

Heavenly Blue Morning Glory

by Diana Adams

It had been a whole week and I still hadn't been able to shake the feeling of snakey restlessness. I was sick of the multiplying sea of people in the city, and it felt like I would go for days without decent communication from anyone. I called Marla, and we arranged to meet at the cafe. We braided our complaints over double espressos. Marla was always very well dressed, so I usually decked-up to meet her. I never fully succeeded, and this time was no different. She looked me up and down critically throughout our conversation. Her phone kept going off, and when she answered it, it enhanced her lurking arrogance. It did help me a little to receive wolfish glances from a splay-kneed man in khakis. Suddenly I felt I could talk about my current state in detail. Marla was ready with advice.

'Try ginger tea, and make sure you practice good dental hygiene.'

Marla was a bit of a naturopath, which is probably why I called her to begin with. We were still friends even though she recently split up with my ex-boyfriend Everett. When I first heard about Marla dating Everett it relieved me of my guilt for dumping him. I pictured her to be big and round. But she wasn't. She had a small rat like face and straight black hair. Her eyes were very large, and because of her eyes she carried within her the perpetual potential for prettiness.

I wanted them to work out. Marla and I hung around together at

parties. But Everett eventually broke-up with Marla, leaving her in the supermarket in tears with two cans of crushed tomatoes in her hands. He still stood on his head everyday though, or so he said, as she insisted that opposite blood flow was cleansing. She looked like she could benefit from a headstand herself right now, her skin was egg-shell pale and chalky.

'Oh, and try these. ' She handed me a plastic baggy full of seeds that resembled watermelon seeds, only smaller. 'If these don't work your problem runs deeper, more psychological.'

I could see no harm in the small brown seeds that smelled faintly of coriander. I was always happy to see seeds. May has always been planting season for my family. You just can't change your internal plant clock. When Marla gave me the bag I felt that fuzzy buzz of luck and recognition that people sometimes confuse with fate.

I went straight home to make ginger tea. My apartment was a mass of messes. There was a heavy layer of unknown dust on the floor, which other residents said had something to do with the traffic outside. In my current state I couldn't bring myself to clean. I could ignore it for another day. I sliced up up the plump lunch-bag-brown ginger root, and poured in the hot water. Sitting cross-legged on the living room shag I took a sip and then popped the whole whack of seeds into my mouth. Later I would learn that they were the powerful seeds of the Heavenly Blue Morning Glory plant.

II

Marcellus plucked up a tangerine in his meaty hands and inspected it in the scant afternoon light. It was a beautiful tangerine, tightly skinned and glowing a rare pink-orange. He peeled it back and bit into the fruit, grabbing several sections at once with his mouth. The whole crate would be put out front of his store, which sold fruit and vegetables to the busy downtown core. He was about

to take another bite, when he saw her coming around the corner, down the dusty street.

Her eyes were glazed, and she looked unblinkingly lost. She came closer. Strangely enough her front teeth were exposed, and he could see bits of something black in them.

This person looks famished. She needs one of my tangerines, he thought, and quickly pulled out another fruit as she passed by. His store front teemed with globular Spanish onions, buxsome peppers, grapefruits and smooth skinned oval mangos. But nothing compared to the tangerine he held out to her. The young woman stopped to look at a box of mushrooms, and then saw his outstretched hand. But then she kept walking.

Marcellus was aghast. How could anyone resist such a perfect fruit? He followed her and kept one eye on his store. He knew he didn't really have to worry, no one would steal from him for he guarded his produce like a jaguar with eyes at the back of its head.

She walked so slowly, as if in a stupor. It was easy to catch up with her.

'You must eat this. Please, are you alright? Here...please take it.'

She gripped the tangerine, and then shook it with excitement 'What is this?' and then said 'This is it!'

Marcellus stood back and wiped his hands on his apron. He was confused. She was holding the fruit up, as if she had never seen fruit before.

'Don't you see?' she said, and then walked away as if this would somehow explain everything.

III

I remembered drifting around the streets, then when I got home trying to go sleep. I was too hot under the eyelet covers and felt a shot of rage at the sound of furious knocking on the front door. My peep-hole displayed a rounded version of Everett, his dark framed glasses appearing bug-like in the concave glass.

'Is this a joke?'

I didn't know what he meant, and didn't really care because I noticed a tangerine on the hallway table. I picked it up, strangely pleased how it fit so neatly into the palm of my hand. I had to admit, I hadn't felt better in years. He looked like a wreck, however, and his tremendously pouted lips looked chewed-up and dry.

'Why did you call me with that strange voice?' He noisily pulled out a chair and sat down with his head in his hands.

I had a vague memory of using my cell-phone in the alley way. The memory of this was fuzzy and puzzling.

' Marla gave....'

'For God's sake! No, wait.' He stood again, and unconsciously and repetitively straightened out his muscle-snug matching dark gray pants and shirt. 'I am tired of this. You are a wreck. I look at you and I see this vast waste of potential. I lie awake at night thinking about the waste, and now this. If I had a talent like yours, I would be higher than a flying-saucer. What stupid shit you write lately. All the wasted opportunities, and you just lie here in this damn apartment with your underwear spread all over, drinking Pepsi-cola, blabbing about lemongrass, hanging out with psychotic, narcotic Marla. I

have had it up to here with you. I can't get this damn green apartment out of my mind.' 'I hate you.'

'I think you are over-reacting...' But he was out the door. He left with a backward wave of his hand.

I felt like I needed to talk to someone, but also felt like being alone with my thoughts. Marla was a good person to do both with. I texted her and she came over right away. She must have been doing yoga because all the muscles in her face were relaxed and she looked about with slow dense eyes.

'Did you take the Morning Glory?'

'You knew I would take it. Why ask?'

'Well, did it work?' Marla's eyes were fixed on nothing, and I was still strangely enrapt by the round dimpled fruit still in the palm of my hand.

But something about the tiredness of her response made me look closer at her. There in the purplish circles under her eyes, and in her angular face I recognized the lines of a someone who was in some kind of struggle.

'It really did work, somehow. What was it Marla? '

'No, not a drug. Just natural remedyit's supposed to make you regular.'

'But I don't feel *regular*. I feel extraordinary.'

'That's because your regular *is* extraordinary. You are one of the lucky ones. My regular is, actually, quite dead- brown boring.'

'How can I ever repay you?' I asked, not really knowing what else to say.

'You know what to do... just do it. Start today. Now.'

The noise of sirens outside was jarring, I cranked the windows shut, the yellow-faced clock in the kitchen ticked, and down the narrow green hallway Marla walked in bare feet, sandals in hand, like an adult trying to sneak away from a sleeping child.

