

THE QUARRY

Chaotic Children

Helen Glover

‘Your children are jerks.’

‘They’re still growing, and learning.’

‘They’ve had three thousand years to grow. They’re jerks.’

The tips of Goblin’s spiky horns reddened.

‘Oh? And your children are any better?’

‘Yes, of course!’ Elf shot back. She rose from her pearly throne, and stormed towards her brother. ‘They’re not murderers like your children.’ Her piercing blue eyes tore into her brother’s crimson ones, making him squirm in his seat.

Goblin’s long claws gripped at his cushioned seat.

‘They managed to kill another plant species.’

Elf loomed over him, seemingly blocking out the very stars themselves. Her white-blue hair turned black, shadows covered her skin. The whole universe appeared to go dark in her anger.

‘They were hungry.’

‘They could’ve eaten rabbits.’

The ground beneath Goblin’s chair began to shake. Tremors rippled through the palace. The marble columns shook in their very foundations. A million miles below them in the mortal realm, thousands cried out in terror as the sun was blotted out of the sky by stormy clouds.

‘They don’t like the taste of rabbits!’ Elf rumbled, her voice echoing across the heavens, sending thunder and tremors into the mortal realm. A hundred people jumped off a cliff in fear, plummeting to their deaths. ‘They kept complaining in their prayers, so I told them to eat plants.’

‘Yes, and it worked so well,’ Goblin remarked snidely. ‘How many plants have vanished to sate your children’s hunger?’

‘Your children have a tendency to murder my children!’

‘Well, *your* children have a tendency to torture mine!’

‘How is that worse?’

‘Would you two please shut up and learn to control your offspring!’

Elf and Goblin turned towards their brother. Elf’s rage was momentarily forgotten and light burst forth once more. The heavens cleared and the sun shined upon the mortal realm. People cried out in relief and dozens of young maidens were promptly shoved into a volcano to placate the gods.

Angel massaged his temples, then took a large swig from his wine glass.

‘Your children both have their flaws, and you two should have reigned them in before things got out of hand!’

Elf and Goblin looked at each other in confusion, then burst out laughing. The cloud upon which their mighty palace floated, bobbed up and down. The mortal realm wobbled and a great chasm opened, swallowing a thousand people.

‘At least our children are capable of thinking for themselves!’ Elf said.

‘Yeah!’ Goblin chimed in. ‘Your children sit around all day, and don’t bother to do anything!’

‘They’re growing fat and lazy,’ Elf smirked, ‘just like you.’

Angel looked down at his rather round belly and frowned. It ballooned out from underneath his chin and he couldn’t see his feet. He was lounged out on a couch but his wings did protest at being squished against the fluffy pillows.

‘Can you even fly anymore?’ Goblin asked.

Angel reached over to the table beside him and grabbed a few grapes. He had flown to meet with his siblings but it was upon the backs of a few hundred eagles. ‘I do not think that I have bothered with that for a few centuries,’ he admitted, more to himself than his siblings.

‘Maybe you’re pregnant?’ Goblin said.

Elf frowned and cuffed the back of Goblin’s head hard enough to make him fall over. Down in the mortal realm, a mountain that had withstood numerous meteorite impacts crumbled into the sea, along with its inhabitants. She strode over to Angel and snatched the grapes from his hands. Angel made a desperate grab for them, but missed and nearly fell off the couch.

‘If he’s pregnant, that would break your truce,’ Human interjected, striding through the diamond arch entrance to join his siblings.

Elf looked at Angel, frowning. All of them had agreed that for the sake of balance, they would no longer create any more life.

‘Brother!’ Goblin greeted Human warmly, whilst trying to smooth his tunic. ‘I suppose your trip went well?’

‘As well as I expected,’ Human held out his hand and an apple flew into it. The apple trees in the mortal realm all bloomed at once. He began chewing and talking at the same time. ‘Your children are plotting to destroy our sister’s.’

‘What?’ Elf sat down on Angel’s couch, her normally cruel and calculating face marred by furrowed brows. She reached for a goblet of wine and downed it in an instant. Angel reached over and rubbed her shoulder.

‘Oh, and they even managed to convince his children to help them.’ Human nodded in Angel’s direction, bits of apple flying out of his mouth.

Angel gave a start. His eyes widened and he fell off the couch, splattering himself on the white marble tiles. He hacked up a half-eaten grape. He stared into the accusing eyes of his sister.

Elf’s pale skin began to darken. She crushed the goblet in her fingers and blood ran down her wrists. The wind outside their palace howled but inside all were silent. The oceans in the mortal realm turned violent and a few thousand sailors lost their lives.

Human approached Elf and took hold of her injured hand, whispering quiet words the other two couldn’t hear. The blood disappeared at his command. She released a shaky breath.

‘Sister, I swear I had no inkling of this treacherous plot,’ Angel begged, his perfect cherub blonde hair falling askew across his face. Yellow feathers were bent at awkward angles as they had been slightly crushed under his massive body weight.

‘You’re a fool.’ Elf grabbed the back of his blonde hair and slammed her elder brother’s face into the cool tiles. She rose, meaning to put as much space between them as possible.

Angel moaned, clutching at his bloodied face. He spat blood and reached for more grapes.

‘I suppose you knew all along?’ Elf loomed over Goblin, hoping to use her height to intimidate him. Down below in the mortal realm, the seas retreated before surging up against the coast, sweeping over the land and killing thousands.

Goblin smirked at her.

‘Knew? I commanded them to do it.’ The tips of his horns flushed with pleasure at the sight of his sister’s distraught face.

‘Why?’

‘Because your children wiped out every single rose! All of them!’ Goblin spat back. ‘I like roses, they smell nice and look pretty on my horns. Now what am I supposed to put on my horns?’

‘You want my children dead because of flowers?’ Elf said incredulously.

‘Roses,’ Goblin retorted.

Human smacked Goblin’s head. He strode over to his twin sister and held her hands in his.

‘I can still save your children.’ He turned to his two brothers, both still rubbing the backs of their heads. ‘I can save all your children. You don’t have to fight.’

‘Since there’s no need to fight, our dear sister should apologize for slamming my face into the floor!’ Angel said whilst munching on grapes. He touched the back of his golden head and winced, feeling blood on his fingers.

‘And perhaps you should pay more attention to your children,’ Elf retorted, ‘instead of letting them be influenced by those with stronger resolves than yours!’ She balled her fists and struck Angel again. The universe darkened. A thousand first-born sons were beheaded to appease the gods.

Goblin met Elf’s eyes and gave her his shark-toothed grin.

‘They needed guidance, so I gave them guidance,’ Goblin said. ‘Wouldn’t want them running amok.’ His grin broadened as Elf’s face paled. Far below them, entire forests went up in flames.

‘I’d hate to think just how terrible your children could be without your guidance,’ Elf growled, her lovely face becoming wolfish.

Angel consumed the grapes on the plate before him in one bite then rose. The ground rumbled beneath his massive belly, and the foundations of the siblings’ mighty palace shook with each step Angel took.

‘If you two would stop arguing, then perhaps we can let our brother speak.’ The mortal realm beneath them shook with each step, but not too violently. The heavens cleared and light broke through once more.

Human nodded his thanks. ‘All of you love your children, but they quarrel amongst each other.’

‘Some truly marvellous deductions.’ Goblin picked up a pear and twirled it in his fingers. ‘I suppose we can go back to ignoring each other now that we’ve figured that out.’ He placed the pear upon his horns and gazed at his reflection in a bowl of water. The fires burning far beneath them took his shape; a thousand people died gazing upon his beauty.

Human ignored him and turned to Angel. ‘You’re all different, you always fight. Your children always fight. Now you need to stop fighting amongst yourselves so your children stop fighting.’

‘How do we stop them from fighting?’ Angel plucked out a bent golden wing and frowned.

‘Remove their differences. Make them the same.’

For a moment, there was silence.

‘Well, then there’s the question of who do we model the children after?’ Goblin butted in. The pear fell off his horns so he replaced it with an apple.

‘Me,’ Human answered.

‘Absolutely not,’ Goblin fired back. The horns atop his head flushed red. ‘You didn’t want children thousands of years ago, you *mocked* us for it! You shouldn’t have them now!’

‘A fact that now pains me dearly,’ Human returned. ‘I have walked amongst your children. I know them far better than any of you. I want to save them.’

Goblin sneered at him, as the apple bobbed of his head. Two bananas were pierced by his thorns. They didn’t fall off.

‘None of my children would want to part with their wings,’ Angel admitted. ‘It makes them... them, I suppose.’

‘My children aren’t losing their horns.’ Goblin chucked one of the bananas at Angel’s head, the gooey yellow flesh mixed into his blonde hair. Goblin giggled and aimed the other banana.

Elf snatched it out of the air. She dropped it to the marble tiles.

‘Sister?’ Goblin said.

Elf held her hand up, stopping him.

‘Your children have already made a pact for the death of all my children. I will do anything to save them. Even this foolish plan.’

Angel coughed.

‘Perhaps then we should consider this idea?’ His meaty paw of a hand reached out to hold Elf’s slender one. He squeezed it and smiled at his little sister. ‘We must unite for the sake of our children.’ He looked at Goblin. ‘All of our children.’

‘Fine.’ Goblin strode over and offered his clawed hands to his siblings. Angel’s meaty paws thumped into Goblin’s claws, while Elf delicately placed her hand down.

‘Or you could fight to the death, and whomever is victorious can annihilate the others’ children?’ Human said.

‘Hush.’

‘You’re such a middle child.’

‘Father always said he was weird.’

Human pouted and started using Angel’s wings as target practice.

The three siblings ignored their brother and the flying fruit. Instead, they focused on each other. They closed their eyes. In their minds, they conjured images of their children. They were all so different. The siblings blended their minds together, melding and bonding. Their thoughts interwove, all their flaws exposed. Nothing was hidden.

One seemed to pull away out fear, but the other two reached out and reassured them. Their love for the children strode them to push on.

They saw the world before them. They saw trees grow tall and die within seconds. Volcanoes thrust islands into the oceans. Water rained down on the land, then the sun withered it. The sun exploded into a ball of light. The world ended and begun. A rose was born and died. They breathed life into the world and they could take it away.

Independently, they had made their children. Moulded them from clay in their image. Forged them in the great smithy hidden in the sun. Imbued them with life from the deepest oceans. Their children grew. They understood the land but not each other. Now, the walls broke down. They reached out to one another. What made their children unique, they took away. They saw their children but thought of their childless brother. He did not have any children. Together, they willed their children to be reborn in his image. Human.

The horns flattened. The wings flew off. The pointed ears became round. Human.

Elf fell, convulsing, to the floor. She struggled to breathe. The air felt toxic, she coughed and spluttered but the air would not pass. Her twin was at her side instantly, whispering words of comfort.

Angel fell over, landing on his wings. He cried out in pain, then joy. He was still him.

Goblin threw up. He shivered and downed a large goblet of wine. It tasted like ash and he spat the wine out. He crammed his fist into his mouth and relief washed over him. His pointed teeth remained. He gazed into a bowl of water and nearly cried when he saw the horns still perched on top of his head.

‘It is done.’ Angel smiled at his siblings.

Goblin and Elf smiled and gazed down at the mortal realm. The smiles soon vanished when they found all life was gone.

‘Is now a good time to mention that everyone is dead?’ Human said.

Goblin looked at Human.

‘What have you done?’

‘Me? I didn’t do anything.’ Human replied.

‘Where are our children?’ Elf asked, fighting to remain calm.

‘It appears that during your temper tantrums, you killed them all.’ Human smiled. ‘They could survive anything the natural world threw at them, but couldn’t survive your tantrums.’

‘I thought you wanted to save them?’ Elf said in a small voice.

‘No, I wanted Father to see how you three managed to colossally screw the world over, and he did,’ Human said.

‘Trickster!’ Angel snapped.

‘Demon!’ Goblin hissed.

‘Why?’ Elf’s eyes pleaded with her twin, but his eyes remained cruel.

‘I want my own children, and you three were dumb enough kill yours—so now Father will let me.’ Human smirked and strode out, leaving the other three in a stunned silence.

The mortal realm was silent. The oceans stopped. The fires stopped. The world stopped spinning. The three looked upon their now dead world. An empty rock.

‘We’re gonna kill his kids, right?’ asked Goblin.

‘Agreed.’

‘I’ll grab my torture kit!’

‘I said kill, not torture!’