

Earning Purple

A Long short story

by

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Are you sitting comfortably?

Then let's begin.

Once upon a time, in a land not so far from here, there lived a Prince and a princess. Apart from his being a Prince and her being a princess, the main difference between them was that he knew that he was a Prince, but she was not aware that she was a princess. He had been brought up knowing that he had only to prove himself worthy and he would inherit a kingdom. She had been brought up as just one of many princes and princesses. On the face of it, it looked as though her parents had abdicated and were allowing their children to grow up without a title to their name.

Another difference was the way they used words. He would use words as if they were a ball under his control. She used words as if they were arrows to pierce the curiosity with which she viewed the world. They both grew up

becoming very good at their own game; he with his eye on the ball and she aiming her arrows.

The King of the Seventh Heaven spotted them as they stood hidden from each other in a group of people. The King of the Seventh Heaven has his own form of amusement. He likes to interfere in the affairs of mortals so that he can stir up more Happiness and increase the size of his kingdom. He sent for his factor.

"Chance," said he, "see that one and that one? Could be interesting. Arrange a meeting."

"Yes, sire. I will call them to your attention when I have succeeded," responded Chance.

Now it took Chance a month or two to complete his task. He knew the Prince would be visiting a neighbouring country in the process of proving his worth of a kingdom. It took some time and a few foul deeds to ensure that the princess was exiled, but Chance is nothing if not thorough. He arranged for the princess to go to a country even more beyond so that he could have the pleasure of seeing them arrive at the same place on the same day; the Prince from the South and the princess from the North. Perfect timing.

So it was that while each thought they were going about their own business their paths crossed and they rested awhile, sharing each other's company. The Prince bounced his words around the princess. His words were of marriage in general, but she is not an experienced ball-player and it may have appeared that she was deaf. But not so. She was searching her quiver for the right arrow to express her feeling knowing all the while she did not have an arrow to match and catch this magic.

The King of the Seventh Heaven reached down and with one hand closed their eyes in forgetfulness, with the other he plucked out their hearts. "Chance! Let's see what sport we can have with these," cried the King of Seventh Heaven.

Before Chance had an opportunity to view the two hearts held by his master there came an Almighty roar from above. The King of Kings has a way of making his presence known and no mistake about it.

"Trespassing on my territory again!" roared he. "Each of those hearts has been registered in the Highest of Heavens since birth! They are MINE." The King of Kings took the hearts and withdrew to the Highest Heaven.

The King of Seventh Heaven was not in the least perturbed. Whatever happens in the realm of Happiness is transient. He loved the capriciousness

of pure Chance.

"Chance? You didn't check, did you? Not a word with your cousin upstairs. If this keeps up you know what will happen don't you? You'll be transferred upstairs and I will be stuck with Random Activity; shades of law and order. Be a good fellow and try to remember in future." The matter was forgotten.

Meanwhile, in the Highest Heaven, the King of Kings was puzzled. In each hand he held a heart, knowing one to be that of the Prince and the other of the princess. In size and shape they were identical. He called his assistant. "R.A. Run these through the spectrum analysis identifier, please. If we are to mitigate the damage that a dose of Happiness has caused, we had better know who we are dealing with."

Random Activity placed the hearts in the identifier. Each heart chosen by the King of Kings possesses a unique, minute amount of uranium; the quantitative measurement converts to a unique numerical code which serves as access for personal past and future history. Also, each heart is composed of the metals appropriate to the destiny of its owner.

"Subject 280634, male, certain heir to choice of kingdom, currently demonstrating passion for the kingdom of your choice and objectivity for your contingency plan. Subject 111239, female, a first-born gift to you, request for operatic destiny denied, request for career as Sister of Mercy denied, given up asking, waiting your instructions." reported Random Activity.

"111239? Isn't she the one ...?" asked the King of Kings.

"The one that left a note. The one that volunteered to go back early."

"Do we still have the note?"

Random Activity handed a piece of paper to the King of Kings and this is what he read:

If it seems that I'm leaving
and you get to believing
that I no longer care, it isn't so.
For the joy of coming home
means that first I must be gone
I've gone as far as I need go.
For my heart is full of yearning
I'm turning and returning
praying that you're waiting there for me.
I will need you then to hold me

to kiss and gently scold me
and comfort, comfort, comfort, comfort be.

The King of Kings made a loud sniff and in a gruff voice said, "It needs music. See, if she had just waited I could have timed her in with a musician. What are we going to do with these two? I suppose it will have to be purification. What a nuisance." If only the King of Seventh Heaven would realise that the absence of sorrow would be enough happiness for most people.

The components of each heart were separated then recomposed so that the Prince's heart was full of the purest, softest gold encased in titanium so that it would appear light and be strong on the outside and soft and precious inside. The heart of the princess consisted of crushed awe and mercury within a case of lead. It would always be filled with wonder and although it could be battered, it would not easily be broken.

The King of Kings reached down from the Highest Heaven and replaced the hearts of the sleeping Prince and princess.

The Prince woke from a dream. He was on the back of a large bird. Was it an ostrich, was it an emu? The bird turned its neck so that he could see its face. It was an emu. The bird covered the ground with its large strides, confidently carrying his weight and putting its feet down surely on the ground. Now and then the bird would leap over hollows in the ground and the Prince had the brief feeling of flying. Then the air was filled with dust and neither the Prince nor the emu could see which way to go. The air cleared and the Prince saw they were standing on the bank of a wide river. The tide was out and the river-bed and far river bank were glistening mud. To the right he saw a bridge upon which was a waiting train. Wrapping the emu in a white shawl, he cradled the bird in his arms and boarded the train. Most of the seats were occupied, some by children sprawling across the seat. He sat down in the middle of one such seat, forcing the children to move their legs. The children were interested in what he was cradling in his left arm. They looked then said, "That's not a baby," and the Prince joined them as they chorused, "that's an EMU."

The princess woke up. She knew where her heart had been. She also knew that her heart had been changed in some way. She looked to the Prince as someone who knew how to take her home, but her heart was not yet filled with yearning and was in no hurry.

The Prince returned to the South. He had soon to choose between future kingdoms. His first application was answered thus:

When I said
Let there be Light

I intended that
all eyes could see.
It is my desire
that you open eyes
to the Inner Fire.
An unrewarding, hidden task.
No name, no fame in which to bask.
Others plenty for the instant sight.
Too few can I trust to do what's right
for the Inner Eye.
Will you accept this offer to be my Third Eye surgeon?

His second application was answered thus :

Dear Sir,
You have demonstrated a dispassionate interest in the shapes of bones. As a vehicle to demonstrate your objective observation it seems that "boomerang" shins serve a purpose. This is a quality that highly recommends you to this Department. There is one thing I will not tolerate on my team and that is someone who passionately enjoys wielding a scalpel. Passion leads to undesirable excesses. Can you imagine what the world would have been like if I had been carried away while removing Adam's rib?
I look forward to welcoming you to the team on Monday at nine.

Yours faithfully,
The First Orthopaedic Surgeon

The Prince accepted both positions. He will go on to become a King in his own right and that's where we will next meet him. For now, let's see what is happening to the princess.

She noticed that after the Prince had departed south, her heart started feeling more and more heavy. She let people play with her heart hoping it would feel lighter, but nothing worked and her heart became a burden to her. Going forward seemed to make it worse, so she decided to retrace her steps to her childhood home and the sacred tree.

The princess sat snuggled against the bark and waited for night to fall. Up in the leaves lived an aboriginal warrior who watched over her childhood dreaming. The guardian of the site of the sacred tree tapped her shoulder as she slept.

"This visit is out of season," said he. "What brings you here?" He knew that women had maps in their feet, etched on their soles through repetitious dancing; maps which included the time they should be in such-and-such a place to benefit from the bounty of the earth. For women, survival is sacred.

But the princess was here where she had no business to be.

"My heart is heavy and I don't know why."

The spirit of the tree whistled in, out and through her. Yes, she was definitely turning into a sunset without ever having lit up the sky.

"Go to your grandfather and follow his advice," were the only words the spirit could speak before a strong wind tossed the leaves and drove him away from the tree.

The princess went to the cemetery and walked along the line of unmarked graves. She sang,

"Blood to Blood,
Bone to Bone
Hear my call
through stone
and sand."

In reply, she heard

"Bone to Bone
Blood to Blood
Your call is heard.
Tears flood
my hand."

The princess stepped onto her grand-father's grave. A team of mice wearing calico dresses swept the sand from the steps into the grave with their besom brooms.

She entered a large cavern and there was her grandfather, surrounded by young boys and men, listening to his stories as she used to do. He gave her a hug of welcome and took her on his knee.

"Now, young man," said he. "What brings you here?" It wasn't that the grandfather did not know she was a princess; it was just that he had a habit of treating young girls as if they were young women. The grandmother had decreed that young girls were only allowed near him if he treated them like boys. That is why she had been given bows and arrows and not a doll as a very young princess. In his presence she had to behave as a prince or be banished.

"Grandfather, my heart has become very heavy. How can such a burden be

made light?"

"You've discovered you have a heart? How time passes." He moved her off his knee and made her sit at his feet.

"You have a heavy heart? Now how can this be? At your birth I found your heart was weighted against you, so I trimmed off a bit of this and a bit of that until your heart was the right size for your age and weight."

"Age and weight," called the voice of Random Activity down the chimney. "But you forgot gender! You sized her heart to that of a prince, forgetting she is a princess. Now what are you going to do with her?"

The grandfather stood, his face turned to steel. He turned to the princess.

"How did you get mixed up with Random Activity and his Master?" he asked of her in a stern voice.

"I don't know," replied the princess. "Would it be the night that I stepped through the Southern Cross and saw what lay beyond?"

"I don't know, child. What I do know there is very little help I can give you. I have a friend who once helped me. Maybe he can help you, too. He gave me this bag. Take it to him and ask how best you can use it," said the grandfather as he emptied the last of his fears from the bag. In his desire to help the one he saw as a prince, he overcame his fear of loving his fellow-man. In a trice he disappeared up the chimney; the young boys and men fell apart like fractured figments; the mice, now dressed in overalls and toting shovels, filled the steps with sand as the princess walked backwards up the stairs to stand on her grandfather's grave.

The Great Black Magician rose before her. He loomed large, arms folded into the sleeves of his kimono, mustachioes hanging long and lean down to his shoulders. He held out his hand. She held tightly to the bag and instead gave him her other hand. Immediately he shrunk and became much her own height. Now tightly holding her hand, the magician winked at her with a slanting eye as he smiled and they both disappeared down the path of a moonbeam. She slept.

While the princess lay sleeping, the Magician carefully examined every mortal morsel of her. Among the awe in her heart he detected traces of wonder amid the fears. He extracted the wonder and put it in a place of safe keeping. She woke in a garden.

The Magician was sat cross-legged, mending all the tiny tears in the bag, securing patches and making the bag as good as new in function, even if it

did look the worse for wear. He told her to explore the garden so that he could concentrate on his task as if her life depended on it. His fingers flew over each perfect stitch, crafting a bag into which would go her fears.

She stood on a rock at the edge of the garden. There were flowers everywhere; the ground was smothered in flowering plants. She would not be able to walk without stepping on blooms and crushing them with her feet. So she did not walk.

The bag gave a twitch.

The magician looked inside. The fear of being disobedient. She had not walked through the garden. Good.

The princess returned and sat next to the Magician as he applied the final stitches and joined nine threads with nine knots.

"My heart feels a little lighter already," she said.

"That's because some of the awe in your heart is now in this bag. You will still have to carry the weight of it, but at least you can carry it on your hip."

He then went into the garden, saying a prayer for each flower as he crushed it beneath his feet. Without prayer or apology, he picked a bunch of mixed flowers for the princess. He showed her how these could be used just like the arrows in her quiver; extra-ordinary arrows to be used for extra-ordinary occasions and only after prayer.

With her quiver on her back and the bag on her hip, the magician transported her to the edge of a lake to test the powers he had lent her. He knew that sooner or later he would have to mention the anomaly of the uranium to Random Activity. But later would do.

The water was clear, clean like a polished mirror. There was not a breath of air and even the dragon-flies and the ducks must have been sleeping. The princess stood by the side of the lake wondering what she was doing there. Would a hand rise from the water and give her a sword? Would a hand rise from the water and demand that she give it a word?

Instead there came a great turbulence, a muddy, twisty, shouting sound and there like a night-time monster in full sunlight, defying all true description, stood the Bunyip.

The princess felt her heart sink, bouncing down to her boots and back again. She took a magic arrow from her quiver and praying said,

"Bunyip, Bunyip
you are a dream
frighten women
make them scream.
Calm yourself
cause no distress
come with me
to Loch Ness.
I know of a lonely monster there
alone and pining, in despair.
You could teach her how to fright
learn from her how not to bite.
Mix it up
the shy and bold
and both survive
be merely old
instead of an ancient memory
lost in a dreaming history.

Stripped of its leaves, the blue flower was shot like the arrow it was into the water of the lake. That is how the princess earned herself the title of Lady of Lake Leschenaultia.

She used a whole bouquet of daisies to earn herself the title of Dame Dangerfield. This was in the field of testing things for women - how far, how fast, how hot, how cold, how deep, how long, how much? She had a laurel of Social Equity placed on her head. Being but one of many in a poisoned field of rye, she polished each grain and prayed and was rewarded with the title, Viscountess Vulgar.

How she came by the title Duchess of DoingDone is a long story in itself and this story is not just about the princess. Suffice to say that, as she was recovering her shape after a bloody battle, some of the uranium was shifted from her heart and lodged beneath the parting of her hair. This brought her to the attention of Random Activity.

He informed the King of Kings who reviewed the whole case and instructed the Great Magician to withdraw all magical powers from the princess. The Great Magician knew that this meant he was to increase her powers because he knew that the King of Kings knew that he, the Great Magician was contra-suggestible which is a polite way of saying "bloody-minded."

So, with help, the princess brought a Gypsy King out from his exile on the North and South Poles.

Now a Gypsy King

can only teach
those of us
out of reach
of the Possible.
Things that simply
can't be done
like looking bare-eyed
clear-eyed at the sun
these are things that gypsies teach
to those of us beyond the reach
of the Possible.

So great had been her terror that she had used a sheaf of rosemary to allay her fears. While she and the Gypsy King were sitting beneath the drying bundle, he corrected her grammar and made sure that she understood she should be signing and, even more importantly, thinking herself as a Princess with a capital "P".

Then there was one
trained as a mender of the mind
soft-spoken, gentle, appearing kind
and curious to see how minds
could bend and hers seemed pliable.
His peers found that he was liable
for creating added strain and stress
in how many women they could only guess.
She came out of Bedlam a Baroness.

And

Then came a King
For whom it was clear
that this was a Queen
for Windemere.
But first he took from her the quiver.
No magic arrows could she deliver.
No arrow-heads to dip in tears
she was to hold the bag of fears.
He could not take
what was truly hers
so seeds of Honesty
hid in furs.
So on an island in a lake
she was left to ponder her mistake
shredding petals for a river
dreaming of an unseen lover

Till the Magician on a magic night
full of moon sent her in flight
across the desert, across the sand
guarded till she reached her land
and returned to her the awe
the wondering she had been waiting for.

And because there is such a fine line between sense and chivalry, bad manners and insanity and for other reasons we won't now explore just accept that she became known as Queen of Quixote. Not chaotic, not exotic, just quixotic.

One day our Prince, now a King, wandered through his garden. Admiring and proud, he looked at the trees he and his Queen had planted together when two sons had been brought into their kingdom. He admired the deep, red rose the Queen had planted when she added a Princess to the Royal Household. But there was something missing and he could not remember or describe the one flower he felt should be blooming in his garden. Then he knew.

It had come to him like an arrow spent, twanging against the titanium of his heart. He touched and read each of the paper-like leaves - were they flowers? But he knew that it was Honesty that he had in his hand.

Now, the King is a very moral man. He knew, even if only in deference to his Queen, he should let it rest there. In good manners, he detached one petal, or was it a leaf, and returned it to the Queen of Quixote. However, he received a call from the King of Kings.

"I'm told you have been appointed Our Third Eye surgeon?" queried the King of Kings.

"Yes, Lord."

"And you have received a branch of Honesty?"

"Yes, sire."

"And you have returned a sprig?"

"Yes, sir."

"And it is your inclination to do no more?"

"Yes."

"Well," declared the King of Kings, "I've news for you, my son. This is one Third Eye which needs repairing. For a start she is colour-blind and can't tell the difference between black magic and white magic. As a result there is a batch of hybrid monsters in Loch Ness. She can't read her name or why would she set out to perform the task I set for her great-uncle? Cared for from the cradle to the grave - how much more social equity is there? She adds letters; drops letters. I write "Ergo", she reads "ergot". I write "grape",

she reads "rape." Luckily, Random Activity heard her bleeps at the time."

"So she's not totally blind," established the Third Eye Surgeon.

"Not yet, but the fact that she keeps staring at the Sun without damage tells me her world has not the light it should have. I want you to maintain contact with her as best you can."

The King returned to his garden. He cut from the bush, one deep red rose, barely beyond its budding and holding it to him committed, what was for him, an infidelity and spoke with the princess, encouraging her to speed him more arrows.

Meanwhile, on the Eighth Level of Hell, the Queen of Queens was rolling about the floor in fits of laughter. These men, Kings or not, take themselves so seriously. The child had done everything she'd been told. Some things were for amusement, but even those with a serious purpose need not be taken so seriously as did the men. Ergot was important. How else could the Queen of Queens identify those whose genes were malleable in a way which could be used constructively? To grow up in a poisoned world requires the children be vaccinated with a poison. To breed from those who can grow up with more ultra-violet rays requires identifying those who can withstand them. What else is Life if not an exercise in Experimental Biology?

The Queen of the Seventh Level of Hell was in a rage. She stamped and swirled showing apricot petticoats beneath a dark red skirt. This was quite uncharacteristic for her. Normally she was orderly, busy and always about the business of working hard at Happiness so that her husband would have the impression it was achieved by his whim.

Just as Chance had failed to notify the folk in the Eighth Heaven of the bringing together of these two hearts, so Random Activity had failed to inform her of their combination and separation. Therefore the girl had been sent off on business for which she had not the heart. But she had done it. Somehow she had done it and the only difference was that the bag she carried got bigger and bigger. Time to put a stop to this, but no orthodox way would do. The Queens who reign over Hells and Happiness have learned a trick or two.

The Queen of Quixote was delighted to speak with the King and even more so to be invited to speed her arrows in his direction. He warned her not to expect any in return.

Partly because she was imprisoned on Lake Windemere and partly because the King of Kings was cancelling out some of the advantages brought to her by the Great Magician, the Queen of Quixote found she had forgotten

the worth of dipping arrows in the bag she carried close to her body. Having given the King all the Honesty she was capable of she was reduced to sending him shredded chrysanthemums. Even worse, she forgot to pray and apologise to the flowers she so cruelly treated.

This so horrified the Great Magician that he arranged for her escape from the island in the lake. He saw her safely returned to her own land. He then took out the wonder he had been keeping for her and, gently with his thumb, laid it on her eye-lids, her forehead and along the parting of her hair. He knew that in the future, should his thumb ever twitch, she would be thinking of him.

Back in her own country the princess put aside most of the titles she had earned abroad, but thinking of herself as being deserving of one retained the title Princess of the North and South Poles. She continued to send the King her pot-pourri of petals thinking she was sending them to the King of her heart, not realising that at the same time they were falling into the hands of the Third Eye surgeon.

She took a good look at all the fears in her bag. She said to them, "Fears, if I have conquered the likes of you, why am I still afraid to visit the King?"

Easily answered, the Fears cried.
Your love, though strong
is now all wrong
and must, must be denied.
Easily answered, the Fears voicing.
What would you do
should he love you
sad song singer, no rejoicing?
Easily answered, the Fears call.
If he sees clear into
your heart it may rue
the day you downed the wall.

Being contra-suggestible, a trait she picked up from the Great Magician, the Princess summoned all her courage and went to visit the King. Her first impression caused her to remind herself how service to Duty is more aging than service to Passion. She forgave him for looking older than he had any right to.

Looking out of the window, he reminded her to dip her arrows in the bag given to her by her grandfather. She brushed this aside, telling him that she preferred to shred chrysanthemums.

They parted. He told her to keep in touch and to show that he meant it he

put his arm lightly about her waist. She said she would and to show she meant it she put her arm lightly about his waist.

That evening, alone in her bed, she felt things shifting in her head and knew that she had been face to face with a Third Eye surgeon.

Fifty-two weeks later, dressed in her regalia as daughter of the monarch of the North and South Poles, in a pink and purple cloak, she toppled toward him inwardly noting that he had shed ten years in the last twelve months and was pleased to see him looking well. They talked of age and time and never knowing endings.

She sent him a book containing pictures of old arrows, but he knew these were preserved from times long past and was not impressed.

Then the Princess went into orbit.

The Eighth Heaven was her first port of call. This is the place where the dead don't sleep. The only rest given is the forgetfulness of being re-born. People who die together are reborn together as identical twins. A good death is like a leaf falling on the faintest breath of wind. The Princess waited to be called to the King of Kings. He came out to see her on the launching pad. He said,

My dearest child
it's been tragic
you had no
constraint
upon your magic.
How was I supposed to guess
you'd take the Bunyip to Loch Ness?
Whereas I meant you to take
him to the Lady of the Lake.
You left here early of your own accord.
You could not wait on Heaven's word.
It may seem hard, but I send you back
but, precious one, I will keep track
and when in the darkest night
you find the sky far too bright
I will call you home.
and remember ...

If it seems that I'm leaving
and you get to believing
that I no longer care, it isn't so.
For the joy of coming home
means that first I must be gone

I've gone as far as I need go.
For my heart is full of yearning
I'm turning and returning
praying that you're waiting there for me.
I will need you then to hold me
to kiss and gently scold me
and comfort, comfort, comfort, comfort be.

"Don't look to me for comfort," said the Queen of the Eighth Level of Hell to the Princess. "My husband goes in for that kind of stuff. Never seen the point of it myself. Survival's the thing. Now you would be - ah, yes. One of my little cockroaches. Can't kill you, can they my sweetie? What's this? Been toying with ultra-violet light as well, have we? Been working a double shift? Don't just stand there. Get back to work. But be sure of one thing. The off-spring of your off-spring's off-spring will be on the space station when this laboratory is closed down for fumigation. Off you go."

As soon as she stepped onto the Seventh Heaven the Princess started crying and crying and crying till it seemed that she could not stop.

"Why are you crying, girl?" asked the King of the Seventh Heaven.

"Because I am happy, sir," she replied.

"Nonsense," said the King, "people don't cry because they are happy. They cry because they cease being sad. Now, why have you stopped being sad?"
As if that was a disgraceful thing to do.

"I remember being here before, sire. A long time ago." Pointing, she asked, "They are the stairs through the Southern Cross?"

The King called, "CHANCE!"

Chance came running, a computer print-out trailing behind him. "Subject 111239, female, the one with, it hurts me to say, a heart as big as a man. Was scheduled for Third Eye surgery, operation postponed indefinitely."

The King went that kind of quiet that people do when they really do not want to hear bad news.

"POSTPONED?" He exploded.

"Postponed," cringed Chance. "With a heart encased in titanium it is difficult to break through and see what is going on inside. We can only guess that, after a lifetime of careful cutting in the field of objectivity he fears to take the slashing slice in the field of subjectivity."

"There is only one 'WE' around here, Chance, and we will remind you it is us. Look, she's stopped crying. Are you going to be sad? Take a read-out of the trace of uranium along the parting in her hair in case we have to get rid of her quickly."

But there was no need. The King of Seventh Heaven, Chance and the Princess sat down in a huddle and discussed Probability Theory, Times Series Analysis and how to measure the Velocity of a Decade. As she got up to leave, Chance was heard to say, "Though it hurts me to say it, she THINKS like a man."

The Princess slid down the spiralling banister to the Level of the Seventh Level of Hell and introduced herself to the Queen.

"Well, a fine howdoyoudo you've caused young lady," said the Queen of the Seventh Level. "Just look at the food you've sent to waste," pointing at a burnt cake in the bin.

"How is that my fault?" asked the Princess.

"Don't you know anything? He gets angry upstairs and the cake burns down here. See how smoothly the iron glides over his shirts. I know that all is well with him up there. That's enough of our housekeeping problems. Now, what's your problem, miss?"

"To tell the truth, I don't know." replied the Princess.

The Queen gave her a sharp look. When someone says they are telling the truth there is a good chance they are not, but she seemed satisfied. "Go on."

After a pause, the Princess told the Queen of her travels, how she had earned all her various titles and how little they meant to her. Now she had stopped travelling it seemed she could not sit still and had gone into orbit through the Heavens and Hells because there was nowhere else to go. How the King of Seventh Heaven and Chance said she had the heart and mind of a man, yet she felt she was a woman despite her grandfather's influence.

The Queen put the fresh pile of ironed laundry in the airing cupboard. She told the Princess to first stand on one foot then the other, with her arms outstretched and palms facing upwards. Yes, definitely unbalanced. The Queen sprinkled salt into each of the Princess' palms until she was satisfied that the Princess was properly balanced. The Queen told the Princess to take the amount in her left hand every morning and the amount in her right hand every night. That way she would stay balanced. Was she ready for a few more truths?

It was true her heart was as big as that of a man, but what the men didn't know was that she also had a womb that was three times the size of most women's. This was the fault of the Queen of the Eighth Level of Hell who specialised in Future Survival Strategies and was researching more secure environments for future children.

"We all know," said the Queen, "how the men messed up Venus, blasting it into a reverse spin and leaving behind clouds of sulphur. We are giving them one more chance with Earth and if they make a mess of that we women are taking over Mars. Give that one a shine, will you dear?" handing the Princess a shoe and brush.

It was time for the Princess to go. Just before she left, the Queen tucked a parcel under her arm and told her to open it when she felt safe at home. The Princess started walking the spiral steps back to the normal world, giving four stamps on each step, testing them for any dry rot or white ants.

All seemed sound.

She was as safe as she had ever felt, so she opened the parcel. Inside was a purple dress with a note attached to it. The note read:

My dear Empress of Empathy
what I gave my husband
and my husband gave me
equal exchange no robbery
was each to the other
our Inner Eye.
Each in a pocket
safe in clear locket
we know we are watched
and watching over each other.
SETTLE FOR NOTHING LESS.
There is nothing more.
God Bless.
(Burning coals of diamond fire
Few equal, none go higher
than the Brotherhood of the Sun.
If among the Twelve there be
one touched with femininity
we shall then enjoy our parity.
(The Sisterhood)

The Princess found this all quite exhausting and confusing. Just before she lay down to sleep for Heaven Only knows how long, she sped this final

arrow to the King, hoping for a response before she went to sleep.

One the hour
other the minute
clock hands
on the face
of Eternity.
One the keeping
while the other
sweeping past
crying
wait, wait for me.
The minute hand
has one fear
that when the
Great Clock stops
it won't be near
the one true partner
it has ever known
so in your Kingdom
be it shown
that all stopped clocks
show midnight.

And as she slept she heard a song:

If it seems that I'm leaving
and you get to believing
that I no longer care, it isn't so.
For the joy of coming home
means that first I must be gone
I've gone as far as I need go.
For my heart is full of yearning
I'm turning and returning
praying that you're waiting there for me.
I will need you then to hold me
to kiss and gently scold me
and comfort, comfort, comfort, comfort be.

Never ending, but that is it for now.

To You: the Reader

Did you enjoy reading this story? If so, would you like to read more of my writing?

A companion set of three novels is next on my agenda. The first, *The Trustees* is completed and will be published when the second is nearly ready.

Several people have been kind enough to read *The Trustees* and give me some feedback. Positive? Negative? Half and half. The positive I shall include below – the negative were from people who wanted everything spelled out for them. A puzzle was too difficult.

This has helped me appreciate who it is I am writing for in the hope of being read. They are intelligent people who have a strong sense of their spirituality.

If you would like me to let you know when I have something new to offer, go to Facebook Page “Izabellaz Books” and click *Like*.

<https://www.facebook.com/pages/Izabellaz-Books/1412120295714001> or

if you are a GooglePlusser, then <https://plus.google.com/+IsabelStorey/about> and ask to be added to the circle I have created to let those interested know without me standing on a rooftop with a megaphone!!

Now to the reviews:

Rebecca: The Trustees is an awesome read, particularly Isabel's writing style. Her use of words and accents are full of flavor that brings her story to life and will make you feel as if home is South of the Equator.

You will find each of her characters lovable, as you join them in their search for truth. She has away of sharing their private lives with just a few words that stir up their deepest emotions. You can't help relating to each and every one of them, while wondering if there is some truth to these fictitious characters.

Journey into the lives of old families who possess both power and good fortune. More specifically the consequences of lost family heritage from the secret passions, wandering lust and lies from men of days past. Marvel at the web of secrets that creates a ripple effect carrying forward through time continuing through generations and across continents. Watch through the eyes of Peacock & Oates, Dumfries and their fiduciary relationship to long lost clients who they themselves know not the true identity of.

Every single sentence and letter takes you a little closer to the truth and at the end leaves you satisfied, yet wanting more. Especially of the Gypsies and the unspoken bond between women that serve to protect both the lies of men and the children they bore. Behind the secrets, hidden doors and buried treasures, it's all there, waiting for you. You will be engrossed from start to finish.

Ciaran:

I thought it was really good, very readable, I flew through it.

It is complex, especially in parts, and for a while there I was marvelling at your ability to pull it all together.

It was written with great surety and a deep sense for the message it was setting out to convey, which I felt was to do with fate and the acceptance of it, the complications of trying to 'manage' things (particularly greed), the inevitability of death, and the different ways by which people communicate. All of those things stated superficially here but conveyed with depth and contrast in the story.

Your style was quite unique too. .. Anyway, I thought it very well done, quite compelling, fast paced (an achievement given the complexity), enriched with repeated philosophical or learned insights which were compassionate and accepting and willing to defer to higher forces. I thought the use of the letters as a technique for conveying the information was clever in that it avoided a great deal of info-dump type back story, instead, converting the information into tantalising snippets that worked like the unravelling of a mystery. Very well done.

<https://www.smashwords.com/profile/view/isabedorastorey>

The above link will take you to that previously published on Smashwords.

Please Note: The books included here were made available soon after my discovering the possibility. Since then I have been on a learning curve and now appreciate how much more there is to putting a book together!

My plan is to revisit all of these once my three novels are up to the standard I hope to achieve.

If you are among the many forgiving people who have already purchased a copy and would like to have a more professional looking version, please let me know either by emailing isabedorastory@gmail.com or through the Facebook or GooglePlus links above.