

Cocktails

with GOD

in the Afterlife

A Bar-Room Novel by
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*“Everyone wants to go to heaven,
but no one wants to die.”*

—Anonymous

Dear Reader,

If God invited you over for cocktails, but the only way to join him was to die . . . would you?

I did, and I have to say that waking up in heaven each morning to accompany God on these long drinking bouts that last late into the night is more fun than I ever could have imagined. And in the days ahead, you will join me, whether you drink or not. I saw your name on the guest list—your invitation is being prepared.

“But what should I wear to the party?” you might ask.

Don’t worry about it. Come as you are.

“And will I know anyone there?” you ask.

Yes, dead celebrities by the score, and all your relatives who have previously crossed over, including those who owe you money and those you owe money to.

“Need I bring anything, like a gift or a bottle?”

Just your soul. Everything else is provided.

“How long does it last?”

I can’t say, but plan on spending the night.

“Will it be any fun?”

People lay down their lives to attend. I can’t wait to see you. Gotta go.

Sincerely,
Buddy Wilde

P.S. Don’t forget to RSVP.

“Don’t forget to be kind to strangers, for some who have done this have entertained angels without realizing it!”

—Hebrews 13:2, The Living Bible

Chapter I

Going Home

GETTING UP EACH day and having cocktails with God is more fun than I ever could have dreamed, but having to actually die in order to join him on these long drinking bouts was a complete nightmare. After hearing the news that I had, in fact, exited my lifeless body and checked into heaven, I wanted nothing more than to turn in my key and wake up in my own bed.

“Good morning, Mr. Wilde,” I heard a voice say.

“How are you feeling?”

“My head is killing me—like it’s in a vise—and I’ve gone blind. Can’t see a thing! What happened?” I asked, totally afraid.

“We’ll get to that later,” the voice said. “Do you know where you are?”

“I think so, but who are you?”

“My name is Tucker. I’m your spirit guide. Welcome to heaven, Buddy.”

“What?!” I sat straight up in bed. “What in the hell are you talking about? Get me a goddamned doctor—I need to be looked at.” I thought for sure that a mental patient was on the loose and was now playing psychiatrist with me.

“Settle down, Buddy, you’re not on earth anymore,” he said. “You suffered a ruptured aneurysm in your brain and crossed over to the other side.”

“Other side of what, the hospital? Someone must have screwed up my paperwork and sent me off to the nut ward! Who’s in charge around here? I want to talk to someone about this. Stat!”

“Sorry, Buddy, but I’m all you’ve got right now. Can you answer some questions for me?”

Uncertain of what actually happened, or where I was, other than I knew it wasn’t home in my own bed, I decided to play along with this guy claiming to be my spirit guide, as he seemed to be my only access to information for the time being.

“What do you want to know?”

“I need to ask some questions, Buddy. Please tell me everything you can remember about the past twenty-four hours.” His inquiry was followed by a loud gasp for air and then a gurgling noise.

“Jeeeeesus Christ! Go blow your nose or cough up a lung first. How gross!”

“Wasn’t me. That’s a guy in the next bed over.”

“Well, either suction his airway or stick a cork in it. I’m not going to listen to that all night. Find him another room,” I snapped.

“Buddy, it’s only temporary. Now again, please tell me everything you can remember about the past twenty-four hours.”

I thought back for a moment, trying to block out the ungodly sounds coming from the guy next to me, then lay back down before answering his question.

“I got up this morning and went to work. I’m tearing down an old courthouse in the historical district to make room for a new library, and it turned out to be a day from hell.”

“Can you elaborate?” Tucker asked.

“I was operating a big crane and having a hard time knocking down an exterior wall. I’d been pounding on it for a while, but it wouldn’t drop. So, I throttled up and swung that baby around, doing a 180-degree turn with the boom. Just before the wrecking ball hit its intended target, the wall somehow collapsed on its own and the momentum from the swing carried the steel ball right through the roof of the church next door.”

“Oh, my lord!” Tucker sighed.

“That’s what I said, but you should have seen when a priest and nun came running out with nothing on, playing tug-of-war over a bedsheet. It looked as if the wrath of God was upon them.”

“Our father works in mysterious ways. What happened after that?” he asked.

“Let’s see . . . I went to the bar, and drank until closing.”

“You did? And drove home after that, under the influence?” he asked.

“No, I skipped all the way there . . . it’s only fifteen miles. Of course, I drove home!”

“Buddy, you should have had someone give you a ride,” he said.

Not being in any mood to be lectured about drinking and driving, I shot back, “I made it home safely, right? And staying out all night at the bar with my friends is certainly not why I am here, correct?”

“But you could have hurt or killed someone!”

“Listen, I know when I can drive and when I can’t. I’m not like some people who get all boozed up and then try to drive home with one eye closed. I take drinking and driving very seriously, and if I have any question whatsoever about my ability to responsibly operate a vehicle, I don’t drive—period—end of discussion!”

Tucker wasn’t finished. “But you shouldn’t even be on the road if you’ve been drinking alcohol.”

“Hey, I don’t know where you come from, but in the town where I live, half the people on the road shouldn’t be allowed to drive when they’re sober! When I get behind the wheel after a night out, the music dies and the party stops before I even open my car door. And in the event it doesn’t, I either find a ride or hide my keys in the grass and take a nap.”

“But what about last night?” he asked.

“Six beers over the course of eight hours? Figure it out!” I yelled.

Just then, a demanding voice came over the loudspeaker in the room and asked, “Who goes there?”

Tucker responded to the voice, “It’s just me.”

The voice on the loudspeaker shouted, “Keep it down, damn it! It’s after hours.”

“Who in the world was that?” I asked.

Tucker hesitated and then replied, “The last one you ever want to get on the bad side of.”

“He sounds like a real ass to me, and I’m sure glad I don’t work here, because I’d probably end up telling him where to get off,” I shouted.

“I heard that,” the voice on the loudspeaker said.

“So what? It’s true!” I shouted back. “Who in the world does that guy think he is anyway? *God*, for Christ’s sake?”

“That’s exactly who you were talking to, Buddy, the Almighty himself.”

Oh, boy, not good, I thought, figuring that either Tucker wasn’t telling me the truth and could no longer be trusted, or I had just landed myself on the wrong side of an angry God who was already mad at the world, and now me, in particular.

Nervous with the thought of either predicament, I reasoned that I was still in my life on earth and was just having a bad dream, so I said to Tucker, “Cut all the bullshit and finish up with your patchwork here. I’m tired and want to go home, now!”

“I’d like to do that for you,” he said, “but I can’t. And besides, I have more questions to ask.”

“Then ask God. He’s supposed to be the one with all the answers.” And with that, I closed my eyes and nodded off, somehow confident that everything would be back to normal when I woke up again.

“There is nothing either good or bad,
but thinking makes it so.”

—**William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, Act 2, Scene 2**

Chapter 2

One Nasty Hangover

“BUDDY, BUDDY, YOU have to wake up,” Tucker said, shaking my arm. “I need to ask you some more questions.”

What’s this? I thought. Maybe it’s not a dream.

“I have to know,” he said, “when you got home from the bar, did you sleep through the night?”

“No,” I screamed, making him well aware of my displeasure at his having woken me.

He persisted. “Buddy, I need you to work with me. Please answer my questions with as much detail as you can. I’m trying to help you through this.”

“Okay, I’ll tell you, but then leave me the hell alone.” I told him how I got up around three in the morning with a splitting headache, put on my pants, went out to the kitchen for some aspirin and a drink of water, then blacked out. That’s all I remembered.

“Please continue,” he said, “it’s important. What happened after that?”

I thought back for a few seconds, and then said, “I guess I woke up here sometime later, but I wasn’t really awake. It’s like I was in a dream state, floating around near the ceiling, and I could see what looked like my body on a long, skinny table with a half-dozen people around me. It was chaotic. One guy was pounding on my chest, another tried desperately to jam a plastic tube down my throat, someone

else was sticking a needle in my arm, while a fourth person shaved my head.”

“And after that?” Tucker asked.

“Well, the next thing I remember was hearing a woman shout, ‘We’re losing him. He’s not going to make it if we don’t get in there now!’ Then there was the sound of a power tool, followed by a terrible vibration on my skull, and a short time later the guy who’d been trying to get my heart going said, ‘Damn it, he’s gone. Elvis has left the building.’ What’d he mean by that, anyway?”

“It doesn’t matter. Go on,” Tucker said, prompting me to finish my story, knowing full well that the doctor had implied that I flatlined on the monitor and that my spirit had gone out of my body. I continued.

“And then, the coolest thing happened . . . a brilliant white light appeared. I’d seen this light before when I was involved in a bad motorcycle accident, but this time it was even brighter, and I was drawn to it just like the first time. Finally, I woke up here to the sound of your voice. Please tell me I’m all right and that you expect me to make a full recovery.”

Tucker didn’t respond right away to the question. “I love my job,” he began, “except for when I must deliver unpleasant news.”

“What are you trying to say?” I asked him, feeling great concern.

“That splitting headache you complained of waking up to, Buddy?”

“Yeah . . .” I responded slowly, wanting to delay whatever he was going to say, which could contain the bad news that no one cares to hear.

“It was the effect of a ruptured artery in your brain. It hurts.”

“And . . . ?” I said, proceeding cautiously.

“Well, the odds of surviving a condition this severe are not favorable.”

“I’m not liking this.” I sat up.

“I can tell. However, the paramedics brought you into the ER, the medical staff rushed you into surgery, and, to make a long story short, the doctors did everything in their power to bring you back, but it didn’t work out.”

“What . . . didn’t work out?” I asked, now expecting to hear the worst.

“The operation. It was a very complicated procedure and with the extended period of time that passed before you even reached the hospital, it would have taken an act of God to save your life, but—”

“But what?” I demanded, somehow expecting to be let down.

“He was busy at the time.”

“Who’s ‘he?’” I asked.

“God,” Tucker replied.

“God? God was *busy*? I don’t believe it!”

“What can I say, Buddy?”

“Busy doing what?” I asked, my fear quickly turning to anger. “Beating up an old lady for missing a day in church?”

“Be careful,” Tucker warned me.

“Well, come on, the God I know doesn’t have limitations. Are we talking about the same God?”

“There’s only one.”

“Then why am I dead? You *are* telling me that I’m dead, right?”

“No, you’re not dead,” Tucker replied. “You merely crossed over. Spirit never dies, it only moves from one dimension to the next and then back again.”

“I don’t believe this shit! Dead at the ripe old age of thirty-five. Unbelievable! Is that what you are telling me?”

Tucker went silent, giving me a moment to stop and think, and try to make sense of it all.

After reflecting on this whole turn of events and coming to the conclusion that I could in fact be dead, I asked,

“So, what happens now, Tucker, I mean, with my daughter? How is she going to deal with all this?”

“Don’t worry about her,” he said. “She’ll be all right, as will your family and friends. You’ll see them again, I promise.”

“But how will they get along without me?” I asked, wanting to break down and cry.

“Oh, they’ll survive. That’s why they’re called survivors. Of course, there’s a process of mourning they will have to go through, due to their loss with you being gone, but they will be just fine, for the most part.”

“For the most part?” I blurted out. That didn’t sound all inclusive. “Will some people get over my passing better than others?”

“Humans are a funny bunch,” Tucker said, with a tone suggesting disbelief. “Most take the death of a loved one and themselves to be final when, in reality, it’s just part of a continuum.”

“A what?”

“A continuum.”

“Never heard of it. Sounds like some rare disease.”

“The continuum of eternity, Buddy. It’s a process where the stages of birth, life, and death keep repeating over and over again. All spirits who take on the role of human beings are subject to it.”

Still confused with this whole business of a continuum, as he called it, I thought back on my life and became mindful of the fact that somehow I knew that there was an afterlife, but when I tried to explain this to Tucker, he cut me off before I could finish.

“Not hardly,” Tucker said. “For a number of years, you didn’t believe in the spirit world, life after death, or reincarnation. You only hoped that these things existed. Instead, you were taught at an early age that when people die, their souls travel to a holding area where they wait to be judged by a supreme being who seals the souls’ fates,

directing them to an eternal life in heaven or hell. But that's not how it works."

"Are you certain?" I asked.

"Without a doubt," he replied.

Leaning back against the pillow beneath my head, thinking about my life and how it had been cut short, my mind drifted off to thoughts of my daughter. My relationship with her mother (now my ex) had started to improve recently when we both decided it would be in our little girl's best interest if we could put our troubled relationship and differences aside and behave like loving parents, so this precious little soul would have a fighting chance at growing up to live a normal life.

Then I felt an emptiness begin to grow inside me for the love my daughter and I had started to share again, and all the fun we were having on the weekends. I cried out, "How will she ever get along without me, Tucker? Who's going to support and protect her, educate her in the ways of the world, and pick her up when she falls?"

"I can't honestly answer that," he said.

I continued, "And who's going to pay her college tuition when she gets older?"

"I don't know what to tell you, but I'm sure she'll figure something out."

"Yeah, that's easy for you to say. You probably don't have kids. The world keeps getting tougher and tougher each day."

"It wouldn't hurt to ask God about it and have him look after her well-being."

"As if that's going to help. You can see where all of my prayers got me—dead! I didn't even live long enough to experience a midlife crisis."

"Your whole life was a crisis," he reminded me.

I settled down a bit and said, "That's true, and it seemed as if the angel of death was always right on my tail, but I had no idea that I would run out of breath this early in

the game.” I lay back down and tried not to think about what the future might look like in the years ahead for my daughter.

Tucker left my bedside and went to check on the guy next to me, who was still doing the death rattle. I had totally forgotten about him, preoccupied with my own set of circumstances. After listening to the rhythm of his gasp-and-gurgle breathing, I asked, “Why is he here?”

“Same reason you are.”

“What I meant was how did he die? He *is* dead, isn’t he?”

“No,” Tucker responded, “he just crossed over like you did, but I really shouldn’t get into it. Information of that nature is strictly confidential.”

“Then tell me this . . . providing you’re at liberty to talk about it.” I thought it to be rather petty of Tucker to be so tightlipped about how a dead guy died, so I asked him in a sarcastic tone, “What’s next? You know, where do I go from here?”

Tucker paused for a moment, “I hate to have to tell you this . . .”

“What now?” I questioned him, somehow suspecting that the other shoe hadn’t dropped yet.

I heard Tucker tell the guy next to me to get some rest. Then he came over to me and said, “You’re not going to like this. However, it is required that you now complete your life review, and I must warn you that it’s a process that brings forth a great deal of pain, both mentally and emotionally. I’m sorry.”

I was tempted to whack myself upside the head a few times, just to make sure I was hearing him right. “Pain?” I wanted to reach out and touch someone with a closed fist. “For your information, Tucker, and in case you didn’t notice, my head is killing me, I can’t see, I’m being jerked around by a strange voice who claims to be my ‘spirit guide,’ and I just died a short time ago, leaving behind a daughter I love more

than life itself. Isn't that enough 'pain' for one day?" I gave it my all to try and reason with him.

"That's how God designed it. He wants you to experience, in a similar fashion, every bit of pain and suffering that you have caused others during the course of your lifetime."

I still couldn't believe what I was hearing. "Are you guys insane, or what?!" I shouted. "I just died. I'm dead, spelled D-E-A-D. It's over, my life is over, and you want to toy with me? This isn't heaven—this is hell," I said with complete conviction.

"Not true," he argued. "Earth is the only physical hell in the universe, but it can also be a state of mind here on the other side. It's your choice." It sounded as if my spirit guide was beginning to lose his compassion toward me, and thinking of the pain of those I'd left behind.

I went off on him. "My choice, my ass, Tucker. I went straight to hell, didn't I? And you want me to believe that I'm off to see the wizard when, in fact, I'm walking down the corridor to Satan's theme park. Well, here's to you, asshole—fuck you and God! I'm not taking shit from anyone! I'm just going to lie here and hope to hell that I fall asleep and never wake up again!"

He countered, "But you haven't completed your life review, which you must do before you can meet the Almighty. It can't be done any other way!"

"Hey, Tucker, here's some breaking news. I don't want to meet God, and I don't want to listen to his bullshit either—especially if he's the same prick who came over the loudspeaker when I first woke up. I'd just as soon rot in hell for all of eternity!"

Tucker, being completely dumbfounded, told me to lie down and go back to sleep.

End of Chapters 1 and 2 Sample

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Cocktails with God *in the Afterlife?*

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