

THE GREAT CROSS CONSPIRACY
By Anthony S. Cicatko

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AUDITION 1 -- for 1m, 1w, 1 flex

In this scene, Tom and Carol continue to look for facts.

CAROL: I'm still not convinced.

TOM: Come on, Carol, what's it goanna take? You saw his birthplace. What more do you need? Case closed!

CAROL: Well, I think he was lying! Did you notice how he avoided all the direct questions?

TOM: Oh, great. What happened to your objectivity?

CAROL: It is exactly that which makes me question. If you had any real objectivity at all, you would stick around here and do some real investigating. Then maybe you'd get to bottom of this.

TOM: Look, the only reason I'm in a hurry to get out of here is to talk to Jesus Himself. Remember there's another feast going on soon? If we hurry, we can get there before it starts. This is the big one - the Passover - and there is no way Jesus would miss it. Jerusalem is three-day walk. That's why I don't want to stay around here.

CAROL: Well, then we still have a few minutes to ask a few more questions. Besides, Jes—

VENDOR: *(Interrupting.)* JESUS-OF-NAZARETH TURBANS, VESTURES, AND HUMPER STICKER FOR YOUR CAMELS! *(To Carol.)* You look like you could use a nice Jesus-of-Nazareth vial guaranteed to hide your beauty from the jealous multitudes and the envious sun.

TOM: I don't think the lady is interested in—

CAROL: *(Interrupting.)* The lady can speak for herself, thank you! *(To VENDOR.)* How much?

TOM: Look, we have a lot of work to do.

CAROL: Yes we do, and I, for one, intend to do it! Do you know anything about Jesus?

VENDOR: Are you kidding? Is there sand in the desert? Of course I know Jesus. He was my neighbor for most of his life!

TOM: Then you lived over there where he was born, right?

VENDOR: Where he was born? Is that what Febion, son of Afib, is saying? What a lie. I tell you there is no end to what some people would do for a shekel. Well, take it from me, Jesus was not born there.

TOM: Then why is he called Jesus of Nazareth?

VENDOR: Well, he lived here for most of his life. But he certainly was not born here.

TOM: Then where was he born?

VENDOR: Well, some say he came from Egypt, but that is only where he came from.

TOM: You're losing me. Are you saying he was born in Egypt?

VENDOR: Not at all, but I do know where he was born.

TOM: Where?

VENDOR: *(Seemingly off the subject.)* Gosh, sales have been down a little since the "code silent" move from the paper, you know. I have not been eating so well. I think that lack of nourishment has affected my memory.

CAROL: I could purchase a veil, please? *(SHE places a few shekels in HIS hand. He hands her a "Jesus Rocks" veil.)*

VENDOR: Ah, now I remember!

TOM: *(Sarcastically.)* I'll bet.

VENDOR: Bethlehem. That's right, he was born in Bethlehem of Judah, the city of David. Yessir, he was born in the house of bread.

TOM: How do you know?

VENDOR: Like I said, I lived beside him most of his life.

TOM: But you mentioned Egypt?

VENDOR: You know, I seem to recall saying something to that effect? *(Puts out hand and waits.)*

TOM: *(Taking the hint.)* Hey, do you have any quill pens?

VENDOR: What do know, I just happen to have a great one right here. *(Hands HIM a quill pen in exchange for a few shekels.)* Ah, yes, Egypt.

VENDOR: *(Cont'd.)* Well, it seems that Herod – the older one, not this Herod but his dad – wanted him dead for some reason. But just before the king's henchmen arrived in Bethlehem Judah, Jesus and his family escaped to Egypt.

CAROL: *(In amazement, to Tom.)* Remember, when He was born Herod wanted Him dead! You mean this is the same Messiah that the Wise Men came to see almost thirty years ago?

VENDOR: You see, Joseph and Mary, His dad and mother, said that they were warned in a dream that they had to go. So, in the dream they were told to take Jesus and flee to Egypt. They were there until the death of Herod. That is when they moved here.

TOM: *(Doubtful.)* Why should we believe you?

VENDOR: Frankly, sonny, I don't care if you believe me or not.

TOM: Come on, this could mean big business for you.

VENDOR: Listen, pal, business was good before you ever came along. Even before the "code silent" from the paper. You know why?

TOM: Why?

VENDOR: Because people have to believe in something. And Jesus seems to offer hope. That's what will keep the people coming.

TOM: But he is your messiah, right?

VENDOR: Well, he's a good kid and all, but messiah? I don't know. For me it's a little hard to imagine that messiah was my neighbor, if you know what I mean.

CAROL: Didn't he heal people here?

VENDOR: Well, yes, he healed a few sick folks, but I hear he has done far greater things in other places.

TOM: Wait a minute, then you doubt that Jesus is Messiah?

VENDOR: Now, I did not say that either. Ya know, actually, I really don't know what to think. As I said, he was a good kid, never had any trouble out of him. Well, except for that riot after his first message.

(TOM and CAROL look shocked.)

TOM: What are you talking about?

VENDOR: Well, He preached his first message here. The people wanted to kill him. You see, I was there and I remember it like it was yesterday. Yes, I remember exactly the words He said. They resonate in my mind...just kind of hanging there at the tip of my tongue... *(Another pull for money.)* Are you sure you can't use a humper sticker for your camel?

CAROL: Sure, I'll take one. *(Hands HIM money.)*

VENDOR: That day He did not seem the same. He had lost a lot of weight. Some said that He had just come out of a forty-day fast in the desert. And man, He looked like it too. But, like always, He was a regular in service. Every time the doors opened He was there. But that day was different. Somehow His words seemed to resonate. They seemed deep, as if coming from pool of calm but absolute authority. He read from the Holy Scriptures. He said, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He hath anointed Me to preach the Gospel to the poor. He hath sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord." When He was finished, no one made a sound for a long time. We all just sat there and stared at Him. It was as if the word itself had just spoken. Then finally, after a long uncomfortable silence, He said, "This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears." Then He went overboard.

CAROL: In what way?

AUDITION 2 -- for 1m, 1w

In this scene, Tom returns to the present day, changed.

CAROL: *(Tugging TOM'S arm.)* It's time to go... come on, Thomas, you sluggard. Let's go...

TOM: *(Mumbling while coming out of a deep sleep.)* Failed... I failed...

CAROL: It's time to go, Tom. We were waiting for a half hour at the library. Your dad just let us in. We need to go.

TOM: What are you talking about?

CAROL: The library. We were to start the report. The article on Jesus, remember?

TOM: The article? That's right! The article. Oh my, the article. It's not too late. It can still be written! I can never be too late. Because He is alive, right? I mean, Jesus did rise from the dead, right? He came back to life, just like he said he would.

CAROL: Of course he did. Are you all right?

TOM: Oh man, am I. I have never been better. Jesus is alive. Jesus is the Messiah. Jesus was real! He was real, Carol.

CAROL: But don't you need facts?

TOM: Oh, yeah, right, facts! That's it. I remember now, but we have all the facts we need already.

CAROL: Are you okay? What are you rambling on about?

TOM: My dream! It was all in my dream. It was fantastic! Don't you see? Jesus was— no scratch that— Jesus IS God's Messiah and the facts are everywhere!

CAROL: *(Confused.)* Dream, facts... Tom, what in the world are you talking about?

TOM: You want facts? Okay, how about these? *(Turning to his friends in the room.)* What about us? *(THEY look at each other in confusion.)* We all believe in Jesus, right? Why? Because believing in Him changes us. Believing in Him gives us joy. Believing in Him gives us purpose, life, hope...just straight-up happiness. When you believe in Jesus it makes no difference what the world does. Your life is amazing because of Him.

TOM: *(Cont'd.)* Some people think he died 2000 years ago, but ask anyone of us and we will all say he is alive today in our hearts and lives. Right? *(THEY all agree.)* But that is not all. It is not just us. Think of the millions, maybe even billions of people that have been changed by mere faith in Jesus! Millions of drug addicts that are no longer ruining their lives with that poison. The alcoholics that no longer hurt their family or waste all their money. And what about the healings? We have all seen how Jesus still heals in our church. Think about it. This one human was born in a place thousands of miles away, spoke a language none of us can speak, and lived in a culture none of us can identify with. Yet, we find a man who can solve all human issues and cause all who believe in Him to totally be transformed... so much so that it can only be described one way: To be born again! You see, Carol, in the dream I was to trying to write an article about Jesus. I was supposed to prove Him to be a fake. Even though I never actually met Him, I kept running into people who did. And everyone was changed by Him. I became convinced that Jesus was the actual Messiah, but the high priest was gonna kill him. I was convinced that I was supposed to save him by writing the morning edition of the paper... Wait a minute! It's not too late! *(An epiphany.)* I can still save him. Yes, Carol, in the minds of people I can prove Jesus is real. I will write the article, and people will see Jesus is for real! This will be the best paper ever. *(To audience.)* Come on, everyone, we have work to do! We need to tell everyone Jesus is alive and ready to change their lives! Let's get started!

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