

Paradise is well-deserved

By A.C. Zito

"You lived a great life, Wendy. I am glad I was able to be your husband for these wonderful forty-four years." Wendy smiled up at him.

"I will see you soon my love." And she drifted off. A blurry vision of her presence came before her. She was in a fairly dead bar except for a few men scattered across the little place with stools flipped over in every corner. A man who sat alone on a single bar-stool looked behind to see her staring at him.

"Well? What do you want?" He muttered as he took a swig of his beer. Wendy stared back at him, stunned as he went back to staring at his cold brew.

"Where? Where am I?" Without turning back around he yelled out:

"YOU'RE IN HELL BABY!" Wendy looked around in shock, shaking her head in disbelief while he chuckled at this and took another swig.

"This can't be!"

"Oh it is!" He immediately replied back. She began to run around the bar frantically.

"Sorry about this. But not! Welcome to my man-cave! God made it for me for the time-being while Hell is being renovated. But don't worry; I have a mattress He found in the dumpster."

"That's who I want to see!" She blurted out; "God!" Suddenly, from behind her, a door of a candescent brightness appeared from thin air. She looked one more time back at the man on the stool and then tip-toed backwards before she began her head-first run into the white light. She was immediately met with a man with a long, black beard catching her wild gallop from the bar. He put a shawl over her, calming the frantic woman down.

"Shalom." He said with a bright smile. On his head was a kippah, and Wendy then began to gasp looking around in realization as she finally muttered out:

"Where am I now?" The man didn't answer but, instead, clapped his hands up high and exclaimed:

"Olam ha-ba!" And all around dancing streamed forth before Wendy. From above she noticed angels flying high and mighty while they tossed down wine bottles which were caught in hands while others landed gracefully on some of the men's top hats. As Hava Nagila was heard from all around, men and women joined into a circle together and danced the Hora. Then Wendy saw it. Through all of the dancing and commotion another door appeared. She began to push her way towards it, but, in doing so, more people began dancing and crowding around her through her anxiety to get to it. With much grunting and pursuing she reached the front of the steps into it and left behind the celebration which only rose in tension from her exit. Upon the next level she was met with a serene grassed landscape. Sitting all around upon the peaceful serenity were what looked to be monks with cleanly shaven heads either meditating upon the ground or strolling around peacefully. One of the men stepped forward with a kind and gentle smile.

"Namasté. Your good Karma has brought you here my daughter. Welcome to Nirvana." Wendy shook her head. Gasping for breath, she plunged onwards passed the orange-robed monks. Suddenly a figure resembling that of Buddha appeared in the distance. This then had her running in the opposite direction, and finding herself tripping and stumbling over every root sticking out along the way. Up a hill she went and then finally finding herself out of the strange, little area but into a luscious forest full of greenery. Her view came into sight of a large, domed structure with towers placed right beside it to make a brilliant piece of architecture. A woman

came from out of another path in the woods wearing a hijab. She had an ecstatic smile on her face.

“As-Salaam-Alaikum.” She said triumphantly; “Welcome to Jannah.” Wendy, instead of saying anything back, only sighed in frustration.

“I don’t know what I did wrong?”

“What?” The woman replied back angrily; “Did you expect seventy-two virgins?!” She hurried ahead of Wendy, running inside of the mosque. Wendy stopped short in front of it feeling queasy. Nothing about this felt right. But then, right when Wendy felt hopeless, a shimmering came from around the structure. Peeking towards it, a glint of hope came forth. Wendy felt herself making her way to the light when suddenly, low and behold was another door streaming forth with a heavenly aura. This door was intricately sprinkled with what seemed to be the finest of gold and jewels. Walking into it, music and dancing streamed forth. But instead of seeing what she expected, a huge man with the face of an elephant jumped before her.

“You’ve made it just in time for Diwali!” He exclaimed, and moving it’s arms as if parting the Red Sea, every strange, blue figure that danced in the candlelight of the ceremony made a pathway for Wendy. As Wendy walked through it she saw one woman with four arms swaying back and forth, and another with a third eye that made Wendy wonder if she winked at her with it or not. As she finally left the endless dancing that streamed forth all around, a man with a face resembling that of a monkey’s took her by the hand and led her to a doorway different from all of the rest. It spindled forth into the sky that almost made Wendy feel afraid to try this new entrance. But as the man helped her step into it, she swiftly made her way through. Upon arrival, stars were shown all around her as she stepped onto a glass walkway. It led her to a cloud hovering right above a spectacular view of what she perceived as her solar-system. A man with a beard as bright as his eyes welcomed Wendy onto the cloud.

“Wonderful view, isn’t it Wendy.”

“Y-y-yes.” She stammered out. Upon looking him up and down, she saw the marks upon his hands and feet, quickly realizing:

“Jesus. It is you!” He nodded. She stuttered out: “What did I just walk through?” He stayed silent. Then, looking away from the view, he waved downwards to where she came from:

“All of it. All of it was what you expected. Now go! Keep going, there is much more for what you can expect.” And another doorway appeared in front of her. And Wendy stepped through.