

CRUCIFIXION RELOADED

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To Jamey and all those who ever suffered from bullying, to Györgyi Tarcali and Hannah Remmel for all their help, to Lady Gaga for being born this way.

THE BIRTH

Sally's Gospel

Sally stopped in the middle of the bustling bazaar to find out that she had lost her way. Men and women hurried by her heading towards their own destination without noticing her. She walked to the palm trees growing in the corner of the square to find refuge from the scorching southern sun. A wind awoke, blowing sand from the desert encircling the city. All she knew was that she was somewhere close to the equator, a word she had just learned from her mother. She stopped in the shade of the trees and felt much better.

She sat down and started drawing in the sand. Her parents told her to wait wherever she was if they were to lose each other, so Sally being a good girl, obeyed. Restlessness was awakening inside her, but she tried not to pay attention to it. Minutes flew by slowly sinking into boredom, so when a tiny black bug appeared, digging itself out from beneath the sand and hurrying away toward a side alley, Sally rejoiced. The bug scampered away with its black armor glistening in the light. An urge awoke in her that compelled her to follow it. As she distanced herself from the bazaar, the voices gradually subsided behind her. Underneath the silence, she heard a continuous high-pitched whistle, the sound of the sun shining down onto the world.

“Wait for me, Mr. Bug. Don't leave me alone,” she said.

The bug didn't seem to listen and continued its fleet away from the giant that was larger than the sun itself.

Sally looked up at the buildings lining the alley, so different than the ones at home. It seemed to her that they were made of the sand itself, growing out of the ground, simple cubes, differing only in height. The alley gradually grew narrower until she couldn't even spread her arms. Wooden crates blocked the way, and the bug disappeared beneath them. Through the silence, a voice emerged, speaking in English with a strange and somewhat comical accent.

“Hiz child iz comming, bi pripered, de time haz com for hiz return. All sinnerz show repent before itz too late...”

There was something strange in the man's voice, and the curiosity bugging Sally didn't leave her alone. She grabbed the top of the bottom box and pulled herself up then climbed onto the top one to jump down to the other side. As she approached the end of the alley, the voice of humanity reemerged from the silence.

It was the confidence with which the man spoke that attracted Sally, not his words. Sally stepped out of the hidden alley onto a busy road with tourists streaming in all directions like ants in delirium.

The source of the voice appeared, a man standing on top of a crate. The potato bag he was wearing was his sole garment. He was bald and his skull shined as the drops of sweat reflected the beams of the sun beating down onto the world persistently. His beard flowed down onto the pavement and was covered with sand. His eyeballs protruded a little, and his left one remained still. He gesticulated wildly with his arms. His thin legs quivered as they balanced on top of the box. As he spoke, he jumped on and off the crate constantly pointing toward the sky and begging the passers-by to listen.

“Bevaaare,” he screamed. “Birdz fall from the vild blue yonder, floodz destroying whole cities, eartquakes shatter face of earth and cause nucler pover plants to seep poison into Godz zoil! The end is near. He vill return to destroy the sinnerz and bring the pure onez to heaven!”

She looked at the adults hurrying away and didn't understand why they weren't listening to the warnings of this poor, disgruntled man.

“Fase the sky and show ripent. You hav bin varned.”

Sally did as she was told. She looked right into the burning sun, and she could see something moving. The sun expanded for a

moment as an old man standing on a cloud dashed out of it. Sally rubbed her eyes as her sight gradually returned.

Two officers stepped to the man, one of them talking to the beggar in a language so different than her own, like magic words of an ancient spell. Sally only understood one word, a name, John, or at least this is what she thought she had heard.

“Offizer, I cannot remain silent. The Mezziah is comming to the world. Angel told me.”

Sally believed John. Miracles do happen, angels exist, anything is possible.

The policeman spoke, and John answered, “The end of the world is near, I varn world to be prepared.”

The officer placed his hand onto John who pushed it away, but the policeman did not give up and grabbed his arm once more, forcing it behind his back this time, making John kneel to the ground.

“Leave alone,” screamed John as he tried to break free, but the policeman reached for his handcuffs and closed them with a click around his wrist.

“Don’t do this to me. Leave alone,” he shouted once more.

The officer pushed John down the alley. Everything slowed down except for Sally and John whose head turned around unnaturally. Sally could hear as his vertebral column snapped until his face looked at Sally while his body faced the opposite direction.

“The Mezziah is coming, Zally, be prepared,” said John.

Sally fell to the ground and started crying, not because she was scared but because she knew that the beggar was right, and no one was listening to his warnings.

Sally felt hands grab her waist and raise her into the air. She opened her eyes and saw her father.

“Oh my God, Sally. I told you to wait for us wherever we lost each other and not to wonder off.”

Sally was happy to see her father, but the tears pouring down her face were for the joy of something else.

“Sweetheart, don’t cry. Everything will be alright. I’m here, no one will hurt you.”

“I know, father...” she said sobbing.

“Then what’s the matter?”

Sally’s father placed his daughter down, caressed her soft hair, and hugged her one more time.

“No, everything is fine.”

“Then why are you crying?” he said with a look of concern.

“I’m just happy,” she said as her stream of tears dried out. She smiled in a way that only those can who see the golden gates of heaven opening.

“Me too, darling, me too,” said her father and was glad that he had found his daughter.

“The Mezziah is coming, father, the Mezziah is returning.”

“The what? Where did you learn this word?”

“He is coming, father...”

“Of course, sweetheart,” said her father but didn’t care to understand the true meaning of her words.

Angela’s Gospel

“In which room?”

“In room 101. The first one to the left,” said Angela looking at the college student blush and hurry away. She sat back behind the counter. The next donor would come in about an hour, and Angela knew that she could take her well-deserved nap soon. The door closed behind the student, and she was left alone. The rays of the sun shone through the glass facade and were reflected by the white tiles of the entrance hall.

A car sped away before the center, disrupting the stillness like a stone falling into the pond. It took time for Angie to settle once more.

The door of room 101 opened a few minutes later, and the college student appeared, placing the cup bearing his semen onto the platter on the other side of the waiting room. A hand reached out through the window, and the little cup disappeared. The college student stopped by the counter, and Angie gave him the money. The boy hurried away with a look of both embarrassment and pride as the entrance doors closed behind him silently.

Angela sat back into her seat and lay back, enjoying the coolness of the air-conditioner. She pushed herself away from the desk and stopped the chair so that she could stare out one of the huge tinted windows that covered the front of the center, the surface facing the outside a mirror, the one facing Angela a see-through window. The leaves of the palm trees lining the beach moved as a gust of wind rushed away heading toward the body-filled beach.

Everything was white in the center giving the place an air of optimistic futurism, not only the tiles but the rows of plastic chairs, her uniform, and desk too.

She closed her eyes as the rays caressed her face, just the way her mother did every night when Angela was a child. Years after her death Angie could still hear her mother humming, and the tune soothed her.

Angie heard the entrance doors slide open, and her eyelids sprung apart abruptly, pretending as if she had just rested her eyes for a second and nothing more, but she didn't see anyone. She was very good at this, imitating work. Being a single mother is never easy and work was the only place where she could compensate the deprived sleep caused by the midnight feedings and diaper changes. A gust of wind blew through the open doors bringing the whisper of the palm trees inside, words Angie could not decipher. The entrance slid shut.

She lay back in her leather chair once more. She felt her eyelids grow heavy, and no matter how hard she tried, she could not keep them open. Suddenly she saw something that made her jump to the window. This would be a memory that would haunt her until the end of her life because she would never be able to decide whether what she saw was real or just a daydream.

A man standing on a tiny cloud descended from the sky. His white hair flowed in the wind just like the millions of rivers running all around the globe, emphasizing his eyes the color of all the oceans, and in revitalizing contrast with his nose similar to the rugged mountains covering the face of the world. As he grinned, his soft lips, like the pillows of the boudoir of the fanciest, most delectable courtesan of the Moulin Rouge, enclosed playfully his white teeth radiating like the glaciers of the north. His beard made of clouds cascaded to the ground. As he hopped off the tiny cloud, his white toga swayed a little, unclinking his dark brown leather sandals.

The door slid open, and the man entered. He opened his mouth to speak with a voice like the thunder of an infuriated storm. "Is this a sperm donor center?"

"Yes. May I help you?" asked Angela still thinking she was dreaming.

"I believe I have an appointment."

"This is impossible, our next guest arrives in forty minutes, I just checked."

“Then check again,” he said gesturing at the list of names. “Randy is the name.”

Angela sat back into her leather seat, shaking her head. She reached for the notebook, opened it, then followed her index finger down the list of names and stopped. She couldn't believe her eyes. She saw Randy, just the forename, written down on the paper with her own handwriting. She looked back at this unlikely citizen with bewilderment.

“But..but...this is impossible...”

“What is it, Angela? Don't you believe your own eyes?”

“There must be a logical explanation to this, there always is.”

“In this you are absolutely right,” said the man looking around. “I'm sorry, this is my first time in a place like this. Could you please show me around?”

“Of course...of course,” she said scratching her head.

Angie stood up and showed him the way. They entered into room 101. There was a white bed in the corner, a television on a simple desk before it, and a bookshelf at the opposite side. As Angela changed the sheets quickly, she continued, “Here are our magazines to help you concentrate. We have all sorts of magazines and videos, heterosexual, gay, lesbian, S&M, transvestite, foot fetish, everything. Choose whichever suits you. No one will be watching, so have fun. Here is the cup that you must try to fill, and that's it.”

“Thank you very much,” said the old man.

Angela hurried back to her seat feeling as if she were losing grip of reality, dreading that she was turning insane. She turned back toward the window. The tiny little cloud the man had arrived with was still hovering before the center.

She shook her head and faced the endless sea in the distance when she noticed that the light outside was changing. Angela looked up at the sun to see it was sparkling, its blinding surface shimmering like glitter. The sun began to tremble, faster and faster, until it shook out of control. The men and women passing by seemed unaware. The sun began to whirl round and round, then it stopped and exploded. For a second Angela went blind, but as her sight returned, she saw glitter covering the sky. The millions of tiny specks sank to the ground only to disappear before scintillating on the pavement for a few seconds.

An opening door disrupted Angela's amazement. She turned around and saw the old man emerge. He had the placid

expression of someone right after sex, an otherworldly calmness. His wisps of hair rose into the sky. The cup he was holding was filled with a fluid that twinkled like the sun a few moments before. The man placed the cup down onto the platter and walked by Angie giving her a wink. *Ting*. The doors slid open. He jumped onto the cloud, rose to the sky, and flew towards the sun that expanded and gobbled him up.

Angela scratched her head not knowing what to do or how to react. She then sat back behind her desk and vowed to sleep more.

Mary's Gospel

“You will feel something cold enter, but apart from that you shouldn't feel anything unpleasant. If you do, speak up.”

Mary lay back and tried to relax. She looked into Josephine's worried hazel eyes and smiled. Even in-between the present circumstance Mary was the stronger one. She felt the cold instrument touch her inner thigh that caused her to hiss. The probe slid up her vagina, and as soon as she grew accustomed it, she didn't feel a thing.

A dream was coming true, and there was nothing that could ruin this. The room decorated with pale-green tiles couldn't hide the fact that this was a hospital. The touch of white leather on her neck that felt cold before, now stuck to her skin.

The doctor disappeared under her skirt. The bright light coming from above blinded her and made her squint, so she closed her eyes and excluded all stimuli, trying to disembodify her spirit and sink into the cotton-like nothingness of anticipation.

Maybe this was a hospital room to others, but to her, this was the place where she would get the gift she most relished. Mary felt a sting that brought her back into the present, the probe slid out. The face of the gentle doctor reemerged from under her skirt and smiled, his moustache dancing over his upper lip as he spoke. “We are done.”

Mary sat up. “Already?”

The doctor nodded and turned to the sink to wash his hands. “Yes. Don't forget to attend the control examinations.”

“Of course not, doctor.”

The doctor stepped to the door, and before leaving, turned around. “Great, see you then.”

“Good-bye, doctor.”

The doctor nodded and left. The door closed with a click, and the silence gradually settled like specks of dust stirred up by a breeze. She turned toward Josephine, and they smiled in a way only those can who know that a miracle had just happened.

Mary’s blue eyes sparkled like the calm surface of a pond mirroring the rays of the afternoon summer sun. Josephine’s hazel eyes glowed like the fur of an otherworldly enchanted deer fleeing from all eyes, not to be seen by anyone, ever. Mary raised her arm to grab hold of Josephine’s hand and held it as if they were going to be petrified for eternity this way so that future generations would see them in this exact pose until the marble crumbles and returns back to the ground from where it came from. Mary stood up, and they hugged turning into one, not in the way that two people unite during sex, but in a way that two halves of a piece reunite after centuries of loneliness and never-ending dreadful search for the other. They didn’t say a word because there was nothing to say, only hope that the inception would be successful.

As they left the hospital, the afternoon sun sank under the horizon, and darkness embraced the world.

“You stay here, Mary. I’ll go and get the car,” said Josephine squeezing Mary’s shoulder.

Mary nodded and watched Josephine’s tall figure hurry away into the night. Josephine was so different than her, she always wore suits, and her blonde hair was primly cut short. Mary was quite the opposite, the waves in her hazel hair tumbled onto her shoulder freely. The dark blue dresses she usually wore was in contrast with her full red lips.

Mary stood under a street lamp that blinked a few times then went out. Darkness covered her like an ever-soft blanket. Fireflies arrived from nowhere and buzzed around her like tinkling stars before flying away into the night. The moon smiled down on the world just like a mother watching her dormant child.

The light returned, but Mary was surprised to see that it wasn’t the street light that emitted this natural luminescence. She looked down, and through her thin blue dress, something glowed like the sun itself warming her from within. Mary knew that the light was coming from her womb.

Josephine stopped the red convertible before Mary. She couldn’t believe her eyes for she too saw the sun burning inside

Mary's abdomen. The white light it emitted gradually turned into darker shades of red until it set under the horizon of the uterus to plant itself like a seed in a soil loosened by the days of rain.

"What happened, Josephine?" asked Mary knowing the answer already.

"It's a miracle, Mary, it's a miracle. There is no other explanation."

They smiled at each other for a few seconds surrounded by an unbreakable silence.

"Josephine," said Mary, "scoot over, I want to drive."

Josephine obeyed, and Mary jumped into the car with a heavenly agility as if a part of her were made of the clouds of heavens. Mary pressed down the clutch and put the car in first gear then held down the breaks and gave some gas to the engine. When the motor began revving high, she began releasing the clutch, giving gas until the rear tires burnt loose, releasing white smoke accompanied by the smell of burning rubber. She released the clutch and brakes at the same time, permitting the car to rocket away, giving out a deafening screech.

Mary enjoyed the cool breeze blowing against her face. The streetlights made the road burn in a calming orange. The many skyscrapers rose toward the sky, trying to reach the moon. Behind the many windows distinct lives resided, like many tiny planets orbiting around their circuits. In each window a singular world could be found, with its own laws, habits, and points of view.

Mary caressed her stomach. She was feeling something that one only feels when their dream comes true. It is a power that not only gives comfort, but an immense joy, a joy to be alive. They sped away through the city preparing itself to go to sleep, heading home to spend the night behind a glowing window just like the many floating away above them.

Hank's Gospel

Hank dried his hands and yawned as the fatigue of the many operations fell onto his shoulders. It was in these moments of complete solitude that he felt the burden he bears, and only now did he perceive the swiftness with which the years flew by. He was old, and the constant physical and psychic concentration drained his energies that were growing weaker each year. He stepped out into the blinding white corridor of the hospital. The hospital was

empty, all was silent. It was afternoon, the last child had been delivered successfully, so he returned to his room to relax.

He opened the door and sat down onto his bed covered by a light green sheet as if he were laying down onto an operation table to be dissected and examined like the corpses in the pathology. He looked at the painting hanging over his glass table, the ancient doctors leaning over and examining a body. All of them seemed like fathers, strict but always just. One of them was caressing his white goatee while the other looked at the wounds of the patient over his glasses lying on the tip of his nose, the others nodded in concordance.

As he dozed off, music entered into his brain like an unwanted intruder. It started with the violins and trombones sinking deeper and deeper into bitter sweetness only to be pierced by an oboe, a singular shriek cutting through the sweet sorrow and answered by the trumpets declaring the beginning of a new world. This perfect harmony was followed by a pause, a pause during which the globe turned around its axis to face the sun. The flutes and oboes tried to emerge from the silence but were lost in the deep murmur of the drums and cellos that suffocated their beauty to give place to insanity. From this derangement, the flutes tried to rise, rise from the mud that was pulling them deeper down.

“Doctor, we need your help,” said a nurse just barely loud enough to be heard over the symphony.

“What is it?” asked the doctor a little louder, the way that one talks when they listen to music through earphones, trying to over-scream the music only they can hear.

“The ambulance brought a mother in. Her cervix has disappeared. She is about to give birth any minute now.”

“What is this music?” asked Hank.

“What music?” asked the nurse a little confused.

Hank looked at the nurse and realized that only he could hear the tune and no one else. He hurried after the nurse through the abandoned white hallway, and the music continued growing stronger with every step.

The oboes emerged once more, this time backed up by the violins pulling the melody out of the mud that was determined not to give up. The trumpets joined the fight against the mud as the woman in labor appeared, her face distorted by the pain. The head of the child was already visible. The music became joyful for a moment as if everything would be alright, swimming in a sweet

tune that became stronger and stronger. The wind raised the melody and carried it over the swamp.

The head of the child was out, and now the shoulders were coming as well. The music was deafening, but no one heard it, only Hank. Black clouds floated over the melody bringing transient rain, but the music fought against it. The wind and black clouds battled for centuries until the wind, putting all its energy into the last gust, blew the clouds away. The sun revealed itself and shone down on the orchestra. Hope was born once more.

Through the raindrops rolling down the leaves, the light emerged as a rainbow to pierce through the world. The child slid out in slow motion as the trumpets returned, leading the music higher. The globe started trembling as the child was raised to the sky. They placed the baby onto the mother, and the music was sweet for a second only to give place to the glorious trumpets again that ruled over the world one last time. All the instruments started playing, and the music grew louder and louder until the old world cracked, and through it, the new one came to light, destroying everything that was wrong in the previous one and evolving into something incredible.

The music stopped, and the silence was interrupted by the cry of the child. The doctor smiled at them and felt in his heart a calmness that one only feels when they peek into the sun to see heaven itself, not the place existing in the imagination of many, but the heaven that was about to come to earth. Hank stared at the family not caring that the child had two mothers because he knew that this was simply another face of God.

He stepped to the mother, blew a kiss on her forehead, and left, longing to hear that ethereal music once more, knowing that someday everyone would.

THE CHILDHOOD

Mary's Gospel

Mary waved as Josephine drove away and disappeared behind the curve. She took a deep breath from the frisky air and stretched her arms toward the sky like the many oak trees lining the road in their neighborhood. The sprinklers rose above ground level, and water began falling just like a summer drizzle. As the rain fell onto the rose bushes growing in the yard and lining the path leading to their porch, each drop glittered like a diamond.

Mary looked at her garden, and even though she found it a little kitschy, she did not mind. She never thought she would be living the suburban dream. A few years ago she imagined she would rather commit suicide than live in a neighborhood like this, with the many homes painted in pastille colors, their residence a pale apricot, telling the neighbors that the ones living in the house were diverse, but not too unique to be freaks. The well-kept lawns showed the many hours spent to prove to the neighborhood that they were earnest people, prone to fit in and live the life like one of the many ants in this anthill.

Mary did not mind because all she wished for was boredom and normality now. She grew tired of the years of struggle against society, trying to change it, make the world a better place, convince others that people like Josephine and herself were humans. Yes, Mary grew tired of fighting, and now all she wanted was to fit in as much as possible into the Elysium yards of Suburbia with the constant scent of wisteria embracing her, caressing her, and soothing her. This was a sweet death, and she was ready to lose herself in it.

Mary closed the front door painted red and marveled at the newly renovated parquet still shining. She hurried up the stairs leading to the upper floor, the railing freshly painted white. At the top of the stairs, she turned right and almost tripped in a wrinkle in the beige woven carpet decorated by ethnical patterns. She adjusted the wrinkle and hurried into Neil's room. His white cradle stood before the window, and the morning rays caressed him with maternal providence.

Mary blew an invisible kiss onto his right shoulder. His curly dark hair framed his translucent eyes and his cheeks the color of the mildest rosé, just a tint mixed with light that one actually doesn't see but feels it linger about. Mary knew that this child was just like the tiny angels dancing around God's throne in heaven. Mary tiptoed out of the room and hurried downstairs.

At the bottom, she grabbed the prominence of the railing and, using the same impetus of her descent, she swung around it and entered her kitchen to wash the dishes and make everything turn back into its previous self, an undisturbed order one only sees in furnishing catalogues. She washed the dishes with her habitual perfection.

She dried the last plate and placed it into the cupboard. Silence. Mercifully, for the first time in weeks, Neil was still asleep. She jumped onto her white sofa facing the fireplace and reached for the eBook lying on the side table beneath the lilacs ruling over the white room with royal posture. She opened the leather casing and looked at the virtual screen so similar to paper.

She began reading her first sentence, tasting every word of it as if it were a portion of golden amber sent from the gods above when screaming trumpeted from upstairs, awakening her maternal instinct.

Neil was up, and this meant two things, he needed to be changed or to be fed. Marry hurried up the stairs with a heavy-heart even though she knew these lost minutes were only an unexpected gift that she did not actually deserve, so in all she hadn't lost anything, just something that wasn't hers. She entered into Neil's room.

She stepped to the cradle, and her blood froze in her veins. Neil was not there. The crying went on and on, always becoming stronger. She tried to identify its source, but there was no use because the voice was coming from all directions. She looked inside the wardrobe. No one. She peeked out into the corridor.

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