

## SACROSANCT

There was an angel behind the counter.

It looked mostly like what you would expect an angel to look like. Person-shaped, wings, halo. Not really cherubic but fuzzy at the edges, like static on an old T.V. A pack of Marlboro Golds stuck out of the pocket of its apron.

No one else was in the store. The air conditioning was audibly blasting. “We close at ten,” the angel said, typing on its phone. You had almost thought it might say *be not afraid*.

“Do you guys still do the six ninety-nine medium pizzas?” you asked. It was hard to look the angel in the eyes. It had a lot of them and all of them were brighter than its phone screen. Some of them were looking at you.

“That was a promotion four years ago,” it informed you.

You scratched the back of your neck. “I’ll just do a cheezy bread, then. And a cinna bread.”

The angel tapped a code into the machine and then pressed a few buttons. It still had its phone in its hand and was idly playing iMessage Cup Pong before missing twice in a row and hitting send. “Twelve seventy-three,” it said, flat.

You clicked out of Twitter and tapped your phone to the machine. It chirped a happy noise and then read *approved*. “I’ll get right on that,” the angel said, typing out another text before sighing and putting the phone in its pocket, jostling the cigarettes.

You could’ve gone somewhere else. There was a McDonald’s across the street. McDonald’s was definitely open. You wouldn’t have gotten an angel who hates its job as your server at McDonald’s. Probably.

You have heard about how terrible the job market is lately.

The angel started to make your order. Briefly, you remembered to feel embarrassed about ordering everything *but* pizza at Marco's Pizza, but the angel didn't seem bothered. It didn't put on gloves—you weren't sure if gloves existed to fit its hands, which were vaguely non-Euclidean—and spread the dough on the cheezy bread tray. It dropped cheese on top and unceremoniously shoved it in the little window halfway down the oven. It closed the window with its bare hands. You winced. It did not.

You checked your phone while it started on the cinna bread. No texts since you checked last, in your car outside the Marco's. Someone liked your Instagram story.

Briefly, you considered making an Instagram story about the angel making your food at Marco's. You changed your mind, though, because people don't care. Instead you started typing a text about it to your boyfriend, before seeing the wall of blue messages you'd sent in the past six hours left unanswered, and deleted that too. What would you even say, anyway? *Haha, look at the angel making my cheezy bread.* You didn't take pictures of strangers in public, even if they were an angel. People would just say it was AI, anyway.

You looked back up at the angel, who had put in the cinna bread and was dressing the cheezy bread. It took out its phone again and was idly shaking parmesan with one hand and typing with the other. Shortly after it boxed up the cheezy bread, the cinna bread came out.

You felt like you were high. You were watching the angel's every move with the intensity of someone incredibly stoned. It had this blurriness to it, this haze surrounding its movements, like looking at streetlamps at night without your glasses on. You didn't think you'd ever seen anything so beautiful. The flickering LEDs above left a halo around its head.

“Here you are,” said the angel, presenting the two boxes to you. You blinked. You hadn't noticed it walk over. “Enjoy.”

When you didn't immediately take the boxes, it sent them down on the counter and pulled out its phone. The receipt stuck to the box with a sticker promising a discount on your next order had your name printed on it; you were certain you never told it to the angel.

"Are you- from around here?" you asked, suddenly desperate to know what the hell was going on. You cringed the second you said it. God, were you trying to hit on it? Stupid.

The angel turned back around to look at you, phone limp in its hand, momentarily forgotten. "What do you think?" it asked incredulously.

You shook your head. "You're right. I just- I meant like... have you been here long?"

The angel blinked. "I was born before time."

"No!" you exclaimed, setting the boxes back down on the counter. The angel raised its eyebrows. "I mean- why are you here?"

"I am doing my Father's will."

"In a *Marco's Pizza*?"

"In a Marco's Pizza," the angel agreed.

"I lived around here, when I was a kid," you told it. "People did coke in the bathrooms."

"People still do," the angel said.

"Why would God send you *here*?" you asked.

"Jesus," the angel muttered. "I forgot how funny you people are."

Casually, it pulled a pink Elf Bar out of its apron pocket and took a long drag. It blew bubblegum vapor in your face—not on purpose, really, it just exhaled and you happened to be in the line of fire.

You, stunned, frozen, could only come up with- "Do you not smoke actual cigarettes?"

The angel looked at you like you were stupid. "No," it said. "They smell."

“There’s lead in vapes,” you tell it, as if it doesn’t know. As if it isn’t an angel, from Heaven, working under the orders of the Lord your God. “A study just came out on it, I think.” Well, you saw it on Instagram.

“I don’t have lungs,” the angel informed you. “We close at ten.”

You checked your phone. It was nine forty-one. When you looked up again the angel had pulled out its own phone again, and one of its many hands was opening its AirPods.

Flustered, you picked up your food. You couldn’t tell if you were angrier *because* it was an angel or because of the basic lack of respect. Sure, the usual Marco’s employee was sixteen instead of eons, but *vaping* in front of paying customers? Watching TikTok, too?

“Does God just not care, then?” you asked, suddenly furious. “Is that it? Has He washed His hands of us, and left you all to just- what, do whatever you want?”

The angel sighed, apparently unsurprised by this turn in the conversation. Its phone was still lit up on the counter with one of those shitty mobile games you’ve seen ads for on TikTok. “Of course He *cares*,” it said. “But there’s nothing He can do about it.”

“He’s *God*,” you said.

The angel shrugged. “Yeah, but have you seen the state of the world lately?” It sighed. “Even He doesn’t know where to start.”

“What- what could He do?” you asked. “What does He do, if not help?”

The angel said, “He’s been really into *Lost*, lately.”

It was all catching up to you. You checked your phone and you had been in Marco's for ten minutes. It felt like thirty seconds. It felt like a year.

“So... we’re fucked, then,” you said, the breads warm in your hands. “Like, that’s it. The world is screwed.”

The angel shrugged again. “Maybe,” it said. “But have faith.”

You looked at it in disbelief. “In *who*?”

The angel took another hit of its Elf bar. Smoke came out of its mouth as it said, “In yourselves. You’re not *all* bad.”

“Just most of us,” you spat, almost coughing at the bubblegum. “Just most of us *people* who are going to end the world.”

“It only ends once,” said the angel. “Everything before that is just progress.”

You opened your mouth and closed it.

“You should go,” it said. “We close at ten.”

“I *know*,” you grumbled, without thinking about it. “I mean. Sorry.” The angel didn’t react, so you took a step back. Then another. The angel didn’t move, still staring at its phone, typing, now, so you just... left. You just turned around and walked out of the store. Just like that. You put the boxes on the passenger seat and sat behind the wheel and thought about how you could ever explain any of this to anyone else.

You took one last look at the angel, even blurrier through your dashboard and the Marco’s window. It was on its phone again and sitting on the counter. You wondered how it got here. You wondered how long it would stick around.

You sat in your car facing the Marco’s until the lights went out, right at ten.