

# Auction Day

by Zalman Velvel

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There will be excitement tomorrow; that much is certain.

I, Rollos III, will sell the beautiful, the incomparable, the exquisite Iona to the highest bidder. She has become the legal age, sixteen.

How I enjoy my craft! I am an auctioneer, as was my father, and his father before him. We Rollos are actors on the stage of money. We sell the spoils of war, trinkets mostly, sometimes slaves. We also auction property when a loan has been foreclosed. We take our fee, one coin from each ten, and from this we prosper.

But what I love to sell, what this Rollos cherishes, is the sale of our finest young women as brides when they reach the legal age. It has been a part of our tradition in Herodotus since Alexander the Great was ruler of the world, almost a hundred years ago. Outsiders think it barbaric, but we find it produces a colorful social tapestry. Our worst and finest traits are woven into the stories of public auctions. It is a glimpse of the base, and the sublime inside us. We do not shrink from our humanity, we embrace it publicly.

Ah, what a buxom beauty Iona is! Her hair is as gold as the sun, her skin as smooth as the finest silk of the Orient. Her azure eyes pull the puppet strings born in a man's heart. Her lips make my belly shudder, and I am old enough to be her father. There is fire behind her eyes, a passion lurking below that sweet face. How I would revel on her delectable flesh, and then ravish every port in her bawdy harbor. The world would see testimony to my passion and potency, when her breasts were swollen and her belly rounded from the fruits of my seed. Ah, but I spin fantasies in my mind, and these lead me into false and ignoble worlds. I am a married man, with a fine wife, and no wish to upset the splendid balance we have created in our combination.

Zenon loves Iona, that is easy to see. The front of his toga distends mightily whenever she is around. They linger together at her father's table in the market. I see their hands touch secretly as he examines the silks and linens.

Zenon is a magnificent specimen of manhood, tall and strong, honest and virtuous. His hair is thick and curly, as mine once was, and at 25, his belly is still firm. My own has long since been transformed by the excesses of wine and sweet meat, the spoils of a successful businessman.

Zenon is the greatest soldier in our army. He has killed hundreds on the field of battle. The men tell stories of his exploits around fires at night. We know he has a large treasure stored from the spoils of battle, as befits a man of his exceptional bravery. How much? That is anyone's guess.

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