

*Actaeon in the Studio of Diana*

OK, here's what happened. Jove, back at the penthouse after another romp with Europa, found the atmosphere at Parnassus a bit pent-up. Juno was exceedingly cool and at bedtime downright snarly around the edges. Suspicious that Diana might be the cause of his wife's icy demeanor, Jove sent Echo downtown to hang out at the goddess's west side studio. Echo confirmed everything. Thanks to Diana and her feminist buddies, word of Jove's totally bullish and unacceptable behavior had made the rounds. 171

Peeved, Jove plotted payback. Everyone knew that—hunting aside—Diana and her circle had but two pleasures: putting down the guys and drawing. As Echo reiterated again and again: when these ladies talked they trashed, and when they drew they drew each other.

Jove decided a night visit from one of the boys might be in order and sent Krylon to Diana's studio to aerosol the joint. While the ladies slept, the magical vapors did their work. The next morning, the group's session was a disaster. Each probing pencil mark brought a big "ouch" to each posing dame. Or as Ovid might have put it, "Gentle touch to paper became wounding touch to flesh." Talk wasn't much help either. Really good jargon became lost in a cacophony of cavil. Diana, hip to who might be behind this bedlam, was mightily ticked off. Then—as Fate would have it—a young man appeared in the doorway. Actaeon, up from the underground and poking about The Village real estate for his granddad, Cadmus, had poked too far. He had entered the wrong corridor and opened the wrong door.

At first Diana and her crew saw red. Then opportunity. Crocale, nimblest of the bunch, stripped Actaeon of his clothes, and hefty Rhanis plopped him on the model stand. Drawing horses scraped. Easels clattered. Surrounded, Actaeon gestured, first this way then that. But too late. Diana's sharp pencil lines nailed him. Heavy-handed Psecas and hard-rendering Phiale grabbed drawing boards, pencils, pens. All dug in. No contour was left uncrossed. Caught

on paper, Actaeon was a goner. By the end of the session, the guy had totally vanished.

172      Some say Actaeon lived on, immortalized in graphite—pinned to the studio wall. Some insist Actaeon died later in a hunting accident. Either way—as Echo was bound to repeat—it was obvious (even among mortals) that Actaeon had been caught like a deer in the headlights of the gods.