

Rejecting God

It was a remarkably average day until Randall got a call from God.

His shift at the restaurant had ended and he was relaxing at home. The possum was tired, wondering if it was worth it to turn on his video games when his phone rang. Randall didn't recognize the number, but that never stopped him from answering.

"Hello?"

"Yes, hello, this is God."

Randall straightened up some. He had never been prank called before.

"God?"

"Yes, that's right."

"Figured you'd sound like Morgan Freeman," he said, relaxing. Where was this gonna go?

"Could if I wanted."

"Oh I believe you." Randall said with a smirk, looking at his hand as he drummed his fingers.

"Do you want me to prove it? Prove I'm God?"

"Why not," Randall chuckled. Whatever avant-garde comedy routine this was, the possum was going to play along.

"Why do you always think I should sound like Morgan Freeman," Morgan Freeman said. The possum's eyes went wide and tickles whispered across his limbs. "Have you ever heard Keith David? He was the Arbiter," Morgan Freeman continued. "I know you know who I'm talking about; you love *Halo*. Played it so much Miranda stopped talking to you."

Randall didn't say anything. The knuckles on his left hand were very wide. Had they always been this wide? His hands were weird.

"Still there?" His voice was normal. It was the voice of God.

Randall nearly forgot to speak, just nodded. "Uh, yeah," he finally said.

"Great, I was thinking you and I should hang out."

Big, pink fleshy fingers with fuzzy black palms. Thick nails, but Randall was hygienic, they were cut.

"I know you're free after work tomorrow. Coffee?"

He had a freckle on his middle finger. Had that always been there?

"Hello? How does coffee sound?"

Randall snapped out of it. "Um, sure?" Could one say 'no' to God?

"Great! We'll go to the Earthy Bill's near your job. Sound good?"

"Yeah." He said it like he was confused.

"Awesome! See you then."

God hung up.

Randall flexed his fingers, watching the tendons move beneath his skin until he realized what all had just happened. Yes, video games *were* a good idea today.

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Randall enjoyed his job but hated the uniform. The collar was stiff and, outside the context of his job, awkward.

He was meeting God in it.

God had not specified when after work Randall should go to Earthy Bill's; so he went immediately after his shift. He had considered calling God back and asking, but he had no idea what he would say other than asking for more details. Somehow that seemed petty to the possum. He considered changing out of his uniform, maybe getting dressed up for his meeting with God, but what was the point? God knew he hated ties.

Did God know he hated ties? God *should* know he hated ties.

"Why, hello there!" came the voice of God.

He was a cat, blue-gray fur, bright green eyes. Jacket and tie, worn loosely and comfortably. God was business casual.

"Hello," Randall said. Swallowed. "How are you?"

"Pretty good," God said and sat down. "Nice to get out sometimes, break the routine." God tilted his head. "Routine is Godly."

The possum nodded. Couldn't argue with that.

"Did you wanna order something?" God continued, gesticulating. "My treat?"

Randall looked up at God's gently smiling face, but looked away. It didn't hurt to look into the face of God; it was just rude to stare. And he looked so . . . normal. No brilliant halos of light, no

wrinkles of omnipotent wisdom, certainly *not* Morgan Freeman; just a cat in a tie. Oh *Christ*, God was wearing a tie; Randall *knew* he should've worn a tie!

"I'm okay," Randall squeaked.

"Really, it's not a problem. In a way of speaking, I kind of own the store." God had a friendly, fatherly smile; the one flashed when telling bad jokes.

"Not much of a coffee drinker."

God laughed. "Yeah, I know."

There was a pause in the conversation. Randall scratched behind an ear. God didn't seem to mind. "So, did you want to talk to me about something?" Randall asked finally. He quickly added, "Uh, Lord?"

"Please don't be so formal," God said, waving a hand and craning his head back. "King of Kings will do just fine," he said with a laugh. Randall gave a weak chuckle. "And I just wanted to talk. Get to know you better. Spend time with you." God looked at Randall, all warm smiles and attention.

Randall swept one pink ear back. "Okay."

God shrugged. "Is that so hard to believe?" Before Randall could reply, God said, "It's not like this is raising someone from the dead."

Randall grimaced before he could stop himself. "It's just . . . I've never gotten a call from God before."

"I'm picky about those I . . . give a calling to." God's smile widened and he snapped his fingers, pointing to Randall.

Randall looked away, looking across the coffee shop. More than the bad jokes, something about this was off.

"Are you still thinking of leaving the restaurant," the cat across the table asked. "Finishing your degree?"

There was no question this was God, though. He knew about his dropping out, his job, his video games, he knew about Miranda . . . "I dunno," Randall answered. "I was never good at school, I'm not sure I could hack it."

He looked back at God but had to turn away again. God's smile. He never stopped smiling and yet it always seemed like it was fresh on his face. "I could help out with that," he said gently, comfortingly.

Randall's eyes narrowed.

“Call it divine intervention.”

Randall had to stop himself from groaning. “God, are you here to talk me into going back to school?”

God looked away but didn’t stop smiling. He fidgeted his hands and his tail switched. “Well . . . I will help out with that, but . . . frankly I’d just like to be more involved in your life.” Randall was taken aback. “Personally.”

Randall’s eyes went wide and his body stiffened. His tail suddenly felt very heavy on the floor.

“God,” he said quietly, leaning in and resting his forearms on the table, “is this a date?”

God chuckled and twisted his neck, leaning and matching Randall’s posture. There was a hint of blush across his ears. His eyes were bright . . . hopeful. “It could be.”

Oh.

His instinct was to play dead. Croak, fall on the floor, give a twitch and just stiffen. It was an evolutionary response for possums everywhere! Er, was evolution even a thing, now he had irrefutable knowledge God existed? Did it even matter? Randall was *literally on a date with God*. His expression was hollow as he openly stared. God still had that infuriating incessant smile, one finger tickling the tabletop. The cat’s tail was raised high, tip switching back and forth.

Finally, Randall shook himself from the stupor. “Oh, uh, wow.” He had to look away, but couldn’t seem to rest his attention on anything as his mind spun. People were *all over* the coffee shop, just pick one and stare! “Really?” Randall looked at God, his head twisted to one side.

God chuckled nervously, red spreading further up his ears. “Yes.” God inched his hand closer to the possum’s where they rested. “Can I consider it a date?”

Randall leaned back up, taking his hands off the table and rubbing his muzzle. “Um . . . ”

“I mean, it doesn’t have to be. It could just be coffee for now.”

Randall coughed. Blood was filling his own ears, making his head uncomfortably warm.

“Until we know more about each other. Baby steps.”

“Listen, God, uh . . . I’m sorry but I’m not really looking for anything right now.”

God’s face faltered for just a second, but the cat caught it and kept smiling. Weaker, but still a smile. Randall felt bad turning the cat down, but what was he supposed to do? *Date God?!* He didn’t even know if God existed before he got the phone call! What did the omniscient supreme being of the universe see in Randall anyway?

“Oh.”

"I'm sorry."

God flexed and relaxed his fingers. "Are you intimidated because I'm . . . because I'm God?"

"No. Well, I mean *yeah*, but that's not it. I'm just not, I dunno, *looking* right now, y'know?"

God's smile actually wilted, leaving the cat's face for the first time since Randall had actually *seen* him. His voice seemed to ring through the room like an old bell as he said, "So it's not *me*, it's *you*."

Randall's ears were on fire. "I guess so . . ."

"You don't have to be intimidated," God said. He had lost control of his voice, the entire shop could hear him. "I mean, sure, it's incomprehensible to you, being everywhere at once across all of time, but I'm the kind of guy who *can* leave work for work, y'know? I know how to handle priorities!"

"No, really, it's not that –"

"I mean, I just think we have a lot in common."

"Maybe we do, but –"

"You should at least *try*," God shouted.

"I'm sorry, but – I just – . . . no."

"Is it because I'm a guy right now? I can change that! It's easy!"

"I mean –"

"It's just I know you've been watching all that gay porn, I figured I'd be good!"

Randall's eyes went wide and his jaw slack. He flicked his eyes around the shop. Yup, *lots* of people looking. Randall's head was so warm the possum was sure he had a fever. He hid his face in one hand.

"That doesn't matter to me, really! I'm not gonna turn you into a pillar of salt for thinking about having sex with a –"

"Please, God!" Randall yelled, sticking his palms out toward God. He hadn't meant to raise his voice. "You're making a scene," he said more calmly.

"I'm not making a scene!" the cat shrieked. Randall winced and shrunk back. "I just want a reason why you won't go out with me!"

"I don't really have one."

"Then you should!"

"But I don't *want* to."

"WHY?!"

Randall looked around, desperate. He had never been like this when flirting, had he? He saw a large, formidable-looking ox approaching their table. Oh thank . . . well, not God, not right now.

"Are you guys alright over here?" the ox said.

God gave the ox a withering stare. It was a frightening look relative to the smile the cat had had.

"We're fine," God spat. Randall nervously rubbed his chin.

"Doesn't sound fine," the ox said. He didn't back down from the cat's stare.

"Actually I was just leaving," Randall said, standing. He didn't want to bail on God, but at the same time he wasn't taking 'no' for an answer.

"You don't have to go, Randall," God said. His voice was stern and he gave the possum the same stare he gave the ox. Randall wanted to play dead again. The ox, however, crossed his arms and set his jaw.

"He can do as he likes," the bovine said.

God snapped his attention back to the ox. Randall was certain there was literal fire in the cat's eyes. "And just who do you think *you* are? I'm here having a conversation with my friend and you wanna butt in? Do you have *any* idea who *I* am?" God stood up, but he was several inches shorter than the ox. Neither seemed intimidated by the other.

The ox raised an eyebrow. "Should I?"

God clenched his jaw then yelled, "I'm *God*, Alpha and the Omega, creator of the universe, Father to *all*! I know every little thing that goes through your *little* head! I have half a mind to turn you into a pheasant for your insolence!" Randall quickly looked around the shop. Every single person was looking at them. Even the hectic bustle of the line was still. Randall covered his muzzle with one hand.

The ox, his face set, put one hand on the cat's shoulder. "Sit down, *sir*."

God looked incensed the ox had touched him. "Get your hand off me."

The ox brought his other hand up and poked God in the chest. "Then *sit down*," another poke, "and *calm down*." Randall's eyes went wide at the audacity of this ox. He grabbed his ears with both hands.

The cat's face contorted with fury. "*BAM!*" He reached up and slapped the ox on the top of his head, "*Pheasant!*" And the ox was now a pheasant. The entire store gasped. The pheasant before God was obviously the same person as the ox – tall, broad-shouldered, thick arms – but also *obviously* a

pheasant. Instead of the grey fur he had brown plumage, instead of a muzzle he had a beak, and instead of a thin, swishy tail he had tail-*feathers*.

The pheasant jumped back, looking at his hands, then all over himself. "What the – I'm a *pheasant!!*"

"I warned him!" God shouted, fists clenched. "I warned him!" Randall was tugging his ears down, mouth pulled into a tight grimace. He would never be able to show his face in public again.

"He should've listened! I'm a fair God, I don't do anything you don't *deserve*, but y'all just have to go and be a bunch of *assholes* all the time!!" God threw his hands in the air and stomped away. "*Me!!*" he yelled, kicking the door the open and leaving.

It was safe to say he wouldn't expect a second date.

Randall, fingers still tugging his ears down and lips still pulled back from his teeth, looked to the pheasant. The pheasant looked at him, utterly bewildered. "I'm a *pheasant*."

Randall just whimpered.

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Randall went into work the next day. Sure he had been humiliated, but really it wasn't that bad. People got rejected and rejected others all the time. Life went on. The Earth continued to turn. Sometimes romantic comedies got written. It was normal.

Except this was *God* he had rejected. The thought kept Randall wide-awake and wide-eyed half the night. At any point the cat could burst in and smash him with a rock so heavy even *he* couldn't lift it. Eventually Randall decided there was nothing he could do, God was everywhere, and he was probably going to be killed in some frightfully embarrassing manner very soon. Why *not* go to work?

He was putting an order into the computer when the hostess came up to him. "Randall," she said, "this *really* cute husky up front says she wants to talk to you." The possum's eyes went wide. *It was God*, he just *knew* it! "She also says she knows you're here, you're not sick, you aren't busy, and you *do* have the time to talk to her; so I shouldn't believe any excuse you try to give me." Yup, definitely God.

Randall twisted his tail on the ground with a grimace. "I guess I'll be right up," he whispered. Maybe God would make it quick; a fast, Old Testament *zap* and that would be that.

Randall went to the front, steeling his nerves, hoping someone would tell his parents gently, and was stunned when he saw God. The hostess wasn't kidding, she was *gorgeous*. She also seemed nervous, wringing her hands and listing side-to-side; certainly not the collected cat from yesterday. "Hey," God said with a meek wave of the hand.

"Hi," Randall said, surprised God didn't seem angry. "You look . . . nice."

God looked down at herself and then back to Randall. "Well, after yesterday I didn't think you'd want to see the cat again," God chuckled.

Randall grinned. God tapped her fingers together.

"Listen, I wanted to apologize. For yesterday. I was just really hopeful, and it's been a while, and I don't take rejection well, but that isn't an excuse. I shouldn't have made such a ruckus, and I'm sorry I embarrassed you."

Randall blinked. Sorry? Apologize? God was asking forgiveness? Randall felt more relieved than he had ever felt in his life. He *wasn't* going to be killed by a stampede of rabid beat poets! *Probably!*

"Well . . . thank you," the possum said. "Apology accepted."

God smiled. It was far less disconcerting now.

"You should probably turn that ox back into an ox, though."

"Oh," God waved a hand, "already done, he'll be fine. Just a little . . . divine experience for him." God wagged her fingers; Randall forced a grin. "I also got you this," God said, pulling a card envelope from her pocket. "Amazon gift card. To make up for, y'know, being an *epic ass*, and yelling out about . . . things . . ."

Randall held a hand up, "Oh, no, you don't have to."

"Please, I insist."

Randall took the card, unsure how to feel, when the husky added, "Consider it a gift from God."

Randall's eyes fluttered closed in a cringe. "God, you know nobody *likes* puns, right?"

"Yes, yes I do." God smiled widely, looking every bit the 'pun dog' meme. Randall knew then being a husky was all part of God's plan.