

INTERIOR - BLACK BOX THEATRE - LOBBY - DAY

A small, shabby waiting room. Taped on the wall is a sign: WELCOME TO CALLBACKS FOR "THE GREATEST PLAY EVER WRITTEN". Three obviously tense actors sit waiting to audition: RAHIM, 30s, an imposing black man wearing dashiki and Afro; JOSHUA, 30s, an endearing Jew in brown robe and yarmulke; and JESSIE, early 30s, a defensive-looking woman wearing a Marilyn Monroe wig and revealing superhero outfit. Each is involved in his or her own annoying "relaxation exercise". Behind a desk, a young punk RECEPTIONIST glances at them, rolls her eyes, and goes back to filing her fingernails. Enter SKY, 20s, a good-looking white guy with rocker hair and classic Jesus outfit. SKY approaches RECEPTIONIST with an air of casual charm. He believes that he is already a superstar, but is willing to downplay it due to his naturally democratic personality and pot-addled brain.

**SKY**

Hey. Sky Parker. I'm called back for Jesus?

**RECEPTIONIST**

(Unimpressed)

Just take a seat with the others. Martin will let you know when he's ready.

**SKY**

That's cool.

SKY sits down next to RAHIM and tries to make conversation.

**SKY**

Hey. Are you here for Judas?

RAHIM bugs his eyes out at SKY like a minstrel and responds in a squealing Uncle Remus voice.

**RAHIM**

Why, I sho am, Massa Christ.

RAHIM drops the act and looks at SKY with disgust, speaking in his natural deep voice.

**RAHIM**

Funny how Judas is always black,  
ain't it? And the Artistic  
Interpretation is always white.  
Well, you can shove your thirty  
pieces of silver, sucker, cause  
Rahim is here to read for the lead.  
In case you didn't learn it right  
in school, Jesus Christ was a  
black man.

**SKY**

(Embarrassed, trying to act hip)  
Hey, I'm down with that.

**RAHIM**

(Indicating Joshua)  
And this guy here, he ain't no  
King Herod.

**JOSHUA**

(Politely)  
I'm also called back for Jesus.

SKY looks at JESSIE, confused. JESSIE glares at him.

**JESSIE**

(Pointing to herself)  
Jesus.

All actors are suddenly startled as an intercom speaker mounted high on the wall crackles into life. A regal voice addresses them. It belongs to MARTIN, the play's director.

**MARTIN'S VOICE**

Hello, Jesus. This is your director.  
(Beat. Irritated)  
Jesus?

The actors leap up, improvising hurried greetings.

**SKY, RAHIM, JOSHUA, JESSIE**

(Ad libs)

Yo! I am your Jesus! Whassup?

**MARTIN'S VOICE**

Welcome to "The Greatest Play Ever Written". I have called you here today in the hope that one of you can become my spokesperson, my star - the human touchstone who can at last deliver my message to the masses.

INT - BLACK BOX THEATRE - STAGE AREA - SAME

MARTIN and his staff sit behind a table covered with head shots, half-eaten food, and overflowing ashtrays. MARTIN is a bearded, unhealthy-looking self-declared genius revered by his staff, which consists of a lesbian STAGE MANAGER; a flamboyant male CHOREOGRAPHER and COSTUMER; and MARTIN'S ASSISTANT, a young floozy currently brushing MARTIN's long matted hair. MARTIN speaks pompously into a microphone.

**MARTIN**

It's a big job, Jesus, and I need someone with charisma. Someone with a sense of justice. Someone willing to follow my every literal word, no matter how petty, how impulsive, how seemingly insane. I ask you to remember that any great cause demands great sacrifice. And that I have an uncle at Miramax.

RECEPTION ROOM - Same

Actors react excited and impressed, eyeing each other competitively.

**MARTIN'S VOICE**

Soon you'll be called in, one by one, to perform the monologues you were told to create. Now stretch as tall as you can and lift your fingers to the ceiling.

(Barking)

To the ceiling!

Actors obey.

**MARTIN'S VOICE**

Keeping your weight very centered, lower yourself into a deep...squat. Keep those hands up! Rahim! Eight words or less! Who was Jesus?

**RAHIM**

(Military staccato)

Jesus was a revolutionary!

**MARTIN'S VOICE**

Joshua Horowitz!

**JOSHUA**

(Struggling to stay in squat)

He was a teacher! A great teacher!

**MARTIN'S VOICE**

Jessie Hoover!

**JESSIE**

A sacrifice for dense, unworthy men!

**MARTIN'S VOICE**

Sky Parker!

**SKY**

Love, baby. Jesus was free and flowing love.

Suddenly worried, SKY counts the words he just spoke on his fingers, then nods happily and gives himself a thumbs up.

MOMENTS LATER - STAGE AREA

JOSHUA auditions on the bare stage before MARTIN and STAFF. His delivery is earnest and flustered, a la Woody Allen.

**JOSHUA**

The afterlife? Oy. Don't make me crazy. What do Christians have against the human heart, that you insult it so? You give us all the moral depth of Pavlov's dogs, who learn to behave only through the threat of torture, panting and slobbering for their sugary reward.

(Pointing accusingly)

You ruined Jesus!

MARTIN looks blank. COSTUMER, CHOREOGRAPHER look annoyed.

**JOSHUA**

It wasn't enough that this teacher, this wonderful brilliant human being, died for his principles. No, you had to make him God's Actual Son, a guy with good connections, who gets to rise from the dead into eternal bliss! This is sacrifice? What about giving up your life when mortal life is all you have? Not glamorous enough, I know. People want big stars, big miracles, big perfect plastic boobies.

(Big finish)

Well, follow my Jesus, and we'll just try to work on being human.

MARTIN'S STAFF looks bored. JOSHUA drops out of character and smiles bashfully. MARTIN nods thoughtfully.

**MARTIN**

Very nice. Tell me, Joshua. If we do go with a Jewish Jesus -

**JOSHUA**

Jesus was Jewish.

**MARTIN**

- I would want to really go with it.  
(Overcome with his own vision)  
I see Romans in Nazi uniforms...  
skinhead shepherds taunting Jesus  
as a teen... possibly a bondage  
temptation scene with a gang of  
Aryan Nation girls.  
(Narrowing eyes)  
Any problems?

**JOSHUA**

(Shrugging)

As long as it's all in good taste.

CHOREOGRAPHER leans forward, miffed and unable to remain silent one moment longer.

**CHOREOGRAPHER**

Excuse me. Do you dance?

**JOSHUA**

What?

**CHOREOGRAPHER**

Do you have any dance training at all? Tap? Ballet? Do you tumble?

**JOSHUA**

Did Jesus know from tumbling?

**CHOREOGRAPHER**

Thank you.

(Making note)

"No dance."

MARTIN'S STAFF looks at JOSHUA disdainfully. MARTIN flips over JOSHUA's head shot and looks away.

(END SCENE)