

The Fabulous Fountain of Flying Fish

Posted originally on the [Archive of Our Own](http://archiveofourown.org/works/47996218) at <http://archiveofourown.org/works/47996218>.

Rating:	Teen And Up Audiences
Archive Warning:	Creator Chose Not To Use Archive Warnings
Category:	Gen
Fandom:	Hermitcraft SMP
Character:	Grian , Joe Hills joehillssays , ImpulseSV
Additional Tags:	Alternate Universe - The Magnus Archives Fusion , Hermitcraft Season 9 , guppy geyser , Animal Death , Existentialism
Language:	English
Series:	Part 55 of From the Archives
Collections:	Hermitcraft x TMA fics
Stats:	Published: 2023-06-19 Words: 1,625 Chapters: 1/1

The Fabulous Fountain of Flying Fish

by [Sixteenthdays](#)

Summary

[JOE]

Howdy there! Have you ever thought about ending the world?

(Pause)

[GRIAN]

...Sorry, who are you? How did you get in here?

Notes

very funny of me to still be doing this like i assume you've read the fic at this point but needed context is [the joe hills podcast](#), [what's the time, mr. wolf?](#), [pinioning](#)

See the end of the work for more [notes](#)

[Click]

[JOE]

Howdy there! Have you ever thought about ending the world?

(Pause)

[GRIAN]

...Sorry, who are you? How did you get in here?

[JOE]

Oh! Apologies. I figured it would be rude to assume a creature of compiled information such as yourself wouldn't remember me from my tape. Guess that's why they say what they do about assuming. I'm Joe Hills! From Nashville, Tennessee.

(Pause)

I asked the gentleman with the cane out there if I needed an appointment, but he said you'd been looking to speak with me and I could just walk right in.

(Pause)

Also, Cleo rang me up this morning and said something to the effect that she was concerned you might torment her with unspeakable horrors if she didn't direct me your way on the double.

[GRIAN]

I...

Now she sends you to talk to me?

[JOE]

See, what's what *I* said. She could have just introduced us when I was over during Halloween for movie night and you were in a closet somewhere and saved the trouble, but I guess it probably didn't occur to her. You know how she gets when she's working on a project.

[GRIAN]

I'm *familiar*, yes. I-

(Pause; exhale, feathers rustling)

Okay. Let's start over. You're Joe Hills.

[JOE]

That's my understanding!

[GRIAN]

Joe Hills of the books.

[JOE]

The one and only.

[GRIAN]

And you're willing to talk to me?

[JOE]

Certainly!

[GRIAN]

...What was that about the end of the world?

[JOE]

Oh, it's just something I've been thinking about for some time now. Care to ponder with me?

[GRIAN]

I... sure?

[JOE]

Thanks! Mind if I take a seat?

(Chair scrapes against the floor)

Some years ago, I had a rather unusual experience. Now, I'm no stranger to those, as I'm sure you know, but this one sticks in my memory for its sheer peculiarity.

At one of my old addresses in Tennessee, I had the good fortune of close proximity to a rather lovely nature preserve, and I quickly developed the habit of going on a morning walk whenever I needed to clear my mind. There was a certain spot by a little creek with some flat rocks that served well for writing, and I could pass hours there working on my latest story.

It was one such day- I was in the middle of a reinterpretation of the epic of Gilgamesh- when I happened to hear, faintly, a curious sound from somewhere a little upstream. It sounded a little like somebody slapping a wet bathmat against a rock.

Of course, I've never been one to turn away from a potential source of inspiration, so I marked my place in my notebook and started following the noise. Eventually, I found the stream's origin point. It came from a little entrance beneath a rock overhang, overgrown, just barely large enough to duck through.

Most people don't know this, but a convenient perk of preemptively laying out terms and conditions with Death is that it generally means you won't be unpleasantly surprised when doing things such as entering small caves while wandering alone in the woods.

The cave opened up a bit inside the rock, and inside, there was a natural spring, bubbling up clear, fresh water.

And it was spouting fish.

I remember trying to make a list of all the ones I could identify as I sat there and watched it. My ichthyology was unfortunately not really up to par, but even to someone as uninformed as me the diversity was stunning. I saw clownfish, tuna, pike, pufferfish, one solitary seahorse. Both saltwater and freshwater fish, so far as I could tell, from every ocean.

They would spit out of the spring a few feet in the air, and hang there for a moment, glittering in the low light like collections of stars, and then flop to the ground with that wet slapping sound and start to spasm around gracelessly, desperate for breath.

They all exhausted themselves and expired before too long, and when they died they went still. There was a very slight incline to the cave floor, tilting towards the spring in all directions, and with the stone slippery with water and scattered scales, they all slid right back into the entrance eventually. Eventually I wasn't even sure if it was truly new fish emerging, or some sort of cosmic recycling.

I don't know how long I sat there, watching that cycle: birth, glory, suffocation, death, consumption. It felt like watching life in miniature. Slimy, gasping, wriggling life. It all seemed very meaningless- and yet, beautiful.

What makes us- any of us- any different from those dying fish?

Which brings me, in a roundabout way, back to my original question.

Do you ever think about the end of the world?

[GRIAN]

Why do you ask?

[JOE]

Curiosity, mostly. You know, there comes a time in anyone's life, if you're going down a certain path, where you start to wonder about things like the ultimate fragility of the known universe. I'd just like to know where you're at on that path.

[GRIAN]

...Tell me your thoughts, and then I'll tell you mine.

[JOE]

Fair enough! That *is* why I came here.

Returning to the topic of the fish, then. I was sitting there, watching them, and wondering where they came from. If they came from anywhere, even! Maybe I was watching the theory of spontaneous generation being proven before my eyes.

And that made me think about the sort of rules we take for granted, as humans living in this world.

Rules like... oh, you know. Gravity. The laws of thermodynamics, preservation of mass, entropy. All the rules that are understood to govern the fundamental ways things work. When you realize one of those is fallible, you realize they all might be, and if they are, what's holding *any* of it up?

[GRIAN]

If you realize one day you can just fall into the sky, how can you ever know the ground won't swallow you up the next?

[JOE]

Exactly!

(Pause)

[GRIAN]

I had a conversation... not that long ago, with someone who compared the world to a bridge that could only handle a certain amount of weight, both real and not-real, for lack of a better term. The prospect of someone intentionally setting out to break it is... well, not impossible.

[JOE]

Indeed. And so there runs the question.

[GRIAN]

You're asking if I would?

[JOE]

Well, you've clearly at least thought about it.

(Pause)

[GRIAN]

I mean, I *wouldn't*.

I'm...

I guess you probably know I have a problem with not doing things to see what happens, right?

[JOE]

I may have guessed along those lines.

[GRIAN]

Yeah, it's been a bit of an issue for me. But I *have* managed, in the past. I went five years without killing my best friend even though I *really* wanted to. I think I can handle the temptation to try to destroy the world.

(Pause)

Oh, don't look at me like that.

[JOE]

I'm just not feeling very filled with confidence here.

[GRIAN]

I've barely spoken to anybody in the last two months, and I've had a tremendously strange last week or so, and I'm still in quite a lot of pain, so forgive me. *(Feathers rustle)*

[JOE]

That *is* fair.

[GRIAN]

I do mean it, though. I like the world how it is. I've gone to a lot of trouble to keep at least a couple of my friends alive. I even like my job, believe it or not.

[JOE]

I see! And even if I didn't, I have no choice but to take your word for it.

Well, thank you for indulging my curiosity.

[GRIAN]

What happened with the fish? If anything else did.

[JOE]

I'm not sure! I never went back. It was such a spectacular image in my mind afterwards that it felt like it would be wrong to try and find it again. Some things exist to be admired, not disturbed. Horrors and wonders alike. Maybe it's still going!

[GRIAN]

Huh.

[JOE]

The world's pretty amazing, huh? You never know what's out there.

[Click]

[Click]

(Footsteps)

[IMPULSE]

You *are* back! Pearl got me up to speed a little. How's the, uh... everything?

[GRIAN]

(Feathers rustling) ...Still figuring it out. I'll get back to you on that.

But I'm glad to be back here. Nice to see you all didn't mess things up *too* terribly while I was gone.

[IMPULSE]

(Laughs) Yeah, it was pretty quiet without you here.

[GRIAN]

Sounds terrible.

[IMPULSE]

It was, a little. Glad you're back.

Though, uh, maybe this is weird timing, but- now that you're here again, there's something I've been thinking about asking you.

[GRIAN]

What?

[IMPULSE]

Would it be okay if I took a sort of... vacation? Tango and I were talking, and he said he wants my help on the next phase of his research. He's wanting to overhaul his system based on the notes he took talking to you, and I just...

I've been thinking about it for awhile now, and I just don't really feel like this is the right place for me. I just... feel like I'd have more to do, and work I'm *really* interested in, if I was working with him and Zedaph.

[GRIAN]

I... well, obviously if that's what you want I wouldn't stop you, but- I... don't... think you can quit?

[IMPULSE]

It wouldn't be *quitting*, I'd just be- taking a break. For a few months, maybe? Maybe longer.

[GRIAN]

...You know what, if that works for X, it works for me.

Can I make a request?

[IMPULSE]

'Course!

[GRIAN]

Come back every now and then to update me on how it's going? I'd *love* to know.

[Click]

End Notes

shoutout to luna lunarblazes who made a joke about joe hills guppy geyser statement back in like. last summer. its been in the plans EVER SINCE!!

[if you're not familiar with the guppy geyser PLEASE click this link](#)

hope you enjoyed! this one was a little difficult but i had a lot of fun with it and i'm very satisfied. perhaps leave a comment!! there are only two more statements to go!! and make sure you listen to the podfic!!

oh and uh if for some reason you're interested in hearing me talk for four hours about mostly this fic but sometimes nothing [i guested on a stream recently!](#)

Please [drop by the archive and comment](#) to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!