



(A serious drama with music in Three Acts)

SHINE'M UP, SHINE'M UP!



BOOK and lyrics
By
Sidney Goldberg
Music
By



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Please Contact:

Sidney Goldberg
20 West Palisade Avenue #3120
Englewood, NJ 07631
201-567-6533
Sidneyg6@gmail.com
www.sidneygoldbergwriter.com



SHINE'EM UP, SHINE'EM UP!

Cast

**ABIE.....70 year old adorable Jew.
Speaks with a slight accent.**

**GROVER.....70 year old, Black, ex-jazz
singer. Sings and has a
contagious laugh. Haunted
by his fathers past.**

**CARMEN.....35 year old Puerto Rican
hooker. Attractive, speaks
with accent.**

**GREG.....45 years old, mean, angry
drunk.**

SHINE'EM UP, SHINE'EM UP!

(CD upon request)

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SHINE'EM UP, SHINE'EM UP!

ACT I

Scene 1

8: A.M.
Yesterday.

JFK Airport. There are three seats center stage where ABIE, GROVER and CARMEN will feign giving shoe shines to imaginary people who they will speak to. We see a cash register and a large clock. The lights dim and a spot lights ABIE holding a brush and HE sings.

ABE

(Sings 🎵)

I GUESS THAT'S WHY

Shining those shoes,
Paying my dues,
I got the Blues,
I guess that's why, I'm always sighing.

Dressed like a bum,
Whose time has come.
Don't see the sun,
I guess that's why, I feel like crying.

And I can't snitch.
That I'm so rich,
And it's a bitch.
I guess that's why, I feel like dying.

There was a time she said I was so funny.
There was a time when all we did was laugh.
Now, nothing seems so funny.
No one wants my autograph.

Planted my seed.
And still I bleed.
Nothing I need,
I guess that's why, I keep baying.

I feel so old,
 Sometimes I'm cold.
 Feel like a *yold*.
 I guess that's why, I'm still graying.

Genius they said.
 Turn in my bed.
 Wish I was dead.
 I guess that's why, I keep praying

There was a time when she said I was so funny.
 There was a time when all we did was laugh.
 Now, nothing seems so funny.
 No one wants my autograph.

(Lights become normal.)

ABIE (Cont'd)

(🎤 Sings with gusto.)

Shine'em up, shine'em up, shine'em up!
 For two dollars I'll make you smile.
 Shine'em up, shine'em up, shine'em up!
 You'll feel cool, walk around in style.

Sonofabitch! Even though it's a blizzard outside and they cancelled most of the flights, like a dope I came early. I come early everyday, because at my age, who can sleep? And except for all those dopes that got stuck here and are trying to sleep on the floor and on those uncomfortable seats, not one of them has come to see me for a... Where the hell are they, what's wrong with them? I'm here an hour already and I haven't even done one *facockte* shine. Not one and it's their fault! Nike, Reebok, Adidas, I hate every one of those *gonifs*, those thieves, because they're making millions selling sneakers, while I make *bubkes*. Not that a man of my stature, my prominence needs anything from those *momzas*. When I lived in the Bronx, only those rich, snot-nosed kids that lived on the Grand Concourse wore sneakers. I lived on Claremont Parkway, with all the poor immigrants and we were lucky to have holes in our shoes. The only sneakers I had were in my dreams. I hated being poor, and shhh, don't tell anyone, but I'm very rich, loaded and I'm not crazy. The reason why I talk to myself is, most of the answers I get I like. But, why do they have to wear sneakers all the time? Even, when they get off the plane.

(Loud)

I hate every sneaker, you hear? Everyone! It's a conspiracy, they're all against me...!

(🎤 Sings with gusto.)

Shine'em up, shine'em up, shine'em up!
 For two dollars I'll make you smile.
 Shine'em up, shine'em up, shine'em up!
 You'll feel cool, walk around in style.

(The stage darkens and spot lights ABIE who talks to imaginary patron.)

(Bows**wipes seat.)**

Oh, you want a shine, mister? Be my guest and sit right down. Wait let me wipe the seat for you. *I wonder where the hell he came from?* You don't know how lucky you are to get a shine from me, because they say Abie gives the best shine at JFK airport. And the boss not me, charges \$6 a shine, and of course the tip is not included, and don't say, don't play the horses. That's not the kind of tip I'm talking about, ya know what I'm talking about...? Who's Abie? I'm Abie and Abie's at your service, *Monsieur*. You're not

(Moves hands.)

French are you, because I'm not that crazy about the Mona Lisa. A little nothing, this big. That's a nice suit. Armani, is that an Armani. It looks like an Armani, so, er, what's your name mister...? You'd rather not say? All right, I understand about anonymity. At

(Starts to brush.)

AA that's all they talk about... Yeah, I used to go but I don't need it anymore. Boy, these are some shoes. I bet they cost a small fortune... \$400? That's a pretty penny mister, in fact that's what I make in a good week... You don't have to feel sorry for me, it's an honest living and I learned to love being honest, except when I lie and boy do I, especially when I meet wonderful people like you, who always give me a tip, a *biggie* and that means a *big tip*, ya know what I mean jelly bean...? Yeah, I talk so much **(Opens bottle of liquid and pours it on little brush and spreads over imaginary shoes.)** because, maybe I am lonely most of the time, but not when I'm working... Yeah, I've

(Wipes then brushes imaginary shoes.)

been lonely since my Anna passed away... Just because I have an accent and sound Jewish, you think I'm Jewish...? Well, don't be so sure. I could be Israeli and today not

(Puts polish on.)

all Israelis are Jewish, especially if you're conservative and if your reformed, Puerto

(Ala Groucho.)

Rican... You think I'm funny? You bet your *bippy* I'm funny. "*Say the secret word and win \$250.*" Now, that's inflation, Groucho used to give fifty-dollars... No, all Jews are not funny like me. You see, I'm special, that's why they call me the *chosen*, and I'm

(Brushes.)

proud of being special, always was, always will be... Hey, how would you like to know the real reason why Hitler tried to exterminate us? That sonofabitch was so miserable, because he never learned how to laugh and we never stopped laughing, that's why he was so jealous... Now, all-of-a-sudden you want me to tell you about the ten plagues, because I'm *so* special? Well, being special's gonna cost you a couple of *sheckles* mister... All right, if it was up to me, I would have made 11, an even dozen, instead of those 10 rotten plagues HE made. The Big Guy missed it by at least one, maybe two. You see, HE should have *circumcised* and then turned them all into orthodox Rabbis, with beards and long *paes*, that's sideburns and today there would be no Iraq, Iran, Syria, Hamas, intifada, no Arafat or Palestinians to worry about. Did you ever hear what Jackie Mason, one of

(Ala Jackie Mason.)

my all-time favorite comedians said about the Palestinians? "*I would give them the West bank, but it's in my wife's name...*" A funny, funny man... You think I have an accent and what do you think he yodels? He makes a fortune too, what about me? What am I

(Sings.)

chopped liver? Don't I count? "*Brother can you spare a...*" Hard to believe, but they still don't know I'm a wit... Yeah, at my age it's too late to become a Mel Brooks, now he's my favorite. Hey, what are you gonna do...? Now I know why

(Wipes with chamois cloth and snaps it.)

I like you. The man appreciates talent... Sure, not everybody's special like me. So, what do you think? Gorgeous, huh? Ever see your shoes look that good? Can't you see your handsome face in the shine I gave you...? That's it? Only a dollar tip for such a beautiful shine? You wear \$400 shoes, Armani suits and you give me a measly dollar tip? Come on, come on, it's snowing outside mister, come on. I came in the snow to give

(Writes slip, puts it and money in register)

you a gorgeous shine... Alright, sorry for you and that's the last time I dust your seat buster and you can forget about having coffee and a danish with me too. No, I'm not in the mood anymore. Go ahead, forget it, forget it cheapskate. Yeah, see you around...

(GROVER enters.)

GROVER

Whew, I didn't think I'd make it in this weather. What a storm. Brrr, it's freezin' outside. Only reason why I came is Greg's been on my black ass. Said if I don't start makin' him some big money like you, he's gonna find somebody else and I sorta need this job. At my age it's the only one I could find, so, how you doin' Jew boy?

ABIE

Ev'ryone once and the easy ones, seventeen times.

GROVER

(Sort of laughs

Gives bag.)

I know inflation, ha ha, same old Mocky. Brought you some coffee and a bagel. Here, and that's three bucks, cash.

(ABIE takes coffee and bagel, opens coffee and sips.)

ABIE

Never mind three bucks cash, I owe you a dollar-fifty which is what it cost you chiseler and I'll pay you later, if you're lucky.

GROVER

How come all you Jews are so cheap?

ABIE

And how come all you Farakan lovers try to take advantage of us cheap Jews, you *gonif*.

GROVER

Gonif my ass Jew boy.

ABIE

My name is Abie, Abie Schwartz. Why do you call me Jew boy, Mocky, Heeb, Hymie, Kike, Moses lover? Oh yeah, you forgot *Yuden*, the Nazis called us *Yuden*. Is it because you're like the Nazis, you don't like *Yuden*? Why, what did I do to you?

GROVER

Maybe, 'cause you Jews don't like us and maybe 'cause your kind got all the money, all the power and us niggers ain't got shit, never did, anyway, do any business Mr. *Kikee*?

ABIE

Are you kidding? It was a regular New Years Eve, you *shvartza chorlehrya*.

GROVER

Hey, you better cool it with that shvartza jive, 'cause I know it means blackie and New Years Eve, no kiddin'...? I thought they cancelled most of the flights and it would be slow as molasses. Now, tell me the truth, how many shines did you do cheapskate?

(Laughs.)

And no BS, how many Jew boy, how many?

ABIE

Nine, ten. It's been so busy I lost track.

GROVER

Holy Toledo, I don't believe it, 15 shines on a day like today? *Manoshewizt*, that's your Jew wine that I really dig, *Manoshewitz* and I ain't even a Jew.

ABIE

You don't say? Personally I prefer Merlot and not 15, not 15. I said 12, 14 tops.

GROVER

(Sings.)

I know you did 15, maybe more, right? You just don't want me to be, "*Jealousy*,

(Laughs.)

why do you torture me?" Damn Abie, see I called you Abie and you Jews sure are lucky.

ABIE

Yeah, look at me, can't you tell how lucky I am? I've always been lucky, especially when they sent my mother, father and my Uncle Yunny to the ovens, not to mention the other six million Jews; I used to have a big family and I was lucky all right, we were all lucky, and when that sweet nun, Sister Catherine hid me and I finally escaped to America, was I lucky. Boy, was I lucky.

GROVER

Hey man, you guys ain't the only ones that's been *lucky*... The same jive happened to us and 200 years later it's still happenin', ain't it Mr. Heeb? And even though Washington, Jefferson and all them other bull shit Presidents didn't have no ovens, *we* were their

 (Sings)

slaves weren't we? "*Rags old iron, rags old iron. All he was buyin' was them rags n' ole iron.*" And don't forget about Selma, don't forget about my main man, Dr. Martin Luther King, who preached non-violence and love thy neighbor just like Jesus loved all of us, Hymie...

GROVER

(Sings.)

ACCORDING to the BIBLE

Since time began,
The trouble between man,
Has been we're different,
N' what a drag.

Guess you can blame,
Its 'cause we ain't the same.
Jews, Muslim n' Christian.
Are G-ds children.

According to the Bible,
It's time for a revival.
According to the Bible,
We're blood brothers, sisters under the skin.
'Cause Black, white or yellow we are all kin.
According to the Bible
It's time for a revival,
According to the Bible.

Sure I am poor.
N' sure I needs some more.
Ain't it time I got it?
Sure could use some.

I'll spread some cheer,
N' sing happy New Year.
Soon as I get my taste.
Have a party.

According to the Bible,
It's time for a revival.
According to the Bible,
We're blood brothers, sisters under the skin.
'Cause Black, white or yellow we are all kin.
According to the Bible
It's time for a revival,
According to the Bible.

ABIE

...And don't forget Martin Luther said, "*I have a dream, I have a dream.*" What a

(Laughs.)

wonderful man and its hard to believe such a brilliant man wasn't Jewish, *nu?*

GROVER

He sure wasn't a Heeb and that's why he preached, that except for the color of our skin, Jews and Blacks, there really ain't much difference, so what the hell we fightin' about Hymie? 'cause we both got a story and they sure ain't good, right? They sure ain't good.

ABIE

Thanks for reminding me and if we're the same, why does your Farakan, who you think is so wise, call us Hymie, the devil incarnate, pigs? And if there's no difference, does that mean you and all your people are pigs too, like he called us? And I thought Muslims, like Jews, are forbidden to eat *traif*, pork. Why does he hate us so much? Has he forgotten that two Jewish boys, Shwerner and Goodman gave their lives for your cause, so that you could vote. Doesn't he understand, Blacks, Jews, we are all G-d's children? We've been persecuted since time and memoriam and so have you. Why can't there be *sholem* between us and our two great people?

GROVER

Sholem, that's another word and would you pa-lease tell me what the heck is sholem?

ABIE

Peace, Grover. That's what has been missing throughout the world, especially in the Middle East and for who knows how long? Arab fighting Jew, Jew fighting Arab. You know, if they asked me, I would undress all the Arabs and all the Israelis, stand them naked, side-by-side in a dark room and play, "*The Anniversary Waltz.*" I bet that they wouldn't know who's who and after they started touching, hugging, kissing and after a little *schtupping*, when they see all the beautiful children they produced, hopefully they'd realize that we are all one big family. I give you *Sholem*; Peace on Earth and good will to all men. *Uhmane*, Amen.

GROVER

...Yeah, Amen for the Sholem man, and the same things goin' on with my people in Africa right now. Blacks killin' blacks, damn fools... And you're happy, right?

ABIE

I'm not happy, in fact I'm sad, because how can a brother kill a brother? *Meschugeh*.

GROVER

(Sings)

(Laughs.)

"*What's goin' on, what's goin' on?*"

ABIE

What a voice and that laugh, where did you get that laugh? Don't you miss it Grover, the singing, the audience, the applause. You used to be famous, so, what happened?

GROVER

It's a long story and one I'll never tell you, 'cause you don't tell me shit. Anyway, that was a long long time ago Jew boy, a long time ago.

ABIE

What's a long time?

GROVER

Got to be close to 30 years...

ABIE

Don't you miss it?

GROVER

I suppose...

ABIE

But, you still have such a beautiful voice. You shouldn't be shining shoes. A man like you, almost intelligent and I said almost, handsome with such a voice should be singing. You told me you used to sing with...

GROVER

...Basie, Duke, Sarah, Ella, Dinah and beautiful Nancy Wilson... But that was when
(Sings.)

I was much younger and maybe I could sing a little. *"Water boy, where is you goin'?" If you don't come back, Iz gonna tell your mammy."*

ABIE

You still can sing, you still can sing. You know who you always remind me of? Next to Frank, one of my all-time favorites, Joe Williams, *olev hasholem*, may he rest in peace.

GROVER

Hey, thanks for the compliment, but like Sinatra, Joe was one of a kind. Joe was the best.
(Sings.)

"Woman's right to tears will be hers until she'll die, but a man ain't supposed to cry."
Like you Hymie, I'm an old man. Show biz is for them young dudes. Ain't nobody interested in...

ABIE

...You are so wrong Grover...

GROVER

...Hey, see those two Hari Karis walkin'? I'm gonna ask 'em, 'cause them Japs got lots of money and you already did 20 big ones, and I ain't done diddly-squat. It's my turn Hymie, it's my turn, 'cause remember what Greg said about gettin' that freakin' worm?

ABIE

Be my guest, because I never have, and I never will shine their *facockte* shoes, even if they begged me.

GROVER

How come?

ABIE

I'm still mad at them from the last war, those squinty-eyed, *bonsai* dive-bombers...

GROVER

(Laughs

🎵 Sings with gusto.)

...You're still tryin' to be funny, ain'tcha Jew boy?

Shine'em up, shine'em up, shine'em up!

For two dollars I'll spin your wheels.

Shine'em up, shine'em up, shine'em up!

You'll feel so good you'll click your heels.

Damn, look at them jive turkeys. Didn't even nod or say hello. Just walked by with their noses up in the air, mumblin' some Jap jive I didn't understand.

ABIE

Told you. Look over there. See those two Indians? Where the hell did they come from?

GROVER

Ever do Indians, Abie?

ABIE

Two, Tonto and Sabu.

GROVER

And?

ABIE

Tonto gave me that guy's silver bullet and Sabu, some midget, gave me a mushy banana.

(GROVER and ABIE 🎵sing duet.)

GROVER

INJUNS

Apache, Cherokee n' Sioux.
Stick feathers in their hair.
N' they don't care, about me n' you.
There's nothin' we can do.

ABIE

They got names I can't pronounce.
The first Americans.
There are those that that try to renounce.
Too bad they've lost their bounce.

Invite an Indian over for coffee.

GROVER

Invite a Cherokee over for tea.

ABIE

We should give 'em back their land 'cause its theirs.

GROVER

Lets prove to them America really cares.

ABIE and GROVER

(THEY salute and sway.)

Lets prove to them America really cares.
AMERICA REALLY CARES.

GROVER

They called it eminent domain.
Legal killin' they said
They were smart but lost their brain.
To me they were insane.

ABIE

Cain killed Able in the Bible.
Jealousy was its name.
All those who sin are libel.
We are from one tribal.

ABIE

Invite an Indian over for coffee.

GROVER

Invite a Cherokee over for tea.

ABIE

We should give 'em back their land, 'cause its theirs.

GROVER

Lets prove to them America really cares.

ABIE and GROVER

(THEY salute and sway.)

Lets prove to them America really cares.

AMERICA REALLY CARES.

GROVER

(Laughing **GROVER** **sings loud.)**

You are the funniest Jew boy I ever met...

Shine'em up, shine'em up, shine'em up!

For two dollars I'll spin your wheels.

Shine'em up, shine'em up, shine'em up!

You'll feel so good you'll click your heels.

Did you see what I just saw? Those freakin' Apaches were wearing feathers *and*

(Laughs.)

sneakers. Where the hell did they get those feathers...? I mean sneakers I mean sneakers.

ABIE

Haven't you heard? Nike, Reebok, Adidas are not only trying to put sneakers on every Indian, but the whole world.

GROVER

Oh, my Lord. See that cat with the turned around baseball cap that just passed by...?

Whew, I hate to say it, but he sure reminds me of my old man.

ABIE

Your father, how long do I know you, 10, 12 years? That's the first time I ever heard you mention your father. How come?

GROVER

It's almost two years, but who's countin'? And I don't talk about him, 'cause maybe I don't want to talk about him.

ABIE

I understand, I still miss my father too... I was 12 years old when...

GROVER

...And I was 16 when...

ABIE

When what?

GROVER

When they hung his black ass and it served him right.

ABIE

Who hung your father? Why, what did he do?

GROVER

See, back in the 40s they used to have a ho-down, a real shindig and hang niggers just for the fun of it in Little Rock. Anyway it's a long story, and I sure ain't gonna tell you, 'cause it's so sad you'll probably laugh, won't you? Ma, you always laugh.

ABIE

If it's that sad and I'm sure it is, I swear I won't laugh, because we're friends, aren't we?

GROVER

Friends, since when did we become friends? We ain't friends and we ain't ever gonna be friends. Who the hell ever heard of a nigger and Jew bein' friends except in that dumb play, "*I'm not Rappaport*" and that was a freakin' play, this is real life Jew boy.

ABIE

Play or no play, friends or no friends, I bet your life was sad and that's why you don't want to tell me, but you can tell me, because this Jew boy knows about sadness.

GROVER

It's sad all right. My whole life's been sad, real sad and maybe that's why I used to sing the blues all the time.

ABIE

Maybe if you told me, you'd feel a little better. Why don't you tell me? I'm a very good listener.

GROVER

I don't know if I could. Don't think I ever told the whole truth to anybody, 'cause maybe it still hurts too much and maybe, maybe I'm ashamed of it.

ABIE

There's nothing to be a shamed of, nothing, because all human beings have faults and fears. Maybe it's time Grover, maybe it's time you got it off your chest?

(WE hear the Underscoring of "What's the Difference.")

GROVER

Maybe it is Abie, maybe it is...? I was born in Arkansas, Little Rock in 1930. My father, Luke Chisolm picked cotton and never picked enough to feed his eight kids and my sweet mother, Dolly. Anyway, Mama used to say that Paw didn't make enough money, 'cause he drank too much: rotgut. Don't think I ever saw or spoke to him when he wasn't stoned. He was this tall, good-lookin' nigger and the ladies sure liked him. One day, it was in the middle of summer and it was real hot. I was walkin' home, carryin' my pole, I had gone fishin', tryin' to catch some catfish for dinner and I did real good, caught four

(Sings.)

big ones. I was happy as a lark singin', "*Old man river, that old man river, he don't say nothin'...*" Seems I always sang, 'cause my ole man used to sing them blues and he

(VO of Father.)

asked, what asked, he made me sing too. "*If I sing, then you better sing, or you know what's good for you, boy,*" he would shout, "*Now sing, damn you Grover Alexander, sing!*" He had the most beautiful voice and seems the good Lord passed it on to me.

Anyway, I was cuttin' through the fields, when I saw my father, wearin' his old Yankee baseball cap, with the brim turned backwards. He always wore that baseball cap, even when he went to sleep, bangin' Lottie, the town's white whore in the fields. He was zippin' up his fly, just about through, when, unfortunately he saw me starin' at him. He ran over to me, grabbed me by my shirt, smacked, then punched me to the ground and then pulled out his big whitlin' knife and put it to my throat. "*You best forget what you just saw, you hear?! You best forget it and if you don't, I'll kill you boy, I'll kill you real*

(Laughs.)

good, 'cause I know where you live," he laughed, just like this, *ha ha ha*, seems I got the same laugh don't I?

ABIE

So, that's where you got your laugh from, your father...

GROVER

(We hear VO of Father speak and laugh.)

"*I know where you live,*" he laughed. I hated his laughin' and I sure hated his big knife even more.

ABIE

Your own father threatened to kill you...? I don't believe it, unbelievable. No, I believe it I believe it... I believe everything you tell me.

GROVER

To this day I still have nightmares about his laugh, freakin' baseball cap and that knife... I hated him for cheatin' on my sweet Mama, I hated him for us bein' so poor, I hated him for always bein' so drunk and I hated him for threatenin' to kill me with his big knife. I couldn't tell my Mama, my sisters and brothers, 'cause I was afraid he would really kill me and maybe them if they knew that he cheated. Anyway, I think I said enough, don't you?

ABIE

Not if there's more. Is there more Grover, is there more?

GROVER

More more? There's so much, this shit could go on forever.

ABIE

Then, if I was you I would continue.

GROVER

Why is that?

ABIE

Because, I believe Plato, a brilliant Greek once said, "*Man's ability to cleanse his soul is G-d given.*"

GROVER

Did he really say that?

ABIE

And you believe in G-d don't you?

GROVER

I sure do.

ABIE

Nu? Start cleansing your soul mister, start cleansing your soul.

GROVER

Now, you sure Plato said it, right? Okay, seems Paw was always loaded and I tried to forget, but I couldn't. Ya see, he had a violent temper, 'specially when he got drunk, which was all the time. Used to beat the shit out of my little Mama and all of us just for

(WE hear VO of Father's laugh.)

the fun of it and he used to laugh just like this. *Ha Ha, Ha Ha*. I was just glad he didn't take his big knife to us. Thank you sweet Jesus.

ABIE

I'm so sorry Grover, but what does he have to do with you not singing anymore?

GROVER

A whole lot Jew boy, a whole lot. One time, me-and-him went to church early, to sort of set up for Easter. My father and me were going to lead the choir. We were goin' to sing,

(Sings.)

"Glory, glory hallelujah. Glory, glory hallelujah." I sure love that song. It was quiet as a church mouse, and like always, he was half polluted when we got there. He looked around, didn't matter, 'cause he was so drunk he couldn't see the nose in front of his face,

much less the Deacon. Anyway, pokin' around, my father sees the poor box and it was filled, I mean there was lots of money in it. He was laughin', he sure could laugh as he pulled on his baseball cap, started stuffin' his pockets with all that money, when Deacon Butler stepped from the shadows where he was secretly watchin' him.

ABIE

Oy, the Deacon saw him stealing from his church. Now, your father was a real *gonif*.
(Underscoring is heightened.)

GROVER

(VO of Deacon)

"Luke Chisolm, what in the Good Lord's name are you doin'?" The Deacon roared, angry as a church's tit. "How dare you! I trusted you with the key. How long has this

(VO of Father.)

been goin' on? How much have you stolen?" "Nothin', nothin'. I didn't steal nothin'. I

(VO of Deacon.)

ain't never stole nothin'!" my father screamed. "You are stealin' from the poor, the hungry, needy folks around here! You will go to hell, live in damnation and I am goin' to

(VO of Father.)

report you to the po-lice right now!" "You ain't gonna do nothin'," my father screamed, as he ran over to the Deacon. "Don't Papa, don't do nothin', please don't hurt him, he's our Deacon," I cried. He pulled the Deacon by his shirt, took out his knife, stabbed him

(VO of Father.)

and said, "That'll teach you to go to the po-lice, asshole." He kept laughin' and stabbin', laughin' and stabbin' and I just stared at him.

ABIE

Oy, he tried to murder your Deacon in front of you, his own son... I don't believe it.

GROVER

...Then he grabbed me, his own son, put that bloody knife to my throat and said, "If I said one word to anybody he would kill me. Forget it, forget everything or you'll go to hell like me," he yelled, pulled on his baseball cap and laughed as he ran away.

ABIE

Oh, my G-d. You are so right when you said you have a sad story. It's heartbreaking... I'm so sorry you had such a father like that.

GROVER

...Yeah, that was my father all right. When all the parishioners got there and they saw me standin' over the body weepin', they called the Po-lice. Seein' me cryin', the po-lice kept on questionin' and questionin' me and then they started smackin' me around real good. "You are an accomplice to the fact boy! We know your good for nothing father did it, so admit it, admit it or we'll send your black ass to prison for 40 years with him!"

ABIE

So, you told them, didn't you? You had to tell them.

(Underscoring ends.)

GROVER

I told them shit. All I did was cry. They knew that my father did it. Needless to say they caught him two days later, drunk as a skunk, hidin' in the woods. When they locked him up, my Mama made us all go see him, one at-a-time. When it was my turn, it was the first time I saw that no good drunk sober. He smiled and laughed real good, pulled on his baseball cap, then told me that when the trial comes, I best forget that I saw him do it, 'cause if I don't and they hang his ass, he promised he'd be back to haunt me and wherever I go, whenever I sing, and he said that I was goin' to become a real good singer like him, I would always see his face, hear him laugh and when I do, I would start to shake, forget all the words I was singin', look like the damn fool they called him and become a low-down loser like he was, unless I tell the judge and jury that some crazy

(Laughs.)

white man killed the Deacon and then he laughed, he sure could laugh. You shoulda heard him. Hold on, I see somebody comin'. Damn, damn. Plato or no Plato,

(Sings.)

damn. Plato or no Plato, what's Greg gonna say? I just ain't got it, do I Jew boy?

I JUST AIN'T GOT IT

I'm tired of livin' my life like a slave.
Hurts so bad I feel like packin' it in.
I think its time I start diggin' my grave.
My poor life is nothin' but a freakin' sin

Nobody loves ole Grover like they did.
I used to be handsome n' I could sing.
Seems life's been on a downward skid.
N' I always dreamed that I'd be king.

Seems I'm all washed up.
My life's too tough,
Damn I aint that rough
I just ain't got it.
I just ain't got it, I just ain't got it, do I?

Seems my paw Luke Chisolm still on my mind.
I can still hear him laughin' in my face.
Think I'm goin' mad and n' goin' blind.
N' up my sleeve I ain't got no ace.

Seems I'm all washed up.
My life's too tough,
Damn I aint that rough
I just ain't got it.
I just ain't got it, I just ain't got it, do I?

ABIE

You got it, you got it and don't worry about Greg. He's a low-life, money hungry bastard like most bosses. Fortunately, this isn't the only place to shine shoes. I worked for myself outside Grand Central, Penn Station, Bloomingdales, Macys, Gimbles and I did good, but lets get back to your story. Wait do you see who I see?

GROVER

Where?

ABIE

By TWA.

GROVER

Oh, my G-d, talk about the devil, what the hell is he doing here so early? Sonofabitch's probably checkin' up on me. The man just don't let this nigger breathe...

ABIE

And you think he lets me breathe? *"How many shines did you do today Abie? That's all? You know Abie, these booths cost me a fortune. You have to do more business or I might have to close down, or maybe I should get someone that's a little younger, more enthusiastic, more get up and go?"* You, thinks he's any different from those other rotten bosses?

GROVER

Yeah, all those turkeys are the same, I mean exactly.

ABIE

Do you know, how many times he's said the same baloney to me? Every time I see him, every week and *oy*, I can't take it, I just can't take it.

GROVER

Me too Jew boy. Listen, you did at least 20 shines and I ain't done one, so, how's about you sayin' that I did 10 and you did ten? Would you do that for me brother, would you?

ABIE

Oh, now that you want something I'm not your Jew boy anymore, now, I'm suddenly your brother, well absolutely not *brother*. Brothers like you I can do without.

GROVER

Please Abie, I didn't mean you no harm by calling you Jew boy. I call all your kind Jew boy.

ABIE

All your kind? That's sounds pretty anti-Semitic to me.

GROVER

Hey, I ain't no anti-Semite like that loser Farakan is, who I despise. When I was 16, I enlisted and fought those Nazi bastards in World War II for you guys. I hated those Jew haters, still do. Man I got me a medal for bravery, so pa-lease, help me out brother.

(WE hear the underscoring of "I Just Aint Got It," ABIE takes money from his wallet and gives it to Grover.)

ABIE

Since you hate Farakan, fought the Nazis, okay, here, put this money in the register.

GROVER

You mean you never put the bread in the register Jew boy?

(ABIE shakes head no.)

GROVER (cont'd)

Damn, I don't believe it. Aw, forget it. Anyway I'm gonna write out 10 slips and you better do the same my man and who's that good lookin' babe with him.

ABIE

Probably, one of his drunken floozies. Who else would go out with that drunken bastard?

GROVER

Hey man, you better start writin' some slips before he gets here.

(ABIE and GROVER hurriedly write slips. GROVER takes them and puts them with money in register.)

GROVER (cont'd)

Thank you Abie, I really appreciate it.

(Aftre a beat GREG enters.)

GREG

Good morning gentlemen, glad to see you could make it. Pretty rotten weather isn't it?

GROVER

Sure is boss, sure is.

GREG

With most of the flights cancelled, I don't suppose you did much business and that's exactly why I came and brought Carmen with me: to light a fire under your old *heinies*. Grover, Abie say hello to your new cohort.

GROVER

Cohort, what the hell is a cohort.

GREG

Carmen is going to be working with you guys, and I expect you to show her the ropes. You know, how to write out a slip, ring up the sale and make sure she has brushes and
(Underscoring is heightened as GREG opens cash register, reels slightly and counts receipts.)

polish... My, I don't believe how busy you've been. It's only 9:45 and you've already
(Hiccups.)

done 10 shines each? Fantastic! What time did you both start, six, seven? That's just great and I want you to know that I appreciate your hard work, your diligence. I mean being here so early and in this weather. I really don't know what I'd do without you guys. Now Carmen, I want you to do exactly what they do, which means getting here

(Sort of sings.)

bright and early, because you see, the early bird gets the worm....Oh well, I have to get going. Got to go to LaGuardia, Grand Central and Penn Station and check on some of my other investments. With this weather I hope I make it. Hope they're as busy as you guys, anyway have a nice day and I'm glad to see things are improving Grover, Abie. Take good care of my little sex-pot and I'll pick you up about six for dinner Carmen.

(Underscoring ends as Greg exits.)

Keep up the good work fellas. Bye.

GROVER

(Sarcastic.)

I'm glad to see things are improving and did you smell his stinkin' breath? Disgusting.

ABIE

(Sarcastic.)

...Keep up the good work, fellas. That drunken bastard was drunk again as usual and did you hear him hiccup? Hey Grover, how would you like to take a walk with me?

GROVER

Tell you what Jew boy. You go your way and I'll go mine and never the twain shall meet.

(THEY exit in different directions. The stage darkens and spot lights CARMEN as in Scene 1 as SHE ♪ sings.)

HOT TAMALI**CARMEN**

Oy ye me llamo Carmen,
A Puerto Rican *enchilada*.
I smoke crack and drink gin.
And I no do it for *nada*.

Feliciadades, happy New Year.
Lets drink to our happiness.
Peace on Earth lets spread the joy and good cheer.
And May Jesus on us bless.

Sure I sold my body.
Boy did I make a big mistake.
When I'll be somebody.
Then I'll eat a big fat steak.

Feliciadades, happy New Year.
Lets drink to our happiness.
Peace on Earth lets spread the joy and good cheer.
And May Jesus on us bless.

Hey *me llamo* Carmen,
A very hot hot tomali.
If you like Christmas.
Eat me, I'm a Christmas holly.

Feliciadades, happy Jew Year.
Lets drink to our happiness.
Peace on Earth lets spread the joy and good cheer.
And may *Jesus* on us bless.

(To ABIE and GROVER leaving - Shakes sexily.)
You see that Priest coming? I'm gonna shine his shoes real good, then I'm gonna ring his
(Sings with gusto.)
bell, ding dong, ding dong.
Shine'em up, shine'em up, shine'em up!
For two dollars I'll do you nice..
Shine'em up, shine'em up, shine'em up!
You'll feel sweet, and that's my price.
You gonna love 'em when Carmen shines'em up. *Oye Chico, benaca,*
(Speaks to imaginary patron. Cleans seat.)
benaca...! Good morning father. Please sit down. Wait, please let Carmen clean it for
you. There, are you comfy...? Good. You know most of the flights are cancelled, so, er
(Puts liquid on small brush and puts it on.)

what are you doing at the airport...? Oh, you didn't think they would cancel your nine o'clock flight to Chicago. That's why you came... I see, a seminar on improving race relations between Catholics and Jews. *Muey interesante*, that's very, very interesting

(Wipes and brushes imaginary shoes.)

Father and I think it's about time too, don't you...? That's why you're going? *Que bueno*... Are you telling me the crusades happened in the 1200s? That's a long time

(Puts polish on.)

ago... Yeah, I think I heard about Queen Isabela... Wow, are you guys really going to take responsibility for the slaughter of hundreds of thousands of Jews during the inquisition...? That's pretty heavy, Father, pretty heavy... Also about the Pope not taking a stand during the Holocaust...? *Ai caramaba!* That was *muey malo, muey malo* man...

(Brushes.)

And slavery in this country...? You're right, you should have embraced Martin Luther King and his quest for freedom. Right on, right on for freedom... And Communism too, the Pope and all Catholics should have spoken out against it...? What can I say?

Personally, I hope you can get to Chicago, because I think you are finally going to do the right thing and maybe you can do something about the bombing on Vieques... Yeah, it's that little island in PR... I would appreciate that Father. Can I ask you something Father? Do you like, err, ever listen to confession outside of church...? Not really, well, I know we're not in church, but er, you just confessed to me and I didn't say this wasn't Saint Mary's did I, and you know what they say? What's good for the goose Padre, what's good for the goose...? Good, 'cause I would like to do a little *confessiones*, 'cause it's been on my mind... *Gracias*, I sure appreciate it. Okay, lets see, where should I begin...? Should I tell you when I had to get married at 15 because I became *encinta*, pregnant and *mi madre* made me get married because she was too embarrassed to tell her *familia* and friends? How I started hooking at 17 to help support my beautiful *bambino* and how I had to give him to my mother to take care of, because I was too busy hooking. That I was married three times and I really loved them all, Miguel, Pablo and Panchito, especially Panchito, he was this *grande hombre* and they all left me, they always leave me, maybe because I became *arê batado, tormentado* on booze, strung out on heroin and finally on crack? Nah, that's old, that's yesterday's newspaper. I gave that up when I went to NA and AA. I've been straight two years, thanks to my higher power, our savior, Jesus Christ... What's troubling me? Okay, I'll tell you what's troubling me. You see, as you know I was a hooker... That's right a prostitute, at least I was before that *carajo*, that *bendejo* got me to give it up. What a mistake... Hey, that's not the only reason. You see that *bato* Greg that was just here, was *êcomin'* to see me two, three times a week and at \$200 a pop it was killin' him, 'cause he's cheap. Money leaves his hands like glue, and he really didn't like my pimp, Victor was his name and Victor didn't like him either. Anyway, every time he balled me, just as he was about to have his *orgasimo*, orgasm, he'd tell me that he loved me, he loved me more than anything and he couldn't stand, he didn't want any other man to touch me, because he loved me. Said he wanted me to live with him and he would treat me like a princess for the rest of my life. He has this beautiful condo on East 63rd Street and last month, like a fool, I believed him and I stopped hooking and gave up my pad in the East Village and moved in... *Permisso*...

(🎵Sings with gusto.)

Shine'em up, shine'em up, shine'em up!

For two dollars I'll do you nice..

Shine'em up, shine'em up, shine'em up!

You'll feel sweet, and that's my price.

Sorry, I thought that *bato* wanted a shine... Oh, no, I haven't turned a trick since then, but sure enough, that *maricon* said he wanted me to do something with my time and make some money for him, 'cause he wasn't going to support me forever. He said he wanted me to learn a new business, his shoeshine business, can you believe it? Me, shining *zapatos*, freakin' shoes. He said, if I light a fire under some of his workers ass, like those two guys that left and all the other guys that work for him, by showing them how to drum up some more business, he'd take care of me real good. Tell you the truth, I've been breaking my ass, I'm sorry for using that language, but that *bendejo* has been cursing me since the day I moved in with him, and I think it's catching like the Asian flu. Worst of all, he's been using me. You see he's banging me almost everyday, besides making me give him a ...job every morning and he's not paying for it. I mean, up and down, I used to charge \$200, around the world 3. He's using me Father, he's using me up real good...And now I'm shining shoes for him,

(Cries)

can you believe it? And he ain't payin' me a freakin' dime, *nada*. What'll happen to me

(Gyrates and 🎵sings with gusto.)

if he leaves? They always leave me, always and I'm not hooking anymore...

SHINE'EM UP!

Shine'em up, shine'em up, shine'em up!

For two dollars I'll do you nice..

Shine'em up, shine'em up, shine'em up!

You'll feel sweet, and that's my price.

End of ACT 1

SHINE'EM UP, SHINE'EM UP!

ACT II

Scene I

The next day:
7:45 AM

**GROVER takes off his coat, looks
around, mopes and 🐛 sings.**

EARLY BIRD GETS THE WORM

Just call me a looser,
I don't have a dime.
They call me a boozer,
That needs a good time.

Been livin' by myself.
I need some lovin'.
N' sure could some help.
Sweet turtle dove'n.

The early bird gets the worm,
That's what they say.
Today is gonna be my turn.
I'll make 'em pay when I get that worm.

Just can't sing anymore.
Lost my autograph.
I just don't know the score.
N' I never laugh.

I sure could use a friend.
Someone I can Trust.
Until the bitter end.
When I turn to dust.

The early bird gets the worm,
That's what they say.
Today is gonna be my turn.
I'll make 'em pay when I get that worm.

GROVER

Damn, looks like everybody went home, except these turkeys that work here. When the hell is it gonna stop snowin'? Must be 10 feet outside and it looks like it ain't ever gonna let up. I don't know how the bus got here, but I'm sure glad it did. I came here early 'cause I wanted to beat Abie for a change. I don't know how the little Jew does it, but he does. Like yesterday, beside the 20 shines he did before I got here, he did at least 20 more and all I did was five all day. Damn, maybe it's the way he says *shine'em up, shine'em up?* Hopefully I'll catch a few shines before he gets here. Fix his little Jew ass, I will. Make him jealous instead of me being jealous. See how he likes it, besides, I owe him some money, \$30. That sure was real nice of him splittin' his shines with me, otherwise, with him doin' 20 and me doin' nothin', Greg would have fired my ass for sure. Hey, I know he's getting' ready to get rid of me, that's why he brought that real fine lookin' babe to be our cohort. Cohort my ass, who the hell needs a cohort? What I need's some big tippers who want a shine... I wonder what she's doin' with that ugly, drunken bastard anyway... Man, that Jew boy sure can be a sweetheart. Guess, that's why I told him about me growin' up in the South, my sweet little Mama, my brothers and sisters, about my no good drunken father, his Yankee baseball cap and his big knife, may his tortured ass rest in wherever the hell he is. Ain't that a bitch? I was confessin' to Abie who's a Jew and Jews don't believe in confession. Wonder what those Heebs believe in anyway? Abie don't know it, but he's the only Jew I talk to and I'm sure grateful I have him to talk to sometimes.

(Laughs.)

Hee hee, the man's teachin' me Jewish and I dig it, I really do. *Gonif's* a crook, *schlep's* like pullin' somethin' I think and *meschugeneh* is crazy. I better watch out or that cat'll

(Snaps fingers.)

make me a Bar Mitzvah and I'll become Jewish just like that and he can forget about that circumcision jive, 'cause, what happens if me and my ladies don't like it? They can't put it back, can they? That's why I ain't interested, no way Jose. Hey, I don't believe it, but there's two guys comin' my way. Ooh wee, this might just turn out to be my lucky day.

(Sings.)

"Hallelujah I'm a bum, hallelujah bum again. Hallelujah give us a hand to remind us again."

(Sings with gusto.)

Shine'em up, shine'em up, shine'em up!

For two dollars I'll spin your wheels.

Shine'em up, shine'em up, shine'em up!

You'll feel cool you'll click your heels.

Please shine'em up mister. Damn, with the snow and ev'rybody's gone home, don't suppose too many people gonna get their shoes shined today.

(ABIE appears.)

ABIE

You're here before me? I don't believe it.

GROVER

Hey man, didn't Greg say something about how the early bird gets the freakin' worm? Hello. So, how's my favorite Mocky doin'?

ABIE

How's your favorite Mocky doing? Don't ask. *Nu*, any action *boichic*?

GROVER

Just like New Years Eve and *boichic*'s a boy, right?

ABIE

It certainly is and how can you be that busy in this rotten weather?

GROVER

Unbelievable, like I haven't stopped and you said you were that busy yesterday, didn't you Jew boy? So, why shouldn't a Blackman be busy today? We got rights, don't we?

ABIE

You, and your rights, so tell me, how many shines did you do, you *gonif*.

GROVER

I'm a *gonif*? You're the *gonif*, 'cause you did 20 before I got here yesterday, so, I did 18 big ones today and it's about time, too. So, there *gonif*, that'll teach you to be late and
(Gives money)
guess who finally got the worm and you should have been here, 'cause this basketball player, Grewell or Sprewell or somethin', gave me a \$100 tip so, here's the 30 you lent me yesterday, brother. Sure appreciate it.

ABIE

(Takes money)

Thank you, so where's my coffee and bagel? What did you forget again?

GROVER

I was in too much of a rush to stop and get it, besides, how's about you gettin' me my breakfast for a change, cheapskate? You makin' all that money, ain't you?

ABIE

(Opens cash register and looks in.)

All right, but the machine takes quarters and I don't have any... Grover, I thought you said you did 25 shines? Where's the slips, where's all the *gelt* you said you made?

GROVER

Well, err, I don't know how to say this, but I really didn't do 30 shines, Abie. Wish I did.

ABIE

So, why did you tell me you did 35 shines? you *gonif*, you.crook.

GROVER

Because I was jealous that you did 40 shines yesterday and all I did was five. Five miserable shines, and today I didn't even do one, not one. I was just trying' to make you

(Laughs)

jealous, that's all Jew boy.

ABIE

Of me you're jealous? Of an *alte cocker* you're jealous? I didn't do 50 shines before you got here yesterday. I did one *facockte* shine. I just told you I did 60 shines because

(Sings.)

maybe I'm a liar and I'm so sorry, but I can't help it.

I LIE

I lie, don't ask me why,
I cry because I lie.
I lie, that's all I know,
Even when it snows I lie.

I lie, I am uncouth.
Can't tell the truth, I lie.
I lie, a crying shame.
I'm to blame so I lie.

When my Anna left and went away.
I cried and drank to ease the pain.
And suddenly my hair turned to gray.
Why does it always have to rain?

The older I get the more it hurts.
And so, I run into the past.
A dream where everything always works.
Too bad the good times didn't last.

I lie, don't ask me why,
I cry because I lie.
I lie, that's all I know,
Even when it snows I lie.

I lie, I am uncouth.
Can't tell the truth, I lie.
I lie, a crying shame.
I'm to blame so I lie.

G-d grant me peace and serenity.
 When will I ever laugh again?
 And will I ever learn to like me?
 Now all I ask for is a friend.

I lie, don't ask me why,
 I cry because I lie.
 I lie, that's all I know,
 Even when it snows I lie.


I lie, I am uncouth.
 Can't tell the truth, I lie.
 I lie, a crying shame.
 I'm to blame so I lie.

I lie all the time, to you and everyone and I don't know why. What am I trying to hide can you tell me? I didn't do 70 shines.

GROVER

You didn't, you really didn't do all them shines? Oh, you sweet Jew, I'm so glad I could jump.

ABIE

And you know what, even though you don't like me, the sweet Jew, maybe, I like you
 ( **Sings.**)
 because, "*Oh you got to have friends.*" Boy, can I use a real friend and that's the truth.

(THEY both hug and jump for joy.)

GROVER

That means that you put your bread in the register just for me and I'm sure beholdin' to you. Well, the next 20 shines we do, we ain't gonna make out no slips and you gonna get your money back and so will I Mr. Kike.

ABIE

Would you do that for me, Mr. Kike, you lying Jew boy?

GROVER

Damn right I would. Hey, it ain't your fault you were born a Heeb instead of black-and-
(Laughs)
 beautiful like me, and you just said we were friends, not that I believe you liar...

ABIE

Tell you the truth; thinking about you and your beautiful voice, your drunken father with his baseball cap, his big knife and how he killed that Deacon, I couldn't close my eyes.

GROVER

(Sings Laughs)
"I couldn't sleep at all last night. 'Cause I was thinkin' 'bout you-ou."

ABIE

What a voice and I love your laugh. Listen, why don't you tell me about when you were
(Moves fingers together.)
 a singer? At least you were famous, I, I was never famous, not even this close.

GROVER

Hey man, I told you enough already. How's, about you tellin' me about your life for a change? I know you five or six years and where'd you say you were born...?

ABIE

I try to forget and this *yold* asks me where I was born, nu? Forget about where I was born. It's a past that I try to forget, ancient history and I'd rather not say.

GROVER

Why not? I told you my story and I ain't ever told anyone, much less a Jew. Why can't you tell me your story, ain't I good enough?

ABIE

You're good enough and if you think your story was sad, mine's even worse and I try never to think of it because the pain is unbearable, it still drives me *meschugeh*, I'm crazy alright.

GROVER

Come on Abie; see I called you Abie, didn't I? Since I shared my misable childhood with you, maybe you could do the same? We just might become, what's that song you

(Sings)
 just sang? *"Oh you got to have friends..."* Do, it man, 'cause like you, I need a friend so I'd sure like to know your story brother. Now where'd you say you was born?

(WE hears Underscoring of THAT IS WHY.)"

ABIE

Oy, I was born 1930, in Schmerheim, Germany, just before that Nazi *chorlehrya* took over. My father was a doctor and my mother *Channa* was a language teacher. We had a beautiful home, but because of that Nazi bastard's determination to exterminate us, desperate and frightened for our lives, my father sold our home and most of our possession for *bubkes*, that's almost nothing. Using most of the money he had gotten on forged passports, he had our names changed to Himler and we fled to Bendine, Poland. Who knew East Poland was where Treblinka and all the ovens would be...

GROVER

Damn them freakin' ovens...

ABIE

...Anyway, one day a neighbor from Schmerheim came to Bendine; in fact she was once a patient of my father's, recognized him and reported him to the SS. I'll never forget what he whispered to me, I was hiding in the closet as they took him and my hysterical mother away: "*Never forget you are a Jew Abie, never forget.*" My mother was taken to Aushwitz and my father to Bergen Belsen... I never saw them again, never.

GROVER

You still miss them, don't you? What a drag...

ABIE

(Sadly shakes head.)

...Marta, our neighbor, who was a dear friend of my parents: My father delivered both her children, found me hiding in the closet, took me in and hid me in her basement. When she got frightened for her children, because she heard the SS was looking everywhere for Juden, Jews, Marta took a chance and hid me in her attic. You know that movie, "*The Diary of Ann Frank?*" I lived it in it for almost two year, I was there *boichic*, I was there and I'll never forget it.

GROVER

Damn Nazis. They were just like the Klan, weren't they?

ABIE

They were worse, much worse. They had ovens, gas ovens, crematoriums, where six million Jews, and who knows how many homosexuals and Gypsies died, *olev hasholem*... May they rest in peace.

GROVER

You said that about Joe Williams, what's that mean?

ABIE

I told you, *olev hasholem* means may they rest in peace, its a homily, a Hebrew adage we say for the dead.

GROVER

...Anyway, how'd you get to America?

ABIE

An interesting story my dear friend and something and someone I will never forget, may she rest in peace.

GROVER

(Sort of laughs)

Nu, I'm waitin' Abie, I'm all ears *boichic*.

ABIE

Marta had heard that the SS was searching all the houses looking for Jews and she was scared for the safety of her children, so, at three in the morning, she took me to a convent where Sister Catherine took me in. She was to become the kindest and most wonderful person I ever met. A saint.

GROVER

Saint Christopher is my favorite and always was. I used to hear some stories about some Jews hidin' out in a church and now I know it's true and I'm glad...

ABIE

...It's true it's true. At first, I was petrified, because I thought I would probably go to hell for having to look at Jesus Christ on that cross all day long, but I knew I had to survive, because six million Jews were more than enough. For the next year or so, Sister Catherine fed, clothed and called me Heinz, not like the baked beans, but Heinz the *goy*. With my nose and my ears, I was some *goy* all right. When we were alone, she taught me French, Latin like my mother, even gave me a copy of the Old Testament and late at night, taught me my *Haftorah*, what I had to learn for my *Bar Mitzvah*, which was in six months. Hard to believe but she read and spoke Hebrew.

GROVER

And them Nazis were all around, lookin' and tryin' to catch your ass. Unbelievable, what a woman Abie, what a fine woman, reminds me of my sweet Mama, she does... Nu? I'm waiting.

ABIE

I think I said enough, don't you?

GROVER

There's more, ain't there??

ABIE

Don't ask.

GROVER

Well, what about that cat Plato and his cleansin' jive?

ABIE

You don't forget, do you?

GROVER

I'm almost intelligent, ain't I?

ABIE

Okay, okay Mr. Intelligent...When, I was 13 she gave me this old, battered *talis*, that's a religious shawl she had hidden, *Bar Mitzvahed* me, and she laughed at Hitler and his *fahschunkeneh*, that's stinking SS. "Never Juden rouse," she cried, "Never Juden rous. I never had children Abie, but if I had a son I would want him to be just like you," she said and kissed me. She never stopped teaching me, but the one thing, the most important thing I learned that I would never forget was: she taught me how to laugh instead of cry under the worst of circumstance. She said, "Abie, always laugh at the world and the world will laugh with you." She managed to get me records of Groucho Marks, Al Jolson, Georgie Jessel.

GROVER

That's why you're so funny, ain't it Jew boy? I mean Abie, I mean Abie.

ABIE

(Smiles)

...At night she would sneak me into her room where we would listen and then she would make these funny faces and we would laugh. I didn't think I would ever laugh again, but thanks to her I did. I loved to hear her laugh. In war torn Europe, her laughter was music to my big ears... I can still hear her laugh. I love you Sister Catherine I will always love you. It's funny, I remember her more than I do my beloved parents. I even have a picture of her. Do you want to see it? I carry it in my wallet. I look at it when I get

(Takes picture from wallet and gives to Grover.)

depressed which is everyday. It's old, very old, but to me she still looks so beautiful. Here, this was my beloved Sister Catherine and that's it. Socrates or no Socrates I've enough cleansing, enough.

(Underscoring ends. GROVER looks at picture as CARMEN enters and appears battered.)

ABIE

Oh, my G-d, what happened to you Carmen?

GROVER

You got a black eye. How'd you get a black eye...? Le'me guess, it was...

CARMEN

(In tears.)

...He did it, he beat the hell out of me, that drunken *bastardo*, because I wouldn't give him a... I wouldn't give him shit so, he punched me, that's how I got this black eye. He's an alchi and he won't admit it and go for help, because all alchis are in denial. I was in denial before I went to NA and found my higher power and did the steps. He beat the

(Sobs.)

shit out of me and I can't take it. He, just kicked me out of his Caddy, I fell and hurt

(Rubs hand.)

my hand and you should have heard him laugh, like a fuckin' hyena.

ABIE

Oh, you poor sweetheart, you poor *buhbala*. I'll go and get you some ice. I'll be right back.

(ABIE exits.)

CARMEN

He is such a mother... I hate him I hate him. I don't know what to do, where to go? Whenever he gets drunk and he's drunk all the time, he get violent and takes it out on me.

(Loud)

Because of his *malo* temper, I'm afraid, *a yudeme, a yudeme*, somebody, please help me. He's gonna kill me, he's gonna kill me.

GROVER

Well, one thing's for sure, you can't stay with him any longer if he says he's gonna kill you. If I were you, I'd find me another place to live and fast.

CARMEN

I would, but how can I? I'm broke, I stopped working and I don't have any money.

GROVER

You said when you were workin' you made some big bread. What happened to all your money?

CARMEN

(🎤 Sings.)

I HATE HIM

I hate his fuckin' guts.
I wish he'd turn to dust.
He beats me 'til I bleed.
The man is filled with greed.

MARICON!

BESA ME COOLO!

METHADONE.

I'D LIKE TO TELL HIM WHERE TO GO.

WHERE TO SHOVE IT!

I LOVE IT; I'D LIKE TO TELL HIM WHERE TO SHOVE IT!

He talks a good story.
And I believed his shit.
He's evil and gory.
On him I'd like to spit.

MARICON!
BESA ME COOLO!
 METHADONE.
 I'D LIKE TO TELL HIM WHERE TO GO.
 WHERE TO SHOVE IT!
 I LOVE IT; I'D LIKE TO TELL HIM WHERE TO SHOVE IT!

Meanest sonofabitch.
 He lies and swear he don't.
 And he calls me a witch.
 He will and then he won't.

MARICON!
BESA ME COOLO!
 METHADONE.
 I'D LIKE TO TELL HIM WHERE TO GO.
 WHERE TO SHOVE IT!
 I LOVE IT; I'D LIKE TO TELL HIM WHERE TO SHOVE IT!
 (Sobs.)

I have a little son, Jose and my mother takes care of my beautiful bambino. He's not really a baby anymore, he's 17, but to me he is... I was 15 when I became *prenjada*, pregnant and I had him and now he's 17, and every penny I made on my back I gave to *mi madre*, because I want him to have a good home, a good education, not like me. He's in high school, Stuyvesant and he's going to go to college. He has to go to college, because he is *muey inteligente*. Honor roll, my Jose made the honor roll.

ABIE

(Enters.)

Here's the ice and I brought a few napkins. Put the ice in the napkins and put it on your eye.

CARMEN

(Sits and puts ice pack on eye.)

Thank you Abie, that's very thoughtful.

ABIE

It's my pleasure sweetheart, my pleasure.

GROVER

(Sings)

"Luck be a lady tonight. Never get out of my sight."

ABIE

You don't know it, but Grover was a famous singer. This man was a big star Carmen, a biggie.

GROVER

I wasn't a big star or a famous singer Abie. I just used to sing a little, that's all.

CARMEN

Were you really a famous singer, Grover?

GROVER

No, but I wish I was.

ABIE

Don't listen to him. He used to sing with some of the most famous people.

CARMEN

Really, who, tell me who? Please.

GROVER

Well, once-in-awhile I used to sing with Basie and the Duke.

CARMEN

Count Basie and Duke Ellington?

ABIE

And what about all those famous singers? Sara, Dinah, Ella and what's her name? Oh yeah, Nancy Wilson.

CARMEN

Oh, my G-d, can I have your autograph senor?

GROVER

(Laughs.)

Yeah, where do you want it?

CARMEN

(Touches ass.)

Right here.

(ALL laugh.)

CARMEN (cont'd)

Would you please tell me about your singing career, Grover? I sure could use something to get my mind off of this eye, and my hand is killing me.

ABIE

And I'm just nosy, that's all boichic. Nu, I'm waiting mister, I'm waiting.

GROVER

All this is gonna do is depress you, 'cause when I think about it, it depresses the hell out of me. Anyway, I got my first gig when I was about 25 in Brooklyn. Carl's Corner in Canarsie. It was this real hip jazz joint. 1956, I got 40 bucks a show, seven shows a weeks and that was a lot of bread in those days. Man I was flyin'.

(Laughs.)

Started singin' all over Brooklyn and met this cat, Lee Goldfarb. A real, bad ass Jew agent who really dug me. The cat was fantastic. Soon I was singin' in some hip bars in the Bronx, Queens too. For a guy that grew up poor I was makin' some good bread. Met this beautiful woman named Rita from Jamaica, fell in love and we got married. I thought I had it all, 'cause she was as beautiful as Lena Horne, only her skin was golden brown and I loved her to

(Sings.)

death...

MY WOMAN

The way she used to call my name,
She'd take my breath away.
To her everything was a game.
We'd play house everyday.

With her love I was the king.
This king had everything.
Winter always felt like Spring.
And my heart would always sing.

She kissed me and I was on fire.
She smiles and I would melt.
My life was filled with desire.
Her love was all I felt.

With her love felt like the king.
This king had everything.
Winter always felt like Spring.
And my heart would always sing.

Lord, why does it still hurt so much?
Seems time doesn't heal it all.
And I sure miss her gentle touch.
That's why I'm climbin' up a wall.

With her love I was the king.
This king had everything.
Winter always felt like Spring.
And my heart would always sing.

I'll always love that woman, always.

CARMEN

I wish I had someone to love me like you loved her, Grover...

ABIE

What's more important is, do you love yourself? That is the \$64 question.

GROVER

That's a good question and one I asked myself many times and don't give me no Plato, no Aristotle jive. I'm through.

ABIE

Is there more?

GROVER

Damn you with your more. Of course there's more. People started to really dig me. Did the Steel Pier in Atlantic City, in 59. Then Lee took me to Europe, can you dig it? A week at the Odeon theatre in Paris, the Old Vic in London, Switzerland, Amsterdam, then I got a recording contract with Decca. Did a real groovy blues album. Sang with

(Sings.)

Basie in 62, "*Goin' to Chicago, sorry but I can't take you.*"

ABIE

That's another one of my favorites...

GROVER

(Sings.)

...Duke in 63. "*You must take the A train.*" I was cookin' and makin' all kinds of bread and the best thing about it was, Rita, my wife, my life, my best friend.

ABIE

I can't tell you how proud I am of you, Grover. Boy you were some star and you had someone to love, which was even more important, like my darling, Anna who I loved more than anything.

CARMEN

Paris, London, Switzerland. Basie, Ellington, man, you were really cookin'.

ABIE

Keep going keep going. There's more, isn't there Grover? So, tell us.

GROVER

Did an album with the Queen, Dinah just before she passed, Ella in '64 or '66. Things were happenin' real fast. Birdland, and Miles played side in 67. Up until that moment, that was the highlight of my career and to top it all off, in 69 or 70, Lee booked me into Carnegie Hall. My woman told everybody. Must have had 50 or 60 of her family and friends there openin' night. Lee was there to root me on and sittin' fifth row center was

the love of my life. I could see her blowin' me a kiss as I walked on stage. There was so much applause that it was deafenin'. I bowed, blew a kiss to Rita as the

(Sings.)

band started playin'. I opened with, "*Am I blue, you'd be too. Ain't these tears killin'*

(Sings.)

me, am I blue..." Man, I was cookin'. *Did, "Folks here is a story, a sad, sad story 'bout a gal, her name was Minnie the Moocher. She was a low-down hoocha coochee..."*

(Sings

Sings

Sings.)

"Summertime and the livin' is easy..." "Night and Day you are the one," and "Miss

(Laughs.)

Otis Regrets she's unable to lunch today, madam." Ha ha, I sure loved that tune and so did they. Flash lights, were goin' off all over the place. People were takin' pictures of

(Sings)

me, I was the star, I knew it and it sure felt good. Then I sang, "*All of me, why not take all of me?*" Suddenly a giant flashbulb went off, pop, right before my eyes. I blinked,

'cause for a second I was blinded, I couldn't see. I blinked again, rubbed my eyes and looked up to the balcony, which was jammed packed, I blinked again and couldn't

believe what I saw and heard. There was ole Luke Chisolm, my mean, drunken father,

(FATHER'S VO loud laugh.)

bigger'n life, wearin' his turned around baseball cap, laughin' hard as he could laugh and

(FATHER'S VO.)

pointin' his big, ugly knife at me and sayin' "I told you boy, I told you I'd be back, didn't

I?" I started to shake and suddenly it all came back to me. I remembered what he said

when he was in prison. "*Wherever I go, whenever I sing and I was goin' to become a real good singer like him, I would always see his face, hear him laugh and when I do, I would*

start to shake, forget all the words I was singin', look like the damn fool they said he was and become a drunken nobody like him." And there I was, shakin' like a leaf and sure as

shit, just like he said I would, I forgot the words, I drew a blank, nothin' came out.

CARMEN

Nothing, nada, you forgot all the words, just like your father said, *ai caramba*.

ABIE

Nu, what are you waiting for, Grover? Don't you know what Kierkegarde once said?

GROVER

First Plato and now Kierkegarde. Who the hell is Kierkegarde?

ABIE

A psychiatrist that some say was as great as Freud, who said, "*Let it all hang out brother, let it all hang out.*"

GROVER

He didn't really say that, did he?

ABIE**(Grins.)**

Are you calling me a liar? He also wrote about one's dissatisfaction with one's father, nu...?

GROVER**(Nods yes.)****VO, FATHER'S loud laughter.)**

Ones dissatisfaction with one's father, huh...? And then I heard him laughin' some more. I hated when he used to laugh and I hated hearin' his laugh right then on the most important night of my life in Carnegie Hall even more. Stop laughin' Papa, please stop laughin' and pointin' your knife at me, I cried to myself as some people stood and started

(VO)

to clap, then they started to hoot and howl. Somebody yelled, "What'd you forget the words dummy?" I couldn't breathe. I was so embarrassed I ran off the stage. The

(VO)

headlines in all the papers the following mornin', including Variety said: "Grover Alexander rubs eyes and bombs at Carnegie Hall," "Stop using Grover!" "Alexander Stoned at Carnegie." "Grover forgets words." I never sang again professionally. I just couldn't.

CARMEN

You never sang again? What a freakin' drag, 'cause you can sing better today than most of those young, punk rappers. Man, you can sing.

ABIE**(Sings.)**

Now, you believe me when I told you he was a big star, Carmen? *Nehboch.*

SHOW BIZ

He once was on the hit parade,
Thinks he's a falling star.
He feels he doesn't make the grade
He's just not up to par.

He has a voice but doesn't sing.
And boy is that a waste.
Talented, should use his wings.
And fly off into space.

Doesn't see who he is,
But I do.
He should be in show biz.
Telling you.

Pain he has runs his life.
Its so true.
When he finds a new wife,
Feel brand new.

He thinks the sun won't shine again.
I told him that he's wrong.
He says oh yeah well tell me when.
It will shine, sing a song.

Doesn't see who he is,
But I do.
He should be in show biz.
Telling you.

Pain he has runs his life.
Its so true.
When he finds a new wife,
Feel brand new.

CARMEN

You are so right Abie, all he has to do is sing his ass off . Man, you are a stud, Grover, you are so hot to trot, *ooh wee*.

GROVER

I used to be, but to tell you the truth, since Rita passed, I forgot what it's like to feel hot.

CARMEN

All you need is a romantic *muchacha* to get your engine workin' again. It still works, doesn't it?

GROVER

I supposed it does and you got anybody in mind, woman?

CARMEN

I might, why you interested?

GROVER

Maybe, but we'll talk it about some other time. Right now, since I pulled my pants down and told you my life story, I think Abie should do the same and tell us about when he said some people called this little Jew boy the funniest comedian in the Borsht Circuit. Ain't that what you said, or were you lyin' again? Man this cat can lie.

ABIE

I never said it. Don't believe him.

CARMEN

You were a comedian, really and *que dise*, what's the Borsht Circuit?

ABIE

I told you I don't want to talk about it.

GROVER

It's because of Anna, ain't it?

CARMEN

Oh, please Abie, please. *Por favor mi amigo, por favor.*

(WE hear the Underscoring of I LIE.)

ABIE

All right with your *por favors*, I'll tell you, not that I want to, but I'll tell you... Many years ago, the Borsht Circuit, which is in upstate New York, had many wonderful hotels where millions of Jews used to go on vacation every summer, like Grossingers, the Concord, the Nevelee, the Raliegh. Too bad I can't remember all there names because there were so many hotels and they were always packed.

GROVER

It was a real happenin' Carmen and expensive too, with real big stars like, Nat King Cole, Tony Bennet, Buddy Hackett. Eddie Fisher was discovered there and even though this little, old Jew won't admit it, he said he did shows with the king of television, Milton Berle, and I believe he did a bit with the great Danny Kaye at Grossingers. Ain't that right *boichic*, or is you lyin' again? Man, this cat can sure tell 'em!

ABIE

It was so long ago, who can remember?

GROVER

You remember all right, now, lay it on us Abie, lay it on us real good.

ABIE

Oy, where should I begin?

GROVER

The beginning's a good place, *nu?* already.

ABIE

All right, the beginning... I got a job at the Raliegh I think in 1959, 60 as director of activities. I really liked it. It was my job to make sure everybody had a good time all the time and was it fun. In the morning I used to get on the loud speaker and tell everybody there's only six eggs, six bagels left and first come first serve. You never saw so many *meshugenehs* running and pushing and shoving, trying to get into the dining room. When

they were all seated I would announce in a squeaky voice like this, that some crazy chickens smoked something funny and became so nutty, they had an orgy and now, everyone has to eat a ten scrambled eggs, six omelets and a dozen bagels immediately because we have no room for all these fahschtunkeneh eggs, did they laugh. Maybe I laughed too, it was so much fun.

GROVER

(Laughing.)

I told you the Jew boy was funny, didn't I?

ABIE

Don't interrupt me, I'm on a roll. They never stopped laughing, and Marty Forbes, who owned the Raliegh, loved me and that's why he worked me to death, that son-of-a-gun. He put me in charge of teaching them the cha cha, the mambo, the lindy, shuffleboard, badminton, volleyball, softball, rowing, it didn't stop and I was so glad to be surrounded by *Yidlachs*, Jews. I love to be with Jews. You too Grover, I love to be with you too,

(Laughs.)

maybe. At night I became the emcee and comedian. People actually laughed at my *mishegas*, my lunacy. At the end of that summer, it was Labor day when the most beautiful woman I had ever seen, she was 25 and her name was Anna Finkel, asked me to show her how to row a canoe. My heart skipped a beat. In two minutes we were on the lake and I couldn't take my eyes off of her. "*Do you always stare like that?*" she asked. "*Only when I'm about to fall in love,*" I said and we both started to laugh.

(Underscoring Ends.)

CARMEN

She was that beautiful, huh?

ABIE

A regular Rita Hayworth. Right then I told her to stop looking, because I was going to marry her. She asked if I had a date picked out and I said the sooner the better. Like they say in the books, it was love at first sight and boy, was it love.

CARMEN

Abie, you are a regular Don Juan.

ABIE

Oy, that was so long ago.

GROVER

Stop interruptin', the man's on a roll.

CARMEN

(Sings with gusto.)

Shine'em up, shine'em up, shine'em up!
For two dollars I'll make you smile.
Shine'em up, shine'em up, shine'em up!
You'll feel cool, walk around in style.

ABIE

Why did you say shine'em up, shine'em up? There's nobody here.

CARMEN

Just practicing Abie.

GROVER

Well, practice some other time. Abie had a problem with booze, like my father, didn't you?

CARMEN

Hey, I had a problem with it too. Lots of people do...

GROVER

...Anyway, I want to know how a little Jew became an alcoholic, 'cause I don't think I ever heard of a Jewish boozer before.

ABIE

I hate to tell you this, but when I went to AA there were plenty and a lot of them said the same thing, how they never heard of Jewish alcoholics. Addiction is a disease and it's not prejudice.

GROVER

Nu, you gonna tell us or what?

ABIE

I'll tell you, I'll tell you. Ooh, you're such a *pachetch*.

GROVER

That's a new one. What the hell is a *pachetch*?

ABIE

A *pachetch* is a *nuhdnick*.

GROVER

And what the hell is a *nuhdnick*? Damn Abie, I can't learn all these words.

ABIE

A *nuhdnick* is a pest, which is what you are. Anyway, this is how I became a drunk. About 25 years ago, when my darling Anna was 40 years old she got lung cancer *nu?* And she didn't smoke. She was in the hospital for months and it was horrible. She couldn't breathe, she didn't eat and her beautiful alabaster skin was turning yellow.

CARMEN

My uncle Carlos died of lung cancer too, but he used to smoke three packs of Marlboros a day and your beautiful *mujer* didn't smoke. What a drag.

ABIE

I went to see her everyday and when I went home, I started with one drink to help me through the night. Then, that one drink became two, two became three and before I knew it I was drinking a bottle of Chivas Regal every night. Because I was a rich man and I didn't have to work, I saw Anna until they threw me out of the hospital and then went home and got *knaitched*...

GROVER

...That's loaded, right? *Knaitched* is loaded and did I hear you say you were a rich man?

ABIE

I still am...

CARMEN

YOU ARE?

GROVER

How rich Abie, how rich? You gonif.

ABIE

I own a high-rise on East 70th Street and one on Central Park West in Manhattan.

GROVER

YOU DO?

ABIE

And I have a beautiful, 16 room home on the ocean in Miami, near the Fountainbleu.

CARMEN

YOU DO?

ABIE

And a chalet in Switzerland.

GROVER

A big chalet in Switzerland, 16-room mansion in Miami, all those buildings! Why the hell are you shining shoes? You ain't a poor slob like me and how'd you get all that

(Sings.)

money?

THIS CAT IS RICH

I can't believe what I just heard.
This dude has made all that money?
Please tell me, I won't say a word.
Man your secret sure is funny.

You clothes look as bad as mine.
And you don't really smell that good.
Why the hell you doin' shoe shine?
Seems like you been misunderstood.

Praised be Jesus,
This cat is rich.
Ain't that a bitch?
This cat is rich.

Man if I was as rich as you.
I'd sail on a big ship to France.
Now I'll tell you what else I'd do.
I'd drink fine wine then I would dance.

I'd party 'til I couldn't stand.
Buy some togs a big Cadillac.
Give me some skin, man slap my hand.
And for luck please slap my back.

Praised be Jesus,
This cat is rich.
Ain't that a bitch?
This cat is rich.

(We hear Underscoring of AND THAT IS WHY.)

ABIE

Its not easy being rich, and I got all that money, because not only am I smart, I'm lucky too. Way back when, I used all the money I saved and bought 30,000 shares of IBM at two, then 300,000 shares of GE at four, feeling I could do nothing wrong, and I don't remember how many of ATT at three, Westinghouse and General Motor at five. In four or five years I made close too... I can't tell you how much, but I had almost as much money as Rockefeller. The reason I shine shoes is, because after my sweetheart passed

away, I spoke to my Rabbi and I told him I didn't want to live anymore. Not without my Anna. I wanted to kill myself...

CARMEN

When I was smoking crack I tried to commit suicide all the time...

ABIE

Talking about ending it, I really don't feel like continuing, can you blame me?

GROVER

Remember about cleansin' your soul and that cat Kierkegarde.

ABIE

You don't forget, do you?

GROVER

Start cleansin' man, start cleansin'.

ABIE

...My Rabbi said that G-d and the bible says that as Jews it is our obligation to live and if I needed a reason to live, I should forget about myself and help someone who is in need, that doesn't have what I have. So, I walked the streets, *fahzhuzzed*, loaded and I spoke to the drunks on the Bowery. Then I spoke to the young black boys who shined shoes and seemed lost. Lots of them were addicts, had no family and were lonely. I went back to my Rabbi and told him that these people needed help. He said first I should go to AA and help myself, so I did. I didn't have to find G-d because I already believed, but going to meetings, doing the 12 steps, speaking to a sponsor helped and fortunately I never drank again. At the meetings they said, don't compare, identify. I sure identified with those shoeshine boys that were addicted, had no family and were lonely, because who was lonelier than me? So I figured what the heck, I'll shine shoes and maybe learn some humility. What else was I doing besides feeling sorry for myself. 25 years later I'm still learning, but I'm sober. And now I don't feel uncomfortable because G-d granted me peace and serenity, I'm not lonely because I have you Grover, and I don't have a hole in my heart that I need a drink to fill anymore. Sure I still miss my Anna and one day we

(Emotional, sobs)

shall meet again and she'll say to me, "*Do I always stare like that?*" And I'll say, "*Only when I'm about to fall in love, only when I'm about to fall in love...*"

(Underscoring ends.)

GROVER

I know how you feel brother. I still miss Rita everyday, just like you miss your Anna, and I just got to thinkin'. If you own this big apartment buildin' on the upper Eastside, don't suppose you might have a little apartment that Carmen could use, do you?

ABIE

I suppose I could get her an apartment...

CARMEN

...Oh, would you Abie, would you?

GROVER

When do you think she can move in?

ABIE

How does whenever you're ready sound, Carmen?

CARMEN

Oh, I can't believe it. I'm going to move out of that lowlife, *maricon's* apartment right away, this afternoon. Happy New Year everybody, happy New Year! *Muchas felicidades!*

ABIE

Here's my business card and this is the address of my building. Talk to Mario, he's the superintendent. I'll tell him you'll be there sometime today, okay? In fact I'll call him in a couple of minutes on my cell.

CARMEN

Oh, Abie, I don't know how to thank you.

GROVER

Now, if I was you I'd go and get my things, 'cause he's probably ain't home and this way you won't have to contend with his bullshit. So, get goin' woman, get goin'.

(CARMEN starts to hurry off as lights fade.)

End of ACT II

SHINE'EM UP, SHINE'EM UP!

ACT III

Scene 1

**The following day:
9: AM**

GROVER and ABIE are drinking coffee.

ABIE

(Gives money.)

Here's the three dollars for the coffee and bagel, you thief.

GROVER

Thief, I sorta got used to bein' a *gonif* and it's only a buck-and-a-half and it's my treat Jew boy.

ABIE

I don't believe it! Again with the Jew boy?

GROVER

(Laughing)

I gotcha, I gotcha. You ain't no Jew boy, you're Abie, my one-and-only friend and I'm sure glad you are brother, sure glad. Yes, you is my brother, my soul brother forever. So, now that we're family Abie and that's 'cause, you know all about me don'tcha? and I know all about you and them Nazi bastards, who I really hated too. Now, you gonna tell me why a man with all your money shines shoes?

ABIE

Do I have to?

GROVER

We friends, ain't we?

ABIE

Now, that you mentioned it, maybe my best friend and don't tell anybody, my only best friend.

GROVER

Nu, I'm waitin', your best and only friend's waitin' *boichic*.

ABIE

You see, all the people that I knew and know, who said and swore they were my best friend, who would always be my best friend, always wanted something, whether it was money, advice about the stock market, an apartment in one of my buildings, do this or that, go here or there, using my home in Miami or Switzerland, my name and reputation. They used me, boy did they use me, and friends like that I can do without. So, to get away from my supposed best friends, I knew I had to do something with my time or I would go crazy.

GROVER

You mean *meschugeh*, right?

ABIE

Stop interrupting, you'll make me crazy. To keep busy, I tried everything, including getting involved with charity, the UJA, the Red Cross, Cancer, the March of Dimes, Muscular Dystrophy, TB, orphans, even the Library and you know what? It was the same horseshit. They all asked me for contributions and some of them I gave five million

(Lights dim, spot lights Abie, remorseful he ♫ sings ala aria.)

dollars and it still wasn't enough.

FRIENDS UNTIL THE END

Only when I started shining shoes I found peace
 No one asks or wants anything, but a good shine.
 And *gutsen dank*, thank G-d I found you, my dear friend...
 I pray we'll remain best friends 'til the end of time.

Its funny I got used to talking to the wall.
 The answers that I got really weren't that bad.
 The telephone would ring, sorry its the wrong number.
 I'd crawl into my bed, and boy did I feel sad.

Its too lonely,
 When your lonely.
 And you only have yourself.
 Its too lonely,
 When your lonely.
 And your dying for some help.
 Its too lonely,
 When you're lonely.

I look in the mirror there's a man I don't know.
 He has wrinkles with a nose too big for his face.
 And he doesn't remember the things he forgets.
 He ask if he is still a part of the human race.

Its not easy growing older when your feet hurt.
Going to the movies and sitting all alone.
Talking to yourself and liking the answers.
Feeling like a lost dog that's looking for a bone.

Its too lonely,
When your lonely.
And you only have yourself.
Its too lonely,
When your lonely.
And your dying for some help.
Its too lonely,
When your lonely.

(Lights are restored.)

GROVER

...And your dear BEST friend don't want anything, except your friendship, Jew boy...

ABIE

WHAT?!

GROVER

(Laughs as Carmen enters.)

I gotcha I gotcha again. Man, I love you Abie, and I need you, I really do.

CARMEN

I'm glad to see somebody's happy around here besides me. *Buenos dias mi amigos.*

ABIE

Buenos dias to you too, sweetheart and what so *Buenos dias*?

GROVER

So, how was it my beautiful *senorita*?

CARMEN

Gorgeous, *que bueno, magnifico*. It's like the most beautiful one bedroom pad I ever saw. *Muchas gracias senor, muchas gracias mi amigo*. I can't thank you enough, Abie.

ABIE

You, are very welcome sweetheart and the view, did you like the view?

CARMEN

Are you kidding? 28th floor, I could see all of Manhattan, the Empire State building. It's so beautiful and thanks to you, the doorman was so nice: Helped me in with all my

things. Went to Grand Union, bought some food, toothpaste, toilet paper, got everything I need and I couldn't be happier, *compadre*.

ABIE

I'm glad.

GROVER

Did you call your mother and your son to tell them the good news?

CARMEN

Feliciadades, did I? They came over and we went out to dinner and we celebrated big

(🎵Sings)

time. "*Quanta la mera, waheda quanta la mera.*" Thanks to you Abie, we were all so

(🎵Sings.)

happy we couldn't stop singing and...

PERMISSO, EXCUSI

I laugh, 'cause I don't want to cry.

No one will ever see my face.

I sing, 'stead of telling a lie.

I hate the fuckin' human race.

Deceive, I never tell the truth.

My father the dealer sold dope.

You may think that I am uncouth.

Would you be diff'rent without hope?

Permisso, excusi, I'm sorry.

The sky no longer looks starry.

The sun no longer shines brightly.

And through life I tiptoe lightly.

I want to be loved, want to be kissed.

There is so much I want to give.

And there is so much I have missed.

Dear *Jesus*, please, I want to live.

Inside my heart, there is this pain.

I have a hole that goes way down.

And I believe I've gone insane.

See my feet drag on the ground.

Permisso, excusi, I'm sorry.

The sky no longer looks starry.

The sun no longer shines brightly.

And through life I tiptoe lightly.

Hey Grover, how's about givin' us a tune? Sure could use one to get me out of my misery.

GROVER

Maybe in a little while, seems I still got my damn Paw on my mind.

ABIE

You know Grover, I'm sure there's something good your father once did. Try to remember the good not the bad.

GROVER

Good, not bad huh? Well, one day, when I was about eight or nine, he taught me how to fish. Got this long, oak branch, took his freakin' knife and sort of whittled it, dipped it in the river, bent it a couple of times, tied it real tight, then buried it under some mud for two or three days. Dug it up and bent it again and it would snap back, whap! Attached a string and three diaper pins. 'Cause Mama had so many kids we always had lots of `diaper pins. Then he'd catch a couple of worms and some clams, attach them to those diaper pins, sort of toss the bait nice and easy into the water, and move the rod up and down, then a little sideways to tease the fish. Sure enough he'd catch one in no time. *"Now you try Grover and remember, back and forth and up and down. Remember you are teasin' them suckers."* And sure enough I caught one, then I caught two and three. Paw was sure

( Sings.)

proud of me and on the way home we sang, *"I got plenty of nothin' and nothin's got plenty for me,"* and kept on singin' 'til we got there. I loved singin' with my Paw, I really did. Like a fool, it was them times that I thought I loved my Paw, 'cause he could do anything, 'specially fish, sing and he could sure cook. Even though he drank his ass off, in his own way, he was a talented sonofabitch.

ABIE

You see, you see, I told you about Plato and his cleansing and it helped, didn't it? Forgiveness, we all must learn to forgive, especially ourselves, except those Nazi bastards, may they all rot in hell.

CARMEN

I will never forgive my father. He left *mi madre* and me when I was 11. He was a drug dealer, heroin and went to prison for 20 years.

ABIE

Remember what the great Aristotle said?

CARMEN

No, what did Aristotle say, Abie?

ABIE

"The milk, that, we are weaned on at birth, cometh from our beloved mothers, not our inebriated fathers. So, drink milk not vodka." Nu, so what's next boichic?

GROVER

That Aristotle was a pretty hip cat, man and sure, I'll tell you what's next. We used to have a whole mess of animals, three cats and two dogs. Seems my Paw was always bringin' home a stray and since we didn't have no toys, we sure loved playin' with them strays. Slick, that's what Mama called him and he was her favorite. He was this big, fat, gray cat with green eyes that used to shine in the dark. He'd jump up on Mama's lap whenever she sat on her rockin' chair and lick her hands. Mama loved that cat. Then there was Midnight, blackest cat you ever saw and Fluffy, kinda real friendly Calico cat. Spot was this fine lookin' firedog, and Bull was a mean bulldog, but some how they all got along, except for those poor chickens. Those cats were always after them, but Mama would raise her straw broom and chase them away. "*Shoo, get away get away,*" sh'ed say. Anyway, as usual we were out of coin, things got real bad, had no eggs since we had eaten all the chickens and we sure were hungry, that's hurtin' hungry. Now, the one thing about Luke Chisolm is, he was a fine cook. Usin' the last of the tomatoes Mama had jarred, with some onions, green peppers, yams, black-eyed peas and mushrooms, Paw was cookin' up his famous stew, which he called Chisholm's delight. Ooh wee, did it smell good and all my sisters and brothers were real anxious to get down to some real home cookin', 'cause we were hungry. Mama said grace, we all thanked Jesus Christ for the food we was about to receive and dug in. We was dippin' the corn bread, lappin' up Paw's delicious gravy, when all of a sudden, Mama, then Missy coughed and spit out somethin' real ugly on their plates. Even though they were slightly brown from the cookin', no doubt about it, it was poor Slick's green eyes. We all sort of threw-up and cried, 'cause like Mama, we sure loved poor Slick.

CARMEN

Oh, my G-d. He cooked your mother's favorite cat... *Ai caramba*, what a *bastardo*. How could he do that?

GROVER

I'll tell you how. The man was so twisted that he forgot to cut Slick's head off and sittin' around the table feelin' real sorry, we got to thinkin' about how many of our other pets that had been disapperain' for years, did Paw cook and from that moment on, no matter how hungry we got, we never ate or looked at his stew again. How could we?

CARMEN

(Laughs.)

Hey Bro, you ready to do a little singin' my handsome *senor*?

GROVER

And what would the lovely *senorita* like to hear?

ABIE

Never mind what the *senorita* wants to hear. How about me? We're still best friends, aren't we?

GROVER

Always.

ABIE

If that's the case, how about, singing something you love?

GROVER

Be my pleasure, *boichic*. Here's something I wrote for my Rita, not that she evr heard it.
(Waves imaginary baton, ♪sings.)
 Maestro if you please...?

RITA

I will always love you baby,
 It seems you're always on my mind.
 Missin' you, it drives me crazy,
 Bangin' my head walkin,' 'round blind.

I hate wakin' up each mornin',
 Without you whisp'rin' in my ear.
 It's always dark ain't no new dawnin'
 Without your love I live in fear.

Rita, don't wanna go on anymore.
 Rita, I just don't wanna live.
 Rita, I got nothin to give.
 Rita, I don't wanna go on anymore.

They say it gets dark 'for the storm.
 Seems like its been rainin' all the time.
 N' I don't know why I was born?
 N' my poems have lost their rhyme.

Rita, don't wanna go on anymore.
 Rita, I just don't wanna live.
 Rita, I got nothin to give.
 Rita, I don't wanna go on anymore.

(Drunk, wearing a Yankee baseball cap backward, GREG enters outraged.)

GREG

What the hell's going on here? I don't believe it! This ain't Carnegie Hall, Buckwheat!
 Who the hell gave you permission to sing on my time, you cocksucker? I'm not

(To Carmen.)

paying you to sing and where the hell were you last night? You ungrateful slut! And you
 took all your clothes, even that freakin' red dress I bought you with my own money,

(Pulls on baseball cap and grabs Carmen.)

because I thought you looked hot in it. Hot, hot shit! If you don't come back, I'm gonna break every bone in your body, I'm gonna kill you, you whore, you miserable whore. That's right, she's nothing but a cheap whore, a prostitute and I saved her Puerto Rican ass from getting AIDS, because I got her to stop hookin', you hear? Me, I got her to stop selling her body and what do I get? I get shit. Come on, I'm taking you home, you hear? Lets go! Let's go before I...!

GROVER

Hey Greg, please take your hands off of Carmen! She don't belong to you or anybody, so take your scummy hands off of her!

GREG

(Pulls on baseball cap and laughs.)

Scummy hands? Who the hell do you think your talking to you low-life nigger. If it

(Pulls Carmen.)

wasn't for me, you'd starve to death like the rest of your kind! Come on, didn't you hear what I just said? Get your damn coat and lets get going, damn it, lets go! And when we get home I'm gonna bang you, I'm gonna bang until you scream bloody murder, then I'm going to make you do things that you never dreamed of, you pig, you twat, you freakin' slut! And I ain't gonna pay you a dime, because you ain't worth even a penny you, because, how do you say it in Puerto Rican? You're a *putan*. Hey *putan*, let's go!

GROVER

I told you, take your hands off that woman or I'll...

GREG

(🎵Sings.)

...You'll do what, you piece of shit.

IF IT WASN'T FOR LITTLE OLD ME

You better do what I say, Sambo?

Or else you'll go,

You're out of here.

Now is that clear?

You're out of here.

Your people are the scum of the Earth.

For all your worth.

So get it straight.

It's you I hate.

So get it straight.

If it wasn't for little old me,
You'd be living in the Bowery.
Sleeping with all them bums.
Begging to eat their crubs,
If it wasn't for little old me.

You remind me of those freakin' apes
Monkey escapes.
You piece of shit.
Why don't you quit?
You piece of shit.

Why your kind is a dime-a-dozen.
Got it cousin?
I don't need you.
Ugly you shcrew.
I don't need you.

If it wasn't for little old me,
You'd be living in the Bowery.
Sleeping with all them bums.
Begging to eat their crubs,
If it wasn't for little old me.

(GREG punches GROVER, who strikes back. There is a tussle and they fall to the floor, wrestle and GREG'S cap falls off.)

ABIE

Stop stop, what are you both crazy? Grover, do you want to go to jail like your father? Is that what you want, *meschugehneh*? The police are all over and they'll arrest you, they'll arrest you. And you're drunk Greg. You're so drunk that you don't know what you're doing. You're always drunk, so, stop it, stop it or I'll call the police. POLICE!

(ABIE separates and stands between THEM. GROVER kicks and angrily stomps on GREG'S baseball cap.)

GREG

...I know what I'm doing you little Jew bastard, I'm going to kill this nigger, who just had the balls to step on my world series baseball cap, this whore and maybe you right

(Pulls and points gun)

now! Okay you bunch of wiseass nothings, lets see what you're all gonna do now, you Puerto Rican cunt, you black mother and you, Mr. Jew boy... All of you, get down on your knees and start praying, start prayin' for your life, because this is your last goodbye; say goodbye and as those poor spics say, say *adios* mother fuckers, *adios*.

(GROVER lunges and knocks the gun away. ABIE quickly picks up gun and stares at it. After a beat, GROVER rushes over to GREG, pulls out a big knife and puts it to GREG'S throat.)

GROVER

Now it's your turn to say goodbye ass-hole, 'cause I've been savin' this knife, it was my father's knife, just for you sweetheart and now, now I'm gonna cut you up into little pieces, simply because I hate your guts. I've always hated your guts: the way you treated
(Raises knife.)

me, Abie and now Carmen, as if your shit don't stink. It smells all right and so does your stinkin', drunken breath.

ABIE

Don't Grover, if you do it they'll hang you like they did your father. Is that what you want? Do you want to end up like your father, hung in jail? Please Grover please, I'm begging you. You're my friend, my best friend and you're not your father, you're not your father.

GROVER

(Puts knife down.)

I'm his son ain't I? And they say the tree don't fall too far from the apple. It don't fall too far.

ABIE

It's the other way around, *meshugehneh*. It's the apple doesn't fall too far from the tree.

GROVER

Your *meshugeheneh* ain't gonna work this time Abie. I got to put this slimy bastard out of his misery, once and for all. He don't deserve to live another second. When I was just
(Looks at and then stomps on baseball cap.)

singin' and I saw him wearin', I HATE that damn baseball cap, always have and him bein' so drunk, I couldn't believe my eyes, I thought I was lookin' at my own drunken father again, and you know how I hated my father, Abie and I hate this Irish prick too, so
(Raises knife and laughs.)

now, I'm gonna do him like ole Luke Chisolm did Deacon Butler. I'm gonna stab him
(VO of FATHER'S laugh.)

and laugh, stab him, and laugh just like my Paw did. You ready to meet your maker,
(Sings.)

Greg? Start prayin' asshole, start prayin,' 'cause.

HARD AS A ROCK

I ain't your slave, I'm a man,
And I got rights I got rights.
Now you better understand
I ain't your slave, I'm a man,
And I got rights I got rights.

I'm gonna cut you from ear to ear.
Is that clear? From ear to ear.
Then I will make you suck my big cock.
My big cock. Hard as a rock.

I ain't your slave, I'm a man,
And I got rights I got rights.
Now you better understand
I ain't your slave, I'm a man,
And I got rights I got rights.

Ain't gonna take your shit anymore.
That's for sure, not anymore.
Take this job and stick it up your ass.
I pass, stick it up your ass.

I ain't your slave, I'm a man,
And I got rights I got rights.
Now you better understand
I ain't your slave, I'm a man,
And I got rights I got rights.
Now if I was you, you lowlife cocksucker, I'd pray.

GREG

What should I pray for, my life? My life ain't worth shit, it never was and if you kill me Sambo, you'll spend the rest of your life in jail like my...

ABIE

Grover, his father was like your no-good father. Don't you understand? He went to jail too. Do you want to end up the same way, behind bars?

CARMEN

No, it wasn't his low-life father that went to jail, it was his sweet, holier-than-thou mother, wasn't it Greg? It was your mother, and why don't you tell them about your mother, *Gregory*?

GREG

FUCK YOU AND MY MOTHER. I HATE YOU AND MY MOTHER!

CARMEN

I thought you loved your mother *Gregory*? Weren't you Mama's little boy? Well, weren't you, so, how can you say fuck your mother? when you loved her, you've always
(Song.)
loved her. Admit it, admit it you drunken *bastardo*, admit it!

GREG**(Emotional.)**

I'll admit it all right... I loved my mother more than anything. Always have, always will... She was this little, religious, Irish Lass who, come rain or shine went to the seven o'clock mass at Our Lady of Victory every morning. She was born in Dublin, Ireland, that's where she met and married my drunken father, Patrick. He even got twisted the night they were married and she often laughed that they were never legally married, because he was so drunk that he didn't consummate the marriage that night. He always denied it, but according to my mother, who swore on the Blarney stone it was true. She told our family, all their friends and they all would always laugh and laugh, much to my

(FATHER'S VO)

father's chagrin "It's a lie and you know it" he would scream in his Irish brogue. "Gregory was born nine months to the day we were married, wasn't he Rose O'Leary?"

(MOTHER'S VO)

"Nine months!" "Nine months and a day, she would smile, nine months and a day..." She knew how to get his goat and she always did.

CARMEN

Right on for his goat and right on for *su madre*, ...

GROVER

Hey Abie, ain't there anybody else you can think of? 'cause that's what I need.

ABIE

Aristotle, who was another brilliant Greek once said, *"Down with all intoxicated fathers."* Did I mention him already?

GROVER

I sure dig them Greeks man, I sure do, 'cause he was talkin' about my drunken father.

GREG

...And mine too. He owned this bar called the Limelight, what else would a drunken, Irish bastard call it? And because he was so proud of his only son, he took me there and

(FATHER'S VO)

showed me off to all his shit faced cronies as much as he could. "Gregory me boy, show them how you can spell and do multiplication, show them how you throw the darts and how you can down a pint like your father." By the time I was eight, I was in love with and thought I couldn't live a day without beer and Irish whiskey sours...

CARMEN

...Oh, my G-d, you started drinking even before me...

ABIE

...His father was just like your father Grover, a drunken loser. All boozers are losers. I know, I was there, Charley.

CARMEN

Cut the bullshit Greg and tell them what you told me about what your religious mother Rose did. I think that's why he drinks so much, to forget how and where his mother died, ain't that right, *maricon?* And the reason why he beats the shit out of me is, he can't stand the pain, the memory. He's mad, because not only does he hate the freakin' world, he hates himself, including the both of you. TELL THEM, WHY DON'T YOU TELL THEM?!

GREG**(Remorseful.)**

And that Plato sure hit it on the head when he said, "*Down with all the intoxicated fathers,*" 'cause my father was the drunken bastard he was talking about. Always had four or five hookers, waitresses that worked his bar, that he kept changing every other month, 'cause he wanted and needed new pussy all the time. The man was a sex maniac. And even though he made a lot of bread from them, it wasn't the money, it was the carnal pleasure they provide him, especially this Italian babe named Louise. Mom told me she

(Sings.)

thought he was in love with her.

SLAP HAPPY

I ain't much different than my rottin' father.
No not much different at all.
Seems I turned out like my rotten drunkin' father.
I feel like climbing up the wall.

I just want to be happy.
I don't want to be sad.
So nuts I feel slaphappy.
And I walk around mad.

That prick hit my beautiful mother all the time.
Then he would beat me just for fun.
Even when he wasn't drunk he walked around blind.
Swore to me there really ain't no sun.

I just want to be happy.
I don't want to be sad.
So nuts I feel slaphappy.
And I walk around mad.

This hatred that I have still colors my ev'ry dream.
I walk around colored by pain.
You don't understand why I don't talk I just scream.
I scream because I'm insane.

I just want to be happy.
I don't want to be sad.
So nuts I feel slaphappy.
And I walk around mad.

CARMEN

I think that's why this *bato* thought he fell in love with me. Your father fell in love with Louise, who was one of his hookers and you thought you fell in love with... you're just like him, aren't you?

GREG

Yeah, even though I hated his guts, I'm just like him all right, because like a dummy I fell for you, a hooker, lock, stock and barrel, didn't I? Like father like son, huh?

CARMEN

Forget about your father and tell them about your mother, *stupido* and maybe Grover will have some *simpatico* and won't kill you, like *su madre* killed your old man. THAT'S RIGHT, HIS MOTHER WAS A FREAKIN' MURDERER AND SHE KILLED HIS FATHER!

ABIE

What, your mother really killed your father? I don't believe it.

GROVER

And, why did your mother kill your father asshole, why?

GREG

Because of me... It was my fault.

GROVER

Because of you, why, what did you do?

GREG

My mother told me when she was in jail, that she had become suspicious of my father's promiscuity when she found lipstick on a couple of his shirts. She was determined to find out once-and-for-all, for she knew something was amiss, when he stopped trying to make love to her. It was Saturday night, three o'clock in the morning and she made me go with her to the Limelight just as it was closing. Mom looked through the window, saw no one was there and since she had a key, she opened the door and we tiptoed in.

(MOTHER'S VO)

"Stay here Gregory my love," she said, "your father's probably in the back with that tramp, Louise and this time I'm going to catch him with his pants down." Soon as she left I fixed myself a whiskey sour, drank it real fast and made another, just as I heard her scream, "You've been fucking all of your waitresses, especially this Louise who's your personal Italian whore all these years behind my back, haven't you Patrick

McGiloughcutty! You're nothing but a cheating, Irish rogue and as G-d is my witness, you'll surely rot in hell, for that is where you belong."

GROVER

Oh, my Lord, he was just like my Paw, cheatin' on my Mama, and he ain't even black... You got any other Greeks you want to tell us about, Abie? And do it real fast.

ABIE

Euripides, who was another sage, a scholar once said, "*Give it time and all sins will all come out in the wash.*"

GROVER

Is you jivin' again Abie? He didn't really say that, did he?

CARMEN

Forget about that freakin' Greek and his wash. Let the *bato* tell us what his mother said.

GREG

(MOTHER'S VO)

If I remember correctly, which I doubt, she screamed, "*You can have your Louise and all your whore waitresses. I want you out, you hear?! I want a divorce, I've had it!*" she said, as I walked in, really loaded, having downed my third whiskey sour. "*What's the matter Mama,*" I slurred, "*what's the matter?*" "*Just look at my dear, sweet Gregory. You've turned him into a drunken sot like yourself. My G-d, he's only ten, he's only ten. Have you no shame?*" she cried, screamed and threw an ashtray, which hit him square on the forehead, and knocked him down.

CARMEN

Good for her. If it was me, I would have killed him.

GREG

Outraged, he wiped the blood gushing from his forehead, pushed Louise, who he was just banging out, ran to my little mother, picked her up, smacked and threw her against the large mirror behind the bar and it shattered, cutting my mother's hands and face. My mother was momentarily stunned. Despite being drunk, trying to protect my little mother I jumped on my father's back and started swinging. "*Stop it, stop it. Leave my mother alone,*" I screamed, "*I hate you, I hate you!*" He turned and started punching and kicking me mercilessly. Seeing how he was beating me, desperate for my safety and remembering there was a gun beneath the register, my mother got it, pointed it at my father and told him to stop beating me or else. Being he was in a drunken rage, he never heard nor knew how afraid she was for my life, as he kept on pummeling me. She

(MOTHER'S VO.)

screamed, "*NO, NO MORE, NO MORE OR I'LL*" and fired five times. He fell to the floor, dead-as-a-doornail.

ABIE

Oy, she killed him dead as a doornail no less...

GREG

...Seeing my bewildered mother, who was bleeding profusely, standing over my drunken, dead father, staring at him in a daze, I kicked him in his ass and screamed, "*I hate you, I hate you, you cheating drunk...!*" When the police arrived, I was still kicking him. They took me, and my mother to the stationhouse and questioned me alone. You're an accessory to the fact boy, an accessory to the fact. Tell us what happened or we'll send your ass to jail with your murdering mother for life. Now talk!

GROVER

...Ain't that a bitch, I was once an accessory to the fact too, the police questioned and questioned me and threatened to throw my ass in jail, but it was my father who did the killin', not my sweet, little Mama...

GREG

...I cried and told them my mother was too religious to hurt anyone and that she was only protecting herself, because he was trying to kill her. Being she always told the truth, she said he only threw her against the mirror, she killed him, she said crossing herself, because he was trying to kill me, her little boy, not her and that's why she shot him, and she would shoot him again and again.

ABIE

She didn't... How could she admit she shot him...?

GREG

...She was convicted of manslaughter, got 15 years and died in prison. And if you want to kill me nigger, be my guest, 'cause I don't feel much like living anymore... Maybe I had enough, because I have this headache, the pain, the pain is too freakin' much, so do it and put me out of my misery... Please, I can't take it anymore.

GROVER

(Raises knife.)

It's my pleasure asshole. I thought you'd never ask.

ABIE

DON'T! DON'T DO IT!

GROVER

Why not?

ABIE

Because can't you hear it?

GROVER

Hear what?

(ABIE fires gun five times into baseball cap.)

ABIE

No more baseball cap, my dear friend, it's over and Greg's not your father and I swear that's the truth. I can't believe it but I finally told the truth, *nu?* I finally told the truth, I finally told the truth, can you believe it? And I know why, I know why. My name's not

(Emotional)

Heinz, it's not Heinz, it never was. I'm Abie, I've always been Abie Goldfarb, always, you're my best friend and Greg's not your father, aren't you glad?

GROVER

(Kicks Greg in the ass, who slinks off.)

No, I guess he ain't, he sure ain't *Abie*. Now, take a walk asshole, take a walk and you can stick this job up your ass.

CARMEN

I hope we never see that *maricon* again.

GROVER

You won't, trust me. Now Abie, did them cats Plato and Kierkegarde really say them things about cleansing your soul?

ABIE

(Laughs.)

What's the matter, you don't believe me?

CARMEN

And what about all them Greeks?

ABIE

(Laughs)

You also don't believe me? I don't believe it!

GROVER

(Sings to Alfie.)

"What's it all about Abie? Is it just for the moment we live?" What's it all about brother? Why don't you do a little cleansin' yourself? How'd you get this way?

ABIE

How'd I get this way. Boy, it's a long story...

GROVER

Your friend's a real good listener, real good, so why don't you tell me? Get it off your chest, you'll feel better.

ABIE

It all started with those *fahschtunkeneh* Nazis... That hatred, that anger and angst I had for them drove me crazy, and I learned to lie to hide my identity and I'm still lying, but thanks to my beloved Sister Catherine, who said laugh at the world, I truly believe that was the impetuous that made me survive and I did. I showed those bastards, didn't I?

That animosity, which I believe was and is G-d given was a blessing in disguise and when I realized it, it became an integral part of my being happy and almost serene... As long as I was angry at somebody, there was a good chance I would be happy, maybe. In 1948, when the United Nations voted Israel statehood, thanks to those Arabs who were determined to get rid of me, suddenly had another reason to go on, because as a Jew I knew we had to survive and that's when I realized that I always need someone to despise in order for me to exist. And what's the sense of existing unless you're happy? Even though I was fortunate enough to become almost as rich as Howard Hughes, I said almost and remember that movie they made of him? I think it was called "Howard and ME?" where he was supposed to be a bum and he meets a best friend. Hello Grover... That picture changed my life and was probably why I started shining shoes, and I'm not lying. Finally I'm telling the truth...

(After a beat.)

GROVER

...Keep cleansin' man, it sure sounds interestin'.

ABIE

Interesting, huh? Wait... When I met you Grover and I thought you hated Jews, I couldn't be happier and now you know why I say I hate Nike, Reebok and Adidas. Once I'm through with them, it will probably be Microsoft, ATT or the Yankees.

CARMEN

'Cause otherwise you won't be happy, right?

ABIE

You are so right, sweetheart, and since you're out of work and need a job my dear friend, how would like to sing again? My friend Bo Littman just bought Carnegie Hall and I hear he's looking for a good singer. *Nu?*

GROVER

Oh, Abie I don't know what to say?

ABIE

Don't say a word and as far as Littman's concerned, he'll just want you to sing a few songs and talking about singing, Carmen, are you ready for OUR song?

CARMEN

What took you so long, big boy?

(ABIE and CARMEN hold hands)

CARMEN and ABIE

(Sings with gusto.)

Shine'em up, shine'em up, shine'em up!
For two dollars I'll make you smile.
Shine'em up, shine'em up, shine'em up!
You'll feel cool, walk around in style.

GROVER

There ain't nobody around. Who needs a shine?

ABIE

(Smiles and puts foot forward.)

I do *boichic*, if you would be so kind.

CARMEN

(smiles and puts foot forward.)

And so do I gorgeous, *por favor*, so do I...

ABIE

(Extends hands they ALL hold hands.)

I think we should go out with a blast.

GROVER, ABIE and CARMEN

(Dancing, THEY Ssing.)

ALL

Shine'em up, shine'em up, shine'em up!
For two dollars we'll make you smile.
Shine'em up, shine'em up, shine'em up!
And then you'll walk around in style.

Shine'em up, shine'em up, shine'em up!
For two dollars we'll make you smile.
Shine'em up, shine'em up, shine'em up!
And then you'll walk around in style.

(Lights fade to black.)

THE END