

Heaven

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It was an unusually warm afternoon in late December. I was finishing a nap, still half asleep really, drifting among tatters of old Christmas carols in my mind, when suddenly it was *right there* in front of me. Hidden in plain sight among the strands of Hark the Herold. *Born that man no more shall die.* And then, as if taunting, *Born to raise the sons of earth, Born to give them second birth.*

Dawg!

The cold reality of that two-faced covenant slapped me like a wet glove. The Old Testament makes no mention of heaven as a precinct of man. No mention of a final reward. And why is that? Well, for the simple reason that there *was no such heaven* then. God, who had created the heavens and the earth from nothingness, God who had originated mankind from a lump of clay, that very same God had, in the beginning, sentenced everybody to die! *Dead* dead. As doornails. Once and done. Over with.

But then, about two thousand years ago, He changed His fucking mind. I picture an old AI professor dabbling with a simulated world in the gloom of his humming computer laboratory, fine tuning the rules. In His infinite wisdom, God said to Himself, “Whoa, I got a better idea.”

I envision a weary, unbroken line of men and women trudging toward a final, ancient, carved-wood door weathering on a darkling plain. A door through which no one had ever been allowed to pass. Heaped around and about are vast piles of moldering bones. Funeral pyres smoulder. This is a final destination. They die like cattle in a slaughter house pen. And then God, with his better idea, flicked an invisible switch, and the next one in line passes *through* that doorway and ascends into heaven. The rules had been changed.

What troubles me most, in the lingering cotton candy of my afternoon doze, is that if God could flick that switch *once*, well, he could flick it again. And again. He *is* God, after all. And everlasting life will flicker in and out at the whim of that half-mad professor fingering his AI console.

Think about it.

And be very, very careful not to piss Him off.