

Carl Dimitri*Boris, My Angel*

It was the American who pressed for marriage. He'd lose her otherwise. She seemed so flawless that it made him insecure. Made him sweaty and unsure. Made him fail in bed.

The doctor wrote out a prescription. The American mistakenly chewed the pill. It tasted like the stars. Then he took and hurt Komiko with his eerie erection. She was sore, she said, and it hurt. Would he please stop? He slowed but he did not stop. It was good and it was like justice. She was grimacing. So now he stopped and washed-out onto his back and sighed at the ceiling. Everything sucked. Even sex.

Komiko looked in the mirror over the dresser. Her cheeks were red. She wiped the tears from her cheeks and looked in the mirrored closet doors. The sun was just at the windows, stealing now onto the beige carpet, the beige and white bed, the white walls. Maybe she should photograph this movement of light. She could post the photos on her blog, calling it "A Study of Light." But how she disliked these colors and how she had told him over and again.

The American was – how else could he say it? – he was a real estate agent, and being a real estate agent he knew resale value. Ha. He knew the value of nothing. He had no sense of the subtle energies. It was up to her to establish some feng shui with plants in the corners, and with the many mirrors, which attracted and circulated the ch'i. So it all fell apart on that Wednesday morning.

He took her by the arm. But Komiko felt a disturbance below and so wrestled away. Naked she took the dumbwaiter down. There in the kitchen she saw two switches and a filthy slimy rat. She flipped one switch and tiptoed around the rat who was slumbering, and who, when he awakened, shrieked at her clear-

coated toenails. One lonely bulb with a chain attached hung from the ceiling. She yanked it. This old subterranean kitchen smelling of flowers watered faithfully. This old tongue-and-groove paneling. This old cracked and curling linoleum. And Boris, at the wooden table, penciling his manuscript. Gray haired and mild mannered, he said graciously, graciously he said, Howdy.

Komiko looked his crumpled suit up and down. He was terribly out of fashion. He was clearly Jewish. He was human-historical debris. A New York intellectual. A socialist. A lover of music. Howdy, he said, without acknowledging her nudity, the simple lines (simple and clear). My name is Boris.

She smiled at him. This was *the* Boris Kuperman, the radical turned reformer. The rat tore off behind the stove.

Komiko wanted to ask him. She felt it so strongly. (She felt everything these days. It was her intuition. Cosmic transformation was afoot. Her intuition prodded her more and more.) She said, You are a conscientious objector?

-I'm a pacifist, Boris said.

-So you're not a conscientious objector?

-Oh sure

-Have you ever been fired for your views?

-Yes, ma'am. From the American University.

The past academic year had been very fruitful for him. He had just completed a guide to the occult. *Fear and Folklore*, he called it. Anyway, that's what he wanted to call it. But the publisher liked the title, *The Devil and How to Avoid Him*. He had to deliver the manuscript by five o'clock that day. But he had taken a wrong turn at the township. Would she help him find the publishing house?

Komiko was grateful for Boris. She thanked the universe for him. Thank you for this gentleman. He kept his eyes to hers. He did not gawk at her vagina or her snowcone breasts. She put on her boots and set out to help him. They set out beneath the quick-moving storm and into the forest. Boris took a chest full of air. The pine trees sure are pretty.

Komiko agreed. It was an unexpected landscape. Then there was all of this, the greenery of the pines and oaks and maples and the ferns and the soft carpet of pine needles. There were the mushrooms blooming on the tree bark and the forest floor. She wanted to say something.

-My grandfather was a horribly sick man. A lunatic mind, really. A scientist and a philosopher. A grave robber and an archaeologist. He eventually stabbed himself, thrusting the blade into his ribs, before dispatching us to the halls. It was a mere spectacle to frighten children, although it did indeed kill him. We were happy in the manor house until then. It was sweet love. It was lipstick. It was a yuk a minute.

The brain depository closed at five a.m. It was already six. Komiko reached through the mail slot and unlocked the door. Boris put his manuscript in a jar by the sink. Komiko intuited a dark energy in the closet.

-It's those men, Boris said. Dead now, but buried alive.

Alright alright, she thought. It was good enough for the likes of them. War criminals is what they were. Unholy monsters. They bombed promiscuously. They gave birth to a time of blood and dying.

Boris lugged the corpses from the closet and spread them beneath two massive pines. He read a passage from the latest biography of Fyodor Mikhailovich Dostoyevsky. Then he spit. To hell with them fellas, he said. Buzzards gotta eat same as worms.ⁱ Then he took his guns out, butts first, and shot the villains. It was high symbolism, his greatest act of apostasy.

Boris had never been the same since his ambush. A bullet-headed man with a microphone and a camera crew pinned him behind his toilet and asked him appear on Tomás de Torquemada's *You Can't Win*. Boris said he would appear, but only two conditions: that Rupert McFlintock explain why oil wasn't \$20 a barrel, like he predicted at the outset of the War; second, that Torquemada come onto Boris's show. There they could talk freely. It was PBS. Boris would give him a full hour, unedited. No commercials.

Then with wet eyes Boris turned to Komiko: I didn't surrender. They took my horse and made him surrender.ⁱⁱ

Komiko's intuition blazed a seething unconquerable lifechanging longing for this man. From here on in it would be all Boris all day and night. She would think of him before sleep and would wake thinking of him still. She threw her arms around his neck. *Boris, my Angel*. They made love on the countertop, face to face, lips lightly touching, eyes hardly blinking. She was wet, really wet, for the first time in her life. The warm shuddering orgasm.

-Please forgive this, she said. It's really unprofessional and kind of crazy. But I have to get this off my chest or I might never get to sleep. I think you are the beginning and the end of loveliness. There is no end to your beauty. And I have been lovesick with you for three months, maybe more.

-And you are plenty pretty, Boris said. Then kissing her hand, he said: We better get a move on. The brown shirts don't like us killing their friends.

But it was bad luck with the cash running out. Komiko assured him that all she needed to do was tell the American she loved him once a week and visit his mother every second Sunday. (He looked like his mother, and she looked like a very tall hobbit.) For that he gave her silver; he installed an imported kitchen in their home, although beige. The electricians did it up special. It was the biggest heist in United States history.

She called him.

-Where have you been, he said. He was sweating, high on laptop pornography.

-Sorry for bothering you.

-I knew you were gonna be late, he said. So I took the phone off the hook. I can't afford to have another bad night of sleep.

Komiko would call him tomorrow.

The American was – how else could she say it? – he was a twat. Always complaining, always whining. This was what turned mere marital tedium into all-out loathing. Still, it could've been worse. It could've been raining. Just as she finished this thought the thunder came, then the rain, beating the corpses hard.

Komiko's boots filled with water. She needed a hot shower and a nip from the bottle. Boris took her by the wrist and led her to the Lost Lady. He ordered an apple martini for Komiko and a glass of Pernod with ice for himself. But it was a long time since the bartender had anything to drink. Everything had run out, even the people.

She put her head on his shoulder. I hope we can forgive and forget, she said.

-You know there's never no forgettin, Boris said.ⁱⁱⁱ

She sighed. She told him about her photography. She had done a series of shots of the dining room table. But let's be honest. She was no photographer. Her intuition told her as much. If only she could do

something useful. Be of use to people and animals. She had questions for him, the most important of which was this: would they ever arrive at truth and purity? Boris didn't know. It certainly was an admirable goal. And the search itself, he said, the search would certainly lead to admirable discoveries.

He leaned his forehead to hers. Her breath was sweet like lake water. Here was a woman of depth. If only he could make love to her three or four thousand times before he died. But there was scant chance of that. He was already seventy-three years old. He enclosed her hand between his, saying, The fin-du-monde is on heartbreaking display. But it is good that warriors like us can meet in the middle of it, with kindness, without thought. He kissed her cheek then and turned off the stool and swung out the doors.

HeShe had just met the girlboy of hisher dreams.

Meanwhile the American shattered a mirrored closet door with his fist and tore out of the driveway in Komiko's BMW. With great pain he thought of her. The way she shuffled when she walked. The way, when he first met her, she wore knee-high boots and carried the purse with the puny dog and cellphone inside.

He tore off to the mall, hoping to find a woman, hoping it would matter to Komiko if he did. He got off the escalator and began it. Women and girls advanced in near lockstep. Spooky action at a distance. Nearly all wore the knee-high boots, carried the baggy purses, the dogs. She was everywhere, grim and mirthless. He leaned against a glass front. Everything was goddamn beige. Goddamn bad feng shui. He was so tired of himself. It would take awhile. He hated his flaws, real and imagined.

They threw Boris in jail for protesting the noise that mankind is making. Using a megaphone on the streets of Camden, he said he could no longer quiet the voice of his conscience. The time had come to liberate ourselves from fear, anger and hatred. There was no need to be afraid of ourselves and each other, he said, and to demonstrate this he hugged willing passersby.

Komiko cried every time she visited him in the maximum security prison. He usually wore a white v-neck t-shirt and brown dickies. When he misbehaved, they stuffed him into a patriotic jumpsuit. He told her not to cry. They were soon exiling him to Barcelona. She could visit him there.

Komiko said, I'll come there I'll get a hotel in Barcelona or a nearby city I'll roam the streets I'll get drunk on the fumes of cars and women wheeling babycarriages if they've got them I'll call you I'll say hello

I'll say Boris I'll say it's eleven o'clock in the morning I'll say the sun is at the window I'll say I'm already wasted out of my mind high on my freedom.

Komiko decided to become a veterinarian when she grew up. She divorced her husband and married her work. She made a good first impression. She shipped her waiting room - with its pets, stomach obstructions, interns, parrots, pop music – to Spain. It was all summer and pink lust then. She was whipped by it, crazed for its taste. It was the best sex she ever had and she had had it all over the world.

ⁱ *The Outlaw Josey Wales*. Screenplay by Philip Kaufman. Based on the novel by Forest Carter. Dir. Clint Eastwood. Perf. Clint Eastwood, Chief Dan George, Sondra Locke, Bill McKinney, John Vernon, and Paula Trueman. Warner Bros, 1976.

ⁱⁱ Ibid.

ⁱⁱⁱ Ibid.