him groan but did not wake him up, and walked towards the clothes and covers. He tried to find which clothes was who's, and when he finally did, he threw Druig's clothes on him. It's only when Pollo started putting on his pants that the smaller boy woke up with another groan.

"What's going on?" He muttered, thoroughly confused as to why he was getting woken up by his clothes falling on him.

"What is going is that you have to wake the fuck up." Pollo didn't mean to be rude, but the stress taking over him was just too much. "We screwed in Phastos' bedroom and we're lucky he hasn't found out. So get up, my room is right next to this one, we can hide there."

Druig obviously still didn't understand what was going on, and neither did Pollo, to be honest, but he still stood up and quickly got half dressed, still holding his shirt in his hand as Pollo looked outside to make sure no one was there. When he was sure of it, the two boys quickly left the room, going in the one to the left instead.

Over the years, Pollo had tried to decorate his room as well as he could, starting by burning off the wall while trying to get a spot of colour, but he finally ended painting them. Sadly for both of them, the colours he'd used were a bit too harsh for the horrible hangover they were stuck with. They sighed in relief as they managed to hide after quickly having thrown Phastos' covers onto his bed. Pollo passed his hands on his face again, whimpering as the whole situation finally hit him.

"Okay, okay, so last night was a mistake, right?" He didn't wait for Druig to agree with him as he paced relentlessly. "Let's agree to never, ever, talk about it again, yeah? I think it would be better for everybody. Don't you?"

The only answer he got was the other man blinking at him in confusion before he finally gave an uncertain nod. "Uh, I think I'll go back to my room now. I'll... I'll see you later, I guess."

He didn't wait for a reply either, basically running out of the room. Pollo let himself fall onto his bed, whining as he closed his eyes. He didn't really understand what was going on and he had absolutely no idea how to deal with it but he swore to himself that he would not try and talk to somebody else about it. He felt it in his bones: talking about it would just be plain stupid.

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When he entered the lab, he noticed that both Phastos and Druig were already there. The two hungover boys both avoided each other's gaze, Druig concentrating on the apple he was eating while Pollo set his eyes on whatever Phastos was working on.

"Hey Pollo," he spoke. "How are you?"

"Shh," immediately said the warrior as he put an end on his forehead. "Please stop screaming. I think I have the worst hangover in all of humanity."

Phastos gave him a small apology before immediately going back to work. Pollo let himself fall in one of the seats, closing his eyes so that the light of Phastos' 3D blueprint wouldn't hurt his head too much. Not long after him, Ajak entered the room.

"Phastos," she greeted a bit too loudly, which made Pollo wince, "did you go to the party last night like I told you to?"

Pollo and Druig exchanged an amused glance before they both looked away, realizing what they were doing. Luckily for them, neither Ajak nor Phastos noticed that little interaction.

"The party, yeah," he said, trying to convince Ajak. "Yeah, it was..."

"He worked all night." Smirked Druig as he took another bite of apple.

"Who asked you?" Snapped Phastos before frowning. "And how would you even know that?"

Quickly realizing his friend's mistake, Pollo came up with the first lie to cross his mind. "Makkari told me she hadn't seen you all night and I told Druig. We were just worried about you, I'm sorry."

Druig and him had a lot to apologize for to Phastos, but being worried about him was not one of them. The inventor's face softened as he stayed silent.

"Get a life," ordered Ajak playfully as she went to Pollo's side. "And where is Sersi?"

"Late, as usual." Sprite said, entering the room.

The Prime Eternal frowned as she noticed something on Pollo, which made him frown as well. "Are you okay? You have a bruise on your neck. I could heal it, if you want."

It took him a good five seconds before he understood what she was referring to. His face became redder than Makkari's suit as he took a step back on instinct. "Oh, no, it's okay, it's just... I got really drunk last night and I guess I hit myself or something. It'll heal by itself, it's fine."

She didn't look very convinced by that, but she did leave him some space. "If you say so."

"I'm sorry, but I have something very exciting to show you, okay?" The inventor interrupted. "Wait till you see this."

"What is it?"

He manipulated the blueprint, making some kind of machine appear in front of them. Now, Pollo might not have been much of a scientist, but it seemed terribly complicated for no reason, to him.

"It's an engine," explained Phastos. "It moves steam from high pressure to low pressure. Uh, uh, it'll help them till their fields at an incredibly fast rate."

At that, Pollo let out an uneasy laugh. "I didn't understand one word of what you just said."

"How surprising," sneered Druig.

He shouldn't have been surprised, as the mind controller always made this kind of comment, but he was still rather offended by that. He was sure that it wasn't the first time the smaller man called him stupid, but maybe the fact that he hadn't expected him to talk at all was what really surprised him. Not the strangely bitter tone he'd used.

"It's gonna freak them out," claimed Sprite, not noticing the look of hurt on her friend's face.

Druig agreed with her, acting as though he hadn't insulted Pollo a few seconds ago. "I mean, they only have had the wheel 1,000 years, so..."

"You know, we could do that thing," tried Phastos, "you know, where you use your mind to control them and then they could do it quicker."

"Ajak, are you listening to this?" Laughed Pollo, which earned him a glare from the inventor.

"Phastos, this steam..." She paused, looking for the right word.

"Engine," Phastos spoke, annoyed. "It's a steam engine."

"It's too soon," declared the Prime Eternal before seeing Sersi entering the room. "And there she is."

"What did I miss?" Asked the woman.

"Nothing," sighed Phastos. "Just the screams of my deep disappointment."

Pollo let out a chuckle, going to tap the inventor's shoulder in sympathy.

"I'm sure you have something simpler," he told him.

"Simple. Okay, let's see. Uh..." He played a bit with his blueprint before he finally came up with something new. "Ladies, gentlemen and Pollo, I present to you, the plow. 'Cause that's what it does. Plows dirt."

Noticing how disappointed he seemed in his own invention, Sersi tried to cheer him up. "I met another group of settlers who are building their homes in the northern fields. They'll need to plant their own crops."

It didn't do much to change his mood, but he did seem to appreciate it. "Thanks, Sersi."

"Listen, humanity may be coming along slower than some of us want. But there is no telling what wonders they will discover as they advance." Smiled Ajak, which made Pollo smile as well.

Still, he found himself glancing towards Druig, feeling his heart pinch a bit. Their relationship had already been complicated before, but it seemed even more damaged now. And to be perfectly honest, he wasn't quite sure what he would do if Druig suddenly disappeared from his life. What did we do?

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