

Old Man In The Mirror

by Kyle Eggleston

George sat in his basement tinkering away at a new invention. He could usually be found in his basement. Always tinkering away. There was nothing he didn't enjoy more than working on something. George wouldn't call himself an inventor in any way. He was more curious than anything else. Curious about how things worked, what made them tick, how they ran. George had been known to take apart and put back together many objects over the years.

Age was getting the better of the man. He had white hair and laugh lines, more commonly known as wrinkles. He was getting up there in age. Without a wife or kids, George was lonely.

Turning a dial, the device switched on and began beeping. George smiled. It worked. Now all he had to do was sell it. The device acted like sonar that bats used for echo location. George was sure something like it had been made before, probably by the military, but he had made it himself. It was an accomplishment at least.

Turning around, George looked into a nearby mirror. It was decorated with strange writing around its edges. George remembered the day he picked up the mirror, the man he got it from didn't have much to say about it. Just that it was a mirror, hell the guy didn't even know what the writing meant.

George had attempted to translate the writing on several occasions but always came up empty. Looking at his reflection, the man in the mirror smiled back at George and spoke. "You did it! I knew you could do it. It just took time."

George froze, he couldn't believe his ears. Had the mirror just talked to him? Standing up, George walked towards the mirror. His reflection didn't change.

"Yeah, you heard me right." The reflection said. "I've been watching you for a while now. Always tinkering on something. I'm proud of you. I never could have done something like that."

George chuckled. "Who are you exactly?"

"I'm you." His reflection said. "Well, that's not entirely true. I'm you but in a parallel dimension. Same Earth just a different location in the cosmos as it were. Think of a stack of plates, each one the same yet unique and sitting on the same place just in different locations."

George's mouth dropped open. He had heard of the multiverse before, but never experienced it for himself like he was now.

"On my Earth, we've been able to plot the different Earths out there. Our Earth's designation is 113. Yours is 206." The reflection paused. "These alternate universes occur due to choices made. The closer we get to Earth 0, the closer to the original timeline we become. I've yet to meet anyone from there yet though. I keep searching hoping I do."

"Why?" George asked. "Why do you want to see Earth 0?"

"Because." His reflection responded. "It's the closest thing we have to the original timeline. We can see how badly we messed things up going on our own offshoot." He frowned. "I know my world is pretty much a mess right now. I'm not so sure about yours." He hesitated as though something weighed heavily on his mind. "I'm not sure I should tell you this, but the mirror is actually a doorway. If you step through, you can visit my universe."

George stared at his reflection. If this man was telling the truth, George could go on an adventure of a lifetime. He imagined all of the different worlds he could visit. "And you've been watching all of these different worlds?"

His reflection nodded his head. "Yes. I came across yours about a month ago. Usually the mirror cycles every day or so, but it hasn't changed since I came across your world. I don't know why."

"George." George said. "I don't know what to say."

"Call me Earl, I never really cared for our first name." The man replied. "If you want to cross over, just place your hands on both sides of the mirror. It'll like, suck you in. It's safe I promise."

George hesitated. "So, you've done this before."

Earl shook his head. "Not exactly. I've never stepped through, but others have, and they all managed to return from where they came from." He waited patiently for George to make up his mind.

George looked around at his workshop. He didn't really have anything going on that couldn't wait. "Why the hell not." He said. "Let's do this." He grabbed hold of both sides of the mirror and was transported into Earl's world within seconds.

George took a look around as he gained his bearings. He did it, he actually crossed over into a different universe. George was astonished at what had just occurred.

"Welcome friend." Earl said. "I'm glad you chose to take this path. Come with me."

They left Earl's house and started walking down the road.

George looked around, the streets were empty. Several houses looked like they had been struck by bombs. It was a complete mess, destruction was everywhere. Looking back at Earl's house, it too had been partially destroyed. It appeared that Earl had been busy fixing the place up so it looked somewhat decent again.

"Earl, what happened here?" George asked.

Earl sighed. "The invasion, that's what happened. When the aliens came, they started destroying cities. We managed to fight them off, but the damage was done. We've been trying to rebuild ever since."

George tried to wrap his head around this new information he was being told. "Wait, aliens are real?" He asked stopping dead in his tracks.

Earl stopped walking and faced George. "Yes, I'm afraid they are. We believe they were after Earth's resources. They managed to kill thirty-two percent of the population. Including my wife and kids." He pointed down the street a bit. "Come with me."

Entering a small diner, George and Earl sat down at a table. Earl picked up a menu and handed it to George. "One of the few remaining diners in town." He said. "Most people packed up and moved away, deciding not to rebuild. Maybe I should have done the same. But I'm stubborn like that, I wanted to rebuild my life or what's left of it. I don't have that many years left in me. Where would I go?"

A waitress approached. "Hey boys, what can I get you?" She did a double take. "Earl, you never told me you have a twin brother."

Earl smiled. "He's visiting from out of town, Chicago to be exact."

The waitress's eyes grew somber. "I'm sorry for your loss, I heard Chicago got the worst of it."

Earl nodded. "That it did. He's just trying to pick up the pieces like everyone else." Changing the subject back to food, Earl ordered. "I'll have my usual."

The waitress nodded. "Okay, and you sir?" She looked to George.

"That sounds good to me, make it two."

"I'll be right back with some water." The waitress left the table.

Earl chuckled. He hadn't laughed in a while, it felt good. "I hope you enjoy it." He smirked at George.

George looked at Earl. "What did we just order exactly?"

"Possum." Earl said laughing. "It's the only meat we can get our hands on these days."

George shrugged. Well what could he do? Beggars couldn't be choosers, and he was a guest so he would have to just roll with it. "I'll give it a try." George said.

A half hour later, George wiped his mouth with a napkin. Possum didn't taste too bad he thought, kinda like chicken. But what didn't taste like chicken? He smiled at Earl. "Thank you for lunch."

Earl nodded. "My pleasure." Standing up, he gestured to the door. "Let's go."

As they walked, they talked about their past. Both men shared similar histories, where they went to school, what they studied, even women they had dated. Earl chose to settle down while George did not. Their worlds different slightly as well, who was president after Kennedy, how World War II went, things of that nature. Then of course there was the alien invasion, that changed history forever.

Reaching Earl's house, they went inside. Earl led George to the mirror. "I think it's time you got back to your own world."

George nodded. "Yeah, I suppose so. Thank you for telling me all about this though, It's been an eye opener." He held out a hand and shook Earl's hand. "I wish there was something I could do for you."

Earl shrugged. "Just live life to your fullest." He said. "That's all I can ask for."

George nodded again. "Alright, I'll do that." Facing the mirror, he placed his hands on both sides again and was taken back to his own universe.

Back in his own universe, George waved at Earl though the mirror. Earl waved back. Then the unthinkable happened. An alien approached Earl from behind, it had four legs and claws for hands. George watched helplessly as the alien ripped Earl in half tearing him limb to limb. The alien looked through the mirror to George and pointed at him.

George had a thought implanted in his brain. "You're next." The alien said. George fell to the floor in shock. Earl had lied, the alien invasion was clearly in full swing.

The End