

### *Xhactu Plays Up a Storm ...*

The *cèilidh* clean-up had almost come to a close. So, why was Xhactu “marching around playing the pipes”? Simple. He was experiencing what he called *inter-galactic joy*—one might even say he was *inter-galactically overjoyed*. And why was that? Again, the answer was simple: After years of longing, he was overjoyed at having finally learned how to play the bagpipes, to a virtuoso level, and in practically no time at all.

He was also *really proud* of the authentic, though slightly modified, Highland Marching Band costume that Master Piper Alasdair had somehow, with some fast footwork, cobbled together for him. For the fitting, Alasdair had shown him to a full-length mirror, and after seeing himself in full costume, Xhactu was virtually bouncing and beaming with pride.

It was as if the *destiny* he had *dreamed* about in the form of that Word resembling an incised, spherical space-rock in its cosmic nursery, contained his “forever potentialities,” intact throughout many past lives and, presumably, future lives.

Both Owl Man and Heron Man stood up at once and watched Xhactu make another lap around the room. As he approached the two bird-men, merrily piping away, Owl Man stepped out, stood at attention and gave a smart salute. This stopped Xhactu just long enough for the Owl to whisper something in his “ear.” Then Xhactu bubbled over in delight.

“Yes, I’d love to, Owlie!”

“Wonderful,” said the Owl. “Let’s all go!”

Despite Xhactu’s preference for Owl Man’s company over the Heron’s—the effect of the *cèilidh*, the piping, and the costume, had so enlivened his spirits that he even welcomed Heron’s presence. So, it was settled. All three of them would walk down to the local pub two blocks away. It was early enough that the pub would probably not be too crowded or raucous. The bird-men had some questions they wanted to discuss with Xhactu, in private, and there

was a nice secluded booth that Owl knew of, in a corner where they could talk. They wanted to “pick Xhactu’s brain,” a rather crude Earthling-expression for what, in reality, would be a highly sophisticated inquiry into matters grand and subtle indeed. Xhactu would wear his costume, and he insisted on bringing his full-sized bagpipe, and playing it on the way.

As they watched the strange procession approach, most of the London pedestrians were frozen to immobility on the spot. The sight of beautiful tartan plaids, and the magical, haunting sound of the pipes, prompted some of them to stand patriotically at attention and salute, as Owl Man had done shortly before. A few marched alongside for a few yards, oblivious to Xhactu’s height (approx. 91 cm or three feet, ironically), and his third leg. The color at his neck, ice-pop-orange, had not yet shaded back into the default color: iridescent green.

Soon the procession’s novelty had worn off for the London crowds, though, and the trio reached the public house without further delay. The name of the pub was the *Bucket O’ Blood*. The only other patron was a silent, heavy-set, red-faced cove, deep into his cups apparently—the “doctor’s daily dose” as he called it.

The barkeep, named Colin, looked up from the tabloid he was scanning for the latest football scores. He noted three customers walking slowly toward the corner booth. Time enough to find the Manchester United score—he had £20 riding on the outcome—before walking over to take their orders. Colin didn’t even give Xhactu a second glance. He was accustomed to all manner of frivolity and outrageousness at all hours, walking in and out the door. Colin was never impressed. Owl ordered three Imperial pints—which included a Porter for himself. Colin, sensing from the Owl’s manner a generous tip, took it upon himself to bring a huge bowl of salty popcorn with the Imperials. Bigger bill, bigger tips, went his thinking. Besides, Colin had won that £20 bet, and was feeling as expansive as he ever felt.

After toasts and compliments, silence befell the group. Sipping the ale was the ostensible reason for the quietude, but really, the Owl and the Heron were formulating how they might approach Xhactu with their queries. In effect, they wanted to hear Xhactu's thoughts and ideas about his cosmic perspective on intuition and similar matters, hoping for some amazing illumination to come squirting through his *universal translator*.

"Xhactu, my dear friend," began Owl Man, "Heron and I would like to ask you a few questions about *intuition* and other cosmic matters, from your perspective. We might even want to apprentice ourselves to you, if you were to agree, of course."

"Wonderful, Owlie," said Xhactu. "Fire away!"

*“Your Galaxy is Like an Entertainment”*

Jenny, the Bucket O’ Blood’s bonnie barmaid, set Owl Man’s Macallan chaser next to his Imperial pint and gave him a curtsy cute as all. Owl Man smiled, nodded his head, and placed a generous tip under the glass. Owl was noted for his generosity.

After a generous swig of the golden liquid (Owl was generous to himself as well), and a tip of his cap in the direction of Xhactu and Heron Man, he was ready with this question.

“We are most curious, Xhactu. if you can tell us anything about *intuition*, that would be beyond our earthly understanding.”

“Well, Mr. Owl, we are not usually of a mind to answer human’s questions about things beyond their ken, their being so dim and all. Yet, I owe you for making it possible to realize my desire of learning the pipes. So, intuition as you call it, and as you know it, is radically different than the other so-called functions that govern consciousness, so different in fact, that it should not be considered a ‘function’ at all. It is instead, even in humans, a *portal*, a doorway, if you will, which allows entryway for all manner of things. What humans rarely experience is that the portal works in two directions, those things coming from the unknown (to humans anyway) and those things being thrust into the unknown. This is one of the main ways of our knowing about humans without being in contact with them. Dreams work the same way. In fact, intuition is one of the mechanisms of what you humans call dreams. In any event, to make a long lecture short, intuition connects to the structure of the universe, what you know as *quantum*. In the real world of quantum, which is only the simplest of universes, time and space, nor any of the other dimensions, are not bound or limited in any way. What is a bit of sport in some universes is the way in which intuitions are manifested, made *real* in your terms, like dreams. One must be a bit careful, because even in advanced ways that we are used to, the unpredictable still rules. But mostly, your galaxy is like an entertainment.”

Both the Owl and Heron sensed that Xhactu was just getting started and sorely wanted him to continue, when Jenny appeared again and asked about another round. Owl and Heron looked at each other, nodding up and down, with Xhactu joining in. Tonight, it seemed they would surely be closing up the old Bucket O' Blood. They waited for Jenny to bring the new round, and once again, Owl Man placed more reward under his refreshed Macallan's.

“Many universes?” It was Heron Man's query.

“Of course,” replied Xhactu. “An elemental fact. Kindergarten knowledge. You see, your own sense of a universe is still bound by that old idea of something needing *to begin*. You must admit it, both of you, you cannot help but *think* this way. Of course, that is the problem. You want to bring something as grand as a universe (even if it *is* a minor object), under something as truly minor as thinking. From what I have told you already, you must see, that it is not thinking that gets you very far, but intuition, which as I have barely touched on, includes dreams as well as art (which I have not touched on at all).”

“But why is it then, Xhactu, with all your access to advanced intuition and other such, that you had to come to earth to learn the pipes.”

Owl Man's question produced a long silence.

“Desire is in many ways a simpler and more complex topic. You see, while intuition is unbounded, desire is bounded and always takes place within locality. I had heard about bagpipes of course and knew their sound and had bonded with the *sense* of them, but not the reality of them. But now, finding myself bound to earth, at the cèilidh, I was full in the *locality* of the pipes, and that locality duplicated itself in me and it was then possible for me not just to sense the pipes, but to play them. Desire is bound to locality. And for this reason, desire itself, and its object are more and more bound to locality of time and space, Desire

does not move out into the universe, but it is as if the universe concentrates itself in locality.

This is why desire can drive one mad, no matter what kind of creature one may be.”

Xhactu yawned.

It was time to call it a day.

“Anything else, Xhactu?” Heron Man prompted Xhactu for the last word.

“Yes. Love is different.”

With that, Xhactu closed his eyes and fell into a deep sleep.