



Marc Vincenz

Under an Auspicious Eye, the Monkey King, Karl Marx,
Charles Darwin and Mao Zedong Do Breakfast at the Four
Seasons

~for Arthur Waley

Hey, ho! says the Monkey King tucking
into rashers of bacon entirely forgetting
that his dear friend Piggy (whom
he journeyed to the West with) was entirely pig.

Welcome Comrades! says Mao, digging
into scrambled eggs; and, to the disgust of all,
leaves his cigarette smoldering and rests his oily chopsticks
on the tablecloth like a real country bumpkin.

Years in caves will do that, mutters Karl who abstains
from solids, and sips ladylike on his coffee, which by the way
he prefers cool as he says it burns his sensitive lips
(without which, he might not talk like a reformer).

Charles, in his absent fashion,
orders himself an entire grilled fish which Mao says
has been plucked straight from the Yangtze and fattened
on all manner of swarming insects, dragonflies mainly.



The Monkey King sniggers, and having wiped his plate clean, somersaults over to the buffet for seconds. Karl glances at Mao and Charles and says perhaps they should not have invited the uncouth ape.

Mao goes quite white and reminds the other two that the Monkey King was born from a solid stone egg. And, in case they had forgotten, says: *Stone is the bedrock of a nation.* Charles, sucking the eyes from his fish, says:

Yes, Mao. You're quite right. It entirely slipped our minds.

And somewhere in the lobby tucked behind his tabloid, and a headline that reads,

Wisdom Comes in Many Guises!

the Buddha is sipping a gin and tonic, and chuckling



Séance

Science, séance. It's all physics. Just read between the lines.
—Ragnar the Clairvoyant

Hitler, he tells me, quite ashen,
unlike Samson, still has all his hair,
a thick spur of silver-grey like crows' wings.

The moustache's been updated as a barcode.
The waistline? Out to here, inflated into
a tyre of cottage cheese and cubed potatoes.

Can you believe *that* monster never ate meat?
And now, he uses a walking stick
to hobble up that tremendous bluff.

And they're all quite credulous,
the ladies, the lads, the paranormal louts,
as they nod, and they hum and haw.

Quite serene, as if they can't wait, not until
they're looking across those blue canyons—
no, not in heaven—but on the pale green planet Vulcan,

hidden behind our sun in a parallel universe.
Where it was once discovered, he taps his nose.
Mercury's orbit was off. The Government knows.

Ragnar, clairvoyant, bear of a man, rises,
eyes spinning like mini-Catherinewheels,
arms splayed like he's about to wrestle

and this thin tremolo rattles from his barrel chest,
you almost want to see him pirouette.
In my mind, I can see these plastic chairs fly,



citizens bounce off walls, hands on puppet strings.
An old lady coiffed in pumice curls
and a Bavarian feather cap with tassels, chuckles.

And right now, we're all talking to the eighteenth
century Spanish country doctor and robber baron,
Xavier, who, as I note to Adelstein to my right,

can't even speak Castellano; but Adelstein says,
Of course. On Vulcan everyone speaks English.
So why not Maori? Apache? Kisumu?

Or Vulcan for that matter? I mutter under my breath,
then stick up my hand for another try.
Crystal, Ragnar's Guardian of Light

flutters her purple eyelids, squeezes the arms
of her chairs behind cascading hairs and inhales:
Your question, is a difficult one, she sighs.

There are some things we just can't reveal,
But we shall try. And she stands and hugs Ragnar
from behind like she's trying to reign in

all the excess baggage of suburbia. She hums.
Ragnar whistles cuckoo, then hoots: Life.
Life always goes on. And it changes, Crystal says.

He's saying it changes into cords of light.
And now he's swaying, his arms tree limbs
shading the congregation. The ladies swoon, chitter,

hold on for dear life. A flowerchild with a pierced
nose whispers. They do that every time.
Ragnar's on all fours and Crystal's still clutching,



riding astraddle, as she tells me later, to divine
the guiding spirit. Nothing but a gruff little bark
emerges, a poodle's catcall. And then he's glows

beetroot red, and Ragnar takes a solemn seat as
Crystal checks her fingernails, music changes—
George Winston washes summer into spring,

and through Ragnar, the husbands arrive, one by one,
as their dearly alive wives ask if they're eating well,
how the movies are behind the sun;

and Ragnar switches voices, I count him
seven times—dark, mysterious, soft and sweet,
whimpers, clucks, hisses—until we meet Hagar,

snake-eyed and a battleaxe to grind, he spits and
curses and Crystal's glancing at the clock;
it's time, she says, it's time;

and just like that we rise, cross ourselves three times
as written in the Charter, pat each other
on the backs, shake hands

and head downstairs to the kitchen,
where Crystal is serving pancakes
and wild wild gooseberry jam.