

Heaven on Earth

(short story)

Aglaia Bouma

Smashwords Edition

Copyright 2012 Aglaia Bouma

Smashwords Edition, License Notes

Thank you for downloading this free ebook. Although this is a free book, it remains the copyrighted property of the author, and may not be reproduced, copied and distributed for commercial or non-commercial purposes. If you enjoyed this book, please encourage your friends to download their own free copy at Smashwords.com, where they can also discover other works by this author. Thank you for your support.

Table of Contents

[Heaven on Earth](#)

[About the author](#)

[Connect with Aglaia Bouma](#)

[More stories by Aglaia Bouma](#)

Heaven on Earth

In the mottled sunlight under the willow tree, which spread its arms out to the tables gathered around it like a mother, a wide, toothless grin pulled open an old man's face. He stood up surprisingly smoothly.

“Bonjour, mon frère!” The greeting between the two men was warmer than the already hot afternoon sun. I peeked as discreetly as possible over the French newspaper I had hubristically bought earlier that day.

The second man, a little less old and wearing a wild moustache which completely covered his mouth, gestured lazily as he lowered himself onto a chair. Instantly, six waiters appeared with huge bowls full of delicacies and a bottle of wine with a bouquet that easily traversed the meters separating the men from me, to nestle up my nostrils.

“So, how do you like retirement?”

“Wonderful, what a delight!” The moustache hopped up to make room for an escargot. I turned an unread page of the newspaper and saw how the man, his eyes closed, swallowed the garlic soaked creature before he continued: “I should have retired ages ago. But I kept hoping I could make things better. Alas... When they started using these airplanes...” He shook his head, a bit sad, but brightened up immediately after taking a sip of wine. I looked around for one of the waiters to order such a bottle for myself, but staff was nowhere to be seen. The scent occasionally wandering my way was all I could get.

The toothless old man had pushed dentures into his mouth, making him look a bit less wrinkly. He looked at his brother kindly.

“Well, you kept it up longer than me. I’ve always admired that.” He let his hand float over the lavish table, then lifted a shinningly polished cover, hung over the escaping aroma and sniffed deeply: “Oh great, scalloped oysters with a champagne sauce!” This scent too drifted in my direction. I was getting hungry. The moustache scooped a spoonful from the just revealed dainties. He put an oyster in his mouth, basted a sip of wine over it and said: “I fully understood why you wanted to quit back then. That expansionism was bound to cause problems.”

The toothless guy with dentures nodded thoughtfully.

“Well, that certainly wasn’t my policy. But of course they wanted to have it their way instead of listening to the advice of an old fool. In all those years my authority had caved in too much.” He pushed a bite of baguette into his mouth, which was followed by a piece of Camembert cheese so creamy I could see it seeping out from where I sat. He chewed slowly, staring thoughtfully into space. “I think things started to go really wrong when that stalker wanted to sacrifice his son, just to get ahead. If I had intervened more severely at the time, I might have retained my credibility. But it’s easy to be all-knowing in hindsight. Luckily, now we’re here and that suits me fine.”

The moustache moved up and down, following the nodding gesture of its wearer. Elegantly, the man emptied the remainder of the wine in his glass, and immediately a waiter came rushing to bring a new bottle. I raised my hand, even waved a moment when I thought he almost looked my way, but it was in vain. My mouth was dry as a desert.

The man with the moustache sat back with a sigh and lit a huge cigar. The fire in his dark eyes flickered briefly in my direction. I ducked behind the newspaper.

“You know,” I heard the mouth with the dentures say, “I wish our brother could have been here.”

Very carefully, I lowered the paper an inch or so. The voice of the old man suddenly sounded so sad, so small. The branches of the willow moved a little and put the wrinkled face in shadow.

“Yeah, me too. But we have to accept the fact that he’s dead. I’ll never forget that suicide... Do you remember the uproar when that German philosopher had found his body?”

The man with the dentures nodded. “Yes, tragic... very tragic.” He plucked a grape from an exuberant bunch, but didn’t eat it. “By the way, how is his son, our beloved nephew?”

The moustache dripped down a bit more. A thick cloud of cigar smoke joined the scents which already had found a tempting spot in my nose. My stomach rumbled.

“Not so good. Schizophrenia combined with a megalomaniac personality disorder is what the doctors say. He cannot be dissuaded from the delusion that he is the messiah.” Again twinkles from the dark eyes flickered in my direction. I lifted the newspaper to cover my face, but felt his gaze burning right through it.

“Ma'am?”

I looked frantically at the words in front of me, afraid to disclose that I had been eavesdropping on their entire conversation. The voice behind the moustache now sounded more insistent, closer, next to me.

“Ma'am?” Slowly I dropped the paper and looked up to the twinkling eyes.

“Would you like to drink a glass of wine with us? Or have a bite to eat?”

I wanted to decline politely, but the rumbling of my stomach wordlessly accepted the invitation.

*

When I sat at their table, a glass of delicious wine in my hand, the oldest man lifted the cover of a second dish. With a big smile on his face, he motioned for me to help myself.

“Pork tenderloin on a bed of truffle salad.”

I looked at him, shocked.

“Pork? But I always thought...” Above the moustache a twinkling eye winked at me and a grin appeared underneath.

“That was a joke. Who would have thought they would take it that seriously.”

About the author

In addition to being a writer, Aglaia Bouma (1970) is an entrepreneur, empathic misanthrope, emotional rationalist, light-hearted pessimist and a social *einzelgänger*.

Her Dutch novel 'De dwaling' was reviewed positively and her short stories often win in contests. The Dutch versions of 'Self-portrait' and 'Unleashed' were published in literary journals. 'Heaven on Earth' she read to the audience attending the presentation of an anthology the story was published in. Some other short stories were published in collections as well. When writing, she tries to describe the characters roaming her fantasy in a way that the resulting story keeps hanging around in the head of the reader for a while. Because you, dear reader, is what it's all about!

If you enjoyed reading this story as much as I did writing it, I'd really appreciate you leaving a review at your favorite retailer.



Connect with Aglaia Bouma

You can contact me directly at: mail@aglaia.nl

New stories I announce here:

Facebook: [facebook.com/AglaiaBouma](https://www.facebook.com/AglaiaBouma)

Twitter: twitter.com/AglaiaBouma

Goodreads: [goodreads.com/AglaiaBouma](https://www.goodreads.com/AglaiaBouma)

More stories by Aglaia Bouma

[Self-portrait](#)

[The lily](#)

[Power failure](#)

[Hot stuff](#)

[Memory lingers on](#)

[Anthology: In Reverse and other stories](#)

[Drawing the line](#)

[Unleashed](#)
