

Storge

an *Assassin's Creed Odyssey* fanfic

for greygerbil

by Rodo

“I DON’T NEED a son,” Nikolaos had said to Akakios when the man had first broached the subject. *I don’t need a son*, he thought again as they stood in the small courtyard and watched two boys spar. One was a head taller than the other and better fed too. But as their wooden swords clashed, it was clear that the smaller, younger boy had something the other lacked: determination. Nikolaos could see it in his eyes, in the way he focussed on his enemy and not the sword. It didn’t take long before the taller boy fell on his behind.

“He has potential, doesn’t he?” Akakios asked, knowing full well the answer he would get.

Nikolaos nodded. He still didn’t need a son. “Your friend’s son, you said?”

“Yes. But his father died two years ago, and the mother shortly after his birth. He has no inheritance to speak of. Just his potential, but without a family he will never amount to anything.”

“Why don’t you adopt him yourself, then?”

Akakios sighed. “Just watch.”

And so he did. The boys kept sparring, and the younger one kept beating the older one. Nikolaos could see the frustration grow in the older boy’s eyes. He fell again, and this time he didn’t get up and try again. Instead he discarded his sword and shield and threw himself at the younger boy, tackling him to the ground and using his size and weight to mercilessly pummel the boy.

“Stop!” Akakios bellowed, and the boys separated. “As you can see, I already have a son, and they don’t get along.”

Akakios’ son didn’t react to the veiled rebuke. Instead he stuck his chin out and tried to stare down his father. The younger boy just stared straight ahead, a mulish expression on his face. He was a fighter, that one. Nikolaos could tell. Cassandra had looked the same whenever she kept losing.

“I don’t need a son,” Nikolaos repeated. The boy heard him. There was a flicker in his eyes, but apart from that, he remained perfectly still.

“You are the Wolf of Sparta, my friend. You need a son, whether you think you don’t or not. And young Stentor needs a father, whether he will admit it or not. What happened on Mount Taygetos happened. Let it go and look to the future.”

Nikolaos wondered whether he could. But when he looked at the boy, he knew Akakios had already won. He felt a stirring of something he had buried when he’d lost his family. And maybe what he needed was not just another son, but one that was as broken and marked by loss as he was.

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