

“The names you give your planets,” asks the Wizard, breaking the silence between the broken glass crunch of Heulog-12’s footsteps. “What is their meaning? What is...’Jupiter’, what is ‘Neptune’ or ‘Saturn’?” Heulog hadn’t noticed, but the Wizard had slowed their glide to stop in front of a stylized mural depicting the Sol System; such displays were not uncommon in the Cosmodrome.

Heulog hums in astonishment. “I didn’t realize you could read Old Russian.”

The Wizard hesitates for a moment, sinking a bit closer to the floor. “...I cannot. I have read the records of them in the World’s Grave. The Grave is replete with empiric information: names, locations, recent history, but there is little by way of semantic relevance. There is little there concerned with *meaning*.”

“Meaning?” Heulog is surprised to hear such soft concepts be sanctioned by such sharp teeth. She thinks for a moment, then sighs. “I don’t *suppose* this counts as Vanguard intel, but nevertheless let’s just keep these...encounters to ourselves for the time being, yeah? This is like the third time in as many months that we’ve bumped into eac—”

“*Coincidences and nothing more.*” The Wizard hisses with pressed urgency.

“As you’ve insisted. Repeatedly. Now, the planets. They come from old religions. Pre-Golden Age. I’ve read in the Cryptarchy about the mythologies of ancient Rome, though I am no expert; that was more Tyra’s thing. See, they were polytheistic, and came up with personified representations of natural phenomena in order to explain the sometimes capricious and unpredictable behavior of the world around them. Jupiter was the god of the sky, and thunderstorms. Neptune was the god of the sea. Saturn was

the god of...time? And agriculture? Wealth? A lot of things, the man was busy.”

The Wizard turns to the Warlock. “Sad that your ancestors had to fabricate gods for themselves, whereas we the Hive are blessed with the knowledge that ours walk among us. It must have been a lonely time in Earth’s history, so removed were you from any and all divinity.”

The Exo scoffs. “You presuppose it would be better had our gods walked among us, implanting ontopathogenic parasites along the way?”

“I didn’t say our way was ‘better’, I said that yours was ‘sad’ and ‘lonely’.” The Wizard turns and resumes drifting down the hallway of broken glass. “So your planets are named for gods which were allegorical constructs representing concepts. But the meaning is still missing. Why is Jupiter given the name of your thundergod, why is Neptune given that of your god of—” She searches for the word. “Waves?”

Heulog shrugs. “Your guess is as good as mine. Jupiter is the biggest, Neptune is the bluest? I get the impression it was less about 1:1 semantic matchup, and more about a feeling. An emotion.”

“Do you name yourselves through the same heuristic?”

“Sometimes, sure.”

The Wizard thinks on this a moment. After stopping themselves short three times, they finally ask, “What is the emotion of ‘Heulog’?”

The Exo stops and looks directly at the Wizard. “How do you know my name?”

Curving away in recoil, the Wizard falters. "I—Your Ghost, I overheard it from your Ghost. It talks very loudly."

Checking the pocket inside her robes where Alder likes to stay when physically manifested, Heulog is greeted by the sleepy, but very silent, glowblue grin of her best friend. Heulog smiles, mouths the word "hey," and tucks her robes back into place, turning to face the Wizard. "We both know that's not true." Her narrowed eyes widen with sudden excitement. "Wait. Do I have an entry in the World's Grave?!"

The Wizard, unsure, barely above a whisper, admits, "Yes. It is where I first heard about you. It was...intriguing to me. You were not at all like I expected."

Heulog squints, amused, at the quavering Wizard. "We are going to have to have a sit-down at some point so you can tell me all about what sort of wild, exaggerated fan-fiction the Hive have scrawled about me. But to answer your question: it means "sunny" in Cymraeg, also known as 'Welsh' in English, because the provenance of English is one of naming things that already had names. The intent behind *my* name? I don't know, maybe it was because of my winning smile and warm disposition. Unfortunately I cannot ask the last person who used this body."

"I understand," the Wizard lies, affecting a posture of thoughtfulness and introspection.

"Why this interest in the meaning of names? Is this an important subject in Hive cul—" She stops herself, smirks and shakes her head in self-admonishment. She walks over to the Wizard, reaches up, and gently tugs on her claw. Such is the size difference that she can only manage to grab a single digit. "Hey. What's your name?"

The Wizard's three eyes flash. "I am called Kysurax. Its meaning is that of sea-foam: sea-foam of the God-wave, the lingering impression of green logic left behind in the wake of final destruction. It means 'beautiful,' and it means 'me'."

"I understand," Heulog lies. Her posture of thoughtfulness and introspection, however, is genuine. "Hell of a thing to be named after though, right? In the wake of, y'know, recent developments and all that? Finding out the wave was a lie?" She had been absent-mindedly pushing around shards of glass with the toe of her boot; they had now gathered together into a small pile. "So much fuss over fake gods, huh?"

Kysurax looks at the Exo, considering her rhetorical questions. "Like Neptune?"

Heulog looks back at the Wizard, unaware of her own smile. "Like Neptune."