

Babe, Babe and Babe

A story

Inez Baranay (copyright)

Veiled Lips by Luce Irigaray enumerates three ways for women to react to captivity in the domain of the father/god¹

Babe sweeps in, red-spun hair, blue neon gaze. 'So who's big idea was this?' she demands. 'I thought I was rid of you, ha ha.'

Babe looks at her watch, her icy blonde demeanor as sheer as ever. 'So it wasn't you either? How long is this going to take?' she inquires smoothly.

Babe's dark body appears like a lengthening shadow, she wanders in as if by vague chance. 'So deja-vu-ey' she murmurs. 'I dreamt about this once. This is less real.'

'Your idea of real' responds blonde Babe of the cold grey-green eyes 'is a gypsy message read in the cards.'

'Whereas you play with marked cards' accused Babe, with a steamy snigger.

'And you throw the table over if you aren't winning' drawls the blonde. 'Look, I don't see an agenda. This has nothing to do with me. You two work it out. Ive got a schedule.'

¹ "Irigaray's Goddesses" by Frances Oppel, *Australian Feminist Studies*, Summer 1994

'I'm the first out of here' snarls Babe. 'Make your point, deal with it, finito.'

Babe sits very still, erect and symmetrical, her black hair draped on her shoulders, vibrating to some inner chord. The others look at her as if she'd interrupted them whereupon she opens her eyes and remarks 'Why retrieve the phantoms of our evaporating connection, I should go.'

Who had called this meeting? The three of them have their suspicions, the same old suspicions they've always had, some new ones too. For instance, does this have anything to do with being - or having been - daughters and does this mean they still are daughters. Finally out of her penumbral corner Babe utters again. 'I was a child playing the ball flew over the fence at that moment he appeared, witnessing.'

'He showed me how to throw a ball.'

'He fetched the ball for me.'

'He forget the ball while I beguiled him with tales, but then I was sent away in disgrace. Because I still find my pride and my shame identically sited, the inheritance is mine' Babe concludes regretfully.

'There is an inheritance and it is mine, I can't disavow it, for I'm able to employ all his devices' Babe confesses, holding her chin high, a-glint like steel in sunlight.

'It is mine, actually, as it must be transformed and that can only be done by one true to her nature. You always ignore the fact' Babe tinkles like the ice in the frosty G&T she stirs with one long white finger 'that he was never our true Source, only a wall through which she speaks.'

'You always forgot I am his true child' insists Babe, incarnadine with ire 'for nothing in his nature was foreign to me. I was at his side, I saw him from behind, I learnt all his ways and exceeded him.'

'A woman must acknowledge her essence' replies Babe, silvern and languid 'consider her body and how she makes love, taking her beloved into herself. She dominates where she most yields, subverting by appropriating, it was all hers anyway in the first wplace, and while it looks like a man's world, do what works. Take a thread into the labyrinth and it gets you back out.'

'He could not hold me in his dark lair' sighs Babe, pitchy and veiled 'though I spent some long winters there, stirring thick stews over the flames, fabricating my narrative tapestries, festooning the raven recesses with flowers. It was not a pledge but a farewell. When he thought I was in his capture already I had passed and left only emblems of my presence. Which were enough for a while' she adds, catching her breath, as if a laugh had almost torn her dusky throat.

'If only you could speak plainly and directly and say exactly what you mean' smolders Babe 'we might get this

business cleaned up and on our way.' She is tired of mere illusion and doesn't mind showing it.

'I could not match your aggressive passion yet in my apparent passivity I found my strength. Equally your cool logic was unanswerable when the only knowledge I knew came smokey from my gut' whispers the ulterior Babe.

Babe regards them through a serene pallor. 'If only we all spoke without defense and accusation. We'd be better friend if you didn't assume you were right and you didn't lack a notion of rightness.'

Who would bring it up? Who dares speak of the man to whom they were linked by a different imperative, perhaps it was choice. From father to husband so the journey went as even those outside of such marriage know. Babe paces up and down, her boot heels striking sparks , and speaks of it at last. 'How people meet: they're the only two who don't get sick on the voyage, they are alone together on the deck, out on the ocean in the storms.' She lights a match, then throws it away. 'Actually' she adds with a blistery cackle 'if the others had only had been getting some fresh air too they wouldn't have been so ill.'

Babe lays claim to the recollection. 'Soon he came to see by sea that clearly I was more suitable for him than whoever it was retching in the fetid confines below. And he more suitable for me than whoever couldn't keep up with me. I laughed in the salt air, drenched to the skin, lit by moonlight, silhouetted by dawn, so enchanting.' She smiles, sleek and tawny with satisfaction.

'You left him, but not until after disembarking, after all the luggage had been sorted. You'd taken from him any chances of any reconciliation. Yet after me' comes Babe's sombre admission 'it is never completely over and yet he doubts it was ever complete at all. We were on different paths after all.'

'As if he know from honor - if there is honour it s only a politic. What counts is my desire. That's freedom. Now I play the field, I score where I can' retorts Babe.

'Faking your orgasms all the way.'

'Sometimes it's better like that.'

These silly quarrels - as if it would change anything! They take up their things, to leave at once, but Babe breaks her brief silence with an inky reminder of the infant's cry.

'So, miss subterranean sootiness' is Babe's hot challenge 'in your foggy robes, if it's you feeling still married it's you who should take this child who is crying to be born.'

But Babe turns to the other to say 'you with your pretty lightness that's so rewarded, you have most to offer this new being - and after all it's the one we should be thinking of.'

'Oh but I'm not ready for it. What kind of world is this anyway.'

'If it were mine I'd be a great parent, fair and certain above all, but it isn't' Babe's voice erupts. 'My lover and I don't have room for this right now, her career's just taking off and I support her in that.'

Babe shrugs a pearly arc of indifference and continues. 'I'm quite maternal when I need to be, it is a feminine characteristic that feminine-type people can have. Still it's not my child, it wasn't me, and it's not my fault if anyone misunderstood my intentions or my precautions.'

Babe draws her dark cape over her head and intones 'I've been united with all my children in my dreamtime I returned to this world with aching breasts there is nothing I can do for the unborn but weep. Skin reveals to me only the skeleton beneath.'

'I must admit I am a more loving person than that' Babe alleges, pushing her ivory bangles above her elbow. 'If only you understood that.'

"Love is meant to be simple!" Babe's conviction is erubescant. 'I love or I don't love and there it is. Surely it's clear.'

From the shadows Babe whispers 'love swells but one of the chambers of my heart and yet all my heart is full. If what it is full of can only be love, then our word love is misapplied.'

'Don't you think definitions suck the vitality from a word?" Babe's creamy tones indicate she is barely bothered to reply but she adds 'Love is misapplied because it is conceived outside of incarnation, of flesh and bleeding and holes and curves. Can we ever understand that while those are the words we use?'

"What counts is what you do' says peppery Babe, throwing her cloak over her riding breeches, flaunting the crimson lining, striding to the door. 'In my case getting on with it.'

'Oh she'll never change' says Babe, pale and calm, planning her patient strategy. The car is waiting.. She rises, glides away, prepared to contrive several apparent transformations.

Babe stares into her mug, fragmentary intimations already eclipsed by the mystifying shapes swirling within the coaly bitter brew.

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