

# An Old **JEW'S** *Blues*



(A play in Two Acts)  
By  
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## CAST

In order of appearance

**FATHER.....**Rabbi, Father of Leyzer and Shaiya.

**SHAMOS.....**75 yrs.

**LEYZER.....**60 yrs. Shaiya's brother. A Cantor.

**SHAIYA.....**57 yrs., Leyzer's brother.

**MORRIS.....**60's. Holocaust survivor.

**GERSH.....**60's.

**HYMIE.....**60's.

**MURRAY.....**60's.

**ABIE.....**60's.

**MAX.....**37 yrs. Leyzer's son.

**PINKY.....**40 yrs. Dynamic.

**WENDY.....**13 yrs. Emotionally disturbed. Daughter of Max and Trudie.

**TRUDIE.....**35 yrs. Shaiya's daughter.

**SYLVIA.....**34 yrs. Psychologist. Shaiya's daughter.

**BUSTER.....**70 year old Negro. Has worked in shul for 40 years and friend of family.

**NURSE.....**38 yrs.

(LEYZER will sing Cantoral selections during scene changes)

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## ACT I

### PROLOGUE

1934

In shul, an old RABBI (the FATHER)  
addresses his congregation.

#### FATHER

'Goot yom tov, goot yom tov and a zeesen Pesach to you all... It's a pleasure to see you again, my pleasure. How long was I in the hospital this time, three months? You know what I missed most, more than anything? Standing on this 'bemah' and 'dahvening' with you in my beloved 'Besmedresh HaGadol' and once again, here I am about to celebrate my favorite holiday with you, 'Pesach.' And Moses said, "Let my people go, let my people go."

(Shows HaGadol.)

Look at this child's 'HaGadol' and you'll see that even after nine plagues, that 'yold,' Pharaoh still refused to let our people go, but when God ordered the Angel of Death to 'Pass over' all the Jewish homes and kill the first born of every Egyptian, Pharaoh finally got the message. We call it Passover and when Tomas De Torquemada slaughtered us during the inquisition, like Hitler, who is trying to spread hatred all through Europe... A madman. 'Oy,'

(Clutches side.)

only when those murderers experienced the wrath of God, did they Understand, that we are all the chosen; Coloreds, Jews, Gypsies, Puerto Ricans, does it matter, aren't we all God's children? Remember that when they move into the neighborhood, say hello, welcome them with open arms. 'Ale menschen zeynen brider.' All people are our brothers. So, what are you waiting for, always have a little more 'rachmunes' for the misfortunate. They have suffered as much as we have, maybe more. They cry and so do we. So, go into their stores, invite them over for coffee... 'Oy...'

(Clutches side.)

So, here we are, 5,698 years later, 885 families defying all odds, not only learning to coexist like the wild flowers our grandfathers once sowed in the Negev desert, arm in arm we will

flourish, because we did more than even the biggest 'shuls' in Manhattan, and when they asked us to plant trees in Palestine, what did we do, 37 of our children, including two coloreds from the neighborhood, went to work on a 'kibbutz.' Your contributions helped plant over 10,000 trees, I know, I counted them to make sure and when they ran out of medicine, what did we do, when they needed doctors, didn't our own Dr. Rappaport, Dr. Slimowitz and my own cousin, Dr. Sidney Finkel and who knows how many more went over, I mean at their own expense and they stayed for six months and when they needed 'gelt' to build a hospital for Jews, didn't we, God bless you and your children, buy a \$100,000 worth of

**(Clutches side.)**

bonds... 'Oy.' The 'Shamos' and I couldn't be more proud of you my dear friends. If it was up to me, I would inscribe each and everyone of you in the good book, because if anyone deserves it, it is you. That's why, next week I am going to have your names

**(Uncovers enormous plaque on wall.)**

inscribed on this beautiful plaque and thanks to your generous donations, the '*Besmedresh HaGadol*' shall live forever and now our dear 'Shamos,' the man that is responsible for the up-keep of our beloved 'shul,' would like to say a few words, and don't worry,

**(Laughs.)**

he's not going to ask for another donation..., not this week.

#### **SHAMOS**

Good 'Yom Tov' and a 'Zeesen Pesach.' Thank you 'Rebbe' and are we glad that you are finally home from the hospital. Enough with the operations already, we had enough. Hopefully you'll never have to go back. Amen and yes 'Rebbe,' I too could not be more proud of our congregation, because we had 63 'Brises,' 72 "bar Mitzvahs" and 65 weddings this year, was I busy, 'Kinehora.' I also have to thank you from the bottom of my heart for the success of our own day-care center, because Jewish children should have a place to go after school, if both their parents have to work and come this fall that's just what we'll do. I just hired a new teacher and naturally we'll need some 'siddurs,' a few odds and ends. Don't worry, nothing major, and I promise, with yours and God's help, I will help them all become proud Jews, filled with 'tsdoke,' like each and everyone of you.

**(Wanting to speak, FATHER goes ahem and points to self.)**

**SHAMOS (cont'd)**

And now ladies and gentlemen, our beloved 'Rebbe' would like to say a few more words about his two wonderful sons, Leyzer, who just graduated from college with the highest honors and still found the time this year to help start our new day care center and his talented brother Shaiya, who we haven't seen since he graduated U.C.L.A. two years ago and hopefully he will stand right here where he belongs and now the proud father of these two wonderful young men, our own 'Rebbe...'

**FATHER**

Thank you, thank you. Today my dear friends, I thank God that I'm still alive to share this '*nachess*' with you. Since you know my son Leyzer since he was born, I'd like you to know that he just graduated... something *cum laude*. Anyway, he was number one in the whole N.Y.U. law school.

**LEYZER**

**(To self.)**

It's '*Summa*' *Cum Laude*, papa.

**FATHER**

And the baby of my family, Shaiya who has a '*schtimme*,' my own Mario Lanza. He sings in those fancy nightclubs in Los Angeles, but I predict that one day he will sing here. Can you blame me for being so proud? And now, I have an announcement. Since '*Boruch hashem*,' I have reached the ripe old age of 72, which is four times '*chai*,'

**(We hear applause.)**

**FATHER (cont'd)**

...and besides I don't feel that good, so I've decided, God has decided that it is time for me to retire...

**(We hear murmurs.)**

**FATHER (cont'd)**

Please, please, that doesn't mean I'm leaving my beloved '*shul*' it just means that I have to pick a successor...

**SHAIYA**

**(Shakes head with disdain.)**

**LEYZER**

No papa, please don't please.)

**FATHER**

...Who better than my own son, Leyzer to lead this great congregation. Not only does he have a good heart, he has the mind of Maimomides. And of course, Shaiya will one day be our *Chazon...*'

**SHAIYA**

**(Aside.)**

...In your dreams...

**FATHER**

...He has to, because, who sings better? What a singer, and its time he came home, don't you think?

**(We hear applause.)**

**FATHER (cont'd)**

So my dear friends, with my beloved sons and the '*Shamos*' to lead you, I can assure you that as long as there's one orthodox Jew that needs us, the '*Besmedresh HaGadol*' here in the Bronx will last forever. I promise. May you continue to do good deeds and may your doors always be open to strangers in need and even though this is officially my last day, my heart will be always be with each and everyone of you. I love you all, now, go home and have a '*zeesen Pesach.*'

**LEYZER**

**(Crying.)**

Papa, don't make us do this.

**SHAIYA**

**(Nods in disgust.)**

Unbelievable.

**(Lights.)**

**End of prologue.**

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## ACT I

### Scene 1

In Temple.  
35 years later.

Shaiya enters, gives newspaper to  
Leyzer and puts on '*Talis.*'

#### SHAIYA

You forgot your Law Journal again Counselor.

**LEYZER**

**(Sarcastic.)**

Thanks Caruso. I'm some counselor alright. Your Father would be so proud...

**SHAIYA**

Forget about Papa and let's sell the 'shul.' Whatever we get, we get and I say let's move to Long Island, okay, New Jersey.

**LEYZER**

No Shaiya.

**SHAIYA**

How's about Westchester, better yet, Miami, that's where everyone else moved to, isn't it? This is a losing proposition, it has been for years. We can't pay our bills because there are no more Jews in the Bronx that go to 'shul,' our 'shul.'

**LEYZER**

You never stop, do you? I will never sell the 'shul,' I can't... and I forgot to tell you, Max called, they brought Wendy home.

**SHAIYA**

So, how is that 'mommaleh?' Boy, did I miss her Leyzer.

**(WE hear a chorus of sneezing and coughing ending with MORRIS' very distinctive sneeze and cough.)**

**SHAIYA (cont'd)**

I believe 'Kvetchers' anonymous has finally arrived...

**(MORRIS, GERSH and HYMIE enter dusting off the snow. Sneezing, coughing and sniffing. LEYZER and SHAIYA become almost like bystanders as they enjoy the repartee that always ensues. They have a good time.)**

**MORRIS**

*'Ah nudde vinter like 'dhis' and 'dhey'll bury me 'fa' sure. No  
(Looks up to heaven.)  
bout a doubt it. In Poland it used to snow like 'dhis,' but here, in America, 'dhe Goldeneh land,' Jews are not only supposed to be safe but 'varm' also. Even in the Bronx, no? So, vhat 'heppend?*



**(Feigning blindness, he squints.)**

'Nu' Mr. Lawyer, so 'vhere' is everybody?

**HYMIE**

**(Warms hands over steam and laughs.)**

They're all here, can't you see them 'blinde?' Clean your glasses you...

**GERSH**

Thank God we still have steam here. Last night we almost froze to death and Hymie says it's your fault Morris.

**HYMIE**

I told you to order oil, didn't I? Three times I told you, you deaf 'meschugeneh...'

**MORRIS**

... 'Vhat...? 'Vhat?'

**HYMIE**

**(Loud.)**

OIL, OIL! I told you to order the oil, Goddamnit.

**MORRIS**

I bought Crisco, didn't I? 'Vhat dhe' hell do you 'vant' from me?

**LEYZER**

**(Loud.)**

Not Crisco Morris, not Crisco. I believe Hymie means oil for the boiler.

**MORRIS**

You believe 'vhat?'

**HYMIE**

Stop believing, stop believing, you're believing and I'm freezing my ass off. WE NEED OIL FOR THE BOILER! Shaiya, would you please tell him that we need oil for the boiler?

**SHAIYA**

Morris, you need oil for the boiler.

**MORRIS**

*Oh, oil 'fa dhe' boiler. 'Vell vhy' didn't you say so in 'dhe foist' place?*

**HYMIE**

**(Whispers.)**

Why I ever let you talk me into moving in with this wet noodle I'll never know, never.

**SHAIYA**

**(Whispers to Hymie.)**

I believe it's because it's Morris's house and you live rent-free. Business stinks, for years remember?

**GERSH**

Hymie, that reminds me, I almost forgot, maybe you have an extra

**(Puts arm on Hymie's shoulder.)**

quarter you can spare...? Come on, what's a quarter between old friends, right?

**HYMIE**

Again with the quarters? What do you do with all the quarters I

**(Gives quarters.)**

keep giving you...? All right, here's a deuce.

**GERSH**

**(Open hand to Morris.)**

'Nu' Morris, you're next.

**MORRIS**

**(Gives quarter.)**

*'Nuch' a quarter? Everyday? It's ridiculous. Here, 'schnorrer.' And if you don't stop 'vit dhat' rock and roll music all night long, I'll throw you out too, GODDAMN IT! I didn't escape the gas*

**(Sings.)**

*chambers to hear Elvis, Not me mister, I vant... "Swanee*

**(Looks up.)**

*How I love you, how I love you." You hear Monya? Tell 'em I vant*

**(Chants.)**

*a little Jolson and I want rent, I want rent, I want rent.*

**HYMIE**

Morris, don't tell me you're talking to Monya again? How many times have I told you, she died ten years ago. If Shaiya tells you, will you believe him...? Shaiya...?

**MORRIS**

*Do you think I would believe anything you say, cheater. Dhat's why I don't play gin with you anymore. You peek at the cards.*

**(Touches heart.)**

*You think I don't see, but I can feel it here.*

**GERSH**

Yup, I believe that's the last sign. He's definitely, banana bananas, tootie fruity. I've seen it before, Soon he'll start spitting and making that crazy noise.

**(MORRIS makes crazy noise, "OOEEEEAAA")**

**GERSH (cont'd)**

I wonder if Belleview still gives fifty bananas for Loony Tunes?

**HYMIE**

25 for you and 25 for me, you got a deal! Hey Moe, we're still waiting for the rolls, where's the rolls?

**MORRIS**

*Holes, don't worry, I got plenty holes, in my socks too. You're not the only vone 'mit' holes, but do I complain? But 'dhenk' God 've' have a little steam here. Feels good, no, Shaiya?*

**SHAIYA**

I hate to tell you this, but I 'believe' someone forgot to pay our gas and electric again this month. Lets hope we don't need steam in April.

**LEYZER**

Let me clean your glasses for you, Morris.

**GERSH**

He needs binoculars not glasses and the sounds he makes,

OOOEEEEAAA, it's like living with a freakin' pig, disgusting.

**(At director's discretion, MORRIS will make annoying rasping sounds throughout play.)**

**HYMIE**

You hear him? I'm telling you he's made Gersh crazy, and now, he's trying to do it to me. Ask him, Gersh are you crazy or what?

**GERSH**

I don't mind that he's deaf and dumb, but his mumbling, his  
**(Shivers and makes sound.)**  
mumbling drives me crazy, OOOEEEEAAA! I'm not crazy am I?

**HYMIE**

You see, I told you he made him crazy. First they spit and then they go OOOEEEEAAA. They call it banana bananas.

**MORRIS**

**(Sound.)**

'Nuch amul mit deh' OOOEEEEAAA? The only reason 'vhy' I let you live 'vit' me is, I like to beat you in Pinochle, makes me

**(Flexes arms, sound.)**

feel like I still got it, OOOEEEEAAA!

**HYMIE**

You got it all right.

**(MURRAY enters sneezing and coughing. ALL will interchange coughing, sneezing and sniffing, which at time will sound like a chorus. THEY put on 'talises'.)**

**MURRAY**

Business is bad enough as it is and it's all because of those 'Shvartzas' and Puerto Ricans. That's why all those rotten Jews left! Yesterday, sixteen people, and it's a good picture, you should see it. "On the Waterfront." The projectionist made more money than me and it's those sonofabitches fault. They take our apartments, our jobs but do they come to the Fenway? I hate them all!

**SHAIYA**

You hate them all, how can you hate them? Isn't Buster one of them and didn't he say he was circumcised?

**MORRIS**

That means he had a 'Bris' and that makes Buster's just as Jewish as we are. Why do you think he comes to *shul* every morning?

**HYMIE**

It took me all night, but I finally figured it out how much he'll

**(Voice.)**

say I owe him? "According to my little black book Uncle Hymie, you owe me a bundle."

**GERSH**

You owe him a bundle and what should I say? I'm ashamed to say how much I owe him.

**MURRAY**

*Him, who's him?*

**HYMIE**

Who do you think, 'yutz?' There's only one him...

**MURRAY**

...You mean Pinky? Pinky's *him*, right?

**GERSH**

I'll tell you if Pinky's *him* Murray, but it's gonna cost you a quarter.

**MURRAY**

**(Change from pocket, waves quarter.)**

Hmmm, look at this one, all nice and shiny.

**GERSH**

**(Takes quarter.)**

*What a beauty. Okay Hymie, tell Murray how much you owe him.*

**MORRIS**

*'Du hearst' Monya, they owe Pinky a fortune. Dopes, they're all dopes.*

**MURRAY**

And who told you to take all that money from Pinky? Who forced you? Think about it. Could any of us stay in business without *him*?

**HYMIE, ABIE, GERSH, MURRAY**

Without *him*, not a day.

**MORRIS**

*Dhank God I don't owe Pinky a dime, not a dime. And you know why, because I'm too smart for Pinky, I always 'vas,' ask him.*

**ABIE**

**(Sniffles.)**

You're smart, you were never smart, dummy, you're just retired... and if you still had the grocery, you'd owe Pinky, too. Maybe not as much as me, but you'd owe him.

**HYMIE**

It's a crying shame no one eats Kosher meat any more, no one. If I could only find someone to buy my butcher shop. Maybe I should just give it away... Hey, that's just what I should do. What an idea, perfect, I'll give *him* the business and we'll call it even-*Steven*. Am I brilliant or am I brilliant? Let *him* have the headaches. In fact, I say let's all give *him* our headaches and then we won't owe Pinky a dime.

**GERSH**

How long have I been trying to sell my Men's Emporium and how much am I asking, 15, \$20,000. That's what I owe Pinky and paying him off with it, brilliant, what an idea. Between this cold winter and the robberies I need the Bronx like a '*loch n' kupp*.'

**MORRIS**

Gersh, would you bring me a CUP also?

**HYMIE**

What kind of cup, what kind of cup?!

**MORRIS**

*He just said a CUP tea, didn't he, a CUP tea.*

**HYMIE**

A cup tea, he just said 'a loch n' KUPP,' what kind of cup tea?!  
I can't take him anymore. I'm giving Pinky the business and I'm  
**(Shivers and screams.)**  
getting out of here before I go OOOEEEEAAA like him.

**MORRIS**

*You don't have to shout, 'Vhat' do you 'tink' I'm deaf?*

**HYMIE**

**(Ala Morris, laughs.)**

*'Vhat,' you deaf, are you kiddink?*

**SHAIYA**

*'Nu,' Hymie, I hope you're having a better week this week?*

**HYMIE**

A few chickens, 15, 20, not that many. There was a time I would  
sell that many before eight o'clock and now, a little flanken, a  
couple pieces of liver, eight pullets, a dozen steaks...

**MURRAY**

At least you did a little business, I had sixteen people all  
day... Can you imagine, sixteen people, eight popcorns.

**HYMIE**

We know all about your eight popcorns. Enough with the popcorn  
and your projectionist made more than you. So, what else is new?  
New York, New Jersey?

**GERSH**

...I don't know how much longer I'll be able to take it. I  
believe they're going to turn the phone off in my store. I'm  
telling you, Shaiya is right. Long Island sounds better every  
minute. That's

**(Pleads to heaven.)**

where most of them went, isn't it? Please, Pinky, you call me  
your favorite uncle, take my Emporium and let's call it even-  
Steven, let me start over in peace.

**LEYZER**

I vote Israel, because that's where my beloved father used to go.

'Eiretz Yisroel.' That's definitely where you guys should go too.

**SHAIYA**

**(Sings Hatikva.)**

'Kol od ba layvov, pehneee-ee-mah...''

**LEYZER**

Thank you.

**SHAIYA**

Don't I always?

**HYMIE**

Israel, Miami Beach, if you ask me, "Too Jewish," they both have too many Jews.

**MORRIS**

'Dhe' News, only communists read 'dhe' News, now, 'dhe' Post, 'dhat's' a paper.

**(ABIE enters, carrying a package. ALL now sneeze, cough, sniffle and make sounds as they welcome ABIE.)**

**ABIE**

Now, that's what I call a greeting, 'Gehzunheit...!'

**MURRAY**

Abie, we were just talking about moving, I vote we go to Miami, Leyzer says Israel and Gersh wants Long Island. What do you think?

**ABIE**

I hate to tell you this but I'm moving to Texas.

**MORRIS**

Texas, 'Vit all 'deh' horses? All of a sudden you 'vant' horses?

**ABIE**

**(Dreamy.)**

Yeah, I'll never forget this Roy Rogers movie I saw at Murray's a couple of weeks ago, or was it Gene Autry?



**GERSH**

And what about Tom Mix, he's bad?

**ABIE**

Anyway, he looked like he was having such a good time, riding and  
(Sings.)  
roping, you should have heard him singing, "I'm an old cow hand,  
from the Rio Grand." That's why I'm moving to Texas.

**MORRIS**

*'What' taxes? I already paid my taxes! Dope.*

**HYMIE**

Texas, not taxes! Why the hell don't you get a hearing aid  
Goddamnit?

**MURRAY**

**(To Leyzer.)**

So tell me Mr. Attorney, why should Gersh and Hymie be the only  
ones starting out free and clear, what about me, don't I count?  
So, should I do it, should I move too?

**SHAIYA**

You're asking the wrong person if you should do it. Trust me, if  
it's in your heart, in the long run, if you're lucky you won't  
regret doing it, maybe.

**LEYZER**

Listen to my brother, he doesn't know how to spell regret. He  
always did what he wanted.

**MURRAY**

And after 40 years in business why should I be the only one with  
regrets, what am I a dope? Tomorrow, I'm giving Pinky the  
Fenway. Let's see how many popcorns he sells.

**HYMIE**

You should have done it fifteen years ago when it was still worth  
something. When all the 'Yidlachs' left, we should have gone too.

**GERSH**

Just think, maybe we should all move in together?

**MAX**

**(Enters looking bedraggled.)**

I'm sorry I'm late... The snow, traffic was terrible. Pop, we

**(Puts on talis.)**

finally brought Wendy home yesterday, sorry I didn't call.

**LEYZER**

'*Mazel tov.*' So, how is my beautiful granddaughter?

**SHAIYA**

Is she any better...?

**MAX**

The doctors think she is. Let's hope for the best.

**LEYZER**

With God's help, with God's help.

**SHAIYA**

Where was your God when she got sick in the first place...?

**LEYZER**

Shaiya, it's not our place to question the Almighty.

**(THEY look at each other and smile as a dapper PINKY enters.)**

**PINKY**

**(Puts on talis.)**

Sorry I'm late. Okay, get my favorite '*schvartza*' and the '*Shamos*' and let's get going, because God waits for no one, right boys?

**HYMIE**

Except you Pinky.

**PINKY**

Not even, me.

**(The SHAMOS and BUSTER enter.)**

**SHAMOS**

I'm sorry we're late. Some '*momzeh*' broke a window again last

night and I had to help Buster fix it. That's what you get for being a 'Shamos' now-a-days. When your father was alive, 'olev hasholem,' I was respected, I ran the 'shul,' I took care of the day-care center and I made sure everything was in order. 35 years later I'm a Goddamn super.

**BUSTER**

There's nothin' wrong bein' a super. My papa didn't mind being a super, 'cause was the best super there was.

**LEYZER**

That's telling him Buster.

**SHAIYA**

Good for you.

**PINKY**

Boys, please, I haven't got all day. Can we please get on with it? I mean, don't you guys have to open your stores?

(The 'Shamos' puts on 'talis' and 'yarmulka' and Buster puts on 'yarmulka.' WE hear SHAIYA and ALL chant *Shacharit*.' After chanting, they shake hands and as they begin to depart ABIE takes Pinky to the side as HYMIE, with open hand tries to collect quarters.)

**ABIE**

... 'Nu' Pinky.

**PINKY**

If I knew, I'd win the fifth at Yonkers tonight. So, what can I do for my uncle Abie, how much do you need this time?

**ABIE**

Not that much 'boichic,' 5-600 tops. It's not my fault I keep borrowing, business is terrible, it's not my fault.

**PINKY**

*The neighborhood's changed,* it's not your fault that everybody's leaving, but we'll make it, we always have, do we have a choice?

**ABIE**

Yeah, 5, \$600, it's not that much. The rent, gas and electric, the telephone. Believe me, before you turn around, you're right,

we'll make it, we have to.

**PINKY**

**(Looks at black book - counts, gives money.)**

Here's eight, that makes it an even eighteen grand. 'Zai gehzunt'  
Uncle Abie and give Con Ed my best.

**ABIE**

Thank you Pinky, one day, I'll pay you back.

**PINKY**

You know how I'm counting on it.

**(ABIE waits as GERSH comes to PINKY.)**

**GERSH**

'Nu' Pinky? How's my favorite nephew?

**PINKY**

Not bad, but what's important is, how's my Uncle Gersh?

**GERSH**

How should Gersh be, I'm asking you, with business so lousy.  
Listen, I can use \$700, what do you say?

**PINKY**

**(Looks at black book.)**

Why don't you take nine hundred and make it an even twenty thou.

**GERSH**

That much huh? Okay, what the heck, if you insist.

**PINKY**

**(Counts and gives money.)**

No, you insist, Con Ed?

**GERSH**

And the rent, I had to buy two new fluorescents, don't ask...

**(Puts money in wallet.)**

Thank you Pinky, one day I'll pay you back.

**PINKY**

I sure hope so. Anyone else, Murray, Hymie?

**MURRAY**

Maybe next week, Pinky.  
Maybe next week.

**HYMIE**

I'll call you later.

**PINKY**

All right, I gotta get moving. I gotta lotta business to attend to. Anyone want a lift to anywhere within reason. Hey, Caruso,  
**(Leaving, to SHAIYA.)**  
give Sandy my regards, tell her I'll call her tonight.

**SHAIYA**

Sure Pinky.

**(ALL depart except the SHAMOS, LEYZER, SHAIYA, BUSTER and ABIE.)**

**LEYZER**

Why does he keep calling her?

**SHAIYA**

You know how he likes her

**ABIE**

**(Gives box.)**

Buster, with this weather, I thought maybe you could use these. Nobody's left to buy them anyway. Use them in the best of health. You need sneakers, I got plenty. I'll bring you tomorrow.

**BUSTER**

**(Opens package and shows boots.)**

Why, thanks Abie, I sure could use these boots... Always giving me things. If it wasn't for you guys, I guess I don't know what I'd do. Can't get too far on Social Security these days.

**ABIE**

It's my pleasure, 'boichic' and I thank you, because, if not for  
**(Exits.)**  
you, would we still have a 'minyanyan? 'Zai gehzunt.'

**SHAMOS**

**(Looks at boots.)**

Let's see those galoshes he gave you... Oh, these are very good for the snow, very nice, thank God there are still Jews left in this world, right Buster...?

**BUSTER**

Thank you Jesus.

**LEYZER**

Personally I think someone should tell the boys to stop borrowing from Pinky, they must owe him a fortune by now.

**SHAIYA**

If they don't borrow from Pinky, who are they supposed to borrow from, the man-in-the-moon? How would they stay in business with out borrowing from 'him' and now it looks like it's our turn.

**LEYZER**

I've told you a hundred times, forget it.

**SHAIYA**

Leyzer, don't you understand, we haven't paid our utility bill for the last six months. I told Con Ed that our donations have declined considerably and we'll pay them as soon as possible. If we don't ask Pinky for his help, we're going to have to close. Come to think of it, that just might be a blessing in disguise.

**BUSTER**

There's still a few people that really depend on this 'shul,' including me and ev'rybody knows it means more than anything to Pinky. Why don't you give him a chance to help us, he'd sure appreciate it.

**MAX**

We could sure use his help Pop... Tell me, how much longer can we hold out?

**LEYZER**

...According to your beloved grandfather, may he rest in peace, forever, right Shaiya?

**SHAIYA**

And you still believe him, unbelievable.

**BUSTER**

Lets have a bingo game. Our Lady of Victory has a bingo game every Monday night and they make a fortune. I'll ask my friends to come. I'll make potato 'latkes' chopped liver, they'll love it.

**LEYZER**

There aren't enough Jews left to play Chinese checkers and you want to play bingo? And you remembered I love potato latkes, what a guy.

**(BUSTER smiles.)**

**MAX**

I wonder what 'Zeydey' would do if he was in our shoes?

**SHAIYA**

Probably take them off.

**SHAMOS**

Your father never had such problems, because he had a million people coming to 'shul.' Now, we don't even have enough for a 'minyan' and we can't pay our bills. It's been six months since any of us got paid. How long can this go on, don't I have to eat, pay rent? Leyzer, why don't you speak to Pinky, what are you waiting for?

**LEYZER**

Again with Pinky?

**SHAIYA**

You got any better ideas?

**LEYZER**

I certainly do, let's go see our little Wendy. God, please make her all right.

(Lights.)

End of Scene 1

# An Old JEW'S *Blues*

ACT I

Scene 2

6: P. M.  
The same day.

BUSTER, lying down and sort of listening to the T.V. when suddenly we hear a window smash. He jumps up and grabs a bat.



**BUSTER**

That's the back window. Must be those sons-a-bitches again. Paintin' those swastikas wasn't enough, now they throwin' bricks through the windows. Jesus, I think I hear them in the *shul*. Wish I could get my hands on their parents 'cause it's gotta to be their fault. Ain't nobody born an anti-Semite, that's something you are taught.

**(HE steals HIS way into temple and is stunned when HE sees a shivering, naked WENDY crying hysterically and waving a knife, maniacally.)**

**WENDY**

*...Come out, come out where ever you are. Ready or not, here I  
(Laughs maniacally.)  
comme.*

**BUSTER**

**(Nears her.)**

Oh, my God. Wendy, my sweet little Wendy, it's Buster, remember me?

**WENDY**

**(Waving knife.)**

*Ready or not, here I commme... Come out, come out where ever you are.*

**BUSTER**

*...It's me, Buster, we used to be best friends. Oh, sweet Jesus, what am I going to do, she's gonna freeze to death. Don't go*

**(Runs and exits.)**

*anywhere Wendy. I'll be right back, right back.*

**WENDY**

**(Sort of singing.)**

*"I'm going to kill you, I'm going to kill you."*

**BUSTER**

**(Returns with blanket.)**

Here sweetheart, why don't you put this around you, you must be

freezin'.

**(When SHE puts knife down and takes blanket BUSTER  
grabs knife.)**

**WENDY**

**(Almost delirious.) (Cries.)**

*Come out come out where ever you are.*

**BUSTER**

Why, I remember when you was a little girl, that's exactly what you use to say when we played hide-and-seek. Remember how you use to always hide and I'd try to find you? You used to love when I was 'It,' so, I guess I was 'It' most of the time, just so I could hear you laugh and how you'd laugh.

**WENDY**

*Ready or not here I come...*

**BUSTER**

*...Come out come out where ever you are. You're even prettier now than when you were a little girl. You had the greatest laugh I ever heard...*

**(WENDY cries.)**

**BUSTER (cont'd)**

Oh, little sweetheart, you don't want to cry, you want to laugh, why don't you take a little nap, your eyes are so red, might, do you a little good.

**(WENDY lies down in front of ark.)**

**BUSTER (cont'd)**

That's a good girl, go to sleep and dream of pretty things... Your Mama and Papa must sure be worried about you.

**(He kisses her, dims the light, looks through phone book,  
goes to phone and dials.)**

*...Trudie, it's Buster, I found Wendy... Yeah, just like the last time... She's here, sorta sleepin'. Can you come and get her...? I know it's Shabbos but she's in bad shape. I don't think you should wait... Should I call an ambulance...? Well, all right, I'll try to get a cab...*

**End of Scene 2**

# An Old JEW'S *Blues*

## ACT I

### Scene 3

One hour later.

MAX and TRUDIE'S living room.  
They are drinking wine and  
pacing.

**LEYZER**

Some brother, you forgot again?

**SHAIYA**

May I ask what I forgot again?

**LEYZER**

This Friday will be six years that Rivka died.

**SHAIYA**

I didn't forget, in fact that's exactly what I was trying to do,  
forget, your wife was my best friend.

**LEYZER**

They say time heals all wounds, so how come I still feel so  
rotten? The loneliness still makes me feel like I don't want to go  
on.

**SHAIYA**

And I do? When Pessie passed away, for a second I thought I  
was... Don't you remember, I also wanted to die. If it wasn't for  
my girls and Wendy...

**LEYZER**

...And my Max.

**SHAIYA**

And you, you only saved my life. No big deal and if you didn't  
make me move into your beautiful home...

**LEYZER**

...Our beautiful home, remember?

**SHAIYA**

I don't know what I would have done. I'll never forget what you did and still do for me and I don't know why I'm rambling like this?

**LEYZER**

I Think Freud might say, it's probably because it's still on your mind.

**(SYLVIA and TRUDIE enter.)**

**TRUDIE**

'NU!' So, where are they already? It's been over an hour since Buster called.

**SYLVIA**

I can't believe you told him to take a cab, just because it's 'Shabbos.' Why didn't you go get her? She's still your daughter, isn't she?

**TRUDIE**

Exactly, she's 'my' daughter not yours. Besides, 'til I get there, they would be here.

**SYLVIA**

So, why aren't they here yet?

**LEYZER**

How long since she's been home from the institution, a year? We waited this long we can wait another few minutes.

**SHAIYA**

For Wendy I'd wait forever.

**MAX**

The doctors said she was much better. One minute she's laughing and the next minute she's crying, or babbling. Wait 'til you hear her, "Come out, come out where ever you are?" Thrilling.

**LEYZER**

'Neboch...'

**SHAIYA**

How could this happen?

**MAX**

They said we could take her home for a while, see how things went.

**(Sobs.)**

So, you see, I knew she wasn't better, I just knew.

**LEYZER**

Don't cry Max, you've cried enough.

**SHAIYA**

At one time or another, we've all had our share of tears.

**SYLVIA**

That's why I keep telling you, let me work on her, what do you have to lose? I've helped so many people, why won't you let me help your daughter, why?

**TRUDIE**

Because you want to hypnotize her, right?

**SYLVIA**

Exactly.

**TRUDIE**

Well, hypnosis is for idiots and my daughter is no idiot, thank you and I wish you'd forget it. Every time she comes home, you ask me and I say no, NO, NO, NO! Forget it, will you please forget it?!

**SYLVIA**

Don't you understand, I'm a psychologist that uses hypnosis, I can help her, I know I can.

**TRUDIE**

Help yourself damn it, help yourself and find a husband. Who's asking you for help?

**MAX**

Don't you two start fighting.  
Sisters are not supposed to fight.  
We have enough 'tsores' already.

**SYLVIA**

Don't start that. Again.  
Don't start that again.  
Please.

**TRUDIE**

Only 'goyim' believe in hypnosis.

**SYLVIA**

That's not true, why Freud himself...

**SHAIYA**

...Freud, *shmoid*, you have so many other patients to hypnotize, and what do you want from my poor Wendy?

**SYLVIA**

How many times have I told you that something traumatic, something terrible must have happened to her. I know it, I can feel it.

**(To Trudie)**

Why won't you let me find out what it is, why, what are you afraid of damn it, tell me!

**(LEYZER and SHAIYA try to divert attention.)**

**LEYZER**

'*Gutsten dank*' Buster found her again, isn't that something?

**SHAIYA**

He's some guy, that Buster, wonderful, just wonderful.

**MAX**

The best, I love him 'cause he's my favorite '*mensch*.'

**SHAIYA**

The perfect gentleman...

**LEYZER**

So, what are we going to do...?

**SHAIYA**

Do we ever have a choice? '*Azoy gaites*' that's the way it goes.

**LEYZER**

She'll be here any minute, better we should think of something good.

(There is a knock on the door.)

**SHAIYA**

You see, I told you she'd be all right.

(TRUDIE and MAX rush to open door and find PINKY and BUSTER standing there with blanket wrapped around a nude WENDY.)

<b>LEYZER</b>	<b>TRUDIE</b>	<b>SYLVIA</b>	<b>SHAIYA</b>	<b>MAX</b>	<b>PINKY</b>
'Oy gehvalt.	'Oy,'	My Wendy.	Wendy!	Oh, No.	Oh, my God. Shit!

(SYLVIA and TRUDIE rush to WENDY and take HER into bedroom. SHAIYA and LEYZER inundate BUSTER. PINKY listens as HE stares out window.)

**LEYZER**

(Hugging Buster.)

Not since Abraham, the father of our people has there been someone as noble as you my dear friend. You saved my grand daughter, I don't know how to thank you.

**BUSTER**

Aw, it wasn't really anything Leyzer and besides, since she was a little girl, I've always loved Wendy like the daughter I never had.

**SHAIYA**

Some 5,000 years ago Moses saved some lost Jews and today you saved a lost and bewildered little Jewish girl, my granddaughter.

**LEYZER**

So, tell me Buster, where did you find her?

**BUSTER**

...She broke into the temple.

**SHAIYA**

That's where you found her?

**LEYZER**

Don't you remember?

**BUSTER**

I heard a window break and I thought it was those punks again, but when I turned on the light, it was Wendy, she was completely naked...

**SHAIYA**

Poor sweetheart.

**PINKY**

Why?

**LEYZER**

Just like the last time.

**BUSTER**

And she was waving this knife singin' that "hide-and-seeK song."

**LEYZER**

I don't believe it.

**SHAIYA**

This time she took the kitchen knife.

**BUSTER**

"...Come out, come out where ever you are..."

**PINKY**

Didn't she go back to shul the last time? Seems like something in the 'shul' bothers her, what the hell could it be?

**BUSTER**

In the 'shul, it doesn't seem possible, does it Pinky...?

**(Heavy silence. After a beat.)**

**PINKY**

And what's this, Buster telling me that nobody's taking a salary? I'm making millions, living high off the hog while the only family I have, starves, not a chance because from now, and that means until our 'shul' gets on it's feet again, you're all taking a salary, immediately, because, like it or not, I'm taking over and that's on one condition, I don't want you to tell Sylvie.

**BUSTER**

Well, you know I won't say anything.

**LEYZER**

As always, you are more than generous, but I can't take your money.

**PINKY**

Why not, it's not dirty. Every dollar I have I made honestly. My



money is not 'traif,' so what is it? Why won't you let me help you? Who's more important to me than you and the 'shul?'

**SHAIYA**

I hope you're serious Pinky, because are we in hot water.

**PINKY**

I couldn't be more serious if my life depended on it.

**SHAIYA**

I'll give Leyzer an extra glass of wine tonight and he'll be happy, he always is.

**PINKY**

Why didn't you tell me things were so bad? I got more money than I know what to do with and since your gorgeous daughter Sylvie won't have anything to do with me, I thought, maybe if I save her father's 'shul,' maybe she'll give me a shot, but you can't tell

**(Writes check.)**

her. Here and if you need more, you got my number.

**SHAIYA**

**(Looks at check.)**

If this is a bribe then I accept and I'll speak to SYLVIA and put in a good word as soon as possible.

**PINKY**

I'd appreciate that Mr. Caruso. Now remember, if SYLVIA finds out, the deals off.

**(LEYZER suddenly clutches side and sits down.)**

**SHAIYA**

Leyzer, what's the matter.

**LEYZER**

I don't know, suddenly I don't feel so good.

**SHAIYA**

Sit down, should I call Finkel?

**LEYZER**

**(Rubs head and calls.)**

I don't need a doctor I don't need a doctor...

**(Lights flicker, time stands still as LEYZER speaks to HIS deceased FATHER.)**

**FATHER**

...You need a doctor like I need a '*luch n' kupp*' and did you say '*Yisker*' for me today? And you know why '*My*' '*shul*' is broke Mr. Attorney? As smart as you think you are, do you know how much money you've wasted all these years on your '*fahcockte*' Law Journals and all those books you've bought about your segregation? The hell with segregation and your Supreme Court, those anti-Semite bastards. It looks like you forgot what I taught you about '*tsdoke.*' You could have used all that money you wasted on '*My*' '*shul,*' my '*shul.*'

**(Lights flicker and WE return to the present. LEYZER sighs and sits as TRUDIE and SYLVIA enter from bedroom.)**

**SHAIYA**

So, how is my sweet '*mommaleh?*'

**TRUDIE**

She's fine Papa, she's taking a bath.

**LEYZER**

**(Groans.)**

*'Gutsten dank... Oy.'*

**SANDRA**

What's the matter Uncle Leyzer? You don't look so good.

**LEYZER**

There's nothing the matter sweetheart, I'm fine I'm fine.

**TRUDIE**

I don't know how to thank you for finding Wendy, Buster.

**(BUSTER smiles as TRUDIE touches BUSTER'S face. SHE and SYLVIA walk over to PINKY.)**

**TRUDIE**

And thank you for being there Pinky.

**PINKY**

**(Hugs her.)**

Thank you is unnecessary, we're family aren't we?

**SYLVIA**

Really, since when?

**TRUDIE**

How did you find her?

**PINKY**

I guess it was destiny. We were driving, maybe five miles an hour. It was snowing so hard I couldn't see a thing. Ya see, I was in the neighborhood and I passed the 'shul,' looking to see if anyone needed a lift, when Buster suddenly jumps in front of the limo. Luckily, Eddie was able to hit the brakes and stop, otherwise he would have nailed him for sure. So, I get out of the car and who do I see on the coldest night, in the middle of the worst freakin' blizzard in years, Buster, with a blanket wrapped around Wendy, freezing their Asses off.

**SHAIYA**

No.

**LEYZER**

Oh, my God.

**TRUDIE**

I can't take this.

**(Exits.)**

**PINKY**

I couldn't believe it. Sylvie, are you listening to me or what?

**SYLVIA**

Do I have a choice? Really Pinky, there's so much going on, I wish you would stop.

**PINKY**

**(Sits on couch.)**

...So, we put them in the car and I head here. Listen SYLVIA, I know this is not the right time, but, how's about me and you goin' to the Copa tonight? Sinatra's closing, I'll get us ringside seats, then we'll go to Jilly's and hoist a few, or, if you want, we can run over to Birdland, Sarah Vaughn's opening tonight.

**SYLVIA**

Tell Frank and Sarah I'm sorry, but I have to pass.

**PINKY**

Didn't I just save your niece's life? Doesn't that mean anything? What do I have to do, stand on my head and do cartwheels? How long are you going to torture me? You see this ring, it's emerald, four carats, cost me a bundle. Here, take it, it's

**(Takes off ring from pinky.)**

perfect.

**SYLVIA**

**(Looks at ring.)**

Are you sure it's perfect?

**PINKY**

**(Sings)**

Almost as perfect as you are, because to me, "You are so beautiful," you're number one.

**SYLVIA**

Too bad I can't say the same for you.

**(TRUDIE enters.)**

**SYLVIA (cont'd)**

Thank God she's home safe and sound.

**TRUDIE**

And thank God she finally fell a sleep.

**(LEYZER clutches side and groans.)**

**SHAIYA**

Leyzer, what's the matter...?

**MAX**

...You look terrible Pop, how do you feel?

**LEYZER**

My enemies should feel the way I do, 'Oy...'

**SHAIYA**

Maybe I should call the doctor.

**LEYZER**

I don't need a doctor.

**PINKY**

Listen, I just got an idea, since Leyzer doesn't feel so good, how's about I drive you all home? I mean I got this big stretch limousine down stairs and what the hell am I payin' Angelo all that money for, to sleep behind the wheel?

**MAX**

...Leave it to Pinky, he always gets great ideas. Come on, you should go before he changes his mind.

**SHAIYA**

You're sure we won't be taking you out of your way...?

**PINKY**

Let's get going I've got to get some sleep, I can't be late for our '*minyan*' tomorrow morning, can I? Come on Sylvie, I'll drop you off too.

**(SYLVIA rises and puts coat on.)**

**LEYZER**

**(Clutching side.)**

'Oy,' suddenly I got such a pain...

**(ALL are panicked.)**

<b>MAX</b>	<b>SHAIYA</b>	<b>PINKY</b>	<b>SYLVIA</b>	<b>TRUDIE</b>
A pain?	LEYZER?	Where?	Are you all right?	Uncle Leyzer.

**MAX**

There's something the matter, look how pale he looks...

**SHAIYA**

...And he's sweating.

**(As LEYZER falls PINKY catches HIM.)**

<b>MAX</b>	<b>SHAIYA</b>	<b>PINKY</b>
He needs a doctor!	Leyzer, what's	Let's take him to

call a doctor!

the matter?

the hospital.

**SYLVIA**

HURRY, he looks sick!

**TRUDIE**

...I'll call Dr. Finkel and tell him to meet us at the Bronx hospital...

**SYLVIA**

...You can't go, you have to stay here with Wendy. We'll call you soon as we find out what's wrong.

**PINKY**

Well, let's get going!

**SHAIYA**

**(Hugs Leyzer.)**

Listen you sonofabitch, I need you. You're my only brother, remember?

**(SHAIYA and PINKY help LEYZER. ALL leave. TRUDIE calls doctor.)**

**TRUDIE**

**(On phone.)**

Dr. Finkle, TRUDIE, you have to hurry, they're taking Uncle

**(Hangs up phone.)**

Leyzer to the Bronx Hospital. You're leaving right now, thank you.

**MAX**

I hope Papa's okay.

**TRUDIE**

He'll be fine.

**MAX**

Yeah, but how come I'm still worried?

**TRUDIE**

As usual your father probably drank too much and felt a little dizzy.

**MAX**

If anything ever happened to Papa...

**TRUDIE**

He'll be fine. Tell you the truth, I'm more worried about Wendy.

**MAX**

I guess so am I.

**TRUDIE**

What are we going to do?

**MAX**

We're not going to do anything. We're going to let her have a good night's sleep and in the morning everything will be fine.

**TRUDIE**

You really think so?

**MAX**

No.

**TRUDIE**

**(Emotional.)**

I just don't understand, for the last six or seven months, every time we went to see her she was perfect, all the doctors thought she was ready to come home. They said she's made great progress. What is it here that triggers her off? One minute she's happy and the next minute she's...

**MAX**

You know, after seeing a million psychiatrists, something still doesn't add up honey. Children that are disturbed usually are born like that. Wendy only became like that when she was...

**TRUDIE**

...Seven or eight.

**MAX**

Ya know I hate to say this, but I've always thought your sister was right, something terrible must have happened to her and she never told either one of us, what else could it be?

**TRUDIE**

Since you're as crazy as my sister, why don't you let her hypnotize you, you idiot. Maybe I'll finally find out what's

S. Goldberg

An Old JEW'S Blues

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wrong with you too.

**MAX**

I wish I knew, then, maybe I'd know what to do for my Wendy.  
Let's go to sleep.

**(Lights.)**

**End of Scene 3**

An Old **JEW'S** *Blues*



ACT I

Scene 4

The following day. In temple.

SHAMOS

I remember when his poor father had the same problem. That's what killed him.

PINKY

That was 30, 40 years ago. Come on, it's only a kidney not a heart, he'll be better before you know it.

SHAIYA

It's not just a kidney, my brother has very rare blood, A.B. negative.

MORRIS

*Didn't you hear?*

MURRAY

Look who asking didn't you hear?

HYMIE

Our all-knowing deaf sage.

MORRIS

*His father, 'olev hasholem' also died from his kidneys.*

GERSH

I know this ain't the right time but, anybody got an extra quarter? I could sure use one.

**(ALL look for quarters.)**

ABIE

Poor Leyzer needs a transplant and this 'schmuck' is still asking  
**(Gives quarter.)**

for quarters... Here's your quarter cheapskate. What a 'nuhdge.'

**PINKY**

That's what I like about you Gersh, you never stop.

**GERSH**

That's because Hymie says I got a one track mind, Quarters and aren't you glad?

**HYMIE**

We gotta find him something else to do.

**PINKY**

**(Gives quarters.)**

You talked me into it Uncle Gersh. 'Zai gehzunt,' here's three 'quarters.'

**ABIE**

How selfish can you get?

**MURRAY**

**(Gives quarter.)**

God forbid, but what happens if he, here 'nuhdge,' if he...?

**GERSH**

**(Loud.)**

...You got rare blood Mo? Come on, tell me the truth.

**MORRIS**

'Vhat?'

**HYMIE and GERSH**

YOU GOT RARE BLOOD?!

**MORRIS**

'Vhat?'

**MURRAY**

AB NEGATIVE, YOU GOT AB NEGATIVE BLOOD?

**BUSTER**

Did you say AB negative?

**GERSH**

Don't tell me you're going deaf too?

**BUSTER**

I ain't goin' deaf, but I think I got, yeah, I'm pretty sure that I got the same kind of blood.

**SHAMOS**

Don't be ridiculous, how can you have the same type of blood as Leyzer, you're not Jewish.

**BUSTER**

Even though I wasn't raised Jewish, according to my pappy, his grandfather was born in Lema, South Africa and he swore he was Jewish. Never ate pork, circumcised the boys, guess that's why he did me. Even said we come from Aaron, you know, Moses' brother. Far as I'm concerned, that makes us all brothers, and that's what they used to say when I was a kid; I got AB negative blood. Who knows, all I know is what I know.

**MAX**

Fantastic!

**SHAMOS**

Impossible!

**SHAIYA**

'Halavai!'

**Pinky**

That's my Buster

**MAX**

Oh, Buster, would you really consider giving my father one of your kidneys? You'd save his life, you'd save my father's life.

**SHAIYA**

It's a very dangerous operation, don't feel as if you have to...

**BUSTER**

Why, for my man Leyzer I'd do anything. You guys are my best friends. Always have me over for 'Hanukah, Rosh Hashanah, all the holidays, even made sure I always have a Christmas tree. 'Magine that, havin' a Christmas tree in a synagogue. I love Leyzer, since the day I met him.

**(SHAIYA and MAX hug BUSTER.)**

**HYMIE**

Still hate them all Murray?

**MURRAY**

Didn't I tell you not Buster, Buster's a '*mensch*.'

**MAX**

We better rush you over to the hospital immediately.

**SHAIYA**

I'm sure they'll have to do a million tests.

**BUSTER**

**(Sort of laughs to ease tension.)**

Well, I never was too good taking them arithmetic tests, know what I mean?

**SHAIYA**

Oh, Buster, what can I say...

**MAX**

Don't say anything. Let's leave before he changes his mind. Come on Uncle Shaiya, I'll get the car, he has to go home and get his toothbrush doesn't he?

**(MAX, BUSTER and SHAIYA exit.)**

**HYMIE**

A kidney still has to do with the pecker, right?

**GERSH**

Kidney, pecker, pecker, kidney. Yeah, I believe it does.

**MURRAY**

Of all the luck, I bet Leyzer's '*schmeckle*' grows six inches.

**MORRIS**

*And a lot good it will do him. He hasn't looked at another woman since Rivka died. 'Vhat a vaste.'*

**SHAMOS**

Waste or no waste, to me it's still a sin.

**MURRAY**

Sin, what kind of sin?

**SHAMOS**

Where is it written in the bible that you are allowed to mix Kosher with '*traif*' and what is Buster's kidney made of, one hundred per cent '*traif*.'

**HYMIE**

Didn't you hear Moses say his grandfather was Jewish?

**SHAMOS**

You believe him?

**HYMIE**

And you call yourself Leyzer's friend? Without Buster's kidney, Leyzer could die.

**SHAMOS**

His father didn't die for a long time. Eight-ten years and what kind of a black man would risk his life for a Jew? Is that normal? Ask yourself, '*Traif*' is '*traif*' and a '*goy*' is a '*goy*', always.

**End of Scene 4**

## An Old JEW'S *Blues*

**ACT I**

**Scene 5**

**That afternoon.**

**LEYZER'S living room. WENDY cries throughout.**

**SYLVIA**

What's the matter pussycat, what's the matter... Please don't cry,

visiting hours are almost over, mommy will be home soon... Why

**(Wendy comes to SYLVIA.)**

don't you come to Aunt Sylvie and let me give you a hug. Now, would you like me to brush your beautiful hair? You always liked when I brushed your hair. Now, don't you worry about a thing

**(Takes brush from purse and starts to brush hair.)**

pussycat not a thing. I know you're worried about your Grandpa Leyzer, but he'll be fine.

**TRUDIE**

**(sobs)**

Are you sure grandpa'll be all right?

**SANDRA**

Am I sure? As sure as I am that you are getting more beautiful by the minute.

**WENDY**

**(Sobs.)**

You're only saying that.

**SYLVIA**

Hey, I just got a fabulous idea. Remember how we used to play all those games when you were a little kid? How would you like your favorite Aunt to play a game with you?

**WENDY**

What kind of game?

**SYLVIA**

The most wonderful game you ever played.

**WENDY**

Really, better than pick-up sticks? Oh, please Aunt SYLVIA. Pretty please. I want to play, I really do.

**SYLVIA**

Okay wise guy, now except for the *needle*, nothing's going to hurt.

**WENDY**

NEEDLE???

**SYLVIA**

I'm only kidding, now listen pussycat, this is a very tricky game, so you have to do everything I say if you really want to have

**(Takes gold watch from neck and swings it.)**

lots and lots of fun... Now, I'm going to swing this watch back and forth. I want you to follow it with your eyes. When you get sleepy, just close your eyes and think of all your best friends.

I'm going to ask you questions. Think of good things and speak

**(She kisses Wendy.)**

very slowly. *Now, iz youz ready baby?*

**WENDY**

*Iz ready, baby.*

**SYLVIA**

Think of a warm sunny day, you are in Hawaii, floating on a raft in the middle of the blue Pacific Ocean, you see a dolphin and you pet it, a beautiful Macaw lands on your shoulder and sings you a song, a puppy licks your face, you are getting tired... Keep looking at the watch, isn't this fun? You are walking on the Moon and pick a star. "Twinkle, twinkle little star." You make a wish and meet Prince Charming, "My, how beautiful you are," the Prince says as he takes you in his arms and kisses you... You are getting sleepy, sleep, sleep my precious... Keep looking at the watch,

**(Wendy is under the influence.)**

sleep... You are asleep. Speak slowly and tell me your wish.

**WENDY**

I wish I never have to go back to the institution.

**SYLVIA**

Go on.

**WENDY**

I wish I could be with Mommy and Daddy all the time.

**SYLVIA**

You are four years old, what do you like best.

**WENDY**

Going to the zoo and riding on Daddy's shoulders, eating cotton candy, hot dogs and peanut butter and jelly sandwiches.

**SYLVIA**

You are now five years old, tell me what you like best.

**WENDY**

I LOVE KINDERGARTEN AND MY TEACHER MRS. PORILES, I like learning the, A, B, C's, playing house, Mickey Mouse, but most of all I love my friend Genna.

**SYLVIA**

I remember your friend Genna, she was wonderful... You are now six years old, tell me what you like best.

**WENDY**

I love Daddy best, he taught me how to ride my bike, I love to ride my bike. Mommy is teaching me how to read, I like that because none of my friends can read yet but I can and I like chocolate pudding. *Mmmm*, it's really delicious, and the Lone Ranger and Tonto and don't forget Superman. He's my favorite and now Janet's my best friend too. Genna and Janet, they're the greatest.

**SYLVIA**

Yes, they were... Okay, we're really growing up. You are seven years old now young lady, what do you have to say for yourself?

**WENDY**

I like going to the Y, even though I can't play ping-pong that good. I don't like Hebrew lessons too much, but I have to go because of Grandpa Shaiya and Grandpa Leyzer... I love Grandpa Shaiya but he always gives me wet kisses and Grandma Rivka bakes the best cookies. She always sneaks me one before dinner and Mommy doesn't know. I just love Grandma Rivka.

**SYLVIA**

You are just doing wonderful sweetheart, now, you are beginning to reach old age; you are eight. What do you remember, you old lady?

**WENDY**

I like Billy, he's so cute and Grandpa takes me to 'shul' every  
**(Starts to weep.)**  
Saturday... I don't like to go to 'shul.' I hate it, I hate it, I hate it!

**(WE see TRUDIE tip toe in and listen.)**



**SYLVIA**

Why do you hate going to *shul*, tell me why you hate it.

**WENDY**

**(Sobs.)**

Because he wants to, he touches me all over, he puts it in my...  
"Come out, come out where ever you are." I'm going to kill him,  
I'm going to kill him.

**SYLVIA**

Who touches you all over?

**WENDY**

I just hate it and I'm going to kill him...! "Come out, come out  
where ever you are..."

**SYLVIA**

Who touches you all over...?

**(TRUDIE steps forward screaming.)**

**TRUDIE**

Who do you think...?! Don't you remember, she used to play  
hide-and-peek with Buster! I'm going to kill that sonofabitch, do  
you hear and then I'm going to kill you! I don't believe it, my  
own sister. How dare you hypnotize my daughter, how dare you?!

**SYLVIA**

TRUDIE! What the hell are you doing here? You are not allowed to  
interrupt when someone is... Get out God-damn-it, get the hell  
out!

**TRUDIE**

I'm going to cut his heart out. Then, I'm going to kill that  
sonofabitch!!! And then I'm going to kill you! Do you hear? I'm  
going to kill you! How dare you, after I told you not to! How  
dare you!

**SYLVIA**

TRUDIE, WILL YOU PLEASE LEAVE?! Do you know what this can do to  
your daughter? Oh, my sweet Wendy. Now, when I count to three

and snap my fingers, you will wake up and forget everything that just

**(Snaps fingers.)**

Happened, one, two three.

**(Awakening, sensing something is wrong, WENDY cries and hides in corner.)**

**TRUDIE**

That black sonofabitch, I'm going to kill him, do you hear, I'm going to kill him!

**SANDRA**

How can you be so sure it was Buster, she never said it was him.

**TRUDIE**

You can rest assured it was him, who else could it be, who else played hide-and-seek with her and how can you go behind my back, my own sister! LIAR! YOU'RE A LIAR!

**SYLVIA**

She was just about to tell me when you... How can you be so sure?

**TRUDIE**

**(Rushes to phone and dials.)**

I'm going to tell everyone, you hear, everyone, and right now, I don't know whom I hate more, you or Buster! And I'm going to

**(Into phone.)**

tell them that too...! Papa...? Oh, Papa you won't believe what Sylvie did.

**WENDY**

**(Steps forward.)**

Jack and Jill went up the hill to fetch a pail of water. Jack fell down and broke his crown and Jill came tumbling after.

**(Lights)**

**End of Scene 5**

# An Old JEW'S *Blues*

## ACT II

### Scene 1

Later.

EYZER and BUSTER are in bed  
when SHAIYA sneaks in.

SHAIYA

Shhh... How are you Leyz?

LEYZER

They say I'm still alive.

BUSTER

Don't believe them.

SHAIYA

I have to talk to you, it's very important.

**LEYZER**

Okay, let me have it.

**SHAIYA**

I mean in private.

**LEYZER**

I'm afraid this is as private as it's going to get for awhile, unless you give me a piggy-back around the ward.

**SHAIYA**

I said private and I mean it.

**BUSTER**

**(Laughs.)**

How's about I close my eyes?

**LEYZER**

Are you going to tell me or what? Now, what's the big secret?

**SHAIYA**

**(Looks at Buster.)**

I just spoke to Trudie.

**LEYZER**

'*Mazel tov,*' and how is my beautiful niece?

**SHAIYA**

She walked in and caught Sandy hypnotizing Wendy.

**LEYZER**

World War three?

**SHAIYA**

'*Nuch erge,*' worse than Hiroshima, they're not talking. Sisters, '*nu?*' She said she heard Wendy say... "Remember when we used to

**(Points at Buster.)**

bring Wendy to *shul* and she played hide-and-seek with you, Buster?"

**BUSTER**

Sure do and I loved ev'ry minute. We played for years... and then something happened to her... Poor kid.

**SHAIYA**

Something happened all right.

**LEYZER**

So, what happened?

**SHAIYA**

Would you like to tell us you pervert!

**LEYZER**

PERVERT, are you crazy, Buster's no pervert.

**SHAIYA**

I'm not crazy. Trudie told me that Buster molested her and I'm going to kill him.

**LEYZER**

Buster molested Wendy?

**BUSTER**

What do you mean?

**SHAIYA**

According to Trudie he did. She just told me that's what made Wendy...

**LEYZER**

...Oh, please, do you actually think our Buster would do such a thing? You're talking about the man that's about to save my life, remember?

**BUSTER**

Don't get yourself so excited Leyzer, it's all right, don't worry, 'cause it ain't true.

**SHAIYA**

It's just because, he feels guilty, don't you Buster?

**LEYZER**

He doesn't have to feel guilty about anything and he doesn't owe me a thing, we're friends remember, the three of us.

**SHAIYA**

I'm no friend of this, this....

**LEYZER**

Shaiya, you can't mean what you just said.

**SHAIYA**

Every word, every word!

**LEYZER**

Buster's been with us for fifteen years and for fifteen years you've called him a prince, a '*mensch*,' and so did I.

**SHAIYA**

Well I was wrong and so were you. Trudie didn't call him a prince, she called him a pedophile.

**BUSTER**

Pedo what?

**LEYZER**

Did Sandy say it too, she did the hypnotizing didn't she?

**SHAIYA**

I didn't talk to Sandy yet.

**LEYZER**

Well, what are you waiting for, I'm sure Trudie misunderstood her, she has to be mistaken. You're talking about a man I love and you love him too and you know it. This has to be a misunderstanding. Where are you going?

**SHAIYA**

**(Exits.)**

To talk to Sandy!

**LEYZER**

Buster, I'm sure there's some mistake.

**BUSTER**

How could Shaiya, of all people accuse me.

**(The NURSE enters, prepares and listens.)**

**LEYZER**

Don't tell anyone, but I think I'm really scared.

**BUSTER**

Tomorrow's when you should be scared, 'cause that's when they're doin' it, today they're just doin' tests. One's gonna hurt real bad. The nurse is here to give us a shot and put us out.

**LEYZER**

She better put us out. Even though I hate needles, I hate pain more.

**NURSE**

Now don't you mind, you won't feel a thing and I think you sure are special, imagine, a rabbi giving one of his kidneys to a colored man. The whole world should know about this.

**LEYZER**

Hey, wait a minute, you got that all wrong. Buster's giving me one of his kidneys, not the other way around.

**NURSE**

Are you sure?

**BUSTER**

You better tell those doctors not to give me one of Leyzer's kidneys, no way.

**NURSE**

**(Laughs.)**

Oh, I'll tell them, but they never listen to me. Never do. Too busy.

**BUSTER**

Are you kidding, they better listen this time.

**NURSE**

I ain't kidding. Now, I want you two, to roll over like nice little boys. I have to prep you and give you a shot.

**BUSTER**

**(Cowering.)**

I hate needles.

**NURSE**

**(Laughs.)**

I betcha we're related, 'cause I hate needles too. Guess that's why I'm giving it to you instead of me.

**LEYZER**

Please make sure they get it right.

**NURSE**

**(Gives shot - looks at ass, shot.)**

Don't worry. Now, roll over Beethoven, you're next... How cute.

**BUSTER**

Oh my God, do you feel what I feel Leyzer?... I'm flyin'...

**LEYZER**

Buster, are you okay...? Oh boy, I'm not feeling too much pain myself.

**(NURSE exits.)**

**End of Scene 1**



# An Old JEW'S *Blues*

## ACT II

### Scene 2

**A few hours later**

**In Temple**

#### SHAMOS

The reason why I called this emergency meeting is, I blame myself for what happened to poor little Wendy, that sweet '*buhbala*.' It was I, not you that allowed that '*shvartza chorlehrya*' to live in my '*shul*' the last fifteen years and why, because I had pity on him. God should only have pity on me. I'll cut his evil heart out, that's what I'll do. I'll show him some pity; I'll show him some pity. How could I be such a fool? And Abie kept '*schtupping*' him with shoes.

#### ABIE

He's been my friend for years.

#### SHAMOS

And how many steaks did you give him Hymie, I mean prime T-bones. And how many sweaters and jackets did you give him GERSH? We're all fools.

#### GERSH

If caring about a friend makes you a fool, then I'm a fool.

**MORRIS**

*Cool, ve got so much steam here and you're cool? Murray, are you cool too?*

**MURRAY**

**(Slaps Morris five.)**

The coolest, give me five Pops.

**SHAMOS**

I thought we were talking about getting rid of Buster? He should only rot in hell.

**ABIE**

We've been friends for years. Now, all of a sudden he should rot in hell? Isn't he giving Leyzer his kidney?

**HYMIE**

**MURRAY**

**GERSH**

**MORRIS**

It's crazy. We're friends. Doesn't make sense. *Meshugeh.*

**SHAMOS**

As soon as the operation is over we have to kill him. I'll cut his heart out that's what I'll do.

**HYMIE**

Cut his heart out, are you crazy?

**MORRIS**

*'Poisonally' I don't believe he did it, not Buster.*

**ABIE**

Neither do I.

**SHAMOS**

YOU DON'T BELIEVE IT, YOU DON'T BELIEVE IT?! TRUDY SAID HE DID IT. I'M TELLING YOU HE DID IT! WHO ELSE IF NOT HIM?

**ABIE**

He's giving his kidney to save Leyzer's life. Buster, never.

**MURRAY**

To me he's always been a pussycat.

**(ALL drink. There is a knock on the door. MORRIS looks under the pew.)**

**HYMIE**

Morris, what are you doing.

**MORRIS**

*I thought I heard something drop.*

**HYMIE**

That was a knock on the door.

**MORRIS**

'VHAT?'

**ALL except SHAMOS**

THAT WAS A KNOCK ON THE DOOR.

**MORRIS**

*More, I don't have any more. I've given you enough, Goddamnit!  
No more AND I VANT RENT, I VANT RENT, I VANT RENT!*

**PINKY**

**(Enters.)**

Gentlemen... So, what's this big emergency, that it couldn't wait 'til the morning and it better be good.

**SHAMOS**

Pinky, I'd like to talk to you in private.

**PINKY**

Private huh, emergency huh?

**(PINKY and the SHAMOS go to the side.)**

**PINKY (cont'd)**

Okay, shoot, what is it?

**SHAMOS**

I want you to do it for me.

**PINKY**

Do what?

**SHAMOS**

**(Fist motion.)**

You know, give it to him.

**PINKY**

Give what to who, will you talk English?

**SHAMOS**

**(Whispers.)**

Buster, I want you to kill him. Cut his heart out. He deserves it, doesn't he?

**PINKY**

**(Loud.)**

This is your emergency? Are you crazy or what?

**SHAMOS**

Please, I'm begging you.

**PINKY**

**(walks to guys)**

Kill him yourself and leave me alone, will you please? This *shmuck* wants me to...

**HYMIE**

...Kill Buster.

**PINKY**

Exactly.

**ABIE**

Who does he think you are, Elliot Ness?

**PINKY**

You mean Al Capone?

**MORRIS**

'Deh' phone 'dey' closed your phone Abie? I'm sorry. And I was just going to call you too.

**SHAMOS**

Forget about the phone. We have to kill Buster. The Bible says,  
"An eye for an eye."

**PINKY**

Nobody's killing anybody yet. We just have to wait 'til after the operation, then we'll find out exactly what happened. If Buster molested Wendy and that's a big if, then, we'll deal with it, one way or another.

**(cross fade to Hospital. We see a repeat of Scene 1 as his FATHER ends sermon.)**

**LEYZER (cont'd)**

**(Hallucinating from shot.)**

Papa?

**FATHER**

And so, my dear friends, here in the Bronx, with my two beloved sons and the 'Shamos' to lead you, I can assure you that the 'Besmedresh HaGadol' will last forever. I promise. May you continue to do good deeds and may your doors always be open to strangers in need and even though this is officially my last day, my door as always is open to each and every one of you. I love you all, now go home and have a 'zeesen Pesach.'

**LEYZER**

**(Crying.)**

Papa, don't make us do this.

**SHAIYA**

What us, you mean you 'schmuck,' you mean you!

**SHAMOS**

...After what your father's just has been through. How many operations did he have and you dare to disobey him again?

**SHAIYA**

You got it and if my older brother weren't such a 'yold,' he'd tell him to shove it too. Do you actually think I'd waste my life being a cantor in his 'shul, are you crazy? What the hell did he ever do for Leyzer or me, besides make us feel like we were never

worth his time. Well, I hate to tell you this Pa, but your prophesy has come true, I'm definitely not worth your time, no, way.

**FATHER**

You'll see you'll be sorry. Without me, you'll be sorry and then we'll see what becomes of you and your life.

**SHAIYA**

I can't wait, can you?

**LEYZER**

Shaiya, please don't go, forgive Papa, you have too, he's...

**SHAIYA**

Are you trying to say he's dying? Well spit it out, you've been calling me every week telling me that he's dying. He's been dying the past ten years, hasn't he and his dying has been killing you and me.

**LEYZER**

Make up with him before it's too late. You better clear up what ever it is between you and Papa, while you still have time or you might regret it for the rest of your life.

**SHAIYA**

And I suppose you'll be happy, right?

**FATHER**

Goodbye and good riddance to you and your big mouth. You were never like my Leyzer, my Leyzer always listens...

**SHAIYA**

...To what, your bullshit, save it for your congregation, they're dumb enough to buy it, but my own brother, I don't believe it.

**LEYZER**

Even though I want to be an attorney more than anything and one day I'll do it, but right now, someone has to take over. What'll happen to the 'shul' if I don't, what else can I do, what about God?

**SHAIYA**

Mama died and you still believe in God, there is no God, how can you still believe in God?

**LEYZER**

Don't blame God, it wasn't His fault that Mama died... I can't, I  
**(Sobs.)**  
Can't let go, he made me promise he made me, he made me.

**SHAIYA**

So, what else is new? I was always the bad one, because I wouldn't take it, you took it you always took it. This is nuts, since you were a kid, you were destined to be a lawyer... Don't you understand? Didn't you promise Mama you'd become a lawyer...? He's warped; he's a selfish bastard that only cares about himself and '*HIS SHUL!*' How many times have you called him a selfish bastard behind his back? Well, go ahead, be my guest. See if I care, just make sure after Papa's gone, you try and have a good time in your '*Besmedresh HaGadol.*' That's spelled with a capital P, for prison, pour prison, you'll always be in prison and I'll

**(Laughs - exits.)**

Be free, ha, ha, ha.

**FATHER**

Did you see how he exploded?

**SHAMOS**

Terrible just terrible, he was always like that.

**LEYZER**

Don't worry Papa, he'll come back, he has to.

**FATHER**

He'll come back all right, on his knees, begging to sing in my '*shul.*' You'll see, mark my words.

**SHAMOS**

**(Hugs Father.)**

Children, I'll never understand them.

**(Lights)**

**End of Scene 2**

# An Old JEW'S *Blues*

## ACT II

### Scene 3

The next day.

MAX and TRUDIE'S living room. ALL are awaiting LEYZER'S arrival. TRUDIE and SYLVIA ignore each other.

#### SHAIYA

Please, Trudie, I'm begging you, make up with your sister, she didn't mean anything.

#### TRUDIE

She didn't huh? I told her not to hypnotize Wendy didn't I, didn't I and what does she do behind my back?!

#### SHAIYA

She's your sister, she's your best friend. How many sisters do you have?

#### MAX

I wish I had a sister.

#### TRUDIE

You better shut up, I'm warning you Max.



**MAX**

If you won't do it for me, do it for your uncle Leyzer. You want him to come home and see you two not talking?

**(WENDY enters and cries.)**

**TRUDIE**

Hi ya sweetheart, did you have a good sleep?

**(WENDY shakes head no.)**

**TRUDIE (cont'd)**

Are you hungry, would you like something to eat?

**(WENDY shakes head no.)**

**MAX**

Sweetheart, Wendy, lets go to Van Courtland Park and make a snowman, or how about a fast game of pick-up sticks gorgeous?

**(WENDY starts to cry and hold ears.)**

**MAX (cont'd)**

What did I do, will someone please tell me?

**SYLVIA**

You didn't do anything Max.

**TRUDIE**

**(Loud, angry.)**

That's right! That black sonofabitch raped my daughter and you haven't done a thing about it!

**SANDRA**

**(Loud, angry.)**

How the hell do you know he did it? You barged in before she had a chance to tell me who did it, didn't you?

**SHAIYA**

Oh, my God, you mean you didn't hear her say it was Buster?

**TRUDIE**

**(Screams and cries.)**

*SHE SAID HE TOUCHED HER WHEN THEY PLAYED HIDE-AND-SEEK! WELL, WHO ELSE DID SHE PLAY HIDE-AND-SEEK WITH? IT WAS BUSTER, IT WAS BUSTER.*

**(MAX embraces TRUDIE. Cross fade to Hospital. SHAIYA enters singing.)**

**SHAIYA**

**(Enters singing.)**

*"Old man Leyzer, that old man Leyzer. He don't say nothin', but must know something, but old man Leyzer, he just keeps rolling..."*

**LEYZER and SHAIYA**

**(Sings.)**

*"A-long."*

**LEYZER**

Gee, it's good to see you. How the hell are you Shaiya? There's sure been a lot of water under the bridge, hasn't there?

**SHAIYA**

A tidal wave, a regular tidal wave and for some strange reason, suddenly I feel better, almost as good as the last time I saw you and that 'soitenly' means better.

**LEYZER**

Me too. How are Pessie and those beautiful girls?

**SHAIYA**

Great, just great, I, I don't suppose you're still looking for a cantor?

**LEYZER**

Only the best 'boichic,' only the best.

**SHAIYA**

Sorry to tell you this, but the old Caruso's not singing anymore, how's about the new one?

**LEYZER**

I'd take you in a minute.

**SHAIYA**

\$150-a-week, plus two weeks off for good behavior?

**LEYZER**

Make that three weeks and we got a deal.

**SHAIYA**

Well, in that case I accept your generous offer.

**LEYZER**

You do, you really do? Oh, thank you, thank you.

**SHAIYA**

I decided that my family's been making do with out, long enough. I need a job with a steady paycheck and what's steadier than Papa's 'shul.' Seems I've had enough standing ovations, two in the last ten years is enough, wouldn't you say?

**LEYZER**

But it was wonderful, wasn't it, doing what you want, singing, the applause. How many people ever have one standing ovation? I'm proud of you. Always was, wonderful, just wonderful.

**SHAIYA**

You and your wonderful.

**LEYZER**

Go ahead tell me your standing ovation wasn't all you've ever dreamed of.

**SHAIYA**

Yeah, but unfortunately dreams and two standing ovations don't pay the rent. And when the girls were born, one right after another, I mean Pessie started working two jobs, and most of the time I did nothing but change diapers... Can you imagine, my wife was working two jobs while I was changing diapers.

**LEYZER**

So, you struggled a little, but it was worth it, because you were happy really happy, I know what happy means, never. Sure I have my family, but how can I make them happy if I'm not...

**SHAIYA**

Papa was right when he said I'd come crawling back with my tail between my legs? He always said I wasn't such a good singer, that I'd never have a steady job.

**LEYZER**

'Gott tse dank,' now you do. You need a paycheck every week and I've been looking for a good Cantor, that's why I should thank you.

**SHAIYA**

I'm sorry Leyzer.

**LEYZER**

For what?

**SHAIYA**

I never forgave myself for not being there when Papa died. Leaving you alone with the 'shul,' I'm sorry.

**LEYZER**

You're lucky you weren't there.

**SHAIYA**

It wasn't luck, Leyz... I just couldn't handle it, that's all.

**(Lights fade on SHAIYA then open in hospital. LEYZER is sleeping as BUSTER awakes.)**

**BUSTER**

Leyzer... Leyzer, are you up?

**LEYZER**

**(Awakens.)**

Unfortunately.

**BUSTER**

How do you feel?

**LEYZER**

Think they gave you my kidney by mistake, because I feel like I'm dying.

**BUSTER**

Seems like I'm dyin' some too. But nothin' hurt when you were out, right? Felt real good didn't it, but now, sure wish they'd

(Laughs.)

give me another shot, don't you? Ha, ha, one, two, don't think I got past three and I was gone, had me the most beautiful dream. My father and me was holdin' hands and walking in the park, the sun was shinin', birds were singin' and butterflies were doin' their thing. My father skimmed a rock half way 'cross Indian lake, then we went rowing. What a beautiful dream... Imagine if I was really Jewish like my grand pappy said and I was raised a 'goy?' You know what, I always felt sort of Jewish.

**LEYZER**

A wise man once said, "You are what you feel." Maybe that's why I had a nightmare. The same nightmare I've had for 35 years. It started just before my father died. We talked. I mean he talked and I listened. What else? Ask my brother.

**BUSTER**

But, you still got some dreams too, don't you Leyzer?

**LEYZER**

I suppose...

**BUSTER**

Don't suppose you could go on living too long without havin' at least one good dream. Don't suppose you'd want to. What kind of dreams do you have Leyzer? You tell me yours and I'll tell you mine.

**LEYZER**

Before I tell you my dreams, I must thank you for saving my life, and if I had the strength, I'd give you a kiss.

**BUSTER**

Seems everybody's been thankin' me, including you. What'd I do? I gave my best friend my extra kidney, which I had no use for in the first place and besides, I know you would have done the same for me. Don't all Jews help each other? This just gives me a chance to take it easy. Sorta lay out, 'cause the Shamos has been workin' me night 'n day, that's why I'm calling this my vacation, know what I mean? Now, you were about to tell me your dreams, long, long ago.

**LEYZER**

**(After a beat, sighs.)**

I dream about my Rivka. My darling Rivka and hearing my mother laugh. She had this laugh Wendy had the same laugh... Mama would

**(Emotional.)**

Laugh every time she introduced me as her little attorney...

**BUSTER**

I still miss my Mama too. Who would've ever thought? Guess we all wanna be something, don't we? Well count me in. Me too. See, I grew up two blocks away on Park Avenue, ya know, along the train tracks, the same Park Avenue that goes into Manhattan where the rich folks live. Well, my papa used to be the janitor in the same building I grew up in. I hated him bein' a janitor, because people were always callin' up for him to fix something, even three o'clock in the morning, "My toilet is stuck and it's overflowing!" "Why isn't the dumbwaiter working?" My sink is leaking all over my Kitchen floor." He was never around to even play catch with me. Not even when I went to school on the first day. Sure hated him being a super. I hated livin' there... Leyzer, I swear on my mama's grave that I never touched little Wendy, so help me Jesus, or should I just say God?

**LEYZER**

You don't have to swear for me, I believe you.

**(NURSE enters.)**

**NURSE**

Why hello, how nice to see you both awake. Congratulations! The operation was a huge success. Apparently, both of you are going

**(Looks at watch and laughs.)**

*To live a very long time, at least 'til 11:30. Now, tell me the truth. How do you two stars feel?*

**(THEY moan.)**

**NURSE (cont'd)**

That good huh? Well, it's time for your shot again.

**BUSTER**

Did you tell them?

**NURSE**

They were too busy.

**RABBI**

You mean?

**NURSE**

Shut up and let me see your, how do you say it? Your 'Tookes'  
**(Gives shot.)**

And, seems like you've become a celebrity around here Buster. Uh  
huh, the whole hospital's talking about you.

**BUSTER**

Does that mean you too, Gerty?

**NURSE**

Not really. Now shut up and let me see that cute heinie of yours.

**(Gives shot - exits.)**

Mmmm, sure is cute isn't it? Now, nighty nighty, boys, sweet  
dreams.

**BUSTER**

Remember what I told you 'bout getting that shot? See ya, I'm

**(Falls out.)**

Gone. One, two...

**LEYZER**

How ironic. He hated his father being a janitor and what did he  
become, and me, what am I...?

**(Lights fade)**

**End of 3**

# An Old JEW'S *Blues*

## ACT II

### Scene 4

One week later.

TRUDIE'S HOME.

**MAX**

Are we lucky, or are we lucky?

**SYLVIA**

You must have '*dahvened*' pretty good.

**MAX**

Everyday, I '*dahven*' everyday.

**TRUDIE**

Yes you do darling, yes you do.

**MAX**

Do I detect a bit of sarcasm, '*Darling?*'



**(The door opens and in walks LEYZER, PINKY and BUSTER with much trepidation.)**

**PINKY**

**(Announcing.)**

Taaa raaa! Introducing two of my closest friends, the man of the hour, Leyzer and the man that saved his life, Buster.

**WENDY**

**(Comes out of it.)**

ZEYDY, OH ZEYDY YOU'RE HOME!

**LEYZER**

Of course I came home, I had to see you, didn't I?

**(LEYZER and WENDY hug and kiss.)**

**TRUDIE**

How dare you come here, you pervert! Get out of my house this instant!

**BUSTER**

Trudie I swear I never touched Wendy.

**(WENDY hugs BUSTER.)**

**WENDY**

Oh, Buster, I love you for saving my Zeydy's life. I'll love you forever, forever.

**BUSTER**

Why if you was my own daughter, I couldn't love you more Wendy.

**MAX**

I believe him honey, I really do. You know I never interfere, but maybe you should let SYLVIA do her thing again. Once-and-for-all, lets' find out what's going on, please, let your sister try to help.

**TRUDIE**

I really don't want to, I really don't Sylvie, but it seems I've just been over-ruled once again, haven't I Max? And I suppose I

should be sorry. The only thing I'm sorry about is, I was so upset.

**SYLVIA**

Me too Trudie, me too... I'm so sorry.

**TRUDIE**

Uncle Leyzer, are you tired? Maybe you should lie down.

**SHAIYA**

Go ahead, why don't you both take a nap. We're going out to have a bite. We'll be back before you wake up.

**PINKY**

Ya know, I was just thinking the same thing. How's about I take you all to Ratner's for lunch and we'll leave SYLVIA here to watch Wendy.

**SHAIYA**

Tell you the truth, I could go for a bite myself. Let's go.

**MAX**

'Nu,' so what are we waiting for? Let's go.

**TRUDIE**

Oh God, was I wrong. I should have listened to you, Sylvie. Wendy sweetheart, remember that game Aunt Sylvie played with you? We're going out for a while, so why don't you stay with Aunt Sylvie and play it again?

**(ALL exit as SYLVIA removes gold watch and starts to swing it. WENDY rushes to her.)**

**WENDY**

**(Giggles.)**

No needles?

**SYLVIA**

**(Sort of sings.)**

Cool it you 'momzeh.' Here it is.

**(WENDY stops and stares at moving watch.)**

**WENDY**

Oh, Aunt Sylvie, it's beautiful.

**SANDRA**

**(Swings watch.)**

And so are you. Now, follow the watch.

**WENDY**

**(Staring at watch.)**

It's so beautiful.

**SYLVIA**

Almost as beautiful as you are... Keep staring at the watch. When you get tired, close your eyes and think of your best friends. You are a pretty butterfly and you land on a rose, it smells wonderful, a sparrow tickles you and you laugh so hard as it flies you across the Grand Canyon. There, you rub noses with a little raccoon. It's so cute, then you play tag with some red nosed reindeer. You are getting sleepy, sleep, sleep... You're swimming in a school of a thousand goldfish in a secluded pond, it is mysterious and quite romantic. You are getting very tired. Sleep my precious. You see a rainbow and at the end of it you find a pot of gold and become the richest girl in the world.... You are asleep. You are eight years old and Grandpa is taking you to 'shul.'

**WENDY**

**(Begins to sob.)**

I don't want to go to 'shul,' I don't like it, I don't want to play hide-and-seek.

**SYLVIA**

Why don't you want to play hide-and-seek, sweetheart?

**WENDY**

**(Sobbing.)**

Because...

**SYLVIA**

Because, why? You can tell Aunt Sylvie why you don't want to play hide-and-seek.

**WENDY**

Because he touches me all over and makes me do bad things, but I'm going to kill him, you'll see, I'll kill him.

**SYLVIA**

Who touches you all over, who are you going to kill?

**WENDY**

Him, I'm going to kill him.

**SYLVIA**

Tell me who he is Wendy, tell me, you must tell me.

**WENDY**

I can't, he said if I ever tell, Mommy and Daddy would die.

**(LEYZER and BUSTER tip-toe in.)**

**SYLVIA**

Mommy and Daddy won't die, I promise. Now tell Aunt SYLVIA who touched you all over when you use to play hide-and-seeK... Hmmm... Buster said that when you played hide-and-seeK, you'd always hide and he would be 'It'... Oh, my God. He would be 'It' and you would be alone with HIM... I don't believe it, it isn't Buster, it's the...

**WENDY, SYLVIA and LEYZER**

...The SHAMOS!

**WENDY**

**(Crying.)**

The 'Shamos' touched me all over and made me...

**SYLVIA**

**(Hugs Wendy.)**

...Yes, I know it was the 'Shamos.' It's all right, sweetheart. He'll never touch you again. I promise... Now, when I count to three and snap my fingers you will wake up and forget everything you just said, one, two, three.

**LEYZER**

'Oy, gutt n' himmel,' I don't believe it.

**SYLVIA**

**(Sobs.)**

Uncle Leyzer, oh Uncle Leyzer, you'll never believe it...

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**LEYZER**

**(hugs Sandra and Wendy.)**

I know sweetheart it was the 'Shamos.'

**(Lights.)**

**End of Scene 4**

# An Old JEW'S *Blues*

## ACT II

### Scene 5

A week later.

In *SHUL*.

#### SHAIYA

I asked you all to come, because we have to discuss what my brother Leyzer refuses to accept the survival of the *shul*.

#### GERSH

(To Leyzer.)

Shaiya's right Leyzer, except for us, there's nobody left.

#### ABIE

I think it's disgusting. One time, there were hundreds of '*shuls*' in the Bronx. Right Mo? Remember going for a walk on the Grand Concourse...

#### MORRIS

...And '*vhat*' about Crotona Park, it '*vas*' so bad? Now, I'm afraid to go for a '*valk*' myself. '*Nu*, what' can you do?

#### HYMIE

They moved in and it's cost me a fortune. Everybody left. It's because of them I'm closing my store? Business has been '*facockte*' for years.

#### SHAMOS

What do we need this 'shul' for? Do I get paid? When was the last 'Bar Mitzvah' or wedding I made, you remember? I vote lets pack it in. Tell you the truth, things are just not the same any more, they're not the same.

**MURRAY**

I vote we should all move.

**SHAIYA**

Sounds like a unanimous decision to me Leyz.

**LEYZER**

I can't do it, not as long as there's one orthodox Jew that needs the 'Besmedresh HaGadol.' Papa would turn over in his grave if we ever did it.

**SHAIYA**

I hate to tell you this mister, but now a days, everybody's reform or conservative. We're just a relic, an endangered specie.

**MORRIS**

*Are you telling me 'dhat' all of sudden, reform and consoivatives have taken over? What about us, plain and simple orthodox?*

**(TRUDIE, SYLVIE, MAX and PINKY enter and will stare at the SHAMOS.)**

**LEYZER**

Well, it's about time, don't you think?

**SHAIYA**

You know how these youngsters always have so much to talk about.

**TRUDIE**

We were talking all right, we were talking! Look at him, Judas Priest himself.

**SYLVIE**

**(Grabs Shamus's shirt.)**

What should we do to him?

**SHAMOS**

What are you doing, leave me alone, what's the matter with you?

**PINKY**

I'll tell you what's the matter, you freaking pervert!

**MAX**

I say hang him. What do you say?

**LEYZER**

I'm not certain that this is the correct procedure, but he was definitely there. In any event, in a court of law, we are innocent until proven guilty, is that not correct, Mr. 'Shamos?'

**PINKY**

Lynching would be too easy for this sonofabitch, too fast Max, I want to see him sweat.

**MAX**

If you want to see him sweat, it will be my pleasure to put him in  
(Bows with great bravado.)  
the oven, 'boichic.' 'Nu,' Mr. child molester, what do you have to say for yourself?

**SHAMOS**

Child molester, you dare call me a child molester? Are you crazy, what do you think I'm a priest, a 'Goy'...? I'm the 'Shamos,' the same 'Shamos' that was loyal to your father, Leyzer for so many years. The same 'Shamos' that held you at your 'Bris,' Shaiya. The same 'Shamos' that gave his life to the 'shul' that your father loved so much, I love so much and you call me a...

**(ALL chant)**

**TRUDIE**

A CHILD MOLESTER!

**SYLVIE**

PEDOPHILE!

**MAX**

BASTARD!

**MORRIS**

*The S. S. liked little Jewish goils, it was horrible.*



**GERSH**

Now I understand why he wanted us to kill Buster...

**ABIE**

You mean...

**MURRAY**

...He's a...

**HYMIE**

...He is, I know he is!

**GERSH**

Do you like little boys too, you, you pervert?!

**HYMIE**

He's worse than a pervert, he's a lecher.

**ABIE**

And all these years we didn't know, I didn't know.

**MURRAY**

All those poor children, we oughta kill him right now.

**ABIE**

He used to play with my nephew too. Did you touch my nephew, you bastard?

**TRUDIE**

**(Chants.)**

HE DID IT, HE DID IT, HE, DID IT!

**MAX**

**(Grabs the Shamos, cries aloud)**

LET'S KILL HIM RIGHT NOW! He made my daughter crazy...

**(PINKY hugs MAX.)**

**PINKY**

...It's all right Max, everything's gonna be all right.

**SHAMOS**

I DIDN'T DO IT, I DIDN'T DO IT, I SWEAR I DIDN'T DO IT!

**SHAIYA**

My daughter Sylvia doesn't lie.

**SHAMOS**

SHE'S LYING, SHE'S LYING BECAUSE SHE NEVER LIKED ME, ASK HER WHY SHE'S LYING, ASK HER!

**LEYZER**

Sylvie, would you please tell us what Wendy said happened when she used to play "*Hide-and-seek*."

**SHAMOS**

What's the difference...?

**TRUDIE**

Shut up you bastard!

**LEYZER**

Try and take it easy on him, Trudie, I'm sure our trusted '*Shamos*' has lots to say, so why don't we give him a chance to explain.

**TRUDIE**

Explain, I'll explain! Wendy said that when she was a little girl, eight years old, the '*Shamos*' raped her when they played "*Hide-and-seek*."

**SHAMOS**

It was Buster not me, he used to play with us too, ask him.

**BUSTER**

But I was always '*It*' and you always hid with little Wendy, didn't you.

**SHAMOS**

I was "*It*" too. You don't remember because you're too old, I was "*It*" plenty of times.

**BUSTER**

At first I couldn't believe that you would do something so terrible, but I was wrong. You, were never '*It*,' never. It was always you and the kids and I didn't know. Guess, I should have

known shouldn't I...? I'm so sorry.

**PINKY**

Take advantage of a little girl. Why I oughta...

**SHAMOS**

**(Outraged.)**

She says '*meshugeneh*'! Wendy told her that story and she expects everyone to believe what that crazy little girl said? You think they're crazy too? They know me, I'm the '*Shamos*,' I run the *shul*.

**SYLVIE**

You run the *shul* all right and you also played "Hide-and-seek" with Wendy, didn't you...?

**TRUDIE**

...And that's when he did it... to my little girl... Kill him, that's what I should do, kill him.

**PINKY**

We'll hire someone. In this neighborhood, it shouldn't be too difficult.

**SYLVIE**

Too easy too fast, I want him to suffer, don't you...?

**PINKY**

In spades.

**SHAMOS**

I did nothing, this is absurd. How can you believe anything a crazy person says?

**ABIE**

And how could you blame Buster of all people.

**MURRAY**

But none of us believed him, right? We knew we felt it.

**MORRIS**

*Because Buster is Buster.*

**SHAIYA**

You're finished! Where are you going to hide? You did it and everybody knows, everybody.

**LEYZER**

Hold on there, don't jump to conclusions. I'm sure the 'Shamos' has a valid explanation for everything, don't you.

**SHAMOS**

**(Screams, begins to lose it. Paces)**

What do they know, what do they know, what do they know?!

**SHAIYA**

They know that you're a pedophile, a child molester...

**LEYZER**

I told you not to jump to conclusions. If the shoe fits, I'm sure he'll wear it soon enough.

**ABIE**

...And everybody knows what happens to child molesters, they get the electric chair.

**HYMIE**

Even that's too good for him.

**ABIE**

Then we'll give him poison.

**MURRAY**

I say, let's fry 'em.

**GERSH**

Let's cut him up into little pieces and feed him to the dogs.

**HYMIE**

What an animal.

**MORRIS**

*'What a chorlehreye.'*

**(MAX goes to grab the SHAMOS but PINKY prevents him.)**

**SHAMOS**

**(About to go mad.)**

You are accusing me, of being a pedophile! 57 years of my life I spent taking care of this shul and that's how you thank me...?

Who started the day care center that opened up the 'shul?' Don't

**(Laughs.)**

you understand, she was hypnotized and you know what they say about hypnosis, everyone does! Only people with weak minds can be hypnotized! She's crazy, I'm telling you she's absolutely nuts! Always... Or do you think I'm crazy? That's it. I'm crazy and she's not. Well, then why is she in a mental institution and I never spoke to a psychiatrist even once? Because she's a loony and I'm not! Don't you understand, she's 'meshugeh' and you're even crazier for believing her! You're all crazy, all of you! And did you ever care about me? Did you ever give me boots in the winter, did you ever think about my needs? Buster this and Buster that. Since when did he become a 'Tsadik...?' But I, who gave my life to this 'shul' got nothing, not even a little respect. Have you forgotten that it was I that made 'Simcha Torah' for the children, my beautiful children, the children loved me, and I loved them... They, respected me, they listened to me. They always did what I told them. Did you teach Sylvia the *aleph beiz*, or did I? She was so lovely, so delicate and Gertrude, did you help her with her 'Haf Torah?' She was lovely, with such

**(Dreamy, starts to move erotically.)**

beautiful lips. And Wendy, such a pretty little girl. Such lovely skin and so beautiful... And Sammy, had such a lovely mouth and so did Rosalie... and Irene and Marvin... They were the

**(Has lost it.)**

only ones who really loved me, the only ones who cared about me, the only ones who did what I told them to do. My 'Moishele,' my 'Rivkala,' my 'Sorele,' my 'Sheyndele.'

**(Lights.)**

**End of Scene 5**

# An Old JEW'S *Blues*

## ACT II

### Scene 6

Later on.

LEYZER'S living room.

A knock on door, SYLVIA opens it  
and PINKY enters carrying  
flowers.

PINKY

(Kisses SYLVIA on cheek and gives flowers.)

Hi ya Sylvie gorgeous, gee, you look beautiful. I hope you don't mind me popping in like this but, but I was just in the neighborhood and I thought I'd say hello. Hi, I got you these...

SYLVIA

Flowers, for me? Why thank you, Pinky, what a lovely surprise, I love yellow roses.

PINKY

Don't I know. They just looked so beautiful that I thought of you. Here's to you baby, happy New Year.

SYLVIA

Why, thank you Pinky, how sweet. They smell wonderful.

**PINKY**

**(Hugs SYLVIA.)**

Almost as good as you.

**SYLVIA**

I was very touched by how you went to Buster's defense... We all were... And thanks for helping the '*shul*.'

**PINKY**

Your father told you?

**SYLVIA**

You knew he would. You're quite a guy Mr. Slimowitz.

**PINKY**

You really think so? You almost sound as if you care?

**SYLVIA**

Maybe I do.

**PINKY**

Well, it's about time don't you think...? I've been running after you for nine million years and I'm getting tired...

**SYLVIA**

Well, why don't you have a seat on the couch next to me and we'll talk about it. Dewars on the rocks?

**PINKY**

I never drink alone.

**(SYLVIA fixes two drinks and gives one to PINKY.)**

**PINKY (cont'd)**

*'L'chaim'* baby, to us!

**(THEY drink.)**

**PINKY (cont'd)**

And not to change the subject, now that freakin' pervert is gone, I wanted to have him eliminated... I hear our illustrious '*minyán*'

is finally going to move, can you believe it?

**SYLVIA**

Why should they be any different? Everybody else has left the Bronx, haven't they?

**PINKY**

They certainly did. They said they were going to... Who knows where they're going to? Those idiots said they couldn't pay me back, so they all gave me their stores. In turn, I gave them each twenty grand to start over, and who asked them for anything and I need their stores like a hole in the head. What the heck do I know about a men's clothing store, a butcher shop, shoe store, even a movie theater. Anyway, I'm looking for a top lawyer, or a C.P.A. Somebody to run my, newfound empire. What do you say Baby?

**SYLVIA**

Sorry, but I'm not a C. P. A.

**PINKY**

Thank God, I hate numbers.

**SYLVIA**

I was wondering, since my uncle Leyzer doesn't have to be a Rabbi anymore and you know how he was number one when he got his law degree, I mean who's smarter than my uncle?

**(Nestles up to him much to his surprise.)**

Since he's familiar with all the businesses, I think he'd just be perfect to run them, don't you?

**PINKY**

Maybe I should have defended Buster ten years ago, we'd probably have fifteen kids by now.

**(BOTH laugh.)**

**SYLVIA**

You always said my father has the most beautiful voice and you know lots of people in show biz, don't you Pinky, and you know my father's wanted to sing more than anything... They've both been so



frustrated all these years.

**PINKY**

Marry me you no-good psychologist and I'll do anything you ask, including getting your father a gig on the Borsht circuit anything, and your Uncle Leyzer, soon as we tie the knot, not only is he going to run all my businesses, I'm going to make him executor of my will. Who better to protect our kids interests than their own grandfather?

**SYLVIA**

**(Swoons.)**

Oh, Pinky...

**PINKY**

**(On one knee.)**

Will you marry me?

**SYLVIA**

Are you starting again? How many times have I told you, I can't marry you Pinky.

**PINKY**

Would you please tell me why?

**SYLVIA**

Because you're a...

**PINKY**

I'm a what?

**SYLVIA**

...A shylock.

**PINKY**

A shylock, me are you crazy?

**SYLVIA**

Everyone knows how long you've been lending money to our 'minyans.' I'm sure you didn't do it for your health and now, all-of-a-sudden you own all their stores, come on.

**PINKY**

I own four of the biggest and most successful bars in Manhattan

and they all make a fortune. What the hell do I have to be a shylock for, I got more money than I can spend, I'm stinkin' rich and the reason why I've been lending, or should I say giving the guys all that bread these past couple of years is, because I love all those old bastards... When my father was alive they were the best of friends. My father was a house painter and he had a hard time making a living. They lent him, or should I say gave him plenty. Maybe it was because none of them ever had kids, who knows but, they always treated me like I was theirs, all of them.

Murray used to take me to Orchard Beach, Stanley, Yankee Stadium, Morris the Paradise theatre, Abie the Zoo. When I used to shine their shoes, instead of fifteen cents, they'd each give me a

**(Nostalgic.)**

buck... Imagine that, a buck... Pinky never forgets. They loved me and I loved them back... I guess I always will, that's why when we drive them to the airport and kiss them goodbye, as our wedding present, I'd like to tell them they don't owe us a red cent and that's including the twenty grand. It's okay with me, what do you say? That is as long as they don't ask us for any more bread from where ever they're going to. Hey, I'm not a sucker, know what I mean?

**SYLVIA**

You really are *something*, aren't you.

**PINKY**

**(Takes off ring and puts it on SYLVIA'S finger.)**

Will you marry this *something* for the thousandth time?

**SYLVIA**

Is that a proposal?

**PINKY**

Yes, say yes...

**SYLVIA**

Well, what took you so long sucker? You think I'm getting any younger dope?

**(They kiss.)**

**SYLVIA (cont'd)**

What should I tell my father?

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**PINKY**

Tell him I expect the ceremony to be on the house.

**(They kiss.)**

**End of Scene 6**

# An Old JEW'S *Blues*

## ACT II

### Scene 7

Lights flicker. Hallucinating, LEYZER sees HIS deceased FATHER who comes to HIM. He is hesitant.

#### LEYZER

Papa, is that you? What happened, Papa, are you all right?

#### FATHER

All right, how can I be all right? What the hell did you do to my 'shul?' What happened to the 885 families I gave you, with their children, more than 3000 people and now you don't even have enough for a 'minyan.' What did you do to my 'shul?!... Of course, I should have known, your like you're brother, a good for-nothing.

#### LEYZER

Let me explain Papa.

#### FATHER

Explain nothing...! What did you do to my 'shul?' I promised the congregation that you would take care of the 'shul' and you made me liar? You should have made those doctors, liars. They're the ones that decided my kidneys were no good, they were no good. They should only rot in hell, and they said they didn't know how much time I had left and just like that, poof I was gone, but I made you promise to take care of the 'shul' didn't I?

**LEYZER**

Yes you did *your honor*.

**FATHER**

You know what you can do with '*your honor*.' You're not the only fool in this country that wasted his life trying to become a lawyer, but I saved you, didn't I? Because the only law that matters is the '*Torah*.' The '*Torah*' and when I died, I gave you my '*shul*' and what did you do to it? You don't even have enough men for a '*minyan*,' not, even enough for a '*minyan*,' what a '*shanda*.'

**LEYZER**

Papa, things have changed in 35 years. The Bronx is not the same. Instead of Jews in the neighborhood, it's Puerto Ricans and blacks.

**FATHER**

Don't tell me about my neighborhood. I built that '*shul*' with my own two hands, the '*Besmedresh HaGadol*.' You promised me that you'll take care of it forever, you promised. Don't you remember, don't you know what a promise is?

**LEYZER**

...Please, I'm almost 60 years old. How much time do I have left...? Poor Mama, remember how she laughed when ever she

called me her little attorney, ha, ha... I bet mama would say the '*shul*' closing is a sign from heaven... At the cemetery you were '*dahvening*' with all your friends. Shaiya and I stood there all alone. He cried and I cried even more... To you, all that mattered was God and your shul. Not even Mama dying, or Shaiya, or Mama's little attorney. When I graduated college, I had job offers from all over the country, the finest firms. Imagine that, your son could have been a high class, attorney and what did I become...? Even though Shaiya came back, he never wanted to be a cantor.

**FATHER**

I don't care about that... The '*shul*' must survive.

**LEYZER**

Animals survive, I'm tired of surviving, I want to live. Enough, it doesn't work, it never worked, so, forget it. I'm begging

you, it's over.

**FATHER**

Never mind, didn't Mama teach you, "Lest we forget, a promise is forever?"

**LEYZER**

Please, don't you understand, it's not up to me anymore, there's nothing I can do. It's over, there are no more Jews left no more, it's over, '*Fartik.*'

**FATHER**

I promised the congregation that you would take care of the '*shul.*' Have I ever lied, are you a liar?

**LEYZER**

Papa, why don't you ask Shaiya if there are any Jews left?

**FATHER**

Don't tell me about Shaiya. I have nothing to say to him, nothing, as long as there is one Jew left, the '*Besmedresh HaGadol*' must go on... It must, promise me Leyzer.

**LEYZER**

**(Sobbing, kisses father.)**

I'm sorry Papa, I'm sorry.

**(Lights.)**

**End of Scene 7**

# An Old JEW'S *Blues*

ACT II

Scene 8

Sometime later.

In *shul*.

MORRIS, GERSH, MURRAY, HYMIE and  
PINKY are drinking wine.

GERSH

I can't believe that bastard would do such a terrible thing.

**MURRAY**

And did you hear how he said he's not a priest?

**HYMIE**

If you ask me, I say we should still cut his balls off.

**PINKY**

Gentlemen, gentlemen, knowing that we know, his having to live with himself will be punishment enough. After all, where is that sonofabitch going?

**MORRIS**

*He's a puhvoit, right?*

**PINKY**

He's a pervert that's happens to be a pedophile, which is worse.

**GERSH**

I always knew there was something wrong with him because that cheap pervert never gave me a quarter, ever and I say lets forget about that low-life and think of something good. Here's to Pinky, may we all live to dance at his son's 'Bar Mitzvah,' Amen.

**(ALL drink.)**

**MURRAY**

Personally, I think we should cut his 'schmeckle' off, save Sandy a lot of disappointment.

**(ALL laugh.)**

**HYMIE**

How'd ya do it Pinky? What made Sandy suddenly say yes after all these years.

**PINKY**

She liked how I defended Buster.

**(ABIE enters with a black eye.)**

**MORRIS**

ABIE! Are you all right?



**MURRAY**

What happened to you?

**ABIE**

When I was closing up, two '*chorlehryas*' with guns, beat me up and robbed me again...

**GERSH**

Did you call the cops?

**ABIE**

For what, they're going to do something...? I can't take it anymore. Thank God it's my last day Pinky, thank God and thank you for the money.

**PINKY**

It's my pleasure and I'm sorry Abie, can I do anything?

**ABIE**

Thank you Pinky, but we're all moving to Arizona on Monday...

**GERSH**

Arizona? I cock on Arizona. I told you where we're moving to. Tell him Hymie...

**HYMIE**

...With all the money we got, Switzerland.

**PINKY**

What the hell are you guys going to do in Switzerland, yodel?

**GERSH**

And ski.

**ABIE**

Just forget about what these '*meshugenehs*' say. They're only kidding about Switzerland, we're really moving to Wyoming and that's final. Horses, I just love when they run, gorgeous, just gorgeous.

**PINKY**

**(Starts to exit.)**

Well, I don't know what to say, but '*Gai gehzunte hait*' and always  
**(Laughs.)**

remember, if you ever need anything, don't call me.

**GERSH**

Good you reminded me, maybe you got an extra quarter on you?

**PINKY**

**(Looks through change - exits.)**

For you, always. Here's a fivesky, no make that six. See you mañana.

**GERSH**

Six quarters, I don't believe it. This must be my lucky day.

**MURRAY**

He just made a buck-and-half just like that. What a racket, all these years, a quarter everyday, it's gotta add up, no?

**ABIE**

He must be loaded and he's holding out on us, he always holds out.

**HYMIE**

How much of my money have you saved, cheapskate?

**ALL**

Yeah, how much?!

**GERSH**

Do I know, I put them in jars. The small jars hold \$38.

**MURRAY**

\$38?, \$38, I don't believe it?!

**ABIE**

And I'm sure you got big jars, don't you?

**GERSH**

\$62.

**MURRAY**

\$62, I don't believe it! And how many bottles do you got?

**HYMIE**

And we want the truth damnit, how many?!

**GERSH**

100's, maybe thousands, maybe more. All my closets are filled and who knows how old they are.

**ABIE**

No wonder his freakin' closet was always locked.

**HYMIE**

It's gotta be more than 35 years that you've been 'schnorroring' me for a quarter everyday and I want it back!

**GERSH**

And don't think it was easy, listening to all of you complain.

**(Different voices.)**

"Again you're asking for quarters? What is it with you and quarters? Everyday it's quarters, quarters and more quarters." Tell me, if I asked you for a dollar everyday would you give me, not a chance, but a quarter a day... Would you give a friend a quarter? Would you? I have to do laundry, please, what's a quarter?

**HYMIE**

**(Spits.)**

I'll give you what's a quarter you chiseler! He became a millionaire on my back. I don't believe it.

**MURRAY**

He's gotta have 6 or \$7,000 of my money in those freakin' jars and I want it back. Please, Hymie I need it, I really do, I'm moving.

**ABIE**

We're all moving and we need it, because we're broke...

**HYMIE**

...We only lent you the quarters, Hymie. Now, you have to give them back. Mo's first, he's the oldest and I'm next 'cause it was my idea to ask, what ask, I demand my money back!

**(MORRIS picks up pen and paper and writes.)**

**HYMIE (cont'd)**

**(Whispers to GERSH.)**

What's the '*meschugeneh*' doing?

**GERSH**

**(Whispers back to HYMIE.)**

You're asking me, ask Morris.

**MORRIS**

I'm writing Pinky, I'm telling him, any time he comes to Tel Aviv, he should definitely stop by, we'd love to see him, '*Shalom.*'

**ABIE**

Hey, wait a minute Gersh. You just whispered to Hymie and Hymie whispered back and Morris heard the both of you? I don't believe it, *OOEEEEAAA* can hear!

**MORRIS**

*Of course I heard him, 'Vhat' do you 'tink' I can't hear?*

**MURRAY**

You sonofabitch, all these years you made us think you were deaf.

**MORRIS**

*'VHAT?!'*

**(ALL laugh.)**

**GERSH**

Listen, anybody got an extra quarter, I need it for the cigarette machine

**HYMIE**

You don't smoke.

**GERSH**

Well, maybe I'm thinking about starting. Have we decided where we're going?

**HYMIE**

We have, but we're not telling *UNLESS YOU GIVE US OUR MONEY BACK!*

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**ALL**

WE WANT OUR MONEY BACK!

**ABIE**

I still say Miami.

**MURRAY**

**(Sings.)**

*"I like Miami in the Spring time."*

**HYMIE**

And I say Texas.

**MORRIS**

*Again 'mit deh' taxes? I told you I paid my taxes, Goddamnit and I vant rent, I vant rent, I vant rent!*

**GERSH**

I'm going to Switzerland and that's final...!

**(Lights.)**

**End of Scene 8**

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## ACT II

### Scene 9

The following day.

On the way to Shul, LEYZER and SHAIYA will become so happy that THEY will almost dance.

**SHAIYA**

Right now I don't even remember what that sonofabitch looks like.

**LEYZER**

You can say that again.

**SHAIYA**

Right now I don't even remember what that sonofabitch looks like.

**LEYZER**

Thank you Sir Echo... I still say we should make him rot in jail.

**SHAIYA**

For what, to have a trial? Would it do Wendy any good? Would it do any of us any good.

**LEYZER**

You're right. I believe Socrates said, "Vengeance is for fools."  
Or was it Lewie the lip, or big Georgie Porgy? You should have  
**(Loves his brother.)**  
been in show biz.

**SHAIYA**

I was.

**LEYZER**

You don't say, how wonderful. Ever get a standing ovation...?

**(SHAIYA shows two fingers.)**

**LEYZER (cont'd)**

Twelve standing ovations, well isn't that wonderful.

**SHAIYA**

And we mustn't forget you envy me.

**LEYZER**

More than you'll ever know.

**SHAIYA**

As usual, you probably got a good reason. But what's really  
**(Almost dances.)**  
important is no more Hymie, ha cha-cha...

**(Both sort of dance the cha-cha.)**

**LEYZER**

...No more Abie, ha cha-cha...

**SHAIYA**

...No more Murray, ha cha-cha...

**LEYZER**

...No more Gershie, ha cha-cha...

**SHAIYA**

...No more Morris, ha cha-cha...

**LEYZER**

'...VHAT?!

**(BOTH Laugh.)**

**LEYZER (cont'd)**

I'm laughing and crying at the same time. I've wanted this to happen since Papa died. Some how it's not easy saying goodbye.

**SHAIYA**

Don't you remember, it never is... You think saying goodbye to my darling wife was easy, or saying goodbye to Wendy when she went to the hospital was easy, nothing's easy. Unbeknownst, the 'shul' became a part of our life... My life. Unfortunately, I think I'll miss it too. Not as much as the opera house in Milan, but I'll miss it.

**LEYZER**

I wonder what Papa would say? His 'shul' the 'Besmedresh HaGadol' becoming a clinic for poor people?

**SHAIYA**

I think he might approve.

**LEYZER**

You really think so?

**SHAIYA**

For yours and Pete's sake, I sure hope so brother. Didn't it seem like forever?



**LEYZER**

At least.

**SHAIYA**

The '*Besmedresh HaGadol*' is finally gone. Finished.

**LEYZER**

**(Cups hands and talks to heaven.)**

Did you hear that Papa? No more '*shul.*' There are no more Jews left, '*Gornisht.*'

**SHAIYA**

'*Schluf gehzunte hait*' and leave my brother alone, Papa. It's over Leyz, our endangered species no longer need your services, so what are you going to do be when you grow up mister?

**LEYZER**

According to your new son in-law to be, a brilliant businessman who just acquired a movie theater, a butcher store, a shoe store and a men's clothing store, not to mention all his successful bars and he owns real estate, don't ask. The man said someone very close to him, thought it would be wise to seek my employment. After all, if you can't trust the executor of your own will, no less your personal attorney, who can you trust? He wants me to make sure that all his enterprises are on the up-and-up. '*Nu,*' who would of thought that one day Pinky would become your son-in-law.

**SHAIYA**

Me.

**LEYZER**

You, since when?

**SHAIYA**

The minute Pinky said to me, '*Pops,*' I hope you don't mind but I just booked you for a month at the Concord and then, anywhere else I want to sing, the Borsht circuit is mine. Believe me, I knew right then and there that I'm getting one hell of a son in-law. I'm really impressed.

**LEYZER**

Seems he understands everything and I mean everything.

**SHAIYA**

Max is not bad either.

**LEYZER**

Personally, don't you prefer singing at the Concord?

**SHAIYA**

You have to ask?

**LEYZER**

Don't mention it. We're free Shaiya, for the first time in our lives we are free.

**SHAIYA**

Shall we say our good byes Leyzer?

**LEYZER**

What do you think Caruso?

**SHAIYA**

How does Long Island sound?

**LEYZER**

And what about New Jersey?

**SHAIYA**

Well, why didn't you say so in the first place?

**(Facing the *shul*, THEY hug.)**

**SHAIYA (cont'd)**

At last Counselor...

**LEYZER**

We have finally arrived, Mr. Caruso...

**(THEY open door to *shul* and we see the SHAMOS hanging.)**

**THE END**

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