

Come Monday

by Mathew Paust

He was in his usual spot, in the shade of the portico, reclining on his cushions. He kept the chest close to discourage thieves seeing him in meditation and thinking him asleep. As it was, only Hiram, his man, dared approach at any time. He watched Hiram now, wending among the tables, collecting the skim, speaking longer with certain vendors, working his way to the chest.

"They are eager," Hiram said, hefting the goatskin purse before emptying it into the chest. The rain of coins gave a comforting sound. "Syrians," he said.

"They behave well, but they know we are well guarded." The two shared a grin. "Have the cousins arrived?"

Hiram turned his head, scanned the courtyard, leaned in, whispered, "Simon says they are on the road. A day out."

"It is good they are not here now. I hate fighting on Sunday. The angry one with them?"

Hiram nodded. "But surely we have nothing to fear. We are well guarded, and no one is quicker with a blade."

"I fear not violence, Hiram. The angry one has a way."

"As do you, Master. I know of no man who can withstand the look."

"Bah."

"Master, your look melted the giant last year. All still speak of it."

"Bah, the look does not work on the angry one. His look melted *me* last time."

"That was three years ago, Master. No one knew. We were not prepared. Draw your blade. That will tame his look."

"I tried. My hand would not move. His eyes held no fear. He saw everything. Saw into my heart. Froze my tongue. It will happen again, but this time it shall not pass."

"We can have him arrested."

"Let him come. Let him do what he did last time. The guards will see. The priests will see. He will be arrested. Then it will end."

