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### **Cosmic Interviews.**

A funny thing happened on the way to the laundry mat- I met a Genie and he gave me three wishes.

When he came forth, ushering through a pinky smoke, he looked annoyed.

“Before you say anything, here is my list of disclaimers and no-go’s. “ He turned his face away in disgust and with a flick of his wrist unrolled a crumpled piece of parchment paper.

1. I can’t make you live forever. Get over it.
2. I can’t make you go back in time for more than 24 hours. And no one is ever satisfied with just 24 hours.
3. I can’t make anyone fall in love with you.

“Ok.” I wasn’t particularly interested in those choices.

“Whatever you decide, be smart because it is a pain in the ass to do clean up afterwards. “ At this point he sat down with a dramatic flourish on the bench and started folding my yoga pants.

“Understood.” He looked wearily at me.

“So what? You want to be taller?”

Wow. He went there.

“No, I am good,”

He studied me. “Um... super rich?”

“Yes. But does someone have to get hurt or die to accomplish that?”

“Probably, but whatever. Next.” Genie was now fashioning dryer sheets into mini-tee-pees.

“Wait- hold off on the rich thing.” I had a better idea.

“Hear me out. What if universal qualities were like the Greek Gods and I got to hold court and pick the one I wanted most in my life?”

He looked at me as if I had just confessed that I liked to bite off my own toe nails, dip them in Tabasco sauce, and give them a pet name.

“I’d say that counted as three wishes rolled into one with a side order of crazy. And where are you going with this?” he rubbed his stomach petulantly and sighed. “Hungry here.”

“Everyone speculates about, *what if I ruled the world? Or what would my super hero power be? Or what if I was Beyonce for a day?* Here I could be my own personal casting director for **universal qualities**.”

“Uh- you sure you don’t want to be 5’7?” whispered the Genie.

“Yea.”

“Universal qualities- come in up.” Genie made some sweeping motion with his hand.

The room flattened and waved, turned upside down, and with a plop sat a bunch of semi humans looking jet lagged and lost.

I was now wearing a crimson velvet robe and holding a scepter.

“Nice touch, Genie.”

I surveyed my new surroundings. Magically I had been transported to a white board room with a long, austere wood desk. There were ten, maybe twelve *humans like beings* either leaning against the wall or scratching their heads. Genie clapped his hands and they all exited through a door.

“Off you go. You get hold to hold the interviews. But there is one thing: You can’t ask too many questions. Seeing as they only morphed into human form for your stupid wish most of them only can verbalize a few words.”

“How will I know if ...”

“You will know. Here.” Genie handed me a clipboard.

“Let me see... who did I want to meet? Love, enlightenment, caution, apathy, joy, hope, where to start?”

I considered bachelor number one,love. But If **Love** walked in the door-oi vay, I couldn’t start there. Over done, anyway. Too complicated, too Cole Porter and too transcendentalist poetry.

“Let’s try **Caution.**” Many a cringe worthy moment in my life had been born from not exercising caution. This is exactly what I needed. Immediately I heard a quiet wheezing. A rumped figure shuffled in wearing a gray track suit, prominent dark circles under his eyes.

”**Oh, no.**” he chants a few times. I see his point.

“Oh, no.” I agree. Why should I choose you? Passion is exhausting. Hopefulness is a pain in the neck. Optimism can be a helluva drag. But if I chose Caution that means a life without one drop of mad, crazy recklessness... no, can’t do it. Next.

“Alright. Bring in **Enlightenment.**” I settled down into my cushy leather chair and waved my scepter.

Enlightenment glided in, wearing a shiny checkered suit festooned with mini- mirror appliqués and silver shoes on his feet.

“**Ah –ha**” he proclaimed.

“Ah-ha,” I echoed back. Why should I choose you? Drumming my fingers on the table I considered it. Do I want to be enlightened all the time? That’s a lot of pressure, holding all that wisdom. Where is the fun in discovery then? And frankly sometimes I enjoy being an idiot. Pass.

“**Apathy**, please.” God knows I have had the life sucked out of me by caring too long and too hard, often for things far beneath me. Might feel good to be cold and detached. It takes few long minutes until something formless slouches through the door wearing, I think, a see through shirt or, wait, no shirt. Of course why would he - he doesn’t care?

“**Yeah, so what?**” he shrugs.

“So what?” I try it on for size. Why should I choose you? This was a possibility. Apathy is cool. Everything is really simple. No investment, no defeat, equals no disappointment. But it also means a pretty passionless existence. And I liked caring about... something. Onward.

“What about **Joy?**” Before I finish my sentence, the door has flung open and bouncing in on a pogo stick wearing crisp, yellow, seersucker pants comes Joy, holding a pin wheel in his hand, eyes ablaze with curiosity.

“**C'mon,**” he urges.

“C'mon yourself.” Something is not right. What was it that I needed? Here I was handed this magical moment, but I didn't know what to do with it. With a wave I dismissed Joy. Now Genie is giving me the stink eye. I need a short break.

I change the subject.

“Have you ever noticed ellipses?” My Genie was now playing candy crush and doing online trading.

“Not actually listening to you.”

“Just hear me out. Ellipses, the dot dot dot, omission of a word or words, you know what I mean? In fairytales, at every end, there is always some kind of ellipses. Like ‘the princess had been heartbroken...until she met him. Or ‘the monster tormented the village... until the spell was broken.’

**All my life I have been waiting for the other side of the ellipses.**” For the first time in his whole inconvenient visit, Genie looked at me with actual curiosity. He waited with his hands quietly folded in his lap. I continued.

”I want the thing that explains it all. The key. I have lived every day feeling like I never was supposed to be here, my life was a big cosmic mix up, like switched baggage claim tickets.”

“You want the happy ending?”

“Sure, but that isn’t what I mean. “

“You want some Cosmic Explanation?”

I shook my head.

“Maybe you want better questions?” Maybe.

I needed to callback in **Joy**.

He bounced into the room.

“Why should I choose you?”

“Why wouldn’t you?”

“Don’t answer a question with another question. Not everything in life is delightful.”

“True. Even amusement parks have the house of horrors.”

“So pretend everything is joyful no matter what?”

“Pretending isn’t the right choice. Accepting is.”

“Do not get all Kung Fu Panda on me.” I narrowed my skeptical eyes. Apathy was starting to look pretty good right about now.

“Listen,” **Joy** continued, “scary rides have a gift, too. They leave you breathless, feeling more alive, infused with new found courage. That’s good though it doesn’t always feel that way at the time. At the end of your life do you want to feel like you watched a pleasant movie with little mystery?”

“Yes.”

“Then you want **Happiness**.”

“What’s the difference?”

“**Joy** is always on the way to **Happiness**. **Joy** is the car you take. **Happiness** is when you are finished. **Joy** has adrenaline, pulse, it never says why. Only why not. You want **Happiness** -she is sitting over there on the bench eating kettle corn, sunning herself.”

He made a compelling argument.

“I’m listening.”

**Joy** continued.

“**Joy** involves more risks.”

It was then I noticed a small creature, unassumingly sitting cross legged on the floor. She had long blond hair. I don’t know why I hadn’t seen her before or why she was in

the room. Her dress was covered in pockets and she kept scribbling things on tiny pieces of paper and stuffing them into the various compartments.

“Who are you?” I pointed right at her.

“**Hope.**”

“You mean **Faith?**”

“No, **Faith** is my older sister.”

My heart was starting to feel funny.

“Why should I choose you?” She didn’t answer, but reached down and scribbled something on a piece of paper, folded it, and placed it in another pocket.

“Why should I choose you?” I repeated. She held my gaze and smiled. My voice rose louder, more insistent, my hands began to sweat.

“Why should I choose **you** above everyone else?” I demanded.

**Hope** was quiet as she often is.

“Because if you have more of me you’ll have more of what you really want.”

“Which is what?”

“Love.” At that point the door swung open and **Love** appeared wearing khaki shorts and donning a panama hat. He was rocking back and forth on his well worn heels.

“**You ready, yet?**” he chuckled.

“No. But I want it anyway.”

**Love** sized me up. He turned to his left and whistled slowly.

“You are a hoarder.”

What the hell was happening?

“Hoard-er. You hoard your love. Its you that holds back. I can’t give it to you with that wall up.”

I was stunned. I had been shamed by a man wearing khaki shorts.

“I don’t have a wall.”

“Yeah you do.” he continued.

“You don’t want the ellipses, what with all that unpredictability. You can’t stand too much risk, but you can’t bear too little. You got to give it away, this love and let what comes after... appear. Don’t judge, don’t worry, just do it.” He winked at me and started to leave.

Goddammit. My mind was racing, one thought eclipsing the next. If I do this. what does that mean? If I commit to hope, what do I have to give up? And if I really want to find the love of my life, what will I have to allow myself to believe could possibly happen? It was all too much, that giant leap of something.

“Time’s up.” I heard the Genie say and once again the room flattened, and waved, spinning in a blur until I was standing in front of the dryer, holding a bottle of fabric

softener. Genie was gone. I was devastated. It all had been a failure, this whole experience.

And then- I understood what my real 3 wishes had been all along. And they had been granted. It was so simple.

“The joyful hope...I might finally find love.”