

# Warsaw

A One Act Play

by

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For my mother, who survived Auschwitz

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Finalist  
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## CAST OF CHARACTERS

MYER

(Patriarch of the family, 58. A master tailor.)

ESTHER

(Myer's loyal wife, 55.)

SAMMY

(The elder son, 28. A fighter trying to resist the German occupation.)

FELIX

(The soft-spoken younger son, 25.)

SASHA

(Felix's fragile wife, 24.)

JOSEPH

(A boy from the neighborhood.)

THE GHOST

(A beautiful woman in her twenties.)

## SETTING

The Warsaw Ghetto, late December, 1940. The living room of a small apartment, including a couch, chairs, table, and adjoining kitchen. One doorway leads to a bedroom and another doorway leads outside.

The city's 400,000 Jews have been rounded up and forced into a crowded, sealed-off ghetto, where they are regularly terrorized by German soldiers. Mass deportations to the death camps are still two years away.

# Warsaw

By Warren Goldie

(Four people sit at a table, eating soup: The father, MYER, his wife, ESTHER, their son FELIX and his wife SASHA. A beautiful young woman sits on a couch nearby.)

The basement apartment is run down, with filthy walls and old, colorless furniture. Coats hang on pegs near the door, bearing the blue and white Star of David armband.

Bursts of machine gun fire outside shatter the calm. Truck engines roar, brakes squeal. Everyone stares at the door expectantly. But the commotion ends and quiet returns.)

MYER

(panicked)

Do you hear that?

ESTHER

No.

MYER

What do you mean no?

ESTHER

I choose not to.

MYER

Felix, close the lights!

FELIX

They're gone, Poppa. It's quiet. It's all right.

ESTHER

Ignore it.

MYER

Ignore it, you say? How does one ignore machine guns?

ESTHER

Eat, Poppa. Come now, it's getting cold.

MYER

When they march into this room and shoot us all dead, then I will ignore it.

SASHA

We all will.

FELIX

Why must you talk like this? It's there, we're here. That's the end of it.

MYER

Oh, I miss the old life.

ESTHER

Maybe God will turn the clock back and we will wake up on Belker Street and you can kvetch about the price of fabric and how Felix works only ten hours a day.

MYER

Yes. That's what I'm talking about.

(The beautiful woman -- the GHOST -- puts the book down and rises from the couch and approaches the family. She is invisible to all.)

FELIX

That I don't miss.

MYER

This is better, hmm? Now you have a little time off.

(Esther stands suddenly.)

MYER (cont'd)

What? What is it?

ESTHER

I feel something. Like before. A presence. Right here. A few feet away.

(The Ghost stands before Esther, appear to scrutinize<sup>3</sup> her. Esther reaches out her hand.)

MYER

What?

ESTHER

A dybbuk.

MYER

A ghost!

ESTHER

No I'm certain of it. There's a dybbuk here. A presence.

MYER

As if we don't have enough tsorus [problems], now we have guests from beyond!

ESTHER

A woman.

MYER

The only dybbuk around here is in your head, Momma. (waves his fist) I'll give you dybbuks.

ESTHER

You do give me dybbuks. From you I have thirty five years of dybbuks.

(The Ghost exits through the front door.)

ESTHER (cont'd)

Wait! She's gone.

SASHA

Esther, I too felt strange.

MYER

Oh, no. Not you too.

SASHA

There's more to this world than what meets the eyes. I know it ... from experience.

ESTHER

Something happened in this flat. In this room. I don't know what it was, but it was horrible.

MYER

Of course it was horrible.

SASHA

We don't know from this place. It could be anything.

(Gunshots ring outside, far away.)

MYER

Oy! Again! Always with the shooting. Do they ever have enough? Terrorizing poor innocent people.

FELIX

I know what you're seeing, Ma. It's us. We are the ones that will be ghosts.

(Myer rises and walks to the window.)

MYER

They're out there.

ESTHER

No they're not. It was far away.

(Felix starts to pace.)

SASHA

Felix, please.

ESTHER

Come, both of you, sit down. I have an idea.

MYER

Oh no, not again. The last time you had an idea--

ESTHER

No, this is good. It will do us all good.

SASHA

I like your ideas, Esther.

ESTHER

Here is what we do. We change the feeling in here.

MYER

We do what?

SASHA

Go on, tell us.

MYER

I hear no idea.

FELIX

What are you saying, Ma?

ESTHER

If you let me talk...

FELIX

Go ahead.

ESTHER

An experiment.

MYER

An experiment.

ESTHER

Yes. In forgetting.

MYER

Ha! First she sees ghosts, now she wants to make us amnesiacs. What's next, we turn into Germans?

ESTHER

Isn't this what you want ... to forget? It's all you talk about. Let's do it. Come on, for five minutes. You can do that.

MYER

You tell me how to forget that everything you've worked your whole life for -- a shop that earns year after year with more customers coming all the time, and now it's all gone -- and I will be happy to do it, and not just for five minutes.

ESTHER

Here are the instructions. We remember the good. We talk only about the good. For five minutes. All right?

MYER

Hmmph!

ESTHER

Who wants to start? Someone ... Think of a memory. A happy time. How difficult is that? Come on.

(A minute passes.)

SASHA

I have one! (turns to Felix) Our wedding day. How about that?

ESTHER

Good, Sasha.

SASHA

I remember it like it's happening right now. We were under the canopy. Felix?

FELIX

I remember.

SASHA

You had so much schpilkis [nerves] I thought you were going to plotz [faint] right there on the chupa [stage].

FELIX

Okay, maybe I had a few nerves. What man is relaxed on his wedding day?

SASHA

The sweat pouring down your face. I'm sorry! Esther, you remember: The rabbi puts the glass on the floor and Felix steps on it so hard it breaks into a million pieces. And shoots out in every direction. It was an explosion.

ESTHER

(laughing)

Oh, I remember it.

SASHA

The glass flies out and hits Uncle Mordechai in the head and he has this big bruise that never goes away. He falls down. I don't know, from shock or the impact. He fell over like a tree that's cut down.

ESTHER

The tree landed on Sadie's lap.

MYER

Aunt Sadie who never touched a man in all her life.

ESTHER

He landed on her pupikel.

MYER

Where no man had ever been.

FELIX

No man had ever tried.

ESTHER

Stop it! Stop it, both of you!

MYER

The scream that came out of that five-foot woman was so loud it they heard it all the way to Lonnish street. (beat) Ha-shem [God] smiled on us that day.

SASHA

When Mordechai woke up, he asked for a refund.

MYER

No!

ESTHER

Yes!

FELIX

I remember all of it. It ruined our wedding.

SASHA

Oh, Felix. Really? It blessed our wedding.

FELIX

Do you mean that?

SASHA

It won't be forgotten anytime soon.

ESTHER

Okay, okay. Do you see, Felix? You see, Poppa? You see my experiment?

MYER

It's good, Momma, give me more soup.

SASHA

(to Felix)

Now?

FELIX

Okay.

SASHA

Myer, we have something for you.

(She goes to a cabinet and retrieves a small package and offers it to Myer.)

MYER

What is this? What are you giving me?

FELIX

Do you think we forgot what day this is?

MYER

A day for experiments. Come, let's eat.

ESTHER

Poppa , don't be such a hardhead.

(Sasha holds out the gift.)

FELIX

Happy birthday, Pop.

MYER

What?

ESTHER

Myer ...

MYER

All right, all right, give it to me. Whatever it is, I don't need it.

(He opens it. It's a framed photo.)

MYER (cont'd)

God in heaven, where did you get this? Look how young Gordi is! And Max. That was before the big beard. Look here, you can see his face.

ESTHER

It's true. Max is a mystery with that beard. It grows every way, even up. And his hair. Oy!

FELIX

I thought it was a hat.

MYER

I could make a coat from it. Or a pillow.

ESTHER

You don't actually see Max. Maybe it's not even him in there.

MYER

When was the last time I was together with my brothers?

ESTHER

Passover, two years ago.

MYER

Hmm. Too long.

ESTHER

So look at this? Look what happens when you think of the good. Do you see how things change? The room feels ... different.

MYER

Don't start with that again. It is exactly the same room.

SASHA

Let's celebrate. Let's do the Hora.

(She reaches for Myer.)

MYER

No, darling. I'm too old.

SASHA

I'll be gentle, I promise. Come on. Two minutes.

FELIX

He would rather have his teeth pulled out than to acknowledge his birthday.

MYER

Why celebrate when the grave is calling out for you? A birthday! What did you do that was so wonderful? You slid out of the womb. As if you had a choice in the matter. Another year has passed since this great feat. Mazel Tov.

SASHA

It is an accomplishment. Think of it. Think what happens with the mother and child. The will to come into this world. It's incredible. The bond. The love. It's the greatest thing of all.

ESTHER

Sasha, forget it. A man cannot understand such things. Not in his belly. He can only know with his mind. That is the tragedy of men.

MYER

I'm not saying such things are not important. But where is the choice? There is no choice. Now, making a home, running a business... these are worthy of celebration.

( MORE )

They come from the will. Making a wool suit with no imperfections ... that is a feat 11.  
worthy of celebration!

MYER (cont'd)

ESTHER

Ha-shem, spare us the wisdom of men.

(Myer examines the photo closely.)

MYER

This frame, it's familiar. You brought this?

ESTHER

It belonged to my mother. I was not going to leave it.

MYER

What picture did it hold?

ESTHER

Sammy, when he was a boy --

(She stops, looks at him in horror.)

ESTHER (cont'd)

Oh, Poppa, I'm sorry.

MYER

Always it happens! Always! Stupid woman. What it is with you?

FELIX

Pop, it was an accident. You asked her a question. She answered you.

MYER

Oh, no. Make no mistake. She means it. She likes to stick in the knife.

ESTHER

How can you say that? (under her breath) He is your son. He will always be your son.

MYER

What? What did you say? I heard that!

FELIX

Ma.

ESTHER

After so many years ... (points toward the door). Look at it now. How many more years of this meshugas [madness] must we endure? I would rather be out there with the Germans.

MYER

Go ahead, I'm not stopping you.

FELIX

Poppa!

MYER

All right, all right! I will forget it. All right. A slip of the tongue. It's done. Let's eat.

(He returns to the table.)

FELIX

This soup, Ma. It's good.

ESTHER

Monica had pepper.

MYER

Where did she get pepper?

ESTHER

Where else? The black market.

SASHA

She got it from Saul.

FELIX

He goes to the Polish side.

ESTHER

Saul crosses the wall?

FELIX

He has papers.

MYER

How?

FELIX

They're fake. But he never has to use them. You know Saul: the blond hair, the straight jaw. The little nose. He "passes."

MYER

He noses over.

SASHA

No, Myer. He doesn't. Not any more. (beat) I'm sorry, Felix. I was going to tell you. I didn't know how. Saul is finished. His brothers, his family, all of them.

ESTHER

His family?

SASHA

Yesterday. It's awful.

(Felix bangs his fist on the table over and over.)

MYER

Stop it. What's the matter with you? Look at me.

(Felix smiles strangely.)

FELIX

You know what I would like? What would be so excellent?

ESTHER

Sheina kindela [dear one], tell me.

FELIX

Jam.

MYER

Jam? There is no jam.

FELIX

This challah needs jam. Delicious, sweet, sticky... um, I can almost taste it. I can taste it. I just think it and there it is, the sweetness on my tongue. Why is that? How can a thought awaken the senses like that?

SASHA

Felix.

FELIX

I once read about these explorers who went to the North Pole. They brought nothing with them, just the essentials. They lived there for months. They put pictures on the walls. Do you know what they were? Girls? Beautiful places? Their families? No. Food! Steaks, potatoes, cakes. They missed food more than love. More than beauty.

MYER

Where do you get such nonsense?

FELIX

I admit it, I understand the mistake of my ways. I will repent. I raise my glass to jam. To the memory of jam. I thank the jam god! He who brings us the sweet goodness. There must be such a being ... for everything. A god of chicken soup, a god of wine. A god of dish-rags... (folds hands in prayer) Well, I shall not remain unappreciative. To the jam god. Baruch atah adonai eloheinu melekh ha'olam --

MYER

Stop it, right now.

FELIX

Thank you for the sandwiches. I must have had thousands. Selfish me. Please, please, touch me once again --

(Myer reaches over the table, slaps Felix on the cheek.)

MYER

Enough! Enough, I tell you! Stop it!

ESTHER

Felix, please. Everything is all right. We're safe.

FELIX

Yes, today. What about tomorrow? And the day after that?

ESTHER

Tomorrow will take care of itself.

FELIX

Tell that to the three boys hanging in the square. I'm sure it will comfort them.

MYER

Shut up! Shut up, Felix! Damn you!

ESTHER

Shh. Shh. Felix. "What happens?" Things change. That is the way of life. You know this. These evil ones? They will be wiped out. He will erase them with a strong hand and an outstretched arm, I promise you. We must be strong. That is all God asks. Now, eat your soup and banish such thoughts. Be grateful we don't have strangers in here. Monica has seven already.

MYER

I wish I had a cognac. If we were home I would have a cognac. I'd give my eye teeth for a cognac.

FELIX

I've heard that my whole life. "I'd give my eye teeth" for a longer Shabbat or another slice of brisket. You have no idea what what eye teeth are.

MYER

Who cares? Whatever they are is worth less than the cognac I can taste in my mouth right now.

ESTHER

Let's make a toast.

FELIX

To what?

ESTHER

To being together.

MYER

We have no wine.

(Esther raises her glass.)

ESTHER

What about this delicious wine.

MYER

That's water.

(Esther glares at him.)

MYER (cont'd)

All right, all right. It's red wine.

ESTHER

L'chaim.

(Felix lifts his glass.)

FELIX

To life.

ESTHER

To our house. To our return to our wonderful home.

SASHA

Family.

ESTHER

I bet the Americans are in England right now, planning an invasion to free Poland. I can feel it.

MYER

L'chaim! She feels it.

ESTHER

(taps her chest)

Where it counts.

(Machine guns blast outside, close by.)

ESTHER (cont'd)

Felix, the lights, quickly! Everyone, get down!

FELIX

What does it matter?

ESTHER

Just do it!

(Felix turns off the lights. The room goes dark.)

ESTHER (cont'd)

Poppa , where are you?

MYER

Here, by the table.

ESTHER

Come here. Come to me.

MYER

Where are you?

ESTHER

Come to my voice.

(A chair topples over. Myer groans.)

ESTHER (cont'd)

Come on, Poppa. Here.

SASHA

Felix, is that you?

FELIX

Sasha, you're shivering. Come here. Come closer.

(Trucks pull up outside. More shots ring out.)

SASHA

Felix, my stomach hurts.

FELIX

Just hold on, sweetheart.

SASHA

This flat, it's a cage. It's a prison. I have to get out of here. I can't stay here another minute. I have to get out. Where is the light? Where is it? Felix! Help me!

ESTHER

Sasha, calm down, please!

MYER

She's going to get us killed!

FELIX

Sasha, think about good things. Do the experiment.

SASHA

What, Felix?

FELIX

Your Aunt Simcha in America. The one who smokes and argues with men. Think about her.

MYER

What Jewish woman listens to men.

ESTHER

Quiet!

FELIX

Sasha, think about her.

SASHA

I don't understand. Felix? What are you saying?

FELIX

Your aunt, Simcha. Come on, try.

SASHA

Felix ...

FELIX

The crazy things she does. You remember. Simcha. You love your aunt.

SASHA

Yes. I love Aunt Simcha.

FELIX

Think about her. Don't stop.

SASHA

Okay.

(Gunshots outside.)

ESTHER

Myer, lean against the wall, like this.

MYER

Ah, good. I'll be comfortable when they shoot me.

ESTHER

Everyone, be still!

(Loud knocking at the front door.)

SAMMY (O.S.)

Open up! It's Sammy. Hurry! Let me in!

ESTHER

Sammy? Is that you?

MYER

Esther! Where are you going?

(The lights come on. Esther is standing at the front door. Felix and Sasha are huddled in a corner. Myer looks on.)

SAMMY (O.S.)

Open up! Come on!

ESTHER

Sammy!

MYER

There is no such person.

ESTHER

What? You would say this now?

(Esther reaches for the doorknob.)

MYER

Don't touch that!

(Pounding on the door.)

MYER (cont'd)

There is no one there.

ESTHER

Shut up, you crazy old fool!

(Esther swings open the door. A young man falls inside. Myer starts toward the bedroom, then turns.)

MYER

I have reading to do.

(Myer enters the bedroom, slamming the door behind him. Esther helps Sammy to his feet.)

ESTHER

Are you all right, Sammy? What's wrong?

SAMMY

I'm fine. Really.

ESTHER

(to Felix and Sasha)

Come, help me. (to Sammy) Look at you. Your arm. What happened? You're bleeding!

(Sammy falls onto the couch. Esther inspects his arm.)

SAMMY

It's nothing, I'm fine. Stop, please. I'm all right.

ESTHER

Vey ismere! Felix! Get a towel. Sasha. Boil some water. Get me something to wrap this. Sammy, let me see. (she rolls up his sleeve)

SAMMY

It's just a scratch.

ESTHER

They shot you? Oh Sammy! My oh my, oh my, oh my.

SAMMY

It's worse than it looks. It's just a graze. Please, calm down.

ESTHER

I should calm down!

(Felix returns with fabric. Esther begins to clean the wound.)

ESTHER (cont'd)

Here, hold still.

SASHA

Are they out there?

SAMMY

No. They're gone.

SASHA

You're sure?

SAMMY

Yes.

ESTHER

Sammy, tell me, what's going on? Why are you in Warsaw?

SAMMY

I have business. I need somewhere to rest, for a few hours. Until morning.

ESTHER

You'll stay here.

SAMMY

(to Sasha)

Sasha. You're Sasha, right? (beat) I'm Sam -- the "bad" son. You've no doubt heard about me. No, actually, you've probably heard nothing of me.

SASHA

No, of course I know who you are.

SAMMY

"Sam Leibowitz, unrepentant sinner and blasphemer."

ESTHER

Stop it.

SAMMY

What was my great transgression? Do you want to know, Sasha? Love.

SASHA

Love?

SAMMY

You must know. I married outside the faith and shamed the Leibowitz name forever. For this the old man hates me as much as the Nazis.

ESTHER

That is not true.

SAMMY

(glances at bedroom door)

What is he doing in there?

ESTHER

He's reading the Torah. More and more his face is buried in the scriptures.

SAMMY

A big help that is.

(Esther finishes wrapping Sammy's arm.)

SAMMY (cont'd)

Nice field bandage, Ma. Snug but not tight. Zadie trained you well.

(The Ghost enters.)

SAMMY (cont'd)

Felix, how long are you and Sasha together?

FELIX

We got married a year after you and Rose.

SAMMY

Well, well.

(The Ghost moves around the room.)

ESTHER

Shh! Listen! She is here. The dybbuk has returned!

FELIX

Ma, please.

SAMMY

What is this nonsense?

FELIX

She thinks there's a ghost.

ESTHER

I know it. I feel her. Like a breeze blowing through the room. Like a brushing at my skin.

(Esther approaches the Ghost.)

ESTHER (cont'd)

She died here, in this room. She's come back. Why? Why has she returned?

SAMMY

Why don't you ask her?

SASHA

The dead return to the place they know best. They are bound between the two worlds. They're stuck.

SAMMY

Wait ... Wait! I feel her.

ESTHER

You do?

SAMMY

She's a goy. She's in the kitchen. She's cooking bacon. Do you smell it?

ESTHER

You think this is funny? Not to her it isn't. She's lost. She needs us.

FELIX

I can't believe we're having this conversation.

SAMMY

Maybe we're haunting her. Did you ever think of that?

(Esther speaks to the Ghost.)

ESTHER

You had a family, didn't you? You lived here. You had children. Something happened. A tragedy. You are looking for your children. You want to join with them.

(Esther reaches her hand out and passes by the Ghost's outstretched hand.)

SAMMY

The only tragedy is she's still in Poland.

ESTHER

What was it? It was before the Germans? You left this plane before all of this. Tell me. I will listen.

(The Ghost exits.)

ESTHER (cont'd)

I tell you, I am going to find out who this woman is. I bet the neighbors will know.

SASHA

You're not meshuga, Esther. I felt something. Every time you do, I do.

ESTHER

Thank you, Sasha. I know.

SASHA

Like a breeze blowing through.

ESTHER

All right, the excitement is over.

(Esther sits on the couch beside Sammy.)

So, Sammy. Tell me, how are you? How are the children? Where are they? How is Rose?

SAMMY

Everyone's fine.

ESTHER

Fine? Really?

SAMMY

What do you want me to say, Ma? What do you think?

ESTHER

Oy. I am a Bubbie who does not know her grandchildren. What a world this is. Terrible. Terrible. Tell me about them.

SAMMY

Janek is four.

ESTHER

Four already.

SAMMY

Luba is three.

(Sammy glances toward the closed bedroom door.)

ESTHER

And?

SAMMY

So, what has he done, locked himself in there like a child?

ESTHER

I don't know.

SAMMY

Felix. Sasha. What about you? No children? You need to work faster.

SASHA

What do you mean?

SAMMY

We need more fighters. This war could go on a long time.

ESTHER

What war?

FELIX

The war was all of two weeks.

SAMMY

Not that war. This war. Our war.

FELIX

I don't understand.

SAMMY

We should fight them.

ESTHER

That is not our way.

SAMMY

The Jews of Europe, you're all the same. You'll daven [pray] right up to up the gallows.

ESTHER

What are you saying? How can you fight them?

SAMMY

Do you have any idea what's happening outside these walls?

SASHA

They'll leave... eventually.

SAMMY

I wish I could loan you my eyes, Sasha. The ghetto is only the beginning.

SASHA

Those are rumors.

ESTHER

Sammy, are you going to tell us why you're here?

SAMMY

I have business.

ESTHER

What kind of business?

SAMMY

Personal business.

ESTHER

What is that supposed to mean?

SAMMY

Just what it says.

ESTHER

And what is that?

SAMMY

I'm not like you. I can't sit and watch. We're organizing -- a resistance.

ESTHER

Oy vey. What are you going to do, fight the whole German army?

SAMMY

Why not?

ESTHER

Oh, Sammy, you worry me so.

(Sammy gets up starts to walk around.)

SAMMY

I always worried you.

ESTHER

Yes, you did. You do.

SAMMY

Why don't you worry about Felix for a change?

ESTHER

I do worry about Felix. Felix is fine. He knows his place. He understands the order of things. But you ... Oh, Sammy. Whatever this thing is, please, don't do it, I beg you.

SAMMY

What would you have me do? Wait like a rat in a cage for the German hand to snatch me away for "relocation?"

ESTHER

What's wrong with that? So be it. Our lives are in God's hands anyway. We remain with Ha-Shem, whatever it is. What is this relocation you speak of?

SAMMY

It's them, erasing us. It's you -- all of you -- plunging your heads in the sand.

ESTHER

We're a family, not an army.

SASHA

Why do they hate us so much?

SAMMY

Because we exist. We're a disease. You know what they call us.

SASHA

If we have to move, we'll do it. We can make a home anywhere.

SAMMY

Tell that to the Yeshiva boys hanging in the square. They may have a different view of things.

SASHA

You're mean! Coming here with your stories, scaring us. Stirring up innocent people for your amusement.

SAMMY

Yes, that's exactly what I'm doing.

ESTHER

The two of you, stop it. Sasha, please. Sammy, sit down. Come, have some soup. It's just cabbage and carrots, but it isn't too bad.

SAMMY

Sure, Ma. I'd love that.

(Sammy sits at the table.)

SAMMY (cont'd)

How long has it been since I had your cooking?

ESTHER

This is not my cooking.

SAMMY

Matzo ball soup. Latkes. Noodle kugel. Blintzes. Hmm! Why am I creating this agony of desire? Please put me out of my misery.

ESTHER

Misery was something you never stayed in for too long.

(Esther places a bowl of soup before him. Sasha starts to sing a Yiddish song. Everyone escapes into their thoughts. Felix watching Sasha. Sammy eating. Esther watching Sammy.)

SAMMY

That's beautiful, Sasha. Did you learn how to sing or does it come naturally?

SASHA

My mother taught me. I studied a little. When Shmulik -- my brother -- passed, I had to work at my father's store. He was a butcher.

FELIX

Sasha is brilliant. You should hear her play piano. She teaches children.

SAMMY

I'm sorry I was rude. I can see how deeply you feel about things.

SASHA

I wish I felt about things a little less deeply.

(Esther reaches for Sammy's empty bowl.)

ESTHER

Here, give me that.

SAMMY

So, is he coming out or do we have to take him in room service?

ESTHER

I don't know.

SAMMY

I should leave. I'm upsetting the order of things here.

ESTHER

Sit down. You are not going anywhere.

SASHA

The curfew.

SAMMY

So, he's going to hide in there until morning?

FELIX

It's not fear that keeps him behind that door.

SAMMY

Sit down, Ma. Please.

ESTHER

It's true, I feel everything. The weight that bears down on us, always. The wheel that turns, grinding at us. We must stay ahead of it, or else. Listen to me, complaining like an old woman. I am an old woman.

SAMMY

You're just exhausted. Rest.

(At the front door: KNOCK pause KNOCK KNOCK  
pause KNOCK.)

JOSEPH (O.S.)

Sammy! You there?

ESTHER

What? What's this? Who is that?

SAMMY

Wait! I'm coming.

(Sammy opens the door. Joseph is a street-wise, 10-year-old boy.)

JOSEPH

They're coming. They're at Sheldon Street.

SAMMY

On foot?

JOSEPH

David went to look.

ESTHER

Sammy? What is this?

JOSEPH

They told me to tell you.

SAMMY

Okay. You did. Go now.

(Joseph exits. Esther closes the door. Outside, trucks pull up.)

SAMMY (cont'd)

I need to go. You're in danger.

ESTHER

No! We can hide you! There's a place in the bedroom, behind the bureau. The wall, it's hollow. No one will find you there. Sasha, here, take these rags. Clean up. Felix, help her. Come, Sammy, I'll show you.

(The bedroom door opens. Myer stands in the doorway.)

ESTHER (cont'd)

The Gestapo is outside.

(Myer locks eyes with Sammy.)

ESTHER (cont'd)

Come, Sammy. This way. Follow me.

(Sammy follows her into the bedroom.)

Stage goes dark. Music interlude.

Stage lights up. Time has passed. Myer and Esther are lying on the couch. Sasha has nodded off in the easy chair.

33.

Felix comes shivering in through the front door, removes his coat with the Star of David armband and hangs it up.)

FELIX

It's almost light.

SASHA

I fell asleep.

FELIX

That's good. You need it. How do you feel?

SASHA

It's so quiet.

FELIX

It was a routine check. It's over. Look at this. Look what I found.

(Felix pulls two eggs from his pocket. Esther goes to him.)

ESTHER

Oh, Felix! Give them here.

FELIX

The SS were on Sheldon Street. I didn't want to stay and find out why.

MYER

Son, since you're up, can you fetch me a glass of water?

FELIX

Sure, Pop.

ESTHER

I'm letting him out.

MYER

Felix, use that nice cup.

(Esther exits. Felix hands Myer a cup of water.)

MYER (cont'd)

Felix, listen to me. I've decided something. I'm going to make you a full partner in the business. As of today, you and Sasha will have half-ownership. Of everything.

FELIX

What are you talking about, Pop?

MYER

The business.

FELIX

There is no business.

MYER

Sure, maybe now. But the idea ... that remains. That is very much alive right here in it's pristine glory. (taps his head) It's the customer -- the customer who knows me, who will return. Always they come back. When the Germans go, you'll see. They'll seek me out like they always do.

FELIX

Okay.

MYER

I'm getting long in the tooth. Even the eye tooth. I want to do this for you and Sasha. You've learned all what I have to teach you. You're a good boy. A tailor of the highest order.

FELIX

(playing along)

Sasha, do you hear that. Isn't that something.

SASHA

It's wonderful.

MYER

My father, your Zadie, God rest his soul, he did the same for me. He made me a partner when I was the same age as you right now. But we had cognac, and boy, did we celebrate.

FELIX

Sasha, what's the matter?

SASHA

Now we have everything. Everything we wanted. A business --

MYER

A partnership! Only a partnership! You will have my business when you have to leave me outside with the rest of the corpses.

SASHA

There is no business, you old fool! How can you not know that? (to Felix) Why are you acting this way? You think next year you'll be working in the store? (sobs) You think I'll be pregnant with our first child? It's not going to happen! It's like ... It's like God is dangling it in front of me ... everything I dreamed, everything I wanted ... teasing me ... It's there but it's out of my reach. It's there as plain as day and I want to grab for it and I try but I CAN'T GET IT! I can't reach it! I'll never have it. It's too far away. It's a cruel God who would do this, a cruel God!

FELIX

Sasha, calm down, please. You don't mean this.

SASHA

It's true!

MYER

Sasha.

SASHA

What! Oh, Myer, I'm sorry. I didn't mean it. It's just ... Oh. Forgive me. I am sorry. You're right. Felix, this is not me. It is this horror that has become our lives. (beat) I want to go home.

MYER

To say such things. (gazes heavenward) It is He who guides us always. What happens here, in this world, He controls it. There is a reason for all this, Sasha, even if with our dull minds we do not know what it is. Yes, even this. We must trust Him always. It is not our lives, it is His, for he has given life, for what it is, to us.

FELIX

Poppa, she didn't mean it. She's upset.

MYER

When Job was stricken by unspeakable tragedy, it was difficult, yes, but he met the challenge. He kept the faith. And Abraham. Look at him. The harder the test, the more we must work. We adapt to His demands always, no matter what. Without Him we are like children lost in the desert of this world.

(Esther and Sammy enter.)

ESTHER

That's right, Poppa. The harder the test, the more we work to meet the challenge.

MYER

So, the prodigal son has returned. To what do we owe this good fortune?

ESTHER

He was in Warsaw--

SAMMY

Prodigal son? You sent me away. Don't you remember?

ESTHER

Please, don't argue.

MYER

You gave me no choice.

SAMMY

There is always a choice.

ESTHER

Listen. You're here, both of you. Can we put this aside?

MYER

Oh yes, I had a choice. Like I have a choice to push the moon and stars behind the sun.

SAMMY

I shouldn't have come.

ESTHER

No, no, you were right to come. We are your family.

MYER

He spits in the face of everything that is sacred. Our faith. The Torah. The Law!

SAMMY

Not true.

MYER

What do you know of truth?

FELIX

Please, stop it. Sasha doesn't feel well.

ESTHER

Put her in the bed.

SASHA

No, I'm fine.

SAMMY

What is so wrong with living life guided by your own principles, if that is what your heart tells you to do?

ESTHER

Within limits, yes. But Sammy, what you did.

SAMMY

People are different. You make allowances for it.

ESTHER

But you can't be so extreme, my son.

MYER

Did you ever stop to think what it would do to us?

SAMMY

Yes, I know. It's all about you.

MYER

Feh!

SAMMY

All right! I am the worst son that ever lived. I married the woman I loved. She wasn't what you expected. She wasn't what you wanted.

MYER

No! It was more than that. Marrying a goy... bad enough. The disrespect. Letting go of our faith. But that wasn't sufficient punishment for us, was it? You had to go further. Like always. You may as well have torn out our hearts. How could you marry a Nazi!

SASHA

What?

SAMMY

That's absurd! Why must you make up such insane fantasies? I'll tell you why: You need a reason to hate me. You've always had enthusiasm for that.

MYER

God forgive me, my firstborn does such a thing, such a vindictive blasphemy. Tell me, Lord, what did I do to deserve such a fate? What!

ESTHER

Poppa , stop it.

MYER

Death is out there, lurking in the shadows, searching for me. I feel the pinch at my chest. The presence. And here is his messenger, in my house! (to Esther) The harbinger. Not your idiotic dybbuk.

ESTHER

Poppa , listen what you're saying.

MYER

Uh, my heart!

SAMMY

Please. Spare us the cheap theatrics.

MYER

You --

SAMMY

What?

MYER

Go! Leave this place! Now!

SAMMY

The first sensible thing you've said.

FELIX

No! Sam, wait.

SAMMY

What?

FELIX

Please.

MYER

Quiet, Felix. Let it out of here.

FELIX

No!

MYER

I'm warning you.

FELIX

You be quiet. I can speak my mind, just like everyone else.

MYER

What are you saying, Felix?

FELIX

I'm a person. I'm not a tree standing here.

MYER

All right, quickly.

(Felix approaches Sammy, as gunshots ring outside.)

ESTHER

(to Sammy)

You are not going out there.

SAMMY

What is it, Felix?

FELIX

Sam, I ... I just want to say ...

SAMMY

Yes?

FELIX

What you're doing, with the resistance. It's good.

SAMMY

You don't know what I'm doing.

FELIX

I know enough. It's right -- for you. Who knows. We can only hope. We haven't always been close, you and I. We may ... We may not... (beat) How precious life feels right now.

SAMMY

I understand, Felix.

FELIX

What I'm saying, Sam... I can't do what you're doing. Even if I wanted to. (beat) I'm glad that you are, fighting, for us. That's what you're doing. I'm proud of you. I'm proud to be your brother.

MYER

Proud!

SAMMY

Felix.

FELIX

Yes?

SAMMY

Just this: I'm sorry.

FELIX

About what?

SAMMY

The way I treated you, growing up. All those times ...

ESTHER

I don't understand.

FELIX

It doesn't matter, Sam. I don't care.

SAMMY

The things I did. I was a bully.

MYER

Listen to this. He regrets something!

FELIX

Sam. It was easy for me. I was the "good" son. I saw your strength, I wanted it. I watched you. I followed you in ways you'll never know. It doesn't matter. It's all just shadows. It's air. The only thing is this, now. You're here. That's all that matters.

SAMMY

When did you become such a mench [upright man]?

ESTHER

Poppa, do you see?

MYER

What? I see nothing.

ESTHER

Think! Here is a chance. Here is Sammy, your son. Do I have to chisel it on your forehead?

MYER

(gestures to Felix)

That is my son.

ESTHER

Uh.

MYER

He rejects everything we taught him. To live with Nazis! Is your memory so full of holes? Look, there -- the great Nazi benefactor. The Nazi husband!

ESTHER

You're talking nonsense, Poppa. Her father is the Nazi, not Rose. Not Sammy's wife.

MYER

That's what you want to believe.

SASHA

I don't understand.

SAMMY

Poor Sasha. I'll explain it for you. My wife's family moved to Warsaw from Austria when she was a child. Her father was SS, an officer. He and the mother didn't get along. He left the family. He moved away. Rose and her mother had no contact with him. None.

SASHA

Who is he?

SAMMY

A bad man. It doesn't matter who. Sasha, do you hear me, she never saw him again.

MYER

Is that so?

SAMMY

Yes! Why would I lie about it?

MYER

She's the daughter of a murdering SS captain! That's her blood. You can't change it.

SAMMY

That's not what's really troubling you, is it?

MYER

You have all the answers, don't you, smart guy. Mr. Big Macher [important person].

SAMMY

Myer, the world you inhabit, honestly, I don't know how you do it. Everything in black and white. Your scriptures lay down the law with an iron fist, and ignore every shade of gray! When I look at the world, it's all gray.

MYER

You get no argument from me, the world is complex. That is why we need the scriptures. If we accepted things at face value and followed our impulses, life would be chaos, like in the olden times. We need God's law to live by --

SAMMY

And suffocate by! Those rules were written for a different world. A primitive, lawless world.

MYER

It is the world outside this door!

SAMMY

Your commandments have one message and one message alone: no, no, no, no, no! Only it says what not to do. Good good, I agree, of course. We don't lie, we don't kill. But where is the yes? There is no yes.

MYER

The law is the law. It is why we are here, why we survived thousands of years, most of the time with a sword at our back. Yet we outlast them. We live on, while their civilizations turn to dust. Why is that? I'll tell you why. It is the scriptures! Have they not served us? There is no other reason we are here having this ridiculous conversation.

SAMMY

Do they mention the Gestapo, your holy books?

ESTHER

Sammy, please. The Torah is our guide, as it should be yours. It's the rock beneath our feet.

SAMMY

I accept that.

ESTHER

Do you?

MYER

When? Tell me a time when this was true. You were always attacking. A jab here, a stab there. You understand nothing. I remember the time you ran through the temple screaming like a lunatic, a certified crazy. My own son. You disrupted the service and shamed me so. Still it makes my blood boil. What was that? Was that respect?

SAMMY

That was an angry child, nothing more.

MYER

The things you did.

SAMMY

Twenty years ago. What do you want from me? You want me to open a vein? You want my blood? It's your blood. Here, take it.

MYER

Look what they're doing now. My business, gone. Soldiers in our beautiful home. The house I made. History repeats itself. Make no mistake, it has been going on since --

SAMMY

... the time of Moses.

MYER

Yes! That's right! And do you know how we survive it?

SAMMY

By sticking together.

MYER

Under one temple! One roof. And you, you're going to do better? You think you're smarter than everyone else. You think you're smarter than God. You think you can make your own laws. Such chutzpah! Well, I have some information for you, big shot. It's too late. The rules are already written. They were written long ago.

SASHA

Stop it, both of you. How can you say such things?

MYER

(grips chest)

Uh! My heart. My heart is about to burst!

SAMMY

Again with the theatre.

MYER

All I ever wanted was respect. The respect a father deserves. Is that such a terrible thing to ask?

ESTHER

Please, Poppa.

MYER

“Please Poppa” what?

ESTHER

Can't you see? He's trying.

SAMMY

Do you want to know why I'm trying? I'm here. My feet brought me here. (beat) I've seen things no person should have to look upon.

ESTHER

I know.

SAMMY

No. You don't.

ESTHER

What? What is it?

SAMMY

Yesterday, on the way here, I was in a house. People I didn't know. In Lodz.

SASHA

You were in Lodz?

SAMMY

Outside the city.

SASHA

How is it there?

SAMMY

Same as here. (beat) There was a soldier, torturing this poor woman and her son. I couldn't believe it. I wanted to smash that shmuck's skull. I could have. My anger was great, almost greater than my fear. But I dared not act. This man, he took that child by the legs and swung him around. Around and around he went, banged that child against the wall like a rag doll. I watched his face. That smile. Can you imagine that? Enjoying that. When he was done, that boy was a lump of flesh on the floor.

SASHA

That is horrible.

SAMMY

The mother. She stood there and watched. I thought about this long and hard, this woman. How can a person lose their humanity like that? It was her son. Yet she didn't move. She'd become a thing, staring empty-eyed at him, with but a single purpose: to survive, from one moment to the next. Even at such a price. That was all that remained of her. This was yesterday. I'm going. Goodbye.

ESTHER

No! Please, Sammy. Wait. Please. Listen to me. You're a good boy. Do you hear? A good boy! My son. My wonderful son. Don't go, not yet. (to Myer) What's the matter with you? You are like that woman.

(Sammy walks to the window.)

SAMMY

It's getting light out. It's morning already.

ESTHER

It's dangerous, what you're going to do?

FELIX

How do you fight them, Sam? Do you have guns?

SAMMY

No. We have something just as good -- our Jewish brains. We have our hatred. Our knowledge of the city. We can't fight, that's suicide. We disrupt.

ESTHER

What do you mean, disrupt?

SAMMY

You attack them, they retaliate. They wipe out the families of resisters, destroy whole neighborhoods. To instruct us. Those boys in the square ... they fought.

FELIX

Then what do you do?

SAMMY

We cause accidents. We loosen a railroad bolt and a train runs off the tracks. An ammunition car blows up -- by accident. (looks at Myer) But maybe these are bad ideas. Maybe I should leave the fighting to the Germans. What do you think, Myer? (beat) I have an idea: I'll do whatever you say. How about that? You decide. Go ahead, tell me what to do. It's what you've always wanted.

MYER

I want only for you to do what's right.

SAMMY

For who?

MYER

Go ahead, fight. I don't care.

SAMMY

So you approve?

MYER

Yes. Get yourself killed. No, I don't mean that. I would like to take you back, but I can't.

SAMMY

No return on damaged goods. Isn't that your policy?

MYER

Ridiculous.

SAMMY

Is it?

MYER

You must atone.

SAMMY

Atone? For what?

MYER

Your sins.

SAMMY

What sins?

MYER

God help me, I can forgive you for so many things. I want to. For years I endured your headstrong behavior. You are my flesh and blood. How can I forgive you for marrying that Nazi!

SAMMY

You cruel, bitter old man. You know nothing of Rose.

MYER

I know what she is.

SAMMY

And what is that? What is that, father? What is she? Tell me, I want to know. Come on, tell me right now. What is Rose?

MYER

What you could never be -- a Gentile!

SAMMY

WHAT??

MYER

Admit it! All your life you wanted to be one of them.

SAMMY

No! I just didn't want to be like you.

MYER

Go! Get out! I can't bear to look at you. Back to your Nazi wife!

SAMMY

I can't!

MYER

Of course you can!

SAMMY

No, I can't! SHE'S DEAD!!

ESTHER

What?

SAMMY

You heard me.

ESTHER

It's not true.

SAMMY

Are you happy now? That's what you wanted. Your wish come true. She's gone. Tell me, where was that God of yours? Where was he? Where is he now?

ESTHER

Oh, Sammy.

SAMMY

It's over, Ma. It's just ... finished.

FELIX

I am so sorry, Sam.

SASHA

What about your children?

SAMMY

They're with Rose's aunt. They're fine.

ESTHER

When, Sammy? When did this happen?

SAMMY

A year ago, in Krakow. A spring day. Flowers everywhere. We were walking by the river, Rose and I. Davida had the children. On such a day one feels all is well in the world. We sat on a riverbank. A group of soldiers came by. Young, I don't know, maybe sixteen or seventeen. (to Sasha) Children. This was not long after Luba was born. Rose wasn't yet strong. She moved slowly. These boys -- these children -- they took us behind a church ...

SASHA

Please. I don't want to hear.

SAMMY

They ripped off her clothes. I tried to fight but they held me down. They made me watch.

SASHA

Please.

SAMMY

She fought. They hit her. They laughed. They pulled her hair, she cried. I tried to help. They kicked me. She screamed. Each one of them on top of her. Animals. No, not animals. Only humans could do such things. They hit me. I was too weak to do anything. What could I do? I could hardly see. But I knew. And then -- Myer, are you listening? -- as they were leaving, one of them said to her, "You know, you don't even look like a Jew." Rose looked over to me. I couldn't move, I was a bloody heap, but one eye was still working. I don't know, maybe she thought I was dead. She stood up with her broken body and said, "I am the proudest Jew that ever lived." Can you believe that? She spit in his face. And he shot her dead.

ESTHER

Oh, my poor Sammy. (to Myer) Are you happy now?

MYER

I don't know what to say. I don't understand.

ESTHER

What don't you understand?

MYER

Why.

SAMMY

What do you mean why?

MYER

I'm ashamed. I have never been so ashamed in all my life.

SAMMY

You are ashamed?

(Myer paces.)

MYER

I am a stubborn old man. A hard-headed fool. I know it. It doesn't make a difference. I am always "right." Well.... I feel no certainty now. (walks to a photo hanging on the wall)  
Look at these children. Who are they? Esther, what is this picture?

ESTHER

It was here.

MYER

Their faces. They are ready to swallow up the world in one gulp. They have no idea what they are in for.

ESTHER

Poppa , you don't have to ...

MYER

Sammy, your wife, Rose. I am sorry. I know these words must mean nothing to you now. I cannot take back what is said, as you have pointed out. I wish I could. She was a good woman who loved you very much.

ESTHER

Poppa , come here, sit.

MYER

You know, before all this ... So long ago, it seems, already I was losing my grip. I'd be walking to the store or the market... I could feel the weight of what was to come. What I was so sure of -- the simplest things -- I began to doubt. Maybe this is what it is to grow old. It was as if the ground beneath my feet had turned to water and I had to find a way to walk upon it. How does one do that? Oh, Samuel, what have I done?

SAMMY

How strange, this thought that comes to me.

MYER

What? What is it? Tell me.

SAMMY

Acknowledgement.

MYER

I don't understand.

SAMMY

It's all I ever wanted from you. To hear that what I think, what I say, what I do, is all right with you. That no change is necessary.

MYER

I give it to you. I give it to you! I acknowledge you, from the front and back and inside out.

(Sammy turns away.)

MYER (cont'd)

Surely there is something I can give to you. You have only to tell me what it is.

SAMMY

There's nothing I want from you.

MYER

We raised you -- both of you -- the best way we knew. I did as my father did, as his father did, from one generation to the next, the passing on of a way of life. But Sammy, you were different. We didn't know what to do. I thought I was helping you.

SAMMY

Helping me?

MYER

Please forgive me, son. I know you can't now. But maybe someday. We have our differences, I know that. You have your point of view. Maybe these things can be worked out? I will try. And you ... will try? You don't have to prove yourself to me anymore.

SAMMY

That's right. That's it. I tried to prove myself to you. Only it wasn't the real you. It was a little Myer who lived inside my head. A Myer who never rested, who never slept, who ordered me to do this and that, day and night, never ending. You never saw any of it. If you knew how much I did to please you. It was all in my head. (points at Myer) There's the dybbuk. He's wormed his way into all our minds.

MYER

I don't know what it is you're talking. It doesn't matter. Samuel, stay with us. Help us. We need you.

SAMMY

I can't do that.

MYER

We can get to know each other. You'll tell me about your life. We'll discuss the Talmud, like we used to.

SAMMY

Discuss? Those were arguments we were having.

MYER

Okay. We'll have a real debate this time.

SAMMY

Stop. Stop it. Do you hear me? You're just doing the same thing. Don't you see?

MYER

I don't know any better.

SAMMY

Do you actually think I can stay here?

MYER

Why not? If you decide it, it is so.

ESTHER

What is more important than family?

SAMMY

Thousands of families.

MYER

Yes, that is true.

ESTHER

Please, don't do this thing, whatever it is. I'm afraid for you.

MYER

No, Momma. I understand. He must do what his heart tells him. What happens from that, we leave to Ha-Shem.

(Sammy goes to the door.)

ESTHER

Sammy, please, no! Don't go! My son! Please! Not again!

(Sobbing, she embraces him.)

MYER

Momma, he is a man. He holds his life in his own hands. It is not for us to decide.

SAMMY

Thank you.

ESTHER

Just a little longer ...

MYER

Momma, please, leave him be.

ESTHER

My Sammy.

MYER

We'll be here, son, waiting for you, when you return.

SAMMY

Happy Birthday, Pop.

MYER

You remembered?

SAMMY

(to Felix) Has he offered up his eye teeth for a Cognac? Or is that yet to come?

(Sasha, Felix and Sammy embrace.)

SAMMY (cont'd)

Goodbye, Felix, Sasha.

ESTHER

Oh Sammy. Come back to us.

SAMMY

Next time you'll make me your chicken soup. The real one.

ESTHER

With matzo balls you'll feel two days in your stomach.

SAMMY

Pop, we will discuss the Talmud.

MYER

Yes, good, Sammy. Goodbye, son.

SAMMY

Goodbye.

(Sammy kisses Esther on the cheek and shakes hands with Myer. Sammy exits. Myer touches the mezuzah on the door frame and then kisses his fingertips.)

ESTHER

Are you all right, Poppa?

MYER

I don't know. Am I?

ESTHER

I could plotz right where I stand.

MYER

I have two sons. Two sons!

ESTHER

Thank you, Ha-shem.

MYER

Don't worry, I plan to do exactly that.

ESTHER

Maybe we should rest a little.

MYER

(pacing)

I don't know if I'm coming or going.

ESTHER

You're coming and going, Poppa. Sit down, please. I'm getting dizzy.

(Esther goes to a drawer and takes out a box. She sits at the table.)

ESTHER (cont'd)

Come, I want to show you something.

(Everyone sits with her. She pulls photos from the box and spreads them out on the table.)

MYER

Ah! Look at this! Felix, when he was a boy.

SASHA

Our wedding.

MYER

What about this? Sammy's Bar Mitzvah. Here, take it out to see. And I have just the frame for it. Gordi and Max can live somewhere else.

(At the front door: KNOCK pause KNOCK KNOCK  
pause KNOCK.)

JOSEPH (O.S.)

It's Joseph.

ESTHER

Joseph?

(Esther opens the door.)

JOSEPH

Where is he? Where's Sammy?

ESTHER

Sammy? He left. What do you want with him?

JOSEPH

He's gone?

ESTHER

I don't know, he had something to do. Joseph, what is going on?

JOSEPH

You don't know.

ESTHER

I don't know what?

JOSEPH

Sammy is a hero, Mrs. Leibowitz.

ESTHER

What do you mean?

JOSEPH

He's killed Germans. More than anyone.

ESTHER

Sammy?

JOSEPH

Yes.

MYER

What's he saying, Esther?

ESTHER

Oh God, no.

JOSEPH

No. It's good! What he's doing. You should be glad.

(Joseph runs off. Felix shuts the door.)

ESTHER

Oy vey.

FELIX

It's not true, Momma. Joseph is a liar. It's a fact. Don't believe him, not for a minute.

SASHA

He was expelled from school for mischief.

ESTHER

Yes, but Sammy said --

FELIX

Sammy said he would not do anything obvious. Remember? He doesn't risk the lives of innocent people. He makes trains go off the tracks, that's all.

SASHA

Felix is right.

FELIX

He doesn't fight, or families come to harm.

ESTHER

Yes, that is right. That boy is wrong. He's a stupid. (beat) Come, Poppa. I'm tired. You need to lay down. Sasha, will please you get these dishes?

SASHA

Go, rest.

(Myer, Esther and Felix start for the bedroom when gunshots blast outside. Esther runs to the front door but Myer grabs her.)

ESTHER

Sammy! No! My Sammy! Please! No!

MYER

Momma, stop it! Stop it. It's not him.

ESTHER

It's Sammy! I know it. They're shooting my Sammy!

MYER

No, Momma. He's far away by now.

ESTHER

It's him. I know it. I know it.

FELIX

There are thousands on the streets. It's not him.

MYER

He's okay.

FELIX

I'm going to see.

ESTHER

Don't go, Felix.

FELIX

It's okay, Ma. I'll come right back.

ESTHER

Oy vey. Please, be careful. Just a few steps. Come right back.

(Felix puts on his coat and exits.)

ESTHER (cont'd)

Come, Poppa. Come this way.

(Myer and Esther exit to the bedroom. Sasha, now alone, goes to the kitchen sink and starts to wash dishes. The front door opens and the Ghost enters.)

SASHA

Hello? Who's there? It's you. You're here.

(The Ghost kneels down, touches Sasha's belly.)

SASHA (cont'd)

Whisper to me. Anything. Let me know you're here.

GHOST

It's a boy, Sasha. A son is growing in you. He will be born into this world. You will call him Avram.

(Sammy enters, breathless and winded. He speaks to the Ghost.)

SAMMY

Rose, what are you trying to do? If you're trying to wear me out, you're succeeding. Where did you learn how to move like that?

(Ghost/Rose gestures for Sammy to come toward Sasha. She points to Sasha's belly.)

ROSE

Sammy, I want you to see something. Look here. Come closer.

(Sammy grips his abdomen.)

SAMMY

The wound ... it's gone! Look at this. I'm fine. What's happening to me? Rose?

ROSE

Yes, I know. Come, see this, Sammy.

(He kneels down to look at Sasha's belly, as Sasha begins to dry the dishes.)

SAMMY

I see it. It's growing.

ROSE

Beautiful, isn't it?

(Sammy and Roses stand.)

SAMMY

What is this place? Why are we here?

ROSE

Look around. What do you see? Slowly, Sammy. Take your time.

SAMMY

I was in the street, running. The soldiers, chasing me. Gunshots. Bullets. The feeling of the street on my face. Pain. (holds his chest) Everywhere. I was dying. I'm dead, Rose, isn't that right? They shot me. I didn't survive that.

(Rose draws him close.)

SAMMY (cont'd)

Then, there you were. Where is this? I don't see anything. Just that little boy.

ROSE

Breathe, Sammy. Breathe in this world. Go ahead, do it. It's the only way.

SAMMY

Yes ... I see it now ... My god.

(Myer walks in and sits on the couch.)

MYER

Sasha, can you warm up a little water? I want some tea. I have a chill.

SASHA

Of course. Sit, I'll make it.

MYER

Thank you.

SAMMY

Poppa!

(Sammy runs to Myer.)

SAMMY (cont'd)

Poppa! Poppa!

MYER

(to Sasha)

I should be exhausted. I feel like a young man on his wedding night. I can feel the blood racing through my veins.

SASHA

I feel the blood racing through your veins.

MYER

Maybe I shouldn't have tea.

SASHA

How about some challah? There's a nice piece left.

SAMMY

Poppa, I'm right here.

MYER

There's a draft. Sasha. Do you feel it? Did you open the window?

SASHA

No. That's dangerous.

(Sasha goes to the window, examines it.)

SASHA (cont'd)

Huh. Look at this. There's a little hole. Maybe from a bullet?

MYER

A bullet? No.

(Myer goes to see.)

MYER (cont'd)

You're right. How do you like that? Someone could have been hurt.

SAMMY

Look, up there, in the ceiling.

MYER

It went into the ceiling. Imagine that.

(Myer returns to the couch, as Sammy follows him.)

MYER (cont'd)

I'll fix it, Sasha.

SASHA

You can fix that? It's so high up.

SAMMY

I'll answer your question, Poppa. Yes, I forgive you. Today, yesterday, for all time. I wish you could see me. Can you find it in your heart to forgive me?

MYER

Yes, I can. I will.

(Sasha stares up at the bullet hole.)

SASHA

Why bother with it. No one will know it's there.

SAMMY

Do you mean it, father? Really?

MYER

I love you. Always.

SAMMY

I love you, father.

SASHA

What?

MYER

What?

SASHA

You said something. I heard you.

MYER

What are you talking? I'm just sitting here, minding my own business. If it's the dyybuk you're hearing, I beg of you, please keep it to yourself. If Momma hears that, we'll never hear the end of it. Dyybukuks!

ROSE

Sammy, come, it's time. We have to go.

(Sammy reaches out to touch Myer, who also reaches out.)

SAMMY

Goodbye, father.

MYER

Goodbye, son.

(Sammy joins Rose at the door.)

SAMMY

Rose, just a minute. The way he felt about you. The things he said. How can you look upon him with acceptance?

ROSE

Those things don't matter. Such foolishness remains here. It means less than a single breath. You'll see. Today, yesterday, tomorrow ...

(MORE)

Everything that happens in time is but a single night's dream within the One Life. Soon to  
be forgotten. There will be another dream. And another. And so it goes, on and on, for  
eternity. Soon many more will follow. Millions. But not Sasha. And the boy. He will  
carry on your line.

(Sammy and Rose exit. Esther enters. She sits on the  
couch beside Myer, and Sasha does too. Myer extends  
his arms around them both.

Fade lights.)

THE END

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