



The House of Broken Angels by Luis Alberto Urrea Discussion Guide

Partial List of Characters

(See also Little Angel's Family Tree on Page 322 of the book)

Big Angel de La Cruz: Head of the de La Cruz family. Also known as Miguel Angel, Flaco, Pops, and El Filosofo.

Perla: Wife of Big Angel. Also known as Flaca and Perla Castro Transvina.

Minnie: Daughter of Big Angel and Perla. Also known as Little Mouse and Minerva.

Mamá America: Big Angel's mother.

Lalo: Son of Big Angel and Perla. Also known as Lance Corporal Hungry Man.

Braulio: Son of Perla and stepson of Big Angel. Also known as Snickers.

Little Angel: Half-brother of Big Angel. Also known as Gabriel Angel.

Don Antonio de La Cruz: Father of Big Angel, Little Angel, César and MaryLú.

César: Brother of Big Angel and half-brother of Little Angel. Also known as Julio César and Pato.

Yndio: Son of Perla and stepson of Big Angel.

MaryLú: Sister of Big Angel and César and half-sister of Little Angel. Also known as Maria Luisa.

Leo: Ex-husband of MaryLú.

La Gloriosa: Perla's sister. Mother of Guillermo.

Paz: César's third wife. Also known as Pazuzu.

Marco: César's son. In a heavy metal band called Satanic Hispanic.

Lupita: Perla's sister. Wife of Jimbo.

Jimbo: Lupita's husband. Also known as Tío Yeembo.

Ookie Contreras: Family friend from the neighborhood.

Giovanni: Lalo's son. Also known as Gio.

Mayra: Lalo's daughter.

El Tigre: Minnie's boyfriend.

Betty: Little Angel's mother.

Tía Cuca: Big Angel's aunt and Mama America's sister. Also known as Cucabent.

Chente Bent: Tía Cuca's husband. Also known as a pirate, Vicente, and Chentebent.

Tiki Bent: Daughter of Cuca and Chente. Also known as Tikibent.

Guillermo: La Gloriosa's son. Best friend of Braulio. Also known as Joker.

Dave: Big Angel's friend and confessor.

Discussion Questions

1. An epigraph to this book comes from singer/songwriter Rick Elias: "This is my confession of love." Why do you think Luis Alberto Urrea began the book this way?
2. How is this story both a tragedy and a comedy? How did you experience the book?
3. The author shows incredible empathy to all the characters in this book. Could you empathize with any of the characters? Which were your favorites?
4. What are some of the misunderstandings that Big Angel and Little Angel have about each other's lives? Are they reconciled by the end of the novel? How so?
5. How does the author play with the idea of time in the novel?
6. The author Urrea was born in Tijuana, Mexico, before moving across the border to San Diego, where this book is set. What are the sights, smells, sounds that stick with you from scenes on both sides of the border?
7. In light of the current political debate around immigrant families, what did you learn about immigration or the border from this fictional Mexican-American family?
8. At one point in the novel, in reference to celebrating his family members' foibles, Little Angel says: "If only the dominant culture could see these small moments, they would see their own human lives reflected in the other." Do you believe this to be true? Did this happen for you while reading the book?
9. The author Urrea has said the entire book is a parable of grace. What does he mean by this?
10. In a conversation about gratitude, Dave told Big Angel, "Dare to be silly." Have you ever incorporated silliness into wellness practices like gratitude? Has it been meaningful?