

a.d. II Non. Mart., 794 AUC

“Are you insane, Caligula?” he asked. Normally I would not tolerate this disrespect from anyone, but this was my most trusted advisor and friend speaking. His council had never failed me.

“No,” I responded. “Why do you ask?”

“Some senators have just shown me your most recent public documents. You have referred to yourself as ‘Jupiter.’ Are you the king of the gods?”

“Why not? Julius Caesar was. And Augustus. I am emperor of the greatest civilization the world will ever see. Who but I would be Jupiter?”

He paused for a second, as if he were thinking of a way not to offend me, now that he realized that I was indeed divine. “But, if you are Jupiter, then why have you dressed up as Venus and Hercules? In public!”

“It is all for the citizens of Rome,” I said. The Equestrian class may skewer me every day, but they have failed to put even a dent in my popularity with the Romans. I am merely showing my gratitude by giving them what they wish to see: gods. Great ones. Not like Neptune, that incompetent sea monster.”

My friend neighed with disapproval. “Don’t start with Neptune again!”

“Oh, I have no need to start with him, for I will soon end him.” My mind filled with fury just thinking about him. He was a menace to Rome. But I would defeat him. I remembered my spectacular victory off of the shores of Britain, as I had my soldiers collect seashells, the spoils of the sea.

“But...don’t you think you’re taking a role as a god too far? Have you not learned from Judea?”

“What do you mean?”

“You ordered statue erected of yourself in the Temple of Jerusalem.”

“Of course I did. The Judeans were being insubordinate. If anyone makes the terrible mistake of not paying me the respect I deserve, I will force them to do so. Speaking of which, my friend, what is the progress being made on the statue?”

“Well...Publius Patronus, the governor of Syria, has put the order on hold. He has promised that he will eventually get to it, but the civil war now is far too delicate a situation for your statue. After all, you wouldn’t want it destroyed, would you?”

“No, no. I suppose not. It can wait. The people of Rome can wait for another public spectacle.” I stared into my friend’s eyes, and it was clear that he was remembering all of my glorious achievements as well.

He chuckled. “I will never forget the bridge.” And how could he? It was the most magnificent spectacle any Roman has ever put on, greater than any of Augustus’ *Res Gestae*. I had ordered two miles of ships, end to end, across the Bay of Baiae. Then I crossed two miles of water.

“No one will ever forget the bridge,” I agreed. “Did you see all of the people that were there, admiring me? Surely my name will go down in history as the greatest Roman emperor, if only for that achievement. And no one will forget the others, either. I’ve built harbors, transported an obelisk from Egypt to Rome, and completed monuments to the gods.”

He frowned. “But what about the famine?” He had to bring it up.

“What about the famine? Rome cannot have it both ways. What does it matter if a few people starved? Their lives are short, but my legacy has to last forever. My people love me. They would be happy to know that their grain went towards my magnificent floating palace in Lake Nemi. Plumbing on a ship! Certainly that is worth sacrificing a few lives, is it not?”

“Well...I...”

“Yes, of course it is. Besides, I have given the people much to be happy about. It was I who reinstated democratic elections, who gave tax cuts.”

“That you did, Caesar. I only hope that the Senate will not succeed in marring your legacy, or worse.”

“Worse?”

His lowered his voice. “I’ve heard rumors from the Senate. There may be more plans to assassinate you.”

I was enraged. “Is Neptune involved?”

“...No.”

“Well, I am still worried. They have tried before and failed, but the Senate has connections in the Praetorian Guard. I may not be safe anywhere.” I thought about my lucky coin, minted in the honor of my late sister Drusilia. It had been with me when I was previously under attack, and she had protected me from being killed as a result. But I did not have it with me. I needed a plan. “You will need to become a Senator, my friend.”

He seemed to balk at the idea. “I don’t think that the Equestrian class will take to someone like me being appointed to the Senate. They already despise you so much.”

“Why?”

“Well, Tiberius, your predecessor, killed off a lot of the senators that would have been loyal to you. And when you came to power, it may not have been the most prudent thing to do to execute some of them.”

“But they were clearly not loyal.”

“I suppose...but it was certainly beyond reason to publicly humiliate others.”

“They deserved it. Besides, as I have said before, like my father, the great General Germanicus, and Augustus, from whom I am a direct descendant, I draw my power from the love of the common people.”

“All this talk about the common people, but did I not hear you say, ‘I wish that the Roman people had but a single neck?’”

“Oh, well, I never said I loved them back.”

“...This is why I don’t think my being a Senator would be such a great idea, Caesar. Besides, I don’t think they’d like me.”

“Nonsense! You make great company! I have sent many dignitaries to dine with you, Incitatus.”

“They didn’t talk to me at all.”

“Why not?”

“Well, I am a horse. What would the people think if they knew you were talking to a horse?”

“But you are so wise! Oh well. For now, you should return to your stable. But I think I shall try to make you a Senator.”

I watched my friend trot back to his marble stable to eat his oats mixed with gold, and then I noticed that the sun had not yet come up. “Rise, Sol! Rise!” I yelled. It then started to do just that, for I am the king of the gods.

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