

Lesser Gods Chapter 3

By

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SCENE 1

SOUND: A SHOWER RUNNING

PERSEPHONE (NAR.)

I'm going to kill him.

I sit up slowly as I prepare myself for battle. I remove the sleep mask from my eyes. He has his own shower. I've had this conversation with him SEVERAL times. Sure, it can get confusing to understand boundaries when you work for someone and you live with them and they're having sex with you, but that's why I've been agonizingly clear with him.

I let him sleep in my bed last night... He was upset and the sound of him pacing outside of my room was keeping me up anyway.

PERSEPHONE

DION.

DION

I'm not taking a shower.

PERSEPHONE (NAR.)

He responds over the running water. He pops out, holding a tablet in one hand and an espresso in the other. Grinning too brightly for this early in the morning.

DION

I'm running it for you. Knew the sound would wake you up. Even if it was to yell at me.

PERSEPHONE

Oh... good.

PERSEPHONE (NAR.)

He hands me the miniature cup. Stands there, watching me as if he's waiting for me to ask him something. And then with a rush- I remember.

PERSEPHONE

Did anyone read it?

DION

Oh they read it. It's been taken down, duh. But people copied and reposted. It's everywhere.

PERSEPHONE (NAR.)

And he's not kidding. The message boards are covered with my words, plus people's mostly adoring comments.

PERSEPHONE

It's like people didn't know I could read and write.

DION

They're mostly positive. You did a great job, Pers. You showed us all a side of her most people didn't know they were missing... Plus, people think you're kind of a rebel.

PERSEPHONE

Kind of?

DION

Well, I always knew it.

PERSEPHONE (NAR.)

He smirks, kisses me. Playfully, I push him back. I haven't brushed my teeth yet. Even I wouldn't put him through that.

SOUND: RINING.

VOICE: Visitor at DOOR ONE.

PERSEPHONE

Who is that?

DION

I don't know.

PERSEPHONE

Well, get rid of them. I need to get ready.

DION

Yes m'am.

PERSEPHONE (NAR.)

He leaves the room so I can get dressed. But before I even reach the bathroom, there's a knock at my door. Which is weird because-

ROSALIND
Persephone.

PERSEPHONE (NAR.)
It's Black. I freeze. My heart THUMPS over the running water.
I take a deep breath. It isn't hard for me to act
confidently, the trick is making people believe it.
God, I wish I'd brushed my teeth.
I pull open the door.

PERSEPHONE
Good morning, Madame President.

ROSALIND
I'm sorry to disturb you, but I think you know why I'm here.

PERSEPHONE (NAR.)
She smiles tightly and I lead her to a small table and chair
set by the window. Luckily, I always leave everything in my
room in order. Except- *dammit*. I deftly kick one of Dion's
socks under my bed.
Boundaries.
I sit. She doesn't. Instead she survey's the crowd outside
the Bricks. They haven't moved since last night.

ROSALIND
They seem so comfortable there, like they've been mourners
their whole lives. Just waiting somewhere to be called in. I-
I still can't believe it myself.

PERSEPHONE (NAR.)
I don't think I've ever seen Black give vulnerability a try.
She speaks slowly, turns to me with icy blue eyes.
They're contacts. She thinks people can't tell, and it isn't
easy but there's something comforting about seeing flaws in
people who try this hard to seem flawless. Cosmetic, genetic
modification was all the rage about a hundred years ago. Our
current crisis was caused inadvertently by overuse of
antibiotics, not by deciding your kid just NEEDED to be 6'4".
When science was still celebrated, people were selecting
traits for their future offspring left and right. But after
it came out our overdependence on medical intervention had
led to our current biological crisis, modification became
everyone's guilty secret.
No matter how tenuous that connection was to the antibiotic
apocalypse. The playing God thing made people uneasy.
Something they rapidly tried to erase.
But still, a handful of seized samples were already fucked
with.

Black just got the bad luck of someone who thought their kid would just look lovely with lavender eyes. *Lavender*. I haven't seen them myself, but I know she keeps them covered to avoid being associated with the vanity of the generations that brought us here.

ROSALIND

Dion seems to be very attentive.

PERSEPHONE

Yes.

PERSEPHONE (NAR.)

I say. Not sure if she's assuming anything.

ROSALIND

Very on top of things.

PERSEPHONE (NAR.)

Alright well, she's definitely assuming something.

PERSEPHONE

Extremely professional. Especially compared to my last few chaperones.

PERSEPHONE (NAR.)

That should end things. I've had a bad string of chaperones. We can't all be as lucky as Rhea to have the same slave forever. Sorry, I meant "sister". Black turns away from me again.

ROSALIND

I saw your post. It was quite touching. We traced it back to Dion's device. Was it his idea?

PERSEPHONE

No.

PERSEPHONE (NAR.)

No shit. I think.

ROSALIND

Didn't think so. Didn't seem like his style. Didn't seem like yours' either, if I'm being honest.

PERSEPHONE

It isn't like any of us have ever been in this situation before. I wasn't sure how to... process.

ROSALIND

Mhm. How are you feeling today?

PERSEPHONE (NAR.)

I think quickly, trying to decide whether to be someone who tells the truth or someone she can trust.

PERSEPHONE

I know how they need me to be.

ROSALIND

Yes. I understand. I'm sure you know but, I really cared for Iris. I thought she was... exceptional.

PERSEPHONE

She was.

PERSEPHONE (NAR.)

There's an unexpected stab in my gut that comes with hearing about her in the past tense. I dig my fingernails into my palms to keep from reacting.

ROSALIND

I'm going to need a favor.

PERSEPHONE (NAR.)

She says. My face must convey my surprise.

ROSALIND

I need you to write another post about Iris. One that draws on your relationship.

PERSEPHONE (NAR.)

Oh boy, a sequel. I think.

ROSALIND

This one needs to be slightly more confessional. It needs to be about her relationship with Eros.

PERSEPHONE (NAR.)

Eros paid about as much attention to Iris as he did to a good lamp. The feeling didn't seem completely mutual, but I always thought Iris was just interested in him because Iris always wanted what Rhea had. Rhea was born to be the star, the real savior. The sacred sister. Didn't matter how exceptional Iris was, Rhea always had that.

ROSALIND

As you must know, she was in love with him.

PERSEPHONE (NAR.)

She says.

PERSEPHONE

I think... love is just such a strong word.

PERSEPHONE (NAR.)

I stammer. And I mean it. Her fawning over Eros never matched the things she really loved. Like performing, or attention. Where is Black getting any of this?

ROSALIND

They were together. Had been for months.

PERSEPHONE (NAR.)

I just stare at her blankly. It just doesn't make any sense. For reasons unknown to anyone alive, Eros has been... smitten with Rhea since we were like 14. Yes they've both been seen around with other people but... Not... people like Iris. And they always ended up back together as quickly and mysteriously as they'd separated. Besides Iris and Eros had nothing in common they-

ROSALIND

You look confused. Which is strange for someone who described herself as... What was it? "Like a sister" to Iris.

PERSEPHONE

I just don't know if Iris would have wanted people to know about that. I mean, everyone knows Eros is with Rhea. People would think Iris had like... stolen him or something.

ROSALIND

Well that depends how you tell it. It's been strictly need to know but, Iris was... close.

PERSEPHONE (NAR.)

And I know exactly what she means by that.

ROSALIND

She was responding. There was a conversation with Eros about becoming involved. At some point they just became... More involved.

PERSEPHONE (NAR.)

I speak before I can catch myself-

PERSEPHONE

That just doesn't sound true.

ROSALIND

Well that's your job.

PERSEPHONE (NAR.)

Why does anyone need to know about any of this? Iris is dead.

PERSEPHONE

The last word seems to hit her somewhere I can't see.

ROSALIND

At this stage, I can't tell you why it matters. But I can tell you, it may help bring this whole thing to an end sooner.

SCENE 2

SOUND: SIGH, THEN THE CLUMPING OF HEELS

RHEA (NAR.)

I know what you're thinking. Or wondering I guess. What the fuck was I thinking? Why would I lie for Eros? Under these circumstances? Well what it comes down to was the look on his face when he asked for my help. We never ask each other for things, there's nothing we've ever needed from each other. Everything we want, we tend to get. Our relationship was built off convenience more than anything. And a fine sense of the absurd. We connected over an eye roll when we were ten and started fucking when we were 16. Mostly because people told us not to... Someone resurrect Jane Austin. It isn't about love, it's about having a partner in all this. I woke up with him on my mind. After dreaming of Iris all night.

I scratch at the thick makeup that covers the tattoos on my left arm. My feet clump along the hallway. These shoes don't fit.

I usually borrow something from Hera for days like this, but she wasn't speaking to me this morning. I know. Silence is the least I deserve.

Black's team had to style me instead and I look just as sexy as you'd think. It isn't that I think these things are about me, it's just that when we usually make an appearance at some dead bureaucrat or general's memorial service, we end up making a fashion statement whether we like it or not. There just aren't a lot of trendsetters left. Or trends.

CHAR

Loving the heels?

RHEA (NAR.)

Char catches up to me, on an upper floor of the new capitol building, in only a few steps.

RHEA

I hardly recognized you with sleeves.

RHEA (NAR.)

I say. These kind of occasions are the only ones where Char ditches the tank tops and sneakers look. We walk down the hall of the makeshift, multi purpose headquarters. It used to be a mall. Yeah, a *mall*. A high end one sure, but people used to eat pretzels in the room that's now used to stockpile weapons. God bless Minnesota.

CHAR

Did you read what Pers wrote?

RHEA

Yeah, I mean I still don't totally believe she wrote it.

CHAR

It'd be a wild card for PR to pick her. If they wanted to pick someone realistic they'd have picked me. Or Eros. I might even believe you before her.

RHEA

That's true. It's too unbelievable to be manufactured. "A sister not in name, but in something stronger. A bond born long before we were. We shared what was left of this world to share. She knew how much you all loved her. My only regret is selfish, but important... not telling her how much she inspired me." What the fuck is that? Nobody inspires Pers.

CHAR

I can't believe how quickly it spread.

RHEA (NAR.)

It's been shared over a million times. This stuck out even among the hundreds of conspiracy theories about what happened to Iris.

CHAR

Where's Eros?

RHEA (NAR.)

He asks over the clacking of my heels on the granite floor.

RHEA

Apollo is apparently keeping a close watch on him.

CHAR

That makes sense. I heard Artemis and Dion talking about him getting reassigned for losing him that morning.

RHEA

Fantastic. Maybe they'll even relocate him.

CHAR

He still showing up for Hera?

RHEA

Yep.

CHAR

That's exactly what Hera needs right now.

RHEA

The fucked up part is she still loves him, but she won't forgive him.

CHAR

That's sad.

RHEA

I think it's bad ass.

SOUND: ELEVATOR DOOR'S DING OPEN. VOICE: "FOURTH FLOOR, GOING DOWN"

RHEA (NAR.)

She is badass. I know it might not sound like it from what I said last night, but there's no one I respect as much as my sister. I was mad, yeah a little at her. But mostly at Eros. For getting me into this, even though I knew he didn't want to be in it either. I don't blame Hera for what happened between Iris and Apollo. I mean, after Hera miscarried she spent years in and out of this awful depression. I actually thought Apollo was being so great during the worst of those times but then I found out about... Iris, who spent her entire life trying to prove she was the REAL "new" Hera. To the point of even fucking her boyfriend. Hera has always been so good at sacrificing her time and her body, but Iris ruined the only thing my sister had for herself.

I'm the one who found them. I'd left my sunglasses in a classroom and saw them there. They were kissing and then she was dragging her lips down his neck and all I could think was that I was finally seeing her as her true self; a vampire. They pled with me not to tell Hera. Both sharing in the unimaginable terror of being disliked. Especially by her. I told them I'd think about it and instead went immediately to my sister and broke her heart.

Shylock keeps telling me Iris was my family and I need to do whatever I can to help her. But Hera and Eros... Those are two people I love. As bad as I feel for Iris, and I swear I do... I can't let her ruin both of them.

CHAR

Can I ask you something?

RHEA

Shoot.

CHAR

Where was Eros that morning?

RHEA (NAR.)

It isn't like Char to ask so many questions about Eros. He was the last to see her alive. At least that's what he thinks. So I know how this probably looks slash sounds to you. But he didn't do it. They weren't even fucking. They were participants in a few M.I.U.C. sessions a few weeks ago and since then she's been really attached to him. But they've never had sex outside of the lab. It was the same for them as it was between everyone. Me and Char. Or Apollo and Pers.

Eros and Hera only never happened because after she lost it, Her property was condemned. Everyone else though... Even me and Apollo... Look it sounds bizarre, but it's all part of the job.

Its kind of the only part of the job.

You do the thing and then you go home and have a beer or five and try not to feel like a trash can. If nothing else, you get that you have a handful of people who know exactly what you're going through. For whatever reason, Iris was never good at separating what happened in there with what happens out here. That's how her and Apollo got started. It's a pattern. As much as she'd hate to admit it, nobody's perfect. Eros isn't perfect. I'm not an idiot, but we wouldn't lie to each other because we don't need to.

He wasn't fucking her, okay?

He was just being nice. She wasn't doing well. She was in a really bad place that night so he went over there and just held her for a few hours. He woke up on her couch when the sun came up and she was...

He got out of there through the fallout shelter that connects all our houses. He would never would have hurt her.

SOUND: ELEVATOR DINGS OPEN

CHAR

Rhea?

RHEA

He was with me. We passed out, when my alarm woke us up he snuck back over to his place.

CHAR

Why don't his scans show that then? He scanned into his house when his guards last saw him around 5.

RHEA

Not a lot of supervision on the roof is there?

CHAR

But he wouldn't have gotten in any real trouble for just coming through the door.

ROSALIND

Hello.

RHEA (NAR.)

We nearly smack into Black as she emerges from her office (a former safe, in case you were wondering). She's pulling on an e-cigarette. Cool.

ROSALIND

This is my friend, Detective Orsino Blue. You'll be seeing a lot of him.

RHEA

Any friend of President Black's is a friend of mine.

RHEA (NAR.)

And I shake his hand without smudging the makeup covering my wrist tattoo of Orion's Belt. Even I have to admit this guy is... spooky. And I have definitely never seen him before. Which is... unusual. There aren't that many new faces around.

CHAR

What's up man?

RHEA (NAR.)

Char shakes his hand too, but he says nothing. He just nods, stares at me.

RHEA

Well, let us know if there's anything we can do to help.

ROSALIND

We will. See you out there.

RHEA (NAR.)

And we turn to go, relieved only for a second-

ROSALIND

Oh wait-

RHEA (NAR.)

And I feel her freezing hand on my bare shoulder.

ROSALIND

Take a rose.

RHEA (NAR.)

And I'm so taken aback, I actually do take the rose from her hand. She hands one to Char too, before giving us a tight smile and closing the door to her office.

SCENE 2

RHEA (NAR.)

We currently live in Minneapolis. I'm told this place didn't used to be hot but now, in July... it's about 90. Add the fact we're wearing all black, I'm sweating out of my eyeballs. Which is convenient because I'm the only one not crying. Even Pers is getting kinda weepy. It's weird. It's hard to look at, but the crowd isn't much better. Black could be reading the Constitution and these people would keep keening. I heard someone say this is the biggest memorial since the last natural born citizen died. A drone overhead keeps panning and zooming over the wet faces. Each one's eyes glued to the gigantic photo of Iris behind Black... Except for that detective. He's looking right at me. My grip tightens on the rose still in my hand.

ROSALIND

I assure you all, we are doing everything in our power to find out what happened to our friend. I personally will miss her everyday, as I'm sure you all will.

RHEA (NAR.)

Char throws a hand over my shoulder. I turn to Eros, his eyes are glued to the photo. Black continues.

ROSALIND

It is imperative now that you all remain calm and keep as always, your heads up. We must not let this event begin our slide into chaos. That is the last thing she would have wanted.

RHEA (NAR.)

Where is Hera? She should be here. She's got to be here. Oh wait, shes- but my search is interrupted by Char who is elbowing me gently. Black is nodding to me. To us. Pers and then Eros lay their roses at the base of Iris' photo. Cameras begin to snap and as I make my way across the stage, one flashes and I stumble. Falling into Char's back. He helps right me, smiling tightly. I swear I see the detective jot something on his notepad-

CHAR
You okay?

RHEA (NAR.)
Char whispers. I nod. And he holds my hand as I follow him. He drops his rose, then I step up. Am I fucking trembling? No, it's the heat. I stare up Iris' nostrils, her pretty face, distorted at this angle. I release the rose.

SOUND: POP. SCREAMS.

RHEA (NAR.)
The stage is flooded with pink smoke. It fills my eyes, my lungs. I drop to my knees instinctively, as if ducking something. Everyone around me is still screaming.

SOUND: SIREN.

RHEA (NAR.)
The siren is almost as bad as the smoke. I cover my ears and squint through the cotton candy colored clouds. An armed guard pulls Pers into him, rushes her to cover. I think I can hear Eros calling my name, but I can't make him out. It's getting thicker. My head is spinning. I focus my eyes on my hands, they stand out against the glossy pristine marble. I crawl forwards or in whatever direction I think the capitol might be. My head is spinning. I look up but I can't even find the sky. My chest burns from trying not to breathe. This smoke could be anything, from anyone, I can't- and I smack my head on something solid. I feel, bringing my face within an inch of the flat surface- and then realize I've got one hand on Iris' throat. Her smile, still serene as it surveys the chaos. Then a cool, clear voice I've never heard fills the air.

VOICE: THE VOID SENDS THIER CONDOLENCES.

RHEA (NAR.)
The Void? Why would they- then a pair of dark shoes appears beside my hand on the ground. I look up at someone dressed in all black, cutting a solid figure into the ethereal pink. They sink slowly to my eye level. A face covered in black and white clown make up raises a finger to thier lips. They hold a white rose in thier other hand. They drop it, then stand and fade away. At least I think they're fading away, but my vision is getting dim around the edges. Looks like I'm about to find out what's in this shit after all. My body takes over, my lungs draw breath without my consent.

I'm coughing. A lot. My head makes contact with the cool marble and somewhere far away, Char calls out to me.

SCENE 3

RHEA (NAR.)
(SOUNDING MUCH IMPROVED)
You'd think my lungs would be more used to inhaling smoke... With all the... smoking. My brain is still waking up from my little event. Not that anyone else would call it that. I spent the entire night in medical doing interviews. Not that Black and Blue were anywhere in sight. *Woah*, solid nickname for the president and the detective...

HERA
Yes it was just shocking. Thank you for taking care of us.

RHEA (NAR.)
Hera is shaking hands with the guards who escorted our car home.

GUARD
If you're sure you don't want extra coverage inside...

RHEA (NAR.)
Our beefy guard-of-the-day says.

HERA
I'm sure there are people a lot more scared downtown.

RHEA (NAR.)
If Hera sounds like she's back to her old self, it's only for them. As soon as they leave she heads for the stairs, only making a slight detour to recheck the locks.

RHEA
I think I'll smell like smoke for a year. You'd think my lungs would be more used to inhaling smoke.

RHEA (NAR.)
That joke doesn't work a second time either.

RHEA
Hera, wait-

HERA
I have a lot of work to do.

RHEA

I'm so sorry. I fucked up. I know I did.

RHEA (NAR.)

She pauses at the top of the stairs. Nods. Then disappears, slamming the door behind her. When I came too, completely fine except for badly needing a drink, she hugged me for a good minute and a half, I felt her tears on my own cheeks. For a sec I thought maybe I should be attacked by fringe groups more often. But as soon as the shock wore off, she was chilly again.

Drink. Right. Nothing is quite as soothing the sound of ice cubes hitting a glass. Not real ice cubes, water is not for freezing anymore. Ice cubes are metal, kept in the freezer until the last second.

I pop into the kitchen to grab them from the freezer. They're so cold, they burn my hand-

Shit.

But a pair of long, skinny fingers picks it up before I can. I jump back, reflexively.

CLARK

(TRACES OF BRITISH ACCENT)

Hi.

RHEA

Who the fuck are you?

RHEA (NAR.)

I jump back five feet, my hand feeling on the wall for the intercom and emergency alert button while I keep my eyes on the man- boy? Uh, guy... ahead of me. He's clean shaven. Light hair, light eyes. Medium build.

Totally average. Except for one thing, he's young. He's like me.

CLARK

I'm sorry. Sorry. I'm- I thought they would tell you.

I'm-

RHEA (NAR.)

He stammers. But I've stopped listening because I'm crossing the small space between us. All of the events of today, with The Void, with Hera... All the rage about Black keeping this mystery unit from us has vanished and been replaced by... wonder. I reach out to touch his face, but catch myself.

CLARK

Uhm... yes?

RHEA
How old are you?

CLARK
I'm uh, I'm 22. I'm Clark. Did no one tell you I was-?
Sorry I just assumed-

RHEA
You're just the same age as me. As us.

RHEA (NAR.)
He takes a step back from me.

CLARK
President Black had me sent here this morning, but then I saw on the news... They didn't think any of the other units would be as um... They just thought you and your sister would be the most hospitable. For tonight. Today was a little crazy with all the- well I guess I don't have to tell you.

RHEA
Yeah, rare to see them do something so close to... well, us.

CLARK
Them?

RHEA
You've never heard of The Void?

RHEA (NAR.)
And his blank stare answers my question.

RHEA
What rock did you crawl out from under?

CLARK
More of a bunker, really.

RHEA
They're this resistance movement. I saw a message the other night...

RHEA (NAR.)
I cut myself off, walk quickly to my library. He follows. I pull my copy of "Godot" off the shelf.

RHEA

Got to be something with the air. Or mourning.

CLARK

Might be easier to find if you had the digital version. Do you have the digital version of... anything? Paper books are such a... I mean they're certainly a treasure but... Right.

RHEA (NAR.)

I hear him, I'm just not listening.

CLARK

Are The Void... actors?

RHEA

If you had to pick an existential voice for your fight against a bleak, oppressive world why wouldn't you pick Beckett?

RHEA (NAR.)

Another blank stare. Oh boy. Forget Beckett, this guy's been more influenced by Orwell. And I'm not talking about farm animals. His look changes like he's heard me.

CLARK

Sorry I don't... Nobody I grew up around still seemed to care about... entertainment things.

RHEA (NAR.)

He gestures to the posters on the walls.

RHEA

People didn't stop caring, they just weren't allowed to make it anymore.

CLARK

They donated all their efforts to more political works.

RHEA

Yes... "donated".

RHEA (NAR.)

He breaks, laughs.

CLARK
You're a lot like how they said you'd be.

RHEA (NAR.)
Now it's his turn to educate me.

CLARK
I had to read up on all of you on the flight. Just your files, I mean.

RHEA (NAR.)
He might not know anything about it, but he's about to provide some entertainment. I cross to the wet bar, pour myself that whiskey.

RHEA
Let's hear it.

CLARK
Hear what?

RHEA
What ole Rosalind really thinks of us.

CLARK
She let's you call her by her first name?

RHEA
No.

RHEA (NAR.)
I sip. Stare at him.

CLARK
Oh come on, I can't.

RHEA
Either you're talking or your walking.

RHEA (NAR.)
He doesn't seem to know I don't have that authority.

CLARK
Persephone tests really well. Really intelligent. She does...

likes to... She goes through a lot of chaperones. And guards.
And drivers.

RHEA

Nothing to newsworthy there.

CLARK

Charon spends an alarming amount of time in the gym.
Good shape. Too good a shape. They don't see a need for him
to continue to build up. Also got himself into a bit of hot
water with the President after a certain weekend with a
Brazilian diplomat.

RHEA

Char does put the "personal" in personal training.

RHEA (NAR.)

I pull a cigarette from my case. Clark acts like I pulled a
dinosaur out of my pocket.

CLARK

That a cigarette?

RHEA

Do you want one?

CLARK

I didn't know they still made those.

SOUND: LIGHTER FLICKING

RHEA

They don't.

CLARK

Bother you much those'll kill you?

RHEA

(IMITATES HIS ACCENT)

Bother you much you'll die anyway?

RHEA (NAR.)

I blow smoke as I settle in with my drink on the couch.

CLARK
Well I can see why you like Eros.

RHEA
Ah, this is going to be good.

CLARK
His file is mostly police reports actually. And tabloid clippings. Did he really steal a cop car?

RHEA
Not on his own.

CLARK
Did he really crash it?

RHEA
That I take no credit for.

CLARK
I don't think your government is his biggest fan.

RHEA
Our government.

CLARK
His "Future" section was nearly empty. Almost like they've got no plans for him. There's a few notes about...you. Your relationship. He tests better than Char, and you- well you have the genes for success.

RHEA
We have a future section?

CLARK
Just predictions as to what tests and things to run, what positions they may be able to steer you all into. Quite generic, really. Except for... Well...

RHEA
Iris. Shocker. President of like... the world? Kinda comforting though that Black isn't planning on running for a hundredth consecutive term.

CLARK

Yeah, she's uhm... a character. Didn't seem like the fairest time to meet her though, considering-

RHEA

Yeah, she's busy building a fucking shrine.

RHEA (NAR.)

He seems taken aback by my callousness.

CLARK

Everyone's upset. Not just here, I woke to my guards weeping. My pilot was nearly too shaken up to-

RHEA

Do you want a drink?

RHEA (NAR.)

I don't wait for a response, I pour him a glass and thrust it towards him.

CLARK

Can you water this down?

RHEA

Water's contaminated. Drink up, people are thirsty pretty much everywhere else.

RHEA (NAR.)

He reluctantly accepts the glass, cautiously sips.

RHEA

So what'd you read about me?

CLARK

You're supposed to be sort of scathing. They also think you have issues with authority.

RHEA

The government thinks everyone has issues with authority.

RHEA (NAR.)

I sit beside him on the couch, I refill his glass with mine.

CLARK

And I read about... your sister. That whole generation was-

RHEA

Yeah well, they were meant to be the last batch. And now they're our babysitters. The most responsible ones. Or the ones who just act that way. Cheers.

CLARK

Yeah. Your sister... I don't wanna be rude but your file left out whether you had the same condition-

RHEA (NAR.)

I freeze.

RHEA

I don't have a condition.

CLARK

But your sister did. Isn't that why- no. Never mind.

RHEA

If they hadn't fucked with her, she might've- This is a not a conversation we are going to have here.

HERA

Or anywhere else.

RHEA (NAR.)

Hera is on the stairs. I hop up and away from the offending visitor. She descends, passes me and extends her hand to Clark.

RHEA

I was just-

HERA

Great to finally meet you.

CLARK

Thank you for having me. I'm sorry, I-

HERA

It's fine. I have to step out.

RHEA

Wait, stay. He's telling me what people really think of me. It's hilarious.

HERA

I don't think you'll need my input then. Don't smoke in here, Rhea.

RHEA (NAR.)

Without another word, she exits. I sink onto the couch.

CLARK

I'm sorry, I didn't know it was such a touchy subject.

RHEA

It's the Iris thing. It's got all of us on edge.

CLARK

You didn't care for her much, did you?

RHEA

I didn't not care for her. It's... complicated. I didn't necessarily like her but I was... used to her. When there's only five of you- or you think there's only five of you... I will miss her. Just, not in the same way people who didn't know her will.

CLARK

She seemed very kind.

RHEA

When we were nine, Shylock- our handler, you'll meet him- gave us these gold bracelets from India. Someone was taking a lot of pictures, one of the flashes scared me so I dropped mine. Fucking thing slipped right down whatever drain... And yeah, I guess I looked kind of upset. So Iris takes hers off and gives it to me. Cameras ate it up. And even then I couldn't help thinking, this was going to be the rest of our lives.

CLARK

Everyone loving her?

RHEA
Sharing with her.

CLARK
It wasn't right. What was happening with Eros.

RHEA (NAR.)
And all the blood rushes to my ears at once.

RHEA
There was nothing happening with Eros.

CLARK
Didn't you read Persephone's thing?

RHEA
Eros didn't come up in it.

CLARK
No... the one from tonight.

RHEA (NAR.)
No one would have told Persephone about anything with Eros.
The only people who know are me, him, and Hera.
The color escapes Clark's face like a gasp. Or a scream. Or a
secret.

CLARK
I thought you knew.

RHEA (NAR.)
I'm standing and I'm not sure why.

RHEA
I need to know what you know, Clark.

CLARK
The... the new tests. With Eros.

RHEA
She had a crush on him.

RHEA (NAR.)
I inform him and assure myself.

CLARK

It had been going on for months. The hormones were taking. President Black thought Eros was her best match. And then he- I mean according to Persephone... She says Iris told her he was coming over that night.

RHEA (NAR.)

None of that makes any sense. It all sounds like a lie. It has to be. But- but how else would she know he was there? Could she really have been close? Why was it a secret? Why... what about *her* was working?

CLARK

She could be wrong, for him it could have just been-

RHEA

What treatments did they have her on?

CLARK

It was just referred to as something based off of what worked with Hera and what didn't with uhm, with you.

RHEA

Persephone wrote that?

RHEA (NAR.)

Of course she did. The cigarette has burned down to a stub.

CLARK

That's why they didn't want you to know. Besides the fact that you and Eros were together. No one knew though. Not until tonight.

RHEA (NAR.)

It feels like a spring is winding up somewhere in my head. It gets tighter and tighter as each revelation hits. Eros and Iris. Iris could have been ovulating.

Months. Months. Months. I feel like I'm going to scream. And then someone actually does scream. Someone I know. Eros. I drop my cigarette on the floor and run outside without even putting on shoes.

What the fuck-

A sea of flashbulbs erupts around Eros as he's pulled kicking and screaming from his house. Char and a few guards push reporters away from him, but a couple of news drones are already circling overhead.

PERSEPHONE

What the fuck is going on?!

RHEA (NAR.)

Pers yells while Dion keeps the swell of chaos from touching her.

ORSINO

Rhea, I'm going to need you to come with me for a bit.

RHEA (NAR.)

The detective is a few feet away from me. But I put more distance between us as I run for Eros. A reporter sticks a mic in my face and I smack him, his equipment falling to the ground. Apollo grabs me. I push him off, he stumbles backwards, trips.

APOLLO

Go back inside.

RHEA

Fuck off, Apollo.

RHEA (NAR.)

And I leave him on the ground.

RHEA

Eros! Eros!

RHEA (NAR.)

They're trying to push him into a cop car but he's squirming so much he smacks his head on the door. He sees me.

EROS

Rhea! I didn't do it. I didn't do it.

RHEA (NAR.)

And as I'm staring at him, a thin line of blood trickling from his forehead, his arms restrained, one leg inside the car. A million flashes bursting like shrapnel shells. All I can think to say is.

RHEA

You should have told me.

RHEA (NAR.)

And even in that moment, he knows what I'm talking about.

I feel cold, fat hands wrap around my wrists. A voice pushes hot air into my ear.

ORSINO

I wasn't asking. You're wanted for questioning.

RHEA (NAR.)

The detective pulls me towards him, towards the car. And I'm so stunned I don't even fight. I'm searching the crowd. And then I see her. Hera is rushing towards me.

HERA

You can't take her, you said-

RHEA (NAR.)

She cries. And just as the door slams, I manage to ask-

RHEA

What did you do?

END OF EPISODE