

A FRIENDLY WARNING:

This book contains fictional stories of faith gone astray. These stories may be extremely offensive to people of strong belief. These are tales of faith being misused to control and destroy. It also features a number of sad souls driven crazy by it. This book is in no way an attack on sane religions or the people who follow them. It is an attack on the many abuses of religion, and the dangers of blind faith.

If you are strongly religious, the stories in this book may be too extreme for you. It would be best to stop right here.

If you are afraid of separation of church and state ending, the religious right, America becoming a theocracy, or crazy fanatics, then you may safely proceed.

YOU HAVE BEEN WARNED

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INTRODUCTION

A little faith may help some people through the long dark night, and into the light. Sometimes, faith leads people into the darkest places imaginable (depending on how dark your imagination is). Any sinister action can be justified in the name of God. It doesn't matter if your God is real, imaginary, or something in-between.

You are about to read (or about to delete) samples from my short story collections: "The All You Can Eat Apocalypse", and "God's Not Coming, So Save yourself". Both anthologies warn of the dangers of an American theocracy, and the terrors of corrupted faith. I have also included a new story, which will be featured in the upcoming third book from the series. In these stories, religious conviction only leads to madness and death. This book is in no way an attack on people of good faith, or the God or God's they worship (despite all the nasty deeds they did). These are cautionary tales of dangers of blind faith, and the people who misuse it for their own ends.

If you are entertained or horrified sufficiently by these stories, then

please check out my other books. If you find these tales overly disturbing, then pray a bit, because that always works.

THE ALL YOU CAN DRINK APOCALYPSE #2

"Can I have a Bloody Kara?" asked Zachary Mangano, an average middle age man with a buzz cut.

It was a rather simple request, but not one that would be fulfilled in this lifetime, or any other.

"What the hell is that?" screamed bartender Bruno Jones.

"Vodka, beet juice, pineapple juice, Tabasco, and some other stuff," replied Zachary.

Bruno was twelve hours into a sixteen-hour shift, and not in a prime mood, or prime shape. He exceeded four hundred pounds. His long gray beard and hair had not been groomed this decade (and possibly not the previous one either). Bruno said, "That is the worst idea I have ever heard of a drink, and I've heard plenty. I don't even have any beet juice. Why the hell would someone put that in a drink?"

Zachary sighed, then said, "Ok, then make it a beer. Do you have any Juno Vesta?"

"Never heard of it," replied the increasingly unpleasant bartender.

Zachary sighed, "I'll take whichever one is your best." Zachary downed his first beer, then stared blankly ahead.

Bruno serviced his clientele, as he gradually transitioned from unpleasant, to downright rude.

"Can I have a frozen strawberry margarita?" asked an overly thin and effeminate man.

"I'm not using the God damn blender. I don't feel like cleaning that God damn thing

out. How about a whiskey sour? It's almost the same thing?"

The man sighed, then said, "OK, never argue with the man making your drinks."

Jim Jones entered the establishment midway through Bruno's performance. He said with a laugh, "You are one lazy bastard, Bruno." Jim resembled a thinner and slightly better-groomed version of Bruno.

Bruno screamed, "Try doing my job. You only sell coffee and pastries, and get to sit on your ass the entire day."

Jim replied, "Yeah, and I freeze in the winter, and burn all summer." Jim sat down on his personal stool.

Bruno asked, "The usual?"

Jim replied, "The usual."

"Did you work that thing out with the wife?"

"Yeah, but not completely. She's gonna let me go bowling on Saturday, but I still have to go to church Sunday morning."

"Ouch, that's gonna hurt."

"I'll be completely sedated since I'm drinking till three. Won't feel a thing."

"I won't be home till after three myself, but I'll be sober. I have to work Saturday night."

"You chose this career field, so don't complain."

Bruno plopped Jim's drink on the counter with a grunt, then moved on to his next victim.

The sports broadcast on the TV was interrupted by a news alert. This resulted in screams and boos from the bar crowd intent on watching "the game."

The rather anorexic blonde newswoman reported, "We interrupt this broadcast for an important news alert. The terrorist group Amud has attacked the Syrian capital. It has only been three months since Amud bombed Penn station. They only inflicted minor damage to the railroad, but the bomb severely damaged some surrounding buildings, killing several dozen people. America is once again at a high state of alert. US troops are on their way overseas, and the president will be issuing a statement momentarily."

Bruno screamed, "Damn Arabs. If they were all Christians, this would never happen."

"If they were all Jewish, this would never happen," said a man near the rear of the bar.

"The problem is you guys, and all the banks you own," screamed a bald Aryan man.

"If I owned a bank, would I be drinking here?" asked the man in the rear of the bar.

"It's those damn foreigners. They keep coming in illegally. They all hate America, and they are all terrorists. We should put them all in camps, just like Senator McDonald suggested," screamed a hairy man. He drank from a beer mug the size of a suitcase.

Bruno called out, "All of those Muslims are terrorists, everyone. I wish I could go back in time, and kill their so-called prophet. That would fix the problem for good."

Zachary broke into hysterics. It was his first actual human reaction, since arriving at the bar.

"What's so funny? A friend of mine died in the last attack. He died because of those monsters!" screamed Bruno.

Zachary took another sip of his drink, then replied, "It's what you said about going back in time, and killing their prophet."

Bruno raised a fist, and shouted, "What's so funny about that? Their beliefs led to this coming war. Don't forget New York, France, Germany, Florida, and that petting zoo in Idaho."

Zachary laughed again, "No, it's not the horror, though I remember different horrors and different victims. I'm with you on all of that hating the enemy stuff. It's that bit about going back and killing their prophet."

"What's so bad about that?" shouted Bruno.

Zachary replied, "It's because I already did so, and more." Zachary rubbed the silver sword neckless hanging around his neck. He kissed it, then broke into tears.

"What the hell are you talking about," asked Bruno, as he refilled several beers.

"I did it, I really did. I went back in time, and took out their prophet, and ours."

Bruno dropped his scowl, and broke into a laugh, "That's a good one."

Jim called out, "Bruno, you really know how to attract the crazy ones."

Zachary said, "I'm not crazy. I was a soldier in a very special branch of the army. At least I once was. Fill me up, and I'll give you my story. I can't tell it sober. Have one on me yourself, because you won't believe it sober."

On the TV, the anchorwoman added, "We go to a breaking alert. We now have reliable evidence that a terror attack is imminent in New York City. Officials deny the

reports, but still warn people to be diligent." The broadcast continued, as a number of patrons exited the bar in haste. Some of them failed to settle their checks. Bruno attempted to chase the freeloaders but was a bit too slow. He put up his hands and returned to work.

"I don't own the place, and the owner is a dick. Who cares?" said Bruno. He refilled Zachary's drink, and mumbled, "What's this nonsense about time travel?"

Before Zachary had a chance to continue, two men entered the bar. To Bruno's horror, they appeared somewhat Middle Eastern.

"Get out you damn sand rats," screamed Bruno, as he pointed a fat finger.

The men glanced at each other. One of the them asked, "Are you talking to us?"

Bruno replied, "No, the other two Arabs. I mean you two. We are at a state of war with your kind. You are not welcome here."

One of the "Arabic" men replied, "Really? When did America declare war on India?"

"You're all the same. Get out," screamed Bruno.

The first man said, "Come on, let's go. The other place is cheaper anyway." The two walked out. Bruno kept them in his gaze. One of the men raised a hand, preparing to give the finger. He decided against it.

Zachary sipped a little of his new drink. He reached into his wallet and plopped a wad of worn cash on the bar. Zachary screamed, "Free drinks for everyone. It's to me, all you can drink."

There was a muffled cheer from the eight remaining patrons. Bruno brought out several large pitchers of beer, then returned his attention to Zachary.

"Thanks, that will make up for the lost revenue, and keep the boss off my back. You have now earned my undivided attention," said Bruno.

Zachary sighed, then continued, "As I said, I work for the military. Four months ago, we got our time travel device working. Took some doing, and cost a few dozen lives. It wasn't easy getting the kinks out. We did not achieve the results we hoped for. We could only go back around one to three thousand years, no sooner. We were looking for a way to tweak the past, so evils could be prevented from ever occurring."

A very small man attempted to sneak out of the bar.

"Alex, where do you think you're going," screamed Bruno.

"Home," replied Alex.

Bruno leaned forward, which was easier than getting off the stool. He screamed, "What about your tab?"

Alex shrugged, and said, "You said the drinks were on the new guy."

Bruno spat, "That's for all the drinks after the announcement. You still have to pay for the four beers you had before that."

Alex threw a wad of cash on the counter, "Damn thief."

Bruno turned back to Zachary, and said, "Sorry about that. Please, go on."

Zachary continued, "We hoped to go back in time, and wipe out all of the terrorist leaders before they formed their groups. That was not possible since the earliest we could go back was around a thousand years. Our leaders debated for months. We came up with three hundred things we could try. People talked and talked about what to change. As usual, indecision won the day." Zachary took a good gulp of beer, then

signaled for a refill. Bruno complied.

Outside, a man was running around with a placard indicating, "The end is now. Repent to the Lord." The man screamed some incoherent nonsense.

After that distraction had concluded, Zachary continued, "Then came the end of the world. The big bad finally hit New York City, bam, done. I was actually on Long Island at the time, Brookhaven to be precise. That's where the lab is. I was safely underground, as the bombs went off. Some religious nuts in the middle east thought their God was right. Our crazy religious leaders thought our God was right. The president, who is also a religious nut, attacked back. He claimed 'God is on our side, and will help us defeat the terrorists.' He launched a nuke counter attack, and off we went." Zachary banged his beer on the counter, to emphasize his point. A glob of beer poured over the sides of the cracked beer mug. It resembled a mushroom cloud. Zachary finished his beer, then continued, "Everyone was waiting for their particular savior to show, but none of them made an appearance. Maybe they had something better to do." Zachary pointed to his once again empty glass, and Bruno promptly refilled it. Zachary downed half the drink, then said, "We did the only thing we could. We sent someone back to kill the ancestors of the leaders. It accomplished nothing, except preventing chylos from being invented. Shame, I really liked that dish. Nice and spicy. The leaders were simply replaced by other people. Only the names changed. The time travel process is not perfect. Every poor soul came back a bit older. We couldn't aim precisely, so we delivered the volunteers prior to each event. The return visit always brought people back a little early, so everyone had to wait for their other selves to leave."

The entire bar tuned into Zachary's story. Every mouth was either wide open or taking in some alcoholic beverage.

Bruno laughed, "Hell of a story. Do you have any proof?"

"How about some more beer for us in the cheap seats?" asked the spokesman for the remaining customers.

Bruno glanced at Zachary, who shrugged and said, "I did promise free drinks for everyone."

The beer flowed.

Jim asked, "What about me?"

Bruno replied, "You said you were going on a diet."

"Not when there's free beer," said Jim.

The news report continued, with more unpleasantness. Bruno grabbed the remote and shut the thing off.

"Want to hear the rest?" asked Zachary.

"Sure, I love funny tall tales. Being a bartender, I've heard many a yarn. You are in the top ten, so far. The grand prize winner is still the guy who became a woman, then switched back again, along with his wife," said Bruno, as he returned to his stool.

Zachary said, "I knew there was only one way to end this. I had to stop both religions. I was completely insane at the time. Otherwise, I would have never even considered doing this. My wife and children were dead, my country was destroyed, and the world was ending. I did not care. I blamed both my God and their's for this mess. The Messiah promised to save us at the end, and bring the righteous up into heaven. It

never happened. The end came, and nobody was saved." Zachary kissed his sword neckless and cried like a woman. After a moment, he regained some composure, drank some more, then continued, "While our leaders tried to find a way to survive, I took matters into my hands. I went through the time device myself and without permission. After arriving, I took some time to learn the local language and attempted to blend in. I waited six years, then finally found the Messiah from Nazareth. He was very young, and just beginning to preach. I killed him. I used a sword so that it would be consistent. I waited three days, but there was no resurrection, which I thought was a bit odd at the time. At the prearranged time, the device sent me directly to the Arab prophet. I had to wait nine years, during which time I learned the language, and blended in the best I could. I finally found and killed him as well."

Bruno laughed, "So that's it? You spent years of your life in the past, and accomplished nothing?"

Zachary laughed, "Yes, that's true, I wiped out both religious icons, but it changed nothing, well at least nothing that matters to the world."

Bruno asked, "So, what has changed, other than some food?"

Zachary downed his beer, and said, "Most of the changes were small. Some different movies, TV shows, and music. A few countries in the middle east have different territory or names, that sort of thing. There was a great TV show called 'Universe and Time Chronicles.' I really loved that show, but it never got made in this timeline. If we survive this, I'm getting into the entertainment business, and making it myself."

Bruno asked, "Not that I believe any of this, but what about Jesus? You said you

killed him, but he is still our savior." He pulled out his own cross and displayed it to Zachary.

Zachary cried a bit. He overcame the outburst, looked Bruno in the eye, and said, "I killed our savior Otho, and the Arab prophet Amna."

"Who the hell are they?" asked Bruno.

Zachary removed his silver sword chain and placed it on the bar top for Bruno to study. He said, "Otho was a man of peace and decency. He claimed to be the son of God. He preached that all men are brothers. He was killed by the Romans with a sword, after protesting Roman aggression and intolerance. He arose three days later, and became our Savior."

The patrons of the bar began to mumble and grumble. A couple studied their own crosses. One guy went through his Bible, looking the information up. An odd bald man gave Zachary the finger, then left the establishment. Bruno developed a slight jitter.

Zachary continued, "Like all of Otho's followers, I wear a sword around my neck, in the same way, you wear a cross. This reminds us of his sacrifice. This never occurred, because I killed him before he had a chance to do any of those great things. Amna was the middle eastern prophet, and very similar to the replacement that you know of. I killed them both. I murdered two beloved religious icons, hoping it would bring peace to the world."

"You're talking nonsense," screamed Bruno. Zachary pointed to his empty beer glass. Bruno ignored the request.

"Believe what you want to believe," said Zachary. He pointed to the sword neckless

laying on the bar top. He took out a book from his pocket and placed it next to the neckless.

Bruno looked the book over, and laughed, "This is all made up. You're a nut job. This is kinda like the New Testament, but it's not."

Zachary said, "You won't think I'm crazy in a few minutes. I came back to my time around a year before I left. Unfortunately, it was after the latest New York City incident. I didn't even land in the lab. Instead, I arrived naked in a woman's restroom during a break at a religious revival. Now, that is a very funny and long story, which will have to wait for another time, if there is one. For an entire year, I had to stay out of my own way and kept a low profile. I go back for the first time in a few days. At least the version of me still here will. I would go and stop me if it wouldn't rupture all of the space-time. At least that's what they said during my training." Zachary pointed at his empty glass. Bruno acquiesced and refilled it.

The Jewish guy in the rear said, "I could have told you that Jesus wasn't the messiah."

A bearded man stood up and screamed, "How dare you spew such blasphemies. Jesus is our savior. Always was, always will be." The man walked over to Zachary, as his friend attempted to stop him. The man continued, "I'm gonna belt you for what you said about Jesus, in his name."

The man grabbed at Zachary but regretted it instantly. Zachary took hold of the man's arm and performed a minor combat move. Zachary never got out of his chair or broke a sweat. He simply bent the man's arm till it snapped. The man screamed, then

fled the bar. He looked back at Zachary, and said, "You're one screwed up bastard, and you'll end up in hell for what you said." The man exited the establishment. He moaned in pain, despite having six beers in his system.

Bruno said, "Total crap, but it's a good tale. If the world doesn't blow up, you should write a book about it."

Zachary took a gulp, then said, "You want proof? You'll have it in a few minutes. The terrorists are about to launch a massive EMP device. It will knock out the power grid and all communications across the East coast. Both the President and the terrorist leaders will take this as a holy sign. Everything falls apart minutes later."

"When exactly is this event going to occur?" asked Bruno.

Zachary looked up at the beer promotion clock, and said, "Two minutes. You see, killing both saviors accomplished nothing. My old world had its redeemers. This world has different ones. Maybe they are both false, or maybe some higher power just sent replacements? Hell if I know. The end is near, so pray to whatever or whoever you want to pray to. Not that they'll listen. They didn't last time."

"Nonsense," said Bruno.

Jim said, "Hey Bruno, give me another beer before the power goes out."

The entire bar glanced between Zachary and the beer promo bar clock.

The moment came.

Bruno said, "Nothing happened, I told you..."

The lights went out, and so did the smartphones. Outside, the city went dark. Every eye fixed on Zachary.

Zachary asked, "Last round?"

A bit more drinking followed as Zachary cried like a baby or at least a very small child.

Bruno took out his cross and stared at it for a while.

Jim called out, "Have faith, Bruno. We don't know if any of this is true."

"I've given you the evidence. I know the future because I was already there."

"I refuse to believe any of this," screamed Jim.

"Refuse all you want. That won't change the facts. I told you precisely when the power and communications were going out. I have shown you my alternate Bible and my sword chain. If you want further proof, you'll have it in ten minutes, when the first bombs fall," replied Zachary, as he finished his beer. After a pause, Zachary got up, and said, "I'm going down to the subway. It's the safest place to be, but not by much." Zachary turned to Bruno, and said, "Thanks for the beers, and good luck." He plopped another two hundred on the bar.

Bruno got up with some difficulty and politely grabbed Zachary on the arm. He asked, "You're not pulling something on us; right? This is all real?"

Zachary looked Bruno in the eye, as tears formed in his. He said, "It is very real. I wish I could say that I'm joking. I wish this was all a bar room stunt. It's not. How could I have predicted the power and communications failure? I know what's coming next, and it's not pretty."

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