



© 2013 by Ross Carter
3661 Park Pointe Drive
Lexington, KY 40509
859 420-1162
ross@rosscarter.com

What Would Jesus Pack? premiered on March 12, 2015, at Studio Players in Lexington, Kentucky. The director was Eric Seale. The cast, in order of appearance, was:

OTIS J BENNETT	Kody Kiser
ALICIA BENNETT	Sharon Sikorski
NICK BENNETT	Stakar Fripp
SHARIA HUSSEIN	Meredith Crutcher
ROD WEATHERBY	Tommy Gatton
MERRYBELLE MCLEAN	Kathy Hobbs
CRAZED GUNMAN	Michael Mau

CAST OF CHARACTERS

4 m, 3 f

Otis J Bennett

a powerful conservative U.S. Senator

Alicia Bennett

his wife

Nick Bennett

their son, a college student

Sharia Hussein

Nick's girlfriend

Rod Weatherby

spokesman for the National Revolver Association

Merrybelle McLean

a fierce and formidable political fundraiser

A crazed gunman

PLACE

The Washington DC office of Senator Otis Bennett.

TIME

Easter Sunday, the present.

TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS

Interior set depicting an executive office. Doors R and L, a large doorway UC. A stage revolver. A plastic replica assault rifle.

Cover art © by Eric Seale.

ACT 1

Setting: A large desk and chair C. DL or DR, a television, its back toward the audience. Chairs, settee, etc. as needed. There is an open arch or doorway UC that is the portal for entering the office. The doorway is wide and leads into an entry hall with egress left and right. A door L leads to an inner office. A door R leads to a walk-in closet. The closet door opens into the office, and has two light switches nearby. There is a signed baseball on a table or bookcase near the door L. "Bennett for the Senate" poster on a wall.

At Rise: Telephone rings. Voice of OTIS is heard as he enters UC and crosses to desk.

OTIS

No, don't close the outer door, there's never anybody here on Easter weekend except the security guards. Just leave it open.

OTIS enters UC, followed by ALICIA, and answers the phone.

OTIS

Bennett. ... Excuse me, who is this? ... I'm sorry, how did you get this number? You'll have to— ... All right, one quick question. ... Uh-huh. ... Are you nuts? I don't know! What would Jesus— Look, you'll have to call my office in the morning. I'm trying to enjoy Easter with my family. ... Yes, that's right. Goodbye. (*Hangs up.*) Damn crazy lunatics. That's supposed to be a private line.

ALICIA

And you are supposed to be enjoying Easter with your family. How shall I break this to the children?

OTIS

We don't have children. We have a child. And he's in college. That doesn't count.

ALICIA

Ah, so that's why you call him your "no count" son.

OTIS

Well, what else do you call someone with no ambition? And no values. And no skills. You know, come to think of it, he does count. He counts the days till the election so he can vote against me.

ALICIA

Just because his values and principles are different from yours doesn't mean he doesn't have any.

OTIS

Au contraire, mon dear.

ALICIA

I love it when you speak French.

OTIS

I don't speak French. I've just heard you say "au contraire" often enough to figure out that it's French for bull—

ALICIA

Now, Otis. Nick doesn't follow in your footsteps because he follows his own drummer.

OTIS

He's in a band? Oh, brother.

ALICIA

I mean that he prefers the road not taken. He's certainly chosen an unconventional subject to major in.

OTIS

Women's Studies? Who the hell majors in Women's Studies?

ALICIA

Oh, I don't know. Perhaps a man who treats women with respect and admires their political history. Just a wild guess.

OTIS

Be that as it may, I have work to do.

ALICIA

Aren't you opposed to working on Sunday? Instead of coming into the office you could be, I don't know, having dinner with your son and his girlfriend.

OTIS

Oh, sure, that sounds like a great way to spend Easter Sunday. Having dinner with my son and his—Nick has a girlfriend?

ALICIA

He might. Who knows? We see little enough of him.

OTIS

He's too busy with his Women's Studies to spend time with a girl.

ALICIA

There's that, and there's also the fact that they always seem to dump him when they find he is the son of the Senator who scored a perfect 100 on the Conservative Index.

OTIS

What's wrong with that?

ALICIA

Still, it seems like we've seen less of him than usual. It could be a girlfriend. A mother suspects.

OTIS

Look, can we forget about Nick and his hypothetical girlfriend? I've got work to do. Thank you for dropping me off at the office. Now why don't you go shopping or something.

ALICIA

Yes, that's an excellent idea. Easter Sunday is a wonderful time to shop. All the stores are open.

OTIS

Please, cut the sarcasm. I need a clean and placid mind while I work on this speech. I don't want any bitterness or irony or savoir-faire to creep into my statements.

ALICIA

It's double-entendre, dear, not savoir-faire. Trust me, you needn't worry about savoir-faire.

OTIS

Well, Madame Parlez Vous, if you aren't going to day-part-ay, maybe you will help-ay-moi. Here's a pad and pencil. Let's write down the points I need to make when I go on TV.

ALICIA

Why didn't you ask one of your staff to come in and work today? Where is Magenta? She normally does your speechwriting for you.

OTIS

Hello? It's Easter. You can't ask anyone to work on Easter. Now, let's get to work. The Senate vote is Tuesday afternoon—

ALICIA

Oh, all right, just let me hang up my coat.

ALICIA crosses to and enters closet R.

I never can find the light switch in here.

OTIS

It's on the outside. Now as I was saying, the Senate vote is Tuesday—

ALICIA

No wonder I couldn't find it.

ALICIA crosses to light switch. Blackout.

OTIS

The other one.

Lights up. Light on in closet.

ALICIA

And there was light.

OTIS

The President is going on national television tomorrow night, and I'm giving my party's reply directly afterward. We'll write the draft today, and put the final spit and polish on the speech tomorrow morning.

ALICIA

You're going to write a speech all by yourself?

OTIS

What, are you nuts? The guy from the NRA is going to write the speech. I just want to have some notes ready so it will look like I've spent a lot of time thinking about it. Look, he'll be here any minute. Jesus, I need some coffee. Magenta! Damn, she isn't here. I'll have to go swipe some from the guards. You write down everything we've covered so far. I'll be back in minute. Keep the door open in case Rod Weatherby shows up. He's the NRA guy. Make him comfortable. Jesus, let there be coffee.

OTIS exits UC.

ALICIA

(Calls after him.) Bring me one too! Cream and sugar! And a sticky cinnamon roll with pecans. Warm. And some napkins.

ALICIA crosses to TV.

ALICIA

Christ, I wonder if this TV gets anything beside Faux News.

TV NEWSREADER VOICE

Welcome back to Faux News. *(as ALICIA changes channels on the TV:)* Faux News...Faux News...Faux News. *(ALICIA gives up.)* Everyone who sets up a web site hopes that his or her site will strike just the right note to make it go viral. Most are forgotten in a day or so, but here is one that looks to have some staying power. Everyone is talking about wwjp.com, which asks the simple question, if Jesus were walking the streets of America today, what firearm would he carry? In other words, What Would Jesus Pack?

ALICIA

Oh my god...

TV NEWSREADER VOICE

Social media have erupted into a giant flame war. Everyone, it seems, has an opinion. Small caliber handgun, 44 magnum, AR-15 assault rifle? Glock, Smith and Wesson, Colt? Just about every firearm is being anointed as the Jesus weapon of choice. Some even claim that Jesus would not carry a weapon at all.

VOICE OF INTERVIEWEE 1

Fully automatic machine gun, no question. Look, he's not subject to restrictive gun laws. None of this semi-automatic [bleep] for him. He's Jesus!

VOICE OF INTERVIEWEE 2

Well if he is wearing a robe he would have trouble with a holster, so I'd say something with a sling, say a lightweight carbine.

VOICE OF INTERVIEWEE 3

Look, I just don't understand these idiots who want to limit Jesus to a single weapon. He'd have at least a 32 automatic on one hip and a large caliber pistol on the other, something with stopping power. At least!

VOICE OF INTERVIEWEE 4

The question is not what kind of gun Jesus would carry; he can hurl thunderbolts or something. The question is what armor he would wear, and there's only one answer: Kevlar.

VOICE OF INTERVIEWEE 5

A crossbow?

VOICE OF INTERVIEWEE 6

Pepper spray, probably. I really don't think he would carry a gun. (Sound of derisive voices in background.)

TV NEWSREADER VOICE

So far no word from the NRA. Statements are expected soon from major conservative political leaders, although it seems clear that however they answer the question, a lot of voters are not going to like it.

ALICIA turns off TV.

ALICIA

I wonder if Otis knows about this. Christ!

JESUS CHRIST enters UC. Actually it is NICK BENNETT, dressed in robe, sandals, and Jesus beard/wig.

NICK

All my children, the bold and the beautiful, the young and the restless, behold my guiding light, for we have but one life to live, all the days of our lives.

ALICIA

You know, I can't say that beard does anything for your looks.

NICK

Verily, verily, life is but a dream.

ALICIA

Nick. What a pleasant surprise and that better not be one of my sheets.

NICK

No, don't worry. Wardrobe department. Where's Dad?

ALICIA

Gone to get coffee. By the way, if you don't mind my asking: is there any particular reason you are dressed up in that costume?

NICK

I want to show Dad. Don't I look great?

ALICIA

Yes. Apart from the beard. And the robe and the sandals. Shouldn't you have a crown of thorns?

NICK

I've got one. I was afraid I couldn't get it past the security guards. It's made of real thorns.

ALICIA

Too bad. If it were a replica they'd let it through no questions asked. I suppose you'd have to paint an orange circle around the tip of each thorn.

NICK

I didn't expect to see you here. What's up?

ALICIA

We haven't finished talking about your fashion statement.

NICK

Well, we both know how Dad feels about my being an atheis—

ALICIA

Shhh—I wouldn't say that word too loudly in here.

NICK

I'm portraying you-know-who in a play and I thought Dad would get a kick out of seeing me in this costume.

ALICIA

More to the point, you thought you would get a kick out of his reaction.

NICK

That too.

ALICIA

Well, your father will be back any moment now, and one or possibly both of you will find the encounter amusing. Though you might have chosen something a bit more dramatic. A giant lizard, perhaps. Or that Japanese monster insect, what's it called? Mithra? Mothra?

NICK

I'm not sure.

ALICIA

Whatever. The point is, why didn't you choose something more frightening?

NICK

Because this is the costume I'm wearing in the play tonight. Didn't I tell you? We're doing a student production of the Easter story.

ALICIA

You haven't changed colleges, have you? You're still at George Washington U?

NICK

And proud of it.

ALICIA

George Washington University, which used student fees to show the movie John Wayne Bobbitt Uncut?

NICK

That's us.

ALICIA

The same GWU that celebrated Islamo-Fascism Awareness Week?

NICK

One of our finest moments.

ALICIA

And you're doing the Easter story?

NICK

Well, it's an adaptation. It's called Nazi Resurrection.

ALICIA

For a moment there I was worried.

NICK

Compared to other student productions, Nazi Resurrection is pretty tame. I have this great speech just before I get shot. "I should have died hereafter ..."

ALICIA

Shot? With a biblical bullet?

NICK

Right. Instead of dying on a cross, I get shot in the back of the head by the Gestapo.

ALICIA

Is it too late to get tickets? I'm sure your father will want to go.

NICK

Free admission. Our expenses were covered by a grant from the NRA.

ALICIA

The plot thickens.

NICK

They took the viewpoint that a single well-placed head shot makes a quick clean kill, instant, no pain, much more humane than suffering for hours on a cross. They even sent us a German Luger to use. A real one. For verisimilitude.

ALICIA

The NRA used the word verisimilitude?

NICK

I think they called it believeableness. Anyway, it was a good deal for us. I wanted to bring the Luger to show Dad but I was afraid that I—

ALICIA

That you couldn't get it past the guards. Very likely true.

NICK

I hope Dad gets back soon. I need to return this costume. I'm not supposed to remove it from the theater.

ALICIA

I'll see if I can find him.

NICK

By the way, if you see a young woman nosing around, she's a friend of mine. I told her she could score an interview today. The door will be open and she can walk right in.

ALICIA

If she's from Faux News I'm sure she will be welcome. Oh, hang on, this might not be a good time. Have you heard about this What Would Jesus Pack business?

NICK

Have I heard about it? Everybody has heard about it. Everybody's arguing about it. It's a hoot. Anybody with half a brain knows it's an impossible premise. It's a question that can't be answered.

ALICIA

Sadly, not everyone possesses half a brain.

NICK

Those are the ones who assume that it's a valid question and start arguing with each other about the answer. I love it. Anyway, Shar—that's my friend—wants to ask Dad how he answers the question. It won't take long. I know he's busy.

ALICIA

And whom does your friend report for?

NICK

The George Washington University school newspaper. The Hatchet.

ALICIA

I think I had better go warn your father.

NICK

Don't tell him I'm here.

ALICIA exits UC. NICK turns on TV. Goes through same sequence as earlier, changing channels and hearing Faux News...Faux News...Faux News.

TV NEWSREADER VOICE

Welcome back to Faux News. Things are heating up on the National Mall, where over ten thousand protesters have assembled to protest the President's proposed

gun control bill. While the protesters remain united in opposition to gun control, signs of a schism are becoming evident.

VOICE OF PROTESTER 1

Here's the point: reasonable minds can differ about Jesus's choice of weapon. Rifle, shotgun, whatever, you can make a case for all of them. Hell, even a sword. But to say that our savior would walk around unarmed, defenseless, that's unAmerican, unchristian, and un-conservative. Worst of all, it's betraying the NRA.

VOICE OF PROTESTER 2

I think that if Jesus were here today, he wouldn't need to defend himself. He would be surrounded by love. And if he gets in a jam, he can always make a plague or a drought.

VOICE OF PROTESTER 3

There are lunatics wherever you go. There's lunatics here saying Jesus would not pack.

VOICE OF PROTESTER 4

There's lunatics here saying Jesus would carry a gun. There's lunatics everywhere.

NICK

Criminy.

NICK turns off TV. SHAR enters UC.

SHAR

Knock knock. (*Sees Nick.*) My sweet lord!

NICK

Shar!

NICK and SHAR embrace.

SHAR

Is your Dad here?

NICK

He just stepped out. Look, I haven't told him about us, so for the time being we're just friends OK? Acquaintances.

SHAR

Well, OK, but when are you going to tell him that I'm—

NICK

Shhhh. Patience my child. All will be revealed in the fullness of time.

SHAR

I'd like to reveal your fullness right now. If I can just touch the heel of your garment...

NICK

Please not now.

SHAR

Oh I forgot. It takes you three days to rise.

NICK

One time! That happened one time!

SHAR

All a girl wants is a little due process.

NICK

Shar, please. Remember where we are.

SHAR

That's one way to to spoil the moment. Is your Dad coming back right away?

NICK

No idea. Look, while we're waiting, maybe you can help me go over my lines for the play.

SHAR

Sure. Where should we start?

NICK

My big speech. Just before the execution. Here.

NICK hands SHAR a copy of the script.

SHAR

Prisoner! Do you have any last words?

NICK

Our paths have now diverged. I forgive you; you don't know what you're doing anyway. I should have died hereafter. For what is today? Is today an ending? Or a beginning? Ummmm.

SHAR

Today you may be—

NICK

Today you may be with me in Paradise. It may be we shall touch the Happy Isles, and see the great Achilles, whom we knew. The moving finger writes: not wisely, but too well.

ALICIA enters UC carrying a tray with coffee, pastry, etc.

ALICIA

Well I didn't find Otis, but I found where the guards keep the coffee. (*Sees Nick and Shar, still in embrace*) Oh, the mind races. (*Puts down the tray.*) Let me see if I can work this out. You two are enjoying a degree of intimacy that was once euphemistically called "dating." I don't know what it's called nowadays.