

A/N: Oren versus Aureo... FIGHT!

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If only his first strike hadn't missed. If only he'd struck earlier, perhaps all the way back when they were still in the cavern beneath the city and it became obvious Aureo couldn't be reasoned with. If only, if only, if only. Alas, Oren can't dwell for too long on what could have been. He's too busy fighting for his life against an all too powerful River God in the middle of his domain.

Oren has to give Aureo props... the aquifer was inspired. He was honestly impressed when he finally realized just what was happening. The river that ran through the center of the City of Goldriver was thick and deep and winding. But it wasn't big enough to drown the entire city all on its own. In the end, it didn't need to be... because the surface water was a kind façade.

The nobles of Goldriver had made a truly colossal mistake when they turned Aureo over to the God Hunters. The River God was right, he could have easily defended Goldriver from Commander Hogarth and his men if the city leaders had just given him a chance. He'd hidden his strength from them too well. He'd made himself seem all too... mortal.

Now though, there's nothing mortal about what Aureo is doing. The amount of power he's wielding is beyond even some of the gods and goddesses Oren had fought up in the Heavens. And back then he'd had the armor and blade of the God Killer to back him up. Now... he's armed with nothing but a single Celestial Metal Dagger.

On top of that, this stone pillar they're standing on is incredibly wet and that to Oren means that the entire thing is filled with Aureo's water. Whips of the

stuff explode upwards, trying to slice Oren into pieces, trying to turn him into a slurry of flesh. He ducks, dodges, and dives this way and that, leaping free where he can, slipping around the attacks where possible.

Some hit him all the same, glancing blows that he can feel will definitely bruise. And if they'd fully landed, he might be dealing with broken, or at least fractured bones. Oren is strong, fast, and durable. But his armor leaves a lot to be desired and the power of a divine being in the heart of their domain is not to be underestimated.

He really, really wished he'd managed to take Aureo out with that very first blow.

“Stay still you little GNAT! I will DESTROY you!”

At this point, Aureo has lost any semblance of sanity or decorum. The god's tortured mind is on full display at this point. No more act, no more façade. This is Aureo stripped down to his true self after the God Hunters got done with him. It's awful, really. Oren feels nothing but pity for the River God. However... if Sophia hadn't unleashed him, he likely would have acted on his own a second later.

In this, he and the goddess were of one mind. Watching Aureo destroy Goldriver's Castle was one thing. That was horrifying enough. But then the River God had turned his attention to the city's Noble District. The same district where he and Sophia had tea in the city's finest inn before heading to the Temple District. The same place where a bright young waitress named Anna had told them all about the state of the city and expressed her fears for the future.

Sophia and Oren's eyes had met in that moment... and the goddess, stricken as she was, had nodded. She'd given him the go ahead and Oren

had moved with all his speed. Not quick enough though, or he wouldn't be locked in this battle with Aureo now, fighting the enraged River God for the fate of the city.

The only saving grace is that Aureo is ignoring Sophia for some reason. The goddess would be an easy target, though the moment the River God attacks her, Oren hopes she'll transport herself away in the same way as she transported them closer and closer to the city. Maybe that's why Aureo is ignoring her. Or maybe he has another reason entirely.

Either way, it's to Oren's gain. If he had to defend Sophia on top of trying to find a way through Aureo's defenses, this situation would be untenable. No, rather... it was already untenable enough as things stood.

Oren grits his teeth as yet another dash forward is met with bubbling water beneath his feet tripping him up while water whips lash through the air to block his path. Finally, there's a shield of water a few feet away from Aureo that rises up to force Oren to redirect every time.

On the one hand, he's not exactly getting tired. Compared to the two day sprint to Sophia's hideaway, this is nothing. He can do this all day so long as he stays ahead of Aureo's water whips. The only problem is, Aureo doesn't seem to be getting very tired either. And the rumbling down below in the city hasn't stopped... if anything it's getting worse.

They need to end this sooner rather than later, but Oren keeps coming up short. Time and time again, he tries to get closer to the River God, only to find himself harshly rebuked and sent skidding back. The dagger in his hand could do the deed, but Oren would need to get nice and personal first and that's proving to be extremely difficult.

Unless...

The beginnings of a plan start to form in Oren's mind. On the face of it, it's a rather simple plan truth be told. And yet... the devil is in the details. If he's going to pull this off, he's going to have to lull Aureo into a false sense of security first. He's going to have to convince the River God that he's winning.

Luckily for his purposes, Aureo doesn't spend much longer bothering with water whips and shields and what not. While the god might not be getting tuckered out any time soon, that doesn't mean he's not still getting tired of Oren's unrepentant bullshit.

“ENOUGH!”

Finally, the River God breaks out the big guns... a massive torrent of divinely charged water that comes rushing up out of the stone pillar and then winds its way down towards Oren. If Aureo was utilizing water whips before, this is more like a water hydra.

Oren could have probably kept dodging even then, but that wouldn't serve his purposes. So instead, he braces himself... and lets the massive blast of water clip him, sending him flying backwards and careening right off of the edge of the massive stone platform.

Fortunately, the whole thing is on top of a pillar of rock and earth and stone rather than being held aloft by some huge fuck-off geyser. Oren falls about a hundred feet before slamming his fist into the side of the pillar, arresting his momentum and grunting as he stabs the Celestial Dagger in next.

Then, he begins to climb. At the same time of course... he knows full well that Aureo can sense him down here. That's the point. If the River God thought Oren to truly be defeated, then he might have turned his attention

onto the city of Goldriver once again... or worse, Sophia. Oren wants him to keep coming after him, but you know what they say. Be careful what you wish for.

Eyes widening, only his reflexes allow for him to dodge to the side as a blast of water explodes out of the pillar where he just was. Dodging with rapid speed, Oren darts left and right, even as he begins climbing his way back up to the top of the platform. Aureo's efforts to kill him haven't stopped... if anything they've intensified. But that's okay because now Oren is perfectly positioned for his plan. And if all goes well, Aureo won't even see it coming.

... Another blast nearly takes his head off, causing Oren to slide down a few feet to avoid it. With a grunt, he gets back to climbing. Aureo wouldn't see it coming... so long as Oren actually managed to make it back to the top.

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It wasn't supposed to be like this. None of this was supposed to be happening. They'd come to Goldriver hoping to use the God Hunters to find a divine being that might have the answers they sought. They'd partially succeeded in that front, rescuing Aureo and helping him get back to full strength. His father, an Ancient God, would almost certainly have the answers they sought.

... But Aureo couldn't be reasoned with. The River God had gone mad down in those catacombs. The God Hunters had torn his heart out of his chest and stomped on it. They'd taken any good will he might have had towards mortals and turned it into pitch black hatred.

Sophia could accept him killing those who sold him out to the God Hunters. She'd offered Oren's services for exactly that. But this? This was too far. And when she'd realized he was going for the part of the city where they'd enjoyed Anna's company at the upscale inn just a few hours ago, she couldn't stand aside any longer. And neither could Oren.

Unfortunately, Oren's first attack had not struck true. Otherwise, this whole situation might have ended far sooner. Instead, Aureo had managed to sense it coming and had dodged out of the way of the dagger of Celestial Metal. From there, battle had been joined between the River God and the Otherworlder.

Sophia had not stood idle though. She wasn't a combatant, but she was still a goddess and she had divine power of her own. Nothing on the level of what Aureo was bringing to bear right now, but Sophia had to admit, she'd be hard pressed to match the River God even on her best day. Luckily, she didn't have to match him. She just had to support Oren to the best of her abilities.

Of course, when Oren goes over the side from that massive blast of water, Sophia screams at first, assuming the worst. But then she notices that Aureo hasn't taken his concentration off of the Otherworlder. In fact, he even tosses her a mad grin as he shakes his head in faux amusement.

"These insects... one moment please, Sophia. I'm almost done with your 'protector'."

Oren was still fighting. Still struggling. Vaguely, Sophia can hear the blasts of water from over the side of the edge in the distance. They sound like they're getting closer. They sound... like Oren is climbing his way back up.

If Oren hasn't given up yet, then neither can Sophia. She pushes more of her divine power into the fray, focusing on the battle between Aureo and Oren as she strives to give Oren the edge he needs to take down the River God. She's been doing it all along... but unfortunately, now that the Otherworlder is no longer directly in Aureo's face, Sophia apparently isn't as stealthy as she might have preferred.

The River God suddenly twitches, his eyes snapping over to her as Sophia goes still.

"You... what are you doing?"

She's finally been found out. And perhaps this is to be her end. If it is, Sophia refuses to cower. She stands tall, staring Aureo in the eyes unflinchingly.

"I'm doing my part, Aureo. You forget, I'm not just a Goddess of Wisdom, but also Equity. Do you think it fair, what you're doing to the people of Goldriver? Do you think it just? I certainly do not and in this, my domain and I are in concert!"

Aureo's brow furrows, his lips curling into a deep frown. He's still trying to kill Oren; Sophia can hear the water crashing about what sounds like just behind and beneath her. But now more of his attention is focused on her than ever before.

"... This... this isn't fairness, you dumb bitch. You're not balancing the scales. You're-!"

Funnily enough, despite watching him destroy an entire castle filled with people, Sophia is more taken aback by him calling her a 'dumb bitch' than anything else. Was that truly what he thought of her?

Alas, she never gets to find out anymore because Aureo is interrupted mid-sentence by Oren's return. The Otherworlder comes launching over the edge of the stone platform, forcing Aureo to cut himself off with a snarl as he refocuses his attention on Oren.

Only... rather than avoiding her like he's been doing since the beginning of this battle, Oren makes sure that he lands right next to Sophia. This gives Aureo pause because even now it seems like the River God doesn't want to truly hurt her, let alone kill her. That hesitation only lasts a scant few seconds, however, before his face begins to contort into something truly grotesque. Those scant few seconds are all Oren needs to reach out and grab Sophia's hand in his own and shout at the top of his lungs.

“SOPHIA, NOW!”

She's doesn't know how she somehow instinctively understands what he wants of her. She doesn't know why she immediately reacts to his command on pure instinct. But for all that Sophia doesn't know, she does know one thing... what to do next.

With a pulse of divine power, Sophia jumps them both forward across the watery stone platform, past the water shield that Aureo has up around him... and right into the River God's personal space. So close that Sophia can literally see his teeth as his lips curl back in a snarl and he opens his mouth. Whatever he might have said to them however... he never gets to say it.

Quick as a flash, Oren slams the Celestial Dagger up under Aureo's chin, forcing his jaw closed as the blade pierces through the River God's tongue and the roof of his mouth before finally driving deep into his brain.

There's a moment where Sophia thinks that they might both still die anyways as a byproduct of Aureo's death throes given that they're surrounded by so much of his still-moving water. She's surprised to find that she's at peace with it, if this is how it ends.

But then Oren twists the dagger viciously and the water surrounding them drops as the last ounce of life leaves Aureo's eyes. The River God is reduced to a corpse... and with him goes their best shot at getting the answers they sought.

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A/N: Being Oren and Sophia is suffering v.v

As always, leave a Like and let me know what you think!