

Alarming Apples

by Mike Lynch

Alarming Apples is an orchard northwest of Boston. Nice place. I go there once or twice a year. They sell apples, books about apples, apple juice, apple pie, and most importantly — apple cider donuts.

Honestly? I'm not a big apple person. When it comes to fruit, I prefer pears. They've got a grainy texture I really dig. I also love blueberries. I like how tiny they are. And I think it's cool that blueberries grow on bushes instead of trees. If I was a piece of fruit, I'd rather grow on a bush than a tree -- it seems much more cozy, you know?

Anyway, like I was saying, I'm not really into apples. But I love apple cider donuts. They're mad tasty! Especially the ones sold at Alarming Apples -- they're dense and moist and perfect. A cute blonde woman with tiny wrists makes the donuts. She basically plops wads of dough on to a funky metal conveyer belt. As the wads of dough travel down the conveyor belt, they're dunked into a vat of hot oil that cooks them, turning them into donuts. When the donuts reach the end of the conveyor belt, they tumble on to a greasy paper plate to cool. After the donuts have been thoroughly dosed with cinnamon and sugar, they're boxed and sold to suckers like me. Simple, right?

So a couple weeks ago, I was fiending apple cider donuts like nobody's business. All day long I sat at work daydreaming about cider donuts. Seriously! Then I bought a box of generic supermarket donuts, but they tasted like boiled paper. Puke! After that, I decided to go for a drive and get my fix. So the next day, just before lunch, I hopped in my car and drove to Alarming Apples. I arrived about an hour later -- just as the tiny-wristed blonde lady was completing a fresh batch -- and purchased a dozen donuts. The box was warm, and I ate two donuts while sitting in the parking lot. As it turns out, that was a pretty bad idea.

After buying my donuts, I drove through the forest toward Boston. My car smelled like cinnamon and sugar. I felt amazingly upbeat and

optimistic. Everything seemed normal but that gradually started to change. The trees on either side of the road changed shape and size until they resembled colorful, jagged, reflective mirrors. Then the road shrank and tapered away until it ceased to exist.

Leafy mirrors encircled my car. Then hundreds of pink, soft-ball-sized acorns fell from the sky. They bounced off the ground and the roof of my car. Then little arms and legs emerged from the acorns. They swarmed around my car, and lifted it into the air. Then they carried me into the forest of leafy mirrors.

The pink acorns carried me through the forest and up the side of a mountain of cubic blue rocks. The mountaintop contained nothing but blue dirt and blue rocks and was surrounded by dense blue thickets. Upon reaching the mountaintop, the acorns ditched my car and their bodies melted into little pink puddles that resembled spilled strawberry milkshakes. Then a shaggy blue goat emerged from a blue thicket and drank the puddles, one by one.

I walked up to the goat and introduced myself. I said, "Hi, I'm Mike." The goat basically ignored me. So I offered the goat one of my delicious apple cider donuts in order to kind of make friends, you know? The goat ate a donut. Then it began sprinting in circles like an absolute maniac.

This worried me. I thought maybe I'd accidentally poisoned the goat or something. Then the goat then charged as if it was going to ram me. However, at the last second, the goat snatched my box of donuts and darted into the blue thicket. The goat stole my donuts!

I was pissed! I chased the goat down a narrow lavender grass path that wound through the dense blue thicket. But the goat scampered like lightning -- fast! It escaped. I hobbled down the path, exhausted. The path deposited me into a clearing that contained a taupe thatch house, a silver well, and a garden full of colorful vegetables -- a neat and rustic little scene.

Inside the hut I found a woman wearing a bathrobe and slippers. Her hair was big and blue and styled in a 1960s bouffant hairdo. The woman sat in a leopard print beanbag chair and nibbled on one of my apple cider donuts! I walked over and said "Hi, I'm Mike. Can

you please tell me what the heck is going on?" And the blue-haired woman leapt from her chair and proclaimed "I am the Queen of Goats and your apple cider donuts are mine by royal decree!"

I frowned. The Queen of Goats consumed about six donuts in the blink of an eye. She didn't even stop to chew them -- she just sort of poured them down her throat. What a waste! I grabbed the box of donuts and the Queen and I wrestled around for a while. After I removed the donuts from her clutches I ran from the house and into the thickets as fast as I could. The Queen of Goats shrieked like a banshee. Several large, ill-tempered, shaggy blue goats chased me. At one point the goats were so close that I felt their teeth nipping my shirt. Fortunately, I was able to lose them in the maze of dense blue thickets.

After escaping the goats, I wandered around in the thicket for several hours and looked for my car. No luck. Then the sun faded away and it got dark outside. I felt so tired I could hardly walk so I curled up on top of a large blue boulder.

As I nodded off to sleep a cricket chirped. And I appreciated the sound -- it felt like a kind of companionship I guess. I struck up a conversation with the cricket. We talked about Super Nintendo and cookies and we fell asleep on the boulder. The next morning, I woke up and offered the cricket a donut. He enjoyed the donut thoroughly and repaid my kindness by giving me a turkey baster full of magic gravy. He said "baste your boulder in the magic gravy and it will float away like a balloon." I was skeptical of course. But I had no reason to doubt the cricket because we were pals.

After the cricket took off, I basted my boulder in magic gravy. The gravy was tangerine colored. It smelled awful, like hot garbage. And at first I thought maybe the cricket pulled a fast one on me. But then, slowly, my boulder started to rumble. And then, slowly, it ascended skyward -- little by little.

The boulder drifted away. Like a cloud. I sat on top. And sadly, I'm afraid of heights, so I clung to the boulder for dear life. The boulder and I drifted along. I'm not sure in what direction we travelled. For several hours I was too terrified to look.

When I finally worked up the courage to poke my head up to look around, a goose was hanging out on the boulder and yawning sleepily. And it wasn't just any old goose. This goose looked familiar. I recognized it from the park near my apartment. So I said "Hello how are you?" and the goose said "Oh I'm doing quite alright thanks." We had a nice conversation about the weather and why my boulder was flying. And for a little while I forgot all about the fact that I was floating on a boulder. Its so nice to see a familiar face. Even a goose face.

After some pleasant conversation I offered the goose my final donuts and he ate them with gusto. Then to repay me for my donuts, the goose tied himself my boulder and towed me back to Boston. I imagine it must have looked pretty cool: a goose towing a bolder through the sky above Boston. And I certainly enjoyed the ride -- fear of heights be damned. However, the trip only took a few minutes. Then my goose friend deposited me on a parking garage roof near the Boston Medical Center. After offering the goose my thanks and inviting him to stop by and eat homemade guacamole sometime, we parted ways.

My apartment is about three miles away from the parking garage. I could have caught the number one bus up Mass Ave, but the weather was cool and nice so I decided to walk. On the way home, I passed a weedy vacant lot, a dripping water faucet, and a diner. I stopped at the diner and ate a huge plate of delicious blueberry waffles.

