

VIRGIN BIRTH

**BY
ANTHONY E. GALLO**

1 EXT. DARKNESS 1
We see all darkness. The screen is black. Suddenly we hear a large explosion. The creation has taken place. The screen lights up in radiant light.

2 EXT. -UNIVERSE DAY 2
The planets of the universe move in harmony. We see the planets Venus, Jupiter and Mars. We then see shots of stars and comets. Suddenly the planet Earth appears on screen with a rough approximation of land and sea as it was millions of years ago.

3 EXT. - DAY 3
Vegetation grows, blossoming into lush jungles. Different dinosaurs roam the earth.

4 EXT. - DAY 4
We see the Ice Age from a series of shots of melting ice and glaciers coming apart.

5 EXT. - SUNRISE 5
The sun appears. God creates man and woman.

6 EXT. DAY 6
The fall of Adam and Eve.

7 EXT JUNGLE DAY 7
Floods. A man builds an arc. Waters subside.

8 EXT. -UNIVERSE DAY 8
A large comet flashes.

9 EXT. -A MOUNTAIN DAY 9
A nomad walks up a mountain with a small boy carrying some firewood. He lights the fire and stops. The light appears, and then total darkness, and a million stars appear in the sky. Then one very bright star comes forth. A caravan of wise men is seen heading toward that star.

10 INT. KING HEROD'S PALACE - DAY

10

King Herod is concerned about revolutions and will do whatever is needed. Seeks advice of astrologer. And dream interpreter. In ancient cultures apparitions and dreams were considered windows into the spirit world and possible sources of God/s revelation.

Gentlemen, I thank you for coming. I call you because I have had a dream. A nightmare in fact. Chief astrologer, what have you concluded?

CHIE
Nothing in my readings indicates any immediate danger.

HEROD
Of that I am sure. But you said immediate danger.

CHIE
My signs are somewhat confusing.

HEROD
You never seem confused. Your sudden confusion bothers me. Tell me more.

CHIE
My signs are somewhat confusing only in that they appear to be blurred. Your kingdom seems secure, but there are some vague signs that show not only our kingdom, but every kingdom in the world coming under a new order,

HEROD
A new order! What about the order!

CHIE
Nothing immediate, Sir. The new order seems to be taking hold hundreds of years away, when both you and I and all the other people in this room will be all dead.

HEROD

That is irrelevant. I must look out for the Kingdom, and the safety of my family for now or anytime in the future.

CHIE

But what my signs are saying is that this Kingdom will be a different type Kingdom. I am confused. This is a kingdom of love and understanding

HEROD

(laughing)

What are you saying! Is age getting to you, Ol Man.

CHIE

I am being perfectly honest, your Majesty. I am confused.

HEROD

It's what I like about you. Allegiance and sincerity beyond belief. And you, Interpreter of Dreams, for which I have very well rewarded you. Shall we alert the military at once of this invasion? Repeat again to all of us what you interpreted

CHIE

I would rather spend more time on my interpretations, Your Majesty.

HEROD

I will expect another report by tomorrow.

CHIE

Yes, Sir.

HEROD

And now, Interpreter of Dreams..How do you interpret my dream.

DREA

Your Majesty. You spoke of two women giving birth. Tell us about it.

HEROD

Yes. Actually they are not my dreams. They are the dreams of my wife. And I will explain them to you. She saw two women, a very old one and a very young one. Both women were pregnant. Then the older woman gave birth to a child, and the child grew quickly into a bearded man. Then the bearded man with very evil eyes pointed his finger at me and said that your days are over.

CHIE

This sounds like a simple night mare. You have nothing to worry about. Well you know that the Jews have this belief that one day a Messiah will come and rescue them and save the whole world.

HEROD

Every religion I know has such a claim. The Jews would have you believe that theirs is the right and only way. So you think they might have some reason to believe this will become a reality.

DREA

Well no reason for alarm. Let me look at my tools again, and see what I can come up with.

HEROD

Very good. And you[<] mr. Astrologer. Will do likewise.

DREA

Yes, Sir.

HEROD

And I expect to hear from both of you within a week.

11 EXT. -UNIVERSE DAY 11

Another large comet flashes.

12 INT THE PALACE OF THE KING OF TARSHISH - DAY 12

The chief astronomer, the chief astrologer, and THE HIGH PRIEST of Tarshish are having a meeting. They are awaiting the arrival of the Chief Dream Interpreter.

KIN

Gentlemen, I have had a dream. My reasons for this convocation are to have that dream interpreted for the benefit of the Kingdom.

CHIE

I shall do my best for you.

CHIE

And I too.

HIG

And also I.

CHIE

I saw a star come out of the West. The Star was so large that it blinded me. Would you describe the star?

KIN

It was the brightest star I have ever seen. It's radiance was beyond belief. And it blinded me.

DREA

Where was the Star located

KIN

To the East.

CHIE

Was there also a comet?

KIN

What is a comet

CHIE
A comet, Sir, is celestial body
with a fussy head surrounding a
bright center with a round orbit.

KIN
Yes, it seems that I saw
something like that.

CHIE
Then my research is correct
concerning the appearance of a
comet.

KIN
Are you expecting a comet in the
near future.?

CHIE
Yes, Sir.

KIN
And the bright star?

ROYA
That sir may be an omen of
things to come.

KIN
And what do you have to say about
this, Chief Prophet of Tarshish.

CHIE
Within our own religion there is
none. But the Jews have some
kind of myth about a messiah or
something of that sort.

KIN
Doesn't every religion

CHIE
But the Jews really believe it.

KIN
What is the story?

CHIE
Well according to their prophets,
one day a descendant of their
King David will rise and restore
his people to greatness.

KIN

Strange, my friend Herod never mentioned this to me.

CHIE

He may not be aware of it. He's never cared much for their religion. ..No.no.no. I take that back. He must be aware of it. You see it is a heavily ingrained part of their religion.

KIN

Some do, maybe. Well wouldn't you know that the Jews always believe they have the right answer. Never mind. Surely, Herod must be aware of it. And that man certainly does know how to keep law and order. I truly admire him. ..

The Council all begins smiling.

KIN

Well more or less. He is a neurotic. But if you had to govern the Jews and face that unstable situation you would be neurotic too. He does what he needs to do.

CHIE

What is our interest in this star and your dream, other than a fantasy?

KIN

Because there may be something in this for us. Like gold. Or actually there may be something negative. Such as a disturbing political situation. And that is why I must immediately send a messenger to Herod to see if he knows anything.

CHIE

Why not send our own delegation on a factfinding mission.

CHIE

Yes, I have been wanting to go to that part of the world

12 (3)

8.
12

14

14

**DID JESUS
COME TO
IOWA?**

DRAFT

ANTHONY E. GALLO

DID JESUS COME TO IOWA?

A PLAY IN THREE ACTS AND AN EPILOGUE

BY
Anthony E. Gallo

CHARACTERS

Manny

Bishop Boeing

Pastor Moeller

Judge William Calhoun

Judd Ischer, an automobile mechanic

Magda (Maggie), his Wife and Asylum
Nurse

Officer James Kennedy

Dr. James Luke, the town physician and
Director of the County Asylum

Townspeople

Elizabeth

Lydia

Ann

Martha

Three Sheep (Optional)

The voice of a man who claims to be
John the Baptist

An Organist

In the wilderness, a voice almost deranged, keeps shouting out: "Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight his paths." A crowd is heard in the background giggling and laughing and shouting, "He's crazy!" "The nut again!" "They keep catching him and he keeps escaping into the forest!"

The cast and audience sing the following hymn as the processions

FAITH OF OUR FATHERS, HOLY FAITH!

We will be true to thee till death.

Faith of our fathers, we will strive

To win all nations unto Thee;

And through the truth that comes from God,

We all shall then be truly free.

Refrain

Faith of our fathers, we will love

Both friend and foe in all our strife;

And preach Thee, too, as love knows how

By kindly words and virtuous

A procession walks down the aisle carrying a cross with a man on it. He is heavily bruised but is still alive. Dr. Luke goes first, followed by Jim,, Pastor Moellor and then the Bishop. (They carry a sign which says: [NIHIL OBSTAT: but we're not sure] The rest of the townspeople follow. Two younger men help carry the cross. The man on the cross is groaning. The sheep keep murmuring.

They all arrive on stage, and the setting is the town square of Providence, Iowa, population 4,800, not including surrounding wheat and livestock farmers. Providence is the Capitol City of Shepherd County.

The Providence Winery and Bakery is the major employer in the town and county, followed by the Providence sheep-slaughtering house.

Martha's tavern is the town's major entertainment center.

The man is taken off the cross and laid on a cot. Dr. Luke, assisted by Nurse Kennedy examines him. The clergy and police surround them. The wounded man appears to be in pain, and uttering words as if he were inebriated. Nurse Kennedy keeps wiping his forehead, and asks:

BISHO

This seems like a hoax and a cruel one at that. A sacrilegious one too.

CALHOUN

He has been severely beaten. Who did this? We haven't had anything like this happen in Shepherd County in a very long time according to my recall.

MAGGIE

He must have been left there for quite a while. It's a miracle that he is still alive.

PASTO

There are real wounds on this man. Someone's perverted idea of fun. Truly a cruel hoax.

JIM

(smiling)

It would be strange if it were the real thing

MAGGI

Are you thirsty? Would you like something to drink?

MAN

Yes. Give- me water. (Then puts his head down again)

PASTO

Is he out of his mind?

JIM

Who are you?

DR

(examining forehead, heart, and wounds)

Vital signs seem to be fine. **There are** some severe bruises. But some rest and relaxation will cure him.

JIM

Who did this to you?

MAN

(Sighing)

I can not recall. I woke up on the side of the road is all I can remember. And then I found myself on this cross.

JIM

(to Dr. Luke)

Are there any signs of alcohol or drugs on him?

DR

None that I can tell.

JIM

Where is your home?

MAN

I don't know.

(and then goes off into a
sleep)

JIM

We already checked him for identification. There is none.

(Looking to the Bishop). Who found him?

BISHO

A sheep farmer about ten miles out of town. He was startled. And called us immediately to check him out. The farmer, a simple and good man, thought it was the real thing, but then remembered the other crazy we have here, that man who keeps thinking he's John the Baptist.

JIM

I have no reason to arrest him. Dr. Luke I suggest we put him into the asylum or hospital for observation. He seems highly unstable. Do you all agree?

BISHO

Look he seems awake. (To the Man) Again, who are you?

MAN

(Almost smiling and with a peaceful look on his face.) I AM.

JUDGE

(Looking intently)

Yes

You are? JIM

I AM MAN

Yes? PASTO
(Breathing heavily)

I AM MAN

Yes? ALL
(anxiously)

I am Who you think I am. MAN
(Then falls asleep again)

Who do you think he is? CALHOUN

A lunatic. But a harmless one JIM
(laughing)

One of the fraternity brothers at Iowa State. I think it's that time of year for the fraternities to be pulling another fast one. BISHO

He seems harmless MAGGIE

Please checks him for drugs. We will be there to help him if he needs it. PASTO

May I have some more water? MAN
(awakening again)

Who are you? JIM
(Giving him water)

If I told you, you wouldn't believe me. MAN
(Smiling)

Who are your parents? JIM

MAN
 (Just stares at them.)
 I don't know.

CALHOUN
 Tell us.

MAN
 I am

ALL
 (Anxiously)
 Yes!

Man drops into sleep

BISHOP BOEING:

He is crazy. In my opinion, he must be kept for observation at least until cured and then sent off. It's the Christian thing to do.

PASTO
 I absolutely agree. But how he found his way here is a mystery. But you recall that last year we had that woman who came into town claiming to be the reincarnation of Abraham Lincoln. Let us take care of him and send him on his way.

ALL NOD. AND THE MAN IS LED OFF.

Scene 11

THE NEXT MORNING. THE MAIN HALL AT PROVIDENCE PROVIDENCE HOSPITAL. MAN IS IN THE MAIN LOBBY AND ENCOUNTERS NURSE MAGGIE. HE LOOKS VERY WELL, AND APPEARS TO BE CURED OF ALL HIS WOUND, AND IS WELL RESTED .

MAGGIE
 (running by, and then coming to an immediate halt)
 What! Is that you.

MAN
 I beg your pardon.

MAGGIE
 You're the man who was so wounded last evening. You seem perfectly fine.

MAN
 (smiling)
 I am. And who are you, may I ask?

Town Square) Drought. Prays for Rain. Comes. Gets people to pray to God. All of a sudden rain appears. Saves Bakery. Becomes hero. Popular. Released by Dr. Luke. Says he wants to stay. There is no work. Bakery machinery broke. He gets it to work. Can stay. Working papers issued by Judge. Saves a child from falling. Helps a gay young man and a harlot. Pet's cat: Sometimes I think my father saved the wrong species.

(Tavern Room in Martha's Tavern) Manny wins dancing contest. Women drawn to him.

Scene 111

AN UPPER ROOM IN MARTHA'S TAVERN. JUDD ISCHER IS ALONE AT A TABLE AND DRINKING A BEER. MANNY ENTERS THE ROOM.

The tension between Judd and Manny becomes intense and is felt by the audience as soon as Manny enters the room

MANNY:

Hello Judd.

JUDD:

Hello Manny ! (Loudly) Or whoever you are!

MANNY

Do you know who I am?

JUDD:

(Screaming)

Yes I know who are? Now get out!

MANNY:

Why are you shouting

JUDD:

Get out! I hate you!

Why
 MANNY

You know Why!
 JUDD

You know who I am then.
 MANNY

You tell me!
 JUDD

Manny
 I'm Manny

That's your name of the last 24 hours.
 JUDD

Then again, you tell me who I am.
 MANNY

You always were canny like that!
 JUDD

What do you mean?
 MANNY

You know what I mean! You always did give evasive answers
 when backed into a corner.
 JUDD

A human trait to be sure. Who Am I then?
 MANNY

You're Jesus of Nazareth!
 (screaming)
 JUDD

Get the Hell out!
 JUDD

Watch that. You know who you are speaking too.
 MANNY

What are you doing here.
 JUDD

I came for one and only one reason.
 MANNY

and what is that?
 JUDD

You. MANNY
 Me! JUDD
 Yes, You. MANNY
JUDD ME!
 Manny
 Yes. You.
 JUDD
 What the hell for.
 MANNY
 Because of my love, and according to my Divine Will.
 JUDD
 What!
 MANNY
 Its been a couple thousand years but things have not change.
 JUDD
 You'll never change
 MANNY
 How did you recognize me.
 JUDD
 We Know. Don't we. What did you expect me to say
BEHOLD, THE LAMB OF GOD
 He who takest away the sins of the world.
 I don't believe that tripe, I know who you are.
 MANNY
 Are you at peace Judas.
 JUDD
 As happy as I can be.
 MANNY
 You're the exception Judas. The other trillions and trillions of humans are born and then die.

You just go on forever roaming the earthen. How many personages have you filled, must be about 70 now.

JUDD

Something like that.

MANNY

And how do you like Iowa

JUDD

I love it. I fit in nicely. By the way, that name they gave you happened to work out nicely, didn't it. ...Manuel... Couldn't that be short for, shall we say "Emanuel

MANNY

I suppose so. There are no accidents you know.

JUDD

That again. Tell me Emanuel, answer one question I've wanted answered all these centuries. It's a real puzzle to me,

MANNY

Yes, Judas, I will answer your question. What is it?

JUDD

How many prayers have been offered to you and Your Supposed Father, through the centuries?

MANNY

Oh. Trillions and trillions and trillions. Why?

JUDD

And how many have been answered? Truthfully?

MANNY

Do you really want to know the truth?

JUDD

Yes. I'm waiting breathlessly!

MANNY

Each and Every last one of them.

JUDD

What! I don't believe you.

MANNY

You know better than that. I never lie. Each is answered according to my Fathers will and not the Prayer's will.

JUDD

Oh Brother!. You really believe that tripe?

MANNY

Yes: And my one prayer now is that you will be saved. All sin can be forgiven. And all you need do is to ask forgiveness for both sins you committed.

JUDD

What sin! I did not betray you.

MANNY

Judas!

JUDD

Jesus!

MANNY

Judas, you mean the thirty pieces of silver bit was incorrect?

JUDD

They lied.

MANNY

Who lied?

JUDD

The Gang of Four: Mark, Matthew, John , and that other Guy.

MANNY: LUKE, MY FAVORITE PHYSICIAN. EVEN MY FATHER AND I HAVE LEARNED FROM HIM.

JUDD

Hope he has more character than the other three. I knew them.

MANNY

What!

JUDD

Matthew! That crooked tax collector!

MANNY

But All that was forgiven.

JUDD

And then John: The one who loved you so much. (Doing an effeminate takeoff) The one you loved, he said. Got me sick to my stomach.

MANNY

Judas!

JUDD

And how about the spineless blabbermouth? Even he stabbed me in the back.

MANNY

You mean Peter.

JUDD

Who else? You made him the head of your church.

MANNY

Yes I did...

JUDD

(Laughing)

Even after that buffoon made all those mistakes. Big mouth, no brains, and the spine of an amoebae.

JUDD

That's right. But the one who gets me the most is that son of a bitch. That mean, sadistic son of a bitch.

MANNY

You obviously mean Saul of Tarsus. Or Paul as he is now called.

JUDD

((Angry to the point of
tears)

After all he did to us. Torture, beatings, floggings, and he called for your hanging. And for centuries all of I've heard is ST. PAUL. What Justice!

MANNY

It was in the providential plan that eventually he would see the light and spread the message. And he did.

JUDD

He was an sob before the conversion, and remained one after the conversion. And you glorified him for all ages!

MANNY

Judas. You have nothing but contempt for our brotherhood but I love you still. Remember, Judas you and I have much in common.. We both died bloody deaths.

JUDD

No, you're only half-right. Only you died a bloody death. I did not. All four of them lied. I did not hang myself as they said.

MANNY

They did not lie. What is in Scripture is truth. Most of the Brotherhood also had bloody deaths, but later.

JUDD

An irrelevancy.

MANNY

Judas! Judas! As I stood crucified on the Cross, with my Mother at the foot of the Cross, I could hear the people murmuring that Ischariot had tragically taken his life after betraying me. They also were saying that he threw the thirty pieces of silver in my persecutors faces.

JUDD

A lie!

MANNY

I wept because of my mother who stood at the foot of the Cross, for the people of Jerusalem, and for you< Judas because your suicide was so senseless. Yet you acted out of fear and shame.

JUDD

I unequivocally deny it.

MANNY

Could they all be wrong. People kept murmuring that the traitor had committed suicide. I wept and wept for you.

Manny (cont'd)

JUDD

I could care less. Anyhow, we had the supposed First coming. And I have always heard of the Second Coming. Is this it! A Rather "Un grand" return.

Or better yet, is this the first and a quarter coming.

MANNY

No, this is one of the innumerable trips I have taken back to my people. A passing we'll call it. And this is a very important one. To bring you back.

JUDD

How I would like to believe, EManuel. Actually you had me fooled for a while. And I always kept up the pretenses, even when I had my doubts.

MANNY

Oh!

JUDD

When you walked on water, which I witnessed, I was impressed. You did do it. I saw with my own eyes. And I was impressed with all those cures, regardless of how you did it. And then when Lazars rose for

As I suffered on the Cross, thirsty, in pain, humiliated, and depressed

MANNY

You could not come where I go, but now you can.

JUDD

Was all that stuff true. All those parable, etc. And your Father in Heaven.

MANNY

Yes. Judd. Yes. Judd! Will you ever believe!

JUDD

Well I have to admit, I really was awed when you did that walk on water thing. And when you cured all those folks,,the centurions son, the deaf and mute, the leper and all that, I was impressed.

MANNY

Then why did you cease to believe?

JUDD

That comes later. Any miracles, tricks, lofty thoughts, and moralizing this time?

MANNY

Why. You saw firsthand wonders and miracles the last time, and did not believe.

JUDD

If God made the world who made God; you want to know answers to questions that as a human you are incapable of grasping.

MANNY

Remember that wonderful Jewish adage: your arms are too short to box with God.

JUDD

That Whore Mary Magdalen

dammed whore.

MANNY

Judas Ischariot!

JUDD

You treated the Scribes and Pharisees with contempt

MANNY

A reason

JUDD

That crazy Martha, washing peoples feet with perfume. You know I've always been a liberal.

MANNY

I am not an Icon. I am right now a living breathing human being with my two natures:

JUDD

Sorry, I only feel one of them.

MANNY

You know I am also descended from murderers, I've counted a bunch of em.

-

JUDD

You treated the Scribes and Pharisees with contempt

MANNY

I know that. And you know why.

MARTHA

(entering)

Now, now. You two. What is all this serious talk about. I could almost hear the shouts in the downstairs bar. Judd, I've never seen you look so serious. And Manny ..let's cheer up. Judd, Maggie just called for you. Little Judd fell off the swing.

JUDD

(picking up to go)

Just a friendly chat. Quite a guy here. We'll continue at another time, Manny.

(exits)

MANNY

Right! And I owe you a beer. Judd.

MARTHA

Are you having any lunch today.

(Draws closer)

MARTHA'

Sees Martha. Rejects her overtures.

Marha begins cleaning the tables.

Manny gets ready to leave.

MARTHA

You've been here a couple of days now. I hope Providence is to your liking.

MANNY

I love it. Iowa's every bit as beautiful as I was told it was.

MARTHA
So you like it huh. You ought to be here in winter.

MANNY
Maybe I'll be here.

MARTHA
(getting closer to him)
So you might stay, huh?

MANNY
Who knows, I have a lot of options.

MARTHA
(She gets closer.)
Like?

MANNY
Who knows? I take one day at a time.

MARTHA
Boy, you are good at giving evasive answers. How about having a sandwich with me? On the house.

MANNY
Sounds good to me. What do you have to offer?

MARTHA
How about Marha's Delight Sub. I've been told they're the best in the county.

MANNY
Sounds good to me. What's in em.

MARTHA
Good Iowa pork with a whole bunch of other stuff.
(shouting down the stairs)
Lydia, two delights, and a pitcher of beer.

MANNY
You need not.

MARTHA
I insist. You know you've only been here a few days but the whole town is talking.

MANNY
Not much to talk about.

MARTHA
Well you gotta admit, you arrived in a strange way.

MANNY

Yeah, I'm confused too.
(He gets closer to her)

MARTHA

(getting closer to him and
grabbing his hand)
So you won't tell me where you're from.

MANNY

I don't know!

MARTHA

(laughing)
All right. All right. I won't ask again. But are you
staying.

MANNY

For a while, anyhow.
(hears music from downstairs)
Wanna dance?

MARTHA

Love to.

They begin dancing to "The Tennessee
Waltze"

They dance around the room several
times. And then the recording is
changed to "In the Mood" , they do
swing.

MARTHA (CONT'D)

You're the best man I've danced with.

MANNY

You do pretty well yourself, ma'm.

They continue dancing when a polka is
played.

Lydia enters room.

LYDIA

Two Martha's delights and a pitcher of draft beer, just like
your ordered, Martha.

MARTHA

Thank you, Lydia.
(kidding)
Now get lost!

MANNY
You can stay. Why not join us?

LYDIA
No thank you, I've got to get back to work.

MARTHA
Wanna dance a while longer?

MANNY
I'm hungry. Let's eat first .

MARTHA
(giggling)
OK. What were you and Judd arguing about. We could almost hear you downstairs. People have remarked that you two seem to know one another from somewhere.

MANNY
(smiling)
How's that?

MARTHA
Just a feeling you get. I don't know why.

MANNY
Ah! Don't be foolish. I just got here.

MARTHA
That's right. But from where?

MANNY
I told you, my mind goes blank often. I can not recall, May I have some water?

MARTHA
(shouting out)
Lydia, bring two glasses of water.

LYDIA
(Shouting out)
Coming!

MANNY
I'd better be going soon. The Judge said there's a job I might be able to do.

MARTHA
Hey! Sounds great! Can you do one more dance with me before you go.

MANNY
OK. Just one more. I've gotta go.

Martha goes to juke box and puts on
"Somewhere over the Rainbow." They
begin foxtrotting.

MARTHA

Tell me Manny. Is that the name you are called.

MANNY

Dave will do too.

MARTHA

Have you always been homeless?

MANNY

Why do you ask?

MARTHA

Providence might be a good place to settle in, Mannie.
(She pulls him closer)

MANNY

Might be.

A shout from the outside: "Come on
Dave."

MARTHA

Maybe we'll see you later.

MANNY

Yeah, that would be nice.

He runs out. Martha begins cleaning.
The music comes on, and a recording
comes on: I'd like to Rinse That Man
Right out of My Head (From the musical
"South Pacific")

Jim enters the room.

JIM

Hello Martha.

MARTHA

Hello, Jim. What are you doing here.

JIM

Just wanted to know, Martha, what do you know about this man?

MARTHA

Almost as much as you do. (laughing) He doesn't overcharge
you with information when you ask him a question. Why should
I know anything, Jim.

JIM

Because he spends a lot of time here. And where does he get his spending money. He's supposedly a homeless man.

MARTHA

We all like him..and buy his refreshments for him. Look I'm not a informer.

JIM

That's besides the point. It's your civic duty. Besides you think of this man as some nice person, and the gals all like him. but you don't know who he really is. He could even be a murderer.

MARTHA

He's as much a murderer as you are a wife beater or something. (She laughs.)

JIM

This isn't funny.

MARTHA

Jimmy!

JIM

Why do you call me that.

MARTHA

(giggling)

Seems as though you're taking yourself too seriously these days. A rookie cop, that's what you are. Up to a few months ago, you were in here with us all the time. Now you're different. You're taking this stuff too seriously.

JIM

Look Martha, I still do. But I get paid to protect the people of Providence. Now this man is homeless, and he seems like a nice enough guy. But we know nothing else about him. And a lot of these homeless people are murderers. There have been some horror stories.

MARTHA

All right! All right!

JIM

Now make me a promise. If you hear something you'll pass it on to me.

MARTHA

I might.

(Thinking)

And then, I might not. If you really want to know something, you might check with Judd Ischer.

I have a hunch he dos know something. I heard them arguing a short while ago. In any case I think you're barking up the wrong tree.

JIM

Well let me tell you, Lady, therer have been a couple murderers in Iowa recently by these homeless poeple . I would hate for you to be one of them.

MARTHA

Well I can take care of myself.

JIM

Not if your throat is sliced. You know this man has a few missing marb-les, I'm told.

MARTHA

Well I can take care of myself. Thank you. (giggles)

JIM

Well don't say I didn't warn you.

MARTHA

Well, thank you anyhow.

JIM

And Martha, are you busy on Saturday night by any chance? The County Fair Fundraising dance is on.

MARTHA

Would love to, Jim, but that's a work night. Saturday is our busiest night.

JIM

Everyboady will be at the dance.

MARTHA

No not everybody. All the rejects, misfits, and wallflowers will be here. Even some churchgoers. I'll take a raincheck, Jimmy.

JIM

Thanks, Martha, now you watch out for yourself.

CUT TO:

TOWN SQUARE

Looming cloudsare seen in background.
An outdoror radio is heard:

RADI

...A tornado has struck 600 miles away and is on its way toward central Iowas.

Wilson, Lincoln and Shepherd Counties are in the path of the Hurricane. Many homes have been destroyed by this tornado, which is one of the worst in Iowa's history.

Wine and bakery workers are on strike and can be seen picketing in front of the Providence Winery and Bakery.

CALHOUN

(puffing a cigar)

This tornado looks like a bad one.

PASTO

It sure does. And we have been praying all week that it won't come our way, Judge.

CALHOUN

Well prayers can't hurt. And they might help. I see we have a problem with the Winery and Bakery workers.

PASTO

We certainly do. I have tried to mediate with both management and labor, to no avail. And that Bishop down the street tried to do the same thing.

CALHOUN

Oh Yeah, How are you guys getting along these days?

PASTO

That's another story. But no one seems to be able to bring a fix the situation.

CALHOUN

Well let's see what happens.

Manny comes down street .

PASTO

Hello young man.

CALHOUN

You seem much better. I understand you've made remarkable progress.

MANNY

Yes. Thank God.

CALHOUN

You like these parts I see.

MANNY

Very much so.

PASTO
Why not stay?

MANNY
I might.

PASTO
How long?

MANNY
Who knows. I plan one day at a time.

PASTO
You've made a remarkable recovery. Almost miraculous.

MANNY
We owe all we have to God.

Bishop Boeing comes up the street,
followed by several members of the
clergy, including a seminarian.

BISHO
Hello, Young man.

MANNY
Good evening, Bishop Boeing.

PASTO
Good evening, Bishop boeing

BISHO
Why heillo to you too, Pastor Moeller. We have not spoken in
sujch a long time.

PASTO
That's right. And we must chat again before long.

BISHO
We must.

(Turning to Manny)
And you, young man, have made a remarkable recovery.

MANNY
Thank you, Sir.

BISHO
And we were wondering if we might invite you to dinner
tomorrow evening. We wish to extend a welcoming to our
visitors.

MANNY
Well I'll be busy. Perhaps I can take a raincheck. In a week
or so.

PASTO

Well please feel free to come to a church service, we welcome all with open arms. No prerequisites of any kind are needed. And please come as our guest to the Church supper we will be having on Thursday.. As a first time guest there will be no charge of course.

MANNY

That is so kind of you also. I can not be there this Thursday, but will certainly plan on coming in the future.

BISHO

Well. Let us not be too presumptuous, my esteemed colleague, Reverend Moeller. Are you a Christian, Manny.

MANNY

(Thinking long and hard)

Very, very much so.

PASTO

Very nice. Can you recall attending a church service of any kind?

MANNY

Yes, many. but I must excuse myself.

BISHO

(to Moeller)

Puzzling, isn't it

PASTO

Yes, isn't it.

All of a sudden a tornado is heard in the background. The townspeople begin running for cover. The two clergymen begin running off too. Manny however remains firm.

BISHO

Please join us. You can stay at the rectory until this blows over.

MANN

I promised to meet someone at Martha's Tavern. Thank you again.

PASTO

You're new to these parts. And do not know the severity of these tornadoes

MANNY

I can handle it. Life is short.

(grins)

The tornado can be heard coming/All the others run away from the storm.
However, Jim comes chasing after Manny

JIM

Now look here you. Please get off the streets. You could be killed.

MANNY

Thank you officer. But I can handle it.

JIM

I command you to move off the streets.

MANNY

Sorry. But you can't. But I appreciate your concern.

JIM

Don't say I didn't warn you.

MANNY

Thank you again, Jim.

Kennedy scoots off. Manny is alone in the plaza, and the tornado is heard coming loudly.

The tornado comes closer, and Manny gets on his knees.

MANNY

(praying)

My Father in heaven.
Listen to my prayer. Let the storm be over. You know my mission and how important is Spare these your people, and they are a devout people of the kingdom from the ravages of this tornado.

(Fill in rest of prayer.)

Suddenly the tornado ends. Everyone comes out. Judd, Maggie, Calhoun, the Archbishop, Pastor Mueller, Martha, Mr. Kennedy.

CALHOUN

It passed us. Alleluia.

MARTHA

Praise be to God.

JUDD

I thought we were dead.

PASTO

We owe thanks to the Lord.

MAGGIE

I'm still trembling.

BISHO

We must have a joint service of gratitude.

PASTO

I had the same idea.

MARTHA

(to Manny)

I saw what you did.

MANNY

What was that?

MARTHA

You know what it was. You prayed. And saved us from the tornado. Admit it.

The others are all intent on the discussion and listening closely.

MANNY

We all prayed. I hope.

JUDD

(trying to change the subject)

Yes we all did. Now look let's celebrate How about a party.

CALHOUN

That would be nice. So nice. But we must all get back to work.

MANNY

I think that's a good idea.

JIM

Would everyone please be careful. There was mass Murder committed in River City three days ago.

MAGGIE

And what did he look like

JIM

Semms he was about 28, blue eyed. 6 ft.

They all stare at Manny. Suddenly a child darts out of building and in front of a car. Like lightening, Manny steps forward and saves him from what would have been instantaneous death. The child is crying. A WOMAN comes forwrd.

All look at Manny in amazement.

WOMAN

You saved my son.

MANNY

Obliged to do so ma'am

WOMAN

you're a homeless man, aren't you, Can I give you some money.

MANNY

No thank you. I wouldn't think of it.

WOMAN

How can I thank you enough?

MANNY

You already have. You might want to do someone else a favor.
How is the boy.

Manny carresses the boy . Everyone is crying. They all Manny too.

They all embrace him.

MARTHA

I've never seen another man do something like that.

JUDD

It was remarkable, isn't it.

CALHOUN

Here I will treat the whole town. Whatever you want. Ice cream for kids, something more appropriate for the older folks.

They all begin dancing. Manny goes into a corner. Then he goes away from the crowd on to a hill outside of town

A cat comes up to him.

MANNY

Hello, there buddy.

The cat comes up to him. He pets the cat

MANNY

You know, sometimes I thin my father saved the wrong species.

He begins to examine the flowers and
looks to the scenery in the background.
He

He then begins praying and says this:

MANNY (CONT'D)

(Raising his eyes to heaven
"Father, I need your help.
Let me Give glory to you, by
bringing back Judas, or Judd.
Just as you gave Me authority
over all people, so that I
may give him.all you gave him.
Now this is eternal life, that
he should know you, the only
true God,
"I revealed your name * to
those whom you gave me out of
the world. They belong to
you, and you gave them to me,
and they have kept your word.
Now they know that everything
you gave me is from you,
because the words you gave to
me I give to him
I pray for Him. I do not pray
for the world but for the ones
you have given me, because
they are yours,
and everything of mine is yours
and everything of yours is
mine, and I have been
glorified in them.
I am only here for a short
time, Father. world, but they
are in the world, while I am
coming to you. Holy Father,
keep them in your name that
you have given me, so that
they may be one just as we
are.
When I was with them I
protected them in your name
that you gave me, and I
guarded them, and none of them
was lost except the son of
destruction, in order that the
scripture might be fulfilled.
But now I am coming to you. I
speak this in the world so
that they may share my joy
completely.

I gave them your word, and the world hated them, because they do not belong to the world any more than I belong to the world.

* I do not ask that you take them out of the world but that you keep them from the evil one.

They do not belong to the world any more than I belong to the world.

Consecrate them in the truth.
Your word is truth.

As you sent me into the world, so I sent them into the world. And I consecrate myself for them, so that they also may be consecrated in truth.

"I pray not only for them, but also for those who will believe in me through their word,

And I have given them the glory you gave me, so that they may be one, as we are one, as one, that the world may know that you sent me, and that you loved them even as you loved me.

Father, they are your gift to me. I wish that where I am * they also may be with me, that they may see my glory that you gave me, because you loved me before the foundation of the world.

Righteous Father, the world also does not know you, but I know you, and they know that you sent me.

I made known to them your name and I will make it known, * that the love with which you loved me may be in them and I in them."

He puts his head down and weeps.

Martha comes from behind a bush.

MARTHA

Hello, Manny. I heard that. Most of it anyhow You're a strange one, Manny.

MANNY
What did you hear?

MARTHA
Your prayer. I heard some of it. Sounded kina familiar.

MANNY
I do that from time to time.

MARTHA
Who are you?

MANNY
Who do you say I am?

MARTHA
Your an evasive one arent you. Im not sure. you could be an
a homeless man, you could a criminal you could be the man I
think you are, and then you could be the unthinkeable.

MANNY
Oh?

MARTHA
Ther's a picnic comming up. Can you come?

MANNY
When is it?

MARTHA
Sunday.

MANNY
Certainly. If I'm available

MARTHA
And why would you not be.

MANNY
You never know what will be happening.

MARTHA
You'll be there then.

MANNY
I plan to. Can I bring anything.

MARTHA
Nothing. Just yourself.

MANNY
Martha.

MARTHA

Yes, Manny. You excite me when you call my name.

MANNY

Martha, what are they saying about me?

MARTHA

Everybody's confused. Some say your a killer, others that you're a harmless bum.

MANNY

And who do you say I am.

MARTHA

You just said it.

MANNY

You know?

MARTHA

uh-huh-. You are the Groom, I am the Bride

MANNY

(laughing)
You're sure

MARTHA

Not quite but .

SCENE 5

Manny is drinking a beer.

Judd enters bringing a mug with him.

MANNY

Welcome, Judd.

JUDD

(disgruntled)
Hello

MANNY

I knew you would be here. (Laughing)

JUDD

How! By your divine omniscience

MANNY

(Laughing even harder)
No. By my human intuition.

JUDD

You don't give up, do you?

MANNY

You might say that. (Sipping his beer) And may I ask you a question? What brings you here.

JUDD

Do you really want to know?

MANNY

Yes

.

JUDD

To ask you to but out, Mister.

MANNY

But I'm not until you relent.
I will in due time. But remember it wont last too long. You do have a free will, Judd.

JUDD

Which I've tried to exercise. Am I right in presuming there will be another and last one of these meetings?
Right. How did you guess?

JUDD

Human intuition. I don't have the other option. You know, you're treating me like an equal this time. You did not the last time.

MANNY

Nonsense, Why-oh-why, Judas, are you like this?

JUDD

You should know better than I. Do you know everting?

MANNY

Sometimes.

JUDD

Then answer this, Manny. You say that you came to avoid the crowds, that you came to avoid the media and not get any national attention. Yet your entrance, hanging on a cross on a sheep farm wasn't exactly meant to preserve your anonymity. It's a miracle that the local and national press hasn't gotten wind of this.

MANNY

Yes, it is a miracle. You want an answer I suppose. Well, suffice it to say that your ways are not Providence's way.

Last time came in a form that shocked everyone, and Providence chose to do the same this time. Your ways are not God's ways.

(stops to think for a moment)

I can come in any form I want. In a cloud, burning fire, wind, and then flesh and blood. I can come performing miracles, with the word from above, or I can come as I have now.

JUDD

Thanks for a non- answer, again. That hasn't changed over time. Even worse, those miracles..the saving of the child and the thwarting of the tornado exposed you to some people. They're all talking about it

MANNY

Not really. I just prayed like everyone else had the option to, and my prayer was answered.

JUDD

You still pray.

MANNY

Often, quite often. It's my greatest joy.

JUDD

You have me more confused than ever. You know I've come to believe you might be a first class phony, and imposter of the worst sorts.

MANNY

You have the right to that belief.

JUDD

And there are those who believe you're that murderer from DesMoines City. I have some suspicion too.

MANNY

You know better than that. You know I have always had enemies. The last time it was Herod and the Pharisees. But you are loved, Judd, and who can save you from the love of God. Judd, surrender your interpretation. Be hunble.

JUDD

Manny. Fuck off!

MANNY

Judd! Judd! Judd! BE STILL AND KNOW THAT I AM GOD.

JUDD

(tears streaming from his eyes)
I curse you! Just leave me alone.

MANNY

Judd, Some things are a mystery. Accept that. In accepting smallness we are liberated.

JUDD

(Heinously laughing)

Are you crazy? I think you are. What they sometimes say about me.

MANNY

No. And stop the nonsense.

JUDD

Tell me Manny. Is that your cousin up there.

MANNY

(surprised)

What!

JUDD

Is that your cousin? The guy who claims he's John the Baptist. Your cousin, right.

MANNY

Yes. John is my cousin. But no that poor disturbed man is not a reincarnation of John the Baptist. He is well meaning.

JUDD

Or just another crazy. Seems to be contagious. And in your case, I did not see a pigeon come by and: " This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased"

MANN

No you did not, and will not. I notice your beer is out. Want another.

JUDD

Don't mind if I do. Thanks. You know I don't like religion. It messes up my brain.

MANNY

You know you don't really believe. You want to be a believer.

JUDD

Yes. Oh man born to be King. Yes, I do. But it doesn't work.

MANNY

(Handing him the beer)

Just allow it to happen, Judd.

JUDD

I've tried.

MANNY

You remember the story of Elijah. And take it from there, Let me cite it to you. Directly from Kings: There he came to a cave, where he took shelter. But the word of the LORD came to him, "Why are you here, Elijah?" Then the LORD said, "Go outside and stand on the mountain before the LORD; the LORD will be passing by." A strong and heavy wind was rending the mountains and crushing rocks before the LORD--but the LORD was not in the wind. After the wind there was an earthquake--but the LORD was not in the earthquake. After the earthquake there was fire-- the LORD was not in the fire. After the fire there was a tiny whispering sound. When he heard this, Elijah hid his face in his cloak and went and stood at the entrance of the cave. A voice said to him, "Elijah, why are you here?"

JUDD

Meaning? I'm beginning to feel sick.

MANNY

Meaning, that the Creator is there if you follow your faith. And be silent and allow belief. And allow the realization of God's Plan. You too can be a part of the resurrection.

JUDD

You know, I think you're crazy. No! Worse! A combination of booze and craziness. You're a crazy drunk!

MANNY

Last time I came to save all of mankind. This time you.

JUDD

I feel so sick. You've gotten me sick to my stomach.

MANNY

I know you're sick. Very sick. In fact, you're going to die.

JUDD

No! No! No! How do you know this! Did you bring about some evil spell on me! Oh, God, help!

MANNY

No. There will be no help.

JUDD

(Screaming)

The pain. I have never felt such pain before.

MANNY

I know.

Murderer!
 JUDD

He falls to ground
 Do something, call Dr. Luke.

MANNY
 No. That's not necessary.

JUDD
 You evil son of a bitch. (Screaming from pain) What is
 happening to me.

MANNY
 (Smiling)
 You're going to die.

JUDD
 You poisoned me, you murderer!

MANNY
 Right. You know the beer I gave you.

JUDD

Can only nod his head because of the
 pain.

MANNY
 It was the same bottle you tried to give me at the picnic.

JUDD

Helpppp!!

MANNY
 Is this a prayer.

JUDD

Maybe.

He drops dead.

MANNY

Looks at Judd lovingly. Then puts his
 hand on him.
 Father, now is not the time. Let him be revived. Forgive
 him, Father, for he knows not what he does.

JUDD

Begins coming to. Then stands, and
looks straight at Manny.

I HATE YOU! I HATE YOU! I HATE YOU!

And he runs out of the room and down
the stairs.

ACT 2, SCENE2

Judd is alone and in his room at the
Mayor's home. He is distraught and
crying. There is a bottle of scotch
and an empty glass beside him

—

JUDD

How numerous, O my God, are your wondrous deeds!
I know that in your plans for us there is none to equal you.
Hear my cry,
Draw me out of the pit of destruction and out of my
depression.

Set my feet upon rock, steady my steps.
If I can only trust in you, My father.
LORD, I turn to you.

Lord, my Father, is he an imposter.

The last time I thought so
I may have been wrong.
Or is he real!
Answer my prayer. Oh, God!

LORD, do not withhold your compassion from me; may your
enduring strength ever preserve me.
For all about me is blackness; it so overcome me I cannot see.
My strength fails me.

LORD, graciously rescue me!
I am in pain.
Lord keeps me in mind.

You are my help and deliverer.

—

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(Second great meeting with Judas. Told No again. Great Dialogue Scene.. A kiss. Did not steal. Did not commit suicide. Not a thief. Did not want to waste assets..like having feet washed in expensive perfume. Shall we have a last supper.

Did not practice what you preached:
treated the scribes and Pharisees
rottenly

You know you are also descended from
murderers, I've counted a bunch of em.)

PRODIGAL SON

TEMPTATIONS

Most people in Providence think that I;'m crazy at best.

Notes:

Listening

Overheard much

(Officer Kinney and Calhoun burst into room: Are you a murderer. Then Officer Kenny and judge Come in and lead Manny off question him about being a murderer. Striking resemblance. Interrogated. And released but now suspicious. Is he the devil or is he phony. What is he?

(POLIC
Manny is questioned and released.

TOW
Clergy, judge and police meet and townspeople meet to express concerns.

The entire audience sings "Nearer, My
God To Thee"

Nearer, my God, to Thee, nearer to
Thee!

E'en though it be a cross that raiseth
me,

Still all my song shall be, nearer, my
God, to Thee.

Refrain

Nearer, my God, to Thee,

Nearer to Thee!

Though like the wanderer, the sun gone
down,

Darkness be over me, my rest a stone.

Yet in my dreams I'd be nearer, my God
to Thee.

Refrain

There let the way appear, steps unto
heav'n;

All that Thou sendest me, in mercy
given;

Angels to beckon me nearer, my God, to
Thee.

Refrain

Then, with my waking thoughts bright
with Thy praise,

Out of my stony griefs Bethel I'll
raise;

So by my woes to be nearer, my God, to
Thee.

Refrain

Or, if on joyful wing cleaving the sky,

Sun, moon, and stars forgot, upward
I'll fly,

Still all my song shall be, nearer, my
God, to Thee.

Refrain

There in my Father's home, safe and at
rest,

There in my Savior's love, perfectly
blest;

Age after age to be, nearer my God to
Thee.

Refrain

-

-

ACT 2, SCEN3

Third meeting with Judd. Manny says he Continued dialogue and confrontation between Manny and Judd must go and wants Judd to come with him, after he Judd prays to the Father for forgiveness. Manny says he wants to think it over. Manny says that he will have to do as the time for his departure is at hand and that both would be killed. Judd asks how. Manny responds that "Death can always be arranged", but that he would be killed in a painless way this time. Judd says he will think things over.

—

ACT 2, SCENE 5

The voice of John the Baptist is heard in the background coming from the Mountain: "Repent, Repent! Repent!"

Manny is walking down the street, but is shrugged off by several townspeople who see him. Manny sees Martha, Maggie, and Judd walking up the street.

—

ACT II, SCENE 6

TOW

Judas tells Police that Manny is insane, Really believes he's is Jesus of Nazareth. He (Judas) went along with it for a while, but then got tired of it. Manny had him convinced too. Must be sent out, or institutionalized or something. May be diabolic character.

TOW

On the fortieth day following his arrival, a mysterious note comes in that with a picture of a man resembling Manny. Wanted for being a mass murderer. Judge apprehends Manny. Manny breaks away. Judd Blames Manny. Tries to escape. Manny says he must go, his time has arrived. Does not succeed, is shot is killed by accident by Jim. Suddenly Martha comes in and announces that the mass murderer was apprehended in Des Moines. Manny is dying, and says to Officer Kenny seems truly sorrowful: I love you. Have no guilt. And to the Judge. Let it be. Let it be. Let it be. My time has been predestined. Maggie cries. Bishop indifferent. Moeller depressed. Judd looks off into distance.

The cast then carries an empty cross up the aisle.

Stage goes dark.

A voice is heard. The same as the one in the beginning saying: " Make straight the ways of the Lord. Repent! Repent! Repent!

And some women's voices are heard saying" When will they ever catch that nut.

THE TOWNSPEOPLE'S EPILOGUE

Thirty years later. Four Townspeople, Lydia, Elizabeth and Ann, walk on to bare center stage. All speak directly to the audience. Then the Stage manager comes on. (Who looks like Pastor Moeller only 30 years older)

ELIZABET

We thought we owed the audience a recap of all that happened after that dreadful tragic night nearly 30 years ago. Much happened that you should be told about. And perhaps what we say will clarify some of the mysteries. But in fact, some of us in Providence are still puzzled by the whole thing. You may wonder if there was a further local and perhaps state investigation about the murder. No, there was not, and the reason is quite simple. There was no body. Yes, the body was missing! Since there was no body, there could be no charge of wrongdoing or murder according to the laws of the state at that time.

What happened? After the tragedy, the body was brought to the morgue for an autopsy, and before the coroner arrived, the body suddenly disappeared. There was near panic in the morgue, but the whole matter was hushed up.

You remember that nice young Police Chief, Jim Kennedy. Well there was much pressure on him to pursue the investigation, but since he could not find the body, he said there was nothing he could do. Shortly thereafter, he was offered a job with the Iowa State Police, and professed rather rapidly. Somebody said he had acquired friends in high place, and there were all other types of rumors.

Anyhow, he eventually become head of the Iowa Sate Police and then moved into politics. Today, he is the Governor of the State and we are very proud of him and his humble beginnings in Providence!

There are many rumors on what happened to the body.

But the one most people believe is that he was never shot, and simply escaped into the forest. Another has him wounded and escaping, while there are still those who insist that there was some wrongdoing, with Kenney behind it all. And then of course, there is a fourth story, and that is the one I believe.

That explanation is that the Man who came to Providence, Iowa about two decades ago was Jesus of Nazareth. I remember what he said to me that night in Martha Tavern. Oh yes. I was pregnant with Billy and was unmarried, and Sam was not interested in getting married. I was desperate and 16 at the time. The Man looked at me and said in an authoritative voice (that I have never heard before and since): "BE STILL, AND TURN TO GOD. Have faith. I did and it all worked out in the end. Sam and I have been married for 30 years now and have four children.

But there is more too. He did things that many people in Providence know nothing about. For instance, Mrs. Scott's little boy was dying and she rushed him to Dr. Luke's office. Well the Manny was walking down the street, saw the boy, and took a look at him almost weeping. And you know what? The boy survived and today Johnny Scott is an outstanding citizen of Providence. I observed all this, which Manny was unaware of. There were a number of other occurrences, which happened, and I might tell you about if you come to my dressing room after the performance.

Above all, he was always so kind. He never looked down on you, and he always made you feel good about yourself. And you know, he went into all the Churches in the County, and seemed to be comfortable in all of them. Word was even out that he even went into the tiniest little Synagogue in our county, and knew each and everyone of the prayers. He also knew exactly what to do, to the shock of the entire congregation. He rekindled my faith and today all members of our family are Believers attend Asbury Methodist Church in Providence regularly.

I shall never forget him.

LYDIA

Hi. My name is Lydia, and I have lived in Providence all of my 60 years as has my family since the Pioneers first came here in 1840. Today I am President of the Women's Club of Providence, and my Husband is Chairman of City Council and president of the Providence Wine and Cheese Company, where that young man worked.

I believe he was here about 5 or 6 weeks, or about 40 days and was in my husband's employ for some of that time. But first, let me fill you in on some details that you may find interesting.

First, you remember that nice Judd Ischer. He came here out of nowhere, and although a stranger, we certainly came to love him here. He was such a good employee at the Providence Asylum (I'm on the Board of Governors). And an excellent father to his two boys and husband to Maggie (although I understand they sometimes had their differences.) Well shortly after the tragedy, and the foul-up of the corpse, Mr. Ischer became somewhat melancholy for some inexplicable reason. We were aware that he had some bouts of depression in the past, which is how he ended at the Asylum, first as a patient and then as an outstanding employee. Well eventually he became quite depressed, and was on severe medication. However, one morning, to the shock of everyone in Providence, he hung himself in his room.

Poor Maggie and the boys (although some people in Providence still believe that the martial difficulties contributed to his suicide). Whatever, I have always like Maggie. But the story does not end there. Maggie had even another cross to bear. She and Judd had a son, Julian, the handsomest youth in the state of Iowa, and an All-American Athlete in High School. He was also really smart, and went directly to work for the Providence National Bank when he graduated from High School. Well he was such a good employee that within nine months he was named a vice president, and become president of the bank within 2 years at age 20, and married the Chairman's daughter a year after that. The bank expanded to become the fourth largest bank in Iowa under his genius. About 5 years later, the Auditors determined that nearly six million dollars was missing from the bank. After a lengthy investigation, it was concluded that the finger pointed to Julian Ischer as the thief. The town was shocked. Well before the Federal authorities could apprehend him, he skipped town. And no one has heard from him since.

The story about the Bishop! Shortly after the tragedy, Bishop Boeing left the Church, and married what some people said was the biggest bimbo in the state of Iowa. She was gorgeous blond hair, short skirts and that entire bit. They now have three children, and he owns the third largest brewery in the state. But according to most sources, he has been quite miserable in the marriage since the day the honeymoon ended.

Judge Calhoun died.

And then there is Pastor Moeller. You saw that stage manager a short while ago who strongly resembled Pastor Moeller. Well that was pastor Moeller. He's now a stage manager for a theatre in Des Moines, and only recently began his pastoral role again. You see, after that event of 20 years ago, Mr. Moeller began having grave doubts about his faith and commitment to Christianity. And before very long, he completely, lost his faith, and left the Church.

Eventually he left his family, and became a homeless person, an alcoholic and a drug addict. He hit a low about 5 years ago. But something happened. Through prayer, support groups, and who knows what else: he was cured and now does part time ministering to impoverished families, and the smile has largely returned to his face. Even some talk of going back into the ministry and returning to Providence.

What do I think? I've been mulling over this question now for twenty years. While I believe there were some extraordinary events that occurred here I have not changed one bit. I still attend service perfunctorily at Providence Episcopal. And that young man certainly lived in this town. But other than that I'm just confused.

ANN

Well, my opinion differs from everyone else here. I believe Christianity is a wonderful institution. Anything that keeps people occupied and engenders love can not be a bad thing. But I assure you that what they say about this mysterious stranger twenty years has been garnished and I will explain why.

I was 20 at the time and saw him often in fact. But that is all he was, a homeless stranger. This was of course before I left for the University, where I made Phi Beta Kappa and have gone on to an advertising career in New York. I happen to be back in Providence for a visit with Mother, my sister Jane and her family.

I vaguely recall what he looked like, quite handsome and in his early to mid - thirties. Very affable, although a little tense sometime. Sexy is what I would call him. He really turned me on. And I've heard murmuring of miracles and all the type of thing, but these were imagined more than real. Providence is a small town in the middle of Iowa, and these people are willing to garnish any happening to bring in some excitement to their lives. The belief is therefore therapeutic, and can do no harm. And these are my lifelong friends, cousins, and fellow townspeople. And I do like them, but they are small townspeople.

My life in New York is one of excitement and each day is a challenge. But I have also known my own grief. Two marriages gone badly, several relationships gone sour, some drug and alcohol addiction and a few other stony turns. . But I have reached the zenith of my career on both Madison Avenue and Wall Street, and by the end of the year my yearly income will be well into the seven figures. Sometimes I envy them in their belief. But I don't believe I can fall back on what is essentially a well thought out superstition at this stage in my life and given my experiences.

There is so much more I could tell you, but I must rush to the Des Moines Airport. My plane for New York leaves in two hours and I have a number of deadlines to meet before I go back to work tomorrow. And tomorrow night I will be dining with the Duke of Blandford.

MR. MOELLER (THE STAGE MANAGER)

Are you confused on what really happened? We all are. You've heard many opinions on what really happened. Many of the people around then have since died. But of those remaining. Most believe that the man who came was really Jesus of Nazareth. Or some angel thereof. But it's all irrelevant. I know that I now believe, and that is all that counts. But each day I recite a prayer:

Dear God
 "You have helped my Belief
 Now help my Unbelief."

You have a blessed evening.

La Commedia e finita. —

—
 MR

(Calling the audience back)

Oh and one question I have to ask you, which you may not be able to answer now. But mull it over in your minds.

DID JESUS COME TO IOWA?

What do you think?

LIGHTS DIM:

The audience, with the whole cast participating and lead by Pastor Moeller sing "Amazing Grace."

Amazing grace! How sweet the sound

That saved a wretch like me!

I once was lost, but now am found;

Was blind, but now I see.

'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear,
And grace my fears relieved;
The hour I first believed.
Through many danger
How precious did that grace appear, toils and snares,
I have already come;
'Tis grace hath brought me safe thus far,
And grace will lead me home.
The Lord has promised good to me,

His Word my hope secures;
He will my shield and portion be,
As long as life endures.
Yea, when this flesh and heart shall fail,
And mortal life shall cease,
I shall possess, within the veil,
A life of joy and peace.
The world shall soon dissolve like snow,
The sun refuse to shine;
But God, who called me here below,
Shall be forever mine.
When we've been there ten thousand years,
Bright shining as the sun,
We've no less days to sing God's praise
Than when we'd first begun.
