

START EPISODE FOUR

A.

NARRATOR

In the Women Quarter's, Leo has started to visit his young wife daily. He wants to know why she talks so much to the eunuchs.

IRENE

They tell me things they won't tell you.

LEO

Like what?

IRENE

They tell me you're not doing enough to build your own power. You have to start making your own contacts with the younger generals/

LEO

/they're baiting us into faction/

IRENE

/But your father looks so ill. Don't we have to/

LEO

/stop talking to them!

Outside her ladies in waiting are listening, worried.

LADIES

Oh. She's made him very angry.

MEGARIS

No, no, it was me. I didn't know what you can and can't say about the Emperor. I should go in and/

LADIES

/You can't go in. She hasn't called for you.

THE STRANGER

IRENE

PAINT ME AS A KAISARISSA,
MY BEAUTY AS A PRIZE.

CARVE MY LIPS AND JEWELS,
BLOND HAIR AND BLUE EYES.

PAINT ME AS THEY SEE ME,
THE SEXY CHILD BRIDE.

A PRINCESS WALKING
IN SILENCE IN THE COURT.

COURT 1
SILENCE.

COURT 2
SILENCE.

IRENE
WATCH ME IN THE PALACE
LEARNING ALL MY STEPS*

COURT 2
* NEVER A WRONG *

IRENE
* GESTURE

COURT 1
* EVEN AS SHE GROWS *

COURT 2
* LARGE WITH CHILD.

IRENE
EVEN A BASILISSA MOVES
IN SILENCE
THROUGH HER LIFE.

COURT
SILENCE *

* AND GRACE.

MEGARIS
I SEE HER BACKWARDS,
A GHOST, A STRANGER.

IRENE
[SILENCE SEEMS DANGEROUS *]

MEGARIS
[I NEED TO HEAR HER WORDS *]

IRENE
[* A LOSS OF CONTROL]

MEGARIS
[* BUT THEY ARE GONE.]

IRENE
THE WHOLE COURT
LOOKS AT ME

AND SEES A STRANGER.

THEY SEE SOME PICTURE
CALLED IRENE *

COURT 1
* OF ATHENS.

MEGARIS
DANCING IN GOLD *

COURT
* AND SILENT
CEREMONY.

MEGARIS AND IRENE
AND IF THEY KEEP ON

MEGARIS AND IRENE (CONT'D)

[LOOKING *]

COURT 2
[LOOKING *]

COURT 1
* THAT WAY
YOU'LL BECOME HER.

MEGARIS
THE STRANGER.

IRENE
I'M BORN ALREADY DAMAGED,
ALREADY NOT A MAN.

PAINT ME AS A EUNUCH.
AS THE STRANGER IN MYSELF.

PAINT ME WHISPERING, WEAK AND CLEVER
FINDING POWER SOMEHOW.

PAINT ME OLDER, WISER,
GROWING SMALL AGAIN.

PAINT ME SO THEY SEE ME,
WHEN NO-ONE HEARS MY WORDS.

B.

CUT TO THE PURPLE ROOM

NARRATOR

January 771 Common Era. The entire court stands
around Irene lying in a bed in the newly built
Purple Room.

Start of slow-building birth
SOUNDSCAPE.

IRENE

My son
will be born
here.

COURT 2A

Born in the purple!

COURT 2B

Porphyrogennetos!

IRENE

A purple room
with many eyes.
I don't feel
safe.

COURT 2A

Shhh.
A purple room
for the heir.

COURT 2B

A public room
for Emperors to die
and be born.

IRENE

(whispering)

I feel him coming.

COURT 2B

Stop time,
watch her.
Everything
depends now
on her body.

MEGARIS

I hold
my breath
and pray for
her.

IRENE

A fire
in my back.
Pain
like bones
breaking.

COURT 2

Perhaps
she was
too young.
Perhaps
she is
too small.
Perhaps
her bones
must break.

Irene pants. The Clasts pant with
her.

IRENE

Give me poppy syrup,
I'm turning into
a sow!

Irene lows like a animal.

COURT 2A

(shocked.)

She should bring him
forth in silence,
with the name
of love
gently on her lips.

COURT 2B

Irene,
Take joy, take pride.
your son
comes,
porphyrogennetos!

COURT 2

Por-phyro-gen-ne-tos.

COURT 2 (SOLO) (CONT'D)

Born in the purple room!

COURT 2B

Porphyrogennetos.

IRENE

I need to crawl
out my own skin
and rest.

COURT 2A

Irene,
Take joy, take pride.
your son
comes.

IRENE

Give me back my
thinking thoughts,
free of such evil pain.

MEGARIS

Give her
poppy syrup,
this goes on
far too long.

The Court look on unimpressed.

Everyone HUMS, while Irene labors.

The hum turns into WHITE NOISE.
Then DISCORDANT NOISE, built from
IRENE'S VOICE, scrambled and
distorted.

That gets LOUDER and LOUDER.

Until the Court have to cover
their ears.

Then silence.

Irene SCREAMS.

COURT 2

A son is born in the purple!
Porphyrogennetos!

CYRA

But look how she bleeds!

COURT 2

Now in the palace
lives an Emperor
and his son
and grandson.
All born
in this room.
Let no one challenge their rule.

COURT 1 (SPLIT)

(a whispering round)

Porhyrogennetos.

COURT 1 (CONT'D)

We thank
Our Lord
above.

CYRA

Look at the blood!

Everyone looks elsewhere. No-one
is bothering about Irene now the
baby is born.

What has he done inside her
to get out?

IRENE
(whispering)
He's born in the purple,
my little son.

CYRA
Do you know how damaged you are?

COURT 2
Shhh.

IRENE
I know if I die,
the pain dies too.

Everyone leaves, except for
Megaris, who tucks something into
Irene's hand, and Cyra who is
lurking in the shadows.

NARRATOR
Everyone leaves the room. Cyra should go with
the attendants holding the newborn, but she
stays watching Irene.

THE SOUND OF MEGARIS
WASHING/NURSING IRENE.

Irene cries with exhaustion. Megaris wipes her
eyes and tucks something into her hand.

CYRA
What is that?!

NARRATOR
All eyes have gone out the purple room *

CYRA
* so she's put her tiny pocket icon
under her pillow! *

MEGARIS
* to help her through this night.

IRENE
A little comfort in case I die.

CYRA

Why did I try to deceive myself?
Make myself "grateful" to her?

A secret icon in the palace!
Tucked in her hand...
because the devil delights in perfidy!

From this point on the scene is
sung.

It's an echo of the opening
overture, but this time intimate
in tone, sung to the icon in
Irene's hand.

I LOOK ON MY LADY (OPENING CHANT REPRISE)

IRENE

I LOOK ON MY LADY AND
LOVE COMES OUT HER EYES.

MEGARIS

AN ICON.

IRENE

THERE SHE LIVES
CLOSE IN THE PAINT
AND GOLD.

MEGARIS

A THING SEEN *

PHILES

HELPING ME
BEAR THINGS
I CANNOT
SEE.

MEGARIS

* IN A FRIGHTENING
WORLD.

IRENE

MY LORD
IS MY LADY
IS MY LORD.

END OF AUDIO EPISODE FOUR