

## A VISIT TO HEAVEN

A very long time ago, when I was four or five years old, I lived in San Juan, Puerto Rico. Every day, I went across the street to my neighbor to have red beans and rice during the midday meal. But, most of the time, I strolled the streets on adventures. Nothing much of significance happened other than having mumps and the removal of my tonsils and adenoids. Ether inhalation is a very weird thing to do for sure.

However, one night after I fell asleep, I found myself standing at the Gates of Heaven and talking to the gatekeeper. He told me he was St. Peter and one of his jobs was to greet new souls when they arrived. Naturally, I asked him, "Mr. Peter, why am I here? I am only a kid and was fine when I went to bed."

St. Peter responded, "Michael, you must have died last night since you are here."

I replied, "Funny, but I don't feel dead at all. My body seems quite solid to me."

"Regardless of the details, you wouldn't be here unless you died," replied St. Peter, "and that is that."

"OK, Mr. Peter. Where do I go now?" I said.

"Well, young fellow, you must go to the Judgment Hall to have your sins weighed," said St. Peter.

"I replied. That seems very dumb to me, Mr. Peter. How much sin can a four year old commit, anyway? Don't they have playgrounds around here or red beans with rice?"

And with that, St. Peter grabbed my right hand and walked me quickly to the Judgment Hall and told me to sit down in a pew and be quiet until my name was called. I was wondering whom I was going to talk too anyway as everyone else was grown up and I did not know them.

So I decided to see what was going on. I noticed that God was sitting behind a judge's bench and there were two tables in front of his bench. At my left was an angel who was to recite the major events in some person's life and which showed up on a giant TV screen. The person being judged sat to the right at his or her bench.

When the prosecutor angel was done, God looked kindly at the person on trial and asked him or her where they wanted to spend eternity, in Heaven or in Hell. The persons who had lived a kind life chose Heaven and those who lived a mean life chose Hell. And each one seemed very happy with his or her decision, thanking God as they left.

Eventually, I heard my name called and I walked up to the right bench and sat down. The prosecutor angel looked at me with a funny expression on his face. I raised my hand and God said, "Michael, you have a question?"

I stood up saying, “Hello, Mr. God. I hope you are well. I really don’t know why I am here as I am only four years old and haven’t done anything bad or really good. I told Mr. Peter this and he said I had to talk to you anyway. May I ask you a question, please?”

God laughing to himself, smiled saying, “Of course, lad, you may ask me any questions you want to. We have nothing, but time.”

I began, “Mr. God, Mr. Peter put me in the back. I saw that many people come to be judged. But, I do not understand why this place is called the Judgment Hall since you just let people go to the place they liked the best.”

God looked down at me with sparkling eyes saying, “You are right, my lad. I never judge anyone for I love everyone. The people who come here think they must be judged so we just have a pretended trial to make them happy with their choices. You are a very bright little boy, Michael. Is there anything you would like from me?”

I had to think about this for I did not want to ask for something stupid. At last, I looked up to God saying, “Mr. God, I think you must have a very difficult job to watch over the entire universe. I was wondering, if maybe, maybe you could use a helper? I am not very big yet and need to learn many more things, but, I don’t tell lies and I try not to cause any trouble for anyone . . . and I do eat vegetables. If you helped me, I would be a good helper, I am sure.”

Then, God stood up and went to the front of his bench and stood right next to me. “So Michael, you want to be my helper, really? No one has ever asked to be my helper. But, it is a very good idea and I think it might just work. I think we should shake hands and make a deal, don’t you.”

God extended his right hand and we shook on the deal. I said, “Thanks, Mr. God. I will be a good helper, but, don’t I need to go to helper school?”

God said, “Actually, I am going to send you back to Earth so you can live a long life and be a real help to me. But, don’t worry, I will make sure the angels teach you many good things and make you a strong helper. But, you need to learn how to be a warrior also.”

I smiled, “Mr. God, can I be a Viking—a good Viking, I mean?”

All the angels in the Judgement Hall laughed in the kindest way. One of them came up to me and said that his name was just like my name, Michael. He said, “OK, my little Viking warrior. I will return you to your bedroom and watch over you. You will have many fights to bear, but I will teach you all that you need. But, never-ever let your heart grow cold or mean. Promise?”

And I promised Angel Michael that I would always be a good Viking and fight fairly and take care of people who are afraid and hurt or crying. And the next thing I knew it was time to get up in the morning. It was more than a dream. I am sure. And I am glad I am a nice Viking.

I guess this is why the very old Grannies in Ukraine believe that I am an Angel on the earth.  
Maybe I am.