

SHORT STORIES

Gods Inc.

THE ANCIENT COURTIER climbed ages-worn steps, ever upward crossing barren ridges, toward the peak of Mount Olympus. Every one hundred years he had made this journey to attend the gathering of the Gods. For the first time since he'd been given the responsibility by the Creator, along with a lofty title of The Immortal Master of Universal Rule, his main job function had become more referee than overseer, and he was not looking forward to this particular gathering. The Big Guy was a bit upset and demanded changes.

His pace slowed, with many a pause for rest. At last the final segment appeared. He grasped his gnarled walking stick tight and trudged the remaining few steps to the summit.

He was known to modern day Humans as the legendary Confucius. A name he had often wondered about but, concluded long ago it was perhaps a suitable label for this era of mass confusion and mindless war.

Swirling mists of clouds grew dense along the trail, obscuring the peak. This was not the Mount Olympus tourists knew of and visited. That one had fallen to ruin and decay. This was the Olympus of Gods, members only. As he neared the top, the first of the brilliantly white columns appeared. Nine rows of colonnades encircled a temple, each row denoting one of the planets in this solar system. The rows, capped in gold, were consecutively higher than the first. The last and tallest circled the inner sanctum. Inside a huge golden conference table stood waiting for the Divine Gathering.

Confucius looked about as he entered the sanctum. Some of the Gods were wandering aimlessly about the temple, others sat cross-legged or leaned against pillars, snoring. Sunshine reflecting off the gold capped column rings, focused on the table and graced the hallowed room in sacred splendor.

Snort, *Zzzzzz*, Wheeez ... Snort.

Confucius made his way to a bench off to the side. Letting out a big sigh, he sat down and rubbed his very tired feet. He leaned back against a column and closed his eyes for a brief respite.

What a bunch of sanctimonious loons, he thought. Struggling to his feet, he approached the table.

"This meeting will come to order!" he bellowed, raising his gnarled walking stick. "Now!" Huge sparks flew as the stick impacted on the table.

The room fell silent. Then with much grumbling, shoving scratching and farting, the delegates stumbled about as they tried to find their assigned name tags at each place setting along the table. The grumbling grew louder as seating was found and taken. These were every day, run of the mill conference chairs. Palatial thrones had been demanded, but Confucius, the sole master of the meeting, wisely decided these egos didn't need another boost.

However, some exceptions had to be made. Buddha had to have a special chair in which to fit his enormous fat belly while sitting cross legged. Krishna also needed a seat with a higher back than usual, his many arms constantly flaying about. Buddha wanted his precious Bodhi tree set up behind his chair, but Confucius had put his foot down on that one. The last thing they needed was a tree full of birds flying around, shitting on the conference table and its participants. The thought of this bunch covered in bird shit afforded Confucius a rare chuckle.

Lao Tzu was pretty much okay with everything until Fei Zhi of I Ching fame showed up. Lao immediately began non-stop chanting of his sacred 81 verses which Fi countered by pitching his sticks all over the place and reciting all 64 Hexagram interpretations. Confucius, being an expert on both exalted practices, grabbed each by their ears and sat them in their chairs. "Stay there." he said,

Wakan Tanka made his entrance swathed in his ceremonial, stinking-ass white buffalo robe. The whole crowd went from bitching to gagging. A total meltdown ensued and Wakan Tanka, with said robe, was ceremoniously pitched into the sacred ponder pool. He returned pissed but sparkling clean with a charming scent of Ode du Bisone.

All these spiritual spats were nothing though when compared to the kicking and screaming tantrums of the three Almighty Amigos; Abraham, Jesus and Mohammed. It was "No!" to everything and then off they would go about who was the 'most colossal' and who did what to whom. The whole thing went totally ballistic when Mohammed trotted in his 72 virgins. After a heated debate, a compromise was made with Mohammed agreeing there would be no frisky virgin frolicking if the gals could keep their sex toys and wait in the foyer.

Immortal children are a pain in the ass, Confucius thought and shook his head. It had taken years just to get the seating arrangements hammered out.

With Confucius at the head of the table and Jesus and Mohammed to his immediate left and right (within thwacking range) and Abraham, Buddha, Lao Tzu, Krishna, Fi Xi along the sides and Wakan Tanka at the far end, the meeting was called to order.

Together these deities represented the quintessential promise of heavenly bliss for all Humankind. The hope and aspirations of billions of mortals, who daily lifted their shining faces toward the heavens in search of answers or bowed their heads for a private chat, these nine enlightened immortals, the saviors of Humankind, guardians of the Universe (depending on who you were rooting for), expounders of love, empathy and compassion. These sole grantors of eternal bliss had made a colossal mess of things. A cosmic cluster-fuck.

Earth, being the only true entity created by Divine Consciousness, and having witnessed the entire experiment of religious lunacy, had been invited, but declined. She hated these parasitic dipshits.

This meeting had been called primarily to address the issue of what to do with the mess, and if anything could be salvaged, perhaps continue the ruse. Confucius, courtier to the Divine, chaired. He also had that big stick. Right away the blame game began with each using the same old worn out excuses.

“Goddamnit!” Jesus said. “It’s not my fault. My teachings have become schemes for making a boat load of money off suckers. Every time I check up on things there’s another bunch of screaming redneck assholes spewing damnation and hate until the coffers are refilled, and then it’s back to their whiskey and whores.”

A huge groan swelled up from the group.

“Holy Shit!” Lao Tzu said. “There he goes again. Enough already. Dude, you totally screwed the crusades and it’s been boohooing ever since.”

“I don’t know where they get this shit.” Jesus cried. “I told them to be nice to each other and everything would be cool. But hell no, they had to go all Inquisition. Burning and beheading because it was fun. Like some Papal tailgate party. And don’t get me started on the Mormons. Planet Kolob my ass.”

“I was supposed to have grown into this all loving grandfather figure.” Jesus said. “Instead I’m back stabbed by Uncle Abraham. He convinced the Romans I

was a bad guy and they hung me out to dry, stuck me in a cave and rolled a big rock in front of it. Took me three days to move that sucker so I could get out. Which kind of helped in a way. People thought I was pretty cool after that.”

“Now hold on there!” Abraham shouted. “I had the right because I was the first. I started this club. Nobody invited you. Just because you were barn born on a bright night didn’t give you anything special. You stole my peeps from me and that was after the Romans cut me a sweet deal on some prime real estate.”

Buddha gave a little chuckle.

“I hear you, Buddha.” Jesus said. “You were not first Abe. I spent most of my earth days in the East hanging with Buddha Bros and learned a thing or two. Siddhartha here has us both by about 2500 years. And actually Fei Zhi precedes us by some 5000 years. Besides your story is so far out there even your guys have a hard time backing you up.”

“Stop it!” Confucius said and gave each a mighty whack with his stick. Holding their heads, Jesus and Abraham sat down. Grumbling and pouting, they threw little lightning bolts at each other from under the table.

Mohammed, listening intently to this exchange, had worked up a good mad. “Yeah, let’s talk about those crusades. We were doing just fine. My guys were all happy discovering astrology and physics and threading some fine poetry together. Then along comes you and your hordes sneaking over the hills dressed up in some weird, clanking kitchenware. Which didn’t do you a damn bit of good. We just lobbed off their heads, teapots and all.”

“You didn’t beat us. We came back. You had no right to our land.” Jesus growled.

“And with savage force we destroyed you!” Mohammed said. “With the power and might of Allah, we thrust ourselves upon you again and again and again!”

On the third "again" there came from the foyer a great crackling of electricity, arcing and dancing across the colonnades as 72 vibrators shifted into high gear.

Stunned, the other participants looked at each other in amazement. Except for Wakan Tanka sitting at the far end of the table, working on his third pipe full of Rocky Mountain Moose Moss. Waving his hands through a cloud of smoke, he coughed and said “Was that the second coming of your Allah?”

Amidst the groans, Confucius looked at his hourglass and noted it was lunchtime. "How does pizza sound?" he said.

And so it went for many days. Accusations and excuses of cooked up morality for all the misery and suffering. Until a tiny speck of light dared a peek around the corner at the end of the Divine tunnel.

Jesus and Mohammed agreed, after many thwacks and bruises from the gnarly stick, to equally share most of the responsibility for the plague of stupid which continues to bless Humankind.

Abraham mostly pouted. His part of the discussions, though minor since the Romans kicked out the fun Gods, had been to throw fits of rage which were quickly subdued by the Divine martial arts masters of the Far East. Buddha and Lao Tzu, having never started a war for anything quickly became the committee's residents of reason, calling bullshit on the holier than everybody Amigos. Fei Zhi, having been at the forefront of the burgeoning age of reason with the development of the I Ching's intellectual gifts of logic, including the whys and wherefores of all whatever, sat in muted humor as the Almighty Amigos were reduced to who could pee the bigger sea.

Except for the numerous, vibrant cascades of bliss, X 72; which afterwards everybody needed a cigarette, Wakan Tanka sat in silence throughout the meeting. He alone had the most reason to be angry. His people had been one with him and in that spirit, had been one with Earth and the All That Is, until missionaries showed up and divinely beat that nonsensical bullshit out of them.

Finally, with empty pizza boxes and half eaten crusts lying all about the temple, (these slobs had never cleaned up after themselves) a conclusion arrived which seemed to fit the times. An inescapable truth became evident. This bunch realized that Human intellect had jumped into the family station wagon and took off in a cloud of smoke on an evolutionary journey of discovery. The forlorn Gods, abandoned in the middle of the road, coughed gilded dust balls. The experiment had failed.

The realization had at least brought unity of purpose to this bunch of wayward warriors. It was time to say goodbye.

Together with this new enlightenment, they created one last message for Humankind. Scripted in an eternal tome, bound in stardust, it had one page.

*You are the Infinite Love of All That Was,
All That Is
And All That shall ever Be.*

*Do no harm. Help others.
Believe in yourselves.
You are the Journey.*

The meeting was called for adjournment by Confucius, seconded by Wakan Tanka. The board of directors of Gods Inc. embraced for a group hug and photos.

“What now?” Lao Tzu said, "We're unemployed."

“I’m thinking shorts, flip flops and Margaritas.” Jesus said.

Mohammed looked about with a wry smile and shouted, “Vegas!

“Weeeeeeeee!” squealed the 72.

Road trip!



In the Beginning, There was Nothing

NOTHING WOKE UP. It didn’t know what, where, how or who. It didn’t know anything, anything at all. Zip, Nada.

“Hmmm,” The very first thought flashed into being as it exploded from within Nothing.

“Not bad,” Nothing thought, and with the first of many egos to be, Nothing felt it was destined for great deeds. A soon to be legend. Worthy of many a tale around campfires.

“Campfires? What the hell is a campfire?” Nothing thought. “Tale?”

Nothing decided to take a walk. Nothing trudged, up and down every dark alley and side street to nowhere. It couldn’t become lost because there was no place to be from or at. A vacuum in a vacuum.

Except Nothing knew something. Nothing knew It was at least something because a minute spark, a crackle of “Huh?” began to grow into a tiny tickle of a thought. A strange yet comfortable energy, almost huggable, permeated from within. Or maybe without. All about it was nothing. But something beckoned. A little hint of “What the hell is that?” It seemed to hop and skip, playing hide and seek along the way, toward a conscious thought. Toward consciousness.

Nothing stopped its futile search to ponder upon this strange feeling. After what seemed an eternity, Nothing wondered, “What is ponder?”

So once again into the vast wasteland of un-ness-ness, Nothing set out to find something. Anything, anything at all that would give it a reason to be.

“It would sure be wonderful if I, at least, had some kind of historical background to form the beginnings of a subconscious,” Nothing thought. “Maybe that would give me a clue as to what I am looking for.”

“Was that a ponder?”

Eons passed. Or minutes.

“Damn it! This is getting me nowhere. Is this all, all that is?”

With his new found pondering-ness, Nothing figured this was something worth trying. “Nothing the Ponderful!” Nothing thought the very first vain thought, which brought forth an immediate search for any kind of reflection of whatever that was.

Uh oh, The ego popped, and with the first groan, thought and reflection forgot themselves.

Many more eons and or seconds passed.

Nothing woke up.

Something was different. There was recall. A recollection of some distant feeling from before. Of Nothing being nothing, then something. Nothing felt awareness flowing out. Aware that some-thing had happened, just before it awakened. As if it had become a part of something. A thought within a thought.

A tiny spark of light, an energy, which seemed to exist within the vacuum. An existent reality of itself.

Singular.

“Could this be a reason to be?” Nothing thought.

Nothing became aware of not being alone. Something trying to be free, to escape from within the Singularity. Consciousness peeked through the bars for the first time and saw a teensy-weensy, tiny spark. The first life-spark.

With an ever so subtle peek-a-boo, the energy began to grow. The first mitosis of nothing burst into something, begetting x2 to the Gazillionth power, while fading in and out, then returning, ever stronger than before. Formlessness formed. On and on it continued to grow, expanding ever faster and faster in a blinding cascade of colors and violent changing hues arcing out into the vastness of Nothingness. In unknowing awe, Nothing beheld the indescribable beauty and awesome power of creation.

It didn't make a sound. Not even a little poof.

Whether an instant or eons had passed, what had been nothing became stars and whirling galaxies, mingled with mists of Nebulae and diffuse particles, dark matter and gases ever expanding into and beyond infinity.

“How could this be? What could have caused this phenomenal event?” Nothing thought.

As that thought formed, a mass of stars, shinning brilliantly, closed in around Nothing.

“We are because of you, Nothing,” the stars said. “When you first awoke, you sensed awareness, and soon after you blessed awareness with curiosity. Then again you slept. For many eons you slept. And while you slept, you dreamed. From your dreams all that is became. You are the dreamer dreaming dreams, and we are your progeny.”

As Nothing heard this, it could sense a feeling of immense joy beginning to grow within. It grew so huge it burst forth from Nothing and spread instantly throughout all creation.

The stars, now shinning with magnificent brilliance, enveloped Nothing and said “Now you have given us Love.”

The stars began to recede, forming clusters of billions of galaxies. Nothing felt itself drawing within, becoming less and less self-aware. Just before Nothing became Nothing 2.0, it heard the stars, in unison declare “Thanks for Nothing!”

The Beginning