

# Not In Kansas Any More

by Tanaqui

Heaven looked a lot like Jericho. Which was a little weird, but probably no weirder than being here in the first place. And not as weird as some of the other things that were going on.

Johnston found out about those when he settled himself onto a stool in a bar that looked remarkably like Bailey's. When he commented on it to the guy sitting next to him, the stranger laughed and said it looked to him like a place called Harvelle's, and everyone seemed to see it a little different.

He jerked his head sideways and added, "The guy in the corner says it looks like the PX on Mars. And, no, he doesn't mean in some movie. On his Earth, they didn't cancel the Apollo program."

"*His* Earth?" Johnston raised his eyebrows.

"Uh-huh." The stranger gave Johnston an amused grin. "Seems like we're all from different universes here." He shook his head ruefully. "Thought I'd seen some strange shit in my time, but this place has it all beat."

Johnston would have to agree with that—assuming it wasn't all some kind of cosmic practical joke. Jake would've been able to explain it, maybe: Johnston remembered him devouring those science fiction comics when he was in his teens—although he reckoned that was more to do with them having stuff about planes and spaceships than anything else.

Parallel worlds or not, the way the stranger spoke and carried himself did seem familiar. "You military too?" Johnston asked cautiously, not entirely sure he wanted to know the answer.

"I was. US Marine Corps." The guy stuck out his hand. "John Winchester, Lawrence, Kansas. Well, and just about everywhere else, recently."

Johnston shook the hand. "Johnston Green, US Army Rangers—" The way things were, he doubted anyone would be harboring old grudges.—"and pretty much always Jericho, Kansas." Seeing John's slight frown, Johnston added. "That's a little place way out west. Almost into Colorado."

The bartender sauntered along the bar and, without being asked, put a glass of something that looked remarkably like scotch in front of Johnston. When he sniffed it and took a sip, he realized it was his favorite single malt. Well, this was Heaven, wasn't it?

"So," he shifted on his seat. "I'm new around here. What is it folks do?"

John laughed. "I guess you might say we... come to terms with our lives? Me," he nodded at the TV screen above the bar, "I'm keeping an eye on my boys."

Johnston looked up and stared blankly at what he'd thought was just some TV show. Two men, a little younger than his own sons, were creeping around what appeared to be a derelict house clutching sawn-off shotguns. Realization dawned. "That's back—?"

John nodded. His eyes were fixed on the screen, where one of the men was leveling his shotgun and firing at some huge bug creature. The bug's guts splattered across the wall; its legs waved feebly for a moment and then went still. John raised his glass in salute. "That's my boys."

"What in Tarnation *was* that?" Johnston gestured at where John's sons were now contemplating the mess that had been the bug.

John gave him a sidelong glance. "You know all the stories about boogey-monsters and demons?" When Johnston nodded, John shrugged, "In my world, they're real. Me and my boys, we're Hunters. Track 'em down, kill 'em or send 'em back to Hell."

"Huh." Johnston was beginning to think that maybe he'd escaped quite lightly if going to war with the home of the nearest Costco was the weirdest his life had gotten. "So...", it was his turn to glance sideways at John, "I guess you didn't have a bunch of cities wiped out with nuclear bombs, then?"

John shook his head. "Sheesh. Think I'd rather face the demons." He turned his attention away from the TV screen for a moment. "You must've been okay in Kansas, though? I mean, with the radiation?"

Johnston scratched his beard. "Yeah. The radiation wasn't a problem. The country going to hell in a handbasket, on the other hand... Mind you, Denver got hit and—." He peered at John. "You said you were from Lawrence, right?" When John nodded, Johnston grimaced. "They hit Lawrence, too. Don't ask me why."

The strangest expression crossed John's face; Johnston wasn't quite sure if it was anger or pleasure. After a moment, John shrugged and turned back to the TV screen. "So, you got family back there still?"

"Got a couple of boys, too. And a wife."

"Lucky man." This time, John saluted Johnston before taking a drink.

Johnston realized that maybe it wasn't the other man's first of the day, and that perhaps Winchester wasn't doing a particularly great job of coming to terms with the world he'd left behind. He sniffed at his own scotch again, and then put the glass down without drinking. "Can't help wondering how they're doing. Things were kinda messy when I... left."

"Here." John pushed a remote control along the bar towards him.

Not quite believing what he was doing, Johnston pointed it at the screen and clicked the button to change channels. He figured that if the TV could show what was happening back home, it was smart enough to figure out where home was.

Sure enough, the screen flickered and wavered for a moment, before settling to show him the

valley below the Richmond farm. Jimmy was handing Jake a radio: the one they'd been using to talk to that bastard Constantino, Johnston realized. Eric stepped up close to his brother, a determined look on his face, as Jake spoke with New Bern's leader. Johnston's anger rose as he heard Constantino offer his condolences: as if he meant a word of it. The anger was replaced by a mixture of pride and amusement—God, Dad and his war stories; how Jake had loved listening to the old man ramble on—as Jake snarled "Nuts!" into the radio.

Like John, Johnston raised his glass to the screen and saluted Jake and Eric. "That's my boys. I'm proud of you. Both of you. You give 'em hell."

John reached over and clinked his glass against Johnston's. "We did something right, didn't we?"

Johnston grinned back at him. "That we did."

**Disclaimer:** These stories are based on the Junction Entertainment/Fixed Mark Productions/CBS Paramount Television series *Jericho*. They were written for entertainment only; the author does not profit from them nor was any infringement of copyright intended.