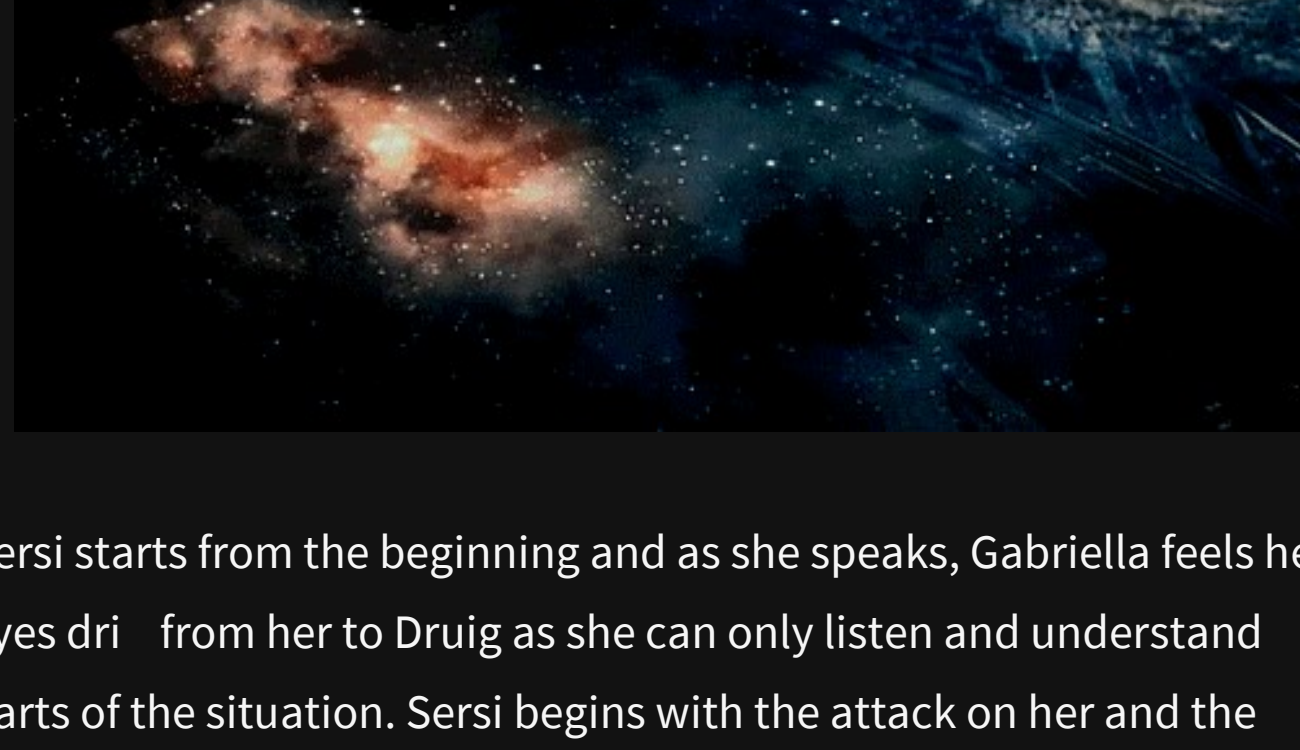


PLAN



Sersi starts from the beginning and as she speaks, Gabriella feels her eyes drift from her to Druig as she can only listen and understand parts of the situation. Sersi begins with the attack on her and the child who Gabriella came to know as Sprite in London to a woman named Ajak, her sphere and something or someone called Arishem. ^a

Sersi then begins to explain that they weren't real, that they were synthetic, their memories erased after each completed mission and in the moment, Gabriella noticed Druig glance to her before looking away so their eyes didn't meet. She couldn't tell what he was thinking as his eyes stayed focused on Sersi, his face showing little emotion as Gabriella could only look blankly forward.

"The emergence," Sersi continues turning slightly towards Gabriella awkwardly before looking back, as Druig tries his best not to do the same, "will destroy Earth and...everyone on it."

Feeling as if the wind was knocked from her chest, Gabriella's eyes linger up to see Druig watching her completely as his mouth clenched to show the pain she was feeling. It was a lot, finding out some entity was planning the destruction of the world, of humans and as Gabriella felt her whole body overcome with worry, she hadn't realised she had moved herself to stand. Noticing she was overwhelmed, Druig made his way past the group reaching for her hands as she simply looked at him to shocked to speak or do anything.

"You've given me a lot of bad news in one go, milady," Druig comments not turning towards Sersi as his focus was on Gabriella who looked lost, not noticing the words being spoken as he squeezes her hand to try and snap her back from her thoughts.

"So, will you help us?" Sersi asks, her voice filled with hope as Druig notices Gabriella's eyes glisten slowly with tears.

Silence filled the hall again, as the others waited for his response, disappointment looming as he hesitates.

"No," Druig says quietly shaking Gabriella from her thoughts as she looks at him before looking past to see the others all turned to watch him, their faces scrunched in a mixture of pain and anger.

"Druig..." Gabriella chokes out softly as he shakes his head before letting go of her hands and turning himself to look at the others.

"I will not leave her." ^a

"But you don't understand," Sersi adds standing now as Gabriella pulls on Druig's arm slightly, "if we, if you do nothing, there is no future, no happy ending."

"Druig..." Gabriella comments again a little louder, but he refuses to turn as he continues to look forward.

"My only mission now, is her." ^a

"Let's go, he's wasting our time," the man who had been quietly listening comments bitterly as he stands in frustration, Druig's eyes lingering to him slowly.

"Ikaris!" Druig's voice is louder now showing his distaste for the man a smile playing on his lips, "I've missed you."

The man named Ikaris moved towards Druig slowly, his eyes filled with anger as Druig did the same. Feeling the tension at its peak, Gabriella steps forwards quickly before grabbing Druig's arm tightly and pulling him back, making the small chatter around them quieten.

"Druig, please!" She mutters out loudly mixed with tears which she couldn't stop from falling, "just stop it!"

Watching him turn slowly to her, Gabriella lets go of his arm gently before stepping back and wishing to be anywhere but the hall. As she took one more step back she shook her head slowly as he went to reach for her, their moment interrupted as they both noticed the man with the camera quietly filming them. Taking a step towards Druig, Gabriella frowns as she's too late to respond before he commands the man to throw it against the wall, making Kingo hum with frustration. ^a

"Alright new rule, no more possessing peoples valets," Kingo comments stepping forward pointing a finger at Druig as he turns to look at him.

"Now, where's your sense of humour Kingo?"

"Humour? Where was the humour," Kingo questions with a fake laugh, "all this time with humans and you can't even think of a good joke'. That wasn't funny."

"Druig," Sersi enounces loudly over the bickering making Kingo stop and slink over to the man picking up the broken camera, "this is serious."

Feeling her mind aching with the everything that was happening around her, Gabriella's eyes linger to the couple that sat quietly on the bench as she notices them observing her. Crossing her arms against her chest shyly, she takes a deep breath before turning and heading for the door, her eyes stinging and blurry.

"Gabriella?" Druig calls out ignoring Sersi as Gabriella's hand lingers on the door before she turns back to look at him.

"I just need some space. We can speak later, I just, I just need to go," she whispers before pushing the doors open slightly and walking into the clearing, not looking back at what was happening in the hall anymore.

Rubbing her temples slightly as she moved as far away from the hall as she could, Gabriella felt her knees buckle as she let herself drop to the ground. All she could do was look at her hands placing them into her lap before gritting her teeth, her mind trying to process everything that had been said. Feeling the tears drip onto her hands as she looked down, Gabriella's thoughts were clouded with the faces of those in the compound, the people she had found a home with.

Sucking in a short breath, Gabriella lets out a soft cry before clenching her hands into tight fists.

"It's not fair," she whispers between cries before suddenly looking up to hear the hall doors push open to reveal Druig leading the other Eternals into the clearing, the mood looking dire.

Watching the group separate moving in different directions, Gabriella's eyes find Druig as he slowly makes his way towards her. Gently pushing herself from the ground, all she wants to do is hold him as she starts to move towards him. Rushing into his arms, Gabriella leans into his chest finally sobbing as he tightly consumes her in an embrace, a hand patting her head gently.

"I'm so sorry," Druig whispers as Gabriella moves her arms to hold him, gripping at his coat not wanting to risk him moving, "I know it was a lot."

"Druig," she chokes out between her sobs and pulling herself from his chest as his hand moved to caress her cheek, wiping tears gently, "you have to go, you must."

"I already told you, no."

"Druig please!" She comments more firmly pushing him from her slightly so he could see her properly, "if there is any chance, any hope, you can help stop this from happening, you have to try."

"Gabriella..." Druig replies softly reaching for her again as she steps back shaking her head.

The mood felt wrong as she looked from him to where Sersi and Ikaris were standing, their eyes lingering from each other to her. It wouldn't be fair to ask Druig to stay and Gabriella knew it was for the best, no matter how painful it felt.

"I told you, I will not leave you," Druig states stepping back to place a hand to her face as Gabriella's eyes close slowly before opening with new tears, "I can't."

"I'm not worth it, Druig!" Gabriella cries out pain mixed with her words as Druig's face tenses slightly as she moves from his touch, "you can't put me before the rest of humanity, without you they are doomed, doomed to not have a choice to whether they live or die. Don't let me feel guilty, don't let me be a reason for that happening."

"Gabriella, you have no reason to feel guilty..."

"You're choosing to stay because of me, right?" She replies quickly as Druig hesitates slightly, turning his gaze to the compound before back to her, "don't let me be the reason you won't help! You've spent so many years, looking after humans, wanting the best for us? Don't stop that now, because of me."

With tears flowing down her cheeks, Gabriella lowers her head as silence engulfs the pair inches from each other as if an invisible wall had now placed itself between them. It seemed like only yesterday the world was blissful and warm and now it was grey and filled with pain. ^a

Looking up slowly, Gabriella notices Druig step towards her wanting to speak once more but as he reaches for her, the pair are startled by the sound of Sersi screaming Ikaris's name. Turning to see what was happening, Gabriella steps towards where Sersi was as she watches what she assumed was a deviant carry Ikaris into the forest.

"Get somewhere safe," Druig suddenly commands moving to place a hand on Gabriella's shoulder before pushing slightly as if he wished her to go, "now."

"I'm not leaving you!" Gabriella replies firmly as he shakes his head, "I can help!" ^a

"Not this time, go."

Watching him run towards Sersi as another two deviants slowly make their way from the trees, Gabriella places a hand against her mouth with a small gasp. Remembering the children from earlier she finds herself moving towards the entrance with little hesitation, Druig's words lingering at the back of her mind now as she ran. ^a

She had no time to think and there was no time for fear, her mind fixated only on finding these children and getting them to safety. ^a

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