18

PRESENT DAY

AURORA

"You're asking me to take control of a Celestial" He looks around at the team, arms crossed in front of him. "I do not have that kind of power."

I sit on one of the benches near the front, one knee up against my chest, my chin leaning on it.

"What if we use my energy?" I speak up, an idea springing to my head. "We can find a way to transfer my energy to you and amplify your powers"

Sersi sits straight, turning around to look at me.

"Aurora, that could work"

Druig purses his lips, head tilting to the side.

"We'll need some sort of technology to be able to do that." He points out.

"Phastos" Sersi calls out, nodding to her words.

Druig shakes his head, leaning back on the table.

"Good luck with that. He gave up on humans a long time ago"

"He did, but maybe I can talk to him. I've kept contact over the years" I offer, looking at all of them.

"We can go and ask him. I'm sure he won't say no" Sersi offers from beside me, nodding.

I smile at her, really liking the plan we're forming.

"Well, then that's the plan" I stand up slowly, still recovering from my wounds. Kingo helps me to the car while Druig takes care of some final orders for the village, and I give him a grateful glance.

Sometimes Kingo could be nice.

When he wasn't being a pain in the ass.

My injuries made me miss Ajak. In times like these, she'd wave a hand over me and heal me completely. We might have been immortal if not injured, but we still felt and healed like any other human.

When Druig has finished giving his orders to the people of the village, he steps into the car next to me, offering a reassuring smile.

"You sure you'll be able to convince him?" he asks as we start to pull away from the village.

I roll my eyes, looking out the window and taking in the Amazon once again.

"It's Phastos. I give him an hour max before he caves"

His laugh is enough to warm my heart.

Just like that, another piece I didn't know I'd been missing clicked into place.

We still hadn't talked about what was going to happen from here, but I wasn't in a rush. Right now my priority was to save the world. To figure out a way to survive.

And to hate Sprite.

I still hadn't spoken to her about what she'd done, but I wasn't speaking to her like we were normal, either. I'd decided that I would wait until everything was fine to speak to her–that is if I could hold off.

Until then, I would just resort to acting like she wasn't there. I had to admit, I was getting awfully good at ignoring her.

I was certain I would be able to hold off until later.

Druig, on the other hand, was a different story.

I could tell he hated her guts. It had taken me some convincing for him not to say anything to her; to let me, but I knew that if she did something or said something he was sure to go off.

I thanked God that she was in another car because if she'd been with me, I was sure she wouldn't have made it out of the Amazon alive.

I'm not sure when it was that I fell asleep, but when I woke up I was leaning on Druig's shoulder, and we were already at the airport. I looked around, my mind still foggy from sleep. In the distance I could see Kingo's jet getting prepared to take off.

Sersi and Ikari's had already left the car, and I watched as Sprite hopped onto the plane, sunglasses on her face.

I couldn't keep off a small scowl from adorning my face.

"You know," Druig begins from his seat beside me. "You still drool as you did 50 years ago" He jokes as he unbuckles his seatbelt, laughter glimmering on his eyes.

I look up at him, leaning myself away from his shoulder and rolling my eyes. I grab my small duffel, making sure I have everything. Ineed.

"And you're still a pain in the ass like you were 50 years ago" I retort, scowling and opening my door before getting out.

Even though I might have been annoyed at him, part of me had missed this mindless bickering. I hadn't met anyone else whom I'd had the confidence to just play and be mean to and knowing that they wouldn't be offended.

He stepped off the car, looking around, squinting as the sun met his eyes. He pulled a pair of sunglasses off the rim of his shirt, placing them on his face.

He looked so fucking hot.

I watched in silence as we walked forward and into the plane. Before we got on, he pauses, a knowing smirk on his face.

"Ladies first"

I roll my eyes.

"Always the gentleman" I note with sarcasm, but I still take his offer, climbing up the stairs and into the plane.

Druig chuckles, shaking his head in amusement.

"Only for you, Rory"

I resist the urge to melt into a puddle right then and there.

CHICAGO

I walk down the neighborhood, a smile creeping up my face.

I'd come here a couple of years ago, asking Phastos about some technology I could use to protect my village in Africa. When I'd come to see him I'd been surprise by the life he had created to himself.

He had a husband, and a son. I'd gotten to know his little boy, who at the time had been no more than 3.

After that, I'd become a more regular visitor. Regular enough for Jack to recognize me, and enough for Phastos to trust me.

I had to admit, I'd grown fond of him and his husband. Seeing them gave me a sense of normalcy I hadn't quite had in a long time.

They reminded me of what Druig and I could have had if we'd still be together.

If I couldn't have what I'd dreamed of having, then I was happy at least someone in the team had.

I'd even been welcomed to stay the night a couple of times. I tried to come visit as much as I could, but my volunteering organization limited it to once every two or three months.

I knew Phastos would do anything to protect his child, so I had no doubt that he would say yes to our plan.

I watch Ikaris take the lead as we near the house, but I hold his arm, shaking my head before walking forward and in front of the house first.

Jack plays with a ball, throwing it back and forth happily with Ben. He cheers Jack on as he reaches to catch the ball, laughing at his son. Phastos sits on a chair, a bike flipped around in front of him.

Phastos sees me first. He smiles, but it quickly fades when he sees Ikaris and Sersi following. He gazes back to me, his face questioning. I shake my head as if to say 'we'll discuss it later'.

Just then, Jack turns around, his face breaking out into the biggest smile as he realizes it's me. He lets the ball drop, letting out a squeal before running to me.

"Aunt Aurora!" He yells happily.

I laugh, leaning down and picking him up, hugging him tight even though my cuts and injuries are hurting enough to make me cry.

"Look, daddy!" Jack yells at Phastos, who stands up from the garage and walks over towards is. "It's Aunt Aurora!" He wraps his small arms around my neck, kissing my cheek in welcome.

"How's my favorite boy doing?" I ask, smiling at him. I turn to Ikaris and Sersi, who both have a questioning looks on their faces.

"These are–" I'm about to introduce them as his aunt and uncle, but Phastos interrupts me, wiping his hands on his pants and motioning for me to stop.

"They are some friends from college." He eyes them. "This is Sylvia... and I–Isaac" He stumbles for a name as he points. to Ikaris.

I put Jack down, rolling my eyes and chuckling before going to Ben, hugging him hello.

"What's going on?" He asks, concern lacing his features as he looks from Ikaris and Sersi, who are talking with Jack and Phastos, and then back to me.

He looks at the faces of concern, eyeing me. He knows something's up.

"Even I don't know yet" I admit, digging my hands into my back pockets. "But that's what we're here to figure out"

—

"I didn't know you were close with Phastos" Sersi notes, watching as Ben and Phastos take Jack to the bathroom.

I smile at the sight, turning back to her.

"I wasn't, until about 5 years ago" I nod to my words. "They helped me through some things and then I just started coming around more often" I explain.

She nods as we take a seat on the table, watching as from the bathroom down the hall, Phastos teaches Jack how to brush his teeth.

We sit at the table, the three of us watching as Phastos makes motions with his hands, baring his teeth at Jack in demonstration.

A small smile grows on my face, and I can't do anything but watch the cute exchange.

"You're so good with him" Sersi notes, referring to Jack. Though I'm not actually looking at her, I can sense the smile on her tone.

I nod, still unable to look away from the scene going on a couple of feet in front of me.

"He's a charm. I'm amazed how Phastos is literally made to be a dad" I gush.

She hmms in understanding but doesn't say anything else.

I think about Phastos and Jack, and about how Phastos had built a normal all to himself. He'd managed to do what the entire team hadn't.

He'd settled down.

"Did you ever consider it?" Sersi's voice snaps me back to reality as she breaks the silence.

I hum, brow creasing as I turn back to face her. I rest my chin on the palm of my hand, my elbow resting on the table.

"Consider what?"

She motions to Jack and Phastos.

"Having kids. Having a family with Druig" She looks fondly at the exchange.

I purse my lips, pausing. I hadn't really expected that question.

"I did, yeah. A while back" I finally admit.

"And why didn't you?" She asks, curiosity dripping from her tone. "Have any children, I mean."

I stay silent for a few seconds, considering the question.

"I mean, we thought about it for a while. I didn't even know if it was biologically possible, but we thought about adopting" I lick my lips. "I guess we never did actually get around to it."

Sersi's gaze softens with pity, and I can tell she wants. toreach over and give me a hug. As much as I loved her though, her pity was the last thing I needed.

I always knew I'd want kids someday, but the thought of them growing up while I stayed the same didn't sit right with me.

It would get to a point where I would be the same, and they would have grown up and lived their own lives.

I would have to see them die.

But I'd wanted a family. I had loved Druig so much that even having children didn't seem as far-fetched as I'd once thought.

We'd talked about it several times, normally when we were about to go to bed. We'd talk about how we'd raise them in a village. How we'd teach theme everything we'd lived through and how. Both of us liked the idea of raising someone that was half me and half him.

We'd been planning on taking in a child. Maybe a girl from the Amazon or the village.

He'd left me before we'd gotten the chance to actually do it.

Who knew, maybe if we figured out a way to save the world and everything worked out in the end then maybe in a couple of years I'd bring up the subject again.

For now though, I was fine living the mother life through Phastos and his son.

Phastos finishes up in the bathroom, leading Jack into his room and then entering the living room to meet us.

He stops for a moment, looking at our awkward stances. Then he closes his eyes, as if preparing for the speech he was about to give us.

"So" He makes a start to the table, taking a seat in front of me and then turning to Ikaris. "After all these years, even you fell for Ajak's lies." He pauses, shaking his head and playing with one of the figurine toys on the table.

"It all makes sense. Why she wouldn't let us interfere with human conflict. Conflicts lead to war, and war actually leads to advancement and lifesaving technology advancement"

He chuckles darkly, not meeting eyes with any of us.

"It wasn't about making a peaceful, harmonious world, was it? But to increase the population. At all cost. Just farming humans as food for the celestials, right?"

"That's bleak" Ikaris notes, looking at him.

Phastos turns, tilting his head, a slight scowl on his face.

"Well, so does telling your husband and your child they'll be dead within a few days"

"But they don't have to be" I finally speak. "You can help us"

He eyes me, pursing his lips. Then he shakes his head.

"I got a family now. They've given me faith again, and I see the good in humanity every single day" He shakes his head, dropping the toy into the table. "So look. I cannot help you."

"Phas–"

"I'm sorry, Aurora, but I can't. It was wrong for me to use my powers without thinking about the consequences in the first place, so now I choose to use my hands to fix my child's bicycle. Okay?" He turns to all of us, his tone serious.

"Do you?" Ikaris asks, humor lining his tone.

Phastos nods.

"I don't use my powers anymore"

"Are you sure?"

Ikaris doesn't wait for Phastos to reply. Instead, he shoots beams out of his eyes and directly into the window. The lasers bounce off the glass, flashing a series of golds before he stops shooting.

The window is as good as new.

I can't hold back a laugh as I realize that Ikaris was right. I lean back in my chair, shaking my head and crossing my arms over my chest.

"No powers, huh, Phastos?"

Ikaris motions to the table, smiling with amusement.

"What's this even made of, vibranium?" He punches the table, making it break in half and fall into the floor in pieces.

I look down at the broken table with wide eyes.

Phastos smacks his lips in disappointment, staring at the table with desperation.

"Fall collection. IKEA"

"Phastos, please" I plead, leaning forward, tone begging. "You know that we don't stand a chance against them if you aren't with us"

I don't wait for him to respond. I point to Jakes's room, brow creased.

"Don't you want Jack to live his life? To grow up? Are you really willing to let him die? There are billions of people with the same potential he has, and we're stripping it away because of a Celestial"

He stays silent, contemplating what I just said. He purses his lips, his gaze flitting to Jack's room and then back to me.

"You know I'm right, Phastos," I tell him quietly. "You know I wouldn't be doing this if I didn't believe humanity was worth saving"

"If you stay here you might as well invite the Deviants for dinner" Ikaris adds, his expression blank.

God, he really knew how to push buttons.

Phastos leans forward, deep in thought.

"Fine" He finally looks up, accepting to come with us. "I'll do it. Just this once"

I whoop, raising my hands in the air in celebration.

"That's my Phastos" I exclaim happily, jumping from my chair and reaching over to hug him. He hugs me back, even though I can tell he's still annoyed by the fact that I convinced him.

And just like that, we were a step closer to saving the world.

a/n sorry for the slow update I have been so so busy with finally projects, but yeah! here you go

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