

You Thought You Had It Bad

A Collection of Short Stories

by

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Part 2 – God Returns In His UFO

Hanguk Yoja Bangu Hato Club

The Resurrection

Twenty Chimps On A Plane

The Earwax Fairy

High Impact

Welcome To Red Square

Jackpot

When We Were Monkeys

Meet The Antichrist

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PART 2 – GOD RETURNS IN HIS UFO
(THE JUDAS CONSPIRACY)

(Inspired by the Gnostic scripture, "The Gospel of Judas")

"The time has come, Judas."

"What time is that Lord?"

"The time when I must leave you all."

Judas moved to stand beside Jesus, who was sitting under the shade of an olive tree, and put his hand on Jesus' shoulder.

"We will follow you Lord, wherever you might go."

A light breeze blew and cooled the air ever so slightly, providing a modicum of relief to an otherwise scorching day. Jesus shook his head while staring off into the distance.

"You cannot follow me on this journey... not yet. It is not your time."

Judas nodded that he understood.

"I love all living things, Judas, and there is much beauty here on Earth, but this world is a violent and predatory place of my Father's making. It utterly amazes me that mankind can tolerate it."

"And your sacrifice... will it change all that, Lord?"

"Maybe; or maybe not. It's a heavy burden I carry," Jesus said, looking up at Judas, "... and I'm scared. My spirit is ready but my flesh feels pain just like yours, and I know what's coming."

"Maybe there's another way," Judas said.

Jesus' expression changed from one of melancholy to interest.

"You think?"

"There's always a way around our obstacles."

"And what's the way around this one?"

Now *Judas* stared into the distance as he became immersed deep in thought.

"Wait a minute... it's coming to me... I've got it!"

"Well I hope it's not contagious... not that it would matter at this point."

"A double!"

"A double?"

"Yes, we find a Jesus look-alike and let the authorities capture him in your place."

Jesus gave Judas a blank stare.

"I'm not sure that would go over well with Dad."

"Nonsense," Judas replied. "Your Father loves you. He wouldn't want to see you suffer needlessly."

"Oh really. You don't know my Father."

"Come on. You've given the world so much already. Seize this opportunity. I can set it up for you."

Jesus cocked his head this way and that, like the pendulum on a metronome, weighing the pros and cons.

"But who would want to do that?"

Judas shrugged.

"Someone who has no future and needs money for his family, I suppose."

"We don't have money for that."

"Not a problem," Judas said. "I'll get Caiaphas, the high priest, to pay. He has gobs of money and would love to get his paws on you. Maybe... thirty pieces of silver,

give or take a bit; it would be a drop in the bucket for him."

Jesus stood and plucked a ripe olive off the tree and popped it into his mouth.

"Well, if you think you can find my double, then go ahead and try, but I'm washing my hands of this whole sordid affair."

It took Judas only forty-eight hours to find a perfect match for Jesus, a dead-ringer as it were. His name was Yitzhak, or Zak for short. They met at **Gethsemane**, the same garden where Jesus and Judas had spoken just two days before. Zak was a very sick man, although he didn't look it, and was concerned that he might die and leave his family penniless.

"So just what is it I'd have to do," Zak asked.

"It's very simple," Judas replied. "You just tell people that you're my Master, Jesus of Nazareth."

"That's it?"

"Yep, that's it. When they come to arrest you, and they ask who you are, just tell them that you are indeed Jesus."

Zak gave Judas the blank stare.

"They're going to arrest me?"

"Undoubtedly. That's why we need someone who looks just like my Master."

"What happens after they arrest me?"

"Oh, they'll probably question you, work you over a bit, detain you for a few days."

Zak remained silent for what to Judas seemed an eternity before he spoke again.

"How much will you pay?"

"Pay?" Judas repeated. He stroked the beard on his chin as he thought. "How's, say... fifteen pieces of silver sound?"

Zak stood and looked down at Judas.

"You want to pay me fifteen pieces of silver for doing this?"

Before Judas could answer Zak stretched out his hand to clasp Judas'.

"Deal."

"Good," Judas replied. "Your family will be very pleased with you. Now this is what we'll do. Tomorrow at noon, I'll meet you at your home and pay you your money. Tomorrow night, at sunset, you come back here and wait in that thicket of trees over there." Judas pointed to a location on the far side of the Garden and Zak acknowledged that he was clear as to where he was to be. "You will take my Master's place after dark when he calls for you. Do not come out before he does so. Do you understand?"

Zak replied. "I understand."

"And if you speak with Him, address Him as Lord... he likes that."

"I shall do as you say," Zak said.

"When they take you away, they'll question you. Just tell them that you're Jesus. Don't answer any questions. Say nothing, but if you feel that you really need to respond, talk in riddles, or tell some meandering story."

Zak stood silent, motionless, trying to absorb all he was hearing.

"Have you heard my Master speak before?"

Zak nodded. "I have."

"Just do like he does. Say the same types of things. They won't know what the fuck you're talking about and will give up asking you questions in short order."

Zak pulled a pair of ripe olives off the tree and popped them in his mouth, promptly coughing them up after nearly choking on the pits.

"Will I see my family again?" Zak said, a little hoarse from the choking incident.

"You can count on it," Judas replied.

Zak looked Judas in the eye.

"Can I trust what you say?"

Judas gave a quick nod.

"Absolutely."

That night, walking on the bank of the River Jordan, Judas explained to his Master the arrangement that had been made with Yitzhak.

"So after we have Passover supper tomorrow, you say: 'I need to go pray on the Mount of Olives, for my time is at hand'... or something to that effect."

"What if the other eleven want to come with me?"

"Tell them you'll take Peter, James and John. They're big eaters, they'll probably fall asleep on you after a large meal. When they do, you call for Yitzhak and send him out to wake them while you secret yourself in

the woods till all this blows over. I'll take care of the rest."

As planned, after the Passover meal Jesus went to pray at Gethsemane, on the Mount of Olives with Peter, James and John in tow.

"You three wait here at the entrance to the garden, whilst I go pray over yonder."

"Yes Lord," they all replied in unison, and Jesus went off to pray.

After an hour, Jesus returned to find his disciples wide awake playing some dice game.

"You cannot wait for me in contemplation," Jesus said with an attitude in his voice, "...you must amuse yourselves with these sinner's tools?" He took the dice and threw them into the surrounding woods. "I have not yet finished praying. You can wait in silence until I return."

"Yes Lord," they replied.

When Jesus came back after another hour had passed, he found all three disciples asleep, whereupon he returned to the far end of the garden and summoned Yitzhak. Zak was the spitting image of Jesus and Jesus was amazed at the resemblance.

"You know what to do?" Jesus asked.

"I do, Lord."

"Three of my disciples are waiting at the garden's entrance. The big one is named Peter, the short one is John, and the one with the unsightly rash on his face is James. Got it?"

"Got it. Peter, John and James."

"Right." Jesus placed one hand on Zak's shoulder and placed his other in the crook of Zak's arm. "Bless you, my son. Good luck." And with that Jesus retired deep into the shelter of the trees to await the next day.

Zak proceeded to the entrance of the garden where the three awaited him. As he neared, he could see another man approach the gate. Some commotion out of sight awoke Peter who also saw this other man approach.

Zak could barely hear the exchange as Peter asked the stranger what his business was there at this late hour.

"We've come for the one they call Jesus of Nazareth," the stranger said.

Peter placed his hands on his hips.

"You and who's army?"

The stranger made a fist with his thumb protruding and, in hitch hiker fashion, pointed behind him at a sizable group of men bearing arms that followed him at some distance.

"Oh... that army," Peter replied. "Well he's not here at the moment."

Just then Judas arrived with one of the chief priests at the head of the column of armed men.

"The one I slap on the back and give a noogie to is the one," Judas said to the priest. He then went up to Zak who, by that time, had reached the three disciples, and delivered him up to the authorities.

Another day had passed before the dawn of the next came, bringing Judas to the edge of the woods at **Gethsemane** to seek out Jesus.

"Lord, are you there?"

"Over here," came the reply in a hushed voice. "Is it all clear?"

"Yes, Lord; all is clear. You can come out now."

Jesus appeared from within a thicket of Jujube trees, the thorny twigs of which the Romans had fashioned a crown that they had impressed into Zak's head. The early morning air was crisp and the sky clear.

Judas approached his Master.

"I have good news and bad news, Lord. The good news is that our little subterfuge worked like a charm. No one suspected that Yitzhak wasn't you. The bad news is that they beat him pretty badly... his own mother wouldn't have recognized him. Your mother couldn't even tell if it was you or not. And they crucified him. He died on the cross."

"As was to be expected," Jesus added.

"But there's even some good there."

"What's that?" Jesus said.

Judas grinned as he answered. "No witnesses."

Jesus looked into Judas' eyes.

"Yes there are; one."

Judas looked puzzled. "Who?"

"You," Jesus replied, continuing to fix a steely gaze on his disciple. There was an awkward silence for several moments until Jesus broke into laughter and pushed Judas hard on his shoulder.

"Only joking Jude."

Judas gave a nervous laugh. "You're such a kidder, Lord. You really had me going there for a minute."

"Okay, so what else?" Jesus asked.

Judas continued. "They placed Yitzhak's body in a sepulcher and rolled a large bolder in front of the entrance, and Caiaphas has stationed two men there to guard it. *But*, as luck would have it, I know them both and they've agreed to take a walk on the morning of the third day... for a price. Once they're gone, I'll take care of disposing of the corpse and you can... how shall I put it... return from the dead."

"Isn't it supposed to be the morning of the second day?"

"No, it's the third day."

"I'm sure the prophecy stated the morning of the second day," Jesus said.

"Trust me. It's the third day."

"Okay, if you say that it's the third day, then it's the third day."

Judas fanned himself as the sun's rays grew more intense with every passing minute.

"Now, I've learned that your other eleven disciples have gone up to Galilee, so you'll want to make an appearance there before..."

"Before my Father comes for me," Jesus said, finishing Judas' sentence.

"...Right... before your Father comes for you. And by the way, tell them to forgive me for what they think I did. I've heard that Peter has threatened to hang me for it."

"It shall be done."

And so Jesus met with his remaining disciples on the mountain top in Galilee, and they wept to see him again. Standing in their midst, with the eleven seated around him, Jesus spoke to them as he did in the days of old, saying:

"All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go therefore and instruct all nations, baptizing them in the name of my Father and teaching them to observe all things whatsoever that I have commanded you, for I am with you always, even unto the end of time."

One of the eleven, Tomas, stood up. While thrilled to see his Master again, he was nagged by one unsettling question.

"Lord," he said, "...I saw you on the cross and you had nails through your hands and feet but I see no wounds on you."

All of a sudden Jesus felt flushed and began to sweat. He had to think fast.

"A fair question, Tomas... and I'm glad you asked it... but don't you think that if I'm able to raise myself from the dead in three days that I would also be able to heal my own wounds in that time?"

Tomas was dumbstruck.

"...Oh... right... okay, sorry... my bad," and he sat back down.

The disciples gave Jesus a thunderous round of applause and wept once more and, as they did, a bright light appeared in the late afternoon sky, a light so intense that it rivaled the sun. A tumultuous roar was heard as the

light moved closer. All the apostles stood to marvel at the sight. Such a spectacle had been seen only once before, over thirty years prior, around the time of Jesus' birth. The Light focused on their Master but nevertheless created a great deal of heat on the entire mountain, so much so that the apostles' hair ignited and fire danced upon their heads like tongues of flame. Each batted another's head with their bare hands in an effort to extinguish these little infernos.

Jesus, arms at his sides, palms facing upwards, looked into the Light, which was now brighter than that of heaven itself.

"Forgive them Father, for they knew not what they were doing... or just didn't care. Now, please, GET ME OUT OF HERE!"

Jesus began to rise into the Light, drifting farther and farther away from the apostles.

"Goodbye," he said. "It's been swell. Goodbye."

The apostles looked up in awe; jaws dropped, mouths agape, and heads still smoldering.

As he continued his ascent, Jesus remembered something.

"Crap... I forgot to tell them to forgive Judas. Oh well. Crap."

On the ground, all eyes were still pointed skyward as Jesus disappeared from view. James scratched the rash on his cheek and turned his head slightly so he could see Peter.

"It's a miracle," James said.

"You can say that again," Peter replied, maintaining his upward gaze.

"It's a miracle."

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