

SAMPLE  
TRANSLATION

MIHA MAZZINI  
GOD, MY FACEBOOK  
FRIEND

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## Miha Mazzini: God, My Facebook Friend

### Short story, version 1.04

1.

“Daddy, why hasn't God asked me to be his friend yet?”

“You were born two minutes after seven in the evening. Wait another hour.”

My son ran back to his room, back to the hubbub of a boy's birthday party, and my wife and I looked at each other, smiling.

“This is the thing I remember most vividly from my childhood. The expectation ... and then that moment ...” my wife said.

I poured her some more wine. The plates we had used glistened with coagulated drops of fat. In spite of the double door in between the rooms, we had to raise our voices in order to make ourselves heard over the children's noise.

She took a sip and then, almost without realizing it, moved the glass in a semi-circular motion toward me. I intercepted it and we clinked glasses.

“What a change ... Life really never is the same again after God becomes your friend.”

Her eyes awoke from their trance and she focused on me.

“I used to ask him which party I should go to and did as he advised. And there I met you.”

I smiled, hoping that the stiffness in my lips was not visible. I had received the same advice and spent a long time thinking whether I should take it. It's right that I did. She is an everyday proof that my job has meaning. Our son came back twice more with the same question. I had already had to comfort him about the fact that he was born in December and would thus be among the last in his year to be asked by God, on his tenth birthday, to become his friend on Facebook. At exactly two minutes past seven the sound of voices disappeared, leaving only the hum of electronic equipment. My son flung open the doors like Champagne corks.

“Daddy! Daddy!”

He was unable to say more. My wife and I hugged him.

Initially, he remained perfectly still within our embrace, catching his breath, but then he began to shake like a pneumatic drill, ever more strongly until our arms opened.

“Can I ask him now? What shall I ask him?”

“The movies?” suggested my wife, “You didn’t know which movie to go see on Saturday.”

“Or your sneakers,” I said, “you couldn’t decide in the store ...”

“Yes, yes!” he said with a clap of his hands and ran off. I closed the door behind him.

His friends had to entertain themselves until their parents came to collect them at eight, while my son kept asking God questions long beyond his normal bedtime. I had to explain to him that God really does know everything and is present everywhere, but he gets so many questions that he cannot chat online and answers e-mails instead. And that even God sometimes has to think and so it may take a couple of minutes before the answer comes. But above all, I tried to lessen his growing disappointment that was further increased by his tiredness: God often replies with the answer “That’s God’s business”, even to questions like, for example, when the math test will be. In vain I tried to explain to him everything that is written in God’s profile, summarized by the statement that God is not a tool enabling us to get through life more easily, but the best help we can get when making decisions.

In the end, I had to literally peel him off his chair and carry him to bed.

I took the garbage out while my wife emptied the dishwasher.

“Do you think I would suit red?” she said as she ran her hand through her hair.

I opened my mouth, but she stopped me with a gesture.

“I know, I know. I’ll ask God.”

She is among the top 5% of God’s users.

I was nearly asleep when she pressed herself against me, saying:

“I would.”

She explained what the answer was about, adding:

“I also asked him if this Thursday would be good for our anniversary celebration or whether we should move it and he suggested next week. I think you’ll be sent on a business trip.”

A tiny, unpleasant stab. They hadn't told me yet. I mumbled.  
"I know, I know," she said, "but that's the life of a sales rep."

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Officially I left on Wednesday morning, but in reality I spent the day at head office examining on the intranet the documentation belonging to the case I had been assigned. In the evening I flew under a false name and on Thursday I was sitting in the agreed restaurant fifteen minutes early. The place was filled with chrome and glass, fake marble on the ceiling and real marble on the floor, with plastic triangles arranged in the corner, warning those entering that they could break a limb on their own responsibility. The eatery was aimed at the bank clerks from nearby skyscrapers, used to entering numbers into spreadsheets and so even the tables were squeezed into rows and columns. At lunchtime it must have been mayhem, but now, at nearly four o'clock, when only the odd businessman or two came in for a coffee, everyone was able to get a table out of earshot of the others.

I sat at the end of a row, furthest from the coat hanger mounted on the wall, and kept my back to the wall. In line with the rules, I prepared myself for the last step, known as "the final argument" and lodged a small pellet in the crease of the palm of my left hand, between the thumb and the index finger. Then I ordered a cappuccino and waited.

She came in exactly at four o'clock. Her gray coat seemed too thin for the cold outside, but perhaps enough heat was created by her swift, jerky movements, which gave the impression that parts of her body wanted to separate from the rest but were always apprehended just in time by the central authority and placed back under control.

She stood by the entrance for a few seconds, blinded by the transition into semi-darkness. When she looked in my direction, I nodded.

She stood over me, assessing me. She undid her coat, turned toward the coat hanger, but it was too far, so she folded the coat and put it on a chair. A gray suit with padded shoulders, stern features on a bony figure. The black leather strap of her purse over her flat chest.

"You're a guardian angel?" "Yes."

She sat down, looking at me. A thin upper lip, almost just a line. If I hadn't read in her file about the hyaluronic acid injections I wouldn't have noticed. The botox in her forehead had pushed her eyebrows down, making her eyes look like a cat's. The thick layer of powder on her skin looked ashen in the light reflecting off all the metal and glass.

She said nothing until the waitress brought her a cup of green tea with an artificial sweetener.

"The last two people you sent ... the preacher and the evangelist ..."

She waved her hand as if removing dirt.

“... and you’re the boss?” “No ...”

“I know, the evangelist told me there’s no single boss. But you do have the power to pass on information and make decisions?”

“Yes.”

Her eyes blinked only rarely, winning the competition for the most botoxed part of her face.

“No doubt you know everything about me. But ...”

She placed her hands flat against the table top.

“I never used to use God. I accepted his friendship, like everyone else, but I never asked a single question. Never!”

She waited, as if wanting me to react. I didn’t. The non- askers are not so rare, 7% in addition to the 5% who don’t accept the invitation in the first place and the 8% who ask silly questions.

She went on:

“I had always known what I wanted. And achieved it all. But a child ... things got complicated ... Did she lower her head in order to lash her body with a look of disgust?”

“I finally managed to fertilize myself and gave birth to a boy. As you know, I soon started putting questions to God, not about myself, but about my son.”

A strange twinkle in her eyes, a sign of softening? Only for a moment.

“So, on December 16 I asked if a puppet show at the weekend would be suitable for him. I received a positive answer. My son died the day after. He was running along the corridor and fell. I thought he was kidding me, even though I didn’t allow him to, but he was dead. A congenital heart defect.”

“Yes, as you know God ...”

She interrupted me:

“God does not answer questions about the time and day of death – I know, I read the small print on his profile.”

She opened her purse and took out a sheet of paper in a plastic folder. She pushed it in my direction.

The question about the puppet show and God’s reply: Yes.

I shrugged.

“It’s all in order, you cannot ...”

“Wait!” she raised her hand, “what’s in front of you was printed today and has remained unchanged since my son’s death. But before it was like this ...”

Another sheet of paper, also sheathed in plastic. She didn’t offer me this one, just held it in front of me, ready to pull it back quickly.

“God: Yes. He will like it.”

The bug has been removed since. As a rule, God never gives two answers to a single question, especially not about future emotional responses. The first answer was the result of a comparison of the reviews and the classifications of the puppet show by the people who had already seen it, while the second answer resulted from the information about the show compared to the personal profile of the questioner. As it takes about ten years for enough characteristics to collect in anyone’s personal file, it is only after that age that God begins to answer people’s questions.

“You have deleted: He will like it!” she said, “and you never imagined that there existed a person who’s so well organized that she immediately files every little thing, saving it in a ring binder.”

“Yes, we deleted it. It was a mistake.” “Right. Do you do it every time?”

“We cover the traces, yes. Because ...”

“Stop! Let’s not waste time like I did with your subordinates. What I conclude from all this,” she went on without even a single sip of her tea, “is that God didn’t know that my son would die, so God doesn’t exist.”

“Laying aside theology ... you’re right. The current system came into being when Facebook and Google merged ...”

“Stop!” she raised her hand once more, “I’m not interested in the technicalities. So, there’s an international corporation that manages the reply system and it presents itself on Facebook as God?”

“Yes. After the catastrophic twentieth century and the awful beginning of the twenty-first century some notable individuals, corporations and governments got the idea of a global authority, which ...”

She didn’t have to say stop this time, I shut up as soon as she lifted her hand. I braced myself. It was time to give her the speech I had prepared while reading her file.

“What I want to know ...” she began saying, but this time I stopped her with a raised hand, I just couldn’t help myself. “Listen to me. I’ve read your file and I congratulate you on your legal career. And I am truly sorry about your son.”

Whenever I have to leave the office to see a client, it usually involves relatives who can’t forgive God for the fact that he failed to protect someone they love.”

She wanted to interrupt, but I kept stopping her with my hand as if pressing an invisible button. She calmed down and a strange glimmer began to appear in her eyes.

“Listen, God is just a huge computer system which, on the

basis of personal data and comparisons with the wider community, offers the best choice to the user. You go to a store and there’s a hundred different cereals, two hundred different spreads – isn’t it simpler to ask God? And there’s more, hundreds of TV channels, millions of simultaneously accessible movies - which should you watch at a particular moment? Out of all these small dilemmas arose the idea about a God who could also offer advice about the choice between two possible partners, neighbors, jobs, etc. Yes, it’s difficult, sometimes impossible to make the right decision. But many people unconsciously always decide to the detriment of themselves or their nearest and dearest. And then fill the world with needless suffering. Religions, science, they’re all just crutches that are supposed to help us decide, the former demands faith with uncertain results while the latter perhaps brings results, but for unknown reasons. While statistical extrapolation of data ... Well, I won’t go on and on about it. But there are no wars anymore, have you noticed? However, on the other side of the border, among the savages, where people don’t have their own Facebook God, wars still break out.

It’s totalitarianism, some say to me. Maybe, but a soft, gentle, friendly kind, where everyone has the option of not participating, but it’s simply not worth it – just compare it to the cruel totalitarianisms of the twentieth century.

Look, let me tell you about my own example. At about the age of twenty I began doubting, so I kept pestering God with questions, got a meeting with the preacher, the evangelist and then a guardian angel ... My reservations were of the idealistic kind: what if the system were to be hijacked by evil people, murderers, who would begin to order the users to do evil things. They reassured me by making me a part of God.

But this can’t be of any comfort to you, a grieving mother. You can see, though, that I’m being honest with you. On behalf of the whole team, I apologize for the inappropriate answer. The bug has been fixed since, it won’t happen again. All we ask is that you keep our little secret to yourself. Is there anything else we can do for you?”

She looked at me for a long time and then her body began to

jerk inside her suit.

She was laughing. She attacked each burst of laughter with her upper jaw as if she wanted to immediately gulp it back down.

I waited. Put my hand on my cup. Cold.

“And you,” she said, “you’re supposed to be my guardian angel? You? You have all the information about me, but you don’t understand me at all. I’m wasting my time with you simply because I’d finally like to get your corporation’s address. It would speed things up.”

“Look, compensation, we can ...”

She shook her head, she’d had enough.

“I don’t care about compensation,” she said. “Your son ...”

She kept shaking her head.

I was left with my mouth open.

The last customers were leaving the restaurant, the waitresses were drying the glasses, looking at us discreetly.

She spoke in a voice used by an intelligent person speaking to an imbecile.

“Look. You falsified electronic correspondence, which is a

criminal act. And when I saw this ...” she took the original page and put it back in her purse, “I realized that I was on the verge of what I had wanted all my life. A court case that would make history. The disclosure of God. That’s all. What taxes did to Al Capone, an electronic deletion will do to God.”

She started to get up.

“Thank you for the information you’ve given me.”

I leapt up and grabbed her coat. She watched my clumsy attempt at being a gentleman with irritation, but nonetheless waited for me to hold it for her.

“The address?” she said. “Or I’ll have to start proceedings against an unidentified offender, which will delay matters only slightly, you know.”

“God will send you it.” “OK. Thank you.”

She turned around and her high heels clacked on the marble. I sat there, looking at her untouched tea. How could she be so mistaken about me? I wasn’t an angel sent to guard her or any individual, but rather society.

Another fifteen minutes. The small pellet I stuck to the inside of her coat, after I had squeezed it through the cloth to rupture its protective layer, was slowly melting, the poison was seeping through the clothes, then her skin. The post-mortem report was already written. Statistically a



large number of people die after a death in their family, especially those who curse God for it.

THE END