



Salve The Savior by Nick Holle

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Prologue

We Are All Going To Hell.

Here's What Happened

Jesus was nailed to the cross, and a couple of Pilate's boys were giving him the old tease, saying something along the lines of, "If you are the King of the Jews, then save yourself." That was when the murmur in the crowd started and got louder as someone approached. We all assumed it was Mary Magdalene or Mary mother of James or Raspy Joe of Arimathea, the pipe-smoking local councilman. But a little man with a big heart and a rubber Pontius Pilate mask emerged to the front of the crowd. He genuflected and gave Jesus the peace sign, and the crowd started rabbling. Pilate's boys were getting awfully suspicious.

He motioned for quiet, and when he got it, he shouted, "A crucifixion is no way to start a weekend!"

Then someone shouted, "Who are you, man?"

And the little fellow responded, "I have come to save He who saves!"

"You will be killed," another shouted back.

"I will not," the man said. "I am the Paragon Of Pluck! The Gangster of Gallantry! The In-law Of Intrepidness!"

"What the hell are you talking about?"

"I am Judas Ignatious Gargubus!"

"Ah, Gargubus," we repeated in unison. We knew this man as our overly confident but faithful veterinarian, a curer of animal ailments. We knew him as an avid twenty-mile-a-day jogger. And we knew as a vexing opponent of capital punishment. But only through flyers and rhetoric. He had never acted so boldly as this.

And with that he ripped off his rubber Pilate mask with a salute and a wink, reached into the mask, pulled out the biggest hammer we'd ever seen, flipped it to the peen side, and uprooted the nail in Jesus's feet.

Now as you might imagine, this pleased Pilate's boys none too much, and three of them charged Gargubus with their best swords and whistles. But Judas Ignatious Gargubus was ready. We had

never known him to be such a shrewd martial artist, but he made quick work of the first two, breaking a clavicle and two femurs. And when the third approached in a blind spot, Gargubus reeled back the hammer and buried it into the side of the guard's neck.

"Ooooooh," the crowd gasped. We loved it. We had come for three routine crucifixions—Jesus and the thieves: hammer, nails, and some thorns—but now we were getting free improvisational violence and death. Judas Ignatious Gargubus was now our hero, and in order to get more of Pilate's boys to charge him and be brutally slain, we switched our earlier stance and began chanting, "Uncrucify him! Uncrucify him!"

Now a dozen of Pilate's boys went at Gargubus, but what with the hammer in the neck, he was without a weapon. With momentum and adrenaline on his side, he grabbed the base of Jesus's cross and yanked it out of the ground. We roared. Then with Jesus still attached, feet dangling, Gargubus swung the cross at the approaching guards. They all stepped back, of course, as in those days it was considered bad luck to get knocked over the head with a life-sized crucifix.

On the second swing through, Jesus's left hand ripped clean off. The women screamed in horror and delight, as the hand remained nailed to the cross, the blood of Christ splattering the uniforms of Pilate's boys. Jesus rolled off the cross, hanging by his one good hand.

Gargubus, hesitating, cried out, "Christ, Jesus, are you okay?"

Always the optimist, Jesus replied, "Don't worry. I'm the Son of God. It'll grow back."

With Pilate's boys growing in number, Judas Ignatious Gargubus continued swinging the cross, eventually ripping Christ's second hand off. The Son Of God fell to the ground. While swinging the cross with one hand, Gargubus threw Jesus on his back with the other, and backed away from the crowd. "Hold on, Jesus," he said.

"I cannot, my son. I have no hands."

"Well, goddammit, wrap your stubs around my shoulders."

Jesus answered, "You blaspheme, Judas Ignatious Gargubus. But I will die for your sins on a different day. Let us make like a tree."

Then Gargubus, still backing away, flipped the cross around, pointing the bottom at the guards. Then he ran right at them. We went silent. We couldn't figure out what in God's name he was doing, running into them like that. They'd be killed, both Gargubus and Jesus. At the very least they'd be killed. Knowing Pilate's boys like we did, they'd be molested and cannibalized too.

Suddenly, we had changed our minds again and rooted for Pilate's boys to get them and rape them and eat them. Just the thought of this tickled the very core of our existences.

But Gargubus and the Lord were one step ahead, and Gargubus planted the end of the cross into the bent body of the guard with the hammer in his neck. And hanging on to the other end, he and Jesus catapulted clear over the guards, landing on the other side of them. Then Judas Ignatious Gargubus, with Jesus Christ of Nazareth riding piggyback, started running away. Pilate's boys were stupefied and allowed the pair to get a healthy head start.

We chased them for several hundred yards, but it became clear that we wouldn't even catch a cripple in the shape we were in. And neither would Pilate's boys. Gargubus was an avid twenty-mile-a-day jogger after all. And having the Son of God on your back never hurts in these situations either. In minutes, they were mere specs. Then they disappeared into the dusklight.

Epilogue

We championed Judas Ignatious Gargubus as a hometown hero, but we were a little peeved we had to replace his veterinarianship. We did not want to leave the lives of our sick ducks, gerbils, and salamanders in the hands of a quack. Talk of Gargubus and his future vigilantism came from the four corners of the earth as he wreaked havoc on capital punishers. Judas was the most popular boy's name for newborns for several generations to come. Though we knew he wasn't the Son of God, we all suspected he was at least a nephew.

We also went on to have a newfound appreciation for the Son of God. His teachings spawned a popular religious persuasion in certain parts, but none of us really bought into it, old fashioned you might say. We supposed where Gargubus was the action hero, we loved Jesus for his comic relief. Christ showed up here and there after that, though nothing like in the glory days. He would die of complications due to adult-onset diabetes, granted reprieve for our sins, and rose from the dead a few days later in fulfillment of the scriptures.

We went on to crucify thousands of people, often in much more creative ways than just nailing them to a cross, but regardless of method, we always had a blast. Some of them were bad, but mostly they were people who just weren't like us, a tradition we were sure would stick around for at least a few thousand more years.