

Lesser Gods Chapter 11

By

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SCENE 1

RHEA (NAR.)

There's a moment I always conjure up when I need to feel close to Eros. When I'm upset with him or he's doing something I don't understand.

We were 18, still mostly drinking. Not doing anything that much harder. We were at this party, celebrating the birthday of Hera and Apollo and that whole gen. It would have been a stuffy, unfun affair but it was the first time in years Hera seemed to be in a good mood. Her and Apollo were basically the stars of the show... Until me and Eros got champagne drunk. I think we danced for a solid four and half hours. Not obnoxiously, just... merrily.

Everyone faded away... and then they literally went away. Hera came over to me, asked if she and Apollo could get out of there. Alone at least (except some guards waiting by a vehicle outside), I pulled Eros down onto the dance floor. Both of us laughing too hard at how difficult it was to undo his bowtie. We were both grinning so widely we couldn't keep kissing...

Eyes glossy from the booze or tears of laughter he asked me if I knew he *loved* me.

My smile faltered and he knew how I felt. Which wasn't bad... it was just that... I didn't believe him. Love just implied... commitments and scheduled appearances and some kind of Eros/ Rhea hybrid nickname and making copping even more radically uncomfortable... It basically implied everything but just a feeling. He didn't speak to me for the rest of the night. The next morning in The Yolk I tried to talk to him.

"Are you mad at me?" I ask. And he glared at me "No. I love you." He responded. I think about this a lot because it reminds me I don't always know what he's thinking... And right now, in the cell, I definitely don't know what he's thinking. He's staring at me so intently, I worry if I get any closer he'll implode. I risk it, taking one step and then-

SOUND: SLAP. SLAP. SLAP.

RHEA (NAR.)

Eros starts slapping himself in the face. Hard. Over and over. Once the shock wears off I run to him-

RHEA

Stop. Stop.

RHEA (NAR.)

I grab his hands.

I hear Clark just behind me.

RHEA
What the fuck are you doing?

EROS
They told me you were dead.

RHEA
I'm not.

EROS
They told me I killed her.

RHEA
You didn't. You did not.

RHEA (NAR.)
His warm eyes stare intensely back at me from two deep sockets. I pull him to me, he smells like old sweat. I run my hand down his back. He shudders and it occurs to me this is the first time in years and years he hasn't had access to any drugs or alcohol. Interrogation plus withdrawl... he's stronger than I would have thought. He takes a big step back from me.

CLARK
I'm Clark.

EROS
You're shorter than I would have thought.

CLARK
... Thank you?

RHEA
So, we-

EROS
I need to lie down.

RHEA
Oh. Okay.

RHEA (NAR.)
He slumps down on the room's only bench. I sit on the ground close to him.

EROS
Rhea, please get away from me.

RHEA (NAR.)
I'm so embarrassed I don't have anything to say... Guess he doesn't need a wall like Clark.
The metal door CLANGS open. Char stampedes in, picks me up in a bear hug.

CHAR
Thank fucking god.

RHEA (NAR.)
I hug him tightly.

PERS
Where the hell have you been?

RHEA (NAR.)
And just behind him is Persephone. Small and angry. Just like always.

RHEA
Hello you tiny, tiny monster.

RHEA (NAR.)
And I approach her too, but she holds up a hand.

PERS
Don't fucking touch me.

RHEA
Pers-

PERS
Do you have ANY idea what the rest of us have been through while you've been on your little vacation?

RHEA (NAR.)
All the spiteful comments, the harsh criticisms I've gotten from her over the years... I've never seen her this... hurt.

RHEA
I came back though.

RHEA (NAR.)
Persephone struts over to the door, leans into a sliver of a window.

PERS
You hear that everyone? Life can get back to normal! Rhea is here!

CHAR
Persephone.

PERS
You do NOT get to talk to me, Charon.

CLARK
Why?

RHEA (NAR.)
Everyone spins to look at Clark.

EROS
He's shorter, right?

RHEA (NAR.)
Eros mumbles from the bench. Charon sticks out a thick hand, Clark shakes it. Then he turns to Eros.

CHAR
How're you doing man?

RHEA (NAR.)
But Eros doesn't respond.

PERS
Well he looks just wonderful. Way to go, Rhea.

RHEA
Persephone, I'm sorry about Dion.

RHEA (NAR.)
My eyes slide to Char, shifting uncomfortably in the corner.

PERS
Is it true? Were you actually having a sleepover with those murderers? And I know about Char.

RHEA (NAR.)
The last part is an afterthought, a glimmer of the Persephone who never wanted to be taught anything.

EROS
Know what?

RHEA (NAR.)
Eros is sitting up now.

PERS
That Char was working with The Void.

EROS
Are you kidding me?

CHAR
It's kind of a long story.

RHEA (NAR.)
Char mumbles. Eros stands.

EROS
I never did anything wrong but I'm the one who's been being...

RHEA (NAR.)

He searches for the word, but can't find it. In frustration he kicks over the bench. His eyes are full of rage and tears.

EROS

And you have all been running around ACTUALLY doing bad things?

RHEA

Eros-

EROS

Are we even Rhea? Am I properly punished?

RHEA

Eros, please that has nothing to do with-

RHEA (NAR.)

But he doesn't want to listen to me.

EROS

What are you all even doing here?!

CLARK

I was actually wondering the same thing.

RHEA

I... think they're worried we've been behaving irresponsibly.

RHEA (NAR.)

Persephone's mouth breaks into something between a cackle and a snarl.

PERS

We? Who the fuck is we?! You're the one who ran away. Taking him. God, if you knew how much time I spent with Hera trying to find you-

RHEA

You did?

RHEA (NAR.)

I can't imagine Persephone working with anyone. Let alone my sister.

PERS

Relax, it wasn't about you. I just want to prove Black killed Iris.

RHEA

What?

PERS

That's what the Void was blackmailing her for.

RHEA

No... it isn't Pers.

PERS

What then?

RHEA (NAR.)

Persephone spits. Clark shoot me a nervous look.

RHEA

She... uhm Hera was never pregnant.

RHEA (NAR.)

Everyone falls into a thick silence.

RHEA

I came back because the Void told me I would be helping take down Black. But... Their leader was working with Orsino. It was a trap. At some kind of... church?

RHEA (NAR.)

Persephone's eyes light up.

PERS

Did you see Hera? Or Apollo?

RHEA (NAR.)

And in a rush, I remember the figure I saw in the shadows.

RHEA

I think I saw someone.

CLARK

You did?! Why didn't they help us?

PERS

Well, that's how you know it wasn't Hera.

SCENE 2

HERA (NAR.)

Still asleep, Apollo rolls onto his side, throws his arm over me. His breath, his skin, the color of the hair dusting his chin... He's warm. I'm not. I'm boiling. I flick the sheets off my legs for the hundredth time since I got in just a few hours ago. I would have bet my life she'd be there. I spent an extra four hours just sitting there, not necessarily afraid to miss her, just not being able to imagine she wouldn't appear. By the time I got in, the sun was appearing on the horizon and Apollo was already in bed. Which explains why my four calls and four hundred minutes of crazy voice messages went unanswered.

He must not have seen her either. He would have waited up to tell me if he saw her. Or the Void. How could he not have?

APOLLO
Hey.

HERA (NAR.)
He mumbles.

HERA
Did you see her?

HERA (NAR.)
He shakes his head.

APOLLO
No one showed up.

HERA (NAR.)
He runs his thumb over my cheek.

APOLLO
I was worried about you.

HERA (NAR.)
I sit up, throw my legs over the edge and onto the floor and start making the bed with Apollo still in it.

APOLLO
What are you doing?

HERA
Anything. I can't just lie here. I can't just-

APOLLO
Hey. Hey.

HERA (NAR.)
He's across the room to me in a second. He places his hands on my arms.

APOLLO
It's fine. You're fine.

HERA

I don't really give a damn about me right now. If we didn't find her that means they might have. They could be questioning her. Trying to prove SHE had something to do with this-

HERA (NAR.)

His hands drop to his sides. He sighs.

APOLLO

Are we positive she didn't?

HERA

What?

APOLLO

If we know it wasn't Eros and it wasn't you...

HERA

Apollo.

APOLLO

I don't know what Black's big secret is but... I don't think she killed Iris. If Rhea ran away... If she's working with the Void, who we KNOW killed Dion-

HERA

What are you saying?

APOLLO

I'm just trying to think rationally. Black isn't the best, but she's never done anything like this. She's only ever been honest with you and I.

HERA

That we know of.

APOLLO

Do you hear yourself? You sound-

HERA

Crazy?

APOLLO

Don't make me that person. I am trying to help you.
Maybe you should lie down.

HERA

Oh my god-

APOLLO

Fine. Fine. Let me just make coffee and we'll... we'll come up with a new plan.

HERA (NAR.)

I shrug and he leaves. It's possible the Void backed out of their meeting because of their attack on Dion. That could make sense, Rhea's clues were written before any of this started. Maybe I can talk to Eros again? I definitely need to talk to Char again. How much time do I have until they take me in? No one has questioned me in nearly a week. I should check Persephone's blog. See if she's posted anything- she obviously not actually being her- that could help me take the temperature of the investigation. Where is my device? Fuck it. I grab Apollo's. It's locked. The number code is his birthday. Or my birthday. They're the same. I'm allowed access and am greeted to an alert. Voice mail 100% full. Full of me, Freaking out. I don't need him to think I'm any more hysterical. I open his mailbox and begin erasing my messages-

SOUND: SILENCE

HERA (NAR.)

My brain takes a long moment to make sense of what my eyes are seeing. Because it doesn't... make sense. I press play and listen to a voice I never thought I'd hear again.

SOUND: IRIS VOICEMAIL

IRIS

After tonight it's all going to be better. People like you because you are good. I just have to get through seeing Eros...

(LIGHT LAUGH)

Can't wait for that. And then we'll figure this out. Things with Hera are going to be better. So much better when this is all over.

HERA (NAR.)

Iris wasn't trying to soothe the relationship between she and I... It was me and Apollo. He was meeting her the night he was-

SOUND: GASP

HERA (NAR.)

My arm stings as I'm injected with- what is-

APOLLO

Shh shh shh...

HERA (NAR.)

I spin to see him, just a few inches from my face. He grips me and pushes me backwards toward the bed. I think that's- everything is spinning.

HERA

Apollo what-

APOLLO

Just something to help you sleep.

HERA

Why? Why?

APOLLO

You'll feel better after you lie down.

HERA

You killed-

APOLLO

Don't ever say that.

HERA (NAR.)

And he pushes me onto the mattress, hard. As my vision starts to blacken I reach a hand out to strike him, push him, get him away from me- but instead he grabs my weak arm. Kisses my hand.

SCENE 3

APOLLO (NAR.)

I love women. I know, maybe you might not think that after... But look... I spend most of my day following the orders of one. And the rest of my day... trying to prove how much I love Hera.

These last few days have been... incredible. I know she's been in a difficult place with Rhea missing... She's been distracted to say the least. But even a fraction of her attention... Having her smile, her eyes on me, her lips... has been perfect. She's just so intelligent and so so so much more clever than you'd think she'd be. Or even she needs to be. And in our few years apart she's become so self confident. There's a self reliance that wasn't there before. It's great.

When we were kids she was shy. Awkward, despite clearly being someone who would grow up to be gorgeous. She's always been tall. I remember, being 13 and thinking "I hope I catch up. Maybe even be taller." Thank god THAT worked out.

You should have seen me the first time I kissed her. All nerves. We were only 15, still a year away from being officially marked viable. I'd asked her to dance at this gala and she actually said "No." I was so embarrassed, I ran out of the party. She came after me and apologized. And I just... went for it. And she kissed me back. See, I knew she liked me. From then on, I was hooked. But she refused to let me publicly date her for five years, even with how close we became and the copping. At the time, those years were so stressful, but in retrospect... they were pretty fun. She'd pay too much attention to some other Unit, I'd get hurt and angry... She'd spend days (sometimes nights) making it up to me.

No matter what she said, she'd always end up proving how much she loved me.

I know what you want to hear about. The affair. I'm not proud of that version of myself. But you have to understand, Hera might have been the one having the semi-public meltdown but I was hurting too. At the time, I thought it was real.

Ask anyone- even Rhea will tell you I was devoted to helping Hera get better. I barely left her side for two years but... when I did... I realized how devastated I was. What a toll the whole thing was taking on me. One day, after a meeting, Iris asked me how I was doing and I just broke down.

Iris. So beautiful. So, so flawed. her anxiety was crippling. But that just made her more empathetic.

The first time we met- after her chaperone had gone to sleep and Eros had run out to meet Rhea somewhere... She came over and we just... talked. For a long time. I really opened up about how hard Hera's breakdown had been on me. She was glad to have someone confide in her, to feel close to someone. I'd never felt anyone so grateful when I kissed them. It wasn't supposed to happen again but... Once she had experienced being close to me, she had trouble distancing herself. And she was so beautiful and so fragile, I couldn't say no. Maybe I was more fragile than I realized...

After Hera found out I thought the affair was over for good. I wasn't expecting Black to put so many resources into Iris. In that case, it only made sense that I'd spend extra time with her. I love Eros, he's a nice kid, but he's a wreck. And look, yeah me and Hera's conception may have been fake- but I'm 32 and still viable. That's rare! There's something about me people like. I figured, it couldn't hurt to try with me. She was understandably hesitant... But we both care about the cause... plus I imagine it only takes trying to make anything happen with a fucked up Eros once to make you appreciate me.

I thought that if this worked, it would have looked like it was conceived during a regular MIUC session. Then Hera couldn't be mad at me. THEN while Iris got swept up in rounds and rounds of studies and tests- Hera and I could raise the baby. Hera is a natural mother. She'd love it. It would have been perfect but... Iris was having trouble understanding everything.

She was getting frustrated nothing was taking. She was blaming me, ME, who was donating my time and energy to her. Me the ONLY person who really had anything to lose with this scheme. She confronted me about why it had worked with Hera the first time and not with her. She was getting so worked up- it may have slipped out that... maybe there was never a first time. She felt used. Thought I was just fucking her again- please. That she was just some kind of ego boost for me- LIKE I need that. Absolutely not. Why would I need her when I knew Hera loved me? Even if she wasn't with me at that moment...

It was bullshit. Complete bullshit. We were keeping our voices down. Eros was passed out on the couch in the next room. I maybe insinuated that there had to be something REALLY wrong with her if he couldn't even sleep in the same bed as her after. She started to cry. As if her life was POSSIBLY more difficult than mine. I only pushed her. She's the one who grabbed the syringe like she was going to stab me with it. I'm not sure what happened next. That person wasn't me.

But now... Hera thinks it was. And she heard the message. We're in a tough spot, aren't we?

If she tells someone, she could send me away. And she might be angry now, sure, but she doesn't really want that. There's only one thing to do, unfortunately.

This will be the best for both of us. I mean, come on, do I should like a killer?

END OF EPISODE