

Lesser Gods Season 2 Chapter 8

By

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SCENE 1

RHEA (NAR.)

Orsino locks us- Hera, Eros, and myself in the dining car. Hera and I sit on opposite sides. By choice.

HERA

Is he okay?

RHEA (NAR.)

She asks me. I'm by Eros- still unconscious but otherwise fine. Not that that should make her getting into this mess any better. I decide not to respond.

HERA

Mature.

RHEA (NAR.)

She says, reading my mind.

RHEA

I just hope you're happy.

HERA

Oh my god Rhea, if you're biggest concern right now is spite you-

RHEA (NAR.)

But the door opens and Persephone, Char, Talc, and Clark shuffle in. They each sit at different tables- except for Talc who offers to lean in the back. Clark sits in the one closest to me. He sits up on his knees. Is he wearing my shirt?

His breath in my ear. Eros drooling on my shoulder. I'm going to fucking snap.

ORSINO

That's nearly everyone... nearly.

RHEA (NAR.)

Orsino turns to Rebekah, who stands- arms crossed and staring at just me like a disappointed babysitter. I stare back hoping my sharp eyes communicate that for once- for fucking ONCE this wasn't my fault. It was Hera's. Rebeah just shakes her head.

REBEKAH

This behavior is unacceptable, Rhea.

RHEA (NAR.)

I shrug Eros off. Turn to Hera. She should say something. She should-

HERA

Apollo has sustained a severe head injury.

RHEA (NAR.)

That was not the something I was hoping for.

Truman/Ford/One of them runs towards the cars with the bedrooms.

You know, for the smart and graceful one- Hera's sure having trouble seeing two feet in front of her. She's about to fall on her face. Hard. I should just keep my mouth shut. Hera wants to go down as Apollo's convenient murderer? So be it.

So... be... ugh, fuck me.

RHEA

It wasn't Hera. Hera was with me. I'll say that every time I'm on camera for the rest of my life.

RHEA (NAR.)

Hera hops to her feet.

HERA

Shut up, Rhea. Apollo needs immediate medical treatment.

REBEKAH

Oh.

RHEA (NAR.)

Rebekah says. Looking a little confused. Like it's started drizzling on sunny spring day and this is nothing more than a little inconvenient. Tru-Ford comes rushing back into the back of the car. His thick brows are knitted together above wide, dark eyes.

TRUMAN

She's right. But he is still breathing.

RHEA (NAR.)

Rebekah and Orsino look to each other. In one moment- I see very clearly how the rest of this goes. We turn around- go back to Minneapolis. It's too late. Apollo is dead. Hera gets taken off the train in cuffs. Gets tossed in some cell with her buddy Black. Rebekah gets to make her punishment even harsher because in the public's eye- she didn't just kill Apollo- she killed the father of the next generation. Rebekah makes up some excuse about how dangerous Hera is. I never see her again. These last few, fierce looks are all I'll get.

My hands tied behind my back so I cant even hold hers- can't-
Rebekah sighs.

REBEKAH
Oh well.

CHAR
That's it?

RHEA (NAR.)
Char says.

HERA
You're going to let him die?

RHEA (NAR.)
Hera's voice cracks as she speaks.

REBEKAH
We can't turn around.

HERA
Okay then- let me off here. I'll wait with him. I'm sure
someone can fly to us or- or-

RHEA (NAR.)
She looks around the room for a second, desperate for
support.

REBEKAH
No. I can't do that. Our location is secret.

PERS
What do you mean?

RHEA (NAR.)
Rebekah turns coolly to her.

REBEKAH
Just what I said.

HERA
You have to make an exception for emergencies.
Especially when you've claimed Apollo is- is- The Father.

REBEKAH
It isn't worth the risk. We'll just have to... leave him
here.

RHEA (NAR.)
Hera stands abruptly.

HERA
Then leave me with him.

REBEKAH
Fine.

RHEA (NAR.)
Rebekah says, breezily. Panic rises in my throat. What the fuck is going on?

RHEA
You can't do that! She can't! Right?!

REBEKAH
Unfortunately there's just... not much I can do to stop her. She's a nonviable. So the incentive isn't there.

RHEA
Hera, you can't stay here.

ORSINO
We need to leave.

RHEA (NAR.)
Orsino interrupts.

RHEA
Shut the fuck up.
Hera, come on.

RHEA (NAR.)
But she isn't even looking at me.

HERA
No. You heard her, it doesn't matter.

RHEA (NAR.)
One of the guards uncuffs her. I climb out of the booth.

RHEA
It does matter and you know that.

HERA
Where was all this compassion an hour ago, Rhea?

RHEA
What? This is totally different.

HERA
When did it become different? When you were refusing to have a conversation with me or when you were hunting me down?

RHEA (NAR.)
Now she's staring at me, hard eyed. Looking somehow more exhausted than I've ever seen her, while also looking incredibly engerized.

RHEA

Don't do this for him.

HERA

I'm not doing this for him, Rhea. I'm doing this for me. Do you know how fucking hard this is for me? To fight the people I love for the person I hate. The person who has lied and hurt me almost as well as he loved me. But we went through something together, Rhea.

I couldn't live with myself knowing I decided to side with you just because it was easier.

RHEA

You wanna talk about living with yourself? About easy?

RHEA (NAR.)

And I feel a long fingered hand on my arm- know it is Eros but slip from his grip anyway. Persephone has gotten to her feet- everyone in the room holds their breath like they know what I'm going to say- everyone except Hera.

RHEA

You were never fucking pregnant. Everyone lied to you. He lied to you. And he let you ruin yourself. Because that was fucking easy.

SCENE 2

SOUND: CAR DOOR SLAMMING

HERA (NAR.)

The first thing I do after I shut the door is turn on the AC. The morning rain has done nothing to take the edge off the already building summer heat. It's over 80 and the sun is still an hour from rising.

I take a deep breath. Start the car, program in Black's private residence.

I've never been called there so... suddenly. Dinners. Parties. Yes. But at 5:45 am? No. But I guess it makes sense.

I'm not even Rhea's chaperone yet but somehow, I'm already getting blamed for her mistakes. If you can call setting a couch on fire a mistake. You have to like, TRY to do that-right?

We share genes, not a conscious. And honestly- has anyone tested the gene thing?

I'm kidding. Or course. I just... when I was 13 I sure as hell wasn't smoking cigarettes. Although I'm not sure how much of it she actually managed to smoke. Hopefully this will scare her off them for life.

Something tells me they won't.

I try to prepare myself for how Black is going to turn this into my problem. Yeah, sure. We spend a lot of time together but- but she spends none of it listening to me. She either spends the whole time monologuing about some injustice to me or reading.

At least Apollo isn't here. I left him sleeping at home. Although he very helpfully tucked my device under a pillow when it started ringing.

He just... doesn't understand Rhea. Not that I do. But I'm trying.

Everything she does pisses him off- which DOES seem to be what she's going for, but still. It wasn't THAT long ago we were kids too. Especially THAT age... Things are about to get... so much harder.

Yes. Right. *That's* what I'll remind Black. Rhea and Iris and everyone have only JUST learned the real specifics of the process, they're confused. And acting out.

Even though Rhea is acting out enough for all of them. It doesn't help that she's been dragging Eros into all of her schemes. He broke his arm last week when RhEa convinced him to sneak out of his Brick late at night.

It could have been his neck.

This can't be worse than that, right?

SOUND: CAR STOPS

HERA (NAR.)

That's what I tell myself as I pop the door open and dash through the rain and up the stone stairs of the President's residence. The two guards outside immediately open the door for me. Even half hidden by the hood of my jacket, my face is... a little too recognizable.

Apollo and I did this... I hate to call it a "photoshoot" but... It was... a series of photographs to promote Orange Aid- this... powder you put into water to test if it's purified properly. It tastes like baking soda and an orange rind that's been run over by a truck. I had to drink buckets of it for the shoot and honestly- I bet eating one of the two story tall posters would taste better.

I smile politely as a butler-type takes my jacket. Thank you. Would you know if she's-?

ROSALIND
Hera.

HERA (NAR.)
Black chirps from the doorway to her office. I take a step towards her but-

ROSALIND
No, no. Let's talk in the sitting room.

HERA (NAR.)
The sitting room? This is new. I think as I follow her into a small room, warmed by a glowing fire- stuffed with cozy chairs. Black settles into one- looking as out of place as a monkey at a funeral.

ROSALIND
Please-

HERA (NAR.)
She says, gesturing towards the chair opposite her. I sit- Roll the sleeves of my shirt up- how cold must she run to be able to sit this close to a fire on this hot morning? But she looks totally comfortable. Not sleepy though- her eyes are tired. Her hands twitch a little and she works something over in her mouth before speaking-

ROSALIND
No Apollo?

HERA
He... wasn't feeling great.

HERA (NAR.)
Yeah he was feeling very much asleep. The sleeping over is new. Something I've only been open to since we officially announced our... relationship. Not that anyone was even a little surprised. Even myself, resistant for so long- was relieved when I let him put a label on what we'd both been feeling for so long. I'm glad I took my time though- carefully selecting the word for the situation. It's about more than semantics.

It's a set of expectations. Not so much a boundary though as a wall- the rest of the world is out there.

We are in here. Together.

He's my partner.

Nothing else much has changed. Except, I let him hold my hand. Which he does often. And yeah, he sleeps in my bed most nights. I don't. Yet.

I've always had trouble shutting my brain off enough to rest. Adjusting to another person has been harder than I thought. But now at least when I lie awake and alone in the dark, I can watch his chest slowly rise and fall. I convince myself it's the same as dreaming.

ROSALIND

I'm going to call him.

HERA

That's not necessary.

ROSALIND

Hera. I want him here for this.

HERA (NAR.)

She says, unreadable, as she gestures to a guard by the door. They leave. She stands and shuts the door behind him. I clear my throat and then just go for it-

HERA

My instinct is to apologize for Rhea's behavior- but I will not. Because if she doesn't start to learn about consequences now, she never will. I recommend we put her through community work as punishment but also mandate even more time with me- other women who have been through the copping process. This is an emotional time but she needs to develop healthy coping mechanisms.

HERA (NAR.)

Black sits back in her chair. Rubs her eyes, smiles.

ROSALIND

You are going to be... an excellent mother.

HERA (NAR.)

I laugh a little bit.

HERA

You couldn't pay me to be Rhea's mother. I can barley handle being her sister.

HERA (NAR.)

Black is quiet now. The dim light makes it impossible to figure out how offended she is. Shit.

HERA

I'm kidding. I'm kidding-

HERA (NAR.)

She raises a hand to me.

ROSALIND

Hera... Hera.

HERA (NAR.)

She repeats again, like somehow that's a substitute for context to this whole... meeting. I start to worry Rhea has somehow managed to create some other mess. Something worse. If she hurt someone, I'd know right? If SHE was hurt I'd-

ROSALIND

I wanted to wait until Apollo was here.

HERA (NAR.)

She's finally done it. She's killed Eros.

HERA

Madame President, please... Don't.

HERA (NAR.)

She stands, slowly. And closes the space between us. She drops to a knee in front of me. Takes my hand as I watch the shadows of the flames climb her face. Then-her expression lifts into a tight smile.

ROSALIND

Hera, you are pregnant.

HERA (NAR.)

I feel... a happiness so sharp and sudden the sensation is more like pain. My mind is moving so quickly and my chest so light- I become aware of every physical sensation- the silk of my shirt grazing my skin. The cool metal of a ring on my right hand. Each fiber of each sock pressed between my bare foot and my flat shoes. I must note everything to be sure I am still here- on the ground- and not lifting away. I take my left hand from hers, and share an almost frightened glance- like any sudden movement- a shudder or flourish or change in the air might shake this miracle from existence.

But Black just nods, encouraging.

But I am too afraid. My hand trembles, mid air, unable to complete its journey alone. So Black helps, guides me to my own stomach. There. There. Everything I have wanted since before I could put a name on it is there.

We have all worked so hard for so long. Generations of knowledge and blood, sweat, and tears have all come to this. Here, in this spot we have all been acutely aware of since we were smiling, slapping infants- now feels... completely, irrevocably changed.

ROSALIND

You did it.

HERA (NAR.)

She whispers. As she raises a finger to wipe away the tear I must not have realized has fallen.

ROSALIND

Congratulations.

HERA

Congratulations to... you too.

HERA (NAR.)

I say. Unable to comprehend- what you even say at a time like this. The door BURSTS open. Apollo- looking more disheveled than I've ever seen him in public-bounds over to me.

APOLLO

Right after you left- I... I ran here... In a car.

HERA (NAR.)

He gasps.

APOLLO

What's going on.

HERA (NAR.)

I open my mouth, try and tell him. But how? How could I manage something like-

ROSALIND

You and Hera have had a success.

HERA (NAR.)

Black says, taking a step away from me. The concept is so foreign, so impossible. It takes him a few long moments before he grabs me- and then immediately regrets it.

APOLLO

Sorry. Sorry.

HERA

No. No.

HERA (NAR.)

I say, taking his face in my hands and kissing him. He pulls me in close, holds me. I feel him shudder, hear him cry.

ROSALIND

I will give you two a-

HERA (NAR.)

But Black can't finish before Apollo pulls Black herself into our hug.

APOLLO
Thank you.

HERA (NAR.)
He whispers in her ear. She- clearly uncomfortable- pats us both on the back. She steps away. Tugs Apollo's shoulder slightly so he too releases me.

ROSALIND
It's important you know- that we are now in unknown territory. This is a fragile situation.

HERA (NAR.)
Her voice is shaky with nerves and happiness.

ROSALIND
But, regardless of the future. This advance alone is incredible. Something to be, so so, proud of.

HERA (NAR.)
She stands.

ROSALIND
But anything can happen.

HERA
Yes.

HERA (NAR.)
I say. Tasting my tears on my smiling lips.

Anything can happen.

SCENE 3

PERS
You can hide out in here.

RHEA (NAR.)
Persephone says, opening the door to her car. The train rushes by outside. All of us- Hera and Apollo included- still on it. After the news broke- after I broke the news- Rebekah just wanted to get away from Hera. I've somehow made our pseudo kidnapping even worse.

Persephone sits on her bed. I drop next to her.

PERS
You okay?

RHEA (NAR.)
And when I open my mouth to say "Of course" the sheer weight of what I just did to Hera hits me. Hard.

RHEA
I fucked up. Huh?

RHEA (NAR.)
I say, barely audible even to myself.

PERS
Honestly?

RHEA (NAR.)
Persephone says, standing.

PERS
I don't know yet.

RHEA
Are you going to talk to her?

PERS
I'm going to fucking try. But- but.... shit.

RHEA (NAR.)
She raises a hand to her mouth.

RHEA
Are you okay?

PERS
I have to pee all the time and I have insane heartburn but I also feel like I'm about to throw up. So like fire? That'd make sense because I'm sweating all the fucking time... Maybe if I tell Hera all that she'll be glad it didn't really fucking happen.

RHEA
That's not funny.

PERS
Of course it isn't fucking funny. Jesus christ my body is revolting and I still know enough not to say anything that insensitive. I'll give you lessons sometime.

RHEA
Man I hope your kid isn't soaking up any of your crazy.

PERS
And I hope you aren't FUCKING any of your crazy into anyone.

RHEA
WHAT did you just-

CLARK
Uhm, hello?

RHEA (NAR.)

Persephone prepares to push past Clark and suddenly- despite everything I can't help say-

RHEA

Wait, stay!

PERS

No.

RHEA (NAR.)

Persephone says, appalled, shoving past Clark who lingers in the doorway.

I suddenly want to be anywhere else. My skin itches. My mouth is dry.

RHEA

Is she okay?

RHEA (NAR.)

I eventually say.

CLARK

Little unclear.

RHEA

Yeah.

CLARK

Are you okay?

RHEA (NAR.)

Everything about every inch of his face tells me he wants to cross the room and- and what?

This is going to be complicated. There's going to be... feelings. A conversation. Eros and I spent a lot of nights out with a lot of different people- and that was fine. We never needed to have a conversation about what was going on because we didn't need to put anymore pressure on each other.

When everything else about your existence is so serious you just need someone in your life to just be... for fun.

RHEA

I can't deal... right now.

RHEA (NAR.)

I think I say out loud as I bury my face in my hands.

CLARK

Okay.

RHEA
Please go.

CLARK
Also okay.

RHEA (NAR.)
He says, lingering for a just a second more. Maybe I'll change my mind. Maybe he'll seek out that part of me that wants him to stay. To sit in silence. To hear me rage against Black and Apollo and Orsino and this whole fucking system for putting me into this role I have never asked for- never wanted.

CLARK
She's going to forgive you, you know. But she can't do that until she accepts what the actual truth is.

RHEA (NAR.)
Clark raps his knuckles on the door frame, and then leaves.

I lay back on the bed- stare at the matte metal ceiling of the car. It feels like 3- but it's not even 8 am.

Everything is so aggressively bright outside- the sunlight pounding onto the white snow outside. I jump up to my feet- stomp over to the fucking windows and grab the curtain. The itchy, cheap fabric clenched in my fist and yanked like I'm slitting the window's throat.

Finally. It's dark and musty and the sound is all damp.

I hate this. I hate this fucking train. Maybe we all should have gotten off. Left Rebekah and Orsino on this train with Apollo- hell I'd take Apollo if it meant Hera would come.

Why did I tell her now? In front of all those people- most of whom she barely knows or likes? Why couldn't I have waited? Why couldn't I have kept my fucking cool and not freaked out? Why am I like this? Why am I always so willing to take this shit out on people I actually like? Why can't I ever let Rebekah or Black have it?

I know why. It's because I know they won't hurt me back. They won't fight. They'll just take it. Which is good because you know, I don't want to feel better so much as I want someone else to feel worse. I don't deserve Clark or Hera. You know? I really fucking don't. It should have been... it should have been Iris who got them. She wouldn't have wasted any time getting fucked up and fighting about guys or or - What else do I even complain about? Fuck man, if Iris and Hera had been sisters they legit could have fixed this whole-this whole-

EROS
Hey, hey.

RHEA (NAR.)
Eros is right behind me. I shove him away.

RHEA
What the fuck do you want?

RHEA (NAR.)
I demand, wishing he'd just- throw open Persephone's door and leave.

RHEA
Huh?

RHEA (NAR.)
I shove him again.

EROS
I wanted to see if you were alright.

RHEA
Why?

EROS
Because you're upset. You're- you're crying.

RHEA (NAR.)
And I go to push him again, but he grabs my wrists. He holds them for a second. Lowers my arms.
I whip my hands out of his.

RHEA
I'm fine. Go.

RHEA (NAR.)
I spit. But unlike Clark- he doesn't budge. We both stand there, unmoving. Unsmiling. Strangers in a stranger place. I stalk away from him- without turning my back. We circle each other for a second. He backs up towards the wall with the darkened windows. I walk backwards and sit on the bed. He slides to the ground.

I look down at him. He folds his knees up to his chin.

I fold mine. Sit cross legged.

We watch each other for a long time. Breathing quietly. Barely blinking. I'm not sure when I stop crying- but I wasn't even aware that I'd started. The train fills the silence. Moving us further and further away from home. Closer to... I don't know.

RHEA
This isn't fair.

RHEA (NAR.)
I say, eventually.
He doesn't respond, just keeps watching me. Big eyes boring into me.

RHEA
No. It's worse than that. It's... it's fucked up. It's-cruel. You barely say a word to me for MONTHS. But now- these last 24 hours... What do you want from me, Er?

RHEA (NAR.)
He finally opens his mouth to respond but I interrupt him-

RHEA
And don't deflect or pretend like you haven't been acting like you don't hate me.

EROS
I don't hate you.

RHEA (NAR.)
He says, easily.

EROS
I hate how in my face you've been. And I hate having to be so close to you. And I hate how much I miss you.

RHEA
That is so... fucking dumb.

EROS
I hate that I knew you were going to say that.

RHEA
That counts as deflecting.

EROS
You know before, I was so jealous of how... how you were? How easily you shrugged off everything everyone has tried to put on us. Every other person couldn't shut up about past mistakes or... the future. Good or bad. But you... You were so stubbornly present.

Couldn't remember what you had for breakfast and didn't care what time you needed to get up tomorrow. I fucking loved that. I loved how... spontaneous you were. No one knew what you were gonna do next. Not even you. I wanted to be there with you, be close to you in the present. But I couldn't get there alone. I had to be fucked up all the time to just...

RHEA (NAR.)

He holds up his hands, frames my face from there on the floor.

EROS

Blur everything. So all I could see was you.

RHEA (NAR.)

He drops his hands.

EROS

Iris could never stop. She was always so worried about what she'd done and what she would never be able to do. She kept saying that the thing with Apollo had ruined any chance she had of making things right with you. Or Hera.

RHEA

Please don't do that.

EROS

See, you never let me talk about her.

RHEA

Talk about her all you want! But don't pretend she didn't DO bad things.

EROS

She made a mistake! So have you!

RHEA

So you've reminded me. Every fucking day. Why is it you have spent months punishing me for something- anything- but you've completely forgotten everything she did?

EROS

Because it was our mistakes that got her killed!

RHEA

I didn't DO anything! Neither did you!

EROS

And that's why she's dead!

RHEA (NAR.)

His voice cracks. Like he's a little kid.

EROS

I heard her. I heard her call out for me but I didn't get up. I didn't see what was wrong. And then Apollo killed her.

RHEA (NAR.)

I drop to my knees, on his eye level. There's a million questions I want to ask. But they'd all push him futher and further into that night.

RHEA
Hey.

RHEA (NAR.)
He buries his face in his arms.

RHEA
Hey!

RHEA (NAR.)
I say, tugging his ear. Just hard enough to get his attention. He snaps his head up.

RHEA
What did you just say?

EROS
I-

RHEA
HEY.

RHEA (NAR.)
I repeat.

RHEA
WHAT DID YOU JUST SAY?

RHEA (NAR.)
He pauses. Catches on.

EROS
Apollo killed her.

RHEA (NAR.)
I lean back.

RHEA
Say it again.

RHEA (NAR.)
He shakes his head.

EROS
Not until you do something for me.

RHEA (NAR.)
I cock an eyebrow

EROS
What happened to Hera?

RHEA
I told her-

EROS
Ah, ah-

RHEA
I-

EROS
Rhea.

RHEA
Black lied to Hera. Apollo lied to Hera... happy?

EROS
No. You?

RHEA
Nah.

EROS
We tried.

RHEA (NAR.)
He smiles and my whole body tingles. The way your skin does after a long winter the first time you feel the weak spring sun's caress.

EROS
You're smiling a lot for a person who is not happy.

RHEA (NAR.)
I prop my chin up on my knees.

RHEA
You're wrong you know.

EROS
I know.

RHEA
No, not about-

RHEA (NAR.)
I gesture to his grin.

RHEA
That situation.

I've always been worried about what's gonna happen. You just didn't want to hear it. How many times did I wonder aloud if this-

RHEA (NAR.)
I point to him. Then to me.

RHEA

- This was gonna be it. If we weren't going to end up being the last people on the planet.

EROS

I guess that never sounded all that scary to me.

RHEA (NAR.)

My back is still against the bed. His the wall. Our toes are six inches or so apart. But the tension is the air is so heavy- he might as well be on top of me.

RHEA

Can I ask you something?

RHEA (NAR.)

He shrugs.

RHEA

Even if you forgive me for what happened to Iris. Even if you forgive yourself.

EROS

Mhm...

RHEA

You're... never going to forgive us, right?

RHEA (NAR.)

He slowly, but definitively, shakes his head.

RHEA

This is over.

RHEA (NAR.)

Now he nods. Head, heavy.

RHEA

You promise?

EROS

Yes.

RHEA (NAR.)

He says barely above a whisper.

EROS

I promise. This is over.

RHEA (NAR.)

He says, slowly extending a hand. Pinky out. I would laugh at the absurdity of it if I could breathe.

Instead I offer the only appropriate response. My own pinky. Our fingers lock. Like we're six again.

Like nothing in the last 17 years has happened. He's the same. We will be here for as long as these two shitty, disappointing bodies allow. Never getting nearer or farther than this playground connection. He feels it. I know because he's yet to release my finger. He rubs his thumb over my fist. Trying to keep it together, I raise our hands to my face. Kiss my hand.

RHEA
This is over.

RHEA (NAR.)
He nods. Understanding but still not releasing me.

Instead he pulls me roughly to him, my knees now on the ground so there's no space between he and I. He kisses me, hard and hot and I don't have any time to think about anything but how much I have missed the exact pressure of his exact lips on mine. I go to run my hands through his curls but- right.

EROS
You hate it.

RHEA (NAR.)
He breathes.

RHEA
I really do.

RHEA (NAR.)
I say- nipping- ever so slightly- his ear with my teeth. He tucks his arms under me. Lifts me just enough to throw me onto the bed. And all at once I feel right and wrong and good and bad and- and so much like myself again.

END OF EPISODE