

Adventures in Godyssey  
A Family Portraits Fanfic

Before God blew up the world once and for all, he scanned the depths and the surface for anything worthy of salvage. Among those that were not (as God's grab-bag would make a much less deserving story than his spitoon) was a sanctimonious old galoot wrapped in a theological shroud of his own rectitude. The Imagination Station, at the moment powering the ego of one John Avery Whittaker, protected the walrustic senior from God's favor. So, like a mass martian abduction, all of the favorable Earthan people were sucked into space, an event that called for the termination of one old man's computerized fantasy.

*Wum*-PAT went Whittaker's body as the surrounding emporium evaporated in a mist of blurry pixels. Every bone and fat cell became much older in an instant, and much more of that than a second ago. He was wedged snugly into a room. "Say, I remember this room! It is the imagination station, not unlike the TARDIS only the same side inside as out."

The door sighed itself open, and half-a-dozen odd yet familiar faces swarmed the doorway. They were all there; Connie, his first employee, so innocent and naïve a moment ago, yet mature and ominous now. Eugene, the nasally computerician who now bore a subserviant demeanor. His son Jason, feckless and daring in father's eyes once, now indecisive and birdy (he glanced from father to friends rather uncontrollably). Katrina, round with child or two, or twenty. What, was she giving birth to a full-grown man? Connie's husband Mitch, almost as daring as Jason in Whit's memory, now unforgivably morseso, as he hosted the old man to his feet and brought him out to face a sixth person, a rosy, hairsprayed, perpetually smiling middle ager whose watch Whit felt had a grim omnipresent flavor.

It was nothing if not impeditive upon Whit's own omniscience. "What happened? The world was all perfect just a moment ago. My wife was dead, but I filled the position of the bar-tender trope, yet I was a moral super human; child and adult alike flocked to my holy emporium, drawn in by my sanctity and mechanical expertise. Why did it all end?"

"Uhh... this is Whit's end? A.K.A, *your* end?"

Whit opened his mouth to correct Connie. That thing he thought was maturity was actually audacity, and he was as sure as trickle lake going to exorcise the crap out of it. But the words he'd meant to used stopped halfway 'cross his adam's apple when he saw the State of disrepair.

Not even tidy tight-wadded Mr. Walton, Whit's dearest yet damnedest daddio, could have cleaned the righteous ice cream emporium of so much... was that oatmeal? Perhaps it was quicksand. It was a skunkly presence, whatever it was, all dripping from the shattered windows and drolling from the rosy stranger's exposed belly button. The ice cream dispensers also drooled out this doggy substances. There

were other things wrong with the scenery; holes in the roof through which Wrathful Bones laid the occasional brown butt-egg, naked cables growing ever more naked at the hands of potato peelers held by Tom Reilly cosplayers, but none was so startling as the cold gritty substance that Whit's jallopy of a brain finally recognized as...

"Applesauce?"

"It all comes of harboring top-secret government hoodle-dee-hoo on your office computer," said Connie with a swagger of her hips. She was dressed in a red sequin gown as if the hostess of an award ceremony. That is, as if the hostess were she. But she wasn't. Not with Whit in charge.

He drew himself up and squared his shoulders. "Connie, as a forty-year employee of My End, you should have the know-how to prevent a catastrophe like this. We are, after all, in Odyssey, South Dakota, where adventures are sugary bubble-gum safe and even the gangs aren't deck enough to do anything worse than third-grade vandalism. I hereby fire you and everyone else too dumb to protect this holy temple from this--" a rusty turd struck and smeared down his cheek. "--debauchery. Where's Eugene?"

"Oh no you don't." Connie's hip torpedoed Whit's paunch, and all that authoritative manner he'd inhaled absquatulated through both ends as brown soda air. "You're not going to *wisest-old-goat-in-town* your way to the top this time, like you did in there." She pointed a sparkly polished red fingernail at the imagination station. "My name is Connie. Connie for confidence. I can out-argue any man that comes my way. Professor Meltsner? Lunge hither."

Eugene, wise, converted Eugene. He bore today, not a lofty and illustrious keyboard, flask or telescope, but... was that a humble tea tray? "Up and at 'em, eh, John Avery? I see you have revived our patient, Miss Kendell. To borrow the colloquialism, I fail to see what his investment in the imagination station has to do with the tribulation."

"Professor Meltsner, smart enough to earn 6 PhD's in everything from anthropology to computer engineering but not smart enough to see the rapture coming." Connie turned again to Whit. "While you were in there, making an itty-bitty version of God out of yourself, the big man upstairs came downstairs to take a look at whatever good is left of mankind."

Jason, third-base deep into it with the oatmeal belly woman, took a break to say, "And He didn't see any here."

"The rapture? Of course!" Whit remembered a medal awarded to him, one that supposedly foresaw him as the first among mankind to enter into God's kingdom. "But... it's impossible! Surely God would have selected me of all people."

Jason took another break. "Who? The man who left his family to fail travelin' preacher school and the fail preachin' bartender babysitter, then 'recover' in the 'virtuous superhero' simulator for the rest of his life? Some rapture." She must not really be all that if he was taking that many breaks.

Dubious Eugene sat his tray on a table. "Well, to borrow the colloquialism, let's not appropriate our conclusions too hasty. We don't know for certain whether this is evidence of a rapture or a second coming. After all, what is a little applesauce..."

"But a sure sign of the end?" said Connie.

Applesauce. That's what all this cold grey sludge was. Whit recalled his imaginary adventure, the one wherein he fired, with due authority, the only help he had. What wonderful days, when he could stick top secret government hoity-toit right into his office and then blame his dumb subordinates when that went wrong.

What followed between Connie and Eugene was a back-and-forth over the likelihood of its truly being the end of times, or even the Whit's end of times, while sneaky little apocalypse gremlins nicked the goods from Eugene's tea-trey. Woman and man were like-for-like on persuasiveness, and Mitch and Katrina looked on with popcorn and concentration. It was over when Connie pointed out Eugene's failings as a tea-tray jerker, and the bespeckled git ran screaming WAAAAOOW after thief 1 and thief 2, and any such who followed according to his number, though identities were not taken down.

"Old galoot, am I?" A sinister sneer erupted from Whit's walrus face. "Well, God may have overlooked me. I still say he would have picked me first, had he known where to look. But you six, you, back-snipping Connie, you, wasted brains Eugene, you, love interests, and even you, my heart-breakingly rebellious son and that... showgirl with not much to show in the way of zatta faye yaari... he didn't want any of you either. How do you like *them* apples?"

"Whether he would have selected you or not, he's already done with Odyssey. Like Nicolas Cage in the famous movie, you can go quietly back to the asylum and fantasize over your king-of-the-christian-community porn or we can push you over and roll you there."

Whit did not go quietly; he lumbered away from his own personal kingdom, as fast as his cypress trunk legs would carry on, but he stumbled and cracked the floor, at first suspicious that a puddle of applesauce had found its way beneath his foot. But then he understood that Connie had roped him in with a lasso of twizzlers. "I knew these ear-wax ropes would come in handy one day." Whit's mass outweighed his muscle, and Connie, Katrina and Mitch did indeed roll him the direction of their liking. Jason and the naval woman didn't help; they were an underwear-and-a-half away from going all the way. And Eugene, trying to regain his personal intellect, focused in on trapping a gremlin (these things were really just children), box, bait and stick style.

Outside was but more of the four horseman's handiwork. Whit thought back to movies that had caressed his heart; Like Nicolas Cage in the famous movie, he had truly been left behind.

Whit rolled by his progressive rival, Regis Blackgard. Sitting across from him over a soothing cup of applesauce was Mr. Charles of the unsexilly-named villians. "And he says," said Charles, "it's a *pineapple!*" They laughed. Mr. Whitaker was grateful not to be in on whatever that ridiculous anecdote was.

"Oh Charles," gasped Blackgard, "you are a preposterous ninny of a man, but I do cherish someone to enjoy the apocalypse with." "As do I, Blackgard," replied Charles. "this applesauce is so much friendlier without all those damned Christians around to witness to us." "I enjoy it, too!" Rodney's constipation turd whizzed across the table and bonked a squirrel. The unreformed youth sat on his motorcycle and sped down the road, squashing a chick tract in the process.

A page of the tract fluttered up and censored Mr. Whittaker's belly-button, out of which apple-sauce was spilling. The applesauce wandered around the spherical man's bod for a bit, then found an easier way out through his tear ducts. The page in question was the one where Little Davey opened his father's porno drawer.

"Little Davey," sobbed Whit. "I could have saved him as Imagination Station Whittaker. I could have broken into his house, dragged him away from that wretched drawer, and torn those sordid magazines in a thousand pieces."

As he felt around for the triggering tract page, Mitch pretended the reason they were rolling Whit instead of carrying him or driving him was the biggest hariest bicep on Earth. "Very good," he said. "If they had an Imaginary gym in there, it sure shows."

Connie cackled. "If there was an imaginary Ben and Jerry's in there, then that shows too."

They came to a hill. That hill made itself a nemesis to all but Whit, who rolled directly into an olympic tricycler, and made his escape as the child beat on his blubbery back with a *plat-plat-plat*.

Connie put her hands on her hips. "Well, looks like the asylum won't get their due today." She took her husband by the arm. "Wanna go out for ice cream?" Mitch laughed. "Considering where you used to work, we ought to go *in* for ice cream." They shared a laugh, with each other, not with Katrina, who sulked that her husband never rose above 'computer snob' status. Ice cream was the last thing on her mind.

On his journey to trickle lake, Whit brainstormed ways to regain (because his hyperventilation put weight *loss*, a thing that wasn't exactly happening, on his mind) his status as moral pinnacle pineapple. He found one in a ritualistic fire. Jimmy Barclay and cousin Len were dancing around like Rumpelstiltskin, a cauldron containing the fire, a cardboard castle fueling it.

Whit reached straight into the fire to half the castle, as he had once done with the séance board. Instead of doing that, he recoiled and looked at his ashen hands. "You've done something unholy here!" Because surely his sanctified fingers would have penetrated that flaming men yon.

Len snorted. "What a cur. Now I now why they call you Whittaker."

"Go away, Whittaker," snarled young Jimmy. "Now that God has picked out who He wants to leave in clothes, I've got nothing to lose."

"But... you were scared of all this..."

Jimmy tsk'd and shook his head. "That's right. You were in the morally-accomplished supreme overlord simulator. You led me through puberty in there. Out here, things are much different. Out here, I always wanted to do this all along but my tight-butt preacher Dad wouldn't let me. Well, he's gone (God has such strange tastes in disciples, doesn't He?) and now I get to do whatever I want."

He showed Whit his rear end, and Len gave his own a little shake. It put Whit in a trance for a moment, but an ember popped out and blazed his chest hair. Stop, drop, and roll, Whittaker. Atta boy.

"I know a man who would love to be a part of the rapture. He's a thespian and a child psychologist, and he goes by the name of Blackgard. Why don't you boys reach deep outside and get your faith back? God has changed His mind before, and there's no reason why it should be too late."

Jimmy and Len exchanged glances. While it was fun to be on their own, they would like an adult to help them with the beastly borogrove they pretended was a formidable opponent. Perhaps a child psychologist, an expert that Whit was certainly not, could aid them. They scampered off to the city to convert Mr. Blackgard, which they did. He wanted to take as much advantage of his damnation as they did.

Whit, meanwhile, tried a second time to douse the flame and shred the castle. This time, his whole wardrobe caught fire. You'd think it was sewn together with wickes or something. It all burned down to a whicker mustache shaped like a blown-out power cord and a loincloth and the mind of a monkey. With an even better reason to get committed, Whit scored a point for Darwinism by releasing his inner semian and trying to put out the fire with that.

Atop the roof of Whit's End, Jack Allen glared at the three couples doing a ritualistic dance, Connie and Mitch, Eugene and Katrina, Jason and Chris. He envied the wrathful youths dashing all around him, but most of all, he envied his wife, slected for the rapture but not he. The energetic youths inspired him to tap into his own rebellious nature and convert to the opposite of Christianity, which according to the United States Census Beureau at the time was Islam. He stood and turned in the direction of Mecca, but before he began his prayer, he saw noxious fumes imminating from Trickle Lake. "Huh. I do declare, it

looks like a funner faith than any I have heard of yet." He clambored down like an impish scamp. Foolish Jack. His old bones weren't trained for such juvenile sport. His foot slipped and brought him down faster than even the Bones, the wrathful kind, could race. And there, stuck in a delirious agony, Allan pondered the meaning of his own existence. "I should have just slipped into the Station once Whit was out."

The next thing he knew, Dolores Rathbone was nursing an imaginary fever with a soft but smelly cloth. He regretted opening his eyes to her. He should have simply feigned unconsciousness, because the noisy woman screeched, "Oh look, Bart, Allan's finally awake!" "Hallelujah!" replied Bart. "Hallelujah nothing," said Jack. "Where are you taking me? I need to get to the witch doctor of trickle lake." "Heh, you're going to a doctor, all right." said Bart. Dolores humphed. "Are you saying some'tin about my doctoring skills, Bart?" "Nah, Dolores. Allen here needs bed rest, I'd say for the rest..." Either the buggy Jack just noticed they were hiccuped, or they'd driven over the biggest molehill in South Dakota.

It aggravated the heck out of Jack's broken ankle to ride in a bump-along go-cart. "Whatever happened to that neon pink limo you used to drive?"

"We still own it," snorted Bart. "But once the weather changed, thugs and bandits went after the Electric Palace. It's just like that mook in the Bible. What was his name? Joe? Anypay, I barely got out drivin' this one vehicky here, had to pick up Dolores on my way outta town. Ain't it crazy how weather changes make people act." Jack sighed in exasperation. "It's not a weather change, Bart. It's the apocalypse." "That ain't what the scientists say." Jack knew both in his heart and his head that the scientists were wrong. They generally were.

They parked, not outside the hospital but right where Agnes Riley used to live before the lord swept her away. "Wait," said Jack, "what are we doing here? I have a broken ankle, not a missing mind." "Welp, nurse Jenny needs someone to look after. Couldn't be Whit, 'cause his ego wouldn't fit through the door, except youse is countin' the Imagination Station door. Couldn't be Aggie, or it could, but it can't be anymore because she don't exist no more. And it couldn't be Whit again, 'cause the old man's gone missing, so who's it gonna be?"

Jack did not go quietly. He rocked and spazzed out while Dolores struggled to drag him by his feet to the second floor of Odyssey hospital. Whit and Agnes, it turned out, had a roommate, none other than the delusional Harlowe Conan Doyle, Pffft-rivate Eye-Dee-Eye-Oh-Tea.

"Wow-dee-hoodalollygag, Whit. You lost so much weight I didn't recognize you." "You *didn't* recognize me, you half-wit private dick," snapped Jack. "I'm not Whit, I'm Jack." "Oh. well, in that case, wow-dee-hoodalollygag, Jack. You gained so much weight I didn't recognize you." Jack said nothing. Doyle didn't recognize him because Doyle was a nincompoop. "Uhh, hey. If you're not Whit, then I only have one question.

"Where is Whit?"

Whit's whereabouts were as wild as his notions of being a sort of "moral superman." Actually, his whereabouts weren't wild at all. They'd be wild relative to a tribal huntsman from the pre-Colonial era who found himself in Odyssey, South Dakota at trickle lake. What was wild was the mold he'd taken on as a tribal huntsman. If you'll remember as you so often do, John Avery Whitaker's clothing was set to fire as he attacked the Castles and Cauldron fire and gave him both the interior and exterior of a wild man. Apocalyptic weeks went by as he slaughtered free game and dined on his savage conquests. His big hairy belly grew in the directions you'd expect from a Burger King inhabitant; his facial hair grew, too. Out of control. Like Osama Bin Ladin. Like Robinson Crusoe.

Then it hit him. This was not the real world. He recalled a time when he sent Dylan and Eugene into the Wild, Wild West, and his programming panache had been so deft that he hadn't encased them in the smithering details of a virtual reality simulator, but he'd sent them to the actual old west. He'd invented an actual time machine! This was not the real world. This was a distortion of it created by the imagination station. Somewhere along the way, he'd confused the timelines and merged with one of his transdimensional counterparts, a confusion in and of itself, as they all should have been moral superhumans. It just wasn't the cosmic way.

The only way to restore Odyssey to its true form, as Whit's moral subjugate, was to turn the imagination inside out. Whit tested his muscle, punching it and listening closely to the steak-like *pat-pat* of its ripples. He wagered he had enough of it to unleash the Station's portal power into this sorry excuse for creation.

All laughter, good jibes, and weenie munch ceased when Whit made his presence known. "I am Utanagwa, immortal spirit of Heap Big Swamp Stinker." The boys looked to one another for a plausible explanation, but laughter returned, as did good jibes and weenie munching. "Silence!" Whit struck the ground with his Spear. "The great immortal spirit has summoned you all here for the greater good of Odyssey, South Dakota." "No, no it hasn't," said an Elven-eared boy, who seemed to be the ring-leader of these lost boys. "We planned this. This is our coming of age trip." "Oh yeah? Well, let's take a *second* coming of age trip," retorted Whit. "You boys surround me and escort me to Whit's End." One of the boys snickered. "Not Whit's *rear* end, I hope."

Whit Blustered indignantly. *Laugh it up*, he thought. *I'll remember what you said, and then I'll paddle the skin off your rear end.* "I'll let you throw rocks. Medical professionals have a bounty on my tush, and the fate of the world is at stake, lest they should apprehend me and cart me off to the Looney Bin."

The boys all exchanged glances. "Boy huddle!" After a moment's whispered negotiation, of which Whit was wary--he thought their cooperation should have been a given--they disbanded and answered, "We get to come up with the battle cry, got it?"

The terms, however trivial, reaped from Whit's eye a tear of position-of-authority sickness. "Uh-oh," said the leading scout. "Looks like the Spirit of Boggy Poop has feelings." A sarcastic "Awwwwww..." left the mouths of the other boys. "We ain't helping you, Shirtless Spirit, if you're going to Wuss out."

Whittaker's good ol' trusty anger returned in full force. He pointed the chastening spear at the Elven boy's rear. "He who spares the rod hates his son!" That was *his* battle cry. "Not bad," said the boy. "All right, we'll go with that, but we better stone at least twelve grown ups on our way there."

Poor boys. They didn't even get to stone one. But then they did stone one. Once they got to the delapidated building, they were angry and disappointed. "Damn, where are all the adults we were supposed to stone?" They obviously called off the search. Whit had a little disappointment of his own. However fallen this fake world was, it never failed to fall a little further and show him how exaggerated his importance had been. As for the stoning boys, they opened their eyes and realized that, yes, there *was* someone to stone: Wild-man Whit. They pelted him with rocks and pinecones all the way through the door, where Connie and the other six, led by Chris, were signing a deal with a contractor, none other than the true moral overlord of Odyssey, South Dakota: James W. Dobson.

Gloy of glories, moral of morals, highness of highness, power of powers! No such philosophical heavyweight had ever entered into the realm of Odyssey, South Dakota before. With the illustrious Doctor Dobtor Dobson Dobfather in town, Odyssey's new name was Godyssey, and there would be no going back.

John Whittaker took his hand. "Come with me, James. Come with me to restore Odyssey to its truthful state, with me leading the tender flock in the great moral issues of the day." James W. Dobson, eyes flowing with tears of adoration, struck a deal with the primal bartender, rocks all apring on his exposed flanks. "John Avery Whitaker, nobody exemplifies cherished beliefs like you do. We will unite, me and you, and head the coalition of the good Lords word over this lost and sinful nation." And so, even though the place had only turned sinful in Whit's absence, Dr. James W. Dobson and John Avery Whitaker seized control of the almighty ice cream emporium, from which they restored the tiny but blessed South Dakotan hamlet to a place of virtue, integrity, and family values, on which they turned their focus and cultivated forever and ever, amen.

Well, that's what he imagined happening, at least. No, what really happened was that Whit came over to present himself as a paragon of moral supremacy (what is it with these dinos and their moral ambition?), Dobson thought him a 'native savage,' pointed, and said, "Behold! One in dire need of a savior, owing to his unyielding roots in the pagan lands of the ignorant primitive!"

Whit would not be told. He marched forward, equipped to convince the great theological shaman otherwise, when his applesauce lactating whore-in-law blocked his path. "Hi! I'm Chris! You're about to enter a place of Wonder, *and* Discovery! Welcome t--" *Splash* went the Glass of the Whit's End roof, for the hole now in it was shaped like Chris, the very naval-flaunting creature who went through it after a primal punch from the great preaching bartender of Odyssey, South Dakota. She smacked face flat into the holy catcher's mit of the dimension-hopping prophet Malachi, but that's really not important to the story, except that he was curious about all that applesauce spilling from her abs-hole, so he forgot to bring her back. He flew her past outer space where she exploded in a burst of forbidden fruitsauce, and



Jason stood around outside looking for her as shreds of fabric and applesauce plopped into his eye. The End of Chris Odyssey.

With Chris out of the way, Whit was ready to let out one Odyssey of a Bible Lesson in appreciating your local vigilante virtue vomiter, but Dobson took two steps to the left, and revealed none other but the deleterious Dr. Blackgard. All the lights went out in Whit's ill-conceived ambition.

"No, no, say it isn't so!" "I daresay, it is well beyond so, with my soul," The wicked doctor laughed long and loud. "A pity for yours, however." He flipped the switch to the Imagination Station. Meanwhile, two firm and authoritative hands fell upon Whit's shoulder. "Your everlasting soul will lie strapped to a bed, next to that delusional Hardy Loyal." Whit turned, and saw an ambulance, occupied by Mitch, Connie, Eugene and Katrina all beckoning him to certain doom. "It cannot be!" He cried aloud. "Do you know who I am? I am John Avery Whitaker, shepherd to the population of Odyssey, South Dakota!" "Not any more," Dobson combed his hair to conceal his bald spot. "There's a new sheperd in town, and he's... I mean, *I'm* taking your place in this 'yere 'Nation Station."

The two hands strengthened from a mere rest to a grip, but the loss of moral power fueled a new sort of power, one that had Whit yanking himself free of the Looney wardens and tackling the dreaded Dobson. "Fight! Fight! Fight!" "Blackgard!" James belted his pelvis over Dobson's bulk, spreading it three-fold like a baking cookie. "Tear the walls from the Station, let the adventure take over the real world!" "And elevate you back into power?" scoffed Blackgard. "How overestimate you your alliances, it rather amuses me." The four young things stood around in a circle and threw popcorn and peanuts as they chanted. "Fine!" roared Whit, "I'll do it myself then!" With Dobson deplete of breath and muster, Whit rolled bowling-ball style to the imagination station, where he shot upright and knocked walls west and east to the floor, releasing a red firey crack in the ground. "May that fissure swallow you all!" As if offered a meal, the crack soared past Dobson, engulfing him in a smokey avalanch of rubble while the four married twenty-somethings headed for the hills. Dr. Blackgard fell to his knees and prayed to the Caldron, but then started to wonder if it was the Castle who took prayers instead.

Whit's expectations were certainly tapping their collective foot. He wasn't bartender yet. He was still shirtless, with all of his chest hairs exposed. The infernal discovery caught wind of this, and suddenly each little follicle of his Gandalf beard and Bluto chest hairs caught fire. Poor idiotic high-and-mighty Whit, he should have known that in the presence of Blackgard's devout and fervant Role-Playing Fantasy prayers that some new unholy menace would emerge from the flames upon his chest. Actually, this thing wasn't new or fresh. It was a mere unfamiliar incarnation of someone he'd rather not have to compete with. "So tell me, old man," said the tallening, formidable foe before him, "what the Lord has done for you this gracious hour?"

Like a mountain guzzling fertilizer, Dobson nowloomed over Whit, an unopposable Titan of a psychologist. "The past is now closed to you. The Imagination Station's adventures are lost amidst a swirling plasmic pond down there in the crevice." Whit looked to his left. Connie, Eugene, Mitch,

Katrina, and Blackgard now crowded into large but overlooked item on his resume. "The Room of Consequences!" He launched himself R.O.C.ward, only to roll onto the vengeful hand of his rival. "No, I think not, the future shall close its doors to you to." Dobson grew wider yet and longer with a lengthy intake of breath, then thundered that breath, truly a tree's worth, a mountain's worth, a planet's worth, down Whit's gullet, growing him the size of the very Titan Dobson was. "And now," said the Doctor, "it is my turn on top!" And with that, ol' W. was air-born above.

"New game plan: Connie stands for consequence." The Odyssey Five huddled together in an effort to not accidentally bump into any buttons and disappoint their escape. Eugene fondled his wife's earlobe, but Connie swatted Mitch's lone advance. "Not now, Mitch-Bitch. Cap'm Connie's takin' us home." Mitch was a little sad, so he turned to Blackgard's mustache for comfort. "Let's hope time travel is a real thing." Connie turned a key, wherever they landed, she simply hoped it would be far from Odyssey, South Dakota.