

Wilderness House Literary Review 6/3

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BELOVED INTRUDER

(Genesis 3:9)

I'd made it.

The first sefirot. The seventh heaven. Primum Mobile. God's place.

It was beautiful, sure. A garden that knew when to stop. Every square inch wasn't a green version of a Sao Paulo slum. Or rush hour Manhattan. Flowers walked wild. There weren't any paths, but every time I stepped there'd be an opening.

Beautiful but weird. Nothing moved, except me. No birds chirped; no animals rustled in the undergrowth. And silent! Talk about the still point. Not a breath of air.

I wandered around a few minutes, and then thought I saw a trail. Up close, it was actually a dark line, like a burn mark or scar, running through the woods, up little zen-rocked hills, across an unmown but even meadow. So I followed it.

I came out from the trees to a little pond. Lovely. Field grass shorter near the water's edge, perfect for sitting. Distant, pyramidic mountain reversing itself in the pond's still surface, like an arrow pointing. And there on the grass sat an angel. He was BIG, even hunched over, elbows on knees, chin in his hands. Beside him lay a fiery sword; the trail led right to it. Apparently, he'd been dragging it along beside him across the property.

"Oh hi," I said. But no sound came. Still, I *heard* myself say it.

"Hello," he said, rousing himself a little, sitting up. "You're here."

"Yes," I said. I'd heard his voice, too, though not in my ears.

"Staying for awhile this time?" the angel asked. When he talked (or whatever) his robe rippled soft colors, like mother of pearl.

"*This time?*" I thought to myself. But I said, "I don't know."

Then I looked around.

"Where is everybody?"

"Everybody?" he said.

"Yeah, you know. People. My grandparents. My second-grade teacher. And animals, like my dog, Goldie. And . . ."

"You mean God. You want to know where God is?"

I nodded.

The angel stood up. I think I liked it better when nothing moved. He clasped his hands behind his back, looked straight ahead, and began to recite,

Then YHWH, God, formed the human of dust from the soil, and YHWH, God, blew into his nostrils the breath of life, and the human became a nefesh chayah, a thing with a soul.

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"Genesis, chapter two," he looked at me. "But, of course, you knew that."

"Of course," I said. Then I waited.

"Don't get it, do you?" the angel asked.

"Get what?"

Can angels slump? "God!" he said, exasperated.

I looked at him.

"God breathed life into the *adamah*, the clay figure . . . that's you."

"That I know."

"Well, *whose* life do you suppose he used for this?"

I paused.

"His, I imagine. I mean, there wasn't anyone else, right?"

"*Right!* So look around. Do you see God anywhere?"

I shook my head. But I looked toward the mountain.

"Oh, God's not there either. Take my word for it. Or don't. It's about a three-day hike. I'll be here when you get back. Nothing better to do."

"No, I believe you. God's not in heaven; I get that. But where *is* God?"

The angel slapped his own forehead with the butt of his hand and colors cascaded like an exploding rainbow.

"Why did he do it? We all told him not to. And with the likes of" . . . and he glared at me. "God, are you thick!"

"I'm sorry," I said and looked away.

"That was direct address, jackass," he raised his non-voice.

"Hey, wait a minute . . ."

"Wait a minute? Wait a *minute?*" I've been waiting forever up here, sluggo! Every day, the same thing. Patrol the garden. For what? Against who? Nobody ever shows up, except every now and then some hot shot meditator or kabbalist or Tibetan something or other. And they're useless."

The angel was seething, boiling colors. It wasn't pretty. Well, actually it was, but . . .

"I blame *you!*" he sputtered in hot pink and bruise yellow.

"Me? What the heck did I . . . ?"

"No, not you. *You!*"

"That's it. I'm outta here. If this is Paradise, bring on Orange County."

"Where do you think you're going?" said the angel. He picked up the sword. It only glowed one color.

"You know your problem? You never listen. '*I'm bored,*' you said. '*I want experience,*' you said. And before any of us could talk you out of it

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-- boom! -- you breathe your life, your soul, yourself into these . . . ceramics! These knick-knacks! Well, what about us? What about heaven? You abandoned us all here. Your little trick sucked all the air out of this place" (no wonder there was no sound). "Where is God?" we keep asking. "When will he come again? Ever?"

"You mean to say?"

"That's right, bucko! The heavens are empty. God's with you. Or more precisely, God is you, your *chayah*, your life. He did it, and now he's stuck with it."

"Stuck?"

"Well, there's no way out, is there? Or rather none you seem to like. (I mean *you*, pottery barn, not him!)"

Then he *leaned* toward me. (Please, somebody, adjust the tint and contrast!)

"You see, I think he'd actually like to get back here. That's why people like you keep showing up. But he's stuck in *there*." (Shit! He wasn't going to touch me?!)

"Options are limited. First, you lawn ornaments could actually come together, recognize who you are, make *your* place (sweeping gesture, aurora borealis) this place. Don't know where that would leave us. Or, alternately "

He paused. So did the sun.

"You could all die. Just kill each other. War. Or a nice lab-created bug. Even he can't reincarnate if there are no people. My bet is that's exactly what you're doing . . ."

"Not me!" I said. "I'm a pacifist."

But he'd switched pronouns again. That, and begun to sort of bleed forward like washed madras. Toward me.

"Part of you wants oneness. Part of you wants death. Either way, you're out of your big mistake. You do *know* it's a mistake, don't you?"

"I'm leaving," I said quietly. "Going back."

"Not this time," said the angel in my head. "You're not much. Not much of him. But a small god is better than none. Don't you agree?"

* * *

I opened my eyes, bolted out of lotus. Breathe! I could actually breathe!

I leaned my head out the open window. More air! Time of the evening breeze. My peace flag fluttered from its pole over the front door.

Then I saw it. Across the street. Someone crawling out (or was it

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into?) my neighbor's window. In broad twilight.

The owner pulled up. Ran to the guy, pulled him by the legs. As the intruder fell, there was a flash. The gun in his hand went off. My neighbor went down.

The intruder stood up. Saw me. Ran full tilt for my window. Leapt up again and again toward the opening, arms extended, face desperate.

"Adam, ayeka?" he called to me. *"Adam, where are you? Where are you?"*