

Fat-Bottomed Earth Angels

Having lost her ability to stand tall, Regret folds in. Maybe it's because I threw her to the ground and stomped on her, and after I left, she laid there for a time, flattened and elongated across my footprints. I thought, "Well, she deserves it. I wouldn't have been able to move forward if I had allowed her to cling to me like that, and hold me fast to the spot."

Regret, now a paper thin hunchback, loiters.

Sorrow reaches up out of the darkness of her fecund soil. She materialises in dreams and through phone calls, emails and invitations that don't arrive. Her sad whispers scratch and drone behind memories of cordial conversations. Sorrow is a gentle killer, creeping into my soul, trying to convince me to turn around and claim the abandoned baggage from the perpetual carousel, urging me to unlock the contents, to toss them out onto the floor and explain them to my daughters. She threatens to invite Regret and Guilt (Guilt, who moans from behind the locked closet, where I dumped him years ago) to a monstrous party, the venue for which will be decorated with the gloom of colours that don't exist.

"You are a mother!" Regret pulls herself together, pipes up and dances around, tripping over the roots of Sorrow and she snaps at my heels trying to convince me by yelling in her shrill voice. "From the moment you became a mother you should not only have dedicated your entire life to your daughters, you should have sacrificed your dreams and potential for them. No divorcing their father and then running off to marry a foreigner. No inviting foreigners into your world. What was that about? Besides, for fathers it's different. They can come and go as they please. But once you become a mother, well, that's it. The bar is set very high. You can't think of going anywhere. What did you do? You have four daughters. What were you possibly thinking?"

"Well, I thought I was making the best decision at the time."

Sorrow hovers, ignoring me and like a know-it-all, she whines directly over my head to Regret. "But the sad thing is that she no longer loved their father. Then she fell in love with a man from another land and together they tried their best to recreate the family. But it was sad, don't you think? It was sad to see how her daughters subsequently encountered this other man in the house, a new husband who didn't even speak the language, a man who initially just nodded and smiled and loved them all unreservedly without knowing what was really going on around him. It was sad that he took for granted that they would love him as easily as he allowed himself to love them. So many things misunderstood. But after awhile he did understand; he understood he wasn't welcomed by the daughters. 'Go back to your own country!' One of them yelled in spite. That was sad, don't you think? It all became very wretched after that."

The world at large clucks in agreement with both Regret and Sorrow.

Then Love shows up, illuminating the place with her famous white light. Love, who is esteemed as the ultimate answer, the alpha and the omega, has come dancing in from nowhere and I watch as she mixes it up with Regret and Sorrow. She doesn't give them a chance. "You guys are all fucked up. Let's just love each other. Forget all the rest. What else is there? I am the answer." Satisfied that as usual that she has—and is—the last word, Love leaves Regret and Sorrow exhausted and lying there on the ground and she floats confidently past the sunset to linger around on the right side of heaven, mostly examining her fingernails but sometimes using the sharp one of her baby finger to point at people, or to motion towards them with her chin. Regret and Sorrow gaze up at the dark clouds that arose from the dust of Love's righteous departure. The clouds can't hold the weight and they begin to spit jagged tears.

"The scene is completely muddy now. You're all wet." says Misunderstanding.

"And who invited you?" I ask.

"Well, I am the natural result of any altercation between the holy trinity of Regret, Sorrow and Love." He answers sarcastically.

"I don't have time for you." I respond. "I have to go and dry off after the storm of tears that now leaves me shivering in the cold."

"Do you want to make something of it?" Misunderstanding flexes his muscles.

"What are you talking about?"

"Listen, I worked it all out with your daughters."

"Yeah, right." Now it's my turn to be sarcastic.

"Listen, just put your rain coat on and we'll go for a walk."

"I know who you are. I'm aware of how you operate. Do you think I want to walk side-by-side with you?"

He snorts. "I seem to be all you have at the moment."

"But I'm already wet and cold from all of these tears. I just want to go inside and let my husband warm me up."

"But he's part of the problem. He came on the scene and ruined everything. Don't you see that?"

"I'm not having this discussion."

Misunderstanding is charming and his voice becomes silky smooth. "Well, you don't have to be so hasty. Why not just give this a chance and see where it leads? It's ironic that I, of all entities, have to explain this to you, don't you think?"

"I don't trust you."

Misunderstanding is just warming up. "Oh, that. It's just that aura of misconception that surrounds me. Don't let it confuse you."

I stand here amazed that Misunderstanding can take over like this. He's directing the play now. And I stop to pay attention.

I see that Misunderstanding has been in control for quite awhile. He tries to disguise his gloating but he can't help but let his delight escape through a glint in his one good eye.

He sets the scene. I accept the chair, the lone chair that he positions in front of the stage. Presumably I will be the only audience.

He hangs a hand-painted backdrop and drags in a blue velvet sofa and props that he has crafted like an expert. I think, "Misunderstanding has done this a million times before." I am impressed by his efficiency and craftsmanship. All the while he chews on a fat cigar, rolls it along his lips but doesn't light it. "I mind if I smoke." He says, "And anyway I don't want to offend you."

"The least of your worries, I'm sure."

I wait because I find that it's impossible to do anything else. And I watch as the scene is set. I hear Regret, Sorrow and Love, the holy triangulate, snickering from behind the curtains. Misunderstanding looks down on me for a reaction but I sit stone-faced. I'm tempted to leave but can't muster sufficient will to move. Perhaps it's because I'm curious. I really want to know. Maybe this will shed some light.

Sure enough. Fade to black and seconds later a lone spotlight with a blue filter makes a hollow sound as it clicks on and shines down to an empty space at centre stage. A void. Nothing there for several seconds. No sound from backstage.

Eventually the spotlight wobbles, and searching the desolation, finds a vaguely familiar female figure lounging on Misunderstanding's blue velvet sofa. She takes her time rolling up onto her feet. The spotlight turns to blue and quivers around her as she trundles towards the centre.

She is Fat-Bottomed Earth Angel. I vaguely remember her. She is the interpreter, a character I created years ago. She explained how it was to my daughters. But that was ages ago and she has been long forgotten. She has no wings now. She has only a fat bottom and drooping breasts. Her teeth are yellow because she's smoking Misunderstanding's cigar.

She shrugs. "He offered so I accepted." She smiles through the smoke.

The blue light becomes a heavy cloud.

"This," she uses the stubby cigar to point at the smoke around her head, "is Misunderstanding. Don't be fooled by the man who brought you here. You just misunderstood."

I stand up and walk away from the theatre, four little fat-bottomed earth angels, wings aflutter, faces raised to the sun, skip out from the shadowed wings. They are all intact.