

(ORIGINAL) JUNO STEEL AND THE MURDEROUS MASK (PART ONE)

[Trigger Warnings](#)

SOUND: RAIN & MUSIC, DOOR OPENING, BELL.

CONCIERGE:

Ah, good evening, traveler! Welcome to the Penumbra. May I take your coat?

You've picked an excellent place to spend the night, dear traveler. The Penumbra is the grandest hotel this side of nowhere. Countless rooms and countless halls - just look ahead of you. See the doors go on and on. Even we aren't sure how many there are, or what lies behind them.

Will you be staying long? Many of our guests do. You're in good company, traveler - the Penumbra draws guests from everywhere and everywhen, and all of them have stories to tell.

Stories that will excite you, delight you, and maybe, even terrify you. Don't believe me? Well, see for yourself.

SOUND: KEYS JINGLING.

This guest has been a fixture in the Penumbra for as long as anyone can recall. He's a detective by the name of Steel, and he's been called in on a murder millions of years in the making.

SOUND: KNOCK.

SOUND: SOUISHING.

What luck - it sounds like he's in. Come, traveler, come with me into room J-12.

SOUND: CREAKING.

Juno Steel and the Case of the Murderous Mask.

SOUND: RAIN AND MUSIC FADE.

JUNO (NARRATOR):

Hyperion City.

MUSIC: STARTS.

Some people say it's the most beautiful place in the galaxy. The rest of us live there. My name's Juno Steel. I used to be one of the guys who cleaned up this mess for the uptown types. Now... well now, I mostly spread the mess around.

RITA:

You got a caller on line one!

JUNO (NARRATOR):

Juno Steel is a lot of different guys depending on the day. Collector of bad art, decent cook, terrible gambler, but my business card calls me something else. Private Eye.

MUSIC: ENDS.

JUNO:

They leave a name, Rita?

RITA:

Said it was confidential.

JUNO:

Never heard of him. Tell him I'm out!

SOUND: THREE QUICK BEEPS.

WIRE:

(FROM CALL)

It's me, Juno.

JUNO (NARRATOR):

Eyes like a hawk, hair like a crow, nose like a peregrine falcon. Sasha Wire. There're only three kinds of people in Hyperion City: people who eat, people who get eaten, and people like Sasha Wire, who are smart enough to leave.

RITA:

Sorry, Mister Steel! My finger slipped.

JUNO:

Sure it did. Hello, Sasha. I didn't expect to see you on my screen.

WIRE:

And why is that, Juno?

JUNO:

Well you managed to avoid me for fifteen years - I thought you'd want to keep your streak going.

WIRE:

Trust me, I do. We wouldn't be talking if the situation weren't serious.

JUNO:

Well it must be pretty bad if you're willing to fall back on me. How's dinner and a movie sound?

WIRE:

Unproductive. This is business, Juno. I'm working for-

JUNO:

(CUTTING HER OFF)

Sasha Wire. Alias Agent W, operative with the Dark Matters investigation team Branch 27B, dual specialties in Psych Profiling and Spin Control, most notably apprehended Boris Coris Yablonsky on Mars-

WIRE:

(CUTTING HIM OFF)

I see my reputation precedes me.

JUNO:

Just because we haven't talked doesn't mean I can't keep tabs on you. You called me dashinglly handsome once.

WIRE:

A moment of weakness. We were four.

JUNO:

From the mouths of babes, Sasha.

WIRE:

Try to focus, Juno.

(SIGHS)

Have you heard anything about the Death Mask of Grimpoteuthis?

JUNO:

More than I'd like. Thing's been all over the news for months now. Croesus Kanagawa has it, right?

WIRE:

There's been some controversy about that, but yes. Here's the full story: three years ago, an ancient Martian tomb was discovered underneath Olympus Mons. The local government tried to field their own excavation, but it didn't go as planned.

JUNO:

Three dozen dead archaeologists weren't in the budget, huh.

WIRE:

The tomb was thoroughly booby trapped, and the Olympus government couldn't afford to continue the investigation without outside help. Enter Kanagawa. He wrote up an agreement, the Olympus had signed it, and his men finished the excavation. That's where they found the mask.

JUNO:

Still in use, knowing Croesus.

WIRE:

The fine print on Kanagawa's agreement with Olympus stated that he could lay claim to any objects of interest he chose. And he chose Grim's Mask. Olympus isn't happy.

JUNO:

So, you want me to talk Kanagawa into playing nice, is that it? Sorry Sasha, I'm not interested. I'm one of the only people in this town he doesn't have a bullet for.

WIRE:

We couldn't ask that of you even if we wanted to, Juno. Kanagawa's dead.

JUNO:

(PAUSE)

Alright, I'm interested.

WIRE:

You'd better be.

SOUND: PEN SCRATCHING.

JUNO:

So, there any suspects so far? Must be something pretty big here to get Dark Matters in on a local homicide.

WIRE:

That's all classified, I'm afraid.

JUNO:

Alright, well, why do you need me? I didn't think Dark Matters liked to play nice.

WIRE:

That's classified too.

JUNO:

Ah.

SOUND: PEN CLATTERING.

So it's that kind of case, huh.

WIRE:

Here's what I can tell you. The situation regarding Grim's Mask is sensitive enough that we're concerned about interference from certain... organizations.

JUNO:

Which ones?

JUNO AND WIRE:

(SIMULTANEOUSLY)
Classified.

JUNO:

You Dark Matters boys and girls sure know how to have fun, dontcha. Listen Sasha, I don't want to waste my time on the cheap.

WIRE:

Don't lie to me, Juno. It hasn't been that long.

JUNO:

Twice my usual rate or I walk.

WIRE:

Fine.

JUNO:

Good. I sent the invoice five minutes ago. So, disprove a curse, find out who killed Croesus Kanagawa, that it?

Wire:

There's just one more requirement, Juno.

JUNO:

I don't like that flirtatious tone, Sasha.

WIRE:

We're sending one of ours to aid your investigation.

JUNO:

Oh, like hell you are!

WIRE:

It's a required term of our business, I'm afraid. A term you agreed to when I paid that invoice four minutes ago.

JUNO:

Same old Sasha. Fifteen years really isn't that long, is it? Alright, who's the guy.

WIRE:

Agent Rex Glass. He should be there shortly.

JUNO:

You know him?

WIRE:

Well, I've never met him. He's...supposed to be eccentric but his record is spotless and my report vouched for him personally. You can debrief Glass on the situation when he gets there.

JUNO:

I'd rather you debrief me, Sasha. Maybe after dinner on Saturday.

WIRE:

Goodbye, Juno.

JUNO:

Bye, Sasha. See you in another fifteen years.

SOUND: THREE SHORT BEEPS.

JUNO (NARRATOR):

A special agent, a crime boss's corpse, and the ghost of an ancient alien. This case was getting busier by the second.

I threw on my coat, grabbed my keys, and spun the right laser carts into my blaster. If I could get out of here before Agent Tyrannosaurus I might be able to solve this case before he could mummify it in red tape.

SOUND: DOOR.

RITA:

Hey! Wait! Just where do you think you're going, you? You-

GLASS:

Hello there.

JUNO (NARRATOR):

His face was lean, but soft, with a cherub smile and a fox's teeth. He looked like he was happy to see me and like he'd be just as happy to kill me if push came to shove. It wasn't an unpleasant look, all things considered.

JUNO:

Agent Glass.

GLASS:

Only to my mother, Detective Steel. Call me Rex, please!

RITA:

Mister Steel you've gotta send him back here.

JUNO:

Buzz off, Rita.

RITA:

The forms, Mister Steel!

JUNO:

Funny, you never cared about these forms before.

GLASS:

Oh, come now. Rita, was it? Did you say something about, forms? I'd rather talk about yours - it's fantastic.

RITA:

I-I-

(GIGGLES)

Really?

GLASS:

Really. Well, goodbye, Rita. I'll never forget you.

SOUND: DOOR.

JUNO:

Impressive.

GLASS:

There's a right way to talk to everyone, detective. You just have to find it. Here's hoping we find ours soon, eh?

SOUND: CREAKING.

JUNO:

Alright Glass, let's get right down to it.

GLASS:

Just like that? You aren't even going to offer me a drink first?

JUNO:

No.

GLASS:

Poo. What do you know so far?

JUNO:

I learned that with a high enough security clearance you can take fifteen minutes to tell a guy nothing.

GLASS:

Very perceptive, Detective Steel! Takes most of us five years in the academy to learn that. Well, to begin with...

JUNO:

Croesus Kanagawa's dead, ancient mask, nobody's happy. But why're you here, Glass? Why not just send in the HCPD?

GLASS:

Oh good, we can get right to the juicy part. Tell me Juno, have you heard of the Curse of Grim's Mask?

JUNO:

Oh no. No, no.

GLASS:

The ancient scribes of Grimpoteuthis wrote that 'whosoever disturbs the mask will have his life claimed-'

JUNO:

(CUTTING HIM OFF)

Oh come on, Glass. Does Dark Matters really waste its time on fairy tales?

GLASS:

(LAUGHS)

Absurd, isn't it? But Kanagawa was found wearing the mask and my direct report said, you'll love this, that 'last generation's fairy tale is this generation's scientific breakthrough.'

JUNO:

Incredible.

GLASS:

I must admit, I do find it to be a questionable use of resources, but, oh well! It's gotten me to Mars, and it's gotten me to you, Juno Steel. And I have to say, I'm enjoying both already.

JUNO:

That's the other thing - what do you need me for?

GLASS:

Oh, we don't.

JUNO:

Huh.

GLASS:

But the Kanagawas in their way insisted. First they wanted to send Croesus's son to tag along, camera crew in tow. A special for his stream, they called it. When we declined, they said they wouldn't allow us in without one of the family and evidently, you make the cut.

What tangles a nice boy like you up with a family like the Kanagawas, Juno? Marriage? Adoption? Cousin twice removed?

JUNO:

In my line of work, it pays to have powerful friends. Keeps all those powerful enemies at bay.

GLASS:

Oh, be serious. Marriage? Adoption? Cousin twice removed?

JUNO:

Fine. A few years ago, Croesus's son Cecil got mixed up in some bad business with the Triad. I got him out of it in more or less one piece, but they like to keep things in the family, so I guess I count now.

GLASS:

Lucky boy.

JUNO:

I sure do feel like one.

SOUND: KEYS JANGLING.

JUNO:

You ready?

GLASS:

Oh Juno, I'm always ready. Well, isn't this exciting! Off to solve a murder, to prove an ancient curse -

JUNO:

(CUTTING HIM OFF)
Disprove.

GLASS:

(CONTINUING)

- and despite all that I feel as though by the time we're through I'll have solved a far greater mystery: Juno Steel. How intriguing.

JUNO (NARRATOR):

Kanagawa lived in one of those mansions over Uptown. It's easy to find, especially at night. Just look for the moon, then look for the bigger moon right next to it. That's Kanagawas'.

MUSIC: STARTS.

We were shown in by a short man that looked like Croesus and handed off to a tall woman who looked like Croesus, she talked to two fat twins behind a desk who both looked like Croesus in order to get us keycards with Croesus' face printed on them. The Kanagawas found it easier than most to keep their business in the family. They had a hell of a lot of family to go around.

SOUND: FOOTSTEPS.

GLASS:

The Kanagawas must really love this model. They have so many of them.

JUNO:

Kanagawas breed like rabbits. Which is to say that most of them don't make it past sixteen but the ones that do are crafty, mean, and they'll sell your arms straight off your body if they think they'll get five creds for it.

GLASS:

Those are savvy rabbits. The kind I'm used to eat carrots and wrinkle their little nosies.

JUNO:

This must be your first visit to Mars, then. If you want to keep your limbs, stay clear of the sewers.

GLASS:

Duly noted. What do they do, anyway, these Kanagawas?

JUNO:

You're kidding.

GLASS:

Oh, I know the broad facts: stars of stream and screen by day, kings of the criminal underground by night, but that's all textbook. I want to hear what it's like down on the ground. Go on, regale me.

JUNO:

(SIGHS)

You got most of it. Stars and kings... it's a little much. Maybe three months ago, but these days -

GLASS:

Show business moves quickly. Some can't keep up.

JUNO:

Cecil does alright. His sister Cassandra, too. Their stepmother's a good coach.

GLASS:

And Croesus?

JUNO:

Not exactly a household name these days.

GLASS:

Not until Grim's Mask, you mean.

SOUND: DOOR.

GLASS:

(GASPS)

Incredible!

MUSIC: ENDS.

JUNO (NARRATOR):

It was something, alright. Croesus had been killed in his art gallery where Grim's Mask was being kept - and Croesus knew exactly what he liked.

GLASS:

Can you imagine: hundreds of death masks, vaults,

tombstones, sarcophagi, all staring you down. Perhaps it's where he wanted to die all along.

JUNO:

I don't think Croesus expected to die at all.

GLASS:

And you, Juno? Where do you imagine yourself dying?

JUNO:

In a cold ditch somewhere, just like anyone else.

GLASS:

Oh, dream a little.

JUNO:

Fine. A warm ditch then.

GLASS:

You don't take anything seriously, do you?

JUNO:

You got a problem with that?

GLASS:

No, I think it's admirable. Standing up against the big, mean world, and laughing.

SOUND: DOOR.

MUSIC: STARTS.

CECIL:

Well, look who the rabbits dragged in. Juno, how are you buddy?

MUSIC: ENDS.

JUNO:

Alive. How 'bout you, Cecil?

CECIL:

(LAUGHS)

About the same, Junebug. About the same. And uh, who's your friend?

GLASS:

Agent Rex Glass with Dark Matters, I'm honored to meet you Mister Kanagawa.

CECIL:

Dark Matters, huh? Crazy. Y'know Juno, I thought we'd have an understanding on this one right? You know how it is in small families like ours. We don't like to air our dirty laundry. That is, we're very private people.

GLASS:

Just you, the family, and ten billion viewers.

(SIGHS)

Would you lead us to the body please, Mister Kanagawa?

JUNO:

He's alright, Cecil. Scout's honor.

JUNO (NARRATOR):

Glass might have been alright, but Cecil wasn't. He had his father's taste for blood and nose for trouble but maybe a fourth of the old man's brain cells.

Standing next to him too long was a pretty good way to make sure you got shot. His right arm was gone, replaced with a cold chrome number with all kinds of nasty surprises tucked away inside it.

I was there when Cecil lost that arm. I'm the reason he didn't lose the other too, along with his legs, tongue, and most of his head. I saved his life.

I try not to beat myself up about that too much. Everybody makes mistakes.

CECIL:

Thanks for coming right over, Juno. We'll make it worth your while.

JUNO:

Well I'd rather you didn't.

CECIL:

Now, you two just need to do me a few favors, do you

understand? We brought you in here, Junebug, because we trust you, Mother especially. And we trust you to do one thing in particular: keep quiet.

SOUND: PAPERS HITTING TABLE.

CECIL:

Sign these.

SOUND: PAPERS FLIPPING.

GLASS:

Now, or in a month? I've seen novels shorter than this contract.

SOUND: PEN SCRATCHING.

GLASS:

You signed it? Have you even read it?

JUNO:

We both already signed it, Glass. It's written on the first page of the guest book at the front door. What was it you call this little number, Cecil?

CECIL:

The Kanagawa Special. Add one part confidentiality agreement, one part personal likeness rights, two parts owning the footage of everything you do inside these walls. (GIGGLES)

Tell anyone about what you see here, agent, and your darkest secrets will be prime time specials every weeknight from now until the day you die.

GLASS:

I don't think I like this man, Juno.

JUNO:

He's not even the worst one.

GLASS:

Oh, do hold me.

CECIL:

Here we are boys, say hello to Daddy.

SOUND: DOOR.

JUNO (NARRATOR):

This was a place built for just one exhibit: the glass case standing in the center of the room. Yesterday, that case held Grim's Mask. Today I couldn't see what it held; the glass was painted red and black with blood. Croesus' body was sticking out a hole in one side. I didn't need to guess where the mask was.

CECIL:

There's the old man, just look inside.

GLASS:

Incredible!

JUNO:

Eugh, what the hell is that on Croesus's face?

GLASS:

You're joking.

JUNO:

Maybe. I won't know until you say the punchline.

GLASS:

Juno, that's the *mask*. The Death Mask of Grimpoteuthis!

JUNO (NARRATOR):

It didn't look like any kind of mask I'd ever seen. This had more in common with a folding chair: a big bronze colored mess crumpled up where Croesus Kanagawa's face was supposed to be. If there was a head crammed in there, it probably didn't look much like a head anymore.

CECIL:

Pretty, isn't it? When we found the old man, it looked more like this.

SOUND: SCRAPING METAL AND SQUISHING.

JUNO (NARRATOR):

Suddenly, the mask snapped open like an accordion. Whatever word it would have looked like it had three little masks

across three little heads, each with too many eyes and noses and other things to count. As for Croesus, well, the thing had tried to split his one head into three small ones. And succeeded.

CECIL:

Who knows what else this thing does.

JUNO:

You sure this is your dad, Cecil?

Cecil:

(LAUGHS)

You think we wouldn't check, Juno? This is kind of a problem for us.

JUNO:

Well, I'm sorry for your loss. The thing that gets me is that you don't seem that sorry.

Cecil:

(LAUGHS)

Sorry isn't really the word. There isn't any sorry. Pissed is a good one, busy is another. Too busy to deal with this now that all of Dad's old business is on my plate. And that's why we called you. I thought I could rely on you Juno. So are you going to take care of it or not?

JUNO:

Not a janitor, Cecil.

Cecil:

No, you're better than that. You're a brother, and the Kanagawas expect certain responsibilities from our brothers.

SOUND: BUZZING.

Cecil:

And speaking of responsibilities. Excuse me, Junebug, I'm filming a special on Hoosegow that's running behind schedule. Our prison riot was supposed to start half an hour ago.

JUNO:

Doing God's work, Cecil.

Cecil:

No business like show business! Ta, Juno, Agent Glass.

SOUND: FOOTSTEPS; DOOR.

JUNO:

Charming as ever. Alright Glass, you want to stop drooling over the mask so we can look around?

GLASS:

No need, I've completed my investigation.

JUNO:

There's a fine line between bluffing and hallucinating, Glass, and you passed it ten miles back.

GLASS:

Oh did I? A completely cylindrical room and at its center, a perfectly cuboid display case. The case which, until last night, housed only Grim's Mask. Its glass is smashed on one side, the mask is certainly the cause of death. If you look at what remains of the skull, you can see that the tearing line -

JUNO:

(INTERRUPTING)
Stick to the room. For my sake.

GLASS:

In short, the mask killed him. But I doubt it did so without assistance.

JUNO:

You think someone took it out, shoved it onto his head, and then shoved his head in the case.

GLASS:

That wouldn't be necessary. A really, incredible polymer, this Martian mask. It changes to assume the shape of what it contains. One hard push from any direction would be enough for it to swallow the victim whole. Oh, and there's one last thing: the killer's name.

JUNO:

That metal can tell you all that?

GLASS:

No, silly - he's left his signature. Inside the case, take a peek.

JUNO:

In there?

GLASS:

Come now, brave detective. Not afraid of a little blood, are you?

JUNO (NARRATOR):

It wasn't the blood that was the problem.

After what the mask had done to Croesus, the inside of that case looked like someone had popped a balloon full of pasta bolognese in there.

But Glass was right. A finger had traced two ancient Chinese characters in the mess inside of that case: a signature.

GLASS:

Shen Long. Does that name ring any bells, Juno?

JUNO:

All the wrong ones. Triad left it, it's their bosses' code name. They sign it at the site of all their big, political murders. It's kind of a calling card.

GLASS:

Ooh, an invitation! Mind if I'm your plus one?

JUNO:

(CLEARS THROAT)

Pretty good investigation, Glass, you impress me.

GLASS:

It won't be the last time, I promise you.

JUNO:

It's not everything though.

GLASS:

(LAUGHS)

Well, I suppose I did skip a few details I found trifling.
But if you'd like to talk about the wallpaper patterns
detective, by all means.

JUNO:

The display case. You said it was smashed.

GLASS:

It is.

JUNO:

Broken into, maybe, but not smashed. The cut is perfectly
circular, the broken glass is all on the inside, see? It
looks like someone cut into the glass to weaken it, then
pushed Croesus through it.

GLASS:

Part of the Triad ritual, do you think?

JUNO:

It could be. But - it'd be worth hearing what the family
has to say about it. Triad's not the kind of nest you want
to kick unless you're really, really sure it's the right
one.

GLASS:

Gangsters and stream stars and kicking nests! My, you do
live an exciting life. Why don't you go talk to the family
and I'll conduct my investigation on Grim's Mask here.

JUNO:

Kanagawa Manor isn't the kind of place you want to be alone
in, Rex. We're going together.

GLASS:

But Dark Matters -

JUNO:

(CUTTING HIM OFF)

We'll pack up the mask and bring it back to my office. You
can look at it there.

GLASS:

Oh, alright. But I've never been good at waiting, Juno; you had better keep me entertained.

JUNO (NARRATOR):

The Triad. I didn't want it to be them. It's this funny thing of mine where I like my fingers to stay on my hands, so before we left I had to make sure there were no other options. And if anyone in Kanagawa's house could help me figure that out, it was Cassie.

MUSIC: STARTS.

JUNO:

You stay out here, Glass. Cassandra's a little... testy.

GLASS:

Oh, how dull. You never introduce me to your friends.

SOUND: KNOCK.

JUNO:

Open up. It's the police.

SOUND: DOOR.

CASSANDRA:

Juno, it's you!

JUNO:

Hello, Cassandra.

CASSANDRA:

Wow, Juno, you look *terrible*. What happened, you let someone test their jackhammer on your face?

JUNO:

Glad you noticed. Mind if I come in?

CASSANDRA:

Hey, who's the spook?

JUNO:

Don't mind him, Cass. He's just here about your dad. Let's talk about this inside. Rex? Stay here.

GLASS:
Woof woof.

MUSIC: ENDS.

SOUND: DOOR.

CASSANDRA:
Alright, you get three minutes and then you're gone. I'm busy.

JUNO:
I can see that - it's a hell of a mess in here.

CASSANDRA:
I'm packing and getting outta here. I've had enough of this place.

JUNO:
During a murder investigation? It's a pretty easy way to get locked up, Cass.

CASSANDRA:
You'd have to handcuff me to the bedpost if you wanted me to stick around this dump. I'm so free the birds get jealous.

JUNO:
Oh, you're cheery. Inside tip from a former cop, Cassandra: leaving the planet when you're a suspect in a murder investigation makes it look a whole lot like you got something to hide.

CASSANDRA:
Something to hide? In this place? I had to go on strike just to get a private bathroom installed, and even that one's got a camera inside the stall!

JUNO:
If that's private, then - ugh, never mind. I don't wanna know. Look, I get it, you wanna leave. But you've always wanted to leave, what's the rush now?

CASSANDRA:

If I tell you the story will you get the hell out of here?

JUNO:

If the story's good enough, sure.

CASSANDRA:

Fine. Croesus finally agreed not to renew my contract.

JUNO:

Really?

CASSANDRA:

(MOCKING)

Really.

JUNO:

You told me your shows were worth too much for him to let you go.

CASSANDRA:

They are! He just got sick of hearing about it, I guess.

(SIGH)

I was supposed to get out of here next week - Croesus croaking like that causes a lot of trouble for me, Juno, and besides...

(PAUSE)

JUNO:

Besides what?

CASSANDRA:

(SIGH)

I never got it in writing.

JUNO:

Damn. I'm sorry, Cass, I really am.

CASSANDRA:

Alright, you asked me a question now I get to ask you one.

JUNO:

Just like old times. If you ever got desperate enough Cassandra, you would make a hell of a P.I.

CASSANDRA:

Verbal contracts, they worth anything?

JUNO:

About as much as the air they're written on.

CASSANDRA:

Seriously!

JUNO:

I don't joke, Cassandra. The universe does it for me.

CASSANDRA:

Fine, then I get out of here. Run off to one of the far arms of the galaxy or whatever. What do you think my odds are?

JUNO:

Of escaping the Kanagawas and their cameras, pretty high.

CASSANDRA:

Really?

JUNO:

Yeah - when you explode on the way there there won't be much left to film. Think about it. Your family has a few thousand creds on every spaceport running off Mars.

CASSANDRA:

Knock it off, Juno! You're going too far.

JUNO:

So you'll look for a hobbyist willing to take you out to Neptune or somewhere, someone who won't sell you out for even the ten cred trillion creds you're worth-

CASSANDRA:

You're always like this, you jerk!

JUNO:

(CUTTING HER OFF)

Should be easy to find you just gotta find someone who doesn't like money and someone who doesn't have eyes.

CASSANDRA:

(TALKING OVER JUNO)

You come in here, pretending you care, but you don't care about anyone, do you!

JUNO:

Fine! Long story short, you're stuck. You're going to be rotting away in this nuthouse for a long, long time.

CASSANDRA:

Well, we'll see who rots first!

SOUND: WEAPON COCKING.

JUNO:

Hell of a teddy bear, you sleep with that thing?

CASSANDRA:

I trusted you! You promised me you'd get me out of here! I told you everything I couldn't tell my own family and you just spit on it!

JUNO:

Yeah, it sounds like me. Keep packing, Cass. Agent Glass and I should have this wrapped up by tomorrow afternoon. You can't go to the outer arms, but that's not the only place to hide in this galaxy. I'll show you some when this is through. This time tomorrow, you'll be out of here, Cass. I always keep my promises.

CASSANDRA:

Expect me to believe that?

SOUND: DOOR.

MUSIC: STARTS.

JUNO:

I don't need you to.

JUNO (NARRATOR):

I didn't like to rile Cassandra up like that, but I had to know. The girl had a trigger finger with the chicken pox and I knew it wouldn't take much for her to pull out what she had.

GLASS:

So, Juno? Is she our lucky lady?

JUNO:

Don't think so. She pulled a neo-derringer personal artillery on me.

GLASS:

My poor detective! Doesn't that make you... suspicious?

JUNO:

If she wanted to kill Croesus, she wouldn't have needed to go through all that trouble with the mask. The NDPA makes a hole big enough to throw a golf ball through without touching any of the sides. Alright, let's look for Min.

JUNO (NARRATOR):

Rex and I tried to find the woman of the house, but she was busy telling the world her husband was alive.

So Rex flashed his fancy Dark Matters badge and all his teeth at an old man who looked like Croesus might have one day if his head hadn't exploded, and we took Grim's Mask and got out of there.

SOUND: HIGHWAY.

JUNO:

Hold this.

GLASS:

Oh, don't mind if I do. What a thrill: off to a secret Triad base, ancient treasure in hand - why Juno, you look positively snowy. Not afraid of a few gangsters, are you?

JUNO:

Course not.

GLASS:

Why don't you prove it to me then? Show me how brave you are.

JUNO (NARRATOR):

Had to hand it to Glass. He had a nice voice. Or good cologne too. You didn't notice it 'til he came really, really close.

GLASS:

So! Where are we headed?

JUNO:

The, uh... Triad's got two primary exports running out of Hyperion: corpses and chow mein. Morgue's closed, so we're going to dinner.

GLASS:

Detective, how bold! I'd love to, of course. But be forewarned, I'm a very expensive date.

JUNO (NARRATOR):

Big golden gate in the front, strings of Christmas lights along the wallpaper, stuffed orangutan hanging by the main entrance, head of the previous owner mounted over the bathroom doors. There must've been a hundred places in Hyperion City that looked exactly like the Empire's Dragon.

And that was by design. The Triad knew the two secrets to endless money in the restaurant business: nostalgia and sodium.

MUSIC: STARTS.

GLASS:

Ugh, why anyone has any fondness for this era of Americana, I will never understand.

JUNO:

Say that a little louder, Glass - I don't think everyone in the kitchen heard you.

WAITER #1:

Ah, Mister Steel! Here you are at last. We've been expecting you. And, you've brought a guest! Right this way, please, right this way. We've a table ready for you and the chefs are already preparing your usual.

GLASS:

Well! Horrible decor, excellent service. How often do you come here, Juno?

JUNO:

I have never been here before. Didn't call ahead either.

GLASS:

Then how - you don't suppose we're being followed, do you?

JUNO:

This is Hyperion City, Rex. You're always being followed. Best you can hope for is the person that's following you wants you alive 'till next week.

WAITER #1:

Your table, gentlemen.

SOUND: CHAIRS SCRAPING.

GLASS:

Ah, I see you've saved us the best seat in the house. The one surrounded by all the other, completely empty best seats.

JUNO (NARRATOR):

Glass wasn't kidding. The place was so big it gave your echoes echoes. Huge, with nearly two hundred tables scattered across. And we were the only ones there.

WAITER #1:

We thought a more... intimate setting might please you.

JUNO:

We're not here for intimate, we're here for your boss.

WAITER #1:

Well, if you'd like to see the manager, I can -

GLASS:

(INTERRUPTING)

I think that you may have misunderstood my friend, sir. He asked for your boss, not your manager. Find whoever your manager's manager calls his manager's manager and you'll be halfway to the man we're looking for!

WAITER #1:

Well, I - just a moment, please.

SOUND: FOOTSTEPS.

JUNO:

Interesting method, Glass.

GLASS:

With any luck, we won't see him again. Middle men depress me.

JUNO:

How do you plan to get to the manager, then?

GLASS:

I don't. I plan to eat my meal in peace, drink excessively, and wait for the manager to come to us. In the meantime, I plan to get to you.

JUNO:

Not much to get.

GLASS:

Oh, I doubt that highly. Every human being upon this earth has plenty to get, Juno. We are universes unto ourselves, each of us with billions of stars and uncountable variations. With numbers like that there can't help but be a constellation or two.

WAITER #2:

Your wine.

SOUND: POURING LIQUID.

GLASS:

You've forgotten your manners, sir! Aren't you going to let us smell it?

WAITER #2:

But they told me -

GLASS:

(CUTTING HIM OFF)

Well, you've now been told otherwise.

(SNIFFS)

Hmm, interesting bouquet. Tell me, Juno, does balsamic vinegar pass for wine on Mars?

JUNO:

It depends on how desperate you are.

GLASS:

No different from anywhere else, then. We will not be drinking this, monsieur!

WAITER #2:

But they told me -

GLASS:

(CUTTING HIM OFF)

Well you've been told again! Are you a machine? Exercise some free will and do exactly as I say! Bring us another bottle!

WAITER #2:

(GRUNTS)

SOUND: FOOTSTEPS.

GLASS:

What are your constellations then, Juno?

JUNO:

I'm happy to answer your questions, Glass, but first they need to make sense.

GLASS:

You have a very interesting name: Juno. Juno, like the goddess I assume? Protectors, mothers, guardians...

JUNO:

Not sure that's what Mom had in mind. Looked at the name once - turns out Juno had a habit of killing her kids.

GLASS:

And do you have a mean streak?

JUNO:

Nope. Mom did, though. Never killed me but that wasn't for lack of trying.

GLASS:

That's too bad. It can be handy, I hear. Detectives who

know how to get rough every now and again.

SOUND: FOOTSTEPS.

WAITER #2:

Wine.

GLASS:

Swill. Goodbye.

WAITER #2:

You little -

GLASS:

You big! Bye-bye now. Bye-bye!

SOUND: FOOTSTEPS.

JUNO:

How 'bout Rex, that short for anything?

GLASS:

Nothing but itself. It means king, you know, in a language dead ten thousand years.

JUNO:

King Glass, huh?

GLASS:

I think it's fitting. Powerful, confident, semi-divine. And a king, of course, is always in need of a queen. The position is open, Juno.

JUNO:

I'll pass. Crown's not a good look on me.

GLASS:

No? There are other royal positions that need filling, of course.

JUNO:

I'm sure there are.

GLASS:

A man named Solomon had that figured out.

JUNO:

Sounds like a smart guy.

SOUND: FOOTSTEPS.

WAITER #2:

(CLEARS THROAT)

GLASS:

(TO WAITER)

Take it back!

(TO JUNO)

There are those in every court who hold all the, shall we say, privileges of a queen without any of the responsibilities. Do you catch my meaning?

JUNO:

No, but I'm listening.

WAITER #2:

(CLEARS THROAT)

JUNO:

What?

WAITER #2:

This is last bottle. You take this wine, or you leave.

GLASS:

Well, with a deal like that -

JUNO:

(CUTTING HIM OFF)

We'll take it.

SOUND: NOISE ON TABLE.

GLASS:

I have to say I'm happy to have met you Juno. I'd always intended to visit Mars one day - Don't drink that by the way, it's poisoned - and to find that I not only tolerate my guide, I actually find him competent is tremendously relieving.

JUNO:

Poisoned?

GLASS:

To hell and back again detective. It has been since the first bottle, and with each one we send back our waiter, who by my estimation has the second largest biceps I've ever seen, consults with that bouncer over there, who has the largest biceps I have ever seen. They're talking now. You don't know how to read lips, do you?

JUNO:

I can read faces just fine.

GLASS:

And what do theirs say?

JUNO:

Let's just say that we might be close to finding out where the shredded beef comes from.

WAITER #1:

Gentlemen, my friends here have told me that you appear unsatisfied with the selection of our cellars. Is there anything we can do for you?

JUNO:

It's nothing against the wine, waiter -

GLASS:

(CUTTING HIM OFF)
It is, actually.

JUNO:

(TALKING OVER GLASS)
Agent Glass and I have a little hangup over starting a meal before everyone's at the table.

WAITER #1:

Oh? Is... a member of your party missing?

GLASS:

He's feigning ignorance, Juno.

JUNO:

Not very well.

GLASS:

Oh, look at him turn red. Quite a hue. You should consider bottling it, sir.

WAITER #1:

My manager has stated -

JUNO:

(CUTTING HIM OFF)

I get the feeling we've had this conversation before.

GLASS:

Barely an hour ago, as I recall!

WAITER #1:

Smart tongues will get you nowhere.

JUNO:

(AT THE SAME TIME AS GLASS)

Maybe, waiter, but it's not just my tongue that's smart.

GLASS:

(AT THE SAME TIME AS JUNO)

Oh I wouldn't say that, tongues are remarkably versatile organs.

WAITER #1: Wei!

SOUND: COMBAT NOISES.

GLASS:

Juno!

JUNO:

(STRAINED)

Finally we're getting somewhere.

WAITER #1:

It's dinner with the boss you'd like, is it? Well, that can be arranged. Gentlemen, I think it's customary to take requests for a last meal. Take their orders, and then take them into the inner sanctum.

SOUND: SCRAPING.

MUSIC: STARTS.

GLASS:

Do you have a plan, Juno?

JUNO:

This is my plan.

GLASS:

And after this?

JUNO:

Don't die.

GLASS:

Excellent. We're on the same page then.

JUNO (NARRATOR):

Cornered. A gun in my back and a two ton hand on my shoulder. We were outnumbered, outgunned, and out of our element. I had them right where I wanted them.

WAITER #2:

So hotshot, what that last meal gonna be?

JUNO:

I'll pass. I'm saving room for dessert.

MUSIC: ENDS.

SOUND: RAIN.

MUSIC: STARTS.

CONCIERGE:

The tale you just heard, Part One of Juno Steel and the Case of the Murderous Mask, was told by the following people:

Joshua Ilon as Juno Steel;

Noah Simes as Agent Rex Glass;

Sophie Kaner as Agent Sasha Wire, Cecil Kanagawa, and
Cassandra Kanagawa;

Kate Jones as Rita;

and Kevin Vibert and Ryan Meyer as the ensemble.

On staff at The Penumbra:
Ryan Meyer as our recording engineer;
Kevin Vibert as our lead writer and sound effects designer;
Sophie Kaner as our director, lead editor, and sound
designer.

Juno's theme was written by Ryan Vibert.
The Penumbra was created by Sophie Kaner and Kevin Vibert.

I'm so sorry you've been called away, dear traveler. We
eagerly await your return.

MUSIC AND SOUND: FADE OUT.

[Transcription credit to subtlepuns, with assistance from Tara
Olivero, Phoebe Joy, and Dana Stahl.]

Trigger Warnings:

- Alcohol
- Death and violence
- Gore
- Deception and gaslighting
- Sudden loud noises

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