

The Coming of Jed Crest

One-Act Play

by

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THE COMING OF JED CREST

A small, rather old fashioned café. On one side of the set is a shop window that looks out onto the street. A net, half curtain, covers the window allowing only the sky to be seen above it. On the opposite side, there is a counter with cups, saucers etc., on it. Near the back of the stage, where the window ends, is the door onto the street. Behind the counter is an exit to the kitchen. The furniture comprises of chairs and tables (four chairs to a table). Some of the tables have been laid with check table cloths. Kerry, a woman of about forty, is shaking a tablecloth and relaying a table. Pat, aged about fifty eight, is behind the counter polishing the work top.

Pat You'll need a clean tablecloth for that one in the corner, there's something sticky on it.

Kerry I don't know Mum, why you bother with tablecloths, we're only an ordinary old caff.

Pat We've always had tablecloths, your father used to say, it makes the place seem more homely.

Kerry Maybe it did at one time, probably has the opposite effect now.

Pat (*Defensive*) There's nothing wrong with this café.

Kerry Nothing a make-over couldn't put right.

Pat That would cost money that we haven't got.

Kerry Well, you're going to have to do something, sometime.

Pat No. We are all right here. Anyway the lease is up in a couple of years.

It's okay, we could just do with a few more customers, that's all.

Kerry Well, we're not going to get them with things like (*she points to a hand-bill that is pinned to the counter*) that stuck up there. Who wants to eat their lunch with a religious notice telling them to repent and be ready for the second coming - enough to put anyone off their fry-up.

Pat Oh, old Bert Ross asked me if I'd put that up for him.

Kerry You should have refused.

Pat I didn't feel I could. He was such a good friend to your dad when he was ill. I'll take it down in a couple of days.

Kerry picks up a mat by the front door. She opens door and shakes mat.

Kerry Here comes the morning rush, (*she closes door and replaces mat*) the three big spenders.

Pat The lads from the Job Centre!

Kerry I'd hardly call them lads.

Pat They're nice chaps though.

Kerry Their three teas is not going to keep us going, never even splash out on a sandwich or a bun.

Pat They are regulars, they may tell their friends about us.

Kerry What! the rest of the unemployed.

Kerry exits into the kitchen. Harry enters from the street followed by Ben and Colin. Harry is carrying a couple of library books.

Harry Morning, Pat.

Ben and Colin also acknowledge her.

Pat Good morning lads, how are we today?

Harry Mustn't grumble.

The three men sit down at one of the tables.

Ben What d'you mean mustn't grumble?

Harry Well we're here aren't we, Ben?

Ben Yes, I reckon I'll be coming here for the rest of my life. I shouldn't think I'll ever get work again.

Colin We are in a dismal mood today.

Pat The usual is it?

Harry Thanks Pat.

Pat Three teas coming up.

Colin *(To Ben)* You've got to look on the bright side - think positive.

Ben It's all right for you Colin, you're younger than me.

Colin *(Chuckles)* Oh yes, I'm a youngster. *(Changes mood)* Try telling that to them up the street. I was a good Office Manager, but I can't even get a clerks job now. Over qualified.

Ben Well they certainly don't want store men.

Harry Printers, neither.

Colin When they asked me once, what else I could do. I told them I could work a comptometer. The woman didn't have clue what I was talking about.

Ben *(Seriously)* Comptometers went out years ago.

Colin I know they did. It was only a joke, but she didn't see it that way.

Harry Like when I told them I knew how to charge-up accumulators. My old dad had a shed at the bottom of the garden and people used to bring them to him for recharging.

Pat brings the teas to their table.

Pat Accumulators! I thought you went to a betting shop for them.

Harry No, these were to power your wireless. This was before the war when wirelesses needed to be charged-up very week or so.

Pat Oh, that was before my time. *(she returns to counter)*.

Ben I reckon *(pointing to hand-bill)* there's more chance of that happening than us getting jobs.

Harry and Colin look towards hand-bill.

Harry Why, what's it say?

Colin *(Leans forward to read it)* They want us all to go down to the Memorial Hall, to prepare ourselves for the Second Coming of Christ.

Harry *(To Ben)* Could be, you're right.

Colin I don't know about that. *(slight pause)* I think the event they are referring to may have already happened.

Harry You do? How's that?

Ben I think we would have heard about it, if it had.

Colin *(He takes a sip of his tea)* Have any of you heard of the Brethren of the Tabernacle?

Harry Yes, they're the lot, a sect, who hold some old box, which they say holds the secret to world peace - but they won't open it.

Colin That's right, it's a casket actually. They say it cannot be opened until the elders of all the major religions are present.

Ben I've always thought they were a bunch of cranks.

Colin They may be. However, about err, forty years ago, I, along with a girl friend, broke into a disused temple of the brethren.

Harry *(Surprised)* You broke into their church? I don't believe it.

Colin *(Smiling)* I was a bit wild in my youth.

Harry I wouldn't have had you down for doing that sort of thing.

Ben I bet you patronised the local billiard halls in those days.

Colin I used to go to that one over Burtons.

Pat My Fred used to go there.

Harry Why did you break in, Colin?

Colin Just for a lark really. This girlfriend of mine worked for the Brethren, in their office. She told me she thought the casket was held there, in this old cemetery.

Harry And you thought it worth breaking the law for?

Colin It wasn't like that, Harry. We didn't go there intending to break in, just to have a look around. It was an old ramshackle of a building.

Ben And?

Colin Well, I tried the door, it was locked but it was rusty and the wood rotten, I gave it a slight push and it gave way, so we decided to take a look inside

Pat Rather you than me.

Colin It was all rather eerie. *(He stands up and starts to walk around)*

There was a musty smell, but as it was a moonlight night, shafts of light from the small windows illuminated it enough for us to see, also there was a hole in the roof. The place was filled with wooden pews and it was all incredibly dirty. Towards the back of this room there was another smaller room which held the tomb of the founder of the sect. Behind the tomb, on a ledge, we found a small stone container. Inside this was a metal casket. I managed to open it and found a number of yellowing papers. *(He takes a drink of his tea).*

Harry What did they tell you?

Colin We couldn't make out much of what was written, it seemed to be in Latin.

Ben And you could see all this just by moonlight?

Colin No. I'd brought a torch from the car.

Harry And you could read Latin?

Colin No, neither of us could. But we were lucky to find another document that was written in English. Much of ink had faded making it difficult to read, but what we did decipher, sent a shiver down our spines. I remember it was just then we had another shock, *(he is back by the table now)* We heard footsteps approaching. As they got closer, Sally, that was my girlfriend's name, grabbed hold of me. I held her tightly.

Ben Sounds good to me.

The listeners laugh slightly. Colin puts down his cup and starts walking about again.

Colin *(Solemnly)* We weren't laughing, we were really scared. The footsteps stopped right outside of the building and apart from the odd scuffle of feet there was no other sound. The person was waiting outside. Standing still, not able to move, we were getting cold. Although, it wasn't the cold that started us trembling. There was a scurry from a corner of the room and a large rat ran along the side of the wall. Sally was about to scream but I managed to put my hand over her mouth. After standing there for what seemed for ages, we heard a man's voice say "I thought you weren't coming" a woman replied "I had difficulty in getting away". There was a pause, I imagined they were kissing, then they walked away.

Harry So what was it you found?

Colin The document, apart from the fading ink, was difficult to read as it seemed to be written in Old English, with lots of thee's and thou's, but as far as I can remember it read something like this; Go and prepare yourselves and your children for the second coming of Christ. And it went on to say; The Holy seed shall be planted and in the year of one thousand nine hundred and forty four he shall be reborn. The place of birth was given as Tottington, and it said he would be born on the fourth day of the fifth month to humble people. After that the writing became unreadable. I think the most interesting thing is the year of his birth. I was born in the 1940's, so he would be around our age now, or a little older.

Henry So it turned out to be a joke.

Colin I don't think so, *(pause)* I don't know.

Ben Do you have this document now?

Colin No. Sally made me put it back in the casket.

Ben And what did she think about it?

Colin She was upset - about what we'd done. We didn't discuss at the time, we both wanted to get out of there as quickly as possible.

Harry Surely you didn't believe what it said?

Colin I didn't know what to believe, but later I followed up the information. I got in touch with the Register of Births and Deaths for the Tottington area, it's near to Bury, and they were able to find entries for births registered for the 4th May 1944. Fortunately, there were only three, and two of those were for girls. The boy was named Stanley Creed and the address given was a Mill Lane. I visited my local library and searched through telephone books for the area, and sure enough there was someone with the name of Creed, still living in Mill Lane.

Harry and Ben register surprise.

Pat *(Jokingly)* So, did you ring the number and ask to speak to Jesus?

Kerry *(Seriously)* Mum, let him tell the story.

Colin No, I didn't phone. I wouldn't have known what to say. *(To Pat)* Look, before I go on could I have another cup of tea? *(He passes his cup to Pat and then sits down).*

Pat Of course.

Ben I think I'll have another one, too.

Harry So will I.

Ben Also I'll have one of your scones, Pat.

Pat Coming up.

Kerry Wonders will never cease. We could make a profit this week.

Pat and Kerry pour and serve the teas and the scone, then everyone looks towards Colin.

Colin I persuaded Sally to come with me to Tottington. We found Mill Lane and the house. We sat in the car outside for some time just looking at it. Eventually we plucked up courage and got out of the car. The house was in a row of run down old cottages. We knocked, *(Colin stands up and moves about)* the door was opened by a lady, who turned out to be Stanley's mother. He wasn't there, but we had a stroke of luck, his mother somehow got the idea that we were his friends from Butlin's, where he had worked as a Redcoat. She willingly talked about his career, telling us he was a Pop-Singer now having formed his own rock group. We had to admit that we hadn't heard of him. Then she told us he had changed his name and he now called himself Jed Crest.

Pat, who has been listening intently, drops a cup she has been drying. The sound of it falling causes the others to look at her.

Harry You alright, Pat?

Pat *(After a moment)* Yes. *(Pause)* Yes I'm okay. It was just hearing that name.

Kerry You've got a lot of old 45's of his, Mum. *(Pat nods her head)*. You didn't know him, did you? *(Pat nods her head again)*.

Colin *(Who moves closer to Pat)* What a coincidence.

Kerry How did you come to know him?

Pat *(She hesitates)* Oh, I'll tell you about it later. *(To Colin)* Carry on, Colin.

Colin Well, as I said he called himself Jed Crest, and he called his group "Miracle". We started to follow his career in the Melody Maker.

Ben I used to buy that each week.

Colin His first recording was "I'll Walk Across the Water for You" but it didn't really take off. However, his next one "Save The World with Love" got into the top ten. Any of you remember it?

Pat *(Nodding her head)* Lovely song.

Ben I remember it. *(starts humming a few bars)*.

Harry Can't say I do.

Colin *(Pulling a face)* I'm not surprised with Ben's rendition. *(Pause)* But you do see where I'm going? His real name is Creed. That has religious connections. His stage name has the initials J.C., and he's named his group, Miracle. Then those two numbers with the titles I'll Walk Across the Water for You, and Save The World with Love. That all adds up to quite a coincidence, doesn't it?

Harry Not really, it isn't proof of anything.

Colin Well, I don't think you can ignore it.

Harry Look, lots of young boys and girls worked at Butlin's as Redcoats, and as far as the name, Creed doesn't sound like a pop star, so he changed it to Crest. And the songs, well the title Save the World... sounds like any other 'flower-power song' from around the time.

Colin What do you think, Pat? You met him.

Pat He was just an ordinary chap.

Colin When you say, you met him, do you mean you asked him for his autograph, or did you actually know him?

Pat I knew him.

Kerry You weren't a groupie, were you, Mum?

Pat *(Quickly)* No I was not. *(Pause)* But I did go out with him for a while.

Colin And was there anything about him? Was he religious? Did he seem in anyway different to you?

Pat I didn't think he was Jesus Christ, if that's what you mean. *(Pause)* He was like other lads at the time, except, perhaps he was a bit nicer than most.

Ben Yet, he never really reached the big time, did he? I can't even remember any of his other songs.

Pat is just about to answer Ben.

Colin He was unlucky, Jed's modest success was swamped by Beatle-Mania. His group lacked publicity, the press were only interested in the antics of the Beatles.

Ben So what happened to him?

Colin Oh, he continued to play the clubs, mostly in the north and midlands.

Pat That's when I met him, at a club in Birmingham.

Colin I intended going to a gig of his in Derby, and to try to meet him, but before I was able, he was killed.

Harry Killed!

Colin He died at a gig when the cable of the mike he was holding became live. There was no way he could survive 2,000 volts.

Kerry Ooh, that's horrible. Did you know, Mum?

Pat Yes, I knew.

Pause.

Harry *(To Colin)* You don't really believe he was the Messiah, do you?

Colin I've an open mind, but you must admit the whole thing was a bit weird.

