Chapter XXII

" The time is ripe, and the future is too.
We made it through difficult moments, yet we will survive the worst.
But I can feel how your suspicion lies, your restlessness increase.
I dare you, do it.
Try turning on me and I will enjoy the look on your face, chisel it into the stones of eternity.
After all, even you know who to bow to."

* * *

They all stood gathered in the laboratory, none of them being able to sit still.
A foot tapping against the ground there, another person nervously nibbling at their fingernail.

Suddenly, Ikaris marched into the room, armor tight just as his face was carved in stone.

Phastos looked down from his work,
"I'm close to figuring it out-"

Beams of energy shot out of the man's eyes, echoed through the silence until it mixed with the metal clanking to the ground, the gold fading.

Energy collected in the center, pathing through the room and blowing everything on its way back.

Phastos was hit too, thrown across the room. He whimpered and gave off a cry, curling up as he heaved for air.

"Boss, what are you doing?" Kingo asked, stepping up with wide eyes.

"I have let this go on long enough."

Sersi ran into the room right up to Phastos and urging him to get up again.
The man whimpered as she touched his side.
"Don't hurt him!"

The others were frozen in shock, able to move a muscle.

"He lied to us." Sersi breathed heavily, almost coughs wrapping around her words and drowning them in pain.
" He already knew about the Emergence."

Kingo shook his head, lowered his eyes.
"No he didn't."

Ikaris swallowed, eyes darting towards the Eternals.
"Ajak told me everything when we left Babylon."

The other man blinked, mouth bobbing open.
" What?"

"You wouldn't have let us stop the Emergence."
Phastos pushed himself from the ground, the tone to his voice bristled yet so much more put than the others.

"No," Ikaris lowered his eyes, voice resounding against the walls and running shivers down their spines, "I only ever wanted to protect you from the Deviants."

"If Ajak wanted you to take her place, why did she choose me?" Sersi questioned, pushing for an answer as she noticed the way his jaw tightened, a small purse to the lips.

She got further up, gasping.
" What have you done?"

Druig pushed from the back, raising his eyes as he avoided them looking up before.
"He killed her."

Sprite's eyes filled with tears, her gaze juggling between Druig and Ikaris.

"I had to." Ikaris exclaimed, causing a wave of sickness, a wall of disbelief to rush over them.

Sersi lightly rocked her head from side to side. "She loved you."

A cry weakly coursed around them.

"Did she?"

" She loved you". The woman squeezed, taking all inside herself to elevate her voice.

Her heart twisted in her chest, gripping at the fabric to stop it. But it only got worse with each passing moment.

"Do you think it was easy to live with the truth? To know all of this would end?" he had tears imparting his vision, heart twisting the longer he looked at Sersi.
" To keep on lying to you?"

"If we gave humanity the choice, how many of them would be willing to die, so that billions more could be born?" Ikaris added, speaking elevated as he proudly stood his opinion.

"We are not giving them a choice." Phastos pronounced.
"Is this why you were willing to kill?"

The man's lower lips pushed further in front, lifting his chin as his muscles shook.
He waited for a reaction, but only received a blank stare.

That was it, his resolve snapped in half, his words droning through the air.
" You're so pathetic!"

"I'm an Eternal, Phastos." Ikaris gritted his teeth, "I exist for Arishem, as do you."

"This is who you are."

Phastos shook his head, features twitching.
"I wouldn't change a single thing about who I am."

He had a fear, a passion clawing at his body.
" Born or made."

Sersi tried taking his hand, pulling him back to safety as Phastos brushed past her.
"But I do not exist for Arishem, I exist for my family!"

"Then you are making the same mistake Ajak did."

Wind blew, Makkari jolted through the room and stopped with a bright smile,
I found Tiamut.

"No!" The others shouted, but weren't fast enough until Ikaris' energy hummed after her followed by those harsh beams.
Kingo shoved her out of range, landing hard.
"Get out of here."

Makkari frowned, but then stiffened her expression and shot out of the room before Ikaris even got a chance to aim again.

Kingo breathed heavily, inhaling piercing air as he protruded his index and middle finger from his hand.
A ball of energy buzzed at the tip of them, holding them right into Ikaris's face.

"Kingo-"

" You do not turn against your family!" Kingo demanded, even if it was rather a useless beg for him to change his mind.
Pain tugged at his features.

"Gilgamesh died because of you."

Ikaris didn't acknowledge the betrayal, didn't dare to think what he had done.
"You won't succeed against me."

He lowered his face.
"The only chances you had are out of the way."

"Chances?" Phastos questioned, forehead wrinkling.
"We had one, you destroyed it."

Ikaris looked down at them, gave them a moment to understand.

Druig puffed a breath, eyes shooting open.
"Persia."

Sersi put a hand over her mouth, a tear streaming down her cheek. A choked off sob came from her throat.

"What did you do to her?" Kingo balled his fist, the ball of energy vibrating as he was tightening his jaw.

"She's safe, but you won't reach her." Ikaris replied, that unreadable expression haunting their minds.
"And I can assure you, if you try to attack, she will stand on my side."

"That's bullshit!" Druig seethed, slitting his words through his shaking body.
"She wouldn't do that, what did you do to her?"

He struck towards Ikaris, about to beat the answer out of him when Sersi put her hand out.
"Druig."

"No, stop with this Sersi!" Druig yelled back, eyes consumed by hollow anger.
And fear.

He turned back to Ikaris, panting into his face until he was sure he'd pass out.
" What did you do to her?"

"I did what I had to." Ikaris leaned down, eyes dropping.
"As she is the only one who ever had a chance against me, and she cares most, it was easy to influence her."

Druig couldn't even see straight at that point, the blood in his veins freezing and boiling at the same time.

Persia, she was gone.

"No, that's not possible." he spat, "Persia wouldn't believe you, not when she finds out about this."

A lost smirk creeped onto his face, "She will rip you to pieces if she ever finds out."

Ikaris bit the inside of his cheek, arms crossed behind his back.
"If she finds out, I can assure you that the biggest threat to my success is nothing more but dust"

Druig's nostrils blew, feet numbing making him feel as if he was falling.

Ikaris wandered his eyes about the Eternals.
"And I will kill every last one of you if I have to."

He was about to walk out, when a fragile voice sliced the thick air.
" Wait"

Sprite moved herself past Druig, avoiding his fuming eyes.
"I'm going with you."

"Sprite- "
Sersi begged, when Thena came waking into the lab.
"What is this?"

Ikaris' eyes glared in that yellow again, but Sprite raced her hand through the air before he could use his power.

They exploded into a swarm of bugs, all swarming their sight, whining through the air.
Thena manifested a sword, but they were gone when the swarm cleared.

Druig swallowed heavily, grabbed at his hair, "No no, god no."
His words were dissolved by his craving lung, begging for air which slipped from his hold.

"Druig, it will be alright-" Sersi tried, but her voice was almost as bad as his.

He turned around, his voice whistling under the impact of the increasing panic under his skin.
"You don't understand." he almost cried, an acidic taste running up his throat.
"I promised to keep her safe, I told her I-"

His hands shook, just as the rest of his body did.
" I can't lose her like this."

"We can do it." Phastos stepped up, levitating the pieces off the ground and assembling them black together.
Druig looked back up at him, unsure of where to keep his eyes.
The others also reflected that little hope.
A blink of blissful hope, in themselves and the girl.

They couldn't let her down again.

* * *

Sprite and Ikaris landed down on the ground, the dried grass crunching beneath their weight.
Slowly, they started approaching the girl sitting at the edge of the cliff.

Her hair fell white, braided back into a hairstyle she learned from the Natives, one she did when she fought.
To honor them.
Or just to feel more secure.

Her suit shone black, reflecting gold at its sides. She had her eyes fixed on the erupting volcano in front of her eyes.

Ikaris stopped Sprite just a minor distance in front of her, forcing her to come to a stand.
"Let me do the talking, you will understand. Don't mention the Emergence."

Sprite shone back at him with big eyes, then dropped them and gave him a nod.

"It does look real, doesn't it?" Persia had her glance tightened around the landscape, a chill running down her spine.

"I'm sorry, Persia." Ikaris stopped and sat down next to her.

She felt how an uncomfortable hold grabbed her, nausea finally rushing up her back.

"I tried talking to them, I really did." he exhaled, watching as the silver blades of lightning struck the horizon, withdrawing from the gray smoke.

"They wouldn't believe me, I wished they did."

"Then we will have to ensure their safety." Persia pushed up her chin, stars dancing in front of her eyes.

"You can go back." Ikaris suddenly said, trying to meet her sight which dropped to her hands.

She traced where Druig did when he had held hers.

"They will hate you if you go up against them." he made it clear, trying to grasp her fading attention.

Her palm clenched shut until her knuckles drained of color.

A faint smile appeared on her lips, " Not any more than they already do."

From a distance, Persia felt a ward of energy break her bounds, getting up from the ground to await the Domo appearing in the sky.

The spaceship gave up a deafening roar, a rumble as it came to a stop above the land.

She swallowed and took a deep breath.

A warm hand placed to her shoulder and shook her slightly, "You know what to do."

"Ikaris-" Persia suddenly exhaled, a wave of unknown energy flooding her mind until she shook it off,
" Something's wrong."

He tilted his head to the side, gave Sprite an alarmed look, "Persia, you can trust me."

"I know I can," she whispered, another blast expanding in her chest forcing the air to be knocked from her body.

"Hey, Persia." Sprite walked up to her, putting a hand to her back.
"Are you alright?"

Confusion took over her mind as if her own consciousness was cut from her.
But she squeezed her eyes shut and nodded.
"I'm okay."

"You know the plan." Ikaris enforced, starting to lift off the ground.
"Only interfere if you get my signal."

Persia hummed in response, getting back down to the ground.

"You and Sprite, stay here."

Without another word, he shot through the air, leaving the both of them back.

Persia rubbed a hand across her forehead, regulated her breathing.
"And you believed him, what made you change your mind?"

Sprite's face twisted into a panicked expression, but then she regained control over it.
"He had a point, even if the others didn't believe it."

"Yeah-" she responded, lowering her face into her hands.

She couldn't believe it at all.
Family against family.
Her against them.

"Maybe I should have talked to them." she suddenly spoke up, voice manifesting stronger.
"I should talk to them, they will listen. Druig will listen."

"No Persia." Sprite interrupted hastily, then pulled back with an open mouth, "It's too far gone, we-"

Suddenly, the lava simmering from the lighting volcano went back, the thick smoke clearing.
Persia got up quickly, searched the terrain with her eyes.

She picked up on three figures lifting into the air, one higher up than the others.

Her own energy went to grasp them, tapping around until she felt him.

Fuck

Her heart picked up on speed, looking around in frustration.

They found a way.

No signal, nothing at all.

"That's-" she started, then pressed her mouth shut and started running towards them.

Her body was working before she could demand it to.

"Persia!" Sprite desperately called, but the girl was already out of reach.

She used her magic to boost herself off the ground, noticed the black strings tangle around her legs.

In the distance, she felt energy rupture, falling to her knees because of the sudden brake.
Stones pushed into her skin, blood dripping.
Her eyes travelled up, two figures lifting into the air.

She rose from the ground, panting as her mouth changed from releasing heavy breaths to indecipherable whimpers.

When she finally reached them, Makkari sank down, a chilling scream scratching her ears.

Persia was just about to walk up to her when-

A piece of energy ripped from her, the feeling of a familiarity stripping from her like her own.

One of her hands clawed at her heart, the other digging into her ear as her vision went white.

A horrid gasp for air, a suffocating feeling spreading in her chest.
She held on tight, but wouldn't keep it.

It escaped from her hold, vision regaining pale colors.
Something was taken from her.

And she couldn't tell what.

"Persia." Sersi mumbled, but still didn't move.

"Sersi you need to listen to me, please-"

A rattle, a huge impact colliding with another shook the entire earth.
Persias looked up, the Domo rushing down with incredible speed towards them.

She opened her mouth to scream, but she was fetched out of the way by Makkari before it was the last she could have ever done.

A cough made her body hunch over as she helplessly grabbed Makkari's hand, skin growing hot with energy.

The Domo slid past them, metal scraping against the sand, then waves of water surging over it.

Another unbearable tug at her energy caused her to drop back to her knees.
The girl next to her sped over the beach, Persia's hand limping next to her.

Makkair got both Phastos and Thena out of the Domo.
Both standing on their feet, energy present.

A breath of relief made the cramping of her muscles slack a bit, until they turned towards the other side.

She turned too, a hand to her stomach as appeared Ikaris, his face resting in a stern expression.

"Druig is gone.", he declared, "It's over".

Her vision tunneled, the words recalling over and over again in her head.
Words were suddenly unfamiliar to her, until at least a moment passed.

" What?"
Persia felt as if time froze, her reality stopping just for her to extend the moment as she realized.

Her mind pieced it together, stomach twisting as her power started inhabiting her mind.
It pulled at her nerves ends until it guided her movement.

Ikaris widened his eyes, mouth falling open as the emotion behind his expression switched.
"You need to-"

"What did you just say?" she questioned again, the only thing she heard was her pulse taking up her ears.

That strip of energy, it wasn't just randomly because of the others using their powers.

The fade of humanity.
That's exactly what was taken from her.

"You lied." she muttered, tongue clicking against the roof of her mouth.
" You killed Druig."

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A/N: Somehow this is so short considering I feel like it's way longer? I'm so excited to write the next chapter, you don't understand.

You guys will absolutely love it hehe.

Also, I binged Legend of Arcane, so prepare for the best chapter so far

ANYWAYS THANK U FOR 18K!!

Continue reading next part