

“A Flamingo Called Frank”

The man sat back in his leather chair behind the desk he called home for thirty hours each week. Enjoying the few minutes of freedom he had between patients, he stared at the ceiling, observing the way the ceiling light cast highlights and shadows on each individual bump, as if they all were important enough to deserve such treatment. He noticed that the ones closer to the light were fully illuminated, while the ones farther away were almost completely dark. Of course, he thought, this is the way it must be. After all, not all of the bumps can be near the light, and it would be ludicrous to add more lights to an already fully lit room. Still, he couldn't help but feel sorry for the bumps at the edges of the room, the bumps that would never feel warmth from the iridescent glow of the fluorescent light.

His thoughts were interrupted by the inevitable voice telling him that his next patient had arrived. “Mr. Jehovah is here, Doctor,” the voice informed him.

The man sighed and tore his attention away from the ceiling, bringing his seat back to its upright position. “Send him in,” he responded, straightening his tie, expecting to make a good first impression.

The door to the office opened, letting in a streak of light from the other room. A new glow was brought to all the bumps on the ceiling near the entrance. The ones farther away were still left in the dark, though. It was like two armies in the heat of battle; light and darkness, amassed on opposite sides of the room, fighting to gain control of the ceiling in the middle. The man stared at this epic war, lost in the struggle happening above his head. The figure silhouetted in the doorway entered without noticing the war

on the ceiling and closed the door behind him, ending it for the time being.

Mr. Jehovah ambled to the couch, ruffled his feathers, and sat down. “Hello, doctor,” he cooed, glancing around the room to fidget off his nervousness.

“Pleased to meet you,” the man responded, slightly put off by the fact that he was talking to a flamingo, but skilled enough to make his reaction unnoticeable. He stood up and walked to the chair opposite the couch, and sat in a position suitable for criticizing a patient. “So Mr. Jehovah,” he started, “what’s wrong with your head.”

“Oh, please don’t call me ‘Jehovah.’ Worshippers call me that. My friends call me Frank,” the flamingo Frank squawked. He fluttered his wings and swung his legs up onto the couch in order to lie down.

“Fair enough,” the man said. He noticed the way the light danced upon the ruffles covering Frank’s body, mingling with the pink to create a technicolor delight for his eyes. “Now, tell me about these ‘worshippers.’”

“Ugh. All these humans praying to me, looking for some sort of salvation. Everyone’s asking for a miracle.” Frank closed his eyes and sighed deeply.

“And do they talk to you often?” the man questioned. The feathers covering Frank’s body spread out with every breath he took. The white light probed underneath this fluffy exterior to find the dark places near the skin and expose them to what they so justly deserved. The man could see the light exploring the underside of the feathers and caressing them with the gentle warmth it brought.

“Every day. And I’ll tell you something else, they actually think I care. It’s as though they think that because I know everything, I have some kind of empathy to their problems. Well you know what, I don’t. Christ, it’s not like I’ve ever been mortal.” He

paused for a second and raised what would have been an eyebrow if flamingoes had eyebrows. "I did try that whole 'son of God' thing once. I figured if they're going to believe in it I might as well make it happen."

"How did it go?"

"Not so well. The kid turned out to be an atheist. I kept sending him visions but he thought it was just the weed talking. I never could get him to believe in himself."

Frank let a out a long sigh that trailed off.

"Tell me more about the 'worshippers,'" the man said, still transfixed on the feathers.

Frank squawked a bit and said, "I just can't understand why they think I want their worship. What kind of person would I be if I made my own creations worship me? I may not be perfect but I'm not *that* shallow. And prayers. Do you know what it's like to hear people cry about their problems all day every day for all eternity? It's fucking depressing, that's what it is. I would have attempted suicide already if it was possible for me to die."

He opened his eyes again and saw the man staring at his body. "You think I'm insane, don't you?" He almost waited for a response. "You don't think I really am a deity, do you? I bet you think I couldn't make a miracle even if I wanted." Frank stretched his neck out and twitched his wings irritably.

The man observed how Frank's elongated neck left a thinner covering of feathers, allowing his skin to grasp some more of the light it wanted so desperately. The skin beneath the feathers, the bumps on the wall, everything fought to gain control of the illumination. Everything wanting to be seen. Everything wanting to feel important.

"Now, I didn't say that," the man sputtered out.

“You didn’t have to. Your eyes have a placating look in them. I’ll prove it, jerk.”

He threw himself off the couch and half-flew to the middle of the room. He paused for a moment, building tension in the way that only a flamingo can, slowly lifting one leg to the underside of his body and making his feathers stand on end. His wings elevated higher and higher until perpendicular to the ground. They started to flap, making a low humming sound like a tiger playing a kazoo. They began to flap so quickly that they melted into an aura around Frank’s body, an aura of pink light encapsulating his torso, which then spread around his entire body. The aura gained intensity and flared up in brilliant white light, like the flash of a camera that extended forever.

Through the painful intensity, the man kept his eyes open, darting them around from the walls, to the ceiling, to the desk. The light spread throughout the room, covering everything with its glow. Every bump on the ceiling was illuminated. Near Frank and in the corners, every little imperfect perfection received the same share of the light as any other. Nothing was left out, nothing was prejudiced against. The flamingo’s feathers were gone; the walls, ceiling, desk, all gone. The man, smothered in brilliance, smiled with the unity of his room.