

Hope and Redemption

two short plays about faith based on
John 4:1-42 and The Book of Job

by

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Hope And Redemption

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by Charles Park Spoler

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Part One: *The Water Lady*

Cast of Characters

Jesse, the Water Lady is in her late 30-early 40's. Her good nature covers up her guilt over a "rough and tumble" life.

Jay, early thirties, is a mysterious traveler who walks in from the desert. He is kind and compassionate but does not tolerate hypocrites gladly.

There is also a **tourist couple**, age unimportant, and three judgmental **townspeople**, of any sex, or age. If desired, any number of townspeople or tourists passing through at various times, without lines, could be added.

Set/Costumes

The only set requirement is a table and a chair. Costumes consist of contemporary summer clothing.

Setting: A town in the desert in the Southwest United States. Contemporary times.

At Rise: Jesse is sitting at her bottled water/sunglasses/sun block stand, trying to sell her wares to the passing tourists.

JESSE

Get your sunglasses here! Sun block! Cold water! Everything you need for the heat!

(A tourist couple stop and look.)

JESSE

Hot today, ain't it? How about a nice, cold bottle of water?

TOURIST MAN

Well, we could use...

(She is interrupted by a passing townspeople.)

TOWNSPERSON

Don't buy anything from that woman.

TOURIST WOMAN

Why not?

TOWNSPERSON

Just...don't.

TOURIST MAN

But why...

TOURIST WOMAN

(apprehensive)
Let's just go.

(The tourist woman nods at the townspeople, grabs her husband, and exits. Jesse looks after her, sighs, and goes back to her business.)

JESSE

Get your sunglasses here! Sun block! Cold...

(She is interrupted by the entrance of Jay. He is dressed in old clothes and is carrying a backpack. It is obvious that the sun has gotten to him. He stops as though he is looking for help. Two townspeople who are walking by turn away from him, as if he had the plague.)

JESSE

Hey, mister...you look like you could use a cold bottle of water. How about it? Only a dollar.

JAY

(wiping his brow)

Yes. I am...very thirsty.

JESSE

Well then, we're a good match, don't you think? You're thirsty, and I'm selling water. How about it? Only a buck.

JAY

Yes, that's true, but there's a slight problem.

JESSE

What's that?

JAY

I'm broke. I have no money. But can you give me a drink of water?

JESSE

Oh. Well. Seeing the shape you're in, I guess I could give you my dying of thirst discount...how's fifty cents sound to you?

JAY

You don't understand. I have no money. In fact, I never have any money. Can't you give me a drink?

JESSE

No money? How do you get along?

JAY

I just...do.

JESSE

Oh, I get it. You're one of those counterculture types. Free as the wind. Like the birds of the sky. They don't plant crops, reap or carry money, but they're always provided for.

JAY

Hmmm. That sounds vaguely familiar.

JESSE

Well, I admire your independence, if not your eccentricity. You just walked in from the desert?

JAY

Yes. What is this town called?

JESSE

Sychar. Named after that town in the bible, you know...Jacob's well, and the woman from Samaria. You know the story?

JAY

Oh, yes. Quite well, in fact. You know your scriptures?

JESSE

Sure. That and fifty cents just might buy me a cup of coffee, you know? So. How long were you out there?

JAY

Well over a month. And I'm very thirsty.

JESSE

Wow. You are hard core. Are you sure someone like you wants to accept charity from someone like me?

JAY

Someone like you?

JESSE

I don't exactly have the best reputation around here. See those tourists over there?

(She points off stage.)

One of the locals just scared them off. They think if they put me out of business, I'll leave town. If you let someone like me give you this water, it might be, like they say, "bad karma" for you.

JAY

Gifts freely given in time of need are never "bad karma." They're part of the Water of Life, and when you drink of that, you'll never thirst again.

JESSE

You don't say? I'd like to get me some of that. Especially in this climate. Tell you what. This one's on me. Just don't tell anyone, okay? Bad for business.

(She gives him a bottle and he drinks voraciously, which is noted by a passing townspeople.)

TOWNSPERSON

You shouldn't buy anything from her.

JAY

I didn't buy it, it was a gift.

TOWNSPERSON

You shouldn't drink it, then.

JAY

She freely gives me the water for which I thirst, and you give advice not to drink it. Which gift am I supposed to accept?

TOWNSPERSON

Well...well...suit yourself. Hmmpph!

(She turns up her nose and exits.)

JAY

She doesn't seem to like you very much.

JESSE

Nobody here, does.

JAY

Why? Because you've been married five times, and you're living with a sixth man who isn't your husband?

JESSE

How do you...
(*catches herself*)
You've been listening to all their gossip.

JAY

No. I haven't. Really.

JESSE

But you've passed through here before?
(*pause for effect*)

JAY

Yes. I've been here before.

JESSE

So you've been talking to them.

JAY

No. I haven't.

JESSE

Then how do you know about me?

JAY

The same way that I know your name is Jesse, short for "Jezebel."

JESSE

Yeah, with a moniker like that, it's no wonder that I turned out like I did. Folks around here mostly know me as The Water Lady, when they're not calling me something else. But how...

JAY

(*interrupting*)
You can call me "Jay".

JESSE

Okay, then...Jay.

JAY

Do you mind if I sit down?

JESSE

Sure. Take a load off your feet. To tell you the truth, you look terrible.

JAY

I felt terrible, until you gave me that water.
(*He sits.*)
Thanks.

JESSE

So why were you out there? I mean, look at you. You should probably go to the hospital.

JAY

That's okay. You're giving me everything I need, and I thank you for it.

JESSE

That's all well and good, but man, look at you. You're just about half dead.

JAY

I'm fine, really. It's all part of the process.

JESSE

Yeah, well, you didn't answer my question.

JAY

Which question was that?

JESSE

You're pretty good at that, aren't you?

JAY

Pretty good at what?

JESSE

Avoiding my questions. Just answer me this...what were you doing out in the desert for over a month in the middle of the summer? I mean, it's hot enough out there to fry an egg on your forehead.

JAY

True. Very true.

JESSE

Come on, Jay, don't play me like that. What were you up to out there? What was the "Process"?

JAY

I guess you could say I was testing myself.

JESSE

Oh, that's so deep.

JAY

(laughing)
Yeah. It was.

JESSE

It's good to see you laugh. You come across, I don't know, so serious, know what I mean?

JAY

I suppose I can come across as "too heavy." That's just me. But I love to laugh. Laughter is like love unfettered, that flows

over the soul like a flood cascading from a mountainside. When we laugh, we are children again, and that's good, for only those with the innocence, joy and faith of a child will find the water of life. And if you drink of that water, you'll never thirst again.

JESSE

So you said. Sounds good.

JAY

It's *all* good. If you know where to find it.

JESSE

I don't know where to look. Happiness, innocence, joy...I've never had it, and I probably never will.

(pause)

Jay...this stuff about the five husbands and the guy I'm living with. It's only the tip of the iceberg, with me. I've led a rough and tumble life. There's a lot of sins on my head that weigh me down. I mean, you should know who you're dealing with.

JAY

I know that I'm dealing with, a kind person who is helping me in my time of need. That's all I need to know.

JESSE

Thanks for not judging me. Around here, I feel like I'm on the hot seat, all the time.

(he laughs)

JESSE

Sorry. Cheap pun.

JAY

It wasn't that bad. Really.

(she looks at him)

JESSE

You are really sunburned, you know that?

JAY

To be honest with you, I feel like I've been burnt to a crisp.

JESSE

I have something for it.

(She reaches down and produces a jar of ointment.)

This is what I use on myself when I get burnt. It works better than anything commercial. I don't sell it, it's too expensive to make. My own recipe...desert cactus, herbs, that sort of thing. Here, let me put it on...

JAY

I can put it...

JESSE

(overlapping)

No, no...I know just the right amount to use. Here you go, lets do your face first. Just relax.

(She puts the lotion on his face.)

It feels good...great, in fact. JAY

Told you. Good thing I have some JESSE left, I'm almost out.

Shouldn't you save some for yourself? JAY

No problem, I can make more. JESSE Here, give me your arms.

(She puts the lotion on his arms. Townspeople have begun to gather, looking disapprovingly at them.)

How about your feet? JESSE

My dogs are killing me. JAY

Take off your shoes. JESSE

Really, you don't have to... JAY

Come on, now, might as well. In for a penny, in for a pound, right? Let me take care of you, Jay. It's no problem. Okay? JESSE

If you insist. JAY

(He takes off his shoes, his feet are very dirty.)

Wow. They're a mess. JESSE
(jokingly holds her nose)
Stinky, too.

I haven't had a chance to change my socks for weeks. JAY

I'll take care of it. JESSE

(She grabs a bottle of water.)

Please, you don't have to do JAY this.

JESSE

I insist. You can't walk around with those feet like that.
(*she starts washing his feet, with the bottled water and a towel. Townspeople continue to watch.*)

JAY

Feels good.

JESSE

The water's cold.

(*The townspeople just can't stand it anymore.*)

1st TOWNSPERSON

That's disgusting!

2nd TOWNSPERSON

Look at him, he's filthy!

3rd TOWNSPERSON

Perfect for her, then.

(*Jesse angrily reacts*)

JESSE

Why don't you all just...

(*She's interrupted by Jay's gentle touch*)

JAY

Let me handle this.

(*Jesse nods at him and continues washing his feet.*)

1st TOWNSPERSON

Looks like she's got a new boyfriend.

2nd TOWNSPERSON

What's this? Number 1,000?

(*The townspeople laugh.*)

JAY

People of Sychar...why do you condemn this woman?

3rd TOWNSPERSON

Just look at what she's doing!

(*She starts putting the lotion on Jay's feet.*)

1st TOWNSPERSON

Right out in the open!

JESSE

(*to Jay only, ignoring them.*)

This will make your feet feel better.

(*Townspeople speak in rapid succession*)

2nd TOWNSPERSON

And she's using that salve of hers that's too good to sell to us!

3rd TOWNSPERSON

She's making a spectacle of herself!

1st TOWNSPERSON

She should be arrested for disturbing the peace!

3rd TOWNSPERSON

Yeah! Throw her in jail!

2nd TOWNSPERSON

How can you even talk to her, mister!?!

JAY

(rises, in a commanding voice)

How can you talk to me? This woman gave me water when my throat was parched, what did you do for me? You turned away, as if I were carrying the plague. My skin was burned, and she anointed it with oil, which she'd been saving for her own use...would any of you done so, for me, or anyone like me? My feet were sore and filthy, and she cleansed and soothed them...would any of you humbled themselves to do the same? My clothes may be dirty, but my body is now purified, thanks to this good woman. Can any of you say you are now as clean as I?

1ST TOWNSPERSON

But this woman, she's a sinner, she's lived in sin all her life. She doesn't even go to church, not even on Christmas and Easter.

JAY

Would such as her be welcome in your "church?"

2nd TOWNSPERSON

Of course not, after the life she's led.

JAY

Then I tell you that your "church" is a false tabernacle, and that the ground on which she and I stand is holier than any church that you have built, with your hypocrisy!

3rd TOWNSPERSON

Blasphemy!

2nd TOWNSPERSON

Throw them both in jail!

1st TOWNSPERSON

If this were the olden days, she'd be stoned to death for her adulteries!

JAY

Then I say that whichever of you be without sin, let them cast the first stone!!!

(No response. Jay bends, picks up a stone, and holds it out to them.)

JAY

Well?

(No response. He approaches the 1st townspeople, holds out the stone.)

Can you?

(He holds it out to the second.)

You?

(He holds it out to the third.)

How about you!?!?

(No response. They look down in shame.)

I didn't think so.

(aside to Jesse.)

Works every time.

(He casts the stone aside. The three townspeople walk away, murmuring to themselves.)

1st TOWNSPERSON

Who does he think he is, the second coming?

(At that, Jay breaks out laughing, but Jesse, overwhelmed, falls to his feet, weeping. Jay gently raises her up.)

JAY

Sister, why do you weep?

JESSE

(still crying)

Because everything they said about me is true! I'm a sinner though and through, I always have been, I can't change, but I can't stand it, all of the things I've done, the people I've hurt, and stolen from, and cheated, it's all coming down on me, I can't take it anymore, the weight, it's crushing me...

JAY

There's a way out, you know, a way to lift this burden.

JESSE

How? Please, tell me!

JAY

Have you ever heard of a man named Jesus?

JESSE

Yeah, sure, I went to Sunday school when I was a kid, I loved those bible stories.

JAY

They're more than just "stories." This man, Jesus, suffered and died so that people like you could rid themselves of their sins

and lead a righteous life. I am telling you the truth. Do you believe me? All you have to do is ask.

JESSE

Just ask? I guess I never thought about it. I mean, I always thought Jesus was a really cool guy, and all, but I didn't think he was for someone like me. I guess I thought I was too bad a person, to ask him for help. It just never occurred to me.

JAY

No one is "too bad a person." He loves the repentant sinner more than anyone else, look at who his friends were, the people he helped. Outcasts, many of them, they called them the "unclean" back then. Lepers, gentiles, crazy people...people whom his fellow Jews were forbidden to go near. These were the ones that he helped, and loved, more than anybody.

(He holds her face in his hands, looking into her soul.)

JAY

I am telling you the truth. Do you believe me?

JESSE

I want to, I really do.

JAY

What is holding you back?

JESSE

Me. My sins.

JAY

Don't think of that. Think of the good that you did, for me, today.

JESSE

I treated you good?

JAY

No one has treated a person in need, better. That's the real Jesse, not this "rough and tumble" image that you think you see in the mirror. The Jesse I know is kind, and compassionate, and wants to break out of her shell. All you have to do is ask Jesus, and he will change your life, forever.

Jesse

Okay...okay.

(she concentrates)

All right, I want to ask him, I believe, but, I don't know what to say. Can you help me?

(Jay takes her hands.)

JAY

(gently)

Jesse, do you believe that this man, Jesus, loves you?

JESSE

Yes.

JAY

Do you hold him in your heart, and believe that he is your way out?

JESSE

I've always loved him, deep down, I just didn't realize it.
(pause)

Yes. I believe that Jesus is my salvation.

JAY

And do you believe that he suffered and died so that your sins could be washed away?

JESSE

Yes...yes, I do. I really do.

JAY

And that he is the way to eternal life, and that he is knocking on the door to your soul, right in this instant?

JESSE

Yes, I can feel it, I can.

JAY

Then go ahead. Ask him.

(She falls to her knees, praying.)

JESSE

Please, Lord Jesus, this is Jesse coming at you. Remember me? I know that we haven't talked since I was a kid, but I need your help. You know about the life I've lived, and the things I've done, but I want to start over, and live the life that you would have me live. Please, sweet Lord Jesus, forgive me my sins, and help me find the strength to live a righteous life. I know that's what you want for me, and with your help, I think I can do it. I will atone for my past life, I will, and whenever I am faced with temptation or evil, I will ask myself, "what would Jesus do?" Forgive me, Lord, please...forgive me. Help me, Jesus, help me.

(She continues praying silently, then looks up at Jay.)

JESSE

Was that okay?

JAY

(smiling)

That's fine. How do you feel?

(she rises)

JESSE

Actually, I feel fine...great!

(Amazed, she touches her shoulder.)

The weight, its gone! All the guilt, and fear, its gone!

(She grabs Jay's hands and dances for joy.)

Its gone, Jay, its gone!

JAY

I'm happy for you. And I am telling you the truth...if you live the rest of your life like you did in helping me, the Kingdom of Righteousness will surely be yours, forever. Do you believe me?

JESSE

Yes, yes, I do! Oh, gosh, I feel wonderful! THANK YOU JESUS!!!

JAY

You're welcome.

JESSE

Huh? What did you say?

JAY

Oh, nothing. I'm really, really happy for you.

JESSE

Thanks. Hey, Jay?

JAY

Yes?

JESSE

You're a preacher, right?

JAY

I have been called that, yes.

JESSE

I was wondering...could you speak to my old man about this! He can be saved too, I know he can!

JAY

The spirit is now in you, you can speak to him yourself. Spread the word, that's part of the bargain. Give away what you can to those who need, and follow Him. And you might consider marriage. In a church, this time.

JESSE

Okay, I will. So...you sure you couldn't just come over for dinner? It could be real low key, and all.

JAY

Thanks, but I've got to go. I have another appointment in the next town over. A man is very ill, he needs...

(holds up the bottle)

...the Water of Life.

JESSE

I understand, now. Will you be back?

JAY

We'll see each other again, soon.

(He starts off, turns)

The end times are fast approaching, and the judgment has begun.
Goodbye, Jesse.

(he exits, Jesse calls after him.)

JESSE

Jay? Thank you, Jay, if that's really your name...is it? Or is it...

(She smiles in realization, and goes behind her stand, holding up a water bottle.)

Get your free bottles of water! Free sunglasses! Free sun block! Everything you're going to need for the End Times! It'll get pretty hot, ya know! Get your free Water of Life, here!

(The two tourists eagerly approach and take a bottle. The townspeople approach, gingerly. She happily waves them over, in an attitude of forgiveness.)

The End

Part two: *The Trials of Joe*

Cast of Characters:

Joe is a devout Christian who lives his life, day in and day out, as he believes Jesus would have done.

Linda, his wife, is also a Christian, but is more concerned with "practical" matters. Their children, **Tara and Bobby**, are elementary school age and are being raised in a proper Christian fashion.

Lucifer, the Devil, is portrayed here as a con man type. Could be costumed in dark, contemporary clothes.

Michael, the Archangel, is representing God's will on Earth. Could be costumed in white, contemporary clothing.

The CEO is a gruff, take no prisoners businessman.

The Shelter Manager possesses a degree of compassion, but plays strictly by the rules.

The Emergency Room Receptionist is an unsympathetic, unflinching bureaucrat.

Charlie is an ex-medical school student, addicted to drugs and down on his luck.

There will also be several "moving men" who appear without dialogue in Scene Three.

Scene One:

Setting: A mortgage company office. Contemporary times.

At Rise: **Joe** is at his desk, CS, talking on the telephone to the **CEO**, who is standing, DSL. **Lucifer** is off to the side, USR, sitting on a high stool, watching.

No, I don't want to foreclose. JOE These are good people, they've just hit a rough patch, they'll catch up when they can.

We have to foreclose. We can't afford to carry these people any longer. It's bad business. CEO

I disagree, it's *good* business, it's win-win. We give them a break, they tell all their friends, and more people will come to us. JOE

What's so special about them? They go to your church, or something? CEO

No, they don't go to my church, they're not personal friends, they're just good people whom I have faith in. Okay? JOE

Fine, but it's on your head if they continue to default. CEO

I'll take that risk. Now, about these balloon mortgages that are about to explode. We need to come up with a strategy so these people can refinance... JOE

(Lucifer, invisible to Joe, speaks)

Well, well. You really are too good to be true, aren't you, Joe? LUCIFER

(Michael enters, stands by Lucifer, watching Joe.)

He's nothing more than a good man whom God has smiled on, who's passing on his blessings. MICHAEL

That's very easy to do when you're the manager of a multi-million dollar company. LUCIFER

I know this man, Lucifer. The Love of God is within him. He'd be happy in whatever situation The Lord placed him in. MICHAEL

I know *mankind*, Michael. Take away their riches and comforts and they become bitter, twisted. They curse God... LUCIFER

MICHAEL

(interrupting)

You put the words in their mouths.

LUCIFER

Sometimes. Sometimes I don't have to. They can be pretty creative, in their anger. They hit some bad luck, provided by me, which, by the way, has to be approved by Him, nothing gets by Him, does it?

MICHAEL

Everything he does is for a reason. His Plan may confuse us at times, but in the end, it all makes sense.

LUCIFER

I know, I know, that's the official program.

MICHAEL

Even you know that's the truth.

(pause, no response)

MICHAEL

Well?

LUCIFER

This one, here. This Joe. I bet if I made him suffer enough, he'd turn his back on God quicker than snow melts in my neck of the woods.

MICHAEL

That would never happen.

LUCIFER

Oh, yeah? Care to make a wager?

MICHAEL

To what purpose? You don't have anything we want.

LUCIFER

It doesn't matter, because I'd win.

MICHAEL

That pride of yours', Lucifer, was what caused your downfall in the first place. It *would* be nice to remind you of that.

LUCIFER

I don't need to be reminded, have you seen my air conditioning bills? Okay. How about this: a sporting wager. I bet you that I can make Joe hate and renounce God by putting him through a "rough patch", as he calls it. Agreed?

MICHAEL

No one gets killed?

LUCIFER

(sighs, petulant)

Oh, all right. Can you square it with Him?

MICHAEL

I'll check, but I'm sure it will be okay. We always enjoy a laugh at your expense.

LUCIFER

Good, good. Now, sit back and fasten your safety belt. This is going to get pretty intense.

Lights down.

End of Scene One

Scene Two

Setting: Joe's house, that evening.

At Rise: Joe is kneeling with his **children** as they say their prayers.

CHILDREN

Jesus tender shepherd hear me, bless thy little lamb tonight. Through the darkness be thou near me, keep me safe 'til morning light.

JOE

Okay, kids. Who do we ask God to bless?

CHILDREN

God bless brother and sister, mommy and daddy, Aunt Jane and Uncle John, Grandmother in Heaven, all of our relatives, and everyone in the whole, wide world.

JOE AND CHILDREN

A-men.

JOE

Sleep tight, don't let the bedbugs bite. And lights out...no reading, okay.

CHILDREN

Goodnight Daddy. Goodnight, Mommy.

JOE

Didn't you forget someone?

CHILDREN

Goodnight, God. See you in the morning!

(The children scamper off. **Linda** puts her arm around Joe.)

LINDA

They're such good kids. You've done a great job with them.

JOE

You too, Linda. And don't forget about the help we've gotten from the Lord.

LINDA

I thank him every day for being blessed with such healthy children. And for such a healthy, wonderful, successful husband.

JOE

Just being alive and in the Spirit is good enough. Everything else is icing on the cake.

LINDA

Is that vanilla icing, or chocolate?

(They laugh. Joe's cell phone rings.)

JOE

Excuse me, honey. That's probably the CEO.

LINDA

Right on cue, as usual.

(She exits SL. The CEO appears, on the telephone, SR.)

JOE

Hello?

CEO

Joe, I'm going to give it to you straight. I've talked to the Board, and we all agree that your, uh, *business philosophy* doesn't square with the goals of the company. In short, we're letting you go.

(pause)

JOE

You're firing me?

CEO

We all want to thank you for your years of dedicated service, but it just isn't working any more. You have until noon tomorrow to clean out your office.

JOE

But...

(The CEO "hangs up" and exits.)

JOE

I can't believe it. After all these years...fired.

(Linda enters.)

LINDA

What's wrong, honey?

JOE

They've...let me go.

LINDA

You mean...you've been fired?

**To Read The Rest,
Please Purchase The
Script**

