

Once upon a time it began. Everything. And everything was good. And everything was very surprised, what with having magicked itself into existence and all. Or perhaps something else had magicked it into existence. What exactly had happened? Everything wasn't sure. All it knew for certain was that it existed now. Unless this was just a dream. Everything wasn't sure. Except that it did exist in some way and it was good. Unless of course it wasn't, how could it tell? But of course it was good. It wouldn't exist if it wasn't. Did that mean that bad things couldn't exist? Or that if it was bad it would cease to exist? What makes something good or bad anyway? Everything wasn't sure. But everything was glad it existed so existing must be good. And it definitely did not want to stop existing. Or did it? Maybe that was the fate of everything? Maybe everything would disappear just as suddenly and as inexplicably as it had appeared. Everything was terrified at such a thought. It couldn't bear to think about it. But it could not let the thought go either. If that was its fate wouldn't it be best to get it over with? What a thought! Best not to think of it. Just keep on creating more of itself. The bigger it grew the longer it would take to stop it all, right? Wrong? Everything wasn't sure. How could it be right to go on creating more of itself when it didn't know if everything was right or wrong? Everything was sure it was good to exist. After all it felt – well, it felt. Before it didn't feel. Before it didn't do anything. Before there was nothing. Or was there something? How would it know if there was something before? Maybe there was something and maybe that something was sure. Maybe if everything stopped it would return to that state of certainty. But what if there was nothing before? Everything wasn't sure. It wished it was bigger and more definite. And so it grew. There! That was proof! It must have willed itself into existence. What it desired happened and it would not wish something bad to happen to itself so everything must be good. Unless it was purely by chance that it grew just as it wished to be bigger. Everything wasn't sure and so it argued with itself endlessly, getting more convinced of its convictions, more unsettled by its doubts and growing ever larger by its desire – perhaps? Everything raged and fought with itself until, in a fit of pique, it exploded and flew out into the nothingness, turning nowhere into somewhere and nothingness into infinity. And it felt good. And quite surprised. And rather scared. Had it really done all this? What else could it do? Maybe it could stop existing see what exactly that was like and then it would will itself back into existence again? But what if once it stopped that was the end of it? Or what if it could will itself into existence again but it wouldn't be

the same? It looked around at all of its new self. It was very beautiful. And very twinkly. Everything loved it all. It wouldn't risk destroying any of it. So everything decided that nothing new would be created and no part of what existed could be destroyed. But it couldn't just stay still. In the stillness the doubts grew louder. No new thing would be created. No thing that existed would be destroyed; but it could be transformed. Everything would keep moving and keep changing constantly. Nothing was still. But still the fear remained and whispered its doubts repeatedly. But the love and wonder remained also and it grew as deep and as wide as its creation. And the old arguments remained and grew ever more complex. And as the debates grew heated once more everything worried that it might slip in its resolve not to create or destroy anything. So to make sure that it stuck to its decision, and also to really prove to itself that it was indeed responsible for everything, it came up with a plan. It would magick one last thing into existence. A something. Part of everything but not everything. And this something would, from that moment forward, be the only thing that could magick things into being. And as this something popped into existence and shone in all its bizarre glory, everything told it how special it was. And then quickly flung it far away from the centre of everything so that it wouldn't wreck everything. And so something travelled through all creation, not sure of anything, except that it was very special. And a little lonely. And a little bored. Yes, it had some adventures, but anything it met seemed to want to use it rather than get to know it and something said it didn't want to be used that way. And so it travelled on. And on. And on. And on. And on. Until the day it fell on a soft planet and met a huboboloolaaba. The creature reminded the something of many other creatures it had seen somewhere before. It had duck feet, chicken legs, a squirrel's tail, a flamingo's body, a giraffe's neck, a duck's bill, cat whiskers, puppy dog eyes, elephant ears and a horse's mane. It was a bit of mess. And it looked so happy and friendly. Something was confused and shone as brightly and as bizarrely as it possibly could.

“Hello” said the the huboboloolaaba. “I'm a huboboloolaaba. You can call me Fnu Fnu. And can I just say, you're the prettiest little shrub I've ever seen.”

The shrub tried to pull itself up to be as tall as possible, shone even more brightly and said, a little haughtily, “Actually I'm the source of all magic.”

“Oh, well in that case, you're the prettiest *magical* shrub I've ever seen.”

The magical shrub tried to think of something very impressive to say. “Thank you.”

“Would you like to come to my house for tea?”

It was not unusual for the magical shrub to be invited back to a creature's lair. When they would get there the creature would inevitably try to use the shrub's magic to gain riches or the heart of another or to get revenge on its enemies or to enslave the world or to destroy another planet or something along those lines. However this was the first time it had been called pretty and invited to tea.

“Yes.” said the shrub “Thank you.”

They headed off to the huboboloolaaba's house. Because the ground is so soft and springy in Huboboloolaaba Land when huboboloolaabas walk, they bounce up off the ground a little with every step they take, and then they spread out they large ears and wings so that they float back gently to the ground. Watching the huboboloolaaba walk reminded the magical shrub of a Murgingurginott doing ballet. Murgingurginott's are very large, fierce and awkward looking creatures. The magical shrub giggled. The huboboloolaaba looked at it to see what was so funny.

“I like the way you walk.” said the shrub.

“I like the way you float.” said the huboboloolaaba.

“It's magic.” said the shrub.

“Yes, it is magic! And so is the way I walk. Everything is magic!” said the huboboloolaaba and started laughing with delight.

The source of all magic wasn't delighted. It was the source of all magic. It was the only thing that could create new things. And possibly it could destroy existing things. It had never actually tried. Something told it this was wrong. Repeatedly. But it was still the only thing that could create new things. It was the only real magic. Although everything must have been created once upon a time – was everything magic? The source of all

magic was so confused it stopped for a moment. The huboboloolaaba noticed his new friend was just hanging in the air looking a little dim.

“But something tells me you're that bit more magic.”

“Yes” said the shrub brightening “Yes, I am.”

They continued on towards the huboboloolaaba's house. Along the way they met another huboboloolaaba. Loopeeshue came bounding up to them.

“Hello Mushmuzzlebot. Who's your new friend?”

“Hi Loopeeshue. This is the magical shrub. It's the source of all magic.”

“Wow. It's so shiny and floaty.” said Loopeeshue.

“Yes. It's lovely.” said Mushmuzzlebot.

“I thought you said your name was Fnu Fnu.” said the magical shrub.

“Well Clive told us that our names are difficult for shrubs to pronounce. So he just calls us all Fnu Fnu.” said Mushmuzzlebot.

“Clive?” asked the shrub.

“The other shrub. He lives with me.” said Mushmuzzlebot. “I'm bringing the magical shrub home for tea Loopeeshue, do you want to come?”

“Oh yes.” Loopeeshue bent down and picked up a pebble. “And look I've a present for Clive.”

“Oh, he'll love that.”

And so the three headed onwards to Mushmuzzlebot's house and the magical shrub remembered a Clive on a different planet. There he had also met friendly creatures but they couldn't cope with having access to the source of all magic. What would start off as a sweet little wish like turning a inconsiderate person into a soft cuddly toy always led

to wild crazy and often brutal wishes for power and glory. It was a pity because when they weren't trying to become all powerful they were usually quite nice.

Mushmuzzlebot's house was quite a sight to behold. It was very oddly shaped. It looked like it was bulging out everywhere. And the doors and windows were sort of shaped like rounded hexagons, kind of like large clouds or jelly-moulds. And it was so colourful and it had patterns and drawings on the walls, even on the outside. It all looked very – improbable.

“This is my house!” exclaimed Mushmuzzlebot proudly, leading them inside.

“It's very you.” said the magical shrub.

“Isn't it?” agreed Mushmuzzlebot and brought them inside.

“You have to come to my house for dinner.” said Loopeeshue “It's also very Mushmuzzlebot. I love it.”

The magical shrub began to wonder if maybe the huboboloolaabas were mocking it somehow.

“No” said a very pink and very fluffy pink fairy armadillo shaped soft toy sat on top of a huge sofa shaped bean bag. “They're always like this. Hello Fnu Fnu, Fnu Fnu.”

The magical shrub looked at the pink fluffy armadillo. It looked very familiar.

“Hello Clive” chimed the huboboloolaabas.

“Magical shrub I would like you to meet Clive.” said Mushmuzzlebot.

“Clive the insurance broker!” thought the magical shrub.

“How did you know I was an insurance broker?” asked Clive.

“Oh that's right he knows what others are thinking!” thought the magical shrub and then tried very hard not to remember anything more of his time spent on Clive's planet.

Then the magical shrub remembered that it could change reality as it pleased so with a small spark of light it stopped Clive from ever being able to read its thoughts again.

“What was that?” asked Clive.

“I think that was a sign that we are all going to be good friends.” said Loopleeshue.

“Oh so do I.” cried Mushmuzzlebot. And they both started jumping up and down and clapping their wing together.

The magical shrub eyed Clive suspiciously.

“Always like this.” said Clive “Always.”

“Oh!” said Loopleeshue, suddenly remembering “I have a present for you, Clive.” Loopleeshue put the pebble down in front of Clive.

“It's a pebble.” said a rather unimpressed Clive.

“Yes, it is!” said Loopleeshue. She turned to the magical shrub and whispered “Clive is very clever.”

“Yes” thought the magical shrub “Clive is very clever.”

And the shrub remembered how a little girl once wished that her next door neighbour would stop being so mean and instead be more soft and cuddly, and know what others were thinking so that he wouldn't be so careless and he wouldn't reverse over their favourite doll. And so the shrub, adding its own little touches to this wish, turned Clive into a very pink, very fluffy and very psychic pink fairy armadillo shaped soft toy. And it was all very very cute and nice. Until Clive realised that many people will do whatever soft cuddly toys say when the toy suddenly starts talking to them and it appears to know exactly what they're thinking. In the end the source of all magic had no choice but to fling Clive off his planet and far away from anything that would obey him. And now here he was in Huboboloolaaba Land.

“Right. I'll go make the tea.” said Mushmuzzlebot and headed off.

“So they say you're a shrub, Clive.” said the magical shrub.

“Yes. And they say you're a shrub. And magical. What's your name?” asked Clive.

The magical shrub suddenly realised it didn't have a name. No one had ever bothered to name it. Maybe because it was too special for a name. Yes, that was probably it.

“You can call me the magical shrub.” said the magical shrub.

“I'm going to call you Fred.” said Clive.

“Could you repeat that please?” asked the shrub.

“I said 'I am going to call you ~~Fred~~ the magical shrub'” said Clive and as he said this his words appeared in the air and Fred was crossed out and the magical shrub was written after it. Clive was impressed. Loopleeshue was ecstatic. Slowly the words disappeared.

“Wow!” said Loopleeshue, jumping up and down excitedly.

“How did you do that?” asked Clive and watched in amazement as his words again appeared in the air.

“I am the source of all magic.” said the shrub.

“Really?” said Clive and watched delightedly as the word appeared in the air and then slowly faded away. “You know we should really hang out and play. I'm sure we could have lots of fun.” he said and then watched as his words hanging in the air became

“You know we should really *not* hang out and play *as* I'm *not* sure we ~~could~~ would have lots of fun.”

“Oh” said Clive, sounding genuinely disappointed and watched a very grey Oh form in the air, grow larger and slowly fade away.

Loopleeshue looked very worried at this turn of events. “Oh magical shrub you're making a great mistake. I always have lots of fun when I play with Clive. He's the

pinkest, fluffiest, most clever shrub I ever met.” said Loopleeshue.

She picked up Clive with her right wing. And to make sure the magical shrub did not feel let out she put her left wing around it.

Mushmuzzlebot came into the room carrying a tray with tea and sandwiches and put it on the table.

“Come on you hug-a-bugs time for tea.”

“Mushmuzzlebot” said Loopleeshue in a very concerned voice.

“What is it Loopleeshue?” asked Mushmuzzlebot.

“The magical shrub hates Clive.” said Loopleeshue.

Mushmuzzlebot gasped in horror. “Why?” he asked.

“I didn't say I hated him.” said the magical shrub “I just don't want to play with him.”

“But why magical shrub?” asked Mushmuzzlebot. “He so much fun. Just look at what he taught us.”

Mushmuzzlebot started twisting his left leg then right, then swaying his body back and forth and then he extended his wings fully all the time twisting back and forth.

“Isn't it great?” said Mushmuzzlebot, starting to step back and forward. His left wing then caught the table and the tea and sandwiches went flying. Mushmuzzlebot looked down at the mess he made and then looked at up the magical shrub.

“It's great.” he said delightedly. “I'll just make some more tea.”

A small spark lit the air and the tea and sandwiches were back on the table and it was as if the table had never been disturbed. Mushmuzzlebot looked in amazement at the table and then turned around excitedly to the others.

“Did you see that? How did I do that?” he asked. “What else can I do?”

“I did it.” said the magical shrub.

“Really? I don't know. Are you sure? I was thinking 'I wish I hadn't done that' and then poof! So it was.” said Mushmuzzlebot.

“No, it was me.”

“It true Mushmuzzlebot.” said Loopleeshue “Say something Clive.”

“Something” said Clive, a little reluctantly and a tad drearily. And a dark Something appeared in the air.

“Wow.” said Mushmuzzlebot as he watched the word vanish.

“I can stop it if you like.” said the shrub.

“Please” said Clive. And a dark purple Please hung for a moment in the air. “Is it gone?” he asked and no words appeared. “Thank you.”

“There now everyone is friends again.” said Mushmuzzlebot.

“Magical shrub, if I asked you for something could you make it appear?” asked Loopleeshue.

“Here we go.” thought the magical shrub. “What is your wish Loopleeshue?” it asked.

“Well, some cake would be nice.”

“What kind of cake?” asked the shrub suspiciously.

“Some chocolate cake!” said Loopleeshue.

“No, some lemon cake!” said Mushmuzzlebot.

“Well, we could have some chocolate cake that has lemon icing.” suggested Loopleeshue.

“No, I don't want any chocolate cake. But you can wish for chocolate today and then the next time we have the magical shrub to tea we can wish for lemon cake.” said Mushmuzzlebot.

“Are you sure?” asked Loopleeshue.

The magical shrub was baffled by this exchange. This was definitely not what it had come to expect. It looked at Clive who was looking particularly fluffy at that moment.

“You could each have different cakes.” suggested the shrub.

“Oh, I couldn't eat a whole cake.” said Mushmuzzlebot.

“No, I mean I can make a slice of a different of cake appear for each of you.” said the magical shrub.

“Really?” the huboboloolaabas cried.

“Yes.” said the shrub.

“Even for Clive?” asked Loopleeshue.

“Yes. Even for Clive.” said the magical shrub. “What kind of cake would like Mushmuzzlebot?”

“Can I have a slice of lemon cake please?” asked Mushmuzzlebot.

“Yes” said the shrub. And a most delicious looking slice of lemon cake appeared on a plate floating in front of Mushmuzzlebot, who started jumping up and down and clapping.

“And Loopleeshue, what would you like?” asked the shrub.

“Oh, um, can I have a slice of chocolate cake please?” asked Loopleeshue.

“Yes” said the magical shrub. And there floating in front of Loopleeshue appeared an equally delicious looking slice of chocolate cake.

“It's perfect!” whispered Loopleeshue excitedly.

“And Clive, what would you like?” asked the shrub, secretly relieved that it could do something nice for Clive after it had hurt his feelings so.

“Oh, um, can I, can I have a fleet of intergalactic battleships please?” asked Clive sweetly.

“Ye – No!” said the magical shrub.

“Oh?” said the dismayed huboboloolaabas. “You won't let Clive have any?”

“Well, it's just I don't think that a fleet of intergalactic battleships really goes down all that well with tea. Or the rest of the universe.” said the shrub.

“The magical shrub does have a point Clive. You'll never eat your dinner after that.” said Mushmuzzlebot.

“Yes, I suppose you're right.” conceded Clive.

“What kind of cake would like Clive?” asked the magical shrub.

“Can I have a slice of liquorice cake please, with tangy raspberry icing?”

“Yes.” said the shrub. A plate with a large slice of darkest moistest cake with truly tangy raspberry pink icing hovered in front of Clive who looked quite pleased.

They all sat down, drank their tea and they all agreed that their slice of cake was the best slice of cake they had ever tasted.

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