

# **Losing It**

A play by

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*Losing It* is an exploration of faith and its ability to survive in the modern, contemporary world. It explores the subject through one character, David, brought up as an observant, ultra-Orthodox Jew. It follows his interactions with two non-Jewish students, Kate and Andy, who learn as much about him as he does about them. It is a coming-of-age play in which a boy's faith and belief structures are tested and broken. It poses questions about the correct way to live life and the differences between tolerance, learning and acceptance of the different life choices made by others.

The accompanying essay discusses the process of writing a piece that deals with issues such as the loss of faith, sexual experience, an unwanted child, loss of a family and ultimately a complete change in priorities for one person.

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### **Characters:**

**David Steinberg** - Aged 20. Chaireidi Jewish. Black skull cap, wears a suit, no tie, plain white shirt open at the neck. From Act Two in the play he wears jeans and shirts or t-shirts.

**Chana Steinberg** – David's mother. Dresses modestly in long, quite shapeless skirts that cover her knees and tops that cover her collar bone, wrists and are fairly loose. She is warm and compassionate while remaining down to earth and pragmatic.

**Rafi Steinberg** – David's father. Chareidi Jewish. Black hat, payot, long beard, black suit, white shirt, one button at the top of the collar undone, no tie. He has his tzit-tzit (undergarment threads) hanging out at the side. Very rigid in his approach to life. Borders on cold to all but Chana and his youngest daughter, Esther.

**Andy Kitson** - Aged 18. David's flat mate in halls. From Hull. Friendly and easy going. Curious, intelligent, the kind of guy who does no work but still gets good grades. Quite gentle. Gay but not overtly camp until drunk. It is difficult not to like him.

**Kate Beckett** – Andy's best friend, aged 19, also from Hull. Sharply intelligent and treats people with suspicion before she trusts them.

**Shimon Steinberg** – David's closest sibling in age. 17. A swot

**Chaim Steinberg** - David's younger brother. 15. Innocent and malleable.

**Rochel Steinberg** – David's younger sister. 13. Young but shrewd & cheeky.

**Esther Steinberg** - David's youngest sister. 7. The baby of the family.

## **Act 1**

*The connecting living area between the rooms of **Andy** and **David** in their university flat in Warwick.*

*Across the back is a kitchenette area complete with cupboards, a fridge and freezer, a sink, stove and oven.*

*Stage Right (SR) is the front door to the flat and a table with four chairs around it.*

*Stage Left (SL) is the door leading to Andy and David's bedrooms and later a Television set and Playstation.*

*There is a bookcase against one wall.*

*Centre stage is a sofa and in front of it, a low coffee table.*

### **Scene 1**

*Early October 2010. Rafi enters followed by David. They are both carrying as many bags and boxes as they can hold.*

**Rafi:** I'm never letting your mother have the map again.

**David:** You always say that.

**Rafi:** Well this time I mean it.

**David:** I've told you Dad, why don't you just get a sat nav?

**Rafi:** I don't want to listen to some electronic woman ordering me about.

**David:** At least she knows where she's going. Anyway you can change the voice so it's a man if you want.

**Rafi:** They're too expensive. I have a perfectly good road atlas.

**David:** Fine but remember you need to add on an extra hour for getting lost whenever Mum has it.

**Rafi:** We'd better go get the rest of the stuff.

*Chana enters carrying a bag and a box.*

**Rafi:** Is that it? I'm sure there were more things.

**Chana:** They're in the car.

**Rafi:** You left the car with things still in it?

**Chana:** I'm helping unpack!

**Rafi:** I told you to stay by the car!

*He runs out.*

*(Off stage)* David!

**David:** Coming!

**Chana:** It's not like I left it unlocked. Oh dear.

*David shrugs and goes after his father. Chana begins to unpack the box. It has food in it. She places things on the counter at the back. She is singing Ani Ma'amin, a traditional Jewish song, to herself. Rafi and David enter carrying more boxes and bags.*

**David:** That's the last of it.

*They put the bags and boxes down. Rafi checks his watch impatiently. He sighs and tuts.*

**Chana:** What's the matter?

**Rafi:** I'm not going to get back in time to teach.

**Chana:** How many have you got tonight?

**Rafi:** Four.

**Chana:** Can't you just tell them you'll be late and push them back a bit? I'm sure they'll understand. You've been delayed.

**Rafi:** Well I wouldn't have been delayed if you had read the map accurately.

**Chana:** I told you that you needed to get off the motorway!

**Rafi:** Pointing left and saying "Ooh that was it!" doesn't count as telling me to exit! We'd already passed it.

**Chana:** Well if you listened to me in the first place and took the route I wanted to take we wouldn't have had that problem.

**Rafi:** Taking the A-roads takes four hours!

**Chana:** But when you go wrong you can take around more easily.

**Rafi:** When you read the map properly you don't have to!

**David:** I'm going to start unpacking.

**Chana:** If you gave me enough time to read the map properly we wouldn't be in this situation!

**Rafi:** You had 17 junctions! How much more time do you need?

**David:** Hello? I'm going to start unpacking now. Without you.

**Chana:** Just a minute David, *(to Rafi)* next time I won't bother coming and you can read the map and drive and deal with the food all by yourself!

**Rafi:** Well at least then I'd get everything done on time.

**David:** DAD! You still need to phone the boys to tell them you'll be back late. You're probably best off cancelling the first two and leaving the others. At least then you'll teach two lessons and only have two to rearrange. Mum, you just have to say things before we get there. Look at the map at the beginning of the journey.

**Chana:** But I can't always do that.

**Rafi:** Shira calling to talk about how she still can't cook is not an emergency. Not for us anyway. Her husband on the other hand...

**Chana:** At least I can cook. Better than Shira at any rate.

**Rafi:** Incomparably so. And for that I am eternally grateful.

*They smile at each other. A moment. All is forgiven.*

**Rafi:** I suppose we'd better get these things upstairs then.

**David:** Finally, thank you.

*Rafi and David take some boxes and exit SL with them. Chana continues unpacking the food box. Rafi and David return a few moments later.*

**David:** I don't know, this wasn't the arrangement I made.

**Rafi:** This is precisely what I didn't want to happen. They clearly don't understand the significance of the situation.

**Chana:** What's wrong?

**David:** There's a name on the door opposite mine and it's not Menachem.

**Chana:** Oh. But you specifically requested to be with him didn't you?

**Rafi:** Yes but instead it appears he's with some boy called Andrew.

**Chana:** Did you write to explain why you had to be with Menachem?

**David:** Yes Mum of course I did.

**Rafi:** This is just typical. You come to a goyishe place like this-

**David:** He could be Jewish?

*Rafi makes a derisive noise.*

**David:** What? There are Jews called Andrew.

**Rafi:** Please David, you're more intelligent than that. Even if he is Jewish it's not going to be what you need. What about kashrut? Learning? Davening? He might as well not be Jewish.

**David:** I can do those on my own! I'll call one of the boys and we'll schedule learning in the evenings.

**Rafi:** I don't understand why you couldn't just stay in yeshiva in Jerusalem like your brothers!

**David:** Because I want to do more than that! I want to do...something. I've spent two years there, just like you wanted. I did my time and I did it properly, I didn't cut corners. But I held up my end of things now you have to hold up yours.

**Chana:** We did make an agreement with him Rafi. And it may not be so bad. Call...what was his name...oh, you know, the Rabbi for the students.

**David:** Fishel. I've got his mobile number and the number for his office at the chaplaincy. It's in Birmingham but he covers Warwick too.

**Rafi:** Chaplaincy?!

**David:** It's just the name of the religious services at the university. It's an umbrella term. Don't worry, he's not Liberal.

**Chana:** Rafi just call Fishel and find out what happened?

**Rafi:** Fine. I'll call him.

**David:** I'll call university services as well. I'm sure they'll know.

**Rafi:** I've a good mind to take you home with us today.

**David:** No! I'm here and I'm staying.

**Rafi:** I don't trust these universities.

**David:** What do you think I'm here to do? I'm not here to do anything but learn. I want to be able to teach history Dad.

**Rafi:** What's wrong with teaching Jewish history?

**David:** Because history is bigger than just the Jews! There are lessons for everyone to learn, about everyone. It's not just about us.

**Chana:** Rafi he's living in a block of boys, possibly with another Jewish boy with a like-minded attitude. He's learning history with a view to teach. These are good things. He's going to have to fend for himself one day.

**Rafi:** I suppose at least history is a safe subject.

**Chana:** Exactly. Mendel's boy went and studied Theology and came out an atheist.

**Rafi:** They all come out atheists from Theology.

**David:** I'm not studying Theology and I have no intention of becoming an atheist. Can we please get these things upstairs? You're going to be even later if we don't.

**Chana:** I'll call the boys to tell them about the lessons. You get the boxes upstairs. It's going to be fine.

*She takes his mobile phone and exits SR to make the call.*

**Rafi:** Chana it's Yoseph Green and Shlomo Cohen. When are you supposed to be coming home?

**David:** Not until December.

**Rafi:** How long is the term?

**David:** Eleven weeks.

**Rafi:** I will come to pick you up at the end of term.

**David:** OK. Thanks.

**Rafi:** But if you've gone off the path in any way-

**David:** Oh for goodness sake!

**Rafi:** If you do you're coming home. Permanently. Is that clear?

**David:** No.

**Rafi:** No?

**David:** I mean, it is clear but I'm not coming home after one term. I'll only just be getting started. And I'm not going to go off the path and give up everything. Don't you think my faith is stronger than that?

*Rafi is silent for a moment. It is clear he doesn't. It is an uncomfortable realisation for both of them.*

**Rafi:** If I think you are going in the wrong direction in even the smallest of ways, and bearing in mind how I feel about this whole venture, frankly you're lucky to even be here, but if I think you're mixing with the wrong people, if I suspect you're talking to girls, not doing enough learning, not davening with enough kavanna, anything! I am pulling you out of this place and you are coming home at the end of this term.

**David:** You can't force me to leave if I don't want to.

**Rafi:** Don't be petulant.

**David:** But you're being unreasonable!

**Rafi:** I'm concerned for your spiritual well-being. I don't think that's unreasonable.

**David:** My soul is going to be just fine because I'm not going to do anything wrong. You won't need to take me home. I'll be exactly as I am now.

*He holds his arms wide in a nothing to hide gesture.*

**Rafi:** This is all very much against my better judgment.

**David:** There's really nothing for you to worry about.

**Rafi:** I'm afraid I'm inclined to disagree. I hope you know what you're doing.

*Chana returns.*

**Chana:** Right that's all sorted. You haven't moved very much have you?

*She looks around the room. Then really looks.*

It's not very homely here is it? Are you sure you're going to be all right living in a place like this? They've not given it a very warm feeling have they?

**David:** Not every home needs seven family members and all their stuff in it. I quite like the space. It's a blank canvas.

**Chana:** It's bare and empty.

**Rafi:** It's soulless.

**David:** It's fine. I like it and I will make it my own.

*He picks up a box and exits towards his room. Chana watches him go.*

**Chana:** What did you say?

**Rafi:** I didn't say anything, you're hearing things.

**Chana:** No, to him I mean. What did you say to him?

**Rafi:** How do you know I said anything?

**Chana:** Well the way he looked at you and the tension when you spoke was a hint.

**Rafi:** I merely told him that if he is influenced by anything here in a way that is not appropriate then I will be bringing him home.

**Chana:** Oh Rafi you didn't.

**Rafi:** Of course I did! What's wrong with that?

**Chana:** The more you push him on this, the harder he will dig in his heels! Don't you see that? You have to be supportive.

**Rafi:** I'm not going to lie about how I feel about the situation.

**Chana:** I'm not asking you to lie, I'm asking you to just...try to see the potential positives.

**Rafi:** I'm afraid I don't see any.

**Chana:** Then open your eyes my love. This truly isn't all bad.

**Rafi:** How can you say that with such conviction?

**Chana:** Because I really believe he will learn things of importance here.

**Rafi:** Please, he could probably learn history better from a book.

**Chana:** Perhaps but what would he learn about life? How is he supposed to learn if he has not yet found his place in the world?

**Rafi:** He should know his place by now.

**Chana:** How? You know the place you would like him to be but he certainly isn't there yet and what if he never is? Perhaps he needs this.

**Rafi:** I don't see why or how he could possibly need this.

*He gestures in disgust at the flat around him.*

**Chana:** Well you'd better start trying to because if you don't Rafi I promise you, you will push him away. Believe me, there is nothing more enticing to a rebelling child than earning the disapproval of their parents.

**Rafi:** This isn't the same as you.

**Chana:** It's not as far off as you might think. Don't push him away Rafi.

*She continues to unpack the food and continues to hum her tune. Rafi is helpless for a moment struggling with his thoughts. Eventually he sighs and picks up a box to take upstairs.*

## **Scene 2**

*Chana and Rafi are about to go. The boxes have been unpacked.*

**Chana:** Right...well I suppose that's everything.

**David:** Yes. Thanks for helping me with all the stuff. The food should keep me going for about a month.

**Chana:** You know where to go when you run out?

**David:** There's a kosher shop in Birmingham. It's a short train ride away and not too far from the station.

**Rafi:** I've spoken to Fishel. He has your mobile number and should be in touch soon. He said he visits once a month or so, sometimes twice, and that you're always welcome for Shabbat there.

**David:** Thanks. Mum, don't get upset I'm closer now than when I was in Israel.

**Chana:** I know...it's just this feels different somehow. Like we're really letting you go and leaving you by yourself. At least in Jerusalem you knew the other boys, we knew the Rabbis there. You really don't know anyone here.

**David:** I know Menachem.

**Rafi:** Ah yes, I spoke to his family-

*The front door opens. Andy enters. He is holding a few shopping bags and struggles to shut the door so doesn't see them properly.*

**Andy:** Oh hey! Hello you must be my flatmate? Room-mate? Roomie? No, not roomie, that's naff, won't say that again. Flatmate. Stick with your first instinct. Let's

go with flatmate. Be a bit weird if you weren't my flatmate because you're in here so you must have a key in which case...

*He suddenly realises he's talking very fast and they are staring at him. He looks at them properly for the first time and stares back. A really awkward pause.*

Did I say my name's Andy?

**Chana:** Hello I'm Chana, this is my husband Rafi and this is David.

**David:** Mum I can introduce myself. I'm David.

**Andy:** Hi David, I'm Andy.

**David:** You said.

**Andy:** Oh. Yeah.

**Chana:** Is this all you've got?

**Andy:** What? Oh this! No this is just my food shopping. I moved in yesterday.

**David:** Where did you come from?

**Andy:** Hull. You?

**David:** London. I've never been to Hull.

**Andy:** Honestly, you're not missing anything. It's the most boring place in England.

No one has anything to say about it except that Philip Larkin was the librarian at the university. That is the sole interesting piece of information about Hull.

*David laughs a little. Rafi looks at him disapprovingly. David stops. An awkward pause.*

**Rafi:** I was going to tell you David, that I spoke to Menachem's family and it has been decided that he is no longer coming to university but is going to spend another year in yeshiva studying Torah instead.

**David:** Brilliant. Of course he is.

**Rafi:** I think it is a very wise decision.

**Chana:** Rafi now is not the time.

**Andy:** Who's Menackcheem?

*He struggles over the name, mispronouncing it.*

**David:** Menachem was meant to be sharing this flat with me.

**Andy:** Oh. I...um...I don't think I understand.

**David:** When we were applying for accommodation we requested to live together because of...well...it's just easier to...for religious reasons...and anyway he's not even coming here anymore so...I suppose when he pulled out the accommodation services just filled the place.

**Rafi:** This is ridiculous, they should have told us!

**David:** It's fine Dad I'll sort it out.

**Andy:** Does this mean I'll have to move?

**David:** No you won't have to do anything. If anyone moves it will be me.

**Andy:** My mother always says I'm a pain to live with.

**Rafi:** It would benefit everyone if you didn't live together. I imagine the lifestyle you lead is very different to David's.

*Andy is taken aback by the derogatory tone of this remark.*

**Andy:** In some aspects...I guess...

*Another awkward pause. Chana shoots a warning look at Rafi.*

**Andy:** So...you're Jewish right? That means...no pork?

**David:** Well, that's only one small part of it.

*Andy looks disappointed.*

But yeah that is right. No pork.

*Andy brightens a bit.*

**Andy:** Because I'm a vegetarian. So does that make things easier? At least for now?

*David and Chana look at each other at a loss while Rafi lets out another derisive snort.*

**David:** It makes things a bit easier...I suppose.

**Andy:** That's something then right?

**David:** Yeah. Thanks.

**Rafi:** We really should be going now.

**Andy:** It was...nice to meet you.

**Chana:** You too Andy.

*An awkward pause.*

**Andy:** I'll just go on upstairs and let you say your goodbyes.

*He exits, SL.*

*Chana hugs and kisses David.*

**David:** Could be worse, right mum?

*A pause.*

**Chana:** Don't forget to phone me please.

**David:** I won't.

**Chana:** Oh I'm going to miss you!

**Rafi:** You'd better get this living situation sorted soon.

**David:** I will.

**Rafi:** And remember what I said.

**David:** I remember.

**Rafi:** One term.

*They leave. David goes to his room.*

### Scene 3

*Andy is unpacking his food singing "Zero to Hero" from Disney's Hercules. David enters with a chumash (book of Jewish learning) and watches him curiously for a while. He sits on the sofa and begins to read. Andy picks up his phone to make a call.*

**Andy:** Kate! You all right? In case you were wondering, I've settled in just fine. Not unpacked everything just yet but, you know, I've started. Anyway come over about 7ish, sound OK to you? I say 7ish... Give me a text just to let me know when you're actually going to turn up yeah? See you later byeeeeee!

*He puts down the phone and as he does he sees David.*

Jesus Christ how long have you been there?

**David:** Oh...er...a bit.

**Andy:** Quiet aren't ya? Nearly gave me a heart attack.

**David:** No. Not really. I mean, sometimes I am...quiet I mean...but...

*He trails off awkwardly.*

**Andy:** Right. So. Umm...

*There is an awkward pause as they each try to think of what to say to the other.*

**David:** What are you studying then?

**Andy:** Politics. You?

**David:** History.

**Andy:** Cool.

*Pause.*

Why history?

**David:** I want to teach.

**Andy:** Right.

**David:** Yeah. Why politics?

**Andy:** I'm really good at bullshitting.

*David flinches slight in surprise at the swearing. He does not laugh. The joke hangs between them.*

**David:** Do you want to be a politician then?

**Andy:** Maybe. Dunno. I'm putting off making any definite career decisions for as long as possible.

*Another pause. Still awkward.*

**David:** Who's Kate?

**Andy:** Kate? Why, you looking?

**David:** Looking? For what?

**Andy:** You're a funny one.

*David stares at him waiting for an answer. Andy realises David is not joking.*

For a girl. Obviously. Oh well, maybe not obviously. Hey you're not....? Do you people...? I mean are there any of you who are....?

*David continues to look blank.*

**David:** I don't know what you mean.

**Andy:** Never mind, we're not there yet. Kate is my best friend from home. She's a year ahead of us.

**David:** And she's coming here?

**Andy:** Yeah a bit later.

**David:** Are you...I mean...is she your...?

**Andy:** Nah course not, nothing like that!

*David seems unsure about this.*

She's...not my type.

**David:** So she won't...stay over or anything like that?

**Andy:** Erm, no she's got her own place down the road. Why are you so bothered about it?

**David:** It doesn't matter. I'm not. It's not important. I'm not.

**Andy:** OK you're not.

**David:** I'm not!

**Andy:** I know, that's what I said too.

**David:** I'll call the accommodation services in the morning. You don't sound like you believe me.

**Andy:** My mum says I have a naturally facetious tone.

*David smiles in spite of himself and starts to relax.*

Hey, so what was all that about, y'know, not living with me and stuff?

**David:** Oh it's complicated.

**Andy:** Well we've got a fair bit of time before her ladyship comes over. She's always late.

**David:** It's really not worth going in to.

**Andy:** Go on, I'm interested.

*David hesitates.*

**David:** Well...you know we're Jewish-

**Andy:** Yeah that bit I got.

**David:** Ok, so you know the thing about not eating pork?

**Andy:** Yes.

**David:** That is just the tip of the ice berg. That's just one thing we don't eat. I can't eat anything that isn't supervised by an orthodox kosher authority because it just isn't considered kosher. I don't eat out at normal restaurants. We don't mix milk and meat. And that's just food. There's praying and learning and rules for men about interactions with women and vice versa and there's Shabbat or what you would call the Sabbath and there are the festivals and fast days-

**Andy:** I get it, you do a lot of things. So what?

**David:** What do you mean so what? So I can't do them living with you.

**Andy:** Why not?

**David:** Because it's impossible. And it's not fair to you. You'll have to work around those things and it's such an effort. We'd have to have separate cooking things and food from each other and why would you even want to do that? It's hard and annoying and my dad would never allow it anyway.

**Andy:** Your dad seems pretty strict.

**David:** He's a very good man.

**Andy:** But strict.

*David looks uncomfortable.*

Strict can be good. Strict doesn't mean bad.

**David:** I never said it did.

**Andy:** Who were you supposed to live with?

**David:** Someone like me.

**Andy:** So another Jew?

**David:** Yes.

**Andy:** Are all Jews like this?

**David:** Everyone has their religious level.

**Andy:** So they're not all like you.

**David:** No.

**Andy:** And you were going to live with a guy who is just like you, same level or whatever and instead you've got me?

**David:** It would appear so.

**Andy:** Why don't you just stay? I mean if I don't touch your stuff and let you get on with your thing and I'll get on with mine...why not?

**David:** Um...I don't think it's a good idea.

**Andy:** Come on Dave...can I call you Dave?

**David:** No.

**Andy:** Right yeah you're not really a Dave are you? Come on David what's the harm?

**David:** My father doesn't think I should be here at all. He says it's too dangerous and secular and that I'll get distracted from... he doesn't think I should be doing anything here.

**Andy:** Well...he's not here now is he?

**David:** But he's coming back at the end of this term.

**Andy:** Then that's nice of him to pick you up.

**David:** He's coming to check up on me.

**Andy:** Look, the way I see it David we're here now. They're not. I don't know about you but I've never been away from home for longer than a holiday. I reckon this is our chance to go a bit crazy. For me, that's going out, getting drunker than I've ever been, testing my limits on the hangover scale and having a lot of fun. And at some point I'll get a degree.

**David:** I hate hangovers.

**Andy:** For you...it could just be living with me.

**David:** I should still probably check with university services...

**Andy:** It's going to be really complicated to move you.

**David:** Still...I don't want to have to lie. And if it really is that complicated...I don't want to have to leave...and I can't just be homeless. I need somewhere to live.

**Andy:** Exactly. Now, if you don't mind, I'm going to pretend to unpack my stuff until Kate gets here.

**David:** I'd forgotten about Kate. Why pretend?

**Andy:** Because she might do it for me if I haven't done it by the time she gets here.

**David:** That's nice of her.

**Andy:** It is in a way. It's more that she likes to be in charge of things and sometimes I use it to my benefit. I know exactly how to play her. Oh that reminds me I've got to get the PS3 set up before she nabs it.

**David:** You have a Playstation?

**Andy:** Yeah I've got to hook up the TV. I've left it in the box in that cupboard under the stairs.

**David:** We're going to have a television?!

**Andy:** Yes...calm down mate...it's just a TV.

**David:** I'm so happy you didn't have it out today. If my father had seen it he definitely wouldn't have let me stay.

**Andy:** Why? Don't you have a TV?

**David:** No. He thinks there's nothing productive on it. It's not spiritual or godly in any way. Doesn't benefit the soul to have a TV.

**Andy:** You know what, he's probably right. But I do love a bit of pro evo.

**David:** Pro evo?

**Andy:** Yeah I'll set it up and we'll have a game if you want.

**David:** What is it?

**Andy:** Are you kidding?

**David:** No.

**Andy:** David. This is very serious. What I am about to show you is going to significantly change your life.

**David:** Um...OK.

**Andy:** Before we begin, one very important question lies between us. David, tell me. Please. What football team do you support?

*Pause. David milks it.*

**David:** Manchester United.

**Andy:** YES!! Good lad!

**David:** You're a United fan?

**Andy:** Yeah my dad's from Manchester. What's your excuse?

**David:** I've got cousins up there and they have a television. They'd watch the football and we'd be allowed to as well. It's not like my dad could stop us in a relative's house. I just got caught up in it.

*Andy's phone buzzes and beeps with the sound of a text message. He looks at it.*

**Andy:** I think we'll have to change your life another time. Kate's leaving in ten minutes. Which means she's leaving in half an hour but it's still not long enough to set everything up and teach you to play.

*He takes a moment to look at David.*

It's been a pleasure to meet you David. I hope you stay.

*Andy pats David's shoulder as he walks past and offstage to the bedroom.*

*A moment.*

**David:** Wait...Andy? She's not...is she? She's coming here now?

#### **Scene 4**

*David is making himself a cup of tea. He has two books on the sofa. Kate and Andy enter from upstairs. David is visibly awkward. Kate is holding a bag of clothes.*

**Andy:** Thanks for helping me unpack.

**Kate:** Don't think I don't know exactly what you did. I only came so I could make you get rid of these.

**Andy:** By which you mean, take for yourself.

*Kate notices David.*

**Kate:** Hello I'm Kate.

*Andy is trying to rifle through the bag. She pokes him who pretends to fall over and lands on the sofa.*

**Andy:** Owwww your nails. Ahhh she got me!

**Kate:** Drama queen. Don't you take my unpacking reward, you're lucky I'm even here.

**Andy:** Maybe David would have taken pity on me.

*Kate scrutinises David who is concentrating very hard on stirring his tea.*

**Kate:** I think it's stirred, love.

*David stops stirring and stares at the floor, embarrassed.*

**Kate:** Did I do something wrong?

**Andy:** Dunno. David, you all right?

**David:** Yes fine thank you.

*He picks up his tea and exits to his room.*

**Kate:** He didn't look fine. He looked weird.

**Andy:** Kate! You can't talk about someone like that just because they're Jewish! They look just like you and me.

*Kate is mortified and runs to the door to check David didn't hear. She smacks Andy on the back of the head.*

**Andy:** Ow!! That actually did hurt.

**Kate:** Well don't do that. I said nothing about his physical appearance like that. I meant....well he just looked at the floor the whole time. Do you think he's autistic?

**Andy:** What is wrong with you? He's not autistic, he's fine.

**Kate:** Not being able to make eye contact is a classic sign of autism.

**Andy:** He made eye contact perfectly well with me earlier.

**Kate:** Maybe it comes and goes.

**Andy:** Autism doesn't come and go, idiot.

**Kate:** Do you think he's deaf?

**Andy:** No.

*(yells)* David?

**David:** *(from offstage)* Yes?

**Andy:** See? Not deaf.

*David returns, still looking at the floor, minus the tea.*

**David:** I forgot my books.

**Andy:** Leave the studying for now, come and get to know Kate.

**David:** Ummm...I can't...I have to....I'm going back to my room. Now. Are you going out tonight Andy?

**Andy:** Yeah I am. Sure you're OK? Not feeling ill or anything?

**David:** No I'm fine, not ill just lots to do, see you tomorrow.

*He exits.*

**Kate:** See? Now what was that all about?

**Andy:** I don't know. He was fine before. He did seem a bit odd about you coming over though. Hey, do you know him?

**Kate:** Where would I know him from?

**Andy:** You've already been here a year, you could have met all sorts of people.

**Kate:** I don't know him.

**Andy:** Because the way he's behaving it's like he's got that awkward morning after the night before, bumped into the girl you're never supposed to see again thing that so many men have around you.

**Kate:** I suppose you suffer from that all the time do you?

*Andy nods, sagely.*

**Andy:** Ah yes, I'm the girl they're never supposed to see again. It's so difficult being me. I'm so alone Kate, find me some love.

**Kate:** Oh shut up you overgrown chimp.

**Andy:** I do not look like an overgrown chimp!

**Kate:** Look at those ears and those cheeks.

**Andy:** I've got nice eyes though.

**Kate:** Yeah all right you have nice eyes. Thank God you've got something to balance out the rest of it.

**Andy:** So what's the plan for tonight then?

**Kate:** I thought we'd get the bus into Coventry and I'll show you around a bit.

There's six clubs and 19 takeaway places and once we've done them that's pretty much all Coventry has to offer. I think Kasbah has a student night on tonight. I just have a couple of things to go through with you.

**Andy:** Oh here we go, Kate's club rules!

**Kate:** No hitting on my housemates' boyfriends.

**Andy:** What?!

**Kate:** I mean it, they are off limits.

**Andy:** But what if they don't know they're gay yet?

**Kate:** Andy, no.

**Andy:** Don't you realise that now you've said that you've made even the really ugly one ten times more attractive.

**Kate:** Which is the really ugly one?

**Andy:** I don't know I've not met them. But there must be one.

**Kate:** Actually they're all quite fit. And none of them would go for you anyway. They're all straight.

**Andy:** As far as you know.

**Kate:** Andy!

**Andy:** Why are you allowed to sleep with anything that moves but I'm not even allowed to entertain the idea of a straight man?

**Kate:** A straight man who's taken.

**Andy:** I know for a fact that's never stopped you before.

**Kate:** That's different.

**Andy:** How?

**Kate:** I wasn't trying to turn him!

**Andy:** I'm not trying to turn them, I'm just doing the scientific research necessary to ascertain the parameters of their sexuality. It's as much for their benefit as it is for mine.

**Kate:** There is nothing scientific about you ruining relationships.

**Andy:** As I recall it's currently you in the lead for relationship ruining. Let us not forget Charlie The Dickhead, as he became known, and the end of his very happy relationship with Beth The Total Drip who is seriously fucking dull and let's be honest, she's not finding anyone again. You ruined a talking piece of plasticine's only chance at happiness.

**Kate:** It wasn't that bad was it?

*Andy stares at her in disbelief.*

**Kate:** Maybe it was a good thing?

**Andy:** In what way was that possibly a good thing?

**Kate:** The sex was great.

**Andy:** Classy.

**Kate:** And maybe it gave Boring Beth the incentive to get a personality.

**Andy:** Credit where it's due you do know how to put a positive spin on things. Now help me decide what I should wear.

*He reaches for the bag of clothes and she smacks his hand away.*

## **Scene 5**

*Morning. David is putting up his Jewish books on the shelves. They are leather bound sets and he handles them carefully. Andy is in pyjamas and enters from his room.*

**Andy:** It's early. Why are you up so early?

**David:** It's 9:23. That's not early.

**Andy:** It is when you had the night I did. Uuuurrrrghhhh my head.

**David:** Did I wake you up? I have to get up at 7. I could probably get up at 7:30 but not much later. I thought I was being really quiet.

**Andy:** 7? 7:30? Why are you saying these horrible things to me?

**David:** I thought it would be polite to let you know.

**Andy:** Polite? They're obscene!

**David:** I'm sorry. I didn't think they were that bad.

**Andy:** I need coffee.

**David:** It's in the tin. I want to talk to you-

**Andy:** Need coffee. Ow my head. No talking until after coffee. Where have you put it?

**David:** In the tin marked Coffee.

**Andy:** Yes. Good. That makes sense.

*He makes himself a coffee with milk and two sugars in the kitchen area and brings it to the sofa. David carries on putting his book on the shelf.*

**Andy:** So, why do you get up so early?

**David:** To pray.

**Andy:** Oh. Every day?

**David:** Except Shabbat. I mean...Saturday. But I'll probably head to Birmingham for most of those. I'll be gone Friday night – Saturday night. I've got somewhere I can stay. Solves one problem I suppose.

*Pause. Andy blows on his coffee and sips it.*

**Andy:** So yesterday...why-

**David:** Did you have a good night out?

**Andy:** Yeah. It was all right. Everything is new. It'll be better when I've settled in a bit.

**David:** I didn't hear you come in.

**Andy:** It was a late one. I wanted to ask you about-

**David:** How can you make friends if you're drinking and dancing?

**Andy:** You...I dunno. You just do. David can you please explain why you were you were so weird yesterday?

**David:** I wasn't weird.

**Andy:** You wouldn't even look at us. Was it something I did?

**David:** No it's not that.

**Andy:** Was it Kate? Did she offend you in some way?

**David:** She didn't offend me. It's not her fault.

**Andy:** Well what was it then?

*David hesitates.*

**David:** It's not worth going into. You won't understand.

**Andy:** I'm hungover mate, not an idiot.

*David hesitates again, reluctant.*

I won't laugh or anything. If that's what you're worried about.

*A really long pause.*

**David:** I haven't had much contact with girls.

**Andy:** Oh don't be shy! Kate's harmless. She'll come off all tough at first but she's not really like that. She's a bit feisty but just give it back a bit and she'll respect you.

**David:** It's not that I'm shy. I don't know if I'm shy. I suppose I could be.

**Andy:** I'm not following.

**David:** I don't really talk to girls.

At all.

**Andy:** I thought I heard you saying that yesterday but then I thought I imagined it.

**David:** No you didn't imagine it.

**Andy:** Since when?

**David:** Since I was old enough to understand the real differences between boys and girls.

**Andy:** You've never in your life spoken to a single living breathing human girl?

**David:** My two sisters and a few of my cousins are girls but other than that...

**Andy:** So you've never spoken to a girl who you're not related to?

**David:** I say thank you to the girl at the newsagent. Does that count?

**Andy:** No. And you can't ignore Kate every time she comes over. It's...not very nice...and a bit weird.

**David:** It's not about being nice or not and stop saying it's weird. I think your way of making friends while you drink and dance is weird but I don't keep telling you that.

**Andy:** Well you can't carry on staring at the floor. What are you going to do?

**David:** I don't know. I've never had to deal with this before. Everyone at home understands that boys and girls don't mix from a certain age and that age is really quite young.

**Andy:** Why not?

**David:** It's so that we don't do anything we're not supposed to before marriage. A fence around a fence around the raging teenage hormones. I don't touch girls or talk to girls and I try not even look at them.

**Andy:** In case looking at one means you accidentally sleep with her?

**David:** I said it's a fence around a fence.

**Andy:** This is fascinating.

**David:** At least you've moved on from weird.

**Andy:** Why did you come to university if you don't want to even look at girls? University is full of girls! In fact, this one has a 60-40 percentage ratio of girls to boys but I accepted the place anyway.

**David:** Why is that important? Does it mean it's a better institution?

**Andy:** It means that for the average straight male student, the chances of getting laid are higher, and it's slimmer pickings for the girls. A lot of people come to university to have sex.

**David:** I came here to get my degree so I can teach history.

**Andy:** You must be one in a million.

**David:** I suppose I could go out when Kate wants to come over. I'll often be away for half the weekend anyway and I could sometimes extend my stays in Birmingham to Sunday. Or I could stay in my room. You'd never even know I'm here.

**Andy:** You can't just hide every time there's a girl here. Kate isn't my only female friend you know. You'll be spending an awful lot of time tucked away.

**David:** I'll work something out.

**Andy:** Can't you think of her as your sister?

**David:** No! Of course I can't!

**Andy:** What about a cousin? Kate and I could be your family away from home. Your long lost distant cousins.

**David:** She doesn't look anything like my cousins.

**Andy:** Just pretend we're family then you can talk to her and everyone's a winner! Oh ouch. I hurt my own head with my voice. Stop shouting David.

**David:** I wasn't shouting.

**Andy:** Then stop making me shout.

**David:** You brought it on yourself.

**Andy:** Oh God now you sound like my mother. Ooh see? Like family already.

## Scene 6

*Two weeks later. Late October.*

*David is sitting on the sofa reading. He does not look at Kate once throughout. Kate bursts in through the front door.*

**Kate:** Andy you stupid fool you left your...oh. Hello. I didn't know you'd be here.

*David stares at the book in his lap.*

**Kate:** Is Andy in?

*David tries to hunch even more into himself if possible.*

**Kate:** Look you're going to have to get used to me being here. I'm not going to pussy-foot around you like Andy does. I get it OK? I've done some research, I've watched "Fiddler" and I read "Yentl" and I'm beginning to get the idea so-

**David:** Andy's not in.

**Kate:** I...oh. Thanks.

*Long pause.*

Why are you so nervous?

*David is silent.*

*She tries to get him to look at her.*

*He does not.*

You spoke to me and you won't even look at me. That's just not how people behave in the real world.

*David snorts.*

**Kate:** Excuse me? What was that noise supposed to mean?

**David:** This is hardly the real world.

**Kate:** Oh like not talking to me is the real world? Please. It's offensive.

**David:** I don't expect someone like you to understand.

**Kate:** Someone like me? What? A woman?

**David:** Firstly, university is not the real world. It's a bubble like any other institution or community. Secondly it is nothing to do with you being a woman. You may think you've done some research but you've barely scratched the surface. And thirdly, if

you really want to talk about what is real, then this world is nothing more than a journey we have to get through to go home. The reality is in the next world when we die and our souls return to God.

**Kate:** I don't believe in God.

**David:** Believe what you like. I'm just telling you the truth.

**Kate:** The truth is totally subjective and will you please look at me?

*David continues to stare at the floor. He is still not comfortable but determined not to look at her.*

**Kate:** It must be more an effort for you to stare at the floor than it is for you to look at me.

**David:** The easy thing is not necessarily the right thing.

**Kate:** Ugh you are infuriating!

**David:** I'm sorry you find me infuriating. It is not my intention to be infuriating.

**Kate:** You've not once said my name, you've not looked at me and you didn't even bother to say hello. You've not acknowledged me as a person at all!

**David:** That shouldn't bother you so much. You don't care what I think. Why do you need me to acknowledge you?

**Kate:** I...I don't know. It's rude not to.

**David:** You care so much about whether I look at you or not because it's not polite? Why can't you just let me be?

**Kate:** It's more than that. It's weird that you don't look at me. It's like being in a room with psychopath. It's horrible.

**David:** So you think I'm mentally disturbed.

**Kate:** That's not what I said!

**David:** You said you're not used to it. You think it's weird. You've made it very clear you don't like it. One can logically infer-

**Kate:** There's nothing to infer. I don't like people who refuse to look at me and twist my words to suit their own...whatever.

*(Pause)*

Andy told me you were going to avoid me when I came over but I didn't think you'd be obnoxious if I did happen to bump into you. I thought I'd be understanding and make an effort and that you would be the same but you want me to tread carefully around your beliefs and you lecture me about God and truth and I don't even know

you! You think your beliefs rank higher than mine or Andy's. I wanted to make an effort because I thought you were shy but you're just selfish.

*David replaces his book on the bookshelf. He still does not look at her.*

**David:** You think that because you watched a musical and read a story that you understand? You have no idea about how I lived my life or about what I believe. You said it yourself – you don't know me. You're so quick to call me weird and rude because I am different to what you know. I've been brought up with a persecution complex that I mock and joke about. But here of all places...I didn't expect it to be true! And based on what? Appearance? A difference in practice or belief?

*Long pause. Kate looks sulky.*

**Kate:** You could at least look at me. No one ever got into trouble just from looking.

**David:** Actually Lot's wife did.

**Kate:** Lot's wife?

**David:** She was turned into a pillar of salt for looking back towards the city of Sodom while it was being destroyed and God had said they were to flee and not look back.

**Kate:** What was so bad about that?

**David:** It's not the looking itself that is bad, it's what the looking represents. She doubted God, she doubted His reasons for destroying the city even though it was full of evil and she knew that. Her looking back showed her doubt and she was punished for it as an example of what happens to people who disobey and doubt God.

**Kate:** That seems like you've read more into that story than is there.

**David:** Nothing should be taken at face value.

**Kate:** Nothing? So there's nothing that's just fun?

**David:** There is plenty of fun but none of it is meaningless.

*Long pause.*

**Kate:** Here are Andy's keys. Leave them somewhere obvious for him. I'm going. I won't try to speak to you again. The experience wasn't pleasant for me. I don't think I'll repeat it.

*She puts the keys down on the table.*

*As she passes by and exits, David looks cautiously up at her. She does not see.*

## Scene 7

*Mid-November. Andy is making lunch. David is learning from a chumash.*

*The TV is now set up to one side and downstage of the sofa on a diagonal.*

**Andy:** What are your plans for reading week then?

**David:** I have some books from the library that I thought looked interesting and a trip to Birmingham planned for the Sabbath.

**Andy:** You know, no one actually reads during reading week.

**David:** Well I'm a maverick.

**Andy:** Yeah you're just like Tom Cruise out of Top Gun.

**David:** Is that a war film? I've not seen it.

**Andy:** No. It's not a war film.

**David:** Any good?

**Andy:** I think it's great but I'm not sure you'll like it.

**David:** What are your plans for this week?

**Andy:** I'm going to enjoy no morning lectures-

**David:** Surely you have to actually go to them in the first place before you decide to enjoy their absence?

**Andy:** I'll enjoy the absence of the guilt I feel for occasionally not going to my morning lectures while I enjoy my lie in.

**David:** Anything else?

**Andy:** Yeah Kate and I are going to visit a couple of things. Warwick Castle tomorrow, Stratford the next day. We're going to see whatever play is on at the RSC.

**David:** Sounds fun.

*Pause.*

**Andy:** You could join us if you wanted.

**David:** No thanks. I think I'll be fine here. I've got some learning to do.

**Andy:** Oh that sounds...fun. Well don't let me stop you. I'm off. Let me know if you change your mind. It'd be nice to have you along.

*Pause. He wraps the sandwiches in foil and puts them in a small rucksack.*

Apparently we're shopping in the Bullring today. Thought I'd spare you an invitation to that.

**David:** My dad's coming today anyway. Enjoy your day out.

*Andy exits. David continues to read. After a minute he hears a knock at the door.*

**David:** Andy have you forgotten your keys again?

*He opens the door. It is Rafi.*

Oh. Hello. You're early.

**Rafi:** I'm carrying on to Manchester after. Going to visit Auntie Ruth and Uncle Shimon.

**David:** You could have told me. I might have wanted to come with.

*Rafi looks around the room as if looking for something specific.*

**Rafi:** So. How are your studies going?

**David:** I spoke to Mum before Shabbat last week. Didn't she tell you?

**Rafi:** Yes she said everything was fine but I wanted to ask you for myself.

**David:** It's still fine.

**Rafi:** No lectures this week then I hear.

**David:** That's right.

**Rafi:** How are you filling all that time?

**David:** If you go to the sofa where I've been sitting this morning you'll see that I've been learning this week's parsha.

*Rafi goes to the sofa to check.*

**Rafi:** Good.

*A cold silence.*

How is your flatmate?

**David:** He's fine thank you.

**Rafi:** Is he in?

**David:** No.

**Rafi:** How do you find living with him?

**David:** It's been great actually.

**Rafi:** You're enjoying it?

**David:** Yes he's great fun...and very interesting.

**Rafi:** I don't want you becoming too friendly with him.

**David:** Why?

**Rafi:** Isn't it obvious?

**David:** Not really, no.

**Rafi:** How does he fill his time?

**David:** I don't watch him every second, I don't know.

**Rafi:** Drinking?

**David:** Sometimes. But there's no prohibition against drinking.

**Rafi:** Clubbing?

**David:** Yes.

**Rafi:** Does he bring girls back here?

**David:** No actually he doesn't.

**Rafi:** Don't lie to me David, I suppose that's something you've picked up from him too.

**David:** I'm not lying. I promise he's never had a girl to stay over here.

**Rafi:** That you've known about.

**David:** Well if I've never known about it what difference? At least that means he's respected me enough not to let me see.

**Rafi:** Or it's just easy to hide it from you. You're naïve David, you live in your own little world. You'll only see what you want to see.

**David:** He's never even mentioned any girls. Not like that anyway. I truly don't think he's ever had anyone back here to stay the night. Anyway I don't want to go clubbing or drink until I'm sick or stay out stupidly late or talk to girls. I'm happy staying in and learning and carrying on as I have done until now. Nothing has changed.

**Rafi:** There's a TV.

**David:** Which I have watched only for the news and the occasional history programme. And the football.

**Rafi:** You can read a newspaper for the news and a book for history. I hope you're not using the internet for anything improper. I don't feel comfortable being unable to monitor your usage on that laptop.

**David:** No Dad of course not.

*There is a knock at the door.*

*David opens it. Andy rushes in, Kate follows. David hurriedly steps back to let her pass by him and looks at his father then at the floor.*

**Andy:** Forgot my keys! Oh hello Mr Steinberg. Nice to see you again.

**Rafi:** I thought you said he didn't bring girls home.

**Andy:** Oh she's not a girl!

*A horrible pause.*

**Kate:** That was a...Of course I'm a girl. He means...I'm...he's like my brother.

*They all stand awkwardly, unsure how to proceed.*

**Rafi:** I think I should go now.

**David:** You don't have to.

**Rafi:** I will call you from Ruth and Shimon's.

*Rafi leaves.*

*He looks up at Kate and Andy, looking directly at Kate for the first time.*

**Andy:** You ok mate? You look like you've been through it a bit.

**David:** Andy. I think I'd like to change my mind about tomorrow.

**Kate:** What?

**David:** If that's OK with you...*(He struggles)* and Kate.

*Kate is gobsmacked.*

**Kate:** We're doing Warwick Castle tomorrow.

**David:** Good. It'll take my mind off things.

*He is still awkward with her. He does not know where to look.*

**Andy:** Do you really think you should be doing this?

*Silence.*

**Kate:** Well it'll be nice to have you with us.

**David:** Thanks.

**Kate:** Andy we'd better go. We're never going to get there. I'm going outside, hurry up.

*David looks away from Kate again.*

**David:** You don't have to wait outside.

**Kate:** Oh...no...I'm not going because of you. It's the only way to get him to move faster.

*Kate exits.*

**Andy:** Everything OK?

**David:** I told you. My dad...

**Andy:** Yeah.

*Andy puts a hand on David's shoulder and lets it sit there.*

**David:** He didn't like the TV.

**Andy:** Oh shit. Yeah I'd forgotten about that. Oh well. It's a pain to move anyway.

At least now he knows. Want a hug?

**David:** Um. No thanks.

**Andy:** You don't have to come with us. If you change your mind again...it's ok.

*David nods.*

*Andy finds his keys. He runs out after Kate.*

*David leans against the door.*

## **Scene 8**

*Andy and David are playing Pro Evo on the PlayStation. They are sitting on the sofa and looking at the TV screen throughout. They frequently jump to their feet when the game gets going.*

**Andy:** So what did you think of United's performance yesterday then?

**David:** Oh they did OK. Could have been better though.

**Andy:** You think so? I thought they were pretty great.

**David:** The defence is just a little...slack. Really strong on the whole scoring goals front, sure, but possession is nine tenths of the law and they were definitely not...not...

**Andy:** Yeah? Go on? Not what?

**David:** Erm, they were not...lawful?

**Andy:** That was terrible.

**David:** I know.

**Andy:** I mean, I see what you were trying to do there, but really, that was a terrible analogy and like your men in this game you took the ball but you had nowhere to run with it.

**David:** How do you do that?

**Andy:** Oh. OH!! Referee!

*He gestures to the screen.*

**David:** The referee is a wise man Andy. Don't argue with his decisions.

**Andy:** Shut up. He's probably just biased. I bet he's Jewish.

**David:** Don't start on the conspiracy theories again.

**Andy:** But they're fascinating! I mean, utterly ridiculous, borderline piss take frankly-

**David:** I assure you the people who believe them do not think they are a piss take and the pro evo referee is not Jewish. Stop wasting time!

**Andy:** Is the clock still running?

**David:** It is and you know it.

**Andy:** Kate's coming over in a bit.

**David:** Oh?

**Andy:** That OK?

**David:** It's fine. You don't have to ask any more.

**Andy:** Got so used to it. I still feel like I should check. Just in case you change your mind again. Which would be fine but I'd need a heads up on it.

**David:** It's fine.

**Andy:** She didn't sound too happy when I spoke to her earlier.

**David:** Why not?

**Andy:** Just the latest man she's decided to consume.

**David:** Excuse me?!

**Andy:** She's a man-eater. It's a phrase. And a song.

**David:** Oh. If you say so.

**Andy:** Well she...oh look, you won't be interested in this stuff.

**David:** No...I think I am.

*Andy hesitates.*

**Andy:** Kate's a bit...reckless when it comes to her dealings with men.

**David:** What does she do?

**Andy:** Well she tends to meet them, charm them, have sex with them and dump them. Usually over the course of a week or so. Then she'll swear off men for another week and repeat the process. She usually makes her way through about two a month.

**David:** Two men?

**Andy:** Yes.

**David:** A month?!

**Andy:** Yes. Her housemates like to nickname the guys who pass through her bed.

**David:** Nickname them how?

**Andy:** Well, for example, recently we've had Toothbrush Guy.

**David:** His name is Guy...and he uses a toothbrush?

**Andy:** No, we don't know his name. We're never introduced. That's why we have to name them. This guy had a mini toothbrush with him in his back pocket which he then left in the bathroom the next morning. Thus we named him Toothbrush Guy. It's his distinguishing feature from the others.

**David:** Does she like being like that?

**Andy:** I imagine so. It's certainly not a low self-esteem thing. She's just an equal opportunist.

*Pause.*

You know, if he can do it, so can I.

*Pause.*

She doesn't see it as being like anything. She doesn't want to commit to anyone so she's just messing around. Having fun. She has fun. It's fine.

**David:** Oh come on that was not off side!

**Andy:** Can't argue with the ref.

**David:** You know this game is pretty realistic. There's no goal line technology here either so it makes the same mistakes.

*They concentrate on the game. David scores.*

**David:** Yes! Get in!

**Andy:** How are you beating me? You've only just learnt this game!

**David:** I believe the way this works is that if I score more goals than you, that means I'm winning.

*Andy looks at him in disbelief.*

I'm a fast learner.

**Andy:** Apparently so.

**David:** Do you have a girlfriend Andy?

**Andy:** No, why? You offering?

**David:** What?

**Andy:** Never mind.

**David:** I don't get it. Was that a joke?

**Andy:** Errrrmmm...

*A pause.*

I don't really like girls.

**David:** I don't blame you. You've just got to meet the right one. Then you'll know.

**Andy:** It's not quite like that.

**David:** What do you mean?

**Andy:** Girls really aren't my type. At all.

*David is blank.*

Well this is going to be interesting.

I'm gay David.

*Long pause.*

You ok over there?

**David:** Explains why you've never brought a girl back.

**Andy:** Yes.

**David:** Do you...I mean...you don't...

**Andy:** Be very careful what question you're about to ask me David.

**David:** I just...

**Andy:** Maybe I shouldn't have told you. Damn it! He's booked. It obviously makes you uncomfortable so why don't we just move on.

**David:** But...have you ever...?

**Andy:** Had a boyfriend? Kissed a girl? What is it you want to ask me, just spit it out.

**David:** Have you ever thought you could be straight?

*Pause. They concentrate on the game.*

**Andy:** No. I've always known. I tried to be straight once. I really wanted to be when I was a teenager. But it just didn't work. You don't choose who you're attracted to any more than you choose the colour of your eyes.

**David:** Some people think it's a choice.

**Andy:** Are you one of those people?

*David thinks.*

**David:** I don't think so. I don't choose to be attracted to women, I just am. So how could it be any different for you? I don't think I could choose to be...y'know. But some people aren't really...erm...are they?

**Andy:** Can you really not even say it?

**David:** I...I...

**Andy:** It makes you that uncomfortable?

**David:** "Though shalt not lie with mankind as with womankind".

**Andy:** But I wouldn't lie with a woman at all so that pretty much gives me free rein to do what I want with a man.

*David is silent.*

I should have known you'd be like this. I must have done deep down or I would have told you sooner. I really hoped you wouldn't be. All Adam and Eve, not Adam and Steve.

*A silence.*

**David:** How am I supposed to be?

**Andy:** Just...accepting. Like it's just any fact about a person.

**David:** But it's not just any fact. It goes against how God has made us.

**Andy:** So you're saying God made a mistake?

**David:** No that's not possible. Oh come on!

**Andy:** Then I have to be as God intended.

**David:** But it's not natural!

**Andy:** Well it sure as hell isn't a choice, you said that yourself. You might want to sub him off you know.

**David:** I don't know what it is.

**Andy:** I think you do know, you just don't like it. You know you have to accept that either your God made a mistake which isn't possible, or He made something that isn't explained in all your books. You think I haven't heard all this before? I've heard it all from the church. I'm lucky my family is so cool, but it was still hard to tell my Dad. And some people aren't as lucky as me, but they come out to their families and they're disowned or kicked out. You think people would go through that if it were a choice?

**David:** I don't know.

**Andy:** No chance. Anyway, even if I chose it, surely God made it a possibility or I couldn't choose it. That's the whole free will thing right?

**David:** Free will is a paradox.

**Andy:** Well maybe this is too.

**David:** I didn't mean to offend you.

*A knock at the door. They pause the game.*

*Andy opens it. It is Kate.*

**Kate:** Hello boys. Everything OK? Oh you're not playing bloody pro evo are you? Of course you are. David, I'm telling you, you were much better off when you didn't know how to play. No girl wants to be with a man who prioritises his game console over everything else. Right Andy?

**Andy:** Yeah. Sure. I'm going upstairs. We're done playing. He won. Good game. You coming?

**Kate:** What's the matter?

**Andy:** It's nothing.

**Kate:** I'll be up in a minute.

*He exits.*

What happened?

**David:** It's um...I....er....well.

**Kate:** Did the two of you have a lover's tiff?

**David:** No!

**Kate:** Trouble in paradise eh?

**David:** It's not paradise!

**Kate:** The first one is always the hardest they say. When a couple has their first fight. Tests the relationship though. Make or break.

**David:** We're NOT a couple!

**Kate:** I know I was joking.

*Silence.*

**Kate:** Ah. No wonder he's upset if this is your reaction.

**David:** I didn't mean to. I can't help it. I've never met anyone-

**Kate:** Please don't continue that sentence.

**David:** It's just...in my community if someone was...I wouldn't know about it anyway. It'd be hidden. It's not accepted where I'm from. I don't know how to deal with it.

*Pause.*

But I didn't mean to upset him. I just need some time to process things.

**Kate:** You know he's been really good about you and all the things you do. Frankly I think he's a saint or something. I'd have been totally freaked out by having to live with all of this. But he's stood up for you and he accepts it. He accepts you. You're lucky you got him as a flat mate. I assure you, most people wouldn't have put up with you for very long.

**David:** I'm sorry. Of course I'll try to...accept it. It just...this is a big thing. We're very traditional.

**Kate:** Yeah I've heard the song.

**David:** Excuse me?

**Kate:** From Fiddler.

**David:** Oh we're back to that.

**Andy:** *(from off stage):* Kate are you coming or what?

**Kate:** Time's up, love.

*She exits.*

**Scene 9**

*Early December. David is bustling around the kitchen area, setting up two candles in small candle sticks, trying to put the table cloth on the table neatly, setting the table, checking the oven, he switches off a light then changes his mind and switches it on again.*

*Kate knocks at the door. David hurries to open it. She has brought flowers.*

**David:** Put those down and tell me what this needs.

*He lifts the lid of a pot and she tastes the contents.*

**Kate:** Mmmm. It's good. It needs a kick. Maybe some more pepper?

**David:** More pepper. Good. Thanks.

*He adds pepper.*

**Kate:** I didn't know you cook. Where's Andy?

**David:** I'm the middle of seven children. I had to learn to cook. Shower.

**Kate:** Are you ok?

**David:** I have very little time until shabbat and I have a lot to do before then so I-

*He stops for a moment, only just noticing her.*

**David:** You're wearing a skirt.

**Kate:** Yes.

*David stares.*

**Kate:** I did a bit of...I looked it up ...I think you thought I hated...I thought I'd wear a skirt.

**David:** You look very Jewish.

**Kate:** Let's not say things we can't take back.

**David:** No...I meant...it's nice. It suits you. I like it.

*She is pleased and a little unsure how to react.*

*A moment. David cannot stop looking at her.*

**David:** Now what was I doing? Oh yes, pepper.

**Kate:** No! You did that already. God I can't believe we agreed to this.

**David:** Yes. So I did. Good. All that's left is to lay the table and then I'll light the candles.

**Kate:** I'll go and see if Andy is ready. How long has he been up there?

**David:** About half an hour.

**Kate:** He's such a woman.

*She exits towards the bedrooms. David stares after her then tries to snap himself out of his reverie. He takes a moment to compose himself. He begins to lay the table.*

**David:** *(shouting)* Tell him he's got five minutes! Then I'm starting whether he's here or not!

**Kate:** *(heard from offstage)* Ok.

*He finishes laying the table and looks in Kate's bag. She has brought flowers and a small vase. He quickly puts them in water in the vase and looks around for somewhere to put them. He tries the table but they are too tall, so he tries the kitchen but there is no space. He is holding them when Andy and Kate enter.*

**Andy:** Ahhh are those for me? You shouldn't have!

**David:** No, they're from Kate.

**Andy:** Lovely. Are you planning on putting those down at all dear?

**David:** Yes umm...

*He looks around again but finds no new spaces.*

**Kate:** Just put them on the floor for now. We can sort it out later.

**David:** No if we just umm...here...I'll...

*He hands them to Kate but accidentally brushes against her. He jumps back and they nearly drop the vase. Both scurry to get it, inadvertently touching each other as they do. Kate grabs the vase.*

**Kate:** I've got it! It's ok. Minimal spillage. Everything's fine.

*David clears a space in the kitchen and she places them on the surface.*

There. They look lovely.

**David:** Ok. Oh! Lighter. Back in a minute.

*He exits to his room.*

**Kate:** He should have just asked me.

**Andy:** I thought you'd quit.

**Kate:** Oh I'm not smoking cigarettes.

*She pulls out a joint.*

I had one of these already before I got here. Thought it would make the whole thing more bearable.

**Andy:** Kate are you high?!

*She giggles. David returns.*

**David:** Found it. Ok here we go.

*He lights two candles, waves his hands over them three times and covers his eyes.*

*He says the blessing over them.*

**David:** Baruch Atah Adonai Elokeinu Melech Ha-olam Asher Kidshanu Bmitzvosav Vitzivanu L'chadlik Ne'ershel Shabbat.

**Andy:** What does that mean?

**David:** Blessed are You, Lord our God, King of the Universe, who sanctified us and commanded us to light the sabbath candles.

**Andy:** Is there a prayer for everything?

**David:** Pretty much.

**Kate:** So you have to see God in everything you do?

**David:** Yes, because God is in everything we do.

**Andy:** But if God exists, and maybe He does, maybe He doesn't, I don't know, but if He does, why does he need you to do all this? It's so elaborate.

**David:** It's more for us. God doesn't need us to do this. We can't forget that God is at the heart of everything in existence. Nothing would be here were it not for God and we mustn't forget that.

**Kate:** But what if you don't believe in God? Not every Christian who goes to church believes in God. I bet not every Jew who prays believes either.

**David:** Do you think we could at least sit down to eat before we begin this?

**Kate:** You're not getting out of this just because you cooked.

**Andy:** What happens now?

**David:** At home we would sing some songs of praise to God. They're all in Hebrew, but I have transliterated and translated copies should you wish to follow.

**Kate:** Should you wish to follow. Oooh he gets very formal around this stuff doesn't he?

**Andy:** Shhh. Get a grip.

*David passes them each a sheaf of papers stapled together and pours them each a cup of wine, which he also hands to them.*

**David:** Ok, we have to make kiddush, which is the sanctification of the Sabbath.

We say the prayer over wine on shabbat and other festivals \*before\* we drink it

Andy, not yet, I'll give you a nod when you can drink. Then we will wash our hands before we eat the challah. You can follow on the third page.

*He reads:*

Yom Ha-shi-shi.

Va-y'chu-lu Ha-sha-ma-yim v'ha-a-retz, v'chawl ts'va-am.  
 va-y'chal e-lo-him ba-yom ha-sh'vi-i, m'lach-to a-sher a-sa  
 va-yish-bot ba-yom ha-sh'vi-i, mi-kawl m'lach-to a-sher a-sa.  
 va-y'va-rech e-lo-him et yom ha-sh'vi-i, va-y'ka-deish o-to  
 ki vo sha-vat mi-kawl m'lach-to a-sher ba-ra e-lo-him la-a-sot.  
 Sav-rei ma-ra-nan!

Ba-ruch a-tah, A-do-nai,  
 E-lo-hei-nu me-lech ha-o-lam,  
 bo-rei p'ri ha-ga-fen.

Ba-ruch a-tah, A-do-nai,  
 E-lo-hei-nu, me-lech ha-o-lam,  
 a-sher ki-d'sha-nu b'mits-vo-tav v'ra-tsa va-nu,  
 v'sha-bat kawd'sho b'a-ha-va uv'ra-tson hin-chi-la-nu,  
 zi-ka-ron l'ma-a-sei v'rei-shit.  
 t'chi-la l'mik-ra-ei ko-desh,  
 ze-cher li-tsi-at Mits-ra-yim.  
 Ki va-nu va-char-ta v'o-ta-nu ki-dash-ta mi-kawl ha-a-mim,  
 v'Sha-bat kawd-sh'cha b'a-ha-va u-v'ra-tson hin-chal-ta-nu.  
 Ba-ruch a-tah A-do-nai,  
 m'ka-deish ha-Sha-bat.

*He drinks and nods to show Andy and Kate they can too.*

**Andy:** That is disgusting. I don't know what that is but it definitely isn't wine.

**David:** It's special kiddush wine.

**Kate:** Ugh it's horrible. It's so sweet!

**David:** You get used to it after a few years. Now I will wash my hands before we eat the bread. You don't have to if you don't want to.

**Kate:** Why do you wash your hands before you eat the bread?

**David:** Because of being spiritually and physically clean before you eat the bread. You're always supposed to wash your hands before you eat bread because it is our staple food.

**Kate:** Does that mean that Chinese or Indian Jews have to wash their hands before they eat rice? Bread isn't the staple for everyone.

**David:** I...I don't know. Let's talk about it when we've sat down.

*He goes to the sink at the back to wash his hands.*

**Andy:** I cannot believe you came to this high.

**Kate:** I didn't want to come at all! I'm only here because you insisted I come! I thought I could at least do something to make it bearable.

*David returns to the table. He uncovers and lifts the two loaves of bread off the plate.*

**David:** Baruch atah Adonai elokainu melech ha-olam, hamotzi lechem min ha-aretz. *He puts salt on the bread, breaks off a piece for himself and then for Andy and Kate. They each take a bite of it.*

**David:** Blessed are you, Lord our God, King of the Universe who brings forth bread from the ground.

**Andy:** That it?

**David:** That's it until after we eat but you don't have to do that part. Grace after meals is very long.

**Andy:** How come you put salt on the bread?

**David:** It used to be a luxury to have salt so we put salt on the bread as a tradition that dates back to that time.

**Kate:** So it's a ritual that has no religious significance at all? It's historical?

**David:** A lot of what we do is based on tradition, not just belief.

**Andy:** I like that. I think it's cool. It's like there's room for more than belief, or if you're not sure whether you believe or not, you can still do something and not feel like a fraud. I could get on board with this Judaism thing. Maybe mix it up with some Buddhism.

**Kate:** Why those two?

**Andy:** The Jews have all the great food. And I've only ever met calm Buddhists. All that meditation they do seems to work.

**Kate:** You'd have to look after your body a bit more. Not so many nights partying.

**Andy:** I wouldn't necessarily keep every law you know.

**Kate:** Then what would be the point?

**David:** There are 613 commandments that Jews are supposed to keep and half of them contradict each other. Do you think anyone has ever managed to keep all 613? Even Moses made mistakes. We're human and as long as you keep growing, keep trying that's as much as anyone can ask for. No one could adhere to everything. Everyone had enough bread? I'm going to get the food out.

**Kate:** Then why bother? If it's impossible what's the point? And what kind of a God asks you to try to adhere to the impossible?

*Andy kicks Kate under the table.*

Ow.

**David:** The kind that you don't always understand. If you could understand every aspect of God there would be no separation between Him and us. Man would become not just in the image of God, but God Himself. And that is impossible. It's OK, this is real wine.

*He opens a bottle of wine and pours for all three of them then busies himself serving the soup. They continue to drink throughout the meal.*

**Andy:** But surely if God exists, we all have a bit of Him in us, so we should be able to understand. *(He tastes the wine)* Mmm much better.

**David:** We are all Godly. Not God-like. There is a big difference. Did you get that essay finished you were doing?

**Kate:** No but I'll finish it tomorrow.

**Andy:** What was it on?

**Kate:** Communication in relationships.

**Andy:** You don't know anything about that. I don't know why you're doing psychology, you hate people.

**Kate:** I do not hate people. And I know plenty about relationships and communication.

**Andy:** Manipulation is not the same thing.

**Kate:** You're being very bitchy. Is this because of the...

*She makes a smoking gesture.*

**Andy:** Maybe.

**David:** What is it because of?

**Andy:** Nothing. Old habits die hard.

**Kate:** And I don't manipulate. It's not just about romantic relationships, it's about friendships and families and different ways of communicating between them.

**David:** Maybe Kate just doesn't want to be in a relationship until she finds the right person.

*Andy snorts.*

**Kate:** Don't you want to be in a relationship David?

*David places a bowl in front of Kate and a bowl in front of Andy.*

**David:** Chicken soup for you Kate and a vegetable soup for you Andy.

**Andy:** Thank you, it smells great.

*Kate tastes the soup.*

**Kate:** Perfect amount of pepper.

*David and Kate smile at each other. A moment. Andy notices.*

**Andy:** David you didn't answer if you want to be in a relationship or not.

**David:** Well, yes I do but only with the right woman and I'm not ready for marriage yet so it'll be a while before I have-

**Kate:** No one said anything about marriage. Just a relationship. A girlfriend.

**David:** What would be the point in that?

**Andy:** Exactly.

**David:** No not like that, I mean what's the point of having a relationship that then doesn't work? It ends and you've wasted your time and emotions on someone. I'll find the right woman when I finish university and have a job and I can provide for a family.

**Kate:** How do you think you'll find a woman if you never have a relationship with one?

**David:** Well it's not as if I'll never meet a woman in my life. I'll be introduced to an appropriate girl and we'll have dinner or coffee or something and if we feel it's something we can make work as a marriage then that's what we'll do.

**Kate:** And love?

**David:** Love grows. It doesn't just start out there. You learn about a person and then you love them, not the other way around.

**Andy:** Yeah Kate, love grows out of coffee, didn't you know that?

**Kate:** What if she doesn't want to be provided for?

**David:** Sorry?

**Kate:** It's like she doesn't get a choice. Some women don't want to just stay where they are and be a good wife. Some women want to have careers. You said you want to provide for your family but what if your wife wants to work? Some women want to be able to support themselves.

**Andy:** Oh here we go.

**David:** Why here we go?

**Andy:** This is the Kate Beckett "I have a dream..."

**David:** I never said my wife can't work but it is the hope that, God willing, we will have children one day and she will stop working for a time to do that. That's just biology talking. I can't have babies.

**Kate:** What if she doesn't want babies? What if she doesn't want to be a wife and a mother but wants to be a CEO of a company?

**David:** Then she won't be the right woman for me. I want children, I want to raise a family one day.

**Kate:** How can we know what we want at twenty years old?

*David clears the soup bowls and begins to get the main course out of the oven.*

**Andy:** You know what you want. You've been saying it for years. You want to get out of Hull, work in advertising, live in London and own a flat.

**Kate:** That's different.

**Andy:** It's only different because it's what you want and it doesn't involve other people. You only ever see things from your point of view.

**Kate:** Of course you're backing him up.

**Andy:** And what's that supposed to mean?

**Kate:** It's different because that's my choice. I'm not signing my life away to marriage.

**David:** No one signs their life away to marriage. Women have the choice. If I ask a woman to marry me she can say no. No one forces that to happen but it's not necessarily a romantic thing at first. It's a decision both people make. Both sides have choice.

**Kate:** That's not how it sounds. It sounds like a religious Jewish career woman is not something that exists. It sounds like there is no place in your world for a woman who might not want to have a family.

*David is silent. A long pause.*

You're so...stuck...in the past where women wore long pretty dresses and stayed at home looking after children. It's as if feminism never happened. That isn't the world today.

**David:** Isn't it? Does your mother have a glittering career? What are you expected to do with your life?

**Kate:** That's exactly my point. You think like my parents' generation.

**David:** I just don't see what is so wrong with that.

**Kate:** Not everyone wants to stay in a shitty northern town for the rest of their lives! Some of us want to get out!

*Silence. Andy and Kate wait while David arranges food on plates. Eventually David returns to the table with three plates of food. Kate drinks more wine.*

**David:** Kate we have a traditional Friday night dinner. Roasted chicken with roasted potatoes, vegetables, and a potato and onion bake called kugel. Andy you have a rice stuffed pepper instead of the chicken.

*They begin to eat in silence.*

You know Kate...although our situations are different in many ways...fundamentally I think they might be the same. There are expectations of us...we come from places we don't want to stay stuck in...

**Kate:** Please don't give me the "we're not so different you and I" line. We're very different David. Our situations are nothing alike.

*They continue to eat. Black out.*

**End of Act 1**

## **Act 2**

*The connecting living area between the rooms of **Andy** and **David** in their university flat in Warwick.*

### **Scene 1**

*Early January 2011. Kate and Andy are watching TV. Kate keeps looking over her shoulder at the front door and at her watch.*

**Andy:** Stop it right now.

**Kate:** Stop what?

**Andy:** He'll be home when he's home. And you shouldn't care.

**Kate:** I don't care.

**Andy:** You've checked that watch four times in the last minute.

**Kate:** He's a friend Andy, nothing more.

**Andy:** I've never seen you check that watch waiting for me. You like him. I can see it.

**Kate:** I do not. And if I'm waiting for you how would you have seen me check my watch?

**Andy:** Whatever. You're all flustered just thinking about him. It's not a good idea.

**Kate:** I am not flustered! I find him interesting.

**Andy:** That's because he's kept himself under a metaphorical rock his whole life.

**Kate:** But it's totally sincere. He really does believe in all that stuff he says and does. I can't understand it. And even when he has no answer for something he won't concede I'm right.

**Andy:** Look at you all wound up by him. I see what this is. You can't break him down and you can't have him. No wonder you want him.

**Kate:** I do not! He's just so infuriating.

**Andy:** He's going to do his thing with a good Jewish girl and he'll barely know her, get married, have some kids, and their very Jewish love will grow. But he's not going to suddenly change his mind and start dating you, an ex-Catholic atheist who is so stubborn you won't even let me have two sugars in my coffee because, I quote "it's not real coffee if it doesn't make you wince"!

**Kate:** Well it's not.

**Andy:** I like my coffee sweet and he likes his women Jewish!

**Kate:** But what if –

**Andy:** No. You don't want to be the girl that tries to change people because apart from being really irritating it doesn't work and you will end up hurt. He'd have to change beyond recognition to be with you.

**Kate:** Oh thanks. Way to put a positive spin on things.

**Andy:** It's true! Ok, let's say he did decide to break his traditions and go against his beliefs. Becomes just like you and me. Another ordinary guy. Then what?

**Kate:** Andy what if I really like him?

**Andy:** If you really like him you'd better get in line.

**Kate:** If you could try wouldn't you? Wouldn't you want to be with him?

**Andy:** Hey I could try. It wouldn't get me very far but I could try. But then...Well he wouldn't speak to me again would he. What could I do? Really?

*Pause. A moment.*

Well this is a first. We've never been after the same man before.

**Kate:** Because normally you have terrible taste.

**Andy:** Because normally you're not fussy and you'll have anything that moves.

**Kate:** I have some standards.

**Andy:** I have some taste!

**Kate:** How do you stand it?

**Andy:** Stand what?

**Kate:** Being around him all the time and...not doing anything is torture.

**Andy:** You're just not used to it. Everything is more attractive if you can't have it.

You must know that. Basic psychology 101.

*Pause.*

Sometimes it's better just to know you have someone in your life. Even if they can never be anything more than your friend. That's just how it is for some people.

## **Scene 2**

*Night time. David enters from the bedroom side. He is in his pyjamas and has an obvious erection. He is looking for a tissue or some kitchen paper. Andy stumbles in, a bit tipsy.*

**Andy:** Daaaaaaaavid!

*David jumps and freezes.*

**David:** I'm sorry I couldn't help it!

**Andy:** What do you mean? I can't see a bloody thing can you put the light on?

**David:** Ah no! I er, like it dark.

**Andy:** Don't be stupid I'm putting the light on.

**David:** No! Don't put the light on. I er...I have a migraine.

**Andy:** I'm putting the light on. Where did it go? You know, you need a light to find the light switch to put the light on. Terrible irony of lighting.

*Andy fumbles his way towards the light switch. David tries to stop him but fails. The light is on.*

**Andy:** That's better WOAHH! Hello soldier!

*He has spotted the erection which David now tries to cover, first with his hands, then with a roll of kitchen paper and finally with a cushion that he grabs from the sofa.*

*Andy is laughing throughout.*

**David:** Sorry. I'm sorry. Oh...I'm so sorry. Please...stop laughing.

**Andy:** Stop apologising! I should be saying sorry, I've clearly interrupted you! Is there anyone special involved? Do you need protection or have you got that covered? Ha! Covered!

**David:** There's no...it's just...you know full well it's just me!

**Andy:** Oh the only protection you need is from the friction, am I right?

**David:** I'm going back to bed. Can we never, ever mention this again please?

*David tries to leave but Andy grabs him.*

**Andy:** Chill out David. It's just a wank, everyone does it.

**David:** Well they shouldn't.

**Andy:** Jesus what kind of wanks do you have?

**David:** What?

**Andy:** I'm sorry, I don't follow.

**David:** I just shouldn't be doing it!

*Pause. David is struggling.*

It's a waste of God's seed!

**Andy:** Are you taking the piss? You aren't allowed to have sex before you're married, you're not allowed to touch or even look at a woman, let alone a man, and you can't even relieve the very natural, ever growing – ha! Pun not intended – tension by having a decent wank every now and then?

**David:** The point remains the same. Andy can I please just go to-

**Andy:** That is ridiculous, no, sit down. Now, from a distance, I understand some of the reasoning for this, some people want it to be special with one person and I think that's a wonderful, admirable thing. But those people also need to whack off a few thousand times before they find the right person to stick it to! Now you go upstairs, you finish your wank and you enjoy every bloody second of it!

**David:** I can't.

**Andy:** You need me to show you how to do it!?

**David:** No, I can do it. I just can't...not without...I feel guilty. There's too much going on in my head. All I can think about is how disappointed God must be in me, and how it's wrong and I have to just get it over with as quickly as possible.

**Andy:** When was the last time you beat one out?

*David thinks for a moment and counts back on his fingers.*

**David:** About six weeks ago.

**Andy:** You've left it six weeks since you last...no wonder you don't look at women mate, if I left it six weeks between each time, I'd probably cum just looking at a girl too! And I don't even bloody like girls!

**David:** That's not why I don't look at women.

**Andy:** Well I bet it doesn't help.

**David:** I'm going to bed.

*He tries to leave but Andy pulls him onto the sofa.*

**Andy:** No. We are going to talk about this. You are going to enjoy your personal time with yourself.

**David:** I wouldn't be able to do anything now anyway.

*David removes the cushion and gestures.*

**Andy:** Oh I see. Man down.

**David:** Exactly. So I'd like to go to bed, pretend this never happened and tomorrow when I see you there will be no mention of this mortifying experience.

**Andy:** Ok. No mention from me whatsoever.

**David:** Thank you Andy. I appreciate that. And I should thank you for preventing me from doing something I shouldn't.

**Andy:** Oh don't. I'm deeply disappointed in myself. I cock-blocked you. From yourself. That's shameful. And near-impossible to achieve. I'm a world class arsehole. I should be reprimanded in some way.

**David:** How about you go to your lectures this term?

**Andy:** Let's not get carried away.

**David:** Well it was worth a try.

**Andy:** I'll go to my lectures if for every lecture I go to you spank the monkey.

**David:** What?

**Andy:** Flog the bishop? Oh it might be Rabbi in your case. Oh no. That's rude. Sorry. Jerkin the gherkin. That's better.

**David:** What are you talking about?!

**Andy:** I am trying to do a trade-off here David but you are not cutting me any slack!

**David:** Andy I just want to go to bed.

**Andy:** OK but I'm saying I'll go to lectures David. Go. To. Lectures. If, IF you have a tug of war with the old Cyclops down there for each one I go to.

**David:** You cannot be serious.

**Andy:** I almost totally am. Almost.

**David:** Goodnight Andy.

**Andy:** Goodnight David. If you ever need anything, make sure you knock before you enter, the second drawer down next to my bed holds lube, condoms, and a stash of gently fragrant wipes that soothe and cleanse at the same time.

*(Pause)*

Oh don't look at me like that. Hygiene is important. Especially in sensitive areas.

**David:** I'll try to remember that.

*He exits.*

**Andy:** Jesus. And a happy new year to you sir! *(yells)* I think we know what your new year's resolution should be! Hahaha doesn't wank. Aaah I've missed him.

*He settles down to sleep on the sofa.*

### Scene 3

*Early February. Andy is working on his laptop. David and Kate enter laughing.*

**Kate:** No, come on I wasn't that bad!

**David:** You were! All she did was ask if you wanted any help.

**Kate:** I was only buying toilet roll! How much help could I need?

**David:** But you didn't have to say it was more intelligent than her. That was mean.

"No thank you" would have been fine.

**Kate:** It's moronic. I'm perfectly capable of buying basic life things by myself. I don't need my hand holding while I do it! It's patronising.

**David:** It's just good customer care.

**Andy:** Unless this is going to inform me about the history of congress in America could you take this fascinating debate somewhere else?

**Kate:** Oooh someone's in a bit of a mood. Do you reckon his tutor finally worked out who he is and made him do an essay?

**Andy:** That's not quite how it happened but the essentials are there. Can you two just piss off?

**David:** I was going to get a camera I don't think I've seen him work before. I want photo evidence.

**Andy:** I am here you know! I can hear you! You can talk to me as well!!

**Kate:** All right calm down I'm going anyway.

*She walks round and gives him a kiss.*

*She touches David's arm on her way out. He does not react, as if this is normal for him.*

**Kate:** Bye boys. I'll see you tomorrow.

**David:** Try not to insult anyone else between here and home!

**Kate:** I'll pretend I didn't hear that!

*She shuts the door behind her.*

*David flops down on the sofa.*

**David:** She was so brutal but it was cool, she was so cool in the aloof sense, not the wow that was amazing sense, although it was pretty amazing so maybe it was both of the senses, I'm not sure but I don't know how she's so sure of herself like that. I could never talk to people the way she does.

**Andy:** Uh-huh.

**David:** I really admire all that confidence though and it's like she doesn't even know she has it. And she said she's going to take me to this exhibition that's on and it's all about the midlands through the 20<sup>th</sup> century and how it developed and how did she even find that?

**Andy:** Uh-huh.

**David:** Amazing, really amazing. And I said we should do another one of those trips because I never did come to Stratford and Kate said you guys didn't get to do everything you wanted so maybe we could go and see something and-

**Andy:** David I'm trying to work!

**David:** Right, yeah sorry, not used to this. I'll just go over here and read.

*He sits on the sofa and picks up a book. He puts it down again. He taps things, picks things up and puts them down again. He begins to whistle. Andy glares at him and David stops whistling. He flicks through another book and puts it down again. He gets up and has a drink of water very noisily. He begins to pace the room and wander around. He starts to hum.*

**Andy:** OK what is it?

**David:** What? What is what? What are you talking about?

**Andy:** Whatever it is you've got ten minutes then I'm going back to work.

**David:** I don't know what you're on about.

**Andy:** I am going to have a ten minute tea break. I am going to have a cup of tea. If you have not told me by the end of the ten minutes I am going to my room because you are driving me mad. Now what is it?

*David hesitates.*

I knew it! I knew there was something. Spit it out. You have nine minutes left.

**David:** No it's nothing and that wasn't a full minute.

**Andy:** Right. OK. I'm just here filling the kettle. Filling and boiling the kettle to make my tea. I'm making my tea. Oh look! There's the tea bag. Going...into...the...mug. The sugar will be joining it shortly. Don't mind me, I'm just looking for the milk, eight minutes, and a teaspoon. I can go on like this for quite some time so I suggest you say whatever it is you want to say.

**David:** I really can't Andy.

**Andy:** Right then I'll help you out. Did your dad call again and threaten to take you home?

**David:** No. Why, did he call you?

**Andy:** No David he doesn't have my number. Did you cheat on an essay?

**David:** Absolutely not.

**Andy:** Did you skip a class?

**David:** Actually yes but that's only a small part of it.

**Andy:** Right we're getting somewhere. Why did you miss your class?

**David:** I missed three. All the classes I had today. Kate said it would be fine.

**Andy:** Oh of course she did. What did she want to do?

**David:** She just wanted to wander around town because it was a nice day and she said I should join her. I don't know what came over me but I did.

**Andy:** And?

**David:** I had the best day I've ever had.

**Andy:** Who else was there?

*David is silent.*

Was it just the two of you?

*David nods.*

**David:** I've never missed a class before.

**Andy:** Oh it's not the end of the world I do it all the time!

**David:** No you don't understand. I've never missed a class before for anything. And she just asked and I thought "oh what the hell?" I've never thought that. I've never wanted to miss a lecture. I mean...I'm here for the lectures.

**Andy:** But this time...? You've got four minutes by the way.

**David:** This time I don't know. She asked and it was like I forgot why going to my lecture was important. And I had two seminars today! They're really important. I'll have missed loads of notes! I don't know why I missed them just to walk around Coventry!

*Pause.*

**Andy:** Oh come on.

*Long pause.*

Two more minutes then I'm going back to work.

*Long excruciating pause.*

Right. I'm going to start up again. I don't mind what you do around here but just stay quiet. I can't work in my room at the moment. I might go to the library later.

*Andy begins working again.*

**David:** I don't know what to do with this.

**Andy:** Do you want my opinion?

**David:** I don't know.

**Andy:** Leave it alone. I told her the same thing, just leave it alone.

**David:** You spoke to her?

*Pause.*

**Andy:** Sort of.

**David:** Well what did she say?

**Andy:** It doesn't matter what she said.

**David:** But if she...then-

**Andy:** Then what?

*Pause.*

**David:** Then maybe....maybe...I don't know.

**Andy:** Right.

**David:** I've never had anything like this before.

**Andy:** I know mate.

**David:** I don't know what I should do. I don't know what I want.

#### **Scene 4**

*Late February. David and Kate stumble into the flat. They are drunk. David falls onto the sofa. David wears jeans and a fashionable shirt or jeans and a t-shirt from this point onwards instead of his normal suit and plain pastel coloured or white shirt.*

**David:** That was the best night ever!

**Kate:** It's only your...what...one...two...third time out? Don't make that call too early. There are maaany more nights to be had that are better than this one.

**David:** Firstly, Kate, it is my fifth time out. However you could be forgiven for thinking it is my third because this is the third clubbing establishment that I have frequented. So I forgive you. For thinking that.

**Kate:** Of course of course. Now where did I leave my keys?

**David:** You cannot drive now. You're drunk.

**Kate:** I meant my house keys. I don't even have a car. You're drunk too.

*David takes Kate's hand as she passes him. She stops looking for her keys. A moment.*

**Kate:** What...what are you doing?

**David:** You have lovely hands.

**Kate:** What?

**David:** Really lovely hands. I thought so from the first time I looked at them. They're so little and I thought they'd be so soft if I touched them and I was right. I thought they'd fit perfectly into my hand.

**Kate:** David what are you doing?

**David:** I'm doing what I want to do. I'm holding your hand.

**Kate:** Are you sure?

**David:** I'm sure.

**Kate:** Well OK then.

*A comfortable silence.*

**Kate:** David?

**David:** Yes Kate.

*A long pause*

**Kate:** Keys. Need them. Need my keys.

## Scene 5

*Kate and David return home from a night out. They are a bit tipsy but not too drunk. They are lit by moonlight.*

**David:** Why didn't we go back to yours tonight?

**Kate:** I told you, the girls are all in, both Becca and Jenny have their boyfriends staying so it's even more crowded than usual in the house.

**David:** Becca's is the one you...

**Kate:** Don't like. Jenny's boyfriend is lovely, but Becca's is awful. He treats her like shit, always looking at other girls but she adores him. God knows why. She's come into my room so many times sobbing over the shit he's pulled and she always says she's going to finish with him but never does. I dunno. They've been together ages and I don't understand it. I don't think I ever will. Why would you stay with someone who doesn't make you happy?

**David:** But love is blind and lovers cannot see / The pretty follies they themselves commit.

*Kate looks at him in astonishment.*

**David:** What? I know some Shakespeare.

**Kate:** Since when?

**David:** Since I started reading the things you gave me last term. I have a good memory you know.

**Kate:** I'm impressed.

*They kiss. Hands begin to wander and clothes are taken off. Kate hesitates at David's trousers.*

**Kate:** Are you sure?

*Pause. He nods.*

**David:** Yes.

**Kate:** Ok.

*She kisses him as she takes his trousers off then removes her own skirt. He is in his boxers, she in her bra and knickers.*

**David:** What do I..

**Kate:** Just try to relax

**David:** Ok..ummm..

**Kate:** Here

**David:** Oh I see

**Kate:** OH!

**David:** Yes?

**Kate:** No...not...yeah that's better

**David:** Oh..I'm going to

**Kate:** Wait..don't

**David:** Trying

**Kate:** Oh

**David:** Is this..?

**Kate:** You're doing fine

**David:**Hurting?

**Kate:** No

**David:** But

**Kate:** Good. All good.

**David:** Ok. Good. Am I

**Kate:** YES! You're fine!

**David:** It's just that...uh-oh...I...oh..oh..OH!

*Silence.*

**David:** Shit.

*Awkward. Kate sighs.*

**David:** So that's

**Kate:** Yes

**David:** Right.

*Kate sighs again.*

**David:** Is it always...so...?

*Pause.*

**Kate:** You'll get better.

**David:** Oh. I see.

**Kate:** You could...

**David:** What?

**Kate:** Never mind.

**David:** Sorry.

**Kate:** Don't apologise.

**David:** Oh. But...you're disappointed.

**Kate:** It was your first time. It's/

**David:** /Embarrassing?

**Kate:** Understandable.

*Pause*

**David:** Kate, I think you're...

**Kate:** What?

**David:** No I mean it. I think...

*Long pause.*

**Kate:** Yes?

**David:** I think I might love you.

**Kate:** Oh. I think...

**David:** Yes?

*Long pause*

**Kate:** I think I might stay here tonight. With you. If that's ok?

*David sighs, slightly disappointed.*

**David:** I'd like that.

*Long pause.*

**Kate:** I can't just...it's not...I might be able to...

**End of Act 2.**

### **ACT 3**

*The Steinberg family home in Stamford Hill. It is early May.*

*The living room. It has sofas, a rug, a couple of lamp tables and a coffee table.*

*There are photos of the family and there is a large glass fronted cabinet of books of Jewish learning.*

*There are packets of food covering everything, crockery and kitchenware on chairs and surfaces. David is sitting on the floor in the middle of it all, unmoving. He has a pile of un-made up cardboard boxes. It is morning. Pesach (Passover) is coming.*

## **Scene 1**

**Chana:** *(Calling from offstage)* David? David are you putting all the chametz in the right boxes?

**David:** Yes Mum.

**Chana:** Have you got enough boxes?

**David:** Yes Mum.

**Chana:** Do you need any more?

**David:** No Mum.

**Chana:** I'm bringing down some more. Hold on!

*She enters with an armful of flat boxes. She puts them down and surveys the room.*

**Chana:** David.

**David:** Yes.

**Chana:** Nothing has moved.

**David:** Sorry.

**Chana:** David...?

**David:** Sorry, I'll do it. I'm doing it now.

*He begins to pick things up and put them in the nearest box.*

**Chana:** No, not that box! Oh just leave it. David I want to talk about-

**David:** Mum! I said I'm doing it.

*She takes a breath to speak*

**David:** I don't want to talk about it.

**Chana:** Your father-

**David:** Is getting worked up over nothing.

*Pause.*

**Chana:** OK. More boxes.

**David:** I didn't need them.

**Chana:** But you will. We need to get this stuff packed away.

**David:** OK.

*David's younger brother Chaim enters.*

**Chaim:** Good progress then.

**David:** If you're not going to help then be quiet or go away.

**Chana:** David please don't speak to your brother like that. Chaim ignore him, he's feeling a bit sensitive. David, behave. I have cooking to do. I'll be in the kitchen.

Please don't argue.

*She leaves.*

**Chaim:** Do you want a hand?

**David:** Yeah. Thanks. Sorry.

**Chaim:** It's fine.

*They pack boxes in silence.*

**David:** How was shul this morning?

**Chaim:** Oh you know, the usual. There were men, there was praying, Dad talked about Pesach. He was really good.

**David:** Oh. Good.

*Pause. Chaim is working up the nerve to ask David something.*

Spit it out Chaim.

**Chaim:** Do you think Dad will ever talk to you again?

**David:** Yes I'm sure he will eventually. He just needs some time to get used to things.

**Chaim:** Are you ever going to come to shul again?

**David:** Yes Chaim, don't be melodramatic.

**Chaim:** Are you going back to university?

**David:** Yes.

**Chaim:** Dad says you're not.

**David:** I don't care what Dad says, I'm going back. I am. There's nothing he can do about it.

*David packs the boxes more angrily, clattering things.*

**Chaim:** David?

**David:** What.

**Chaim:** Do you think I should go to university?

*David says nothing.*

*Chana looks in.*

**Chana:** Everything OK in here?

**David:** It's fine. If you want me to do this and get food for later I'll have to finish by 6 right?

*Pause*

**Chana:** Yes. By 6...

*Pause*

...David I-

**David:** Better hurry up if I want to have this done by then. I reckon I'll make it but only if Chaim stops distracting me.

*Pause*

**Chana:** Chaim maybe you'd better help me in the kitchen. I've got the list for you David, so when you're done just come and get it.

**Chaim:** I'll be quiet, please let me stay here?

**Chana:** If he's bothering you just tell me and I'll put him to use in the kitchen.

**David:** Ok.

**Chaim:** Thank you!

**Chana:** If you do want anything...I'm just –

**David and Chaim:** In the kitchen!

**David:** We know.

**Chana:** If you want anything. Anything at all.

*David stops packing the box and looks at her.*

**David:** Thanks Mum.

*Chana nods and leaves.*

*Pause.*

**David:** No.

**Chaim:** No what?

**David:** Don't go to university. Not if you don't really, really want to. It's better...to be...I think you'd be happier not knowing.

## **Scene 2**

*Evening. Rafi is sitting on the sofa and looks sad. Chana comes in from the kitchen. She sits down next to him.*

**Chana:** He'll come back. Just give him time.

**Rafi:** I don't think he will.

**Chana:** He will. He's a good boy. He'll come back to us.

**Rafi:** I said university was not the place for him, I knew he was too weak for that kind of place. He's always been so afraid of upsetting people.

**Chana:** Not any more. Maybe it's done him good.

**Rafi:** Done him good? Our son came home with jeans in his bag, jeans! He was wearing a t-shirt with a slogan so obscene I can't even...He won't come to shul, I have no idea what he's doing with his time. Where's the good in this?

**Chana:** He seems stronger. More assertive. He has more conviction-

**Rafi:** In all the wrong things!

**Chana:** He's making decisions. Maybe he needs something like this.

**Rafi:** I'm going to talk to him.

**Chana:** Rafi I don't think that's wise.

**Rafi:** What do you suggest?

**Chana:** Give him time and space and he will come to us. If you talk to him you'll only push him further. He's waiting for us to make our move. I tried earlier but he refused to speak to me about it so I just left it. I let him know I am here for him if he needs me. That's all we can do right now.

**Rafi:** It's not enough. We need a harder line. What if he goes out, eats non-kosher? What if he's seen?

**Chana:** Rafi, if he's going to eat non-kosher he's not stupid enough to do it in Stamford Hill. He knows he'd be seen and if he is it'll be because he wants to be. He's not eating anything he shouldn't in London anyway.

**Rafi:** How do you know?

**Chana:** He's been home for every meal.

**Rafi:** I'm going to talk to him.

**Chana:** Please Rafi don't / do this.

**Rafi:** / David!? David come down here please?

**Chana:** (*hissing*) Raphael Cohen I am telling you now if you start shouting at him I will put pepper in absolutely everything and so help me you will have to live on matzah and cheese for the week! Control your temper and do not provoke him unnecessarily. David do you want a drink? I was going to make some tea.

**David:** I'll make it.

**Chana:** No I'll get it. I have some soup to check anyway. I'm not sure I put enough pepper in it.

**David:** Dad doesn't like pepper.

*(She looks meaningfully at Rafi)*

**Chana:** I know. Tea?

**David:** I'll have a coffee please.

**Chana:** I'll be back in a moment.

**Rafi:** Can I have a...

*Chana shoots him a death-stare.*

**Rafi:** Never mind.

*Chana exits to the kitchen.*

**David:** Did you want something?

**Rafi:** Have you picked up your yom tov suit from the dry cleaners?

**David:** No, I'm doing it tomorrow.

**Rafi:** OK.

*Pause.*

**David:** That's it? You don't speak to me for three days and then you just want to know about the dry cleaners?

**Rafi:** I would like to speak to you about the girl.

**David:** Kate?

**Rafi:** Yes.

**David:** I don't want to talk about her.

**Rafi:** I just want to-

**David:** You're just going to shout and start an argument and get angry. It's better if we don't talk about her or anything about university.

**Rafi:** Just about her.

**David:** There's nothing to even talk about!

**Rafi:** If you'd just listen to me.

**David:** We broke up OK? I'm not seeing her or speaking to her anymore. You win.

**Rafi:** You broke up?

**David:** Yes. Happy now?

**Rafi:** You were dating her?

*David is silent.*

You told me you were just friends.

*Silence.*

You lied to me. Repeatedly.

*Silence.*

What else have you lied about?

*David looks at the floor.*

Answer me!

**David:** I...

*Chana returns.*

**Chana:** David please leave your father and me to talk.

**David:** I am going to stay at university. I am going to finish my degree so that I have more chance of being able to support my family. I don't want to be like Yitzi sponging off you to feed his baby just because all he wants to do is learn Torah in Jerusalem.

**Rafi:** He is focused on making himself a better man through study.

**David:** But he's neglecting his wife and child while he does it so swings and roundabouts.

**Rafi:** She understands.

**David:** She shouldn't have to! She should be able to spend time with her husband. If he can't support them he shouldn't have a family.

**Chana:** David that's a terrible thing to say.

**David:** It's not terrible, it's logical!

**Rafi:** You think you can spend a few months at this place and come home to tell us the way we've lived our life, all our life is wrong? That you know better because you spoke to some shiksa? You don't even look like you anymore.

**David:** It's not about what I look like! It's all about appearances with you.

*Chana tries to hand David his coffee.*

**Chana:** David I think you'd better take this up to your room. There's a packet of biscuits in the box by your foot. Take those with you.

**David:** I am staying at university. I can think there. They let me think.

**Rafi:** We let you think here.

**David:** Until I form my own opinion and it differs from yours.

**Rafi:** You can't just decide to disagree with the truth!

**David:** But what if it isn't the truth? Haven't you thought about what that means?

**Chana:** David that's enough now. Please go to your room or to the kitchen.

**Rafi:** I knew that girl /would be trouble.

**David:** /Mum I love her! I can't help it, I do. I love her.

**Chana:** Out. Now.

*David leaves.*

**Rafi:** Don't look at me like that Chana.

**Chana:** I told you not to start with him. I knew it wouldn't help and he is pulling further and further away.

**Rafi:** I can't just stand back and let him go this way.

**Chana:** Sometimes these things are not up to you. He'll come back in his own time.

**Rafi:** My fear is that he won't at all.

**Chana:** He's only going back for a few weeks after this then he's home for four months of summer. Let him ride this out. The more attention you give him the worse he will be.

**Rafi:** He's not a two year old throwing a temper tantrum. This is bigger than that.

**Chana:** But the principle is the same. Believe me.

**Rafi:** Do you ever resent me? For learning so much?

*Chana thinks.*

**Chana:** Not now.

**Rafi:** But then?

**Chana:** I was 24 and had three children under the age of five Rafi. It wasn't exactly easy. And remember Rafi I was so new to all this. I hadn't grown up in a household where it was normal to go and study so much.

**Rafi:** But I had to go and learn.

**Chana:** Well...

**Rafi:** Well? You know I had to. I had to study Chana.

**Chana:** It's not important now but back then...perhaps you could have been a little more flexible and gone after bedtime instead of before. Maybe done a little bit less. Understood my position a little bit more. It didn't have to be quite so intensive did it? But it doesn't matter now. It's in the past and all the kids have turned out OK. No harm done.

**Rafi:** All except-

**Chana:** All the children have turned out very well.

**Rafi:** I'm not sure I tell you enough how much I admire your patience.

**Chana:** Thank you Rafi. I just want you to try with him. I know it's not easy for you. I lived another type of life so I know it's not all bad out there. But you just need to try to be patient with him. If you can't give him understanding, give him patience. Can you at least do that?

*Rafi does not answer. She pulls out the pepper from her pocket and waves it at him. They smile.*

**Rafi:** I'm giving another talk in shul tomorrow. I should make sure I have everything ready.

*He exits and Chana is left with her tea.*

### **Scene 3**

*The Steinberg dining room. It is lunch time on the second day of yom tov (holy day) on Pesach. There is a long table of the family – Chana, Rochel, David, Chaim and Esther are all at the table. It is silent. The table is beautifully set and has starter style food on it. There is a large cabinet like that in the living room filled with books and a smaller drinks cabinet. Shimon enters and sits down in silence. Rafi enters also in silence. He uncovers and lifts up the two matzah crackers.*

**Rafi:** Baruch Ata Adonai Elokainu Melech Ha-olam, Hamotzi Lechem Min Ha-aretz.

**All:** Amen.

*In silence Rafi breaks one matzah into pieces and passes it around the table. Each person takes a piece. Food is passed around the table during the conversation.*

**Esther:** Eurgh I hate matzah. Daddy next year I don't think I'm going to eat any matzah at all.

**Rafi:** What are you going to eat instead?

**Esther:** I'm going to eat potatoes.

**Rafi:** We eat potatoes as well as matzah Esther, not instead of.

**Chana:** I know it's not nice but we get through it every year.

**Shimon:** What did you think of the Rabbi's sermon today father?

**Chaim:** Do we have to talk about it? It was boring enough hearing it the first time!

**Rafi:** Chaim don't be rude to your brother. I thought it was interesting. Yitzi would like it. I'll have to email him a summary of it after yom tov. His point was not particularly dynamic but then he is not a dynamic man. Very knowledgeable, just not the best speaker. Good for the community though.

**Shimon:** Do you think he'll stay much longer?

**Rafi:** I should think we have him for another couple of years at least before Jerusalem calls.

**Shimon:** Does he have / children who live there?

**Chaim:** /Who wants to play a game?

**Chana:** Chaim don't shout over your brother when he's talking.

**Rafi:** Can you pass the liver please? Yes he has two like us. Actually Rivka and Aharon and Yitzi and Talia have both been to his daughter's for meals. She's a similar age to Rivka but her husband is learning with Yitzi so they see each other. And the egg mayonnaise please?

**Chana:** Rochel are you not eating?

**Rafi:** The liver is wonderful again Chana. You really have outdone yourself this year. Did you speak to Rivka? She phone a couple of days ago asking for your liver recipe.

**Chana:** Thank you, I thought it turned out quite well this year. Yes I spoke to her, she said she wasn't sure she'd have time to make it but she sent her love to everyone and said she's hoping to come visit maybe for Shavuot with the children. They miss their grandparents apparently! Rochel give me your plate / I'll put some food on it.

**Rochel:** /No mama I don't want any thank you.

**Chana:** What's wrong darling are you not feeling well?

**Rochel:** No, I'm not hungry. I'll have a bit of soup.

**Chana:** Yes of course do you want me to get it for you now?

**Rochel:** No I'll wait for everyone else.

**Chaim:** I bet she's got her period or something gross like that.

**Chana:** Chaim! That is no way / to talk to your sister!

**Rafi:** / Chaim Steinberg we do not talk about such things at the yom tov table.

**Shimon:** Chaim that's disgusting.

**Chana:** Well it's not disgusting Shimon that's extreme.

**Rochel:** Yeah it's not disgusting, / it happens to girls.

**Rafi:** / Chana we just said we're not talking about this at the table.

**Shimon:** Well it's not nice.

**Chana:** I'm sorry Rafi but no son of mine is going to think these things are disgusting. It's something natural that happens to women.

**Shimon:** Come on David back me up, periods are disgusting.

**Chana:** Shimon if you say that one more time you will leave the table and go to your room.

**David:** Don't drag me into this.

**Rafi:** Of course you can't even enter into a discussion with your family now.

**Chana:** Rafi don't start.

**David:** This isn't a family discussion / this is an argument.

**Rochel:** / I don't even have my period I'm just not hungry.

**Rafi:** Well I'm sorry if he's not going to participate in the family / then I'm not just going to sit back and quietly let it happen.

**Chana:** / Who says he's not participating? He helped prepare for Pesach, he's been to shul, what more do you want from him?

**Rafi:** All he does is sit in his room!

**Chaim:** I still think periods are gross even if you don't have it.

**Chana:** Periods are not disgusting, they're a part of life, get used to it and you can't have it both ways Rafi. You can't ignore him for days then tell him to be part of the family. That simply isn't fair.

**David:** This conversation wasn't even about me.

**Rafi:** I'm not trying to have it both ways I just want him to be-

**Chana:** You want him to be / exactly what you want and you can't make a person like that Rafi.

**Shimon:** / It's always about you at the moment. It's all they talk about.

**Esther:** Sometimes it's about me too!

**Chana:** Pass me the plates I'm going to do the soup.

**David:** Of course it's sometimes about you Esther. / Mum and Dad talk about all of us.

**Rafi:** / I don't see why it's so unreasonable to want him to-

*Rafi is cut off by the doorbell ringing.*

*They all stop and look at each other.*

*A moment.*

**Chana:** Who's ringing the doorbell on yom tov?

**Rafi:** It's probably those witness people. Ignore it.

**David:** They know it's useless coming round this way, they don't bother.

**Rafi:** Well who else is it? No one's going to ring the bell around here.

*The bell rings again.*

**Esther:** I want to answer it.

*She exits up to answer the door.*

**Chana:** Someone go with her.

*Chaim exits after Esther.*

*Chana begins clearing the table.*

David help me please.

*David joins her. They exit to the kitchen.*

**Rafi:** Well? Chaim who is it?

*Chaim enters.*

**Chaim:** There's two people here. A boy and a girl. They want to see David. What should I tell them? Should I say he's not home?

*Rafi hesitates.*

**Rafi:** No. Don't lie. Tell them he is busy.

*David enters carrying two bowls of soup.*

**David:** Who's busy?

**Chaim:** You are.

**David:** Who are you telling I'm busy?

**Chaim:** Erm.

**Esther:** *(From offstage):* David! Your friends are here to see you!

**David:** The people at the door are for me?

**Rafi:** It would appear so.

**David:** Shimon take over with Mum for me.

*Shimon exits to the kitchen.*

*Esther enters.*

**Esther:** Did you hear me?

**Rafi:** I think the whole of Stamford Hill heard you.

*Chana enters.*

**Chana:** Invite them in.

**Rafi:** No.

**Chana:** Yes. If there are guests at the door we will invite them in.

**Rafi:** These are not guests.

**Chana:** I will not turn them away Rafi. These are not bad people. They are welcome in our home.

**Rafi:** They may be welcome in your home but they're certainly not welcome in mine.

**Chana:** Go and call them in David, you can't leave them standing there on the doorstep. When did we suddenly not have the same home? I will not have my hospitality questioned Raphael.

*A tense pause.*

*David enters followed by Andy then Kate.*

*A long pause.*

**Andy:** I'm so sorry to interrupt your meal Mr and Mrs Steinberg. We er...we wanted to surprise David.

**David:** I'm surprised.

*An uncomfortable pause.*

**Chana:** Have you eaten?

**Kate:** Oh I'm / not hungry.

**Andy:** No not yet.

*Pause.*

**Chana:** Would you like to join us? It's all Passover food but there's plenty of it.

**Rafi:** My wife is a wonderful cook. You won't know the difference. She's very modest.

**Andy:** If you're sure it's OK...I'd love to stay. It's...good yom tov? That's what you say?

**David:** Yeah that's it. Thanks.

**Chana:** Thank you Andy. Shimon bring me two more bowls of soup, Chaim get two more chairs and I'll lay the places.

*They bustle around.*

**David:** I...why are you guys here?

**Andy:** Just wanted to visit.

**David:** Both of you just wanted to visit?

*Kate is fidgeting and nervous.*

**Andy:** Well, I may have convinced Kate a bit to come with me.

**David:** Andy tell me why you're here. What is this about?

**Chana:** Right, all ready, let's sit and eat. Come now, Kate is it? You sit here next to Rochel please and Andy you can sit next to David. Lovely. Please start before it gets cold.

*They sit and eat in silence for a few moments. It becomes increasingly awkward.*

**Chaim:** I wish we were talking about periods being gross again.

**Chana:** Chaim Steinberg to your room now.

**Chaim:** Worth it.

*He exits to his room grabbing food off the table as he leaves.*

**Rafi:** Chana I would like to speak to you in the kitchen.

*He stands and moves towards the kitchen.*

*Pause.*

Please.

*A moment between them. Chana exits after him.*

**Shimon:** Esther stop staring. Rochel stop sulking.

**Rochel:** Stop telling me what to do, you're not my father.

**Esther:** I want ear rings like those ones. Do you think Mummy will let me get them?

**Shimon:** Well I'm older than you so I get to tell you what to do.

**Rochel:** David's older than me and you and he doesn't do that.

**Shimon:** There are lots of things David doesn't do that maybe he should.

**David:** Not now Shimon.

**Shimon:** Not now what? I don't know what you mean.

**David:** Shimon don't start with me. I'm not in the mood.

**Chana:** *(from offstage)* You'd better not be fighting in there!

*A guilty pause.*

**Andy:** Did you catch the game last ni...oh I forgot. No telly. Never mind. It wasn't worth seeing anyway.

**Kate:** This is ridiculous Andy. We shouldn't be here.

**David:** What's ridiculous? Why shouldn't you be here? My dad's just being his usual self. Really, it's no problem you being here.

**Kate:** Please Andy can't we just go?

**Andy:** No. We're staying.

**Kate:** But-

**Andy:** You can go if you want to. I'm staying.

**Kate:** You know full well I won't leave you here to just say whatever you want.

**David:** What exactly is it that is going to be said?

**Kate:** It doesn't matter because / we shouldn't be here.

**Andy:** / Now is really not the time mate honestly, she will tell you but not in front of everyone.

**Kate:** Andy this is embarrassing. We're embarrassing everyone by being here, please, can't we just leave?

**Andy:** No we're here now. We're staying.

*Chana enters.*

**Chana:** Your father has gone for a lie down. He is not feeling well. Andy, Kate I'm sorry but he's very tired. We had a late seder last night and another one tonight. He needs to rest. He leads both so...well he'll eat something later.

**David:** He was fine before they arrived.

**Chana:** You know what he's like, doesn't like to complain.

**Rochel:** No! He's a big baby as soon as he gets a cold!

**Chana:** Be quiet Rochel.

**Rochel:** But it's true! You always say you don't know who the bigger baby is, Daddy or Shimon.

**Shimon:** Hey, I don't make a fuss about being ill!

**Rochel:** You do too!

**Shimon:** Like you're so perfect.

**Esther:** Daddy says there's no such thing as perfect.

**Chana:** And he's right. Shimon and Rochel, clear the bowls, and help me serve the main course. We're having lamb is that all right for you two?

**Andy:** Oh...erm...I'm a vegetarian.

**Chana:** Right. I see. We haven't got much in the way of vegetarian food here. Do you eat fish?

**Andy:** No. Sorry.

**Chana:** Well at least you don't do things by halves.

**Kate:** It's OK Mrs Steinberg, we were just leaving anyway.

**Andy:** No, we weren't, we are both looking forward to tasting your cooking. David raves about it.

**Chana:** Well that's nice to hear. Esther stop playing with the tablecloth I will not be happy if it frays. I'll find something for you to eat Andy, believe me no one leaves here hungry.

*She exits with Shimon and Rochel.*

**David:** Esther go practice looking for the afikomen.

**Esther:** How can I practice looking for it? It's not hidden now.

**David:** Pretend it's hidden. Go look in the living room. See if you can find the best hiding places for it and then when Dad hides it later you'll find it first. Go quickly!

*Esther exits.*

Tell me.

**Andy:** What?

**David:** Why are you here?

**Kate:** There is nothing you need to know.

**David:** Well then why are you here?

*Silence*

**Andy:** If you don't tell him I'm going to.

**Kate:** Fine, so tell him.

**Andy:** It shouldn't be me telling him.

**David:** I'm guessing we're not getting back together...are we?

**Kate:** What difference does it make if it's from me or from you? The information stays the same. You wanted me to come. I'm keeping to our deal.

**Andy:** It's kind of implied that you also have to actually tell him!

**David:** Tell me what?!! This is ridiculous! Are you dying? Do you have some kind of contagious disease? What is going on?

*Esther enters*

**Esther:** I found the best hiding places in the living room!

**David:** Great well done, now go look upstairs please.

**Esther:** Ok when I've found those can I tell you what they are so I don't forget them?

**David:** Yes of course you can.

*Esther exits, nearly bumping into Shimon who enters with a large serving plate of lamb.*

**Shimon:** Esther stop running! I hate helping in the kitchen, she can't make up her mind to do platters or plates. Do we serve it in here or let everyone help themselves at the table? No one else cares!

*He exits back to the kitchen.*

**David:** Tell me now. Whatever it is.

*A long silence.*

*Rochel enters with a large bowl of salad.*

*She exits again in silence.*

*Shimon enters with a dish of potatoes. He exits.*

*Kate brushes something off her stomach.*

*Andy looks at her as she does.*

**Andy:** She's pregnant.

**David:** Hilarious. Seriously tell me.

**Kate:** There. Now you've said it. Now he knows.

*A long pause*

**David:** You're not joking.

**Kate:** Can we please go now?

**Andy:** You know we can't.

**David:** Is it...?

**Kate:** Yes it's true. Yes it's yours. Of course it's yours.

**David:** Well we've not been together for five weeks now. I thought-

**Kate:** You thought I'd have just slept-

*She is cut off by Shimon, Rochel and Chana entering with plates and more dishes of vegetables.*

**Kate:** -through all my lectures. You're confusing me with Andy.

**Chana:** Do you not enjoy your studies Andy?

**Kate:** Andy hates studying. Frankly no one is sure how he got a place at university.

**Andy:** I can speak for myself thank you.

**Kate:** And for me as well it seems.

**Andy:** I don't mind studying but I don't like early mornings and a lot of my lectures seem to be timetabled then. And I only speak for you, Kate, when you refuse.

**Chana:** Please help yourselves to food.

*The Steinbergs take food except David who does not move.*

David aren't you hungry?

*Silence*

David...?

*Silence*

Are you feeling all right?

*David shakes his head slightly.*

**Andy:** He's had a bit of a shock is all. He'll be fine.

**David:** No! I'm fine. He's exaggerating. I'm fine.

*Pause*

**Chana:** Rochel, Shimon, Esther. I want you to take your food into the kitchen and eat at that table. Or the living room. I don't mind. Whichever you want. But under no circumstances are you to come back in here until I say, do you understand? Shimon, you're in charge, please keep the girls in there.

**Rochel:** But-

**Chana:** No buts Rochel. Out. All three of you.

**Rochel:** I hate it when Shimon is in charge.

*They exit.*

**Chana:** What is it?

**David:** I can't tell you.

**Chana:** Of course you can tell me, I'm your mother, you can tell me anything at all. However big, however bad. No mother wants to see her child flounder on his own.

**David:** I...I...

**Kate:** I'm pregnant. It's David's. But you don't have to worry Mrs Steinberg I'm not keeping it. It won't be a problem. I only came to tell David because Andy made me.

**Andy:** Well you left me no choice.

**Kate:** I told you in confidence as my friend!

**Andy:** He has a right to know.

**Kate:** Well you had no right to threaten me!

**Chana:** Threaten you?

**Andy:** No no no, it's not like that! I had to get her to come down here or she'd have just done it without telling him. I said I'd tell her parents if she didn't come and tell David. Her dad would hit the roof, he's very Catholic, and traditional.

**Kate:** It's more than that. I've got an internship this summer with Saatchi in London but I have to borrow the money from my parents for rent while I'm there. They won't lend it to me if they find out and I can't afford to go by myself. I swear Andy if you mess this up for me-

**David:** You can't get rid of it. We'll get married. Kate I love you.

*Long pause*

You have to keep it. You can't...I can't...I can't let that...please. You have to.

**Kate:** Are you mad? Did you not hear what I just said?

**David:** Please. Please Kate. I can't be responsible for that. I can't. I only ended things because of my family, because of...all this...but I love you I do.

**Kate:** I knew I shouldn't have told him. Andy this is your fault, you and your bloody moral high ground bullshit!

**Chana:** I must agree with David.

**Kate:** I'm sorry, I know we're in your home, but with all due respect this has nothing to do with you.

**Chana:** It most certainly does. This is my son's child. My grandchild you're talking about.

**Kate:** It's not anything yet, it's a blip in my tummy and it's not going to be anything more.

**Chana:** It's a potential life. It is no one's place to play God and decide who lives and who dies.

**Kate:** But I don't want it and what kind of life will it have with a mother who never wanted it?

**Chana:** David.

*Pause*

I'm so sorry but...

*Pause*

I'm going to have to tell your father.

**David:** No, please Mum no.

**Chana:** I'm sorry I can't keep something like this from him. I will do everything I can to support you. But something like this...as his wife...I...I am so sorry.

*She hugs David close for a long moment.*

*She exits.*

**Andy:** Oh shit.

**David:** Please Kate. Please don't get...I'll take it. I'll look after it, I'll take care of it. You never have to do anything for it that you don't want to. I'll deal with everything just please don't kill it.

**Kate:** You'll deal with everything? You're not going to be able to have it for me David, that's not quite how it works.

**David:** Please. Do you need money? I'll pay for whatever you need? I've got some savings. It's not a lot but it's better than nothing.

**Kate:** Oh for goodness' sake don't be so ridiculous David. It's not money. I don't want this baby. It is everything I don't want.

**David:** Please Kate, you don't have to do this, we can be together...we can...we can make it work.

**Kate:** I can feel it, I can feel it growing and while it grows I'm getting smaller and I hate it. It's like...there's less of me. I'm less myself. And I don't want it, I can't, I can't have it.

**David:** Please. Kate. Please. I'm begging you.

**Kate:** Don't. It won't make any difference. You can just go back to your life, carry on with all this.

**David:** My father will disown me. My mother is upstairs telling him now, and I know that he...

*Pause*

He'll sit shiva for me. It'll be as if I am dead. He won't speak to me again. I won't be allowed back into the house. My family will shun me, my friends, the community...everyone I know from this world, everyone I've grown up knowing. Once she tells him, I lose everything about my life that I know. If you get rid of this baby then it's for nothing. I lose everything for nothing. But if you keep it...if you let me have the baby...I lose everything but at least it's for something. It's not for nothing. Please Kate...

**Andy:** Kate I think we'd better go. I'm scared of your Dad at the best of times but ...David I'm sorry. I thought I was doing the right thing.

**Kate:** I didn't want to tell you. This wouldn't be a problem if he hadn't made me come here.

**David:** It doesn't make a difference now. I can't un-know it. So we have to do what we can now. I've told you what it means for me.

**Kate:** You're not asking me to just give you a bagel or something David you're asking me to have a baby. This is not a small ask. This is a huge thing.

**David:** But you'll think about it?

**Kate:** I have to think about it, I can't just change my mind in an instant.

**David:** But you're considering it?

**Andy:** Kate, let's go, I really think we shouldn't be here when he comes down.

**David:** Please Kate, just say it, just tell me you'll think about it? Please Kate?

*Pause*

I've got nothing else. Please?

*Silence.*

### **End of Act 3**

### **ACT 4**

*March 2012. The Steinberg living room. There are no Passover things around.*

#### **Scene 1**

*David struggles in the door holding a worn looking carry cot and a rucksack.*

**David:** Shhh. Tikvah please don't wake up. I know you're still tired. Go back to sleep.

*He drops the shopping and the rucksack and begins to rock the cot.*

Come on. Daddy needs some time to sort some important things out. You want to eat next week? I have to learn how the benefits system works.

*Pause.*

Come on go back to sleep.

*He looks hopefully into the cot.*

Good girl.

*He begins to unpack his backpack.*

No no please don't wake up. Come on I need a break here. What is it? Are you hungry? Have you done something in your nappy? Why can't you tell me? Please tell me. Any indication. Point, sign, say it in Swahili at least I'd be able to translate it somehow please just tell me what you need and I'll do it but I don't know what you want.

*He sits down on the floor next to her and begins to rock the cot.*

I'm so tired Tikvah. I don't know what to do with myself. You're really testing my stamina you know. Just because you get to sleep during the day doesn't mean I do! How about we make a deal? Give me six hours solid sleep a night and I'll get you some nicer nappies. I know you hate the value stuff but we don't have a choice at the moment. I got you the good baby food though, no preservatives. I know you like

that. And you know, beans aren't so bad once you get used to them. And soup is filling enough if you eat enough of it with bread. I shouldn't be telling you this really because in fifteen years you'll be using it as tips for losing weight. You won't need to though. You'll be perfect. You are perfect. Just go to sleep now. I don't ask you to do a lot, but this one thing, I really need from you. Just shhh.

*He checks the cot.*

Well if you're going to stay awake at least stay quiet. I've got stuff to do you know.

*He gets up and walks away.*

OK OK...shhh...maybe we should get you a dummy.

*He turns the cot to face where he is sitting.*

That way you can see me. But I can't take you everywhere OK? If I want some water I'm not shlepping you over to the sink and back again. Got it?

*Beat.*

You are so beautiful. So tiny. So perfect. A tiny, perfect person full of potential. Everything lies ahead of you. You've not made a single mistake. You've done nothing wrong. You will one day of course. But not yet. Right now you are entirely perfect, entirely innocent. I know we don't have a lot of money, but I'm going to take care of you so well. I promise.

*He continues to fill out the forms. A knock at the door.*

Don't you go anywhere Tikvah.

*He opens the door.*

**Chana:** You have a visitor David.

**David:** A visitor? Oh! What are you doing here?

*Andy enters.*

**Andy:** Thought I'd come to say hi.

**David:** I'm very busy at the moment.

**Andy:** Yeah course I can see.

**David:** Did you want something in particular?

**Andy:** Um...just came to see how you're doing mate that's all.

**David:** Well, I'm still here. I'm doing fine. As you can see.

*It is awkward.*

Are you going to lectures at all this year?

**Andy:** Ha! A few. The ones that take place in the afternoon.

**David:** So no change there then.

*They manage a brief smile.*

**Andy:** Kate said she wrote to you.

**David:** I don't want to talk about her.

**Andy:** Did you read the letter?

*Silence*

I have a copy of it here. Don't worry it's sealed. She said she wants to see you.  
She's in London now.

**David:** I have enough to do here without having to worry about her.

**Andy:** She feels-

**David:** I don't care how she feels. I only care about the baby.

**Andy:** David there isn't...Have you tried to...?

**David:** I've nothing to say to her.

*A pause*

**Andy:** I'll just leave it...I'll...it's...I'll leave it there. I found a house with a couple of guys from my course. It's weird living with normal people.

**David:** Thanks Andy, that's just what I need to hear.

*Pause.*

**Andy:** She's different now you know.

**David:** I don't care.

**Andy:** She's not as hard.

**David:** Why are you telling me this?

**Andy:** I think it's because of you.

**David:** Are you saying it's my fault?

**Andy:** No...I don't know.

*Pause*

**Andy:** I tried to make her stay away from you.

**David:** Why?

**Andy:** Because I wanted to...

**David:** It doesn't matter now anyway.

**Andy:** It does. I should have tried harder to stop it. I'm sorry David.

**David:** You've nothing to be sorry about.

**Andy:** Maybe...I just feel I could have done something. Stopped it or something.  
Y'know, crisis averted. Hero of the hour!

**David:** I don't think you could. But thanks Andy.

**Andy:** I've not done anything.

**David:** You didn't forget I exist. That's something.

**Andy:** I'm not sure I could forget you exist.

*They look at each other. A long moment.*

Well I'll be back again soon.

**David:** Sure.

**Andy:** I'd better go.

**David:** Yeah.

**Andy:** I'll see you...

**David:** Ok.

*Andy carefully embraces David.*

**Andy:** I'll see you soon.

*Very quickly he kisses his finger again and places it on David's lips. He leaves.*

*David stares at the cot. Chana enters.*

**Chana:** You can stare at it all you want David. It doesn't change anything.

**David:** She wrote me a letter. She's got a job with that company now.

**Chana:** Put the cot away now please. It's been months David.

**David:** I'm fine.

**Chana:** Your father and I are really worried about you David.

**David:** I have to look after the baby.

**Chana:** David there isn't a baby. She got rid of it. She didn't have it darling, she made her choice. You have to stop this.

**David:** All I have now is the baby mum. I have to focus on her. She's beautiful. All that potential...

**Chana:** Why don't you have a rest?

**David:** I'm not tired mum.

**Chana:** Go on. Lie down.

**David:** Mum I'm not tired!

**Chana:** Shhhh. You're fighting everything so hard David. Stop fighting. It's done. It's over.

*Chana strokes his hair and he begins to relax.*

**Chana:** I want to talk to you about something.

**David:** Mmm. What?

**Chana:** David, your father and I think you should see a doctor.

**David:** He barely speaks to me.

**Chana:** He's...proud. He'll come around.

**David:** You always say that.

**Chana:** He always does eventually.

**David:** I don't need to see a doctor I'm perfectly fit and healthy.

**Chana:** We're going to give the carry cot away to a charity shop.

**David:** I need the cot for Tikva.

**Chana:** Tikva?

**David:** I called her Tikva mum. The baby. You know this, I've told you a hundred times. Maybe you should see the doctor, you obviously can't remember your own granddaughter's name.

*Silence.*

**Chana:** That's a beautiful name.

**David:** Thank you. I thought you'd like it.

**Chana:** But it's a beautiful name that should be used when you have a child. David you're living in a fantasy and it has to stop now.

**David:** I'm here. I'm here and so is Tikva. We're here together. Everyone we need is here.

**Chana:** I also thought you should look at this.

*She holds a siddur up in front of him.*

**David:** Why would I want that? I don't have time to pray any more.

**Chana:** Maybe it will help you find your way. Your soul...

**David:** My soul is fine.

**Chana:** Your soul is lost.

**David:** I don't want it Mum.

**Chana:** I know. Maybe just leave it there. You don't have to pick it up if you don't want to. Just keep it for now. Do this one thing for me.

**David:** Well I'm not going to throw it away if you leave it there, but I can't guarantee that I'll use it.

**Chana:** That's good enough for now.

**Chana:** I miss you David. We all do. You get that stubbornness from him you know.

**David:** I'm right here Mum.

*She hugs him, kisses the top of his head.*

**Chana:** Come back to us soon.

**David:** I've not gone anywhere.

**Chana:** We've called a doctor for you David. You're on a waiting list. For an appointment. I think it's for the best. Your father...We both do.

*He does not answer.*

Think about it. *She leaves the siddur next to the letter from Andy.*

*She leaves the room. David picks up the letter and the siddur and throws them both away from him. He goes to the cot and rocks it. He picks up the blankets inside and smells them. He turns the cot upside down and waits.*

*He picks up the siddur and opens it. His lips move slowly as he soundlessly reads the words.*

*Lights fade to blackout.*

**END**

## Notes

### Kiddush

Translation of Kiddush:

The sixth day. And the heavens and the earth and all their complements were finished. And G-d finished by the Seventh Day His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done. And G-d blessed the seventh day and made it holy, for on it He rested from all His work, which G-d had created to do.

Attention Gentlemen! Blessed are You, Lord our G-d, King of the world, who creates  
the fruit of vine.

Blessed are You, Lord our G-d, king of the world, who made us holy with His commandments and favored us, and gave us His holy Shabbat, in love and favor, to be our heritage, as a reminder of the Creation. It is the first of the holy festivals, commemorating the exodus from Egypt. For You have chosen us and sanctified us from among all the nations, and with love and goodwill given us Your holy Shabbat as a heritage. Blessed are You, Lord, who sanctifies Shabbat.

A siddur is a Jewish prayer book usually containing the morning, afternoon and evening services, often in Hebrew and English.

Transliteration of Ani Ma'amin:

Ani Ma'amin be'emunah sheh-leima, bevias ha-Moshiach.

Ve'af al pee, sheyismamey'ach im kol zeh, achake lo, b'chol yom sheyavoh.

Translation:

I believe with perfect faith in the coming of the Messiah.

And even though he may tarry, I wait each day for his coming.

An audio recording of a well-known tune:

<http://www.aish.com/sh/s/48968736.html> (website where the recording can be found)

<http://image.aish.com/misc/AniMaamin.mp3> (recording)

A second recording of a different well-known tune:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CL70Qn5Mmwg&feature=related>

## **Losing It – A Story Driven By Plot.**

### **Introduction:**

“When I was a child, my parents and teachers told me about a man who was very strong. They told me he could destroy the whole world. They told me he could lift mountains. They told me he could part the sea. It was important to keep the man happy. When we obeyed what the man had commanded, the man liked us. He liked us so much that he killed anyone who didn’t like us. But when we didn’t obey what he had commanded, he didn’t like us. He hated us. Some days he hated us so much he killed us; other days, he let other people kill us...

-Blessed is He, we prayed.” (Auslander. 2009. P1)

*Losing It* was originally intended to be a play about a boy’s late loss of his virginity. It was intended as an exploration of late developers and how they fit in to society, particularly in a culture where going to university, experiencing things and “finding yourself” are given importance to a young adult. It swiftly became apparent that the play was about more than a loss of virginity but rather, the reasons behind keeping that virginity intact in the first place. The society in which we live thrives on sex as an industry, and forms a large part of romantic relationships and how we function in them. The play is about the faith that lies behind staying chaste. This is a faith that fuels a large number of seemingly irrational rituals and actions that make up a lifestyle. It has been made clear to me from personal accounts of individual stories that for a number of people, university is a place where their faith has changed in some way. For some it has developed and grown stronger and for others it has dwindled to non-existence. University is a place where otherwise unlikely lives converge and it is not a place to remain stagnant. *Losing It* is about what happens to a boy whose world has been limited and although it uses Judaism as the example, it is about the wider subject of faith. The play explores the unpicking of faith through the prism of ultra-Orthodox Judaism but is not limited to Judaism and its rituals. Every religion in extreme forms comes with its own examples of ritualistic

behaviours and traditions, all of which are as fascinating and at times unintelligible to the outsider. David is the outsider in the contemporary world of secular education but Kate and Andy are outsiders to his world. He is as much of a confusion and fascination point as they are to him. This essay will discuss the process of writing *Losing It* with a particular focus on character and structural development.

### **Character development:**

The most challenging aspect of writing a predominantly three handed first act was finding nuances that made each of the relationships believable. In the first draft, the three characters were all heterosexual. This led to questioning about Andy and Kate's relationship and an implication that there had to be something more there. In week three of our classes we learned of the idea that people open up and reveal personal information when on stage as a pair, but when there are three on stage the relationships become about power. The feedback appeared to be that Andy and Kate could not possibly be platonic, despite no evidence to the contrary. It appeared to be implausible that nothing sexual could ever have happened between them. This lack of any tension negated the power struggle that would have fuelled the balance of the relationship between them. In fact, it seemed the sexual tension was more tangibly between Andy and David, under the guise of a fraternity. This led me to change Andy's sexual orientation and it immediately made sense that he is in love with David, despite the homosexuality David is inclined to feel. This also shifted the power structure between the three characters, and rather than there being competition between Kate and Andy, a subtler interaction formed. In Act Two, Scene One, Kate and Andy discuss their shared feelings for David, and rather than being divided by competition, they are united by the shared experience of his unattainable status. Andy's decision later in the play to insist that David should know about Kate's pregnancy is fuelled by the fact that he has feelings for David, and has had for some time.

Kate was the most difficult of the characters to write convincingly. She seemed to be nothing more than a device for the rest of the story rather than a character in her own right facing her own issues and fighting her own battles. She was something

that needed to happen to David to make his story possible, rather than a woman whose arc crossed with his. In writing her I found that the less I had her on stage interacting with David, the more believable their relationship became. When interacting with David the dialogue became far too direct and re-reading scenes between them, I found them saying things that no one would ever really say. It became a case of “less is more” with Kate and a constant struggle I had was to force the characters to hold back and not allow too many elements of myself into their voices. In the first week of classes for the Mphil(b), we discussed what a playwright is. Truth seemed to be the key to writing, be it exposing or revealing it, or simply writing truthful relationships and situations. People are not as forthright as both Kate and David had become, and if they are then it is an anomaly and not the norm. It was a conscious reminder that I had to keep giving to myself to remember to write as if my characters did not want to simply say what was on their minds all the time. In the final edit of this play, I have reduced some of the dialogue and attempted to use subtext to add a less direct layer to the writing.

Part of the problem was that I had not given Kate any kind of history. “A play may be set anywhere...but a writer’s archetypes will surface just the same, drawn from the palette of their limited experience” (Waters. 2010. P96) but it was clear that I knew very little of Kate at all. Where I could answer questions about Andy’s family and background, popularity at school, reactions to situations, I could not do the same for Kate. She was distinctly two dimensional and it was perhaps because she was the only female character and close to my age that I found her so difficult to write. Steve Waters presents the idea that we have a limited number of characters that can be written with any credible depth due to the finite nature of life experience but if anything Kate was too close to my situation in life and I found her harder to write than any of the other characters. The superficiality of her character made all of her actions in the play seem false and her motivations were not believable because I had not given her any due to her differences to me that I was finding hard to imagine because of some parallels. The way in which I finally found the things that are important to her was by starting at the end of her story and working backwards. The crucial question for me was “why does Kate not want to have a baby?”

There are the obvious answers of her being too young, still a student and not in a stable relationship with the baby's father, but there had to be something deeper motivating her at the root of her aversion to being a mother at this point in her life. It had to tie in with her dislike for relationships and her desire to remain single even in the face of a slightly unpleasant reputation for sexual promiscuity. The idea of her having low self-esteem and not being intelligent enough to have used protection seemed too simple to motivate such firm beliefs in her lifestyle choices. Kate is intelligent and that option did not fit the woman I had created. Similarly, simply wanting to have sex because she enjoyed it felt unmatched to the drive she possesses as a character. The choice to use her desire to escape her small town home was one that changed her entire character. She suddenly had a reason behind her actions. She did not just want to be free of obligation, she needed to be, and it stemmed from much earlier in her life than I had written. In week seven of our classes the objective we were given was to create a character. One exercise was imagining a person and then simply giving that person their story. This exercise unlocked Kate's character, as I had to imagine what her life might have been like growing up in Hull. The feeling of obligation to family is difficult to escape, and can tie a person down to a place. Kate needed to be free to carve a name for herself in the form a career. A successful career can often mean independence from a family or a place that a person feels held back by. Kate must feel trapped by the small town life she feels it is expected of her to lead. Following in the footsteps of her domestic mother is the worst thing that can happen to Kate. She refuses to settle down in a relationship to avoid the expectation of settling down and being a domestic wife. She needs to feel freedom sexually as well as emotionally to constantly remind herself that she is not going to become her mother. This is at the root of why she does not want to have the baby and also forms a parallel to David. She denies the similarity of their situations at the end of Act One, but it is there, and ultimately that is what forms their attraction to each other; the simultaneous familiarity and difference.

David's faith has been tested beyond its limits and although he has walked away from it, if he returns it will be with a stronger belief because it has been ripped apart, scrutinised and rebuilt. When it repairs it is stronger because of the trials it has withstood.

“Tragedy celebrates the individual’s subjugation and thus his or her release from the burden of repression and its attendant anxiety...the hero and the heroine are those people who do not give in to temptation. The hero story is about a person undergoing a test that he or she didn’t choose.” (Mamet. 2002. P14)

Mamet seems to be expressing two sides of the same coin. Either the hero is freed from repression or he resists temptation. David, at the beginning of the play, does not understand why he has his faith or what it means to believe in something in the face of it being tested. But he resists nonetheless. He is a hero. But his belief is innocent and easily unpicked because it is rooted in habit and ritual rather than experience. By Mamet’s definitions, his trajectory is tragic, as he shakes off his religious shackles, at least temporarily, and allows himself to experience his repressed sexual identity. Paradoxically despite his desire to leave his faith behind completely, he does not seem able to. He is drawn to it in a way that cannot be explained or beaten by science or logic because faith is ultimately a feeling. Despite the fact that he has seemingly lost everything, he still has a part of him that fundamentally retains his faith in God.

My perspective on how to write this play was changed when I saw the Royal Court Theatre’s production of Arnold Wesker’s *Chicken Soup with Barley*. The play spans twenty years from 1936 and follows a Jewish family’s political and personal journeys in the East End of London. The thing that struck me the most about the way Wesker writes is that the characters are inherently Jewish in their mannerisms, their ideas, their ways of speaking and their interactions. The power plays and the strengths and weaknesses of the individual characters were entirely recognisable as being those of a Jewish family. The dialogue, however, rarely mentions the fact that they are Jewish. It is not something they talk about but it is simply something that they are. This sharp accuracy in capturing that difference changed the way I wanted to write my characters. The three characters became less defined by their spiritual and religious beliefs and more defined by their interactions with the other characters in the play. This led me to question whether I had strayed too far from the play’s subject in the second draft. The play was supposed to be about faith surviving in the contemporary world but it seemed to lose sight of that when I tried to deliberately

avoid the debates the characters could have about the existence of God. However the first draft had been too focussed on the debates that were at the crux of the play. This had made the characters somewhat two dimensional in that they were simply defined by their positions of believing in God (David), atheist (Kate) and agnostic (Andy).

It became clear that the play had to have some discussion of the main topic in it or it would simply ignore the issues at hand. Furthermore, it is not unlikely that these types of conversation would take place between students at university, a place where people are encouraged to explore themselves and challenge and discuss their positions on matters of importance and irrelevance alike. Perhaps in another setting it would not be believable to see three people discussing the existence of God late into the night but university allows the space to freely have that conversation. Once I had justified its place in the play, it was difficult to curb the tendency to wax lyrically and at length about the various sides to the debate. However each time I allowed myself to explore that in the writing it felt less like a play and more like a structured lecture series debate.

One of the key experiences at university is meeting people from different backgrounds, whom one would otherwise never have met had you not all been thrown into the microcosm melting pot that is university. It is, for many, the first venture into independence, the first time away from home, the first time living in a different town or city and the first time for meeting people who are not like the people one has grown up with. The idea that there are people who have never met a Jewish person is a surprise to many Jewish students when they first enter university. Jews have tended to populate areas of cities, rather than remote rural towns and so it is not surprising that there are so many people who come to university and have quite simply never met a Jew before. It is only surprising to the Jew himself who has grown up (in most non-extreme circumstances) in an integrated community typical of large, multicultural cities. It is in many ways the parallel of the ultra-orthodox Jew who has spent all his time in his community be that in Israel, America or England, and has never consciously encountered a non-Jewish person before. Each is equally new, naïve to the point of ignorance and fascinating to the other. Thus the decision was made that Kate and Andy grew up in and have come from Hull. The

choice of a city rather than a small village on the outskirts of it was made because the level of explanation I found myself writing was not conducive to the rest of the play. It became about how much Judaism I could explain in as simplified way as possible. That preoccupation was something I encountered throughout the writing of *Losing It*.

### **Time and Space:**

“Play structures fall into two categories: those using linear time and those which disrupt it.” (Edgar. 2009. P99)

Time became a particularly difficult factor in the writing of *Losing It* because although there is much to be said for Aristotle’s principle of the unity of time, the events of the play simply could not take place in one day. It was perhaps a fundamental error to attempt to write a play that took place over the time span of eighteen months, but the effect I wanted to achieve was that of watching a man’s faith crumbling in the secular world that he faces for the first time. This is not something that happens overnight and although the timeline in the play is linear, to an extent it also has to be episodic to capture the decline of David’s faith. However it was difficult to find a way to indicate time moving forward because the time jumps are not regular. Taking inspiration from Chekhov’s work in *Three Sisters* and *The Cherry Orchard*, I tried to give indicators using references to the semester structure of the university year, though they are not as clear as they perhaps need to be. Although Act Three is set in the run up to and at Passover, there is still a jump of a few days between scenes. It could be argued that the jumps in time are more suited to a film script than a play but time has to move forward and keep moving forward to allow the change in David to happen. The truth of his transformation can only be seen with the right amount of time behind it for it to be credible. This is also applicable to the truth regarding the development of his relationships. Andy has to have enough time to form an attachment to David in the same way that David needs enough time to form an attachment to Kate.

The idea that I might write two plays in one, or two parts of the same play in the style of Tony Kushner and his epic *Angels in America*, was considered. It could be that the first play is the play of the three young adults in university and the second play is the wider impact their relationships have on David's family, the repercussions the relationships have in a world that is not the safety of university. This is an option for if this play is revisited and it is something that may well develop. As it currently is, the play should be experienced as a whole because the journey of David's character at the end is just as important as the breaking down from the beginning.

There are many parallels within *Losing It* that have been placed there deliberately to highlight what can be seen as small mindedness of closed off communities, whether it is intended for them to be so or not. There is the previously discussed parallel between the small town folk who have not met a Jew and the Jews who have not met a non-Jew. There is the parallel of Chana and Rafi bringing David to university and their discomfort in an environment with which they are totally unfamiliar. They have no point of reference to anchor them to the space, and similarly, Kate and Andy are lost in the Stamford Hill home of Rafi and Chana. They are out of their comfortable space and have entered the personal space of an ultra-orthodox Jewish man who has already expressed intense discomfort at their proximity. Furthermore Rafi's unwillingness to enter the world of a secular university is reflected in Kate's unwillingness to come to the Steinberg household and discuss her situation with David. These parallels emerged as a way of perpetuating the underlying notion that David has to choose between two worlds that are quite clearly separate. It is in Act Three that the two worlds converge and in the house of his childhood, where he should be the most innocent, he truly loses everything.

An important aspect to consider when writing is the length of time it takes for the audience to watch the play in front of them. Writing the stage directions for *Losing It* displayed a tendency to over write. Re-reading previous versions of the play showed repeated and clear attempts to completely direct the play through the stage directions. There is a fine line between stage directions and dictating how each character is supposed to behave. There are gestures that I saw as I was writing the play, and still see reading it back, that I wish to bestow upon characters,

moments that I want to choreograph with details as subtle as looks between people and costumes that I want to describe in detail. However this crosses a line that exists between writer and director. There is a relationship there that must be preserved and the space between writing and directing is an important one. Of course without the words there would be no play but it is the director who brings the words to life and gives them space in which to move around. The purpose of stage directions is to provide guidance and a picture for a director and actors to work from. "There's a difference between an author being helpful and one who tries to give their performance for them" (Ayckbourn. 2004. P65). They should not be a dogmatic set of instructions that must be followed at all costs. An initial reading of *Losing It* took far longer than I had anticipated, predominantly because the play was filled with unnecessary explanations and overly complex stage directions. In the final draft I allowed myself detailed descriptions of the stage set up at the start of each act to give a clear picture of the space, but tried to limit further elucidation once the dialogue had begun. The use of basic props was extremely helpful in the reading at highlighting how much could be conveyed using so much less than I had initially intended and imagined. Peter Brook says

"I can take any empty space and call it a bare stage. A man walks across this empty space whilst someone else is watching him, and this is all that is needed for an act of theatre to be engaged." (Brook. 1972. P11)

The simplicity of this holds truth for writers as well as practitioners of theatre.

### **Structure and Story:**

During the seventh week of classes we discussed the differences between character-driven story and plot-driven story. The former being a story that starts with a character who is then put into situations, the latter being structured around characters serving a sequence of events. The idea behind the character-driven story is that the plot emerges naturally and organically, and is driven by the inner wants and needs of the character. The idea of the plot-driven story linked to an issue discussed in week ten regarding dramatic irony. The obvious examples of fate as a driving force are Sophocles' tragedies such as *Oedipus Rex* or *Antigone*. If the characters are merely serving a story, then how does one, as a writer, prevent the work from feeling contrived? It became clear that there has to be a more complex

approach, where a combined use of character development and the drive of plot, would produce the most interesting, balanced work. In every draft prior to the final copy of *Losing It*, Kate has kept the baby and given it to David, to allow him to retain hope at the end of the play. Augustus Thomas writes on the nature of farcical comedy:

“In constructing such plays the French have the three act formula expressed by one of their modern writers:

Act one; get your man up a tree:

Act two; throw stones at him:

Act three; get him down.” (Thomas. 1916. P7)

In a lecture given by Duncan Macmillan, a variation of this was posited; rather than get the character down, writers should watch the character get down from the tree by himself. We like our characters and want them to survive what we throw at them, but the writer’s job is not to keep giving the character ladders to help him escape from the tree. It is to test the character, put him through the worst thing that can happen to him and discover what he becomes.

It was with this in mind that it became painfully clear that it did not make sense for Kate to keep the baby she did not want for a man she did not love. It was not in keeping with her character, though it served the plot I wanted to write. Thus the final act of the play became much darker in tone, as rather than being given the ladder David needs to survive, it is taken away and he goes mad because he has nothing.

### **Language and the Context of Judaism:**

There is no easy way to convey to an audience what it means to a Jew to hear Hebrew. There is no simple way to explain the connection that an observant Jew is brought up with as part of their very existence with a language that is known and studied as Biblical Hebrew. It is not a certainty that there is any way to explain

these connections at all, easy or otherwise. Steve Waters writes about “Specialised Vocabulary” which refers to specific language that “reflect[s] back on the speaker” because “with the register comes a code or jargon which forms a kind of shibboleth to distinguish between insiders and outsiders” (Waters. 2010. P118). This idea refers to language games within English but an extension of this has to be when one is able to read or talk in a second language. It is something that is ingrained into a child’s learning from a young age. Such importance is placed on the Jewish heritage – on Hebrew and to some degree, Yiddish. The weight of a Jew’s ancestry and the collective consciousness of the Jewish people on his shoulders are tied up in the language. It is the language that connects every Jew in the world in prayer. It is the language that connects the people from the past to the present and will connect to those in the future.

The problem I faced here was determining how much it is worth trying to explain to an audience. How much of the rituals of Friday night and saying *Kiddush* should I be including? Should I include a translation? Should I write out the transliteration of the Hebrew words or simply a stage direction that says “*David recites Kiddush*”? Should I be explaining what *Kiddush* is in greater detail? These appear to be quite minor questions about one small section, but they are reflective of a wider issue that I faced writing the entirety of the play which is that of explanation. At what point does this play become inaccessible to a non-Jewish audience? At what point does this play become patronising in its over explanation? There are jokes that will only be understood by a Jewish audience, about food and language and teaching within the community. The danger is to want to explain these jokes to an audience, but the lesson I learned in trying to do that is that no joke is funny or funnier when explained. Some people will simply not find it funny, others will see the joke for what it is even if they don’t understand it and some people will understand every nuance and laugh when they hear it. No play can please every audience member so to try to achieve this impossible goal by incorporating every piece of information about a topic is foolish.

In an earlier draft there was a song that Chana and later David sang, called *Ani Ma’amin*. There are thirteen principles of faith in Judaism that correspond with the thirteen attributes of God. The words to the song are the words of the twelfth

principle of faith. There are many stories within Judaism that are surrounded by mysticism and many that are embellished. In an earlier draft there was a song that Chana and later David sang, called *Ani Ma'amin*. In the final version, Chana sings the song in Act One, Scene One and hums the tune again later in the same scene. The story behind the tune to this song is that it was sung on the way to the death camps by a full trainload of Jews. The translation of the words is "I believe with perfect faith in the coming of the Messiah. And even though he may tarry, I wait each day for his coming."

This is particularly powerful when placed with the story of how the haunting melody was written because on their way to certain death the Jews sang of their faith. It is a perfect example of how faith can unite a group of people in a time of hopelessness and it is an idea at the core of David's belief.

Music in the form of singing forms a large part of the spiritual side of Judaism. A large part of synagogue services are sung. There are repetitions of seminal prayers that are said first as individuals and sung second as a community. There are songs sung at every meal on the Sabbath and at the end when the Sabbath is finished. In the first draft, as well as singing Kiddush, David sang *Ani Ma'amin* to Kate as a trump card to demonstrate his faith when she challenged it. The effect of this was, however, a large expository passage about what it means and the story behind the song. It did not seem to fit with the dialogue and although it is possible to have him singing the song at points throughout the play, there did not seem to be a right time for him to do so. It finally occurred to me that this is because from the beginning he is easily swayed by Andy to stay in the flat and it is not his faith that holds his conviction, but his desire to learn outside of it. The two are not mutually exclusive but it became apparent that I was forcing an action onto a character whose priorities did not allow him to perform that action comfortably because the conviction was not there.

## Conclusion

“Religion offers the cleansing mechanism of confession: the Catholic confessional, the Jewish Day of Atonement, the Baptist Testimony.” (Mamet. 2002. P68)

It is my belief that to me, this play will never feel finished. The writing process was one of personal exploration in terms of my own faith in God and Judaism. Although I did not grow up in a *shtetl* (a Yiddish term for a large group of Jews populating a small area of a city or town) environment such as that which is found in areas like Stamford Hill, and certainly my own family experience has not been anywhere near as religiously rigid as David’s has, I have found myself drawing on my own feelings of unease about the issues Jews face in the wider world and the issues the Jewish people create for themselves and perpetuate in self-fulfilling prophecies. As my perspective and feelings change on issues of faith and the Jewish peoples’ relationship with the secular world, so my perspective on how this play should be written changes too. Even from one month to the next my views have shifted and aspects of *Losing It* have felt like they do not accurately encapsulate the way these issues should be addressed. Perhaps it is the hardest lesson to learn as a writer to allow a play to stand on its own, without constant tweaking and editing. The play must be judged in its own right, left alone. It has to be let go by the writer to be seen in the world with decisions made and stood by. This is what transforms a piece of writing to a living piece of potential theatre.

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