

**“Life’s complicated...
When You Can Turn Water into Wine”**

By Caine N. Abel

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Often life challenges us in unexpected methods and sometimes along the way, we find comfort in the intangibles, or what we believe without seeing or holding its physical presence and valuing what we carry in our hearts and minds, while grasping on tightly to the very tangibles we believe are important enough to dedicate our lives to gain or keep. But sometimes belief is more important than what one might consider “proof”, as value is to hope, just as tomorrow will be a better day.

Warning!!!

If you are religious and without a sense of humor...

The contents of this book may offend you...

So before you turn the page and begin the journey into this parody of the alternate life of the most famous religious figure in history returning simply to live among us, trying to just be a normal, regular guy, with all of the experiences and baggage of his past, in the new millennium...

Life's really not that complicated... unless you have problems, and don't we all have problems?

You can choose to be an asshole and then you wouldn't really give a crap about other people's problems, but you would need to be so self-absorbed, requiring you to be so interesting that you could never bore yourself.

Now that would lead to exhaustion, a problem easily cured with a few "uppers" or maybe some coke. That is, if you aren't Mormon (nothing wrong if you are) and maybe some caffeine, unless you don't want to do drugs because maybe you are Mormon (again, not judging) and that would be okay too, however you could be that rebellious personality, for all I know, who is going to Hell for making the choice to do cocaine since you've already reserved a ticket for drinking, or snorting "caffeine" (no right or wrong way to do it) but then again you wouldn't be exhausted because you probably wouldn't be that interesting anyway.

Think about it this way, it's not like the paparazzi are hanging around Salt Lake City. In fact, I might go so far as to stake my menial reputation on the fact that there aren't any paparazzi anywhere in Salt Lake City, unless they are lost, or on their way somewhere else. But back to my point... if you were Mormon paparazzi (It could happen, they watch TMZ in Utah too).

Then you might find a natural energy booster (If it's even allowed) to keep you up all night, looking to take some compromising photos of maybe Jesus on his "come back" tour (to hang out, not for the final judgment, people) through Salt Lake City, on his way to Las Vegas or Hollywood, drinking a Pepsi, or doing a line of coke (hey a lot of time has passed since we last heard from him and the story is quite complicated), on his way out the door of that fancy church that sits in the middle of a city with no water, named after a lake of sand, as he was on his way to meet with his agent in L.A. about his newly completed script.

A script written about a guy tragically and selflessly hanging from a cross one day, ascending to... well you already know that story... but this is about his personal journey, that came afterwards, just wishing to be a regular, normal guy, after all that he sacrificed for mankind, or “sinners” (as his father might call them) previously.

Jesus was trying to live on his own merits from the fruits of his labor. He was a regular Joe, trying to tell a compelling story from more than one point of view, since he had that innate ability of both an insider’s and outsider’s outlook. Hopeful that people would not simply pre-judge him for the person he once was, that “holy roller” they once only read about. It was hard to overcome, when people heard you could walk on water, cure the blind, even arise from the dead. So after the big event, he went away for a while, to find himself.

It was a few centuries after meeting and spending time, getting to know the absentee father he would frequently hear from in those first 32 years of his life, but never got to see. After a few centuries with anyone, you begin to notice unflattering things in your parents, as any child would, seeing more than you really care to. Jesus realized he wanted to write his own book about his overbearing, know-it-all father as powerful as Oz, that wasn’t exactly going to be a tell-all book, like some of those “no more wire hangers” tales of abuse.

He hoped to tell others of his experience as the “Son of God” and of how he had grown exhausted of listening to angels asking, “who do you think you are, God?” Or being constantly reminded, “you know that you are not your father, right?” by unionized angels questioning his authority, as if nepotism had something to do with the pecking order in heaven. There was definitely a lack of respect from some of the top angels, as they didn’t like that the “Son of God” was their boss, “daddy’s boy”, as a few of them referred to him.

Complicated is when you tire of hearing other's ruin the story about the time you turned water into wine, telling it as if they were present for the event, or people on the street always asking if you "had a complex growing up, trying to live up to your fathers expectations?" Hating it when the misinformed asked "hey man, you must've felt like a rock star, that time you parted the Red Sea, just as the Pharaoh's army was closing in." He'd had enough of those rude "hole in the hand" jokes, from smart ass, little kids pretending to drop things, saying in vain. "Look at me, I'm Jesus," getting laughs in those first few hundred years after his death.

So in writing it, he first had to ask himself if he'd be okay if his book didn't become an "all time" best seller, like his fathers.' That was the gravity of the standard his book would have to live up to, exactly why his closest friends advised not to even try, "it would never be as popular as your father's...anything you do will always be compared to your dad's book." The pressure was on. Not wanting to write a book with the same subject matter, certainly nothing as serious and since his father also cornered the "Self Help" market, that was out too.

So Jesus' first idea, was a story about vampires and teen love. Two subjects that were always popular, also rebelling against his father's teachings. However, in the end, he just wasn't down with blood suckers. Besides, he was sure that some critic would find some ridiculous, "spoiled child" connection to that "water into wine thing." It was maddening to be held to such unfair scrutiny, as he weighed the pros and cons of his thoughts, he needed to find a quiet place to brainstorm and that's how he ended up in Salt Lake City.

It was a charming, "Stepford" type place, where he was assured not to get into trouble, but while the people were nice and mostly respectful, in a city that was known to make it a point to live by the teachings based on the Commandments, including those extra ones found right in the desert

of Utah, it was odd that many locals looked at him so disapprovingly, for his long hair and unshaven appearance and what many referred to as his Hari Krishna outfit. So he found a local barber shop, got a his beard manicured like George Michael and hair trimmed, kind of like Kenny G. (even the prodigal son had to modernize his appearance) certainly a break from his post B.C. look, of his younger years. (Why is there no D.C. period, for During Christ?)

Anyway, afterwards he went shopping at the “Mormon Macy’s” (it really exists, I got a nice pair of Nikes there once, cheap.) He bought a bunch of khaki colored Dockers pants and short sleeved, buttoned up dress shirts in white and light blue, just like everyone else, but he still wasn’t as popular as you might think in a town showered with his old imagery everywhere you turned.

It wasn’t long before he grew weary of those self-righteous, judgmental people, skeptical of him, always seemingly named Jebediah or Jeremiah and constant harassment from the local law firm of “Smith, Young and Jones,” threatening legal action if he didn’t stop claiming he was the “Son of God”, actually serving him a cease and desist warning, on company letterhead. Acting as if they were going to be his judge and jury, threatening like they were going to tell Jesus the next time he came for a visit. “Like they’d even be invited to that party,” he thought, looking at the document. “I’m sorry, but your invitation must’ve gotten lost in the mail,” he’d tell them in passing on the street.

Jesus would always joke to them, but they didn’t find it, or him, to be very funny. So he packed up his items. He didn’t have many, as he learned long ago that it was a good idea not to keep a lot of personal possessions, just in case he needed to make a quick exit. “Be ready to leave at a moment’s notice,” he would always advise his friends. So he moved to a city where all the other

guys took on his look and called it “grunge.” So with a Nirvana t-shirt, a pair of jeans and a wool snow cap, he felt right at home in Seattle, often joking that “it seemed like rain.” referencing Noah’s Ark. That line always got a few laughs and some concerns from those who hadn’t met him yet.

He even got to wear his favorite sandals and everyone was jealous of the truly handmade pair that looked so retro, in that “old-world” style. Women would break the ice with the question of where he got his pedicure. He tried to explain that it was his special lady who taught him, before they broke up, when she used to wash his feet for him. But they just didn’t get it and asked every time they saw him where that shop was.

It wasn’t uncommon to find him in the company of atheists, who didn’t really have any expectations, or preconceived notions, as they weren’t worried about being judged for their shortcomings or fear eternal damnation in the fire pits of Hell. Since they didn’t believe in his story that they considered nothing more than religious folklore, but he enjoyed their company just the same.

As on any given night, Jesus could be seen having philosophical and sometimes even spiritual discussions, enjoying a glass of his favorite microbrew in hand, sitting with his atheist friends. Talks never turned heated, unlike some of the conversations turned debates he had in Salt Lake City, with the self-proclaimed theologians who would explain their interpretations of the stories they only read about in his father’s book, even though he was able to reflect upon them with the clarity of a first person’s perspective. But what else would you expect from someone thinking that divorce only came when your spouse turned to salt?

It was one of those heathens (as they were referred to in biblical times) whom introduced him to a few musicians that later lead to Jesus joining a band called “The Wondering Apostles.” Not one wanting to take attention away from everyone else, he played the drums, but his incredible solos eventually left the rest of the band filled with envy and one night before a gig, the other members took a vote in Jesus’ absence.

Later when he arrived, all four of them sat around drinking a beer, eating some appetizers, like they always did before a live performance, but the table fell eerily silent. There was this familiarity that Jesus had sensed once before, that led him to calmly ask, “why do I get the feeling that all of you will betray me, before the show tonight?”

As he and the band watched the stagehands set up, Jesus noticed that there were only three chairs, microphones and guitars, but no drum set. They had decided they would perform their set “unplugged” and like that, he was out of the band.

To make matters worse, people around town seemed more certain that the end was near, even though he did his best to reassure them it wasn’t, but walking downtown he noticed more “end of the world sale” signs in merchant windows and knew the time had come to leave town. Luckily he was working part time at one of the many coffee houses in the city, even inventing his own special blend, he called “Morning Glory.” It was a popular selection and with the profits, he saved up enough money for a bus ticket to Las Vegas, where he became a dealer. (No, not that kind. He was the son of God, remember?)

Anyway, he needed a job (even though it went against his anti-money changer viewpoint) and for a while, it worked out fine. Before he was fired due to an alarmingly high percentage of people that sat at his table won at Blackjack. Management figured that he was cheating. As he

explained that he was a professional and was insulted by the thought of them questioning his integrity, as dishonesty went against his beliefs. Security gently carried him out of the casino.

Taking the long way home to clear his head, he ran into a prostitute on his way back to his apartment, who asked him if he was interested in spending some time together and depending on the story you may have been told when you were younger, she may, or may not have been his type. After talking to her for some time, her pimp approached angrily, demanding to know why she was listening to this guy talk and not getting paid.

The pimp raised his hand to strike her, but Jesus interceded, gently touching his shoulder. As the pimp felt a sense of calm come over him, it caused him to lower his arm. It was Jesus who began to explain that he too has a controlling father who wasn't always around, but remembered that it was his mother and stepfather that always were, and even if the pimp was still mad at his mother for throwing out his awesome mixtape collection that took his entire teen existence to put together, all those years ago, he should still go call his mother and forgive her. While Jesus finished his conversation with the young lady, before he finally went home.

The pimp took out his cell phone and had a heart to heart talk with his mother, explaining that "I was just about to slap the shit out of one of my bitches for not making that extra sharp cheddar, but then Jesus touched me and told me to give you a call." Understandably the pimp's mother was pleased hearing that her son finally found religion in his heart and inspired that Jesus touched his soul, not knowing that he meant it literally.

On the way to his apartment seeing the landlord, Jesus quickly ducked around the corner, before his landlord saw him. You see, although the landlord wasn't much of a religious man, he might have considered it a "miracle" if Jesus was to pay his rent on time, but times were tough and he'd

already been arrested a few times in Seattle and Salt Lake City for practicing cures without a medical license and the judge presiding over his case for possession (no, not that kind) didn't buy his claim that the hemp was a cure all, for medicinal purposes only.

He still liked to give motivational speeches to those on skid row, trying to motivate the down trodden, as it was something that still gave him purpose. It also counted as time served for the mandatory community service issued by that same judge, but it did nothing to add to his bank account. And so on the 15th of the month he was short again, so Jesus who often bartered his abilities in trade for something he needed, offered to fix the landlord's aching back to make up the difference, but he would never totally cure it, just in case he was short on the rent again next month.

All the time and experiences that Jesus had gone through yet he still pondered, not of what he would do to survive, after all, he fed many from the flesh of one fish, but stuck on the subject matter of his book, heavy on his mind. Although he was still that same caring, nurturing person of legend, you would understand his trust issues that he carried with him. No longer simply willing to trust others unconditionally, he made it a point that his inner circle would need to earn their place.

It was easier to share an apartment than try to pay full rent. So he brought in a roommate, who was cool, wasn't looking for direction, and didn't steal his food, causing those uncomfortable infamous "come to Jesus" moments that often persisted in the world of shared occupancy. They got along well and his roommate's friends all dug Jesus, as he enjoyed being in the company of them as well. But then, who wouldn't like Jesus? Around them he could let his hair down and didn't always need to lead by good example, but one of Jesus' pet peeves, was his roommate

would always bring the party back to their apartment even though Jesus would have to work on Sunday. His friends always liked to come back to his place, especially after a late night of Saturday drinking and debauchery, always knocking on Jesus' door early Sunday mornings, waking him, thinking that it was the same as Mass, confessing their sins and it was every Sunday morning that a groggy Jesus would patiently remind the drunken flock "I'm not Catholic."

They would still feel better about their misdeeds and offer up suggestions of what his book should be about. The common theme always seemed to be "Jesus II, The Return," the story of an angry Jesus seeking vengeance with Hellfire and other pyrotechnic effects, now a martial artist, like in "Kung Fu." Except, the journey would start off by kicking the Roman legion's ass, serving up justice to his betrayers, those bastards who stood quietly in the background of the crowd that cheered for that thieving asshole Barabbas to be freed from the cross, instead of him.

Move forward a few thousand years to modern times and he would travel the country and soon the world, tracking down and killing all of those annoying, self-made, prophets, in front of the foolish flock. You know, like that show "Dexter." In this scenario, Jesus would always say something strong and humorous, a proclamation, in the moments preceding their death.

"You are going to suffer for your sins!"

Or, something cool like, "burn in Hell mutha fuckaaaa!"

Or, "the arm of the Lord is long and your time is short..."

Maybe something in the tone of a question, "did you think that I didn't see that shit?"

And his other favorite Samuel Jackson type line, "oh yeah bitch! Vengeance is mine, say the Son of God! Can I get an Amen before I kill your ass?" he'd ask before finally stabbing them

through their heart with his trusty weapon that he'd refer to as his "Soul Catcher" or "The Reformer."

Jesus would always laugh about it, seeing it in the form of a movie of the week, or weekly drama/comedy show, produced by Quentin Tarantino. "Jesus Justice," amusing as it was, it always sounded better after their Sunday morning ritual as they would always partake in a morning round of hemp smoking. Afterwards he would make an awesome breakfast feast, even though he only had condiments in his fridge and cereal boxes in the otherwise bare cabinets to the praise of his followers that he called friends.

After a nap, he woke to find himself alone, once again. Left to his own thoughts and considerations of writing his book under a pen name, there was that nagging feeling of how he was afraid that somehow it would get out and he'd hear from the naysayers about how he was just trying to take credit for something else, like that time people thought he was lying about that blind kid and the bird he resurrected. "What a fiasco," he thought.

Jesus also remembered that no matter what, he wouldn't rely on other people to write his stories down and he'd use paper, not tablets of stone. This would ensure that all of his words made it down the mountain, a kind of a jab on his dad's previous works and all of the false books and religions created upon the supposed lost writings of God. He called those stories "The tablets, Take Two," understanding that it slightly irritated his father, that people were actually putting words in his mouth. "It was like story telling in the dark ages, how many times did someone adlib part of a story?" he often wondered.

"Exactly how bad could Sodom and Gomorra have been? I've been to Thailand and Tijuana."

They were the kind of stories that you'd expect to hear from your father to keep you out of

trouble, or away from a place, or a city. “What a Dinosaur,” he sometimes said of his father’s more conservative views. Jesus was much more liberal in his opinions. In those brief moments when he thought he was alone, forgetting that he really wasn’t ever alone...

That also made date night a little awkward and sometimes downright uncomfortable when he had a lady friend or two over, knowing that his father would be judging him and all. So it was also common for Jesus to hook up at their place and at least then it would be too pervy for dad to watch. Because Jesus liked to get freaky sometimes, you know, with his ladies washing his feet and all. It was okay that he had a foot fetish, as we all have our thing and even Jesus understood, not one to judge and all.

Sometimes when his dad would talk to him at the most inappropriate times. It seemed to bystanders unaware of who he was, that he might be mentally unbalanced, since they couldn’t hear his conversations with his dad. People began to take pity on him at a very young age, as he would often arrive at the PTA conferences and “Bring Dad to School Day” alone, having to listen to his father tell him that he was too busy to attend. Many people in the village thought that his father was just some irresponsible drunk that ran out on him and his mom when he was a baby and when he tried to explain what really happened, it made it even worse, as people thought he was just in denial.

So he thought that his experiences might help others by telling the story of his relationship with his father, that it might help others find their way. But after the first draft was completed, he realized that it would only be a “feel better about your lousy childhood” book, that Oprah might feature in her Book of the Month Club. That meant he would have to sit on her couch and be interviewed, eliminating any future chance to sit in her audience on one of those “Oprah’s

Favorite Things” shows. Since he already knew better than anyone about rolling the dice and betting the odds, he wasn’t going to risk that.

So once again he deliberated long and hard, looking for a new subject, an idea that might motivate him to start writing. He considered “The Life and Times of Jesus,” his journey as a young man, spreading spirituality by way of riverside baptisms, that helped to save many souls and the adventures that ensued. But he somehow imagined Hollywood turning it into some crappy knockoff of “Young Indiana Jones” with a “Little House on the Prairie” twist (a wholesome show that he hated by the way.)

Where he would search for his own artifacts, his shroud, and his chalice hidden many years earlier - not because he was the Son of God or anything like that. He just hated it when other people used his cup and utensils. He also envisioned producers writing somewhere in the script, he would be stuck with a sidekick named Jimmie, the little awkward kid that no one liked, but Jesus would have to take in because that’s what he did.

Somehow they thought it would make Jesus more appealing to viewers in the 35-49 years old demographic, as if he wasn’t already likeable enough. “Nope, not doing that!” he thought. Still, he was just a little upset with Michael Landon for stealing his idea for “Highway to Heaven,” when out of kindness he made sure that Michael got that role of a lifetime all those years ago in “The Creature from the Black Lagoon.”

Jesus even tried a stint as a “new age life management, negativity cleanser,” but found too many charlatan, hippie, loving hacks were giving out bad advice that even they wouldn’t follow, ruining what good accomplishments he made. It was just like the pharaohs tried, all those centuries ago, as if they were divine. Even though his official policy of that time was to turn the

other cheek, inside he really wanted to turn theirs, in a sort of saintly retribution with all of the velocity of an unwelcomed Ike Turner backhand.

However more and more “life coaches” were popping up each day, like one of those plagues his father allegedly may have used to thin out the herd, wiping out half of the world’s population, like we saw on The History Channel. “The problem was that ‘free will’ didn’t have a stupidity clause in it,” he would often say. He was a believer in one of his favorite movies, “Forest Gump.” He could be heard saying, “Stupid is as stupid does,” quite often as he watched the news, even though he had already seen it play out in his head earlier. He could do perfect impersonations, by the way.

Women would often flatter him, without understanding why. “You would just make the perfect boyfriend,” they would say and he would always respond “no, I carry my share of emotional scars, on the inside.” His friends coined another phrase explaining his success with women, “Yep, he Jesus’d her.” In the mornings after he brought company home, sometimes his friends would joke, asking if he “converted her”, to which he would respond with that Bill Clinton look of confidence, two thumbs up and all.

He would often spend the morning amusing himself (c’mon people, a little respect) with one of his favorite hobbies; a combination of reading all of the daily horoscopes and people watching, trying to figure out by their behavior and who was what sign. He did this while he sipped on his morning coffee, sitting at his table in one of those famous coffee houses, writing his next manuscript, titled “You Might Be a Religious Nut: Top Ten.”

□ You might be a religious nut... if you believe that God told you the Earth was going to end on a specified date. Especially since, I didn’t know.

- You might be a religious nut...if you are listening to prophecies from a guy that worked in a hardware store or a coffee house a week ago.
- You might be a religious nut...if you believe someone you went to high school with, who used to always dress in all black, wearing an overload of mascara and a pentagram is now having everyone call him Jesus.
- You might be a religious nut...if you think that giving all of your stuff away to the person who is telling you the end is near, will get you an admission ticket to the pearly gates... I mean think about it, the next day you're homeless, because you are stupid!
- You might be a religious nut...if someone hands you punch and you see people dying all around you and you still drink the punch, I mean really?
- You might be a religious nut...if you believe your group needs matching polyester blend sweat suits, with five dollar sneakers from the grocery store to make a trip into the afterlife... or somehow you might get lost on the journey.
- You might be a religious nut...if you think that swatting bad kids with a two inch thick board instills discipline and is The Lord's way, when you've seen movies like a naked, Kevin Bacon initiation into a fraternity in "Animal House."
- You might really be a religious nut...if on a certain day of the year, everyone else gets gifts and I get a crappy "everyone else got something and all I got was to look at everyone else opening gifts on my birthday" t-shirt.

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