

Lesser Gods Season 3, Chapter 1

By

Colleen Scriven

9.11.18

LESSER GODS SEASON 3, CHAPTER 1

Scene: 1

(BABY CRYING)

RHEA (NAR.)

I lie, face down on the pillow. My arms too tired to even push myself up. Despite the fact I can barely breathe. Maybe I'll die like this. The worst kind of naked thanks to being the worst kind of sweaty. My poor, destroyed nipples leaking onto the sheets.

(CRYING)

Bet they're still gonna bring me to him- not so much a sacrificial lamb as a lamb chop. Dinner. Ready to be sucked dry.

I roll over and onto my feet. Pull on an over sized tee shirt. Something about it doesn't smell great. Part of me almost feels sorry for my clothes, they used to spend their nights crusted in happy, dance sweat. Cheap beer and expensive vodka. Now? Sour breast milk and baby puke. *Hot.*

I pad down the hall, note the light under Hera's door. I take big, slow steps. You know, just in case she hears what I'm hearing. Wants to join me. I reach the top of the stairs. Dammit Hera.

I plunk down each step, she's not sleeping anyway so what-

Wait... does that mean someone is keeping her up?

Fucking finally. Was starting to feel like a convent in here. I wish I was happier for her then I was sorry for myself.

(CRYING GETS LOUDER)

The closer I get the louder the sound. I veer into the kitchen. Pause at the sight of an open bottle of bourbon. Damn, Hera. Okay.

(CRYING IS LOUDEST)

What the fuck is-

EROS

Woah, woah. Sorry.

RHEA (NAR.)

Eros is just a few feet behind me, audio receiver in one hand, glass in the other.

(CONTINUED)

EROS

Woke me up.

RHEA

What did?

RHEA (NAR.)

He glances at the monitor, missing the joke.

EROS

Are you going?

RHEA

Yeah.

RHEA (NAR.)

I say sliding into my sneakers, crushing the back down. Forcing them to be clogs. I don't bother to bend over and fix them.

EROS

Like that?

RHEA

Not really in the mood for a lecture on how to behave from a guy who keeps showing up on my doorstep tipsy and sad.

EROS

Hey I love it. I'm going to wear it to the party on Friday.

RHEA

Oh, fuck. That's Friday?

EROS

Our birthday?... And for the record I'm going for tipsy and *pensive*.

RHEA (NAR.)

The rules I set a year ago are still in place. My relationship with Er is a- a *neat* friendship. I never seek him out or confide in him or- get within two feet of him. But he's retaken up drinking like a fish to gin. Better than using anything harder. But still, the memory of what happened when he got too far in his own head... Plus, if he goes home alone- he'll just be stuck with all his Apollo memories. Including the last one. So... now his drool stains my throw pillows. At least until he gets a new chap.

I turn towards the sink. Open the cabinet beneath. Where it used to be dark, is now light. The tunnel has

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

RHEA (NAR.) (cont'd)
become the official way to transport me and Persephone
at all hours of the night to where the Offs are.

EROS
I'm just saying you should put on pants.

RHEA
Eros you know half the remaining population has now
seen my vagina right? And not even on one of its good
days.

RHEA (NAR.)
At this, he relents. Raises his hands.

EROS
Can I come?

RHEA
No.

RHEA (NAR.)
He turns to go back to the living room but stops when
he hears what I hear.
(THUMPING)
He turns to me and we stand there, facing each other
while we listen to the unmistakable, rhythmic sound of
fucking that is not our own.

EROS
Is that... Hera?

RHEA (NAR.)
I shrug.

EROS
I don't wanna stay and listen to that.

RHEA (NAR.)
The monitor sparks to life again, wailing.

RHEA
Fine, if you prefer *that*.

RHEA (NAR.)
I say, slipping down the chute, only to step on a
staircase. Weirdly missing the old drop that
accompanied the beginning of all my adventures.

EROS
Remember when I sprained my ankle falling?

RHEA

It wasn't a *bad* sprain.

RHEA (NAR.)

Remembering that we still managed to dance in the dark to Bowie.

EROS

Don't think I've been down here since the make over...

RHEA

Yeah, it's oh so safe because god forbid I trip and die and they just milk my corpse.

EROS

Hey, don't talk like that.

RHEA (NAR.)

He says, reaching for my hand. I take it back.

RHEA

You don't talk like *that*.

EROS

Fine.

RHEA (NAR.)

He's been like this for the past year. All through the pregnancy and all the sleepless nights since. He wants to help. Or he wants me to *know* he wants to help. But he's settled for melding into the living room furniture. I can't figure out what his angle is. Prove he isn't the kinda guy who kills people when he's upset?

He walks in front of me, hips swaying carelessly in the light.

Nothing's happened since that morning on the train. Not with him. Not with Clark. I just can't imagine having the energy. For sex or drama or even like- emotional intimacy. Every part of me is tired and feels bored with exhaustion. Even though I haven't had to do anything since he came 3 months ago. No work outs, no live events. No copping, thank god. Just photo shoots and interviews where Hera writes my answers.

The uh- exit. Birth. Whatever, was hard on my body. For a group of scientists everyone is weirdly science-phobic. *Natural* birth. They said. Just like MIUCs are *natural*. They had to do a C section on Pers. Which she hated. She wanted to hold her's right away. Soon as it happened she was in, man. She didn't change

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

RHEA (NAR.) (cont'd)

so much as pivot. She took all of her focus and ploys and just directed them at... Off stuff.

I'm happy for her. I am.

Between her and Hera, there's enough maternal energy to make up for whatever I seem to so clearly be lacking.

We come now to the door that leads up into the Nest. Not sure what bird freak is naming our facilities but between this and the Yolk- somebody has an agenda.

Two guards stand at the door. I wave. They let me and Er pass. They exchange a little glance between them.

See this? This is why I don't like paling around with him after dark. I get enough whispers and eyebrow raising solo.

Walking up the stairs we see more and more guards as we come closer to the door to the room. The walls are cake batter yellow, forced soothing and sweet like chloroform. The room is also doused in some kind of soft smell. Like cotton. Mozart plays very very softly. They want the Offs to be chill *and* smart.

I just hope they're not smart enough to learn how fucked up all this is.

We enter the Nest. Everything inside is cool blues. Pillows and throws on couches no one ever gets to sit on. The two actual cribs are separated by sound proof glass walls. Guess Rebekah is hoping that you can't expect privacy if you've never had it. The room where P is (Persephone the Second) is dark. She must be asleep. His cubicle is a different story. An overwhelmed night nurse is holding him. Eyes pressed in fury, tiny toothless mouth open. Screaming on the other side of the glass. If I didn't have to go in there and deal with him, this would actually be super funny. But alas. I pause, press my hand to the door like I'm going to enter. The nurse spots me. Doesn't look too relieved. Like what? Like I'm going to make things worse. Like I'm going to just be another thing they have to take care of. Fucking useless, man. Even when I succeeded, I failed.

EROS

Where's the live stream?

RHEA

Wait- have you never been in here?

EROS

Someone hasn't invited me.

RHEA (NAR.)

Char has been here a handful of times for photo shoots. He balances the baby on one hand. Pretends he's a weight. Bench presses the 3 month old. Char has a very limited imagination. But it doesn't matter. Rebekah thought it was easier to go along with what I shouted that day. "It's in our best interest to have the public trust all of us." So now Char has to play Dad and Chaperone.

RHEA

You never thought it was convenient that they were always sleeping or just lying there kicking? Did you think Char was reading them Goodnight Moon or Ulysses?

EROS

But *why* is the Old Woman whispering hush?

RHEA

It's the same few videos on repeat.

EROS

Damn, I feel stupid for being surprised.

RHEA (NAR.)

I shrug. In the last year he's somehow tried to change back into who he was before Iris died. Less cynical. In some ways, it's worked. But in others... It feels a bit like gluing together a mirror. Cracks are still there, splinters the reflection of yourself too.

EROS

Let me try something-

RHEA (NAR.)

Eros greets the nurse with a smile, takes the tiny pink person from her hands. Presses him to his chest. Rocks him. He quiets. Snuggles up to Eros' worn soft, vodka-scented tee shirt.

In the light, I get a really good look at the two of them.

Eros hair is matted and sticking out at crazy angles. There's more dried drool on his face than the baby's. He smiles as the tiny eyelids flutter and close. A small victory. Eros is happy. In a way that makes everything a little sadder. That Adam isn't his.

(CONTINUED)

I shut my eyes hard. Listen to the sound of my heart whispering something that doesn't sound like "sorry."

Scene 2

EROS (NAR.)

How do you see me?

After all this time.

I think, staring down at Adam. But feeling Rhea's eyes on me.

I lift him closer to me. Breathe in. I know we were all kinda focused on the species dying out- but we didn't spend nearly enough time worrying about the extinction of new-fucking-baby smell.

The nurse nervously clears her throat.

EROS

Couldn't help it.

EROS (NAR.)

I say sheepishly, grinning. She shakes her head, disarmed. Steps outside to talk to Rhea who still watches me through the glass. I mime dropping Adam. But Rhea doesn't react.

EROS

Damn. This isn't going to be easy.

EROS (NAR.)

I say out loud. But Adam isn't listening. He's now staring up at me anxiously. Suspiciously. Damn. He *is* Clark's.

I didn't always care about this. The way I should have. In fact for the first 21 years of my life this whole thing seemed kinda pointless. Just building a sand castle while the tide rose.

Iris changed my mind.

I don't think I need to tell you that it wasn't my idea. One day I just got called to Black's office with Apollo and they laid out the plan for me. I didn't want to do it. Didn't get why they couldn't test whatever drugs out on Rhea. They told me they were only offering this to me and Iris privately as a courtesy. They had no problem letting everyone know that Iris was... more fertile or whatever than Rhea. That didn't matter to me, whatever they said was going on inside us just

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

EROS (NAR.) (cont'd)

seemed abstract and unreal. But Rhea *would* have a problem with the news. Because of the Iris of it all.

So in a really dumb way to avoid causing more trouble- I told Rhea I wasn't feeling well one night and snuck over to Iris'. When I entered through the kitchen she was wearing sweatpants and drinking a beer. Or holding it at least. It was a prop. She was in costume. For me. It took me way too long to realize that.

I wanted to get the whole thing over with right away. But I mean, I phrased it differently. I hope I did. She probably saw right through me anyway.

But when we got to her room... I mean, I'd never been up there. But the room and the house were the same layout as Rhea's and mine. But it was so quiet. No chaperone bustling around somewhere. No record spinning softly. No Lauren Bachall whispering something into Bogart's ear. The soundtrack of Rhea's I'd become accustomed to was totally absent.

I couldn't drink the beer she gave me. I just stood there. Picking at the label in the doorway, the wet scraps hitting the carpet. She just sat on the bed. Braiding her soft, long blonde hair. Trying to make small talk the way you ask someone how their dinner is as the house burns down.

I couldn't figure out how to start. I knew how to cop and I knew how to have sex. But I didn't know which one this was supposed to be.

And Iris, I mean she'd never... with anyone outside the lab but Apollo. At least- I don't *think* she had. Even now I can't stop... doing that to her. Assuming.

I'd for sure only had non government mandated sex with Rhea. Not that anyone believes that. Pretty sure people think they can pay to watch. Double it to join.

Just because we agreed to that one time. As a *joke*.

I tried to focus on the bright light- imagine it was the lab. But the lights where more champagne than fluorescent. There were no gray robes to drop. No heart monitors to itch. Her bed looked so much softer than the cot in the observation room we used to call Rosalind Black. Because it was stiff and cold and generally sucked.

(CONTINUED)

IRIS

I'm sorry.

EROS (NAR.)

She said.

IRIS

I don't think this is going to work.

EROS (NAR.)

I nodded, relieved.

She rose. And crossed the room to where I stood. She reached me. Then dropped to her knees.

EROS

Woah- woah-

EROS (NAR.)

I protested. But a second later she popped back up. Fist full of tiny pieces of the shredded beer bottle label.

IRIS

That was driving me insane.

EROS (NAR.)

And she gave me an almost invisible, self satisfied smirk before leaving the room.

IRIS

Come on.

EROS (NAR.)

She called from downstairs. I took a deep breath, downed the beer, and followed her voice to the kitchen.

IRIS

Wanna play a game?

EROS (NAR.)

She said, pouring a large glass of white wine.

EROS

I uh, didn't know you liked games.

IRIS

I don't. But I'm competitive.

EROS

I forced a laugh. She sighed.

(CONTINUED)

IRIS

Eros, why'd you agree to this?

EROS (NAR.)

I thought as fast as I could.

EROS

Curiosity.

IRIS

You're not acting very curious.

EROS (NAR.)

And she leaned forward, looked at me over her glass. Eyes half lidded. Seeing something I couldn't.

You know, since we'd found out about her and Apollo-Rhea had been sure that somehow Iris planned the whole thing. That Apollo was too self-absorbed to be thinking about anyone else. I never bought that. Until that very second. Maybe that whole time I should have been giving Iris a lot more credit.

It scared me. Made me feel like she saw me the way she saw him. Just a sleazy liar.

EROS

I think I should go.

IRIS

What? Why?

EROS (NAR.)

She said suddenly confused. I didn't know what to say, so I just shook my head.

IRIS

I don't know how to do this either. And- And I know you'd rather be with her.

EROS

Yeah but- but that has nothing to do with you.

IRIS

Competitive, remember?

EROS (NAR.)

She said, more bored than sad.

IRIS

You love her.

(CONTINUED)

EROS

I do.

IRIS

What's that feel like?

EROS

You know. You loved him.

IRIS

I *what*?

EROS (NAR.)

Her jaw dropped in the most dignified way possible.

EROS

It's what he told Hera.

EROS (NAR.)

She raised an eyebrow. I suddenly felt both warmer and stupider than usual.

EROS

That's a lie. Duh.

IRIS

"Duh" is fucking right. Why would you believe *him*?

EROS

I couldn't understand why else you would... do it.

IRIS

I didn't need much of a motive. It was medium good sex, not a murder, Eros.

EROS (NAR.)

She said, swallowing back her wine. She thought, tapped a finger to her pink lips.

IRIS

I can't believe you all thought that I would feel that way about someone... so...

EROS (NAR.)

And in place of a word, she just waved a hand over her head to communicate Apollo's constantly coiffed hair.

IRIS

I am intelligent and witty and likable- well to *most*. And yet...

(CONTINUED)

EROS (NAR.)

She gestured to the radiant emptiness around her

IRIS

I don't think you could ever understand what it's like to want something- someone- but to literally have no one left. It's like aching with nostalgia for something that never existed.

EROS (NAR.)

She tipped her head back to keep tears from spilling down her cheeks.

IRIS

It's so *sad*. I mean- it's *Apollo*.

EROS (NAR.)

And then she did this thing- half laugh, half sob. She tried to hide it in her glass but ended up snorting wine into her nose, coughing chardonnay onto the counter top.

There was nothing gorgeous or graceful or *Iris* about it. She was embarrassed. She was beautiful.

She started trying to mop up the counter top with a towel. But I stopped her.

EROS

Here.

EROS (NAR.)

I said. Wiping down the surface with the hem of my tee shirt.

EROS

Done. Now-

EROS (NAR.)

I said, pulling a stool up to her's.

EROS

Tell me some embarrassing stuff about Apollo.

EROS (NAR.)

And we stayed like that- a few bottles later. Becoming friends for the first time since we were 13. We laughed a ton. She was just showing me her impression of Apollo mispronouncing the name "Basquiat" when her ID bracelet started to ring.

EROS

Damn, is this what time you get up everyday?

IRIS

No. No. Hormone injection time.

EROS

Oh. Right.

EROS (NAR.)

A pause. A reminder of why we were really there.

EROS

Why are you doing this? Why does succeeding matter to you so much?

IRIS

It's our whole... reason for being here.

EROS

That sounds like some caveman shit. The biologic pull. The selfishness of a legacy.

EROS (NAR.)

She cocked an eyebrow.

IRIS

And that sounds like some Rhea shit.

EROS (NAR.)

To that, I had no answer.

IRIS

To give life, to want to be able to share everything you love about it... About what the human species has accomplished... If my only legacy is sharing the achievements of others... I don't know what's so selfish about that.

EROS (NAR.)

Her bracelet rung again and she left the room.

I listened to her climb the stairs. Just thought about... the general unfairness of everything she had to go through... and followed her up. I watched her fill the large needle. Wondered what this girl, without friends or someone to love or anyone else here darkening any of her bright doorways- what was it she found so wonderful about life that she'd want to waste hers doing this?

(CONTINUED)

EROS

Can I help?

EROS (NAR.)

I asked, because even then I knew she was smarter than I was. And whatever she could see about this world that I couldn't, had to be worth fighting for.

She paused, but then nodded. Handed the needle to me. And turned away.

IRIS

I usually do my thigh but uh... the bruising... Is getting kind of bad. If you could uh.... if you could do it... In my butt.

EROS

I laughed so hard I nearly dropped the syringe.

Yes. I will stab you in the butt.

IRIS

Well A) Don't use the phrase "stab." B) You don't have to. It's, you know, *intimate*.

EROS

Iris, I've seen your butt.

She shrugged, turned away. Dropped her pants and underwear as I dropped down to uh- butt level. I took a breath, suddenly kinda nervous.

IRIS

Eros? I will be fine.

EROS (NAR.)

She said looking down at me over her shoulder. Somehow still composed despite the situation.

After the injection I straightened up. She began to pull her pants up, but stopped. Took a step closer to me.

EROS

Should we?

IRIS

Only if you want to.

EROS (NAR.)

I dropped the syringe. Reached for her delicate fingers. She was probably *still* breathing wine out of her nose... I *did* want to.

(CONTINUED)

I leaned in to kiss her.

But she stopped me.

IRIS

I don't think we should do that. I need to know what we're doing to her isn't like what I did to Hera.

EROS (NAR.)

I nodded, grateful she had not used Rhea's name.

So, careful to avoid my lips, she pulled me down on top of her...

SOUND: CRYING

EROS (NAR.)

Adam starts crying again in my arms. Nice while it lasted.

For the first few weeks after we found out about Rhea, and I thought the baby might be mine... I felt... useful? Like Iris would have been happy, like I was happy. But then we found out he was Clark's and as the months passed... I couldn't get away from my thoughts of what I did to Apollo and even fucking Orsino. But then, I started focusing again on her. Iris. My friend. What they did to her. How they used her death. Since then, I've been trying to be less destructive. More productive. If I could just feel how I did when I thought I had succeeded-

RHEA

Here.

EROS (NAR.)

Rhea says, taking him from me.

RHEA

Come on, dude. You're fine. You're fine. We're here.

EROS

We, huh?

RHEA

Don't get too excited. I'm talking about my boobs.

EROS (NAR.)

And for just a second- I see her in there. A flit of a smile at her own joke. The old Rhea. Who was always funny and irreverent and honestly? Wanted to jump my fucking bones. When I wasn't talking to Rhea, that didn't make me feel any better. Now at least, trying to

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

EROS (NAR.) (cont'd)
get closer to her. Making her feel better. I mean,
that's a goal. That's something good I can do.

Then, when she's feeling like herself again, I mean who
knows... Maybe she and I can make our own kid. Right? I
mean we've got a whole world to-

RHEA
Fuck.

EROS (NAR.)
She says.

RHEA
I see now that if I take off the shirt to feed him...
I'll be...

EROS
Yep.

RHEA
Naked. Damn. Fucking... Baby brain.

EROS (NAR.)
She whispers.

EROS
Well...

EROS (NAR.)
I say, undoing my belt and dropping my jeans. I step
out of them. Hand them to her.

EROS
Topless is better than bottom and topless.

EROS (NAR.)
She pauses before trading me the baby for the pants.
She steps into them, they're a little looser than they
would have been on her before. She then unceremoniously
takes off her shirt.

She takes Adam back.

RHEA
Thanks.

EROS
For sure.

EROS (NAR.)

I say, cold now in my boxers, but not feeling it. Because Adam is quiet. And she's standing there in my pants. And something about this scene feels like a beginning.

SCENE 3

(LOUD MUSIC)

HERA (NAR.)

This was a mistake.

I think as loud as I can over the music and the loud, drunk people. I am not drunk. I am standing nervously at the bar, perfectly comfortable, as elsewhere people trample each other to get to the front. I walked in and they just parted for me. Almost jumping back as if by static electricity, something about my presence repelling them.

They made way for me as I approached the large, black, sticky granite. The bartender rushed over to me- some guy in his 60s. That isn't old because everyone here is older than me. Like it used to be before Rhea was born. I forgot how unnerving that was. I tried to think of something to order, but froze. I felt everyone's eyes on me. Can't do beer because I don't like it. Can't do wine because *of course Hera would order wine at a dive bar*. Can't do any hard alcohol because then everyone would just think I was self medicating, numbing my suffering because Apollo is gone.

I scan the bottles behind the bar like one of them will speak to me.

HEP

Champagne.

HERA (NAR.)

I hear just a few inches from my ear. I turn suddenly-shocked to find anyone so close. Shocked to find *him* so close.

He's broad with messy hair. Maybe shorter than me. But too close to tell. His eyes are light, set in a round face. Bushy, friendly eyebrows. Cinnamon colored scruff dusting the lower half of his face. Hair the same color- but streaked with grey in some places. He must be... maybe Rebekah's batch.

(CONTINUED)

HEP

Whenever I don't know what to order, I go for champagne.

HERA

Why?

HEP

I like to celebrate my own indecisiveness.

HERA (NAR.)

He smiles a big, crooked grin. And I feel a lurch in my stomach I haven't felt in a really, really long time. For a second I'm worried I'm going to throw up.

HERA

Excuse me? Two champagnes please.

HERA (NAR.)

The man next to me nods, appreciatively.

HEP

Wow, you're going to drink two on your own...

HERA (NAR.)

I'm immediately embarrassed.

HERA

Oh- are you-?

HERA (NAR.)

I stutter as the bartender slides two tall- maybe not clean- flutes over to us.

HEP

I'm kidding. I will help.

HERA (NAR.)

He says, taking one. Raising it.

HEP

Cheers.

HERA (NAR.)

I raise my own glass. Graze his. Even in the loud bar, I can hear the "clink" they create like a warning shot.

HEP

It's good to see you again.

HERA (NAR.)

Ah. Fuck. We've met. Of course we've met. Everyone has met.

(CONTINUED)

HEP

You've been a little busier than I have.

HERA

That is... the easiest way to describe my life.

HEP

Well, you stood out even when we were kids.

HERA (NAR.)

Oh no. We are from the same gen.

HEP

Hephaestus.

HERA (NAR.)

He says smiling, putting me out of my misery.

HERA

Oh my god, Hep?

HERA (NAR.)

He nods.

HERA

I didn't recognize you. Your hair is- and you're... *bigger*. And you know, I'm very rude.

HERA (NAR.)

He laughs, which makes me feel a little better about not recognizing someone I grew up with. Someone I had government mandated sex with.

HERA

Where have you been?

HEP

Uhm- do you remember Ischmael Brown? The uh- really boring guy who was always talking about dams?

HERA

Civil engineer.

HEP

Same thing. Well, after I got marked non viable I followed him to some projects North.

HERA

What could you possibly have found interesting about the Great Lakes?

HERA (NAR.)

I say, allowing myself to relax a little.

HEP

Wasn't the lakes I was interested in.

HERA (NAR.)

He says, smiling, while I redden. Feeling unbelievably stupid. *Hera you heteronormative idiot.*

HEP

Boring. But hey, less murder mysteries and train mutinies.

HERA (NAR.)

And now my embarrassment is eclipsed by an unexpected pang of guilt and confusion (because of the guilt). That comes with the mention of the train.

HERA

Like you said, I've been busy.

HERA (NAR.)

I take a huge swig of champagne.

HEP

I didn't know you hung out in places like this.

HERA

Well, since Rhea's taken a break I figure I better help cover their losses.

HEP

The chaperone life.

HERA

Only kind of. I mean, the whole system has changed. Charon is with Persephone. Talc is with Clark. I'm *kinda* with Rhea-

HEP

Apollo is out West.

HERA

Yeah.

HERA (NAR.)

I say after a beat. Always shocked by how easily everyone believed the lie. How much I like to believe it to. He isn't dead, petrified by ice and snow. No. He's just out west. Working with groups there as they form new treatments. He's a great subject. Oldest viable man left. So healthy.

I choke the lie down like medicine. It burns. And I never feel better so much as part of me knows the sickness won't be satiated for long.

HEP

Sorry.

HERA (NAR.)

Hep says, leaning in.

HEP

You probably miss him.

HERA (NAR.)

I finish my glass.

I don't.

I blurt out.

I don't miss him.

He stares at me for a beat. Smiles.

HEP

Thank god.

HERA

Don't tell anyone. Or do. I don't care.

HERA (NAR.)

I say, hoping he cannot tell how very much I care.

HEP

He sucked.

HERA

He did.

HEP

Like he *really* sucked. He's acted like he owned you since we were 12. Can I get you another one?

HERA (NAR.)

He asks as his hand skims mine.

HERA

You know I'm not really looking to be owned again.

HEP

Who said anything about that? I'm just here for a totally fun, meaningless night or doing absolutely anything. You just can't talk about infrastructure.

BARTENDER

Can I uh, get you anything else Hera?

HERA (NAR.)

Hep turns to me, raises his eyebrows. I hesitate, unable to tell if I'm ready to do this. If I'll ever be ready. But if not now, when? It's been a year. I deserve to have some fucking fun. But what if I'm- Fuck it.

HERA

You can't talk about Apollo.

HEP

Deal.

HERA (NAR.)

He says.

HERA

Champagne. At my place.

HERA (NAR.)

I say, celebrating my indecisiveness.

...

The coolness of that moment wears off almost immediately. I find myself sitting comically far away from him in the cramped interior of the car. Walking three steps ahead of him up my stairs. My hands shake. I'm nervous. Please let Rhea be asleep.

HEP

Hey, Hera?

HERA (NAR.)

I turn around as we reach the security detail at the top of the stairs.

HEP

Hera? Just say the word and I'm gone. The word is "Concrete embankment."

HERA

That's two words.

HERA (NAR.)

I say, entering the house. He follows.

It's dark but there is a distinct- yep.

(SNORING)

Eros is asleep, dirty sneakers dangling off the couch.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

HERA (NAR.) (cont'd)

I bring a finger to my lips. Hep gives me an "okay" sign.

We creep up the stairs. I feel him somewhere behind me in my electrical field, it makes my heart pound in my chest. We get to my room. I quickly close the door behind me.

HEP

Uh-

HERA (NAR.)

Hep says, and I realize a second later-

HERA

Fuck. The champagne is in the kitchen.

HEP

That's fine! That's fine. Would have been really hard to open quietly anyway.

HERA

Eros. Yeah. He's here.

HEP

I noticed.

HERA

A lot. He's here a lot.

HEP

Are he and Rhea-?

HERA

No. No. Uhm- they're just like the world's weirdest friends. She doesn't feel that way about him anymore.

HEP

Ah so we got a little heart breaker hotel.

HERA (NAR.)

I laugh.

HEP

I haven't been in here. I haven't been in any of the chaperone's rooms in the Bricks.

HERA

Have you been in any of the Five's?

HERA (NAR.)

He laughs. Shakes his head.

HERA

Well, see one. Seen 'em all. Or... well this is how the room came. I never changed anything.

HEP

Never?

HERA

No- it all seemed... fine.

HEP

Hera, come on. It's been over ten years. Think of all the ghosts hiding in here.

HERA

Well, our decor budget's been slashed. Lucky for the ghosts.

HEP

We gotta do something.

HERA (NAR.)

His big brown eyes scan the room quickly under his brows. In the light grays and greens of my room his skin looks tan and dark.

HEP

I bet you can see the sunset from bed if you shift it this way.

HERA (NAR.)

He says, striding over the bedside. He lifts experimentally.

HERA

I am usually out of bed by the time the sun sets.

HEP

Then you're not doing it right.

HERA (NAR.)

He says, comically stone faced.

He nods towards the bed. I relent. Cross, and lift the other side. We shuffle nonsexily to the place by the window, lower it.

HEP

Now we just have to move the dresser-
(CRYING)

HERA (NAR.)

And then from somewhere else in the house I hear it—the monitor. Adam is crying.

HERA

Rhea.

HERA (NAR.)

I say.

HEP

- Can handle it. Besides. This? This is an emergency. You can't access your underwear drawer.

HERA (NAR.)

He says. Gesturing to a drawer being hindered by the bed's new placement. I pause. Think. This isn't the first time she's been summoned to feed Adam in the middle of the night. And it definitely won't be the last. If I could go instead of her, I would. In a second. But they'll make her go anyway.

There's another THUD as Hep tries to move the heavy dresser on his own. I leap over to him.

HERA

We should still be quiet.

HEP

Then you better help.

HERA (NAR.)

We move the dresser. Which means we have to move an end table. The other end table. A standing lamp. A shoe rack. The rug. It's an hour before we're done.

HERA

Is that everything?

HERA (NAR.)

I sigh finally, surveying the room.

HEP

I think we should try moving the bed *back*.

HERA

Are you-

HERA (NAR.)

But he isn't serious. He's smirking. The room looks... well, different. Not transformed. But changed. The furniture has still played audience to everything that's happened to me here. But now they're looking at me from a different angle.

HEP

What do you think?

HERA (NAR.)

Hep says. Wiping a little bit of sweat from his forehead with the sleeve of his tee shirt. Exposing his thick bicep.

I pull him to me and kiss him. He takes me in his arms, pushes me back onto the bed.

Change is good. I think.

Scene 4

(MOZART)

PERS (NAR.)

I read that babies should listen to Mozart.

So they're smarter.

And trust me, my baby is going to be smart. Not that she has much competition.

I think, looking over at Adam- collick-ey in Rhea's arms. I know he is three months younger than P but still- I'm pretty sure she was much more vocal. Well, they do say girls mature faster than boys.

At every age. I think, looking over at Eros- draped on the couch. Long arms hanging off one end, feet off the other. No pants.

P in my arms. I slip out of our little fish tank and into Adam's.

RHEA

You guys having a very slow, very lame dance party?

PERS (NAR.)

She says in reference to the music.

PERS

Classical music is good for their brains. You want me to play it for him?

RHEA

Nah. Gonna throw on some Hall and Oats. Want him to grow up with a sick mustache.

(PAUSE, NOT SURE HOW PERS WILL TAKE THIS)

(CONTINUED)

PERS (NAR.)

I laugh, shake my head. Rhea is skinnier. Heavier bags under her eyes. She's miserable. But she's still funny.

PERS

How're you doing?

PERS (NAR.)

I say, softly.

RHEA

Same.

PERS

He's going to start sleeping more. Three month mark.

PERS (NAR.)

She shrugs. Stares at P.

RHEA

She looks like you.

PERS (NAR.)

She says softly. And she does. I think. Big eyes. Thick dark hair, short and soft. None of the stone henge-like features of Dion's face.

RHEA

What're you doing up this early?

PERS

I come here first everyday. Need to make sure she hasn't turned into a giant overnight.

PERS (NAR.)

Who knows- she could still end up as big as him. As long as that's after I stop carrying her.

PERS

Besides- big day.

RHEA

Tuesday?

PERS

It's Thursday. And also- I am officially 26 weeks out.

PERS (NAR.)

26 weeks out that is, from giving birth. The doctors kept telling me that the pregnancy was hard on my body. But besides that spotting on the train and then some abnormal placental hormones- the nine months were a breeze. Really. I loved it. Even while on bedrest-

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

PERS (NAR.) (cont'd)
which really isn't a big deal. Everyone overreacted to everything. They had no one to compare to.

RHEA
I don't know dude. I couldn't imagine going through it all over again.

PERS
It's not about going through it. It's about being a part of-

RHEA
I know. I know. But Pers, you don't... *need* to do anything for anyone. Look at yourself. You're like the fucking Madonna. No one would flinch if you ate your baby.

PERS (NAR.)
I tense up, defensive but trying not to react because I know Rhea is having a bad morning. I hold P close to my chest. Feel her soft dark hair under my chin. Her tiny pillow-like hands. The Cesarean scar burns under my shirt.

PERS
How long have you guys been here?

RHEA
Couple of hours. Since about 4.

PERS
How's everything going with him?

RHEA
He's pooped like 3 times.

PERS
I meant Eros.

RHEA
Me too.

PERS (NAR.)
She says, turning to Er. Who'd we'd probably be able to hear snore if it wasn't for the glass.

RHEA
He's fine. The whole showing up to my house thing is becoming more regular. Char needs to either stop drinking with him or start sleeping with him. In a platonic way. Or, whatever.

PERS (NAR.)

I watch her as she watches his chest rise and fall.

RHEA

I can't believe you're excited to cop again.

PERS

Rhea, I'm not. In fact- I have some ideas. No one was conceived by copping right? These were both love matches.

PERS (NAR.)

Rhea snorts.

PERS

You know what I mean. I'm just saying- we could *reform* the system.

RHEA

Still sounds like I'm going to have to fuck one of them.

PERS

Wait- so Eros is climbing into your bed every night and you two aren't-

RHEA

He is falling onto the *couch*. Where he sleeps alone.

PERS (NAR.)

Doubt it. I think. But don't say because, you know, I'm cool now.

PERS

Well, Clark-

RHEA

Doesn't have a whole lot to say to me. Does he?

PERS (NAR.)

I let that sit. She isn't wrong, but she isn't totally right.

We've become close, he and I. Partly because we need to spend so much time doing baby stuff. And partly because... we just understand each other. The loneliness he grew up with, the way people lied and mistreated him. I get it. It's easy to slip back into that place, to shy away from the crowds. Mistrust everyone who wants to get close to you. It's nice to have someone I don't need to explain that stuff to.

PERS

Wait- who are you having sex with?

RHEA

No one.

PERS

What do you think about when you masturbate?

RHEA

Sleeping.

PERS (NAR.)

I shake my head, trying not to laugh because both Adam and P are now asleep. Rhea lowers him into his crib. Backs up slowly as if from a ticking time bomb.

PERS

You know, if you wanted to meet someone else-

RHEA

I do not have your stamina.

PERS

I'm only having hooking up with anyone on days that begin with the letter T.

RHEA

Persephone scheduling hookups. Scary.

PERS (NAR.)

Scheduling the nights and the people. I think. Not that that hasn't been a *logistical* nightmare. You know what it's like to meet someone- catch their eye over the shoulder of one of your 5 security guards- make your way across the room. let your fingertips graze his or her arm. Lean into their ear, spread your lips and whisper- "Have you ever been apprehended by a government agent for trafficking materials considered illegal or harmful?" Yes, I've memorized the background check.

HERA

Good morning!

PERS (NAR.)

Hera says brightly, sliding the glass door open. I hand over P.

RHEA

I'm sure it has been.

(CONTINUED)

PERS (NAR.)

Rhea says weirdly. Hera swivels her head to Rhea. Bites her lip, cocks her head, before turning back to the baby.

HERA

And good morning to you, Sweet Pea.

PERS (NAR.)

I love watching Hera with them. She just... radiates warmth.

RHEA

Dude, I need breakfast.

CHAR

No can do, gang. Got a meeting with Rebekah.

PERS (NAR.)

Char says, leaning in the door frame. Gleaming in leather ankle boots, dark jeans, and a short sleeved shirt. Grey vertical stripes cut asymmetrically into alabaster silk.

Chaperone Char would not be caught dead in mesh shorts or an athletic tank top.

HERA

Five more minutes.

PERS (NAR.)

Hera whines, never sounding more like Rhea.

CHAR

If we're late, she's going to get pissed at you.

PERS (NAR.)

At that, Hera rolls her eyes, places P back in her crib. I lean over.

PERS

I'll see you later, baby.

PERS (NAR.)

And I delicately turn up the volume of the Mozart.

PERS

Do we need-?

PERS (NAR.)

I say to the rest of the group, gesturing at the still sleeping Eros. Char shakes his head. We tip toe out of the room, leaving the guards and the nurses the only

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

PERS (NAR.) (cont'd)
awake adults in the Nest. Although I'm not sure I'd consider Eros an adult even if he was awake.

All the nights he spent cuddled up to my back, his tears tangling in my hair, it has been kind of nice to see him... I don't know... more like himself.

Sure he still drinks, but he isn't spurting gin like a fountain until 5 am. There's another layer there now. He lives behind some big wall, but he spends a lot of time out with the rest of us.

Adam and P have helped I think, let him redirect his energy from the past to the future. It must kill him that after *all* the sex they had- Clark gets lucky on his first try.

It would be sad if it wasn't so funny.

RHEA

Offs are all yours.

PERS (NAR.)

Rhea says to a lead doctor in the hall.

Offs. Short for "Offspring." Yes. Rhea's... nickname for the babies- not that she's ever referred to them as those. No, instead she's determined to look at them a little more clinically. Like how Black always called us "units." I don't know if she's made that connection. Or if that's exactly why she's doing it.

We follow Char and Hera down the hall and then up a flight of stairs to where we can catch the least subterranean elevator.

Rhea leans very close into Hera, inspecting her. Hera, without making eye contact, swats her away.

Sacred Sister nonsense as per usual.

We get out on Rebekah's floor. Approach her office. Two armed guards pat us down. Pat us down. Us, harbingers of the new generation. Most important vessels sent since fucking Noah's Ark. And she's making us get patted down. Rude. Paranoid.

CHAR

Tacky.

PERS (NAR.)

Char grunts as a metal wand gets waved over his groin.

We enter Rebekah's office. Given a complete minimalist makeover in the past year. Gone is all of Black's playing at masculine traditionalism. Thick dark navy drapes stripped away so the sun gleams off the white marble slab supported by two silver triangles that serves as her desk. There's almost nothing else in the room. All of Black's books and busts- sent to whatever far corner of the country she herself has been. Our success has erased their past mistakes.

We have been given, a fresh start...a fresh start in the way life returned to Chernoybl. Hobbled by aberration on a cellular level.

REBEKAH

Persephone. Rhea.

PERS (NAR.)

Rebekah croons, standing and pulling each of us into her skeletal embrace. She takes Hera and then Char's hands in a bony clasp.

REBEKAH

Hera and Char, your presence actually isn't required. Please proceed to the Yolk.

CHAR

But our meeting isn't for twenty minutes.

REBEKAH

Well I'm hoping that if you leave early, people might for once be on time for a meeting.

HERA

I don't-

PERS (NAR.)

Hera says, baby glow gone and replaced with suspicion.

REBEKAH

We're just going to discuss their birthday party.

RHEA

Hera, please know if anything goes wrong I will not hesitate to punch her in the fucking face.

PERS (NAR.)

At that, Hera is satisfied. She and Char leave.

(CONTINUED)

RHEA

What's up.

PERS (NAR.)

Rhea says flatly.

REBEKAH

Can I get you anything?

PERS (NAR.)

But we all just stare at her.

REBEKAH

Alright then. I suppose you had another late night, Rhea. And Persephone- I see that Eve is now able to roll onto her stomach. Very exciting.

PERS (NAR.)

Oh, you didn't really think they were going to let us name our own children did you? No. Much like every other aspect of our days- Rebekah has seized upon their names as another PR opportunity. Adam and Eve. A nod to the generation of the president whose hard work won us this victory. Talk about tacky.

PERS

Let's get to it.

PERS (NAR.)

I say, flatly. Rebekah blinks, and turns to Rhea.

REBEKAH

Rhea, do you know what today is?

RHEA

Tuesday.

REBEKAH

It's Thursday. And also- another more notable occasion. Adam is three months old.

RHEA

And I didn't even bring him a cake. No wonder he was so pissed at me.

REBEKAH

I spoke to Dr. Abraham and he says you are officially ready to return to your MIUC sessions.

PERS (NAR.)

I am afraid to turn to Rhea. Afraid to see her face right now.

REBEKAH

It's very exciting. We're all really thrilled to build on our recent success. We're going to announce it at your birthday party next week.

RHEA

I can't.

PERS (NAR.)

Rhea says just above a whisper, all the color has drained from her face and her hands are shaking.

REBEKAH

Rhea, we've been extremely cautious. We gave you an extra cushion of time because we care about your longevity.

PERS

Rebekah, you know- since I am also ready to start attempts again, maybe Rhea can be given a longer-

REBEKAH

Oh my goodness Persephone I totally forgot. Dr. A and I also discussed you. Unfortunately, you are not ready to return to trials.

PERS (NAR.)

She leans forward, places a cold hand on my knee.

REBEKAH

You just aren't ready. And as Hamlet says, "The readiness is all!"

RHEA

You know everyone dies in that scene right?

PERS (NAR.)

Rhea says, voice trembling with rage.

In the silence, a clock chimes on the desk.

REBEKAH

Look at that! Meeting time.

PERS (NAR.)

Rebekah stands, pats Rhea- deflated and somewhere else entirely.

REBEKAH

Oh I wouldn't worry. Persephone will be here. And she's so maternal.

PERS (NAR.)

Rebekah says, all but winking, as she sashays out of the room. I wish Rhea would have kept her promise to sock her. Where the fuck is-

Scene 5

CLARK

Here's Clark!

PHOTOGRAPHER

Sorry, bud. We gotta do it again.

CLARK

The first time I was too quiet. The second time I was too loud. The third time the baby started crying. The fourth time the camera was out of focus. The fifth time the baby was *still* crying. So the six time was-?

PHOTOGRAPHER

You said the wrong name.

CLARK

For god's sake.

CLARK (NAR.)

I grunt, pulling at my "overly casual" tee shirt, trying to get some air onto my skin under the hot lights. I don't know why there needs to be videos of us at the party. We'll be right there.

I take a deep breath. Nod to the crew- because let's face it this isn't really their fault. I'm sure they'd rather be doing... anything else.

PHOTOGRAPHER

Sorry, Clark. We gotta keep rolling, we can't keep Adam and Eve out this-

CLARK

No yeah, I understand. One more go.

CLARK (NAR.)

I step back behind the large, false wall. Put on my happy face. Again. My cheeks are starting to cramp.

Anyway-

CLARK

Here's Triton!

(CONTINUED)

CLARK (NAR.)

I say, scooping up Adam from where he sits on a white shaggy rug in a spotless white onesie. He looks at me. I look at him. He pukes. I get it.

A few moments later, when I'm toweling off, Adam is being carted back to the Nest- escorted by eight armed guards. Good bonding time, I think.

Hey wait- can I like, spend another few minutes with him? Outside of a fu- flipping lab?

GUARD

Sorry, Triton. President Gold has a very specific-

CLARK

Ah, right. Yeah. Of course.

TALC

Don't worry pal. Soon, we make the rules. No need to look so upset.

CLARK (NAR.)

Talc says, clapping me on the back as he approaches.

CLARK

How can you-

TALC

I can smell the puke.

Scene 6

CHAR (NAR.)

Man, you ever just step back and realize you are fucking killing it?

I run a hand through my hair. Little longer than I used to wear it. But hey, when you live with someone with as many conditioners as Persephone how can you resist growing it out?

I'm just a step or two behind Hera. Who's hair is- noticeably kinda fucked up. Which is weird for someone who-

CHAR

Wait.

HERA

What?

(CONTINUED)

CHAR

Who did you spend last night with?

CHAR (NAR.)

And Hera immediately turns stop sign red.

HERA

A... Char. I am an adult woman.

CHAR

Expand on the adult.

HERA

Char.

CHAR (NAR.)

She says entering the elevator.

CHAR

Hera, please. We never get to do *this*.

CHAR (NAR.)

She huffs- looking a ton more like Rhea.

HERA

I made a new friend.

CHAR

And his name? ... Hers?

Be still my beating-

HERA

His.

CHAR

Fine. I'll take it. Is this the first person since...?

HERA

Yes.

CHAR (NAR.)

I clap hard enough to shake the elevator.

CHAR

She's back. She is back.

HERA

I don't know if I was ever... wherever you are.

CHAR (NAR.)

I bark a laugh. Yeah. It has been a busy year. I tell ya, the way people have been trying to fuck me they think I can get *them* pregnant.

(CONTINUED)

Besides, since Rebekah knows I am not actually viable I don't need to jump through all the hoops of security clearances. Not as tricky as you might think to keep up the charade. They just believe they're breaking some rule. Flirting with exposure drives Rebekah nuts.

Not that she can do anything. Rhea's stunt has forced us into a truce. It's made me damn near untouchable. I didn't realize last year, even before then, how much easier everything would be if I just... let my friends help me. And I help them too. Rhea is having a really fucking rough time. Having to do all the publicity with me and not Sulky or Scaredy Spice is easier. I might be the only person in her life who doesn't want anything from her.

Persephone on the other hand, is rocking this motherhood bullshit. She's also a surprisingly good roommate. Or uh- ward. But really, come on. I think she does as much protecting, educating, and serving as I do. Especially when it comes to face masks. Have you *tried* face masks? She's confident and self assured in a way I've never see her. We come home from a long day of media blitz and just have a glass of wine. She's stressed about her body or whatever but she's about to be cleared again and she is so so excited.

CHAR

Are you going to see him again?

HERA

Yeah. I think I am.

CHAR

No, no! Hera, come on.

HERA

What?!

CHAR

According to recent polling you are I are the best looking people on the planet.

HERA

What poll was that?

CHAR

One taken by only me. Look, you gorgeous Nice Girl, do you feel that?

HERA

The elevator stopped?

CHAR

The winds of change.

CHAR (NAR.)

I say as the doors slide open.

CHAR

For the first time in four generations, people are excited again. Babies! Hope! And they want to celebrate by fucking.

CHAR (NAR.)

We step out of the elevator.

HERA

Charon have you seriously never even entertained the idea of a relationship?

CHAR

The last time I slept with someone more than 3 times he introduced me to The Void.

HERA

That is statistically, not going to happen again.

CHAR

Well now I associate monogamy with Rebekah. Well? You bone dry down there now?

HERA

Oh my god *don't* talk to or about my vagina ever again.

CHAR (NAR.)

I throw an arm around Hera as we walk out of the elevator towards the Yolk.

CHAR

I'm going to need details.

HERA

We just met- out. He helped me move furniture.

CHAR

Handy.

HERA

Can we stop talking about this now?

CHAR

I'm just happy for you and your... "Velvet glove."

HERA

We are not calling it that.

CHAR

What if we just call it "cookie?"

HERA

Charon.

TALC

We already talking about dessert?

CHAR (NAR.)

Talc, who wouldn't be able to pin the right thing to say on a donkey, approaches.

CHAR

Yeah dude. Hera is starved.

CHAR (NAR.)

Hera shoves me. I bite my lip to keep from laughing. The elevator doors slide open again.

Hera freezes.

HERA

Oh. Hi.

CHAR (NAR.)

Hera says to the shaggy, tan man who steps out. He stands and as I recognize him. My heart stops.

HERA

What're you doing here?

HEP

Eros' new chaperon. Hi, Char, right? I'm Hep.

CHAR (NAR.)

He sticks out his hand and I mechanically take it. Feel like I'm shaking hands with a ghost.

CHAR

Eros'.... new chaperon?

CHAR (NAR.)

I ask, trying to cover up how shell shocked I am.

HERA

You didn't mention that last night.

(CONTINUED)

CHAR (NAR.)

I turn, ever so slightly to Hera. And see how starry her eyes have gone. The light blush that's risen to her high cheekbones. Oh fuck.

REBEKAH

Ah, have we all met Hephaestus?

CHAR (NAR.)

Rebekah says, gliding towards us.

And I nod. Because I know Rebekah has. After all, Hep introduced us.