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.
CONTINUED:

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.
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.
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.

(CONTINUED)
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)
I chuck a sock at her.

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

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

-I peed on him.

Rhea’s jaw drops.

Are you sure it wasn’t-

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

Wow.

Rhea says, laughing and falling back onto her bed.

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.

My finest moment indeed.

I sit down next to her.

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

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

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

(CONTINUED)
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.
"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?
CONTINUED:

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.

Don’t forget the uh, crown of thorns.

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.

This all feels so wrong.

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.

Oh.

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.

Probably should have assumed.

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.

We don’t really talk.
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.