



"Harry was a big man, dim and useful in the manner of big, dim men."

June

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June is the month of Juno, known as Regina, Moneta and various other epithets. She is the goddess of marriage, finance, and protector of the Roman Empire. Goatskins and figs figure prominently into her worship as well. And of course, what else would a Classical goddess be in a modern era?

Juno Moneta was woman of parts. Most of those parts were angry. Her sister Lucina, "The Fig Queen" of the tabloid press, had hustled Juno out of a forty-thousand hectare goat ranch. Not to mention a once-and-future husband. "I will *kill* her," Juno told her son Harry. Harry was a big man, dim and useful in the manner of big, dim men.

"Let me do it, Mother," Harry croaked in a voice that could have raised stones. "I been bored since you had me clean the stables."

"I can't have you kill your aunt. It would look bad on television." Juno thought for a moment. "Where's that idiot Uly? Doesn't he like to sniff paint thinner with you?"

"Oh, I don't know." Harry was the model of careful consideration. "Uly's as like to, you know...huh huh...with Auntie Luce as he is to kill her."

"He can 'you-know' all he wants with her as long as she feels my wrath when he's finished," Juno snapped.

"Cut!" shouted the director. He stalked forward, a thin, elegant man in lavender Gallic silks and a dark smoked *pince nez*. "Harry, more emotion. Make the audience understand *you* want to do Auntie Luce. And enough with the 'you knows.' Use a real verb."

"But she's my aunt!"

"Do you want to do her?"

"Well, yeah...who doesn't?"

The director threw up his hands. "You're all idiots!"

"Look," said Juno. "I have to bless some peacocks at four this afternoon, so if we can finish this...?" Her voice acquired a dangerous lilt.

"Lady," the director said, "if you don't like the cameras, don't sign the contracts." He glanced at a production assistant. "Okay, let's take it again from 'Uly's as likely to screw Auntie Luce."

Harry scowled. "I ain't saying 'screw' on the tee-vee."

Juno stared out the window of her ornithopter. The passenger compartment was heavily sound-proofed, so that it wasn't much noisier than the average motorcycle ride. Her *haute couture* slingbacks stank of birdshit, and somebody had stuck her with an enormous basket woven in the shape of a cart, filled with pickled peacock eggs.

Pickled peacock eggs!

"Dreadful fucking things," she said to no one in particular.

Harry tugged her arm. Juno patted his hand. "What is it, dear?"

Her son leaned in so close the stubble on his jutting jaw irritated her ear. "RNN says Uly kidnapped Auntie Luce on the steps of the Londinium Corn Exchange."

"Well, good." She'd get her goat ranch back. Lucina could keep the husband.

"He did it the old-fashioned way, in a steam-powered swan. Our family ratings shot up fourteen points."

"Who's a good boy now?" Juno asked, turning to kiss her son.

There was something she didn't like in the glint of his eyes as he kissed her back, so she popped a peacock egg in his mouth and returned to her view, calculating the advertising revenue from a fourteen point pop. How could they keep those numbers up across an entire ratings cycle? She might have to marry Harry at some point.

It was good to be a goddess. Juno made a note to invite Lucina to dinner in a few weeks' time.