

The †-Files: Jesus is God; Read the Bible

Lights up on three men, two white, one black, simulating driving. There are two church pews set up lengthwise on the stage, one directly behind the other, facing downstage. One of the whites and the black, ANDY and JIMMY, sit in the front pew, MIKE is lying on the rear one. Andy is driving, Jimmy is smoking.

MIKE
Stop swerving!

JIMMY
There hasn't been a turn in this road in 40 miles, Mikey.

MIKE
Then why is Andy all over the road?

ANDY
I can't drive any straighter, Mike.

MIKE
I think I'm gonna be sick.

JIMMY
That Thumper got him right in the gut.

ANDY
I saw a sign for a service station about a mile back. I'll pull in and we can get you something for your stomach.

MIKE
You're a good man.

ANDY
That's what my mama told me. (to Jimmy) How far till we're back on the main road?

JIMMY

(looking at map)

About another 15 miles. (finished with his cig, he lights up another) This shortcut's gonna save us six hours.

ANDY

You're gonna be a chain-smoker by the time we're done with this trip.

JIMMY

Small sacrifice.

Just then, red and blue lights appear from behind the pews. We hear a siren.

JIMMY

Aw shit. This is the last place we wanna get stopped.

ANDY

(pulling over)

Play it cool, we're not breaking any laws.

JIMMY

Having this map is against the law.

ANDY

Well, no law that this Bubba knows about. You think one of these hicks could tell from a 2,000 year old map? Besides, the world will thank us for it.

JIMMY

You got funny ideas about how the world works, Andy.

Mike simulates pulling over. A TROOPER has appeared from behind the group, dressed in full- small-town sheriff regalia except for a pontiff's hat. Walks up to Andy's side and shines a flashlight inside car.

TROOPER

Where you boys headed?

ANDY

Vatican city. We're going to the new council.

TROOPER

You're heading to the council? You boys look a little young to be guests of the Pope.

ANDY

Overachievers, I guess.

TROOPER

Mm-hm. Come to think of it, y'all don't look too Catholic neither.

MIKE

What's a Catholic supposed to look like?

TROOPER

What'd he say?

ANDY

Nothing. Our friend's sick. Delirious. It's an ecumenical council. We're Jews for Jesus.

JIMMY

I'm a Baptist.

TROOPER

Why don't I take a look at your map, I can point you in the right direction.

JIMMY

We're not lost, officer. We know exactly where we're headed.

TROOPER

Oh I don't think you do. I'll be a might more comfortable just pointing you the way outta town.

JIMMY
What were we stopped for, Officer?

TROOPER
Pass over the map, boy.

Andy reaches for map, but Jimmy holds on. Andy tugs and a small part of the map rips off and falls to the floor as he gives it to Trooper.

TROOPER
This don't look like any map I ever saw. Why don't you boys step out of the car.

JIMMY
What are we being accused of, Officer?

TROOPER
You're not accused of anything yet, son, as long as you cooperate. C'mon.

As boys get out of the car, the Trooper signals back to his car. TROOPER 2 comes up swinging a baton. Lights fade.

Lights up on a cluttered desk downstage left. A door facing upstage right is situated up center from the desk. We can read the backward lettering that says "Fax Meddler: CBI." FAX MEDDLER is seated at the desk, reclining in an office chair with his feet on the desk. He is overworked, exasperated, and disheveled. He is tossing a baseball into a glove mindlessly. A phone on the desk rings.

Fax Meddler's VOICE 1 rings out.

VOICE 1: It all started with a phone call. I wish to God I hadn't taken that call.

Meddler picks up phone.

MEDDLER: Meddler.

VOICE 2 (muffled and raspy): He's alive.

MEDDLER: What?

VOICE 2: He's alive.

MEDDLER: Who's alive?

VOICE 2: The truth is out there.

MEDDLER: What?

Dial tone. Meddler hangs up slowly, pensively. All of a sudden, he hears something from outside the door of his office. He gets up and sets out the door to catch the culprit. When he gets back, there is a manila envelope on his desk. He rips open the envelope and takes out a folder that reads "The Chalcedon Dossier." He goes back to his desk and starts to flip through it.

FAX'S VOICE: The Council of Chalcedon, 451, Turkey. High-level talks between the clergy and the government to determine Jesus' real identity. Major Players: Marcian, king of Byzantine empire; also known as Marcianus. Pope Leo I; sometimes known as Leo the Great; sometimes known as the Tuscan Bull. Council disputed the notion that Jesus had only one identity. Council determined that Jesus was in fact two beings in one body, one human and one divine.

Meddler puts down the dossier and looks off into space.

MEDDLER: Two beings.

All of a sudden a knock on the door. Meddler runs to the door in the hope of catching the intruder. It's Donna Scaly. Meddler looks past Scaly and back forth down the hall.

SCALY

Hey, Meddler. What's your problem?

MEDDLER

Did you see anyone out there?

SCALY

Are you kidding? It's 3:30 in the morning. You're the only one crazy enough to be in the office this late.

MEDDLER

Then what are you doing here?

SCALY

Cute. I finished examining those corpses you left on my desk. Their bodies were covered with crosses, just like we figured.

MEDDLER

We figured?

SCALY

Anyway, I'm gonna go home and get some shuteye.

MEDDLER

Take a look at this, Scaly.

Scaly looks, raises an eyebrow, purses lips.

SCALY

Hm. The Council of Chalcedon? What's it mean?

MEDDLER

I don't know. Someone left it on my desk a few minutes ago.

SCALY

Someone? Meddler, this is a government building. People don't just walk in whenever they please.

MEDDLER

And yet, here we are. Go home. Thanks for your work on those stiff.

SCALY

(leaving)

Please don't call them that.

MEDDLER

I forgot you developed relationships with your “clients.”

Meddler sits back down and starts to go over dossier as lights fade black.

FAX' VOICE

I had no idea then the impossible swirl of events that had been initiated that night. I just thought someone was playing a joke. Some joke.

By the way, my name is Meddler, Fax Meddler. I work for a special sub unit of an investigative adjunct of the Church that investigates transnormal and paranormal phenomena. For as long as I can remember my division has been called the X-Files, though I never had any idea why. A lotta people say you gotta be a person like me to dedicate your life to work like this. I guess that's true. I was never really sure what that was supposed to mean either.

Anyway, we should probably start this whole thing off at the beginning, when events still retained a degree of normalcy.

Meddler and Scaly are at a black tie party, with many people milling about. Meddler is pulling on his bowtie.

SCALY

Stop tugging on it.

MEDDLER

I can't help it. I hate these things. I feel like I'm being throttled.

SCALY

Just bear it for a few more hours.

Agent SCANNER, who was talking to guests with his back to the stage, brings a man dressed in red to Meddler and Scaly. The man is smoking.

SCANNER

Scaly, Meddler, you have to meet the Cardinal. Cardinal, these are our two best field agents, Donna Scaly and Fax Meddler.

CARDINAL

Pleased to meet you. I've heard so much about your work.

MEDDLER

(pointing at cig)

Those things'll kill you, you know.

CARDINAL

(pointing up)

Fortunately, not until our savior wills it.

SCANNER

The Cardinal's just got back from doing the Lord's work in west Asia.

MEDDLER

West Asia? You ever make it over to Turkey, Cardinal?

CARDINAL

Ankara, Konya, the usual haunts.

MEDDLER

You ever make it over to Chalcedon?

CARDINAL

(chuckling)

Chalcedon? I'm afraid you're about 800 years too late. They changed the name of that city to—

MEDDLER

To Kadikoy, I know. Did you go there?

CARDINAL

Why would you be asking about Chalcedon? It's just a sleepy little fishing village, now. No, church intrigue to be found there.

SCANNER

I'm sorry, Cardinal, maybe you two could take this up later? There's so many people I want you to meet.

Scanner and Cardinal start to leave.

SCANNER

(to Scaly)

Does he have an off button?

She smiles.

MEDDLER

What'd he say?

SCALY

He said you're his second-best field agent. I don't think he likes you bringing work to his party, Meddler.

MEDDLER

Then why'd he invite me?

SCALY

I'm gonna mingle. Try not to spook anyone out.

Meddler nods and Scaly wanders off. A fetching young woman, NICAEA, wearing the same dress as Scaly meanders by and makes eye contact with Meddler.

MEDDLER

Boo.

NICAEA

Excuse me?

MEDDLER

Nothing. I'm Fax Meddler, Transnormal Phenomena.

NICAEA

Oooh. Do you talk that sweet to all the girls?

MEDDLER

You don't seem like the typical cathedral wonk. You in the media?

NICAEA

You could say that. I'm Nicaea.

MEDDLER

(tugging on tie)

Nicaea. That's an unusual name. Wasn't that the name of-

NICAEA

You alright there?

MEDDLER

I can't stand these things. I feel like I'm on a leash.

NICAEA

Don't knock it. The tuxedo was invented for women. (starts to straighten his tie). I don't know a single girl that can resist a man in a tux. They're so sexy.

MEDDLER

Can I get you some punch?

NICAEA

I don't know. Can you?

MEDDLER

Don't move.

Meddler fades into the crowd and the woman wanders off. Scaly wanders back to where she was as Meddler comes walking up.

MEDDLER

Here you are, my lady. One sexy man bearing drin – Scaly.

SCALY

Hey, sexy. Who were you expecting?

MEDDLER

There was another woman here. She had the same dress as you.

SCALY

That bitch. I'll kill her. (starts to raise up her dress to reveal a packed leg holster)

MEDDLER

Easy, Annie Oakley. Here, wet your whistle and cool down.

Meddler gives drink to Scaly and immediately starts to scratch at neck.

SCALY

Meddler, we'll be out of here in an hour. Let it rest.

MEDDLER

Yeah, but it's even worse now. It feels like there's something . . .

He reaches into his collar to find a tiny microchip.

MEDDLER

What the hell?

SCALY

What's that, a geek suppressant?

MEDDLER

Give my regards to Scanner, I'm going back to the office.

SCALY

He's gonna be mad you didn't stick around for his speech.

MEDDLER

I'll feign awe in the morning. Take my drink, please.

MEDDLER exits. Cardinal comes over.

CARDINAL

Where's your partner running off to?

SCALY

There was some work he forgot to do. He's a bit of a compulsive.

CARDINAL

I guess that has its advantages in your line of work. And disadvantages.

MEDDLER

Yup, that about sums it up.

CARDINAL

How'd you two end up working together?

SCALY

I was re-assigned from Improprieties when the division got restructured. To be honest, I tried to get a new partner for the first couple of months, but after a while . . .

MEDDLER

After a while, what?

SCALY

Well, when I first got into the agency, I told myself I'd learn by surrounding myself with the best people.

CARDINAL

And he qualifies?

SCALY

Meddler's the best field agent I've ever seen. He's relentless, like a dog with a bone in his teeth. Once he gets hold of a case, he doesn't let go till it's solved.

CARDINAL

I'm glad to know that.

Lights fade as X-Files theme comes up.

FAX'S VOICE

I wasn't insulted that Maggie had come on to me just so she could slip me a microchip. I figure if God gives you weapons, you gotta use them. I wondered what was so urgent, however, that she would do something as risky as pass it to me in a room filled with the world's most powerful Catholics. Either it's the biggest bombshell this side of Baghdad or a fantastically elaborate way of giving me a phone number. I mean, why make a crack about tuxedos like that if you're not interested? Am I right?

When lights come back up, Meddler is sitting at his desk, talking on the phone.

MEDDLER

Yes, I know its . . . yes, I know it's against regulations, but don't you see that I . . . Mm-hm. But if that's true, then shouldn't the regulation be guided by a higher principle? I mean, it's not like I'm making an immoral request. What do you mean how should you know? I'm a spiritual agent.

What else am I . . . yes . . . yes . . . yes . . . yes Yes, just the floor plans. I don't need the whole blueprint. Thank you, Betsy. Remind me to take you out for pie. Well remind me again, I'm sure to catch on. Thanks
goodbye.

Scaly walks in in a surgical overcoat while Meddler is on phone. He motions for her to sit down.

SCALY

You needed to see me?

MEDDLER
Remember this?

SCALY
Ah, the intelligence booster. How'd it work out for you?

MEDDLER
It's a map.

SCALY
A map of what?

MEDDLER
Vatican city, but it's centuries old. Most of the structures on it have been torn down.

SCALY
Where'd it come from?

MEDDLER
That woman I was talking to must've given it to me. She was an odd one. I called every department in the church and no one's ever even heard of her. Everyone's jumpy down in Processing. I had to promise Betsy pie to send me a current blueprint.

SCALY
Ah, you and your promises. So I don't get it. Some dress thief gives you an obsolete map and you go apeshit? If I give you my old parking tickets will you buy me breakfast?

MEDDLER
You don't eat breakfast.

SCALY
It's symbolic.

MEDDLER

Another thing. The woman said her name was Nicaea.

SCALY

Nicaea? that's an unusual name.

MEDDLER

That's what I thought. I knew I'd heard it before but before now I couldn't place it.

SCALY

Before now?

MEDDLER

Nicaea was the site of the first ecumenical council in 325 AD. It declared that Jesus wasn't a man, but was in fact God.

SCALY

The Nicene Creed.

MEDDLER

Exactly.

SCALY

That's an unusual name.

MEDDLER

Grab your lunchbox, we're taking a field trip.

SCALY

To where?

MEDDLER

Straight to the top.

Music plays as Meddler grabs coat and they both exit through door. They exit stage left and lights darken.

SCALY'S VOICE

Don't you hate the way Meddler's always bossing people around? Like we're his slaves? I knew we were gonna have to investigate that map. He's always giving those cryptic answers. "Straight to the top." What's the hell's that supposed to mean? I guess I ask for it, though. I never just say, "No, Meddler, I'm too busy to run off with you on one of your hunches." But who am I kidding? Busy doing what? I wanted to find out what the dress thief wanted to show us, and why she was so interested in my partner.

Lights come up again as they are walking through a graveyard with flashlights. Meddler is holding a print-out of the map.

SCALY

You always take me to the nicest places, Meddler.

MEDDLER

Only the best for my girl.

SCALY

Explain to me how this is the top again?

MEDDLER

This was Nero's personal garden back when they used to burn Christians. They say he used to have all his cabinet meetings here.

SCALY

By "they" you mean history geeks who never go on real dates?

MEDDLER

Precisely.

MEDDLER

Color me mollified.

Pair come to the entrance of a mausoleum, with Latin writing etched outside.

MEDDLER

There it is.

SCALY

There what is?

MEDDLER

The detail on the chip allowed me to see that a part of the map had been ripped off and pasted over, maybe centuries ago.

SCALY

And this is the mystery spot.

MEDDLER

You got that right.

SCALY

(reading)

“In sanctorum eternum est.”

MEDDLER

In safekeeping forever.

SCALY

I wonder what was so valuable someone wanted it kept at the Vatican?

MEDDLER

I don't know, but someone wants us to – DUCK!

Before Meddler finishes his sentence, an object goes flying by their heads and nails the gate in front of them. Meddler picks the object up and takes a look.

SCALY

What is it?

MEDDLER
It's a Bible.

Meddler and Scaly take cover while a group of people wearing T-shirts that say "The Bible Thumpers" run onto stage from stage right. They have the bearing and attitude of a 50s-era street gang. All carry Bibles as weapons; some have them in a sling, some studded and at the end of maces, some at the end of a chain.

THUMPER 1
Where'd they go?

THUMPER 2
I thought I saw them go over there!

Group takes off stage left. A STRAGGLER gets a late start and as they pass where Scaly and Meddler are hidden, Meddler jumps out and onto him.

STRAGGLER
They're ove – mmmph.

Meddler covers Thumper's mouth. Meddler pulls out another book.

MEDDLER
You yell out again and I'll stick this Koran in your mouth.

THUMPER
No! God, no! I'm sorry. I'll be quiet.

MEDDLER
Why did you attack us?

THUMPER 3
We know what you're doing, trying to merge the sacred with the profane.

MEDDLER
What are you talking about?

THUMPER

Don't act innocent. Every generation spawns more of your kind, and we've been there every time to stamp you back into the ground.

MEDDLER

Who sent you?

THUMPER

THEY'RE OVER HERE!

Meddler and Scaly race off as Thumpers rush onto stage. Some help up their comrade and others toss Bibles in the pair's direction. Lights fade.

Lights up on Scaly and Meddler at a diner. Meddler is rubbing his shoulder through scene.

SCALY

So who were those people?

MEDDLER

The Bible Thumpers. A Lutheran sect. They're mostly just muscle, though. Somebody else is pulling the strings.

SCALY

How many of these sects are out there?

MEDDLER

Dozens. The Baptists, the Methodists, the Coptics. They all seemed to start out for a good reason, but it's hard to tell the differences between them anymore. Mostly because they all share one decisive trait: They don't like it when you step on their turf.

SCALY

And we've done that somehow?

MEDDLER

That's not even the worst of it. Tonight's little escapade teaches us two things: One, someone other than the lady at the party knows what we're up to—

SCALY

And two, we're up to something big to have them call the God Squad on us.

MEDDLER

Let's get back to the office. I'm gonna have to pull some strings to get to the bottom of all this.

SCALY

I'm beat. I'll call in first thing in the morning.

MEDDLER

Actually, I need a small favor. I had the morgue send over a few corpses I wanted you to take a look at. Three young ministers on their way to the Vatican council were found buried under an earthen dam last Tuesday. I wanted you to take a look at the bodies to check for bruises.

SCALY

Bruises like what?

MEDDLER

Like this.

He pulls down shirt to reveal cross-shaped bruise on his shoulder.

MEDDLER

It's where the Bible hit me. Bible-thumper Bibles always leave that kind of mark.

SCALY

Alright, well let's get going now before this coffee wears off.

MEDDLER

One more thing, Scaly. When they searched the car of those ministers, they found part of a map.

SCALY
A map?

MEDDLER
This map.

SCALY
(starting to get up)
Waitaminnit, Meddler. It's 10:30. No one's gonna release those bodies to me at this time of night.

MEDDLER
I took the liberty of sending them over to your office this morning. I know how you like surprises.

SCALY
Surprise. You're paying.

Scaly is up and out the door. Meddler pulls out his wallet, tosses cash on the table, and follows after.

FAX'S VOICE
So anyway, that's how you find us here. A whole lot of questions and a goon squad on our tails. Those young boys that had been killed were promising young souls doing the Lord's work in a city that sometimes didn't like new ideas. One of them even had a young wife he'd brought with him to Rome. Why were they sacrificed? For whom? The answer was out there somewhere. Also, I hadn't been straight with Scaly about those Bible bruises. If they get a good shot, they can make you pretty sick — nausea, fever. Sometimes they can even cause some permanent damage. Like death. There's no known cure, only water and time. I'm a pretty tough cookie, though. At least that's what I tell the girls down in Processing.

Lights up on Meddler asleep at this desk with the Chalcedon Dossier laid out. Scaly walks in and starts blowing in his ear. He waves her away, until he wakes up with a start.

MEDDLER

When did you get in here?

SCALY

Just now.

MEDDLER

What time is it? Late?

SCALY

Early.

MEDDLER

I was really looking forward to a night in my bed, too.

SCALY

Ah, Meddler, don't tease me. What were you doing all night?

MEDDLER

Investigating this meeting at Chalcedon. Some remarkable things happened. Things that would make a lot of people uncomfortable.

SCALY

Uncomfortable like what?

MEDDLER

Uncomfortable like I don't think many people know that early church leaders weren't too sure about Jesus being God. A lot of them had the notion that Jesus was just a remarkable man, but that only God was divine.

SCALY

What happened to them?

MEDDLER

Most of them were excommunicated. The main reason they had the council was because of a priest from Alexandria named Arius. He claimed that the deities of the Trinity weren't equal.

SCALY

What, like there was some kind of hierarchy?

MEDDLER

Yeah. He said that God was first, then Jesus, then the Holy Spirit.

SCALY

That does sound like heresy.

MEDDLER

Yeah, now. But back then he had quite a following. In fact, Chalcedon was organized to prevent a schism.

SCALY

Get out.

MEDDLER

Exactly. Arius was making the same claims that would be used to justify the Reformation 1200 years later.

SCALY

That *would* make a lot of people uncomfortable. I'm uncomfortable.

MEDDLER

Tell me about it.

SCALY

How does it jibe with scripture?

MEDDLER

Jesus also said that the Father was above him, but people thought he was just being modest.

SCALY

It's funny how we choose when and when not to listen to our leaders.

MEDDLER

All the better to confirm our own beliefs with, my dear.

SCALY

So if this council was organized to prevent a schism, all of its findings had to have been . . .

MEDDLER

Had to have been political.

SCALY

And not a matter of papal infallibility.

MEDDLER

Doubtful.

SCALY

Meddler, millions of people view these credos as the word of God.

MEDDLER

That's the idea.

SCALY

If this gets out it would force people to re-analyze their belief in church doctrine.

MEDDLER

Donna, my dear, I have a feeling this is just the beginning.

SCALY

So where to now?

MEDDLER

Before we go back to the graveyard, we're gonna need a little help.

Lights.

Lights up as Meddler and Scaly come to a nondescript door. Meddler knocks once, then twice, then three times. A voice comes from behind the door.

VOICE

Who stole the cookies from the cookie jar?

MEDDLER

Mama and Daddy and baby makes three.

Silence.

SCALY

Nice friends, Meddler.

MEDDLER

They're a little eccentric, but they've always had my back.

Door opens to reveal TIBERIUS, a squat, balding man with glasses. The room is cluttered, with surveillance equipment, clothes and pizza boxes comprising the decor.

TIBERIUS

Meddler!

MEDDLER

Hey Tiberius. Are the caesars around?

TIBERIUS

Yeah, we're all here. There's a Dr. Who marathon on. (leering) Who's your friend?

MEDDLER

This is Donna Scaly, my partner. Scaly, meet Tiberius.

SCALY
Charmed.

TIBERIUS
The pleasure is mine. Wait here a second while I go down to the basement
and tell the guys your here.

Tiberius leaves.

SCALY
Nice friends, Meddler. I didn't even have to say "my pleasure."

MEDDLER
Give 'em a break, Scaly, these guys don't have many beautiful women
over, if you can believe it..

SCALY.
I believe it. You think I'm beautiful?

MEDDLER
To these guys, you're an oasis in the desert.

SCALY
You're sweet. And clueless. Wasn't Tiberius a Roman emperor?

MEDDLER
Yeah, they're big into these role-playing games. They each took the name
of one of the four emperors after Augustus.

Three more guys enter from stage left.

ALL
Meddler!

MEDDLER

Hey, fellas. Scaly, meet the Julio-Claudians: Caligula, Nero, and Claudius.
Fellas, this is my partner, Donna Scaly.

All four just stare at her lasciviously.

SCALY

How ya doin' fellas? Anyplace around here a girl could take a load off?

They all begin clearing separate spaces, throwing clothes onto each others spaces and generally just shifting the mess around.

SCALY

You know, come to think of it, I'll stand.

NERO

What can we do for you, Fax?

MEDDLER

I got a little problem with Bible thumpers. I need something that's gonna throw them off my trail.

CALIGULA

Thumpers, hunh? Claudius has been working on a little remedy for those fascists, haven't you, Claud?

CLAUDIUS

(going over to a computer console)

A little something, yeah. It's just a transceiver, but it picks up metaphysical ectoplasm within a 100-yard radius.

SCALY

Metaphysical ectoplasm?

MEDDLER

Mostly just corn syrup and frankincense. But the Thumpers perform a little initiation ritual that gives it a distinct signature.

TIBERIUS

A paranormal signature.

CLAUDIUS

They wear it like cologne, the little freaks.

MEDDLER

What'll it take to get my hands on that transceiver?

CLAUDIUS

I don't know, Meddler, what're you willing to trade?

NERO

I believe there's still the matter of the three Golden Dragons of Osiris.

CALIGULA

Yeah, Meddler, you still have more power points than all of us combined plus you've got the Doomsday card.

Meddler looks at Scaly nervously.

MEDDLER

Yeah, well, you know, we can talk about that later, I'll definitely make it worth your while.

CLAUDIUS

Alright, far be it from me to doubt the word of the High Priest of Macedon.

MEDDLER

Yeah, you ready to go, Scaly?

SCALY

Of course, your eminence.

TIBERIUS

Don't be a stranger, Miss Scaly. There's plenty of Dr. Who to go around.

SCALY
That's good to know.

NERO
Oh, Meddler, I almost forgot. A package came today to our address but it was marked to your attention.

Hands a package to Meddler.

MEDDLER
(opening package)
Why would someone send me something here?

NERO
Hell if I know.

SCALY
What's it say?

MEDDLER
"Ephesus Dossier."

Meddler opens package and out falls a key and documents.

MEDDLER
Three guesses as to what this opens.

SCALY
Let's roll.

Lights come up with meddler and scaly sitting on same pews fom opening scene, with Meddler driving and Scaly in the passenger seat reading the Ephesus Dossier.

SCALY

Council of Ephesus, 431 AD. The council was held by Emperor Theodosius II to discuss Patriarch Nestorius' contention that Mary could not be called the mother of God unless she was a God herself. He refused to call her the mother of God in his sermons and claimed that Jesus had a divine nature and a human nature and that Mary had given birth to a human Jesus.

MEDDLER
Two natures.

SCALY
What?

MEDDLER
The Council of Chalcedon determined that Jesus had two natures, one human and one divine, to counter the argument that Jesus had only one nature that was both human and divine.

SCALY
This is getting very confusing.

MEDDLER
You're telling me.

SCALY
It seems like the church was trying to reconcile that fact that Jesus had wept, hungered, thirsted and demonstrated a lack of omniscience in the Bible with the fact that he was, you know, God.

MEDDLER
Add to the fact that the Roman Empire had extended itself so much that you had head priests in Rome, Constantinople, Antioch, and Alexandria all fighting over Jesus' true nature.

SCALY
And this was before the popes?

MEDDLER

This was before the popes.

SCALY

So whomever won, their city would be the seat of the Catholic church.

MEDDLER

Basically.

SCALY

So this theological debate was essentially a turf war.

MEDDLER

Essentially.

SCALY

This is big, Meddler. For hundreds of years people have been holding onto these beliefs because they thought their church leaders had a direct line into the will of the Almighty.

MEDDLER

This is big.

Silence.

SCALY

So was Jesus God or not?

MEDDLER

Damned if I know.

Right then, red and blue lights appear behind the pews. At the same time, Meddler's transceiver goes off. Meddler pulls over and the Trooper comes walking up.

TROOPER

Where you folks headed?

MEDDLER

We're CBI, officer, sorry if I was speeding.

TROOPER

That's not what I asked, boy. What's that beeping sound?

MEDDLER

We're Catholic Bureau of Investigation on official business. Turn your lights off and be on your way.

TROOPER.

Oh, you think you're gonna tell me my business. step out of the car please.

Meddler shares a look with Scaly as the Trooper motions back to his partner. Meddler forces door open quick and gets Trooper in the gut. As Trooper 2 comes to help, Scaly jumps out and assials him. A fight ensues, and Meddler and Scaly come out on top. They take off stage left. Trooper 2 crawls back to his car.

TROOPER 2

Officer down. We got a situation. Two perpetrators headed towards Vatican city. We're gonna need back up.

Passes out. Lights.

Lights up on Meddlers and Scaly back at entrance to mausoleum, flushed and out of breath. Meddler tries key in padlock. It fits and turns, and Meddler and Scaly enter with flashlights. Lights go down as all we see are flashlights proceeding across stage.

SCALY

Meddler, what if we're wrong about this?

MEDDLER

It's been a wonderful life.

Lights up as pair comes another doorway with a plaque next to it.

MEDDLER

“Dorme Pietro” It means the sleep of Peter.

SCALY

Are we near St. Peter’s Basilica?

Meddler

I think we’re under it, or next to it, or something. But this is definitely we’re the map goes. Whatever we’re looking for should be right behind this door.

ScaLY

You think the key opens this lock, too?

MEDDLER

I do, my dear Donna. It’s freezing in here. Are you cold?

SCALY

Not particularly.

Meddler takes out the key and open this lock as well. This door opens with a huge creak. It’s dark inside, and we can barely make out the shadowy figure of a man, RABBI, bound in chains. We hear him coughing.

MeDDLER

Hello?

RABBI

Hello? Hello, is someone there? Oh, thank God you’ve found me. I haven’t eaten for days.

SCALY

Oh my god, Meddler, there’s someone trapped down here!

They rush over to help the man down. He is a shirtless Middle Eastern man in his middle 30s, covered only with a cloth around his waist. He is unshaven and unkempt.

Scaly

My God, how did you get down here?

RABBI

It was many years ago. Some soldiers took me down here. I can't recount how many times I asked what my crime was, but you know the government. They don't really need a reason, do they?

MeDDLER

Yeah, we know the government. So do you have any idea who might've wanted to do this to you? Ransom? Did your family have money?

Rabbi

No. We're dirt poor. I know who did this. Some of my colleagues. They didn't like some of the things I was teaching in my classes and they decided to turn me in. It was during the time when the authorities were a little sensitive about talk that could be considered unpatriotic so (looking around) I guess they finally found a way to shut me up.

MEDDLER

You're a teacher?

RABBI

A rabbi. From Nazareth. I know, I know, you've never heard of it. It's a small province in Judea. The north country.

MEDDLER

Ach-ooo!

RABBI

Bless you, my son.

Meddler gets look of amazement on face.

ScALY

Oh yeah, like we've never heard of Nazareth

RABBI

Really? I'm surprised.

MeDDLER

How long did you say you've been down here, Rabbi?

RABBI

Let's see, I stopped keeping count after the first few years. The guards used to come pretty regular, but one day they just stopped. My family . . . my family would never be able to afford my bail. I just gave up after a while.

To tell the truth, most days I'm just waiting for it all to end.

MEDDLER

Donna, I'm starting to think something, and I'm not sure how to say it.

SCALY

Wait a minute, a teacher from Nazareth? What was your name, rabbi?

RABBI

Oh, you would've never heard of my teachings, I was strictly small-time. I never even made pharisee.

MEDDLER

Donna.

SCALY

Your name, rabbi.

RABBI

It's Jesus. Have you heard of me?

Lights.

End of Act One

Act Two

Meddler and Scaly are with Rabbi in his cell.

MEDDLER

Rabbi, we've got a few things to tell you. They're gonna be difficult to hear.

RABBI

Oh, Mr. Meddler, I am no stranger to hearing bad news. That's why I take so much pleasure in spreading the good news of our Lord to as many people as possible. Do you think I could take a few minutes talk to you about the kingdom of heaven sometime?

MEDDLER

Now wouldn't be the best time, although I can't believe I'm saying that to you.

SCALY

Did you say you had no idea how long you've been down here?

RABBI

As you can see, there is no place to let in the sun so that I might be able to track my days. But I wager it's been an extremely long time. I must say Mr. Meddler, you have quite an inquisitive slave. Have you educated her?

SCALY

I'm not his slave!

MEDDLER

Scaly, let's try to keep things on track. Rabbi, after you were imprisoned, your sect became very popular.

RABBI

It did? I had two very enthusiastic students named Peter and Simon. Were they the ones who assumed most of the evangelism?

MEDDLER

At first, but then mostly by a man named Paul.

RABBI
I don't recall a Paul.

MEDDLER
You wouldn't.

SCALY
Wasn't he known as Saul of Tarsus back then?

MEDDLER
They never met.

RABBI
Saul? I do know that name. Or maybe I should say I recognize it. It was from a dream I had some years back. But I remember it like it was yesterday. I was walking on a road from Damascus to Jerusalem, and I met a man named Saul, a man so twisted with anger and ambition it glowed about him like a halo.

MEDDLER
What'd he say to you?

RABBI
He didn't have the chance. You know how sometimes in a dream you just know things? I just knew this man was bent on the destruction of my people. So I asked him to change this course he'd set himself upon and consider a different path. If the road he was headed on was bound towards hate, I suggested he consider turning around, heading towards love, and seeing how that made him feel for a while. I could tell he had always seen hate as an amoral quality, and had always used it as a way to achieve means, no matter what it did inside to your soul. That wasn't the way to go on.

MEDDLER
Then what happened?

RABBI

Well, he fell to his knees . . . and started weeping. It was very powerful.
The very next morning when I awoke I said a prayer of thanks to our
Father for such an inspiring experience.

SCALY

Our Father, hunh?

RABBI

Of course our Fat - Oh, I see, you are a spy, maybe? Coming to report on
the troublesome rabbi to the Roman thought police? Well if that is your
game you'd better just chain me back up.

(Starts to put chains back on.)

I will die before I perform a ceremony I know to be blasphemy before God.
Do you Romans know anything of principle? Do you believe in anything
except wine and orgies?

MEDDLER

Rabbi, rabbi, you misunderstand. Please take those off. Donna just wanted
to see if you meant "my father," instead of "our father." You know, like
you're the son of God?

RABBI

Well I am a son of God, but we are all sons and daughters of God, are we
not? I would really love the opportunity to minister to you for a short
while. You have such an enquiring mind, an inspiring passion for life.

SCALY

Meddler, can I talk to you for a second?

MEDDLER

Sure.

They step outside the room into the hallway.

SCALY

This guy's good.

MEDDLER

Real good.

SCALY

He really seems to think he's Jesus of Nazareth.

MEDDLER

He really does.

SCALY

And he's done his homework.

MEDDLER

Apparently so.

SCALY

So whuddoyou think we got here?

MEDDLER

I think the Catholic Church has been keeping Jesus locked in a dungeon underneath the Vatican for the last 2,000 years.

SCALY

Cute. Remind me to ask him about his skin-care regimen. Seriously. Where do you think this guy came from?

MEDDLER

Nazareth.

SCALY

Meddler!

MEDDLER

Scaly, open your eyes! The truth is sitting here talking to you and you still refuse to see! Doesn't it all make sense? The map, the secret councils and

conspiracies? How else do you explain a small Jewish cult spreading over the entire world in 300 years? They tapped into a man of uncompromising principle and have been subsisting on his life essence for centuries, like a . . . Duracell battery.

SCALY

Who? Who tapped into this battery?

MEDDLER

The early priests. The first popes. There's your mystery.

SCALY

Meddler, this is surprising for even you. How is the man supposed to have survived 2,000 years without having aged a day?

MEDDLER

Faith. People believe in him. Many believe he has everlasting life. He's had scores of people believing in him without reservation since before he was crucified up until this very moment in time. How could he ever really die?

Scaly gives skeptical look.

MEDDLER

He lives in our hearts and minds.

SCALY

And this makes sense to you?

MEDDLER

It's the one thing that finally does make sense to me. I've always puzzled about how the church spread so far, and so fast.

SCALY

They needed a power source?

MEDDLER

Like a spiritual energy core, yeah. He powered their movement.

SCALY
Meddler . . .

MEDDLER
Listen, Scaly, you don't have to believe. But either way we have a man here in need of our help who is at best severely delusional. So let's just humor this guy till we find out who's behind all this. I have a feeling the answers will be revealed.

SCALY
Deal.

MEDDLER
Ach-ooo!

SCALY
Bless you. Boy, Meddler, you're relaly coming down with something.

MEDDLER
Yeah.

Scaly and Meddler go back into room.

MEDDLER
Okay, Rabbi, we're gonna get you outta here.

RABBI
Oh bless you, son. Oh to see the life-giving sun once more. I'm beside myself. The trio head back up out of the room. All of a sudden, a beeping sound goes off. Meddler pulls the transceiver out of his pocket, which is all lit up.

SCALY
Thumpers. They must've tracked us.

MEDDLER

This way.

They exit the opposite direction and walk for awhile till they come to a staircase. Meddler and Scaly bring the Rabbi up the stairs and into the entryway of a vast cathedral.

RABBI

This temple is unbelievable. What are the lamps lit with? I don't see any flame inside.

MEDDLER

We'll get to that later. We have to get you out of here.
Rabbi stops short, staring at the altar.

MEDDLER

Rabbi, we have to keep moving.

RABBI

Why is a crucifix at the center of the altar?

scaly

It's a symbol meant to represent your sacrifice.

MEDDLER

Scaly!

RABBI

My sacrifice? Why are they honoring me?

sCALY

It's what worshippers do. They hold your memory dear.

RABBI

They worship me? All this is for me? What about our Father? (looking at Meddler) Surely they don't worship me over God.

Meddler is silent.

sCALY
You are God.

RABBI sits down, hyperventilating. Meddler looks at Scaly, shaking head.

SCALY
What? What? How long are we gonna patronize him? If he's telling the truth about all this he needs to know, doesn't he?

MEDDLER
We could break it to him a little gentler, that's all.

RABBI
Master Meddler, you and your slave have been unimaginably kind in saving me from my imprisonment.

SCALY
I'm not his slave!

RABBI
And I must say your liberal treatment of her is most refreshing. I too have some interesting ideas on the master/slave relationship.

SCALY
I'm not --

MEDDLER
Pick our battles, Scaly, remember?

RABBI
However I must insist on your being candid with me, now. I'm afraid I won't be able to continue along on our journey until some things are made clear to me.

MEDDLER
Fine, but you're not gonna . . . Fine. Why is it so cold in here? I'm freezing.

RABBI

What sacrifice did I make?

MEDDLER

When you were crucified, most people believe that you died.

RABBI

The Romans and their propaganda. They'll do anything to maintain their power over people's minds.

MEDDLER

Yeah, except, it wasn't just the Romans. Even your own people spread the word that you died, and that in doing so you were doing it for the sins of all people.

RABBI

So they use the instrument of my execution to honor me?

MEDDLER

I know it sounds a little . . .

RABBI

It doesn't sound like one of Peter's or Simon's ideas. Was this Saul of Tarsus? He always had some scheme or another to do me in.

MEDDLER

He's most commonly known as Paul today, but yeah. Also . . .

SCALY

Just finish it, Meddler. They could be here at any minute.

MEDDLER

Also, they claimed that you came back to life three days later and spoke to some of them.

RABBI

That explains a lot.

SCALY
More dreams?

RABBI
Unforgettable ones. They were all crying. My mother, Salome, Joanna, all my students. At first I thought it was my life flashing before my eyes before I realized I'd never been in that situation before.

sCALY
This is too much.

RABBI
How did this happen? I always said to look to God in your hearts. To love our Father like you honor yourself. I was so careful.

sCALY
Yeah right.

MEDDLER
Donna.

sCALY
Do you believe this bull, Meddler? What about all the miracles, and the adoring masses? They were calling him the Messiah way before he got to Jerusalem.

RABBI
They called many people the Messiah, and I had to build up credibility. I knew my message would never get out otherwise.

sCALY
And so you didn't see it coming? You knew what happened to Zoroaster, to Alexander the Great. Before they were even cold people started talking about how they must've been born from a virgin.

RABBI
(to Meddler) I must ask: why did you buy such an impudent slave?

Scaly
I'm not his slave!

RABBI
Anyway, everyone knows my mother wasn't a virgin. I have an older brother named James.

MEDDLER
We have a lot to talk about.

RABBI
I never suspected it would get like this. I guess I just thought this time-

sCALY
You thought this time it'd be different? Well, it's not. It's the same. Just wait till you hear about the crusades.

RABBI (to Fax):
Someone is saved?

MEDDLER
Much later. Trust me, Lord.

SCALY
Can we get a move on, already?

RABBI
I have one more question, and it's the one I'm most afraid to ask, I'm afraid.

MEDDLER
I think I have an idea.

RABBI
How long was I . . . How long ago did my . . .

MEDDLER

The year is 2005. You've been a prisoner for almost 2,000 years.

RABBI

It's a miracle.

Falls to knees in prayer.

SCALY

Meddler.

MEDDLER

Give him a second, Scaly. He's had a pretty rough day. I've still got the transceiver.

RABBI

Okay. We can go.

MEDDLER

You okay?

RABBI

No. I'm very angry. The head of this church, my church, owes me an explanation.

MEDDLER

That may not be as easy to arrange as it was back in your day, Rabbi.

RABBI

Master Meddler, I will inaugurate our friendship with one piece of information about me that you should know. I have a reputation for being somewhat of an obstinate man. When I set my mind on something, I usually get it. The head of this church will see me, though the heavens themselves fall in my wake.

Exeunt. Lights.

Meddler is alone near stage left, with an umbrella, facing upstage. A man walks onstage from upstage right, smoking a cigarette. A hole has been cut in the umbrella to accommodate the large pointy hat he's wearing.

CARDINAL

I'm glad to see you could make it. You were acting very agitated at Scanner's cocktail party.

MEDDLER

Maybe I don't like being jerked around. Maybe I was wondering what your fellow cardinals would think if they knew you'd been secretly feeding me information for months.

CARDINAL

Doing that wouldn't serve either of our purposes. Or are you still interested in finding out what happened to your sister?

MEDDLER

You been holding that over me for a while. One day it's not gonna work when you want it to.

CARDINAL

Fortunately not until our savior wills it.

MEDDLER

What'd you call me out here for?

CARDINAL

Just to give you a heads up. Some pretty important people are trying to scare you off your current case. They've called out some particularly nasty people to send you a message.

MEDDLER

I got that message loud and clear.

Shows Cardinal his bruise.

CARDINAL

You'll want to see this nun about that. (Hands Meddler a business card).
She'll clear it right up.

MEDDLER

I thought there wasn't any cure for a Thumper bruise.

CARDINAL

No cure sanctioned by the church. I guess you'd call my friend more
technically a witch.

MEDDLER

So who are these people that are trying to derail my investigation?

CARDINAL

Very high ups. That's all you need to know. If you keep going on the
course you're going I hope you're ready for a big battle.

MEDDLER

I'm getting a lot of that. Listen, Cardinal, I'm holding something.
Something big.

CARDINAL

How big?

MEDDLER

Big big.

CARDINAL

Well, chances are they already know. Chances are the only reason you
haven't been excommunicated is because someone still needs you.

MEDDLER

That's what I figured.

Cardinal starts to leave.

MEDDLER
Hey Cardinal!

Cardinal turns around.

MEDDLER
What are you getting out of this? What's your end of the deal?

CARDINAL
I get peace for my immortal soul, Fax. What else?

Lights.

Lights up on Meddler, Scaly and Rabbi at diner.

RABBI
This place is amazing! Such a variety of foods from all over the world.
Where's "China"?

SCALY
Have you put any thought into how we're gonna get the Big Guy here in
for a meeting with the other Big Guy?

MEDDLER
Trying to speak with the Pope right away might not be our best move.
What he needs most is a consensus; some followers to back up his message.

SCALY
You mean like some new disciples.

MEDDLER
It wouldn't hurt. It'll give him the air of legitimacy he's gonna need if
anyone's gonna take him seriously.

SCALY
Even then, Meddler, it's gonna be a uphill climb.

MEDDLER

Good thing we're federally trained superagents.

RABBI

In my time, the Roman gov't was very learned in the art of building a consensus.

SCALY

Things have changed quite a bit since your day, Rabbi.

RABBI

Have they? In my day, whenever you wanted people to listen to you, you went to the army. Soldiers mean power.

Meddler

An army . . .

RABBI

I'll try the corned beef and cabbage on rye. That sounds simply heavenly.

MEDDLER

I'll be right back, I gotta make a phone call.

Lights.

When lights come up, Meddler Scaly, and Rabbi are entering from stage left, and Rabbi is eating a sandwich. Onstage there are two Bible Thumper standing guard next to a conference table surrounded by five chairs. The guards have Bible slung over their shoulders. The Rabbi is eating a sandwich.

RABBI

I don't see why we couldn't have remained at that lovely diner.

SCALY

Rabbi, that's your third sandwich!

RABBI

I have to get my strength up. You try being locked in a dungeon for 2000 years with nothing more than fekatzah wafers.

MEDDLER

Time is starting to become a factor, Rabbi. We don't know how many people know you're gone.

SCALY

How'd you get a meeting with the Thumpers so quick, Meddler?

MEDDLER

I called the one contact I had and told him I had the package they were looking for. They called back and made an appointment with their pastor a few minutes later.

RABBI

Time is becoming a factor. That's a good one. You wanna know about time becoming a factor? I've got a nice dungeon I could show you and we could learn a little something about time.

SCALY

Jesus sure isn't the type to let something go.

RABBI

Meddler, could you please tell your slave--

SCALY

Meddler, could you please tell your "savior"--

Just then, two men, Brother EMANUEL and Brother Ezekiel, wearing Bible Thumper jackets and carrying attaches, walk in.

Emanuel

Sorry for the wait gentlemen, and lady.

MEDDLER

No problem. Your timing is perfect. Is the Pastor gonna be available to see us today?

EMANUEL

Unfortunately, our pastor won't be able to meet with you face to face. My name is Brother Emanuel, this is Ezekiel. We have been given full authority to speak in the name of the Lutheran Church.

MEDDLER

Alright well. This is a pretty big deal. I was really hoping I'd be able to speak to whomever's in charge.

Ezekiel

Our pastor thought it imprudent to intervene personally in this matter until we could verify the validity of your claim.

MEDDLER

Alright, if you say so. Without further ado, I present to you our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ of Nazareth.

RABBI

(mumbling because of a mouth full of sandwich)
Pleased to meet you.

MEDDLER

As I suspect you know, this is who you were retained to keep me away from.

EMANUEL

We weren't sure until just now. We had our suspicions, but our retainers held everything close to the vestment, if you know what I mean.

MEDDLER

Of course they did. Well I've come to you because we're interested in forming an alliance with the Thumpers. With the support of your security forces, I think we can force the Vatican to account for some of its past missteps.

Ezekiel chuckles.

EMANUEL

Before we take on the Catholic Church, would you mind if we asked some questions of your, what shall we call you, sir?

RABBI

Rabbi is fine. Or even Yeshua, like my grandmother used to call me.

EzEKIEL

Rabbi is fine. So let's get started with an easy one, shall we? Why don't you name for us the books of the New Testament.

RABBI

The what?

Ezekiel and Emanuel snort derisively.

EZEKIEL

The New Testament, Rabbi? The part of the Bible set during your lifetime?

RABBI

What's a bible?

MEDDLER

They didn't have bibles during Jesus' lifetime. The books of the bible were just stories that circulated amongst the people of the Near East back then.

EMANUEL

Fine then. Tell us this. Do you rule heaven alone, or with the help of your Father and the Holy Spirit?

RABBI

What?

EMANUEL

Sir, are you or are you not our Lord and Savior, the Prince of the Universe?

RABBI

These are titles that you put on me.

(to Meddler)

Why does it always go this way with these people? (to brothers) Do you have any real questions?

EMANUEL

Mr. Meddler, if your so-called savior cannot answer the most basic questions of Christian doctrine, then I do not see how seriously we can take this--

MEDDLER

But don't you see? He wasn't responsible for any of the things you're asking about! They were decided by other men who came along after Jesus died.

EMANUEL

Oh and I suppose we've just been going along with what these "mysterious men" happened to say were the secrets of the universe?

MEDDLER

Wha--? I--!

EZEKIEL

Not to mention that not a few of our flock are going to be offended by the fact that your Jesus, frankly . . . looks like an Arab.

MeDDLER

He's not *my* Jesus, he's Jesus!

EMANUEL

(to Ezekiel)

I've been banging my head about how we'd spin that one.

RABBI

What's an Arab?

Ezekiel

Let us know if you come up with anything a little more substantial.

MEDDLER

But I've--But I've come up with Jesus!

Ezekiel

Even Jesus isn't the Pope.

RABBI

Young man, let me ask you something. You seem strong, robust. full of an active and lively spirit.

EMANUEL

I like to think so.

RABBI

And yet a part of even you, a staunch supporter of your church, really deeply wonders if this is all there is, don't you?

EMANUEL

I don't see what my faith has to do with anything.

RABBI

Well, don't you? As far as your concerned, isn't that all there is? And doesn't it inform all your actions, leading us to being here right now? Wait, don't answer. Consider this: What if the paradise that you suspect might be there, where you suspect deep deep inside where only the child in you lives anymore, what if I told you today that that paradise does exist? And that I know because I've seen it? And that there, all your questions are answered, but not in word form but simply in the breadth of your contentment in being there. Wouldn't that change everything?

EMANUEL

If I knew for sure, of course, but how can any of us know?

RABBI

I'm here to tell you that I know for sure that there is a Father above and he is waiting for you in heaven. Look into my eyes. If you can find one speck, one trace of doubt in what I'm saying, then I'll walk out of here right now and never ask for another moment of your time.

Emanuel starts to look into Rabbi's eyes skeptically. Slowly, though, his expression becomes first blank, and then slowly transforms to one of awe.

EzEKIEL

This is ridiculous. Brother Emanuel, I'm ready to file my report. Are you coming?

Emanuel's expression now changes to one of outright awe, and then an ecstatic smile breaks on his face.

EMANUEL

Oh, Father, I never knew how to express my fears.

(he falls to his knees)

I wanted to tell someone that I felt I was living a lie but I was too ashamed to tell anyone.

RABBI

I know. We all go through it.

All are watching this with disbelief; except the guards, who stand stoically.

EMANUEL

(to Meddler and Scaly)

Thank you so much, so much, for finding him.

EzEKIEL

Oh you have got to be kidding me. Emanuel, pull yourself together. Do you really mean to tell me that you believe this nonsense?

EMANUEL

With every fiber of my being. Look me dead in the eye if you don't believe me.

EZEKIEL

I will not fall in for this voodoo nonsense. I am going to file my report with the Pastor and if you don't report back then don't expect me to cover you.

EMANUEI

Do what you have to. I won't be going back to your church.

EZEKIEL

This is ridiculous. Good day to you all. You can count out the Lutheran Church in your insane pogrom against the Vatican.

He leaves and the guard furthest away from him follows after. The further guard passes the near guard, and then looks back expectantly. The guard who was closest to Ezekiel hands his Bible to his partner and waves his hands, indicating he's finished. Emanuel puts his arm around the guard and smiles. The other guard shakes his head and exits.

SCALY

That was . . . I don't have the words.

MEDDLER

Do you believe now, Donna?

SCALY

I don't have the words. That went both terribly and wonderfully at the same time. What do we do now?

MEDDLER

I think we should hold some more meetings.

Lights.

FAX'S VOICE

We went to meeting after meeting, and at each one, the Rabbi would take a few minutes to minister to one, maybe to of their people, and they would always come back. Not all of them right away like the guy from the Bible Thumpers, sometimes it would take a few days, but they all came eventually. Before long, we had our army, and we were knocking on the Vatican's front door.

Lights up as Meddler, Scaly, the Rabbi, and about ten others are standing in a group stretching from upstage right to a wooden door which stands downstage left. The others onstage are wearing jackets and T-Shirts with names like "Heaven's Angels" and "The Christian Soldiers." They carry an array of biblically inspired weaponry and swing/hold/twirl them menacingly.

Meddler knocks loudly.

SCALY

Who knew the Vatican actually had a front door?

EMANUEL

It's for show. They've got one of those revolving thingies on the side entrance.

We now begin to hear the sound of faint steps. Over the course of about a minute, those footsteps get louder as Jesus' crew show signs of impatience like checking watches and setting down heavy weapons.

As footsteps get particularly loud, an ENVOY walks on from downstage left and opens the door.

Envoy
Can I help you?

MEDDLER

Yes, we're here to see the pontiff. We have an appointment.

ENVOY

Ah yes. You're the folks from the VBI?

MEDDLER
That's it.

ENVOY
Alright, well, we can't see all of you. Only four of you can come.

MEDDLER
Alright

At this, Meddler, Scaly, Emmanuel and Rabbi step through the door and the Envoy shuts it. He then rolls the door upstage right. As he does so, the Rabbi's entourage backs up and offstage.

ENVOY
So how may our father help you?

MEDDLER

I understood that we'd be speaking directly to the Pontiff himself.

ENVOY

Unfortunately, the Pope won't be able to meet with you face to face. I have been given full authority to speak in the name of the Church.

SCALY

Doesn't anyone hold their own meetings anymore?

MEDDLER

I really don't think we're going to be able to effectively get across our message through the use of an intermediary.

SCALY

The Rabbi really is more of your hands-on type of savior.

At this point we start to hear footsteps again.

ENVOY

Well, I'm sorry to hear that. I really don't have much flexibility on the matter.

RABBI

Maybe this young man would have some insight into the questions I have.

MEDDLER

I doubt it, Rabbi, the questions you want answered are pretty high-level stuff.

ENVOY 2, walks onstage from downstage left and whispers into the first Envoy's ear.

ENVOY

Are you sure?

ENVOY 2

Absolutely.

ENVOY

Well I'd better go see about that.

And he leaves, cueing the footsteps, Only this time in reverse. While he is walking away, Envoy 2 doesn't talk, but simply smiles beatifically. After about half a minute Scaly speaks.

SCALY

Listen, we've been very pati--

Envoy 2 hold up his finger, indicating "not yet." When the first Envoy's footsteps die to nothingness, he speaks.

ENVOY 2

Ahhh, that's better. Can't be too careful about the echo in here you know. Vaulted ceilings and all. So, welcome, welcome, so glad you could make it. Our Holy Father will be able to see you now.

SCALY

Now?

ENVOY 2

Yes, please follow me.

Envoy 2 leads the group upstage right to the door and goes behind it, placing the door between the group and the audience. He then pushes the door centerstage about a 3/4 of the way downstage.

ENVOY 2

Right in here.

He opens the door for them, they all step through, and he exits.

SCALY

Well that was very strange. I wonder how the Pope suddenly got so available.

MEDDLER

(going over to one side and picking up a cigarette butt)

I've got an idea.

POPE'S VOICE

(loud booming voice. When he first begins to speak, have all four looking around to find where the voice is coming from, only to locate it right above the audience's heads.)

It seems we have some friends in common, Agent Meddler.

MEDDLER

It seems so, your eminence. Thank you for taking the time to see us.

POPE'S VOICE

Well given the stature of our guest, I'm sorry I couldn't meet you sooner, my son. So how may I help you?

MEDDLER

Well as you may know, a couple of weeks ago, my partner, Donna Scaly and I--

SCALY

Pleased to meet you, your holiness.

POPE'S VOICE

Bless you, child.

MEDDLER

We were following a lead that led us here to the Vatican to an ancient passageway near where Nero's garden used to be. We made our way inside and found this man here chained to the wall.

POPE'S VOICE

That's terrible.

MEDDLER

Yes, well, he's very resilient. And he also claims to have been crucified over 2,000 years ago.

RABBI

Yes, I have many questions about this. Why was not my family informed that I was alive? You Romans know that it is sacred for Jews to have burial rites, and yet you continue to disregard the civil rights of the Judean people. On what authority do you stake your claim on the Holy Lands and the city of Jerusalem? I'll have you know that your Roman bankers have desecrated our sacred temple.

POPE'S VOICE

Rabbi, I would like to hereby formally apologize on behalf of the Roman Catholic church and the spiritual legacy of the Pontifex Maximus for any and all acts of terrorism, violence, or cultural discrimination perpetrated by the Roman government against the people of Judea and the occupation of your Holy Lands. These actions were taken in a time of primitive diplomacy, a time when Roman authorities did not appreciate that cultural diversity makes any pluralistic society richer, and in the long run, stronger.

RABBI

Oh. Well, thank you very much. You know, Mr. Meddler, I think I rather like this fellow. You're a very good leader of my church.

POPE'S VOICE

Bless you, my son.

RABBI

Bless you, my son.

POPE'S VOICE

Er, yes. What other questions have you, Rabbi?

MEDDLER

I have one. Am I allowed?

RABBI

Of course, Mr. Meddler.

MEDDLER

Why did you have this man locked in a dungeon for the past 2,000 years? Don't you think that's a gross violation of his civil rights? Don't you think the Church owes Jesus Christ a public apology?

POPE'S VOICE

Of course this a violation of his civil rights. And the attitude that we can simply bend the rules once or twice for someone is an attitude that must be cleansed from the Church. You have my firm commitment that an investigation into these infractions will begin immediately, as we all strive for a cleaner, more Holy Catholic Church. Thank you for coming, and bless you all.

MEDDLER

Wait, wait, wait, you didn't really answer my question. I mean, you sorta did, but what I really want to know is why? Why was this allowed to go on for so long? How can the Church call itself holy and yet discard members of its flock if they become too dangerous?

POPE'S VOICE

It's inexcusable. To think that something like this could continue on for so long is, of course, very disturbing. It speaks to a real problem with internal communication. I think it would be best to wait for the findings of our executive committee. Thanks again for your interest in the Catholic Church.

MEDDLER

Wait, but you still didn't answer how--

RABBI

He doesn't know, Mr. Meddler. Something tells me the secret was lost years ago.

MEDDLER

Why was my sister excommunicated?! How can you call yourself holy and so easily consign someone to eternal damnation?!

RABBI

Mr. Meddler. I understand your pain. But you must find a way in yourself to see the bigger picture.

MEDDLER

I'm sorry.

RABBI

Excuse me, your Eminence?

POPE'S VOICE

Yes, your Eminence?

RABBI

Oh, thank you. I think I like that title: Your Eminence. It's very nice. Um, you seem like a reasonable, clear minded-man.

POPE'S VOICE

Thank you.

RABBI

And yet, also, I sense an anxiety within you. Maybe about your great position, or the power of the Church?

POPE'S VOICE

Well, it's no secret the Church has been losing followers in recent years. We've had to tailor our message to the prevailing winds so many times sometimes I wonder what our message is anymore. I admit sometimes I go over the list of past Popes and wonder how they would feel about how I'm doing. But it is in those times that I pray and commune with our Father. And sometimes I don't understand very clearly the answer I get, but I always get an answer.

RABBI

You are a good Father for my Church. So powerful with the Spirit. People need to really believe that you believe that there is something more than all this, something wonderful.

POPE'S VOICE

I know. And I want to portray that confidence all the time. I get so . . . terrified that I'm not portraying that confidence enough . . . that I'm losing soul after soul because I'm distracted, or disconnected, or nervous.

RABBI

Well if no one's told you today, I'm here to tell you. Your instincts are 100% right. You don't ever have to wonder or worry. I make the guarantee to you right now that what you're doing serves a purpose, expressing your truth serves a purpose. Choosing to do right, and be honest and faithful, and help people, serves a purpose. We are in a great battle with the forces of evil on this earth, and every person that chooses to do good in their lives strikes another blow against Satan. So know, Father, that you are a mighty warrior in the kingdom of God.

POPE'S VOICE

Thank you, teacher. I wish I could offer you more. Ever since I became Cardinal I heard stories about you, we all heard stories, but it's so incredible. Popes for years have been sending down bread and wine to the dungeon, but it had become almost a tradition. I mean, no one imagined . . . we just assumed it was rats eating up all the wafers.

RABBI

They tried. I got very good at flicking my chains at them.

POPE'S VOICE

Are there anymore questions I can answer for you?

MEDDLER

Yeah, I'd like to know something. Are you gonna publicly acknowledge who this man is, and defer control of the Catholic Church to him?

POPE'S VOICE

(after pause)

No, Mr. Meddler. The Catholic Church is going to continue the way we have been.

MEDDLER

But how can you--? How can you call yourselves Christian if---

RABBI

Mr. Meddler. I think I understand. They don't need me anymore. The Church is powerful enough now without me.

POPE'S VOICE

We of course will follow your teachings with as much faith to God's will as He allows.

RABBI

I've become expendable.

POPE'S VOICE

I would never put it like that.

RABBI

Never the matter. You are a good leader of my Church. You may continue with my endorsement.

POPE'S VOICE

Thank you and bless you all.

RABBI

Bless you.

He turns to leave.

MEDDLER

Wait, so that's it? They just continue on as before? No public apology? No reckoning?

RABBI

No vengeance, Mr. Meddler. That's not my way.

SCALY

We'd better get back to the others.

They go back the way they came and meet the others. As Scaly starts to explain things silently to Jesus' crew, the Rabbi takes Meddler aside.

RABBI

So, Mr. Meddler. Here we are at the end of our journey. It might not have been what you would've liked but it's without a doubt the will of God.

MEDDLER

It seems that way.

RABBI

And speaking of. Are you ready to accept our Father into your heart fully and without those doubts that fuel you so?

MEDDLER

I've got . . . there's just so many things I want to know about . . . everything, I guess. Why are we all here? What's next for us?

RABBI

Well, Mr. Meddler, the first step on every journey of discovery is having a little faith. Sometimes you just have to believe and use that as a foundation to seek the truth.

MEDDLER

I don't . . . I don't have that much faith.

RABBI

But why will you not allow that for yourself? Why will you not allow yourself peace?

MEDDLER

Because . . . there are too many people counting on me, counting on me to always be skeptical, always be questioning.

RABBI

And yet it is your soul that is in danger of becoming lost.

MEDDLER

I guess so. I guess that's my burden.

RABBI

(laughs with a sense of irony)

Alright. So I presume this is where we part ways.

MEDDLER

Please contact me if you ever need anything.

RABBI

No. I won't. I think I will wait for you to contact me.

MEDDLER

Take care, Rabbi. And take care of Donna for me. She's very special to me.

RABBI

Take care of yourself, Fax.

The Rabbi leads all of his crew off stage right. Scaly lingers, looking at Meddler, and then follows the Rabbi. After a moment, the Cardinal walks on from stage right. He's not smoking.

MEDDLER

How did I know you were lurking around?

CARDINAL

Must be my charisma. Did you get all the answers you were looking for?

MEDDLER

No. Yeah. Who knows? Something in my gut tells me there's more, though.

CARDINAL

How did I know you'd say that?

MEDDLER

You're psychic. I guess I'll be seeing you around.

CARDINAL

I don't think so. Not until you find your path.

(starts to take off his hat and
vestements)

I've found my savior.

MEDDLER

You're the one that sent me those clues.

CARDINAL

Nicaea's wonderful, isn't she? She wanted me to tell you that she really did think you were very handsome. She and I will be joining the Rabbi later tonight.

MEDDLER

I'm happy for you both.

CARDINAL

Are you sure you won't reconsider? Seems a shame you went to all this trouble for nothing.

MEDDLER

It wasn't for nothing. I think I'm closer now than ever. But I've gotta keep searching. The truth is out there.

He exits stage left and the Cardinal
exits stage right. Lights.

RABBI'S VOICE

Hello, everyone. Thank you so much for coming tonight. Don't forget to tip your valet if you had your car parked. Some of those people live on those wages. And please take the time to tell your loved ones how much you care for them tonight. If they're here with you, do it right away. Life is short. And so beautiful. Believe in yourselves. Because I believe in you. Goodnight.

Cue theme music.