

Holiness in a Downtown Apartment; A Bible Lesson

Divinity stood barefoot in my overpriced Montgomery apartment. Her hip bent against the marble counter like a stream of water curved against hard rock. Wisps of frizzy curls twisted around the shell of her ear, a glowing halo, and the soft stove light whispered around the edges of her figure. She called to me like the angel called to Mary. “Come here, I’ve got something for you.” (*“Hail, O favored one! Luke 1:28”*)

I got up, wooden chair scraping tile floor, because who could resist divine callings? My steps glided to the spin of a record player humming in a distant corner. The lyrics flowed like heavenly hymns; a spirit of worship mingled with steam from carrots and onions and celery. I met her at the altar, a stove tucked neatly between the fridge and spice cabinet, dipping my head between her wings and collarbone. She handed me a scripture, yellow and torn. “A recipe!” She exclaimed. I squinted to read it, condensation settling onto the frame of my glasses. It was written before the Fall of Babylon.

“I can’t read this,” I pointed out, and I could feel her laugh as her shoulder jostled against my chin. I wanted to look affronted, but it’s hard to scowl at an angel. “No one but Go-” She politely ignored me, choosing to wipe my glasses instead.

“It’ll be fine.” she assured, tucking the frames back behind my ears, “Pass me an apron.”

I knew she was preparing a sermon when she closed a fist around a nearby knife, pointing the edge towards my chest. “Ask me to teach you the meaning of life,” she said, a smile tickling the corners of her simple mouth.

Somewhere in between her lips and knife, I became Eve in the garden, yearning to take a bite of sin. I was Persephone, desperately licking pomegranate from the beds of my fingers. This was divinity acknowledging the mundane. This was the beginning of the world. And, like Eve and Persephone, I was simply a woman. Like Eve and Persephone, I longed for a taste. My angel smiled at my decision, handing me a flattened board.

“Grab a carrot,” she said. (*When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. Genesis 3:6*)

With a flick of a dial, she taught me the nature of the elements, how fire was so explosive and bright and moving, it was easy to lose sight of the smoke it left behind. She explained while tossing oregano, rosemary, and thyme over the flames, that humanity burns. “Why are you all so afraid of catching fire and not the destruction it leaves behind? There should be no fear at all. It’ll be ashes to ashes, dust to dust anyway,” she mumbled, blowing salt on the counter. (*All go to the same place. All came from the dust and all return to the dust. Ecclesiastes 3:20*)

She demonstrated sacrifice: how to shred life without letting tears splash into the broth. “Cook your food,” she demanded, blood coating her fingertips, “It’s no good to anyone raw.” And as the atmosphere grew heavy with spices and steam and running water, she breathed, “Be attentive.” She set an iron pot on the stove, scraping all the ingredients inside. She poured the

broth, letting it bubble against the sides of the bowl, hands hovering over liquid like Moses preparing to part the waves of oceans. *(Moses stretched his hand out over the sea, “and the Lord caused the sea to go back by a strong east wind all that night, and made the sea into dry land, and the waters were divided.” Exodus 14:21)*

She grasped the end of a wooden spoon, a holy weapon, and she stirred.

She stirred until the crucifixion. She stirred until the third day. She stirred until the stone was uncovered from the grave and the aroma had risen again and forgiven Man’s sin. *(And go quickly and tell his followers, ‘Jesus has risen from the dead. Matthew 28:7)*

Scooping holiness into a plastic bowl, yellowed and chipped, she offered me a taste.

Somewhere in between her ordinary smirk and wooden ladle, my lips molded themselves to the edge of her spoon. I sipped gently in her image, the meaning of life coating my throat, and I knew there was no angel in my kitchen.

There, adorned in a damp apron, brown curls sticking to a brown face, stood a God.

God taught me, in the soft light of an apartment kitchen, that the meaning of life could be found in homemade holy soup. It could be found in the leftover pool of broth after slurping the spoon clean and kissing a lover goodnight. So, I kissed her on the lips. Amen, Amen, and Amen. *(Now the woman and her wife were both naked, but they felt no shame. 2015-present)*