

PILVAX

Issue Five Spring 2008

Errol Scott is a fiction writer, currently living in Munich, Germany. His short stories have appeared in literary magazines around the world, in the Czech Republic, France, United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, Turkey, Japan, and the USA, including *Blatt*, previously *The Prague Review*, and *First Intensity*.

Gorilla's Angel

by Errol Scott

She pulled on her green waterproof gorillawear with the bright buttons. It was itchy in the armpits but faster than fast. Speed was the thing. Clutch right, bank left, Lake Balaton sifted past the open window. Angels were in Keszthely and she was going to get one. Everyone knew that angels were clean gone out of Budapest, and Budapest would have been too obvious to begin with.

It wasn't the highway that bothered her. It was really the scent of that highway that was repellent. Smells like that seemed like death and tulips and other kinds of flowers that were no good for eating but grew up just the same between the cracks in the sidewalks. She crushed them all down with her melting tires. She flattened every flower in the road. The flowers were the markers for the clutch. They were all white and lined up down the middle. I had an adventure once. I was wearing that scarf and walking in the town square. The gorilla remembered that day as vividly as ointment and tried to remember the scents that swirled around her in the air when she had the scarf on. A man had stopped her. "Five hundred forints for the scarf," he had said. No amount of forints or pounds or crowns would be enough for this scarf. An angel had given it to her.

"I want to wear it," said the man. "I want to have adventures too."

But the scarf was not for sale. It was not sold for love or gleaming coins or even raised hands. The man had become frightened suddenly and melted back into the crowd. The gorilla wore the adventure-scarf today. She was off to find her angel, the one she used to have, but who had evaporated one day in a murky hazy heat. Angels live in Keszthely because angels need heat. You can always find angels because flowers grow all around them. Flowers lead up their steps and into their apartments. Flowers lead right to their refrigerators and then inside their refrigerators too.

Flowers are scarce at the sides of the road by Lake Balaton. Even the white ones lining the highway centers are fewer and farther between than flowers anywhere else. Keszthely

bore down on the gorilla and all the melting belittling waves of smell-free air bore down upon her too. In this way she came to know that Keszthely was just around the corner. The advantages of having your own angel are numerous. You can have free pizza delivered at whim. You can get the last seat in line on the first day of the new Star Trek film. In all-you-can-drink pub events, where square-necked Einsteins swill lousy beer, you can have clear cool white wine brought to your chair without a single drop spilled. Smoke and haze divide and fresh bubbles of silver pop up under your nose just in time. Yes, an angel would be fine. An angel would be perfect. And today the fine, not so furry, gorilla would find hers. The angel-divining scarf was artfully draped around her delicate neck. The heavy silken waterproof boots were on her perfectly balanced feet. Air flew past her like dolphins and suddenly the mighty Keszthely crystallized about her. But no angels, no angels were to be found anywhere at all.

Panic didn't set in the gorilla's heart until dawn the next morning. She had used her angel-calling flute, waved the angel-attracting scarf, and accelerated up and down the flowerleading highway to no avail. Not one angel, not even a small one waved back. Keszthely had been disinfected of angels as well? Two whole towns completely angel-free?

"Angel," mimed the gorilla to the night sky. "Angel, I'm here."

The dolphins sped up, bouncing like ten pins off the Fiat hood. And slowly, so slowly it was almost not smellable, an angel crawled straight out of her gorilla heart. The flash of it cracked the asphalt, snapped the cash machine-in-the wall into two straight pieces, and shattered the bun-selling shop next door. The telephone pole in front was only mildly bent. The gorilla had found her angel.

More of Errol Scott's stories can be found in ISSUE 5 of PILVAX, locally available in Budapest.