



Jim's Life

A novel by Jason Matthews

Sample - A Messiah is found

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*I am going to venture that the man who sat
on the ground in his tipi meditating on life and its meaning,
accepting the kinship of all creatures,
and acknowledging unity with the universe of things,
was infusing into his being the true essence of civilization.
Luther Standing Bear - Lakota Sioux*

A dozen wooden bowls were on the main table in Mari's painting room. Several contained dried flower petals. Others held berries. The flowers and berries ranged in color from white and yellow to different shades of blue, green and purple.

Mariposa showed Missy and Jim how to crush the dried petals into fine bits using a large wooden spoon. Once they were busy with that, Mari mashed the berries into a paste. Angelo entered with a strap around his shoulder that supported a bucket. Inside it was a mix of clay and water from the banks of the Amazon. They worked together to create different bowls of brightly colored paints. When the paints were ready, Jim removed his shorts. He stood naked before the others.

Mari went first. She dipped both hands into the bowl of blue paint and smeared it all over Jim's chest. She dipped her hands in the bowl again and moved to his back. She laughed pleasantly while she transformed Jim's torso to a blue mass. Missy dipped her hands in the green bowl and followed Mari's lead. Angelo went for the yellow paint and added color of his own. Jim laughed as the three of them engaged themselves in painting his body.

"Make me the sea," he said.

An hour later every inch of him had been painted to blend into the aqua greens and blues of water. Small rippling waves and the reflections of light within it were a part of his new look. Only his eyes remained untouched.

In the early afternoon the pedestrian square of Sao Paolo was packed with thousands of locals and some tourists. People walked about the area quickly, many of them headed to and from the underground transit near the square's center. Others convened outdoors near the modern fountains. They talked, ate and enjoyed the pleasant day. The temperature was surprisingly for early February, when the conditions were usually sweltering.

Angelo and Jim emerged from the underground transit station. Jim was cloaked in a hooded black robe that reached the ground. His blue-green feet poked out from the bottom of the robe on each step. They walked to the pedestrian area around the series of fountains and stopped in the middle of it all.

"My mother wants you here," Angelo said. "I used to play in these fountains as a boy."

Jim looked at children as they splashed and frolicked in the shallow fountains.

Finally Jim said, "Thank you."

Angelo embraced him. He put his head onto Jim's shoulder and held the boy as a father would hold a son embarking on a long trip. Jim reciprocated the embrace.

Angelo began to cry and laugh simultaneously. Eventually he gathered himself and backed away enough to see Jim's eyes through the hood of the black cloak.

"I'm honored to have been here," Angelo said.

"You taught me so much. I couldn't have done this without you."

"It's true."

"Next time, it's your turn," Jim said with a grin.

"We'll see. Are you ready?"

"I am."

They embraced again until Angelo forced himself to back away. In one movement, Jim disrobed and tossed the cloak into Angelo's arms. He stood in the middle of the crowded area in nothing but his elaborate aqua-marine body paint. He looked like a human form of pure water.

Angelo held the cloak and smiled as Jim gave him one last look of appreciation. Then Jim turned and walked out among the crowd. Many noticed the strangely painted person. Some whistled as they realized he was naked beneath his paint. Others wandered over to appreciate the artwork.

Angelo turned and headed back to the transit station. Soon he disappeared underground. In little time, a crowd of intrigued people had gathered around Jim. They examined him closely, impressed with the unusual costume.

"Posso tocar?" a young woman asked. *May I touch it?*

"Sim." *Yes.*

Mariposa and Missy held each other for a long time in the basement of the mansion in front of the tunnel car. Finally they let go. Missy entered the car and took a seat.

"You'll be okay?" Mari asked.

"I will."

"You know what to tell them when you get there?"

"Yes."

"You, dear child, are a visionary of great power. Remember that."

From the pocket of her gown Mari pulled out a tiny glass container of purplish-blue paint. She opened it and dabbed it with her index finger. She then reached into the tunnel car and touched Missy's third-eye area of her forehead. She held an A note from her vocal chords as she pressed her finger, leaving a perfect indigo circle just above and between the young woman's eyes. Mari gave the glass container to Missy.

"See you soon," Mari said and blew a kiss.

Missy looked back at her a bit confused. The door of the car materialized, and the pressure locks of the tunnel closed. The car zoomed away.

The young Brazilian woman touched Jim's arm to feel the paint. Her hand moved gently down to his wrist before she placed her other hand on it. As she felt Jim's wrist and hand she looked at him strangely. Other people came over and carefully touched the paint on his back and sides in appreciation of the

artwork. Jim looked upon all of them with an expression of genuine welcome. More and more people came over to see.

The young woman could not take her hands from him. She stared into his eyes with a dazed expression. Jim returned her gaze with loving compassion. The woman's eyes filled with tears. Her mouth quivered.

"E ele," she said softly. *It's him.* "Ele está aqui." *He's here.*

A look of astonishment came over her as she uttered, "O Messiah." *The Messiah.*

The woman's brow creased in wonder as Jim held her gaze. She continued clutching his hands as she began sobbing. She dropped to her knees.

"O Messiah, O Messiah!" she cried as the tears flowed down her cheeks.

More people came over. They looked at him and the young woman, unsure of what was happening. Soon a dozen people were attempting to touch Jim. He released one hand from the woman's grip to give others a chance to hold it.

People about the square heard the cries coming from the center. "O Messiah! O Messiah!"

A swarm of people surrounded him. They pushed to get closer, but there were far too many for all to be able to touch him. The pack compressed. The ones in the center grabbed onto Jim, anxious to hold an arm or a leg or even his hair. He let himself to remain limp and numb to it all as he felt the desperate wanting within them.

So many hands reaching for him resulted in accidental scratches as the crowd reacted like sharks in a frenzy. Droplets of blood seeped through the aqua paint.

At the transit station in Brisbane, it was late at night. The shuttle car came to a stop and the pressure locks opened. After the door dematerialized a cloaked Missy emerged from it. She walked through the receiving area alone, her eyes fixed forward as she went. A calm assurance and knowingness registered on her face. She no longer looked like a girl.

She walked directly up to the first Fed unit she saw.

"I'm Missy Walkins, and I need a ride home."

Eventually a Federation police cruiser flew over the center of the confusion in the Sao Paolo public area. From the bottom of the hovering device, a misty spray shot over the crowd. The people in the center passed out while the ones of the outskirts covered their faces and moved away from the mist.

Jim stood alone, unaffected by the spray. His entire body was gashed and smeared with his own blood. He looked around him, surrounded by several dozen people lying on the ground.

"Stay where you are," a voice called out from the vehicle.

Two Federal units were lowered from the hovering craft to remove Jim from the mass of unconscious people.

(End of current sample)

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