

SECTION 4

CHAPTER 23: UNNAMED

“Ye gads!” exclaimed Missy, her true accent emerging due to her general level of comfort plus her first can of city beer. “I can’t believe folks are still making cans,” she offered as the thought crossed her mind. So much was happening perhaps in the silent spaces and—

Lettuce Bamboo stumbled off of the transport unit. *Oh shit. What sort of hellish landscape did I wake up in now?* She bounced down the hot pavement. Parking signs. Coin machines. *Oh, a bee.* “Hey there bee. Where can a person find some—”

“Food?” said the bee, pulling herself out of the white-petaled flower. “What do you need *food* for? We’re all just going to die one day, anyway.” Another bee made itself known to Lettuce and did the bee equivalent of rolling its eyes. “You probably forgot to switch at the last junction,” it said. “Don’t worry. Just go down that road and around the corner. You’ll find what you are searching for. Oh, and don’t go jump-

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ing in front of any mechanical beasts.”

Um...

“Circles. We’re just going around in circles.”

“Well, I was hoping for one *big circle*,” said Apple Hippopotamus to her friend Zorba Cathexis.

“I think we’re running short on time.”

“Well, not to be pedantic,” said Apple in an overly pedantic tone, “but I would say it is more as if we are running behind schedule. We’re out of sync, you might say, even.”

Zorba looked tired. He thought about the last time they ate and wondered from whence Apple drew her energy. They had now been hiking this trail for *too damn long* if you asked Zorba, which Apple rarely did. His dreams of late had been communicative, but slippery. Apple tugged at her top, which, since the sun had started its descent, had picked up a habit of sliding down over her ample bosom. Apple had more or less ample bosoms.

“I think we’re due for contact. Soon, I think.” Apple stopped walking. “You trust me, don’t you?”

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CHAPTER 24: IT'S NOT QUITE WHAT YOU WERE EXPECTING

“Dammit Apple. You don’t need to push so hard all the time. You’re leaking again.”

Apple wiped at her nose with the rag she was using as a handkerchief.

“BRRRP. BRRBRRRRRP,” she said. *Oh fuck, she thought. I’ve lost the ability to speak words. Oh no!*

WE HAVE ONCE AGAIN REACHED THE POINT IN OUR BURGEONING NOVEL WHERE OUR AUTHOR HAS FORGOTTEN YET AGAIN WHY SHE IS WRITING THIS STORY. BETTER THINGS TO BE READING, YOU HAVE. THIS WORLD IS STILL SHITTTTTTTTTT!!!!!!! WHAT IS THE POINT!????!?!?!?!?!?!? YAWN. BLAH BLAH BLAH BLAH. FUCK. IS ANYBODY OUT THERE? HELLO? McFLY?

Sorry. Where were we?

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CHAPTER 25: IN WHICH OUR PROTAGONIST SHITS THE BED

“Turn back. There is nothing—”

Just then, we realized, all of your arts were useless. Seriously, there must be some other path that we haven't tried or something. Everything we had been doing up to this point—our entire oeuvre—had shit to offer the world, which was in the midst of dying the most horrible of deaths. But, but, but, you said, over and over and over and over and over. And over and over and over. But, but, but, but. No, there is nothing to be gleaned here. Try something else.

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CHAPTER 26: AND YET, STILL, PERHAPS

A. stared hard at her reflection on the page. Was that really her? But how did they know? How did they write her part soooooo well. As if they knew her. As if they *were* her. She wrapped the book back in its wrapping and tucked it into her sack.

“You don’t look like yourself.”

It was true. Apple didn’t look like herself. This *probably* was due to the disguise she was wearing. Apple was disguised as a person who worked in a nondescript office building from 9 to 5, Monday through Friday, and had been for the past five months. But perhaps this person was picking up on the fact that, as of today, Apple’s soul was now probably officially dead. This was probably a necessary if unpleasant sacrifice Apple had to make if she was going to successfully infiltrate

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this dense hierarchical conspiracy of resource extraction that had somehow managed to infect the entire city. Apple lived in a city again. With office buildings. Probably. Probably Apple was a little bit hungry and maybe hungover.

“How was your weekend?” asked Apple’s co-worker.

“Oh,” thought Apple, thinking like a person who split their day cycles into discrete time units, “my week-end was enjoyable. How was your week-end?”

Meanwhile, on the other side of the world, Johnny Pickles sat down across the table from ahhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh who cares. We’re not gonna get out of here alive. We’re not going to survive if we keep playing the same roles again and again. And again and again and again and again.

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CHAPTER 27: IT'S A PLAY, DON'T YOU GET IT? (IT'S A PLAY)

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CHAPTER 28: ONE OF THESE DAYS

ACT FOUR

SCENE.

(Setting.)

PERSON: Words.

OTHER PERSON: Words.

(PERSON does something.)

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CHAPTER 28: ONE OF THESE DAYS

ACT FOUR

SCENE.

(Setting.)

PERSON: Words.

OTHER PERSON: Words.

(PERSON does something.)

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CHAPTER 29: ONE OF THESE DAYS

“One of these days, Apple. One of these days.”

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“One of these days, Apple. One of these days.”

CHAPTER 30: ONE OF THESE DAYS

“Well that was weird. How did we end up here?”

“Yeah,” replied Zorba. “All of a sudden, no less.”

Apple and Zorba were now back on the road. It was so many years into the future now. And things were totally different and/or exactly the same. It was, you know, *weird*.

Apple and Zorba were clearly the main protagonists in this story, even though, you know, the other characters were totally their own fully fleshed out individuals with their own complex stories, too, obviously. I think something important was happening though. In this story. Maybe. Right now. At this exact moment. I am having difficulties communicating it though, at the moment right now. So...how are you? How are things? Et cetera. Interesting. Totally. Um. Fuck.

Apple stared at the blue and red bar graph that represented some informational content that Apple was struggling to pretend to be interested in. Oh, no, wait. This happened *earlier* in the story. We forgot. Apple was now back in the jungle. Or, um, on the road. Walking with Zorba, who had had his own adventures these many many years, which probably did not involve pretending to be an office drone of some sort or other for months on end. Apple and Zorba were probably very happy when they saw each other for the first time after so many many years of not seeing each other. Were they still the same people that they were before? Did they still speak the same language? These

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"Life sucks. The point is to try to make it suck less."

"Who said that?"

"Cite your sources."

"Nobody cares about that. Why are you pretending this matters?"

"No. Clearly, none of this matters."

Just then, somebody farted. And we all laughed, because farting is intrinsically humorous. I don't know why. That's just the way things are. You cannot change the way things are. Otherwise they wouldn't be themselves. Apple Hippopotamus collapsed in the path. This was all just too much for her. She definitely was not ready for this. To live in a world with other people. With you, for instance. Zorba stopped and looked down at his friend. "Well, that's one option, I guess."

"I don't wanna go on," she whined, as Zorba continued to send her various telepathic messages with his eyebrows. "Okay, fine." Apple began the process of awkwardly picking herself up from off the ground. "But I reserve the right to re-flop at any moment!" Pause. "Are you hungry?"

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CHAPTER 31: poetry?

SCENE.

(Somewhere in space.)

PERSON: The youth are so respectful these days. It almost gives me hope for the future. Sometimes.

(Stage directions.)

OTHER PERSON: And other times?

PERSON: Other times?

(OTHER PERSON gives PERSON a look, as if to say, yes, what about other times.)

PERSON: There are no other times. There is only now.

(Something happens?)

NEXT SCENE.

(Some sort of god walks into the room. In the corner, sits another god, scribbling into a notebook.)

“Whatcha writing?” asked Zorba, after he returned from taking the piss to find Apple squinting and scribbling by the light of a now smallish fire. “You know, I came across one of your reports once. It was random as fuck.”

“That’s why I write ‘em,” said Apple, not looking up. “I’m not working on a mystery, though. I think I might have solved all the mysteries.”

“Seriously?”

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“Yeah, I think so. Everything makes perfect sense now. Don’t you think?”

“Yeah, I guess I didn’t notice. But yeah. Is that...weird?”

“It’s uncanny.”

“Yeah. Uncanny.”

“But it’s not mysterious, though.”

“No, of course not. You solved all the mysteries.”

“Uh huh.”

“So what are you working on?”

“Oh,” said Apple. “I’m writing a story, I guess.”

“Oh Apple. Not another story.”

“Sorry,” she replied sheepishly. “I just couldn’t help myself.”

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CHAPTER 32: THIS IS A STORY, MAYBE

Sure, sure. Maybe this is a story. I suppose that makes sense. Odd, this plot though? Odd, yes? It's funny though. I guess. Sad and funny. A heartbreaking tale with a well-developed sense for humor. I am so appreciative of all I've been given. I want more, though. I expect more. I expect perfection. That's not too much to ask. Is it? Funny though. This story. Sad. I guess. Kind of funny though. It breaks my heart.

"Oh. That's a surprise." Apple looked towards the other side. "I wasn't expecting that." She paused. "I suppose I never am."

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