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Getting Filled with a Little Help from my Friends

David Woodward

We found ourselves high up in the mountains. They seemed to rise and stretch on forever. The summits were pointed, the tips a lush, velvety green. An indigo sky surrounded the improbable scene. It was perfectly calm at first. Then, the winds began to pick up. Slow and steady at first. It rustled our hair and made us feel alive with the mountain. A sense of unity overcame us. Warmth held us like a strong and steady hand. Judas called it paradise. James called it shelter. Jesus, I said, how did *we* end up here? Paul laughed hysterically and climbed further. But there was no further to climb to. Still, he had to move on; he had to tell someone about our discovery. Shouldn't he have gone down?

I watched Paul amble away from us. The intensifying wind blew his long hair and beard all over his face. I laughed. He looked like a real mountain man. He found a peak that was higher than ours. He stood tall and proud on the sharp tip. Perhaps he was part goat. Peter said Paul would always find a way to outdo us. The other James agreed. He claimed Paul was the most ambitious man he'd ever met. The third James was late meeting us. We saw him running and falling as he went up the steep cliff just below us, his robe catching on some stunted bushes with needle-like thorns. Jesus, he said, wait up. I'm bleeding all over the place. I laughed again at the sight of my hapless brother. God bless him, I thought. He could always bring out my lighter side. Laughter really was the best medicine — and my brother. One day I'll tell Siddhartha. He was right all along. Perhaps brother James was my guru. Krishna, Krishna, I cried within. Are we in the Himalayas? No response. I will meditate later. He will reemerge as a goat, or a vulture, or a passing cloud. We'll converse then.

As I watched Paul, or was it Saul now? I keep forgetting. Everyone keeps changing their names all the time. It is very difficult to keep track. Hey Simon, is that Paul —

or Saul — up there? Simon, tying Thomas' sandals, again, looked up at me and shook his head in frustration. Paul, Paul, Paul, he said, irritated beyond words. And I'm Peter. Remember. So, who is Simon? Peter pointed to the zealot. Oh, I said, smacking my palm on my forehead. It was a very hard and loud smack. Peter flinched. Or was it Simon? He looked ready for a fight. Right, right, I said, as I stumbled over a rock. I think I was the one who actually re-named him. Why do I keep doing that? I remember now. That zealot always got on my nerves. Sometimes, I felt like telling him to take it easy. Why so serious all the time? Thomas overheard this and got confused. So, Peter is now Simon, but Simon, the zealot, is still Simon. Um, something like that, I recall saying. Close enough. Yes, yes, now I remember. The zealot kept his name because, because . . . he was the zealot. Simon the extremist, I used to call him. And extremist is synonymous with zealot. Phew. I need a nap now. Naptime everyone.

I dreamt the winds picked up something fierce. The indigo sky turned a horrendous shade of purple. Yuck. It was awful. Then the horrendous purple turned greenish. Vomit green. Then, I saw the wind. I never recalled having ever seen the wind before. Even in my wildest dreams. The winds were so fierce that they blew the tax collector's robe up and over his head. I smiled. Serves him right. Taxes. What bull*! @#. What's his name again? I think he was the son of somebody. Or was he the brother of someone else? By the look of his private region, I don't think he was circumcised. Hmm. Maybe he's a spy. Whatever. Not my problem. What's coming is coming. Right, Siddhartha? The mountain above me smiled. But the wind did not. It began to whirl all around. Should I be alarmed? Should I wake up? It twirled about us like one of them transcendental dervishes — the ones I always admired. It lifted robes, hair, and feet, bringing down leaves, branches, and spirits. I looked to the horizon. But all I saw was more spiked mountain tops. Paul, or Saul, or Simon, or whatever the ambitious (usurper?) one was called, was floating in the air. He was surrounded by a series of twisters. What is the other word for them? Can one go into

meditation while one is asleep? Siddhartha? No response. He must be meditating. Oh. It just came to me. Tornado. Thanks, man. This is a really cool dream. I wish Judas could see this. He loves this kind of stuff. There must be at least thirty tornados flying in formation. The ambitious one doesn't seem to be enjoying it though. Is he calling my name, or is he blaspheming again? I'll sick Judas on him. That'll fix him. Not that I really mind. It's a compliment, really. But I like to see him squirm, just a little. He'll have his day. But not today. Go twister go, blow him up, then down. Ha! It worked. He's going up and down like a yo-yo. I gotta dream like this more often. What if I threw in a goat? Yes, a goat is always a good idea. Stick it to him goat. Make him bleed, like my brother. Now I've gone and done it. I can't stop laughing. Hey, you guys need to see this. I can't recall the other five guys' names. All this recalling is making me anxious. Jesus, I have to pee. Eureka! John. How could I forget John? Didn't he try to drown me once? Or was that another John? Mary was right on that one. There are way too many Johns to keep track of. Ah, Mary. Why didn't I invite her along? Oh, yeah. She and Saul don't get on too well these days. I think he owes her some cold, hard denarii. Hell. Another reason she ought to be here. She'd kill to see Saul-Paul being tossed about through the sky by a myriad of twister-tornados. She'd really appreciate the goat horn up his arse. I don't think these other clowns will. Especially the zealot. He'll probably give me another lecture. *Me!* It's just me and Judas up here. Speak of the devil, where is my number two?

epilogue:

The mountain finally awoke. It yawned and stretched on for another two millennia or so. Siddhartha, the face, faced the West for a change. He figured it was time. The

East finally saw the back of his head. I can't describe it because, well, I can't. I spend most of my days wandering the hillsides, playing with goats, sleeping with sheep, and teasing mountain lions. They are so fun to tease. Sometimes I pretend I'm a sheep, or a goat, and at the last second, I say, boo! They still eat me, but then I come back and haunt their dreams. Siddhartha taught me how to do that. I often sit on His face. The sun sets on us while we drink tea. We make stunning shadows. We reminisce about all the mischievous things we would have liked to have done. In a way, we have. When Krishna is not busy being reborn, he stops by for a chat and some good organic green tea. He gives us the latest news from down below. We always know when he's coming. He's a whirlwind . . . a . . . what's that word again? You know. It's a wind that goes around and around, throws everything into the air, keeps it airborne for a while. The thought of it is bringing back some good memories. I'm laughing again. Siddhartha's not helping me out his time. I laugh even harder. I spill my tea all over His serene face. Krishna is beside himself. He's gonna fall off Siddhartha's nose if he's not more careful. God, it feels so good to laugh with your best friends in the whole wide multiverse. I can see good old Krishna transforming before my very eyes. He's getting ready for his next adventure. Buddha and I call out to him before he leaves us once again. Remind them of perfection. I laugh so hard I fall off His slightly upturned lips. But it's not my laughter that precipitated my fall. He finally opened His mouth. But no word came out. He kept His promise. His mystical silence will not be broken. He will never admit that I exist. And *that*, I respect — beyond words. But there is sound coming out of Him. The mountains are trembling with this most magnificent and holy roar. We are One. We really are. Our laughter fills the fall. And the abyss listens. We are open for business, it says; it tells us its hours. Persephone and Pluto poke their heads out of the swirling black hole, for good measure. They are laughing too. I can't recall ever being so filled.