

The Anguish of Easter

by Emily Sparkles

I used to be so certain
about right and wrong.
About choices and their consequences.
About heaven and hell
and how there was
no room in between
no space in between
no point in between
(take that point how you will)

The second my life ended I would be cast
upwards, to eternal bliss(?) of worshipping and casting aside my
crown but also living in a mansion on a street of gold
(unless I wasn't good enough, and then that mansion might be a
shack, and that's okay! because heaven is the goal!
but even heaven has a hierarchy).

The second my life ended I would be cast
downwards, to eternal conscious torment
(you mustn't forget the conscious bit - it's not torment enough if you
can't really feel it, remember it, even as you can't escape it.)
To lakes of fire and the weeping and gnashing of teeth
To the ability to see again and again the God you rejected
just out of reach
even though hell is the absence of God(?)

Life was a race to heaven
keep
going
keep
pushing
forward

upward
onward
(like the good Christian soldiers before you)
But speaking of history, don't look back!
(pillar of salt)
Don't dwell on facts
TRUTH IS ABSOLUTE
and it is absolutely what this particular translation of these several
ancient texts and this preacher out of dozens of denominations has
told you that it is
Don't question it.
Keep going forward
onward
upward
If you linger too long or cast your net too wide you'll miss it
Heaven
Your crown
(collect those jewels! through acts of service! but works won't save
you.)

Life was a race from hell
keep
running
keep
praying
keep
shaming
The enemy is invisible
(but many have actually seen demons and satan himself, he's a
ghost, a creature with horns, a man with a beard, a witch, a wizard,
a shadow, a reflection, the latest toy or song or movie craze, the
voice inside your head, the controller of your idle hands, don't give
him a threshold)
(At least he was male, too)
keep

running

keep

praying

the second you let down your guard the enemy will get you, and you can't save yourself so you MUST keep praying, you MUST keep repenting, you MUST be baptized, you MUST have a clearly defined and agreed upon spiritual gift and you MUST use it for the good of the church FOR FREE before you're even old enough to bleed or drive or think too critically
(but you've always thought critically)

There is no boat that big but

make it make sense so

pages of conjecture, apologetics in a primary school mind

they must have been eggs or babies

they must have decided the dinosaurs weren't deserving

the sheer pride bursting through my chest for working through a problem I wasn't supposed to label

or question

The frenzies under the steeples spread

while a nation assumed congregations were

mild

morality-maintaining

mashed potato potluck harmless gatherings

they started

to grow

they started

to show

hunger.

Movies were made about the thief in the night

who stole the good guys (?) away

and left others behind

Tattooed marks and guillotines, filmed right here in Des Moines!

Do you remember her? She babysat you when you were kids! She stressed out about even playing a character who would get a fake mark of the beast.

Sleep well!

Plays were made that traveled the states

Heavens Gates, Hells Flames

bring your friends.

See it more than once.

That moment at the gate - scream remorse, scream 'till your hoarse
To Hell with you.

The girls read *And the Bride Wore White*

in living rooms writing love notes promising purity to as-yet-unknown husbands

while the boys read *Wild at Heart*

and played paintball and nodded heads at the pain they suffered at the hands of spaghetti-strapped tank tops

The daddies put pewter promises around their daughters' fingers
and danced in tulle and ties
surrounded by smiling eyes

The preachers proclaimed progress as they spoke openly about their smoking hot wives
and boycotting disney
and shame anyone who was sexually perverse enough to still support them

And this Easter as the snow falls I know
that some of those hypocrites have been called out
but they still hold more money and privilege than I ever will or want.
That those who made profit over the pain of purity culture still get more airtime than those who can provide healing for the hurt
That this Easter the snow falls as if to say

I will not celebrate this day
Stay inside, and look in the mirror
Don't pretend sunshine and daffodils are a divine promise from the
almighty sanctioning your carefully-planned-to-look spontaneous
baptisms in potable water that others do not even have access to,
while you spend thousands of dollars on spaces and salaries while
demanding those who pay YOU do the work for free to say nothing
of those who are really in need.
You sing curated songs written by organizations under fire, thinking
not singing THOSE songs will fix it
As if the "it" is "them" and not "me"

This Easter the snow falls and maybe that's more in line with the
earlier tornado seasons and the rampant wildfires and the general,
noticeable, undeniable shifts in weather patterns that scientists have
been warning us about for years
but the programming is deep
and it must be a sign
and either way
will you see it?

I used to be so certain
(still working on that
programmed, colonizing, crusade mindset
that wants to take my truth and proclaim it as
absolute)

I have been cast into heaven
in many forms
and been thrust through hell
many times
I have found the points
in between
There are so many points in between
For one is not up

and one is not down
and we are all touching everything, and everyone, all the time
(I think)

I used to be so certain.

