

CollabOrate
Justice #10
Marx

LADY JUSTICE, JUSTITIA, GOES TO HER NINTH PSYCHIATRIC APPOINTMENT. *Justitia removes her blindfold and bumps open the door with her shoulder, to avoid scraping its fine surface with her sword's scabbard or her scales of equity. A face framed in an integrated bush of graying black hair, moustache, and beard sits atop a stocky frame. Justitia settles herself, and scratches a bit of limestone scale from her right elbow. Marx, the German Ashkenazi Jew, smiles broadly. The black box of conscience hunkers on the coffee table, boding a pregnant intrusion.*

MARX: I cannot stop smiling. Your beauty so reminds me of Jenny, my departed wife—the love of my life.

JUSTITIA: I am glad for our resemblance. You still grieve. Has she been gone long?

MARX: Time is a bit confused in this psychoanalysis. My time was the nineteenth century. Before I lost her, we lost four of our seven children. She parented. I wrote and I agitated. I got us expelled from country after country. Times were hard for the Marx tribe.... But let's talk about your family, Justitia.

JUSTITIA: There's a topic.... My father was Chaos, and my mother Power. I am born of their union. Every member of papa's family was an anarchist and never deigned to cooperate. Every member of mama's tribe marched lockstep to grandfather's whim. My parents charged me, from my earliest days, to structure human society with a balance none among their own families had ever managed. I was their hope. And I am a huge disappointment.

MARX: I doubt that. Parents seldom feel that way about their children. Your task, as a demi-god, brims with complexity. So, what of your siblings? They must be a handful at Thanksgiving dinners.

JUSTITIA: That they are. Goodness, of course, prospers. He is the heir apparent. My sister, Truth, has, frankly, suffered a nervous breakdown. One just cannot count on her these days. My younger siblings, Kindness, Beauty, Rationality, and Community struggle through these difficult financial times. But let's talk of my confusions. You know, some deem you, Karl, to be the most influential thinker of the last two centuries. Do you have ideas you believe I should mull? Your dialectical materialism wowed global politics for a century, and still....

MARX: Pahhh! I aimed not to talk about the world, but to make it a better place. That, I see, has gone poorly....

The black box of conscience bursts open. Chairman Mao Zedong rises to his full six inches. "You err, Comrade. In my hands, and those of our brethren Stalin, Lenin, Pol Pot, and the many champions of peoples oppressed by capitalist pigs, your glorious insight governed half the planet. We inspired billions and silenced dissenters. We realized the dictatorship of the proletariat. You dreamed. We implemented. You have our gratitude." A tear rolls down Marx's cheek and into his bramble of beard. Marx shuts the black box of conscience firmly, shaking his head despondently.

MARX: I advocated short-term violence. I embraced socialism as an interim stage, foisted by revolution, leading, so I dreamed, to a classless and stateless society of utopian sharing. Unintentionally, I threw open the doors of government to homicidal sociopaths. Chairman Mao squeaks as my conscience because he remains the most vicious of mankind's murderous maniacs. Seventy million died in that idiot's Cultural Revolution. I designed the bullets. Mao and his ilk pulled the trigger.

JUSTITIA: The road to communist utopia held more switchbacks than you imagined?

MARX: Many more. I found capitalist abuses damnable, but I missed so much. When I discarded the foibles of capitalism, I also tossed the baby of global trade. It is now obvious that expansive trade creates a positive-sum game in which every nation prays fervently for the prosperity of every other, despite the pains of recessions and class oppressions. The impulse to war has plummeted. What's more, I tossed out god as an opiate stupefying the masses. The divine stands more firmly rooted in human affections than I ever imagined. I overstepped in projecting my atheism upon the human canvas.

JUSTITIA: Still, a world without class distinctions or states.... A world where people give their skills freely and take only the measure they lack. That all sounds so right to me.

MARX: Toward the end of my life, I devoted less energy to revolutionary rhetoric and more to ethical argument. In the *Gotha Program*, I urged communists and people of good faith everywhere to live by this principle: "From each according to his ability, to each according to his need." My ideology is little more than pedestrian family structure telescoped to include all people. In families, children and elders and the disabled work little, but consume much. Healthy adults produce and share with kin less able. We all believe that arrangement quite natural and desirable. So, too society.

JUSTITIA: So communism is just family values writ large? The global homestead?

MARX: I think that captures my gist, Justitia. Too bad my speculations did not come to fruit as I had imagined.

JUSTITIA: That may be the understatement of the last half-millennium....

Marx raises his eyebrows, and shrugs his shoulders. A frown teases his lips. He vanishes.

Justitia chews the inside of her marble cheek, deliberating her several psychiatric conversations. She can feel insights tickling marble folds of her stony cerebrum.

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