

Excerpt from Gott Mit Uns by Dan McLaughlin ©2010.
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The answer was lost as there was a very loud thud outside the door of “the commons”. Give this Janet lady some credit, it did feel just like an earthquake.

“I think that’s her,” Janet said, unnecessarily.

I got up and went over to open the door. Just outside was a truly large penguin perhaps 8 feet tall, looking regally about her.

“The Great Goddess Bo?” I asked.

Having made several mistakes, including her shape, size and gender, I was not taking any chances at this point.

“Yes, fish-eater, I am the Great Goddess Bo.”

Her voice was rather deep, sort of like a later Maggie Smith.

“Oh well, just the giant penguin goddess we were looking for. Won’t you come in then?” I said as I opened the door as wide as I could as she hunched her way through.

Once inside she proclaimed again,

“I am the Great Goddess Bo. Would you like a fish?”

Suddenly a rather large fish was flopping about on the floor.

“We, um, well, thank you. Claire, would you....” I said as Claire jumped up and hustled the fish off in the general direction of the kitchen.

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We waited until Claire returned. Then I began,

“Great Goddess Bo, thank you so much for joining us here today in response to a summons by one Janet Robertson, a de facto if not necessarily de jure member of the Church of the Holy Anchovy.”

“I am the Great Goddess Bo. Would you like a fish?” she interrupted.

Suddenly another rather large fish was flopping about on the floor.

“Yes, well, thank you Great Goddess Bo. Um Claire... thank you. Great Goddess Bo, I am here to tell you that while it may look that your summons on behalf of the Church of the Holy Anchovy was a legitimate one, we deeply regret to inform you that the summons was in error and would like to escort you back to the place whence you came. Now if you will just sign or acknowledge here, and here on this Release of Cosmic Blame form, and the standard Liability Waiver form here and here, and then we can be on our way,” I looked up from my papers. “These forms are standard.”

For us, at any rate. I held out the forms and a pen.

The Great Goddess Bo looked down at me and said,

“I am the Great Goddess Bo. Would you like a fish?”

Suddenly a third rather large fish was flopping about on the floor. Claire sighed and put this fish into her satchel. I raised an eyebrow at her, but IDCRA satchels were known for their legendary carrying capacity and their remarkably well designed reinforced internal subdivisions. Each agent’s satchel was individualized to his or her own specifications. So if she wanted to put fish in there, fish it would take.

“I am the Great Goddess Bo. I have many, many fish,” the Great

Goddess Bo added. "Would you like another?"

"No no no no, thank you Great Goddess Bo," I said. "We have quite enough already. If we could just focus here on your presence here, Great Goddess Bo. Like I said, we are here to inform you that that the unforeseen and indeed somewhat problematic series of events that resulted in your being here on this plane of existence was an error and we are here to escort you back to that place where you were formerly residing. At no cost to you of course." I said.

There was a pause.

"And we have already done all the paperwork," I added.

"I am the Great Goddess Bo," said the Great Goddess Bo. "So you don't want any fish? I have other things."

Whereupon the commons floor was covered with a wide variety of aquatic life. Clair, bless her efficient little heart, had the items scooped up and in her satchel within moments.

"I am not sure if you are quite following me here, Great Goddess Bo," I tried again. "I am your agent at the UDD. I was the one who put the paperwork through that brought you here."

"I am the Great Goddess Bo. O, then thank you, fish eater. Have a fish. From the Great Goddess Bo," added the Great Goddess Bo somewhat unnecessarily.

I put my fish into Clair's satchel. It was surprisingly roomy. And her case files were surprisingly free of fish oil and odor.

"I don't think you are quite getting the point here, Great Goddess Bo. This is no longer your world. These are no longer your people. There is no place for you in this world," I said.

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“I am the Great Goddess Bo,” said the Great Goddess Bo. “This is not true. This fish eater summoned me.”

Her large fin vaguely motioned in the direction of Janet.

Oh non-specific deity DRAIN it. (A more savvy way to say “God Damn it.” You say *that* where I work, with all the actual gods hanging around it is likely to actually happen, so to play it safe we tended to be more generic when it came to swearing.)

And the Big Bird had a point. A good point. Since she had been summoned, theoretically she did have a follower, and with a follower she was a Deity with all the rights and responsibilities that a Deity gets. This meant we just couldn’t hustle her offstage. We would have to bring her back to UDD and there would have to be a formal hearing and all. And until the great Goddess Bo got her own Deitific Adjusters we would have to act both as IDCRAAs of the UDD and Deitific Adjusters to the Great Goddess Bo.

“Here, faithful fish eater, have a fish from the Great Goddess Bo.”
“Thank you,” said Janet as she scooped up the fish that appeared at her feet. She handed it to Claire who put it in her satchel.

“Seven years at the Academy and I am a keeper of the fish morgue,” Claire muttered.

“I am the Great Goddess Bo,” said Bo. “And you are correct, Fish Eater, in one thing. There is much that is new to the Great Goddess Bo of this new world.” She looked around. “What is this food called ‘Pizza?’ We will discuss only after a pizza.”

“Pizza?” asked Claire who was suddenly in a much better mood. “I like pizza. Let’s eat pizza. Can I go and pick it up? Can I drive? Can I go? And what are Buffalo wings? We got a coupon for some Buffalo wings

last time and I want to get some. Can we get lots?”

Well, maybe things would be better after some food. Food that wasn't fish.

So after some negotiation on the number and amount, the pizza was ordered along with all the other fixings (salads, bread sticks, liters of soda, brownies, garlic bread and this time Buffalo wings).

“The Great Goddess Bo is here, so what boon would you ask?” said the Great Goddess Bo while we waited for the delivery guy. “I am very good with fish.”

“No, we're good, thanks,” I said. We flipped on the TV. Another anomaly of freezing time was that for some reason the only channels that come through are ones that showed old TV game shows.

It was another one of those time/space conundrum things. Since the show has already happened...at this point of the explanation I tended to zone out, but it was TV channels that showed TV game shows in rerun was the only channel that we consistently could get when we froze time. “It would have been much easier for me to go out and get the pizza,” Claire insisted at one point. “I would been there and back by back by now if I had just driven there from here.”

“No doubt that is so, but you are needed here,” I said.

OK, that was a lie.

The food actually arrived quickly, this being a college town and all, and soon we were all munching happily away.

Bo was very happy to discover the brownie. Her appreciation for the “offering” of the brownie ran to many fine sized fish that fit into the satchel quite nicely. We also agreed that despite the weird name, Buffalo

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wings were a fine addition to pizza food group.

While we had been eating, the only channel we could get was showing *Wheel of Fortune*. It was “Masters of Comedy” week and this was a special “Mel Brooks” edition and Janet had displayed an amazingly deep knowledge of his oeuvre. She was in her third explanation of “Putting on the Ritz eh-hh-ngh hnnn-ngh clump clump clump.” when I brought the discussion back to the matter at hand.

“So as you can see, Great Goddess Bo, much has changed since the last time you were here. In this land of pizza and TV the time of a Goddess who serves her followers with healthy serving of fresh fish is past. You should really come back with us and resume your rest,” I said.

“I am the Great Goddess Bo,” said Bo. “And no, simple fish eater, I disagree. The large ones are still here and are frightened by fire. The fish eaters that need me are still living among you.”

She burped and another fish popped into existence.

“Excuse me.”

Claire put the fish into her satchel.

Bo stood up a little unsteadily. I thought at the time it was the brownies she had eaten that were taking a toll, but later the lab guys figured out it had been the processed wheat in the bread sticks that she was not used to which had done the damage.

“Fish eaters hear me now. I am the Great Goddess Bo of the Church of the Holy Anchovy. I will not be constrained by lesser beings. I was created to swim and protect my people. So stand aside and let me go, you ungrateful puny creatures. And I am going to take my fish back.”

So saying she grabbed Claire’s satchel and lumbered toward the door.

If I had been younger I might have done something stupid.

Like try and stop her.

Claire did say, "Hey. You stupid Big Bird, give me my bag back."

She was younger.

And stupider. She gave away about three feet and several hundred pounds to the bird, so Great Goddess Bo did not seem to consider Clair's remarks worthy of much consideration. She just held up the satchel just above the height of Claire's hands. Claire tried to jump up and grab it. Janet and I just watched as she plodded away with Claire following her trying to jump and grab it from Bo's flippers. After the door closed behind her. Janet said,

"I might not be a professional IDCRAer or anything but my impression is that didn't go well."

"No, not quite the way I had hoped," I replied.

"God damn it," said Claire coming back to the table. "I could have used a little help there Neeregem."

"Claire, watch your language, you know when we say things like that it could be bad for 'it'," I admonished her.

"Well that Big Bird got my satchel, and in that satchel were all my case files from the session where we OKed her summons," Claire said.

"Oh," I said.

"Is that bad?" asked Janet.

"It is not good," I said.

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“We should probably get back to the office,” said Claire....

As we began to walk away we both heard far off in the distance a long wailing cry, as if a person was falling a great distance into an unimaginable hell. Then there was a distinct, if fairly quiet, thud.

“Uh-oh,” I said.

“What?” asked Claire.

“I think news of our exploits has just been processed by the main office,” I said.

“What do you mean?” she asked.

“The sound we just heard was the sound of Mr. Bosably being cast into the nether regions of Hell.”

“What? Where? Why? How?”

It seemed like she had a series of questions. I took a deep breath.

“Well, the why was an idea instituted a few Directors or so back. The idea was to make supervisors more directly responsible for the work that was done under them. They get a lot of very nice carrots, but if something goes wrong, they are responsible. That’s the why, and they are cast into the nether regions of Hell. That would be the what and the where,” I explained. “So what I am guessing is that news of exploits of the Great Goddess Bo has entered the consciousness of the upper regions of the bureaucracy of the UDD and some remedial actions were taken.”

“Poor Mr. Bosably! How awful! The nether regions of Hell! For how long?” Claire said.

“I believe it is for all eternity. But it is really not that bad,” I said.

“How is that not bad? How could being cast into the nether regions of Hell for eternity not be a very bad thing?” she asked.

“Ah, that is the ‘how’. Now you got to remember that there are a huge number of hells under the jurisdiction of the UDD and within the millions and millions of hells some “hells” are actually pretty nice places. Some of the more grim arctic gods believe ‘Hell’ is what most people perceive as a tropical paradise. And the kicker is that former supervisors gets to pick the ‘Hell’ they are cast into. And then since supervisors are pretty much masters of both time and space ‘being cast into the nether regions of Hell for all eternity’ has evolved into more a self imposed hiatus from work at a resort location,” I said.

“Oh, that doesn’t sound so bad then,” she said.

“Of course not. Some of them actually like the actual being cast down experience. Basically it’s a light slap on the wrist followed by a vacation. It is no big deal. But what it means is that someone was not pleased to hear about the Great Goddess Bo.”

“Do you think I’m going to be in trouble?” Claire asked.

“Why would you be in trouble?” I asked.

“Well she did take my satchel and umm in the satchel I had all my files,” she said.

“Oh. Yeah,” I said.

I had forgotten that.

“Oh?” she said.

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“Oh,” I said.

“Oh as in uh oh?” she asked.

“No, oh more as in huh,” I said.

“Huh,” she said.

“Yeah, like that,” I said.

“Oh,” she said.

“Yeah. Like that,” I said. “Let’s get back to the office.”

We hit the button and away we went.

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