

We Three Kings Of Orient Are

A Play in One Act by:

Avi Warner

Michael Taylor

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This play was approved by the Jewish board of Censors

Cast:

Joseph, a Carpenter from Galilee

Mary, his wife, and a new mother

Magi-1: An operative for the Persian CIA

Magi-2: An operative for the Persian CIA He wears an eye-patch, like a pirate.

Rabbi: A cameo figure, played by Avi Warner, who quickly leaves. He also wears sheets and a funny little skullcap.

Costume: Joseph and Mary are dressed in Jewish looking bedsheets. The Persians wear black suits, with black ties and aviator sunglasses. Jesus is played by a human looking doll.

Setting: January 2nd, 1 AD.

Setting: A stable in the Judean City of Bethlehem, near Jerusalem. In a manger lies a newborn baby, surrounded by the proud parents. A Rabbi is in the process of circumcising the baby.

Rabbi: Wama bama booma, and with that, I declare this baby circumcised. *He brandishes a bloody butcher knife.* May his future be blessed by God. What a fine looking baby boy. An there's this glow about him; a halo; he could truly be one of god's sons..or could he....(a knowing look of realization) but I won't pry, I won't pry...I'm sure he's yours. *Rabbi exits.*

Joseph: Uh, thanks---*a concerned look at Mary.* *Mary shrugs with feigned innocence.* Honey this is getting embarrassing. All those shepherds giving me those knowing looks, and why did that little drummer boy keep going "cuckold, cuckold." (*He flaps his arms like a chicken*). It's really embarrassing. Is there something you're not telling me?

Mary: There, there, honey.

Joseph: I just don't understand. I was always told that abstinence was the most effective form of birth control---but now--- How could this happen! And he keeps making things levitate!

Mary: The world works in mysterious ways. What can I say?

Joseph: It still makes me uncomfortable. That, and I was at least hoping to have at least one sexual experience for every baby I have. Even Catholics have it that much....What kind of virgin are you? Are you a Madonna virgin or Madonna virgin.

KNOCK KNOCK KNOCK. The knocks are very ominous and threatening, like the CIA is about to burst in your home and start torturing you. The PIA agents, stride in, checking every cranny of the room, and then pause.

Magi One: Are you sure these are the coordinates? This dive looks like the armpit of the universe, not the birthplace of the King of the Jews.

Magi Two: I'm absolutely positive. This is the place. Its right here.

Magi One: That's what you said about those plague-launching catapults in Tuscany, and did we ever find those?

Magi Two: That was just an intelligence gaff. It happens to everyone.

Magi One: Well, I sent Magi Three to investigate that comet over Jericho. I think we're on a wild goose chase here in Bethlehem.

Magi Two: The star is right over the house. It has to be here. The stars don't lie. Trust me, I'm a professional.

Joseph: Who are you, and what are you doing in my house...I mean my stable?

Magi One: Is this your baby?

Joseph: Uh, well, I think so....um

Magi One: He doesn't look a damn thing like you.

Joseph: Damn it...well it's the baby my wife just had. That much I know for sure.

Magi One: Oh my god! What have you done to his penis!

Mary: Its tradition. You know, Jewish tradition. Tradition! (starting singing the line from the musical)

Magi One: I see. Well, now, Mr....what the hell is your name?

Joseph: I am Joseph of Bethlehem.

Magi One: Bethlehem; this is promising; the royal city of the late, great King David, the anointed one of God. But you don't look like someone who could be the father of the king of the Jews. You look like a hick. What do you do for a living?

Joseph: *hurt* I'm a carpenter.

Magi One: See what I tell you! This isn't the newborn king of the Jews. He's just a carpenter's son. (*realizing the lack of resemblance*) Or not!

Magi Two picks up the baby and looks at it. Damn! He just barfed all over my face. Wait---I can see! My eye! I'm no longer blind. It's a miracle! He takes off his eye-patch.

Magi One: Hmm. Jewish kings are known for their miraculous powers. Maybe this is the one. Well, we can always set him up as the king of the Jews---we'll call him the provisional king of the Jews for now, until elections are held on an undisclosed date to ratify him. Of course, we don't want to waste our efforts on a weakling or a cripple. Is the kid healthy?

Mary: Very

Magi One: How often does he nurse

Mary: Once every two hours.

Magi One: Bottle or breast?

Mary: Breast

Magi One: Good. How often does he poop?

Mary: Three times a day.

Magi One: Soft or hard?

Mary: Hard as diamonds. Now that I think of it, clear and sparkly like diamonds too (*a pause as everyone exchanges puzzled looks*).

Magi One: Okaaaaay. Is he cholicky, intemperate, grouchy?

Mary: He's a little angel.

Magi One: Good.

Joseph: Who the hell are you people? What the hell do you want with my son...or, with my wife's son anyway?

Magi One: And one more thing... that rabbi...did you know him?

Mary: Yes—

Magi One: Do you trust him?

Mary: Well, we let him circumcise our son.

Magi One: Sounds like a religious fanatic

Mary: I don't---

Magi One: Where do his loyalties lie---you know politically?

Mary: Well, I think....

Magi One: Does he speak Latin?

Mary: I've never heard him...

Magi One: (*menacingly*) Not even... pig latin?

Mary: No.

Magi One: Perhaps... Greek?

Mary: I don't think so...

Joseph: Will someone please tell me what the bloody hell is going on here!!!!

Magi One: Does he like to wear hats with funny little broom things, or carry a short sword or wear those prissy little skirts?

Mary: I've never seen...

Joseph: Listen to me! Who the hell are you people and what are you doing in my house... I mean my stable.

Magi One: Do you read the newspaper, Mr. Joseph?

Joseph: Well I can't read

Magi One: Do you follow politics?

Joseph: Well I do a little.

Magi One: Are you familiar with the international situation?

Joseph: A little....

Magi One: Well perhaps I ought to explain. Myself and my companion are members of the PIA.

Joseph: PIA?

Magi One: Persian Intelligence Agency. We are secret agents of the King of Persia. They call us Team Magi. Our third operative is checking out an unidentified astrological phenomenon allegedly sighted over Jericho. See, we look into the stars and predict the future to help determine the policies our government should pursue. We're astrologers really, when we're not busy torturing people, toppling third world governments, or selling weapons to the contras, that is.

Magi Two: All of which we're also really good at if you don't mind me tooting my own horn.

Joseph: But what are you doing in Roman territory?

Magi One: We're working behind enemy lines. That's what you do when you're a spook. You may realize that the Romans are jealous of the peace and freedom which we as Persians enjoy. They hate our free way of life and therefore want to hurt us with their legions of terror, of which Judea is also victim.

Joseph: I see. But the Romans have given us aqueducts and roads, and they subsidize our big temple here in Jerusalem. Have you seen it? It has silver and gold, and pillars, and a big courtyard and lots of space for everyone to be Jewish....

Magi One: If the Romans were so great, why do our rulers have awesome facial hair and such impressively tall hats.

Joseph: Good point, but what does Judea have to do with this?

Magi One: Have you ever heard of a place called Mesopotamia?

Joseph: I think so....between those two rivers.

Magi One: Between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers, the cradle of civilization... the cradle? Get it? Cradle, baby, cradle, baby?

Joseph: What are you talking about?

Magi One: I don't know anymore. But Mesopotamia, aka the Fertile Crescent, aka the cradle of civilization, aka Irak is crucial to our ongoing war against the Romans. Our garrison in Mesopotamia must hold out.

Joseph: But why do you care so much about Judea... isn't Judea a 2nd rate power?

Magi One: Actually Judea is an eighth rate power...right after Poland.

Joseph: Where's Poland? Besides, I still don't understand what Judea has to do with this.

Magi One: Question, Mr. Joseph, where are the legions of terror located?

Joseph: I don't know...

Magi One: In Syria, Mr. Joseph, six Roman legions stationed in Syria menacing our ability to occupy the Irak.

Joseph: So?

Magi One: So, where is Judea located?

Joseph: In Israel.

Magi One: Immediately adjacent to Syria. Judea is the Achilles Heel of the Roman terror machine.

Joseph: Can you stop saying terror for just five minutes?

Magi One: I don't think you sufficiently appreciate the terror of the Romans. It is a terror that hates our people. A terror that terrorizes our land. A terror that terrorizes our rivers and our streams. A terror that terrorizes our women, our children, our day care centers. A terror that is diametrically opposed to our Eastern values and civilization, and fills our hearts and souls with terror! A terror that terrifies every citizen of the Empire of Persia and can only be stopped by our ongoing occupation of Mesopotamia. With Judea in revolt, the Roman legions will be forced to divert their operations away from Mesopotamia and the Irak will be ours! Forever and ever and ever! We will never ever leave!

Joseph: But won't the Romans simply respond by razing Judea to the ground and killing every man, woman and child?

Magi One: Collateral Damage. You're in Israel, get used to it.

Joseph: So that's why you want to be sure that the King of the Jews is on your side? So he can aid you Persians in your war against the Romans.

Magi One: I've explained this already Mr. Joseph, but because you failed to pay attention I am forced to repeat myself. Now, read my lips. Rome, Persia, Judea, Mesopotamia, Rome, Irak, Syria, Legions, Persia, Terror, Rome, Terror, Rome, Irak, Persia, Judea,

Legions, Terror, Rome, Mesopotamia, Cradle Baby Cradle Baby, Cradle Baby *He goes on like a broken record. Mary goes up and slaps him. WE ARE AT WAR!*

Joseph: I see.

Magi One: Yes, the King of the Jews is a vital ally in our war on Roman terror. Which is why it is so essential to our operations that we search out the king of the Jews.

Joseph: What about King Herod?

Mary: You mean the Casino guy? We had our honeymoon at Herods. We saw Wayne Newton! *Giggles and praises Wayne Newton until cut off.*

Magi One: King Herod is little more than a Roman puppet, a toady of terror. We have no use for him. Besides, he's old and childless and will be out of the picture soon. By the way, you might want to watch out for him.

Magi Two: Our intelligence, after analyzing ancient Jewish texts, has concluded that your son will be the Prince of Peace and Light.

Magi One: Right, the peace that comes after we wipe the Romans off the face of the earth. Mission Accomplished!

Magi Two: Your son will inspire great men, like Martin Luther, Martin Luther King Jr, Mother Teresa and Thomas Kinkaid.

Joseph: Who are they?

Magi Two: I don't know, they haven't been born yet. But it's in the stars.

Magi One: There's just one thing. The Jewish texts say that he will be the King of Kings. Now, as you know, the King of Persia is the kings of kings, and will remain so until the end of the world. We would like you to sign this document saying that while you admit your son is the king of the Jews and the Prince of Peace, and possibly the Messiah, the anointed one of God, he is not and never will be the King of Kings.

Magi Two: Just for our intelligence files: what is his name?

Mary: We were thinking Emmanuel.

Magi One: Emmanuel! That's a pussy name! No one can command the respect of the Romans with a name like Emmanuel? Can you think of him standing up to the Romans and saying, "Stop you Roman curs, I am Emmanuel the Pudgy, King of the Jews!" I don't think so. It's weak.

Joseph: Well I was watching *luche libre* wrestling last night, and they had a guy on called *Jesus el Tigre*, and come to think of it I really like the name.

Magi One: Yes, Jesus the Terrible, the King of the Jews. Sounds catchy. That will strike terror into the hearts of the Romans!

Joseph: So wait a second: you expect me to spend 18 years of my life, working my ass off, building houses and furniture, to feed and clothe and educate the King of the Jews just so he can be a pawn in your geopolitical game! What's in it for me!

Magi One: Well, we have brought gifts, just for you....frankensense, myrrh....

Joseph: Why the hell would anyone want frankensense and myrrh?

Magi One: And gold.

Joseph: Gold's good.

Magi One: Then the king of Persia shall not disappoint.

Joseph: That sure does beat the Roman bounty of thirty pieces of silver to anyone who finds the king of the Jews.

Magi One: Well, time to head out. The insurgents in Armenia are revolting. Well, I say to them, "bring it on." We eat Armenians for breakfast. But don't worry, we'll be back in about thirty years, to work out the details of the revolt. We were thinking about calling the Jewish Revolt "Operation Infinite Carnage."

Mary: Oh my, that sounds awful.

Joseph: How about "Operation Jewish Storm?"

Mary: That sounds pretty lame-o too.

Magi One: "Operation Eternal Justice?"

Mary: What orifice do you pull these out of? (sarcastically) I know: how about Operation Judean Freedom?"

Magi One: I like it.

Magi Two: Oh, we almost forgot. The King of Persia wishes to award the King of the Jews, his mother and his fath--..... mother's husband the Persian Medal of Peace and Freedom, to honor their commitment to our war on Roman terror. Please rise. *The cheap tin medals are awarded with great ceremony.*

Mary: Wait! Wait! Listen! I think that he's about to say his first word! Say mommy! Say mommy!

Jesus: I tell you...

Joseph: Shit, I was hoping he might say daddy! Say dada! Say abba! Say dada! Daddy loves you! Wherever he is, damnit.

Jesus...and verily I say to you...

Magi One: This kid is useless. No one ever conquered the Middle East with peace and love and brotherhood. We need someone who will bring fire and sword! This mission is a bust!

Magi Two: Kind of like that whole Bay of Naples incident. Or our attempt to topple the Iranian government.

Magi One: *Aside.* We are the Iranian government, idiot!

Magi Two: How will we win the war with peace-mongering tree hugging hippies allies like this kid?

Magi One: Sometimes you go to war with the Jewish allies you have, not with the Jewish allies you want or hope to have in the future.

Magi One: *publicly* Well, we must take our leave. Remember, this entire conversation never happened. *Aside to Magi Two* Well... what ally should we seek next in our war on Roman terror?

Magi Two: Well, Germany, Scotland, Armenia, Pontus and Palmyra are all in and Uganda may join our willing and pliable coalition.

Magi One: What about Poland?

Magi Two: No one gives a shit about Poland.

Magi One: That's not enough...we need allies who actually count.

Magi Two: How about the Huns?

Magi Ones: Looks like we'll just have to wait around for the Huns. Goddamned unreliable Huns.

Magi Two: What will we do while we wait for the Huns?

Magi One: We can always invade Russia. Its winter, but fortunately we have a lot of men.

Magi Two: Let us be off. *The leave, singing We Three Kings of Orient Are, Bearing Gifts We Travel of Afar.*

Props:

Baby Jesus doll, manger.

Eye patch

Aviator sunglasses

Butcher knife with fake blood.

Gifts