

BROTHER MAN

BY
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BROTHER MAN has its origins in the play TZADDIK by Monica Ditmas, which first explored the idea of looking at the Passion through the eyes of Jesus's family. Although there is some room for theological debate on the matter, the case for Jesus having had a brother, James, who went on to lead Jesus's followers, is a strong one. It can be inferred from other biblical references to Jesus's family that he probably had other siblings, though we know next to nothing about them, so I have contented myself with giving Jesus a sister and giving James a wife.

Characters in order of appearance

Young James	Age: about 10
Young Jesus	Age: about 12
Young Rachel	Age: about 11
Mary	Mary appears at two stages of her life; as the young mother (20s or 30s) of Jesus, Rachel and James as children, and then again as a woman her 50s or 60s when they have grown up.
Joseph	50s – the older father of a young family
James	late 20s, early 30s
Rebecca	late 20s, James's wife
Rachel	late 20s, early 30s, James's sister
John	mid 20s
Jesus	early 30s

Stage directions and period-specific references have been kept to a minimum to allow as much freedom as possible to the director. The play can be performed in period costume or in modern dress.

The play takes place in two different time periods: during the childhood of Jesus and twenty years later, during the Passion week in Jerusalem.

Note on pronunciation: "Momma" and "poppa" should be pronounced "mumma" and "puppa", to give a sense of terms of endearment within a Jewish family, as in the film of Fiddler on the Roof.

SCENE FOUR

REBECCA: People are beginning to say things. Stupid things. They're talking about him as a leader. I don't like it.

JAMES: Jesus couldn't lead anyone out of a wicker basket.

REBECCA: Well, he has led a huge crowd – bigger and bigger – all over Galilee and now he has led them down here.

JAMES: All right. All right – he's developed leadership skills. Good on him.

REBECCA: Leader's not actually the word people are using.

JAMES: So, what word are they using? I could give them a couple.

REBECCA: King.

JAMES: King?

REBECCA: I heard a group of women all talking about him as a king.

JAMES: King of what?

REBECCA: I don't know. Just – King.

JAMES: He's flipped. He has finally flipped. Please tell me he wasn't wearing a crown.

REBECCA: No, he wasn't. And I genuinely don't know if he's said it. But the idea must have come from somewhere. And he's not denying it. At least, not that I've heard.

JAMES: Becc, this is serious.

REBECCA: That's what I've been trying to tell you. You and Jesus – anyone can see you're brothers. You're each as stubborn as the other.

JAMES: If he goes round letting people call him a king, it won't just be the priests he'll have to worry about. He'll have the Romans feeling his collar.

REBECCA: Actually, I think it's worse than that.

JAMES: Meaning?

REBECCA: Well think about it. You said yourself: where's he meant to be king of? Not here. So what sort of king is he meant to be?

JAMES: A mad one.

REBECCA: No, seriously. Think. Which King are we all supposed to be waiting for? To lead us out of bondage? Of the House of David?

JAMES: You're joking.

REBECCA: I only wish I were.

JAMES: Jesus has said he's the Messiah? He's actually said it?

REBECCA: I don't know if he's said it, but everyone else is saying it for him, believe you me.

JAMES: The idiot. He should never have come.

REBECCA: He's playing along with it. That's what he was doing this morning.

JAMES: What exactly did he do this morning?

REBECCA: It was mad. People just dropped everything and surged towards the north gate. They were throwing flowers and hanging coloured cloths from their windows and everything. They must have known he was coming.

JAMES: Oh, they knew all right. He'll have made sure of that. Nothing modest about our J.

REBECCA: Honestly, James, I am not joking: you'd think he was King David coming back from the wars. With all his followers.

JAMES: They weren't armed, were they?

REBECCA: No, no. But Jesus was riding.

JAMES: Riding? What was he riding?

REBECCA: It looked like a colt.

JAMES: He must have more money than I thought.

REBECCA: But that's what I mean. You know the story? The Messiah? Entering the city riding on a colt?

JAMES: What did you do?

REBECCA: I just watched. I've never seen anything so sad in my life.

JAMES: Sad?

REBECCA: It was his eyes. Everyone else was laughing and singing. He was smiling back at them – smiling with his mouth. But not with his eyes. James, we need to get him here. Talk with him.

JAMES: No way!

REBECCA: He needs us.

JAMES: I can think of one or two things he needs.

REBECCA: James, I'm serious. This might be his last chance.

JAMES: I said no.

REBECCA: Please! Something bad is going to happen. I can feel it.

JAMES: He's got his followers. He doesn't need us.

REBECCA: Oh, they are a waste of space. I saw them. Grinning fools, the lot of them. They'll grin him straight into prison and then they'll keep grinning all the way back to their safe little homes. You just see if they don't.

JAMES: Becc, if I invited him here, he wouldn't come. I mean it. He didn't before. And even if he did, he wouldn't listen to me. He never has and he never will. It's pointless.

REBECCA: But what if he did come? And what if he did listen?

JAMES: He won't.

REBECCA: He might.

JAMES: He won't.

REBECCA: You don't know that.

JAMES: All right. Fine. If Jesus decides to change the habit of a lifetime and actually pay some attention to his family, he knows where we live: the door is always open to him. All he has to do is hop on his colt and pay us a call. But he won't.