

# Poker Night

By Steve Case

Jesus was bent over with his hands in the pocket's of his kaki shorts and staring into God's refrigerator. "Don't you stock up when you know we're coming over?"

"What?" God called from the table in the next room.

"I mean," Jesus said from the kitchen "If you invite guests over to your home it's usually customary to provide some sort of snacks or refreshment."

"Mi casa su casa." God said, "You can have your fill of all the food you bring yourself. Oh, and bring me an ice tea please."

"Make it two." St Peter said. Peter was sitting to God's left leaving the right hand seat open for Jesus. It was a small joke but one that was never lost on the savior.

"Francis, what about you?" Jesus called.

"What's he got in there?" Francis yelled toward the kitchen.

"Mostly those flavored teas and Yoo Hoo."

"Any of those little coffee can things?"

"Two." Jesus called back. "One is mine. You want the other?"

"Please." Francis called.

"Are you going to play or are you going to be a waiter." God called. He was nearly stacking the orange cards and placing them in the square on the board.

"I was called to serve." Jesus called. The rest of the table could hear him trying to carry multiple bottles and cans while rummaging through the cupboards.

"Ah ha" Jesus said.

God looked at the ceiling and tried to sound innocent. "Ah ha? What ah ha?"

"You can't hide the good stuff." He entered the room carrying the drinks and holding a bag of chocolate chip cookies with his teeth.

"Gross." St Peter said. He reached up and took the bag from the savior's teeth.

Jesus put the bottles and cans down in front of their respective owners and then grabbed St Peter's halo and with a flick of his wrist he spun it around in place with a "Ziiiiiiiiinnnnnnnnnnng."

Peter reached up and stopped the halo. "You are such a child."

"Only way to heaven." Jesus said. Francis smiled. He was going to say the same thing.

"You're the shoe." God said to his son.

"I don't want to be the shoe." Jesus said. "I want to be the top hat."

"Francis is the top hat." God said.

"But I was getting drinks and stuff."

"Snooze you lose." Francis said. Jesus reached over to give Francis' halo and spin and Francis batted his hand away.

"Can I be the cowboy?" Jesus asked.

"Don't have the cowboy." God said. He was starting to count out the money.

"Everybody has a cowboy." Peter said. "It comes with the game. How can you not have a cowboy?"

"Gave it to a kid." God said.

The Son of God and the two saints stopped counting their own play-bills and looked at each other. Then they all turned to God who was making sure his colored bills were neatly arranged with the edges under the game board. He looked up and saw them staring at him. "What?" he asked.

Jesus popped open his mini can of coffee and leaned back in his chair. "Okay, Pop. Let's hear it."

"Well," God said. "There's this little girl named Patty. She was playing with the game even though her mother told her not to and she lost the cowboy. So she prayed to me for another one and I gave her the one out of my game."

"You gave away the cowboy." Jesus said. "What if we want to play with six people someday."

"Just don't invite Gabriel." Peter said. "Gabriel cheats."

"Gabriel doesn't cheat." God said. "He loses on purpose sometimes cause he thinks I'm a sore loser."

"Are you a sore loser." Francis asked. He sipped his coffee.

"Have you read the Old Testament?" Peter said.

"Wait wait." Jesus said. "What do we do if we want to play with more people??"

"We'll use a button or something." God said.

"You would do that wouldn't you?" Jesus said, "You who could make a live horse run through this room; you'd go and use a button."

"Wouldn't want to use a real horse, Jess." Francis said. "Be too big."

Peter said, "He could make it really really tiny."

Francis started to giggle. "Might leave a pile on the board and then the shoe would step in it."

Peter smiled. "Never had that problem with the little doggie."

Francis said, "Well, the dog well trained."

The two saints looked at each other and began to laugh. Jesus just looked at them and stared. "Oh but I'm the child."

God reached into the box and tossed his son the thimble. Jesus placed the piece on the starting square and picked up the dice. He rolled a seven.

As the Son of Man was moving the thimble along the board, Francis asked. "What's your rule on prayers?"

"What do you mean?" God asked.

"Well," Francis said, "Peter gets prayers all the time. So do I. So does Jess and his mama get's a LOT. But you, you get more than any of us. So what's the rule on which prayers get answers and which ones don't?"

God picked up the dice and rattled them in his hand. He said, "All prayers get answers." He rolled double fives. "Sometimes the answer is no."

"But how do you decide." Peter asked.

"Depends." God said. "Depends on who is praying and what they really need at the time."

Peter rolled the dice. God picked up his ice tea and drained half the bottle. "Little girl who prayed for the cowboy was afraid her father would hit if he found out."

"Would he?" Jesus asked.

"Probably." God said. "I gave her the horse from my box and now she has a stronger faith. She believes prayers get answered. She's going to need that. When she gets older she'll think that her mother found the pice and put it back but right now....she believes her God in heaven is listening."

Jesus picked up the dice, rolled, and landed on the CHANCE space. He drew a card and then looked at his Father. God looked at the ceiling. "It says, 'You will get your father another ice tea.'"

"Excellent" God said, "When did they start adding that card to the deck."

"Cut it out." Jesus said and tok another card. This one read. "...and pass me the cookies."

Peter and Francis started to giggle. God, who had been trying to hold back a laugh now let it go and it came out of his nose with a snorting sound.

Peter's shoulders started to shake and he had to put his bottle down. Francis was giggling and looking at the floor. He had tears in his eyes.

Jesus stood up and went to the kitchen. Peter calmed down and said, "We should make up a card that says, 'Stop smacking your child or I'll send you to hell. -Love God.'"

"That would be totally spooky." Francis added.

Jesus returned with an ice tea. He placed in front of his father and then kissed the top of his head. He sat down and drew another card. This one said, "Thanks."

Jesus flicked it at the Lord and said, "Will you cut it out!"

Francis squired coffee through his nose and had to leave the table. Peter fell out of his chair.

Jesus said, "You know this sort of thing never happens when we let Gabriel play."

God chuckled.

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Elsewhere.

Far away...

Patty sat across from her father as she they played the game. Her father was ahead...as usual.

Her mother was barely trying and her brother had left the table when his favorite TV show came on. Martin rolled double sixes and moved the cowboy piece along the board. "9..10..11..12 CHANCE." Martin said. He drew an orange card and read it to himself. The color drained out of his cheeks. He looked like he had the wind knock out of him. "What the hell is this?" he said flicking the card at his wife. She picked it up confused.

"It says go to jail, Honey. That's all. What's wrong with you?"

Martin took the card from her and read it again. He slid the card under the pile and moved the cowboy to the jail and didn't say a word the rest of the game.

Patty won.