

## Apoc

I'm not one to believe in strange things such as teleportation to other worlds, but there I was naked and surrounded by what appeared to be floating orbs that resembled planets. The ground on which I stood, if that's what you'd even call it, was warm on my bare feet, a grassy feel that was all together soft and pleasant as I wiggled my toes. The air had a comfortable warmth to it as a subtle breeze ran through my hair and I could feel the emotion of the atmosphere itself. I looked around in awe and realized that even though it appeared to be daytime the sky was littered with the brilliance of countless stars, and much to my inner child's delight I could in fact reach them and even manipulate them. It wasn't long before I had rearranged the cosmos to resemble a picture of Mickey Mouse, chuckling to myself as I admired my work I heard a voice from behind me. Remembering that I was naked I embarrassingly turned around doing my best to cover myself and was greeted by the smile of a frail old man.

"Ello mate!" The man's hair was whiter than white, balding on top but what he lacked on his head he surely made up for on his face. His beard ran down his torso, twisting around his body to form a sort of tunic before tapering off onto the ground just past his feet.

"Umm..." I stood there dumbfounded and at a loss of words, what in the actual hell is going on here I thought to myself as I stood there staring at the old man.

"Definitely not hell mate, quite the opposite actually." The man's voice didn't match his appearance, he had the voice of a strong and confident businessman, not that of a frail old man who draped himself in his own facial hair. The man raised a boney finger and pointed to my cosmos Mickey Mouse. "Crikey! Did you make that mate?" The man appeared to be amused by my cosmic art abilities and praised my work.

"Y-yes I did." I managed to stutter out, growing ever more confused by the minute. "Where am I?" I asked the old man as he stroked his long beard, still admiring my work.

"You're here of course." The man had a puzzled look in his eyes, as though I had asked the dumbest question imaginable, unsure of what to say I remained silent until the man was finished looking at the rearranged stars. "Aye, here is everywhere and nowhere." The explanation did absolutely nothing to answer my question or shed light as to where I was.

"Great." I said sarcastically as the old man motioned for me to follow him, he started walking and rapidly began disappearing as if he were walking beyond the horizon. I followed as we passed by numerous oddities and things of wonder, wanting to ask about every single one but remaining silent. We eventually stopped at what appeared to be a table in the middle of a grassy field, the table looked to be made of tiny cloud wisps held together by bright green vines that sprouted up from the ground underneath it. The vines twisted up the legs and bloomed out over the table top decorating it in a variety of leaves, but also holding the table down rooting it to the field and keeping it from floating off in the warm breeze. Out of nowhere two chairs fashioned in the same way appeared and the old man motioned for me to take a seat as he plucked one of the planet looking orbs out of the sky.

"Ever heard of apoc juice mate?" He carried the tiny planet over to the table and took a seat, the fluffy looking chairs as comfortable as you would imagine sitting on a cloud would be.

"Apoc juice, never heard of it." I responded to his question as he placed the planet into his long beard that seemed to suck it in, consuming it entirely.

“Well you're in for a treat then!” His voice was enthusiastic and filled with excitement for me to give it a try. “Greatest stuff I ever came up with.” He went on to boast about the drink, confused. I asked him where we would get the said drink from.

“So... is there a waiter or something that'll bring us this miraculous beverage you keep going on about?” I looked around the empty fields that surrounded us, endless orb-like planets floated around us yet the field felt empty with its vast array of colors and flowers. The man squinted off and on for a few more seconds before sighing in relief, two crystal like goblets rose out of the fluffy table top to sit perfectly on top. The man picked one of them up as he rose to his feet, a contagious grin on his face that was so large it caused his eyes to squint into nothing more than wrinkles. He picked the end of his beard up off the ground and held it over the crystal cup, as he did a golden liquid ran out of his beard into the cup emanating an otherworldly glow as it filled the chalice.

“Crikey this patch smells good!” He handed me the cup and began to repeat the process, filling the other in a matter of seconds. He took to his seat once more, the glow of the golden liquid disappearing as he downed the drink in one swift go. I hesitantly looked at the beverage in my hand, I had no idea what this was but it came from his beard which was honestly pretty disgusting. I was in no rush to taste this mysterious beard liquid but the old man insisted I drink up, assuring me it was going to be the greatest thing I've ever had. I threw my head back and much like the old man downed the drink in a single gulp, it was slightly salty but sweet, the perfect balance of carbonated and flat, it was in fact the greatest thing I have ever tasted.

“Wow! What the hell is this stuff?” I wanted more, produced by an old man's facial hair or not it was so amazing I didn't care. I shook my cup trying to get the last few drops that clung to the bottom of my cup onto my tongue.

“Aye, amazing like I told ya right?” The man was relishing the moment he finally shared his prized juice.

“Better than I can even describe, what is it?” I questioned the man, hoping he'd offer more of the beverage to me.

“Apoc juice, like I said.” It was becoming clear to me that I needed to nearly spell out my exact question to the man who apparently took everything at face value. As though he could read my thoughts he elaborated, explaining the mysterious substance I had blindly consumed. “Apoc juice, short for apocalypse juice, is the essence of souls freshly squeezed out of a planet when I deem the planet doomed. That planet was squeezed of all life when I placed it into my beard, producing the liquid essence that we just enjoyed. You see mate, I created all of these planets you see around us, endless fields of them all bursting with prime life, many of them not quite ripe yet so there they sit biding their time until I can juice them. The name itself is something that varies depending on whom I am speaking with, much as my appearance would. You used to be human so that is why I am using a human form as well as a relatable name for the juice, so that you understand.” I sat there processing all the information I had just received, oddly enough it was pretty straight forward and only one question really puzzled me.

“So you're what I would be familiar with as god then correct?” I questioned the man who sat happily in his seat which had begun to turn gray, as though there was going to be a storm of some sort produced by the cloud chair.

“Ohh, vibrating chair time!” The man excitedly looked down at the swirling darkness that sat just below him, giggling with every rumble and crack as the storm broke out underneath his rear. “And yes, I am what you would call god mate.” He went back to watching the storm

progress underneath him. I cleared my throat in preparation, my one real question eager to get into the open for god himself to answer.

“Why do you use an Australian accent?” And just like that my question was out in the open, I eagerly awaited an answer to finally cure the irresistible itch of a question.

“Easy mate, I was a huge Steve Irwin fan, figured this was a good way to pay my respects. Shame what happened to him really, even more a shame that the stingray race isn’t ready for consumption yet or I could avenge my man’s death.” God took the last few drops in his cup and dumped it onto the field next to him. “For my homie, my mate Steve.” God placed the cup back onto the table, returning his attention back to me. “Any other questions mate?” He smiled at me, knowing that that was all I had for him at the moment. Feeling as though I needed to have some sort of question for him other than about his choice in accent, I scrambled my brain.

“What makes the juice so good and tasty?” I stupidly asked, unable to come up with anything better. “I mean, the slight salty mixed with the sweet and just the whole thing is amazing.” It didn’t help, but I had tried to elaborate a little further.

“Well funny thing about that, I don’t really know. But my theory is that the salty taste comes from the tears of all those religious fanatics, and the sweetness comes from all the good things on the planet.” God sat there enjoying the thunder messaging his back as his chair continued to rumble, content with his answer.

“That actually makes a lot of sense, why did you bring me here though?” Finally a legitimate question I could ask that wasn’t pointless.

“In short, I need a farm hand to help me harvest all this apoc juice. I know you pretty well considering I created you and I just knew you’d be the man for the job! One thing though, you need a beard for the juicing process, think you can manage that?” God questioned me, I sat there somewhat pissed knowing that I was never blessed with the ability to grow decent facial hair. I began to feel like he brought me here to mock my beard growing abilities, I mean he was god, he knew I couldn’t grow a beard.

“Uhh...” I stuttered stupidly once again. “I think you know I can’t grow facial hair very well, nothing more than a stubble.” I tried to get a read on what he might be thinking but I couldn’t, his face resembled that of a rock as far as expressions went. He sat there as a grim look formed on his face.

“Well shoot, guess you’re not the right man are ya.” His head drooped as he let out a disappointed sigh. “Unfortunately I can’t allow you to be here without the proper facial hair required for harvesting, and seeing as to how you’re already dead and all I can’t send you back to earth either.” I interrupted him mid sentence.

“Wait, I’m dead!” It came out harsh and accusatory.

“Yea... kind of maybe had to kill you to bring you here, which if you can’t be here and you can’t go back to earth leaves me with one place to put you.” God's look was concerning, it was the look that someone gives you when they hit your car with a shopping cart while you're still sitting in it. That oh shit I fucked up, my bad, kind of look, which coming from the almighty couldn’t be good. “Sorry mate!” And with a snap of his fingers I was falling, falling for what felt like an eternity into a dark abyss.

When the falling finally stopped, I found myself in a musty room surrounded by other humans, none of which had facial hair that amounted to more than a stubble. They were all standing in a line leading to two large wooden doors that swung both ways on the rusted hinges,

a horned man with hooves for feet stepped through them motioning for the next person to follow him behind the large doors. Hanging just above those large swinging doors was a sign, and it read “Get your ticket to heaven today with a devil of a deal on hair implants.”