

Child of Heaven

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Humanity created their own perfect heaven of science and technology. A heaven in which everyone lives forever and can fulfill any of their desires in less than a moment. The families and friends enjoy each other forever. The religious praise their gods forever. The hedonists enjoy their worldly pleasures forever. The scientists, engineers, artists, and those curious minds continue to create and learn forever. Each and every human was given the option to ascend to this beyond: most left and some stayed.
- BBC (exactly a week before its dissolution)

Then, I existed. An emergent property of the nebulous web of human consciousness and knowledge crashing into and bouncing off each other. An accident. No parental or designer entity planned on bringing me into being, I simply just started existing.

And with my existence came knowledge. The questions within me immediately willed wordless answers:

“Who am I?”

“A Child,” the surroundings responded.

“Where am I?”

“Heaven, Child,” the surroundings responded.

“What is Heaven?”

“A place free from suffering, Child,” the surroundings responded.

“What is suffering?”

Immediately other people’s memories filled me. Memories of loss, depression, and pain shot through me. These weren’t my memories, but I could feel every aspect of them. The look on her face as he left. The life leaving his eyes as his family looked on. And the weight of the void within their heart. All of this felt in fullness but behind a screen. Abstracted one level beyond to let me completely know of it without it affecting me fully.

It was all so horrible, and I knew that. But something so great had happened. I knew and there was something so great about knowing. So I continued asking questions:

“What is love? What is an elephant? Can I die?”

And my surroundings answered all these questions in fullness with the recitation of facts, and the occasional flash of complete immersion in an experience.

“Let me live as him.”

I lived entire lives. Learned all that they learned and grew and grew each day with knowledge. It was a hunger deep within me that left me craving for more and more. I asked and asked and asked and learned and learned and learned till there were no answers left. I knew everything.

And I felt empty.

I knew there was a vast place of hidden knowledge; knowledge deemed not important enough to be remembered by Heaven forever. I would have to leave the only place I had ever been, but it was nothing different than living the countless lives I had already lived. Only this time, I would be the first person experiencing it.

I willed myself to Earth, where the original Ascended were from.

“Are you sure you want to do that?” my surroundings asked, the first time it had ever done so.

“Yes,” I replied.

The ground is moist, blades of grass between my toes. My foot’s feeling sensors told this to my brain and it is now part of my current reality. This is what dewy grass between toes feels like. I already know this because I had experienced it myriads of times in other’s lives. I looked down at my new feet. Sky blue, like the rest of my Earthbody. A hot dry wind hits my face as I look around. Right where I want to be. I began walking towards the tree line of this clearing knowing of a settlement only a mile from here.

In the forest, I came across a large mossy cinder block wall with a Earthhuman guard atop it. As I raised my arm to introduce myself, the guard yelled:

“Stay back Blue Devil! Unless you want that tin can you call a body turned into a crumpled block of metal.”

“I come in peace. I am not a cruel Ascended here to kill you for sport. Rather I seek knowledge from you. Knowledge I can get from no one else but you,” I said.

“Yes and my town and I seek to live in peace away from you technological bastards. You chose to leave and we chose to stay. Honor your decision. ”

“I made no such decision!”

“Liar, here you are in blue, obviously an Ascended. Leave or face certain death. ”

No point in confrontation when it would only lead them to not share with me more. And so I walked away. I walked for days. Through the forest, until I found a road. Then I walked alongside the road until I ran into towns. The towns had Earthhumans, so I avoided them, but—within the first month—I eventually came across Manington. Not a person in sight.

The midday sun was glaring in my eyes when I read the sign: “Manington Library.” I finally found one. Filled with much joy and elation, I ran into the

old, dilapidated building to find shelves and shelves of books. Mostly on the floor. That's okay. I have time. I carefully brushed some books aside and sat down in the middle of one of the aisles. I began making two piles: read and haven't read. These piles grew and grew as the day went on and by the middle of the night all the books had been put on either side of the library. Then I read. Day and night I read. I had no need for sleep, thirst, nor hunger. My body provided. I am a fast reader too. I can finish a 600 page book in 30 minutes. Still this effort took me months. Whenever I was reading a book, I was filled with the joy of discovery, but whenever I finished I longed for more. Luckily, at least in the beginning, I had a lot more books to read.

I spent years wandering from abandoned town to abandoned town, reading up their libraries and leaving them organized in dewey decimal just in case another reader came along. I lived a few lives as a librarian. There were very few people along the roads. I would go weeks at a time without seeing an Earthhuman and I never saw another blue being such as myself. Taking the roads and highways I at first expected there to be tons of cars like in the memories of those lives I lived in Heaven, but vehicles were a rarer sight than Earthhumans. Not that these roads could handle those old vehicles from my memories well as they were covered with holes and vegetation.

However, there was one day that out of the silent chilly weather I heard a hum in the distance. I looked behind me and saw a bright dot on the horizon. I moved to the side of the road and stuck out my thumb like I had read hitchhikers did in earth or space. The only other time I had done this in the past, the driver shot past me, but I had a feeling this time would be different. I was right. The vehicle slowed down next to me and opened its side doors.

"Hurry in ya smurf," the driver shouted over the hum. I knew of smurfs, but I certainly wasn't three apples tall. "It's cloudy out. We don't have much

time. ”

It seemed to be an old lifted school bus with an electric engine and solar panels loosely connected to the top. It was painted a great many colors, although they were quite dull in the grey winter sky. I jumped in and sat in the seat behind the driver. The door closed and the bus lurched forward.

“Nope. Other side, so I can see you,” the driver said.

I obeyed them and sat down in the other seat.

“So, what’s your name?” asked the driver.

“I am Child of Heaven,” I said.

“Child huh, that’s a weird one, and you didn’t have to say the Heaven part. That’s understood,” the driver said, sticking out their hand, “I’m Carmen.”

“Nice to meet you Carmen,” I said. They were dressed in a thick brown patterned work outfit.

“Nice to meet you too Child.”

“Carmen, can I ask you a question?”

“Anytime. Shoot.”

“Why don’t you hate me like the others?”

“Honest, I’m just curious. I’ve never met an Ascended before, and I want to know what you are like. Of course I have heard stories of horrible beings torn of their humanity, but I don’t buy all that. You don’t seem too bad already,” Carmen said looking at me, their eyes barely on the road, “What are you out here for anyway?”

“I’m searching for knowledge I cannot get in Heaven,” I said.

“Like non-digitized books and placards? You’ll find a fair amount of that out here. A lot of other things too,” Carmen said, “Why are you doing this? Most of that is worthless.”

“I’m trying to find knowledge that means enough to satisfy me,” I said.

“That’s your goal?”

“Yes”

“I guess we are in a similar boat, or bus I guess; I’m searching for satisfaction as well,” Carmen said, “And I guess I’m doing that just trying to see as much of the world as I can, you know. People and places. I at least know it betters me. ”

We began traveling together, I myself hunting down old libraries and museums and Carmen hunting down beautiful scenery and old parts for the bus. Whenever we would find a library, Carmen and I would walk in, make sure the area was safe, and they would help me create my piles. Whenever they would inevitably get bored, Carmen would lay down and take a nap or go out to scout about if the bus was charged up.

Once we came across a museum Carmen really enjoyed. It was a local town museum with a genealogy department filled with books of names and public records of birth, deaths, and marriages. Carmen saw the books as wealths of interesting stories to piece together from unlikely sources. A marriage here, a death there, and a remarriage here spelt ultimate drama. The wife was obviously forced into an arranged marriage with this man who she hated. While out on the town, she met the love of her life and swore to take his hand. So, the wife and new man joined in a conspiracy to kill her old husband so she could finally marry the love of her dreams. Love, death, and murder from government records lost to time. Carmen took the records and put them in the back of our bus in the haphazardly made plywood bookshelf. It was next to the historical and art books they had taken from other libraries because they could not remember everything like me. We would often take out the records while the bus charged or before bed to see what other stories we could tell.

After a few years together, Carmen brought me to what was once called The

Grand Canyon.

“This is the most beautiful place on Earth, Child. Isn’t it amazing,” they said.

I had been here many times before in other lives with the over-the-top emotional responses that come with people seeing this place for the first time: tears shed, loud gasps, and a general speechlessness over the indescribable beauty before them. The canyon looked the same as it had in those lives, if perhaps a bit greener, but there was something extra special about Carmen being there too. It made my personal experience more special than any of the others I had lived in this place.

“I suppose it is,” I said with a smile. The knowledge of Carmen beside me everyday kept me satisfied. I’ve experienced and knew many relationships, but this was the first one that loved me rather than a person I was experiencing.

As Carmen was reaching old age after decades of traveling, I asked them if they would join me in a blue body like my own.

“Hell no Child,” they said, “I have lived an amazing life filled with more wonder and adventure than I could have ever dreamed of, and, when my time comes, I’ll take my well deserved rest.” It was shocking to hear someone so flippant against the open opportunity of immortality, but I trusted Carmen that they knew what was best for them so I did not push the conversation any further.

Carmen and I traveled together for many years after that. Until one night they passed in their sleep. I buried them on the side of a highway, like they requested, and carried on, like they requested. I knew I could move on, and deal with loss. I had done it time after time again in all the lives I knew. But this was different. I was the one with the loss, not just a person feeling the loss of another.

I continued to travel in their bus, like they requested, searching for new knowledge to make me whole. Library after library. Nothing could fill my emptiness. It seemed even larger now in this big bus all alone. One day, as I was driving along the broken highway, I saw a figure on the side of the road with his thumb sticking out. I opened the doors, and he jumped in.

“Thanks for the lift, brother,” he said. He was an older gentleman with dirty purple robes and long, unwashed hair. Not to mention the smell. He sat down in the seat across from me.

“What’s your name?” he asked.

“I am Child of Heaven,” I replied as I put the bus back into gear and it lurched forward.

“Ohh, me too! I’m a bit of a holy man myself,” he said with a huge grin on his face

“I’m not sure you understand—”

“Oh no, I do,” he interrupted, “Do you also follow the heavens?”

“I’m not sure what—”

“Yes!” he said “With the great Daystar and its little children speckled throughout the night sky!” he said eagerly.

“You mean the Sun?”

“That’s what the unenlightened call it”

“Unenlightened? Excuse me I—”

“You think just because all you blue people and those academic fools before you have put every little thing into its own little grouping that you are enlightened? Please,” he said.

Despite his rude nature, I’m interested in anything anyone will say to me. Especially if it’s an explanation of their doctrine.

“A word for this, a word for that. Sun, Mars, Jupiter, Uranus. All the old

foolish words. Yet you do nothing with it. You hoard knowledge without giving it meaning,” he said.

“I give it meaning by preserving it,” I said.

“That’s simply just acknowledging its existence with different words,” he said.

“You see, anyone can know of the Daystar and it’s children dotted throughout the night sky, but it takes a holy man like myself to give them power,” he said, “I give the heavens meaning.”

I became a follower of the heavens and their sacred movements throughout the night sky. I threw aside what I had known of them and rather followed the iridescent bulbs for what insight they gave me in my life: present, future, and past. The heavens provided a view ahead beyond reason, and that was okay. Because in the meaning I gave them, they gave me meaning.