

Lesser Gods Season 3, Episode 3

By

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LESSER GODS SEASON 3, EPISODE 3

Scene: 1

(CLASSICAL MUSIC PLAYS SOFTLY)

PERS

Shhh, you're okay. You're okay.

Probably just a nightmare.

PERS (NAR.)

I say as I cradle P in my arms. Her face smooths out from its crying. I wipe tiny tears away.

CLARK

What do you think they dream about?

(cont'd)

I look around the Nest. The artificial warmth of its colors and textures struggling to heat the cold, scientific subtext of everything around them.

PERS

I can't imagine it's any more surreal than all this.

(cont'd)

Clark laughs. Nods. He spins the mobile above Adam's empty crib.

PERS

I'm sorry they didn't tell you he's out for tests.

PERS (NAR.)

I say. He shakes his head.

CLARK

I just feel like I'm constantly being reminded how unimportant I am.

PERS

I don't think it's personal.

CLARK

Oh don't worry, I don't think anything that has ever happened to me has been *personal*.

PERS (NAR.)

He leans an elbow on the crib. Tucks his fist under his chin.

(CONTINUED)

CLARK

That's why I want to be good at *this*. So they feel less-

PERS (NAR.)

Now he drops his hands to his sides.

CLARK

Alien.

PERS

Well then practice.

PERS (NAR.)

I say, walking over to him. I nod towards his arms, he quickly folds them like mine. I'm aware of the nurses outside the Nest watching us carefully. But I find Clark to be relatively steady. You know when he's not panicking.

PERS

Support her head- right. Great. Very important. Lot of future schemes brewing in there.

PERS (NAR.)

I say, laying a finger right between P's big eyes. She follows me with them. Lets out a little laugh when I flutter my fingertips below her chin.

CLARK

Wow.

PERS (NAR.)

Clark laughs too.

PERS

It's good when they laugh. They need to hear their own voice.

CLARK

Going to fit right in with our bunch then.

PERS (NAR.)

She looks to him now.

He smiles at me. For once, looks confident. Calm. Happy.

CLARK

You're really good at this.

PERS

I know.

CLARK

It's been great to watch you on camera with her. Know it's real.

PERS

Does it hurt to watch Char get to do all that stuff?

PERS (NAR.)

He shrugs, just a little so he doesn't scare the baby.

CLARK

Nah. I don't think I'd be very good at the performance part of this. And Char is an expert. Just gets to be the strong, hot daddy.

PERS

Clark don't say "daddy" again.

CLARK

Noted.

PERS (NAR.)

He coos to P.

CLARK

I imagine what you do has got to be harder. The uh-

PERS (NAR.)

He glances at the nurses outside the sound proof glass.

CLARK

- Apollo of it all.

PERS

I mean, it isn't ideal. But last year I don't know how I would have handled talking about Dion all the time.

PERS (NAR.)

I tell Clark, no longer struggling the same way to talk about him. Dion. I used to worry she would only ever remind me of him, but she doesn't. She doesn't remind me of anyone. She is wholly herself. And I love that.

PERS

And Apollo is away. So I don't have to see him all the time.

PERS (NAR.)

At this Clark nods, solemnly.

(CONTINUED)

PERS

I'm best as a solo act anyway.

CLARK

I spoke to Rhea yesterday. Or tried to.

PERS

She's not-

CLARK

No, no. I know. I don't blame her for being upset. Especially since they're... reengaging us.

PERS

How're you feeling?

CLARK

I'm... mostly sorry. And nervous. This is still technically my first MIUC. Rhea isn't ready to go back. And then I'm going to be there, awkward and unsure of what to do.

PERS

You figured it out once before.

PERS (NAR.)

He doesn't laugh.

CLARK

That was different. That was her idea. This is- I mean it would probably just be easier if it was Eros. Or Char. Someone who knows what they're doing.

PERS

And someone who's less likely to succeed. I think.

CLARK

Are you nervous to start back up?

PERS

I'm actually not.

CLARK

That doesn't surprise me at all.

PERS

No, Clark. I'm not cleared yet.

PERS (NAR.)

He face falls.

(CONTINUED)

CLARK

But they told you-

PERS

I know.

CLARK

You were excited.

PERS (NAR.)

I think about lying. But what's the point?

PERS

I was.

CLARK

Can I ask why?

PERS (NAR.)

I think about shrugging this question off as well. But he and P are just staring at me, both looking concerned. Something about it makes my words feel softer, less... pathetic.

PERS

I feel like, sometimes, I didn't do it right the first time. I don't know how to read the charts or tests but whatever the doctors read made them think I needed help. Even at the end.

PERS (NAR.)

I reach out, brush my finger tips on P's cheek.

PERS

I wanted to hold her. But I was under anesthesia. I just... I feel like if I get to do it again I can show them that this isn't just for show. You know? I am really meant to do this.

CLARK

Are you sure it's about showing *them*?

PERS (NAR.)

I look up now. His mouth is tilted in a sympathetic grimace.

CLARK

They're just being extra cautious. And for good reason.

PERS (NAR.)

He tickles P's neck just like I did a few minutes ago. She laughs.

(CONTINUED)

CLARK

You're incredible.

PERS (NAR.)

And as P continues to giggle, something in my chest feels a little lighter.

Scene 2

HERA (NAR.)

It isn't until I raise my coffee and feel it lap, cold against my lips, that I realize how long I've been sitting here. Thinking about Rhea. Trying to imagine how to help her through today. But it isn't just going to be today is it?

SOUND: DOORBELL

HERA (NAR.)

I glance quickly up at the stairs as I reach the door. Rhea has been napping all afternoon.

HEP

Hey.

HERA (NAR.)

Hep says, holding two metal coffee thermoses up. Disposable things become a lot less convenient when there's no one left to make them.

HEP

It felt like that part of the afternoon where people need more coffee.

HERA (NAR.)

He grins, looking fresh and caffeinated enough for the both of us. Something in my chest stirs, I swallow nervously before speaking.

HEP

Where's Eros?

HERA (NAR.)

He tips his head to the side, surprised.

HEP

He's in tests for the next hour. He asked me to leave.

HERA (NAR.)

He says, anticipating my next question.

(CONTINUED)

HERA

Great.

HERA (NAR.)

I say, gesturing for him to follow me inside. Once my back is turned, I roll my eyes at myself. Great. Yeah Hera, it must be to have your new ward reject you.

HEP

He seems *interesting*. Like he's putting on a different show for everyone.

HERA

He's been through a lot.

HERA (NAR.)

I say, wiping my hands subtly on my pants. There are so many things making me nervous my body can't pick just one.

HEP

Yeah, I mean. You must know him pretty well. Oh, you already had coffee.

HERA (NAR.)

Hep places his cups down on the island.

HERA

Old coffee.

HERA (NAR.)

I say, taking it to the sink. I feel his thick arms wrap around me, his soft lips on my neck. Every nerve ending on my body awakes with a jolt. His hands slip under my shirt, rough against the soft skin of my stomach. He pauses when he feels my scar, ugly and crooked even after all this time.

HEP

Can I ask you about this?

HERA (NAR.)

He whispers in my ear. I turn to him. He's right on top of me. I place my hand on his chest. Shake my head. Not now. Besides, I have a much more pressing question for him.

HERA

Why didn't you tell me you were here for Eros?

HERA (NAR.)

There's that head tilt again. Maybe now more suspicious than surprised.

HEP

I really wasn't thinking about work.

HERA

But it's so relevant. You know who he is to my sister.

HEP

But that's *your* sister.

HERA (NAR.)

He takes a step back. Drops onto a stool.

HEP

So you would have preferred me come up to you in a bar, on what is your night off, and start bugging you about more Rhea/Eros bullshit?

HERA

It could have been *part* of the conversation.

HEP

Never at any point, have the Final Five just been *part* of a conversation.

HERA (NAR.)

He clenches his fists. Drums them on the sides of his thighs.

HEP

Why do I feel like there's no way I could have gotten this right?

HERA (NAR.)

I run my hands through my hair.

HERA

I've already been the person who gets lied to.

HERA (NAR.)

He hops to his feet now.

HEP

I'm not lying. Yes, I should have told you about Eros. I actually approached you because I thought we would talk about he and Rhea. But when I was there-

HERA (NAR.)

He takes a large step, a breath away from me now.

HEP

When I was here. I couldn't think about anything but you. Still can't.

(CONTINUED)

HERA (NAR.)

My heart hammers in my chest. I try and speak- but can't.

HEP

There is a lot I'm not proud of. But I will tell you every second of my life if we're talking about our pasts.

HERA (NAR.)

I shake my head.

He reads something on my face. Lifts me up and onto the counter. He finds my lips with his. His kiss is deep and hungry, starved in a way Apollo never was. I wrap my arms around him and he slips a hand up my skirt.

SOUND: CRASH

HERA (NAR.)

I freeze. Rhea must be awake. Hep pulls back from me.

HERA

I have to. She's-

HEP

You don't need to explain. You know, because we're both chaperones. I mentioned that right?

HERA (NAR.)

He offers me his hand. I hop down. Straighten myself out.

HEP

I am going to leave both coffees as a peace offering.

HERA

Offering accepted.

HEP

This party on Friday...

HERA

The Birthday Party?

HEP

Yes. Will you go with me?

HERA

Like... in public?

(CONTINUED)

HEP

Uh, if you want you can sit on my shoulders and we can wear a big ole trench coat.

HERA

No I just... it's kind of soon.

HEP

Is Apollo even going to be there?

HERA

No.

HERA (NAR.)

I croak through my suddenly very tight throat.

HEP

What if we went as friends?

HERA

I just don't want my life under a microscope right now.

HEP

Okay. Okay. Can I reserve you for one dance?

HERA (NAR.)

He wiggles his shoulders.

HEP

I'm *really* bad.

HERA

Fine. One.

HERA (NAR.)

He pulls me to him, kisses me quickly before backing towards the door.

HEP

Go do your job.

HERA

I'm trying.

HERA (NAR.)

I hiss, taking the steps two at a time. I can still feel a dumb smile on my face when I reach Rhea's door. It feels so good I consider leaving it there. Maybe I should be positive. But no. Rhea's misery prefers company. I knock.

HERA

Hey lady, can I come in?

RHEA

I'm asleep.

HERA

Okay.

HERA (NAR.)

I wait one, two-

SOUND: DOOR BEING PULLED OPEN

HERA (NAR.)

As expected, Rhea pulls her door open. She's wearing basketball shorts that must have belonged to Char tied tightly around her waist and a cropped white tee shirt.

HERA

Are we exercising?

RHEA

Never.

HERA (NAR.)

She says too harshly.

RHEA

I just want something I can get right back on the second it's over.

HERA

Okay.

RHEA

And I don't want anything-

HERA (NAR.)

She runs her hands roughly over her arms-

RHEA

My skin, you know?

HERA

Yeah, I do.

RHEA

How's your boyfriend?

HERA

I do not know what you're talking about.

(CONTINUED)

RHEA

Is he cool being first man?

HERA

Might as well ask if he's cool being Santa Claus.

HERA (NAR.)

Rhea shrugs. Wades back into the mess of her room. Her hands shake as she fishes around.

HERA

You okay?

RHEA

Yes.

HERA

Why did it have to be Clark.

HERA (NAR.)

Did I ever tell you about my first MIUC?

RHEA

Yes, when I was 14. I believe the phrase you used was "magical."

HERA

Oh. I lied.

RHEA

No shit. Even I didn't think you were *that* weird. I need socks.

HERA (NAR.)

I enter the room. Start sifting through piles of laundry.

HERA

Well, being as I wasn't as...

RHEA

Ambitious?

HERA

As you and Eros were... It was all totally new for me. So a lot of the feelings down there-

HERA (NAR.)

Rhea slowly straightens up.

RHEA

I don't want to hear this story.

(CONTINUED)

HERA (NAR.)

I chuck a sock at her.

HERA

I just did not do a good job keeping track of my body and I-

HERA (NAR.)

Now I have her full attention. I shrug my shoulders. Try not to laugh.

HERA

- I peed on him.

HERA (NAR.)

Rhea's jaw drops.

RHEA

Are you sure it wasn't-

HERA

Trust me. It was pee. I knew it. He knew it. Every doctor in the lab knew it.

RHEA

Wow.

HERA (NAR.)

Rhea says, laughing and falling back onto her bed.

RHEA

I don't know what the best part of this is. That you, pride of the death throw of our species, pissed on someone by accident. Or that that someone was Apollo.

HERA

My finest moment indeed.

HERA (NAR.)

I sit down next to her.

RHEA

Wait, you aren't trying to tell me that this is you and your new dude's thing. Because this is a judgment free-

HERA (NAR.)

I shove her. She falls over. Bounces up from the mattress.

RHEA

OR is this the thing you're afraid will come out if you run for office.

(CONTINUED)

HERA (NAR.)

I grab one of her pillows.

RHEA

Or should I say- leak?

HERA (NAR.)

And mock smother her.

RHEA

I'm sorry! I couldn't hold it.

HERA (NAR.)

She laughs, muffled by the pillow.

HERA

I'm trying to support you.

HERA (NAR.)

I say, finally ripping the pillow away from your face.

HERA

I want you to know that however awkward today is, it will not be as awkward as that.

HERA (NAR.)

Her smile fades a little as she shakes her head, sorry the conversation has turned back to this.

RHEA

I haven't done this since before the train thing.

HERA

I know.

RHEA

It was with Er. But he was so cold and clinical... It was like it wasn't.

HERA (NAR.)

I nod. Trying to figure out what the right thing to say here might be.

RHEA

All I wanted was his attention. And now I'm fucking drowning in it.

HERA

Do you wish it was him today?

HERA (NAR.)

She shakes her head emphatically.

(CONTINUED)

RHEA

When we used to have to cop, it didn't feel so bad. Because I knew he hated it for all the same reasons I did. Nothing that happened in there was real. The feelings. The uncomfortableness. The rush and the chaos we were making every night, that was real. I just don't think Eros feels that way anymore.

HERA (NAR.)

I watch her run her hands through her hair, pull her knees up to her chest. I think about how I used to feel safe with Apollo. Ironic, now. But it wasn't so different than Eros and Rhea, Apollo and I were also on the same team. But we were just playing with Black. The relationship we built out of that. There was always a plan we were following, a goal we were trying to achieve. After I lost the baby. Or was told I'd lost the baby, part of me still felt like I was trying to follow that doomed plan. Like I was happier being lost in the woods than forging a new path out.

I didn't feel free until Apollo died. And even then, it's taken me a year to be able to accept that feeling. I can do anything I want now. I can have sex with Hep. I can dance with him regardless of what anyone says. I could even run for fucking president. Not that I ever would.

HERA

It can be nice to start over with someone new.

HERA (NAR.)

I say.

RHEA

Oh Hera. I don't wanna shock you- but Clark has *already* been inside me.

HERA

You know what I mean.

RHEA

It's just so insane. They *know* copping hasn't produced any Offs. Why go back to it?

HERA

Do you really see yourself having sex with Eros or Clark anytime soon?

HERA (NAR.)

She shakes her head.

HERA

Maybe we can pitch them something like that though. There have been alternative arrangements.

HERA (NAR.)

I say, thinking of Eros and Iris' private sessions but knowing not to bring them up.

RHEA

Sometimes I think they all need to be there, need to be involved so they can feel like they're part of the "success." But they really aren't doing fucking anything. Not when they're watching me on my back. Not when they're watching as I get bigger and bigger. Feeling so fucking alone even as someone else grows inside of me.

HERA (NAR.)

Hot, angry tears spill down her cheeks.

RHEA

It doesn't matter how it gets into me. The second it does I'm just going to lose myself again.

HERA

Let me talk to Rebekah, let-

RHEA

We know who she is. If she thinks something is right nothing can shake her. As long as she's in charge, my life is going to be one endless 12 month cycle until there's nothing left of me.

HERA

Rhea, I'm going to fix this. I promise.

Scene 3

RHEA (NAR.)

When I was a kid, these robes seemed... cool. Like armor for a knight. We'd come here on some fucked up field trip when we were like 12. They didn't show us a session. Probably because they knew that would have scared us. But Hera and Apollo must have just been completing one because they emerged into the hallway draped in that slate gray cotton. Apollo was drinking coffee. Hera was tucking a lock of his hair back into place. They looked glamorous. Like they were just climbing out of a hot tub cocktail hour, not getting it on for an audience.

"Hey guys!" Apollo said, cheery. Oblivious to the weirdness of him having just fucked my sister. Hera herself seemed more taken aback.

(CONTINUED)

"When did you all get here?" She asked.

"Only a minute ago." Shylock reassured her. Hera's face relaxed. Even then I thought that was weird. Hera was still a year or two away from becoming my chaperone, but she set up these bizarre "bonding sessions" every week where she told me in excruciatingly boring detail about every aspect of her life. Whatever happened in those rooms between her and Apollo, there had to be a reason she didn't want me to know too much about it.

I think about that day a lot whenever I slip out of my clothes and into this- the cotton overwashed and scratchy. Itchy. Uncomfortable. I push the thick sleeves up to my elbows. Rub my hands over my own skin. Again and again until the friction makes the goosebumps on my arms disappear.

HERA

You okay?

RHEA (NAR.)

Hera says coming into the locker room. She picks up my clothes. Folds them over her arm as carefully as if they were a flag. I just nod. Worried if I speak I'll get upset again.

I don't even know why they make us wear these things. What's the difference if people see me naked out here or in there? What does modesty mean if they decide how much you get?

HERA

I brought you something.

RHEA (NAR.)

Hera says before producing a small silver flask. My flask. Which she confiscated from me when I was 16.

RHEA

A Flask Of One's Own.

RHEA (NAR.)

I whisper.

HERA

Yes.

RHEA (NAR.)

She says turning it towards me, that same title scratched into its face.

RHEA

Am I even... allowed?

RHEA (NAR.)

Hera, god bless her, forces her version of a casual-cool shrug.

She hands me the flask. I tip it into my mouth. The bourbon rich and smokey in my mouth, falling back over my tongue leaving traces of vanilla- god it's been awhile since I had sex. I pass it back to Hera. Who also sips, grimacing a little. I reach for it again, but Hera hesitates.

HERA

You're not allowed to finish this.

RHEA (NAR.)

She cautions.

RHEA

Hera, I've barely drank in a year. I'm not performing at my normal levels.

TALC

(THROUGH DOOR)

Hera! I'll save ya a seat out in the hall!

RHEA (NAR.)

Talc calls from outside.

HERA

Gimme that.

RHEA (NAR.)

Hera hisses, swigging from the flask.

...

RHEA (NAR.)

A few minutes and one, considerably lighter flask later, I emerge from the bathroom. With heavy hands I drop the flask into one of the robe's pockets. Feeling a little warmer now. I've decided to forgo the flip flops they give us. On top of everything else I'm doing to my body I don't need blisters.

I pass Hera and Talc in the hall. Shoot them a thumbs up. Hera swallows whatever worry has just appeared in her throat. Just says-

HERA

Good luck.

RHEA

Let's hope not.

RHEA (NAR.)

I faux whisper as I push into the lab. Clark is sitting on the cot. His feet swing just above the floor. He looks thin and pale in the robe. He hops down. Takes a few big steps towards me.

CLARK

Hi.

RHEA (NAR.)

I just nod curtly, cross to the white table with our twin sets of sensors. I press their adhesive pads onto each wrist. Slip a hand into my robe so I can press one to where my heart is.

CLARK

Uh-

RHEA (NAR.)

Clark is studying each wrist pad carefully. Unsure which goes to which. I take one from him, hold his right wrist in mine. Firmly stick the pad there.

CLARK

Thanks.

RHEA (NAR.)

He whispers.

RHEA

I've had a lot of practice.

RHEA (NAR.)

I say. Something gives him pause here. But I'm not paying attention. Instead, I'm back to last year. Before the ill fated train adventure. Mornings and afternoons. Eros, Apollo, Char... In an endless cycle that left me emotionally and physically numb. Eros whose distance felt like it was killing me, Apollo who had actually tried to kill me, Char who kept criticizing my traps. I don't even know where my traps are.

CLARK

Rhea?

RHEA (NAR.)

Clark says softly, and I realize I'm still holding his hand. I drop it, grab the sensor for his chest. Press it to his heart. It feels like it's beating right into my hand.

I take a step back.

RHEA

Don't forget the uh, crown of thorns.

RHEA (NAR.)

I say, my voice sounding thicker than I expect, as I pick up the thin band that wraps around my head. He watches me, looks down at the pads pressed to his body. Feels the one over his heart.

CLARK

This all feels so wrong.

RHEA (NAR.)

He says, looking to the one way mirror the docs are behind. I shrug out of my robe. The flask makes a muffled clang as it hits the floor. Clark clearly notices, but just bites his lip. I leave it on the floor as I cross to the cot naked except for my sneakers- which squeak against the tile floor.

RHEA

Oh.

RHEA (NAR.)

I almost laugh, kick them off and in the direction of the mirror. I drop onto the cot. Clark looks around nervously, clocks the couple of unrelenting cameras. He disrobes, revealing, he's still in his underwear. Something so Clark it hurts. He takes a few small steps towards me, gestures to his current outfit.

CLARK

Probably should have assumed.

RHEA (NAR.)

And standing there, looking serious and anxious in his tidy whities- he suddenly looks so much like- like my *friend* that I want to weep. My heart aches, unexpectedly for those terrifying nights with The Void. When his back against mine felt like the only warm place left in the world.

RHEA

We don't really talk.

(CONTINUED)

RHEA (NAR.)

I say, locking my jaw to keep it from quivering.

CLARK

Cool. Yeah that I guess I also-

RHEA (NAR.)

Realizing he's still talking.

CLARK

Right.

RHEA (NAR.)

He takes a deep breath, hooks his thumbs into his underwear.

CLARK

Rhea, I don't want to do this.

RHEA (NAR.)

I pivot so I'm lying there on my back. He finally strips. I stare up at the ceiling, bright lights burning my vision. Out of the corner of my eye I see him fruitlessly try and cover himself. Give up and march determinedly over to me. He sits on the very edge of the cot. Carefully places a hand on my knee. Strokes it with his thumb. I don't react. Having decided a long time ago this was easier if I pretended I was someone else somewhere far away.

CLARK

I'm sorry.

RHEA (NAR.)

Clark shifts so he's over me and I close my eyes. Try against every instinct to relax so it doesn't hurt.

CLARK

I'm sorry.

RHEA (NAR.)

He repeats louder.

CLARK

It's just not going to happen.

RHEA (NAR.)

I don't open my eyes until I feel his weight shift off the stiff mattress.

CLARK

My apologies to everyone.

RHEA (NAR.)

He says to the mirror, still ass-naked.

The nervous voice of a tech crackles into the room.

TECH

Triton, if you are having a technical issue.

CLARK

Yeah must be performance anxiety.

TECH

There are solutions. Your partner can-

RHEA (NAR.)

And then I sit up, turn towards the nearest camera, and vomit. Session. Over.