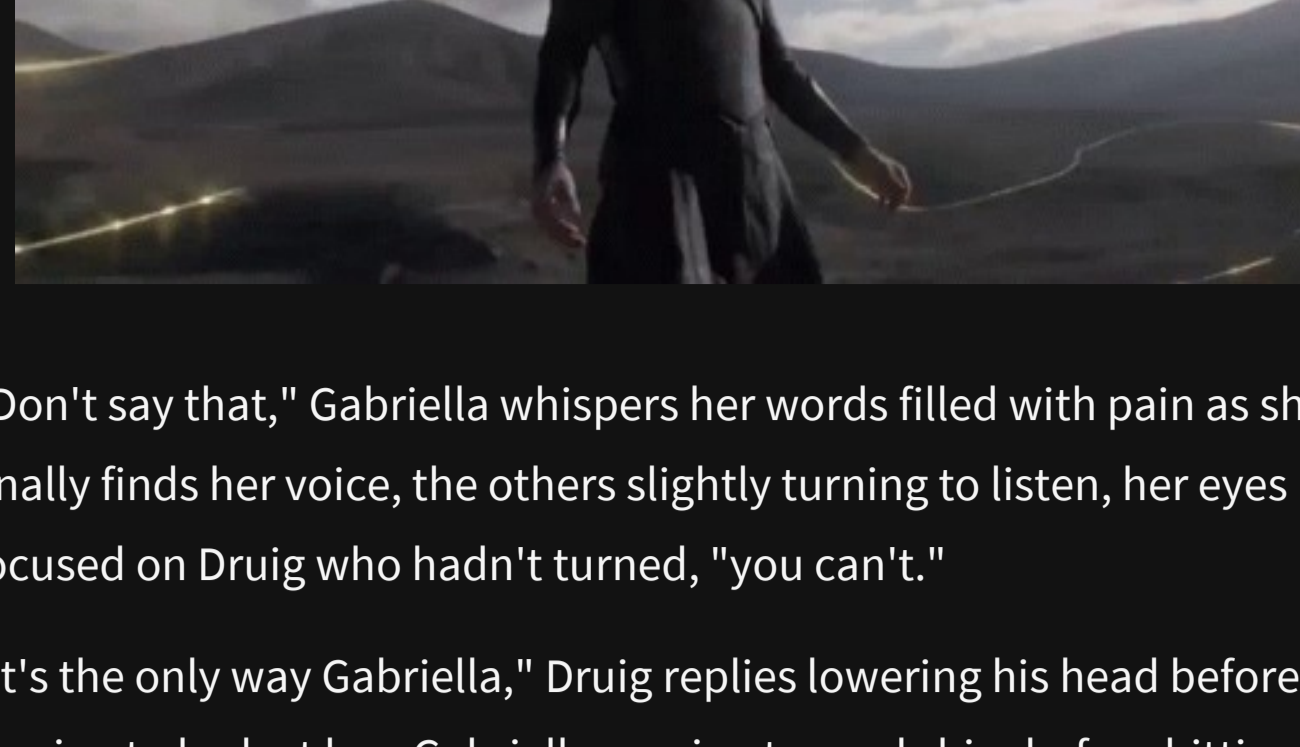


## POWER



"Don't say that," Gabriella whispers her words filled with pain as she finally finds her voice, the others slightly turning to listen, her eyes focused on Druig who hadn't turned, "you can't."

"It's the only way Gabriella," Druig replies lowering his head before turning to look at her, Gabriella moving towards him before hitting him with her fists, "we have to do everything in our power, to stop the emergence. Whatever it takes."

"It's just not fair."

Placing her head against his chest, Gabriella closes her eyes tightly as he rubs her back gently. With everything happening so quickly, she could feel herself running out of time with him and it was killing her. Lifting her head, Gabriella looks up at him as Druig places a hand against her cheek before placing a soft kiss on her forehead.

"Okay, sorry to burst this really sweet moment," Phastos comments moving slightly towards the middle, Sersi nervously rubbing her hands together as Makkari stands beside her for comfort, "but, we need to start from scratch and that means take time we don't have."

"We must have something to speed up the process?" Makkari signs as Phastos looks to her before lingering over Sersi who was still trying to process Ikaris's betrayal. With a moments pause, Phastos suddenly claps making everyone jump as he points to Makkari.

"You're a genius!" Phastos exclaims excitedly as he signs, Makkari replying with a simple nod of approval, "Sersi, I think you have just what we need."

"What do you mean?"

"Ajak's orb, the cosmic energy used to communicate to Arishem, it would be perfect to enhance the Unimind," Phastos responds stepping towards Sersi as she furrows her eyebrows, "using it to create the bond between us, could give us the fighting chance to need."

Watching Sersi glance down, Gabriella pulls herself from Druig to settle herself against the table as she frowns.

"Can you take it out?" Sersi questions as Phastos tenses his jaw before nodding, Makkari and Thena more intrigued now as they step forward to see.

"Just stand still, it shouldn't hurt."

Pushing on the table, Gabriella watches quietly as Phastos moves his hands slowly to pull out the orb from Sersi's chest. With thin gold lines of cosmic energy expanding between his fingers, Gabriella can't help but to step closer as the orb is gently pulled from Sersi's chest.

"This will be perfect," Phastos comments hovering the orb as he turns before pulling it apart and expanding it, "let's make the bracelets and go, Ikaris and Sprite will most likely be waiting for us."

Following the others into another room, Gabriella can't help but marvel at the giant gold statue as it stood tall in the middle. Watching as each Eternal make their way to sections on the wall, Gabriella can only stand quietly against the doorframe as her eyes widen with amazement. Beautiful and intricate suits of different colours materialised around each Eternal, each one detailed to represent each individual with the bracelets tightened on their wrists. Gabriella's eyes focused on Druig as he moved away from the wall and towards her, his suit fitting him perfectly with a design of dark red marking it.

"What do you think?" Druig questions noticing Gabriella hadn't taken her eyes off him as he continued to make his way towards her, "it's okay, you can tell me how handsome I look."

"I don't have to tell you, what you already know," Gabriella replies so lightly looking at him more closely as he stops before her with a gentle smile.

"Oh, but I do love hearing you say it," he whispers while tracing her jaw with his finger, "besides, you're right."

Playfully hitting him as he chuckles, Gabriella looks past him to see the others fiddling with the bracelets before moving close to go over their plan once more. Watching Phastos and Thena talking amongst themselves, Gabriella half smiles as Makkari makes her way to her.

"Druig, it's time," Makkari signs as Druig frowns looking at her before nodding slowly turning to Gabriella, Makkari also turning to pull her into a quick hug.

"It's time, Gabriella."

Pulling away from Makkari, Gabriella finds her jaw tense as Druig pulls her into a firm hug. Wrapping her arms tightly around him, Gabriella pushes her face deep into the crook of his neck as he softly pats her head.

"Don't worry, Phastos and Thena will stay on the Domo. Make sure to hide as Ikaris will be drawn here to take care of Thena first," Druig exclaims as he pulls her away to look at her properly, her eyes prickling with tears, "you'll be fine."

"It's not me, I'm worried about," Gabriella states firmly hitting him against the chest as she smiles so lightly, "don't you die. If you die, I'll never forgive you."

"I promise, my love."

Placing his hands gently on each side of her face, Druig pulls her towards him as he places his lips on hers. The kiss is deep and warm as she moves her arms around his neck to pull him closer, her chest aching with each second they were together. Feeling him pull away, Gabriella whines softly as Druig gently wipes the tears from her cheeks with his thumbs.

"Now, you better stay safe up here okay?" Druig comments as Gabriella lets out a soft cry, his face slightly turning in hopes the others were listening, "you hear that, Phastos, Thena, if anything happens to her."

"Yes, we get it, you'll kill us," Phastos replies moving around them to look out the window, "we are here. Make your way to the beach, prepare for anything."

Watching Makkari and Sersi make their way towards the hallway, they each gently squeeze Gabriella's shoulder as they pass. Trying to smile, Gabriella nods gently as she turns back to see Druig looking at her, his eyes distant as she pokes his cheek.

"I look forward to hearing the wonderful tale," Gabriella whispers as she leans up to kiss him gently against the cheek, "of the day the eternals, once again, saved mankind."

"And I look forward to telling you."

With one final kiss, Druig slowly moves away from Gabriella before making his way to follow Sersi and Makkari through the hallway. Rushing towards the window, Gabriella watches quietly as she begins to bite her nails. Noticing the volcano bubbling in the distance, Gabriella jumps as she feels a hand reach for her shoulder before spinning her gently. Looking through blurred vision, Gabriella frowns as Phastos begins to pull her away from the window.

"Gabriella, we need to get you someone where safe. Ikaris could arrive any second," Phastos mutters out, tightening his grip as she looks from him to the window, "it's best you hide, now."

Nodding quickly, Gabriella moves her way back into the laboratory as she quickly looks around for some place to hide. Pulling herself behind a table and crouching down, Gabriella finds her breath catch as she watches Phastos run into the room.

"Gabriella? Where are you?" Phastos questions spinning on his heels as Gabriella gently stands to wave him over, his hands reaching for her as she runs to him, "I'm sorry, he's here."

"Thena?"

"She's distracting him," Phastos replies as he takes her hand and makes a way to the window, urging her to look, "look, it's about to start."

Following Phastos's eyes, Gabriella looks out the window to see Sersi, Druig and Makkari standing on their edge of the island. Placing her hands against the glass, Gabriella feels her chest tighten as she watches the three of them lift into the air. Watching the cosmic energy transfer to Druig, Gabriella glances sideways as she feels Phastos lift into the air beside her.

"Phastos?" Gabriella questions as she watches his eyes grow distant and his hands raise slightly at his side.

"Everything's okay, just keep watching."

Turning slowly back towards the window, Gabriella gasps softly as an energy shield forms around the others on the island. Placing a hand on the glass again, Gabriella smiles nervously as she watches the volcano slowly quiet down. Looking back to Phastos with her grin growing at the fact their plan was working, Gabriella's eyes dart back to window as a loud echo of wind vibrates the glass. Pressing herself closer as her fingers tapping desperately against the glass, Gabriella lets out a spine-chilling scream. Watching Ikaris knock Druig to the ground, Gabriella glances to Phastos as he is now against the wall with the cosmic energy disappearing.

Feeling her vision blur as the tears fall, Gabriella gasps with little breath as she watches Ikaris lift Druig up by the throat before throwing and blasting him against the ground. Moving across the window as Gabriella tries to see if Druig had risen from where he landed, her body moves back slightly. Watching Ikaris rise and face the domo, Gabriella turns to Phastos as she notices him also looking out the window. Stepping towards him with her mind blank, Gabriella allows for Phastos to grab her and pull her into a protective hug before moving. Gasping as a cosmic beam shoots through the window shattering everything in its path, Phastos covers Gabriella from the blast.

"Gabriella, we need to move," Phastos yells through the explosion, pulling at Gabriella as they stumble towards the door. "we need to fin-

"Thena!"

"We need to find a spot, where the impact isn't going to kill us," Thena replies placing a gentle hand on Gabriella's shoulder before turning and looking for an area for them to brace the impact into the island.

Allowing Phastos and Thena pull her into a corner, Gabriella winces as they place her into a protective embrace. Shaking with them as the domo crashes into the ground, Gabriella feels her body launch slightly against Phastos. Feeling her head crack against the wall, Gabriella drops suddenly with the impact as her vision is now mixed with tears and dizziness. Trying to pull herself up, Gabriella stumbles up slowly as Thena helps lift her to her feet as she feels herself lurch with the pain. With the throbbing from her head, Gabriella places a hand to her forehead before wincing and pulling it away to see her fingers darkened with blood.

"Ouch, this sucks," Gabriella whispers as she looks at Phastos place a hand against her face to move it towards him, her vision still fuzzy, "is it bad?"

"No, no it's okay," Phastos replies gently as he smiles before looking towards the door as Makkari speeds towards them.

"Are you okay? Gabriella, your head!" Makkari signs moving towards Gabriella with a gentle hand before turning to Phastos.

"She's okay, it doesn't look serious," Phastos responds for Gabriella as she looks from him to Makkari, "but right now, we need to get out there to help."

Nodding quickly with a sorry smile at Gabriella, Makkari dashes Phastos and Thena out onto the beach before coming back for Gabriella. Reaching for her gently, Makkari waits for Gabriella to ready herself before dashing her out onto the beach. Stumbling slightly in the sand as she finds her footing, Gabriella looks around quickly to see if Druig had appeared. Rubbing her hand against her cheeks, Gabriella drops slowly before looking past the group to see Ikaris land against the sand.

"Druig's gone."

Grabbing at her chest as her tears start to fall again, Gabriella feels her chest ache before watching Makkari runs at Ikaris. Watching her crash him against the rocks, Gabriella's eyes move to the volcano as rocks explode from the top. Feeling herself drop further into the sand, Gabriella no longer wanted to fight as she realised Druig was gone. Looking up slowly as the rocks make their way towards the beach, Gabriella closes her eyes waiting for one to hit her. Waiting for the impact, Gabriella's eyes flutter open as she sees Thena standing before her. Watching Thena turn towards her, Gabriella frowns slightly before following her to pull herself up onto her feet.

"You can't stay here, move to the edge of the water," Thena exclaims loudly through the crashing of rocks around them, Gabriella feeling her body not wanting to move, "please Gabriella, I won't be able to protect you. You need to keep, you need to focus."

Looking at Thena as she places her hands against her face, Gabriella nods slowly before looking towards the water. Feeling Thena pull away to rush to find Ikaris, Gabriella finds herself stumbling before dropping and wincing at the cold water rushing over her legs. Looking up from the sand towards the volcano, Gabriella feels her heat breaking as she can only think of Druig and how much pain she was feeling.

Looking from the volcano, Gabriella feels her eyes widen as she notices a deviant emerge from the ocean. Pulling herself closer to the sand, Gabriella feels her jaw tense as it makes its way towards the others.