

A MESSIAH

THE STAGEPLAY

By

GURMEET MATTU



A MsSIAH

**The stage play by
Gurmeet Mattu**

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AUTHORS'S NOTE

A MsSiah was written in the mid-1980s and reflects those times. I'd already written, and had performed, a few stage plays, but they were dialect driven comedies set in Scotland. This was written as an exercise only, to prove to myself that I could write something more weighty and was never intended for production. Somehow the director Lillian Cattigan got a hold of the script and called me to ask permission to produce it. I agreed, though I didn't know if it would do anything for my reputation. In any case it was performed as a joint production by Strathclyde Theatre Group and Roughcast Music Theatre at Strathclyde University's Ramshorn Theatre in Glasgow with a totally female cast of 14, a female crew and director. They even threw me out of the rehearsals! Just to confirm for those who are confused by my name, I am male. The reviews said "There is good writing here" - *Glasgow Herald* and "Mattu certainly does not shirk big issues" - *The Scotsman*. Despite ostensibly being a feminist play my original intent was only to play about with the Christ mythos, so maybe from that point of view it was a failure, though I'd still claim it was the best piece of pure dramatic writing I've ever done. If anybody fancies reviving it please contact my agent, Mike Sharland at

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

Jessica - A MsSiah

Donna - Her Mother

Her Disciples -

Petra - A true believer

Judy - A Manipulator

Jane - A stripper

Sandy - A hooker

Libby - A lesbian.

Bertha - A housewife

Jean - A housewife

Jemi - A housewife

Phyllis - A housewife

Martha - An air stewardess

Tammy - A business executive

Simone - A supermodel

SETS

Women's Peace Camp

TV chat show studio

A DARK STAGE. A SPOTLIGHT SHINES CENTRE STAGE
PETRA ENTERS AND WALKS INTO THE SPOT.

PETRA: Yes, I knew Jessica, and knew her well. Or not at all, if you care to think like that. What was she? A mystery, and proud to be so. She moved me, and that is all that matters. That she existed and touched the lives of others. Do I mourn at her passing? Oh yes, I miss her so. And yet, and yet. She is not gone.

LIGHTS COME UP SLOWLY, REVEALING A 'WOMEN'S PEACE CAMP' OUTSIDE A MILITARY BASE, AS JUDY ENTERS.

PETRA: Hi, Judy.

JUDY: Hi, Petra, what 's happening ?

PETRA: The story so far ? Evolution. Getting smart, slow but steady. Knocked down, dragged back now and again, still climbing.

JUDY: Where are we going ?

PETRA: Who knows.

JUDY: Where have we been ?

PETRA: Well, pay your regards to Ramapithecus, Homo Habilis, Homo Erectus, Homo Neanderthal, and Homo Sapiens, with a kindly nod to our cousins, the madames Australopithecus. Wave a hand to barbarism, feudalism, imperialism, fascism, communism and feminism.

JUDY: Yeah ? What about sadism and masochism ?

PETRA: Said it, fascism and communism. Spare a thought for Jehovah, Zeus, Odin, Ra, Vishnu, Jupiter.

JUDY: Roll up ! Roll up ! Take your pick !

PETRA: A god a day keeps the devil at bay. Who 's your chosen one, one, Judy ?

JUDY : God ? Give me a gun. It's all bullshit, howling at the moon.

SINGING FROM OFF-STAGE CATCHES THEIR ATTENTION.

JUDY: It's Mad Donna. Pleased with the world. You be nice to her.

JUDY: As always.

DONNA, HEAVY WITH CHILD, ENTERS.

PETRA: Hi, Donna.

DONNA: Hal-lo, girls.

JUDY PACES ROUND DONNA, TAKING IN THE FACT OF HER PREGNANCY.

JUDY: Got yourself knocked up, I see.

DONNA : (PROUDLY) My baby. (SHE PATS HER BULGE)

JUDY : You were a founder member, Donna, chained to railings, remember? You've let the side down.

PETRA: Leave her alone, Judy.

JUDY: She let the side down. Deny it.

PETRA: It wasn't like that. I didn't do it. Not with anybody.

JUDY: Oh, now we 're getting somewhere Immaculate, was it ?

DONNA: (CONFIDENTIALLY) Do you know what I think ? I think it came from there. (SHE LOOKS UP)

JUDY: A pilot ! Did he have a smart uniform, Donna ? Did he smell of aftershave?

DONNA: No no I mean .. it's .. it's .. a miracle.

(PETRA PUTS AN ARM AROUND DONNA)

Petra: It 's okay, Donna, I believe you.

JUDY: Well I don't. You've committed sexual treason.

DONNA: I didn't, Petra, I didn't ... tell her. I must be so fertile that life just springs up inside.

JUDY: Doesn't work that way, traitor, you know your biology. Ovum plus sperm equals big belly. Question ... who supplied the sperm?

PETRA: Cut it out, Judy.

DONNA: No, she's right to ask. But I don't know. (PAUSE) It must have been God.

JUDY: Ah ha ! You,, of course, are such a gorgeous female that even God's got to have bang at you. But leaving that aside, we come to the assumption that God must be a man, ergo the ante-natal state.

PETRA PULLS DONNA AWAY FROM JUDY.

PETRA: Did someone interfere with you, Donna ? A man ? Were you raped ? Do you know what I mean ? Did a man do something to you ? (DONNA SHAKES HER HEAD) You were, Donna ! You were !

JUDY: (LOUD) Did he make you come, Donna ? This incredible cosmic screw you had, surely God would make you come. If anybody can guarantee the Big O, it's surely God.

PETRA: That's disgusting.

JUDY: So you think God's a man too.

PETRA: I didn't say that.

JUDY: Well why so touchy about the big fella's sexual prowess ? Is it blasphemous to mock a God that doesn't exist ? Bow down your head to the almighty, well-hung, man-god :

DONNA PULLS AWAY FROM PETRA.

DONNA: I hear what you say. ... but I know what you think. Mad Donna! Mad Donna! Mad Donna! It doesn't matter who ignited the spark ... man, woman, child ... god, beast or demon. From my belly will come a daughter who will shake the world. The seas will tremble at her passing , and the glory of her name will bring salvation to our hearts.

DONNA PAUSES, TIRED, THEN RUNS OFF.

JUDY: She's a total and utter loon.

PETRA: You shouldn't have done that, said what you said. She's only a child.

JUDY: She needs to be shocked into sanity. You're too soft on her. I've thought that before, that you're soft.

PETRA: Some of us think you're too tough.

JUDY: Revolutions aren't won by soft sympathy. If I'm tough, it's because I've got to be.

PETRA: (TURNING AWAY) If Donna would only admit she was raped. I could understand that.

JUDY: She's simple enough to do it willingly ... just for the experience.

PETRA: No, not that either.

JUDY: You're as crazy as she is. You're not telling me you believe ... (MIMICS DONNA) 'from my belly will come a daughter....

PETRA: I'm willing to wait and see.

JUDY: Loonies breed loonies, sunshine, and loonies don't shake the world.

PETRA RAISES HER HAND IN A NAZI SALUTE.

PETRA: Hitler was a loony.

JUDY: Yeah, that's what we need ... the brown blouse brigade.

THEY LINK ARMS AND GOOSE-STEP OFF, LAUGHING.

WE HEAR A STORM RAGING. LIGHTS DIM A LITTLE. DONNA RUNS ON. SHE IS NO LONGER PREGNANT.

DONNA: Jessica was born at the time of the grey wind howling. The pine wood planks of the rough shack shock, and I laughed when I saw her ...

I remember snow swirling, saw it through the cracked window. And the howl of wolves.

And she tasted my milk.

I looked down and saw through her disguise. Saw the soft smooth beauty she was to be. Felt the muscles that were to form under her slack flesh. Knew the power her baby-grip foretold.

The destiny in her unfocussed eyes.

I swept back my hair from my tear-streaked face, pulled her closer. Angry that her coming was here ... in a desolate hovel, on a grimy bed, with sweat her midwife. But I smiled too, and not just with mother love, I remembered the future my baby had.

My baby Jess, with her chubby pink thighs. Her little birthmark.

Sign of a prophet, a provider, a shouter from hilltops. I kissed her little head, its wisps of reddish hair, and she sucked my bulging breast.

I'd born a god.

SHE LOOKS AROUND FEARFULLY, AS IF SHE'S REVEALED TOO MUCH, THEN RUNS OFF.

THE STORM ABATES, GIVING WAY TO SUBDUED DISCO MUSIC AND PUB NOISES. PETRA AND JUDY ENTER CARRYING DRINKS.

JUDY : She's as crazy as her mother.

PETRA: You're repeating yourself.

JUDY: Did you see what happened ?

PETRA: With my own eyes.

JUDY: That drunk guy, up to the eyeballs, pulled out his dick and pissed into his glass. In full view, the public bar. And he says to Jess 'okay, ya holy bitch, there's the water, now turn it into wine.'

PETRA: I saw it.

JUDY: And Jess passes her hands over the glass and says, 'It is done, my son. Drink deeply.

PETRA: She's got style.

JUDY: She socked it to him, drunk pig.

PETRA: She is someone special, isn't she.

JUDY: Don't start that again. She's a smart kid, that's all.

PETRA: You remember what Mad Donna said?

JUDY: (ANGRILY) I remember. When she does something special then I'll join in your frenzies and fantasies. But she really gave it to that guy, the asshole.

PETRA: *He* saw something special in her, called her a 'holy' bitch.

JUDY: Yeah, yeah, she 's serene and calm and poised and understanding, that shines out a mile. I could be too, if I didn't smoke, didn't drink, and spent half my life contemplating my own blue eyes.

PETRA: There's more to Jess than that, and you know it. She 's a born leader for a start. A leader for the movement, that would be good.

JUDY : We 've always been against personality politics. The message is what counts.

PETRA: A spokeswoman for the cause then, she 'd be good at that.

JUDY: (COLDLY) Don't push too hard, kid.

PETRA TURNS AWAY.

TO MALE CHEERS JANE ENTERS. SHE: GOES TO CENTRE STAGE AND BEGINS STRIP ROUTINE TO DISCO MUSIC.

JUDY : If Jess can get through to a blind bitch like that, then I'll believe she's something special.

PETRA: She doesn't like challenges, you know that. She won't spin miracles just to prove something to you.

JUDY: Where the hell is she anyway ?

PETRA: In the loo. (AS JESS ENTERS) Here she comes. Hi, Jess, over here. No converts in the lavs?

JESS WALKS ACROSS TO THEM, HAVING NOTICED JANE.

JESS Naah, they're pre-occupied with paint.

THEY ALL TURN TO WATCH JANE PERFORMING.

JUDY: This is sheer exploitation, Jess.

JESS: I know.

JUDY: That poor girl.

JESS: I know.

JUDY: Does she even know what she 's doing ? What she's betraying ?

JESS: Look through their eyes. Know your enemy.

JUDY: But there comes a time for action.

JESS: I know.

PETRA : We'll talk to her later.

PETRA TRIES TO TURN JESS AWAY, BUT IS PUSHED ASIDE.

JESS : The time is now.

JESS WALKS OVER AND STANDS DIRECTLY IN FRONT OF JANE.

PETRA: You goaded her into that.

JUDY: If she 's so special, she'll know..

JESS REMOVES HER JACKET AND PLACES IT OVER JANE 'S SHOULDERS.

JESS: Let me clothe you, sister.

JANE: What's your game ?

JESS: You must be cold.

JANE: Cold ? I 'm sweating like a bloody pig.

JESS: Your bones will chill.

JANE: There'll be a bloody riot if you don't let me get this bra off.

BOOS AND CATCALLS RISE OVER THE DISCO MUSIC.

JESS: There will not. (SHOUTS) Let he who wishes to see this woman naked, first bring his mother and ask of her the same.

BOOING, CATCALLS AND DISCO MUSIC ALL FADE. JESS LEADS JANE TO JUDY AND PETRA.

JANE Who are you people ?

JESS: We are friends.

PETRA: Who don't like to see women exploited.

JANE: Bloody libbers. I'll get my cards for this. Can't you let a girl earn an honest living ?

PETRA: We want to help you.

JANE: Thanks, I'll have a bloody mary.

PETRA SHRUGS AND EXITS TO GET THE DRINK

JANE : And I need a new outfit. Devillesse, in red leather, I think. It's got little horns on the bra, and a forked toil hanging from the pants.

JUDY : Don't take the piss, that's not what we meant.

JESS: You're wrong anyway. Purity is much more sensual than evil. Wash your make-up off, put your hair in bunches, wear ankle socks and a white dress.

JANE: Very clever ... the little girl look. D'you want to be my manager ?

PETRA RETURNS WITH DRINK. JANE TAKES IT AND ACTS OUT

JANE: And I could go on with a glass of milk ... and spill it on my dress ... and have to take it off.

JUDY: You 'll have to wash your dress after every performance, otherwise it'll start stinking.

JANE: No use crying then ... get it ? Over spilt milk ?
(NO RESPONSE) I knew you were a dreary bunch.

PETRA: Do you enjoy your work ?

JANE: (DELIBERATELY) I love it !

JUDY: Being degraded ?

JANE: Listen, girls, why don't you leave me alone. Go and give the whores in the High St a hard time.

PETRA: You're not telling me you enjoy taking your clothes off in front of all those people. Watching them stare at you slobbering, lusting

JANE: I make them feel good, and that makes me feel good. Is that a crime ... or a sin ?

JANE: (ACTING THIS OUT) I give them a shake Of the shoulders ..they look up from their pints ... a jiggle of the boobs ... , their eyes open wide ... snap the hips and I blow their brains.
They want me ... I'm a star !

PETRA FINDS HERSELF UNCONSCIOUSLY COPYING JANE 'S ACTIONS. SHE STOPS, EMBARRASSED.

PETRA: You talk to her, Jess.

JESS: You enjoy it, sister? Their lust excites you?

JANE: (MOCK DRAMATIC) Yes ! Yes .' I'm a raving nympho !

JESS: And nothing else would fulfil you equally ?

JANE: Nothing else pays as good.

JESS: Do you believe we care for you ?

JANE: I suppose your hearts are in the right place. (PAUSE) I agree with all your high ideals, dear sisters, but it's a hard, sad world out there, and you've got to give a little if you want to pay the rent.

JESS: Do you believe I care for you ?

JANE AVOIDS JESS'S EYES, LOOKS AT PETRA AND JUDY.

JANE: (BEWILDERED) What does she mean ? She's not ... you're not ... no, I can tell right away.
Who are you ?
Who is she ?

JESS: (HARD) I'm your mother, girl. The one connected to you by the tube of life. The one who had to squat in the fertile earth to birth you. I'm the white lady of your dreams, kissing you goodnight. I go back through the ages and touch the original egg ... and I see you.

JANE: Shut up !!

JESS: (SUDDENLY FRIVOLOUS) I want to experience the excitement you feel. I'll do your next spot for you.

JANE: No, not you.

JESS: How is it ... shake the shoulders ..

JANE: (ANGUISHED) Don't !

JESS: Jiggle the boobs ...

JANE: (SOBBING) No .' No

JESS: Oh, I know I won't be very good, I don't have your experience.

JANE: Don't do this ... don't please you can't

(SHE BREAKS DOWN IN TEARS.)

JESS PUTS AN ARM AROUND HER AND LEADS HER ACROSS THE STAGE.

JESS: Come with me, little sister, leave this behind.

JANE: (STILL SOBBING) I'll get fired.

JESS: Fired from the realms of unreason into the clear blue sky. It's the best way, a clean break.

JESS AND JANE EXIT.

JUDY: She did it. The bitch did it.

PETRA: (GLOATING) Personal magnetism ?

JUDY: Don't start. (PAUSE) Maybe she is something special, maybe she can do something special.

PETRA: You'll see.

JUDY: Would you follow her ? Wherever she led ?

PETRA: I trust her.

PETRA EXITS.

JUDY STALKS THE STAGE, THINKING.

JUDY: If Petra, soft as she is, will follow her, then she 's just the leader we need. Our general for the war. Our general for the victory. And even generals take advice . . . from their lieutenants

JUDY EXITS.

DONNA ENTERS.

DONNA: Did you see' ?

She 'd started the process ... my princess. She had them in her hand ... her dainty little hand. And all the mockery I took then was worth it for their adoration. The love they gave her was mine too.

And I knew that she would grow. Those times then were the fumbblings of a child. A precocious child, walking a long road ... man-made. But she wouldn't tumble wouldn't fall.

Ah, did you see ? Did you see ? My Jess in all her glory ... and how she loved her mother

DONNA EXITS AS JESS ENTERS. THEY DO NOT ACKNOWLEDGE EACH OTHER.

JESS STANDS MOTIONLESS CENTRE-STAGE.

SANDY ENTERS. SHE RUNS ACROSS STAGE AND THROWS HERSELF AT JESS'S FEET

JESS LIFTS HER UP SLOWLY.

SANDY: Forgive me, my lady, for I have sinned.

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