

A Hel of an Audition

By pwatson1974 and Ms Tiger to You

Jane Monroe was bored. Bored, bored, bored, bored, boredity-bored, b-o-r-e-d, bored! She leaned back on the hotel bed, soft fluffy robe wrapped around her, her natural, whatever certain media outlets would say, platinum hair wrapped under the towels, idly flicking through channels trying to find something vaguely interesting to watch. CSI: Help We're Running Out of Major Cities to Set this Crap In? Click. Cheesy magic act on Who Desperately Wants to Be Famous? Click. History of the Americas with earnest people with beards and wearing sun-hats carefully brushing dirt off tomahawks while speaking in reverentially hushed tones? Click. Foreign children's cartoon? Click. Scary movie with rats everywhere? Click!! 157 channels and nothing on. Thanks, Bruce.

She sighs, settling back onto the bed. "There must be something to do in this crappy town! Oh, forget it!" She pulls the towel from her head, carelessly tossing it aside and lies back in the bed. "I need to talk to my agent." she mutters as she closes her eyes.

She opens her eyes to a darkened room, the television flickering a 52 inch snowstorm of static, moonlight pooling around the window, certain someone called her name, "Who's there?" Hisses of static answer her. "Great. I'm hearing things. My therapist will just love this."

"Hello, Jane." she turns towards the voice a face appearing on the screen, pencil thin moustache stretching over the too wide lip and under the beak of a nose, red light spiralling around him.

"What?"

"Ah, good, you're awake. Can't have you sleeping the night away. We've got a show to do."

"Show? Who are you?"

"Come, come, Jane, I'm the Heluman." the face winks one of its beady black eyes, face permatanned a thorough mahogany orange, "We haven't got all day, you know. The audience is getting restless."

Jane cautiously approaches the screen. "What audience?"

"Why, mine, of course. Now do come on. Everyone's waiting for you."

"Everyone?"

"Everyone." he replies emphatically. "Now come on, no shilly-shallying or lollygagging permitted of the Heluman's assistant."

"Look, I don't know who..."

"The Heluman. Are you not listening, you stupid bimbo?!" his face returns to the too wide smile, white teeth glinting in the light, "Do come on."

She steps back, folding her arms, "No. I don't know what kind of cheese fueled nightmare this is but I am not taking part in it."

"I said, come on!" a long arm in a sharp black sleeve and white gloves reaches from the television, gripping her wrist in a corpse-cold vice as it yanks her towards, and then through, the screen.

"Hey! What..." she stumbles across the stage, her tottering heels clacking on the lacquered wood. The grip on her arm releases, letting her feel the tight showgirls outfit 'covering' her. A thousand rhinestones and barely any modesty. "What is this?! I'm not wearing..."

"Do you not ever shut up?!" the Heluman demands exasperatedly. "We have a show to do and your petty pretty little head is getting in the way."

"Look, buster, I don't know..."

"No, you don't know. You don't know anything. Still, you're the best available so the show must go on. We just need to decide on the first trick. Give me your finger."

She glares at him, as he pulls a foot-long syringe with a needle like a stiletto from his jacket pocket.

"Why?"

"For the blood test, of course. How else can we determine what to do with you?"

"Blood test?! With that thing?! Not a chance."

"Oh, very well." he shrugs a boneless shoulder, tossing the syringe over his shoulder, ignoring the long

scream from the darkness outside the stage. "Hair will do just as well." he pulls out a pair of safety scissors with blades like shears, metal sliding across metal with a schlick. "A little off the top? Say," he looks her up and down, pointing the blunted end of the scissors at her neck, "a foot?"

Jane backs up, "You stay away from me with those, you lunatic!"

"A lunatic? Maybe a trifle moon-sick, but hardly a lunatic, my dear."

"Keep back, or I'll..." she backs up against the wall. Straps of black leather loop out from the wall, coiling around her wrists, "...hey!!! Get off me!" The leather tightens, pulling her back against the wall, arms spread above her. She struggles futilely as more loops pull her legs aside, suspending her spread-eagled. He advances on her, raising the scissors, the arms either side of her neck. "Hey! Don't! Please!" he closes the arms with a disturbing smile. Jane screams and screams and screams and wonders why she isn't dead and screams and screams and opens her eyes to find him holding a significant chunk of hair in his hands and no sign of the scissors. "What the?!" she reaches for her neck, only to be abruptly reminded of the straps around her wrists as she watches the strange little magician carry her hair over to a hopper dropping it inside. A 60's Star Trek computer whirs and flashes lights along one wall before spitting out a spool of ticker tape into his gloved hands.

"Ahhhh. Very interesting."

"What is? What is it?"

"Well, my dear, now I know what to do with you. We'll just have to get you more suitably attired."

"Suitably attired?!" her hands wave, "THIS is your definition of suitably attired!"

"Usually yes, and may I say you are most fetching in it, but for someone with your heritage it is most unseemly. We shall have to correct it."

"My heritage? What is that supposed to mean?"

"Oh, come now, no need to be modest." He pulls off his opera cape, swirling the fabric over her. She looks down, finding soft brown leather covering her, although she notes, without surprise, still leaving her shoulders bare and showing more cleavage than is proper unless the role absolutely demands it. Tassels and beads hang over her chest and from her arms, buckskin moccasins covering her feet. She looks up to find a mirror staring back at her, her hair tied into two short plaits, a headband around her forehead with a single feather sticking erect behind her head, strips of red paint swathed across her cheeks.

"What the hell?! What have you done this for?"

"Well, my dear, you are a Red...Native American." comes from behind the huge mirror.

"I'm what?! Don't be ridiculous! Do Native Americans have hair like this?"

"Some have been known to..."

"And it is not from a bottle!"

"Of course not, but you are 100% Native."

"100%?? Are you daft?!"

A leathery hand holds out the ticker tape, '100% redskin' etched into it.

She stares at it. "That...that is dead wrong. On so many levels. I can't..." she stops as the mirror slides back revealing the Heluman, his wrinkled skin bared to the waist, a headdress filled with feathers running almost as tall as he is, the train of feathers spilling onto the floor. "Oh, my God..."

"Heap big computer no lie."

"Oh my God..."

"Squaw will be quiet."

"Will I f...." another strap appears from somewhere, pulling her head back as it pinches her cheeks.

"Language! Squaw learn heap bad habits from white man." he hefts up a tomahawk, casually tossing it up, letting the carved wooden handle slap into his hand. Jane's eyes go wide.

"Mmmmmf!!! Mnff, mnnt mnu mnnnr!"

"Squaw in heap big trouble." he rears back, and hurls the tomahawk towards her. Jane's eyes track it as it tumbles end over end over end. She struggles against the straps and freezes as the axe-head thunks

into the wall beside her. Her shriek is muffled by the strap but still manages to echo around the room as she struggles more intensely. He raises a second axe. "Squaw might want to keep heap still." He hurls the tomahawk. Jane freezes as it passes through the tassels under her arm. Her shriek is slightly less voluble, the eyes getting more you-will-die-slowly than oh-god-don't-kill-me. The third axe thunks into the wall between her spread legs. "You know, squaw, this is heap boring." She mumbles something, possibly suggesting they swap places to make it more interesting. Rather than taking the sage advice of "Mmmmmmmffff mmmmf mmmfmmmmmmffff!", he walks towards her. She tries to struggle, but the bonds refuse to give, and consequently the Heluman takes hold of one of the axes and pulls it to the side and conspicuously does not have a moccasin impact his nose. Jane feels the wall start to turn around her, speeding up as he walks back to his throwing line. This time, the muffled shriek is louder than ever as the axe thunks outside her leg. "Oh, don't be like that. You are heap safe." another axe slams into the spinning board. Jane's muffled response does not indicate a feeling of increased security. Nor do any of her other responses as the axes dig into the board, each one getting closer and closer, the handle of the last brushing her side. "And one for the road. Heap big finale!" He pulls back and lets the final tomahawk fly.

"MMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMM!" Jane screams as it flies towards her. This time the 'thunk' sounds different, accompanied by a sharp punch in her chest. Trying to hyperventilate around the gag she looks down, the handle of the axe protruding from the middle of her chest, the head buried deep. Her eyes widening in terror, she looks up at the smiling figure in his ridiculous Hollywood Native garb. Her eyes roll back in her head as she slumps in the restraints.

"Oh, dear. Heap big problems with this one."

Jane slowly comes around, which in itself is rather a surprise. Her hands immediately fly to her chest but don't find a giant sucking chest wound, nor an axe, and barely even an old white scar faded nearly away. Of course, she's lying on her back in a long white gown that drapes over the bier she's resting on, and the creepy little man is standing over her with a smile, back in his garish ringmaster's ensemble.

"Feeling better, hmmm?"

"I'm not dead!"

"Very perspicacious, little lady."

"Not that I'm complaining but...why aren't I dead?"

He shrugs, "You could be if you really wanted to..."

"No, no, nonono, that's fine!"

The Heluman's smile becomes wider, stretching his cheeks. His top hat shifts. "Excellent. Well, what shall we..."

Jane screams.

The Heluman looks around, "What? I didn't do it, nobody saw me do it, you can't prove anything!"

Jane points a trembling finger at the hat, where a pink nose twitches under a pair of black eyes.

"There's a...there's a..."

"Hmmm?" His eyes swivel upwards, "Oh, we have another volunteer. How wonderful." He lifts up his hat, grabbing the rat underneath with his other hand. He holds it in front of his face as it scrabbles, squeaking away. "No need for that kind of language. Now, hold still. This will just need a small sample." He pulls out a pair of scissors as Jane tries to put herself as far as possible from them both, backing into an invisible but very solid something surrounding the bier. The Heluman snips the scissors shut. Jane screams again as he catches the still squeaking head. "You stay here. I'll be back once I have the results." He drops the headless rat to the floor, dropping the head into the hopper. As the squeaking ceases, the computer continues its calculations, and the rat scampers off across the floor. The Heluman takes the ticker tape from the computer and looks at it. And looks at it. And kicks the computer.

"Stupid useless hunk of junk. Made in Taiwan. No wonder it was so cheap!"

He gives it another kick, sparks and smoke flying as the speakers slowly croon out "Daisy, daissssssyyyyyy..."

He looms over the bier, "See? See?!" he thrusts the ticker tape into her face. She squints, '100% Redskin' etched in the tape, "How is an artist of my calibre supposed to work with these cheap foreign-made materials?! It's already made me use the wrong trick which is unforgivable! Now I'll have to devise something else for your entertainment!"

Jane looks up. "You...you really don't need to bother..."

"No, no, never let it be said I ever gave a substandard performance, I insist."

"It's quite..."

"I insist!" he replies forcefully.

"It's..."

"I! Insist! Now, lie down."

"But..."

"I said, lie down, you stupid bitch!" Jane slowly lies back on the bier, eyeing him nervously. "Good. Thank you." He straightens his jacket, and moves his fingers over her, wiggling them wildly. Slowly, Jane feels herself rising up off the bier, the reassuring solidness falling away as she rises into what looks like a poor theatre's starry night backdrop.

At about three feet up, the long dress finally pulling clear of the bier to reveal a gap, the Heluman stops. "Now, my dear, just stay there. Don't wander off."

"As if." she mutters under her breath as he vanishes from view.

She stays there, floating above the stone, it's actually quite relaxing, especially compared to the rest of the insanity. Especially especially the rat. Ugh. Still, this isn't that... "Argh! Who is in charge of the props department in this abominable place? Is it too much to ask for to have just one thing go right?!" Well, apart from that strange, terrifying little man. He is definitely bad. She hears a skittering on the bier. And the rat. The headless rat. Maybe that's worse than he is. Maybe. Still, she's floating above it now and...was that a little weight added to the train of her dress? The dress shifts against her legs slightly as tiny claws dig into the glistening white silk. No, no, no, no, no, no. She screams. Even louder than for the axe.

The Heluman bustles over, "Yes, dear lady. Is there a problem?"

"The r-r-rat! It's on my dress!!!"

"Ah, yes, that would be a... ah, there you are, you naughty little thing." She feels a tugging on the dress, "No, let go, you're frightening my assistant and that is most unprofessional." Another tug. "I said, let go, you stupid rodent!!!" more tugging before it finally stops, followed by a wet smack over and over.

"There we are, dear lady. That won't be a bother any more." he smiles, dots of red spattering his white gloves. "Now, to avoid any unpleasantness, we really should proceed, props department be dratted." He reaches up, taking hold of the backdrop and dragging the moon off the black fabric, holding the shining disc in his hands, about three feet across.

"What are you going to..."

"Please do be quiet, my dear." he stands at her feet, holding up the moon, and passes it above and below her, brushing the long train of her dress. "There, nothing supporting you. At least, nothing obvious." Jane shivers a little, suddenly feeling a lot less secure that this is pleasant. Or safe. He smiles, in what is probably meant to be a reassuring way, and holds the moon up by her feet, soft light bathing her. He moves the moon towards her, a gentle tingling passing through her feet as the moon slides smoothly through her. The moon makes its way all along her body, the gentle pins and needles following it, leaving Jane feeling like she's just been through a thorough massage as it passes through her head. She closes her eyes as it sweeps through, not sure she wants to see what it looks like from the inside. The Heluman looks triumphant as he holds the moon aloft, and then repeats the procedure from her head, the tingling feeling more intense the second time through, a nice vibration that just about lingers. And once the moon leaves her feet, making her squirm a little as the tingling tickles, the Heluman sweeps it over her again, the tingling rising to the edge of being uncomfortable. And then another sweep from the head, the tingling becoming an ache all across her body. "And now for the

spectacular, stupendous, stupefying, tremendous finale!!!!” Jane opens one wincing eye. The moon makes its fifth sweep over her feet and the ache becomes a dull pain for an instant before it's gone, falling into a numbness in the moon's shadow. The numbness pulls up her body with the moon, losing all feeling as it passes over her, an almost welcome relief from the aches if not for the worry nagging at the back of her mind as to why. “Goodbye, my dear. I'll see you soon.” the Heluman smiles as the moon reaches her neck.

“Goodb...” she starts and falls silent as the moon slides over her mouth. Jane's eyes go wide just before the moonlight washes over them.

For an instant, the long white silk dress floats empty above the bier, before flopping down, the hem landing in a drying puddle of dark red. “Yes, see you very soon, indeed.”

She opens her eyes to a darkened room, the television flickering a 52 inch snowstorm of static, moonlight pooling around the window. She winces at the aches filling her body, her mouth dry, throat feeling like she's gargled some of that cheap rotgut they considered whisky in that bar in Texas. She sits up, fumbling for the light switch. And as the room is bathed in artificial light, she stares into the mirror, a pale white scar, looking like its decades old, marring the skin between her breasts, her formerly shoulder length hair now hanging in a crude pixie cut. And she screams.