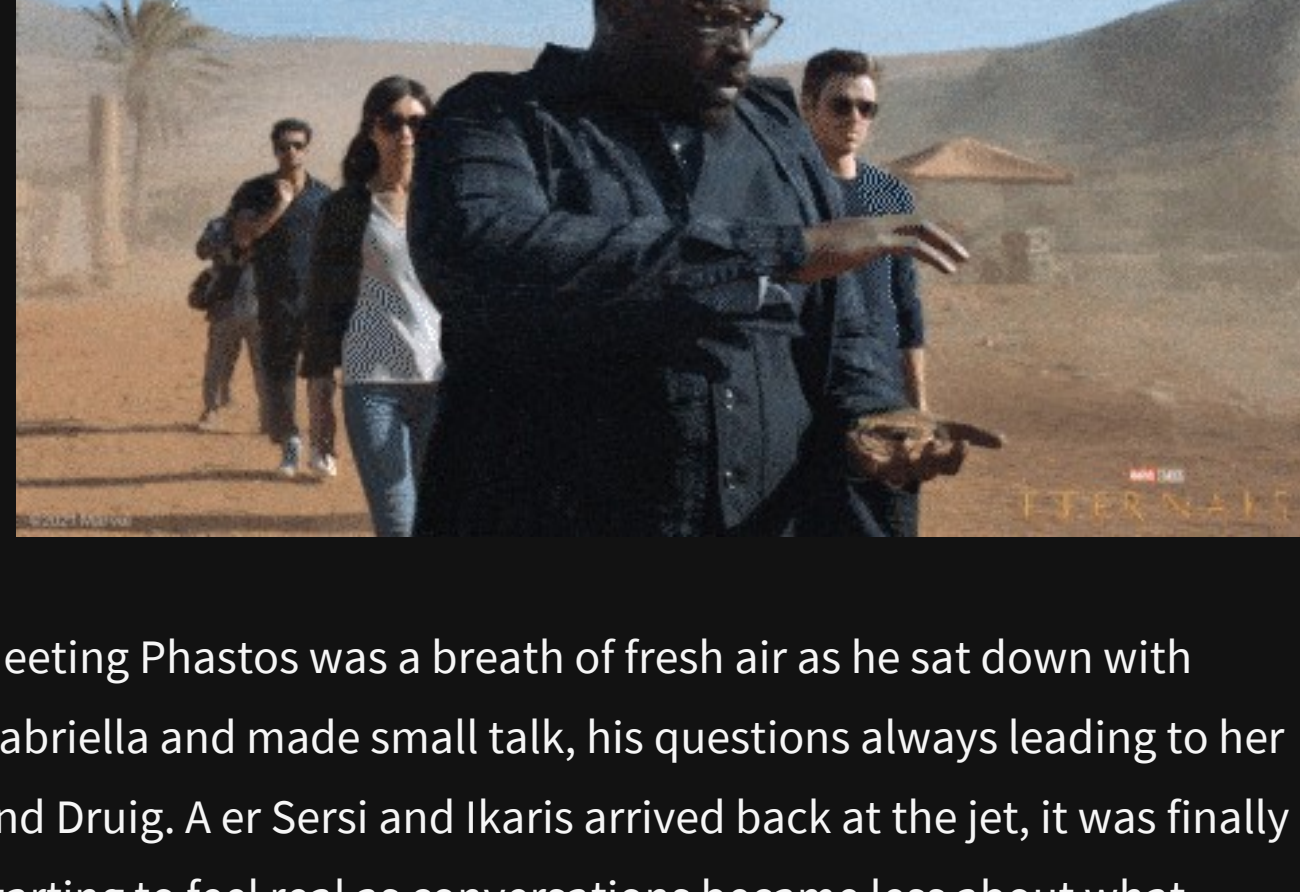


## DOMO



Meeting Phastos was a breath of fresh air as he sat down with Gabriella and made small talk, his questions always leading to her and Druig. As Sersi and Ikaris arrived back at the jet, it was finally starting to feel real as conversations became less about what everyone had been up to and more about what will happen if they fail. Spending more time with him, she found Phastos endearing as the others pushed him to speak more of his family, his answers making her smile at the love he had found.

Druig had subtly mentioned that Phastos had given up on humans a long time ago, due to their technology and weapon advancements. Being around for thousands of years helping it develop and expand, Phastos began to hate what became of his work. As Phastos sat patiently while Sprite and Kingo commented about the past and present, Gabriella couldn't help but want to ask him another question.

"Phastos," Gabriella mutters out so ly as he turns from the others to her while fixing his glasses, his eyes glancing down at Druig who was resting his head on her lap, "why did you decide to help us?"

As the others quiet themselves Gabriella looks shyly at Phastos who had now leaned back at her question, his hands pressing together in his lap. Feeling Druig's chuckle vibrate her legs slightly, she goes to apologise but is stopped by Phastos as he smiles.

"When I met Ben, I began to see the good in humans again," Phastos states as Gabriella looks down subtly as Druig pulls her hand from awkwardly resting to his forehead, urging her to play with his hair for comfort, "and when we adopted Jack, well, they became my sole purpose for wanting to stay on Earth. So, that's why I'm helping, for them and only them, so we can have a future together."

"We all have our reasons, to wanting to save Earth," Sersi chimes in as she moves to place a hand on Phasto's shoulder, his hand slowly raising to touch it as he looked to her, "the bottom line is, we will do what we must to save this planet."

Watching Sersi grip his shoulder with a gentle smile before moving to a seat, Gabriella frowns as Phasto's eyes linger over her and out the window. Feeling herself sink back into her chair as Druig moves with her, Gabriella can't be sure if Phastos had any feelings towards her other than bitterness. Although she hadn't done anything that would be the reason to hate humans, she felt as if it came with the title.

"He doesn't hate you," Druig comments randomly as Sersi who was fiddling with her phone looks over to him, her eyebrow raising before looking away to see Sprite and Kingo annoying Ikaris as he sighs loudly.

"I didn't say," Gabriella quietly answers glancing down before hitting him gently against the forehead, once again not happy he was listening to her thoughts, "Druig, I swear to god."

Opening an eye to peak up at Gabriella, Druig playfully grins as she rolls her eyes while returning a gentle smile. Moving a hand slowly over his face making his eyes focus on her, Gabriella lightly traces her finger along Druig's nose. Moving her finger tenderly from the tip of his nose to his lips, Gabriella shyly outlines them before pulling away as someone coughs awkwardly.

Looking up slowly Gabriella finds Phastos had risen from the seat before them, his face scrunched with confusion and slight disgust. Awkwardly pushing at Druig so he finally moves from her lap, he chuckles as he stands to straighten himself in front of Phastos. Feeling her face flush with heat, Gabriella watches as Phastos pats his clothes before looking from her to Druig.

"This is something I feel, like I shouldn't be watching," Phastos blurts out slowly pointing as Druig places his hands behind his back before leaning towards him, "it feels odd."

"Hey! That's what I said," Kingo announces before pushing past Sprite and Sersi to join Phastos, "well pretty much what I said, really it's just because it's Druig."

Looking from Kingo to Druig, Gabriella finds herself smile slightly as she notices his face twitch before dropping with a grin. As Druig slowly looks up to glance between his friends, Gabriella lightly tugs on his coat.

"Phastos, Kingo, I'm so lucky to have such family," Druig comments smugly as he slightly turns to caress Gabriella's cheek before looking back, "is my happiness such a gross sight?"

"Not gross, Druig," Kingo replies a little hurt as he moves a hand to rule Druig's hair while Phastos holds up two fingers and squeezing them close, "we just didn't expect it, from our little loner."

Pushing a chuckling Kingo, Druig smiles before turning to o er a hand to Gabriella who had been watching quietly. Taking it gently Gabriella allows him to pull her up before he turns to the others, his hand squeezing hers.

"Well you all might as well, deal with it," Druig responds taking Gabriella past them as she shyly smiles, mouthing a quick sorry, "now, if you'll excuse us."

Following Druig past the others with a quick nod to Sersi, Gabriella trudges along as he pulls her into the secluded part of the plane. Pointing to the seat as Druig waits for her to sit before he straightens himself, he smiles as she furrows her eyebrows.

"Why did we move from one seat to another?" Gabriella questions moving back slightly as Druig leans forward, his eyes watching her face flush.

"I just wanted you," Druig whispers so ly as Gabriella bites her lip nervously, making him grin, "all to myself."

"Druig.."

"Don't fret my love," he replies chuckling li ing her chin as her lips part slightly, "Now is not the time for that, besides, we should be arriving soon."

"Arriving soon?" Gabriella mutters out so ly as Druig removes his hand for her chin, "I heard the others talking, we're going to find the domo right?"

"Yes, and I do believe you'll find it amazing."

Gabriella didn't remember what time she fell asleep or when they arrived in Iraq, but she smiled so ly as she remembered Druig talking with her until she had passed out. Stepping out of the plane a er what felt like a life time, Gabriella li s a hand to cover her eyes as sweat drips slowly down her forehead.

"It's so hot," Gabriella whines so ly as Druig turns to her, looking over his sunnies as his hands are tucked into his leather jacket, a small chuckle leaving his lips, "why is it, so hot?"

"Iraq is around forty percent desert, it comes with the terrain," Druig replies pushing his glasses up as Gabriella frowns, "would you like me to fan you?"

"Fan me?" Gabriella laughs out shaking her head as he smiles before o ering her his arm, "let's just go."

Noticing the rest of the group waiting for them to catch up, Gabriella takes Druig's arm before pulling him quickly towards the others. Standing at the back, Sprite uses her power to hide the group while Druig uses his own to disperse the archeologists who were working on the dig sites. As Gabriella looks around while the group move further into the area, Sprite drops the invisibility hiding everyone.

As Phastos pushes his way to the front, he finally stops before pulling out his device. With a wave of his fingers, his eyes linger up as the ground begins to shake. Watching the dirt a couple of meters in front of them start to sink, a dark green surface engraved with gold emerges. Pushing away from Druig slowly, Gabriella steps forward in awe as she notices Karun do the same.

"It's incredible," Gabriella mutters out as Karun nods quickly, watching him pull up his camera in amazement.

With the wind blowing the sand up in swirls as the domo raises into the sky, Gabriella shields her eyes once more turning as Druig pulls her back to him. Letting him put his hand in front of her eyes, Gabriella smiles shyly as he smiles back.

"Are you ready?"

"Ready for what?" Gabriella questions as Druig chuckles, his hand moving to place hair from her face behind her ear.

"To see where it all began."

Watching Druig place his hand before her, her smile widens as she takes it gently making him chuckle. Following the group into the domo, Gabriella can't focus on anything as her eyes try to take in everything around her. As Druig pulls her along the dark hallway, Gabriella looks past him suddenly as she notices the hallway begin to fill with artefacts.

Making sure not to stand on anything, Gabriella's eyes widen as the group enters a large room filled with everything from books to large statues. Feeling her eyes glance around with excitement, Gabriella focuses on a woman who was speedily flipping through a book upon a throne. Watching her look towards the group, her eyes light up as she places the book down and waves happily.

Turning to see Druig smiling, Gabriella looks back as the girl hops o the throne before moving towards them. Watching her eyes stop on her, Gabriella freezes as the girl leans towards her with a gentle smile.

"Who's this?" The girl signs as the others turn to Gabriella before looking back at the girl, Kingo moving forward first, 'she's cute.'

"Makkari! I missed you, this is Gabriella," Kingo replies out loud pulling her into a hug while signing as she smiles looking from him to Gabriella, "and she's Druig's girlfriend."

'Druig's girlfriend?' Makkari signs back her eyebrow raising as she looks at Druig, her grin widening as she moves towards him as he swats her away, 'definitely cute.'

Following her move to greet the rest of the group, Gabriella finds herself looking around the room. Slowly walking around and gently tracing objects with her fingers, Gabriella looks up as Phastos whines.

"Such a mess," Phastos comments moving around slowly before looking towards the group, "but, we need to get to business. Time fleeting and all."

Watching everyone nod, Gabriella looks over to Ikaris who had quietly kept to the wall as everyone was happy to be back. Frowning slightly as Gabriella turns back to see the others all get comfortable, she smiles as Druig beckons her to him. Moving to stand with him quietly, she stands close as the others begin to discuss everything.

Focusing on Phastos as the rest of the group circle around him, finding spots to get comfortable. Gabriella frowns as she glances around at everyone, her eyes once again lingering on Ikaris. Looking suddenly as Phastos coughs to get everyone's attention, Gabriella half smiles as he rubs his hands together.

"Shall we?"

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