

lights, camera, bitch, smile

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Summary

"Don't ever fucking hide from me again," she snarls, and Apollo thinks he finally may have found someone permanent.

"I won't," he promises.

OR:

The one where Apollo gets too scared, but Rhea hunts him down, and then they communicate.

Notes

more angst baby! because i don't know how to write anything else, i fear. i mean, i do, but angst wriggles in. i call it my *sparkles* masala.

See the end of the work for more [notes](#)

Apollo has never really had anyone in his life that was *permanent*, beyond his mother and sister. The rest of the immortal family may or may not count depending on how one sees the relations everyone here has with each other, and considering this, no one but perhaps Hermes can be counted.

He's cared for all of his lovers in his own way, but most of them, at the end of the day, leave eventually. The mortals grow and change and age, while Apollo does not, remaining ever youthful, ever unchanging. Death is not always a tragedy, and he cherishes the time he did have, but sometimes, the loss is paralysing. Apollo remembers being in bed for days after Hyacinthus was taken away. He remembers the devastating drought and heatwave in Europe during 1540 after Marguerite Valois-Angouleme passed away.

Rhea might just be the exception. Apollo hopes, at least, that she will be there forever, even as he fears that there will come a day when he accidentally terrifies her into leaving. Time as Lester has definitely changed him a lot, he knows that, but he can't help but keep remembering the man who cursed Cassandra (sometimes he regrets it) and who killed all of Niobe's sons (how *dare* she insult his mother? Even today, the memory brings him a kind of rage that is visible to all). That is still Apollo, the same way the god who brings Rhea candy whenever she wants is also Apollo.

He tries not to show her the former as much as he can.

Apollo has seen the looks that his father, his *darling* stepmother, even Aunt Demeter give him when they think he's not looking. He wonders if they're waiting for him to do something wrong. They've never liked him. Hera, he can understand. She despises all the products of her husband's various affairs. Zeus's borderline hate hurts him, but Apollo supposed it had something to do with paranoia, with the fact that Apollo had so many domains (and thus, worshippers), the plot with the golden net that he was involved in. Demeter – he doesn't understand that one. Maybe it has something to do with how he's on civil terms with Hades, they can all be petty like that, but it's ridiculous. Lots of gods are civil with Hades, Demeter doesn't despise them all.

While Apollo and Hades are on mutually respectful terms, he – like most other gods – is unwelcome in the Underworld. Which is fine, because only Hestia (obviously) and Persephone (his uncle's wife) are truly welcome, and Hermes is welcome by necessity due to duties. Yet, his uncle avoids him for the most part even when they're in the same place, only facing him when necessary. On bad days, even Uncle P is cold with him, like they are not long-standing allies.

Apollo would say it's his eyes, but that's not the answer, because Apollo has learned to hide his eyes with a layer of bright blue because his molten gold used to make Leto flinch even during his childhood days at Delos. He is very careful in the fact that his children get their mortal parent's eye colour and not his.

Apollo would've preferred his younger self's thoughts of his eyes not being normal (an idiotic idea, like any god would ever look *normal*) and a majority of the older generation disliking

him purely because, perhaps, he was simply more powerful. A single vision in 1986 changes all those ideas.

There is a man on a throne. It looks like the era of the Titans. They call him Kronos, King of the Titans. He has eyes of molten gold, a crooked smile, and blond hair. The Titan's very aura makes Apollo shiver, makes him want to run away, because this is danger, wrong, run, run, run—

And he looks *just* like Apollo.

He immediately goes to Leto. She takes one look at his face, and holds him, asking, "What's wrong?"

"Do I really look like him?" Apollo chokes out, "The Crooked One?"

His mother takes a sharp breath but says nothing. It's all the answer he needs. He stays with her for some time, but eventually has to return to his duties. There's only so many consciousnesses a god can have at a particular time.

This reason for the avoidance, the coldness, is so much worse. Because now he knows that he looks like the man his father hates the most, so no matter what he does, Zeus will never see Apollo, only *the Kronos lookalike*. He continues acting the same way he always has, laughing, smiling, cheerful, unbothered – because fake it till you make it, right? Because if he tries hard enough, he can trick himself into thinking that it doesn't matter what, *who* he looks like.

(It doesn't really work.)

A very selfish part of him is beyond grateful that Rhea Jackson has only ever seen Kronos' host that took after Hermes, only the golden eyes being the Titan Lord's own feature. Apollo is, he will admit, extremely afraid of how she would react if she knows what Kronos actually looks like. She hates their grandfather, just like she has every right to. He made most of her teenage days miserable. He tried to *kill her*. The sun god knows it's unreasonable, because Rhea loves him, her fatal flaw is fucking *personal loyalty*, and she won't just leave because he has a resemblance to Kronos.

But Apollo looks like Kronos, Rhea looks like her namesake, and he thinks there's a sick irony in that. He's seen Demeter and Hera and even his own father waiting for him to make a wrong move, seen Hades scrutinising him every time Apollo is with her, even seen how reluctant Poseidon is to trust the heart of his favourite child to his nephew (this one for more than one reason). It hurts, but he doesn't care all that much... mostly.

Rhea loves him. That is enough.

Apollo isn't sure how it happened. Later, he won't even remember what caused it. All he knows is that Rhea and Apollo are together, talking and laughing, she has just braided flowers into his hair, and like a particularly stupid monkey, he lowers his barriers, takes off

the armour, and his eyes flare gold. He quickly changes them back to blue, but he's already noticed the slight widening of her eyes, and is much more subdued for the rest of the day.

Then he goes and hides away in Delos. He does his duties from there. Leto eyes him disapprovingly, and not even the *38 missed calls* and another *99 unread messages* from Rhea are enough to make him change his mind, although it is very tempting. There is, of course, the fear that the RJPS (Rhea Jackson Protection Squad) will collectively kick his ass whenever he comes out of hiding but that's a worry for future Apollo.

He does not expect Rhea to come all the way to Delos.

Right, island. Any of her siblings could have easily dropped her off nearby and then she could just swim here – gods are not allowed or able to encroach on each other's *places* like this, unless invited, but one, Rhea could do it through sheer stubbornness and two, Delos is also sentient and can probably sense how much he misses her. Leto lets her into the temple and then leaves the two of them alone.

Apollo has no idea how to react to this. He stands there, staring, so she takes a cue to talk instead.

"Listen, whatever I did, you could at least try to talk through it with me first?"

The very idea of *Rhea* doing something wrong in this situation is frankly nonsense.

"What, *you*?" He sputters, "Rhea, you didn't do anything."

She raises an eyebrow and huffs. "Well, clearly I did *something* wrong, because you've ghosted me for a week. Radio silence. My calls go to voicemail. My texts aren't replied to." Apollo notices her arms are crossed in front of her. Rhea only ever does it when she's either defensive or hurt or both. The way her jaw is set is also a telltale sign of the fact that she was worried, and that he *may* have made her cry. They were right in thinking he'd mess it up somehow, he thinks wryly.

Apollo looks at this woman who came all the way to Delos just because he went kind of off the grid for a week, and wonders when was the last time someone searched for him that way.

"I got scared," he admits.

"Of what?"

"That you'd leave," and *gods*, this sounds so much more raw out loud.

Rhea looks at him incredulously. "So you left *first*? What kind of idiot logic is that?" she asks. "Why would I leave you?"

Why would I leave you?

There are so many reasons. There is no reason at all. Rhea wouldn't leave him because she loves him. Rationally, he *knows* that. But...

You could have anyone you want.

You deserve better than an Olympian. Than me.

A god's love is too destructive.

I've already hurt you once.

"My eyes aren't blue," he says instead.

"Gold, then," she determines.

Apollo hangs his head, not daring to look into her eyes.

"How does that matter?" she asks him, "If you think I'd leave over eye colour, you should know I mainly just have a thing for blond hair. Not blue eyes."

Sarcasm is always her first defence.

"It's not just that," he says listlessly.

He doesn't know when Rhea moves forward, but he can tell the exact moment when her fingers grab his jaw and make him face her.

"Look at me," she ordered. Apollo did so, her grip wasn't that strong – intentionally, he's sure – so it was more of a nudge. "What do you think is so terrible that you would think I'd leave you?"

"I look like *him*," he confesses miserably.

"That's it?" she sighs softly, and her tone is much less harsh now. "Apollo, you can't blame yourself over genetics. You look like dear old grandpa. So fucking what? We're related to the little bitch," he wants to laugh despite himself, only Rhea Jackson would call Kronos himself a *little bitch*, "So we have similar characteristics. I have his smile, you know? The one that got him the title."

Apollo *does* know, he's seen both their smiles. On Kronos, the smile looks plain evil, but on Rhea, it looks roguish and daring and, dare he say it, a little hot, and the two are *not* comparable.

"I'm not as good as you seem to think I am," he warns. He doesn't know why. She isn't running, he wants her to stay, so why give her warnings like this?

(She deserves to know what she's getting into.)

"I know," is all she responds with.

"Marsyas, Cassandra, the plague on the Achaean camp—" he reminds.

Rhea interrupts. "All gods have their fair share of incidents."

"Niobe's sons," he adds, because there's no fucking way Rhea can *not* hate him for this one. She loves kids.

Rhea cocks her head to the side and smiles like she's almost amused, "She insulted your mother," she says simply.

"And I killed her sons."

She moves one step closer, so close that her breath is ghosting over his lips, and inquires, "And what, do you think, *I* would do to someone who insulted *my* mother?"

Apollo says nothing. He knows she would go to extreme lengths for her mother, but since nobody would dare breathe the wrong way against Sally Jackson, he does not know *what* lengths.

"I'm not as good as you seem to think I am either," she says in lieu of an answer, "There's a lot you learn from fighting two wars and from the Pit."

"I think you're a much kinder deity than most of us could ever dream to be," he replies honestly.

And she *laughs*. As if he's somehow wrong in his assessment, which is ridiculous. Poseidon himself has once said that Rhea is the daughter of the calmer seas, of his kinder self, the girl who likes rescuing sea creatures and playing with children and braiding hair.

"You're a prophecy god," she whispers, "See for yourself how much of a kind deity I am."

"Maybe I will."

Rhea smiles that same crooked smile, Apollo falls for it, and he *Sees*.

There is Rhea, sitting on the banks of a river with children running around her. River goddess. Protector of children.

Next, she is in an arena, training young demigods to fight, or simply around children that seem godly enough to be half-bloods. Goddess of heroes. Patron of demigods.

He sees a battlefield. There is blood and the sound of gunshots and war machines and war cries. Goddess of battle. She is as much the personification of a soldier as Ares is.

The scene changes to a raging hurricane and tornadoes and sea storms and he sees Rhea and Kymopoleia in the middle of it all.

"All your domains," he informs her, "All expected."

She leans a little forward and her breath tickles his ear. "The Fates left out a couple domains. Or maybe I will get them in the future? It wasn't very clear."

Apollo notices young children asking for someone, anyone, to help them, do something, and suddenly a mortal – he knows it's a mortal, everything else is a blur – appears and their

platelets are exploding, there is red everywhere. Protector of children, but also their avenger. Goddess of blood.

The battlefield again, but it's a wasteland of corpses, smelling of blood and death. A series of images shuffle through, the aftermath of storms and earthquakes – shipwrecks, fallen buildings, broken things. Rhea Perseus. Goddess of destruction.

There are changing forms, something he has seen with many gods. There is a twelve-year-old Rhea, sword in hand, an unmatched fierceness in her eyes – the same one that defeated Ares and drew first blood. The demigod heroine, who was still a child. There is an older form, around twenty, much like his, with the same looks, maternal and protective in nature. The protector and avenger.

And then, there is a flickering ageless form – the future one – with a curved sword in one hand, a spear in the other, with seas and storms at her beck and call, with eye sockets filled fully only with blood to the point that it leaked down her face. The destroyer. The wanakt-ja– the scene stops abruptly.

He leans back to face her. "Oh."

The grip on his jaw becomes much stronger, far more unforgiving if he's being poetic about it, and were he still human, it would leave a few marks.

"Don't ever fucking hide from me again," she snarls, and Apollo thinks he finally may have found someone permanent.

"I won't," he promises.

Later, when they're lying side by side somewhere, still on Delos, he murmurs to her, "I wanted to show you the island under better circumstances."

"Well, I still haven't gotten a tour," she tells him, "I came straight to talk to you."

"Well, that just won't do." Apollo gets up and gives her a hand, winking. "A tour is in order."

"That it is," she agrees. Then, after a moment, she looks at him and gives a mild glare. "And *stop* hiding your eyes when it's just us, at least."

Apollo can't remember the last time someone accepted the golden eyes the way they were. Fates above, he's so in love already that it should be impossible to fall in love even more and yet. Rhea smiles at him again, baring some teeth, and he might as well turn into a puddle of goo in her hands.

They're going to be okay.

End Notes

yes, the RJPS was furious with apollo, but they talked it out later. yes, the two of them fucked on the beach later which isn't relevant but i wanted to add it anyway.

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apollo: ...and that's why i decided to run away from feelings.

rhea: i will fucking find you just you wait.

.
apollo: i'm horrible.

rhea: darling, i'm WORSE

apollo: *simpling noises increase*

somewhere, the Fates: do you think we made a mistake? ...Nah, they're fun.

ALSO. GUYS. HOW WOULD YOU FEEL ABOUT OVERTHROWING ZEUS. just as a possibility. as always, tell me your thoughts in the comments!

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