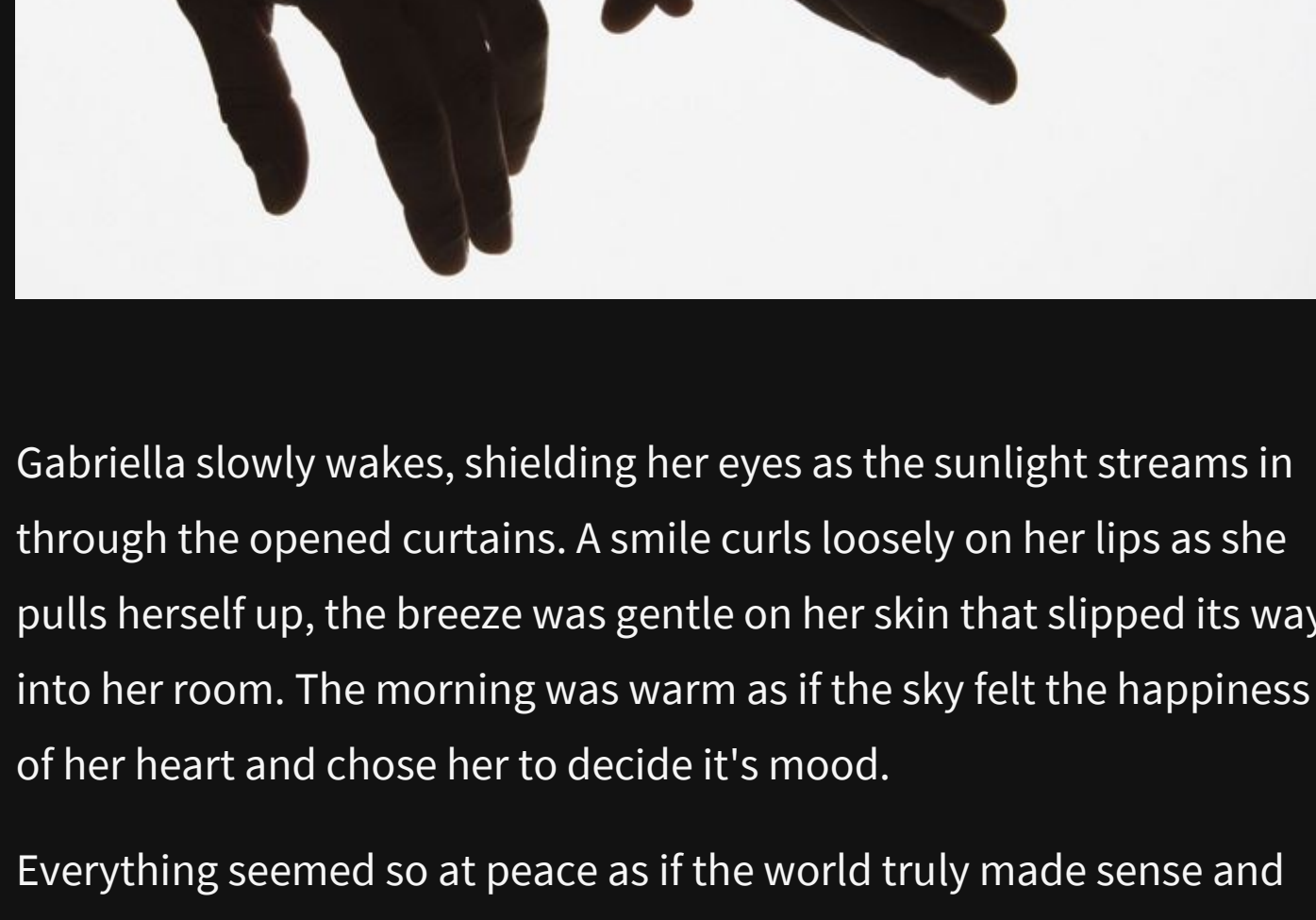


FEELINGS



Gabriella slowly wakes, shielding her eyes as the sunlight streams in through the opened curtains. A smile curls loosely on her lips as she pulls herself up, the breeze was gentle on her skin that slipped its way into her room. The morning was warm as if the sky felt the happiness of her heart and chose her to decide it's mood.

Everything seemed so at peace as if the world truly made sense and she could only giggle at the thought of him. Removing the tangled sheets from around her, Gabriella stretches slowly before moving to get ready for the day.

It was a chilly morning as she made her way into the clearing, Reaching her arms above her head warming up her muscles, Gabriella smiles as she notices Druig listening to some of the woman chatting away much to loudly. Stopping to watch for a moment, Gabriella shakes her head in amusement as Druig looks up and notices her. As he was aware of her now, he smiles warmly before walking around and behind the woman, mimicking their gestures innocently.

Druig was kind and the people loved him for it. He always made sure to keep everyone safe, everyone happy. But one when he wasn't looking, Gabriella could see that at times he felt overwhelmed by it, though he hid it well.

Shaking her head with a laugh, Gabriella made her way to him as he straightened himself and shortened the distance between them. With a small gesture to the woman, they bowed briskly before whispering of the pair before them and returning to their chores.

The others in the compound were aware of something forming between the two, yet no one made any comment. This gesture was more to satisfy Druig's longing to seem stern and in control. Despite what you might say looking upon the community he had built, he cared a lot about his people and they respected him for it.

Druig was one treated much like what you think a 'god' would be treated like amongst humans. It was more due to his followers wanting to treat him as such and although Druig was of a higher purpose it was true, he was sure to keep his rule gracious, but he never thought himself a true god.

"You're late," Druig comments teasingly bumping his shoulder against Gabriella's as she returns a small bump.

"I'm not late," she replies grinning before facing him properly, "we had no set time for training."

"Did I not mention-"

"No you didn't," Gabriella cuts him off holding her grin before stepping back not taking her eyes off Druig, "shall we?"

The corners of his mouth curved upwards in amusement as he simply nodded and moved to follow her. Watching her closely, Druig felt himself swept away in her aura as they walked to the training arena. The arena had been a place they often visited together, which proved true as little snow was seen.

As Gabriella sped ahead to reach the arena, she turned happily to see Druig following quietly. Watching her tie her hair quickly in ponytail, Druig felt himself entranced. It was becoming more clear to him that he held her above all else, that she had become his sole true reason to want to stay on Earth.

'Stay on Earth?' Druig thought over this for a while as he entered the arena. It wasn't one that Druig thought about the future, about when it would be time for the Eternals to one day return to Olympia. Since finding his place on Earth and finding Gabriella, it was apparent that it had become a small thought that crept in and out of his mind when mediating.

"Druig?"

"Sorry," Druig responds quickly as he shakes his thoughts, "I was lost in my thoughts."

"Anything good? You were quiet for some time," Gabriella teases as she moves herself to the weapon stand.

Fiddling with each weapon, holding each one at eye level so she could study the one she wished to use, Gabriella smiles as she feels Druig remove the distance between them.

"I was thinking of you."

"Of me?" she remarks brightly hiding the shyness in her voice, "I hope only good things."

"It's always good things," Druig comments calmly as he moves beside her before reaching for two martial art sticks and offering Gabriella one, "let's see how much you remember from last time."

Taking the stick from Druig, Gabriella grins before making her way to the middle of the arena.

"Fighting stance," he instructed as he removed his coat to reveal his sleeveless shirt, placing it over the weapon stand.

Watching Druig loosen his muscles and make his way opposite her in the middle, Gabriella can't help but to fixate on how muscular he really was. Although this was the normal for their training, it was one of the first times that she really looked.

Twirling the martial stick between both hands, Gabriella regains her concentration as Druig places his stick in front of him.

"Now focus," Druig announces as he pulls up his martial stick into a position of defence, "Don't overuse the stick, you need to focus on your opponent and showing off will only allow for mistakes."

"Understood."

As Druig stood his ground sternly Gabriella moved her way forward, keeping her eyes locked with his as she held the stick tightly. As she closes the distance between them, Gabriella raises the stick to strike.

As Gabriella elongates the stick to take a swing at Druig's side, she is met frustratingly with his own stick moving quickly to block her hit.

"Again."

Exhaling quickly, Gabriella steps back to steady herself before launching for Druig once more. The stick cracks once more against his stick, Druig pushing her back this time and returning another hit shortly after.

"Again."

Feeling displeased, Gabriella steps back to reevaluate.

Flipping the stick from one hand to the other while sidestepping slowly, Gabriella carefully watches as Druig shows little hesitation to what she was doing. Pushing forward once again, Gabriella launches the stick to which she meets Druig's once again.

With giving no time for Druig to comment, Gabriella lifts the stick to spin above her before launching again. Druig's stick cracks loudly against hers as she removes the stick to attack again, giving him a shorter time to react.

"Better Gabriella."

This time Druig reacts first as Gabriella finds her footing, his body twisting as he moves to strike from a different angle. Reaching the stick beside her in attempt to block him, Gabriella is pushed back from the sudden force. Feeling her footing slip, Druig launches again and hits once more with a short but fierce attack.

"No fair," Gabriella whines as she pushes back with her stick, "you're using your immortal strength."

"Deviants will not care for how little your human strength helps," Druig says ducking and spinning to move behind her, "you need to focus on getting strong, as strong as the deviants you might face."

Lifting her stick just in time Gabriella finds herself face to face with Druig, his strength pushing her down as she struggles.

"What use is training when I have no true weapon to attack with," she groans out as she drops quickly to escape his attack, "a stick won't help me fight them."

"You will eventually," Druig responds turning to see her attempting to catch him unguarded, "you must work up your strength."

Finding himself catching her stick with his open hand, Druig spins his stick effortlessly in the other as he uses his foot to unbalance her. Just as he does, Gabriella pulls her stick inwards to distract Druig before spinning herself to his back and pushing him towards the ground.

Feeling the stick drop, Gabriella uses all her strength to grab a hold of Druig's stick before pulling it back to trap him against her chest. It would only be a second before he could overpower her, so quickly she moves to kick his feet from under him leaving her forward.

As Druig falls forward for only a second Gabriella almost feels excited but is met with Druig spinning back behind her, turning and grabbing her in a small body lock. Tightening his arms around her, Gabriella lets out a short gasp before feeling herself being thrown forwards.

"You cannot expect to win in a hand to hand battle," Druig says moving around to keep his hold on her, Gabriella slumping slightly, "you must use your wit or you will surely die."

"Got it," Gabriella coughs out, trying to regain her breath.

Druig pulls her up before pushing her away to ready himself once more. Looking at her, you could see that Gabriella was almost spent for the day but he knew he had to push her.

And so did she.

Placing his hands before him in a fighting stance, his foot going behind his back for leverage, Druig beckons Gabriella forward.

"Don't give up."

Gabriella could feel her body aching for her to stop, but she knew that if she didn't continue training, she would be no help to Druig. Gritting her teeth to bare the pain, she launches herself forward with one thing in mind.

Distract.

As she closes the space between Druig and herself, Gabriella crouches quickly to pick up some sand before returning to her target. Sidestepping to keep her distance, Gabriella throws the sand she had retrieved and pushed her way closer.

The sand distributed perfectly as the wind was flowing in Druig's direction slightly. Watching him grumble in annoyance, Gabriella found it the perfect chance to attack and so she did. Reaching Druig as he rubbed his eyes, Gabriella gives a quick uppercut to his chin resulting in him falling backwards with little force. Not allowing him a chance to regain his stance, Gabriella picks up the stick closest to her before launching it at Druig's face only stopping short of his nose.

"Mighty Druig," Gabriella says between short breaths as she tries to calm her breathing, "I think it would be good to end our training there, don't you agree?"

"You cheated."

"Cheated?" Gabriella mutters out with a short laugh and turning the stick so it sat so lightly between her neck and shoulder, "I didn't cheat, I merely... used my wit."

"Indeed, you did," Druig comments with a chuckle.

Druig slowly sat himself up with a small smile before noticing Gabriella had reached out a hand to him. Looking up, he noticed how happy she was at herself and it almost felt hard not to let her have this win. Allowing her to help him to his feet, Druig dusted himself off gently before returning his gaze to her.

"You did well today Gabriella," he comments so lightly as Gabriella grins happily.

"I have a brilliant teacher."

With another small chuckle, Druig finds himself ruffling Gabriella's hair. Watching her respond awkwardly, Druig bends down to retrieve the sticks from the ground before walking over to put them away and reach for his coat. Tightening the straps, Druig makes his way towards her to take her hands.

"I want to show you something," he whispers as Gabriella tilts her head curiously, "meet me after dinner, by the gate."

Automatically nodding, Gabriella watches as Druig bows gently before kissing her hands and letting them go. Feeling her body go numb, Druig mentions he must go and inquires that Gabriella returns quickly. Watching him turn and walk towards the clearing, Gabriella can't help but smile as she feels her chest tighten with anticipation.

Gabriella could feel her face growing hot as she thought about tonight, dusting herself off and patting her hair down quickly, she made her way back.

As Druig returned to the clearing, more people were about and with great praise they welcomed him humbly. Bowing in response, Druig made his way to mediate as he wanted to prepare himself for tonight. There wasn't many spots that Druig had learned as more and more people travelled, but he was lucky to have one place safe from the view of the humans and he was ready to share it.

Sitting down and breathing in a deep breath, Druig closed his eyes to mediate and to once again think of her. A smile playing on his lips as his mind flickers to her thoughts as she thinks of all the possibilities of tonight, some thoughts more devilish than the rest.