

THE UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY

Medina:

A New Play from Genesis to Apokalupsis

by

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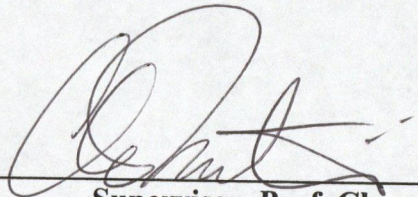
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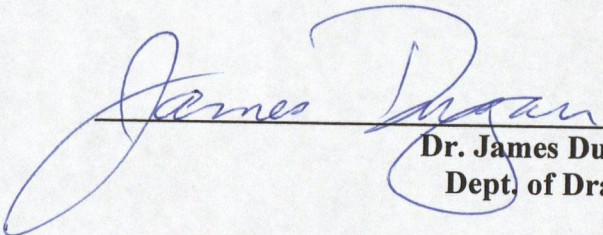
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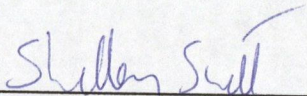
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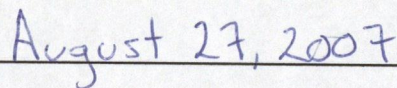
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ABSTRACT

MEDINA:

A NEW PLAY FROM GENESIS TO APOKALUPSIS

Amos Altman

The following manuscript and the accompanying artist's statement examine the process of playwriting in creating and developing the full-length play, *Medina*. The play *Medina* explores the space that exists between family members in a family torn apart by a dark history and a religious conversion.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

SIGNATURE PAGE	ii
ABSTRACT	iii

MEDINA: FROM GENESIS TO APOKALUPSIS

1. INTRODUCTION	1
2. INITIAL STAGES	4
3. CHALLENGES IN DEVELOPMENT: RESEARCH	11
A. AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL MATERIAL	12
B. RELIGION	15
i. MOSES	21
ii. MEDINA	24
4. CHALLENGES IN DEVELOPMENT: THE WRITING PROCESS ...	26
A. PLOT AND THEME	27
B. CHARACTER	33
5. CONCLUSION	38
WORKS CITED	39
APPENDIX I: <i>MEDINA</i>	41
ACT I: JIHAD	43
ACT II: MEDINA	88

1. Introduction

From conception to completion, the process of creating a cohesive full-length play harbored many challenges and brought about many rewards. Crafting a successful final product as a playwright was filled with mental blocks, countless revisions, merciless cuts, and new discoveries. Gauging success in both areas required an in-depth look at the writing process itself, from the first spark of inspiration through the entire development process.

Writing *Medina* was initially simply an attempt to evolve as a playwright and write a distinct, challenging, successful, and, ultimately, producible full-length play. When the subject of religion became involved in the process, the supplementary objective became the creation of positive discourse about the topics discussed in the play. The topical center of the play involved intolerance between religions. A secondary concentration on the limits of forgiveness and the difficulties of reuniting a dysfunctional family would inform the primary topic. With those intentions in mind, the process of writing *Medina* was an exciting test to progressively conquer the challenges presented, meet the expectations prescribed, and develop into a better writer.

Edward Albee stated that “Writing should be useful. If it can't instruct people a little bit more about the responsibilities of consciousness there's no point in doing it. But we all write because we don't like what we see, and we want people to be better and different.” (Albee 4) *Medina*'s development was an exploration of that ideal. The original outline for the play lacked any semblance of a play with challenging themes or ideas. The play evolved to present an artistic work “which not only releases the feelings, insights

and impulses possible within the particular historical field of human relations in which the action takes place, but employs and encourages those thoughts and feelings which help transform the field itself” (Brecht). The primary intention became to engage an audience: to identify with the protagonist’s struggle and to question their preconceptions about religion and; grounded in that intention was the goal to engage an audience into discussion about intolerance and forgiveness. Writing a successful product depended, to a degree, on meeting those goals.

Success also existed in creating a structurally sound play with consistent characters, effectively translated ideas, and a focused, streamlined narrative. There were, however, no unanimous criteria for success in playwriting. Essentially, “there are no rules – and no policing body to enforce them, even if there were” (Martini 3). However, William Archer said that “the essence of drama is crisis” (24) and Aristotle suggested that “one must strive for that which is either necessary or probable” in both plot construction and character (Hutton 750). Those ideas offered a foundation for creating a play that could be focused and consistent.

It was vital to investigate unfamiliar areas in the writing process. A sustained effort was made to distance the play from a history of short, comic one-act work. The outline for *The Rabbi Will See You Now* was a reflection of that history. Developing *Medina* became an active attempt to subvert that history and attempt something new.

From a research standpoint, fresh, and often uncomfortable, subject matter was examined and a delicate exploration of personal history was utilized. Comprehensive research and uninterrupted script development were set standards to ensure the creative process flourished. I tried to encapsulate those processes in this paper with a focus on the

challenges they presented throughout development, rather than a chronological notation of the experience.

Writing the play eventually led to the completion of a final, thesis draft ready for its apokalupsis, or unveiling. The play in question began as *The Rabbi Will See You Now*, a comic exploration of an autobiographical event. It evolved into *Medina*, a wholly fictional drama about redemption and forgiveness.

2. Initial Stages

As a writer, staring at the blank page can be ultimate humiliation. It is a failure of imagination and inspiration. A blank page, however, is also liberating. There is ultimate freedom in starting a new writing project from the very beginning. But artistic inspiration can occasionally wane and be difficult to sustain. The university setting, however, provided an environment that established set goals that supported the process of creation. The playwriting program encouraged the creative process with expected deadlines and ongoing critiques, facilitated by thesis supervisor Clem Martini. Even before completing the pre-thesis play, *Waiting Time*, he set forth a challenge to begin the thesis project.

Brainstorming was the practical solution for creating a dozen or so story outlines for a proposed thesis play. Out of those outlines, around ten were superficially examined in meetings with Professor Martini, and two or three of the more intriguing ideas were pursued in further, more specific outlines. The three ideas were a family drama (*A Cracked House*), a play about Allied Japanese soldiers in World War Two (*Little Gibraltar*), and a romantic comedy (*Night Moves*). Though those outlines were ultimately cast aside, elements of *A Cracked House* would eventually be used in developing *Medina*. A new direction opened up when an enabling spark of inspiration occurred through the tragedy of a death in the family.

The subsequent event, a Jewish funeral, was the inspiration for the creation of what would become *Medina*. Going to the funeral was not treated as a research opportunity at first, but the subject matter of a story began to emerge as the funeral progressed; thus began the process of creating a full-length play. The heightened emotion

of a funeral planted an idea of potential conflicts and characters for a play. Also, the unknown nature of a Jewish funeral was a possible hook that could be intriguing for a prospective audience. In personally experiencing the dissonance and disconnect that the funeral created, there was insight into the possibilities of character, structure, and conflict. Feeling alienated from my family planted an idea for a protagonist's struggle: disconnection from his family. Dramatic potential arose as the protagonist began to take shape and elements of the primary conflict began to form.

The idiosyncratic nature of that particular Jewish funeral, whether it was traditional (and perceived non-traditional) dress, food, prayers, or preparation of the deceased, was also observed and noted. The skeleton of events in the play took shape as the structure of that funeral from my point of view: arrival, going to the synagogue, meeting the Rabbi, the funeral service, the shiva, and departure. In the case of the shiva, "the seven day mourning period" (Cohn-Sherbrook 561), the autobiographical experience was actually more celebratory than depressing. Complete strangers arrived at the house to mourn, but would then pilfer pastry. An old friend of the deceased showed up with some marijuana called Panama Yellow. My cheeks were constantly pinched and the resemblance of myself to my father a consistent topic of conversation. There was also sense of celebration of life throughout the process and a sense of comedic potential in many of the exchanges and observations.

The first outline for the play, then called *The Rabbi Will See You Now*, mostly came from memories of the event itself, with elements of fiction added and new character names introduced in writing the outline. There were thirteen characters and the structure mirrored the structure of the funeral. The conflict of the protagonist, Andrew, was

internal in nature. Islam was not yet a part of the play, nor was Moses. My initial notes mainly dealt with the chronology of events from arrival to departure and remembered dialogue from the experience. Any aspects particular to that specific Jewish funeral were noted for future reference. Family members metamorphosed into rudimentary characters or composites and potential character arcs began forming.

After returning from the funeral, and following discussions of this outline with my thesis supervisor, it became obvious that there was a need for more depth and specificity for the play. Too much of the play relied on ambiguity and the plot was not yet fully developed. It also became apparent that there was little comedy inherent in the play. The outline seemed to force comedic interaction. The play was outlined as a simple fish-out-of-water story with the additional hook of the family being Jewish. The discussions with Professor Martini also suggested moving away from comedy to grow as a writer, since most of the previous written work (including the pre-thesis play) had been comic in nature. Considering the involvement of religion in the play, it seemed a natural area for dramatic progression to occur. With the inclusion of a prospective religious conflict, new elements were focused on and further investigated in a second outline. Changes would have to be made to accommodate a more challenging direction.

In order to achieve a new sense of dramatic potential, many of the autobiographical elements and comedic memories were excised from the play, resulting in greater freedom of narrative. The argument that “[the] urge to explore the past comes with a powerful urge to escape it” (Chandler 45) was most certainly the case in the genesis of this new direction for the play. Most of the characters remained, but it was necessary to attempt a core with more inherent conflict. Thirteen characters became

eleven (and were eventually whittled down to eight), superficial dialogue was discarded, and the conflict began to take shape. Structurally, the outline suggested that the first act should end with the revelation of a secret.

Since religion was a main component of the play, the idea arose that upsetting the family's religious sensibilities might open up an appealing line of inquiry. Reza Aslan said that "[the] clash of monotheisms occurs when faith, which is mysterious and ineffable... becomes entangled in the gnarled branches of religion" (xxvi) and that conflict was precisely what the play needed. A new scenario was written involving a secret involving religion that would have the potential to tear the family apart: Andrew's struggle would involve a conversion. His revelation at the end of the first act would be the conversion, and the subsequent struggle to bring the family back together would be the crux of the second act. After careful consideration, Islam became the religion to which Andrew would convert, and the catalyst for conflict was planted.

The two prime examples of dramatic work that informed the play's new direction were Robert Bolt's *A Man for All Seasons* and Bertolt Brecht's *Galileo*. In both plays, matters of principle are at stake, and both protagonists are forced to make choices that revolve around religion. Of course, the play *Galileo* views religion as an essentially antagonistic force, while *A Man for All Seasons*' Sir Thomas More uses religion as his moral compass; both men pay dearly for their so-called transgressions either with or against their respective religions. Andrew's character was influenced by those circumstances.

Those plays, however, dealt with the power of organized religion to influence politics and scientific discovery. My idea was to frame the story within a more intimate setting. The framework of family would become a microcosm for the play's larger issues.

Less influential but still important to the play's evolution were the family dramas that have been presented on the stage and screen for years. A pair of works stood out after an early draft of the play revealed some sub-conscious influences: the progression to a cathartic embrace in *Ordinary People* and the dysfunction of the Tyrone family in Eugene O'Neill's *Long Day's Journey into Night*.

Forgiveness was an important theme in the play's second outline. It was a clear need of Andrew's and a clear source for conflict within the family. Both the aforementioned film and play dealt with that subject matter directly. An inability to forgive is the source for family tension and conflict. Eventually, a substance abuse angle developed in later drafts of *Medina*, which was influenced by the family dysfunction it caused in *Long Day's Journey into Night*. Additionally, *Ordinary People* provided influence to two areas of the play: the unfeeling mother and the death of a sibling. The character Lulu was influenced by Mary Tyler Moore's Beth Jarrett, though the two characters present a contrast in terms of emotional release. Though *Long Day's Journey into Night* and *Ordinary People* remained largely sub-conscious influences, or perhaps a symptom of the anxiety of influence, their impact was certainly helpful in defining what would become *Medina*.

Using an autobiographical event as a starting point, the writing of the first draft developed quickly. An elementary knowledge of Jewish funeral rites and the mourning ritual aided in the initial draft, though further research into both Judaism and Islam would

be required. The proposed conflict in the play, a religious conversion, seemed plausible, so the concentration on writing the play began. An early opportunity to possibly have the play work-shopped at the Banff Playwright's Colony presented itself, which pushed the deadline for a first draft to be completed. There was no time for procrastination. The priority became to complete the first draft; more in-depth research would play a factor in the play's later development.

The first act came together very quickly, though the cast of characters was still overly large. There were still eleven characters in the second outline and in the first draft, including Andrew's brother, a Cantor, and some other minor characters. As sprawling as the first act was, it contained clear, escalating conflict. The dramatic action of the play moved forward steadily to Andrew's revelation at the end of the act, stronger conflicts were established, and characters began to progressively take shape.

The second act proved more troublesome. Instead of increasing the tension after the revelation of conversion, the second act became mired in a slow settlement of the family's conflicts. The one family connection that held tension, between Andrew and his mother Lulu, remained unclear due to a lack of precise understanding for their tumultuous relationship. Lulu's rationale behind her resentment for Andrew and vice-versa was vague in the first draft, and continued to be a difficult matter to deal with as the play matured. Nevertheless, a first draft was finished before the workshop deadline passed. However, after careful thought and a critique of the first draft, it was apparent that the script needed editing and further exploration. The workshop would not be pursued at that juncture. The script had too many unresolved issues at that stage to be involved in a workshop, but there was clearly an advantage to having a first draft

completed. There would now be more time to continue the script's development and begin the extensive research process.

3. Challenges in Development:

Research

Though the research process had truly originated at the funeral, the majority of the text based research started after the first draft was completed. That process pushed the play into new and exciting areas. The research also allowed me more confidence to write about the subjects involved. There was an enormous amount of material to investigate regarding the two religions in question. Though some of the research material was contradictory (especially translations of scripture), it was valuable to develop characters, theme, and conflict. The research generated additions to the play that furthered its progress greatly. A new character was introduced that provoked further research, as did the introduction of the town that represented “the model of Islamic perfection” (Aslan 53) that would become the title of the play.

A. Autobiographical Material

Referencing my autobiographical source material was instrumental in creating *Medina*. The ability to record personal observations was an important aspect of the research process. Witnessing the arrival of a large amount of pastry trays to the shiva, noticing mints on the Rabbi's desk- those incidents, while not overly important in the plot, were the rich details that added authenticity, nuance, and dimension to the play. The ability to capture something through observations was valuable in many ways. In the case of a funeral, the varied reactions to death generated multiple character traits still in the play. Fay's recounting of her first date with her husband was based on an actual exchange. The eulogies in the script were a mixture of the real and imagined. The set-up for the funeral and meeting the Rabbi reflected the actual events. However, the use of such material was troubling for two reasons.

Firstly, the observed material impeded the development of the script. The play was not working as "history that's been tarted up a little bit" (King 138). Some separation from the actual events became essential if the play was to evolve. The "transition from [the true] experience to the page... [is] always some sort of translation [rather] than an author in his or her entirety" (Pick), and the success of the play depended on expanding that translation, giving the story freedom to progress in new directions.

Though in the end some of the material was retained, much was excised in early drafts to the betterment of the play. Often there was a synthesis of fiction and truth that informed the moments of the play. The character of Andrew was not a strictly autobiographical figure though he evolved from personal similarities. The theme of

alienation certainly had its origin in reality, but the play enacted a conversion that never took place. The real funeral was in a decidedly Jewish community in Toronto for someone who was alienated from the family by both geography and religion. That personal feeling of alienation was transplanted onto Andrew in a very different context. Much of Fay's character drew upon two authentic, true-life sources. Bubbie, though conceivably an amalgam of Jewish grandmother stereotypes, relied heavily on the character traits of a real person. But none of the characters, in truth, embodied sufficient conflict to sustain an audience's attention. In order to advance the plot, there would have to be less concentration on personal material.

Secondly, there were concerns that arose from using autobiographical source material. Despite the characters' name changes and the addition of new situations and conflict, there remained anxiety that a character might be recognized. Further alterations were made to separate the character and the person, while trying to maintain the integrity and consistency of the character. Bubbie was the character most inspired by a real person and her dialogue reflected some of that person's characteristics, but fictional idiosyncrasies were added to her character. Lulu went through constant changes to avoid any connection to a real person, as she was perhaps the least sympathetic voice in the play. The plan was to instill enough difference in the character and plot to avoid any negative reactions from the persons involved in the real situations. Because of the changes in name, circumstance, and personality, discomfort over the play's origins lessened.

Throughout the revision process, the ethical issues dwindled. Necessary changes to further the play's narrative distanced the characters even more from their initial

sources. Most characters were either composites from real-life counterparts or completely invented. The plot was completely overhauled and involved a complex family history that was almost completely fictional.

A tertiary form of research concerned speaking to family members about what they recollected from the events on which the play is based. The play's structure was in place, and the queries were meant to address false details and memory lapses in terms of the funeral service itself. Surprising results were produced from this research method. Pieces of information initially forgotten were remembered in conversation and helped events come together. Marcy's eulogy in *Medina* had similarities to its source, and through familial conversations, accurate phrasing of the source eulogy rose to the surface. These conversations also produced an opportunity to gauge more personal and visceral responses to the play's subject matter. The first draft had characters repeatedly hitting one note about Andrew's conversion. The original dialogue revolved around the perceived extremist nature of Muslims or the violence perpetrated in the Middle East. A myriad of responses in the play to Andrew's conversion were introduced, and echoed the responses received by my family members. Their responses, if one of their own family members had converted without their consultation, varied: anger, confusion, shock, ambivalence. Those reactions were introduced into the script as the script developed.

This research provided characters in the second act the opportunity to develop into distinct individuals with a wide range of opinions about Andrew and his life choices. The biggest question in those conversations involved why Andrew converted, which the script had not yet answered. To resolve that question of why Andrew chose to convert, I embarked on the next stage in the research process.

B. Religion

More rigorous research of the two main religions in question, Judaism and Islam, became the focus as a second draft commenced. The biggest challenge to the research process was the overwhelming amount of information available. An understanding of the conversion process as well as the history, singular and collective, of the two faiths was a necessity, but Islam took early focus. Of the two religions, Islam was the least researched to that point, considering the family connections already used for investigation into Judaism.

In researching Islam, the first surprise came in unearthing the definition of jihad. Jihad was defined as a spiritual struggle (Kung 600), but it “was given new political interpretations” in the twentieth century as a synonym for holy war. The first act of the play was named Jihad because the duality of the word reflected Andrew’s struggle and the polarization it created in his family.

The next step was to decide on the sect of Islam to which Andrew would convert. Shi’a, Sunni, and Sufi were the three largest sects, with Shi’a arguably the most orthodox and Sufi arguably the most liberal. It felt implausible from my understanding of Andrew’s character that he would join a conservative sect of any religion. Sufism became the original template for the sect Andrew would choose because of its “[yearning] for a warmer, more spontaneous spiritual life” (Denny 219) and liberal reputation. Andrew’s personal desire for forgiveness and acceptance made a conversion to that sect seem possible. However, as Andrew’s character did not display the mysticism of a Sufi, he was rewritten to fit a Sunni model.

The play did not directly oppose a sect of Islam, but the event of a conversion, so a sect was removed from the play's text. Nevertheless, the knowledge of sectarian variety in Islam shaped Andrew and his arguments. General knowledge about Islam was collected in early research, including the five pillars of Islam and Muslim dietary laws, but there needed to be a sharper focus on what would drive the play's development.

Issues of conversion and inter-faith marriage in Islam and Judaism became the center of the research. It was critical that inter-faith marriage was not an option for Andrew and that his conversion would be, in part, to marry. The script would develop his deeper psychological reasoning for conversion throughout the writing process, but marriage provided Andrew's initial impulse. What was made clear through research was that an engagement of "a Muslim girl and a non-Muslim boy" (Abdul-Rauf 29) would be unacceptable; Abdullah Yusuf Ali's interpretation of the Qur'an explicitly states "Do not marry unbelieving women until they believe. ... nor marry (your girls) to unbelievers" (2.221). Abdul-Rauf also states that "a male Muslim [may] marry a non-Muslim girl... [though] this practice [is regarded] as undesirable" (29). That prohibition of marriage could be used as one of Andrew's catalysts for conversion.

As the script continued to develop, so did Andrew's deeper motivation to convert. An engagement to a Muslim woman established that need, but it was clear that more drive was required for the immediate acceptance of Andrew's conversion. The idea that Andrew needed his family to attend "a formal betrothal [or Khitbah]" (Abdul-Rauf 35) provided the play with another layer of complication. This ceremony often required a family member of the groom to "reveal his intentions" (Abdul-Rauf 35). This added another dimension to conflict and the play's second act had more at stake for Andrew and

his family. In discussions with Professor Martini, it was clear that the first act had a clear peak, but the second act was simply a protracted resolve to the revelation of the first act. The betrothal ceremony served the play as another goal for Andrew to work toward.

Research into Islam also helped support the introduction of addiction to Andrew's story. When Elliot, the character of Andrew's brother, was eliminated after the first draft, an opportunity appeared to embed this character's death with resonance involving past conflicts with his family. This developed from a car accident that killed Elliot (with Andrew driving) to Andrew and Elliot doing drugs together, ending with Elliot's suicide and/or overdose. Even later drafts left it fairly open to interpretation, and specific details about the death or the particular drugs used were almost never explicitly mentioned.

This new scenario, involving Elliot's death from an addiction, became another catalyst for Andrew's conversion: the need for purity. This was a two-fold strategy, as the purity of the body, the "prohibition of intoxicants" (Sabini 193) and cleanliness of prayer stressed by much of the scripture was as important as the purity of the soul allowed by the Qur'an through forgiveness; "Allah does blot out sins again and again" (4.43). The concept of the afterlife in Islam (Paradise or Hell) provided Andrew with another avenue for judgment and forgiveness, since "there is no indication of a clearly defined concept" (Cohn-Sherbrook 456) of the afterlife in Jewish scripture. Essentially, these were the research points rooted in Islam that were explored in early drafts to support plot strands in the play.

Insights were offered as a result of researching Judaism in the areas of mourning, as well as inter-faith marriage. The funeral practices and especially the more archaic or

orthodox customs were unnecessary to the play itself, but offered perspective: “mourners sit on the floor or on low cushions or benches and are forbidden to shave, bathe, go to work, study the Torah (except subjects related to mourning), engage in sexual relations, wear leather shoes, greet others, cut their hair, or wear laundered clothing” (Cohn-Sherbrook 561), either for the length of the formal mourning period, or shiva (the seven to thirty day mourning ritual, depending on the relation of the deceased). The play takes place over two days in a household of reform Jews, and many rules had little textual advantage, though they did create another outlook into Judaism to consider.

The mourning period in which the play takes place would normally include visiting or bringing meals to the mourners and group prayers (Cohn Sherbrook 561). Though my personal experience with the Jewish funeral allowed for first-hand knowledge of this sort, certain areas of the funeral service were distilled to confine the story to a compact timeframe.

The prayer in the play was specific, as the Mourner’s Kaddish is the central prayer in the Jewish mourning process, and its counterpart in the Muslim ritual, the Salat, would make its way into later drafts for Andrew to perform. The Kaddish is spoken or sung by all who mourn and the Salat is performed silently, creating a subtle moment for Andrew to again demonstrate his conversion. The rule that “burial of the body should take place as soon as possible” (Cohn-Sherbrook 560), while not a standard of all Jewish funerals, became a rule for this particular family at their particular temple; also, the family in the play does not cover mirrors during mourning or maintain any other conservative ritual, though it is mentioned in the script to hint at the reformism of the Jews in the play.

In terms of the Jewish response to such a conversion and marriage, visceral character reaction negated extensive research in that area, though Jewish law stated that “mixed marriage is forbidden” (Cohn-Sherbrook 540). Maurice Lamm argues the point even further stating that “inter-faith marriage is treason against the Jewish people, its Bible, its history, and its laws” (64) and fellow Jews should not “attend wedding services or receptions of intermarried friends or even relatives” (63). That presented the extreme argument against Andrew’s engagement and the betrothal ceremony itself, used in part by both Marcy and Lulu in the final text.

There was a greater focus on Islam because Andrew’s conversion and acceptance of Islam was the crux of the plot, not the rejection of his Jewish faith. In fact, it was important that it be understood that his past and his relationships were the principal reason for his crisis, not any negative issues with Judaism itself. Andrew was to be a part of reform sects of both religions, but the Islamic sect he joined placed more value on tradition than his family did.

Examining the shared history of the Muslim and Jewish people was an unenviable task, but full of small rewards that definitely enhanced the play. Unenviable because of the contradictory source material, the amount of material, and the sensitive nature of the subject matter and rewarding because minutiae extracted from every source was an aid to the progress of the play and its characters. The main problem with this investigation was also its greatest advantage: a vast amount of information. It became necessary to pick and choose what was read and discard some texts rather quickly.

Reading scripture, though sometimes tedious and often contradictory in interpretation, was an integral part of making sure the play stayed true to the concepts of

both religions. Translations of the Qur'an were particularly troublesome in that regard. Because certain Arabic words had many synonyms, a passage could be interpreted very differently. In terms of the treatment of women, Reza Aslan pointed out the following excerpt with these very different translations: "Men are the support of women as God gives some more means than others" (69) and "Men are in charge of women, because Allah has made some of them excel the others" (70). Speaking to a fellow graduate student, Samer Al-Saber, helped clarify the question of interpretation, as well as some textual issues. He agreed that Andrew appeared attuned to a more liberal sect of Islam, so his interpretation would reflect his liberal sensibility. He also mentioned that the text referred to a prayer sheet, rather than the proper term, prayer rug. Those conversations reinforced my belief in the play's progress to that point in the research process.

There was a tendency to overdo some research areas, such as past and present political history, however, ignorance of the history and the contemporary issues that contributed to the troubled relations between Jews and Muslims would not be tolerated. Hardly any specific historical events, violent or otherwise, are mentioned in the play, but it was important to have a firm grasp on historical context from both religions' perspectives. From the fallout between Jewish tribes and Muhammad in Medina to the current state of violence in the Middle East, there was an effort to comprehend both perspectives.

i. Moses

Moses became a character in the third draft of *The Rabbi Will See You Now*, then re-titled *Home and Away*. He was the most significant character addition and required the most research. Moses appeared after eliminating the character of Andrew's brother Elliot. Andrew needed a confidante and someone to give him support on his quest for reconciliation. Because of the darker tone, there needed to be a powerful presence to guide Andrew in his quest for forgiveness and reconciliation. Since religion was already ingrained in the play, a religious mentor seemed apt.

Moses was the first choice for that character. Jesus would not work, nor would Muhammad. Muhammad could not be a staged character, for fear of alienating a Muslim audience, since a dramatic depiction of Muhammad “whether in a positive or negative light — is blasphemous because it could inspire idolatry” (Dube) and had inspired violent reactions in the past. Jesus was too open to divergent opinion to be used. He could be neither a divine prophet nor sacrifice (the former not believed by Jews, the latter not believed by Muslims), and the differences in their theologies made it difficult to create a stable character. Abraham, though perhaps an intriguing choice due to his relationship to both religions, was never really considered as a character for the play. He lacked the immediate recognition that Moses made available.

The play needed an identifiable voice of reason with similar ties to both religions. Moses was an easily recognizable religious figure and his experience as a leader fit his role in the play. He also had parallel ties to Judaism, Islam and Christianity, all of which recognize him as a prophet and hold similar mythology. To that end, his early

incarnations in the play relied heavily on mythology, including two references to the burning bush, two to the exodus, and a reference to the “rescue of the hero-child” (Auerbach 13) from a basinet. Once his character began to build away from the mythology his purpose, as Andrew’s guide, became clear. However, his character would be more clearly defined with additional investigation.

As the research continued, more rewarding revelations about Moses emerged, validating the decision to include him in the play. Moses, like Andrew, had strained relationships with family because of an unacceptable marriage (Auerbach 93). Also, he was frequently tasked to do the impossible and was reluctant to fulfill his burdensome responsibilities.

Moses evolved with every draft of the play. As the research into him increased, his character became increasingly difficult to center. He became a guiding force in dealing with Andrew’s crisis, but his character remained too broad and comic; changes were made to change Moses’ tone. His dialogue became more assertive as the revisions continued and his advice more pointed.

Moreover, when integrating a character like Moses, certain questions about his relationship with Andrew were raised: Where does he come from? Is he familiar with the modern world? Is he a ghost or a real figure?

Early in the play, Moses’ presence was established by the iconic brandishing of a burning bush, giving an audience a relatively good idea of who they are dealing with. The synthesis of the modern and ancient in his speech patterns and vocabulary, however, presented Moses with alternate characteristics and modern sensibilities. The task of balancing that dichotomy became increasingly difficult as Moses became less a

confidante and more of a driving figure in the story. There was an active attempt to minimize the mythology of Moses explicitly, instead relying on his personal perspective on the events of his life to enlighten Andrew. To recreate Moses as a full character that existed outside of scripture, there was a need to create a Moses that was aware of the modern world and the consequences of the actions of the protagonist. In that respect, there were vast opportunities for artistic license when dealing with Moses, as he “is clothed in the form of legend and miracle stories” (Auerbach 9), but he also appears at the end of the play as a cab driver.

Moses as caricature, conscience, or comic relief left in those early drafts and was replaced by a sage to aid in Andrew’s journey. Eventually, that Moses would be replaced again, but not before further investigation. Out of dealing with the minutiae of Moses’ character arose the necessity for further research into the life, times, and decisions of Moses. There would be a paring down of the Biblical name-dropping in conversation with Andrew and an expansion of a hypothetical Moses, uncomfortable with his iconic status and some of his own choices. In that vein, it became clear that Moses’ position in Islam and Judaism required more research.

It was discovered that Judaism certainly places more importance on Moses’ role as a messenger of god (the Torah is otherwise known as The Five Books of Moses). While the Qur’an recognizes Moses as a messenger, the references to him are few, though varied. Much of the mythology mentioned in the Qur’an is also mentioned in the Torah and his life history is generally thought of, with a few exceptions, in the same terms in both books. The character of Moses continued to develop as a messenger and leader to guide Andrew to the Medina he sought.

ii. Medina

The accidental viewing of the PBS documentary *Muhammad: Legacy of a Prophet* that mentioned the township of Medina prompted further research into what became an indispensable symbol for the play's protagonist. It provided a religious context for comparison to Andrew's personal journey and afforded the play with a symbol for reconciliation. Further textual research determined that the concept of Medina paralleled Andrew's struggle in the play. Medina represented for some "the [positive] model for Muslim-Jewish relations [but it also demonstrates] the insurmountable conflict that has existed and [may] always exist between the two sons of Abraham" (Aslan 53). That encapsulated the duality that Medina provided to the play as a symbol and consequently Medina became the new metaphor for Andrew's struggle.

As *The Rabbi Will See You Now* became *Home and Away* (and eventually, *Medina*), the concept of Medina was cultivated. Medina equaled "the consolidation of feuding tribes into a harmonious confederation" (Solomon 246), therefore Medina offered an excellent metaphor for the struggle to bring his two families together. Medina was "not the city of a single Arab tribe, like Mecca, but the city of several rival tribes and clans" (Kung 105) that Muhammad brought together with a focus on brotherhood. Many of Islam's early converts came to Medina and Muhammad began to establish the early customs of Islam. Muhammad and his followers' flight from Mecca to Medina were also comparable to Andrew's alienation from his family and his subsequent conversion. Their allegiance to Muhammad meant they had to "abandon their tribe and their families for an uncertain future" (Aslan 48). Andrew was presented with that same dilemma. Medina

was the beginning of an important religious partnership, one that Andrew certainly strives for, but Medina also demonstrated the breakdown of that partnership.

The sustainability of Medina finally fell through after years of fighting to protect it. The Jews of Medina “[rejected] Muhammad’s prophetic claim” (Kung 108) and in return Muhammad began to react negatively toward Judaism, “extending to the expulsion of the Jews” (108), due to mistrust and religious tension. Though the monotheism of Islam was clearly in tune with both Judaism and Christianity, the central schism was the acceptance of “Muhammad as the definitive Prophet of the one God” (Kung 143). Muhammad “wanted Arabia to be purely Muslim” (Kung 159) and as his political power increased, non-Muslims were driven away. Medina remains an important site for Muslims, too, as it is Muhammad’s burial place (Sabini 192). As a symbol in the play, Medina enabled me to provide Andrew with a hopeful place for his family and his new faith to reconcile, but also served as a metaphor for the religious and personal antagonism that keep them apart. The hope that Medina could exist again, at least within his family, was Andrew’s goal. With this new symbol implanted in the play, the play had finally taken full shape, not just in narrative, but thematically as well.

4. Challenges in Development:

The Writing Process

The challenge in writing remained to complete a tightly constructed full-length play. The challenges in the writing process were indispensable to my evolution as a writer. Revisions continued and were influenced by readings and critiques, including a public staged reading at the University of Calgary's Taking Flight Festival. There were elements of the play that were a source of concern throughout development. The second act needed more significant fallout from the revelation in the first act. Lulu and Andrew's relationship required clarity. It was essential that Moses developed. The play needed to be tied together thematically. As a playwright, the true success of *Medina* was in overcoming the challenges it presented and completing a new work that, through the development process, evolved past earlier work and into a new direction.

A. Plot and Theme

After the initial outlines had explored the shift from comedy to drama, the writing process began. In writing the first draft, a commitment to the new direction of the play was made. A clear motivation for Andrew and a more active series of struggles were the first priorities. Originally, the conflict between Andrew and his mother, and the secret behind it, was paramount. In the first drafts the conflict was vague, but a true dramatic shift occurred in the play when the idea of a conversion to Islam was implemented as a major plot point in a secondary outline. The answer was simple, but full of dramatic options and complexities: Andrew would convert to another religion. It seemed logical that the conflict would involve religion. A conversion presented an obstacle for Andrew; could he reveal his secret and then deal with the repercussions?

Originally a few other religions were considered (Mormonism and Catholicism), but they were quickly cast aside. In retrospect, they were only considered to avoid the most explosive religious schism between Judaism and Islam. Though because of the very nature of the complexities of the conflict between Jews and Muslims, the idea would not go away, and the play's plot needed that conflict. Andrew would convert to Islam without the family's knowledge and, furthermore, was planning to marry a Muslim woman. This would also generate the conflict and the struggle between Andrew and his family.

The conversion to Islam could also serve Andrew as a way to expunge his own personal demons. The idea that he needed his family to attend a betrothal ceremony came later in the writing process, but the play now had the beginnings of a plot and a conflict. Andrew was not only an outsider before his conversion, as a result of his supposed

aimlessness and the alleged liability in his brother's death. Now Islam, the source of his salvation, was also the source of a whole new problem.

As rewrites began to shape the play, lingering problems remained. After cutting the role of Elliot, Andrew's brother, a moment of clarity arrived in the reasoning behind his alienation. If Andrew was culpable in his brother's death, or thought culpable by his family, it would provide the devastating core to the conflict with his family. It would also provide the rationale for the strained relationship with his mother. Originally, the idea that Muslim extremists had killed his brother was outlined, but that seemed better served to a more polemic piece of dramatic work.

Another attempt at finding the core of their relationship appeared in an early draft through an expositional argument between Andrew and Lulu near the end of the second act, in which Andrew bore responsibility for allowing Elliot to drink and drive. In early readings of the play, this was found weak and coincidental. A criticism of one of the readers was that the audience needed to believe that Andrew was an active agent in his brother's death if the situation was to further alienate Andrew from his family. The plot settled on the relationship of Andrew and Elliot as both brothers and addicts. Rather than dealing with a dark twist of fate like a car accident, Andrew instead became the enabler of his brother's addiction. The extent of Andrew's responsibility in Elliot's death still was not quite worked out in dialogue form, but the motivation for dysfunction and estrangement was planted.

The second and third drafts of what was then re-titled *Home and Away* contained only minor revisions to the play's first act, but heavy changes to the second half of the play. Scene order was changed, a sub-plot involving Marcy's pregnancy was added,

dialogue was re-worked, and Moses' character became clear. The next four drafts further focused the play and made it a leaner more precise narrative.

By the time draft eight had been completed, most of the minor issues involving character consistency had been resolved and the structure solidified. Most notably, draft eight had established Moses as a character with a spine and sense of purpose. However, by this point several workshops had illuminated many of the script's still numerous weaknesses. Major plot strands involving the Rabbi's arc, Marcy's pregnancy, and the concept of Medina remained unsettled. And there was still the biggest issue facing the final draft and the play as a whole.

The most persistent script weakness remained Andrew's vitriolic relationship with his mother and what was to be the nucleus of their separation. Their motivations remained messy and lacking in a clear vision. I continued to search for a resolution that clarified their relationship. Draft eight was finished with the hope that this problem would finally be solved. Though by this point the play had received frequent critical analyses from my thesis supervisor and had a number of informal readings, further revision was postponed until a final reading could be assembled. That was a profitable decision because at that point, criticisms could be voiced on a much tighter version of the script. A connection through Alberta Theatre Projects allowed me the opportunity to have a reading in of their rehearsal halls. With Professor Martini's notes from a previous meeting in mind (mostly revolving around the aforementioned major issues), some revisions were made to the eighth draft before the reading. The first scene no longer took place at an airport, further hints of Andrew's past with drugs were implanted, and an expansion of the Medina concept was attempted in two scenes.

The final reading would be very valuable in assessing the play's success to that point in the process. This reading of the text was different from all of the others, as most of the readers had either read the play before or heard an earlier draft read at the Taking Flight Festival. This familiarity had extremely positive results, as the actor and audience comments and critical responses were perceptive and helpful. Medina, it was felt, could be further explored and Marcy's pregnancy needed to be further developed. The fact that her revelation ends the first act, but is discarded quickly in the second seemed weak in the mind of one audience member. Medina was thought of as a great metaphor for Andrew's struggle and, though it was positively reinforced in the reading and the comments, it still needed work. Changes to the penultimate scene, Andrew and Lulu's final confrontation, seemed to work but would have to be focused on in the final draft. It was the biggest challenge left in the writing of the play, as the personal relationship between those two characters, and their discoveries in that scene, were integral to the success of the play.

The final draft, however, began with a title change; *Home and Away* became *Medina*. The deadline for finishing all thesis materials was approaching, and a title had to be decided. The consensus at the ATP reading was that *Home and Away* sounded like a play about sports. The concept of Medina had expanded throughout the writing process and was firmly thematically connected to the play; therefore *Medina* became its final working title.

The greatest challenge in writing the final draft was completing the climactic scene between Andrew and Lulu. The fight was always messy and motivationally inconclusive. Why Lulu dislikes Andrew, and when this alienation began was a source of

much difficulty in the writing process; it remained the biggest challenge throughout the revisions. The scene had improved, but lingering doubts remained as to its precision.

Unearthing the core of their mutual antagonism was the goal of the final draft. Andrew and Lulu had been distant since Elliot's death; that much was clear. They both felt that the other was partially responsible, with Lulu believing strongly in Andrew's full culpability. Lulu's emotional abandonment of Andrew was always less clear, but small adjustments in her character were made to comprehend her motivations. An answer revealed itself after many revisions: Lulu felt that her life had failed and had continued to fail through the fate of her sons. Andrew's lack of direction professionally and his resistance to everything she had planned for his life began to fracture their relationship. Her failure was compounded by Elliot's death. That Andrew survived was a painful reminder of her failures. Finalizing that scene was frustrating and time consuming, but it was the final step in completing the thesis draft of the play.

The final draft of *Medina* presented reconciliation as the primary theme of the play. Andrew finally accepted who he had become, and was successful in finding a family member to accept him. Andrew's attempt to "reconcile the traditions and values of [his] individual [homeland] with the traditions and values of [his] new home" (Aslan xiv) was not fully realized, but the ending opens the door to a hopeful future. The final embrace between the father and son symbolized the possibility that a connection might exist in the future that was unavailable for them at the beginning of the play. Moreover, the text illustrated forgiveness as the aspect that allows for reconciliation to take place. Reconciliation does not occur between Lulu and Andrew because of Lulu's inability to

forgive. Andrew has forgiven his mother and himself, but his true redemption occurs with his last line in the play: "I'm trying".

B. Character

The play began with an overly large cast of characters who possessed only a vague notion of their motivation. The second outline sketched out specific motivations and the beginnings of character arcs, but the characters were not wholly realized until the completion of the second draft. The second draft eliminated peripheral characters and constructed a firmer structure. The introduction of the conversion in that draft began the development of characters with clear intentions. Elliot remained as an absent, but expositional figure. The Cantor, though a staple of a Jewish funeral, was expendable. An unseen character of Barb, a shunned aunt of Andrew's, was an unnecessary leftover of the autobiographical elements from the initial outline, as was Elliot's girlfriend, and they too were removed. The cast had been reduced to eight characters, but additional revisions were certainly in order with the completion of supplementary drafts.

Though small rewrites had been done throughout the early research processes, they were mostly practical changes. As many of the remaining characters, in the beginning, had been based on real people, the brunt of the work had been done before the writing had begun. This, however, changed completely as the play's plot adopted a new direction. The characters in the play had to fit Aristotle's maxim that their "speech or action declares... some moral choice" (Whalley 107), or at least a choice that was identifiable. In the case of these characters, that choice was whether or not to stand with Andrew at the Muslim betrothal ceremony. It was difficult to deal with the idea that everyone would react poorly to Andrew's conversion, so development of their reactions

was continuous. The idea to expand the reactions was to cast the Jews in the play in more than an intolerant light and have their reactions influenced by their character.

It was never the intention to have these characters have politically charged conversations filled with explicit arguments from the Jewish and Muslim perspective. Early attempts at this type of dialogue were quickly rejected. Instead of arguing about specific topics like the various gender issues that plague both orthodoxies of the religions involved or pick specific points of reference to history, the dialogue had to refer to this type of knowledge without explicitly stating it. The danger was generating reasonable talking points for either side to give a history lesson, giving the characters a benign and practical worldview where there should be emotion and skepticism. Using history to charge an audience with questions, used to great effect in Jason Sherman's *Reading Hebron*, was the goal. Though that particular play does rely on a specific event in history, this play had the burden of the entire history of conflict between these two religions that could be used as either ammunition or defense.

Implying something about history by using a phrase or name and letting the audience do their own research was not the primary goal for the character's arguments. I wanted the audience to search for answers to the possible questions about religion and spirituality the play asks, not a specific political message. Arguing political points about the treatment of women in the respective religions or where the blame belonged for the violence between Jews and Muslims felt too pointed. A simpler approach was to have the arguments be more personal: Marcy took a more investigative approach to her discourse with Andrew while Joe's was more personal. While Marcy tries to understand Andrew's reasoning for his conversion, Joe questions Andrew about the change this might make to

his family heritage. When he asks about the possible name change that a conversion to Islam might bring, it simplifies the argument. Politics are not involved but people. The same could be said of Lulu, whose reaction is cold and angry, but for reasons that differ from religion. Those choices were made according to what was plausible to each character in response with their relationship with Andrew. After each character's position on that matter was decided, and the relationships clarified textually (either explicitly or implicitly), the process of re-creating and revising the characters began.

As revisions continued, the characters became richer and tighter in construction. Bubbie and Fay remained largely unchanged from their composite sources, but the other characters began to evolve, either as composites or fully imagined beings. Moses had the most changes in character from his insertion into the play until the final draft. His comic sensibilities, mostly remnants of Elliot's dialogue, were trimmed significantly, as were most references to his mythology. He was more active in the story and had a clear intention to help Andrew. The revisions to his character gave Moses a full character, rather than being a breezy sidekick.

Marcy and Fay's relationship was given more individual moments to grow, and Marcy's character was written as a lawyer, focusing her character and giving her new opportunities and a new perspective in her argument with Andrew. Her sub-plot involving the secret of her pregnancy was given a more time to develop, though it still lacked significant struggle. The Rabbi of the play was never like the Rabbi from the real event, except that he was a talking head with no arc in the family's story. An arc that showed the Rabbi go from inept to effective, with comic relief in mind, was starting to form. His effectiveness also established another, more mature, perspective on the

conversion. The Rabbi was also a character that could be allowed to know all about Medina in study, and it was he who introduces Medina into the play. Joe was never based upon a real family member, but instead represented a tired and passive side to a family full of dysfunction. His nature was to offset Lulu and Andrew's aggression as well as, comparatively to Andrew, try to show a man clinging to a family and trying to bring it together.

The strained relationship between Andrew and Lulu was the one part of the play largely still based on autobiography. The fiction began to overtake the autobiographical elements, but the core of the relationship was based in truth. Those characters, and their scenes, were the most difficult to write, as they were very personal. Their climactic scene was certainly the most difficult, because I was creating fiction out of a confrontation based in truth. Though the scene written presented the altercation in a completely different context, the core emotions of the original confrontation were intact in the scene. Those characters had to attack each other and break each other down. Writing a personal, though fictionalized, account of such a raw exchange became a challenge in opening up as a writer. As the scene developed, the process of writing it became a cathartic experience. The freedom to explore the scene without restraint also aided in developing the characters and their conflict to their fullest potential.

In terms of character, the play achieved most of what it set out to do. Nearly every character had an arc to play, the family dynamic was solidified, and the issues in earlier drafts involving character sameness in the second act, particularly Marcy and Lulu, were dealt with.

Every character became full and unique. Developmentally, Moses came further than all of the other characters, from a confidante that was mostly comic relief to a full character with purpose and drive. Marcy was built in a more defiant way than she was initially imagined when the plot turned to drama. She was originally quite angry with Andrew and the friendship that was cultivated in the first act was inconsistent with the second act. Constant rewriting metamorphosed Marcy into a more understanding, but principled character. She now stands against Andrew, but her character is now one that at least hints at the idea of forgiveness and reconciliation. The story itself depended on the truth and clarity of its characters, and the play was successful to that end.

5. Conclusion

Writing *Medina* was a trying and illuminating journey. Success of the project depended on focus, consistency, and clear objectives for the characters in the play. The same could be said for determining the success of the playwright. In terms of overall developmental success, writing a play like *Medina* in an academic setting such as the University of Calgary offered positive influences on the final product. There was an abundance of research material available, as was the tutelage of a thesis supervisor. At every stage Professor Martini challenged me to stay focused and write, and that is the most important factor for a writer: to stay writing.

The play matured as creative choices were carried out throughout the writing process. There existed numerous difficulties in all areas of the process, but there were successful solutions to those problems. Though Marcy's pregnancy sub-plot remained in need of further development even in the final draft, many of the greater weaknesses in the play, as evidenced, were overcome. I believe that through careful planning, steady revision, the use of workshops, script meetings with my thesis supervisor, and a firm self-examination of the script, *Medina* became a successful play.

My expectation of the final product was to have a play that met a standard of artistic responsibility; to challenge an audience and prompt discussion into the themes discussed in the play. The other major objective was to have a complete, tightly constructed play ready to be guided into the next steps of the development process. I believe that *Medina* met those expectations.

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APPENDIX I

Medina

Characters

Andrew- a young man

Joe- Andrew's father

Lulu- or Louise, Andrew's mother

Fay- Andrew's aunt

Marcy- Andrew's cousin

Rabbi- A young rabbi

Bubbie- or Rachel, Andrew's grandmother

Moses- the famous one, bearded and robed

ACT I: JIHAD**Scene 1.**

ANDREW is kneeling in a yard, closing an old suitcase. He stands, takes a deep breath, and exhales. JOE enters onto the back porch.

Son. JOE

Dad. ANDREW

What are you doing? JOE

Just looking around. ANDREW

When did you get here? JOE

Just now. Cabbed it. ANDREW

Joe comes into the yard and hugs Andrew. Andrew does not return the hug, but rather holds his suitcase and waits for the hug to end.

Shalom. JOE

The hug ends.

Hi. ANDREW

How was your flight? JOE

Good. ANDREW

You hungry? JOE

I could eat.

ANDREW

A pastrami sandwich?

JOE

When in Rome.

ANDREW

Well then...

JOE

Joe reaches for Andrew's suitcase.

I got it.

ANDREW

FAY enters.

Look what I found.

JOE

Joe exits.

Hey Aunt Fay.

ANDREW

I'm so glad you could come.

FAY

Not a problem.

ANDREW

Do you want a drink? I mean, juice?

FAY

Sure. (*Fay stands*) It's okay. I've got it.

ANDREW

Joe enters with a glass and hands it to Andrew.

No pastrami. Juice?

JOE

Sure.

ANDREW

JOE
Marcy go back to Mark's?

FAY
Inside sleeping. It's been a long week.
Fay dabs her eyes with a tissue.

ANDREW
How are you holding up?

JOE
I'm okay.

FAY
I think he was talking to me.

JOE
Right. Sorry.

FAY
That boy looks so much like you.

JOE
Don't tell him that.

FAY
Both of your boys. So handsome. Everyone used to be so jealous.

ANDREW
I can imagine. How are you doing?

FAY
It's a lot, you know. Your Bubbie, the arrangements, your Bubbie.
Joe and Andrew both smile.

JOE
Oh, and about your Bubbie.

ANDREW
What about her?

FAY
You haven't told him yet?

JOE

I was getting to it.

ANDREW

Told me what?

JOE

Your Bubbie. She's been a bit... unstable.

ANDREW

And that's some new development?

FAY

No. It's not the regular stuff. She's really showing her age.

ANDREW

Okay. Noted.

Andrew nods. They are silent for a moment.

FAY

I could use a glass of water.

JOE

Sure. Did you want anything to eat?

Joe exits. Andrew and Fay remain silent a moment.

FAY

When did you get in?

ANDREW

Just now.

Enter LULU with a glass of water.

LULU

Fay? *(seeing Andrew)* Hello.

ANDREW

Hey.

They look each other over a moment. Lulu takes Fay the glass of water and sits down next to her.

He wasn't sure if you wanted ice. \ LULU

This is fine... You're still in school? FAY

Just a few more classes. ANDREW

But you quit, I thought. LULU

I'm just taking some time. ANDREW

Oh? LULU

So Andrew... When was the last time I saw you? FAY

Five years. It's been five years. LULU

There is a moment of awkward awareness.

It's been a long time. ANDREW

You keep growing. FAY

Too old for that. You're probably shrinking. ANDREW

Fay laughs. It is a wonderful laugh that has been underused lately.

You're not wearing that tomorrow are you? LULU

No. I've got a dress shirt and some cords packed. ANDREW

What colour? LULU

Brown. ANDREW

Brown? LULU

Brown. ANDREW

Brown's fine. FAY

I thought we weren't supposed to care. You know, cover the mirrors and all that. ANDREW

Don't worry about it... Just get some sleep. FAY

Yeah. Is there a bed handy? ANDREW

There's a couch free in the basement. FAY

Well then- ANDREW

Good night then. LULU

Lila tov. FAY

Andrew exits. Lulu lights a cigarette and Fay drinks from her glass. Joe enters, in a pair of sweatpants, but no shirt. Lulu quickly hides the cigarette.

Saw that. JOE

I know. LULU

Might as well go get it. JOE

Lulu, surprised, retrieves the cigarette.

FAY
How is he doing?

JOE
He's better.

FAY
What's he do now? If he's not in school?

JOE
Photography still. And some other things.

LULU
Art.

FAY
Right. Flags. He hung these flags.

JOE
But he still takes pictures. Artistic.

LULU
He's a secretary, really.

JOE
At a gallery.

LULU
So?

JOE
Networking, hon.

FAY
Art. Marcy did a play in college once. *Equus*. That was odd. About a horse or something.

LULU
We never know what he's going to do.

FAY
There a market for that out west?

JOE
Not sure.

LULU

Artistic photographs. He means pornography.

Everyone stops a moment to consider pornography.

FAY

Ah well, he'll figure something out.

Lulu looks away and exhales a plume of smoke.

Scene 2.

The living room of Fay's house. Andrew is hanging up the telephone. There is a shuffling on the couch behind Andrew.

Andrew
Hello?

Marcy
Hello?

Andrew
Hey. Sorry.

Marcy sits up.

Marcy
It's alright. You just get in?

Andrew
Yup.

Marcy
Let me get up. Give me a hug.

Andrew
How you doing?

Marcy
I'm okay. You?

Andrew
Fine.

Marcy
No, I mean... You know what I mean.

Andrew
Oh.

Marcy
Well?

Andrew
Yeah. I'm clean.

Fay enters.

Good. MARCY

You finally got some sleep? FAY

Mm-hm. You should too. MARCY

I know, I know. FAY

Fay sits next to Marcy.

Look just your dad, Andrew. MARCY

Doesn't he? FAY

You and Elliot both. MARCY

Yeah... Um, Aunt Fay? I don't mean to be pushy but, where am I going to sleep? ANDREW

Is someone on the couch downstairs? Oh. Renovations. Your uncle was renovating. FAY

It's okay mom. I'll come sleep with you and Andrew can sleep here. MARCY

Enter Joe and Lulu.

Everyone off to bed? JOE

In a second. FAY

If you need anything, Fay. LULU

Lulu hugs Fay.

FAY

Sure.

JOE

Good night then.

Lulu and Joe exit.

MARCY

You go on ahead, mom.

FAY

Okay honey.

Fay exits. Marcy returns to her slumbering position.

MARCY

What are you up to these days?

ANDREW

What? The last five years?

MARCY

It hasn't been... Oh god. It has. Since Elliot's funeral. Sad. These things are all that bring us together. I guess it's just as well then.

ANDREW

Just as well what?

MARCY

Just as well we don't see each other more often.

ANDREW

Yeah, well, we've both been busy, too.

MARCY

You done school?

ANDREW

Almost. You?

MARCY

Making my way.

ANDREW
That's good.

MARCY
Yeah... So, who was that on the phone?

ANDREW
Just checking messages.

MARCY
Didn't sound like checking messages to me.

ANDREW
Oh, so you were spying?

MARCY
No, not spying. Eavesdropping. Without intent.

ANDREW
Already talking like a lawyer.

MARCY
Come on... Who was it?

ANDREW
Just messages. I swear.

Marcy looks him over closely.

MARCY
Nope. Still don't buy it.

ANDREW
That's too bad.

MARCY
You're totally lying.

ANDREW
Allegedly.

MARCY
It's good to see you. You look... tired.

ANDREW
And you look... fat. Really.

MARCY

What?

ANDREW

Bulbous.

MARCY

And what does...? You are unbelievable.

Marcy stands and starts to leave.

ANDREW

Wait, Marc. It was just a-

Marcy motions at him and turns off the light as she exits.

ANDREW

Don't we do witty repartee anymore?

Andrew lies on the couch and shuffles around. A figure enters the room.

ANDREW

Marc?

The figure moves closer.

ANDREW

Listen, it was just a joke. You look fine.

The figure pulls out a burning bush from beneath his robe.

ANDREW

Jesus!

MOSES

(in a booming voice) No. Close.

ANDREW

Someone get out here! There's some crazy-

MOSES

That won't work.

ANDREW

No. Of course it won't. 'Cause I'm dreaming. That much is obvious.

Moses moves closer to Andrew. Andrew picks up a menorah and wields it defensively. The bush is extinguished.

MOSES

You're not dreaming.

Moses pinches Andrew's arm.

ANDREW

Ah! Then what is this?

MOSES

You summoned me.

ANDREW

I didn't summon anything.

MOSES

Then why am I here?

ANDREW

I don't know.

Moses wanders to the couch and sits down. His voice loses its boom.

MOSES

This your place?

ANDREW

Shouldn't you be omniscient or something?

MOSES

I'm not god... It was just a question.

ANDREW

What?

MOSES

Do you live here?

ANDREW

No. Fay. My aunt.

MOSES

I sense something here. Loss?

ANDREW

Funeral.

MOSES

No. More than that. *(takes the menorah from Andrew)* Huh. Jews?

ANDREW

Yes. Sort of.

MOSES

Sort of?

ANDREW

Reform.

MOSES

Well, that's a start. You have any food? I could use a nosh.

ANDREW

You eat?

MOSES

I guess I do.

ANDREW

There are some bagels in the kitchen. And I think I saw some bananas in a bowl by the fridge.

MOSES

Fay won't mind?

ANDREW

I don't think so.

Moses goes to the kitchen. Andrew moves closer to the kitchen and peeks in just to make sure that this is all still happening.

MOSES

Whose funeral?

ANDREW

My uncle. Robert.

Andrew backs away from the kitchen.

MOSES
You close?

ANDREW
He was my uncle.

MOSES
That isn't an answer.

ANDREW
Not close. Not really.

MOSES
When is it?

ANDREW
Tomorrow. We have to get him buried-

Moses enters with a bagel.

MOSES
Before the Sabbath? Now that one I know.

ANDREW
Yeah. I guess you would.

MOSES
And you don't cover mirrors, huh? Yeah, the décor too, this is not Orthodox.

ANDREW
No. They drink, they smoke, they wear primary colours. Where are you going with this?

MOSES
I'm just trying to figure out why I'm here. Experience tells me a time of crisis. You have a crisis? You need someone to talk to?

ANDREW
No.

MOSES
Hm. Then what am I supposed to do?

ANDREW
How am I supposed to know?

MOSES

You summoned me.

ANDREW

I didn't.

MOSES

You're just stable then? A young man, carefree?

ANDREW

I wouldn't say that.

MOSES

Ah, the plot thickens. Then what is it?

Andrew goes to the patio doors and looks out. Moses follows.

ANDREW

Have you ever kept something from somebody?

MOSES

Yes.

ANDREW

No, I mean, just not told everything. Because it will make things... less than pleasant.

MOSES

I know that predicament. My whole life-

ANDREW

It's nothing. Never mind.

MOSES

You sure?

Andrew doesn't respond. Moses shrugs and returns to the kitchen. Andrew follows.

ANDREW

Hey.

Moses is not there and Andrew lies down in his original spot on the couch.

Scene 3.

The next morning. A synagogue. Marcy and Lulu stand in an atrium outside of the rabbi's office.

MARCY

Really, I'm fine.

LULU

You sure? I left some waters in the car.

MARCY

Okay.

LULU

And I have some Zoloft.

MARCY

I'll be okay without.

LULU

It's going to be all right, you know.

MARCY

Thanks.

LULU

Two waters then.

Lulu exits as Andrew enters.

MARCY

Put this on.

She hands Andrew a yarmulke and Andrew juggles it.

ANDREW

You okay?

MARCY

Fine. You?

ANDREW

I didn't sleep well.

MARCY

Me neither. I could have used a drink last night.

ANDREW

Do you know about sleep deprivation?

MARCY

What?

ANDREW

Seeing things that aren't there.

MARCY

Why?

ANDREW

No reason.

Fay and BUBBIE enter. Bubbie carries an extremely large purse and a small wooden block (she puts it under her feet every time she sits).

FAY

Marcy? Could you help me with your grandmother please?

BUBBIE

Who is this?

ANDREW

It's Andrew and Marcy, Bubbie.

BUBBIE

Oy, you're so big. Give your Bubbie a kiss.

Marcy, then Andrew, lean down and give Bubbie a kiss. She gives them both hugs.

BUBBIE

I'm going to need a ladder to hug you.

ANDREW

Or I could kneel.

BUBBIE

What's that?

MARCY

Nothing Bubbie. *(to Andrew)* Time and place.

BUBBIE

Oh, and my granddaughter. You've filled out quite nicely.

FAY

We're just going to drop off our things at our seats.

ANDREW

I can watch them for you.

MARCY

No one's going to steal them.

ANDREW

Alright. Calm down.

BUBBIE

Marcy?

MARCY

Yes, Bubbie.

FAY

Have you seen the Rabbi?

MARCY

Not yet.

BUBBIE

And is Moses here?

ANDREW

What?

MARCY

Mark, Bubbie. My boyfriend's name is Mark. He's in the second row in the temple.

FAY

He's not coming in with the Rabbi?

MARCY

Uh, we didn't know if that was appropriate.

BUBBIE

Is Mark the black one?

FAY

No, Bubbie, that was Tyler.

MARCY

I'm not sure he'd be comfortable-

ANDREW

It's not comfortable for any of us.

BUBBIE

I dated a shvartzer once.

Silence for a moment. Andrew clears his throat.

FAY

Let's go Rachel.

Fay exits with Bubbie.

ANDREW

Huh. Bubbie is losing it.

MARCY

But watch the attitude. She's not stupid.

ANDREW

I know.

MARCY

I mean it. Where'd your mom go?

ANDREW

Dad's still in the office with the Rabbi so she went to grab his suit jacket from the car.
When will I meet this Mark fellow?

MARCY

Soon enough I suppose. Where's your boyfriend?

ANDREW

Oh, and she's funny.

MARCY

Sorry. I've got to stay distracted. And if it's at your expense-

ANDREW

I've got a girlfriend, actually.

MARCY

Sure you do.

I do. ANDREW

What's her name? MARCY

Sarah. ANDREW

Jewish? MARCY

Like that matters to you, bacon lover. ANDREW

At least I go to shul. And pray. MARCY

I pray. ANDREW

When was the last time you prayed? MARCY

Is Mark Jewish? ANDREW

That's rhetorical, right? His last name is Schlipstein. MARCY

Any chance you're taking that name soon? ANDREW

Why? MARCY

Just asking. ANDREW

You didn't answer my question. MARCY

Which question was that? ANDREW

MARCY

Sarah. She Jewish?

ANDREW

We're not really Jewish anyway. Reform.

MARCY

Hey. If Hitler were still around, we'd be on a list.

ANDREW

I mean, other than Chanukah, we never did much.

MARCY

Maybe you don't do much. But we've both been mitzvahed.

ANDREW

Yeah.

MARCY

And your dad's Jewish.

ANDREW

The Jewish thing goes through the mother.

MARCY

So? You'd still be Jewish?

ANDREW

Yeah... Is this working?

MARCY

What? As a distraction? (*Andrew nods*) Not really. I've got a lot on the go.

ANDREW

How do you manage it?

MARCY

What?

ANDREW

All of this.

MARCY

I've handled much more stress in my time.

ANDREW

Oh come on. The way you handle yourself, the way you're-

MARCY

Hard part's over. You know what it's like seeing someone sick. And that you can't help them.

ANDREW

Yeah. Hard part's over.

Enter Lulu, with Joe's suit jacket. Moses wanders by and Andrew follows him with his eyes.

MARCY

Hey, there you are.

LULU

Andrew, where's your father?

Andrew is still distracted by Moses' arrival.

LULU

Andrew?

MARCY

Still in the rabbi's office.

LULU

Where's your yarmulke?

ANDREW

Right here.

Enter Joe from the office.

MARCY

There he is.

Enter Bubbie and Fay.

FAY

Mark is going to watch our bags, Bubbie. So stop worrying.

JOE

The rabbi will see us now.

I feel like I'm in *The Godfather*.

ANDREW

Andrew-

JOE

Inappropriate.

LULU

Don't look at me like that. Let's just go in please.

ANDREW

Scene 4.

The rabbi's office. The family is all sitting down. A young rabbi enters and sits behind his desk.

RABBI

Good morning everyone.

Everyone murmurs back a greeting.

RABBI

Now we must get down to some difficult business. I know that I am new to this temple, and this is my first funeral service, but I will try to help all of you through this difficult time. Still, this service is a little different for me. I knew Robert, not as intimately as you, but I knew him as a part of the congregation and a giving volunteer. But for the purposes of the service, I was hoping you could shed some light on who he was for me. Mint?

The rabbi points to some mints on his desk. Andrew stands and takes one, then sits back down.

RABBI

Does anyone have anything to start with?

BUBBIE

He loved working with his hands. Since he was a little boy. Always building.

RABBI

And he became a, if I'm not mistaken, a carpenter.

FAY

Yes. Like his father and brother.

RABBI

Family business?

JOE

I had one out west. With my son.

MARCY

His was here.

JOE

We were both very successful.

RABBI

Ah.

MARCY

He was always so proud of me. He thought education was important. Even near the... near the end, he came to see my graduation from university. He wanted me to do well.

LULU

We all want that of our children.

BUBBIE

He loved leather. He had leather pants in high school, carried a leather knapsack around wherever he went.

FAY

He traveled a lot. Always with the family vacations.

RABBI

Family was very important to him.

FAY

Yes, yes.

LULU

He cooked.

MARCY

Spaghetti was his specialty.

FAY

I knew I'd marry him within ten seconds of meeting him.

Andrew's attention has shifted from his fingernails to Fay. Marcy takes her hand.

FAY

It was at the E.C. Raceway. One of his friends was racing that day. And my friend Trudy introduced me to him. It was at first sight. That first smile.

BUBBIE

He liked making spaghetti.

FAY

His smile lit up a room. Literally.

MARCY

It was beaming.

LULU

It was never bigger than the day Marcy was born. So proud.

RABBI

He was a good father?

MARCY

The best. Supportive-

FAY

Our first date. I remember, he asked me to go with him to dinner, but he forgot that he had a dinner with his mother the same night. So he asked me if I minded if we brought her.

RABBI

Family was very important to Robert.

BUBBIE

Oh yes.

JOE

He would stand up for me at school. He was a provincial wrestling semi-finalist.

RABBI

Ah, a sportsman?

BUBBIE

He played hockey when he was younger.

MARCY

Attentive.

LULU

Caring.

MARCY

Funny.

BUBBIE

He was my first born.

Andrew yawns. Everyone turns to look at him.

RABBI

Go on, Rachel.

BUBBIE

He was such a bright boy. Energetic. I couldn't keep up. And that smile. Could cheer anyone up.

MARCY

Always made you feel a little better when you were sick.

There is a short silence.

FAY

It was a long illness. But he was so optimistic.

MARCY

Even that-

Marcy stops a moment to gather herself.

RABBI

What were you saying Marcy? Please.

MARCY

That last day. I was supposed to leave for school, but he insisted that I stay. It's like he knew, and he wanted the family to stay together. That was most important to him.

A short silence. The rabbi nods.

RABBI

If there's nothing else at this time, I invite anyone who wants to see Robert one more time...

The rabbi stands and leads Fay and Bubbie out of the room. Andrew begins to go too, but is stopped by Joe.

MARCY

Wait-

ANDREW

What?

MARCY

Immediate family only.

JOE

You're not going in, then?

MARCY
I'll remember him the way he was.

ANDREW
What do we do now?

JOE
We go watch the service.

LULU
Don't you remember Zeda's funeral?

ANDREW
No, I-

LULU
No, of course you didn't.

Pause.

MARCY
We should go.

LULU
Were we boring you?

ANDREW
What?

LULU
The yawning?

JOE
Not today please.

Moses enters. Lulu throws her hands up.

LULU
Then you deal with your son, Joseph. Where's the washroom?

MARCY
I'll show you.

Lulu and Marcy exit.

JOE

Andrew-

ANDREW

It was involuntary, okay? I didn't really sleep last night.

JOE

This day isn't about you. It's about Robert. You're so... (*gestures*) then when you come out of your shell you have this attitude.

ANDREW

Sorry.

JOE

You don't mean it. You're always doing this-

ANDREW

Yeah, well-

JOE

Let's just get through the rest of this day without incident. Okay?

Joe goes to leave. Andrew follows.

JOE

Give it a minute. I'll go calm your mother.

ANDREW

Dad, I-

JOE

What?

ANDREW

Later. Never mind.

Joe exits.

ANDREW

You're back. Why are you back? Are you haunting me?

MOSES

I'm here to help.

ANDREW

How can you help?

MOSES

I can do a lot of things.

ANDREW

Like what?

MOSES

Listen, for one.

ANDREW

You want me to talk to you?

MOSES

If it will help.

Andrew paces a moment, then turns to Moses.

ANDREW

I don't keep them at a distance. We're just so different.

MOSES

Who? Family? Yeah, it can be tough. Look at Cain and Abel. Or Abraham.

ANDREW

What am I supposed to say to them?

MOSES

Is that the problem?

ANDREW

No. I don't know. We just need to get along. Just for a while.

MOSES

You need common ground.

ANDREW

Not going to happen. Especially now. There's already this... thing missing. Add to that ... And they think *I'm* weird. Both Elliot and my dad, when I would drive around with either of them, they'd look around and start saying "I wonder who designed that house? Oh, that would have been a nightmare." Was I supposed to compete with that? And now that it's just me and dad, I mean there's nothing. And Lulu, I can't even begin to explain. There just... there is no common ground.

MOSES

Who's Elliot?

He was my brother.

ANDREW

When did he die?

MOSES

A long time ago.

ANDREW

How?

MOSES

I don't want to talk about this with you. I just need to get through this.

ANDREW

And I can help you.

MOSES

Can you?

ANDREW

I believe I can.

MOSES

I shouldn't even feel guilty about this. It was my choice.

ANDREW

Let me help.

MOSES

(laughs) How is that going to work? No. I'll figure it out.

ANDREW

Free will.

MOSES

Moses exits. Andrew sits down and massages his temples. Marcy enters.

MARCY

You coming?

ANDREW

Yeah.

MARCY

You get the honour of sitting next to Bubbie. Dad says make sure to hold her hand. She's gonna cry. The Jew-y thing is to wail, I guess. Not like the Catholics. Just keep those feelings bottled up.

ANDREW

That's the healthy thing to do.

Marcy and Andrew exit.

Scene 5.

The temple. Joe sings a prayer.

JOE

El maley rachamim shochen bam'romim
hamtzey menuchah nechonah al kanfey haschechinah
bema'alot kedoshim ute'horim
kezohar harakia me'irim umazhirim
lenishmat

shehalach le'olamo
ba'avur shekol beney hamishpachah, yedidim umakirim
mitpalelim le'iluy nishmato
began eden tehey menuchato
lachen ba'al harachamim yastireyhu
beseter kenafav le'olamim
veyitzror bitzror hachayim et nismato
Adonai hu nachalato Veyanuach beshalom al mishkavo
Venomar amen.

(God full of mercy who dwells on high
Grant perfect rest on the wings of Your Divine Presence
In the lofty heights of the holy and pure
who shine as the brightness of the heavens
to the soul of _____

who has gone to his eternal rest
as all his family and friends
pray for the elevation of his soul.
His resting place shall be in the Garden of Eden.
Therefore, the Master of mercy will care for him
under the protection of His wings for all time
And bind his soul in the bond of everlasting life.
God is his inheritance and he will rest in peace
and let us say Amen.)

Joe sits in the congregation. The rabbi stands at a podium.

RABBI

I didn't really know Robert that intimately, but he was a cherished member of this congregation. He was a master craftsman. A family man. A bright young man. Energetic. And a hundred watt smile. Which made sense, because he was an electrician.

BUBBIE

Carpenter.

RABBI

He could cheer anyone up. Cook a fine plate of spaghetti. He enjoyed wrestling with men. And judging from the people gathered today, he will be missed. And now Robert's daughter Marcy would like to say a few words.

Marcy gets up and heads to the podium.

MARCY

I got lucky. Most of you who sit before me knew my father as a friend. I'm the only one here who was lucky enough to have him as a father. When I remember him... I remember a doctor, a vanquisher of bedroom monsters... When I had nightmares he would lie on the floor next to my bed until I went back to sleep. More than once I woke up the next morning to find him still asleep on the carpet next to my bed. He was the kindest man I have ever known. He and my mother were always willing to take in someone who needed help. He worked hard. Some might have thought too hard. But no matter how hard he worked, he always had time for family. No breaks. Straight home from work, he'd cook, help with some math homework, then start paperwork. But he was always there for soccer games, plays, graduations. In all of the pictures of us as a family, there's this look. A smile. Pride and love. And with my mother, there was so much love. When he looked at her... It was the unmistakable look of a man in love. Everyone here knows how lucky he considered himself. He married the woman of his dreams. I remember the hardest part of seeing my dad sick. It was that I couldn't help. I couldn't fix him the way he had always done with me and my mom when we were in pain. He'll miss so much. I'm sure he's upset about that. Weddings, grandchildren ... He would have spoiled them rotten. It was always hard to keep things from him. He was so clever. Just one look and you'd break up or blush and he'd have you... This weekend I came home to see him. Things had taken a turn. And on Saturday night, just after midnight, dad called for me. He asked that I sit with him awhile. So I stayed. We talked for hours. Then he looked at me and smiled. He said "hey sweetie" and squeezed my hand. That was the last thing he ever said. I wasn't surprised that he waited for all of us to be together. His mother, his brother, my mom, and me. So we could take care of each other when he was gone. I don't think that was luck. I think he stuck around because that's the type of guy he was. He would stick around to be sure we'd all be okay.

Marcy returns to her seat. The rabbi steps back to the podium.

RABBI

If you will all now stand for the kaddish.

All stand. Andrew does not say the kaddish, but prays silently. Andrew leaves the temple. Everyone notices, but the service continues.

ALL

Yisgadal veyiskadash shemey rabo
 Be'olmo di'vero chir'usey
 Veyamlich malchusey
 Bechayeychon u'veyomeychon
 U'vechayey di chol beys yisroel
 Ba'agolo u'vizman koriv ve'imru omeyn

Yehey sh'mey rabo mevorach le'olam u'le'olmey olmayo
 Yisborach ve'yishtabach ve'yispo'ar ve'yisromam ve'yisnasey
 Ve'yis'hadar ve'yis'aleh ve'yiys'halol
 She'mey dikudsho b'rich hu
 Le'eylo min kol birchoso ve'shiroso tushbechoso ve'nechemoso
 Da'amiron be'olmo ve'imru omeyn

Yehey sh'lomo rabo min shemayo ve'chayim
 Oleynu ve'al kol yisroel ve'imru omeyn

O'seh sholom bimromov
 Hu ya'aseh sholom oleynu ve'al kol yisroel
 Ve'imru omeyn

(May His illustrious name become increasingly great and holy
 In the world that He created according to His will,
 and may He establish His kingdom
 In your lifetime and in your days
 and in the lifetime of all the house of Israel
 Speedily and soon. And let us say amen.

May His illustrious name be blessed always and forever.
 Blessed, praised, glorified, exalted, extolled
 Honoured, raised up and acclaimed
 be the name of the Holy one blessed be He
 beyond every blessing hymn, praise and consolation
 that is uttered in the world. And let us say amen May abundant peace from
 heaven, and life
 Be upon us and upon all Israel. And let us say amen.

May He who makes peace in His high places
 Make peace upon us and upon all Israel,
 And let us say amen.)¹

Blackout.

Scene 6.

The foyer of the synagogue. Andrew is standing alone. Moses appears.

ANDREW

I'm not talking to you.

MOSES

You're going to have to. You can't run from me. And I'm not going anywhere.

Moses disappears. Andrew opens his eyes and looks around. The rest of the family enters. Joe is holding Bubbie's block. Bubbie and Fay walk off.

LULU

What was that?

ANDREW

I was-

LULU

You left.

JOE

Lulu, you, Andrew and Bubbie go in one limo. Me, Fay, and Marcy in the other.

MARCY

That's fine Uncle Joe.

JOE

Now to find my mother.

MARCY

I think they were finding a washroom.

Joe and Marcy exit.

LULU

What's the matter with you?

ANDREW

Nothing.

LULU

Running out of there like a lunatic. You act like you've never been to a funeral before.

ANDREW

Excuse me, but you know I have. And you know how difficult-

LULU

That's not what I meant.

ANDREW

Could you back off? We're supposed to be celebrating his life.

LULU

It's not a happy celebration.

ANDREW

I don't even know what that means.

LULU

Quiet now. Here they come.

Enter Marcy and Fay, who is crying profusely.

LULU

Brown cords.

MARCY

We should go.

FAY

Are you okay, honey?

ANDREW

Yes, ma'am. I didn't mean to leave like that...

FAY

So many people...

ANDREW

I felt like-

LULU

The car's waiting.

FAY

Yes, let's go. Get this day done.

MARCY

It'll be fine mom.

Andrew watches Marcy and Fay holding each other as they exit. He then looks at his mother. They exit. Blackout.

Scene 7.

Andrew, Fay, Marcy, and Lulu walk to the gravesite. Moses is there, watching. Andrew is immediately anxious.

MARCY

Did you notice? The rain stopped right as we pulled up. There was this little glint of sun that shone through the clouds...

LULU

That's beautiful.

FAY

It was a wonderful service. Lovely eulogy, honey.

MARCY

I'm glad.

LULU

For a child to be so grateful-

Andrew begins massaging his temples.

ANDREW

Ah, the guilt.

FAY

What?

LULU

What?

ANDREW

Never mind.

LULU

No. What did you say?

ANDREW

Listen, Louise, you're not in the right frame of mind to have an argument.

LULU

Andrew, you are being extremely-

ANDREW

I got it. I'm rude. I'm strange. I'll be quiet.

LULU

Who are you? Whenever you open your mouth-

ANDREW

I know. I'm not the boy you raised.

FAY

Lulu, Andrew-

ANDREW

Just one second. You've made it entirely clear that you don't need me around. I *embarrass* you. I'm different. And not like-a-snowflake different.

LULU

I come to all of your-

ANDREW

Yeah, and judge with that... that look.

MARCY

People are coming. Could you stop?

FAY

Please, this isn't-

LULU

You wonder why you're left out. It's this. You never finish anything. Aimless. In school, work. Even your "art". You never take responsibility for anything.

ANDREW

I've taken my share. When Elliot died-

Lulu slaps Andrew. Marcy and Fay are stunned. Andrew smiles.

LULU

That's enough. You don't talk about him.

ANDREW

You think I've been the distant one since then. No, you've been the one. And it's always been there. Why, when I've needed you the most-

LULU

You're being unfair.

ANDREW

Yes. Yes I am. How does that feel? I tried to help him-

LULU
Help him? You couldn't even help yourself.

FAY
This is not the time-

LULU
Alone. That's what you are.

ANDREW
I'm not alone.

MARCY
Please stop this.

LULU
I didn't start it.

ANDREW
I did?

LULU
You know what you did.

ANDREW
I'm a different person now.

LULU
Prove it.

MARCY
Both of you. Stop.

LULU
What are you doing, Andrew?

ANDREW
I met someone. A woman.

MARCY/ FAY
What?

ANDREW
But I need you. Do you hear that? I need you to-

Joe enters.

What's going on?

JOE

I don't know.

FAY

I'm getting married.

ANDREW

What? Who?

JOE

Of all days-

FAY

Why are you doing this to us?

LULU

Yes, *I'm* doing this to *you*.

ANDREW

What do you want Andrew?

MOSES

I want to tell them.

ANDREW

What?

MARCY

Then tell them.

MOSES

You can't be serious.

LULU

I'm engaged.

ANDREW

Why didn't you-

JOE

ANDREW

I'm telling you now. She wants to meet you. Family's very important to her. But there's something else. A ceremony.

LULU

You didn't want her to meet us?

ANDREW

No. Yes. No. It's complicated.

MOSES

Tell it.

ANDREW

She's Muslim.

FAY

What?

ANDREW

I'm Muslim.

MARCY

I'm pregnant.

Fay faints. Blackout.

ACT II: MEDINA**Scene 1.**

Marcy sits on Fay's porch. Moses stands in the shadows. Andrew enters from the street.

Hey.

I wouldn't go in there.

So you're the one?

The one what?

That they sent out here to... figure me out. Makes sense, I guess.

Don't be like this. I can't talk to you if you're already... defensive.

What are we supposed to talk about?

Jokes? You come here with jokes?

Come on, Marcy-

Be quiet for a second. I buried my dad today.

I know and-

Don't you get that?

Silence.

Why didn't you tell us?

ANDREW

That's a joke, right? My family is so... I don't even want to explain it. Besides, I could ask you the same thing.

MARCY

You can be infuriating.

ANDREW

Answer the question.

MARCY

I should have. Now she's not talking to me. Today even, she won't talk to me. But I tried to tell them. I didn't want him to know what he'd miss. But I think he would have been happy for me.

ANDREW

I think that's the difference. He would have been happy for you. This would have been a problem no matter when I told them.

MARCY

Well it's not exactly great news.

ANDREW

What?

MARCY

Don't you read the newspaper?

ANDREW

What are you going to lawyer me with some historical argument? There's more than enough blame to go around. I get it. I do. It was never going to be an easy transition.

MARCY

Easy? Another joke?

ANDREW

Her family understands.

MARCY

Yeah, but she told them, didn't she? And they've met you I'll bet. Why do you always do things the hard way?

ANDREW

Don't tell me-

MARCY

I'm not telling you anything. I'm trying to understand.

ANDREW

This isn't easy. Especially today.

MARCY

No kidding.

Pause.

ANDREW

It would have been hard just telling them any day, okay? That I wasn't theirs anymore. Not completely. And that I haven't been. For a long time. But that's not even it. I believed in something again. By not being what they wanted me to be. You know. But that wasn't enough. They drove me away, too. I needed something to believe again.

MARCY

You could have talked to me, you know.

ANDREW

What?

MARCY

We always seemed alike. Strangely close.

ANDREW

I wasn't sure you'd understand.

MARCY

With all that's gone on, you keep pushing.

ANDREW

I didn't do this to push anybody.

MARCY

Do you ever do anything that isn't for yourself?

ANDREW

Easy for you to say.

MARCY

And what does that mean?

ANDREW

The ultimate conformist. Always doing what the family wants. Just like Elliot.

MARCY

What?

ANDREW

I remember a time when you wanted to be an actress. And what happened? You felt that pressure that they put on you and took off it to law school. You're so worried about what everyone else thinks-

MARCY

And you don't care at all. Yeah, I became something that I didn't want to be when I was sixteen, but so what? I'm happy.

ANDREW

So am I.

They stop and look at each other a moment. Marcy looks away.

MARCY

Conformist? I'm having a baby right now.

ANDREW

In this day and age, that's your big rebellion? You've made all these plans but none of them are for yourself.

MARCY

It just looks that way from someone who doesn't finish anything and takes the hard road out of everything. I do what I do because I care about my family. I'm not going to run away from it.

ANDREW

I'm not running away.

MARCY

What then?

ANDREW

Listen, her family... her family wants to meet.

MARCY

And what's that got to do with me?

ANDREW

Help me with them.

.Joe enters.

JOE

Hey. Marc, you're mom wants to see you.

MARCY

What?

JOE

She wants to talk. She's calmed down.

ANDREW

Marcy, wait.

MARCY

I don't think I can help you.

ANDREW

I'm not running away.

Marcy exits.

JOE

Andrew?

ANDREW

Hey.

JOE

Is it true? I mean, this isn't one of your stupid jokes. Or some art project.

ANDREW

What? No.

JOE

What are you thinking?

ANDREW

What?

Lulu opens the patio door.

LULU

You are a cold boy.

Lulu closes the door.

JOE
This is killing her.

ANDREW
So?

JOE
When did you get so vicious?

ANDREW
When did she?

JOE
You know that she still hurts. You know it. But you still-

ANDREW
That gives her license? We lost him too. No. she's always treated me like that. Only it's worse since then.

JOE
She doesn't think it was your fault.

ANDREW
You've got to stop sticking up for her.

JOE
She's my wife.

ANDREW
And I'm your son.

JOE
He was her baby.

ANDREW
So was I.

JOE
No one blames you.

ANDREW
You know that's not true.

JOE
Even if it was true, you think this will help? You've abandoned your faith.

ANDREW

I've found it. I'm running toward something, not away.

JOE

With them?

ANDREW

Listen to you. *Them*.

JOE

That's not what I meant. This is, this is big. And we were left out of it.

ANDREW

I can make my own decisions.

JOE

It was not your decision to make.

ANDREW

It's my life. It has nothing to do with you.

JOE

How could you stand there, stand there and look at me like that and say that the way you just did?

ANDREW

I know this is a hard day. And I should have told you before, okay? But I've changed. For the better. I'm happy for the first-

JOE

You seem angrier.

ANDREW

Dad, you've got to-

JOE

Are you keeping my name?

ANDREW

What?

JOE

Your family name. My name.

ANDREW

Yes.

JOE

And your children? Will they-

ANDREW

Yes.

JOE

You're the only son I've got left, you know.

ANDREW

I know.

JOE

We've both lost brothers. And I've lost a son. I can't-

Andrew moves toward his father. Joe backs away.

ANDREW

Wait.

JOE

I can't... And don't tell Bubbie about this. It's too much for today.

ANDREW

Dad.

JOE

Just stay here until I get you.

Joe exits inside. Andrew stands on Fay's porch alone as Moses' voice is heard.

MOSES

An exodus.

Moses appears.

ANDREW

Go away. It's your fault I'm alone out here.

MOSES

You think you've got abandonment issues? I was left in a basinet, half-drowned-

ANDREW

I said go away. Please.

MOSES

Maybe you shouldn't have been so aggressive.

ANDREW

You were pushing me to do it. And, by the way, that's a good one coming from you.

MOSES

I did what had to be done. But I had to be pushed. Sometimes we are meant to do what our brothers cannot.

ANDREW

What does that mean?

MOSES

They needed to know the truth. And you needed to tell them. So don't blame me for the timing being less than stellar.

Andrew and Moses stare each other down. Bubbie enters.

BUBBIE

Hello boys. What are you doing out here all alone?

Andrew looks at Moses, then at Bubbie and back to Moses.

BUBBIE

Oy, you are so tall. What do they put in the water out west?

ANDREW

It's not the water Bubbie. It's-

Moses gives Andrew a look.

MOSES

That won't help.

BUBBIE

What was that honey?

ANDREW

Nothing Bubbie.

BUBBIE

You boys look so much like your father. It's nice that you both came.

ANDREW

Bubbie, who are you talking-

MOSES

It was a lovely service.

BUBBIE

Yes. But that Rabbi's eulogy... But I'm so glad you made it.

Bubbie hugs Moses.

BUBBIE

Oh. Elliot, you grew a beard.

ANDREW

Bubbie?

MOSES

I've had the beard for a while.

BUBBIE

Everyone here misses you so much. I wish you'd come more often. You boys. You look so much like your father.

Bubbie brings a handkerchief up to her face.

MOSES

Oh, Bubbie. You'll be okay.

BUBBIE

Did you hear? I'm going to be a great-grandmother? I suppose for the one life taken, another is given.

MOSES

Come out for some fresh air?

BUBBIE

There are so many people in there.

Bubbie pulls something wrapped in a napkin out of her purse.

BUBBIE

Ruggalah?

ANDREW

No thanks.

BUBBIE
Elliot?

MOSES
Sure. But I should get inside.

BUBBIE
Alright. Have some kiwi-fruit. It's in the kitchen.

MOSES
Sure Bubbie.

BUBBIE
Make sure to wash it.

Moses bends down and gives Bubbie a kiss, goes to exit into the house, but retreats to the shadows.

BUBBIE
So many people in there.

ANDREW
Yes.

BUBBIE
How are you doing honey?

ANDREW
You saw him.

BUBBIE
Of course I saw him.

ANDREW
Elliot?

BUBBIE
Why would you ask that, dear?

ANDREW
No reason. I'm fine, Bubbie. How are you doing?

BUBBIE
It's hard. My oldest boy.

ANDREW
Yeah.

BUBBIE
When did you see him last?

ANDREW
A long time ago.

BUBBIE
Do you still read?

ANDREW
Yes. I read.

BUBBIE
You used to read so much. We'd go to the library and by the time we got home you had everything read. Things were so simple.

ANDREW
Well, I'm grown up now.

BUBBIE
Things can get crazy.

ANDREW
Yes they can.

BUBBIE
Things aren't meant to be easy. You have to be willing to make sacrifices. It's when you're not long for this world, you know, like your Bubbie... You realize that all the hard work was what life was about... I gave you your first bath, you know.

ANDREW
I've seen pictures.

BUBBIE
You were so cute. And tiny. Now you're so big. Not a nebbish like your father.

ANDREW
Practically a giant when you compare.

BUBBIE
What? I'm sorry, you must forgive your Bubbie. My hearing isn't what it used to be.

ANDREW

I just said, yes Bubbie, dad's a nebbish.

BUBBIE

I heard somebody say you were getting married.

ANDREW

Well, that's just crazy Bubbie.

BUBBIE

I didn't know you were even involved. No one tells me anything anymore. Not since Elliot died. I feel like I'm going-

ANDREW

But you just saw him.

BUBBIE

It was a ghost honey. Don't worry, he's not the scary kind. He was in a robe.

ANDREW

Are you sure you're okay Bubbie?

BUBBIE

We have to go on, don't we? I just wish I was told about things. I hate that feeling. Being alone.

ANDREW

Me too.

BUBBIE

You're not alone. You have us.

Fay enters. She has been crying quite a bit.

FAY

Rachel. The Rabbi's here.

BUBBIE

And the cantor?

FAY

Him too.

BUBBIE

Andrew?

ANDREW
Yeah.

BUBBIE
I love you honey.

Bubbie hands him a piece of ruggelah and exits with Fay. Andrew sits down. He begins massaging his temples. Moses appears and tentatively approaches Andrew.

MOSES
So-

ANDREW
Can't you stop?

MOSES
I don't have a choice.

ANDREW
Right. I summoned you.

MOSES
And it's not over.

ANDREW
No?

MOSES
I'm still here, aren't I? So what is it?

ANDREW
For once. I want us to be normal. But we've never been...I saw the way Marcy and Fay held each other at the temple. We don't do that. My dad only started hugging after Elliot died and my mom only touches me to prove something. The appearance of normalcy. But we'll never be it.

MOSES
So make it normal.

ANDREW
There's more.

MOSES
There's more?

ANDREW

The kitbah. A betrothal ceremony. Family tradition.

MOSES

And?

ANDREW

And I'm supposed to have someone stand for me. But I don't-

Moses pats Andrew's shoulder.

MOSES

Nothing's impossible. I mean, yes, it will be hard. It's a lot to take, I'm sure, and the way you told them... *(takes the ruggelah)* You going to eat that?

ANDREW

Take it.

MOSES

Todah rabah. (thank you)

ANDREW

Rabakh ashah. (you're welcome)

MOSES

The truth is a powerful tool. It's not a weapon.

ANDREW

I wasn't using it as a weapon.

MOSES

Don't treat me like an idiot. *(Moses bites into the ruggelah)* You wanted to tell her like that. Have you ever stopped to consider that it's you?

ANDREW

What's me?

MOSES

Making things harder to be "normal".

ANDREW

What?

MOSES

And what it must be like for them to think that you are driving them away?

ANDREW

You know nothing about us.

MOSES

No it's you. You have no idea. You lost a brother? An uncle? I lost an entire family. Families. All your entitlements. You think you're an outsider? Have you seriously considered who I am and what I've done? I think you have. And you want me here to perform some miracle.

ANDREW

It's more complicated than that.

MOSES

It's not.

ANDREW

Then tell me how to fix it.

MOSES

I'm just a shepherd, Andrew.

ANDREW

I told them. What more do you want?

MOSES

What more do you want?

ANDREW

I'm done.

MOSES

What?

ANDREW

I'm through being a doormat to them. I'm the quiet one. I was always the quiet one. Well, no more.

Moses sits down. Andrew begins rubbing his temples again. Andrew sits down. He is shaken. Enter the Rabbi.

RABBI

Oh, I'm sorry. Am I intruding?

The rabbi smiles at Andrew, then takes out a cigarette and lights it. Andrew notices this.

Is there something wrong?

RABBI

You smoke?

ANDREW

Except on the Sabbath.

RABBI

Right. No lighting fires.

ANDREW

I should quit, but events like these. Stressful.

RABBI

I guess.

ANDREW

Andrew, right?

RABBI

Yes.

ANDREW

You were in the office today.

RABBI

Yes.

ANDREW

You didn't say anything. Did you know Robert well?

RABBI

As well as I could have.

ANDREW

It was quite the mosaic in the temple today. Full and vibrant. He was a loved man.

RABBI

Yeah. I think your eulogy pretty much summed it up.

ANDREW

Oh?

RABBI

ANDREW
Can I ask you something?

RABBI
Sure.

ANDREW
What do you know about seeing things? Visions?

RABBI
I suppose it depends.

ANDREW
Suppose someone was seeing... This sounds so stupid. Moses. Someone was seeing Moses.

RABBI
I wouldn't know what to say.

ANDREW
Am I a good Jew?

RABBI
Well, as I understand it you have gone through a conversion.

ANDREW
Of course, you've heard.

RABBI
Though the Orthodoxy forbids it.... And with things the way they've been... But you have to ask yourself, what makes a good Jew.

ANDREW
I don't know. Was I ever a good Jew?

RABBI
Start with something simpler. Were you, are you, a good person?

ANDREW
I don't know.

RABBI
(looking at his cigarette)
Then that's really your question. If you can answer that-

ANDREW

I haven't honoured my mother or father.

RABBI

Well, that's tricky. That's a commandment. But that's what Yom Kippur is for.

ANDREW

I found something...

RABBI

And what did you find?

ANDREW

I'm not sure I can explain it.

RABBI

Try.

ANDREW

A place where I can be myself. A home. A place where I can be forgiven.

RABBI

And what do you need to be forgiven for?

ANDREW

Anything.

RABBI

And you couldn't find it with your family and their faith?

Andrew shakes his head.

RABBI

Have you ever heard of Medina?

ANDREW

Muhammad went there after his flight from Mecca.

RABBI

It was more than that. A place where Jew and Muslim could live together and fight for one another. One family with many faiths. Mohammed brought them together to achieve something greater than themselves. Their relationships often strained, but when battle came they stood side by side.

ANDREW

One family with many faiths, huh?

RABBI

Medina brought them together. After all, we're all children of Abraham.

ANDREW

Medina.

RABBI

You're family is your faith Andrew. You must stand with them. And if they do not stand by you, you must bear it.

Joe enters.

JOE

Rabbi, it's time.

RABBI

So it is. I will see you inside.

ANDREW

Wait. What happened in Medina?

RABBI

Religion got in the way.

The rabbi exits. Joe stands at the patio door.

JOE

Are you coming in?

ANDREW

I know I didn't do this the way you would have wanted.

JOE

What happens now?

ANDREW

What?

JOE

Nothing. I'm very tired. Later. Please, let's just go in. And please-

ANDREW

Don't worry. I'll stand in the corner or something. That's what I'm good at.

Andrew walks past Joe. Joe closes the door. Blackout.

Scene 2.

Fay's living room. Fay is cleaning up.

MARCY

Mom, sit down. We're not supposed to work.

FAY

I'm not working. I'm just avoiding talking to you.

The Rabbi enters.

RABBI

We'll... I'm off.

FAY

So quick.

RABBI

The work is never done.

BUBBIE

Well, give your Bubbie a kiss.

The Rabbi looks around, then complies.

RABBI

Good night, all.

The Rabbi exits.

FAY

I've got to sit down. You coming outside?

Fay massages her temples.

ANDREW

Me?

FAY

Yes, you.

MARCY

Wait-

FAY

Tomorrow, daughter. Not today. Tomorrow.

*Fay goes to the patio door and exits to the patio. Andrew follows cautiously.
Fay sits on a patio chair. Andrew sits on another. Andrew is noticeably uncomfortable.*

ANDREW

You want me to stay?

Fay nods.

ANDREW

Standing room only today. I didn't know that there were so many-

FAY

He touched a lot of people.

ANDREW

I guess so.

FAY

I'd rather have had an empty temple in thirty years than a full one today.

Andrew stands up.

ANDREW

Are you okay?

FAY

Why do people ask things like that? Of course I'm not okay.

ANDREW

Sorry. About today.

FAY

This is... No. I'm fine. Go.

Andrew goes to leave.

FAY

Why don't you talk?

ANDREW

Gets me into trouble.

FAY

I mean, today, when the rabbi asked you if you had anything to say, any memories... you just stood there...

ANDREW

I didn't want it to be... I don't know.

FAY

What would have you said?

Andrew sits back down.

ANDREW

Nothing bad. It's just... it's just that... I wanted to keep it private.

FAY

And you didn't cry. Don't you cry?

ANDREW

I cry.

FAY

Didn't even say the kaddish.

ANDREW

I prayed. It was silent.

FAY

Oh.

ANDREW

Are you and Marcy okay?

FAY

The baby?

ANDREW

Yeah.

FAY

We'll get there. But trust is a big thing.

ANDREW

Why is everything so hard?

FAY

I was thinking the same thing.

She wipes her eyes and runs her hands through her hair.

FAY

Do I look okay?

ANDREW

You look beautiful.

FAY

Liar.

ANDREW

Did you mean what you said today? You knew from the first moment-

FAY

Absolutely. No question.

ANDREW

I didn't know that.

FAY

Well, there's a lot you don't know about us.

ANDREW

That goes both ways, you know.

FAY

We tried, honey, for years. But nothing worked. You were so-

ANDREW

Unique?

FAY

Distant. Even when you were a kid. Didn't like to be touched, held.

ANDREW

I'm not sure I meant to be. Distant.

FAY

You?

ANDREW

Me what?

FAY
From the first moment.

ANDREW
With Sarah? I think so.

FAY
You did this for her?

ANDREW
I did this for me.

FAY
Do you have a picture?

ANDREW
Yeah.

Andrew takes a photograph out of his wallet and hands it to Fay.

FAY
Oh, she's lovely. Did you take it?

ANDREW
I did.

FAY
She doesn't wear the (*makes a gesture to her face*), uh-

ANDREW
Only when her grandfather is around.

FAY
Just bad timing. All of this.

ANDREW
Marcy would disagree.

FAY
Yes, she got her little news in at the right time.

ANDREW
Sure did.

Fay rubs her eyes and sighs.

ANDREW

And did he really, you know, on your first date-

FAY

Yes. Oh god, that was the strangest thing.

ANDREW

I'm sure it was.

FAY

Are you happy?

ANDREW

No one's ever asked me that.

FAY

Well I'm asking.

ANDREW

I am.

FAY

That's all you need you know. All of the fighting and the ups and downs and the stuff that gets thrown at you... We were so happy Andrew. It may not have looked like it all the time, but at the end of the day... He's going to miss grandchildren. He would have spoiled them rotten.

ANDREW

Yeah.

Enter Bubbie.

BUBBIE

Who's there?

FAY

It's Fay and Andrew, Bubbie.

BUBBIE

Why is it so dark?

FAY

It's nighttime Rachel. Are you all set to go?

BUBBIE

Joseph's finding my block. Hard to find with my eyes... I just put it down for a second...

FAY

When are you coming in tomorrow?

BUBBIE

Around nine. Andrew, am I going to see you before you go?

ANDREW

Plane leaves at 7:45.

BUBBIE

Oy, that early?

FAY

You're leaving tomorrow?

Andrew nods. Joe enters.

JOE

Mother? Found your block.

BUBBIE

Thank you honey. You know you're getting older. You should check your testicles for lumps.

JOE

I will mother.

BUBBIE

Well, Andrew, give your Bubbie a kiss.

Andrew pecks her on the cheek.

BUBBIE

Joseph, your son finally has stubble.

JOE

Do you have everything?

BUBBIE

Of course, dear... Where's Elliot?

JOE

Elliot's gone, mother. Now, let's get going. You need anything while I'm out Fay?

FAY

No. Yes. Maybe some chocolate.

Moses waves to Bubbie. Bubbie waves back.

BUBBIE

You stay strong honey.

Joe and Bubbie exit.

FAY

I need chocolate.

ANDREW

There's a lot of pastry inside. I could grab-

FAY

No. No more pastry today. Chocolate.

ANDREW

Do you want me to get Marcy?

FAY

Could you hold my hand?

Andrew considers this a moment.

ANDREW

Sure.

FAY

There was this thing your uncle did, my husband. Saying his name in the past tense. Already. Whenever we finished eating dinner. Without fail, he would come around the table and give my shoulders a squeeze and kiss my neck. He'd never take his plate to the kitchen, but... Well, that's what I'll miss most. Our little secret.

ANDREW

Did you want to know what I would have said to the Rabbi?

Fay nods. Andrew leans in and whispers something to Fay.

FAY

That's lovely honey. Why can't you talk like that more often?

ANDREW

Our little secret.

Fay begins to giggle.

FAY

The facilitator of the Jewish grandma stereotype, your Bubbie.

ANDREW

Yeah, that's true.

FAY

Wash your fruit. Oy.

Lulu enters.

FAY

Lulu.

LULU

Fay? How are you doing?

FAY

Fine. I'm fine. Finally sat down.

LULU

Good. I'm going to bed. I expect I'll see you tomorrow.

FAY

Okay.

Lulu exits.

FAY

You need to talk to her.

Andrew shrugs.

FAY

Come here.

She puts her arms around Andrew. Blackout.

Scene 3.

The patio, later that night. Andrew is finishing a prayer. He wraps his prayer rug. Lulu enters. She sees her son and walks to the far edge of the patio and lights a cigarette.

LULU

Did you do this to punish me?

ANDREW

I'm sorry?

LULU

Did I push you here?

ANDREW

Where?

LULU

To betray your family.

ANDREW

Oh, I see. It's a betrayal.

LULU

It is.

ANDREW

This had nothing to do with you. This was me making another one of my own decisions. And you can't stand that.

LULU

I don't know what-

ANDREW

Sure you do. You had my life all mapped out for me. But my *independence*, my, my-

LULU

I only wanted what was best.

ANDREW

Which is what exactly?

LULU

To have some drive. Instead you took your little pictures. Got in with the wrong people. Quit school. Now, you don't have-

ANDREW

I do have something-

LULU

Let me finish. You are heading in a dangerous direction. With whoever this girl is.

ANDREW

She's not in some sleeper cell.

LULU

Whatever it is you need from me, permission, you're not going to get it.

ANDREW

I don't need... She wants to meet you. That's all. There's a ceremony-

LULU

A Muslim ceremony?

ANDREW

Yes. And I think you should be there.

LULU

I don't think so.

Lulu begins to walk away.

ANDREW

This was my decision. I'm not ashamed. And now, even if I'm Muslim or Christian or Mormon or Jew, I'm just myself. I'm no different.

LULU

Do you know what they-

ANDREW

Are we taking sides? Sides? What a concept.

LULU

You can be cruel.

ANDREW

So can you, mother, but I want you there.

LULU

No.

ANDREW
No?

LULU
I've had enough. I can't... No, I will not-

ANDREW
Do you remember what you said to me at Elliot's funeral?

LULU
What?

ANDREW
Do you?

LULU
What are you talking about?

ANDREW
You took him from me. You took something special. That's what you said.

LULU
Was I wrong?

ANDREW
He made his own decisions.

LULU
You put him there. In that room. He was a good boy.

ANDREW
A good boy? Because he had a job? A car?

LULU
He was good, but you changed him.

ANDREW
I was in trouble. That's all I was. I didn't change-

LULU
You should have known better.

ANDREW
You don't think I think about that? I do. I think about it. If I hadn't have been into what I had been into... But I can only be responsible for so much. He made his own choices.

LULU

Just like you.

ANDREW

And you didn't help? Every time he came home, you'd hand over money, without question. Or he'd sneak in your purse-

LULU

What?

ANDREW

-Your traveling pharmacy, he'd call it.

LULU

He had a good job. He had a life.

ANDREW

He wasn't happy.

LULU

You could have stopped it. You were there.

ANDREW

I was in no condition to see it. But you-

LULU

You're blaming me?

ANDREW

It's no one's fault. We all had a chance, but he did what he did because it was his choice.

LULU

You were difficult. Always.

ANDREW

Don't change the subject. You know how that made me feel? Telling me that. What that does to someone you're supposed to love? And I found him. Have you ever held someone like that... You ever thought about that? How scared I was? How angry I was? At him? At myself? I didn't need validation for feeling guilty.

LULU

I'm not going to listen to this.

Lulu tries to leave, but Andrew stops her.

ANDREW

I needed you to hold me. Tell me I was good.

LULU

Let go of me.

ANDREW

And I want you to know that. So you can understand. I will never be what you thought he was or what he could have been. Those are your excuses. It's because you crushed me.

LULU

You did it to yourself.

ANDREW

And I got worse before I got better. By myself. And I want you to listen to me. I did this because I found someone. Who makes me feel the way you never could. Welcome. I don't know when it started with you, but these last years have been worse.

LULU

What did you expect?

ANDREW

I'm not asking for your forgiveness. I just want to know that I've forgiven you.

LULU

Forgiven me? Enough. You've always had your things. You've always done things the way you wanted. Well this is my turn.

ANDREW

For what?

LULU

I was going to do so much and you, and you took that away. It wasn't my life anymore. It was ours. A mistake. That's what you were and that's what you are. All that I wanted-

ANDREW

What did you want?

LULU

I didn't want to touch you. You know how that made me feel to feel that way? And when Elliot was born, I promised myself it'd be different. And now he's gone and you're all that's left.

ANDREW

I want to try.

LULU

You do what you want. I tried. I did. With both of you.

ANDREW

We can make this work.

LULU

I don't think I want to be a part of our life anymore.

Lulu begins to leave.

ANDREW

Wait-

Lulu exits. Andrew runs a hand through his hair. Moses appears. Andrew shakes his head.

MOSES

You okay?

ANDREW

I want to go home.

MOSES

Isn't this your home?

ANDREW

I'm going crazy.

MOSES

This woman-

ANDREW

Sarah.

MOSES

Is she your family? Your home?

ANDREW

I don't know where I'm supposed to go. I want to be a family. I want Medina.

MOSES

Maybe one day.

Andrew slides down a wall and sits. Moses squats next to him.

MOSES

You better get some sleep. There's a long road ahead.

ANDREW

Are you permanent?

MOSES

You need to sleep. You've done a lot today.

Moses picks him up.

ANDREW

Is that why you're here? To carry me?

MOSES

Sure. That's why I'm here.

ANDREW

I'm a good person. I mean, I try. I really do. I mean, I can be.

MOSES

Sure you can.

ANDREW

What am I supposed to do?

MOSES

I have set before thee life and death,
The blessing and the curse;
Therefore choose life, that thou mayest live.

ANDREW

Am I going to keep seeing you?

MOSES

Let's get you inside.

Blackout.

Scene 4.

The next morning, 6 am. Andrew is rolling up a prayer rug. Joe walks in on this.

Oh. Sorry.	JOE
It's okay.	ANDREW
So, you pray.	JOE
Every day.	ANDREW
Commitment.	JOE
Yes.	ANDREW
You all packed?	JOE
Yeah	ANDREW
Fay said... Maybe bring Sarah to the unveiling.	JOE
Let's not get ahead of ourselves.	ANDREW
That's what I said.	JOE
Don't you ever wonder why we're not more-	ANDREW
She's up, you know.	JOE
Okay.	ANDREW

JOE

She told me what you said.

ANDREW

Did she tell you what she-

JOE

You really don't know what it's been like for her.

ANDREW

Yes I do. Exactly.

JOE

It's more than that. You should talk to her.

ANDREW

I tried.

JOE

I don't want to be stuck in the middle of this anymore.

ANDREW

We're just... *(he pats his two fists together)*

JOE

Do you remember your grandfather?

ANDREW

What?

JOE

He's a lot like her. And you. Strangely enough. Are you going through with this?

ANDREW

I've made a commitment.

JOE

I think you should have discussed it.

ANDREW

It wouldn't have made a difference.

JOE

You didn't give us that choice.

ANDREW

I'm supposed to ask you-

JOE

What?

Unseen by the men, Lulu stands in the doorway to the kitchen.

ANDREW

There's a ceremony. The kitbah. The families together. We're supposed to meet.

JOE

I don't know if that's possible son. You've always been... Just like her, you know. You've got to give her time.

ANDREW

She's had my whole life to accept who I am.

The doorbell rings. Andrew picks up his bag.

ANDREW

Cab's here. I'm going to be late.

JOE

Your Zeda, he was a hard man. A lot harder than your mother. I didn't speak to him for a long time before he died, did you know that? (*Andrew shakes his head*). I don't even know why.

ANDREW

Dad.

JOE

We've had our moments.

ANDREW

Sure.

JOE

Andrew, if you weren't so-

The doorbell rings again. Andrew goes to the door.

ANDREW

I'm coming.

JOE

If no one else will son. I'll be there. I will.

ANDREW

Dad... And what about-

JOE

Funny thing, genes. My looks, mother's temperament. Stubborn.

ANDREW

I mean why aren't we happier?

JOE

We try. We're family.

Lulu disappears into the kitchen. Andrew opens the door. A Moses-looking cabbie stands there.

ANDREW

What are you doing here?

MOSES

I drive the cab. You call for one?

ANDREW

Um, yeah.

MOSES

I'll get you where you need to go. As always.

ANDREW

I'm going home.

MOSES

Cool. Take your bag?

ANDREW

Thanks.

Moses exits.

ANDREW

I should go.

JOE

Yeah.

ANDREW

I'm trying dad. I want you to know-

JOE

Shalom, son.

Joe grabs Andrew and hugs him. Andrew hugs him back. Blackout.

FIN.

1. "Memorial Prayer" and "Mourner's Kaddish," *Dressler's Jewish Funeral Care*. "Prayers". Accessed June 13, 2006. www.jewishfuneralcare.com/prayers.shtml