

Lesser Gods  
Season 3  
Chapter 4

By

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LESSER GODS  
SEASON 3  
CHAPTER 4

Scene: 1

CLARK

I feel as if I'm constantly making everything worse.

CLARK (NAR.)

I say as Pers expertly flips through a rack of suit jackets. It is accompanied by another rack of pants. Ties. All crowded into her living room- now a tent city of Italian wool.

PERS

You do not.

CLARK (NAR.)

She parts the wall of sleeves and looks me up and down, shakes her head.

PERS

Your legs on the other hand... I just wish you'd made time to get a fitting. Short guys *need* a tight silhouette otherwise they just look stumpier.

CHAR

No offense.

CLARK (NAR.)

Char adds, sipping from a long stemmed glass of champagne. He's wearing his dress pants, but hasn't bothered to throw on a shirt yet. Pers' dress hangs, ready for her, behind him.

PERS

Are you drinking already?

CLARK (NAR.)

Persephone hisses.

CHAR

It's my birthday.

PERS

It's all of our birthdays.

CHAR

Then cheers.

(CONTINUED)

CLARK (NAR.)

He says, extending his glass. Persephone takes it. But hesitates before sipping.

PERS

No. I'm going to have to feed P before the party.

CLARK (NAR.)

Char shrugs, takes the glass back. Finishes it. Persephone crosses to me, hands me a pair of pants.

PERS

These are short enough to make your legs look long. Now, if we give you a pocket square or *something* to draw the eye up-

CHAR

We can ask Rhea to puke on him again.

CLARK (NAR.)

Pers and I both spin to shoot daggers at him.

CLARK

They might make you start copping again soon too.

CLARK (NAR.)

I tell him, but he only shrugs.

PERS

Assuming your dick doesn't fall off from overuse.

CHAR

I have always been one to fly too close to the sun. Like Icarus.

PERS

Was that last night's name?

CLARK (NAR.)

This actually gives Char pause.

CHAR

I don't *think* so?

CLARK (NAR.)

He pops to his feet.

CHAR

I'm getting more champagne. And I'm bringing you one too Clark. This is your first *real* birthday. Get fucking bubbly, man.

CLARK (NAR.)

I laugh, shake my head. I don't think I know Char very well, still, but he is certainly around a lot. Even if he's emotionally keeping me at a distance, it is nice to have someone so extroverted to drown everything out. Especially on days when I'm nervous or- no that's pretty much my main emotion.

CLARK

How are you?

CLARK (NAR.)

I ask Pers now that we're alone.

PERS

Fine.

CLARK (NAR.)

She says, dismissive enough that I know not to press.

PERS

Have they rescheduled you yet?

CLARK

No. They did reprimand me though. Told me they didn't want the copping process to be unpleasant-

PERS

Even more unpleasant.

CLARK

Right. But there were certainly ways to medically or manually ease my performance anxiety.

CLARK (NAR.)

She's quiet. Throwing a tie around her own neck and focusing on tying it.

CLARK

They won't really do anything like that- right?

PERS

No.

CLARK (NAR.)

She slips the tie off her neck and onto mine.

PERS

I think it would take like... something really extreme. I don't think they'd want to do it either.

CLARK (NAR.)

She slips the knot up, tightens it. She smooths my collar down.

PERS

If I give them what they want for just a few moments, the rest of my day is just for me. When I leave a session I do something so fucking Persephone it makes me bigger and realer than whatever version I am under those lights.

CLARK

Like what?

PERS

Can't tell you.

CLARK

Oh come on-

PERS

No. It's my thing. You have to find your own good thing.

CLARK

I'm not good at anything.

PERS

That doesn't matter.

CHAR

Fuck it, I just grabbed the bottle.

CLARK (NAR.)

Char says returning with three glasses. He pours, sloppy and sloshing frothy gold champagne onto the floor.

PERS

Char.

CHAR

Come on! One glass! This is the only thing we get to celebrate.

PERS

We had two successes this year.

CHAR

You did. And Rhea did. And Clark did. This, our 24th year, is for ALL of us.

(CONTINUED)

CLARK (NAR.)

Persephone rolls her eyes, accepts a glass.

CHAR

A toast to-

PERS

No. No toasts. *Bets* on what we're going to see tonight. Loser has to have breakfast with Talc for a week.

CLARK

This isn't fair, I'm going to have to be with Talc regardless.

PERS

Sorry darling, you should already know fair isn't our thing.

CHAR

Well I'm going to assume someone makes an impromptu, drunk speech. Like Eros at our 16th.

PERS

Oh god. Yes. That was classic.

CLARK (NAR.)

To me-

PERS

He kissed Black.

CLARK (NAR.)

To Char-

PERS

My money is on Hera. Just for fun. Who knows, maybe she'll kiss her new man.

CLARK (NAR.)

Char shrugs, sips. I think for a moment about telling them about me and Talc's embarrassing attempt at getting her to run for President. Even saying it now sounds silly. But Talc and I spent the better part of a year plotting. It all made sense on paper. Rebekah is barely legitimate and Hera is likable and intelligent. She could help us control our own lives. Something that especially after yesterday, seems more important than ever. She'd be the perfect candidate if she only wanted it.

PERS

I want to know where he even came from, but the mystery is the hottest thing he has going for him.

(CONTINUED)

CHAR

Who cares. I give him a week.

CLARK

Are you jealous, Char?

CHAR

I am fucking not.

CLARK (NAR.)

He says, hard and heavy enough to land with a thud.

PERS

Well I bet Rebekah will try and make something out of Rhea resuming the process.

CHAR

Just make sure you back up for that Clark.

CLARK (NAR.)

He quips, himself again. I flip him off, take a sip of champagne.

CLARK

I bet... I bet this is going to be your most memorable party yet.

PERS

That is WAY too vague.

CLARK

Fair is fair.

## SCENE 2

PERS (NAR.)

I tap my fingers nervously on my arms- wrapped tightly around myself.

CHAR

God dude, are you so starved for contact you're trying to make out with yourself?

PERS (NAR.)

Char says in the corridor outside the hall.

PERS

Well I'd finally be with someone worthy of my time.

PERS (NAR.)

He smiles, checks his reflection in the clean glass of that painting with George Washington making his friends ferry him across the Delaware. We're deep inside the

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PERS (NAR.) (cont'd)  
capitol building, where the mall walls are elevated with great American art work. Pretty sure you can still smell the fries from the food court while you look at Jackson Pollacks.

EROS  
We doing this thing?

PERS (NAR.)  
Eros says, bounding up to us, looking unusually put together in a light gray suit. I adjust his tie for him.

PERS  
Nice to see you in pants again.

EROS  
I didn't have any underwear formal enough.

PERS (NAR.)  
He grins, blinding me.

EROS  
Always wake me up next time. I love seeing you in mom mode. By the time you have the second one you'll be able to do all that shit in your sleep.

PERS  
Yeah.

PERS (NAR.)  
I say, not wanting to tell him I'm still delayed. I already know what he'll say. Some version of "Don't blame yourself" which will only thrust the thought back into my head.

RHEA  
Game on.

PERS (NAR.)  
Rhea says, coming up behind me wearing-

PERS  
Rhea.

PERS (NAR.)  
But she holds up her hands.

RHEA  
No, no. I don't want to hear it.



PERS (NAR.)

She's wearing tight black pants and a tucked in white button down. Heels. Her long hair is tied back in a tight bun. She looks like a caterer. A hot one. But still.

PERS

You look like you're working this.

RHEA

I would have preferred to dress like a houseplant.

EROS

Is that one of my shirts?

PERS (NAR.)

Eros asks.

CLARK

Hi everyone!

PERS (NAR.)

Clark says. Talc behind him for just a second, before ducking inside the party.

But we both ignore him. I put my hands on Rhea's arms. Prepare to tell her how this isn't a big deal. Isn't going to-

SOUND: DOORS OPENING. FLASHBULBS.

But then the doors to the hall open and there is an eruption music and applause. So many eyes hiding behind the pops of flashes. It wouldn't be so bad if I could see all of them, you know? Know exactly who is out there. Where they are sitting. How close they are to me.

RHEA

Hey.

PERS (NAR.)

Rhea places a hand on my arm.

RHEA

In addition to having a dozen armed guards- you're getting another body guard.

PERS (NAR.)

She hooks her arm in mine.

EROS

She is dressed for it.

PERS (NAR.)  
Rhea flips Eros off.

EROS  
What? I like it!

PERS (NAR.)  
He says, standing on the other side of me as we enter the party.

The room is crowded- not something we're particularly used to. Men and women in formal wear bump elbows at banquet tables as they applaud.

With it's walls draped in gold and silver fabrics, the party seems more like a New Year's party than a birthday. You can almost forget the people in black holding guns of various sizes stationed at every entrance and exit.

There's a long table at the head of the dance floor. We make our way swiftly to it. Char, already pretty drunk, stops to shake various hands. Bump fists. He high fives a very old man so hard he stumbles backwards.

Eros pulls out my seat for me.

PERS  
Is our silverware plastic?

PERS (NAR.)  
Rhea experimentally bends her fork.

CLARK  
If you have to give Rebekah credit for anything, it should be how little she cares about aesthetics.

PERS  
No shit.

PERS (NAR.)  
I say, seeing her enter now that we're settled. She's wearing a plain, black dress that accentuates her skeletal collarbones and is just long enough to showcase her hideous, comfortable-looking shoes.

She holds her hands up as if to say "Stop" to all the clapping. Then she settles in at a non descript table in the corner. I hate how she pretends to shy away from the spotlight. It's transparent and embarrassing.

Everyone soon quiets and then a small ensemble of strings begins to play.

Like the wind rippling through tall grass, everyone turns to us at once. My chest tightens.

Eros leans back in his chair so he can see Rhea.

EROS

Hey.

RHEA

No.

PERS (NAR.)

She says without looking at him. He gets to his feet. squats between us, but speaks into Rhea's ear.

EROS

Do me a favor? Don't ask me to dance.

PERS (NAR.)

He says, smiling.

RHEA

You know it's going to just kill me not to.

PERS (NAR.)

She says flatly. Eros stands. Sticks a hand out to Char.

CHAR

You better not make me look bad out there.

PERS (NAR.)

Char grumbles as he takes Er's hand. Eros lovingly touches Char's chin.

EROS

Even I couldn't make you look bad, baby.

PERS (NAR.)

And he pulls him to the dance floor leaving just me, Clark, and Rhea. The air is heavy enough between them to distract from my... anxiety or whatever.

RHEA

Gonna go see what Hera is up to.

PERS (NAR.)

Rhea says before fleeing. Clark watches her go. Dutifully, I prepare myself to ask him about her. But-

CLARK

You know. I was just thinking... Maybe dancing could be my thing? My good thing?

PERS

You're not supposed to tell me.

PERS (NAR.)

He stands, reaches out for me.

CLARK

I'm an absolutely dreadful secret keeper. I already told everyone how I'm just wearing these short pants to look less stubby.

PERS

I believe the word was "stumpy."

PERS (NAR.)

I say allowing him to pull me to my feet. I stare out at the dance floor, looking open and wide and exposed.

CLARK

If we need to leave we can just pretend it's because of that.

PERS (NAR.)

He says, nodding towards Char, who is dipping and twirling Eros across the dance floor. I roll my eyes, Clark gently leads me to the edge. He puts his hands high around my torso. I delicately lower them to my waist.

PERS

You're not going to impregnate me just by touching me.

CLARK

Well it would certainly ruin the dress.

PERS (NAR.)

I shake my head, try not to laugh.

CLARK

So how's this compare to the other parties?

PERS

There have been years these things have been pretty lightly attended. But this year, I guess, is different.

PERS (NAR.)

I nod towards Char.

PERS

And it's been awhile since I had a chaperone who didn't wanna dance with *me*.

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CLARK

I'm sorry.

PERS

Don't be. I'm just kidding. He stepped on my feet anyway.

PERS (NAR.)

I say, briefly distracted by the handful of other couples that have joined us on the dance floor. Hera and Hep. Talc and some unhappy-looking nurse.

CLARK

Yeah I'm really shocked I haven't done that yet.

PERS

You need to start giving yourself more credit for things, Clark. Confidence is sexy.

PERS (NAR.)

And he abruptly pulls me closer to him, places his hands on my lower back.

I cock an eyebrow at him. But he's already blushing, goes to give me more space. But I hold him tighter.

PERS

Where'd that come from?

CLARK

Just... trying to be more...

PERS

Brave?

CLARK

Like you.

PERS

I'm not brave. I'm confident.

CLARK

Call it whatever you want, but I'm afraid of crowds because they're unfamiliar. You're afraid of them because... because they've given you reason to be. But you still step in front of them everyday. And you manage not to just *be* but to shine.

PERS (NAR.)

He's just a few inches from my face, the deep blue tie I picked out for him making his light eyes pop. When he speaks to you, he means it. He couldn't not if he tried. I want to thank him for saying that. But I'm

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PERS (NAR.) (cont'd)  
worried if I open my mouth, my voice will catch. And I might- well people might *think* I might cry. Or whatever.

So instead I just lay my head on his shoulder while his heart beats steady and safe, and he tries too hard not to step on my toes.

SCENE: 3

CHAR (NAR.)  
It is possible, just barely, that I started drinking too early. I think as I make my way to the bar sweating alcohol. I unbutton my shirt. The third time I've done this in the last hour, my tie gone before dinner.

CHAR  
A water.

CHAR (NAR.)  
I say even as the bartender slides me another glass of France's dwindling finest.

I stop his hand with mine when he tries to take the glass away.

CHAR  
You can leave this.

CHAR (NAR.)  
I say. He nods, too formal to be of any interest to me. Unlike Persephone, I don't find work attractive.

HEP  
Just a beer please.

CHAR (NAR.)  
I turn to Hep. His shaggy hair brushed back away from his suntanned face, eyes already crinkled in preparation for a fake smile. I gotta say something... biting. Something that immediately conveys how pissed off I am but is still subtle enough to keep him guessing, let me get under his skin.

CHAR  
Hi.

CHAR (NAR.)  
I go with.

HEP

Hey.

CHAR (NAR.)

He says, a rough hand raising a cool glass to his lips. He waits. Like I'm the one who has to say something? Like I'm the one who owes like, an explanation? I didn't just vanish one morning. No. No. I'm going to wait him out.

CHAR

(IMMEDIATELY)

What the fuck are you doing here?

CHAR (NAR.)

But being direct is cool too.

HEP

Eros needed a chaperone.

CHAR

YOU was the key word there.

CHAR (NAR.)

Something in my tone makes him glance quickly around. Nervous. Good.

HEP

I was just the best guy for the job. I was shortlisted for Persephone's position before Dion, so when this job opened up...

CHAR (NAR.)

He smiles, an adorable "ain't it just the darndest thing?" shrug. Infuriating.

He looks past me, I turn to see- Hera. Watching us as she talks to someone from the medical staff and some government wonk. Smiling in a way that cannot possibly be meant for them.

I down the rest of the champagne in front of me.

CHAR

Are you planning on fucking me again?

CHAR (NAR.)

Now his attention is squarely back on me.

HEP

I think we should go somewhere more private.

CHAR

Oh, no thanks. I meant in terms of getting me involved with a bunch of terrorists and then disappearing.

CHAR (NAR.)

He grabs my arm with a thick hand. I throw him off easily.

CHAR

Does she know you fuck guys?

HEP

Yes.

CHAR (NAR.)

This catches me for just a second.

CHAR

Does she know you fucked me?

HEP

No. But I haven't- There hasn't been the right time.

CHAR

No time like the present.

CHAR (NAR.)

I say, pivoting towards Hera. He grabs me again. Hard enough to stop me, but he doesn't turn me back around. Instead he leans in my ear.

HEP

I really care about her.

CHAR (NAR.)

He whispers as I watch Hera, now bouncing holding Adam, letting his drool drop onto her dress. Flying him like a tiny airplane in and out of the other baby's face. She laughs and the partygoers around her do too.

There's no body on the planet who deserves to be cared for more than her. But not by *this* guy.

CHAR

You used me. To make her like you.

CHAR (NAR.)

I say, pointing sloppily at Rebekah.

CHAR

Guess it paid off, Mr. Chaperone.



CHAR (NAR.)

Now Hep lowers my hand, steps fully around me, so he's just a foot from my face.

HEP

I cared about you.

BARTENDER

Can I-

CHAR

Fuck off dude.

CHAR (NAR.)

I bark a little louder than I wanted and the bartender flees.

Hep's brows furrow as earnestness escapes his every pore.

HEP

You *know* that Char. I told you, things with me were complicated though. I told you that right after you told me-

CHAR

You think I remember every conversation I have with someone I'm fucking?

HEP

... How do you think of me, Char?

CHAR (NAR.)

And somewhere in my head a few memories begin to emerge, force their way to the surface like a drowning victim. Gasping and screaming and desperate. The smell of coffee. Fingertips on my face. The hollow calls of morning birds to each other. Arms around me.

Like a tiny balloon of carbon hurtling to the top of my champagne, I return to the party and the people and the sounds of music being ignored.

CHAR

I don't.

CHAR (NAR.)

I say at last.

HEP

Okay.

CHAR (NAR.)

He says, disappointed in *me*.

REBEKAH

Gentlemen.

CHAR (NAR.)

Rebekah says, gliding towards us.

REBEKAH

What are we discussing so intensely?

CHAR

I was just asking Hep if he had anymore cool clubs for me to get involved in.

REBEKAH

I don't think he does.

CHAR

Oh, you guys have a nice little chat about that? When you promoted him? Question, Prez, did he have to fuck me to get this job or was that his own artistic flair?

Hey, Bar Guy! Can you get me and my two old, old friends here a drink?

HEP

I think you're good.

CHAR

Oh, is this you *caring* about me?

REBEKAH

It would be very unfortunate to dredge up the whole affair again, Charon. Please don't forget how easy I've made life for you. How very much space there is now in the world to send someone loud.

CHAR (NAR.)

She pats my shoulder.

REBEKAH

I have a speech to make. Happy birthday.

CHAR (NAR.)

She says gliding away. Hep steps back towards the party himself.

CHAR

If you don't tell Hera. I will.

HEP  
She'll find out about you and the Void too.

CHAR  
She already knows. Guess you're going to have to find another way to keep me quiet.

Scene 4

RHEA (NAR.)  
I reach for Clark, but pull my hand back. Better to not-

CLARK  
Hi.

RHEA  
Hey.

RHEA (NAR.)  
I say. Trying to stick my suddenly too big hands in my pockets. But there are no pockets. Because women's fashion is no less archaic in the apocalypse.

RHEA  
Can I talk to you?

CLARK  
Depends how much you've had to drink.

RHEA  
Already puked.

PERS  
By all means then.

RHEA (NAR.)  
Persephone says while ceremoniously, stepping away from Clark.

PERS  
I'll catch you later.

RHEA  
Yes!

RHEA (NAR.)  
I say, even though she's looking at Clark.

PERS  
Perfect.

RHEA (NAR.)

She says, snapping her attention to me with a smile.

PERS

These shoes are killing me. I need to sit.

RHEA (NAR.)

She says, turning to a table of well dressed men, who trip over themselves as they leap from their seats.

She cocks an eyebrow at me and joins them.

CLARK

Are you having fun?

RHEA

Not really. I know these are our birthday parties but- they always feel like a way for them to pat themselves on the back. "Haven't killed our science projects yet!"

CLARK

Yeah I mostly expected the food to be better.

RHEA

These are both good critiques.

You are a surprisingly confident dancer.

CLARK

Not sure confident is the same as good but I will take it... Pers' taught me.

RHEA

Oh really?

RHEA (NAR.)

There hasn't been a lot about the last year I've been big on, but getting to be friends with Pers? That has been great. We finally did the thing where we realize we have a lot more in common than not. We're both very funny and smart. We're both saving the human race. We're also both really humble.

RHEA

She's a good friend.

CLARK

Yeah, she is.

RHEA (NAR.)

We settle into a brief awkward silence. I know what I have to say but it's *so hard*.

RHEA

About uh- yesterday.

CLARK

You don't need to apologize.

RHEA

Oh, right. Yeah.

RHEA (NAR.)

That's not what I was going to do but- Good to know.

RHEA

Thanks for trying not to.

CLARK

Oh, yeah of course. But, I'm sure I'm not the first person to just- refuse.

RHEA

Uh, you kind of are. In my sessions at least.

RHEA (NAR.)

He stops now, searches my face.

CLARK

What? Even you, who takes even the smallest chance to rebel.

RHEA

I don't think I-

CLARK

An hour ago you put a bunch of chips in your mouth and *then* a spoonful of salsa.

RHEA

Didn't realize anyone saw that.

CLARK

How could you not have just... said no?

RHEA

I uh, I don't know. I mean When you're growing up and you're told every day you have to do this thing... It doesn't feel optional. Just a part of life. Like breathing or sleeping.

CLARK

Or shitting.

RHEA

Exactly like shitting. Sounds classier in your accent.

RHEA (NAR.)

He smiles, a lopsided smirk.

RHEA

You know they're going to make us try again.

CLARK

Well, what if we kept refusing? In various creative ways?

REBEKAH

Ladies and gentlemen, I would just like to make a brief announcement. Could I have our guests of honor to the stage?

RHEA

Sounds a lot like trouble.

RHEA (NAR.)

I say, smiling myself now and stepping towards the small stage set up at the back of the room. Our fearless, skinny leader stands behind the podium. She beams at us.

REBEKAH

Don't they just look lovely.

RHEA (NAR.)

I stand beside Persephone, her heels bring her just about to my nose. She shoots a glance my way, rolls her eyes.

REBEKAH

The last 18 months in the lives of these young men and women have been trying to say the least.

RHEA (NAR.)

Don't show a picture of Iris. Don't show a picture of Iris. Don't show a picture of-

REBEKAH

I'd like to take a moment of silence. For Iris.

RHEA (NAR.)

Everyone obeys, many lower their heads, close their eyes. But not me. Because I can feel, even though we've got Pers and the solid wall that is Char between us, Eros tensing up. I shift a little so I can see him- but Pers has placed a hand on his shoulder. He puts his opposite hand on top of hers.

SOUND: CAMERA SNAP

I turn quickly to see what moron took a fucking pic-

REBEKAH

Thank you all. From tragedy, emerged hope. Not so much a phoenix from the ashes as two eggs forged by fire-

RHEA (NAR.)

Oh god, has every good speechwriter died?

REBEKAH

These courageous men and women, with the help of our new staff-

RHEA (NAR.)

She flips her lank hair over her shoulder.

REBEKAH

And a new administration...

RHEA (NAR.)

Polite, repugnant laughter.

REBEKAH

They have done what many thought impossible at best.

RHEA (NAR.)

She nods to someone off stage now and... And two nurses bring out the Offs to oohs and ahhs of the audience.

REBEKAH

We thought just this once we could let them miss their bedtime.

RHEA (NAR.)

More stomach turning chuckles. I'm scanning the smiling faces, the light playing on them. Turning their smiles to hungry leers.

PERS

Rhea.

RHEA (NAR.)

I turn to see a woman in front of me, holding Adam.

RHEA

What?

RHEA (NAR.)

I hiss. Pers is holding P, eyes on me as she delicately untangles a tiny hand from her necklace.

Oh. Of course. Of. Course. I take Adam from the nurse, who fades away amidst the flashbulbs and applause. Adam

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RHEA (NAR.) (cont'd)  
begins screaming because he always does. But the people watching just start laughing. I can hear my heart in my ears now, even louder than the crying. Is this funny? This snapshot of the rest of my life? Having achieved the only thing I was ever even possibly going to be able to just to fail in a way no one expected? Will my hands be full of fucking Offs at my 25th birthday? The cries high and sharp like an eagles beak, breaking the skin and pecking at my liver? My body at once being applauded, laughed at, and punished for-

CHAR  
Heyyyyyy- okay. Okay.

RHEA (NAR.)  
Char says, swiftly lifting Adam out of my hands. The tiny face wets his immaculate suit jacket.

CHAR  
What is with you?

RHEA (NAR.)  
He whispers with boozey breath. He is drunk. That should scare me. Make me want to take Adam back. But I can't. Because something makes me scared he's safer with a fucked up giant than with-

REBEKAH  
Okay, okay. That may be enough. Let's let these two get to bed. They've got a lot of work to do.

RHEA (NAR.)  
She just turns to watch the Offs be ferried off stage. She smiles at me. I gape at her. Did she just make a joke about two infants eventually having to fuck each other?

REBEKAH  
I would of course like to take a special moment to appreciate Rhea, Persephone, and Charon for their success. Please, step forward.

RHEA (NAR.)  
God these people will clap for anything. I glance back at Clark, who *should* be here. Not that I think being in a really weird emotional place and then fucking your friend is really much of an achievement. But if we're applauding people for it anyway... Persephone raises a hand. Touches it to her chest in faux sentimentality. I do wonder if she's really thinking about Dion though. In the last year she's gotten to this really comfortable place with her grief. But this would be hard. Oh well, at least no one has brought up-

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REBEKAH

We do have a surprise message from a special guest.

RHEA (NAR.)

I look to Hera who is leaning in a dark doorway. I focus on her intensely- worried she's going to- I don't know cry maybe? That I can hear the ice cubes clinking against one another in her cocktail. But her face betrays nothing.

REBEKAH

I'm afraid there's no supporting video, so this photo will have to suffice.

RHEA (NAR.)

And there, projected behind us, appears a larger than life photo of Apollo. Looking slimy and svelte in a photo from a few years back. I study the lines on his face like the rings on a tree. Maybe Black's last inauguration. Hera is probably just out of frame. I turn back to her, still nothing.

APOLLO VOICE

Hey everyone... Sorry I am unavailable... You know how I get about... [laugh]...

RHEA (NAR.)

My stomach tightens. They had 33 years of media footage of him and this is what they went with?

APOLLO VOICE

Anyway, I look forward to this next year...

RHEA (NAR.)

That's gotta be just some past birthday.

APOLLO VOICE

For all of us... Our family is just growing...

RHEA (NAR.)

He said that to me at the ceremony where Hera was assigned to be my chaperone.

APOLLO VOICE

It's a wonderful time to be alive.

RHEA (NAR.)

Oh I don't- but Eros has turned and run off the stage. He ducks through a side door of the hall. Before security can even follow him I kick out of my shoes and chase him.

(CONTINUED)

RHEA

Hey!

RHEA (NAR.)

I say as he tears down a hall. A few guards burst out after us.

RHEA

I got it.

RHEA (NAR.)

I call over my shoulder, but they keep coming.

RHEA

I said leave us alone.

RHEA (NAR.)

I say, this time firm enough to stop them. They don't go back inside the party, but just stand by the door.

RHEA

Hey.

RHEA (NAR.)

I say, finally grabbing Er by the sleeve. He rips his arm away, grabs at his tie. Stands there taking deep breathes in and out. A button from his collar clatters and rolls on the marble floor.

RHEA

How did you know *I* wasn't planning on fleeing the party? We should at least rock paper-

RHEA (NAR.)

But his face is cramped up in concentration. His eyes are closed tight.

RHEA

Sit down.

RHEA (NAR.)

I say, lowering him to the floor. He pulls his knees into his chest.

RHEA

Just keep breathing.

EROS

Why did she do that?

RHEA

She needs people to think he's alive.

(CONTINUED)

EROS

But didn't she know we would feel...?

RHEA

Er she doesn't think much about how we feel ever.

EROS

Some days I don't think about him. But others... I feel like every time I open my mouth I'm going to scream what I did...

RHEA

He killed Iris. He hurt me and Hera and-

EROS

But he wasn't doing any of that when I found him. He was already hurt, he couldn't do anything to me. He was just- just talking.

RHEA

Hey, hey. That happened. Yeah.

RHEA (NAR.)

Oh god it has been a long time since I have had to give anyone else a pep talk.

RHEA

But you're not *there* anymore. You're here.

RHEA (NAR.)

Hoping that will do, I press my hand over his heart, where it thrashes in his chest.

EROS

Everyone is going to think there's something fucking wrong with me.

RHEA

Yeah it was really nice of you to give me some competition.

RHEA (NAR.)

I make myself smile. Run my fingers through his hair, relieved he has transitioned out of his Sinead O' Connor look. I-

Eros leans forwards and kisses me. His lips on mine are familiar and warm but I don't return it. Just softly push him away with the hand still on his chest.

RHEA

You shouldn't do th-

(CONTINUED)

RHEA (NAR.)

But it occurs to me we are not alone. In fact, we aren't even just with the security staff. As they've added a photographer to their little viewing party.

The man behind the lens lowers his camera. Evidently having gotten his shot.

Fuck. Me.

Scene 5

HERA (NAR.)

I press my eyes together for just one... two beats longer than a blink. Can't overreact. Even with everyone being distracted by Eros. I can't... React any more than if I'd just heard a message from an ex boyfriend.

HEP

I gotta go check on Eros. Are you okay?

HERA (NAR.)

Hep says, rubbing his calloused thumb over my bare shoulder.

HERA

Of course.

HERA (NAR.)

And he runs off. Leaving me there. Not reacting as if Apollo is dead.

Or I'd killed him. Left him to petrify where no one would ever find him.

I can't even react like I know that last phrase. "It's a wonderful time to be alive." Was from a video on his device. I'd woken up, the camera so close to my face he had to wipe the fog of my breath from its lens. It was the first night we'd spent together after I got out of the hospital.

He'd wanted to immortalize the morning after.

In the video, I'm swaddled in these soft white blankets. His stubbled face enters the frame brags that for the first time, I was the one who was oversleeping. I lazily untangled one of my arms, smacked the device away. It landed lens up amidst the blankets, so it didn't capture him diving in next to me. Wrapping his arms around me. Lips to mine, then up to my forehead before announcing-

(CONTINUED)

"It's a wonderful time to be alive."

I should have known they'd go through his phone.

I open my eyes. It's only been a second. I need to go follow Rhea. Make sure she's okay too. But then I might see Er. Probably wracked with guilt.

I can see Rebekah wrapping up her speech- cool facade a little bruised. But I can't hear her. I can only concentrate on leaning on the wall. Going for casual and trying not to betray how wobbly my legs are.

People start clapping. But I can't. My hands are frozen to my glass.

Rebekah is descending the stage, shaking some hands.

TALC

Well that was fucked up. Even by her standards.

HERA (NAR.)

Talc has sidled up next to me.

TALC

Are you okay? Just now your voice sounded... fine.

HERA

I am fine.

HERA (NAR.)

I can't look at him.

TALC

Have you told Hep yet?

HERA

No.

TALC

Why? Don't trust h-

HERA

No. I don't want to change how he feels about Eros.

HERA (NAR.)

I say, a little too harshly, before walking quickly towards the bathroom. I need to splash water on my face or see my face at least. Make sure what happened isn't written all over it. I guess I could play it off like... like I miss him. Or- or-

(CONTINUED)

GUARD

Hera? You can't-

HERA (NAR.)

But I don't listen, I blow right past the guard and into the restroom. Which is totally empty. Thank god. I-

REBEKAH

Oh.

HERA (NAR.)

Rebekah is standing at the mirror. Applying lipstick so subtle, it might as well be chapstick. She watches me in the reflection.

REBEKAH

Didn't think they'd let anyone else in here. But it isn't like they were going to tackle you I suppose.

HERA (NAR.)

Now she turns to me.

REBEKAH

They don't see you as dangerous.

HERA

That was fucked.

REBEKAH

I agree. But if we didn't play anything. People might start to ask a lot more uncomfortable questions.

HERA

How long do you think they'll settle for voice mails?

REBEKAH

I think until about... 2 weeks after our next success when we announce he has died in some freak accident.

HERA

You're assuming you'll have another success?

REBEKAH

We. Rhea. Clark. Myself. You. Humanity.

HERA

She needs more time.

REBEKAH

My staff disagrees.

(CONTINUED)

HERA

Well your staff is wrong.

REBEKAH

Hera, you are a really wonderful asset to all of us. You are compassionate, kind, really know how to work a room... And on top of everything- you are just so damn beautiful.

HERA (NAR.)

She reaches a cadaverous hand to my face. Places her cold fingers at my chin.

REBEKAH

But all of that makes you a much better babysitter than a leader. So please, keep supplying the love and care Rhea needs. But don't pretend to know how to do a real job.

HERA (NAR.)

She smiles and waltzes out of the room.

I close my eyes again for one... two... but this time I don't think about the past. I think about the future.

I charge out of the bathroom. Nearly collide with Rebekah, who has barely cleared the door. I pound across the dance floor, get right on stage.

HERA

Excuse me, I'm really sorry to bother everyone again. I know it's been an exciting night. And I know most of us just want to take off our shoes and have another drink so I'll keep this short. I'm pleased to announce my candidacy for President.

HERA (NAR.)

Every face is stunned. Except of course, for Talc. Who starts clapping. Clark joins in. And soon, you can barely hear the confused murmuring of the room as the applause gets louder and louder.

Rebekah exits.

Scene 6

EROS (NAR.)

I've just been sitting here since Rhea ran back inside. Pissed. Which is fair. Really fair. This party sucks. Even before the uh- thing was played. Our birthdays used to really be all about us. We'd get fucked up and have fun- which sounds like every other day, I know, but the people who would useually get angry with us

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

EROS (NAR.) (cont'd)

would also just get fucked up. For one night a year they would stop talking about the future and who we were supposed to produce. They'd just talk about how happy the were to have us.

I think in general, as a species, humans are really bad at appreciating the present. Birds jump from nests without fear of falling, flowers turn to the sun without worrying when it will set. But us? Everything that doesn't remind us, scares us.

That's dumb. I'm dumb. Sometimes Iris would say stuff like that but it sounded... I should go inside. Apologize. Leave. Hep can just stay and hang out with Hera. Man, *Hera*.

How is she right now? I know she hated him for what he did, but I also know how much she wanted him to live. She shouldn't have to look at me right now.

Suddenly the scuff marks on the floor I have been staring at are covered by the sight of two sensible, low-heeled shoes.

REBEKAH

Eros.

EROS (NAR.)

Rebekah's voice coos. And I remeber whose idea that message must have been. I get quickly to my feet.

EROS

That was fucked up.

EROS (NAR.)

I spit.

REBEKAH

I'm sorry if it caused you any unpleasantness.

EROS

Unpleasantness?

REBEKAH

Well, I would say "pain" but I feel like you've upgraded our standard of what that means.

EROS (NAR.)

I step closer to her- but check my security team still at the end of the hall. So I fold my arms- realizing for the first time in a long time, Rebekah is not surrounded by armed guards.



EROS

You're alone.

REBEKAH

Yes. I wanted to make sure you were alright.

EROS

*Right.*

EROS (NAR.)

You were worried I'd mention Apollo is dead. I think.

REBEKAH

It doesn't matter if you all believe it or not, I care about you five very much.

EROS

You shouldn't have brought Adam out without talking to Rhea. You know how she's been and-

REBEKAH

How could I not? Don't you understand that everyone else in that room has lived a hell of a lot longer than 24 years with nothing but failure and dread?

EROS

Fucking fine then! Let them have their success, just leave Rhea alone. At least until she's better.

EROS (NAR.)

She just stares at me blankly, her mouth small at the end of her long face.

EROS

There's something wrong with her.

REBEKAH

Eros, she is one of two women to conceive and carry a child in the last 5 generations. There is nothing wrong with her that matters more than that.

EROS

So just to be clear, when you said you cared about us you only meant in terms of how successfully we can keep fucking eachother?

REBEKAH

Yes. Exactly. Because, Eros, the only thing wrong with you all is how accustomed you are to privilege. When I was your age I was having to cop with a lot more people I knew a lot less well. And that was just at night. Because during the day we were all being trained for jobs to keep the water and power running for the

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

REBEKAH (cont'd)

smaller, thankless generations to come. And after ten years of exhausting every part of my body I found out, like everyone else I knew, I was non viable. And somehow in the face of that crushing disappointment I found it in myself to volunteer whatever was left of myself to be a carrier. To literally allow someone else to feed off of my body for nine months. At no point during that process did anyone ask if I was "Okay" and I didn't need them to, because I knew nothing about me mattered as long as she was growing, strong, and healthy.

EROS

So you're pissed no one said "thank you"?

REBEKAH

No. I'm disappointed that Black allowed you all to be raised thinking your friendships were nearly as consequential as the sacrifices we all made to get to this point.

EROS (NAR.)

Somehow Rebekah has managed to take the exact same, selfless thing Iris tried to teach me and made it so fucking self serving.

She takes a deep breath, tries to control herself.

REBEKAH

I just don't know how to make you understand. Of all people, I thought maybe you would get it. I know how you feel about Rhea, Eros. I know what people say, but I don't believe you and Iris were just pretending to be chasing success.

EROS (NAR.)

People say that? I think, a weight dropping onto my chest.

REBEKAH

That you were leading her on. That that's why she killed herself.

EROS (NAR.)

She shakes her head.

REBEKAH

I know you were willing to risk your relationship with Rhea for this.

EROS

Just shut up, okay? You don't get to do this to me too. I know how you've played Char and Rhea and I guess every other fucking person- but not me. I'm not playing whatever game. I'm just trying to get my shit back together and be close with Rhea again. But you you are making that so fucking hard because you're making her cop again with *Clark*. Who doesn't even care about the cause. Not like me, who gets it. And gets Rhea. And-and...

EROS (NAR.)

I slow down, finally hearing myself. Something ugly I've been trying really hard not to think clawing it's way to the front of my head. My dumb fucking head.

She's jsut staring at me, Sphinx-like.

EROS

I just want to help her do this.

REBEKAH

Then it looks like you and I may be on the same side.