

The Message Left

There it is again. A call faraway and thin. It is asking me to do something. I am not certain what to begin with. I rise through the mist and listen. Surely not. After all this time and with my dubious past I am wanted to be a guardian! The cry silvers round me. I spin into its imperative Attach! Watch! Care! I fly into the sound.

That shoulder is very small. No matter, I can be any size. The other shoulder I see is occupied. I am too late. Too late for this charge to have a quiet life. The other turns its head towards me. It has the eyes of a cat focussing on a mouse. Knife edge perfect. Totally contained. My charge has picked up a muse. There should have been another angel on that left shoulder. There has been a battle. That call then was my partner angel, running out of power and desperate. So that is why I got the summons. I have a chequered existence – a demon as often as an angel, in a constant cycle of rehabilitation and damnation. I wish the Almighty would make his mind up. Anyway, muses are tricky things and can't be coped with by goodness alone. I am needed for my understanding of the darker side of things it seems.

We contemplate each other the muse and I. You will note it does not have a capital M. It is not one of the gracious immortal ladies that govern music, poetry and art in general. Oh no. A muse is something manufactured from that same intensity of course but it has no leavening of compassion, of flexibility, of fun. It is like a jewel. It coruscates in the beauty of sharp edges. It is a focus, a drive, an urgency. They carry messages and need to have them expressed. They chose humans to do this for them. It doesn't always work. Sometimes the human is sliced to pieces by the process and cannot give the message. Sometimes the muse picks a human who is impervious and it is the muse who suffers. I quite like that. Or best of all the human is fit for the muse and the result is amazing. I find that interesting but it only works when the angel plays a part and I do not like muses.

I look at the sleeping baby. The muse has already wound its fine filaments around and through its tiny, beating, red heart,

At 10 minutes past midnight, ten minutes into Wednesday 2nd April 1913, at 16 Elmbank Road Aberdeen, Ronald Center is born. The Aberdeen Daily Journal (not yet called the Press and Journal) shows the barometer pointing at Change but notes "Barometer steady. Weather fair and cold" The forecast for the day is "Calm and light breezes, mainly westerly; generally fair or fine, some local showers or mist; moderate temperature" He is Mrs Center's sixth child. She is forty two or there about and already has two girls, Jane and Agnes. The three boys are William, Alexander and Hector. Jane is already twenty years old and Agnes is eighteen. William is fourteen, Alexander is twelve and Hector is almost nine.

Agnes Jane Ingram as she was had married Alexander Center at St Nicholas Church in Aberdeen on 16th October 1891 when they were both twenty. Alexander was a stonecutter journeyman then and he still works in the granite industry. His father William is a stone polisher.

What kind of household is this that Ronald Center is born into? Just the bare registry facts seem to show a steady and ordered life. His parents marry at twenty, a reasonable age and his father is in regular, skilled employment. Their first child is born two years later and the others arrive at a sedate pace. They are named conservatively after Agnes's mother and Agnes herself and after Alexander's father and Alexander himself. Hector and Ronald are probably also family names. However, the gap between Ronald and Hector is almost nine years. Does this mean that Ronald is rather an after thought? How does his mother feel about that? Are his older sisters still at home? Jane, the elder, is never to marry and perhaps she always stays at home. Do she and Agnes fuss and dote over their baby brother or are they out at work all day and find him a bit of a pest when he cries at night? What do his brothers think of him? Too small to take part in anything they do William and Alexander probably just register him as a baby. But is William, who has been the youngest for so long, sometimes wistful as he watches his mother feed wee Ronald. And did she breast feed him? Now in 2008 there is no one left to ask. All those children and no one left or no one found so far.

Ronald Center did not have any children. His story is full of spaces like the intricate pattern of the finely knitted shawl he is most likely wrapped in for his christening. We will assume he is christened. This is 1913 after all. Ronald's parents were brought up in the days of Queen Victoria. Britain is just out of the Edwardian era. George V is on the throne "by the Grace of God, King of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland and of the British Dominions beyond the Seas, Defender of the Faith, Emperor of India" The first world war had not yet arrived to smash the social order and Britain took itself pretty seriously. A look at the ladies fashion ads in the Aberdeen Daily Journal for the 2nd April would tell you that. Hats voluminous; skirts to the ankle for the most part; walking sticks tasseled; footwear complicated.

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