

A photograph of a man and a woman looking at a laptop screen together. The man is leaning over the woman, who is sitting at a desk. They both appear to be smiling and engaged with the content on the screen. The image is slightly faded to allow text to be overlaid.

Chapter 5

Grandfathers

Mandy Oviatt

Maiden of Maidens

The Olisbeth Mason Chronicles Book 2

Chapter 5: Grandfathers

By Mandy Oviatt



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Picture to the left (broody, moody Arthur) was totally drawn by [Kelci Crawford](#). She's awesome.

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“Arthur, I have to ask.... who was your most formidable opponent?”
“Why do you ask?”

“You’ve hunted with some of the best hunters in history, faced some of the toughest predators in the known universe, and faced down at least two Titans. That’s not to mention the countless acts you’ve done in other guises. I want to know, is there anything that has ever scared you?”

“First Sergeant Paul Mason.”

“That’s it? First Sergeant Paul Mason? What’s so scary about him? He’s just a Mortal. ”

“He is Olives’ dad”

“Oh... Yeah. Got it. Dude, you’re on your own.”

Arthur Thomas and Dionysus, chatting over a bottle of wine.

Disclaimer: If you have not finished reading My Lady Olives and want to read this book anyway, it may contain minor spoilers for the ending of part one. You have been warned.

A Quick-quick summary of My Lady Olives:

My Lady Olives: In Book One, My Lady Olives, Olisbeth Mason, the child of a retired Army First Sergeant, discovers she’s a modern incarnation of Athena, and that her boyfriend, Arthur, is Artemis. A whole lot of awesome stuff happens. I don’t want to spoil book one. I’ve already given you the spoiler warning, after all, so you should have already read book one by now. And if you haven’t, you should. Just understand, Olisbeth and Arthur go through a lot of stuff, and as happens with young, in-love couples, have a nice, romantic night, right before facing down two Titans. This chapter deals with the fallout of that night.

Chapter 5: Grandfathers

Arthur Thomas looked blankly at the computer monitor to the four faces staring back at them: First Sergeant Paul Mason and Jaclyn Williams each had their own screen, while the smiling faces of Michael and Vanessa Thomas sat squeezed together in front of their one home computer. Suddenly, with all four pairs of eyes in front of him, Arthur thought he was losing his nerve.

Rip it off like a bandage, he thought. He had a pit in his stomach, and felt a bit of heartburn, the latest in a string of pains and aches he felt in his body. Olisbeth sat to his left, right hand gripping on his left hand tightly under the table. It had been her idea, to talk to all four of them at once. That did not make this any easier, especially with that castigating glare from the First Sergeant.

Olisbeth was right, they needed to tell their parents. She was now 12 weeks, 3 months along, and the grandparents needed to know that a grandbaby was on the way, if, for no other reason, than to prepare for the arrival.

“I am glad we had a time where all of us could meet, even if we had to do it this way.” Arthur said carefully. He could hear Olives breathing, and could tell she was very nervous about this particular conversation. He squeezed her hand carefully. The computer at the Thomas household was in the den, just off the kitchen. The faces of his parents squeezed close together. The squares holding all the heads made it look like a performer in front of a fully booked audience.

First Sergeant Mason was in his living room. Arthur could make out several pictures of Olisbeth on the wall behind him. Jackie was in her North Carolina home. Arthur saw two mannequins dressed in pirate wardrobe behind her.

“I presume this is involving the wedding.” Vanessa squealed in her happiest voice. “AJ, Olives... You set a date!”

“She...” Arthur started, noticing a panicked look in his girl’s eyes

“Just don’t tell me you’re staying in Greece another semester,” Paul grumbled, “I don’t like my girl being so far away.” “I...” Olives began. Arthur could see a bead of sweat trickle down her forehead. It did not help that there was no AC in their cheap Athens apartment.

All at once the matriarchs clucked like chickens. *Gods, I will never herd these ladies back into sanity long enough to get the news out.*

“Did you decide if you want to hold it ...” Vanessa opened her eyes wider.

In her corner of the screen, Jackie addressed her brother-in-law, “Paul, Vanessa’s probably right....”

“...in Houston or at the University? Vanessa turned to glance at Michael, ignoring Arthur.

“...I am sure they are fine.” Jackie turned to look at Olisbeth’s father.

“Or somewhere else?” Arthur’s mother said, dreamily, eyes wistful of her own wedding.

“It’s probably just wedding business.” Aunt Jackie said quickly.

“Or are you going to marry in Greece? It’ll take time, but we can get the tickets to get out there if you want.”

“Mom...” Arthur said, a little more forcefully. His mother appeared to not notice. She was a talker, and sometimes, when Vanessa Thomas was speaking, it could be hard to butt-in to the conversation. Arthur stared at the screen waiting for his mother to look at him. He had heard everything, but understood none of the conversation.

“But...” Olisbeth said, annoyed that none of the older generation seemed to be listening to them. Arthur could see the gears turning in her mind.

“I do not see why they should rush into things, they’ve only been dating a year or so,” the First Sergeant said calmly. “They are both very young and...”

“OY, Guys! The kids are trying to talk!” Arthur’s father was never a man of many words, so when he *did* speak, people were always more likely to listen to him. *Dad is the only one who is noticed that we have not had a chance to talk this whole conversation. Gods, I hope I am as good a father.*

“We...” Arthur said, staring at Olisbeth’s gleaming grey eyes. She had the same flash in her eye that she often had right before successfully doing

something insanely awesome, like beating an entire fraternity at *Beer-Chess*, taking down a Titan, or even making a joke at Phoebe's expense. The look told Arthur, "I got this." Recognizing the look for what it was, he nodded, giving her the floor. She let go of his hand, reached to her left, and picked up the sonogram.

"We're going to be parents." She put the now three-week old sonogram paper in front of the camera. Arthur smiled. He already scanned the picture and put it in his wallet to show every random stranger he met. The Deli lady, the newspaper salesman, the downstairs neighbors with the yappy dog, and even strangers on the bus saw that picture, the first picture of his first child. He even showed his cousin Alex in a moment of weakness the week before, after making him *swear* not to tell anyone. It turned out that Alex already knew; apparently, the maternity clothes that Olisbeth now wore were once in Emilia's closet.

The picture on the sonogram showed a nine week fetus, which *technically* the baby looked like a little alien peanut, barely human at all. It did not matter. It was still the most beautiful thing he'd ever seen. Now at twelve weeks, the baby would look a little more human. For the time being, Arthur was happy to have the picture he had.

Where moments before, the other computers had clattered with chatter, now, crickets chirped. Olives had the paper in front of her face, so she could not see the expressions on the faces of the older generation. Arthur could clearly see the four faces staring back at them. Arthur's mother beamed, Jackie frowned. Paul's face stayed stone solid; Arthur could not read what the retired military man was thinking. Of all four of them, only his father simply smiled with happiness, then Michael stood up and walked off screen. *I am a freaking god and I am worried about what these people will say? Well, they are going to be grandparents. But it's Olives' family as well, and she's every bit as divine as I am. This is so petty and silly.*

Paul grumbled and cursed his desk chair as he stood to leave the conversation. "I want to see your belly." Jackie said, calmly. She was the first to speak. Olives put the paper down, nodded, and turned in profile. She was just a little chunky, (Never think of your baby's momma as chunky Arthur!) not fat, not showing obvious pregnancy weight gain. Heck, she could hardly keep food down now, and had lost a few pounds. At seeing Olives' belly, his mother, Vanessa, exhaled loudly. *I did not realize Mom was holding her breath.*

"Well, when? When is this baby due?" Jackie asked, her eyes sparkling.

"Late April," Olisbeth lied. The midwife suggested the child would come around the end of March. Arthur noticed his father returned to the computer

desk with a bottle of Scotch and an ice-filled glass. Several states away, Olisbeth's father had done the same thing. The two future grandfathers poured their scotches somberly. *How many other things do these two have in common that I haven't noticed?* Arthur wondered idly.

Jackie slipped a momentary melancholy frown. *Oh, that's right...* Arthur thought, *Olisbeth told me Jackie could not have kids. She must feel a little jealous.*

With a deep breath, Michael Arthur Thomas Sr. proclaimed "To the kids." Arthur's dad raised his glass, and Paul matched in kind. The First Sergeant drank the liquor down in a gulp, and then sat there at his desk, staring at the screen with unblinking steel grey eyes. *I see where Olives gets that stare from,* Arthur thought as his future father-in-law glared at him. The First Sergeant slowly rolled his ice in his glass. He moved so slowly the ice made no clinking as they shifted.

"Don't you know how to prevent that?" Jackie said, "Girl, I thought you had more sense than that. I offered to put you on the pill!"

"When did you do that, Jaclyn?" First Sergeant Paul snapped, saying the first words he had uttered since seeing the picture. He continued staring at the onscreen couple. It was his focus as he rolled thing over in his mind.

"The first time? When she was sixteen, Paul. The same age Helen and I were when we started taking them. But most recently? Two months after she started dating Arthur, when we met him last Thanksgiving." She smiled at her brother-in-law. "Lissie, I am sorry about that question. It was rude. I am happy for you."

Arthur's mother grinned broadly. "I am going to be a *Yiayia!*" Her excitement was high. Paul Mason was inanimate since his sister-in-law snapped at him. Arthur's father polished off his glass of scotch and looked across the screen, presumably to Paul. The two future grandfathers shared a look.

"Out with it. Say it all now, Dad." Olisbeth quietly squeezed onto Arthur's hand, her knuckles turning white. That she'd called her father Dad instead of First Sergeant showed her nervousness.

Paul reverted to yelling. It was easier. "Soldier, you're too young. You are barely twenty. You have not had a life yet. This is only your first tour of duty. You are not married yet! You should not be traveling right now. I am yanking your TDY... and YOU!" Paul pointed directly at the screen, his finger seemingly pointed directly at Arthur, "I am going to blame you." He was a growling lion. Arthur felt a chill run down his spine.

"Wha—"

Paul's face filled the screen as he figured out whether to stare at the camera or the screen. The window shook, it was clear that the man had lifted the computer camera. "You told me you hold my daughter's virtue with high respect." He grumbled. "That is just nine pounds of lies, since there's proof in her hand that you...you've ..." Arthur saw the man make a fist in front of the camera. The computer window faced the floor so Olisbeth knew the first Sergeant was angry.

"Bu—" Arthur stuttered.

"I am gonna reach down, grab your colon and yank it out your mouth. Pain. Lots of Pain!" Paul Mason glared at the young man. Arthur was suddenly grateful that he had an ocean and several time zones between the retired soldier and himself.

"Hey! That's my son you're talking to." Vanessa said. Michael sipped his second glass of scotch, smiling behind his glass. *Obviously, my father thinks this is all funny.* Arthur knew he had been a dog in the past, leaving a string of girls and broken hearts behind him. His mother *knew* of his girlfriends and activities, but always wanted to believe he would do the 'right thing.' He was her child, and Arthur knew that he could do no wrong in Vanessa's eyes.

Not that he was about to tempt fate by trying to piss her off.

Olisbeth looked her father, carefully. The screen canted to normal as Paul sat back in his chair, still glaring, but now at Jackie. "I am sorry; I do not know what came over me right now. I want them to be happy," Paul got up and left, yelling in the background, "but... She's my only little girl, and there is quite an age difference between the two of them." Jackie shifted an apologetic gaze back and forth between Paul's section of the screen and the rest of the viewers.

Olisbeth growled. "Father!" Arthur sat up with a twitch as she spoke. "First of all, there are four years, six months, and twenty-four days between Arthur and I, that's hardly cradle-robbing."

Arthur stared at his girl while she continued. "If you'd had a problem with that age difference, the time to talk was last October, when you met him. Secondly, I am an adult, I am in a foreign country, scared, and my body is doing constant battle with itself." Her eyes were sharp, angry. Arthur watched this beautiful creature in awe. "And yes, father, wherever you are, Arthur, and I have a baby on the way. I know what we did, and how we made that happen. And you know what, *father*, I made that decision to do it." Arthur's parents and even Olisbeth's aunt looked very uncomfortable observing this exchange.

The First Sergeant growled and muttered as he sat down. He was not used to his daughter, or anyone, talking back to him. His scowl was at the camera.

“Any time an argument begins with ‘I am an adult,’ it’s usually to preface some childish, immature, and stupid action taken on by the speaker. I am an adult, so I am going to do something completely selfish and childish. Olisbeth Mason, if you really want to be an adult, act like one.”

Jackie calmly interjected. “Paul, the kids have been together a year, and probably been having sex most of that time.” Arthur saw Olisbeth’s cheeks redden slightly at that statement, “I know you dated Helen two years before you got married, but I also *know* you guys didn’t wait for your wedding night.” Jackie said. “And that’s it, Paul. These two are getting married. Married people have babies. What did you tell me about when you and Helen first had this one?”

The First Sergeant softened, but he grumbled. “It was the happiest day of my life.”

“Let them be happy.” Jackie’s eyes were misty. “You know Helen would be happy.” Paul looked at Jackie like there were Martians on her face. Arthur looked at his mom, who was still cooing.

During the rest of the call, Vanessa shared stories of her own pregnancy, how she told Michael that she was certain she was going to have twins, (despite the doctor claiming there was only a single heartbeat), her weird cravings, the crazy dreams she had. Arthur had heard these stories a thousand times before, before, every time one of the extended family made a pregnancy announcement. He used the moment to make telepathic contact his sister. Arthur knew, based on experience with his mother’s storytelling that it would be a few minutes before anyone expected him to contribute to this part of the conversation.

WE ARE TELLING ALL OF THE GRANDPARENTS, AND AUNT JACKIE RIGHT NOW, Arthur warned his sister.

I WILL BET MOM WANTS WEEKLY PICTURES OF OLIVES’ BELLY, I WIN, AND I GET YOUR GAMESTATION. Phoebe giggled.

I WILL BET SHE WANTS THEM ALMOST EVERY DAY, AND IF I WIN, YOU HAVE TO ... HELL, I DO NOT KNOW. FAVOR TO BE NAMED LATER.

BET ACCEPTED. No matter the outcome, Arthur knew she would claim his GameStation anyway, and that she would do whatever favor he asked. Usually, whoever started the bet ended up conceding, and met the other one’s terms in exchange for what they wanted. The GameStation seemed more than worth... whatever twisted task he could come up with for Phoebe.

“AJ, have you told Phoebe yet?” Arthur heard his mom ask. The direct question pulled him out of his conversation with his sister. He nodded.

“Mom” Arthur reverted to being a teenager in front of his mother, “You know as well as I that I cannot keep anything from her,” He said. “We told her before anyone else. She was, quite literally, the fourth person to know.” *Marissa, myself, Olisbeth, then Phoebe. Let mom interpret that statement, as she will.*

“Before your OWN mother?” Vanessa glared for a moment, wide-eyed like Olisbeth.

“Mom, you know how Phoebe is. She read it off my face the first time she saw me, just a few minutes after I found out.” He smiled. It was a big whopper of a lie, but believable enough to keep his mother from feeling slighted. Even though his mom was sometimes mildly psychic, she never really believed that her children could speak telepathically. Even when they did it in front of her.

“Listen, guys, I know this is exciting, but I do need to get to bed,” Olisbeth said quietly. “It’s Six o’clock in the Central Time Zone, but for us it’s 2 AM. And *his* child already keeps me up at nights.” Olisbeth said quietly. “Arthur, you can stay talking, but I am going to bed.” She kissed him on the temple and stumbled back to their bed.

“Arthur, email me the sonogram. Do not wait and do it when you wake up. Do it now while it is still fresh in your mind.” His mother grinned, “And I want belly pictures! Twice a week, Minimum!” Arthur complied with his mother’s sonogram request while she continued to talk on about her desire to make a baby scrap book.

PONY UP, WITCH. He could hear Phoebe grumble. AND I ALREADY KNOW WHAT I WANT YOU TO DO. HAND-ADDRESS ALL OUR WEDDING INVITATIONS.

I WRITE LIKE A DOCTOR ON CAFFEINE PATCHES, SO IT’S YOUR WEDDING/FUNERAL.

“Consider it done, Mother.” Arthur politely complied. Paul remained on, silently staring. *My mother is going to be an overly involved Grandmother. I am so sorry, Olives.* Arthur thought to himself. *I am sorry for you too, Dad.* His mother blew a kiss at the webcam and walked out of the room.

OLIVES?!? DAD?!? ARE YOU STILL ON THIS LINE? HANG UP, GOOFBALL. I GOT ROUNDS TO DO.

Arthur grimaced which his mother took for acquiescence. “We will talk later, son. Paul, good talking to you.” His father tipped his scotch glass to Paul before shutting off the webcam. Jackie expressed a similar statement, and shut hers off. That left Arthur alone, face-to-face with Paul.

In this lifetime alone, Arthur had been beaten up by a demi-giant in high school for his feminine tendencies, gotten *into* the lion cage at the zoo, was infected by waters of the Underworld, faced down two Titans, and most recently, kept a secret from his divine girlfriend, who hated secrets. That was just in the body of Arthur Thomas, not considering the amazing feats he'd done in his previous incarnations. Right now, First Sergeant Paul Mason terrified Arthur *more* than the depths of Tartarus and rabid lions ever could.

"I am sorry." Paul said, softly. Before Arthur could say anything, the First Sergeant continued. It was an unexpected apology, so Arthur listened carefully. "I didn't handle myself very well at all, but I know that I am right. My child, my girl, is all I have left." Even though he was apologetic, Paul had a menacing, frosty glaze. "I worry about her. She is all I have left in this world. I just do not want her to be left in the foxhole alone." *Foxhole?*

"Paul, I treat your daughter like a goddess." Gods, he hated the word 'goddess,' but for this purpose, it fit. "And you saw how my mom... She is already a super-involved grandmother, and she just found out about her first grandbaby. Paul, family is everything to my mother. If I so much as thought for a *moment* to abandon Vanessa Thomas's grandchild, she would murder me and feed me to the alligators." Arthur breathed in before continuing. *Mother could do it too, we live close enough to the Bayou.*

"First Sergeant, I'd rather arm wrestle a grizzly bear than hurt or cross Olisbeth or my mother. There is no way, *under the Moon*, that I will ever hurt her again. Olisbeth forgave. I cannot forget." His choice of words was purposeful. The moon, as his own divine sphere of influence, would hold him to his word. Not that Paul understood such a thing. As a quick thought, Arthur pushed his sleeve up to his elbow and pulled his forearm up to the screen, showing the old scars on his arm. "And you know that." Arthur and Paul had had a long conversation in the past about putting harmful energy to useful purpose instead.

"You're both too young."

"And if we'd waited ten years, you'd say we were too old." Arthur said calmly. "Paul, can I ask, did Helen have any problems, you know, when she had Olisbeth?"

Paul's eyes dampened a bit at the mention of his wife's name. *No matter how mad he gets at me*, Arthur thought, *He always likes sharing stories of his late wife.*

Paul considered, "Not that I remember. But Helen was always healthy."

"How did Helen tell you that you were going to be a father?"

“I came back from a week-long field exercise. She left a laundry bag by the door, a towel with soap and shampoo on the bathroom sink, and fresh clothes on the bed. She was at work when I got back, but she’d left something on the bottom of the pile of clothes: a note, written on a piece of white paper, and a yellow pacifier. The note said, “Welcome home, Daddy.”

“A Note?” Arthur asked. *I hope that this will put him in a better frame of mind. If I keep him feeling nostalgic, he will be less angry. It works with most people, anyway.*

“Yes, a note. I hopped in my car and drove to the high school where she worked straight away.” He started to smile, soften a bit. “And my Lissie?”

“Olisbeth took the test while I was out at the market, and she just kinda blurted it out as soon as I got home.” He said, cautiously. He knew before she did, within *hours* of conception. There was an air of truth; Olisbeth took a test while he was out shopping, just before she left for Greece. Before he could say anything else, he heard a slight groan from the bedroom. It was Olives’ ‘I am hungry and cannot get out of bed’ groan, or maybe it was her “I will remember to hug you in a year if you find me some food,” groan. Hunger was part of all her groans these days.

“My father-to-be duty calls, First Sergeant. And unless you want your pregnant daughter wandering the streets looking to eat marble...” Arthur let his voice trail off as Paul shook his head.

“Eating marble?”

“Hunger pains turn women into Godzilla. I have heard horror stories, Paul. Whole cities ravaged.”

“Take care of her, son.” Paul shut off his internet connection and Arthur snuck to the kitchen, grabbing a cold can of ginger ale and a bag of spicy corn chips. The bounty recovered, he snuck into his own bedroom, leaving the snacks on his sleeping bride-to-be’s bedside table, and slipped into bed as quietly as he could.

I doubt Zeus will take this news so well.

Note from the Author

Thank you for taking the time and reading/downloading this chapter from *Maiden of Maidens*, sequel to *My Lady Olives*.

You may ask why I selected this chapter, of all the chapters in the sequel, to release for free.

Well, there are three reasons.

1. This is a slice of normalcy in the lives of Arthur and Olisbeth before the “adventure” begins in the story. Arthur and Olisbeth are dealing with a small amount of ‘normalcy’ before the Fates kick in and mess up their lives. For all the divine things going on in their lives, Arthur, Olisbeth, and Phoebe have mortal lives to balance as well, parents who don’t know their children are gods.

2.. I had originally planned to release an Arthur-centric chapter, but my editor/beta reader reminded me that it might do better to release one that at least includes Olisbeth first.

3. I love the interplay between the Thomas family and the Mason family, and wish the story provided me with more chances to bring the families together.

Maiden of Maidens is in editorial and beta phase right now. All things according to plan, I will publish in mid-January to early February. Yes, I know, it will be too late for Christmas time.

For more information about Olisbeth Mason and her world, please check out my website: Olisbeth.wordpress.com, [Facebook Author page](#) or my [Goodreads Author profile](#).

- *Mandy Oriatt* -