

Divine Intervention

Ara Trask

Being the Angel of Lost Souls was a bitch of a job; so much so that sometimes, Otto thought about asking his friend Morty, the Angel of Death, if he'd like to trade occupations. Not that anyone would allow that, but he could dream. Unlike the role of Death, there was a lot of emotional investment for Otto, whose primary objective was to convince those souls lingering on Earth to cross over. It was a lot more work than just stopping the clock and saying, *Sorry, that's it. You're done.*

Because Otto had to train himself to think like humans in order to understand their emotions, he had grown to be more like mortals than any other angel. But in changing himself to empathize with them, Otto had unwittingly made himself vulnerable. His job, over the centuries, had begun to mentally torture him. While the Almighty had granted His angels the ability to consume alcoholic beverages after much pleading and resentful mumblings, he had not given them the pleasure of knowing drunkenness (It had become an infamous moment in angel history as the first lesson as to why angels should never again ask for another human pleasure again. Thus, Almighty became known for His diabolical cleverness when it came to satisfying the grumblings of His winged nation.), and so the only relief Otto could find from his job was in two other mortal pleasures: the cinema and classic rock.

While the movies gave Otto the chance to live a life through someone else's eyes and experience happy endings, it was the music that became a constant comfort for him. It was the 1960s that really changed everything.

To his delight, a spiritual revolution swept across the new generation; suddenly, a wide array of people listened when he spoke about harmony and coexistence. The mere mention of peace and love drew them in as if the other side promised a never-ending field of cannabis. Perhaps, he thought, they figured if peace and love were thriving, a toke of good weed had to be somehow involved.

But it wasn't all daisies and doves—many of his mortal heroes died during that period, those figures on the silver screen and cathartic voices that had helped him suffer through so much. He would never forget the shock of horror he had felt after an empathetic Morty called him to a hotel in Hollywood and Otto saw Janis's body slumped on the floor. The knowledge he would never again hear her raspy voice belt out "Cry" was almost too much to bear.

Many stars hesitated to cross over when they died young. Whether it be from the denial of their expiration, or the frustration of not being able to carry out unfinished business, it was rarely a cakewalk in convincing them to move on. He spoke to them all—Jim Morrison, James Dean, Norma Jean, J.F.K., but not M.L.K.—he was ready for the “promised land” before his head hit the landing. Otto knew the circumstances of each death and closely guarded their secrets, taking his oath to do so with the utmost seriousness. He and Morty knew more about wrongful and accidental deaths than anyone outside of God.

It was during the 60s that the Angel of Death got a taste of Otto’s compassion for humans, and that Morty and Otto earned their first scolding from the All-Powerful. They had decided to take a break and crash a party hosted by Bob Dylan one night after the Angel of Death heard about it from a beatnik in Café Le Figaro. This was when Morty was sporting his shaggy Keith Richards haircut, and right after he’d dyed his hair and wings black. (Not that mortals could see angel wings, but Morty didn’t do anything half-assed.) Morty was jittery from the moment they walked into the troubadour’s hotel suite.

“Cool it, Morty. Why are you so nervous?”

“He’s *Bob-fucking-Dylan*, Ot!” Morty lit a cig with trembling hands as his amber eyes darted about the room.

“Yeah. And you’re the *Angel-of-fucking-Death*, friend.”

“I can’t believe I never thought of doing this before. You’re so brilliant, man.” Morty grabbed Otto’s face and kissed him hard on the lips.

Otto pushed Morty away. “You taste like the back end of the Marlboro man.”

“You’re so cute.” Morty pinched Otto’s chiseled cheek. The cigarette in his lips truncated his usually broad, dimpled smile.

“Alright, get back, you creep!” Otto scanned the crowd. “So if this works, we’re meeting CCR next.”

“I’ve already met John Fogerty,” Morty said, dragging on his cigarette.

“You—you *what?!?*” Otto grabbed his friend by the collar.

The cigarette nearly popped out of Morty’s mouth as he began to crack his Cheshire grin.

“You asshole.”

“If only you could’ve seen your eyes! That was classic, man. Do it again!”

“I hope Bob Dylan throws up on you.”

“I hope that girl with the tiny dress mistakes you for a man and tries to grab your non-existent penis.”

Otto flushed, which made his face glow pale. “Thanks a lot.”

“Hah-hah! Oh, shit, you look like a light bulb!”