

THE DAVIDSON AFFAIR

A revised and shortened version of the dramatisation
by Ian McGregor from the book by Stuart Jackman

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Shortened, revised version: Nickie Cox 2015

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Radius

The Religious Drama Society of Great Britain

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CHARACTERS:

Rome Herald Staff

Drewy Patros, Editor in Chief

Cass Tennel, Investigative Journalist

Nickie Kapper, Editor

Rosa, Photographer

N.B. With a slight change of name, all the above can be played by either men or women

In Judaea

Pilate

Pilate's Secretary (male or female)

Zacchaeus

Tom, a furniture removal man

Thomas Didymus

Mary Magdala

Caiaphas

Caiaphas's Advisor (male or female)

Cleopas

SCENE 1

CASS TENNEL's apartment. Mobile rings. CASS enters. Finds his mobile. DREWY PATROS on the other side of the stage, also with mobile.

CASS *(expansively, cod Italian accent)* Bella, my beautiful Bella!

PATR Get packed, Cass; I'm sending you to Jerusalem

CASS *(Pause)* Drewy ... I'm on leave.

PATR I'm sorry, but this is dynamite.

CASS *(resigned)* O.K. What's the story?

PATR Davidson.

CASS What about him?

PATR They hanged him, Friday afternoon.

CASS Did they now? And what do you want me to do? Lay a wreath?

PATR Stuff your flowers, Cass. A fish steak and some rolls, more like.

CASS *(moving phone to other ear)* Bad line, Drewy. I thought I heard you say he was dead.

PATR Dead ... and buried.

CASS And now he's hungry?

PATR I know. It doesn't make sense. But word's come through from Nickie and she's nobody's fool.

CASS What does she say, Drewy?

PATR *(reading text)* "Jesus Davidson, executed for treason Friday, reported seen in city early this morning following small earthquake 04.00 hours. Several members Jewish Army guard detail in close arrest pending enquiry suggest immediate investigation"

CASS Who was - or is - Jesus Davidson?

PATR Good question, Cass. But you'll have to go to Jerusalem to find the answer. All we know here is that he was a small town craftsman, plumber or joiner or something - who got himself tangled up in politics.

CASS Oh, one of those!

PATR Precisely; one of those. And with the present state of things in the Middle East it could snowball in 24 hours. We're going to scoop it even if it kills you! Anything you need, ask Nickie.

CASS Now, just a minute, Drewy ... I...

PATR Make it good, boy

(Exit PATROS)

SCENE 2

Jerusalem Office of the Rome Herald Newspaper. ROSA & CASS. CASS reads back his copy on his laptop, occasionally making alterations.

CASS Jerusalem today is a city of rumour and unrest.

Along these streets, just a week ago yesterday, Jesus Davidson made his triumphal entry into the city. If his aim was to seize control of the government it is baffling why he then held back as nothing could have stopped him.

But he slipped out of the city and disappeared. The moment of opportunity was lost. On Thursday evening he was arrested, betrayed to the Sanhedrin, it is believed, by one of his closest friends.

While troops moved into key points in the city, the Sanhedrin sat through the night and on Friday presented their verdict to the Governor-General who signed the necessary order and Davidson was executed at noon that same day.

But early yesterday morning, something happened at the tomb of Jesus Davidson. Just exactly what it was has been difficult to determine but the immediate outcome has been a widespread and persistent rumour that the dead man, somehow, is alive again.

As of yet, no official statement has been made and attention is now focused on the Governor-General in the light of this new crisis.

(Enter NICKIE KAPPER)

KAPP It's on. The Governor will see you. But it's got to be at the Residency.

CASS That's quite a break. I thought he was strictly for 'no comment'.

KAPP Oh, he is; he is indeed. I doubt if even you will be able to get anything out of him.

CASS Then why agree to the interview?

KAPP You know Pilate. He always likes to do the right thing.

CASS Ready?

ROSA Yes, fine.

SCENE 3

The Residency. CASS and ROSA. PILATE'S SECRETARY enters.

SEC H.E. is on his way down. He has a very busy schedule so please keep it brief.

(SEC exits. PILATE enters. CASS turns on his Dictaphone to record the conversation)

CASS Lord Pilate, would you care to make a comment on this new crisis?

PILATE Certainly, Mr. Tennel. But of course it's not a crisis, you know. Nothing like one. Everything is under control. There is absolutely no cause for alarm: none whatever.

CASS That's good to know, Sir. But there is this rumour about Jesus Davidson...

PILATE Davidson's dead. Dead and buried. I can see no point in discussing him now.

CASS The rumour is, Sir, that he's alive again.

PILATE Alive again? Oh, come now, Mr. Tennel.

CASS Still alive then; if you prefer it that way.

PILATE I prefer it neither way. He was executed by soldiers of the Tenth Legion.

CASS But the rumours Sir - can they just be ignored?

PILATE This is Jerusalem, my dear chap; you must appreciate that rumour is meat and drink to them here in the Middle East

CASS What is your view then of the incident at the tomb this morning?

PILATE I'm afraid I don't quite follow you, Mr. Tennel.

CASS I mean the earthquake, and so on.

PILATE Oh, the 'earthquake'. I am told there was a slight tremor just before dawn. It's the season for them of course. Nothing remarkable.

CASS Whatever the size of the earthquake - it was enough to break open the tomb, I understood!

PILATE Oh really? How very unpleasant!

CASS What significance do you attach to the behaviour of the guard?

PILATE What significance? It was ... it was, very unfortunate. Not our boys, of course: Jewish Army. Good lads, all of them. But a little - well, a little inexperienced.

CASS You mean they panicked!

PILATE Ooh - panic's a strong word. Too strong, I think.

CASS. Lord Pilate. Why was it necessary to maintain a guard over the tomb of a dead man?

PILATE I wondered whether you would ask me that: a good question.

CASS And the answer?

PILATE. I'm afraid it's rather complicated. A matter, very largely, of religion.

CASS Oh?

PILATE Jewish religion. It means a lot to them, you know.

CASS But how does religion come into it? We were led to believe that Jesus Davidson was a political prisoner executed for high treason.