

Lesser Gods Season 3, Chapter 2

By

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LESSER GODS SEASON 3, CHAPTER 2

Scene: 1

(TREADMILLS STARTING UP)

EROS

Is this really-?

TECH

Yes, Eros. Dr. A has been very specific.

EROS (NAR.)

Dr. A. None of Black's docs made us do anything this dumb. Or pointless.

CLARK

There a problem?

EROS

No. No, Clark. There isn't.

CLARK

Great. The let's get this over with.

EROS (NAR.)

And with that, he tucks a breathing tube up his nose and starts running. His speed is easy to match- legs are way shorter than mine. I'm just loping alongside his jog. I shift my eyes up to the tech watching us. Hoping he sees how pointless this exercise is. All of these tests could be run *separately*.

EROS

Not like they're going to watch us skip side by side and scream "Ah yes! It's just his sneakers that are affecting his sperm count."

EROS (NAR.)

I grumble to no one but Clark by default.

CLARK

Could be a question of your breathing. Or your heart rate.

EROS (NAR.)

Clark huffs. Struggling to run and talk at the same time.

EROS

I mean more like- I don't think I need to be so close to you.

(CONTINUED)

EROS (NAR.)

I say, annoyed at myself for sounding so... immature. It's just that Clark- it's not what you think. I'm not jealous of him. I don't even have a problem with him. He's just been a dick to me for the past year. Whenever he's near me he just makes catty little comments about what I said on the train. Or what he *thought* I said. Sorry if my memory isn't great, I was busy trying to save his fucking life.

I tip my speed up. Now I too jog- but it's still easier for me than him. Good. I hate when he gets like this- acts like he understands this process more than I do. No shit I know what the techs are actually looking for. I've been running these tests in this same lab since I was like 10. Only thing that's changed is the company.

CLARK

Hear you and Rhea paid the Offs a visit.

EROS

Yep.

CLARK

Why?

EROS

Because I was already with her when the monitor went off.

EROS (NAR.)

Wordlessly, he ups the speed on his own machine. I do the same, pounding down with each step.

CLARK

You hoping she sees you with a baby and-? What? Her ovaries will explode?

EROS

Sounds painful.

CLARK

Not sure that would put you off.

EROS (NAR.)

At this I SMACK the stop button on my treadmill. I skip briefly but stick the landing as I fly off.

Clark, if there's something you want to say to me- just fucking do it.

TECH

Gentlemen, please don't stop the activity.

EROS (NAR.)

The tech announces from a booth above us. I stay still.

Clark doesn't stop but just slows his machine down. He walks, then rotates so he's facing me, walking backwards. Surprising me with his sudden coordination. He tugs the cannula out of his nose.

CLARK

Anyone with eyes can tell Rhea is not in a place to be-

EROS

Oh and you're the expert on how she's feeling?

CLARK

She isn't ready to be intimate with anyone.

EROS

"Intimate"?

EROS (NAR.)

He turns back around, away from me.

EROS

So because she doesn't wanna have sex with you, she isn't ready to have sex with anyone?

CLARK

That isn't what I'm saying at all. She doesn't seem-
mentally well.

EROS

How would you know? As soon as she made it clear she didn't wanna fuck you again you stopped giving a shit about her.

EROS (NAR.)

At this he hits the emergency stop button. Stumbles, falls off the end of machine. I stick an arm straight out to keep him from smacking into me. He ricochets off.

EROS

If you couldn't have her the way you wanted her, then you didn't want her period.

CLARK

She- I mean she told me she needed space. To figure out her feelings.

(CONTINUED)

EROS

We're on top of each other all the time! No matter how much space she asked for, you could still see that this past year has been hell for her.

CLARK

I was respecting her by listening to her! Something you know nothing about.

EROS

Oh, I've been listening. All night long as she screams into her fucking pillow. From the couch... I'm trying to be her friend while she's-

EROS (NAR.)

But I stop, because I don't know *what's* wrong with Rhea.

He takes a small step closer to me. Tiny nostrils flaring.

CLARK

I don't even know if you believe yourself.

EROS (NAR.)

I bite my tongue to keep from snapping back. I'm not lying! My priority *is* Rhea. Of course it's Rhea. Sure, yeah I want her to have a baby with me. Eventually. And not this fucker. This guy who quakes and runs away the second anything gets difficult. Who has left Rhea to deal with the hell of this process all by herself. I won't abandon her the way he did.

EROS

This is just another chapter for us. You'll never share what we've shared.

EROS (NAR.)

He scoffs, tips his head back.

CLARK

Like a kid?

EROS (NAR.)

I shove him. Hard.

CHAR

Hey, hey. Guys. Guys.

EROS (NAR.)

Char steps between us. He puts a hand on my chest. Doesn't need to even touch Clark to stop him. He tries to read my face.

CHAR

You good?

EROS

Of course I am.

EROS (NAR.)

I throw his hand off me.

CHAR

I just- man, I know you don't like yourself when you're angry.

EROS (NAR.)

I feel rage creeping up my neck like a spider. Each leg crawling and itching.

EROS

I don't- *like* myself?

CHAR

You know what I'm talking about.

EROS

Char, CHAR, you think this- you think I could do that again? What I did to-

EROS (NAR.)

I swallow before I say the name. Apollo. Apollo. Apollo. I clench my jaw. Keep my lips tight over my teeth so Char can't see them grating against each other.

Clark is condescending and rude and- and just makes me feel like shit but he could never do what Apollo did. After 8 years of living with me like a brother or- or whatever- he killed our friend. And then let- let them...

Clark doesn't matter to me enough to ever hurt me like he did.

CHAR

Take a deep breath.

EROS (NAR.)

I suck the sterile air into my lungs. Push it out through my teeth, clenched still- but now in a twisted grin.

EROS

Fuck it, man. Fuck it.

(CONTINUED)

EROS (NAR.)

And then I lean in closer to Char.

EROS

And don't talk to me like that. I'm not- I'm okay.
Okay? I'm not crazy.

CHAR

Okay.

EROS (NAR.)

I run my hands over my face. Fighting the memory of them landing hard against Apollos face. Again and again. I want to cry. Tears vs blood vs... vs... Then... Somewhere in them- just a trace but definitely- yes. That new baby smell. Adam. Just this morning he was right here in these same palms. The world is new for him. I'm new for us.

Scene 2

(SIGH)

CHAR (NAR.)

Talc drags Clark out of the lab. He looks somewhere between confused and upset. Conset. Upfuse-

HEP

Let's get out of here man.

(cont'd)

My word baby will have to wait. Hep has appeared, tossing a playful punch at Eros arm. Mistake. Eros' whole skinny body visibly tightens at being touched. He's still too wound up. Christ. Shouldn't someone have briefed him on Eros'... issues? Like Hera or- right. Guess they weren't talking about work much last night.

HEP

Persephone. Nice to see you again.

PERS

Pleasure.

(cont'd)

Persephone says, barely paying attention. Hep notices. Nods tightly.

HEP

Hey.

(CONTINUED)

(cont'd)

He says directly to me now. I don't say a word.

HEP

Well, we gotta run. Nice to see you.

(cont'd)

He says, smiling at Persephone and then- as surprising as a sucker punch, he reaches for my arm. Squeezes it. And leaves.

I look around the room to the Tech and Pers. Sure someone must have- I mean that was so *obvious*. Like-like when we met.

It isn't like I've ever had a problem picking people up. I mean, the only issue I've ever had is finding anyone *new*. That's probably, literally the only reason he stuck out. He was chubby and shorter than me. He had super hairy arms. He spent the entire night pretending he didn't want to go home with me. He was always talking or laughing with someone else, but out of the corner of his crinkly little eyes- he was always watching me.

And trust me, I know how to be watched. I really kicked things up a notch, making more and more of a scene- making it harder to pretend to ignore me. At one point I think I even picked Eros up over my head and put him down so hard- Hep's drink fell off whatever table it was sitting on. I got down on my my knee, picked up the now empty bottle. Got within an inch of face as I handed it back to him. Finally, he had to look at me. But neither of us said anything. Just stared at each other for one, two- and then Eros fell over onto us. Rhea- pupils the size of dinner plates fell over laughing.

It wasn't until we'd loaded both of them into a car and sent them home, that we were alone. I hadn't wanted him so much as wanted to annoy him before. But there in the dark shadows and red glow from the tail lights- there was something darker, more mysterious about him.

We walked into my Brick, dark. Sometimes Artemis would wait up, a sliver of light under her door telling me she was there if I wanted to chat. But about what, I don't even think she knew.

I went upstairs, peeled off my shirt. And turned around to find I was alone. I trotted downstairs. Where I found him looking inside my kitchen cabinet.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

"Do you have anything that tastes like... anything?" He said, a box of saltines in one hand and a pack of rice cakes in the other.

I patted my abs in response.

"I'm aware." He responded. "But still... you've gotta have a vice."

He gestured around my spotless Brick- walls uncluttered by art and floors free from any other crap.

"Don't you have any hobbies? Where do you keep the stuff you like?"

"I don't. It usually leaves before I fall asleep."

"Ha." He responded, pulling a jar of peanut butter out. He dipped a cracker in.

"Don't you want to know like *anything* about me? I could kill you for all you know."

I looked at him, finger tips covered in peanut butter, beard dusted with crumbs.

"No. You couldn't."

"I feel like I could sneak up on you."

"Dude I can hear you breathing from here."

"Is arguing the only way I can get you to actually talk to me?"

"You had all night at the bar to talk to me."

He shrugged again.

"I was busy."

"Yeah, busy eye fucking me."

With that he actually looked surprised. He walked over to me, reached a hand out- and unpeeled a piece of medical tape off of my neck.

"Guess you're just too cool for anyone to tell."

Embarrassed, I took a step back from him. Destroyed a saltine in my mouth.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

"Did you have a session today?"

I just shrugged, mouth to dry to reply. I was also of course, praying this guy didn't have a copping fantasy. It's just too on the nose.

"Damn, I never wanted to have sex after. I just felt... weird."

"It's a totally different thing. Especially since it's not like I'd ever fuck any of them out here."

"Yeah, but still you've gotta meet these guys and extend a certain amount of emotional energy."

"Well I'm done feeling if you are."

"Char."

He said, the wrinkles that formed when he smiled long gone.

"Why are you so eager to get me upstairs? You don't even know my name."

I hadn't even noticed.

"I don't know what rules you've put on yourself... but this isn't like being in there. You can break them if you want."

"And how's that supposed to make me feel?"

"I think part of the fun is not knowing."

PERS

What do you think of him?

(cont'd)

Persephone says. I shrug.

CHAR

Doesn't seem too memorable.

Scene 3

(cont'd)

I don't get up when Hera comes in. I remain seated at the island counter top in the center of the kitchen. My copy of *In Cold Blood* in front of me. I needed something to cheer me up.

(CONTINUED)

HERA

Hey!

(cont'd)

Hera says, bright.

HERA

How was your meeting with Rebekah?

(cont'd)

I shrug. Turn a page.

HERA

She was in an unusually good mood this morning.

RHEA

That makes two of us.

RHEA (NAR.)

She laughs-

HERA

Right. You want a coffee or something?

(cont'd)

No thanks.

HERA

You might feel better if you have some caffeine.

(cont'd)

I grip the edges of the book so hard I think I'll end up with Capote in my bloodstream. Something to make me more present? More acutely aware of my own fucking nightmare? No. A stimulant isn't what I want. I don't want that and I don't want to feel better. I want to crawl out of my fucking skin and leave it like a pair of dirty jeans on the bedroom floor.

HERA

Adam seemed good this morning. I think he's an extrovert. Like you.

RHEA

Were.

RHEA (NAR.)

I mumble. Like I was.

HERA

Rhea.

(cont'd)

I reread the same sentence for the hundredth time.

HERA

Rhea, look at me.

(cont'd)

Hera says, gently placing her hand over the page. Unable to read through her, I look up and just beyond her eyes. At her ear. Because I know what she's going to ask next and I don't want to really see her when I answer.

HERA

I need to tell you something.

RHEA

Wh-what?

RHEA (NAR.)

Surprised out of my fog I do look her in the eye.

HERA

I had someone over here last night.

RHEA

Okay.

RHEA (NAR.)

I say, an anger I don't have a name for building in my chest. I don't particularly give a shit about her personal life right now. How can she think I would? Can't she tell something is really wrong? Or have I been so- fucked up these last few months that she's gotten used to it.

HERA

I didn't know it then, but uhm he is- Eros' new chaperone.

RHEA

What?

HERA

He's great. He's uhm- different.

RHEA

You just brought some random-

HERA

He's not random.

(CONTINUED)

RHEA

Sorry "different" dude back here in the middle of the night? While I was sleeping?

RHEA (NAR.)

Hera looks at me, blinks. Unsure where any of this is coming from.

HERA

I don't... It's not like- Rhea he's from my gen. I knew him-

RHEA

Clearly you didn't. You, what? Met out. Had a nice little chat. Brought him back here, fucked him, and never ONCE did it come up that he is Eros'- *Eros*- goddamn chaperone?

HERA

We weren't talking about you.

(cont'd)

She says, crossing her arms. Hurt.

RHEA

It's just weird! It's weird! The entire planet knows I have... shit with Eros. That you are my chaperone. And sister. That as- as fucking such- It's like a conflict of interest.

HERA

A conflict of interest?

(cont'd)

It's sketchy that he didn't tell you.

HERA

He's obviously been cleared by Rebekah and-

RHEA

Oh *great*.

HERA

Rhea, you're being- I honestly don't even know. I thought you'd be happy for me.

RHEA

How? You put me in *danger*. I'm not just- cool with fucking around anymore. I'm really important. Mother of the- the next generation.

(CONTINUED)

HERA

Rhea, since when do you talk like that?

RHEA

Since it's about to start all over again.

RHEA (NAR.)

And now I can see something click into place. I look beyond her again. Willing myself not to fucking cry.

HERA

What?

RHEA

I have to start copping again. Tomorrow. Rebekah told us. Not Pers. She's not ready. I am. My body is. You know because I had a success. Because things are going well. I have to. I have to again.

HERA

But you don't want to.

RHEA

It doesn't matter.

HERA

It does.

RHEA

Since when?

SOUND: KNOCK

Scene 4

(DOOR OPENING)

CLARK

Hi Hera.

CLARK (NAR.)

I say, trying on a smile. I can tell from the look on her face it fits in all the wrong places.

TALC

Howdy!

(cont'd)

On what- why does Talc have to be so- *himself* all the time? I know he can't see Hera's unusually severe face but surely the heavy strangeness in the air is loud enough to hear.

(CONTINUED)

CLARK

Can we come in?

RHEA

No.

(cont'd)

Rhea growls from somewhere just beyond the door. Well, at least Talc heard that.

CLARK

Hi Rhea.

CLARK (NAR.)

I say quietly.

Rhea flies into view like a bird of prey. Wrapping first her long, unkempt nails around the door and then yanking it further open so she can stand beside Hera in it. The Sacred Sisters stand side by side, the elder composed but troubled and the younger looking furious and exhausted.

CLARK

Maybe we should come ba-

RHEA

What did you say?

CLARK

I uh- said maybe we should-

RHEA

Before that.

CLARK

Hi Rhea?

RHEA

Don't say hi to me.

CLARK

I- what?

CLARK (NAR.)

But she slams the door in my face. Talc and I stand awkwardly on the stairs. I glance over my shoulder at the security team who have been trying very hard not to react to this whole performance.

TALC

I think... she is warming up to you.

(CONTINUED)

(cont'd)

I ignore him, instead thinking of my altercation with Eros this morning. You know every time she's lashed out at me, I've just kind of backed off. Thinking she needed space to work out whatever she's going through. That's what she asked of me when we returned home. Right? I obliged. I was hurt and it was easier to give her what she wanted because- I mean, have you *met Rhea*? But it's been a year and our relationship- friendship- hasn't gotten better. And Rhea... I don't understand *what* she's gotten... But maybe I need to try. Maybe on this one specific, detail of a much more complicated situation, and obtuse existence really, Eros is... right. Ish.

SOUND: KNOCK

(cont'd)

The door creaks back open. Hera's face fills the few inches allowed.

HERA

Clark this is a *really* bad time.

CLARK

Excuse me.

CLARK (NAR.)

I say quickly before throwing my arm out and shoving the door fully open. I take a large step inside into no man's land and stride with more adrenaline than confidence.

CLARK

Rhea.

CLARK (NAR.)

I say, finding her lying on the couch, head tipped off and upside down. Her eyes track me as I slow to a stop.

CLARK

Rhea, are you okay?

CLARK (NAR.)

She is silent. Watching. I wait.

RHEA

Did you get a new haircut?

(cont'd)

In surprise, a hand flies to my hair.

(CONTINUED)

CLARK
No?

RHEA
Guess it's always looked that dumb.

CLARK
Well your hair looks really dirty and not great. And you've got these bags under your eyes and I don't know how long you've been wearing those socks but-

RHEA
Jeez okay, you win.

CLARK
I don't want to win. I want to talk to you. Maybe privately. For just a second.

CLARK (NAR.)
I say, turning to Hera and Talc just a few feet away.

CLARK
Please.

TALC
Fine by me.

(cont'd)
Talc chirps. Hera looks past me to Rhea, who shrugs. Rolls her eyes in a gesture so familiar I almost feel... at home.

HERA
I was just making tea.

(cont'd)
Hera says, placing a hand under Talc's arm and gently guiding him towards the kitchen. It's non patronizing in a way only Hera can accomplish.

Alone now, Rhea rights herself on the couch- but kicks her legs up to take up the remainder of space on it. I look to the arm chair opposite it- crowded with dogeared books already fighting for space, pages jammed together and cannibalizing each other on the cushion. I drop to the floor, fold my legs and make myself small.

CLARK
How uhm- how's Adam?

RHEA
Why don't you ask one of the 9 doctors constantly around him.

(CONTINUED)

CLARK

I think I saw him like- trying to sit up. Not mastering it yet but definitely getting the basics. Taking it slow.

CLARK (NAR.)

I look nervously in her direction.

CLARK

Cautious.

RHEA

Smart of him.

CLARK

Rhea, I'm- I'm sorry. About this past year. About, my part in it.

CLARK (NAR.)

She nods a little.

CLARK

I thought you'd handle it and then we could pick up where we left off. Well not there, where we started. Not that quite like, kidnapping me far back. But like, post solving Iris' murder pre getting on that train of doom... Hm... We really need some happier memories don't-

RHEA

The time when you were in love with me.

CLARK

Uhm... the time when we were friends.

RHEA

But I don't know if we were. How do I know you weren't just... pretending to be someone else so I'd fuck you.

CLARK

Do you really think I could pull that off? Come on Rhea, you *know* me.

RHEA

Not really. We had a few months of being what I thought was really close and then I fucked you and you lost all interest in being anything less than my... what? Boyfriend?

CLARK

No. No that isn't- clearly you've been talking to Eros too much.

(CONTINUED)

RHEA

Oh my fucking god Clark, when are you going to let this go? It's been a year.

(cont'd)

Great. Fantastic. Now I just look jealous. Which is even worse than neglectful.

CLARK

No, no- I don't... I just mean he said something similar to me just this morning.

RHEA

Now you're just sitting around talking about me? Fuck I'd prefer if you ripped each other's heads off.

CLARK

Rhea, please. I don't care about your relationship with Eros.

RHEA

I am not in a relationship with Eros.

(cont'd)

I pause- not sure how to read that. If I express some kind of sympathy she'll be mad. If I show any kind of relief she'll be... really mad. As per usual I am between a rock and a Rhea place.

CLARK

I just want to be there for you. As whatever you need me to be.

RHEA

You sure as fuck didn't care about being there for me when I had to have *your* baby.

CLARK

Uh, I think the word you're looking for is "our."

CLARK (NAR.)

I resist the urge to get to my feet, instead shift stupidly to my knees so we're at least on the same eye level.

CLARK

Is that what this is about? Because believe me Rhea, when I was with you. Really *with* you- the last thing I was thinking about was having a baby. How was I supposed to know, how were either of us, that together we were going to do *that*.

(CONTINUED)

CLARK (NAR.)

She slides her hands up over her face.

CLARK

I've never regretted that night. Not for a second. But Rhea, if nothing else ever comes of it- together- we saved the human race.

CLARK (NAR.)

Abruptly, she sits up straight.

RHEA

Did they tell you to do this.

CLARK

What?

RHEA

Come here, try and be my friend again. Today? Of all days.

CLARK

I don't know what you're talking about.

RHEA

What are you doing here, Clark?

TALC

Seems like a great time for us all to have some tea.

Scene 5

HERA

Talc, I think you guys should just go. This is not a good time.

CLARK

Rhea, I'm just- I just want things to be better.

HERA

Clark.

HERA (NAR.)

Clark has spent a lot of the last year coming into some kind of his own. His hair is a little longer, making his head look less round and baby-ish. His face has gotten a little slimmer, drawing more attention to his blue eyes. But now, when he turns to me from where he kneels at Rhea's feet on the floor, he looks just as small and scared as the day we met him.

HERA

Clark, Rhea and I need to be alone right now. Please just get into whatever is so apparently important-

SOUND: SLURP

HERA (NAR.)

I say, shifting my glance to Talc as he slurps his tea.

HERA

And go.

TALC

Alright buddy, let's start our pitch.

(cont'd)

Talc says as he delicately taps around with his cane until he finds an end table. I sit down next to Rhea as he slowly sets his tea cup down- right on the cover of Rhea's copy of Helter Skelter. Rhea is... very into murder right now. She says it relaxes her. Clark scrambles to his feet, rearranges the cup, wipes the cover with his sleeve. Sets it back down with a "good as new" double thumbs up.

Rhea swings her legs up so they cross over my lap. I pat them sympathetically. To have her begin copping again- It's only been three months. Between what little sleep she's getting and how much trouble she's had gaining weight- I mean she can't really be in good health. Is this going to be the cycle? For the rest of her life until she's totally rundown? Adam is just starting to get a little calmer. Shouldn't she get at least a little reprieve-

SOUND: THROAT CLEARING

Talc clears his throat. Rhea presses the heels of her hands into her eyes.

RHEA

Alright boys, the sooner you tell us Jesus Saves the sooner you can get out.

CLARK

That isn't quite it.

(cont'd)

Clark says, his words light. As if he's testing the strength of the ice covering a lake.

TALC

We are currently at a very exciting, important crossroads in time.

(CONTINUED)

RHEA

Thursday?

(cont'd)

Rhea growls.

RHEA

Oh wait, I got it that time.

(cont'd)

She says, suddenly, brightly.

TALC

Yes you did. But no. No. It isn't just Thursday. It's November.

HERA

Talc, just tell us what the hell is going on.

HERA (NAR.)

I say, impatient to speak with Rhea privately. There has to be a way to delay-

CLARK

It's an election year.

(cont'd)

- the process starting up again. When the Five were little they had a psychologist who would come around once a year. I mean, we did as well. But they don't do much except make sure you aren't suffering from a delusion that might hurt yourself or others.

TALC

It would have been the end of Black's term.

(cont'd)

And since they too missed that Apollo was a raging psychopath then I don't know what they were actually doing. But if they could speak to Rhea's current state. How it would be better long term for everyone if she just had more time...

CLARK

The legislation that allowed for Rebekah to be hastily elected does not prevent a normal election year.

(cont'd)

If THAT doesn't work maybe... Is Persephone cleared yet? She's supposed to be and unlike Rhea I know she's excited by the idea of resuming the process.

(CONTINUED)

TALC

Someone just needs to formally challenge her.

(cont'd)

I know it's more complicated than just a switcheroo but *both* of them were successful. I know Rebekah does not personally *like* Rhea. All the time. Some of the time. But Rebekah has carried before. Can't she try and-

RHEA

Hey. Hera.

(cont'd)

Rhea elbows me. A rare smile playing at the corners of her lips.

RHEA

I think the Accent Brigade is trying to ask you something.

HERA

What?

HERA (NAR.)

I say, trying to remember anything either Clark or Talc has said in the last minute. Clark shifts nervously from foot to foot.

CLARK

I think, we think... Everyone probably thinks, maybe us just a little more consciously, because of who you are- the way you make people feel- your kind of innate quality to-

TALC

We think you should run for president.

(cont'd)

I look from Clark to Talc. Back again. And then burst out laughing. Gripping Rhea's shoulder as she too throws her head back-

RHEA

Oh man, you know the last 10 minutes or so? Been pretty unpleasant. But you two devious little weirdos have really just made my day. Hera- your majesty- if I may-

CLARK

It would be Madame President if anything.

RHEA

That's some real A to B joke telling, Clark.

(CONTINUED)

(cont'd)

Rhea manages to snap through her laughter.

HERA

Okay, okay. Thanks for that guys. But we really need to be alone.

TALC

Hera, really, you're not thinking about this.

HERA

Rebekah would never actually let someone else run. She'd have their campaign crushed.

CLARK

But not if it was you. You're the most popular person on the planet after the-

(cont'd)

He looks nervously to Rhea.

CLARK

Offs and Pers and Rhea.

TALC

And to be honest? I think people might like you better than Persephone.

CLARK

Talc.

TALC

Very cold eyes.

CLARK

You have a public platform no one else does. If Rebekah suddenly shut you up people would revolt.

HERA

Nobody my age has ever been elected president.

TALC

I think that's an angle for us. You're going to be around longer, you're more invested in building a better future. For your nephew.

HERA

Rebekah gets to claim the kids as something she did.

CLARK

But we know she didn't. That was all Black.

(CONTINUED)

RHEA

Yeah it was Black who pushed that kid's giant head out of my vagina.

HERA

R-

HERA (NAR.)

I start. But stop. That's fair.

TALC

Graphic. But Rhea is right. This is the whole problem with Rebekah, with the whole system as is. They use these kids like farm equipment, abuse their bodies and minds and then take credit for every inch they drag them forward.

CLARK

You understand what it's like to be us. You've seen first hand why the way things are isn't working.

HERA

But Clark.

HERA (NAR.)

I say taking a deep breath and trying not to look at Rhea.

HERA

But Clark, it is working.

RHEA

But it isn't good enough.

HERA

What?

HERA (NAR.)

I say turning to Rhea, who is staring out the window now at the guards- keeping people out as much as they keep her in.

RHEA

You do get what this does to you Hera. More than anyone else.

(cont'd)

She looks at me now. And I know we're thinking of the same thing. The time after I lost- or thought I lost my own...

(CONTINUED)

HERA

I'm just not a good candidate guys.

CLARK

Her, your issues... They're in the past. They couldn't use them against you if they tried. Your struggles have only made you stronger.

HERA

That isn't...

HERA (NAR.)

I bite my tongue, force myself from revealing the bright white, dry bones that clatter together so loudly in my closet.

HERA

If the truth about Apollo came out. That I know what Eros did. It could destroy all of us.

TALC

If we stand together, they can't touch any of us.

HERA

I'm sorry. I just, need to focus on other things right now.

HERA (NAR.)

I say, gripping Rhea's knee.

RHEA

Hera.

(cont'd)

Rhea says. But I'm already standing.

HERA

Thanks for uhm, for believing in me though. I will wholeheartedly endorse whoever you find. Whoever is better.

TALC

That's a tall order, darlin'.

(cont'd)

I smile a little, and lead him towards the door. Clark follows. When I pull it open, he turns-

CLARK

Let's talk again soon, okay? There's so much more-

(CONTINUED)

RHEA

Yeah, let's make this emotional manipulation an annual thing.

(cont'd)

Rhea says as she reclines back on the couch, opening up Helter Skelter to a mercifully black and white photo of Sharon Tate's bloody living room. His shoulders slump a little. I pull them onto the stairs, close the door behind me.

HERA

Sorry about her. Just today- well I'm sure you understand. I'm sure you're not happy with the decision either. It isn't fair to either of you.

CLARK

Hera-

(cont'd)

He starts, big eyes gleaming in the afternoon sunlight.

CLARK

I really don't know what you're talking about.

(cont'd)

Shit. I think, trying to stitch these words together tightly enough to leave the smallest scar.

HERA

You and Rhea are resuming copping.

CLARK

It's too soon.

(cont'd)

He stammers.

HERA

I know. Rebekah told her this morning.

CLARK

Today? That's why... I don't... want to.

(cont'd)

I know that too. Afraid of repeating myself. I pull him close. Hug him.

HERA

We'll figure something out.

TALC

If you don't wanna change things now, when will you?

(cont'd)

Talc says, throwing an arm around Clark and whistling
as they walk off.

SOUND: NATIONAL ANTHEM WHISTLING